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GAMEPRO

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22 CHARACTERS
REVEALED! P.80

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Issue 231 / DEC 07

66 MORE GAMES INSIDE:

- ★ LEGENDARY: THE NEXT BIOSHOCK?
- ★ HALO 3: FIVE SECRET TOOLS TO GAIN THE COMPETITIVE EDGE



An IDG Entertainment Publication

ORCHESTRATE THE PERFECT OP.

22:01 Eliminate soldiers near ambassador.
22:02 Suppress fire on left building.
22:03 Cover northwest corner for extraction.

22:01 Eliminate enemy on balcony.
22:02 Provide covering fire.
22:03 Move in to extract ambassador.

www.socomtacticalstrike.com
www.us.playstation.com/psp
www.seal.navy.mil



Drug Reference
Violence

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SOCOM

U.S. NAVY SEALs

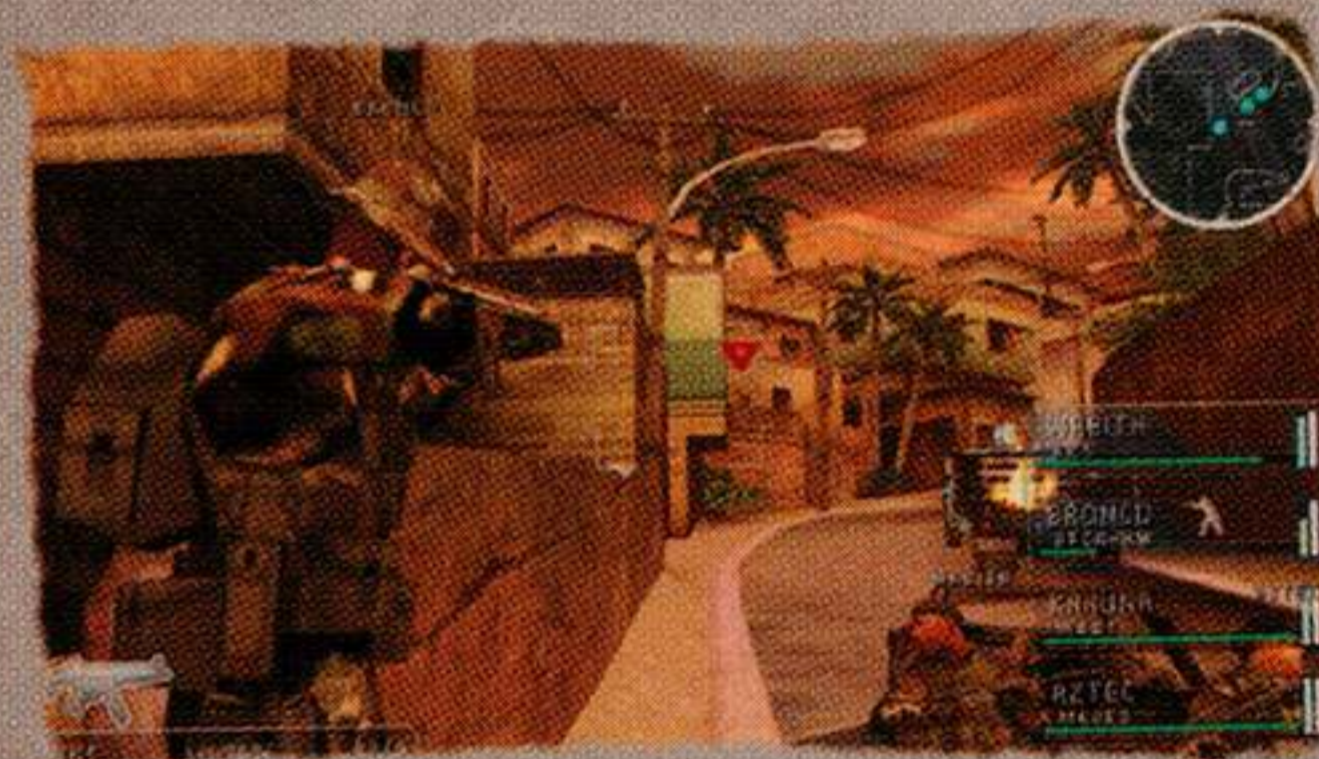
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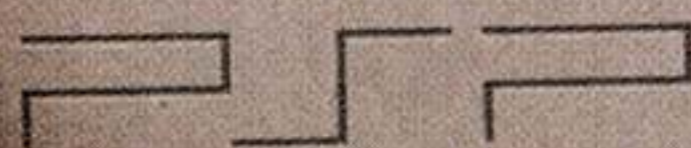


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22:01 Engage enemy soldiers.
22:02 Eliminate all enemy threats.
22:03 Cover team's extraction.

22:01 Fire grenade at machine gunner.
22:02 Move to secure ambassador.
22:03 Escort ambassador to rendezvous point.

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IN THEIR FUTURE LIES



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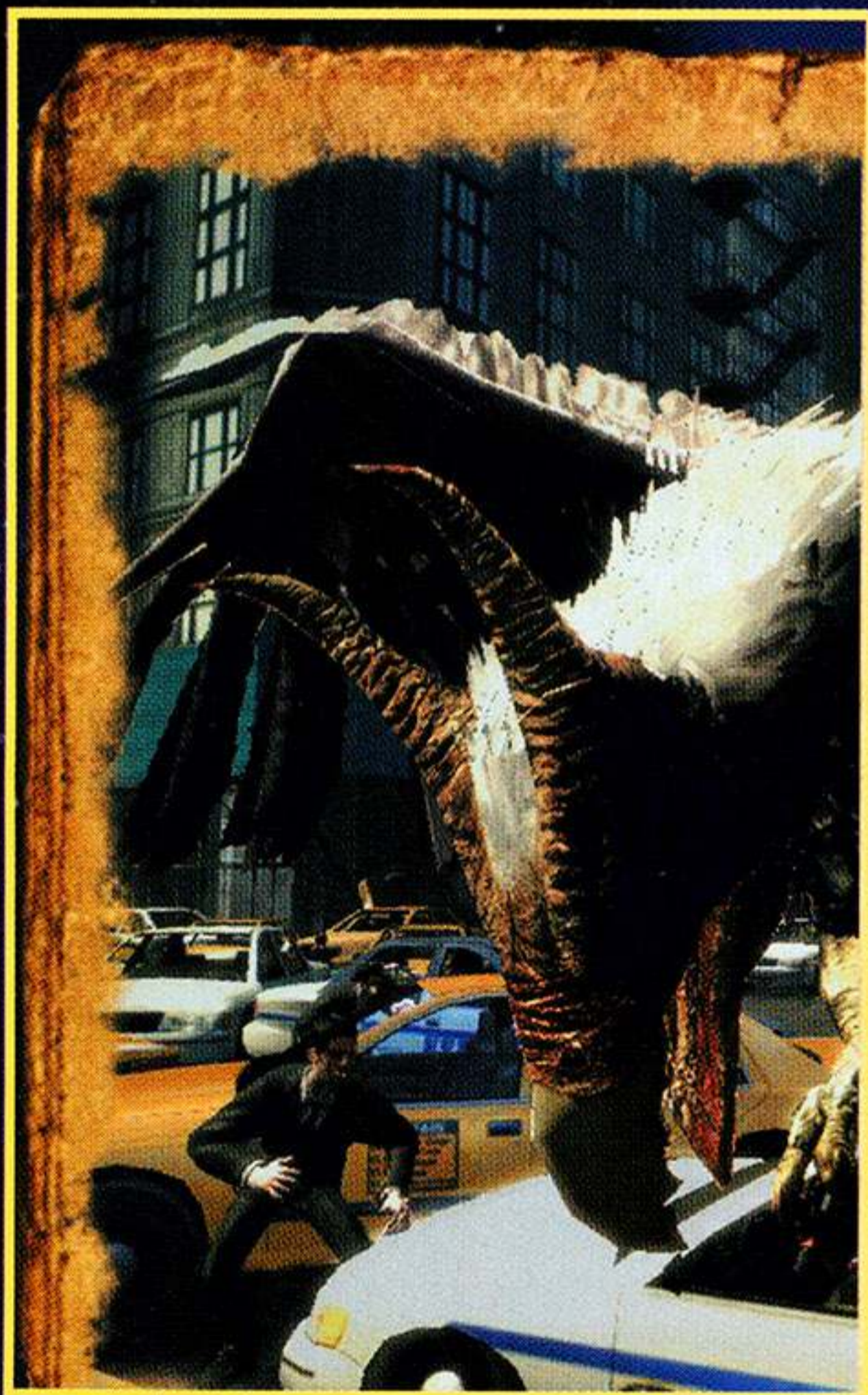
GAMEPRO

★ Features



68 A Galaxy of Possibilities

The Wii has already ignited a formidable surge of energy out there in video game space. Now it's set to blast off with Super Mario Galaxy! Here's what happens when plumber meets pulsar.



86 A Legend in the Making

Legendary challenges you to wield modern-day firepower against werewolves, griffons, Minotaurs, and other monsters shambling straight out of Greek and Scandinavian mythology. We visit developer Spark Unlimited in order to find out if you've got a fighting chance.



106 GamePro Holiday

It's that most wonderful time of the year when gamers of all ages are making up wish lists and dropping not too subtle hints about the stuff they'd like to get. This gift guide showcases the gear and gadgets that will ensure your favorite gamer has a happy holiday.



94 GamerHelp: Halo 3

Sure, Halo 3 is probably the biggest game of the year, and we're starting to scratch its surface. We show you how to find all secret Skulls, make custom games, and more!



100 BradyGames Strategy: BioShock

The folks at BradyGames take you beyond the basics with advanced hacking tips and other strategies! Check out the full strategy guide—on sale now!



★ Departments

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23 Everything We Know About Resident Evil 5

We can't wait for RE5 just like you. So we scraped together all the evidence we could find and behold—some hard facts about this survival horror block buster in the making appear!

28 Battlestar on Xbox Live

Battlestar Galactica rages on Xbox Live Arcade. Here's how the cast—humans and Cylons alike—rate the game.



24 A Look at Killzone 2: Bigger than Halo 3?

Steven Ter Heide, producer at Guerrilla Games reveals why Killzone 2 will be the biggest game ever to launch for the PlayStation 3.

30 Console Race 2008: The Big Three

Hey, Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony! You guys want to dominate next year? Then heed these words of advice.

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Sayonara, and Thanks for All the Games

Buzz is moving on. When we first started *GamePro*, I had no idea where it would lead or even where the games industry was headed. It was just a blast to be here! It's been amazing to be an integral part of its growth as it's become the most exciting and creative entertainment medium today. It's been a wild ride, full of ups and downs—a journey shared with so many good people, too. But at the end of the day it's always been about all of you, the real *GamePros* out there. I thank each of you for being loyal readers. As long as you are *GamePro's*, there will be a *GamePro*—still your magazine after all these years.—**Brother Buzz**



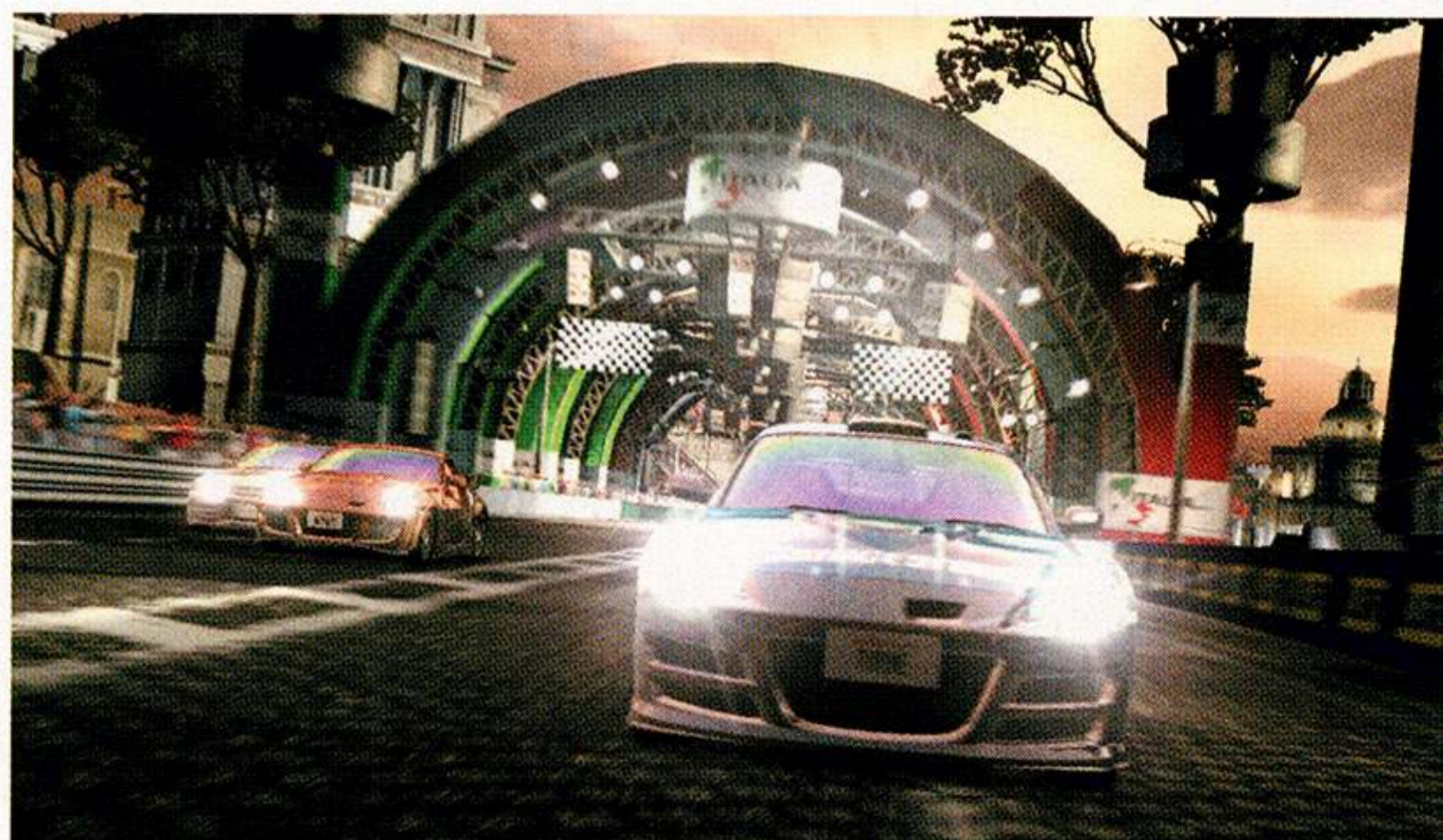


Rated M for Mature, we can only assume.

▼ NINJA GAIDEN II XBOX 360



▼ FAR CRY 2 PC



▼ JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS PS3, XBOX 360, PS2



▼ KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: CIRCLE OF DOOM XBOX 360



▼ LOST ODYSSEY XBOX 360



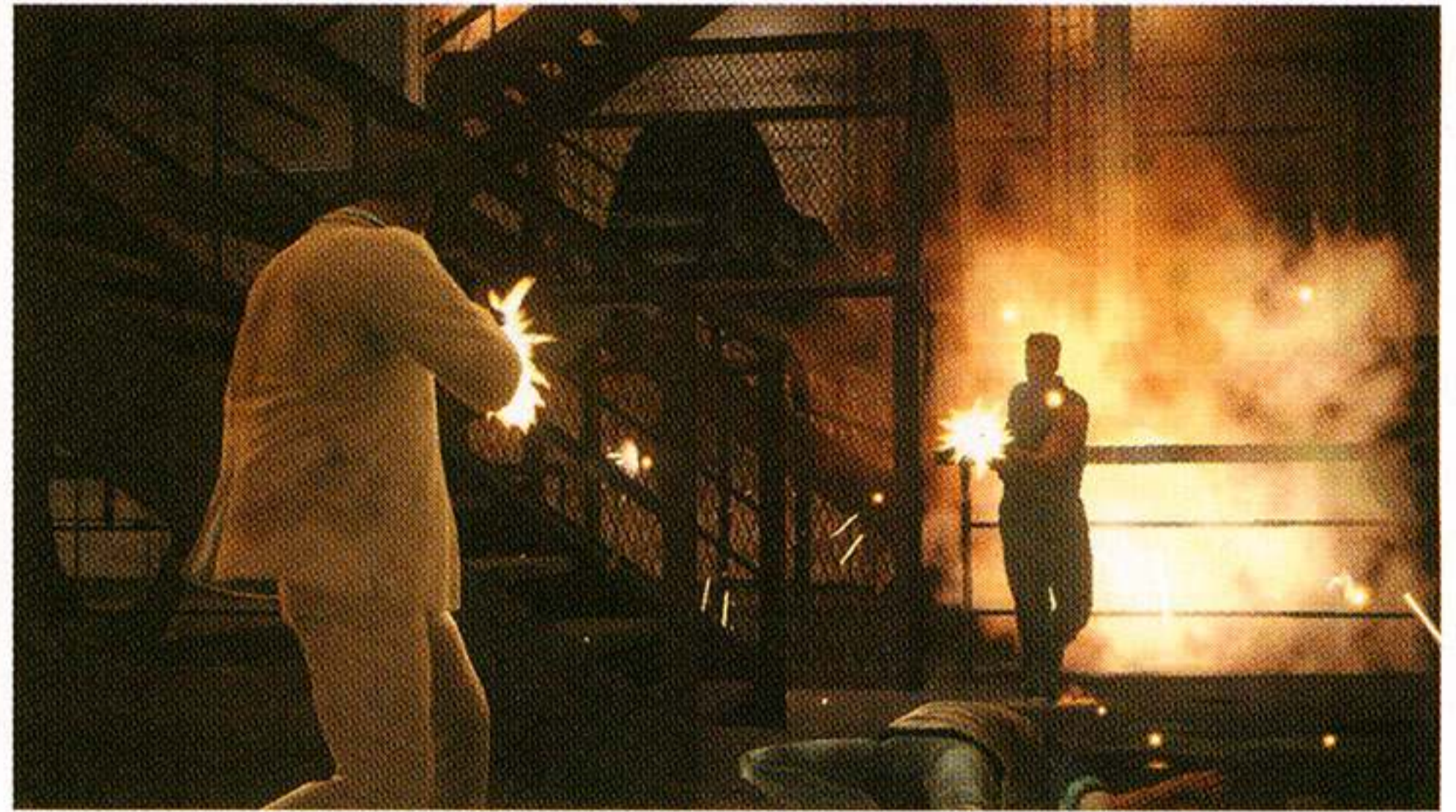
▼ ARMY OF TWO PS3, XBOX 360



▼ KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN PS3, XBOX 360, PC



CRYISIS PC



THE CLUB PS3, XBOX 360

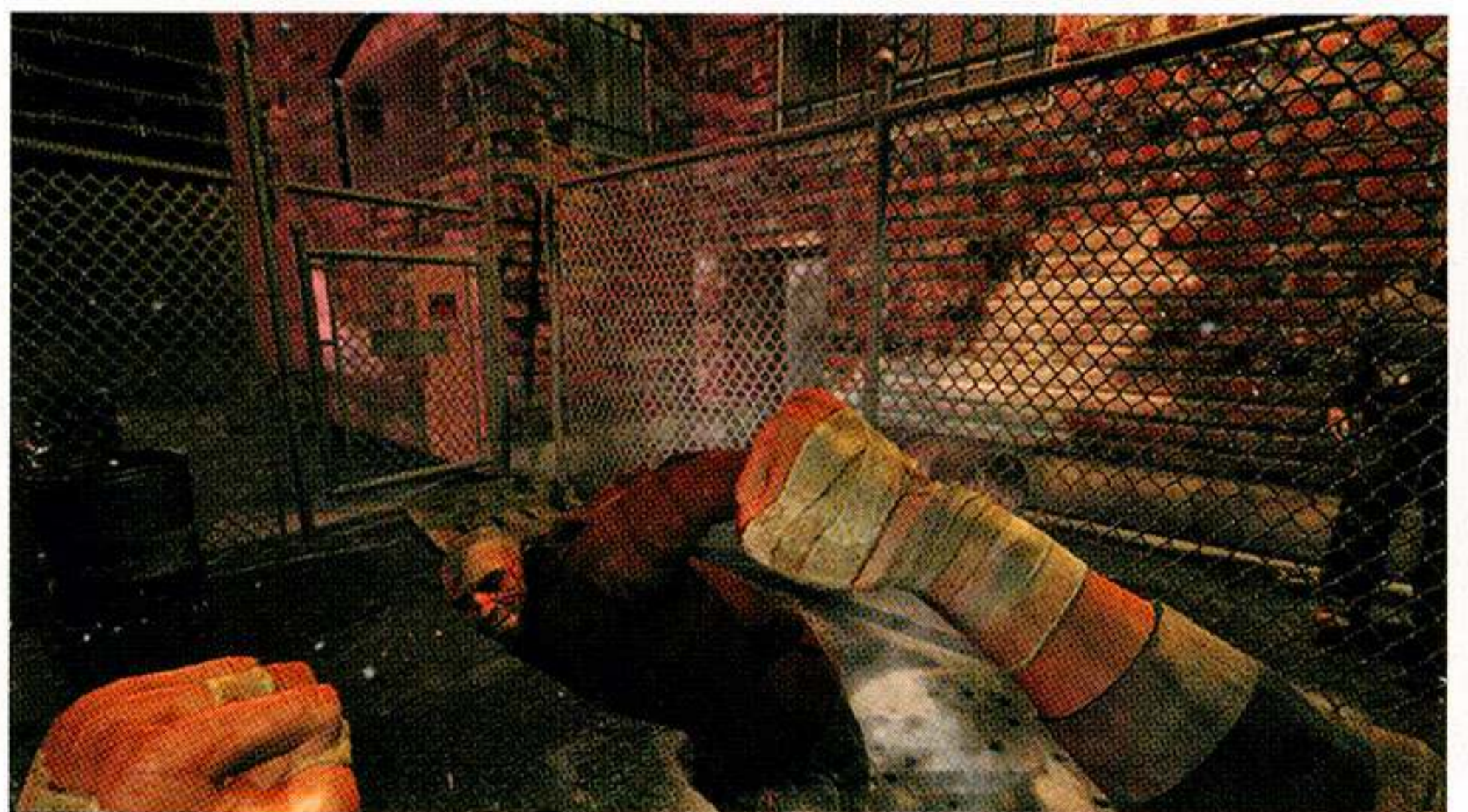


Even graphical powerhouses like Call of Duty 4 and Crysis don't have explosions this sexy.

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY PS3, XBOX 360



SOUL CALIBUR IV PS3, XBOX 360



CONDEMNED 2: BLOODSHOT PS3, XBOX 360

This is Vince Young.

Wireless Sports Updates

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Ringtones

As fast as he is on the field, he's even faster off it. Vince is always switching up his ringtone for the latest hip-hop track he's gotten stuck in his head. Luckily, he's got over 3 million to choose from with AT&T Mobile Music.

Picture Messaging

Vince travels for work. A lot. So he likes to keep in touch with his mother and friends back home. And with unlimited picture messaging on his MEdia™ Max Unlimited plan, he saves a lot doing it.

Me/Charity

Most people don't know that Vince isn't just about football. He's also a volunteer teacher who's working to make sure every kid has access to the technology that drives today's world.

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Have you ever noticed David Beckham's wife, Victoria "Posh Spice" Beckham, never smiles?

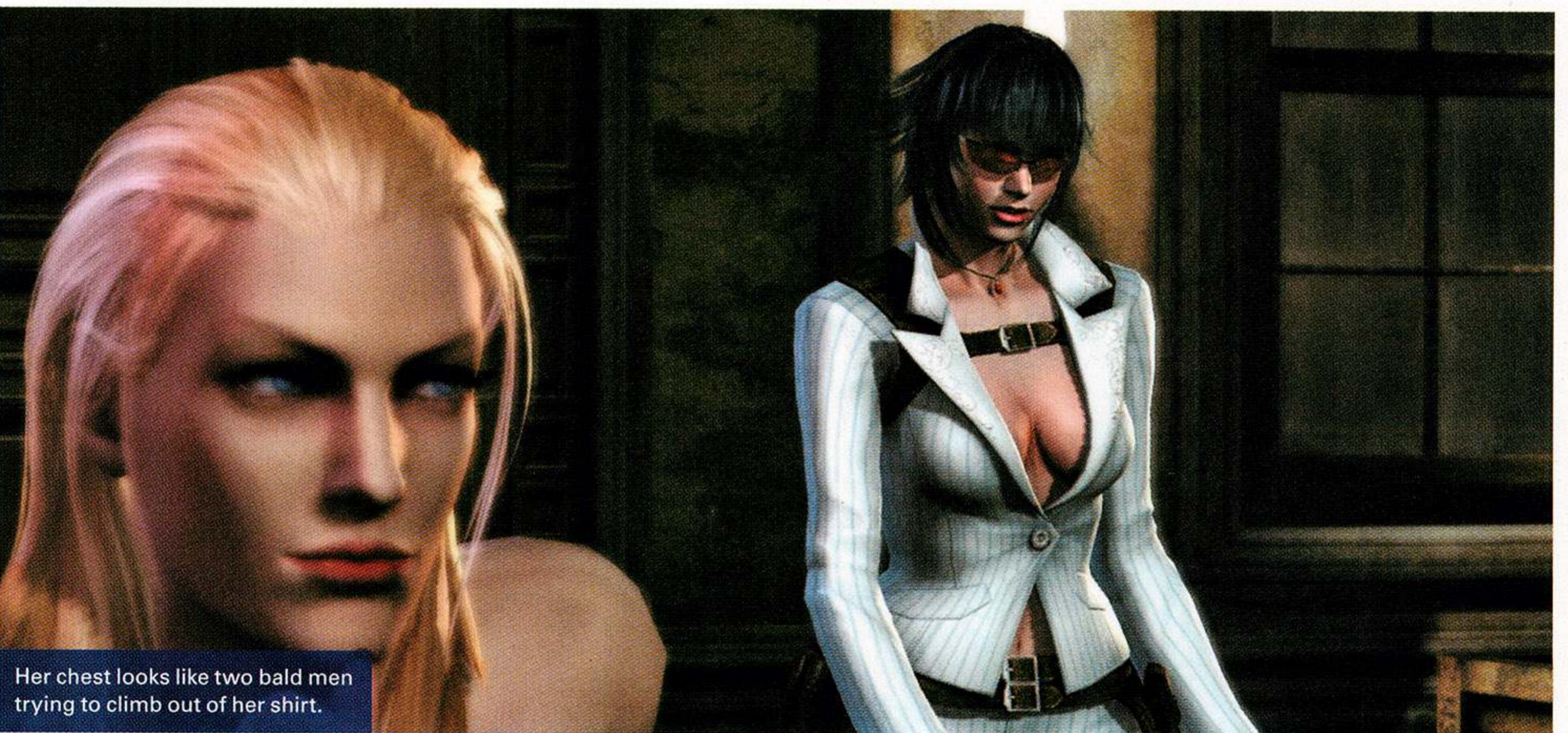
▼ **FIFA SOCCER 08** PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS, PC



▼ **THE ORANGE BOX** PS3, Xbox 360



▼ **NIGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS** Wii



Her chest looks like two bald men trying to climb out of her shirt.

▼ **DEVIL MAY CRY 4** PS3, Xbox 360

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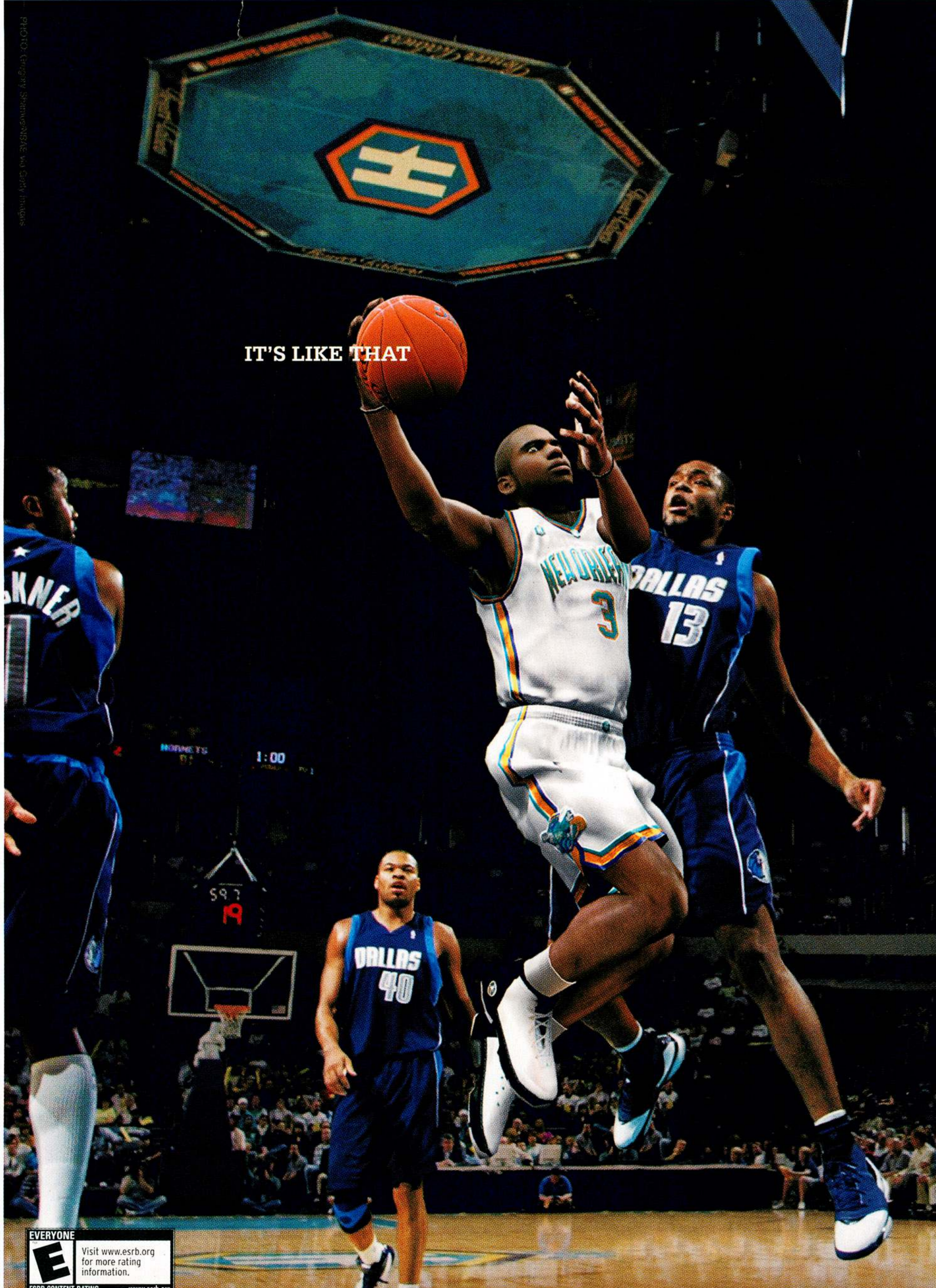
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PHOTO: Gregory Szymanski/BAE and Getty Images

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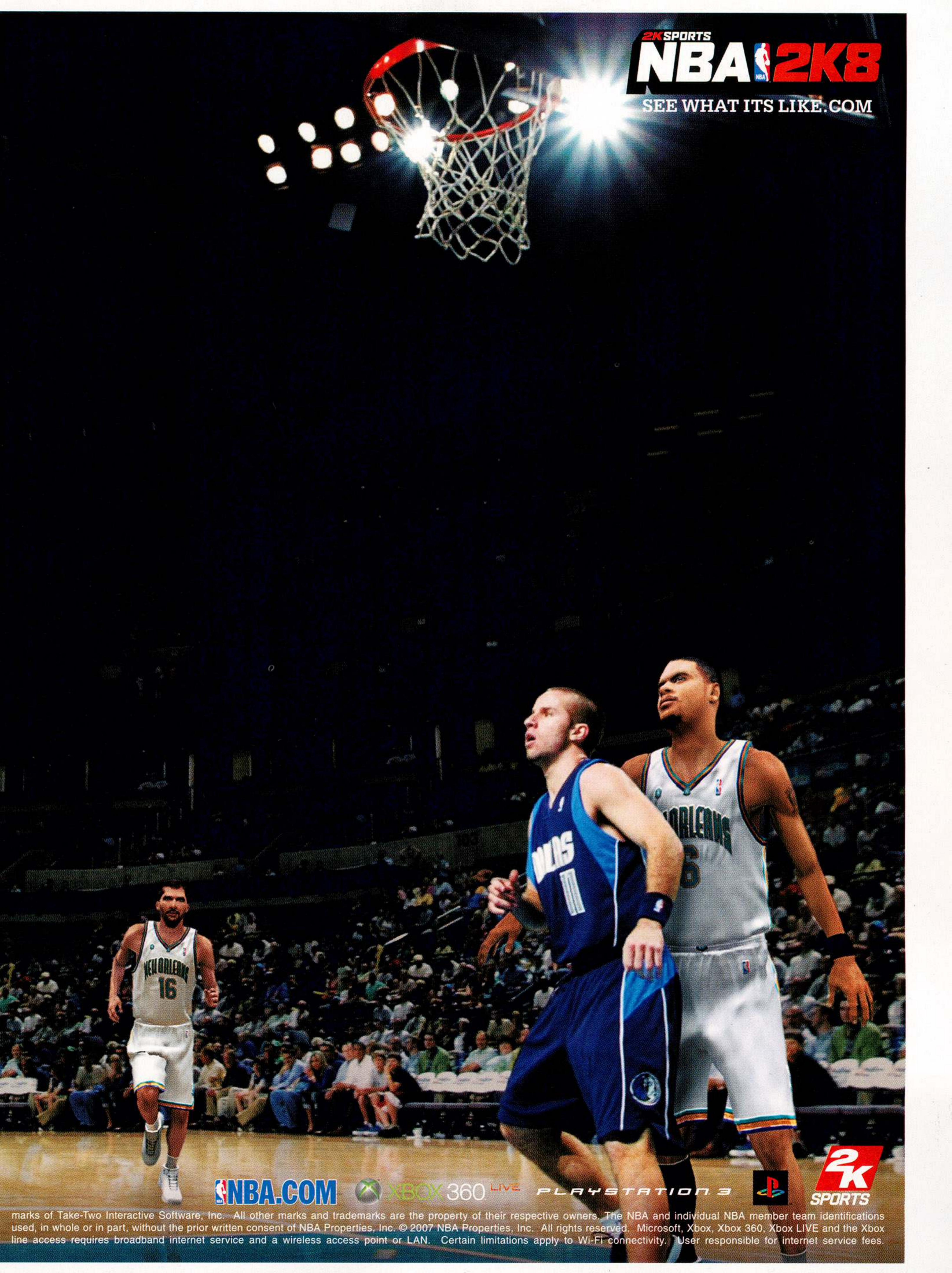


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ONE ORDINARY MAN.
ONE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE.



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ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org	

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SPAWN POINT

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INSIDE SPAWN POINT

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GamePro Fortune Teller . . . Page 26
Battlestar Galactica . . . Page 28
Prototype . . . Page 34



EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT RESIDENT EVIL 5

We have no exclusive; no hands-on; no live demo to reference, but an extended trailer and plenty of screen shots offer more than enough detail to arrive at some hard facts about Resident Evil 5.

THE ENEMIES

The enemies in RE5 are not zombies per se, nor are they apart of the Los Illuminados cult from RE4. If RE5 does in fact take place in Haiti, it's likely that Voodoo plays a significant role in the "zombism" of the Haitian people. It is a Haitian belief that, with Voodoo, the dead can be reanimated by black-magic sorcerers.



Just like in RE4, enemies will throw knives that you can shoot down in mid-flight.

THE SETTING

RE5 takes place 10 years after the events of RE4. Leon Kennedy, however, is a no show. Back from the original Resident Evil, the main playable character is former S.T.A.R.S. member Chris Redfield. The official location is still unknown, but rumors and speculation point to the Caribbean country of Haiti. Oddly enough, RE5 incorporates heavy use of bright daylight, a first for the gloomy series.



Haitian Voodoo? We hope so.

THE GAMEPLAY

The core feel of RE5 is similar to RE4, using an over-the-shoulder camera to navigate through the game. The close-quarters combat system has been improved upon by adding intense struggles between Redfield and enemies, the ability to dodge knife swipes, and a mega punch to disperse crowds of encroaching "zombies." Temperature and sunlight will also play a key role in the game. Just like in real life, sudden exposure to bright light will render Redfield temporarily blind until his eyes adjust, and over exposure to the sun will cause him to hallucinate.



An over-the-shoulder camera system is the sweet spot for RE5.



This looming figure seems to play a similar role as Resident Evil 4's chainsaw-wielding maniac, Dr. Salvador.



Sherry Birkin returns—all grown up.

KILLZONE 2

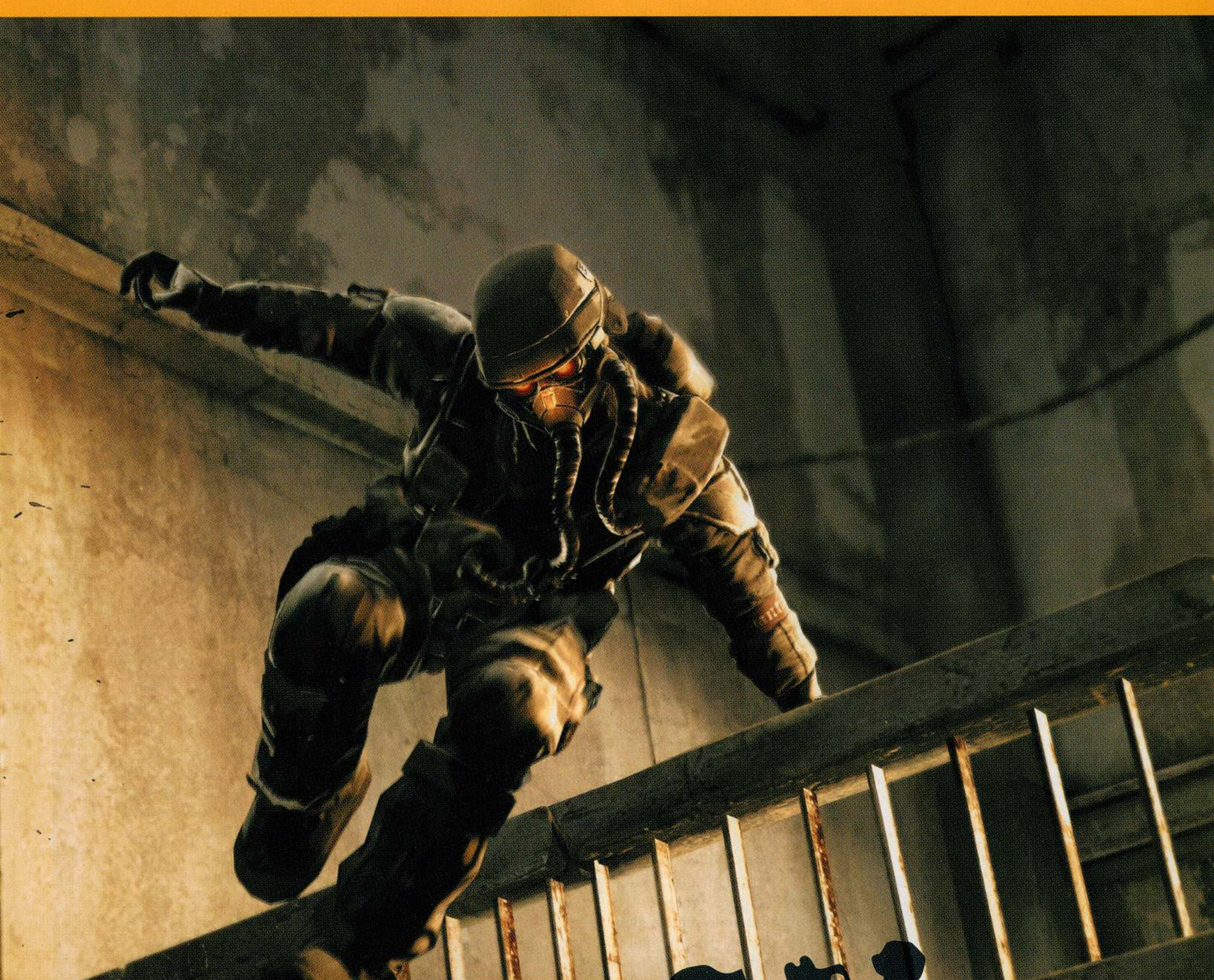
SONY PREPARES TO LAUNCH THE BIGGEST GAME EVER FOR THE PLAYSTATION 3.

If you missed the explosive Killzone 2 trailer that came out of E³ earlier this year, log onto GamePro.com now and watch it. The opening scene looks strikingly similar to the controversial "fake" trailer from two years ago, which proves developer Guerilla Games has been hard at work to make Killzone 2 look as good as the target render.

Killzone 2 already looks better than the likes of Call of Duty 4 and Halo 3 on the visual side of things, and it's still early in development. It's too early to tell how the game will actually play, but producer Steven Ter Heide assures us Killzone 2 will feel better than the first game. "We are building on

our strengths from previous titles, and working hard to improve on their shortcomings," said Ter Heide.

With a \$20 million budget, Killzone 2 is backed by the industry's most talented game designers, and not to mention the powerful technology of the PS3. "[The PS3's] processing power means we can add more detail and create that Hollywood-type realism we're after," said Ter Heide. Killzone 2 is a key title for Sony in 2008, and we can't wait to hear more details about the campaign and multiplayer. In the meantime, here's a tasty interview with details beyond the trailer.



LIBERTY DICTATES FREEDOM

Steven Ter Heide, producer at Guerrilla Games, talks Helghast weaponry, Killzone 2 multiplayer, and unveils new gameplay mechanics.

What kinds of environmental hazards will players run into on the Helghast's home planet and how will these hazards affect the player?

The Helghast have learned to harness the power the planet offers and have turned them into weapons. For example, the ARC weapon you can see in the demo is powered by lightning.

In the original Killzone, the player had the chance to play as several characters. What kinds of characters will the player be able to control in Killzone 2?

In Killzone 2 we are introducing a new player character called Sev. Sev is part of a special forces squad called the Legion. Other characters are not playable but will appear as buddies with different abilities. The player can wield a variety of different weapons, and carry up to two with him at any time.

The first Killzone didn't allow you to jump. Will Killzone 2 add this feature? Why is this feature important/not important?

We felt that navigating small obstacles was annoying in Killzone, but we also wanted to keep everything grounded in reality. In Killzone 2 you can jump, however, you will not be able to fire at the same time. The player will also be able to perform lots of context-based actions that will be all in first-person (such as lean and peek). The feeling of immersion is very important to us.

Squad A.I. was a sticking point in the first game. What will Killzone 2 do to improve its A.I. of enemies and squad members?

For Killzone 2, the world is more complex with lots of physics objects and destructible environments, which means the A.I. has to navigate and be aware of all of that. They also have to be more aware of each other and their enemies, as we will see many more characters on screen at the same time.

Will any of the multiplayer maps from Killzone return in a superior form?

We are not talking about the details of our multiplayer campaign just yet. It will however be an extensive component of Killzone 2, linking to Killzone.com as well as into Home.

It's pretty obvious (at least to us) that Killzone 2 has some of the best graphics ever seen. What is it about the PS3 that allows you to pull off this kind of detail?

We've created our own proprietary technology to drive the game, and this is using many of PS3's specific strengths. Large quantities of data can be streamed because we have a great deal of storage capacity. It is not a luxury to have Blu-ray but rather a necessity, as compression only gets you so far. I mean, the level that we showed at E³ and Leipzig topped out around 2GB!

GAMEPRO FORTUNE TELLER



SUCKS OR RULES

Changing the world, one insult at a time.

The *GamePro* Fortune Teller has no patience for official game reviews—the Tarot Cards tell all. Consult the all-powerful Polygonus to see the future of next year's highly anticipated games.



THE LAST REMNANT

Release Date: Spring 2008 // PS3, Xbox 360

Polygonus can see to the farthest reaches of time, and even he can't count how many *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy* sequels, spin-offs, and side projects will come from Square Enix before World President Kevin Federline destroys the planet in 2025. *The Last Remnant* intrigues Polygonus in that regard. The increase in action, the use of the Unreal Engine 3, and the focus on a worldwide simultaneous release are all foreign territory for Square Enix, and Polygonus predicts a positive prognosis for this 300-inspired title.

VERDICT: Square Enix is treading new ground with *The Last Remnant*, which is a risky move amongst the money-printing *Final Fantasy* games, but Polygonus feels it will pay off.



CARD ▶

The Dark Horse



TOO HUMAN

Release Date: 2008 // Xbox 360

Polygonus has to take a few side jobs to pay his rent, including overseeing development hell. One of its primary tenants is *Too Human*, the troubled action title from Silicon Knights. *Too Human* has been in the works for over eight years, over three console generations, and has failed to impress in any public showing. Factor in the recent strife between Silicon Knights and Epic over the failure of the Unreal Engine 3 to power the game properly, and Polygonus foresees a rough, *Shenmue*-esque future for this troubled trilogy.

VERDICT: Too much has gone wrong for *Too Human* to meet expectations. This Human is starting to smell like a corpse.



CARD ▶

The Walking Corpse

SUCKS

Unreal Tournament 3 (Xbox 360). The latest chapter in the competitive killing spree series won't hit the Xbox 360 until 2008, but the bad news doesn't end there. Epic Games says it will likely ship with less content than the PlayStation 3 version due to the size constraints of DVD media. **SUCKS**

Copy Protection. Gamers understand the need to protect the investment that goes into developing the best PC games, but when will publishers realize that nonsense such as online activation, installation counts, and invasive DRM systems consistently does little more than punish legitimate customers? **SUCKS**

Arm Spirit. What's worse than getting your arm broken by a Japanese arm wrestling game? Hearing the company spokeswoman simultaneously set back gender politics and add insult to injury with this gem: "Even women should be able to beat it." **SUCKS**

RULES

BioShock. In addition to being a fantastic game, *BioShock* draws inspiration from sources as diverse as Ayn Rand, George Orwell, and *System Shock*; and shows just how refreshing a thoughtful blend of ideas can be. Here's hoping it inspires players to crack a book once in a while. **RULES**

E for All. Now that E3 has transitioned from show floor extravaganza to back room wheeling and dealing, it walks the E for All conference, where you don't have to be a journalist to get a firsthand look at the latest games and goodies. **RULES**

Free Goodies. The free downloadable content trend continues. *GRAW2*'s "throwback pack" went from 800 points to zero on Xbox Live Marketplace, *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* will be gratis on the PlayStation Network, and 2K Games put *BioShock*'s memorable soundtrack on the web. **RULES**



GAMES TO DIE FOR

Our current obsessions



#1

BIOSHOCK (XBOX 360)

This blockbuster features an immersive and intelligently designed world with room for individual play style and thrillingly unpredictable A.I. behavior.



#2

MARIO STRIKERS CHARGED (Wii)

If you thought *Mario Party 8* was a blast to play with a couch full of friends, you desperately need to grab this maniacally addictive twist on soccer.



#3

SHIN MEGAMI TENSAI: PERSONA 3 (PS2)

The notion of nightly suicides to combat evil might make this trippy RPG excursion unsuitable for kids, but it's still dark, brilliant fun for adventurous adults.

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BATTLESTAR INVADES XBOX LIVE

The cast of *Battlestar Galactica* test drive the Xbox Live Arcade game.

Sierra Entertainment brought the new Xbox 360 *Battlestar Galactica* game to the set of The Sci-Fi Channel TV series, which is currently taping the fourth and final season of the show. A pair of pilots from the *Galactica*, Grace Park (Lt. Sharon "Boomer" Valerii) and Tahmoh Penikett (Lt. Karl C. "Helo" Agathon), took the new downloadable high-definition game for a spin.

Playing a Cylon on the show, Park jumped right into a Raider in her first in-game flight. "I love the different levels and how you can be either in a Viper or a Raider," said Park, who recently made her video game debut in Electronic Arts's *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars*.

A big part of the game's longevity will be in the multiplayer modes. The Xbox 360 game will offer eight-player online combat in Firefight, Skirmish, and Domination modes.

"I think it will be a great way to get your friends into the game," said Park. "Seeing who's going to go on which side and even switching sides. That's what the show's been so much about with the humans versus the Cylons."

Although the end is near for the cast of *Battlestar Galactica*, fans will still get a couple of years of entertainment out of the show, the DVDs, and possibly even more video games. But how will the show's creators end the mega sci-fi hit TV series?



"I'm pretty sure we're going to get to Earth," said Park. "We've already shown what the Cylons and humans are capable of and we're not going to get there and live happily ever after. I'd like the show to keep to the reality of what's been happening."

Penikett would like to see the series end with a big question mark. "Being true to *Battlestar*, it can't be just a big happy ending where we find Earth and the earthlings are waiting with open arms saying, 'Welcome back,'" said Penikett. "It's got to be dark and it's got to be ugly."
—John Gaudiosi



Geek Speak 2.0

Big words, small type.

Buff: Any spell or ability that enables you to temporarily improve the basic stats or power of your own or another person's character, thereby giving them a better chance against powerful opponents.

Carebear: A derogatory phrase that's more or less the MMORPG equivalent of "wussy." Typically used to taunt anyone that dares complain after a handful of high-level characters stomp a village of newbies into dust.

Zerg: Any thinly coordinated mass rush of forces with the sole purpose of overwhelming an enemy with numbers alone. A reference to the zerglings from *StarCraft*.

THE BIG 5

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



1 WII IS FASTEST SELLING CONSOLE EVER

According to a report from VG Chartz, Nintendo's latest console has now surpassed lifetime sales of the Xbox 360 in less than a year despite ongoing availability problems. 10.6 million Wiis have been given loving homes so far.

THE VERDICT: Hardcore gamers might bristle that the hardware is underpowered, but Nintendo has punctured industry conventions by simultaneously innovating, expanding the market, and making a profit on every unit sold.

2 PARAMOUNT DUMPS BLU-RAY

Don't plan on seeing *Transformers* on Blu-ray any time soon. The production and distribution company announced that it's ditching Sony's format in favor of HD DVD.

THE VERDICT: Paramount was paid \$150 million in cash and incentives to make the switch according to a report in the *New York Times*, suggesting the surprise move had little to do with the struggling format's supposed superiority.

3 60 GB PS3 SUPPLY DEPLETED

"We no longer have any inventory in SCEA warehouses. All inventory has been purchased and shipped to retailers," Sony's Dave Karraker confirmed.

THE VERDICT: By the time you read this, the 60 GB PS3 will be extinct from retail shelves, leaving only the more dominant 80 GB unit that ships with MotorStorm. Not a bad deal in our opinion.

4 MANHUNT 2 SCORES "M" RATING

Originally tagged with the dreaded "Adults Only" rating, effectively blocking it from release, Rockstar's ultraviolent horror sequel has been toned down enough to land the far less crippling "Mature" rating on appeal.

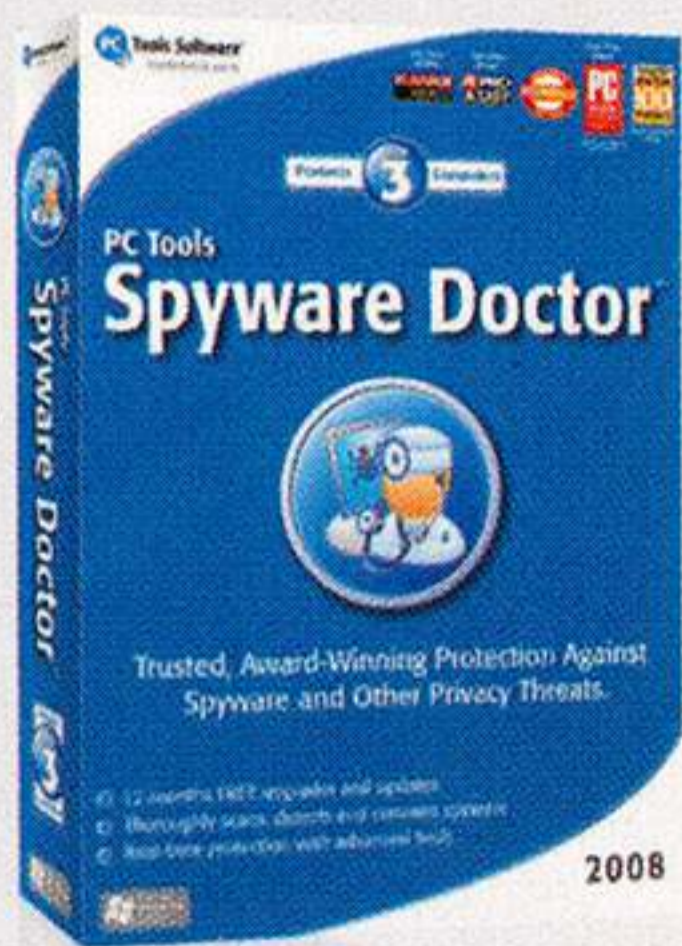
THE VERDICT: Don't expect to see the console gaming equivalent of a "director's cut."

5 PSP HITS THE ROAD

In Europe only, Sony announces Go Explore, a satellite navigation device, and Go Messenger, a voice, video, and chat service for the PSP.

THE VERDICT: If these early 2008 add-ons fare well in Europe and Great Britain, expect to see them make the slow boat across the Atlantic.

Do you have the right protection?



Experts agree, Spyware Doctor® provides the best protection against spyware, malware, identity theft and other online threats. Built-in OnGuard™ real-time protection and advanced heuristic technology keep your most precious assets covered.

Don't get pucked by spyware. Protect yourself with Spyware Doctor.

THE CONSOLE RACE 2008

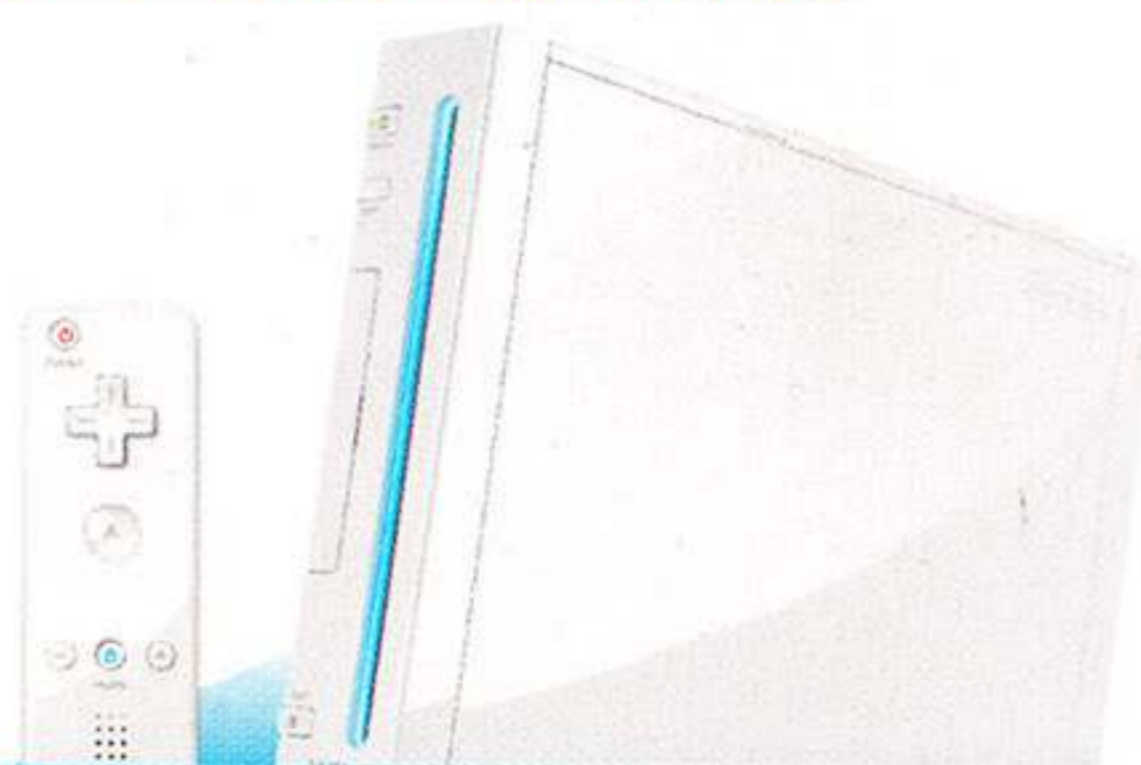
How can Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony stay on top? Here are *GamePro's* recommendations for each console maker to win the 2008 race for console dominance.



Release more reliable hardware. The estimated 25-33 percent failure rate is sure to keep people from buying the machine, as evidenced by waning sales in 2007. People are waiting for better Xbox 360 hardware. Microsoft needs to oblige.

Reevaluate the Xbox 360 value proposition. The Xbox 360 lacks a high-definition movie player, wireless networking, and free online multiplayer, something PS3 owners can get for a mere \$50 more than the Xbox 360 lite.

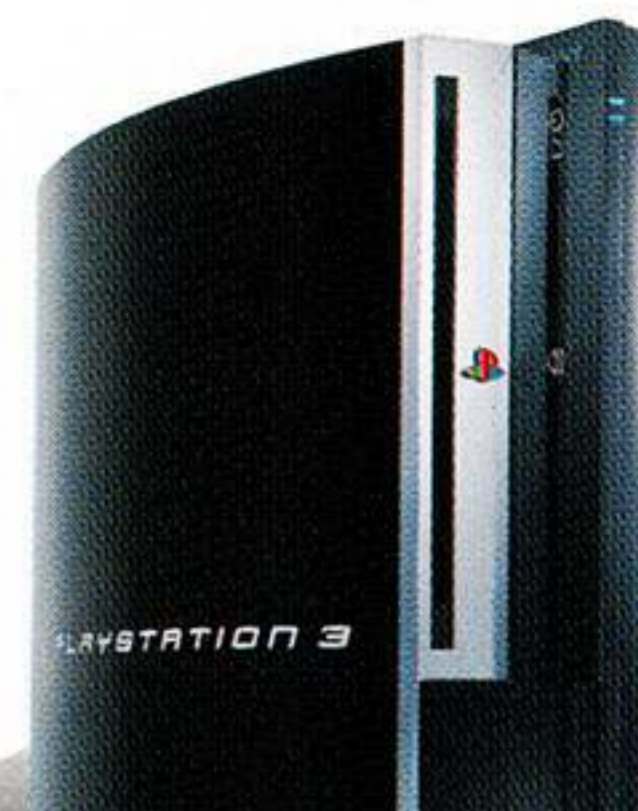
Make Xbox Live free. In doing so, we're confident many more gamers will "jump in" causing similar effects to that of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Why charge a fee when you could make more money by advertising?



Keep things fresh. Nintendo needs to deliver experiences that can only be found on Wii, such as games like *Wii Fit*, *Wii Music*, and even *Metroid Prime 3*. You can never have too much fresh fruit. Just remember: it rots quickly.

Indulge the hardcore gamer. Give core gamers what they want: deep, mature games, often with online modes. The DS handheld is an inspirational system that features an assorted platter of both casual and mature games for all ages.

Upgrade the system to HD with forward compatibility. Soon Nintendo will be able to integrate HD-ready components into the Wii for a still-attractive price. Furthermore, a hard drive for playable demos would further maximize the console's much-debated life expectancy.



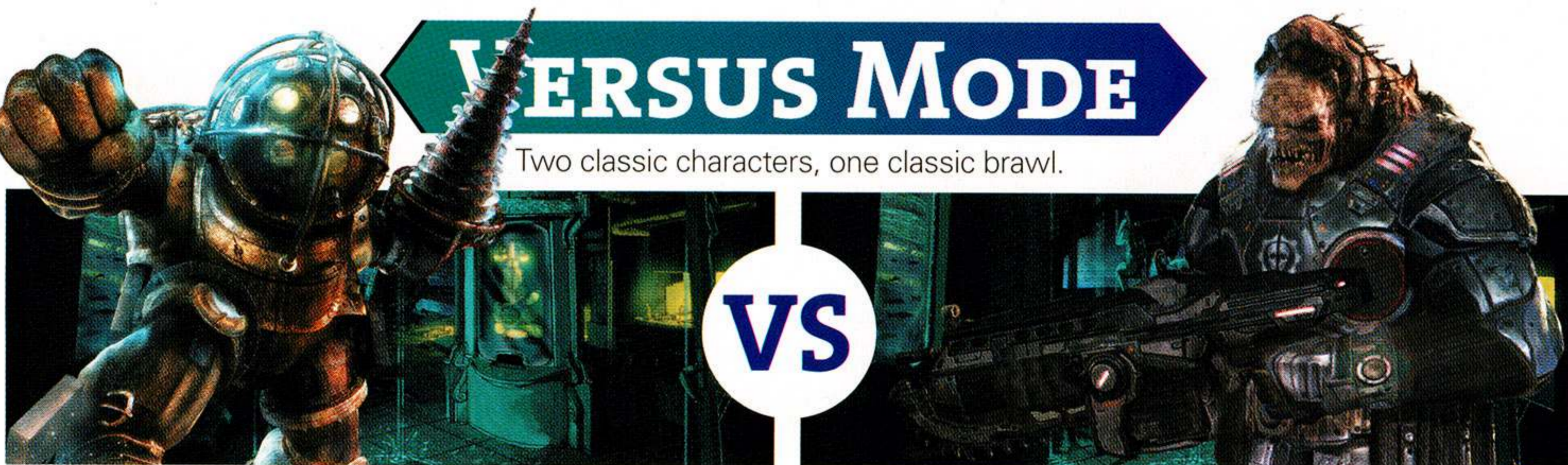
Lower the price to \$399. Gamers have to own the hardware first to play the games, and the PS3's price point still isn't at a digestible level for most consumers. Without widespread adoption, Sony will be unable to drive growth and negotiate key PS3 exclusive games.

