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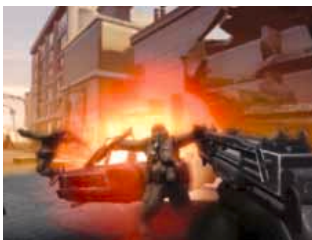


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KINGDOM HEARTS II

No Haley Joel Osment in this one; he's too busy fighting puberty

EDITORIAL



I've gotten to see several hardware launches during my years as a gaming journalist: Nintendo 64, Virtual Boy, Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, GameCube, Xbox, DS, PSP, and

probably 15 iterations of the Game Boy. They're always exciting to see (except for the Game Boy Pocket), and I'm one lucky guy to be able to cover them as part of my job.

It's always strange seeing a new console. You're always questioning the name (Dreamcast), the look (GameCube), and what the hell it's supposed to be about (Virtual Boy). Eventually, you get used to whatever it is you're questioning (OK, maybe not the Virtual Boy), and it's game-on from there...business as usual. Hey, now I think "Dreamcast" is a perfectly fine name for a gaming machine.

This issue, we got unprecedented behind-the-scenes access to see the successor to the Xbox, the Xbox 360. Do we like it? Are we impressed? You might expect us to be gushing all over this thing. After all, Microsoft was generous enough to let the press see it early and it is a new, much more powerful game system. But we're not about the hype here. We'll be honest about what we think about the Xbox 360 so far (though keep in mind that early opinions are just that: early and opinionated—things always have plenty of time to improve before they ship to stores). Throughout the rest of the issue, from our nuclear-sized 33-page cover feature to li'l ol' Final Word way in the back, we discuss this new piece of hardware in brutally honest detail. But forget us—what do you think? Read on, then let us know your reactions. But please don't call us, you crazy sons of bitches. Try e-mail (EGM@ziffdavis.com) or our official Electronic Gaming Monthly message boards at boards.1UP.com instead.

—Editor-in-Chief, Dan "Shoe" Hsu

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Letters

ranting, raving, and a psp purse

■ The man you love to hate: Jack Thompson.



Jack inbox

I thoughtfully e-mailed "antiviolence crusader" Jack Thompson [the trial lawyer from last issue's Head to Head article on videogame violence]. His address is available at www.stopkill.com. I received the following response: "Sorry you don't like my points. I like yours...on your head. Are those horns, by the way?"

—Anonymous

Here and there

Regarding the Head to Head article: Gaming is just as big in Japan as it is in the United States, but what about crime? Has anyone compared the countries?

—Chris Houston-Ponchak

Although Japan's crime rates remain among the lowest of any industrialized nation, reported juvenile offenses—the vast majority involving shoplifting and burglary—are on the rise. However, cultural differences complicate

comparisons of the sort that you suggest—notably, Japan's strict gun-control laws, as well as a greater emphasis on the group and on not standing out or behaving in ways that will bring dishonor to the family.

Devil made him do it

It seems to me that trial lawyer Jack Thompson is teaching kids that they don't need to take responsibility for their own actions, that they need ever only shout, "Grand Theft Auto made us do it." And as for games such as *Full Spectrum Warrior* being used to "break down the inhibition to kill," Thompson is dead wrong. The U.S. military uses simulators to train soldiers in the use of squad tactics, not to desensitize them.

—Kenny Fahrion

Indelible ink

Having a best friend who's a tattoo artist, I get to hear all sorts of fun stories about good ink gone bad. The worst is when a poor shlub thinks he's getting a Japanese symbol for "power" when he's actually being branded with "\$5 princess for half hour." Unfortunately, it would appear that Mr. Aaron Stoddard [featured in *EGM* #192's Bonus Gallery] has fallen victim to similar circumstances. While it is a very cool design for a tat, it's not *Galaga*. Any gamer worth his salt can recognize the intergalactic harbinger of bugged-out chrome vengeance that is Yar, from the way-too-cool-to-not-have-a-sequel *Yar's*

Letter of the month

"Antiviolence crusader" Jack Thompson [Head to Head, *EGM* #192] seems to think there's some big cabal between game companies and retailers, that they're conspiring to get mature games into children's hands. Has he shopped in stores? I recently went to a Wal-Mart to pick up some M-rated software along with a few R-rated movies and had two clerks rush me as if I was going to rob the place. And I'm in my mid-20s, mind you. Don't get me wrong; under no circumstances should kids play these games without parental consent, but why is it that people like Jack don't know jack?

P.S. In your *Marvel Nemesis* preview, you said Jill Valentine was in *Resident Evil 2*, when in fact, she was only in *RE* and *RE3*. I think you do this stuff just to see if we're paying attention.

—Dan Gallagher



Congrats, Dan Gallagher. As our Letter of the Month writer (and one of many riled-up readers), you've scored a free M-rated game from *EGM*'s secret stash.

Revenge. Break out the bleach and steel wool; it's gonna be a long, painful night.

—Mr. Gone

Tale of the tape

I hold *Halo 2* LAN parties every weekend (high-speed Internet isn't available here), and after each match we argue, often over team killing. So I got this idea: plug my Xbox into a VCR and pop in a tape so that I can record the matches. Now, when a disagreement arises, we simply rewind the tape and watch what happened in slo-mo. For instance, right when I opened up on an opponent during a team oddball match, my teammate cracks the skull over mine, killing me. Or so I thought. The

replay showed my teammate swinging at the enemy and accidentally smacking me as I stepped in with my shotgun. Now wouldn't it be cool if *Halo 3* allowed you to watch (and save) a replay after each game?

—Jesse Turner

Actually, Jesse, at one time *Halo 2* had a feature called "saved films" that might've let you make movies. When asked about it in *EGM* #187, Bungie Content Manager Frank O'Connor said, "It would have been nice to have something like that in *Halo*, but it was not to be." Or, in other words, maybe next time. ➤

POST OFFICE

Rambling and ranting from our message boards, **boards.1UP.com** (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* forums)



■ Xbox 360: Revolution or going in circles? Read more on page 62.

What's in a name?

Strayfox: 360 makes me think of 3D0.

Jc-ice: Better then naming it Ybox.

Atihsu: Doesn't 360 mean going around in circles? Perhaps it's prophetic.

MaximumX: I hope they come to their senses and name it Sexbox.

Budmanx: I'll buy it, but I'll refuse to call it by name.

MrCommandante: It's 360 degrees, as in covering all entertainment sectors: games, music, movies, and maybe the Internet.

Morf: Killing Xbox early kind of annoys me. It's PS2 that needs to make way for PS3.

Nintendo4Life: That's what they want you to think.

NotoriousNeo: True. Releasing it so soon might backfire in the way it did with Sega's Dreamcast, especially if it looks dated next to Sony's new system.

HymenCrusher: I want one. Xbox got me into online gaming.

MaleficentOgre: XNA [Microsoft's development platform designed to cut costs between PC and Xbox ports] could dissuade me from buying 360.

Crispy4001: Yeah, sooner or later, Microsoft is going to have to regulate the traffic between the two platforms if it wants Xbox 360 to keep its own identity. But that won't go over well with developers seeking to profit from both platforms.

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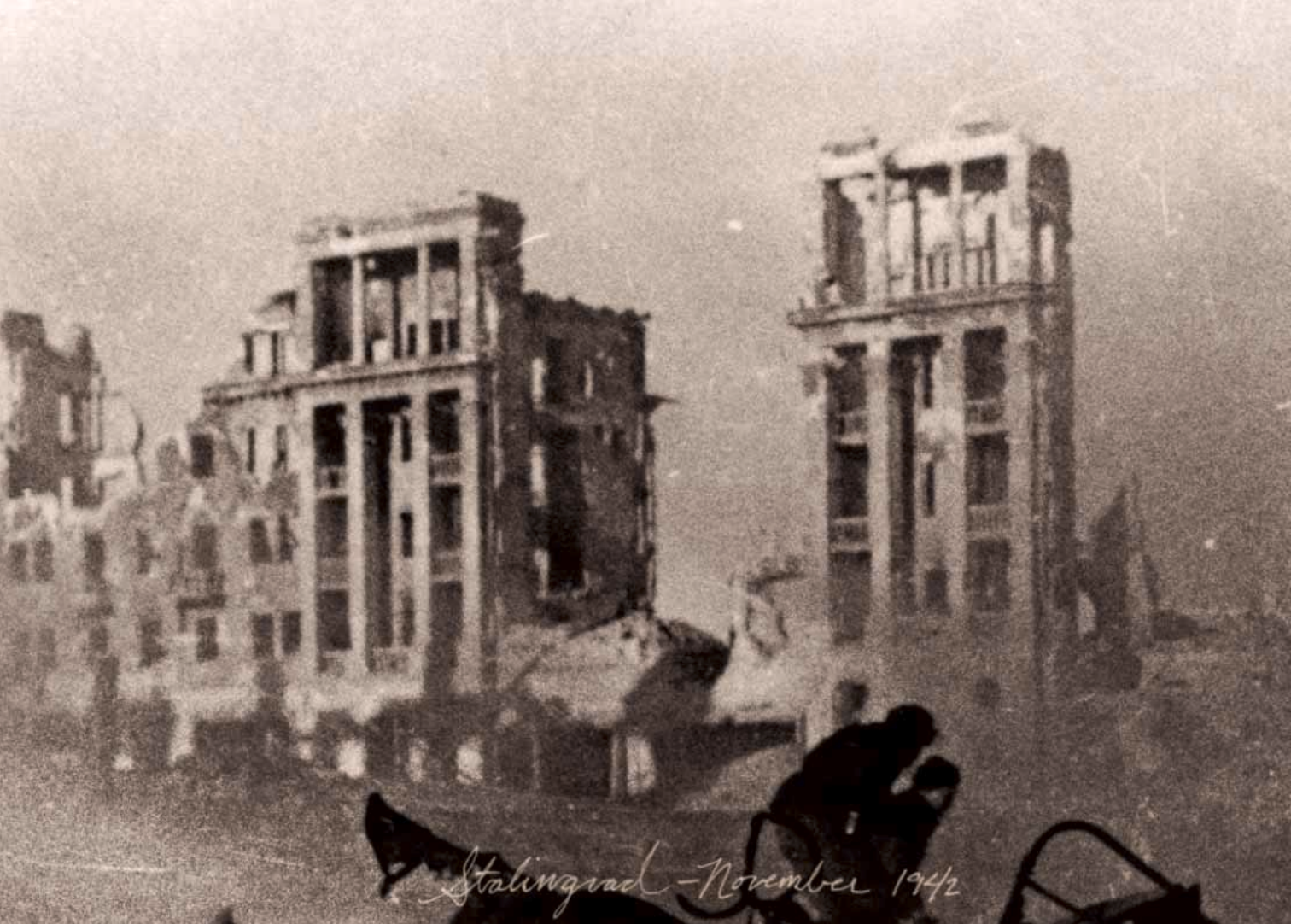
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BONUS GALLERY

Going the extra mile for love of the game



Tri-forceful

I just got the June issue with the fine feature on the new *Legend of Zelda*, and figured I'd show you some pics of a computer case I designed for a customer and fellow fan. He wanted something simple and distinguished, so this is what I came up with. (I plan on making another for my PC, but still haven't decided on a design.) Enjoy.

—Patrick Mounts



Lucky lady

My mom's good friend got married a few months back, but get this: The groom is a huge *Halo* fan, and went so far as to order a custom *Halo* wedding cake! Of course, he had to have a traditional cake as well, but it's still awesome, eh? Peep the picture and notice that he even put different-colored Master Chiefs on the corners.

—Nicholas A. Lopez



Go girl

You haven't printed cosplay pictures for quite some time, so I'm sending you some of myself to make fun of. They're tributes to Sonic and Knuckles, two of my favorite characters. I plan on making Tails to complete the original three *Sonic* characters (excluding Robotnik, although that would be sexy, too). And in case you can't tell, I'm a girl.

—Jonna Lybrand



PSPurse

Somehow my girlfriend got her hands on a PSP before me. What's worse is that she doesn't know squat about gaming (sure, good girl gamers exist, but she's not one of them). Now she's so into it that she convinced her employer (leaderwireless.com, which sells cell phone accessories) to design a purselike case for women with PSPs.

—Sam Sanjuan

> All word, no play

On page 54 of *EGM* #191, you talk about what you can buy on the "Internets." Are you clowning on the president, or is that what you meant to print?

—Derek Van Dam

Families is where our nation finds hope, Derek, where wings take dream.

About face

After rocking *Resident Evil 4*, I hopped on to *Halo 2*. Funny thing is, I kept hitting the A button while holding back on the left control stick, basically trying to instantly turn around the way I would in *RE4*. That got me thinking: Why hasn't anyone tried something similar in a first-person shooter?

—Andrew Brasuelli

Actually, Andrew, both *Unreal Tournament* (Dreamcast/PS2) and *Return*

to *Castle Wolfenstein* (PS2/XB) offered the option.

Hidden and dangerous

What is it with *Splinter Cell* and crap? In the past, you printed a letter about a cleaning lady in *Pandora Tomorrow* who couldn't control her bowels. Now in *Chaos Theory*, I cap a guard on the crapper, look in, and lo and behold, another big brown sausage. Someone should teach terrorists that, "If it's yellow, let it mellow; if it's brown, flush it down."

—Dan R.

Sputtering outrage

[Editor's note: unedited for emphasis] I had my PSP taken! from me yesterday at school. And the worst part is that when I tried to get it back (the *Splinter Cell* way). Witch got me a suspension instead of my PSP back. Another thing is that since the

school confiscated my PSP and they called my parents and told them the only way to get my PSP back is for them to come in and pick it up them self. Witch my dad sad "I will pick it up at the end of the school year!(for my punishment) witch is approximately 6 months away. I don't know nothing can replace my old PSP, because of everything that we have been throw being first in line at the store were I bout it and all, and I being the first one in the store to open there's and have every one gather around me and the screen of the PSP so that we could marvel at how small we all were compared to the PSP's big screen.

But for me the count down begins again, but that's were you guys at *EGM* come in (wink, wink).

—Jesse Rodriguez

They did you a favor, phonics rocket.

IT ISN'T A GAME ANYMORE

Met your spouse in an online session? Named your children after Nintendo characters? Enlisted after playing *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*? Send your fanatical fan story to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: Obsessed Gamers, and we might tell your terrifying tale in an upcoming issue.



GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Got proof that game design is best left to the pros? Send your concept (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama



STEROID PRIMED

Something sinister lurks in the depths of the body-sculpting competition Testoster One. Powerlifting champ Manus is the only one who can destroy this evil...but first he must be primed!

But no matter how many muscle-building drugs you pick up and ingest, one thing is absolutely certain: They will morph your balls.

—Don Edeaux

WIN THE GAME OF THE MONTH CONTEST

We've hidden at least one movie quote in this issue—spot one and you may have already won our Game of the Month. All that's left to do is e-mail the quote, the movie it's from, and the page you found it on to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: Movie Quote: *EGM* #193. Include your full name and mailing address (no PO boxes!) in the e-mail. We'll pick three winners at random and send each of them a copy of our GOTM. This issue's prize: *Forza Motorsport*. 🏁



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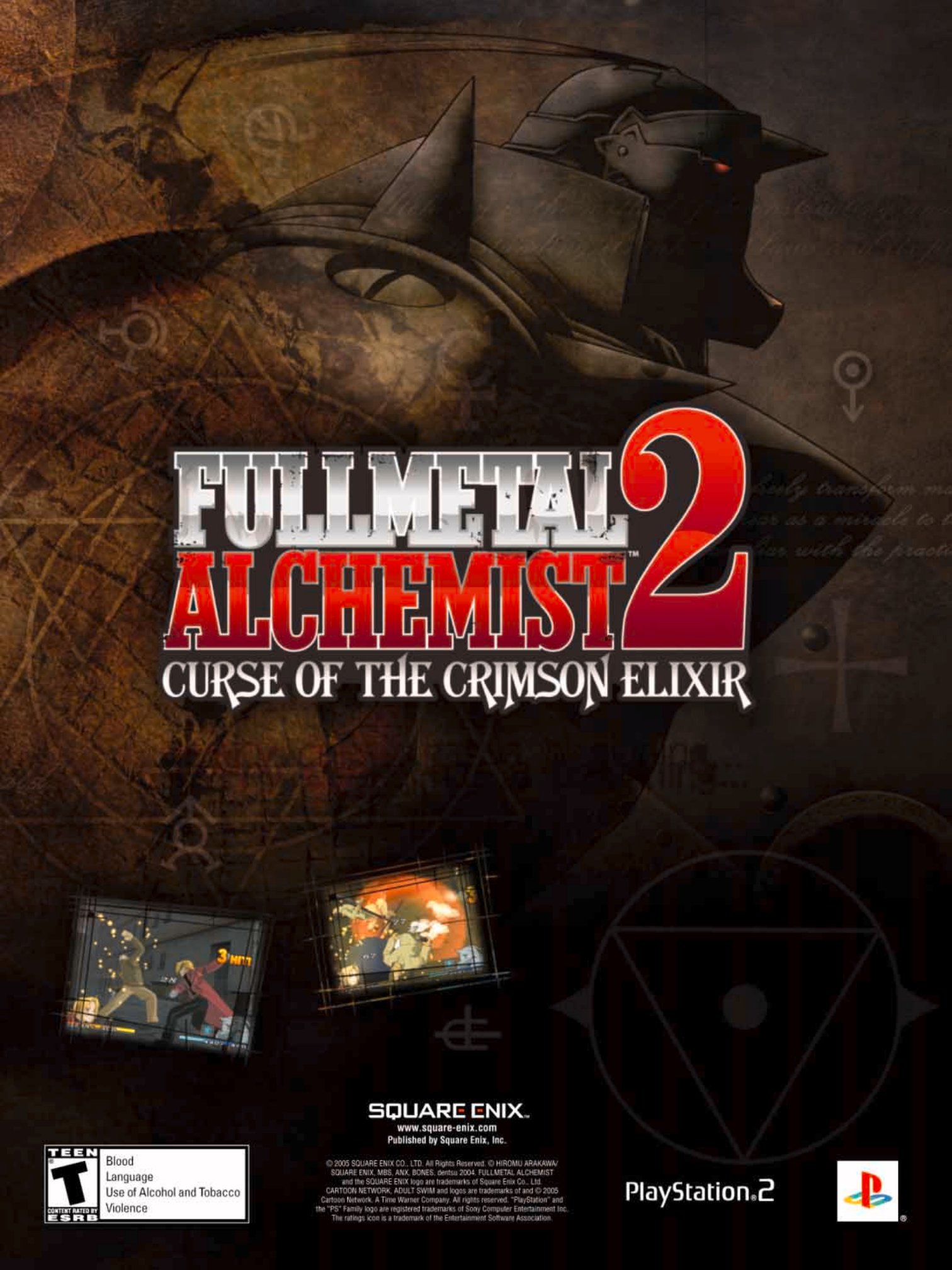
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PlayStation 2





press start

gaming news, previews, rolling around in crap again, and other stuff

PSP VS. DS ROUND 2

As the portable fight enters its second stage, we look at the next round of games for both handheld systems

Burnout Legends

EA Games • August 2005

Tracks from *Burnouts 1* and *2* collide with *Burnout 3*'s ramped-up gameplay style in this miniversion of the car-busting racer. Play all your favorite multi-player modes online or over Wi-Fi, too.

Coded Arms

Konami • July 2005

Wow, something for PSP that ain't a racing or sports game. Rather, this futuristic first-person shooter tosses you into a virtual world with big guns, bigger enemies, and the biggest levels we've seen for the system (some levels never end, really).

The Con

Sony CEA • October 2005

The first fighting game in which losing can pay off, this 3D brawler lets you bet on your bouts and take a dive if you put money on the other guy.

MediEvil: Resurrection

Sony CEA • Fall 2005

Replay the first two games in this PS1 action series with a few new levels and slightly snazzier graphics. Comes with two-player wireless minigames as well.

>>> PLAYSTATION PORTABLE GETS A LITTLE SKIN—THE FOLKS AT PLAYBOY HAVE CREATED A SPECIAL PICTORIAL OF THE CYBER GIRL OF THE YEAR 2005, AMY SUE COOPER, THAT WAS

GoldenEye: Rogue Agent

EA Games • June 2005

The real draw for this Bond spin-off is its multiplayer mode: Up to eight people can blast each other to hell, and better yet, only one game cartridge is required. Also, *Rogue Agent* plays surprisingly well using the stylus.



Nintendogs

Nintendo • August 2005

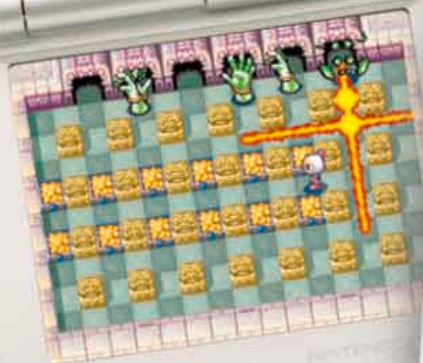
The dual-screen handheld gets some serious puppy power, as you'll be tasked to raise and train a little pooch. This includes teaching your portable hound voice commands, giving it a bath via the stylus, and taking it for walks.



Meteos

Nintendo • June 2005

Meteors rain down in this block-dropping puzzle game, and it's your job to group similar ones with the stylus and hurl them back into space. You get lots of customizable modes, including wireless multiplayer.



Bomberman

Ubisoft • June 2005

The bomb-strewn playfield sprawls across both DS screens in this portable version of the explosively addictive classic. Even better: Its wireless multiplayer mode supports up to eight players.



SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR SONY'S NEW HANDHELD. HEAD TO CYBER.PLAYBOY.COM FOR MORE DETAILS (SORRY, KIDS, BUT YOU NEED A CREDIT CARD TO GET THE PICTURES).... >>>



Xbox

HALF-LIFE 2

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Valve
Release Date: August 2005

Why you should care about the PC hit...

Future gaming scientists will look back at the Xbox's lineup of *Halo 2*, *Doom 3*, and *Half-Life 2* and scribe it as a trinity

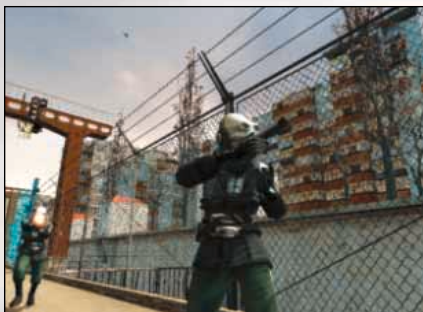
of shooter perfection. But in the here and now, non-PC gamers may find *Half-Life 2* an unknown quantity. We show you why *Life* is good on Xbox.



That Sinking Feeling

While *Halo 2* feels epic and *Doom 3* puts fear in your guts, *Half-Life 2* is just plain oppressive. You once again play as crowbar-wielding science nerd Gordon Freeman, who begins the game in a dystopian city-state prowled by faceless goons. The run-down town creates a feeling of despair that permeates the game.

And Valve, which is porting the game internally, promises that the dismal experience won't lose its fidelity in the move to Xbox. "We're leveraging the Xbox's unified memory to stream in all the content and bring the entire experience to life without compromise," says Doug Lombardi, Valve's director of marketing. In fact, Valve is sprucing up the graphics with new effects, including the vibrant bloom lighting seen in *Halo 2*.



Straight Shooters

Sure, the Covenant bad guys in *Halo 2* thought they were so clever, but *Half-Life 2*'s troops come with their own tricks. "Our enemy A.I. gives [enemies] the ability to react to any given situation," Lombardi says. Try to hide from them, for instance, and they'll coordinate search patterns with each other, toss grenades, or blow up barrels to flush you out. "Not only does it keep the action from becoming repetitious," he says, "it creates some great moments of surprise when you think you have them just where you want them."



Physics Is Fun

And here we have the main attraction. See any object in *Half-Life 2*—from barrels to buzz-saw blades to bookcases—and you can have your way with it. But why should you care? Aside from adding *Dukes of Hazzard*-style thrills to the vehicles (a dune buggy and air boat), the physics figure into the game's puzzles. Sometimes you'll need to drag barrels underwater to raise a floating platform, or use a crane to build a bridge. Just expect to use your head—and the environment—as often as your killer weaponry.



One Stunning Gun

Speaking of weapons, wait'll you get your hands on this thing: the physics cannon. A gift from resistance forces early in the game, the gun lifts objects and launches them as projectiles. (Hint: Buzz-saw blades make a fun mess.) The cannon works defensively, too: You can lift tables to use as shields, grab grenades in midtoss and hurl them back at whoever threw 'em—even pluck blade-spinning hoverbots out of the air to use as chain saws. "It makes for a near-endless form of nontraditional gameplay," Lombardi says.



>> THIS SUMMER MICROSOFT WILL SHIP *KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES* (XB). THE ACTION-STRATEGY SEQUEL WILL HAVE A SIMPLER INTERFACE AND MORE ONLINE OPTIONS.... >>

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SUSPECT:
long furry tail.
Heavily armed.
Smells like a strip club.



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Mature Humor
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs
Use of Alcohol

Back with a raging hangover, Conker is drinking, smoking, and chasing more hot, furry tail than ever. Well, when he's not blowing the stuffing out of Tediz. Take your deviant skills online to Xbox Live™, or you can always just play with yourself.



it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE

EGM INTERNATIONAL

The poorly dubbed adventuring never ends



■ PS2

YS III: WANDERERS FROM YS

Whoa! Is there a Super NES chip inside my PlayStation 2? No, no—this is just a really old role-playing game (vintage 1989, in fact) remade for modern consoles. To capitalize on the recent success of *Ys: The Ark of Napishtim* (PS2), Taito is launching special editions of two games in developer Falcom's epic series: this one (a side-scrolling RPG similar to *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link* on the 8-bit NES) and *Ys IV: Mask of the Sun*, an overhead action game widely considered a classic by Japanese role-playing nuts.

Why would I care? *Ys* is one of those odd series that's enjoyed even by people who claim to abhor this genre. It's fast-paced, easy to play, and, with luck, *Wanderers'* revised graphics will merit a U.S. release.



■ PSP

ADVENTURE PLAYER

A game that plays games for me? If only—it'd save us a lot of time every month. This isn't exactly a game, per se—it's an adventure-game creation system that comes with three premade titles, including the latest in the horror-filled *Echo Night* series. The software runs on PCs (see screen on bottom right), plus you can release your masterpieces on the Internet (which gamers will then transfer to the PSP via memory stick).

Hot damn! This'll put Square Enix out of business! Well, not so fast—by "adventure game" we're referring to the type of menu-based graphic-and-text games that went out of style with the first George Bush. Still, this is one of the most interactive PSP projects yet, and a Japan-only release would be a shame.

WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

I believe it was the Dalai Lama who said, "Happiness is a warm gun." Regardless, I know he was the guy who coined "Shoot to thrill." This is why he is my guru, for I love wielding a weapon in a game.

Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil



While Xbox owners are finally getting *Doom 3*, PC gamers are happily heading straight to hell—again. This expansion pack isn't doing a whole lot new here and that's just fine because, honestly, can you really improve upon blasting zombies into meat chunks? Still, *ROE* does bring back the series' beloved double-barreled shotgun, introduces a grabber gun (no, this isn't *Half-Life 2*) for picking up and throwing objects, and gives you new powers like slowing down time. Killing the minions of hell—it never gets old.

Hellgate: London



And because killing the minions of hell never gets old, Flagship Studios (made up of a bunch of *Diablo II* vets) is hard at work on *Hellgate: London*. This one takes place in a not-too-distant and (hopefully) alternate future in which guns are the order of the day to kill the demons taking over the city. The cool thing about *Hellgate's* firearms is that you'll be able to modify them via attachments that you'll bolt on for special attacks and the like. Finding those add-ons will be just one of the many carrots dangling from a forest's worth of sticks in this game when it ships next year.

—Robert Coffey,
Computer Gaming World

UNDER THE RADAR

Platform: PlayStation 2
Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo
Release Date: August 2005

TRAPT

Tecmo reaches deep into its PS1 back catalog with *Trapt*—a bloody revival of the sadistic PS1 *Deception* series. It's ostensibly an original series with a sexed-up new heroine (the appropriately named Princess Allura), yet the basic gameplay of the old titles remains intact. It's your job to trick helpless saps into triggering various grisly traps that you strategically place throughout the castle. If everything's set up efficiently, you'll gleefully watch limbs severed by swinging blades, skulls crushed by boulders, and entire bodies impaled on spikes. Lovely!



» BUENA VISTA GAMES HAS RECENTLY ACQUIRED AVALANCHE SOFTWARE. NO PROJECTS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED, BUT HERE'S HOPING THEY DON'T MAKE ANOTHER TAK GAME... »

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PlayStation 2



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activision.com



PS2/XB

FIRST LOOK: **BLACK**

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Criterion Games
Release Date: February 2006

The power of pulling the trigger

Criterion, the Brits behind car-crunching classic *Burnout*, are addicted to danger. "If we stand for anything," admits Producer Jeremy Chubb, "it's blowing s*** up." Little wonder then that they liked what they learned on a Nevada vacation. "We paid some American lunatics to let us fire machine guns and came away saying, 'This is fast cars—it's exhilarating, it's frightening, it's lethal, and

it's what shooting in games should be like, but isn't.'" Which brings us to *Black*, a love letter to Second Amendment advocates, a shooter about firing AKs into the air if only for the fun of it. "We're going by Hollywood's hard-and-fast rules of guncraft," Chubb explains. "The idea being that if we deliver on them, we'll end up with shooting like no one has ever seen before."
—Shawn Elliott



Guns Are the Stars of the Show

"We've come up with this concept we're calling gun porn," Chubb says. "We're not emphasizing actors and performances, so we wanted to make our weapons exciting and exotic." So far so good. *Black's* 50-some high-powered firearms—from rifles to riot guns to grenade launchers—rattle like fistfuls of firecrackers and deliver their dialogue loud and clear.

>>> SNK REALLY LOVES THEM SOME XBOX LIVE—THE COMPANY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL RELEASE FOUR FIGHTING GAMES (*KING OF FIGHTERS: NEOWAVE*, *SAMURAI SHODOWN 5*, *KOF '94*).

Every Bullet Is Our Baby

"It's not so much the hits that count as the misses," says Chubb. "Here, you can miss and still mangle people. So if I'm shooting at someone and can't get him in my sights, I can blast the ceiling and bring it down on top of him. Or, with a ton of terrorists in the place, I can spray bullets every which way, putting plaster in their faces, so they can't see well enough to hit me." Instead of shooting combustible canisters, *Black* would rather you reduce cars to smoldering steel and buildings to rubble. "We like the idea behind, you know, all those barrels that blow up and wanted to apply it to the entire experience. But if something's not great to shoot, we're probably not putting it in the game," says Chubb. ➤



RE-BOUT, AND KOF: MAXIMUM IMPACT—MANIAX) LATER THIS FALL FOR XBOX. EACH GAME WILL COME WITH THREE ONLINE MODES—REMATCH, HEAD-TO-HEAD, AND TOURNEY... ➤➤



▶ **BLACK** (CONT.)



Death Is an Opportunity

"In most shooters, foes don't earn their money—if you shoot them, they fall down and that's it. We wanted baddies in *Black* to be much more exciting," Chubb says. "They're there for a reason; they're there to enhance the experience." Catch one in the shoulder, and he'll spin around; blow the balcony out beneath another, and he'll fall 50 feet onto a car below, flattening it in the bargain. Here, however, is where comparisons to Hollywood could hurt. It's hard to get that you-got-yours gratification when opponents throw themselves from windows after a premeditated pause.



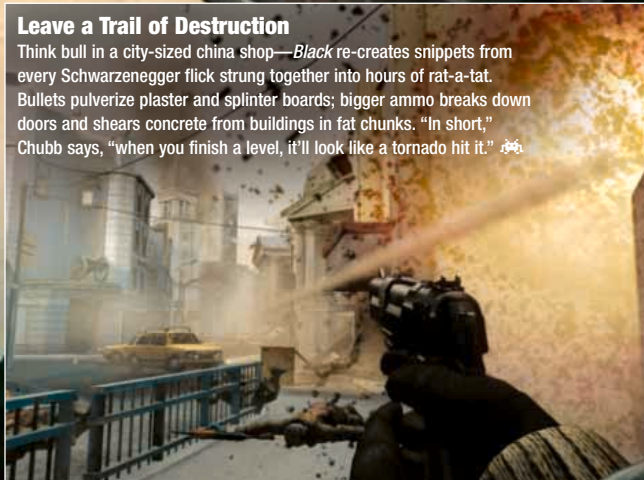
Bigger and Louder, Louder and Bigger

According to Chubb, "It's classic Hollywood: Don't use a small gun when you can use a big one; don't blow up something small when you can blow up something big. It's common sense, of course, but we're applying the concept across our whole game."



Leave a Trail of Destruction

Think bull in a china shop—*Black* re-creates snippets from every Schwarzenegger flick strung together into hours of rat-a-tat. Bullets pulverize plaster and splinter boards; bigger ammo breaks down doors and shears concrete from buildings in fat chunks. "In short," Chubb says, "when you finish a level, it'll look like a tornado hit it." ☼



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SKILL-BASED MMORPG TOURNAMENT



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ONLINE THIS MONTH

Your so-called life in Vana'diel



■ Three of the same outfit? Someone better call the fashion police.

