ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY®

The #1 Videogame Magazine

WWW.1UP.COM 1UP NETWORK

NEW SCREENS & INFO

MASS EFFECT

EXPLORE THE GALAXY IN THE LATEST EPIC RPG FROM THE MAKERS OF KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PLUS:

- PS3/Wii updates
- Tough-guy games
- Sonic's future
- Exclusive first look: NBA Street V4
- Splinter Cell Double Agent multiplayer
- Reviewed: Okami, Xbox 360 games, and more!

Take a knee.

Bow to no one.

Tourist Trophy™

THE REAL RIDING SIMULATOR

Tourist Trophy The Real Riding Simulator is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. ©2006 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All manufacturers, motorbikes, names, brands and associated imagery featured imply any sponsorship or endorsement of this game by such party or parties. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World. Play In Ours."

From the makers of Gran Turismo™ comes Tourist Trophy, the most realistic motorcycle simulator ever created. Featuring over 35 real-life and fantasy courses, customizable riding gear, and over 100 licensed sport bikes and graphics that truly capture the fluid movement of man and machine. So zip up the leathers and open up the throttle. Nothing gets you closer to the action than Tourist Trophy.

www.touristtrophy-thegame.com

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

POLYPHONY DIGITAL

PlayStation 2

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN URS.

in this game are trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Any depiction or recreation of real world locations, entities, businesses or organizations is not intended to be or is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.

STEP INTO THE SHADOWS OF JAPAN'S UNDERWORLD.

"... A MASTERPIECE."
- PLAY MAGAZINE

"... EVERYTHING FELT SO IMMERSIVE, WE JUST HAD TO KEEP PLAYING."
- PSM

"AND WHAT A STORY IT IS!"
- IGN.COM

"WHO'S TO SAY WHETHER NORTH AMERICA IS READY FOR A GAME ABOUT JAPANESE MOBSTERS? WE SURE AS HELL ARE!"
- GAMESPOT.COM

UNLOAD DEADLY COMBOS WITH OVER 300 ITEMS AND WEAPONS

KEEP HER SAFE AND FIND THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYSTERY

STRIKE WITH POWERFUL FINISHING BLOWS AS YOU UPGRADE YOUR SKILLS

AVENGE DISHONOR THROUGH THE TWISTING, DRAMATIC STORYLINE

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Alcohol
Violence

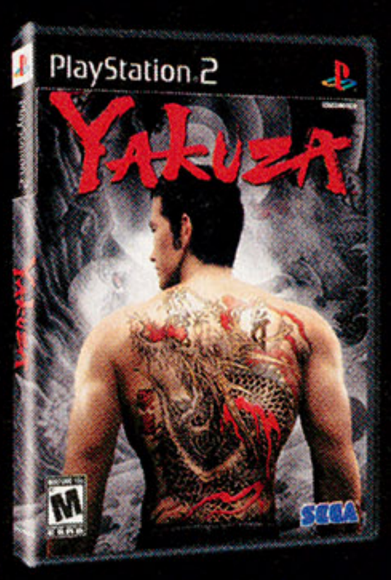
PlayStation®2

YAKUZA™

SEPTEMBER 8, 2006

SEE THE STORY UNFOLD AT...

WWW.YAKUZAGAME.COM



SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo and YAKUZA are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. © SEGA. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

SEGA®
www.sega.com

GOBBLE. VROOM. MUNCH.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

NINTENDO GAMECUBE™

SMART BOMB INTERACTIVE

BANDAI NAMCO Games™

PAC-MAN® WORLD RALLY ™ & © 1980-2006 NAMCO BANDAI Games Inc. 2006 All Rights Reserved. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). TM, ®, and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. Software platform logo (TM and ©) IEMA 2006. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are owned by their respective owners.

PAC-MAN WORLD RALLY™

PAC-MAN AND AN AMAZING CAST OF NAMCO CHARACTERS ARE BACK IN THE FASTEST, MOST EXCITING KART RACING GAME EVER! RACE ON WILD TRACKS OR FIGHT IT OUT IN BATTLE MODE WITH CRAZY PAC-POWERS AND EXCITING NEW WEAPONS.
IT'S ALL YOU CAN EAT ADRENALINE!

EVERYONE

Mild Cartoon Violence

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

250,000 ACRES TO EXPLORE
303 MISSIONS TO ACCOMPLISH
89 VEHICLES TO COMMAND
32 STUNTS TO MASTER
ONE REVOLUTION TO IGNITE

MATURE 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Drug Reference
Intense Violence
Language
Sexual Themes

PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE

PlayStation 2

XBOX

XBOX 360

SOUNDS BEST ON Sound BLASTER X-Fi TECHNOLOGY

WINNER

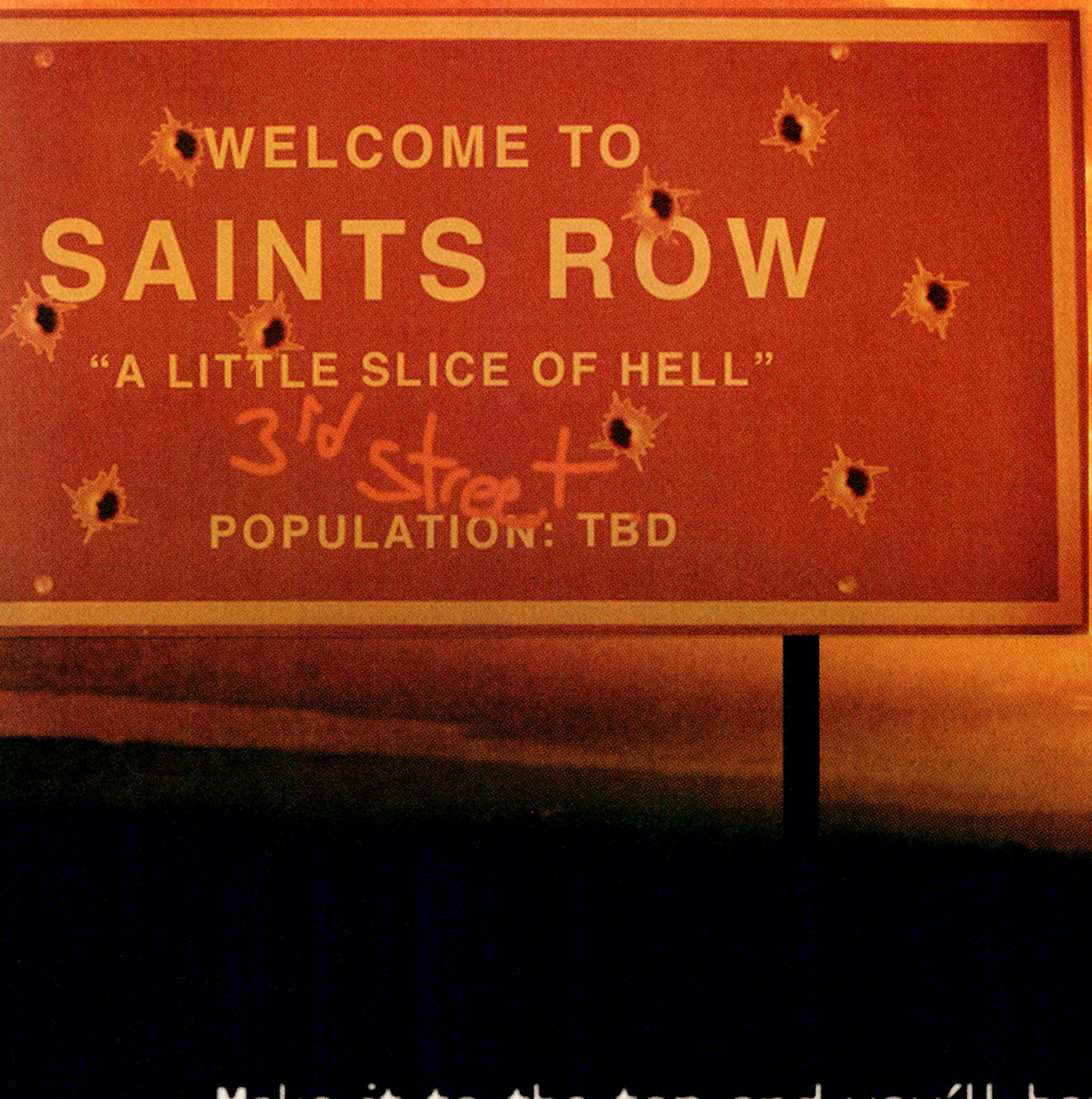
BEST ADVENTURE GAME OF E3

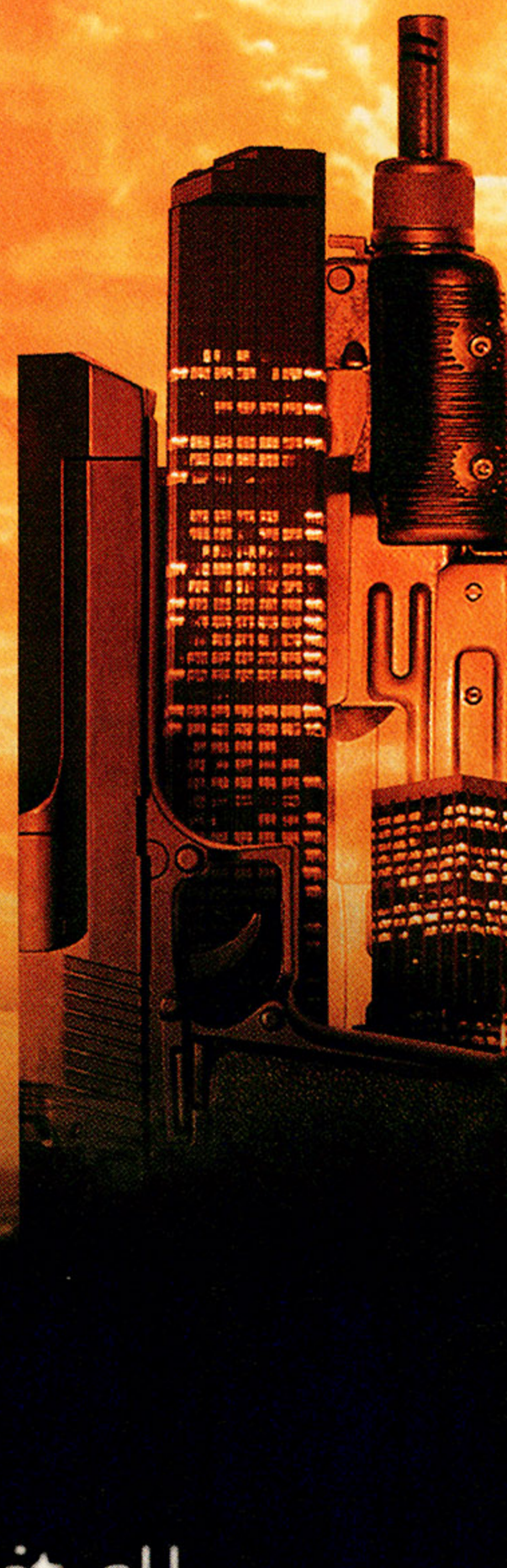
– TeamXbox.com –

COMING FALL 2006

www.JustCauseGame.com

Just Cause © 2006 Eidos, Inc. Developed by Avalanche Studios. Published by Eidos, Inc. Just Cause, Eidos, and the Eidos logo are trademarks of the SCi Entertainment Group. Avalanche is a trademark of Fatalist Entertainment AB. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Software platform logo (TM and ©) IEMA 2006. The rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. ℗ 2006 Creative Technology Ltd. The Creative logo, Sound Blaster logo, X-Fi logo, EAX logo, EAX ADVANCED HD logo are registered trademarks of Creative Technology Ltd, in United States and/or other countries.





Make it to the top and you'll have it all.

Money, cars, women,
and a bunch of people who want to kill you.

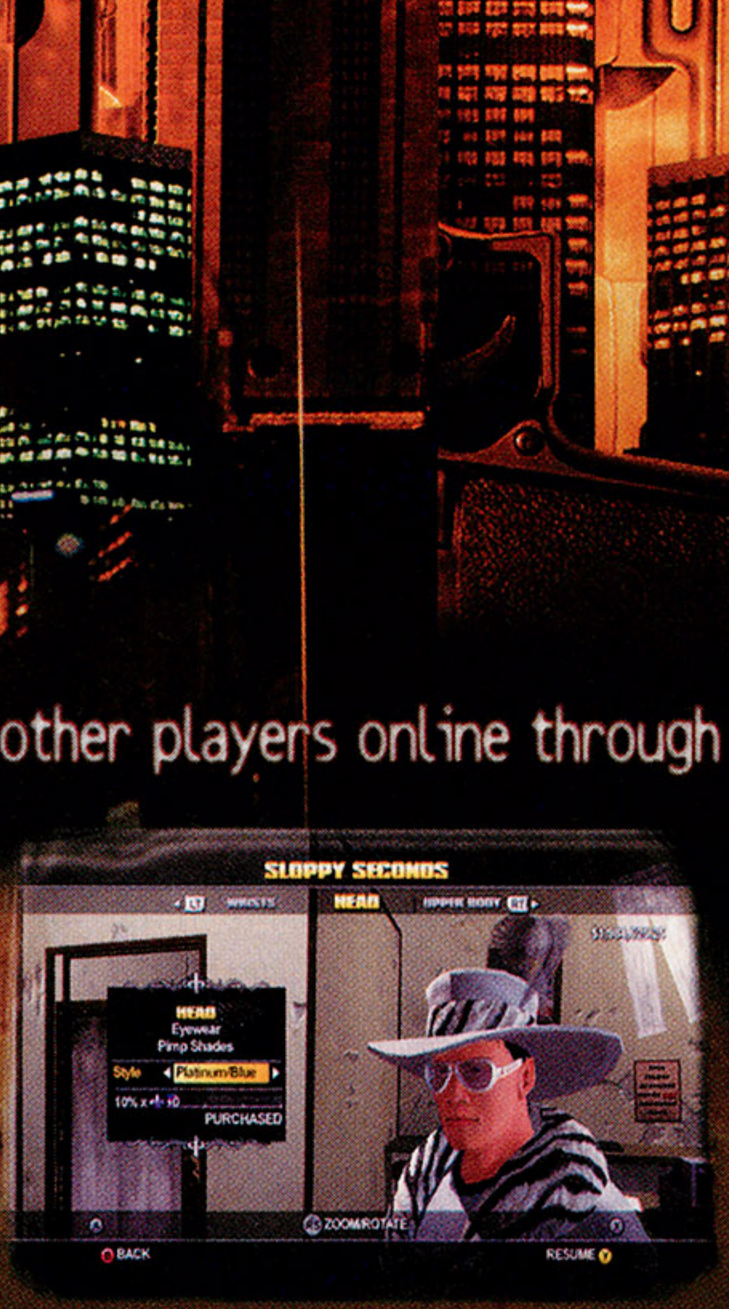
In stores August 29th

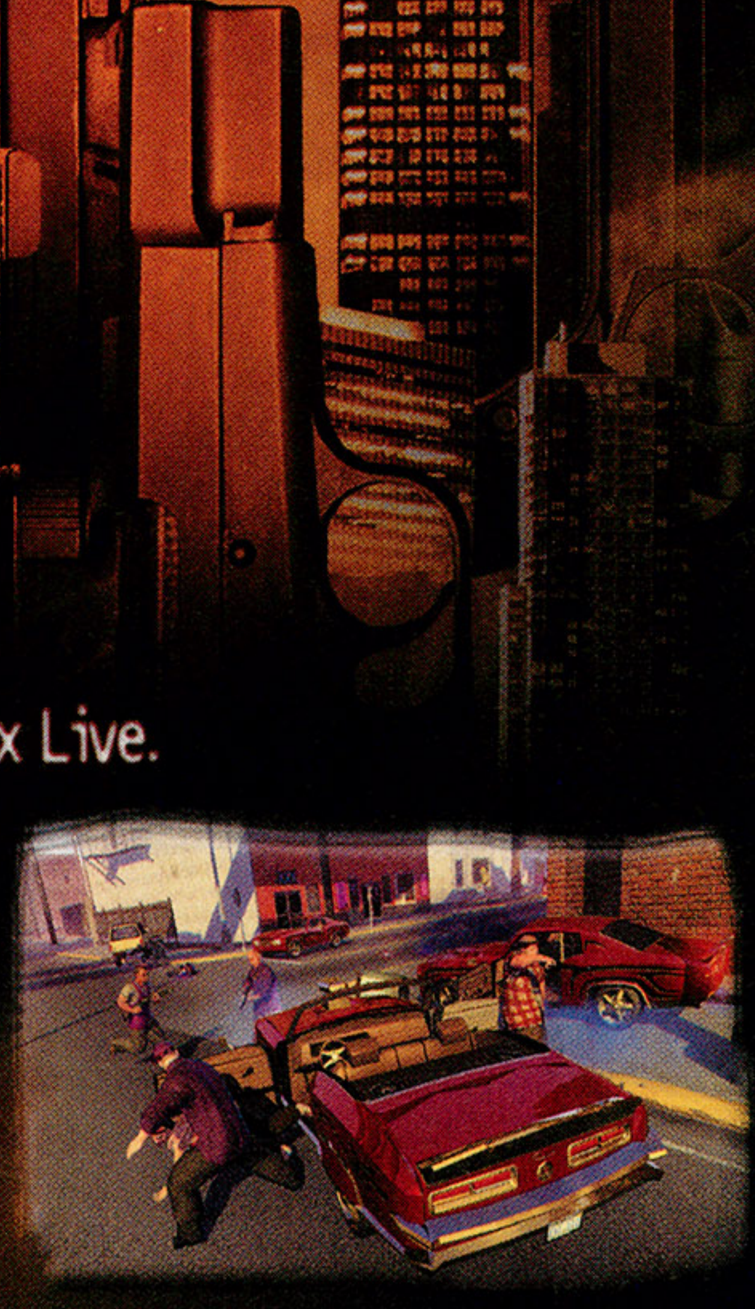
© 2006 THQ Inc. Developed by Volition, Inc. Saints Row, Volition, Inc.,THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. Compatible phone and carrier service required. Text messaging and data service charges may apply. Check your carrier for more details.All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries.

Saints Row™

Sinners Welcome

Challenge other players online through Xbox Live.





"If the Grand Theft Auto series lit a fire under the ass of the action genre, then Saint's Row burns down the whole damned house." -GamePro

www.saintsrow.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Partial Nudity
Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Use of Drugs and Alcohol

ONLY ON XBOX 360

XBOX 360™ | XBOX LIVE®

TEXT SAINTSROW TO 69847

volition inc

THQ®
www.thq.com

contents

issue 207 · september 2006

LETTERS

14 Because the moogle mail carriers will riot if we stop taking snail mail

PRESS START

Your source for the hottest news, previews, and features

20 FALSE ADVERTISING
We demand the naked truth from videogame commercials

28 PREVIEW: NBA STREET V4
Turn your hometown into the next streetball hotspot

34 ONLINE: CLASSIC COMEBACK
Check out these legendary games coming to Xbox Live Arcade

36 GAME DAY
11 teams are given 24 short hours to design and complete an original game

40 15 YEARS OF SONIC
Sega's famous 'hog is blowin' up

44 THE SURREAL LIFE
Meet the wunderkids behind the home-grown web video hit, *GameLife*

48 SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT
Sneaky sneaky! We spy exclusive screens and info about next-gen *Splinter Cell* multiplayer

54 THE BIG ONES
Get your fix on heavy hitters like *Halo 3* and *Grand Theft Auto IV*

62 RUMOR MILL
Stuff we hope turns out to be true

GAME OVER

Oh, we're not done yet!

114 SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP
Games still suck in the year 200X

116 CROSSWORD/GRUDGE MATCH

118 EGM RETRO
Celebrating 25 years of apes escaping

120 FINAL WORD

122 HSU & CHAN

82

COVER STORY:
MASS EFFECT

Join us on our interstellar joyride through the galaxy in the latest role-playing game from the makers of *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*. Just don't put the top down or your head will explode....

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

EDITORIAL
Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu
Executive Editor Shane Bettenhausen
Managing Editor Jennifer Tsao
Senior Editor Crispin Boyer
Previews Editor Bryan Intihar
News/Features Editor Michael Donahoe
Reviews Editor Greg Ford
Editor-at-Large Mark MacDonald
International Editor John Ricciardi
Intern Adam Gothelf

DESIGN
Art Director Monique Convertito
Assistant Art Director Mike Cruz
Intern Rosemary Pinkham

CONTRIBUTORS
Robert Ashley, Ray Barnholt, Kevin Convertito, Sean DallasKidd, John Davison, Alexander Dennis, Randy Dodson, Justin Frechette, Patrick Joynt, Garnett Lee, Demian Linn, Mark MacDonald, James "Milkman" Mielke, Jeremy Parish, Andrew "Skip" Pfister, Jared Rea, Rey Serrano, Greg Sewart, Scott Sharkey

Founder Steve Harris

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA GAME GROUP

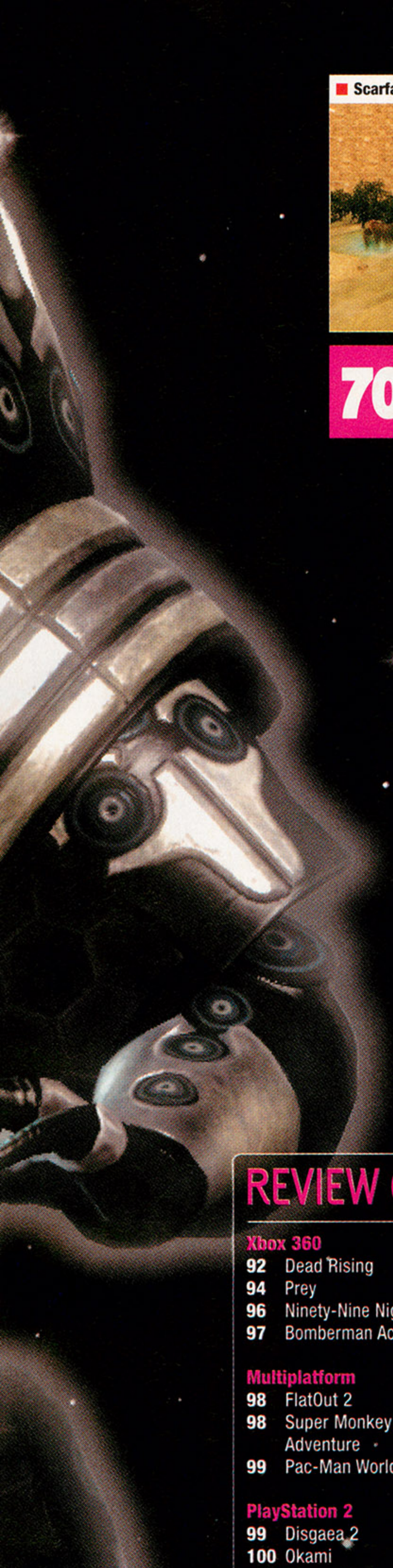
HEAD HONCHOS
President Scott C. McCarthy
Senior Vice President and General Manager, 1UP Network Ira Becker
Senior Vice President and Editorial Director John Davison
Senior Vice President of Sales Scott McDaniel
Vice President of Advertising Sales Marci Yamaguchi
Vice President of Marketing, Research and Events Rey Ledda
Vice President of Circulation Dave Rock
Group Creative Director Simon Cox

COPY DESK
Copy Chief Jason Wilson
Copy Editors Kaitlen Jay Exum, Andrew Fitch

PRODUCTION
Senior Production Manager Anne Marie Miguel
Production Manager Monica Brent

SALES
Senior Vice President of Sales Scott McDaniel
Vice President of Advertising Sales Marci Yamaguchi
Director of Online Sales Brent Martyn
Territory Managers & Acct. Execs.
Gaming Accounts
Northwest
Regional Sales Director Amy Mishra
Southwest
Southern California and Arizona
Regional Sales Director Leslie C. Gelfand
Senior Account Executive Rita Kline
East
AL, AR, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV, WY, Canada
Regional Sales Manager Andrew Reedman
Account Executive Jessica Reback
Consumer Accounts
Senior Director of Consumer Advertising Sales Marc Callison
West Regional Sales Director Laura Hill
East Regional Sales Director Bruce Kaplan
Account Executive Jessica Reinert
Automotive Accounts—Detroit
Regional Sales Manager Ken Stubblefield
Promotions Manager Wendy Donohue
Senior Advertising Coordinator Tipler Ubbelohde
Administrative Assistant Lynn Fortunato
Sales Assistant Tiffany Orf

1UP.com
Editor-in-Chief Sam Kennedy
Senior Manager of Ad Operations Adam Carey
Audience Development Manager Nopadon Wongpakdee
Advertising Campaign Coordinator LeAnne Hsu



Scarface: The World is Yours

The Sopranos

70 TOUGH GUY GAMES

Nerds better watch their step—it'll take *cojones* to play these games

26 CONSOLE COUNTDOWN

The clock's ticking down to this fall's launch of PS3 and Wii, and we've got all the latest info

REVIEW CREW

Xbox 360
92 Dead Rising
94 Prey
96 Ninety-Nine Nights
97 Bomberman Act: Zero

Multiplatform
98 FlatOut 2
98 Super Monkey Ball Adventure
99 Pac-Man World Rally

PlayStation 2
99 Disgaea 2
100 Okami
103 Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII
104 Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria
106 Dance Factory

DS
106 Deep Labyrinth

PSP
108 Bomberman
108 Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins
109 Tekken: Dark Resurrection

Extra Stuff
110 Reviews Wrap-up
111 Reviews Archive

Dead Rising

Okami

EDITORIAL

Some fanboys will look so hard for "proof" of bias from us, they won't even read the magazine to "find" it. Case in point: Some random guy on a message board thought he was calling me out when he pointed to my July issue editorial (in which I said the $600 price tag for the PlayStation 3, in the grander scheme of things, may not be as big a deal as people are making it out to be). He claimed I was pro-Sony and anti-Microsoft because I didn't give Sony as hard a time for this price announcement as I did Microsoft in an interview that took place shortly after the Xbox 360 launched. Woe is the magazine editor who responds to a message-board post like this, but here I go.

1) If this person would've turned just 10 pages, he would've seen our interview with Kazuo Hirai, president and CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America, where we grilled him about the price (over four questions, no less), the fake gameplay videos they showed the year before, and more. So you see that we treat all our kids equally and fairly, we also gave Nintendo a hard time about the name "Wii" in that same issue.

2) The Xbox 360 interview this guy is referring to was done *after* the system came out (search "Moore's Law" on 1UP.com to read it). Unless this guy knows something I don't, the PlayStation 3 is not out yet, and therefore, the interviews won't take the same tone. Sure, we can ask Sony about its *perceived* mistakes, but no one (not you, not me, not the forum guy) can say that the company has done anything wrong...yet. Is $600 too expensive? It sure seems to be (as I indicated in that editorial and in our new hype meter on pg. 26), but we don't know if the PS3 will flop at that price or not until it actually hits store shelves. Until then, we're all just speculating. Believe me, if Sony screws up the PS3 launch, we'll be as tough on them as we were on Microsoft and the Xbox 360 release—ditto for Nintendo and the Wii.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

MARKETING
Vice President of Marketing, Research and Events Rey Ledda
Research Director May Tong
PR Manager Jason Freidenfelds
Marketing Coordinator Vanessa Alvarado
Marketing Graphic Designer Drew Hathaway

To contact Sales & Advertising, please call 415-547-8000

(Contact anyone on this masthead via e-mail using: firstname_lastname@ziffdavis.com)

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA INC.

Chairman & CEO
Robert F. Callahan
Chief Financial Officer
Mark Moyer
Executive Vice President & Chief Content Officer
Michael J. Miller
Executive Vice President, Licensing and Legal Affairs, General Counsel & Secretary
Gregory Barton

Presidents
Scott C. McCarthy (Game Group)
Sloan Seymour (Enterprise Group)
Jason Young (Consumer Tech/ Small Business Group)

Senior Vice Presidents
Kenneth Beach (Corporate Sales)
Ira Becker (Game Group)
John Davison (Editorial Director, Game Group)
Jim Louderback (Editorial Director, Consumer/Small Business Group)
Angelo Mandarano (Sales & Marketing, Internet)
Scott McDaniel (Sales, Game Group)
Martha Schwartz (Custom Solutions Group)
Michael Vizard (Editorial Director, Enterprise Group)

Vice Presidents
Aaron Goldberg (Market Experts)
Barry Harrigan (Internet)
Kristin Holmes (International Licensing)
Michael Krieger (Market Experts)
Rey Ledda (Marketing, Research and Events, Game Group)
Rick Lehrbaum (Internet)
Eric Lundquist (Editor-in-Chief, eWEEK)
Chris Maginn (Internet)
Jim McCabe (PC Magazine)
Paul O'Reilly (Event Marketing Group)
Ellen Pearlman (Editor-in-Chief, CIO Insight)
Beth Repeta (Human Resources)
Dave Rock (Circulation)
Stephen Sutton (Audience Development, Consumer/Small Business)
Stephen Veith (Enterprise Group Publishing Director)
Monica Vila (Event Marketing Group)
Marci Yamaguchi (Sales, Game Group)
Randy Zane (Corporate Communications)
IT West Coast
Senior Technical Analyst
Bill Schmelzer
Desktop Administrator
Nick Kalister
(Contact anyone on this masthead via e-mail using: firstname_lastname@ziffdavis.com)

1UP NETWORK

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE
Subscription Service 800-779-1174
Int'l/Canada 303-604-7445
E-mail subhelp@egmmag.com

All content copyright © 2006 Ziff Davis Media Inc. Reproduction, modification, or transmission, in whole or in part, by any means, without written permission from Ziff Davis Media Inc. is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved.

ESRB

letters

commie plotting, cartoon shilling, and videogaming

Those latte-sipping Tingle lovers!

I find it absolutely not cool how you responded to a letter by Chris Hague, who called you out on your socialist comments [*EGM* #204]. You pull the classic liberal line of free speech. It amazes me how you dismiss his points in an effort to uphold your own. Maybe you should all wear Che [Guevara] T-shirts while you're at it... with burning crosses on the back. In an age where the news and editorials are often one and the same, when it comes to games, my favorite escape, I don't want *EGM* to read like *The New York Times*: lies, editorials, and liberal rants.

—Larry Ragland

Muahahaha! Our readers only think they're boning up on games. In fact, they're submitting to a devious commie brainwashing program, a secret plot to redistribute the nation's wealth by pouring it into videogame publishers (also undercover commies).

Critics are too critical

I'm a dad, and I like to play games my sons (six and four) can watch. One of the very best of those games was *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* (XB). I saw how you panned it in the reviews archive and got really ticked off, because it was one of the very few games I've been able to enjoy. My sons got a kick out of watching, and it wasn't so difficult, so they were able to play it a little bit. Almost every review you guys write either compares the game unfavorably to something that has already come out, or it complains that there is "nothing new" about it. How about throwing a bone to those of us that don't mind a game that is just like something else?

—Paul Wright

Different people have different tastes in games (as the three-reviewer *EGM* format highlights), and bad reviews shouldn't change the way you feel about a game you love. That said, if you don't mind games that offer nothing new, why bother reading reviews? The store shelves are full of them.

Shilling *Space Ghost*

What's with the last paragraph of Shoe's editorial in *EGM* #205? Since when has the editorial been about shilling a product? In this case, the product in question is GameTap. Shoe gives his editorial, then subtly segues into an (unrelated and unnecessary) advertisement by saying, "If you want to call me an idiot and are looking for more ammo, peep Space Ghost interviewing me on GameTap." Then he proceeds to tell us to sign up for a free trial. He mentions GameTap four times in three sentences! Is this the same guy who, in *EGM* #192, refused to take a free TV from Microsoft, then proceeded to call for games journalists to start acting like journalists? I want to see insight and opinions in editorials, not advertisements.

—Michael Marks

Editor-in-chief Dan Hsu responds: "Ouch! Let me just say this: I wasn't paid or compensated in any way. It was fun and silly (an *EGM* editor on *Space Ghost*!), and I thought readers might want to know about it. I couldn't help mentioning GameTap four times because, in telling people how to navigate to the video, every menu item or URL had the word GameTap in it. No shilling here."

■ **Space Ghost: "That's some real journalism you're doing there, Shoe."**

Maps are hard

It's been over one full month since Zipper Interactive came out of hiding to tell their fans that the (delayed) downloadable map packs for *SOCOM 3* should be available in mid-May. This, of course, was the first communication from Zipper that addressed this subject since February 21, when the maps were announced. It's well past May, and there is still no downloadable content [*Ed:* SOCOM 3 *Map Pack #1 was since released on June 27*]. I'm fairly confident ➤

■ **Underneath his mask, the *SOCOM* soldier cries for the death of innocence...and delayed downloadable maps.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Type-1 Vampirism

Sink your teeth into this: I was playing *Oblivion* the other day when—out of nowhere—I received the so-called "vampirism." I had heard of it from other players, but never thought it would happen to me. How could I have been so oblivious? You see, in reality, I'm a Type-1 diabetic, and games have always allowed me to escape that reality, until now. There were so many similarities between vampirism and diabetes that it forced me to reconsider my quest. Would I just cope with the disease and live from victim to victim, or might there be some other way? I haven't answered that yet, but I will say that I'm tired of all those guards and townspeople commenting on how pale I look.... Don't I get enough of that in the real world?!

—Aaron Small-Stryker

Thanks for your insight, Aaron. For your Letter of the Month, you'll be receiving a (hopefully disease-free) game in the mail from the *EGM* vaults.

POST OFFICE

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

"The new hype is..."

Druz3: ...not curable and leaves a nasty rash.

NoFXcKy: ...attacking weak spots for massive damage.

GrayFoxtastical: ...a sequel!

Slinkydvc: ...motion sensing. Am I supposed to get excited about something my inner ear does every day?

Ragingbegal: ...not worth $600.

PizzaBagel: ...new systems, same old games.

Fence: ...better and shinier than the Old Hype (now with 62% more FUN!).

Kill_Beams: ...the old hype with a new coat of paint.

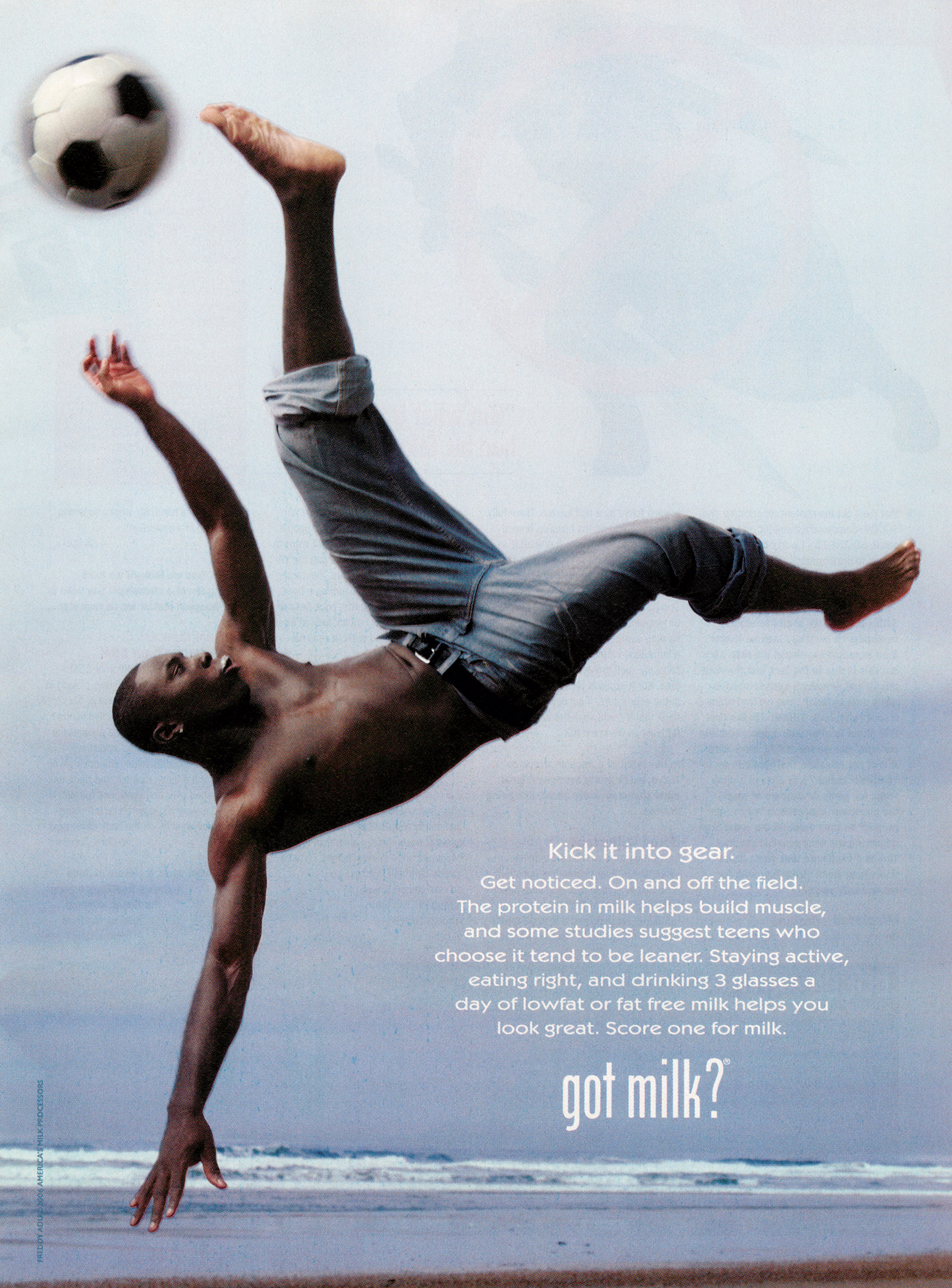
CONTACT EGM

E-mail us at:
EGM@ziffdavis.com

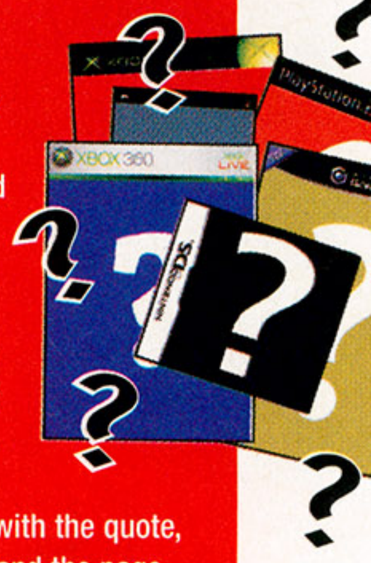
Or write to:
EGM Letters
101 2nd Street, 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

For subscription help, contact:
E-mail: subhelp@egmmag.com
Web: http://service.egmmag.com
Phone: (800) 779-1174

To order back issues:
E-mail: back_issues@ziffdavis.com


Kick it into gear.
Get noticed. On and off the field.
The protein in milk helps build muscle,
and some studies suggest teens who
choose it tend to be leaner. Staying active,
eating right, and drinking 3 glasses a
day of lowfat or fat free milk helps you
look great. Score one for milk.
got milk?®
FREDDY ADU ©2006 AMERICA'S MILK PROCESSORS

WIN GAME GOODS



We've hidden movie quotes in this issue—spot one and enter to win! Go to **EGM-qotm.1UP.com** (note the new URL!) where you can send us a message (subject head: **Movie Quote: EGM #207**) with the quote, the movie it's from, and the page number you found it on. Include your mailing address (no PO boxes!) and your full name, and you could be one of three lucky winners this month to receive an exciting arrangement of game-related prizes picked out just for you by us!