Wow gamers with something new. Sony must show consumers that the Cell processor and Blu-ray technology matters to games. In its current state, the PS3 has trouble differentiating itself from the Xbox 360 and Wii outside of a handful of first-party prospects.

Revitalize the PlayStation brand. With its strong lineup of first-party games, Sony is in as good a position as any to return to prominence. What was once the master of third-party relationships will now have to stand on its own two feet to rebuild itself as a trusted and ubiquitous name in gaming.

VERSUS MODE

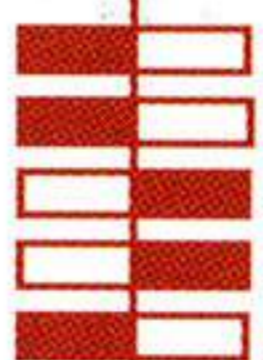
Two classic characters, one classic brawl.



VS

BIG DADDY (BIO SHOCK)

Strength: Heavily Armored
Weakness: Bound to the Gatherers it protects
Size: Short and squat
Speed: Slow as molasses...at first
Favored Weapon: Powerful industrial drill



BERSERKER (GEARS OF WAR)

Strength: Preternatural sense of smell
Weakness: Blind as a stinking alien bat
Size: Tall and muscular
Speed: Runaway train
Favored Weapon: Sheer force of momentum

OUTCOME:

Big Daddies seem like lumbering hulks at first, but when a lost Berserker turns a Little Sister into chunky soup, it finds out the armored sentry doesn't need a Hammer of Dawn to do serious damage in a hurry. Big Daddy's drill finds immediate and messy purchase in the Berserker's spinal column, and no amount of thrashing or stampeding will shake him

loose. After minutes of intense struggling, only the decisive crunch of bit on bone marks the final passing of the immense alien juggernaut.

DECISION: Big Daddy >>>





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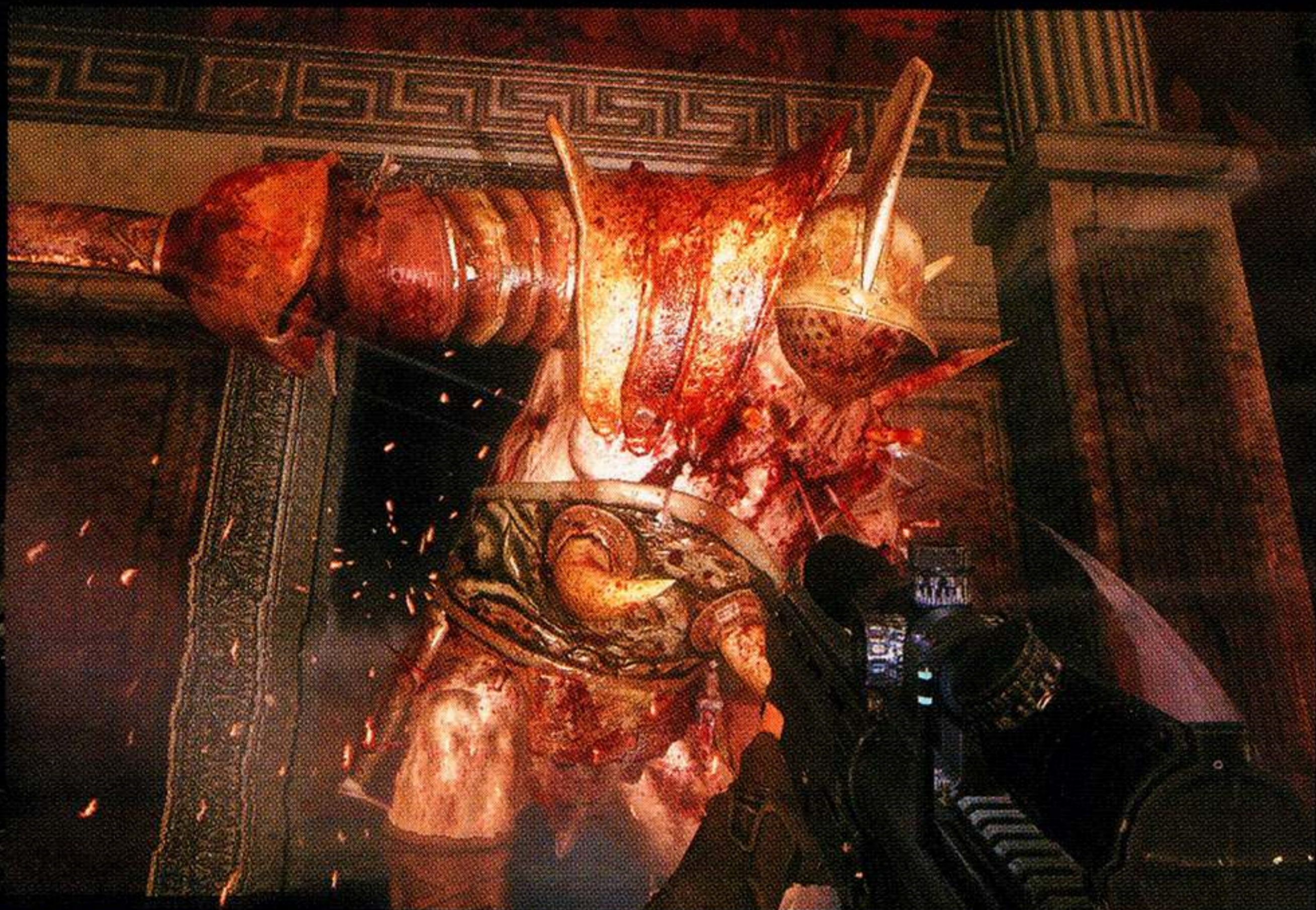
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HEADPLAY™

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CLIVE BARKER CREATES INTERACTIVE INSANITY

Jericho is primed to be the video game horrorfest of the year with grotesque monstrosities, supernatural powers, and horrendous evil.



GamePro: What's the basic premise of Jericho?

Clive Barker: Jericho is structured as a series of worlds within worlds, or rather I should say a series of battlefields within battlefields, and the Jericho squad is making their way through them toward the source of evil. All the soldiers and armies that surround that creature (and inhabit those battlefields) have given their lives to keep that central source of evil in its locked down position, because if it ever escaped into the world it would do untold damage.

GP: Where did the idea for Jericho come from?

CB: The whole notion came to me when I first started to see some of the war games that are coming out. I saw how incredibly accurate they were in the way the soldiers moved and performed their actions; it was all good solid realistic stuff. And I thought, man if we could marry that up with a really killer supernatural idea, we would have something that is the heart and soul of a fantastic piece of storytelling. But because it's rooted in people doing realistic things, soldiers who are acting as real soldiers, you believe the fantastical element because everything else is real.

GP: As a storyteller and writer, what drove you to make the transition to video games?

CB: I think it's a natural curiosity that any storyteller has. When a medium emerges and you ask yourself if there is anything you have to contribute, and is there something here that my kind of storytelling can explore in this medium and allow my imagination to spread its wing? Games, particularly because they are developing technologically, offer someone like me huge opportunities.

GP: Can you describe the crafting process for you in developing Jericho? Is it similar to crafting a piece of fiction writing or a movie?

CB: I begin my work as a writer crafting a story and that quickly develops into using my artistic skills to be able to give people a sense of what things look like, especially the beasts. People know what human beings look like—they're the easy part. It's what the bad [guys] look like that I really had to work to come up with something original. And where Jericho is concerned I don't mind tooting our horn. I think we have some pretty original beasts in there.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH



Ken Levine, lead designer of BioShock, in an interview with The Patriot Ledger newspaper.

"As a piece of art, we want to deal with challenging moral issues, and if you want to do that, you have to go to some dark places."



Factor 5 President Julian Eggebrecht speaking at this year's Games Convention Developers Conference.

"I would be happy if in games we could talk about homosexuality, but we're not even at the point where we can admit that humans have heterosexual relationships, and that is a real problem."



Game designer and author Bob Bates at this year's GDC.

"What passes for story in most games is just revealed backstory...fundamentally it's uninteresting."



David Reeves, president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, in an interview with GamesIndustry.biz.

"Honestly, probably we should have had more original PSP games."



Yann Le Tensorer, co-founder of Ubisoft's Tiwak studio, in an interview with GamesIndustry.biz.

"It's wrong to say it's harder to code on the PlayStation 3, it's just something that needs to be learned."

HUMAN HISTORY JUST GOT
A LITTLE LESS HUMAN.



THE BEST GAME YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF: PROTOTYPE

Pro-to-type: noun. An archetype; a primitive form.



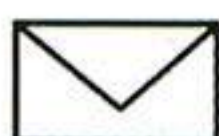
Alex Mercer is a prototype of unknown origins and capabilities. Unleashed upon the streets of New York City, Mercer finds himself with unparalleled powers and physical agility. Much like the T-1000 from *Terminator 2*, Mercer can morph his body into a weapon, such as massive claws or an armored exoskeleton. Instead of killing for pleasure, the prototype kills to evolve. Every life he takes, Mercer consumes their abilities, and even physical appearance, becoming more and more powerful with each intellectual being he devours. This constant evolution goes beyond the physical as the prototype grows smarter with each victim. The thoughts and memories of his prey may provide crucial intel to Mercer's past, or abilities such as flying helicopters. Prototype comes to the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and PC in Summer 2008.



e: London...Hellgate: London...Hellgate: London... • **You know what? Metal Gear Online is pretty freaking cool.** I recently had a chance to play it, and even with the Japanese text and weird control setup, I was able to score plenty of kills with minimal fuss. It plays more like a stealthier SOCOM than did MGS3's simpler online mode, but includes the trademark weirdness (cardboard box cover, porno mag mines) from past Metal Gear games. It's good fun, and I predict MGO will be a major draw for the PS3's online service... • **So the GamePro office suffered a mysterious bout of flu-like symptoms on September 25th, a.k.a. Halo 3's launch day.** I counted at least three missing staff members, myself included. But I really was sick! I swear!... • **On that note, my Limited Edition Halo 3 arrived with a scratched game DVD.** It seems that a faulty retention nub caused the disc to fall off and bounce wildly inside the case. The game plays fine, but it's still a bummer—destroying discs is MY department. Anyone else having this problem?... • **So I finally joined the HD era.** I bought a 46" Sharp LCD...and yes, it does 1080p. Of course, this will spoil me forever because now I'll expect every game to support 1080p... • **Anybody else totally sold on the new PSP-2000?** It's light, sleek, and I love the new video-out option. Now if we could just get some better games... • **My Xbox 360 has been playing with my emotions lately, flashing the dreaded Red Ring of Death before shutting down.** "Noooooo!" I cry, before realizing that it turns on again and plays as normal. Phew! But I'm worried my luck won't last... • **There's a certain, very promising game that needs to be delayed for further work but probably won't be.** It's a frustrating situation to watch, partly because I'm forbidden from telling anyone what the game is (that ship has sailed), and partly because the game has so much potential. When will publishers learn to put quality over making numbers?... • **My quickie Halo 3 review:** I love the multiplayer options (online co-op and the Forge being hugely groundbreaking), but the single-player campaign is, by and large, MOTS. Why am I still seeing so many drab interiors and repetitious hallways? The dialogue and voice acting are other key weak points. I love the gameplay to death, but it's time to enhance other aspects of the game as well... • **Speaking of which, where's that Halo movie?** Will it ever get made?... • **Biggest time-waster of the last few weeks: Rock Band.** It's gotten so out-of-hand that GamePro editors are sneaking in over the weekend for an hour or two of sweet, sweet playing time. If you get this game, and I think you should, definitely look into getting the drum set. It's almost impossibly fun... • **Saint's Row 2...Saint's Row 2...Saint's R...**



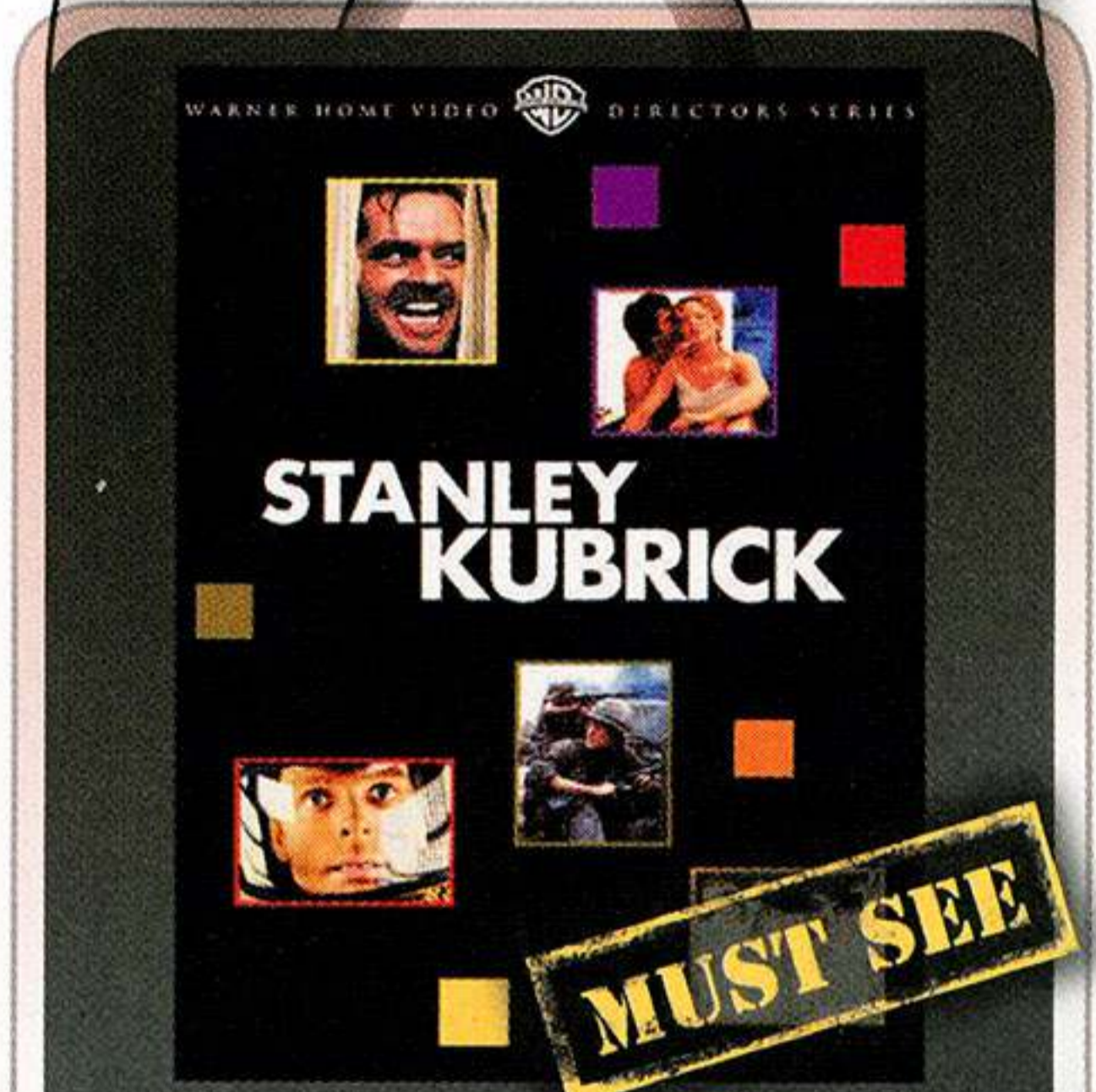
Pwned this month:
Sick days, Halo 3
Limited Edition, 720p



e-mail Sid:
s_shuman@gamepro.com

DVD PRO

Movies for gamers.



WARNER HOME VIDEO DIRECTOR'S SERIES: STANLEY KUBRICK

After botching aspect ratios and high-definition conversions for some of Kubrick's classics, Warner Home Video seems poised to finally get it right. The set includes: new transfers of *Full Metal Jacket*; *The Shining*; the international version of *Eyes Wide Shut*; fresh remasters of *A Clockwork Orange* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*; and a bunch of featurettes. Also on Blu-ray and HD DVD. kubrickfilms.warnerbros.com
\$79.92

SPIDER-MAN 3

Spider-Man faces off against a former friend, his uncle's real killer, and his own darkest impulses in this two-disc special edition of the record-breaking blockbuster. Also available on Blu-ray. spiderman3.sonypictures.com
\$28.97

GF MOST WANTED

1. Stranglehold (Midway) Xbox 360
2. Medal of Honor: Airborne (EA Games) Xbox 360
3. Halo 3 (Microsoft) Xbox 360
4. BioShock (2K Games) Xbox 360
5. Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (Activision) Xbox 360
6. Skate. (EA Games) Xbox 360
7. Heavenly Sword (Sony) PS3
8. Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Nintendo) Wii
9. Stuntman: Ignition (THQ) Xbox 360
10. Blue Dragon (Microsoft) Xbox 360

R F O M . C O M

RESISTANCE FALL OF MAN

Welcome to Earth, circa 1951. The Chimera, a horrific species of unknown origin, have overrun Russia and most of Europe. And now they're threatening the entire planet. Armed with an arsenal of unique and deadly weapons, you and your fellow soldiers represent humanity's last hope.

"...easily the PlayStation 3 (system)'s premiere, must-have title."

-Game Informer

"...a highly playable action game that will satisfy even the most demanding FPS junkies."

-GamePro

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Join an unparalleled online community—form clans, battle other clans in unrivaled matches featuring up to 40 players, and stay informed with comprehensive player rankings.



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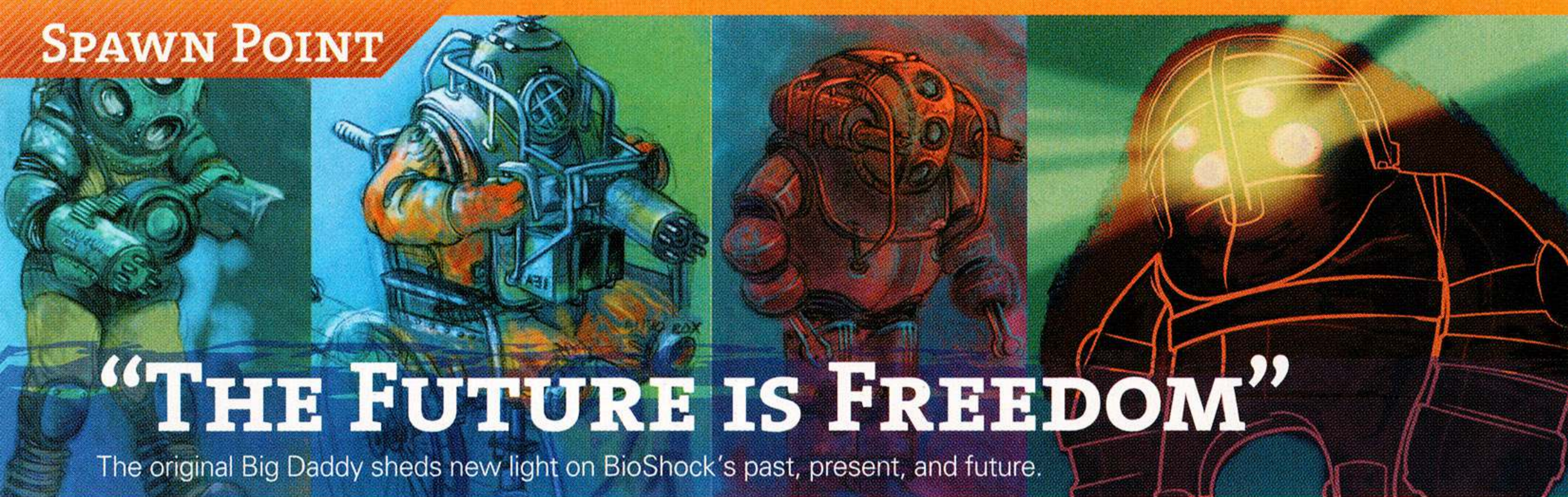


"5 out of 5"
-G4

"9.5 out of 10"
-Game Informer



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“THE FUTURE IS FREEDOM”

The original Big Daddy sheds new light on BioShock’s past, present, and future.



GamePro: You’ve spoken before about the early versions of BioShock: one featured Nazis, and the other psychological de-programming. So what’s the real story behind this?

Ken Levine: That’s all true. We went through a lot of different stages and I decided on the story fairly late, but I was waiting for the game to tell me what the story is. I don’t have a story axe to grind. The game design comes first for me. It wasn’t really until mid-2005 when the World of Rapture started to speak to me.

GP: Is horror something that continues to intrigue you? Or are you interested in doing something completely different?

KL: I like horror. Some emotions are very hard to elicit in games. Horror is one that is more direct and easier to get to in a game, maybe more so than any other medium...because in a movie, there are constraints. In a horror movie, you know things won’t come from behind you. You know how long movies typically are. I think horror works really well in games and I’ve been lucky to leverage it. I think I know how to scare people.

That said, I think you never know for sure whether horror is going to work. At the end of the day, who knows if something will be scary? Who knows if it will be fun? Even the best directors and writers screw the pooch. For instance, during BioShock, there was a fairly large movement within the company at one point to cut the Big Daddies.

GP: What was the concern about the Big Daddies? They’re so iconic.

KL: They didn’t work at first. We couldn’t get them to work properly. In another universe the Big Daddies may have been smart to cut, but I had an attachment to them...maybe even an irrational attachment! Fortunately, I’m in a place where I can say, “no, we are not cutting this!” I think the difference between a good game developer and a bad game developer is to know when to hold them and know when to fold them.

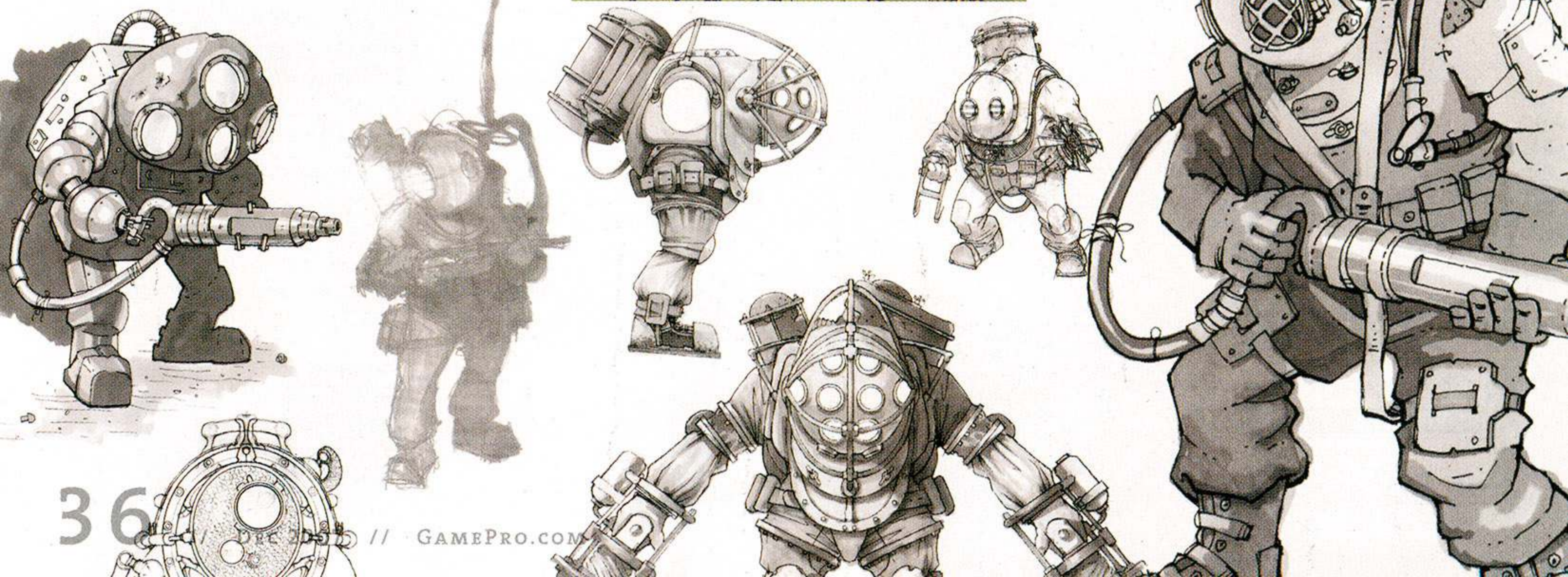
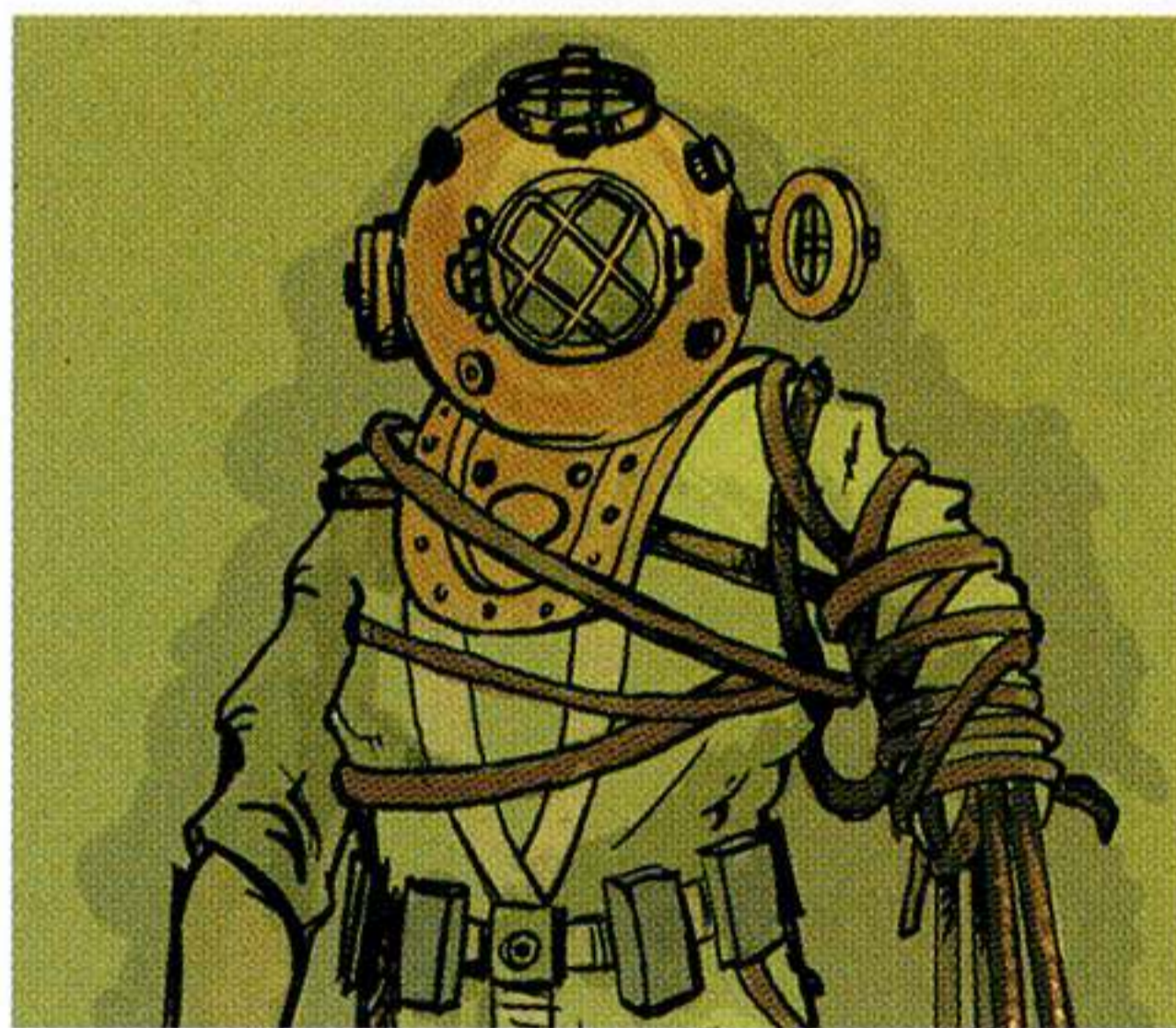
GP: Has this success given you guys a little more power and say when it comes to selecting future projects?

KL: I don’t know. I’ll find out, I guess. All we want to do at 2K Boston is make money for the company and create good games, and we’ve done that so far. I’m still driving my Honda Civic hybrid—I’m not looking to buy a Ferrari! I want to keep being trusted to make more games like BioShock. That is how I get paid. Sure, I do get a nice salary, I’m not going to kid you. But to me, power is not demanding double- or triple low-caf at 4:00 a.m. just because I make cool games.



GP: What do you think game designers are doing right, and what do you think they are doing wrong?

KL: More developers are giving gamers freedom, and are not spoon-feeding them their stories and their walk-throughs. They are opening things up for the gamer. The future of games is freedom. Overall, game designers are doing more right than they are wrong. But Eastern game developers, I think, have to start trusting their players more. They should let gamers skip cut-scenes if they want to, and allow their games to be a little more open-ended or story-driven, rather than designer-driven. The future is freedom.



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NOVEMBER . 2007

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PLAYSTATION 3



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UBISOFT

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Dude,
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PSP. The only
place to play.[™]
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Anywhere.

The Lines Are Drawn...

Three years ago, Queen Elincia of Crimea won the war against the Mad King Ashnard of Daein, but the Crimean knights, led by Geoffrey, must quell unrest within Crimea's own borders. Ike and the Greil Mercenaries, meanwhile, find themselves facing an old threat.



The laguz tribes unite to seek justice for a crime long unpunished. They are led by Skrimir, an untested general and heir to the throne of Gallia. Can he tame his thirst for battle long enough to see his troops to victory and peace, or will his rage lead all nations to the brink of ruin?



Tibarn and Naesala put aside their differences to lead their clans to war. The raven king, however, carries a secret burden that may cause their alliance to crumble—and seal the fate of their cause.

Dheginsea, king of Goldoa, warns that the chaos of war may threaten the land's covenant with an ancient god. He struggles to hold his nation to its pledge of neutrality even as the events surrounding him lead the world to the brink of ruin.



Fantasy Violence
Mild Language

Wii

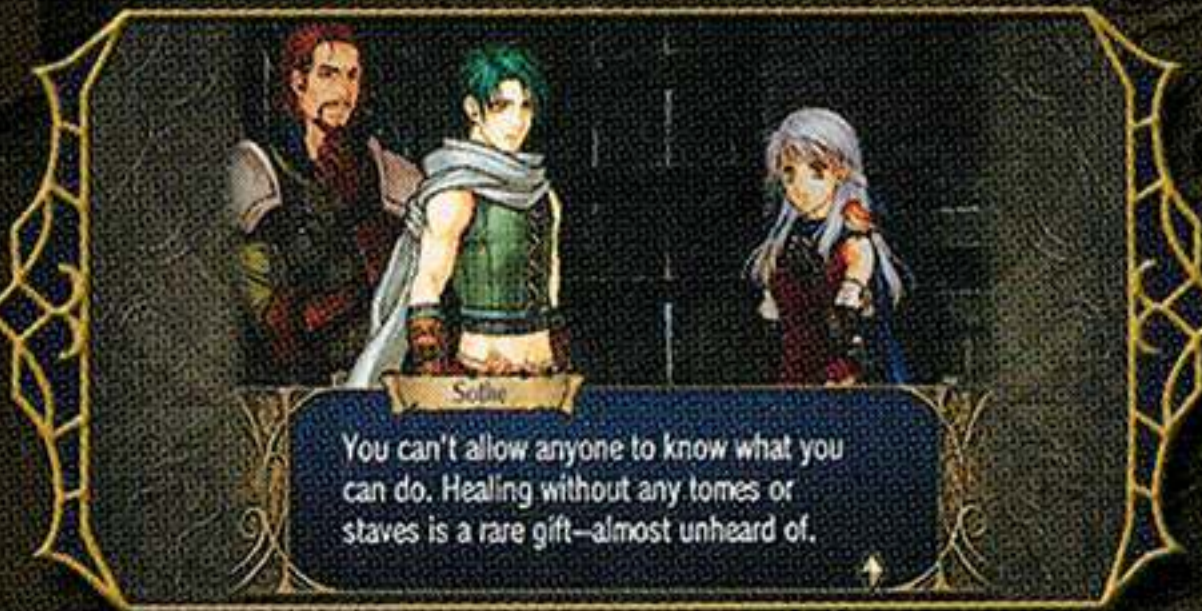
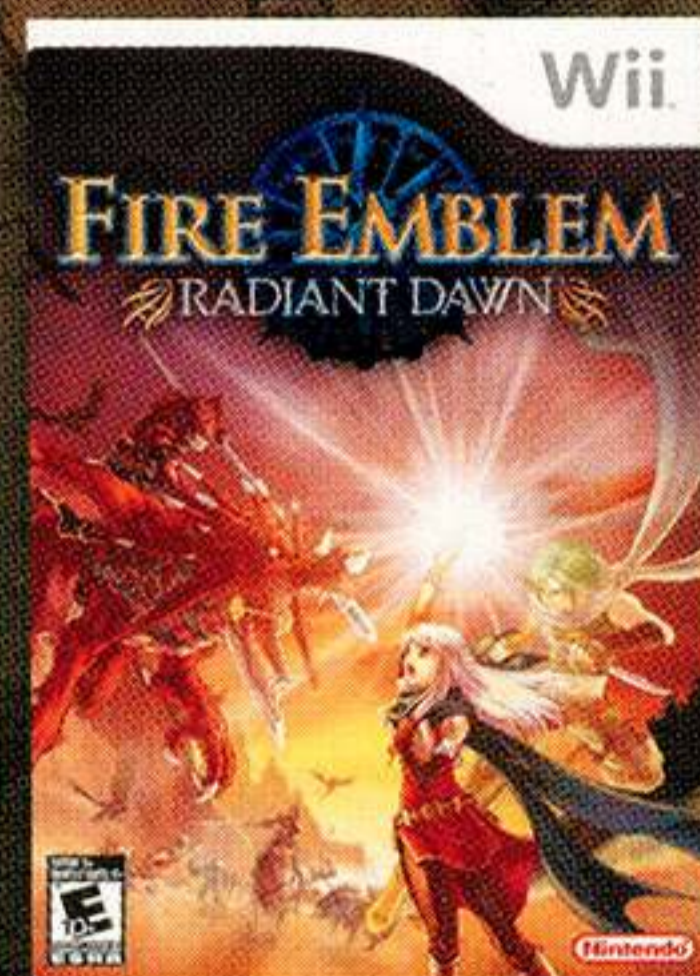
...But Every Story Has Two Sides.

With King Ashnard's death, Daein fell under the harsh rule of the Begnion Empire. Years later, Micraiah, Sothe, and the Dawn Brigade have taken up the struggle to liberate Daein. They pin their hopes on newfound Prince Pelleas, but can this mysterious youth rally Daein to rise up against her tyrants?

Begnion's senators now rule Daein. They have given their military commanders free rein, all the while hiding their actions from the Apostle Sanaki. Beset by turmoil at home and abroad, Sanaki seems fated to be her nation's last apostle. Is Zelgius's sword enough to help her save all she holds dear?

Two Sides to Every War.

In a war fueled by chaos, who can say what is right and wrong? In a Fire Emblem first, you will play both sides of the war and judge for yourself. Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn introduces a host of new features that make it a snap to pick up and a challenge to beat.



GUITAR LEGENDS: GET ON STAGE!

Mobile

■ Publisher: Gameloft ■ Release Date: Now

With the sudden flood of instrumental games, it's no surprise that we'd eventually see one in mobile form. If you've played Guitar Hero, you'll be familiar with Guitar Legend, due to its noticeably similar style. The game is to feature a career mode, dozens challenges, and some rockin' unlockables. Most noticeably are the game's eight licensed songs, such as "Smoke on the Water," "Heart-Shaped Box," and "Message in a Bottle."



S.T.A.L.K.E.R. MOBILE

Mobile

■ Publisher: Nomoc ■ Release Date: 2007

The nuclear-disaster-based shooter for the PC is making its way into your pocket. As you progress through the game, you'll encounter many baddies of a most mutated nature. You'll also gain experience which can be used towards your different skills and move sets. Based around the same setting at the PC title, you're ultimate goal is to uncover the secret behind the controversial and Umbratic Zone incident.



PREY MOBILE

Mobile

■ Publisher: Skyzone ■ Release Date: 2007

Apparently Tommy wasn't the only one who caused "The Mother" a bit of trouble. In the mobile version, you play as yet another escaped human aboard the mysterious alien ship, the Sphere. The game features a lot of what made the console game so recognizable, including the wonderful weapon design, eerie alien foes, and even the stomach-turning wall walking. Now you have motion sickness on the go!

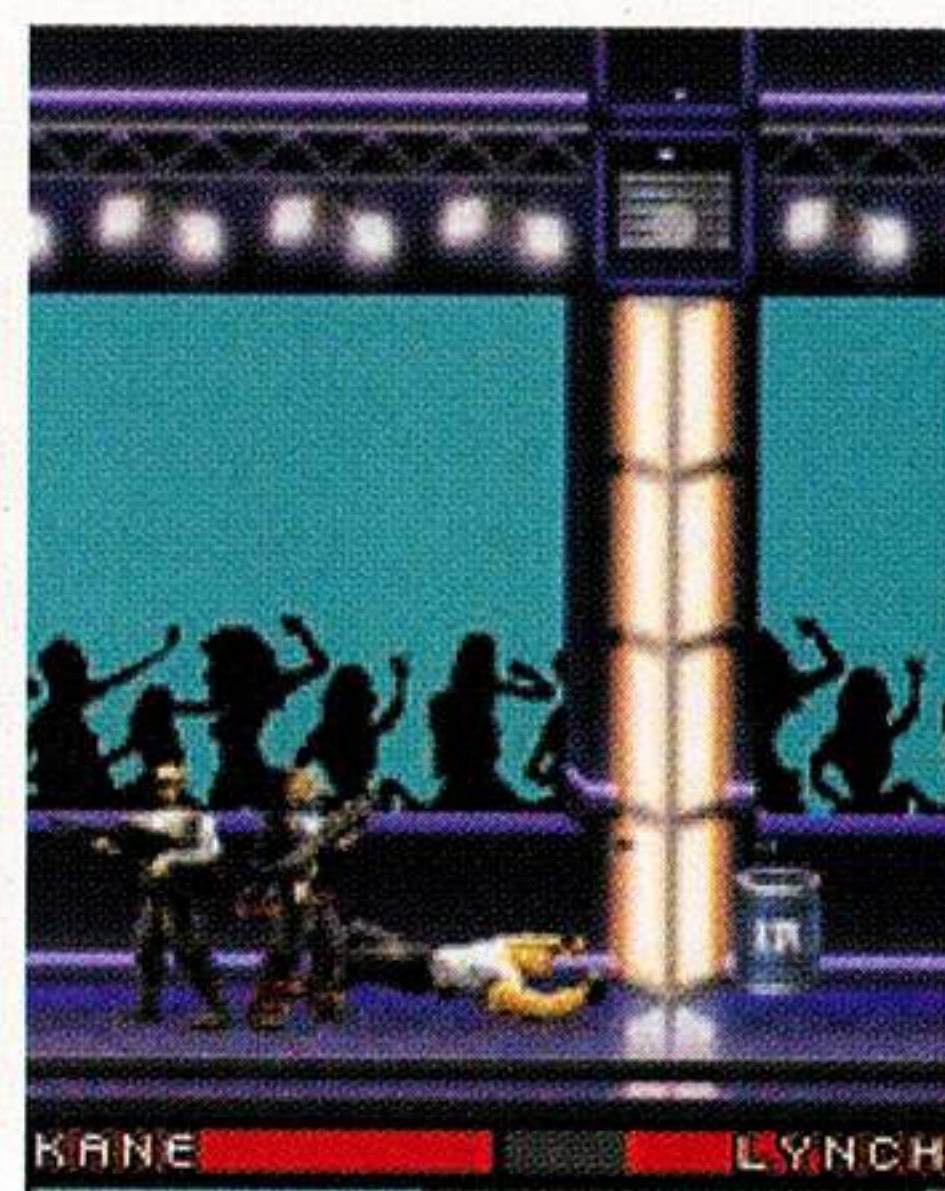


KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

Mobile

■ Publisher: Eidos Mobile ■ Release Date: Now

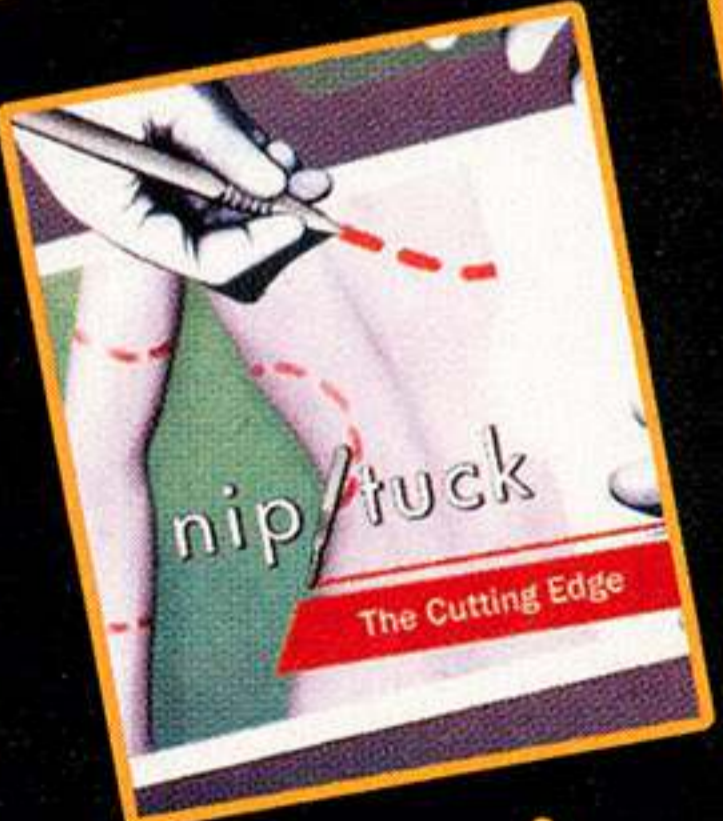
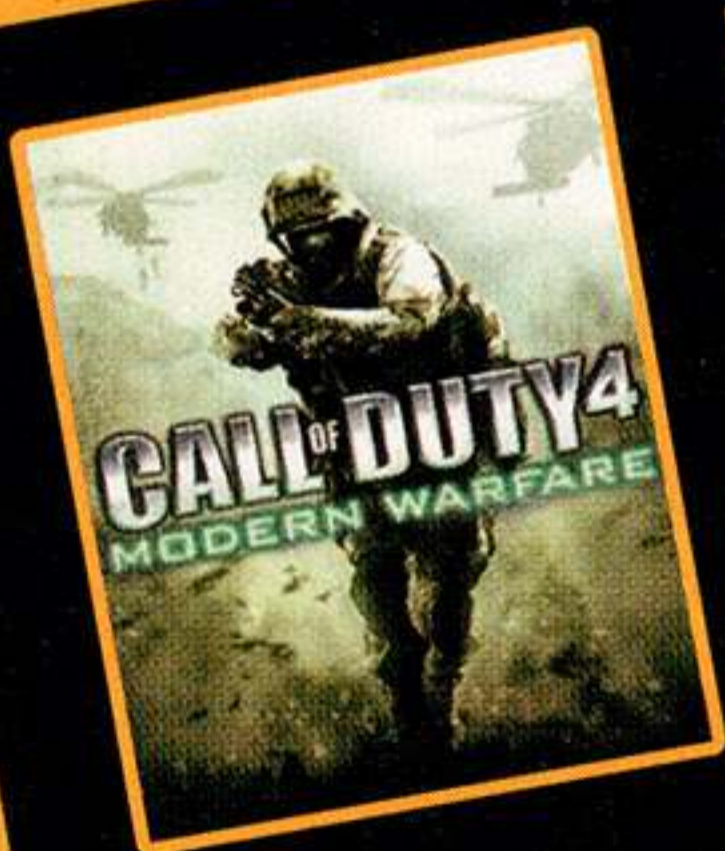
Kane (the mercenary) and Lynch (the psychopath) are two convicts, sentenced to death row, who form a partnership due to unfortunate circumstances. Based on the soon-to-be-released console title, the game spans 38 levels of several different locals, including a nightclub and a bank. You take control of Kane, are followed and accompanied by Lynch, and must utilize both characters' skills in order to save Kane's family from impending doom.





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EndWar allows you to give orders to your armies using only your voice.

TOM CLANCY'S ENDWAR

Finally—strategy at the speed of thought!

PS3 Xbox 360

Developer: Ubisoft Shanghai Publisher: Ubisoft Release Date: March 2008

One of the coolest aspects of being a *GamePro* editor is that, on a moment's notice, we get the chance to travel all over the globe in search of the world's coolest games. That's how I found myself in Shanghai a few months ago, jet-lagged and bleary-eyed after a 13-hour flight from San Francisco, with

a seven-hour Puzzle Quest binge still coursing through my veins, watching one of the most interesting, most futuristic game demonstrations of my career.

Sitting in an office-building high above the ground, I witnessed the future of gaming. As I sat in slack-jawed awe, I watched lead designer Michael

de Plater control an entire virtual army on a battlefield in La Mancha, Spain with little more than his voice. I watched him issue voice commands to tanks, soldiers, and air units to form attack groups, reinforce units, attack, defend, and retreat. And the units listened, responding to and executing the orders with an eerie emotional resonance.

"Green team, camera."

"Green team, retreat."

"Artillery, attack Hostile Two."

THE FUTURE OF GAMING?

In all regards—story, controls, multiplayer, even the very nature of its design—Tom Clancy's *EndWar* is a game of the future. A harbinger of games and global events to come.

Voice controls. Streamlined strategic gameplay that feels like a real battle. Crazy persistent-state multiplayer dynamics. Previously, Ubisoft has only hinted at the details underlying these interesting-sounding features in the company's press releases and communications regarding *EndWar*.

Recently, however, Ubisoft invited *GamePro* out to its studio in Shanghai, China for an exclusive firsthand look at all of the above and then some. We arrived in Shanghai skeptical that any one game could on its own usher in a new age or style of gaming. When we left, we found our minds boggling at the possibilities.

CONTINUED ►





EndWar's camera angle is fairly low to the ground. This creates more intense and realistic battles.



ONLY IN SHANGHAI

One of the eastern-most cities in Asia, Shanghai is an intriguing intersection of east and west, wealth and poverty, capitalism and communism, material desire and the absence thereof.

This intersection of culture and commerce at least partially explains the game's near-future story, which posits a dramatic shift in global politics resulting in an explosive sequence of events that trigger a large-scale ground war between Russia, the United States, and Europe.

Here's how it goes down. In 2020, the United States and the European Union announce the development of a new missile defense system. Left out in the cold by these non-communist nations, Russia develops its own missile defense system. The elimination of nuclear proliferation is supposed to usher in a new era of peace. But it doesn't.

Shortly after the launch of the missile defense system, the world discovers that many nations have overstated their oil supplies. This tilts one of the key balances of power—capacity for oil production—into the favor of the former Soviet Union. Mother Russia immediately begins using its petro dollars to aggressively build up its ground-based military might.

Almost simultaneously, the United States announces the pending launch of the brand new Space Station Freedom. This new satellite boasts a host of ground-breaking features that will help the world, and one particular innovation that pisses off American allies and enemies everywhere. Space Station Freedom, it turns out, also doubles as a space-borne barracks capable of hosting three complete battalions of soldiers. These forces have rapid deployment capabilities

that allow them to attack anywhere in the world within 90 minutes. A terrorist attack that critically disrupts the launch of one of the final components of this station sets off a series of global incidents that triggers World War III.

In 2004, when Ubisoft's development team originally began discussing the game's premise, "there were elements we put in that felt fantastical...we felt that there was no chance this could happen," says de Plater.

Fast forward three years to 2007. U.S. President George W. Bush squares off with Russian President Vladimir Putin over a missile defense shield. Russia makes a brazen land grab at the fossil-rich Arctic Circle. China blows up an orbiting satellite. "Now the whole thing seems not only possible, but also probable." An eerie silence falls over the room as everyone considers the ramifications of a real-life World War III.

Julian Gerighty, another EndWar team member, breaks the silence. "That's funny...I always saw the story as an excuse to have massive land battles." Everyone laughs. "That is true," says de Plater. And with that, he pulls his Xbox 360 headset on and begins ordering his units around in the most convenient manner possible.

"Black team, camera"

"Red Team, abort."

"Calling all transports. Create group."

SCRAMBLE FOR POSITION...AND POWER

EndWar begins with a bang—literally. The game starts with a series of single-player missions that set-up the over-arching story and resulting world war while simultaneously indoctrinating players into the controls and gameplay. In the first mission of the game, you play as the United States and attempt to ward off the terrorist attack on Kennedy Space Center that triggers World War III. After the mission, you choose a side and enter the war itself.

CONTINUED ►

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Like any ground war, the goal of *EndWar* is to defeat your opponents by capturing a series of tactical objectives, thereby driving your opponents from the battlefield. Like any strategy-based video game, in *EndWar* you fight in a series of battles that escalate in difficulty and complexity. Depending on who you choose to play as, your foes will be the Russian Spetsnaz Space Guard Brigade, the European Enforcers Corps, or the United States Joint Strike Force. Each force has a style and propensity for certain types of weapons and tactics. The Russians are masters of brute force. The Europeans have harnessed directed energy-based weapons. And the Americans have mastered precision attacks.

Each battle contains a number of objectives that exist on a tactical map. Similar to PC-based strategy games like *Company of Heroes*, in order to capture one of these points, you simply attack

the flag in the center of the objective. After capturing a point (named "alpha," "delta," etc.), you can reinforce the point with defense towers that will aid you in protecting it.

Capturing and holding these objectives generates points that can be used to upgrade your units during battle. As an example, you can upgrade your rifleman units' weapons from guns to rockets to rail guns, and you can strengthen their protection by upgrading their armor to exoskeletons.

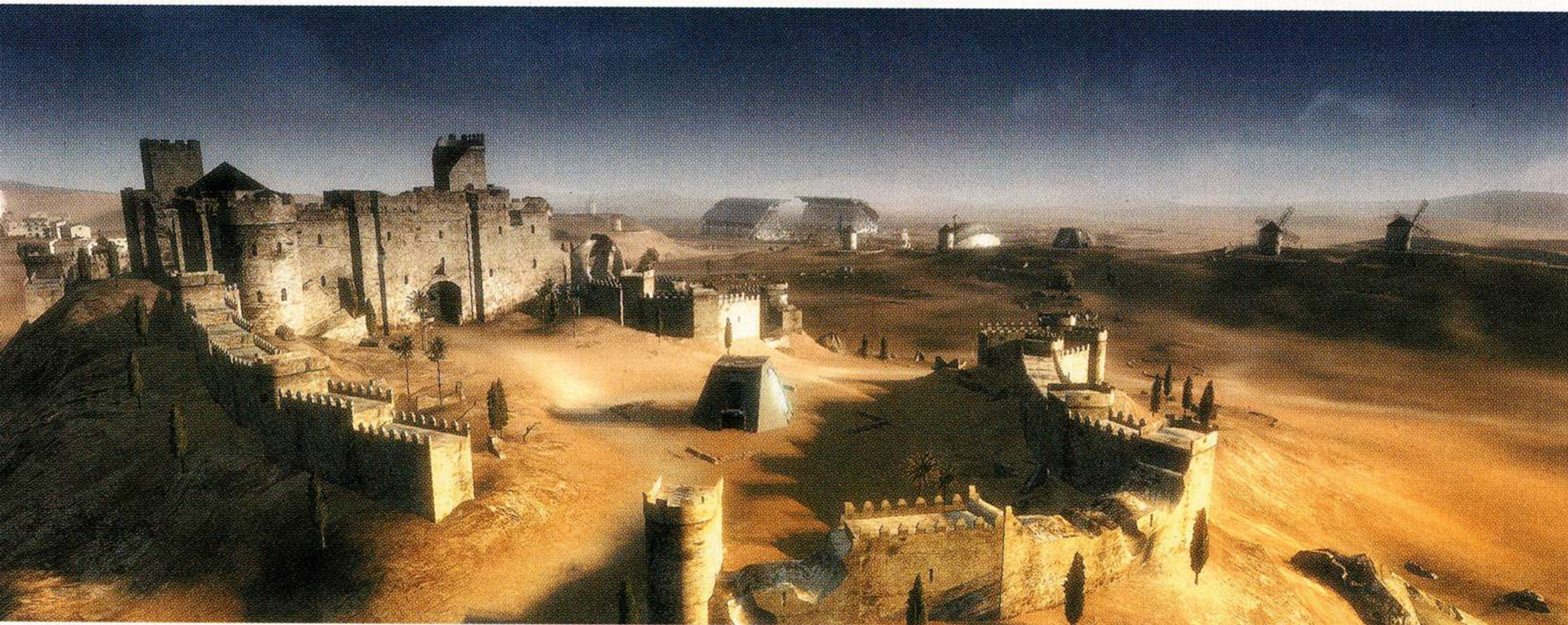
Generate enough points and you can call down special attacks specific to each side in the battle. The United States can call down the Rods of God, a controversial weapon that received considerable press 18 months ago because it uses a satellite to release a massive number of heat-resistant metal alloy rods that can be targeted anywhere on the planet. To balance the game, these weapons are not made available until one

side has gathered at least half of the available objective points on the map.

While many levels emphasize objective-based missions, others emphasize special objectives such as the annihilation of the enemy, besieging a city, or using special forces to sabotage an objective. All of these mission types are available in both single- and multiplayer matches.

While *EndWar* only utilizes seven basic unit types—Rifleman, Engineers, Tanks, Artillery, Transports, Helicopters, and the Command Vehicle—the game offers such a wide array of side-specific upgrades and experience levels that a wide array of functions and capabilities exist.

Unlike most strategy games, the battalions you create and upgrade are persistent, meaning that as long as they don't get destroyed, you can continue to use and improve them over the course of your campaign—in both single- and multiplayer games.



CONTINUED ►

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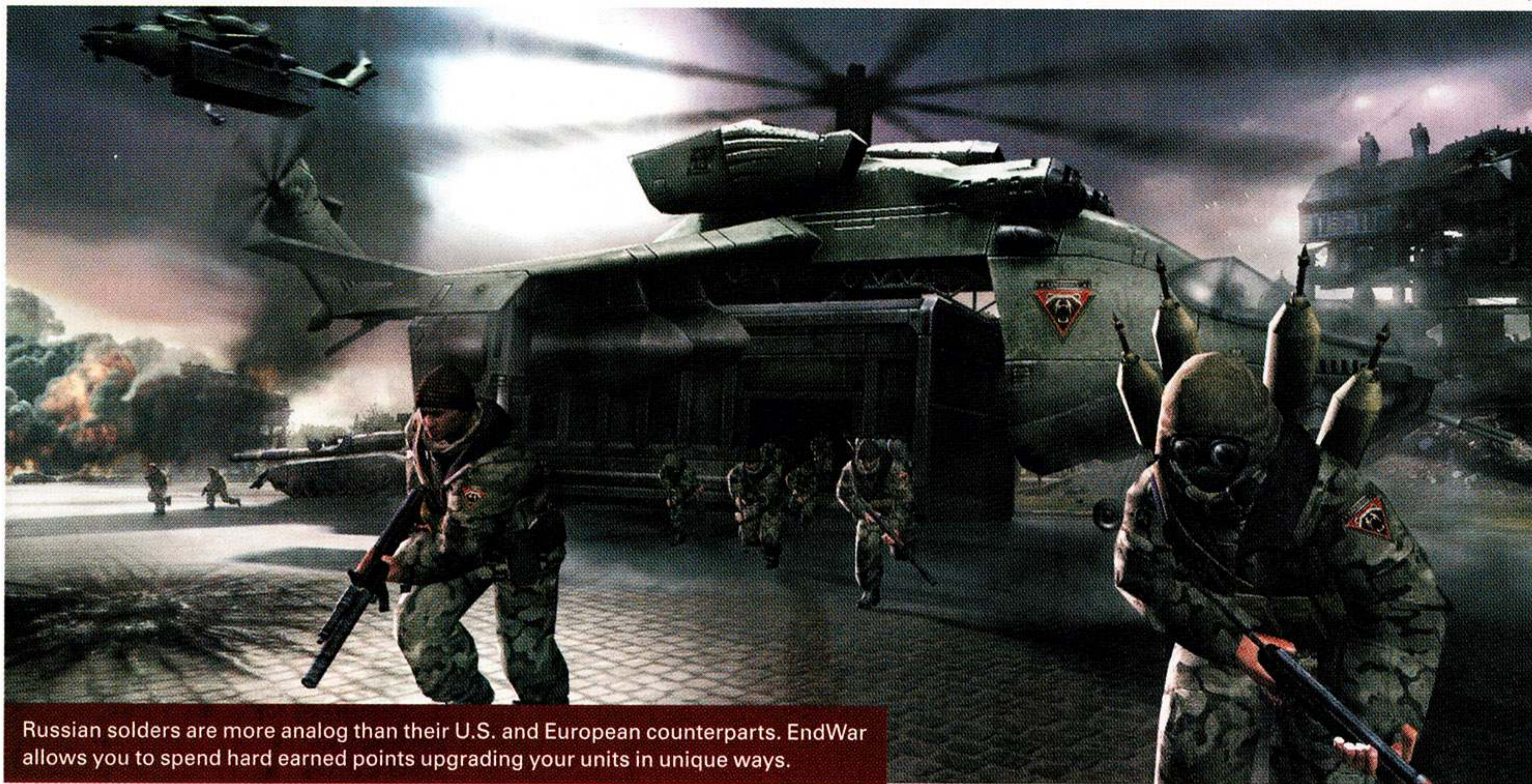


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Russian soldiers are more analog than their U.S. and European counterparts. EndWar allows you to spend hard earned points upgrading your units in unique ways.

THE SPEED OF THOUGHT

Without a doubt, the biggest revelation in EndWar is the control scheme. Previously, real-time strategy games have forced players to click, scroll, and drag their way through battles. The frustrating end result was that far too frequently, the interface presented a very real gameplay barrier, preventing players from accomplishing their goals as quickly as they wished. In multiplayer matches, strategy often mattered less than who could best manage the interface.

Enter voice controls. Now any player can quickly order strategic commands to all their units by simply stating the command in simple English using an Xbox 360 headset. Watching the voice controls in action is nothing short of a revelation. Even in the game's early state of development, the game quickly recognizes voice commands. A simple tree of commands allows

you to call on a unit or battle group and then issue a specific order and objective. If you'd like to see the results of your orders or of any battle, you can simply issue the voice command, "Camera."

During play, you can still use the Xbox 360 controller to scroll around the map. Rather than use a traditional real-time strategy control scheme, Ubisoft's Shanghai office decided to mimic the controls of the Ghost Recon series. One added bonus is that at any point, you can take specific control of any unit and maneuver them as you please.

In keeping with the Ghost Recon controls, the game's perspective is more like Ghost Recon than a traditional strategy game. The end result is a more pronounced and realistic fog of war that creates greater strategic tension. During battles, battle chatter will convey the emotional state and results of your units' engagements.

REAL-LIFE WORLD WAR III, IV, V, VI...

Over the course of the game's 30-plus missions, you fight all over the North Atlantic theater, including Finland, Spain, Three Mile Island, and Washington D.C. The game's mission structure unfolds as a series of battles that take place all over Europe, the Soviet Union and North America. Like most strategy games, these battles escalate increasingly in difficulty.

Here's where EndWar departs from the realm of most other strategy games and becomes really interesting. The moment you finish the single-player missions that open the game and you choose a side of the battle, you are cast into what is essentially a persistent-state massively multiplayer battle where each multiplayer match impacts the progression of EndWar's story.

Unless you specifically choose otherwise—the game will allow the fearful or non-connected



CONTINUED ►

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Strategic commanders fight all over the globe in EndWar, including Paris, Washington D.C., and Moscow.

to play against the A.I.—every battle you play is a multiplayer fight. What's more, each of these battles has a very real effect upon the overall war between the United States, European, and Russian forces. EndWar's dynamic battlegrounds allows you and I to determine the end of the game's over-arching story as well as the victor of the war. Here's how it works: At the end of each 24-hour period, Ubisoft's servers will tally the results of all the multiplayer battles on its system. The final results determine everyone's impact on the main story progression. So, for example, if all the players playing as the Russians have a great day of battle, the borders of the world map will be redrawn to reflect this Russian dominance.



In an effort to reinforce the overall progression of the battle, the impact of your actions on the world map are immediately visible every time you play. The moment EndWar loads, the global map that is displayed on the game's main screen reflects the state of the world as impacted by everyone's combat the previous day. Talk about a real-life World War.—**George Jones**



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If you sneak up behind a soldier without being detected, you can assassinate him in one swift stroke, but don't expect his buddies to be too happy about it.