If anything has become apparent to Square Enix in the past 18 months, it's that gamers love their *Final Fantasy XI*. This titanic massively multiplayer online role-playing game for PS2 (and PC—remember, the two sides can play together) is currently sitting pretty at roughly 500,000 active subscribers, even with all the recent competition from PC heavy hitters such as *World of Warcraft* and *City of Heroes*—not to mention the new slimmer PS2 model, which eliminates the option to use the hard drive necessary for *FFXI*. “Our subscriber numbers have remained quite strong despite changes in hardware and launches of other high-profile MMORPGs,” remarks Yasu Kurosawa, the game’s North

American online producer. “Players have a strong tendency to come back after trying other online games because they miss *FFXI*’s unique gameplay, strategic depth, artistic style, and community.”

Square Enix takes pride in that player community, too. Since the launch of *FFXI*’s PC version in late 2003, the publisher has hosted seven fan gatherings—the most recent of which was held in Hawaii this past April. Square uses these events, as well as websites and message boards, to cull fan feedback and criticism about *FFXI*, which Kurosawa claims has had a vast impact on the game. “*FFXI* has a very strong and active community that spans hundreds of fan and media websites. We take feedback very seriously.”

Though no new *FFXI* boxed expansions have been announced just yet, the game’s development team is dedicated to creating live in-game events, adding additional areas for players to adventure in (such as the newly opened Grand Palace of Hu’Xzoi and Garden of Ru’Hmet), and continually monitoring game balance. If Square’s annual Vana’diel Census (which is found at www.playonline.com/ff11us/survey) is any indication, this MMORPG will have a healthy, devoted audience for a long time to come—although some fans may be just a little too devoted, according to Kurosawa. “We can now confirm that someone has just recently reached level 75 in all 15 jobs.” Yikes.

—Ryan Scott



■ *FFXI*’s new Grand Palace of Hu’Xzoi.

EverQuest Online Adventures is this thing still on?

Surprisingly, this unsightly and rather dull PS2-exclusive MMORPG (which debuted in early 2003) still has a pulse. Publisher Sony Online supports an active community of close to 30,000 members with regular in-game events and additional content. Yet *EQOA* could be in for a shaky future, as we haven’t seen any sign of another retail expansion since 2003’s *Frontiers*. Are any more products in the works? “[That] has not been determined at this time,” says a Sony Online rep.



WHAT’S UP AT



1UP.COM

Starting May 17, there’s going to be a thread on our message boards where you can **discuss reviews with our EGM Review Crew members**. Also, visit egmvsfragdolls-club.1up.com for the results of our rematch with the gorgeous (and skilled) gals of gaming, the Frag Dolls.

EGMEXTRAS.1UP.COM

We hid our **Afterthoughts on *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory*** in our extras section because we’re sneaky like that. Read and find out what the heck is up with those strange hidden Easter eggs in the game.

CHEATS.1UP.COM

If you’re having a tough time solving that recently purchased game tape, then you’re in luck. The website just got some cheap labor and hired an intern to man the ever-growing cheats section. There’ll soon be **FAQs on 1UP.com’s top 50 games**.

Featured Club: Female Eye for the Gamer Guy

Trying to find that special second player? Go to **Femaleeye-club.1up.com**, where hot girl gamers help out the 1UP.com community by answering the occasional 15-year-old boy’s relationship questions. Also, every Monday they feature a female perspective on fashion, dating, and a bunch of other stuff that most males only pretend to care about.

Featured Blog: Greg Ford

When our copy editor isn’t hard at work correcting our spellings or reviewing games for us, you can find him ranting about actor Robin Williams naming his daughter Zelda or playing *God of War*. See what’s on his mind today at egm_ford.1up.com.



How Dirty Boys Get Clean.
NEW AXE SHOWER GEL





■ Not shown:
Sora's new Drive
transformation,
which enables him
to merge with
party members to
become a combo-
heavy, dual-key-
blade-wielding
fightin' freak.



■ PlayStation 2

KINGDOM HEARTS II

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Release Date: Winter 2005

The wonderful worlds of Disney and Final Fantasy collide yet again

Square Enix just loves teasing us. The publisher has provided yet another quick glimpse—via a new batch of screenshots—at *Kingdom Hearts II*, the anticipated console follow-up to the blockbuster Disney-meets-*Final Fantasy* action-RPG. But again, Square is keeping most of the game's details, well, close to its heart.

So far, we know *KH2* takes place one year after the card-based GBA title *Chain of Memories* and starts off with our keyblade-wielding (and slightly more

mature) hero Sora and animated pals Donald and Goofy in a land called Twilight Town. This one will also feature all-new worlds and several Disney-themed areas that the trio didn't traverse in prior games (Hades' underworld from *Hercules*, the *Beauty and the Beast* castle, the battlefields of *Mulan*, etc.). And expect King Mickey, the most famous mouse of them all, to play a larger role in this sequel. More to come next issue, as we grab a controller, play the game, and chat with its creator. —Bryan Intihar



>>> ANYONE WANT TO BE A MILLIONAIRE? MAJESCO SURE HOPES SO, AS THE FIRST 500,000 PEOPLE WHO BUY A COPY OF *ADVENT RISING* (COMING TO XBOX MAY 31) HAVE THE CHANCE TO



■ Square totally ripped off our fanfiction about Goofy and Mulan fighting a giant, fanciful spacefish.



■ "Hey I'll kid, wanna climb the Giving Tree at Neverland Ranch?"



■ Will *Mulan's* merciless Shan Yu join the side of the Heartless? Did you see *Mulan*? Neither did we.

Our Heart's Desire
Not surprisingly, Square Enix remains very hush-hush about the new Disney-inspired worlds that will appear in *Kingdom Hearts II*. Here are some from our wish list:

Lion King: We'd welcome a trip to Simba's jungle (just no singing "Hakuna Matata," please).



The Sword in the Stone: Forget the sword—how 'bout pulling a keyblade from this rock?



Robin Hood: The sly fox would make for a great ally (much better than Kevin Costner, for sure).



Tron: This computer world's blistering-lightcycle race just screams "minigame."



The Incredibles: Fighting off the Heartless with the superheroes of this CG film would be...uh, incredible.



■ *Final Fantasy* guest stars (like *FFX's* Auron, shown here) drop by to lend a hand. Kind of like when Timecop was on *Friends*. Well, not exactly.



Xbox

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Rockstar North
Release Date: June 2005

Good things come to those who waited—for the Xbox version

1

America's Bloodiest Home Videos

Ride a bike up a wall and back flip it onto its wheels, pilot a plane beneath the Gant Bridge, slay a ganglord with your girl's flower bouquet—it'll happen, but nobody will believe it. That is unless you preserve your illicit high-lights for posterity. *San Andreas'* new-fangled replay feature lets you record your greatest gangsta moments in 30-second snippets.

My Tunes

There's no knocking *San Andreas'* soundtrack, an it-came-from-the-'90s collection encompassing everything from Kiss to Heart, Slick Rick to Rick James, Willie Nelson to Ronnie Hudson, and Public Enemy to Humble Pie. Even the entire FM dial can't please everybody all of the time, however, so this version creates custom stations from the songs you save to the hard drive and plays them randomly or sequentially, or in a radio format complete with commercial breaks.

2

3

Sightseeing

"There's a movie theater in [San Francisco stand-in] San Fierro. On PS2, I couldn't tell what was playing," says Rockstar rep Devin Bennett, "but now when I went back, I saw that it was *King of Ass*. All of this stuff you couldn't actually read before is crystal clear on Xbox." And the detail doesn't stop at farcical signs and shop fronts. "[Developer] Rockstar North creates characters, vehicles, everything in high resolution, but bumps it down to get it onto PS2. When it comes time to convert to Xbox and PC, they can go back to those high-res models, and thus everything looks crisper, cleaner, more colorful and vivid," explains Bennetts.

No Loading Zone

Where *GTA's* large-as-life geography seamlessly transitions from suburban sprawl to glittering gambling strips, cirrus-clouded skies to silo-studded meadows, walking into a pizzeria means taking a boring trip to the loading screen on Sony's system. Here it happens lickety-split: Step up to the door, and in the blink of an eye, you're inside eating. Whether you're starting the game or going into a cut-scene, loading times are lean if not nonexistent. 🚗 —Shawn Elliott

4

Explore the "alternative lifestyles" of San Fierro.



Is this the best car you could steal?

>> THIS FALL, 989 SPORTS HEADS BACK TO THE HARDWOOD IN *NBA '06*. AND LIKE A LOT OF OTHER SPORTS TITLES THIS YEAR, 989'S *ROUNDBALLER* WILL FEATURE A STORY MODE.... >>



Be the first on the field. *NCAA 06 Football* is back. Bring big time college football to your house and get the crew together for some serious tailgating. Available July 13¹ on Playstation[®] 2, Xbox[™] and GameCube[™]. At Best Buy[™], gamers rule.





press start

PlayStation 2

FINAL FANTASY XII

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Release Date: Fall 2005

Finally—a new look at the world's most wanted RPG

It's been 12 long and painful months since Square Enix last released any new screens or information about *Final Fantasy XII*, the latest PS2 installment in the legendary role-playing franchise. This troubling silence, coupled with continual release-date delays, had many fans fearing the worst: Would Square rework, or possibly even scrap, the project? Don't throw out that cuddly moogles cosplay outfit just yet, 'cause we bring good news: *FFXII* is still coming, as evidenced by these stylish new cinema shots. We have to wonder, though, if the core gameplay has changed in a year's time...we'll let you know next issue.

—Shane Bettenhausen

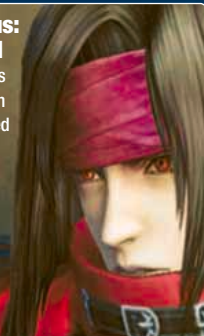
>> NO NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE LICENSE? NO PROBLEM—THIS FALL, 989 SPORTS WILL RELEASE EXCLUSIVELY FOR PS2 *ROAD TO SUNDAY*, A MISSION-BASED FOOTBALL TITLE THAT



In Other Final Fantasy News...

Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII

Mum's the word on this PS2 third-person action sequel to the best-loved FF of them all, *Final Fantasy VII* (PS1). It's due out in late 2005, and stars Vincent Valentine and Cait Sith on a quest set three years after *FFVII*'s end.



Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children

Are you ready for some good news? This full-length, CG-animated motion-picture follow-up to *FFVII* will hit DVD on September 13. It might get a limited theatrical release before that....



TRACKS ONE TEAM'S OWNER, HIS SIDEKICK, AND SEVEN PLAYERS. *ROAD TO SUNDAY* WILL ALSO INCLUDE MINIGAMES LIKE GAMBLING AND...HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT? UH, OK.... >>



GUESS THE BAD GAME IDEA

See if you can tell the actual game concepts from our own weird creations

1



Tank — Tired of assuming the role of some dirty-looking wise guy in a trench coat who carries a bunch of sucky pistols? Then check this out: Here you play as Tank, the human flamethrower. You can actually breathe fire (and yes, blow it out your ass, too). Unlike in a lot of games these days, resource management doesn't involve stupid rings or stuff—it's gasoline that you drink! Yep, you can get your lips around a car's gas tank and suck, then flip open your Zippo and napalm the damn hippies in the game.

☐ REAL

☒ FAKE

2



Assemblage — It's already all over your living room...why not have Ikea on your TV, too?! This high-intensity puzzle game brings the internationally renowned Ikea experience into a whole new realm. Take blocks, screws, and dowels of all shapes, sizes, and colors, and assemble your furniture fast—without the benefit of helpful instructions—to pile up massive combos. And what Ikea experience would be complete without Swedish meatballs? All cafeteria items are unlockable and tradable in multiplayer mode.

☐ REAL

☒ FAKE

3



Controversy: The Game — The race to corrupt America's youth is officially over. Carefully calculated to provoke maximum moral outrage (and media coverage), *Controversy: The Game* aims for violence supremacy. Using the innovative bullet-view system, players will guide bullets through all the major organs of the human body, witnessing every gory tear and mutilation in slow motion. Realistic blood-flow physics promise plenty of spurting arteries and Senate hearings.

☐ REAL

☒ FAKE

4



Clone Wars — Imagine a squad-based shooter on battlefields the size of the ones in the *Starship Troopers* flick, but instead of killing bugs, you'll be targeting 10,000-plus Britney Spearses, Jessica Simpsons, and other cloned female pop stars running rampant onscreen. Each of the divas is covered in armor, and if you're a real crack shot, a critical hit will render her naked. The game will be rated Teen, as it'll be clear that these ladies aren't really human—they are holograms. So you're only killing light.

☐ REAL

☒ FAKE

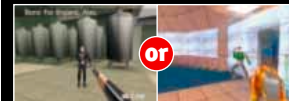
Answers: 1-Real, 2-Fake, 3-Fake, 4-Real

THE HOT SEAT: THE MATCHMAKER



Brian "Ske7ch" Jarrard is the community lead for Bungie.net, which means he's responsible for *Halo 2*'s online playlists and matchmaking. He's also quite effective at dealing virtual death in *Halo 2*, so to save some lives, we pulled him away for a bit and sat him down in our Hot Seat....

Nintendo 64 Shooter



☒ GoldenEye 007 ☐ Perfect Dark

Brian Jarrard: "Nothing beats running around as Oddjob and kicking ass. Wait, he was in that game, wasn't he?"

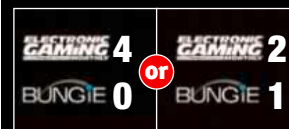
Space-Marine Adventure



☐ Starship Troopers ☒ Aliens

B.J.: "I dunno.... *Starship Troopers* had Denise Richards and the shower scene...but I'd lose all credibility if I picked it over *Aliens*."

Ouch



☒ Losing to EGM the first time in *Halo 2* ☐ Losing to EGM in the rematch

B.J.: "Ohh! [Look of pain on Jarrard's face] The first time, because we can say we had the excuse of you having ringers, and we had a bunch of players who didn't play well as a team. The rematch was all on our terms, and we still got our asses kicked."

OVERHEARD

"Being an idiot online? Cursing continually? Making threats? Being a racist jackass? BANNED. Oh, and a word to screamers—BANNED. All you have to do to avoid being BANNED is QUIT BEING AN IDIOT. You're not funny. You're not clever. You're a boring loser and people hate you."

—Bungie.net's weekly update, apparently finally fed up with explaining four times a month exactly what will get you banned from Halo 2

"It was based on an inspiration that this may someday be the direction that technology will take us."

—Sony Electronics spokeswoman Elizabeth Boukis speaks to New Scientist magazine about the company's patent application for a device that adjusts neurons in the brain so users can experience movies and videogames in a more direct manner

■ Sony: One step closer to the Matrix.

Unlock 24 Playable Characters
in This Epic Action-RPG.

Then Build Them Up in a
Massive Online Experience!

Are The Lad

End of Darkness



Unleash Special Attacks



4-On-4 Online Deathmatch



4-Player Online Co-op



Mild Language
Violence

PlayStation



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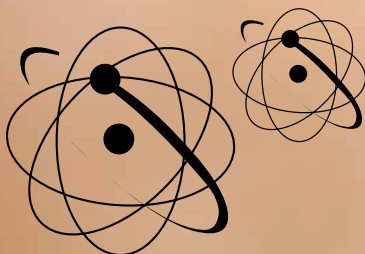
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WEIRDER SCIENCE

Five new experiments in gaming geekery

Gizmo-minded entrepreneurs around the world are braving mockery, broken bones, and stuffy RadioShack employees in the name of art, entertainment, and—in one case—college credit. And you thought Nintendo, masterminds behind bongo controllers and twin-screened touch-and-talk handhelds, had a monopoly on ingenuity. The big N has nothin' on this new batch of tinkerers.

—Shawn Elliott



■ **Pongmechanik** maker Niklas Roy (left) schools a friend at his own invention. Note the joysticks for controlling the paddles.



Clockwork Kraftwerk

While gaming grandpappies *Frogger* and *Pac-Man* have gotten with the times and gone 3D, older-than-old blip-batting hit *Pong* has actually retro boosted backward. Niklas Roy sees the steam train of thought into the station with *Pongmechanik*, a mechanical *Pong* replica that mimics the original's gameplay with gears and old-timey telephone relays instead of silicon. "The idea," explains the German über-engineer who spent a year perfecting the project, "was to put a piece of virtual reality into reality." Has he considered selling his contraption to curiosity collector Michael Jackson? "Unfortunately, he hasn't contacted me yet," Roy says, "but I'd rather sell it to [Pong inventor] Nolan Bushnell." Sorry Jacko, but your mane might get tangled in the moving parts anyway.



■ **Pongmech**'s innards are a maze of relays, score dials, and motor-driven chains that drive the ball and paddles across the playfield. It even has a doorbell to supply the bleeps and bleeps.

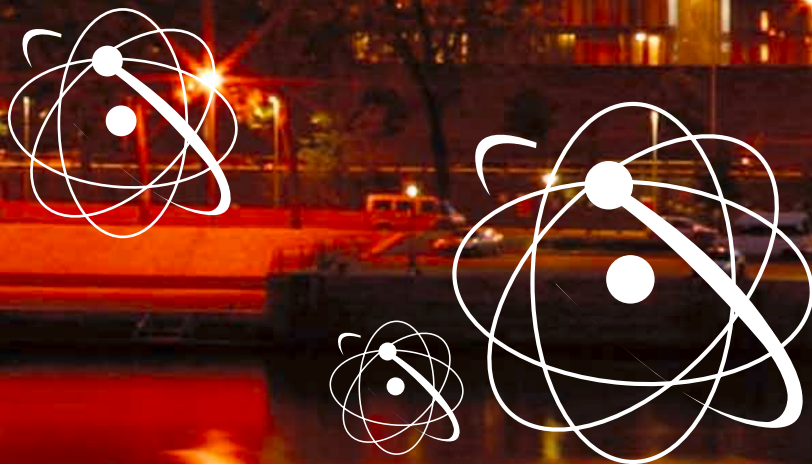


(GBA/DS/PSP). WHILE NO SPECIFICS ABOUT THE HOME VERSIONS WERE RELEASED, EA SAYS THAT EACH PORTABLE INSTALLMENT WILL FEATURE A UNIQUE STORY LINE.... >>

Skyscraping Arcade

Play *Tetris* too long and you start seeing its boxy pieces in floor tiles and building facades—unless, of course, you're staring at the side of Paris' Bibliothèque Nationale, in which case it could really be the classic puzzler that you're seeing. At certain times of the year, passersby who know which digits to dial (try +33 1 44 24 73 50 next time you're in town) can use phones to play *Pong*, *Breakout*, and *Pac-Man* on the skyscraping arcade's 3,370-square-meter "screen." Eiffel what?

■ High score: Dial the right numbers on your cell phone and you can play a 20-story-tall *Pac-Man*.



Hurts So Good



Winning Eleven looks and sounds like soccer, but it's never felt like it—at least not until now. When it comes to simulating the excruciating hurt of having a cleat shoved into your shin, videogames' vibrating controllers don't cut it, so crackpot tinkerers Tilman Reiff, Volker Morawe, and Roman Kirschner at Germany-based art group FUR created LegShocker, a hand-sewn shin pad with a hammer inside. Make a stupid play or let the other side score, and this made-for-masochists peripheral will pound the crap out of your lazy legs. "The hammer hits hard," says Kirschner. "In fact, sometimes it feels like it's stomping into marrow." Share the couch with a bag of grass cuttings and unclean athletic cups and *FIFA* will even smell like soccer.



■ LegShocker crushes your shins *and* holds up your socks.



MARIO-MASTERING MACHINE

In 1997, supercomputer Deep Blue beat chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov. Now a robot built from Legos might get the best of wiseacre rapper/actor Will Smith. "Our robot could take him...despite Will's record of crushing other, lesser robots," says Tim Dooley, who along with fellow college students Ben Rowe and Matt Sesno created a Lego machine that plays *Super Mario Bros.*' world 1-1. The button-tapping 'bot even grabs the hidden 1UP, fire flower, and invincibility star along the way. "Building it was easy, but programming it proved to be a bit more complicated, as we essentially had to time out every little portion of the level," says Dooley of the trio's project at Vermont's Middlebury College. "Still, our bot probably couldn't wax the tail of the Nintendo savant from ['80s flick] *The Wizard*. Look at *The Matrix*—humans always triumph over machines."



■ Finally, a robot that saves us from the drudgery of playing videogames so we can focus on the fun stuff...like lawnwork. The machine uses precise timing to tackle *Super Mario Bros.*



■ Through his goggles: What the human Pac-Man sees.



■ Tag, you're eaten: Ghost players tap the Pac player to nab him or her.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Picture it: A guy in goggles feverishly walks a series of straight lines connected by precise 45-degree turns. Sometimes doubling back or making a sudden about-face, he mumbles "Wakka wakka." You've probably seen crazier crazies in your home city, but this guy isn't out of his mind; he's Pac-Man.

Designed at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University and financed by the island nation's military, *Human Pac-Man* turns the real world into a pellet-littered labyrinth. Wearing a computer and goggles through which he sees virtual objects superimposed on real-time video, "Pac-Man" collects pellets by walking through them while pursuing ghost players try to "eat" him by tapping his back. "Today's games are restricted to static

and monotonous interfaces where players stayed glued to their seats in front of a screen," says team lead Dr. Adrian Cheok. "We felt a need to explore the untapped frontier in human-computer interaction, where users are immersed physically in the game."

Wanna stage *Halo 2* Spartan-vs.-Covenant campaigns on city streets instead? According to Cheok, it's possible: "The technology can [already] be developed to provide real-time guidance and position information to the soldier on the battlefield. It can also be modified to support many other games, including first-person shooters. Adding in weapons and power-ups is definitely feasible; it is just a matter of adjusting hardware to suit the necessary objectives." 🚗

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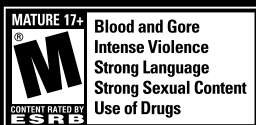
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THE SALES CHARTS

FOR MARCH

2005

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES



1 Gran Turismo 4 • PS2 • Sony CEA

2 MVP Baseball 2005 • PS2 • EA Sports

3 EA Sports Fight Night Round 2 • PS2 • EA Sports

4 Devil May Cry 3 • PS2 • Capcom

5 Star Wars Republic Commando • XB • LucasArts

6 God of War • PS2 • Sony CEA

7 EA Sports Fight Night Round 2 • XB • EA Sports

8 Major League Baseball 2K5 • PS2 • 2K Sports

9 Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 • XB • Ubisoft

10 MVP Baseball 2005 • XB • EA Sports

TOP 10 PS2



- 1 Gran Turismo 4
- 2 MVP Baseball 2005
- 3 EA Sports Fight Night Round 2
- 4 Devil May Cry 3
- 5 God of War
- 6 Major League Baseball 2K5
- 7 Tekken 5
- 8 MX vs. ATV Unleashed
- 9 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
- 10 Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30

TOP 10 XBOX



- 1 Star Wars Republic Commando
- 2 EA Sports Fight Night Round 2
- 3 Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30
- 4 MVP Baseball 2005
- 5 Splinter Cell Chaos Theory
- 6 Major League Baseball 2K5
- 7 Halo 2
- 8 MX vs. ATV Unleashed
- 9 NBA Street V3
- 10 Narc

TOP 10 GAMECUBE



- 1 Star Fox: Assault
- 2 Resident Evil 4
- 3 Super Mario Sunshine
- 4 MVP Baseball 2005
- 5 NBA Street V3
- 6 Mario Party 6
- 7 Donkey Kong Jungle Beat
- 8 Super Smash Bros. Melee
- 9 Robots
- 10 Pokémon Colosseum

TOP 10 PORTABLES



- 1 Twisted Metal: Head-On • PSP
- 2 NFS Underground Rivals • PSP
- 3 WarioWare: Touched! • DS
- 4 Untold Legends • PSP
- 5 Robots • GBA
- 6 The Incredibles • GBA
- 7 Yoshi Touch & Go • DS
- 8 Super Mario 64 DS • DS
- 9 Metal Gear Acid • PSP
- 10 Wipeout Pure • PSP

TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 4/17/05



- 1 Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed. • PS2
- 2 Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed. • XB
- 3 Splinter Cell Chaos Theory • XB
- 4 Doom 3 • XB
- 5 God of War • PS2
- 6 Dragon Ball Z: Sagas • PS2
- 7 Gran Turismo 4 • PS2
- 8 Splinter Cell Chaos Theory • PS2
- 9 Close Combat: First to Fight • XB
- 10 MX vs. ATV Unleashed • PS2

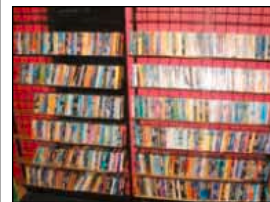
ON THE AUCTION



Hate carrying that cash-heavy purse around? Lighten the load and spend it all on this crap.



Item: Back in '95, 3DO unveiled its M2 console. It never came out, but that doesn't mean you can't pick up this preproduction unit.
Asking Price: \$225.50



Item: Ever dream about swimming in your prize possessions like Scrooge McDuck? Get your hands on 820 empty NES game boxes.
Asking Price: \$1,025.99



Item: This very rare *Jet Set Radio*-themed Dreamcast sure looks sweet, but is it really worth that many ducats? We think not.
Asking Price: \$500



Item: Sick of that convenient and easy to hide *Dance Dance Revolution* pad? Well, here's a metal one, and it supports up to 500 lbs of weight, fatty.
Asking Price: \$185

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PlayStation 2

WE LOVE KATAMARI

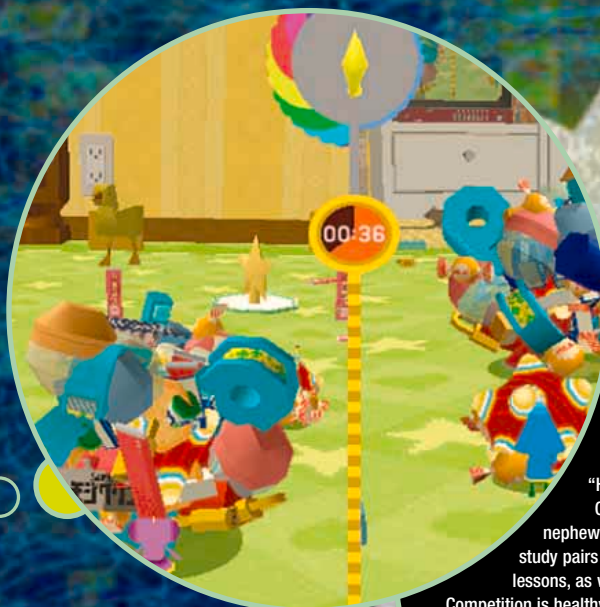
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Release Date: Fall 2005

Bigger, weirder, and ballsier than its cult-hit forerunner

Readers beware: We've enlisted *Katamari Damacy's* stoic ruler, the King of All Cosmos, to reveal details about *We Love Katamari*, his (truthfully titled) upcoming sequel. If you haven't experienced the unique thrills of his first garbage-rolling sim, he demands that you do so before reading this. Trust us: It's \$20 well spent.

The King Speaks:

"Our wonderful game last year, as indubitably excellent as it was, could have been better. There was a lot of Our shrimpy Prince, yes? And not nearly enough of Us, no? Well, Our second game will offer many new experiences and several new heroes more valiant than that lowly Prince. We understand that the readers on Earth are excited about the elfin male, Link, riding a horse in the 'Zelda,' and look! Here We are, also on the royal equine! This proves that Our game has everything you could possibly desire: gallant steeds, wondrous worlds, and plentiful objects destined to be rolled into balls. Learn all about its bountiful virtues here.



Friends and Foes

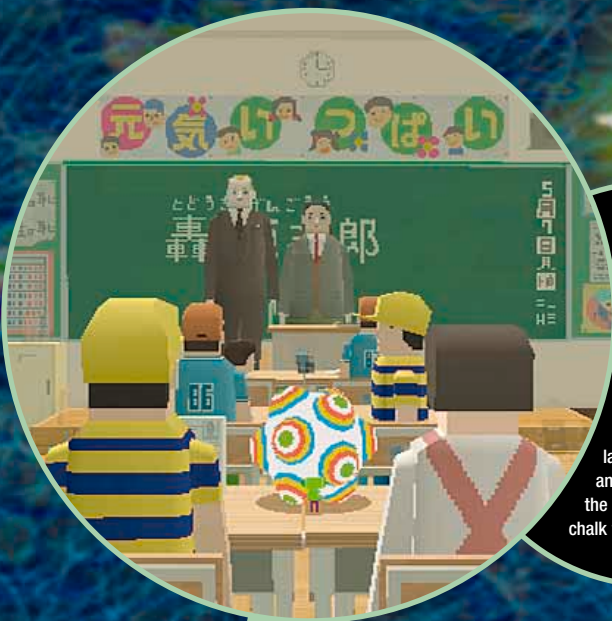
"Here are some of Our enterprising nephews and nieces forming study pairs to better absorb their lessons, as well as each other.

Competition is healthy for growing Princes and Princesses (and encouraged in this new game), but We are glad they can also put aside their differences and work together in a new cooperative adventure. Splendid!"



Field Tripping

"It is not enough to become book smart, of course. One must also have street smarts, as well as grass smarts and ocean smarts. Our second game will impart copious amounts of cosmic knowledge: You will travel to all-new locales such as frozen Antarctica and gay Paris, where everything is to be rolled up at the earliest convenience."

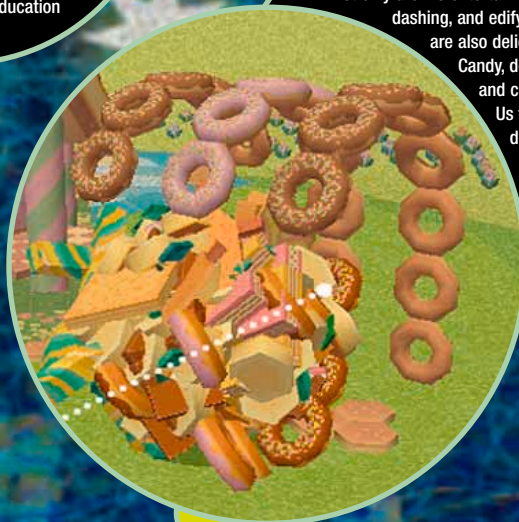


Back to School

"See! Children! They have made a mess of their classroom, yes? But We thought it might be educational to roll up their pencils and apples and whatever else one might find in a school. The students have larger hair than We remember, and the giant grizzly bears in the halls seem new, but We chalk this up to education reform."

New Objects

"Not only are We entertaining, dashing, and edifying, We are also delicious. Candy, doughnuts, and cookies gave Us the splendid figure you see before you."



Katamari Race

"We, too, feel the need for speed, yet traffic safety is also a concern of Ours. Here, the Prince races in the safest manner We know of, which is in the precise center between lanes."



"We certainly hope that we have enlightened you regarding Our upcoming masterwork *We Love Katamari*. We guarantee that you will play no finer object-collection simulation all year. This is the King of All Cosmos, signing off."



HOLLYWOOD ICON AL PACINO, WHO PLAYED CUBAN REFUGEE TURNED DRUG LORD TONY MONTANA IN THE FILM. HOWEVER, PACINO WON'T DO VOICEOVERS FOR THE GAME. SHUCKS.... >>



OUT OF SIGHT

Thought playing Marco Polo was tough? Meet a gamer who can kick your ass without ever looking at the screen



■ Blind master Ryan Conroy can hear your every move.

Your Sub-Zero is harpooned, a well-timed uppercut slashes his life bar, and then a humiliating fatality finishes him off. It's a familiar sight for anyone facing 20-year-old Ryan Conroy in *Mortal Kombat*, but Conroy never sees his victory; he only hears it through the television's speakers.

Conroy is blind. He lost his sight to a retinal disease when he was 2 years old, but that hasn't hampered his gaming addiction or his competitive spirit. Conroy's older brother got him into gaming by teaching him how to play *Mortal Kombat*. It wasn't long before Conroy started winning and the trash talking began. "Eventually, I beat him and all of

his friends," says Conroy, who lives in Connecticut. "They were amazed, but they'd say stupid things like, 'Well, you have the game rigged,' and I'd say, 'You can think what you want, but you just got beaten by a blind person—it's not my problem.'"

Over the years, Conroy has completed more than 50 games for the Super NES, PS1, and PS2. He's mastered all the major fighting games (everything from the *Street Fighters* to the *ClayFighters*), but he's also a champion in wrestling, boxing, and baseball games. His secret: He listens up. "I just memorize the sounds so well," he explains. "Whenever I hear a sound I know what's going on. I

can tell when they're in the air or if they're walking towards me."

When he picks up a new game, let's say *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*, he'll log on to gamefaqs.com and download the combos. Then he'll have his PC's screen-readout program recite the moves at a blistering 112 words per minute (even a large majority of the blind can't catch every word at this speed, let alone sighted people). After hours of practicing, he'll conquer the game in a week at the most. "I won't put [a new game] down until I beat it," Conroy says. "I'll spend eight hours a day or whatever it'll take. I beat them a bunch of times, and then I get tired of them and play

against other people."

Like any gamer, Conroy faces moments of frustration—but rarely because a game's too tricky. "They have those descriptive movies for blind people," he says. "I wish they would come out with narrative [for games] like *Resident Evil*, and the person in the background will tell you what you see and what's on the ground or whatever."

And videogames aren't the only things that could use a little more descriptive help. "I signed up for [Braille *Playboy*] once," he says. "I thought there were going to be...descriptions for what [the pictures] look like. There wasn't. I canceled it."

