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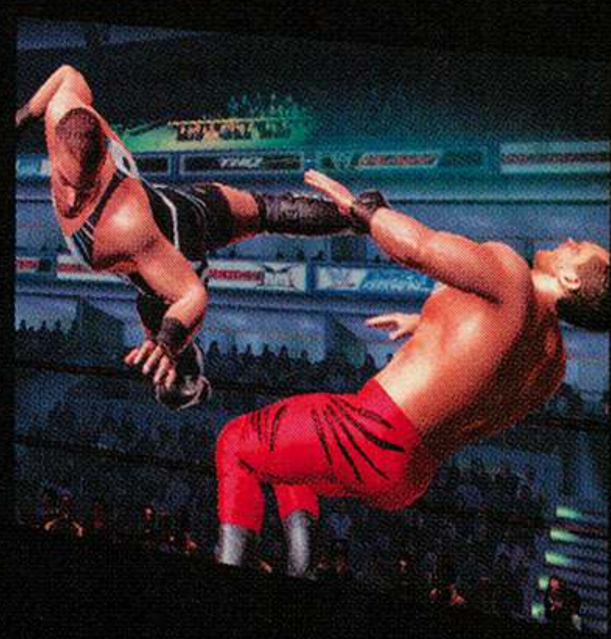

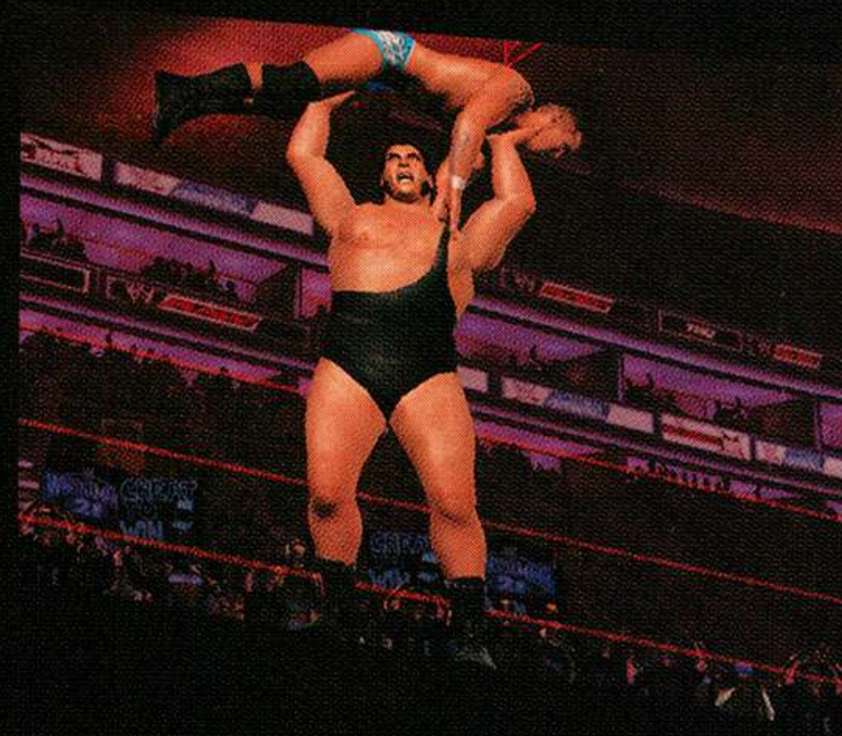

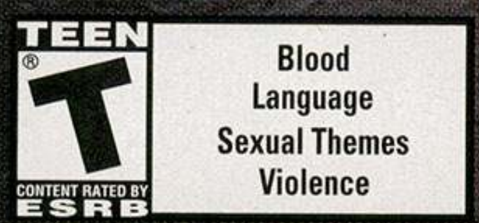

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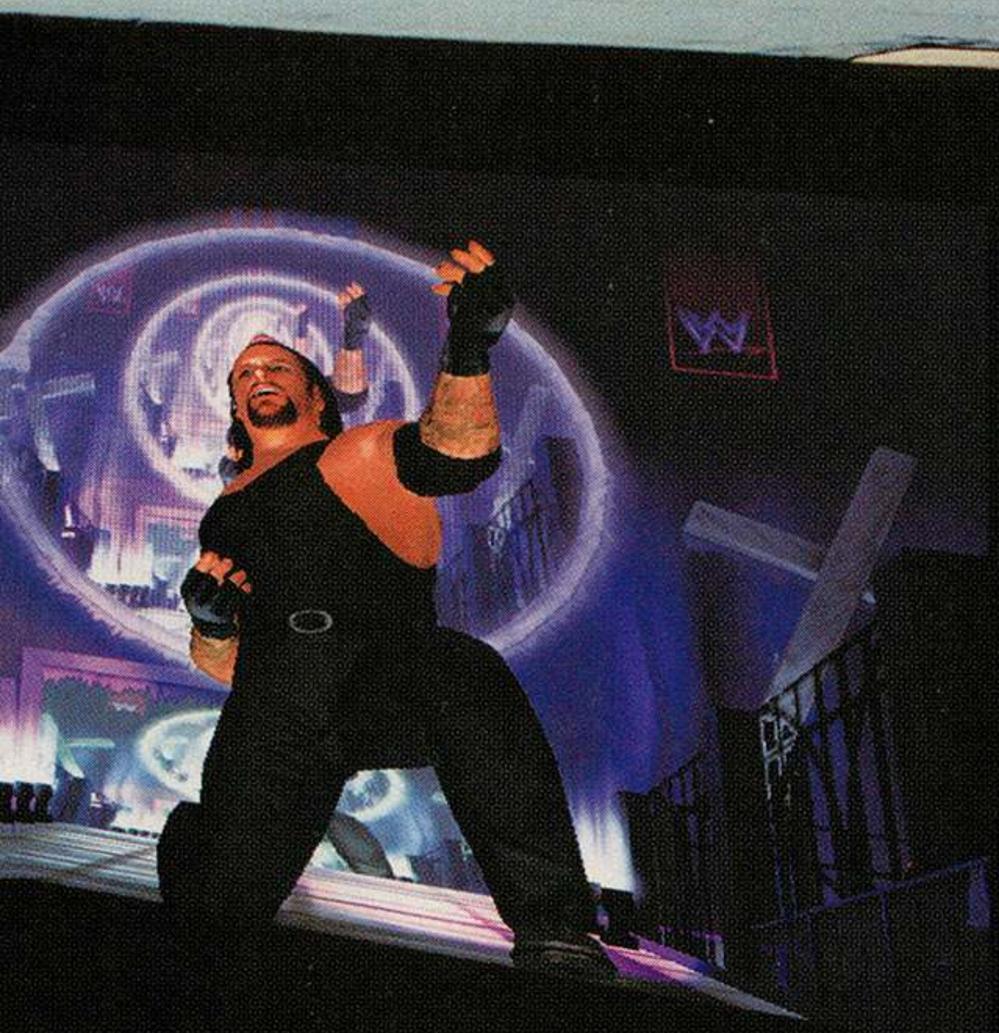

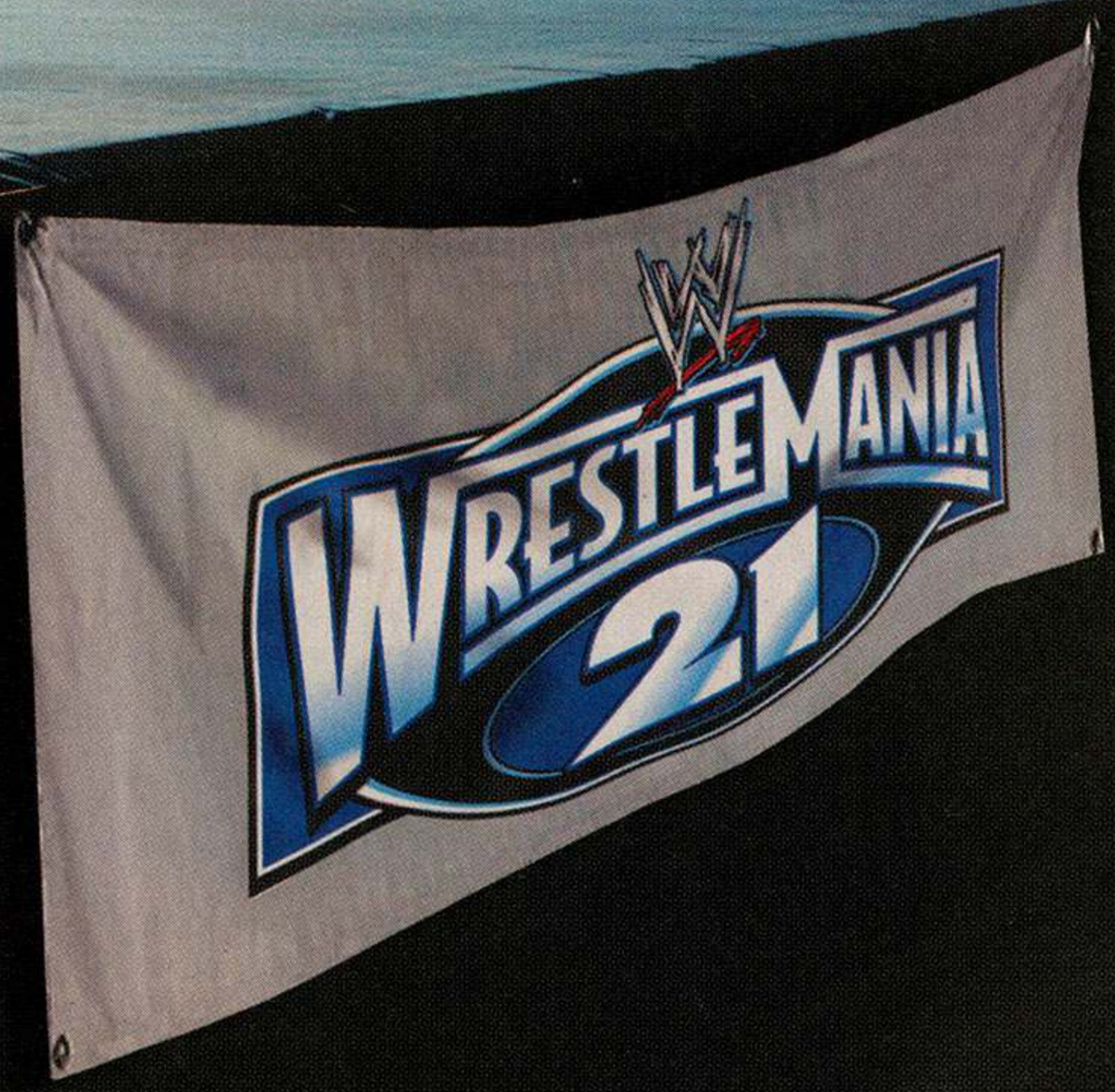

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FEATURES

ON THE COVER

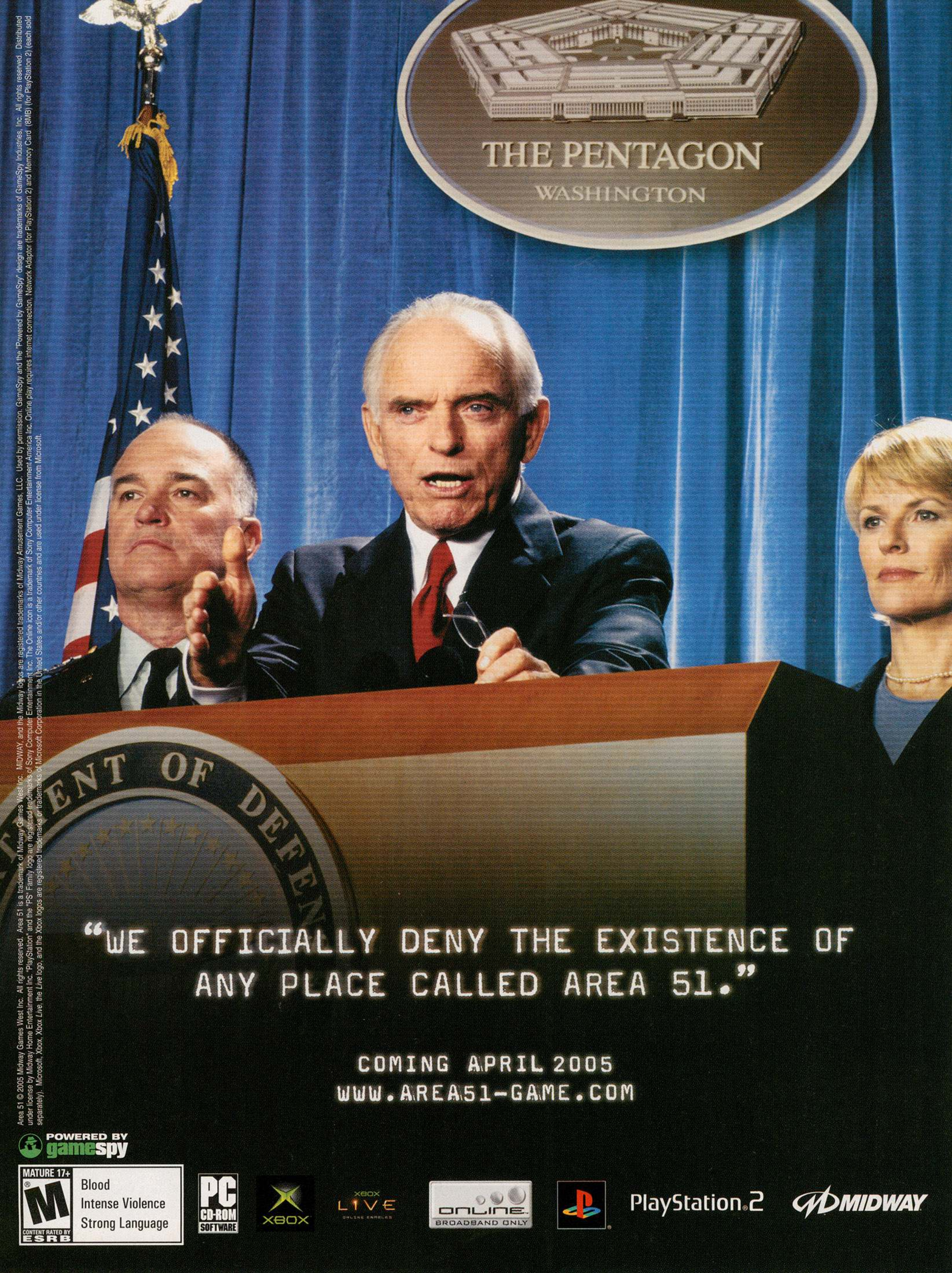
30 | From Panel to Pixel
Here's the most incredible superhero team-up of all time! First, check out Dragon Ball Z: Sagas, where you can enter the DBZ universe and relive the adventures with Goku, Gohan, and the gang from the beginning. Then, strap in for crime-fighting action with Batman, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Freedom Force, and more.

Cover art: Atari and FUNimation

37 | LamePro
Now more than ever the world needs laughter… but we decided to give you *LamePro* anyway!

44 | The Halo 2 Ultimate Xbox Live Survival Guide
There are no one-man armies in Halo 2 on Xbox Live. Here are all the squad tactics, tricks, and dual-weapon matchups required to transform your team into a formidable Spartan force.

48 | PSP: Ready For Liftoff
The PSP (PlayStation Portable) is ready to prove that you can take cutting-edge gaming with you. Get ready for some hands-on previews with the world's newest handheld.



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LOADING

20 Electronic Arts vs. Take 2: The Acquisition Wars

League licenses are being gobbled up faster than you can say, "illegal procedure." The world of video-game sports is taking shape for the next generation.

24 Atari Flashes Back

Centipede? Asteroids? Solaris? Saboteur? Interested? You're about to experience Flashback.

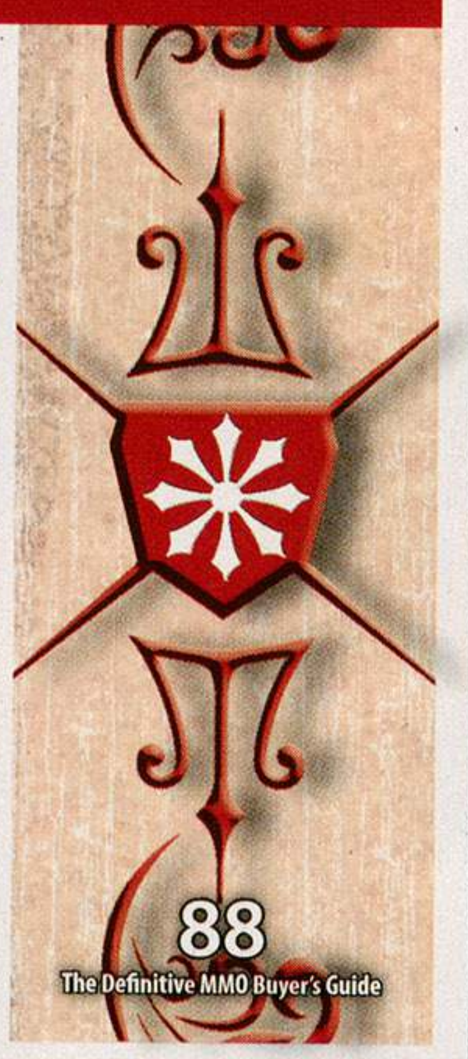
26 A Game Best Served Cold

They say the clandestine spying game plays out deadly drama every day—we just never hear about it. Step into the world of spies and counter-spies with Vivendi Universal's Cold Winter.

...And more!

DEPARTMENTS

10 HEAD2HEAD
14 BUYERS BEWARE
20 LOADING
54 SNEAK PREVIEWS
68 PROREVIEWS
88 PC GAMEPRO
94 GAMES TO GO
96 SPORTS PAGES
100 ROLE-PLAYER'S REALM
102 CODE VAULT
108 CHARTBUSTERS



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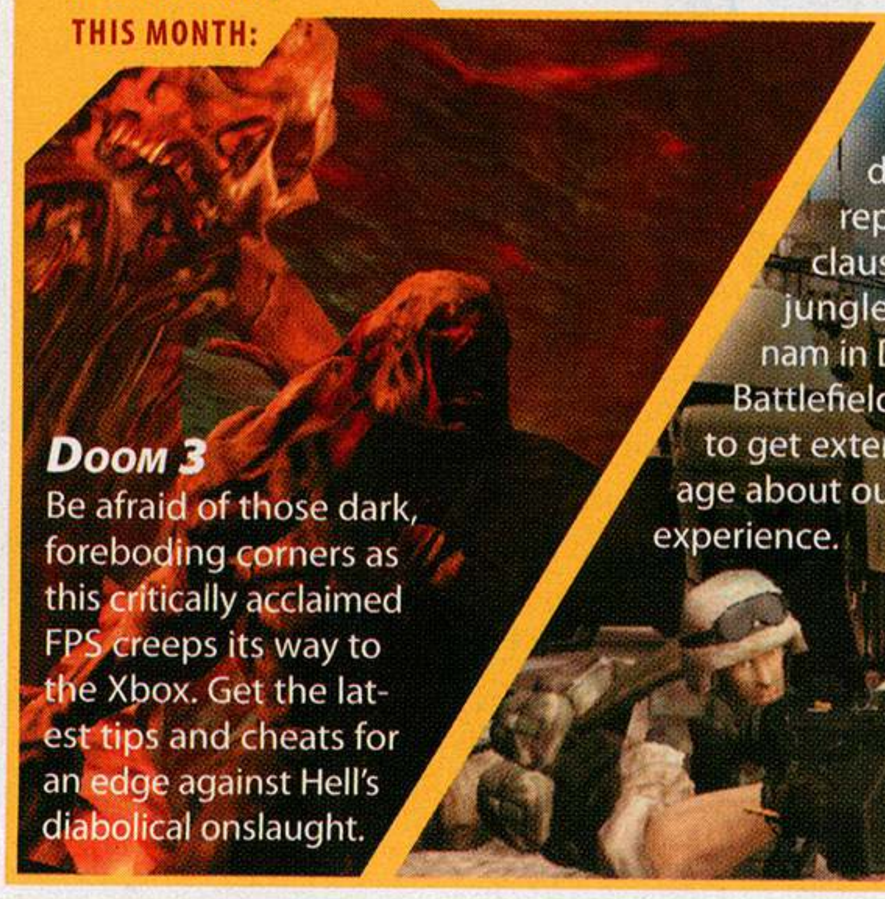
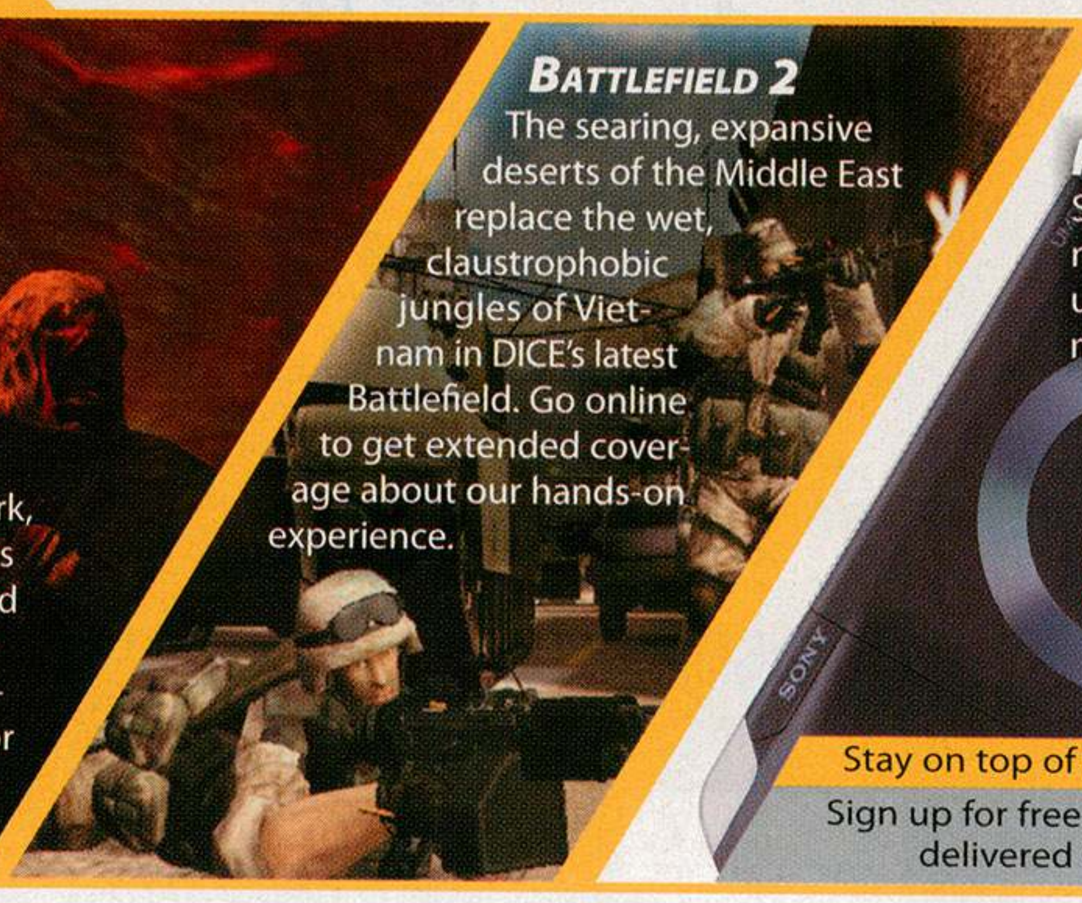


DOOM 3
Be afraid of those dark, foreboding corners as this critically acclaimed FPS creeps its way to the Xbox. Get the latest tips and cheats for an edge against Hell's diabolical onslaught.



BATTLEFIELD 2
The searing, expansive deserts of the Middle East replace the wet, claustrophobic jungles of Vietnam in DICE's latest Battlefield. Go online to get extended coverage about our hands-on experience.

PSP LAUNCH DAY!
Sony's technological marvel is finally upon us—is it worth the money and the wait?

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GAME FINDER

Previews

Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana 100
Battlefield 2 91
Cold Fear 64
Dead to Rights II 63
Destroy All Humans! 56
Enthusia Professional Racing 61
FIFA Street 99
LEGO Star Wars 63
Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks 60
NARC 60
Outlaw Tennis 99
Pariah 62
Psychonauts 58
Raze's Hell 61
Shining Force Neo 100
Tales of Rebirth 100
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Lockdown 64
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory 54
WWE WrestleMania 21 62

Reviews

Multiplatform

ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5 96
Fight Night Round 2 98
MVP Baseball 2005 96
Playboy: The Mansion 85
World Soccer Winning Eleven 8 International 98

PlayStation 2

Death by Degrees 80
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening 70
Gran Turismo 4 68
Kessen III 84
MLB 2006 96
Musashi Samurai Legend 84
Nano Breaker 80
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows 74
Ys: The Ark of Napishtim 101

Xbox

America McGee Presents: Scrapland 85
Doom 3 72
GunGriffon: Allied Strike 82
Star Wars: Republic Commando 79

GameCube

Donkey Kong Jungle Beat 82
Star Fox: Assault 81

Game Boy Advance

Ace Combat Advance 94

DS

Wario Ware Touched! 94

Codes and Cheats

Alien Hominid 104
Def Jam Fight For NY 102
Duel Masters 102
Grand Theft Auto Advance 104
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas 102
Mercenaries 102
MTX Mototrax 104
Need for Speed Underground 2 104
Outlaw Golf 2 104
Rumble Roses 102
Star Wars: The Clone Wars 104
Suikoden IV 104
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 104

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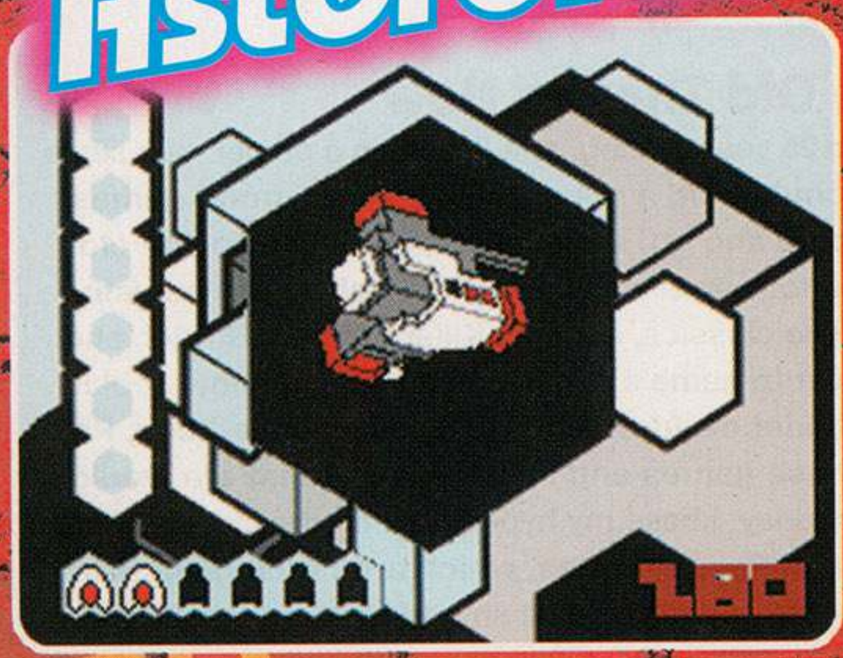

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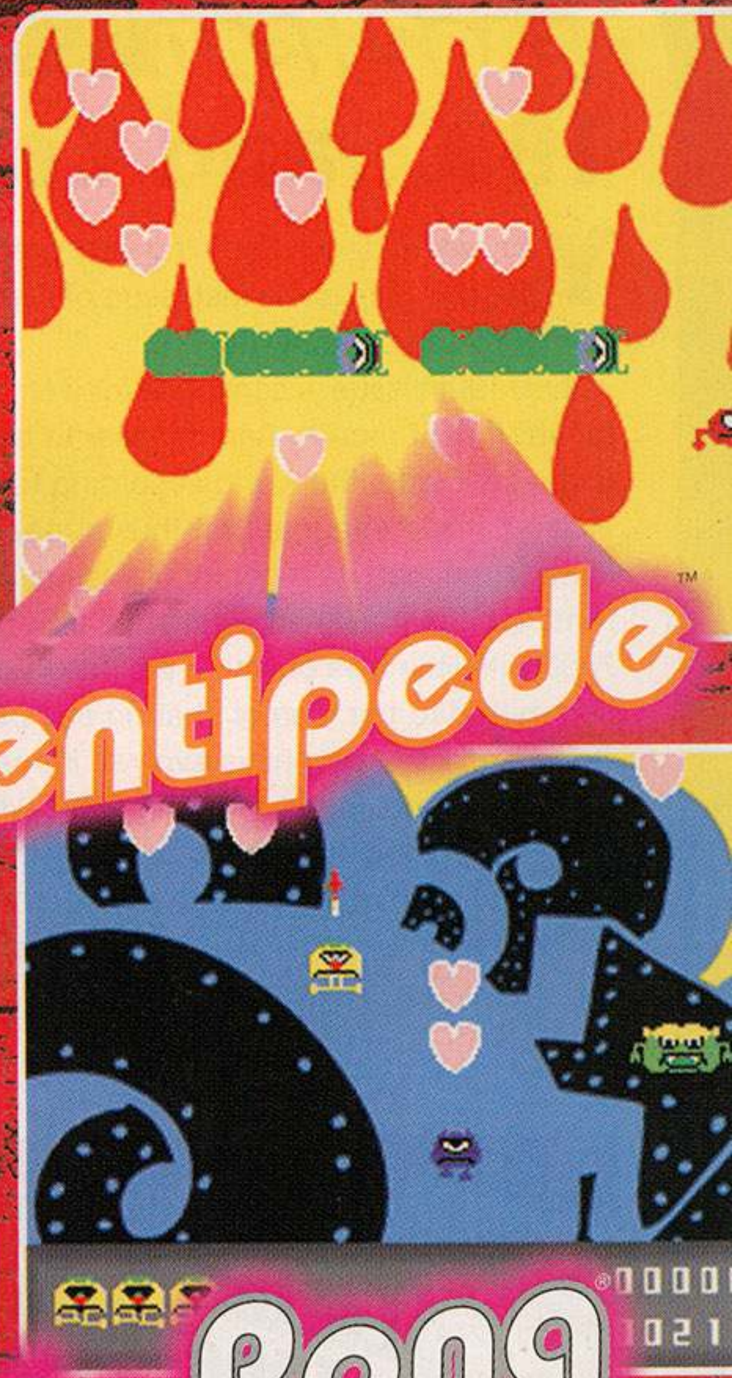

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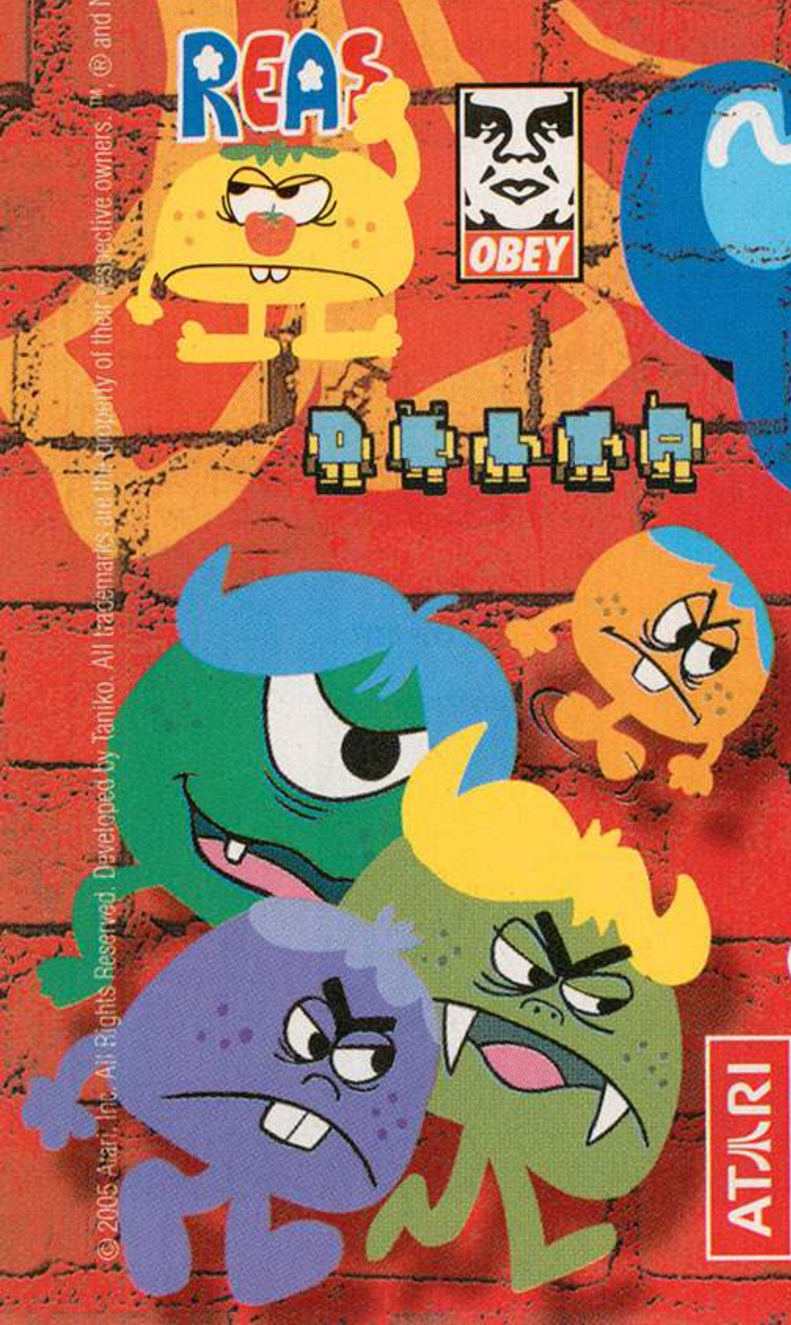
3 Graffiti Legends tag
10 Atari Classics



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199...and Counting!

You are holding something very precious in your controller-blistered fingers. This is the last issue of *GamePro*—at least, the last issue of *GamePro* as you know it!

Our 199th issue is coming in for a landing, and Issue 200 is preparing for liftoff next month. And in order to celebrate 16 years of cool video-game coverage, the world according to *GamePro* is going to change.

It's hard to imagine that this magazine, which set sail in 1989, has already reached its bicentennial issue. We started out by covering the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Sega Master System, and the Atari 7800 with little idea of where the ride was going to take us, but we were committed to the idea of sharing the journey—and the fun—with you. Games and systems have evolved immensely since then; even in this issue we're looking at the Sony PSP, which packs more game power into your pocket than all those old systems combined.

Plenty of magazines and websites have come, gone, and changed during that time, too; and we're undergoing something of a transformation ourselves. The creative crew is preparing a brand-new look for *GamePro* magazine and GamePro.com—and we promise, as always, to continue to bring you the best video-game coverage we can.

For those of you who have been with us all the way on this wild ride: We thank you for your support. Now we ask you all to buckle your seatbelts.

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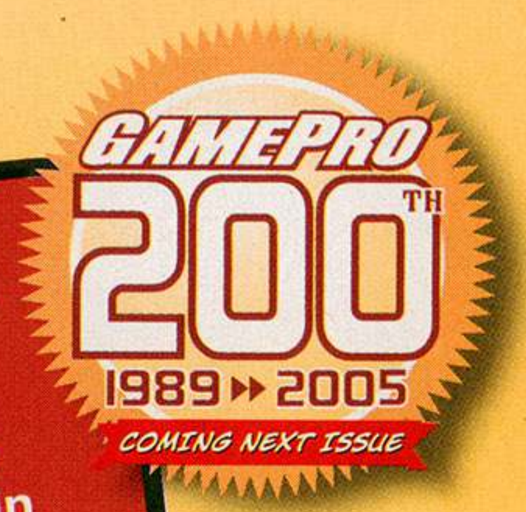
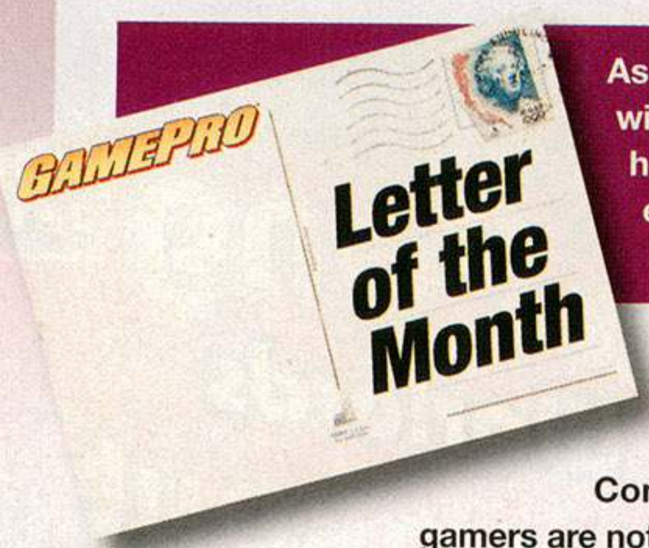


The GamePro 200 Sweepstakes

Be prepared to jump on this amazing giveaway in the next issue—number 200!—of *GamePro*.



As games continue to evolve, so too will the way they affect us. For his thoughtful letter, David earns a Logitech Cordless Action Controller.

GTA: A Thinking Man's Game

Contrary to what many people say, gamers are not stupid slobs: We play video games because we want entertainment that captivates our minds. The reason the Grand Theft Auto series is becoming the most successful one of all time is because people relate to the authenticity of the GTA world. These games make people think about the world. Why is there violence? Why do we kill each other? GTA is neither a good shooter nor a high-quality driver, but it's a good game because it duplicates our flawed world and causes us to question it. The GTA games do not tell us the reason why violence arises, they merely remind us that it occurs frequently. It's our challenge to contemplate this world. The more a game makes a person reflect, the more that person gets involved and is entertained by that game. The best games are the ones that make you think. I concur that books can make you think. However, video games can, too. Gamers are thinkers.

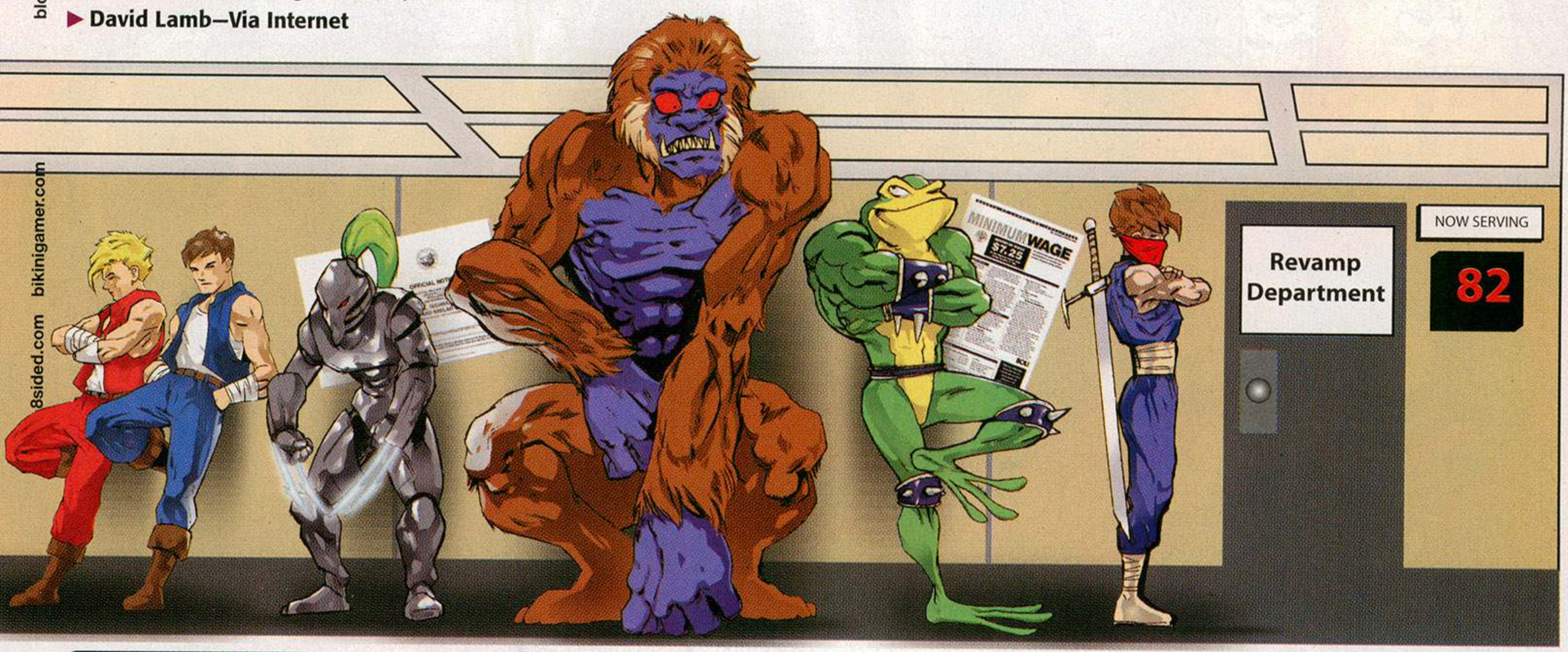
▶ **David Lamb—Via Internet**

So Old They're New

I'm 25 years young, and I've been a gamer ever since I could hold a controller. I've seen good games come and go, so it makes me happy to see old favorites revamped for newer consoles. But I believe the industry has overlooked some classics, such as Killer Instinct, Strider, and Double Dragon—just to name a few. Can you imagine how cool it would be to see Cinder perform a 52-hit combo on the Xbox, PS2, or GameCube? Those games and many more of that era would make great games today. I base my hypothesis on the current Ninja Gaiden and Prince of Persia games, which are nothing short of awesome. I believe the powers that be should look to the past for a promising future.