ASSASSIN'S CREED

The science fiction flourishes remain a tantalizing mystery, but Altair's got more than a razor-sharp dagger up his sleeve.

PS3 Xbox 360 PC

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft Release Date: November

Altair's only a few feet from the ground, but every moment he lingers is borrowed time, and his quarry's unprotected back is within reach. He leaps from the wall, and a retractable blade locks into place just before sinking into the target's neck. Unfortunately, the noise of this execution has attracted an audience, and they're not the least bit shy.

THE PROMISED LAND

Dropping into the Middle East in 1191 A.D. might seem overwhelming, but our master assassin is recently disgraced, a contrivance that allows game complexity to grow gradually as the protagonist earns back weapons and abilities. Altair's secretive Hashshashin sect enjoys a safe haven in Masyaf, and it is there that the story begins in earnest.

Outside this stronghold are three sprawling cities—Jerusalem, Damascus, and Acre—linked together by a central hub, which serves as a sort of level selection area. Of course, you can't just pick up a map at a gas station; to get the lay of the land, you must find high ground. Climb a "view point," indicated with an eagle circling a perilously high structure, and you'll replace empty map space with valuable intelligence: red circles indicate guards, and blue ones mark potential hiding spots.

SECRET SOCIETY

Studying the environment is always the first step to success. Though you're free to roam and stumble across objectives, a smart assassin knows the value of information. The Hashshashin don't

simply pick names out of a hat, either: they need you to eavesdrop on conversations, steal important objects from paranoid conspirators, and even extract information from reluctant informants with your fists.

These preparatory investigations aren't just diversions on your way to a spectacular murder. Sure, they unveil valuable narrative information, but each also parcels out hints on how you might most effectively carry out your dirtiest business. How much snooping you do beyond the bureau leader's minimum requirements is up to you, just as the order in which you tackle your objectives is left for you to decide.

MEAN STREETS

That's all much easier said than done. Ordinary citizens might not know you, and many soldiers might mess with you only if you're causing trouble—slicing open innocent pedestrians is a no-no—but others will recognize you on sight, and they tend to be pretty vocal about it. Altair can climb almost anything, but rooftop archers stand watch, and you don't have a bottomless supply of throwing daggers. Even civilians can cause no end of grief: nudge the wrong peasant and he might drop a package and cause a scene; deal too savagely with an irritating beggar and someone with a sword might rush to investigate.

Altair's not made of tissue paper—he's a skilled swordsman, and blessed with an effective countering system—but taking on an army of armored goons with adaptive A.I. isn't practical, and

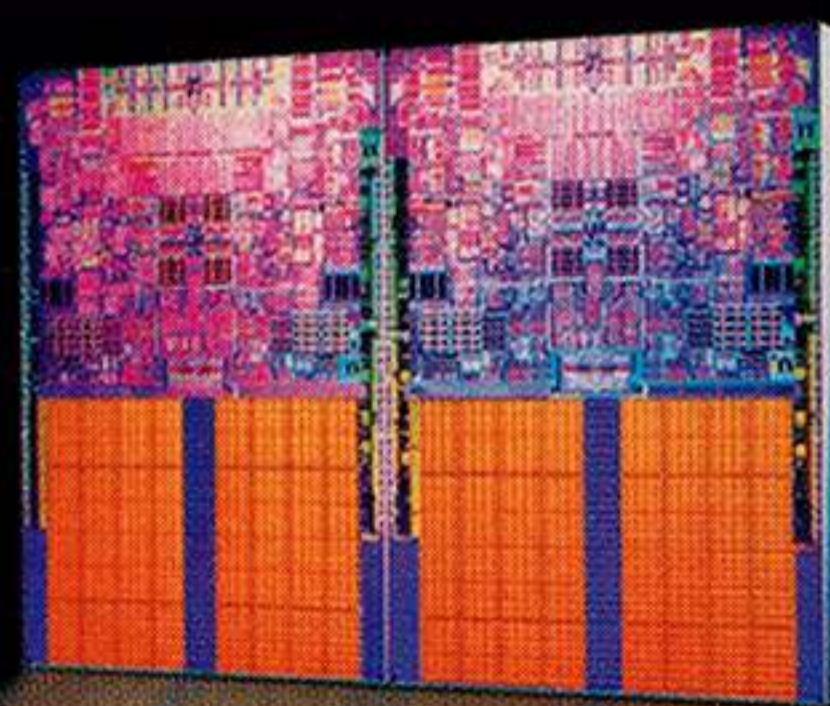
escaping is no mean feat, even with hay piles and rooftop hideaways. Luckily, human obstacles can be turned to your advantage. Save a beleaguered monk, and his buddies will let you blend with them and ride the "Monk Express" past guards. Slice through the jerks harassing a peasant woman, and her grateful husband might gather a group of vigilantes.

A MAN IN FULL

What's most alluring about Assassin's Creed is the seamless way these disparate elements gel together. You'll pick pockets, leap between rooftops, and fight or outrun guards, without any jarring break between. Similarly, Altair feels fully developed precisely because his range extends from the subtlety of pushing a bystander aside to the uncorked violence of dispatching a corrupt official. The often sudden juxtaposition of quiet blending and high-profile bloodshed is remarkably effective.

Assassin's Creed bears all the hallmarks of a top tier next-generation experience, from high dynamic range lighting and detailed textures to a view distance you're unlikely to enjoy in any modern city. The shrewdly constructed narrative maintains a sense of purpose, but it'll likely be the deep interactivity of the world itself—and the remarkable range of encounters it enables—that drives gamers to it in droves. Even if Assassin's Creed does somehow stumble as it approaches the release date finish line, it certainly won't be for lack of thoughtful design and inspired ambition.

—Cameron Lewis



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Ninja Gaiden II brings an entirely new breed of versatile combat to a beautifully violent world.

NINJA GAIDEN II

Ryu slices and dices in Team Ninja's latest

Xbox 360

Developer: Team Ninja Publisher: Tecmo Release Date: 2008

Tecmo is carefully guarding the long-anticipated sequel to Ninja Gaiden and has only released a brief teaser video, keeping the hands of eager fans away from the controls. However, those who were willing to wait in line at the Tokyo Game Show were rewarded with a glimpse of the game through a staff demonstration of the Aqua City level.

BLOOD AND BEAUTY

The demo showed off the various weapons and skills game hero Ryu Hayabusa has at his disposal, including a scythe or dual katanas depending on which fighting style he's equipped with.

Perhaps the most impressive part, aside from the gorgeously crisp visuals, was the level of violence. It wasn't just over-the-top showers of blood but the detail and variety in the way one could choose to maim opponents. There was plenty of decapitation and quartering as Ryu tore through the limbs of ninjas and demons alike. There was even a point at which an enemy, with one leg cut off, crawled its way over to Ryu and grabbed him before bursting into an explosion of blood and body parts.

Though the graphic detail in which the violence is depicted is likely to stir and excite fans of the series, the general public could receive it dif-



ferently. The game's rating has not been decided, but Tecmo was checking the IDs of fans queuing to see the demo.

A TECHNICAL FEAT

But its violence isn't the only aspect of the game that boasts impressive detail. Aqua City, the level in which the demo took place, showed the Xbox 360's tech at its best in a detailed Venetian-style city setting. The enemies as well, if one can find the time to take a closer look in between the blood splashes, are just as cleanly rendered as the stunning new environments they inhabit. —Gina Maria Reams



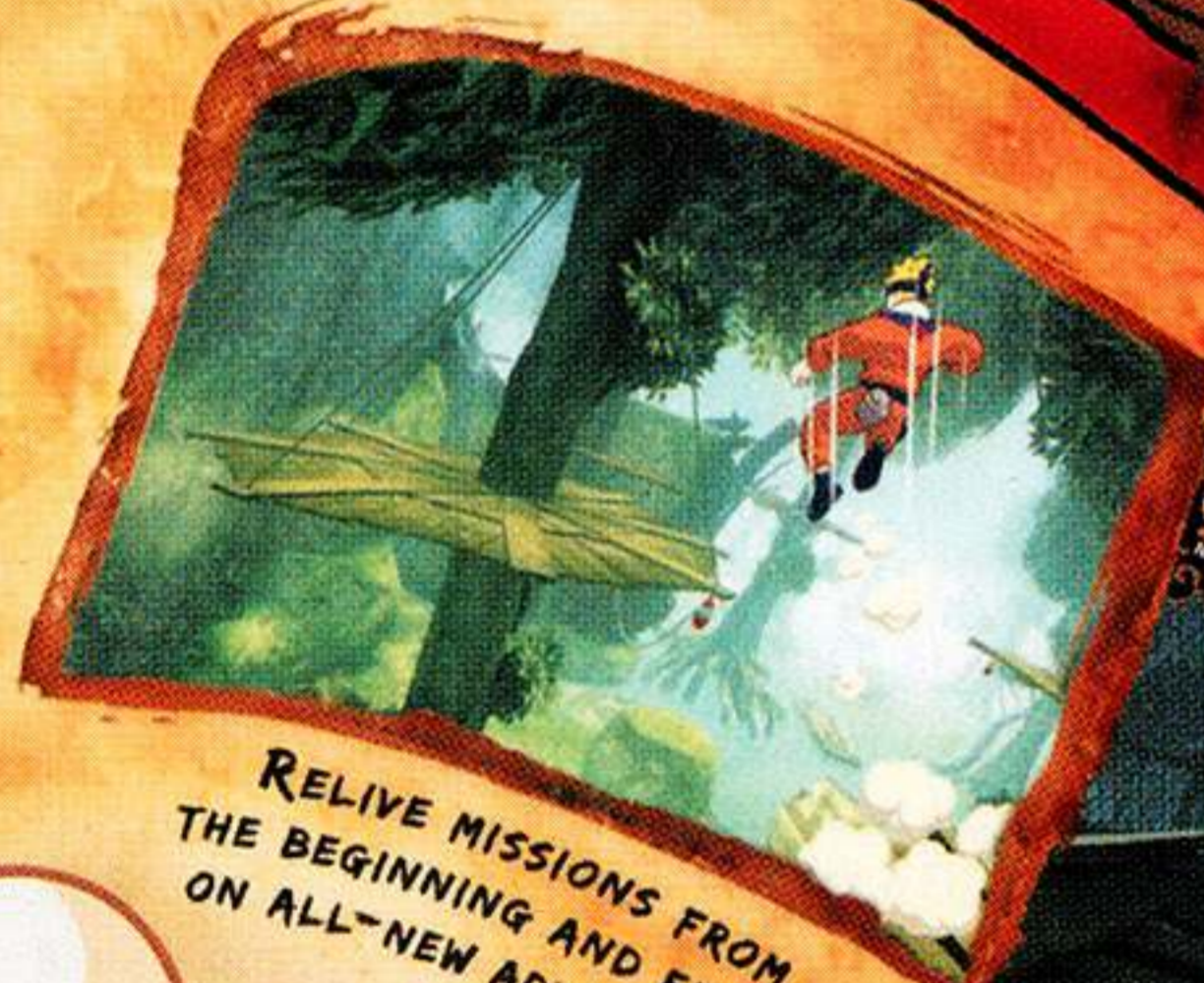
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Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE



If you liked *Knights of the Old Republic*, you're going to love *Mass Effect*, which is heavier on action.

MASS EFFECT

Massive effectiveness

Xbox 360

■ Developer: BioWare ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Release Date: November

Mass Effect is shaping up to blow away *Knights of the Old Republic* in terms of both story and real-time action. BioWare's Casey Hudson, the project director on *Mass Effect*, sat down with *GamePro* to explain exactly why that is. —Chris Morell

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC INFLUENCING MASS EFFECT

Each game that we've developed at BioWare has helped lay the groundwork for what we're working on today. It would be nearly impossible for a studio to build something like *Mass Effect* as their first title, so the work we're doing now really stands on the shoulders of the giant projects we've developed in the past. Every game we've developed to this point added critical knowledge that we've been able to apply to making *Mass Effect* bigger and better.



PLANNING A TRILOGY

We intend to allow players to continue straight into the next game using their character from the first. And the key decisions you made in *Mass Effect* will also be reflected in aspects of the ongoing story.

CHOOSING YOUR BATTLES

The combat system has the intuitive controls of a third-person shooter, but also allows you to easily coordinate the huge amount of tactical options available to your team. The central innovation is what we call the "Power Wheel." You hold the right shoulder button and the action pauses, showing you all the combat abilities of the characters in your squad. From there you can target various enemies and command your squad mates to use specific attacks on them, then you release the button and your colleagues fire as you return to real-time combat.

REALIZING REAL-TIME COMBAT

One really nice thing about the combat system is that players can easily adapt it to their own comfort level in terms of twitch skill. There are a number of ways in which this happens, but the big one is the Power Wheel itself, which players can use as much or as little as they want. Players who don't like having to use real-time twitch skills can literally hit the Power Wheel every few seconds, commanding their squad to fire a salvo of attacks, letting them play out, then hitting the

Power Wheel again to line up a new combo. This will inch them forward through the battle in an extremely tactical way that doesn't require fast twitch skill. On the other hand, you can be Soldier class and generally play the game like a pure shooter.

MORAL DECISION-MAKING AND OPEN-ENDED PLAY

What sets the medium of video games apart from all other media is that it's interactive. So everything in a game experience really needs to be interactive, including the story itself. In a movie the story is predetermined, but the great opportunity that a game should offer is the ability to explore the story and change its outcomes. After all, you're the main character! And the ability to change a story means giving players choices. The more choices you have as a player, the more it becomes your own personal experience in the game world, and we believe that makes the experience much more powerful.

THE LOWDOWN

- Already planned as a trilogy; Players can use their same character in future *Mass Effect* game.
- Opened-ended gameplay meets all-new real-time combat



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are you ready to dive the world?

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Even if you're a guitar hero, you'll be surprised at how much fun it is to sing in Rock Band.

ROCK BAND

Rock Band will be your new addiction. The *GamePros* explain why.

PS3 Xbox 360 PS2

■ Developer: Harmonix ■ Publisher: MTV Games ■ Release Date: November

The *GamePro* game demo room has been overflowing with wannabe rockers from the moment Rock Band hit the office. Instead of reiterating the game's features (which everyone should know by now), I thought it would be more informative and fun to poll those musically inclined *GamePros* to find out why this game has them staying at work late.—Chris Morell



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE INSTRUMENT TO PLAY (INCLUDES SINGING)?

Sid Shuman: Drums. They rule! I never played before but found out that I'm a natural drummer thanks to Rock Band.

Dave Rudden: Gotta go with singing. I loved Karaoke Revolution, and this game takes out a lot of the embarrassment of singing amongst friends. Your friends aren't going to laugh at your voice cracking when they're struggling on the drums.

Travis Moses: I always enjoy playing guitar, but

I've actually found lead vocals to be my favorite part of the band. I really hate karaoke, but Rock Band makes me feel a part of the band, not some spectacle onstage.

WHAT IS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE INSTRUMENT TO PLAY?

Chenda Ngak: Guitar, because I suck at it. It's too hard for my n00b hands.

Amanda Ng: Drums, because I've got no rhythm and my feet aren't coordinated. But if I did, I'd be all over it.

Dave: Bass. I know it's the backbone of every song, but more often than not you can barely make out your contribution to the song.



DO YOU LIKE THE SONG SELECTION?

Travis: Rock Band is interesting because in Guitar Hero the songs are meant for tasty guitar licks, but the selection in Rock Band caters to more

instruments. That way, everyone looks cool, not just the lead guitarist.

Sid: Yes, though I'm eagerly awaiting full album downloads. In general, I'd like to see more songs from the 70s and 80s and fewer modern pop hits.

DO YOU LIKE IT MORE OR LESS THAN GUITAR HERO?

Tae Kim: I think Rock Band does a lot of things better than Guitar Hero. Obviously, the drums and the ability to sing stand out, but I like Guitar Hero's controllers more.

Amanda: If you want a riff-ripping guitar experience, Rock Band isn't the way to go. But everything else about it blows Guitar Hero out of the water.

ARE YOU GOING TO BUY ROCK BAND?

Dave: I'll likely just buy a drum kit. I could always use a standard USB mic or headset for vocals, and my Guitar Hero II guitar for guitar/bass.

Chenda: I will probably buy it for my boyfriend... the whole enchilada.

SING, SHRED AND WAIL

- Singing is less embarrassing than karaoke.
- Songs are geared more for a full band than rocking riffs.
- Bass can be somewhat boring.

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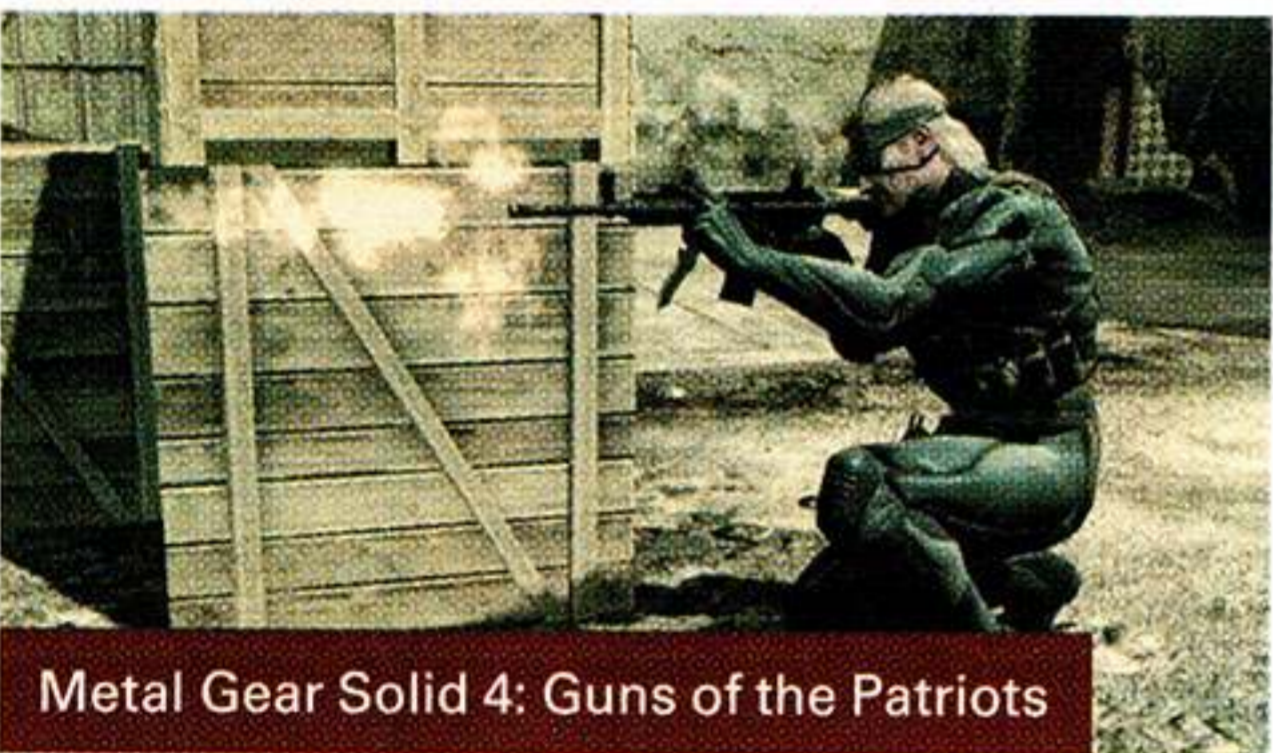
THE 9

Only the biggest games make *GamePro's* monthly spastic info dump



Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

Silver bells, are you listening? It's the start of the Holiday season, and while most of you are still creating ridiculous(ly fun) game types in **1 Halo 3's** do-as-you-please multiplayer mode, the rest of us handful of gamers are looking forward to what the GameStop Santa is leaving under the tree. Personally, I wouldn't want to take on the Master Chief in a festive holiday fist fight, but the rest of the gaming world must compete. **2 Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction** has



Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

been out for a couple weeks now, and what better way to treat your PlayStation 3 before Christmas. Being one of my favorite franchises of all time, I was shocked to discover how many close friends and coworkers had never touched a Ratchet game. Blasphemy! The new Ratchet has insane gunplay, beautiful graphics and more organic humor than just about any game out there. What more could you ask for? I guess if your PS3 is still lonely and you're looking for something a little more realistic and you can't wait for **3 Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots** (at the Tokyo Game Show, there was a playable level, not to mention Metal Gear Online deathmatch to frag around with) **4 Uncharted:**



Mass Effect



Halo 3



LittleBigPlanet

Drake's Fortune would tickle your fancy. It's Tomb Raider platforming meets Gears of War combat, though you don't have Lara's fine physique to distract from the gameplay. Out later this month, Uncharted sports some of the best production values out there, and you'd expect nothing less from the creators of the Crash and Jak series. On the online side, though, it's all about **5 LittleBigPlanet**. As we inch closer to the game's release in February, it's becoming increasingly evident that it could be a phenomenon. It's surely the only real chance, other than **6 Killzone 2**, for Sony's PlayStation Network to compete with Microsoft's ever-popular Xbox Live service. It's a good combo for Sony, though, as LittleBigPlanet will drive the user-generated content and Killzone 2 should bring it home with free online multiplayer play. For the Xbox 360, life does go on post-Halo, and it's all about **7 Mass Effect**. It's got that galactic alien intrigue you crave from Halo, with an arguably bet-



Super Smash Bros. Brawl

ter single-player campaign (story-wise, at least), and it's out this month. On the Wii front, **8 Super Mario Galaxy** is probably packed and ready to hit retail as we speak, and at the time of writing has hit the half-million mark for preorders—I wouldn't doubt that it has eclipsed a million by now. Considering the popularity of Mario and the sheer number of Wii consoles out there, Mario should be feeling quite super in his first showing on the Wii. But, of course, he'll be making a follow-up appearance in **9 Super Smash Bros. Brawl** next month. And who can blame him for wanting to throw down with Princess Peach? Just think about how many times he's rescued the damsel in distress, only to receive a puny kiss on the cheek. You're a patient man, Mario.—Chris Morell



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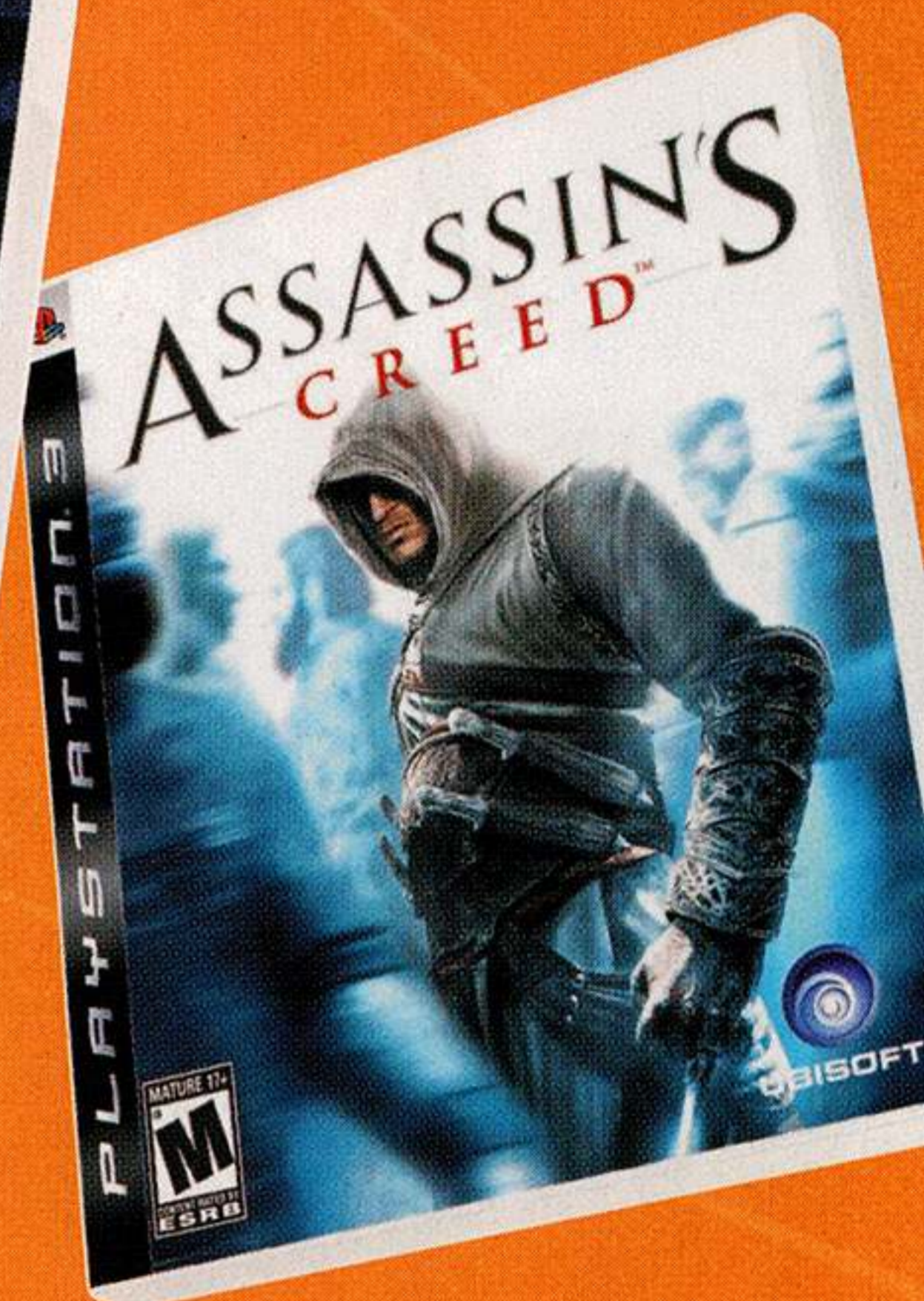
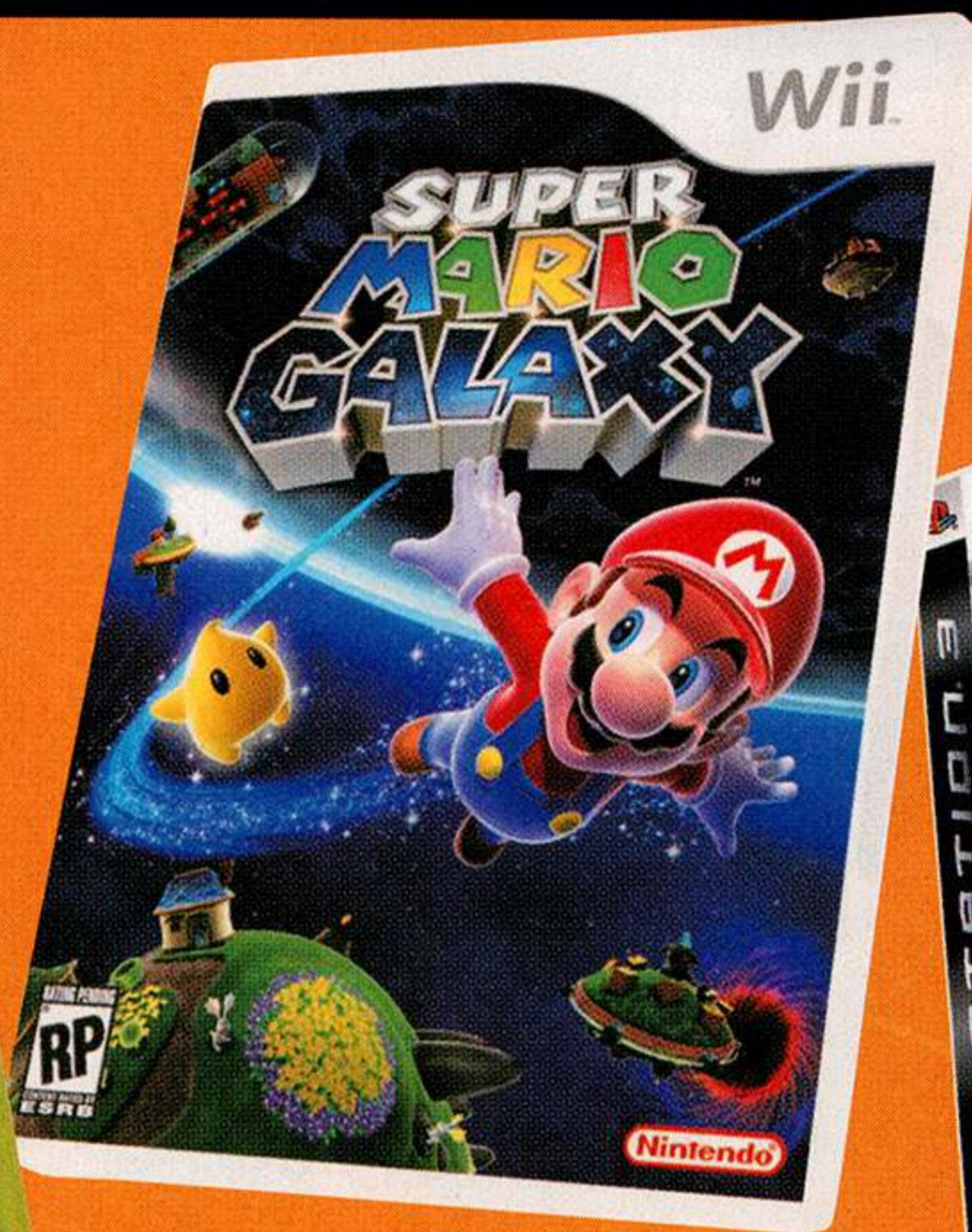
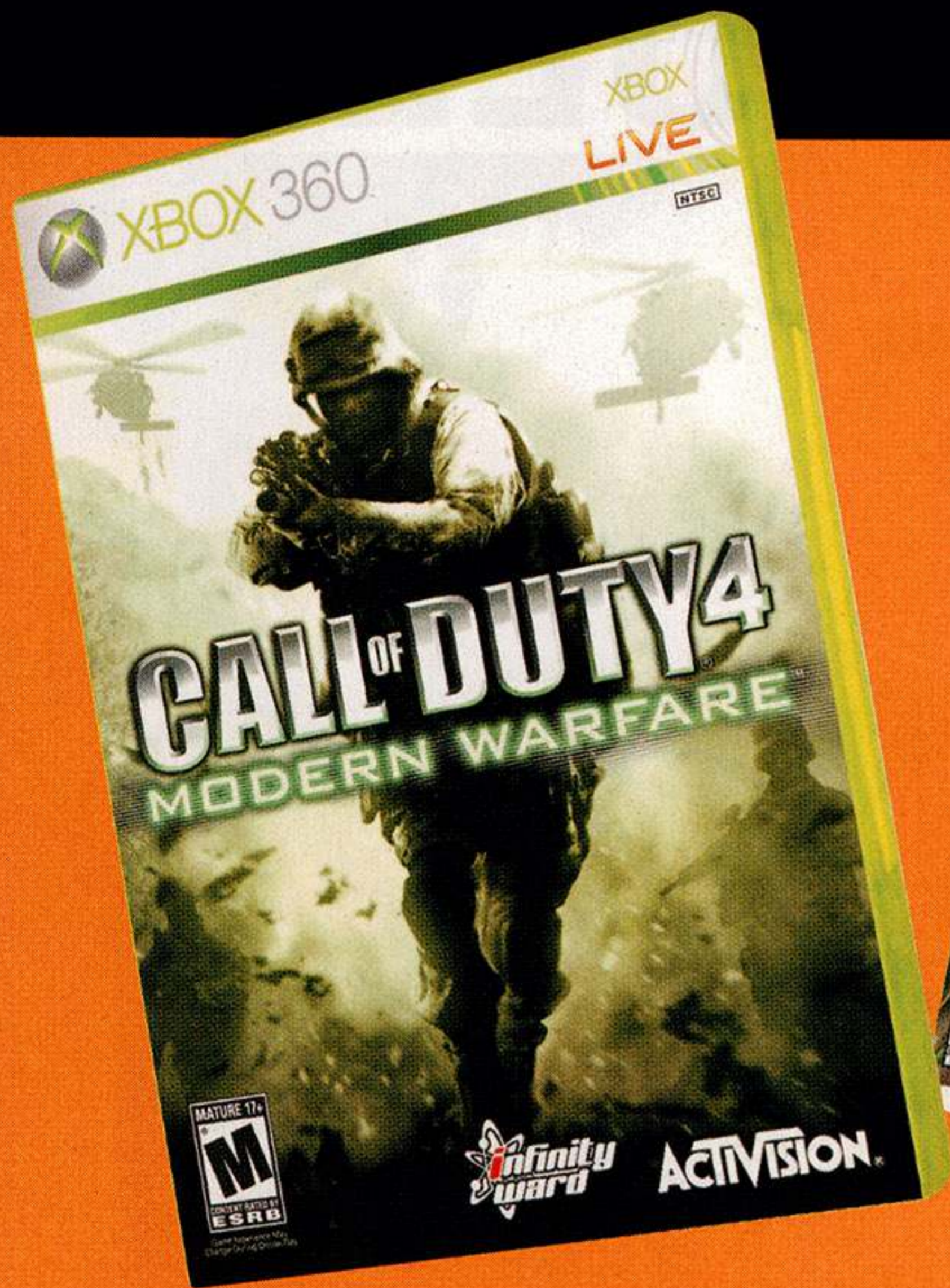
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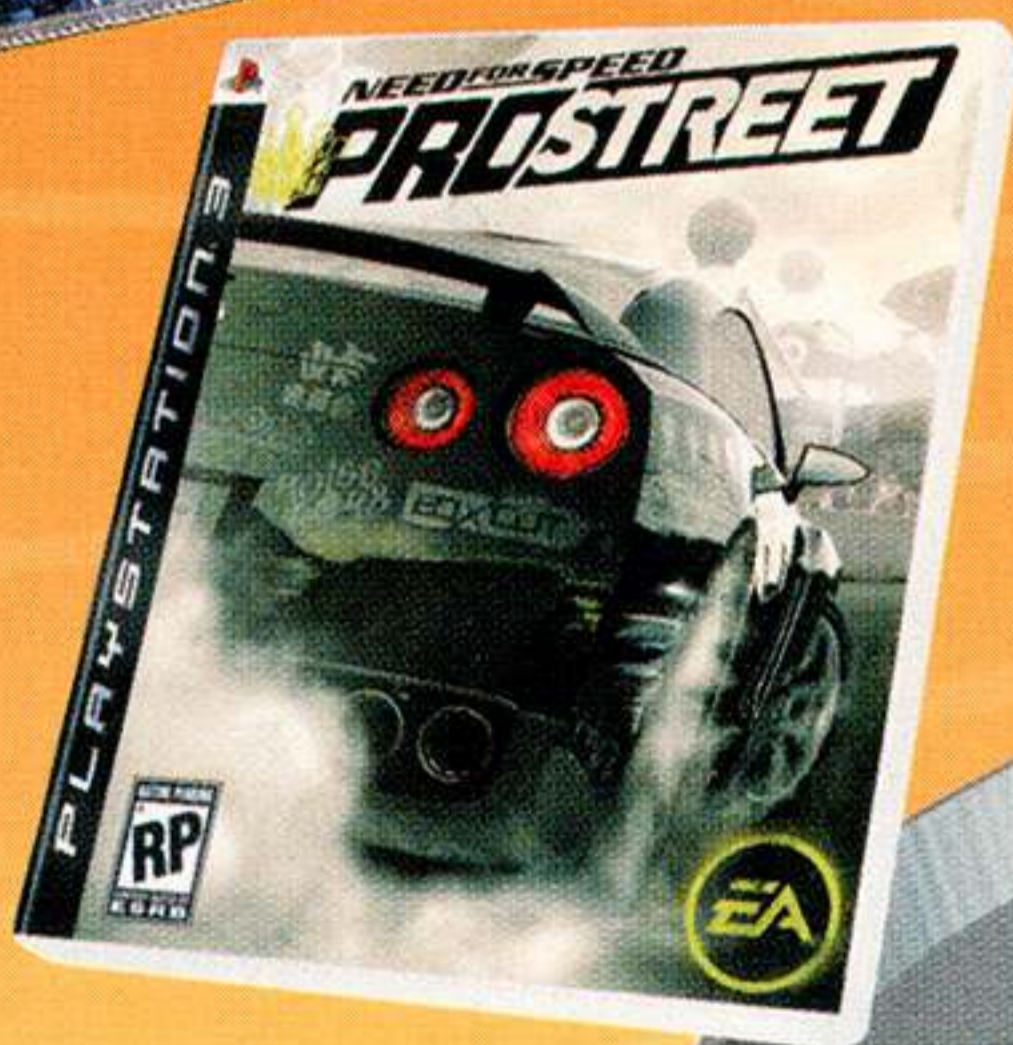
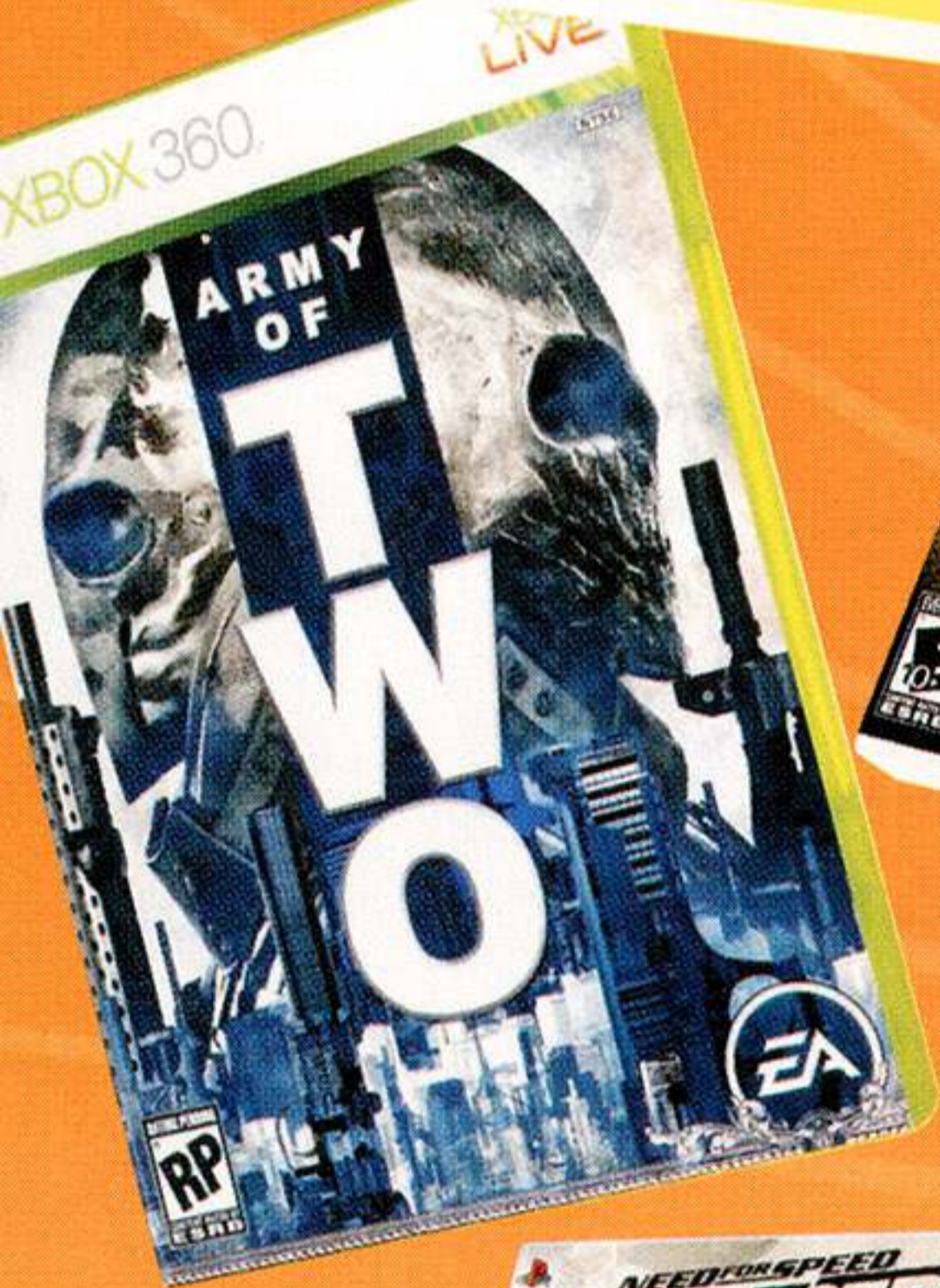
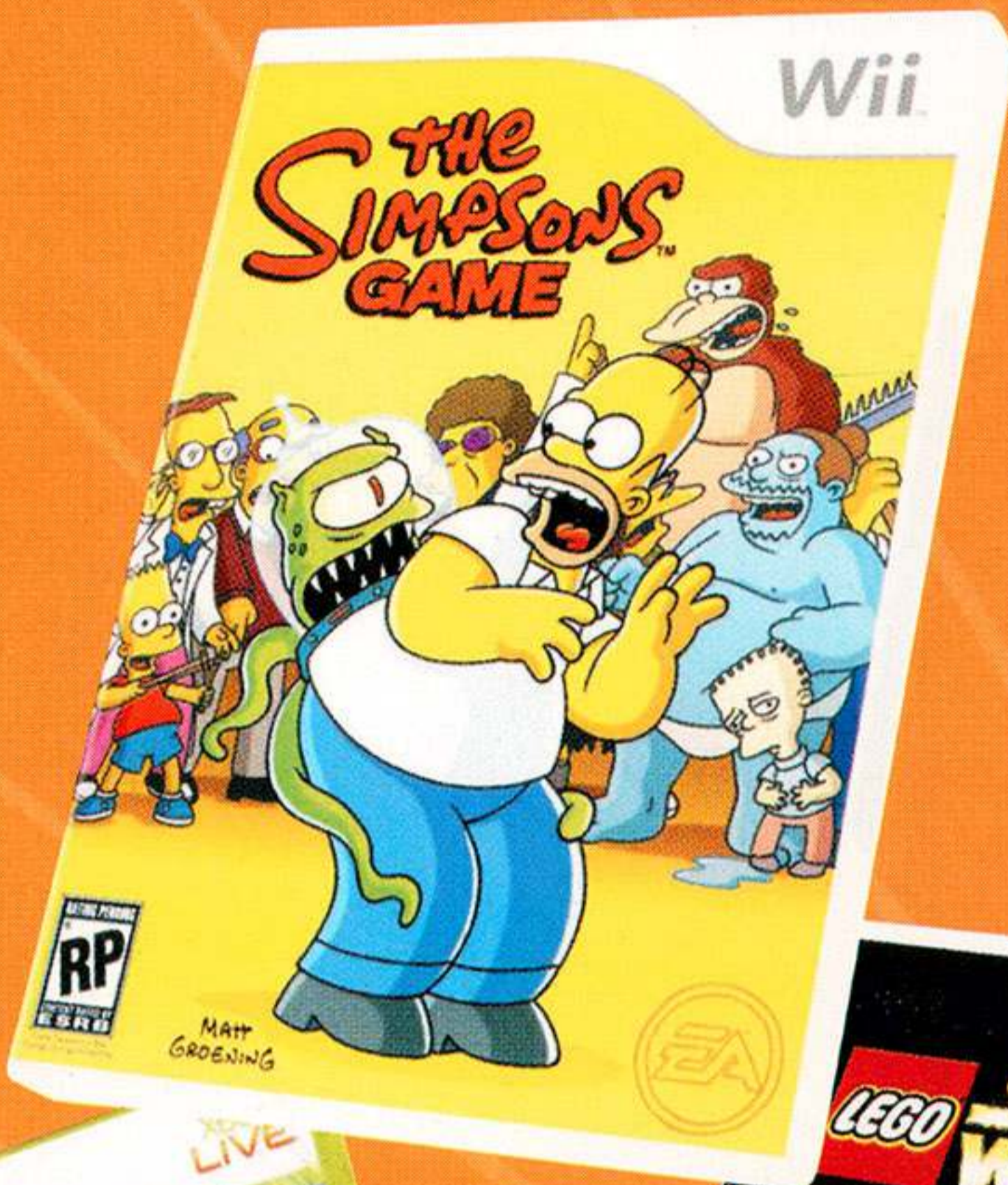
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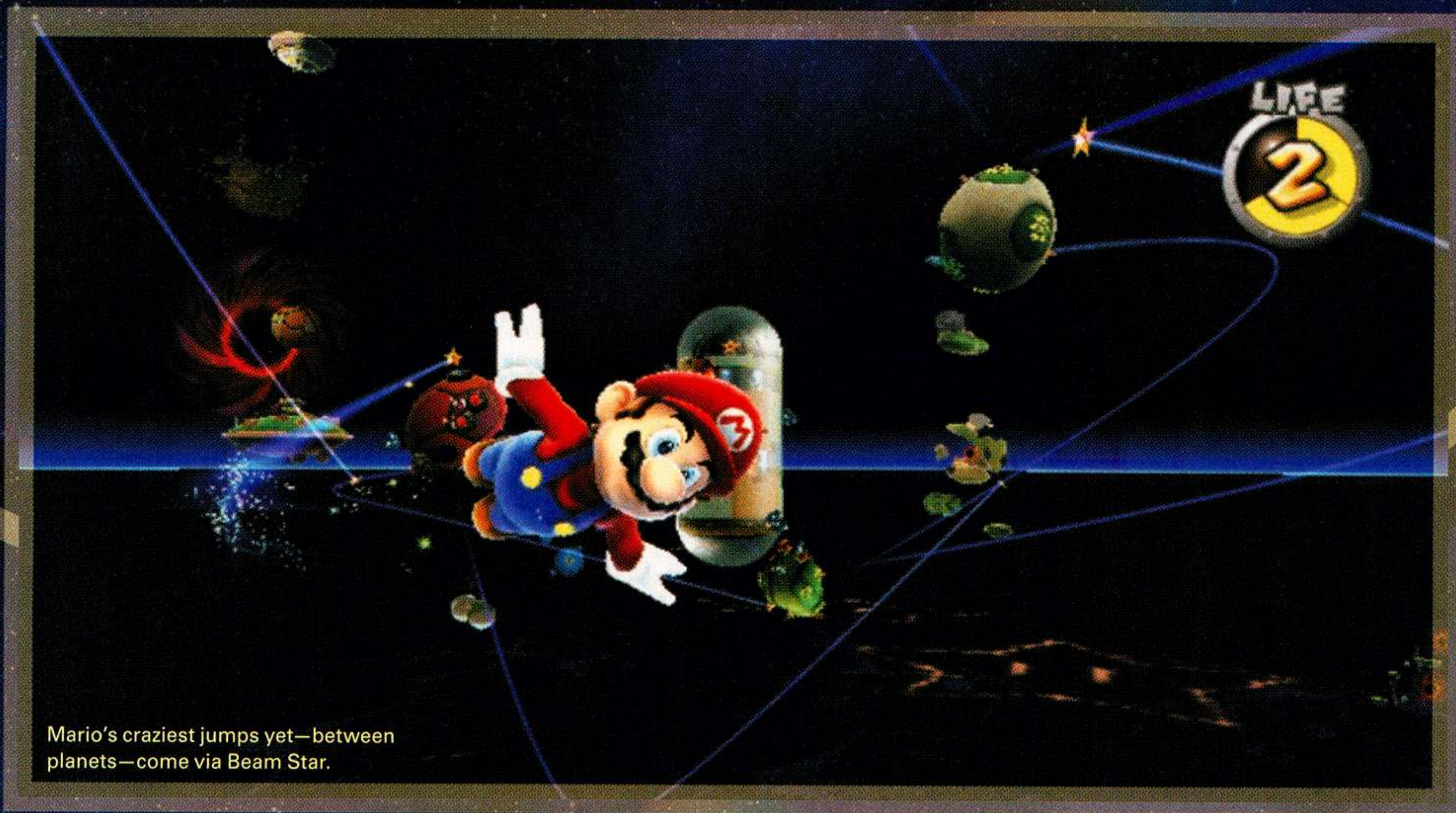
MARIO GOES

The long-anticipated return of Mario is nigh. We've collected every bit of information on the plumber's upcoming intergalactic adventure and brought it all back to Earth for your consumption!

By Dave Rudden

WORLD OF GALACTIC!





Mario's craziest jumps yet—between planets—come via Beam Star.

In Super Mario Galaxy, the weight of the world is on our favorite plumber's shoulders, both literally and figuratively. Mario is exploring space to save Princess Peach, and, we presume, the universe. But perhaps more importantly, he's also working to save his storied platforming career. While no one will argue that Super Mario Sunshine was a bad game—we were among the many magazines to give that game a high score—it lacked the sense of newness and, well, Mario-ness that every other title in the series had brought to the table. From what we've uncovered, and we've uncovered quite a lot, Super Mario Galaxy has managed to find it again.

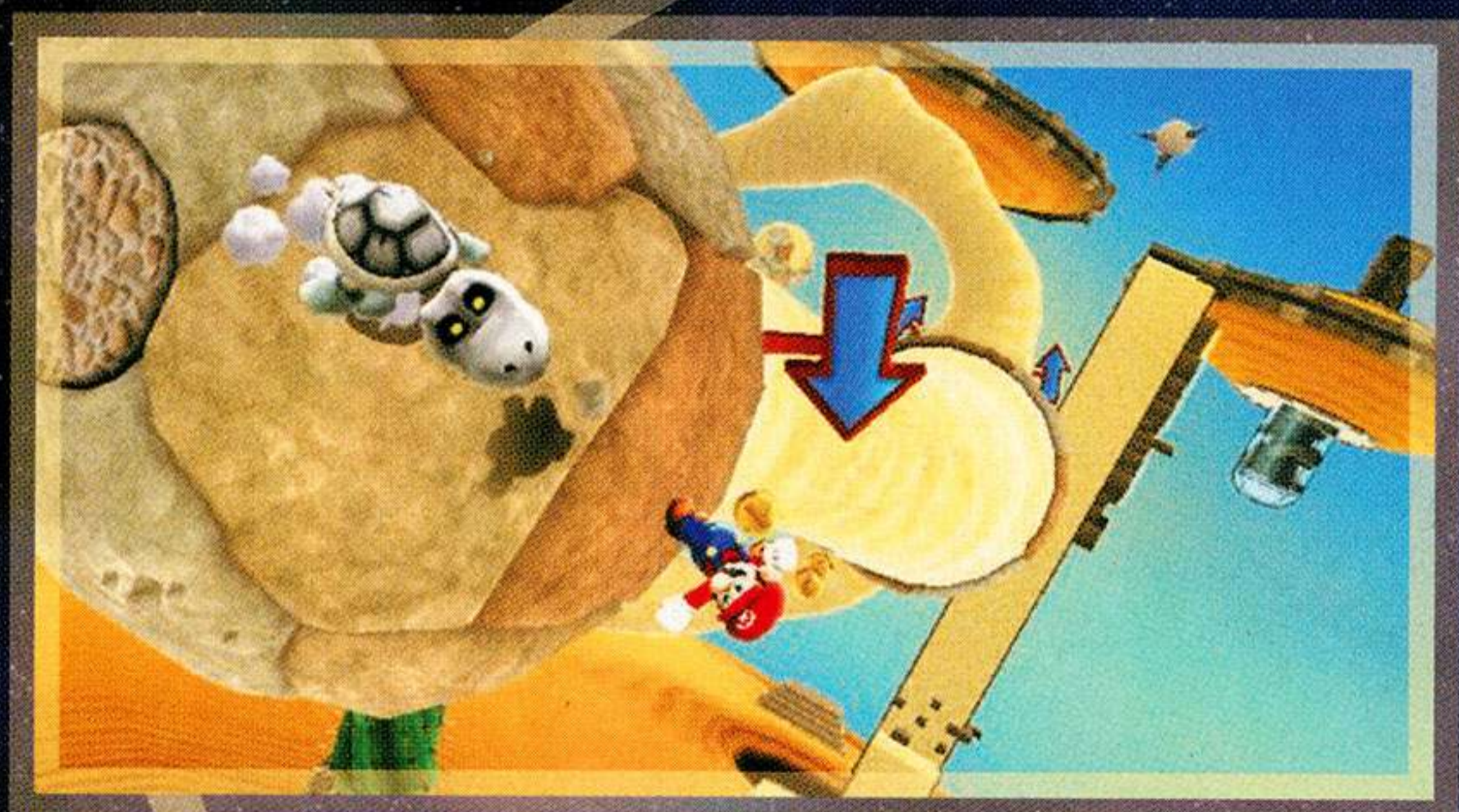
THREE-POINT-FIVE-D

In a way, Mario's been a victim of his own success. Not many folks thought that Super Mario Brothers 3—one of the greatest 2D platformers of all time—could be topped, but Super Mario World managed to exceed almost everyone's expectations when it launched with the SNES. Mario's first 3D iteration on the N64 seems to have even less room for improvement. When you've created and perfected a genre, as many believe Super Mario 64 did for 3D platformers, where can you possibly go from there? The answer is something we like to call "Three-point-five-D."

Nowhere was Nintendo's new dimension more apparent than at Galaxy's unveiling at E³ 2006. The stage gamers waited hours to play was fast and frenetic, with Mario hopping from planet to planet like an ADD-afflicted alien. It was certainly different the Mario status quo, but we weren't sure if it was a change for the better. Thankfully, Galaxy has broadened a bit over the last year and a half, with levels that span larger areas and some planets that even manage to surpass Mario 64's and Sunshine's in scope. That's not to say the spacier stages haven't been spruced up. In fact many of the game's latest additions have given the series a possible new direction.



Smaller planets + bigger enemies = huge threats.



CONTINUED ►



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A Special Operations Chinook Helicopter Crew Chief prepares the aircraft over a drop zone before a jump.
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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

For those of you who were disappointed by the water-gun-based moves of Super Mario Sunshine, Galaxy's new tricks may be more up your alley. First, let's look at the crazy environmental knick-knacks that will have you planet-hopping with ease.

The Star Ring and Beam Star are Mario's main methods of interplanetary movement. The Star Ring is the launching—and landing—point for each planet. Either pre-built, or shattered and scattered about the planets, the Star Ring functions like a space-age version of the iconic green warp pipes of old. The Beam Star is akin to Link's grappling hook: Simply point the Wii Remote at one of them, press the jump button, and you're zipping through the sky.

While the Stars may have an air of familiarity about them, the co-operative second player option is a neat new addition that should add a new layer to the Galaxy gameplay experience. It's simple and not really a world-changing experience, but a welcome addition all the same. A second player can use another Wii Remote to shoot stardust at enemies to help defeat them or stop environmental hazards from getting in Mario's way, a smart multiplayer upgrade that should make the game even more casual-friendly. Hardcore fans can rest assured that it's an optional aid, as all stardust moves can be pulled off with one player.



Prediction: That bug is the goalie in the next Strikers title.



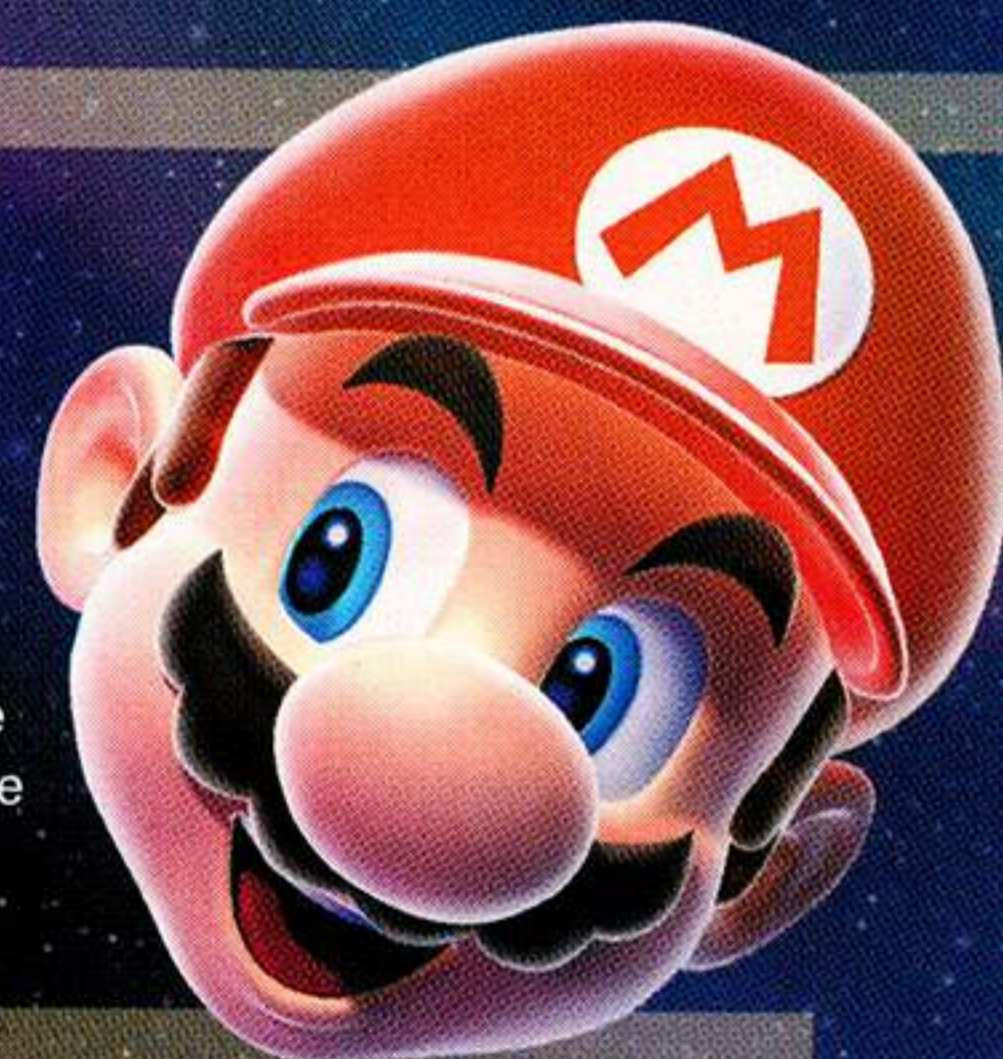
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PLANETS AND GALAXIES

What LittleBigPlanet Could Learn from Super Mario Galaxy, and Vice-versa.

In just a few scant months after Super Mario Galaxy's release, LittleBigPlanet will enter the PlayStation 3's orbit. Boasting a completely different platforming experience, the innovative LittleBigPlanet has a bunch of neat tricks we'd like Mario to learn. Of course, there's a few moves the master could impart to the newcomer as well.



LITTLEBIGLESSONS:

CO-OP. REAL CO-OP. Look, the second-player Stardust-shooter is nice and all, but some co-operative puzzle solving and enemy stomping is something Mario fans have yearned for. Seriously, why aren't Mario and Luigi working together? They're certainly closer than the rag-tag gang from LBP.

CUSTOMIZATION NATION. Okay, this is a Mario pipe-dream if there ever was one. LittleBigPlanet allows you to dress up your rag doll avatars and decorate stages to your heart's content. Can you imagine a 3D Mario title where you made the rules?

NOTES FROM NINTENDO:

MARIO-ESQUE MOTIVATION. Okay, granted, LBP is a sandbox game, loaded with customization, but would it hurt to include some sort of story? Mario may be saving the princess for the kajillionth time, but it still manages to draw the player in to some degree.

NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER(-UPS). There's no sense of exhilaration in gaming quite like the first time you pick up a power-up in Super Mario Galaxy. There's no sense of power-ups in LittleBigPlanet. Sure, you can unlock new items that award special abilities and then equip them, but it's just not the same.



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Violence
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Game experience may change during online play.



Who did you expect? Wart?

Mario has another Link-esque move in the Spin Attack, pulled off the same way Link did in *Twilight Princess*: by shaking the Wii Remote (or Nun-chuk, if you prefer). It's a neat little move that's simple to pull off, and it should make the combat in *Galaxy* even more enjoyable. It also has a bonus application besides being a great melee move, as you must use it to build up kinetic energy when inside a Star Ring.

Then there's the standard costume-based transformations, with a few new options that look unique and enjoyable. Mario can morph into a bee and take flight to reach high platforms, or mutate into a Boo ghost and float through barricades that the living can't pass. He can also reach new heights as a spring, and traverse water with an ice walk. The Fire Flower is also making its 3D—excuse us—three-point-five-D debut, which we're really excited about. And finally, the invincibility star is returning with amazing rainbow effects.

KEEPING GROUNDED

Of course, there's plenty of classic Mario moves at the core that should make the game easily accessible to series vets. Many of Mario's old moves have returned, and despite the bizarre design of the Wii Remote, the action are still simple to pull off. You'll be running, jumping, and butt-stomping with ease; though we wouldn't dock Nintendo points if it allowed customizable controls.

