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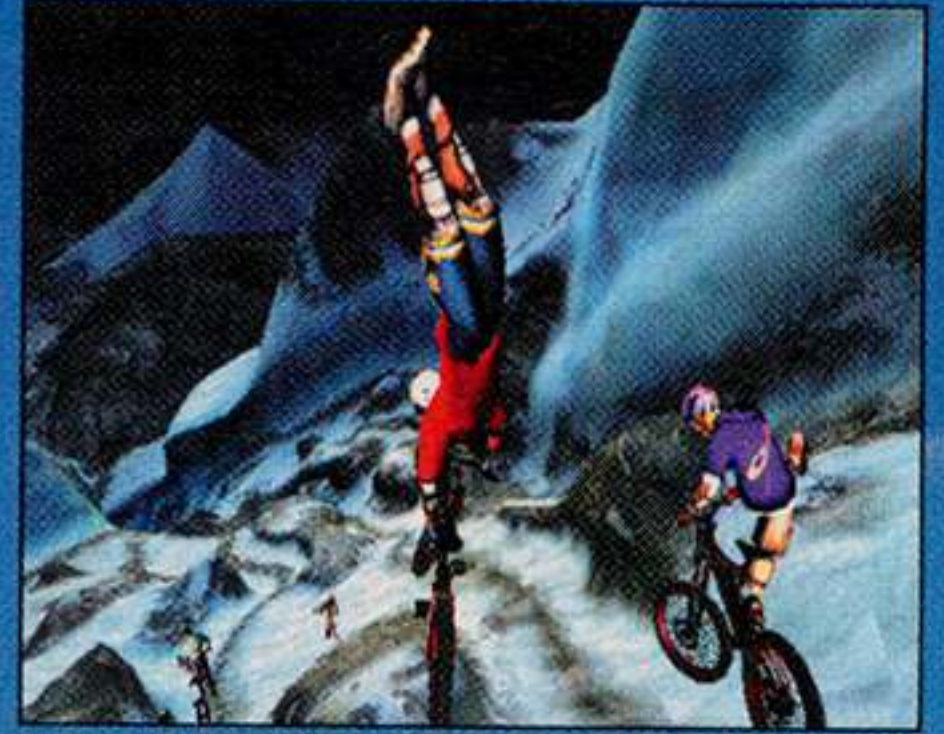


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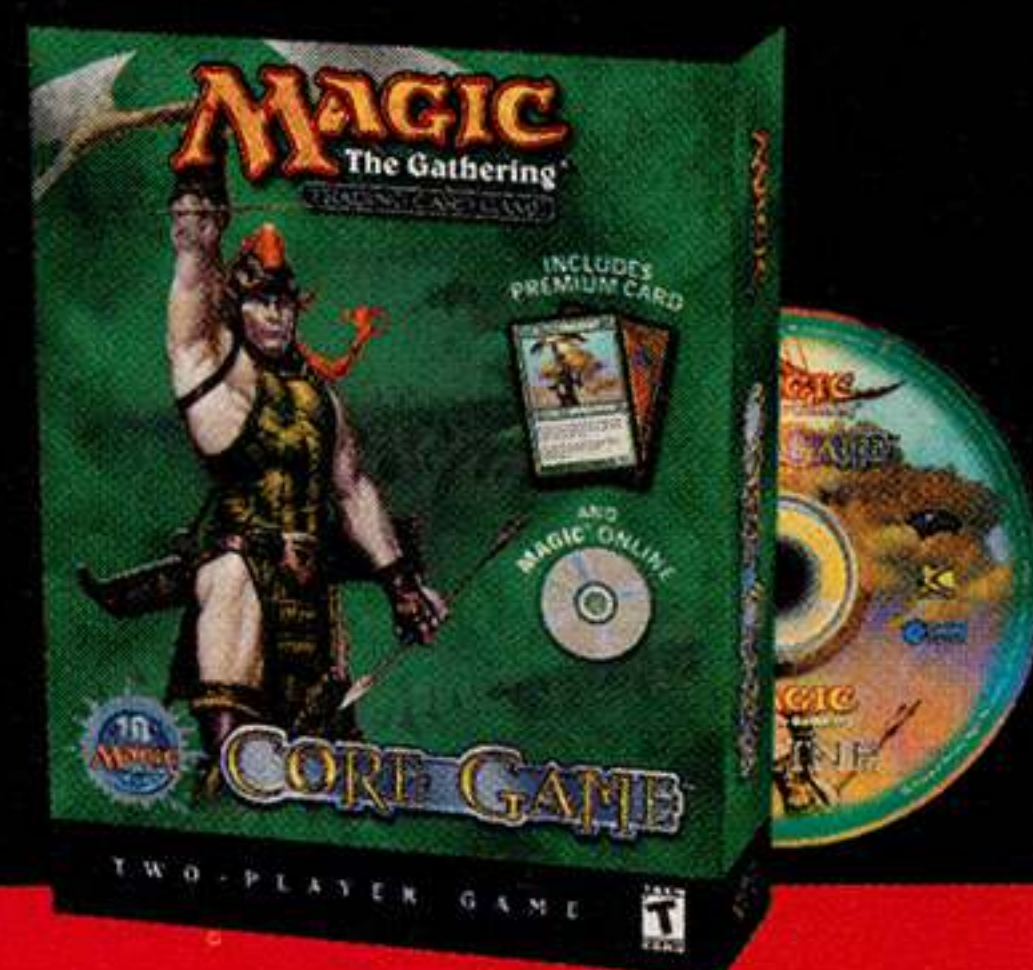




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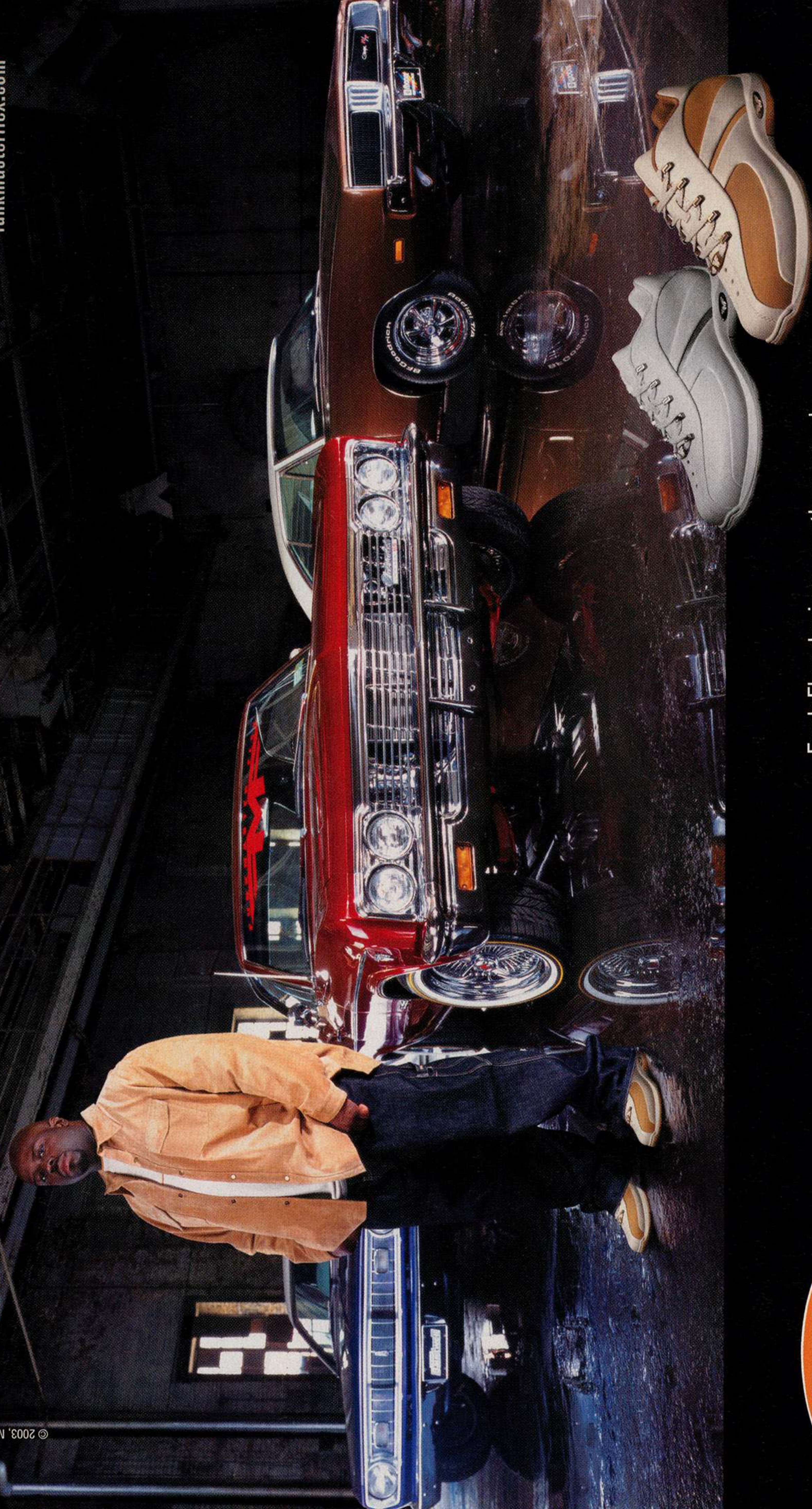
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30 Union of the Snake

Solid Snake returns in Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes for the GameCube and again in Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater for the PlayStation 2. Konami's Hideo Kojima and the team at Silicon Knights reveal their plans of attack.

**Twin Snakes:
Exclusive
Hands-On Preview**

34 Lucky XIII

Ubi Soft's using its French connection to import a unique cel-shaded shooter to the U.S. Conspiracies and action abound in this Euro comic book-based game coming to the PS2, Xbox, GameCube, and PC. Will XIII turn out to be your lucky number?

38 War Games

The U.S. Army recruited Pandemic Studios to build a game to train soldiers. Now THQ is about to recruit you into the ranks of Full Spectrum Warrior for the Xbox.

40 Secrets & Lies

GamePro looks at some of gaming's greatest unsolved mysteries...and solves them! From weird rumors to urban legends that would not die, we've got the truth about everything from Lara Croft's lack of clothing to consoles that can start world wars.

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Ape Escape 2 (PS2)

Put a lock on that cage! If the Freaky Monkey Five makes you go ape, here's relief from the simian madness.



CODE VAULT

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Victory can be yours with these codes for Enter the Matrix (PS2, Xbox, GameCube), Hulk (PS2, Xbox, GameCube), Wakeboarding Unleashed Featuring Shaun Murray (PS2, Xbox), Midnight Club II (Xbox), Shox (PS2), and, naturally, more!

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SILENT HILL 3



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In online space, no one can hear you scream: Star Wars Galaxies, PlanetSide, and Homeworld 2 blast off. You can look forward to Guild Wars, The Call of Cthulhu, Unreal Tournament 2004, and more.



Star Wars Galaxies! Page 44

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The fun stays with you with Mario and Luigi, Fire Emblem, Metroid: Zero Mission, Mario and Donkey Kong, CIMA: The Enemy, Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue, and DemiKids—all for the Game Boy Advance.



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It's kick-off time with Madden NFL 2004 (PS2, Xbox, GameCube) and ESPN NFL Football (PS2, Xbox). And, it's not too early for NFL Blitz Pro (PS2, Xbox, GameCube), NBA ShootOut 2004 (PS2), and more!



Madden NFL 2004! Page 94

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The Xbox RPG drought is over! Star Wars: KOTOR, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Rent A Hero No. 1 give Microsoft's machine some muscle, while .hack Part 3: Outbreak (PS2) is no hack job.



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What's On GAMEPRO

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Games

Go to GamePro.com for reviews and previews of all the hottest games for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC, and more. Enter contests to win awesome prizes, find the latest cheats, print out strategies, and chat with a different GamePro everyday.

This Month

- Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution (PS2)
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder (Xbox)
- Madden NFL 2004 (GameCube)
- EverQuest: Evolution (PC)

Entertainment

Check out the entertainment channel for reviews of newly released movies, comics, anime, toys, and all the latest DVDs. Be sure to check out New Comics Day every Friday.

This Month

- Movies—Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life
- Anime—RahXephon
- Movies—Freddy vs. Jason



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LOADING...HEAD2HEAD

EDITOR'S LETTER

The Unexplored Country

Game developers are pushing relentlessly forward in their quest for challenging game experiences. Hideo Kojima, Konami's Metal Gear Solid mastermind, expressed that attitude when he shared plans for his new Game Boy Advance game, Boktai, with *GamePro* this issue (see Cutting Edge). "I want those who love playing games to experience a totally different, brand-new experience," he says. "Then I want those who are not into games to pay attention to new concepts for what a game can be."

Kojima's Boktai is pushing the GBA into the light of day (literally) for a new twist on vampire hunting. Using an innovative solar sensor technology, you have to play in the sunlight to power up an in-game solar weapon.

Military masterminds should also plan a walk in the sun with THQ's Full Spectrum Warrior by Pandemic Studios. Designed according to U.S. Army specifications as a combat leader trainer, the game challenges you to fight with your brains rather than your thumbs by issuing commands under fire to two squads of soldiers to achieve mission objectives while preventing casualties.

And Sega Sports will issue its own dose of reality. First-person shooter meets first-person passer this season in ESPN NFL Football (formerly NFL 2K). An impressive and innovative first-person perspective mode places you inside the helmet of your favorite NFL stars for a field-level view of helmet-jarring football.

If concepts like these don't make you hunger to hold a controller in your hands, then you don't know video games. "I want players who are starving for a new kind of game," says Kojima-san. Feed us.

The GamePros
Oakland, CA
letters@gamepro.com

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PSP Envy?

Why is Sony getting into the handheld business? The way I see it, Sony is trying to do with handheld gaming what Microsoft did with the console industry—which is make a big powerful machine, back it up with lots of money and advertisements, support it with lots of crappy games (with a few good ones in between), and make it "cool." And when I say, "cool," I mean not "kiddie" and for "mature" gamers. And what the heck does "the next Walkman" mean? Have they forgotten about something called the Game Boy Advance SP? I wouldn't be surprised if next year Microsoft came up with their own Xbox portable. What do you think of all this stuff?

► Simon Tolomeo—Via Internet

Plenty. One, let's look at that Microsoft analogy because it's a good point (though probably not the one you were trying to make). When Microsoft announced that it was entering the console market, some people said Sony was dead. Those people were clearly wrong, so if you're a Nintendo fan worried about the GBA's future just because Sony wants a piece of the handheld market too, don't be—competition is good for business, and it's ultimately good for gamers. As long as you enjoy playing your GBA, it will never go out of style. Two, you're assuming a heck of a lot about a system that probably won't be released until the end of 2004 (that's an educated guess). No software titles have been announced, let alone shown, so it's a little early to say they'll stink! Three, according to Dean Takahashi's book *Opening the Xbox*, Microsoft was thinking about a handheld product, dubbed the Xboy, but it never made it out of the planning stages (or hasn't yet, anyway). Maybe it will show up someday because, as Sony has realized, handheld games are popular, and there's money to be made there. And finally, when Sony's Ken Kutaragi called the PSP "the Walkman for the 21st Century," he was referring to the way Sony's portable stereo changed the way people listened to music when it came out in the late 1970s. He's predicting big things for the PSP. But you know what? He built the PlayStation. He's allowed to boast a bit. In the meantime, until

the PSP is in your own hands and you can make your own decision, try to keep an open mind. What if—gasp!—the system turns out to be fun?



Purple Reign

There's something somewhat arbitrary albeit interesting that I've noticed over the past few years concerning Nintendo systems: They are purple. First, there was the atomic purple N64 console and Game Boy Pocket. Then, the Game Boy Color was released in two different variations of purple as was the Game Boy Advance. Purple has

obviously become a color associated with the GameCube, and the new cobalt Game Boy Advance SP looks suspiciously purple to me. It's not that something as trivial as a system's color bothers me, but it's just killing me to know why, if there is a reason. Is purple dye cheaper or something?

► Adam Waszczak—Colchester, CT

It started even before the N64, Adam—remember the buttons on the Super NES and its controllers? They were purple, too. We contacted Nintendo to see if there was anything beyond aesthetics to it and turned up nothing (other than a reminder that the official color for the GBA and GameCube is indigo). Our best guesses tie into something far older than video games—royalty. Purple has long been associated with kings and queens, a rich color that has represented wealth, success, and power for a lot longer than Mario has been around. Purple is likewise the color of royalty in Japan (only there it's called *murasaki*), so it's fair to assume that, if nothing else, Nintendo's purple passion wisely implies something about the company you keep.



Twisted Mental Block

I was wondering why *Twisted Metal: Black* was rated Mature by the ESRB, but the online version of the game was rated Teen. It bugs me because I had trouble buying the game when it first came out, and when I started playing it, it appeared to me that the game should really have been rated the same as *Twisted Metal* or *TM2*.

► Adam—Killawog, NY

To date, *Twisted Metal: Black* is the only game in the series to



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Violence
Suggestive Themes



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receive a Mature rating; all the rest were rated Teen for violence. That's because the single-player mode of TM:B included some pretty gory cinematic sequences—horror movie-quality stuff that further explored the darker side of the characters and went so far as to illustrate some of the things that made them into the maniacs they became. The online version didn't have a single-player story mode, so the ESRB deemed evil ice cream trucks that turn into giant robots and El Caminos that fling suicide bombers at other drivers to be...just good Teen fun!

Night Grooves

I saw the commercial for *Midnight Club II*, and I just fell in love with that trance song. Do you know what it's called and who does it?

► **Avtar Singh—Via Internet**

The fine folks at Rockstar say that the mystery song is "Infinity in Your Hands" by DJ Darkzone. Party on.

Cheating the \$ystem

I was wondering where *GamePro* gets its cheat codes. Do you get them off the Internet, or do you actually give the video game companies money in exchange for the cheats to their games?

► **Danielle Basford—Spring, TX**

No money changes hands, Danielle. Cheats come from two main sources: readers and companies. Readers submit the codes they find on their own (and yes, some people do sit at home and try different button combinations and passwords and stuff), and companies send us codes directly from the developers who created the games. Sometimes they send those without being harassed, and sometimes we ask real pretty-like. The Internet is a wealth of information, but not all of what's out there is correct, so any cheats we get from the 'net we test in-house before going to print. If you see a code in *GamePro*, it works!

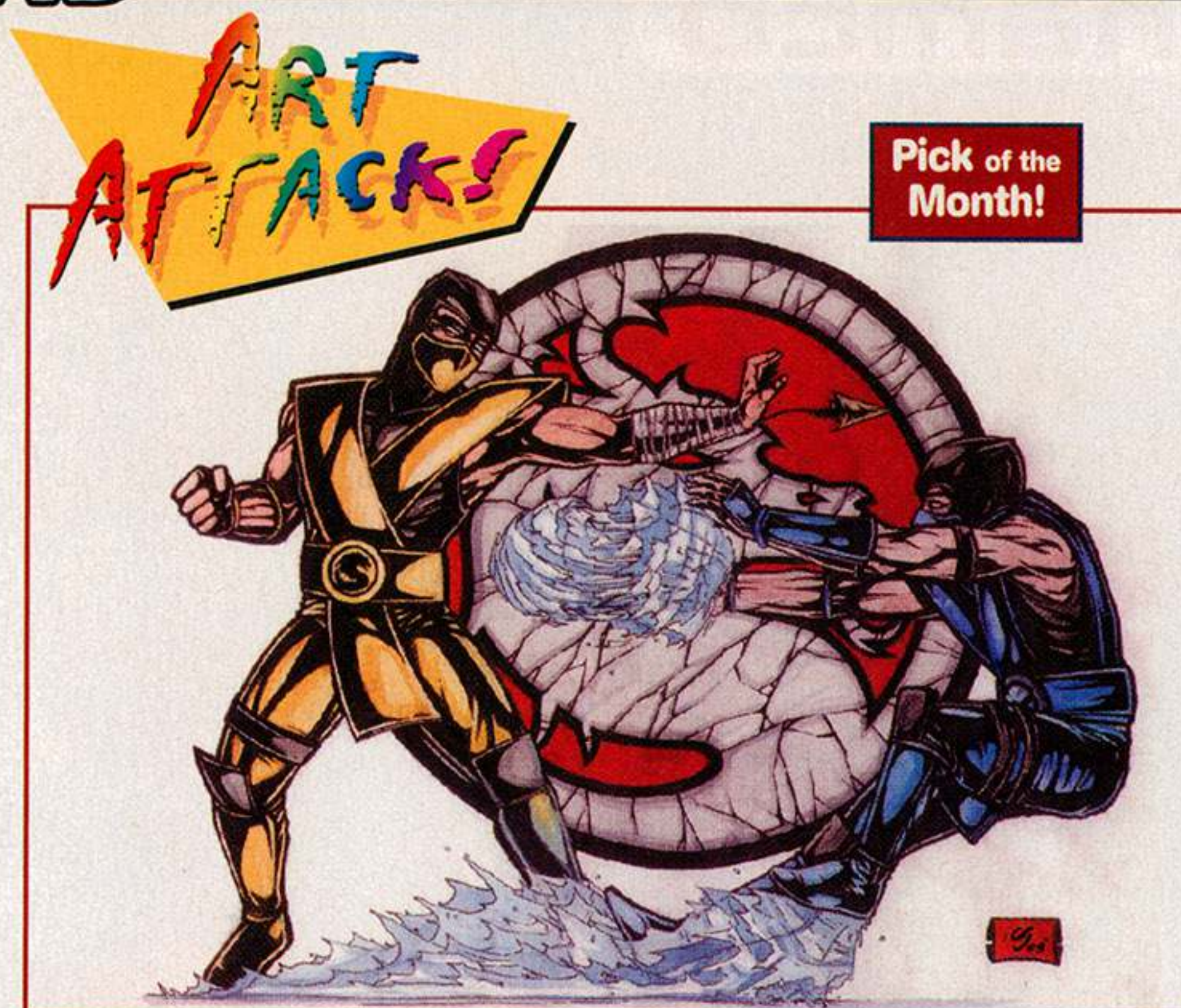
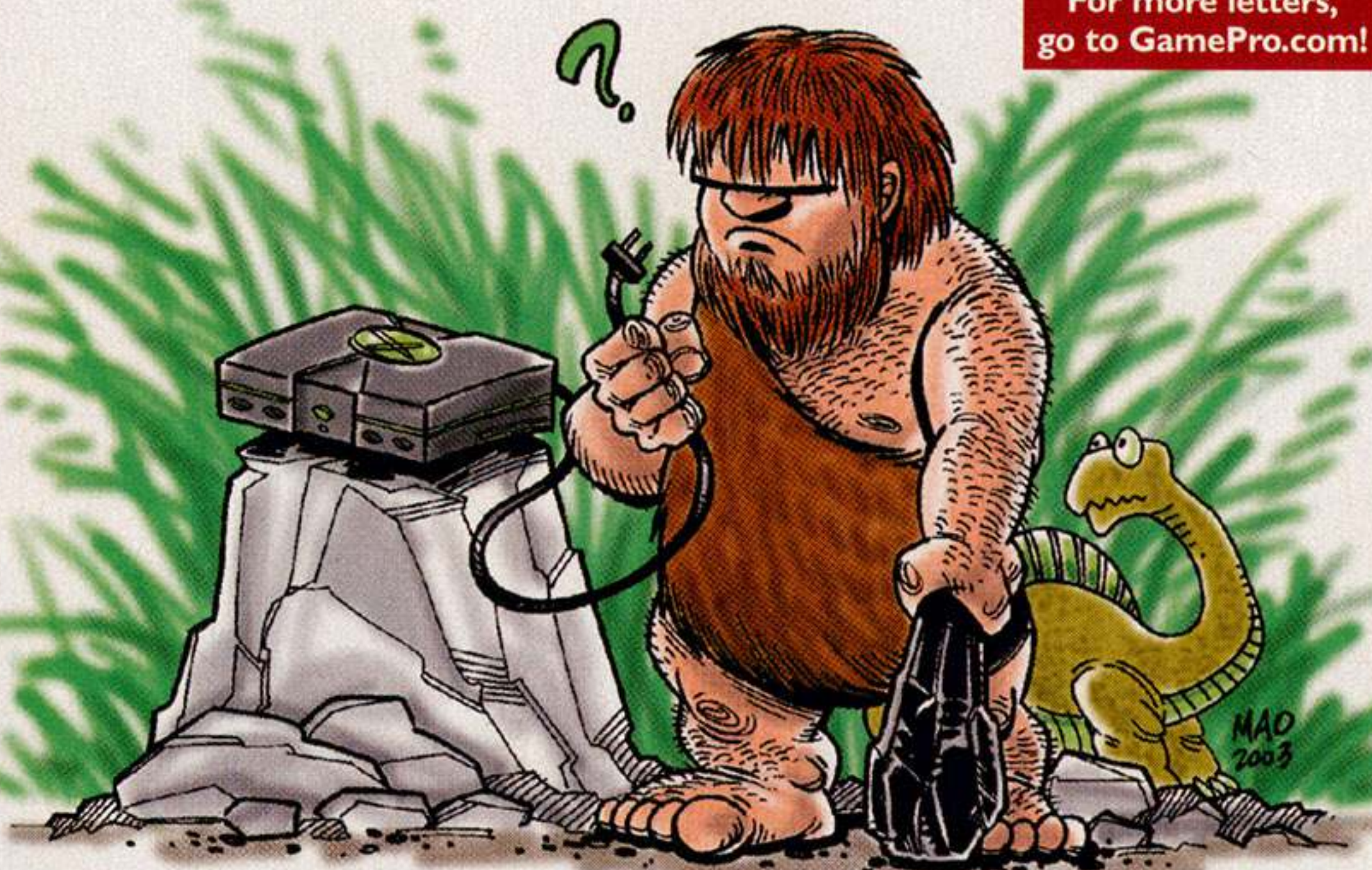
Ook Sharp!

Me Ook. Ook have system. Ook like system. Friend get Xbox. Ook no mind. But then friend say Ook system is ape poo-poo. Ook mad. What should Ook do?

► **Ook—Smelly Cage Place**

With friend like that, Ook no need enemy. Ook should hit friend on head with heavy object, like cage door or Xbox. When friend get all sleepy, Ook "borrow" Xbox. Friend learn valuable lesson if he ever wake up. But in quest to help friend be more open-minded, Ook should be careful not to actually open friend's mind.

For more letters, go to GamePro.com!



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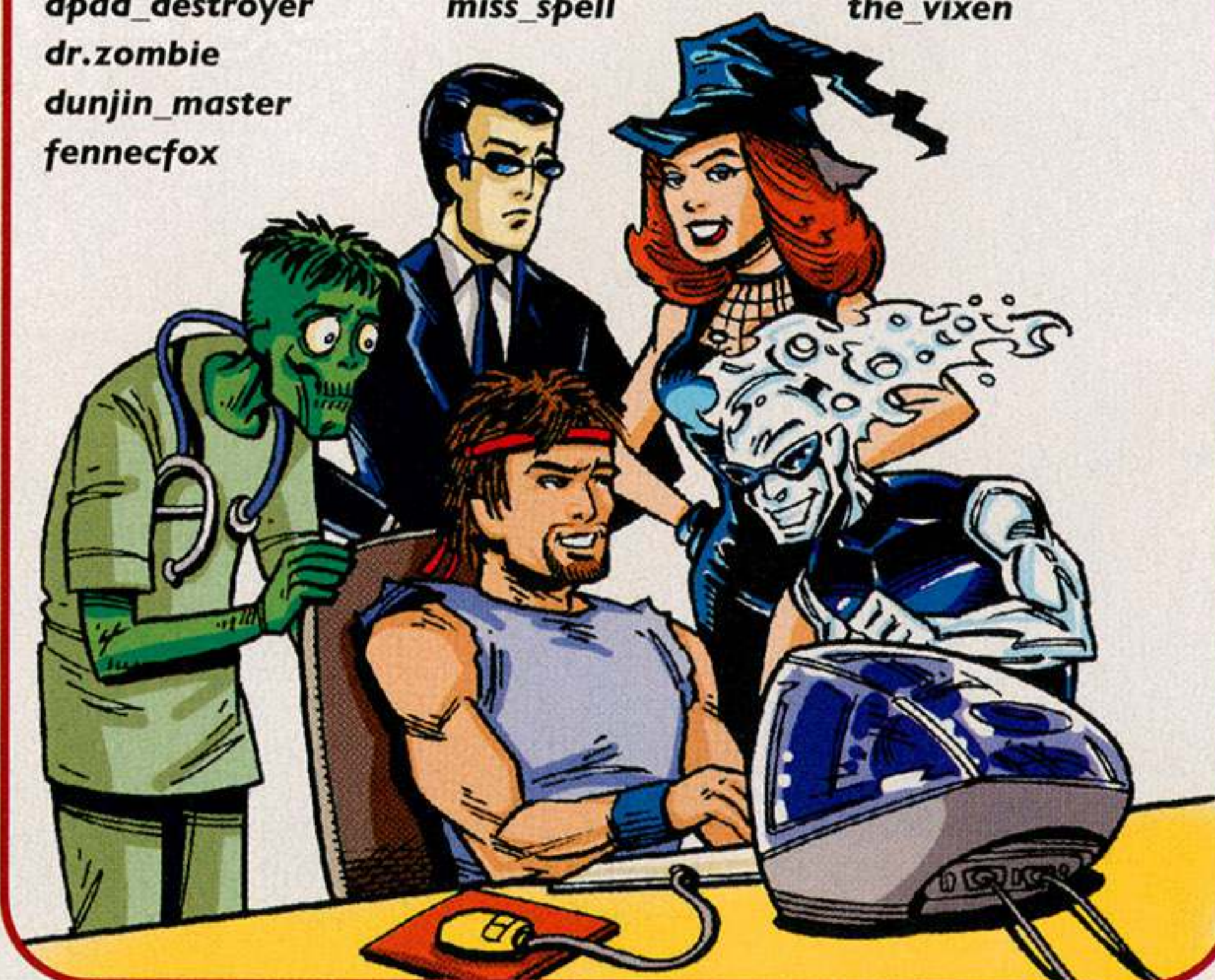
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PlayStation 2



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BY THE WATCH DOG



Atari can't hide the glitches of Enter the Matrix, and what to do if your copy of Splinter Cell for the PC is getting all weird on you in this month's Buyers Beware.

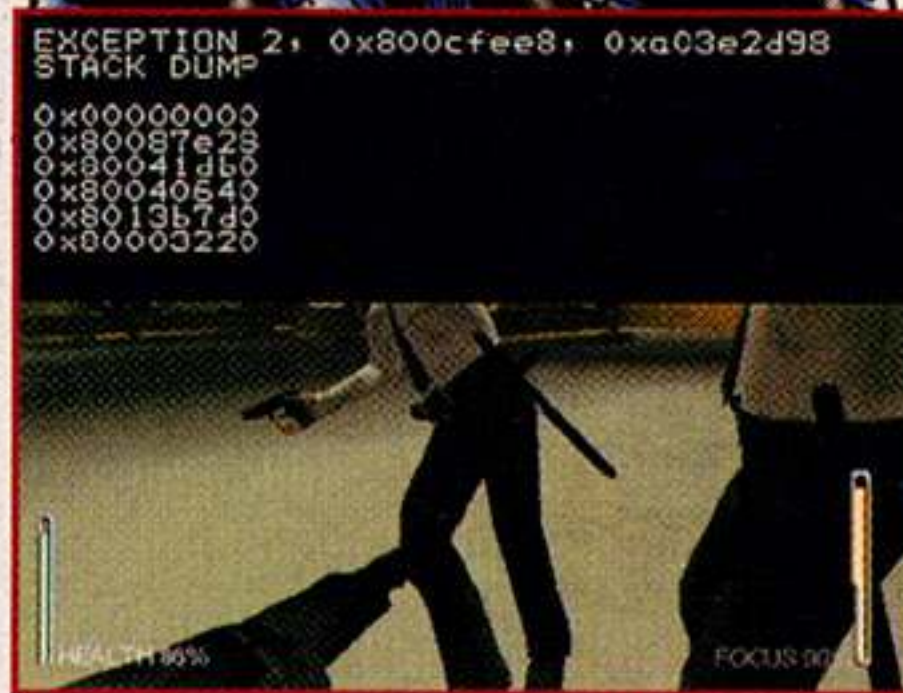
Q I experience a lock-up in Enter the Matrix for the PS2. It's on the mission where I am trying to rescue Axel from the plane. I slide down the ladders to get to the ground floor and begin walking to the plane. The screen goes to the loading screen (with the Matrix characters scrolling in the background), and after a few seconds, the screen goes black and locks up. I called Atari support, and the tech told me they have been getting calls on this but do not have a fix. Many people are experiencing this problem as this same issue is posted on many message boards. There are also other issues on other platforms. So far, I have swapped out the game with the retailer, started the game over, and tried it on a friend's PS2, and it still locks in the exact same place. Granted, there are people who do not have this issue, but there are many people who do. It seems that they have dropped the ball on this. Do you have any insight on these problems?

MARC PETRICK—VIA INTERNET

A We've been getting complaints and posts on GamePro.com's Buyers Beware forums about all console versions of Enter the Matrix, and among the many glitches reported are gaps in the animation, ridiculous amounts of clipping, freeze-up, and sound crashing and other audio problems. In fact, Four-Eyed Dragon experienced gameplay crashes while reviewing the GameCube version—and that was a retail, boxed copy. The most prevalent and irritating problem is lock-up, and it seems that on the PS2 version at least, the lock-ups are usually occurring at the Airport level.

We contacted Atari's technical support, and according to them, the only times they have heard about the game locking up have been in the Airport level when hack codes were used, in particular the All Guns code, and that after going into the memory manager, wiping out all saved game data, and starting over, the game will work fine. But what about readers who are having this and other problems with the game and have never used the codes in the first place? It could be that Atari is covering up for what is definitely a bug-ridden game, just as Rockstar Games tried to claim that cheat codes were causing all the glitches in Grand Theft Auto III and Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (see Buyers Beware in the May 2002 and March 2003 issues of GamePro). Atari's public relations would not comment on the issue despite several inquiries.

Why? Maybe Enter the Matrix was rushed so its release could coincide with *The Matrix: Reloaded*. Riding the wave of the film hype worked since Atari moved a million units in America and Europe in the span of a week. So while Atari is enjoying the success of huge sell-through numbers, gamers are stuck with a game that was clearly not tested thoroughly.



Four-Eyed Dragon found this unwelcome surprise while he was reviewing the GameCube version of Enter the Matrix—and he's not the only one.

Q I'm writing to tell you about major problems many people, myself included, are having with Splinter Cell. As soon as we try to load the game, we get a "General Protection Fault" error message, and no one at Ubi Soft seems to know how to fix this problem. I was looking forward to playing this game after reading your review, but now I'm sorry I ever heard of it because it has given me so much aggravation.

ADAM COHEN—NEW YORK

A We've been hearing about this error message, but without getting a diagnosis of your system's specifications, we can't pinpoint the problem, let alone offer any advice on how to fix it. Ubi Soft's website, however, does offer some tips that may help. According to Ubi Soft's technical support:

- Your desktop color depth *must* be set to True Color (32-bit).
- If you are playing on Windows XP, disable the Sticky Keys in Windows.
- If you have an nVidia-based video card (GeForce2, GeForce3, or GeForce4 family), make sure you have the 41.09 video drivers installed. You can get these drivers from nvidia.com.
- If you have an ATI-based video card (Radeon 8500/9000/9500/9700 family), make sure you have the Catalyst 2.5 (6218 for 2000/XP) or better drivers installed. You can get these drivers from ati.com.
- If you have a Matrox Parhelia video card, make sure you have the 1.02.00.042 drivers installed. You can get these drivers from matrox.com.
- If you have an AMD-based system, please make sure that you have the latest BIOS and chipset driver installed. Your motherboard's manufacturer is usually the best place to locate information about this.
- Make sure that AGP support is enabled in the DirectX Diagnostic tool (dxdiag).
- Make sure your computer meets the full minimum requirements for this game. The system requirements are listed at splintercell.com.
- Try editing the SplinterCellUser.ini file in the system folder of the game directory. Look for Resolution near the bottom of the file. Change 640x480 to 800x600 and save the file. Try the game again.
- As a last resort, try lowering the sound acceleration in the dxdiag tool. To do this, follow these directions:
 1. Click Start, then Run.
 2. Type dxdiag and click OK.
 3. Click on the Sound tab.
 4. Move the hardware slider down one notch, then close dxdiag and try Splinter Cell again.
 5. If the problem persists, keep lowering the slider bar in a trial-and-error fashion until the problem is fixed.

If you are using a supported 32 MB video card, we recommend playing with minimal specs (minimal resolution 640x480, minimal shadow resolution, and minimal shadow details) to avoid any crashes.

The Watch Dog adds: If none of these tips help, go to the Splinter Cell Technical Support page at http://forums.ubi.com/messages/overview.asp?page=1&name=scell_tech, post a topic titled "General Protection Fault," and make sure you provide your system specifications. Ubi Soft has been pretty good at reading the posts, using the specs to pinpoint the problem, and offering solutions.

SUBMISSIONS

At GamePro, listening is what we do best. When you have a problem with a product or feel you've been ripped off, we want to know. Write to:

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Nintendo: 800/255-3700
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HERE COMES THE SUN

BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND, THE FIRST GAME BOY ADVANCE TITLE FROM THE CREATOR OF THE METAL GEAR SERIES, MAY SUCCEED WHERE ALL OTHER GAMES HAVE FAILED: MAKING PASTY-WHITE GAMERS GET OUT IN THE SUN A LITTLE MORE OFTEN. *BY FENNEC FOX*

HIDEO KOJIMA, LIKE lots of successful video-game designers, has a problem: The popularity of his seminal work is keeping him from working on new ideas. "I've always been telling people that I want to make strange new games," he said in a recent interview with *GamePro*, "but there's the Metal Gear series to think about, and that ends up taking priority." Fortunately for his fans, the designer of the game that single-handedly invented the stealth genre had a little spare time after *Metal Gear Solid 2* wrapped up. Eighteen months later and voilà: the debut of *Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand*, a GBA action/RPG coming this September that isn't strange so much as like nothing seen before.

AND I SAY...

Boktai (short for *Bokura no Taiyo*, or "Our Sun" in Japanese) comes in a clear GBA cartridge that contains a small photoreceptor—a sensor that detects the strength of whatever sunlight is hitting it. The sensor works by measuring the amount of ultraviolet light—the invisible energy that makes your skin tan on hot days—that's hitting it directly. Django, the hero of the game, has a gun that's powered by the ultraviolet light picked up by the sensor. Pressing A while outdoors refills the gun's solar power gauge, but it works only if you are playing *Boktai* outside on a sunny day—it won't work if you're inside because typical indoor lighting doesn't emit ultraviolet energy.

Mind you, this doesn't mean that *Boktai* must be played outside at all times. You can collect solar capsules to refill your gun energy (as in any decent action/RPG), and the game is littered with solar banks that store solar power for use when it's dark outside. However, there's one area of *Boktai* that absolutely requires at least a little sunlight: the boss battles. To defeat an undead dungeon master, you must reduce his energy to nil and drag his coffin outside, where you can then use the sun to reduce the demon to ashes. The game is divided into several of these dungeons, each filled with puzzles, treasure, and enemies that Django can slink past, *Solid Snake*-style, if he's short on gunpower.

...IT'S ALL RIGHT

As Kojima puts it, the hardest part of getting *Boktai* to work isn't the sensor itself but all the fine-tuning it requires. "We're running field tests all across Japan and North America," he said. "With some places, like London with its fog and everything, there isn't enough sunlight in the day to make for much of a game, so we have to bump up the sensitivity a little based on the region." As a result, before you start a new game, you're asked to input the general region of the world you live in—if you're up in Seattle, then it will be easier to fill up the sensor's gauge than if you're down in Orlando.

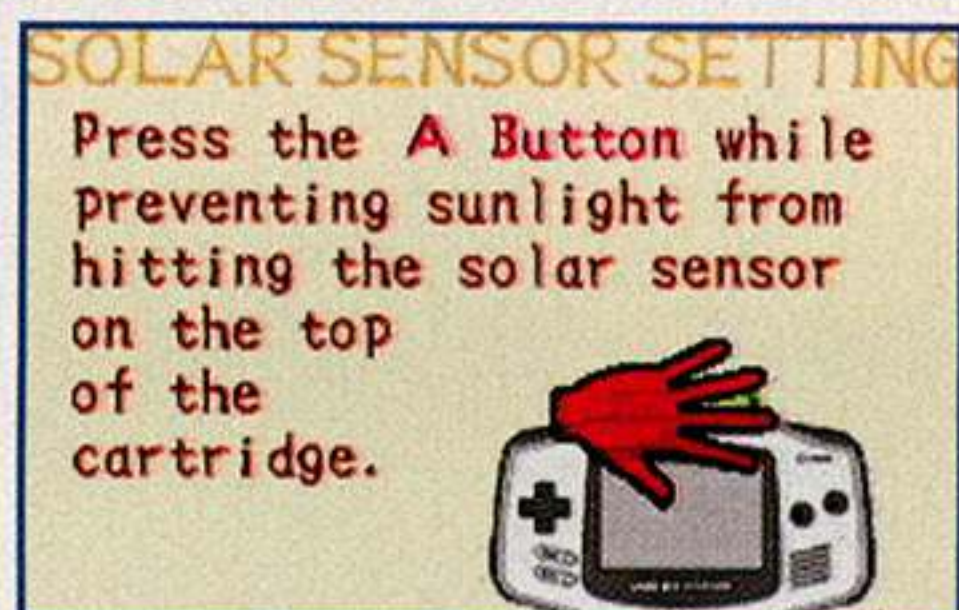
The best part about the preview version of *Boktai* is all the little extras that you'd never notice unless you treat the game's premise seriously. Some areas of *Boktai*'s world are only accessible during certain times or weather conditions, and the strategy you choose for conquering a dungeon can change dramatically if you have the sun on your side. Playing outside all day doesn't necessarily make things easier, though—some enemies hide from you when the sun's too bright, and your gun can overheat and stop working if you use it too much. Solution? Go play in the shade for a while. Clever—and, like the rest of *Boktai*, refreshingly innovative. **G**



Most normal enemies can be defeated (or at least stunned) by a shot or two from your Gun del Sol.



It's not enough to merely subdue dungeon bosses—you must drag them all the way outside to begin the solar-exorcism process.



If the sensor isn't working under direct sunlight, then head for the Options menu to recalibrate it.



If you're indoors and short on solar energy, you can withdraw juice from these solar banks.



Pile Driving in action. In order to defeat bosses, you must be playing in sunlight—indoor light won't do.



Boss battles take place within a Pile Driver, where you avoid attacks while dumping solar energy into the large receptors.



Boktai's solar sensor sits on the upper right-hand corner of the cartridge. (The retail version will encase the sensor inside a clear cart, so it won't be exposed like this.)



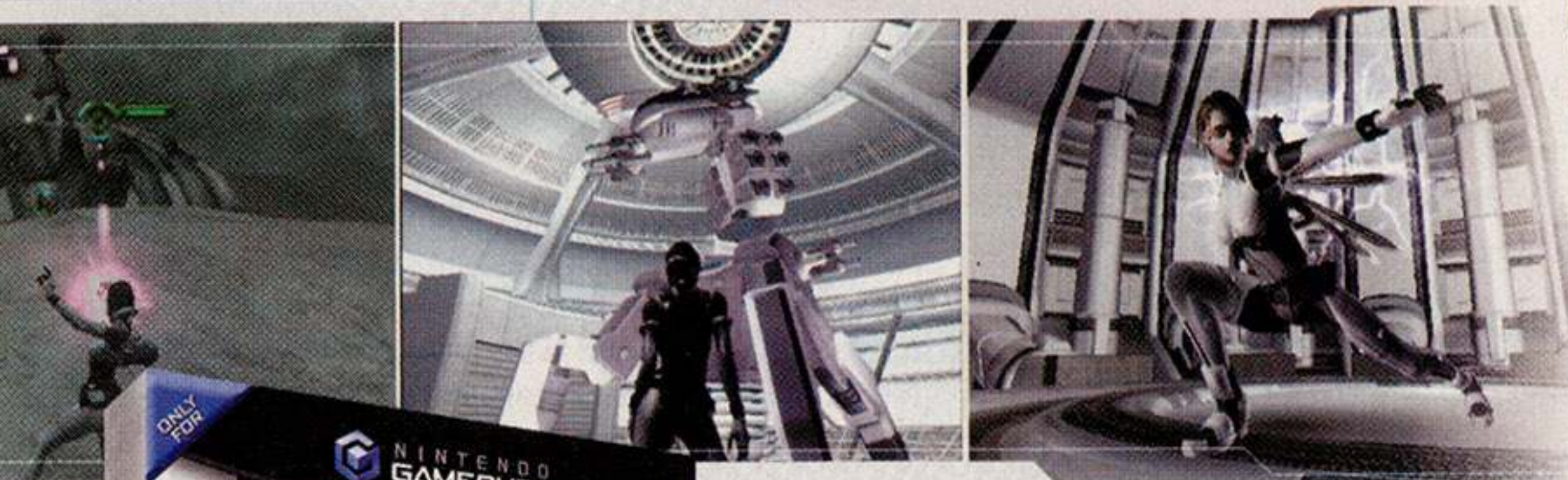
P.N.03

DANGER AROUND EVERY CURVE.

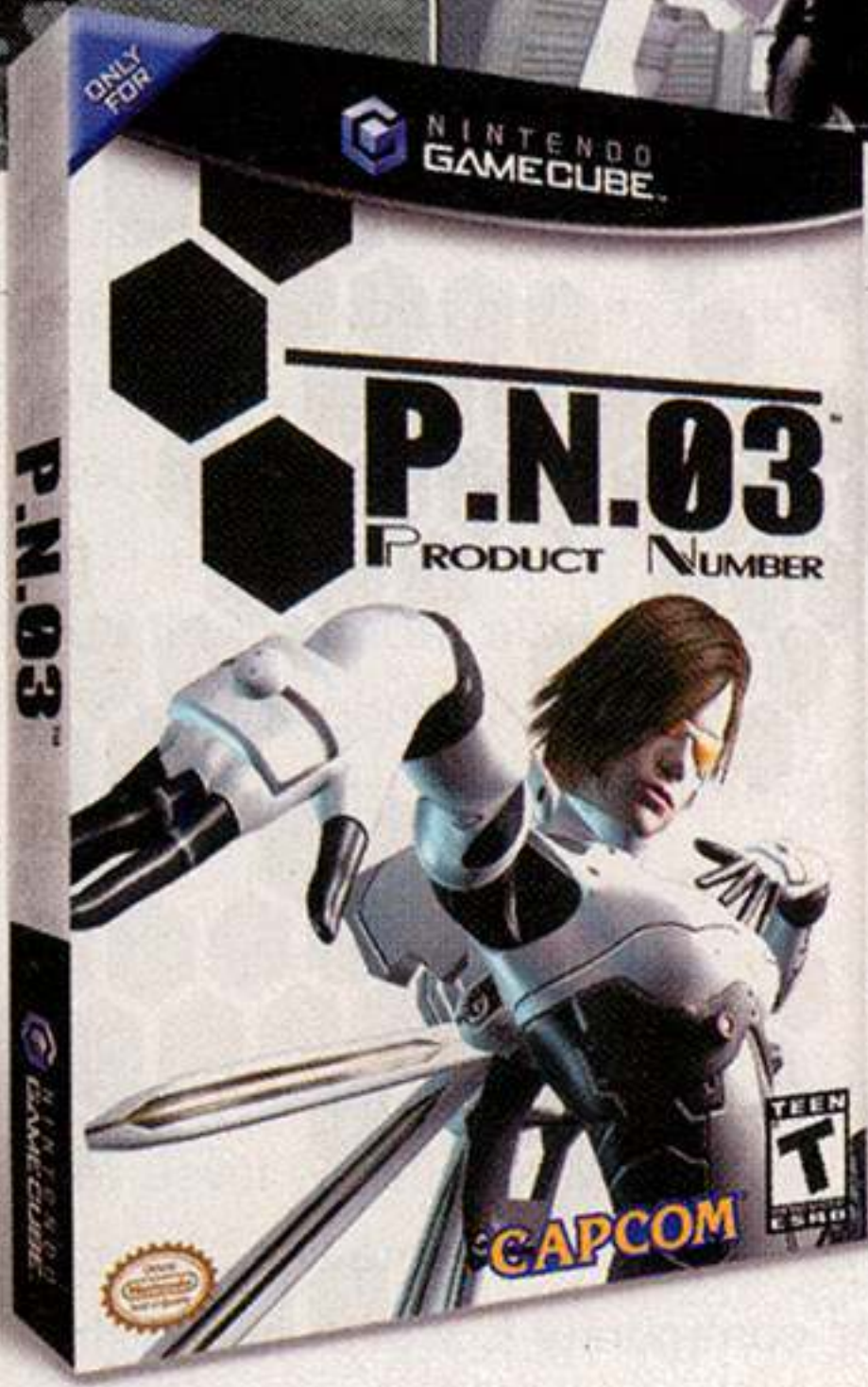
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YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ACTION LIKE THIS.

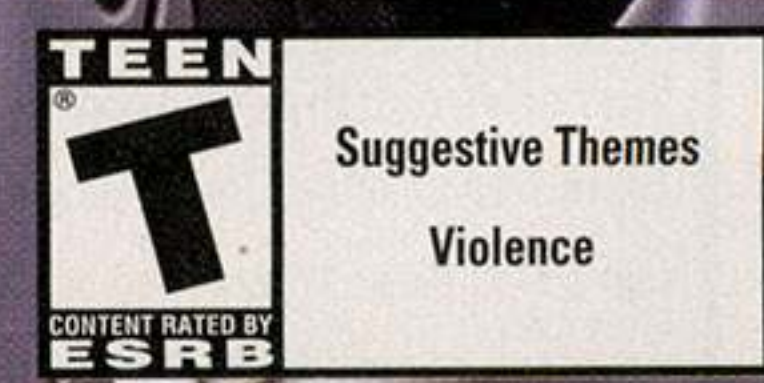
demolish robots, machines, mega weapons and transforming enemies with your bare hands



master stylish moves and powerful attacks for enhanced choreographed gameplay



BRADYGAMES Strategy Guide AVAILABLE



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WHY PAY TO PLAY?

ARE ONLINE GAMES' MONTHLY FEES BASED ON NEED OR GREED? *BY DUNJIN MASTER*

WITH MORE AND more gamers turning on to the MMO style of gameplay than ever before, the question comes up fairly often: Why do these games ask for monthly fees, and is it worth it to you to pay them?

OUT OF THE BOX

While MMO (massively multiplayer online) games are sold in stores just like your typical "box games," most of them require a monthly fee (typically \$10–\$15) above and beyond the original purchase price. A lot of gamers think that's highway robbery. They point to free services like Blizzard's Battle.net (see sidebar) and NCsoft's upcoming Guild Wars to prove their point—both provide persistent worlds, but neither requires a monthly fee for the privilege of playing.

Blizzard Vice President Bill Roper, however, says that running a massively multiplayer game like Blizzard's upcoming World of WarCraft costs about three times as much as running an online server like Battle.net because MMO games require constant maintenance, 24/7 customer support, and an ongoing dedicated development team. Any staff devoted to continued development of WOW is staff Blizzard can't assign to other projects, which also slows down Blizzard's overall development schedule.

Robert Garriott, CEO of NCsoft North America (and brother of Ultima Online creator Richard "Lord British" Garriott), puts it best. "Think of it as running a small city. Many of these games have hundreds of thousands of 'citizens.' NCsoft operates the 'government' that builds new roads, puts criminals in jail, and digs new caverns for citizens to explore and enjoy. All of that costs real money."

FIRE AND KEEP FIRING

What does that mean to you? Most importantly, games that ask for monthly fees have more money to put back into the players' experience, making MMO games unique in their ability to grow and evolve over the course of their lifetimes. If you compare EverQuest today with what it was like



World of WarCraft will be Blizzard's first subscription-based game.

BLIZZARD ON BOTH SIDES

Bill Roper finds himself in an interesting position—Blizzard runs the free-to-play Battle.net, but it will also be releasing World of WarCraft, which will run on a monthly subscription basis. Why go both ways?

Battle.net was originally just an online match-making service built for connecting players and setting up games on the players' own computers. Ever since Diablo II, it's been a lot more server-intensive, but they've kept it free. With the release of World of WarCraft, Blizzard has decided that it can't shoulder that type of burden, so WOW will be subscription based.


three years ago, you'd think you were looking at two completely different games. According to Scott McDaniel, Sony Online's VP of Marketing and PR, "Offline and session-based games are the epitome of 'fire and forget, move on to the sequel.'" That means that when you're paying monthly fees to play a game, you can expect more involvement from the developer, unlike most games whose developers typically move on to the next project after the game ships.

CHEAPER THAN A MOVIE

Now for some money talk—the big argument is that pay-to-play makes gaming more expensive.

Roper and Garriott both agree that this isn't so. "The dedicated box game player purchases two and a half box games per month, and pays about \$100 per month for the privilege. This adds up to about \$1200 per year for an active gamer," says Garriott, who adds, "The average online customer pays \$10–\$15 per month, or \$150 per year for each game—a much cheaper purchase on a cost per hour of enjoyment basis than a typical box game." Roper points out that a night at the movies can run upwards of \$25 for two hours' entertainment, while \$15 buys you a whole month of MMO entertainment, which is there whenever you want to play. Besides, most MMOs include at least a month of free gameplay as part of the purchase price, and all people interviewed for this article feel you have nothing to lose by trying it out.

TRY IT AND SEE

So why pay to play? The bottom line is that you need to get \$15 per month of enjoyment from a game for it to truly be worthwhile. Imagine if, for an additional fee, you could get all-new levels for Metal Gear Solid every month or play along with thousands of other players in a game like Morrowind. For a lot of people, that extra developer attention and player community is worth its weight in monthly fees. 



After a rocky start on the PS2, EverQuest Online Adventures is about to get an expansion. Apparently, console gamers aren't completely adverse to monthly fees.

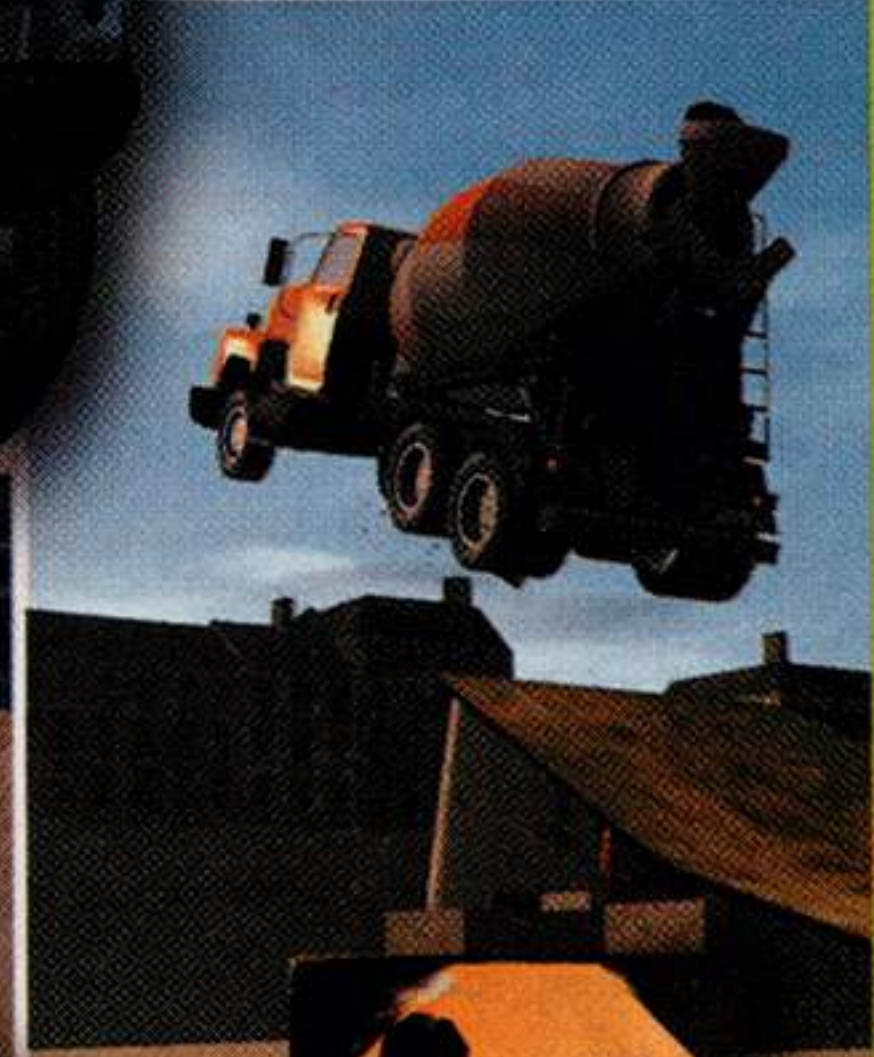
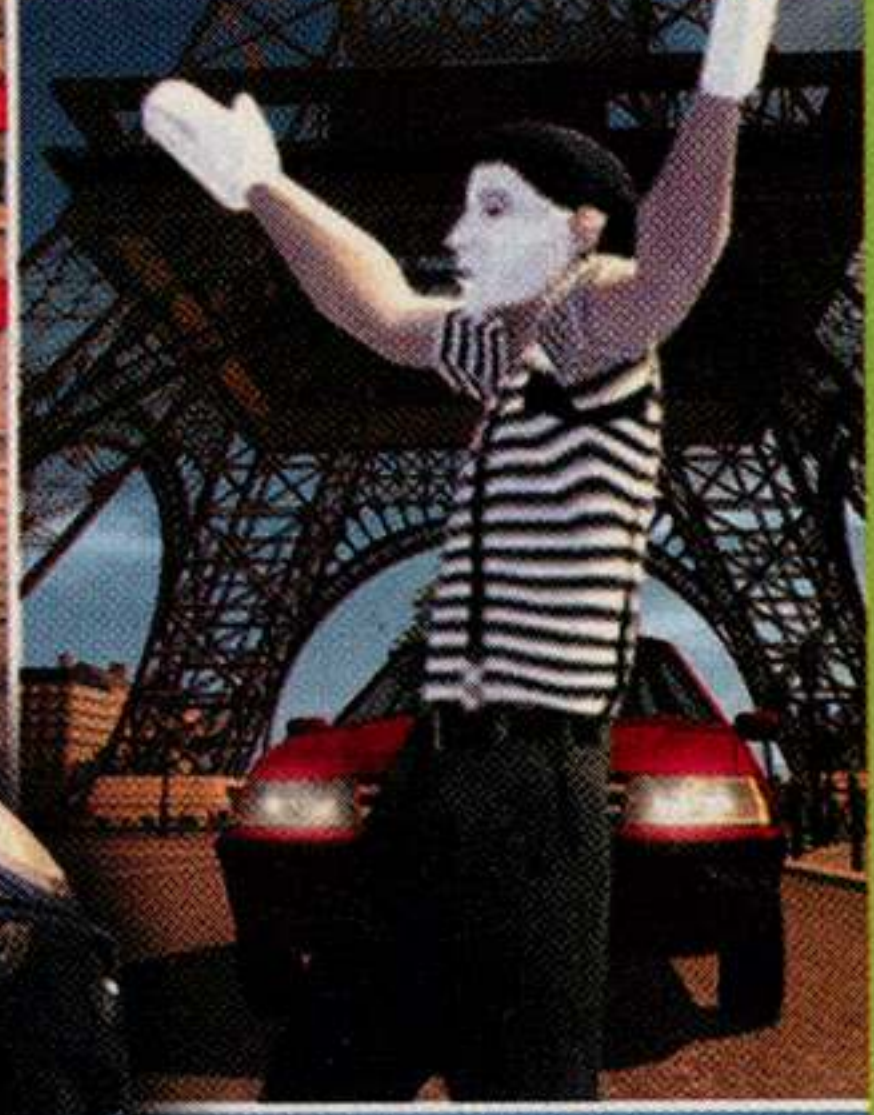


EverQuest II is a huge leap past the original EverQuest, but it's nothing compared to the way it could be three years after launch.



While all of its other titles in development will be pay-to-play, NCsoft's Guild Wars will not have a monthly fee. Will Guild Wars players enjoy the same full support other MMO gamers expect?

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MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

www.xbox.com/midtownmadness3



XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

SONY UNVEILS PSX

Multifunction set-top box powered by PS2 core

At an industry press conference held in Tokyo in late May, Sony Vice President Ken Kutaragi unveiled the PSX, a new consumer electronics device that combines DVD and digital video recording facilities with the ability to play PlayStation 2 games. The system will be launched in Japan by the end of the year with a U.S. and Europe release targeted for 2004.

The PSX, as Kutaragi was quick to point out in his statements, is not just a game system but instead a brand-new fusion of game technology and consumer electronics. The unit is built around PlayStation 2 hardware and is fully compatible with all PlayStation and PS2 titles. In addition, though, it also works as a set-top box with a broadcast satellite tuner and the ability to record to DVD and the PSX's 120 GB internal hard drive. The slot-insertion system (compared to the PS2's disc tray) is compatible with all current recordable DVD formats, and the unit also has input jacks for Memory Stick storage, Ethernet cables, and USB 2.0 devices. "Our idea here was to see how much of a home appliance we could create with the PS2's technology," Kutaragi said. "In a way, it's also a presentation of how much digital appliances can change when you use the [PS2's] engine."