"But what if the missiles had hit Tokyo?"

➤ that we'll get the content repackaged into *SOCOM: Combined Assault* (or, as I like to call it, *SOCOM 3.5*). I worry that, when it comes to online games, we will always get a half-baked, half-functional product.

—Brian W.

Seth Luisi, *SOCOM* senior producer, responds: "It certainly took us longer than expected to release the map pack, but this is due to the fact that the commerce and download system needed more time to finish, and we had many issues to resolve. *SOCOM 3* is the first PS2 game to offer online downloadable content, and we needed to make sure it was not released "half-baked" or "half-functional." It is always a challenge for game developers to meet the consumer expectation to have the product on time while at the same time delivering the best possible product. This is a challenge that game developers have been struggling with for many, many years."

Misplaced priorities

On July 4th, North Korea shot five missiles toward Tokyo as a test launch. Thankfully, the test failed and the missiles landed harmlessly in the ocean. But what if the missiles had hit Tokyo? Games like *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *Super Mario Galaxy*, and *Metal Gear Solid 4* would not see stateside release. Unfortunately, it is a fact that most of the gaming world originates in Tokyo, and a large-scale attack on that city could certainly spell problems for obsessed U.S. fans. North Korea is likely to attack again in the near future. If successful, do you think that it could spell the end of gaming (at least as we know it)? *—Chris Day*

In the event of a nuclear attack on Tokyo, we're pretty sure you'll have other things to worry about, like being drafted.

Bored with blood

I'm getting tired of realistic violence in videogames. Every game has guns in it now except *Animal Crossing* and *Madden,* but I'm certain that they'll add zappers to *Animal Crossing* and a football target-shooting minigame in *Madden*. I know many people want to use the new Wii controller for violence, shooting people and slicing off their heads, but I want to see some changes. Why not use the Wii Remote for constructive fun, like racing a horse (whip! whip!), paddling a boat, stirring virtual food, darts, pool, balloon piercing, archery.... I mean, look at all the fun that can be had without realistic violence! *—Philip*

Sounds like a real blast, Phil. We can't wait to play awesome nonviolent games like *Bricklayer: Legend of Farmer's Tan*, *Nap-in-a-Hammock*, and the action-packed thrills of *1040EZ: Tax Preparation Deathmatch.*

Basement dweller persecution

Why do you always post letters and make comments about citizens who live in their parents' basements? I am still in my mom's basement and I'm very healthy. I have a steady girlfriend (who is also an avid gamer), a well-paying job, and the responsibilities of being the front man in a band. So, what's so wrong with being in a basement?

—CA Burke

All this time we thought we were making fun of a stereotype! Say hello to your Dungeon Master for, us rock star....

Musical theater: more macho than *EGM*

I was reading the July edition of *EGM* [#205] the other day while I was playing in the pit orchestra for *The Sound of Music.* I started to become self-conscious once I realized I was waving around a magazine with a huge cartoon game advertisement. I immediately folded the back cover around, did a quick look left and right, and then leaned over and continued to read. Is there any way you guys could put something really macho on the back cover next time? *—Chris Cornelius*

Like what, a picture of Julie Andrews frolicking among the flower-covered hills of wartime Switzerland?

BONUS GALLERY

Kirby Fiesta

Chris DeCastro says: "For my final semester project in Spanish class, we had to make a piñata. I decided to do something fun. Needless to say, I got a good grade. Too bad not many people in my school know Kirby."

EGM: Donde estan sus huevos?
Chris: En mis pantalones y mi huevos son muy grandes.... They're in my pants, and they're large.
EGM: What kind of candy did you put inside?
Chris: Unfortunately, the teacher would not allow us to fill it with candy. I'd be all for it, but that would require breaking Kirby. Instead, I papier-mâchéd a 20" (or so) beach ball, then covered it in frills. The eyes, feet, and arms are made of fun foam. Overall, it was pretty cheap to make, just a few trips to the dollar store.

© 2006 P&G

IF YOU STINK, IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF YOU WERE THE LAST GUY ON EARTH.

Next time, use the strongest Old Spice clear gel on the planet.
New Red Zone Clear Gel.

In a Monkey Ball, NO One Can HEAR you SCREAM.

Join AiAi and the Super Monkey Ball gang in an adventure across 5 kingdoms with over 50 characters to meet and numerous quests to complete!

EVERYONE

E™

Mild Cartoon Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO GAMECUBE.

PlayStation®

Available on PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and PSP™(PlayStation®Portable) system

SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE™

50 original puzzle games

New Monkey Ball abilities including: sticky, wood, hovering, boxing and invisibility

Three brand new party games and three classic favorites

SEGA®
www.sega.com

© SEGA. SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo and Super Monkey Ball Adventure are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved. "PSP" is a trademark and "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). ™, ® and Nintendo GameCube are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

NOT AS ADVERTISED

Game commercials have tried to sell us on phony footage for years, so when will we finally see reality in TV advertising?

As American consumers, we base an extraordinary number of our purchasing decisions on the info we get from television advertising. And we sure do let a lot of things slide. Truth is, you don't get to slay dragons if you join the Marines. The Clapper requires an intricate knowledge of hand-clap pitch and timbre that only the old lady in the ad can pass down. The taste of Juicy Fruit will "move you" for about 18 seconds. And a fast-food burger has never quite matched its succulent TV appearance. But is it really worth going to court to have your deflated Whopper restored to picture-perfect proportions?

Maybe—some battles are worth fighting, particularly the ones related to videogames. Most of us have seen an ad or two that got our gaming juices flowing strong enough to make a purchase, only to be let down when the game doesn't deliver what the TV spot seemed to show. Creative advertising can turn a bargain-bin reject into this year's killer app with tricky editing, graphical enhancements, and flat-out avoidance of actual gameplay footage. It's not like software publishers haven't been exaggerating their ads for decades; no one ever sued Atari because *Air-Sea Battle*'s explosive box art wasn't faithfully re-created by the 43 pixels charged with the task of depicting blocky combat on your Atari 2600. But how is the average consumer—moms and grandads and mainstream gamers—to know the difference between what's freely playable and what's strictly displayable in gaming commercials?

Duty recalled

The Brits asked just this question. Back in February, the U.K.'s Advertising Standards Authority demanded networks pull commercials for Activision's *Call of Duty 2* (Xbox 360, and *Big Red One* for PS2/XB/GC) after three consumers filed gripes that the ad's scenes misrepre-

>> KONAMI, WHICH OWNED THE GUITAR-RIFFING GENRE WITH ITS JAPAN-ONLY *GUITAR FREAKS* SERIES BEFORE REDOCTANE'S *GUITAR HERO* CAME

sented the games. "Viewers felt that the ad was misleading because the quality of the graphics was superior to that of the game's," says ASA spokesperson Donna Mitchell. "They felt that viewers could assume that the scenes shown were taken from the game and may buy it on the strength of the quality of the scenes." Conveniently timed with the release of the Xbox 360, the ad sold enough folks on *COD*'s super graphics to make it one of the 20 top-selling titles of 2005—and the console had only been out for a month.

In reality, the advertised clips were computer-generated sequences created by Los Angeles animation studio Rhythm & Hues. They showed intense, detailed action from a first-person perspective, not unlike the viewpoint *COD* gamers assume when playing the game. It's possible less-seasoned first-person shooter fans could have thought the footage was ripped from a gameplay sequence when shown through this familiar viewpoint. But Activision denies its intention was to posit the ad's movie sequence as a glimpse of *COD*'s main game. "The footage was intended purely to communicate the subject matter of the game rather than to represent actual gameplay," the company said in a press release following the U.K. ban. "Activision made every effort to comply with advertising guidelines and acted in good faith in screening these advertisements. Activision believes that such footage is commonly used in this way throughout the videogames industry."

As seen on TV?

And you needn't look far to see where they got that notion. Americans are used to the idea that what you see isn't always what you get—game publishers have been and continue using ads that don't show actual gameplay when plugging their wares. *Final Fantasy VII* helped usher in the use of showy video intros and cut-scenes, as well as the practice of using these flashier scenes to sell games on TV. The game's television commercials featured nothing but prerendered, wholly unplayable movies. Number of ads showing gameplay: zero.

And it's not just about showing off the best parts of a particular game—sometimes, it's not even the same piece of software. Most times, publishers will use the highest-quality image available for TV spots and online ads to advertise a game that gets released on several very different platforms. That means the latest *Splinter Cell* installment you bought for the PS2 looks remarkably crappy next to the TV ads that show the graphically superior PC version or hi-res images from a developer's souped-up hardware. Electronic Arts took cross-platform advertising a step further and ran an ad for the PSP's portable version of *Madden NFL 06* using video footage from the beefier PS2 release. "The PSP's video-playback capabilities are one of the hardware's selling points," says EA VP of Marketing Todd Sitrin. "We saw it as an interesting way to say that *Madden* was on the PSP by playing back our *Madden* ad off a UMD. We were not trying to mislead consumers." OK, so if you see an ad for any PSP games, folks, just assume you're looking at an unreleased UMD showing video of a better-looking game bearing the same name as the one advertised. Not misleading at all.

■ ***Madden* as seen on UMD, not PSP.**

Truth in advertising

As bad as that *Madden* switcheroo is, dozens of publishers are just as guilty. While Activision may have borne the initial ➤

ALONG, MAY HAVE A NEW SIX-STRINGED SECRET WEAPON IN THE WORKS: THE COMPANY JUST PATENTED THE NAME "GUITAR REVOLUTION".... >>

NOT AS ADVERTISED (CONT.)

brunt of the heat for misleading ads, other games like Ubisoft's *Brothers in Arms*, *Far Cry Instincts*, and *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* employ the same kind of prerendered videos in their advertising (Ubisoft declined to comment for this story). But how's the public to know that what they're seeing isn't really what they'll be playing? Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association President Emeritus Hal Halpin has one idea. "A fair compromise would be to subtext, in a clear and readable font, something like, 'Not actual gameplay footage,'" he says. "Game companies have a duty to both the retailers and the end users to accurately depict their products, and that includes cut-scenes and other prerendered footage, but not without disclosing the difference."

Increased public sensitivity to exaggerated advertising could mean more TV spots getting pulled for retooling. After all, the Federal Trade Commission does have an act that prohibits false advertising, and it's only a matter of time before consumers take a game company or its ad agency to task for airing misleading footage. "There would be liability on the part of the advertiser showing footage of a videogame that is not the actual footage," says Advertising Law Attorney Lisa Dubrow, "particularly if it was footage that looked materially different from what a consumer would see when playing the game."

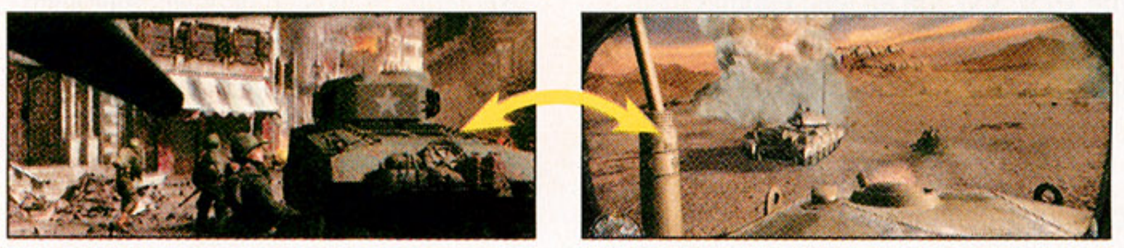
Until then—and as long as prerendered videos upstage true game content—we can expect game ads filled with flashy, phony computer-generated footage. Newer hardware, however, means more advanced real-time graphics, and the need to show off a game with prerendered movies may diminish as playable scenes become more visually appealing. The vast majority of PS2 and Xbox ads use in-game footage already—we may be just a generation of hardware away from the extinction of doctored ads altogether. As for a true-to-life Chia Pet ad featuring that ceramic sheep with patchy, green stubble...we're not holding our breath. —*Jon Dudlak*

UNREALITY TV

Three games that got the phony-footage treatment...

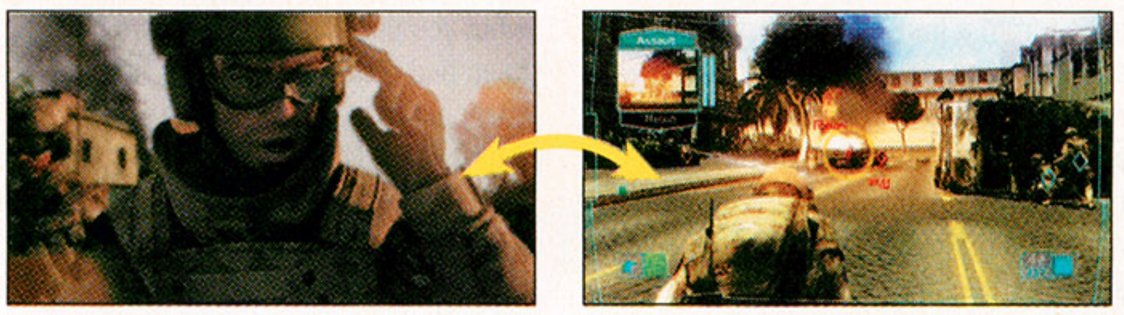
■ ***Final Fantasy VII*** **from the commercial**

■ ***Final Fantasy VII*** **on your PlayStation**



■ ***Call of Duty 2*** **as seen the commercial**

■ ***Call of Duty 2*** **as seen on the Xbox 360**

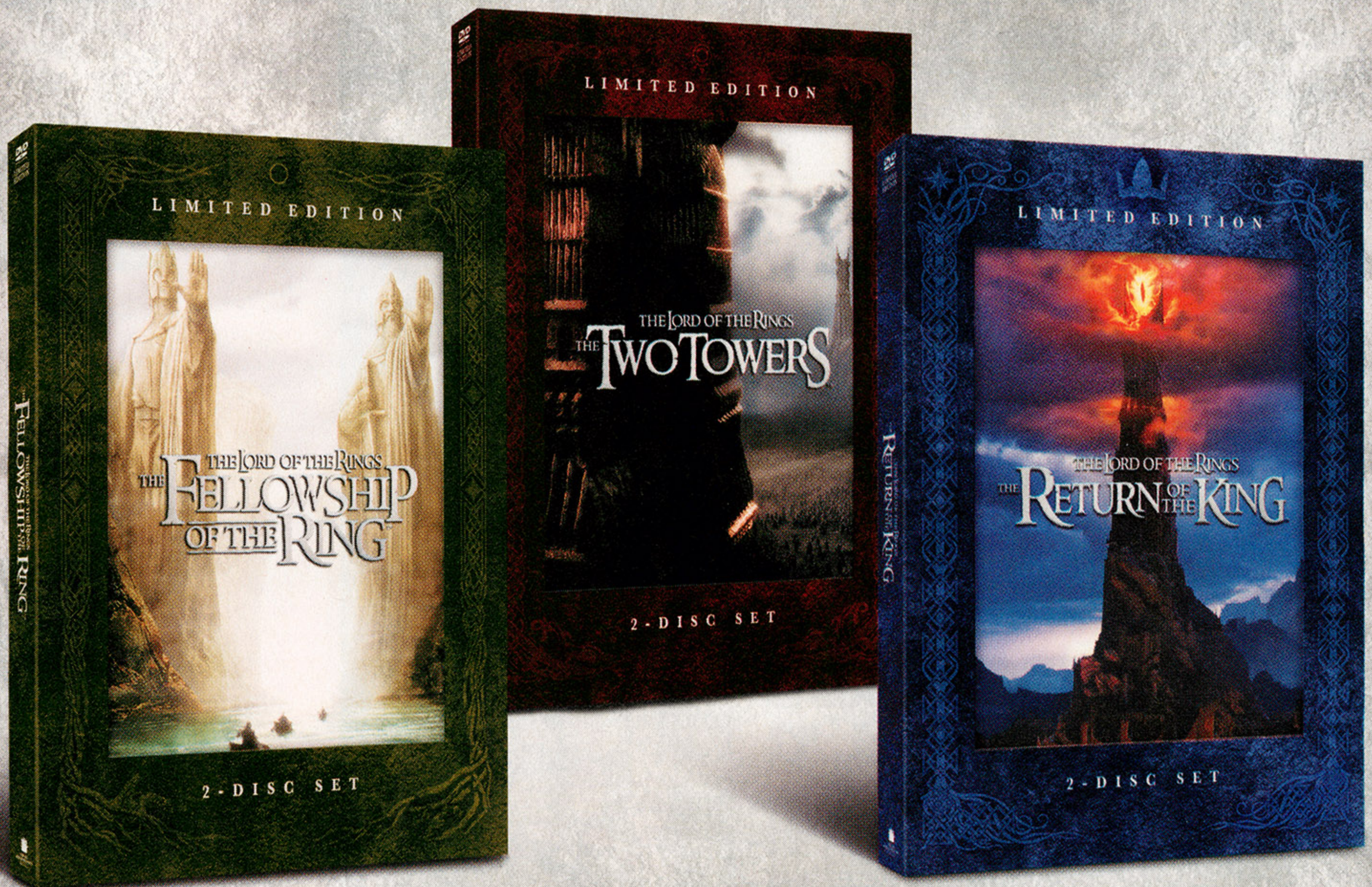


■ ***Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*** **in the ad**

■ ***Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*** **on 360**

>> ALTHOUGH MICROSOFT SAYS "NO COMMENT," THE COMPANY IS REPORTEDLY READYING AN ALL-PURPOSE HANDHELD NAMED THE "ZUNE".... >>

SECOND BREAKFAST IS SERVED



THE LORD OF THE RINGS LIMITED EDITION 2-DISC SETS

DISC 1

FOR THE FIRST TIME, the theatrical and extended versions of the film on one disc.

DISC 2

NEW BEHIND-THE-SCENES DOCUMENTARY FEATURING NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN FOOTAGE!
Created by filmmaker Costa Botes (personally selected by Peter Jackson), each unique documentary uses raw footage to reveal the inside story on how the greatest adventure film franchise was born.

AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

www.newline.com www.lordoftherings.net

© MMVI New Line Home Entertainment, Inc. The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return of the King, and the names of the characters, events, items and places therein, are trademarks of The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Tolkien Enterprises under license to New Line Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

NEW LINE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

egm international

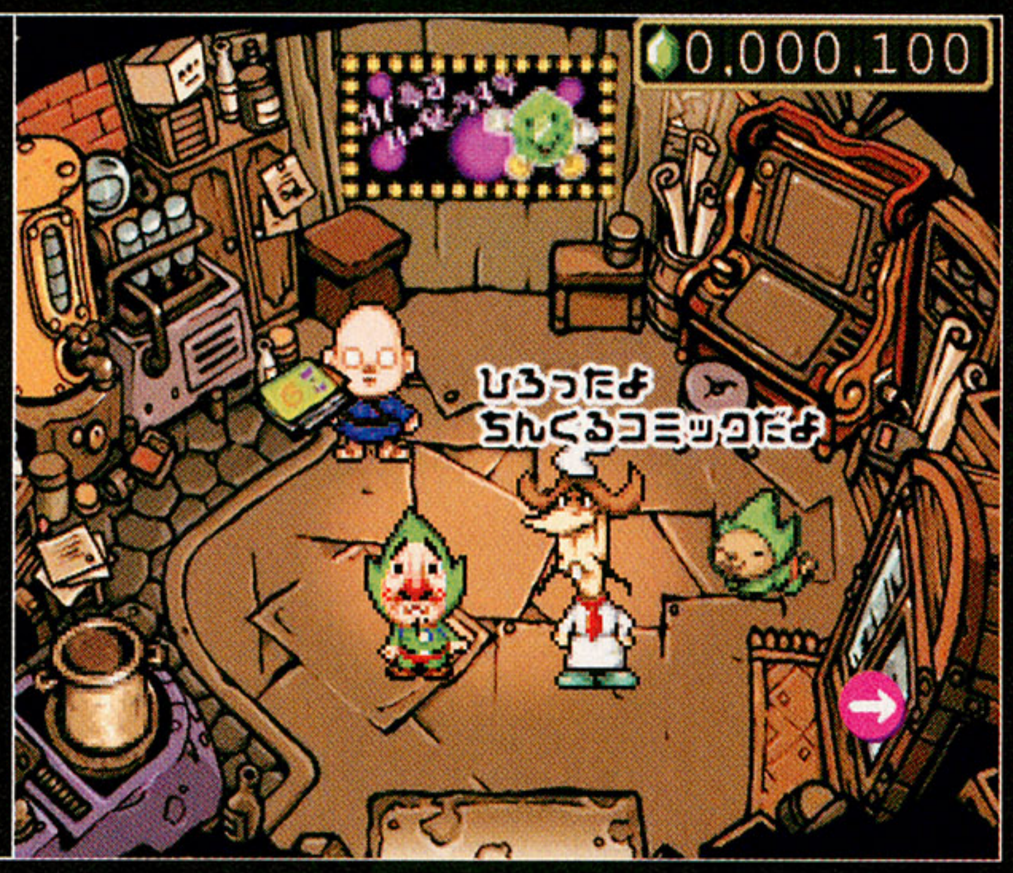
The crazy games (and fairies) never stop coming

Nintendo DS

FRESHLY-PICKED TINGLE'S ROSE-TINTED RUPEE LAND

Got any *Zelda* dirt? Besides Nintendo's chest-thumping about how *Twilight Princess* is going to be the best *Zelda* ever, all's been quiet on that front lately. So quiet, in fact, that we savor *any* news to come down the pipe—even when it's about (shudder) the long-feared Tingle role-playing game.

You mean that potbellied pixie is getting his own game? Yep, Nintendo has launched a website (www.nintendo.co.jp/tincle) for the solo outing of Link's little companion on DS. Assuming these website graphics resemble the real game, we're actually kind of looking forward to it. (Against our better judgment.)



Nintendo DS

MAWASUNDA!!

I can't wrap my mind around all these loopy DS games. Neither can we, but the DS always has room in its madhouse of goofy games. Its latest patient, *Mawasunda!!* (that's Japanese for "Spin it!!") has you touching the screen to operate a spinner on the bottom screen to play a bunch of silly minigames.

Silly? Such as? You name it: crack open safes, make sushi for impatient customers, play a round of the brick-busting classic *Arkanoid*, or (in a very, very cut-down version of *Tony Hawk*) spin your skater in the air as many times as you can. Sure, it may sound simple, but try twirling your way to victory without suffering from a nasty case of high-speed hand cramps.

BY THE NUMBERS

Tech Attack

1994 Year the original *Tekken* was released in arcades

8 Number of *Tekken* games (excluding the crappy Wonderswan card game)

2 Different bear brawlers in the series

1 Number of terrible spin-offs starring Nina

PETA's down with kick-ass kangaroos.

WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE

On this week's episode... As anyone who watches shows like *Lost* or *24* can avow, episodic series keep TV junkies glued to the boob tube week after week, thanks to ever-evolving plot threads and compelling characters who develop over months or even years. PC gaming continues to creep further into episodic territory due to the rapid proliferation of digital distribution models like Steam and GameTap.

Earlier this year, Valve Software's Steam service unveiled the season premieres of two of the biggest episodic PC games to date: Ritual Entertainment's *SiN Episodes: Emergence* and Valve's own *Half-Life 2: Episode One*. Twenty bucks apiece for five-plus hours of first-person shooter gameplay doesn't sound too bad, but considering that new episodes are (so far) spaced a whopping six months apart, the whole "episodic" definition loses more than a little meaning.

Conversely, developer Telltale Games seems to have the right idea, at least on paper: As we recently unveiled in our August 2006 cover story (*CGW* #265), the new adventures of fan-favorite adventure game protagonists Sam and Max utilize the subscription-based GameTap model (as well as Telltale Games' own online store) to bring a new (albeit brief) episode to players every single month, beginning this October.

At this point, developers still have a lot to learn about this type of distribution. Timeliness is a much bigger factor in the episodic equation; the "it comes out when it's done" mentality we see from so many companies these days doesn't quite work here. If you want gamers to feed their fix, you can't keep 'em waiting six months between episodes...right?

—Ryan Scott

Ryan Scott is the reviews editor for our sister publication Computer Gaming World

>> SEVERAL FORMER *ADVENT RISING* DEVELOPERS HAVE FORMED THEIR OWN STUDIO, CHAIR ENTERTAINMENT, TO CREATE A SCI-FI SHOOTER.... >>

YOUR BACKBONE'S CONNECTED TO YOUR EAR BONE.

Made for iPod

Carry a pack that can carry a tune. With JanSport LiveWire™, your iPod® is tucked away but its controls are close at hand. jansport.com

JANSPORT

JanSport® is a registered trademark of JanSport Apparel Corp., a subsidiary of V.F. Corporation. JanSport: Appleton, Wisconsin

iPod is a trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.; registered in the U.S. and other countries.

countdown to launch

T-MINUS THREE MONTHS

Your monthly prep for the PlayStation 3 and Wii liftoffs

The Xbox 360 is already enjoying its head start in the console race, but in mere months, Sony and Nintendo will be back for the attack. So before the battle, read up on who's got the goods to deliver. Each month until launch, we'll let you know who's inching closer to console supremacy. Bring it, boys!

PLAYSTATION 3

Release Date: November 17, 2006

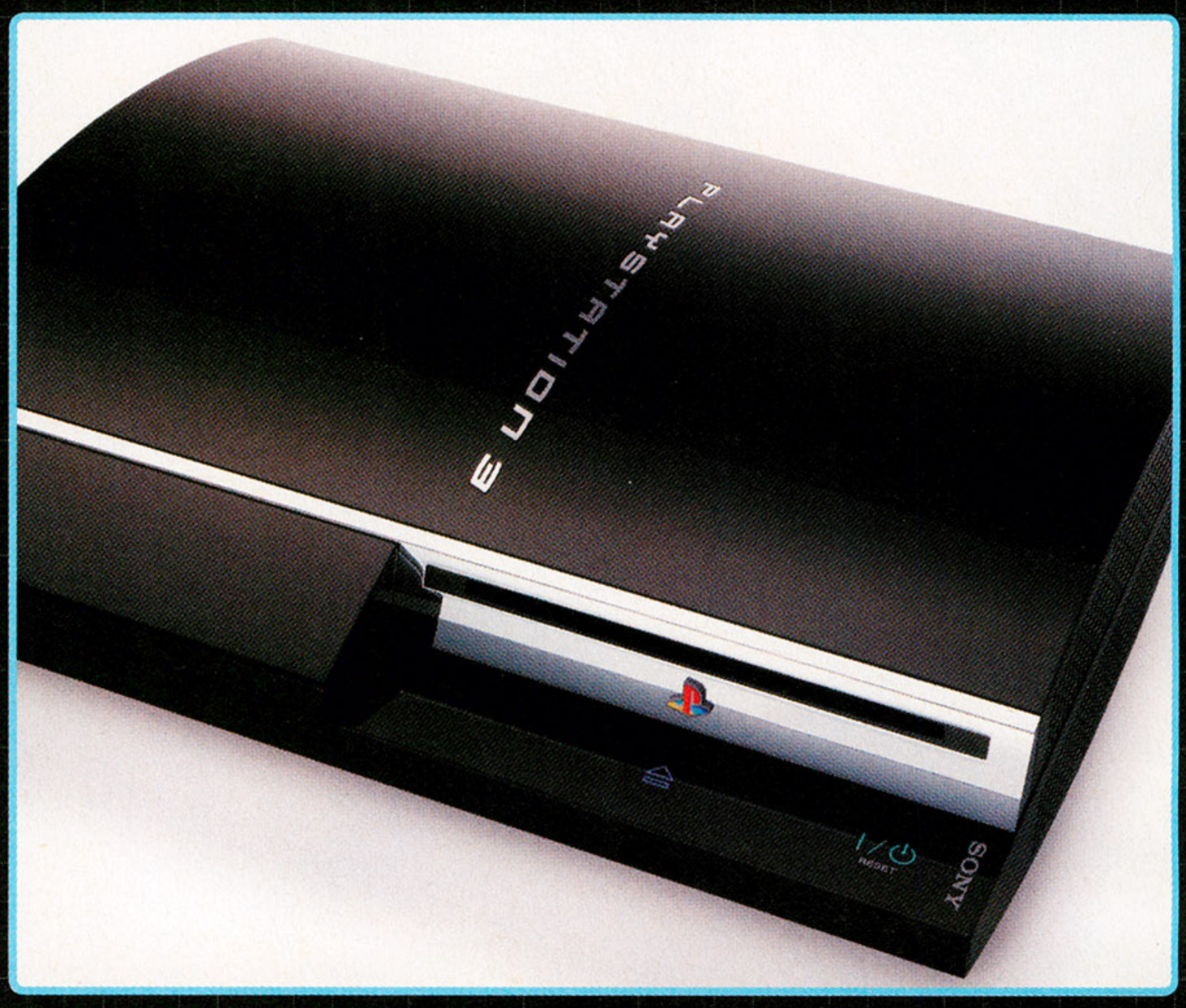
Two hardware configurations: A 20-gig hard drive model retails for $499, while the 60 gigger goes for $599. The two models also sport wildly different outputs—the 60GB monster gets an HDMI connection (used for high-definition TVs) and Memory Stick/SD/CompactFlash slots (used for various multimedia functions).

Online: Sony claims they will offer a robust service similar (in almost every way) to Xbox Live...only free!

More ray for your day: The PS3 comes equipped with a Blu-ray DVD player from the get-go. The next generation of DVDs may not be showing up on your monetary radar now, but when you consider that current Blu-ray players are retailing for more than a thousand bucks, the PS3's bloated price tag is actually a little thinner than most may think.

Graphics: Pretty much on par with Xbox 360. Some games (*Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Final Fantasy XIII*) look a little better, but overall, don't expect to see much of a difference among launch software.

Crazy controller: Like Nintendo, Sony hopes to change the way we look at—or better yet, use—controllers. The new DualShock doesn't look all too different, but the added motion sensors register your movements. Sure, the setup isn't as snazzy as Nintendo's Wii Remote, but it's at least a turn in the right direction.



THIS MONTH'S BURNING QUESTION

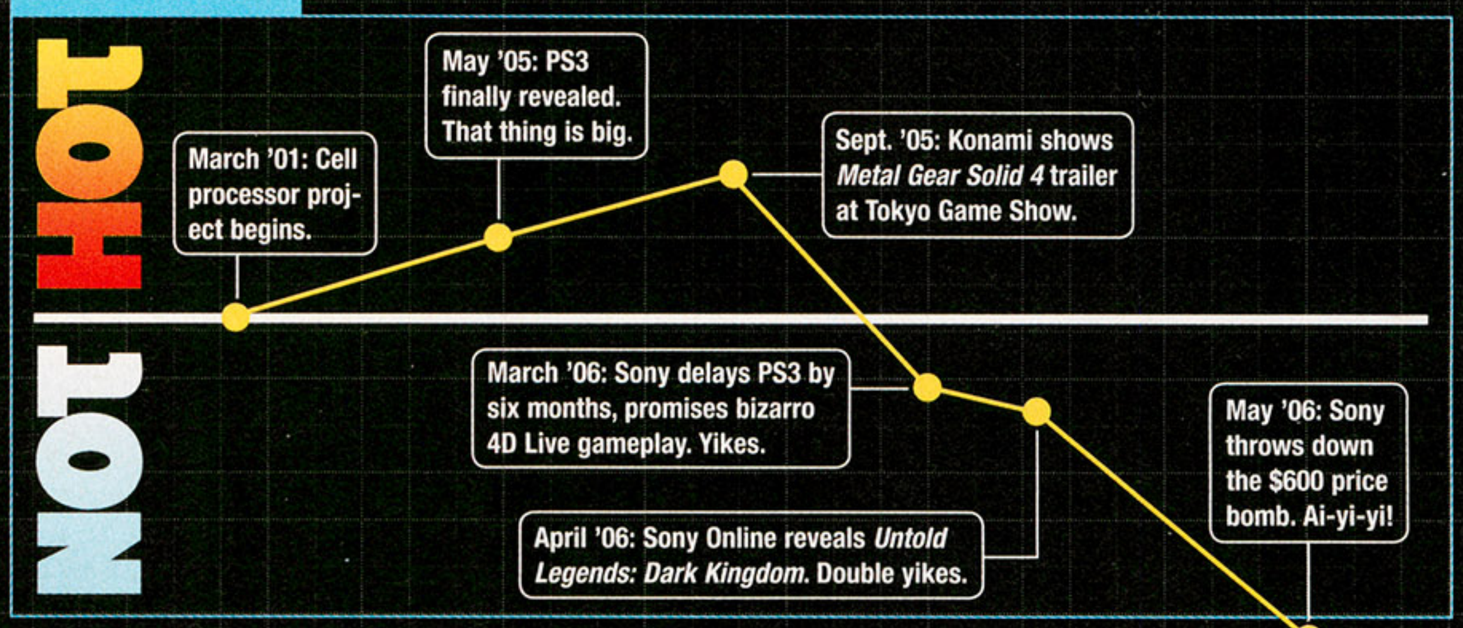
I hear the motion-sensing PlayStation 3 controller won't have vibration. Wha?

Depends on whom you ask. Sony says it nixed vibration because it interfered with the controller's motion sensor. But the folks at Immersion—a company that specializes in controller-feedback tech—don't see why Sony can't make wiggling and buzzing coexist. "Our engineers, in matter of hours, came with three solutions," says Immersion Prez Vic Viegas, whose company is trying to get its enhanced feedback technologies into the next-gen consoles. "We'd be happy to share them with Sony if they'd like to solve their problem." But Sony isn't exactly saying "please" and "thank you," and we figure that has much to do with the $91 million patent-infringement lawsuit the company lost last year to Immersion (the case is being appealed). Including vibration in the PS3 pad would mean Sony would have to settle its case with Immersion (something Microsoft has already done), and there's little chance of that happening in time for the PS3's November release (Sony reps did not get back to us on this issue). "The PS3 will be the only next-gen console without vibration," says Viegas. "They are taking a major step backward."

PREDICTED LAUNCH LINEUP

Resistance: Fall of Man
Warhawk
Genji 2
Formula One '06
MotorStorm
Tony Hawk's Project 8
Sonic the Hedgehog
Rainbow Six: Vegas
Madden NFL 07
Need for Speed Carbon
WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2007
John Woo Presents Stranglehold

HYPE TRACKER



>> PORTABLE PUZZLE FIENDS, LISTEN UP—Q ENTERTAINMENT IS WORKING ON REMAKING THE PORTABLE PUZZLE GAME *GUNPEY*, BY LATE GAME

UNTIL NEXT-GEN IMPACT

Wii

Release Date: Fall 2006

Price: Nintendo promises under $250

Online: The "WiiConnect24" service ensures the system will stay connected to the Internet even when it's powered off. Nintendo is keeping mum about what else the service will offer, but we do know online play is free.

Extended play: The Wii's Virtual Console offers a massive back catalog of pixel-perfect classics, starting with original NES games and ending with Nintendo 64 titles. Oddly enough, Nintendo games aren't the only classics to choose from on the service. Old-school competitors—now new-school companions—Sega (Genesis) and NEC (TurboGrafx-16) will both have select games available. Nintendo has yet to reveal what games will be available or how much they'll cost.

Graphics: Look marginally better than top-tier GameCube games.