▶ **Stanley Cadet—Via Internet**

Yes, Cinder, Glacius, Riptor, and the rest fight on, if only in memory. Capcom's Strider made a quickie show in Strider 2 for the PlayStation, of course. Golden Axe, Primal Rage, Mercs, Battletoads, Streets of Rage—oh, the list of games begging for remakes goes on. Ideas and concepts, proven winners all, swirl around the video-game gene pool like seeds in the wind. When will they see the light of day? [If you've got an old favorite begging for a second coming, tell us about it—please!]



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A Shot Back

I ran into your Op-Ed article "A Shot of Originality" (Loading, November 2004), and I have a bone to pick with you. Why is it that you failed to mention the Deus EX and Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay games? Are you telling me those games represent "the same old shooter?"

Deus EX is quite possibly the most innovative FPS game I've ever played: It crosses into RPG grounds and makes an excellent hybrid shooter with its extremely engaging story line and open-ended play. Riddick introduced the heavy emphasis of stealth, and it shares something in common with Breakdown: making hand-to-hand combat the main way to engage enemies. What about Psi-Ops? Psychic abilities are given to you so you can eliminate people in any way you choose.

You go so far as to say Halo will fall into the same boring parameters, yet you fail to mention the things that made the game truly innovative—such as extremely intelligent A.I. for its time and intense gunfights that experienced absolutely no slowdown.

You ask what's the next big step in this genre? There's going to be plenty. This genre in this generation has finally begun to explore new territory, and it will spawn even more innovation, creativity, and originality.

▶ **Phillip Meris—Via Internet**

Teach Your Children

I have recently come to a conclusion about violence and video games. Since before Death Race for the Atari 2600, there has been concern about violence in video games. Now, the reasons for banning violent video games are admirable, but the cause of violence in society and in children is not video games or any form of media for that matter. It can be argued that much is due to the negligence of some parents who don't take the responsibility for teaching their children right from wrong. When you expect media to teach your children life values rather than taking care yourself to have such discussions with them, there will be problems. Games are not the cause of violence, but if parents would just step in and teach their children that violent behavior is wrong, that concern would not be an issue. Or better yet, if parents don't want their children to play the games, they shouldn't allow them to. Parents have a responsibility in this situation, and until parents decide to change, nothing else will.

▶ **MalicGP—Via Internet**

There's no substitute for conscientious and loving parenting: That includes imparting the proper knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Parents are responsible for that, but with technology and culture evolving so rapidly, they can use all the help they can get. This includes the ESRB ratings, proper support for ratings at the retail level, good information (from places like *GamePro*, of course), and responsible gameplay by their gamer children, too.

Downing Shooters with Halo

I rented Killzone and can't put it down. Sure, Killzone was shot down immediately at launch for trying to say it was a Halo killer (good one, Sony), but it's an incredible game that doesn't need to compete with Halo or any other shooter. Sony just hyped people up way too much and then let them down. You cannot compete with a giant like Halo; you can only pretend it never happened and try to divert people's attention from it subtly. Personally, I hate the game, mainly because it kills the sales of every other game out there, but also because it's nothing new or innovative. An online shooter with sub-par graphics—whoop de do. The only reasons it is so popular is because Xbox Live is extremely easy to use and the atmosphere is like that of a bar, where you walk around, meet people, and challenge them to a brawl.

▶ **Jesse Ford—Atlanta, GA**

Hoo-whee, you Atlantans really know how to party! Yes, Killzone has its positives, but Halo 2 also benefits from the Xbox's ability to produce first-rate first-person-shooter action that consistently escapes PS2 games. And it would be a serious error in judgement to underestimate the growing attraction of Halo 2 online.

READER REVIEW

Resident Evil 4

I've been with Resident Evil ever since it first appeared on the PlayStation back in the day, and I was blown away by what it brought to the video-game table. But after many sequels and some disappointments, Capcom has come back with a great game. Resident Evil 4 for the GameCube is the best—better than any of the other games. Most people hated the fixed camera angles in the first titles, but I thought they added to the game by leaving you wondering what lurked around corners. Anyway, the new camera still keeps you guessing what's around the corner, but it also lets you see what's directly in front of you. The graphics are jaw dropping, but I do miss the CG movies just a little bit (since the in-game graphics are so good, most of the time you never notice they're missing). Like the ending sequence, for instance: I thought those were CG graphics, but they were all in-game visuals.

The story is unbelievable, too. I loved every second of it, and as it unfolded, I wanted to know more about everything so I had to keep playing. I loved the game, and if you own the GameCube, this is a must buy.

—*XtrustKillX*

FUN FACTOR 5.0/5

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

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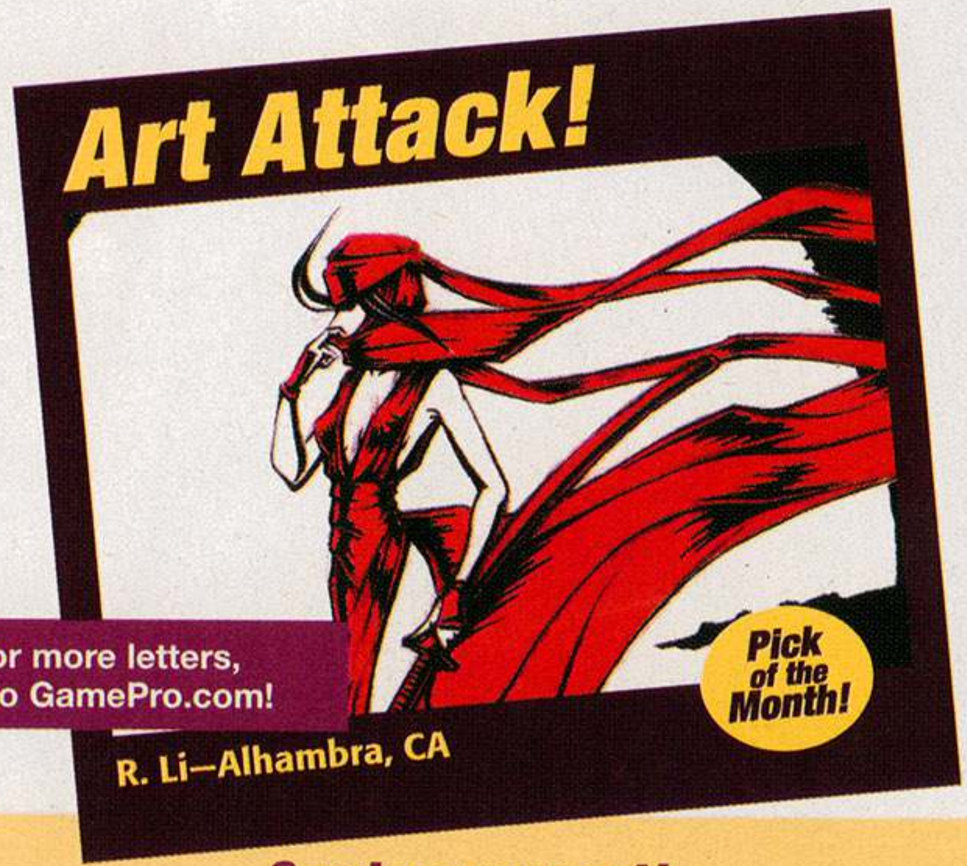

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IN STORES THIS APRIL

The fine art of tweaking your computer...it can be a daunting task, especially when it seems like all the meaningful options are hidden in the dreaded "Advanced" tab. This month, The Watch Dog focuses on what makes computers sputter and gives recommendations on upgrades for those who can't afford the latest and greatest PC gaming rig.

Digital Conspiracy

Okay, I really need some help here. I bought Half-Life 2, and overall I like the game because it does what other games can't. My video card is near top of the line: a PNY Technologies Verto 256 MB GeForce 6800 GT AGP 8x. I recently bought it, and I am very pleased with its performance with other games but not with Half-Life 2. Now FYI, I am not green in the computer technology world—my computer has at least 512 MB RAM, sufficient hard drive space, and a CPU clocked in at 3.10 GHz. I've downloaded the trial version of 3d Mark 03, and the score for my computer is in the 10,000+ range. I also reformatted my hard drive last summer and have defragmented it every time I've installed another huge program or game. What I don't understand is when I run the settings at *the* lowest settings, my computer lags badly. I've turned off the shader and anisotropic filtering, which really helped a lot, but sometimes when I'm just walking it lags for about a second or so. Strangely, when I'm fighting against a Strider and it's taking five to six RPG hits, it barely lags. Is my computer just weird or is there something that I should do?

▶ **Noah Ylitalo—Via Internet**

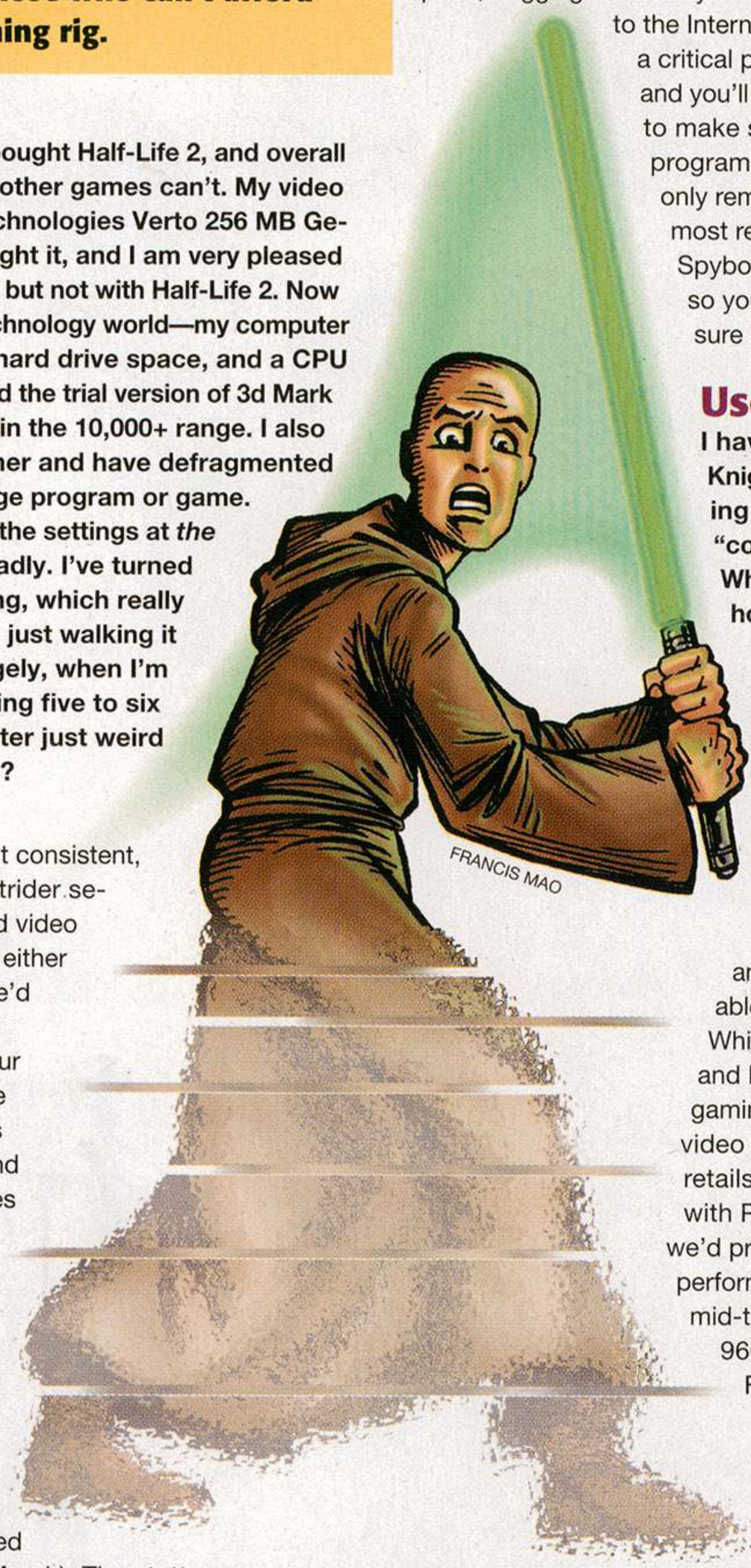
It sounds like the frame-rate drops aren't consistent, especially if you can get through the Strider sequences smoothly. With such a high-end video card and CPU, hardware isn't the issue, either (if you were to upgrade at all, though, we'd suggest having at least 1 GB RAM).

First off, there's no need to defrag your hard drive every time you install a large program. Fragmentation mainly occurs when you delete large chunks of data and install something else. Fragmented drives are slower because the computer needs to jump around more to access clusters of data. When your frame rate drops, do you notice the hard drive being accessed a lot? If not, then the issue probably isn't with your hard drive being fragmented.

When you say your computer lags for a second, it may be because of the infamous sound stutter, which we covered in our last issue (see Buyers Beware, March). The stutter occurs on even the most fancy, high-end rigs and isn't a problem unique to your own machine.

One likely possibility is that there's too much junk running in the background—companies like AOL and Apple's QuickTime love installing background processes that needlessly eat up system resources. In addition to hard drive cleanups, it's equally important to cleanse your operating system from hidden processes that are wasting valuable gaming resources. Looking at the system tray is a good surface assessment of how cluttered your operating system is—there should be only three to four icons of only the most essential processes in there (volume, network, and maybe a Firewall program if you have one). Disable all messenger programs, media tray items (QuickTime, Real, EAX), video-card control panels (ATI, nVidia, etc.), and even Steam from running on Startup—you don't need them. Sometimes that's easier said than done. For example, QuickTime has a nasty urge to lodge itself into the system tray, even if you erase it from Windows Registry (the best solution is to rename the file qttask.exe or delete it all together).

Due to Microsoft's esteemed software engineers leaving security flaws the size of a barn, spyware is a constant and unfortunately evolving threat. Like cyber termites, a large number of them wear down your computer, bogging it down by sending bits of information from your computer to the Internet. Downloading anti-spyware programs is a critical part of keeping your computer in trim shape, and you'll need to install at least two to three programs to make sure it's clean (due to the myriad spyware programs and files out there; a single program will only remove about 75 percent of spyware). The four most reputable ones are Ad-Aware, Spy Sweeper, Spybot, and Spyware Blaster. The more the better, so you may want to use all four of those to make sure no sinister programs or cookies are hidden.



Use the GeForce

I have a big problem: I got Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast, and when I tried playing it, I received an error message saying "could not opengl" or something like that. When I tried playing the game at a friend's house, it worked fine. I'm pretty sure my computer has all the requirements, but in case it doesn't, here's what I have: 400 MHz processor, 160 MB RAM, 4 MB video card (ATI). Please help!

▶ **Anonymous—Via Internet**

By the looks of it, you badly need a new video card. According to LucasArts, an OpenGL-compatible 16 MB video card is required for the game. With such a small amount of video RAM, the game wouldn't be able to play regardless of your OpenGL issues. While you'd ideally want to upgrade your CPU and RAM, the cheapest solution to extend the gaming life of your PC is to buy a new low-end video card. The nVidia FX 5200 with 128 MB retails for about $50 online and is compatible with Pentium IIs and AMD K6s—which is what we'd presume you have. While Radeon tends to perform slightly better in the mid-to-high range (Radeon 9600 and 9800 versus FX 5700 and 5900), in the low-end, the nVidia gives the best bang for the buck.

Submissions

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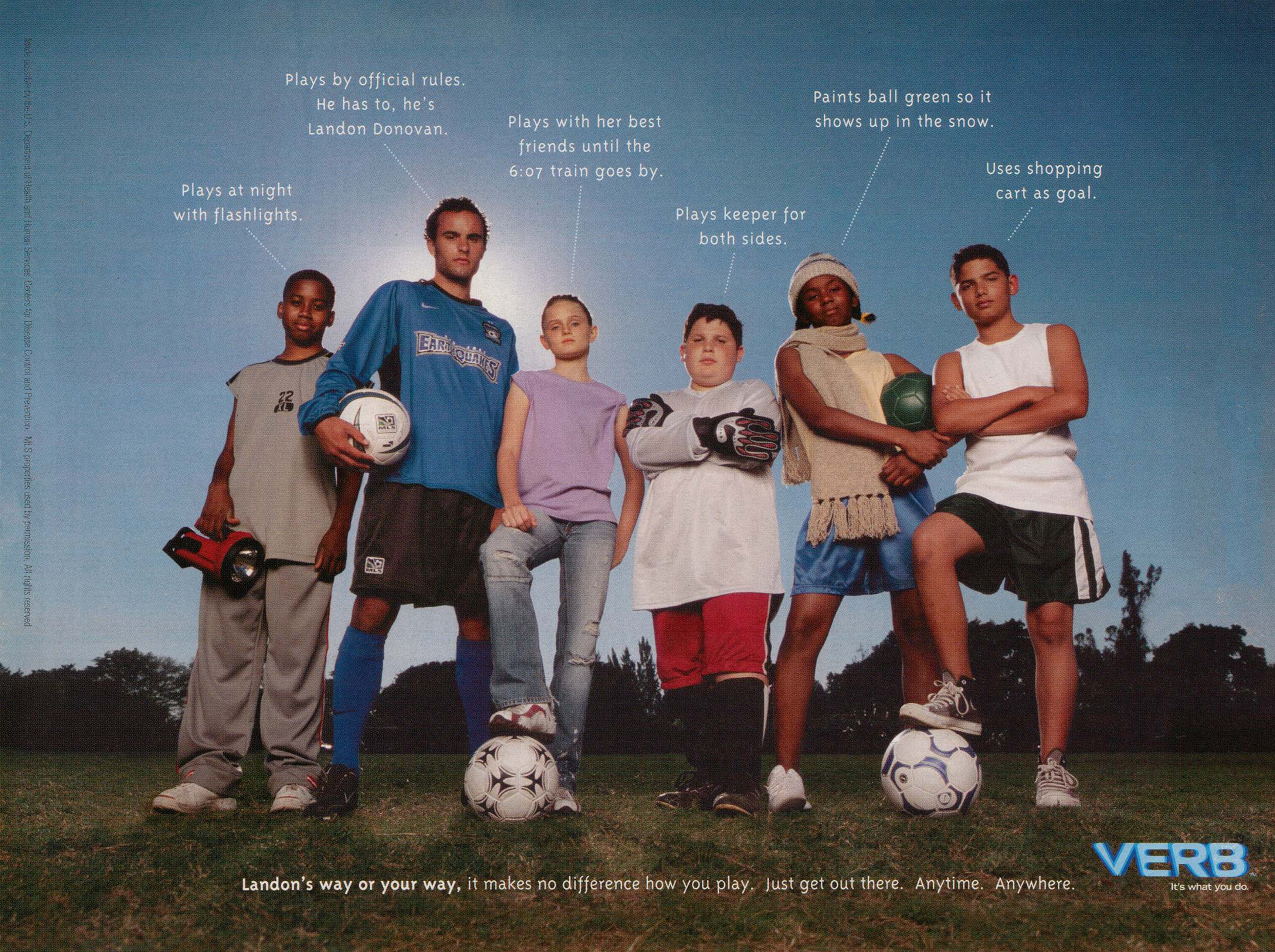

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The GAMEPRO TOP 10 BEST VIDEO-GAME FRANCHISES

What's YOUR Top 10? Visit GamePro.com and let the GamePro nation know!

BOMBERMAN 10
CASTLEVANIA 9
8
7
6
5
4
3

#9 Castlevania

Developed by Konami

To continue our Top 10 Franchises list that we started in the March issue, here's #9. One rule was made before we chose a series: For a franchise to be considered, it had to have more than one sequel. So don't bother sending hate mail in regards to Halo, Half-Life, The Sims, and other omissions—they will be eligible next time.

The Castlevania series personified the platform/action genre during its heyday in the late 1980s. Castlevania had a simple good-versus-evil plot—in this case, whip-toting warrior Simon Belmont versus the prince of darkness, Count Dracula. The linear objective was to venture through the castle, destroy the Count's henchmen (werewolf, Frankenstein, etc.), and then take on the Count himself. Behind the rote play mechanics was an intriguing story line in which each successive Belmont family member would battle the Count (or one of his henchmen) in another game. Even with 8-bit graphics, the first Castlevania game on the NES created a horrific atmosphere, which was only enhanced by the next-gen systems' processing powers. The last NES 'vania, Dracula's Curse, was a massive adventure where you could recruit one of three characters that could be switched to at will.

Castlevania had two strong 16-bit entries—Super Castlevania IV and Bloodlines—but the PlayStation version, Symphony of the Night, changed everything. You played as Alucard, Dracula's disgruntled son, and the game used the same approach as in Super Metroid: You were left to explore a vast castle with inaccessible areas that could be reached only after obtaining particular powers and abilities.

However, Castlevania (and its sequel, Legacy of Darkness) on the Nintendo 64 was a huge stumbling block. It was the series' first foray into 3D, but the gigantic stages made no architectural sense, and the Tomb Raider–esque platform-hopping mechanics coupled with uncooperative camera angles only made things worse. The series returned to form with Circle of the Moon for the Game Boy Advance (which used the same nonlinear design as that of Symphony), and the franchise was finally done 3D justice with Lament of Innocence for the PlayStation 2. A DS Castlevania will be released before the end of the year.—*Major Mike*

Symphony of the Night (PlayStation) is considered one of the finest games—if not *the* finest game—in the Castlevania series.

One of the series' most enduring traits is the continuing story line that follows the cursed Belmont clan and its eternal struggle with Count Dracula.

Did You Know...?

Dracula X was butchered when it was ported to the Super NES from the PC Engine Super CD-ROM. For its Japan-only release, the original version, Dracula X: The Rondo of Blood, featured two playable characters (Richter and Maria), several branching paths to take (so one couldn't play every stage in a single game), and a knockout music score courtesy of the CD audio. Unfortunately, the original game never made it to the U.S., and fans were stuck with the truncated Super NES edition. Rondo is a rare find, and on online auction sites (such as eBay.com), it fetches bids that easily exceed $100.

The lost masterpiece—Dracula X: The Rondo of Blood

The most recent game, Lament of Innocence (PS2), took Castlevania to the realm of 3D and did it right.

Key Games in the Castlevania Series

- ☐ **Castlevania** (NES, 1987)
- ☐ **Castlevania II: Simon's Quest** (NES, 1988)
- ☐ **Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse** (NES, 1990)
- ☐ **Super Castlevania IV** (SNES, 1991)
- ☐ **Dracula X: The Rondo of Blood** (PC Engine, 1993)
- ☐ **Castlevania Bloodlines** (Genesis, 1994)
- ☐ **Castlevania: Symphony of the Night** (PlayStation, 1997)
- ☐ **Castlevania** (Nintendo 64, 1999)
- ☐ **Castlevania: Circle of the Moon** (GBA, 2001)
- ☐ **Castlevania: Lament of Innocence** (PS2, 2003)

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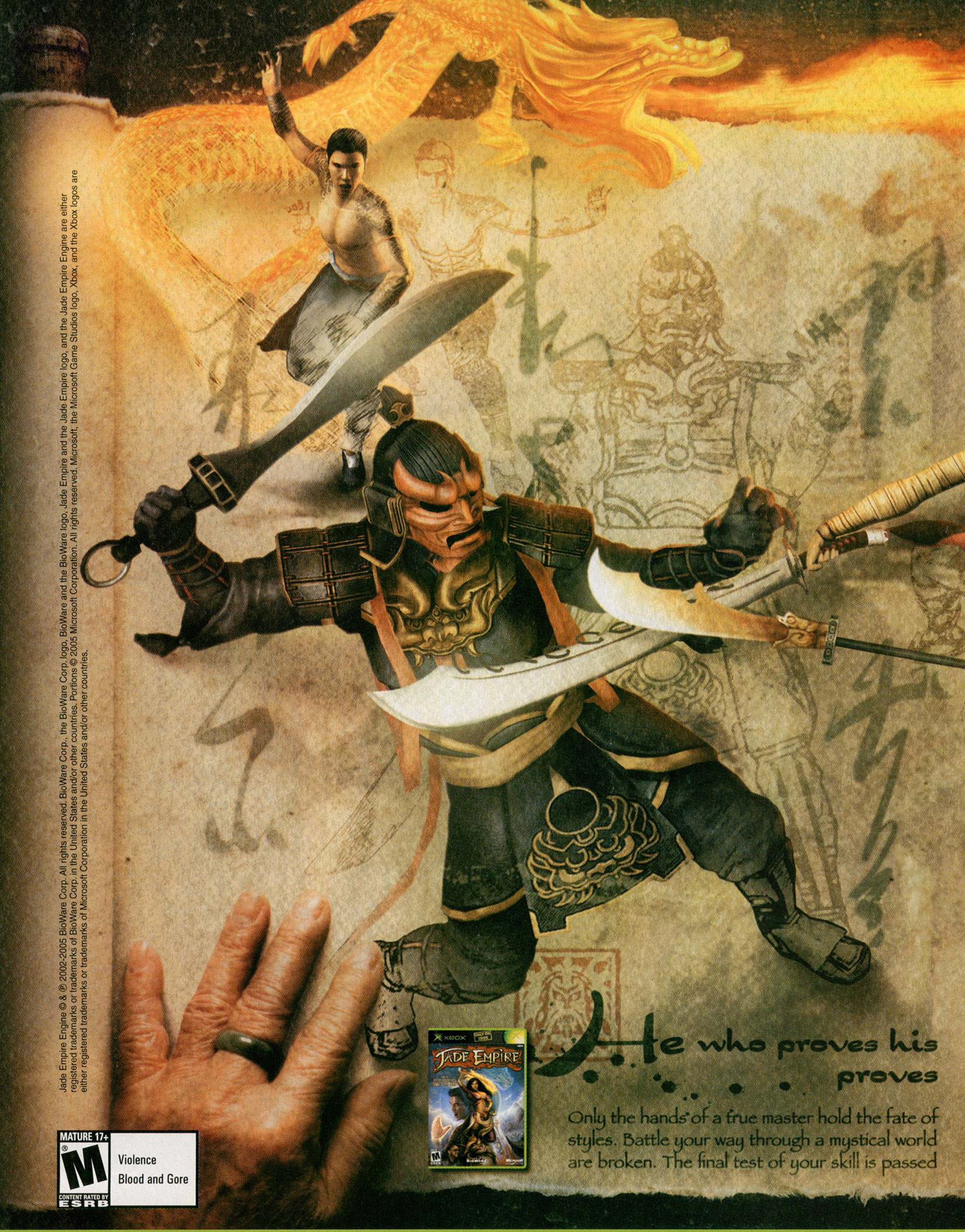

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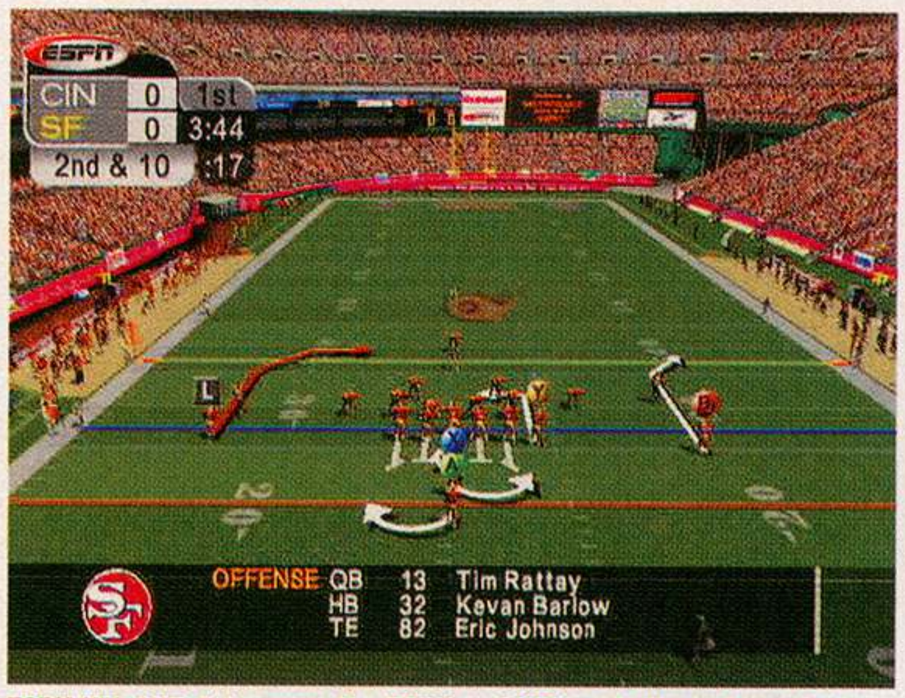
In December 2004, EA Sports scored a sweet victory when it signed a five-year exclusive licensing agreement with the NFL and Players Inc. The deal prevents any other company but EA from using NFL brands, stadiums, and player names and likenesses in its games. In 2004, ESPN NFL 2K5 was a strong competitor to EA Sports' Madden NFL 2005—especially with its $19 retail price tag. In January 2005, EA signed a 15-year deal with ESPN that gives the software giant "access to ESPN programming, personalities, and integrated marketing opportunities;" the integration will begin in 2006. The deal also eliminates the ESPN video-game series as a competitor and further strengthens EA's unrivaled supremacy in the football video-game arena. According to the NPD Group, ESPN NFL 2K5 (PlayStation 2) was the number four–selling game and Madden NFL 2005 (PlayStation 2) was the number three–selling game of 2004.

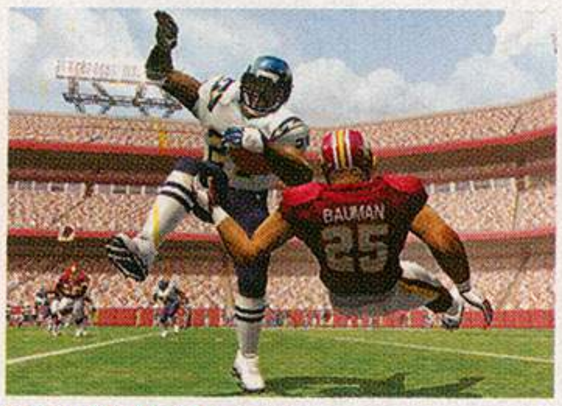
"We believe that the decisions of the NFL to grant an exclusive license for video games do a tremendous disservice to the consumers and sports fans whose funds ultimately support the NFL by limiting their choices, curbing creativity, and almost certainly leading to higher game prices," said Take 2 in a statement. The EA-NFL agreement shuts out other franchises, too, like 989's GameDay and Midway's Blitz: Playmakers. Midway's upcoming pigskin game promises to "include all the gameplay and fun the NFL won't allow;" however, the game was in the works before the EA-NFL agreement.

Take 2 struck back with a sports exclusive of its own by signing an exclusive seven-year agreement with the Major League Baseball Players Association. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Take 2 paid between $80 and $90 million with some estimates as high as $150 million. The company then went an extra step when it purchased ESPN NFL 2K5 developer Visual Concepts and Kush Games from Sega for $24 million, and created new labels, 2K Games and 2K Sports. Just as game developers and publishers scramble to secure the licenses to comic-book and motion-picture properties, EA and Take 2 have taken things to the next level by locking up certain sports licenses. Madden is already the top-selling football video game, but EA has now secured its position as the only game in town in the football arena. It remains to be seen what impact the Take 2 agreement will have with its exclusive MLBPA deal as baseball video games have a decidedly lower profile than football games.



ESPN NFL 2K5: Take away the ESPN and NFL, and all you have is 2K....

Midway's long-running Blitz franchise continues sans the NFL license with Blitz: Playmakers.



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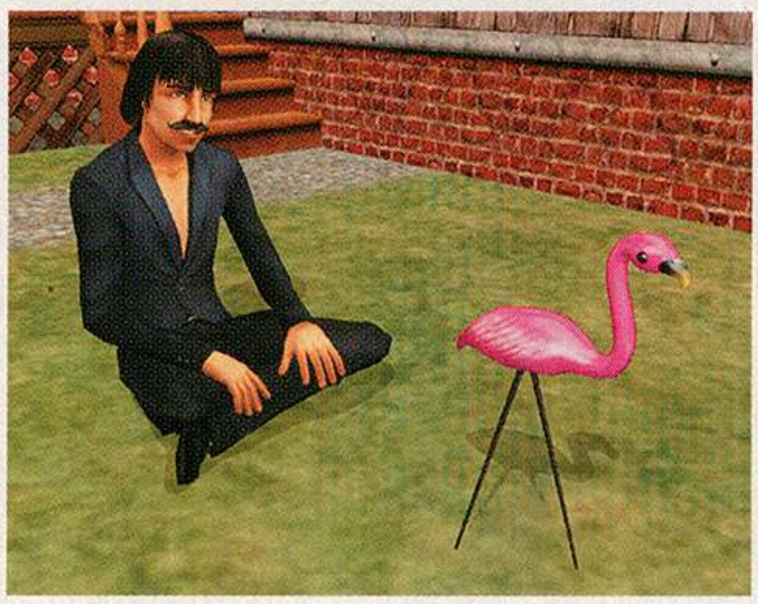
The Sims 2 Gets Even Stranger

While it may appear on the surface that the hit series Halo and The Sims have very little in common, think again. ***By Kathunter***

Gamers have spent countless hours meticulously creating their own version of reality inside the newly released The Sims 2, spending days and nights staring at the computer screen, and watching their Sims watch TV, make a sandwich, or perform some other mundane task that somehow becomes magically entertaining. But what if these characters suddenly came to life and had their own distinct personality? If you've ever wondered about such a thing, a small company in Texas is about to tackle that question.

From Rooster Teeth Productions (creators of the cult hit series Red vs. Blue) comes a new machinima called The Strangerhood. Red vs. Blue, which currently does about 1 million downloads a month, is created using the Halo 2 game engine. In this case, The Strangerhood is created using one PC and a copy of The Sims 2.

We had a chance to sit down with Rooster Teeth Productions' founder, Burnie Burns, to discuss this new creative endeavor.



***GamePro*: What is the basic story of The Strangerhood?**

Burnie Burns: It's always fun to take a game's premise and try to give it some kind of realistic context in the scope of the real world. We started with the perspective of the Sims themselves. How would they feel about being constantly manipulated by some unseen force? Who is doing that manipulation and why?

The Strangerhood is the story of eight people who wake up in this isolated suburban place with no memory of how they got there or where they are from. They must find a way to live together while dealing with this mysterious voice that runs almost every aspect of their lives. Because the "sets" of The Sims 2 are so suburban, it's a great chance to riff on classic American TV, especially sitcoms.

***GP*: How did this idea come about?**

BB: We saw The Sims 2 at E³ last year. We definitely thought we could do something fun with it. Six months later, that idea turned into The Strangerhood. We think it's a great fit because it's about as different from Halo as you can get, so it's something new for people who never really got into Red vs. Blue.

***GP*: You write a script and record voice-overs, but how do you turn a Sim game into an animated sitcom?**

BB: It's not easy, but the challenge is part of the fun. It's almost like another type of gameplay. If you want Wade to pass out in a shot, you get him up, run him around, make him exercise, and just basically tire him out. Then, you have to get him in the right place at the right time when he finally keels over. If he does it right, you win.

Machinima is a lot like live-action filmmaking. The animations aren't scripted from beginning to end, so you get lots of accidental stuff that's great.

***GP*: What are some specific technical challenges that had you pulling your hair out at 3 a.m.?**

BB: Little things, such as having all the characters face one person in the room. You can imagine why that would be useful cinematically, but no one would play the "let's all look at Sam" game, so why would a developer include that feature? Part of the fun is coming to terms with the rules and then editing to take advantage of them.

***GP*: Can you tell me a little bit about the actual cast of The Strangerhood? How many characters are from the Red vs. Blue series, and how many are new additions?**

BB: We tried to cast fresh voices as the main characters so that people would not be distracted. David Zellner plays Sam, Lindsey Griffith voices Catherine, and Brooke Hattabaugh does Nikki. Probably the biggest Strangerhood character done by a Red vs. Blue cast member is Wade, who is played by Joel Heyman, the voice of Red vs. Blue's Caboose. Joel now gets to brag that he has the most popular character in both series. Matt and I play Dutchmiller and Tovar/Griggs respectively. Mister Mystery is simultaneously double voiced by Gus and Gfunk.

New episodes are uploaded weekly and can be downloaded from Rooster Teeth Productions' website at strangerhood.com and redvsblue.com.

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GP LABS

Atari Flashback Classic Game Console

GamePro examines the new Atari Flashback, a retro game console featuring 20 classic Atari games.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Atari Flashback is its petite size—it's not much larger than a CD jewel case. The retro gaming console includes 20 titles (14 from the 2600 and five from the more advanced 7800), including one unreleased title. So, in keeping with the rampant nostalgia, *GamePro* reviews four of the most noteworthy games using our classic scoring criteria. Enjoy!—*Vicious Sid*

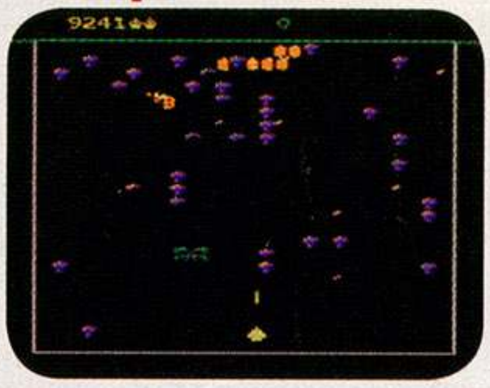
Price: $59.95. Contact: Atari, atari.com

Asteroids

FUN FACTOR 4.5

Insanely frustrating yet highly addictive, this classic shooter still packs a punch. But the worst feature is that the Flashback console won't save your high score once you turn off the power (lame)!

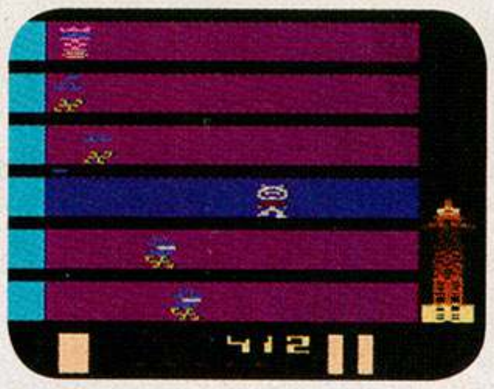
Centipede



FUN FACTOR 5.0

Though Millipede has more varied enemies and play modes, the original Centipede takes top honors here thanks to its crisp, clean graphics, which are based off the more advanced Atari 7800's.

Saboteur



FUN FACTOR 2.5

Until now, Atari has never released this internally developed prototype. Frankly, it's not hard to see why. A bizarre, nonsensical game, Saboteur's sole claim to fame is a guest appearance by the flies from Yars Revenge.

Solaris

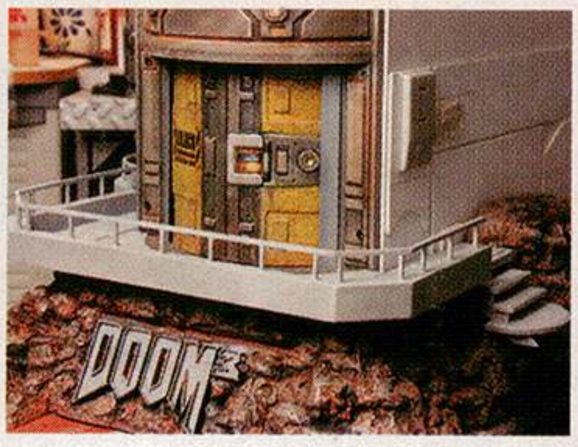
FUN FACTOR 4.0

Though incomprehensible at first glance, this spacey shooter is actually one of the more charming games included with the Flashback. Best moment: blasting through swarms of giant planets as if they were insects.

ART OF THE GAME

Demon-Powered Dynamo

Much like the demon-infested Martian complex depicted in Doom 3, this modest Antec Super LANBoy aluminum PC case has mutated into something far more sinister. Paul Capello's monstrous masterpiece, though still a work in progress, not only integrates distinct elements from Doom 3's buildings and airlocks, but it also includes rocky Martian terrain, an integrated LCD screen, a chainsaw fan bezel, and even a teeny-tiny metal staircase! And no tower of terror is complete without a glowing red pentagram (housed behind a chic bay window). You can check out Capello's eye-popping gallery, plus an insanely detailed work log, at thebestcasescenario.com. —*Vicious Sid*



The Sound and the Fury

GamePro spoke with Marty O'Donnell, audio director for Bungie Studios, to shed some light on Halo 2's audio technology.

***GamePro*: What were the most drastic changes in Halo 2's sound?**
Marty O'Donnell: More everything: more dialog, more music, and more Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound. Physical objects now make convincing sounds when they impact, roll, and scrape against other objects. Sound positioning is far more accurate, so Surround Sound is extremely important. And the music is now more dynamic and responsive to your actions. I want you to feel like you're starring in a big-budget sci-fi/action movie.