Unlike the PlayStation and PS2, the PSX will be distributed by Sony itself, not by Sony Computer Entertainment. Development is being handled by the company's Broadband Network Division, the new department Kutaragi founded last March. "Before we released the PS2, we were asked, 'Why is DVD playback necessary for a game system?'" Kutaragi commented. "As we see now, the result was that the PS2 became the trigger for the widespread popularity of the DVD. I believe we can look forward to this becoming a similar trigger."



Just like the PS2 before it, the milky-white PSX can be placed horizontally or vertically.

VIOLENT GAME BAN UNCONSTITUTIONAL

In a ruling published in June, the U.S. Court of Appeals decided that video games are protected as free speech by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In doing so, the court ruled that a St. Louis, Missouri law banning minors from accessing violent games is unconstitutional. The original ordinance, enacted by the St. Louis city council in 2000, required children under 17 years old to get parental permission before buying M-rated console games or playing red-label coin-ops.

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals wrote that if the First Amendment could "shield the painting of Jackson Pollock, music of Arnold Schoenberg, or Jabberwocky verse of Lewis Carroll," there was "no reason why the pictures, graphic design, concept art, sounds, music, stories, and narrative present in video games are not entitled to similar protection."

The appellate court also rejected the St. Louis side's argument that video games should be more strictly regulated because of the effect they may have on children. "[The idea that] there is a strong likelihood that minors who play violent video games will suffer a deleterious effect on their psychological health is simply unsupported in the record," the court wrote. "The government cannot silence protected speech by wrapping itself in the cloak of parental authority."

HOT AT THE ARCADES

SVC Chaos: SNK vs. Capcom

Developed by SNK • Published by Playmore • Available now

When Capcom and SNK agreed to create crossover fighting games, each company was supposed to release its own version of the ultimate 2D rivalry. Unfortunately, SNK has spent the last few years restructuring, but it's finally ready to hold up its end of the bargain. Chaos will include characters not available in Capcom's versions like Hugo, Earthquake, Tabasa, and Mr. Karate. Currently, 24 characters are known, but it looks like more will be announced as the release date approaches. Using four buttons, players will duke it out in a one-on-one format without specialized grooves or teams of ratio-powered characters.

SVC Chaos is being made for the Neo-Geo system, which ensures the classic SNK look and feel, but sadly prevents the graphics from comparing to those of newer fighters like Guilty Gear XX. However, fighting-game fanatics care more about complex fight systems than fancy visuals. SVC Chaos is set for release this summer in Japan with a U.S. release soon after. Be excited.—Simon Limon



3DO Goes Bankrupt

The 3DO Company announced that it has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court of Northern California. The filing, although not immediately spelling the end of the storied software (and occasionally hardware) publisher, is an admission of the fact that the company is unable to continue as a going concern. Although the company will continue to operate, unofficial reports indicate that much of the outfit's development staff has already been laid off, and 3DO's stock was removed from trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market on June 9.

"This filing gives us more time to complete transactions in the interest of our stakeholders," said 3DO Chairman and founder Trip Hawkins in a release. "While we hope that this news will generate additional new opportunities, at this point we are focused on pursuing either the sale of the entire company or the sale of its assets." Hawkins has had to loan money to his own company twice in the last nine months to keep it afloat.

Originally founded in 1993, 3DO was the force behind the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer, one of the first CD-based standalone game systems when it was released worldwide in 1994. Although it got off to a hot start, the system's high price, along with stiff competition from the PlayStation and Sega Saturn, spelled its early doom three years later. After dropping hardware, 3DO went on to become a prolific third-party developer.

3DO's financial troubles began in early 2001, when the company's long-running Army Men franchise began to falter and its developers were caught unaware by the next generation of game consoles. The game lineup they showed at this year's E3 show, including Street Racing Syndicate, Jacked, and The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, was part of an effort to use longer production times and create higher-quality games.

Metallica: The Game

Vivendi Universal has announced an agreement with world-famous metal band Metallica. The exclusive multiyear deal will spawn a multiplatform vehicular combat game with music, voices, and "inspiration" from the folks behind the band. VU isn't revealing any info on the game (not even a title) but promises that Metallica will provide voice-overs, background music, and other exclusive content to the project. Said content includes an original song for the game along with a music video that includes bits from the title.

GAMEPRO Labs

Auravision EluminX Illuminated Keyboard

Rating: 4.0

How do you make a keyboard cool? Just like you make PC cases and license plate frames cool: lights! The EluminX features translucent backlit keys that glow in your choice of colors; supposedly it helps ease eye-strain while working (or gaming) in dark environments, but there's also an undeniable geek-chic factor to having an input device that looks like something Tron would use. Unfortunately, there's a slightly slippery feel to the keys, which respond to each keystroke with a very audible click, and you'll wish its gimmick was brighter. The super-slim profile and lack of angling feet arguably make it better suited for lap use than desktop. Since most console players won't be doing heavy-duty typing anyway, you can overlook its faults in the name of cool, even if it is pricey. Bottom line, if your friends see you typing with this on your PS2 (remember to buy the USB adapter), they'll be impressed.—*Dan Elektro*

Price: \$99.99. Contact: Auravision, 800/368-6469, eluminx.com



Pelican Chameleon

Rating: 4.0

If you don't follow the light-up path to coolness, then your alternate route is clear... literally. Making stuff see-through has a time-honored history, and Pelican's latest throws in colored circuit boards to give the Chameleon that much more pizzazz. The unit is noticeably smaller (and glossier/slipperier) than the standard Dual Shock and features split shoulder buttons—L1 and R1 are where you'd expect them to be, while L2 and R2 sit on a shelf on the back of the controller. This is one of those love-it-or-hate-it things, but at least you can find out which camp you're in before you buy it—the clever packaging lets you hold the controller in playing position without removing it. The lightweight Chameleon responds well and it's a good value, but it's definitely for those with small hands.—*Dan Elektro*

Price: \$14.95. Contact: Pelican, 323/234-9911, pelicanacc.com



Best-Selling Video Game Titles: May 2003

TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
1 Enter the Matrix	PlayStation 2	Atari
2 Enter the Matrix	Xbox	Atari
3 NBA Street Vol. 2	PlayStation 2	EA Sports Big
4 Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	Xbox	Activision
5 Brute Force	Xbox	Microsoft
6 Pokémon Ruby	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
7 Pokémon Sapphire	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
8 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	PlayStation 2	Ubi Soft
9 Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel	Game Boy Advance	Konami
10 Midnight Club II	PlayStation 2	Rockstar

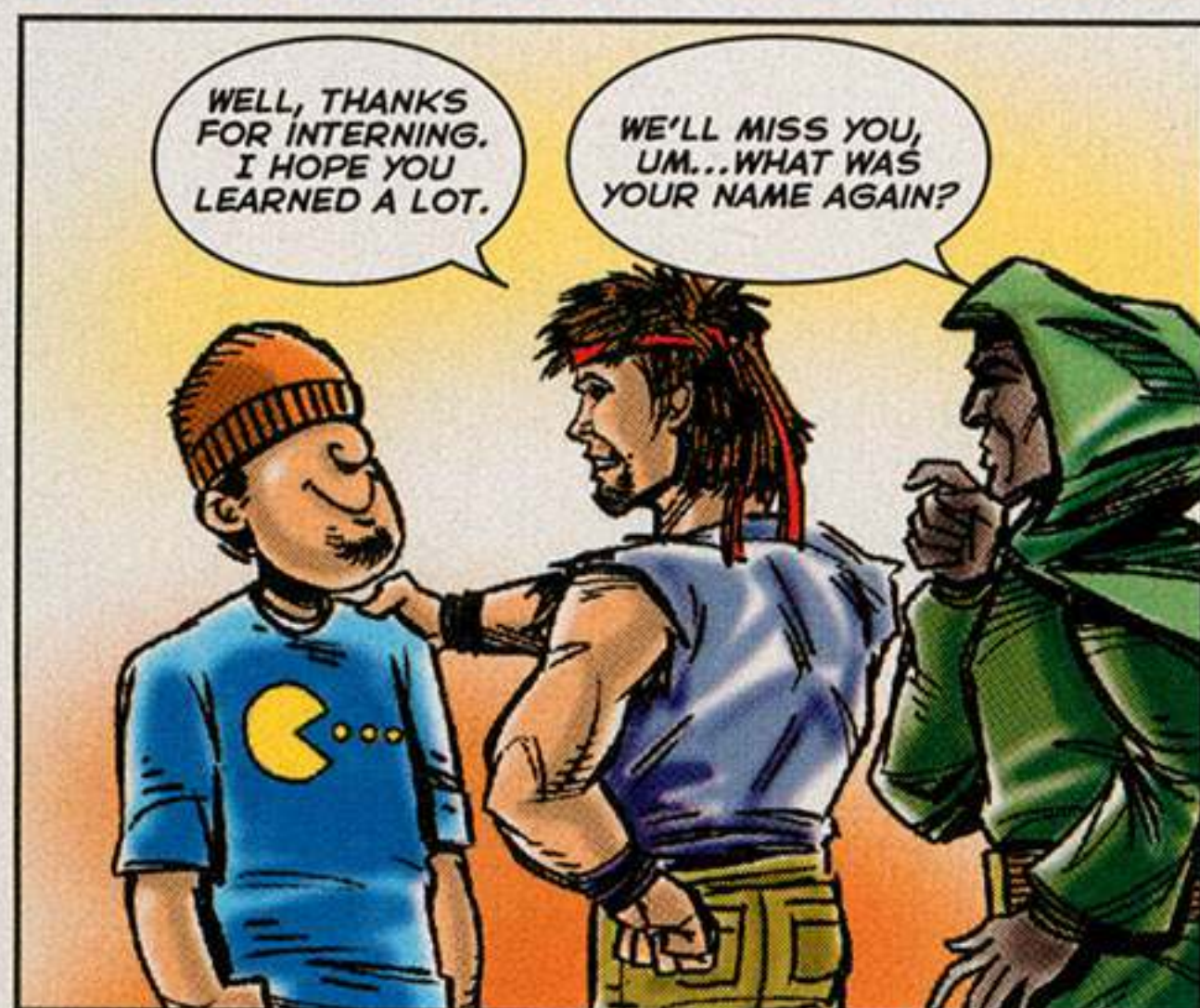
Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld

static

If-Life 2...Half-Life 2...If you're on Xbox Live, be aware that the person with the gamertag "DanElektro" is not the guy from the magazine, even though he says he is. Word has it he sucks, and he's obnoxious, too. Wait...how can you tell the real one from the fake one again? • Speaking of Xbox Live, check out gamertagdatabase.com to find people on Microsoft's gaming network in your neighborhood, around your age, with the same games, with similar play styles, and more. It's a very cool and completely independent resource. • On the director's cut of Sonic Adventure, director Takashi Iizuka reveals that Big The Cat was purposely created to contrast the fast-paced gameplay. Fennec Fox always thought he was purposely created to make people stop playing. • One of our editors was shopping at a popular nationwide retailer and watched in horror as a family bought five Game Boy Advance games—all strictly on the licenses. Whatever the kids called out, mom bought—but the kids called out only games based on popular movie and toy franchises, without so much as looking at the back of the box. What's worse, awesome games like Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgame\$ and Advance Wars were in stock and on sale, but totally ignored. If lackluster licensing deals are really what's driving the handheld market, the industry is going to be in serious trouble. • Acclaim has officially stated that it is limiting its GameCube support. Is this a sign that the GameCube or Acclaim is in trouble? Or both? Probably both. Oh well, don't sweat it—Acclaim isn't the only company being cautious about the 'Cube; it's just the only company brave enough to talk about it. • Pelican's got a new guarantee—if one of its products damages your console, the company will replace it for free. Cool to see someone taking a stand for their stuff after years of InterAct's sketchy products. • Yes, Red Dead Revolver is unfortunately still cancelled. We'll keep you posted. • Champions of Norrath...Champions of Norrath...Ch

HIDDEN CHARACTERS

"The Intern-net" Part 3



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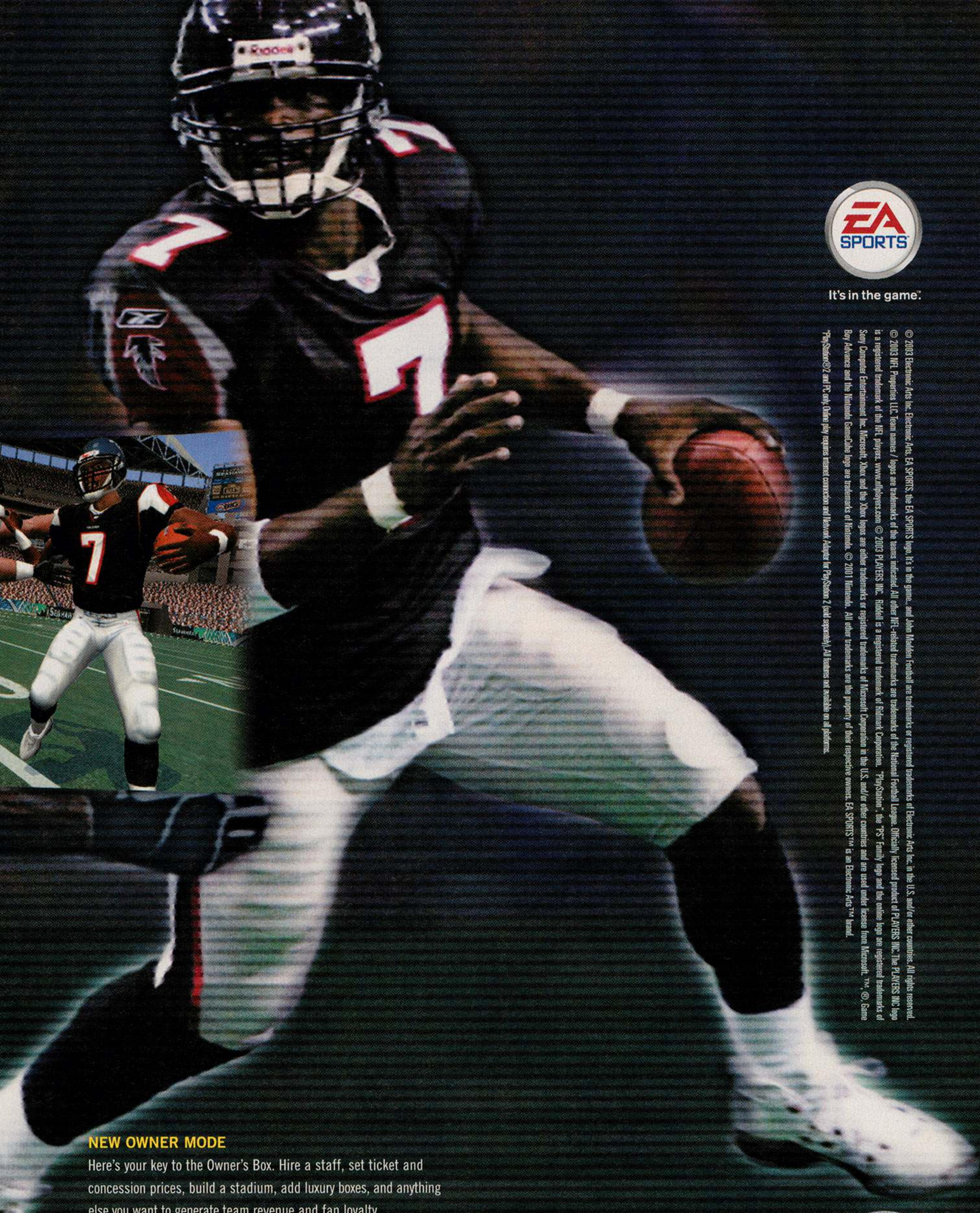
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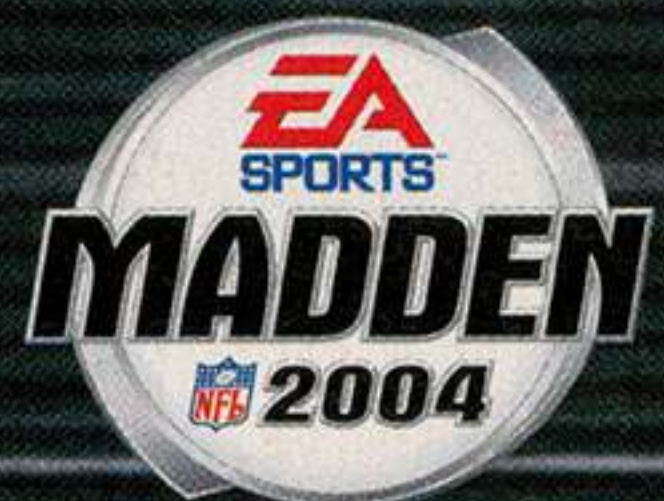
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Union of the Snake

**Twin Snakes:
Exclusive
Hands-On Preview**

Solid Snake bites twice—once in *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* for the GameCube, and again in *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* for the PlayStation 2. *GamePro* went undercover and got the latest intel from the men behind the Metal. By Major Mike

PRIOR TO THE Electronic Entertainment Expo, there was buzz aplenty regarding the next Metal Gear installment as trailers for upcoming titles in the series had become show events since the first one debuted in 1997. This year was no different as audiences packed Konami's booth yet again for a glimpse of Solid Snake's upcoming adventure, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater for the PlayStation 2. However, Konami had a second card up its sleeve: Solid Snake would make a second appearance—this one on the GameCube under the tagline *The Twin Snakes*. Unlike Snake Eater, however, *Twin Snakes* will be a remake of the first Metal Gear Solid that appeared on the PlayStation in 1998 but with better graphics and new surprises.

For the uninitiated, Metal Gear Solid was a huge hit—not entirely because it was the first Gear in eight years, but also because of its innovative gameplay. Released in an era when action games were a dime a dozen, MGS did a rare thing: It emphasized the art of sneaking rather than fighting and created an action sub-genre whose influence is apparent in popular contemporary games such as Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell*.

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The Power of Two

Konami Producer Hideo Kojima always wanted to work with Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto but never had the opportunity. Unfortunately, the producer was knee-deep in Snake Eater when Nintendo approached with a proposal for a Solid Snake adventure on the GameCube. Rather than pass up the opportunity, Kojima was confident a quality GameCube Metal Gear title could happen—namely, by remaking Metal Gear Solid. The next hurdle was finding a developer.

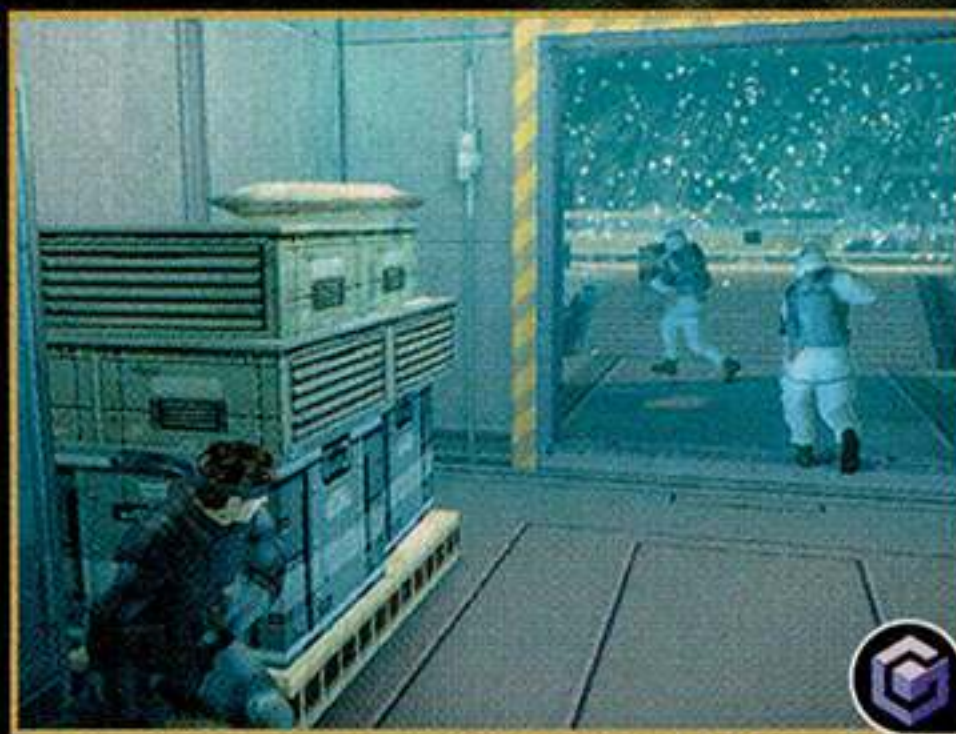
"When we decided to develop *Twin Snakes*, we had to look for a development team that had experience on the GameCube," says Kojima. "We ended up not finding such a team in Japan. Shigeru Miyamoto recommended Silicon Knights (developer of *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*) to us." Aside from Miyamoto's recommendation, there were other factors in selecting the Canada-based developer. "There is really no point for the same staff five years later to do a simple remake," says Kojima. "That's why I decided to go with Knights—the introduction of new blood into the development of *Twin Snakes*."

"No comment." —Hideo Kojima

"Game remakes definitely have their place, and one of my favorite horror films is John Carpenter's *The Thing*," says Silicon Knights President Denis Dyack. "The movie was able to keep the spirit of the original but take it so much further, which is the same goal as this collaborative project." Akin to the GameCube remake of the original *Resident Evil*, *Twin Snakes* retains the skeletal story of its source material—as Solid Snake, you must thwart terrorists who possess nuclear weapons at a remote Alaskan base—but adds a host of new features (see sidebar, "Twin Snakes: Hands-On Impressions"). Obvious graphical improvements aside, *Twin Snakes* uses the play engine from *Sons of Liberty*, meaning Snake can dangle from railings; hide subdued guards in lockers; roll while running and knock over enemies like bowling pins; and switch to first-person view on the fly. Conversely, the A.I.'s been given an I.Q. boost



Can you find Solid Snake in this screen?



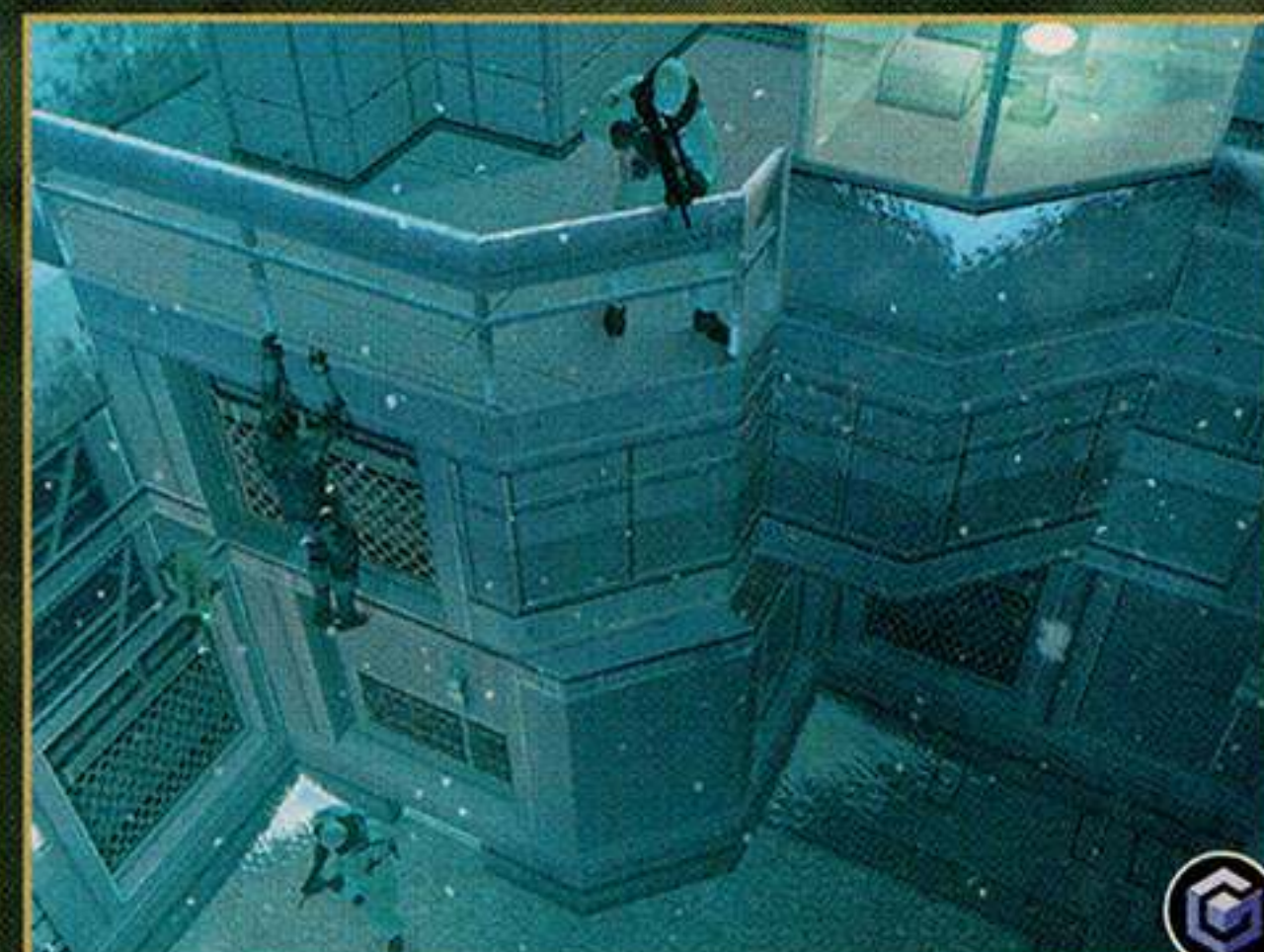
"There are many games that I would like to see remade," says Denis Dyack, "but if I were to choose only one, it would probably be *Kid Icarus*."



Solid Snake and Revolver Ocelot square off in one of *Twin Snakes*' many cinematic scenes. "The game would just not be the same without its excellent story and cinematics," says Denis Dyack. "That's why they are getting such attention."



"[*Twin Snakes*] seemed like the perfect project for the GameCube," says Denis Dyack. "I believe that you will start to see more collaboration like this in the future."



Not only can you dangle from ledges to avoid detection, but you can also instantly knock out enemy guards by dropping on top of them.

Twin Snakes: Hands-On Impressions



Vets of the PlayStation Metal Gear Solid games should have no problem adapting to the game's engine on the GameCube controller as the multiple functions and character abilities quickly become second nature. The graphical improvements are a plus as is the enemy A.I., and the subtle effects (such as the bullet-time effect that occurs when you're fired at while submerged) are cool touches. While *Twin Snakes* doesn't feel like a brand-new experience (at least not from the first two areas for a seasoned Snake head who played the original version repeatedly), the new play techniques add flair and style to an already familiar game. It should be interesting to see how the game fares as a complete whole.

as guards follow trails of blood and footsteps in the snow, and occasionally check in with each other via radio. With any break in the communication chain, alert status goes up a notch and reinforcements are called to the scene. Another key facet of the original Metal Gear Solid—in-game cinema sequences—were completely redone by popular Japanese film director Ryuhei Kitamura (*Versus*, *Azumi*) for *Twin Snakes*.

Snake Eat...Snake?

As Silicon Knights remixes the past, Konami's team is focused on the franchise's future. Slated for an early 2004 release on the PlayStation 2, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater is a large departure from previous Snake adventures. For starters, the game takes place during the 1960s Cold War (prequel!) in thick

CONTINUED ►

jungle: Two-thirds takes place outdoors—in caves, waterfalls, and mountains—and the remaining one-third in buildings. “Since Snake Eater is the second Metal Gear Solid game for the PlayStation 2 [third, if you count Substance], we had to do something drastic to surprise everyone,” says Kojima. “We also knew that the jungle is what we the developers of MGS, fans, and people in the industry wanted.”

Snake Eater’s setting will play a key role in the game—not only visually, but also in terms of gameplay. “In real espionage missions, the agent never gets to start right outside the enemy base,” says Kojima. “In reality, they land a few hundred miles away in a country right next to the country where the target is. In the jungle, you have to fight not only human enemies, but also the landscape and the weather.” Working within Eater’s setting will be a “survival system.” Being in the great outdoors, Snake can’t raid the local kitchen for nourishment or get rations out of a nearby locker; instead, he must eat animals and reptiles, and carefully manage his food supply—otherwise it could rot.

The Lay of the Land

Of course, it wouldn’t be Metal Gear without stealth, and Snake Eater promises the most challenging use of the technique yet. How challenging? There will be no radar in the upper-right corner of the screen; seemingly innocuous dry leaves and water puddles could alert guards as Snake tries to sneak up on them; various booby traps provide nasty surprises for careless players; and the uneven terrain forces players to be more cautious when moving. Then there are adverse weather conditions, including rain, heat, and



One of Snake’s new abilities: dangling by one hand while using a weapon in the other

the occasional brush fire. Despite the usual secrecy regarding the project, additional details and rumors have slithered out of the development compound. Characters could fracture limbs by falling from high places (a real hazard as tall trees and cliffs are prime sniper nests), and an online component in the form of different-colored camouflage patterns may be implemented.

As for the other burning question among fans: Will Snake be the sole playable character in the game? “The main character will remain the same throughout Snake Eater,” Kojima says. “Although you don’t switch characters midway through the game [as was the case with Sons of Liberty], there will be something to replace that this time around, and I don’t want to ruin the surprise.” Sounds familiar.

“Snakes...Why Did It Have To Be Snakes?”

With the release of Substance last year, Twin Snakes this fall, and Snake Eater in early 2004, that’s a lot of Snake to digest. “I do not intend to mass-produce side stories or spin-offs of MGS,” Kojima says. “The temptation from a business standpoint is there, but releasing too many titles weakens the brand.” If you ask any Metal Gear fan, however, there’s probably no such thing as “too much Snake.”



A hunting knife will be one of the weapons in Snake’s arsenal—not only will this “tool” allow him to silently kill enemy soldiers, but it’s also handy for taking down other foes—such as bees.



“In the jungle,” says Hideo Kojima, “you have to fight not only human enemies, but also the landscape and the weather.”



Using the jungle’s surroundings will be key to Snake’s survival. Here, Snake climbs a tree in order to get a better view of an oncoming patrol.



Guns aren’t just for shooting enemies—you can also shoot fish (one of the four important jungle food groups).



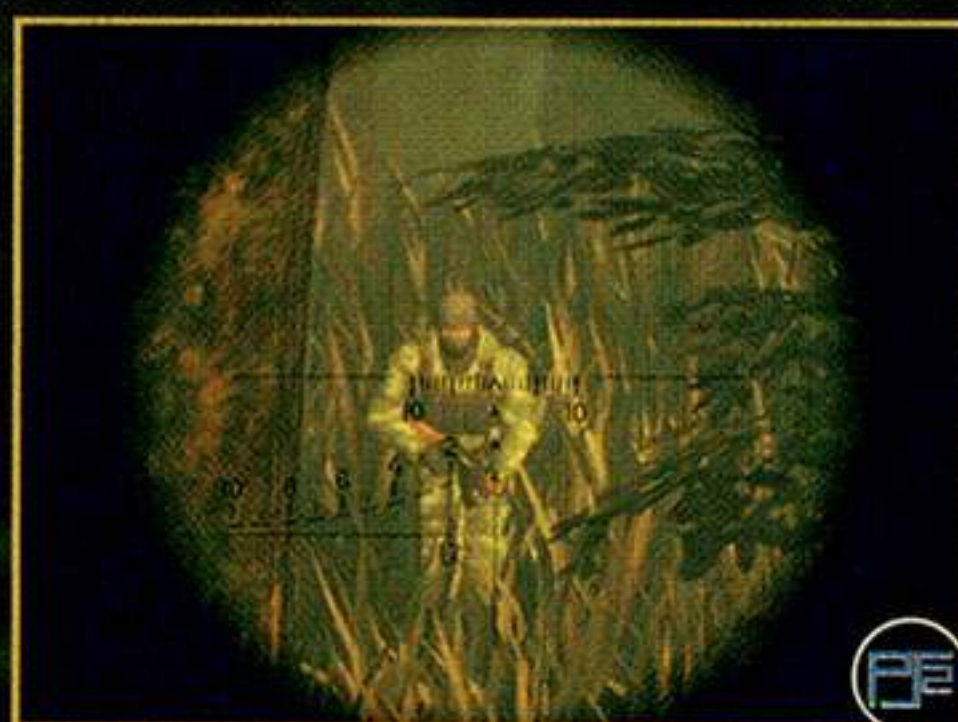
Snake Eater takes place during the Cold War, an era Kojima calls “an espionage paradise.”



Snake’s brand-new look: jungle fatigues, face paint, and bigger guns



No matter how much you use stealth, sooner or later, you must fight



Another weapon in Snake’s arsenal—the always-handy sniper rifle



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LUCKY XIII



A FRENCH COMIC, A UNIQUE VISUAL HOOK, AND A PRESIDENTIAL CONSPIRACY ALL ADD UP TO XIII, UBI SOFT'S STYLISH, CEL-SHADED SHOOTER. WILL IT BE A PRIME NUMBER FOR GAMERS? BY DAN ELEKTRO

Your mouth tastes like sand.

Your head won't stop throbbing. You've lost a lot of blood, and you don't have much hope of finding any of it. There's a tattoo on your chest and a key in your pocket—neither of which make any sense. You don't know where you are. You don't know who you are. And the first person you see upon waking up—the buxom lifeguard who apparently kept you in the land of the living—just collapsed in a hail of gunfire and a pool of blood.

Life's a beach, and you're about to die.

So begins your cryptic adventure in Ubi Soft's arresting new first-person shooter, XIII, which is based on the smash-hit comic book. Players awake on a New England beach armed only with severe amnesia but soon unravel a vast conspiracy involving the military, secret agents, and the assassination of the President of the United States. What's more, it's presented with a unique visual twist that could make it the most authentic comic-to-game translation ever.

GÉNÉRATION 13?

Mind you, XIII is a "smash-hit comic book" only if you happen to live in Europe. Writer Jean van Hamme and artist William Vance have created over 14 volumes of XIII in France, but with no English translation for the U.S. market yet, most Americans have never heard of it, let alone read it.

"We never thought the obscurity of the comic in the U.S. posed a challenge," says the game's producer, Julien Bares. "We think that XIII appeals to American gamers because at the heart of the game's story is a very American-centric conspiracy plot. The story is loosely inspired by the JFK assassination, which was the start of America's fascination with conspiracy theories. Everyone enjoys a compelling story with a lot of twists and turns."

If anything, the game's events will likely come as a complete and refreshing surprise—an original and deep story, free from hype or oversaturation.

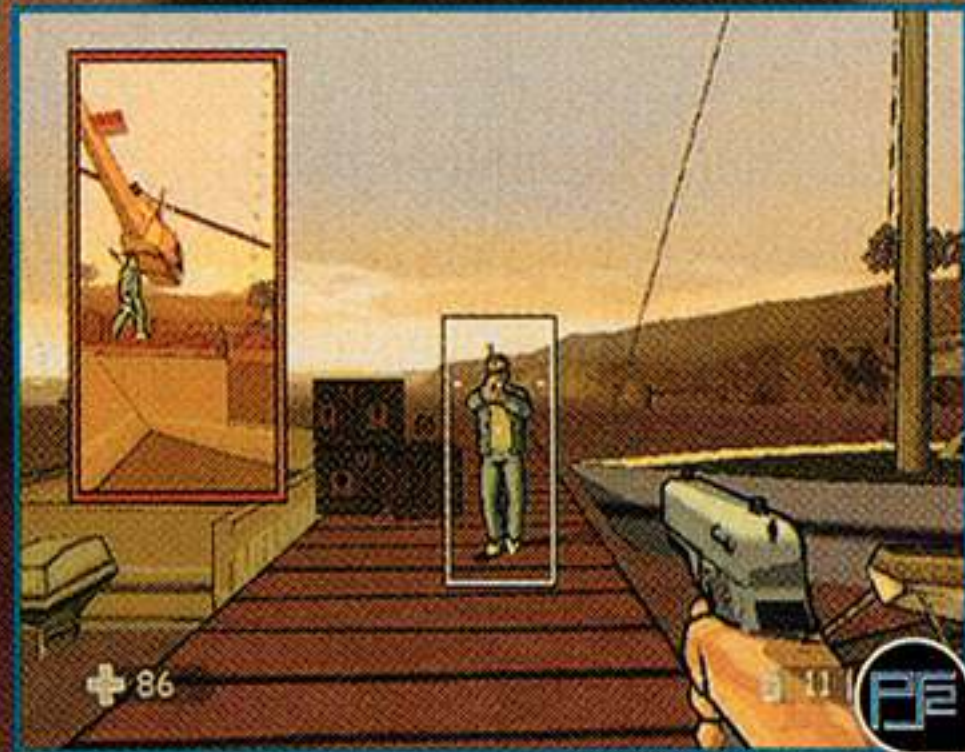
"The XIII game acts as a stand-alone story, where the scenarios in the game let players understand the original comic's history," says Bares. "You don't need any background to understand why certain events happen."

NOVEL APPROACH

Even without reading the graphic novel, players will feel like they're immersed in a comic world, thanks to XIII's cel-shaded graphics. Basing its work on the Unreal II engine, the development team at Ubi Soft France set out to re-create the comic's world as closely as possible (van Hamme worked with the developers at several key points)—and while Auto Modellista and The Legend of Zelda certainly look cool, a comic-book game like XIII arguably offers the best context for cel-shading.

Additionally, players will find comic-style rectangular panels popping up on the screen in the middle of the game to offer an alternate view of a dramatic event, a sneak peek around corners, or the result of a lethal sniper shot. These hyper-aware moments are part of the protagonist's "sixth sense."

"The player character is a well-trained commando who can turn any situation to his advantage," explains Bares. "He possesses a sixth sense, which is like radar. For example, a pop-up will appear to signal a hidden sniper or a guard walking behind a



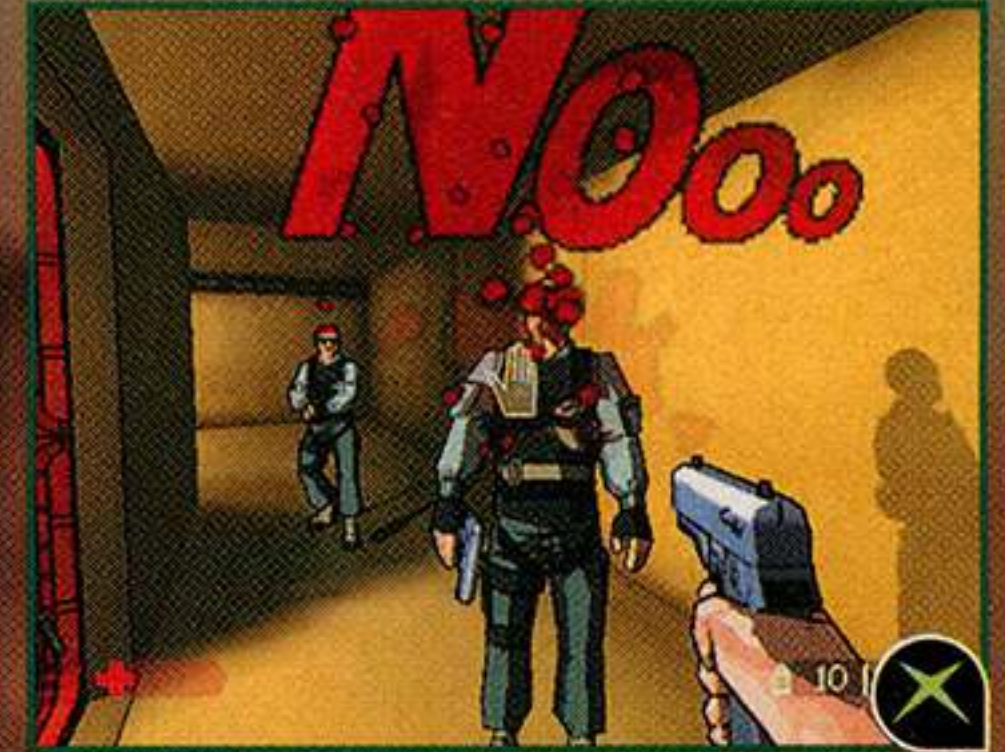
The player's sixth sense offers threat warnings on the fly. You may have lost your memories but not your skills.



Don't let XIII's French origins faze you. "The style is closer to that of American graphic novels like 100 Bullets and Sin City," says Julien Bares.



XIII's single-player experience spans 34 lengthy missions and includes threats from land, sea, and air.



Members of XIII's development team have worked on Splinter Cell and the Rayman series.



"It's not just about shooting enemies," says Producer Julien Bares. "The action and stealth gameplay elements are seamlessly integrated into the story. We live a story, like in the best adventure games."



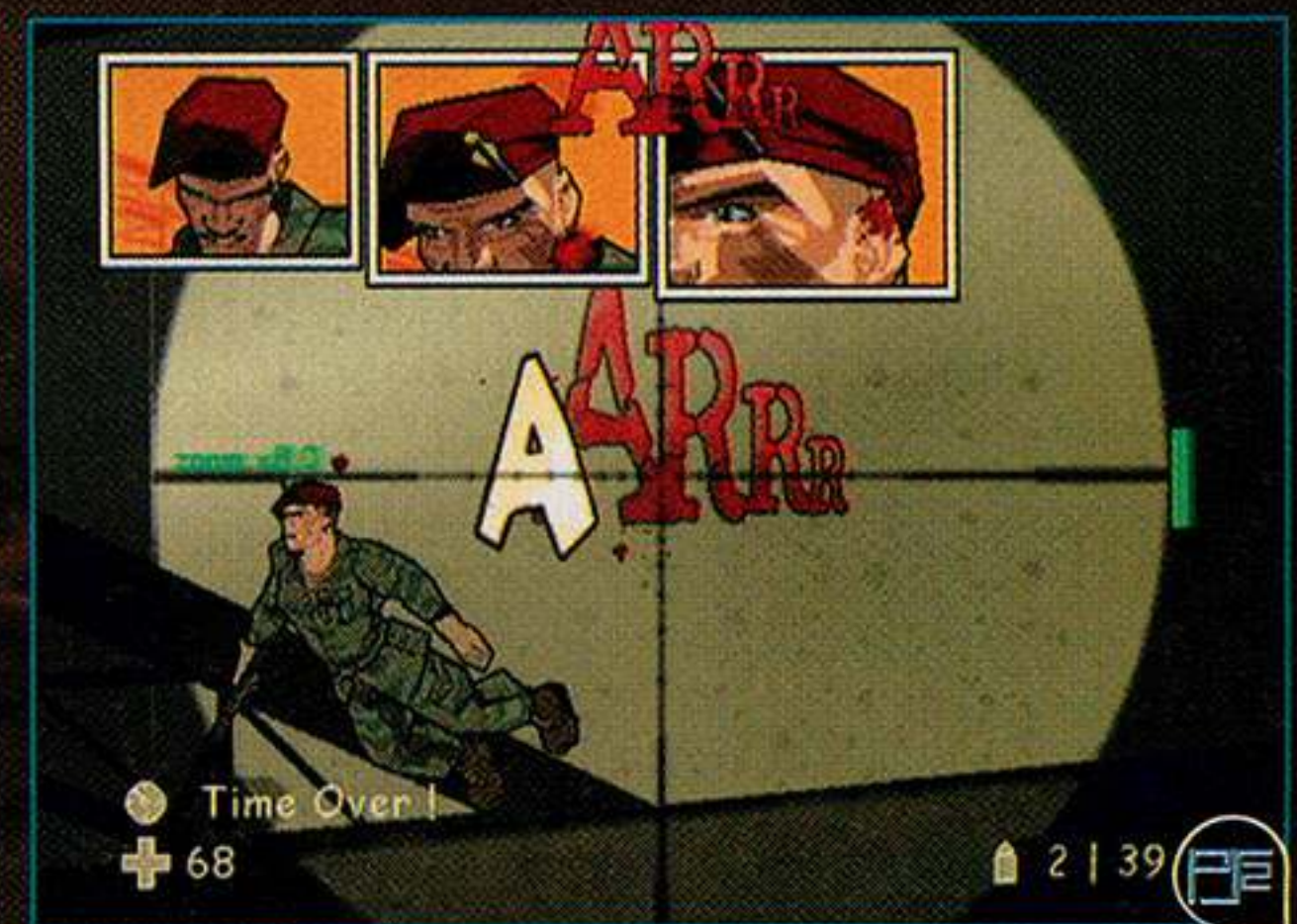
"Since this was the first time we tried cel-shading, it was a learning experience," says Julien Bares. "But I think the final result is our best reward."



Stealth and strategy are as important as reflexes and bravery in XIII; long-range weapons like this dart crossbow can remove threats from a distance.



XIII retains the language and style of comic books in its gameplay as well as its cinematics.



Heavy use of onomatopoeia (words spelled like they sound)—including enemies who scream in a trail of letters as they fall—reinforces XIII's comic roots.

CONTINUED ►



nearby door. The sixth sense is also illustrated with onomatopoeia, where players will see a 'tap tap tap' behind closed doors, signaling guards walking in the room."

More onomatopoeic devices (which means words that are spelled like they sound) serve to reinforce the comic sensibilities, such as the visual "BAOMMM" of explosions and enemies who fall off cliffs screaming a trail of "A"s and "H"s in the air behind them.

DO YOU SNEAK FRENCH?


Don't let the cel-shading fool you—the game still feels like a gripping thriller with a palpable sense of urgency, not to mention a bit of bloodshed. "Our biggest inspirations were thrillers from the 1970s like *Bullitt*, *The Getaway*, and *The French Connection*," says Bares. "They were very inspirational for us as they showcased intense, fierce action without using over-the-top gore. Similarly, in XIII, you can really feel the threatening, menacing nature of the bad guys, but the game's style is not overly gory."

Players will destroy a submarine, survive a cable-car disaster, protect and cover allies, wage underwater harpoon battles, bash bad guys with makeshift weapons like shovels and bottles, outwit enemies who intelligently hide behind cover, and use a mix of stealth and heavy weaponry through 34 missions.

"How the story unfolds actually dictates a lot of the gameplay elements," reveals Bares. "For example, the player must first discover his past; to do so, he must escape numerous assailants, including the FBI. Since he cannot necessarily kill the FBI agents because they are innocent, he must rely on stealth and use objects as weapons to escape. The action and stealth gameplay are seamlessly integrated into the story. We wanted to stop the cliché that 'FPS' means straight-out shooter."

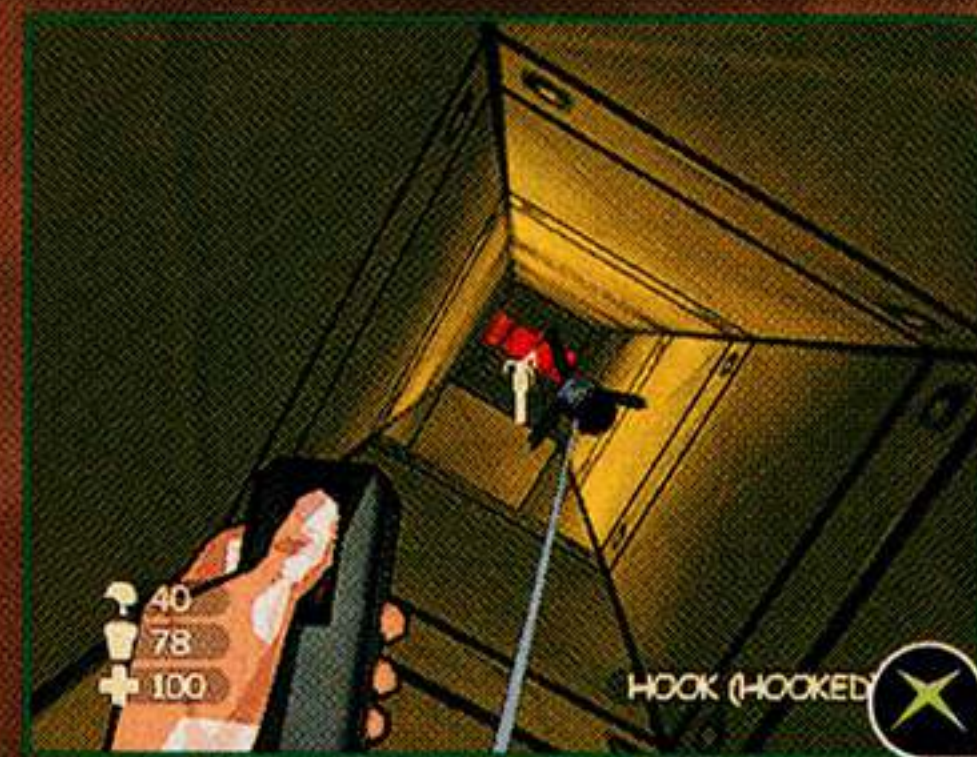
TREIZE MAGNIFIQUE

As XIII nears completion, the graphics and A.I. have already fallen into place on the PS2 and Xbox (GameCube and PC versions are also in development), but the preview versions' voice acting seemed overwrought, control layouts needed tweaking, and online support for both systems had yet to be implemented.

But while some gamers will remember XIII as "that cel-shaded shooter," it's clear that the team wants the game to succeed on its gameplay and story merits when it's released in October. "Besides our great technical qualities, I think our story and graphical style will separate XIII from all the other FPS games on the market," says Bares. "We have a great character, multiple exciting environments, and a lot of characters and enemies—I think that makes a pretty good game." 



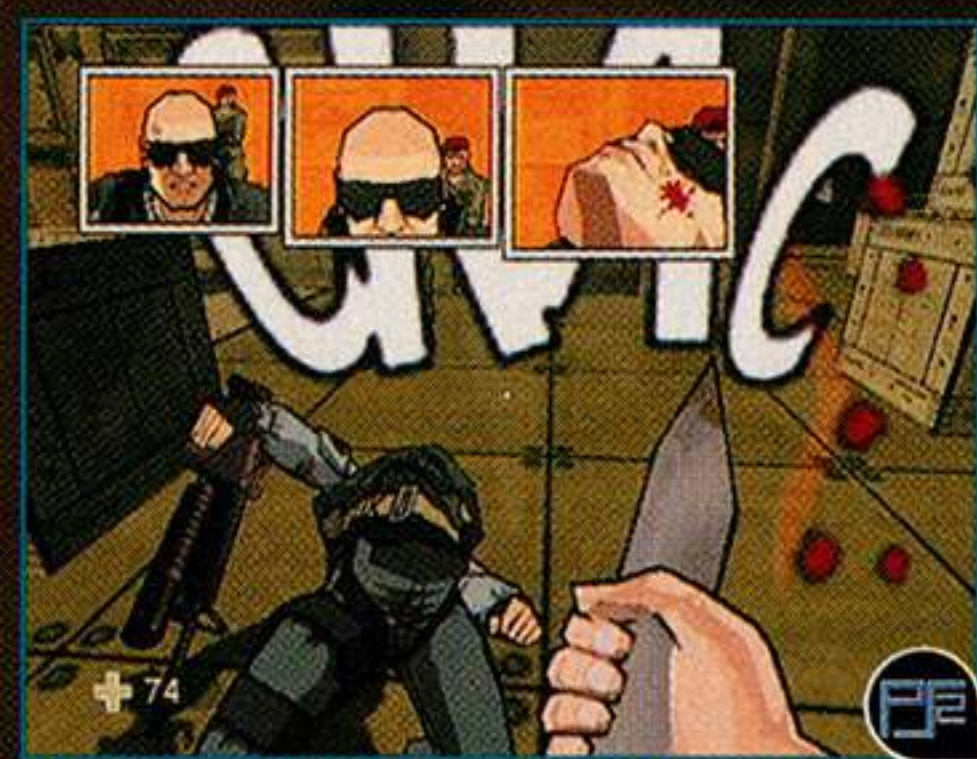
Since the A.I. is clever, you may need to move the bodies of slain enemies to keep your presence a secret.



XIII's grappling hook is key to navigating tricky territory—some areas require you to swing and shoot simultaneously.



In addition to plenty of shooting and sneaking, XIII offers environmental puzzles and interactions.



Weapons include rocket launchers, throwing knives, machine guns, and even improvised weapons like shovels and brooms.



The cel-shading effect is subtle and comfortable, feeling less like a gimmick and more like a narrative device.



"The deep story line provided us with many different environments and exciting scenarios throughout the game," says Julien Bares.

MIDWAY



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WAR GAMES

TEN HUT, RECRUIT! IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO SALUTE FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR, A GAME THAT CLEARLY IS ALREADY REDEFINING THE ARMY OF ONE. BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



SO YOU'RE A bad-ass squad-based military game expert? Think again, private. In February, developer Pandemic Studios will release Full Spectrum Warrior, a military team/tactical game based on the Army's light infantry. But if you believe this is just another standard squad-based shooting game, then the largest and arguably the best army in the world has something to say to you.

SOLDIER WARFIGHTER TOOL

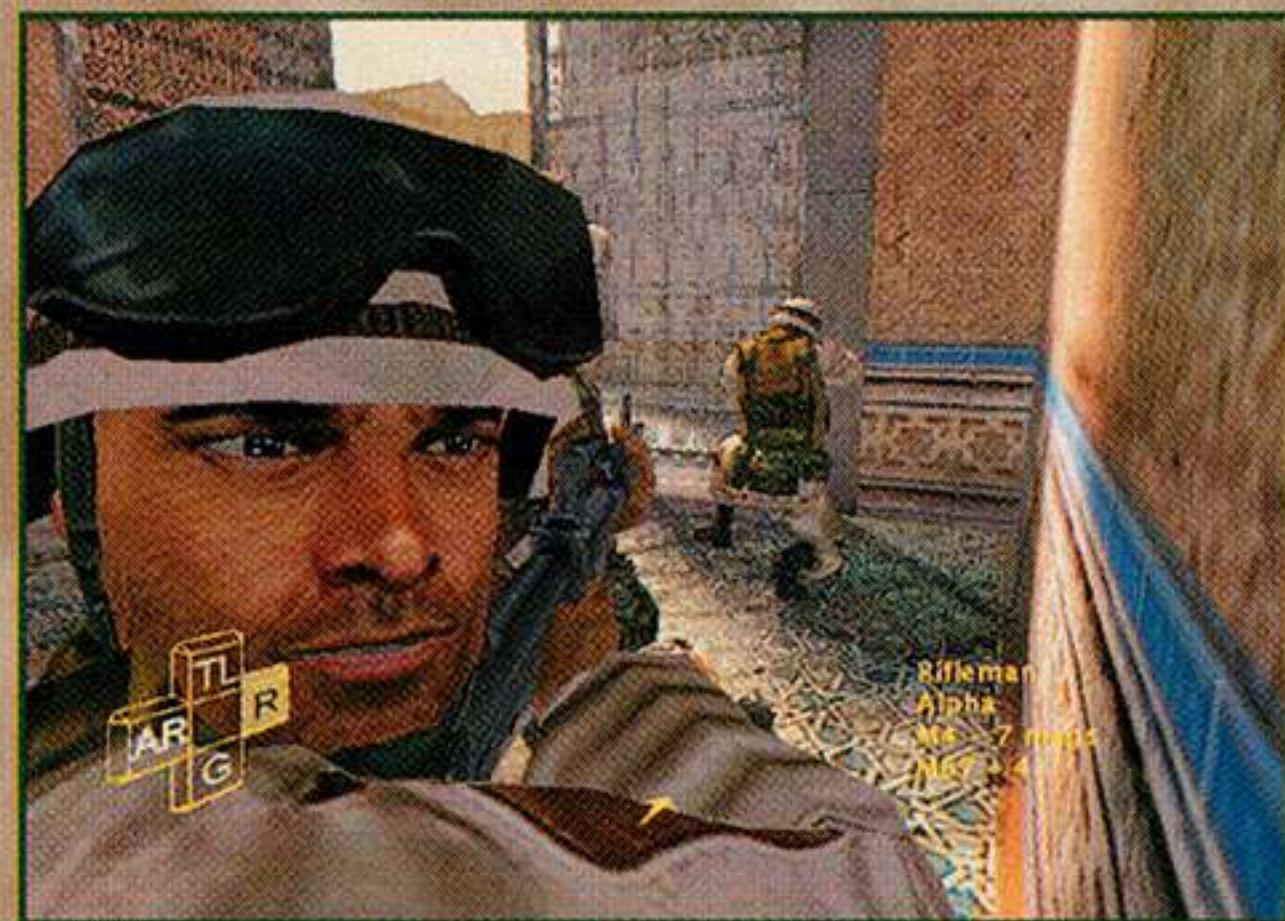
"We want to give the player an authentic Army experience," states William Stahl, director of Full Spectrum Warrior. Stahl has been working on FSW, which was originally planned for the PlayStation 2 but is now Xbox-only, for almost three years. The player Stahl refers to in his statement, however, doesn't just refer to the average gamer. The United States Army asked Pandemic to create FSW as a virtual trainer for its troops. In fact, the game has always been conceived as a next-generation trainer first and an entertaining game second. It was only after publisher THQ picked up the license that FSW was to be sold to the general public.



Unlike other upcoming games, Full Spectrum Warrior will not use voice commands to control your squad. Pandemic felt that voice command responds slower than button presses.

TAKING ONE FOR THE TEAM

First and foremost, FSW strictly follows the Army rules and doctrine of Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT). In the game, you control a nine-man squad broken down into two teams (Alpha and Bravo), each with a team leader, rifleman, automatic rifleman, and grenadier. As the team commander, you must move all of your soldiers safely through the dangerous streets while quashing those who stand in your way. The controls handle more like those of a third-person tactical game—you command your troops individually or as a unit using simple button presses. "This game is not PC-primary," says Stahl. "The game was always done on the console. All of the design and work was for the Xbox controller." You can tell a trooper to cover a specific area, have a team move in a two-by-two formation, or have



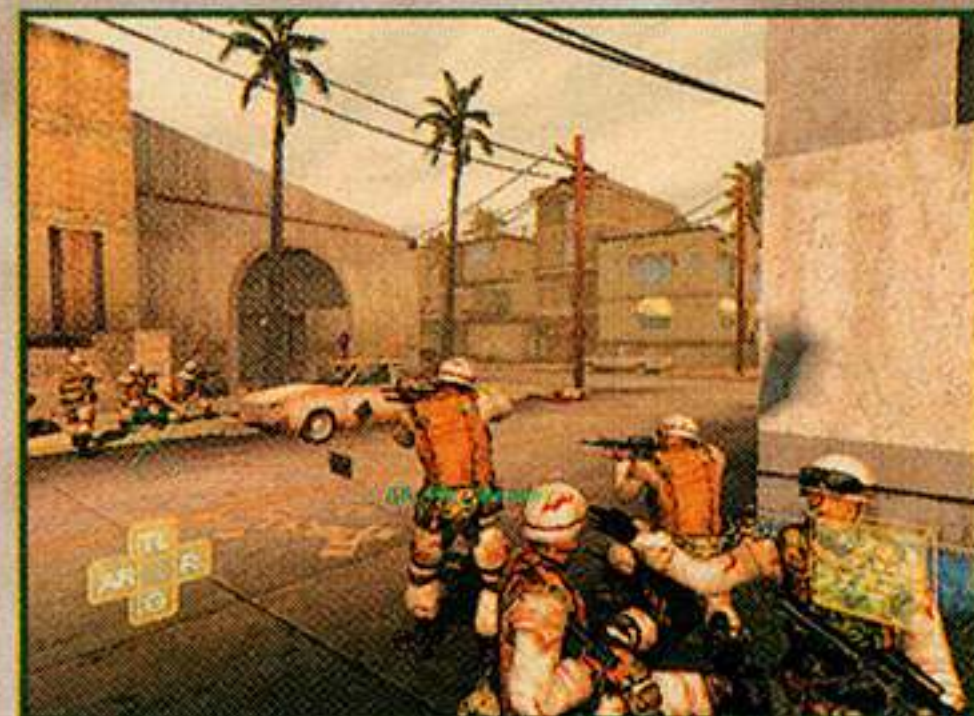
"Reactions are dependent on the actions," says William Stahl. "If there's a firefight and two of your soldiers get killed, the rest of the squad will talk to each other much differently than before the firefight."



The Army version of Full Spectrum Warrior is already in Beta form and is currently undergoing tests by the military.



Each of the game's six environments is between 12 and 16 square blocks, and consists of one main mission and multiple side objectives.



Pandemic has just begun figuring out multiplayer gameplay, but you can expect Full Spectrum Warrior to support Xbox Live.



Soldiers can only stay behind cover for a limited time—buildings and cars will deteriorate if shot upon.



Your squad is capable of breaching structures and correctly clearing each room to secure an entire building.

one team give suppressing fire while the other team flanks an enemy. You will not control the game in a first-person perspective as in other popular squad-based titles.

"[Today's] squad-based military games are not squad-based," asserts Stahl. "You can be any other unit who is not part of the team—he's just waiting to be moved. Our guys are not like that. They're designed specifically to operate as a team. So when they perform a function, everybody has a certain cog in the wheel that fires at the right time to get that thing done. They're modeled on professional soldiers."

In an early demo of the game, these virtual professional soldiers seemed to act as an authentic team. They automatically took cover when fired upon, gave correct hand signals, aimed their guns only in their fields of view, moved in actual Army-specific formations suitable for their surroundings, and, most importantly, didn't fire a shot until ordered to do so.