Crazy controller: Better loosen your limbs, because Nintendo's innovative Wii Remote is going to have you waving your arms like a chirpy cheerleader. Unlike Sony's controller, the Wii-mote not only has rumble, but speakers in the center that will register gameplay actions (shooting an arrow for instance). The standard Wii-mote also connects to an analog-nubbed Nunchuk, which also registers motion, for games that require more precise movement.

THIS MONTH'S BURNING QUESTION

Can I browse the Web with the Wii?

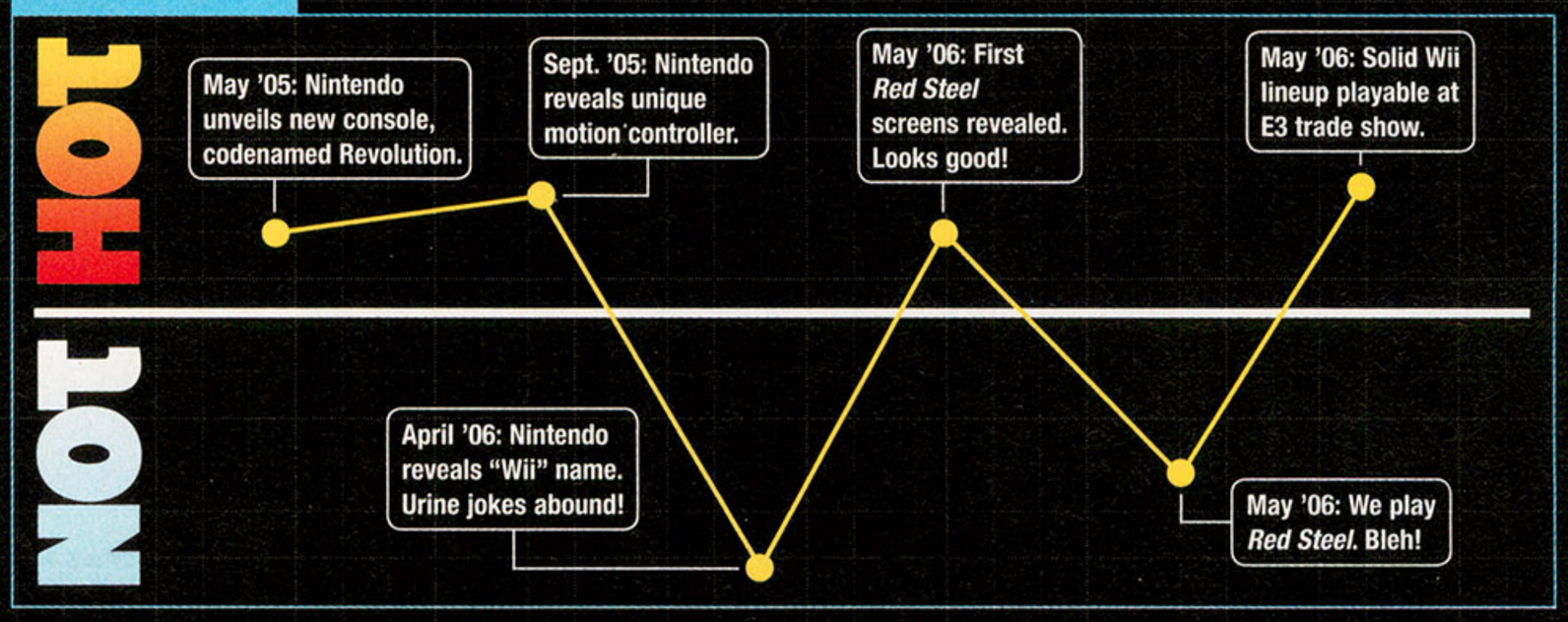
While Nintendo remains tight-lipped about the full scope of the Wii's online functionality, we do know that you'll definitely be browsing the Web with your Wii Remote. Expect a special version of the freeware Opera browser to come bundled with the Wii—you'll use the motion-sensing controller to point and click your way to information, Web-based e-mail, and (hopefully) plentiful porn. USB keyboard support isn't expected, but you'll be able to use a virtual keyboard for e-mail and composing inflammatory message-board posts.

The Wii Remote offers a new twist to gaming.

PREDICTED LAUNCH LINEUP

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz
Red Steel
Rayman Raving Rabbids

HYPE TRACKER



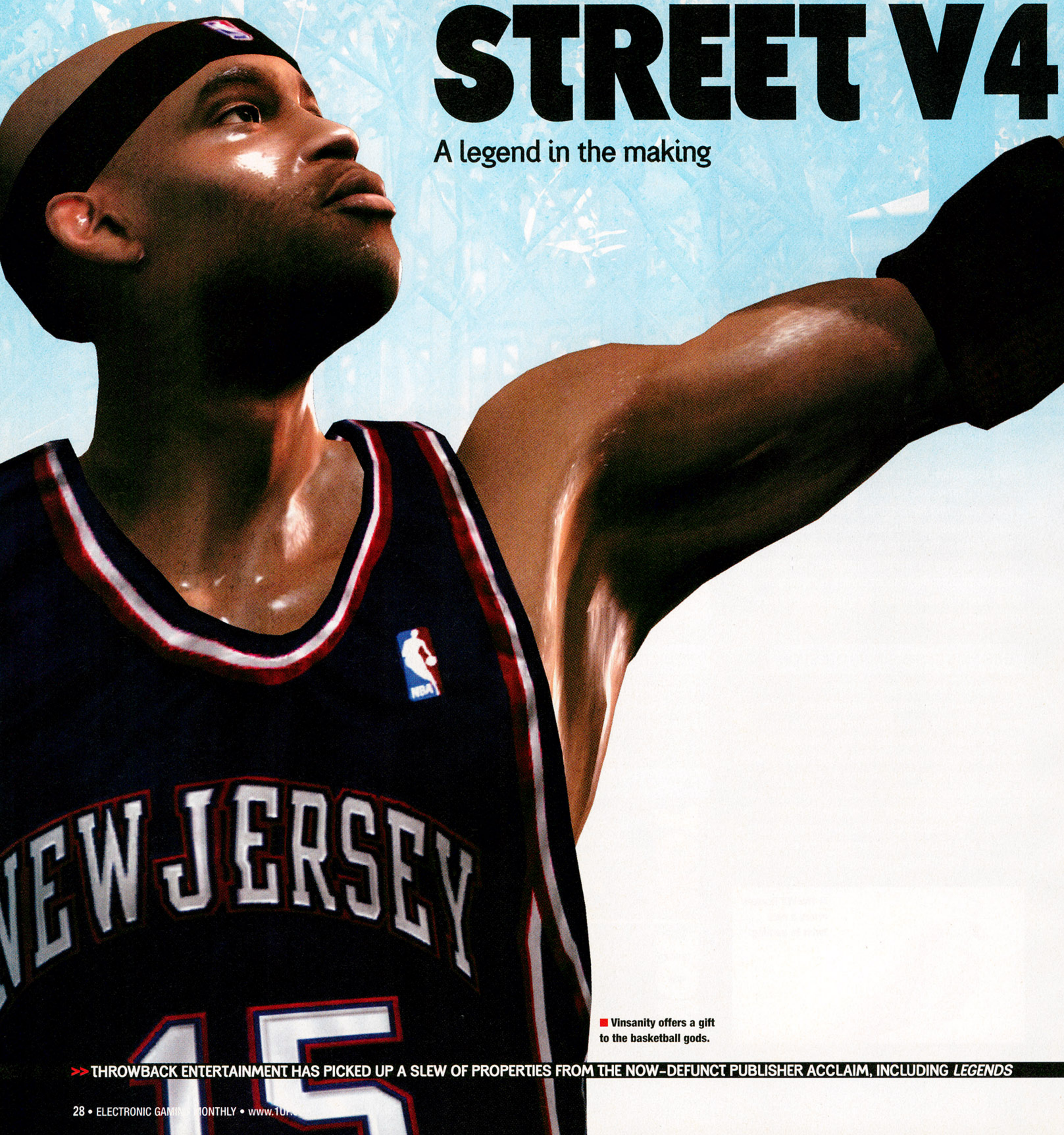
BOY CREATOR GUNPEI YOKOI, FOR BOTH THE NINTENDO DS AND THE PSP. *GUNPEY* ORIGINALLY SAW LIFE ON THE JAPANESE WONDERSWAN.... >>

PS3/XB360 PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

NBA STREET V4

Publisher: EA Sports Big
Developer: EA Canada
Release Date: Spring 2007

A legend in the making



■ Vinsanity offers a gift to the basketball gods.

>> THROWBACK ENTERTAINMENT HAS PICKED UP A SLEW OF PROPERTIES FROM THE NOW-DEFUNCT PUBLISHER ACCLAIM, INCLUDING *LEGENDS*

■ Don't look so happy, 'Melo.

Carmelo Anthony didn't need basketball camp to become a Division I national champion. He didn't need to participate on those top-tier AAU teams to become an Olympian. Heck, he didn't even need four years of college to become an NBA lottery pick (Anthony left Syracuse after his freshman campaign). He learned how to play the game—and master it—just down the road on the local blacktop. During a brief conversation with the Denver Nuggets small forward (which you can see this fall on gamevideos.com), Anthony stressed how important those countless days of pick-up games were to perfecting his craft. His success has also helped transform Anthony's hometown court of Cloverdale (located in Maryland) into another streetball hotspot.

In *NBA Street V4*, the next iteration in EA's dunktastic franchise, you'll be taking a similar path to 'Melo. "The idea here is that every legend has a beginning," says Producer Dan Ayoub. "Every star has to come from somewhere. This is your journey to put your hometown on the map."

Earning respect

It's late afternoon, and the sky has turned an orange-purple over the famous oceanside courts of Venice Beach, CA. You, a relative no-name, survey the scene: Half-court matchups occupy the first few baskets, but you don't find any real competition so you keep on moving to the far playground. And there you spot them—LeBron, T-Mac, and Shaq—three basketball icons. The trio looks you up and down, and then gives you a "Sorry, son, but you ain't ready for us" glare. This means it's back to challenging Venice's other ballers until you earn enough cred to take on the NBA's elite. Welcome to *NBA Street V4*.

"We have this level-up system where you'll earn better moves, more outrageous moves, but it's also now about earning respect," says Ayoub. "So say I'm a level 5 and I meet LeBron, who's a level 60. There's no way he's gonna play a game with me. He's not going to waste his time. But as I get more respect and gain more levels, now you're going to start to notice me and eventually I'll be a big enough name, a big enough talent to take on the likes of LeBron."

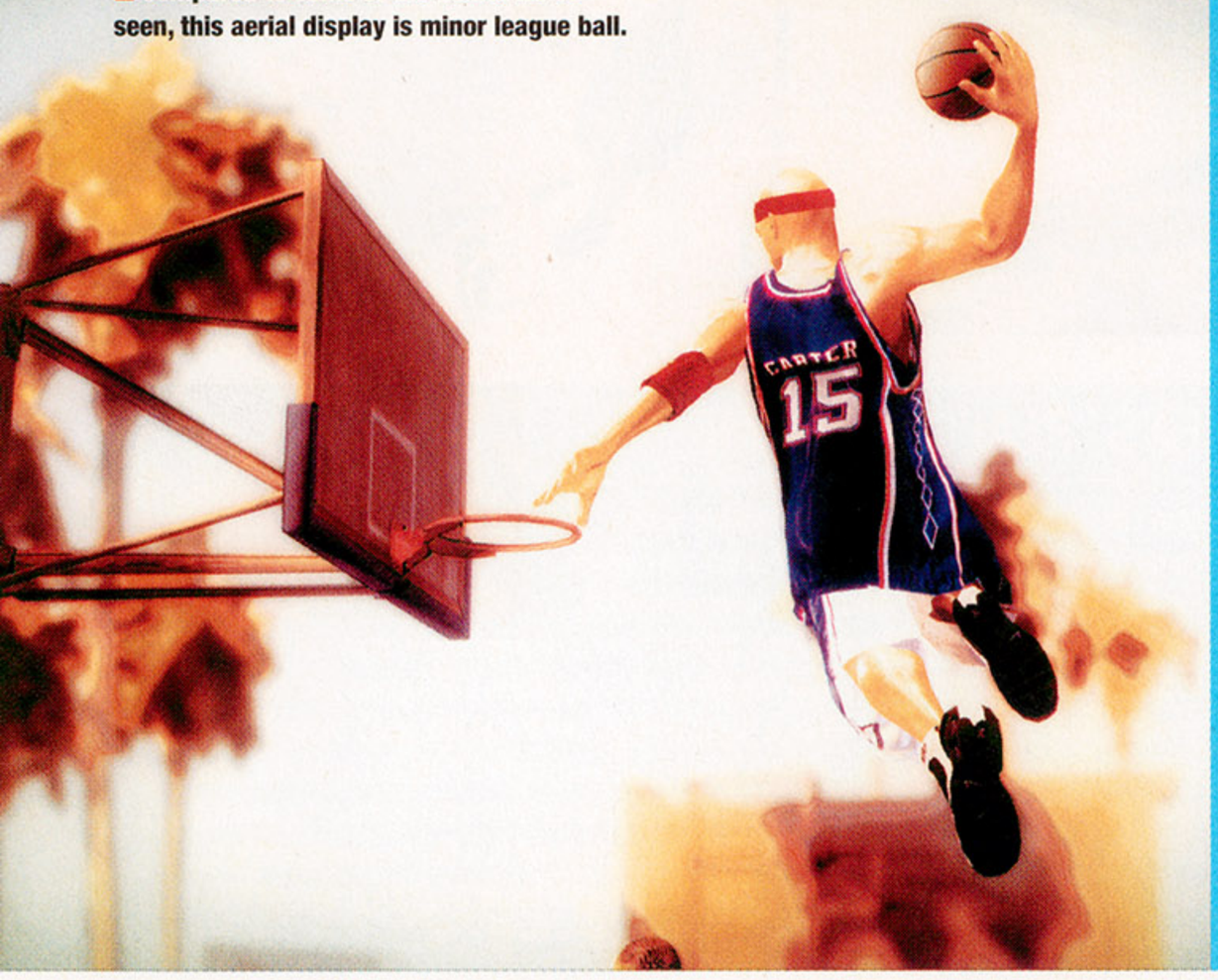
So unlike previous editions, this *Street* tries to mimic what actually happens on well-known courts such as Rucker Park, The Cage, and Kentucky's Dirt Bowl. You can't just go against the best of the best because you happen to be at the court on that particular day; you've gotta earn your shot at the big boys.

Another change-up here is the presence of Brand Jordan, Nike's exclusive line of footwear and the clothing of several top NBA players such as Anthony, Sonics sharpshooter Ray Allen, and Pistons masked-man Richard Hamilton. But it ain't just another clever (and sometimes annoying) marketing scheme for dressing up your custom baller with top-of-the-line gear. Some of the Brand Jordan athletes will play a crucial role in the story mode. "You'll actually go to these guys' real hometown courts," says Ayoub. "They'll act as the 'boss characters' in *NBA Street V4*." And speaking of hometowns, as you ascend to "legendary" status, the NBA's top talent will eventually make their way to your own digs for the ultimate streetball tourney. Win there and, like Ayoub mentioned earlier, your personal playground (EA modeled one of the courts after the gym from the sports flick *Hoosiers*—very nice) will become another prominent location on the basketball map.

It rests in your hands

Here's an oddity: A developer who thinks his game got too much credit. Despite glowing reviews, Executive Producer Wil Mozell felt EA somewhat dropped the ball with its last arcadey hoopster. "Some people called *V3* really pretty, polished, and great—but not fun," he says. "From a gameplay perspective in *NBA Street* ➤

■ Compared to some of the dunks we've seen, this aerial display is minor league ball.



THE NEXT-GEN FACTOR

Sorry, current-gen ballers, but you're gonna have to pony up the dough for a new system if you want to play on *NBA Street V4*'s asphalt. And here's how the dev team is taking advantage of the PS3 and Xbox 360's horsepower:

The Environments—Playgrounds that have multiple courts (such as Venice Beach) will show several games going on at once. "The camera pans through the court so you can pick your challenges," says Producer Dan Ayoub.

The Players—Aside from looking prettier (natch!), you can also expect voiceovers from select NBA superstars during the story mode.

The Crowds—Spectators have been sorely lacking from the *NBA Street* franchise... until now. "We're calling them 'extras,'" says Ayoub. "We want them to be a feedback mechanism for the player. So when you do a huge dunk, the crowd will go nuts." Don't be surprised if they rush the court after big plays, too.

The Dunks—In one word: crazy. We've seen footage of a guy backward somersaulting immediately after a slam. We saw another player bouncing the ball really high, doing a 360 in mid-air, then grabbing the rim with one hand, grabbing the ball with the other, and shattering the backboard as the finale. We've even witnessed someone dunking the rock twice in one trip up to the rim—yup, that counts double on the scoreboard.

OF WRESTLING, VEXX, EXTREME-G, SUMMER HEAT BEACH VOLLEYBALL, AND *GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE*. ONE QUESTION: WHY?.... >>

NBA STREET V4 (CONT.)

➤ *V4*, we want to make the darn game fun again." Over and over again, members of the dev team talked with us about "putting the ball in your hands." Huh? Hasn't it been there the whole time? "Over the years with *NBA Street*, we've pretty much mastered 'in the air,'" says Mozell. "Where we haven't broken through with innovation are the simple things, like tricks and dribbles. In the past, it was satisfying to say, 'Hey, I wanna do the slip-n-slide, and I know it's this button combination.' But it's still a canned animation, it's really not that rewarding, and it certainly doesn't reward you for user skill. So we're focusing on bringing back user skill. Now, we're allowing people to create their own tricks on the fly." We can't reveal the exact mechanics behind customizing your shake-and-bakes just yet, but we can tell you, after a short playtest, that it already requires a bit more ability with the controller (in a good way).

Now, say you're still struggling with getting tricky—won't that put you at a distinct disadvantage? In any other *NBA Street*, yes, it would. But No. 4 will counteract the fancy fakers by enabling you to get physical. "Before, physical play was kind of a result of faking a guy out, and he fell over," says Mozell. "Now, we want to push the boundaries on physical play in terms of giving back control to the user. What we want to do is that, if you don't have the wicked handles, physical play will then be your weapon. With next-gen *NBA Street*, physical play allows you to play defense and have fun doing it." This battle of varying styles will really come into play within the new 1-on-1 matchups that take place within the standard 3-on-3 games. "Obviously, *NBA Street V4* is still a 3-on-3 game, but now you can call someone out," says Ayoub. "I use the analogy of fights in a hockey game: I can challenge you, and you don't necessarily have to accept, but if you do, it'll bring you into another aspect of the game." The developers hint that 1-on-1 play will be a big part of *V4*'s gamebreaker, the series' famed game-changing, yet high-risk, sequence. —*Bryan Intihar*

■ D-Wade's moves were too much for 'Melo to handle. Or was it his BO?

■ In *V4*, physical play will be an integral part to putting the claps on tricksters.

EA'S "REAL" NBA GAME

NBA Live 06 was easily the slickest-looking sports game at the 360 launch, but the sim didn't have much meat on its bones. Expect the next-gen version of *07* (due this fall on both the PS3 and Xbox 360) to have a respectable feature set compared to the current-gen editions. All-Star Weekend, which includes the 3-point and slam dunk contests, will be present, as well as a beefy Dynasty mode. On the court, players will finally show some emotion (meaning no more dead-man stares after fouls or big shots), and the new "Superstar" ratings will unlock additional moves for select players (so, for example, the Nets' dunkaholic Vince Carter will have access to jams that benchwarmers don't). Oh, and remember how everyone felt like Shaq at *06*'s free-throw line? EA promises that this season, you'll actually be able to score from the charity stripe.

>> ATARI'S WHEELMAN GETS A NEW BOSS, AS UBISOFT HAS RECENTLY ACQUIRED THE RIGHTS TO THE *DRIVER* FRANCHISE.... >>

Aliens turned Tommy's world upside down...
Portals change everything. Experience for the first time the reality bending effects of a portal world. Prey sets a new standard that will completely mess with your mind.
Multiple gameplay innovations from the developer that brought you Bullet Time, including Deathwalk (dying is no longer annoying...it's fun!) & Spiritwalk (leave your body to explore, ambush, and solve mind blowing puzzles!
...Now he's about to return the favor.
Living weapons, a faithful sidekick, vehicles, giant environments, jaw-dropping memorable moments, a story of redemption and destiny, and a 3-hour epic soundtrack by Jeremy Soule (Oblivion, Guild Wars). The FPS of the year is here.
Imagine a place where gravity isn't always down! It can be controlled, twisted, flipped, and even wrap around small planetoids? Imagine walking on walls and ceilings? Can you handle this new challenge?
PREY
"Prey looks like one of the best first-person shooters of the year in both graphics and gameplay." – IGN
"Absolutely incredible to look at, packed with scintillating effects." – Play
"Doom 3™ hiked the bar. Prey may transform the bar altogether." – 1UP
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Partial Nudity
Strong Language
PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE
PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE
XBOX 360
XBOX LIVE
Digital Delivery at www.PlayTriton.com
© 2006 Take-Two Interactive Software and its subsidiaries. All rights reserved. 2K Games, the 2K logo, Venom Games, the Venom Games logo and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. © 2006 3D Realms Entertainment. All rights reserved. The Prey name and logo, 3D Realms Entertainment and the 3D Realms logo are trademarks of Apogee Software, Ltd. Developed by Human Head Studios, Inc. Human Head Studios and the Human Head Studios logo are trademarks of Human Head Studios, Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Copyright 2005, ATI Technologies Inc. ATI and the ATI logo are registered trademarks and/or trademarks of ATI Technologies Inc. All rights reserved. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

THIS MONTH:
SHARA MILLER
PRODUCER AT LUCASARTS

take this job
PRODUCER

Our monthly look at the jobs you want—with tips from the folks who have them

Miller's details

Experience: Six-and-a-half years
Notable games: *Star Wars Battlefront II*, *Mercenaries*, *RTX Red Rock*, *Escape from Monkey Island*. Now working on LucasArts' *Thrillville* (PS2, XB, PSP).

What's a producer?

He or she is a development team's organizer, cheerleader, and main facilitator, making sure no task falls through the cracks—and making sure someone picks up the slack when they do. Development teams face numerous "milestone" deadlines; it's Miller's daily grind to keep everyone on track for reaching those milestones. "Being in production is all about removing roadblocks for the team members," Miller says, "solving problems every day, keeping people aware of what the schedule is, and making sure that everyone is totally committed to the game that they're working on."

Producer job data

Salary range: $60,000 to $85,000
Recommended education: While Miller is very impressed by what she's seen from game-specific school programs, she thinks that studying what you love—whatever that may be—and then applying that knowledge to games is the way to go. "I studied anthropology," she says, "and working with games is so much about working with different cultures. Even with the British developer [Frontier Developments] I'm working with now, there's a whole different mindset to interacting with people outside of this country. It's a background that's taught me how to examine the way groups work and think together."
Location of most jobs: West Coast
Current level of demand: High. "There's always a high demand for smart, talented, hardworking people who care about games," says Miller. "Always."

Miller's typical day

Videogame development is a hectic job, so for the producer, it's all about making sure the people building the game have what they need to get that job done. "A normal day usually starts with a phone call to our developer in England," says Miller. "After that, I usually spend some time playing the latest build of *Thrillville*, taking notes, and—let's be honest—trying to get a new high score on the trampolines minigame." Throughout the day, she checks in with folks from the sound, voice, and music team, localization, the legal department, testers, artists, sales, and marketing. "My day-to-day goal is to make sure that no one on my core team ever gets impeded by bottlenecks," she says.

How'd she get the gig?

Miller was at Microsoft's Interactive Media Division—which included games, Web, and CD-ROM development. "I left Seattle and Microsoft, where the coolest and most fun people I'd worked with were on the games side," she says. "I wanted to do that again, so I moved to the Bay Area looking to get into making games." Miller sent her résumé to LucasArts, came in for an interview, and got the job. "It was that simple," she says. "I never even looked anywhere else."

—Evan Shamoon

TOOLS OF HER TRADE

Office whiteboard
"We have meetings in my office all the time," says Miller, "and it's always centered around the whiteboard to make sure we never forget our priorities. It's simple...like, black-and-white simple."

Phone and e-mail
As a producer, you've got to constantly stay in touch with your team—and Miller talks with her team one to three times a day, every day (even those across the planet in the U.K.). "The second you lose touch," she says, "that's when people veer off into their own directions and the project goes off track."

Console debug kits
"You can never step away from the game," says Miller. "You need to get to know your game intimately, watch other people play it...to really understand it from the ground up."

NEXT UP: TRANSLATOR

>> BLIZZARD, OF PC *WARCRAFT* FAME, IS HIRING A PRODUCER WITH A CONSOLE BACKGROUND TO WORK ON NEXT-GEN PROJECTS.... >>

PUMA® SUPERSTRUCTURE

ONLY @

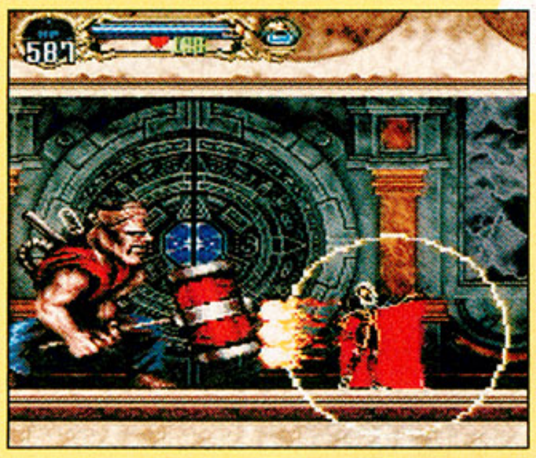
CHAMPS SPORTS®

WHERE SPORT LIVES™

online this month

Xbox Live Arcade cashing in on *Castlevania* and other classics

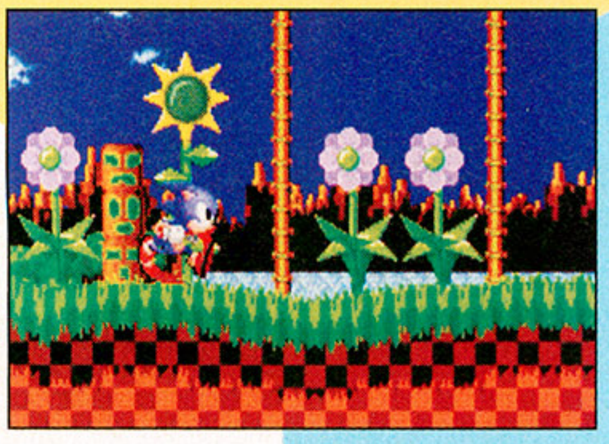
The next generation may be upon us, but it's nice to remember the good ol' days of gaming. You know, back when a quarter bought a few minutes of fun (or frustration, depending how much you suck). That's not to say today's games aren't memorable, but people seem to always flock back to the oldies. Maybe it's the simplicity, maybe it's nostalgia, or maybe it's because the games are actually fun...but whatever it is, Xbox Live Arcade is housing a slew of new old games. Here's a list of old-school classics, and one PS1 surprise, coming to your Xbox 360. ***—Michael Donahoe***



■ ***Symphony of the Night* will be the first PlayStation 1 game to appear on Xbox Live Arcade.**

Konami
Hungry for more batty castle crawls? Well, sink your teeth into this: Konami is resurrecting the cult PS1 game *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* on Xbox Live Arcade. Along with *SOTN*, Konami is also bringing back other classic hits, some revered (*Frogger*, *Contra*, *Super Contra*, *Track & Field*), some obscure (*Time Pilot*), and some really obscure (*Scramble*).

Namco
While Namco probably has the most well-known relics (*Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *Dig Dug*, *Rally-X*), most of these upcoming Live games have appeared in countless compilations over the past few years. Even so, if you factor in the achievements with the simple pick-and-play simplicity, they'll be hard to ignore in your online downtime.



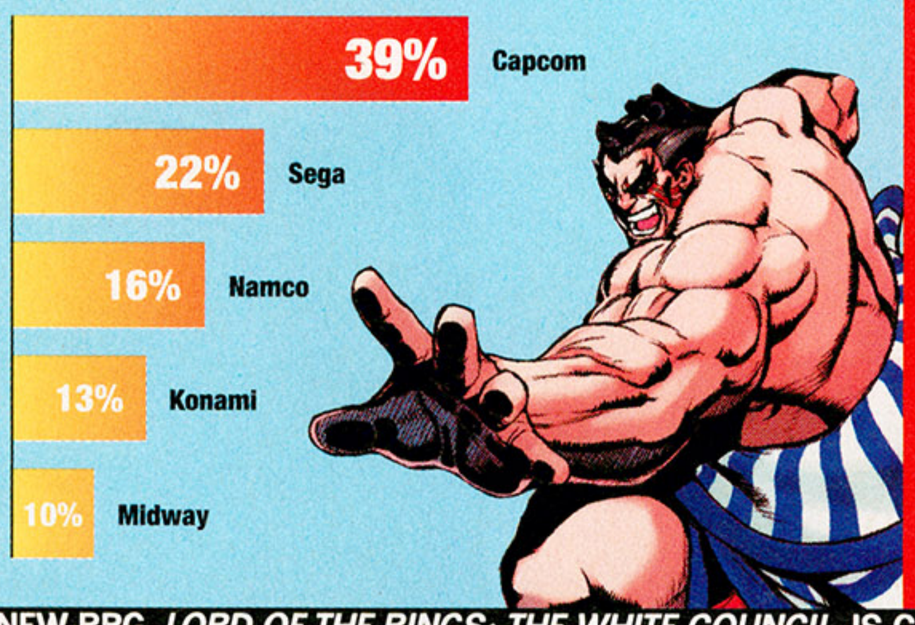
Sega
Leave it to Sonic to whore himself out to all the consoles. In addition to appearing on the Wii's Virtual Console, you can also find the first *Sonic* on Xbox Live Arcade, now titled *Sonic the Hedgehog High Speed*.

Capcom
Fighting buffs can get their fix with Capcom's *Street Fighter II' Hyper Fighting*. Not much has changed, but since it's online, finding a fight is a cinch. But before you put your quarter up, read our wrap-up on page 110 to see if the fight is worth it.

Midway
Like Namco, most of Midway's lineup (*Defender*, *Paperboy*, *Root Beer Tapper*, *Cyberball*) has appeared across various collections. However, Midway's trump kard is the inclusion of the online capable *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3*.

POLL POSITION

Sure, all these companies are pimping out their classics, but who's got raddest arcade games of all time? We let our 1UP readers answer that question.... Here's what they think:



WHAT'S UP AT 1UP.com®

EGM.1UP.com
We know that once you finish the last page of this month's glorious issue, you're gonna want more—and we've got it. Head over to our supersite, EGM.1UP.com, to get more exclusive info on this month's *Mass Effect* cover story.

EGMLIVE.1UP.com
Now that we have our very own podcast, we just can't get our editors to shut up. Tune in every week to hear us go through hilarious reader mail, argue over review scores, and yap about how we landed our jobs as game writers.

CHEATS.1UP.com
The brave men and women that make up our cheats team work extra hard just for you. They spend their time breaking controllers and swearing in frustration so you don't have to. Throw them a bone and check out it out, will ya?

GAMETAB.com
Knowing where to go for the best news in gaming can be overwhelming. The solution is Gametab, the ultimate hub that links you to all the sites you need for up-to-date videogame happenings.

BOARDS.1UP.com
Make a few friends (or enemies) on our all-encompassing message boards, the best place to talk about, well, whatever you think is hot in the gaming world.

KIMI.1UP.com
1UP's ex-community manager and most popular member, Kimi Matsuzaki is gone but still bloggin'. Just about any day of the week, you can always find a new, thought-provoking post accompanied by a ton of pretty pictures.

>> EA IS THE LORD OF MILKING OF A PRODUCT DRY—A NEW RPG, *LORD OF THE RINGS: THE WHITE COUNCIL*, IS COMING TO 360 AND PS3.... >>

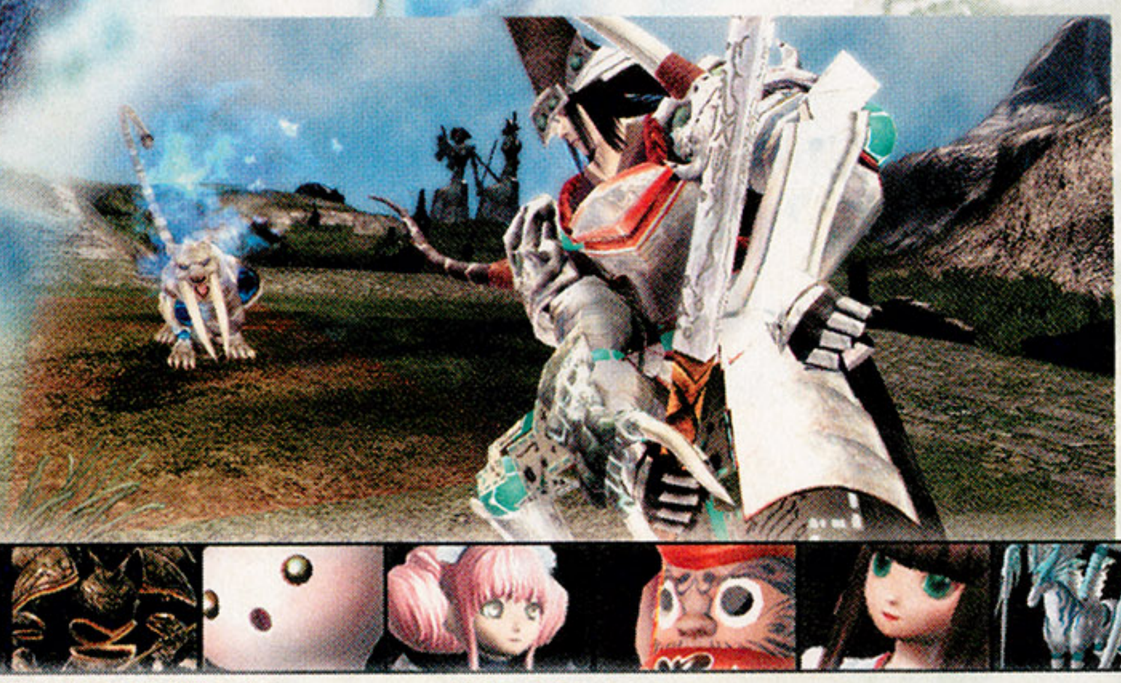
ENCHANTED ARMS™

Experience one of the first true next-gen role-playing adventures.

Experience an epic story with over 50 hours of gameplay.

Log on to Xbox Live® for head-to-head Versus battles.

Master the SpeedTactics Battle System.



UNLOCK OVER 100 CONTROLLABLE CREATURES.

DEVELOPED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE XBOX 360™ VIDEO GAME CONSOLE.

ESRB T (Teen) — Content Rated by ESRB
- Alcohol Reference
- Mild Fantasy Violence
- Mild Language
- Simulated Gambling
- Suggestive Themes

ONLY ON XBOX 360

XBOX 360™ | XBOX LIVE®

Coming Summer 2006

FROMSOFTWARE www.EnchantedArmsGame.com

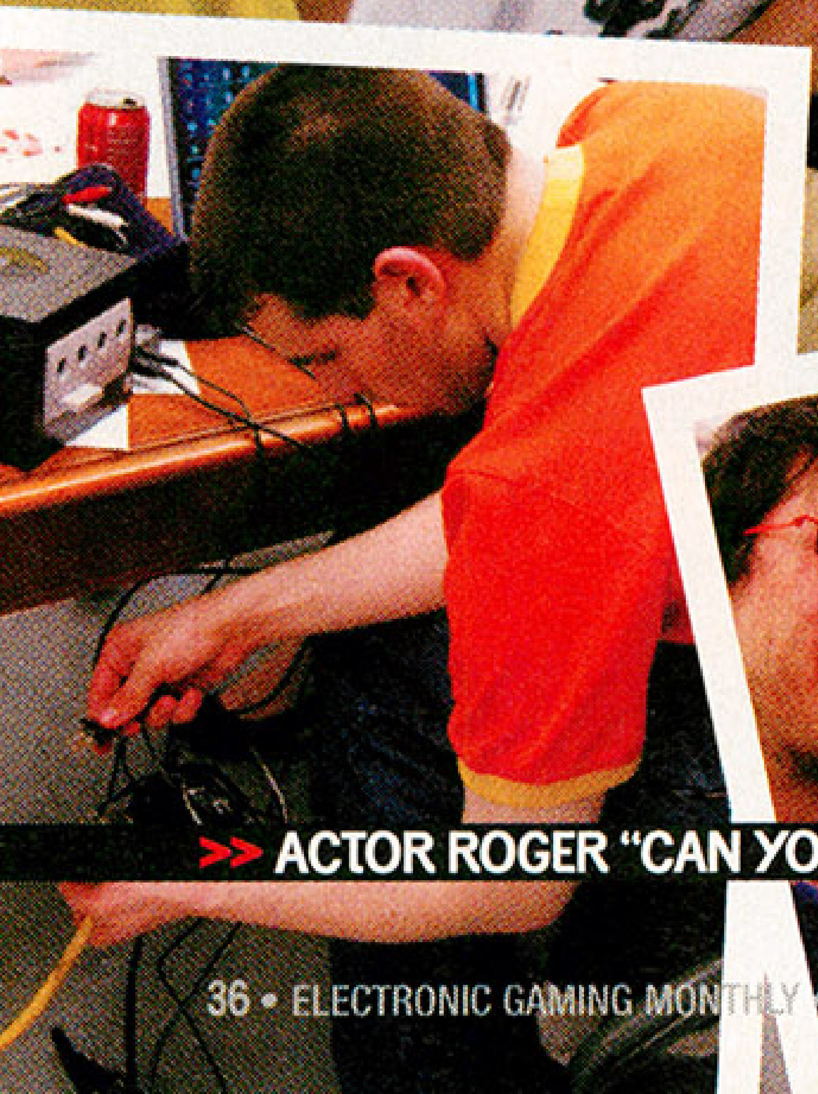
UBISOFT®

© 2006 FromSoftware, Inc. All rights reserved. Published and distributed by Ubisoft Entertainment under license from FromSoftware, Inc. Enchanted Arms is a trademark of FromSoftware, Inc. and is used under license. Ubisoft, Ubi.com and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries.