***GP*: What new audio technology is featured in Halo 2?**
MO: We had Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound in the first Halo, but this time, we've really got it working well on everything. Every area has unique reverb properties that treat sounds in realistic ways and can smoothly transition from one area to another without abrupt changes. Also, notice how the speed of sound works in Halo 2. Distant explosions will be seen and then heard a little later just like lightning and thunder.

***GP*: What were some of the inspirations for the music in Halo 2?**
MO: I had the opportunity to work with some amazing musicians like Steve Vai while crafting Halo 2's music. I also wanted Halo 2's music to sound like a natural progression from (the first) Halo, so that (game's) music was a starting point in the compositional process.

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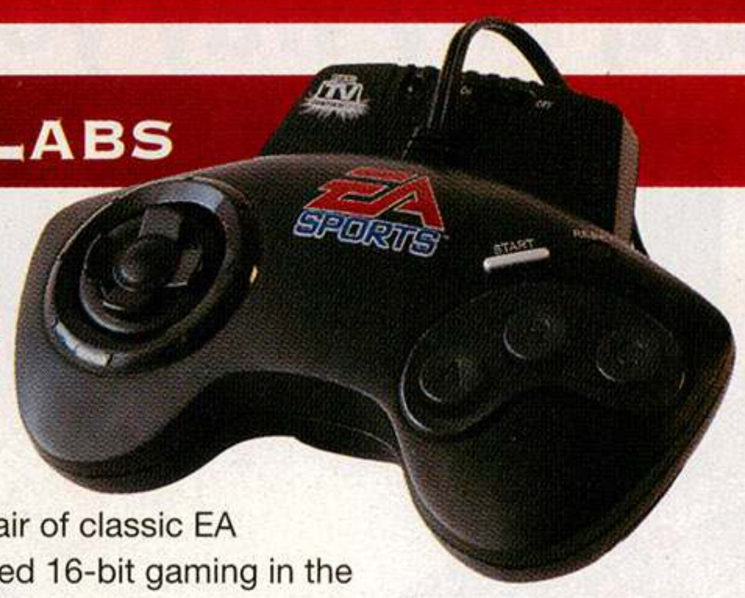
GP LABS

JAKKS EA Sports TV Games



Blast to the past with a pair of classic EA Sports titles that dominated 16-bit gaming in the mid-1990s. Featuring a very Genesis-looking controller, EA Sports TV Games presents Madden NFL '95 and NHL '95 as authentically as possible on your TV screen. Its built-in memory enables you to save your create-a-team and player options as well as your progress in season play. The two-player version features two controllers for head-to-head action wherever you can find a TV to plug into. The only caveat to this sharp package is that these games are over 10 years old, so the graphics and gameplay are much simpler than what you get in contemporary football and hockey games. Nevertheless, these games were the bomb back then and retain their fun factor even after all these years. —*Dr. Zombie*

Price: $25, one player; $35, two players
Contact: JAKKS Interactive, jakkstvgames.com

GP Labs Rating: 3.5/5

JAKKS World Poker Tour TV Games

JAKKS TV Games ups the ante (literally) with its latest plug-and-play product, World Poker Tour TV Games, which is based on the popular TV series on the Travel Channel. Its unique controller design features a built-in LCD screen that allows up to six players to view their cards discreetly. This isn't a kid's toy, though—it's meant for hardcore poker players looking for a variety of options and features. An instructional DVD is included to show the many aspects of gameplay, although it's really quite easy to learn. Mastering how to bet and when to fold is what takes skill and patience. After the kids have had their time in front of the TV, this should provide a good change of pace for older gamers.—*Dr. Zombie*

Price: $19.99. Contact: JAKKS Interactive, jakkstvgames.com

GP Labs Rating: 3.0/5

COLD WINTER WATCH

This Cold War Is Red Hot

Spring may be coming, but the warm weather won't thaw Cold Winter, Vivendi Universal's upcoming PS2-exclusive shooter. Players guide Andrew Sterling, a hardboiled MI6 agent, out of a Chinese prison and into a two-fisted espionage adventure. The gameplay focuses on no-nonsense action and features a real-world arsenal of mammoth proportions (over 30 guns total), including AK-47s, RPGs, and flamethrowers. In the preview version, several gameplay flourishes were evident. The enemies were smart enough to take cover and call for reinforcements, and you could push over tables to use as improvised shields. Ultimately, Cold Winter's multiplayer modes (including King of the Hill and Flag Tag, and are all playable online) may prove to be the biggest draw, especially because the PS2 lacks a killer multiplayer FPS title. Catch the Cold this spring. —*Vicious Sid*

GOD OF WAR WATCH

The Gods Are Crazy

Sony's upcoming PlayStation 2 Greek-mythology action/adventure title finally arrived in the form of a one-stage playable demo. Although the build was brief, it had all the intense action that earlier previews had hinted at. But all wasn't perfect: The action sequences that require fast button presses when the corresponding controller symbol appears on-screen were a tad too fast; otherwise, the controls enabled you to execute an awesome barrage of attacks and defensive maneuvers (grabbing an enemy and ripping them completely in half was particularly satisfying). Look for our God of War ProReview in an upcoming issue of *GamePro*; the game hits store shelves in late March.—*Major Mike*

10 Years Ago

Retro Corner
10 Years Ago (April 1995)...

...in GamePro

Mortal Kombat III (arcade) was the main cover image of our 154-page April issue. This cover was backed by a three-page behind-the-scenes "making-of" feature about the arcade version of the game, which featured the exclusive first look at the new fighter, Sub-Zero.

- **Sega Rally Championship** was Hot at the Arcades.
- *LamePro* struck again with four pages of parodies and lampoons of popular games at the time. Of note was Super SBPA RBI ERA Bases Loaded Hardball III '95: Strike Edition, which ended with "Besides, why look for the players anyway? They sure didn't look for you."
- No game received perfect scores; **Earthworm Jim: Special Edition** (Sega CD) came the closest as it got 5.0s in every category except Sound (4.5). **Return Fire** (3DO) and **Starblade** (3DO) were also awarded high scores. **Pinball Fantasies** (SNES) received the lowest score in the magazine with a Fun Factor score of 1.0 (ouch!).
- Japanese versions of U.S. PlayStation launch titles were reviewed in the Overseas Prospects section—in particular, **Battle Arena Toshinden**.

...in Gaming
Nintendo's 400-Pound Gorilla

With over $7.5 million in sales, **Donkey Kong Country** (SNES) was crowned the "fastest-selling video game" of all time. As a result, Nintendo purchased a quarter of Rare, Donkey Kong Country's developer. Nintendo also announced that its upcoming Ultra (later Nintendo) 64 next-generation gaming console would be delayed until November 21.

The Jaguar

Atari announced that its CD-ROM add-on for the Jaguar system (the Jaguar CD) would be released in June and retail for $149.

E3 ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO

All Quiet...

The first Electronic Entertainment Expo was preparing to open its doors. As an alternative to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), E³ was a convention that emphasized gaming software over hardware.

...in Sales

Here are the top five–selling games of April 1995:

1. Donkey Kong Country (Nintendo/SNES)
2. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition (Acclaim/Genesis)
3. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition (Acclaim/SNES)
4. The Lion King (Virgin/SNES)
5. The Lion King (Virgin/Genesis)

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/Point-of-Sale

Donkey Kong Country

NBA Jam: Tournament Edition

NBA Jam: Tournament Edition

Plastic Fantastic

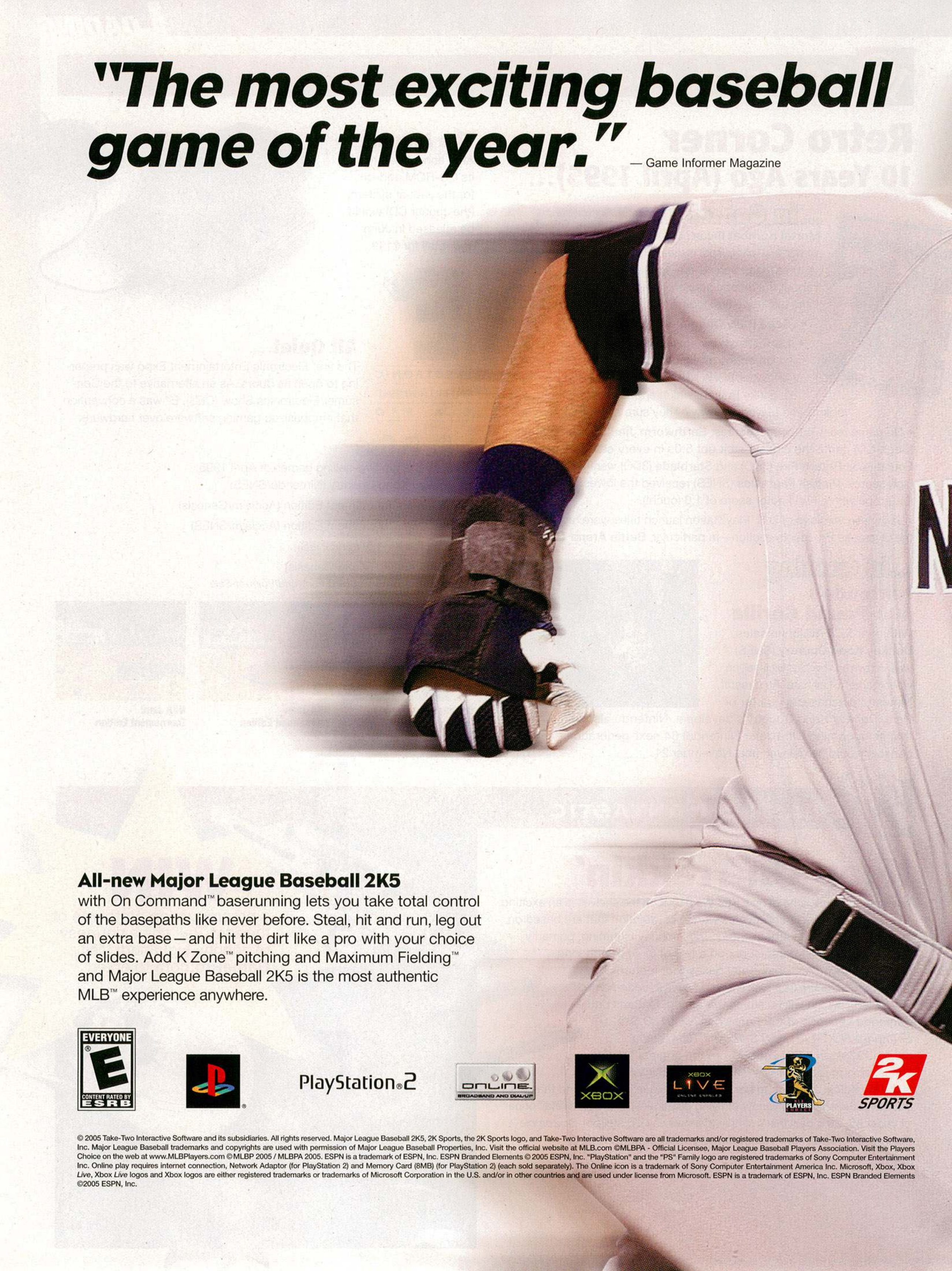
Keep On Trekkin'

Amongst the avalanche of new Star Wars toys on the shelves is an exciting new line of affordable collectibles worthy of attention that are based on the original sci-fi powerhouse, *Star Trek*. Johnny Lightning, primarily known for die-cast cars, launched a line of 3- to 4-inch long spaceships with die-cast metal bases that features key ships from the entire Star Trek lineage. Series 2, code-named "Red Alert," which will hit stores this spring, features battle-damaged versions of the *Enterprise NX-01*, *U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701*, *U.S.S. Reliant 1864*, and a cloaked Klingon battlecruiser from the original TV series, among others. What makes these vehicles so cool is the incredible attention to detail and the unique display stand that lets you pose the ships in a variety of flying positions. Plus, with a retail price of under $5, it's a deal that's simply (dare we say it?) stellar!—*Dr. Zombie*

For more information, visit johnnylightning.com

WIN a preproduction prototype of the Star Trek ships courtesy of Johnny Lightning! Visit **GamePro.com** to enter!

"The most exciting baseball game of the year." — Game Informer Magazine



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2K SPORTS

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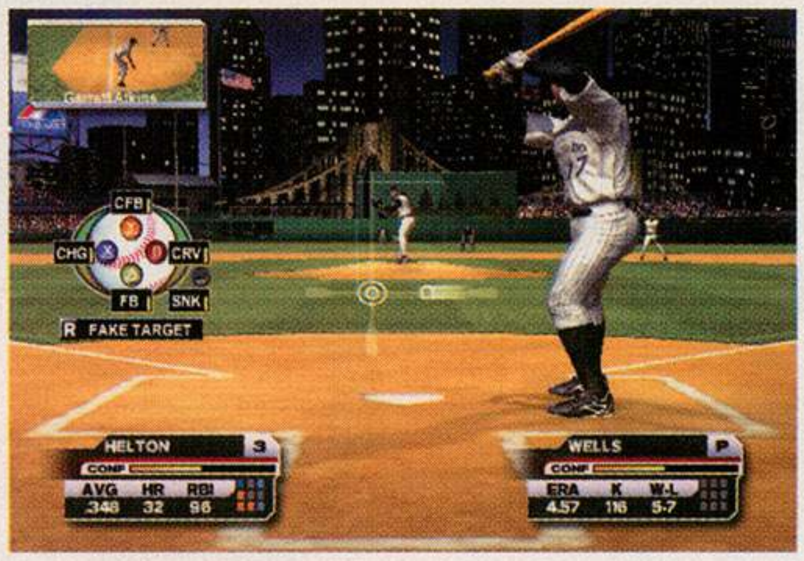
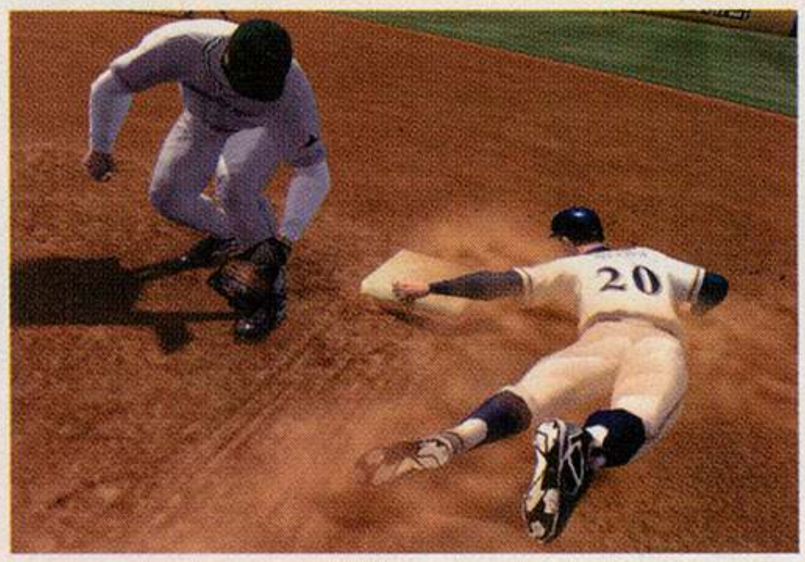
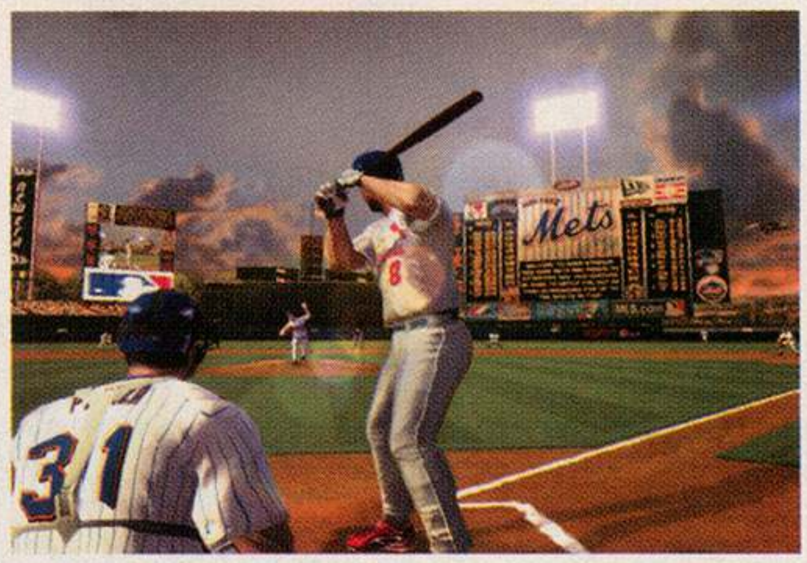
Baseburner gives you unprecedented control of your runners on base.



K Zone pitching gives you better command of your entire repertoire of pitches.



Maximum Sliding: Avoid the tag with your choice of slides!



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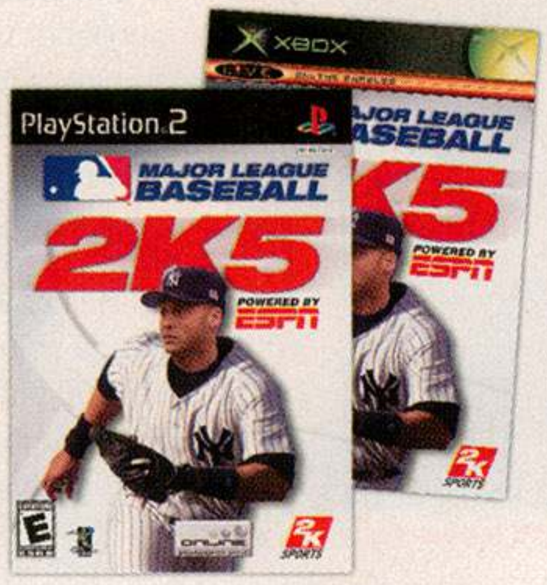

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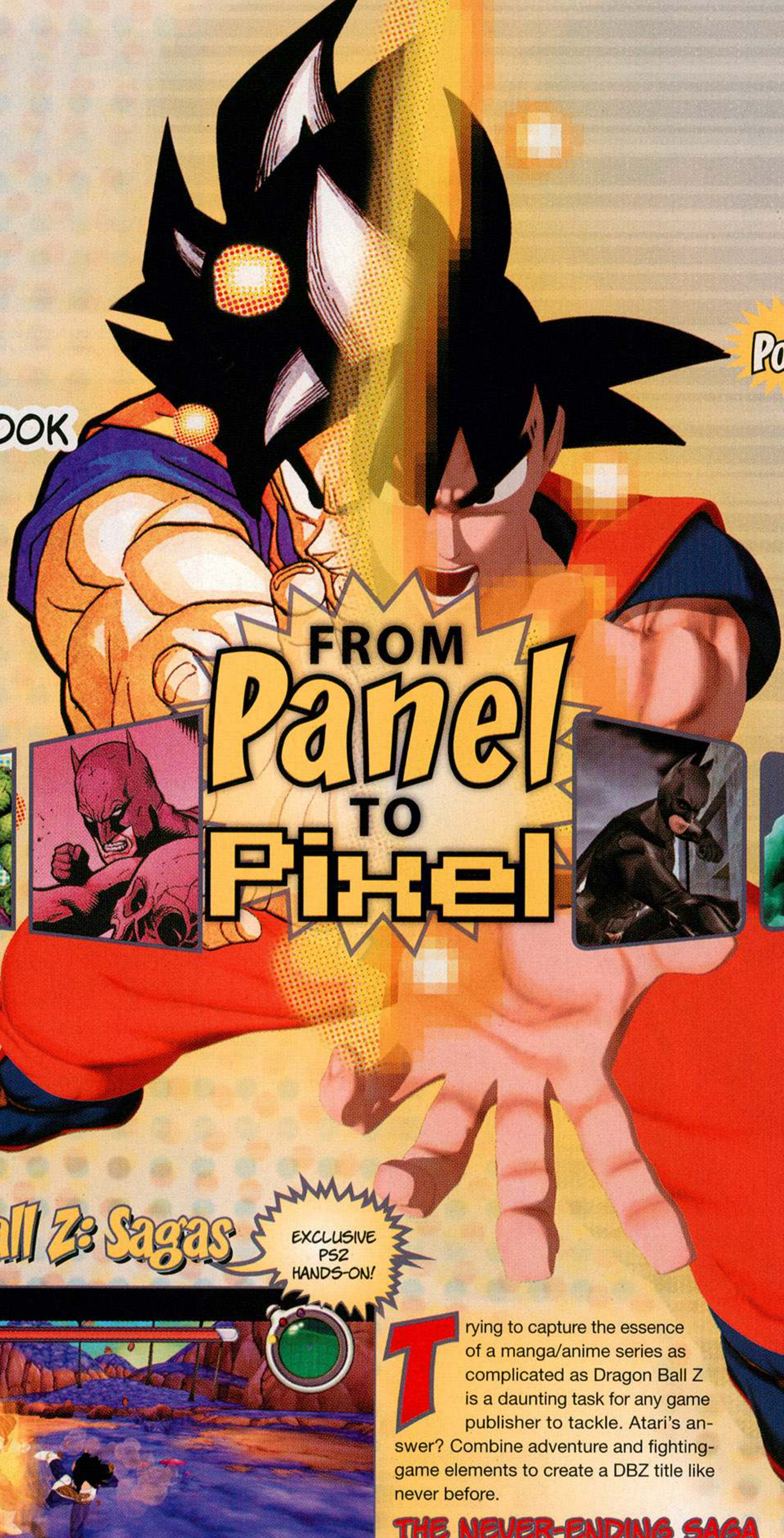


Pow! Thwap! Bang!

GamePro takes a look at some hot comic and manga prospects making the jump from pencil to polygon.

FROM Panel TO Pixel

Dragon Ball Z: Sagas

EXCLUSIVE PS2 HANDS-ON!

Vegeta takes on Android 16 on planet Namek. Just as in the anime, you have to power up your Ki before you can fire off any spirit blasts.

Trying to capture the essence of a manga/anime series as complicated as Dragon Ball Z is a daunting task for any game publisher to tackle. Atari's answer? Combine adventure and fighting-game elements to create a DBZ title like never before.

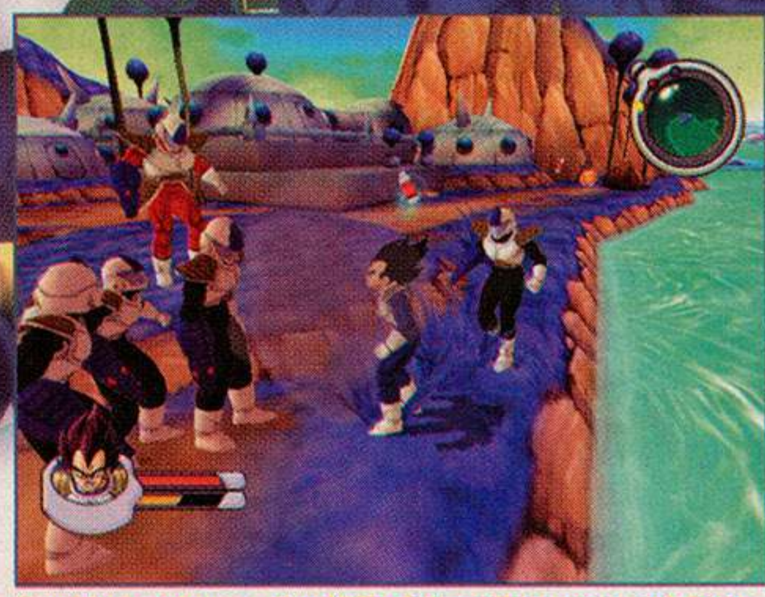
THE NEVER-ENDING SAGA

Ah, Dragon Ball Z. What more can be said that hasn't been said before? With 41 manga volumes, 291 anime episodes, 13 full-length movies, a cast of over 150 characters, and enough fights to fill up several seasons' worth of NHL games, Akira Toriyama's creation might actually be bigger and more expansive than the ancient Chinese fairy tales it's based on.

Dragon Ball Z © FUNimation; The Incredible Hulk and Fantastic Four © Marvel; Batman © DC Comics

Sagas' targeting system makes attacking enemies in hard-to-reach places a snap. Just watch your defense.

Buying new combos lets you unleash killer finishing moves like Goku's spinning kick.



Need to break up a cloud? Try teleporting away and dousing the whole group with a spirit blast. It works for Vegeta.

You either love it or hate it, but either way, it's impishly addictive.

Trying to encapsulate these countless pages of manga and hours of anime action (and, occasionally, inaction) into a single video game is a Herculean task. As there's so much plot line to cover, most titles concentrate instead on the slam-bang fighting, letting gamers reenact the series' classic battles without all the "I can't believe he's got so much power!" talking-head bits in between. Others, such as the line of action/RPGs Atari released for the Game Boy Advance, take a story arc or "saga" from the anime and let you play it out for yourself, trading away the depth of DBZ's bigger-than-life combat in favor of a more believable game world. No game, however, has ever tried to combine the two—something Atari plans to fix with Dragon Ball Z: Sagas, which could bring a breath of fresh air to the entire DBZ series.

Every character has a weak and strong Ki blast that can be worked into combos for extra arse-kicking goodness.

A DBZ COMPENDIUM

Due out for all three consoles this spring, Sagas is surprisingly aggressive in how much of DBZ's story line it covers. The game takes you from the beginning of the Z anime with Raditz crashing to Earth and wagging on about Super Saiyans, then goes on a whirlwind tour through the introduction of Frieza, the destruction of planet Namek, and the rise of Dr. Gero's androids before closing with Gohan's final confrontation against Perfect Cell. "We wanted to give players a chance to truly enter the Dragon Ball universe," explains game director Dan DeOreo. "To pull that off, we have developed a scaleable combat/upgrade system that will allow the player to create his own superheroic experience within the DBZ universe."

As the cast changes frequently from saga to saga (Goku tends to die a lot, for example), you'll be controlling a wide variety of characters throughout Sagas. The game features five playable heroes—Goku, Gohan, Vegeta, Trunks, and Piccolo, along with a few unlockables—and as the game proceeds, you'll automatically switch from warrior to warrior as the story demands. A second player can join the combat at any point in the game, and if he does, he'll be controlling a different character from player one—Piccolo may fight alongside Goku on Namek, for example. If this sounds constricting to you, don't worry: After finishing each stage, you can play it again in the "Pendulum Room," a bonus game mode that lets you tackle any area with any character you like.

NAMEK IS SO NICE IN THE SPRINGTIME

Most of Sagas' 19 levels are adventure stages, featuring your hero traversing a swath of terrain and fighting off legions of enemies. The environments run the gamut of the DBZ universe, from random sections of Earth's countryside to the blue-green surface of Namek. Later stages take place in leveled cityscapes and the hyperbolic time chamber where Goku and crew train. There's even an teensy-weensy bit on planet Yardrat, the dark-red place Goku escaped to after Namek's destruction.

Every adventure stage is set up along a more-or-less single path filled with items to find and sinister henchmen to beat up. When you're not fighting, the control scheme isn't much different from that of a typical platform adventure: You use the analog stick to run (or fly) around, the × button to jump, and the other buttons to punch, kick, block, or fire off Ki blasts. Holding down the ○ button for a short time charges up a high-powered Ki strike, whether it's Goku's Kamehameha or Trunks's little finger-dance thingy, and you'll need this attack

In order to use your powerful moves and abilities, you need to keep your Ki meter charged by holding down ○.

CONTINUED ▶

to blow away both wimpy enemies and any huge boulders that might lie in your path.

When you lock on to an enemy with the L1 button, the control system changes dramatically. All of your movements become relative to your target, and depending on the direction you turn, you'll dash toward the enemy, do a back flip to fall back, or strafe from side to side to avoid attacks. Once within melee range, you can attack your opponent with assorted combinations of the □, △, and R1 buttons.

Just as in Budokai and other fighting games, the battle system in Sagas is very combo oriented. Every character starts out with two simple combos, which are unleashed by hitting the punch or kick button five times without getting blocked. You earn better abilities by collecting the Z coins dotted around each stage and exchanging them for new moves at power-up stations. The combos you unlock can be used by every character in your roster, and if you're serious about hunting down every Z coin and buying every upgrade, you'll have a fearsome arsenal before the endgame. "We've given the player the opportunity to get wildly creative with skill combinations so (that) they can play the game in a way that feels comfortable to them," says DeOreo. "The only limit on how cool the combat can be is the player's imagination."

As if all this weren't enough, some characters in Sagas can even go Super Saiyan (or Super Namek) and kick several more levels of arse for a limited time. To earn this power, you'll need to fill up a special Saiyan meter by connecting with melee attacks on your foes—unless, of course, your character hasn't yet awakened to his Saiyan destiny, in which case you'll have to wait until that part of the story comes along. Now *that's* being faithful to the source material.

To uncover all of the Dragon Balls that you need to proceed to the next level, use Ki blasts to destroy rocks and other objects in the environment.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Of course, it's doubtful that FUNimation and Toei Animation would allow any unfaithful Dragon Ball Z game on the shelves. (Toei has contributed a brand-new animation sequence for Sagas' opening video, by the way.) The real question here is this: How does all of this story, fighting, and so forth actually *play*?

The preview PlayStation 2 version that Atari provided emphatically answered the question: It plays pretty darn well, thank you. Although the game's graphics aren't cartoon-shaded like they are in Budokai, Sagas still puts together a decent visual package—buildings topple in clouds of dust, enemies are sent flying through mountains, and nearly everything you see—from bushes to parked cars—is destructible. The music keeps up the 1980s action-flick vibe from the anime's soundtrack, and all the original U.S. voice actors have given their best shouting and screaming performances for the game's fighting sections.

Where Sagas truly shines, though, is in the boss battles. Goku and friends get to fight nearly every decent bad guy from the DBZ universe, including Raditz, Vegeta, androids, and even Cell's assorted forms. What's more, every battle is just as intense as the TV-show confrontations, though not quite as lengthy—you'll be trading combos and Ki blasts like crazy, sending each other into the air and teleporting madly around the arena. Not only is the game true to the anime, but it's also just as much of an adrenaline rush—something that could make Sagas irresistible to diehard fans.—*Clockwork Crow*

The combo system in Sagas lets you take on multiple foes at once easily.

CONTINUED ▶

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How Dirty Boys Get Clean.

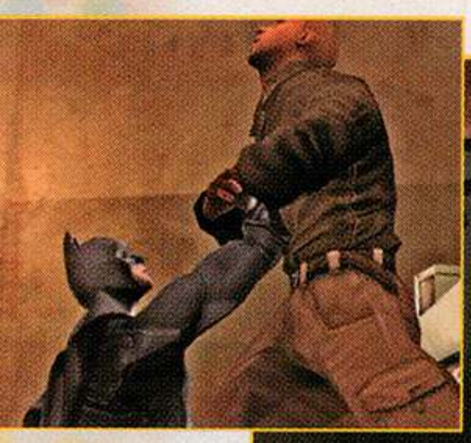
NEW AXE SHOWER GEL

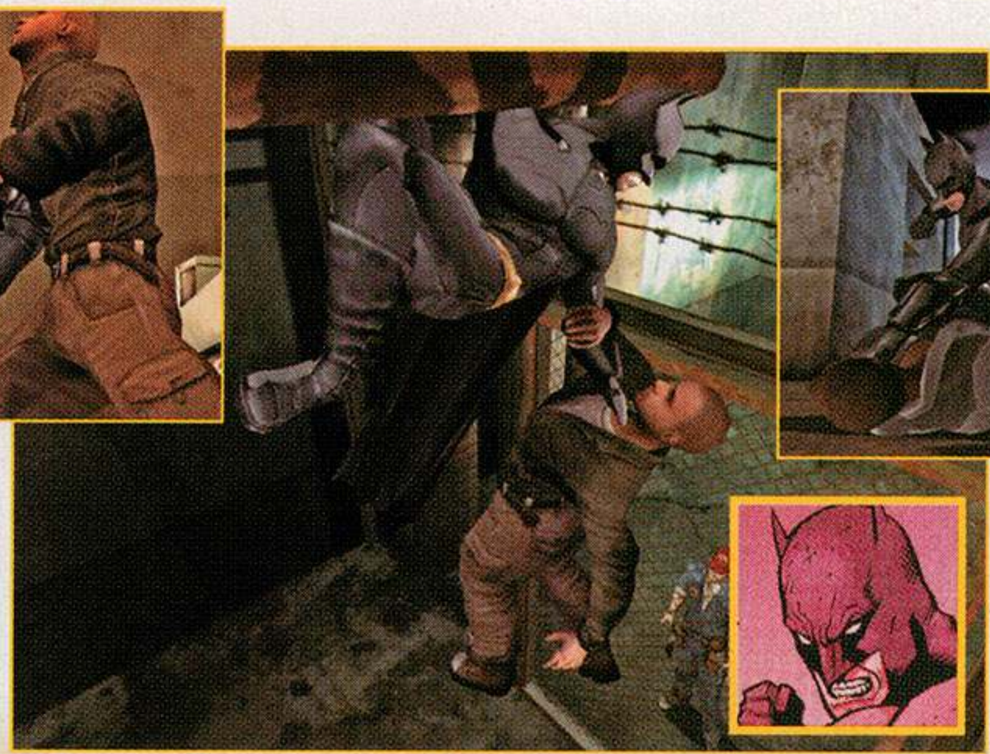
FROM Panel TO Pixel

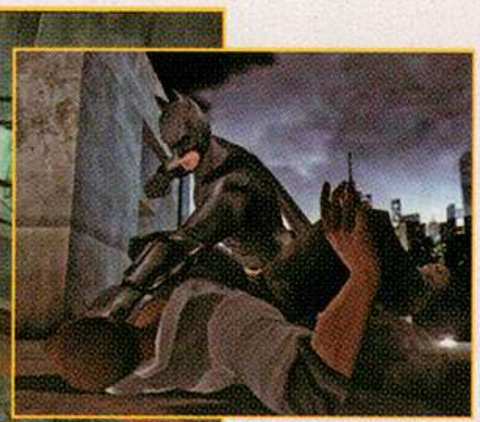
The Incredible Hulk

From the pages of Marvel comics (and the pen of Eisner-winning artist Bryan Hitch), The Incredible Hulk is on track to be the most enjoyable Hulk game yet. In the playable preview version, the Hulk stomped on cars, tanks, and skyscrapers in vast, detailed environments that had no draw-in problems, even from extreme distances. Upon picking up the controller, the gameplay was intuitive and instantly enjoyable with a focus on free-roaming, GTA-style missions. One key element was the Hulk's ability to charge up any move for more powerful results. Charging up the jump button enables the Hulk to launch hundreds of feet into the air (useful for taking down aircraft), while charged punches and stomps leveled nearby skyscrapers. The Hulk could also "weaponize" any object in the game, using cars as battering rams and huge boulders as bowling balls. Comic fans will be able to Hulk out this August.—*Vicious Sid*

■ **Developed by Radical Games** ■ **Published by Vivendi Universal Games** ■ **Target release date: August**







Batman Begins

Based on the upcoming movie starring Christian Bale, Batman Begins tells the tale of the Dark Knight's origins and his battle against such series nemeses as Carmine Falcone, Ra's Al Ghul, and the Scarecrow. Don't expect this to be a beat-em-up on the scale of other games set in the DC universe, though. The key to Batman Begins is mastering stealth by using the shadows to sneak up on unsuspecting criminals and paralyze them with fear—right before interrogating or pulverizing them with a repertoire of hand-to-hand fighting techniques. Batman can also silently strike from above or let enemies take each other out. There's plenty of fast driving action, too, in the form of vehicle combat from behind the wheel of the Batmobile.—*Major Mike*

■ **Developed by Eurocom** ■ **Published by EA Games**
■ **Target release date: June**

THE STORY SO FAR...

Comics-To-Games Time Line

Here's a chart that shows how popular comic and manga characters have translated to the video-game world as rated (by Fun Factor) in the pages of *GamePro* magazine.

1993

Spider-Man and X-Men: Arcade's Revenge Flying Edge/Genesis **5.0**

1994

Spider-Man and X-Men: Arcade's Revenge Acclaim/Game Gear **3.0**

The Incredible Hulk U.S. Gold/SNES **3.5**

Maximum Carnage Acclaim/Genesis **3.5**

The Incredible Hulk U.S. Gold/Genesis **4.5**

1995

The Adventures of Batman And Robin Sega/Sega CD **1.5**

Batman Forever Acclaim/SNES **2.0**

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs: The Second Cataclysm Rocket Science/Sega CD **2.5**

Garfield: Caught in the Act Sega/Genesis **2.5**

The Tick Fox Interactive/SNES **2.5**

The Death and Return Of Superman Sunsoft/Genesis **3.0**

Justice League Task Force Acclaim/Genesis **3.0**

The Punisher Capcom/Genesis **3.0**

The Adventures of Batman And Robin Sega/Genesis **3.5**

Judge Dredd Acclaim/Genesis **3.5**

Spawn: The Video Game Acclaim/SNES **3.5**

Spider-Man Acclaim/SNES **3.5**

The Adventures of Batman And Robin Konami/SNES **4.0**

Biker Mice from Mars Konami/SNES **4.0**

X-Men 2: Clone Wars Sega/Genesis **4.0**

X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse Capcom/SNES **4.0**

Wolverine: Adamantium Rage Acclaim/SNES **4.5**

Phantom 2040 Viacom/SNES **5.0**

1996

Separation Anxiety Acclaim/Genesis **4.0**

X-Men: Children of the Atom Acclaim/Saturn **4.0**

1997

The Crow: City of Angels Acclaim/Saturn **2.0**

The Fantastic Four Acclaim/PlayStation **2.0**

Batman Forever: The Arcade Game Acclaim/PlayStation **2.5**

The Incredible Hulk: The Pantheon Saga Eidos/PlayStation **2.5**

Dragon Ball GT Final Bout Bandai/PlayStation **3.0**

Batman Forever: The Arcade Game Acclaim/Saturn **3.5**

Ghost in the Shell THQ/PlayStation **3.5**

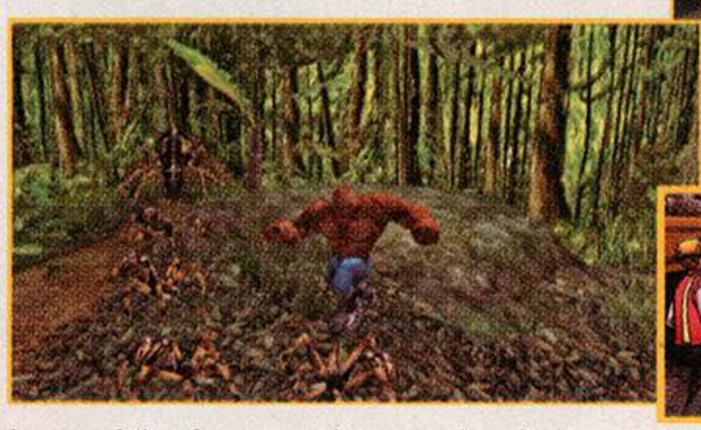
Iron Man X/O Manowar Acclaim/PlayStation **3.5**

Marvel Super Heroes Capcom/Saturn **4.5**

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter Acclaim/N64 ..... **5.0**

Fantastic Four

Marvel's oldest crime-fighting family finally makes its way to the silver screen and consoles this July. Naturally, the game lets you play as one of the Fantastic Four: Mr. Fantastic, who can stretch his limbs long distances and squeeze into small spaces; Invisible Girl, who uses her titular powers for stealthy duties; Johnny Storm, who can create walls of flame and throw fireballs; and the Thing, whose brute strength allows him to smash through walls and lift heavy objects. Together, they take on their nemesis, Dr. Doom. Teamwork is emphasized as you can control one of the four members and switch between them at will. For multiplayer, up to two wannabe superheroes can simultaneously play the co-op mode or go head to head in arena-based combat matches.—*Major Mike*



■ **Developed by Seven Studios** ■ **Published by Activision** ■ **Target release date: July**

MEANWHILE...

Other Comic-Book Games

Untitled Marvel/EA Fighting Game

Taking the honors away from Capcom, EA Games is developing a fighting title that pits heroes and villains from the Marvel universe against original EA characters created specifically for the game.

Freedom Force vs. The Third Reich

The original comic-book RPG returns to the PC this March with snazzier visuals and a new time-traveling plot rooted in the 1940s. The team must now link up with "Golden Age" heroes like Tricolour and Black Jack before battling WWII-inspired villains. New "Silver Age" members include Green Genie and Tombstone.

City of Villains >>>

This quasi sequel to the hit MMORPG City of Heroes will give PC players an opportunity to express their darker sides using villain types like stealthy Stalkers and manipulative Masterminds. New features include the ability to build a custom HQ and an epic PvP mode, which will pit villains and heroes against one another. Publisher NCsoft is shooting for a late summer release.