Enemy A.I. will take cover and work as teams. They're unscripted, so they won't do the same thing twice.

Those skilled in military operations achieve cooperation in a group so that directing the group is like directing a single individual with no other choice.

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*



"Coming into this project, the Army had no idea what you can do on a game system," says William Stahl.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Full Spectrum Warrior's attention to team cohesion is further augmented with challenging gameplay to test your leadership skills. As team commander, you must ensure that your group follows Army procedures, or else your command status falters within the ranks. For example, you might get a call from your superiors not to shoot upon a statue—even though there's an enemy using it as cover—because the object has political significance. But if you still engage the enemy at the statue, your command status lowers, which basically means that commanders lose confidence in you. In return, if later you request air support, command may not give it to you because they feel you're not making effective choices in the field.



Full Spectrum Warrior accurately simulates smoke, wind, and fog realistically and dynamically.


At any point in the game, however, you can jump back in at any place previously played much like a quick reload. So if you do fire upon the statue or if you get troops killed, you can backtrack 15 seconds and issue a different command. But

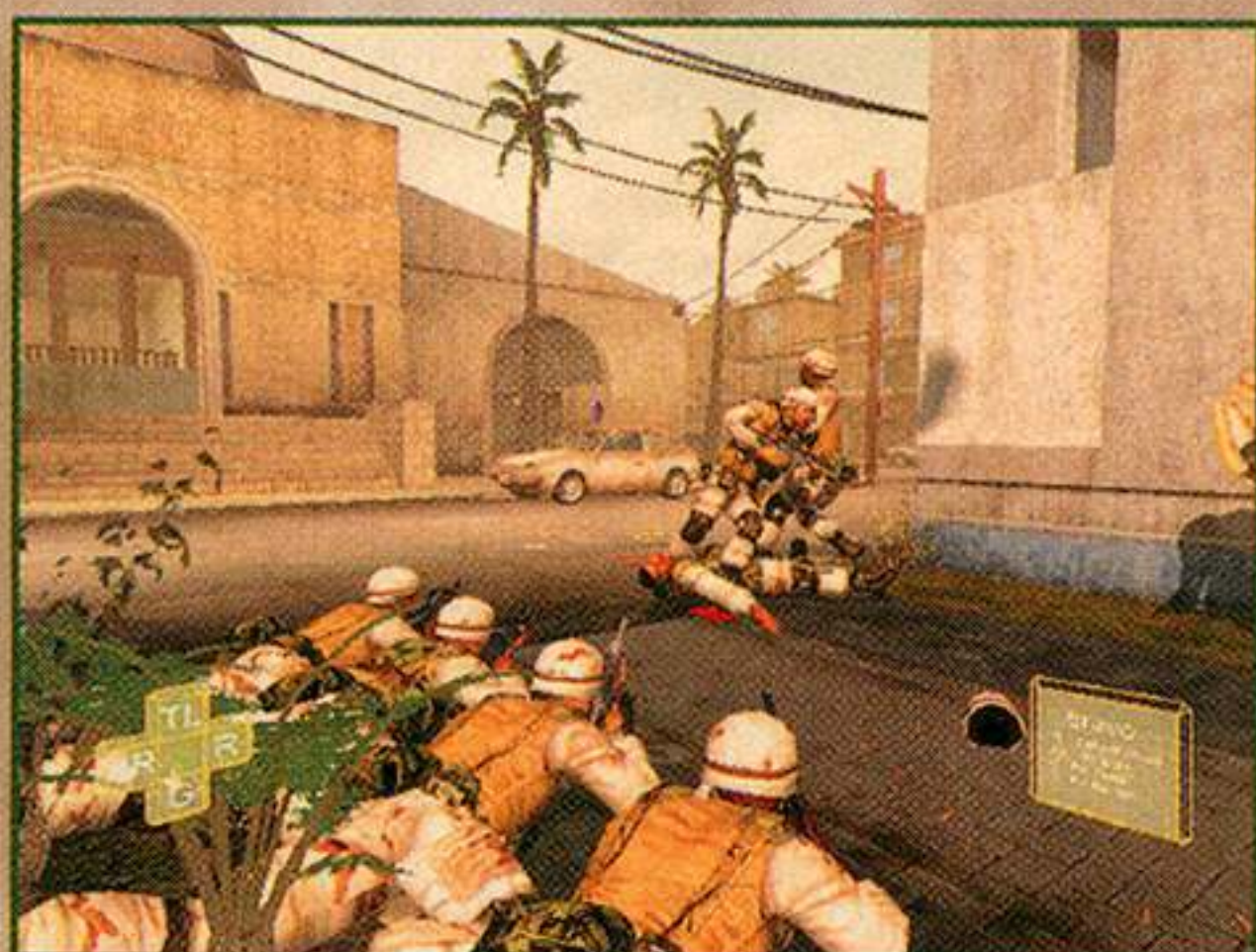


As it is essential in real Army operations, Full Spectrum Warrior will have helicopter support. You can call in an air strike or request a casualty evacuation.

each time you reload, you don't get your command status back—it actually goes down. Conversely, if you pick up an injured soldier and move him to a casualty evacuation site instead of reloading your game, you gain your command status back. "We encourage players to do the right thing," says Stahl. "You can reboot all you want to get all of your guys back, but you're not going to be an effective squad leader."

COMBAT READINESS

The military and retail versions will look and feel almost identical. The only major difference will be that the civilian version will have character personalities that are distinct and will drive a compelling story. Within your team ranks, there will be guys who won't get along; a guy might lose it when bullets start flying, and a guy may be gung-ho. All of these personalities will develop through time, and how you deal with them and how they deal with each other will determine the outcome of the game. "We're trying to create a game where you play as the guys from films like *Band of Brothers* and *Saving Private Ryan*," explains Stahl. "Our Holy Grail is playing the movie." 



"Medal of Honor did a really good job of hitting a Teen rating and still being true to the military theme," says William Stahl. "We're aiming FSW to be Teen rated, too."

Secrets

Lies

A topless Lara Croft? Millions of crushed cartridges? Mind-control video games? You won't believe some of gaming's greatest urban legends—even the ones that are true.

By Dan Elektro



The PlayStation is really just a redesigned Super NES CD drive.

This is based on just enough truth for gamers to get it wrong forever. In 1988, Sony and Nintendo agreed to work together on a CD-ROM attachment for the Super NES. By 1991, Sony planned to enter the market with its own game system called the Play Station (two words) that also played SNES games as well as its own "Super Disc" format. Not wanting to share control or profits with a rival company, Nintendo brokered a new deal with Philips without telling Sony; it all went down with an embarrassingly public announcement at the Consumer Electronics Show in 1992. Essentially stabbed in the back, Sony went back to the drawing board and came up with a new, standalone console, code-named Play Station X (that's where the old "PSX" abbreviation came from in fan circles), designed to kick the snot out of the SNES. That machine—and not some leftover blueprint from a previous partnership—would eventually be released as the PlayStation (one word) in 1994. Nintendo's Philips SNES CD drive, meanwhile, never materialized.

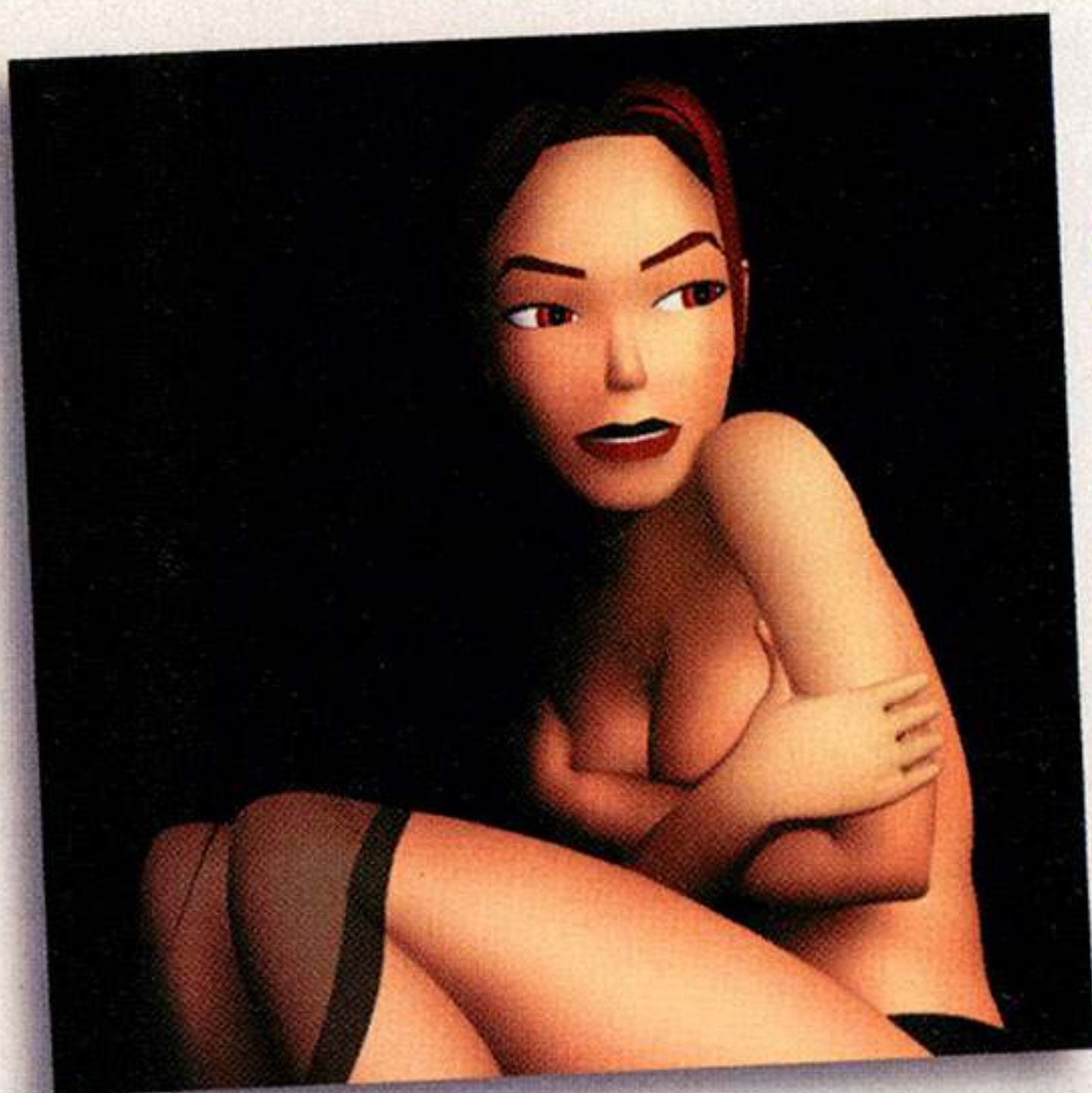
You can launch missiles with a PlayStation 2.

When the PS2 debuted, there was a big hullabaloo over export laws. The machine's main processor was so advanced that it was classified as a supercomputer and therefore was not something that was allowed to leave Japan. The fear was that an enterprising hacker in a third-world country could harness the PS2's ability to do very fast math calculations and use it to control, say, a guided missile system. Export laws were changed so the PS2 could be released worldwide, and gamers have been happy ever since. However, reports circulated that Saddam Hussein imported several dozen PS2s upon the machine's launch. Were these very cool gifts for his nieces and nephews or intended for more nefarious military purposes? For that matter, could the PS2 really be used as part of a weapon of mass destruction? With any luck, we'll never find out.



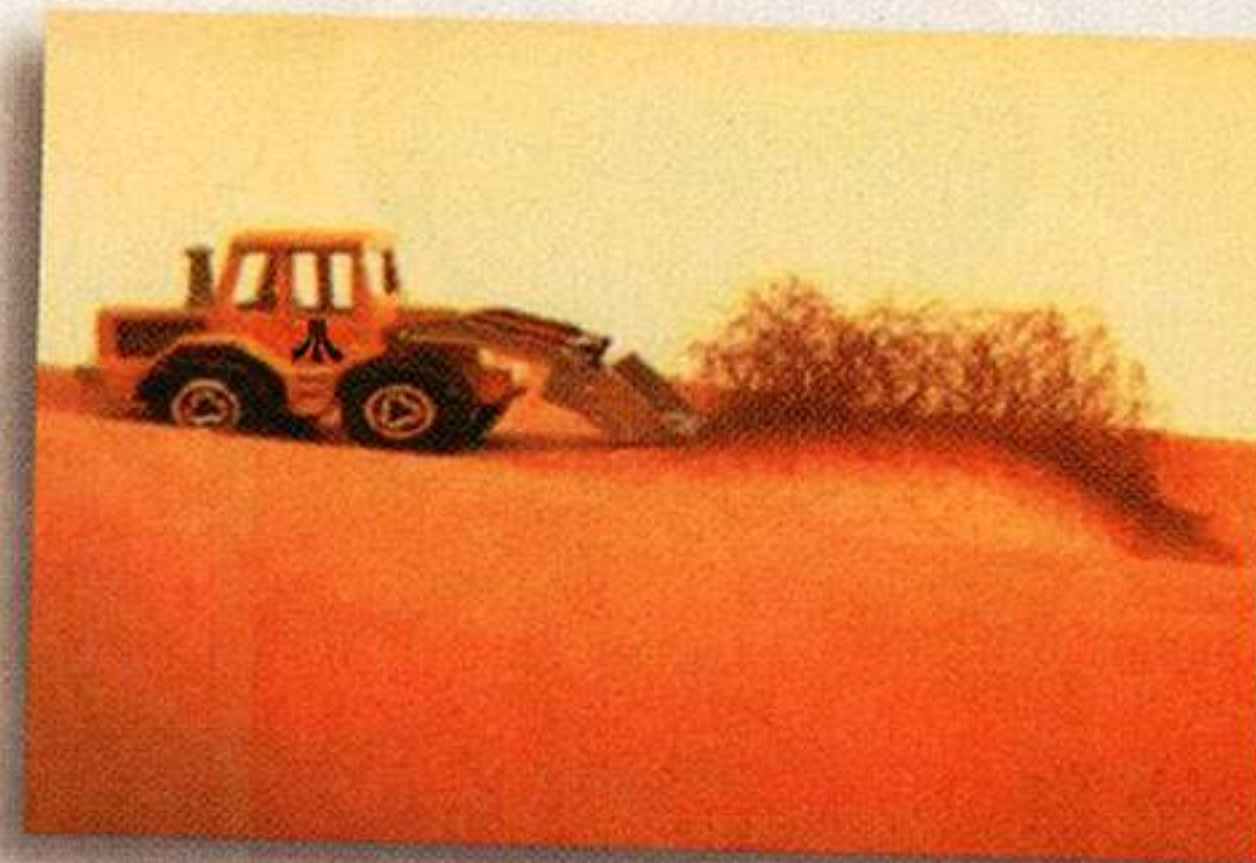
There's a nude code for Tomb Raider that makes Lara topless.

This is a classic case of wishful fanboy thinking. Lara Croft is hot. A lot of video gamers are teenage boys with raging hormones. Ergo, ask a teen male gamer what he wants to see, and the answer is pretty obvious. Let it be said: No nude code exists for any Tomb Raider game. However, an enterprising bunch of hackers have created patches for the PC versions of the game that replace Lara's clothing textures with naked flesh ones—but that's an independent, user-created thing. In fact, Tomb Raider's just one of several PC hits (The Sims, Quake, Jedi Knight 2, GTA3...um, Britney's Dance Beat...and amazingly, F1 2002) to get stripped down by the dateless gaming community with unauthorized nude patches. But official codes built in by the programmers? No.



Atari buried a bunch of crappy game cartridges in the desert.

If you think bargain bins are overflowing with lackluster games now, consider the situation in 1982. Atari was in the midst of making some dreadful mistakes, including a costly licensing deal for the lousy home version of Pac-Man (it made 12 million copies...but the Atari 2600 only had an active install base of 10 million). To try to rebound from that, Atari licensed *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* from Steven Spielberg—but the rush-it-out-for-Christmas deal meant the game had to be created in six weeks. Unsurprisingly, it looked and played like it. Atari made 5 million cartridges and was stuck with most of them collecting dust in warehouses. Realizing they'd never sell, Atari dumped millions of E.T. cartridges into a New Mexico landfill. When people found the site, Atari had the carts crushed and the landfill filled with cement. For the full story and quotes from the people who lived through the debacle, check out *The Ultimate History of Video Games* by Steven Kent.

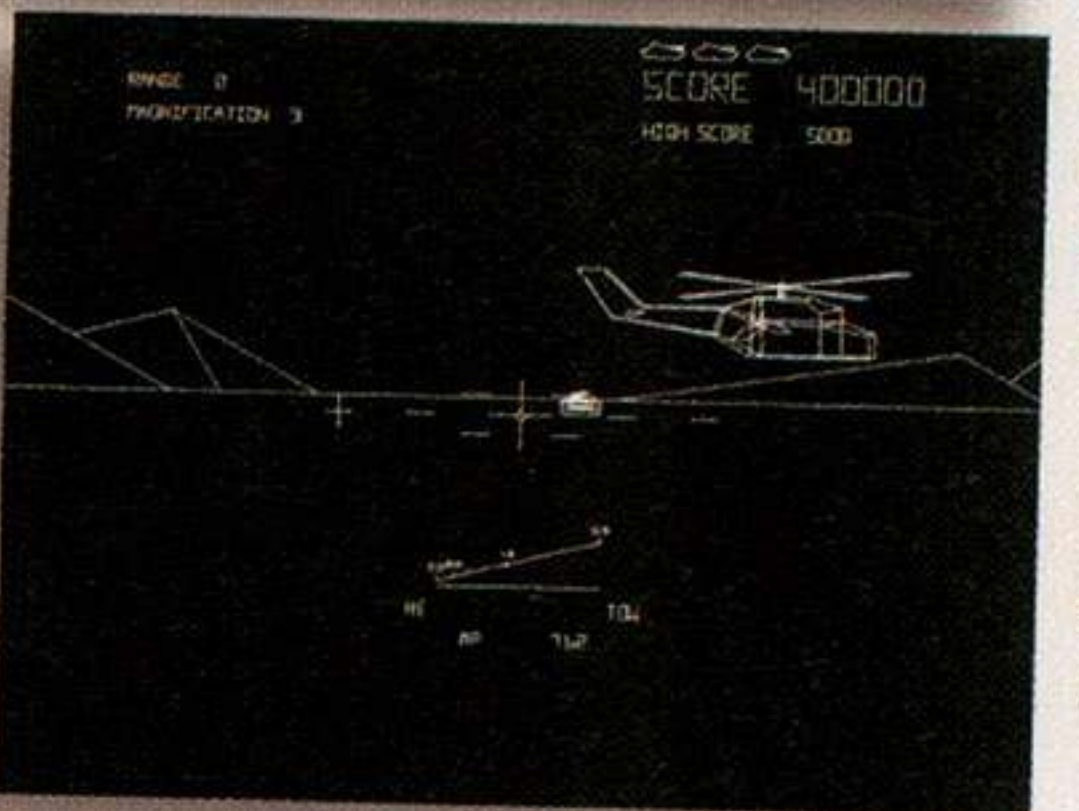
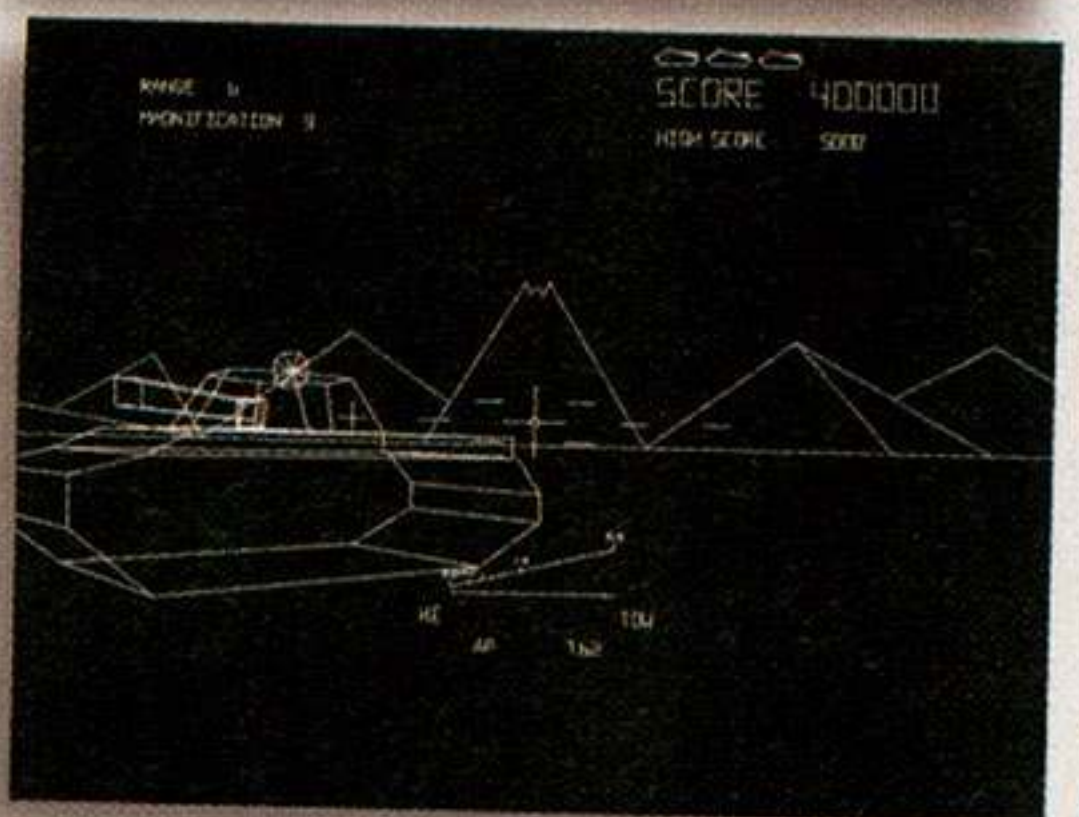
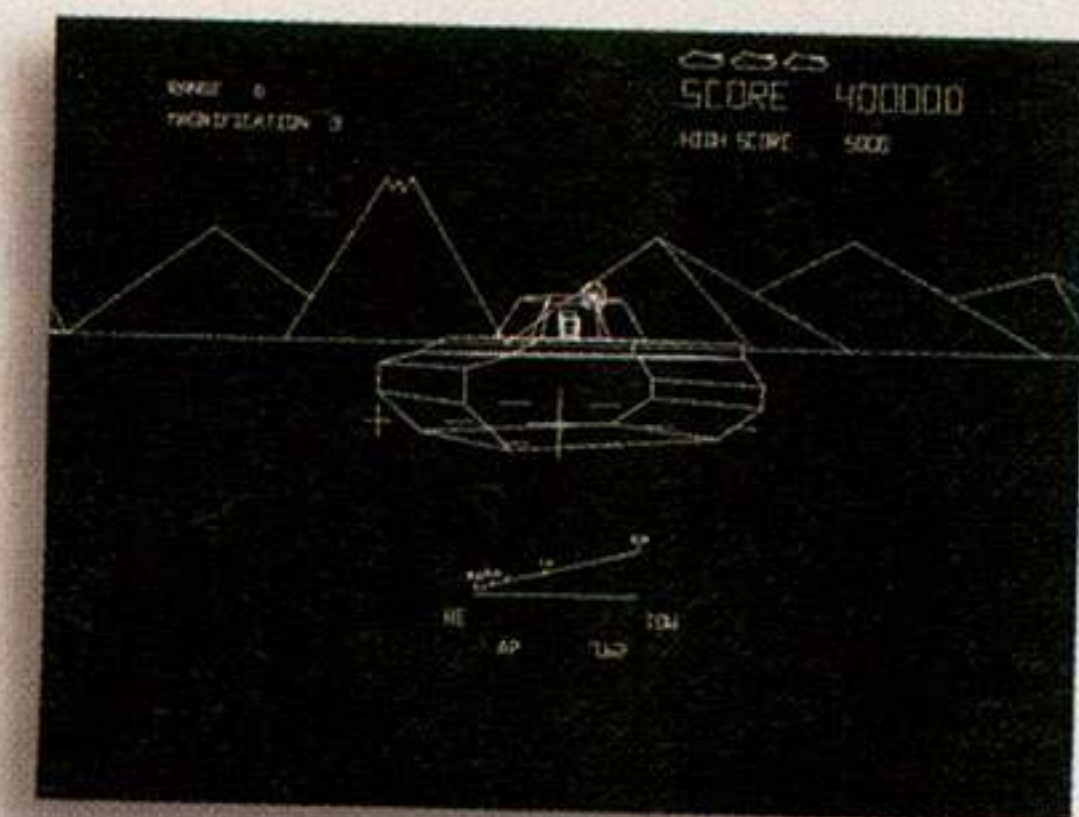


The military has used video games to train soldiers since the early 1980s.

Okay, so maybe *Missile Command* isn't exactly a serious simulation, but the U.S. military has been using modified versions of commercially available video games for several years. The first was a customized version of *Battlezone*, a realistic tank simulation called *Bradley Trainer* (programmed by *Battlezone*'s designer, Ed Rotberg). The cabinet looks like a regular *Battlezone* machine but with over a dozen extra switches and knobs on the front as well as a custom control grip to properly correspond with the controls of a Bradley M2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (that is still in use today). Two prototypes were made in 1981, and only one is known to exist today. However, one element morphed and lived on; the *Bradley* controller bears a striking resemblance to the yoke found on Atari's *Star Wars* and *Return of the Jedi* games.

The most celebrated use of games as training tools was *Marine Doom*, a custom version of *Doom II* created to teach soldiers about teamwork, fog of war, communication, and the behavior of weapons like M-16s and M-249s. Oh, and it was kinda cool to play, too. "The fun factor is very important," said Project Officer Lt. Scott Barnett to the *Government Computer News*. "That's what makes our Marines want to use it. But it's an honest-to-God training tool: You can do mission rehearsal, mission planning." Enterprising gamers can download the *Marine Doom* files for free to try it themselves.

Game-based training is only growing. NovaLogic has been enlisted to build a custom version of *Delta Force 2: Land Warrior*, the Navy gives a custom version of Microsoft *Flight Simulator* to all student pilots, and *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear* is being used for urban warfare training. Now, with games like America's Army and *Full Spectrum Warrior* sneaking back into consumer gaming, the circle is complete.

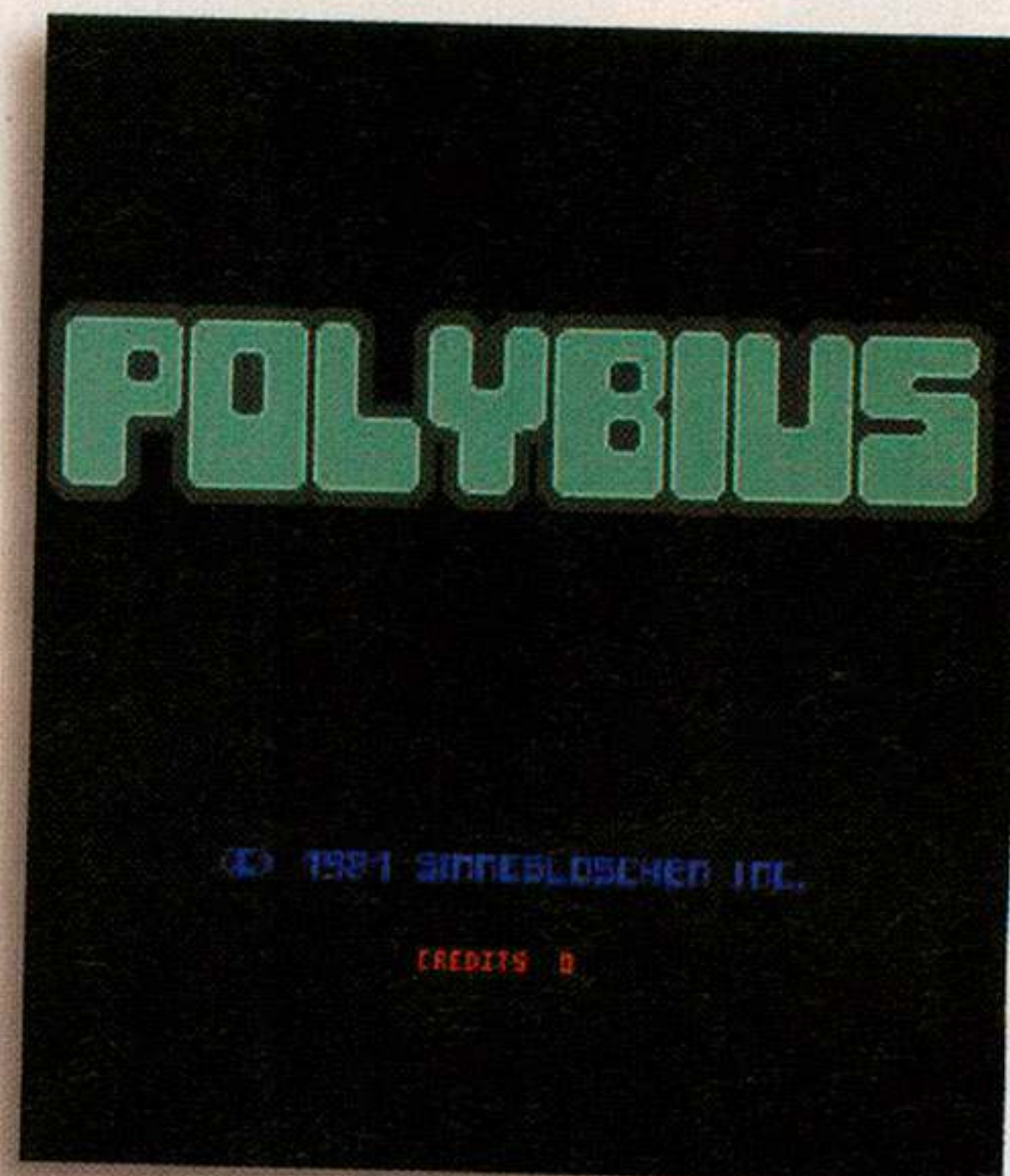


The government made an arcade game that erased kids' memories and gave them horrific nightmares.

Using games for military training is one thing; using games for mind control...well, that's something else. But there is a cryptic tale of an arcade game called *Polybius* that appeared in only a handful of locations in Portland, Oregon in the early 1980s. Credited to a company called Sinnesloschen, *Polybius* (named for a Greek historian who also dabbled in cryptography) was an abstract puzzle game that reportedly caused nightmares and memory loss in those who played it ("Sinnesloschen" is German for "sense-deleting"), and some supposedly swore off games for good. And to seal the deal, one arcade owner claimed that black-coated gentlemen would periodically come to collect data—but not coins—from the machines.

Unfortunately, the main thing that's missing is proof. While a ROM reportedly exists, it hasn't actually been located. A title screen is all anyone seems to be able to produce—and these are easy to create in Photoshop (the company name's font is the same one Williams used on several of its games, making cut-and-paste easy for an aspiring prankster). Also, nobody seems to be willing to name names or authenticate any of the tales floating around the Internet—nothing can be verified by a reliable source.

But still...what if it's true?



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Each lap changes to open new paths and shortcuts



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PlayStation 2



rainbow STUDIOS



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Recommended System Specs

Windows 98SE/ME/2000/XP

Pentium 4 1.5 GHz

512 MB RAM

2.0 GB on HD

64 MB video card

FIRST-DAY SERVER JITTERS aside, *Star Wars Galaxies* provides an expansive, mature online gaming experience that encourages creativity and teamwork without forcing everyone to become an epic warrior.

A NEW HOPE

Most MMORPGs cast you as a warrior of some sort, charged with fighting tons of monsters to gain in power so you can fight tons of more powerful monsters and collect more powerful weapons and pants. The *Star Wars* saga, however, isn't about fighting monsters—it's about cantinas and farmers and the little guy changing the course of the galaxy. In order to succeed, *Galaxies* couldn't be just another MMO—the developers had to make it more than *EverQuest* has ever been as well as making it more accessible to *Star Wars* fans who've never seen an MMORPG in their lives.

If you want to just wander out and shoot monsters in *Galaxies*, feel free, but three of the six starting professions have nothing to do with killing, and you could go your entire *Star Wars Galaxies* career without ever having brandished

a blaster. Scouts, warriors, dancers, medics, musicians, crafters, and even hairdressers all have something to do in the game, and it's all designed so that even the hardest of warriors will have reason to go watch a hot Twi'lek shake it in the local cantina for a few minutes. There's never been a game that so completely rewards social interaction the way *Galaxies* does, and that, not the *Star Wars* name, is why *Galaxies* could change the industry.

STAR WARS GALAXIES



PRO TIP: You can type "/find" to open a list of destinations in a city. Choose one, and the game will make a way-point to that location.



PRO TIP: If you see a scout's camp in the wilderness, ask if you can rest there—your resting there gets the scout experience points, and you'll heal up faster.



PRO TIP: Wookiees can only speak Shyriiwook, so no one can understand them at first. If you're a wookiee, teach everyone you meet to understand your language, or you'll have to become a master of charades.

WHO'S SCRUFFY LOOKIN'?

Casual gamers and mass-market players might find this to be the friendliest MMO yet. Not only does it look gorgeous and sound great, but it also goes to great pains to teach you how to play, how to advance in your chosen profession, and so on. The game rewards you for teaching your skills to others, and the character advancement system is flexible enough that you can be whatever type of character you want. You're not locked into a number of closed classes that force you to play the game the way the designers intended, and since you can untrain skills, you can't really make a lasting mistake as your character develops.

INVOKE THE HOLY TRILOGY

Like any MMORPG, *Galaxies* could change a lot over time, but the solid heart of the game should remain the same. If you're thinking of trying out an MMORPG for the first time, this is probably the best place to start. **G**

GRAPHICS 4.5

Just a hair under the top graphics for PC games, *Galaxies'* online nature limits what it can do visually. Still, it looks better than every single MMORPG out there, and that's getting to be a chore.

SOUND 4.5

The extremely recognizable *Star Wars* sound suite is essential in pulling off that *Star Wars* feel, and *Galaxies* has it down pat. You can even hear other players' music when they're jamming in a cantina.

CONTROL 4.0

The default controls will be foreign to anyone who's ever played any game, but you can remap the keys at will or choose from a few preset keymaps that make the game feel like an FPS, *EverQuest*, or even *Diablo*.

FUN FACTOR 5.0

While it's not yet finished (MMO games never are), *Galaxies* represents an evolution of massively multiplayer gaming. There's something for everyone here, and the only requirement is that you like *Star Wars*.



PRO TIP: Hunting is always safer in a group. With a couple of friends, you can take out enemies that would have slaughtered any of you alone.



PRO TIP: It's tempting to run around like crazy in a gunfight but don't. Instead, stop running and kneel to give your shots more accuracy.














PRO TIP: After a long day of fighting, head into the local cantina. Make sure you click the entertainers and "Watch" them, and your battle fatigue will heal up in no time.




PRO TIP: When hunting, pay attention to the symbol over your target's name. That symbol's color shows how tough the creature will be to beat. Red means you're screwed.



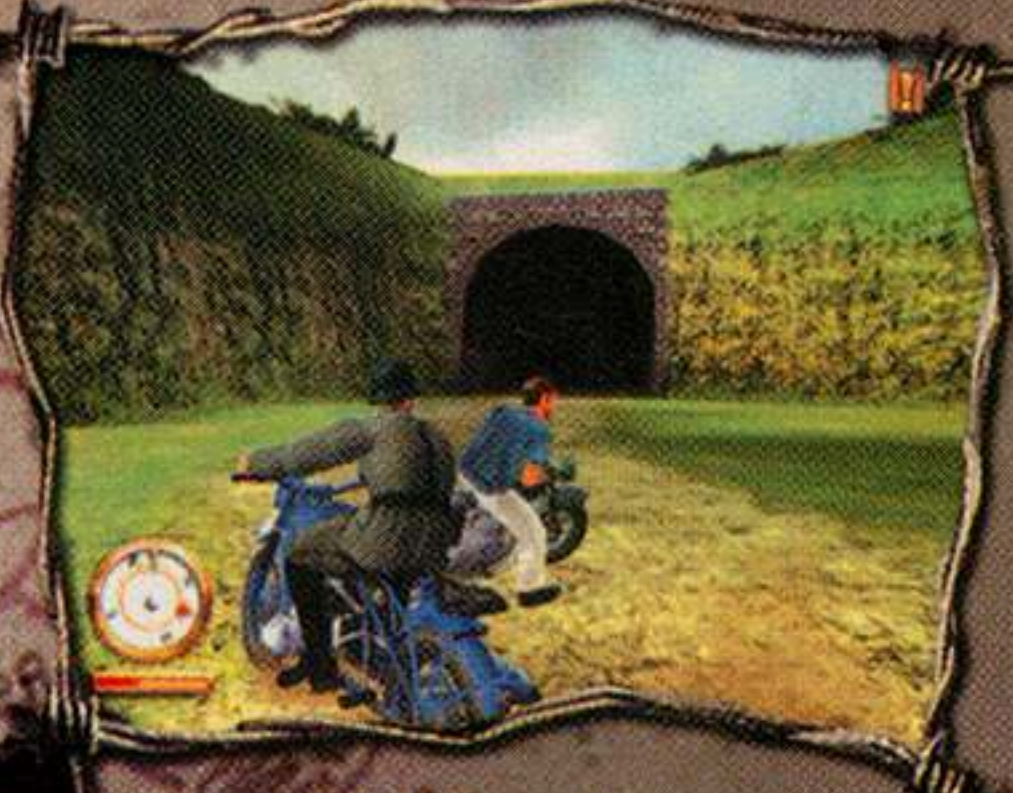
 BY DUNJIN MASTER	■ Developed by Sony Online Entertainment	■ Published by LucasArts	■ \$49.99 (plus \$15/month)	■ Available now	■ RPG	■ Massively multiplayer	    
	    						

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PlayStation 2



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Recommended System Specs

- Windows 98/ME/2000/XP
- Pentium 4 1.8 GHz
- 512 MB RAM
- 3.5 GB on HD
- 128 MB video card

THE MAKERS OF EverQuest have traded in their Centi Longswords and Thurgadin armor for Infiltration Suits, rocket launchers, and hover tanks. In so doing, they've created one of the coolest first-person shooter experiences on the planet, one any FPS fan would be silly not to check out.

CHOOSE A SIDE

The difference between PlanetSide and the other team-based FPS games out there is that this time your team consists of hundreds of other players, many online at the same time, all throwing themselves into constant battle over 10 huge continents. As you play, you level up, gaining you access to more equipment choices and combat roles. As your character gains in Battle Ranks, you may add new equipment and weapons to your repertoire.

In PlanetSide, there are no NPCs and no easy experience points. Either you're on an attacking team or a defending team as your group tries to take over entire continents. Everyone you see is another player, trained and ready to gank you if given half the chance. This can be a very frustrating game for newbies and players who like to go it alone as loners and rookies will find themselves staring at the respawn screen as often as they're out there fighting.

GROUP UP, SOLDIER

PlanetSide's greatest strength lies in the squad structure. Squads of 10 soldiers (one of them is designated a leader who gains Command Experience) are the optimal and most typical units. Group-friendly players will find a wealth of teamwork and squad-level action in PlanetSide, and just about every possible role—heavy weapons, scouts, infantry, hackers, medics, vehicle pilots, etc.—is needed in the big fight.

The biggest concern about PlanetSide is that the constant battling can get old after a while. Once a base is conquered, there's more incentive to go conquer another base than there is to defend the ones you have. While each base held grants bonuses to your other bases on the continent, those bonuses are almost unnoticeable to all but the most experienced commanders. Once the game's been going a while, continentwide strategy should pop up, giving the game's action more of the context it sorely needs.

WILD WORLD

PlanetSide's never-ending conflict and rewarding squad experience should be a godsend to FPS gamers out there looking for a huge and widely varied play experience. If you're looking for a massively multiplayer Unreal Tournament, however, you're just going to get yourself killed. **G**

PlanetSide



PRO TIP: Experienced commanders can create waypoints for their squads. If you see a waypoint, check with your squad leader to see what they want you to do.



PRO TIP: It takes a lot of force to conquer a well-defended base. Once the base is secured, use the post-hacking waiting period to get yourself healed and restocked, and your equipment repaired before moving on.



PRO TIP: Your team's Sanctuary is a great place to gather your squad and discuss tactics. No matter what happens in the world, the other teams will never get in here.



PRO TIP: MAXes are powerful, but they can't do anything but fight. With MAXes in your squad, you'll need at least one engineer to repair their damaged armor.



PRO TIP: The Infiltration Suit enables you to pass unseen inside enemy bases. When you're standing still, you're completely invisible, but some enemies with the Dark Vision implant may be able to spot you.



PRO TIP: The ANT is available for anyone with a vehicle certification. If you're stranded and need a vehicle in a hurry, the ANT's better than nothing.



PRO TIP: This is what it's all about—the Command Console. It takes 15 minutes for it to turn over to the attackers after it's hacked, so get ready for a fight.

GRAPHICS 4.0

Better looking than EverQuest but not nearly as pretty as most non-massively multiplayer first-person shooters, PlanetSide does well what it needs to do with just a few bells and whistles.

SOUND 4.0

While some vehicle sounds need work (the Galaxy sounds like the car from Pole Position when it's accelerating), the thunder of constant battle is dead on. Also, voice chat is available, which is a huge audio plus.

CONTROL 4.0

It feels slow compared to other FPS games, and tiny bubbles of lag can make the game intermittently difficult to play, but this slightly simpler, more tactical version of the team FPS certainly gets more comfortable over time.

FUN FACTOR 4.5

Online FPS fans who like the heat of tactical team action will really dig the constant squad-level action of PlanetSide. If you're looking for single-player fun, you'll want to give it more thought before you enlist, though.



- Developed and published by Sony Online Entertainment
- \$49.99
- Available now
- First-person shooter
- Massively multiplayer



BY D-PAD DESTROYER

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Guild Wars

T IRED OF PAYING to play? The folks at ArenaNet know a few things about running online games, and they've created Guild Wars, an interesting attempt at fixing the flaws in the massively multiplayer market. Billed as a competitive MMORPG, Guild Wars

will challenge you to face the world either alone or in small groups, tackling personal missions that could pit you against the massive world or against opposing teams of players. You'll collect items and treasure, but since everything's based on missions, you won't have to sit and wait for gnolls to spawn to do it.

Surprisingly, Guild Wars will not have a monthly fee to play. The ArenaNet folks helped create Blizzard's Battle.net, so they've done the free online thing before. **G**



BY DUNJIN MASTER



- Developed by ArenaNet
- Published by NCsoft
- Target release date: 2004



FIRST LOOK

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth



W HEN GAMEPRO REPORTED on Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth some months ago, there was little more than a preview movie to show the creepy coolness the title promises. Thanks to the title's acquisition by Morrowind publisher Bethesda Softworks, Headfirst's labor of Lovecraft is alive and kicking. Based on some of H. P. Lovecraft's most famous works, Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth is the tale of a hapless investigator thrust into the mind-shattering world of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Lovecraft's stories never end well, so there's some concern as to whether Headfirst can simulate the Mythos and make a fun game at the same time. Still, everything points to a truly awesome experience when the game ships next year. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Headfirst Productions
- Published by Bethesda Softworks
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



UPDATE



Homeworld 2

T HE ORIGINAL HOMEWORLD was a PC landmark, the first real-time strategy game to do more with 3D than just model terrain. Unfortunately, the addition of a Z-axis meant only budding Ender Wiggins could play (the enemy's gate is down!). Homeworld 2 does a few key things to make the game feel less like trigonometry homework and more like a game, not the least of which is an insanely welcome targeting circle that snaps to the nearest laser fodder. Small ships are now grouped in squadrons; larger capital ships' individual systems can be targeted in precision strikes. The sense of scale in the preview build was sensational as barrages of lasers and glowing ship trails weaved a weird sort of light web that made for some hyper-hypnotic epic battles. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed by Relic
- Published by Vivendi Universal
- Target release date: August



HANDS-ON

THE SAND IS WET WITH BLOOD.

THE GROUND IS LITTERED WITH

THE BODIES OF THOSE FALLEN.

YOUR LUNGS CRY FOR AIR.

YOUR HEART SCREAMS IN YOUR CHEST.

YOUR HANDS ARE SLICK WITH SWEAT.

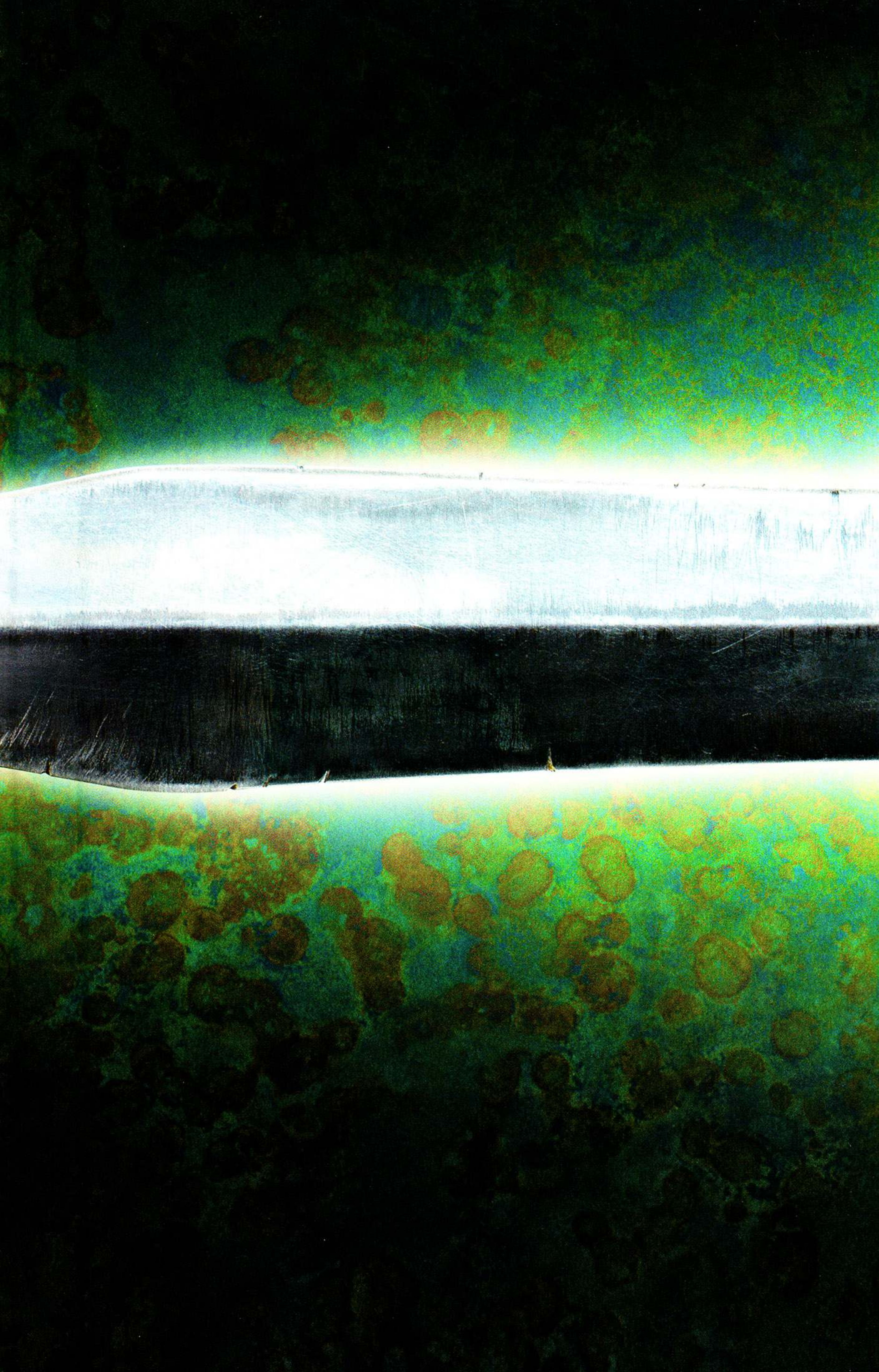
THE ENEMY SURROUNDS YOU.

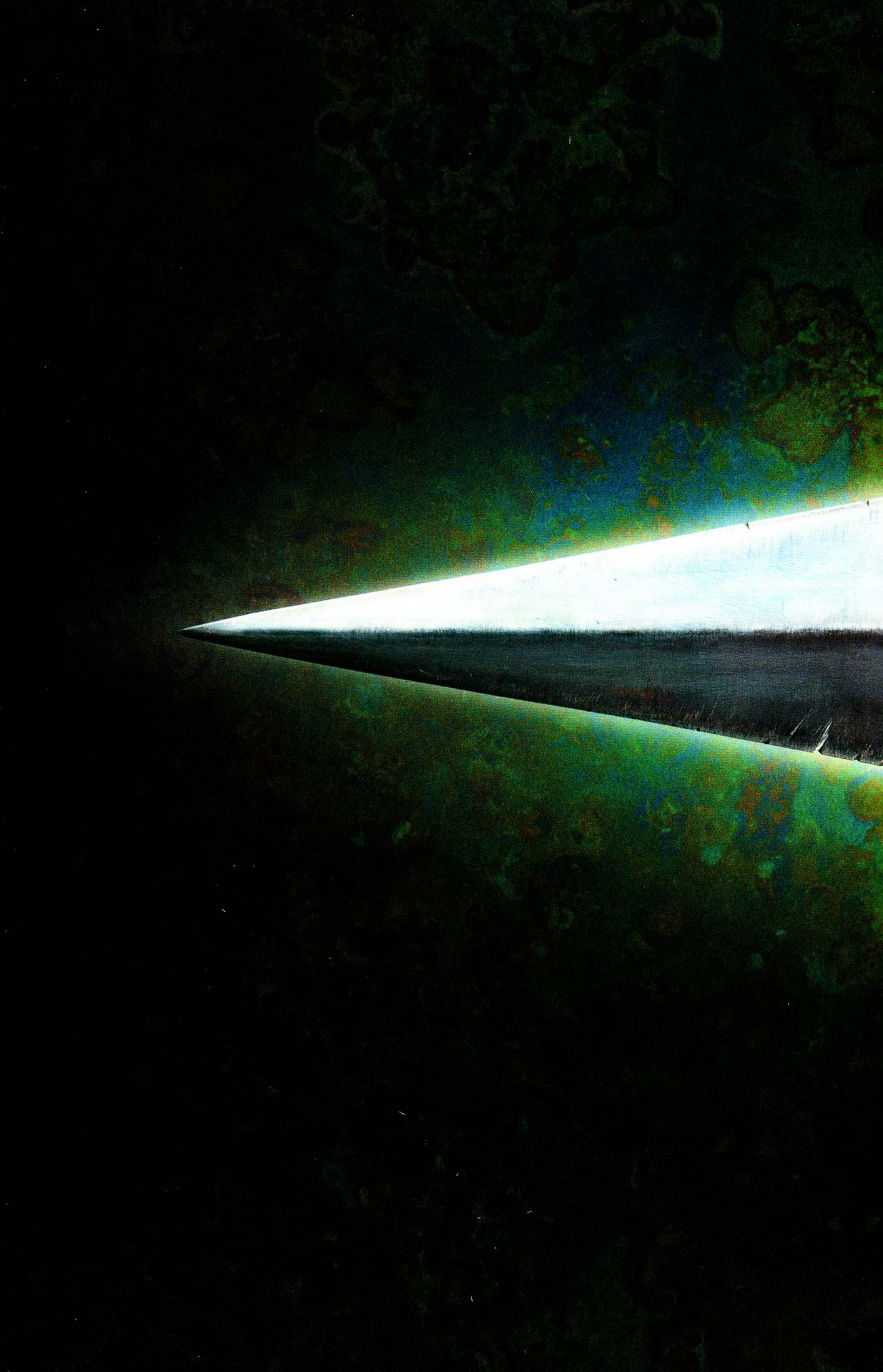
THE CROWD ROARS FOR YOUR HEAD.



WHAT WILL STAND BETWEEN YOU

AND YOUR DEATH?











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Not much is known about the sparkling cities of this dry and arid land across the sea. The Palace of Iblis is known as the premier arena of this distant land—built by a tyrant king who is said to have converted a wing of his palace into an arena to quench his thirst for bloodshed. There are rumors of dark magic, and many travelers have returned from voyages there with tales of men who summon lightning from the sky and bend it to their will.



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In the hands of a skilled warrior, the sword is as versatile as it is deadly. From the lightning-fast short swords of the Imperial Secutors to the massive two-handed blades of the Nordagh barbarians—many a gladiator has faced death time and time again with nothing but his sword and his wits.

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too slow to sw

SWORDS



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AFTER *the fall* of the DARK GOD,

the bloody war between Imperia and Nordagh was ended, but at a terrible price. Mankind had very nearly been destroyed.

In the wake of this horror, the people of the world vowed never to wage war against each other

again. In the uneasy peace that followed,

the skills of bloodshed were largely

confined to the arena. Schools of

gladiators from strange lands

hardened themselves in local

leagues hoping to compete in

the glorious tournaments

of Imperia. This is the

world that Valens

and Ursula are

born into. Valens,

the son of a legendary

gladiator, trying to grow

out of his father's shadow.

ponents into submission with these crushing brutes. Hammers are the most powerful weapons in the arena. And while they may be too heavy and strong for some people's style, the smashing results are well worth the wait.

HAMMERS



GLA

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If you want to fell opponents like small trees, you want a two-handed blow and victory is yours. While not nearly as agile as the sword, carry more weight, allowing the wielder to deliver a much more p

AXES



GLADIUS™

GLADIATORIAL RPG





THE WINDWARD STEPPES

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THE WILDS OF NORDAGH

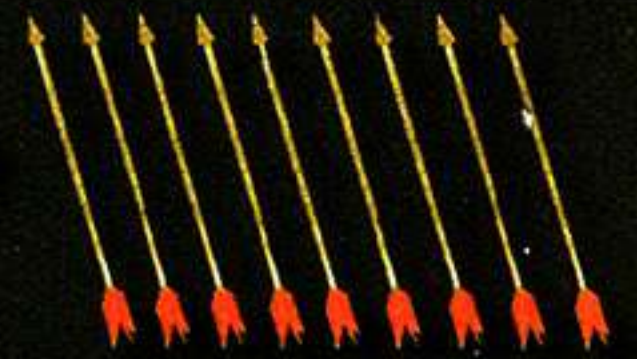
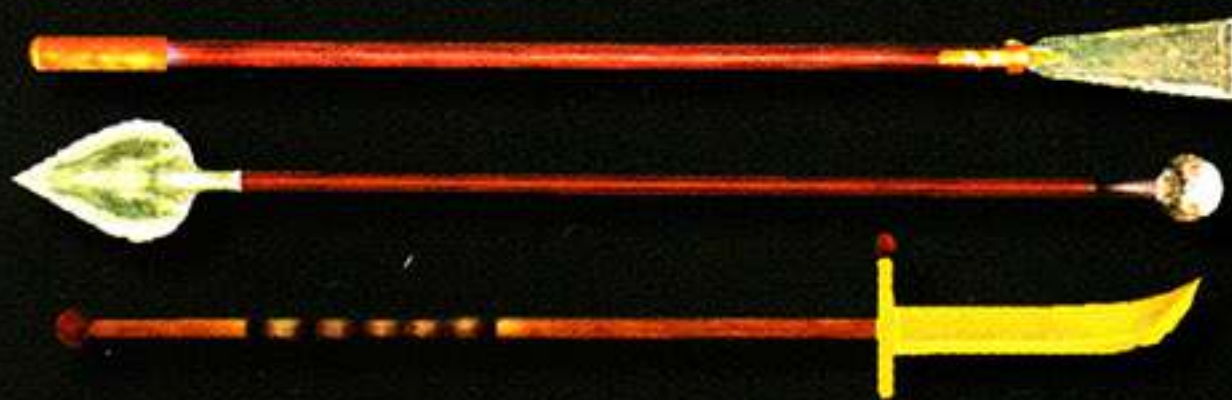
Dark land of mighty barbarians. During the Great War, the kings of Nordagh fought mighty armies of Imperia to a standstill. A huge wall separates Imperia from this wild and rugged land of dark forests and imposing mountains. The barbarian lands have a deep and mysterious history of magic—from the Galdr witches who counsel the kings to warriors who wield strange powers. The arenas of Nordagh are as harsh as its people, Mordare's Den, where warriors fight inside the bones of a long-dead dragon.



axe. A single
axes tend to
powerful strike.

The Gungnirs are so skilled with the javelin they've been known to pin their enemies' feet to the ground. And Imperial gladiators are learning the accuracy of the archers of the Steppes with their deaths. Beware the ranged weapons, for you might find yourself dead before you know the fight has begun.