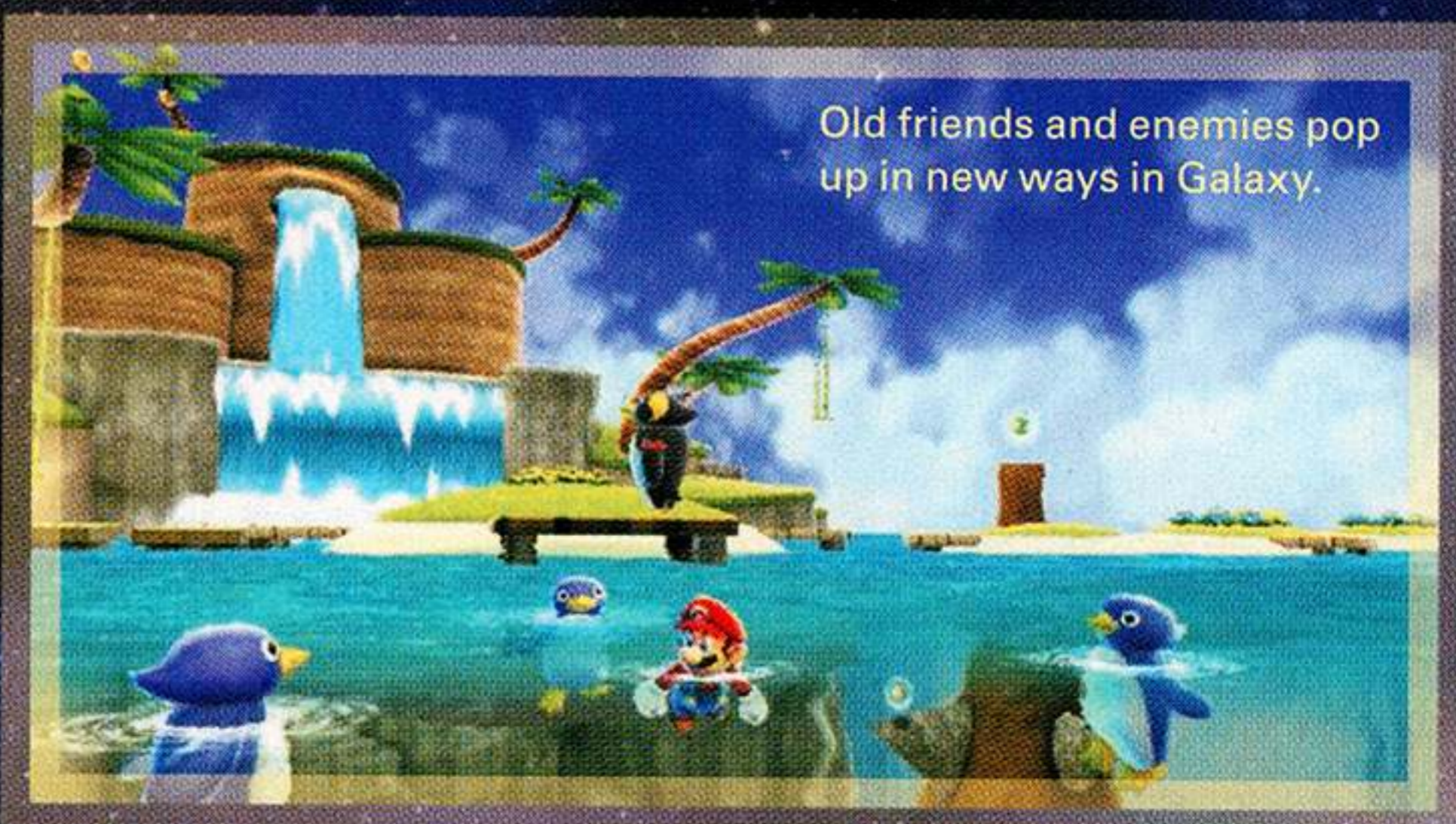
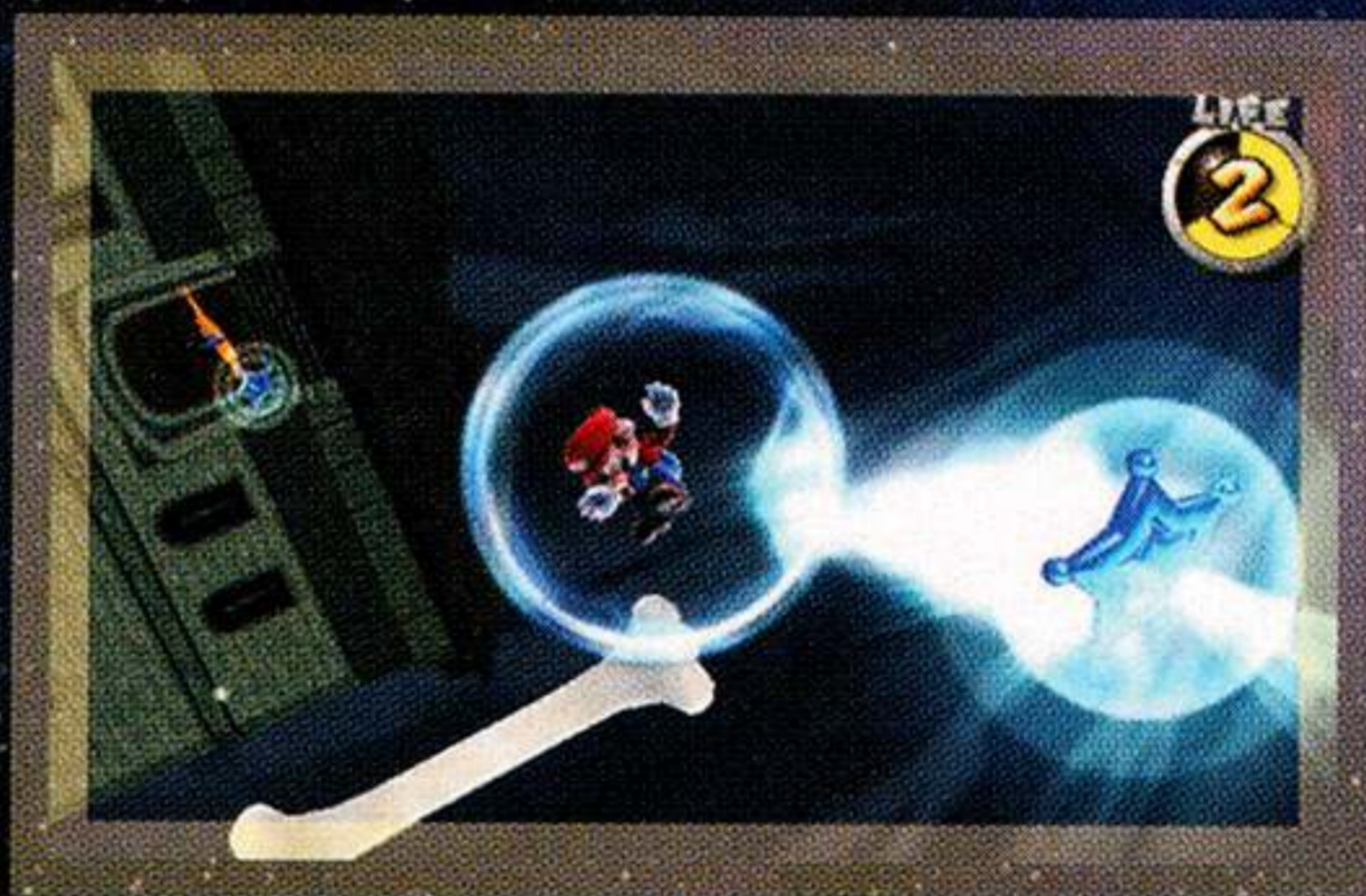
And thankfully, in the rare case that you don't cotton to the newfangled planet-hopping gameplay, it seems like Nintendo has a few stages that focus on strict back-to-basics platforming using Mario's N64 skills. According to a recent discovery by IGN, these stages resemble the secret areas in *Super*

Mario Sunshine that did away with Mario's FLUDD pack. Devoid of enemies but full of intense platforming action, we hope to see more of these stages.

THERE'S NO "LAX" IN "GALAXY"

With *Super Mario Galaxy* nearing completion, we have to say we're impressed how well the game has come together since its first showing. What originally looked like a madcap mishmash of crazy planet-flying acrobatics has evolved into...well, it's still a madcap mishmash of crazy planet-flying acrobatics. But the new gameplay elements we've seen mesh wonderfully well with the intergalactic levels, and the classic gameplay that made the Mario series amazing still shines through as well.

We're not totally without worry, though. The over-abundance of collectables like coins, music notes (which award extra lives after a certain amount are collected), Stardust, and Star Ring fragments, as well as the weak nature of a few of the power-ups—Bee Mario, we're looking squarely in your direction—add more than a few question marks. But with gaming legend Shigeru Miyamoto at the helm, we're confident that the end product will be a creative, highly playable experience. Nintendo may have made a slight misstep with the oddball *Super Mario Sunshine* (for the GameCube) in 2002, but the company seems to have realized that the series is at its best when it upends the tea table and reinvents itself while, crucially, keeping true to the core Mario ideals. The countdown is almost complete. Blastoff is imminent. We're confident you'll enjoy exploring *Super Mario Galaxy*.

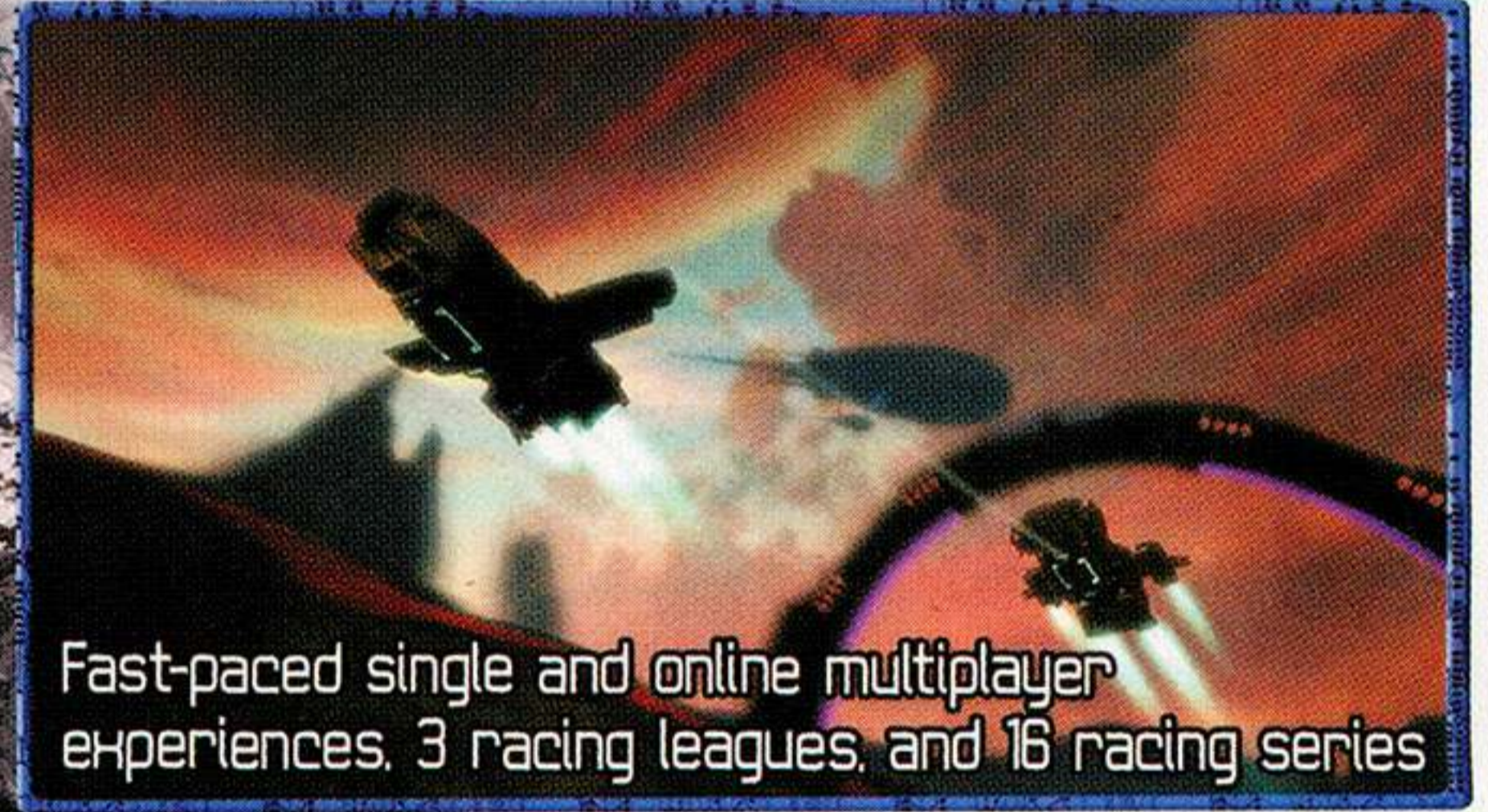


Old friends and enemies pop up in new ways in *Galaxy*.

CONTINUED ▶



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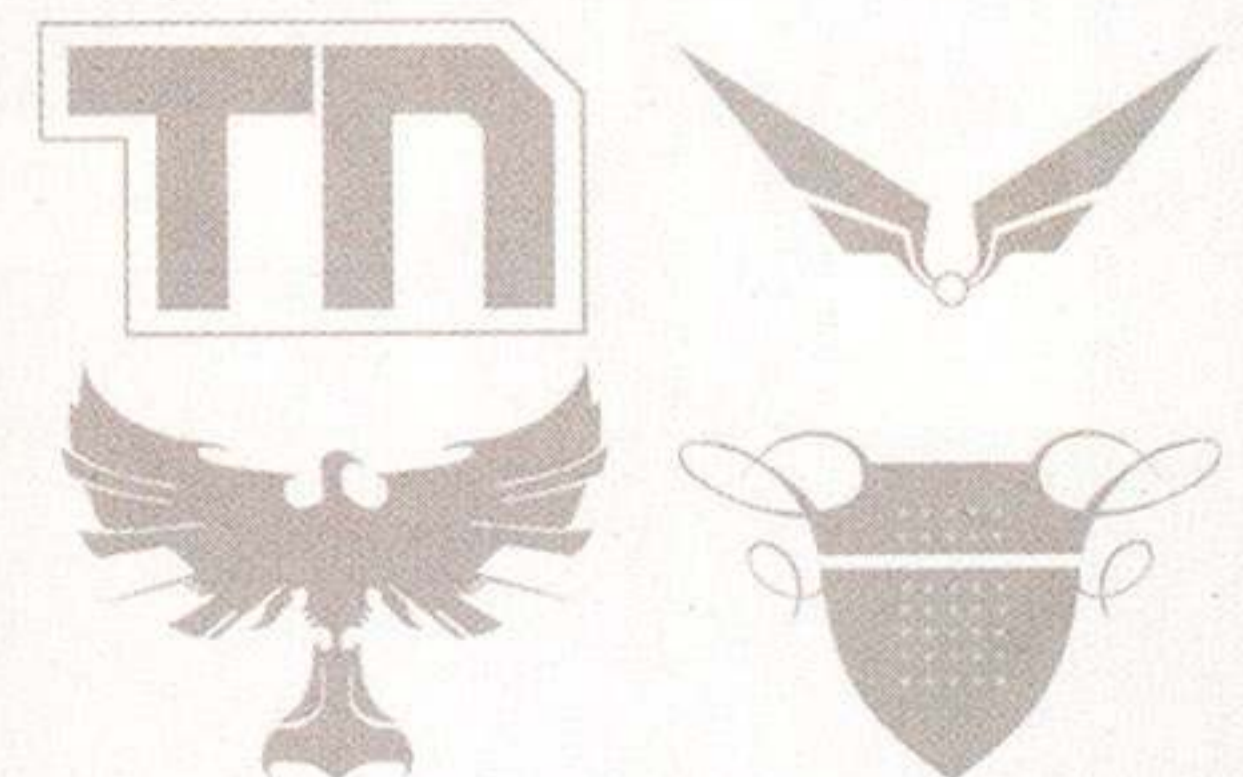
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Jump in.



MARIO'S NEW DUDS AND BUDS

No Mario title is complete without new transformations and allies.



▲ Float through obstacles and avoid fellow ghouls as Boo Mario.



◀ This mystery lady intrigues us. Is Princess Rosetta in need of saving, like Peach, or does she have another purpose?



▲ Fly to greater heights and make flowers your friend as Bee Mario.



▲ Got an extra Wii Remote? Then you've got an extra ally in your intergalactic adventure.

CONTINUED ▶



WHERE NOW, MARIO?

He's been underwater, in the sky, in 2D and 3D. Where could Mario possibly go next?

MARI-MMO

Remember the Mario 128 demo, where Mario was cloned into dozens and dozens of carbon copies of himself? We'd love to see that option explored. Whether it's a co-op MMO Mario or a puzzle solving 3D adventure along the lines of Mario vs. Donkey Kong, we see power in numbers.

RPGALAXY

Sure, the Paper Mario Series was fun, but what is it gonna take for Nintendo and Square Enix to make up, play nice, and collaborate on an old-school RPG that recalls the SNES classic Super Mario RPG?

SUPER MARIO SANDBOX

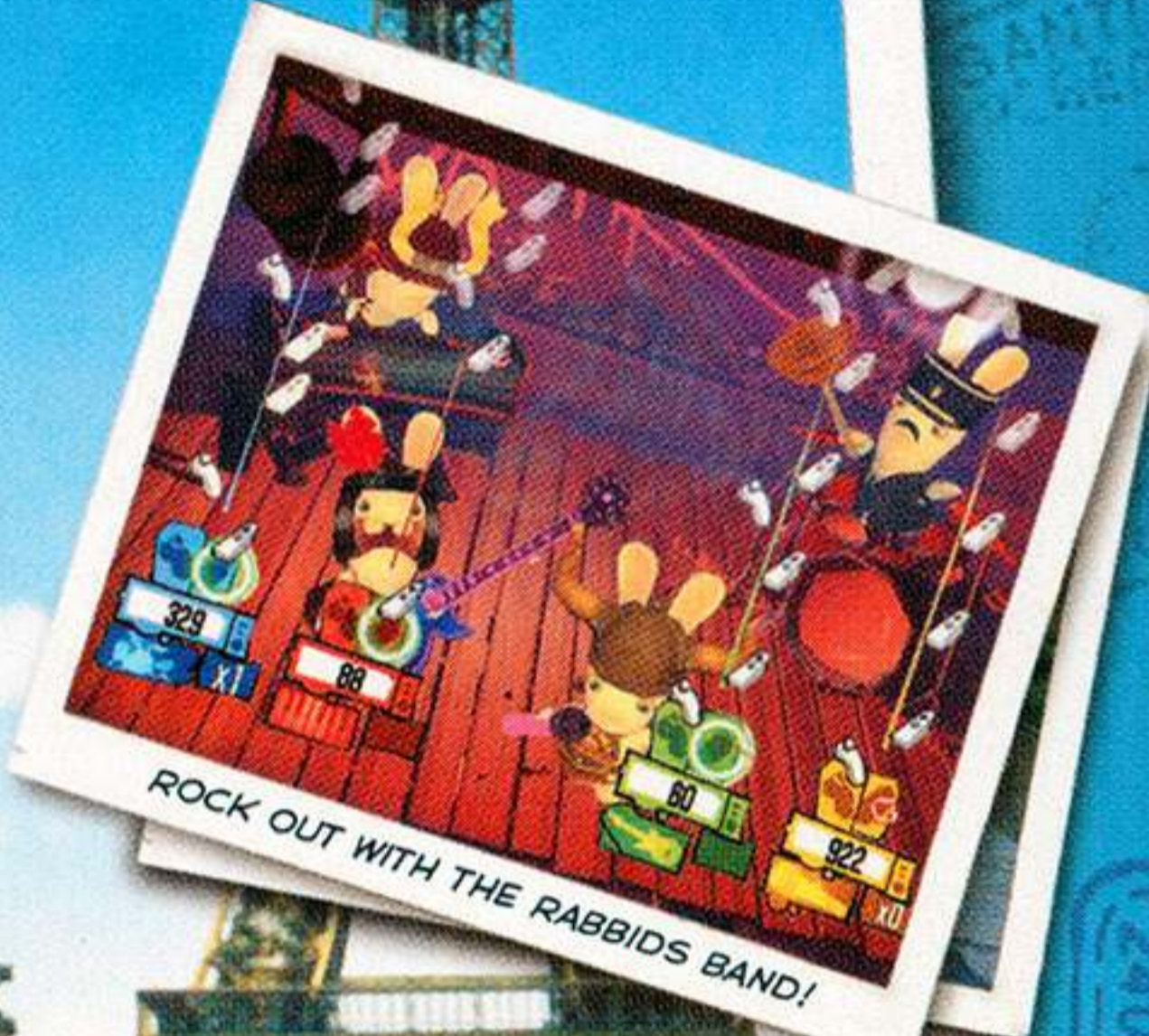
We think its time for Mario to move away from the portal/stage setup of the 3D iterations of the series. Might we suggest something along the lines of the more free-roaming worlds of Jak and Daxter or Ratchet & Clank?

MIX MASTER MARIO

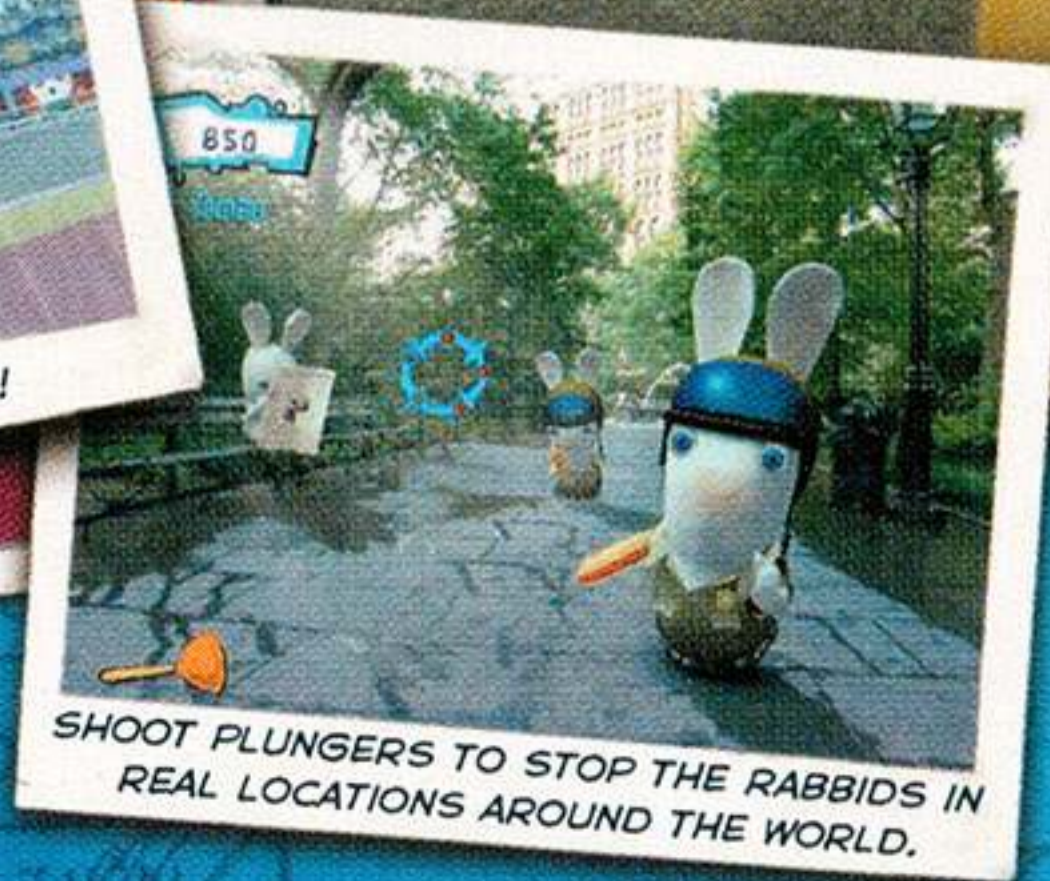
Everyone loves the original Super Mario Bros. Everyone loves Super Mario 64. Why not mix the former's chocolate with the latter's peanut butter and redo the original in gorgeous 3D? It'd take some tweaking, and a bit of elbow grease, but man, would the end result be the mother of all nostalgia trips, or what?!

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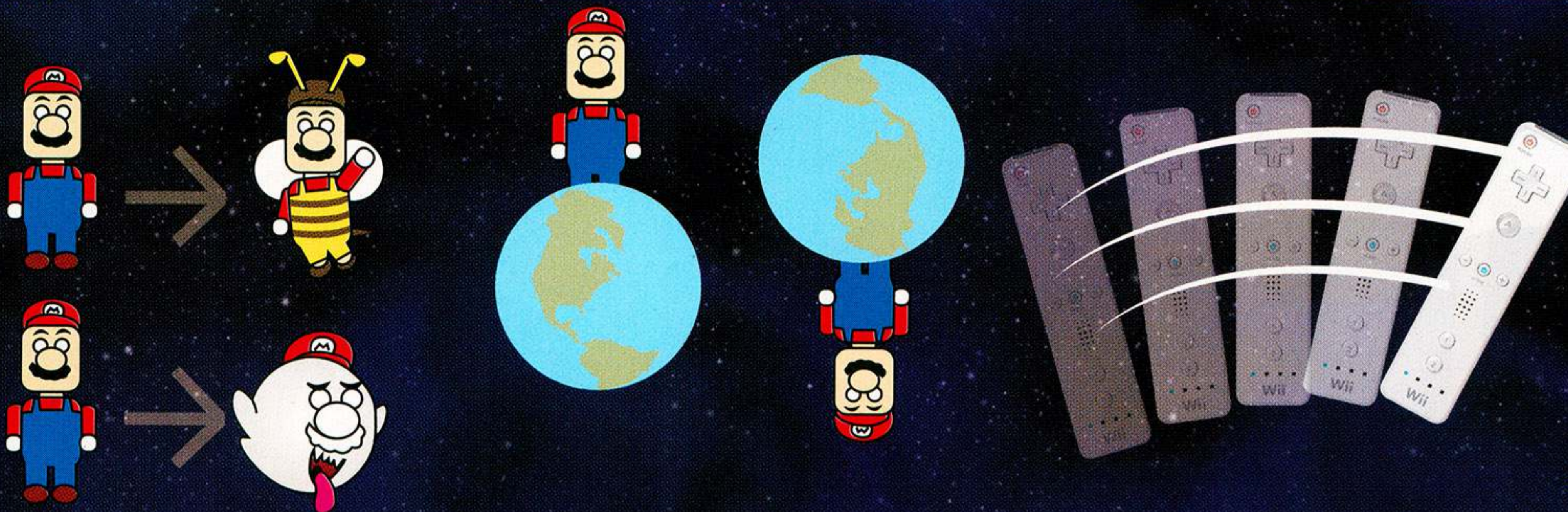


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HEAD IN THE SKY, FEET ON THE GROUND

An illustrated guide to Mario's new and old moves.

NEW



BE A BEE OR BOO

Mario's got a whole bunch of new transformations to try in Galaxy, from buzzing around as a bumblebee or stealthily sneaking around as a ghost. Simple yet effective, these moves could continue the strong tradition of interesting power-ups that began with the Mushroom and the Fire Flower.

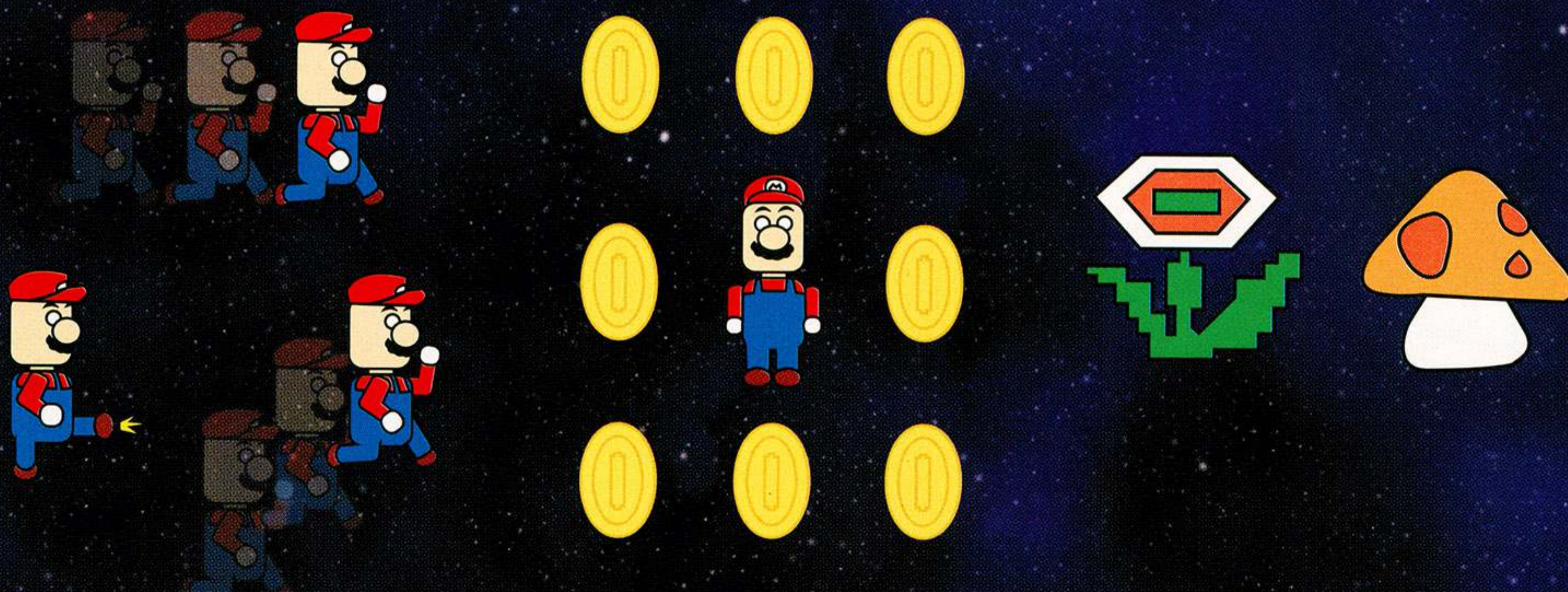
GO WITH GRAVITY

With some stages spanning mere feet in diameter, Mario can't get too attached to the ground. With a multitude of moves, Mario can hop from planet to planet with reckless abandon. Use the Star Ring and Beam Star to soar to new heights!

LEAVE 'EM IN THE DUST

A second player can grab a Wii Remote and help collect Stardust scattered about the Galaxy, even the scraps that are out of Mario's reach. The Stardust can then be shot at enemies and hazards to stop them in their tracks.

CLASSIC



KICK, RUN, JUMP

Many of Mario's moves and attacks will return in Galaxy. Even though the Wii Remote and Nunchuk are a far cry from the N64 and GameCube's controllers, you'll find that moving Mario around will feel like second nature.

MARIO THE MONEYMAKER

Collecting is still the name of the game in Galaxy. Gold coins still restore lost energy and provide 1/100th of the currency needed to earn a star, and red coins work towards earning you new stars. From what we've heard, the exchange rate in space ain't too bad...

FEEL THE BURN OR HEAL IN TURN

Remember the first two power-ups you ever collected in a Mario title? Yep, the Fire Flower and the Super Mario Mushroom (with new effects) make their first appearance outside of the 2D Mario titles in Galaxy. We're hoping it feels like the first time, which is why we've included it in this section.

CONTINUED ►



Introducing, among other things,
 some people you haven't had a chance
 to punch in the face yet.



This may be the greatest DBZ game of them all. There are more than 150 playable characters. Plus both consoles have exclusives. There's online play with Wii. And there's Disc Fusion on the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system,



which lets you combine all three Tenkaichi games into one. Now, every character in every game is available to fight. Whatever console you have, find a friend who has the other one. Share the fight.



Cartoon Violence
 Mild Language

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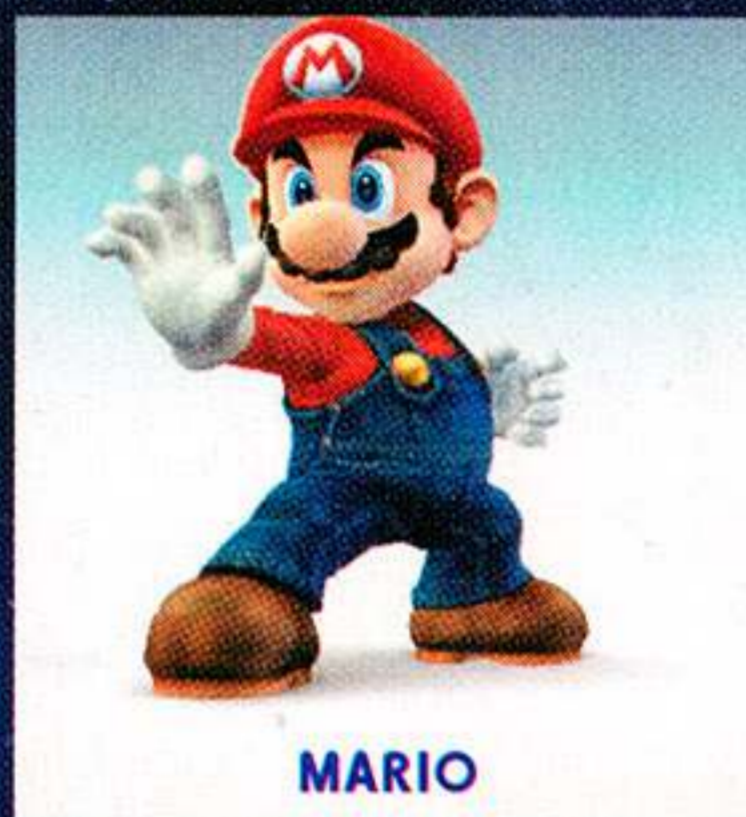


BRAWL FOR ALL!

Nintendo's finest return to fight it out in Super Smash Bros. Brawl. Long-forgotten NES-era stars will fight hand-to-hand with newbies and a few surprising picks, too.

THE FIGHTERS

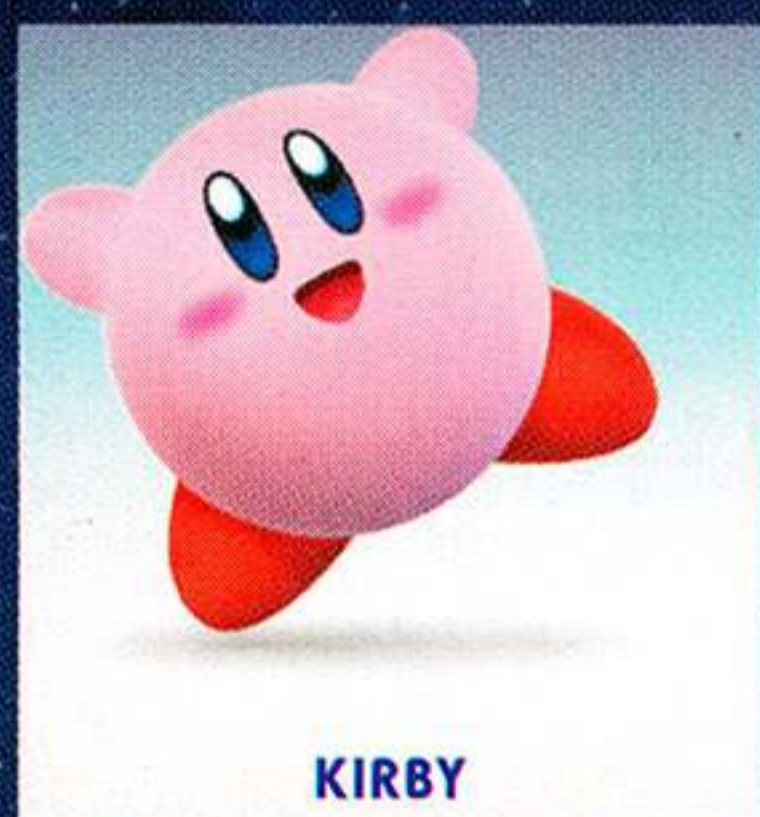
The following characters are confirmed to be swinging fists and throwing shells in Brawl. Returning contenders have seen slight tweaks. **Link** and **Zelda** now sport new "Twilight Princess" designs and outfits, and you can bet some of the new moves from that game will be at your fingertips. The final 10 are new challengers. For a few like **Wario** and **Diddy Kong**, it has been a long time coming. Others, like **Pit** from the ancient Kid Icarus series and **Solid Snake**, the first non-Nintendo character announced for a Smash Bros. game, are complete surprises. Speaking of outsiders, Nintendo confirmed that Sega's mascot, **Sonic the Hedgehog**, will indeed be joining the fray. The dream match of every child of the 16-bit era will finally become a reality this winter when Sonic and Mario finally get the chance to throw down. As for that last kid shown below? He's **Lucas**, from Mother 3, a Japan-only RPG (think of him as the new Ness).



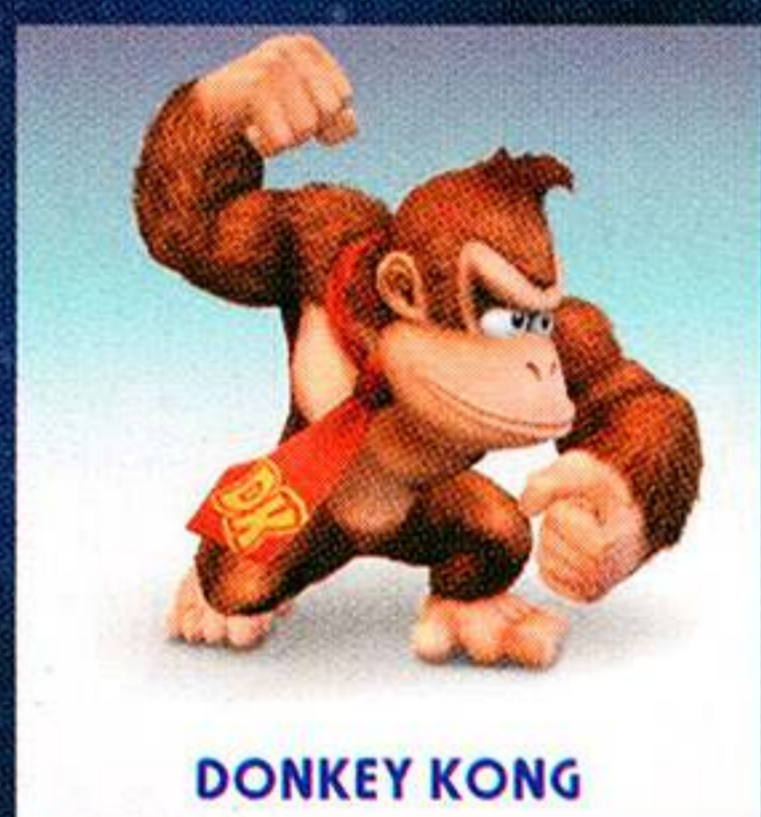
MARIO



PEACH



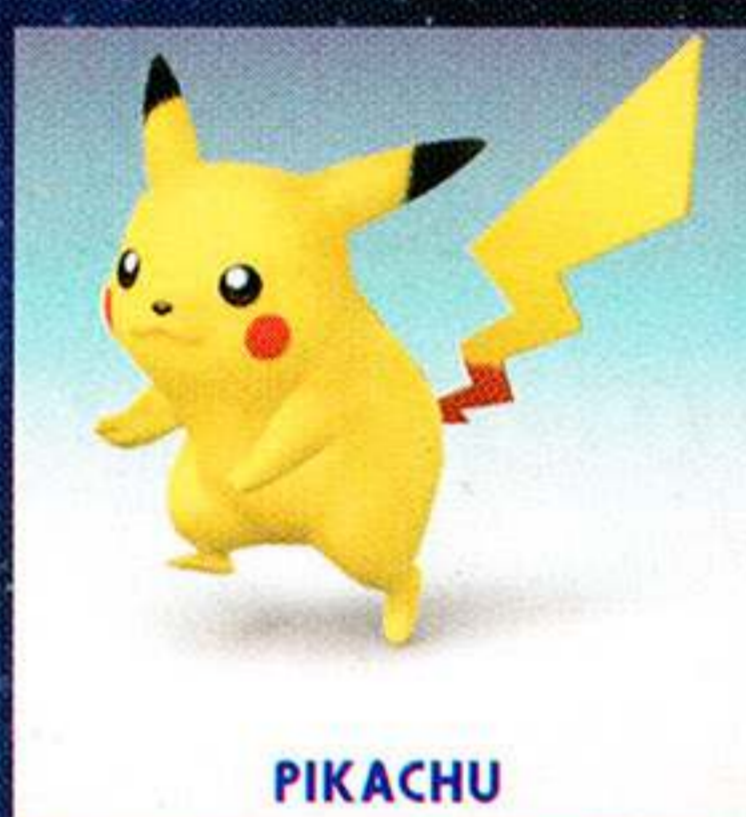
KIRBY



DONKEY KONG



LINK



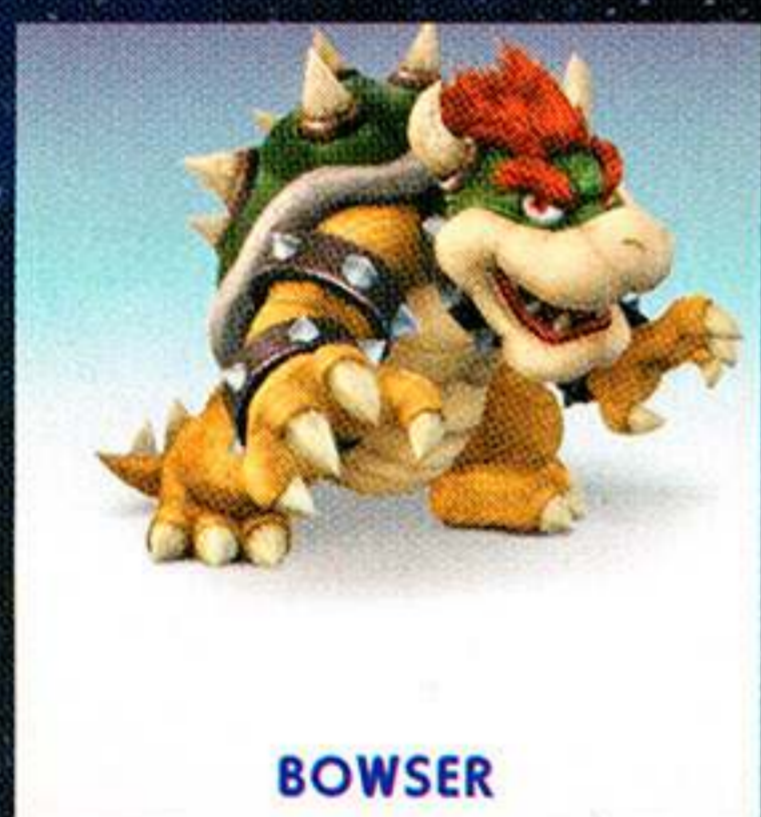
PIKACHU



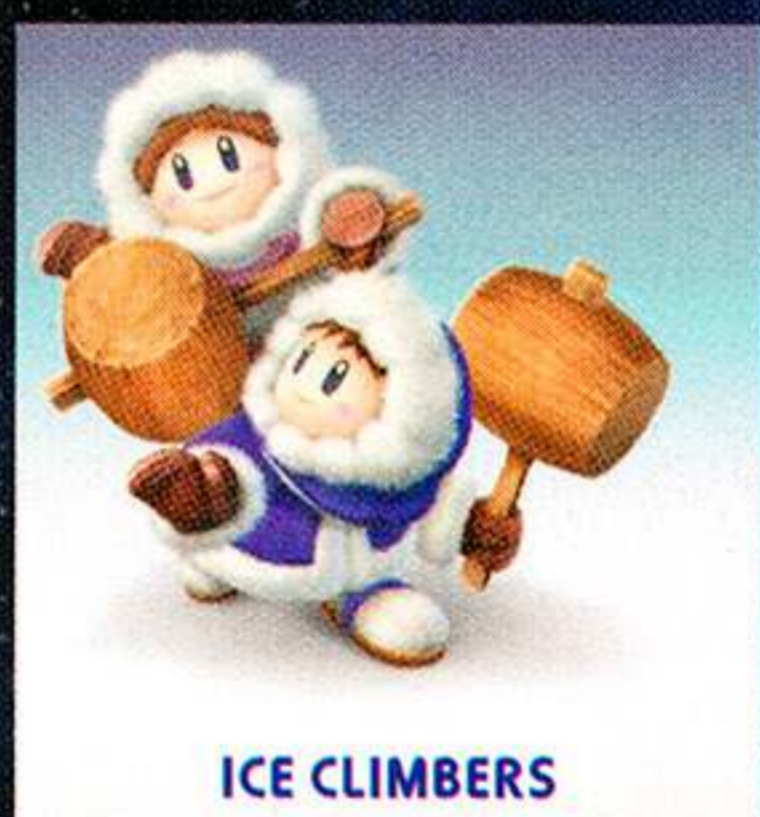
ZELDA



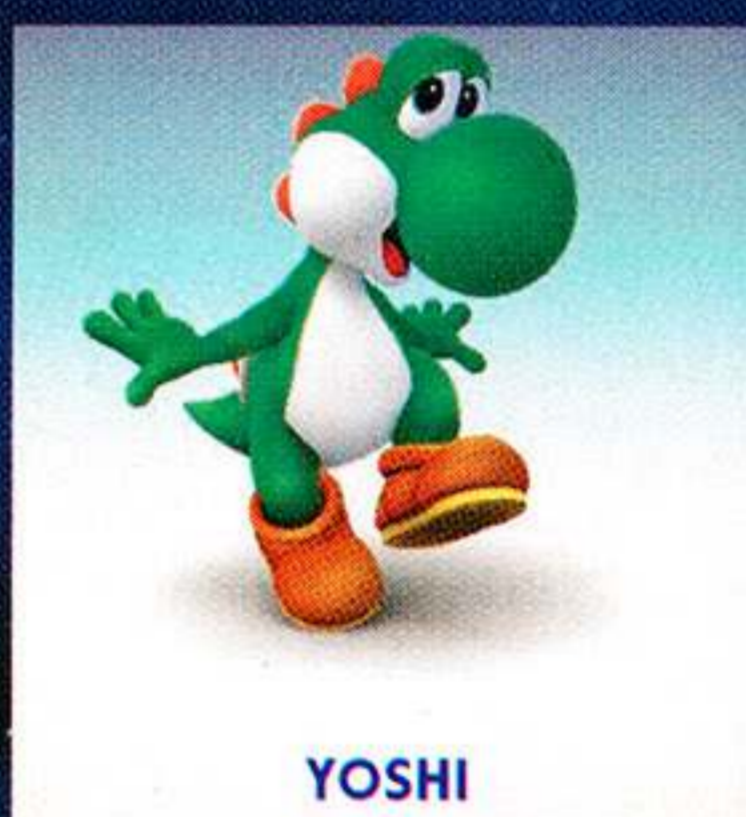
FOX



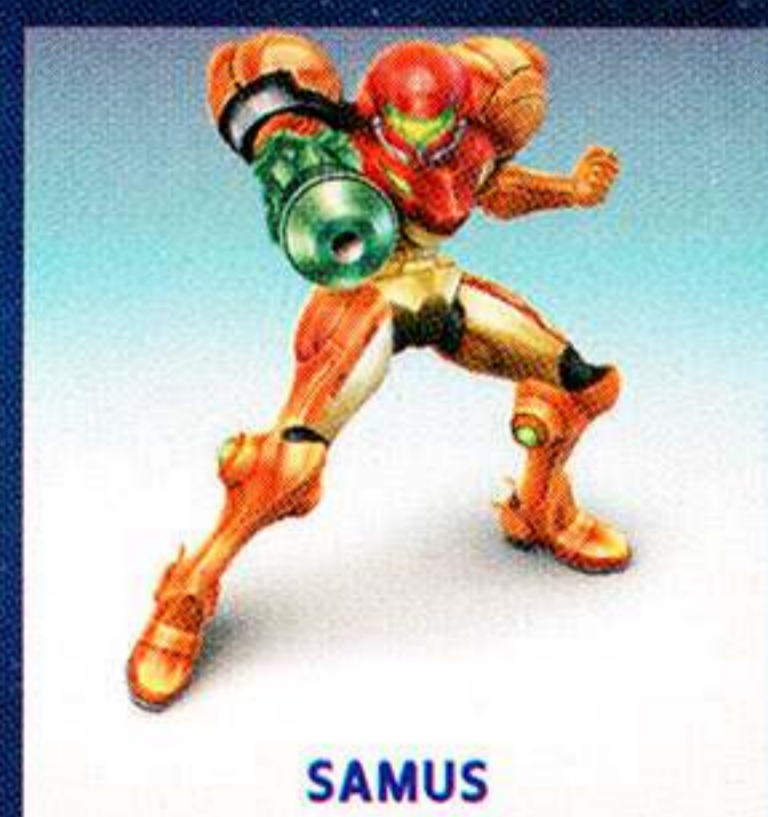
BOWSER



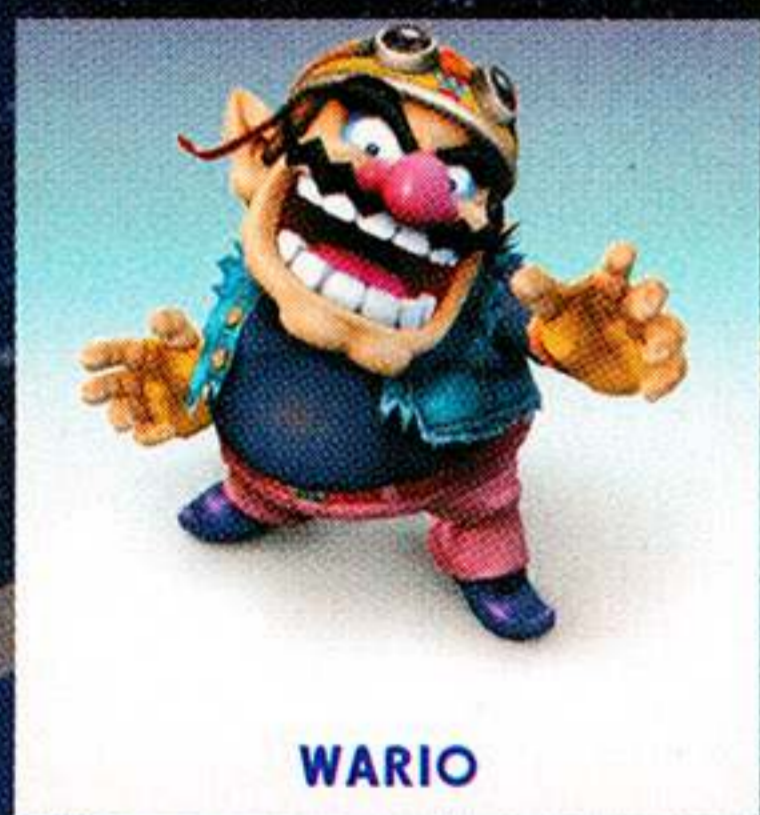
ICE CLIMBERS



YOSHI



SAMUS



WARIO



META KNIGHT



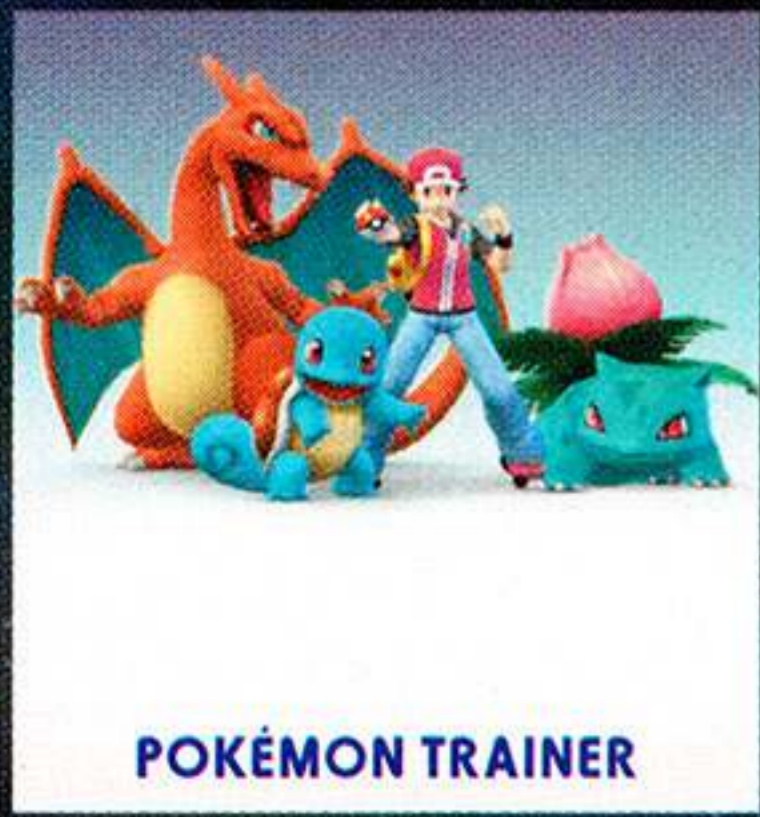
SOLID SNAKE



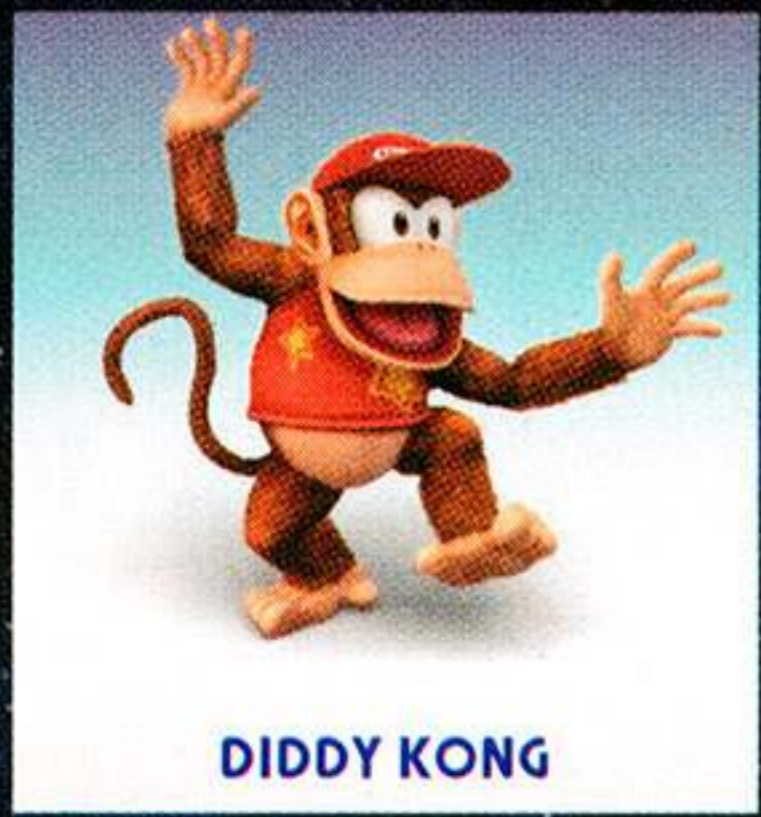
PIT



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



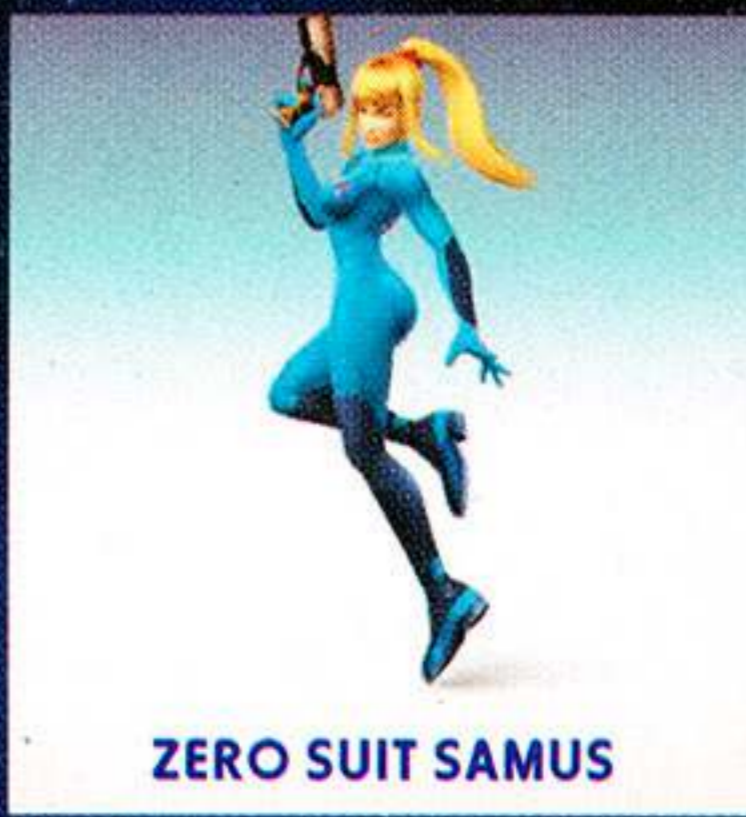
POKEMON TRAINER



DIDDY KONG



IKE

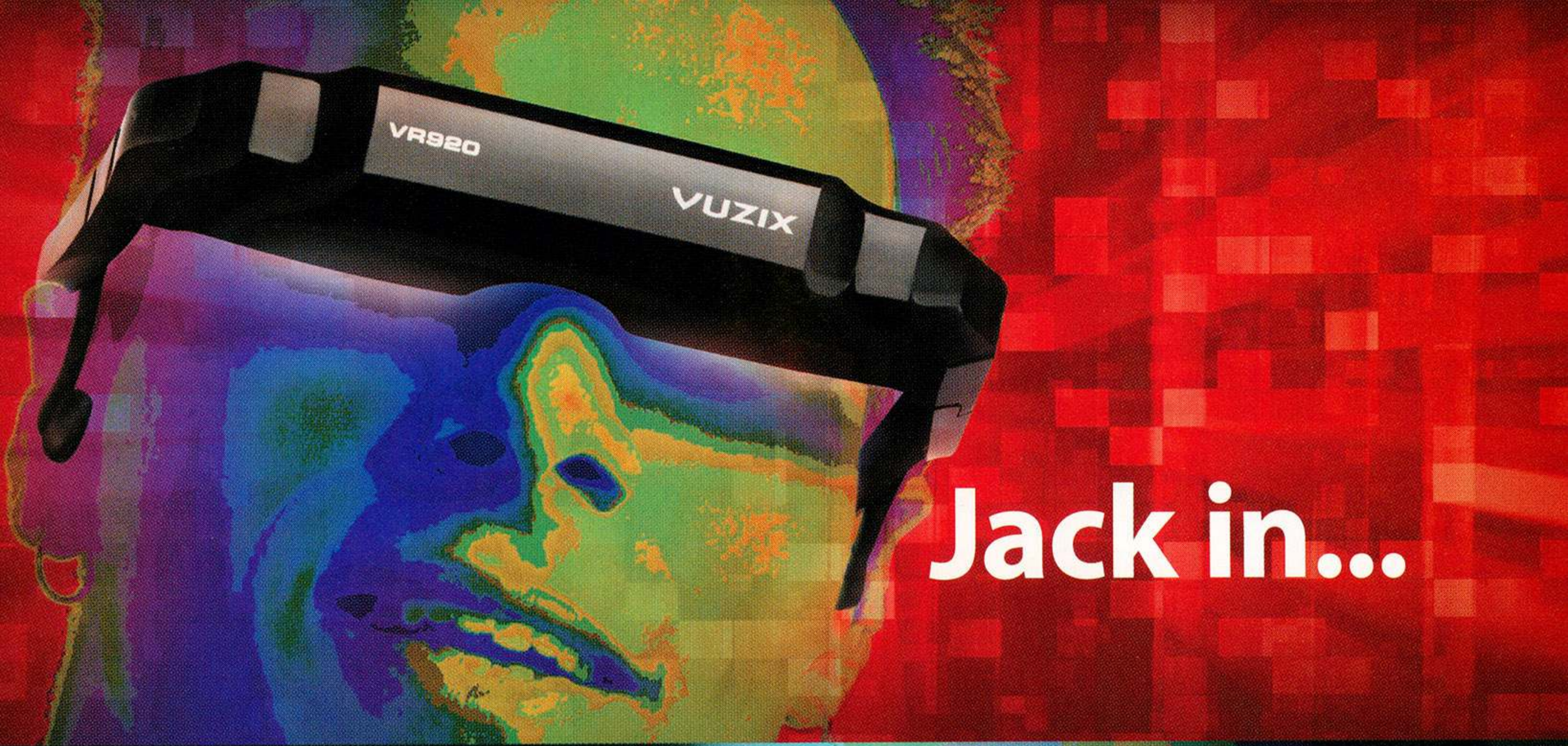


ZERO SUIT SAMUS

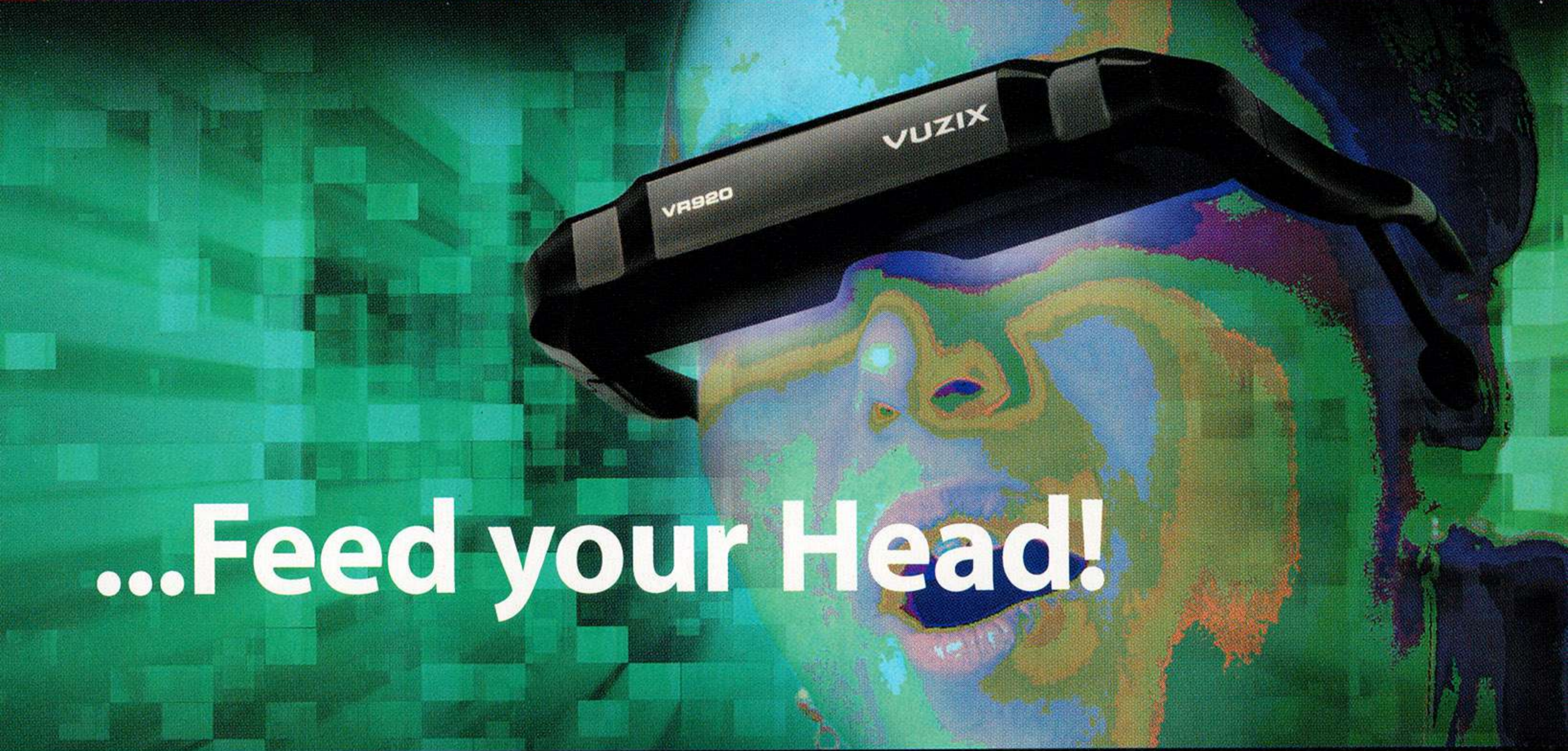


LUCAS

CONTINUED ▶



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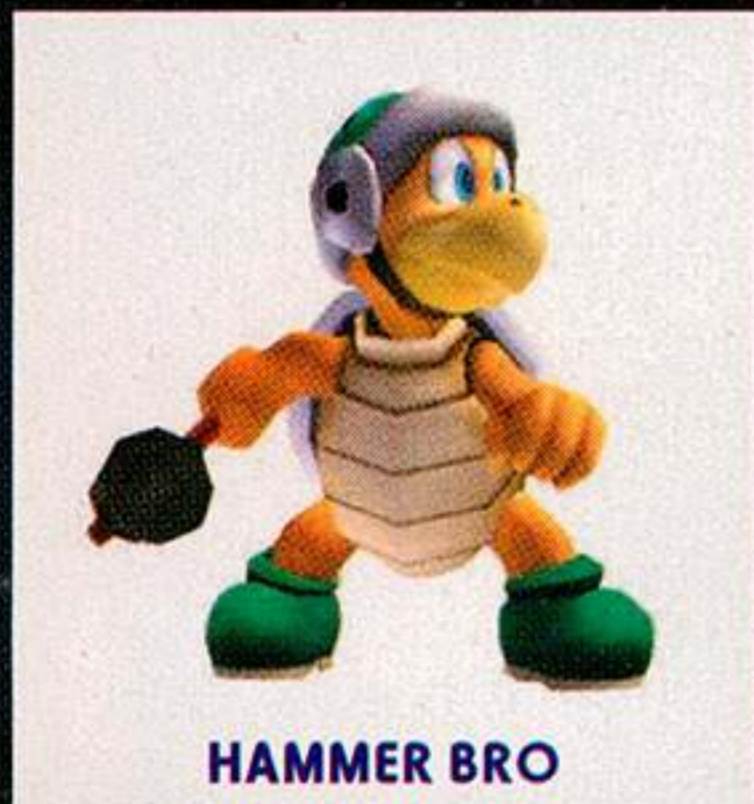
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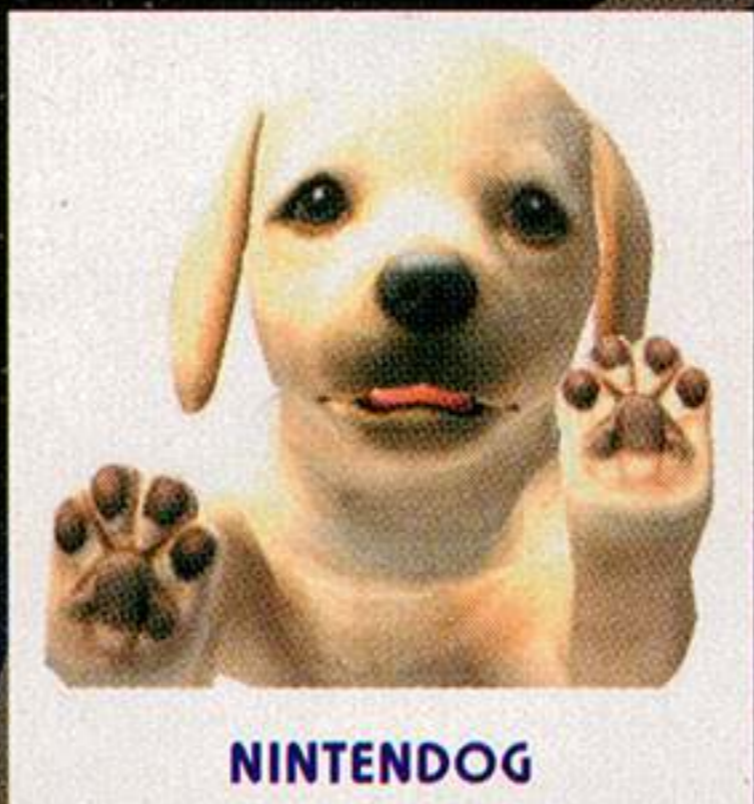
THE NEW VIRTUAL REALITY