1998

Spawn the Eternal Sony/PlayStation **2.0**

X-Men vs. Street Fighter Capcom/PlayStation **2.0**

Batman & Robin Acclaim/PlayStation **3.5**

X-Men vs. Street Fighter Capcom/Saturn **5.0**

1999

Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter Capcom/PlayStation **4.0**

Turok 2: Seeds of Evil Acclaim/N64 ..... **4.5**

Marvel vs. Capcom Capcom/Dreamcast **5.0**

2000

Danger Girl THQ/PlayStation **3.0**

Spawn Capcom/Dreamcast **3.0**

X-Men Mutant Academy Activision/PlayStation **3.0**

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Capcom/PlayStation **3.5**

Marvel vs. Capcom Capcom/PlayStation **3.5**

Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion Acclaim/N64 ..... **4.0**

Gundam Side Story 0079: Rise from the Ashes Bandai/PlayStation **4.5**

Spider-Man Activision/PlayStation **4.5**

Marvel vs. Capcom 2 Capcom/Dreamcast **5.0**

Turok: Rage Wars Acclaim/N64 ..... **5.0**

2001

Blade Activision/PlayStation **2.0**

X-Men: Mutant Academy 2 Activision/PlayStation **2.5**

Batman Vengeance Ubisoft/PS2 ..... **3.5**

Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo Bandai/PS2 ..... **3.5**

Spider-Man Activision/N64 ..... **3.5**

Heavy Metal: Geomatrix Capcom/Dreamcast **4.0**

Spider-Man 2 Enter: Elektro Activision/PlayStation **4.0**

Spider-Man Activision/Dreamcast **5.0**

2002

Blade II Activision/PS2 ..... **2.5**

Shrek TDK Mediactive/Xbox **2.5**

Superman: Shadow of Apokolips Infogrames/PS2 ..... **3.0**

Turok: Evolution Acclaim/PS2 ..... **3.0**

Batman: Vengeance Ubisoft/Xbox **3.5**

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Infogrames/PS2 ..... **3.5**

Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front Bandai/PS2 ..... **3.5**

Robotech: Battlecry TDK Mediactive/PS2 ..... **3.5**

2003

Batman: Dark Tomorrow Kemco/Xbox **1.5**

Superman: The Man of Steel Infogrames/Xbox **2.0**

Hulk Universal Interactive/PS2 ..... **2.5**

X2: Wolverine's Revenge Activision/PS2 ..... **2.5**

Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu Ubisoft/PS2 ..... **3.5**

Marvel vs. Capcom 2 Capcom/PS2 ..... **4.0**

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Konami/PS2 ..... **4.0**

2004

Catwoman EA Games/PS2 ..... **2.0**

Spawn Armageddon Namco/PS2 ..... **2.5**

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: Battle Nexus Konami/PS2 ..... **2.5**

Astro Boy Sega/PS2 ..... **3.0**

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2 Atari/PS2 ..... **3.0**

Lupin the Third: Treasure of the Sorcerer King Bandai/PS2 ..... **4.0**

Shrek 2 Activision/PS2 ..... **4.0**

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3 Atari/PS2 ..... **4.5**

Spider-Man 2 Activision/PS2 ..... **4.5**

X-Men Legends Activision/PS2 ..... **4.5**

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Hemorrhoid Prime

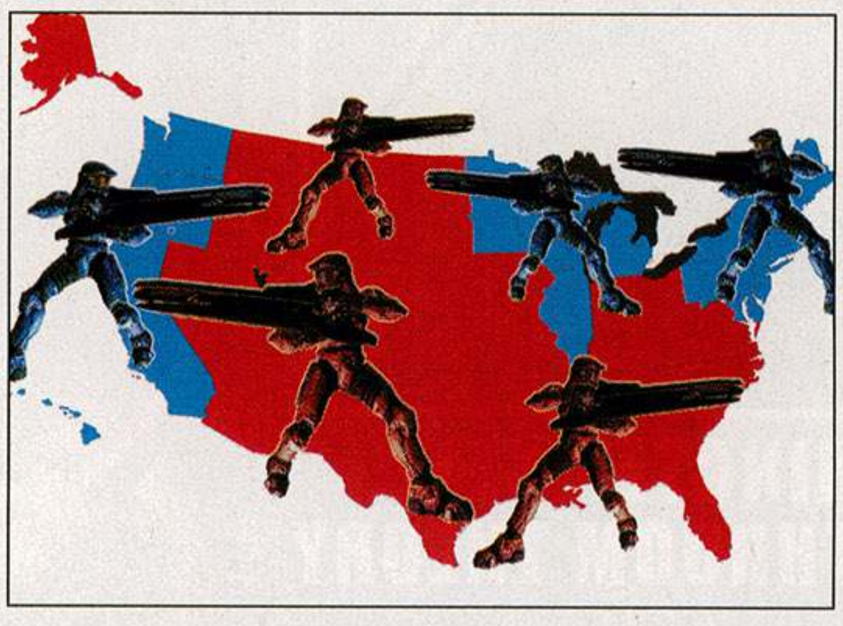
BS Sure, Metroid Prime Hunters: First Hunt put an interesting "spin" on Samus and her bounty-hunting adventures in space, but this entry could prove to be her most challenging yet. Fighting monsters outside her space suit is one thing, but Hemorrhoid takes a more internal "micro" approach of self-grooming. Using the stylus, you'll take care of Samus's more "unique" personal problems, such as hygiene and scratching that embarrassing itch. Fortunately, she's up to the task with a variety of attachments, including a back scratcher and other implements to get the job done.—*Minor Mike*

■ First Look ■ Developed and published by Buntendo ■ Target release date: Mid-40s

Halo 2: Red vs. Blue 2004

It's war in 2004! Take charge as the unstoppable Master Chief of Staff, a superhuman PR powerhouse with a vicious grasp of scorched-earth electoral strategy. As the election unfolds, it's up to you to crush your opponents under the weight of partisan rhetoric. After selecting your party affiliation, it's time to attack! On the Red side, you can choose from weapons like the Christian Coalition Carbine, which drives a divisive wedge issue (ammo types include gay marriage and school prayer) deep into the psyche of the opposing party. While they wrestle with in-fighting and crumbling solidarity, you're free to build a stronger party platform! But beware—Blue players can deploy Michael Moore in emergencies (careful, though, as he has a tendency to backfire) and call for a devastating vote recount, stalling your attempts to usurp the executive branch. Win one for the Gipper!—*Passive Sid*

■ First Look ■ Developed by Fundie Studios ■ Published by MaxiHard ■ Target release date: Every four years



Ashlee Simpson's Karaoke Revolution

OW! Whether you suffer from acid reflux or make dogs howl from your tortured singing, SNL PlayNoMore has developed the perfect game to gratify your inclinations toward stardom. With the game's vocal and music tracks, aspiring pop vocalists can perform to radio-edit perfection by simply turning on the vocal track at the right time—freeing yourself to do erratic jigs and knee-hops. Featuring a new Disc-Skip Reader technology, the game cleverly detects when the DVD skips or falls into endless loops (making you permanently lose the game when it does). Songs range from the early nostalgic tunes of Milli Vanilli to the catchy, candy-coated tracks from recent virtuosos like Janet Jackson, Puff Daddy, and Mandy Moore. Although the preview build was excruciatingly boring, we think the game will rock—as we do believe for every single preview.—*Pleasebemygirlfriend*

■ First Look ■ Developed by SNL PlayNoMore ■ Published by Kommittee ■ Target release date: Before hype diminishes

POOR NEWS

Exclusive!

Next GTA

LamePro has learned that Rockstar may be planning another game in the Grand Theft Auto series! The as of yet untitled game will most likely star someone who has some possible wrong done to them or is wanted by the law, and the action will probably take place in several gigantic sprawling areas, including busy cities and tranquil countrysides. One intriguing hypothetical scenario involves transplanting the franchise to a past era, such as the Wild West or even Roman times. Weapons will probably play a key role, too, with a potential selection of melee and projectile-based firearms, and carjacking vehicles will also be a likely feature. A diverse group of actors will probably provide the character voices, but nothing more has been revealed as of press time. Check out our exclusive hypothetical screen shot on what the completed game might look like.

A potential screen shot of the next untitled Grand Theft Auto game, probably in development for the StayPlation 2.

Static

Millipede...Millipede...Millipede... So it turns out the rumors about a new Atari system are true. Codenamed the 7800, the successor to the 2600 will allegedly come bundled with a new Pole Position game. Don't be surprised if you're running your entire household off this powerful unit. • Rumors are flying that Parker Brothers is prepping a "board game" called Monopoly in order to cut in on the video-game market. • Two-button controllers coming soon? As if! • Could the era of 8-bit graphics really be upon us? According to sources at playing card and love tester manufacturer Nintendo, it may be ready before you know it. Stay tuned! • It's a game...but it's also a watch?! Would we make something like this up?! • A prediction: By this time next year, games will be playing you. • Q-Bert... Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...Q-Bert...

LP ticker: BUNGIE CHANGES NAME OF HALO ANTAGONISTS FROM "THE FLOOD" TO "GENERIC MUTANT ZOMBIES" IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS ::

The Sims 2: Martha Stewart's Priz'n Livin'

Ah, yes, the home improvement diva finally faces the music and goes to the big house, and that's where this expansion pack comes in. Playing as America's favorite jailbird, you must make friends and make her country club—I mean prison cell—as nice as possible while dodging Fears (getting shivved, being stuck in "the hole," becoming One-Eyed's "bitch") and fulfilling Aspirations (decorating prison cell, having lunch with Big Momma, bribing prison guards). Recipes and decorative skills are Martha's strengths, but there's plenty of time to be spent in the yard lifting weights and keeping in prime condition (to max out her Body rating). Unfortunately, many gamers (especially those who lost money on her stock) will probably opt to play the game as poorly as possible in order to max out Martha's Misery Index. It's fun but not in the way the developers intended.—*The Woman in White*

ESRB ?!
- Developed by Maxi
- Published by AE Games ■ $28.70/share
- Available now (via delayed shipment)
- Simulation ■ 1 player

GRAPHICS	Y	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	?	R/P
CONTROL	N	5

PoorNews

Fable Creator Promises Sequel Will Use "Ga-Zillions" of Polygons

Meter Polyneux, famed creator of such classic titles as Poopulous and Whack and Blight, recently spoke out on his ongoing role in designing Fable II: True Lies. "We're committed to delivering the goods this time with a minimum amount of hype," Polyneux said. "I got a little carried away while designing the last game, and if I made impossible promises concerning features in that game, I sincerely apologize," Polyneux continued before adding that Fable II will feature "ga-zillions" of polygons per character.

Polyneux noted that Fable II's environments will make the epic locations from the film *LOTR: The Return of the King* "look like tiny Lego castles." He went on to promise that the eagerly anticipated sequel will include "over 100,000 hours of gameplay" and "take advantage of the fourth dimension" before his PR handler abruptly ended the interview.

New Game To Feature No Licenses

Funsume announced that its new game will feature absolutely no licensed music, product billboards, or real-life athletes on the cover. The game will also not be affiliated with any leagues, television networks, or fashion designers, and will rely entirely on the heretofore-untapped creativity of the developer's artists and programmers.

"We're pleased to be teamed up with absolutely nobody for our latest game," said Happy O'Funplay, president and CEO of Funsume, in a press release. "We simply can't wait until our inventiveness and originality goes completely unnoticed by consumers and we're forced to go bankrupt."

Reader of the Month TIP

GAMEDODECAHEDRON

RUGRATS ROYAL RANSOM

Unlock Michael Jackson: At the Start screen, **press Up, ○, △, △, Down, □, ○.** If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear Michael Jackson's "I Wanna Be Where You Are." You can now play a mini-game where you take control of Mr. Thriller himself and try to prevent the Rugrats from escaping Neverland. You can entice them to stay by offering titillating magazines or letting them play with your monkey.

Ja Toya Lackson—Alwaysland, NV

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NETAMATEUR

Holy #*@&, There Are Naked Ladies on the Internet!

Turns out the Internet is more than just a place to play World of Warcraft and download pirated music and movies. It's also practically overflowing with pictures of naked ladies! Accessing this revolutionary new form of entertainment is often as simple as typing "naked ladies" into your favorite search engine.

One sticking point is the pricing structure, often set at a steep monthly charge of $39.99 or even $59.99. Luckily, you can work around that by signing up for the three-day trial, usually set at a wallet-friendly $4.95. But beware—if you neglect to cancel your trial account in time, you'll get socked with a big, embarrassing charge that your credit card company will refuse to refund. At least, that's what we've heard.—*Tobias Noob*

POORNEWS

Potential Girlfriend Potentially Female

A Night Elf Druid in the online role-playing game World of Warcraft might be interested in grouping up with fellow WOW player Ron Wurxle, according to a message in Ron's guild chat channel yesterday.

Ron Wurxle's encounter with a Night Elf Druid may lead to "grouping up."

According to 15-year-old Wurxle, a Night Elf Druid female named Succubessie stood in front of his character on the boat to Teldrassil and proceeded to remove all of her equipment while doing the "hot" Night Elf female dance emote.

"I took off my armro [sic] and danced w/her," said Ron in guild chat, "and she whispehred [sic] that I looked sexy." Later, after the boat ride was over, the Night Elf Druid put her clothes back on and quickly ran to the Druid trainer.

"I asked her if she watned [sic] to grp [sic] some time," continued Wurxle, "and she whipserd [sic] back 'OK.'" Wurxle immediately added Succubessie to his friends list and mailed her a mana potion along with a letter stating that he didn't really need it. Wurxle has yet to receive a reply from Succubessie.

Copy of Ron Wurxle's letter to Succubessie

LAMEPRO LABS

n00by EyeToy Mobile Movie Madness Kit!

PlayStation 2
Rating: 5.0

It seems every day they're coming up with new ways to play with the EyeToy, but n00by just released what's got to be the finest EyeToy accessory yet—the Mobile Movie Madness Kit, a small digital device that turns the EyeToy into a mini personal camcorder. Simply plug the EyeToy's USB cable into the Mobile Movie Madness Kit and off you go! The slim design of the Movie Kit makes it easy to fit in your front pants pocket without arousing suspicion, and the cord is long enough to snake down your pant leg. The EyeToy camera itself can easily be attached to your shoe with a variety of household adhesives—we recommend black shoes and electrical tape for maximum concealment. The Kit also comes with a mounting bracket—perfect for hiding your EyeToy under the toilet seat rim in public restrooms or in shower drains at your favorite gym. The only thing missing from the kit is a clear plastic case to prevent water from splashing on or leaking into the EyeToy, but we found a baggie and a rubber band work just fine! Oh yeah!—*Quagmire Glen*

Price: $29.99. Contact: n00by, 800/555.n00b

LP ticker NINTENDO ADMITS IT'S CRAZY, SHOULD BE COMMITTED :: PARAPPA AND SUNNY BREAK UP, CITE INCOMPATIBLE GENITALIA :: OMG, WTF?! ::

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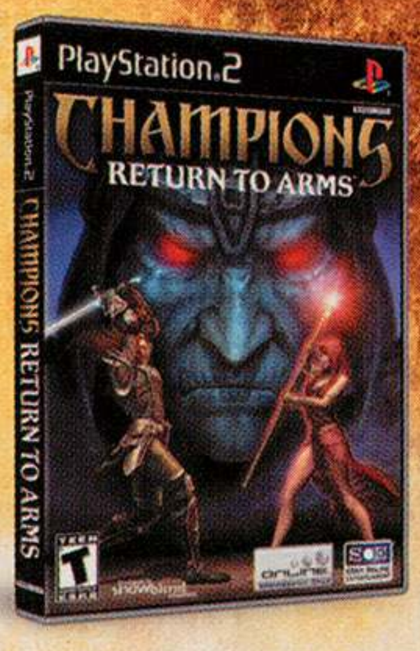

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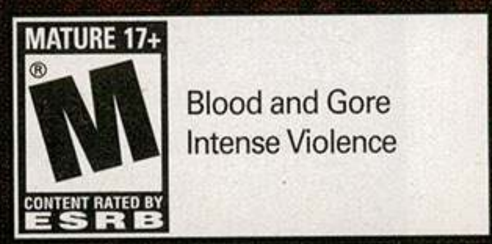

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Feature

The Halo 2 Ultimate Xbox Live Survival Guide

Xbox Live is packed with legions of cunning, deadly foes. Don't enter this dangerous new battlefield without this indispensable guide. *By Vicious Sid*

Explosive Situation

Plasma grenades may stick to enemies, but Fragmentation grenades offer far more tactical flexibility. Want to hit far-off enemies? Just tilt up your view slightly before throwing; with practice, you'll become quite accurate. Also, try bouncing them off walls to clear foes hiding around blind corners.

Methods of Melee

Though you shouldn't rely on melee attacks, they're invaluable in certain instances. One whack from behind will drop any opponent—even those protected by the Overshield. In close-range brawls, watch for your foe's shield to sputter, then surprise him with a melee attack—one blow should finish the job.

Head Case

This point cannot be stressed enough: Land as many heads shots as possible. Always. If you can't reliably hit enemy heads, then practice longer and harder. This is especially true with the Magnum, Battle Rifle, and Plasma Rifle, but it applies to all guns.

Hoard the Sword

If you find the Energy Sword, quickly switch to another weapon and go incognito. Your opponents won't know you're carrying the Sword, so you won't attract attention. By keeping others from using the Sword, you'll level the playing field. Now you can lure an unwitting enemy in close, then switch to the Sword for an easy surprise kill. But don't dual wield, or you'll never get the Sword out in time.

Dual-Wielding Dangers

Just because you *can* hold two guns doesn't mean you *should* hold two guns. Many players dual wield like it's a religion, forgetting the power of Plasma and Frag grenades. Bypassing dual wielding also enables you to litter the ground with grenades just before a superior enemy overwhelms you.

Connection Blues

Can't connect to Xbox Live? You may need to restart your modem. Unplug your cable or DSL modem from the wall socket, wait a minute, and then reconnect the power. Microsoft says that "power cycling" solves about half of Xbox Live connection problems.

Workplace Violence

What's work without a few thousand kills? The *GamePro* editors took a few minutes away from the screaming and bloodshed to share their favorite Halo 2 secrets for Xbox Live.

Four-Eyed Dragon

Don't run with the pack. Instead, let your team advance and then move on your own in another direction. Your team will be the distraction while you slyly flank the opposition. You'll end up as an expert in reconnaissance to relay enemy movements or a lone wolf that can strike effectively from behind.

Funky Zealot

Focus on weak players to score easy kills, and gang up on isolated strong players. For larger levels, dual SMGs work well at medium- to long-range distances. On smaller levels, use the Shotgun or Energy Sword, and spam grenades as you approach corridors.

The Man in Black

Are you considered the best player on your team? If not, try playing the role of bodyguard. Hook up with the top man, guard his back, and blast targets that he's shooting at. Coordinated fire racks up kills and points more quickly. Keeping the team leader alive can be the edge your squad needs to emerge victorious in any multiplayer variation.

CONTINUED ▶

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UPPER DECK ENTERTAINMENT™

The Essential Halo 2 Weapon Companion

Which gun combos are best at each distance? Read on to find out. Ratings are based on a scale of 0.0 to 5.0, 5.0 being the best.

Close Range

	Magnum	Plasma Rifle	SMG	Needler	Plasma Pistol
Magnum	3.5	4.5	5.0	2.5	3.5
Plasma Rifle	4.5	4.0	5.0	2.5	2.0
SMG	5.0	5.0	4.5	3.0	4.5
Needler	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.0
Plasma Pistol	3.5	2.0	4.5	2.0	2.0

Summary

When combined with a precise Magnum or an overcharged Plasma Pistol, the point-and-spray SMG is the close-quarters champion. Dual SMGs are also a potent weapon in melee-range combat. But the SMG and Plasma Rifle offer the best of both worlds; it's often best to start with a quick, accurate burst from the Plasma Rifle before firing both guns.

Medium Range

	Magnum	Plasma Rifle	SMG	Needler	Plasma Pistol
Magnum	4.5	5.0	5.0	3.0	4.5
Plasma Rifle	5.0	4.5	4.5	3.0	3.0
SMG	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	5.0
Needler	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.5	2.0
Plasma Pistol	4.5	3.0	5.0	2.0	2.5

Summary

The SMG and Plasma Rifle both offer great flexibility at this range, which lies just outside melee distance. Dual Plasma Rifles and an SMG and Plasma Pistol are superior combos. But the precise Magnum reigns supreme, particularly when coupled with an SMG or Plasma Rifle. Don't forget that you can kill an unshielded enemy with one Magnum headshot. Medium range also happens to be the best distance for the Needler (particularly in the cramped hallways of Ivory Tower), but don't expect any miracles.

Long Range

	Magnum	Plasma Rifle	SMG	Needler	Plasma Pistol
Magnum	4.5	4.0	4.0	2.0	3.5
Plasma Rifle	4.0	3.5	3.5	2.0	1.5
SMG	4.0	3.5	3.5	1.5	2.5
Needler	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.5
Plasma Pistol	3.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	1.5

Summary

Though few small guns excel at this distance, dual Magnums are your best bet for reliably pegging distant opponents. At long range, enemies have an easier time dodging the Plasma Pistol's overcharged shot; instead, try a carefully timed burst from the Plasma Rifle to melt their shields before closing in for the kill. The SMG is horrifically inaccurate at this distance, so reduce your recoil by shooting one at a time.

Heavy Weapons

	Close Range	Medium Range	Long Range
Shotgun	5.0	3.5	1.5
Carbine	3.5	4.0	4.5
Battle Rifle	3.0	4.5	4.5
Brute Shot	4.0	4.0	3.0
Sniper Rifle	2.5	3.5	5.0
Beam Rifle	2.5	3.5	5.0
Energy Sword	5.0	3.5	0.0
Rocket Launcher	3.0	5.0	3.5
Sentinel Beam	3.5	4.0	3.5

Summary

The heavy weapons have highly specialized roles in Halo 2; don't expect any all-in-one solutions. The Shotgun and Energy Sword rule in close-range combat, though the Brute Shot's melee attack is powerful in the right hands. At medium distances, the Battle Rifle and Covenant Carbine become top-tier kill machines; the secret is to keep your distance and land constant headshots. Though the Sniper Rifle is the gold standard at long range, the Beam Rifle has an edge because it can fire two rapid shots before overheating.

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PSP: READY FOR LIFTOFF

The Sony PSP is upon us, but every GamePro knows it's the software that's going to make the hardware sing. Here's the hands-on take on 15 games that are prepared to make their debut when the PSP launches. *By Brother Buzz*

IN PURSUIT OF THE PSP

The Sony PSP is the hot ticket item of the month, and even though it's only available in a $249.99 bundle (with Memory Stick), supplies will be limited. Preorders are the way to go if you really gotta have one now. You still might be able to score a place in line at Electronics Boutique (EB.com), GameStop (GameStop.com), or your friendly neighborhood videogame specialty store.

APE ESCAPE

■ **Developed and published by Sony**

Trying to catch time-travelling monkeys that threaten to alter human history with a net appears to be a winning concept in any format. This version feels true to the series, and it even does an impressive job of seamlessly transforming its two-stick gameplay into single-stick-and-button action. The game was quick and the controls quicker. And the game cam kept up with both of them. Two hundred monkeys are prepared to run amok, and there will be at least four WiFi mini-games. Ape Escape should remain silly but engaging fun for all ages and species.

The Buzz: Time-travelling, history-changing monkeys successfully leap from consoles to rule the PSP world. Oh, the humanity!

ALSO COMING

- **ATV Offroad Fury**
  Sony—Launch
- **Coded Arms**
  Konami—Summer 2005
- **Death Jr.**
  Konami—Summer 2005
- **FIFA 2005**
  EA Sports—Launch
- **Frogger Helmet Havoc**
  Konami—Summer 2005
- **Grand Theft Auto**
  Rockstar Games—Fall 2005
- **Gran Turismo 4 Mobile**
  Sony—Launch
- **Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition**
  Rockstar Games—Fall 2005
- **NBA 2005** Sony—Launch
- **Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory**
  Konami—Summer 2005
- **Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix**
  Activision—Summer 2005

DARKSTALKERS CHRONICLE: THE CHAOS TOWER

■ **Developed and published by Capcom**

Darkstalkers brings classic side-scrolling fighting-game action to the PSP. The combat system's based on Capcom's familiar Street Fighter six-button setup with strong attacks set to the shoulder buttons. The controls handle the martial arts with ease, although hardcore console fighters might like the button response time to be a mite quicker. Darkstalkers is definitely yanking the PSP over previously tread territory in workmanlike fashion albeit in fine style. If you're looking for impact, promised wireless multiplayer action might be your draw.

The Buzz: Darkstalkers Chronicle looks and plays just fine, but it's a fight fought many times before. Head-to-head action will tell the tale.

DYNASTY WARRIORS

■ **Developed and published by Koei**

Give Koei an "E" for effort for its aspiration to bring epic gameplay to the PSP. Dynasty Warriors mimics the console versions as an action/strategy game set in ancient China. The game handles the hordes of enemy soldiers you'd norm ally have to fight by partitioning the expansive battlefields into bite-sized chunks. This makes the melee easier to see on the smaller screen, although it's a little tough to identify your soldiers in a crowd during the heat of battle. This game's bursting at the seams.

The Buzz: Deep and dense with a nice mix of strategy and action. But if you weren't a Dynasty Warrior fan before, this version probably won't change your mind.

HOT SHOTS GOLF

■ Developed by Clap Hanz
■ Published by Sony

It's not the PGA, but Hot Shots as always puts golf in a league of its own. The players look wackier than ever, and the six brand-new courses look spectacular. Still, the only things Hot Shots takes seriously about golf are tight swing mechanics and accurate ball physics. The fun's in the gameplay, but you can customize 10 characters with 50 body parts and improve skills with experience. Wireless gameplay offers two-player head-to-head and eight-player tournaments. You can even play a putts-only match. This game's hot for the PSP.

The Buzz: Just tee this sucker up and take your swings. You don't need Tiger and Co. in hand to play an excellent round of golf.

NBA STREET: SHOWDOWN

■ Developed by EA Canada ■ Published by EA Sports Big

NBA Street ballers will find familiar three-on-three in-your-face basketball that looks virtually identical to the big-screen version's. Showdown's packed with enough new stuff to make it a real road warrior. The 12 courts include two brand new for the PSP, and the teams feature the NBA stars plus 22 legendary greats. The control transition from the console's two joysticks to one mini-stick and buttons takes work but is ultimately painless. Multiplayer mode includes head-to-head wireless and two very fun four-player mini-games—Shot Blocker and Arcade Shootout.

The Buzz: Word on the Street is that the Showdown between the PSP and the console versions gets down to just screen size and sounds.

METAL GEAR ACID

■ Developed and published by Konami

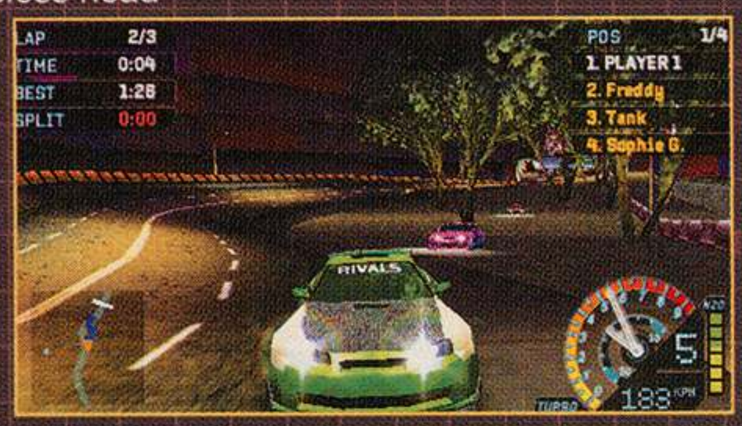
Acid transforms the commando/stealth action of Metal Gear into a turn-based card-style strategy game. Because you draw cards to make moves and countermoves, there's a high degree of luck and randomization that affects your progress. It seems like an odd format to match with these great 3D graphics. The decidedly slow pacing might be too slow for hardcore Metal Gear fans. The only draw for them might be the story line, which brings Solid Snake out of retirement to track down a secret weapon called Pythagoras.

The Buzz: This isn't your normal Metal Gear game, and the controversy might mean it just isn't in the cards for Acid.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND RIVALS

■ Developed and published by EA Games

Preliminary runs with the PSP version reveal some fine racing performances, and Rivals is another one that handles well and looks even better. The 10 circuits are tuned for handheld play and slightly different from the console versions', and that combined with impressively tight controls should keep players' thumbs on the accelerator. Even night races were fairly easy to follow. Available, too, is the fan favorite Drift mode. Hard-core drivers should enjoy wireless head-to-head competition—all of which will be for pink slips.

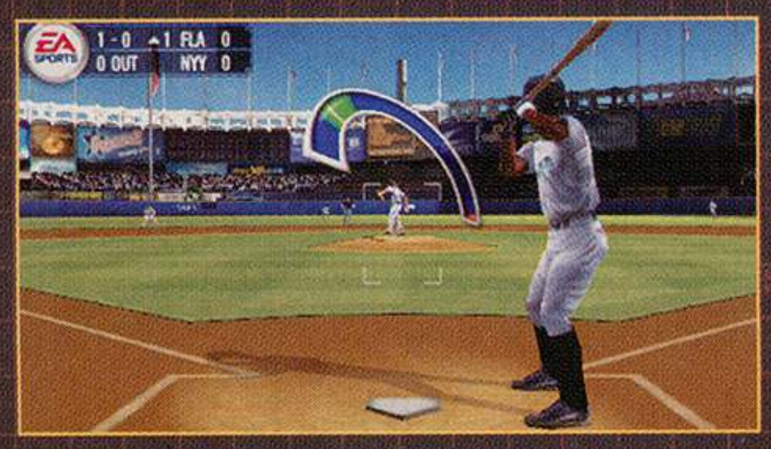


The Buzz: Overall, the features and challenges might grade out even better than the console version's.

MVP BASEBALL 2005

■ Developed by EA Canada ■ Published by EA Sports

MVP Baseball 2005 is notable as the first full-fledged sports sim to come up to bat for the PSP. Early versions offered little gameplay but showed much promise. The batting and pitching interfaces from the console versions make the transition intact. The gameplay uses an impressive widescreen view that enables you to see all the bases from the catcher's view. Regular modes are present, but for quick games MVP has new mini-games, including Pitcher Showdown and Homerun Derby.



The Buzz: This ambitious sports sim is swinging for the fences.

NFL STREET 2: UNLEASHED

■ Developed by EA Canada ■ Published by EA Sports Big

Street 2: Unleashed isn't straightforward pro football, of course, but it represents an evolutionary step forward in handheld football. Feature-wise, this is actually the latest full-fledged version of NFL Street. You get all the plays from both console versions, PSP-exclusive AFC and NFC "throwback" teams, 14 fields, three new mini-games, and head-to-head WiFi action. The widescreen gameplay view even enables you to see receivers and defensive backs at the line–something no other football game does.

The Buzz: If Street football's your game, this will be a great way to take it with you.

CONTINUED ▶

RIDGE RACERS

■ Developed and published by Namco

Ridge Racers already feels like it's in command of the handheld road. It looks like a million bucks, and the controls are track-ready. The d-pad demonstrates excellent turning radius, a little tighter than even the console versions'. The mini-stick works fine, too, but there's a little more give during turns. You can easily switch between first- and third-person views via the left trigger, too. World Tour mode offers courses from all previous Ridge Racer games. In keeping with its arcade tradition, Racers is not meant to be a miniature driving sim, but it is a lot of fun.

The Buzz: This game plays arcade perfect. Every Ridge Racer fan is required to take a turn around the track with Ridge Racers.

TWISTED METAL: HEAD-ON

■ Developed by Sony Santa Monica ■ Published by Sony

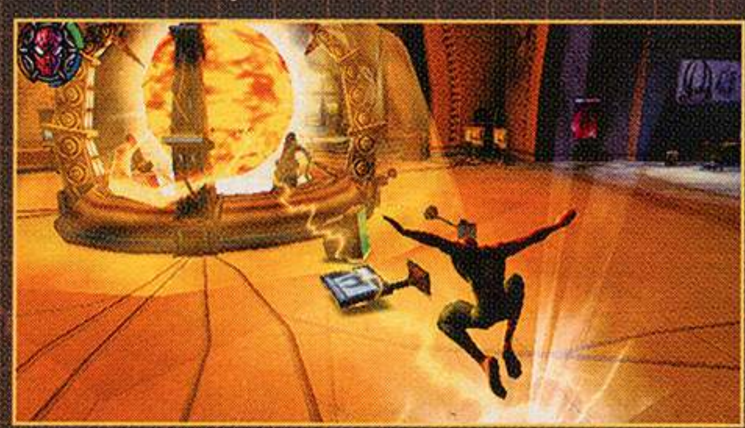
Twisted Metal doesn't appear to veer from its arena car combat formula. In preview form, the fighting kicked in like chaos in a can. Adversaries zip in and out of view, and then pound you from out of sight. You get in a couple of precious licks; they accelerate away. Twisted Metal-heads will have a blast cruisin' for a bruisin' down memory lane, but the preview oddly just didn't feel like it was driving for the cutting edge. Eight-person, wireless multiplayer matches could turn out to be the freeway to fun.

The Buzz: Ow! Ow-ow! Who's shooting me? Ow! No fair!

SPIDER-MAN 2

■ Developed by Vicarious Visions
■ Published by Activision

Spider-Man 2 isn't straying from the webslinging formula of the Spidey-versus-Doc-Ock games. The game is being built from scratch to present 19 great-looking levels. As expected, Spider-Man moves include wallcrawling, punches and kicks, and webslinging. Here, too, you can toss web balls, snare foes in a cocoon, and cast a Spidey net. Swing controls are relegated to the single mini-stick, so the high-flying feel of the console versions feels subdued. At least Rhino, Mysterio, Vulture, and Shocker are all here to party.



The Buzz: Spider-Man is one handsome webslinger in the PSP, and the 19 new levels should help to keep him fresh, too.

UNTOLD LEGENDS: BROTHERHOOD OF THE BLADE

■ Developed and published by Sony Online Entertainment

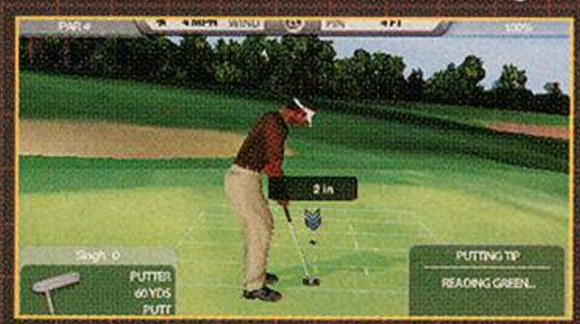
Legends is an action/RPG that's grand in design and intent. Twenty-six main quests, 20 side-quests, 100-plus levels, and 70 creature types are all served up skillfully from a gorgeous overhead view. With gangs of weird monsters, spell casting, an A.I.-controlled sidekick, and the fantasy landscape, the PSP screen gets a major-league workout but delivers. Diablo diehards and Champions of Norrath fans should relate, but it remains to be seen how mass-market gamers manage this epic. Yes, there's a wireless party system planned, too.

The Buzz: Be prepared to set aside a block of time and to make a commitment.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR

■ Developed by EA Canada ■ Published by EA Sports

Golf might be the best sport for on-the-go play, and Tiger Woods looks like a gem. The game's been rebuilt from the ground up with 12 courses, 20 PGA pros, five unlockable "legends," create-a course, and create-a-player mode. You even get PSP-only mini-games. PGA Tour looks and plays great, and the hit meter's redesigned for better handheld viewing. The PSP version has handy options that the PS2's doesn't. For example, during single-player foursomes, you can skip past the CPU's turn, and every mode supports WiFi multiplayer gameplay. PGA Tour is a PSP gimme.



The Buzz: Bet on this game like you'd bet on the Tiger.

WIPEOUT PURE

■ Developed by Sony Europe
■ Published by Sony

Wipeout means fast, furious, futuristic racing, and where you might expect the intense action to cause you to swing the PSP all over the place as you frantically drive, topnotch visual presentation keeps you steady and on track. Steering feels crisp with either the analog mini-stick or the directional pad. The triggers pull twists or sharp banks (as in the classic original). Sixteen single-player tracks, WiFi connectability, and mucho acceleration could keep you focused and very still for a long time.

The Buzz: Solid controls and adept animation keep a tight rein on supersonic racing in its Purest form.

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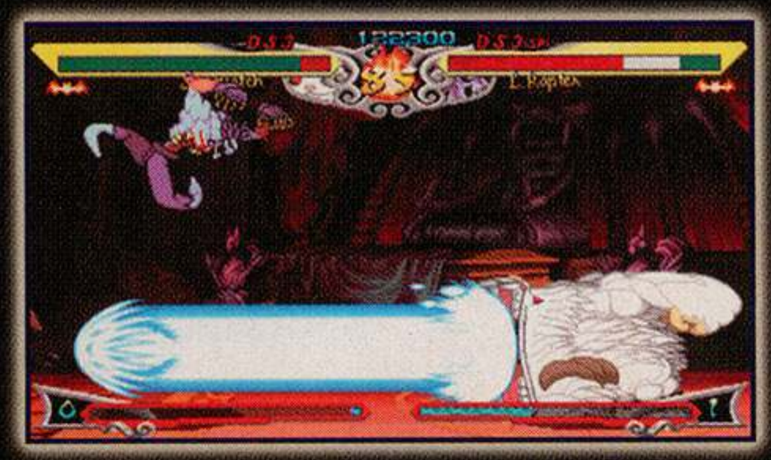

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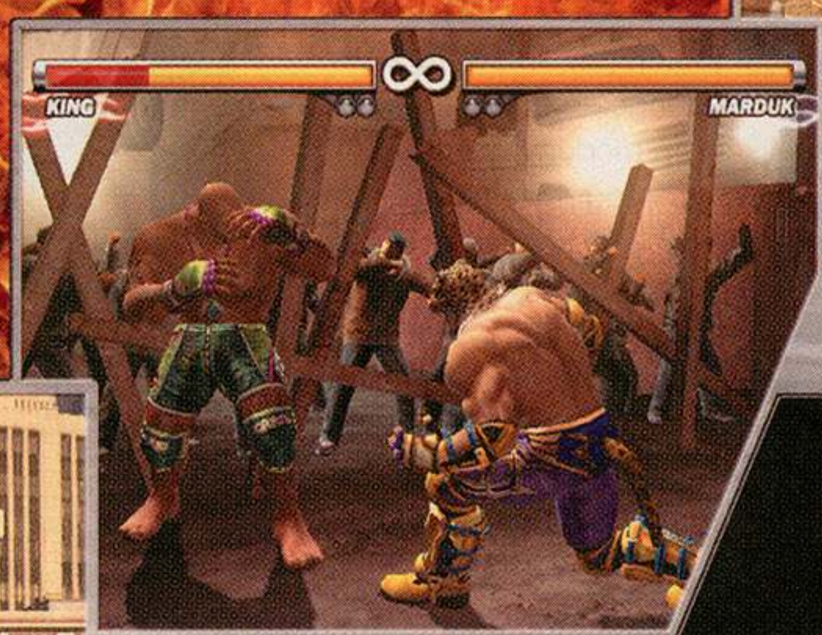

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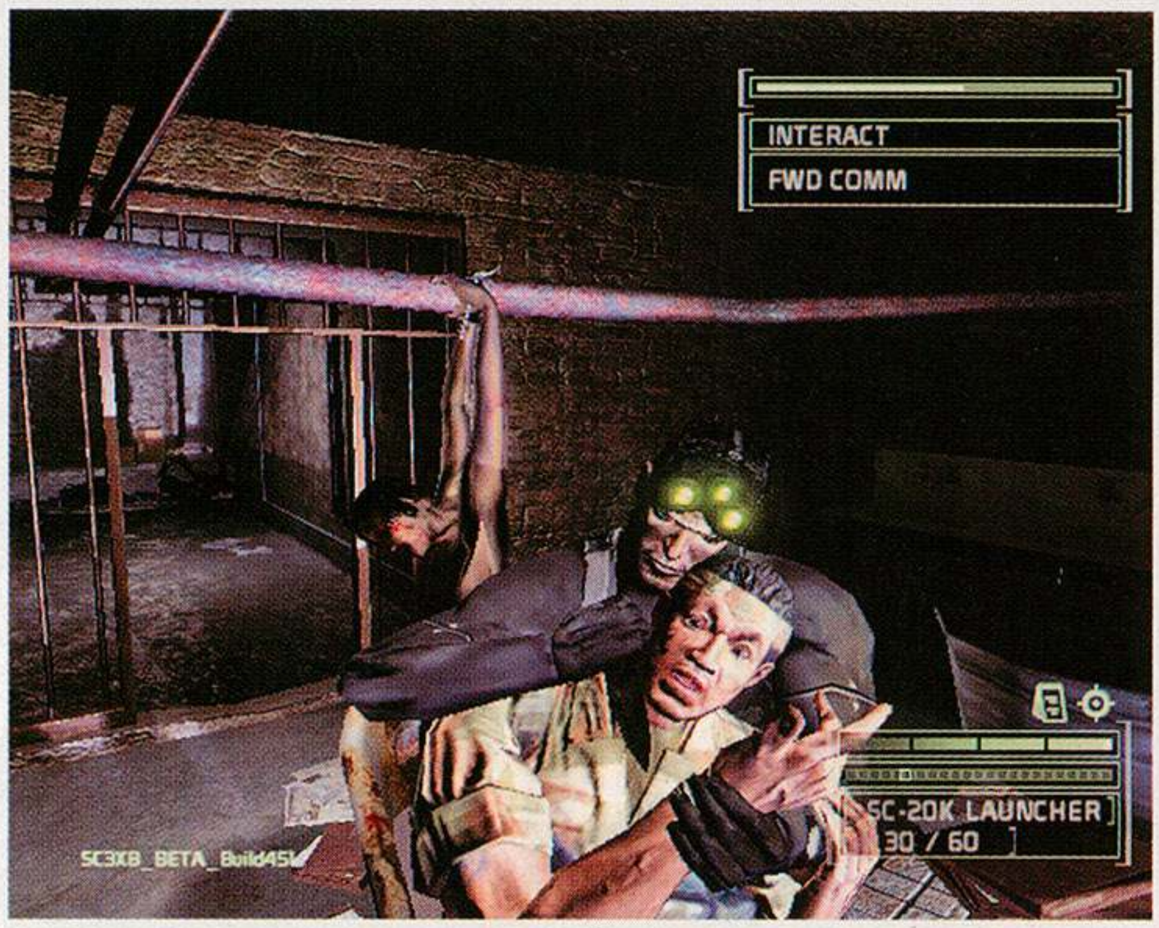
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory

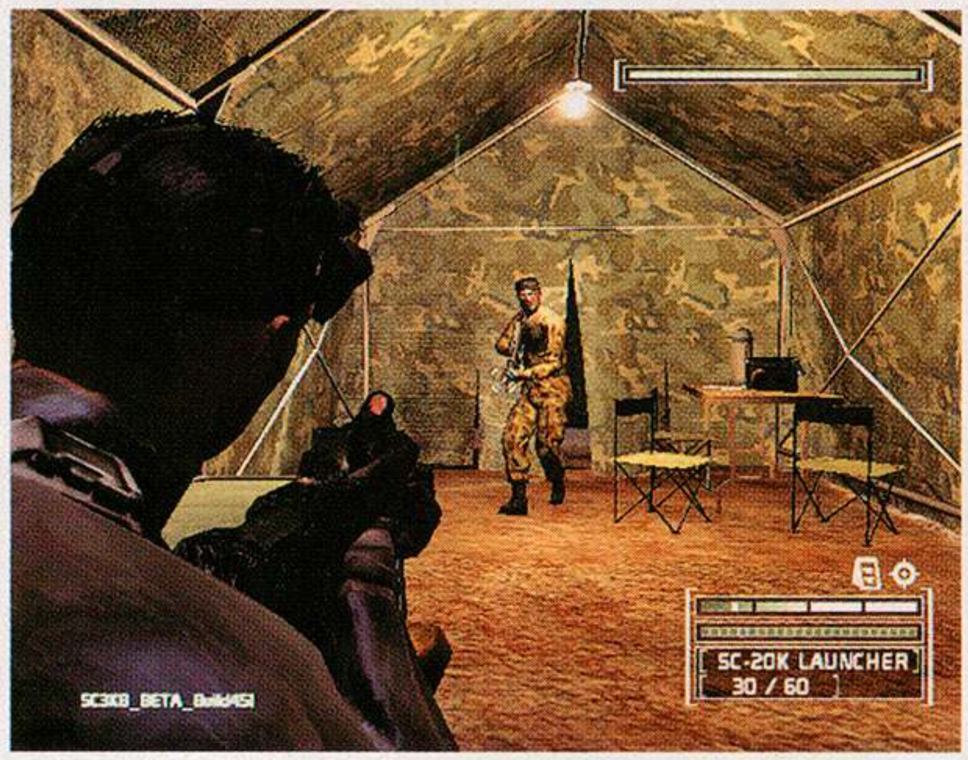


PS2 XBOX The Splinter Cell games are already a part of what is perhaps the best Tom Clancy series on console systems—so what's left to do that hasn't been done? A little polish here and some small additions there—that's what. While it may not sound like much, little things add up quickly; and it's apparent that with Splinter Cell Chaos Theory, Ubisoft is continuing to build toward the creative sky.