RANGED WEAPONS



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PlayStation®2

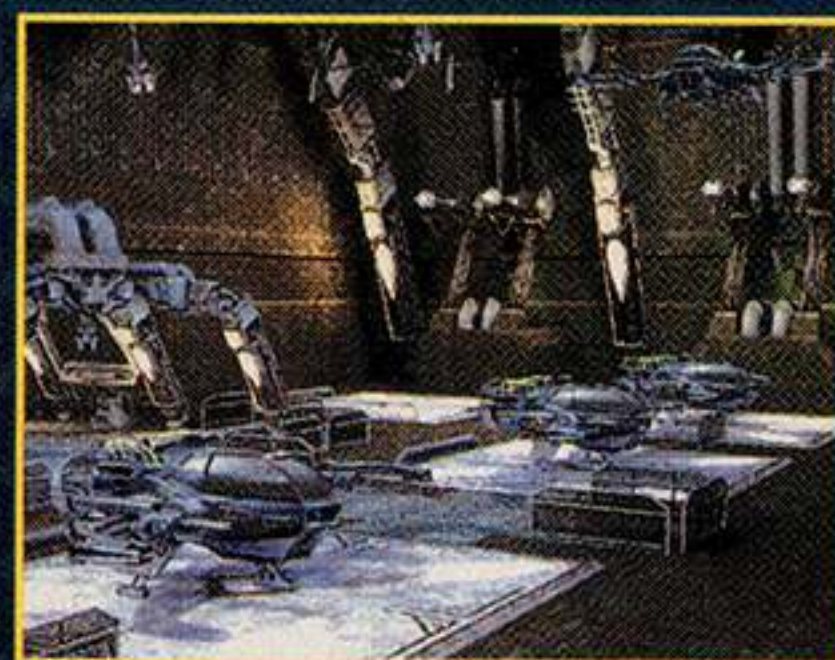




Unreal Tournament 2004

AS THE MULTIPLAYER arm of the Unreal franchise, Unreal Tournament 2004 faces the challenge of being enough of an upgrade from Unreal Tournament 2003 to warrant purchase of the new game. Judging from the game's list of features, it looks like it's up to the challenge. Unreal Tournament 2004 will ship with more brand-new maps than the number of maps in the previous game altogether, including over 15 levels built for Assault and Onslaught, 2004's two new game types. Consider that Unreal Tournament 2004 will add land-, sea-, and air-based vehicles, voice communication support, and the ability

for people outside of the game to watch broadcasts of matches via UnrealTV, and this year's model looks ready to trump last year's champion. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



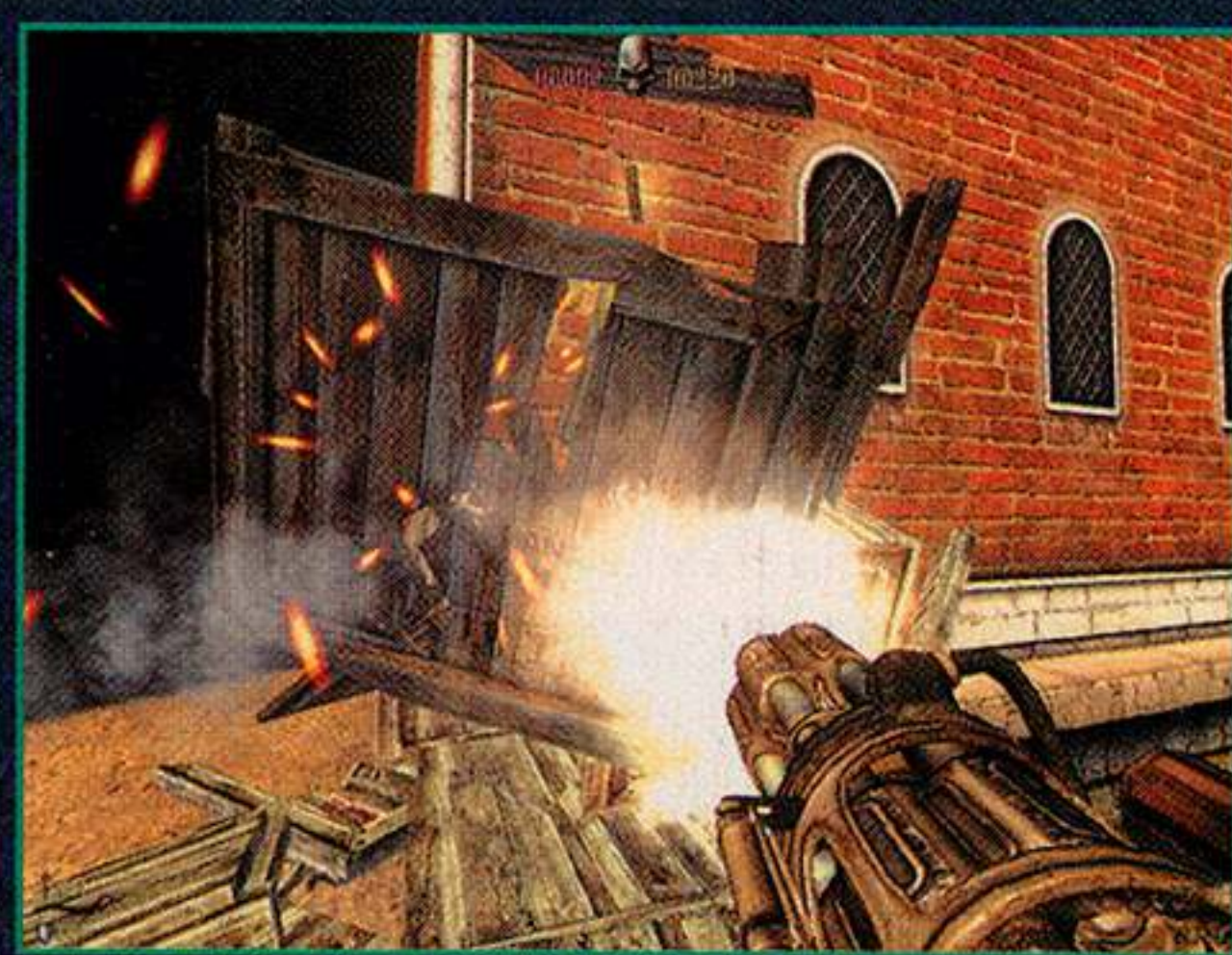
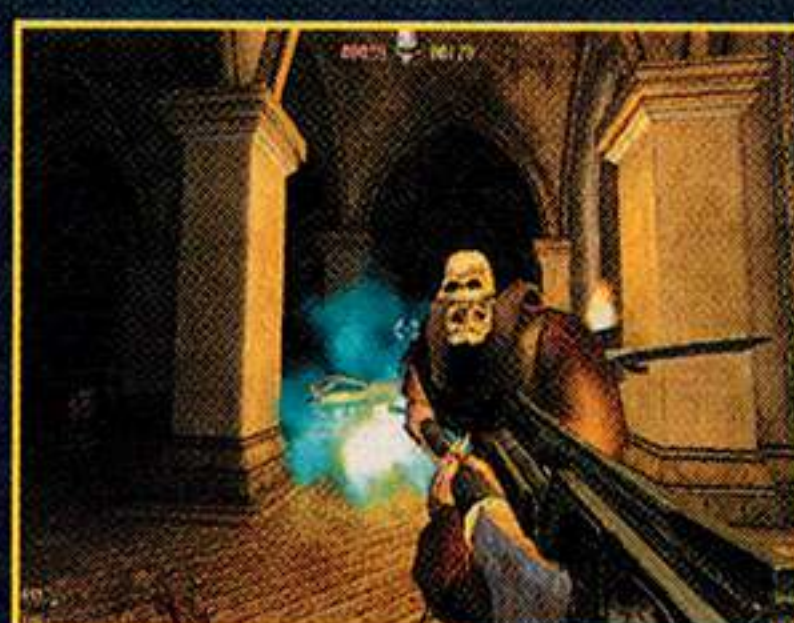
- Developed by Epic/Digital Extremes
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: Fall 2003



FIRST LOOK

Painkiller

FPS GAMES THESE days seem to fall into two categories: tactical World War II sims and everything else. Painkiller, a game by Polish developer People Can Fly, is clearly in the latter category. You are Daniel Garner, an automobile-accident victim who finds himself in a horrific battle for his soul in the Underworld. Your unholy pact means you can morph into new terrifying shapes after collecting the souls of 100 enemies, but it also means you'll have to mow down waves of endless bad guys and knock down humongous bosses to save your soul. If you're worried about having to think



too much, don't—Painkiller is a straightforward shootfest in Hell. Sound familiar, Doom fans? With the ubiquitous HAVOK physics engine and some seriously awesome visuals, Painkiller might be just the remedy you're looking for. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by People Can Fly
- Published by DreamCatcher Interactive
- Target release date: November

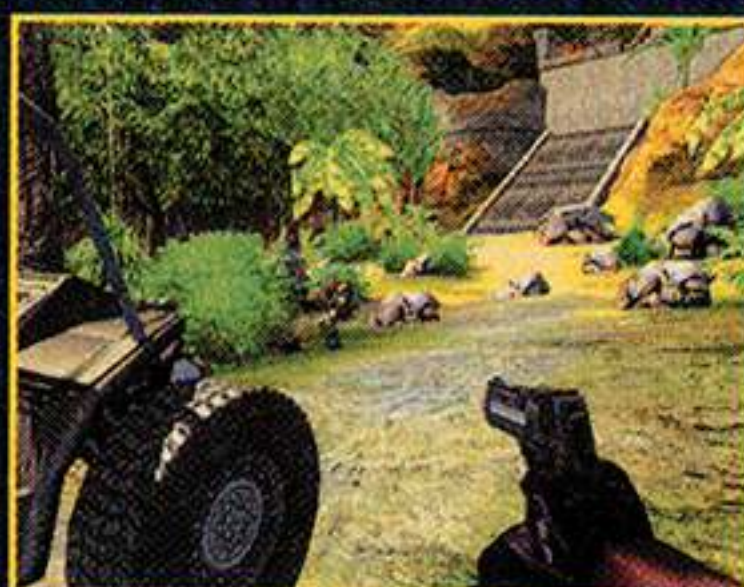
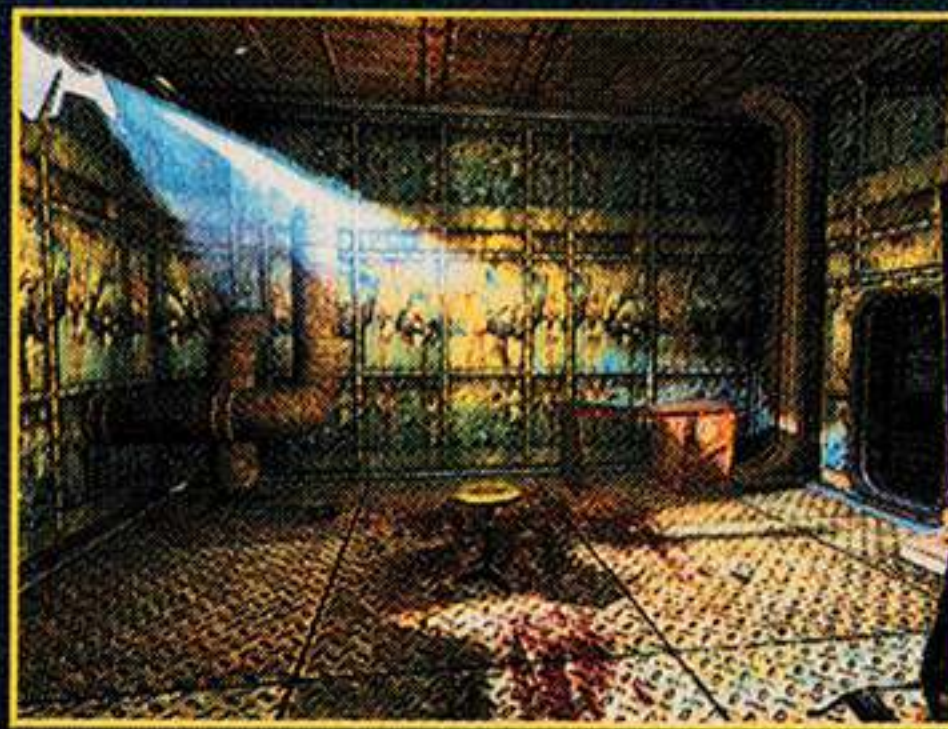
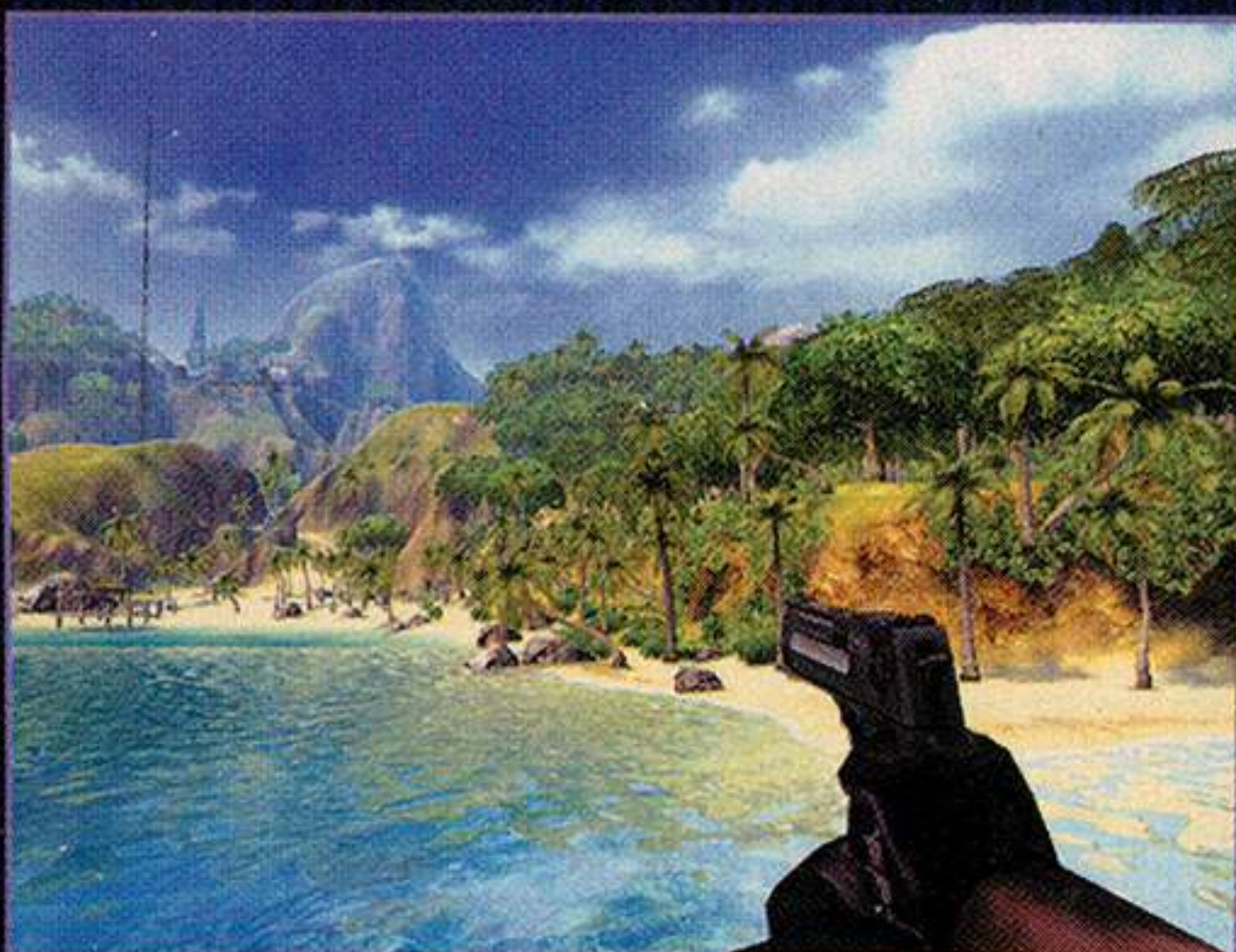


FIRST LOOK

Far Cry

FAR CRY LOOKS like a game based on a technical achievement—the Far Cry engine enables you to see farther than ever before with 800-meter scalable vision and the ability to lock on to enemies with your super-powerful motion-sensing binoculars. In Far Cry, you are manly-man Jack Carver, hired to escort a gorgeous reporter to a tropical paradise. Of course, when you reach the island, you're

quickly attacked by artillery fire from a mysterious island militia. Suddenly, you have to fight tons of mercenaries and get to the bottom of the devious plans of an evil madman. Far Cry will feature realistic physics, diverse gameplay, and enhanced A.I. If it can pull those things off, then FPS fans just might cry tears of joy. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Crytek Studios
- Published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: Winter 2003



FIRST LOOK



Mario and Luigi

CHICKEN CON BROCCOLI! Weird is the watchword with Mario and Luigi, a strange 2D platformer/RPG hybrid creature cut from Paper Mario's scrap papyrus. You play as both brothers (together or separate) as they wander around in a traditional top-down RPG perspective, climbing on each other's shoulders and using each other's heads to get through puzzle-laden environments. (Why? 'Cuz Princess Peach has been captured by a witch, that's why.) When you meet an enemy, the game switches to an Active Time Battle mode as each brother takes turns smacking enemies in order to earn experience, build skills, and bolster their hit point meters. The twist: When enemies try to smack you back, you can tap a button and hop over their attacks in real time. It's a bizarre but promising twist on the plumbers' profession. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Nintendo
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

Fire Emblem

IT LOOKS LIKE one of Nintendo's longest-running and most popular tactical role-playing series (in Japan, at least) will finally be landing in American hands later this year. Don't question it—just accept it and smile. For those who've never had a chance to play with Fire, the games



are essentially more complex, hardcore fantasy versions of Advance Wars (no surprise, since Intelligent Systems developed both) with dragons, wizards, and Pegasus soldiers in place of tanks and artillery. This particular chapter in the Fire Emblem tells the story of Lin, an orphan who learns she's actually the heir to the throne of Rikea. As in similar games such as Tactics Ogre, your units level up and grow, but here,



once your units die, they're gone from the game for good. Ah, true evil, thou hast revealed thyself. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed by Intelligent Systems
- Published by Nintendo
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

Metroid: Zero Mission

WHILE MOVIE REMAKES usually suck, and people hate when George Lucas messes with their beloved Star Wars movies by inserting digital slugs where they don't belong, the same rule does not hold true for video games. As anyone who



unlocked the original NES Metroid in Metroid Prime can attest, sometimes you can't go home again when it comes to classic games—and what once was cool on an 8-bit system is decidedly craptacular in the light of the 21st century. That's why Metroid: Zero Mission could make a more than welcome addition to the GBA library: While real details are still shrouded in Nintendo mystery, it



BY EVIL STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Nintendo
- Target release date: 2004



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK



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Mario and Donkey Kong

OLD RIVALRIES DIE hard: That's why on-again off-again enemy-friends Donkey Kong and Mario are at each other's



throats once again in this puzzly new Nintendo plat-



former for the Game Boy Advance. Mario and Donkey Kong takes place in a factory that makes little Mario dolls;



there are lots of switches to press, traps to avoid, and items to collect in the classic 2D platformer style. The game represents a sort of retrospective of the Mario-Kong dichotomy: Look closely at the screens, and you may notice some familiar-looking gameplay chunks and level layouts taken from Donkey Kong Jr. and Donkey Kong 3 (the weird bug-spraying game that featured the titular ape but not Mario). Unfortunately, Nintendo hasn't announced a release date for Mario and Donkey Kong just yet; keep your bananas peeled. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Nintendo
- Target release date: To be determined



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

CIMA: The Enemy

NATSUME'S AMBITIOUS RPG, CIMA: The Enemy, spins the yarn of Arc J, guardian of a gate that divides two worlds—the world of humans and that of demi-human creatures called CIMA. Mankind and the CIMA have been at war for decades, and when the conflict threatens to reach a boiling point, you join Arc J as he struggles to defend humanity and bring about peace between the two races. Natsume will combine nonlinear, real-time gameplay with an innovative battle system that incorporates both action and strategy elements.



A unique system will enable you to "activate" NPCs in the game to solve puzzles, while a richly crafted story should keep you hooked through the game's 30-plus hours. **G**



BY PONG SIFU



- Developed by Neverland
- Published by Natsume
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue

WHEN A NEW Ham-Ham named Bo falls from the sky, it's up to Hamtaro, Bijou, and the rest of the gang to help him find the ingredients to make a rainbow that will take him home in Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue. You'll be able to control all of your favorite Ham-Hams as a team, including, for the first time, Boss, Oxnard, and Pashmina. More than 100 mini-games and various tasks will break up the action, and you'll be able to trade earned sticker cards with friends by linking GBA systems. **G**



BY PONG SIFU



- Developed and published by Nintendo
- Target release date: To be determined



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

DemiKids: White of Night/ Darkness of Day

DEMIKIDS: WHITE OF NIGHT and DemiKids: Darkness of Day are the newest (and easily the "cutest") entries in the Shin Megami Tensei series that spans 15 years and several consoles, including the PlayStation's Persona RPGs. DemiKids is set up a little more like a Pokémon game, though it exchanges your usual cuddly Pocket Monsters for raging demons and complicated narratives. You can trade demons between White and Darkness via the GBA link cable, a fusion system makes it possible to collect up to 350 different monsters, and you can negotiate with enemies instead of annihilating them, as in the Persona games. **G**



BY DJ DINOBOT



- Developed and published by Atlus
- Target release date: October



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRST LOOK

A New Class of Monkey Catching Madness



George
Most Likely to Be Inquisitive



Punto
Most Likely to Sink the Gondola



Libby
Most Likely to Swim to Ellis Island



Arthur
Most Likely to Get Pierced



Yellow Monkey
Most Likely to Be a Pro Wrestler



Pink Monkey
Most Likely to Be a Pop Star



El Toro
Most Likely to Grab the Bull by the Horns



Harley Q. Win
Most Likely to Annoy the King



Billy
Most Likely to Get a Speeding Ticket



Leo
Most Likely to Catch a Fever



Monko Polo
Most Likely to Find a Legendary Banana



Natalie
Most Likely to Lose Her Wits



Marshall
Most Likely to Punch the Ref



Larry
Most Likely to Step in Monkey Poo



Buzz
Most Likely to Be Lost in Space



Mr. White
Most Likely to Be an Evil Scientist



Stephenson
Most Likely to Walk the Plank



Jimmy
Most Likely to Save the World



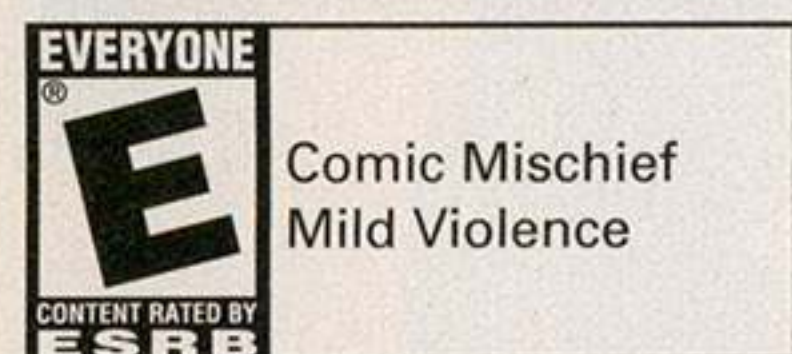
Specter
Most Likely to Take Over the World



Cleo
Most Likely to Walk Like an Egyptian



300 monkeys. They're smarter. They're zanier. And they're trying to take over the world.



PlayStation 2



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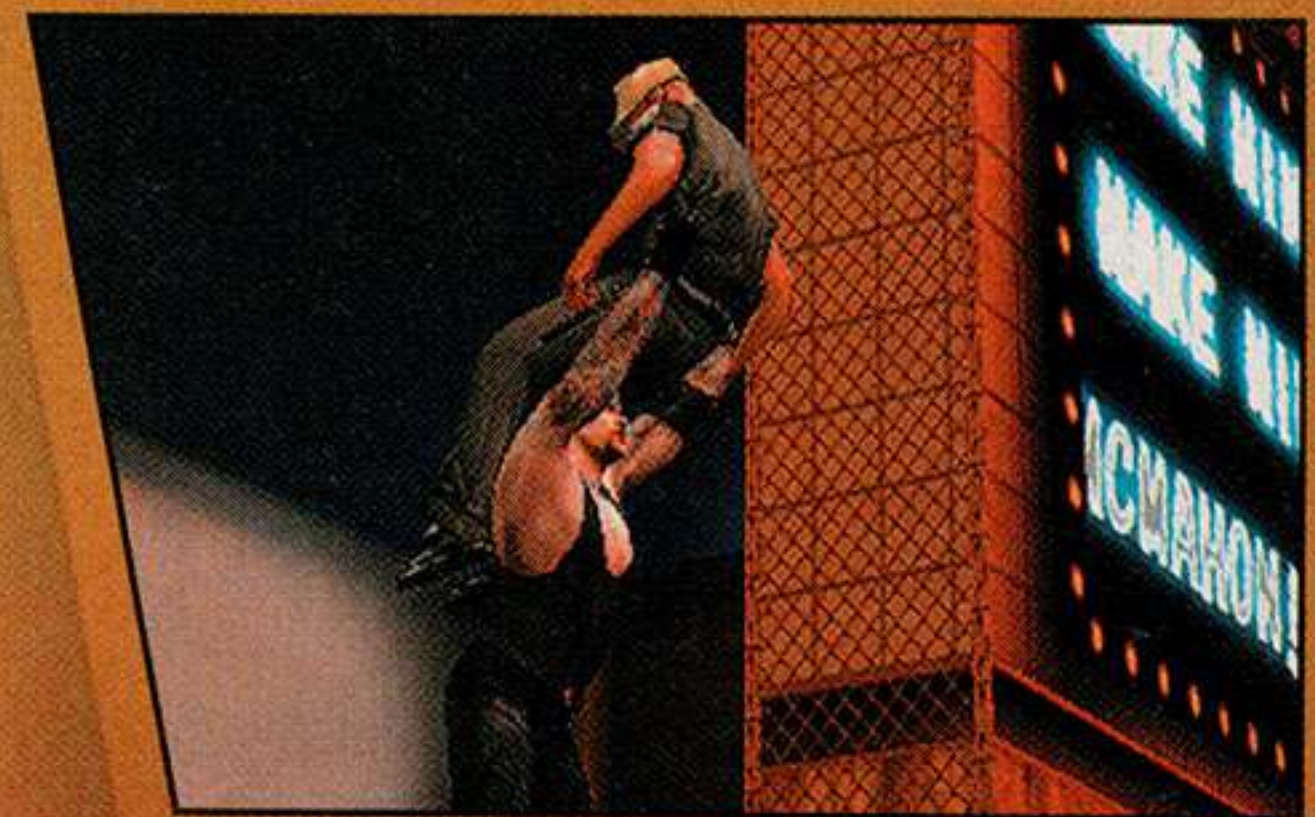
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Ninja Gaiden

FANS OF STEALTHY ninja games may turn up their collective noses at the latest from developer Team Ninja, but gamers who want their black-garbed hero to wield his Katana with extreme prejudice



should be in for a treat. *Ninja Gaiden* for the Xbox concentrates solely on super-fast combat and a healthy dose of style that Team Ninja promises "will redefine the boundaries of the action genre." How, exactly, it plans to carry this out is still being kept top secret as are details of promised online functionality.

The series first made its mark back in the late 1980s in arcades and on the 8-bit NES, but has been dormant since the 16-bit era. The hero, Ryu Hayabusa, has kept busy appearing in the *Dead or Alive* fighting games, but he finally gets back into the spotlight with this new Xbox revival. Ryu must regain "Ryuken," his magic sword, and avenge the massacre of his entire clan by the evil Vigor Empire and the mysterious Holy Emperor. A new save system that enables players to quit a game and restart from the same point should also help Ryu complete his mission. **G**



BY TOKYO DRIFTER



- Developed by Team Ninja
- Published by Tecmo
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK



Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando

RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO is the highly anticipated sequel to one of last year's best PlayStation 2 platform games. Once again, you play as titular hero Ratchet, who is a bit older and wiser after saving the universe in the first game, and his robotic partner, Clank, who isn't any wiser but certainly has learned plenty

of new tricks. Unfortunately, the new set of baddies they must take on are much craftier and tougher as well.

The current preview version enables play through the MakTar resort level, a Hoverbike Challenge, Gladiator Arena combat, and some Battle Sphere action. The resort level features the familiar jump-and-attack gameplay found in the original with

the addition of new weapons and a variety of interesting obstacles. Controlling Ratchet is a snap, and the new strafe function helps tremendously in targeting enemies. The Hoverbike Challenge plays out like a mix of *WipeOut* and a *Star Wars* pod race—maneuvering the craft has the right pseudo-weightless feel. The Gladiator Arena is

where you earn special items by defeating tough opponents, and the Battle Sphere levels take place on a perfectly circular mini-planet. **G**



BY TOKYO DRIFTER



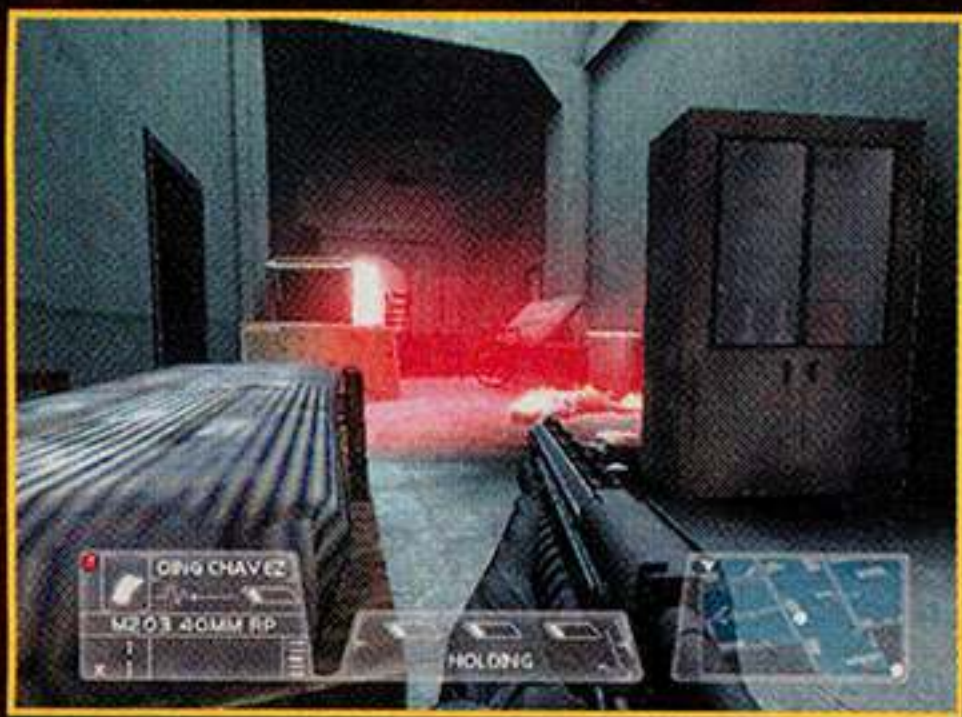
- Developed by Insomniac
- Published by SCEA
- Target release date: November



UPDATE

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3

THE WORLD'S PREMIER antiterrorist team is about to get a little busier fighting bad guys. But don't mistake this tactical



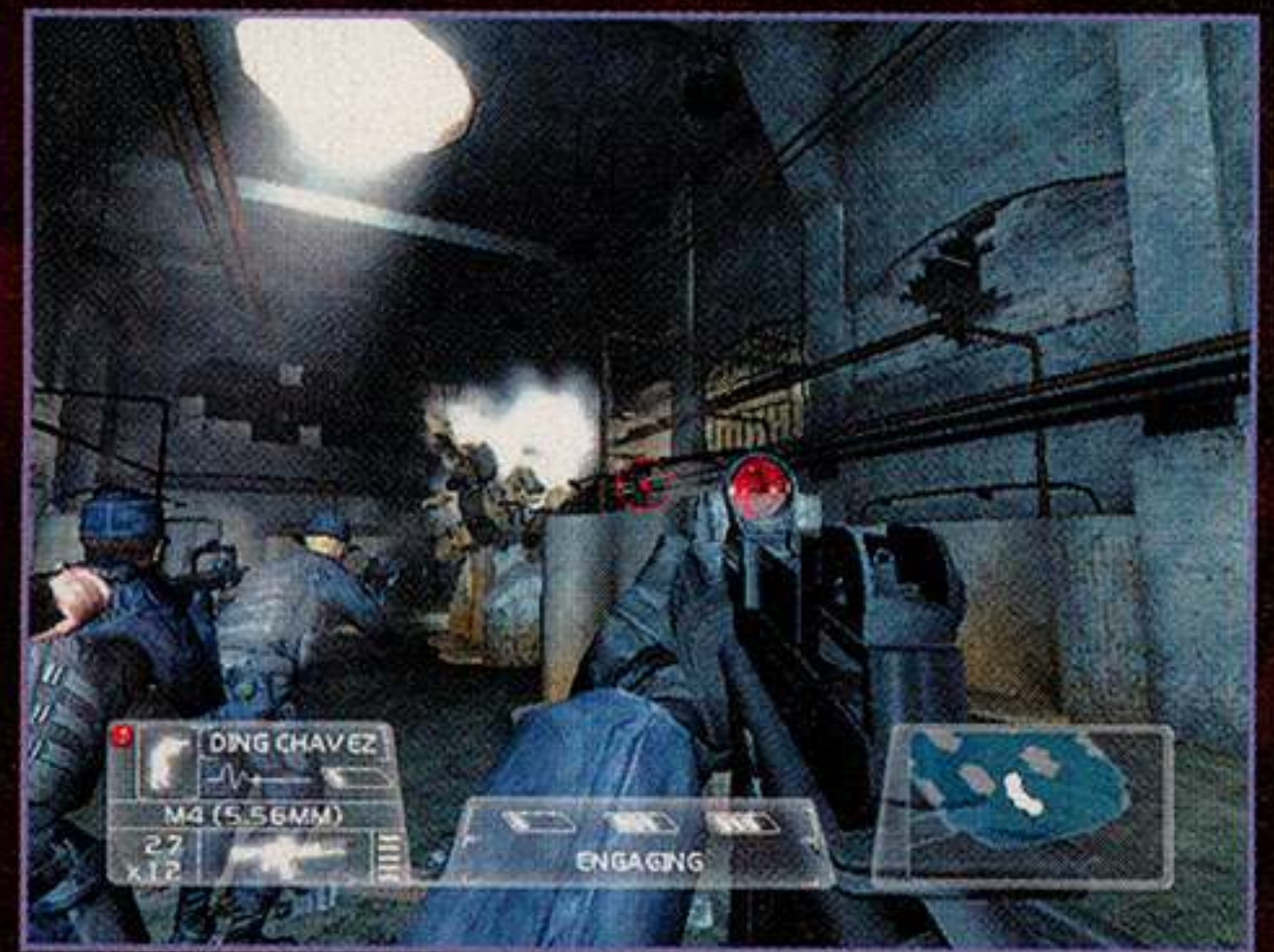
shooter for Raven Shield, the third Rainbow Six installment on the PC. Ubi Soft decided to scrap the idea of porting the PC classic in favor of revamping the entire game just for the Xbox. Everything is new, including the urban setting, plot, level structure, and enemy A.I. The most noticeable change is the improved visuals, which looked outstanding in an early build of the game. Perhaps the most promising new addition to Rainbow Six 3 will be the ability to play with other elite troopers via Xbox Live.



The core of the game won't diverge from the series' legendary gameplay: close-quarters battles using a squad of international soldiers equipped with the latest realistic weaponry. You can also direct your team

to perform various tasks

using the game's real-time order system and by voice-activated commands. Those street thugs won't stand a chance when team Rainbow arrives in the neighborhood this November. **G**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON



- Developed by Ubi Soft Montreal
- Published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK

Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home



SOMETIMES, YOU HAVE just one of those days when you want to square off against some guy, take him into the backyard, hit him with a flower pot, and lay his ass out on a flaming table before leaping onto him from the rafters of a concert stage erected nearby. If you're having one of those days, you might want to check out Eidos's Backyard Wrestling.

While the preview build for both systems could still use some polishing on graphics and A.I., the base for the game is already there: Use anything you can get your hands on to beat the hell out of your opponent while he tries hard to do the same to you. While the balance among brawling, grappling, and weapons fighting is still being tweaked, both the Xbox and PS2 builds showed a pretty strong timing-based reversal system and a couple of original stages on which to fight.

With the Insane Clown Posse and Kitana Baker (the brunette from the infamous Miller Lite catfight commercial) signed on to star as playable characters, Eidos's rough and rowdy risk could pay off—assuming developer Paradox can tighten the A.I. and smooth out the graphics in time for the October ship date. **G**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed by Paradox Development
- Published by Eidos
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON

Beyond Good & Evil

A VIRTUAL PARADE of bizarre and awesome things to look at, this ambitious PS2, Xbox, and GameCube fable feels like a maturely surreal PC graphic adventure (à la *The Longest Journey*) tempered by polished console action/adventure gameplay as seen in *Star Fox Adventures* or *The Wind Waker*. *Beyond Good & Evil* centers on a character named Jade, a freelance reporter in the watery world of Hyllis who earns money by traveling via hovercraft (*Wind Waker*-style, 'til she learns how to fly) to exotic locations to photograph rare species and events. Jade also happens to be (quite unwittingly) at the epicenter of an interstellar war as super-creepy H.R. Giger aliens (known as the DomZ) dip down to the planet's surface to steal people for ethereal fuel and other unfathomable purposes. What's worse, they're probably doing so with the Orwellian government's secret blessing.



Everything about the PS2 demo of BG&E—its story, characters, battles—was epic and cinematic with tons of voices, cut-scenes, and fight sequences that melted into dramatic slo-mo. Sidekicks play an important role in the gameplay, too, as Jade is often accompanied by another character with unique abilities. Imagine Ico, only with a boorish pig instead of a glowing princess. If the upcoming “year of the sequel” has you worried that originality might finally be dead, fear not, intrepid gamer. Hope lies in the Beyond.



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: November



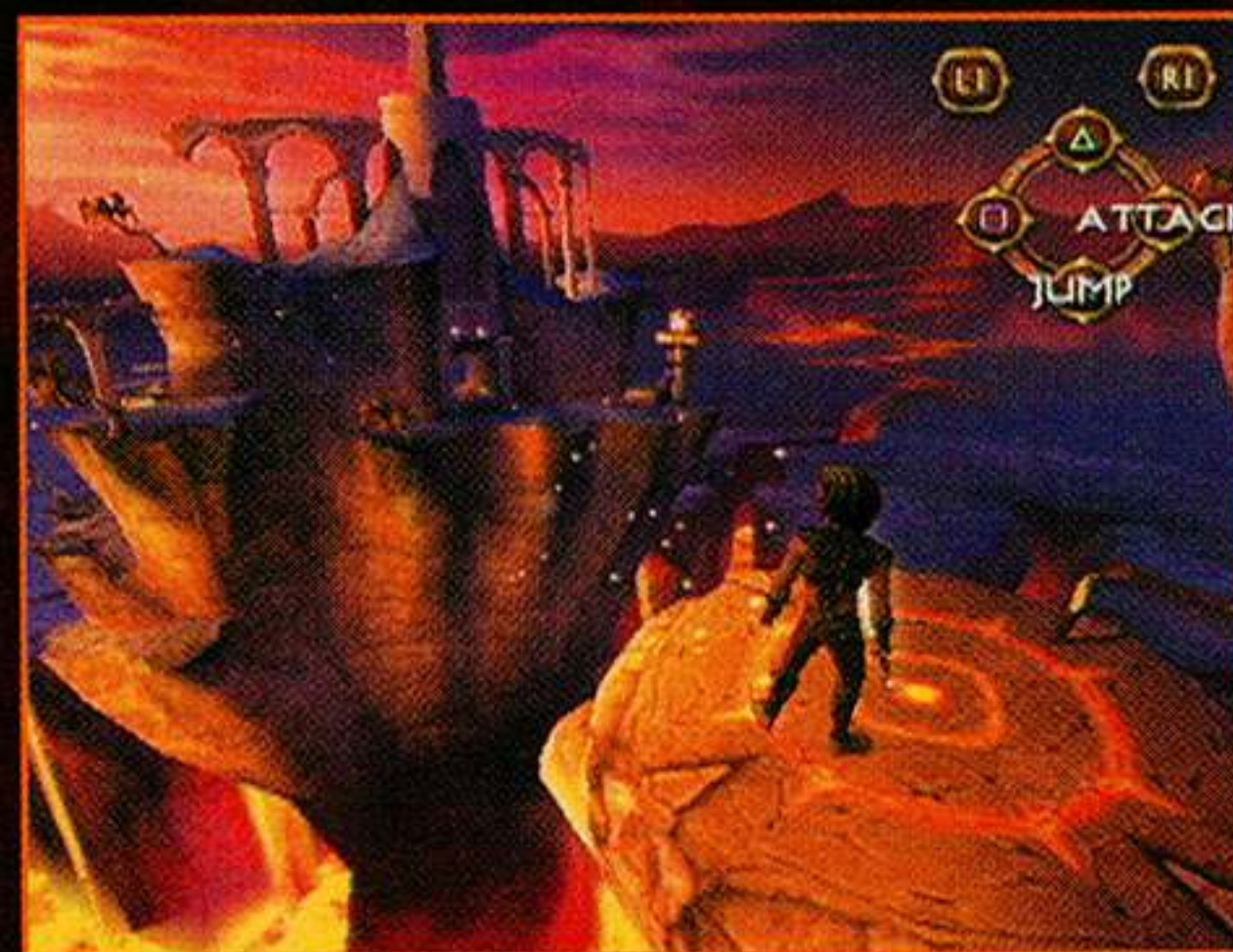
HANDS-ON

Sphinx and the Shadow of Set

WHAT GAME FOR the PS2 and GameCube has two main characters, really high production value, and ambitious aspirations to be the next *Legend of Zelda*? If you answered *Sphinx and the Shadow of Set*, you have answered correctly. Your life is spared...for now.

Sphinx is divided roughly 60/40 between the exploits of the fight-happy Sphinx (complete with an arsenal of bouncing acid blowdarts and explosive, remote-controlled scarabs) and the cowardly, puzzle-enjoying mummified corpse of Tutankhamen. As each hero struggles to thwart Set's scheme of replacing all the world's leaders with doppelgängers, the two travelers' tales inevitably intertwine. The presentation and polish are already very much in place in *Sphinx*—the game looks quite beautiful and runs very smoothly.

One of the complaints levied against *The Wind Waker* is that its puzzles were just way too easy—too many times a character spelled out what to do instead of letting you figure it out for yourself. The puzzles in the PS2 preview version of *Sphinx* seemed a little on the brainier side, requiring careful observation of the dungeons' vast chambers and quite a bit of visual logic. Not too surprising, given the subject matter.



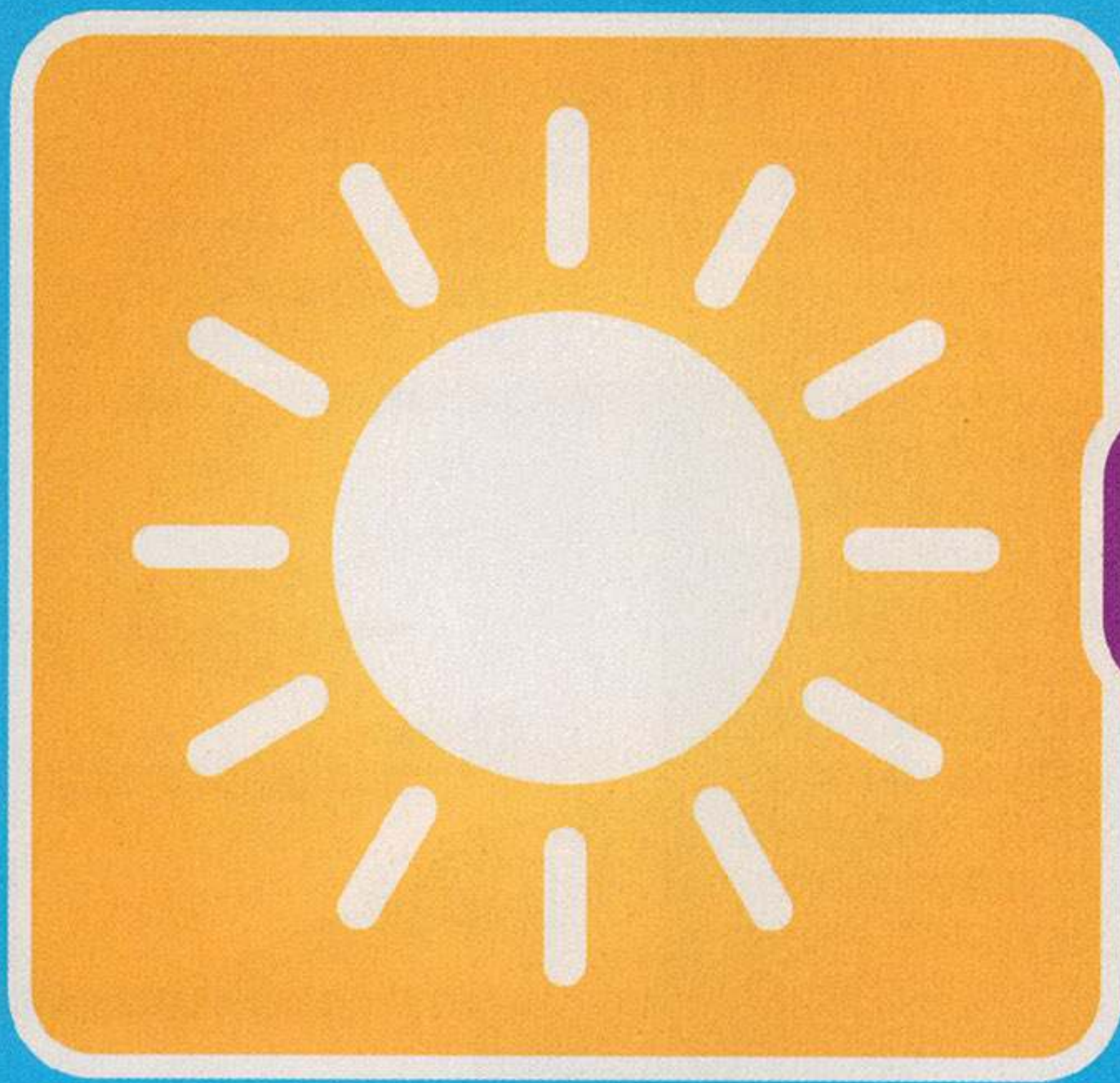
BY EVIL STAR DINGO



- Developed by Eurocom
- Published by THQ
- Target release date: September



HANDS-ON



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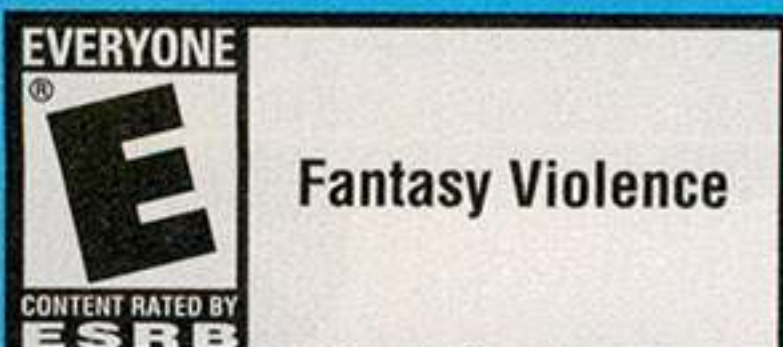
Utilize sunlight to become more powerful by day



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Multiplayer game modes for 2-4 players



GAME BOY ADVANCE

KONAMI

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Otogi: Myth of Demons

SO FAR, OTOGI sure looks and feels like Sega's other sword-wielding, scarf-loving, martial arts champ, Shinobi—only this time it's an Xbox-only title. In an early build of the game, there was plenty of hack-n-slash drama set in ancient Japan. You could customize more than 30 weapons, perform a



variety of magic spells, and collect special anti-demon items in more than 25 levels. The story revolves around the exploits of a mystic hero and is based on classic Japanese mythologies. For Shinobi fans who couldn't get enough, Otogi should be your next round of frenzied blade fun. **G**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed by From Software
- Published by Sega
- Target release date: August

Xbox

HANDS-ON

Lethal Skies II

THE FLIGHT CREW of Lethal Skies is trying one more time to gain air superiority, even though its first attempt failed miserably. This time around, the story takes place in a war-torn future Earth. You can command up to 19 fighter jets in over 20 missions, choose your wingmen's aircraft, pick your own ordinance, and issue commands during your flights. In an early build of Lethal Skies II, the visuals didn't show any improvement, and the gameplay felt the same—extremely arcadey and very unrealistic—though the controls were much more responsive. **G**



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed by Asmik Ace Entertainment
- Published by Sammy Studios
- Target release date: September

PLAYSTATION 2

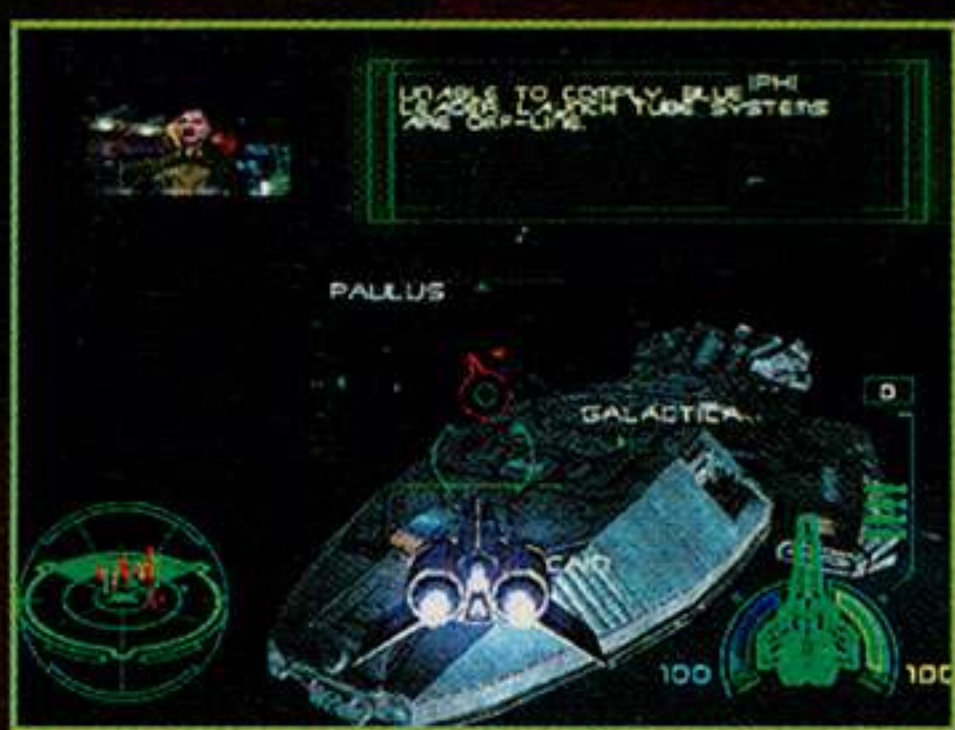
HANDS-ON

Battlestar Galactica

SCI-FI NERDS, THE wait is almost over: The game based on the 1970s TV series *Battlestar Galactica* is nearly ready. The game (which is coming out for the PS2 and Xbox) serves



as a prequel, shooting back in the story line about 40 years and giving players a chance to battle the Cylons as a young Ensign Adama. The Xbox build featured lots of placeholder elements, but the core gameplay—space combat in a one-man Colonial Viper, blasting dozens of Cylon Raiders—showed promise, and being able to adjust weapons, shields, and other ship attributes on the fly was definitely welcome. The coolest bit: the crimson reflection of your face in the cockpit glass when firing lasers! **G**



BY BAD HARE

- Developed by Warthog
- Published by Vivendi Universal
- Target release date: August

Xbox

HANDS-ON

SWAT: Global Strike Team

GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM takes place in the near future, where SWAT skills are in demand all over the world. You play as a commander who, along with two side-kicks, takes out bad guys in a



variety of urban environments. Voice recognition is the hot tool for gaming's future, and although verbal commands worked on an early version of GST on the Xbox, they seemed to have a slower response time than just pressing buttons. Still, for a game based on SWAT tactics, yelling at aggressors to put down their weapons or directing a companion to clear a room is exhilarating. If Argonaut can polish the visuals and improve A.I. movements, Global Strike Team could make a favorable appearance this September. **G**

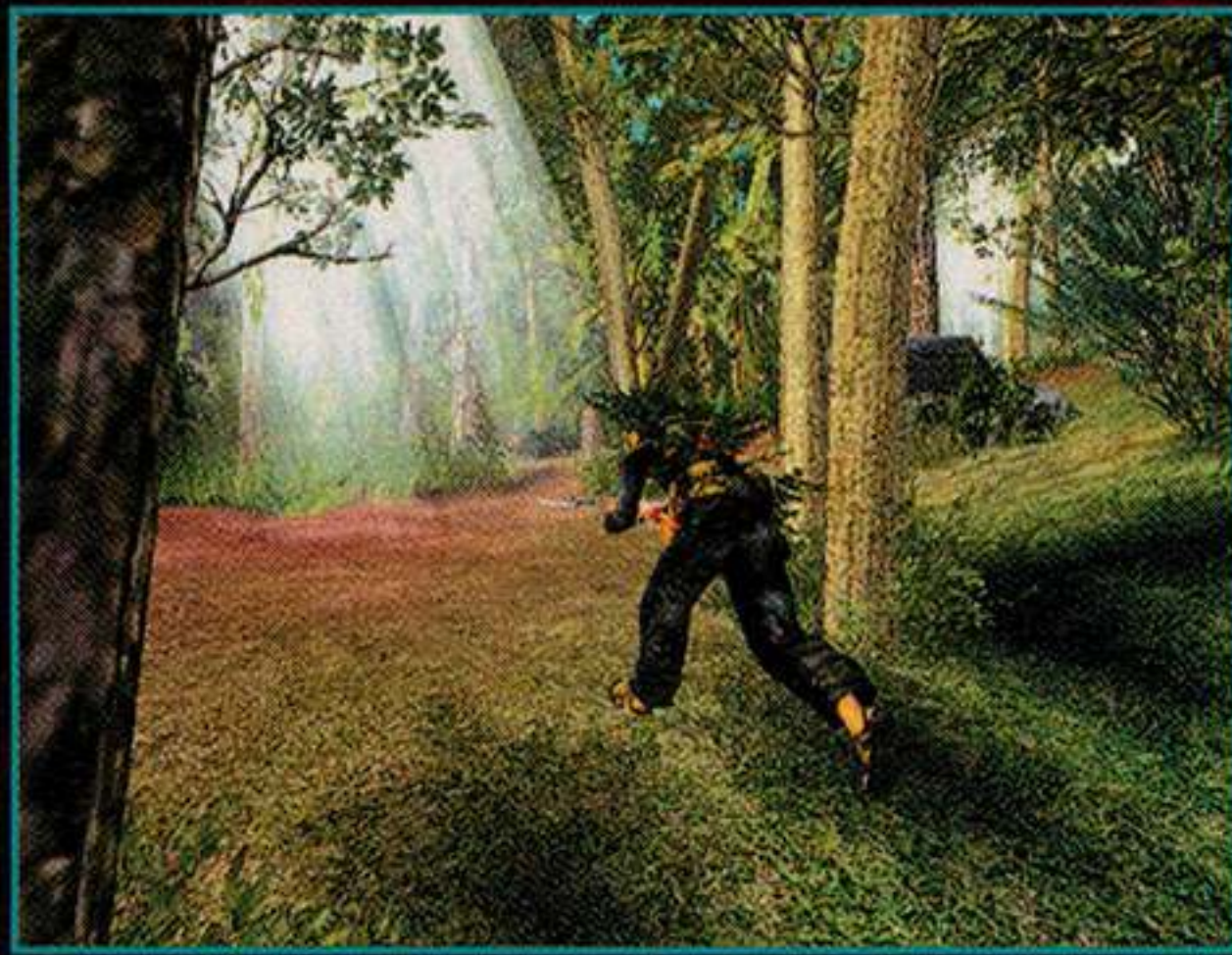


BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed by Argonaut Software
- Published by Vivendi Universal
- Target release date: September

Xbox

HANDS-ON



Men of Valor: Vietnam

THE CREATORS OF Medal of Honor: Allied Assault for the PC are crafting a first-person shooter using the Vietnam War as a backdrop, but could they be walking into a treacherous political minefield? Men of Valor: Vietnam (coming to the Xbox in early 2004 and the PC later in the year) uses Unreal Warfare technology to deliver scenarios set in the early years of the Vietnam conflict. As in Allied Assault, the missions will be filled with A.I. platoonmates to watch your back and scripted events intended to make you feel all the confusion and disorientation of jungle combat. This is controversial territory, to be sure...here's hoping 2015 knows how to handle it right. **G**



BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed by 2015
- Published by Vivendi Universal
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

UBI SOFT HAS finally revealed the sequel to Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell. Subtitled Pandora Tomorrow, the new game is due to hit stores in the first quarter of 2004. Although Ubi Soft's being a little stingy on the details, it appears that Pandora will still concentrate on the single-player stealth action that made the original such a joy to play. There will also be a heavy online component this time around, and several players will be able to explore large areas at once. **G**



BY FENNEC FOX

- Developed and published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK

Cy Girls

CHARLIE'S ANGELS meet William Gibson's *Neuromancer* when the sexy ladies of Konami's upcoming Cy Girls try to put a lid on some dirty cyber-terrorism around the world's most dangerous underbellies and inside the abstract landscape of cyberspace. Ice is a crackerjack with firearms, Aska is a ninja, and together they may be unbeatable...but what's really important is that they're sexy. An eight-way directional control scheme allows the girls to move in any direction while putting the bop to enemies...in all ways sexy, of course. **G**



BY PONG SIFU

- Developed and published by Konami
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK

kill.switch

THE PREVIEW BUILD of Namco's kill.switch feels like no other military shooter before it thanks to its high-octane gameplay. It forces you to find ways to use the environment for cover at breakneck speeds while opponents use impressive team-based tactics to dish out some hurt. So far, the game looks wicked, the touted offensive cover system is most dope, and if Namco can tune up the controls and clean up the animation so the main character doesn't look so uncomfortable while running, then kill.switch will be all set. **G**



BY PONG SIFU

- Developed and published by Namco
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON

Star Trek: Shattered Universe

STAR TREK: Shattered Universe is the first of a planned series of games to be published by TDK and set in Gene Roddenberry's original futuristic utopia. The frenetic space-combat game takes place in an alternate reality during the timeline of the original series in which the Federation is a force of imperialism and oppression rather than discovery and peacekeeping. You'll be able to pilot six ships, each of which is being created exclusively for the game, throughout 19 levels of raging space warfare, and you'll even encounter classic Trek characters...but will Spock have a goatee? **G**



BY PONG SIFU

- Developed by StarSphere
- Published by TDK Mediactive
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK



Jak II

IN JAK II, Jak and Daxter venture into new territory in more ways than one. Picking up where their last game left off, Sony's signature heroes open a time portal and unwittingly allow the evil Metalheads to invade their world as they themselves are hurtled into a war-ravaged future.

The game features a darker tone than in its predecessor as Jak is captured, tortured, and juiced with Dark Eco. He transforms into a sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde personality that enables him to bust out with some supermoves when he snatches energy from vanquished foes.

Naughty Dog is showcasing a new game engine in Jak II. The game world is much more expansive than the original's. For example, the main city is about 20 times larger than Jak & Daxter's main 'ville. That also sets up extensive hoverboard action. The 'board plays a more prominent role in the gameplay than it did in Jak and Daxter.

Entire sections of some areas require Jak to master Tony Hawk-like moves. In the preview build, the hoverboard responded smoothly and instantly to the right analog stick controls, and

you could quickly break it out by pressing R1. But, of course, if you think all you're going to do is cruise half-pipes and bust railslides, you don't know Jak.

BY BROTHER BUZZ



- Developed by Naughty Dog
- Published by Sony
- Target release date: October



PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON



Metal Arms: Glitch in the System

DESCRIBED BY ITS creators as a cross between Halo and Ratchet & Clank, Metal Arms: Glitch in the System looks cute but blows up real good. As Glitch, you're out to destroy the evil General Corrosive, freeing your iron brethren from his clutches by any means necessary—rockets, sawblade shooters, EMP grenades, you name it. One of the coolest gadgets lets you jack into and take possession of other 'bots for undercover mayhem; run the 'bot to destruction, and it's one less enemy you have to take out later!

Another innovation is Metal Arms' cool two-handed weapon system: You can select different weapons for each hand, and some can be used in tandem (the slingshot can be used to send grenades much further, for instance). In the three-level Xbox demo, it worked wonderfully. Brilliant explosions, funny animations (scared robots flee—and scream!), expansive levels, unusual enemies (including piles of sentient scrap that rebuild themselves), and an overall sense of adrenaline-fueled shooter mayhem made an early version of Metal Arms surprisingly addictive. Suddenly, that whole Ratchet-meets-Halo comparison makes a lot of sense—and Metal Arms seems destined to become a sleeper hit in November.



Note: All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.