View the Future

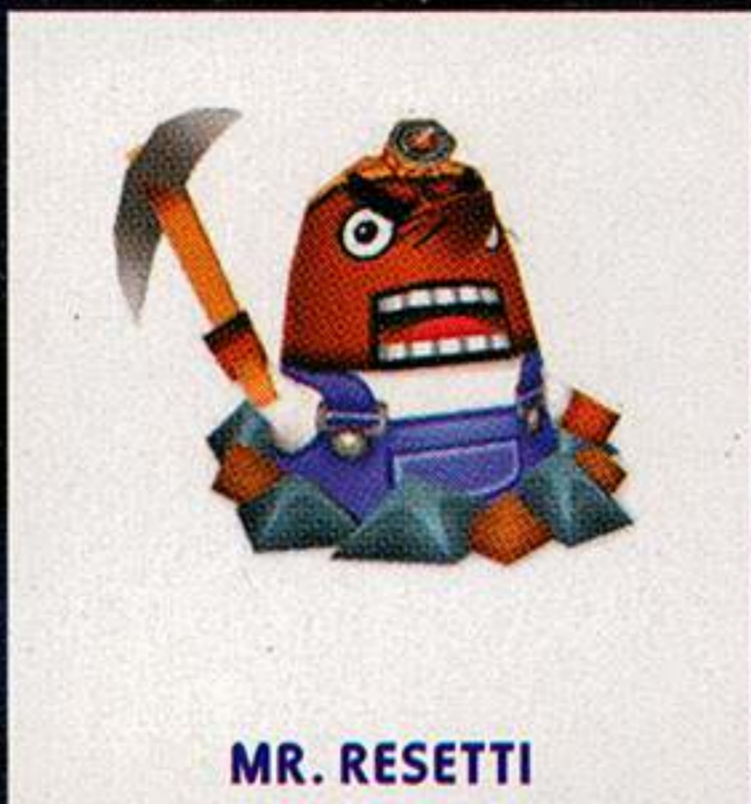
THE HELPERS



HAMMER BRO



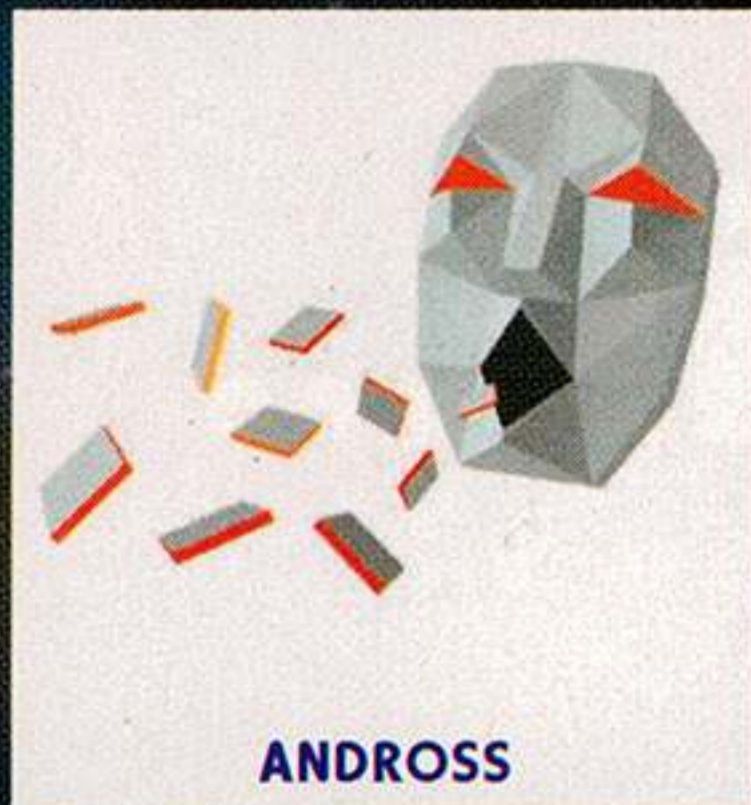
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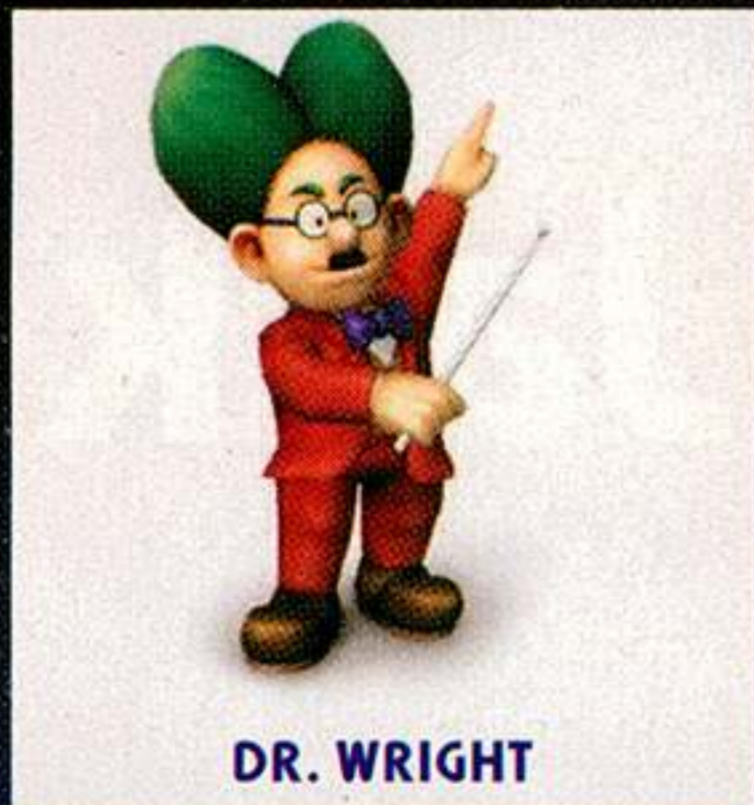
MR. RESETTI



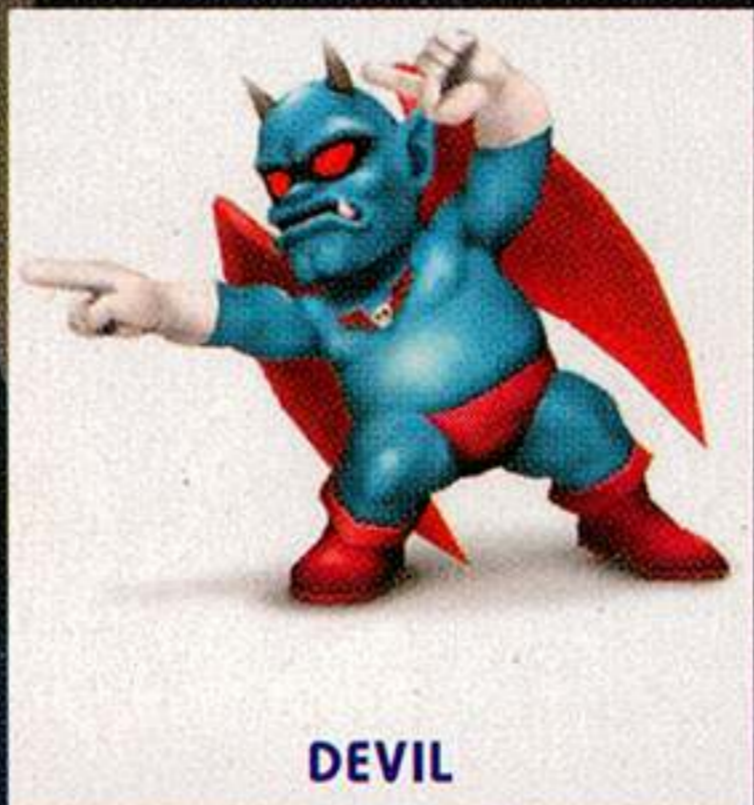
SAMURAI GOROH



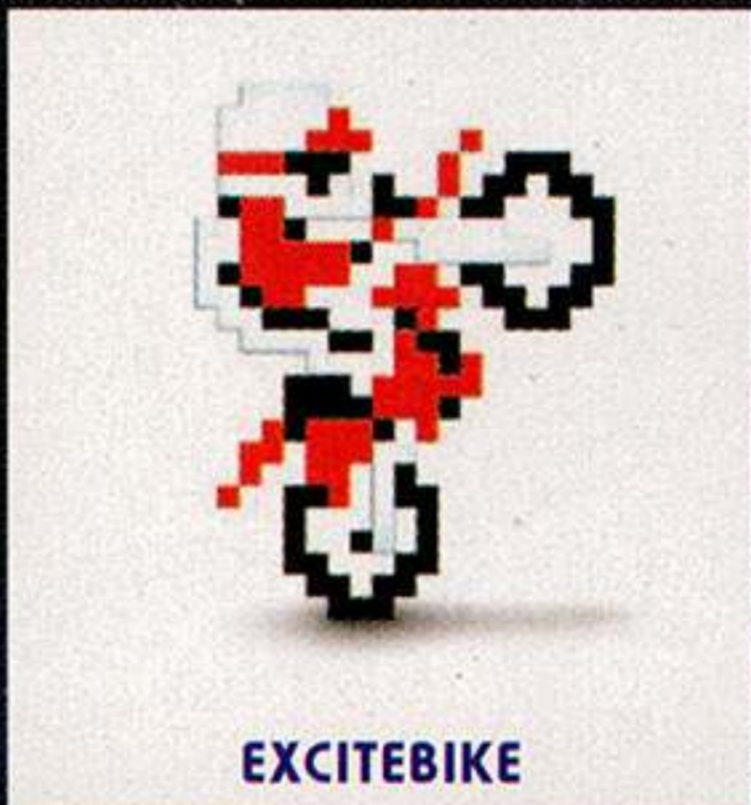
ANDROSS



DR. WRIGHT



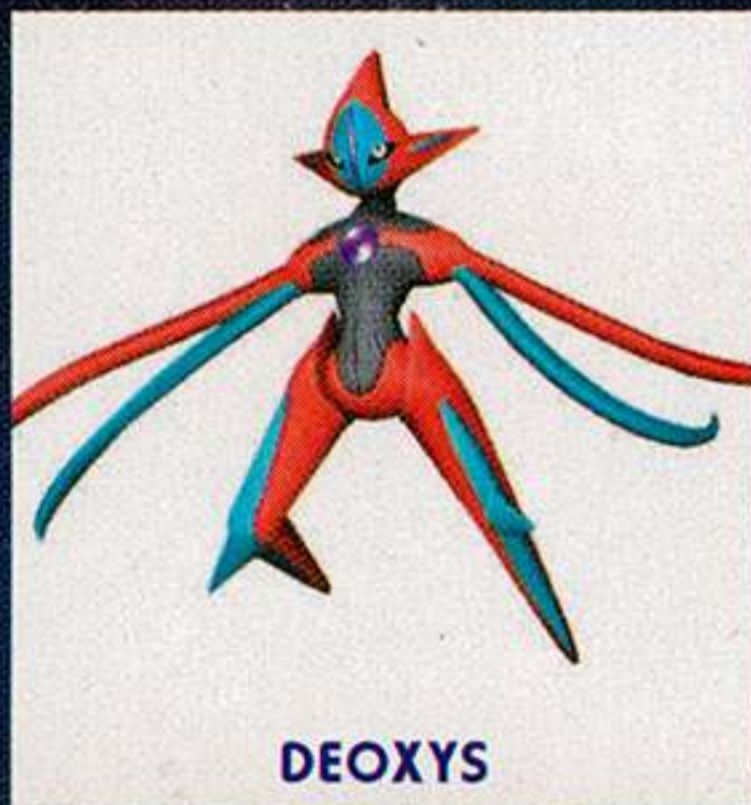
DEVIL



EXCITEBIKE



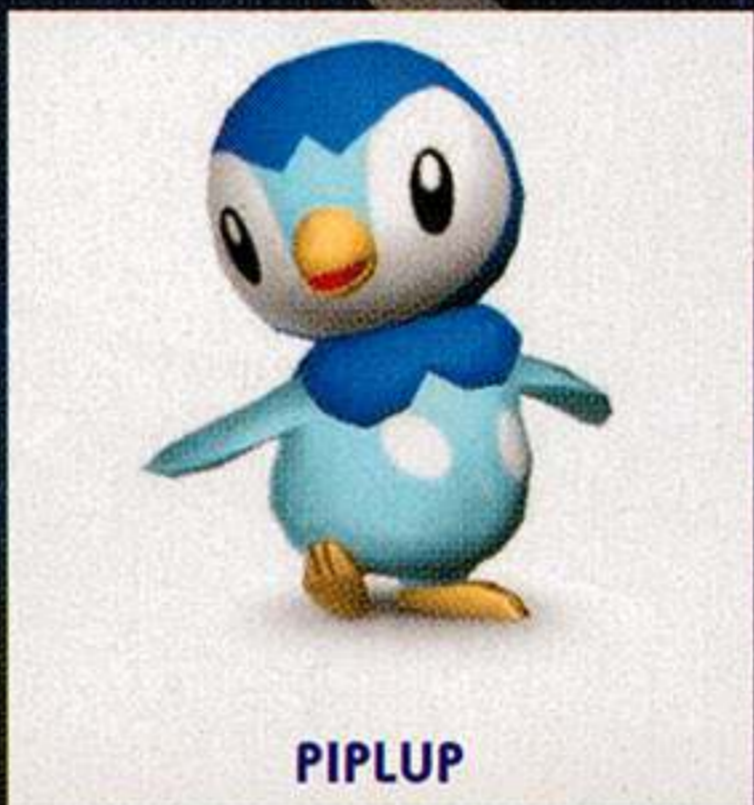
LYN



DEOXYs



MUNCHLAX



PIPLUP



CHIKORITA



GROUDON

These characters may not be as familiar to casual Nintendo fans, but old-school and import gamers may crack a smile when they see them make an appearance on the battlefield. The top two rows are assist characters, who emerge when an assist trophy is unleashed. There's a few you'll probably recognize, like the Ham-

mer Bro and the Nintendog, but others, like SimCity's Dr. Wright and StarFox's Andross, haven't been seen for years. And, once again, Nintendo has to torture us with another character never-before seen in the U.S., with the Devil from Devil World. The bottom row feature a Smash Bros. staple: Pokémon!

CONTINUED ►

A NEW CHALLENGER! 7 FIGHTERS WE WANT TO SEE

Nintendo's done a smashing job assembling an excellent roster for Brawl, but there's still a few franchises left to be mined. Here are some iconic characters we wish would join the fight.



MEGA MAN

The blue bomber is just as influential a mascot as Snake and Sonic, with an impressive weapon to boot. With the ability to charge shots or assume defeated enemies' powers, Mega Man is a worthy opponent.



WART

Super Mario Bros. 2's boss gets no respect from Nintendo. It's time he returned...with a vengeance!



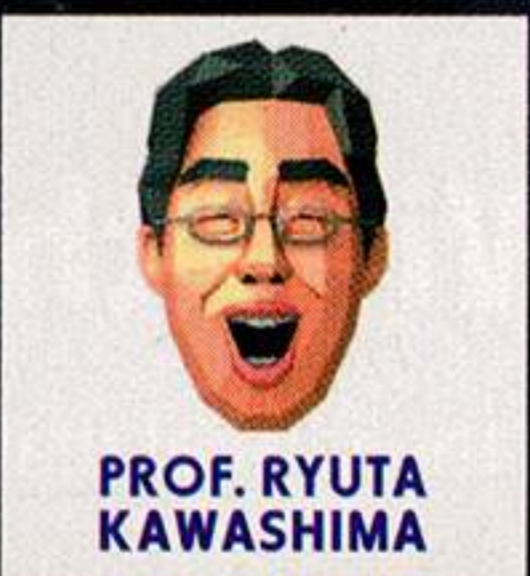
LITTLE MAC

Not only is Punch-Out's hero iconic (dig that pink jumpsuit), but the concept of summoning Bald Bull or King Hippo is too awesome to pass up.



DUCK HUNT DOG

Okay, we wouldn't want to play as him, but everyone who's played Duck Hunt probably wants to put this dog down in the worst way.



PROF. RYUTA KAWASHIMA

You know after dealing with morons on a daily basis that Brain Age's mastermind just wants to let his fists do the talking.



TOM NOOK

Animal Crossing's shop owner has plenty of implements of destruction for sale. Can you survive a butterfly net beat-down?



MASTER CHIEF

Okay, a pipe dream if there ever was one, but we want to see Halo's hero go toe-to-toe with Solid Snake!

THE BEST (AND WORST) Wii GAMES

Truth be told, the Wii is a hit-or-miss affair. Avoid the crap with our handy buyer's guide!

THE BEST

The starting point for any new Wii owner.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS



From Our Review: "Twilight Princess is a potent brew, crafted from a formula that Nintendo has been perfecting for years. And while the flavor is familiar, it somehow manages to feel new and refreshing at the same time. The key to Twilight Princess's genius lies in its ability to evoke, and fulfill, a feeling of nostalgia... Twilight Princess brings back all those fond memories, then creates some of its own."

Key Assets:

- ★ Beautiful art direction
- ★ Smart use of the Wii Remote

MARIO STRIKERS CHARGED



From Our Review: "The core gameplay in Mario Strikers Charged is arguably the best available on the Wii, partly because the controls work with you, not against you. And while the game succeeds most as a multiplayer experience—we defy you to invite three friends over and not have a good time—Mario Strikers Charged is still a total blast if you're playing by yourself thanks to a bevy of play modes."

Key Assets:

- ★ Intuitive controls make for addictive matches
- ★ Tons of modes keep replayability high

THE WORST

Steer clear of these stinkers.

FAR CRY VENGEANCE



From Our Review: "Far Cry Vengeance is like a time-warp ten years into the past, but there's no flux capacitor or white-haired doctor, only crappy graphics, aggravating controls, and some of the dumbest enemies ever seen in a console shooter. Everyone thought shooters would be the genre of choice for the motion-sensing Wii, but games like Far Cry are quickly proving that theory wrong. The simple act of turning around in Vengeance is more difficult than wiping out an entourage of baddies in clear view."

Cardinal Sins:

- ★ Awkward, cumbersome controls
- ★ Vile, pre-PS2-era graphics

TRANSFORMERS: THE GAME



From Our Review: "For the first time since the early days of the NES, I am utterly in awe of my inability to grasp the controls of a game. The Wii Remote motions are responsible for both looking around as well as melee combat. You need to waggle the Wii Remote to punch and kick during fights, but that makes your Transformer shake his head around like he's having a seizure. Chances are, you'll have more fun dressing up in a cardboard box and beat-boxing as you pretend to be Sound Wave."

Cardinal Sins:

- ★ Clunky use of motion sensing
- ★ Boring, formulaic missions

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NINTENDO DS

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FEATURE

A LEGEND IN T



THE MAKING?

NEW WEAPONS, NEW MONSTERS, A MULTIPLAYER UPDATE, AND EVEN A BOSS UNVEILING. *GAMEPRO* GETS FIRST CRACK WITH LEGENDARY.

BY TRAVIS MOSES



Legendary's griffons are no joke—they'll claw through walls and windows to get at you.

What's so special about Legendary? It combines modern-day firepower with vicious werewolves, griffons, and Minotaurs—think *God of War* meets *Call of Duty 4*.

Earlier this year, developer Spark showed us how *Legendary* (formerly known as the more tongue-twisty "*Legendary: The Box*") is breaking the mold of typical shooters. A cinematic story line, creatures ripped straight out of Greek and Scandinavian mythology, and, of course, big guns make up the essence of *Legendary*.

WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME

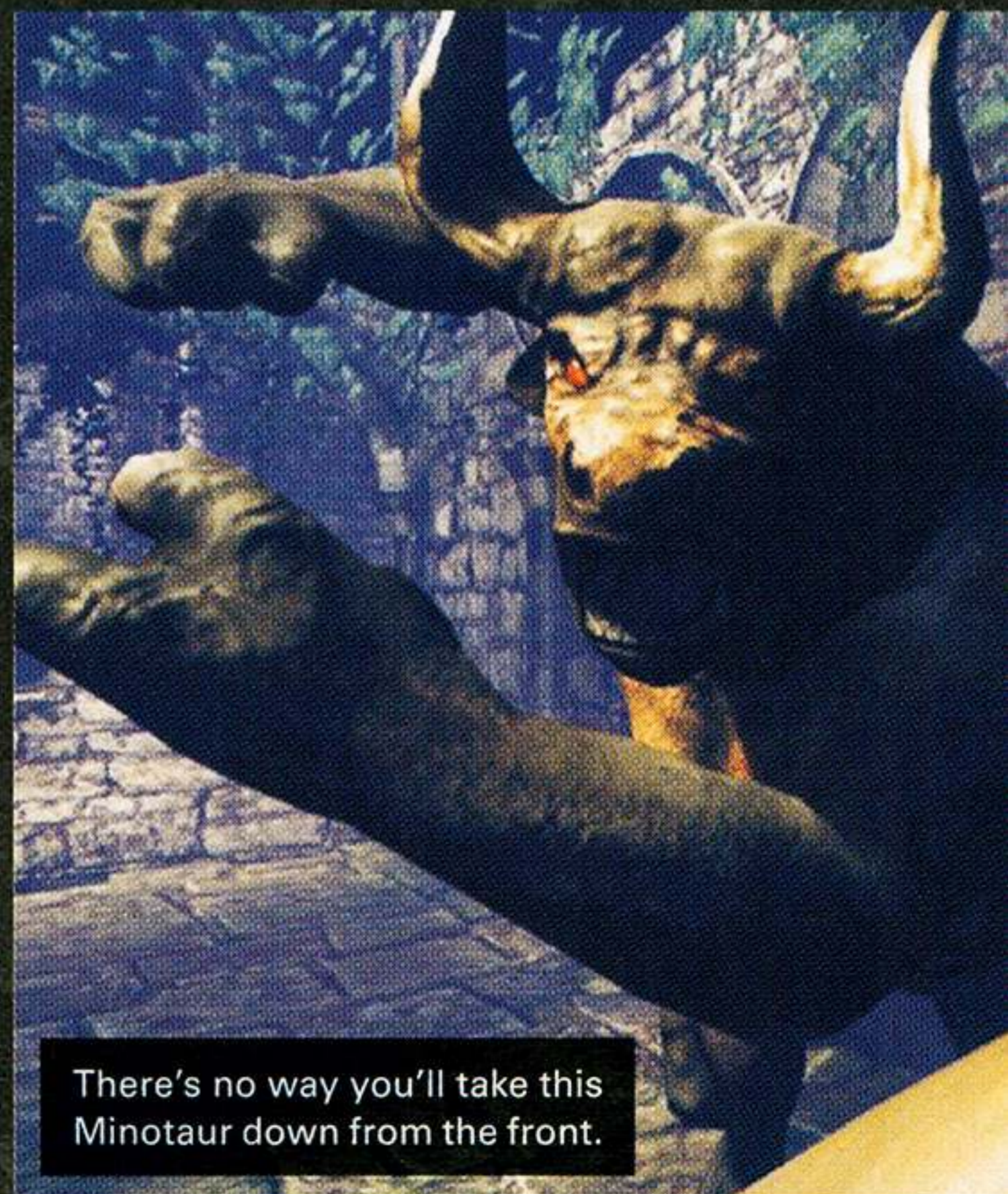
Standing in the streets of Durham, the fifth episode in the game, it's immediately obvious that developer Spark has made major progress in polishing this highly promising shooter. The graphics are much improved since the build we saw earlier this year with near-finalized lighting and tactile textures. Eerie fires light the street as the sun dwindles below the horizon, and a chapel looms menacingly in the distance. I run down the street maneuvering past fallen debris from the surrounding buildings. Members from the Council of 98,

protectors of the mythological-turned-real Pandora's Box, cover my blind spots as we approach a closed gate. It's game time!

Actually, it's an ambush. Werewolves lope down the street and crawl from nearby windows in waves. I fire my assault rifle in short, controlled bursts, but have a hard time hitting the targets. These lycanthropic bastards are unnervingly fast and nimble. Smarter than the mindless grunts found in most shooters, *Legendary's* werewolves crawl on walls and through barricades, snarling and gnashing their teeth as they approach for the killing blow.

Ammo nearly depleted, I fall back into a dilapidated two-story house. Upstairs, it's safe...until an alpha werewolf leaps through a hole in the wall and starts gnawing on my skull. No good! I swap to the shotgun hoping to deal more close-range punishment, a key gameplay element in *Legendary*. Though I best the beast, I've learned a key lesson: beware the alpha pack leader wolves.

I break away and leap back into the street. I have a better fighting chance in the open, and with the support of the Council, the alpha hordes go down hard. I crisscross my way through some



There's no way you'll take this Minotaur down from the front.

CONTINUED ►

MONSTERS, INC.

LEGENDARY'S BEASTS ARE SMART AND STRONG—
EVEN THE SCORE WITH THIS BESTIARY.

WEREWOLVES

In mythology, werewolves are said to be humans who shape shift into wolf-like creatures, usually during a full moon. Intelligent and nimble, werewolves run faster on all fours, climb on walls, and throw furniture.



ALPHA WOLVES

The bigger, more badass brother of the werewolf, alphas take more damage and dish out platters of pain. Silver bullets won't kill these beasts, as werewolves must be decapitated before they regenerate.



MINOTAUR

Part man, mostly bull, the Minotaur is an unstoppable force with a keen sense of hearing and almost armor-like hide. Dodge his charge with a split-second sprint, then attack from behind.



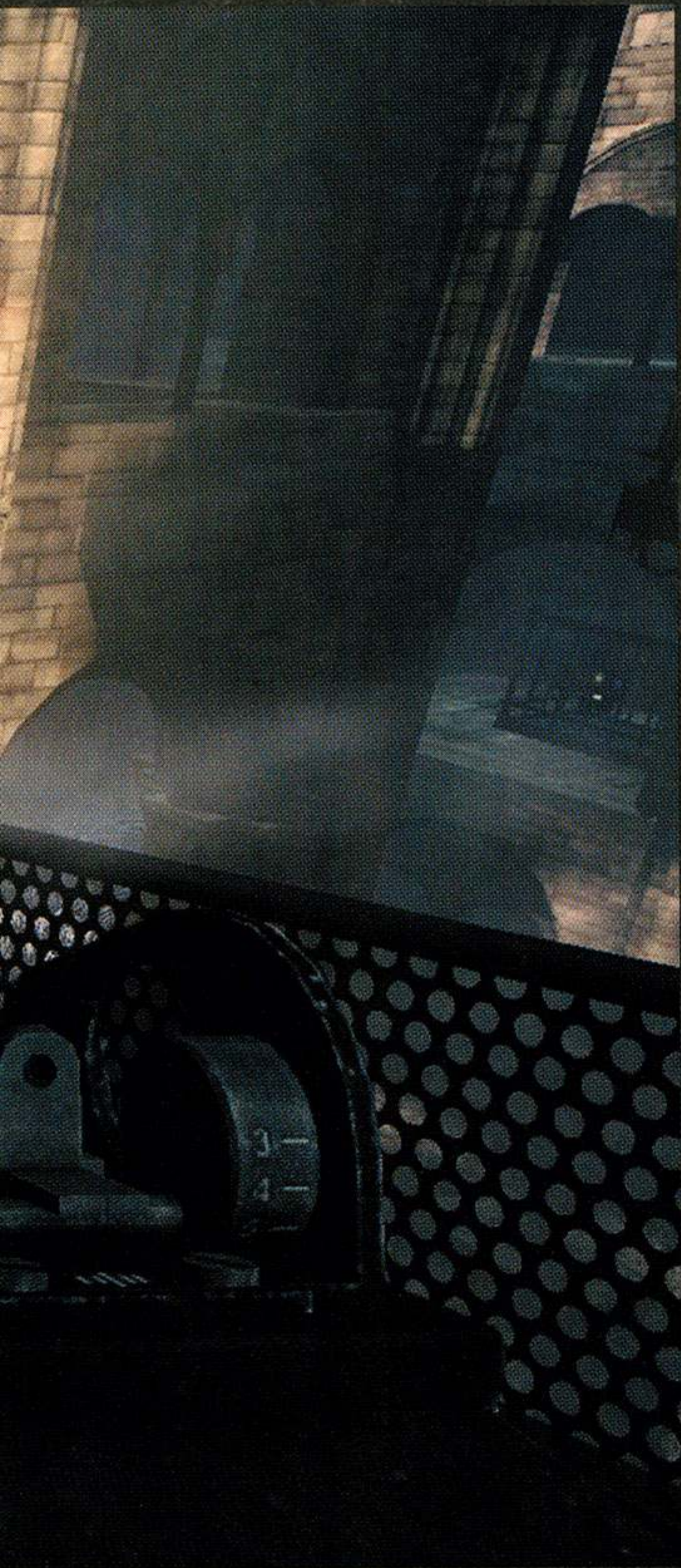
GRIFFON

With the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle, the griffon possesses a cat-like curiosity coupled with the hunting instincts of a lion—a formidable foe. Use heavy artillery.



ECHIDNA TENTACLE

In Greek mythology, Echidna had the face and torso of a beautiful woman, but the body of an enormous serpent. Her tentacles attack anything, even other creatures, but they are easy to kill with small-arms fire.



A LEGEND IN THE MAKING?



Low on ammo? Let the werewolves do the work for you.

nearby alleys, blasting through hordes of lower-ranking werewolves. One leaps above a doorway, picks up a concrete block, and hurls it at a nearby Council mercenary. Before he can get back up and brush off the assault, the beast pounces onto his chest, picks him up by both feet, and smashes his limp body over and over again into the asphalt.

The situation looks grim. I dash down a nearby tunnel and enter into a cloister of concrete pillars and barricades. Two Black Order soldiers, former Council members-turned-slaves to the power of Pandora's Box, are relaxing in the middle of the cloister. Seconds later, I hear a deep baritone growl and catch my first glimpse of the brutish Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull monstrosity from ancient Greek myth. A shattered body lands at the feet of the Black Order soldiers, a nearby wall explodes in a cloud of dust and debris, and then the Minotaur charges upon them.

To the sounds of driving guitars, the two Black Order soldiers open fire. Of course, it's much, much too late. The Minotaur shatters both men

with a threatening-looking club—actually a stone cross—and then turns his attention to me. I unload round after round of shotgun shells into the beast, but my feeble assault barely breaks his powerful stride. The Minotaur lowers his head and gores me, knocking me to the ground. Shaken, I clamber to my feet and sprint behind a nearby barricade to reload my weapon. The Minotaur screams with rage, and as I hastily reload my weapon, I hear what sounds almost like a stampede. My sturdy barricade explodes as the beast rips through, clubbing me with that strange cross of his. The developers weren't kidding when they said that a Minotaur fight is like setting a bull free in a china house. By the time this battle is over, the surroundings will lie in ruin.

It's time to finish the Minotaur. I expect him to rear his head down and charge again, but instead he lifts the stone cross above his head with both arms and throws the 200 pound projectile at my face. Death ensnares me in its warm, relaxing embrace. Thanks to the magic of checkpoints, I'm able to kill the Minotaur after no

CONTINUED ►



MONSTERS, INC. (CONT.)

NARI

In Scandinavian mythology, the Nari are demonic beings that spawn from the souls of children. They have sharp teeth and claws, and can possess inanimate objects. Nari are invulnerable to attacks while in ghost form.



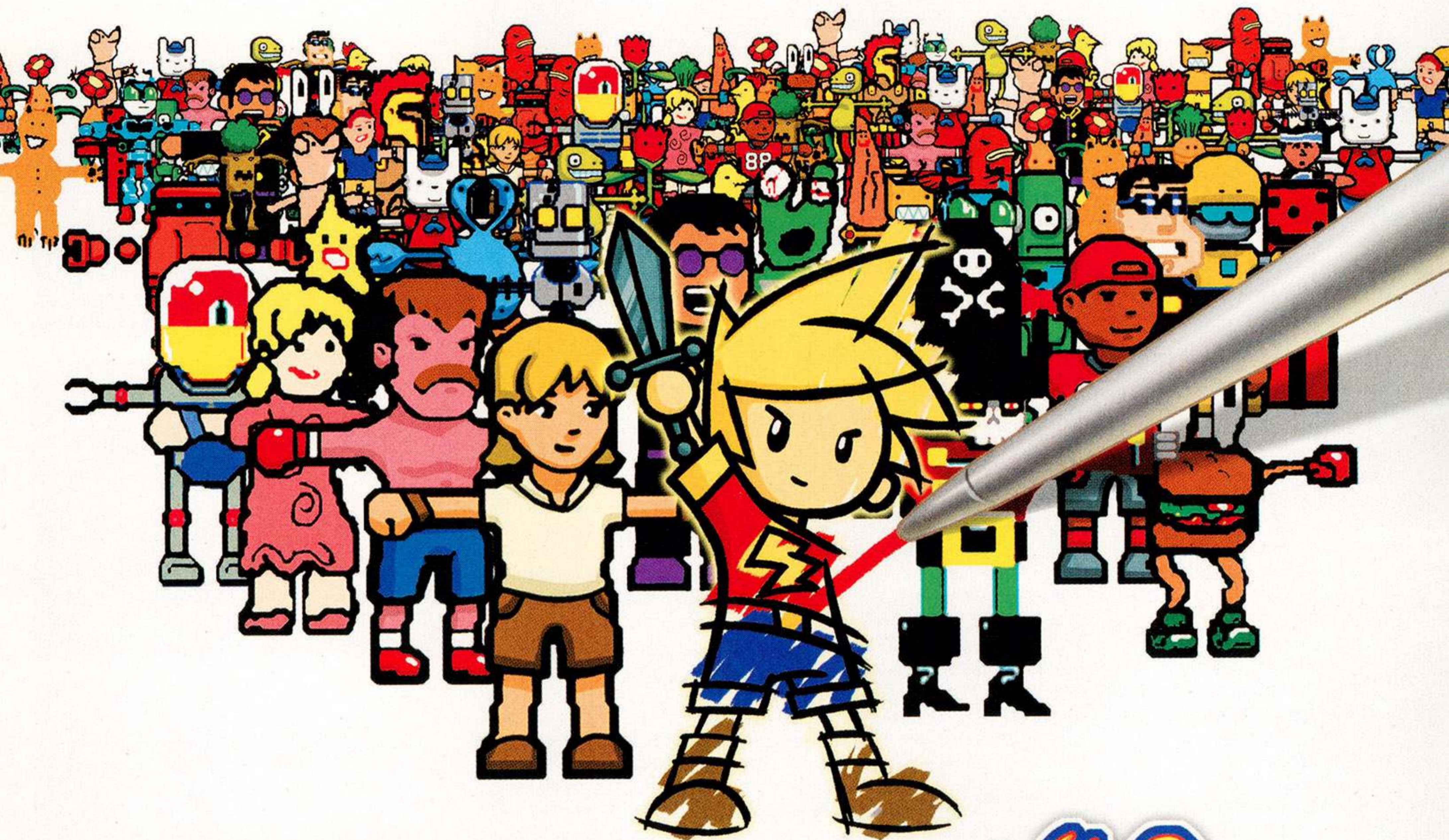
A BOSS UNVEILED

THE KRAKEN

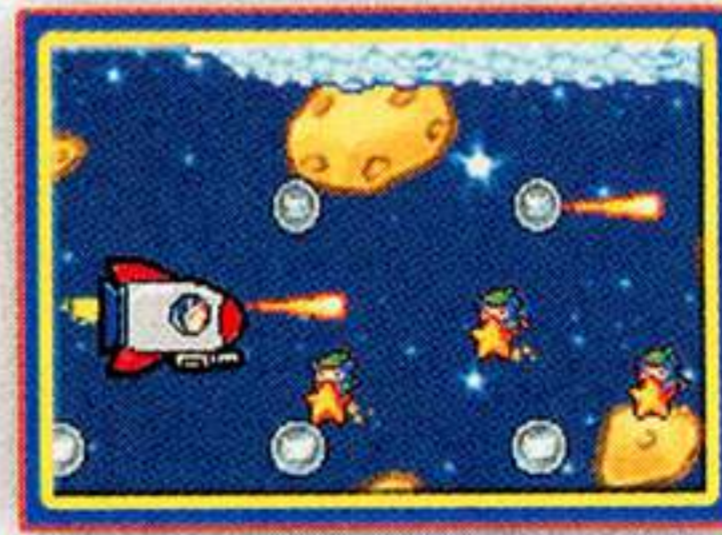
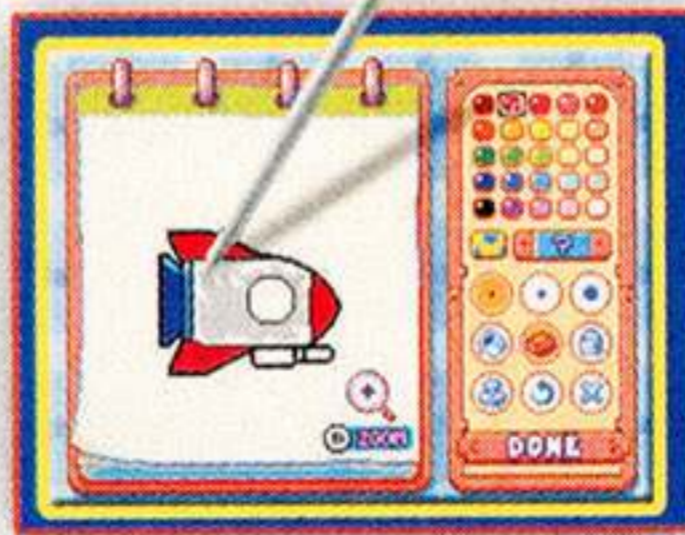
The tale of the Kraken hails from Scandinavian lore. Survivors say it's the size of an island and invulnerable to heavy weapons. In *Legendary*, the Kraken takes on the shape of a gigantic octopus-like creature with eyes at the end of each tentacle.



Your Hero. Your Adventure.

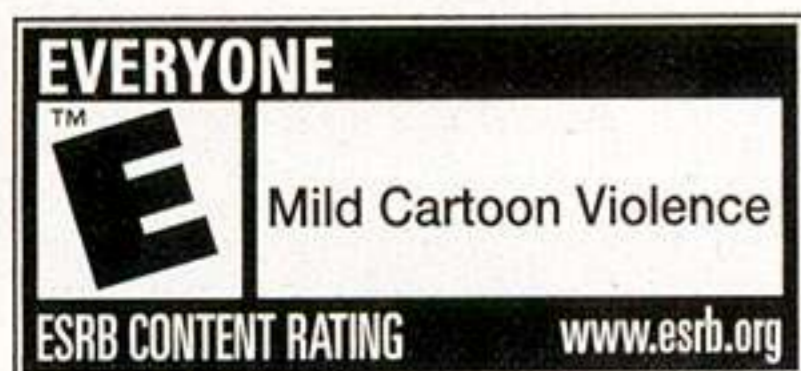


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A LEGEND IN THE MAKING?



less than three more attempts. Even during this moment of victory, I can't help but reminisce how each battle was utterly different: depending on where I ran, my distance to the beast, and how badly I was wounded, the battle played out entirely differently. That's the beauty of the A.I. system Spark has built for *Legendary*. Enemies can and will go everywhere, and are fully aware of their surroundings. If you stand in their line of sight and there is something nearby to throw, such as a chair or heavy rock, they're going to throw it. At you, most likely.

THE ENEMY TRIFECTA

So, you've read about the Council of 98, the Black Order, and the creatures of myth, but here's how each different sect adds to the gameplay and story of *Legendary*.

The Council of 98 is an ancient organization of elite soldiers specially trained to prevent Pandora's Box from being unleashed. But now that it's open, they use their fighting ability to undo the damage and reseal the box. Even though you foolishly opened the box, the Council fights with you to help restore order to the world.

Black Order members are a different breed. Once part of the Council of 98, the Black order



The assault rifle is no match for an alpha. Try a shotgun.



splintered off to find a way to unleash and harness the power of Pandora's Box. A man by the name of La Fey runs the evil sect. By the end of the game, you'll have a personal vendetta against La Fey and his mercenary minions.

MONSTER MASH

Spark remains tight-lipped about the details of *Legendary*'s multiplayer, but they did confirm werewolf A.I. would play a key role to earning frags in a sort of creature deathmatch. Spark did reveal creature control devices for the single-player campaign that allows the user to twist the tides of who and what the creatures attack. Could this be part of the multiplayer experience too? Only time will tell.

For the time being, the single-player campaign of *Legendary* is done. Spark's developers are making daily runs through the game to polish up the hitches and glitches, but the entire story is complete. *Legendary* is scheduled for a Spring 2008 release, which gives the developer more than plenty of time to fine tune the already intense, metal experience. All eyes are on *Legendary*, and we look forward to seeing much more in the next coming months. **GP**

MYTH BUSTERS

EVEN A RAMPAGING MINOTAUR IS NO MATCH FOR THESE HIGH-POWERED WEAPONS.



ASSAULT RIFLE

The go-to weapon for mythological beast slayers. A well-rounded weapon coupled with an ACOG scope for long-distance shooting.



SHOTGUN

Best used against werewolves. A direct headshot will instantly decapitate any Limos werewolf; alphas take a couple more shots.



MACHINE GUN

Spray and pray with this light machine gun. The machine gun's heavy artillery is best used against griffons and Minotaur.



SUBMACHINE GUN (SMG)

Two submachine guns are better than one. Dual-wield for maximum damage.



PISTOL

The last resort...you might want to save a round for yourself.

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GET TOGETHER. ROLL SOME DICE. HAVE FUN.

Halo 3: Killer Secrets Guide

Hunt down all 13 secret Skulls in the game, unlock some of the best armor permutations, and more!



THE TWO HARDEST CAMPAIGN MOMENTS

Halo 3's Heroic and Legendary modes will challenge any veteran. Here's how to beat the two hardest moments in the game!



Dual Scarab Battle

As soon as "Journey's End" begins, ride your vehicle through the icy terrain and plow through anything in your path. You'll soon find a Hornet, so hop in. Pilot the UNSC aircraft and prepare to battle the two mammoth Scarabs up ahead. Don't try to attack both: instead, focus on destroying one Scarab at a time. Break the Scarab's legs by shooting their weak points (indicated by the red cross hairs), and dodge or destroy the smaller enemy aircraft. Once you shatter the Scarab's power cores, located on its rear, your giant metallic adversary will be no more. Now finish off the other one!



Escape from the Flood Hatchery

Surviving "Rampant" is a real backbreaker. Pass through the gooey surroundings as quickly as possible to find Cortana. Prepare for a grueling battle: you'll be fighting a *ton* of Flood beasts. But don't stop to smell the roses for long, because killing all the Flood here is impossible. Follow the shiny cyst road and drop into the hole ahead. Whatever you do, don't pop those tumor-like pustules growing all around you. Keep thrashing your enemies and move from area to area without stopping for too long. Clear a path with the energy sword and you'll eventually get out this filthy Flood pit.





How To: MAKE CUSTOM GAMES

Want to make the ultimate custom game type in Forge? This primer will get you started.



Plasma Punch & Stick

The goal here is to hone your melee and grenade stick skills. Points are only awarded for assassinations, beatdowns, and grenade sticks.

Step 1: Go to the Custom Games lobby. Select Slayer as the base gametype to edit. Press the X button to edit gametype options.

Step 2: Set the Score to Win to your preference. We recommend 25 kills.

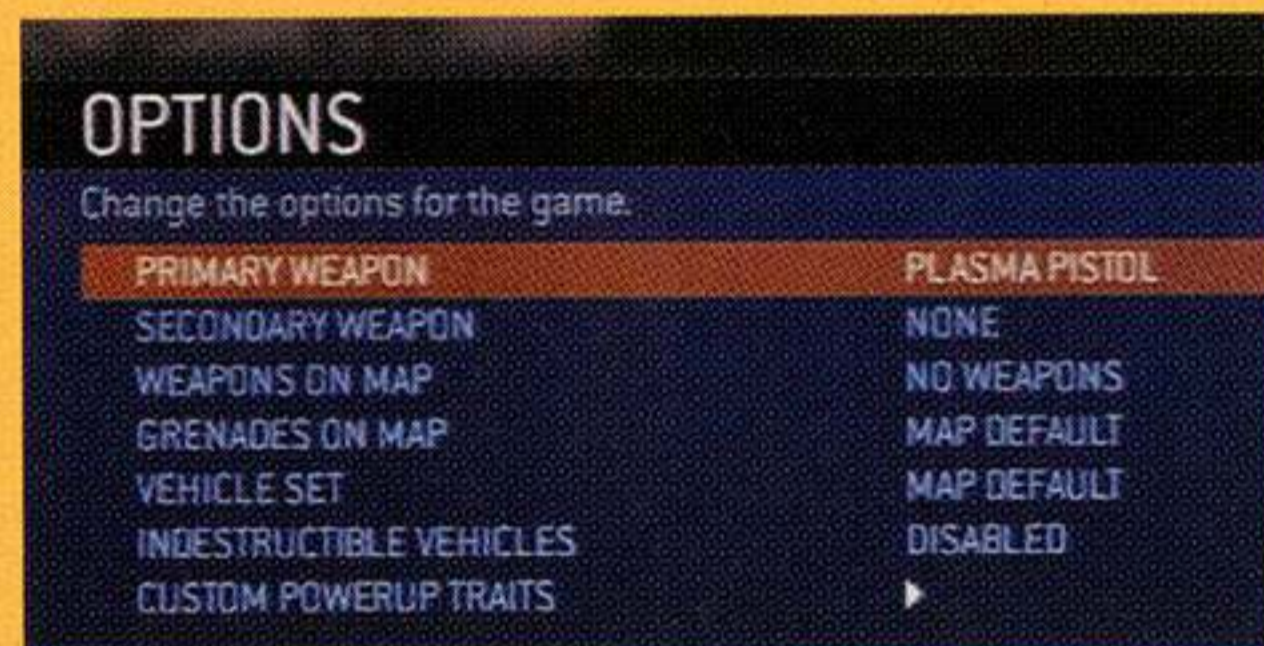
Step 3: Go to Slayer Settings. Click on the Scoring options. Leave every option as is. Except, the following options need be altered:

Kill Points: 0

Beatdown Bonus: 1

Assassination Bonus: 1

Sticky Bonus: 1



Step 4: Head back to the main Slayer options menu. Go to Weapons and Vehicles. The following options need be as follows:

Primary Weapon: Plasma Pistol

Weapons on Map: No Weapons

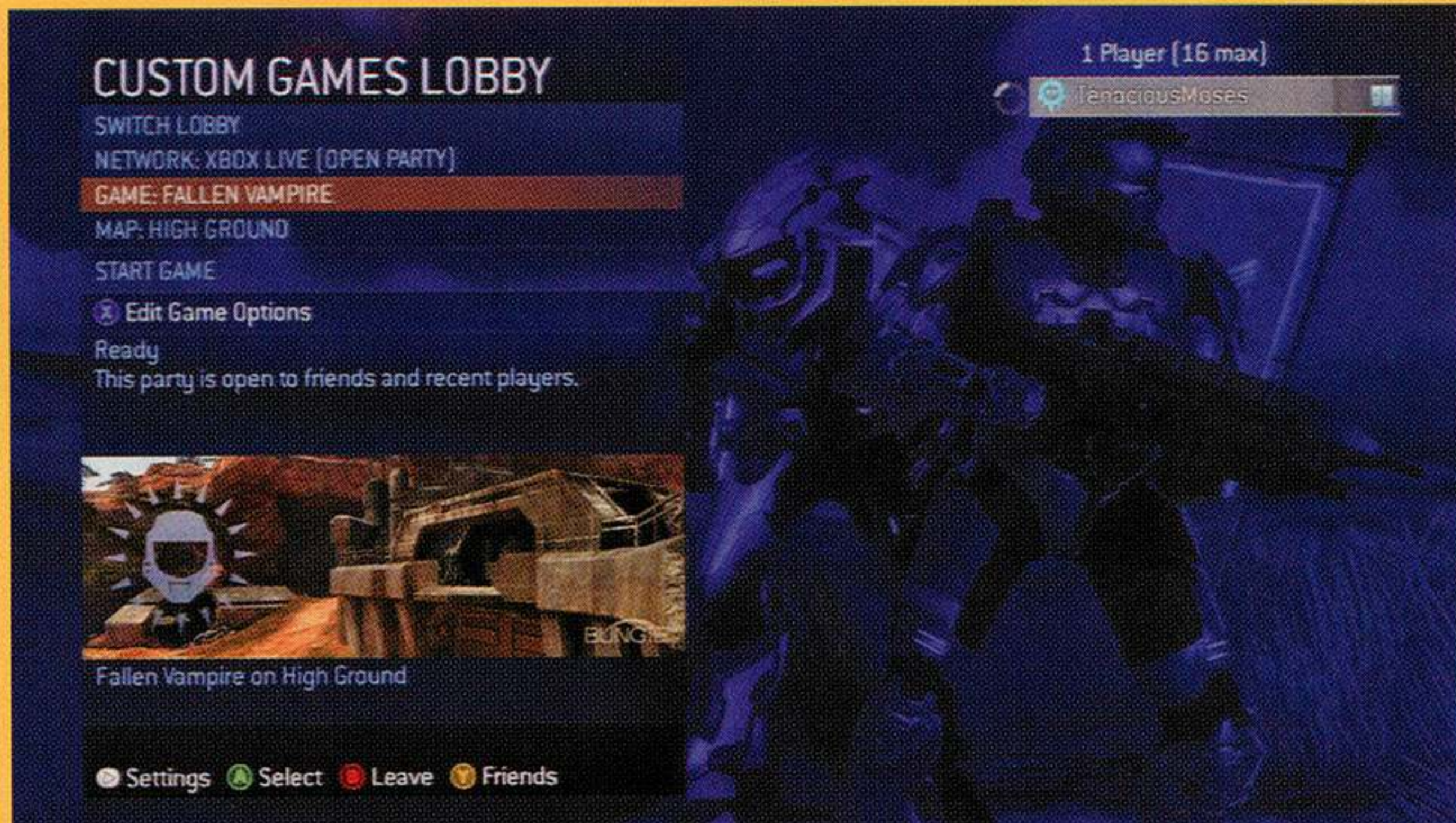
Step 5: Return to the main Slayer options menu. Go to General Settings. We need to edit the Base Player Traits.



Step 6: Go to Weapons and Damage. Enable Infinite Ammo.

Step 7: Press the X button to save these settings. Select "Save as New." Character space is tight, so name this something shorter such as "Plasma Pnch&Stck."

You're now ready to play a Custom Game of Plasma Punch & Stick with friends on any map! Go the extra mile in the Forge to replace all the Frag Grenades with Plasma and Spike grenades for extra sticky fun.



Fallen Vampire

Fallen Vampire is a variation of Juggernaut. One player is selected to be the ultra-powerful Vampire. When the Vampire dies, the spirit is passed on to another player...kind of like the devilish soul in *Fallen*, that flick with Denzel Washington. Points are awarded for killing the Vampire as well as scoring kills as the Vampire.

Step 1: Go to the Custom Games lobby. Select "Juggernaut" as the base gametype to edit. Press the X button to edit its gametype options.

Step 2: Set the Score to Win option. We recommend 10 to 20 kills.



Step 3: Go to Juggernaut Settings. Change the following options on this screen:

Next Juggernaut: Random

Next Juggernaut Delay: No Delay



Step 4: Go to Juggernaut Traits. There are many options we need to alter here. First, go to Shields and Health. The following options should be changed for optimal balance:

Damage Resistance: 200%

Shield Recharge Rate: 100% (Normal)

Shield Vampirism: 50% Leech

Immune to Headshots: Enabled

Step 5: Go back to the Juggernaut Traits option menu. Go to Weapons and Damage. The following options need be changed:

Damage Modifier: 200%

Infinite Ammo: Enabled

Weapon Pickup: Disabled

Step 6: Go back to the Juggernaut Traits option menu. Go to Movement. This is where we change the Vampire's speed and ability to essentially fly. Change the Player Speed to 150% and Player Gravity to 50%.



Step 7: Go back to the Juggernaut Traits option Menu. Go to Appearance. Change the following options:

Active Camo: Poor Camo

Waypoint: No Waypoint

Forced Color: Black

Step 8: Press the X button to save these settings. Select Save as New. Name this gametype "Fallen Vampire."



You're now ready to play a Custom Game of Fallen Vampire with friends on any map. Fallen Vampire is best played on smaller maps such as Guardian, Snowbound, and Epitaph.

CONTINUED ►



HOW TO: GET ALL 13 SKULLS!



There are 13 Silver and Gold Skulls in Halo 3—find them all with this handy GamerHelp guide!

The Gold Skulls

Gold Skulls usually make the game much harder, and can make cooperative play more challenging.

NOTE: Attention all skull hunters! One skill you'll want to learn is "crouch jumping," which makes you jump slightly higher. Press A to jump (duh), then click and hold the Left Analog stick to crouch in midair.



Iron Skull

Effect: If you die, you'll respawn at the beginning of the level.

Location of Skull: "Sierra 117"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Very Easy

Towards the end of Sierra 117, you'll find the first skull. A Pelican will land nearby, but don't board it. Instead, make your way to the left of the Pelican until you are able to jump up onto a ledge which you'll be able to traverse to another ledge that sits against a building. Follow this ledge around the side of the building, and in the furthest corner where the ledge ends, you will find the Iron Skull.

Black Eye Skull

Effect: You must melee attack enemies to restore your shield.

Location of Skull: "Crow's Nest"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Very Easy

As soon as the stage begins, walk up a small set of stairs and walk to the left—you'll see a box with letters and numbers written on the side. Jump onto the box and position yourself so that you can see the red metal scaffolding up above. Make a well-timed jump up onto the scaffolding, and from here turn left and jump onto the large gray pipe. You'll find the Black Eye Skull at the far end of the pipe.

Tough Luck Skull

Effect: Enemies are far more vicious in battle.

Location of Skull: "Tsavo Highway"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Medium

After you pass the shield that blocks the road, you'll reach "Tsavo Highway." A huge Covenant ship will fly overhead. At this point, move towards the large pipe to the left of the highway. Jump down onto the grassy area directly below the yellow ladder that's connected to the pipe. Jump further down onto a gray platform, which has a narrow ledge connected on the right. Jump onto this tiny ledge, then jump to the larger platform on your left. Walk all the way to the end—on the left-hand side you'll see a rock cliff with the skull. Make the long jump over and snag it.

Catch Skull

Effect: Foes will constantly lob grenades at you.

Location of Skull: "The Storm"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Medium

The good news is that this skull is fairly easy to obtain. Once you get outside, hop into a vehicle. There will be a small circular building to the upper-right corner of the plains. The skull is on top of this building. Though there are a few ways to get on top, the easiest way is to jump from the top of a vehicle to get on top. You can also try grenade jumping, though this way is more dangerous.

Fog Skull

Effect: You have to survive the game without your motion sensor.