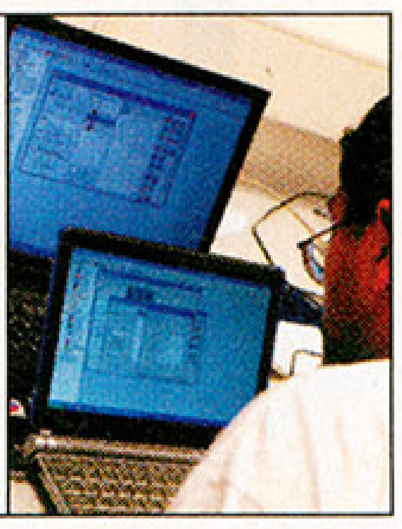
GAME DAY

We lose sleep in a 24-hour design contest

The annual "Mobile Game Mosh," hosted by New York design school Parsons, is a crunch time right out of the Death Star trash compactor: 60 undergrad students from area universities get one day to make working mobile-phone games. We follow a team during the noon-to-noon madness. —*Tracey John*

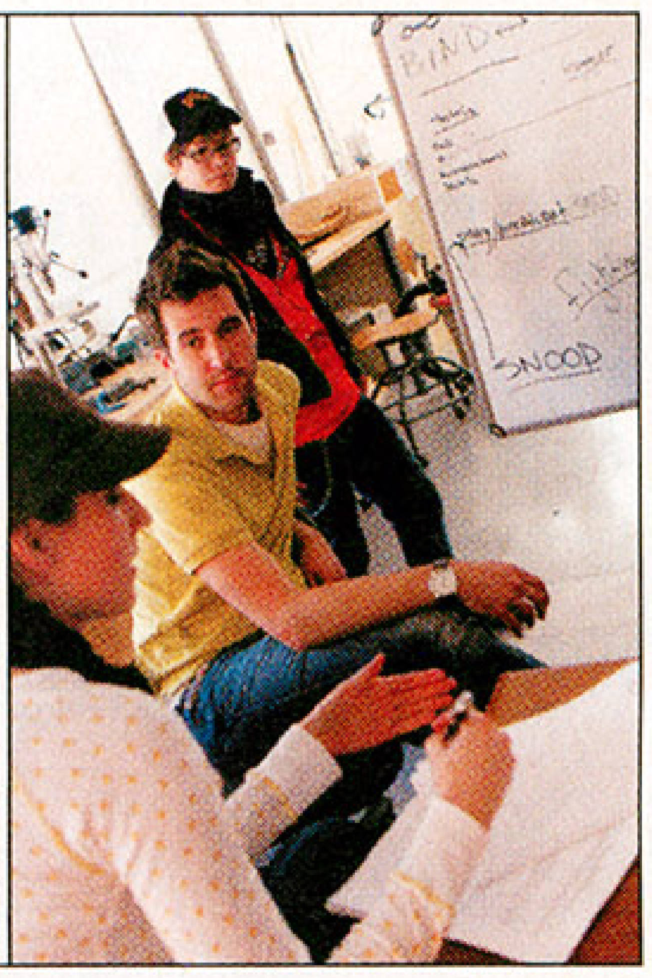


The Rules



Each makeshift mobile team was given one Mac and one PC installed with Flash, Adobe Photoshop, and Game Maker to design a portable time waster for the Nokia N70 phone. Squads also received an envelope of four randomly selected verbs, two of which had to be incorporated into their game's concept—mainly to keep any teams from cheating and making games beforehand.

Hour 1: The Brainstorm

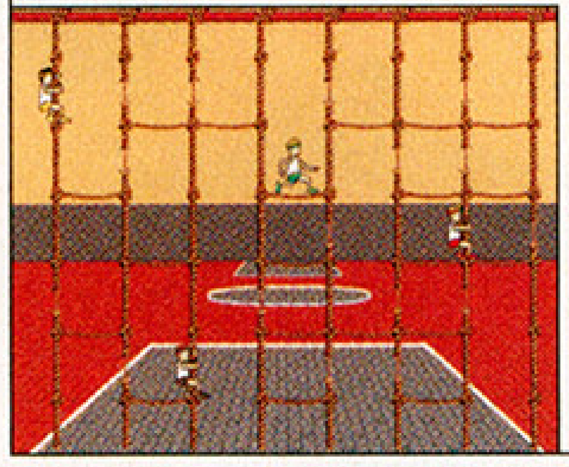


Las Pwnistas, the only all-undergrad group made up of Parsons' own design and technology majors, were pumped to get pondering. "Last year, a Parsons undergrad team won," says member Becky Stern, sporting a black bandana bearing the team name. "We have a reputation to uphold." They get stuck with the words "bind," "snap," "wander," and "illuminate." After four hours of brainstorming, Las Pwnistas decide on a multiplayer game inspired by their own terrible times in gym class. Dubbed *Gym Jungle*, the concept involves dodgeball and rope climbing. "Who the hell ever made a game about gym class?" asks team member Ira Sutcliffe.

Hour 14: Disaster Strikes

Too tired to think, member Lowe drops dead.

With Las Pwnistas' sweaty concept set, the joking stops and the work begins—until 2 a.m. The group can't sync up multiple phones and the server. On top of that, Flash keeps crashing. "If it crashes again, I'm quitting," says programmer Todd Vanderlin. (Seconds later, it does crash; fortunately, Vanderlin stays.) Meanwhile, everyone else continues working on gameplay and sound. At 4 a.m., all that's left is to get the cell-phone dodgeball game to link up with rope-climbing (left), which everyone plays on a big theater screen. "Does Red Bull ruin your liver?" asks member Anna Lowe, before dozing off.



Hour 24: The Finish Line

The team rallies after a 7 a.m. breakfast, but communication between the phones and server is still a problem. Worst-case scenario: Las Pwnistas will need to walk judges through the game's pieces without actually playing it. The outlook is bleak, but when the clock strikes 10 a.m., the Parsons faculty member who helped create the server application arrives to help. Turns out that Vanderlin had missed a step. Back on course, the team races to finish *Gym Jungle*.

Time is called at noon. Las Pwnistas cobbles together and hands in what they've finished. Alas, *Gym Jungle* doesn't win. "If we just had one more hour," laments Vanderlin.

And the Winner Is...

Although Las Pwnistas didn't win any top prizes (such as software from sponsors Atari and Adobe, thousand-dollar checks, and the chance to have their game published), they still landed honorable mentions in the sound and innovation categories. The top winner, picked by a panel of industry pros, is a game called *Moth* from The Difference Engine, a team from Union Theological Seminary and Teachers College at Columbia University. They garnered weird looks for their oddball game-making methods, like using a didgeridoo for sound (right) and hand-painting—then scanning—the game's graphics. In the end, they came up with a simple, visually impressive game in which a moth tries to find its way to the moon via a puzzle-clearing path. "If these kids are able to do these kind of games in 24 hours," says Bruno Bonnell, CEO of event sponsor Atari, "what can we expect from them working for a month? It's scary."

>> ACTOR ROGER "CAN YOU DIG IT?" HILL IS SUING TAKE-TWO, CLAIMING IT USED HIS LIKENESS IN *THE WARRIORS* WITHOUT PERMISSION.... >>

Tired of waiting for your character?

Introducing a blazing fast 8 Mbps connection from Comcast High-Speed Internet, helping make lag a thing of the past. Along with lightning speed you also get full access to Game Invasion™ and exclusive content from IGN, like betas, clips and the latest news. Comcast gives you an incredibly fast connection and content you won't find anywhere else, so you play better.

Upgrade today and game like you mean it. That's Comcastic!
comcast.com/8Mbps

Comcast®

8 Mbps speed for downloads only (maximum upload speed 768Kbps). Many factors affect speed. Actual speeds may vary and are not guaranteed. IGN Founders' Club provided with Comcast 8 Mbps speed plan only. IGN Founders' Club supplied by and subject to terms of IGN Entertainment, Inc. Comcast and its subsidiaries are not responsible for any products and services of other participating companies. ©2006 Comcast. All rights reserved.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

PlayStation 2

UNIVERSAL

BANDAI NAMCO Games

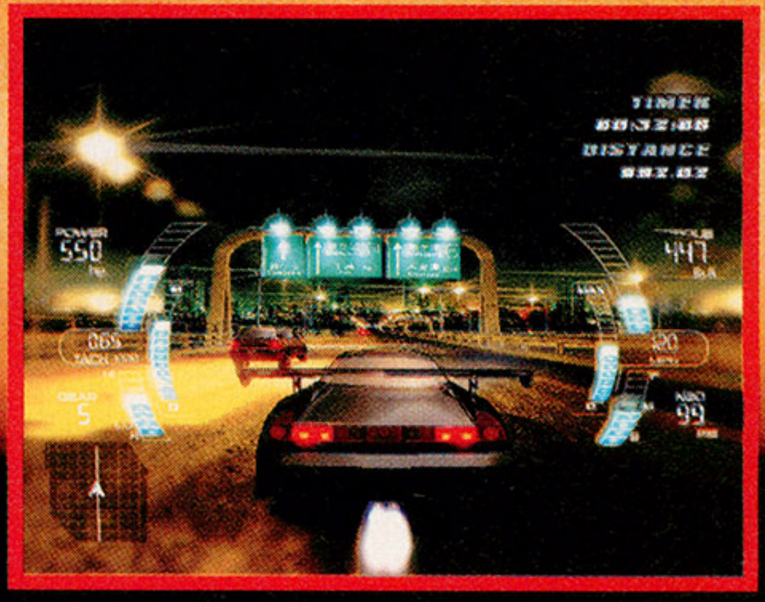
The Fast and The Furious is a trademark and copyright of Universal Studios. Licensed by Universal Studios Licensing LLLP. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks belong to their respective owners. © NAMCO BANDAI Games America Inc. 2006 All Rights Reserved "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. A Note to Parents. Please consult www.filmratings.com for information regarding movie ratings in making viewing choices for children. The driving sequences in The Fast and The Furious motion pictures were filmed with professional stunt drivers, under carefully-controlled conditions, for entertainment purposes only. No attempt should be made to duplicate any of the racing activities or sequences depicted therein. Universal neither condones nor endorses the use of this or any related product in any manner whatsoever other than in strict accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and speed limits.

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS™

ファースト アンド フュリアス

COMING SOON

OWN THE DVD THIS FALL
THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS TOKYO DRIFT



- *THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS EXPLODES ONTO HOME GAME CONSOLES FOR THE FIRST TIME!*
- *OVER 100 OF THE MOST DETAILED TUNER, MUSCLE AND CONCEPT CARS EVER SEEN ON THE PLAYSTATION®2 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.*
- *TUNE YOUR RIDE WITH OVER 80 LICENSED WHEELS AND 300 BODY KITS FROM AUTHENTIC JDM COMPANIES.*
- *REVOLUTIONARY DRIFTING MODEL, CINEMATIC CAMERA ANGLES AND STUNNING VISUALS.*

SONIC'S SUPER SWEET 15

Sega's beloved mascot celebrates his birthday with three new titles

Although he's not quite as ubiquitous as Nintendo's all-star plumber (Mario's been unclogging drains for 25 long years), Sonic the Hedgehog has assuredly earned his spot as runner-up in the videogame mascot pantheon. In the 15 years since his Sega Genesis debut, countless competitors have tried to emulate his style, speed, and no-nonsense attitude...but you don't see us raising a toast to long-forgotten losers like Bubsy the Bobcat or Zero the Kamikaze Squirrel. Nope, Sonic outlasted them all, building an impressive resume of work across all manner of platforms along the way. And he's not taking a break—Sonic has three wildly different games in the pipeline, proving that he's still as relevant as ever.

—Shane Bettenhausen

>> HERE'S A QUICK PS3/X360 *SONIC* INFO ROUNDUP.... CAN WE EXPECT ONLINE MULTIPLAYER? SEGA SAYS MAYBE. WHAT ABOUT SUPPORT FOR

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

PS3/XB360 • November 2006

By naming Sonic's next-gen debut simply *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sega hopes to reboot the franchise and reintroduce gamers to the titular 'hog. But if he's still so popular, is that really necessary? Hell yes. Although recent offerings such as *Sonic Heroes* and *Shadow the Hedgehog* have been a hit with the grade-school crowd, many of the hedgehog's older fans gravitated away from these overly cutesy, slower-paced duds.

Despite all of Sega's talk about reinvention, this PS3/XB360 outing actually feels an awful lot like a gussied-up retread of *Sonic Adventure* (Dreamcast). That's not necessarily a bad thing, though—here, you guide a slightly older, more athletic Sonic through a grandiose quest to save Princess Elise from the clutches of series nemesis Dr. Robotnik. In fact, the game's weighty story line (told via gorgeous, *Final Fantasy*–quality CG cut-scenes) even hints at a possible romance between Sonic and this human female. Wow, Sonic really has grown up... and gotten kind of freaky, too.

The majority of Sonic's stages play out just as they have in all of his 3D adventures: lots of running, jumping, bouncing from foe to foe, and, unfortunately, careening to your death due to the deadly combination of breakneck speed and iffy camera angles. Some things never change, eh?

Fortunately, it's not all about falling off edges. Just as in *Sonic Adventure*, you often take a breather from platforming to explore residential areas. This time, you can talk to townsfolk, take on optional quests, play minigames (tag, races, and quizzes), and gather power-ups and new moves. Plus, this *Sonic* introduces an all-new (and surprisingly fun) level type—so-called Speed Stages where Sonic shifts into high gear for absurdly fast dodging, jumping, and attacking. Despite being remarkably simple and straightforward, these new areas reduce the *Sonic* experience to its purest, twitchiest core (much like *Super Mario Sunshine*'s tricky platforming minilevels).

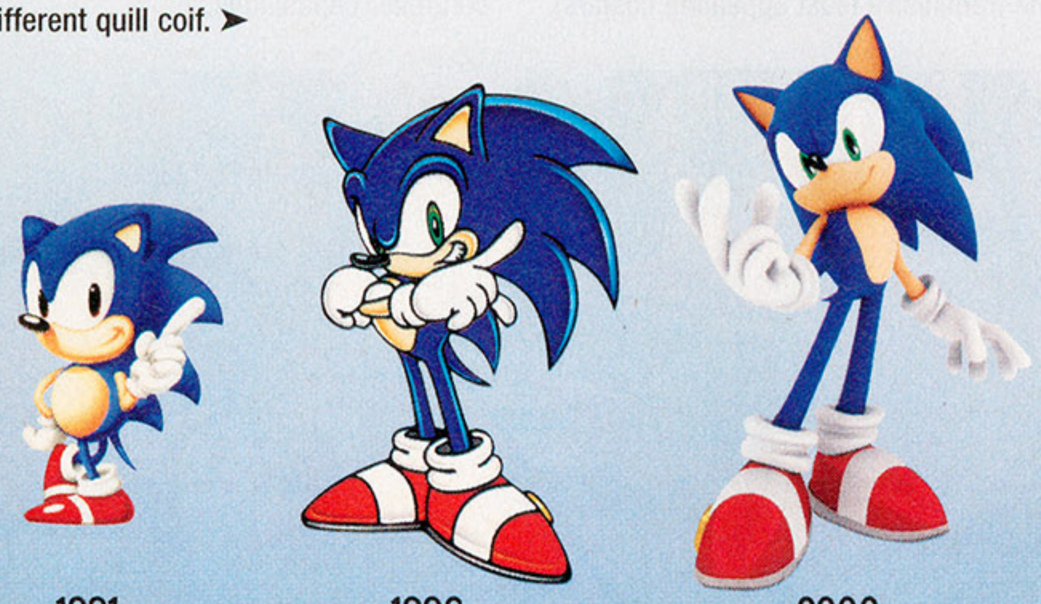
And although you might expect this to be a back-to-basics all-Sonic affair, he's not the only hedgehog you'll be controlling. Bad-seed antihero Shadow returns with new moves, new motivations, and (regrettably) more of the clumsy gunplay and lame vehicles that plagued his recent solo outing. Newcomer Silver the Hedgehog seems far more promising—this mysterious freak levitates through levels, telekinetically tossing giant boulders at foes. Since Shadow and Silver play through the same stages as Sonic, you'll have to use their unique abilities to find alternate paths to victory.

■ Silver the Hedgehog hovers above it all.

■ Good news: playing as Shadow is optional.

SONIC NIP/TUCK

What's Sonic's dirty little secret? Like many celebs, he's had a little work done. With the public scrutinizing his every move, can you really blame him? Take one look at how he appeared when he first hit the scene in 1991—fresh-faced, stubby-legged, and a little thick around the middle. By the late '90s, he was sporting a new look, with thicker quills, longer legs, green contacts, and an even sassier attitude. These days, he's looking even taller and thinner, and he's even got a slightly different quill coif. ➤



1991 1998 2006

THE PLAYSTATION 3'S MOTION-SENSING CONTROLLER? LOOKS UNLIKELY. HIDDEN PLAYABLE CHARACTERS? YOU CAN COUNT ON IT.... >>

SONIC'S SUPER SWEET 15 (CONT.)

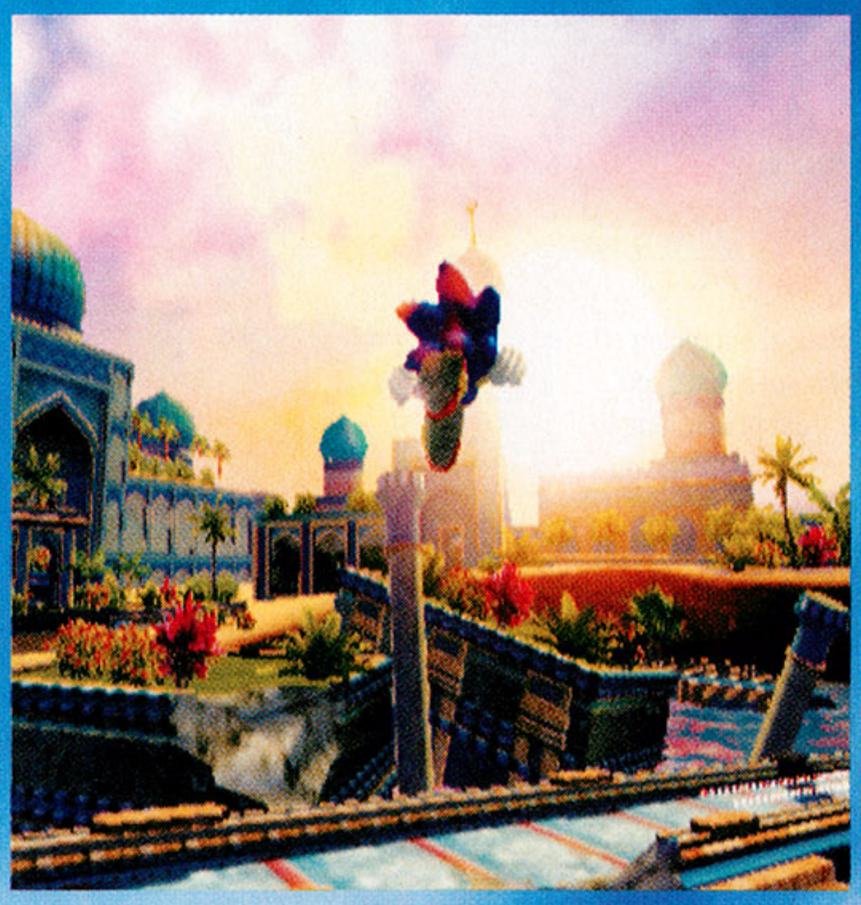
SONIC ROGUES GALLERY

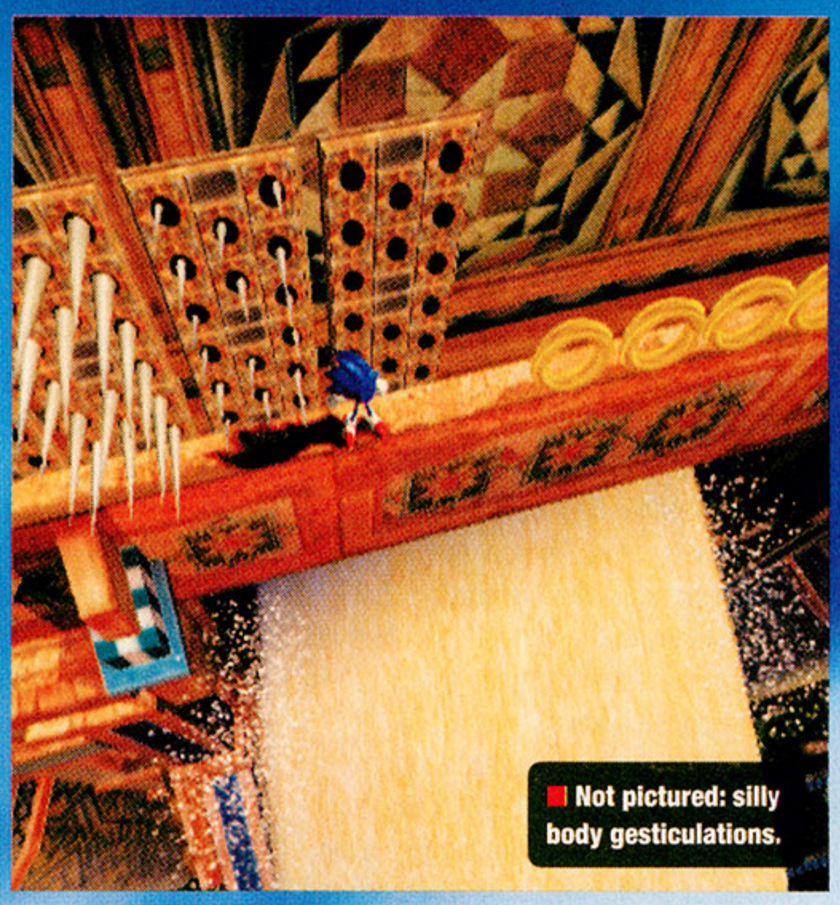
Although Sonic remains one of the coolest characters in gaming, he tends to hang out with some truly obnoxious anthropomorphic critters. We'd like to think that we've seen the last of these embarrassing wannabe mascots...but we're probably not that lucky.

Team Chaotix
Vector the Crocodile, Espio the Chameleon, and Charmy the Bee once starred in a forgotten Sonic spin-off, *Knuckles' Chaotix* (for the doomed 32X "console"), and for reasons unknown, Sega revived these no-talent freaks as playable characters in *Sonic Heroes*. If you think they *look* annoying, you should hear them speak.

Cream the Rabbit
Introduced in *Sonic Advance 2* (GBA), Cream the Rabbit might be the least menacing heroine ever: She's a naïve 6-year-old who attacks by throwing her pet Chao (named Cheese) at foes. We dare male gamers to maintain their masculinity while controlling this juvenile abomination.

Big the Cat
This sweetly retarded, morbidly obese feline single-handedly attempts to destroy *Sonic Adventure* (DC) with his mind-numbingly dull fishing stages. He was apparently designed to appeal to gamers fed up with characters that were "fast" or "cool."





SONIC WILD FIRE

Nintendo Wii • Spring 2007

"We originally considered making something that's a lot more like the *Sonic* games you've seen on other platforms," says *Sonic Wild Fire* producer Yojiro Ogawa. "However, since the Wii hardware gives us the opportunity to revolutionize traditional games and make them better, we wanted to create a deep game with incredibly simple control." That could end up being the smartest decision that Sega has made about the *Sonic* franchise in years—*Wild Fire* feels incredibly fresh and addictive. So much so, in fact, that this should easily one-up Sonic's upcoming PS3/XB360 adventure.

At first glance, however, the gameplay here seems awfully limited. Sonic runs through levels along a preset, on-rails path—you take control by holding the Wii Remote horizontally and tilting it to the left and right in order to steer your 'hog. Jumping over obstacles requires a simple button press, while thrusting the controller forward during a leap initiates a homing attack that you can then combo across multiple enemies. And once you've collected enough energy orbs, you can also bust out a special maneuver that automatically rockets Sonic forward at maximum velocity.

Wild Fire's startlingly pared-down design appears to eliminate the annoying problems that continue to hinder traditional 3D *Sonic* games. Because it's a more controlled experience, the confusing camera angles and cheap deaths you've become accustomed to are history, yet the game still retains the speed and spectacle we all demand from a killer *Sonic* title. And don't worry that the game will force you to play as some totally lame Sonic hanger-on (scope the sidebar to meet the franchise's least appealing costars).

"We really felt that it was important to focus on Sonic in this game," explains Ogawa. "Therefore, Sonic is the only character that players can control in the main game."

Despite our glowing praise, don't be shocked if your first attempt at controlling Sonic with the remote ends in tragedy. You're initially tempted to make sudden, jarring controller motions, but slightly tilting the Wii Remote yields far better results. It's an easy learning curve to master, though—our Sonic-steering skills improved dramatically during our short time playing the game.

As engaging as the main game feels, expect to spend plenty of quality time with *Wild Fire*'s suite of multiplayer contests. "We are planning on including loads of minigames," says Ogawa. "These will be simple, challenging party games designed around the Wii controller capabilities."

>> ELECTRONIC ARTS HAS ANNOUNCED THAT ACTRESS EMMANUELLE VAUGIER (*SAW II*, *WISHMASTER 3: BEYOND THE GATES OF HELL*) WILL

SONIC RIVALS

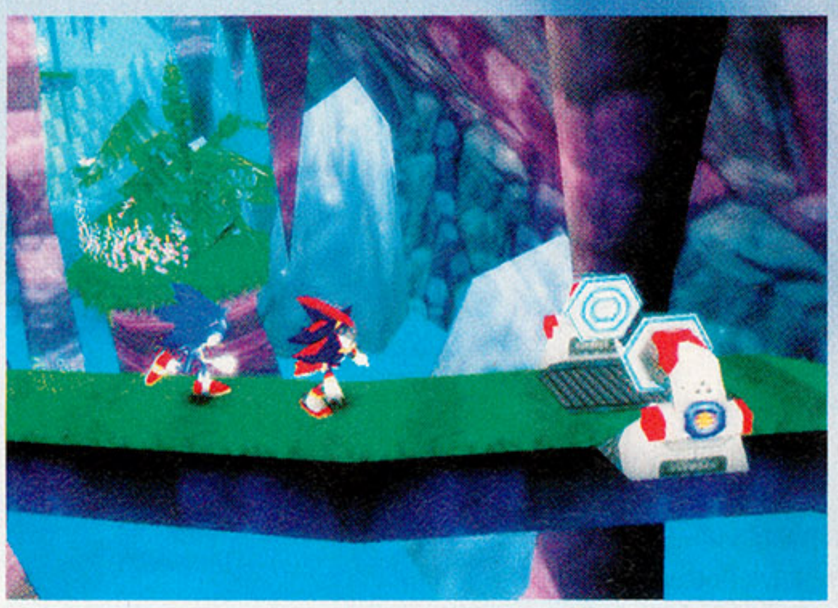
PSP • November 2006

Sonic's first foray onto the PSP isn't what you might expect. *Rivals* hearkens back to the classic 2D side-scrolling *Sonic* games of yore with its basic run-and-jump gameplay, yet its striking 3D visuals and Wi-Fi multiplayer footrace gameplay couldn't be more modern.

Here, you take control of Sonic, Knuckles, Shadow, or newcomer Silver (who's also in the PS3/XB360 Sonic game) in a series of grueling one-on-one races across traditional platforming stages. You can tackle the game solo (racing against A.I.–controlled critters), but *Rivals* is clearly intended for two-player action.

Sprinting, running, and looping suddenly become far more dramatic when you're constantly trying to stay ahead of a rival. Success doesn't rely solely on platforming prowess, though—you'll pick up various power-ups along the way that dynamically morph into offensive or defensive tools depending on whether you're in first or second place. End-of-level boss encounters get particularly tense, as you're tasked with defeating a giant metallic monstrosity while simultaneously keeping your enemy from doing so.

In its current state, *Rivals* certainly feels quirky and looks great, but the gameplay lacks the precision of the old side-scrolling *Sonic* classics. Something just feels a bit off about the control—the way the characters collide with the levels seems touchy and haphazard, and in a contest where millimeters matter, that's not a good thing. *Rivals* developer Backbone (the guys behind *Death Jr.*) needs to address this problem before the race kicks off....



■ Competitive boss battles get a li'l hectic.

SONIC 101

If you're new to this whole *Sonic* business (or simply want to relive some childhood memories), Sega makes it extremely easy to get up to speed on the hedgehog's gameography. *Sonic Mega Collection* (PS2/XB/GC) collects all of his killer Sega Genesis titles, while the GameCube-only *Sonic Gems Collection* rounds up the esoterica, including the brilliant *Sonic CD* (Sega CD). Sega also plans to celebrate Sonic's birthday by releasing the original *Sonic the Hedgehog* (updated with Sonic's spin-dash from *Sonic 2*) for the Game Boy Advance this November.

■ *Sonic CD*, the secret best *Sonic* game ever.

SONIC'S ESTRANGED DADDY

Sonic's 15th birthday celebration feels slightly bittersweet because his creator, Sonic Team founder (and race car enthusiast) Yuji Naka, recently left Sega to form his own company, Prope. He's not entirely severing his ties with his former employer, though—Sega owns 10 percent of his new venture. But what the hell is a Prope, anyway? "We named our company Prope in the hopes of bringing game entertainment much closer to users, establishing closer ties between users and us, and creating near-future entertainment," explains Naka, CEO and president of Prope. "I am looking forward to the challenge of embarking on this new entrepreneurial venture supported by such a powerful global publisher as Sega." Wait, that didn't explain anything!

■ In the divorce, Sega retained custody of Sonic, but Naka got this sweet ride.

NOW SHOWING @ GAME VIDEOS

watch now, play later

We wade through the Internet muck and emerge hours later, covered in gross webcam footage of teenage girls lip-synching to Cheyenne, bearing these game-related gems. See them all (along with more traditional game trailers for you squares) at www.gamevideos.com/egm.

LOL

***Broken Pixels* Episode 4**

Seanbaby joins various *EGM* and 1UP.com staffers to mock horrible games, with hilarious and decidedly R-rated results. This episode, *Ring King* and that Aerosmith game (*Revolution X*) get their sweet comeuppance.

WTF!

***Halo 3* trailer fan remake**

Watch as the stirring music to *Halo 3*'s teaser trailer transforms a shirtless kid in a motorcycle helmet into the Master Chief. Not pictured: his poodle, aka Cortana.

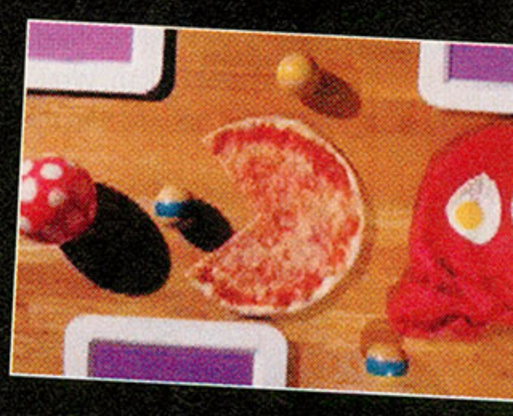
OMG

***Street Fighter II* action figures ad**

Who wins in a battle between Guile's Sonic Boom Tank and M. Bison's Crimson Cruiser? Who cares? You'll be too busy laughing at the cheesy actors dressed up to (barely) look like your favorite World Warriors.

1337

Game Over



In this incredible clip by stop-motion animators PES, arcade classics *Centipede*, *Frogger*, *Asteroids*, *Space Invaders*, and *Pac-Man* are reimagined with cupcakes and pizza slices. Watch it.

PORTRAY NIKKI, YOUR DRIVER'S SASSY EX-GIRLFRIEND, IN THIS NOVEMBER'S *NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON* (COMING TO EVERY CONSOLE).... >>

THE SURREAL "LIFE"

The endearing oddballs behind MTV-endorsed GameLife prove that anyone—and we mean *anyone*—can start their own videogame show

"Welcome to the gamers' lounge," says Andrew Rosenblum as we descend into the basement of his family's suburban home on the outskirts of Boston. It looks like a typical teenage gaming haunt, with overstuffed couches and beanbag chairs parked in front of a big-screen TV and games scattered across the floor. But this is no normal subterranean nerd lair—it's the set of literally homegrown Internet show turned MTV curiosity *GameLife*.

With two low-end video cameras and PC editing software, Rosenblum, 19, and his friends Alex Lizarbe, 19, and Dave Cohen, 21 (plus two out-of-state hosts), set out last summer to put together a homemade version of the gaming shows they'd seen on TV. "We were bored," Rosenblum says, "and we just thought, 'Let's use the camera to record some [game] reviews.'" The resulting show, posted on video-upload sites like GameVideos.com and YouTube.com, was an unexpected hit. "I was at school and someone was like, 'I saw you on the Internet the other day,'" Rosenblum says. "I checked my Gmail account and there was a whole flood of messages there, both fan mail and hate mail. I thought, 'We have a monster on our hands.'"

Unapologetically amateur, *GameLife* is as much about the show's comically awkward hosts as it is about games (search for *GameLife* on GameVideos.com to see what we're talking about). That's what attracted Alex Porter, MTV Overdrive's games producer. He hired *GameLife* to do minute-long reviews for *The G-Hole*, a gaming program that runs on MTV's website and the MTV2 cable channel. "I find the whole thing incredibly charming," says Porter. "You've got these—let's face it—not terribly telegenic guys who are just really into games, and they've decided to put this thing together. It's very *Wayne's World*."

Chewing scenery: Host Cohen hams it up.

Of course, not everyone who watches the show finds it charming. Some of *GameLife*'s audience watches to laugh *at* them, not with them, regularly making their presence felt on the show's website (www.gamelifeshow.com). "I've read a lot of really insulting comments about them, which I find annoying," says Porter. "They're doing what they love, going out and creating something, which I admire."

In a time when Paris Hilton poses for videogame promotions, *GameLife* remains proudly nerdy—a dose of authenticity that Rosenblum and company are happy to provide. "Other gamers can relate," he says. "If they wanted to, they could make a show like this. It's not something that's hard to do. We were just the ones to do it."

—Robert Ashley

FIVE TO LIFE: MEET THE CAST OF GAMELIFE

Andrew Rosenblum
Andrew is a is a tightly wound bundle of nervous energy. Though his wardrobe consists almost entirely of Nintendo T-shirts, he's known to repeat over and over, "I'm not a Nintendo fanboy!"

Alex Lizarbe
The shy one of the bunch, Alex nevertheless has some advice for anyone who wants to start a gaming show of their own. "It's always good to use a tripod," he says.

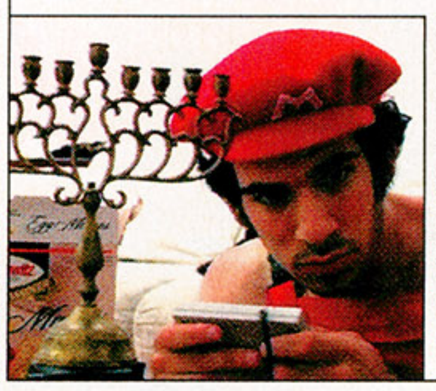
Dave Cohen
Dave's a big guy who's hot for wrestling, which explains the show's WWE-style plot twists. "You thought you could replace me?" Cohen asks after mysteriously disappearing from the show's website. "No one can replace me!"

Melissa
By day, Melissa is a private gourmet chef. By night, she's *GameLife*'s only female reviewer, which may explain why this oddly out-of-place cutie wants her last name withheld. "I get enough death threats as it is," she says.

Geoff Mendicino
GameLife's 16-year-old loose cannon is a walking, talking freak-out, the kind of guy you notice from a mile away. "I walked into GameStop," Mendicino says, "and the manager said: 'Holy s***—you're that a**hole from *GameLife*.'"

DIY-TV: GAMELIFE ISN'T THE ONLY HOMEMADE GAMING SHOW OUT THERE...

Game Jew • www.gamejew.com
"Mario, he's Italian. What's a Jewish boy to do? Put on the hat and the overalls, then you get Game Jew." So goes the catchy theme song to this Nintendo love-in. It's a little easier to swallow than Game Jew's folkier side, "The wind whispers Wiiiiiiiii!"



Mega64 • mega64.com
A web show that re-creates videogames in real life to see how real life reacts, Mega 64 has been called "*Jackass* with videogames." Nothing beats seeing the show's cast dress up as freaky characters from the arcade classic *Paperboy* to harass their local paper delivery man.