BY DAN ELEKTRO



- Developed by Swingin' Ape Studios
- Published by Vivendi Universal
- Target release date: November



PLAYSTATION 2



XBOX



GAMECUBE

HANDS-ON

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PlayStation 2



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Violence

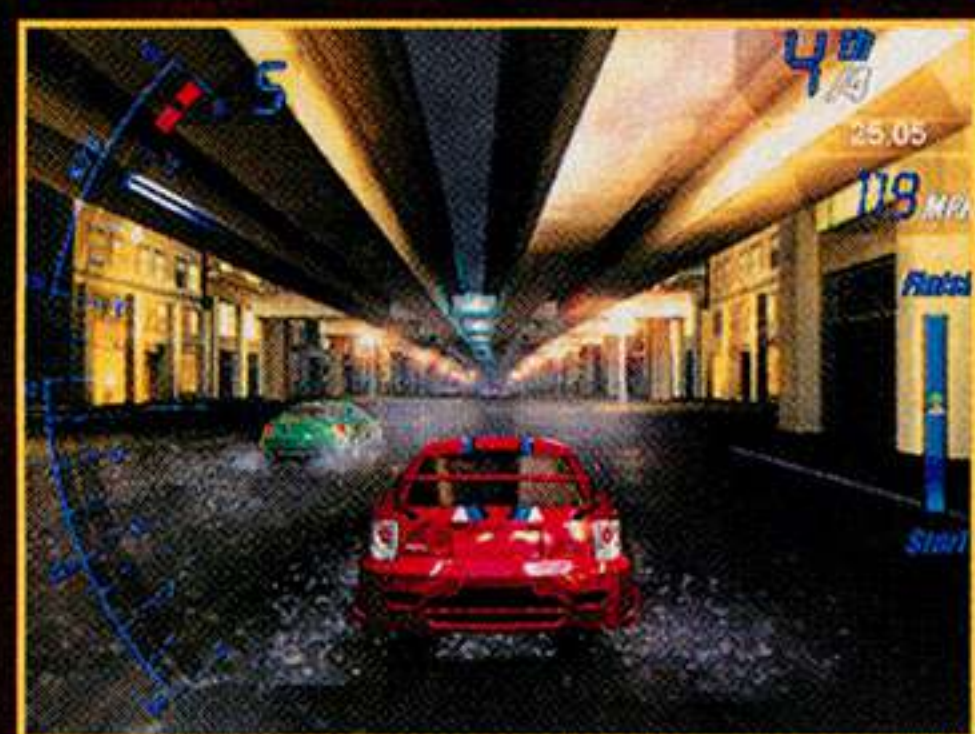
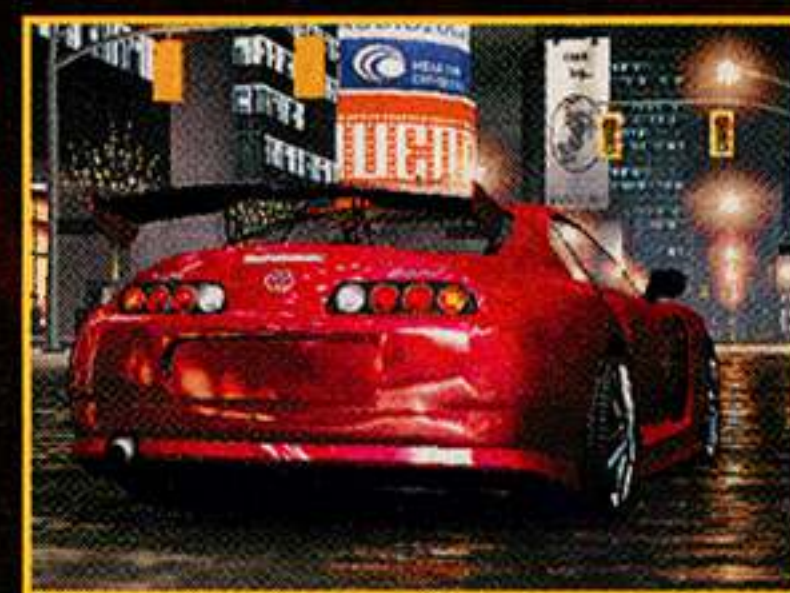
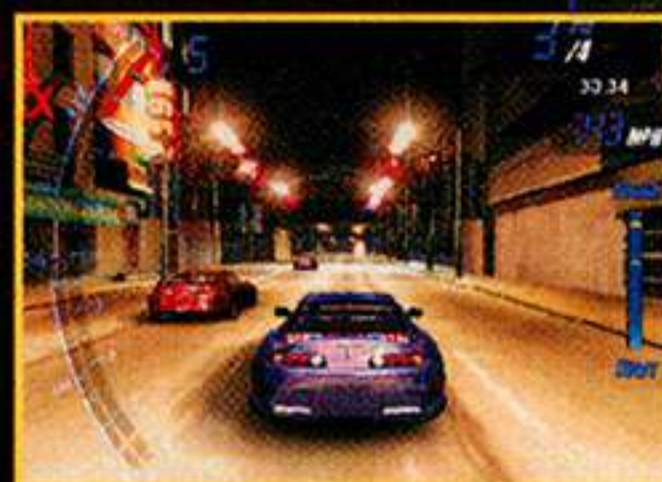
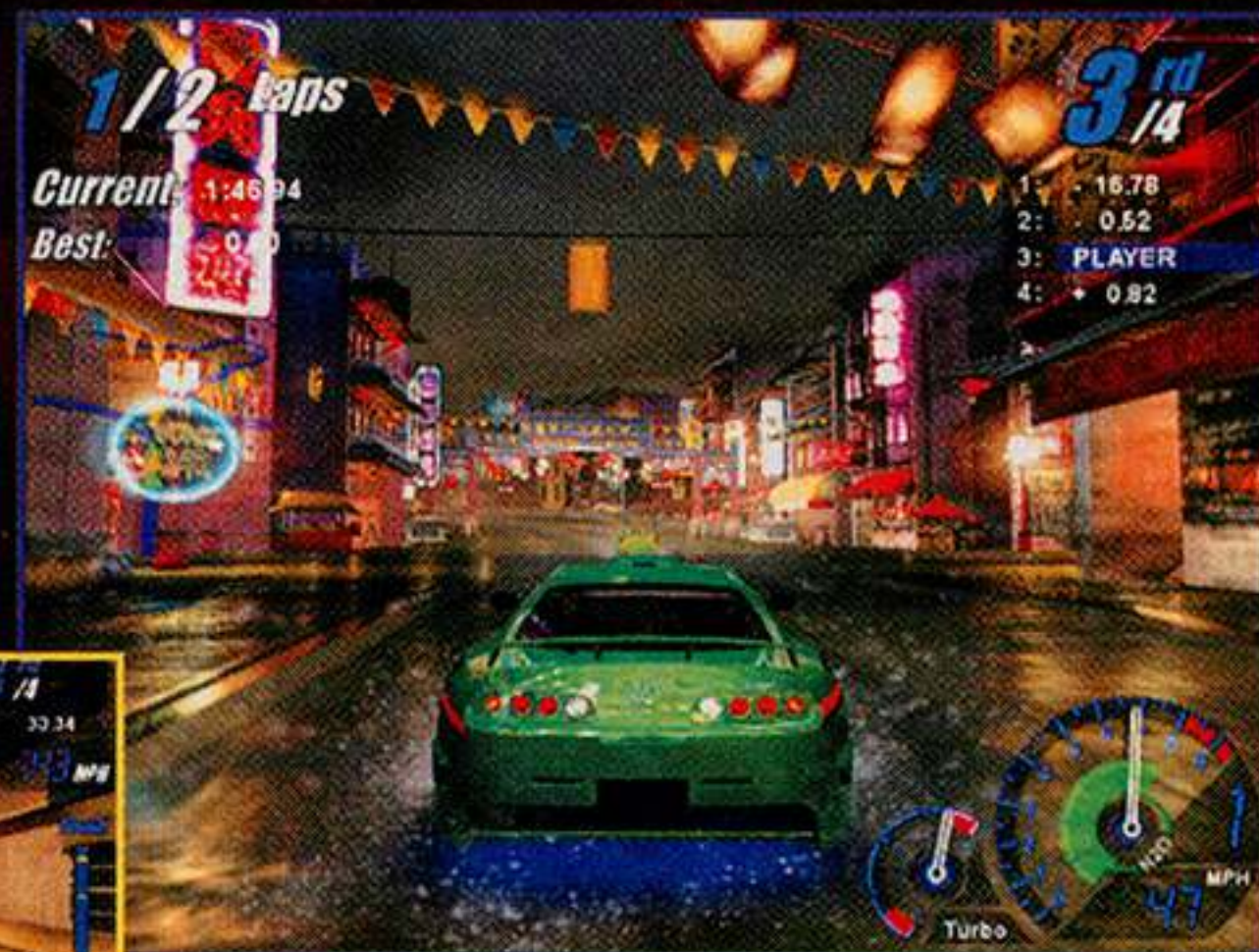
Need for Speed Underground

AFTER RETURNING TO respectability with the impressive Hot Pursuit 2, the Need for Speed series is striking out into bold new territory—bold, at least, for this franchise. Following in the skid marks of the Midnight Club series, Need for Speed Underground departs from its customary stable of exotic European cars, turning instead to street racing and tuner cars in urban environments. As always with this series, the sweet licenses await the touch of your driving gloves as you'll find 20 cars including models from Toyota,

Mitsubishi, and Subaru. Better yet, you can trick them out with a huge selection of aftermarket parts from manufacturers like Skunk2, Momo, HKS, Nitrous Express, Sparco, GReddy, AEM, and more.

You'll be able to tackle drag racing, regular street racing, and four-player online competitions (on the PS2 only), earning cash to buy new cars and parts while building a reputation. The game's more than 100 events go down in nighttime cityscapes, and the graphics already have an impressive lushness and detail. An Oscar-nominated visual-effects expert is working on Underground's sensation of speed, particularly when you punch the nitrous, and with all that under the hood, the game seems primed to be one of the slickest rides of 2004.

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.



BY AIR HENDRIX



- Developed by EA Black Box
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds

THE FINAL EPISODE is now television history, but fans jonesin' for a Buffy fix can look forward to Chaos Bleeds this August. Set in the framework of the fifth season, the Scooby gang finds itself fighting alternate-dimension versions of old enemies let loose anew in Sunnydale. You'll fight them not only as Buffy, but also as Willow, Xander, Spike, and Sid the Dummy.

For a game that's not a sequel, Chaos Bleeds is shaping up to be one hell of a sequel. Despite a new developer and publisher, the game already features remarkable continuity—fans of EA's Xbox title will feel right at home since the controls and gameplay are gratifyingly familiar. The game also features seriously satisfying combat, more challenging puzzles, and an all-new multiplayer mode (there are 24 playable characters, including Buffy creator Joss Whedon!), which will let you see if you can slay well with others.



BY MISS SPELL




- Developed by Eurocom
- Published by Sierra
- Target release date: August

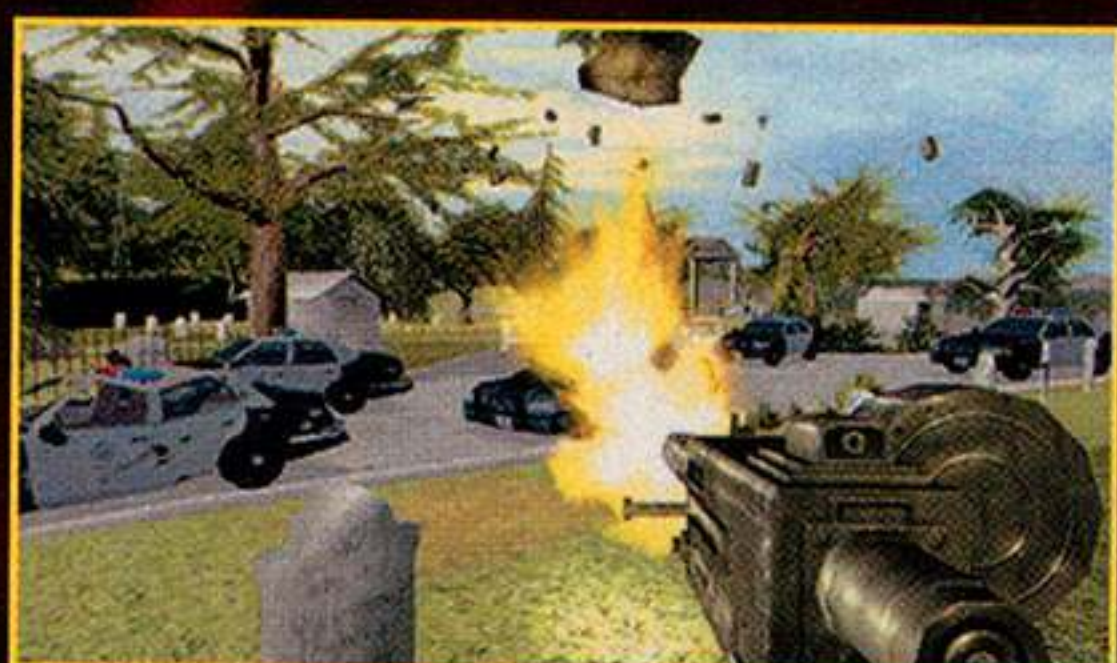


HANDS-ON

Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines

GAME-MOVIE CONNECTIONS ARE all the rage, and Atari's pretty much leading the pack when it comes to crossovers (Enter the Matrix, anyone?). For the video-game version of Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines, Arnold Schwarzenegger loaned his voice, and director Jonathan Mostow shot brand-new movie footage to go alongside the film's story.

Okay, that's cool, but what about the game? Think first-person shooter with a few lines of 3D fighter code written in. You play as the Terminator (the Arnold Schwarzenegger one) before and after being reprogrammed to protect John Connor, taking on Tech Com forces with tons of high-caliber weapons through 20 missions set in present-day L.A. (and a few in the dark and dismal not-too-distant future). When it's time to face off against the new T-X, however, the game switches to a sort of Tekken-style Fighting mode, so you can duke it out robo-a-robo. 



BY EVIL STAR DINGO



- Developed by Black Ops
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November




FIRST LOOK

Time Crisis 3

THE DAMNABLE ZAGORIA FEDERATION has invaded the Mediterranean country of Lakano (see if you can find it on your globe—look carefully!). Now it's up to VSSE agents Alan Dunaway and Wesley Lambert (their secret identities: you and a friend, each armed with a Gun-Con 2) to shoot the TV screen 'til the world is set to rights.



If you're unfamiliar with the arcade game, the latest installment of the Time Crisis series introduces a few new features to the light-gun shooting saga, including four selectable weapons (handgun, machine gun, shotgun, and grenade) and sniper combat. The PlayStation 2 home version adds more story and a new playable character (Aricia Winstone, an unplayable Lakano soldier in the arcade); it also comes packed with the GunCon 2 light gun in case you don't already have one in your arsenal. 



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed and published by Namco
- Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003

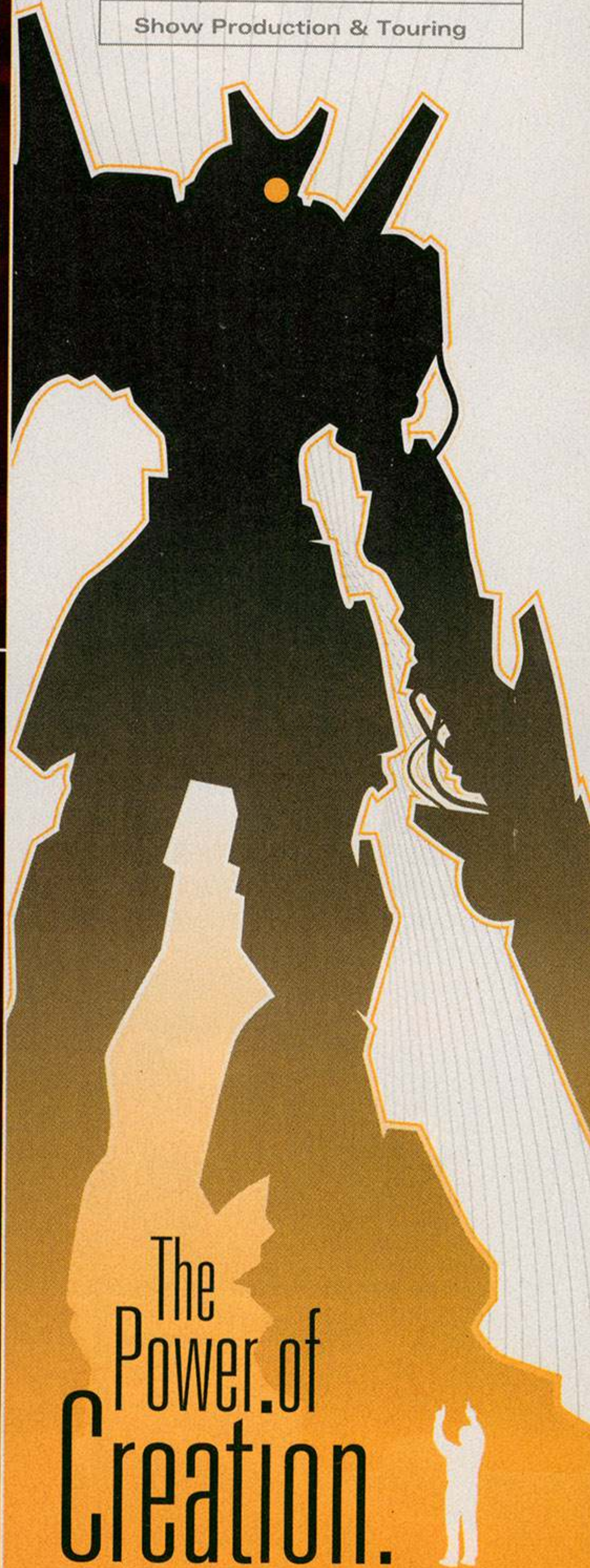


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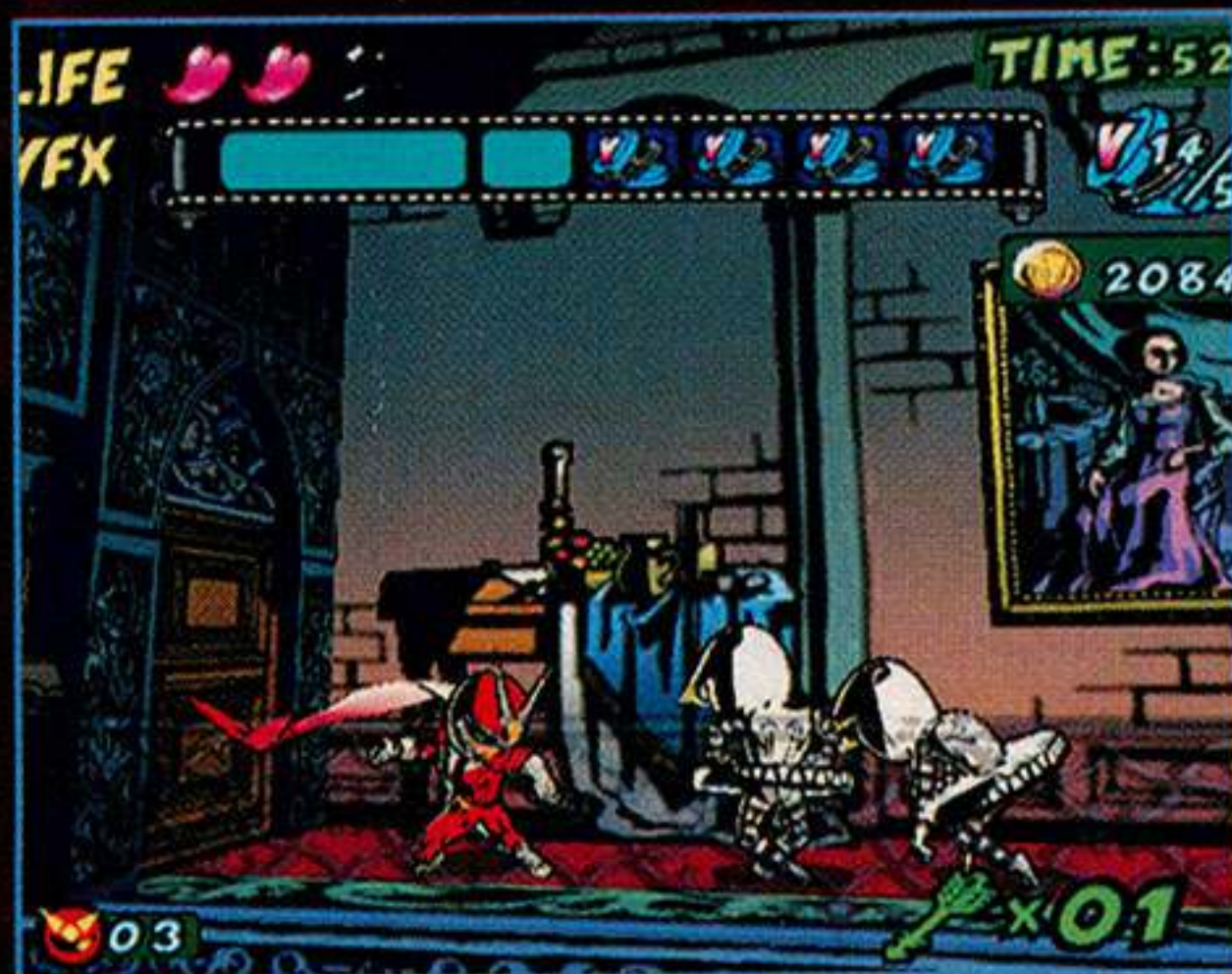
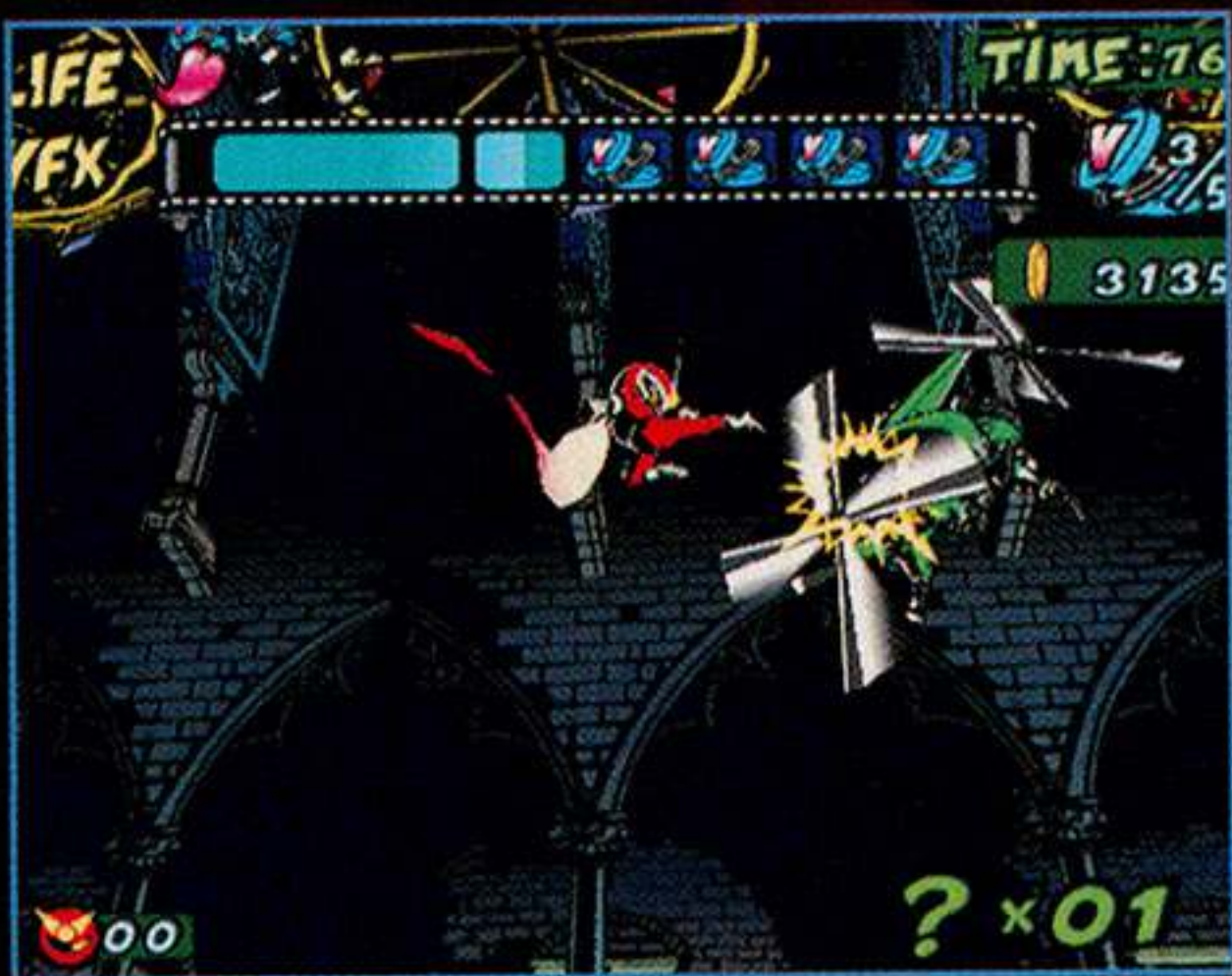
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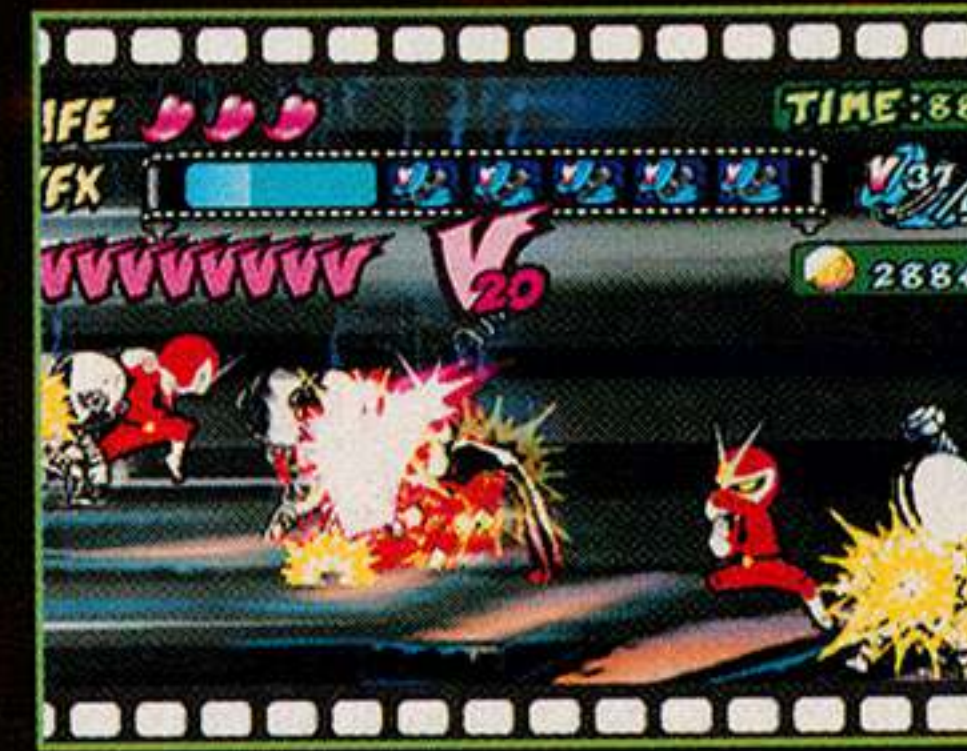
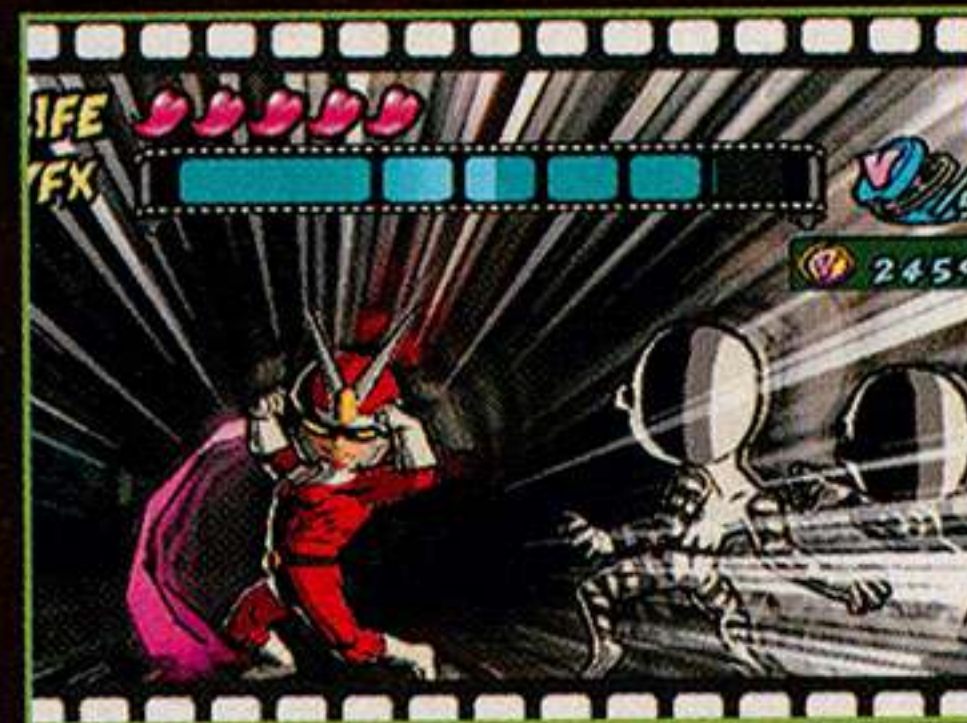
Viewtiful Joe

WITH TODAY'S HIGH-POWERED next-generation consoles, 2D side-scrolling action/platform titles are few and far between. Viewtiful Joe, however, may change the perception that such titles are out of date with its unique look and arresting gameplay. You play as Joe, an ordinary guy who's imbued with radical powers after his girlfriend is kidnapped. Once Joe dons his superhero suit, he can learn to slow down and speed up time, among other abilities. These powers



are key to the gameplay: Slow-motion, for instance, lets Joe dodge bullets and other supersonic projectiles, while speed-up lets him reach otherwise inaccessible areas if he's standing on a platform with a rotating fan mounted beneath it.

Based on an early preview build, Joe's straightforward and simple controls will keep the gameplay fresh and exciting every step of the way. Joe's unique look is also worth mentioning as the graphics resemble a comic book that suddenly sprang to life (complete with loud onscreen bubble-text dialogue). Mixing 3D graphics with a pastel cel-shaded color scheme, Joe has an undeniable surrealistic feel, and the humorous special effects and clever details add to the overall impact. If Joe stays on track, he should have a, um, "Viewtiful" debut this fall. **G**



BY MAJOR MIKE



- Developed and published by Capcom
- Target release date: October



GAMECUBE

HANDS-ON

Advent Rising

THE FIRST INSTALLMENT in an epic trilogy of games, Advent Rising tells the tale of Gideon Wyeth, a human being who's about to discover that there are aliens who think humans are gods. He's also about to discover his latent psychic super-



powers that let him fling people and giant space tanks around with his mind, right after he discovers the giant pile of semiautomatic weaponry he can wield with both hands. Science-fiction nuts should pay extra attention—the game's script is being written by demigod/author Orson Scott Card, the man who wrote the classic *Ender's Game*. If you haven't read it, put down that Xbox controller and head to the library now. **G**



Vultures

ON AN ALTERNATE Earth where Europe never conquered America, a plague has wiped out the Old World, and the survivors have crossed the ocean hoping to find sanctuary in the New. Instead, they found shackles and slavery, were named "Vultures," and were set to fighting each other as entertainment for the masses. You play as one of 16 of these Vultures with different fighting styles, hacking away at other would-be scavengers with daggers, swords, and battle axes. Enemy bodies are divided into "hit zones" so you can target your attacks, and two players can gladiate at once, either cooperatively or in a deathmatch. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed by GlyphX
- Published by Majesco
- Target release date: Spring 2004



Xbox

FIRST LOOK

BY EVIL STAR DINGO



- Developed by Grin
- Published by CDV
- Target release date: Fall 2003



Xbox

FIRST LOOK

Sonic Heroes

SONIC HEROES' SETUP looks pretty standard—long stretches of runway (literally) littered with lots of loops, obstacles, and springboards—but there's much more to it than meets the eye. In Sonic Heroes, you control three characters at once (Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles, for example) and switch among them on the fly as the situation demands. Tails is good at getting you up high, Knuckles is an expert at breaking stuff, Sonic gets you the speed you need for long jumps—in other words, no more just running forward blindly 'til your rings fly out of your head. Twelve



characters from the Sonic family will have a go at it throughout the game, including Amy, Cream the Rabbit from Sonic Advance 2, and the ever-delightful Sonic Adventure fan favorite Big the Cat. **G**

Note: All screens shown here are from the GameCube version.

BY STAR DINGO



- Developed by Sonic Team
- Published by Sega
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004



FIRST LOOK

Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown



CAPCOM IS BRINGING another NES classic into the 3D era with Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown. After playing the preview build, it's clear that the elements that made the original a hit are still intact, but improvements make this revision much more interesting than the original. There are five basic types of action: sword fighting, archery, jousting, siege warfare, and army battles. Robin Hood's role has been upgraded to make him the main character, and other members of his merry band of rogues play important roles as the story progresses. Cut-scenes are fraught with droll British wit and sarcasm as Maid Marian's machinations drive Robin into the fracas for the crown. The story elements are interspersed throughout



the turn-based territory acquisition, offering a nice break from the Risk-style strategizing. With its well-balanced blend of strategy and action, Robin Hood looks like it will make its mark on the map in August. **G**

BY DJ DINOBOT



- Developed by Cinemaware
- Published by Capcom
- Target release date: August



HANDS-ON



Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg

IF A BOY in a chicken suit pushing around giant ovoids doesn't sound like fun, obviously you're broken inside. Sonic Team's latest may be structured a lot like any ol' Mario-ish game, but the central gameplay mechanic—rolling an egg around in front of you and using it to hop higher, flatten enemies, and for a plethora of other odd purposes—makes for an inspired little twist on tiring 3D platform clichés, and young Billy controls like the finest of mascot heroes. Unfortunately, the preview build we played didn't have the game's biggest potential hook implemented just yet: In the final game, each egg you roll around will have a mystery creature growing inside it; once it hatches, it helps you out in its own weird and special way. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



- Developed by Sonic Team
- Published by Sega
- Target release date: September



HANDS-ON

Maximo vs. the Army of Zin



MAXIMO RETURNS FOR more sword-slashing and platform-hopping as he takes on the mechanical Army of Zin in this sequel to last year's hit title. As with any sequel, there are several new features and improvements over the original. First and foremost is the new reward system where you are awarded rare items by saving innocent townsfolk. Another notable change is the elimination of the "hub" system, where you could enter any area from a central room; instead, Zin proceeds at a linear pace. The story line concerns ancient machines that are freed from their prison and thus proceed to wreak havoc on peaceful villages, but the narrative focuses a bit more on Maximo as the tale of how he got his famous scar is revealed in the game. **G**



BY MAJOR MIKE

- Developed and published by Capcom
- Target release date: January

PLAYSTATION 2

FIRST LOOK



Magic the Gathering: Battlegrounds

A ZILLION EXPANSION packs, an epic-sized menagerie of cool creatures, and a concept that has withstood the test of time, and still there's not a good Magic the Gathering game that's more than just cards on a TV screen. Magic the Gathering: Battlegrounds could finally change that: It's a sort of action/strategy/fighting game in which you run around an arena as one of nine wizards, summoning an army of creatures to protect and fight for you, and casting spells and enchantments from two of the five tradition color schools



in Magic—black, blue, green, red, and white—in order to best your equally wizardly foe. Battlegrounds wisely supports Xbox Live, too, not just for multiplayer duels, but also for downloading spells, wizards, and other such Magicky goodness. **G**

BY EVIL STAR DINGO

- Developed by Secret Level
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November

XBOX

FIRST LOOK



Rogue Ops

ANY DAY THAT begins with finding out your husband was a spy is bound to be an interesting day—especially when you decide to follow in his footsteps in order to exact revenge. That's the setup for Rogue Ops, a third-person stealth/



action title coming for the PS2, Xbox, and GameCube this November. Don't let the simple graphics fool you—freedom was the game's biggest strength in the Xbox and GameCube preview builds as the game gave you the option to do just about everything you'd want to do as a covert op (grapple up walls, hide in shadows, distract enemies with a piano so you can stealthily kick their ass). Cool touches like x-ray cut-scenes of breaking bones up the cool factor, and clever combo-driven sneak attacks add a lot to the suspense. **G**

Note: All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.



BY STAR DINGO

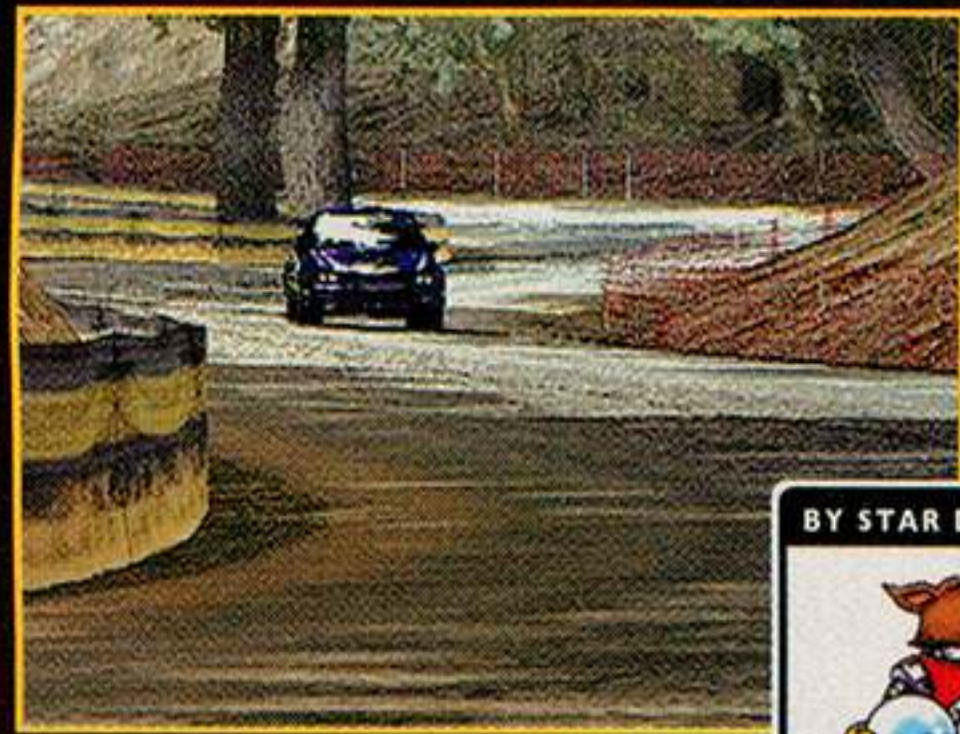
- Developed by Bits Studio
- Published by Kemco
- Target release date: November

XBOX GAMECUBE

HANDS-ON

R: Racing Evolution

R: RACING EVOLUTION isn't the follow-up to Ridge Racer V that you may have been expecting. Series designer Isao Nakamura has instead come up with a brand-new game and a brand-new philosophy intended to bring new players into the realm of racing games. The powerslide-oriented gameplay of Ridge Racer has been changed in favor of realism with officially licensed cars and eight racing styles (GT, rally, drag, etc.). R: Racing Evolution also takes a note from Codemasters' Pro Race Driver by



tying the racing into a fully fleshed narrative; it follows the career of Rina, a professional racer on the rise, and tells her story through a series of cinematic CG cut-scenes featuring characters designed by Tekken and Soul Calibur II alumni. **G**



BY STAR DINGO



■ Developed and published by Namco
 ■ Target release date: Fourth Quarter 2003



FIRST LOOK

The Hobbit

MUCH HAS BEEN written about brave Bilbo Baggins and his perilous adventures, but nobody has ever thought of turning the book that inspired *The Lord of the Rings* into a 3D platformer. Until now! Sierra's *Hobbit* (formerly a GameCube exclusive but now coming to the PlayStation 2 and Xbox) is a hop-n-bop retelling of Tolkien's original story, complete with troll caves, a sprawling Hobbiton, and a working One Ring that's quite useful for burgling stuff.

The PlayStation 2 and GameCube previews revealed a surprisingly ambitious game with 12 large levels and lots of cute graphical touches. If



the developers at Inevitable can polish up the loose ends, then gamers sad over the lack of a *Hobbit* movie could have something to console themselves with this fall. **G**



BY FENNEC FOX



■ Developed by Inevitable Entertainment
 ■ Published by Sierra
 ■ Target release date: September



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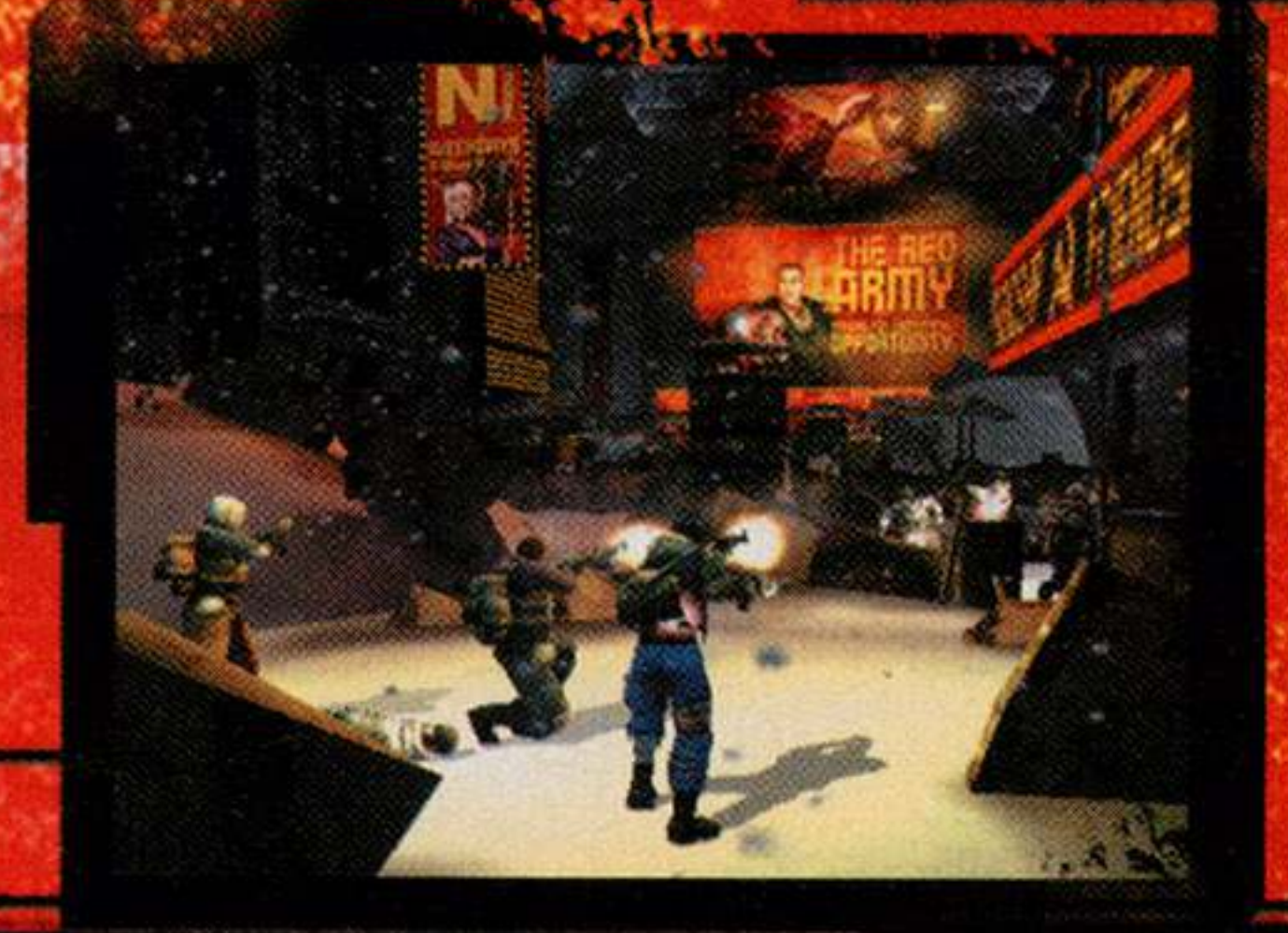
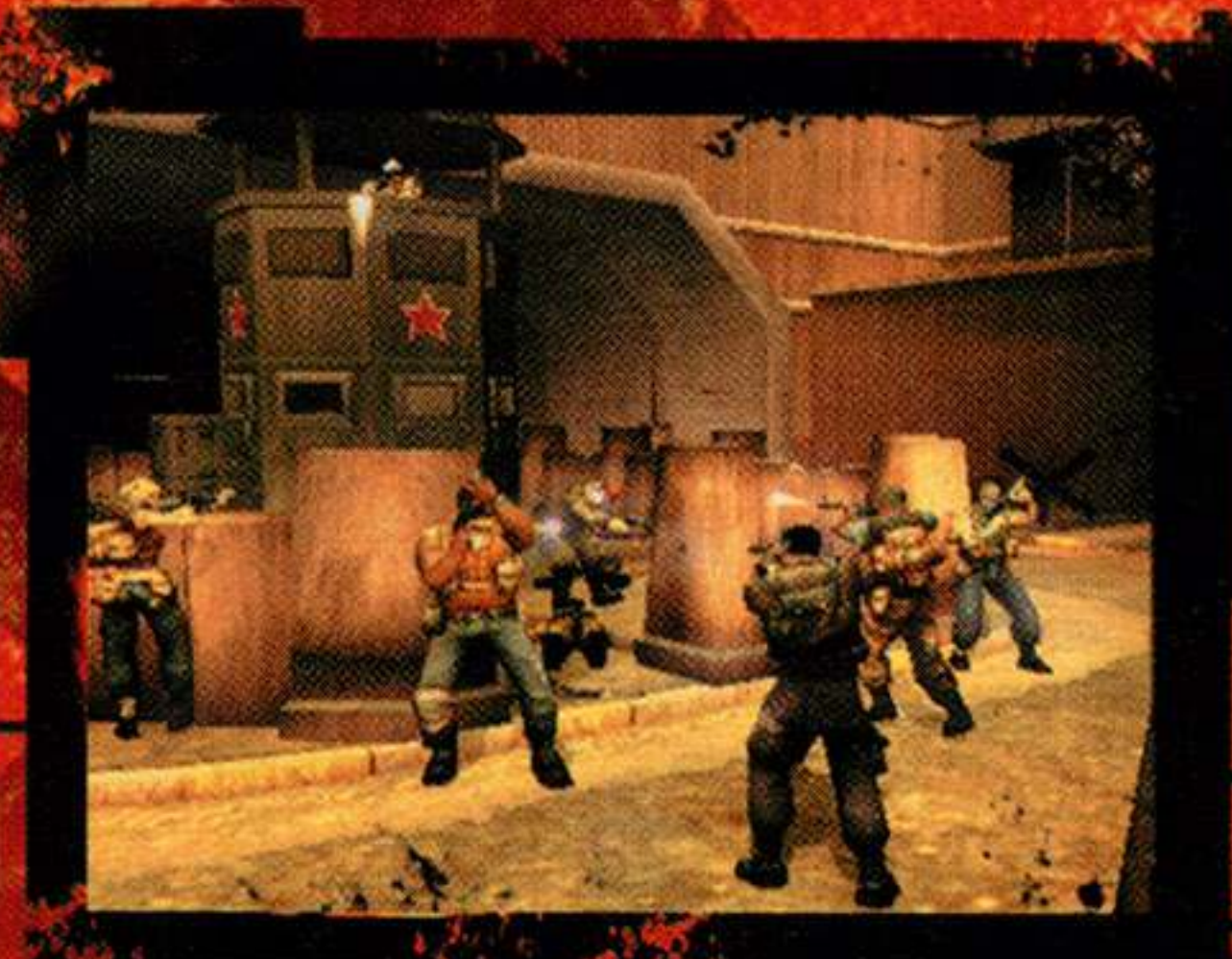
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The ESRB Ratings Guide

The interactive electronic entertainment industry utilizes a voluntary rating system developed by an independent organization—the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)—so consumers know what to expect before buying a video or PC game. The following is a quick key to the most common ratings; for a complete description, check out the ESRB's website at www.esrb.org or call 800/771-3772 for more information.

EVERYONE (E) Titles rated **Everyone (E)** have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, comic mischief, or crude language.

TEEN (T) Games rated **Teen (T)** are suitable for ages 13 and up. These games could have violent content, strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

MATURE (M) Games rated **Mature (M)** are appropriate for older gamers, generally 17 and up. Mature-rated games may contain more intense depictions of violence, stronger language, and, on rare occasions, sexual themes.

RATING PENDING (RP) The **Rating Pending (RP)** icon may appear in early reviews of soon-to-be-released products. Look for the actual ESRB rating icon on the game's package, check the ESRB's website, or call its toll-free phone number for updated rating information.

BMX XXX By Acclaim



BMX XXX's slogan is "Keep it dirty," and the game certainly does—just about every salacious, offensive, crude, and suggestive element you can imagine is in the game, albeit played for comedy. Players interact with hookers, strippers, and pimps, all of whom use the strongest language imaginable. Rewards appear in the form of stripper videos. The title pretty much tells consumers all they need to know.



Brute Force By Microsoft



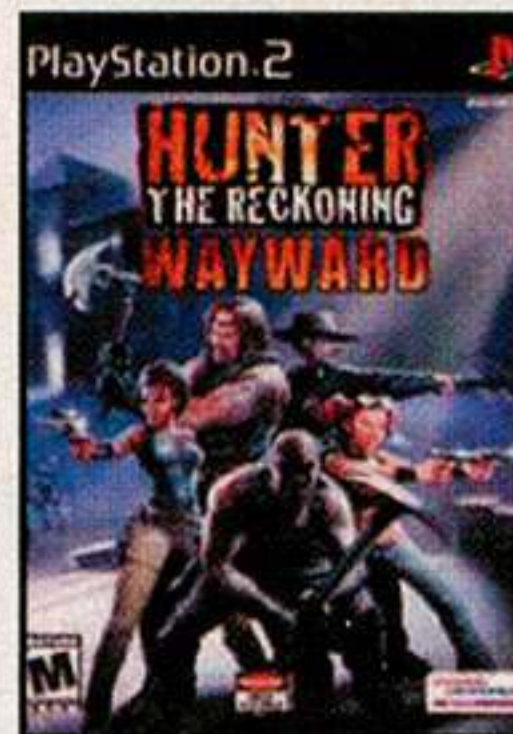
The game is centered on squad-based sci-fi military violence and therefore has a healthy amount of violence—blood flies freely out of enemies when they're shot. Characters utter some surprisingly vile words in the heat of battle, but none of the classically unmentionable ones.



Hunter: The Reckoning—Wayward By Vivendi Universal



Zombies, vampires, and werewolves abound, and you get to shoot them all—repeatedly. While the action's a bit far away, the violence is unmistakable, and blood and body parts fly. Still, you're fighting evil and protecting the innocent, so all the zombie decapitation comes within the context of "fighting evil." Hunter's gritty world might rub some folks the wrong way, but underneath it's a story of heroism.



Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter By Black Label Games



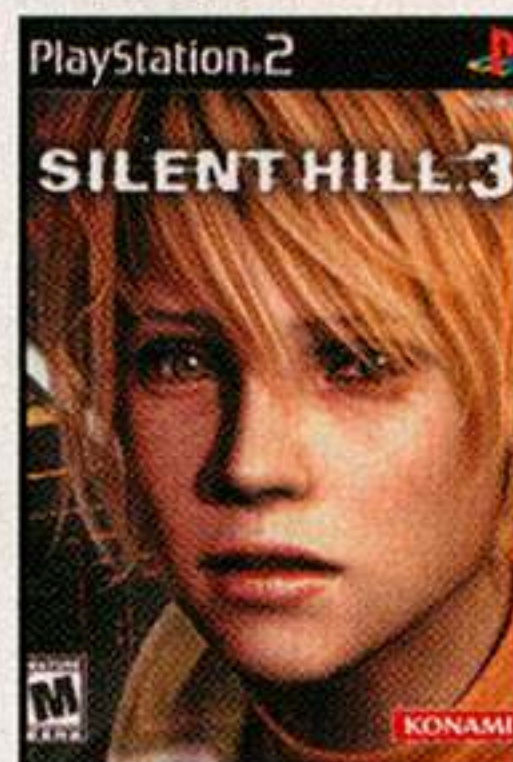
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter may take place generations into the future, but weird-looking creatures still bleed red and can be eliminated by one shot to the head. Splattering of body parts after a harsh explosion only accentuates Bounty Hunter's violent content.



Silent Hill 3 By Konami



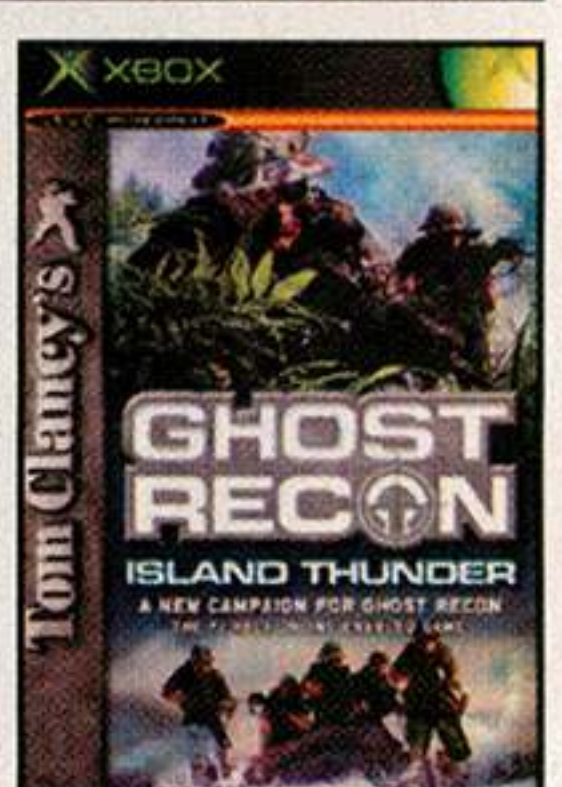
It's rated M for just about anything you could rate a game M for... excessive blood, cruelty, sexual overtones, violence, and religious themes that some will find offensive, plus grotesque, indescribable things that come from your worst nightmares. Definitely not for the young ones.



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder By Ubi Soft



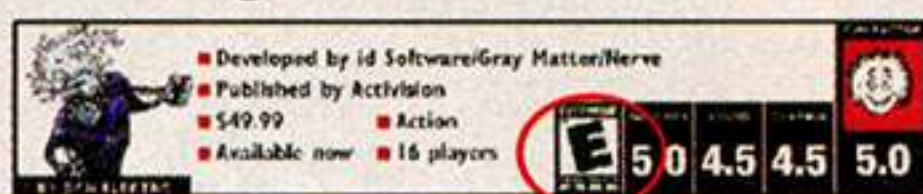
Authentic and realistic military tactics in real-world war-time situations means plenty of violence in this first-person shooter. Players will encounter blood-stained clothes after being hit by bullets and a lot of bad guys waving guns around every corner, too. The realities of war certainly warrant a Mature rating.



Note: Some box art may not display final ESRB ratings.

WHERE TO FIND THE ESRB RATING

GamePro understands that parents care about the content of the video games their children play. That's why every review printed in our magazine and posted on our website lists the ESRB rating. Below, we've circled this rating in a sample review box to help readers locate it throughout GamePro.



Note: Previews do not carry an ESRB rating as games are often not rated until they're ready for review and purchase.

ESRB RATINGS FOR ALL GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

Brute Force.....	M	Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness.....	T
Hunter: The Reckoning—Wayward.....	M	Pirates of the Caribbean.....	T
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter.....	M	PlanetSide.....	T
Silent Hill 3.....	M	Rent A Hero No. 1.....	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder.....	M	RTX Red Rock.....	T
Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction.....	T	Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided.....	T
Downhill Domination.....	T	Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic.....	T
Freaky Flyers.....	T	SX Superstar.....	T
Freestyle Metal X.....	T	Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution.....	T
.hack Part 3: Outbreak.....	T	ESPN NFL Football.....	E
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb.....	T	Group S Challenge.....	E
The Italian Job.....	T	Madden NFL 2004.....	E
		Midtown Madness 3.....	E

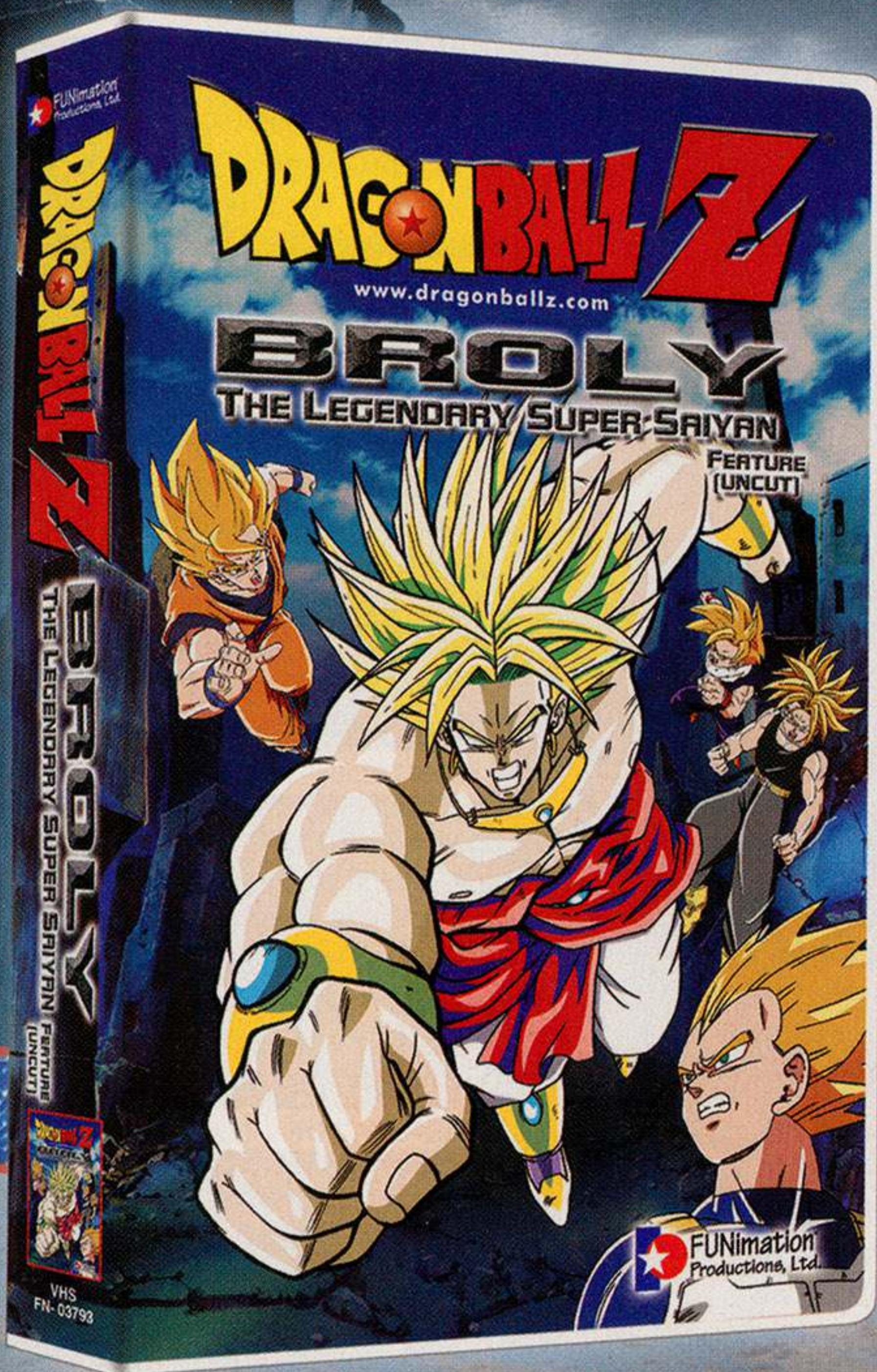
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SILENT HILL 3

GATHER 'ROUND, ALL ye masochists, and hear tell of Silent Hill 3, the tale of a teenage girl who wanders into the mall one day and winds up vomiting out religion in the wake of coagulated, vibrating, lumpy dog-man cadavers. This game is sick, ultraviolent, blasphemous, nasty, and filled with things that people were too afraid to create words for. Just the way a horror game should be.



PROTIP: Sudden camera angle changes give you hints; inexplicable footprints can reveal a path.



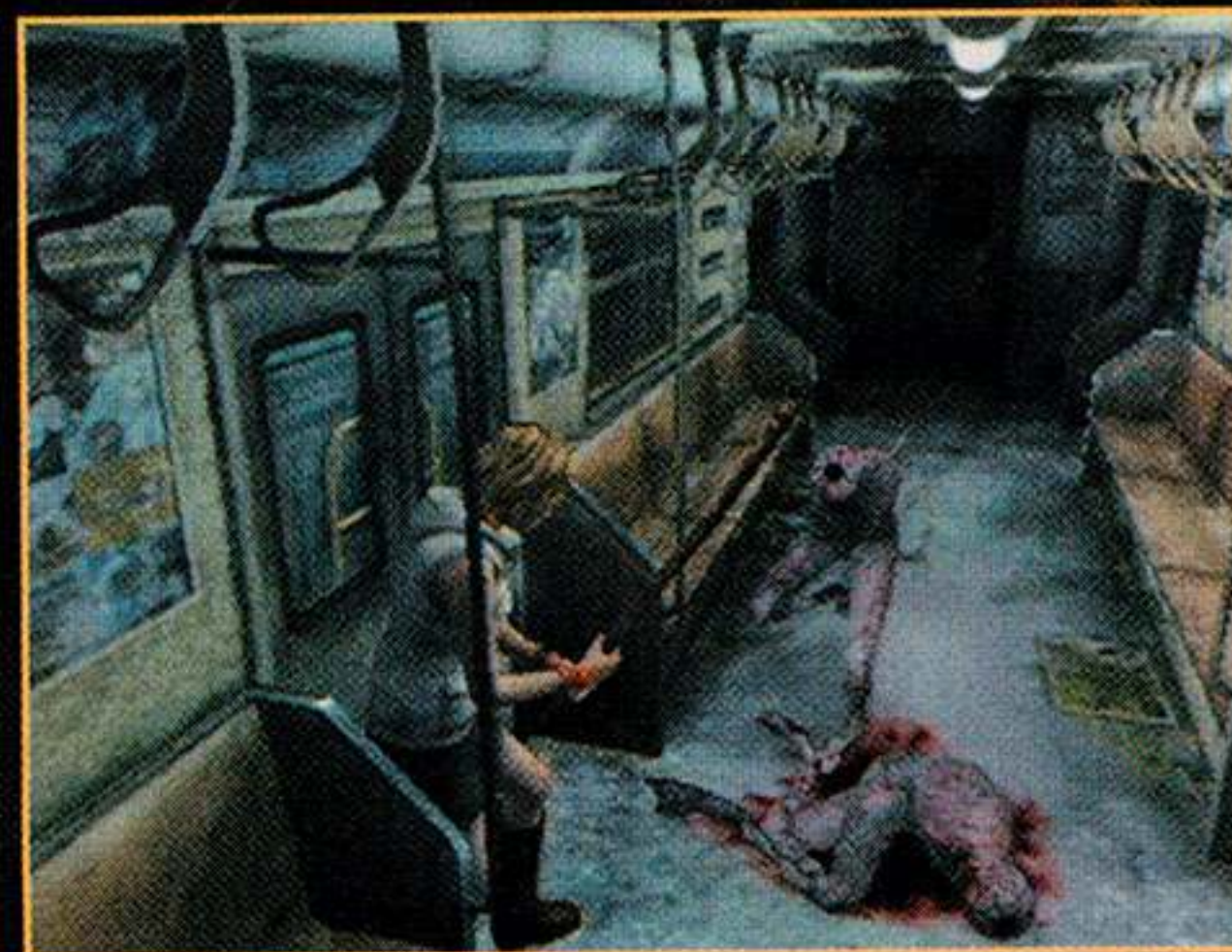
Coollest room ever

What the Hell Is That?

Seeing as this is the second Silent Hill game to appear on the PlayStation 2, you can't help but compare it to its predecessor. While the engine is almost identical (read: best shadows ever, lots of narrow hallways, and clunky fighting), the game finds ways to improve on just about everything. The darkly beautiful visuals are sharper, the character models are more convincing, and when the walls start to bleed into fuzzy intestinal fluff, that's the kind of inventive stuff that leaves a mark. The game wisely offers up more varied locations and doesn't keep you cooped up in any one for too long, and the usual illogical survival/horror puzzles kind of make sense this time around. The control is still clumsy (and still too reliant on lethargic melee weapons), but the combat is more varied thanks to new weapons like the katana and submachine gun.



PROTIP: Beating the game gets you new costumes and weapons. Try entering "ProTip" in the Extra Costume typewriter.



PROTIP: Don't waste ammo on the two-legged purple things. They're easy to bludgeon to death with the steel pipe.

No Really, What the Hell Is That?