A Lethal Dose of Stealth

In a near-complete build of Chaos Theory, all signs already point to impressive. To start, the single-player game offers much more gameplay flexibility than in previous Splinter Cell games. Levels are now designed in a nonlinear fashion, meaning you can tackle each mission in several different ways. You'll know from the start where your objectives are located, but it's up to you to choose the path to complete them. Additionally, at the beginning of each mission, you'll be given the choice of how to confront your enemies: You can opt to go in stealthily, equipped with only nonlethal weaponry; you can enter the level hot with weapons that permanently "liberate" the mercenaries; or you can entertain a little bit of both methods.

Outdoing Pandora Tomorrow's multiplayer game is a hard feat, but it looks like Ubisoft is up to the challenge. In Chaos Theory's new co-op mode, you and a friend must work together to complete any of the four unique levels. You have to rely on each other to give cover, watch for patrols, and even hoist the other one up onto ledges. The versus game (Spies vs. Mercenaries) has been improved, too. There's a host of new equipment and moves for each side, plus the game features a whopping 11 maps, six of which are brand new.



Renewed Light In the Shadows

The most striking feature of Chaos Theory, however, isn't its refined gameplay. Do you remember the first time you saw the original Splinter Cell on the Xbox? It was truly amazing—but the PlayStation 2 version of Chaos Theory already looks just as good. Ubisoft has created a brand-new visual engine that makes Chaos Theory run super smooth in all of its beautifully detailed environments. The GameCube version is sure to wow you, too.

It's certainly exciting to watch a favorite series evolve into something even better. Here's hoping this new Splinter Cell can achieve the recognition that it is poised to receive.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

- **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Ubisoft Montreal**
- **Published by Ubisoft**
- **Target release date: March**

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

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Destroy All Humans!

PS2 X Grand Theft Auto with aliens against humans—it would be a shame to pigeonhole THQ's sandbox action game that way, especially when you realize it has a story line that's actually worth following and a cool implementation of physics that involves more than just moving boxes.

Give Me...Brains!

The game is like a bad *X-Files* plot come true, where you're a saucer-riding, human-abducting, bug-eyed alien sent to planet Earth to...destroy all humans. Starting off as sinister green man Crypto 137, you are sent to Earth to save your intellectually patronizing race known as the Furons. Wars have rendered your race literally impotent, and the Furons survive by endlessly cloning themselves from 2000 individuals. Your responsibility is to extract DNA from earthlings' brains and repair your tragically mangled genes.

Few games can pull off a story that's actually funny, but developer Pandemic Studios has been successful so far—catchy movie references and Dr. Evil–style dialogue abound (and your superiors get quite excited when talking about anal probes and their effectiveness in an interrogation).

Cerebral Menace

The story isn't the only part that's engaging—the gameplay gives you refreshing freedom in tackling each level. In one mission in which you chase and then blow up a car carrying G-men, you can take the stealthy approach by disguising yourself as a human to dodge law enforcement; death ray and anal probe everything in your path; hurl cars and people with your telekinetic powers; or simply find empty pathways to steer clear of most trouble. The game also features sequences in which you ride in your UFO, shooting death rays and lifting up puny military vehicles using the Abducto Beam. Slick.

The graphics in both preview versions largely remained the same with the Xbox's looking crisper. Although the visuals work, it would be great to see the art stylized, especially in the style of the 1950s alien flicks. The ominous "ooooo-eeee-oo" horror sounds are spot on, however, matching the game's kitschy take on the Roswellian theme.

While still in the early stages of development, Destroy All Humans looks promising so far. The game has an eccentric flair that's sadly absent in so many uninspired and technology-driven games in our day.—*Funky Zealot*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Pandemic Studios** ■ **Published by THQ** ■ **Target release date: March**

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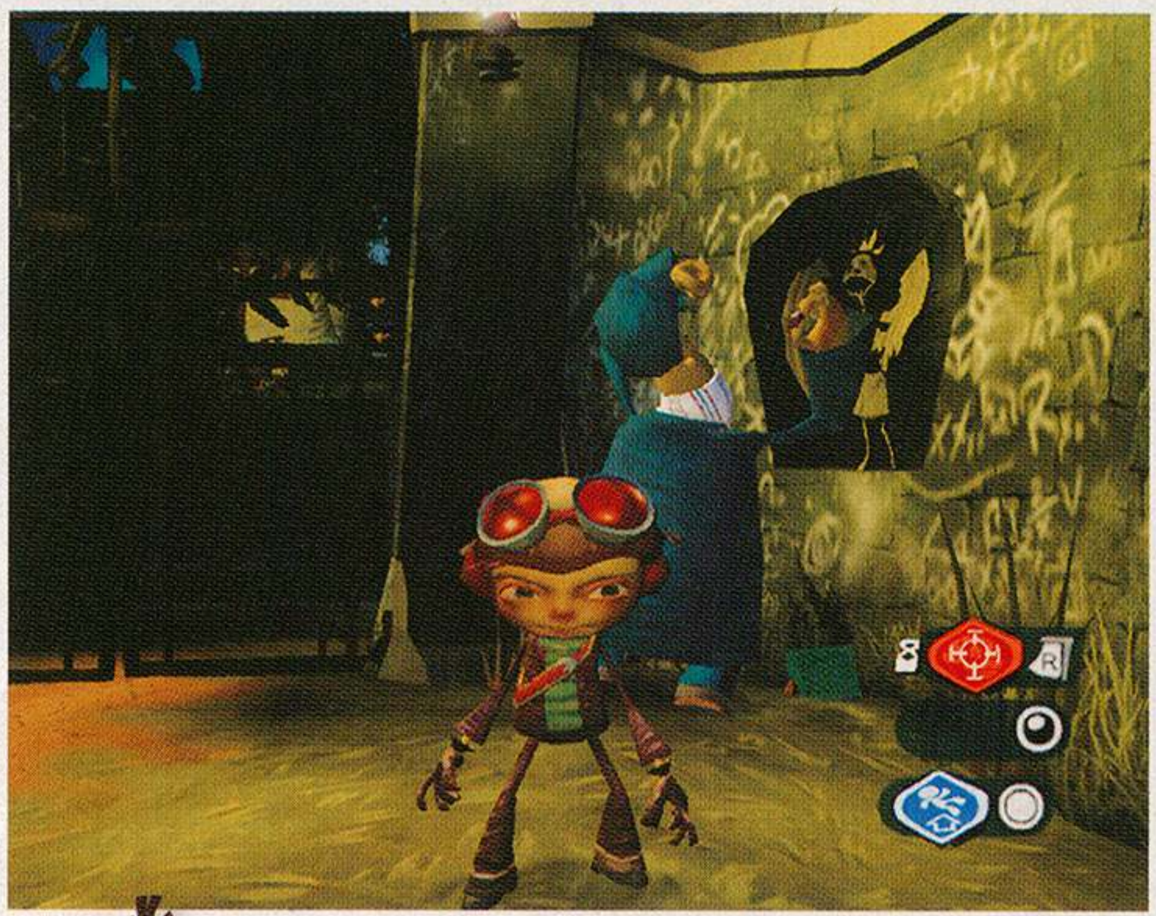
Psychonauts

Other games have dabbled in the psychic business with heroes that use mental telepathy and other destructive mind-bending powers to do in bad guys, but Psychonauts puts those powers to use in a totally different playing field: inside the actual minds of other people.

It's All in Your Mind

As a young Psychonaut in training named Raz, you're the only one who can save your fellow clairvoyants when they start mysteriously disappearing from psychic boot camp. This third-person tale has you battling in 13 distinct levels: three in the real world and 10 inside the mental worlds of weird wackos, monsters, and assorted maniacs. Your battles play out like a first-hand account of a Vulcan mind meld as you confront emotional baggage, mental cobwebs, and lost memory gaps, while Freudian censors try to kick you out of their heads. On your road to brain-busting victories, you learn new psychic powers, such as telekinesis, invisibility, confusion, and pyrokinesis, to help you save your buddies and cleanse the minds you're invading.



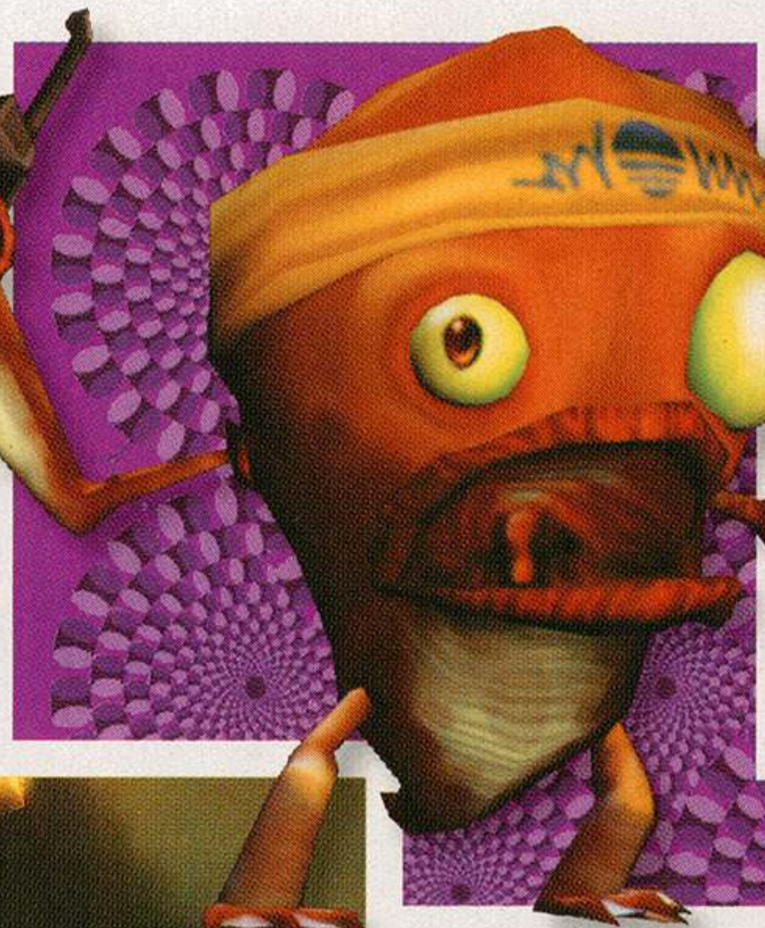
Psycho Nuts

The tone of Psychonauts is not at all serious. Characters like Raz are superdeformed in one way or another, and they spew whimsical jokes and comical remarks at every turn. Additionally, each level is populated with a kaleidoscope of colorful shapes, sizes, and imaginative scenery that seem like an extreme face-lift of Alice's Wonderland. And these screen shots are only dazzling teasers of what's to come.

The gameplay, however, is a serious venture that played wonderfully in a demo version. Yup, the game features puzzle solving, some platform jumping, and lots of collecting, but there isn't just one road to victory in each level. There are always alternative solutions, multiple paths, and submissions scattered about to make your experience as engaging as your self-consciousness.

Psychonauts has already defined its artistic innovation, but will it be able to fulfill the adventurous mind? Our brains are hoping it will.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

- **Hands-On**
- **Developed by Double Fine Productions**
- **Published by Majesco**
- **Target release date: April**



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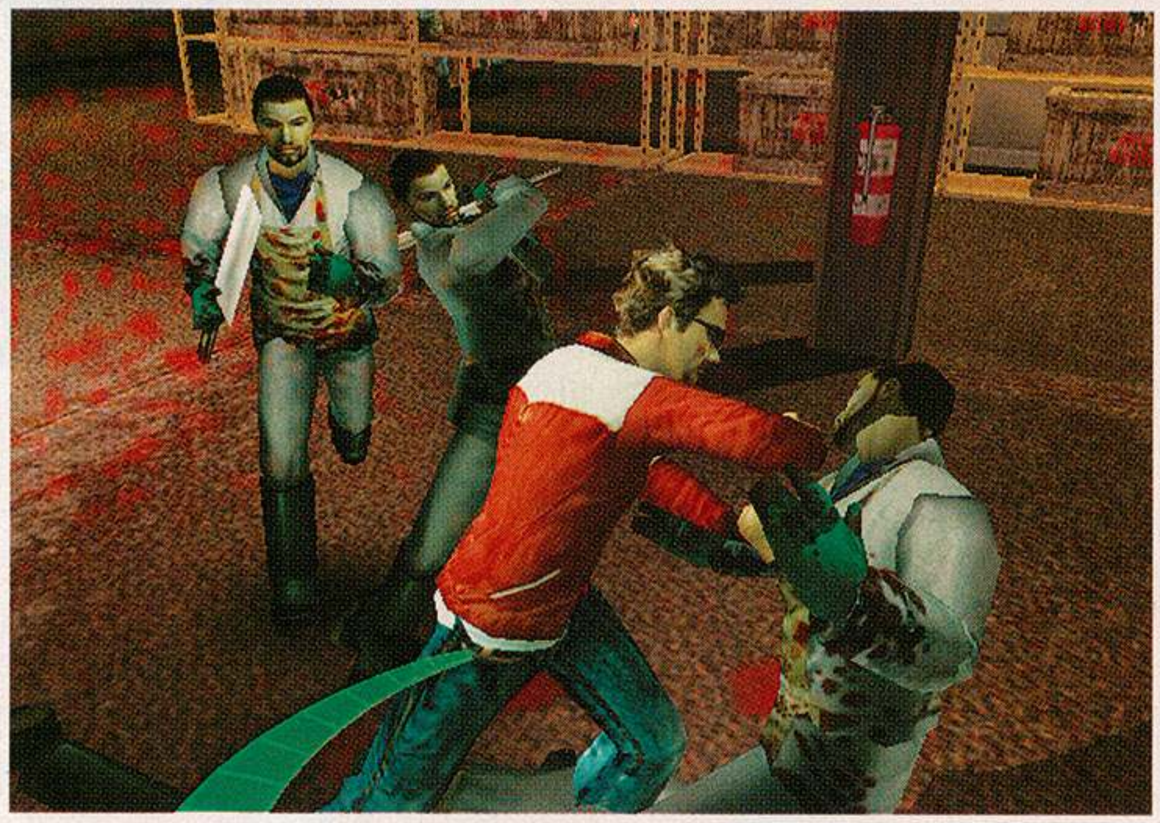
NARC

The classic 1988 arcade game gets a next-gen makeover. In NARC, you choose between two characters—good-cop DEA Agent Marcus Hill or bad-cop Jack Forzenski (who's fresh out of drug rehab)—and take on the mission to rid the city streets of a new illegal drug called Liquid Soul, which is distributed by the evil K.R.A.K. organization. Just because you wear a badge doesn't mean you have to obey the law. From a behind-the-character perspective, you can acquire a wide variety of potent firepower—shotguns, pistols, and more—and even use different drugs to speed up or slow down time (called "Weed Time")... just be careful not to get called in by your superiors for random drug testing (a series of humorous mini-games in which you must successfully execute random tasks, such as walking in a straight line). However, you can't get too rough with suspects as each NARC must maintain a certain "badge rating" in order to remain a law-abiding officer. In addition to colorful aesthetics, NARC features voice talent from such acting stalwarts as Michael Madsen, Ron Perlman, and Michael Wincott. The deep cover begins in March.—*Major Mike*

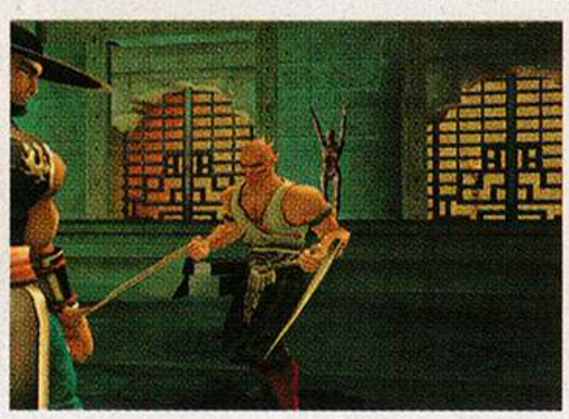


■ **Update** ■ **Developed by Point of View** ■ **Published by Midway** ■ **Target release date: March**

All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.

Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks

Mortal Kombat has proven itself as a successful fighting franchise, but when it ventured into other genres, the results were less than stellar (ahem, Mythologies: Sub-Zero and Special Forces). Yet some success was found in the RPGish Konquest mode in Deception, and Shaolin Monks looks to build on that with a similar 3D quest-and-fight play scheme. Monks tells the story of kombatants Liu Kang and Kung Lao, and follows them through their journey, where the biggest secrets and rumors of the MK universe are revealed. The game features a one- and two-player cooperative mode with environments that showcase classic MK-stage settings, such as the Living Forest and other trademark locales. There's no shortage of MK characters, either, as Mileena, Jade, Kitana, Goro, and Baraka (among others) resurface at various points during the game's narrative. Being an MK game, there's bound to be plenty of violence, carnage, and (hopefully) fatalities. Monks is the first in a series of games based on the MK franchise that publisher Midway claims will appear annually. —*Major Mike*



■ **First Look**
■ **Developed by Paradox**
■ **Published by Midway**
■ **Target release date: September**

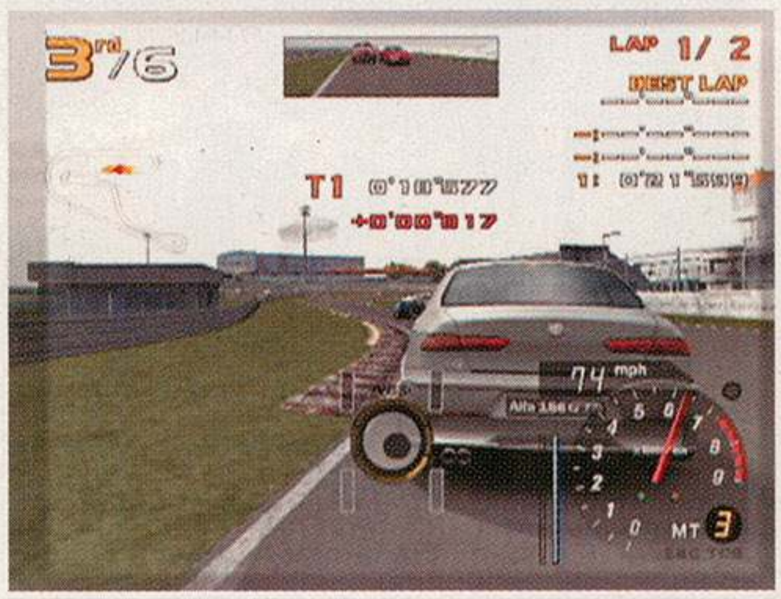
All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.

Enthusia Professional Racing

PS2 If you've ever taken a driver's test, you know that feeling of being watched like a hawk for driving blunders; Konami's Enthusia so far seems to be doing the same thing only with Skylines instead of your mom's Corolla.

As the intro sequence in the preview build advertised, the physics modeling looks impressive, coming close to Gran Turismo's (complete with forgettable elevator jazz and dance tracks). Opponent A.I. also mimics that of Sony's racer with cars obliviously moving along their set path. In an unpleasant contrast to GT, however, the game incorporates "Enthu points" in its Enthusia Life career mode, which only seems to punish players during races: You lose points for touching the dirt, hitting the wall, or even being nonchalantly knocked into by other cars. While the core racing element is rock solid, hopefully this nagging negative reinforcement will be reworked by the time the game is released.—*Funky Zealot*

■ Hands-On ■ Developed and published by Konami
■ Target release date: March



Raze's Hell

XBOX Ever become enraged after watching sickeningly cute television shows like the *Teletubbies* or *Barney and Friends*? If so, seek counseling or check out Majesco's latest game, Raze's Hell. It's a darkly comedic game—taking a page from Conker's Bad Fur Day—that tells the story of anti-hero Raze whose world has been invaded by a mysteriously cute and overly chipper species called the Kewletts. Led by their secretive Princess, the Kewletts soon reveal that their plans involve far more than spreading happiness and joy; they intend to twist the world into their own utopian vision. The game takes place in a third-person action setting with over 20 mission-based levels, and Raze must set out to expel the Kewletts and uncover the reason behind the alien takeover with the help of fellow inhabitants and a wide selection of brutally entertaining weapons. It looks like Hell might just be fun after all.—*The Watcher*

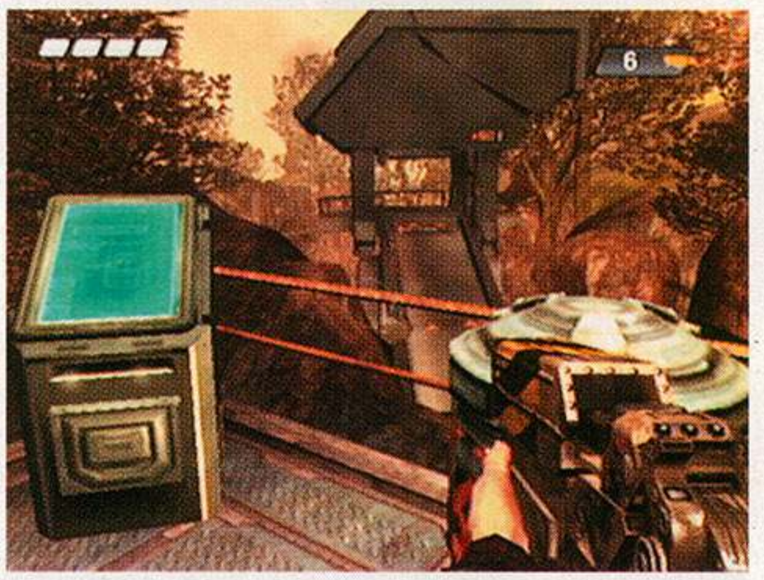
■ First Look ■ Developed by Artech Studios
■ Published by Majesco ■ Target release date: Spring 2005

Those trucks must be going to the Kewlett Stonghold.

Forget everything you know about samurai...

Pariah

In Pariah, you control Jack Mason, a disgraced doctor who battles high-tech prisoners while tracking a mysterious patient harboring a deadly virus. In the playable preview version, the FPS action was reminiscent of that in Unreal—which is not surprising given that designer Digital Extremes helped create that series. The weapons certainly have flair; the Bulldog serves as a down-and-dirty assault rifle, and the Frag Rifle works like a heavy-duty shotgun. But in a Deus Ex–style twist, you can upgrade each of your weapons, adding features like Servo Reloaders, Titanium Concentrators, and Recoil Stabilizers. You can even hack your Health Injector (a portable healing tool with strategic applications) to add features like Quick Inject and Adrenaline Boost. This weapon modifying is easily the game's best feature—should you lavish all your upgrades on your Grenade Launcher or spread them out across your entire arsenal?

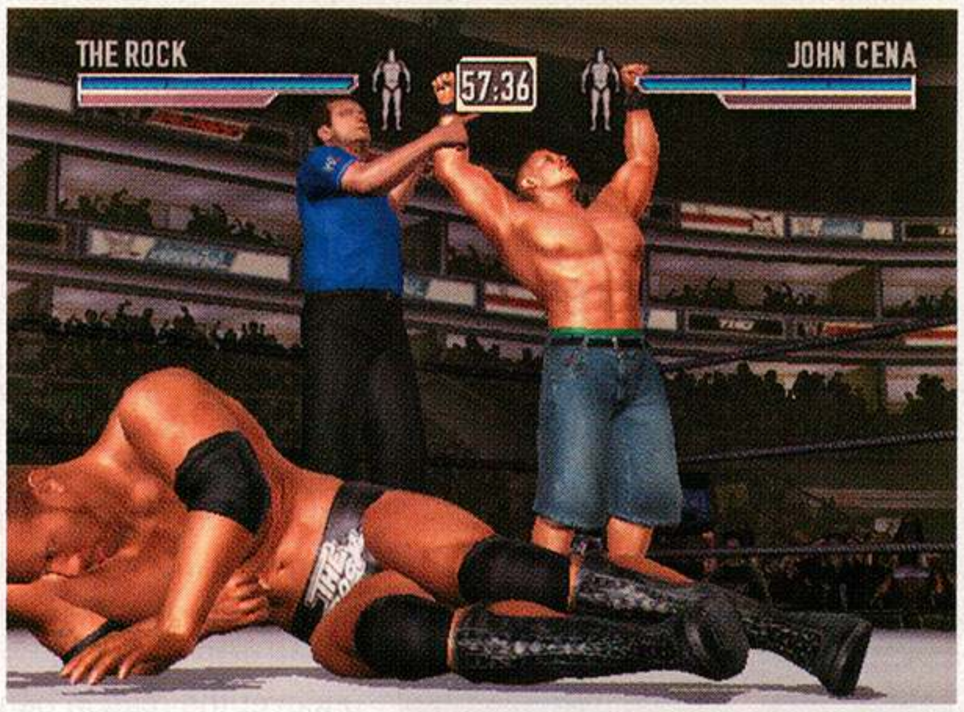


The playable preview version wasn't groundbreaking, but the drivable vehicles helped keep things fresh. Problems in the unfinished version included a somewhat pokey frame rate and a few repetitive level layouts. But hey, Halo was a masterpiece despite sharing those exact same shortcomings, and there's still time to polish those flaws. The built-in map editor and Xbox Live support may also lend some serious weight—we'll find out for sure this May.—*Deuce Magnum*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Digital Extremes** ■ **Published by Groove Games** ■ **Target release date: May**

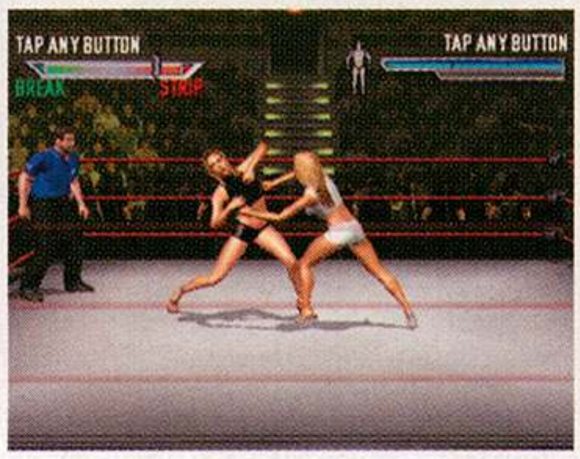
WWE WrestleMania 21

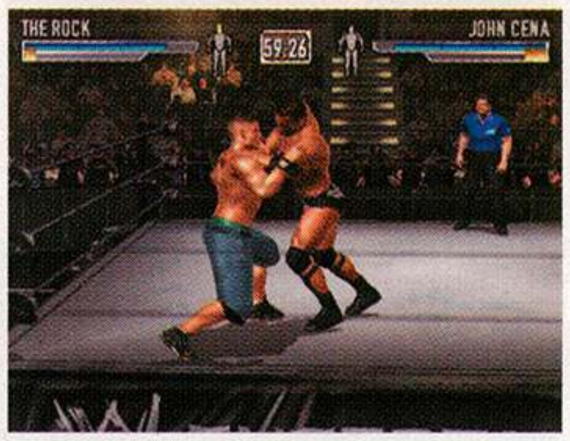
Noticing the absence of a decent wrestling game on the Xbox, THQ has obliged to fill the void with a long-awaited addition to the WrestleMania series. WrestleMania 21 will offer new features and a more lifelike experience, and developer Studio Gigante is promising the game will be one of the most realistic wrestlers to date.



From what we've played so far, it looks like Studio Gigante is well on its way to fulfilling that promise. In the preview build of WrestleMania 21, character models were faithfully rendered from their real-life counterparts, and the attention to detail was impressive. Muscles flexed, arms bent, and faces contorted convincingly during a match, further adding to a realism not previously seen in other wrestling games.

Aside from splendid visuals, WrestleMania 21 also features an immense amount of gameplay variety. A total of 46 wrestlers—old and new—are available to fight in over 20 arenas and 15 modes of play, which range from Battle Royal to Bra and Panty matches. And that doesn't include the new features offered on Xbox Live. Online, you can take on friends in an array of matches—all with full voice-chat support—or try out the new create-a-belt feature, which enables you to build your own championship belt and defend it online.





With so many features, WrestleMania 21 has the potential to tackle its way to the top as one of the best wrestling games on the Xbox when it's released in March.—*The Watcher*

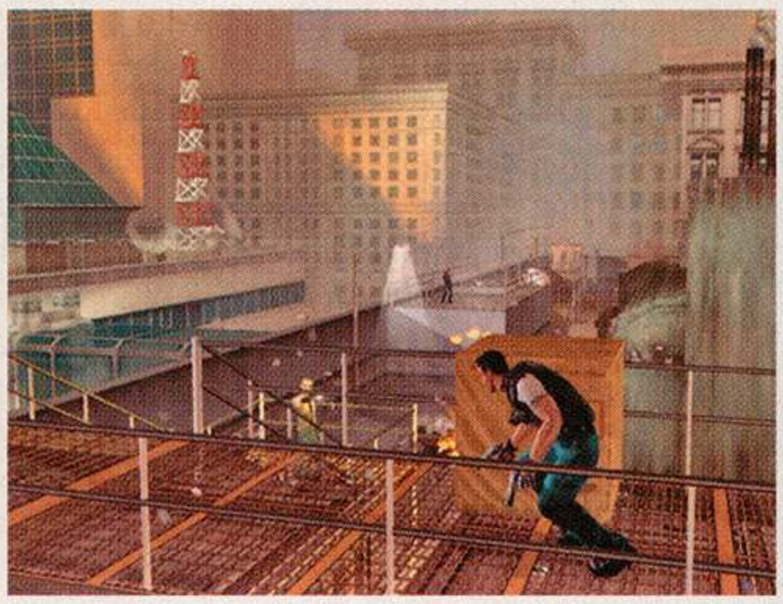
■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Studio Gigante**
■ **Published by THQ** ■ **Target release date: March**

Dead to Rights II

PS2 X Feeding off the success of the previous installment, Dead to Rights II throws Jack Slate and his K-9 friend Shadow back into the action of Grant City. Investigating the kidnapping of a Grant City judge, Jack must fight his way through a city rife with corruption and crime. He's got old and new skills at his disposal, including disarming enemies, frantic melee combat, and fighting with a huge assortment of weapons ranging from chainsaws to rocket launchers. Old tactics still apply for Jack, allowing him to take human shields in combat as well as call on Shadow to disarm or take down nearby opponents. Namco is promising plenty more action with its sequel, and with the inclusion of new moves and a variety of new weapons, Jack Slate looks to be well on his way to lighting up the streets of Grant City once again.—*The Watcher*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed and published by Namco**
■ **Target release date: April**

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.



LEGO Star Wars

PS2 There have been quite a few compelling Star Wars–themed games to come along in the past year, such as Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords and Star Wars: Republic Commando, but one of the most promising is coming to our galaxy this April—LEGO Star Wars. Not only is it poised to earn points for its irreverent take on the famed franchise, but it might just also come away as one of the best Star Wars games ever!

LEGO Star Wars enables gamers to dispose of popular Star Wars villains and solve puzzles while playing through some of the most memorable scenes from the prequel films, including the upcoming *Revenge of the Sith*, in one- and two-player co-operative modes. All told, the game features more than 30 characters to play, including Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and (yikes!) Jar Jar Binks. So far, the game looks great and the action is fast-paced. The Force is definitely strong with this one.—*The Enforcer*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Traveller's Tales**
■ **Published by Eidos** ■ **Target release date: April**

...the term just got redefined...

Mycella: Well, it looks like the summoning worked after all.

Hydro Blas

Cold Fear

If you're disappointed that Resident Evil 4 is a GameCube exclusive (at least until the PlayStation 2 version hits in late 2005), then check out Cold Fear, a unique entry in the survival/horror genre. As a Coast Guard agent, you stalk the blood-drenched decks of a derelict Russian whaling ship during a raging hurricane. Your mysterious enemies, dubbed ExoCels, are foul, wriggling parasites dredged from the center of the Earth during an oil-drilling expedition. How they managed to contaminate the entire crew is a mystery, but you'll piece together the puzzle while fending off infected humanoids and other icky surprises.

The preview version had Resident Evil overtones but with a few nasty twists. First and foremost, the whaling ship tilts and lurches endlessly, throwing off your aim—that's a real problem in combat as you rely on headshots to finish off your freakish foes. Luckily, you're also armed with a handy shove move, which helps you clear space when you're mobbed by mutants. Visually, the preview version looked simply stunning with lifelike character animation, detailed lighting, and superb weather effects. The cramped, claustrophobic environments and grisly depictions of alien gore looked like they were straight out of *The Thing*. The audio upped the suspense, manipulating the sounds of booming thunder to great effect. Let's hope the final game lives up to the paralyzing promise of the preview version.—*Deuce Magnum*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Darkworks** ■ **Published by Ubisoft** ■ **Target release date: March**

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Lockdown

Playing the Rainbow Six series solo can be a standard affair that doesn't offer much bang for the buck. Online, however, the Rainbow Six games are explosive, enabling groups of counterterrorists wannabes to prove their marksmanship skills against one another. Such will be the case with Lockdown, the next Rainbow Six game.

Although many bugs still needed to be fixed in the early version we played (including collision detection, load times, and frame rate), playing cooperatively or against one another was already a treat. New indoor maps, some of which were humongous, offered great scenery as you hunted down the enemy. The controls remained the same—aim, shoot, and lob the occasional grenade—and the new real-world weaponry was a blast to fire off. You can expect the same online accessibility as that in past Rainbow Six games on the Xbox.

Lockdown's single-player mode is gritty. In it, you and your team must rescue a fellow comrade who's being tortured and held captive. In each level, you use standard bang-and-clear tactics while guiding your team to perform room-to-room searches. Aside from new areas and even more simplified team commands, not much else is new. But even that should be enough to Lockdown any Rainbow Six fan's nights—especially online.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

■ **Hands-On** ■ **Developed by Redstorm**
■ **Published by Ubisoft** ■ **Target release date: March**

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Blood and Gore
Violence

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Gran Turismo 4

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Real men drive Fords, Chevys, and practically every other automobile to come off an assembly line in Sony's superb driving sim.

PROTIP: A set of tires needs to last at least five laps. Sacrifice some grip for sturdiness by equipping the right treads for longer events.

PS2 Memorize every meter of tread-eating tarmac as thoroughly as you would the potholes and crosswalks on your morning commute: Roller-coaster altitude changes; steep, bobsled-style banks; switchback bends—Nurburgring is too technical, too unforgiving, to blindly bump and grind around. Gran Turismo 4 reproduces the goliath (the German circuit currently runs 14 miles) in consummate detail, right down to the sponsor banners, and you can measure your progress by the brand names you pass, much like you do with the string of Applebees and Wal-Marts on your way to school or work. Learning the line (racing lingo for the shortest route around a track), however, only counts if you can keep your car on it.

Photo-Realistic Finish

Steering assist notwithstanding, these cars don't drive themselves. In fact, if you're used to arcade racers where horsepower and a high top end are all it takes to see you from start to first-place finish, you might doubt that they even drive at all. Each automobile has its own character and attitude, and you don't race the things so much as enter into relationships with them, feeling your way through a few rough first dates, buying gifts (i.e. parts and performance upgrades), and gradually getting under the hood, until the two of you work together well enough to collect trophies. Practice, in other words, makes perfect, and the feeling is sublime when you stop clattering over curbs and start popping your car out of each corner, perfectly aligned for the following chicane. Plus, with 700 or so cars, there's something for every taste (Ferrari, Porsche, and Lamborghini are no-shows, but with trucks and turn-of-the-century motor carriages in this game's garage, you can bet that producer Kazunori Yamauchi tried his best).

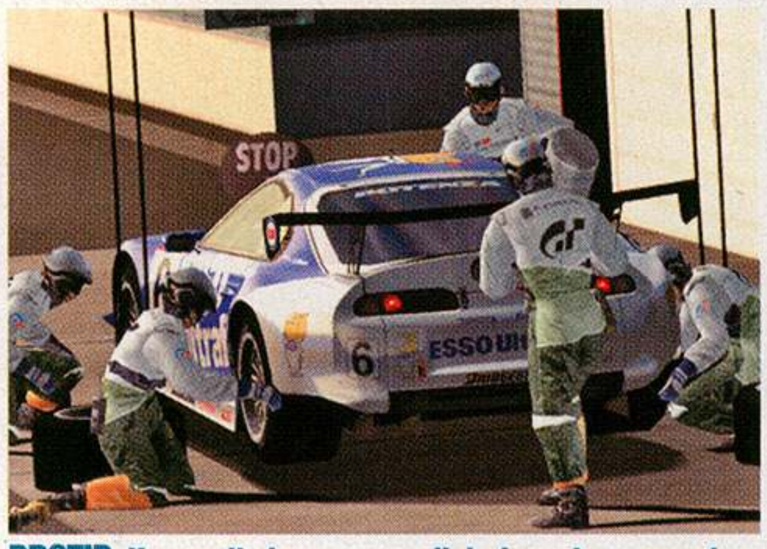
PROTIP: Struggling with a specific race? Hire a professional wheelman and try coaching your car to the checkered flag in B-spec mode.

PROTIP: How do you memorize 50 tracks and the mechanics of 700 cars? Imagine that your mind is a memory card and clear those nonessential saves, such as when to eat and sleep.

On the Offline Road Again

None of this, however, is new. The experience is expanded in that there are more cars to collect, polished in that the game is prettier, and refined because rather than adhering to a single fixed route, computer-controlled competitors now do unto you as you do unto them—but these tweaks don't qualify as new. Only A) the ability to shoot virtual snapshots of your auto and then actually print them and B) a driver-management mode qualify for that distinction. The former makes for a fun diversion; the latter is too hands-off to be gratifying to all but the hardcore; and neither is the online play that Sony promised.

Still, it's hard to complain about what Gran Turismo 4 doesn't do when it sets the standard for driving sims with what it does. Flawlessly paced progression keeps you playing for leaner lap times; a newfound sense of speed makes each race seem like protracted suicide; and down-to-the-nuts-and-bolts details assure authenticity—as the box says, this is the drive of your life.—*Fart of War*



PROTIP: You can't change your oil during a tournament, so make sure you get it done beforehand.

PROTIP: Want to set speed records? Go for a high gear ratio and a low down force and ride height.

ESRB E ■ Developed by Polyphony Digital ■ Published by Sony ■ $54.99 ■ Available March ■ Racing ■ 6 players

Strictly for show: Turn-of-the-century motor carriages roll backwards down hills.

DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME.