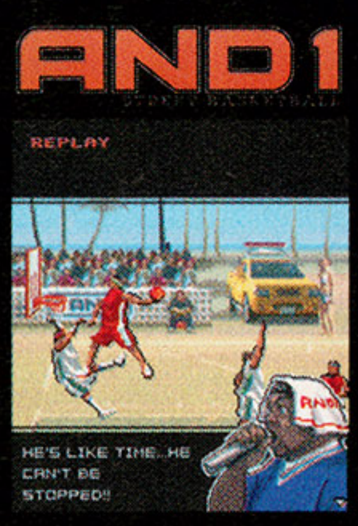
>> CLASS ACT: TORU IWATANI, THE MAN WHO MADE *PAC-MAN*, IS LEAVING NAMCO TO TEACH GAME-DEVELOPMENT COURSES IN JAPAN.... >>

Keyword : POOL

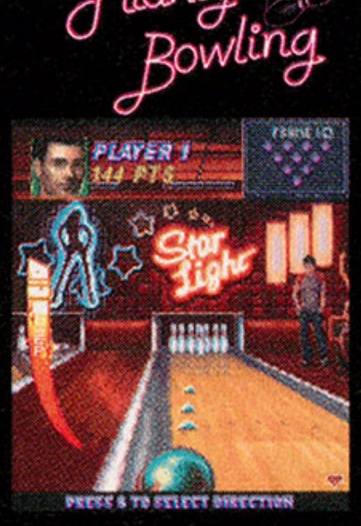
Rack 'em up and sink 'em all!

TEXT THE GAME'S KEYWORD TO 82174 TO GET THE GAME TODAY

Standard text message, airtime and game charges apply



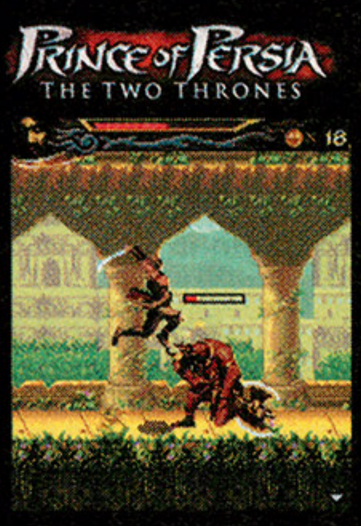
Keyword : AND1



Keyword : BOWL

Keyword : ASPHALT

Keyword : CARD



Keyword : PRINCE

© 2006 Gameloft. All Rights Reserved. Gameloft, the Gameloft logo, Asphalt: Urban GT, Midnight Pool, Midnight Bowling and Platinum Solitaire are trademarks of Gameloft in the US and/or other countries. All manufacturers, cars, motorbikes, names, brands and associated imagery featured in Asphalt: Urban GT mobile game are trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. AND1® and Mix Tape® are trademarks of AND1. 1989 Jordan Mechner. All Rights Reserved. Based on Prince of Persia® created by Jordan Mechner. Prince of Persia and Prince of Persia The Two Thrones are trademarks of Jordan Mechner used under license by Gameloft. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners. ©2006 Verizon Wireless.

verizon wireless

gameloft
WWW.GAMELOFT.COM

DEAD ON ARRIVAL?

We go toe-to-toe with producer Mark Altman about the upcoming Dead or Alive movie

Mark Altman knows he screwed up. He knows that *House of the Dead*, his first games-to-film collaboration with infamous game-movie director Uwe Boll, is rotten. If fact, he'll tell you that. "I did a lot of commentary on the *House of the Dead* DVD talking about the problems," says the Los Angeles–based writer and producer. Now Altman is in for his toughest challenge: porting the bouncy female fighters from *Dead or Alive* to the silver screen. ***—Damon Brown***

EGM: You're a producer on the upcoming *Dead or Alive* movie—so what's up with the studio yanking the trailer off the net shortly after it appeared? Was it that bad?

Mark Altman: I don't know about that to be honest. I know that there was a teaser trailer that was made to show distributors—I'm not sure if that was online and if it was taken down. That's something that Dimension [Films, the distributor] would have done. I'm not up on that controversy.

Altman is also writing the *Fear Effect* movie.

EGM: So you aren't trying to copy the *Snakes on a Plane* marketing strategy of releasing something terrible with the hope that people may think it's so *bad* it's good?

MA: [*Laughs*] No. The release is great. It is really fun. How do you adapt a fighting game without an elaborate story? I think it's really good. We may get gamers wanting more screen time for the more obscure characters, but the movie is just fun. With some games you can literally transcribe a game and create a movie. This one needed to be filled out.

EGM: So if it isn't *bad*, then tell us why it's good.

MA: The best way to describe it: *Enter the Dragon* meets *Charlie's Angels*. It is true to the game. [Director Corey Yuen] did a remarkable job shooting the film and giving it a great look. It's a popcorn movie. It is not *An Inconvenient Truth*. It is not going to change the world.

EGM: What about the locales? How karate-kickin' faithful are they?

MA: The film was shot in Asia, so there are really exotic venues. In *DOA*, fights can break out anywhere, so you see them on vistas, mountain peaks. There's a fight in the bamboo forest, in the rain. One fight takes place in a character's bedroom. There is always something exciting and surprising.

EGM: So your buddy Uwe Boll recently challenged his critics to a boxing match. Think you can take him?

MA: [*Laughing hard*] He would kick my ass. First of all, he is a boxer. I've never boxed a day in my life. Second, we'd never be in that situation, as he and I continue to be friends. Regardless of the disappointments we had about the [*House of the Dead*] movie—I thought there was a better movie in there that didn't come out—I wish him all the best and think that each of his films has been better than the one before it.

EGM: Be honest with us now: What's your favorite Uwe Boll movie?

MA: Oh god. Overall, the best movie when you're inebriated is *House of the Dead*. [*Pause*] Actually, it's hard to say. All of them have interesting aspects to them. There are moment in *House of the Dead* that I really like, some creature stuff in *Alone in the Dark* is good, interesting visuals in *BloodRayne*, so all of them have interesting aspects. I'm reluctant to say my favorite and reluctant to say that he's done his best.

DIRECT-TO-DUMPSTER

Altman's already reworked several games into films, but what would happen if he clashed with some classics? We ask him how he would transform these games into box office gold.

Space Invaders

"I guess you could say Tim Burton sort of did this with *Mars Attacks!*, but I actually think this could be a great movie if played in the spirit of *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* or the classic '50s alien invasion movies. It beats the hell out of *Missile Command* at least."

Burgertime

"Is that anything like Hammer time? We actually had the rights to do *Pitfall*, which I would have loved to have done. We lost the rights and were never able to get them back from Activision since the franchise became a kids' franchise. It's too bad because that classic game would make a great movie."

Metal Gear Solid

"I know Kojima would love to direct this. Why not? He's lived with this property longer than anyone. To me, the problem here is that *24*'s doing this so well every week. The appeal of this as a movie is lessened. It's all about Jack Bauer."

>>*FLATOUT 2* JUST LAUNCHED, BUT THE CRASH-CRAZY RACER IS ALREADY SHIFTING GEARS—A NEW *FLATOUT* IS REVVING UP FOR THE 360.... >>

YOUR MIGHTY BAND OF HEROES
WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED
BY A SERVER CRASH.

All trademarks are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©2006 Wizards.

Wizards of the Coast
PLAYDND.COM

GET TOGETHER. ROLL SOME DICE. HAVE FUN.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

XB360 / PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Shanghai
Release Date: September 2006

The world's coolest multiplayer gets a makeover (maybe now people will actually play it)

It was the ultimate game of cat-and-mouse—until the mice ruined all the fun. A few years back, *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* (PS2/XB) introduced a revolutionary multiplayer game to the stealth genre. It was ingenious—a tense 2-on-2 mode where sneaky spies went on covert missions while heavily armed mercenaries hunted and gunned them down. But a funny thing happened: The mice got good. "The hardcore fans have gotten so good, they slaughter the newbies before they're given a chance to enjoy the game," the developers tell us. You don't say. It was obvious the multiplayer, while critically acclaimed, wasn't quite working when pro spies were going on the offensive and taking out mercenaries before they knew what hit them. The game failed the other way, too: It was near impossible for new spies to beat a couple of veteran mercs. It was enough to frustrate even the most seasoned of gamers.

Now the developers are shooting for a more accessible, newbie-friendly 3-on-3 game in the Xbox 360 edition of *Double Agent* (it's also scheduled to hit PS2, Xbox, and GameCube with different feature sets). It's the right idea, but will it turn off the hardcore fans of *Pandora Tomorrow* and its sequel, *Chaos Theory*?

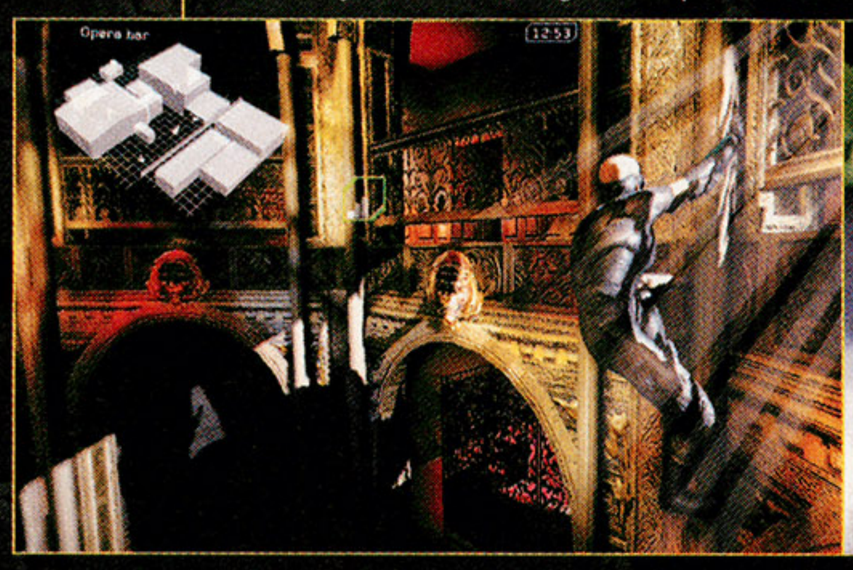
Here's a look at what's new, what's out, and what's being done to give the cats (and rookie mice) a fighting chance in the world of *Splinter Cell*.

THE SPY

Then: In *Pandora* and *Chaos*, spies were equipped to hold their own against the mercs. They had four slots to hold stuff like smoke grenades, flashbangs, or sticky cameras (that emitted knockout gas) to help get mercs off their backs, and they had offensive help in a shocker gun and combat moves like an elbow smash or body-drop attack.

Now: The spies return to do their good, government-approved deeds. But with the focus on simplifying the gameplay, the developers neutered these shadowy agents. The shocker gun, elbow smash, and most of the gadgets are out—point being, these guys are supposed to be sneaking around, not charging in for battle. The spies only carry one gadget at a time, which they can pick at the start of the mission and swap out at the designated "drop zone." These include smoke grenades, flashbangs, health needles (to heal you or a teammate), and jammers (which spook a mercenary into thinking a spy is somewhere that he's not). The spies keep their drop attack and humiliation-inducing rear chokehold for the 360.

The spies are slightly more nimble than before, which helps alleviate the pain from the offensive castration. Hitting the right bumper in certain places, for example, will allow spies to do a quick "escape move," such as leaping through a window or sliding into an air vent. The spies also have an all-purpose hacking device; they can use it to shoot out lights, mess up mercenary electronics, or grab computer files from a distance.



>> ODDBALL NINTENDO GAME *MARIO HOOPS 3-ON-3* IS GETTING SOME FANTASTICAL CHARACTERS FROM ITS DEVELOPER, SQUARE ENIX. THE

THE MERCENARY

Then: Mercenaries were stacked in *Chaos Theory*: three types of guns and mines, spy traps, frag grenades, and so on. They also had several tools such as laser sights, flashlights, sound detectors, and a couple of different vision modes to track down well-hidden spies.

Now: The mercs lose most of their goodies, but they're still well-equipped to deal with the government boys in tights. Their (only) gun is the assault rifle with integrated grenade launcher and sniper scope. Instead of mines or spy traps (or gas masks or flares or...), the mercs get remote-controlled, camera-equipped drones that can go into those areas that spies love and mercs can't reach, like air vents and crawlspaces. Oh, these things can be set to explode, too. But as far as gadgets go, the drone's it for this team.

Mercs see the world in such a more simplified manner now. They can turn on an adjustable flashlight on their guns, but they no longer have a laser sight. The motion-tracking display is now built into the visor—if the spies run around, they will appear highlighted to the mercenaries without the mercs having to switch on a separate motion-tracking vision. But EMF vision is still something the mercs have to activate manually: Turn it on, and if a spy's using any of *his* vision modes (thermal, night), he'll light up on the merc's screen like a neon "please shoot me" sign.

Instead of arrows pointing out to mercs where sound (from an on-the-move spy) is coming from, they get less direct help from a proximity detector, which works visually (an onscreen range indicator), audibly (heartbeat), and tactilely (controller rumble) when a spy (or his fake-out jammer) is nearby. ➤

■ **Sneak, don't run: Fast-moving spies will be highlighted on the merc's new built-in motion-sensing visor.**

POPULAR ROLE-PLAYING-GAME MAKER IS TOSSING A HANDFUL OF *FINAL FANTASY* CHARACTERS INTO ITS NINTENDO-THEMED B-BALL GAME.... >>

SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT (CONT.)

THE GAMEPLAY

Then: Two spies worked together to clear objectives—that was the easy part. The hard part was avoiding mines, spy traps, laser trip wires, cameras, and presence detectors. That was enough crap to keep a spy busy for, oh...two minutes until he got caught and killed.

Now: All that stuff above? Gone. The only things spies have to worry about are merc drones and, well, the mercs themselves. Spies are more free to run about the levels, since the dangerous obstacles you had to stop and scan for are things of the past.

All objectives are just a straightforward "infiltrate and extract," where the spies have to hack into various computer terminals to download data to take back to the drop zone (the farther away a spy is from the station, the weaker his hacking signal and, therefore, the slower the download). A helpful onscreen minimap helps spies and mercs see where their teammates and objectives are, including which terminal is actively being hacked.

The map designs are taking the "simpler" and "accessible" route as well. The designers are toning down the mazes of vents, multifloored rooms, and alternate paths from previous games to create more straightforward stages that are a bit easier to navigate. "Each map is designed and playtested to be memorized in 10 to 15 minutes max," the developers tell us. On top of that, animated helper "ghosts" are scattered throughout each level to help beginners get their bearings. For example, a ghost with a large "Y" icon above his head might be climbing a pipe, letting players know that a.) that pipe is climbable to reach a higher elevation, and b.) you need to hit a button to do it (guess which one?). These friendly ghost guides eventually disappear after the player sees them a few times. ➤

■ If you're short a few players, you can turn on up to three merc bots to play against your team of human spies. No-go on spy bots, though: Spy A.I. proved to be too complicated to program.

■ *Double Agent* will stat-track just about everything you do (spy using night vision, merc getting grenade kill, etc.). Do 'em enough, and you'll rank up, unlocking new skins (you can be a girl spy!), maps, and co-op challenges. This ranking system will also be used for online matchmaking.

>> THE SECRET IS OUT ON WHO'S MAKING THE NEXT *JAMES BOND* GAME—DEVELOPER TREYARCH (*SPIDER-MAN 3*) IS DOING THE JOB.... >>

navy.com/seals

do you have what it takes?

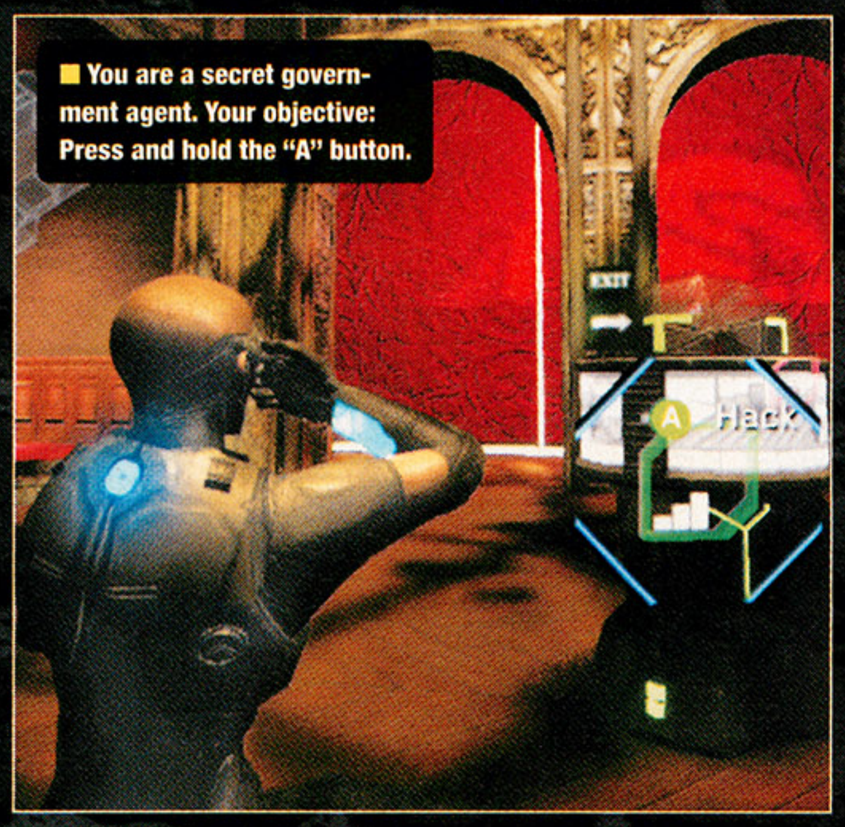
© 2006. Paid for by the U.S. Navy. All rights reserved.

SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT (CONT.)

THE CO-OP GAME

Then: *Chaos Theory* let you play through campaign-style missions with a fellow spy. It was cool, but short—with an abrupt no-ending.

Now: In *Double Agent*, cooperative mode is a series of standalone missions done more in the style of the versus game rather than a story- and dialogue-driven campaign mode. Your team of human spies goes up against computer-controlled mercs and takes care of specific tasks, such as "download as much data as possible within the time limit (without needing to secure the data back at the drop zone)." Some of these "co-op" missions are even competitive, like "the first to bring back two discs of data wins." Ubisoft is planning on having six co-op challenges available from the start, 12 more to unlock after you've progressed a little bit, then another 12 to download over Xbox Live at a later date.



■ You are a secret government agent. Your objective: Press and hold the "A" button.

■ Beware the merc's flying drone. It can go places and it can explode. Boom goes the spy!

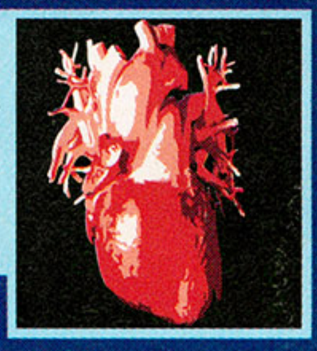
THE OPINION OF A LONE GAMER

Then: *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* and *Chaos Theory*: two of the finest multiplayer games I've ever played, handicapped only by the fact that most of my gaming friends and co-workers won't even touch them because they're too complex, hardcore, and frustrating. My gaming friends and co-workers are a bunch of big babies.

Now: Initially, I was underwhelmed by the new direction of *Splinter Cell* multiplayer. No multiple gadgets? No clever traps to catch spies? Where's all the strategy that went into each matchup? Alas, those days look to be over, unless I want to keep my *Chaos Theory* disc permanently on deck. But the more I played *Double Agent* multi, the more it grew on me. I'm not sure if it's because I'm jonesing for *any Splinter Cell* versus action (it's been over a year since *Chaos Theory* came out) or what, but I was starting to appreciate how smoothly the game was moving along because, as a spy, I didn't have to stop every few tiptoed steps to scan for cameras, mines, spy traps, and all that crap—I only needed to worry about the mercs, objectives, and keeping quiet like a good spy should. And once I realized I shouldn't actively be going after mercs all the time (you know, being offensively neutered and all), it did put me in a more paranoid role. I'm weak, I'm near-powerless, and I really need to stick to the shadows and keep out of sight. Hey, what do you know? This new spy game may actually end up being more intense.... But on the merc side, I was definitely missing setting up all my antispy wares. At the same time, though, I can appreciate how much less frustrating my new merc was making the game for the spies and how interactions needed a more personal touch (no more anonymous mine kills—you'll have to see the spy to put him to rest). So while we lose a lot of the hardcore, strategic gameplay in versus play, at the very least, I know more of my big-baby friends and co-workers will be willing to face off with and against me in *Double Agent*. And seeing as how most of them wouldn't play *Chaos Theory* with me, it looks like these changes are for the better after all.... —*Dan "Shoe" Hsu*

GAMING'S GUESS WHO

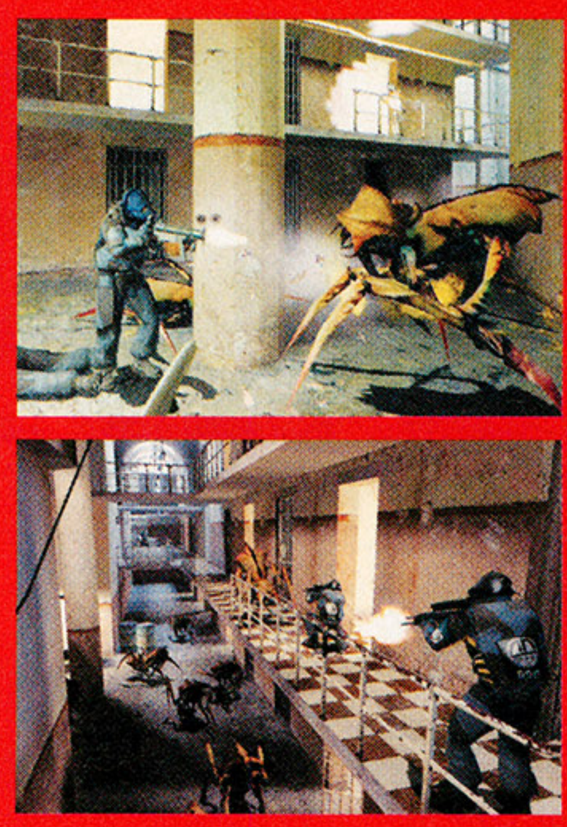
1. Thwarting the minions of evil takes a whole lot of heart.



2. Saving worlds is fine and dandy, but I wouldn't mind devoting my time to music.
3. I may be famous for my world-saving skills, but not many people know I'm also a talented topiary artist.
4. People say tights are passé, but they're obviously blind to style.
5. When I'm sick, I prefer red medicine—that stuff sure is tasty.

Who am I?

Answer: The Legend of Zelda's *Link*



LET THERE BE LIFE

Half-Life 2 materializes onto next-gen consoles

Want to find out what all the *Half-Life* hubbub is all about? Don't worry, you don't need to plunk down cash for a new gaming rig—EA is not only bringing the popular PC shooter *Half-Life 2* to both the Xbox 360 and the PlayStation 3, but it's also throwing in its two episodic sequels as well. But wait, there's more! The package also throws in the multiplayer-heavy *Team Fortress 2*. Still not pleased? In addition to already getting four frickin' games, the bundle also packs *Portal*, a brand-new puzzle-y first-person shooter set in the *Half-Life* universe. Phew, if that doesn't sound look a good deal, someone swindled you out of your common sense.

>> EPIC GAMES ANNOUNCED IT WILL TACK ON A TRAILER OF *GEARS OF WAR* TO A FEW FLICKS THIS SUMMER. NO NEW FOOTAGE, THOUGH.... >>

TAKE OUT ENEMIES USING "THE ROCK'S"
WRESTLING-INSPIRED COMBAT MOVES.

EQUIPPED WITH AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS, THE INTERCEPTOR
IS LETHAL ON LAND OR WATER.

THE ULTIMATE ASSAULT VEHICLE TRANSFORMS
FROM CAR TO BOAT TO MOTORCYCLE.

"NOW THIS IS *BURNOUT* WITH GUNS."
—OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

SPY HUNTER®
NOWHERE TO RUN™

WWW.THESPYHUNTER.COM

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Mild Language
Violence

XBOX

MIDWAY

PlayStation.2

Spy Hunter: Nowhere to Run © 2006 Midway Amusement Games, LLC. All rights reserved. SPY HUNTER, NOWHERE TO RUN, MIDWAY and the Midway logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Used by permission. Distributed under license by Midway Home Entertainment Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family Logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

the BIG ones

Our monthly check-in with the games you really care about

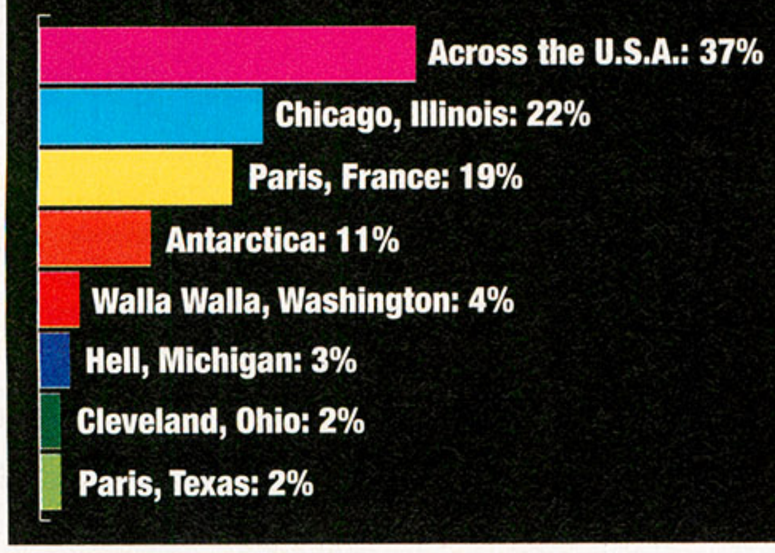
GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Rockstar • PS3/XB360 • October 16, 2007

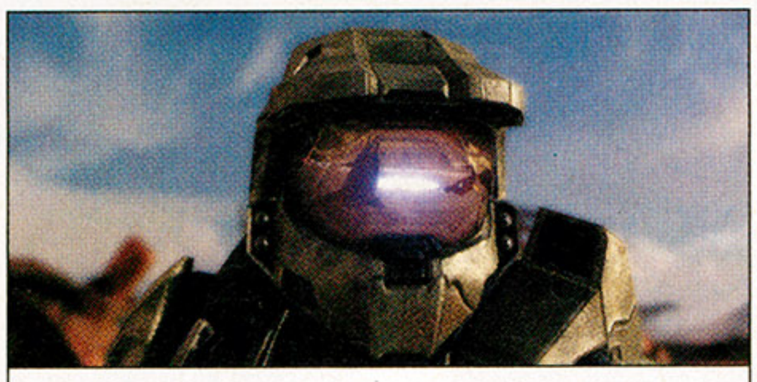
OMFG!11! Did you see the supposedly leaked screen of *GTA4* on the Net (below)? WTF!1!! But in case the generic red-brick buildings and dressed-for-a-funeral pedestrians didn't make you LOL, let's get the official word from a Rockstar rep: "The screenshot is bogus."

So what's a virtual thug to do with no info and a year to wait for the game to drop simultaneously on the PS3 and Xbox 360? Speculate up a storm, of course. To wit, we polled *EGM* readers about the most vital issue in *GTA* real estate: location, location, location.

Where would you like to see ***Grand Theft Auto IV*** take place?



■ Fakey!



HALO 3

Microsoft • XB360 • Fall 2007

A recent interview with composer Marty O'Donnell (peep it at gamevideos.com) revealed that developer Bungie is indeed working on stuff besides *Halo 3*—could it be that long-rumored Xbox Live Arcade game?

Anyway, the studio's weekly website update at bungie.net has trickled out an obvious *Halo 3* bit: the return of the Warthog. As for not-so-obvious info, Frank O'Connor, the "Bungie Weekly Update" scribe, has confirmed that, in addition to daily *Halo 3* multiplayer sessions, the guys around the office are now meeting on a regular basis to run through some of the game's campaign scenarios. Also, Weapon Designer Tom Doyle recently confirmed the return of the Beam Rifle (the Covenant sniper). "The Covenant sniper is one of my favorite weapons—it just feels so powerful," he said. "I wanted to emphasize that in the new version, so we're adding some detail that will really show off the building energy in the weapon." Now, could you pay that much attention to improving the wimpy Needler?

And in *Halo* movie (2008) news, author DB Weiss said he's now working on a second draft of the script.

FINAL FANTASY XIII

Square Enix • PS3 • 2007

Stand down, *Fantasy* fanatics—we probably won't learn anything new about *FFXIII* (the first chapter in Square Enix's ambitious multigame Fabula Nova Crystallis project) until the Tokyo Game Show at the end of September. And the bummers don't end there: At a recent shareholders' meeting, Square Enix President Yoichi Wada made some startling comments about next-gen development, promising more episodic online content, increased in-game advertising, and regular "software updates." Frankly, Wada's planned "updates" sound more like bug-fixing patches than cool bonus content. He explained that Square Enix could save on the huge cost of debugging by passing the bugs on to consumers and fixing problems after the fact. Yikes!

■ ***MGS4*'s Liquid Ocelot rocks his Wal-Mart greeter badge.**

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Konami • PS3 • Fall 2007

Solid Snake may now be a geriatric, but that isn't stopping the sneaky SOB from getting out there and pressing the flesh—a new hot-to-trot *MGS4* trailer will debut at the Leipzig Games Convention in August (which, depending on when you read this, may be on gamevideos.com right now). And after you're done viewing the footage for, like, the 20th time, head over to improvemgsonline-club.1UP.com and take Kojima Productions' quick poll on how the studio can make the online play in *MGS4* better. (A more accessible control scheme would be our first request.)

>> DEVELOPER LIONHEAD HAS COMMENTED THAT *FABLE 2* (XB360) WILL BE A MORE "MATURE" RPG AND TAKE PLACE 500 YEARS AFTER NO. 1.... >>

MIDGAR DIED...

PlayStation 2

SQUARE ENIX™
www.square-enix.com
Published by Square Enix, Inc.

© 2006 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. CHARACTER DESIGN: TETSUYA NOMURA. FINAL FANTASY is a registered trademark of Square Enix Co., Ltd. DIRGE OF CERBERUS, SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Language
Use of Tobacco
Violence

SOMETHING SURVIVED...

THE WORLD OF FINAL FANTASY® VII IS ABOUT TO EXPLODE.

A mysterious organization has emerged from the wreckage of the Meteor disaster. The enigmatic Vincent Valentine may be the only one who can save this shattered world.

Set after the events in FINAL FANTASY VII and FINAL FANTASY VII ADVENT CHILDREN, this entirely new game features familiar characters, dazzling gunplay and shocking truths never before revealed!

DIRGE of CERBERUS™
FINAL FANTASY® VII

Take on new enemies and dangers in dazzling 3D environments

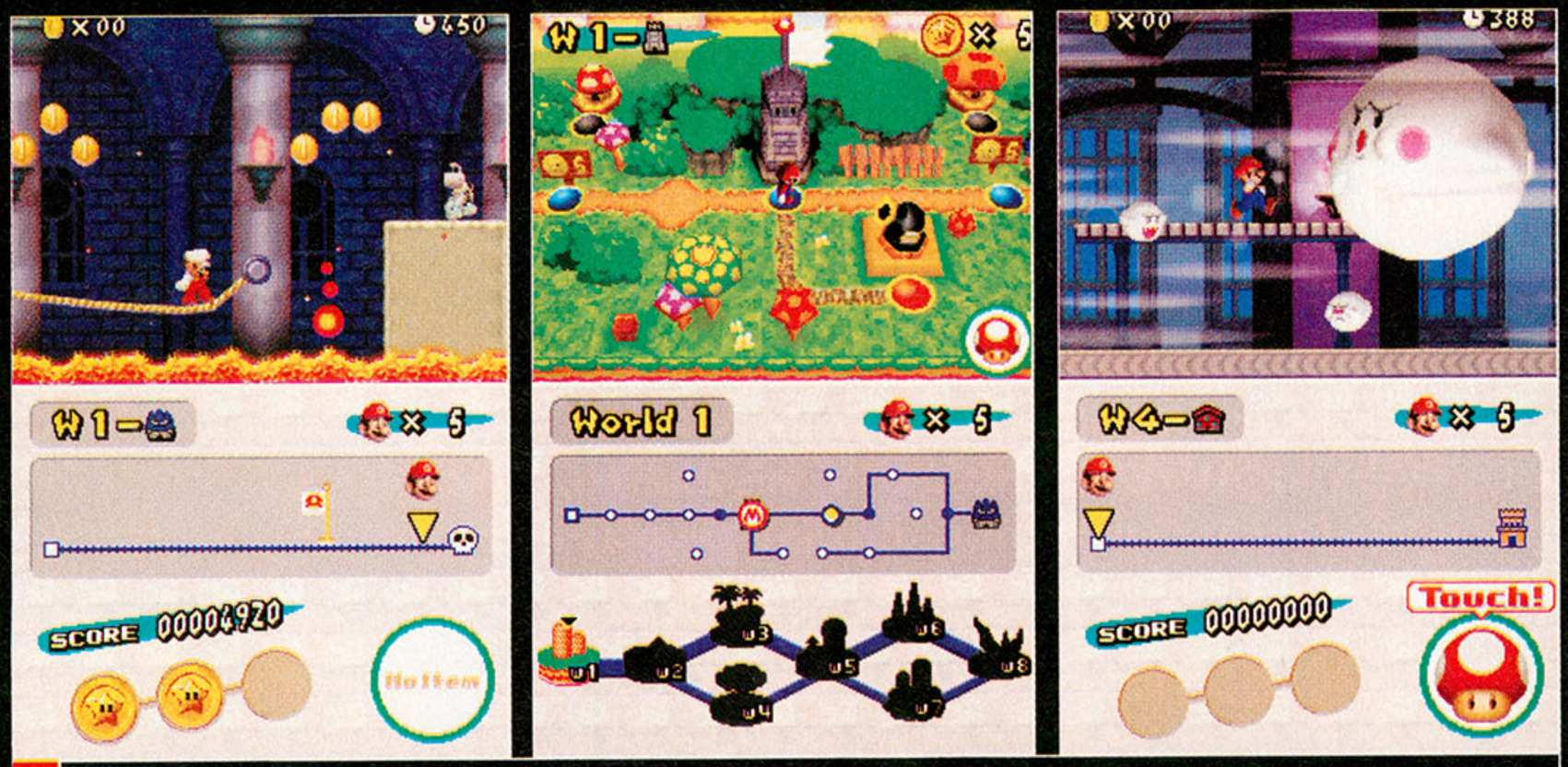
Stunning graphics and CG cinemas continuing the epic storyline

Meet familiar faces and unique allies in an all-new action adventure

sales charts

FOR MAY 2006

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES



1. **New Super Mario Bros.** • DS • Nintendo
2. **Kingdom Hearts II** • PS2 • Square Enix
3. **Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!** • DS • Nintendo
4. **God of War** • PS2 • SCEA
5. **The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion** • XB360 • Take 2
6. **Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter** • XB360 • Ubisoft
7. **MLB '06: The Show** • PS2 • SCEA
8. **Guitar Hero Bundle** • PS2 • Red Octane
9. **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas** • PS2 • Rockstar
10. **Kingdom Hearts** • PS2 • Square Enix

■ *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*

■ *Guitar Hero*

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Service. Call (516) 625-6190 for questions regarding this list.

TOP 10 XBOX 360

1. The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
2. Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter
3. Fight Night Round 3
4. Battlefield 2: Modern Combat
5. MLB 2K6
6. X-Men: The Official Game
7. Table Tennis
8. Call of Duty 2
9. Tomb Raider: Legend
10. FIFA World Cup 2006

TOP 10 PS2

1. Kingdom Hearts II
2. God of War
3. MLB '06: The Show
4. Guitar Hero Bundle
5. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
6. Kingdom Hearts
7. X-Men: The Official Games
8. Over the Hedge
9. FIFA World Cup 2006
10. The Godfather

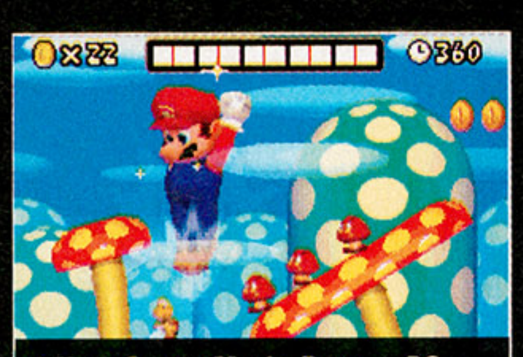
TOP 10 XBOX

1. MLB 2K6
2. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
3. Halo 2
4. Fable
5. X-Men: The Official Game
6. The Godfather
7. FIFA World Cup 2006
8. Tomb Raider: Legend
9. Over the Hedge
10. Lego Star Wars

TOP 10 GAMECUBE

1. Over the Hedge
2. Rampage: Total Destruction
3. Naruto: Clash of Ninja
4. Paper Mario 2
5. Mario Kart: Double Dash!!
6. Sonic Riders
7. Super Smash Bros. Melee
8. DDR: Mario Mix
9. Lego Star Wars
10. Super Mario Sunshine

TOP 10 PORTABLES



1. New Super Mario Bros. • DS
2. Brain Age • DS
3. Super Mario Advance • GBA
4. Over the Hedge • GBA
5. MLB '06: The Show • PSP
6. Daxter • PSP
7. Metroid Prime Hunters • DS
8. GTA: Liberty City Stories • PSP
9. Kingdom Hearts: COM • GBA
10. Pokémon Emerald • GBA

TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 06/25/06

1. Cars • PS2
2. Over the Hedge • PS2
3. Cars • GC
4. Hitman: Blood Money • PS2
5. X-Men: The Official Game • PS2
6. Kingdom Hearts II • PS2
7. AND 1 Streetball • PS2
8. Hitman: Blood Money • XB360
9. MLB 2K6 • PS2
10. Cars • XB

Source: Blockbuster Video

>> COSPLAYERS NOW HAVE A LEGITIMATE REASON TO DRESS UP LIKE FREAKS—*FINAL FANTASY XII* WILL ARRIVE IN STORES ON HALLOWEEN.... >>

ALL DRESSED UP AND NO ONE TO K.O.