Even the story stands on its own legs: It's a satisfying, coherent sequel to the first game (though you needn't have played that to enjoy this) and not just another "weird nightmare" like the second. Some of the sickest of the sickos will be a bit disappointed to know that nothing here tops the second game's scenes of outrageous mutual necrophilia; the enemies here aren't quite as distressing or nauseating as a pair of female legs sewn to another pair of female legs. And for all its twisted imagination, some will wish the game didn't leave so much to your own twisted imagination. But it's still nuttier than anything else you'll find on the PS2.



GRAPHICS 5.0

It's the same basic artful engine as that of Silent Hill 2, but everything looks more polished. Character models are gorgeous as are the greasy bad things in their own special way. The areas are more varied than in SH2, and there are graphical effects here you've never seen before. Still the best shadows in the business.

SOUND 4.5

The best distressing dysymphony of vibrating rusty metal things and radio static ever used as a soundtrack. The English voice acting is much improved over its predecessor's, but a few characters are still off (Leonard, most notably), and vocals can get drowned out by the music.

CONTROL 3.5

The combat's a little more varied and fun than Silent Hill 2's repetitive, clumsy melee combat, but it's still not exactly svelte. The 2D control option prevents the game from operating too much like Resident Evil, and that's a good thing. Better camera options would be nice.

FUN FACTOR 4.5

For all its similarity to Silent Hill 2, the third installment still manages to set itself apart with more variety, slightly improved combat, more logical puzzles, a different enough story, and even better visuals in their own grainy nonconformist way. It's a masochist's recurring dream.



PROTIP: Don't forget that you can block (hold R2, tap □). It's essential if you want to defeat the carousel boss in the amusement park.



PROTIP: Beat the game once, highlight Extra New Game, then enter ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ○, ×. Start a new game. It will bring new meaning to the cut-scenes.




PROTIP: You can kill these fat hulk corpses without getting hurt by using the katana—just repeatedly use the downward swipe (press × hard).

LUOS RUOY SEMUSNOC TI EROFEB NUR

Are there better games out there in terms of just sheer gameplay? Most certainly. But Silent Hill is still the Dark Emperor of Atmosphere, the layout of a single room can tell six horror stories, and the heroine has more darkness in her pinky than Lara "Angel of Darkness" Croft has in her whole

bulbous body. Memorable games are hard to come by. Here's to the ones that leave abscessed stains. **G**

 BY STAR DINGO	■ Developed and published by Konami ■ \$49.99 ■ Available August	■ Horror ■ 1 player	MATURE CONTENT RATED BY ESRB	GRAPHICS 5.0	SOUND 4.5	CONTROL 3.5	FUN FACTOR 4.5
	WWW.GAMEPRO.COM LETTERS@GAMEPRO.COM						

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER

the angel of darkness

LARA CROFT HAS a problem, and it's not just that she's wanted for murder. She's got a bad case of multiple personality disorder and was discharged from the institution before she was right and fully cured.

Lara: Light and Dark

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness came to the world with a lot of promises: darkly dark darkness, completely new gameplay ideas, and a Lara unlike you've ever seen her before. Titles known for their nonlinear gameplay, like Shenmue and Deus Ex, were flung around as role models for the New Lara. You can sort of see some of those new "open-ended" ideas visible here—branching conversations, different solutions to certain puzzles, a "city" for you to explore, strength upgrades—but in a quietly aborted form and with the central purpose of nonlinearity (i.e. to make the game more fun) shunted aside.

The game is also clearly unfinished. Enemy A.I. can be blind and stupid, hand-to-hand combat is buggy, and little illogical things like Lara's inability to step on a rat that's draining her health bar are minor annoyances by themselves...but a whole lotta little things add up to a lot.

Behind all that, most of the game is still the same old Tomb Raider with nightclubs or biological research facilities replacing the tombs—finding switches and partaking in meticulous jumps are the crux of Lara's existence. Lara still handles like a truck, plodding along despite her apparent agile British gracefulness. You'll die—a lot—and spend a great deal of time staring at the loading screen.



The undead warriors and ancient traps in the Hall of Seasons represent the oldest of the old-school Lara gameplay.



PROTIP: Check the last page of Werner's notebook in order to solve the wheel puzzle at the Archeological Dig.



PROTIP: Be polite in your conversation with Bouchard. Part of the nonlinear gameplay is that he instantly kills you if you're not.


There Is Some Goodness Within Her

There is some good to be found here, despite all the complaints. The graphics may lack cutting-edge gleam, but at least they're always clean. New animation routines (climbing stairs, scaling cliff walls) look really cool and make the old stuff stick out like sore thumbs.

There's quite a compelling story, too, and the gameplay schizophrenia and plot turns make for lots of variety. Some puzzles are really quite clever; the game is huge, and there are lots

of little side-quests to dig in to. Unfortunately, the number of bugs and half-baked ideas tends to drown out what went right.

Half a Phoenix

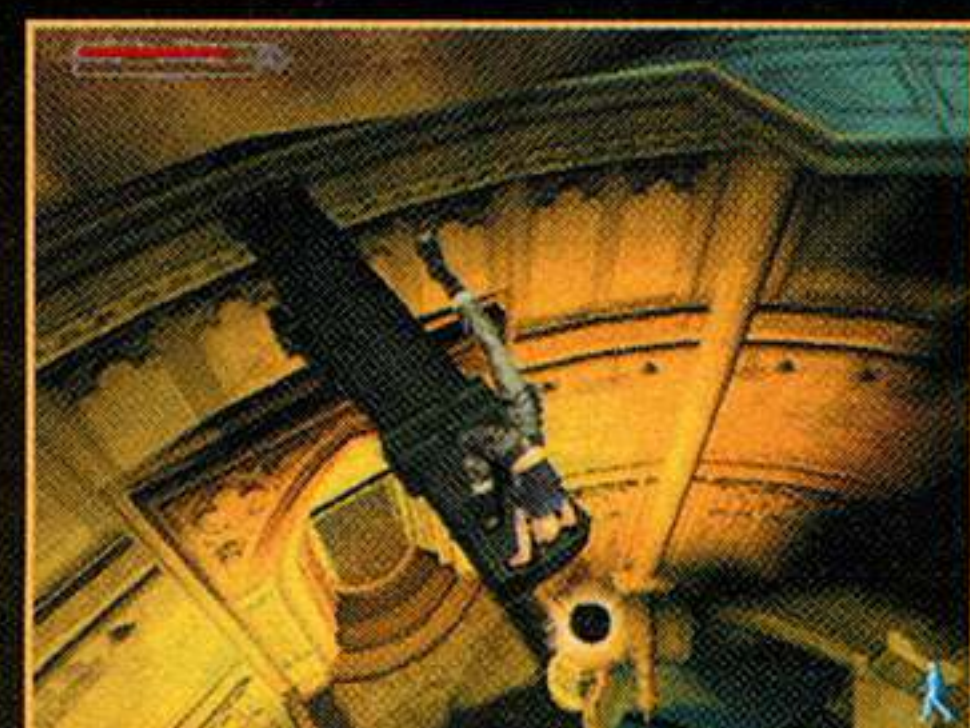
The Tomb Raider series definitely needed something different, but this unfinished-feeling adventure wasn't quite the "different" that Lara needed. This aborted rebirth of a heroine could very well be the death of a franchise. 



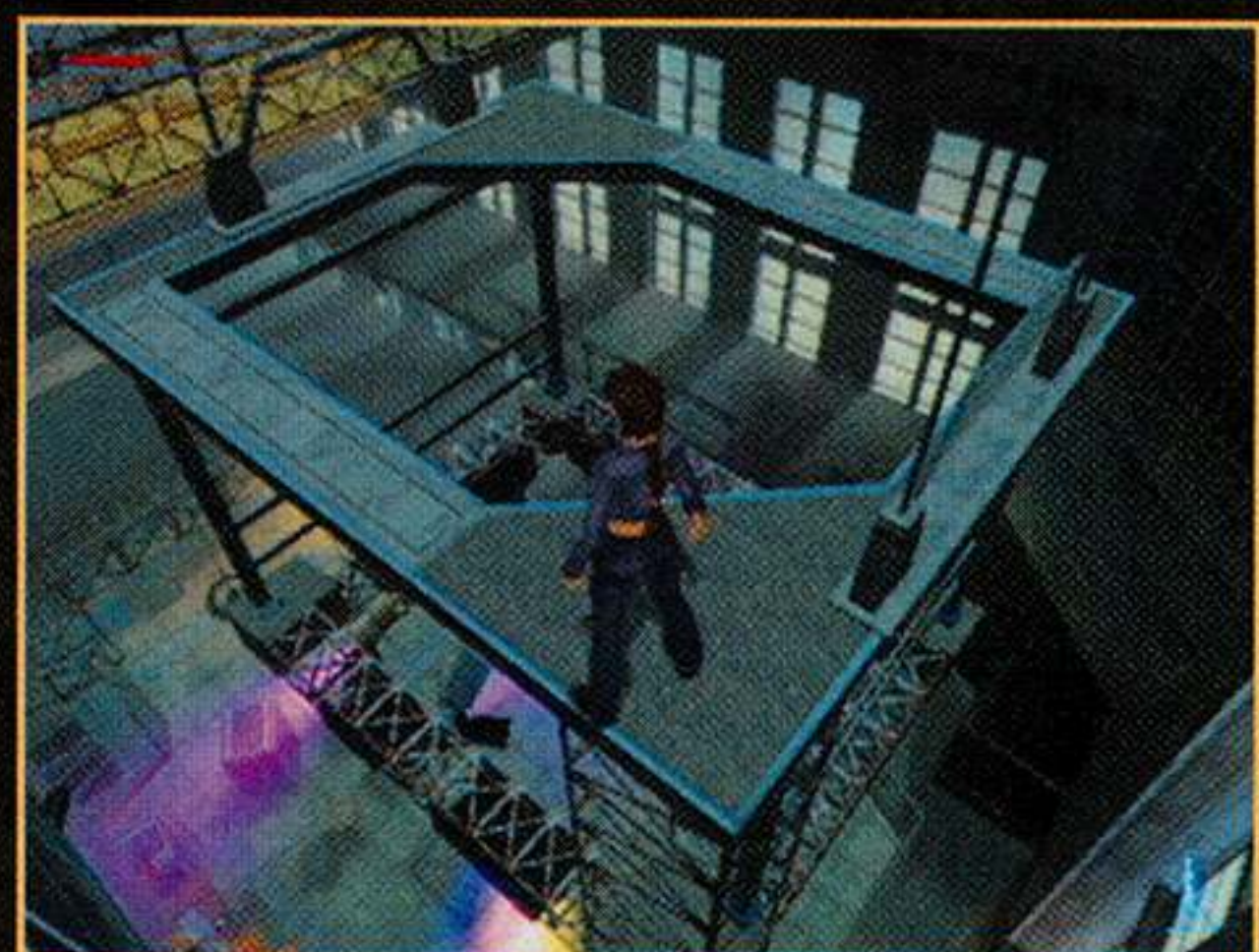
The graphics might not exactly be cutting edge, but at least the game loads a lot.



PROTIP: In the Louvre, use the security camera to zoom in on the Post-it note on the computer. You'll get a secret code.



PROTIP: Hold L1 while pulling yourself up a ledge, and Lara will perform her sultry handstand trick.



PROTIP: Once you get the music playing at the Serpent Rouge, you can scale the moving light fixture to get to the control room at the top.

GRAPHICS 3.5

The textures are dull, the character models are simple, and the lighting is still of first-generation quality, but some animation is fantastic—and a lot of artistry went into many of the backgrounds. That goes a long way in a game with so many different locales.

SOUND 3.0

The voice acting seems hurried as if it were a placeholder. Sometimes sound effects disappear; sometimes they double-up on themselves. Sometimes they sound really damn good, too. Depends on what day it is, really.



CONTROL 2.5

Lara has never controlled well, and this would have been the most obvious place to fix things...but it didn't happen. Lara still handles like a truck, hand-to-hand combat is broke, and a single jump takes so much effort and concentration that you have to take a nap afterward.

FUN FACTOR 3.0

A big, huge game of half-baked ideas. There's a ton of gameplay and a pretty interesting story here, if you're willing to deal with bugs, control problems, and lots of loading screens. Bet you're not, though.



	■ Developed by Core	■ Adventure		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
	■ Published by Eidos	■ I player					
	■ \$49.99						
	■ Available now						

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION beats its predecessor with souped-up visuals, new characters and moves, improved tutorials, hundreds of unlockable items, and the amazingly deep Quest mode. And this is a Greatest Hits title? Insane bargain alert!



PRO TIP: One of the coolest secret features is the 10th Anniversary Virtua Fighter, complete with old-school polygonal models and the original stage music.

Fighting Evolved

Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution doesn't quite pack the type of new features to warrant calling it Virtua Fighter 5, but what's there is enough to keep fighters busy for many years until that game is released. The evolution begins with the smoothed out visuals—slightly jagged edges around characters and the environment are a thing of the past. The fighters have new animations and many unlockable items that can dramatically alter their appearance in cool and fascinating ways.



PRO TIP: The hundreds of unlockable items in Evolution can give your fighter a virtual makeover.

The two new characters also look great, and they contrast well with the returning VF4 crew. The audio features much improved background tunes and richer sound effects.

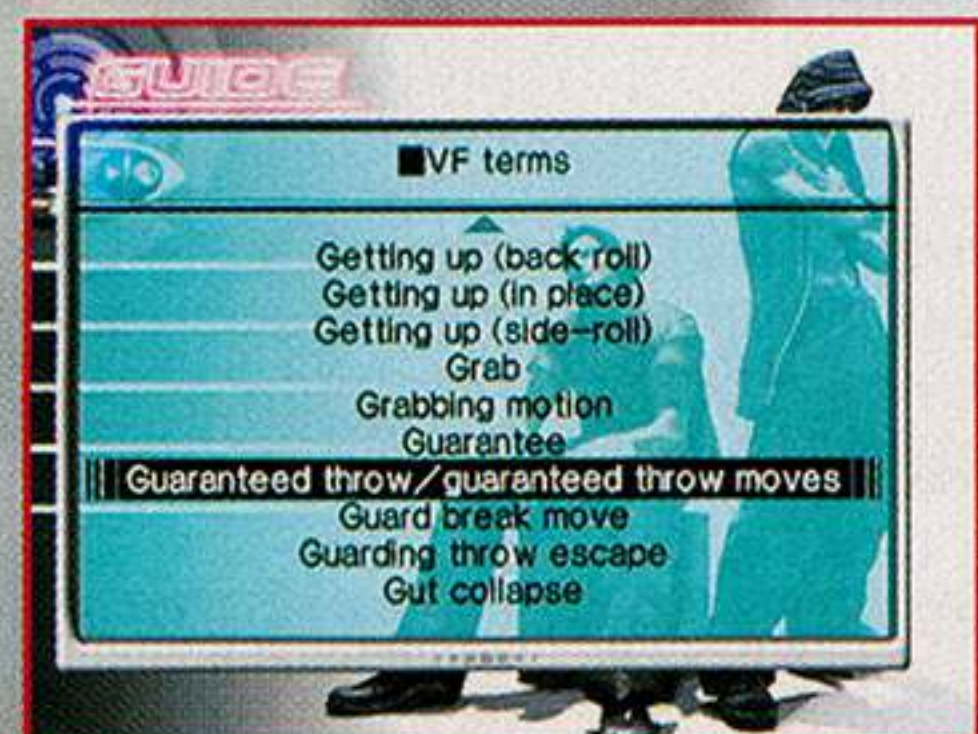
The Evolution Will Be Televised

The main meat of this game is the Quest mode, which pits you against the lifelike A.I. of fighters from around the globe. Since VF4: Evolution doesn't support online play, this is as close as you're going to get unless your buddies come over to the house. Along with the improved tutorials, persevering through the many realistic opponents should eventually reveal a Zen-like moment not unlike when, in *The Matrix*, Neo realizes he can stop bullets. You'll be able to predict attacks before they're initiated and feel the underlying rhythms of a fight.


If you missed VF4, there's just no excuse not to enroll in this fight club now. Owners of the previous version can upgrade without regret thanks to Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution's budget price. In other words, every fighting fan must have this game.



PRO TIP: The combos tutorial is vital to your success in the upper ranks.



PRO TIP: The handy glossary clues you into the vast terminology of Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution.

	■ Developed by AM2	■ Fighting	TEEN CONTENT RATED BY ESRB	GRAPHICS 4.5	SOUND 4.0	CONTROL 5.0	FUN FACTOR 5.0
	■ Published by Sega						
BY TOKYO DRIFTER	■ \$19.99	■ Available August					

Downhill Domination

DOWNHILL MOUNTAIN BIKING is relentlessly fast, extremely dangerous, and not for the faint of heart. Same goes for Downhill Domination, which delivers more frantic speed thrills than most extreme games.



PRO TIP: Come out swinging! You get points for combat, so flail your limbs out of the starting gate.



PRO TIP: In Mt. Zorkovaska's TD race, get onto the pipeline near the end. You'll get smoother terrain and Black Diamond bonuses.



PRO TIP: You'll cut huge chunks off your time if you skip the hairpins on Mt. Middle's TD run—but it requires dangerous shortcuts.

Mud, Sweat, and Gears

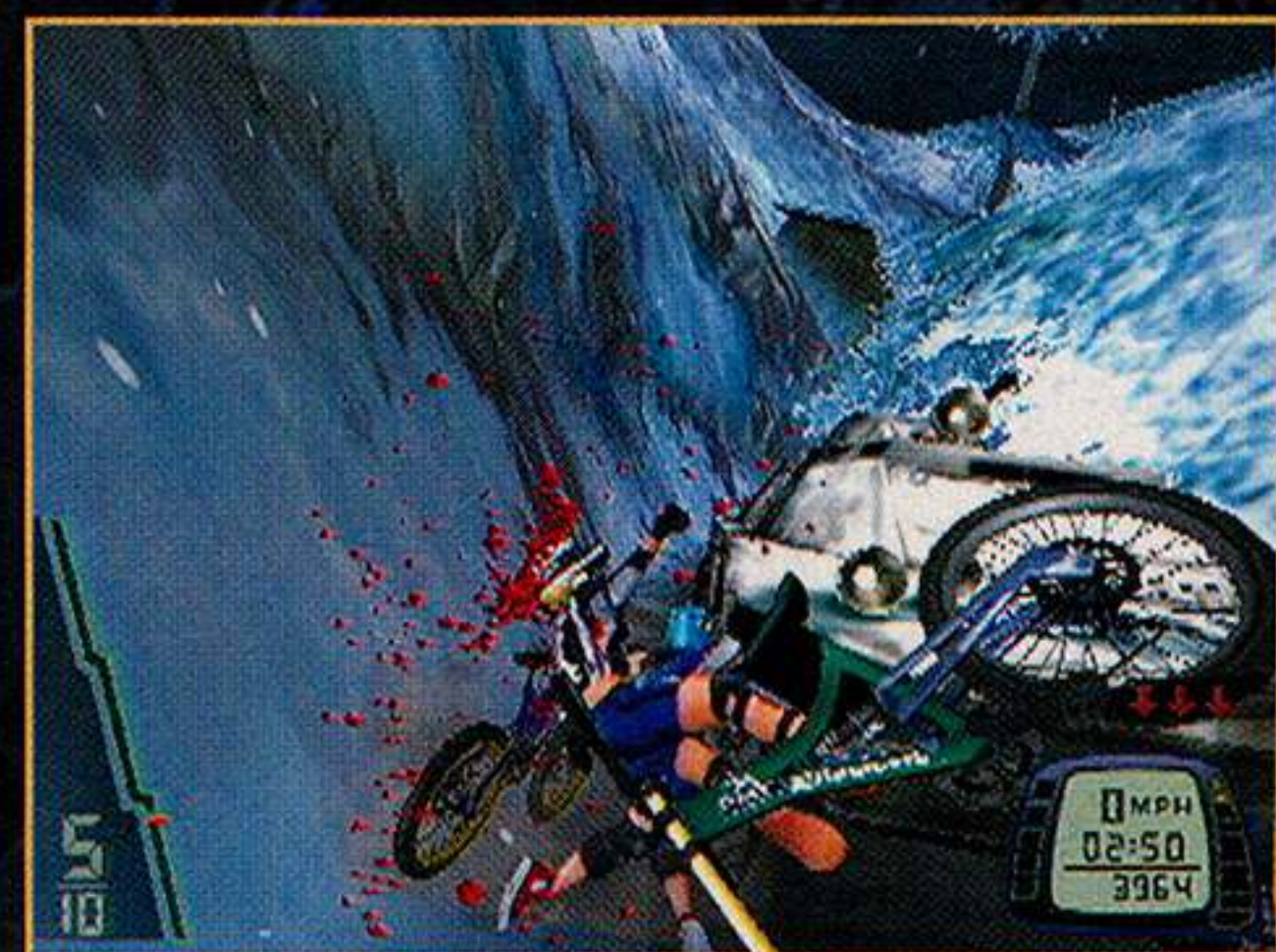
It's neither inaccurate nor an insult to call Downhill Domination "SSX on dirt"—not only do players choose one of 14 characters and careen down 27 enormous international mountains while busting tricks, smacking opponents, and collecting power-ups, but the controls are nearly identical, too. All stunts are performed with the shoulder buttons plus Triangle as a modifier (and it's not always comfortable). As you earn cash, you'll upgrade your bike and unlock goodies.

Downhill Domination features an incredible sensation of speed and a canted camera that will make you leave your stomach at the top of the mountain. Narrow trails, treacherous terrain, and the fast gameplay really ratchet up the tension—it's hard to keep up, and you almost forget to do tricks in the mad scramble to stay upright. Avoiding polar bears, mountain goats, hikers, vehicles, and maybe even a sasquatch or two is all part of the frantic fun.


And Now, Several Words from Our Sponsor

Less enjoyable is the amazingly blatant product placement—bike brands like Trek and Specialized make sense, but while you pedal, billboards for online auction sites and energy bars peddle under the guise of earnable sponsorships. Gamers will tire of it quickly, along with the repetitive voice quips and lackluster music—whee, rap about bicycles!

Action-sports junkies should at least rent Downhill Domination to experience its admirable difficulty and teeth-rattling sense of chaos. It's not for the weak.



PRO TIP: Keep your finger hovering above R2—you'll need to frequently bunnyhop obstacles from small puddles to huge vehicles.

	■ Developed by Incog	■ Racing	TEEN CONTENT RATED BY ESRB	GRAPHICS 4.0	SOUND 2.5	CONTROL 3.5	FUN FACTOR 4.0
	■ Published by Sony						
BY DAN ELEKTRO	■ \$39.99	■ Available now					



Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter

THE WAIT WAS long: over a year since it was first announced. The concept was bold: to seamlessly combine space combat with first-person shooting. The result—unfortunately—became Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter, a game that didn't fully materialize into what seemed like a winning design.

It's the distant future, and you play ex-Ranger turned bounty hunter Mace Griffin. Your job is to collect wanted criminals throughout space, while at the same time, you try to figure out who framed you and your other Ranger crew 10 years ago. It's a rough adventure for Mace. The game is broken into first-person gameplay with some space combat sprinkled in to break up the monotony. The transitions between the two gameplay styles work without a hitch, but the game's troubles begin right at the start. Unintuitive controls that can't be adjusted for smooth movement plague the first-person part of the game. Additionally, the hordes of angry creatures out to get you have been clumsily developed—a lot of times, they'll stand motionless without firing a shot, even if they're being hit in the head. Sadly, flying your Pinto-like spacecraft is more cumbersome than thrilling. Here, too, the controls feel awkward and unresponsive.

PRO TIP: Besides in busted-open crates, you'll find health and ammo supplies underneath vehicles and on top of cargo dumps.

The world of Mace Griffin may encompass multiple star systems, but the game feels cramped and limited. Linear levels where there's little room to explore on your own attribute to unchallenging gameplay. Even the visual and sound effects don't sparkle with creativity as they should in a game like this. All told, this is one bounty hunter that doesn't deserve any bounty at all. **G**

Most of the levels in Wayward seem taken directly from the original Xbox Hunter: The Reckoning, even down to the enemies. In Wayward, however, you're returning to those levels (over and over) to complete all-new goals—sometimes you need to escort someone somewhere, other times you might need to collect 11 pieces of silver to make a weapon for fighting a werewolf, and still other times you simply need to stomp through the area and take out all the baddies. The problem is that these levels were made with mindless gut-stomping in mind, so they're endlessly boring when you're running around trying to find hidden items.

Hunter: The Reckoning—Wayward

SOME TIME AFTER the Hunters saved the town of Ashcroft, evil returned once again. This time, two fellow Hunters have gone missing, and it's up to you to save them. Thus begins an epic quest filled with violence, gore, and lots and lots of dead creatures of evil.

Wayward is about as much fun as the Xbox version, meaning that it's good for a few laughs with some friends, but it's not much on long-term playability. A new playable character opens things up a bit as does the hub-based system (which enables you to select different characters and weapons between levels), but the one-dimensional action and dull graphics and sound won't excite you once the violence wears off. **G**



PRO TIP: The Judge's Smite Edge is extremely powerful. For best effect, maneuver around and line up as many baddies as possible in Smite's arc of fire.

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PRO TIP: Before you summon and fight The Mourner, take time to destroy the pews in the church to give yourself room to move around.



PRO TIP: The best place to practice aerial stunts is in Party mode. Set up a nine-player game and run 'em yourself.

Freestyle Metal X

DOES THE WORLD need another freestyle motocross stunt game? Well, okay, just one more—Freestyle Metal X delivers a burly extreme experience that doesn't feel like it was cloned.

A genre is a genre, after all, so the hallmarks are here—well-animated pro riders doing sick and twisted things as they fly through the air to an aggressive soundtrack (supplied by Mötley Crüe, Motörhead, Megadeth, and more). As you progress through farmland, cities, beaches, and Las Vegas (okay, some of the goal structure is borrowed from THPS4), you supposedly impress a hot chick named Cindy, for whom you're showing off. She teases you with double entendres throughout the game, which is especially amusing when you choose a female rider.





So far, so what—but the gameplay mechanics require a bit more dexterity than those of your average Hawk clone (not to mention a steeper learning curve—give yourself a few hours and the entire training course to get the feel for it). It's that depth, along with the huge, varied levels and deep trick list, that makes Freestyle Metal X so satisfying. The physics are also forgiving, which makes every stunt seem landable and makes the player feel like a hero. Throw in a level editor, a daredevil arena (jump buses for money!), and a pass-the-controller party mode (sorry, no split-screen), and you've got a game worthy of a rental at the very least. Give Freestyle Metal X a chance; it might surprise you. **G**



PRO TIP: Milk stoppies and wheelies for all they're worth—they can run up big points at the end of a combo.

 BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON	■ Developed by Warthog	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>MATURE</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td rowspan="4">  2.5 </td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CONTENT RATED BY ESRB</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	MATURE	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	 2.5	M	3.5	3.5	3.0	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB							
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	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB																		
■ Published by Black Label Games	■ First-person shooter																		
■ \$49.99	■ 1 player																		
■ Available now																			

 BY D-PAD DESTROYER	■ Developed by High Voltage	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>MATURE</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td rowspan="4">  3.5 </td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>3.0</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CONTENT RATED BY ESRB</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	MATURE	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	 3.5	M	3.0	3.5	3.5	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB							
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	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB																		
■ Published by Vivendi Universal	■ Action																		
■ \$49.99	■ 2 players																		
■ Available August																			

 BY DAN ELEKTRO	■ Developed by Deibus Studios U.K.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>TEEN</td> <td>GRAPHICS</td> <td>SOUND</td> <td>CONTROL</td> <td rowspan="4">  4.0 </td> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CONTENT RATED BY ESRB</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	 4.0	T	4.0	4.0	4.0	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB							
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	CONTENT RATED BY ESRB																		
■ Published by Midway Sports Asylum	■ Action/sports																		
■ \$39.99	■ 1 player																		
■ Available now																			

RTX Red Rock

IN RTX RED ROCK, you play as E.Z. Wheeler—lone wolf and radical tactics expert who is sent to Mars to investigate a colony attacked by alien forces. Wheeler's got a mechanical arm that can be outfitted with an assortment of tools and weapons, and an eye implant that provides four vision modes used to view maps and see invisible enemies. Sounds similar to Metroid Prime, but don't be fooled—RTX is nowhere near as compelling due to its sloppy controls, meandering pace, Ginsu-choppy frame rates, generic environments, and beat collision detection. The cumbersome inventory interface doesn't help, either, and although the various vision modes are a cool accessory, you can't move while switching between them. Even worse, the temperamental lock-on targeting system doesn't even work half the time. Puzzles are limited to fetching keys and backtracking ad nauseam to use them; even with a map, you'll wind up wandering around confusing levels hoping to stumble across a door you hadn't encountered before.





PROTIP: Knock down the pipes to dismantle the deadly fan trap.

Barely passable visuals and bargain-basement sound design round out what is the most lackluster of packages (one exception is a choice sequence where you enter a computer world, Tron-style). To say RTX has problems is an understatement, and the sum of all these mediocre components is a scattered game that's just plain boring. That's a shame because with some more development time and imaginative input, RTX could have been an engaging and innovative addition to the third-person action/adventure genre. **G**

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PROTIP: Ride the hydraulic lift with the laser drill to clear the boulders out of the doorway at Kuznetsov Diamond Mine.

 BY PONG SIFU	■ Developed and published by LucasArts	■ Action/adventure	TEEN CONTAINS MATERIAL THAT MAY PROVOKE OR ANNOY SOME PLAYERS	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR  2.0
	■ \$49.99	■ Available now		■ I player	2.0	2.0	



PROTIP: Use the demolitions to blow up the underwater columns to defeat the slippery Kraken.

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

ALTHOUGH WELL-TRAVELED ON the Xbox and PC, everyone's favorite whip-toting archeologist unfortunately makes it to the PlayStation 2 with cursed results in Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb.



Emperor's Tomb's story line is full of classic Indiana Jones anecdotes, complete with mythological intrigue, bare-fisted rumbles, and brain-teasing puzzles. The game's worldly levels clearly mimic the locales of the Indy films; they're impressively designed for plenty of platform jumping in slick, architecturally sound structures and colorful environments. A mix of intense head-bashing against smart A.I. and an occasional crate-smashing balance act out to some solid gameplay. Even the orchestral music score adds an exciting Indiana Jones element to the action.



PROTIP: Rush enemies before they can pull out a weapon—most of the time, you'll be able to disarm them with a solid hook to the jaw.

You don't have to dig deep, however, to notice that Indiana is buried in some unfavorable ground. The most disappointing aspect to the game is the horrendous frame rate. Whether you're inside, outside, or even underwater, the whole game moves choppily. It also doesn't help that there's a serious collision detection problem—enemies try to run through closed doors, and it's difficult for Indy to maneuver around tight areas. Moreover, controlling the camera angles during heated fights is a chore on the fingers, especially when you're also trying to switch to a desired weapon on the fly.

If only Emperor's Tomb were optimized for the PlayStation 2, this antiquity collector would have been an archeological find. Sorry, Dr. Jones fans—stick with the big screen if you want an exciting relic hunt. **G**

 BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON	■ Developed by The Collective	■ Published by LucasArts	TEEN CONTAINS MATERIAL THAT MAY PROVOKE OR ANNOY SOME PLAYERS	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR  3.0
	■ \$49.99	■ Available now		■ Adventure	■ I player	2.0	

Freaky Flyers

FEW GAMES ARE as polished as Freaky Flyers. It's packed with over 30 unique aviators animated in amusing cartoon cut-scenes, a handful of mini-games, a sarcastic newsreel announcer, and subgoals similar to those in Tony Hawk within each unbelievably detailed level. Freaky Flyers went for over-the-top aerial racing mayhem and nailed it dead on. Unfortunately, all this hard work seems undercut by thin multiplayer options.

Don't let the meek multiplayer mode dissuade you, though. Freaky Flyers has a very strong single-player portion. Flying through each ornate map is like riding a Disney attraction—each turn reveals an entirely new and equally detailed portion of the ride. The levels are chock-full of destructible objects and worthwhile subgoals. Rewarding the player for interacting with the course really makes Freaky Flyers a satisfying experience.





PROTIP: Don't be afraid to look behind you to shoot down a pesky follower. This works best immediately after flying through a speed boost.

The sound effects are superb—pilots yell at each other while flying, planes scream during nose dives, and the self-deprecating announcer will grow on you. Controlling the planes is straightforward, but it still leaves room for fancy flying during two-player dogfights. The only real foible is that the two-player split-screen really does cut your visibility in half, making enemy planes nearly impossible to see and the level that much harder to interpret. The two-player mode isn't all bad, but for such a solid game, it's a flaw that's keeping this otherwise plenary racing game below the ranks of Mario Kart and Diddy Kong Racing. **G**



PROTIP: Instead of holding the fire button down, fire your machine gun in bursts to make sure you don't completely run out of ammo.

 BY SIMON LIMON	■ Developed and published by Midway	■ Simulation	TEEN CONTAINS MATERIAL THAT MAY PROVOKE OR ANNOY SOME PLAYERS	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR  4.0
	■ \$49.99	■ Available August		■ 2 players	5.0	5.0	

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MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER



WHEN A GAME suffers long delays, sometimes its developer was granted time to hone and refine it. Sometimes, though, it's a warning that a potentially good game is struggling...and with Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter, the red-alert klaxons are blaring. Despite some promising early preview versions, this disappointing sci-fi combat game didn't come close to living up to its potential.

NOT MY KIND OF SCUM

Mace Griffin's set up is truly intriguing: You play as a soldier who was wrongly imprisoned when his squad was slaughtered, and upon your release, you become a bounty hunter seeking revenge. On the gameplay side, that means you hose down hordes of opponents from a first-person view, occasionally climbing behind the controls of a fighter for dogfights in space. The hook was supposed to be seamless transitions between the two gameplay styles—run into a hangar, climb into a ship, and zoom into space with lasers blazing. But tedious auto-piloted launch and docking sequences spoil the effect—the screen might as well just say "Loading" while you stare blankly and hold a useless controller.

The story fizzles too. Between the abundance of clichés and the wooden delivery, you'll be thinking suddenly fond thoughts about the recent *Star Wars* movies. The action itself feels a lot like the Red Faction series, although it's not of that caliber. The gameplay is extremely linear and heavily focused on the rapid depletion of ammo with little thought for strategy—you run into a room or fly around a space station, annihilate bad guys, repeat.

MOO. MOOO.

The terrible A.I. is a big culprit behind the sense of lackluster repetition. Enemies fight poorly and generally aren't very alert or bright—sometimes they don't even notice you when you're standing directly in front of them! The combat feels as mindless as gunning down penned cattle, which would be fine if Mace was trying to be a *Serious Sam*-style game...but it isn't.

JONESIN' FOR JANGO

In the end, Mace lacks that intangible sense of excitement and wonder that makes gamers stoked to play. If you're a big Red Faction fan and you love Rambo-ing through combat games, you might extract a few thrills from Mace Griffin's long levels, but for most, the Xbox has far better turf to conquer. **F**



PROTIP: Crouch as you enter unknown territory, and the enemy usually won't notice you.



PROTIP: If you're endlessly spinning to find your target during a dogfight, reduce your thrust to lock on more easily, but remember that that makes you a sitting duck.



PROTIP: Load up the shotgun for a furious, room-clearing outburst by clicking the Left trigger to load extra shells.



PROTIP: Guns are slow and ineffective against the Jaldari—rely on grenades or rockets.



PROTIP: These spiders can be more lethal than most other enemies if they spring at you. Strafe to the side or simply run past and leave them behind.



PROTIP: Use a stream of missiles to take out the hacker before he jumps out at the end of Trouble at the Temple.



PROTIP: Retreat around a corner or back through a door when your shields get fried, and the enemy won't follow, giving you time to recharge.

GRAPHICS 3.5

Mace's visuals are decent but not great. The levels have sharp textures and details, but aren't too interesting to explore. The Xbox version's environments look a notch better than the PS2's, but it's not a huge difference.

SOUND 3.0

Overwrought delivery makes the dialogue (and the story) feel clichéd and silly, while the trite music doesn't soar to the cinematic heights it aspires to. The game also strives for a Red Faction feel with its NPC chatter, but frequent mis-cues ruin the effect.

CONTROL 3.5

Mace controls stiffly. Turning feels slow, space combat and weapon switching can be clumsy, and aiming is touchy. Even worse, it lacks the normal tuning and customization options that would've let you tweak it to your taste.

FUN FACTOR 3.0

With the developers of the impressive *StarLancer* signed on to a cool gameplay concept, it was reasonable to have high hopes for Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter. But a lethal combo of weak game design, lousy A.I., and a wooden story leave it rife with mediocrity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed by Warthog Published by Black Label Games \$49.99 Available now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-person shooter 1 player 					
	<p>BY AIR HENDRIX</p>						

Tom Clancy's
GHOST RECON
ISLAND THUNDER



PRO TIP: Go prone as soon as shots are fired at you. You're a smaller target when lying down, even if you're out in the open.



PRO TIP: In Mission 8, equip one of your soldiers with a tank buster to take out the helicopter before going into the encampment.

BY NOW, XBOX Live subscribers have realized that they can't escape the military prowess of Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon—so far, it's been a perfect shot of multiplayer bliss. For even more Ghost action, Island Thunder is an excellent follow-up that both hardcore players and newbies can set their sights on.

Expand Your Horizon

Ghost Recon: Island Thunder is much more than just an expansion pack. Like the PC version, the game contains eight new maps that take place in a near-future Cuba, and once unlocked, a handful of new specialists are at your control. But additional Xbox Live features overshadow even these expected extras. The most apparent are the in-game dynamic stats that continually track your gameplay. You can also play in more maps, which include several Desert Siege and original Ghost Recon levels. More weapon kits are available for each soldier, too, enabling for greater diversity in player tactics. A complete training stage is included in the game to familiarize new recruits to the intuitive control scheme.

All of Ghost Recon's sharp sights and sounds continue to stand out in Island Thunder. Again, the graphics are clearly improved upon from those in the PC version—soldiers look cleaner, and even explosions detonate much more realistically.

Booming firepower from fellow gunners in an all-natural environment filled with bustling leaves and thunderous falling rain completes a great soundtrack.

Gunner's Island

The best part of Island Thunder is its price tag. At \$10 less than a regularly priced Xbox game, this shooter is a bargain. Though it may seem to be a simple add-on, Island Thunder has enough features to make it feel like a brand-new game. **G**



PRO TIP: The best team setup for any mission is a three-man squad with all members equipped with silenced weapons.



PRO TIP: Direct one team with a sniper giving cover while the other team secures an objective.

	■ Developed by Red Storm		MATURE N	GRAPHICS 4.5	SOUND 4.0	CONTROL 4.5	FUN FACTOR 4.5	
	■ Published by Ubi Soft							
	■ \$39.99							■ First-person shooter
	■ Available August							■ 16 players



PRO TIP: Place aerial mines in front of speed boost portals—a spot where everyone tries to fly through.

THE XBOX VERSION of Freaky Flyers is as engaging as the others, except that the lacking multiplayer is an even bigger disappointment. It's simply too late in the Xbox's lifespan to get away with ignoring four-player support—especially after making a kart-style racer as copacetic as Freaky Flyers. The ingredients for endless multiplayer racing suspense are present, but sadly, Freaky Flyers only provides a succulent single player with a side of very cold two-player racing.

THE FREAKS OF THE INDUSTRY

The racetracks are the game's biggest highlight. Each of the 12 maps contains plenty of breathtaking areas and unlockable extras. You'll want to stop racing to explore the temple of doom mineshafts or to dogfight with a Japanese monster. On top of the visuals, completing sub-goals (à la Tony Hawk) reveals speed boosts or unlocks maps and characters within the single-player campaign. The tiny planes control perfectly and provide a decent sense of speed without dizzying the pilot or constantly running into walls. Firing weapons such as homing missiles or aerial mines guarantees a smile on your face as planes scream to their fiery death just before passing the finish line. Yes, piloting Freaky Flyers is surprisingly fun.



PRO TIP: At the start of Danger Island, fly through the first waterfall on the right for an early speed boost.



PRO TIP: While pursuing during a dogfight, don't hesitate to ease up on the gas to keep the enemy in front of you and to allow for more time to aim.



PRO TIP: During the first lap on the Snow level, shoot the snowy dam blocking the waterfall to unlock the blue boost highway. This will enable you to take the lead early on and catch up during later laps.

FREAKIN' CLOSE TO BEING FLAWLESS

The fact that the game is so close to perfection is what makes the multiplayer so damn disappointing. Every aspect of this game demands solid multiplayer to justify all the detail given. Most likely, playing with a fourth of your original screen proved too difficult as the two-player mode already feels like looking through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. If you're looking for a beefed up version of Diddy Kong Racing, you've found it—as long as you're willing to play alone. **G**

	■ Developed and published by Midway		TEEN T	GRAPHICS 5.0	SOUND 5.0	CONTROL 5.0	FUN FACTOR 4.0	
	■ \$49.99							■ Simulation
	■ Available August							■ 2 players

BRUTE FORCE WANTS really, really badly to be the next Halo, what with its squads of space commandos, dual-weapon-wielding heroes, sniper rifles, and alien worlds. It's good to want things.

THE DRAWING OF THE FOUR

Brute Force's biggest draw is its squad mechanics, but unfortunately, it's more interesting in theory than in practice. Each of your four commandos has a "superpower," but only one (Brutus' thermal vision) is really all that useful. Switching between members is easy, but it's more of a hassle than it is fun—you'll wind up wishing you had just one character



PRO TIP: Despite the delays, the game still feels unfinished. This helicopter, for instance, entirely vaporizes when struck with an apparently magical frag grenade.



PRO TIP: Turn on Brutus' Vengar Sight whenever possible—his health regenerates while it's on.

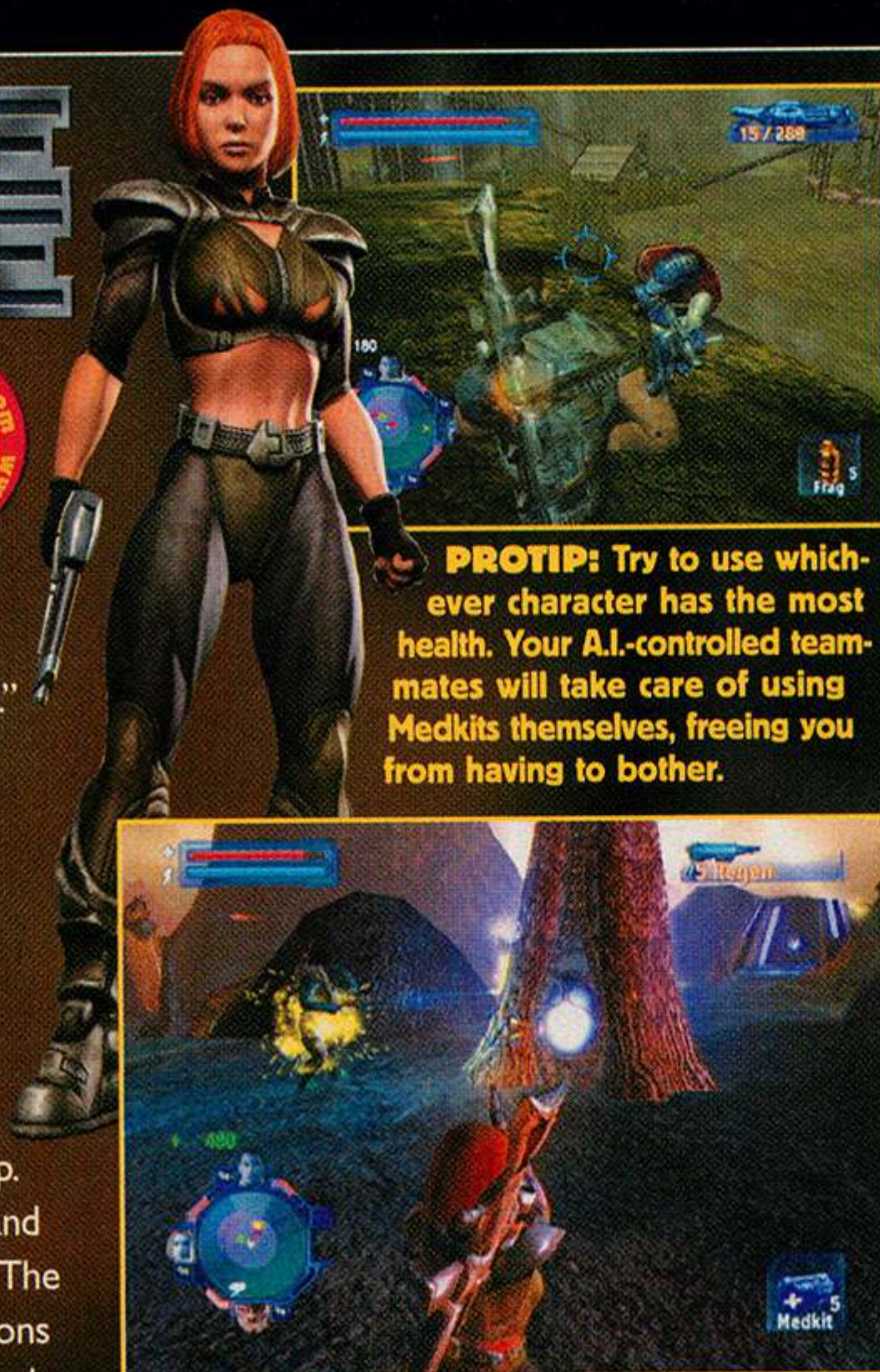
to worry about with all the "powers" bundled into it. This is as straightforward a shooting gallery as they come, and missions essentially boil down to "follow the yellow dots down the canyon." It's cool that three friends can control the other squadmates, but there's no Xbox Live multiplayer—a really glaring omission for a squad-based shooter.

CONFORMITY HAS ITS PLACE

Brute Force apes Halo's control scheme almost note for note, but it does so from a third-person perspective just for the sake of being different. You'll wish it conformed 100 percent—the angle change removes some of the grace that comes with the setup. The visual design is very Halo-esque, too, but the frame rate and overall gleam isn't up to Halo developer Bungie's high standard. The game makes textbook-good use of Dolby Digital 5.1 for explosions and sound effects, but sometimes the in-game vocals are drowned out, and dumb one-liners from your not-all-that-likeable-in-the-first-place lead characters get dumber each time you hear them.

Brute Force is fun for a while, a forgettable destructathon with an OK squad gimmick, but that's about it. This gang of four doesn't add up to one Master Chief.

BRUTE FORCE



PRO TIP: Try to use whichever character has the most health. Your A.I.-controlled teammates will take care of using Medkits themselves, freeing you from having to bother.

PRO TIP: Take out the Blue Pillars ASAP in the Hunting for Shadoon mission to prevent more enemies from teleporting in.

<p>BY STAR DINGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed by Digital Anvil Published by Microsoft \$49.99 Available now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 8 players 	<p>MATURE</p> <p>CONTENT RATED BY ESRB</p>	<p>GRAPHICS</p> <p>3.5</p>	<p>SOUND</p> <p>3.5</p>	<p>CONTROL</p> <p>4.0</p>	<p>FUN FACTOR</p> <p>3.5</p>
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MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

ROAD RAGE CAN never be productive on the real streets, but in Midtown Madness 3, it's exactly what drives the game to a revelry of bumper-crunching mayhem.

French Kissing the Bumper

As the third installment to the widely popular PC series, Midtown Madness 3 offers Xbox players a chance to rub tires with urbanites in Washington D.C. and Paris. In fact, both cities have been impressively re-created within the game—from the various neighborhoods to the sprawling monuments—in extremely sharp and vivid detail. Constant moving traffic and wandering pedestrians flood the city streets, adding to the realistic feel. However, once behind the wheel, realism is out the window, and four-wheelin' craziness begins.

In the single-player mode, you're an undercover agent tasked with disrupting the criminal world by performing jobs that include pizza delivery, chauffeuring, stunt driving, and ambulance driving. Each level is broken down into mission-based challenges, usually entailing you to recklessly drive from point A to point B within a specific time limit. En route, you'll crash into everything that's in your way, even flipping cars and totaling light poles as you race to your destination. Despite the fantastic crashes and simple controls, the gameplay can quickly get redundant with missions that seem to repeat themselves; plus, a limited soundtrack only adds to the monotony.



PRO TIP: It may be hard to control at first, but the dump truck runs quicker in reverse gear.

Lively Action

Fortunately, a refreshing multiplayer showing overshadows the humdrum single-player game. Up to eight players can compete in fun games like tag, team battles, and simple races around the two cities. Playing MM3 on Xbox Live is definitely much better than playing alone. Take a trip around the block with this driver, but be sure you have Live hooked up for an exciting ride.



PRO TIP: Most of the time, you'll get to your destination faster if you take the main thoroughfares rather than traveling the side streets.



PRO TIP: In Rental Routers, park your car in front of Angelina's car to gain extra time on her.



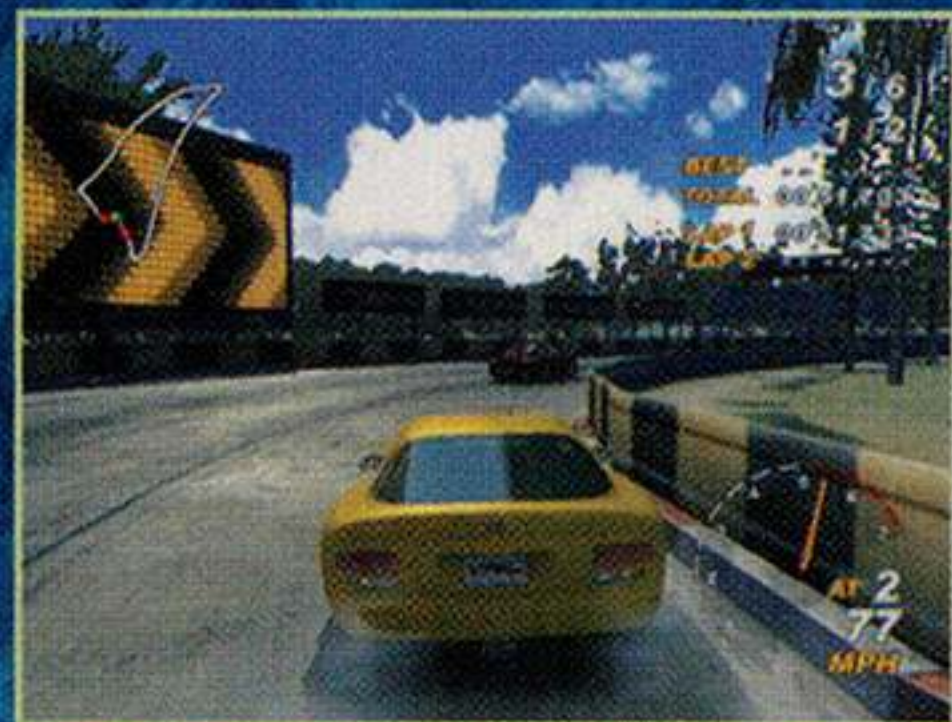
PRO TIP: Look for bonus paint jobs on top of buildings, like on the roof of the police headquarters in Washington D.C.

<p>BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed by Digital Illusions Published by Microsoft \$49.99 Available now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving/action 2 players (8 via Xbox Live) 	<p>EVERYONE</p> <p>CONTENT RATED BY ESRB</p>	<p>GRAPHICS</p> <p>4.5</p>	<p>SOUND</p> <p>3.0</p>	<p>CONTROL</p> <p>4.0</p>	<p>FUN FACTOR</p> <p>4.0</p>
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Group S Challenge

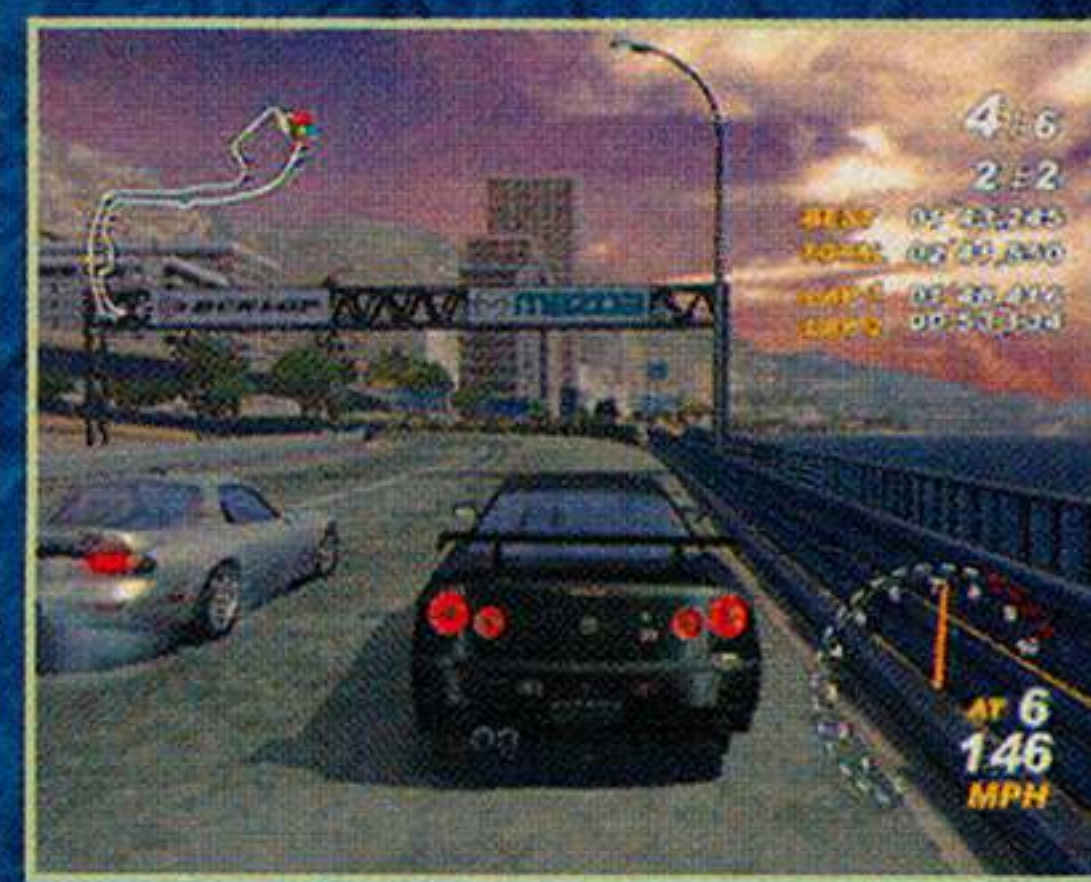
CAPCOM GOES FOR a bit of realism with Group S Challenge, a solid racer that won't make you forget about Gran Turismo, but will make up for Auto Modellista. Group S Challenge features several gameplay modes, such as the Circuit mode in which winning races earns you money that can be used to purchase parts to adjust or add onto your car to improve its performance; Duel mode, where you win unique cars by placing first in one-on-one races; and the arcade mode, which enables you to choose any car and track right off the bat.

Each car in Group S handles differently and responds terrifically, and though the default mapping is awkward, you can customize the controls. The physics are not quite as realistic as Gran Turismo's, and the game's overall




PROTIP: If you're having trouble handling loops, select a car with better handling and acceleration so you can speed out of turns easier.

feel is slightly arcadey, though leaning a bit more to the simulation side. Excellent car models, lighting, and reflection effects help the smooth visuals create a sense of blazing speed, and the beautifully detailed tracks are punctuated by vicious turns and loops that require you to master braking and powersliding without losing too much velocity. The sound design is crushing enough—tire squeals and engine roars are killer; but the whack techno soundtrack is the pits. Despite some frustrating rubber-band A.I. at the beginner level and opponents who'd rather crash you into a spin than avoid you, the A.I. is solid and provides a frantic challenge at higher difficulties. It's a choice bet for racing fans who want a little arcade with their sim. **G**



PROTIP: Hitting a wall slows you down more than braking does—keep it in mind before a sharp turn.

 BY PONG SIFU	■ Developed and published by Capcom	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>EVERYONE</th> <th>GRAPHICS</th> <th>SOUND</th> <th>CONTROL</th> <th>FUN FACTOR</th> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.0</td> </tr> </table>	EVERYONE	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR	E	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0
	EVERYONE		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR						
E	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0								
■ \$49.99	■ Racing											
■ Available August	■ 2 players											

Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction

A CONSOLE REAL-TIME STRATEGY, you say? Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction could change the minds of gamers who doubt the RTS genre could ever work on the Xbox. It's just too bad poor level design and lackluster graphics keep it from reaching its true potential.

Look deeply inside Extinction, and you'll find a truly well-conceived RTS control system in which simple single button presses make unit management second nature. The tedious resource gathering of other real-time strategies has been reduced here, and developer Zono has tailored the gameplay more toward what each race (Aliens, Predators, and Marines) does best. There's not much in this world more fun than sending a horde of Aliens into a room full of marines, slaughtering them, and using their comatose bodies to spawn more Alien soldiers. On the other hand, the overly straightforward Marine campaign suffers in comparison to the other two, but that's mostly because Aliens and Predators are so damn cool. It's a decent use of the license packed around a fine control layout that most other console RTS developers would do well to copy.

PROTIP: Keep comatose bodies lying near the Alien Queen at all times. Whenever you lose an Alien, the Queen will create one automatically.

Still, it's hard to get past Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction's throwback graphics, frustrating difficulty, and poor level design, which don't quite make the game a total loss but easily keep it from kicking much ass. If you're looking for a shallow action/RTS with a great license, you'll probably really enjoy Extinction. It's the best way to get your Aliens vs. Predator fix on the Xbox. **G**

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PROTIP: Hitting cars costs you points. Drifting around curves and catching air earns you bonuses.

The Italian Job

MINI COOPERS, ASSUMING you can fit in one, are an utter blast to drive—so much so, in fact, that they make this bare-bones racer seem better than it actually is. A basic copy of Wreckless, The Italian Job has you darting around L.A., causing havoc over a series of timed missions. The graphics are crisp and astonishingly smooth, but the game is

terribly short—the mission mode is too easy and the auxiliary racing bits are uninteresting. While not an awful game (Climax's driving engine is rock solid as always), it would be much better suited for arcades than home systems. **G**

SX Superstar

WHILE CLIMAX'S ITALIAN JOB was less than stellar, it's obvious that Acclaim got the long end of the stick with the developer's other creation. Although hardly original (it's Jeremy McGrath with a next-gen facelift), SX Superstar is a well-built arcade bike racer with pretty-enough graphics and the trademark dead-on Climax control. Most amusing of all is the Championship mode—winning on the track here lets you negotiate sponsorships, move into better digs, and even find a nicer-looking girlfriend...unless you're female. Hardcore folks will notice the fake bike names and lack of tuning options right off, but the story mode's novelty should keep genre beginners fascinated all by itself. **G**



PROTIP: Until you've graduated beyond the 125cc range, don't try executing two tricks in a single jump.



 BY FENNEC FOX	■ Developed by Climax (U.K.)	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>TEEN</th> <th>GRAPHICS</th> <th>SOUND</th> <th>CONTROL</th> <th>FUN FACTOR</th> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>2.5</td> </tr> </table>	TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR	T	3.5	3.5	4.0	2.5
	TEEN		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR						
T	3.5	3.5	4.0	2.5								
■ Published by Eidos	■ Racing											
■ \$39.99	■ 2 players											
■ Available now												

 BY FENNEC FOX	■ Developed by Climax (U.K.)	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>TEEN</th> <th>GRAPHICS</th> <th>SOUND</th> <th>CONTROL</th> <th>FUN FACTOR</th> </tr> <tr> <td>T</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>3.0</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> </table>	TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR	T	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.5
	TEEN		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR						
T	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.5								
■ Published by Acclaim	■ Racing											
■ \$29.99	■ 2 players											
■ Available now												

Madden NFL 2004

STOCK UP THE fridge, pay the electric bill in advance, and kiss your significant other good-bye. Madden NFL 2004 is a feature-packed football powerhouse that's going to keep you housebound for the duration of the NFL season.

High-Class Football

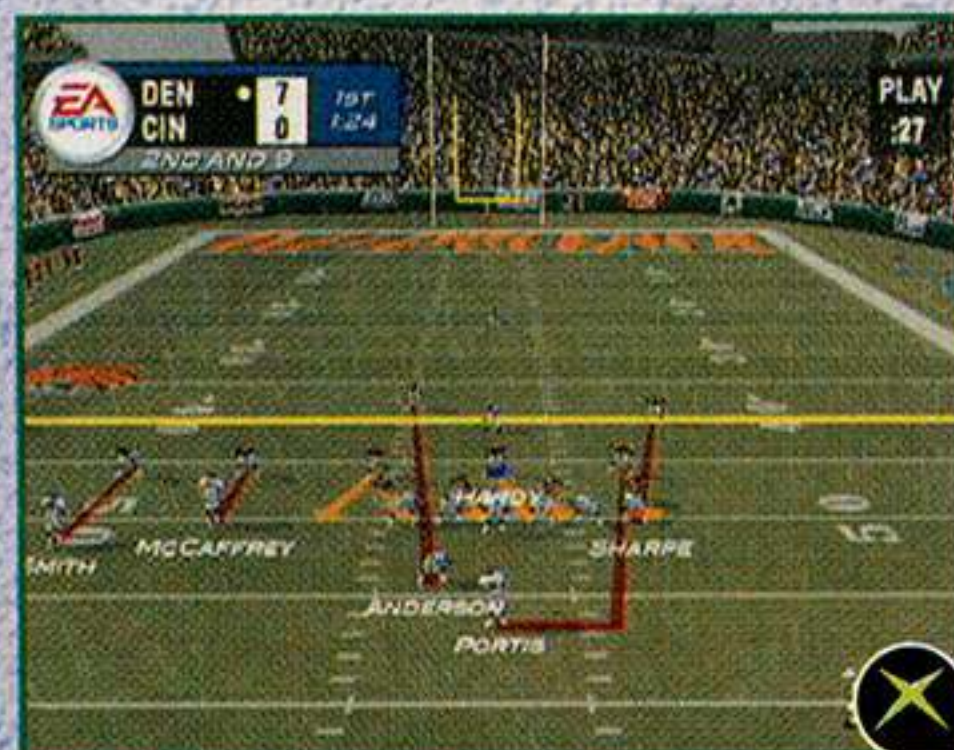
Madden's one of those games that just keeps raising the bar...on itself. This 2004 edition maintains the traditional love affair with the NFL that football gamers have come to expect from the series while adding some dynamite new features.