To those parties attempting to recreate the stunts contained in the new MX vs. ATV Unleashed, we offer this message: DON'T. While that seems fairly obvious to most, you'd be surprised how many people will contemplate emulating its dangerous intensity, vis-á-vis the realistic head-to-head racing experience. Ergo, THQ and Rainbow Studios put forth the following caveats to all parties: Do not attempt to make a golf cart do 70 mph, nor launch a sand rail over a moving plane. Moreover, do not undertake the recreation of any and all stunts from MX vs. ATV Unleashed in order to replicate its realistic rag-doll physics. The insane stunts and fierce racing is intended for the sole intent and purpose of an intense gaming experience, not for the discovery of clever ways to inflict bodily harm. Case in point, THQ and Rainbow Studios offer this photo as reference of the projected outcome of ignoring this warning. Honestly, what was this guy thinking? Said driver wasn't anywhere close to successfully completing the jump, nor is the other side of the canyon he was attempting to reach even in the aforementioned photo. In summation, MX vs. ATV Unleashed is not real, don't attempt to make it real.

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Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening

After one shaky sequel, Dante is back in top form with an action game that positively exudes coolness.

PS2 The first Devil May Cry (already three years old, unbelievably enough) has influenced nearly every action game since its release with smooth moves and effortlessly stylish visuals. The second one, on the other hand, fell victim to its own success—it was so similar to all the Blood Omens and Van Helsings of the world that it failed to stick out as any real achievement anymore. Capcom took its time with the third game, though, and it shows because Devil May Cry 3 is one of the sweetest comeback stories the PS2 has ever seen.

PROTIP: Throwing enemies into the air (press and hold R1, and then move away from the targeted enemy while pressing △) is the linchpin of any decent combo.

Dope!

Taking place before the first two titles, the third Devil May Cry has more than ample room to mess around with the formula a bit. As the game begins, Dante is trying to open up a well-dressed, perfectly moussed ghost-busting outfit when he receives an invitation from his brother Virgil after nearly a year of silence. A friendly house party this is not, however: Dante is immediately attacked by scythe-wielding demons, and before long, our white-haired stud is making his way up an imposing tower that has sprouted in the middle of town.

PROTIP: Aerial Rave (press ○ repeatedly while airborne in Swordmaster mode) is great for combos. If you hit more than one enemy with it, the gauge will skyrocket.

Nearly everything you see in Devil May Cry 3, from these dartboards to the drum set in your office, can be destroyed.

Being a younger, bolder (?) hero, Dante is very flexible with his fighting moves. Besides the sword/handgun combo series that fans should be familiar with by now, playing as the son of Sparda lets you choose from four fighting modes before each mission, which basically serves to change your "style" move. Powering up these styles lets you run up walls, unlock more special attacks for your weaponry, and even fight bare-handed like a *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* villain. It's a lot to pick up at the beginning, but in practice, it opens up a level of depth to the combo stringing and ×-button bashing that other action games wish they got for Christmas last year.

Crazy!

The depth doesn't end there. For the third Devil May Cry, Capcom has also messed around with the combo system—there's a little gauge that shows how close you are to the next rank, and, just as in Tony Hawk, repeating moves ad nauseam will net lower ratings. The result: Every fight involves a bit of strategy that's not obvious from the get-go, which is similar to the gameplay in Ninja Gaiden—and just as in Tecmo's game, every fight is both more difficult and more engaging as a result.

PROTIP: If you tackle a mission with the Gunslinger style, any shot you land on an enemy past the eighth will put you "in the groove" and cause more damage.

Stylish!

Having to worry about more than button mashing is something new for Devil May Cry, and it can make things tricky in the beginning—even on the easiest level, you'll need to fight intelligently from the start or you'll die a quick, painful death. You won't mind the trial much, though, because the audio/visual package is vastly improved—from the widely varied landscapes to the death-metal soundtrack to Dante's snappy dialogue. In short, it's a killer package.

—*Clockwork Crow*

PROTIP: You'll have an easier time in the beginning if you opt for the Swordmaster style and use the ranged attacks it unlocks to disperse nasty demon crowds.

ESRB M ■ Developed and published by Capcom ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Action ■ 1 player

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GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

PS2			FUN FACTOR
	GRAPHICS	4.5	4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5	
	CONTROL	4.5	

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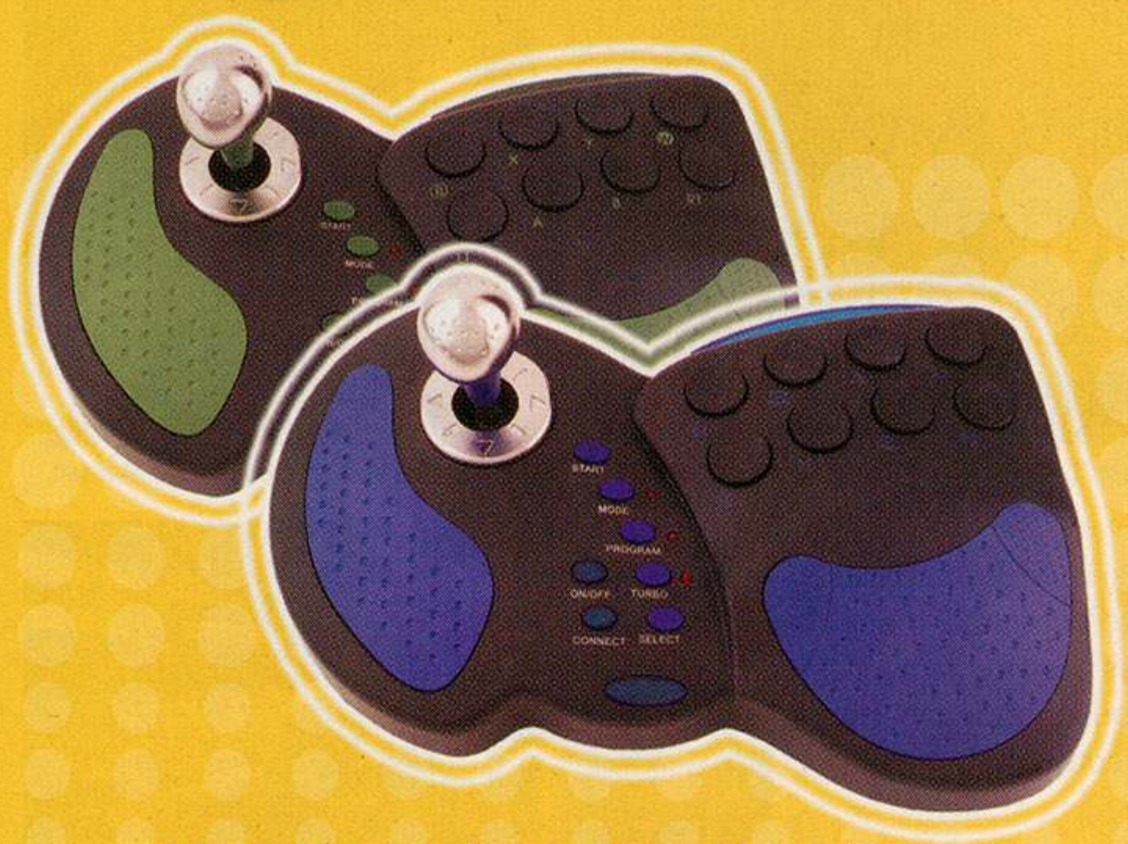

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Doom 3

Visit Hell all over again with the Xbox version of Doom 3...but this time, you can bring a friend with you!

Last year, developer id forced thousands of gamers to upgrade their outdated graphics cards when it released Doom 3, the highly polished "remake" of the original Doom. Now, thanks to this port by Vicarious Visions, the seminal sci-fi/noir shooter looks pixel perfect on the Xbox and contains a marvelous extra not seen in the PC version: a two-player cooperative mode that is playable via split-screen or on Xbox Live.

PROTIP: Don't waste shotgun ammo on unarmed zombies—use the pistol or chainsaw instead.

Hell in a Bucket

As you wind your way through the blood-smeared labs of the Mars Research Facility, you are quickly immersed in a terrifying world overrun by murderous jack-in-the-box demons whose springs have been wound by a demented scientist. To get out, you must fight your way through the very bowels of Hell itself, facing off against a seemingly endless parade of grotesquely deformed creatures that leap at you from the darkness.

The visual design of the game lends itself perfectly to the horrors of the unknown: stark, flickering lights illuminate vividly rendered environments and cast deep shadows into corners and hallways. The feeble flashlight, accessible by tapping the White button, illuminates the wreckage but replaces your weapon. This forced defenselessness heightens the already anxious mood, and the masterfully mixed soundtrack drives the tension over the edge with subtle, perfectly timed music and effects.

PROTIP: Sticking together is crucial in team deathmatch.

Enjoying the Ride

Flashlight mechanics aside, Doom 3 is essentially a stripped-down, run-n-gun hallway shooter that features simple gameplay wrapped in cutting-edge presentation. The star of the show is the cooperative mode, which enables two players to fight their way through the campaign story. In co-op mode, the maps have been tweaked, making the gameplay more challenging and forcing the players to work together.

If you're not feeling cooperative, up to four players can partake in deathmatch, team deathmatch, last man standing, or tournament games on five maps. Some maps contain rooms that can be sealed off (i.e. the Frag Chamber) or light switches that plunge areas into darkness. The multiplayer options can't hold a candle—much less a flashlight—to Halo 2's gold standard, and they lack the visceral, horrific intensity found in the campaign and cooperative modes. Matches are still fast and fun, though, even if the options are limited.

PROTIP: Use the chainsaw to whittle Cherubs down to size.

PROTIP: Cackler Demons move slowly, so rush at them with the shotgun.

If you get all misty eyed and nostalgic at the mere mention of Doom, you'll want to pick up the Limited Collector's Edition and revel in full versions of Ultimate Doom and Doom II. Though good for a few laughs, the blocky graphics and wonky controls are tough to stomach after experiencing Doom 3's polished performance. At least in this case, it seems that "you can never go home."

Hell Hath No Duct Tape

Rather than distracting gimmicks, Doom 3 offers a refined shooter with a smooth frame rate and tight controls. At this point, there are no plans for a "duct tape" cheat for the Xbox version, so you'll just have to fumble with the buttons and learn to live with your fear. Though Doom 3 is lacking in innovative gameplay, it more than makes up for it with amazing graphics, flawless sound design, and excellent storytelling.—*DJ Dinobot*

PROTIP: Circle-strafe with the chain gun to bring the Vagary down.

ESRB M

- Developed by Vicarious Visions
- Published by Activision
- $49.99 ($59.99 Limited Collector's Edition)
- Available March
- First-person shooter
- 4 players

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

GRAPHICS	5.0	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	5.0	4.5/5
CONTROL	4.5	

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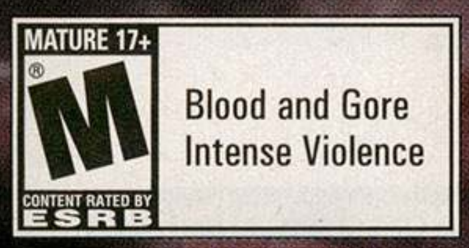

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Intense Violence

PlayStation.2

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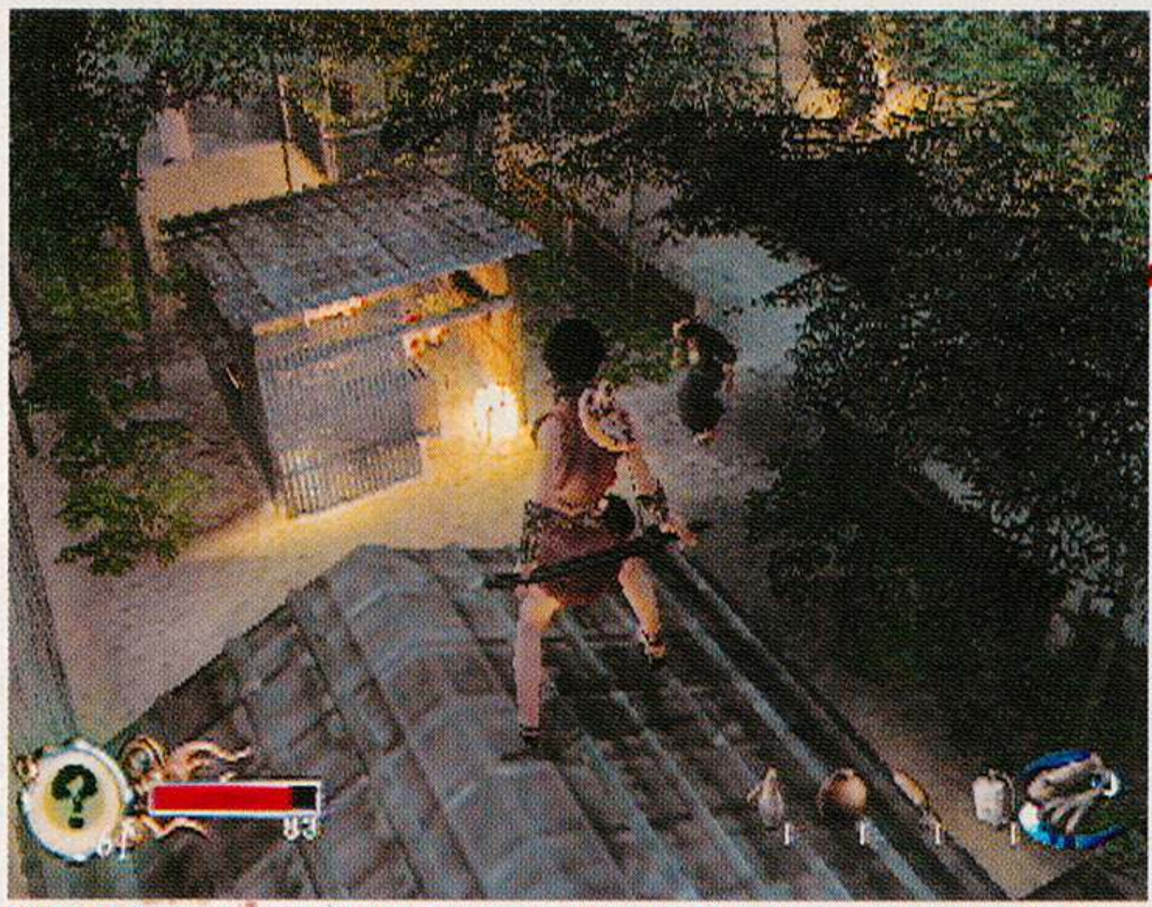
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows

The students have surpassed the master.

PS2 The ninja is silent. The ninja is deadly. The ninja also respects tradition…almost to a fault. So it goes with Tenchu: Fatal Shadows, a game that takes its stealth heritage very, very seriously—a slave to dying ways for better or worse.

There Are Many Ways To Cook an Eggplant

Just like its predecessors, Tenchu: Fatal Shadows is a "ninja simulator" that emphasizes cunning and planning over running around with guns (or in this case, swords and shuriken) blazing. In each level, you are expected to study the paths of your foes, wait patiently around corners and behind walls until their backs are turned, and then silently move in for a "stealth kill" that earns you special scrolls and cool ninja tools as rewards. While it's possible to make it through many levels just by running your fool head off until the end, your ego takes a hit when you get a negative score for being spotted by everyone, and you earn no new special moves because you didn't stealthily kill a single soul. The game can be extremely cool and rewarding—you really *do* feel like a ninja when things go right—but if you're not the patient and meticulous type, this ain't the game for you. You can fully expect to play levels dozens of times before you get them "right," and be prepared to check your outrage when you have to restart a level many times from scratch each time you make a tiny error.



PROTIP: Enemies have problems seeing you if you're not at the same height as them. Use this to your advantage on roofs and stairs.

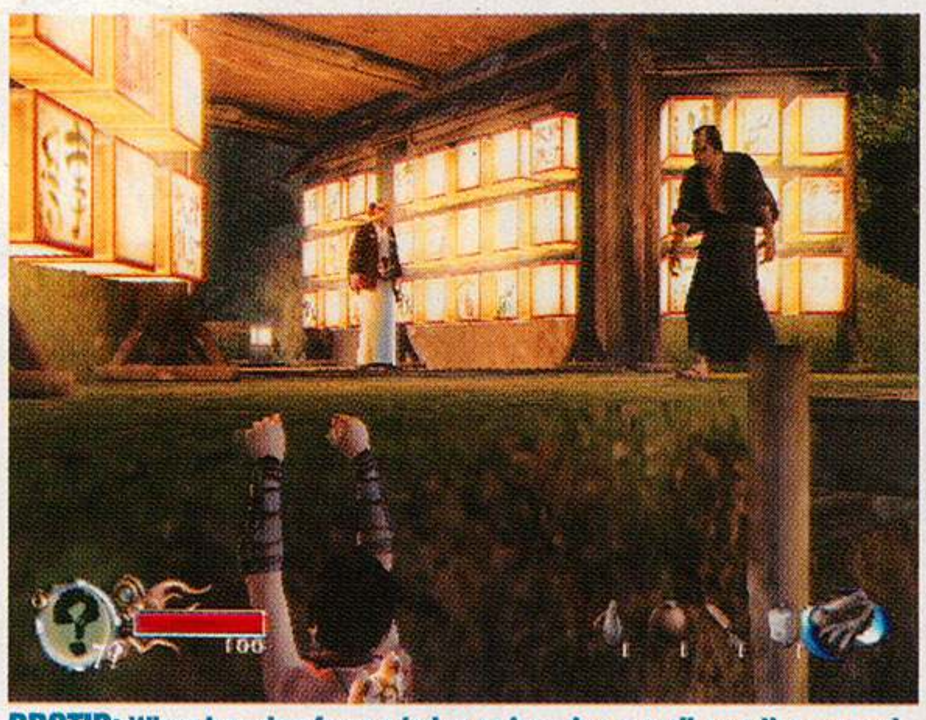
PROTIP: If you're spotted (and especially if you're spotted by multiple foes), run back the way you came. Fighting just isn't worth it.

PROTIP: If you're stuck fighting, try leading your foe into water. They die instantly, yet you endure.

Murderous/Killer/ Lethal Shadows

While Tenchu was once the alpha and omega of stealth gaming, its surreptitious slinkings have since been surpassed by the graphic and storytelling prowess of Metal Gear Solid and the gloriously open-ended gameplay of Thief: Deadly Shadows. In Tenchu, old quirks die hard: The guards still walk predictable patterns and quickly forget you the second you turn around a corner or dangle off a ledge in front of their faces. The camera is still obnoxious to deal with, too, especially when peering around corners.

Improvements are here, but they're minor: You now make sounds (which mostly means guards hear you if you splash in the water) when you move too quickly, and you're able to drag bodies out of sight as in Tenchu 2. The story is also split between the two main characters, making the narrative more interesting and the levels less repetitious. Stealth kills can also be turned into "super" stealth kills (earning you more reward scrolls) if you tap the kill button a second time at the right moment during your assassination animation.



PROTIP: When hanging from a ledge or hugging a wall, use the manual camera (L1) to examine your surroundings.

PROTIP: A good (but cheap) tactic against bosses is the "charge" move. Dash forward with × and then immediately tap □ to attack.

PROTIP: If an enemy sees you, you still have a split second to perform a stealth kill. If someone approaches from around a corner, roll out in front of them at the last second to score a stealth kill.

The Old Cur

The way of the ninja is still one heck of a challenge, but games have found better ways to be stealthy since Tenchu first snuck into town. She's a good old dog but hard pressed to learn new tricks.—*Star Dingo*

M ■ Developed by FromSoftware ■ Published by Sega ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Action/stealth ■ 1 player

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR
	SOUND	4.0	3.5/5
	CONTROL	3.5	

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Star Wars: Republic Commando

Lead an elite squad of deadly soldiers in the galaxy's greatest conflict

Continuing to ride its wave of recent hits, LucasArts is throwing its ordnance into this year's first-person-shooter mix with Star Wars: Republic Commando. Leading Delta Squad, a three-man team of elite soldiers, your missions take you deep into enemy territory across 14 levels to engage in a host of various endeavors, including assault, sabotage, reconnaissance, and hostage-rescue assignments. All that stands in your way is a slew of hostiles, such as Geonosian drones, battle droids, and General Grievous's personal bodyguards.

The DC-17c is a versatile weapon that can transform into a sniper rifle and grenade launcher. But every now and again, it's good to try out some high-powered alien technology, such as the Wookiee crossbow with ricochet-action plasma bolts.

PROTIP: The Revive Mechanic ensures that the battle isn't over until the last commando is down. When incapacitated, select Recall and Revive, and then press A.

Roll Call

The cornerstone of almost every LucasArts title has been an engaging story line, and Republic Commando is certainly no different. In fact, instead of merely being a tale of events that happen outside the realm of the films, the game actually ties in events to bridge the gap between Episodes II and III, and leads into the beginning of *Revenge of the Sith*. For fans of the flicks, that's huge as it makes the game seem like you're playing a part in the film. To everyone else, it all depends on if you like action games built around a good story.

Technically, Republic Commando utilizes an enhanced version of the Unreal engine, and to that end, LucasArts has done a fine job with the technology to create a polished, atmospheric experience. The character models look good, from the squat Trandoshan slavers to the towering Wookiees, and the squad looks superb. Working in tandem with the visuals, the sound effects and musical score give Republic Commando that undeniable Star Wars feel, even though both are a bit more subdued than those in previous offerings.

PROTIP: Super battle droids are tough hombres. Use your sniper attachment to shoot off their armor to expose their weak points and then quickly dispose of them.

PROTIP: Always listen to the chatter coming through your helmet's comlink. Often times, your squad mates and advisors give you good tactical info.

PROTIP: Use your squad to slice into computer consoles, set charges, and snipe oncoming enemies.

Where Republic Commando does make strides is with its extensive yet simplified control scheme, making LucasArts' main bullet point for the game—"the squad is your greatest weapon"—a reality. Unlike most games in the genre that bog down the action with a complex series of submenus, Republic Commando has been streamlined so that giving an order to a team member is accomplished with the press of a single button. To make this possible, there are several areas within each level that will emit a holo-projection visible through the heads up display of your helmet.

How and where you use the squad is entirely up to you as not every position is optimal. Additionally, the squad A.I. has been tuned so that your mates are neither too smart nor too clueless and behave in a way that makes sense, such as slowly backpedaling while continuing to fire on their intended targets.

On Point

If you're a fan of the films or you really appreciate a good action game based upon a good script, then Republic Commando is a definite must have. LucasArts has done a super job in bringing this game to life thanks to the outstanding story, tight controls, and the hefty amount of intense action, while also including a standard list of multiplayer modes and Xbox Live online support. That it won't win critical acclaim for being revolutionary is beside the point. Bottom line: It's a fun game to play, and that's what matters.—*The Enforcer*

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ESRB T ■ Developed and published by LucasArts ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ First-person shooter ■ 4 players; 16 online

GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	4.0	4.0/5
CONTROL	4.5	

Nano Breaker

PS2 It's a tried and true killer formula: big sword-swinging maneuvers plus lots of bone-crushing bad guys equals a constant barrage of thumb-numbing action. Unfortunately, it's clear that this formula isn't fully utilized with Nano Breaker.

True Colors

Why is it that machines just don't like humans? Nano technology is all the rage in Nano Breaker's world, but somewhere in the evolution of the machines, they gained a conscious and are now waging war against their creators. This is where you come in—a plasma sword-wielding badass who knows how to destroy such technological abominations. You collect power-ups and other special abilities to help you form the most deadly strikes—you can even customize your button combinations for a loaded offense.

PROTIP: Give this boss a real heart attack by pulling out his heart and whacking it with your attacks.

There is no such thing as extreme prejudice on this battlefield. Waves of nano-infused monsters come at you in all directions, and the only thing to do is kill them. Mondo swipes and slashes cause dear pain to your opponents as gallons upon gallons of what Konami labels "oil" (although the default color is red) spurt out, leaving a huge, unsettling puddle of liquid behind after a fatal hit. This, sadly, is the high point in Nano Breaker—everything else gravely falls just short of disappointing.

PROTIP: Instead of distancing yourself, bring as many creatures to you as possible. Then, pop out a viscous combo that will dish out multiple hit points.

Nano Nonsense

Repetition can go only so far. Such is the case in Nano Breaker, where every single level (albeit designed slightly differently) consists of the same repetitious gameplay—hacking and slashing your way to victory. Some simple-minded puzzles break up the monotony just for a bit, but even then it's not very fun. The levels themselves are blandly decorated with not much detail, and the mellow tunes just don't fit the mood of the game.

No one wins in this tale about man versus machine. Nano Breaker is a brainless, gratuitous gashingfest that means well but just doesn't play well.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

ESRB M
- Developed and published by Konami
- $39.99 ■ Available now
- Action ■ 1 player

PS2			FUN FACTOR
	GRAPHICS	3.0	2.5/5
	SOUND	3.0	
	CONTROL	3.5	

Death By Degrees

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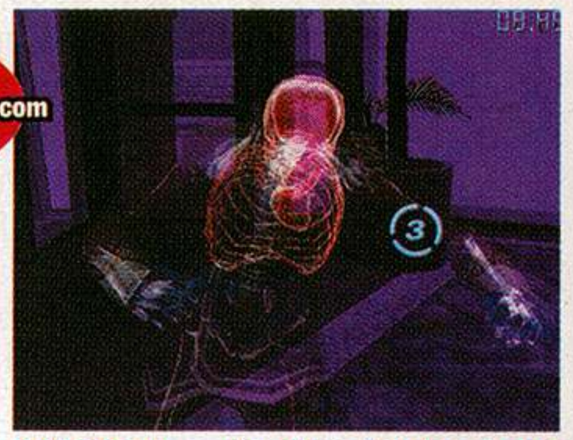
PS2 Tekken fans might be curious about Nina Williams' starring role in Death by Degrees, but that curiosity will quickly turn into bitter disappointment. The story line is a weird mish-mash of flamboyant villains, stolen high-tech weapons, and...the Bermuda Triangle. Naturally, it's Nina's job to infiltrate a mysterious cruise ship and gain answers. But after playing Death by Degrees, Tekken fans might want a few answers of their own.



PROTIP: To use the Critical Strikes, hold L2 and attack your opponent. The left analog stick aims, while the right stick delivers the blow. Be quick and aim for the head or chest for maximum damage.

"Hot Girl... Cool Adventure?"

The big change for Nina is that she can now strike, slash, and shoot in 360 degrees, much like Jet Li in Rise to Honor. Sadly, the awkward camera angles hamstring this potentially fun approach, and the unfamiliar attacks mean you can forget about re-creating your favorite Tekken combos. Even with the RPG-style skill enhancements, the core fighting quickly grows monotonous. Strangely, you must often solve mind-numbing fetch quests that routinely succumb to the most punishing clichés of the adventure genre. Many of these puzzles are ripped straight from the bowels of the first Resident Evil. Hex-shaped cranks? Check. Doors "locked from the other side?" Check. Convoluted menus and a pain-in-the-ass save system? Check plus. Granted, the game features several interesting mini-games—the sniping scenario is downright decent—but there's nothing fun enough to warrant even a second playthrough.

Nina, We Hardly Knew Ye

On the plus side, Death by Degrees' flashy bone-splintering Critical Strikes (which give you an x-ray view of your opponent's limbs snapping like twigs) look nasty as hell and definitely earn the game its Mature rating. Unfortunately, the repetitive boss battles beat this concept into the ground. Fluid character animation and crisp, though unremarkable, environments round out the visual offering. On the sound side, Death by Degrees' sparse music and no-nonsense effects struggle to build the tension, but the techno/metal tunes just feel out of place. In the end, fans of Tekken will simply ask, "Why?"—*Vicious Sid*

PROTIP: You can shatter the first boss's skull and sternum all you want, but the results are underwhelming. Slam him into the wall spikes to really inflict damage. Likewise, avoid getting crowded near the walls.

ESRB M
- Developed and published by Namco
- $49.99 ■ Available now
- Action ■ 1 player

PS2			FUN FACTOR
	GRAPHICS	4.0	2.5/5
	SOUND	3.5	
	CONTROL	3.5	

Star Fox: Assault

Where else can you find a group of galactic superheroes whose superior shooting prowess rivals their cutesy, cuddly demeanor? In Nintendo's Star Fox, of course, where the traditions of kittenish space combat are resurrected in fine form with Assault.

It's a Zoo out There

Star Fox: Assault was delayed for some time, but the reasoning was justified. The game brings back the classic family-friendly space shooter, departing from Fox's last romp, which was more of an adventure game on foot. Plus, in Assault, you get a barn full of chipperish animals—starring the strong-willed Fox McCloud—who are ready to fight for the well-being of the universe. It's several years after the Dinosaur Planet incident, and Fox and his team are sent to destroy a new threat in the galaxy. They'll fight for liberation in space and on land, eradicating weird alien creatures and fellow four-legged creatures like Pigma Dengar and Wolf O'Donnell.

So the story's a bit cheesy, especially when it involves animals that know a thing or two about using killer vehicles and the latest ray guns, but you'll soon forget all of that once you aim your sites on the objectives. Playing as Fox, you'll be ordered to counteract insurgencies made up of rampaging swarms of nasty browbeaters by using three methods of force: flying an Arwing, driving a Landmaster Tank, or running and gunning on foot. Each option offers the same exciting shooting experience as you lay waste to anything that shoots back. On some levels, you can even switch effortlessly between all three modes, but the true fun lies in handling the agile Arwing. Each time you sit in the cockpit, you're automatically put in the throws of oncoming obstacles and frenzied shootouts—it's what a solid arcade 3D shooter should be.

PROTIP: Get rid of all air threats before tackling the opposition on the ground. Destroying air reinforcements should also take priority because your team isn't very adept in handling it themselves.

PROTIP: Slow down to better follow an enemy.

PROTIP: It may be your default weapon, but the Blaster still carries a heavy punch. Hold down the fire button for a few seconds and then let go for a killer shot on hard-shell enemies.

PROTIP: Use the Arwing to destroy ground targets, too.

Wishing upon a Star

What makes this Star Fox even more appealing in addition to frantically avoiding asteroids and opponents is its outstanding visual presentation. Space never looked so sharp, and the many worlds in which McCloud and his crew travel are rich with vibrant colors and dazzling effects.

Star Fox: Assault, however, doesn't achieve complete warp speed. Character voices tend to repeat themselves way too often, and controlling the Landmaster Tank is a tedious task. The worst, though, is the inability to command your team. Instead, they aimlessly wander around and continuously need your help to fend off enemies.

Still, Assault certainly delivers. The game features tons of missions if you go at it alone, and the multiplayer competitions are ripe with fun. Star Fox's gratifying gameplay assures you that this is one star that still shines on any Nintendo system.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

Old MacDonald probably didn't see his farm animals ruling the universe.

T

- Developed by Namco
- Published by Nintendo
- $49.99
- Available now
- Action/shooting
- 4 players

GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	3.5	4.0/5
CONTROL	4.0	

Donkey Kong Jungle Beat

Dance Dance Revolution may have a monopoly on exercising the lower part of the body, but the bongo-driven GameCube titles surely give the arms and torso the most frenetic workout on the market today. Using the latest GameCube peripheral is Donkey Kong Jungle Beat, where you guide the muscular simian through several horizontal- and vertical-scrolling levels in which you beat up enemies and avoid traps. How much you enjoy the game ultimately relies on how long you can keep hammering away on the bongos.

PROTIP: When fighting the mechanized elephant, throw the pineapple at him so it gets stuck in his trunk; then, throw as many explosive pineapples at him as you can.

"He's Banging on the Bongos Like a Chimpanzee..."

In Jungle Beat, you use the bongos to move Donkey Kong around the screen. Each drum moves him in a different direction; hitting both drums simultaneously makes him jump; clapping makes him stun enemies within a certain range; and the faster you drum, the quicker Donkey Kong moves. The levels are cleverly constructed, and a decent array of obstacles, enemies, and puzzles are thrown into your path—along with hidden bonus areas, where you try to grab as many bananas as possible in a limited amount of time by rapidly pounding on the drums. If this sounds tiring, it is, and your physical stamina is a major factor in how much you'll enjoy the game. Plus, the game features some clever diversity (especially with the bosses), which requires some nimble finesse and strategy to vanquish.

PROTIP: Once an enemy is dazed and knocked onto its back, jump on top of it and whale away.

PROTIP: When in doubt, clap.

Congo Bongo

Jungle Beat puts on a colorful, visually stunning show with stages that take place in steaming jungles and frozen wastelands. The audio rocks, featuring a decent music score that makes performing the onscreen commands intuitive. If you can get past its gimmicky aspect, Donkey Kong Jungle Beat becomes an interesting spin on the side-scrolling hop-n-bop action genre that ultimately relies on endurance as much as reflexes.—*Major Mike*

E ■ Developed and published by Nintendo ■ $39.99 ■ Available March ■ Action ■ 1 player

GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	4.0	4.0/5
CONTROL	4.0	

GunGriffon: Allied Strike

When you've got a system as large and bulky as the Xbox, it makes sense that there's a ton of games on it starring enormous robots kicking the snot out of each other. GunGriffon, the latest in this oddly prolific genre, attempts to breach the gap between fun arcade romps like MechAssault and the nearly obtuse complexity of Capcom's Steel Battalion. Does it succeed? Yes—but like a delicate bouquet of roses, only under the most exacting of play conditions.

PROTIP: If your mission doesn't involve annihilating all enemies, it will be easier to use a speedy HIGH MAC and strafe your target from the sky.

International Diplomacy via Robots

Like every robotathon, GunGriffon (a series that has its roots in the Sega Saturn) is divided into several segments. Before each of the 20 or so missions, you're given the ability to choose both your ride (called HIGH MACs in this game) and the weaponry you'd like to take along. There's an amazing depth of variety in the robots and their accessories, and your strategy for the upcoming sortie may vary widely based on your choice of HIGH MAC.

This serves to make GunGriffon a bit dizzying from the start, and it isn't a feeling quelled by the missions themselves. Although it plays a bit like MechAssault, the spirit of the game is much closer to that of Steel Battalion, complete with that game's complicated control and notoriously hair-pulling difficulty level. In the single-player mode, GunGriffon gives you very little chance to survive—weak weapons combined with nonintuitive button assignments spell a great deal of Game Overs in the beginning. It's not an insurmountable challenge, but with visuals as chunky and Dreamcast-like as these, it will be hard for many gamers to drum up the willpower to continue.

PROTIP: Battle damage is sectional in this game—if you hit a robot in the head, it will cause more damage than an arm or leg shot.

No Mech Walks Alone

Into this distressing situation steps GunGriffon's multiplayer support, which literally saves the entire package. Playing missions with another human player (instead of the brain-dead A.I. ally you usually get) makes things far easier at the start, giving you a chance to learn basic battle strategy without dying every other moment. Online team-based matches are also exciting (though similar to MechAssault's Live support), making GunGriffon worth a shot if you have a Live connection and fairly skippable otherwise.—*Clockwork Crow*

T ■ Developed by Game Arts ■ Published by Tecmo ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Action ■ 2 players; 8 online

GRAPHICS	2.5	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	3.0	3.0/5
CONTROL	2.5	

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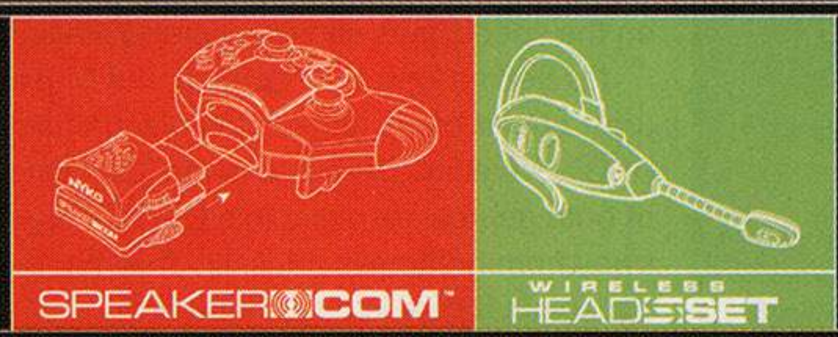

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Kessen III

PS2 From its monochromatically drab strategy games, Koei has come a long way, delivering a satisfying hybrid action/strategy experience in Kessen III. Still, the game could use a bit more creativity in art direction and story line.

For the Children

Taking on the role of a sanitized and graciously altruistic Nobunaga (not the temple-burning man of fury), you battle against blindly nefarious warlords to bring peace to little orphaned children. Both Nobunaga and your officers can be leveled up and customized by acquiring new weapons and armor—an addictive, Nobunaga Online–inspired RPG element. Setting itself apart even more from the original, Kessen III's gameplay is more action oriented, enabling players to perform slash and charge attacks that highlight the carnal intensity of medieval warfare. Even though the game features more twitch-combat, its strategic aspect has not been compromised, making Kessen III approachable for both hardcore and casual audiences.

PROTIP: Charge with cavalry when enemies are almost within melee range. If done when they are too far, charging up again becomes difficult.

PROTIP: For the most part, you don't need to upgrade the armor of your key officers—they automatically get new gear as the campaign progresses.

The Good, The Bad, And The Plucked Eyebrows

Unfortunately, Kessen III is bogged down by a constant and jarring barrage of forgettable cinematics, driven by contrived acting rivaling that of Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*. While a step in the right direction, bad cut-scenes are worse than no cut-scenes at all, and you'll frequently hit the Start button to skip the myriad unwelcome intermissions.

It's certainly the best Kessen so far—but expect a corny samurai Western with flamboyantly bare-chested shirts. —*Funky Zealot*

ESRB T ■ Developed and published by Koei ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Strategy ■ 1 player

PROTIP: The fourth regular melee attack sends the opponent reeling back, creating a small window of opportunity to perform a charge attack.

PS2	GRAPHICS 4.0	FUN FACTOR
	SOUND 3.5	4.0/5
	CONTROL 4.0	

Musashi Samurai Legend

PS2 Five years ago, a sleeper hit made its way to the original PlayStation. Brave Fencer Musashi was a quirky action/RPG that played on the age-old concept of an out-of-place hero doing his best to save the day. Musashi Samurai Legend takes the formula and updates it beautifully for the PS2.

Big-Haired Action Hero

Although it's heavy on the action, Musashi doesn't skimp on the story. The game is packed with numerous characters and plenty of little plot twists to keep things moving along. You always have the freedom to go adventure a bit, but never are you forced to spend mundane time leveling up.

Combat is well balanced with the judicious use of magic serving as a counterpoint to the melee-heavy fighting that naturally flows forth when your hero is dual-wielding two swords. Movement is quick and easy, and a well-timed parry can fend off most attackers. One caveat, though: You can't cancel moves. If you start an attack and then decide to move, you have to wait for the attack animation to finish—leaving you wide open to counterattack.

PROTIP: If you get overwhelmed, bust out a magic spell. A well-timed blast can clear the immediate area and give you some breathing room.

PROTIP: When fighting this bad boy, focus on the center shield. Destroy it to expose the eye—three direct hits to the pupil, and he's down for the count.

Why Is It Always the Camera?

The biggest issue with Legend is the camera system. Completely manual, the camera works well when adventuring outside but fails to perform when you enter an arena-based boss battle. Instead of centering on Musashi's opponent, the camera often ends up facing away, leaving the boss in a blind spot. Experienced gamers will handle it well, but it is sure to be a point of frustration for novices.

Creature selection is diverse with a number of anime-inspired critters looking like they just stepped out of a Macross video and into your game. Musashi uses an advanced form of cel shading, dubbed "manga shading," that gives the game a very stylized look. Heavy on the speed lines and character definition, it truly does bear the look of an anime film.

It's been a long time coming, but Musashi Samurai Legend offers an enticing blend of action and RPG adventure. The game mixes the best elements of both genres, resulting in a title that is just a hair away from greatness. Musashi may not be Zelda's equal, but it sure is close.—*Syriel*

ESRB T ■ Developed and published by Square Enix ■ $49.99 ■ Available March ■ Action/RPG ■ 1 player

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

PS2	GRAPHICS 4.5	FUN FACTOR
	SOUND 4.0	4.5/5
	CONTROL 4.0	

Playboy: The Mansion

There's no way around it: Successful games breed copies and knockoffs. For example, after Tetris hit it big, a ton of comparable puzzle/strategies fell like rain; when Quake got hot, you couldn't fire a railgun in a game store without hitting a dozen first-person shooters.

Without a doubt, Playboy: The Mansion might as well be called The Sims as Told by Hugh Hefner. The Playboy game is a relationship simulator (just like The Sims). The Playboy game has the characters speaking a gibberish language (just like The Sims). The Playboy game has you coordinating photo shoots of topless women and creating a monthly skin magazine just like…hey, wait a minute.

PROTIP: At a party, make sure your attendees are introduced to each other. Then, if you talk to a group of people instead of just one, you'll end up improving multiple relationships at once.

Keep Abreast of Your Goals

You control a virtual Hef as he starts with a small mansion and a few friends. The 12 "missions" require you to build Hef's empire by hiring staff, assigning articles and pictorials, organizing lavish parties, making celebrity friends, and getting your romance on. Achieving the myriad goals earns big bucks, unlocks more of the mansion grounds, and lets you find out firsthand the definition of the word "voluptuous." You couldn't get more booty if you bought a can of booty bait, jumped in your booty wagon, and drove down for some fishing in Booty Lake.

PROTIP: Once you have enough cash, make sure you keep the number of journalists, photographers, and models balanced. When you need to achieve a certain goal, you'll want one available.