Location of Skull: "Floodgate"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Hard

Nabbing this skull is tricky, but at least it's at the start of the stage. As soon as you enter the town, zoom in on the top of the building to the right. Time it right, and shoot the enemy right before he jumps off the edge of the building. If you did this correctly, the skull will drop to the ground ahead of you. Watch the skull so you can locate it after it falls to the ground. Messed it up? Try, try, try again.

Famine Skull

Effect: Enemies will only drop about half as much ammunition.

Location of Skull: "The Ark"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Hard

During this mission, a group of Ghosts attack you. You should find yourself under a large metal overhang. The Famine Skull is located on the overhang, so make your way up the rock formation to the left and jump the narrow gap to access the structure. Run to the far end of the structure; if you zoom in here, you'll be able to spot the skull

resting in a small alcove. Using the grenade jump technique is pretty much the only option, as this is a very tricky skull to grab. If you're playing co-op, you can use a buddy to stand on and jump which also works. Either way, the Famine Skull will not be easy to obtain.

Thunderstorm Skull

Effect: Every enemy in the game will be ranked up to next higher class.

Location of Skull: "The Covenant"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Very Easy

The Thunderstorm Skull is located on the second tower you encounter in this level. You'll get a message saying that there is no need to land, but there actually is a reason... to get the skull! Land your Hornet in the middle of the tower, between the two diagonal platforms. Look for the skull at the far end of the middle platform. Easy, right?



Tilt Skull

Effect: You can only hurt certain enemies with specific weapons.

Location of Skull: "Cortana"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Medium

Keep your eyes open for a room containing a Flood, as well as two ramps separated by a small divider between them. Jump onto the divider, and then jump again to reach the tip-top of the divider (it may take a few tries). Once on top, look to your left to see a strange-looking outgrowth coming out of the wall above you. Jump onto this platform from the divider. You'll find another strange outgrowth to jump to if you turn a little bit more to the left, and from that area turn a full 180 degrees and you'll see the final strange platform. From here, walk across the vine-looking rock to a new area with some splattered guts and the Tilt Skull on the ground.

Mythic Skull

Effect: Enemies will take a lot more damage because their health doubles.

Location of Skull: "Halo"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Very Easy

This skull is a very easy find. At the start of the level, enter the cave ahead of you. Hug the wall to the right until you reach a narrow passage that will continue to wind around to the right. Once the passage gets a bit darker, you should spot the Mythic Skull on the ground right in front of you.

CONTINUED ►



NITRO BIKE

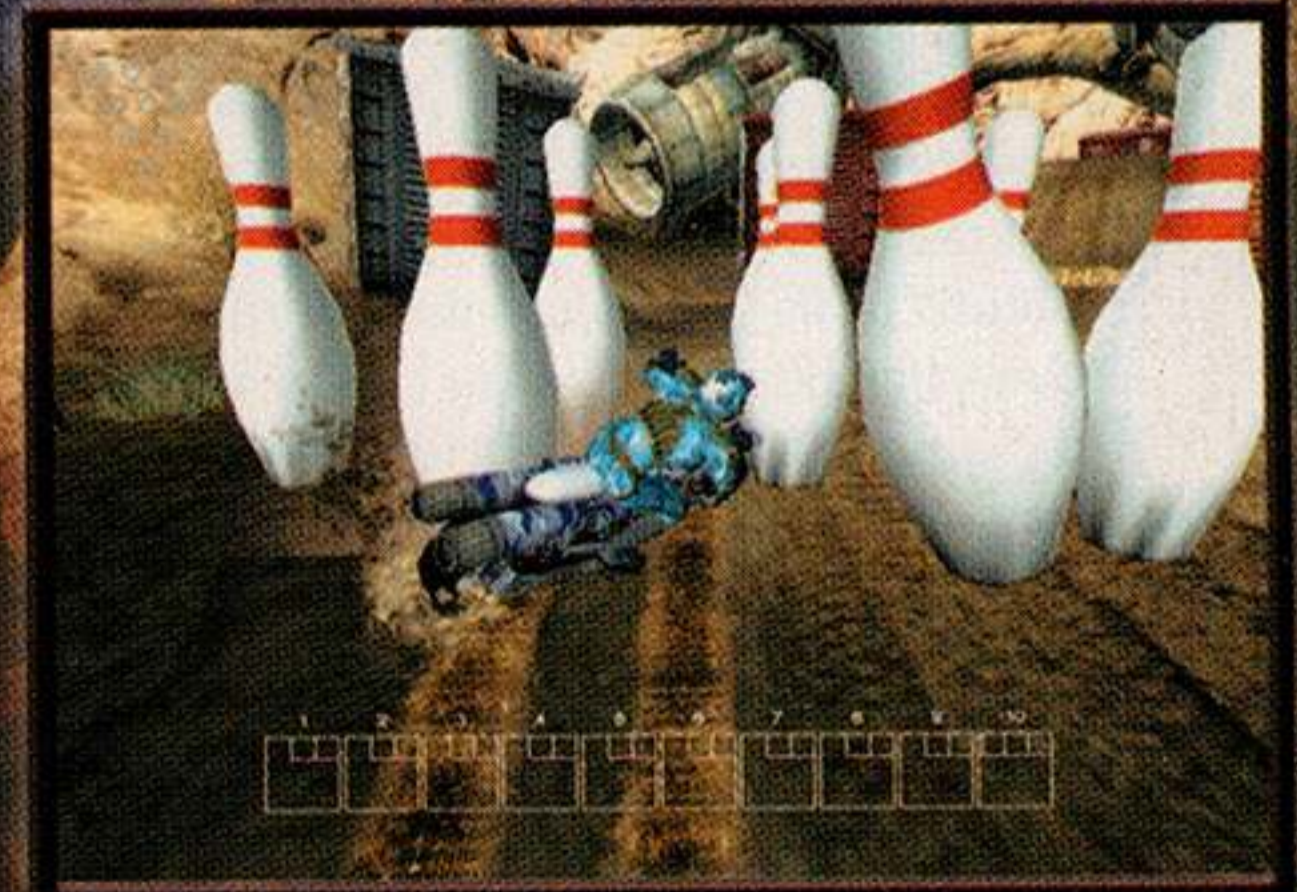
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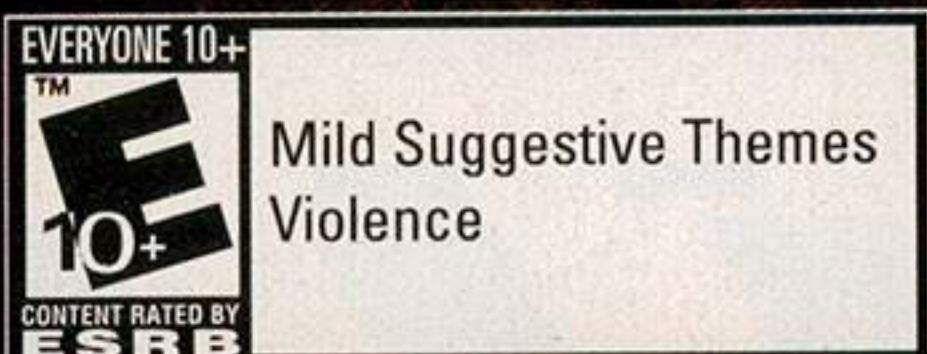


Challenge your friends in four-person split-screen or six-person online multiplayer



Nitrobike™ bowling – wipeouts encouraged!

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Wii™

UBISOFT





The Silver Skulls

Silver Skulls usually make the game easier (or stranger) in some way. Find 'em all!

Blind Skull

Effect: Your HUD, weapons, and motion sensor graphics disappear.

Location of Skull: "Sierra 117"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Easy

You can pick up the Blind Skull early on during the campaign, just moments after you face your first Gold Armor Brute. A couple of Phantom dropships will come into sight and you'll need to approach the ship that is furthest away from you. Stay to your right, and keep moving forward until you see the rock overhang—the Blind Skull is on top!

Grunt Birthday Party Skull

Effect: Shooting a Grunt in the head results in cheers and confetti.

Location of Skull: "Crow's Nest"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Easy

Score this skull right before you join up with the Arbiter, where there is a hole you are supposed to drop into. Instead of jumping all the way to the bottom, jump on the slight ledge which is placed towards your back. If you peer down the pipe before jumping in, you'll have a better chance of landing into this hidden area where the Grunt Birthday Party Skull is.

Cowbell Skull

Effect: Explosions are much larger. KA-BOOM!

Location of Skull: "The Ark"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Medium

You'll know you're close once you find the Scarab. After wrecking the giant spider, enter the building in the middle of the sandy area. Pick up the Grav Lift and continue through the structure until you reach the staircase. Look above your head for some raised platforms. Jump onto the highest platform by setting off a Grav Lift and you'll get "more cowbell!"

IWHBYD

Effect: You'll experience secret dialogue throughout the campaign.

Location of Skull: "The Covenant"

Difficulty in Acquiring: Very Hard

In order to earn the I Would Have Been Your Daddy Skull (IWHBYD), first reach the area where there are the seven holographic rings. Jump through the rings in this specific order: 4, 6, 5, 4, 5, 3, 4. The Skull should appear next to where you meet the Prophet of Truth.



How To: UNLOCK ALL THE ARMOR

Wanna unlock the coveted Hayabusa armor set? We'll show you how.



Hayabusa



Scout

Elite Armor Permutations

Commando

Commando Body: Similar to the Ascetic Shoulders achievement, but you only have to kill three enemies instead of four.

Commando Head: The same way as the Ascetic Shoulders armor.

Commando Shoulders: Kill 10 enemies without dying in a ranked free-for-all playlist. Also earns a "Killing Frenzy" achievement.

Flight

Flight Body: Complete "Tsavo Highway" in the campaign on either Heroic or Legendary difficulty.

Flight Head: Beat the Halo 3 campaign in its entirety on either Heroic or Legendary.

Flight Shoulders: Complete "The Ark" on either Heroic or Legendary.

Ascetic

Ascetic Body: Assassinate or melee attack five enemies online in a ranked free-for-all match. Also earns you the "Up Close and Personal" achievement.

Ascetic Head: Score a triple kill while wielding the Energy Sword on a ranked free-for-all match. Also unlocks the "Steppin' Razor" achievement.

Ascetic Shoulders: Slaughter four enemies within four seconds of one another during a ranked free-for-all match. Also unlocks the "Overkill" achievement.

Spartan Armor Permutations

EOD

EOD Body: Complete "Tsavo Highway" on Legendary difficulty.

EOD Head: Earn this fancy armor by beating the campaign on Legendary difficulty.

EOD Shoulders: Complete "The Ark" on Legendary.

EVA

EVA Body: Complete "Tsavo Highway" on Normal, Heroic, or Legendary.

EVA Head: Play through the campaign on Normal or higher difficulty.

EVA Shoulders: Complete "The Ark" on Normal or higher difficulty.

Scout

Scout Body: Earn the "Too Close to the Sun" achievement by using the Spartan Laser or Missile Pod to blow up a Banshee. Works in either a ranked online game or in campaign mode.

Scout Head: Earn the "Used Car Salesman" achievement by destroying a vehicle containing three enemies. Works in either a ranked online match or in campaign mode.

Scout Shoulders: Earn the "We're in for Some Chop" achievement by obliterating an enemy vehicle using a piece of Equipment. Works online or during the campaign.

Security

Security Head: Earn a whopping 1000 Gamer Points by unlocking achievements in Halo 3.

Security Shoulders: Earn 750 Gamer Points.

Hayabusa

Hayabusa Body: Collect six of the secret Skulls in the game for this sleek ninja armor.

Hayabusa Head: Collect all 13 secret Skulls to unlock this Shredder-esque helmet.

Hayabusa Shoulders: Collect nine of the hidden skulls.

Hayabusa Katana: To unlock the final piece of the Hayabusa set, you must earn every single achievement in the game, as well as own the complete Hayabusa armor set (Body, Head, and Shoulders). Easy, right!

Others

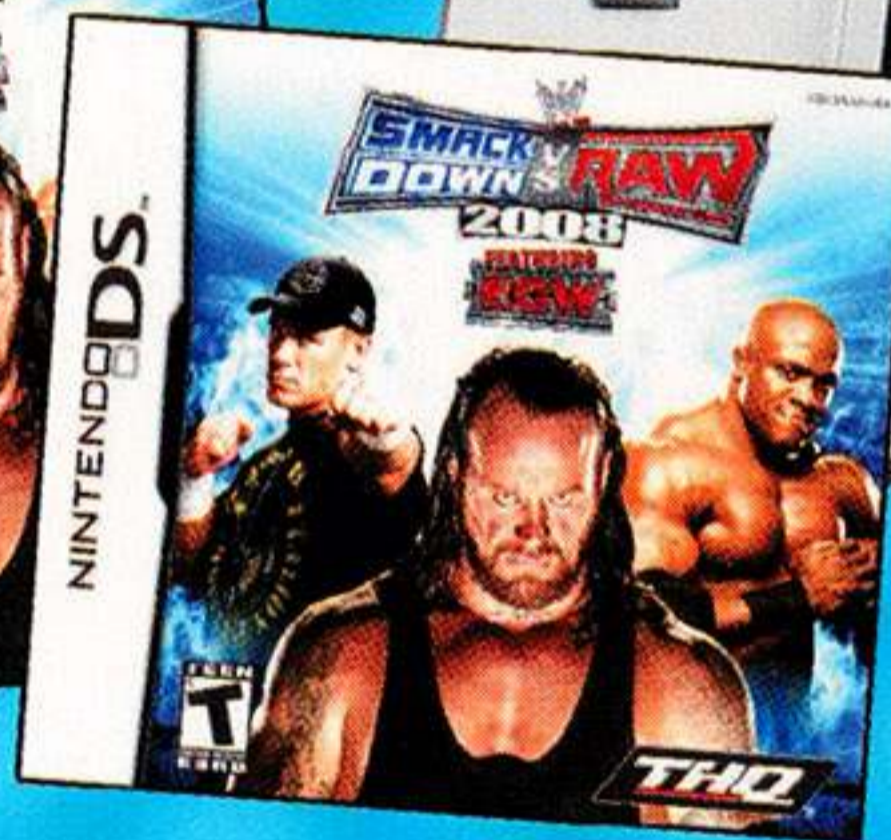
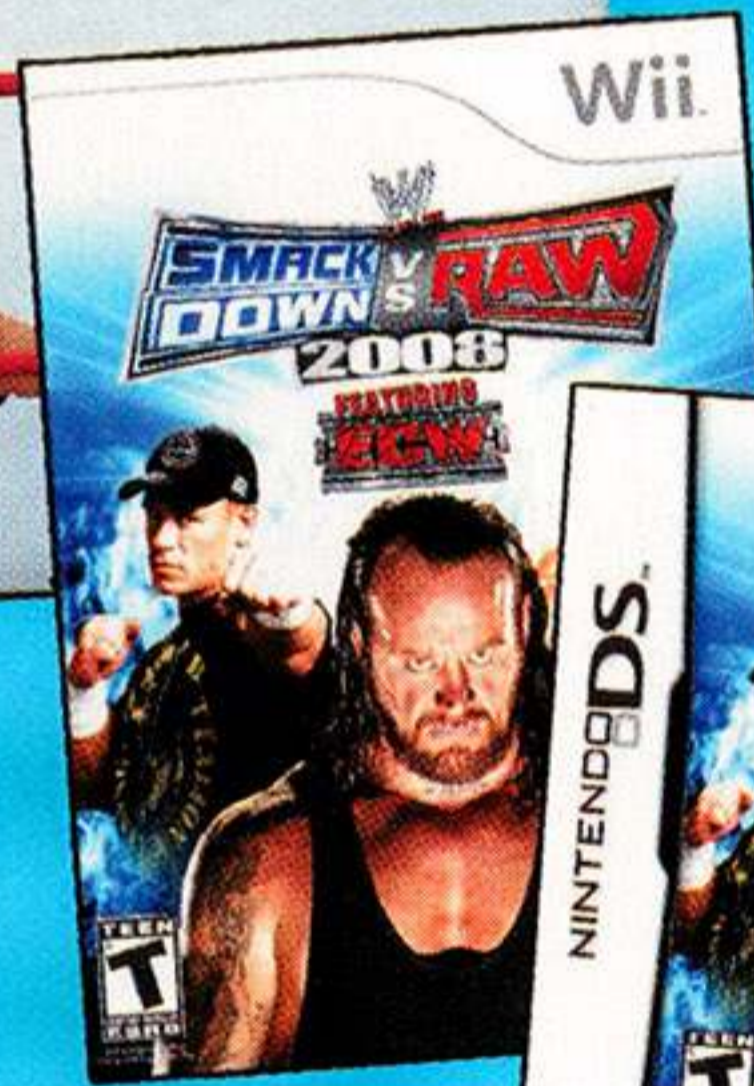
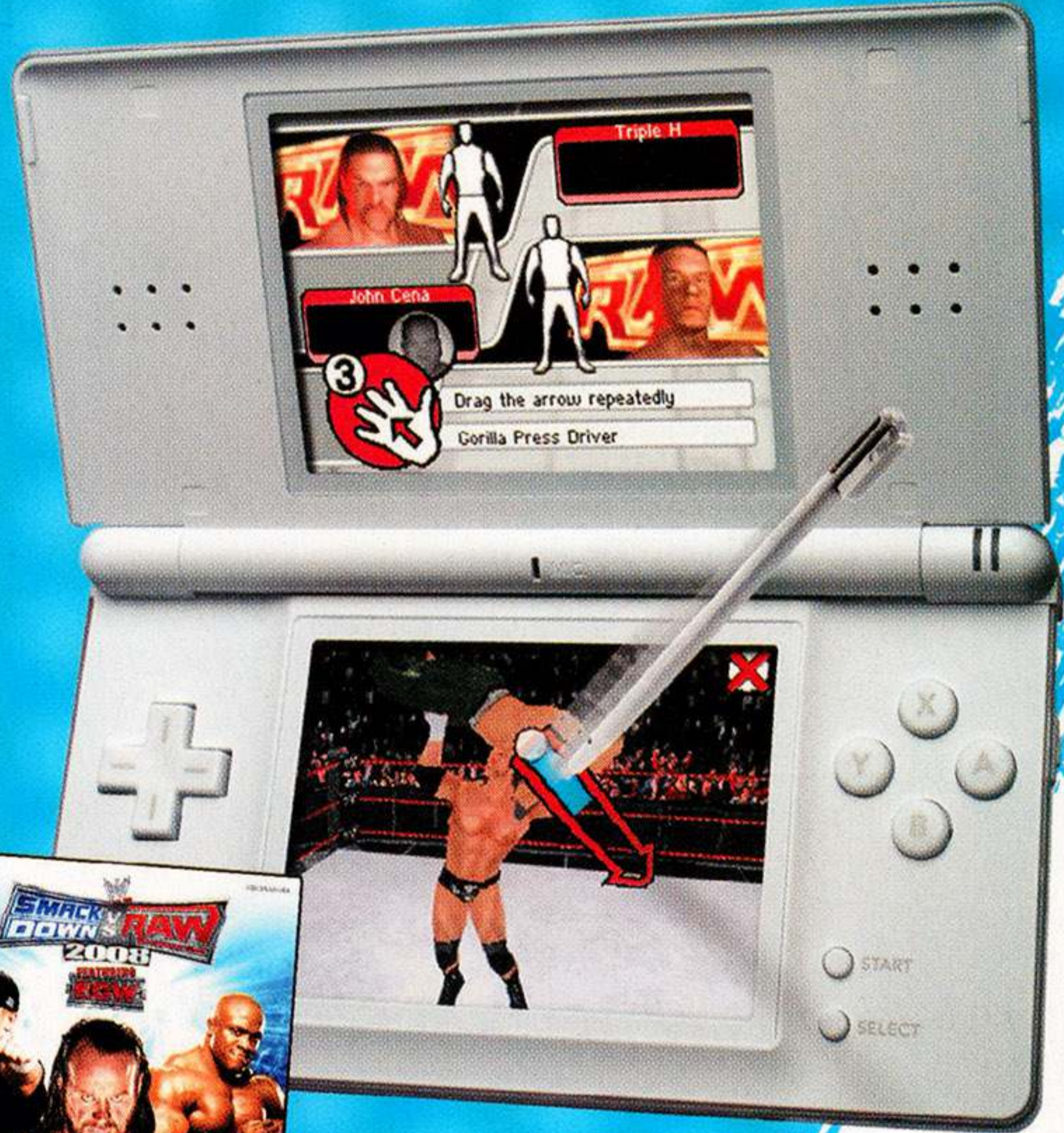
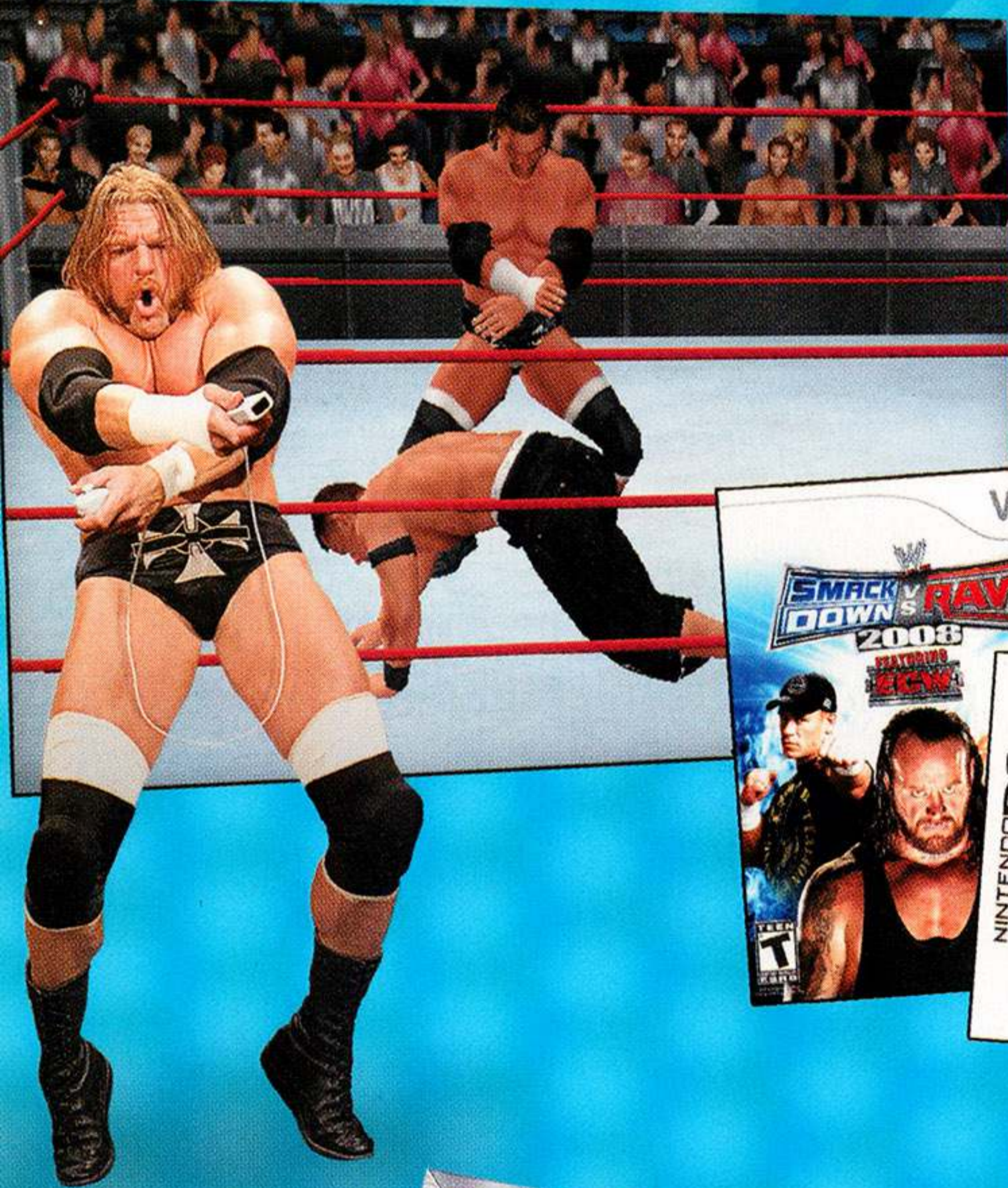
Rogue Head: Earn the "Spartan Officer" achievement by ranking up to Officer online.

Mark V Head: Earn the "UNSC Spartan" achievement by ranking up to Sergeant grade online.

ODST Head: Earn the "Spartan Graduate" achievement by earning five EXP or playing through 10 online games.

It's all about the game – and how you play it.

How will YOU play?



SMACKDOWN vs RAW 2008



TEEN
T
Blood
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence
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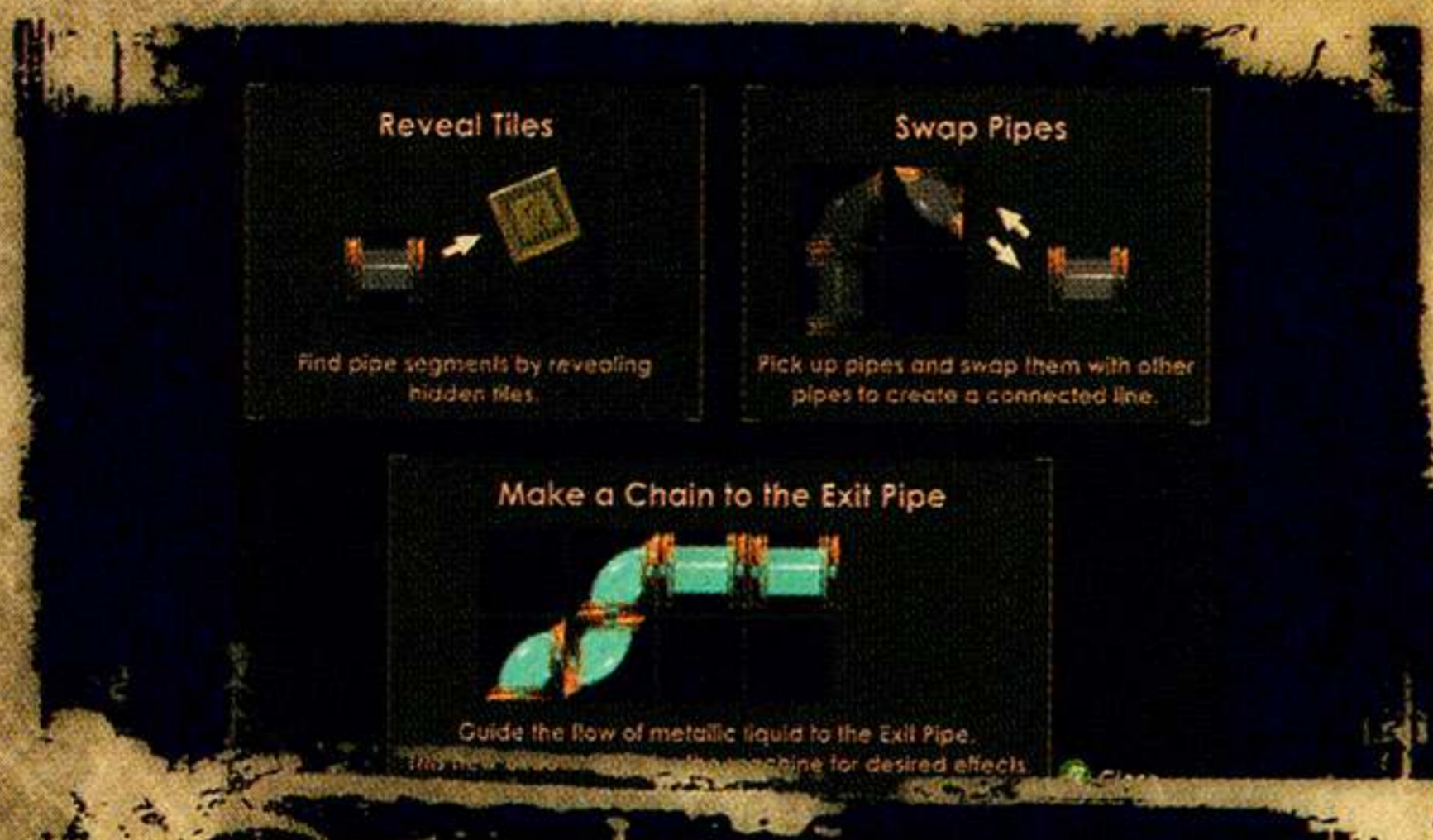
BEYOND THE BASICS

HACKING

Hacking plays a big role in *Bioshock*, since it allows you effectively deal with the machinery in Rapture. This puzzle-based mini-game requires you to quickly swap tiles showing various shaped pipes to direct the circuit flow from one side of the grid to the other. You'll have to avoid various hazard tiles while acting fast, so as to not overload the system or set off an alarm. You can hack safes, Security Cameras, Security Bots, Turrets, most vending machines, and even some combination locks.



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BioShock
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To attempt to hack a device, approach the machine and follow the on-screen commands when they appear. This will bring you to the hacking overview screen. This shows you how difficult the hack will be and what tonics you have spliced that are working to make it easier. It also gives you the following four options:

- 1) **Attempt the hack.**
- 2) **Cancel the hack.**
- 3) **Use an Automatic Hack Tool.**
- 4) **Buyout the hack with money.**

The Rapid Reveal: When hacking, don't worry about trying to line up new pipe right away. Instead, rapidly uncover the dozen or so tiles nearest the start of the circuit flow so as to reveal any potential alarm or overload tiles. Don't start directing the flow until you know you aren't going to lead it into a dead-end.

Prepare for Failure: It's not a good idea to attempt a hack when the difficulty meter is deep into the red zone, but if you are going to make the attempt, make sure you have full Health Meter before you do. The hacking gets much more difficult the deeper into Rapture you get and it's entirely possible that an overloaded system can shock you enough to kill you.

Automatic Hacking: Automatic Hack Tools are a precious commodity in Rapture and should be saved for use in hacking safes, as they are the most difficult hacks

to perform. The only time you should consider using an Automatic Hack Tool for anything but a safe is if you have the maximum amount (5) or are hacking a vending machine or U-Invent machine that carries Automatic Hack Tools.

Override Security: There are Security Cameras and Turrets located throughout Rapture and although you can oftentimes easily destroy these sentinels before they spot you, it's better to hack them. In doing so, you turn the tables on Rapture and make the security system work for you against everyone else. Not only will you not get shot by the Turrets and Security Bots, but you can advance in comfort knowing that you have a mechanical line of defense guarding your blindside.

RESEARCH

One of the weapons you'll come to acquire is the Research Camera and, although it doesn't deal direct damage to enemies, it is one of the most devastating tools in your possession. Use the Research Camera to take photos of enemies to earn Research Bonuses. Each time you reach a new Research Bonus Level, you will gain an advantage over that enemy. Sometimes you'll gain a boost in the amount of damage you inflict, sometimes you'll gain a tactical advantage, and other times you'll actually gain a hidden tonic! Each time you squeeze the trigger to take a picture of an enemy, a Research Score is calculated and the Research Meter fills. The amount this meter fills is based on a number of factors, not the least of which is the Research Bonus Level you're trying to reach—Level 1 is much easier to reach than Level 4. Research Scores are based on the following criteria.



Pistol Rounds

How centered the subject is in the photo.

How close up is the subject in the photo.

Are there multiple enemies in the photo?

Is the subject in the midst of performing an attack or signature move?

Have you photographed this particular subject already?

Is the subject dead?

Keep On Snapping: You might be hesitant to take repeat photographs of the same exact enemy given the decrease in the Research Score you're given, but if you are to ever unlock all of the Research-based Achievements, this is necessary. Provided you have enough Film to do so, continue snapping pictures over and over until the score is too low for the photo to register. Don't worry, once the Research Score reaches this low mark, the camera won't expend any Film.

Prologue

Remnants
of Raptors

Life
Underwater

My
Journal

Enter
Today

Launch Me
Some Fun Now

My
Directory

VENDING MACHINES

Rapture is filled with vending machines, but these aren't the kind you're used to topside. No, you won't find many sodas or cupcakes here. Instead, you'll find what passes for the *bare necessities* in a war-torn secret society—First Aid Kits, Pistol Rounds, Exploding Buckshot, and, well, maybe a few cupcakes too.

CIRCUS OF VALUES

The Circus of Values machine is your one-stop shop for the essentials. Here, you'll find First Aid Kits, EVE Hypos, and most basic and advanced ammunition types, as well as some snacks. The following price list shows the items found in the Circus of Values vending machines in the order that they appear in the game. Not all machines carry the same stock.



Circus of Values Price List

Item	Price	Hacked Price
First Aid Kit	20	16
EVE Hypo	25	20
Chechnya Vodka	3	2
Pistol Rounds x6	25	20
Electric Buck x6	72	54
Armor-Piercing Pistol Rounds x6	60	48
00 Buck x6	54	41

Circus of Values Price List

Item	Price	Hacked Price
Machine Gun Rounds x40	60	45
Potato Chips	3	2
Frag Grenade x3	60	45
Film x15	15	12
Proximity Mine x3	75	57
Automatic Hack Tool	N/A	60

Circus of Values Price List

Item	Price	Hacked Price
Liquid Nitrogen x100	100	75
Napalm x100	75	57
Coffee	5	4
Pep Bar	8	6
Incendiary Bolt x6	80	60
Antipersonnel Auto Rounds	N/A	75
Steel-Tip Bolt x6	30	24

Prioritize Primal Needs: Don't spend a penny on ammunition until you make sure you have at least 7 or 8 First Aid Kits and EVE Hypos. There is plenty of ammunition to be found in the environment and it's highly unlikely that you'll ever run out completely. On the other hand, you need Health to stay alive.

EL AMMO BANDITO!

The El Ammo Bandito machines aren't as common as the Circus of Values machines, but they tend to carry a fantastic supply of basic and advanced ammunition. No, you won't find any Pep Bars or First Aid Kits here, but it is a one stop shop for all your ammunition needs.

Don't Splurge: There's a lot of ammunition to be gained by simply picking up the weapons of fallen foes and by searching containers and corpses. Resist the urge to spend a lot of money on ammo at this vending machine unless you are near the max you can carry (500 dollars).



WELCOME TO LA LA LAND



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anchorblue

GATHERER'S GARDEN

Your money is no good here! The Gatherer's Garden machines only accept Adam as payment for the plasmids, tonics, slots, Health, and EVE Upgrades they contain. And you can only get Adam by rescuing or harvesting a Little Sister. These machines aren't as common as the others, but you'll find one in close proximity to most Little Sister encounters so you won't need to go far to spend the Adam you acquire.



Meter Upgrades on Hold?: You may want to resist the urge to spend Adam on Health and EVE Upgrades until you have acquired all of the tonics and plasmid expansion slots. You will gain increases to these meters by researching Little Sisters and, if you're really having a tough time staying alive without upgrades, you may want to consider a lower difficulty setting. Purchase one Health Upgrade early in the game and see how long you can go without needing another one. You should be able to live off of a constant supply of First Aid Kits.

U-INVENT

These machines exist as crafting stations so residents of Rapture can turn common household items like glue and brass tubes into usable items like ammunition and Automatic Hack Tools. U-Invent machines can be hacked to lower the requirements needed to invent an item and there is also a tonic called "Clever Inventor" that can be used to automatically lower the requirements by 1 per component. The true beauty of U-Invent machines is that they make the rare inventible type of ammunition readily available. Each of the projectile-based weapons has a third form of ammunition that is rarely seen in the open environment. Search containers and corpses to find the components needed to make that ammo and build yourself an arsenal the likes Rapture has never seen!



Surplus Inventions: There's no handy indicator to let you know how much of a particular ammo type you have when you're using a U-Invent machine, so it's very easy to create more than you can carry. Although this should be avoided by double-checking your supply before inventing, the excess inventions will simply pile up on the floor outside the machine. If you don't go too far, they might still be there for a refill later on.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Power to the People machines are the rarest of all in Rapture, as there are only 12 in existence. They are certainly worth seeking out, however! Power to the People machines offer a one-time, free-of-charge upgrade to the weapon of your choice. Each weapon, excluding the Wrench and Research Camera, can be upgraded twice. These upgrades typically enhance the damage the weapon can inflict, reduce its limitations, or enhance its carrying capacity.



Think Versatility First: While it might be tempting to upgrade the Chemical Thrower or Grenade Launcher right away, it's better to focus on the weapons that you use the most often first. You may want to upgrade the weapons in the order that they are found, starting with the Pistol and ending with the Crossbow.

Written by Doug Walsh

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R2-D2 Interactive Droid

MSRP: \$119.95

www.sharperimage.com

The real hero of the *Star Wars* movies, R2-D2, is now the best friend any gamer could have. This voice-activated robot can dance, chirp, and whirr for your amusement, plus respond to 30 command-specific phrases. Most importantly, it has an extendable utility arm that can hold a frosty beverage. A crucial touch, because taking down evil empires makes us really thirsty.



DREAMAUTHENTICS



DreamAuthentics Katana

MSRP: \$2,000+, depending on configuration

www.dreamauthentics.com

Purists know that the best way to play classic games is with an authentic joystick, a couple of big buttons, and the old-timey goodness of a real arcade cabinet. But space is tight, which is why we recommend the Katana from Dream Authentics. This table-top arcade machine is a slick addition to your den or game room. Just make sure your friends wipe the pizza grease off their hands before they play.

Pleo

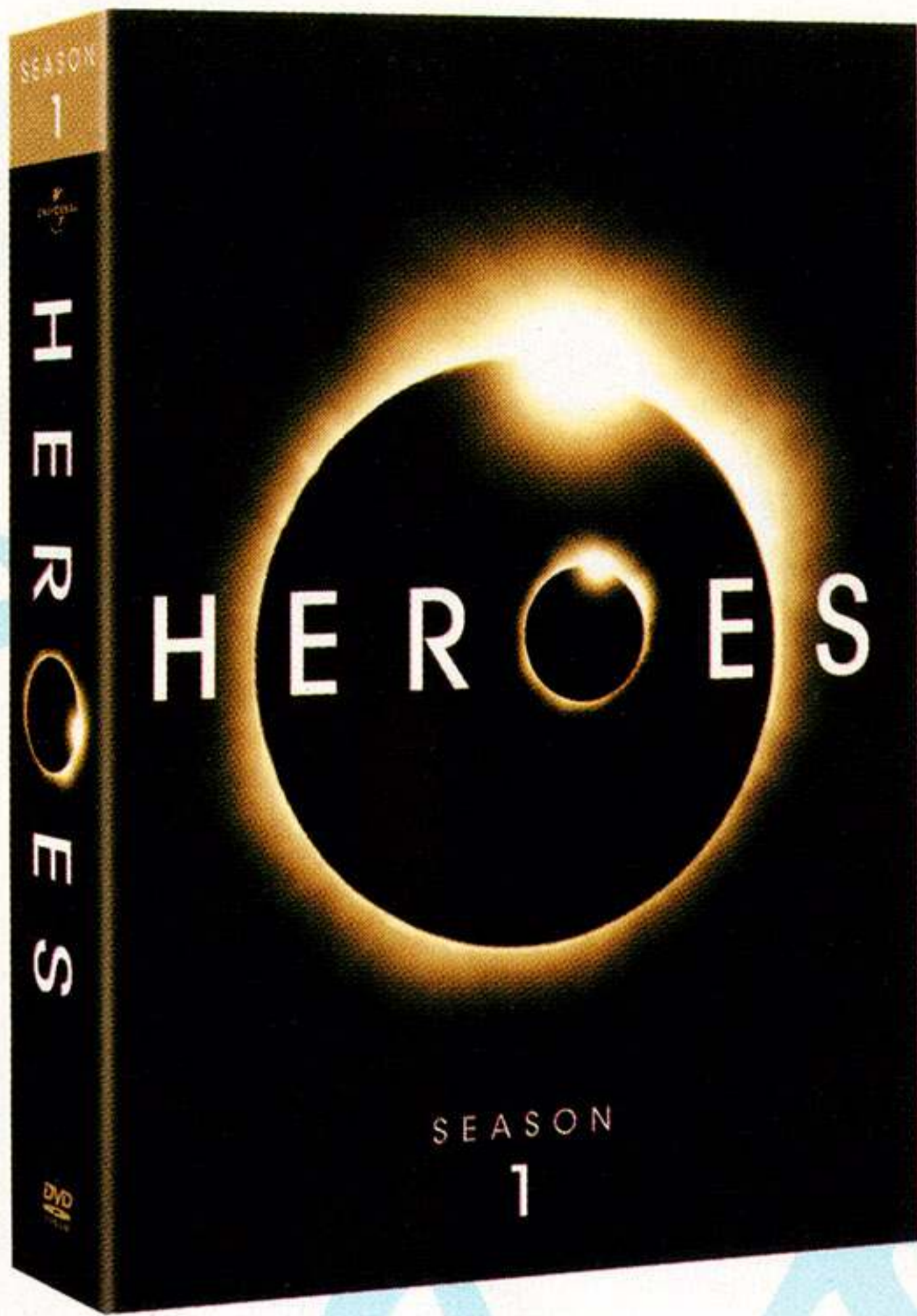
MSRP: \$349.99

Website: www.pleoworld.com

Oooh, baby. As if dinosaurs and robots weren't cool enough on their own, some genius inventor had to go combine them into one loveable artificial life form. Pleo is an impossibly cute baby camasauros, and he's decked out with high-tech microphones, cameras, and sensors that enable him to navigate your sleazy apartment with a certain clumsy grace.

The best part: As you play with Pleo, he begins to learn and react. Over time, his personality and behaviors will be unique, meaning that he'll be different from your friend's Pleo. Multiple Pleos will play with each other, too. It's so cute, it's almost sickening. Obviously you should buy it immediately.





Heroes Season 1 DVD

MSRP: \$59.98
www.heroestheseerie.com

Time-traveling samurais. Brain-eating supervillains. An invincible cheerleader, and a big, big secret. If you haven't watched *Heroes* yet, you're missing out on some of the best TV since, well, ever. Makes *Lost* seem about as exciting as a tired old re-run of *Three's Company*. And just wait for season two!

Segway i2

MSRP: \$5145
www.segway.com

Bicycles are so old-fashioned. So get the iPod-wearing youngster in your life a Segway i2 and watch as he becomes the king of the neighborhood. Too bad Segways didn't exist when we were kids. That paper route would have been a breeze, wouldn't it?



Matrox Triple Head 2 Go Digital Edition

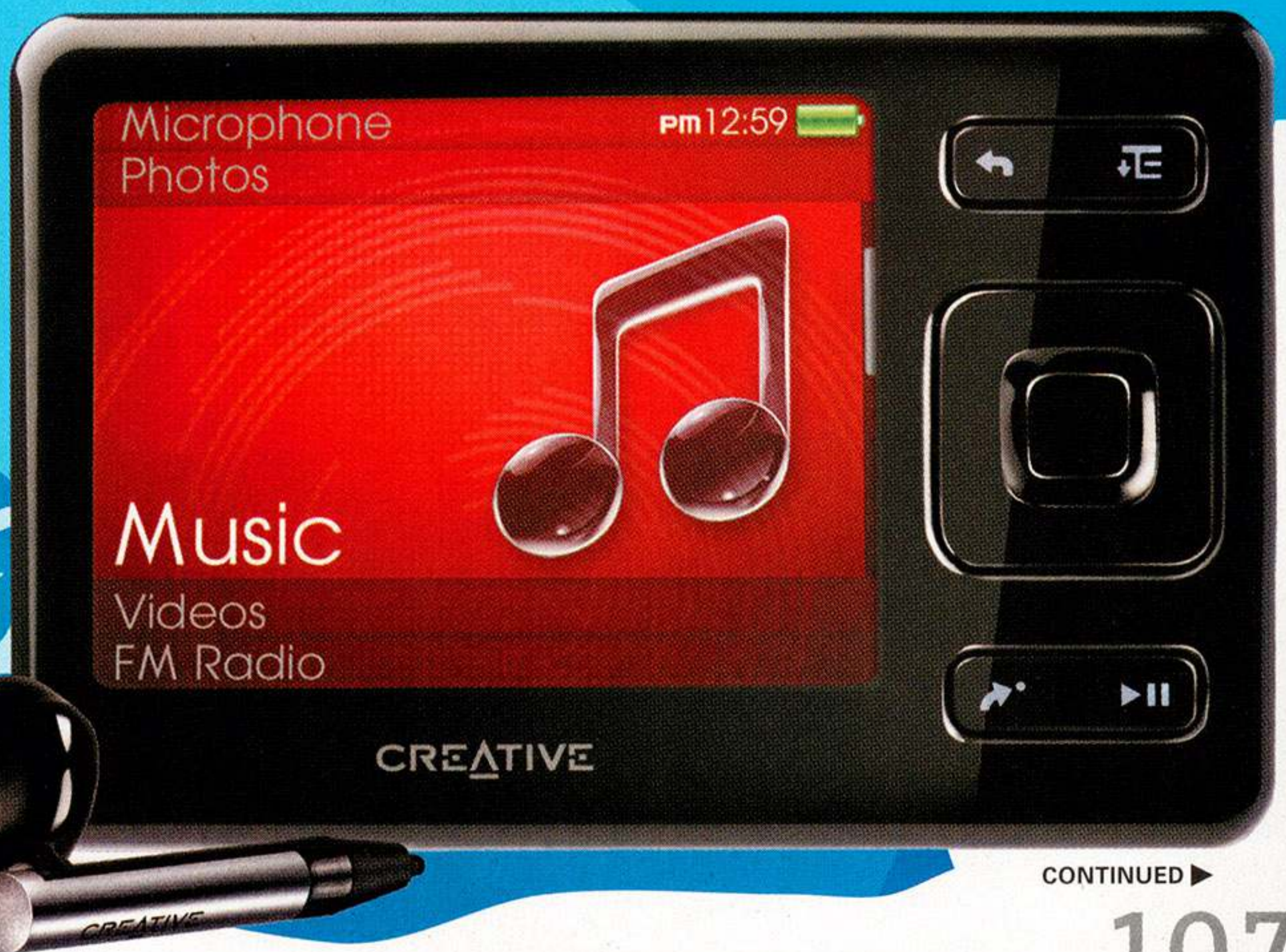
MSRP: \$329
www.matrox.com

Just one monitor? *Weak*. This handy video processor splits your PC's video signal into three streams for some triple-monitor action. The extra screen real estate lets you arrange your windows and files however you want. Oh, and it'll make your PC flight sims look pretty awesome, too. Sure, the setup is expensive, but if you just have to have an ultimate monitor setup, this is the only way to fly.

Creative Zen 4GB

MSRP: \$129.99
www.creative.com

Slowly but surely, the almighty iPod is becoming passé. Why not try something new? Creative's new Zen model is definitely worth a close look. It features a 2.5-inch TFT screen, plays music and movies, and packs in a voice recorder and FM radio. Best of all, it's got insanely long battery life. *iWhat?*



CONTINUED ►



Nyko Wii Charge Station

MSRP: \$29.99
www.nyko.com

If you're lucky enough to score a Wii this holiday, you should definitely put the Nyko Charge Station on your wish list. This handy gizmo comes with two rechargeable battery packs and a charging station, which will keep your Wii Remotes fully juiced during that crucial round of Mario Strikers Charged. Score!



Roomba 560

MSRP: \$349.99
www.irobot.com

We all know that robots will eventually take over the world, so you might as well order them around while you still can. We suggest you command the Roomba 560 to clean your room for you. This intelligent little 'bot will root out the dirt in your carpets and suck it right up. But be nice to it, because its grandchildren might end up ruling the world. And robots have loo-o-ong memories...

Airzooka

MSRP: \$12.99
www.cyi.net

Here's a gift that every gamer needs: The Airzooka is a nifty toy that shoots a ball of air up to thirty feet. You just point and shoot. It's perfectly harmless but it'll convince that bratty sister of yours to leave you alone when you're playing Halo 3 online. You hear that, Megan? *You better stay away from that door or else!*



For Mom:

Product name: The Vert Tote
MSRP: \$199.99
www.acmebags.com



For Dad:

Product name: Lafuma Zero Gravity Recliner
MSRP: \$159.99
www.lafumafurniture.com

Family Ties

Take a break from being selfish this holiday and get something nice for the two people most responsible for your existence: your mom and dad. For your mom, we suggest the stylish yet functional **Vert Tote** from Acme Bags, which is the perfect bag for everyday tasks. For the old man, we have the **Lafuma Zero Gravity Recliner**. Give him one of these and he'll be conked out in the backyard with a newspaper folded over his face in no time.

CONTINUED ►

CONAN[®]



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PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360 LIVE



MATURE 17+
M Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Nudity
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org



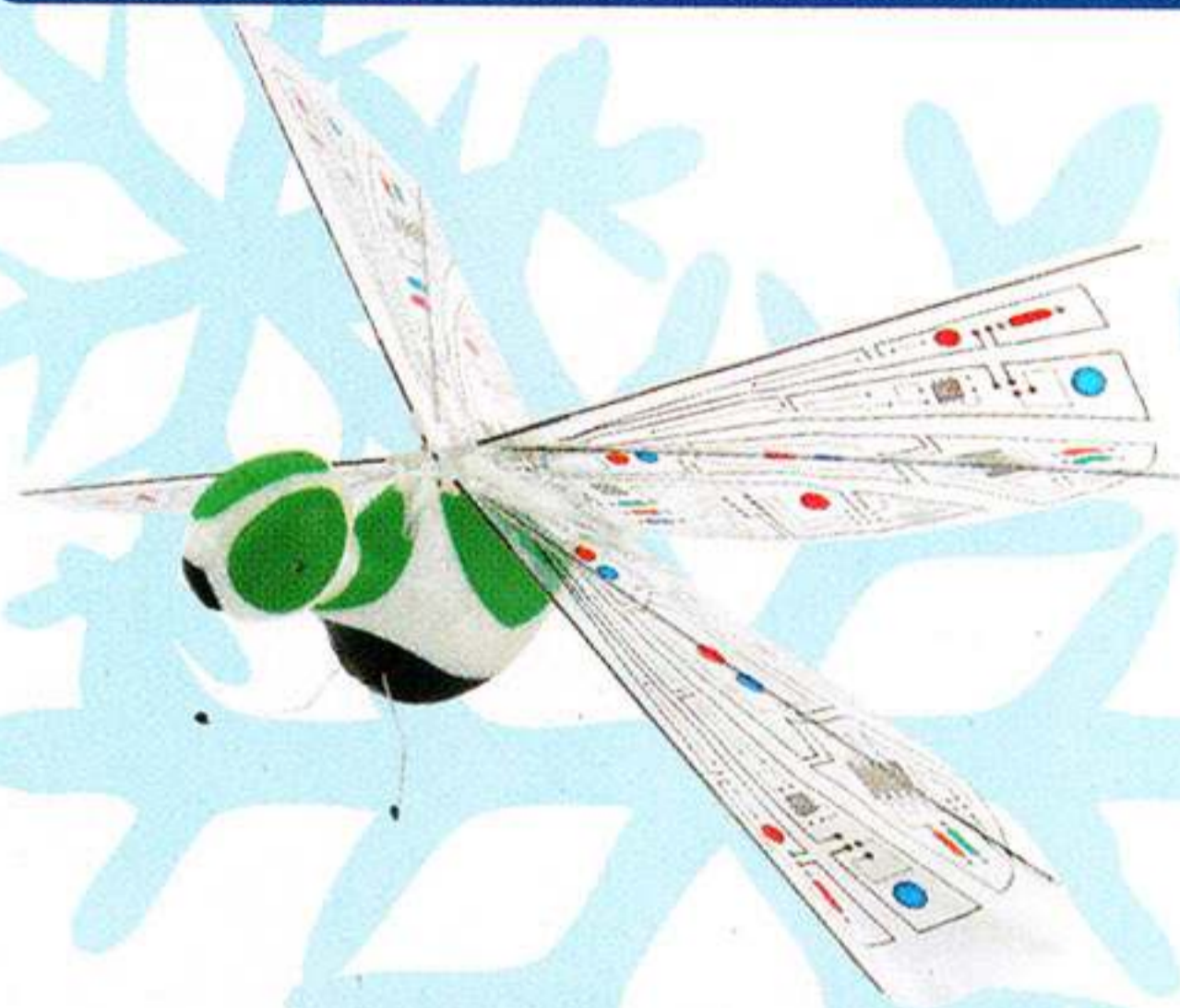
**CHECK OUT THE LATEST
ISSUE OF CONAN FROM
DARK HORSE COMICS**

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World of Warcraft Trading Card Game

MSRP: \$14.99 (Starter decks); \$3.49 (booster packs)

Just when you thought World of Warcraft was done ruining your life, they go and release a trading card game. D'oh! If this tabletop version is as compelling and addictive as the MMO, we're all in a lot of trouble. Hey Blizzard, how about we just have our paychecks sent directly to you from now on?



Flytech Dragonfly

MSRP: \$44.99
www.flytechonline.com

When the Flytech Dragonfly first landed in our office, it caused quite a stir. Everyone started fighting for a chance to take this little RC vehicle out for a spin. And no wonder: it's a blast to play with. Once you get the hang of the controls, you'll be harassing your friends and neighbors with your insectoid flying skills in no time.

Nerf Night Jam Nerfoop and Peyton Manning Pro Grip football

MSRP: \$19.99 (Night Jam); \$14.99 (Pro Grip)
www.nerf.com

Everyone knows that sports and the holidays go hand-in-hand, so what better way to work off that big, fattening holiday dinner than to reenact the Super Bowl or NBA Finals right in your living room? Just be careful not to knock over your Mom's favorite vase, mkey?



Griffin Journi

MSRP: \$129.99
www.griffintechnology.com

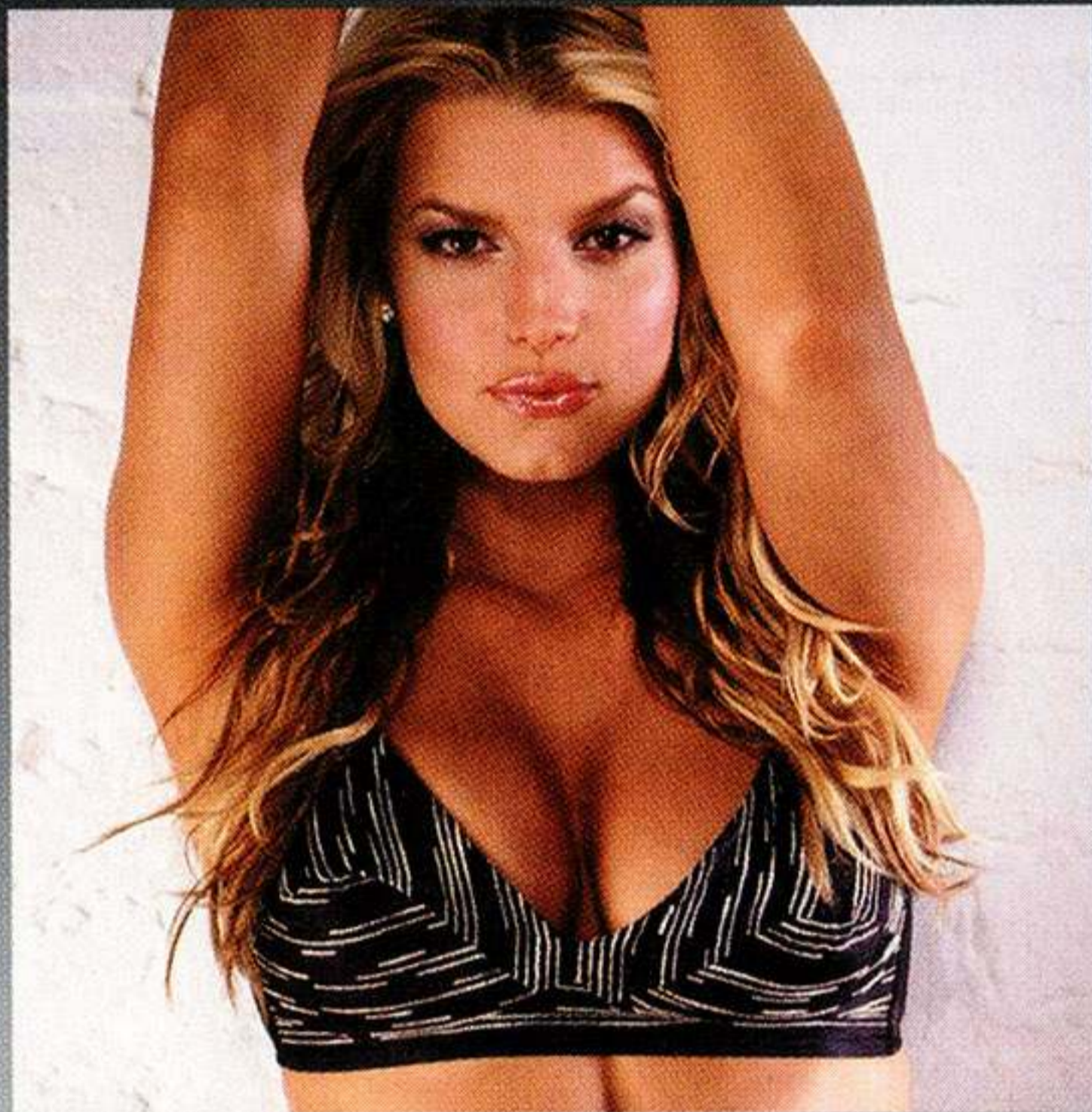
Griffin makes some great iPod accessories, but their best product might be this portable set of iPod speakers. Its best feature? Easily its built-in Lithium-Ion battery, which holds an eight-hour charge. It's also a lightweight, coming in at just 2.2 pounds. Now you won't have to lug a huge boombox with you to the beach. Speaking of which, you might want to go get some sun, you pasty-faced gamer, you.



ing girls movie movies music people comics film fun
tics rock television tv anime babes boobs comics film
ny **Make time for life's important decisions.** ba
bs comics film funny gaming girls movie movies mus

Battle of the Jessica's

Which is hotter?



VS



Total Votes
7,578

50%

50%

Who would you want to win in a fight?

Pitbull vs. Vick



VS



50%

50%

Total Votes
8,218

VS

Which Next Gen title do you choose?

Battle of Next Gen Video Games



VS



50%

50%

You Create You Vote You Decide



www.SucksOrRules.com

SUCKS OR RULES

www.SucksOrRules.com

GAME OF THE MONTH

HALO 3

Just how big is the juggernaut that is the Halo franchise? Consider this: Although this issue won't hit newsstands until almost two months after the game's release, we're still selecting Halo 3 as our Game of the Month. At first, we had misgivings. Won't people be sick of Halo 3 by then, we wondered. Also, we reviewed a ton of other high profile titles that were worthy of consideration this month, including Guitar Hero III, Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction, and The Orange Box.

But it became rapidly clear that Halo 3 was the clear cut choice. Considering the game's insanely deep multiplayer options, we felt that the game would still be going strong by the time this issue hits newsstands. And no offense to any of the other games we reviewed this month but this is Halo we're talking about. What other franchise short of Metal Gear Solid has more buzz surrounding it?

So, while Halo 3 will be "old news" by the time you read this, there is no doubting that the game will still be on everyone's minds and on everyone's playlist. But don't think for a second that we are just rehashing the same review we posted online. While Assistant Editor Travis Moses did an incredible job of reviewing the game, you have all no doubt read it by now, so we have a little something special up our sleeve for our "review" of Halo 3! Turn the page and read on to find out what it is!

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MEET THE GAMEPROS!

We may have gotten rid of our personas but we've kept our personalities. Come along with us as we delve deep into the mind of copy editor Chenda Ngak aka Rebel Princess to discuss casual gaming, new-gen systems, and *Star Wars*!

Let's start with the basics: When did you start playing video games?

The first game that I played was Super Mario Brothers on the NES. An afternoon with Mario and Dip Sticks and I was in pre-adolescent heaven.

What do you think about the consoles that are out now?

They are all incredible. I hate all of the smack talking from fanboys because so many intelligent people worked hard to produce each of the consoles. Until I can build a better machine, I'm keeping my lips zipped.

Which one is your favorite?

I use the Wii the most because it fits my gaming style—casual. But, if I need a powerhouse, of course I'm going with the PS3 or Xbox 360.

What do you think of new-gen titles like Halo 3 and BioShock?

They were both fun to play, but I'd rather watch someone else put in the work while I enjoy some popcorn and watch the story progress. The better question is what did everyone in the office think of me spewing out all of those @%&\$@*& profanities during the Halo 3 beta, while they were trying to work!

You're a self-proclaimed casual gamer: What do you think game companies can do to make games more accessible to you?

Honestly, the only time I'm excited by hardcore games is when there is huge media buzz over it, like with Halo 3. If they offered a hardcore gaming boot camp where we did sniping and slicing drills, and if *GamePro* paid for it...I would go!

What upcoming title are you looking forward to the most?

Rock Band! I could've been a rock star if it wasn't for college...and my lack of musical talent.

You used to go by the persona Rebel Princess. On that note, what is your favorite *Star Wars* character of all time?