—James Lee

Hearing Is Believing

A blind gamer tells how to beat three games with your eyes closed...



■ Pity the fool: Mr. T takes a blind beating.

Rocky Legends • PS2

"In boxing games I block a lot, so when people start throwing punches at me, I know they're right there. It makes a sound when they're stunned, and then I'll start throwing those super punches at them, [or] I'll throw some kind of combo or something."

Mortal Kombat II • Super NES

"I don't know if they're right next to me and they're trying to jump backwards or if they're jumping towards me. So I duck and swing the uppercut, and I usually connect." When he faces another player, he'll play as Reptile and turn invisible to even things up.

WWF Attitude • PS1

"The hardest part was the Royal Rumble—there's like 30 guys in the ring, [but] all the wrestlers had different voices when you hit them. It's harder for me to tell where they are, so I bounce off the ropes a lot and hit 'em with a clothesline."

PS2/XB/GC

SHOW AND TELL: PRINCE OF PERSIA 3

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Release Date: Fall 2005

Hot Babylonian nights with Ubisoft's raging royal

Stand down, opposing camps in the *Prince of Persia* style war. With this third chapter, developer Ubisoft aims to simultaneously please fans of 2003's *Arabian*

Nights—inspired adventure *The Sands of Time* and players who dug last year's brutal sequel, *Warrior Within*. The story line continues *Warrior*'s dark, murderous mood, but a greater

emphasis on puzzles, exploration, and platforming hearkens back to what made *Sands* so special. *Persia 3* Producer Yannis Mallat explains how he'll be a uniter—not a divider—this time around....



Fancy Footwork

Yannis Mallat: "We've further refined the combat to make it far less repetitive: Running through the dark streets of Babylon, the Prince uses the newly expanded free-form fighting system to finish off the guards with acrobatic flair—one at a time or both."



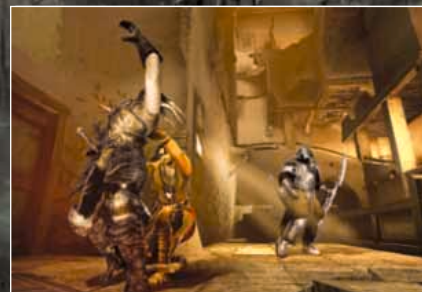
Silent and Deadly

YM: "Stealth takedowns are an important new gameplay focus: The Prince must use his agility to assassinate this soldier quickly and silently before the archer across the way spots the Prince and begins his wave of attack."



A Price on Your Head

YM: "When the Prince returns to his turbulent hometown, he's a wanted man, so he'll have to navigate the back alleys without being captured. With such paranoid tension in the air, he's not able to just hack and slash his way through enemies—he must be crafty."



Live by the Blade

YM: "The Prince's swordplay feels much like it did in *Warrior Within*. However, as you play through this game, you'll find some rather surprising changes to the gameplay that fundamentally alter how the Prince fights...of course, I can't reveal all these secrets yet." 

POP3 takes place in Babylon, the Prince's hometown.

>> THE NINTENDO DS GETS A FRESH COAT OF PAINT—THIS JUNE, NINTENDO WILL OFFER ITS DUAL-SCREEN HANDHELD IN A JAZZY SECONDARY COLOR, ELECTRIC BLUE... >>



Xbox

AFTERTHOUGHTS: JADE EMPIRE

The game's creators give up the goods

Think you've seen it all in *Jade Empire*? Doubt it. This may be BioWare's first "short" role-playing game, but one playthrough is only the beginning, according to the folks who made the game. We sat down with joint CEOs Ray Muzyka and Greg Zeschuk to find out a few secrets of their Empire.... —Jennifer Tsao

EGM: Your games are known for being easily over 40 hours. Was it difficult keeping *Jade Empire* so short?

Ray Muzyka: It was a very conscious decision. We really strove to make this a really replayable game that would be very different on replay, and one that also would allow people to finish it. We wanted to make sure that fans...would be able to get to [the end] in a reasonable time.

EGM: There are three possible endings. Which do you like best?

RM: The Neutral ending is almost like a semisecret one. You have to say [what you want to do] like four times in a row. I think that's my favorite.

Greg Zeschuk: I really like the Closed Fist one the best. I just found it very moving.

EGM: The combat was really fun to watch. How'd you do it?

GZ: We tried to simulate the general approach that a martial arts movie would use, where even if you're fighting a group of opponents, you're interacting with one or a couple of them, or maybe once in a while you'll do a big huge move that'll affect a whole bunch of them. So once we

had the material to build the styles from, we hired martial artists, stunt doubles from movies we watch all the time...the woman who was the stunt double for Lucy Liu in *Kill Bill*, and Keanu Reeves' [double from] *The Matrix*...and we motion-captured [them]. We'd say, "Do strings of moves, strong hitting moves with your hands, and see what happens." Then we would literally build the styles out of the strings of moves that these people did.

EGM: So much of this game is refreshingly new—why didn't you completely rework the menu system, too? Or the dialogue trees? A lot of it seems like a rehash of your first Xbox game, *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic*.

GZ: We were already innovating on a lot of stuff, and so...we chose our challenges. The combat itself, the overall level of polish, the amount of cut-scenes in the game were pretty huge undertakings.... Why fix something that's not broken?

EGM: While we're being honest—that dice game is pretty lame. What gives?

RM: But that movie is cool though...in the teahouse—

EGM: Don't change the subject...

GZ: It certainly wasn't meant as a major gameplay element.

RM: It's just a guy standing in the corner that you can roll dice with, to add authenticity to the tavern. The movie [of the dice rolling] is pretty cool, though.

GZ: The movie is cool.

RM: You get to see the dice rolling in real



■ Seek out Hidden Fist style (shown here) for what the BioWare guys call "the best Clear move in the game."



time. Our cinematic designers had some time and wanted to make it entertaining for the time that you spent with it.

EGM: OK.... So, how come your character doesn't have a voice?

GZ: We did tests early on, where we had the system up and running. The challenge ended up being...we'd have to have multiple sets, a lot of different dialogues, so you could pick the voice that you wanted to be. That was a challenge, the size of it. The second issue is more of a design one, actually. We sat down and modeled a scenario where you'd see the line, your character would speak it, and then the other character would respond.... And everyone was just skipping through. They

just felt, "Well, I already know what I'm going to say," so they just wanted to keep things moving.

EGM: The followers all bring something different to the table, especially with the dual battle and support modes—

GZ: One of the tricks there is to leave them in their regular battle mode until they get beaten up and are about to die. Then you can switch them into support mode.

EGM: That's abusing the system!

RM: It's making good use of their help. Use them for what they have, then turn them to support to extend their usability. It's a very Closed Fist approach [Laughs].

Follow the Followers

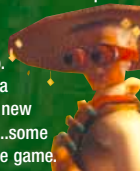
The BioWare guys recommend talking to your followers regularly. Seems they've all got some baggage....

Kang

Deep Dark Secret:

Lord Lao's Magical Furnace quest

RM: It's an entire new area he'll take you to. You can unlock a whole bunch of new minigames, too...some of the best in the game.



Dawn Star

Deep Dark Secret #1:

You can turn her to the Way of the Closed Fist

GZ: You actually can convert her [and Silk Fox] to be evil. If you pursue all [the Closed Fist dialogue] choices to the end, you get a chance to switch them.



Deep Dark Secret #2:

Her true identity

GZ: She's someone special, actually.

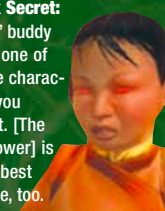
RM: If you explore her past, and Sagacious Zu—you have to do it with both of them—you can find out some more super-secret, special information.

Wild Flower

Deep Dark Secret:

Her "other" buddy

RM: She's one of my favorite characters once you unlock that. [The secret follower] is one of the best in the game, too.



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TOP RINGTONES / WALLPAPERS

EG65035 - Nelly	Na-Na-Na-NA
EG65006 - CHINGY	LEAVE WIT ME
EG65032 - Nelly	N Dey Say
EG65041 - Rob Thomas	Lonely No More
EG59719 - Josh Gracin	Wheels
EG59675 - Ryan Cabrera	TRUE
EG51394 - Kayne West	All Falls Down
EG59672 - Gavin DeGraw	I don't want to be
EG65024 - Trick Daddy	Sugar gimme some
EG65017 - Snoop Dogg	Signs
EG59673 - Three Days Grace	Home
EG65000 - CIARA	NEXT TO YOU
EG65003 - R. KELLY & JAY-Z	FEELIN' YOU IN STEREO
EG59476 - Green Day	Boulevard of broken dreams
EG59407 - Ludacris	Get the f*** back
EG59408 - Snoop Doggy Dog	Drop It Like its Hot

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JAVA GAMES



EG329 EG115 EG137 EG588 EG553 EG534

Compatibility Chart

NOTE: Nokia • Sony • Samsung • Siemens • Motorola
 A game with a color dot, i.e. RED, is compatible with SOME models of the corresponding make, i.e. Nokia. You will still need to visit www.dirtyhippo.com to ensure it is compatible with your model.

NEW WALLPAPERS



FROM THE DEATHROW VAULT

EG51756 - Snoop Doggy Dogg	Ain't no Fun
EG51789 - 2 Pac ft. The Outlawz	Hit 'Em Up
EG51729 - Dr Dre	F*** With Dre Day
EG51725 - 2 Pac	California Love
EG51730 - Dr Dre	Let Me Ride
EG51795 - Ice Cube	No Vaseline
EG51786 - Jewell	F*** Wit Dre Day RMX
EG51731 - Snoop Dogg Dogg ft Dr Dre	Nuthin but a G Thang
EG51724 - 2 Pac	How Do You Want It
EG51732 - Snoop Doggy Dogg	Gin and Juice
EG51793 - 2 Pac	Me Against The World

HOT WALLPAPERS



EG0851 EG3888 EG0254 EG3896 EG0257 EG0865 EG0910 EG3895 EG1022 EG3916 EG4026 EG4021

EG59460 - Fabolous	Young'n Holla Back
EG59541 - Lil Jon & Eastside boyz	I Don't give a F**k
EG65016 - Snoop Dogg	Let's Get Blown
EG59551 - Ja Rule	New York
EG59667 - Nas	Nazareth Savage
EG65007 - LL COOL J	I'M ABOUT TO GET HER
EG59685 - Young Buck	Shorty Wanna Ride
EG59474 - Ciara	1 2 step
EG50930 - Sean Paul	I'm Still In Love With You
EG59491 - Method Man	ALL I NEED
EG50649 - P Diddy	Bad Boy For Life
EG59499 - Wu-Tang	BRING DA RUCKUS
EG65018 - Das Efx	Mic Checka
EG65023 - Eric B. & Rakim	Microphone Fiend
EG59690 - Sean Paul	Infiltrate
EG59503 - Jay-z	Izzo
EG50649 - P Diddy	Bad Boy For Life
EG65080 - Gang Starr	You Know My Steez
EG59506 - Busta Rhymes	Make um Clap

ROCK

EG50909 - Coldplay	MOSES
EG59436 - Three Days Grace	I Hate Everything About You
EG52243 - Green Day	American idiot
EG52080 - Hoobastank	The reason
EG59487 - Simple Plan	Perfect world
EG52098 - Ben Harper	Wicked Man
EG59760 - Default	Wasting My Time
EG59484 - Incubus	Drive
EG59431 - Incubus	Wish You Were Here
EG59433 - Slipknot	Vermilion
EG65082 - Rage Against The Machine	Calm Like A Bomb
EG65083 - Rage Against The Machine	Guerilla Radio
EG65084 - Rage Against The Machine	No Shelter
EG59479 - Aaron Lewis	Outside
EG50210 - Green Day	Basket Case
EG59535 - Korn	ALIVE
EG59482 - Linkin Park	BREAKING THE HABIT
EG50897 - Linkin Park	FROM THE INSIDE
EG50875 - Linkin Park	NUMB

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***Step 2**

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■ Apparently, smiling isn't permitted in Marvel's superfamily.

THE RUMOR MILL

Where there's always something to talk about

After months and *months* of yours truly dishing the dirt on Microsoft's next console, the company has finally unveiled the worst-kept secret in gaming. And to Xbox 360 I say, it's about freakin' time you showed your face. In all seriousness, I'm stoked for new hardware, as this means my rumor mill won't be running dry for at least another few years. Aside from my usual assortment of mouthwatering treats, I've thrown a few XB360 bones to the crew working on our cover story, so don't forget to peep those pages, too. Until next time, send your complaints to the following address: quartermann@ziffdavis.com.

—The Q

We all can be heroes

Last issue, I was rapping about how massively multiplayer online role-playing

games (known to some peeps as simply MMORPGs) would have a much larger presence on the next wave of consoles. I wasn't yanking your chain, as I'm now hearing that an MMORPG using the **Marvel license** is planned for both PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. And here are a few nuggets about the game: Instead of donning, say, Spidey's or Wolverine's tights, you'll create a fully customizable character who can meet up with several CPU-controlled Marvel legends, become their temporary protégé, and earn some of their signature moves via completing heroic deeds throughout the game's crime-filled metropolis. Sounds, uh, super!

The Empire strikes back

Nope, this gossip ain't about that galaxy far, far away. Rather, I'm referring to developer BioWare's latest and greatest Xbox role-playing game, *Jade Empire*.

Apparently, one of the reasons the main quest wasn't as long as a typical RPG's is because the studio is saving some ideas for the speedy *Jade Empire* sequel. Yep, my supersneaky band of martial artists tells me that you'll be karate chopping your way through mythological ancient China for a second time in 2006.

Returning to Prime time

Nintendo's resident bounty hunter didn't have the drawing power of *Halo 2*'s Master Chief or *Grand Theft Auto*'s thug-tastic Carl "CJ" Johnson in 2004, but Samus Aran still turned in yet another stellar performance in *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*. Hopefully, she can go three for three on GameCube, as it looks like Nintendo will release *Metroid Prime 3* for its kiddie-looking console sometime next year. But I do have a teeny tiny request: How 'bout letting the blonde bombshell actually speak, Nintendo? I know I'm not the only one who wants to hear what the lady has to say.

Multiplayer GTA

Golly gee whiz, trying to find out anything on *Grand Theft Auto for PSP* has been tougher than convincing an old-fart politician that videogames aren't bad. But alas, here I come finally bearing some specifics on this anticipated project: The game will include a

multiplayer mode that, thanks to the PSP's Wi-Fi feature, will allow you and a couple of your friends to enter the same city and either work together to cause law-breaking mayhem or battle it out for control of Liberty City.

Portable prince

And in other handheld happenings, it seems Ubisoft is shrinking down its acrobatic member of the Persian royal family. Look for the **PSP version of *Prince of Persia*** to take the best elements from the last two console installments (so lots of puzzles and a darker setting). 🐼

Believe It or Not

Q: Will the next Game Boy handheld be essentially a portable GameCube?

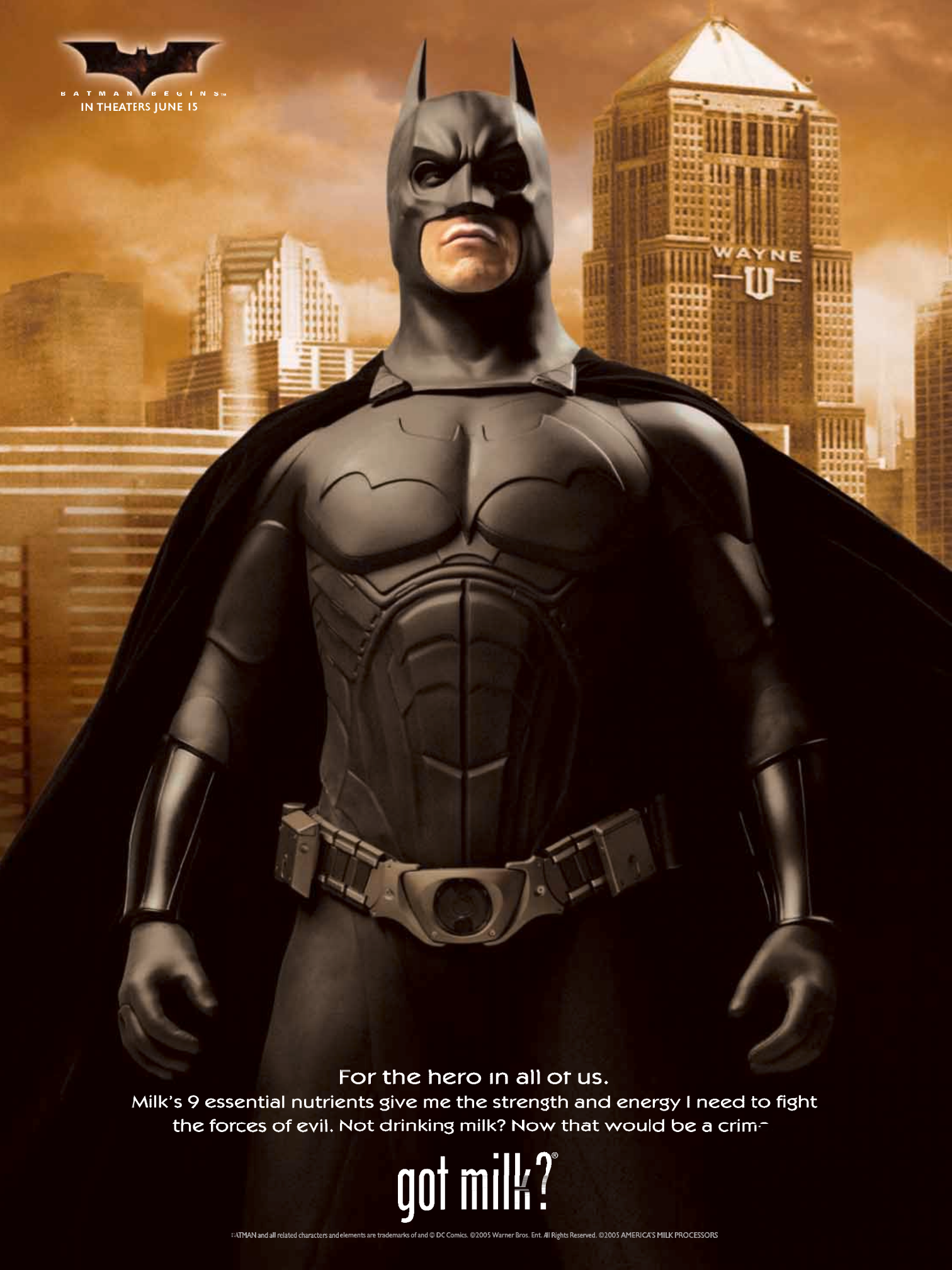
A: Man oh man, wouldn't that be a punch to Sony's gut. From a visual standpoint, a machine like that would put even the PSP to shame. Plus, developers wouldn't have to learn new hardware, thus increasing the likelihood of triple-A games at or around launch. Still, a handheld that powerful, not to mention having to stream data off a disc, could be too taxing on its battery (as we all know, the PSP struggles in that department). Does Nintendo know something about battery life that Sony doesn't? Maybe....



>>> ATTENTION JOHNNY DEPP FANS: BUENA VISTA GAMES IS MAKING A NEXT-GEN TITLE BASED ON THE SUMMER 2006 FLICK *PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST*...>>>



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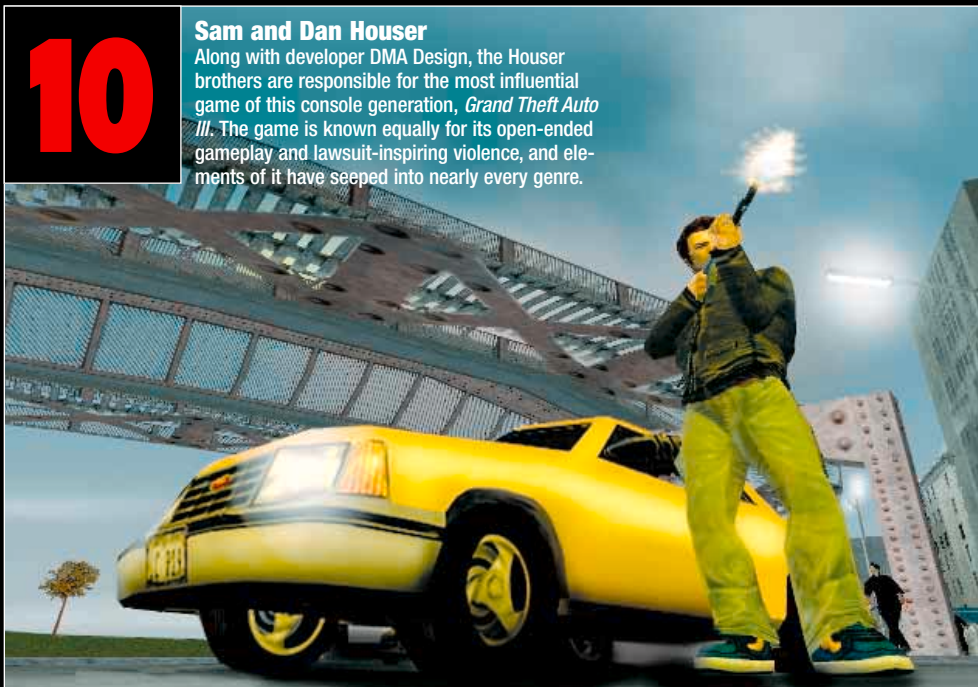
COUNTDOWN TO ISSUE 200

MOST INFLUENTIAL

The website Dictionary.com defines 200 as “being ten more than one hundred ninety.” That couldn’t be more true. So as we draw one step closer to *EGM*’s historic 190th + 10 issue, it’s time to look at the people who made the industry what it is today. As always, feel free to discuss our selections on the official *EGM* message boards at 1UP.com.

10**Sam and Dan Houser**

Along with developer DMA Design, the Houser brothers are responsible for the most influential game of this console generation, *Grand Theft Auto III*. The game is known equally for its open-ended gameplay and lawsuit-inspiring violence, and elements of it have seeped into nearly every genre.

**8****Will Wright**

If “thinking outside the box” weren’t such a tired cliché, we’d use it to describe Will Wright. The innovative designer of *SimCity* and *The Sims* would rather have players create than destroy. And wait till you see his next game, *Spore*.

John Carmack

Known more for his amazing technical prowess than traditional game-design skills, Carmack sets the bar high for programming and graphical engines. As the whiz kid of Id Software, he helped create franchises such as *Wolfenstein*, *Doom*, and *Quake*, which in turn gave birth to the first-person shooter genre.

7**Alexey Pajitnov**

The man created *Tetris*. Therefore, he is better than you.

6**5****Toru Iwatani**

Pac-Man fever swept the United States in the early 1980s and was a watershed moment for the industry, as videogames hit the mainstream for the very first time. Until this point, most arcade games were of the *Space Invaders* variety with limited appeal—thanks to *Pac-Man*, even grandmas were plunking quarters.



>> SINCE 2K SPORTS CAN'T MAKE PRO FOOTBALL GAMES ANYMORE, THE NEXT LOGICAL MOVE IS GOING THE COLLEGIATE ROUTE, RIGHT? IN THE WORDS OF ESPN ANALYST LEE CORSO, "NOT

PEOPLE

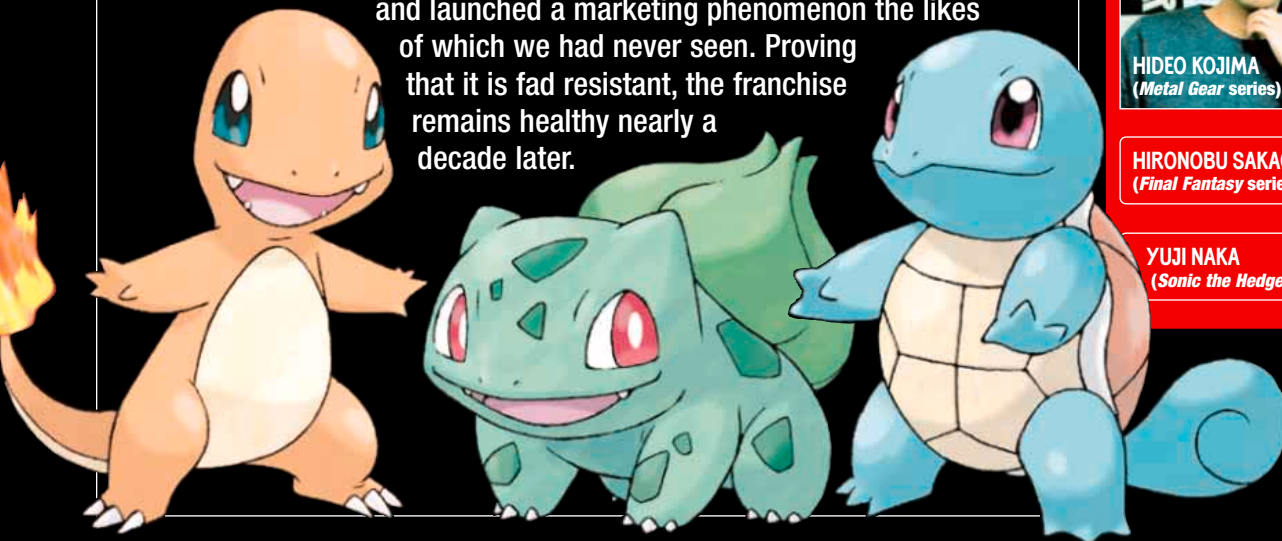


9

Satoshi Tajiri

It was 1996, and Nintendo's Game Boy was starting to run out of steam. Along came Satoshi Tajiri and 151 of his closest friends.

Two years later, *Pokémon* found its way to the United States and launched a marketing phenomenon the likes of which we had never seen. Proving that it is fad resistant, the franchise remains healthy nearly a decade later.



Honorable Mentions



HIDEO KOJIMA
(*Metal Gear* series)

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI
(*Final Fantasy* series)

YUJI NAKA
(*Sonic the Hedgehog* series)

4

Gunpei Yokoi

The late Yokoi was a driving force behind Nintendo's hardware design, with his crowning achievement being the venerable Game Boy. He was also a pretty good game developer, responsible for *Super Metroid*, which coincidentally, we voted as our top game of all time in Issue #150.

Thanks to *Pac-Man*, even grandmas were plunking quarters.

3

Nolan Bushnell

He founded Atari in 1972, and in doing so, sowed the first seeds of the home console industry. Bushnell's *Pong* found its way into the living rooms of mainstream America, paving the way for the legendary Atari 2600 system, the great game boom of the early 1980s, and then the great game bust of 1983.



2

Ken Kutaragi

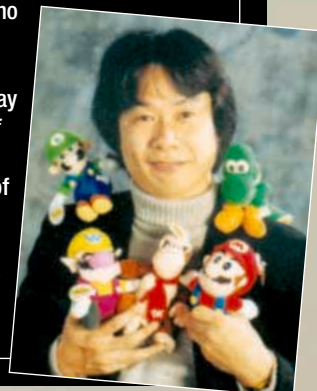
The "father of the PlayStation," Kutaragi's technical vision helped Sony do what was, at that point in time, unthinkable: dethrone Nintendo as the No.1 force in the videogame industry. And he's looking to do it again with the PSP.

1

Shigeru Miyamoto

There's little that hasn't already been said about Nintendo's ace designer and producer. *Donkey Kong* was a breath of fresh air at the arcades and introduced us to the man who would become

Mario. *Super Mario Bros.* revived a dormant industry and revolutionized the way we play games at home. *The Legend of Zelda* was a landmark adventure game that helped sell millions upon millions of NES consoles. *Super Mario 64* established the standard for 3D action games. Today, his watchful eye and creative mind continue to keep Nintendo's first-party development on point. 🍄



3D Render by Chuck Ernst



THE HOT TEN

You must really want these games, 'cause you keep voting for 'em

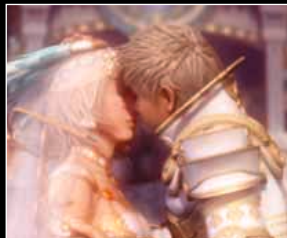
Disagree with the list? You're the ones who created it. Choose and/or lose at egm.1UP.com.



■ Meet *Calibur* newcomer Zasalamel. Hell, anyone's a step up from *SC2*'s Necrid.

1 The Legend of Zelda

GC • Fall 2005



2 Final Fantasy XII

PS2 • Fall 2005

3 Animal Crossing DS

DS • Fall 2005

4 Mario Kart DS

DS • Fall 2005

5 Soul Calibur III

PS2 • October 2005



6 Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow

DS • August 2005



7 Kingdom Hearts II

PS2 • Fall 2005

8 Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII

PS2 • Fall 2005

9 Fire Emblem

GC • November 2005

10 Burnout Revenge

PS2/XB • September 2005

5



■ Check out Raph's skeletal hand—he's totally undead.



SOUL CALIBUR III

PS2 • October 2005 — Given Namco's recent arcade success with *Tekken 5* (well, at least in Japan, where people still fill up coin slots), everyone expected a playable-in-public version of *Soul Calibur III*...but Namco swears that this puppy will debut on

PS2. Expect three new characters, a much deeper single-player quest, and best of all, a create-a-character mode. As for the game's single-platform fate, we've heard rumors of an enhanced version that might land on next-gen platforms. Here's hoping....

9



FIRE EMBLEM

GC • November 2005 — The *Fire Emblem* tactical-RPG series can be a little intimidating. If you get one of your heroes killed he's not "videogame dead," he's worm-food dead. Not coming back. If you don't like it, replay the entire stage. But for gamers who have yet to undergo a baptism by fire, the Cube incarnation of the series is willing to spare some mercy—newbies can look forward to less-stressful easy mode (a series first).

10

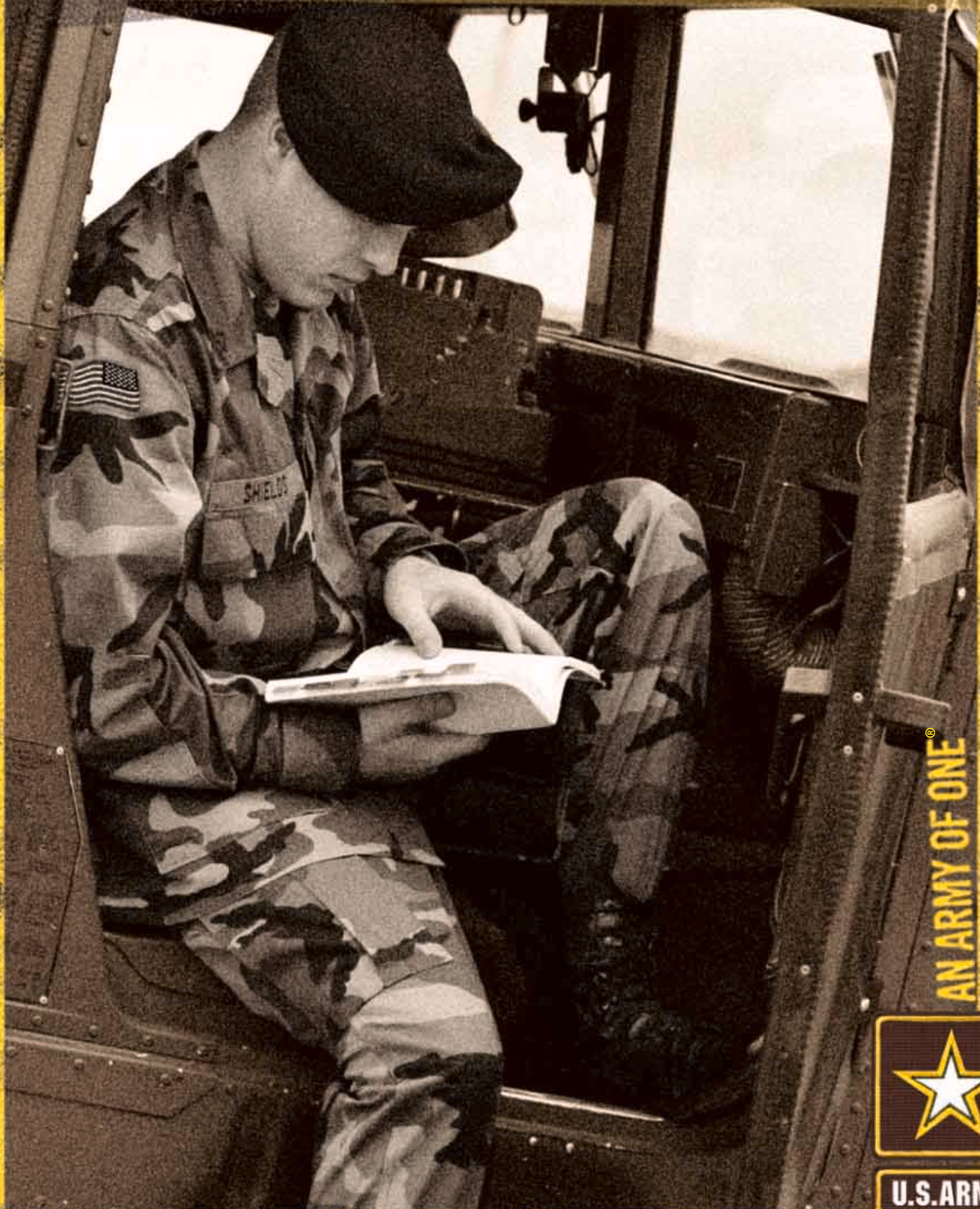


BURNOUT REVENGE

PS2/XB • September 2005 — We got *Burnout Revenge*'s developers to chat about their new game, and frankly, we were a little scared. The whole idea seems to be born out of repeated viewings of *Bad Boys II*, and the terms "aggressive," "carnage," and "gratification" came up with alarming frequency. Finally, an outlet for all pent-up angst over discourteous taxi drivers and extra slow "Baby on Board" station wagons....