SUPER K.O. BOXING

Download Super K.O. Boxing on your phone and relive the glory days of arcade boxing. Take your best shot at 15 Cent, Major Pain, Sake Bomb, Ivan Roiden and the rest of the Super K.O. circuit.

"This is a must-download. Now." *IGN*

"5 out of 5." *WGWorld*

PLAY THE DEMO AT GLU.COM/SKO

▶ Available on these and all other wireless carriers:

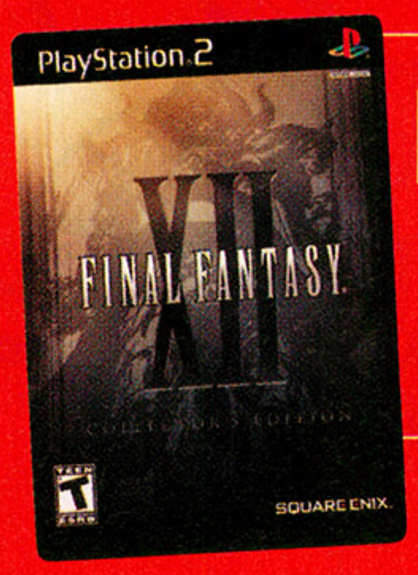
cingular · T-Mobile · boost mobile · Virgin mobile · HELIO

© 2006 Glu Mobile, Inc. GLU, the Glu Logo and SUPER KO BOXING are trademarks of Glu Mobile, Inc. All rights reserved. All product and

glu™

the hot 10

Gaming hipsters are abuzz about...



1 FINAL FANTASY XII COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Devout *FF* fans will want to shell out $59.99 to pre-order this slick two-disc set (available exclusively at EB/GameStop stores on October 31st). Your extra cash goes toward a nifty steel case and a disc loaded with trailers, interviews, and featurettes.

2 CLUB NINTENDO

In Japan, gamers get sweet rewards for buying Nintendo products—Club Nintendo lets them exchange proof-of-purchase vouchers for exclusive loot, including a special DS cartridge containing three classic Game & Watch games. Bring this crap to America, guys!

3 TURNING JAPANESE

Sega's upcoming *Yakuza* brings the seedy underbelly of Tokyo's gang culture to life with the help of all-star Hollywood voice talent. Videogame voiceover vets Mark Hamill (aka Luke Skywalker) and Michael Madsen (the drunk dude in *BloodRayne*) get gruff and surly, while hotties Eliza Dushku and Rachel Leigh Cook titillate with feminine wiles.

4 XBOX LIVE CURRENCY CALCULATOR

Are you sick of using an old-fashioned calculator (or even worse—actual mathematics) to determine how much microtransactions really cost on Xbox Live? Head over to www.stevehunter.co.uk for a quick and easy way to see the real price of Microsoft Points in six different currencies.

5 FFIII DS LITE

Just when you think that Nintendo's DS Lite couldn't get any sexier, they go and doodle *Final Fantasy* characters on it. These limited (and numbered) "crystal white" units ship with a copy of *Final Fantasy III* in Japan on August 24th. Good luck finding one.

6 PONG CLOCK

Tragically, this totally radical wall clock that plays Pong with itself while accurately telling time (via the score display) isn't actually for sale—some inventive artist crafted the one-of-a-kind timepiece.

7 EGM LIVE* PODCAST

It's just like this magazine, only with way less reading and tons more bickering. You'll love it. Head over to egmlive.1UP.com and listen to our editors talk shop every week.

**not actually live*

8 MINIATURE COLOSSUS

Show your support for Sony's art-house hit *Shadow of the Colossus* by importing this classy statue of the game's most recognizable stone giant. Fine art isn't cheap, though—expect to shell out about $100 for this piece when it ships this October.

9 BATEN KAITOS ORIGINS

Nope, that's not a mirage—it's actually a new GameCube game. If history is any indication, RPG fans should grab this late-gen gem before those damned eBay speculators get to it.

10 JACKASS NUMBER TWO

Call us immature, but *EGM*'s editors will be totally cracking up when *Jackass 2* hits theaters on September 22nd. We're still not sure how much fun the corresponding *Jackass* game (PS2/PSP) can be, though—a virtual kick to the nuts just doesn't make us laugh.

>> NINTENDO-OWNED DEVELOPMENT HOUSE N-SPACE (*GEIST*) HAS OPENED A SECOND STUDIO IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA TO FOCUS ON WII GAMES.... >>

THE POWER OF THE GREATEST FIGHTING DYNASTY IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND.

Share your customized character through wireless infrastructure Ghost mode.

Wireless ad hoc battle with up to 2 players to prove who is the real champion.

Updated and enhanced graphics on 19 stages of pain.

Play mini-games in ad hoc mode or individually for a change in the action.

鉄拳 TEKKEN®

DARK RESURRECTION

Tekken: Dark Resurrection has arrived on the PSP® (PlayStation® Portable) system. Fight with new characters Lili and Dragunov or other favorites including Jin, Heihachi, and Armor King.

GAMESPOT 2006 BEST OF E3 EDITORS' CHOICE WINNER

"Best Fighting Game"
"Best PSP Game"

ign.com BEST OF E3 2006 WINNER

"Best PSP Fighting Game"

TEEN
T
Crude Humor
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PSP PlayStation®Portable

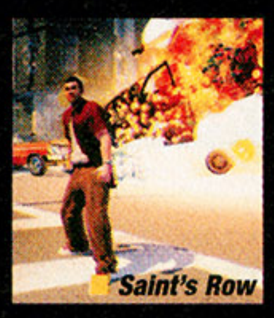
BANDAI NAMCO Games

TEKKEN® DARK RESURRECTION & © 1994-2006 NAMCO BANDAI Games Inc. "PlayStation" , "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.
All other trademarks are owned by their respective owners.

rumor mill

It's raining rumors

Wading through the relentless stream of so-so games the past few months has turned The Q into a certified crazyman. If I see one more *Blade Dancer* or *Crusty Demon*, I'm going to be put into a premature coma. But enough yawning about the present—let me predict what you'll be yelling about in the future. As always, I turned all the wild gaming gossip into easily tamed tidbits, so chew on this fresh batch of rumors while I ready up a yummy round for next month. ***—The Q***


■ *Saint's Row*

Another row of saints

As we creep closer to the PlayStation 3's launch, any Xbox 360 game that hasn't already pledged allegiance to Sony's new console is looked at with question. Is anything a console exclusive anymore? I won't answer that obvious question, but I will answer a not-so-obvious one—my gang of rumor rats told me **the 360 gangsta romp, *Saint's Row*, will also be a PS3 launch title.**

Turning back time

If you thought the *Prince of Persia* sang his swan song with last year's *The Two Thrones*, rewind that gloomy tune and listen to this—**a new *Prince of Persia* may be coming to next-gen consoles next year.** Whether or not it features the same prince from the last few games remains to be seen, but I do know you can expect more awesome acrobatics and twitchy time finagling.

Console crisis

When it comes to dazzling PC first-person shooters, none look quite as snazzy as EA's upcoming *Crysis*. Sadly, any console owners who were hoping to explore the picturesque jungles in *Crysis* were disappointed when no next-gen version was announced at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). Well, dry your eyes, shooter fans: I hear **a next-gen *Crysis* is actually in the works, only it's not a port of the PC game.** Instead, the game will be either a sequel or a side story set in the *Crysis* universe.

Luigi's new crib

Besides hopping behind the shadows of his portly brother, Luigi occasionally fends off freakies with a ghost-sucking vacuum cleaner. His first game, *Luigi's Mansion*, launched alongside the GameCube, and now it appears that **Nintendo is calling for a *Luigi's Mansion* sequel for the Wii.**

■ *Crysis*

■ I'ma gonna Wii my pants.

Q-TIPS

- Itching to play some old-school classics? Well, Nintendo's got a deal for you—I heard **free Virtual Console games will be packaged with select titles in the Wii's launch lineup.**
- *Halo 3* is still a ways away, but that hasn't stopped me from getting my hands on this hot one—**if (more like when) Microsoft launches a handheld, it's going to launch with a simpler, dumbed-down version of *Halo*.**
- Still trudging through *Oblivion*? Well, pick up the pace—**the next *Elder Scrolls* is apparently set to ship next summer.**

>> EA IS CRANKING OUT THE GAMES FOR NINTENDO—IT ANNOUCED *TIGER WOODS*, *SSX*, *HARRY POTTER*, AND *THE GODFATHER* FOR THE WII.... >>

©2006 TAG Fragrance Co. www.ConsiderYourselfWarned.com

WARNING

INTRODUCING NEW POCKET-SIZE TAG BODY SHOTS.™

LOAD IT, LOCK IT, AND ROCK IT AT YOUR OWN RISK.

CONSIDER YOURSELF
WARNED.

overheard

They said what!?

"I think that games are too complicated today. With 3D games, players must manage the camera while performing more complicated maneuvers than ever before. We want to move away from that with Wii. Everybody should be able to play."

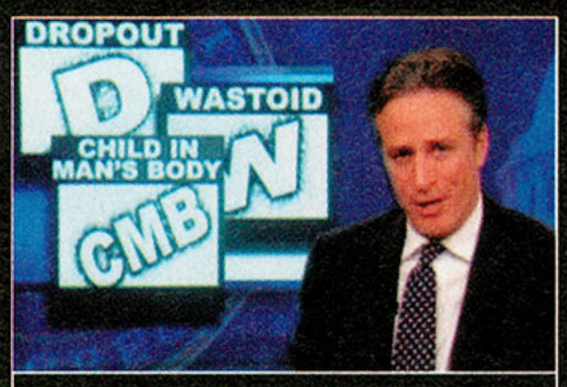
—Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto

>> *HOT SHOTS GOLF* DEVELOPER CLAP HANZ BRINGS ITS UNIQUE CHARM TO ANOTHER SPORT WITH *EVERYBODY'S TENNIS*, SET FOR RELEASE

©2006 Jeremy "Norm" Scott

"I'm unsure about its appeal to the main users, namely middle- and high-school students. Also, **when you publish games for Nintendo hardware, your biggest rival is Nintendo.**"

—Namco Bandai Vice President Shin Unozawa explains his concerns about Nintendo's Wii

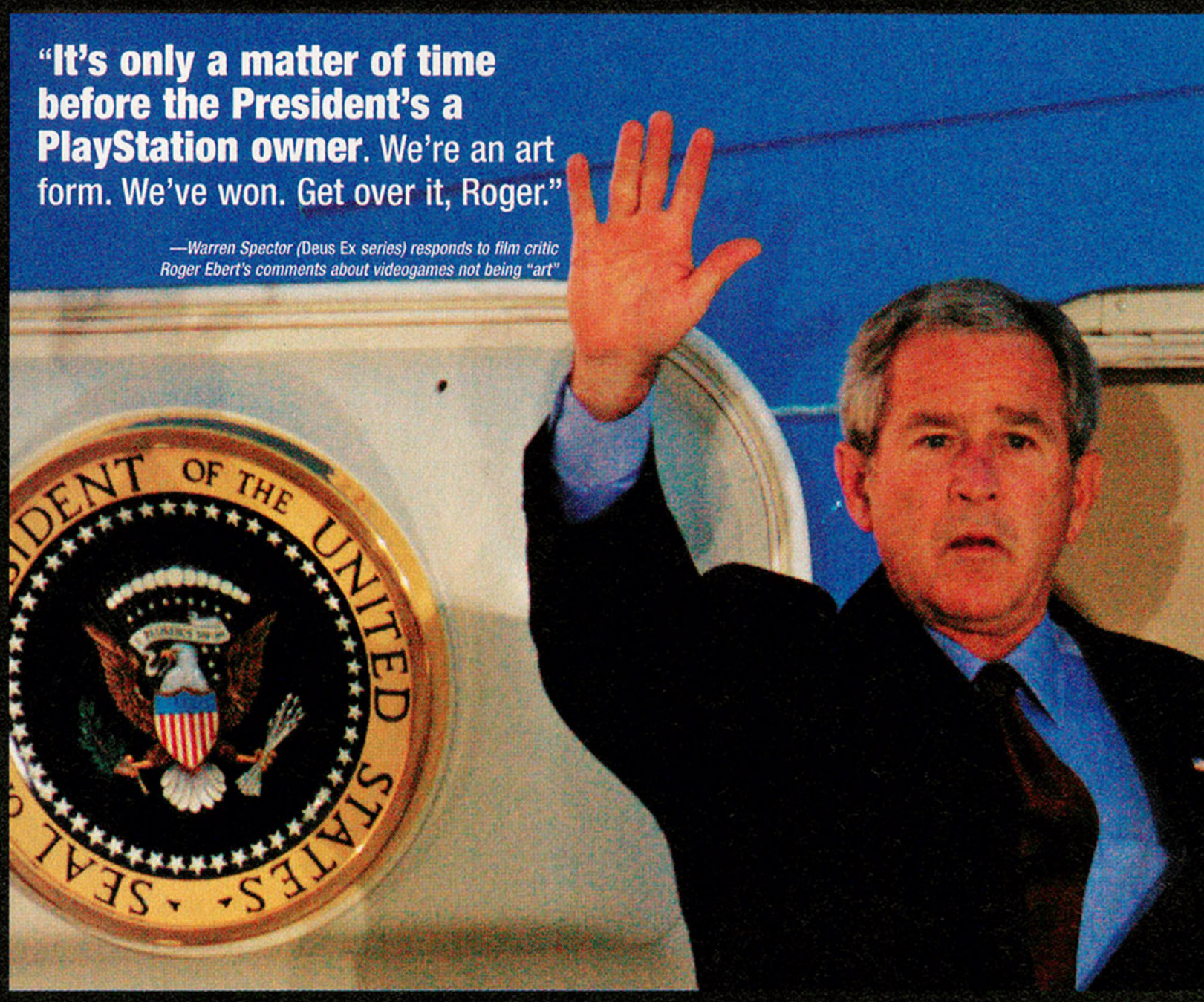


"Many feel that the M for Mature rating is too vague in describing content, not to mention **completely inaccurate to describe anyone who plays videogames**. They propose a three-tiered system that would start with D for 'Dropout,' W for 'Wastoid,' and max out at 'CMB, Child in Man's Body'...that would be me."

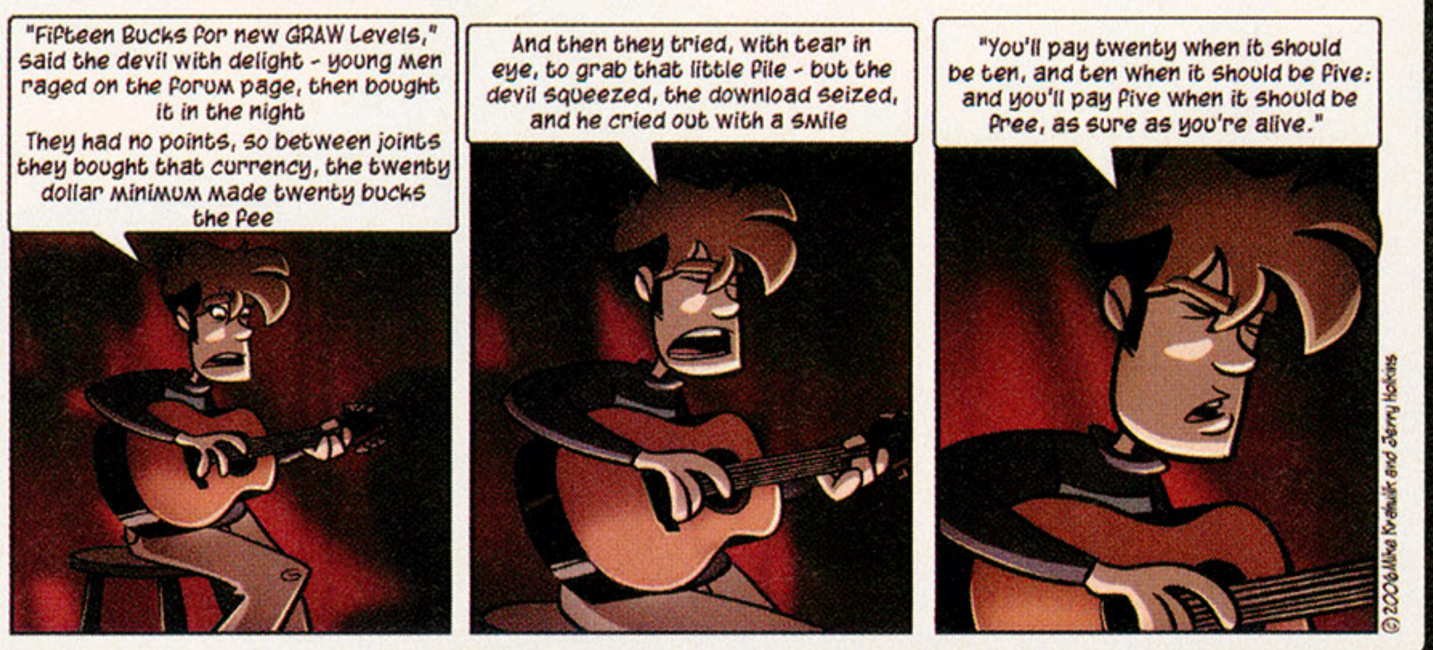
—Daily Show host Jon Stewart reports on the congressional debate on videogames

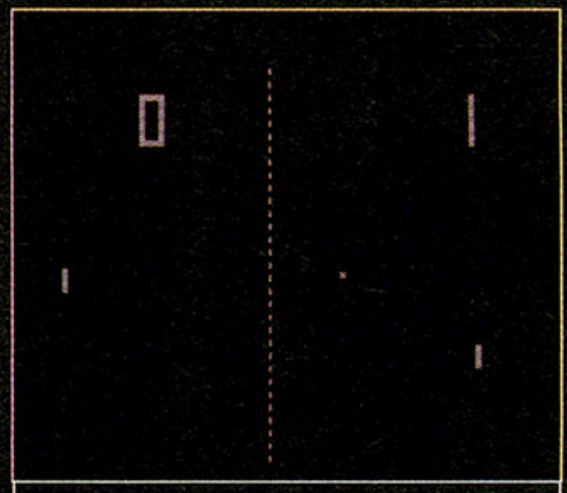
"It's only a matter of time before the President's a PlayStation owner. We're an art form. We've won. Get over it, Roger."

—Warren Spector (Deus Ex series) responds to film critic Roger Ebert's comments about videogames not being "art"



PENNY ARCADE WWW.PENNY-ARCADE.COM





"I'm a gamer myself—I was an expert in *Pong*. **That was a great game.** Beep, boop, beep..."

—Michigan Representative Fred Upton reveals his taste for cutting-edge games on the House floor

QUOTATION SOURCES (LEFT PAGE): LEVEL MAGAZINE (RIGHT PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT) IGN, CGW, THE DAILY SHOW, THE DAILY SHOW

IN JAPAN THIS SEPTEMBER FOR PLAYSTATION 2. WHEN THE GAME COMES STATESIDE, EXPECT A NAME CHANGE TO *HOT SHOTS TENNIS*.... >>

SEPTEMBER 2006

coming soon

Oh, so that's where all the games have been

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

XB360 • Atari

Screw island fever—get behind the wheel (or handlebars) of more than 125 customizable licensed vehicles and enjoy 1,000-plus miles of pavement in sunny Oahu, Hawaii. Keep your 360 online and you'll find competitors popping up all over this free-driving vacation destination.

FINAL FANTASY III

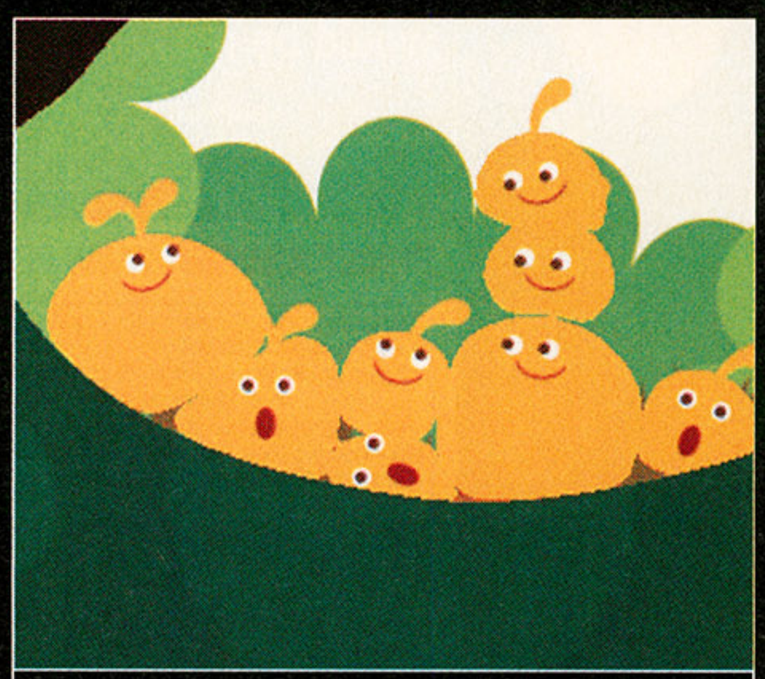
DS • Square Enix

Those on this side of the Pacific can finally roleplay through this *Fantasy* (the NES original never came out here), which also goes under the 3D knife for its U.S. close-up. If your mom asks what job you want come September, tell her you're applying to be a Black Mage.

MARIO HOOPS 3-ON-3

DS • Nintendo

It's basketball...but with Nintendo characters, red shells, mushrooms, minigames, and what every great roundballer lacks: coin collecting. We're scouting *3-on-3* for the touch controls, but keep the "Hotplate" Williams to Mario jokes to yourself, please.



LOCOROCO

PSP • Sony CEA

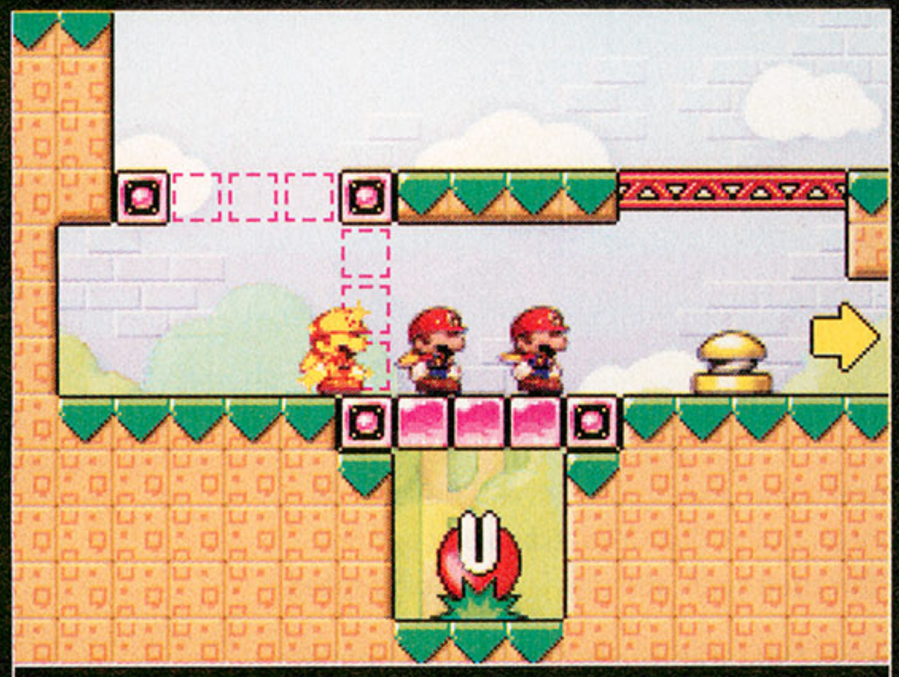
Simple controls (use the handheld's shoulder buttons to tilt the environment and move these blobs) and an almost overwhelmingly happy atmosphere make this quirky side-scroller a much-needed boost in the PSP's library. Are you happy now? No? Well, you will be.

>> TIRED OF WAITING FOR THE WII? WELL, ANALYSTS RECENTLY TOLD CNN.COM THAT MARIO'S BUNCH WOULD LAUNCH THE CONSOLE IN

LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

XB360/PS2/XB/GC/PSP/DS/GBA • LucasArts

The licensing duo proved to be a cash cow in its inaugural trip around the galaxy. This game focuses on the first three films (the good ones) and crams tons of extras that should make even the most jaded *Star Wars* nerd leap for joy.



MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS

DS • Nintendo

Use the touch-friendly mechanics in this puzzler to guide a bunch of teeny-tiny Marios *Lemmings*-style past obstacles to safety. This sequel will also feature a level editor and Wi-Fi support that enables you to trade your creations with everyone else.

BATEN KAITOS ORIGINS

GC • Nintendo

True to its name, this role-playing prequel takes place 20 years before its surreal predecessor. Expect more card-combo battling, lots of side quests, and...do we really need to list the rest of the features here? With so few RPGs on the system, it's not like GC owners can afford to be picky.

MORE SEPTEMBER RELEASES

ACE COMBAT X: SKIES OF DECEPTION
PSP • Namco Bandai

ATV OFFROAD FURY 4
PS2 • Sony CEA

DRAGON QUEST: ROCKET SLIME
DS • Square Enix

THE GODFATHER
XB360/PSP • EA Games

GUN SHOWDOWN
PSP • Activision

JUST CAUSE
XB360/PS2/XB • Eidos

NASCAR 07
XB360/PS2/XB • EA Sports

NHL 07
XB360/PS2/XB • EA Sports

NHL 2K7
XB360/PS2/XB • 2K Sports

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: RED/BLUE RESCUE
DS • Nintendo

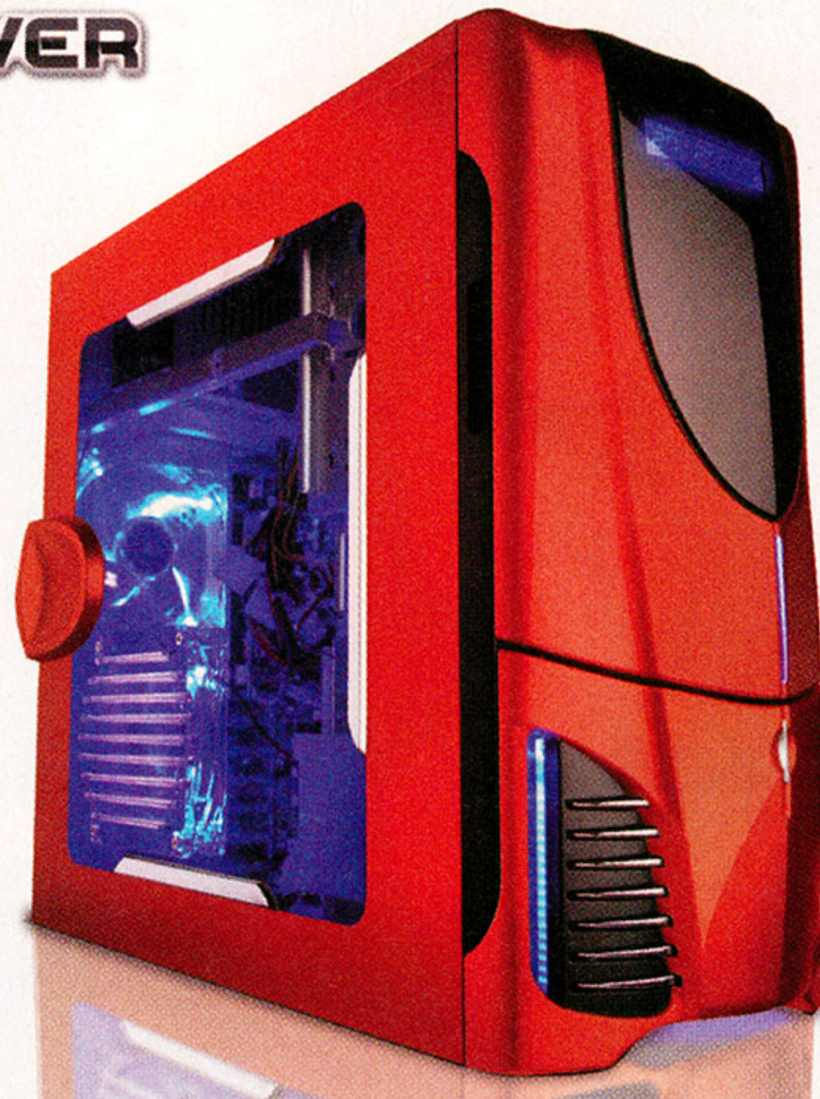
SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT
XB360/PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft

SPY HUNTER: NOWHERE TO RUN
PS2/XB • Midway

YAKUZA
PS2 • Sega

SEPTEMBER, BUT NINTENDO QUICKLY DISPELLED THE RUMOR, CLAIMING IT'LL ANNOUNCE LAUNCH DETAILS DURING THAT VERY MONTH.... >>

iBUYPOWER



WE BUILD IT, YOU PLAY IT.

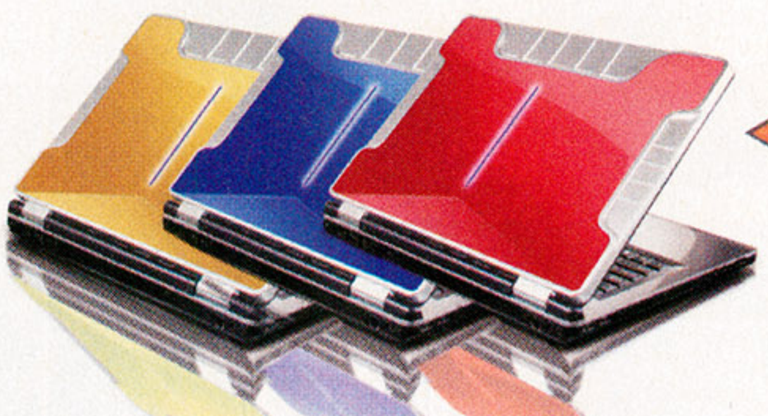
AMD 64 Athlon

AMD 64 Athlon FX

AMD Turion 64 MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

- Break the limits of performance. Your intense applications and 3D games demand the most out of your processor. AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processors fulfill that demand with leading-edge performance, an integrated memory controller, dual-core technology, and fast HyperTransport™ technology. Stress your system—run the latest 3-D games and multi-threaded applications at jaw-dropping speed.
- Raw power, on a chip. Don't let latency ruin your experience! AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processors feature an integrated memory controller. Data latency can be reduced to a minimum as HyperTransport™ technology provides a high-bandwidth, low-latency connection between the processor and your system. Latency is the enemy—don't let it get in your way!
- It's your processor, your limits. Your processor should not just be adequate—it should rise to meet your demands. AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processors enable you to discover the true potential of your personal computer. Break the speed limit; it's YOUR processor!
- Reduce the bottlenecks. A fast processor is one thing, but a fast computer system is another. HyperTransport™ technology featured on AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processors is the key. With a 2000MHz doubledata clock rate, HyperTransport technology provides a fast and low-latency connection throughout your computer system. With free flowing data, you can feel confident your applications are operating at their maximum potential.

BATTALION S55Ø TURBO



$1255

FREE SHIPPING

15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
AMD® Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology
- AMD® PowerNow! Technology
- HyperTransport Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection Technology
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
Mobile ATI® Radeon™ X700 128MB DDR Video
1024MB DDR-400 Memory
Removable 8x DVD±R/±RW / CD-RW Drive
80GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA100 Hard Drive
10/100MB Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Network
4x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports; 3-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader
High Performance Li-Ion Battery
Free Deluxe Carrying Case

AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-34 Processor	$1255
AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-37 Processor	$1269
AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-40 Processor	$1299

BATTALION CLS-TURBO

$1149

FREE SHIPPING

15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 DisplayCL
AMD® Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology
- AMD® PowerNow! Technology
- HyperTransport Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection Technology
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
Mobile ATI® Radeon™ X1600 256MB DDR Video
512MB DDR-400 Memory
Removable 8x DVD±R/±RW / CD-RW Drive
40GB 5400RPM Ultra-ATA 100 Hard Drive
10/100/1000 MB Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
Build-in CMOS Camera 1.3 Mega Pixels
Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Mini-PCI Network
4x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports; 6-in-1 Build-in Media Card Reader
High Performance Li-Ion Battery
Free Deluxe Carrying Case

AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-34 Processor	$1149
AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-37 Processor	$1169
AMD Turion™ 64 MobileTechnology MT-40 Processor	$1199

Order Toll Free 888. 462. 3899

BARGAIN 64

NVIDIA® nForce™ 4 SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
NZXT® Trinity Mid-Tower Case + See Through Window + Neon Light
Corsair 512MB DDR400 Memory
Serial-ATA-II 160GB 7200RPM 3 Gb Hard Drive
16x DVD-ROM + 52x32x52 CD-RW Combo Drivre
NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6200 w/TurboCache 256 MB 16X PCI Express Video Card
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
Add ViewSonic® VX922 19" LCD – Xtreme 2ms video for ultimate gaming @ $319

AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$499
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$519
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor	$559
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor	$619
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+ Processor	$689

$499

VALUE PRO

NVIDIA® nForce™ 4 SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
Cooler Master Ammo-533 Gaming Tower Case
Corsair 1024MB DDR400 Memory
Serial-ATA-II 250GB 7200RPM 3Gb Hard Drive
16x Double Layer DVD±R/±RW Drive
NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GT 256MB 16X PCI Express Video Card
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound; 600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
17" Viewsonic® Q7B LCD Monitor
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
Free Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Network Adapter

AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	$999
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	$1029
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3800+ Processor	$1059
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+ Processor	$1119
AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+ Processor	$1179

$999

GAMER-SLI

NVIDIA® nForce™ SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
Raidmax® RX-9 Gaming Case
IBuypower® CPU Liquid Cooling System
Corsair 1024MB DDR 2-800 Memory
Serial-ATA-II 300GB 7200RPM 3Gb Hard Drive
16x Double Layer DVD±R/±RW Drive
16x DVD-ROM Drive
2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7900GT PCI Express 256MB Video Cards - SLI Enabled
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
Creative Inspire 8 Channel Surround Sound Speakers
10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard; Optical Mouse
Free Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Network Adapter

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor	
5000+ (Socket AM2)	$1759
4600+ (Socket AM2)	$1629
4200+ (Socket AM2)	$1569
3800+ (Socket AM2)	$1499
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	$2469

$1499

GAMER FX

$1039

NVIDIA® nForce™ SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
NZXT Apollo Gaming Case
IBuypower® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
Corsair 1024MB DDR2- 800 Memory
Serial-ATA-II 250GB 7200RPM 3Gb Hard Drive
16x Double Layer DVD±R/±RW Drive
6-in-1 Media Card Reader
2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GS 256MB
16X PCI Express – SLI Enabled
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
600Watt Surround Sound Speakers
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
Free Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Network Adapter

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor	
5000+ (Socket AM2)	$1279
4600+ (Socket AM2)	$1179
4200+ (Socket AM2)	$1099
3800+ (Socket AM2)	$1039
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	$1989

NIGHT DREAMER FX

$1269

NVIDIA® nForce™ SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
MS WINDOWS® XP Media Center Edition 2005 w/ Service Pack 2
Tuniq Symmetry Gaming Case
IBuypower® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
Corsair 1024MB DDR2-800 Memory
Serial-ATA-II 300GB 7200RPM 3Gb Hard Drive
16x Double Layer DVD±R/±RW Drive
16x DVD-ROM Drive
2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GT 512MB DDR3
16X PCI Express Video Card – SLI Enabled
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
10/100/1000 MBps Ethernet LAN
Logitech X-530 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
Free Wireless 802.11g 54MBps Network Adapter

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor	
5000+ (Socket AM2)	$1529
4600+ (Socket AM2)	$1419
4200+ (Socket AM2)	$1339
3800+ (Socket AM2)	$1269
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	$2239

AMD 64 Athlon X2

- **Multi-tasking with extreme performance. Stop juggling applications. With the AMD Athlon™ 64 FX dual-core processor, you can run multiple process-intensive applications and still rely on truly exceptional performance. Play the latest intense 3-D game while instant messaging, creating , editing or enjoying your favorite digital media. Explore the possibilities of extreme multi-tasking.**
- **Step up to 64-bit gaming. Today's games demand more than good graphics—they demand realistic physics, lighting, artificial intelligence, and sound previously only reserved for the world of simulations. AMD64 technology, featured on AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processors, is the key to bringing the next generation of games to life. Don't get left in the dust—64-bit is here to change the world of 3-D games.**

THE TOUGH GUYS

Don't you dare f*** with these bad boys (and girls)

Sure, you could take a stroll through the bad part of town when the bars let out. You could grow accustomed to the lump made by a .45 under your pillow. You could take a bullet in the shoulder and stay alert enough to weave through rush hour traffic at 120 mph. You could solve problems the easy way, through overwhelming violence.*

Or you could wake up at noon, switch on your gaming box, and settle into that comfy, ass-shaped crater in your couch. Being tough is a lot easier with three lives and infinite continues, so we've scouted out the future of tough guy games. *—Robert Ashley and the* EGM *brute squad*

THOMPSONOMETER

**If the thought of virtual murder and mayhem gets your pilgrim pantaloons in a twist, please refer to our special Jack Thompson meter. It's a measure (on a scale of one to five Thompson heads) of how outraged puritanical types like the Florida-based attorney will become at the sight of each game.*

THE TOUGH DRUG LORD

SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS

PS2/XB • VU Games • October 2006

"TONY MONTANA IS NOT A F***ING BITCH!" screams Executive Producer Peter Wanat into the phone. He takes on the attitude (and volume) of his open-world game's coked-up gangster antihero, so much so that the only way to print his speech is in all caps. It's a little over the top, but *The World is Yours*—the interactive follow-up to the film that broke the record for dropping F-bombs—is just that. In the words of Wanat, "THE GAME IS ABOUT THE TOTAL F***ING EXCESSES OF TONY MONTANA!"