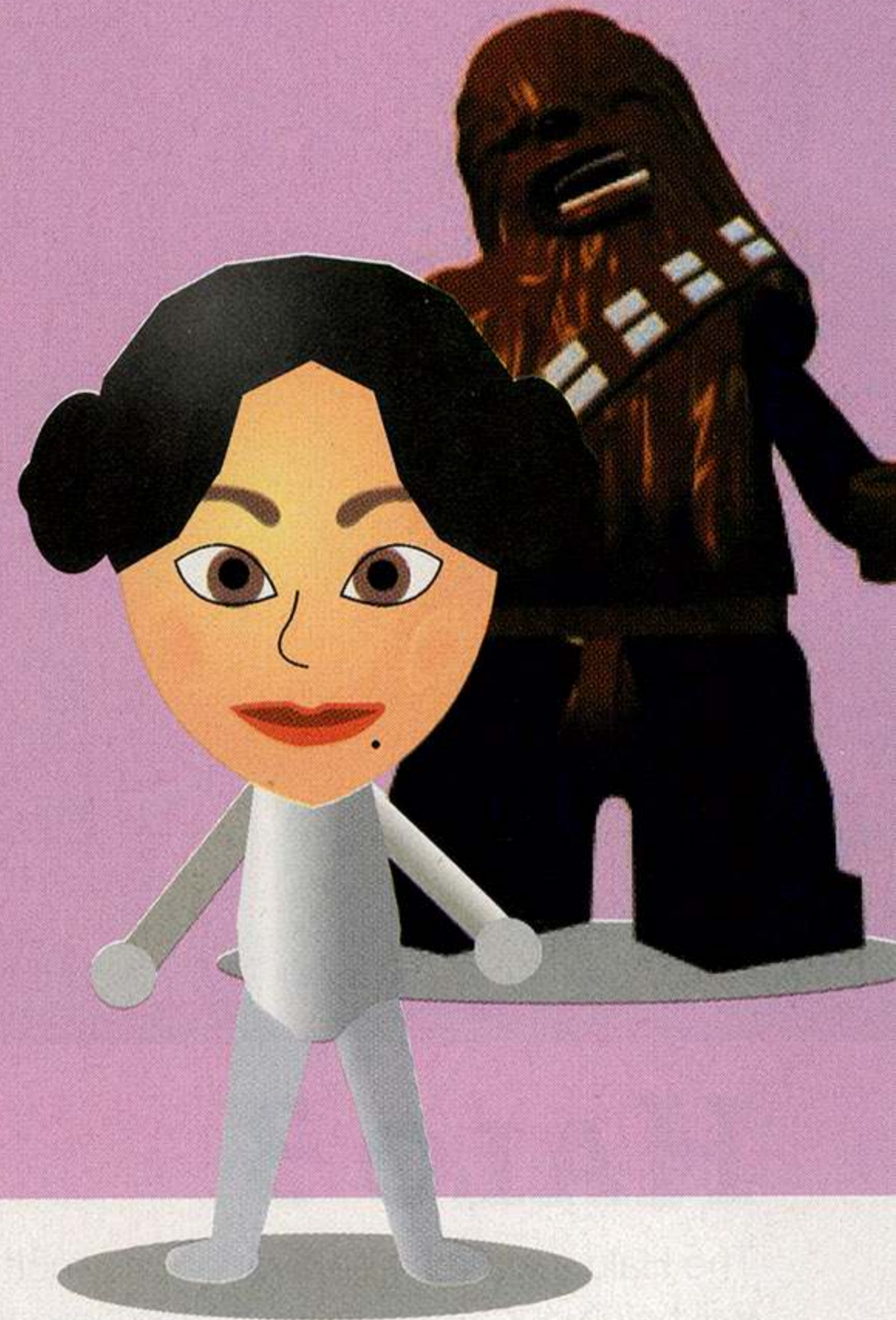
Duh! Princess Leia is the best female heroine of all time. I like female characters who are smart, sassy, and full of gumption. Intimidated by Vader? Puh-lease!

Would you ever kiss a Wookiee?

If he looked like Brad Pitt with a beard, after five days of fishing in the wilderness.

As a woman, would you rather date a *Star Wars* nerd or a *Star Trek* nerd?

Star Wars! The heroes were hotter.



GAMEPRO'S RATING SCALE

Behind the numbers:

5.00–4.50 The best of the best. If you don't own this game, you should. Think Halo, Zelda, Resident Evil, and Metal Gear Solid.

4.25–3.50 Highly enjoyable, but falls short of true greatness. The Fight Nights and Tony Hawks of the world.

3.25–2.50 Approach with caution—try before you buy. Enter the Matrix and the Dynasty Warriors games fall squarely in this category.

2.25–1.50 Should come with a sticker: "Warning, contains poisonous amounts of suckage." Remember Backyard Wrestling?

1.25–0.00 An absolute insult to humanity. Kill it with fire and holy water.

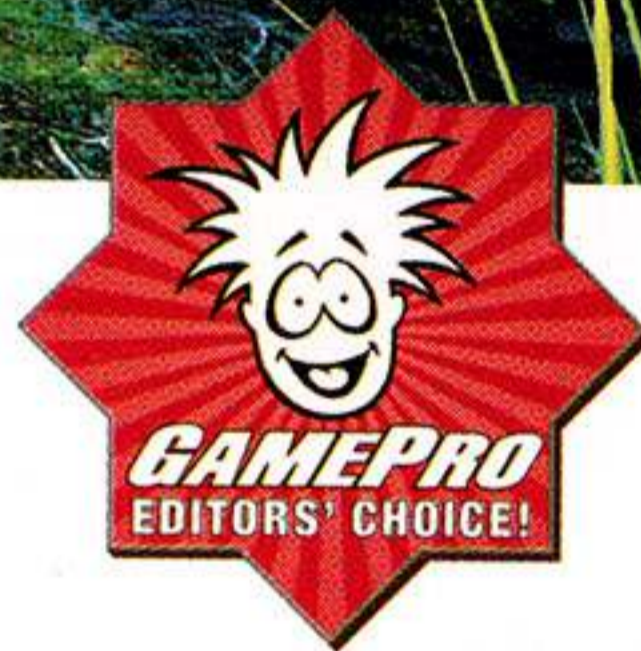


Games that score 4.50 or higher are awarded our coveted Editors' Choice Award.



HALO 3

The Halo saga may be over but its multiplayer modes will hold your attention for a long time to come!

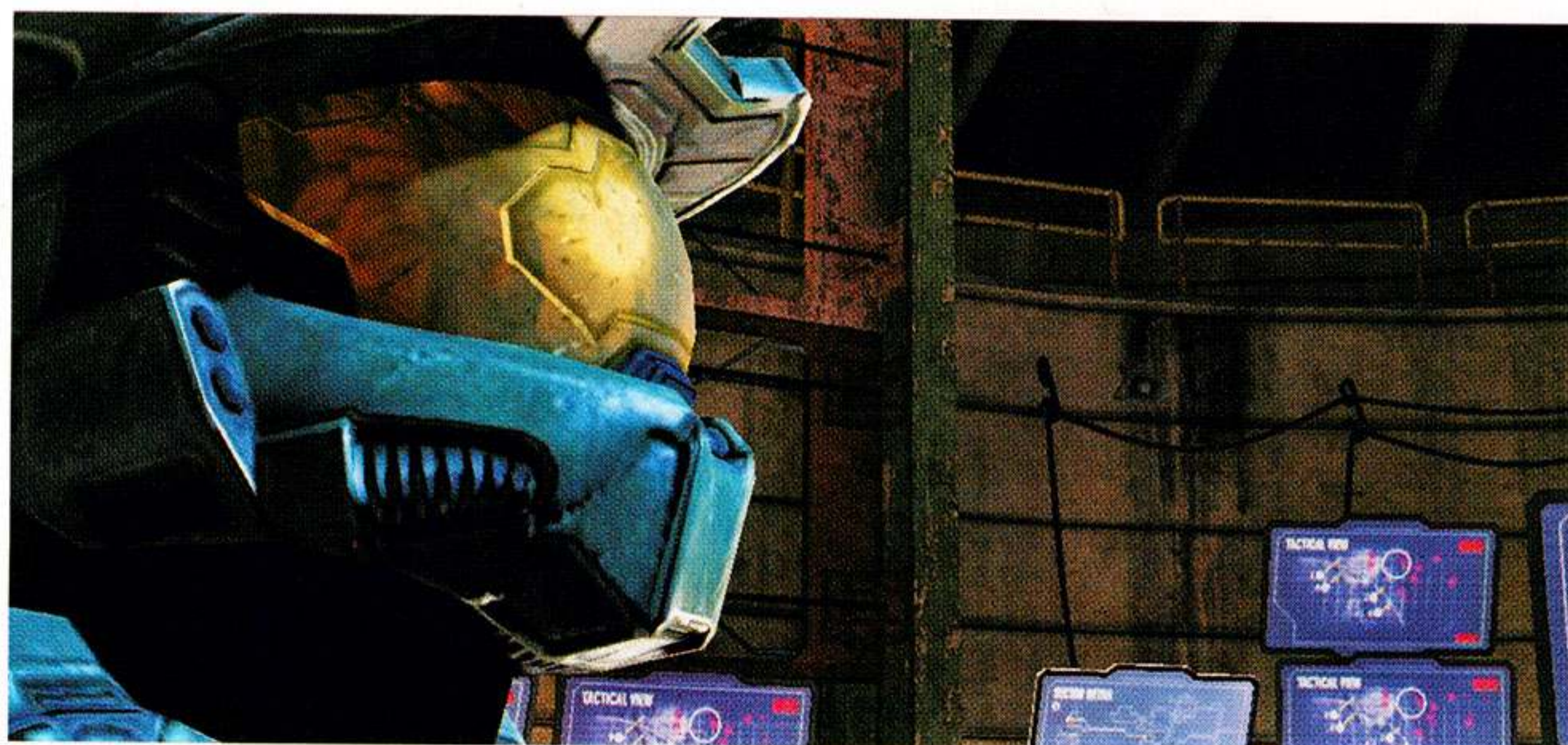


Xbox 360 ESRB: M

■ Developer: Bungie ■ Publisher: Microsoft

For many Halo 3 players, the fight was finished within the first eight hours of buying the game. So what's left after destroying the Covenant and returning peace to Earth? Hours upon hours of ruthless online multiplayer, of course. While the single-player mode brings the franchise to a spectacular close, it is the multiplayer options that remain Halo 3's shining achievement.

Assistant Editor Travis Moses raved about the single-player mode and the many different multiplayer options available in our online review, which is available at GamePro.com, awarding the game a five out of five rating and hailing it as a success in every possibly way. And now that he's had a chance to take his Spartan online for real, he's back with an in-depth review of Halo 3's online components!





There's no doubt that Halo 3 dominates the online console gaming scene. It has such an amazing selection of modes: competitive four-player online coop mode, intense 16-player multiplayer, an eight-player gametype and level editor, the ability to save and watch films from both single and multiplayer with a free-roaming camera, and take your very own screen shots. Even more amazing, all of these features can be shared with your friends over Xbox Live.

To be honest, as of press time, I've spent more time playing Halo 3 online than Lindsay Lohan has spent partying, hitting close to 300 online matches in one week. I've played nearly every gametype, which trumps the selection from Halo 2, and am moving up through the ranks like a dedicated soldier boy. If it weren't for the unlockables, such as armor permutations and rankings, I probably would have played half as many games.

Let's talk about these two items briefly. Armor permutations, or custom armor pieces, are unlocked through Halo 3's Xbox 360 Achievements. Players can customize their Spartan or Elite armor in the following categories: head, body, left shoulder, and right shoulder. The emblems and custom color selections, that return from Halo

2, are more robust and colorful. Custom armor is a dream come true for Halo players, and you'll spend weeks trying to get the entire set.

Player rank is directly related to winning matches in online games. The UNSC military ranks are similar to modern-day rankings: private, sergeant, captain, and general (the final rank for online players). Rank is purely cosmetic, unlike player skill level, which is a number that Halo 3 uses to pit you against players with like skill. It's extremely confusing at first, even for hardcore players. First-time Halo players should stick to the "social" matches, which disregards the skill level system entirely.

All in all, Halo 3 multiplayer combines everything we loved from Halo: Combat Evolved and Halo 2 into one glorious package, adding extended pleasure through the use of equipment and Brute weaponry. And I predict that players will spend an equal number of hours watching saved replays and creating custom gametypes as they do actually playing the game.

There is no doubt that Halo 3 is now the premiere online console shooter. It has the potential to be relevant long after its release and I can't wait to see what new types of game modes become available through the Forge tools.—**Travis Moses**

FAVORITE HALO 3 MAPS

HIGH GROUND: Featured in the public beta, the Zanzibar-inspired High Ground is an asymmetrical map. One team spawns in a high base and the other team starts on a beach; both teams are divided by a large gate and bridge.

GUARDIAN: Inspired by Lockout from Halo 2, Guardian features similar multi-story structures with twisting ramps and a central mosh pit.

ISOLATION: Outside, Isolation is a beautiful greenery of rolling hills and Forerunner structures. Inside, the flood infestation has created an ant farm of treacherous tunnels and slippery pitfalls.



GAMEPRO'S FAVORITE HALO 3 GAMETYPES

There's no doubt that the Forge is a powerful creation tools that will give rise to some awesome custom gametypes. At press time, these were the modes that had my attention but I can only imagine what new modes gamers will come up in the future!

TEAM SLAYER: The standard Red vs. Blue deathmatch everyone has come to know and love.

LONE WOLF: The new Rumble Pit in Halo 3 is chopped down to five players from Halo 2's eight-player mayhem.

INFECTION: Zombies vs. Humans. Zombies are equipped with an energy sword, and each human killed joins the lust for brains. Try to be the last man standing.

ROCKET RACE: Race to the waypoints on the speedy Mongoose, but watch out for incoming rockets that will blow you right off course.

HALO Bookmark links to **Halo 3** screens and news.
Text **HALO** to **59479**

Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Phenomenal weapon balance and new game types; file sharing lets you trade maps, modes, and videos online.

CONS: Few returning Halo 2 maps; where's Lockout and Ivory Tower? A little matchmaking sluggishness as mobs pack the online servers.

CONTINUED ▶



THE *GAMEPRO* EDITORS SOUND OFF ON HALO 3!!!

Now that Travis has had his say, we decided to let the other *GamerPro* Editors weigh in on Halo 3. What do they think of the game's single- and multi-player modes? Read on to find out!

What did you think of Halo 3?

For the most part, Halo 3's lived up to the hype, and as a whole it's one hell of a package in terms of online and offline play.—**Senior Editor Chris Morell**

This is about as good as it's going to get for a Halo game.—**Senior Editor Sidney Shuman**

Anyone who owns an Xbox 360, and isn't totally turned off by shooters, needs to, at the very least, play this game.—**GamerHelp Editor Patrick Shaw**

Was it worth the wait? Does it live up to the hype?

Yes. Few games can generate this amount of hype and actually live up to it but I think Halo 3 is as good as we all expected.—**Reviews Editor Tae K. Kim**

I hate waiting for anything, let alone three years for a sequel but, yes, it was worth it.—**Art Director George Hu**

Multiplayer was worth the wait, but the campaign was somewhat underwhelming. As a complete package, though, it does live up to the hype.—**CM**

How do you feel about the single-player campaign?

Finally, I can play through the campaign mode with online co-op! Thank you Bungie for answering my prayers.—**GH**

It's solid and enjoyable, but replayability for me will be confined solely to online cooperative play. If you play Halo 3's campaign all by your lonesome, know that you're missing at least 60 percent of the total game. Online multiplayer is where this game is at.—**SS**

The single-player campaign has finally grown a little stale as we've reached the third game in the series. But to me, Halo 3's story mode is all about the weapons. Between the updated Brute Shot, improved Needler and the fun-as-hell Gravity Hammer, I'm having a lot of fun.—**CM**

Where does Halo 3 stand in the Halo franchise? Is it truly the best Halo ever?

Halo 3 seems pretty nifty so far, but it hasn't bested the original yet, in my opinion.—**Games.Net Editor Dave Rudden**

Yes. It has the best graphics, the best multiplayer modes, etc. Halo's third time is definitely the charm.—**TKK**

When it comes to multiplayer—the real draw for many Halo players—Halo 3 is indisputably the best Halo game.—**SS**

What about the multiplayer mode?

The multiplayer in Halo 3 is its main strength. Not only are there more than enough modes and multiplayer maps to whet your multiplayer appetite, but there's also the Forge, which is incredibly engrossing.—**PS**

I haven't had a chance to jump in but after reading Travis' review and hearing about the Forge and the lobby system, I'm excited. It just might convince me to sign up for Xbox Live.—**TKK**

I have abstained from multiplayer until I've developed a modicum of FPS skills. Online Halo can be devastating if you suck at it.—**DR**

What would you change about the game if you could?

Longer campaign mode and more maps. Bungie introduced map packs for Halo 2, so I'm sure we haven't seen the last of those for Halo 3.—**GH**

I think character dialogue and plot remain two major weak spots. If Halo 3's writing and plot were as good as BioShock's, you'd be looking at an utterly revolutionary game.—**SS**

I wish there were more zoomable weapons in this one. I remember the zoom pistol from the first being amazing. Now that weapon's been completely nerfed.—**DR**



Finally, how would you grade Halo 3's two main components?

George Hu
Single-player grade: **A** Multiplayer grade: **A**

Sid Shuman
Single-player grade: **B** Multiplayer grade: **A+**

Chris Morell
Single-player grade: **B-** Multiplayer grade: **A**

Dave Rudden
Single-player grade: **B+** Multiplayer grade: **N/A**

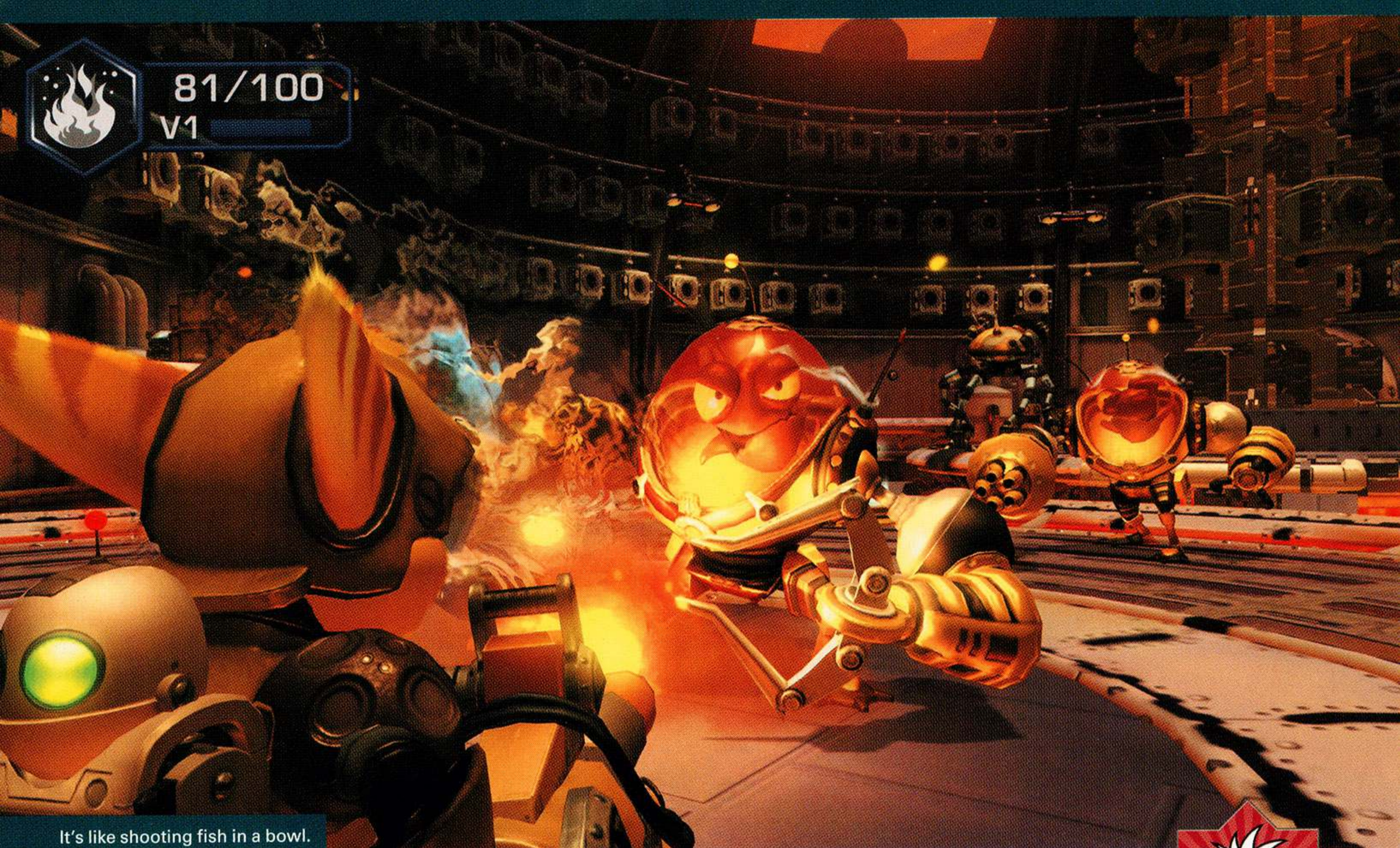
Patrick Shaw
Single-player grade: **A** Multiplayer grade: **A+**

Tae K. Kim
Single-player grade: **B+** Multiplayer grade: **N/A**



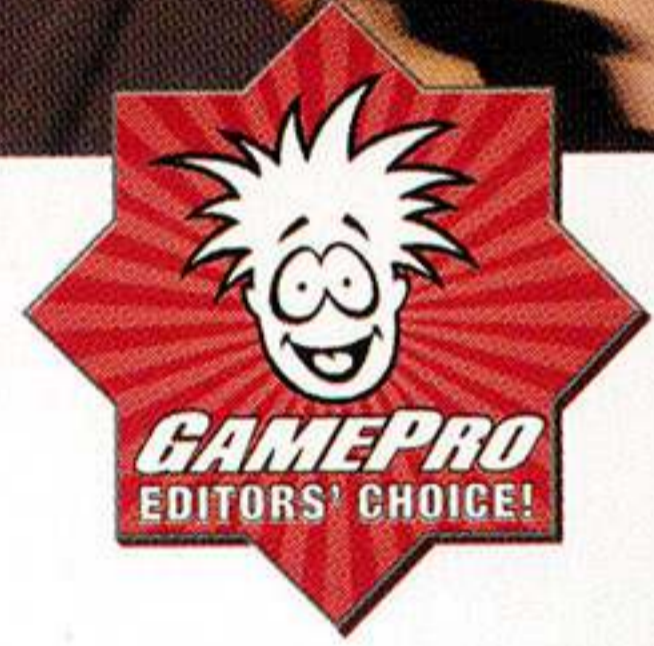


81/100
V1



It's like shooting fish in a bowl.

RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION



Filled with explosions, laser beams, and daring escapes, Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction is a classic game that gamers will be talking about for years.

PS3 ESRB: E 10+

Developer: Insomniac Games Publisher: Sony

It's fitting that the first installment of the Ratchet & Clank series on the PS3 is called Future, because in many ways it sets the bar for all future PS3 games. Starting with the opening cinematic to the very last moment, the game is a prime example of what developers can and should do with the platform.

FROM START TO FINISH

Let's start with the thing console gamers hold most dear: the graphics. Tools of Destruction definitely delivers in the visuals department, doling out sweet eye candy like a friendly old lady on Halloween.

It would be easy to take the lush and vivid detail of the game for granted, but witnessing a giant building collapse as you rail-grind past it is truly a jaw dropping experience. The best part is that the game's frame-rate never dips or stutters, which means the intense action never misses a beat.

ARMS RACE

Of course, the true stars of any Ratchet game are the many gadgets and weapons that you get to use and considering this installment is subtitled "Tools of Destruction," you can bet Insomniac went all out.

As you progress through the story, you acquire bolts to purchase weapons with and a precious metal called raritanium to upgrade your arsenal with. The upgrade system has been revamped to a grid system: raritanium is used to purchase slots on the grid that unlocks upgrades in strength, ammo capacity, range, and other attributes. This adds an additional depth and customization to the playing experience.

The weapons are also as inventive and vicious as ever. One of the silliest gadgets in the game is called the Groovitron—it shoots a giant disco ball into the air causing all the enemies to start dancing. Each enemy has their own style and I couldn't help but laugh each time I used it. It's just one of the cool weapons found in the game—the Tornado Launcher is another personal favorite—and the humor inherent in them definitely is a strong point of the game.

FLY LIKE A...LOMBAX?

Other than the weapons, players will use the Sixaxis to control Ratchet at certain points during the game. It's implemented better than most other PS3 games but it's still a bit awkward to use. The controls are also a little wonky when accessing the weapons via the quick select. There were

times in the flurry of battle where I wanted to select a weapon and I had to try several times to get the intended one to load.

But don't let these minor complaints fool you: Tools of Destruction is an amazing PS3 game that fully leverages the power of the console. It sets the bar high not only for the series but for all PS3 games to come. It is, without a doubt, reason enough to buy the system.—Todd Melick.

VAD8 Bookmark links to **Ratchet & Clank Future** screens and news. Text VAD8 to 59479
Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

5.00
..... OUT OF 5.00

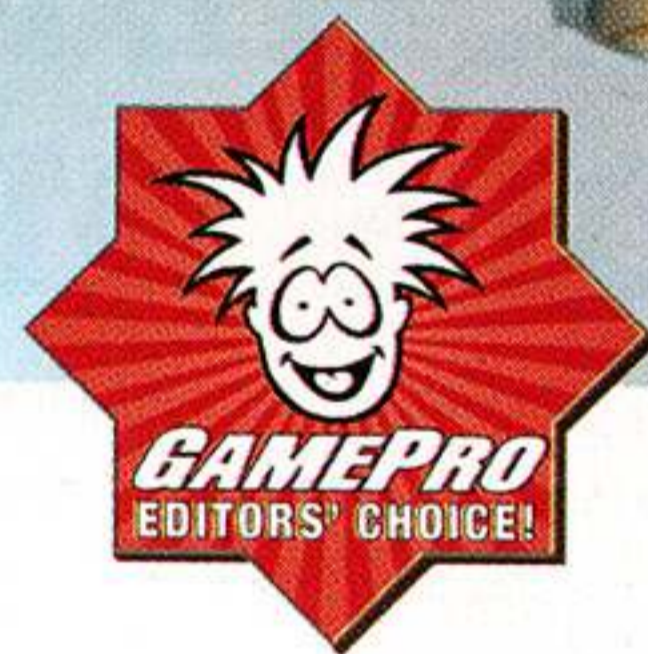
PROS: Luscious visuals; solid gameplay; addictive story; hilarious weaponry

CONS: Controls are sometimes wonky; music can get a little stale





Little-known fact: Portal has been known to induce severe cases of vertigo. Keep your head straight.



THE ORANGE BOX

Valve is set to cause Half-Life fever with their newest and most comprehensive collection the series has seen to date.

Xbox 360 ESRB: T to M

Developer and Publisher: Valve

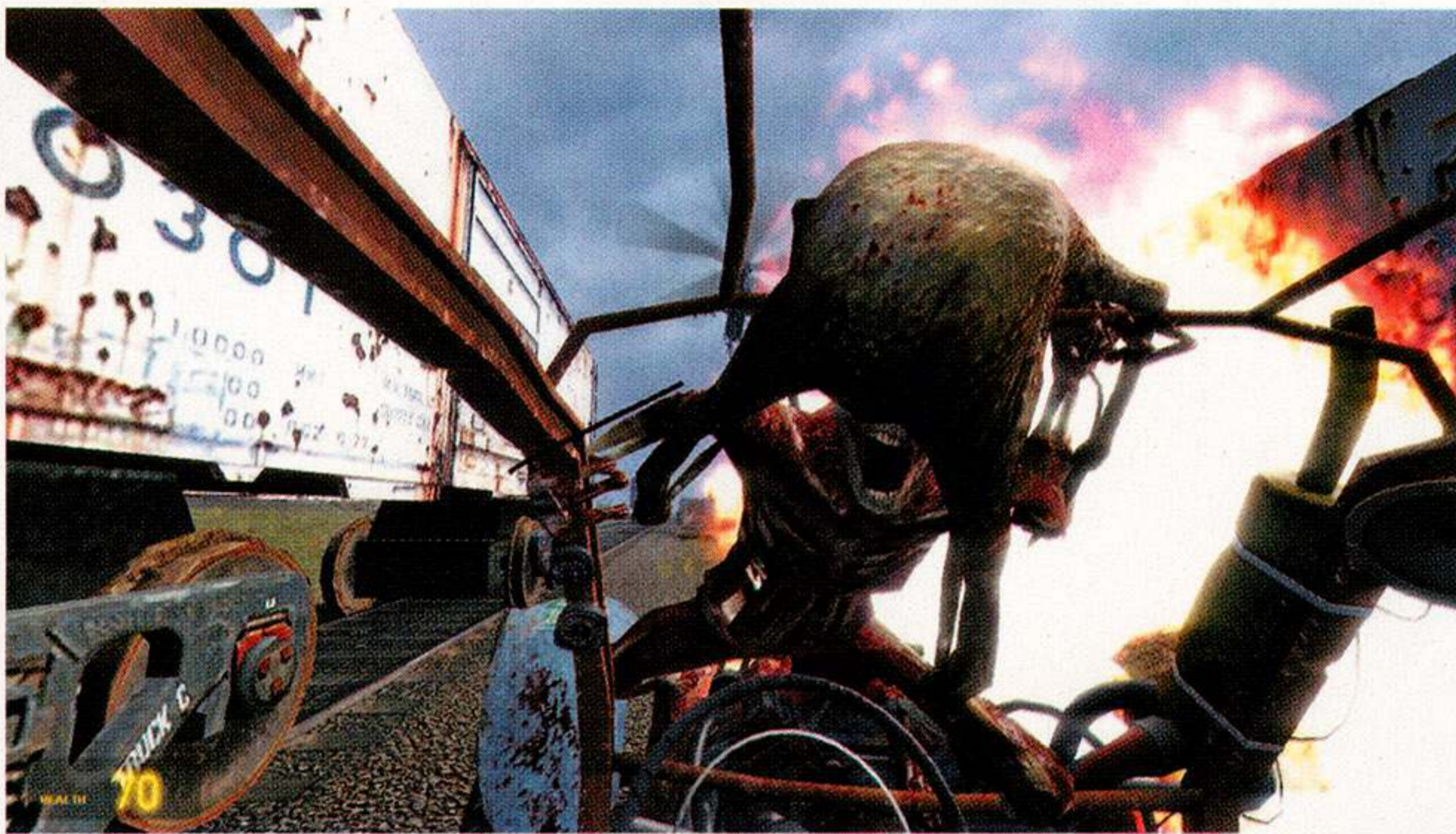
You want to talk about getting your money's worth? Take a look at The Orange Box: Not only do you get Half-Life 2 and the two episodes, you also get Portal and Team Fortress 2. For first-person shooter fans, it doesn't get much better than this.

FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR

What's even better is that each individual game runs amazingly well on the Xbox 360. The graphics are amazing as is the presentation. The interface that Valve created for navigating through the content is also wonderful. You can easily choose a game from the main screen, play for a bit, exit out and jump right into something else. A useful auto-save function keeps tabs on your progress so you don't have to worry about losing any of your hard work.

As for the games themselves, I'll skip Half-Life 2 and Episode 1, as they have been covered elsewhere (they're still awesome, by the way) and stick with the three new titles—Episode 2, Team Fortress 2, and Portal.





SAME GREAT TASTE

Each game in The Orange Box is awesome in its own right. Episode 2 delivers more of the same action that we saw in the original and Episode 1. It's a great continuation of the storyline and it will no doubt satisfy diehard fans who have been waiting to continue the adventures of everyone's favorite quantum physicist turned warrior, Gordon Freeman.

The online FPS Team Fortress 2 is also a winner with its unique cartoony visual style and its finely tuned gameplay. It doesn't weigh you down with a billion class options and focuses instead on just simple fun. It's a great counterpart to the serious sci-fi battles of Halo 3 and should attract its own fan base in short order.

ANOTHER WORLD

Lastly, we have Portal, which is easily one of the most creative, mind-bogglingly addictive games I've ever played. You start out as a test subject taking part in an experiment put on by Aperture Science Laboratories. You're tasked with overcoming puzzles using portals. The portal system sounds almost too ambitious for its own good. First, you create a blue portal on a wall, floor, or ceiling. You then create an orange portal in another location. Walk, jump, or fall through one portal and you'll end up coming out of the other.

Amazingly enough, this system has zero flaws. The difficulty ramps up well and while the later stages do get fairly complex, there's (almost) nothing impossible in Portal. What's also surprising is that Portal has a fun storyline which features some genuinely witty writing. Although it only weighs in at three to four hours, Portal is one of the biggest attraction in the Orange Box, managing to steal its fair share of the spotlight against the other amazing content with its ingenious premise and superb design.

BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

There are some minor quibbles with the game. First, I feel that the Gravity Gun is an awesomely innovative tool in the Half-Life series, but for Episode 2, I had hoped that Valve would address the fact that carrying around a large object obscures your vision field. Another nitpick: while The Orange Box has a lot to offer, some of the new games are a bit too short, particularly Portal. A game this good deserves far more than an all-too-brief four hour play time. That's not to say that those four hours aren't incredible but that the experience is over far too quickly.

But beyond that, there is nothing bad I can say about this package. The fact that you get five games is awesome. If you divide it out, you're essentially paying \$12 for each game, which is an incredible bargain. Valve's done an amazing job here, and it shouldn't let down any fans of the series with its slick presentation, great gameplay variety, and entertaining stories.—**Andy Burt**

FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Every game offered up is solid. Portal is especially awesome.

CONS: The new games, especially Portal, are a bit too short.



nailed! 2.0 x 3001

As with previous Hawk games, try to land every trick in a revert or manual so you can continue your combo.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

Tony Hawk is back and better than ever but is the Birdman run of out of interesting tricks?

PS3 ESRB: T

Developer: Neversoft Publisher: Activision

After skating with Tony Hawk for almost a dozen titles, the Birdman's brand of virtual skateboarding is starting to feel a little stale. Proving Ground, however, manages to breathe some new life into the franchise and it should please virtual thrashers who haven't yet tired of the franchise's formula.

OLD DOG, OLD TRICKS

First things first: Be aware that this game, although improved from previous versions, is not all that much different. You still start off as a no-name skater who completes objectives to earn cash, build a reputation and eventually become a recognized skateboarder.

That said the game looks fantastic. The character models in the cinematics have a strangely robotic look to them but the cityscapes are huge

and full of intricate details. You can grind and jump off of just about anything and it's possible to just ignore the objectives altogether and have fun skating around the city. It definitely has that open-ended Grand Theft Auto feel that so many developers strive for but of course, the objective based missions are where the action truly lies.

S-K-A-T-E

Much like its predecessors, Proving Ground has a ton of objectives to complete. You can take your skater on three career tracks: Career skaters focus on winning competitions and creating new moves. Hardcore skaters thrash around and skate wherever they want while the Rigger path lets you customize the city or your own skating lounge with ramps, rails and other gear on the fly.

There are also plenty of extra challenges like races, photo, and film ops that are littered around the city. As I said, there are ton of things to do and you'd have to play Proving Ground for a long time before you accomplish every single thing there is to do.

There are also some cool moves thrown in like the Aggro-kick, which lets you build up a serious head of steam, and the ability to enter Nail The Trick mode in mid-jump, which lets you gain some serious air.

BAILS AND FAILS

But as fun and feature rich as the game is, I did have a few grudges. The controls can be a little

tough, especially if you aren't a franchise master. Also, after spending some time with EA's competitor Skate, the button-mashing nature of Proving Ground felt a little tired, as did its focus on unrealistic 30-trick combos.

Still, there's no denying that the Tony Hawk franchise has some life left in it and Proving Ground is yet another deep and satisfying entry in the dominant skateboarding franchise. But here's hoping they start to innovate again next year, because if they don't, their competition might just leave them in the dust.—Andrew Gori

HAWK Bookmark links to **Tony Hawk's Proving Ground** screens and news. Text **HAWK** to **59479**
Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

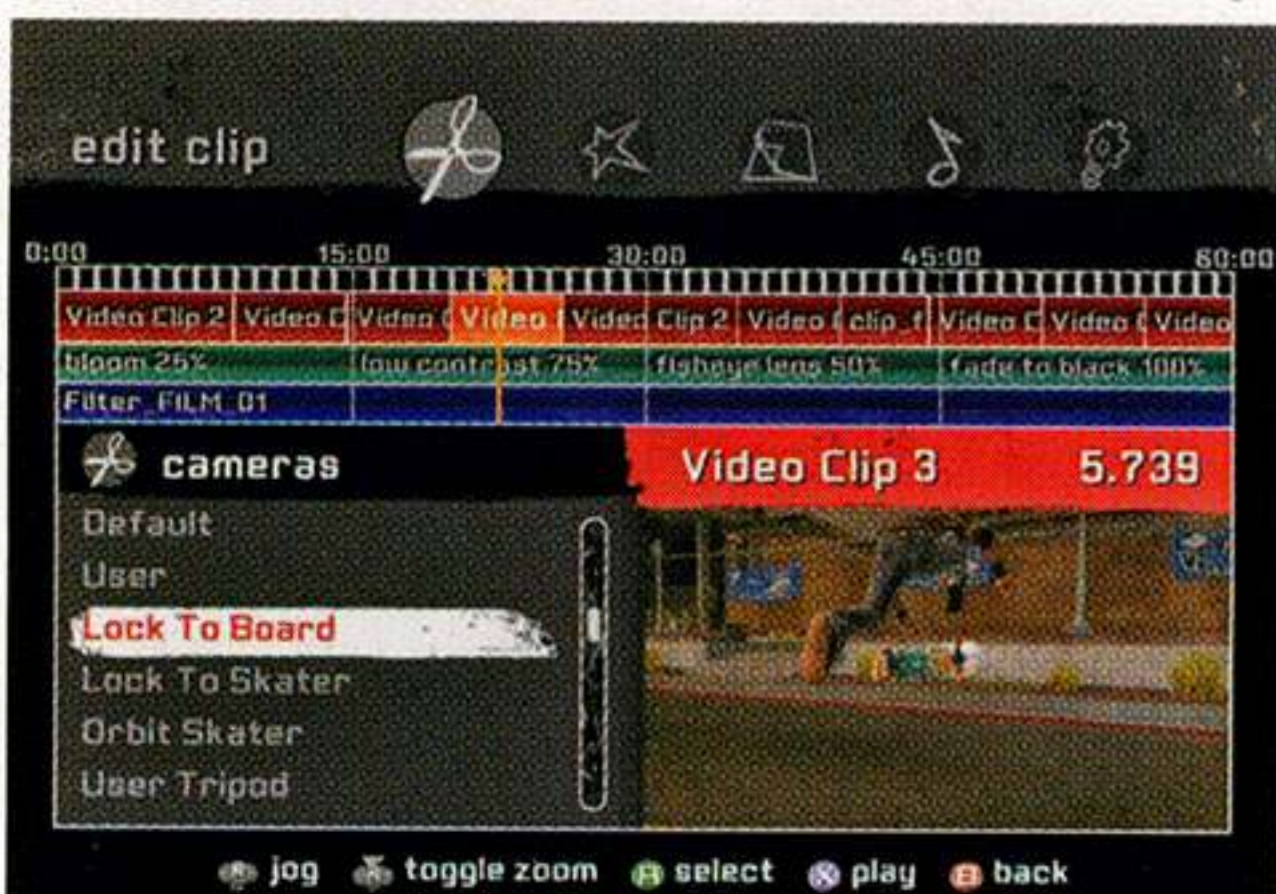
4.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Wide expansive levels; tons of options and variety.

CONS: Some basic moves can be too difficult to learn; formula is starting to feel a little old.





Shelly

Just because you're attached to cover doesn't mean you can't be hit. Keep a sharp eye on the angle of the object you choose to rub up against, or you'll have to catch more than a few bullets with your teeth.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

Like a darker Butch and Sundance, but with a lot more guns...and problems.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Io Interactive Publisher: Eidos Interactive

With its deadly serious attitude and dialogue drenched with f-bombs, Kane & Lynch wants desperately to be a hard-boiled exploration of the criminal underworld. Unfortunately, it never achieves its intended goal, coming up just short in the all the pivotal areas.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

A title like Kane & Lynch almost demands a gritty, well told storyline. Much like action thrillers like Heat, a good story gives proper context and meaning to the gory gunfights. Unfortunately, Kane & Lynch's heavy-handed story is just an excuse to get you into trouble with mobsters, cops, guards, and anyone else with a shotgun and a beef.

But what Kane & Lynch lacks in storytelling acumen it makes up for with interesting scenarios. However, while it might sound fun to perpetrate a daylight bank robbery, or break *into* a maximum security prison, these circumstances come off

feeling limp despite all the loud gunfire and dead bodies. Each mission basically boils down to taking out witless automatons that come running when you cross invisible markers, and heading for the next disposable scripted cut-scene.

And for every intense and strategically rich open environment there are two that feel like halls bound together with duct-tape. Also, Kane & Lynch isn't ugly by any means but it doesn't come close to tapping the potential of the Xbox 360's hardware with its timid explosions and awkward enemy movements.

LOSING CONTROL

Then there are the controls, which are frustratingly inconsistent. It made me long for the intuitive control scheme found in Gears of War, which would have been perfect for this game, by the way. Why does holding down the left trigger to zoom in on your target sometimes leave you pointing at the ground? Why is weapon reloading both manual *and* automatic, thus robbing you of golden opportunities to return fire because your character suddenly decides to pause and swap clips?

There are just too many problems with Kane & Lynch for me to cover them all here. Sure, the gritty atmosphere and balls out gunplay offers up some thrills, and yes the multiplayer options hold some potential but the hard-boiled noir tone and interesting amalgam of varied ideas never truly comes together to form the cohesive action thriller that the game aspires to be. —Cameron Lewis



Bookmark links to Kane & Lynch screens and news. Text DWUC to 59479

Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

3.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Engaging mission concepts, offline co-op, online multiplayer might turn out to be fun.

CONS: Poor controls, mostly bland visuals, misbehaving allies, dumb enemies, and more.





"Billie" Church can gun down foes or turn them into demon-sushi with her Nodachi sword without breaking a sweat. Now that's power.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

Clive Barker's brilliantly demented mind conjures up the horrifically good Jericho.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: MercurySteam Publisher: Codemasters

Clive Barker's Jericho is an interesting game that's dripping with atmosphere and style. Its story, in which you lead a covert squad of "occult warfare" pros through the ruined, evil city of Al-Khali, is well done, thanks to the involvement of horror master Clive Barker and while it has its faults, it will no doubt please gamers on a visceral level.

THERE'S NO "A.I." IN "TEAM"

Jericho's gameplay revolves around a team system that allows you to switch between the assorted characters. Each member of your covert-ops team has their own innate powers which you

have to use effectively in order to succeed. For instance, one member of the team can stop enemies in their tracks with powerful blood magic, which can buy you precious seconds during a demon onslaught. The action is intense and the firefights can get really hairy when evil monsters are trying to claw your eyes out from every direction.

The downside to the team system is that the computer A.I. does a poor job of taking over when you switch characters. This can lead to frustrating moments where your team gets slaughtered because the A.I. controlling them failed to pick up the slack right away. This makes otherwise enjoyable action segments more frustrating than interesting.

DRIPPY, GOOEY, DELICIOUS

Thankfully, the graphics in Jericho are some of the best I've seen on the Xbox 360 so far. Every liquid texture seems to be gooey and disgusting, which only adds to the creepy atmosphere. The environments are large and detailed, and the character design is top notch, especially for the demons you'll encounter; some of the enemy designs will haunt you long after you put the game down.

Unfortunately, while the stage design is awesome, there are some horrendously long load times involved. It makes sense given the game's graphical prowess but it really cuts into the sense of immersion that the game's atmosphere does such a great job of instilling. Also, the voice-over work, which is deliciously hammy in a B-movie sort of way, isn't always synced up properly to the facial animations, which annoyed me.

A WORTHWHILE SHOT IN THE DARK

Despite these mistakes, Jericho still manages to shine bright. Its slick style, amazing graphics, and dark atmosphere really make it stand out. Here's hoping that MercurySteam has another romp into the dark depths of Clive Barker's mind lined up soon. —Andy Burt



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Stylized gameplay; slick graphics; amazing moody atmosphere.

CONS: Long load times; A.I. problems; audio dubbing is sometimes off.

FOLKLORE

PS3 ESRB: T

■ Developer: Game Republic ■ Publisher: Sony



It's hard not to be mesmerized by the visual elements of Folklore. Not only are they beautiful and crisp, but they are a breath of fresh air in the otherwise fantasy dominated RPG genre. The Celtic background gives ample space for some truly original design, and nearly every one of the monsters I battled (there are more than 100 in the game) was stunning to look at. Unfortunately, once you get over how great everything looks, this action RPG is stunted by a few problems that hold it back from growing into a perfect game.

GROWING PAINS

As the game begins you are introduced to each of the two main characters, Ellen and Keats, and play through the chapters as each of the protagonists. The problem with this is that the story unfolds very slowly, especially towards the very beginning. The beautifully rendered cut-scenes are sparse, with the story mostly being told

through static images with the dialogue in speech bubbles, much like a comic book. While the narrative is compelling, it drags on at such a snail's pace that I found myself impatiently wanting to get back into battle.

ID, EGO, SUPEREGO

The game has an interesting approach to battling monsters. As you go through the game, you capture the spirits, called ids, of monsters and use them to attack your foes. The catch is that after you beat down a baddie you use the Sixaxis control to yank the spirit out by pulling up on the controller.

This is executed amazingly well, though after a few hours it started to lose its novelty. There is a bit of strategy involved to battling the ids as some are only susceptible to certain spirits, but unfortunately, there just isn't enough variation to keep the gameplay from feeling repetitive.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Folklore also plays out in a fairly linear fashion, though the levels that you traverse are interesting. From the Hell Realm to the Faery Realm to the Undersea City, the locales are unique and wonderful. Despite the game's faults, I was drawn into the game for the same reasons that we are drawn into fairy tales—I wanted to see what was just around the next corner.

What saves this game from being just another monster collection RPG is the compelling narrative and the unique environments. I am also looking forward to the downloadable content which should help keep things fresh in the future. Although it isn't perfect, Folklore is definitely one fairy tale worth finishing.—Todd Melick



FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Original settings and monster design; compelling story line.

CONS: Gameplay gets monotonous; story's pacing is slow.

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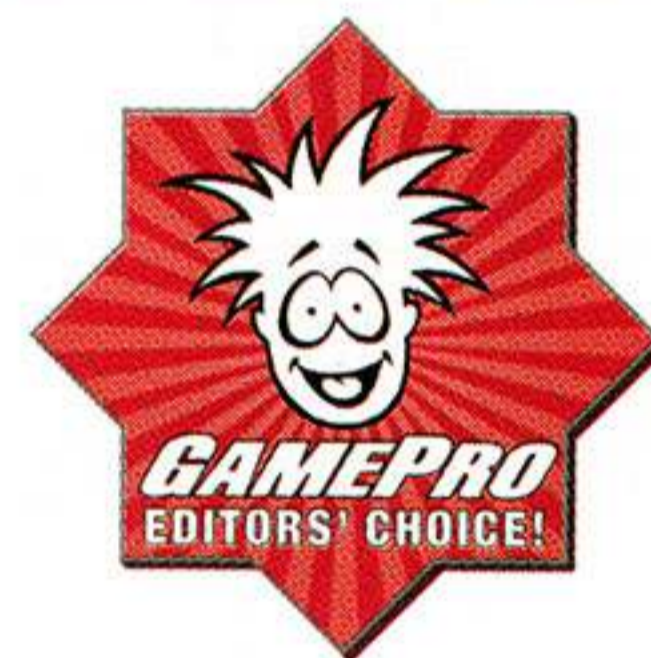
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MVP



Purple unitards won't guard a drop-kick to the face.

WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008



The superstars are back with an all new shiny spandex coating.

PS3 ESRB: T

Developer: Yuke's Publisher: THQ

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008 surpasses the 2007 version while still remaining true to the spirit of the sport. There are some problems, but does a great job of giving wrestling fans a chance to live the life of a superstar.

the wrestlers control fluidly, making it easy to do the basics like kicking and punching. Some of the harder maneuvers can tax your fingers, especially the signature moves—franchise veterans won't have any issues but those new to the games will.

This isn't a title for the casual gamer, but if you're a fan of the franchise or just really love throwing half-naked men off ladders and pinning them to the ground, then SvR 2008 is about as good as it gets.—**Todd Melick**

ROYAL RUMBLE

With a sport that's so dependant upon the athlete's individual personalities and outward appearance, it's important that the designers do a good job of digitizing these wrestling superstars. This isn't Madden where you can hide a player in a football helmet: You can't just recycle The Rock's body and paste Carlito's head on it.

Thankfully, the digital versions of the wrestlers look almost as good as their real-life counterparts. The wrestling action is buttery smooth and

TRULY HARDCORE

This brings up one issue with the game: Unless you're a big pro wrestling fan, WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008 probably won't have much appeal to you. That's fine as the game is obviously targeting the WWE fanatics but just be warned that your enjoyment of the game is going to be directly tied to how heavily invested you are in the shows and characters.

You also need to be a diehard fan to endure the insane load times. It got so bad that at times, I felt as if I had been transported back in time and was playing a PlayStation game.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Still, there's no denying SvR 2008 is a wrestling fan's dream come true. There's surprising depth in the game, from the WWE 24/7 mode where players take a no-name wrestler all the way up through the ranks, to the robust and endlessly complicated create a character mode, the game has enough content to keep a dedicated gamer busy for a long time.



FUN FACTOR

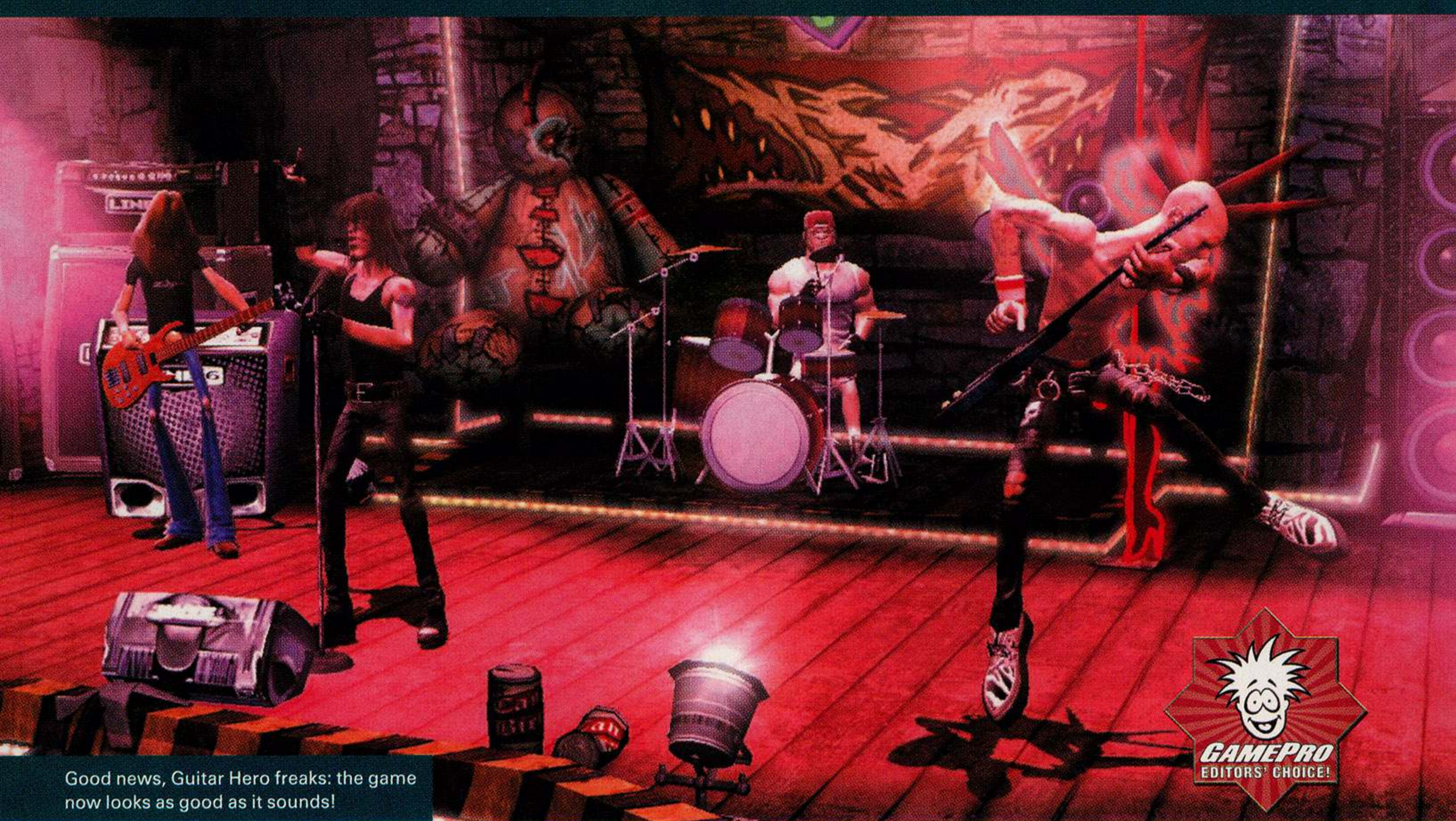
4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Nice graphics and detail in recreating the superstars.

CONS: Skull-crushing loading times; game play seems repetitive at times.



Good news, Guitar Hero freaks: the game now looks as good as it sounds!



GUITAR HERO III: LEGENDS OF ROCK

The third time's the charm for the king of the rhythm game genre.

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: Neversoft Publisher: Activision

It's hard being the king. Just ask the Guitar Hero franchise. It's currently sitting on the rhythm game throne and yet, all anyone can talk about is the new kid on the block, Rock Band. But don't let the hype distract you: Guitar Hero III is not only the best Guitar Hero ever, it might have just enough juice to steal away some of Rock Band's thunder.



OPENING ACT

There really isn't much to say about GHIII. The game is essentially the same one that we've been playing ever since the first one dropped. The only difference this time around is that the presentation and visuals have finally caught up to our expectations. In short, the game looks as good as it plays, which is a remarkable feat indeed. The graphics get a nice bump up in quality and the animated cut-scenes that transition you from level to level are nicely done—say goodbye to the static map with a cutout tour van.

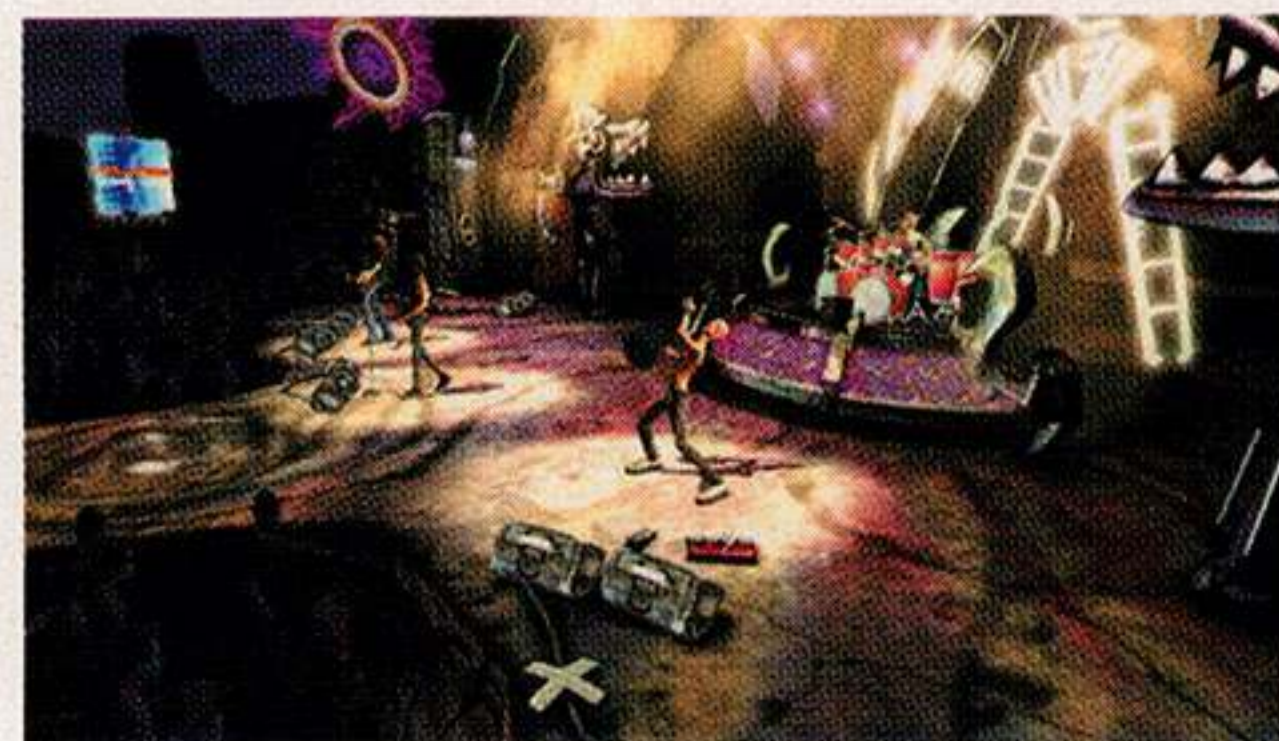
Everything just screams high production values, which is pretty awesome. The song list is also

impressive and features a good mix of the old and the new. It still skews heavily towards rock and hair metal but the game has some real winners like Guns N' Roses's "Welcome To The Jungle" and Weezer's "My Name is Jonas." There are also a ton of unlockable tracks and of course downloadable content is in the works.

LAST SONG, LAST DANCE

The new additions also shine but not for very long. The boss battles are a fun diversion and I wish there had been more of them—there are only three so it doesn't feel like a full fledged feature. The online modes, which I didn't get to test out due to the fact that I was playing an early review copy, have some cool options, including online co-op, which is useful if you don't have a friend to play with you.

I did have a few issues with the game, though. I noticed that the layout of the notes in certain songs were a little wonky, requiring you to move your fingers in a way that felt unnatural. The game is also pretty brutal in the late goings. I got all the



way to the last tier on Hard without failing once but I still haven't beaten any of the final songs because they're so insanely difficult.

Also, the included wireless guitar is awesome but I had minor issues with getting it to sync with the console. The green button would also blink out every now and again. It might be an isolated issue but it was a small ding against an otherwise awesome controller.

ENCORE

Whether you buy Guitar Hero III will depend on whether you already invested in Guitar Hero II for the Xbox 360. If you did, this is a no-brainer. Go buy GHIII the minute it hits store shelves—you will not be disappointed. However, if you haven't yet taken the plunge, you might want to wait until Rock Band comes out before you make your decision. Either way, this is the best Guitar Hero ever made and you will not be disappointed if you're a fan of the franchise.—Tae K. Kim

FUN FACTOR

4.75

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Graphics and presentation rock as hard as the gameplay; sweet new wireless controller.

CONS: Song tabs are a little wonky; not enough boss battles; last few songs are *hard!*



5
Fast Strike Finisher

Blocking just before an enemy connects buys the chance to retaliate in colorful ways. Getting the timing right takes some practice, though, as each bad guy times his blows differently, so get to know what movements precede each thrust of his blade.

CONAN

When you absolutely, positively have to kill every villain in the realm.

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Nihilistic Software Publisher: THQ

Before there was *The Lord of the Rings*, there was Robert E. Howard's *Conan the Cimmerian*. Now, the big brute is starring in his own video game. But don't call this a comeback: Even though it's been 75 years since he was born, Conan's still more than ready to crack a few skulls.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS

Conan might start off with little more than a sword and a health meter, but right out of the gate the hulk's got his pick of three different ways to do battle, and each lends itself to different situations and styles. A blade in each hand deals damage with frightening speed, but equipping a shield instead means enemies have a harder time breaking through blocks. A single two-handed death-dealer can pound the life from anything in a few short strokes, but its sluggish movement demands careful timing.

Since damn near everything you kill drops equipment, the opportunity to change approaches is seldom far away. Conan's path through this dark world might be a straight line most of the time, but his arsenal reads like the inventory checklist for a weapons store: swords, scimitars, halberds, polearms, axes, shields, torches, boulders, and more lie strewn all over the place.

HOUSE OF PAIN

The laundry list of armaments is nothing compared to the enormous library of combination attacks Conan can unlock, and each is gorier than the last: limbs are sliced from torsos, heads

removed from shoulders, and intestines spilled from corpses cleaved in twain. Fallen foes release red runes to be spent on new repertoire maneuvers; once learned, most can then be practiced in battle until mastered, at which point additional bonuses are awarded. As if that weren't enough, as Conan gathers pieces of his armor, he gains special powers, like the ability to briefly turn enemies to stone, or call a rain of fire down from the heavens.

From the Barachan Isles to Stygia, the visuals evoke traditional sword-and-sorcery paintings. The level of environmental detail never quite reaches critical mass, but turning everything from dusty arenas and dank caverns into blood-drenched abattoirs gives the game a powerful sense of warped grandeur.

DANCING WITH THE DEVIL

In truth, it's the simple joy of watching Conan slip in and out of slo-mo as he dispatches evil in dozens of imaginative ways that keeps the whole game from feeling as repetitive as it really is. The simple-minded enemies seldom provide enough of a challenge to warrant such an extensive play-book, though. From witch doctors to monstrous simians, each is locked into a repetitive dance of canned moves, and besting each is a simple matter of memorizing their patterns. Far too often success hinges on provoking an attack, rolling away, and then spinning up a powerful combo.