Getting To Know You…

You also learn a lot about *Playboy*'s 50-year history as you play. The game features blurbs of info on loading screens and content (such as classic covers) that can be unlocked with points you earn for meeting objectives. Plus, you have encounters with several "real" Playmates and Bunnies who graced the magazine's pages—who for the sake of the game are glamour models turned 3D models.

But mostly, it's all about meeting as many people as you can and keeping them happy by maintaining high levels on their casual-, business-, and romance-relationship gauges…again just like The Sims. And, frankly, the gameplay ends up being more than a little tedious and repetitive as you try to juggle the growing number of relationships while attempting to achieve higher numbers of required goals.

You'd have to be a boob not to find Playboy: The Mansion's soft-core entertainment titillating, at least for a little while. Unfortunately, the enjoyment can't keep up, likely resulting in a premature ejection of the game from your console…but remember: It happens to nearly every gamer at some point.—*Manny LaMancha*

ESRB M ■ Developed by Cyberlore Studios ■ Published by Arush Entertainment ■ $49.95 ■ Available now ■ Simulation ■ 1 player

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.0	FUN FACTOR 2.5/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	3.0	
X	GRAPHICS	3.0	FUN FACTOR 2.5/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	4.0	

American McGee Presents: Scrapland

From the twisted mind of American McGee comes Scrapland, a film noir–styled murder mystery set in a land of human-hating robots and technological marvels. One part *Blade Runner* and one part *The Fifth Element*, the game follows the adventure of D-Tritus, a very green but very determined news reporter who is tasked with uncovering the dastardly mastermind causing the digital demise of well-known robots. The only problem is, it's not all that exciting.

PROTIP: Watch out for the Beholder robots. They can see through any disguise and will sound the alarm if they discover you impersonating someone.

This Land Is Your Land…

Unlike the open-ended atmosphere of the Grand Theft Auto series, Scrapland fails to deliver on its promise of a living world. Sure, there's a huge city to explore and plenty of inhabitants to shoot, but there's no depth to the world. Venture off the main path, and you'll find little to do aside from shooting up random citizens and stealing their cash. It's a great way to blow off steam, but it doesn't make for great game design.

One of the neater aspects of the game is the "Great DataBase" that stores the information of every robot in the game. As D-Tritus, you can hack the database and pose as one of 15 robots, each with a special ability. Early on this isn't much more than a novelty, but later in the game switching identities becomes essential.

PROTIP: Before competing in a race, be sure to remove all weapons and extra hull plating—the extra speed boost will make winning a whole lot easier.

Frame-Rate Frenzy

While exploring the world on foot, the controls are rather spot on, but hop into a vehicle, and prepare for motion sickness. Scrapland uses an original control configuration that will confound even Halo veterans. A "lock-on" feature helps somewhat but doesn't compensate for the poor controls. Compounding this problem is the game's low frame rate—it often dips below 30 frame per second—resulting in uneven movements and disorienting turns. The audio is just as uneven with the soundtrack switching between powerful scores and repetitive bloops and beeps that sound like they were composed on a vintage 1980s synthesizer.

A great idea on paper, Scrapland fails to fulfill its potential in more ways than one. It's a serviceable game, but it doesn't excel in any regard. Had it spent a few more months in development, it could have been a gem; as is, it's strictly bargain-bin material.—*Syriel*

ESRB T ■ Developed by Mercury Steam Entertainment ■ Published by Enlight Interactive ■ $29.99 ■ Available now ■ Action/adventure ■ 1 player

X	GRAPHICS	3.5	FUN FACTOR 3.0/5
	SOUND	2.5	
	CONTROL	2.5	

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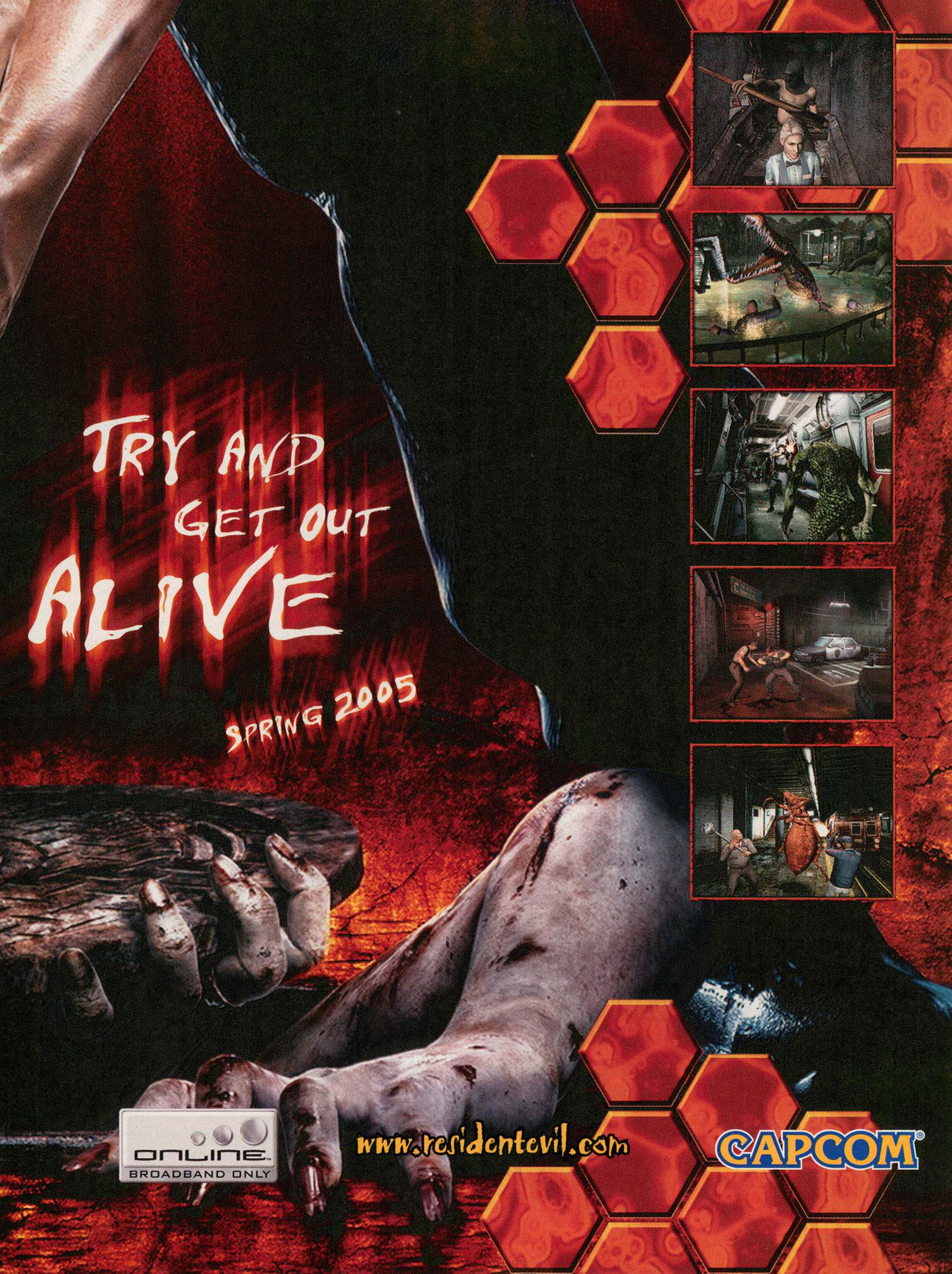
Online play requires internet connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately).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The Definitive MMO Buyer's Guide

Spent one too many sleepless nights trying to keep up with each new MMO title? We know the feeling. That's why we pitted the seven hottest massively multiplayer online RPGs against each other in an epic battle for your undivided attention. The results may surprise you—or not. ***By The* GamePro *Editors***

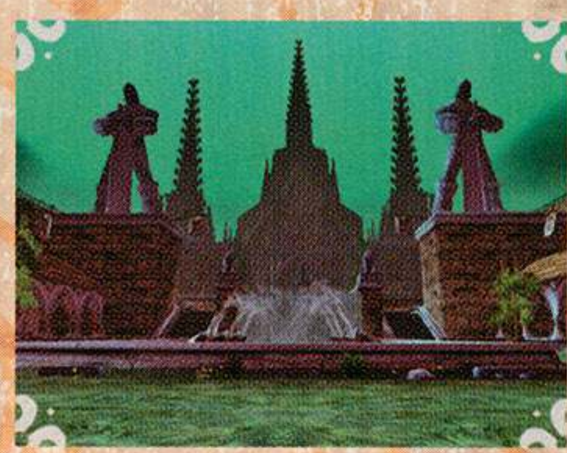
World of Warcraft

BEST OVERALL

Everything we said in our review last month still stands: This is the most polished, pretty, and enjoyable MMORPG ever made. It's fast, streamlined, and perilously fun. It'd be easy to recommend as the default "MMO to get" except that since the game's launch, two important weaknesses have emerged—one that was easy to predict and one that we never would have guessed.

World of Warcraft is the fastest and most fun MMORPG of 'em all, but hard-core players may blow through it too fast.

Ironforge, the hub of the Alliance, has been lovingly dubbed Lagforge by players to celebrate the, uh, overpopulation problems.



World of Warcraft is a lot like Disneyland—some servers even have lines to get in! Think of the instanced dungeons as the big-ticket rides.

The first problem is that a whole lot of folks got to the level cap really, really quickly. High-end content like Hero Classes and player vs. player Battlegrounds are still just promises. The second and more shocking weakness is a plague of technical problems—some of the higher-population servers make players wait in line before they can log in and play. Other servers have had lengthy periods of downtime during which players couldn't log in their characters. Our advice: Create a character on a low- or medium-population server, choose the underplayed Horde faction, and you'll be problem-free.

VERDICT: It's pretty, fast, and accessible, but more importantly, WOW has the best "fun" curve of any MMO. Unresolved technical issues and a lack of hard-core, high-end content are a minor drag.

EverQuest II

HARDCORE

If World of Warcraft's lack of high-end "stuff to do" and server problems are making you rethink your MMO allegiances, you might want to give EverQuest II a try. While the pace is slower and the art direction is a little goofy, the game has been healthy and stable since launch. It's also technically proficient with hyper-demanding graphics that, at the highest settings, require a future-proof PC.

In addition to free regular updates and retail expansions, EQII introduces story-driven "adventure packs" that you can download for $4.99.

EverQuest II's tendency toward complexity means it's mostly for hard-core role-players with ample free time.

Casual players may want to shy away. EverQuest II is a very dense, slow, demanding game (though admittedly not as unfriendly as its predecessor nor as hyper-complicated as Star Wars Galaxies) that requires a serious time investment. If WOW is a theme park, then EQII is a museum with tons of stuff to do, see, and explore. You can expect plenty of walking and little guidance. It's very easy to fall into the "XP grind" mentality in this kind of atmosphere, so you need to expend some extra effort in order to get the most out of this experience.

EQII allows for a lot of character diversity, offering a high number of classes, appearance options, and skill branches. Very few heroes in EQII are alike.

VERDICT: EverQuest II is sprawling, complex, and open, so hard-core players looking for zillions of grind-hours need not look further. Casual folks may find it impenetrable and drab.

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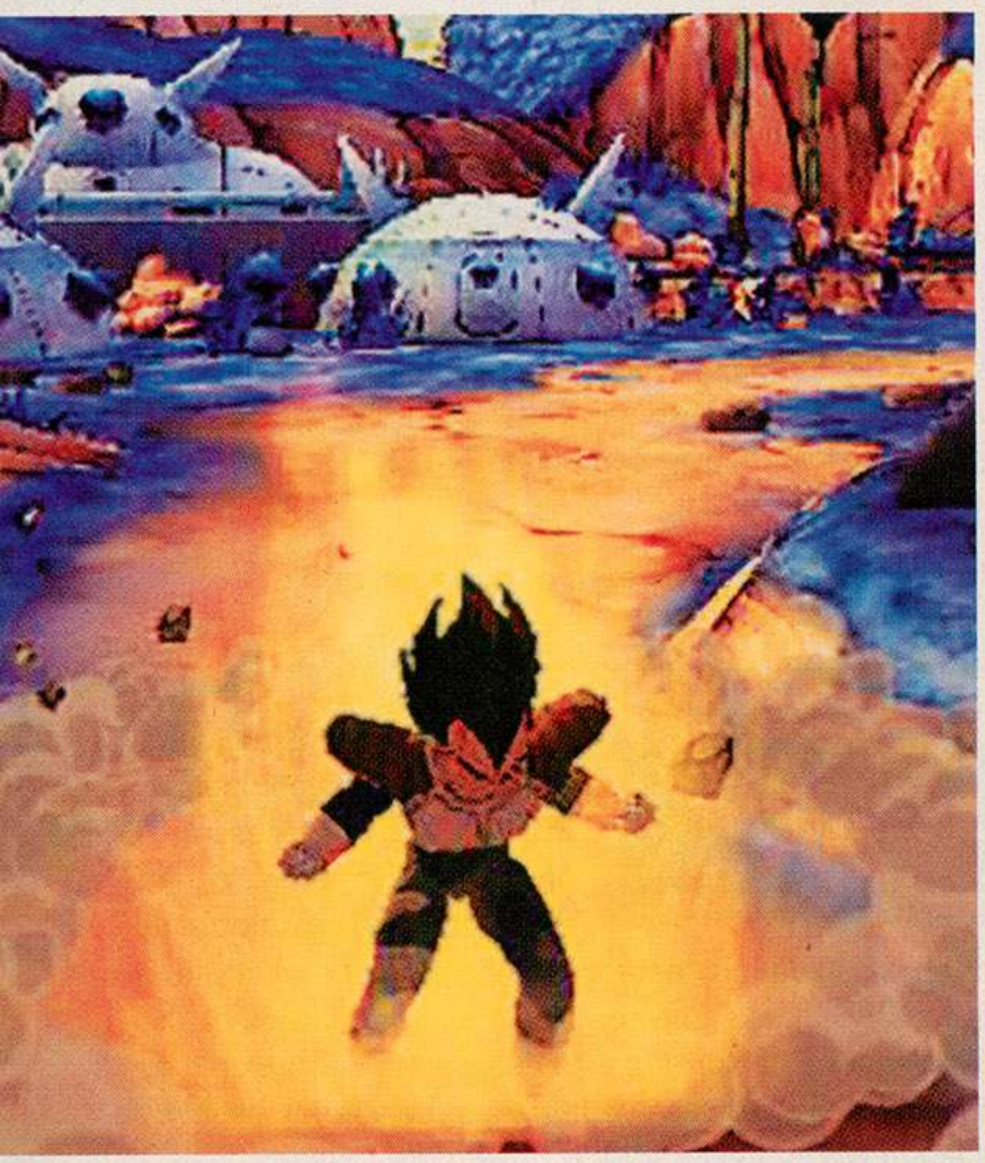

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PlayStation.2

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City of Heroes

CASUAL CHAMP

If you want to play online with real-world friends, take a long, hard look at City of Heroes, a super-accessible superhero MMO that won't bog you down with endless details. Unlike other MMOs, City of Heroes allows a high-level character to temporarily "downgrade" his powers so players of different levels can fight together on equal footing—it's one of the game's key advantages. After time, the combat-oriented gameplay can become somewhat repetitive, but the wide variety of super powers and enemy types (plus liberal content updates) help keep things fresh. Though City of Heroes doesn't include PvP features, the upcoming City of Villains should fill that hole quite nicely.

VERDICT: City of Heroes offers a fun, friendly formula that won't overwhelm you with confusing options and make-or-break decisions.

Star Wars Galaxies

Few MMORPGs approach the microcosmic complexity of Star Wars Galaxies. In a self-contained world with an intricate, player-driven economy, players can choose from careers like chefs, entertainers, and riflemen. Unfortunately, combat professions often focus on mob grinding, which is roughly as fun as scooping up Bantha doo-doo. And while the space combat (added in the Jump to Light Speed expansion) is solid, PvP takes on a diminished role; you'll likely spend more time waving at X-wings in your TIE fighter than blasting them.

VERDICT: Unless you're a rabid Star Wars nut, you'll probably prefer a more balanced, accessible MMO.

Dark Age of Camelot

PVP HONORS

This dark horse doesn't get the fanfare of World of Warcraft or EverQuest, but it lives on thanks to robust expansions like Catacombs, which features overhauled graphics and new environments and classes (including Warlocks and Valkyries). If you like to play solo, DAOC: Catacombs is a great choice because you have the option to start private adventures (or "instances") so you won't cross paths with other players or parties. The hardcore player-versus-player component is another selling point, at least for combat-minded players.

VERDICT: This well-rounded MMO boasts a solid fan base, a steady stream of updates, and a robust PvP angle.

Final Fantasy XI

Final Fantasy XI is available for both the PC and the PlayStation 2, which helps explain its huge user base. Independent-minded MMO players should look elsewhere, though, because team-based battling (particularly after Level 20) resides at the heart of FFXI. The slow, deliberate pacing may also turn off impatient gamers. In addition, you can expect to encounter plenty of players who speak Japanese; luckily, the built-in translator is (usually) up to the task.

VERDICT: As long as you pack plenty of patience, FFXI's large, diverse community makes it a solid MMO choice.

EverQuest

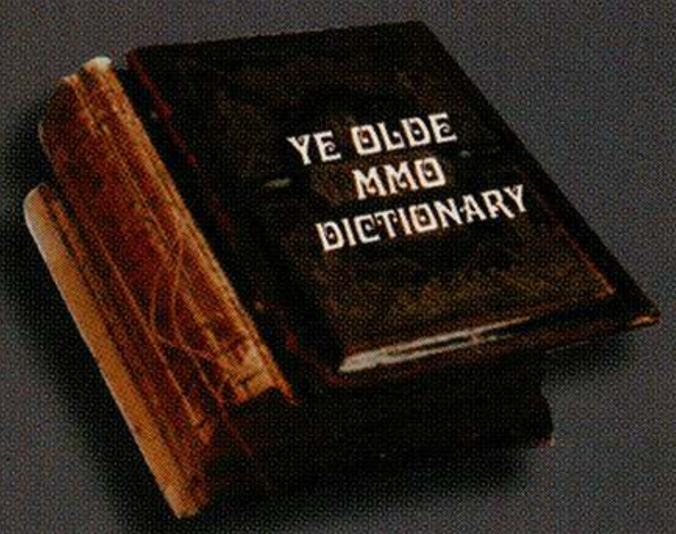
In some ways, EverQuest II's most direct competitor is its graying predecessor—and for good reason. Many dedicated players stubbornly resist the notion of abandoning their established communities, high-level characters, and items. And thanks to a seemingly endless parade of expansions (the latest, Dragons of Norrath, was released in February), they won't have to—at least for now. Unless your friends are already deeply entrenched in this aging world, newer MMOs have more to offer.

VERDICT: EverQuest's well-established community is its main asset, but that base will dwindle as players migrate to newer MMOs like World of Warcraft and EverQuest II.

Master the MMO Lingo

This info is strictly on a need-to-know basis—and you need to know.

N00b: Grating term reserved for ignorant, inexperienced players (that's you).
PvP: A controversial feature that allows MMO players to attack other players.
Nerf: To weaken a class for "balance," often to the rage/joy of forum inhabitants.
Gank: To engage another player who is still weak from an earlier fight (in PvP).
Aggro: Attacking or pestering a monster will increase its Aggro toward that player.
Add: Said during combat, this signifies that another monster is approaching.
Tank: A character that can absorb a huge amount of damage, such as a warrior.
Grinding: The monotonous act of attacking a single type of monster again and again for loot or experience.
Instance: An area or adventure that exists only for your party.



Battlefield 2

The fight moves from Vietnam to the Middle East in Battlefield 2, the latest installment in the online FPS series. Set in the modern day, Battlefield 2's conflicts take place between American, Chinese, and the Middle East Coalition. Each force holds an arsenal of unique weapons and vehicles that, in true Battlefield series form, adhere to a balanced rock/paper/scissors structure. That balance also lends itself to the new troop types like the Medic, who can revive friendly soldiers, and the Anti-Tank troops that pack equipment to take out armored targets. Another new character type, the Squad Leader, is particularly valuable because he serves as a mobile spawn point for his team. These new character classes mesh neatly with the new persistent ranking scheme, which is similar to the system used by Halo 2's Xbox Live mode. As you perform appropriate duties in each combat role (such as sniping enemies or reviving comrades), you'll earn permanent promotions that carry special perks. But in a puzzling touch, the game won't demote you for naughty acts (like team killing).

Visually, Battlefield 2's radically redesigned graphics engine sported several noticeable improvements in the preview build. Compared to those in Battlefield Vietnam, the soldiers in Battlefield 2 looked more realistic and featured cutting-edge details like rag-doll death animations. The environments boasted some big enhancements like smoother terrain and crisply rendered grass and foliage (which, in a nice touch, swayed gently in the breeze) as well. But the early build's uneven performance, which sputtered occasionally even on the fairly powerful test PCs, could be a potential problem. Hopefully, the developers can fine-tune Battlefield 2's frame rate before the game arrives on store shelves this summer.

Despite the performance problems in the unfinished version, the game showed plenty of promise. Barring any unfortunate surprises, Battlefield 2 is almost sure to thrill fans of hard-edged, realistic modern warfare.—*Deuce Magnum*

- **Hands-On**
- **Developed by Digital Illusions**
- **Published by EA Games**
- **Target release date: Summer 2005**

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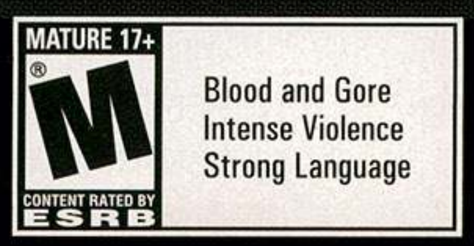

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

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MIDWAY

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Ace Combat Advance

The Ace Combat franchise enters the handheld top-down arcade-shooter fray with a surprising shot of originality in Ace Combat Advance. In a genre dominated by classic arcade-shooter clones, Ace Combat Advance brings a bit of ingenuity by offering something that no other handheld shooter has as of yet—free-roaming, dual-plane environments.

Ace Combat Advance's gameplay may look like that of the ordinary, run-of-the-mill arcade shooter, but it isn't. The dual-plane environments let you dogfight high in the stratosphere or dive down to tree-top level to bomb ground targets at your leisure.

PROTIP: In most missions, dogfighting with aerial foes is a waste of time.

No, Boys, There Are Two "Os" in Goose

In Ace Combat Advance, you assume the role of an elite ace pilot in the United Air Defense (UAD) who is single-handedly charged with black-ops missions against the UAD's mortal foe, the Air Strike Force. You can choose from 10 fictitious strike craft—nine of which must be unlocked by achieving primary and secondary mission objectives. In addition to the airplane's default missiles and guns, you have an assortment of six special weapons to choose from—although you'll find that in over 90 percent of the missions, you'll select the Tactical Air-to-Surface Missiles as your bread-and-butter weapon.

Mission objectives and strategies mirror those in previous console Ace Combat titles. Objectives include reconnaissance, search and destroy, and scramble. The basic strategy, which is predominant in all Ace Combat games, is to strike as many targets as possible while conserving your ammo and protecting your hull's integrity in the finite time allotted.

PROTIP: Pay attention to mission objectives and mission updates.

Chappy Sinclair Would Be Proud

Ace Combat Advance's gameplay initially has a high learning curve. It's difficult to toggle weapons, maintain proper speed, and dodge surface-to-air missiles at the same time. You'll find yourself constantly calling for a refuel, reacquiring targets because you flew over them too fast, or being blown into tiny pieces by pursuing enemy fighters. But once you get the hang of the game engine and acquire better planes, the game becomes a pleasurable experience. Ace Combat Advance is the perfect stopgap between an air-combat sim and an arcade top-down shooter.—*Rice Burner*

ESRB E ■ Developed by Human Soft ■ Published by Namco ■ $29.99 ■ Available now ■ Shooting ■ 1 player

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	4.0	4.5/5
CONTROL	4.0	

Wario Ware Touched!

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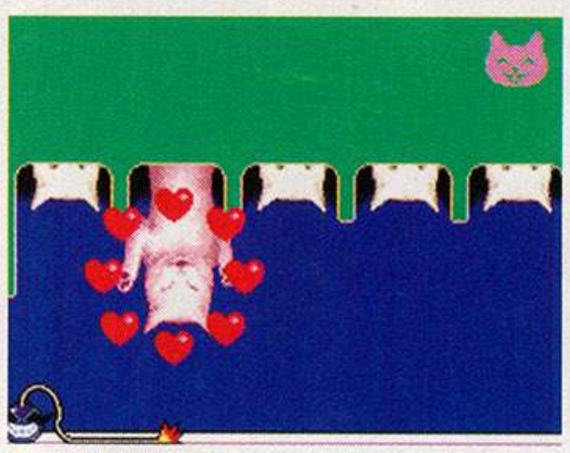
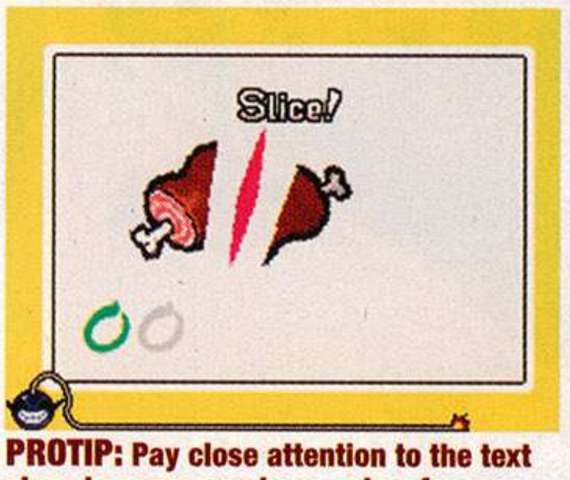
Nintendo's favorite antihero is back with a new collection of 200 more oddball mini-games for the DS. In Wario Ware Touched, the basic conceptual premise remains the same as that of previous Wario Ware titles: You are bombarded with a multitude of fast-paced, hilariously quirky mini-games that are designed to tap into your primordial subconsciousness and bring forth a plethora of actions guided only by your initial primeval responses.

While it shares the distinctive feel of the Wario Ware series—simple yet bizarre mini-games with set time limits—Wario Ware Touched brings a whole new dimension to the series due to the DS's unique stylus and microphone functions. Touched utilizes the new control scheme, bringing an innovative and frantically amped up dimension to the Wario Ware franchise. Instead of traditionally tapping buttons, Touched enables you to drag, rub, slash, tap, and write with the stylus pointer to navigate the menagerie of mini-game kookiness.



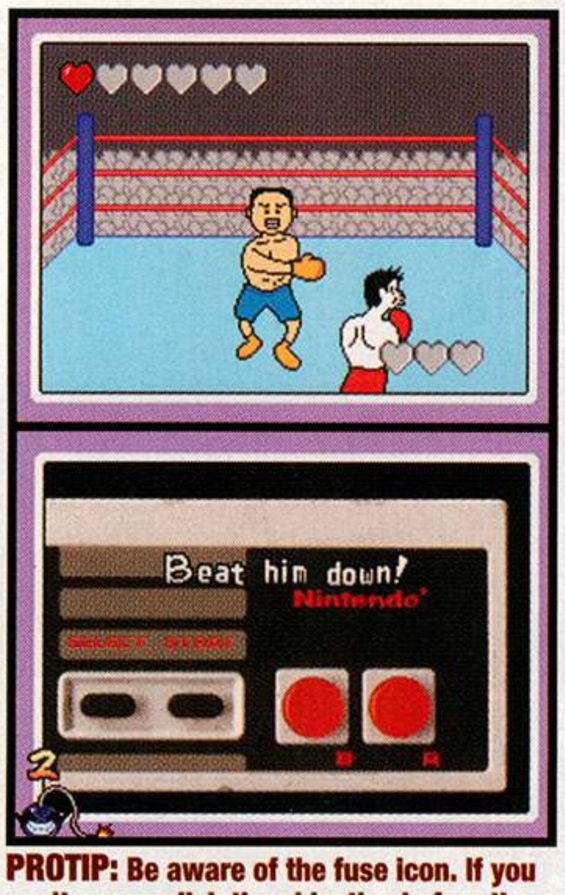
Awwww...kitties!



PROTIP: Pay close attention to the text clues because you have only a few seconds to respond.

Has Wario Touched You?

Although a few of Touched's challenges are rehashes of those in previous Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega MicroGame$ titles, all of them have been refreshingly tweaked for the new controls. If you thought the previous Wario Ware mini-games were tough, you're in for a treat—try figuring out whether you can drag, poke, slash, or write in a three-second instant. Additionally, Touched utilizes the microphone function by having players blow into the DS to play certain mini-games.



PROTIP: Be aware of the fuse icon. If you can't accomplish the objective before the fuse reaches the bomb, you're dead.

9-Volts Is Back!

Each character has 21 mini-games, which are united by a common control theme. Completing the initial character's challenges unlocks additional characters and mini-game mega mixes, which mix up the control themes.

Furthermore, the DS's dual-screen format has been put to excellent use. In most mini-games, the top screen is used to give brief clues or spawn an object that falls into the bottom screen, where you then must interact with it using the stylus. To date, Wario Ware Touched is the only DS game that fully utilizes the DS's unique functions and is a must have for all DS owners.—*Rice Burner*

ESRB E ■ Developed and published by Nintendo ■ $34.99 ■ Available now ■ Puzzle ■ 1 player

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR
SOUND	4.5	4.5/5
CONTROL	5.0	

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MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Strong Language
Violence

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This Championship Season

The pennant race is on for baseball video games, and MVP Baseball 2005, MLB 2006, and ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5 are playing at the top of their games.

PS2 X Baseball gamers are the luckiest video-game sports fans around—this is a league that has definitely reached parity. The three contending baseball sims—MVP Baseball 2005 from EA Sports, MLB 2006 from Sony, and ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5 from Sega/Global Star—are showing off major league form, and a new franchise from Nintendo, Pennant Chase Baseball (see sidebar), isn't planning to be a bench warmer. Your decision to back one team over the other is probably going to be based on intangibles. So let the nitpicking begin.

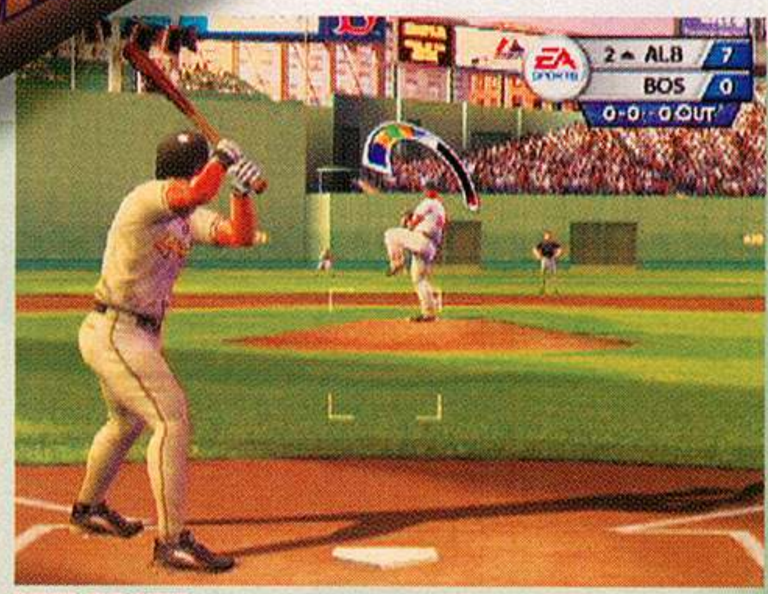
MVP Awards

MVP Baseball 2005 remains as smooth a player as ever. Last season's all-star fielding controls, which enabled you to precharge throws for a great variety of situations from precise pegs to soft tosses, get a boost from additional gameplay animations. Diving and leaping with the right analog stick feels tighter, too. Outfielders chasing down deep flies also benefit from the subtle, soft white indicator that reveals the direction of the hit ball. For pitchers, the familiar crescent "golf" meter has been improved with indicators that better enable you to nail pitches.

But hitters are actually the major beneficiaries of improved controls. The Hitter's Eye feature oh-so-briefly flashes a color at the pitcher's point of release that let's you know the general type of pitch that is being thrown. For example, green means off-speed, red means high heat. Hitting's a little more forgiving, although you can still aim with the cursor for a better hit.

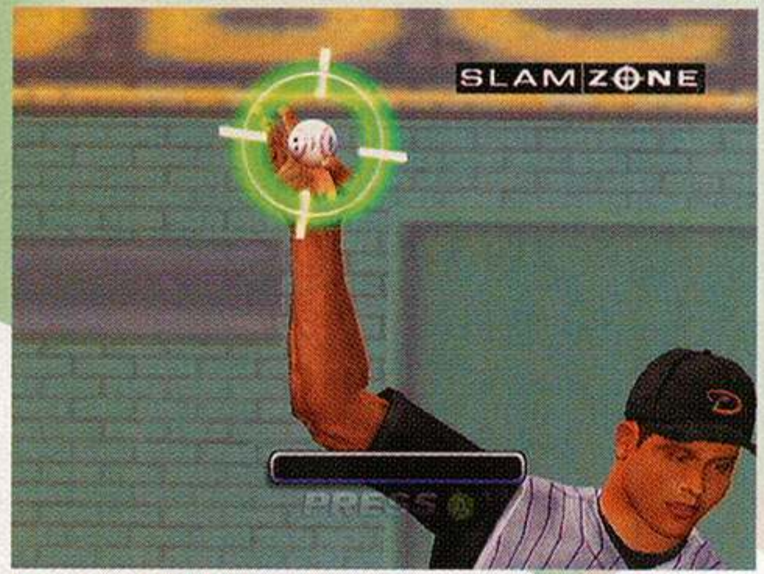
MVP's presentation remains solid without any dramatic changes to last year's version. Players look virtually the same, and the animation remains silky smooth. The competition, however, has made noticeable improvements in this area.

Owner mode enables you to build your baseball from designing the park to juggling the price of hot dogs. Additionally, your minor league farm system extends down to the Single A level this year.



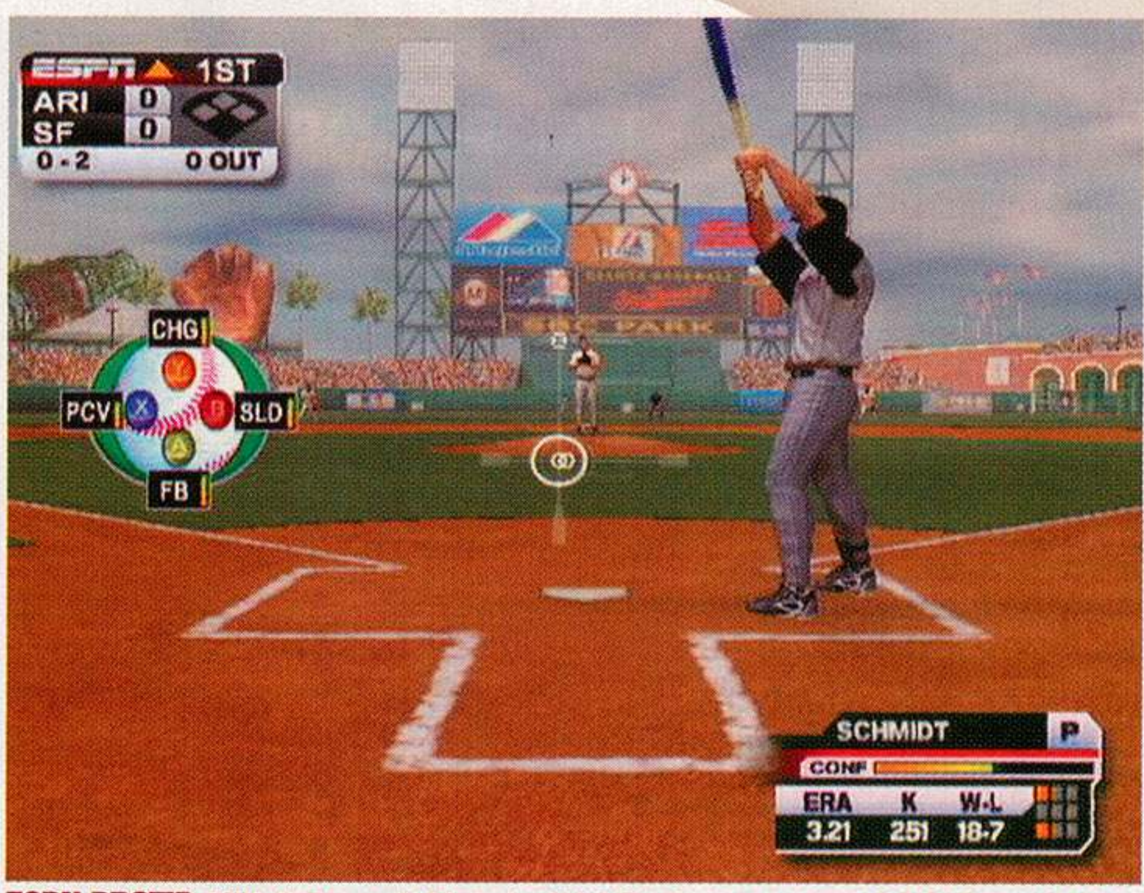
MVP PROTIP: For consistent pitching, as the indicator runs from the red area, try to tap it as it hits the blue area.

MVP PROTIP: On hits to the outfield, charge up your throw as you run to the ball. That way you can make the toss back to the infield more quickly.

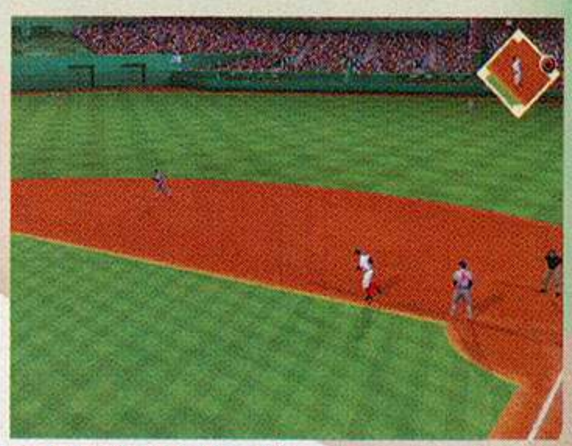


ESPN PROTIP: If the batter guesses correctly, the Slamzone lets you prepare a home run stroke.

ESPN: Player graphics and animations have undergone noticeable improvement.



ESPN PROTIP: With K-Zone pitching, don't let the bars pass completely through the reticle. Even if you're slightly off, you might hit the strike zone.


MLB PROTIP: The hit-and-run is not that easy, but if you can punch a hit to right field with a runner on first, always make him run to third base.

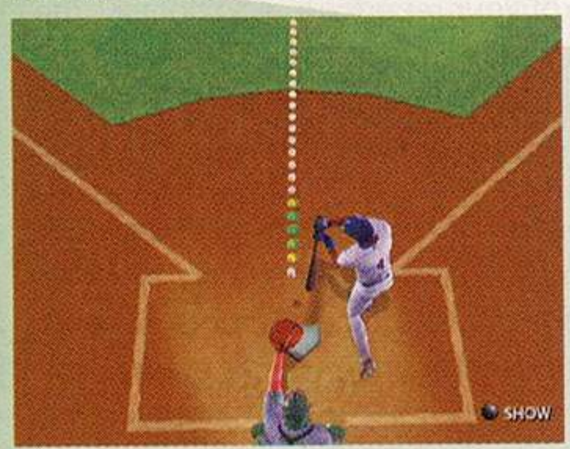
MLB Moves Up

MLB came out smoking last season, and this year MLB 2006 appears to have focused on making refinements. Most noticeable are the visuals. The player models show off better detail than last year's (although Johnny Damon's long locks still look like a weird Red Sox helmet), but the animation kicks it up yet another notch. Players all over the field display uncannily realistic mannerisms, and batting rituals at the plate are a real kick to watch.

On the field, tweaks to the gameplay mechanics are welcome improvements. Pitchers receive a new point-of-release meter that uses a two-button press technique to set power and precision. As a game wears on, the pitcher's confidence reacts to the flow of the game and affects his accuracy.

Outfielders get a new fielding zone marker that's tied to player ratings. When a ball's hit a circular on-field icon appears, and as the ball drops it shrinks around the spot where you need to position your fielder to make the play. The marker adds a great bit of challenge to defense, but you may suffer a fair number of errors until you develop your fielding skills.

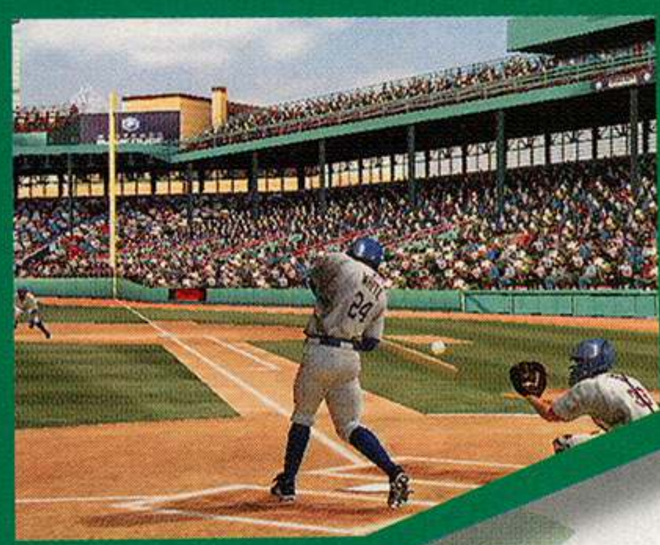
MLB's deep Franchise mode and the great Career mode get even better, too. Franchise's interface is much easier to navigate, and you have more leeway in determining player positions particularly at trade time. AAA and AA players, teams, and stadiums are available, too. The cool Career mode is even cooler. Now you can improve player skills through training and by "watching" game film. You can still use the EyeToy to map your face onto a created player, and you can select your own swings, walk-ups, stances, and home run celebrations, too.