Private First Class. **Ryan Shields**. 11B Infantryman.

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press start

COMING SOON

"Snood 2?!" Sorry, slow month

■ Yes, *Far Cry*'s Jack Carver knows he looks hot.

JULY 2005



187 Ride or Die

Ubisoft • PS2/XB/GC — It's a hard-knock life of street racing and drive-by shootings. F'real yo.



Death, Jr.

Konami • PSP — Strangely enough, everyone's complaining that *Death* just isn't coming soon enough. This scythe-wielding munchkin couldn't make it in time for the PSP launch, so now his creative platforming antics will live up your lazy summer days.



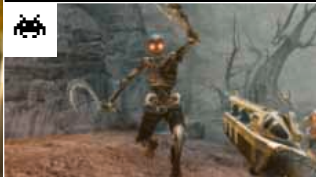
Advent Shadow

Majesco • PSP — Kind of like its sci-fi shooter big brother *Advent Rising* (XB), but pH balanced for a woman...and a PSP.



Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

2K Games • PS2/XB/GC — Oompa Loompa doompadee doo, strange candy powers and puzzles for you.



Darkwatch

Konami • PS2/XB — Fulfill your dream of controlling a vampiric gunslinger in this Wild West-themed first-person shooter.



Far Cry: Instincts

Ubisoft • PS2/XB — Break out the Hawaiian shirt, piña colada, and Brazilian wax for this tropical first-person shooter.



Flipnic

Ubisoft • PS2 — Just what pinball games always needed: a mission in which you save flamingos from hungry alligators....



Nanostray

Majesco • DS — Find yourself touching this 3D shooter to scan for bosses or man-age weapons. There's a co-op mode, too.



NCAA Football 2006

EA • PS2/XB — Previous *NCAA Football* titles have captured *EGM*'s "Most Valuable Game of the Month" trophy, and 2006 has got more hype to it than Oklahoma's Adrian Peterson because the game sports better graphics and a "race for the Heisman" mode.



Namco Museum Collection

Namco • PSP — Play new and original versions of timeless classics like *Dig Dug*, *Pac-Man*, and *Galaga*.



Pac 'n Roll

Namco • DS — Collecting those same darn pellets again but in a refreshing way: rotating Pac-Man via the touch screen.



Riviera: The Promised Land

Atlus • GBA — It's demons versus angels (and angels courting angels) in this apocalyptic RPG adventure/dating sim.



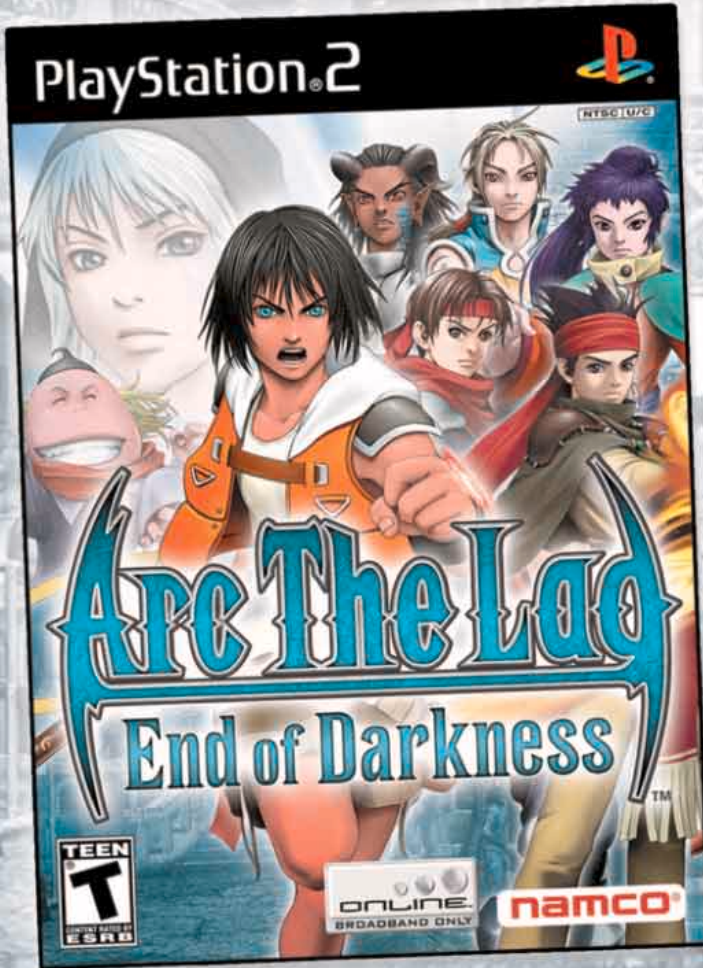
Snood 2: Lost in Snoodville

Global Star • DS — OK, we failed to find a screenshot of this "game," but we did find this \$99 *Snood* shirt at www.snood.com.

>> LET'S GET SERIOUS...AGAIN—THIS FALL, 2K GAMES WILL RELEASE FOR XBOX THE ENEMY-HEAVY FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER *SERIOUS SAM II*, WHICH WILL INCLUDE ONLINE CO-OP...>>

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own HDTVs...

IS AMERICA READY FOR THE XBOX 360?

By Dan "Shoe" Hsu

UTION



e will have the most powerful platform," says Chief Xbox Officer Robbie Bach. "The Xbox 360 will be the Porsche of videogaming." Bold words from a console maker who less than four years ago was struggling to prove that its hulk-sized Xbox was as viable a gaming system as anything Sony or Nintendo could bring out. But it's easy for Microsoft to boast right now. Sony and Nintendo haven't shown much of their next-generation hands yet, and of course an Xbox successor—now officially named Xbox 360, as you've probably guessed—will manhandle the current generation's now-ancient-by-comparison hardware. But is the 360—due out this fall with a yet-to-be-determined pricetag—coming out too soon? What if the leap in performance isn't as great as people expect? What if gamers are expecting the Ferrari Enzo of videogaming instead?

Seeing isn't always believing

You can sense the excitement—and overwhelming hype—when listening to Microsoft talk about its new baby. "This is not Xbox 2," says J Allard, corporate vice ➤

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360 EVOLUTION

So here it is. The Xbox 360 can stand vertically or horizontally, just like the PlayStation 2 (it's roughly the same size, too). Don't ask us how you're supposed to stack other systems or components on top of this curvy thing if it's lying on its side—the little contact-lens-shaped gap that's left probably won't look too hot in your audio-video setup. To get a behind-the-scenes look at how the Xbox 360 evolved from a simple vision into what it is today (including how it got its circular name), check out the second part of our story at xbox360.1UP.com.



► president for Xbox. "This is not an incremental thing within an era, like PlayStation was the beginning of the 3D era, and PlayStation 2 was the second half of the era. This is a new era. This is a big jump—kinda like vinyl to CD to iPod." OK, unless Allard is talking about some sort of fourth-dimensional gameplay, we should expect two things: much-improved graphics and new gameplay experiences not available on current systems. How does the Xbox 360 fare in these two categories so far?

It's not fair to criticize a game's graphics five to six months before its release, but that's not about to stop us. So far, with a few exceptions like *NBA 2K6*, Xbox 360

games generally aren't blowing our minds. Where they should be screaming "photo-realistic next-generation graphics," it's more "I'm a really good-looking Xbox game." Keep in mind, all these titles still have months of development left, and no one was impressed by *Halo* when it debuted at a trade show six months before its release—and look how that one turned out. So even though Xbox 360 games aren't making the greatest first impression so far—certainly nothing we'd classify as vinyl to CD to iPod—developers have plenty of time to polish things to a high-resolution shine.

Part of the problem is, visually, the current Xbox still has some legs, as proven

with recent hits like *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* and *Forza*. Can games really impress more than those lookers? "With 720p and 16:9 [standard for all games], Xbox 360 is going to knock people's socks off," says Allard, pointing out an HDTV resolution and widescreen ratio that also happen to be options on the Xbox 1. "That said," continues Allard, "we're approaching a [limit] here in graphical fidelity. The difference between a film like *Toy Story* and *Halo 2* is pretty compressed now. There's still room to go, make no mistake, but it's all finesse. The average consumer goes to see *Toy Story* and then *The Incredibles* and says it's the same visual quality. You know how much

better *The Incredibles* is than *Toy Story*, technically? Huge! But the reality is, we've gone beyond what most consumers can perceive." And what if you don't have a widescreen HDTV? "It will look awesome on a standard 4:3 TV," says Bach about the type of television most Americans own.

So gamers who set their 360 graphical expectations on "*Toy Story* to *Incredibles*" won't be disappointed. Those hoping for games that look like real life...shouldn't give up hope just yet. A few specific things we've peeped—like a *Project Gotham Racing 3* in-game car model and hoops star LeBron James dribbling and shooting a basketball in *NBA 2K6*—looked unbelievable. A casual ►

THE SYSTEM

Sleek and functional

Infrared Port

When you press any of the buttons on the optional DVD remote control, it beams magic rays into this hole, so your Xbox 360 knows what you want done with your *Titanic* DVD.

Memory Unit Slot

Did any of you actually use memory cards for your Xbox? Didn't think so. Microsoft hinted, however, that future faceplates may be sold with memory units built in, so when you slap that sucker on your console, it'll change the themes and skins in your 360 menus.

Wireless Binding Button

When your friends bring their wireless controllers over to your house for some multiplayin', you hit this button to bind them to your console. No more controller ports and messy wires!

Power Button/Ring of Light

Power button: see DVD Disc Tray, above right. Also note the outer green ring (dubbed "The Ring of Light"). It's actually made of four quadrants, each of which can change colors to indicate something to the different players. For example, if an outside game invite comes in for player 3, the third quadrant may flash red to let him or her know. Other possible uses considered by Microsoft: a way to indicate your character's health (yeah, that's real practical—to have to look away from the screen to get that information) or the health for all four players. The quadrants will adjust properly if the machine is turned sideways.

Hard Drive

The removable 20GB hard drive (compare to the Xbox's 8GB hard drive) sits on top of the machine and will come preloaded with casual games (think arcade titles), demo movies, and Gamer Tiles (your onscreen icon, see pg. 68). It's possible Microsoft may sell larger hard drives down the line.

Ethernet Port

Somewhere back here is the Ethernet port to plug in your network cable for local area network (LAN) or Xbox Live broadband gaming. Microsoft will also sell an optional Wi-Fi adapter that snaps on the back of the Xbox 360 to wirelessly connect it to an appropriate router in your home network.

DVD Disc Tray

If you don't know what this is for, you're lying. That, or you have no business reading a videogame magazine.

Faceplate

Don't like how the Xbox 360 looks? Change it. This entire front panel pops off, so you can swap it for another design, much like cell-phone faceplates. Some designs and themes are already in the works, but we'll be holding out for something unicorn themed. Preferably airbrushed.

USB 2.0 Ports

Underneath this cover are two USB 2.0 ports to accept peripherals (one more is on the machine's backside). Use these to plug in digital cameras, MP3 players, weird controllers, and more.



THE CONTROLLER

Familiar territory—except for one important new button

Bumper Buttons

The Left and Right triggers are still back there, but now you'll find two more shoulder buttons (called bumpers), similar to the PS2 pad's. These replace the Black and White buttons on the Xbox controller and are digital, not analog (meaning they're either "on" or "off," with no range of motion like the triggers). In between them is a charge port to plug in a power cord for low-battery emergencies.

Audio/Expansion Jack

You can also plug just about any headset mic you want into the round jack here, like the one you have for your cell phone, for example—wired or wireless, it doesn't matter. Your crappy old (probably busted) Xbox Live headset will work here, too. The oval holes are for future expansions. Microsoft won't say for what exactly, though.

Battery Pack

To keep your wireless controller wireless, you can stick store-bought batteries here, or you can use the optional rechargeable battery pack.

Everything Else...

The buttons, the dual analog sticks, the D-pad, the Left and Right shoulder triggers...they're all the same as they were on the Xbox controller.

Xbox Guide Button

Hit this bulbous button to access all of the universal services available to Xbox 360 users (hey, we predicted this button last issue!). You can get to everything from your Xbox Live friends list to your custom soundtrack with just one press. The best part for us lazies: You can use this button to turn on your Xbox 360 wirelessly. The lights surrounding the button indicate which player you are after you bind the controller to the console. If you're player 2, for example, only quadrant 2 will be lit. They will also indicate things like an incoming game invite for this player (similar to the Ring of Light on the main console).

► observer may have trouble distinguishing these things from their real-life counterparts, but then, we didn't see them in their real in-game situations (i.e., in a full game with other cars, players, crowds, etc.). We'll see how everything turns out this fall.

You've got services

The other part of the 360 equation has to do with the gameplay experience. Pretty graphics aside, what can this new machine offer that its predecessor couldn't? Most 360 developers we talked to can't wait to use the extra horsepower to improve things like artificial intelligence and physics. (And you wonder why more of them aren't married...) But more ambitious than that, Microsoft is attempting to bring about a new world order

within the gaming community—and it starts with one fat button.

The current Xbox offers features you can't find on the GameCube or PS2, like universal friends lists and custom soundtracks, but have you ever noticed how inconsistent the interfaces are, if these services are even available? Try messaging your friends through *Halo 2* and then *Chaos Theory*—it's a world of difference.

On the new controller you'll find a dedicated Xbox Guide button, a one-stop shop to access features common to all Xbox 360 games. "The dedicated button flips you out of your game," says Allard. "It pauses *Halo* or whatever your game is and lets you go manipulate the system—then you push it again to [go back to your game]. It's a sim-

ple way to get in and out." This means you can message your friends, send game invites, download new levels, listen to your custom soundtrack, see your stats...all by pressing this one button.

The Xbox 360 is always connected (or "Live Aware"), too—if you want it to be. Say you're watching a DVD or playing a single-player game. Your Xbox 360 can still be hooked up to the Internet so you can receive invitations to play games from your needy friends. A small notification window will pop up, then you hit the Guide button to instantly jump to the message.

The idea here—and it's a helluva smart one—is for this one universal button to do it all, offering consistent services on consistent menus all of the time, no matter what

you're doing with your console. Forget about whether an individual game supports this or that anymore—your Xbox 360 will always be able to take care of it.

Media outlet

When you insert a music CD into the 360's disc drive, MSN Music will kick in (assuming you're connected to the Internet) and have track and album names all ready for you, so you no longer have to type in anything for your custom soundtracks. Even better, "If you have a Windows XP PC on the home network," says Jeff Henshaw, executive producer for the Xbox Platform, "you can stream your music right over to the Xbox 360 console without having to go rerep [your CDs]." This should work for all the digital ►

WHAT AN EXTRA 360 DEGREES GETS YA

Here's how Microsoft's new Xbox 360 compares to its older brother in the tech department. Too geeky for you? Chris Satchell, general manager of XNA (a development tool for the Xbox platform pioneered by Microsoft), explains what this stuff means for gamers in more everyday gaming terms. Oh, it's still geeky, but a lot more comprehensible.

	XBOX 	XBOX 360 	WHAT THE DIFFERENCE MEANS FOR YOU
CPU	Intel 733MHz Pentium III; one hardware thread	Custom-designed IBM PowerPC-based CPU with 3 symmetrical cores running at 3.2GHz each; 2 hardware threads per core and 6 hardware threads total	Satchell: "Developers can do so many more physical simulations than before, so when you interact with the environment, it'll all feel real and live and not pre-canned or pre-scripted—everything will react properly. You'll feel much less constrained with how you play with the world. Characters will have better A.I. and be more realistic in how they move. So imagine shooting a character, and he's limping and falling against the wall realistically."
CPU FLOATING POINT PERFORMANCE	1.466 GFLOPS	115.2 GFLOPS	(uh...ditto)
GRAPHICS PROCESSOR	233MHz custom-designed chip, developed by Microsoft and Nvidia; 4 parallel processing units	500MHz custom-designed chip, developed by Microsoft and ATI; 48 parallel processing units (at 24 times total power)	"This allows so much more detail and realistic surfaces, which are the keys to having absolutely lifelike experiences. For example, you'll see characters casting multiple shadows, which is really important for realism."
TOTAL MEMORY	64MB	512MB GDDR3 RAM	"Extra memory means bigger, richer, more detailed worlds. They can be huge, and you won't have to wait at loading screens for it all to stream in. This memory is also needed to store all those high-definition graphics."
MEMORY BANDWIDTH	Main memory: 6.4GB/sec; EDRAM rendering memory: N/A; frontside bus: 1GB/sec	Main memory: 22.4GB/sec; EDRAM rendering memory: 256GB/sec; frontside bus: 21.6GB/sec	"This opens up the memory bottleneck so developers can really go to town in how they render up scenes. This means you'll see more realistic worlds and lighting—a lot of effects you're used to seeing in cinemas you'll now be able to see in-game."
POLYGON PERFORMANCE	116.5 million/sec	500 million/sec	"You won't be seeing those horrible sharp edges around everything. There's nothing worse than seeing a beautiful game, but the character's head is this strange cubey thing. With a higher polygon count, you can smooth out all those hard edges to make things look more realistic."
SIMULTANEOUS TEXTURES	4	16; bilinear filtering	"To make surfaces look real and natural, like leather or skin or wood, you have to have a lot of textures. You will really feel like you're seeing real materials in the game. The game world will feel much more like real life."
PIXEL FILL RATE	3.7G/sec	16G/sec	"Now we can make all these great visual effects we've been talking about without bogging down the framerate [how smoothly everything runs in motion]."
COMPRESSED TEXTURES	6:1	DXT1-5	"With developers, no matter how much memory you give them, they always want a lot more. Compressed textures let them use that memory more effectively, so everything in the game world can look unique, rather than having to repeat textures everywhere, which looks artificial. Audio programmers will breathe a sigh of relief, too, because they get more audio space back now."
INPUT/OUTPUT	Game controllers (x4) Ethernet port	Wireless game controllers (support for up to 4); 3 USB 2.0 ports; 2 memory unit slots; Ethernet port	"The coolest thing about USB 2.0 ports is all the peripherals that we haven't thought of yet that can plug into the Xbox 360. We've opened up the whole market for peripherals, whether it's force-feedback steering wheels or fishing controllers. By having an open [USB] system, the imagination is the limit."
AUDIO CHANNELS	256	More than 256	"More channels let developers...give different audio experiences that react to what players are doing. So if you crash your car into a wall, instead of getting the same 'thud,' the game can take into account how fast you were going, what materials you hit, and modify the audio in real time to give you the correct sounds."
AUDIO SUPPORT	3D audio; Dolby Digital 5.1	3D audio; Dolby Digital 5.1	
HDTV SUPPORT	16:9; 720p and 1080i supported	16:9; 720p and 1080i standard	
SOFTWARE FORMAT	DVD	DVD	
SIZE	3.5" x 10.25" x 12.75"	3.27" x 10.16" x 12.17"	
WEIGHT	8 lbs., 11 oz.	7 lbs., 11 oz.	

THE SERVICES

What you'll see when you hit that fat button on your controller...

Xbox Gamer Guide

Hit the Guide button to access a world of new features. Here's just a sampling.

Gamer Tile/Gamerscore

That's you in the picture. (Yes, you're a smilin' Asian fella.) The Xbox 360 will come preloaded with several gamer tiles (icons) from which to choose, or you can import your own picture here.

Music Player

Control your custom soundtrack from here, whether it's music on your 360's hard drive or tunes streaming in from an MP3 player or a networked PC.

Player Indicator

This shows which player hit his Xbox Guide button to open up this screen.



Game Window

Normally, the game you were playing before you hit the Guide button would be in this window, not Ms. Dark from *Perfect Dark Zero* here. This whole thing you're

looking at is just the abbreviated Xbox Gamer Guide. From here, you can get to the full Xbox System Guide to access Xbox Live, the marketplace, and more.

Xbox Live

On this screen, you can check your friends list and send messages and invites. Note your, or rather, Burning Sky's gamer card in the upper left corner. His rep is based on feedback other gamers have left for him; gamerscore we'll get to in a bit; and zone is what category of gamer he considers himself (for example: pro zone for hardcore types, family zone for G-rated gamers, or underground zone for jerks who can't stop f'in around). All

of these combine to match the most compatible players together for a better online-gaming experience.

Gamerscore, by the way, shows just how serious a gamer you are. You earn points by playing games and completing accomplishments. What accomplishments? That's up to the individual games, but all 360 titles will have the same number of points to offer up. Some points will be easier to get than others....



➤ music on your PC except for the protected songs purchased from Apple's iTunes Music Store. ("We've approached Apple," says Henshaw, "but they are not interested.") A home network too complicated for you? Just plug your portable digital-music player straight into the Xbox 360 to stream the tunes directly. And Microsoft says this method will work with Apple's iPod.

You'll also be able to bring in your digital pictures from your Windows XP PC via your home network. Again, if that's too much work, the 360 offers simpler solutions. You can plug a digital camera directly into the 360 and download the files via the USB 2.0 port, or you can get the Xbox Camera, which acts like the PS2 EyeToy, only it takes sharp, high-resolution images and can be used for

online video chats or video messaging. Once you get those pictures into your 360, the in-game world's the limit: Map your ugly mug onto characters, put a logo on a T-shirt or car, or create whatever icon you'd like to represent yourself to other gamers online. Just try to keep it PG-rated, OK?

It's a-Live!

At about 2 million subscribers, Microsoft's online service, Xbox Live, is just a small club of avid (and sometimes a-hole) gamers when compared to the 20 million people who own Xboxes. But most of those 2 million members will tell you that this club is worth not only the \$50 a year they're paying for it, but the thousands and thousands of hours of fightin', shootin', racin', puzzlin',

and ball-throwin' gameplay invested in Live gaming so far. This stellar service can't be beat, and it's about to get a whole lot better.

Noticed how we called some of those Live gamers a-holes? That's because online gaming tends to bring out the most annoying, racist, sexist, backwoods, cheating jackasses in society. But in the 360 generation, you should see a lot less of them. Matchmaking will be much more refined: For example, if you're playing with JerkStore007 and he's mouthing off throughout the game, just leave negative feedback on his profile, and Xbox Live will not pair you with him for future skirmishes. If you like that dirty talk, however, you can give him positive feedback to bump up your chances of getting matched up with him in

the future—and you don't even have to add him to your friends list for that. The Live community will also be divided into general zones and skill levels, so theoretically, you'll be playing mostly with like-minded and similarly skilled gamers when you're not playing with friends. If this all works like it's supposed to, hallelujah.

Live gamers will also see microtransactions in their online world. These are small purchases you can make with real-world money to enhance something in your virtual world, such as new car models for driving games, new clothes for characters, or...well, just about anything you can imagine that could customize your game-playing experience. "*Fable* [2] will sell tattoos in the [Xbox Live] marketplace for 50 cents apiece," ➤

A side view of a red Ferrari Formula 1 car, number 12. The car features several sponsor logos: 'DANIA' on the front wing, 'TOSHIBA' and 'COPIERS FAX' on the sidepods, 'PIRELLI' and 'brembo' on the rear wing, and 'Hella' and 'CZ' on the front fender. The number '12' is prominently displayed on the sidepod and front wing. The car is on a track, with a person in red overalls visible in the background.



EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB



Ferrari
 primo Livemini Design



it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE

LIVE...FROM YOUR XBOX 360

If you have broadband, you're automatically an Xbox Live customer on the Xbox 360. Just plug in to access the basic-services-only Xbox Live Silver for free (minus anything you end up buying). If you want to play most multiplayer games, however, you'll have to pay the standard \$50 a year for Xbox Live Gold, which is basically what Xbox Live is now with additional features. And good news for current Live subscribers: Your membership carries through to the 360, so you can keep your same account and gamertag.



XBOX 360	XBOX LIVE SILVER (FREE)	XBOX LIVE GOLD (\$50/YEAR)
CREATE AN ONLINE ID (GAMERTAG)	X	X
FRIENDS LIST	X	X
SEND AND RECEIVE TEXT/VOICE MESSAGES	X	X
VIDEO CHAT		X
DOWNLOAD FREE OR PAID CONTENT	X	X
EARLY ACCESS TO DOWN-LOADABLE CONTENT		X
ACCESS TO MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER GAMES (ADDITIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES MAY APPLY)	X	X
PLAY MULTIPLAYER GAMES ONLINE OVER LIVE		X

RUMOR CONTROL

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BELIEVE WHAT YOU READ ON THE INTERNETS

Pricing: No official price yet, but one analyst we talked to predicts \$349.

Backwards compatibility: Nope. The Xbox 360 won't be playing Xbox 1 games. And that includes the rumored 360-optimized version of *Halo 2* that people are speculating will come pre-installed on the new console.

Bundles: Microsoft is only producing one standard package (with 20GB hard drive) for launch, unless retailers make a stink and ask for different configurations.

TiVo/WebTV 360: Xbox 360 will not have TiVo-like video-recording capabilities. Microsoft, however, could not rule out Web browsing on the console.



■ This top view of the Xbox 360 almost makes it look like a microphone. Or a sex toy. Whatever turns you on.

➤ Henshaw offers as an example. "So you can really deck your characters out exactly the way you want to deck them out, without spending an arm and a leg."

It's an interesting concept, sure, but a dangerous one. What if developers start pulling bits and pieces of content from their games so they can sell them to you later online? Why just make \$50 selling one game when you can make \$50 plus several 50-cent microtransactions? Microsoft seems to think the market will stay balanced on its own: "[Maybe] the community will come back and say 'not interested' and won't buy the game," says Cam Ferroni, general manager for the Xbox platform. "I think the market will dictate how far this will go. There will be a couple of mistakes along the way; there will be a couple of

revolutions along the way as well."

Even gamers can get a piece of the action (hey, 50 cents is 50 cents). Eventually, Microsoft envisions part of the Xbox Live marketplace being run by the gaming community itself, where creative types can design something on a computer, upload it to Live, then sell it to other users (Microsoft is considering taking a small fee for these transactions, eBay style). "You know, the notion of users being able to create their own custom paint jobs for cars," says Henshaw, "and take them online and sell them to other users...I get excited about the viral community contributions. I think game publishers do a great job of building great downloadable content, but it'll really get good when [gamers] are able to do it themselves."

Premature evaluation

Talk to any of the Microsoft executives and you can really feel a sense of readiness on their part: They're ready to unleash the Xbox 360, and they're ready for a full-scale console war with their biggest competitors, Sony and Nintendo. But are gamers ready?

Look at an Xbox game like *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* and tell us if you really need better graphics right now. See what developer Bungie has done with stat tracking and rankings for *Halo 2* and ask yourself whether you're tired yet of what the Xbox can offer. Seems to us there's still plenty of potential left in the big system.

Plus, Microsoft's going after the online and high-definition crowd. According to Nielsen/NetRatings, little more than half of the United States is on broadband, and the

Consumer Electronics Association says only around 10 percent of Americans own high-definition TVs. Sure, those numbers will grow in time, but it's still not exactly the biggest market Microsoft can go after (that would be Sony's target audience: *everyone*). Is the Xbox 360 coming out too soon? "Ultimately gamers will be the judge of that," says Bach when presented with that exact question. "When people see the 360, they're either gonna say it's a big leap ahead—or it's not. If we don't produce a great gaming experience, it won't matter if we ship it in '05, '06, '07, or '08. If it doesn't have a next-generation game experience, people won't buy it." This fall, gamers will get to make that decision for themselves.

Ready or not, the Xbox 360 is coming. 🎮

YOU HAVE TO HAVE A QUICK MIND SO YOU CAN SURF



HARDER. I GET MOTIVATED JUST BY THINKING OF SURFING.



I WOULD NEVER THINK OF SMOKING POT.





xbox 360:
perfect dark zero

PERFECT DARK ZERO

We made a rare visit to Rare's studios and came back with a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge about their upcoming Xbox 360 shooter. Here's what we learned, from A to Z

By Mark MacDonald

H

alfway up his forehead, Senior Designer Duncan Botwood traces a line. "My hairline used to be here," he says flatly.

What's he have to worry about? Maybe it's the stress of making a new multimillion-dollar first-person shooter, *Perfect Dark Zero*. Maybe it's the challenge of making that game for a system, the Xbox 360, that

doesn't exist yet. Maybe it's the pressure of making that long-awaited game, for that nonexistent system, in time to debut alongside it this fall. Maybe it's all of the above, and the widely held belief that *Perfect Dark Zero* can't just be good, can't just be great—it has to be The Killer App, a must-play title so essential that gamers will buy the Xbox 360 just to have it.

But then Botwood smiles, and another

possibility crops up: Maybe he's just kidding. Truth is, the thirty-something Brit seems completely at ease, almost eerily relaxed only a month before his game's public debut at the E3 videogame trade show in May. "If we can just make sure we give them the best game we can make," he says, "then I think we've done our job." Cool as a cucumber in a snowstorm—hard to believe this is a guy cop-

ing with the stress of making a game this important, with a can't-miss ship date in roughly six months.

Which flips our earlier question on its head: Why *isn't* he tearing at his scalp?

The answer: Underneath that scalp is one of the big, beautiful brains at developer Rare Ltd. responsible for two of the best-selling shooters of all time—*GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark*, both for the Nintendo 64. (The



fact that Rare is housed in a plush custom-built studio in the middle of the picturesque English countryside also might account for some of the general serenity.) "I've been making shooters for 10 years," Botwood says, "so I've got a pretty good idea of what does and doesn't work in regards to our approach to [the genre]. That makes my job a little easier—I can focus on getting the new things working."

Which is good, because *Perfect Dark Zero* brings plenty of "new things" to the crowded genre: a 50-plus player limit, maps that can expand to accommodate that huge number or shrink down small enough for a 1-on-1 fight, innovative new evasive moves like a quick roll and corner lean, and an expansive spectator mode, just to name a few. Add that to everything *Zero* carries over from its N64 predecessor—

gadgets, computer-controlled bot opponents, at least two ways to fire every gun—and what it borrows from the other great shooters of our time—vehicles, online ranking, and matchmaking features from *Halo*; and modes, options, and other bits from *Counter-Strike* and *Rainbow Six*—and you've got a project so ambitious you've already read 500 words about it and we've barely scratched the surface. So much to

learn, so much to see—how the hell will you ever take it all in?!

Relax. Deep breaths. Over the next six pages you'll find everything we discovered during demos, interviews, and hands-on play time in our visit to Rare, all organized and broken down into bite-sized chunks from A to Z. So sit back, relax, and take it all in at your own pace. And don't worry so much; your hair will fall out. ▶



P Players,
see pg. 80.

E Evasive actions,
see pg. 76.

W Weapons,
see pg. 81.

THE A TO Z OF PDZ

The new Perfect Dark explained, from alternate fire to Zero

A

Alternate Fire

Every weapon in *Perfect Dark Zero* has a secondary function you can activate with the new L shoulder button (the R trigger being "shoot," as usual). Depending on the gun, you might screw on a silencer, launch a grenade, activate stealth camouflage, or turn your weapon into a stand-alone sentry turret—and that's just for starters. "We've got some really different secondary [attacks] we haven't talked about yet that you

haven't seen in any other game," says Director Chris Tilston with a widening grin, "which are cool as well."

Believe it or not, **some weapons even have a third ability**—a special visual filter that makes enemies stand out or a beam that can reprogram those sentry turrets to work for your team, for example. And with **28 total weapons** (see W), that's one hell of a lot of options.

B

Bots,

computer-controlled multiplayer combatants, with three adjustable skill levels in *PDZ*. Though you can use them for their typical offline purposes (to help you learn maps and practice modes or act as friends for you poor saps without broadband), bots also have more interesting uses *online* in *Zero*, as Designer Botwood explains. "You could play with your friends against a team of bots," he says. "Or have one really, really

good bot against all of you. Or have your friends hold out against a massive team of bots." Best of all, these **bots know when they aren't wanted; you can set each so that it ducks out as soon as a real live player joins your game**. Botwood also says there will be some way to give bot teammates simple orders, but he wasn't ready to explain exactly how just yet.



V Vehicles,
see pg. 81.

L Levels,
see pg. 78.

C Communication

As anyone who's ever captured a flag in *Halo 2* can tell you, voice chat between squadmates is what makes team games so thrilling. But, as anyone who's ever been called a "dog-#%&^ing, #\$\$, @#\$\$-sucker" in *Halo 2* (and really, who hasn't?) can tell you, voice chat with nearby members of the *other* team isn't always such a great thing. "A certain group of gamers enjoys smack-talking," says Program Manager Richard Cousins,

"but the majority of people don't. So we decided not to do [proximity voice chat]." Besides, with teams of 25 or more players, the airwaves will be quite hectic enough already. To help, *Zero* allows for different chat channels within your team—separate channels for offense and defense, for example, or a channel for just your friends. Annoying players that still manage to buzz in your ear can always be muted or kicked, of course.

D Deathmatch or dark ops,

the mode sounds more like *Rainbow Six* or *Counter-Strike*: Every game is broken up into rounds, with each player granted just one single life. Everyone buys equipment before each round—guns, gadgets (see G), vehicles (see V)—and sets out to kill the other team. "It's more of a slower-paced game," says Designer Botwood. "In deathmatch you can go in guns blazing, but if you try that in dark ops, you'll get cut down pretty quickly." Which leads us to.... ➤

All of dark ops' six scenarios are under wraps as well, but from what we learned,



■ Our favorite part of multiplayer so far is this combat roll. Easy to control and incredibly useful, it felt natural immediately.