Hardcore Franchise players, for instance, are going to party hearty with the new Owner mode. At last, you can take a shot at running every aspect of your football operation. Winning the Super Bowl is one thing, but how about turning a profit? You can set ticket prices, adjust parking fees, and spend cash on advertising to put butts in the seats. The menus take a little time to master, but hey, it's a long season.

Budding billionaires can work the off-season, too. You can negotiate contracts, sign free agents, and even scout rookies and rate them at the combine. Owner mode also has an amazing build-a-stadium feature. You can construct your football dream house from the ground up with a simple-to-use tool that enables you to manipulate hundreds of architectural features from lights to end-zone logos with a few button presses.

PRICES	PRICE	TICKETS
BROWNS		
CLEVELAND BROWNS STADIUM™		
STADIUM TYPE	OUTDOOR/GRASS	FAN SUPPORT
AVG ATTENDANCE	73,290	
NUMBER	PRICE	VS EXPECTED
UPPER LEVEL	33,940	\$37
UPPER ENDZONE	0	\$47
MID LEVEL	19,719	\$44
DAWG POUND	14,640	\$59
CLUB SEATS	8,754	\$169
LUXURY BOXES	147	\$84,000

Create a stadium, create a team, create a player...Madden has it all this year.



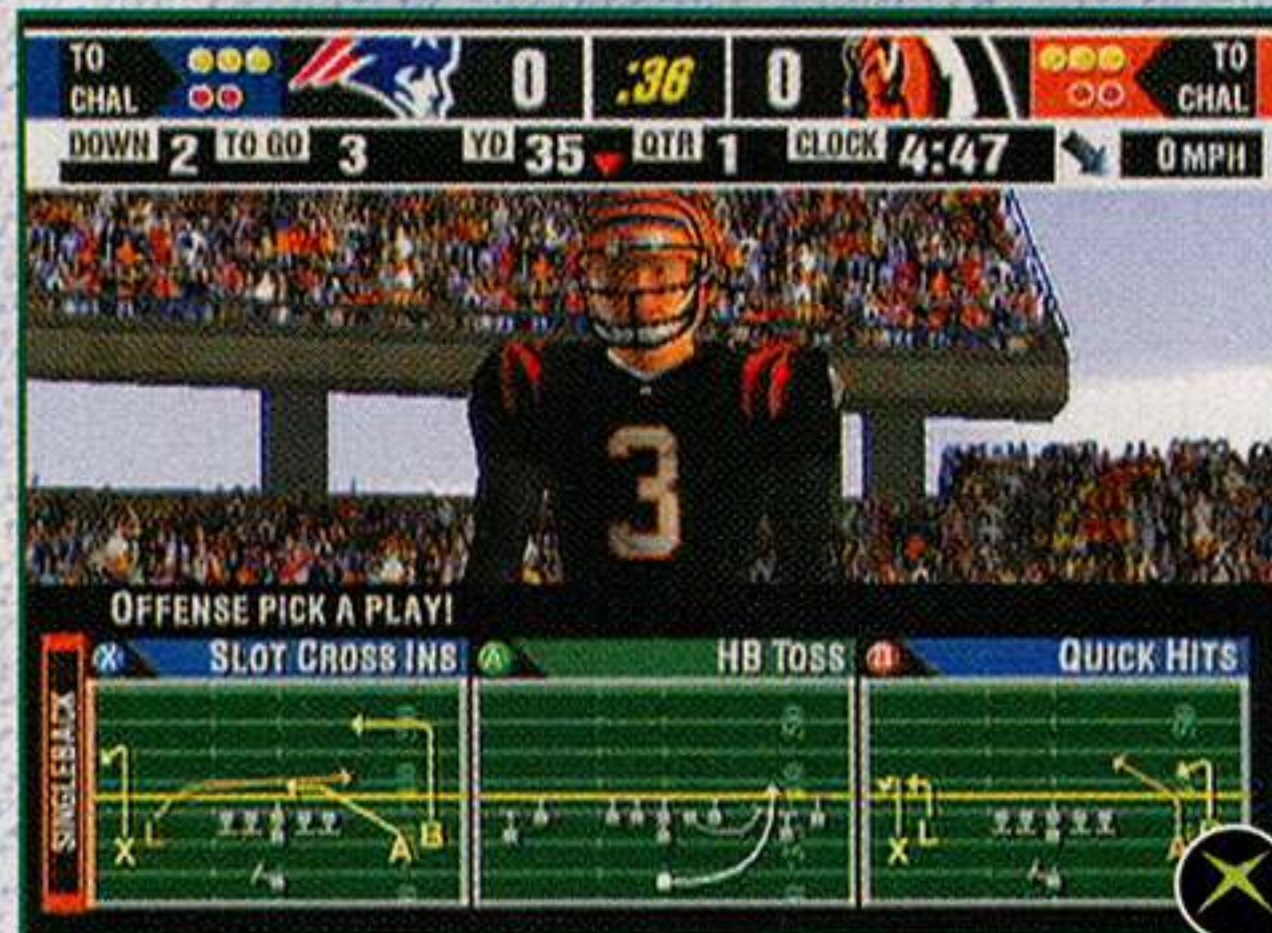
PRO TIP: Pressuring the quarterback is the key to effective defense. Always blitz if your team has a weak defensive line, like the Bengals.



PRO TIP: On defense, it's easiest to play middle linebacker. Be sure to always press the Coach's Cam button to find the player you need to key on.



PRO TIP: Be aggressive when you cover kickoffs. As your coverage team is running downfield after a kick, select the player closest to the kick returner, then press the Sprint button and slam into him like a homing missile.



PRO TIP: Find an effective pass play for your team, and you can build your offense around it. Check out the Bengals with Singleback-4WR, Slot Cross Ins.



PRO TIP: Go to Practice mode and work on a hook-in pass play. They're almost unstoppable and especially effective when you're near the goal line.



PRO TIP: To generate the most power on your kickoffs, be sure to press the action button when the kick arrow is as far as possible into upswing (the red portion of the kick meter).

Playmaker Power

Yes, the behind-the-scenes stuff is pretty darn cool. But on the field is where Madden is money. All the player models have received another megadose of polygons. The PS2 version looks even better than last year's, but the Xbox and GameCube games really shine.

But whether it's for the PS2, Xbox, or GameCube, the familiar football action rocks. Of course, the game feels best when played with the PS2 controller. The Xbox and the GameCube are fine, too, but their button layouts force sometimes awkward finger stretching.

This year Madden juices its overall fine control scheme with a new system called Playmaker Control. This feature enables you to control teams and individual players on the fly by pressing toward a direction with the right joystick on the PS2 and Xbox, or with the C Stick on the GameCube.

Playmaker adds great gridiron nuances to your game. Prior to the snap, for instance, you can react to the opposing team by switching the direction of a run on offense or cheating the secondary to one side on defense. After the snap, you have to take the time to become a real football maestro to manipulate all the regular buttons as well as the right analog stick for Playmaker Control. If you can manage that, you can perform slick tricks such as directing your blockers during a run or signaling your receivers to break off their pass

patterns on offense. On defense, you can instantly commit to the run or the pass once you read the opposing offense. Playmaker works great if you can stay calm enough during the heat of battle to fire it up.

Madden Goes All the Way

Online Madden gamers (both Xbox and PS2) will also enjoy a few upgrades. The smack is back thanks to EA Sports Talk, which finally enables you to add a headset to your game. There's also a "fair play" feature that should eliminate most annoying online cheats.

The best gets better. Not content to sit on its...er, laurels, Madden NFL 2004 raises its game to yet another level. Once again, the road to the video game Super Bowl leads through the house that John built. **G**



- Developed by EA Tiburon
- Published by EA Sports
- \$49.99
- Available August
- Football
- 4 players

EVERYONE	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
PS2	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.0
XBOX	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0
GAMECUBE	4.5	4.0	4.0	5.0

BY BROTHER BUZZ

ESPN NFL Football

ESPN NFL FOOTBALL comes roaring out of the tunnel and onto the video-game football field with a vengeance. The Game Formerly Known As NFL 2K4 has attitude, energy, and more than a few cool new features. Along with a big-time infusion of ESPN SportsCenter personality, you get first-person-view gameplay, a jumbo-jet-load of features, a little bling bling—oh yes, and great football action, too.

Look, Ma, No Hands

Alright, let's just get this out of the way: ESPN NFL Football's First-Person View Football feature is a knockout! First of all, you have to appreciate the audacity of this design; that ESPN pulls it off is all the more impressive.

You can play an entire season from this perspective, and the in-the-helmet look and feel is excellent. On defense as a linebacker, for instance, the ugly gets nasty as you go facemask to facemask with blockers who impede your attack on the ballcarrier. On offense, the ball exchange between quarterback and ballcarriers incorporates nicely tuned bullet-time animation to enable you to adjust your field perspective. Slick.

The potential replay value for the game is enormous. Of course, until ESPN has had a full season under its belt, the jury's out as to whether first-person view is a major revolution or a nifty diversion...but it's very cool.

It's Still about the Football

That being said, the regular "old" football is pro caliber. For both the Xbox and PS2 versions, the graphics are great. ESPN has the best-looking face models, hands down; the guys actually look like the guys! The body models still retain a sort of long-arm, stiff-hands look, but the animation is generally smooth (despite a few robotic moments), and players display nicely detailed post- and pre-play antics that are so lifelike, it's eerie.


The controls get a major facelift with a traditional playcalling screen that features formations with plays in three windows. The system's simple to master (read "just like Madden"). Armchair coaches will appreciate the ease with which the interface enables you to manage tactical intricacies, including the audible setup that assigns multiple audibles based on each formation. On defense, you can preset defensive backs to always double-up on specific "star" wide receivers, among many other moves.

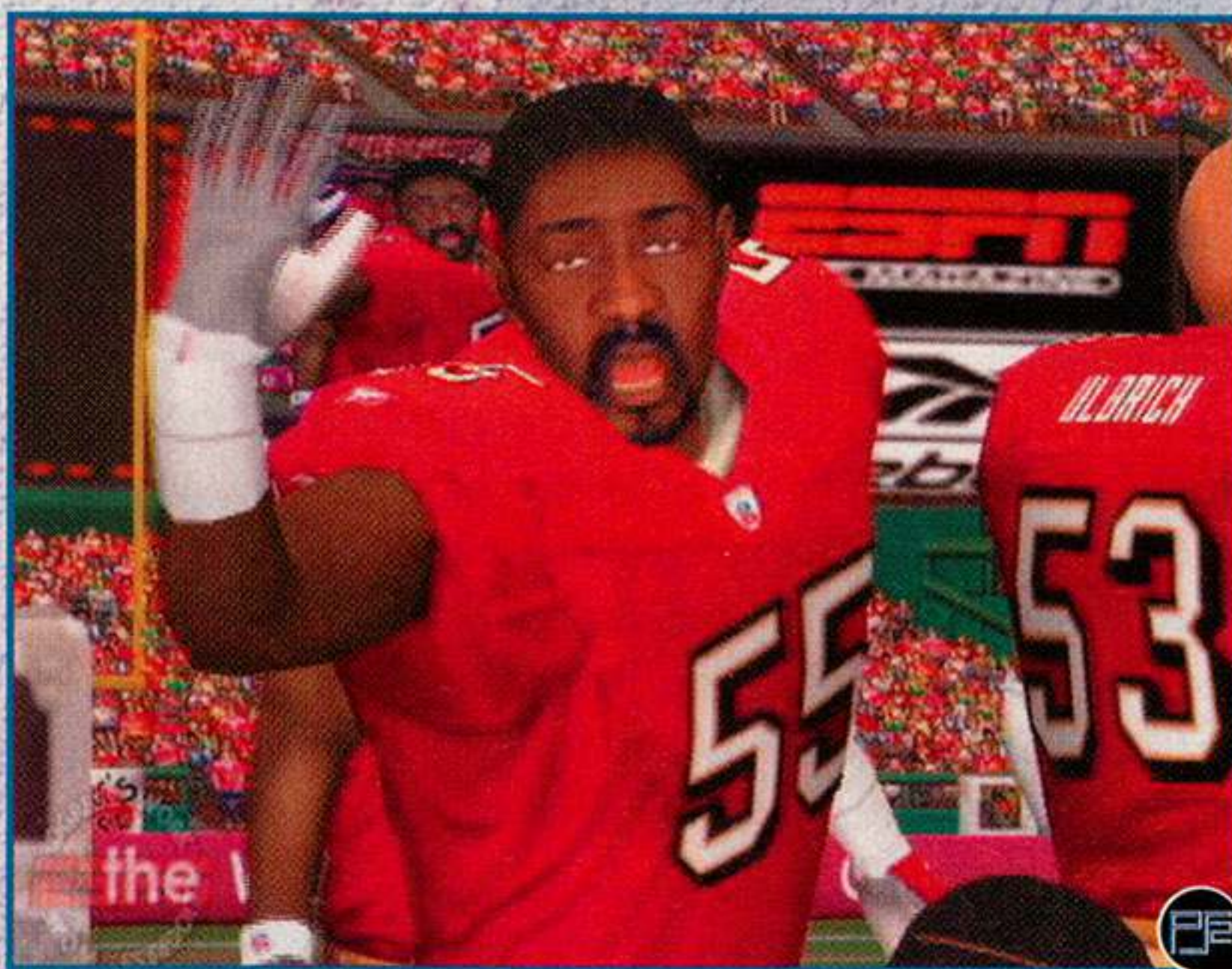
Online gamers get a "cleaner" game of head-to-head football with both the Xbox and PS2. A major effort has gone into eliminating online cheating this season.

Your Just Rewards

ESPN puts on an entertaining show, too, and headlining the festivities is the new Crib feature. This is basically a virtual bachelor's pad worthy of any jock millionaire. As in real life, you start out with nothing but a hot tub, but as you accomplish such far-ranging activities as winning games, setting on-field records, or even just exploring ESPN football features, your inventory starts to resemble a Sharper Image catalog. For instance, you get autographed jerseys (with signatures by the pro player of your choice), trophies for your trophy case, and even fun stuff like an air hockey table/mini-game. When you get your high-tech entertainment system, you can keep you ripped tunes on it if you have an Xbox.

You don't have to crash at your Crib if you're a football game purist, but you might want to make an occasional visit. You could find cheats, historic players you can add to your current rosters, and special hidden skills.

If nothing else, ESPN NFL Football earns kudos as a masterful effort. It literally redefines itself within the span of one video-game football season and is a worthy preseason Pro Bowl pick. If this game can't get you excited about pro football, you must be a Cardinals fan. 



Hi, mom! ESPN NFL Football isn't afraid to take off its helmets to reveal the best-looking "real" faces around.



PROTIP: Visit your Crib after every game. Cheats and hidden players will appear, along with the bling bling.



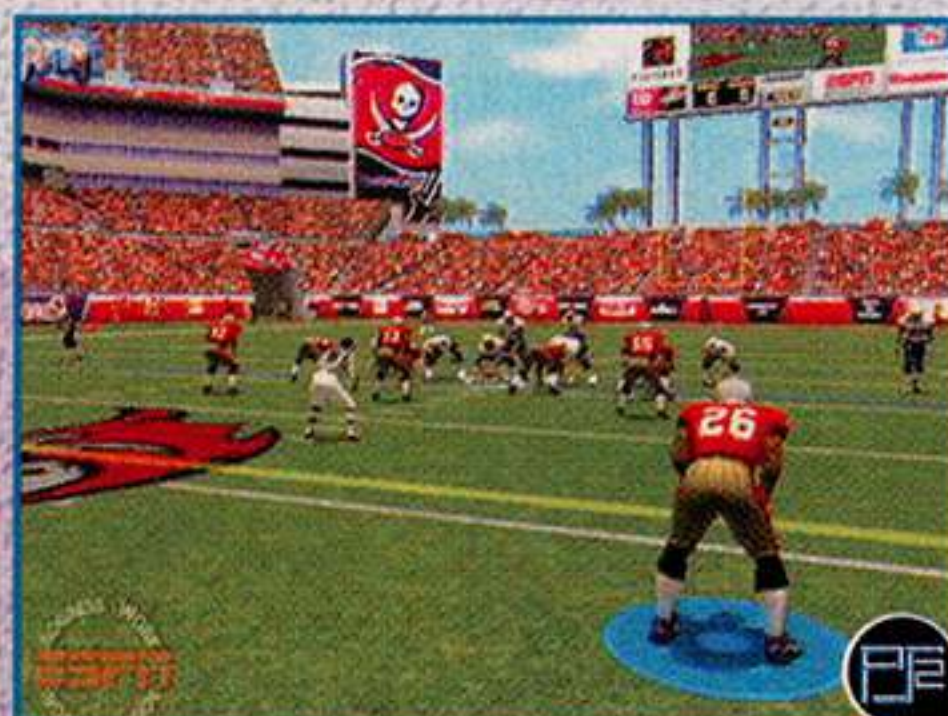
PROTIP: Plays that work in regular view also work in First-Person View Football, but the timing is completely different.



PROTIP: Pass-happy players should be sure to try the Pass Play Zoom Out view in the Camera Selection menu of Options mode.






PROTIP: With good passing teams like the 49ers and the Packers, practice plays that put five receivers into a pattern. Someone's always open.



PROTIP: Play a linebacker or a safety on pass defense. Although you have to protect against the run, it's easiest to cover a blown coverage or double-team a receiver from those positions.



PROTIP: It takes time to master the feel of First-Person View Football. View all offensive and defensive plays prior to the snap...then use Replay to figure out who smacked you!

	Developed by Visual Concepts		GRAPHICS 4.5	SOUND 4.0	CONTROL 4.5	FUN FACTOR 5.0
	Published by ESPN Videogames	Football		GRAPHICS 5.0	SOUND 4.5	CONTROL 4.5
	\$49.99	4 players				
	Available September					

NFL Blitz Pro

LONG THE KING of arcade-style football, Midway's NFL Blitz Pro wants only one thing for its franchise: respect. To get it, the company has affected a slight name change (the "Pro" denoting that it's serious football now) and a slew of features intended to lure gamers away from Madden, Fever, and ESPN.

Although players still light on fire and pummel each other with late hits, NFL Blitz Pro (coming out for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube) pulls the series further and further from its quick-hit, rules-be-damned, quarter-crunching roots. Gameplay now features full 11-man squads on the field with team-specific playbooks. The running game is being overhauled and enhanced,

and the A.I. has been completely rewritten for a more realistic play feel—no more catch-up—because-the-game-is-programmed-to stuff. A 10-season franchise mode gives gamers much more longevity, and the game now features SlugFest-style funny two-man commentary.

Most significant for PlayStation 2 owners is the addition of online support. Not only will NFL Blitz Pro enable head-to-head

matches, but the game will also offer downloadable roster updates and—if you can believe this—accurate weather conditions for what it's like in the real world. If it's snowing in Buffalo, it's snowing onscreen.

The PS2 preview version still suffered from pockets of severe slowdown, commentary glitches, and many of its features (franchise mode, create-a-player) were not yet functional—but the core gameplay worked fine and should satisfy gamers when it's completed and tuned. **F**



BY BAD HARE



- Developed and published by Midway Sports
- Target release date: September



PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

NBA ShootOut 2004



NBA SHOOTOUT GETS tweaky this year, promising boosted graphics, online support, the NBA's 50 Greatest Players, and a slew of smaller details to tighten up the game-play. Big changes, like new player models, improved A.I. (including a completely reworked, intelligent, and adaptive defensive system), and new cameras, are augmented by single-button mid-air shot



changes and physical momentum—little things that could wind up meaning a lot. Online play supports four players, and 989 will push weekly roster updates to your PS2, adjusting players' power and effectiveness based on their real-world injuries. The PlayStation version clearly won't have all the PS2 goodies, but at least it will exist. Could this be the year for ShootOut to shine? **F**

BY BAD HARE



- Developed by 989 Sports
- Published by Sony
- Target release date: September



PLAYSTATION 2 PLAYSTATION

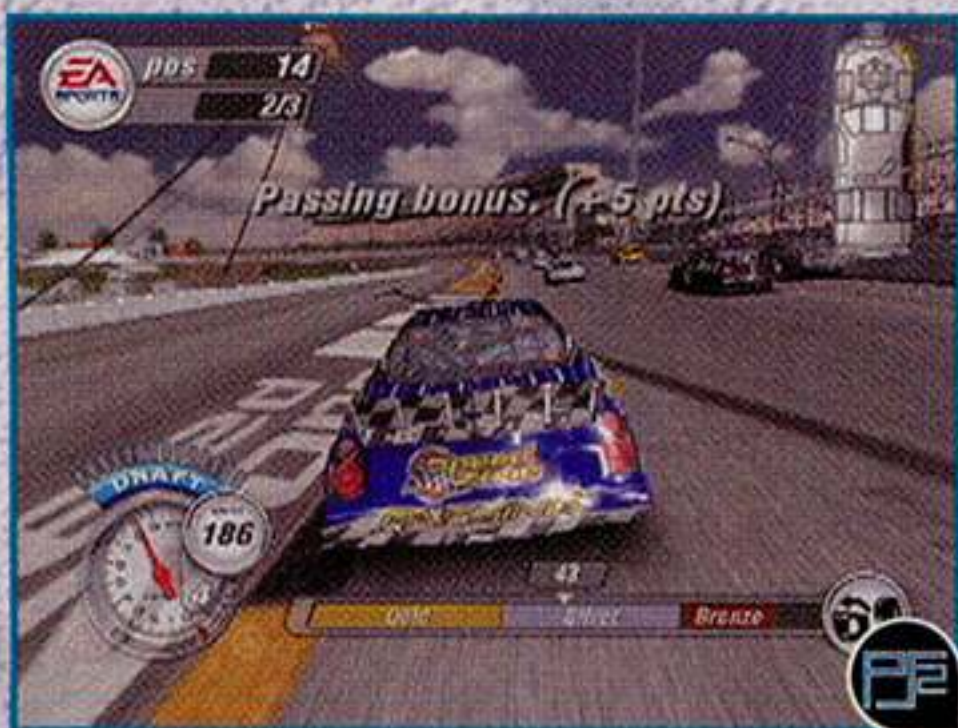
FIRST LOOK

NASCAR Thunder 2004

EA SPORTS LOCKED up the NASCAR license this season, which means that it will be the only stock-car racing game out there...so it's a good thing that NASCAR Thunder 2004's improvements and tuning seem like exactly what the series needs to recover from a slightly flat performance last year. As long as EA clears up the mild sluggishness of the frame rate in the preview version (as it plans to), the sense of speed seemed on track to finally mimic the feeling of blasting down a track at 200 mph, which would resolve a long-standing flaw in the franchise. The tracks and environmental lighting were much more lush and rich, and, better yet, the handling felt less tricky and mulish—experienced gamers should be able to wrangle these rides without breaking their thumbs.

On the features side, NASCAR 101 provides some welcome tutorials for newbies, and the Thunder License, Lightning Challenge, and Speed Zone modes mix mini-games, real-life scenarios, and instructional laps to provide additional schooling. The races now follow the full NASCAR format, including happy-hour practices, and the Career mode is much more streamlined and manageable. The online competition (on the PS2 only) should be a big attraction, too.

The big new feature—grudges and alliances between drivers—injects an interesting element into the mix. Trade too much paint, and other drivers' passing indicators turn red, which means they'll pop you any chance they get. They're not as vicious as a fellow gamer would be, but they definitely can rumble. Overall, NASCAR Thunder 2004 feels more authentic, accessible, and playable—the only disappointment is the absence of a GameCube version this year.



BY AIR HENDRIX

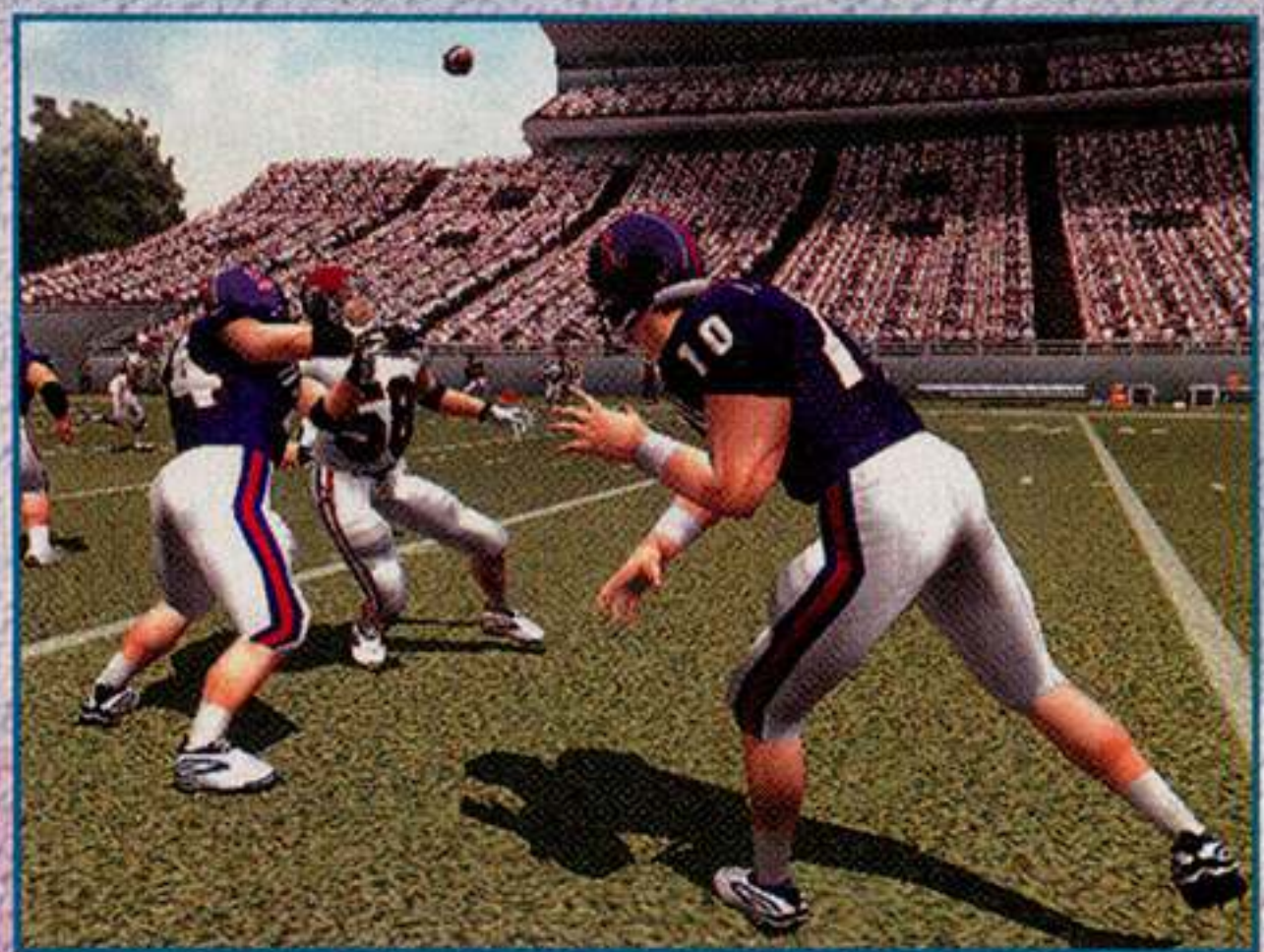
- Developed by EA Tiburon
- Published by EA Sports
- Target release date: September

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

HANDS-ON

NCAA GameBreaker 2004

989 SPORTS' QUEST to return to the glory it enjoyed back in the PlayStation days continues on the college gridiron with NCAA GameBreaker 2004. The beleaguered sports series is making the right offseason moves beginning with extensive support for on-line play that includes tournaments, voice chat and commands, and more. The graphics have been reworked and looked substantially better at E³, while overhauled offensive and defensive



playbooks provide new plays geared toward team-specific strategies. With 28 bowl games, a play editor, and a coaching career mode, GameBreaker's roster looks fairly solid, but it faces a tough challenge from EA Sports' perennial powerhouse, NCAA Football 2004.

BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by 989 Sports
- Published by Sony
- Target release date: August

PLAYSTATION 2

FIRST LOOK

NINTENDO
GAMECUBE



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NINTENDO
GAMECUBE

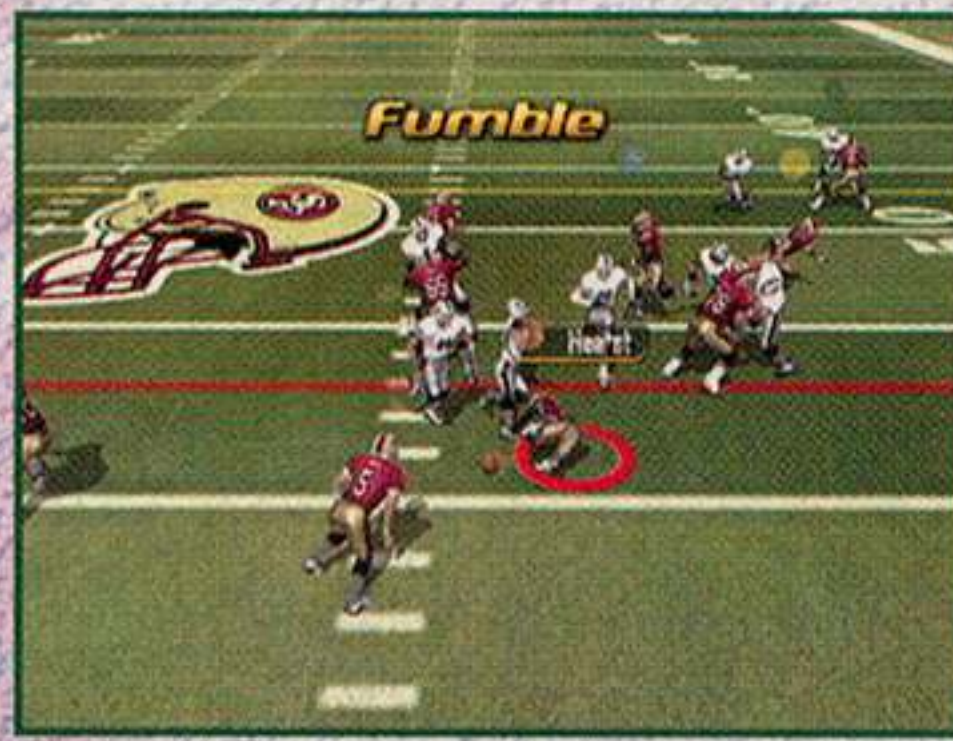
©2003 WAL-MART

NFL Fever 2004

AS THE THIRD or possibly even fourth pigskin game on the Xbox's depth chart, the NFL Fever series hasn't managed the Super Bowl level of success, but it's done an admirable job of delivering fast-paced, action-packed football. This season, it has a shot at drawing more attention because it's the launch title in Microsoft's new XSN Sports series on Xbox Live. The XSN connection means that you can form leagues and tournaments on XSNSports.com, and that info is then synched with your Xbox over the Internet, where you can meet the competition head-to-head. With a host of other sharp features, NFL Fever 2004's online support is one of its big draws.

But all that adds up to squat if the game doesn't play well, and Microsoft has focused on the right areas in the off-season. The defense did a lot of work in training camp, including making more effective on-the-fly adjustments, better tackling and blocking, and a tighter secondary. On offense, Microsoft has focused on smoothing out the passing game to match the already-solid running game with some intriguing new options. Retooled graphics and coaches stalking the sidelines also help improve the game.

In hands-on time with a preview version, the new controls for passing presented some intriguing new concepts. QBs use the trigger to regulate how hard the throw is and the right analog stick to move a cursor around the field to control where the ball goes in relation to the receiver. The game feels like it's maintaining its cartoony look and arcadey action focus, while cool touches, like your coach radioing in advice while you choose plays or the ability to save mid-game, add a lot. NFL Fever is good at doing its own thing, and if you like its brand of ball, 2004 should be another solid season. **F**



BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed and published by Microsoft
- Target release date: August

Xbox

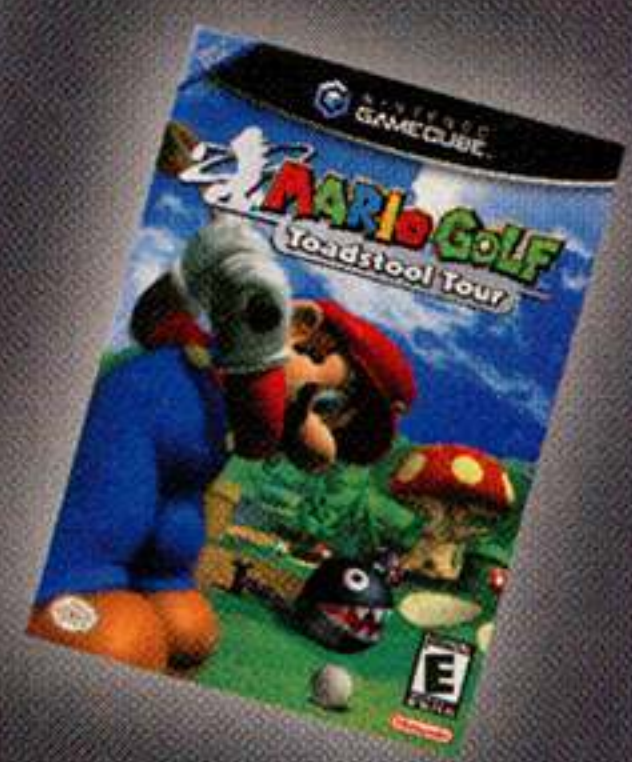
HANDS-ON



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PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING TO EVERYONE
RP-E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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NHL 2004

AFTER FLOPPING last season with a game-play style that can best be described as jumbled, EA Sports signed a new developer for its NHL series and took a fresh

approach. The focus is now authentic hockey, and it's backed by the coolest Dynasty mode yet seen at the rink. Alongside the usual player management and trades, you set the length of practice and the ticket prices while also leveling up your organization's "skills" at scouting, equipment, medical, and much more. Other cool new features include the top three European leagues, better and more realistic fighting, and PlayStation 2-only online play.



But the ice is where the action is, and new schemes for passing, skating, checking, and deking give the game a whole new feel. Such substantial changes naturally mean that it takes time to get comfortable with the controls. The innovation behind the changes is clear, but whether they're successful or just finger-twisters will depend on the last few months of tuning.



Both the PS2 and Xbox preview versions looked sharp (a GameCube pre-viewable wasn't yet available), and the new, more serious commentary was a relief. With the ESPN series coming on strong, NHL 2004 seems to have the advantage in features and graphics, but until the success or failure of its controls overhaul becomes clear, it remains the dark-horse pick this season.

BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by EA Black Box
- Published by EA Sports
- Target release date: September

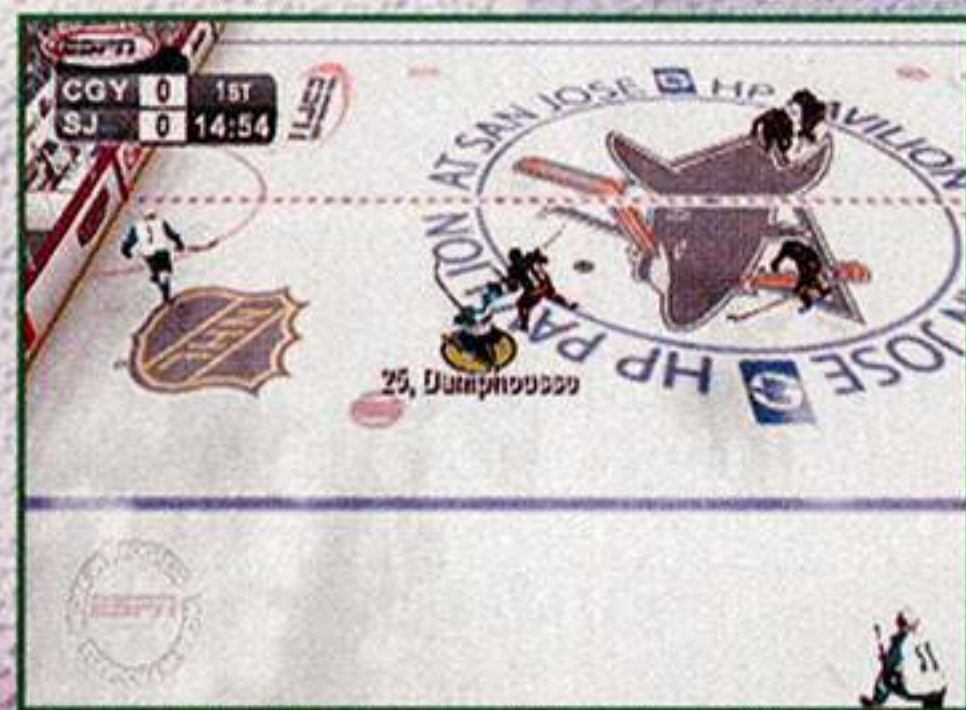
PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

HANDS-ON

ESPN NHL Hockey

NHL 2K3 SWEPT to the forefront of hockey last season, and ESPN NHL Hockey, its freshly renamed successor, seems primed to continue the streak. The ESPN presence plays a much bigger role, right down to top

announcers Bill Clement and Gary Thorne calling the action. As in ESPN's NFL game, a crib-like Skybox tracks your stats, unlocks old-time jerseys and teams, showcases your trophies, and even offers mini-games. First-person gameplay won't be making its debut this season, but online action will be available in both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions.



The developer's aim this season is to make the game more accessible by building in a few more action/arcade elements while still retaining the

sim-style realism that earned the series its reputation. Leading the charge is the a solid Franchise mode and the new All-Star Challenge events, which are available as engaging mini-games. The on-ice action also benefits from some slick tuning, including making the goalies less perfect and goals a bit more frequent. Overall, the scouting report shows that ESPN will probably be the top pick this season. It may not have as many whiz-bang new features as NHL 2004, but the graphics got a solid facelift, and the action feels comfortable and well-tuned.

BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by Kush/Visual Concepts
- Published by ESPN Videogames
- Target release date: September

XBOX

HANDS-ON

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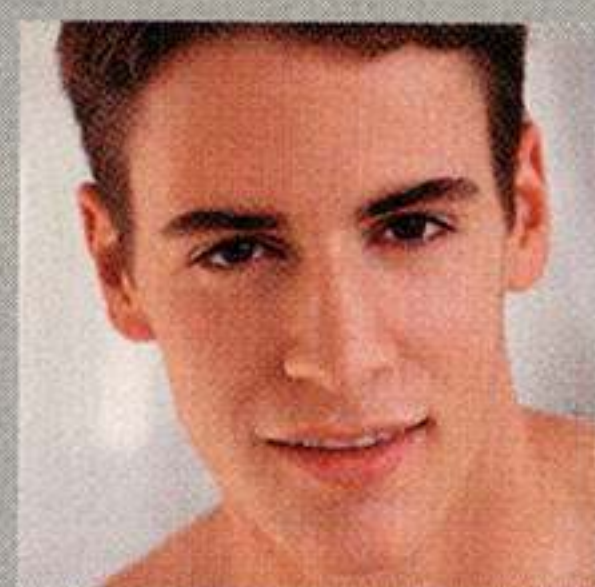
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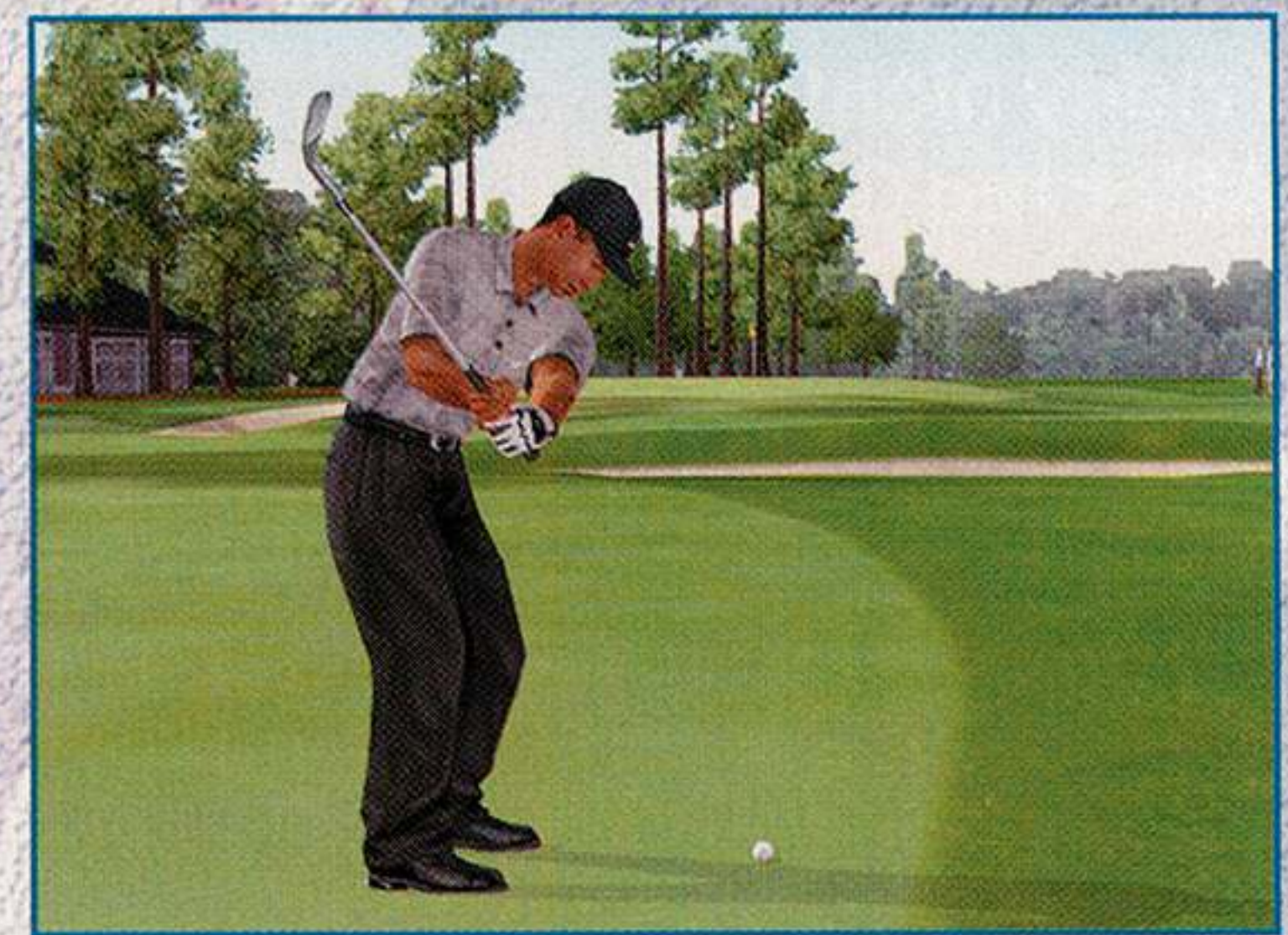
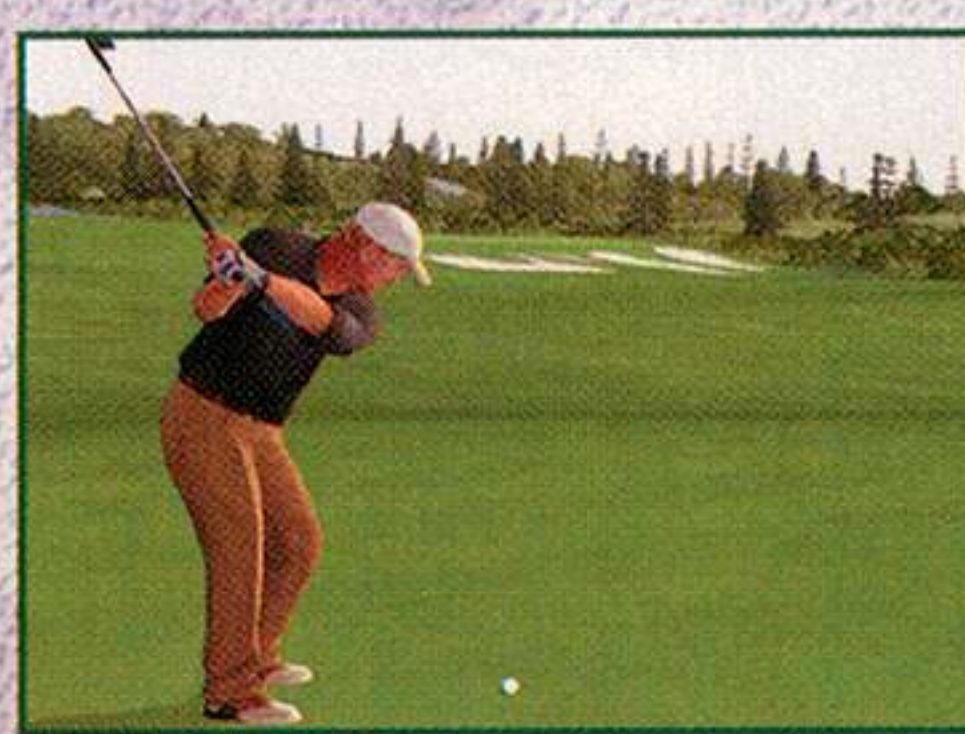
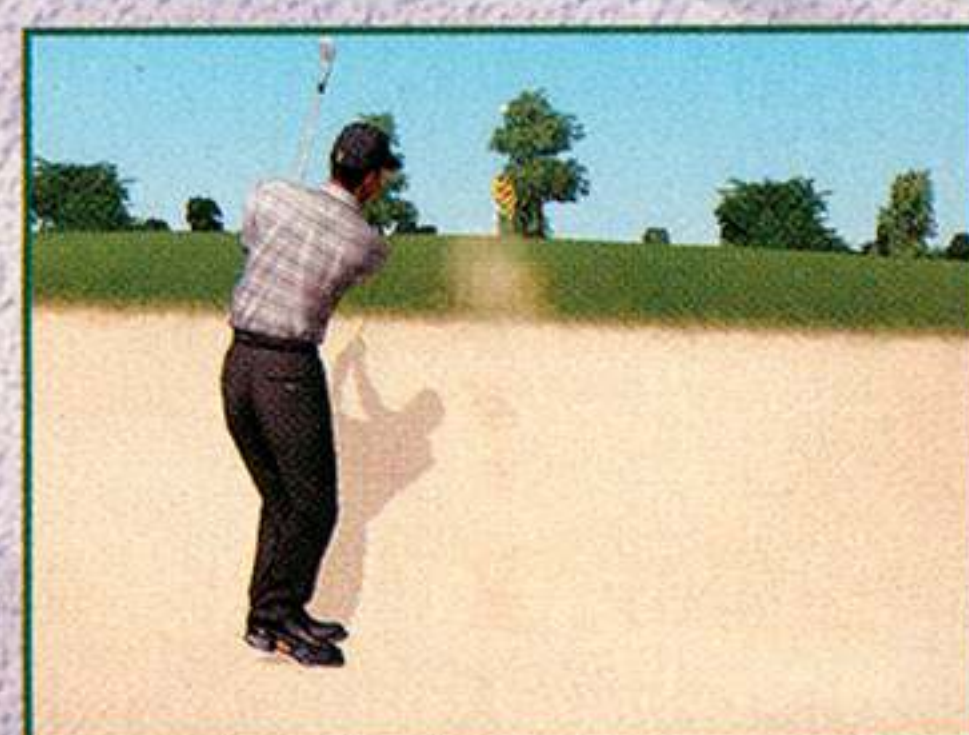
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Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE create-a-player modes are usually found in wrestling games, but EA Sports is looking to change all that with an impressive leap forward. Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 aims to put you in the game and build your skills via a create-a-golfer mode that enables you to adjust a huge range of facial and body details like eye width, chin length, and two different jaw tweaks. Everything your golfer wears or uses is also under your direct control, and manipulating all these details is a fun game-within-the-game.

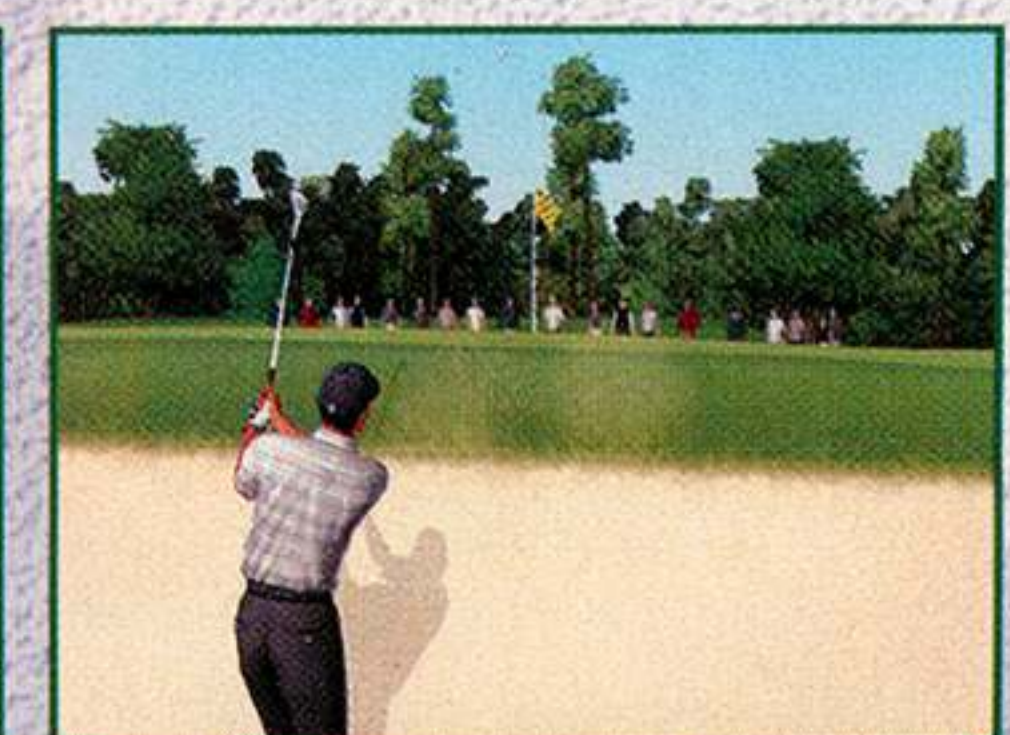


Although customized players are a big focus for Tiger 2004, more than a dozen top pros are represented, including John Daly, Justin Leonard, Vijay Singh, and Tiger Woods himself. Several fictional characters and one celebrity, Cedric the Entertainer, are also selectable. The PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube preview versions controlled well, but only the PlayStation 2 version lets you play online, where you'll find weekly tournaments and invitationals.

Key new gameplay tweaks include the "at last!" addition of a putting grid, multiple drivers and wedges, and a new chip shot, while on the features side, you'll find voice communication, real-time events (linked to occasions like the Masters or your birthday), in-depth Season and World Tour modes, and some sharp new arcade-style mini-games. Rounding out the list are five new golf courses that join older favorites like Pebble Beach and St.

Andrews Golf Links for a total of 19. Even if Tiger's real-life PGA Tour isn't going as well as usual, the video-game version is shaping up to be one of his finest efforts. **G**

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.



BY TOKYO DRIFTER

- Developed and published by EA Sports
- Target release date: September

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

HANDS-ON



FIFA Soccer 2004

THE FIFA SERIES from EA Sports has always featured topnotch visuals and plentiful team selection, but it's gotten knocks for wonky gameplay and a lack of team-management depth. Last year's model overhauled the gameplay aspect, and FIFA Soccer 2004 now looks to shore up team management. EA hopes to achieve this through the new Career mode where you build up a franchise, make front-office decisions, and try to win championships. You can play a multitude of seasons to achieve your goals,



but each season presents unique challenges that are designed to simulate life's unexpected twists. FIFA Soccer 2004 also features 300 new crowd chants, 16 official leagues, and 350 teams culled from all over the world. **G**

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.

BY TOKYO DRIFTER

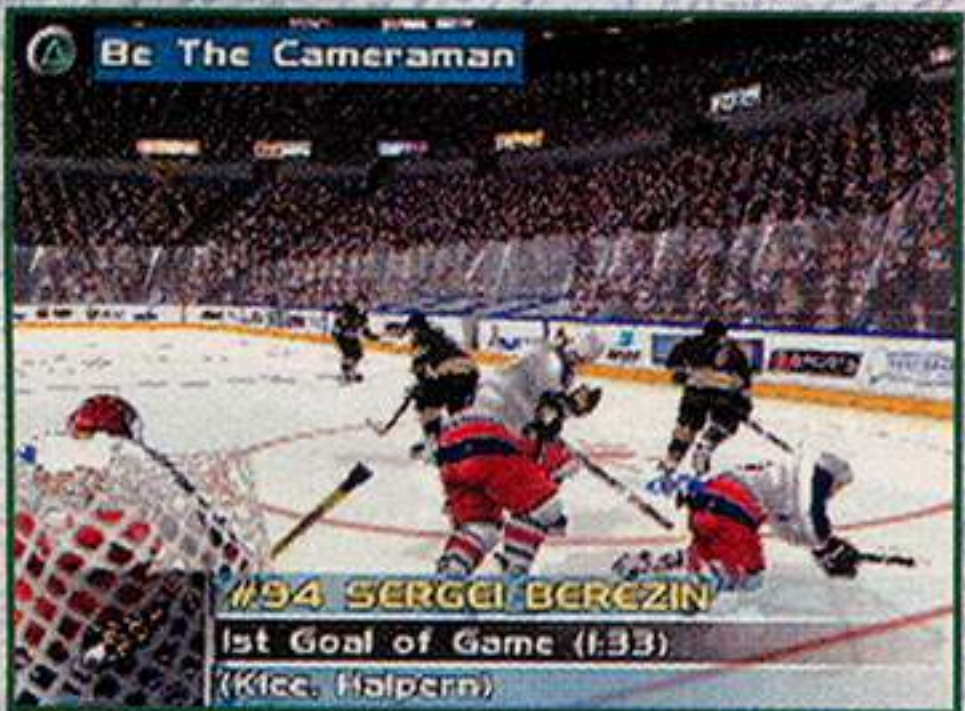
- Developed by EA Canada
- Published by EA Sports
- Target release date: Fall 2003

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

FIRST LOOK

NHL Hitz Pro

MIDWAY'S SPORTS TITLES are known for their over-the-top action, but this year's entry into the NHL Hitz series is a little different.



Choosing to inject some realism into hockey's version of Blitz, Midway has changed the action into a more authentic five-on-five game complete with penalties, offsides rules, and other things to make the game feel more like real hockey. Every single NHL player is represented here, rather than just a few from each team as in previous versions. Midway is touting unparalleled stickhandling and goalie control as well as a line-change system that enables you to pull out players who've been knocked around a few too many times.

The realism is the first thing you'd notice about the preview build—while the body checks and other physical moves were still brutal, the flow of the action seemed more like real hockey than a cartoony *Mutant League* game. Some Hitz fans might question the wisdom of going more "authentic" this time because it just feels odd to



be called for a penalty for cross-checking in a Hitz game rather than being rewarded for it. Still, aside from a graphical glitch here and there, the preview build looked solid and almost ready to go. **B**



BY D-PAD DESTROYER



- Developed and published by Midway
- Target release date: September



PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Art by Jung-seung Hong, Recent Graduate, ILM Modeler



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STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

FOR YEARS, CONSOLE and PC RPGs have lived in segregated worlds, borne of a common source but separated by audience and history. The time has come, finally, to end this abominable discrimination, and Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic will be the game to bridge this gap...not only is it intensely hardcore like a good PC RPG, but it's also intensely easy to pick up like a good console RPG. Integration is here! BioWare shall overcome!

Not Even the Force...


Set four millennia before *Episode I*, Knights of the Old Republic features a galaxy in far greater turmoil than in your typical *Star Wars* plot. The Sith cult, led by a pale nutter named Darth Malak, has decimated Republic forces with a seemingly inexhaustible army of alien battleships—in fact, without young Jedi Bastila and her Force powers, the good guys would have been offed long ago. As a Republic soldier caught in the Sith maelstrom, you must rescue Bastila and follow her across space, playing keep-away with Malak and eventually discovering your own latent Force abilities.

Knights of the Old Republic's structure is very simple: walk around, find quests, carry 'em out, rinse, and repeat for 50 hours. The battle system, however, requires special mention: It may look real-time in the screens, but it's actually turn-based and intensely fast—just like in *Baldur's Gate*, you can pause the action at any time to target enemies and assign commands to party members. There's a learning curve in store here for most, but it's quickly surmounted, and executing grandiose three-way combos on bosses soon becomes second nature.

...Holds Enough Power...

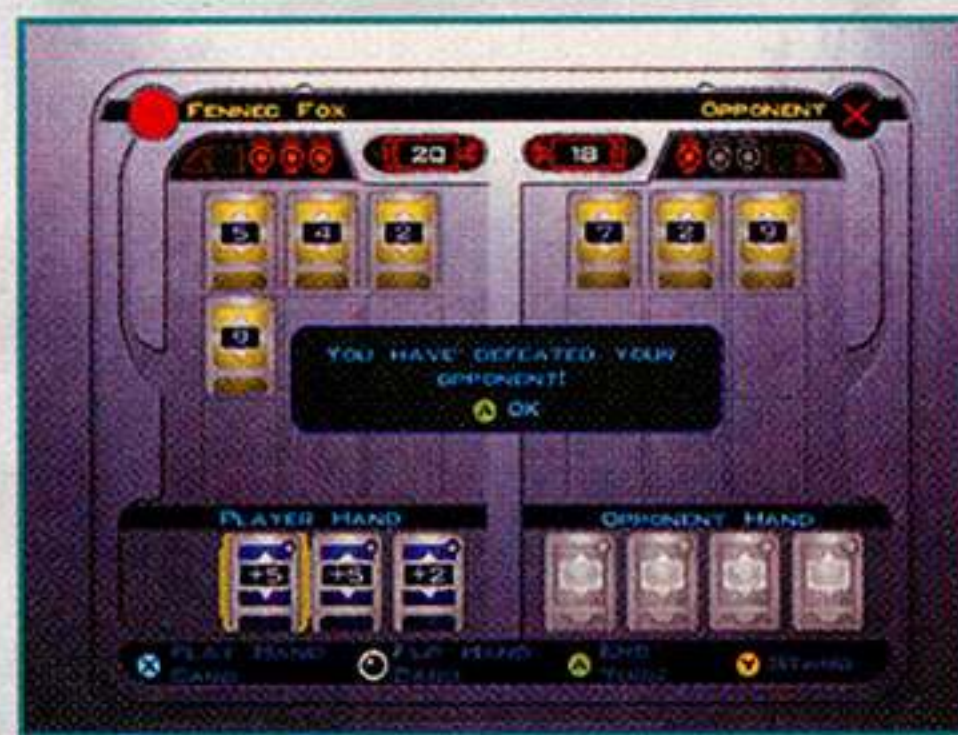
BioWare's most magnificent achievement, however, isn't the battle system or the graphics (which are hopelessly pretty, by the way). It's the sheer size of the thing. Side-quests number in the dozens; they sprout up like dandelions everywhere you go. You can become a Light or Dark Jedi based on your behavior, and the story branches believably depending on your alignment. And there's so much terrain to explore...almost too much. In fact, hoofing around the vast expanses of some planets will make you wish you could borrow Mr. Skywalker's personal speeder for a few hours.

...To Lift This Xbox

But no matter. The main point is: After many tries, someone's managed to combine console and PC RPGs (two completely different genres, really) and create something that fans from *both* camps will love to bits. BioWare's efforts have been well worth the wait—Knights of the Old Republic is required playing for Xbox owners, and it's worth finishing twice to spot the differences between the Light and Dark stories. Yes, it's *that* good. 



PROTIP: This robot drone is far easier to deal with if you switch off the shield encircling it. Try breaking into a nearby terminal.



PROTIP: The Pazaak card game is great for scoring extra cash. Invest on negative-value cards for your deck—they're more useful in the long run.



PROTIP: The color of your lightsaber depends on the type of crystals you use to build it. These crystals can alter your strength and Force abilities, too.



PROTIP: This disturbed lady on Dantooine is searching for her missing companion; you'll find him at the far south end of the planet.

GRAPHICS 4.5

From the grassy hills of Dantooine to the dizzying forests of Kashyyyk, the amount of detail in every location is staggering. Some of the animation is stiff, but the sheer quantity of it more than makes up the difference.