Tony's biggest excess is, apparently, in his pants. We've all seen power meters, life meters, ammo, magic, and golf swing meters, but here's the only game to include a "balls meter." You get balls for doing anything Tony would do. "YOU WANNA GO FOR SIX CONSECUTIVE HEADSHOTS? WE'LL REWARD YOU WITH BALLS!" shouts Wanat. "YOU WANNA POP SOMEONE IN THE LEFT NUT AND THE RIGHT NUT? WE'LL GIVE YOU EVEN MORE BALLS!" Yes, in case you're wondering, the game features testicle-specific targeting.

So, what happens when your balls meter fills up? In short, you're primed for a massacre. Maxing out your cojones will switch the perspective from third- to first-person and make you invincible. Or, as Wanat says, "IT'S EIGHT TO 10 SECONDS OF A TOTAL F***ING CRACK COCAINE HIGH!" ➤

THOMPSONOMETER

Upon hearing about the "balls meter," Thompson will get his publicist on the phone and yell, "I'm back in action, baby! Get Donny Deutsch on the phone."

■ Tony does his part to keep Hawaiian shirts in style.

Background Design by Sean DallasKidd

"YOU WANNA GO FOR SIX CONSECUTIVE HEADSHOTS? WE'LL REWARD YOU WITH BALLS!"

—Peter Wanat, Executive Producer

THE TOUGH MOVIE COP

DIRTY HARRY

PS3/XB360 • Warner Bros. Interactive • 2007

Here's a refresher on what makes loose-cannon cop "Dirty" Harry Callahan's day: blowing big holes in serial killers, demolishing property in the pursuit of justice, and flaunting basic civil liberties to get his way (Miranda rights: for sissies). And he's not about to turn good cop in this action game, for which Clint Eastwood is providing his likeness and concept approval. "[You] can choose to use a bit more force with an unsavory character in interrogations or combat," says Senior Producer Scot Kramarich, adding that playing rough will tick off Harry's superior (portrayed by Gene Hackman). Oh, and you might want to ask yourself if you fired five shots or six, punk. "You are limited with your ammo," Kramarich says, "so make every shot count."

THOMPSONOMETER

Although he doesn't mind the cop-on-creep violence, Thompson's more of a *Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol* kinda guy.

■ Harry's fashion sense can mean only one thing: The game's set in 1970s San Francisco.

"You can choose to use a bit more force with an unsavory character in interrogations or combat."

—Scot Kramarich, Senior Producer

THE TOUGH EXTRATERRESTRIAL

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! 2

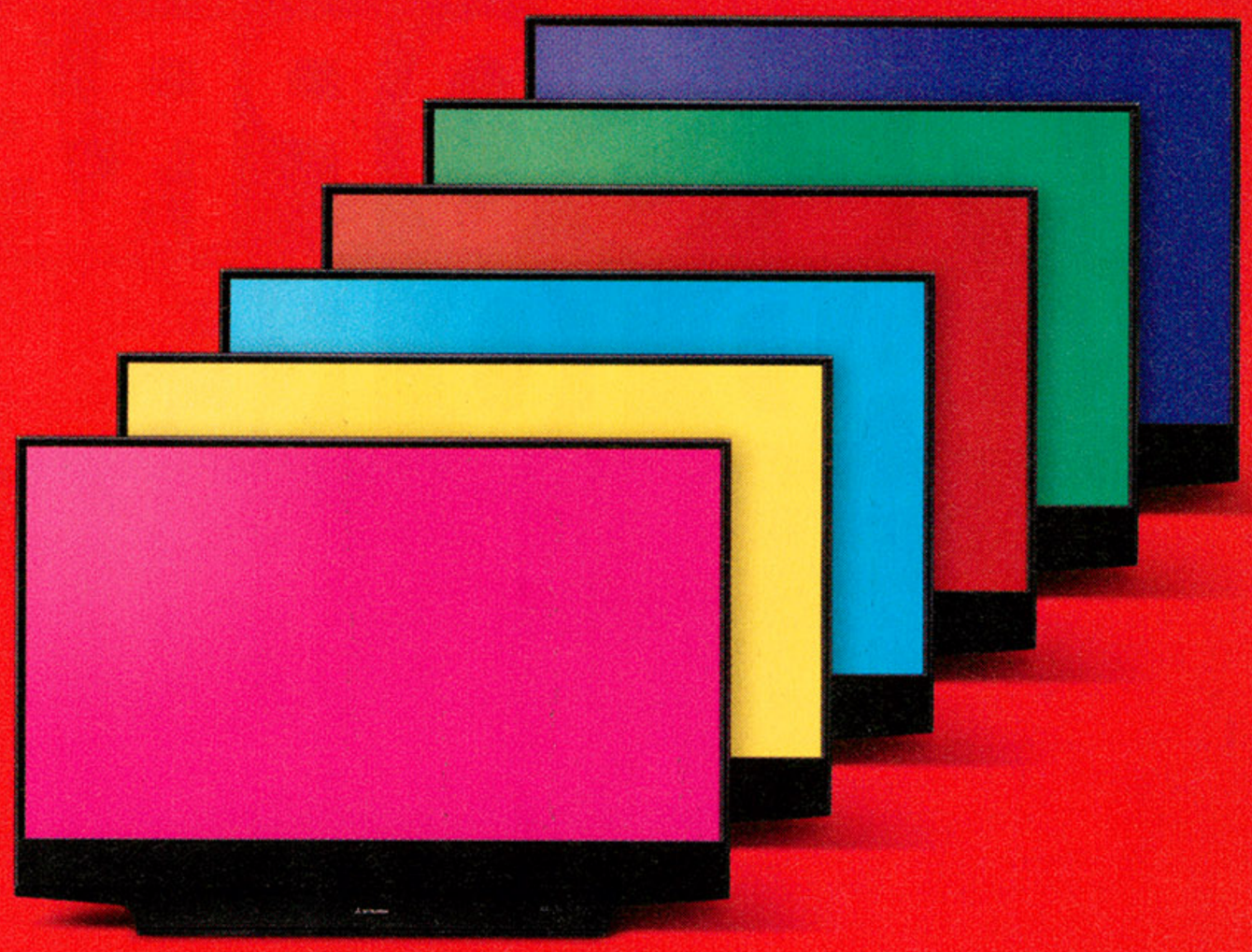
PS2/XB • THQ • October 2006

"Crypto's attitude makes him a pretty tough cookie," says Producer Derek Proud. "He believes himself superior to everyone on planet Earth, which is not surprising because it's true." Sure, he's got that going for him. But he's also got that anal probe. Can't forget the anal probe. In the original *Destroy All Humans!*—a go-at-your-own-pace open-world action-shooter—Crypto wreaked all sorts of havoc with tractor beams and death rays, and the sequel distances him even further from E.T. on the least-pansy-alien scale (while also sending him globe-trotting to England, Japan, and Russia). Along with greater mind powers and new weapons, Crypto now has the ability to call down a meteor strike. You better believe that puts a kink in the Thursday night mah-jongg throwdown. ➤

THOMPSONOMETER

No doubt *DAH2* features plenty of eradication, but who's Thompson to judge what qualifies as offensive in the extraterrestrial scheme of things? Perhaps "death ray" is alien for "hug."

More colors. For a more colorful picture.



1080P

DLP TEXAS INSTRUMENTS

We're the world's only HDTV maker using a sixth color—magenta—to create our pictures. And the difference is obvious in our 1080p HDTVs' 2,000,000 pixels. Learn more about our light engine at **6color1080p.com**.

MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC
DIGITAL TELEVISIONS™

DLP® and the DLP logo are registered trademarks of Texas Instruments.

THE TOUGH FAMILY

THE SOPRANOS: ROAD TO RESPECT

XB360/PS2 • THQ • Spring 2007/Fall 2006

Mobsters and their too-cute nicknames...how can anyone who goes by the name Big Pussy call himself a tough guy?

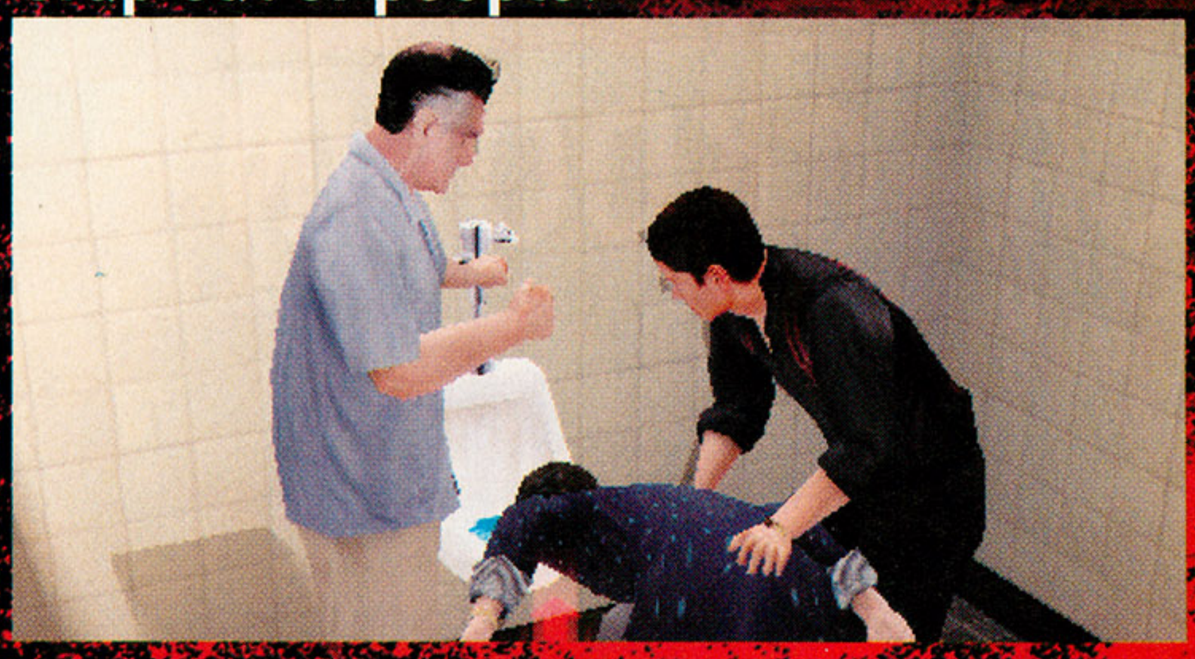
"You've obviously never watched *The Sopranos*," says Elizabeth Dahm, producer of the crime family's videogame debut, *Road to Respect*. "Big Pussy was part of the innermost trusted circle of Tony Soprano's mob family until he turned rat and Tony had him whacked." The game picks up between seasons five and six and puts you into the role of Joey, the illegitimate son of season two victim Sal "Big Pussy" Bonpensiero, as you take on missions scripted around a feud between the Philly and Jersey crime families. "Our goal is to capture the experience of working for the Sopranos," says Dahm.

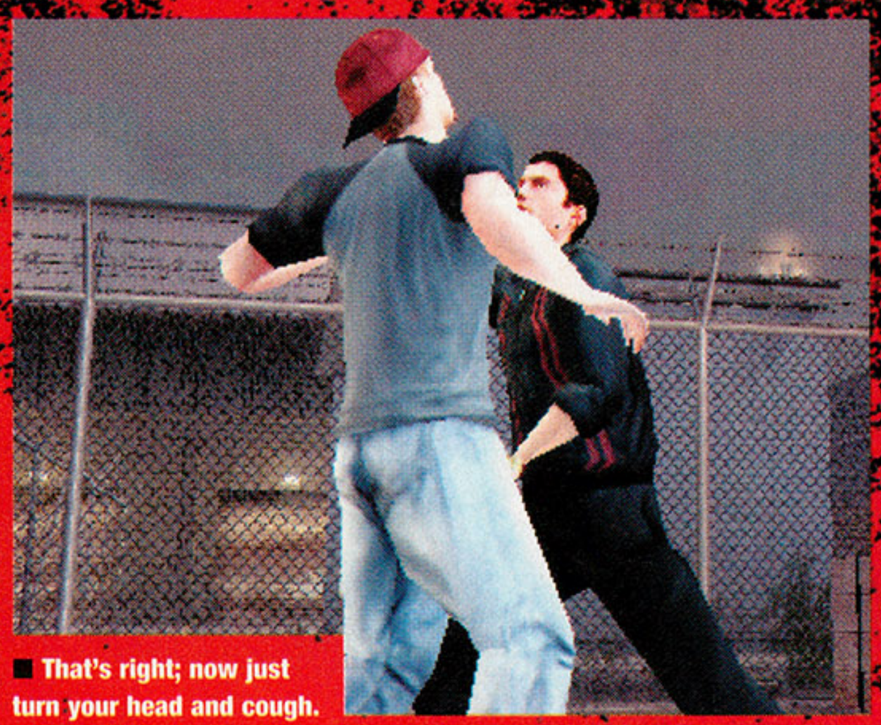
In this line of business, of course, "working" is synonymous with "beating the living crap out of people." But anyone who has watched the show will tell you that, aside from occasionally shocking bouts of violence, *The Sopranos* is mostly about people standing around talking. How, exactly, do you get that across in a game? "Matching the show's tone was extremely important," says Dahm. "*Road to Respect* features an interactive dialogue system that allows the player to choose how to speak to various characters in the game." Don't worry, though: Mob life and boring dialogue trees don't mix, so the game boils your conversational choices down to "smooth" and "tough." "Different choices will result in different outcomes," says Dahm. "Every effort was made to give language as strong a role in the game as it has on the show." Bada-bing. ➤

THOMPSONOMETER

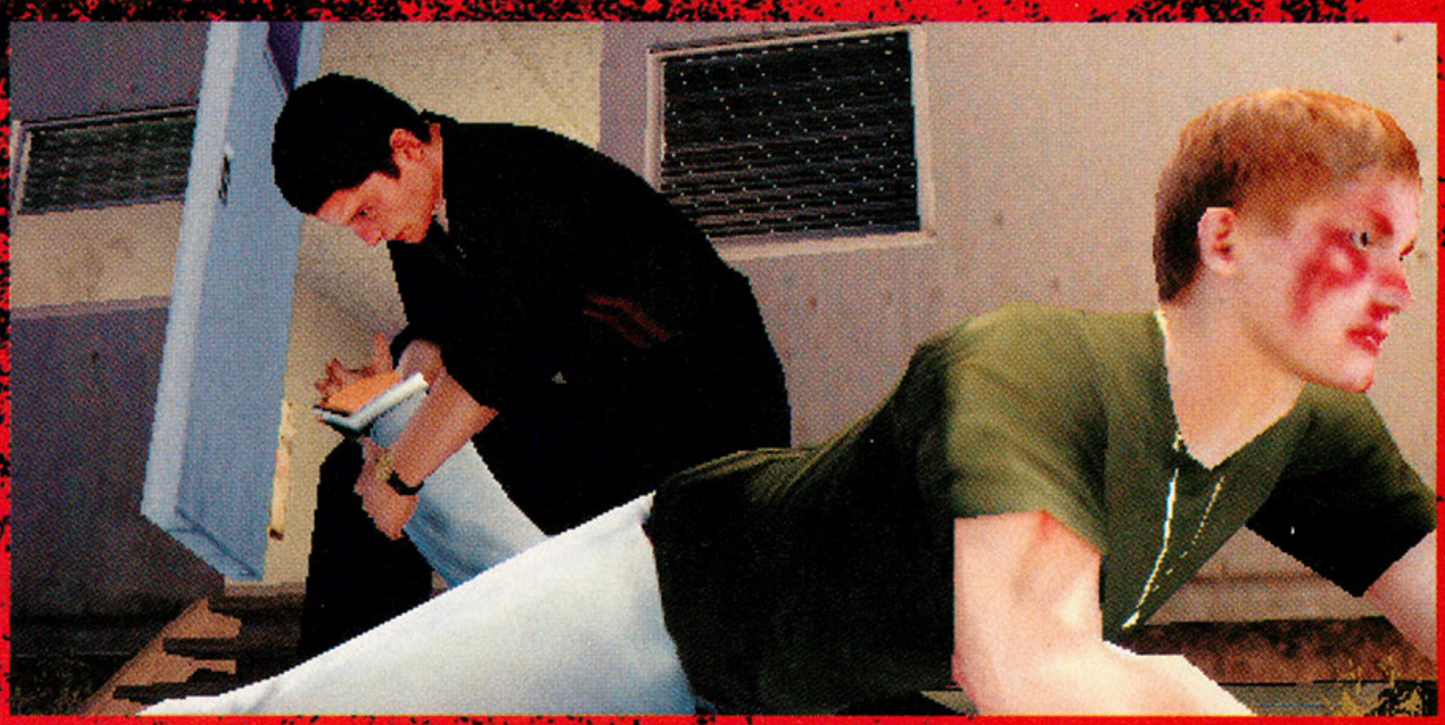
TV and movie-based violence don't seem to bother unhappy Jack, so *Road to Respect* may fall off his radar (at least for a little while).

In this line of business, of course, "working" is synonymous with "beating the living crap out of people."





■ That's right; now just turn your head and cough.



THE TOUGH IMPORT

YAKUZA

PS2 • Sega • September 2006

Don't let the sleek suit fool you. For protagonist Kazuma, a typical business negotiation involves guarded courtesies, some heated words, and then, well, a face planted into the wall and a seeing-stars uppercut. Such is the grind as Kaz works his way through the world of the yakuza, more commonly known as the Japanese Mafia. And while it's easy to think of the game as an Eastern-developed *Grand Theft Auto*, *Yakuza*—a mission-driven brawler heavy on the cut-scenes—has some key differences. It's got no grand theft auto–ing for one, it sports a more methodical pace, and you'll even have to buy gifts for your girlfriends. Makes you wonder if trigger-happy Western gamers will readily adopt this import.

THOMPSONOMETER

While Thompson may be happy that innocent pedestrians are off-limits here, Jack might crack when he realizes that progression relies almost exclusively on throwing fists at virtual pie holes.

Oh, these balls are coming right over the plate.

THE TOUGH CREATE-YOUR-OWN TOUGH GUY

CRACKDOWN

XB360 • Microsoft • Fall 2006

Ever since *Grand Theft Auto* took the muzzle off morality, developers have been pimping a bunch of out-of-control antiheroes. Well, in the futuristic metropolis of *Crackdown*, cops are the new criminals—you play as an agent of the law who isn't against cappin' crooks to bring about a little justice. Customizing your cop goes way beyond picking up lame power-ups, too; every combative action you perform in the game (fighting, shooting, etc.) helps turn your officer into a beefed-up crime fighter. So that means the more asses that meet your foot, the stronger your crime-fighting kick will become (for instance, you'll gain abilities like tossing cars).

THOMPSONOMETER

If this lawyer really thinks violent games cause shootings, wait until he blames accidental circus deaths on *Crackdown*'s Superman-like building leaping.

THE TOUGH CHICK

HEAVENLY SWORD

PS3 • Sony CEA • Spring 2007

Beating up dudes as a man is not too hot. But replace the brawny meatbag with a feisty broad and you have an entirely different game (and one that is 100 percent sexier). Nariko, *Heavenly Sword*'s redheaded hottie, may look nice on the outside, yet she has no problem tearing your insides out. She shouldn't have much trouble doing so either, considering the variety of ways she can mince your meat—with her massive sword, dual swinging blades, and a variety of probing projectiles, Nariko is the type of woman you don't want to rub the wrong way (though, judging by her vicious crotch shots, even the right way sounds a little sketchy). ➤

THOMPSONOMETER

Jack may not dig *Heavenly Sword*'s stylish carnage, but he knows better than to mess with a lady who's proficient at nut-cracking.

FROM THE CREATORS OF DOOM RPG™

ORCS & ELVES™

ign.com
BEST OF E3
2006
WINNER

ADVENTURE CALLS... DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO ANSWER?

Deep within the battered fortress of Zharrkarag, an evil most foul has taken hold. Armed with courage and a mystical wand, you must descend into the spiraling labyrinth and defeat the minions that lie in wait. Go forth cautiously, young elf.

PURCHASE NOW! TEXT KEYWORD "ORCS" TO 22123

A SECRET TO UNLOCK AT
WWW.ORCSANDELVES.COM

© 2006 ID SOFTWARE, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PUBLISHED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS UNDER LICENSE FROM ID SOFTWARE, INC. ORCS & ELVES, DOOM RPG AND ID ARE EITHER TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF ID SOFTWARE, INC. IN THE UNITED STATES AND/OR OTHER COUNTRIES. EA AND THE EA LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF ELECTRONIC ARTS INC. IN THE U.S. AND/OR OTHER COUNTRIES. FOUNTAINHEAD ENTERTAINMENT AND THE FE LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF FOUNTAINHEAD ENTERTAINMENT, INC. ALL OTHER TRADEMARKS AND TRADE NAMES ARE THE PROPERTIES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS. EA TM IS AN ELECTRONIC ARTS TM BRAND.

THE TOUGH ACTION HERO

SPY HUNTER: NOWHERE TO RUN

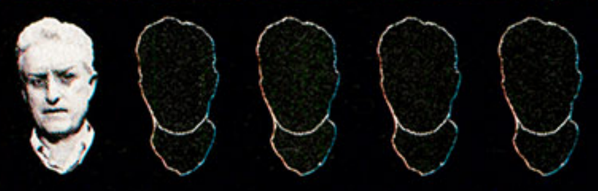
PS2/XB • Midway • September 2006

You may recognize the *Spy Hunter* name from the classic '80s arcade game. The less fortunate may recognize it from the franchise's last showing, the pitiful *Spy Hunter 2* (PS2/XB/GC). Either way, it's always kept to a simple concept: Drive a fast car loaded with weapons and blow crap up.

And now Hollywood thinks this formula can work on the silver screen, as Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is headed your way in a *Spy Hunter* movie (which has been mysteriously delayed until next year). This is the official game. Yep, *Nowhere to Run* is a game about a movie about a game.

"We're trying to bring a different experience to *Spy Hunter* than just shooting and blowing up cars," says Producer Jeremy Airey. That "something more" is the addition of on-foot action levels starring the movie's beefy hero. And yes, the character will take a page from Johnson's former career and perform wrestling moves on his enemies. "Were not necessarily a wrestling game," says Airey. In fact, *Nowhere to Run* isn't any particular kind of game. Aside from to the manhandling moves, The Rock will pack an assortment of firearms, making *Spy Hunter* a game about a car (which transforms into both a boat and a motorcycle) with guns, driven by a pro wrestler with guns. Macho indeed.

THOMPSONOMETER



Compared to these other tough guys, The Rock is as wholesome as a glass of warm milk.

■ **The Rock gives one helluva facial.**

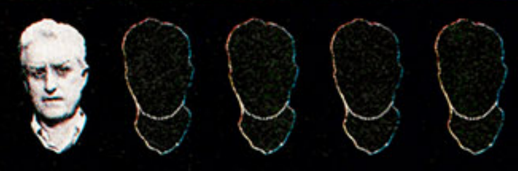
THE TOUGH ARCHAEOLOGIST

INDIANA JONES

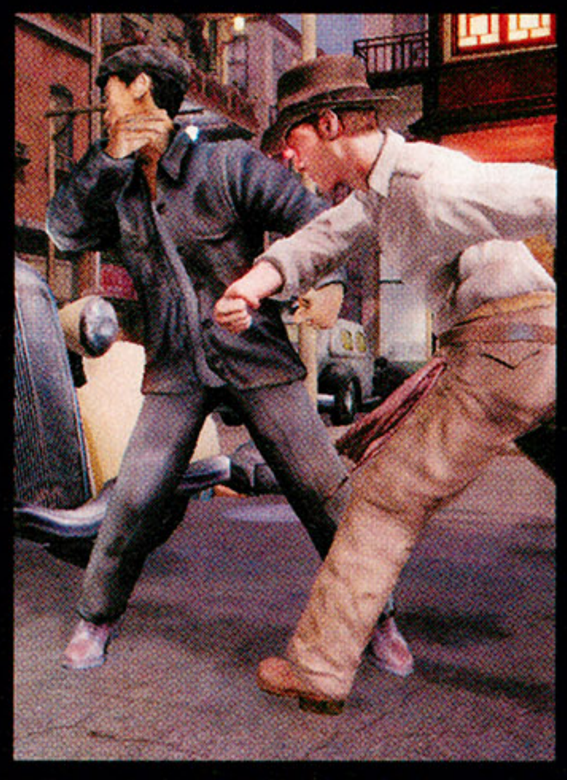
PS3/XB360 • LucasArts • Fall 2007

So what if he's got a little snake phobia and a fighting style that relies more on derring-do than tae kwon do? Indiana Jones always got by with pluck and luck in his movie adventures, and it's a formula worth following in this next-gen brawler. "You'll be using everything at your disposal to win the encounters," says Project Lead Chris Williams. "Disarm an enemy with the whip, head-butt his companion, throw a bottle at the third guy coming through the door, and then roll a barrel toward him while turning to deliver a whirling punch before grabbing an enemy and throwing him into another. There's a frantic and desperate feel to every fight."

THOMPSONOMETER



Not even Thompson can get worked up over an archaeology professor who busts Nazi butt.



■ **The game's souped-up animation system means you'll rarely see the same move twice.**

THE TOUGH KID

BULLY

PS2 • Rockstar • Fall 2006

Before he's even had a chance to ditch class or hock a loogie in a single freshman's face, Jimmy Hopkins—*Bully*'s 15-year-old hothead—is already making a name for himself as the "hero" of the next bad game to ban. What, you mean PTA groups and antiviolence crusaders take issue with a game in which your main mission is to rise to the top of a juvie-delinquent school's social order by fighting dirty and attending as few classes as possible? It doesn't help that *Bully* is from the publisher of the *Grand Theft Auto* and employs the same do-anything mechanic—even if the hero isn't old enough to drive. ➤

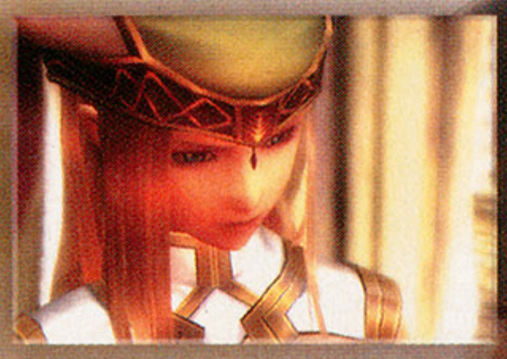
THOMPSONOMETER

Jack has made no secret that this game is at the top of his hit list.

A Rebel Spirit,

THE GODS HAVE EXILED YOU TO THE MORTAL WORLD. WHEN THE WARRIOR WITHIN YOU AWAKES, YOU MUST FLEE THOSE WHO WOULD CONTROL BOTH YOUR BODY AND YOUR SOUL.

VALKYRIE PROFILE®2
SILMERIA



AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 26

Continue the Epic

VALKYRIE PROFILE®
LENNETH

Return to a world of myth, centuries after Silmeria's story.

AVAILABLE NOW on the PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system.

PlayStation®2

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Alcohol Reference
Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes

SQUARE ENIX™
www.square-enix.com
Published by Square Enix, Inc.

© 1999, 2006 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. Developed by tri-Ace Inc. Character design: PRODUCTION I.G. Character illustration: KOU YOSHINARI/YOU YOSHINARI. VALKYRIE PROFILE, LENNETH, SILMERIA, SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

THE TOUGH MEN IN BLACK

RESERVOIR DOGS

PS2/XB • Eidos • Fall 2006

The iconic image of *Reservoir Dogs*—tough guys in black suits, skinny ties, and dark sunglasses—represents a challenge for a videogame adaptation. In the legendary indie flick, each of the sharply dressed jewel thieves (with the colorful code names of Mr. White, Mr. Blonde, Mr. Pink, Mr. Orange, Mr. Blue, and Mr. Brown) has his own distinct personality. But when you turn a charismatic, real actor (say, Steve Buscemi) into a polygonal dummy, any personality not conveyed by clothing tends to get lost in translation. The challenge: How do you make a *Reservoir Dogs* game that doesn't just feel like a bunch of nobodies in black suits?

"Each character's dialogue is based heavily on their personality," says Project Manager Dave Manuel, "and they have their own method of torturing a victim." Wait—can we roll that back? Each character has his own special torture move? "I personally like to grab a groveling hostage and slice an ear off, which makes any cops facing me drop their weapons in the hope that I won't go any further," says Manuel. That might help explain why *Reservoir Dogs* has already been banned in Australia, even though, according to Manuel, you can play through the entire game without killing a single person. Australia has a rough-and-tumble tough guy image, but considering their ninny censoring (the country also banned the *Grand Theft Auto* series), are they really a bunch of pussies? "You know, they almost chose 'Waltzing Matilda' as their national anthem," says Manuel. "You tell me...."

■ Yo, Mr. Whatever-color-you-are! Try looking to your left.

THOMPSONOMETER

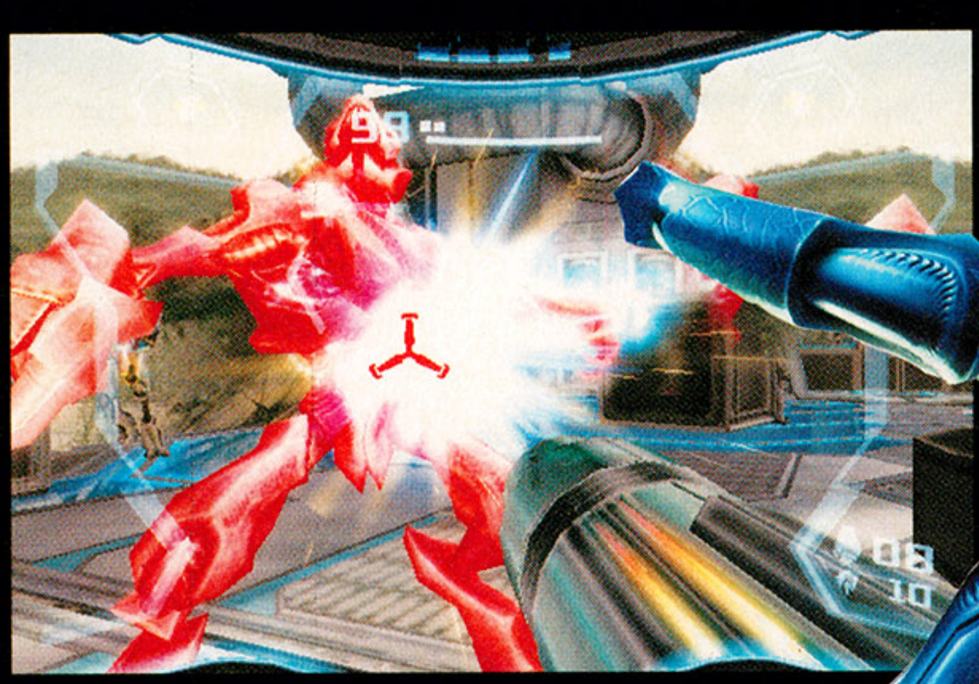
Thompson will momentarily spout righteous streams of blood from his stigmata when he hears about *Reservoir Dogs*' torture moves, but then he'll realize that torture is legal and necessary to prevent acts of terror.

THE TOUGH BOUNTY HUNTER

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

Wii • Nintendo • Fall 2006

Metroid heroine Samus has been helping close the gender gap in gaming ever since her seminal NES adventure. In *Corruption*, she'll be manhandling aliens and space pirates on the Wii, with players using the system's unique controller to open doors and launch grapple beams with hand motions. Still, the biggest draw here remains the series' addicting action-adventure formula and memorable boss battles. We can't help but wonder if ultimate toughie Master Chief could pull off a boss battle as sweet as Samus' versus the dragonlike Ridley: The two combatants plummet down a seemingly bottomless shaft while exchanging fireballs and energy shots.



■ *Corruption* won't have any multiplayer modes. That's probably a smart move considering *Prime 2*'s craptastic versus action.

THOMPSONOMETER

Unless he wants to go after the women's lib movement, Jack may want to steer clear of this one.

newegg.com®

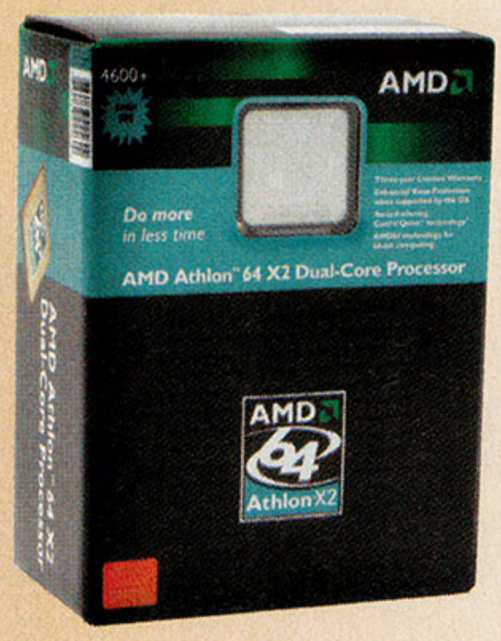
ONCE YOU KNOW, YOU NEWEGG.

No Payments for 6 months
with your *Newegg.com Preferred Account*
See website for more information. Promotion ends 10/31/06

Visit Newegg.com for today's prices, complete product list, and in-depth product info.

AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+
Orleans 2000MHz HT
512KB L2 Cache
Socket AM2 Processor
$139.00

AMD Opteron™ 146
Venus 1000MHz HT
1MB L2 Cache
Socket 939 Processor
$259.00



AMD

AMD Athlon 64 X2 4600+
Manchester 2000MHz HT
2 x 512KB L2 Cache
Socket 939
Dual Core Processor

Increase your performance by up to 80% with the AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 Dual-Core processor. Work or play with multiple programs without any stalling or waiting. Dual-core technology is like having two processors, and two working together is better and faster than one working alone.

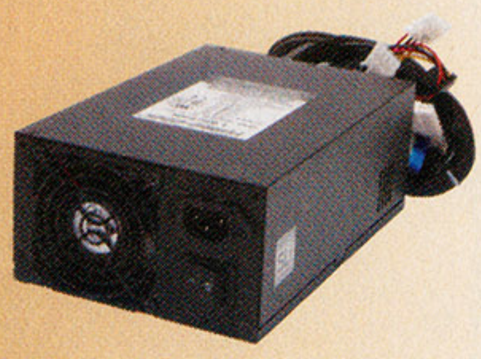
$579.00

COMPUTER SHOPPER SHOPPERS' CHOICE 2005

BEST PLACE TO BUY
- ONLINE
- SOFTWARE
- PERIPHERALS
- CORE COMPONENTS

YOUR INVITATION TO THE FREQUENT GAMERS CLUB AWAITS...

PC POWER & COOLING



$489.99

PC Power & Cooling 1000W
Turbo-Cool EPS12V Power Supply

Scythe

$39.99

Scythe NU350PS-OTP USB2.0
Aluminum 3.5" External Enclosure

BYTECC

$29.99

BYTECC BT-300 Adapter
USB 2.0 to IDE/SATA up to 480 MBps

XMS2

$299.99

Corsair TWIN2X2048-6400C4
XMS2 2GB (2 x 1GB) 240-Pin DDR2

WD Western Digital

$279.99

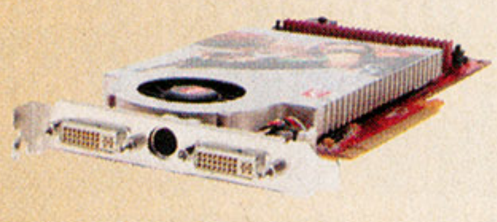
Western Digital My Book
Premium 500GB External Hard Drive

Kingston TECHNOLOGY

$55.00

Kingston SDM/2GB Flash Media
2GB MiniSD with SD Adapter

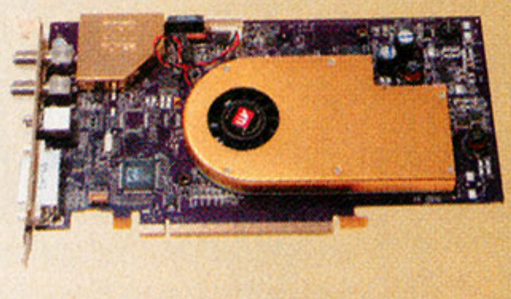
ATi



$359.99

ATI Radeon X1900GT 256MB 256-bit
GDDR3 VIVO PCI Express x16

ATi



$133.99

ATI Radeon X1300 256MB 128-bit
VIVO PCI Express x16 All-In-Wonder

*Enter Promo Code EGM10906 for a **FREE T-SHIRT** with these items*

©2006 Newegg Computers. All rights reserved. **Pricing and Availability**: Prices good from 08/15/06 to 10/15/06 or while supplies last. Prices, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges, if applicable, are not shown. Newegg is not responsible for pricing or other errors and reserves the right to cancel orders arising from such errors. All items sold as retail unless otherwise noted. OEM products may be sold without packaging, documentation or other articles. Free shipping does not apply to Television orders. Television stands are not included they must be purchased separately.