Evasive actions,

our term for two different tactical maneuvers that really set *Zero's* multiplayer game apart: the combat roll and taking cover.

A roll is a somersault in any direction—forward, backward, or to either side—you can pull off at any time by moving the analog stick and pressing the R shoulder button. The camera pulls back to show your character flipping over on the ground, before zooming back into first person. **This seemingly simple little stunt has com-**

plex gameplay implications,

as Botwood explains. "Since a head shot is more powerful than a body shot, suddenly changing your head height [with the roll] is an important tactic," he says. "Also, you can change your trajectory slightly [by pushing on the thumbstick midroll], so they won't necessarily know where to expect you to [pop up]. And it breaks the autoaim, which is useful in long-range gunfights." So why not just roll everywhere? "You can't fire while you're doing it," responds Director Chris Tilston, "and you take more dam-

age [if you're hit midroll], so if you're doing it all the time, you'll be very, very vulnerable."

Taking cover is similarly simple: get close to anything you could hide behind (benches, balconies, columns) or nearly any square corner and an "A" icon appears, letting you know you can press that button to duck or lean against cover. Once again, the camera moves back for a third-person

view, this time allowing you to aim your reticle (a bit) over the obstacle or around the corner you're hidden behind. Press fire and your character will pop out and start shooting, ducking back as soon as you let off the R trigger. "The cover move is great," says Tilston. **"It allows you to see around corners. But it also ties you to a location, at least temporarily.** And you're a sitting duck for someone coming from the other direction, so you have to use it with care and know when it's time to quit and run."



Feedback,

the reason Rare released this art of main heroine Joanna Dark (left) years ago was to get this from fans. Since the reaction was mixed, the company decided to keep the stylized look but dial it back a bit, as you can see from Jo 2.0 (right).

Speaking of feedback, since Rare won't have the luxury of a wide audience to test

its game before release, à la *Halo 2* (which was given out to about 8,000 Microsoft employees), it'll be relying on its own experience and Microsoft's 100-plus testers (its largest team to date) to balance and refine *Zero*. With so many maps, modes, vehicles, and weapons...well, we wish them luck.



■ Not a girl, not yet a woman: the new Joanna Dark.

Gadgets

are pretty much exactly what they sound like—clever little James Bond-style spy doohickeys. A few examples in *Zero*: The data thief speeds up the hacking of objects (like turrets or spawn spots) to take them over for your team, the medkit is a one-shot instant resurrection for a dead teammate, the lockbox can hot-wire enemy vehicles, an explosives kit will destroy certain walls to open up new paths into a base or through a level.

Some of these gadgets are for the single-player game, but even more will be available in dark ops mode, which puts a whole different spin on multiplayer. "[When] you can buy gadgets," says Designer Botwood, **"you can tactically organize your team by what role they play. [Like a medical team carrying medkits, or a demolition squad toting explosives]. It puts a greater emphasis on teamwork."**

Health system

Zero's is quite unique. Every player has health and armor; some guns take off both at once, others armor first, then health. Initially most damage (or all of it from falls or melee attacks) is "shock damage"—you'll get it back automatically as long as you don't take too much and provided you stay out of harm's way for a bit. But take enough damage quickly and your health bar lowers *permanently*. That's right: Armor can be replaced but not health.

The idea is to level the playing field between the average player and the superelites. Since no one can ever be fully healed, even the best players will succumb eventually, hopefully limiting the guys who never die in other games and lead everyone by 50 kills from the start.

Jump

Wait, actually, don't. As in *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark*, there's **no jump button** in *Zero*. Run up to a short ledge and, after a brief pause, your character will simply climb up. A bit surprising in this day and age, but Rare claims the evasive actions and duck move fill the jump's purpose (throwing off enemy aiming) just fine, without all the ridiculous bouncing about. ►

nsults

Zero will dole them out (i.e., "EGM Shoe has died 10 times in a row without a kill!"), along with praise for special multiplayer achievements, à la *Halo 2*.



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Kill TV

OK, now *that's* what we're talkin' about. Rare is working on **this spectator mode for Zero where players can watch whomever they choose**—not just other gamers on your friends list, but almost anyone. Imagine learning tactics by finding the top dark ops player on the game's built-in leaderboard and watching him play live. Though it seems to open some doors for cheating, the idea is one of the most exciting we've heard of since *Halo 2's* stat tracking.



■ "How the hell do those *CLAN187* guys do it?" Find out for yourself by watching them on Kill TV.



■ We'd guesstimate what you see here is only maybe...1/12th or so of the desert level in the version of Zero we played.



Levels

First the bad news: Only six are promised for multiplayer. But now the good news: **Each level is ginormous and automatically expands or contracts depending on the number of players and game mode.** For an eight-player deathmatch on the desert level, for example, the level may be closed off to just a small city and the surrounding dunes—a good size in itself. But up the count to 50-plus players and the level more than quadruples in scale, including expansive canyons, an entire upper cliff area, and scale miles of paths connecting it all. The levels get so big, in fact, **that players can drop special way-point markers** to show their teammates where they are on the pop-up map.

Melee,

weaponless attacks. Lose your gun, run out of ammo, or push up on the D-pad at any time to put up your dukes—in this mode, it's the L trigger for a left-handed punch and R for a right-handed one. But even more deliciously humiliating than punching someone to death? Using your fists' alternate fire to **grab your opponent's weapon** and then killing him with it.

Nintendo GameCube,

the system that Zero originally began its life on many years ago. "We reached some barriers [developing Zero on the Cube]," says Designer Botwood, "because it wasn't really online. We felt we'd done just about everything offline we could with the N64 *Perfect Dark*, so it was frustrating. Along came the Xbox," he says, "but we couldn't take the same game [we

designed] for four-player splitscreen and make it work for 16 [online], so there was a kind of redesign there. **We had it working on Xbox with 50-plus players**—the networking technology was there. But the [graphics] weren't—the machine wasn't powerful enough." Then the 360 rolled in and, well, you can figure out the rest.

Offline

Believe it or not, some people who enjoy multi-player shooters don't have broadband Internet connections. Savages! Zero has mercy on these poor souls with **split-screen and local-area network (LAN) support.** >



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P layers,

one for single player, two to four for splitscreen, and 50-plus (Rare is shooting for 64) online. And **although nothing is confirmed, we have a sneaking suspicion other multiplayer options are in the works. "We think the idea of co-op over Xbox Live is a very attractive one,"** Designer Botwood says coyly. "We were certainly interested to hear Bungie had it planned for *Halo 2*...it's something we're very interested in." Other sources have hinted that *Zero* may have new kinds of co-op play, possibly including more than two players or a mode in which one guy can play as the enemy....

Q

uestions,

we still have a few. Like how good is the A.I. in the single-player game? Hell, how is *anything* in the single-player game? What are the other 20 or so weapons we haven't seen like? Or the other four multiplayer levels, two vehicles, six dark ops scenarios, and all the gadgets? How smoothly will the final game run? **Will Rare and Microsoft be able to effectively balance and bug test such a huge and wildly ambitious game?**

R adar,

a little circle in the upper right of *Zero's* screen that detects bad guys and gives you a rough outline of your surroundings. Well, sort of. **"It's not precisely a radar, it's not precisely a threat sensor,"** says Designer Botwood. **"It's all of these."** Enemies show up whenever they use a weapon, but eventually disappear based on how loud or powerful the gun they shot is (generally, the louder or more powerful the weapon, the longer they'll stay visible). This not only makes silenced and weaker weapons more valuable but also creates another set of skills for players to master; just by "reading" this radar, seasoned *Zero* soldiers may tell not only where their enemy is, but what kind of weapon he is carrying.

S ingle player

Though we were invited to Rare to discuss *Zero's* multiplayer game and nothing else, we couldn't help but ask about the solo campaign. We knew it takes place in 2019, four years before the N64 *Perfect Dark*, telling the story of how Joanna Dark was recruited and became a secret agent (and something to do with her father), but in terms of gameplay, just what will set the game apart? Director Tilston's answer is understandably vague, but interesting nonetheless. "Replayability...tapping each level any way you want to do it, sort of changing it. It's tied into the gadgets as well, **so there's tons of replay value within a single level...it's almost like you can play it in an entirely different way each time."**



■ No, that's not Lara and no, that's not a tomb—that's about all we can say for sure about the one single-player screen we got.



■ Green = Good = Don't shoot.
Red = Bad = KILL! KILL! KILL!
Any questions?

T hat's bull#\$%@!!"

1. Often exclaimed by those accidentally killed online by their teammates. *Zero* attempts to minimize this problem by sticking to a **universal color-code: Every player, no matter which of up to four different teams they are on, sees their friends (and friendly vehicles) as green and their enemies as red.** Look closer and you can still tell someone's team by his player model.
2. Frequently heard by those killed immediately after spawning. A small chamber filled with armor and weapons before you re-enter the level will hopefully limit this expression to special occasions.

Underwhelmed

by these screenshots? Or maybe you're impressed? Either way, Rare was quick to remind us that the version of *Zero* you see here is far from final; since the Xbox 360 hardware has yet to be manufactured, the game currently runs on a tem-

porary and far less powerful development system. "This is a work in progress," says Program Manager Richard Cousins.

"This is not the final look of the game. You want to take what you see with a grain of salt."



■ The L trigger controls the jetpack's thrust, so you need to keep it pressed lightly to stay level.

Vehicles

come in three flavors: jetpacks (one man with a mounted machine-gun), motorcycles (one driver and a rear gunner), and hovercraft (one driver and "as many as can fit on the back," with a harpoon gun in there somewhere). Vehicles can take damage and will work only for one team but can be repaired or hot-wired—taken over by another team—by standing nearby and holding down the A button.

Weapons,

28 different types, all of which take one (pistols), two (rifles), or three (rocket launcher, giant guns) of your four available inventory slots. When you create a death-match game, you can choose from several premade weapon sets (the group of five guns that will be available on the level) or create your own custom list. In the match, you reload by picking up generic ammo (pistol bullets, rifle

bullets, grenades, etc.) that'll work with anything in its class of weaponry. Other details: **Every gun's reticle starts off small and precise, becoming larger and less accurate as you continue to fire.** Also, you need to watch your ammo count and stop shooting to reload—it's not automatic when you run out of bullets, as in many other shooters.



■ Now you see me, now you *really* see me: The shockwave rifle's alternate fire mode lets you see through walls.

Xbox Live

Rare has plans for an extensive list of online options: **a refined version of *Halo 2*'s ranking system** to more accurately pit players and teams against opponents of similar skill, letting friends form squads—like *Halo 2*'s parties—that can move from game to game together, both an automatic match-finding function and one that lets you choose games based on a specific list of criteria, and finally, plans for extra downloadable content down the line.

Y not allow players to map their own faces on their characters?

After all, that was the plan with the original *Perfect Dark*, and the Xbox 360 will have a digital video camera peripheral. "There are issues with content, and there are issues with the whole attitude toward shooters," says Botwood, no doubt referencing how often the genre gets mixed up into media stories about troubled youth. "Besides," he deadpans, **"I have absolutely no desire to see testicles running around."**

Zero,

the ambitious *Perfect Dark* first-person shooter that Rare and Microsoft are counting on to convince you that you *need* an Xbox 360 come this fall.

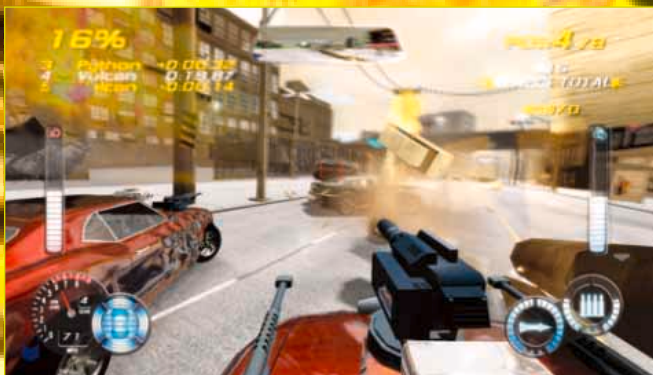
Are their hopes justified? (See A-Y) 🎮

XBOX 360: THE GAMES

Sure, the system is sexy, but will the games deliver on the next-gen promise?

Expectations can be a real bitch. In your mind, you possess an ideal of what "next-gen" games should look like, but whether or not the first Xbox 360 games live up to that theoretical concept...well, that's kind

of subjective. But since we're never ones to back down from a chance to voice our opinions, we're going to tell it to you straight: Do these games (most of them slated to ship around the launch of the hardware) live up to the hype? Are we blown away? Read on to find out....



■ Tracks quickly transform into chaotic war zones.



■ Full Auto's on-the-hood view gives a sweet view of the carnage.



■ *Full Auto's* 20-plus cars aren't real-life models, but there's still something for everyone—classic muscle cars, European coupes, low riders, even a roadster for the ZZ Top crowd.

FULL AUTO

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Pseudo
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: "First and foremost, this is a racing game," admits *Full Auto* Lead Designer William Ho. "But we figured out how to take racing games to the next level—by letting players destroy everything." And after blowing up several city blocks worth of prime real estate in his new racer, we see precisely what he means. Although the core gameplay features eight cars careening their way through roped-off urban circuits, a sizable and deadly arsenal makes that dash for the finish line a lot more apocalyptic.

All of the game's 20-plus cars come

with factory-installed standard-issue machine guns, and you're able to further customize your ride with missiles, grenade launchers, oil slicks, and various other implements of destruction. An enforced cease-fire keeps the first 10 seconds of each race pure, but once the lead starts flying, the true nature of *Full Auto* erupts—cars barrel through coffee shops, sending shattered glass, broken furniture, and flaming rubble into the way of oncoming traffic. Then, two seconds later, someone shoots a propane tank...that explodes and launches itself

at an oil tanker...which smashes into a gas station, causing a hellishly huge explosion that takes out half of the competition, not to mention the commuter train passing nearby.

Or alternately, maybe none of this craziness occurs. Rather than filling the game with pre-scripted events, the developers at Pseudo instead peppered the game with set pieces—some obvious, others very vague—that can trigger obscenely destructive consequences. It's purely up to chance (and the game's incredibly realistic physics engine)

whether or not these pyrotechnic events take place. "You will never see the same thing twice," says Ho. "This game will never be boring: You'll always find something new and destroy things in a new way, every time you play."

The developers promise at least 30 tracks, all set in different sections of the same massive, fictional city. "We don't want to restrict gameplay to a city grid," Ho explains. "You'll get dirt, sand, water, mud, switchbacks, and off-road sections: You can drive your car between trees in forested city-park sections, kind of like ➤



■ Hmm...what will happen if I fire....

Hands-on Chaos

Diving directly into the world of *Full Auto* feels slightly overwhelming at first—steering, boosting, aiming, shooting, braking, and unwrecking (turn the page for the scoop on this neat feature) threatens to overload your senses with chaotic complexity. Once you acclimate to the intensity, though, it's awfully addictive. So much of the world can be obliterated, whether to reveal shortcuts or impede your foes' progress, that it feels almost like a first-person shooter and a racer at the same time. Who would have thought to mix *Burnout* and *Halo*?



■ Take that, outrageous gas prices!



FULL AUTO (CONT.)

■ Yep, this is an in-game screenshot. The car models can take quite a beating before collapsing.



Un-Wreck

If you're on the receiving end of *Full Auto*'s cataclysmic accidents, you can "Un-Wreck" to reverse time. This *Prince of Persia*-inspired effect happens at the touch of a button, and your meter fills up based on performance. "We wanted to prevent the cycle of getting frustrated with a racer, hitting pause, and starting over," says Lead Designer William Ho.



► the speeder-bike scene in *Return of the Jedi*." And all that scenery provides more than just a lovely backdrop—everything can be shot, and destruction is contagious: Destroy a building and watch as the power lines warp and sway, sending electrical poles crashing on your foes.

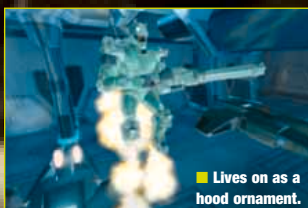
The 360 Factor: The visuals clearly sport a level of detail beyond that of current-gen games, but *Full Auto*'s most arresting aspects focus on gameplay and physics. "I think it's impossible for this game to exist on current-gen systems," says Ho. "In fact, we're already pushing up against the limits of the new hardware with our realistic physics and destruction...our replays are bigger than the entire PlayStation 2 memory." And all

this destruction isn't just pretty, it's fun, too—watching buildings and cars explode, crumble, and warp provides a gleefully sadistic rush. "It's the physics that drives everything: That's what makes something that's falling, exploding, rolling, or breaking apart really convincing," says Ho. "Previously, all of that would have to be canned, scripted, or done by an artist, but now, we can just say apply these physical properties to this object and it does it."

Full Auto will also offer all the new-fangled Xbox Live features that Microsoft is currently trumpeting: organized tournaments (both races and arena combat), player-versus-player wagering, and microtransactions (you'll be able to buy new tracks, weapons, and cars).

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Overall, we're impressed with the full package. *Full Auto* feels remarkably new and fresh, and it's not just a glossy graphical sheen that sets it apart from the racing-game pack. "We're not so cocky as to say we're better than *Burnout* or *Twisted Metal*, but we're different," explains Producer Cord Smith. "It's a unique driving fantasy, different than anything on the market."

—Shane Bettenhausen ►



■ Lives on as a hood ornament.

Pseudo Who?

Canadian developer Pseudo started developing *Full Auto* as a PC game eight years ago but scrapped it in favor of *Cel Damage* (a cartoony vehicular combat game published by EA for Xbox and GameCube). Its following project, a PS2 reinterpretation of the Genesis classic *Vectorman*, was quietly canceled last year. Luckily, all that hard work wasn't lost. "We ripped off *Vectorman*'s missile launcher and strapped it onto a car," laughs *Full Auto* producer Cord Smith.





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■ You'll race across thousands of miles of open road...though hopefully, not from this angle.



Publisher: Atari
Developer: Eden Games
Release Date: Fall 2005

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

The Basics: Remember the last *Test Drive* game, *Eve of Destruction*, the one about toothless rednecks racing around dirt tracks? Thankfully, this one isn't like that. *Unlimited* returns to the series' supercar roots, with serious exotica like AMG-tuned Mercs, the Lamborghini Murcielago, the McLaren SLR, and even sports bikes. And the racing takes place on crowded public roads, so you'll have to dodge SUV-driving

soccer moms en route to breaking the sound barrier.

The 360 Factor: Expect *Unlimited* to look pretty hot. "The [graphics] are closer to current-generation prerendered sequences," says Stéphane Baudet, head of developer Eden Games. And the hotness will extend to the Xbox Live Gold online features: "We are pushing online function-

ality even further than most next-generation Xbox games," says Baudet. "We are providing a notion of world persistency where players can trade their online belongings. *Unlimited* also [supports] downloads of additional Xbox Live content such as new vehicles, game modes, and competitions. But our most anticipated features will be real-time radio streams and a spectator mode, which allows the

entire game community to watch the official weekly competitions."

Is It Next-Gen Enough? Depends on what you expect from a next-gen racer. If you want it to look as good as these screenshots and have a ton of online options, yes. If you want it to redefine the concept of driving by letting you race while it fixes you dinner, probably no. —Demian Linn



TOO HUMAN

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Silicon Knights
Release Date: Fall 2006

The Basics: This slash-and-shoot action game has already been dubbed "the Xbox 360's *God of War*" by its handlers...and it's still nearly two years away. Maybe they're right: "*Too Human* will immerse players in battles between cybernetic gods, machine giants, and mortal men on a scale never before seen," says Producer Denis Dyack. "As the god Balder, players will explore the mythical setting in a long-forgotten futuristic past and engage in sweeping, epic battles while

being immersed in oceans of organized enemies." Oh, and did we mention this is part one of a planned trilogy? Talk about ambitious...

The 360 Factor: Dazzling graphics are a given, but the addition of Xbox Live co-op play comes as a pleasant surprise.

Is It Next-Gen Enough? Hopefully. The 360 could use a top-notch original series.... —Shane Bettenhausen



99 NIGHTS

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: QJ/Phantagram
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: Concrete details on this title currently redefine "sketchy." Seriously, we don't have much to go on, other than this impressive screenshot. We know that renowned producer Tetsuya Mizuguchi (*Rez*, *Lumines*) is overseeing the project and that it's being programmed by the folks at Korean developer Phantagram (*Kingdom Under Fire*). *Nights* appears to be a *Dynasty Warriors*-esque brawler...but looks can be deceiving. Knowing Mizuguchi's résumé, this could be a wartime rhythm-action game.

The 360 Factor: Much like the 360 version of *Kameo*, *99 Nights* assaults the senses with a terrifying number of onscreen characters. Though, you gotta wonder if combat might get a little boring after you've vanquished grunt No. 8,402.

Is It Next-Gen Enough? The slick visuals and approachable subject matter should make it a hit...but fans of Mizuguchi's artsier games might cry "sellout."

—Shane Bettenhausen ▶

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ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

■ We can't wait to race
on this Gary, Indiana track.

NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: EA Canada
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: *Most Wanted* pinches the open city and deep car customization of the best-selling *Need for Speed: Underground* series, adds the smokeys-and-bandits cop chases from previous *NFS* incarnation *Hot Pursuit*, and puts it all online. As your racer becomes more and more wanted by the coffee-spilling doughnut-eaters, you'll inch higher on the "blacklist" of most notorious drivers. Which, presumably, tops out at "Duke brothers."

The 360 Factor: Well, so far you've got your really nice graphics and your beefed-up online features, although the game's

producer, Michael Mann, is playing coy on that front: "It's still early to confirm anything, but I can share with you that we are looking at how we can enhance the experience for the Xbox 360 and that core mechanics like the blacklist and reputation will be part of the online experience." Huh. You do that, and don't forget to let us play as cops, too.

Though we haven't seen the game in motion yet, it's clear that the cars themselves look almost photo-realistic, thanks, mainly, to a technique Mann calls "laser scanning." "A laser wand is scanned over the car to provide geometry and surface

textures of the vehicle," explains Mann, "which generates amazing detail, like flecks in the paint. And yes—you can see the paint flecks on the in-game cars."

Is It Next-Gen Enough? We reserve the right to be surprised, but considering that *Most Wanted* is also coming to current-gen platforms, it seems very likely that the Xbox 360 version will be distinguished by its graphics more than anything else. If those graphics are prettying up an otherwise excellent racing game, then it may well be enough.

—Demian Linn ▶



ALSO ON THE XBOX 360

We've seen only a fraction of the games slated for release on Microsoft's new box...here's a glimpse of what's to come.

Available at launch:

Dead or Alive 4 • Tecmo

After seeing what *DOA* developer Team Ninja squeezed out of the original Xbox, we're scared by how lovely this fighter should look.

Gears of War • Microsoft

The guys behind the *Unreal* franchise unleash an original third-person squad-based shooter set in a bombed-out metropolis.

Project Gotham

Racing 3 • Microsoft

Although the console surely isn't hurting for racers, Microsoft dishes up another entry in its long-running urban driving series.

In the works:

Amped 3 • 2K Games

The Darkness • Majesco

Dark Sector • Digital Extremes

Duke Nukem Forever • 2K Games

Table 2 • Microsoft

Forza Motorsport 2 • Microsoft

The Godfather • EA Games

Scarface • VU Games

Splinter Cell 4 • Ubisoft

Stranglehold • Midway

Taxi Driver • 2K Games

Tomb Raider: Legend • Eidos

Unreal Champ. 2007 • Midway

Heavily rumored:

Halo 3 • Microsoft

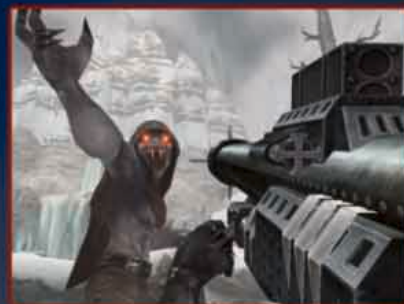
Indiana Jones • LucasArts

Mercenaries 2 • LucasArts

Ninja Gaiden 2 • Tecmo

True Fantasy Live Online • Microsoft

DARKWATCH



"...excellent use of ragdoll physics. Nothing is more satisfying than chucking a stick of dynamite and watching the bodies fly."

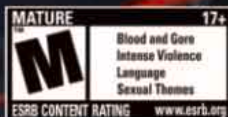
Adam Pavlacka
Hardcore Gamer Magazine

"The fastest, most solid physics engine you can buy with support that is unprecedented. It's one of the best tech decisions we've made."

Clinton Keith - VP, Technology Director
High Moon Studios

"From dismembering ragdolling enemies to shooting dynamite barrels in mid-air and pulling off all sorts of gunfighter tricks, Havok gave us unparalleled freedom to dream up and implement new gameplay mechanics!"

Chris Ulm - VP, Design Director
High Moon Studios



COMING FALL 2005!

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■ Original concept art for the *Kong* flick by Jackson's special effects house, WETA.

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Release Date: November 2005

ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

The Basics: Piecing together any coherent information about Ubisoft's upcoming adventure based on Peter Jackson's (the director behind the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy) 800-ton box office gorilla isn't easy—the flick doesn't drop until December, and the studio wants to keep most of its secrets under wraps. We're just guessing here, but we expect that you'll control heroic Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody) as he rescues Ann

Darrow (Naomi Watts) from the grumpy ape. We do know that Michel Ancel, the mastermind behind *Rayman* and *Beyond Good & Evil*, is producing the game and that he's working very closely with Jackson to deliver an amazingly faithful adaptation. "We've given Ubisoft absolutely unlimited access to every creative aspect of our film production," says Jackson. "We really want the game to be a close brother or sister to

the film—like they belong to the same universe."

The 360 Factor: Check out how amazingly close the in-game screenshot above re-creates the original *King Kong* production art (inset). It's no accident—the game's development team has access to all the sets, models, and special effects created for the film, so expect a spot-on visual match

between the two. Hopefully, the game is more than a beautiful raft simulator, of course.

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Ubisoft's simultaneously making *King Kong* for every other platform in existence, so don't expect much in the way of 360-specific gameplay here. It'll surely have the nicest visuals of the lot, though....
—Shane Bettenhausen

GHOST RECON 3

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft/Red Storm
Release Date: Fall 2005

ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

The Basics: Van Damme disaster *Universal Soldier* wasn't so dippy after all. Future Force Warrior, an actual Army initiative, hopes to develop lightweight, overwhelmingly lethal, fully integrated individual combat systems within the decade. "We're trying to take that technology—head-to-toe protection, netted communications, soldier-worn power sources, and enhanced performance—and integrate it into a seamless environment," says Robbie Edwards, producer of (tentatively titled) infantry tactics sim *Ghost Recon 3*.

Streamlined squad command and a refined over-the-shoulder camera improve the established *Ghost Recon* gameplay. Also on the list: a general layout that's less linear than *Ghost Recon 2*'s, but not as bewilderingly big as the original game's. "The challenge is to make sure a player knows what he is supposed to do and where he has to go, and then have him decide how to do it and how to get there," explains Edwards.

The 360 Factor: Veteran players will appreciate *GR3*'s improved teammate A.I. and enriched Xbox Live options...but only



■ The snazzy picture-in-picture updates keep you abreast of team ops.



after they've oohed and ahed over the slick next-gen graphics. Stunningly realistic explosions, weather effects, and character animation truly set this apart from current-gen games.

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: See the shock-and-awe screenshots—*Ghost Recon* is finally catching up to its troops' cutting-edge technology.

—Shawn Elliott >

■ This high-tech supersoldier might look tough, but he's just watchin' Mama's Family on those goggles.

MY DAD CAN
BEAT UP
YOUR DAD!

MEET DEATH, JR.

NUMBER ONE SON OF THE GRIM REAPER HIMSELF. ARMED WITH HIS TRUSTY SCYTHE, HE'S OUT TO PROVE HE'S A REAL BONE CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK.

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STIGMARHA

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EVIL... AND HIMSELF FROM A **ONE-WAY TICKET**
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QUAKE 4

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Id/Raven
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: No monster closets here: Scope that strogg harvester, a long-legged parts processor prowling for scraps, meat, and metal alike. "The strogg are the great recyclers of the galaxy," says Tim Willits, developer Id Software's co-owner and lead designer. "They take over planets, collecting living creatures—like, if they need legs, they'll take those; if they're short on arms, they'll slap some on. When at war, they salvage everything, including smashed enemy ships, even their own supertanks and stuff." In *Quake 4*, they'll find plenty to pick over.

The *Doom* bringers at Id know what you're thinking but insist that this isn't the same half-lit house of horrors that scared us stupid on today's hardware. "With *Doom 3*, you were alone in the dark," says Willits. "With *Quake 4*, you're at war—part of a bigger battle that goes beyond you versus the forces of evil."

The story picks up immediately after *Quake II*'s: The strogg homeworld's interplanetary defenses are down, and you assault the planet as part of an invasion force. "Each soldier in your squad has a name and personality," says Willits. "You'll be with these guys for the whole game and get to know them." Medics are on hand to help when things heat up, and

combat engineers are around to customize your arsenal. "We've got the classic *Quake* weapons covered—rail gun, nail gun, etc.—and then we have modifications for each that mix it up as you progress," explains Willits.

That fraternity with fellow marines makes it all the more tortuous when fate tears you apart. "One of the *Quake 4*'s cooler story hooks is that at some point, you're captured and sent to a strogg facility to be turned into a strogg," Willits says. "There's a scene where you're on this conveyer belt, and you can see what's happening to yourself and all the other unlucky guys who've been captured. But before you're turned on, so to speak, and jacked into the nexus, you're rescued and you then become the key to winning the war. Because since you're now part strogg, you're also able to infiltrate strogg defenses."

Once you've been strogg-ified, you can run faster, jump higher, and fight harder. These powers further deepen the surprisingly complex (for a *Quake* title) gameplay. "We're mixing up being alone and being with your squad, being indoors and being outdoors, being on foot and [being] at the helm of a hover tank—we're going for diverse gameplay," explains Willits.

The 360 Factor: *Doom 3* is drop-dead gorgeous on Xbox, but deep-pocketed PC gamers could still boast about how much sharper it looks on their powerful rigs. With Xbox 360, the playing field may be leveled: Id says *Quake 4* on Microsoft's new machine looks more or less identical to the future PC version. "Xbox 360 has great CPUs, a great videocard—it's a great platform," says Willits. So in the end, console gamers can brag about getting the better end of the bargain, since a PC of comparable power could cost thousands. Plus, we'll get to enjoy the beefy Xbox Live feature set for the team arena online deathmatches....

Is It Next-Gen Enough? *Quake 4* is basically a bigger and badder, prettier and more polished take on the tried and true, and that's not a bad thing. According to Willits, it's also smarter: "Strogg fighters are aware of one another and act accordingly. We've set it up so that some guys rush you, some guys cover them, and others stay even further back. And they all take the terrain into account, too—we have this really cool area with sloping hills and ravines, and the A.I. is built to take advantage of that."

—Shawn Elliott >

■ Get ready for one gruesome torture scene—our hero gets sliced, poked, and amputated in the strogg-ification plant.





■ Ah...outdoor environments. Huge levels set on the strogg's alien homeworld set *Quake IV* apart from its cousin *Doom 3*.



■ No, *Quake 4* will not receive the new E10+ ESRB rating.

CALL OF DUTY 2

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infinity Ward
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: For all its ear-stabbing commotion and substantial explosions, WWII shooter *Call of Duty* (PC) is too quiet. Or so say military advisors Capt. John Hillen and Col. Hank Keirse. "They wanted to know, 'Where's all the yelling and the shouting?'" explains Vince Zampella, chief creative officer of developer Infinity Ward. "Once the first shot is fired, there's no more secrecy, there's constant shouting—guys screaming, 'Cover me! German on the hill! Get him!'" So for *Call of Duty 2*, we've built a whole battle chatter system where both Axis and Allies constantly update one other. You'll get word when you're being flanked and hear it when friendlies need help. If the enemy takes cover behind a blown-out car, a squad-mate will warn, 'Watch out, sniper behind that rusted wreck.' And you will be flanked. Enemies tended to use lone-wolf

tactics [in *COD*], so we're taking the squad strategies that were successful with the Allies and bringing that to the Axis. You'll see one squad suppress you and another surround your position. You'll see more enemy emotion and reaction to your movements."

As in previous *CODs* (both on PC and consoles), players will wage war alongside Soviet, British, and American squads. Here, however, the intercontinental itinerary isn't fixed, meaning you can move from front to front in any order you like. Even the fighting is freer: You'll still see trademark *COD* scripted events, but much of the game is wide open. "In Toujane [North Africa], you're inserted at one point in the city and can follow the path that the tanks take into the city center," Zampella explains, "but you'll meet heavy resistance and lose half of your squad.

However, you can also flank around the outskirts of the city—slip in through any one of several alleyways. There's not just one way to play the game."

The 360 Factor: According to Activision's authenticity advisors, *Call of Duty's* combat also needs something more, something only higher-caliber hardware can handle. "A grenade went off, produced one second of flame, one second of smoke, and then it was gone as if it had never happened," says Chief Technology Officer Jason West. "What these guys brought up was that at the end of a battle, the battlefield is scorched; there's smoke, there's dust, it's been kicked up and abused. So we've worked to fix that feeling. Now after an engagement, fires still burn, dust hangs in the streets, and smoke suffuses the whole scene. And it's

good for gameplay. If you come around a corner, you can tell by the atmosphere that allies are engaging the enemy.