MVP PROTIP: The Pitch/Swing Analysis on the Game Paused menu will help you learn to time your strokes.

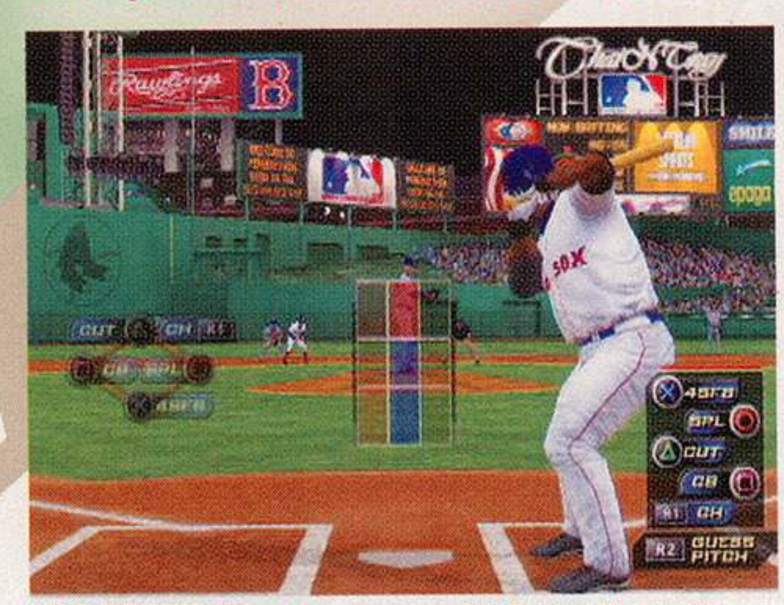
Pennant Chase Baseball

Nintendo is getting into the pennant race with Pennant Chase Baseball. This baseball game will feature MLB and MLBPA licenses. One of its claims to fame will be an RPG-like "Rookie of the Year" mode that, like a careers feature, enables you to create a player for any major league team and play him through his career. Game performance earns points, which you can apply toward player improvements.



ESPN PROTIP: If you use cursor hitting, keep your target low in the strike zone.

MLB PROTIP: With the point-of-release meter, accuracy is more important than power over the course of a game.



MLB PROTIP: Even if you're a rookie batter, it always pays to guess what pitch you're being thrown. Press R2 to display the Guess Pitch menu.

2K High Five

ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5 has undergone an overhaul of sorts. The game was number-three in a field of three last year, but this season it looks great and has dramatic gameplay improvements for all skill levels.

One of the most notable changes is in the pitching interface. Four styles of pitching include the regular 2K cursor and true-aim systems, but this season you also get the K-Zone system, which is modeled after ESPN television's K-Zone strike zone graphics. K-Zone uses a target reticle and sliding dots that move along horizontal and vertical axes. You aim the reticle at a spot in the strike zone and then tap buttons to make the sliding dots stop as near to its center as you can. The size of the reticle is affected by fatigue, pitch speed, and pitcher confidence throughout the game. Overall, the K-Zone system gives the game an arcade feel, but it's a welcome improvement to 2K5 baseball.

The batting also gets a slick little tweak. You use the standard method of guessing pitch-location with the joystick, but if you guess right you're rewarded with an arcade-style extreme zoom-in on the ball as it leaves the pitcher's fingers. The visuals also go into slow-motion to give you time to charge up hitting power by jamming on one button and then punching another in order to hit the pitch. Of course, you can swing and miss, too, if you don't nail this sequence in time.

Base running gets a shot of adrenaline, too. 2K5 presents a unique style of baseball gameplay by enabling you to control the game from the third-person view perspective of an on-base runner. This is a steal system where you control your lead, your retreat to the bag, and whether or not the batter swings at a pitch. As your skill improves, this becomes a great little game within the game that can enable you to dramatically eke out a victory in closely contested games.

Also noteworthy are the game's graphics, which are greatly improved, particularly the animation that was 2K5's Achilles' heel last season. The player models also show good detail and richer textures.

A Home Run Derby

Baseball's become a crowded field. ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5's impressive game control improvements make it fun and deep. MLB 2006 follows up last year's comeback player of the year with control tweaks and makes its formidable Franchise mode even better. MVP retains the Gold Glove for controls, but the competition has made up ground. It looks like this season baseball has something for everybody.—*Slo Mo*

MVP Baseball 2005

E

- Developed by EA Canada
- Published by EA Sports
- $49.99 ■ Available March
- Baseball ■ 4 players

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.0/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	4.5	
X	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.0/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	4.5	

MLB 2006

E

- Developed by 989 Sports
- Published by Sony ■ $49.99
- Available March ■ Baseball
- 4 players

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR 4.0/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	4.0	

ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5

E

- Developed by Visual Concepts/Kush Games
- Published by Sega/Global Star
- $49.99 ■ Available March
- Baseball ■ 4 players

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5	
	CONTROL	4.0	
X	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5	
	CONTROL	4.0	

Fight Night Round 2

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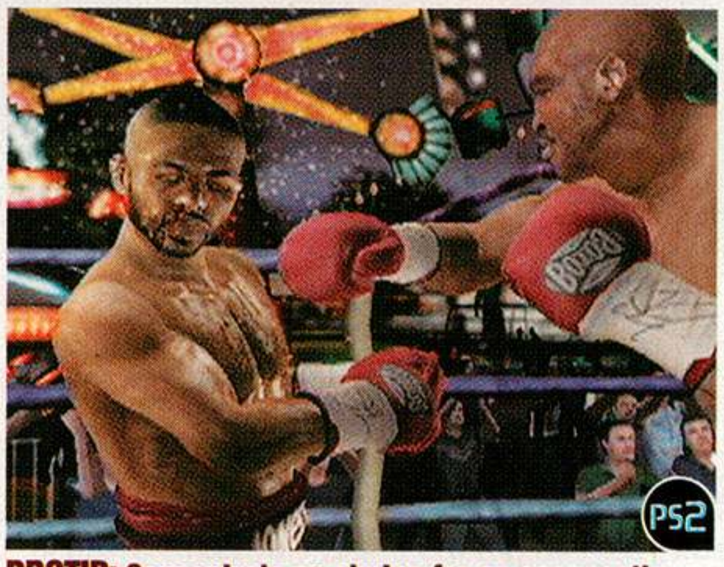
PROTIP: Get in the habit of using the most devastating punch: the jab. You can wear your opponent down and start massive combos by throwing it.



PROTIP: Concentrate on aiming for an opponent's swollen or cut eye. By continually pounding on the injury, their defense will go down.

Round 2 doesn't back down and gets ahead on the scorecard as Fight Night continues to perform in championship form.

A Cut above the Rest

Like a well-trained boxer, this year's Fight Night sticks to what's worked in the past and adds new crowd-pleasing abilities. The most striking change is in the game's innovative control scheme—where you use the right analog stick to throw jabs, hooks, and uppercuts—which has been slightly altered to enable you to fight more like a professional in the ring. Haymakers, or powerful punches, can be thrown at any time, and blocking as you shuffle your feet is now a part of your repertoire. Additionally, the responsibilities of the cutman lie in your hands as you're charged with stopping the bleeding and reducing the swelling on the fighter's face in between rounds.

Get Hooked

Fight Night has also received a face-lift. Actual beads of sweat and uglier-looking bruises are much more noticeable. The many options to customize a personal boxer—from the shape of his head to the amount of fat on his body—seem limitless. The career mode has been improved, too. You can now choose your next opponent and even change weight classes to unify a belt. The training before a fight has thankfully been refined—it's not as cumbersome on the fingers as it was in the first game. And your career doesn't end when you reach number one. You must successfully defend your title or titles until you retire.

Round 2 does show some slight bruising. The commentary and trainer advice can get repetitive, and it would have been nice to be able to switch camera angles instead of being fixed on just one view. Still, this Fight Night looks and feels as strong now as it was in the first round. And with little competition in the ring, Round 2 will have no trouble knocking some fun into boxing fans.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

ESRB T ■ Developed by EA Chicago ■ Published by EA Sports ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Boxing ■ 2 players

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	3.5	
	CONTROL	4.5	
Xbox	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	3.5	
	CONTROL	4.5	
GC	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	3.5	
	CONTROL	4.5	

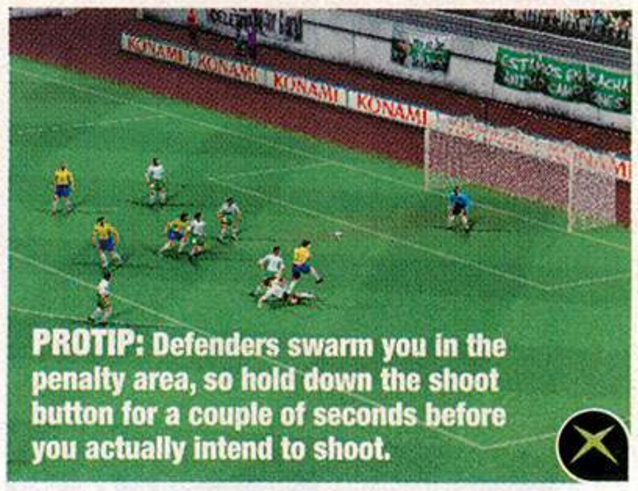
World Soccer Winning Eleven 8 International

A.C. Milan and Inter Milan. Ajax and Rotterdam. Much like the real world of soccer, the rivalry between Konami's Winning Eleven and EA's FIFA garner strong loyalties from their respective fans. Although Winning Eleven has always enjoyed the upper hand with its ball handling, FIFA's extensive work on passing has evened the playing field—potentially bringing this season's matchup to a draw.

PROTIP: Tackle ahead of the player, or else you'll be seeing a lot of the ref.

Second-Rate Trappings

New to the series are "flick" passes, which can be performed with the right analog stick. Unfortunately, actually executing them is clumsy due to the imprecise analog directional controls. Players still have the occasional problem of kicking the ball to team members' feet instead of anticipating their movements and passing ahead, which slows down the pace of offensive runs. They also tend to bunch together even when they're not near the goal. The game's mechanics are solid, but FIFA has shown itself to be superior in core gameplay—a first.



PROTIP: Defenders swarm you in the penalty area, so hold down the shoot button for a couple of seconds before you actually intend to shoot.

PROTIP: For weak-dribbling teams, head the ball in with a center—it's particularly potent in Winning Eleven.

Crossing Injury Time

However, the matchup tilts slightly in favor of Winning Eleven when looking at the whole package. It has more lifelike animations and movements for players, and dynamic sounds from crowd stands that give life to the sport's maniacal fervor. Plus, team stats overall are better balanced (not blatantly favoring South American and European teams), the selection of international teams is more diverse, and the Master League mode is easier to delve into. It's still a winner—but this time by a very narrow margin.—*Funky Zealot*

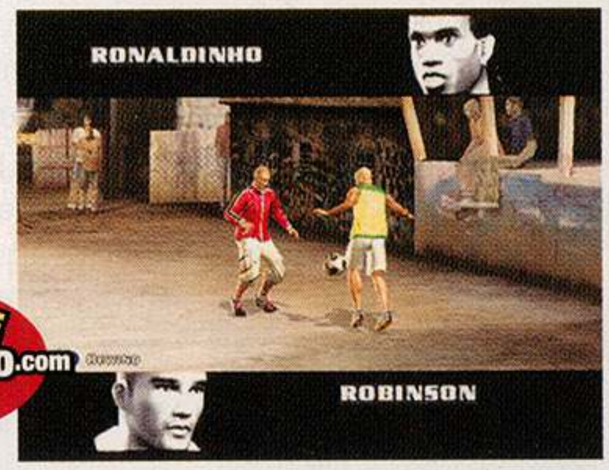
ESRB E ■ Developed and published by Konami ■ $39.99 ■ Available now ■ Soccer ■ 8 players

GAMEPRO EDITORS' CHOICE

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5	
	CONTROL	4.0	
Xbox	GRAPHICS	4.0	FUN FACTOR 4.5/5
	SOUND	4.5	
	CONTROL	4.0	

FIFA Street

FIFA Street is shaping up to be a fascinating entry in the Street catalog. This is the most realistic-looking Street game yet. The game's going to feature actual pro soccer players from all the international teams with spot-on character models. The four-on-four (including the goalie) teams play on 10 global locations ranging from the Favelas section of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to New York City, USA. The controls are already in game-shape and deftly enable you to launch nifty moves from a slick bag of tricks. As with NBA Street V3, you rack up combos to build Game-Breaker moves. The right analog stick in combination with the triggers orchestrates the stunts also not unlike NBA V3. FIFA Street is likely going to surprise a lot of gamers with its cool footwork, whether they're soccer fans or not. It's already on track to turn headers…er, heads.—*Slo Mo*



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■ Hands-On ■ Developed by EA Canada
■ Published by EA Sports Big ■ Target release date: March

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

Outlaw Tennis

Just as it did on the golf course, developer Hypnotix is bringing its raunchy, over-the-top arcade-style play to the tennis court. In Outlaw Tennis, you can choose from 16 playable characters (with adjustable attributes like Power and Endurance) and dress them in saucy attire. Matches take place on several diverse courts—including an aircraft carrier and a battle arena from the movie *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*—and players can take the game online in both console versions for singles and doubles (including regular two-on-two and Canadian two-on-one) matches. Visual eye candy and other aesthetic features aside, Outlaw peppers matches with a host of optional hazards, such as time bombs and pinball bumpers, and you can even engage in hand-to-hand fighting to interrupt an opponent's momentum. Xbox players will have the extra option of being able to rip their own tunes into the console's hard drive.—*Major Mike*

■ First Look ■ Developed by Hypnotix
■ Published by Global Star ■ Target release date: May

All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

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Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana

PS2 Old-school console RPGers who like their sprites hand drawn and their weapon-creation systems complicated have an ally in NIS America—a frequent purveyor of quirky, anime-laden strategy/RPGs like Disgaea, La Pucelle: Tactics, and Phantom Brave. NIS's latest import is called Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana. It's the epic tale of a young lad named Klein Kiesling who travels the world of Regallzine in order to crack the secret code of alchemy. The heart of the game lies in its item-customization system—Klein can extract elements from objects in the game and transform them into Mana with the help of various elemental spirits. Mana is then used to create new weapons or grant powers to existing ones.

Klein gets around dungeons by running, jumping, and attacking in an action-gamey kinda way, but battles are handled by what NIS has dubbed the "Cost Turn System." Regular attacks cost a single turn, while special attacks, such as summoning a creature to the battlefield, can take several turns to activate and are interruptible.

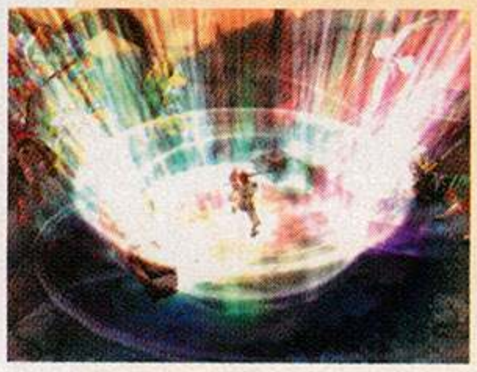
NIS America has been batting a thousand with its quality nuttiness. How long can its weird winning streak last?—*Star Dingo*

- **First Look**
- **Developed by Gust**
- **Published by NIS America**
- **Target release date: May**

Tales from Across the Sea

GameCube gamers got a taste of Namco's Tales series last year with Tales of Symphonia. Hopefully this year it will be PS2 owners' turn as **Tales of Rebirth** was recently released in Japan. The new installment takes place in the Kingdom of Callegia, where 18-year-old hero Veigue Lungber lives; the story revolves around an ancient holy war between humanity and the Gajuma race. The game takes a more traditional approach to its graphics than Symphonia, opting for 2D hand-drawn sprites on 3D backgrounds. The battle system is different from Symphonia's in that characters and monsters line up on three different "planes" and can move back and forth between them as they fight. There's no official word yet when or if Namco is bringing Rebirth to the U.S., but we'd be surprised if it didn't given the game's success in Japan.

Sega is working on **Shining Force Neo** for the PS2, the next installment in the classic Shining Force series. The big twist here is that it's not anything like the old grid-based strategy/RPGs of yore. Neo is more along the lines of an action/RPG. The main character, the ubiquitous Max, has the new ability to switch classes depending on the type of weapon he has equipped—sword and shield for knight, two-handed sword for all-out warrior, bow for archer, and staff for sorcerer. Max can take up to two more party members with him into combat, selecting them from a headquarters much like the one in the original Shining Force games. Old-school RPG gamers may not like the direction this beloved strategy/RPG series is headed, but hey, times change. No word yet on a U.S. release, but Japanese players are expecting the Force will be with them in late March.



Ys: The Ark of Napishtim

PS2 Ys: The Ark of Napishtim is a game misplaced in time. You are a young boy with a sword who collects money and kills things, and that's really all there is to it—but that purity and simplicity are a big part of this surprising little action/RPG's charm.

PROTIP: Jumping can get you away from most attacks. Use it almost as a dodge.

Creative Anachronism

The role-playing saga of red-haired Adol Christian goes as far back in time as Final Fantasy, but you don't need to have played his previous adventures to dig into this one. The plot centers on a sort of Bermuda Triangle phenomenon known as the Great Vortex and the Isle of Canaan that lies inside—a place where lost seafarers have become stranded and have re-created their own society. Adol finds himself trapped here and has to make his way through the game's dungeons and towns.

The game's engine is 3D, but you have no control over the camera, so everything has a 2D-anime look and feel. Adol's moves are exciting, the enemies he fights are quirky and have clever attacks, and big bosses abound with neat animations and effects. The characters all have full 2D anime portraits during conversations, and every line is fully voiced by some entertainingly overzealous voice actors.

PROTIP: Deal with the Wandering Calamity by jumping to hit the jewel in its chest then running to the lower part of the screen to avoid his hand swipes and fire breath.

The control scheme has absolutely no frills—Adol simply runs, jumps, swings his elemental swords, and occasionally uses a bit of magic. We praise the designers' decision to make Adol a speedy little devil, so darting around towns and inevitably retreading terrain isn't such a tedious chore. Adol's sword swings are quick and his combos are fun, and the game's fast pace is one of its strongest allies—experience, sword upgrades (attained by collecting Emel from felled foes), and sword skills are granted frequently, so you're always getting a solid sense of reward.

PROTIP: If you enter a new area and you can only do zero damage to the enemies, turn back—you're not supposed to be there yet.

The most obvious thing missing is a useful map—the one you have access to is a nice piece of art, sure, but it's nearly impossible to glean any information from it. The inventory system is also a little lacking as you can equip only one item in your "quick slot." Plus, your inventory can't be accessed during boss battles, which means if you've loaded yourself up with the wrong item for the job, you're out of luck.

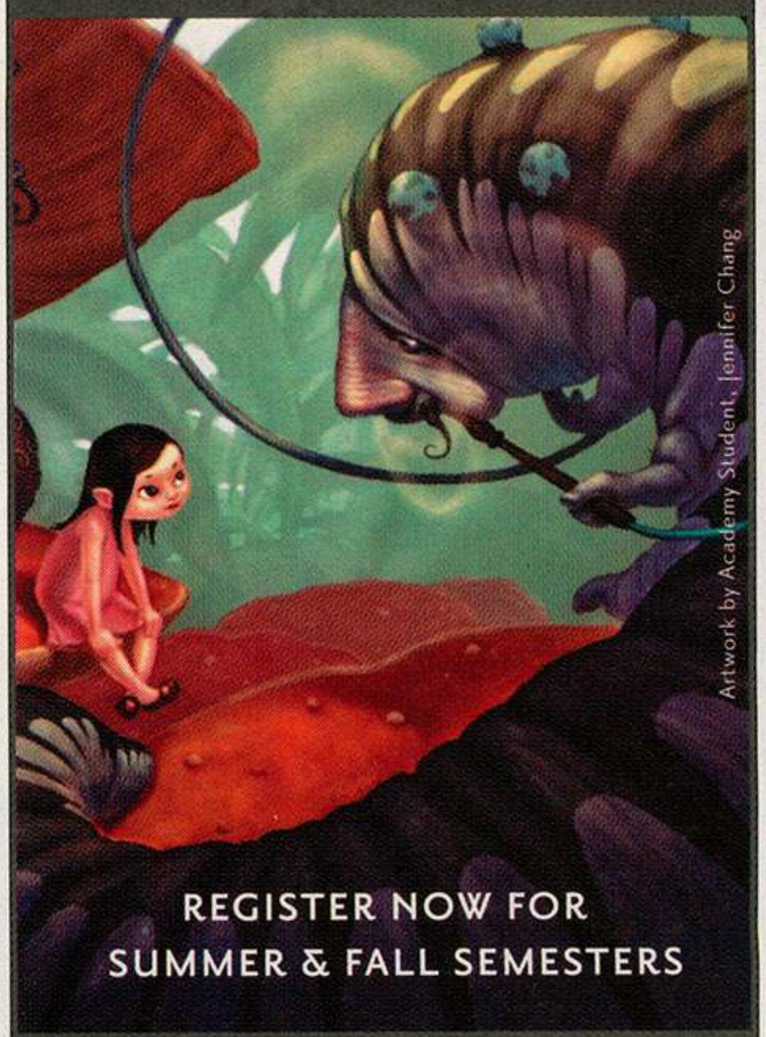
Zen and the Art of RPG Design

Ys: The Ark of Napishtim is action/role-playing in its purest form—fast, well made, and fun even without the complexity (or convolution) of Final Fantasy, Knights of the Old Republic, or even The Legend of Zelda. Sometimes there's nothing wrong with a little good ol' fashioned simplicity.—*Star Dingo*

ESRB T ■ Developed by Nihon Falcom ■ Published by Konami ■ $49.99 ■ Available now ■ Action/RPG ■ 1 player

PS2			FUN FACTOR
	GRAPHICS	4.0	4.0/5
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	4.5	

ANIMATION & COMPUTER ARTS



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READER OF THE MONTH TIP

PLAYSTATION 2 PS2

MERCENARIES

During gameplay, **press Select** to access the PDA and then select Factions. At the Factions screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone.

$1,000,000: Press Right, Down, Left, Up, Up, Left, Down, Right.

All Items in Merchant of Menace Shop: Press Down, Down, Down, Down, Up, Left, Right, Right.

Infinite Ammo: Press Right, Left, Right, Right, Left, Right, Left, Left.

Infinite Health: Press Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right.

Phil Brinkston—Wilmington, VA

PLAYSTATION 2 PS2

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

At the Main Menu, select Extras and then select Cheats. At the Cheats screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you enter the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message.

Seize the Day by Bless:	SIEZE
Take A Look At My Life by Fat Joe:	CARTAGENA
Walk With Me By Joe Budden:	PUMP

DUEL MASTERS

During a duel, enter the following codes to enable the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone.

Add One Shield (Player 1): Press and hold R3, and then press ×, □, △.

Add One Shield (Player 2): Press and hold R3, and then press ×, ○, △.

Break One Shield (Player 1): Press and hold R3, and then press △, □, ×.

Break One Shield (Player 2): Press and hold R3, and then press △, ○, ×.

Instantly Win (Player 1): Press and hold R3, and then press L1, R1, L1.

Instantly Win (Player 2): Press and hold R3, and then press R1, L1, R1.

Get Four of Every Card: At the main menu, select Arcade Mode and then select Deck Build. At the Deck Select screen, **press and hold R3, and then press L1, L1, L1.** If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Enter the following codes during gameplay and not while the game is paused. When a code is entered correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

All Traffic Lights Are Green: Press Right, R1, Up, L2, L2, Left, R1, L1, R1, R1.

Beach Party: Press Up, Up, Down, Down, □, ○, L1, R1, △, Down.

BMX Bunny Hops: Press △, □, ○, ○, □, ○, ○, L1, L2, L2, R1, R2.

Cars Fly: Press □, Down, L2, Up, L1, ○, Up, ×, Left.

Dozer: Press R2, L1, L1, Right, Right, Up, Up, ×, L1, Left.

Fat CJ: Press △, Up, Up, Left, Right, □, ○, Down.

Full Weapon Aiming While Driving: Press Up, Up, □, L2, Right, ×, R1, Down, R2, ○.

Gang Members Are Everywhere: Press Left, Right, Right, Right, Left, ×, Down, Up, □, Right, Down.

Gangs Control the Street: Press L2, Up, R1, R1, Left, R1, R1, R2, Right, Down.

High Jumps: Press Up, Up, △, △, Up, Up, Left, Right, □, R2, R2.

Hydra: Press △, △, □, ○, ×, L1, L1, Down, Up.

Infinite Lung Capacity: Press Down, Left, L1, Down, Down, R2, Down, L2, Down.

Mega Punch: Press Up, Left, ×, △, R1, ○, ○, ○, L2.

Monster Truck: Press Right, Up, R1, R1, R1, Down, △, △, ×, ○, L1, L1.

Muscled CJ: Press △, Up, Up, Left, Right, □, ○, Left.

Orange Sky: Press Left, Left, L2, R1, Right, □, □, L1, L2, ×.

Quad: Press Left, Left, Down, Down, Up, Up, □, ○, △, R1, R2.

Rare Car Traffic: Press Up, L1, R1, Up, Right, Up, ×, L2, ×, L1.

Really Sunny Weather: Press R2, ×, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, Down.

Skinny CJ: Press △, Up, Up, Left, Right, □, ○, Right.

Stunt Plane: Press ○, Up, L1, L2, Down, R1, L1, L1, Left, Left, ×, △.

Taxis Have Nitrous: Press Up, ×, △, ×, △, ×, □, R2, Right.

Vehicle of Death: Press L1, L2, L2, Up, Down, Down, Up, R1, R2, R2.

Vortex: Press △, △, □, ○, ×, L1, L2, Down, Down.

RUMBLE ROSES

Clean Pause: During a match, **press Start** to pause the game. At the Pause screen, **press Select** to clear the pause menu.

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XBOX

MTX MOTOTRAX

At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, select Cheats. At the Enter Cheat Code screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will be unlocked in its respective menu.

Unlock All Movies:	23F7IC5
Unlock All Sobe Gear:	5OB3
Unlock Maggot Rider And Slipknot Bike:	86657457
Unlock Officer Dick:	BADG3

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Best Buy Car Vinyl: At the title screen, **press Up, Down, Up, Down, Down, Up, Right, Left**. If you entered the cheat correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone and the Best Buy vinyl will be available in the Graphics Shop.

OUTLAW GOLF 2

During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the cheat correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

Bigger Ball: Press and hold L, and then press Up, Up, Up, Black.

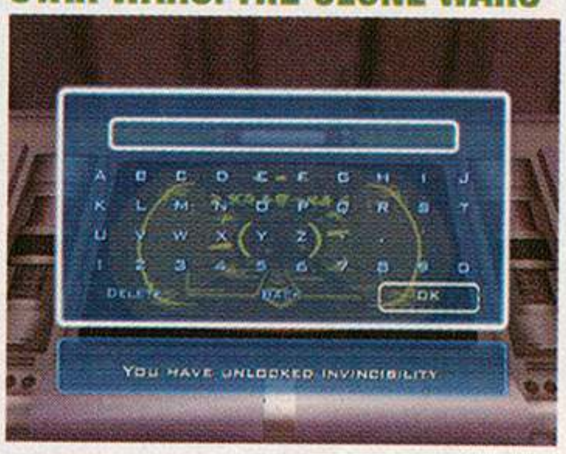
Bouncy Ball: Press and hold L, and then press Up, Up, A, Up, Up, B, Up, Up, X.

Extra Beat Token: Press and hold L, and then press White, White, Black, Black, Y.

Perfect Shot: Press and hold L, and then press A, B, A, A, B, White, B, A.

Smaller Ball: Press and hold L, and then press Down, Down, Down, Black.

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS



Invincibility: At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, select Bonuses. At the Bonuses screen, select Codes and then enter LORDOFSITH. If you entered the cheat correctly, the name of the cheat will appear onscreen.

MULTIPLATFORM

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

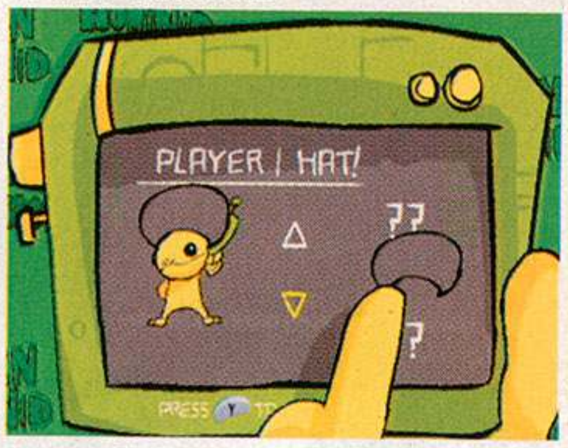
At the Main Menu, select EA Sports Options & Extras and then select Passwords. At the Password screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the cheat correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

Passwords are case-sensitive.

Adriana Sugar Dolce:	SOSWEET
Alastair Captain McFadden:	NICESOCKS
All Accessories:	TIGERMOBILE
All Adidas Items:	91treSTR
All Calloway Items:	cgTR78qw
All Cleveland Items:	CL45etUB
All Courses:	THEWORLDISYOURS
All Courses And Golfers:	THEGIANTOYSTER
All Maxfli Items:	FDGH597i
All Nike Items:	YJHk342B
All Odyssey Items:	kjnMR3qv
All Ping Items:	R453DrTe
All Precept Items:	BRi3498Z
All Tag Items:	cDsa2fgY
All TourStage Items:	TS345329
Aphrodite Papadapolus:	TEMPTING
Arnold Palmer:	THEKING
Ben Hogan:	PUREGOLF
Bev Boomer Bouchier:	THEBEEHIVE
Billy Bear Hightower:	TOOTALL
Bunjiro Bud Tanaka:	INTHEFAMILY
Ceasar The Emperor Rosado:	LANDOWNER
Dion Double D Douglas:	DDDouglas
Gary Player:	BLACKKNIGHT
Hunter Steelhead Elmore:	GREENCOLLAR
Jack Nicklaus:	GOLDENBEAR
Jeb Shooter McGraw:	SIXSHOOTER
Justin The Hustler Timberlake:	ALTEREGO
Kendra Spike Lovette:	ENGLISHPUNK
Raquel Rocky Rockers:	DOUBLER
Reginald Reg Withers:	REGGIE
Seve Ballesteros:	THEMAGICIAN
Sunday Tiger Woods:	NEWLEGEND
Tiffany Tiff Williams:	RICHGIRL
Unlock All In Skill Section:	NIGHTGOLFER

MULTIPLATFORM

ALIEN HOMINID



Hat Codes: At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, select Player 1 Setup. At the Player 1 Setup screen, select Name and then enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the cheat correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound.

Afro:	SUPERFLY
Blond Wig:	APRIL
Brown Hunting Cap:	CLETUS
Dandelion Headdress:	DANDY
Flower Hat:	GRRL
Jerry Curl:	GOODMAN
Stove Pipe Hat:	ABE
Tiara:	PRINCESS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GRAND THEFT AUTO ADVANCE

During gameplay, **simultaneously press and hold A and B, and then press Start** to activate Cheat mode. Once in Cheat mode, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming tone.

$15,000: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, L, L.

All Armor: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, A, L.

All Health: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, B, B.

All Weapons: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, A, A.

Gang Hostility: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, B, R.

Lower Wanted Level: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, A, R.

Maximum Wanted Level: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, R, R.

Enter the code again for Zero Wanted Level.

Raise Wanted Level: Press Left, Right, Up, Down, R, A.

SUIKODEN IV

Check out this tactic to defeat Boss Crab in Suikoden IV. For more info, see the complete guide now on sale from Brady Games.

BOSS BATTLE

After being exiled from your homeland and then picked up by a Merchant ship, your small crew ends up on a deserted island. Just as you're ready to leave the island, Chiepoo's stomach leads him into a rough spot and a battle with a group of crabs.

BOSS CRAB

Level:	36
HP:	1300
Drops (potch):	1000
Drops (item):	Giant Crab Shell, Crab Bun

WILD CRAB

Level:	17
HP:	90
Drops (potch):	380
Drops (item):	Shell (20% chance), Seashell (30% chance)

When Boss Crab appears, it's initially difficult to damage. Don't use any magic points, and focus on eliminating the Wild Crabs. At the end of the third round, you are prompted to use the Rune of Punishment, and the real battle begins.

After using the Rune of Punishment, Boss Crab appears with six Wild Crabs. Boss Crab has two breath attacks. The first, Water Bubble, hits a single target, while the second hits all targets for 50 to 70 points worth of damage.

Use Rune abilities that target multiple enemies, such as Berserk Blow or Dancing Flames, to take out the Wild Crabs in the first round of battle. Boss Crab has no particular weakness, so use whatever Rune abilities are available. However, have one character each round heal the damage caused by Boss Crab's attacks.

While Boss Crab isn't extraordinarily dangerous, you can expect this to be a long battle, especially if your group is between levels 17 and 20.

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Academy of Art University 101
ACADEMYART.EDU

Activision, Inc. 42, 43
ACTIVISION.COM

American Legacy Foundation 55
INFECT-TRUTH.COM

Atari 9, 89
ATARI.COM

AXE Deodorant 33
THEAXEEFFECT.COM

Bandai America 47
BANDAI.COM

Best Buy 11
BESTBUY.COM

Capcom . . . . . 51, 86, 87, 4th Cover
CAPCOM.COM

Century Media 81
CENTURYMEDIA.COM

Electronic Arts 75, 76, 77, 78
EA.COM

ESPN 28, 29
ESPN.COM

Full Sail Real World Education 99
FULLSAIL.COM

Hasbro 21
ATTACKTIX.COM

Intec, Inc. 71
INTECLINK.COM

Konami 103
KONAMI.COM

Microsoft Xbox 18, 19
MICROSOFT.COM

Midway Games 7, 73, 92, 93
MIDWAY.COM

Namco 13, 52, 53, 66, 67
NAMCO.COM

Nintendo of America, Inc. . . . . 3rd Cover
NINTENDO.COM

NYKO 83
NYKO.COM

Outward Bound 105
OUTWARDBOUND.ORG

Skechers USA 5
SKECHERS.COM

Sony Computer
Entertainment America, Inc. . . . . 2nd Cover, 1
SONY.COM

Sony Online Entertainment 41
SONYONLINE.COM

Square Enix, Inc. 61, 63, 65
SQUARE-ENIX.COM

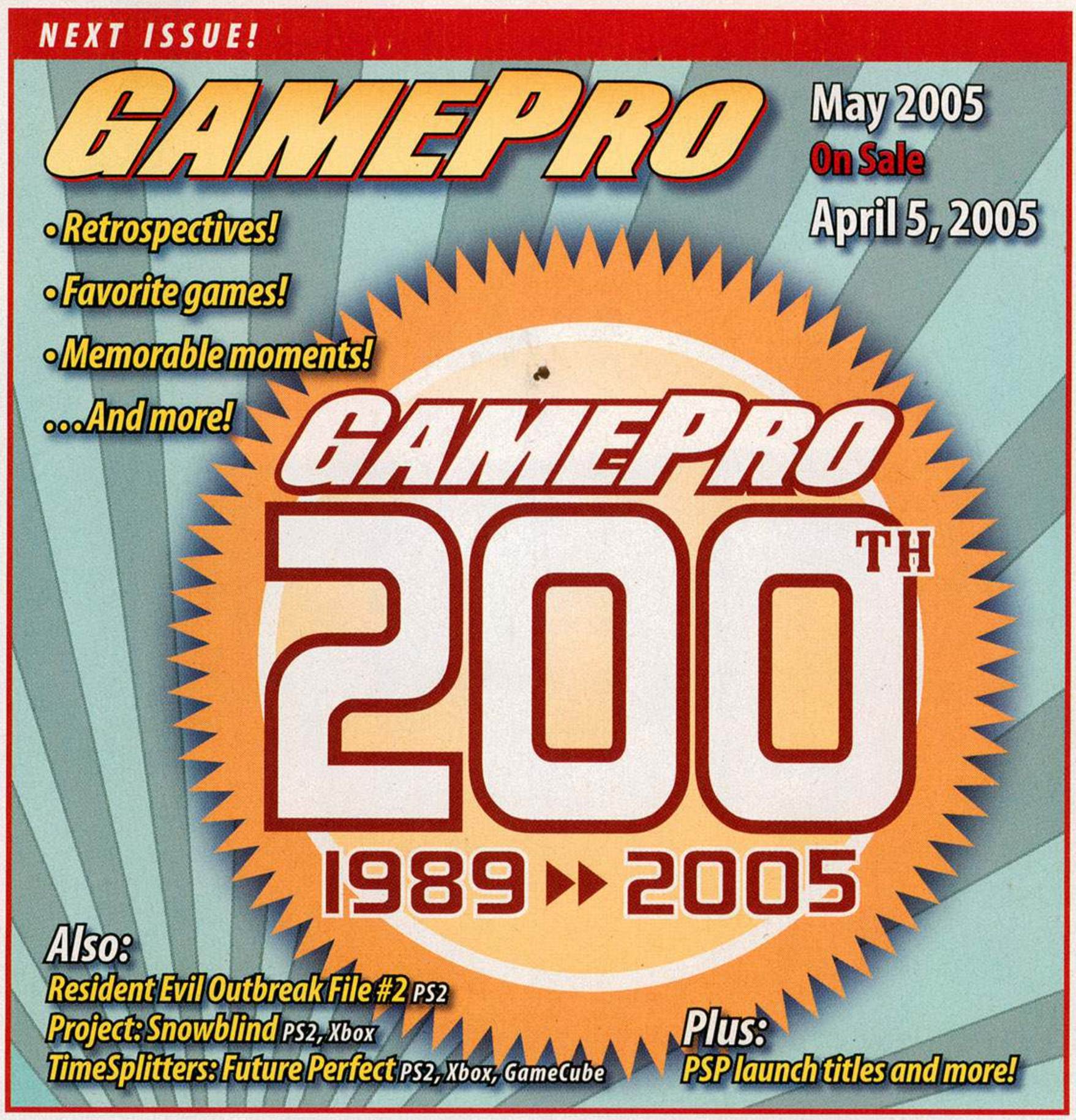
Take 2 Interactive 23
TAKE2GAMES.COM

THQ, Inc. 2, 3, 17, 69, 95
THQ.COM

University of Advancing Technology 91
UAT.EDU

The Upper Deck Company LLC 45, 59
UPPERDECK.COM

VERB 15
VERBNOW.COM



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Top 10 Best-Selling Console Video-Game Titles
December 2004

	TITLE	PLATFORM	LAST MONTH
1.	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Rockstar Games	PlayStation 2	2 ▲
2.	Need for Speed Underground 2 EA Games	PlayStation 2	4 ▲
3.	Halo 2* Microsoft	Xbox	1 ▼
4.	Madden NFL 2005* EA Sports	PlayStation 2	6 ▲
5.	Call of Duty: Finest Hour Activision	PlayStation 2	NEW
6.	Need for Speed Underground 2 EA Games	Xbox	9 ▲
7.	NBA Live 2005 EA Sports	PlayStation 2	NEW
8.	Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater Konami	PlayStation 2	7 ▼
9.	Mario Party 6 Nintendo	GameCube	NEW
10.	Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II—The Sith Lords LucasArts	Xbox	NEW

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Why *GP* Editors Won't Be Hunting for Easter Eggs

1. Resident Evil 4 (GameCube)
2. Half-Life 2 (PC)
3. Halo 2 (Xbox)
4. Shadow of Rome (PS2)
5. World of Warcraft (PC)
6. Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (PS2)
7. The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap (GBA)
8. Call of Duty (Xbox)
9. Feel the Magic: XY/XX (DS)
10. Fable (Xbox)

1

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Rockstar is certainly reveling in its latest tale-of-the-gun urban adventure. Although it doesn't necessarily break new ground, San Andreas nevertheless brings all that was fun in previous Grand Theft Auto games into a 1990s world of gangster violence. It's an open playing field that enables you to drive, fly, or walk in any direction; an epic journey that brings out the ruthless thug in you; and a stylized game that houses a unique decade of incredible tunes and characters voiced by an outstanding cast of actors.

5

People just can't get enough of WWII first-person shooters. So what if this Call of Duty doesn't exactly mirror its venerable PC predecessors? Massive explosions, fierce combat, and a tale of one of the grittiest wars told from three viewpoints are plenty to coerce any action gamer.

10

It's no surprise to see this follow-up to the highly regarded original on the top 10–best-seller list. Fans of the Star Wars universe continue their enthusiasm with the Force in yet another quest worth playing twice—once as a good-hearted Jedi and once as an all-powerful follower of the Sith.

Top 10–Selling Games of 2004

1. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (PS2)
2. Halo 2* (Xbox)
3. Madden NFL 2005* (PS2)
4. ESPN NFL 2K5 (PS2)
5. Need for Speed Underground 2 (PS2)
6. Pokémon FireRed (with adapter) (GBA)
7. NBA Live 2005 (PS2)
8. Spider-Man 2 (PS2)
9. Halo (Xbox)
10. ESPN NFL 2K5 (Xbox)

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