The long and satisfying boss battles against fiends like the Elephant Demon and Sand Dragon fare better, even if their timed button-pressing

cues owe a great deal to the contemporary classic *God of War*. Waiting more than half a minute for the last checkpoint to load each time you die doesn't do wonders for immersion, but slowly whittling each deity down to size provides some of Conan's most fulfilling moments.

ROUGH TRADE

Fans of the Conan books will likely be disappointed by the disjointed narrative and surprisingly dispassionate vocal performances; and most gamers will see the button-tapping mini-games and bare-breasted maidens as the hollow window-dressing they are, but Conan is still an agreeable diversion despite its obvious faults. If only the rest of the game were as inventive as the seemingly bottomless library of animated brutality, Conan might have been elevated to the Mount Olympus-like heights that a certain other warrior has achieved.—Cameron Lewis

FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Cool weapons and combination attacks; great boss battles; stunning battle animations.

CONS: Enemies are too predictable; storytelling lacks polish.

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

DS ESRB: T

Developer and Publisher: Capcom

After playing *Trials and Tribulations*, I've come to the sad conclusion that a real attorney will never have as much fun in the court room as Phoenix Wright. If they did, I probably would have made my parents happy and gone to law school.

MAKE IT WORK

Phoenix Wright games are notorious for their soaring leaps and twisted logic, but it always manages to come together in the end somehow. The game often requires out-of-the-box thinking, but the characters and absurdity make it a fun and entertaining romp through the courthouse rather than a brain-damagingly confusing experience.

The game has five cases in all but don't get your hopes up—there are still no DS-specific case like there was in the first Phoenix Wright. This game, like the second, is a direct port of the GBA game with no real special DS functionality aside from the same old touch screen selection and the ability to shout "Hold it!" and "Objection!"

SAME OLD SONG

Truth be told, if you've already played the first two Phoenix Wrights, you won't find any new improvements. The gameplay, graphics, and music are almost exactly the same as in the previous two installments. Cases play out exactly the same as well: You talk to people, gather evidence by reading through box after box of text and squeeze key information out of witnesses by breaking their "psyche locks"—a concept returning from the second game—via countering the excuses and lies that characters tell to hide their deepest, darkest secrets.

If you loved the first two installments in the franchise, then *Trials and Tribulations* definitely



has more of what you're looking for. Newcomers to the series will be better served by picking up the first Phoenix Wright as part of the series' charm lies in getting to know the characters over time.

ULTERIOR MOTIVES

But here's the real reason to buy *Trials and Tribulations*: If it sells well enough in America, Capcom will likely bring the fourth game to our shores. This title features a new ace attorney, Apollo Justice, and was designed specifically for the DS, so if you loved the DS functionality in the last case of the first game (such as dusting for prints, spraying luminol, examining evidence from all angles, etc), support the franchise to get more of that DS-based sleuthing goodness in the future. Either way, the courtroom antics of Phoenix Wright are well worth the trip, even if the formula hasn't changed.—Amanda Ng



FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Same wacky courtroom drama that made the first two games so memorable.

CONS: The game might be a little too much of the same old, same old for some gamers.



LEGO STAR WARS: THE COMPLETE SAGA

Wii ESRB: E10+

Developer: Traveller's Tales
Publisher: LucasArts



I've always had a soft spot in my heart for the LEGO *Star Wars* games. The games were a great example of what you can do with a license if you approach it the right way and it was ridiculously charming, what with its cute graphics and great sense of humor. Much like with the *Star Wars* movies, LucasArts has seen fit to collect the first two LEGO *Star Wars* games into an ultimate collection for the Wii. And the best part: it has Wii Remote lightsaber action!

Okay, so it's not the Jedi-like, cutting limbs off of Stormtroopers control scheme that everyone has wanted since the Wii was first announced but the motion-sensing lightsaber moves are fun... for about five minutes. As with most Wii games where you have to move the Wii Remote to attack, it gets a little tiresome. The cool part is that the little speaker emits the appropriate lightsaber sounds, which only gets me more excited for the possibility of a proper *Star Wars* game with lightsaber controls built around the Wii Remote.

Aside from that, the game is pretty much the same as the others. You maneuver blocky *Star Wars* heroes through stages modeled after the movies, blast enemies, and collect items. The controls are solid, the action is fun, and the graphics are actually decent on the Wii. It should find a nice home on the casual-gamer friendly Wii, though anyone who's already played the first two might want to think hard before buying it, as the game hasn't changed much. Still, it's a fun title and one worth getting for the little *Star Wars* fanatic in your life.—Tae K. Kim



FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Classic LEGO-shaped *Star Wars* fun; Wii Remote lightsaber controls are interesting

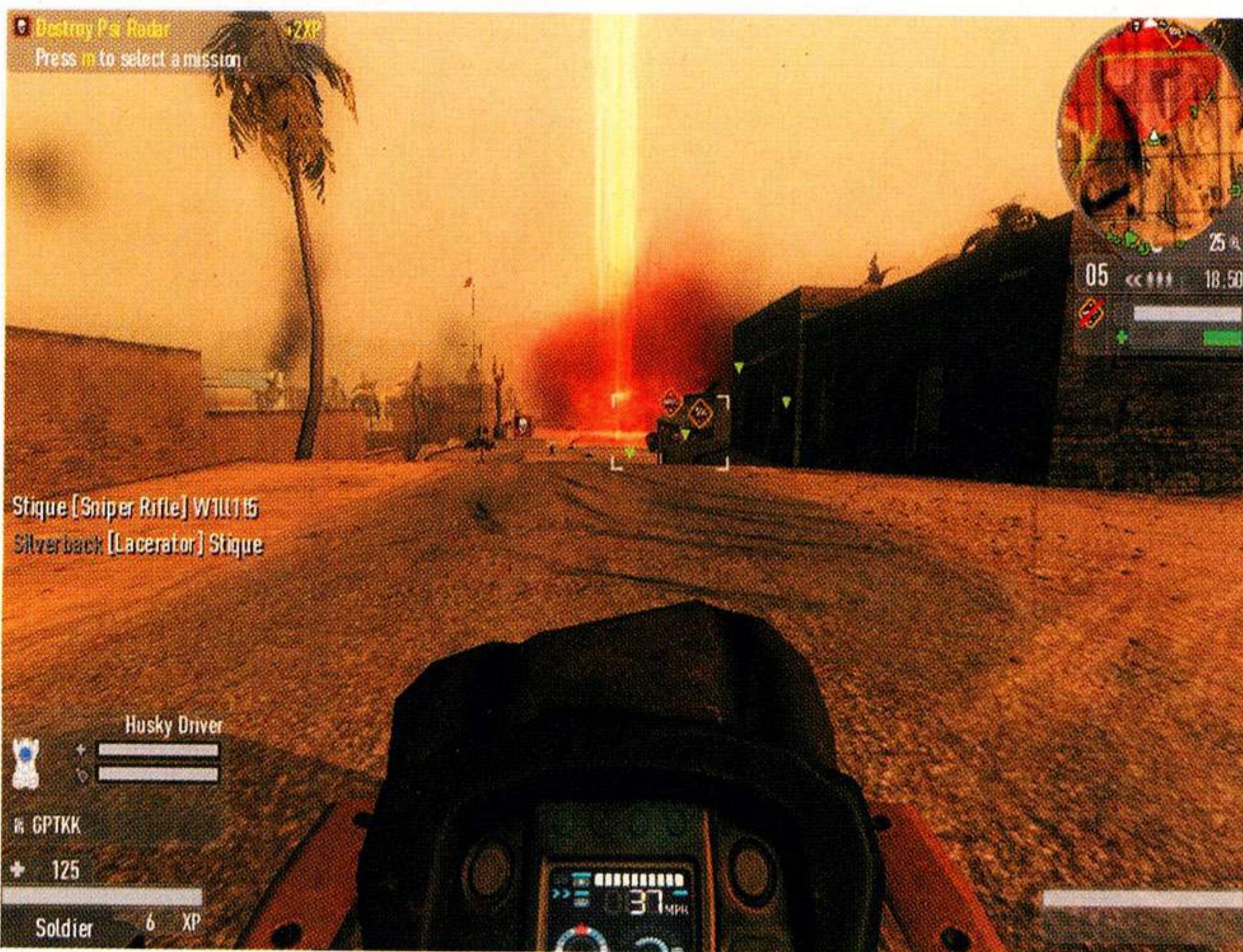
CONS: Not a whole lot has changed; Lightsaber controls are only fun for a short while.



ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

PC ESRB: T

Developer: Splash Damage Publisher: Activision



I really hope that Quake Wars sells a ton of copies. With Halo 3 already in people's grasps when the game releases, it's possible that it'll get ignored, which is too bad because it's such a blast to play.

MY OWN WORST ENEMY

Anyone who played the free Enemy Territory game that Splash Damage put out a while back knows what they're in for with Quake Wars: a but-tery smooth online FPS experience with finely balanced gameplay.

Both the Strogg and the human GDF have access to five different character classes: soldiers, medics, engineers, scouts, and snipers. All of the classes fulfill specific roles and you really do need a good mix on the battlefield to be successful in combat situations. Some classes are, obviously, more important than others, though, and the game identifies what it feels to be the key class for each specific map.

A variety of vehicles also add to the carnage. Each side has access to small speedy crafts and large hulking battle machines; things get pretty hairy on the battlefield when all of the vehicles

come into play at once. The only thing bad about it is that you can't use an opponent's vehicle.

SYNCHRONIZED SLAUGHTER

You also gain experience for everything from killing an enemy to using your class specific skills. Once you gain enough, you earn rewards in the form of combat bonuses, like increased sprinting speed and flak jackets, which is a nice touch.

The matches I participated in boiled down to one team defending critical objectives from the other side's assault. The objectives stack neatly on top of each other—accomplish objective "A" to gain access to "B" which opens up "C" and so forth—and this creates constantly shifting combat zones as one team gains ground on the other.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

It's obvious after my limited play time that Splash Damage did a bang up job of crafting a fun and addictive team-based FPS experience. I feel like I just barely scratched the surface and can't wait to dig down deeper into what the game truly has to offer. I really do hope that a lot of players buy the game and hop online, if only so I can be guaranteed a steady stream of opponents to play against.

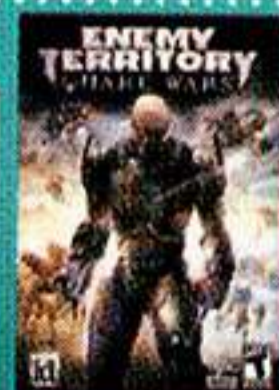
—Tae K. Kim



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Splash Damage knows how to design a finely tuned team-based FPS game.

CONS: You can't use enemy vehicles. First-time players will feel lost and discouraged.

SILENT HILL ORIGINS

PSP ESRB: M

Developer: Climax Studios
Publisher: Konami



I dread new Silent Hill games as much as I look forward to them. Since its inception on the PlayStation, the series has successfully out-creeped even the most stoic survival-horror fan. So imagine my delight and horror when I was handed Origins, which, like its predecessors, succeeds in the difficult task of frightening the gamer on a cerebral level.

You step into the role of Travis Grady, an easy-going truck driver who's constantly haunted by disturbing visions. He finds himself in Silent Hill, passed out from fatigue, after rescuing a girl from a burning house on the outskirts of town. He wakes up in a hospital, and from there, he delves deeper and deeper into the dark depths of the town.

As in past games, there is a certain "real world-alternate world" motif that runs throughout the game and Travis can switch between these realities using any mirror he touches. Longtime fans of the series will notice many locales from previous outings, and the visual style of the series is kept intact here. Everything from the environments to the creatures oozes with the spine-chilling sense of dread that the series is known for.

The game does suffer from a wonky camera, though. It usually works fine but there were times when it would swing into a bad position, making it hard for me to see what was going on. There's also an auto-center option that doesn't seem to work the way it should.

Still, Silent Hill Origins succeeds on so many levels that it will not disappoint fans of the series. It's another solid title in the series and acts as a great preface to the story of later titles. Just be sure to play it with the lights on.—Andy Burt



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Very impressive graphics; immersive gameplay will creep the hell out of you.

CONS: Occasional wonky camera; character models could be a bit more detailed

THE SIMPSONS GAME

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: EA Redwood Shores Publisher: EA Games



I was so hyped up about The Simpsons Game. As a big fan of the show, I wanted another chance to romp around in my favorite fictional city with my favorite animated family! Unfortunately, while the game does some things right, it's lackluster in some key areas, which keeps it from being the end-all, be-all Simpsons game that I wanted it to be.

JEBUS WOULD BE ASHAMED...

First off, the controls suck. I mean, they really suck. They suck so bad that they often detracted from the on-screen fun. For instance, each character has, in one form or another, a type of targeting system—Marge uses hers to aim her megaphone while Bart uses his to aim his slingshot. But, because the control scheme is so wonky, it never really works right. The sad part is that if the developers had taken more time to polish the controls, we'd be treated to a much finer gaming experience.

Compounding the issue was the fact that many of the missions were time based. I would repeatedly fail missions just because of the controls.

LIGHTS! CAMERA! INACTION!

Secondly, the camera is god-awful. This is a problem common to these types of games but you figure a powerhouse company like EA wouldn't make such a blatant mistake. There were far too many instances when my view of the action was completely blocked and attempting to fix the angle only made things worse. If it weren't for the amazing visuals and smooth frame-rate, I would've completely given up on the game.

Another thing that bothered me were the load times. Sure, I've come to expect a short wait when a mission is loading but having to endure a lag after switching out characters is just ridiculous.

WELCOME TO SPRINGFAILED

The biggest tragedy is that The Simpsons Game is a decent title and had these major issues been addressed, it would have fared much better. Springfield and all its denizens are recreated faithfully and the free-roaming, GTA-like mission structure gives you the opportunity to just walk around and take in the sights.

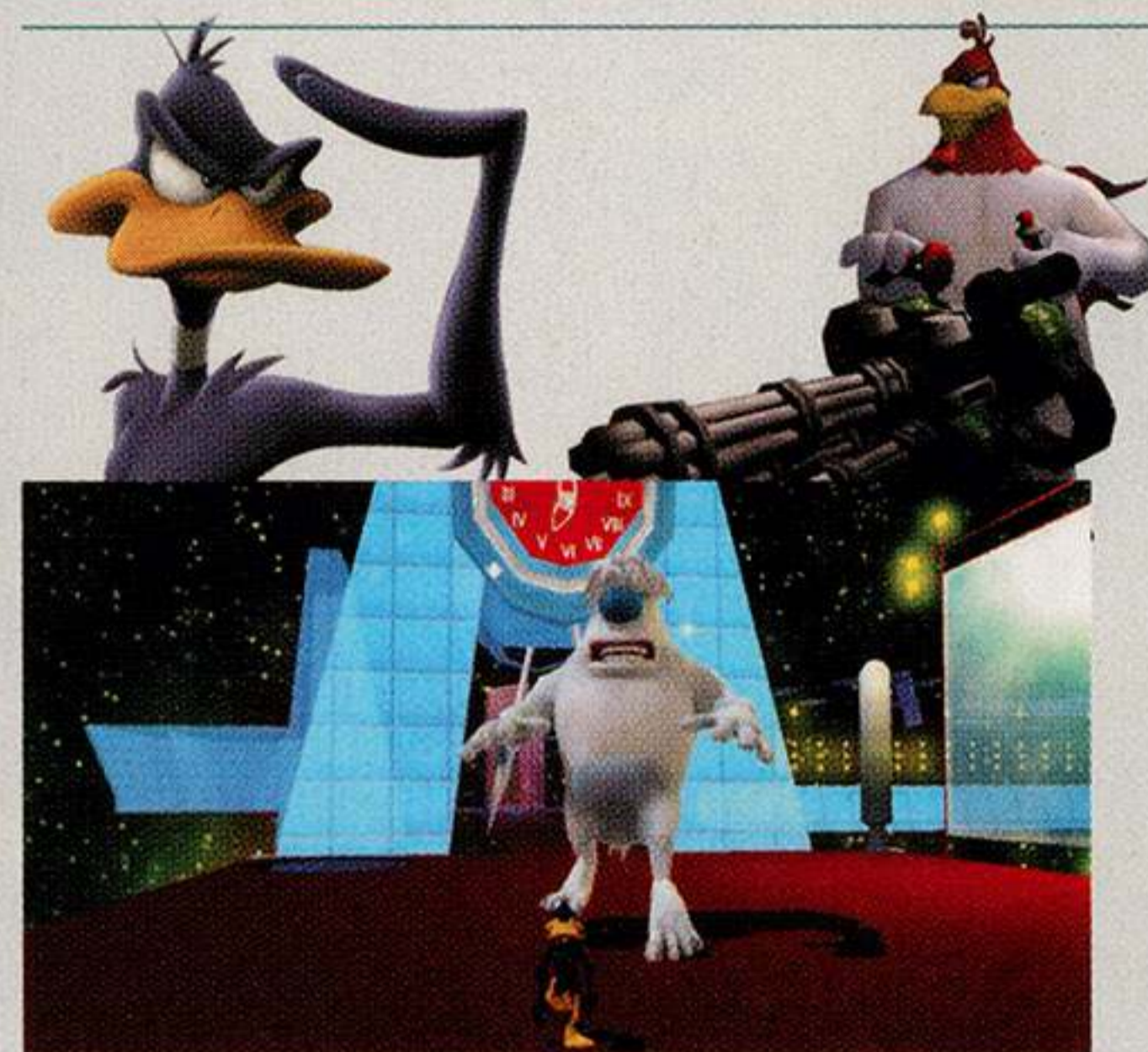
The game's story is also brilliant, thanks to some great writing. Seriously, if the animated show still had writing this good, I'd feel more compelled to actually watch it on a regular basis.

All in all, The Simpsons Game is a good effort but there are some glaring flaws that hold it back. Still, despite the wonky camera and flakey controls, there are some genuine laughs to be had and it's a great chance to spend some time with everyone's favorite animated family.—**Andy Burt**

LOONEY TOONS ACME ARSENAL

Xbox 360 ESRB: E10+

Developer: Red Tribe Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment



In my humble opinion, animated perfection was achieved with the creation of the Looney Tunes cartoons. The shows that dominate the airwaves now like SpongeBob SquarePants and Naruto have their merits, but when it comes to pure entertainment and comedic timing, you just can't beat Bugs and his crew of merry misfits. The Looney Tunes gang has starred in their fair share of video games but they might have hit the jackpot with Acme Arsenal, a clever title offers up a nice serving of good old-fashioned fun.

Acme Arsenal plays a lot like the LEGO Star Wars titles, only you control Bugs Bunny and other Looney Tunes characters instead of blocky Star Wars heroes. The gameplay boils down to a simplistic mix of platform jumping and enemy bashing, with a good dose of item collection thrown in. It won't tax your reflexes or your brain, which is why the game is perfect for younger gamers; players who grew up with the cartoons, as I did, will also experience a nice feeling of nostalgia as they play.

The level designs are also interesting, with varied locales and enemies—you basically fight evil robots the whole time but they dress up according to the time period you're in—and the visual palette is colorful enough to hold a child's short-lived attention span. Acme Arsenal isn't as fun or as inventive as LEGO Star Wars but it is an interesting introduction to the Looney Tunes world and further proof that the characters have retained their ability to charm and entertain. Here's hoping that this title helps turn another generation onto the wonders of the magical and timeless Looney Tunes cartoons.—**Tae K. Kim**



FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Amazing graphics that bring Springfield to life; writing is superb.

CONS: Awful camera, controls, and load times.

FUN FACTOR

3.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Simple gameplay and colorful visuals should appeal to young gamers; good use of the franchise license.

CONS: Gameplay too simple for older gamers.

BEAUTIFUL KATAMARI

Xbox 360 ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Namco Bandai



Beautiful Katamari, which is the first title in the franchise to appear on anything other than a Sony branded console, retains the uniquely goofy nature of the original game, from the King's barely coherent trademark ramblings, to the upbeat soundtrack, and that's good news for Xbox 360 owners indeed.

BLIND MAN'S BLUFF

The basic gist behind the Katamari games goes like this: Using the analog sticks, you propel a sticky orb around the world, gathering small items like candies and poker chips until you gain enough mass to suck up people, cars, buildings, and more. You have to build up your orbs to as large a size as you can manage so the King can turn them into planets, stars, and other celestial objects. The gameplay is rather simple but the charm comes from the whole package: The colorful visuals, the strange characters and the bouncy soundtrack all make for a unique experience.

Unfortunately, while it is a fun title, Beautiful Katamari suffers from some of the same goofs that plagued the other titles. You still get stuck in tight spots because the camera swiveled behind a wall or table, co-op control still amounts to pretending you share a single uncomfortable body with a twin, and a few of the levels are filled with frustrating opportunities to abruptly end your hard-won progress because you ran over the wrong item. Even the much-anticipated online multiplayer battles run dry quickly because of diminished object variety, and an unalterable match time limit.

COLLISION INSURANCE

Beautiful Katamari's collision detection also seems slightly more obtuse than its predecessor titles, fussily refusing to pick up some objects right away. Insult is added to this injury when you fail a level and are forced to endure a chew-out session with the King instead of just jumping right back in for another try. If the level were reloading in the background, this might be amusing but as it stands, it's just pointlessly irritating.

Still, in spite of its plainly apparent faults, Beautiful Katamari is a lot of fun, even if the formula

hasn't evolved much since the original. The addition of online play over Xbox Live is an interesting wrinkle, but doesn't add up to much when you can't even change the time limit, or roll peacefully towards a common goal. The game is also rather short but when every outrageous environment is so chock full of goodies, and the atmosphere so relentlessly positive, it's still hard to resist playing just one more time. —Cameron Lewis



FUN FACTOR

3.75

..... OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Simple but compelling gameplay; sharper graphics, hidden goodies, online leaderboards.

CONS: The camera is wonky and the frame rate stutters; collision detection is questionable.

SPIDER-MAN: FRIEND OR FOE

Xbox 360 ESRB: E10+

Developer: Next Level Games
Publisher: Activision



Making the most out of the old adage that your enemy's enemy is your friend, Spider-Man: Friend or Foe lets you take control of numerous heroes and villains from the Spider-Man universe and go on a beat-em-up adventure that brings to mind titles like Marvel: Ultimate Alliance and X-Men: Legends.

Playing as Spidey, you eventually gain the help of cretins like Venom, Green Goblin, and Doctor Octopus along with some heroes like Silver Sable and Prowler. The plot is a little thin—chunks of a meteor hit Earth, someone's using them to create evil creatures, you have to stop them—but the game keeps things moving fast enough that you don't really notice.

The game also ditches the expansive cityscape of the recently released *Spider-Man 3* in favor of smaller room-sized areas; as such, the missions are repetitive to a fault: you enter a room, enemies appear, you beat them all up and move on. There are some interesting RPG-lite elements that let you power your characters up but the gameplay feels pretty shallow all around. Thankfully, a friend can jump in and help you out, which is probably the best way to play this game.

I am giving Friend or Foe the benefit of the doubt because it's obvious that it's geared towards a younger audience: the difficulty is low, the action is mind-numbingly simplistic, and the overall vibe of the game, from the art style to the character dialogue, is juvenile—as in youthful, not immature. It's sure to be a hit with its intended demographic and that definitely counts for something.

Older gamers, however, and those who expect a little more from their games than a shallow beat-em-up experience might want to look elsewhere for their superhero action. —Tae K. Kim

FUN FACTOR

3.50

..... OUT OF 5.00

PROS: It's fun to take on the role of the villains; interesting power-ups also keep things rolling.

CONS: The plot is thin and the action is overly simplistic at best.

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4

Xbox 360 ESRB: E

Developer: Bizarre Creations Publisher: Microsoft



With automotive monsters like Forza Motorsport 2 and DiRT nicely filling their respective niches, you might wonder what there is left to do with the racing genre. As fun as it can be, Project Gotham Racing 4 doesn't seem to know either



MAKING AN IMPRESSION

At first glance, every race in PGR4 is a stylish mix of simulation precision, arcade excitement, and egomaniacal showboating. Showing skill on the asphalt in any form earns you Kudos—everything from peel-outs and powerslide drifts to expert cornering and air time can be strung together as long as you don't tag a wall too hard in the process. Each sequence is rated from one to five stars so you know precisely how cool you really are.

The Kudos you earn in every mode can be spent on a range of unlockable goodies such as cars and tracks but they can also make the difference between winning and losing a championship series in the long Gotham Career mode. Style is almost as important as form as you claw your way up from the amateur ranks, and the historically conservative A.I. has finally learned to express itself a little bit.

MIX AND MATCH

What's most unusual about PGR4 is that the physics engine is strangely uneven. Slam into the right rear corner of an opponent's sled and he'll barely flinch, let alone spin into the wall as you'd expect. Contrast that to the fact that if you fail to feather the throttle as you come out of an arcade-style drift, you'll spend precious seconds just spinning your wheels.

Some racing enthusiasts will love the atypical mash-up; others, especially car tweekers and purists, will probably find it maddening. The disappointing audio is also lamentable as is the damage modeling that appears to be merely cosmetic. Still, once you wrap your head around the quirks, the game does deliver some thrills. The unfortunate thing is that the whole experience never truly comes together.

BALANCING ACT

There are plenty of offline modes to keep you entertained but the online mode is rather lacking, despite some bells and whistles like the ability to categorize and upload photos for others to vote on. There are only four rather unimaginative event types, and one of those starts off locked.

All in all, PGR4 is enjoyable enough that it warrants a look but it just doesn't play to its strengths well enough to stand toe-to-toe with the current champions of the racing world.—**Cameron Lewis**



FUN FACTOR

3.75

OUT OF 5.00

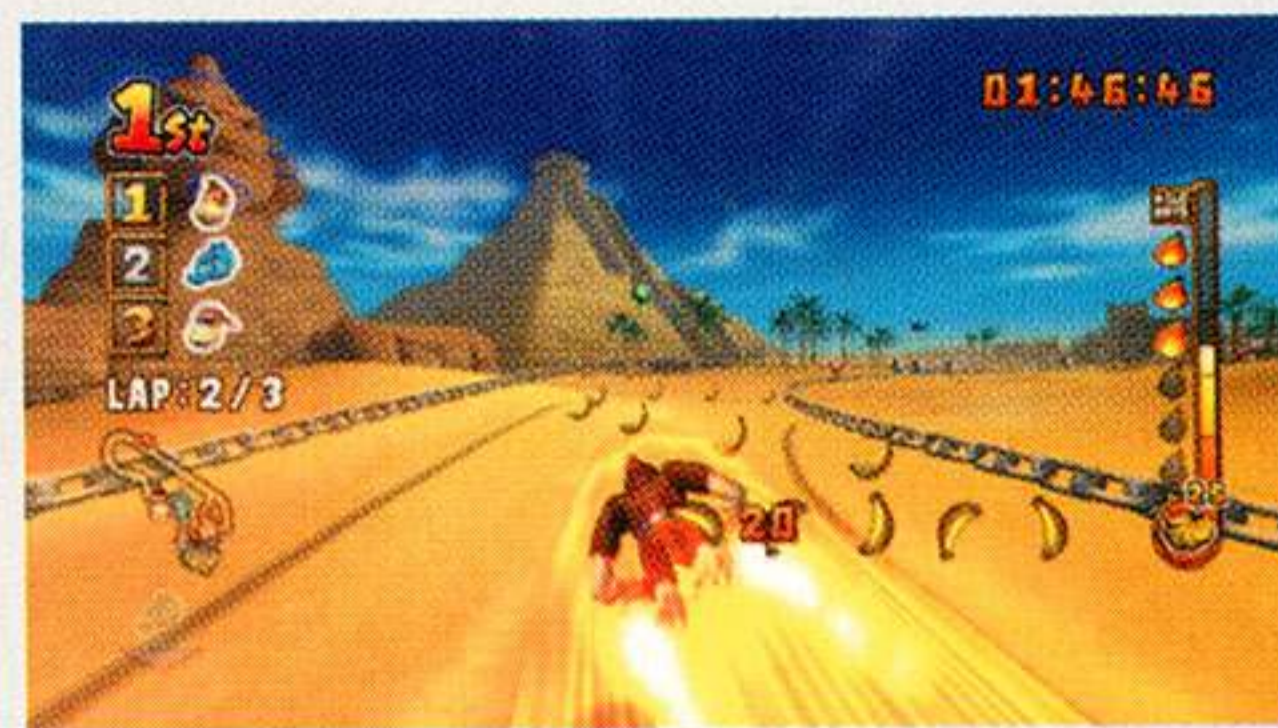
PROS: Beautiful weather effects; over 120 vehicles; lots of tracks and offline events.

CONS: Lousy collision and damage models; unconvincing motorcycles; dearth of online events.

DONKEY KONG BARREL BLAST

Wii ESRB: E

Developer: Paon Corp. Publisher: Nintendo



There have been a few titles for the Wii that began life as GameCube games. Twilight Princess and Super Paper Mario were two of the ones that underwent the transition and came out better as a result. Unfortunately, the same can't be said of Barrel Blast.

Originally developed to make use of the GameCube's unique Bongo Drum accessory, Barrel Blast is an odd racing title where you have to "beat" the Wii Remote and Nunchuk in the air like drum sticks to make your character move. You swing the two controllers up and down to reach top speed and you move them both up to jump. In order to move left or right, you have to swing just the Nunchuk or Wii Remote by itself.

It's pretty awkward and tiring to deal with the control scheme, as you'll often jump when you meant to accelerate and lean left when you meant right. It would have been better if the developers had left in the option to use the Bongo Drum controller but they didn't, which is strange because the Wii can accept GameCube controllers. Maybe if they had, the game would have been more fun but as it stands, it's pretty terrible.

Controls aside, the gameplay itself is nothing to be excited about. The courses are clumsily designed, the races are repetitive, and the characters are unmemorable. In short, Barrel Blast is offensive to all the senses. It feels wrong, looks awful, and it isn't a treat for the ears, either. As for taste and smell, the rancid nature of this game is likely to give you acid reflux. This game is anything but a blast.—**Dave Rudden**



FUN FACTOR

2.25

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: The Wild Move boost gives the game a semi-fun Burnout vibe for about 15 seconds.

CONS: Emulates Mario Kart in every category except quality.

FINAL FANTASY XII: REVENANT WINGS

DS ESRB: E10+

Developer: Square Enix/Think & Feel, Inc. Publisher: Square Enix



The idea of a Final Fantasy title that strays from its traditional RPG roots will no doubt conjure up flashbacks to less than stellar experiments like Dirge of Cerberus and Heroes of Mana. But shockingly, Revenant Wings, which trades in the RPG formula for a real-time strategy bent, manages to buck past trends and delivers a gaming experience that is actually worthy of the Final Fantasy name.

A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME

Picking up where Final Fantasy XII ends, Revenant Wings centers on the sky pirates Vaan, Penelo, Kytes, and their crew as they fight on the floating continent of Lemurés, where winged beings known as aegyl roam.

The aegyl aren't the only things populating Lemurés, though, as monsters and marauding sky pirates have invaded the continent. Luckily, Vaan has come to possess a stone that allows the summoning of esper groups, also known as yarhi, which is where the RTS portion of the game kicks in.



RUSH THE SPOT

The RTS genre isn't very popular in Japan, a fact that must have affected Revenant Wings's design. The strategy portion of the game has been boiled down to a "rock, paper, scissors" mechanic in which each unit has a corresponding unit that it is weaker or stronger against. Elemental types help add a layer of strategy, but for the most part, if you throw enough units at a target, you'll likely clear the mission.

Thankfully, the A.I. is nowhere near as idiotic as it was in Heroes of Mana, making battles actually fun, instead of an exercise in micromanaging frustration. Your units go where you want them to go, and do what you want them to do. The size of the



DS screens remains an issue but it's not as bad as it was in Heroes: now, the only issue occurs when you have multiple units clumped together, making it difficult to pinpoint specific units.

LET'S CALL IT "RESTRUCTURING"

Still, I give Revenant Wings high marks for its well-paced story, its shallow yet fun RTS-lite gameplay and the RPG elements such as magic casting and weapon crafting. It's an interesting addition to the Final Fantasy franchise and proof that Square Enix can deliver a good title that doesn't fall back on RPG conventions. —Amanda Ng



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Great story; RTS-lite elements work well; cut-scene and background graphics are excellent.

CONS: Super blocky sprites are endearing or jarring; small DS screen size still a minor issue.

DEMENTIUM: THE WARD

DS ESRB: M

Developer: Renegade Kid
Publisher: Gamecock

Dementium: The Ward is overwhelmingly successful at one thing: creating a mood of terror and dread. The audio is filled with creepy sound effects that bring the game to life and from the very beginning you are surrounded by blood stains and darkness.

The first-person perspective also adds to the intensity. Moving through Dementium's demented world is accomplished by using the directional pad to move and sliding the stylus over the touch screen to adjust your point of view. There were many times when I was attacked by multiple enemies and had to quickly turn to attack, which resulted in a tangible sense the fear.



Unfortunately, the game does start to feel repetitive after a while, especially when I died and had to restart a chapter all the way from the beginning. The game also allows you to carry only one item at a time. It felt a little frustrating having to choose between holding a flashlight to see or a weapon to defend myself. Luckily the crosshairs glow red when you are targeting an enemy, which gives you a limited ability to blindly fire in the dark.

Aside from the action, Dementium is driven by puzzles which are engaging without being frustrating. They are still nonsensical but they are fun: At one point I had to count cadavers to discover the combination to unlock a shotgun from its case and found myself panting as I circled the morgue trying to tally up the bodies.

My biggest complaint with the game is that the story never really comes together but the scares and chills more than make up for it. It's not perfect but it is a great stab at bringing the survival horror genre to the DS. —Todd Melick

FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Chilling audio and intuitive controls make for a great horror game.

CONS: The story leaves you guessing; gameplay can be repetitive.

ZACK & WIKI: SEARCH FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE



Wii ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Capcom

I honestly have been getting tired of my Wii. The console that once felt new and inspired started to seem gimmicky and mundane. But just as I was getting ready to send it down the plank to swim with the fishes, Zack & Wiki: Search for Barbaros' Treasure came along and breathed new life into the sails of my Wii.

Zack & Wiki is a puzzle solving adventure that might look easy thanks to its colorful visuals and cutesy characters but it's anything but: The game will challenge you nearly as much as the NY Times Sunday crossword. Its difficulty stems from the fact that there is nothing guiding you from one objective to the next; this often leaves you feeling lost and confused. So traveling around to find all the pieces of the dismembered pirate Barbaros becomes more of a wild goose chase than it needs to be.

Thankfully, the inventive controls keep things feeling fresh and enjoyable. Moving Zack and Wiki around is as simple as pointing the star cursor on a location and clicking the A button. Interacting with the environment is just as intuitive, whether it is launching a spear off your pirate ship at a giant squid, or rocking a baby dragon to sleep.

The cute graphics and cartoonish soundtrack also lend to the game's charm. It's just a shame that the Saturday morning visuals clash against the game's overall difficulty. What seems like the perfect game for kids is actually a challenging game for adults. Who knew? Still, Zack & Wiki is a terrific game that will stick with you for a long time. I'm already looking forward to a sequel.

—Todd Melick



FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: A refreshing adventure; inventive controls keep things fresh.

CONS: Difficult puzzles can be overwhelming.

SONIC RUSH ADVENTURE

DS ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Sega



It's clear that the developers at Sega are playing the numbers game. With five Sonic titles set to release this year, odds are that at least one of them is bound to be halfway decent. It looks like they've hit their quota early, though, because Sonic Rush Adventure is actually good.

A sequel to 2005's Sonic Rush, Adventure is a side-scrolling 2D platformer that makes excellent use of both screens. As with most Sonic games, you can jam your finger on the right directional pad button, and for the most part, it will usually get you to the end. However, the slew of extra moves including double jumps, tricks, dashes, and glides makes reaching the finish line a more varied and interesting affair. What's more, you actually have incentive to run the best race possible, as you're rated on how well you run the course. The better the rating you get, the more material you'll receive, which allows your sidekick Tails to craft the various sea-faring vessels that shuttle you around from island to island faster.

Another great aspect of the game was its length: While there are only seven islands in total, there is a surprising amount of content that is unlocked. The graphics, design, and layouts of the various levels are also excellent.

Overall, Sonic Rush Adventure is a welcome and surprising addition to the vast Sonic canon. I can only hope that the other Sonic titles on the horizon are as good as this one.

—Amanda Ng



FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Surprising amount of content; diversified tracks; map exploration is a nice touch.

CONS: Excessive voice sound effects during racing; still technically the same Sonic formula.

DREAMERS WANTED.

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ASK THE PROS

You ask, we answer.



QUESTION OF THE MONTH



Erag0n



Sid Shuman

A PC CRYSIS

Q: Crysis. Crysis, Crysis, Crysis. All I can think about is Crysis, but the problem is I do not have a high-powered PC. I've heard rumors of Crysis for PS3 and Xbox 360. Can you tell me if these rumors are true?—**Spectrum421**

I'm with you on Crysis—it looks ultra-tight. As for Crysis coming to the Xbox 360 or PS3 anytime soon, the answer is a big "NO." Crytek, the Crysis developer, is currently researching the inner workings of both new-gen consoles, but it has denied claims that they're planning a port. They've even gone so far as to say that the consoles couldn't handle the full version of Crysis (I'd say this is pretty close to accurate, judging by the graphics), and that if they were to make a console version of the game, it would be a Crysis spin-off and not the original game. So don't hold your breath for any Crysis console action for quite some time.—**Sid Shuman**



THIS IS YOUR SPACE

SEEING NOTHING BUT RED

Q: How am I supposed to beat Red Steel when I can't get past the first level. If you could send me a guide or something so I don't die within the first like five seconds that'd be great.—**Chunkdaddy**

Tae K. Kim says: Poor Red Steel. The game got pretty beaten up when it first came out. I remember taking it home and playing it and enjoying myself for a while. It wasn't a great game, but I think people might have expected too much out of it. I'm not making apologies for the game's faults, of which there are many, but I just think it suffered unnecessarily from being one of the first FPS games to use the Wii motion sensing controls, which everyone just expected would completely redefine the genre. I'll admit that Red Steel does require you to make some gameplay adjustments, Chunkdaddy, but you shouldn't be dying so often in the first five seconds. Just be patient with it and you'll eventually get the hang of the controls. If you want some assistance, head on over to GamerHelp.com where the Pros and some of our members have put up some tips. But in the end, practice is the way only way you're going to get better at that game.

LONDON CALLING

Q: Greetings from London! I just wanted to ask is it true that GameCube games are backward compatible with the Wii? That's it! Oh and is Animal Crossing on the GameCube a good game?—**VelvetGirl**

Tae K. Kim says: Greetings from America, VelvetGirl. To answer your question, yes, GameCube games are indeed backwards compatible with the Wii. You just load the GC discs in, boot up the system, and you're good to go. The top of the Wii unit has a hinged door that reveals four GC controller ports, so you just plug one in and you're off and playing. As for Animal Crossing on the GameCube, it is indeed a good game. Some might even argue it's great. I personally played it for a while and had fun with it. Say hello to London for me.

FIGURING OUT THE HD ON YOUR TV

Q: Does an HDMI port on a TV mean it supports 1080p?—**kinghtowl3**

Travis Moses says: No, it does not. I myself own a Sony Grand Wega that has two HDMI ports, but it only displays up to 720p and 1080i. As far as video-game consoles go, both HDMI and Component will display 1080p resolutions.

WHERE, OH, WHERE WILL MY LITTLE SKATER GO?

Q: For Tony Hawk's Proving Ground, are there any known levels, yet? I'm very interested because the levels always turn out cool.—**warfare315**

Wes Nihei says: Tony Hawk's skateboarding games qualify under the loosest definition of "sports" even though skateboarding in general is now an "extreme sport." It's like calling NFL Street a sports game, and we suspect most hardcore skaters are horrified by the idea, but since you asked...what can be said at this time is that Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia have been identified as locations so far. In reality the City of Brotherly Love is a sort of skater's fiefdom, so no surprise that South Philly's FDR Skate Park will be in the game. This skateboarder haven was designed and built by skaters after a tough negotiation with the city a few years ago. And Love Park is back (from Pro Skater 2 and Underground 2). In Philadelphia the politicking still rages between skaters and the city to open it up to legal skateboarding, but what fun is a skateboarding game without some rogue riding?



PROS

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

AWESOME THREADS



Method0123
Status: n00b

"My wife thinks the fact that my kid and I watch *Naruto* together is weird, too. So what? I like it and there are hot chicks in it. She's just jealous."

On why Americans are attracted to cartoon visuals.



numonex
Status: Hero

"Thing is that *Maxim* needs to get lost. It's a two-bit rag and has nothing to do with games. Giving BioShock a not-so-hot review is like *GamePro* doing an article on fine dining."

On BioShock as one of the greatest games to date.

Member of the Month



finalfantasymaster

Rank: Button Masher Expertise: Video Gamers
Sex: Male Hometown: St. Petersburg, FL
Age: 15

I have not yet to finish all the Final Fantasy games, but I've completed VII, Dirge of Cerberus, IX, X, and X-2. I have mastered X by beating it twice, and the second time I completed almost everything possible. X is my favorite game of the Final Fantasy titles.

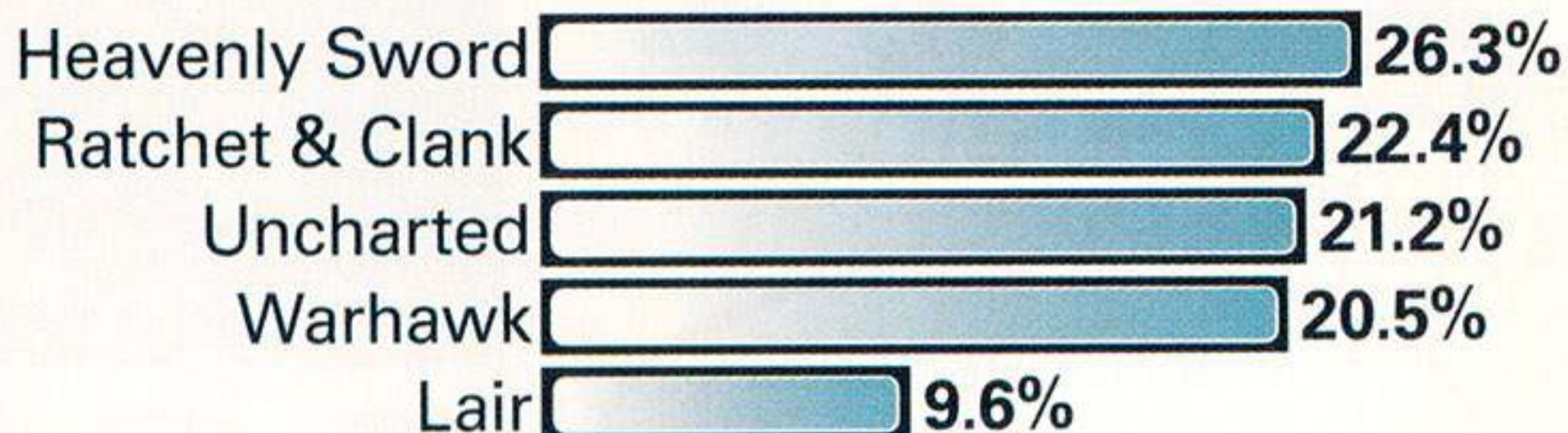


Quick Poll



Results as of September 6, 2007

What game most tempts you to buy a PS3?

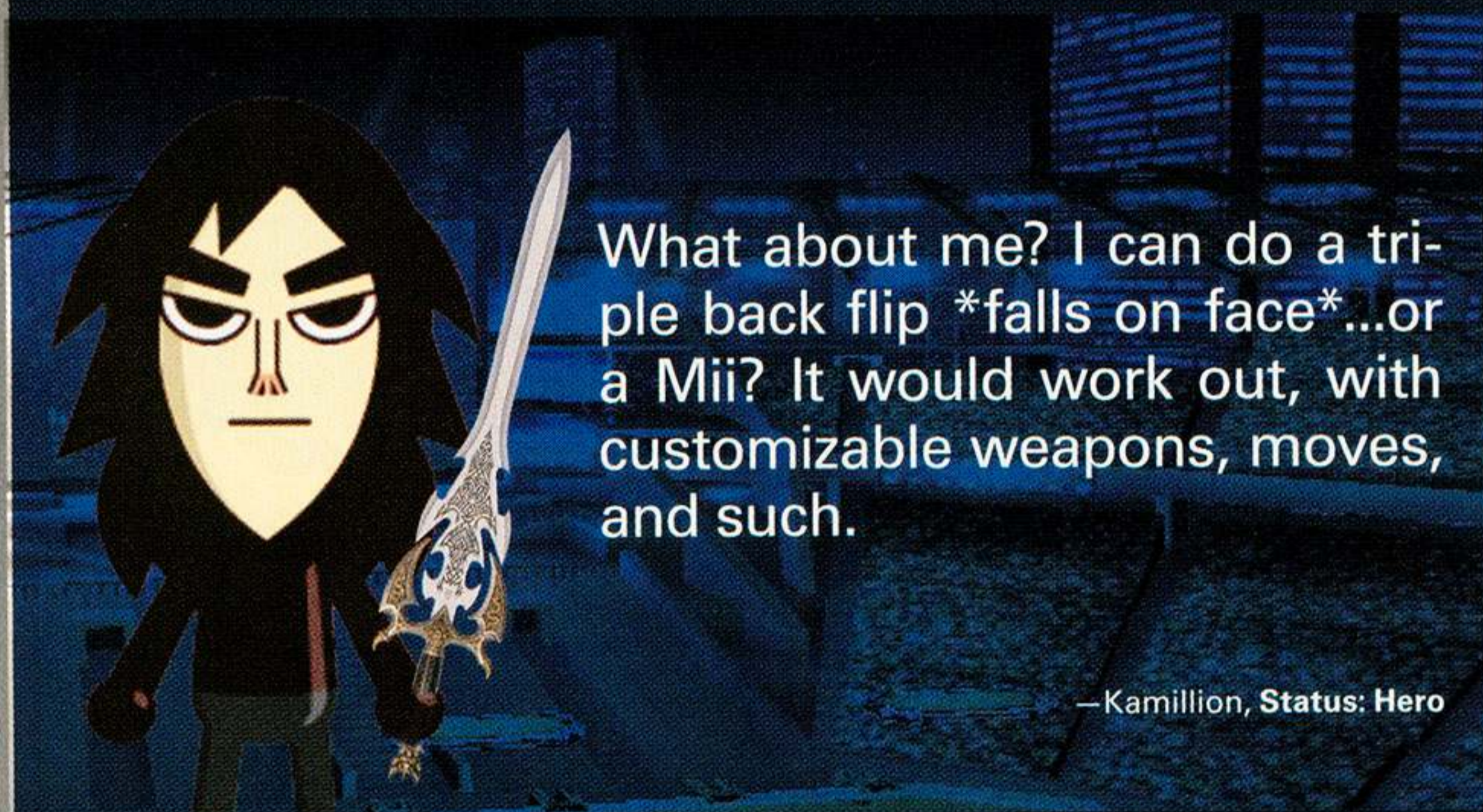


GAMEPRO CHALLENGE

Every month, hundreds of readers take the *GamePro* Challenge. Find it at www.gamepro.com/community.

THE CHALLENGE:

We asked you to help us round out our All-Star Super Smash Bros. Brawl team, and you really came up with some top-tier picks!



What about me? I can do a triple back flip *falls on face*...or a Mii? It would work out, with customizable weapons, moves, and such.

—Kamillion, Status: Hero

OTHER NOTABLE PICKS:

Young Link from Majora's Mask; press down B to filter through the Goron, Deku, and Zora forms. His final move would include fierce deity!

—Shammom, Status: Hero

I say Major Mike, because he's been *GamePro's* resident game ass-kicker for years.

—Teh2Dgamer, Status: Hero



Anarcho_Adams
Status:
Button Masher

"For the movie *The Terminator*, O.J. Simpson was considered to play the lead role, but producers did not choose him as they thought he would not be

On weird useless facts.



HALO7ISFUN
Status:
Playa

"Part of me thinks it might be a little weird to be gaming after like 27 (the year I consider the last of one's youth)."

On the age of gamers.

GP Pulse



Your hot picks as decided by
GamePro.com



1 Halo 3

Heavenly Sword **2**

3 Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Grand Theft Auto IV **4**

5 BioShock

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H2H HEAD TO HEAD

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Warrior demands
5 out of 5 for me
and penguin!



MISSING: ONLINE GAMES

I was wondering if you could review online games like Runescape, Club Penguin, or Miniclip. There are a lot of online games out there that you don't cover.

Michael Sirh—Fairfax, VA

While we would love to review everything out there, as you can see we have a limited number of pages in the magazine. However, we'd love to see what you think of these games in our user review section at GamePro.com. Who knows? In the future you may see full write-ups about these online giants. Stay tuned!

GAMEPRO FAILS AGAIN

I shouldn't have been surprised to see the Wii getting yet more of a pass from the gaming press (in the gaming report card issue #228 September '07), but it still causes me no end of confusion. The only good thing you can really say about it is that it has sold a heck of a lot of units; but a B- for Available Games, are you insane? The titles that have come out for the console have, aside from one or two bright spots like The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Paper Mario, have been abysmal. And then you give Graphics a B- as well? That is unbelievable. It can barely churn out visuals that are one step better than the GameCube. An

LETTER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

THE HEADPLAY PERSONAL CINEMA SYSTEM

The Letter of the Month winner will receive the Headplay Personal Cinema System—a visual headset and multi-media center. It's a cool, comfortable, immersive, high-res, cinematic experience for gaming, movie watching and the web, and connects directly to consoles, Macs, PCs, and most other visual devices. It also delivers true stereoscopic 3D viewing when playing 3D games and movies.



Paying top dollar isn't out of reach

YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

I've been a *GamePro* subscriber for a few years now, and when I read the letter "Paying the Piper" in the October issue, I exploded with frustration. Sure people are unhappy with the cost of video games and their respective systems, but whining and complaining about it isn't going to make Bill Gates write us all into his will. People are just jealous of the fact that Mr. Gates simply had a good idea, and now he's making billions of dollars. Everyone has the ability to think up something—unless you don't. Maybe the people who are moaning and groaning about the cost of video games are just too lazy to work a little harder for those little things that we all want. I'm not rich. I have a common job; yet, I work hard to make that extra buck. Think before you badmouth hardworking people; they deserve credit for their efforts.

Matt Foster—Perryville, MO



A- overall grade is ridiculous, especially in light of the Xbox 360, which you fail to score properly. The Xbox 360 outclasses the Wii in every category save for Industrial Design and Sales, yet you score it lower. Preposterous! Anyway, *GamePro* Teachers = fail.

Justin—Fort Worth, TX

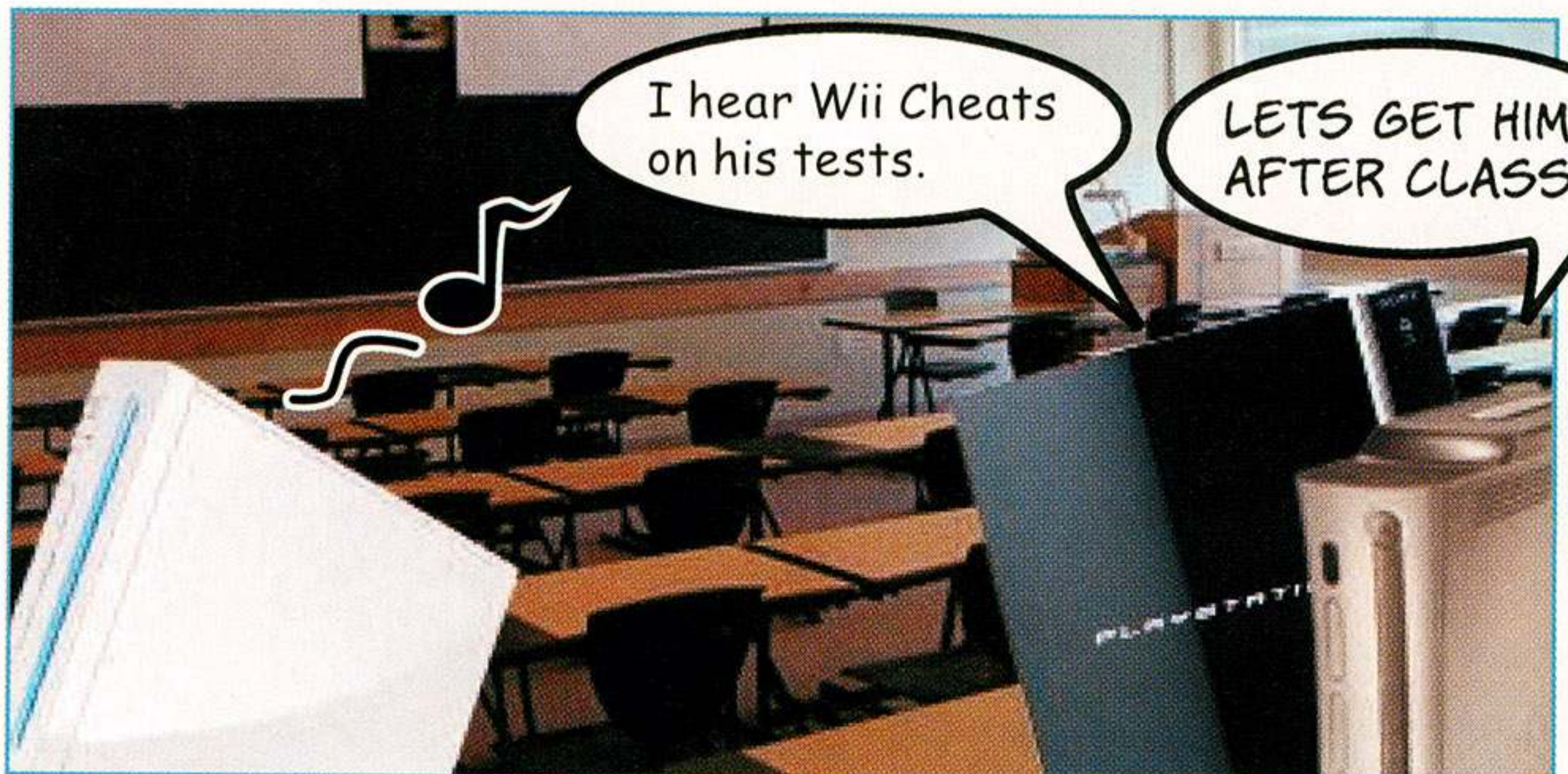
I CAN'T "C" WHAT YOU MEAN

Hello, I just wanted to say "WHAT?" I saw your graphics grade for the PC in the system report cards (Issue #288, September 2007). It's pretty obvious that the PC is now capable of producing more

impressive graphics than any game consoles. If you need an example, look at *Crysis*. You guys said that with a DirectX 9 card *Crysis* looked better than *Gears of War*, which is one of the best looking console games. So, why grade the PC a "C"?

Jay Smith—Conway, AK

Well, Jay, we here at the school of *GamePro* are hard but fair. Why I remember a time when I was a wee lad in school and a "C" was reason alone to keep sleeping though the lecture of that all too exciting history lesson. Perhaps we can just pretend "C" stands for "Cool" or "Captivating" and call it even?





PRIME TIME MIYAMOTO

Okay, I'm sure I'm not the only one writing about the irony of page 30 of your September 2007 issue. First you have the Metroid Prime Corruption box art with Samus over an Earth-like planet and the corrupted Samus to her back. Then you have Miyamoto stating he could have done Halo if he wanted to in the "Famous Last Words" section. Tack on the fact that your preview of Metroid Prime 3 talks about the changes to the battles to make them larger and more epic. Miyamoto is a genius, and Nintendo is an innovator of fine games, but it sure sounds like Miyamoto is already making Halo—epic battles for your favorite planet, infections/corruption of Cortana/Samus, third in a trilogy, FPS, etc.

Robert Hamiter—Via Internet

MOVE OVER, MASTER CHIEF

I've been an avid reader for a couple of years now and recently I've noticed that you've covered Halo 3 a lot. A prime example would be that you've featured it on the cover two times already (July and September issues). It's not that I'm a Halo hater, but I would like to see newer content featured on the cover, instead of an article on Halo that I would have probably read anyways. Why not cover Sony first party games such as Uncharted: Drake's Fortune or Warhawk? The Master Chief has been in the limelight enough, and he needs to free the stage for another star once in a while.

Bruno Roy—Carignan, QC, Canada

AN ALL-STAR BRAWL

December 3 is the official release date for Super Smash Bros. Brawl. Over the course of the last two years many fans have speculated about who will appear in the game. There are, of course, the fan favorites, who are considered to be guaranteed slots such as Diddy Kong, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Midna [from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess] as well as those considered outrageous like Mach Rider, Balloon Fighter, and Viewtiful Joe. So, *GamePro* editors, I offer a challenge to you: Come up with a list of characters that you believe to be the most likely Smash Brothers final roster. Your opinions on the matter could help put several wars across the Internet to rest...and, who knows, maybe even stir up a few new ones.

Casey W.—Tecumseh, OK



Well, Casey, we accept your challenge. Our Brawl rosters are posted at GamePro.com. In the mean time check out who the Smash community thinks we left off our list in this month's *GamePro* Challenge at the forums at GamePro.com.

LET'S CONNECT!

Got a question or comment? Write to us at: letters@gamepro.com or *GamePro*, Head2Head, 501 2nd St., Ste. 114, San Francisco, CA 94107. Be sure to tell us your city and state, too.



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Jonathan Contreras—Bell Gardens, CA

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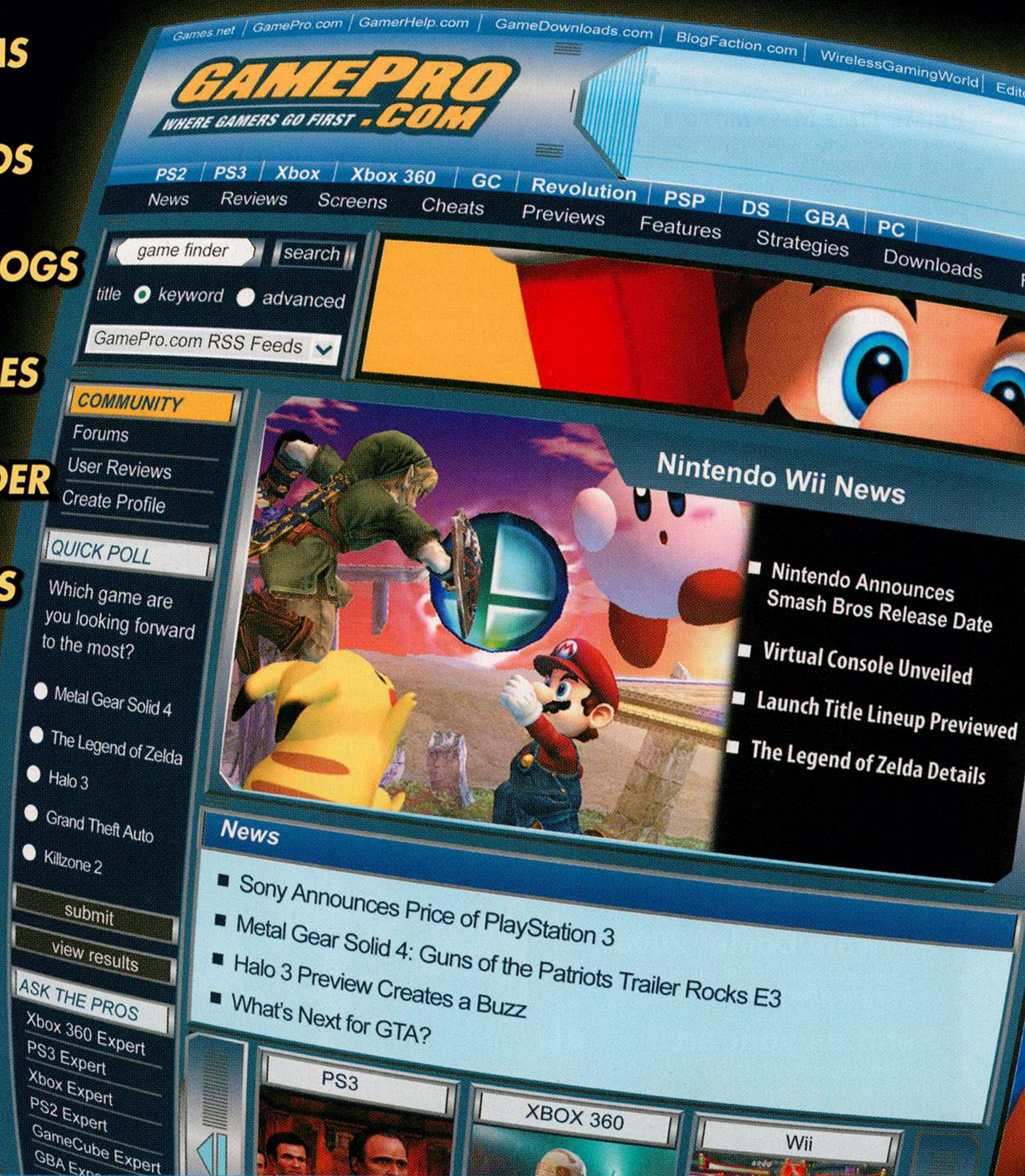
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