"So we're putting all this work into the audio, the A.I.—and it all ties together. For instance, in Russia's cold environments, characters stand around rubbing their hands together as steam comes out of their mouths. If something dramatic is happening, you have to handle the situation believably. All this was impossible to do on current-gen [systems]."

Is It Next-Gen Enough? Performance-wise, *Call of Duty 2's* visuals match those in today's newest PC titles. Both the superbly detailed graphics and battlefield soundscape feel tooth-rattlingly realistic, going far beyond what you've seen in current-gen console war games.

—Shawn Elliott ▶





■ "We had some off-the-street testers in, and at one point, a few had to pause the game to wipe the sweat from their foreheads," says Producer Vince Zampella.



■ What about multiplayer modes? "Absolutely," says Producer Vince Zampella, "but we're not talking about what the plans are yet."



■ A *Sin City* game? Nope, it's one of *Condemned*'s trippy flashback sequences.

► CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS

The Facts: Playfully splicing together genres to engineer an original next-gen hybrid, *Condemned* christens itself a "first-person psychological thriller." What does that mean, exactly? "Comparing it to survival-horror games and first-person shooters is a fair place to start," explains *Condemned* Producer Dave Hasle. He's not kidding: The eerie locations, purposefully nebulous story line, and nerve-racking soundtrack borrow from the best of the *Silent Hill* scare-em-up genre, while the brutally intense combat, tenacious A.I., and FPS control scheme are straight outta

Doom 3. "In the end, though, the game starts to define a new kind of experience," says Hasle, "one filled with tension, apprehension, visceral melee combat, forensic investigation, and a story about the hunt for a serial killer."

Combat consists of frenzied scrambling to fend off murderous nut jobs—you'll pick up whatever's at your disposal, be it a lead pipe, wooden plank, or shotgun, to stay alive. Don't expect pure fighting, though: The *CSI*-inspired forensic puzzle elements add a clever twist (e.g., scoping mysterious stains with a black

light). Plus, the grisly narrative violently intrudes on your progress, thrusting you into heavily stylized crime-scene flashback cut-scenes.

The 360 Factor: Current-gen games such as *Resident Evil 4* and *Doom 3* deliver frighteningly beautiful worlds, but *Condemned* looks to paint an even scarier picture. "The Xbox 360 lets us create detail and atmosphere that approach a level of realism previously unattainable," states Hasle. "For example, we have an enemy that berserk-attacks at an

extremely close range—the detail in his face, the flying spit and blood from his mouth, and his filthy fingers as he claws into your eyes...it's really something to experience."

Is It Next-Gen Enough? The visuals certainly impress, and since it's neither a traditional shooter nor a driving game, *Condemned* stands out among the launch-window offerings as a truly unique title. Hopefully, it will be able to sustain its tense, horrific combat without getting too repetitive... —Shane Bettenhausen ►

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Monolith
Release Date: November 2005

ALSO ON: PS3

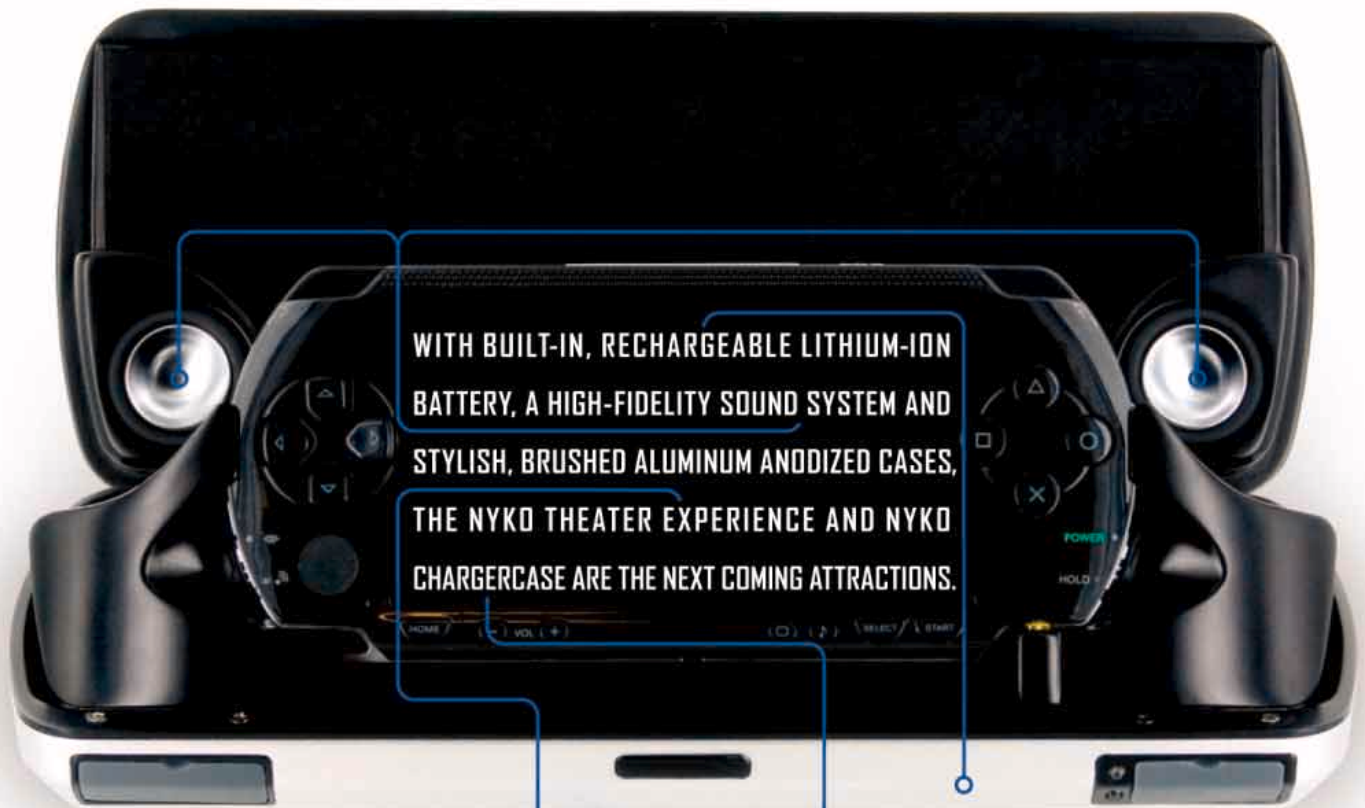


■ You'll find guns in the game...but no ammo. Once it's empty, toss it.

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▶ THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Publisher: Bethesda/2K Games
Developer: Bethesda
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: Hardcore roleplayers love *Oblivion* predecessor *Morrowind* for its open-ended world and deeply customizable gameplay. Now they'll get to return to the world of Tamriel, where they'll match wits, swords, and wands with more than 1,000 unique characters who offer unscripted dialogue and operate on their own 24/7 schedules. The first-person perspective returns with an all-new combat and magic system. Newbies won't have to worry if they haven't played the first game; the story stands on its own.

The 360 Factor: *Oblivion* will surely make use of the more powerful technology for its lifelike facial animations, realistic lip-syncing, and full speech—icing on top of the game's crisp and detailed overall look.

Is It Next-Gen Enough? *Morrowind*'s graphics made even high-end (at the time) PCs sweat, but on Xbox the game looks only so-so. If these Xbox 360 screens are legit (which Bethesda reps insist they are), then perhaps this time the company can close the graphical gap between its console and PC games. —Jennifer Tsao



■ TV's Alf is back...and he's pissed.



■ One sexy fairy, one Budweiser horse, and 1,000 trolls...fair odds.



■ On the left, scope Xbox Kameo. On the right, the 360 version.



KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

The Basics: Kameo the fairy collects the souls of powerful elemental warriors and uses their abilities to bash, sneak, battle, and puzzle her way through a world of huge and devious dungeons. Rare Designer George Andreas says, "*Kameo* really is a game for everybody." With appealing *Zelda*-like gameplay at its core, he's probably right.

The 360 Factor: According to Andreas, "We had finished the game on Xbox." The leap to the Xbox 360 has allowed Rare to take a complete game and cram it full of new ideas. Take the battlefields, which feature literally thousands of brawlers at the same time: "The [huge] battlefield is something we've wanted to do, but we lacked the power to do it," Andreas says.

Is It Next-Gen Enough? Beneath a glossy coat of next-gen paint, *Kameo* appears to be largely the same game that almost hit the original Xbox. You will find a few gameplay touch-ups, though—namely, the heavily-populated battlefields and online play. Still, we're worried that its slightly kiddie art style might damage *Kameo*'s mainstream appeal. —Christian Nutt ▶

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rare
Release Date: Fall 2005





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■ A quick note: Only the three big screens (one at the top of each page) are from the Xbox 360 version of the game. The smaller ones hail from the current-gen Xbox version.

ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Release date: Fall 2005

The Basics: This newest evolution in Activision's long-running grindathon takes a slightly more realistic route, transporting you to the birthplace of the skateboarding scene—Los Angeles. The game's story line captures the zeitgeist of the skate-punk

lifestyle: You're a wide-eyed Midwestern runaway, new to the city and in need of a radical *Jenny Jones* skater makeover.

Although *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland* takes place in a modern-day L.A., it's a world soaked in '80s punk cul-

ture (cue up some Minor Threat and Dead Kennedys to set the mood). Once you spike up that Mohawk and cut up those jeans in the numerous barbershops and stores scattered throughout the city, you'll be ready for the new *Tony Hawk* experience.

THAW tosses out one of the series' most established concepts—stages. Instead, the developers have focused on delivering one big-ass city, re-creating L.A.'s familiar neighborhoods and landmarks in one huge, interconnected sprawl. "We started ►



Ever Fudge Up a 1.6 Billion-point Combo?

Andy "THPS" Gentile is regarded as the world's best *Tony Hawk* player. Need proof? After landing a mind-boggling 1.6...billion-point combo (*billion*, not *million*), Andy landed a job as a level designer for *THAW*. His expertise means that we'll spend less time trying to find

that perfect line—we watched as Andy landed 3 million-point combos with ease. He knows that true *Hawk* enjoyment comes from improvising around the city: In *THAW*, you can combo from one end of L.A. to the other, linking reverts to manuals to keep the combo going.





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TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND (CONT.)



■ Wanna kick it even older school? *THAW* offers a classic *Pro Skater* mode, with 10 goals per level. Plus, you and a buddy can now team up and barrel through classic in splitscreen co-op.



➤ [THAW] right after *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* came out," says Neversoft Producer Kevin Mulhall. "We wanted a massive city with no loading, a place where you can skate anywhere you want to." It's a liberating experience for those weaned on the limited levels of past *Hawks*: You'll be able to start a combo in Hollywood and land it in East L.A.

But wicked combos alone don't make you famous; you'll have to make a name

for yourself (again) by impressing people in sponsor challenges, but this time with an array of new moves. Bert slides are a crucial addition: These surfing-like pivotal tricks deftly link other moves in a combo. "It's a throwback to the Dogtown days: It's a more stylized trick, like the manual," says Mulhall. Also, revamped walking controls let you Jackie Chan your way around town, running up walls, doing wall-flips, and somersaulting through alleyways.

This new approach to the *Hawk* franchise is an intentional 180 after two exceedingly goofy *THUG* games. "Last year, we went wacky and did off-the-wall humor," Mulhall says. "With *THAW*, *Tony* goes back to its roots and to the essence of skating." That means, thankfully, more drought-emptied swimming pools and fewer fiery beaver farts. And although you won't be skating as them, you'll still get cameos from many pro skaters, including

many L.A. hotshots and old-timers. Story mode missions will also jive with the game's real-world vibe, as you complete various skating tasks to earn cash. We can guarantee that you won't be controlling some jackass on a mechanical bull. But that's not to say that there won't be any vehicles—*THAW* introduces BMX bikes, which you'll be able to hop on at any point. Bikes have their own controls and tricks, such as tailwhips and bar spins.



■ *Tony Hawk's Pro BMX Rider?*

Tony Hawk's Greatest Gameplay Innovations

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2: The combo-linking manual exponentially upped the first game's point possibilities.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3: The revert: a new, subtle way to link vert tricks.

Tony Hawk's Underground: Hawk first steps off his board, creating new opportunities for trickery.

Tony Hawk's Underground 2: The natas spin: stylish, but not very versatile.



■ *THAW's* Bert slide allows for mad trick-linking. It's a nice addition....



■ Ah, all the distinctive beauty of L.A.—overpasses and drainage canals.

The 360 Factor: But most people will wonder how *THAW* performs on the Xbox 360—not some silly bicycle. So far, we haven't seen much proof that it takes advantage of the system's beefy graphical abilities...but hopefully, the developers will polish up the looks in the coming months.

At least the 360 *THAW* will bring *Tony Hawk* to Xbox Live for the first time. The game will make a great transition to the 360's multiplayer-friendly Xbox Live Gold by having up to eight players in over 10

different game modes. Gold will make it easier for us wannabe X Game medalists to set up teams or go all-for-one in *THAW*'s smaller sections of the city or levels from its classic mode.

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Looking at these screenshots, we're not that impressed with the 360 version's visuals—*THAW* looks more like an Xbox 180 game (as in, headed backwards) to us. Still, developer Neversoft says, "The increase in [power] will allow us

to create longer missions and goals, have even more game features and control mechanisms." But we may not see anything different from *THAW*'s Xbox/PS2 version besides a bit prettier graphics. We'll keep hope alive that the final version isn't just a sloppy Xbox-to-Xbox-360 port: Neversoft told us it'd "probably" change stuff around for the Xbox 360. But we're guessing that we'll have to wait till 2006 to see how *Tony Hawk* taps the true power of the next-gen systems. —Jimmy Lee



Skate Ranch

The streets of Los Angeles can be brutal to a corn-fed kid from the sticks. Luckily, you have a home base where you and your buds can relax—your personal skate ranch on the outskirts of town. How your skater's haven develops is entirely up to you: You build it by finding suitable pieces throughout L.A., grinding them, and dragging them back to your desert getaway. Be on the lookout for cool objects that would make good skating lines. "The missions aren't in any order, so nobody's skate ranch will be similar," says *THAW* Producer Kevin Mulhall. Personally, we've got our eyes on the "W" in the Hollywood sign. ➤



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■ Will the power of a next-gen console fix the humongous gap in Michael Strahan's teeth? It ain't a miracle worker, people.

ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC



■ *Madden* (along with all XB360 versions of EA Sports titles) should be playable online.

MADDEN NFL 2006

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: It just wouldn't be a true hardware launch without a new edition of Johnny Ballgame's colossal football franchise. While the overall feature set may be smaller than the current-gen installments, the XB360 version of *Madden NFL 2006* will surely have all of this year's on-field advancements, which includes Vision and Precision passing (an onscreen cone

represents your quarterback's field of vision), adaptive A.I. (defenses now adjust if you keep calling the same play), and brand-new juke moves.

The 360 Factor: Next-gen power will bring about subtle events that have been sorely missing from the virtual gridiron. This means you'll finally see running

backs leaping over massive pileups near the goal line, players hydroplaning five to 10 yards after being tackled on a muddy, rain-soaked field, and stadiums filled with loud-mouthed fans who no longer look like cardboard cutouts.

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Yes...if the game really looks as impressive as this batch

of screenshots. You see, all the images here were taken from an EA "visual target" CG video, which is not the actual game. Still, Executive Producer Jeremy Strauser absolutely swears that *Madden NFL 2006* will "look better than [these screens].... The game will have a level of detail that'll blow you away." Here's hoping.... —Bryan Intihar

■ Imagine how good Tiger's hottie wife will look on XB360.



ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Redwood Shores
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: Like most of the sports titles mentioned on these pages, the development team isn't giving up the goods on *Tiger's* upcoming feature set. All we know is that Pebble Beach will be one of the courses included with the XB360 version (whoopie).

The 360 Factor: Thanks to the capabilities of this next-gen machine, you'll now see more noticeable contours on the courses, especially the greens (which any golfer knows is where it really counts). Also, improved physics will make for real-

istic ball flight and bounces. But what really has us excited is being able to walk up to the 18th hole's green in the final round of a major tournament and see the gallery just littered with cheering fans (current versions of *Tiger* feature almost no spectators).

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: If the XB360 edition can deliver on the points mentioned above, then we can't wait to put on our Payne Stewart-inspired knickers, grab a bag of clubs, and hit *Tiger's* next-generation links. —B.I.

■ Lookin' good. Now let's see *Live* from an actual gameplay camera.



ALSO ON:
PS2/XB/GC

NBA LIVE 2006

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: EA isn't ready to tell us its game plan for *NBA Live 2006*, but if you go by the last few iterations, expect some more refinements to its freestyle control system and, hopefully, last year's slam dunk contest.

The 360 Factor: Look for basketball to get rougher on Microsoft's upcoming console. "Imagine [Miami Heat guard] Dwayne Wade driving the lane against the Suns—the lightning-quick first step, the sick crossover dribble, and the big collision with [the Suns'] Amaré

Stoudemire in the paint as he lays it in," says Producer Tim Tschirner. "[On Xbox 360], you'll be able to see dynamic physical collisions like you've never experienced before."

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: We're all for a li'l more banging along the boards, but as with *Madden*, we're not entirely convinced that *NBA Live's* players can look as realistic as this "visual target" screen—especially when there are 10 guys on the court at once. So don't believe it until we see it. —B.I.



■ **NBA 2K6:** Now with nosebleed cam?

ALSO ON:
PS2/XB

NBA 2K6

Publisher: 2K Sports
Developer: 2K Sports
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: Like EA, 2K Sports is keeping most of this year's b-ball features in its jockstrap for the time being. We do know, however, that *NBA 2K6* will have a new steal system. "Players can use the right analog stick to make different directional swipe steals," says Project Manager Scott Slaby. "And when a player is away from the ball, they can use it to jump in specific directions to block passing lines or even intercept a pass."

The 360 Factor: The crew at 2K Sports is really psyched about high definition. "Our

game looks awesome already, but when you have it running at 720p, it's unbelievably gorgeous," professes Slaby. "The power of the Xbox 360 definitely gives us the ability to explore new realms in terms of shading and lighting. And our player models are so detailed—it's just crazy."

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Visually, this series has always been the cream of the basketball crop, so we have no doubt *2K6* will look pretty. But can it make the necessary gameplay strides? (Check out pg. 126 for more on *NBA 2K6*.) —B.I.



■ Apparently, tattoos, bandannas, and sleeveless T-shirts don't intimidate like they used to.

TOP SPIN 2K6

Publisher: 2K Sports
Developer: Indie Built
Release Date: Fall 2005

The Basics: Oh-so-simple controls, silky smooth player animations, and a gigantic career mode made this formerly Microsoft-owned tennis series the only real gem in the company's retired XSN lineup. Now under the watchful eye of 2K Sports, this *Top Spin* follow-up will feature advanced shot types and abilities that you'll learn while progressing through the main game, plus Xbox Live play.

The 360 Factor: According to the game's developer, Microsoft's next-gen console will let them take care of the little things,

such as touching up the player models, venues, and crowds and adding brainier A.I. "Obviously, high-definition output is very exciting, and people will notice a huge difference with games running in HD," says Project Manager Thorsten Moeckel. "Xbox 360 allows us to create an incredibly immersive experience that rivals what you see on television—but now it's you playing [Maria] Sharapova."

Is It Next-Gen Enough?: Sure, but how 'bout the option to go all John McEnroe on the linesman? —B.I.



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by Rick O'Connor



review crew

a sad month, full of lamenting and the gnashing of teeth

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THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

There's no getting around it—we give our own Review Crew a score of 3.0 this issue. But it's not for lack of tryin'; there just weren't many games available to review. You know you're in trouble when the hottest competition is for Shame of the Month. That *Forza*, though—it's a good one.

Got any questions about the games we played for this issue? Hit up the cumborsomely titled "EGM July #193 Review Discussion" thread on the EGM message board at 1UP.com and talk it over with Review Crew members. You can accuse us of bias, we can refute your points with facts, then you can ignore them completely...oh, *Internet*.

And coming next month: The winner of our Review Crew Survivor contest gets his first assignment. Not counting the foot massages, of course.



GAME OF
THE MONTH

FORZA MOTORSPORT





THE REVIEW CREW



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Likes: GBA games on DS, Xbox 360 services
Dislikes: *Rengoku*, interns beating him in games
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Dislikes: How much his therapist charges
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Dislikes: *Smartbomb*. Very, very deeply
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Dislikes: Load times in PSP games
Blog: johtntv.1UP.com



JUSTIN SPEER, Staff Reviewer
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Dislikes: No-risk design, random battles
Blog: zepylus.1up.com



■ You may also see reviews written by the folks over at **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** and **1UP.COM**. Do not be alarmed, we are aware of the incursion.

THE RATING SYSTEM & AWARDS

7.0-10 GOOD

5.0-6.5 FAIR

0-4.5 BAD

At *EGM*, we evaluate only games that have been deemed final and reviewable by their publishers. Three editors rate each game independently, and we use the whole scale. **5.0 IS AVERAGE.**



Platinum —
straight 10s.
For games
that are life-
changing.



Gold — for
games with
an average
score of 9.0
or higher.



Silver —
for games
with a mean
score of 8.0
or higher.



The highest-
scoring
game each
month gets
a star.



The lowest-
rated game
with unani-
mously bad
scores.

ESRB KEY (Also check out www.esrb.org)

Everyone:
Saccharine fun for the whole family:
dancing elves, rampant sharing, and
possibly Smurfs.

Everyone 10+:
Saccharine fun for family members
over 10, that may include mild violence
between cartoon squirrels.

Teen:
The PG-13 of game ratings. Fisticuffs,
hilarious sexual misunderstandings, and
madcap antics.

Mature:
For the 18-and-over crowd. Intense
violence, gore, pixilated sex, drugs;
parents no likey.

00:14:56
BEST
00:00:00

OK, backseat driving grandma: why is *Juiced* telling us to slow down?

SLOW DOWN



PS2/XB

JUICED

+1 Respect

DEMIAN: If this all looks strangely familiar, kind of like, oh, page 136 of *EGM* #184, that's because we've already reviewed this street racer. But before *Juiced* actually made it to store shelves, then-publisher Acclaim bit the dust. THQ stepped in, put *Juiced* back in the garage for some needed game-play tweaks, and here we are, for real this time.

Aside from the usual tune-race-repeat dynamic, *Juiced* has a few interesting features. You can bet on races and race for pink slips—a few unwise wagers early on can have serious consequences to your cash flow. You'll also add A.I. drivers to your "crew" as you progress, whose skills increase with track time while you play the pit boss or race alongside in a team battle. As in *Gran Turismo* 4's B-spec mode, you'll adjust your A.I. racer's driving style with the D-pad—while not tons of fun, it is an easy (and optional) way to earn money.

Unfortunately, even when you're behind the wheel yourself, *Juiced* just isn't in the same race class as its top rivals, *Need for Speed* and *Midnight*

Club. The cityscapes and cars have a cartoony look, and the handling is stuck somewhere in the not-as-fun-as-it-could-be zone between a sim racer and an outrageous arcade game like *Burnout 3*.

As expected, the Xbox version looks a bit better, but the PS2 game does support online voice chat if you've got a headset (as does the Xbox game, of course). And though you can race your career mode cars online—and lose them in ill-advised pink slip races—you can't bet with other players, which is a shame. *Juiced*'s attempt to bring something new to street racing earns my respect, but not my love.

G. FORD: Back when I first reviewed *Juiced* over six months ago, I had some good times. While it never delivered the same thrills as *Midnight Club* or *NFS Underground*, it had a few clever ideas. But many months have passed and the game is only marginally better—its controls are a little smoother, among other tweaks—and the rest of the genre has moved on now that the big boys

have their new updates. While still a respectable game that's enjoyable for a few laps, *Juiced* lacks the impact it would have had last year.

1UP.COM—JOHN: The problem with all of these tuner-culture games is that they take themselves so seriously. Even the menu screens have tribal tattoos here, and every new shaven-headed, Supra-driving thug you meet is more desperately earnest than the last. That said, *Juiced* is a competent entry into the genre. Most of the boxes on the list of necessary features for this kind of thing are checked, and it sits comfortably between *Need for Speed Underground* and *NFSU2*. Lots of cars, lots of mods, and gambling, which adds a dynamic that's only really been done before in *Street Racing Syndicate*. Driving feel is on the arcade end of the scale, so you can chuck a 200-hp front-drive car into a bend at 80 mph without any tedious understeer. Realistic? No. But it's fast, and it's pretty fun. It's just not anything particularly special.



Respect, Yo

Juiced's career mode is all about respect—after each event, your respect rating with other street racing crews will fluctuate depending on your performance. Some crews are impressed by circuit race wins; others don't bat an eye unless you race for pinks. They all get pissed if you bang up their cars, though. Problem is, each crew leader says the same one or two things over and over; Carlos of the Legion crew can only say "Jour a deeeeeeemon wit da piiiinkinks" so many times before it gets a little ridiculous.



Good: Betting on races, making the A.I. drive for you
Bad: Car handling not as polished or fun as it should be
Not to be Confused With: *Juice*, the 1992 Tupac film



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

7.0
DEMIAN

6.5
G. FORD

7.0
JOHN

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Juice
Players: 1-2 (2-6 online or system link)
ESRB: Teen

www.thq.com



■ PS2/XB

PREDATOR: CONCRETE JUNGLE

Let us prey

Good: Creative alternative-combat ideas spice up the fighting

Bad: Looks worse than some PS2 launch titles

The Moral: If an alien ship lands, don't steal nothin' from it



JON D: Props to *Concrete Jungle* for trying something different from the usual action-game clichés—even though the game's obtuse story will raise a few eyebrows. As a Predator, you gimped your mission in the 1930s and left behind some alien tech. A century later, you return to find a crime syndicate all decked out with Predator gear and weaponry. Third-person action combat ensues, though your first battle will be with the god-awful default camera (change it in the Options menu for a much better view). Too bad there's no option for correcting the messy graphics and generally one-dimensional gameplay, though. *Concrete Jungle* feels like a giant series of random *Grand Theft Auto* minimissions: Bust up this drug deal, invade this Mafia don's mansion, etc.

Typically sloppy beat-em-up combat is actually smoothed out on occasion when you use some of

Predator's tech gadgets and more specialized hunting skills. Scanning foes to identify enemy weaknesses and sniping with the plasmacaster to avoid the melee BS adds some welcome depth. There are some good ideas buried here and there, but they generally feel more forced than fun when you put 'em all together.

JAMES: Even with all the cool gadgets, *Predator* will have you hunting for fun gameplay. The cloaking ability is nice, but the game's camera (in both default and "tracking" views) is so bad sometimes that even you don't know where the hell your guy went. *Predator* gets a little too zealous with the gadgetry, also: In one level, you're supposed to neuro-scan everyone to find the bad-guy pimps...since it's so difficult to spot their big hats and platform shoes.

Worse, each stage's two to three

tedious objectives lack in-between save points—as if the game wants you to hate it.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER:

Predator is a pretty awesome game—in concept, that is. The story is some bizarre and groovy yarn about you (a Predator) hunting down humans who've reverse-engineered your technology. Think of it as a complete Predator simulator: You've got full access to the classic Pred weapons and gadgets (even that freaky Predator scream).

Sounds great, but when you actually play it, the damn default camera completely obscures what you need to kill or where you need to go, there's too much scanning, the A.I.'s occasionally idiotic, and the lack of checkpoints in long missions is obscenely aggravating. What could've been an awesome *Predator* game is actually one ugly mother****er.



■ You'd think Robocop (the blue refrigerator-looking thing, right) might at least get a name check in the title, if not top billing....

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.5	4.5	4.5
JON D.	JAMES	SCOOTER	

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Eurocom
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.predatorconcretejungle.com



www.killer7.com

■ PlayStation 2

ATELIER IRIS: ETERNAL MANA

Special blend



Colorful characters, yes.
Colorful backgrounds, no.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	7.0	7.5
	JUSTIN	SHANE	JOHN R.

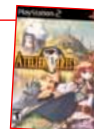
Publisher: NIS America
Developer: Gust
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.nisamerica.com

Good: Involving, well paced, fast and intuitive combat

Bad: Still has those damn random battles

Rated T: For consumption of made-up alcoholic beverages



JUSTIN: To all you jaded, battle-weary role-playing gamers out there: Have you considered a career in alchemy? For anyone who's toiled away for years at a dead-end job in the field of generic monster slaying, stepping into the shoes of an alchemist named Klein in *Atelier Iris* might provide a welcome change of pace.

Where most RPGs make weapon forging and item splicing feel like brain-dead busywork, *Atelier* imbues these processes with purpose and context. You'll feel compelled to create and use items because 1) they're useful, and 2) even rare items can be replaced, so there's no need to hoard them. Cute, clever tutorials explain everything, and while some of it is optional, nothing feels forced or useless.

Atelier does exhibit a few tired old-school traits; you're randomly sucked into slow-moving turn-based scuffles from time to time, but thoughtful additions (a pinch of strategy in this case) keep things fresh. Add in an entertaining story loaded with humor and you've got a potent concoction that should appeal to any RPG fan.

SHANE: This time-warp RPG has me waxing nostalgic—its dated visuals, goofball characters, and catchy tunes could have easily sprung from some forgotten classic for the Sega Saturn...gee, maybe even

the antiquated Sega CD.

Sure, it looks prehistoric, but its heart is in the right place: After a generation of serious, depressing role-playing hits (*Final Fantasy X* and *Shin Megami Tensei*), maybe some levity is in order.

Speedy, simple battles and wonderfully interactive environments keep the game rolling at a nice clip, and it's really the perfect length—40 hours for an average playthrough, 70 if you're a completist. Worth a look if you can handle its retro graphics (and clunky overworld map).

JOHN R: *Atelier* is the kind of RPG I'd like to see more of in the States. The graphics, while a bit dated, have a very clean, colorful style that lends the game world a distinct, cohesive feel. And the lighthearted story never once takes itself too seriously—a far cry from most of today's self-important, overly melodramatic role-players. The characters are genuinely funny and likable, the English voice-acting is surprisingly decent, and most importantly, the gameplay is solid. Battles can be a bit slow at times, but the battle system itself is intuitive and well designed, and synthesizing weapons and items can be extremely addictive. Kudos to developer Nippon Ichi for bringing this over—hopefully, the company is hard at work on the sequel.

■ PlayStation 2

IN THE GROOVE

Don't hate it because it's a rip-off



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	5.5
	JENNIFER	JOE	KAREN

Publisher: RedOctane
Developer: Roxor
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everyone

www.inthegroove.com

Good: Highly customizable routines

Bad: Music for cheesy techno fans only

Why Should: *Dance Dance Revolution* have all the fun?



JENNIFER: I get what they're trying to do with *In the Groove*. The hardcore already know this *Dance Dance Revolution* spin-off from the arcade; why not give the folks at home some choices, too?

This dancepad rhythm-music game makes several nice amendments to the established *DDR* rule book, starting with the addition of "modifiers" of the standard straight-scrolling arrows: Here, there are twisting arrows, mines, hand steps—all creating a fun, if slightly psychedelic, dancing experience. The modifiers give something new and refreshing for the hardcore set while livening things up for the two-left-feet crowd stuck on the easy setting. Dexterous dancers will also raise their hands for the new expert difficulty—this one goes to 13, and those steps are some serious business. Overall, the choreography of the routines is hit or miss: Some feel like true dancing, while others can be awkward even for the pros. And though I understand that dancing games need songs with high BPM, is it so hard to incorporate fast remixes of hit mainstream songs? This techno tyranny must end! Maybe *In the Groove* isn't a real dance revolution, but it takes some (gulp) steps in the right direction.

arrows spin, disappear, reverse their orientation, or turn into mines that must be avoided, you've entered the realm of the Hardcore Dance Freak.

That's not to say there's nothing for newcomers; *Groove*'s easy levels are very, very easy. But it gets hard quickly, and the most difficult setting will probably make your head explode. Even with a near-infinite array of options for tweaking the difficulty, though, this no-frills game is obviously intended for very, very serious dance-game fans—serious enough to not need flashy backgrounds or popular songs.

1UP.COM—KAREN: For those wiz kids who have mastered dancing games, here's a chance to blow another 800 hours—but with Eurotrashy music you'll really hate. For everyone else, prepare to gawk at an overwhelming tornado of arrows. Though *Groove*'s detailed custom settings can be adjusted for beginners, options like making the direction arrows spin and bounce in a bunch of cracked-out ways really make it expertcentric—but also more like a game than an exercise in memorizing permutations of cardinal directions.

Think of *Groove* as a training program for supercoordinated gamers-slash-dancers—but regular Joes may abandon the nifty high-end RedOctane dance pad after 10 minutes.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE: *Groove* is a game for those of you who think the many iterations of *DDR* just aren't hard enough. When



■ Your enemies called each other in the morning and coordinated their outfits.



■ PlayStation 2

SAMURAI WESTERN

Our cowboys could beat up your cowboys

Good: Lotsa unlockable characters and costumes

Bad: Rote, repetitive hack-n-slash

Try Instead: *Onimusha 3*



SHAWN: East meets West, swords square off against six-shooters at Shanghai noon...there's bad and there's ugly, but I'm having trouble finding the good.