SOUND 4.0

The music and sound effects are nothing new—really, if you've heard one *Star Wars* game, you've heard 'em all. The ponderous amount of voice acting, though, makes every NPC conversation seem like a new day—and it's almost never repeated.

CONTROL 3.5

BioWare's pseudo-real-time battle system works remarkably well, although it uses the White and Black buttons like they're going out of style. Getting from point A to point B can take approximately forever at times—some kind of location-warp option would have been nice.

FUN FACTOR 4.5

BioWare has fabulously succeeded in taking a very PC-like title and making it palatable (not to mention obscenely addictive) to the console audience. The result: the best RPG on the Xbox and arguably the best *Star Wars* game to date.



PROTIP: You will probably die horribly during the first turret mini-game. Sorry. Next time, try following the radar instead of the viewscreen.



PROTIP: In general, blasters are useful only at long range. If the enemy's too close, switch to a sword or lightsaber.



Developed by BioWare
Published by LucasArts
\$49.99
Available now
RPG
1 player



EF .hack Part 3: Outbreak

THE WORLD...ER, The World is in ruins! After two volumes' worth of plodding about, Bandai's four-volume RPG/anime hybrid is just now kicking into high gear. The World (the fictional online RPG in which .hack takes place) is literally falling apart at the seams—the root towns are corrupted and breaking apart, your chief ally has been taken in by the hacker police, and worst of all, Mia's starting to act strangely around you. Well...stranger than usual, at least.

Outbreak's gameplay differs little from that of the previous two installments. The majority of the game is spent trudging through dungeons, plundering treasure, and defeating bosses in Phantasy Star Online-like battles. Unlike in



PROTIP: Grunties can now search for food, portals, or dungeon entrances. Exactly what yours will search for, though, depends on its type.

Part 2, there isn't much new to the game system—more skills and items have been added, you can use Grunties for fun and profit, and that's about it. In fact, if you haven't played through the first two volumes, you should probably just forget about Outbreak for now...not only will you be lost in its story line, but the challenge could make you pop your top. It's uneven, too: Some dungeons must be completed with a single character and require massive leveling to survive, but once you make it through, you're so buff that the multicharacter dungeons are dead simple.

All that said, though, Outbreak is the most engrossing .hack yet from a story standpoint. If you haven't started yet, begin with Part 1, and you'll likely be caught up in time for the final volume's release. Judging from the plot twists here, it will be worth the trouble. **B**



PROTIP: You can cast magic only on enemies that are currently onscreen. Make sure your camera angle's sussed out before bringing up the menu.



- Developed by Cyber Connect 2
- Published by Bandai
- \$49.99
- Available Fall 2003
- RPG
- 1 player



GRAPHICS
3.0

SOUND
4.0

CONTROL
2.5

FUN FACTOR
3.5

X Pirates of the Caribbean



PROTIP: Storms can be disastrous. To survive them, lower your sails and position your boat upwind or downwind.

YOU'VE NO DOUBT noticed by now that the RPG drought for Xbox owners has well and truly ended. The best part about this sudden bounty? There isn't any total crap among the bunch: Pirates of the Caribbean, despite becoming a movie license at the last minute (it was originally called Sea Dogs II), succeeds at the great majority of feats it attempts.

Describing Pirates' gameplay can be difficult. If you have PC game experience, then "Sea Dogs, except more of it" should be enough explanation. Otherwise, think of it as a sort of nautical Morrowind: As a rank-and-file sea captain in the 17th Century, you're free to make your name any way you wish, whether it be by legal trading, naval battles, or the old "Yarr, cut 'is throat and bring me the wenches" bit. There is the outline of a plot above all this, but you're often given the leeway to ignore it completely.

Your time in Pirates is divided between exploring island landscapes and sailing the seas between them. The land sections are nothing special, really—the controls are like a tank, the graphics are effective but samey, and sword fighting boils down to a PC-style clash of RPG statistics. Go out to sea, though, and it's a completely different story: The weather effects are beautiful (the storm sequences are downright scary), and pulling off a successful ship capture is an exhilarating experience once you manage it.

The dogged PCness of Pirates will undoubtedly turn off some console owners. If you can deal with it, though, you'll find an engaging RPG that rewards the effort it takes to master. **B**



PROTIP: The basic rule of thumb for sea trading: Buy goods where they're exported (i.e. cheap), and sell them where they're imported (i.e. expensive).



- Developed by Akella
- Published by Bethesda Softworks
- \$49.99
- Available now
- RPG
- 1 player



GRAPHICS
4.0

SOUND
3.0

CONTROL
3.0

FUN FACTOR
4.0

X Rent A Hero No.1

UNDERGROUND CULT HITS aren't born—they're made. Just like Nintendo's EarthBound (and, more recently, Enix's R.A.D.), Rent A Hero No.1 seems expressly designed to become an obscure B-game classic—it's unpolished and controls strangely, but it's too weird and drop-dead funny to ignore if you're a very special sort of gamer.

A straight port of a three-year-old Japanese Dreamcast game, Rent A Hero stars a typical teenager with perhaps the greatest summer job ever: defender of justice. As the world's first superhero for hire, you must handle a staggering variety of jobs—halting bank robberies and rescuing kidnapped girls on one hand, helping rich old ladies with their book shopping on the other.



PROTIP: New combos can be bought at SECA or learned from the kung-fu guy at the university.

Basic gameplay proceeds action/RPG style with most of the game world available to you early on. The battle system is probably Rent A Hero's strongest trait—encounters run like a 3D Final Fight, and you gradually learn new combos and moves to deal with the criminal masterminds you'll discover later on. Unfortunately, this fighting system almost isn't used enough—most of the game is spent running around town endlessly, which is hard to take for long periods of time.

Typical Xbox users will be turned off by Rent A Hero immediately—the graphics are solid but low budget, and the game inexplicably doesn't support analog control, making play with the original Xbox pad physically harmful. For hardcore freaks, though, AIA's latest is worth at least a shot for its rockin' battles and its incredibly strange sense of humor. If the EarthBound sequel never makes it over here...well...at least you have this, right? **B**



PROTIP: HIP-PP upgrade capsules can be found anywhere—dumpsters, vases, works of art, even the corners of rooms.



- Developed by Hitmaker/CoolNet Entertainment
- Published by AIA
- \$44.95
- Available now
- RPG
- 1 player



GRAPHICS
3.0

SOUND
4.0

CONTROL
2.0

FUN FACTOR
3.0

Champions of Norrath



IF YOU'VE PLAYED *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, you might think you've already played *Champions of Norrath*—it's developed by Snowblind Studios, the same folks

who made *Interplay's* action/RPG smash, and at first glance it looks almost the same. Of course, Sony Online Entertainment wouldn't just put its *Realms of EverQuest* brand on last year's RPG, so you can rest assured that *Champions of Norrath* will be more than you bargained for.

Based in Norrath, the setting of the megahit MMORPG *EverQuest*, *Champions* casts you as either a warrior, cleric, wizard, ranger, or shadow-knight, and charges you to complete quests all over the world. Besides taking place in *EverQuest's* well-established setting, *Champions* also features a number of other improvements over Snowblind's previous work—you have a lot more freedom with the camera; there are tons of class-specific weapons, armor, and outfits for each character; and you even get to choose your character's gender no matter what class you pick. According to Sony Online Entertainment, the game will have so much artwork that it will ship on a dual-layer DVD, officially making it one of the largest games for the PlayStation 2.



BY DUNJIN MASTER



- Developed by Snowblind Studios
- Published by Sony Online Entertainment
- Target release date: November



FIRST LOOK

Sudeki

TAKE A GROUP of very talented Western developers, tell them to produce the best Japan-style role-playing game they possibly can, and the result is *Shadow Madness*...erm, wait, wrong system. No, *Sudeki* is much more ambitious than *Crave's* old snorefest—an Xbox exclusive, it's an action/RPG title that tries to combine Eastern design sensibility with a Western taste for graphical magnificence.

Although the visuals in the preview version were undeniably top-of-the-line Xbox caliber, it's the gameplay that should keep things exciting. The battle system runs like a sped-up version of *Phantasy Star Online*—every member of your party has a selection of melee, magical, and Spirit Strike attacks, and you can switch freely among them during battle. The first two are simple enough (you have weak and strong melee moves, just like in *PSO*), but Spirit Strike attacks between multiple characters are trickier to pull off—and they're needed to beat most bosses. The controls are also easy to come to grips with, although the lack of a real pause function during battles (the game drops to *Matrix*-style bullet time when you enter a menu) could cause major anguish if your crew gets killed before you can heal them.



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed by Climax (U.K.)
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON



Gladius

WHEN THE AVERAGE person hears the word "gladiator," two things generally come to mind: Russell Crowe and really weird fraternity initiations. LucasArts will attempt to do something about this with Gladius, an original combination of console-style RPG gameplay and PC-style theatrical realism.

The Xbox and GameCube preview versions (the game will also hit the PS2 at the same time) revealed a game that, despite the gritty exterior, plays a lot like the arena sections in the Arc the Lad series. Instead of felling slothlings and having pointless conversations with villagers, though, you progress the story by fighting in tournaments, hiring recruits for your army, and gradually building your name as a warrior. Battles work like Arc's except with more tactical freedom—you can plan out your moves far in advance, and the local geography can also be used to your advantage. **L**



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed and published by LucasArts
- Target release date: August



HANDS-ON

Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII

City Info		Qiao	Province	Yu
City	Force	Zhang Jiao	Prefect	Liu Pi
Band	1st		Warlord	
			Officers	2 Free 0
			Domestic Affairs	Trust
			Dev	---/--/ Fields 0
			Com	---/--/ Market 0
			Tech	---/--/ Factory 0
			Def	---/--/ Gate 0
			Safe	---/--/ Tower 0
				Barracks 0
Size	Small			

THE PREVIEW BUILD of Three Kingdoms VIII offers all the menu-surfing turn-based historical strategy you can handle. Over 600 Commanders, 100 potential player-created officers, 54 scenarios, 40 endings, 15 new tactical skills, and a partridge in a pear tree await those with the patience to master the endless spreadsheets that lie in wait. New relationship commands allow you to throw banquets for your favorite allies, pledge oaths of brotherhood, and even marry to attain strategic goals. Up to eight players can participate in massive campaigns. The menu system thus far is slow-paced and con-

fusing, but it looks like the finished product should appeal to fans of the genre. **L**

City List	
City	Ji Nan
	Qing
Prefect	Guan Hai
Force	Zhang Jiao
Gold	2900
Sup	62000
Trp	46000
Band	



BY DJ DINOBOY



- Developed and published by Koei
- Target release date: August



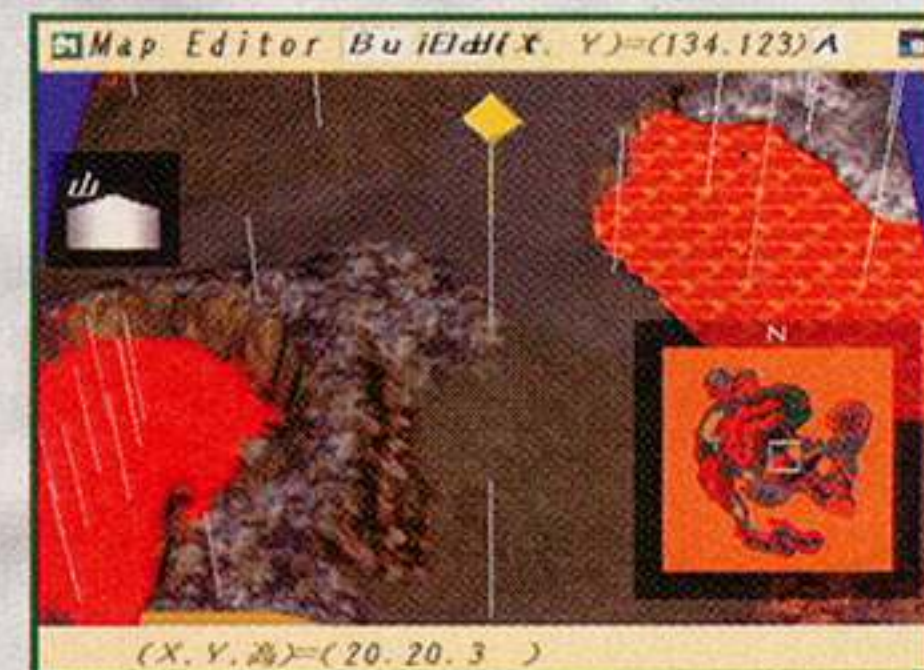
HANDS-ON



RPG Maker 2

FED UP WITH all those crappy PlayStation 2 titles? Want to stake a name for yourself in the game industry? All you need is two things: talent and the proper tools. One will be \$50 at your local game shop this fall, and the other...well...Agetec can't help you with that.

The preview version of RPG Maker 2 revealed a surprisingly deep and flexible game engine to work with, despite the Atari Jaguar-caliber graphics. The designer is divided into several difficulty levels, and throwing together a mini-quest with stock maps and characters takes just a few minutes on easy mode. Pump up the complexity to "hard," though, and you can edit everything—characters, enemies, dungeons, and even visual effects. This daunting task is made easier with a USB keyboard in hand—a must if you're really serious about your Great American RPG. **L**



BY FENNEC FOX



- Developed by Enterbrain
- Published by Agetec
- Target release date: October



HANDS-ON



APE ESCAPE 2

Don't let Specter's Freaky Monkey Five make a monkey of you, young grasshopper! This ProStrategy Guide presents an ancient tome full of secret monkey-fighting arts and chimp-clobbering techniques to get you through these battles of extraordinary magnitude. *By Pong Sifu*

races across the bridges, lobbing bombs at you if you follow him. You want to keep after him, but be careful—if the lights on the bridge turn red, the ground will collapse beneath you. After being knocked off his cycle five times, Blue Monkey collapses to the ground, where you can use your Monkey Net to catch him and advance to the next stage.

Yellow Monkey is incapacitated, at which point you can capture him with your Monkey Net.



Occasionally, Yellow Monkey will shake a nearby pole, causing objects to fall out of the sky. These are easily avoidable, if you keep clear of their shadows on the ground.

Giant Yellow Monkey Battle



At first, the gargantuan Yellow Monkey tries to jump on top of you from above. Dodge his attacks until he yells, "Here I come," at which time he barrels toward you. If you're armed with the Super Hoop, start activating it when he yells so that when he charges you, he'll be easier to dodge. If you get out of his way, he'll teeter at the edge of the arena in front of the spikes.

Pink Monkey Battle



You need to hop from pad to pad across the water to reach Pink Monkey while she's singing onstage. Dodge the pink hearts that come from her or else you'll be momentarily stunned by her hot monkey love.

Blue Monkey Battle



The battle with Blue Monkey takes place on four platforms that are connected by four bridges. What you need to do is use the Super Hoop to gain speed and run into Blue Monkey to momentarily stun him.



While he's wobbling, run up to him and smack him with the Stun Club, and he'll fall onto the spikes.



While he's dazed, use the Super Hoop again and knock him off of his unicycle. Afterward, he hops back onto his ride and



When he leaps back into the arena, a shockwave will emanate from the point of impact. Double-jump over the shockwave, and he'll rush you again. Avoid his charges and then hit him with the club while he's wobbling in front of the spikes. Repeat until



When you reach the stage, give her a whack with the Stun Club. The speakers on the side of the stage blast you back into the water. Make your way to the stage and club her two more times.



After you hit her the third time, the stage will change, and the water disappears. Now, Pink Monkey will attack in two ways.





Red Monkey Battle



When she sends The Bombettes after you, either steer clear of them completely or hit them with your Stun Club before they explode. If she sends electric waves at you, jump over them. After each attack, Pink Monkey takes a few moments to recover—that's your opportunity to leap onto the stage and strike her with the Stun Club. After three hits, she's subdued long enough for you to net her.

Red Monkey is very powerful and counters all of your attacks. His toughest attack is the spinning attack—use the Super Hoop to gain enough speed to dodge it. After performing a spinning attack, Red Monkey becomes dizzy and is vulnerable to the Stun Club or the Super Hoop.



Once his attack ceases, run into his mouth and knock out one of his teeth with the Stun Club. Repeat this for all of his teeth to defeat him.



Ultra Goliath is pretty tough, so be sure to equip yourself with the Sky Flyer, the Super Hoop, and the Electro Magnet. He has some nasty attacks, so be very patient and very careful when fighting him. When he tries a grabbing attack, keep your distance and use the Super Hoop to avoid his hand. He also tries to smash you with his fists. You can hear them moving, and once they stop, jump out of the way.

White Monkey Battle

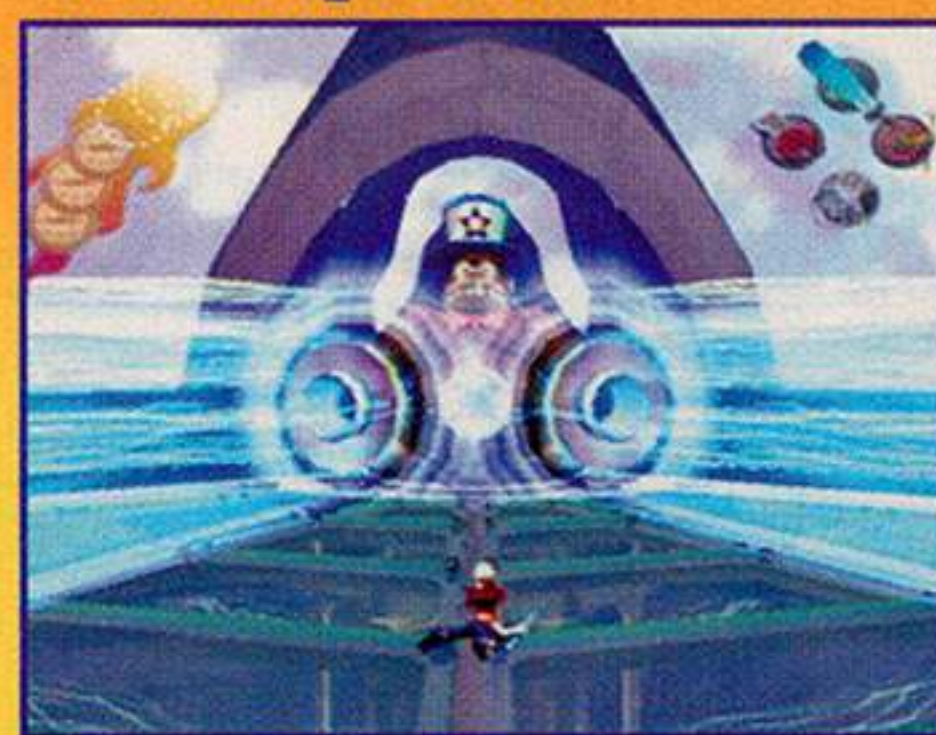


Though assisted by the giant Robo-Jimmy, White Monkey is the easiest boss to defeat. In order to get to White Monkey, you must first go through Robo-Jimmy. He attacks you using a laser beam, a Stun Club, a Sky Flyer, or a Super Hoop. Avoid his attacks. After each attack, Robo-Jimmy stalls for a moment—that's your time to run up behind him and strike the green button on his back.



Occasionally, Red Monkey will grab a dinosaur and throw it at you. Not only should you avoid it, but you should also watch out for the shockwave the attack creates—use your Sky Flyer to stay aloft and avoid the shockwaves.

Showdown With Specter



At first, you fight against the Cymbal-Crashing Monkey. He is pretty easy to beat as long as you keep away from him when he tries to suck you in and smash you with his cymbals. When he attacks you with laser beams, press yourself to the ground by pressing L3.



Careful though—if Ultra Goliath misses you, his fist will destroy the floor plate below you, so be sure to double jump to a safe floor plate. It's easier to escape these attacks if you stick to the smaller plates right in front of him. His most powerful attack is a beam of energy that hits the center of the arena and emits a shockwave; use the Sky Flyer to avoid the shockwave.

Giant Yellow Monkey Battle 2



Avoid Yellow Monkey's hand attacks and double jump whenever he tries to shake you or flip you into his mouth. When Yellow Monkey tries to suck you into his mouth, run toward the screen, away from his mouth. Don't risk jumping to avoid objects, or you will be sucked in.



Once the beams pass over you, run toward him and hit the large green button on his stomach. Do this two more times to destroy him and move on to Ultra Goliath.



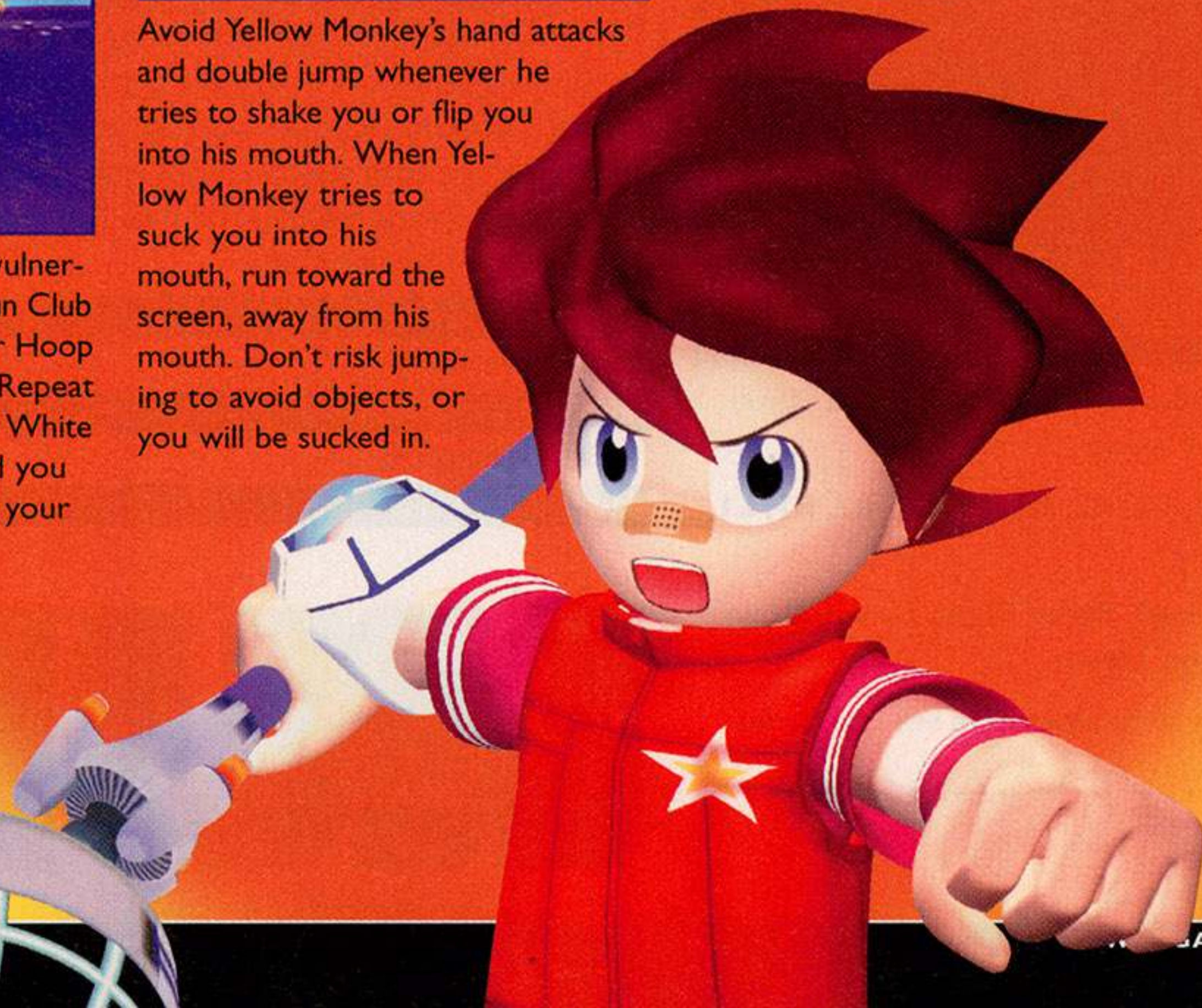
At this time, Ultra Goliath will pause to recharge. Run up to him, use the Electro Magnet to remove the metal plate from his chest, and strike the exposed area with the Stun Club.



White Monkey is now briefly vulnerable, so attack him using the Stun Club or run into him with the Super Hoop before he regains his senses. Repeat this until both Robo-Jimmy and White Monkey are knocked out, and you can grab White Monkey with your Monkey Net.



Do this five times to win the battle and defeat Specter.



CODE VAULT

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ENTER THE MATRIX



Infinite Health, Invisibility, and More



At the A:\> CHEAT prompt, enter CHEAT.EXE, select CHEAT, and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats.

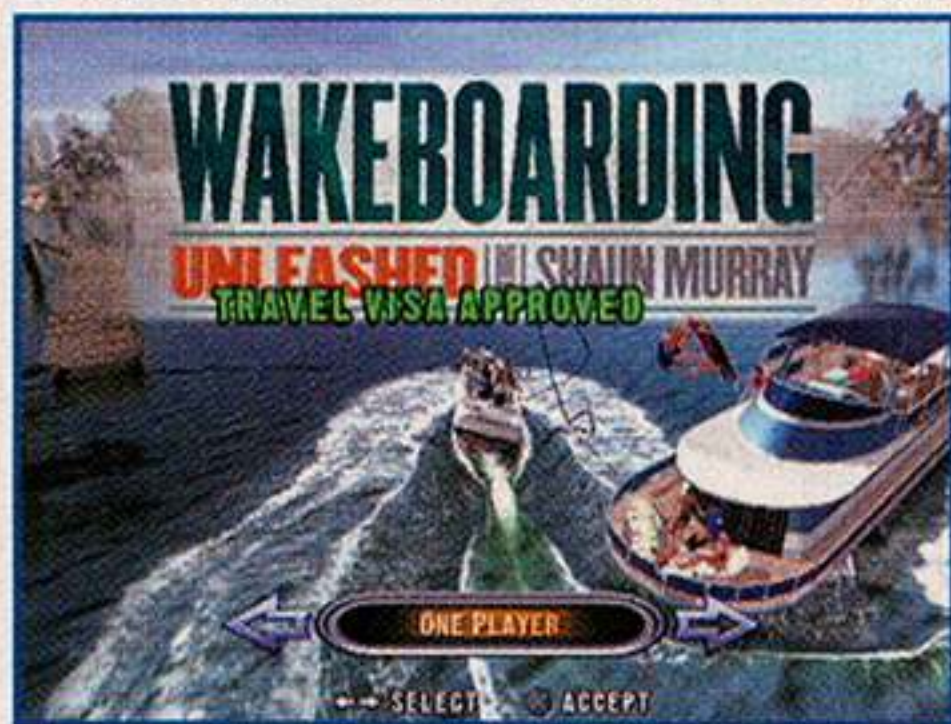
All Weapons:	0034AFFF
Faster Logos:	7867F443
Focus Restored Fast:	FFF0020A
Infinite Ammunition:	1DDF2556
Infinite Focus:	69E5D9E4
Infinite Health:	7F4DF451
Invisibility:	FFFFFFF1
Multiplayer Fighting:	D5C55D1E
Test Level:	13D2C77F

Elliott Rosenthal—Los Gatos, CA

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY



Secret Riders, Unlock Levels, and More



At the Main Menu, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

All Gaps: Press R1, L1, L2, R2, R1, L1, L2, R2, R1, L1, L2, R2, R1, L1, L2, R2.

Get More Boards: Press Up, Up, Left, Left, Right, Right, Down, Down, Up, Left, Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Down.

Secret Riders: Rotate the right analog stick clockwise several times.

Unlock Levels: Press □, □, □, □, ○, ○, ○, ○, △, △, △, △, □, ○, △.

HULK



Invulnerability, Terminal Codes, And More



At the Main Menu, select Options, and at the Options menu, choose Code Input. At the Code Input screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. Once a code is entered, return to the Main menu and select Special Features. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear onscreen.

Double All Enemies' HP:	BRNGITN
Double Hulk's HP:	HLTHDSE
Full Rage Meter:	ANGMNGT
Half All Enemies' HP:	MMYHLP
Invulnerability:	GMSKIN
Puzzle Solved:	BRCESTN
Regenerator:	FLSHWND
Reset High Score:	NMBTHIH
Unlimited Continues:	GRNCHTR
Unlock All Levels:	TRUBLVR
Wicked Punch:	FSTOFRY

Terminal Codes: Find a terminal during gameplay, and when you do, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you enter the code correctly, you'll get an onscreen prompt that indicates you've unlocked bonus material. To access the bonus material, quit the game, and at the Main Menu, select Special Features and then Concept Art, Movies, or Cheats to see what you have unlocked.

Desert Battle Art:	FIFTEEN
Hulk Movie FX Art:	NANOMED
Hulk Transformed Art:	SANFRAN
Hulk vs. Dogs Art:	PITBULL
Play as Gray Hulk:	JANITOR



WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY

Get More Boards, Secret Riders, and Unlock Levels



At the Main Menu, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

Get More Boards: Press Up, Up, Left, Left, Right, Right, Down, Down, Up, Left, Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Down.

Secret Riders: Rotate the right analog stick clockwise several times.

Unlock Levels: Press X, X, X, X, B, B, B, B, Y, Y, Y, Y, X, B, Y.



MIDNIGHT CLUB II

Adjust Difficulty Level



At the main menu, highlight "Options Mode," highlight "Option: Controller," and then **press Left** to scroll over to Option: Cheat Code. Select Option: Cheat Code, and at the Option: Enter Cheat Code screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, it will disappear when you select Accept on the keypad.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

Difficulty Level 0:	howhardcanitbe0
Difficulty Level 1:	howhardcanitbe1
Difficulty Level 2:	howhardcanitbe2
Difficulty Level 3:	howhardcanitbe3
Difficulty Level 4:	howhardcanitbe4
Difficulty Level 5:	howhardcanitbe5
Difficulty Level 6:	howhardcanitbe6
Difficulty Level 7:	howhardcanitbe7
Difficulty Level 8:	howhardcanitbe8
Difficulty Level 9:	howhardcanitbe9

CUBIX: ROBOTS FOR EVERYONE SHOWDOWN

Complete Game as Abby, Unlock Construction Robots, and More



At the main menu, select Extras, and at the Extras screen, choose Cheats. Enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear onscreen.

Complete Game as Abby: Press X, R, X, Y, X, Y, R, L.

Complete Game as Connor: Press X, Y, L, Y, X, Y, L, R.

Unlock Bubble Town Day Robots: Press Y, Y, Z, Y, Y, R, L.

Unlock Bubble Town Night Robots: Press Y, L, Y, Y, X, L, Z.

Unlock Construction Robots: Press Y, Y, Y, Y, Z, A, R.

Unlock Dr. K's Base Robots: Press Z, A, Y, Y, Y, X, A.



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: FEDERATION VS. ZEON

Unlock Characters



Begin a game in Arcade Mode. At the Enter New Pilot Name screen, enter the following names to unlock the corresponding character. If you entered the name correctly, the character will be playable.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

Amuro Ray:	AMURO
Char Aznable:	CHAR
Dozle Zabi:	DOZLE
Gaia of the Black Tri Stars:	GAIA
Garma Zabi:	GARMA
Hayato Kobayashi:	HAYATO
Kai Shiden:	KAI
Lalah Sune:	LALAH
Mash of the Black Tri Stars:	MASH
M'Quve:	M' QUVE
Ortega of the Black Tri Stars:	ORTEGA
Ramba Ral:	RAMBA
Ryu Jose:	RYU
Sayla Mass:	SAYLA
Sleggar Law:	SLEGGAR



SHOX

Easy Money



At the Name Entry screen, enter LOADED as a name. If done correctly, you'll start the game with \$10,000,000.

GT ADVANCE 3: PRO CONCEPT RACING



All Cars, All Tracks, and More



At the title screen, **simultaneously press and hold L and B**, and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

All Cars: Press Left.

All Tracks: Press Right.

All Tuning Parts: Press Up.

Unlock Extra Modes: Press Down.

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE



Hidden Cars



At the Credits screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cars. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

Citroen Xsara: Press Left, Left, A, Right, Right.

Ford RS200: Press Right, Left, A, Down, Down.

Nissan Micra: Press Left, Up, Left, A, Left.

Renault 5: Press Down, Right, A, A, Right.

Saab Viggen: Press Up, Down, Down, Right, A.

X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE



100 Lives, All Power-Ups, and More



At the Select a Slot screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

100 Lives: Press Right, Right, Right, Right, Right, Right, Right.

All Power-Ups: Press Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right.

Infinite Double Jumps: Press Select, Left, Up, Down, Down, Up, Down.

Invincibility: Press Down, Up, Down, Down, Up, Down, Select.

Regenerate with Claws Out: Press Right, Up, Down, Right, Left, Select, Select.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY



50 Lives



In order for this code to work, you must have a saved game file. Start a game, and at the Select a Game screen, highlight "Erase" and then **press B, A, R, R, A, L**. If you entered the code correctly, Diddy Kong will say "Not Bad," and you'll have 50 lives.

APEX



Unlock All Circuits and Every Production Car



At the main menu, select Dream Mode, and at the Brand name screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, all unlockables will appear when you start a game in Arcade Mode.

Unlock All Circuits:

WORLD

Unlock Every Production Car:

REALITY

V-RALLY 3



Real Physics

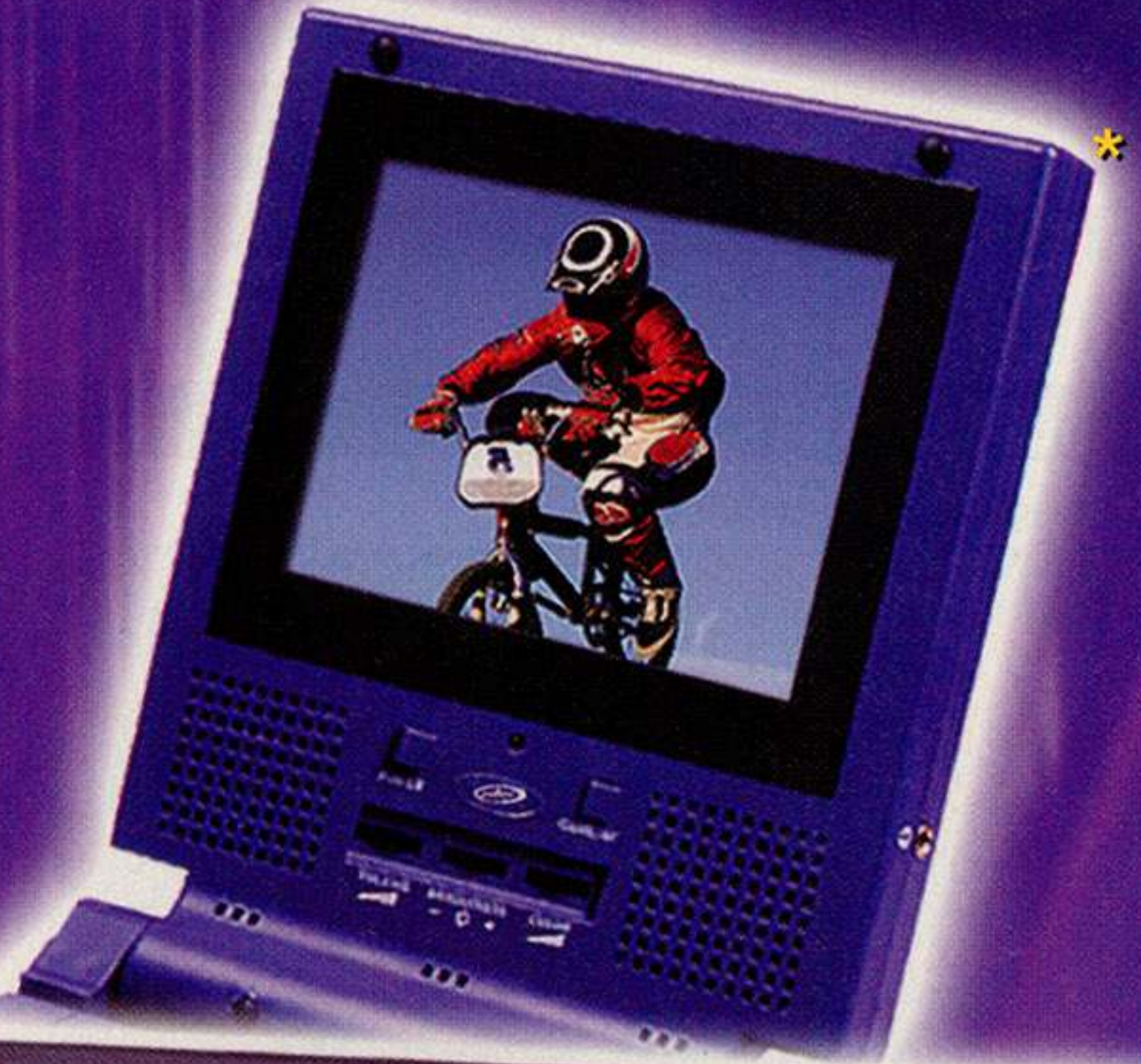


At the main menu, highlight "Drivers" and then select Create. At the Create Driver screen, enter **REAL** as your first name and **WHEEL** as your last name. If you entered the name correctly, the cheat will take effect when you start a race. To deactivate the cheat, you have to erase the driver's name from your memory card.



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CRUIS'N VELOCITY



Level Passwords



At the Main Menu, select Password, and at the Password screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a sound and automatically return to the Main Menu.

Level 1:	HLDDRTSN
Level 2:	HLDDSNST
Level 3:	HLDDNRLN
Level 4:	HLDDHVGD

NICKELODEON PARTY BLAST



Unlock Bungi and Clam Games

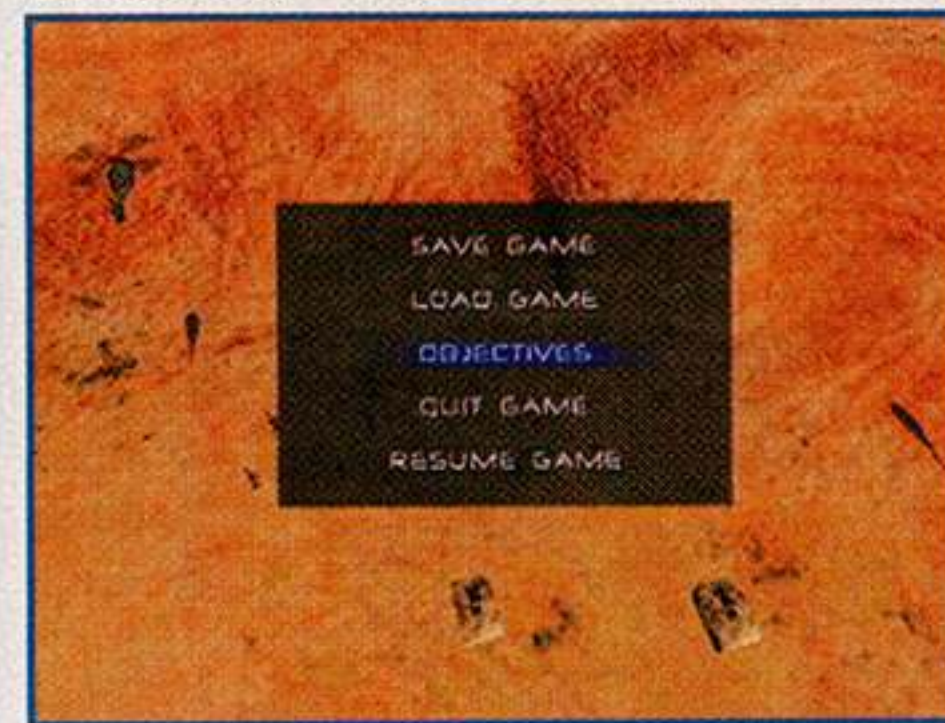


At the game selection screen, highlight "Blast" and then press **Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right**. If you entered the code correctly, all Bungi and Clam games will be available.

CONFLICT ZONE



\$10,000, Get 100 Population, and Skip Mission



Pause the game and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

\$10,000: Press **X, Left, Right, Up, Left**.

Get 100 Population: Press **X, Right, Right, Left, Up**.

Skip Mission: Press **X, Up, Up, Right, Left**.

BMX XXX



Stage Select, Unlock Park Editor, and More



At the Main Menu, choose Acclaim Extras, and at the Extras screen, select Cheats. Enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a crowd will yell.

Note: A "_" designates a blank space.

All Bikes:	65_SWEET_RIDES
All Levels:	XXX_RATED_CHEAT
All Movies:	CHAMPAGNEROOM
Amish Boy:	ELECTRICITYBAD
Amish Boy's Bikes:	AMISHBOY1699
Ghost Control Mode:	GHOSTCONTROL
Green Skin in Rider Editor:	MAKEMEANGRY
Happy Bunny Mode:	FLUFFYBUNNY
Hellkitty's Bikes:	HELLKITTY487
Itchi's Bikes:	ITCHI594
Joyride's Bikes:	JOYRIDE18
Karma's Bikes:	KARMA311
La'tey's Bikes:	LATEY411
Level—The Dam:	THATDAMLEVEL
Level—Las Vegas:	SHOWMETHEMONEY
Level—Launch Pad 69:	SHOWMETHEMONKEY
Level—Rampage Skatepark:	IOWARULES
Level—Sheep Hills:	BAABAA
Level—UPG Roots Jam:	UNDERGROUND
Manuel's Bikes:	MANUEL415
Mika's Bikes:	MIKA362436
Movie—Bonus Movie 1:	THISISBMX
Movie—Bonus Movie 2:	KEEPITDIRTY
Movie—The Bronx, NYC 1:	LAPDANCE
Movie—The Bronx, NYC 2:	STRIPTease
Movie—The Dam 1:	BOING
Movie—Final Movie:	DDUULRRLDRSQUARE
Movie—Las Vegas 1:	HIGHBEAMS
Movie—Las Vegas 2:	TASSLE
Movie—Launch Pad 69:	PEACH
Movie—Rampage Skatepark:	BURLESQUE
Movie—Sheep Hills 1:	ONEDOLLAR
Movie—Sheep Hills 2:	69
Movie—Syracuse 1:	FUZZYKITTY
Movie—Syracuse 2:	MICHAELHUNT
Movie—UGP Roots Jam 2:	BOOTYCALL
Night Vision Mode:	3RD_SOG
Nutter's Bikes:	NUTTER290
Rave's Bikes:	RAVE10
Skeeter's Bikes:	SKEETER666
Stage Select:	MASS_HYSTERIA
Super Crash Mode:	HEAVYPETTING
Tripledub's Bikes:	TRIPLEDUB922
Twan's Bikes:	TWAN187
Unlock Park Editor:	BULLETPOINT
Visible Gap Mode:	PARABOLIC

HE-MAN: THE POWER OF GRAYSKULL



Level Passwords



At the Main Menu, select Password, and at the Enter Password screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the password correctly, you'll automatically go to that level.

Level 2:	HMNCLDNT
Level 3:	HVDNBTR
Level 4:	VLNTFFRT
Level 5:	FHSMBSHS
Level 6:	BHLDNGTL
Level 7:	THNKYHMN
Level 8:	THSNRSTR
Level 9:	DMGRBSGV
Level 10:	WTCHTHMN
Level 11:	FLLYRSTR
Level 12:	DMGSHRNS
Level 13:	WRKLDKMG

MONSTER FORCE



Invincibility, Level Skip, and Unlock Characters

Invincibility: Pause the game, and then simultaneously press and hold L, R, B, and Down. If done correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone.

Level Skip: During the game, simultaneously press and hold L, R, A, and Up. If done correctly, you'll automatically go to a level-complete screen.



Unlock Characters: At the Character Select screen, simultaneously press and hold L, R, B, and Right. If you entered the code correctly, Mina and Drew will be available.

SMUGGLER'S RUN: WAR ZONES



Flying Cars and Glass Cars



Pause the game and then enter these codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect.

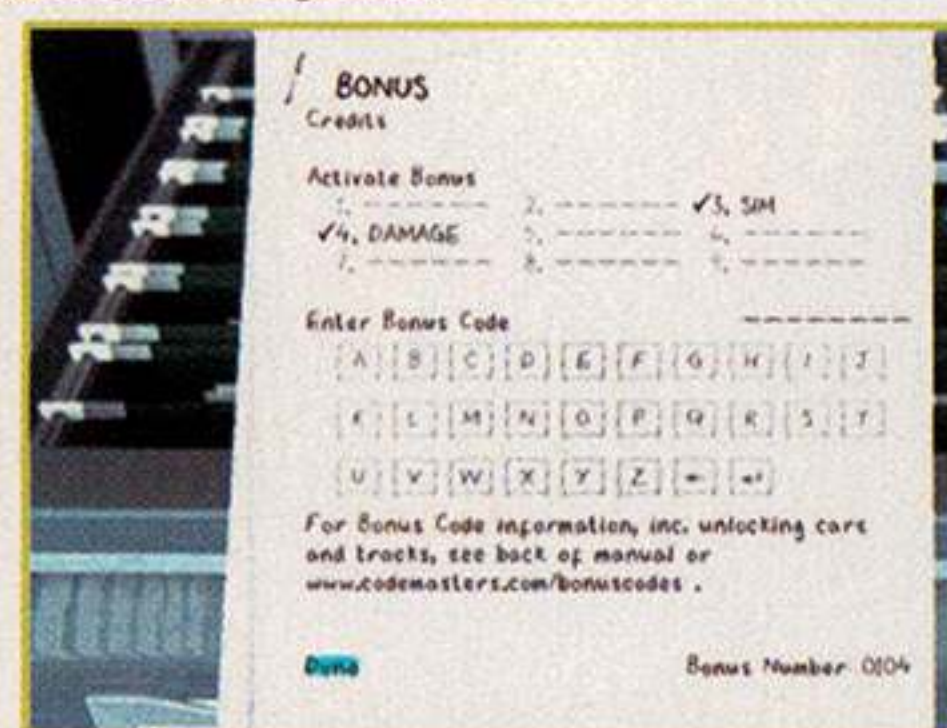
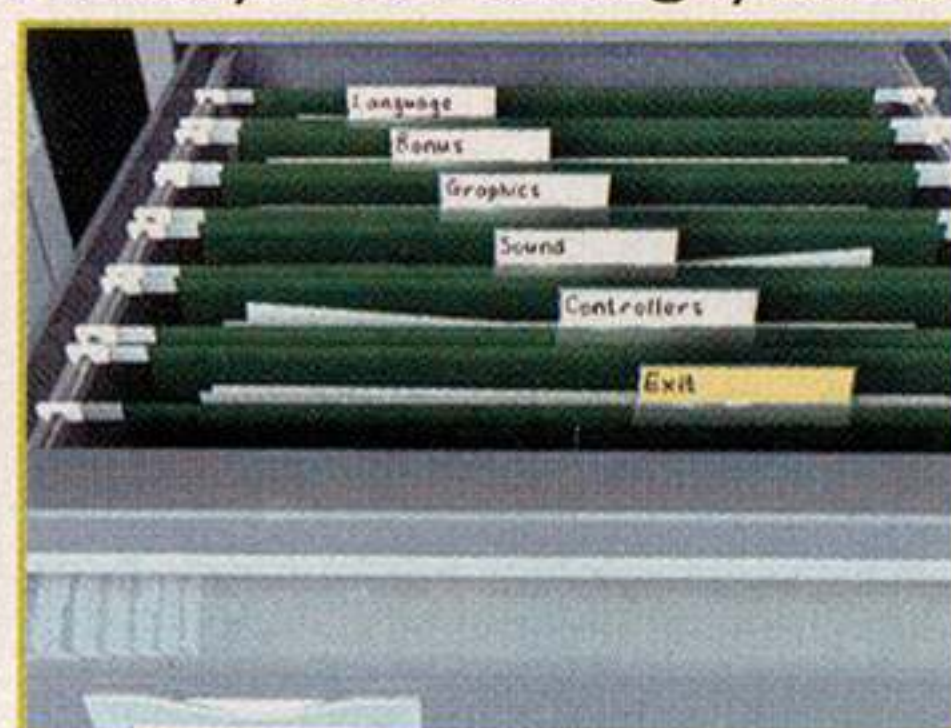
Flying Cars: Press Z, R, Z, R, Right, Right, Right.

Glass Cars: Press Left, Right, Left, Right, Z, Z, R.

PRO RACE DRIVER



Credits, More Damage, and Realistic Physics



At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options menu, choose Bonus. At the Bonus screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear at the Activate Bonus menu.

Credits:	CREDITS
More Damage:	DAMAGE
Realistic Physics:	SIM

SPYRO: SEASON OF FLAME



Infinite Ammo, Unlock Mini-Games, and More



At the title screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a sound.

Infinite Ammo: Press Right, Left, Up, Down, Right, Down, Up, Right, B.

Infinite Shield: Press Left, Down, Up, Right, Left, Up, Up, Left, B.

Never Down: Press Down, Up, Right, Left, Right, Up, Right, Left, B.

Open All Portals: Press Up, Left, Up, Right, Up, Down, Up, Down, B.

See All Worlds in Atlas: Press Left, Right, Up, Up, Right, Left, Right, Up, B.

Unlock All Breath Types: Press Right, Down, Up, Right, Left, Up, Right, Down, B.

Unlock Atlas Warping: Press Down, Up, Left, Left, Up, Left, Left, Right, B.

Unlock Mini-Games: Press Right, Up, Down, Down, Down, Right, Up, Down, B.

Unlock Super Charge: Press Left, Left, Down, Up, Up, Right, Left, Left, B.

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

Invulnerability, Unlock Drizzt, and More



Get 19,000 XP, 500 Skill Points, and Most Spells/Feats: During gameplay, simultaneously press and hold **L, R, X, and Right**. If you entered the code correctly, the character will say something.

Invulnerability and Level Warp: During gameplay, simultaneously press and hold **L, R, Left, Y, and Start**. If you entered the code correctly, a cheat menu will be displayed that will allow you to activate invulnerability or warp to another level.

Unlock Drizzt: At the character select screen, simultaneously press and hold **L and R**, and then press **A**. Keep simultaneously pressing **L and R** until Drizzt appears onscreen.

ATLANTIS: THE LOST EMPIRE

Level Passwords



At the Main Menu, select Continue, and at the Enter Password screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the password correctly, you'll automatically go to that level.

Level 2:	BVVFQ4X
Level 3:	BXF74YCY
Level 4:	BXNVKB3G
Level 5:	CMJNFTTM
Level 6:	CS4LYC3F
Level 7:	DBTZQBYC
Level 8:	DRDZ49WY
Level 10:	FD7C76XF
Final Level:	COCNQIY

SSX TRICKY

Max Out Stats, Unlock Mix Master Mike, and More



At the title screen, simultaneously press and hold **L and R**, and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.



Max Out Stats: Press **B, B, Z, B, B, Z, A, A, Z, A, A, Z**.

Unlock Everything: Press **A, B, Z, X, Y, Z, B, Y, Z, X, A, Z**.

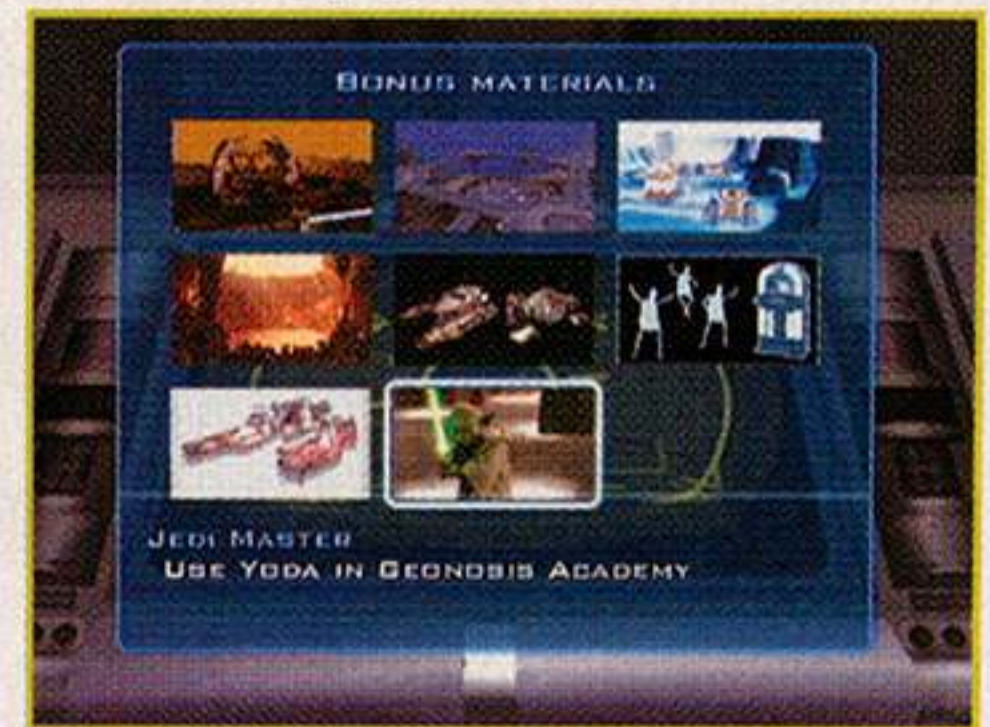
Unlock Mallorca Outfit for Elise: Press **A, A, Z, X, X, Z, B, B, Z, Y, Y, Z**.

Unlock Mix Master Mike: Press **A, A, Z, A, A, Z, A, A, Z, A, A, Z**.

Unlock Rectorator: When prompted to enter your name, enter **RECTOR** as a name. If done correctly, you'll play as Rectorator no matter who you choose to play as.

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

Bonus Menu Materials, Unlimited Ammo, and More



At the main menu, select Options; at the options screen, choose Bonuses; and at the Bonuses screen, pick Codes. Enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear onscreen.

All Multiplayer Maps:	LETSDANCE
Bonus Menu Materials:	IGIVEUP
Cut Scenes:	GOTPOPCORN
Get Three Bonus Objectives:	ALITTLEHELP
Team Photos:	YOURMASTERS
Unlimited Ammo:	NOHONOR

THE SIMS

All Objects Are Free, Party Motel Game, and More



At the main menu, simultaneously press and hold **L and R**. A cheat menu will appear. Enter the following codes at the Enter Cheat screen, and if done correctly, a message will appear.

Note: A "_" designates a blank space.

All Objects Are Free:	FREEALL
All Two-Player Games:	MIDAS
First-Person View:	FISH_EYE
Party Motel Game:	PARTY_M
Play the Sims Mode Unlocked:	SIMS





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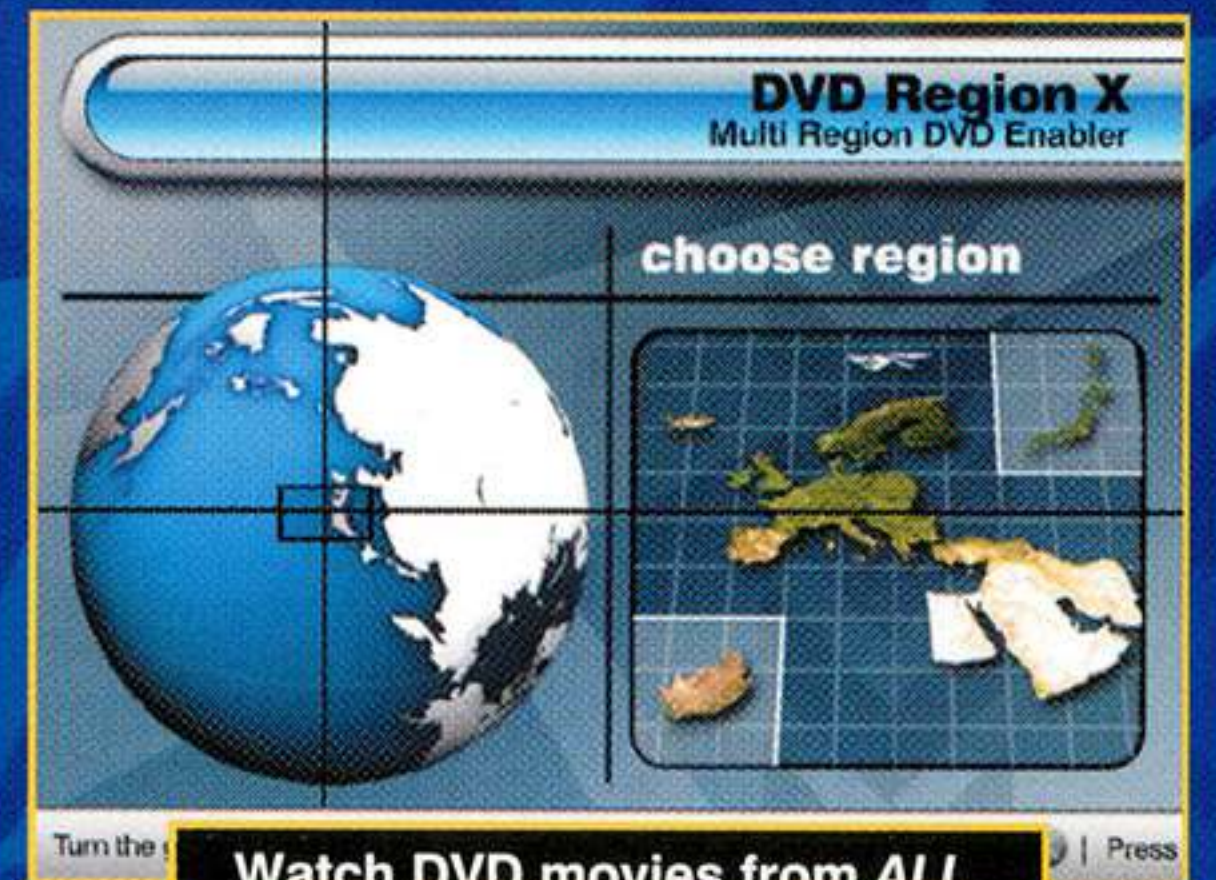
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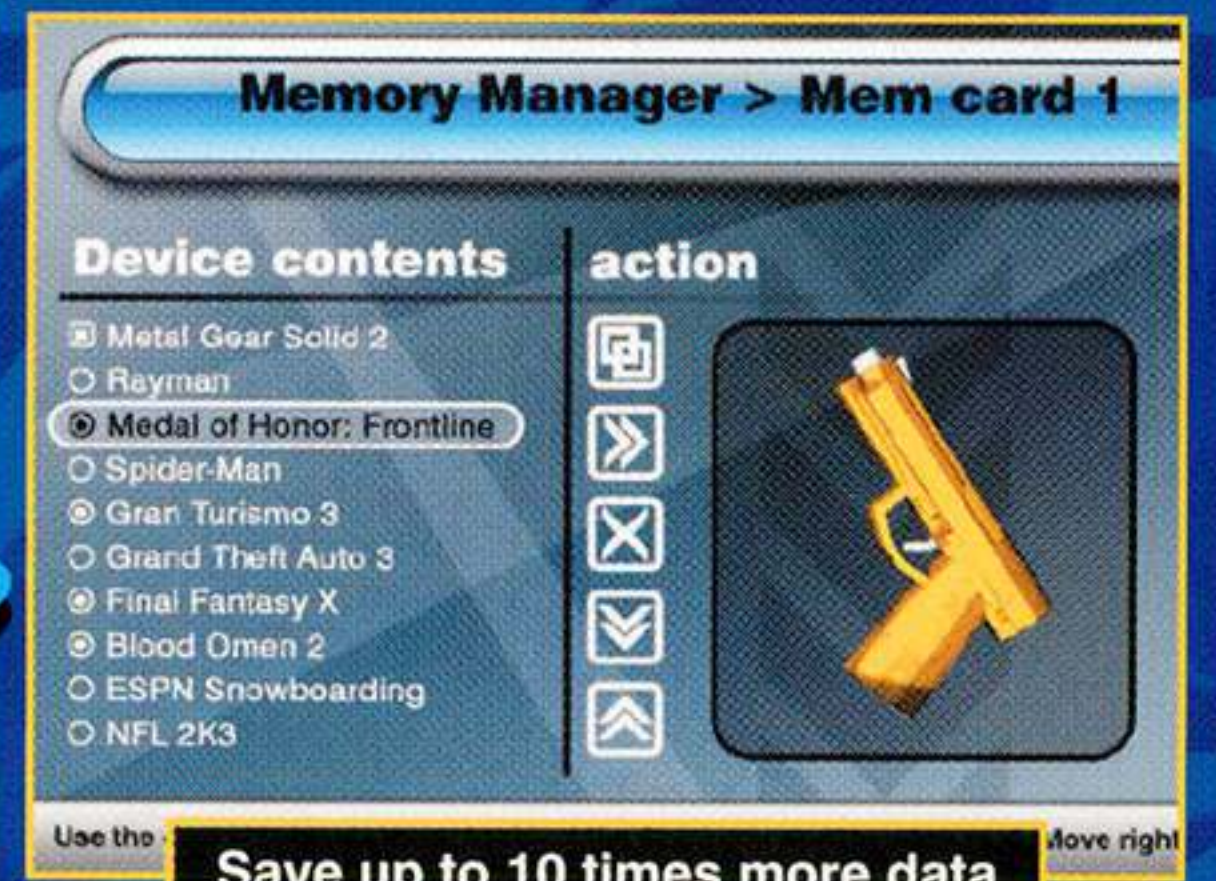
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