Despite its right time, wrong place potential and oddball outlaws who gush French and Gatling gunfire, *Samurai Western* isn't comedy (straight-faced hero Gojiro Kiryu cuts 'em up without cutting up). Then again, it's hard to take seriously as far as hack-n-slash gaming goes. Hit a button to chop. Hit it a bunch to chain together "com-bos"—a see-through technique to make mind- and thumb-numbing mash-mash-mash suggest skill.

Samurai can't fake the fun either. A gazillion gunslinging bores spring into existence, shoot blanks, and act bad; "one-button" Gojiro bleeds 'em back into the ether, and it starts again. The tumbleweed treadmill takes another turn for the tiresome

in later levels where, instead of trying new tricks, the same bandits sport triple stamina. The idea is that you trudge back to completed chapters, strengthening Gojiro's sword arm and collecting performance-enhancing cowboy apparel, but why bother? Give me more game—strike that: Give me a game.

JUSTIN: Playing *Samurai Western* is like hacking through an improbably cool independent film. Quick-draw samurai Gojiro's speed, grace, and lethality are reason enough for any action gamer to at least give this one a whirl—and I reckon that hearin' the sweet music of gallons of outlaw blood pourin' into the dirt is reason enough to pick up that there sword.

But while it's got heart and spirit in spades—heck, even the cut-scenes are up to snuff—it sorely lacks depth. Even with different

sword styles, there are only a handful of foes to kill and only one real way to kill 'em. Maybe the developers needed more time (or more cash), but hey, it ain't half bad.

JAMES: "I can taste your hatred...it's like a fine wine," a *Samurai Western* bad guy says during just one particular moment of ridiculousness. And at times you'll get drunk with anger, but mostly, as you hack-n-slash-n-hack-s'more through 16 stages, you'll just be bored. Even though you get a nice selection of weapons and accessories (+2 DEF Afrol!), it doesn't add to the bland gameplay—it just makes your character look like he couldn't decide what to be for Halloween. Killing the same five guys (fatty with dynamite, Australian giant with boomerangs, etc.), who all whistle and say, "Hot damn!" when you dodge has me wondering why this game is so impressed with itself.



■ Dodging bullets—or slicing them in half (left)—takes serious skill. First, you tap Circle. Then you keep tapping Circle.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.0	7.0	5.0
SHAWN			
JUSTIN			
JAMES			

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Spike
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Mature

www.atlus.com



www.killer7.com



★
GAME OF
THE MONTH



Xbox

ONLINE

FORZA MOTORSPORT

Sign up for driver's ed

What's a Drivatar?

If you're the lazy type, train an A.I. "drivatar" to do the hard work for you. As you race a series of cars on different courses, the A.I. driver will learn your own racing style and drive accordingly. But alas, with someone else behind the wheel you won't earn much cash for a win....

DEMIAN: Better than *Gran Turismo 4*. I figured I'd write that when I reviewed *Gran Turismo 5* one day, but this is *Forza Motorsport*, Microsoft's homage to the greatest driving sim around. Except the student has already lapped the teacher, thanks in no small part to *Forza's* online multiplayer. Even without the online stuff, though, *Forza* is every bit as good and accurate a sim as *GT*.

And while *Forza* can't match *GT4's* huge roster of cars, it has more of the cars you actually want to drive, including—*finally*—Porsches and Ferraris, from classics ('73 Porsche 911 RS, Ferrari 250 GT) to current street spec cars to race-prepared models. There are also eight real-world tracks to race them on, along with many more fantasy courses.

Starting out in career mode, you'll pick a home region—North America, Europe, or Asia—which will determine what cars you have access to initially. And though your garage will quickly balloon

to Jay Leno proportions, *Forza's* class-based racing means you can spend time tuning and driving a handful of favorite cars if you'd rather.

Once on the track, *Forza* is sublime, although its realism can be as brutal as it is rewarding if you've got the driving aids turned off. Traction and stability control are for sissies, but ABS is almost required; without a real-world brake pedal's feedback, it's just too easy to lock the brakes (a fault that might have been fixed with a little strategic controller rumble). But in one of *Forza's* more elegant touches, if you turn off the driving aids—and turn on manual shifting—you'll earn more cash for wins. A nice reward for hardcore players.

I'm less enthusiastic about the A.I., though. While it's better than *GT4's*—cars are smart enough to drive around you if you stop on the race line, say—the other racers still manage to hit you all too frequently. Not as frequently as real

people online, however, although you can turn off car collisions in multiplayer events. Like *Halo's* clan system, you can also create clubs of like-minded players, and even design custom livery for your cars. I noticed a few hiccups in our online matches (as did John, see below) but nothing to get too upset about. If you play on Live, look out for my C-class 944 Turbo, B-class Lotus Elise, or A-class 911 GT2.

1UP.COM—CHE: *Forza Motorsport* has rekindled my geek-love for all things with a chassis, motor, and four-wheels. What's fantastic about the game is that, beyond all the gameplay realism Demian's hit upon, *Forza* is both flexible and robust enough to let you revel in whatever automotive obsession that's currently rocking your world.

For me, that compulsion is drifting; nothing beats the feeling of throwing your car around a



Good: Incredibly accurate physics, great car selection
Bad: Xbox still doesn't have a wheel to equal PS2's Force Pro Drift Racing: Fun...but a good way to lose



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

9.5

DEMIAN

10

CHE

10

JOHN

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft
Players: 1-2 (2-8 online or system link)
ESRB: Everyone

www.forzamotorsport.net



The New Wheel in Town

Fanatec's new Speedster 3 was designed with *Forza* in mind, and though it's not bad, it doesn't equal the authentic feel of *Gran Turismo 4*'s Force Pro. The pedal box and shifter paddles seem a bit flimsy for a \$150 item, and the pseudo force feedback kicks in only when you bump other cars or walls, spin the wheels, or hit the rumble strips. Good but not great.

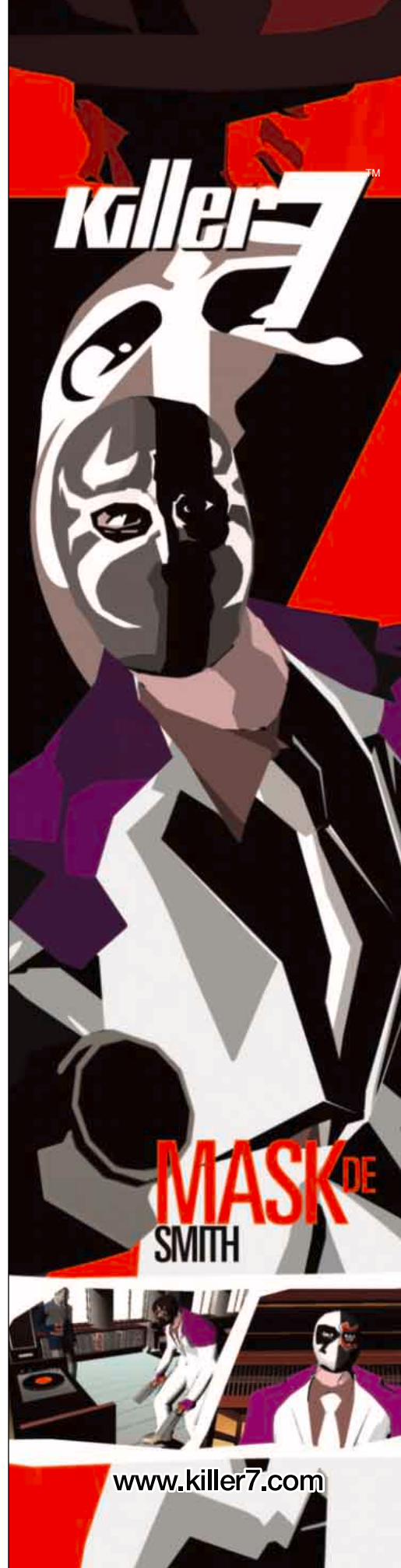
corner at breakneck speeds in a controlled slide, and *Forza* captures that sensation perfectly. The game's subtle control system means that you actually feel when your tires are at their grip limits, while *Forza*'s weight distribution model re-creates a real sense of gravity as your car is hurled sideways through a turn. Forget about grip racing. Halfway through my *Forza* career, I began tuning my Mazda RX-7 FC for maximum downhill drift handling with real-life tuning guides I Googled on the Web. Seriously, that's how authentic *Forza* is. Car lovers everywhere, heed the call today and pick up this late-generation gem.

1UP.COM—JOHN: Let's get the obvious and sensational nonsense about *Forza* out of the way right up front: This is the best racer on Xbox. The extensive car list exhibits impeccable taste on behalf of the Microsoft team and is full of desirable and exotic rides in every class. Forget vanilla-flavored hatchbacks—the career mode dangles

the delicious possibility of adding Ferraris and Porsches to your garage before you move on to indulge in the so-fast-you-don't-have-time-to-blink GTS and P1 class races.

Forza's handling is impeccable. Many car sims have done an adequate job of providing an impression of the forces exerted on a car as it hurtles around a track, but in *Forza* it's as though you can feel the exact point where your tires lose traction. As a demo of how important clever physics models are, there are few experiences more tactile on Xbox.

Xbox Live will no doubt prolong the life of the game indefinitely, but while testing the game less than two weeks prior to release, it was not without problems. Drivers with bad ping times would sometimes pop up all over the place, but, when stable, the online play is immeasurably satisfying. I actually found the close-knit battles of the lower classes to be much more fun than lining up a bunch of Enzos and Carrera GTs. Come find me in the A-class lobby; I'll be in an Evo FQ-330. 🏁



DS

STAR WARS: EPISODE III REVENGE OF THE SITH

You've played this Sith before



Revenge's gameplay formula: Apply lightsaber to robots, repeat.

Good: Cool lightsaber battles, nifty flying levels
Bad: Blah side-scrolling gameplay
Good for Almost Nothin': The touch screen



CRISPIN: A long time ago is right. *Revenge of the Sith* looks and plays like a licensed title from 15 years ago—most of this game is 2D side-scrolling hack-n-slash. Sure, that might seem charming in an old-school, Super Nintendo kind of way, but trust me: The nostalgia is lost after you bash your hundredth battle droid or start getting creamed by the enemies' cheap gang-up-on-you tactics. C'mon—the DS is capable of way more than this (a Jar Jar—torturing minigame on the touch screen, for instance).

Still, *Revenge* has a few things that save it from licensed gaming circa 1990. You get branching paths and a few unique (but still dull) levels for each of the two playable characters: whiny Anakin or wise Obi-Wan. You can customize their attributes and Force abilities. You get a lot of lightsaber moves and combos for the decent boss battles. And the 3D spaceship-combat stages offer a nice break from the side-scrolling monotony (I wish the whole game had been focused on this mode). But seriously, gameplay this clichéd has no business on a next-generation handheld. I suggest



you move along. Move along.

BRYAN: As you begin Scene 1 of this pint-sized *Revenge of the Sith*, a phrase that any *Stars Wars* fan should know suddenly appears onscreen: "I have a bad feeling about this!" Man, talk about some heavy-duty foreshadowing. Almost every on-foot mission here follows the same played-out formula: Walk left to right mindlessly swinging your light stick, suffer an alarming number of cheap-ass hits, then face off against a boss that will frustrate most young Padawans (who seem to be game's target audience). And while your limited time flying through the galaxy sure looks impressive, there's hardly any dogfighting—lame. You know there's a serious problem when a game's (especially a portable one's) high point is its music.

JENNIFER: *Revenge* returns to the time-honored tradition of so many *Star Wars* games: It's not fun, and it makes you question your original high opinion of the franchise as a whole. My biggest gripe is the controls. Perhaps they work OK on GBA SP, but the DS is big enough that having to rely so much on the shoulder buttons to block the (truly endless) hordes of cheap baddies is hand-crampingly burdensome. Then there's the last-generation gameplay—it's predictable, repetitive, and makes no real use of the DS touch screen. The game is not offensively bad—I actually enjoyed figuring out how to beat certain bosses. But even regular bad crap like this makes me want to plot my revenge.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.5	4.0	4.0
CRISPIN	BRYAN	JENNIFER	

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Players: 1 (2-4 via Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone

www.ubisoft.com



Who the hell are these Pokémon? Where's Pikachu?

GBA

POKEMON EMERALD

Coming soon: Pokémon Cubic Zirconia

Good: Best *Pokémon* yet for GBA
Bad: The rehashiest rehash ever rehashed
License to Print Money: Originally granted to Nintendo in 1996



CHRISTIAN: Only having dabbled in *Pokémon* before, I wasn't sure it could hook me. But it did—there's a powerfully subtle and engaging game underpinning the archaic roleplaying of *Emerald*.

Yes, the story is juvenile and practically nonexistent. Yes, it's missing all the whiz-bang collectible-card systems and branching scenarios of contemporary RPGs. But it's still a finely honed, if extremely conventional, jewel of a game. The creatures' powers all play off one another in a perfectly balanced dance...of poorly animated 2D artwork. You could easily spend a hundred hours raising, training, fighting, trading, and questing within the confines of this tiny cartridge.

My real problem lies with the fact that Nintendo and developer Game Freak refuse to evolve the series. This is a revamp of a 2-year-old game (*Ruby/Sapphire*) millions have already bought, and while it's the best *Pokémon* for GBA, it's essentially hackwork. That said, it's still the best *Pokémon* to buy...until the DS version adds enough gimmicks to squeeze out a few million more sales.

SHANE: As only a casual Pokémaniac, I haven't bothered to investigate each suc-

cessive retread of *Pokémon*. If I caught 'em once, do I really need to bother catching 'em again? Yes...and no. If you already played *Ruby/Sapphire*, keep moving—there's nothing much to see here. If it's been a few years since you last snuggled with Pikachu, you'll be mildly impressed by how the game's evolved. Two-on-two battles, wireless fights, improved animation, and a streamlined interface show how far the basic premise has come.

The series' simplistic visuals seem pretty inexcusable at this point, but thankfully, the terrifyingly addictive gameplay provides enough of a draw. *Pokémon* preys on your desire for perfection, sucking you back in until you uncover all of its sickly sweet mysteries. Before you know it, 30 hours of your life have vanished....

JOHN R: If *Pokémon's Ruby and Sapphire* never existed, I'd have no problem wholeheartedly recommending *Emerald*. I'm not quite sure I prefer it to the recent *FireRed* and *LeafGreen* remakes (could be the nostalgia factor), but it's still an excellent addition to the series and is well worth playing if you're a fan of the genre. The problem is, *Ruby and Sapphire* have been out for two years, and *Emerald* doesn't offer enough new content to differentiate itself. Sure, wireless-adaptor support is nice, but the only other major change is the Battle Frontier mode, a *Coliseum*-like battle arena that isn't even accessible until you beat the game. If you've never played *Ruby* or *Sapphire*, skip 'em and go straight to *Emerald*. Otherwise, wait for *Diamond* and *Pearl*.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.5	7.0
CHRISTIAN	SHANE	JOHN R.	

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Game Freak
Players: 1 (2 via Link cable)
ESRB: Everyone

www.pokemon.com



■ The game could use more "X-factors," like the thick fog in this level.

Your Highness, we've reached Port Kiris.



■ Talking-head cut-scenes (above) flesh out the story, but tend to drag on a bit.



■ GBA

FIRE EMBLEM: THE SACRED STONES

Haven't advanced wars



Good: Excellent strategic combat, three difficulty levels

Bad: Not much different or new

Basically: More of what made the first *Emblem* great



MARK: There are two ways to approach a boss in *Fire Emblem*: send in your strongest pipe-hitting badass for a guaranteed victory or chance saving the kill (and experience points) for a weaker foot soldier who, eventually, could become a valuable badass himself. Developer Intelligent Systems faced a similar risk-versus-reward dilemma in creating the sequel to its excellent GBA strategy role-playing game. The choice it made with *Sacred Stones* is obvious: don't take any chances and go for the safe, predictable win.

Anyone who played 2003's original *Emblem* will not only feel at home with the sequel, but also struggle to tell the difference between the two. Almost visually identical, they share the same friendly setup and solid gameplay—turn-based tactical combat with a rock-paper-scissors-style attack priority system. A decent plot again keeps you invested in your individual troops, with the fact that

characters can actually die (and *stay* dead) heightening the tension.

Sacred Stones makes a few welcome alterations, including soldier-evolving options and easier item retrieval. Also, fewer hand-holding early missions, a branching story, and more optional battles add up to a longer quest. Overall the game is polished and addictive; I just wish it were ambitious. More unique battle-grounds, different attack ranges and effects, a new mechanic or two—the *Emblem* formula would benefit from some added complexity.

SHAWN: Duck the dry dialogue, skip the story. You'll still dig your clerics, falcon knights, and cavaliers—not for who they are (blue-haired, wide-eyed boilerplate), but for what they do in *Fire Emblem*'s whip-smart battles. In fact, when one falls, it's like losing a best friend (or at least the long hours you invested leveling him up). And that—the part that says when he's

gone, he's gone forever—is the game's tactical error. (Not a real Waterloo, but a blunder big enough to discourage risk-taking in the line of turn-based duty.) The rest is four-star strategy, squarely done and with enough back-and-forth between studied defense and decisive sieges to keep your feet on the coffee table.

1UP.COM—CHE: Strip away the epic story of good versus evil (I dug it way more than Shawn did) and the dizzying number of characters, and you have very straightforward combat—essentially nothing you haven't seen before in kindred spirits like *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *Advance Wars*. What makes *Sacred Stones* unique is how it sugarcoats the level-grinding, treadmill-like repetition with a captivating, episodic story line. The fact that dead characters are gone for good makes every battle thoughtful and tense. It's definitely one of the GBA's best tactical games.

Leave the Link Cable at Home

Up to four players can field a team of five combatants each in *Emblem*'s shoddy multiplayer game, but instead of playing on a battlefield where, you know, actual strategy might come into play, you challenge each other in 1-on-1 arena auto-battles. It makes little sense and is even less enjoyable.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0

MARK

7.5

SHAWN

9.0

CHE

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Intelligent Systems
Players: 1 (2-4 via Link cable)
ESRB: Everyone

fireemblem.gameboy.com



www.killer7.com



■ PSP

NBA STREET SHOWDOWN

Same ol' playground



■ What's less exciting than this screenshot? *Showdown's* new snoretubulous minigames.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	7.0	6.5
	BRYAN	DEMIAN	GIANCARLO

Publisher: EA Sports Big
Developer: EA Canada
Players: 1-4 (2 via Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone

www.easportsbig.com

Good: Simple to play, robust solo mode

Bad: Old-style gameplay, worthless minigames

Should've Been Called: *NBA Street Vol. 2: Redux*



BRYAN: "Streetball reinvented for the PSP" it says on the back of the game's box. Color me confused, because after playing *Showdown*, I'd label this baller as more rehash than reinvention.

And a rehash wouldn't be so bad if it were based on the latest console edition, the excellent *V3*. Instead, the developers copy-and-pasted *Vol. 2's* gameplay, which means it's too easy to block and too hard to steal, plus the gamebreaker system (made up of special moves that earn you extra points while reducing your opponent's score) features almost-automatic shots rather than *V3's* poster-worthy dunks. And the two new minigames—Arcade Shootout and Shot Blocker—are totally forgettable.

Now don't get all pissy like a Pistons fan and start throwing cups at me. The game still possesses several of the qualities that have made *Street* the most entertaining b-ball brand: Crowd-pleasing showboat moves are easy to perform, transforming your no-name player into the king of all courts proves fairly deep, and the NBA's finest look damn detailed even in portable form. Still, I was hoping for one or two new tricks from this hoopster.

DEMIAN: Bryan's low blow at Pistons fans is just the start—Tayshaun Prince's miserable 2 out of 5 blocking rating and Rip

Hamilton's 3 out of 5 shooting (he's famous for his midrange jumper) hurt even worse. But Bryan's right: Even though *Showdown* is the best arcade basketball game on a handheld, after playing *Street V3* on the big consoles, I find it hard to go back to *Vol. 2's* gameplay, in which goaltending blocks are the surest form of defense.

I figured the game would suffer further, what with only two shoulder buttons to modify your tricks with, but it doesn't: You can tap or hold the Trick or Shoot buttons (in combination with the shoulder buttons) to execute a pretty wide range of moves.

And though I'm unimpressed by the new multiplayer minigames, regular head-to-head matches are as fun as ever.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO:

Everything about the *NBA Street* series should, theoretically, make for an excellent PSP game. But there's one major problem: *Showdown's* controls are really sluggish at times, even when performing something as simple as a regular jump shot. This extends to movement on the court as well—lining up to shoot a three-pointer can occasionally be a hassle. Still, *Showdown* has some fun elements, but it's just too bad that a little extra time wasn't taken to clean up the controls a little more.

■ PSP

RENGOKU: THE TOWER OF PURGATORY

Purgatory indeed

SHAME OF THE MONTH



■ We can buy the white-walled rooms, but who knew purgatory would be heavy on the robots?

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.0	2.0	2.0
	MARK	SHOE	DANA

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Hudson Soft
Players: 1 (2-4 via Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Mature

www.konami.com

Good: Customize and build up your own robot!

Bad: ...so it can fight the same bland battles over and over

Forgettable: Lackluster multiplayer modes



MARK: One of *Halo's* designers once said that a great game is actually the same 15 seconds or so of gameplay over and over. Apparently, the developers at Hudson Soft took him literally when they created *Rengoku*, a dull, clunky "action" title so repetitive that you almost get the feeling the developers at Hudson Soft took *Halo's* designer literally when he said...ahem.

Anyway, *Rengoku* is set entirely in the titular tower, an arena where obsolete robot soldiers battle for the amusement of an outside world now at peace. You wander from room to room—all practically identical, with only power-up-filled boxes between their bare walls—destroying enemies (also all practically identical) before the doors unlock and you can move on. The only solace is in the huge number of weapons and methods available for building up your robot to fight more effectively. But while combat is serviceable (you can lock on targets and quick-roll in any direction to dodge), it's not deep, smooth, or satisfying enough to hang a whole game on.

In one of the minimal yet pompous story line's few lucid moments, the final boss (or so you think) says, "Everything that happens in this tower is pointless. Nothing but endless destruction and warfare." So true.

SHOE: Most games make you feel like a badass hero/soldier/robot/car/whatever.

Rengoku, however, makes you feel like the lab rat that never could figure its way out of the maze. I kept stopping every 15 minutes to say, "There's got to be more to this game than this." Unfortunately, there is not. Shooting enemy after enemy in generic, repetitive stages just to find upgrades for your fighting machine gets tiresome in the first, oh, 10 minutes. But *Rengoku* makes a boring matter much worse by using the D-pad for 3D movement (uh, hello? The PSP has an analog nub for this crap) and forcing you to backtrack in order to save your game. Fantastically unfun.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA: There are a lot of things to dislike about *Rengoku*, but I'll start with the fact that it seems like it was developed for PS2 and then ported to the PSP with no thought for how the two systems differ. The scale is so small that it's hard to see your opponents, and the details of your robot (who runs like a spaz and isn't even remotely tough looking) are lost in the mostly dark, repetitive environments. Customization is a terribly boring endeavor, and aside from a lone (and tedious) multiplayer mode, there aren't even any minigames to take advantage of the system's portable nature. I'd be more bile filled, but the game is so bad that it's not even worth getting angry about.



■ If you choose only one obscure British puzzle game for PSP, make it Archer MacLean's *Mercury*.

■ PSP

SMARTBOMB

Plenty of bomb, not much smart

Good: Peppy music, occasionally fun puzzles
Bad: Dippy story, plentiful obnoxious puzzles
Potential Lawsuit: Obvious *Minesweeper* rip-off



SHANE: *Smartbomb* dares to try a different approach to the venerable portable puzzle genre by melding a wide variety of simple brainteasers (think: flipping switches, aligning lasers, and enduring a lame *Minesweeper* clone) with a deep plot. It's not a crappy concept, but the story—an overwrought and predictable tale of a mad bomber versus bomb-defusing experts—surely doesn't do the puzzles (most of which are pretty darned obnoxious to begin with) any favors.

In fact, you're probably better off skipping the cheesy story mode altogether. Its 10 levels of dull cut-scenes and duller voice acting combined with a smattering of annoying puzzles offers little fun. The developers have even engineered shocking new methods of making the game less enjoyable: First, you can actually die in the menu while choosing your next puzzle, thanks to an ever-pre-

sent countdown timer. Next, the tortuous boss encounters boil down to vague trial-and-error defusing with strict time limits...prepare to replay these levels a few times.

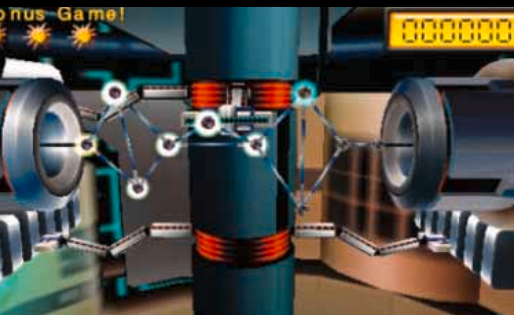
You can experience the same assortment of passable-looking puzzles (sans narrative) in arcade mode, and you'll find a few that aren't too painful, like a *Marble Madness*-inspired maze and a clever bomb-disposal robot offering. It's not worth it. Stick with *Lumines*.

MARK: If you're going to slap together a bunch of dusty old mini-games available for free on the Internet, at least upgrade the graphics, polish the controls, discount the price—something. Sadly, the makers of *Smartbomb* didn't heed this advice. What you're left with is a bit like *WarioWare*, just without the personality, humor, originality, or fun. Even if you're in the market for a

collection of distracting brain-ticklers, the repetitive setup and some horribly designed interfaces negate what little enjoyment a few of the games might have offered.

CHRISTIAN: *Smartbomb* is beyond merely bad—it's kind of depressing. Even if it were done well, its unambitious collection of logic puzzles would still be stale. But the painfully restrictive time limits and sluggish control pushes it well beyond my tolerance, while the die-and-retry gameplay only makes it worse.

Then, of course, comes the ultra-laughable story. Tying a puzzle game to a futuristic military weaponry yarn? It worked in the movie *WarGames* but not here. *Smartbomb* is just a result of wrongheaded thinking from inception to completion. Its poor quality is so obvious that I don't understand how this game made it to my PSP. ☹



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.0	3.0	2.5
SHANE	MARK	CHRISTIAN	

Publisher: Eidos
 Developer: Core
 Players: 1 (2-4 via Wi-Fi)
 ESRB: Everyone 10+

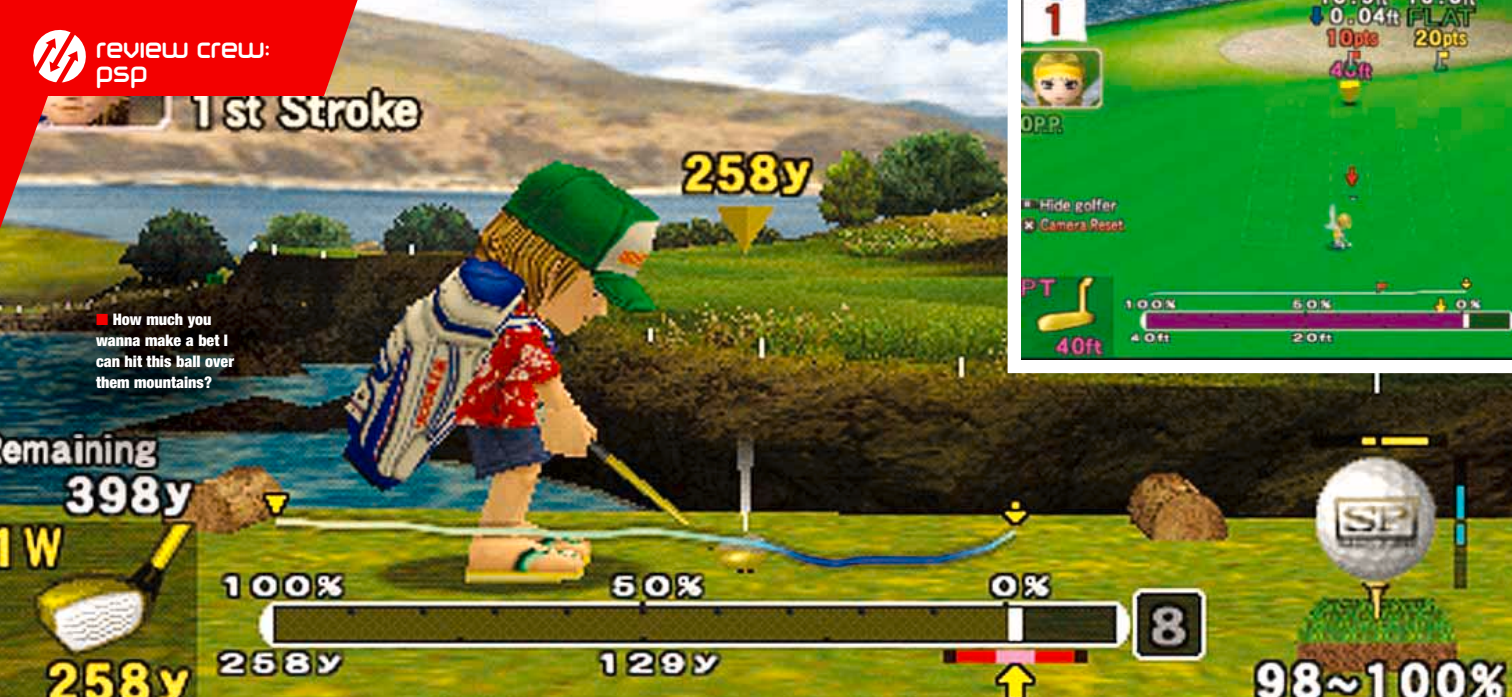
www.eidos.com



www.killer7.com



review crew:
psp



■ PSP

HOT SHOTS GOLF: OPEN TEE

It's the simple swings that matter

CRISPIN: Fans of the *Hot Shots* series on the PlayStation and PS2 know exactly what to expect from *Open Tee*. The simple, tap-a-button swing meter remains unchanged, as does the look of the supercuteness golfers and their caddies. In fact, if this installment came out on the big consoles, I'd consider it a bore.

But as one of only two on-the-go golf options for the PSP (the other being *Tiger Woods*), *Open Tee* is my pick for the game to get. It all comes down to the swing meter. *Tiger* forces you to use the PSP's analog nub to swing—a tricky technique I could never quite master. *Open Tee*'s button-tapping formula just works better, letting you focus on making good shots rather than fighting unpredictable controls.

Unfortunately, *Open Tee* loses to *Tiger* in nearly every other department. You can't customize how your character levels up—particular skills increase automatically after each successful game. And it takes too long to unlock new courses,

forcing you to replay the same old holes until you've collected enough stars to move on. At least the pace is fast enough that you can finish most matches on one bus ride.

SHAWN: Bobbleheads be damned—*Open Tee*'s Dorf-like duffers wanna be taken for serious golfers, which means you shouldn't expect goof-ball modes where there's a daycare-colored world. Here, practicing passes for a minigame. (Bonus doodads add some drive, but unlocking a single course takes longer than a cartless 18 at Boston behemoth the Pines, so that's sort of a bad thing, too.)

Open Tee still finds the hole, only it's somewhere between pick-up-and-play party game and serious golf sim. Its blinking grid marks the lay of the green better than most links games do, without taking the intuition out of putting. Its triple-tap club control beats *Tiger*'s (PSP) bogey-beckoning touchiness...even if it isn't as fun.

JENNIFER: Golf is a weird sport: Its snoozeworthiness in real life is actually what makes it compelling in videogame form. Repetitive, solitary, mildly scientific, surprisingly addictive—*Open Tee* is all of these things, and it'll neither blow you away nor put you to sleep. Instead, it'll require patience, practice, and occasional poking around in the dark. (You unlock new techniques like super top-spin and high trajectory shots, but after the initial explanation you'll have to consult the manual for how-tos.) Perhaps a little too much patience is required to unlock courses, as Crispin and Shawn mentioned. But in general, this is a fun little portable outing, especially if you're not serious enough for *Tiger*.

And I have exactly three words for the golf snobs: unlockable trucker hats. 🚚



Putter Party

If you want to play *Open Tee*'s multiplayer mode, you better find some PSP-owning buddies who also have the game. Unfortunately, its Wi-Fi-only multiplayer options don't let players take turns on one system. The bright side: Up to eight players can compete simultaneously in the tournament mode. But with match play still forcing players to take turns, why not just let 'em pass around the same system?



Good: Cinch controls, addicting gameplay
Bad: Takes forever to unlock courses
What We Really Want: A minigolf minigame



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

7.0
CRISPIN

7.0
SHAWN

7.0
JENNIFER

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Clap Hanz
Players: 1 (2-8 via Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone

www.playstation.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were too little or too late



Mega Man Battle Network 5: Team Colonel/Team Protoman • GBA • Capcom • ESRB: E — A classic gaming icon in an adventure about computer hacking, card collecting, and jargon-smothered cyber-dungeon crawling...could *Network* be any geekier?

Bottom line: If you have a friend who wants to trade *Battle Network* items with you, hold on to that person and never let go.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms X • PS2 • Koei • ESRB: E — Begin your *Romance* as a free officer, learning the game's complexities at a gradual pace, or skip the foreplay and get straight to uniting the land through dueling, debating, and domestic policy.

Bottom line: For hardcore romantics only, but if brains turn you on, you'll have a lasting relationship with frequent deep-strategizing.



Stolen • PS2/XB • Hip • ESRB: T — *Stolen*'s less-than-perfect crime: intellectual property theft. It's all here—*Splinter Cell*'s movements, spy-game gadgetry, and shadowy ambience—but this thievery-themed sneak-em-up can't copy Sam Fisher where it counts.

Bottom line: Leading lady Anya picks consumer pockets with limp-wristed chop-socky, a fussy interface, and boneheaded baddies.



MLB • PSP • 989 Sports • ESRB: E — Ironically, the simpleness of 989's baseball franchise (which hurts it on the console side) makes *MLB* a great fit for Sony's new handheld. It features made-for-dummies controls, players move as smoothly as in its console big brother, and there's commentary—a first for 989's PSP lineup.

Bottom line: Toss in a few minigames next year, and *MLB* could put some serious heat on EA's *MVP*.



Need for Speed Underground 2 • DS • EA Games

ESRB: E — Unless you've just been thawed from a glacier and your Neanderthal brain somehow knows how to read, you already know that *Underground 2* is about modding cars and showing 'em off in illegal street races. It's also one of the weakest iterations of the franchise we've seen—though far from out-and-out *bad*, the graphics and sense of speed could definitely be better, the D-pad controls gave us hand cramps, and the touch screen implementation feels tacked on.

Bottom line: Serious on-the-road car junkies will have more fun with the superior PSP version. 🚗

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

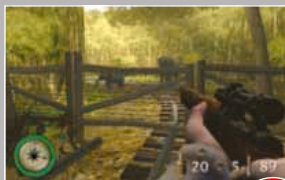
Our ancient burial ground for reviews



■ The bad guy from *Haunting Ground* has a striking resemblance to Sloth from *Goonies*.

MEDAL OF HONOR VS CALL OF DUTY AND BROTHERS IN ARMS

Sometimes killing Nazis never gets old. We put the veteran *Medal of Honor* series against the new *Brothers in Arms* and *Call of Duty* recruits.



■ Average score for the six *Medal of Honor* games reviewed by EGM

7.64
(OUT OF 10)



■ Average score for *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*

8.0
(OUT OF 10)



■ Average score for *Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30*

8.83
(OUT OF 10)

bargain bin bounty



HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED

- Xbox
- Released: March 2002
- Original Scores: 10, 10, 10

If you're one of the two Xbox owners who hasn't played *Halo*, go grab a copy now that it's only 20 bucks. Even though some levels get repetitive, *Halo* has a Tony the Tiger "grrrrreat" last stage (driving with guns blazing and trying to beat the clock).

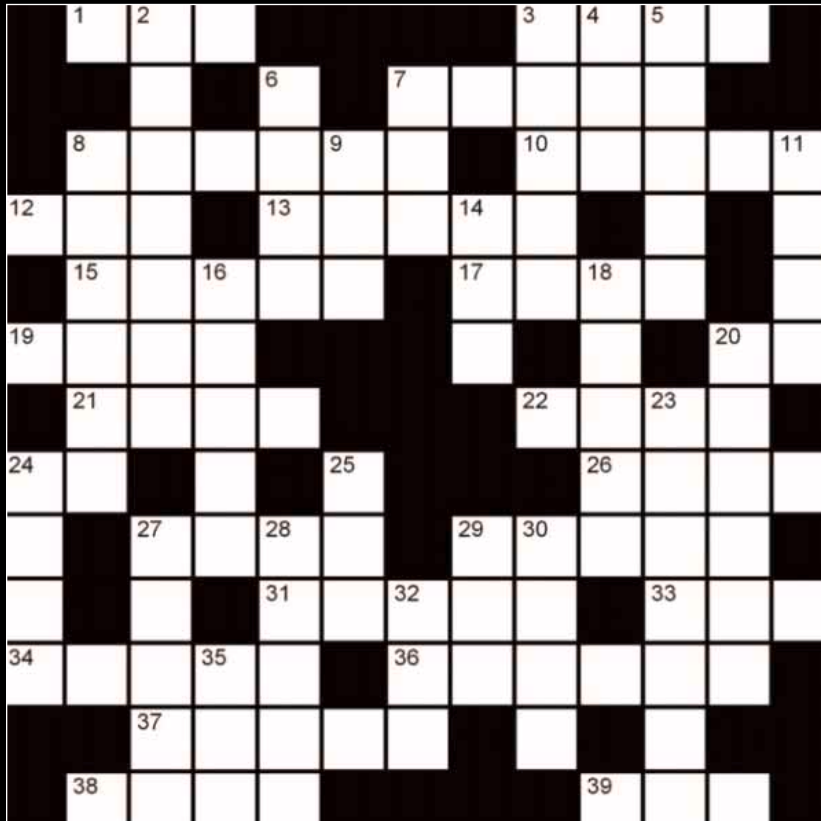
GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
American McGee Presents Scrapland	XB	■ The broken-record gameplay forces you to play through repetitive missions	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Area 51	PS2/XB	■ This fun, creepy shooter is satisfying even with Duchovny's monotonous voiceover	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	PS2/XB	■ Salute <i>BIA</i> 's brainy A.I. and squad tactics—it's the best WWII shooter yet	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Champions: Return to Arms	PS2	■ Hack and/or slash to find cooler stuff to let you hack and/or slash some more	7.5 7.0 6.0	
Close Combat: First to Fight	XB	■ Belongs in no man's land because of bland gameplay and shell-shocked A.I.	5.0 5.5 4.0	
Cold Fear	PS2/XB	■ A lukewarm zombie game, but the exploding headshots never get old	6.0 7.5 5.0	
Cold Winter	PS2	■ 007 meets MacGyver (sans mullet) in this above-average violent shooter	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Dead or Alive Ultimate	XB	■ The bouncing boobs of <i>DOAs 1</i> and <i>2</i> look way nicer revamped for Xbox	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Dead to Rights II	PS2/XB	■ This boring sequel about a cop and his dog is great...for us to poop on	4.0 6.0 4.5	
Death by Degrees	PS2	■ We're grateful to have Nina on board—too bad good gameplay didn't come with her	5.0 5.0 6.0	
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	PS2	■ This sequel gives us a new fighting-style system and some crazy combos	8.0 7.0 9.0	Silver
Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat	GC	■ Why work when you can bang on the drum all day in this unconventional platformer?	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Doom 3	XB	■ We promise you'll jump when things go bump in the night in this beautiful shooter	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Dynasty Warriors 5	PS2	■ Hack-n-slash through armies as a Chinese Rambo in this addictive sequel	8.0 7.5 8.0	
EA Sports Fight Night Round 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ We pity the fool who doesn't climb into the ring with this boxing champ	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Enthusia: Professional Racing	PS2	■ Even hardcore <i>Gran Turismo</i> fans should take a ride in this driving sim	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
FIFA Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ Soccer has been <i>Street</i> -ified, and it's decent but not great	6.5 5.5 7.5	
God of War	PS2	■ Great beard of Zeus! Missing this hot action-adventure would be a Greek tragedy	10 9.5 10	Gold
Gran Turismo 4	PS2	■ Still the best driving sim on PS2, but not a lot has changed since <i>A-Spec</i>	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
GunGriffon: Allied Strike	XB	■ One of the Dreamcast's finest-looking robot shooters. Wait, this is an Xbox game?	3.5 2.0 5.0	
Haunting Ground	PS2	■ Even the bouncy boobs can't make us think this is a top-notch survival-horror game	7.0 6.5 5.0	
Jade Empire	XB	■ Put Jet Li to shame as you build your own kung fu badass in this excellent action-RPG	10 9.5 8.5	Gold
Kessen III	PS2	■ Though cinematic and ambitious, it never manages any serious action or strategy	7.5 6.0 6.5	
Lego Star Wars	PS2/XB	■ Some fun disassembly is required when you use the Force to take apart battle droids	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	PS2/XB	■ This time around, cars have superpowers and move faster than a speeding bullet	8.0 9.0 9.0	Silver
MLB 2006	PS2	■ The series tries to go for a hit, but it's still just a bunt compared to the competition	7.0 6.5 7.0	
MLB 2K5	PS2/XB	■ Cranks one outta the park thanks to its innovative pitching system and spiffy visuals	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mortal Kombat: Deception	GC	■ This bloated sequel has so many extra game modes that there's even <i>MK</i> chess	6.0 6.5 7.5	
Musashi Samurai Legend	PS2	■ This swordsman swings a mean blade, but repetitive levels hamper the fun	6.5 5.0 6.0	
MVP Baseball 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Slick minigames make it the best hardball sim yet	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
MX vs. ATV Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ A worthy game that appeals to more than gearheads with its countless unlockables	8.0 7.0 6.5	
Pac-Pix	DS	■ All that doodling in school will come in handy in this over-too-soon DS drawing game	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Pariah	XB	■ This shooter has cool weapons and a semi-interesting story, but it's no <i>Halo</i> -killer	9.0 6.5 6.5	
Phantom Dust	XB	■ Amass more psychic powers than Miss Cleo has in this slick arena-combat game	8.5 7.5 8.0	Silver
Playboy: The Mansion	PS2/XB	■ It's a third-rate <i>Sims</i> clone, but with giant cartoon boobies	5.0 4.5 4.5	
Pocket Kingdom: Own the World	NG	■ The N-Gage's first online RPG, not that you can tell while playing	5.0 4.0 7.5	
Pokémon Dash	DS	■ In this mediocre <i>Poké</i> spin-off for tykes, rubbin' really is racing	5.0 6.5 6.0	
Project: Snowblind	PS2/XB	■ The NRA has its poster game in this weapons-crammed futuristic blaster	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Psychonauts	XB	■ Cure more crazies than shock therapy does in this great platform game	8.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Red Ninja: End of Honor	PS2/XB	■ Gameplay so horrible that it actually ruins a videogame with hot ninjas in panties	4.5 4.0 4.0	
Resident Evil 4	GC	■ Witness the near-perfect rebirth of Capcom's venerable survival-horror franchise	10 9.5 10	Gold
Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	PS2	■ Koko the gorilla has an easier time communicating than gamers in <i>REO</i> 's online play	5.0 5.0 4.5	
Rise of the Kasai	PS2	■ The stealth killin' is easy when your numskul A.I. partner's not getting in your way	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Sega Classics Collection	PS2	■ Awesome Sega coin-ops are "updated" into monstrosities, while Sega fans weep	4.5 6.0 4.5	
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	PS2	■ It's <i>Final Fantasy X</i> plus Hinduism, plus <i>Mad Max</i> , but with a cliffhanger ending!	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Spider-Man 2	DS	■ If your spider sense is on the fritz, let us warn you to avoid this ho-hum adventure	6.0 5.5 3.0	
Spider-Man 2	PSP	■ Kirsten Dunst looks nice, but the camera has a hard time focusing on anything else	6.0 7.0 6.0	
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	XB	■ Back with cool co-op features and graphics more shocking than Kim Jong-il's hair	9.5 10 9.0	Gold
Star Fox: Assault	GC	■ "Dogs of war" takes on new meaning in this Nintendo comeback shooter series	8.0 8.0 6.0	
Star Wars Republic Commando	XB	■ Guide a squad of three smart stormtroopers that actually shoot the bad guys!	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	XB	■ <i>Street Fighter II</i> + <i>Street Fighter III</i> = <i>Street Fighter Awesome</i> . But where's <i>Alpha</i> ?	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Tekken 5	PS2	■ The Iron Fist tournament may be getting a little rusty, but it comes with great extras	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	PS2/XB/GC	■ The ultimate twitch first-person shooter with a killer sense of humor	7.5 7.5 9.5	Silver
Tork: Prehistoric Punk	XB	■ Platforming clichés in this punkosaurus have been around since the Stone Age	7.0 6.0 5.5	
Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix	PSP	■ The additional features make you want to keep grinding in the Destruction Tour	9.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Twisted Metal: Head-On	PSP	■ This fighting game with cars is OK, but the series is due for some maintenance	7.5 6.5 6.0	
Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict	XB	■ Fast-paced deathmatching that's ideal for gamers bored with <i>Halo 2</i>	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Viewtiful Joe 2	PS2/GC	■ More of what you (hopefully) know and (should) love from <i>Joe</i> 's first outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
WarioWare: Touched!	DS	■ Its wacky minigames keep you—and those watching you play—entertained	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
WarioWare: Twisted!	GBA	■ Spin your GBA like a nutcase in this collection of new three-second microgames	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Wipeout Pure	PSP	■ Remind yourself to blink while playing this great, intense racing game	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Worms Forts: Under Siege	PS2/XB	■ Weird fort building and stupid A.I. make <i>Worms</i> gross again	6.5 4.0 6.5	
WWE Wrestlemania 21	XB	■ The A.I. is so bad that this game is even unworthy for a fake sport	3.5 5.0 6.5	
Xenosaga Episode II	PS2	■ Not <i>Xenosaga Episode II</i> , but more like <i>Xenosaga Episode I: The Deleted Scenes</i>	7.5 6.5 7.0	
Yoshi Touch & Go	DS	■ Draw clouds with the stylus and control the environment for Mario's green steed	7.5 7.5 8.5	
Ys VI: Ark of Napishtim	PS2	■ A solid, challenging action-RPG the way they used to make 'em	7.5 6.5 8.0	

*Games in red are previous Game of the Month winners.



X MARKS THE BOX

(Solution on page 128)

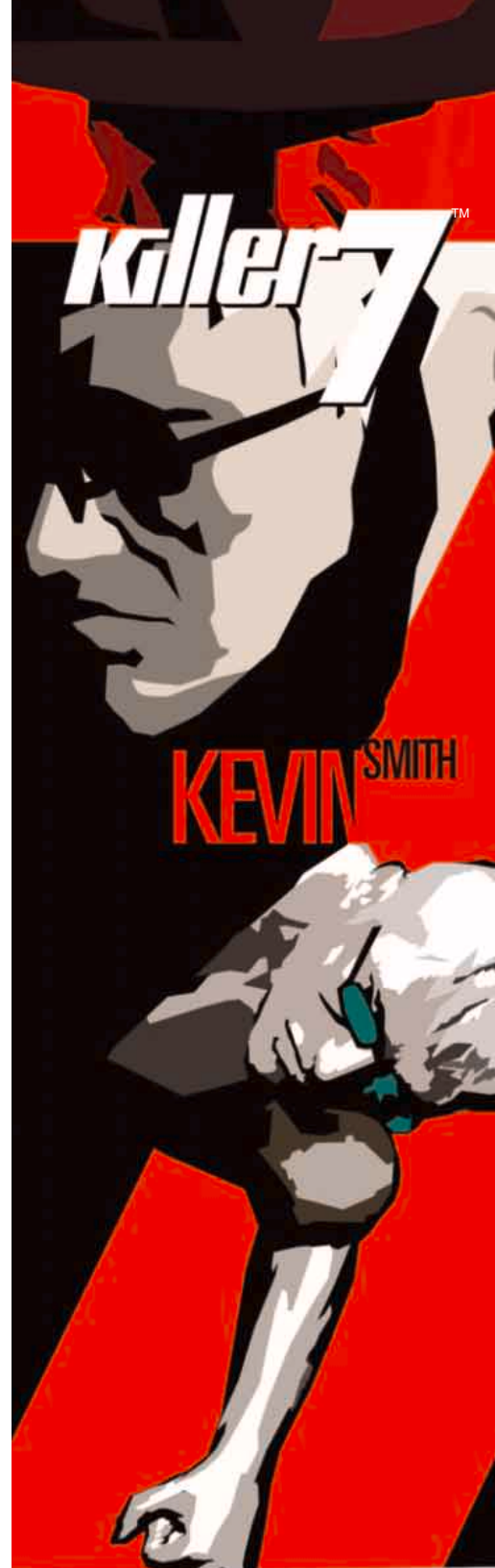


ACROSS

1. Samus Aran's frigid beam
3. Stone of *Streets of Rage*
7. Xbox exclusive time-warping cat
8. *Madden's* two-__ warning
10. *The Sims* servants
12. *Tony Hawk Underground's* Margera
13. *Devil May Cry* swordsman
15. Previously proposed name for Xbox 360
17. *Panzer Dragoon Saga* hero
19. *Vandal Hearts II* bit-part prisoner
20. Green, Red on an Xbox controller
21. Like Lotus or Toyota in *Gran Turismo 4*
22. Generic videogame collectible?
24. 8-bit Nintendo's __ *Jackson Baseball*
26. *Shark Tale* electric marine life
27. Ys series protagonist
29. Like "action" or "puzzle"
31. *Mortal Kombat's* yellow cyborg
33. Like *Viewtiful Joe's* shading
34. Slow down in *GT4*
36. Flies out, in baseball games
37. Shredder's *Ninja Turtles* boss
38. New *Narc* drug-injection target
39. *The Lord of the Rings* Sauron's omniscient portal

DOWN

2. *Scrapland* city
3. Pointed a gun at
4. Hyped Xbox 360 software development tool
5. Raze!l's *Soul Reaver* punishment
6. *UFC* fighting style
7. Obi-Wan's street name
8. PS2 knight in boxer shorts
9. Green's enemy in *Army Men*
11. NES *Rush 'n Attack* attack
14. Number of main stages in *Katamari Damacy*
16. Like Raiden, for a while, near the end of *Metal Gear Solid 2*
18. Xbox trademark color
20. Opposite of 27 down
23. Liquid metal PSP title
24. Friend to an NES *Boy*
25. Like PS2's Cooper
27. How you'll rarely find *Pokémon's* Snorlax
28. Home to 26 across
29. *Final Fantasy III's* feral kid
30. The third "E" in games trade show E3
32. Like *Kingdom Hearts* or *.hack*
35. PS2's *Mark of* __



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SEANBABY'S WORST TV GAMES OF ALL TIME

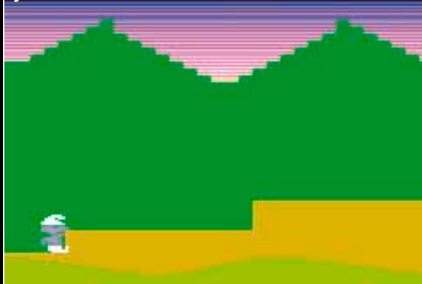


Part two in an ongoing series...of two

Previously on *The Rest of the Crap*: “Vanna White is a swamp creature.” Later that same day, “My God, these readings prove that every time someone plays a game based on a TV show, God pulls the head off a kitten.” And now, the startling conclusion to the painfully researched list of the 10 Worst TV Games of All Time, in No Particular Order.

—Seanbaby

■ If you can't negotiate a step, you deserve to die.



Smurf Rescue in Gargamel's Castle • 2600/Colecovision

The TV Show: A wizard and his cat hatch plots to eat the Smurfs.

The Game: When you're four inches tall and split your time between smurfing and smurfing to music, everything is a danger. The programmers took this idea and ran with it, so a slight brush against ANYTHING will kill you. Fences, steps...if you touch it, you die a tragic, frown-faced death. Which is fine with me. These damn blueies are narcissistic enough to replace every adjective in their language with their own species name, and maybe after a few hundred of them explode by smurfing themselves into fences they'll get over themselves. You don't hear me trying to work “humaning” into the description of my day, you damn egomaniacs. Which is probably why stairs don't hate me enough to try to kill me.

2

ACCURACY

I can't think of a single episode in which a Smurf failed to step onto a curb and died—probably because you can't say, “Let's give his body a proper smurfing!” on TV.



Home Improvement • SNES

The TV Show: Men grunt! Women like to shop and have periods!

The Game: I swear to God, this is based on the family sitcom of the same name, and you fight fire-breathing dinosaurs with a grappling hook.

10

ACCURACY

I was wondering how they were going to be faithful to Episode 28: Holy Crap, a Fire-Breathing Dinosaur!

James Bond Jr. • SNES

The TV Show: It's like James Bond, only retooled for children who like things that suck.



■ Young Bond: limber and likes to flaunt it.

The Game: The feature that sets this game apart from all other bad side-scrollers is that enemies don't charge into your karate kicks. Instead, they stop short of where your kick would hit them, and throw grenades at your face. Luckily for them, when James Bond Jr. tries to step forward and kick at the same time, he unleashes a super jump-kick that hits enemies 30 feet above his head and nothing else. Fights alternate between getting hit in the face with grenades and leaping over the guy who did it, a combat system rarely seen outside the spaz community.

96

ACCURACY

It's probably close—I've never actually seen the show. I saw *The A-Team*, though, and thinking about that put me in a good enough mood to give this game a 96. Sucka!

Airwolf • NES

The TV Show: Hawke's brother is missing. His helicopter is not, and it kicks total ass. Also starring Ernest Borgnine.



■ I've seen better graphics on an Etch-A-Sketch.

The Game: On TV,

Hawke can target an enemy jet, close his eyes, smash his hand across the console, and any of the 25 buttons he hits will shoot the jet down. Airwolf's cigarette lighter will blow you up. Its landing gear travels through time, then blows you up in the future. In the Nintendo version, however, you can take a nap in the time it takes to turn slightly to your left. Some of the enemy pilots were briefed on this limitation and will taunt you, knowing that as long as they don't fly directly in front of your machine guns, you can never hit them.

3

ACCURACY

I've piloted Care Bears that were deadlier than the Nintendo Airwolf. And if you've ever tried taking out an F-16 by loving it really hard, then you know how insulting that is.

Fun House • NES

The TV Show: A game show based on another game show based on covering teen contestants in food. Host J.D. Roth suggests, “Let's get messy!”



■ J.D. Roth: Hot pink suits him. Also, lavender.

The Game: The show had two teams answer trivia questions whose only purpose was to give the children time to rest between sloppy food fights. For added authenticity, the game leaves out the trivia questions and replaces them with a never-flinching J.D. Roth head that encourages you to roller-skate through futuristic battle zones. And probably due to some kind of miscommunication, the sloppy food fight portion of the show is replaced with this same thing.

0

ACCURACY

My memory of the show isn't perfect, but I am positive I never saw children roller-skating through laser turrets to bombard manhole covers with throwing stars. Positive. ㄟ(っ>∇<)ㄟ

GRUDGE MATCH

Lego my Lando



vs.

LEGO STAR WARS

LUCAS' STAR WARS

It sounds like a worse idea than the *Bebe's Kids* Super Nintendo game, but by golly *Lego Star Wars* can box! Let's see if Lucas' blockbuster *Star Wars* movies can bust Lego's blocks.

PLOT

Episodes 1-3 boiled down to the essential best
Advantage: Lego

Midi-chlorians make you an a-hole

DEMOGRAPHIC

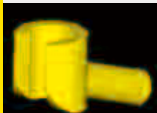


Ages Jake Lloyd to Yoda
Advantage: Tie

Certainly this dude
Advantage: Tie



BETTER JEDI



Obi-Wan's rigid plastic claw means he'll never drop a lightsaber
Advantage: Lego

Puny human wrist cost Luke his hand and saber



SEX APPEAL



Amidala's angular front-butt

Slave-girl Leia
Advantage: Lucas



IF YOU DON'T LIKE SOMETHING



Just hack it into smaller blocks!
Advantage: Lego

Too bad, sucker—you bought a ticket!



DISAPPOINTMENTS



Jabba proved to be too rotund to Lego-ize in-game
Advantage: Lego

Ewoks, in general



ON THE WHOLE

It's still a game full of friggin' Legos, man

Stellar *Episodes 4, 5, and 6* offset frequent lameness of the prequels
Advantage: Lucas

WINNER: LEGO STAR WARS

Turns out swapping the *Star Wars* cast for a bunch of little plastic men with bad hair makes a good thing even better.

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PlayStation 2

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FINAL WORD

Going 'round and 'round on the Xbox 360

Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu and 1UP.com Managing Editor Che Chou were two of the first journalists in the world to see the Xbox 360, but they signed a nondisclosure agreement saying they'd keep quiet about everything they'd seen until this issue. Do you have *any* idea how difficult it was for these two to keep their traps shut on such a major event? Now, the embargo's up, and the boys are finished with their therapy sessions, so let's see what they really think about Microsoft's new machine.

Let's get the obvious out of the way. What were your first impressions when you saw the Xbox 360?

Shoe: It looks like a shrunken-down PC. I guess I was hoping for something sexier here, like the iPod or the PSP.

Che: I have to agree. My initial reaction was that the Xbox 360 looked more at



■ The Xbox 360: The curviest console you've ever seen.



What's the best thing about the 360 so far?

Che: The best thing about the 360 is that I'll be able to play next-generation games later this year. As an early adopter, I want my shiny new gadgets and I want them now! Not late next year. The fact that Microsoft will be able to build the 360 on top of its preexisting Xbox Live architecture tickles me pink like Kirby.

Shoe: The Xbox Live stuff will be amazing—it's easily the best part about going 360 this fall. The streamlined and

"The Xbox Live stuff will be amazing."

home in an office than a living room. It just didn't look like a traditional console, but then again, isn't that what Microsoft is banking on?

Shoe: I'm glad it's not traditional looking, actually. It definitely has a unique look and feel, though I'm not sure how that thing's going to stack with my other components. It looks cool. Just not iPod cool.

improved matchmaking should make playing online with strangers fun again, and as long as developers don't get greedy, I can see the microtransactions being kind of fun for a game you're really into. Sure I'll pay a buck to get a bunch of new *Halo 3* skins or insignias. Just don't charge me for something I should be getting with the game to begin with.

Che: Let's not forget, with free basic membership to all 360 owners, you can finally expect Xbox Live to hit critical mass.

left in the dark ages when that time comes. Microsoft is building its online foundation now...all in preparation for the future when the entire world is connected.

How about Nintendo?

Shoe: Nintendo's problem isn't the quality of games or hardware—GameCube's *Resident Evil 4* looks just about as good as half the 360 games I've seen so far—it's marketability. Its next system will impress, I'm sure, but will it sell as well as Microsoft's or Sony's? Doubtful. It just doesn't have that cool, grown-up brand image its competitors have.

Che: There's no doubt the Nintendo name no longer carries the weight it used to, but I think it'll be a while yet before you see Nintendo go the way of Sega and leave the hardware business. Its conservative business strategies are both a blessing and a curse; on the one hand, playing it safe has kept Nintendo profitable, even while its stubbornness to change with the times continues to kill its market share. I don't expect its attitude to change in the next generation.

Shoe: Yeah, Nintendo will just be happy with its niche. It doesn't seem interested in taking over the world, which is OK.

Shoe: Yeah, but also don't forget, you need broadband for that basic service. Only half of the United States has broadband right now....

The worst?

Shoe: When I first saw *Soul Calibur* for the Dreamcast, it blew my eyes out. I wanted that *Soul Calibur*-ness in all of the 360 games. I had it in my head that we would see photo-realistic and lifelike graphics here, but we're not there quite yet. The closest I've seen so far is *NBA 2K6*. The LeBron James in the video demo we saw looked and moved almost exactly like the real thing. Let's just see if he'll still look that good when it's a full 5-on-5 game, with crowds, ball physics, A.I., and so on. And cheerleaders. Don't forget the cheerleaders.

Che: You have a point. I don't buy that graphics are less important than gameplay—for a game to rock, it's important to have both in spades. And the visuals we've seen from the 360 thus far look more like an evolution than a revolution. C'mon, where are the neuro-jacks for the back of my head?

Does Sony need to worry?

Che: Although Microsoft probably won't become a market leader just yet in the next generation, Sony really can't afford to rest on its PS2 and PSP arsenal. Look what happened to Nintendo between the Super Nintendo and the Nintendo 64. The game industry is an ever-changing market. Heck, just ask any Japanese publisher—you stagnate at your own peril.

Shoe: If Sony were smart, it'd get on the online bandwagon with its next system. Although online gaming isn't mass market yet, it will be—and if Sony leaves that market space alone long enough, it will be



■ *NBA 2K6* for Xbox 360: That's hot.

EGM RETRO: MAKING THE GAME

We've got a very good feeling about this *Star Wars* title

Adding something here, removing a snippet there, father of the Force George Lucas likes picking apart his films. In the same nothing-is-sacred spirit, we cobble together the

better bits of the games from the galaxy far, far away and leave the fluff on the cutting-room floor to make the ultimate *Star Wars* videogame.
—Shawn Elliott



Star Wars Battlefront PS2/XB • 2004

Vast and stocked with all the big, scene-stealing **vehicles**, last year's *Battlefront* made for blowout online 16-person (or up to 24, if you had the Xbox version) multiplayer matches, *Star Wars* or otherwise. Now, put that freedom to hop in and hit the thrusters in a story-heavy, single-player epic, please.



Star Wars Republic Commando • XB • 2005

Thanks in part to a band of identical brothers who do well without direction and work wonders with it—just the self-sufficient sort we'd want to share our multiseat dropship with—the recently released *Republic Commando* showed that *Star Wars* could do **squad-based shooting** with the best of 'em.



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic XB • 2003

KOTOR charmed fans and converted detractors with its populated planets, didn't-see-that-coming plot twists, and power to pick sides in the Force's light and dark clans. We dig shooting and asking questions, so this RPG's **storytelling** and personable cast are coming with us.



Star Wars Episode I: Racer • NG4/DC • 1999/2000

Episode I's space chariots screamed "racing game" from the get-go, and *Racer* answered back. Despite Dreamcast's superior specs, its version did nothing Nintendo 64's didn't and everything it did, meaning either is good enough for the **minigame** in our *Star Wars* megagame.



Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy XB • 2003

This *Star Wars* experience will surely include Jedis. And since these intergalactic ninjas live or die by the lasersword, our game will need killer **lightsaber duels**. We liked the cut of *Academy*'s glowstick battles—just add a few more special moves and our game'd be dangerous.



Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader • GC • 2001

When our identical-looking squad (see *Republic Commando*) takes to the skies, we'll want **starfighter sim** *Rogue Squadron II*'s cockpit cam (which lets you look around the cabin), targeting computer, coordinated wingmen, screen-clogging sorties, and enemy aces.

DISTURBANCES IN THE FORCE

Some scenes should stay deleted



Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones • GBA • 2002 — Now the collection of *Star Wars* games has its very own *Holiday Special*.

Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing • PS2 • 2001 — Just when you get past the idea of *Star Wars* capitalizing on the kart-racing craze, you get to the part where it's a bad game with jugheaded Jedi.

Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi • PS1 • 1997 — Tough to control, tougher to enjoy, fighting flop *Teras Kasi* stumbled upon the secret art of sucking ass. 🍌

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NEXT MONTH: **AUGUST • ISSUE #194**ON SALE **JULY 5**

NEXT-GEN SYSTEMS



PREVIEWS

- Dead or Alive 4 (XB360)
- Mario Kart (DS)
- Ninja Gaiden Black (PS2)
- Shadow of the Colossus (PS2)
- SSX4 (PS2/XB/GC)



REVIEWS

- Advent Rising (XB)
- Batman Begins (PS2/XB/GC)
- Conker: Live & Reloaded (XB)
- Destroy All Humans (PS2/XB)
- NCAA Football 2006 (PS2/XB/GC)

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

As you know, in this issue we opened up our trench coat and flashed you with some Xbox 360 coverage, but get ready to finally see some **big news on the Nintendo Revolution and the PlayStation 3**. Suddenly feel like you have a mouthful of Pop Rocks? Don't worry—that sound you hear is just your mind getting blown away. But will these new consoles drastically change the

way we play games? From the looks of it, this won't be one of those lame Nintendo Virtual Boy flops.

It's a nice feeling knowing what we'll be busy with for the next few years, so we'll share our experiences from E3, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the world's largest videogame trade show. Get our **hands-on impressions of all the hottest games of the future** and our not-so-hands-on impressions of the

booth babes.

We stuck to what we're good at and also got our mitts on some of the sweet titles coming out this year, such as *Zelda*, *Kingdom Hearts II*, and *Burnout Revenge*. We'll give you **our thoughts on the big games you'll be playing soon**.

This action-packed issue will do a no-handed cartwheel and hit news-stands soon, so watch out for it!

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**ANSWERS TO
X MARKS
THE BOX**
on page 123



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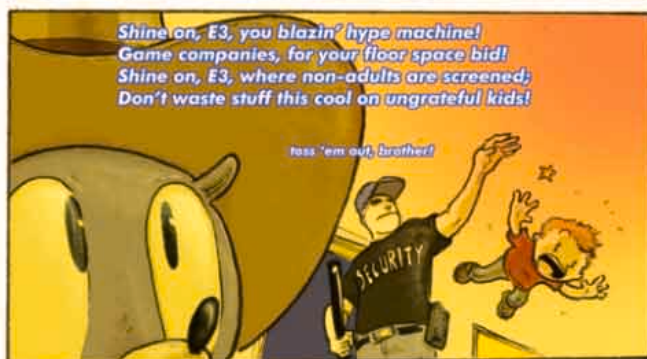
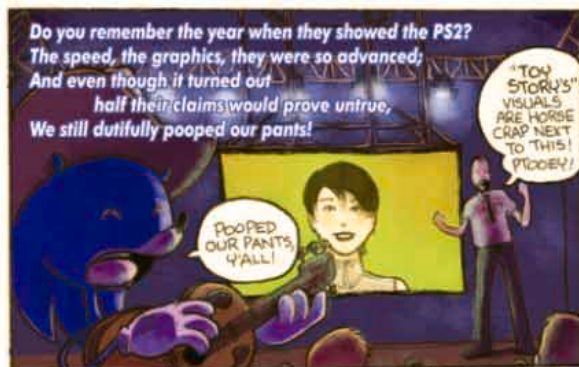
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