- *98% of orders ship within 1 business day*
- *"A" rating on ANY merchant ranking site*
- *500,000 product reviews from customers*
- *Over 50,000 customer testimonials*

STAR TOURS

By Jennifer Tsao

The galaxy is your oyster in **Mass Effect**, the next epic role-playing game from the makers of Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

Space may have been the final frontier back when *Star Trek* was in vogue, but it's kinda been done to death in the intervening decades. So, how surprising was it when, at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the videogame industry got collective interplanetary chills from *Mass Effect*? Sure, the sci-fi role-playing game for the Xbox 360 looked amazing—next gen in all its glory—but so did about half the other games on display. What wowed the crowds was just how up close and personal the game takes you, through its compelling dialogue technology, to civilizations way out there in the Milky Way. When BioWare, the game's creator, invited us to take an exclusive closer look at *Mass Effect*, naturally we strapped into our space machine and issued the warp command. Join us for a galactic tour you won't soon forget. ➤

EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS

GO TO EGM.1UP.COM FOR MORE

Space may be vast and mysterious, but only the Internet has exclusive *Mass Effect* footage and extended interviews with the folks making the game. Head to **egm.1UP.com** to check it out!

Bioform: Krogan
Universal Coordinates:
110142.21
787263.11
6492311.55
Sector 12

Bioform: Volus
Universal Coordinates:
305342.21
78946515.11
75841541.55
Sector 4

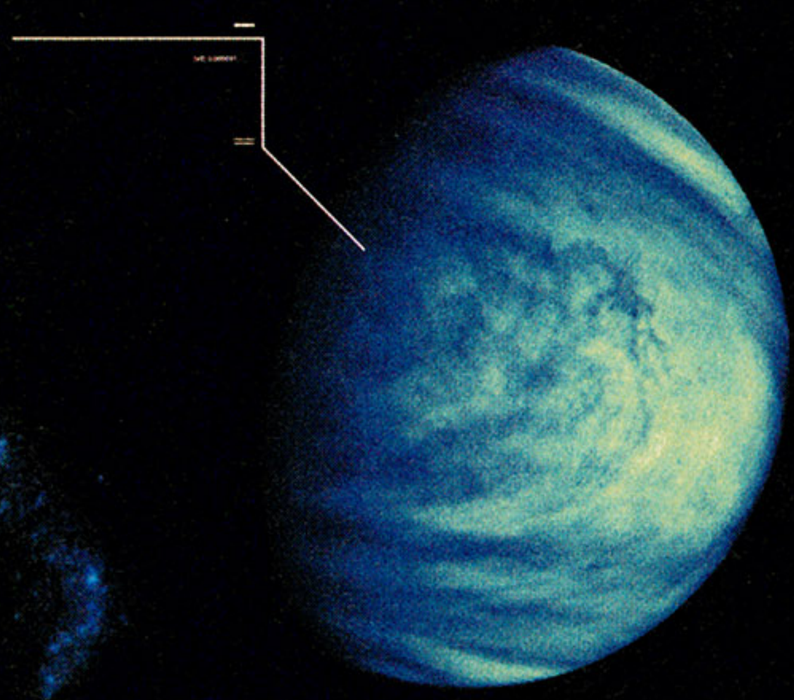
SPACE ODYSSEY

An epic voyage deserves an epic tale

Gazing out the window at unfamiliar, exotic new solar systems may take your breath away, but it's important to remember why you're here. It's the 22nd century, and human beings have only just been able to make their way into the farthest reaches of our galaxy. We're becoming familiar with its alien civilizations, but as newcomers to outer space, "we're not major players yet," says Project Director Casey Hudson. BioWare co-CEO Ray Muzyka puts it more poetically: "You're the tip of the spear of humanity in the galactic space, the first representative of humanity in a wider galactic alien civilization." In an attempt to gain political power, the human race is trying to place its members in key strategic positions, and that's where you come in.

Playing the role of Commander Shepard, you're one of the human race's greatest military veterans. As such, you're a perfect candidate to become a power player—a Spectre, the most elite rank of soldiers that report directly to the galactic council. In that process, however, you discover a chilling reality—"the scariest thing possible," according to Hudson. Apparently, the entirety of organic civilization as you know it is merely a *Matrix*-y crop, allowed to grow up by ancient machine races that have ruled the galaxy for millions and millions of years. They come to harvest us on a routine cycle, decimating civilization every couple thousand years. You quickly determine that you have a job to perform: save all of organic civilization. (Nobody said this tour would necessarily be a relaxing one....)

■ **Characters are realistically designed, but they're also stylized. Says Hudson: "It's more about angular people from the future—where everybody's in really good shape."**

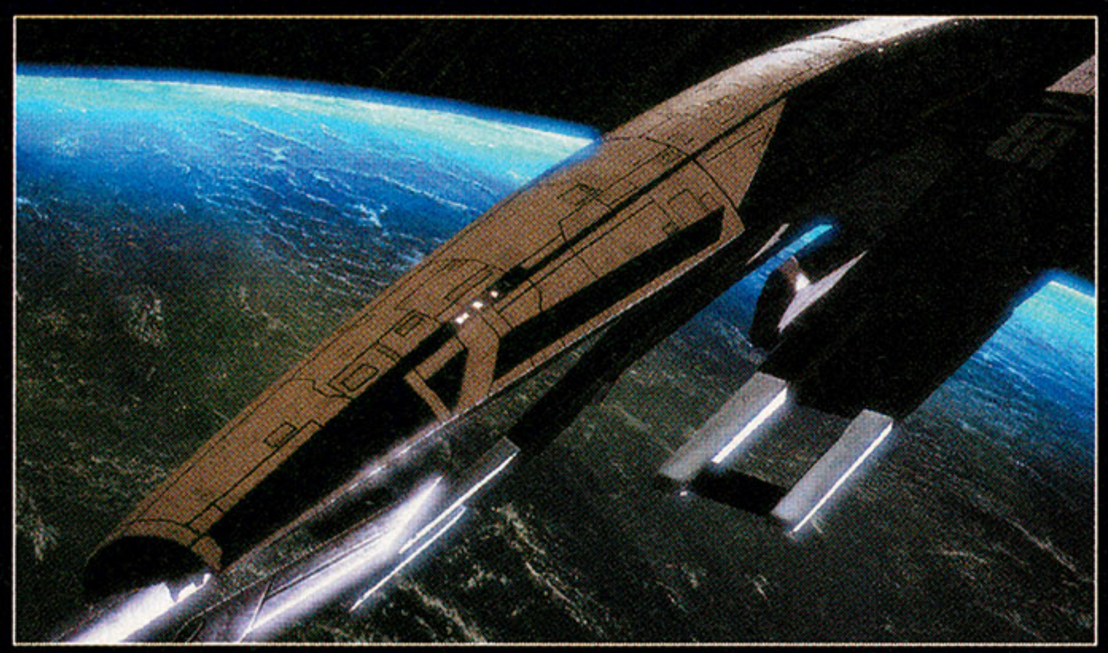


FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Fasten your seatbelts—the g-forces are intense

Before you venture too far, take a moment to familiarize yourself with your surroundings. In *Mass Effect*, you'll pilot your starship, the Normandy, through a vast array of planetary systems, space stations, abandoned freighters, asteroid fields, and other heavenly bodies, both charted and otherwise. You will be able to see these locations as you orbit them, though actual space travel will utilize a star map system similar to the interface in *Knights of the Old Republic*. BioWare promises that, with several hundred unique locations to explore, this game's map will dwarf *KOTOR*'s—one sign of the company's grand ambitions for *Mass Effect*, which is planned as the first game in a trilogy. Hudson explains that this all starts with the title, which he hopes will evoke "the biggest scope, the biggest story, huge concepts, massive ideas, the player having a big effect on the world...."

Physically, "mass effect" is a real force in the game, one that will play a crucial role in both space travel and combat. Hudson likens it to today's theoretical dark matter: "Even in current astronomy, they're discovering a force that wasn't previously accounted for in physics that is causing all these things that aren't supposed to be happening," he explains. In the game world, this natural force enables the player to travel across great distances of space, and it can give you superhuman powers called "biotics" (to be covered later on the tour).



■ **Biotics specialists will learn to channel dark energy, known as "mass effect."**

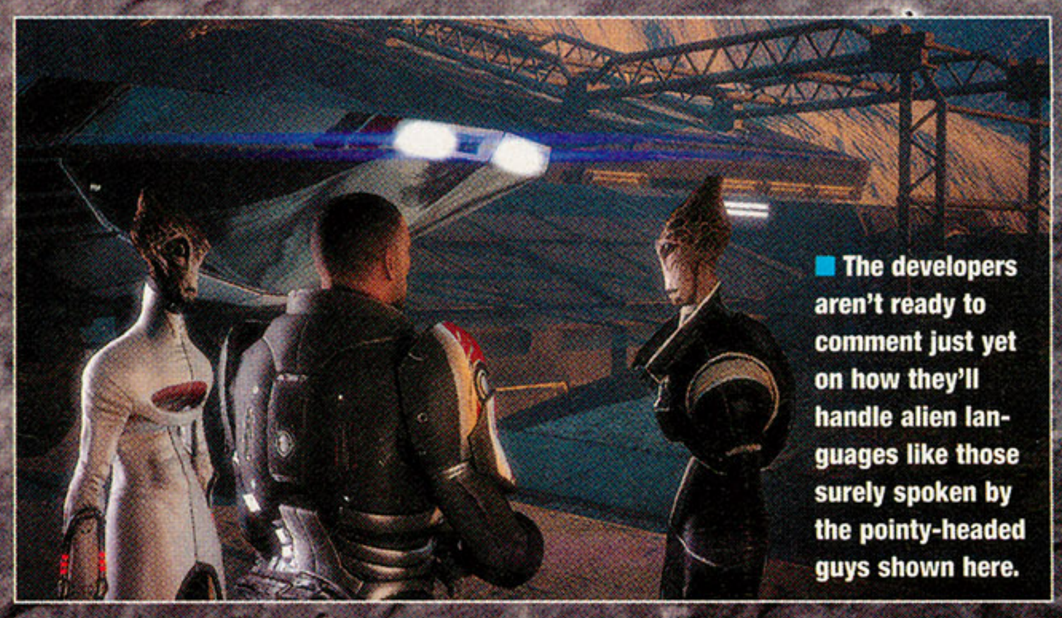
LOVING THE ALIEN

Come face-to-face with friends and foes across the universe

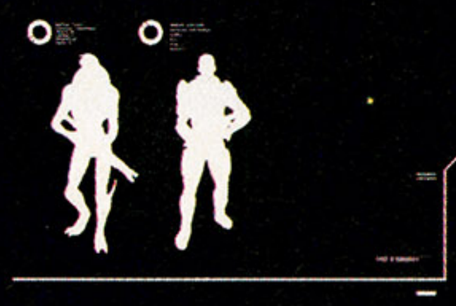
The best part of traveling is meeting people from foreign lands, and this galactic voyage should present plenty of opportunities for that. Indeed, for BioWare, this is really what *Mass Effect* is all about. The company feels this game is next gen in ways far beyond graphics and gameplay. "Our strength is storytelling," says Muzyka. "What's the technology that gets us to better stories?" Muzyka says the company has focused many, many years developing technology strictly for creating digital characters that are better actors and can deliver the story in a better way. Many of the characters in *Mass Effect* are developed using procedural tools that enable programmers and designers to control exactly how the characters' facial expressions move. They can then match those animations precisely with speech intonations to convey emotion. "When a character raises an eyebrow, the way that it wrinkles looks like a real person doing it," Muzyka says. "You forget that it's a digital character, and you start caring about what they're saying and feeling." The goal is to make these characters believable enough that you can look in their eyes without thinking about the lip-synching or the gestures. "You're actually thinking about what they're feeling as a character," he says. Muzyka hopes gamers will get really excited threatening or flirting with a character not just because of the logical results of such behavior, but because they truly see and feel how the other character is responding to what they're doing. "It's so much more empowering," says Muzyka. "You start forgetting that you're in a story—you're actually there."

The dialogue system is another hugely important aspect of creating more compelling stories. With a dynamic wheel, you select a direction that indicates the type of response you want to give—angry, threatening, or compassionate, for example. You'll have some sense of what your character is going to say or how they'll react, but it's a vast step beyond the normal dialogue trees from even recent story-based RPGs like *KOTOR* or *Jade Empire* (also from BioWare). "You don't have to stop and wait while your character watches you look through the list of options," says Hudson. "You can respond as soon as the other character is done. It makes a huge difference—you forget that you're playing something.... You have this unprecedented feeling that you're in control in a more tactile way than ever before." The dialogue system is intended to be intuitive and easy to use. "It makes having a conversation, for the first time in any RPG, easy, very accessible, and fun," says Muzyka. These conversations won't just be idle side quests that help you earn a few extra space dollars, either. "Negotiation, diplomacy, threats, coercion, flattery—all sorts of different ways of interacting with the characters in *Mass Effect* will have significant impact on the story development," says Hudson.

Like *KOTOR* and *Jade Empire* before it, *Mass Effect* will further impress upon players the consequences of moral choices they make throughout the game. "We're trying to build that into the gameplay, maybe on a deeper level than we ever have before," says Muzyka. "Your decisions have tremendous impact on the way the story unfolds, both in the characters around you and even in the things you'll encounter hours later in the game, and in the ultimate end of the game." Indeed, your choices can affect future episodes of the trilogy, but we'll save that for the end of the tour. ➤



■ **The developers aren't ready to comment just yet on how they'll handle alien languages like those surely spoken by the pointy-headed guys shown here.**



MASSIVE ATTACK

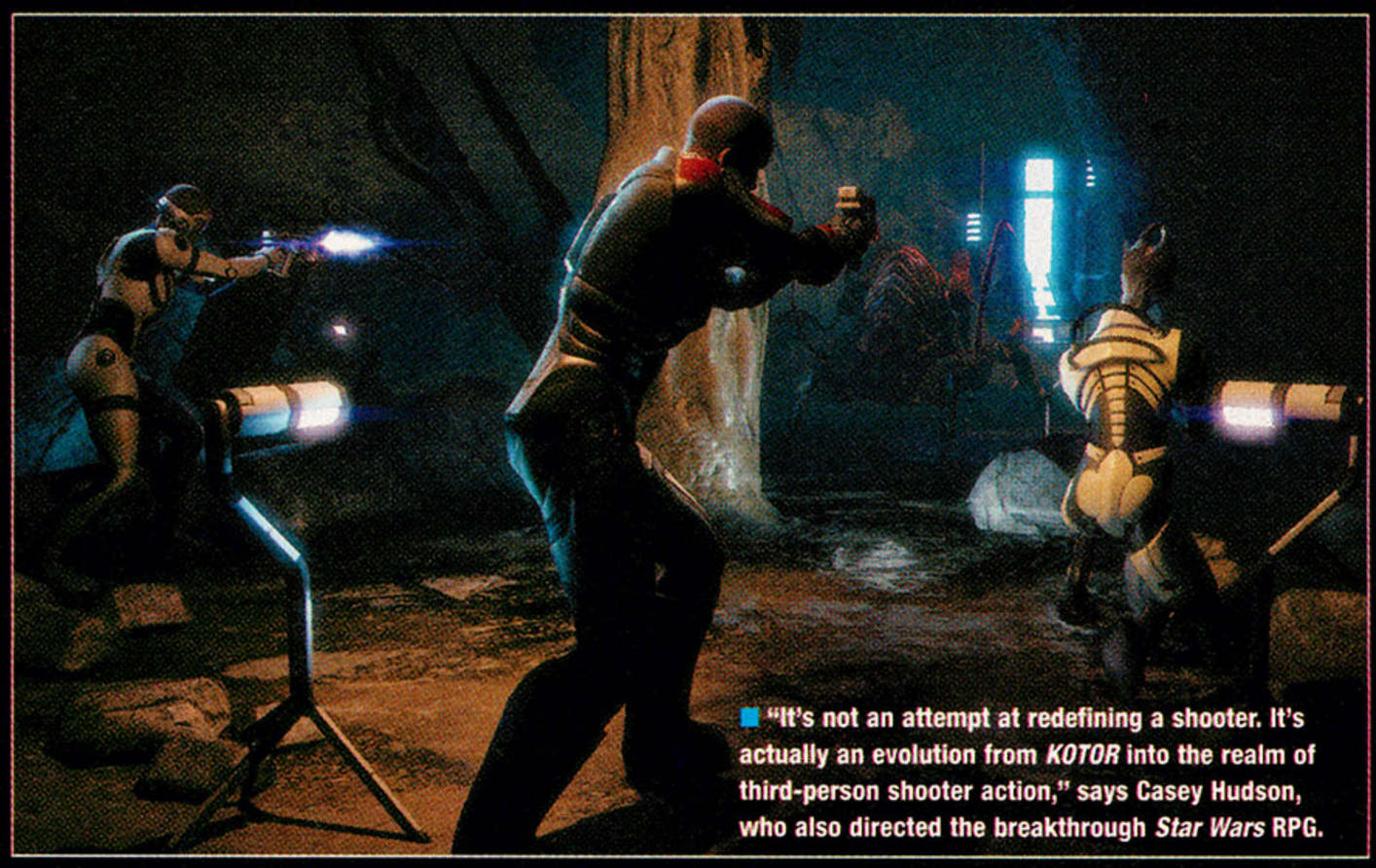
When you can't talk your way out of it...

In the course of your trip, be nice to the friendly characters you encounter; you'll need them when you head into combat (you can take two other team members with you). Each character can specialize in any combination of three classes: soldier, tech, or biotics (those superhuman powers where you can feel and shape the "mass effect" energy force). The soldier class is the conventional combat-oriented character that will focus on traditional weapons such as rifles and grenades, while tech users learn to control and manipulate enemy weapons and defenses. Biotics specialists have a whole other range of aggressive abilities—they can ignite items, freeze them, control objects remotely, use plasma and fusion effects, and more. The designers want all the classes to be equally exciting to use in a fight. "In a typical RPG, the magic user or tech specialist does stuff as an alternative to combat," says Hudson. "In *Mass Effect*, the biotics and tech users have amazing things they do in combat that are as cool as [what] the soldier [does]." They're also focusing on making these skills truly team-based. "The idea was to create powers that could be used in interesting combinations," says Lead Designer Preston Watamaniuk. "By themselves, they're still powerful and effective, but it's when you stop and think how you can use them in conjunction that the really powerful effects come out of them."

Your stable of companions is, of course, completely customizable, from the characters' basic skills down to their armor and weapons. You'll find all sorts of things around the worlds that you can modify your equipment and companions with. For instance, you can alter your weapon so it'll make enemies disappear, or you can make it freeze the enemy, where they'll actually turn into an icy solid and slide down a staircase, and if they take damage they'll shatter. "The mods and stuff you can do can allow you to use these things as chess pieces," says Hudson. Throughout the game, you'll be able to swap squad members in and out, depending on what situations you face, and smart tactics become essential to survival.

The combat is real time, but you can control any of your party members using context-sensitive commands. "Say you're fighting a horde of smaller creatures coming at you from all directions," says Hudson. "You can be picking off the smaller creatures, and your squad members will use their own A.I. to choose the best targets for them." The D-pad and shoulder buttons will allow you to tell various squad members to target particular enemies. "You can just hit a button to say, 'You take out that guy, you take out that other guy,'" Hudson adds. "You're simultaneously fighting three different enemies with real simple commands."

And what if, as in the screenshots here, there's a larger boss-type enemy coming at you at the same time? This is where powerful tactical planning—and the pause feature—come in. "If you're finding that you can't defeat that boss in the real-time game," says Watamaniuk, "you can pause and order your tech guy to take over that machine boss, and for a while, he'll start firing and wiping out his own troops." Or you could thin out his shields, or tip him over, or designate him as an enemy to other baddies around him. The squad-based command system "puts all these tactics at your fingertips," says Hudson, "to very easily create all kinds of mayhem." ➤



■ **"It's not an attempt at redefining a shooter. It's actually an evolution from *KOTOR* into the realm of third-person shooter action," says Casey Hudson, who also directed the breakthrough *Star Wars* RPG.**

■ Shepard can choose to go it solo, if that's how you want to play it.

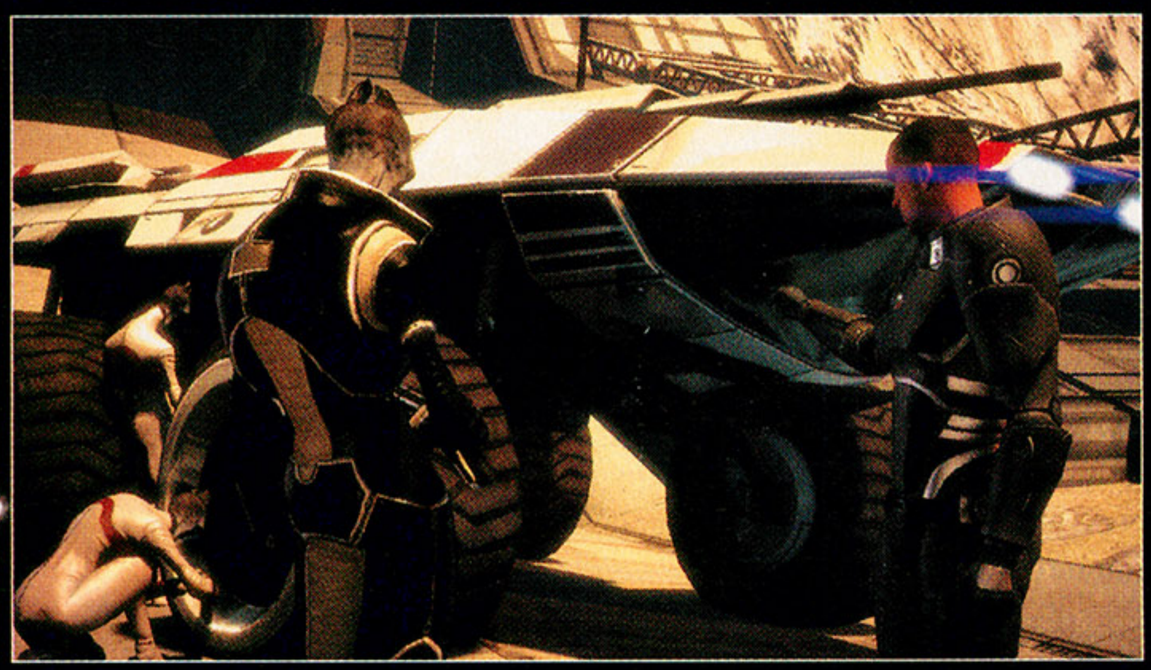
■ The big mechanical beastie pictured here, called an Armature, is part of an enemy machine race called the Geth.

DROP SHIP

Explore uncharted turf in your own all-terrain vehicle

What epic journey would be complete without some off-roading opportunities? *Mass Effect* promises more than a few of these; you should have unprecedented freedom to explore the universe on your terms—we saw underground bases, caves, and abandoned mines among the various exotic locations the player may happen upon. "You might have a really clear idea of what story location you want to visit next, so you go to the galaxy map and navigate around and find the planet you want," explains Hudson. "But as you enter that star system, you might pick up a signal from a derelict ship floating in space, and you think, 'Oh I'll go to that first.'" What you encounter there might turn out to be a required story quest, or it could be an optional side quest, for which you're rewarded with new weapons and mods for your armor.

How you do this exploring is also noteworthy. You'll have a very capable all-terrain vehicle that you can customize to better handle the various types of terrain you'll encounter. "If you're exploring off the beaten path, you're going to be driving [your vehicle] on the edges of mountains and over the edges of cliffs, across icy lakes—it could be anything," says Hudson. "That's where some of the neat modifications come in." Since the driving mechanic is completely physics-based, you can give your ATV better grip, more power, better handling, and other special modifications that will help you get to locations that you wouldn't be able to otherwise reach. The vehicle will also have turrets and weapons, so naturally it will be involved in some vehicle-based combat. Think of it as another member of your party, one you'll customize and use during the story quest and beyond.



■ **Shepard may look like he's going toe-to-toe with the Harvester pictured below, but Lead Designer Preston Watamaniuk calls that an "almost impossible" scenario. "We wanted to give you enemies that were going to challenge you in your vehicle," he says, and with this creature's running, crushing, and acidic venom attacks, it's meant to be a boss-level battle, even in your vehicle. "So this [screenshot] is just before Shepard gives up and runs as fast as he can back to the car," jokes Hudson.**

■ **The safer way to defeat the gigantic space dragon.**

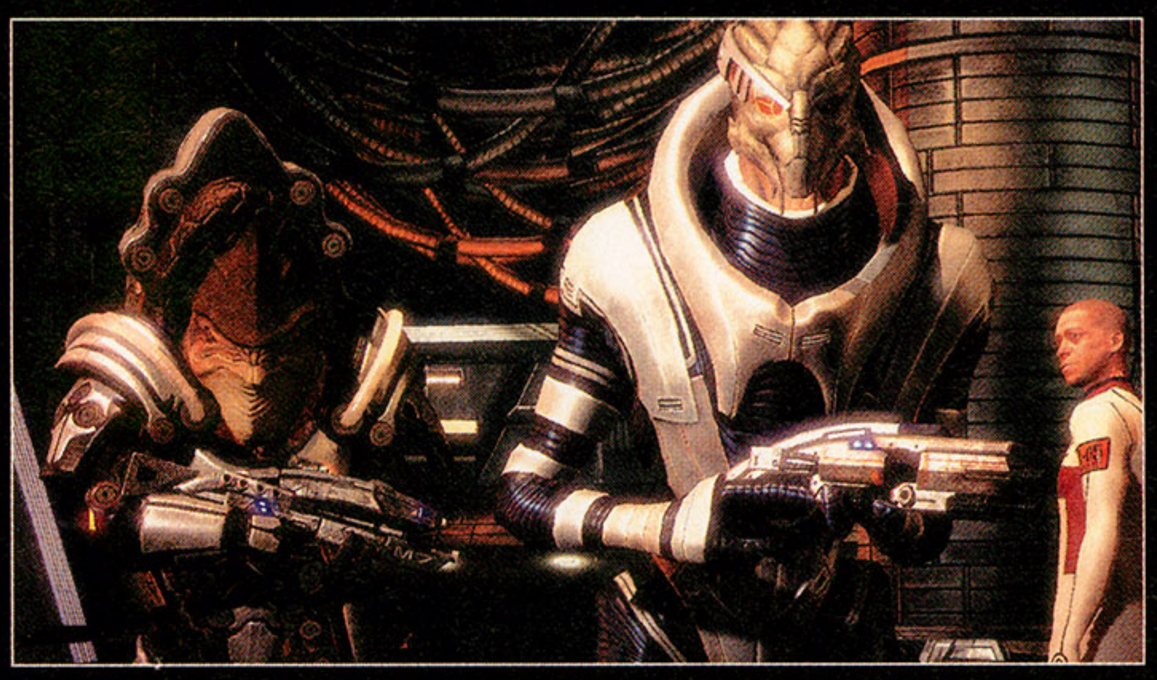
LOST IN SPACE

It ain't over, even when it's over

BioWare is promising to extend your galactic tour with unlockable areas and missions (available right out of the box), plus downloadable content on Xbox Live. The team is also committed to letting you use the main character you created to do it. "It's too cool a concept not to do," says Hudson. "The more you invest in this character, the more you're going to want to keep that character around," he says. You'll also have the option to use your character from this game when starting future episodes of the trilogy. But don't think of *Mass Effect* as one gigantic tale divided into three episodic chapters that end with cliffhangers and force you to play on to find out how things unfold. Yes, each game's plot is planned within a larger arc, but Hudson emphasizes that the individual episodes will be discrete entities, satisfying in their own right.

If, however, you do choose to continue with the saved character you've developed over months and years, expect future content to work with you. The team hasn't figured out exactly how it will work, but this is an important facet of designing the trilogy. "Of course, you'll want the major decisions you made to carry through," says Hudson. "It is going to be the universe that you created through your decisions in the first game." The experience should be well worth it, too. "The further we go in detailing [*Mass Effect*'s] story, the more clever hooks and fun things we're putting in the long-term story arc and downloadable content," says Hudson. You never really know what you'll find—weapons, characters, and quests are all part of the plan for Xbox Live expansions. "You might find out that a new region of space has opened up, and there's a whole bunch of new worlds out there to explore," says Hudson. Might a futuristic planet Earth be one of those? "I can't say," he says, "but anything's possible."

So while BioWare estimates that the game will rival its previous works in length of the main story quest, the traditional end won't really be the end. "When you look at the horizon and wonder what else is there, you can actually go there, and there's always really cool stuff for you to find," says Muzyka. In other words, our tour may have come to a close, but one need only look at the horizon and dream of the adventures to come.



"This isn't the bald humanoid you're looking for. Move along."

review crew

is it art? is it a game? who cares, just enjoy the game

THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

Well, blow me down. We actually have a healthy-looking Reviews section this month, with a couple of award-winners to boot. Does this mark the end of the summer drought? Looking at the upcoming release list: Yes, yes, it does (of course, I'll probably be eating my words in 30 days now).

What has the staff most excited this month is the "Is it art?" Game of the Month, *Okami*. Paintbrushes, magic wolves, and a definite *Zelda* vibe equals a killer pedigree. Right behind *Okami*, though, is *Dead Rising*, and not just for what it did to Crispin (see his bio on the opposite page).

In more unfortunate news, we didn't get *Madden NFL 07* reviewable discs in time for this issue. Check out Reviews Wrap-up for our early impressions.

—Greg Ford, Reviews Editor

GAME DIRECTORY

Xbox 360
92 Dead Rising
94 Prey
96 Ninety-Nine Nights
97 Bomberman Act: Zero

Multi
98 Super Monkey Ball Adventure
98 FlatOut 2
99 Pac-Man World Rally
99 Disgaea 2: Cursed Memories

PlayStation 2
100 Okami
103 Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII
104 Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria
106 Dance Factory

DS
106 Deep Labyrinth

PSP
108 Bomberman
108 Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins
109 Tekken: Dark Resurrection

Extra Stuff
110 Reviews Wrap-up
111 Reviews Archive

GAME OF THE MONTH

OKAMI

THE REVIEW CREW

Don't shoot the messengers

DAN "SHOE" HSU • Editor-in-Chief
College football's about to start, but Shoe's trying to hide his excitement. If Greg Ford finds out, he'll be assigning Shoe a ton of sports-game reviews, leaving him less time to watch the real deal.

Now Playing: *Shadow of the Colossus*, *Psychonauts*
Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com

SHANE BETTENHAUSEN • Exec. Editor
This month, summer's bleak gaming drought finally ends, so Shane offers you a toast to kick off the monumental 2006 fall gaming season. Plus, he really needed a drink after beating *Dirge of Cerberus*.

Now Playing: *Disgaea 2*, *Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria*
Blog: egmshane.1UP.com

JENNIFER TSAO • Managing Editor
Jen was so busy visiting the outer reaches of the galaxy for this month's cover story, she only had time to review one game. (Too bad the cheapo space airline only gave her miles for the Canadian leg of the trip....)

Now Playing: *Okami*, *New Super Mario Bros.*
Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com

CRISPIN BOYER • Senior Editor
In what can only be described as a bizarre office mishap, Crispin's fist accidentally punched his phone during a maddening portion of *Dead Rising*. Cha-ching! Can you say "workers' comp"?

Now Playing: *Dead Rising*, *Bomberman* (PSP)
Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com

BRYAN INTIHAR • Previews Editor
During their daily *Tekken: Dark Resurrection* bouts, Bryan made Shane look foolish (Greg Ford can testify to that). But when it comes to *Soul Calibur III*, well, Big B really doesn't like to discuss it.

Now Playing: *Okami*, *Tekken: Dark Resurrection*
Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com

GREG FORD • Reviews Editor
After witnessing Crispin's "This game *&$^ing *#&$^s!" freak-out to a tough game firsthand (the poor phone will never be the same), Ford has since taken the proper precautions.

Now Playing: *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*
Blog: egmford.1UP.com

MICHAEL DONAHOE • News/Features Ed.
Michael's bummed he finally finished *Kingdom Hearts II*. In fact, he's contemplating quitting his job to set up shop in the Magic Kingdom...as a janitor. It's a dirty job, but someone's gotta clean the crapper.

Now Playing: *New Super Mario Bros.*
Blog: egmiked.1UP.com

ADAM GOTHELF • Editorial Intern
After reviewing a *Pac-Man* kart racer and a *Super Monkey Ball* platformer, new intern Adam now specializes in crazy-person/baby/crazy-baby games.

Now Playing: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*, *King of Pro Baseball* (N64, Japan-only)
Blog: egmadam.1UP.com

MARK MACDONALD • Editor-at-Large
Each fall, Mark celebrates the birth of our nation's first game reviewer in a tasteful ceremony. We don't have the heart to tell him Lincoln never reviewed games. And he was born in February.

Now Playing: *Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins*, *Okami*
Blog: egmmark.1UP.com

ROBERT ASHLEY • Staff Reviewer
Sure, *Okami* was an adventure, but it paled in comparison to Robert's journey to *GameLife*'s Gamer's Lounge, where he made a cameo appearance in episode 6.

Now Playing: *Okami*, *Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow*
Blog: robertashley.1UP.com

JAY FRECHETTE • Staff Reviewer
Jay Fresh had to bid a tearful good-bye as his short but sweet internship came to an end this month. GameVideos.com snatched him up, so he can still be seen around the office annoying *EGM* editors.

Now Playing: *Geometry Wars*, *Valkyrie Profile 2*
Blog: egmjay.1UP.com

DEMIAN LINN • Staff Reviewer
Dead Rising can inspire even the most mild-mannered to fits of office equipment destruction. But after Demian got a few good licks in on Crispin's phone, he felt a lot better. That phone had it coming.

Now Playing: *World of WarCraft* (PC), *Dead Rising*
Blog: egmdemian.1UP.com

GREG SEWART • Staff Reviewer
Sewart would have reviewed more games this month, but the Canadian border patrol had other plans for him.... Guess it's time to bribe a few more officials. Corruption rules!

Now Playing: *Prey*, *NCAA Football 07*, *Oblivion*
Blog: stewy.1UP.com

1UP.com's stable of writers not only helps flesh out our reviews, it also tackles games our deadlines prevent us from hitting in a timely fashion. Check it.

THE RATING SYSTEM & AWARDS

10-7 GOOD

6.5-5 FAIR

4.5-0 BAD

Platinum
Straight 10s. For games that are life-changing.

Gold
For games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.

Silver
For games with a mean score of 8.0 or higher.

GAME OF THE MONTH
The highest-scoring game with unanimously "good" scores.

SHAME OF THE MONTH
The lowest-rated game with unanimously "bad" scores.

ESRB Ratings The ESRB's game ratings range from "Everyone" to "Adults Only." Visit **www.esrb.org** for the full lowdown.

■ Know what pisses off zombies more than giving them airplane rides? Nothin'.

■ Xbox 360

DEAD RISING

Maul of America

CRISPIN: Gamers who grew up surviving horrific *Resident Evil* videogames and watching gore-de-force *Dawn of the Dead* remakes know that any real-life walking-dead uprising would both kick ass (hey, everything's free at the mall!) and suck ass (why is Aunt Karen trying to eat my large intestine?). No game encapsulates that apocalyptic dichotomy like *Dead Rising*, a million-zombie-march brawler that just happens to be the best s***ty game you'll ever play.

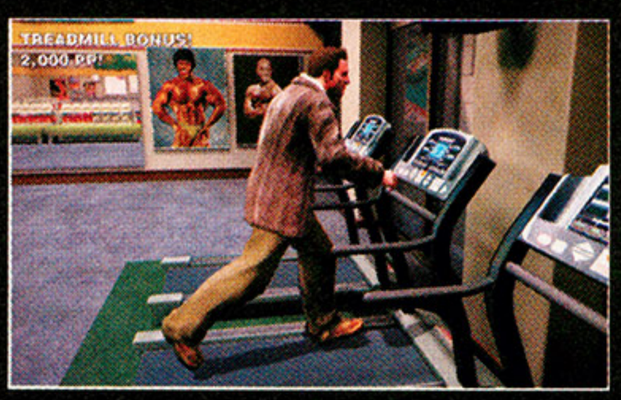
How easy it would have been for *Mega Man*/*Onimusha* creator Keiji Inafune, wielding the mighty 360 hardware, to pump thousands of zombies into a so-real-you-can-smell-the-Cinnabon mall, then simply give gamers carte blanche to carve through the recently deceased. But *Dead Rising* is so much more balls to the mall than, say, the similarly venued *State of Emergency*. Not only can your hero, everyman photojournalist Frank West, use everything from HDTVs to lawn mowers as weaponry, but most items have unique effects. Wailing on corpses with a guitar produces power chords with each impact. Skateboards serve as transportation *and* a way to clear a path. And careening through herds of zombies in a jacked car is just the coolest thing ever.

It makes for an experience that's as fun to watch as it is to play—until you spook your peanut gallery with frustrated hollering that would wake the dead. *Dead Rising*'s save system is an outdated pain in the ass that holds only one slot at a time. The old gaming adage "save often" isn't an option, either, because you must hike to certain areas to do it. Now consider that you're on the clock here: The game gives you 72 hours (which whiz by faster than real time) to dig up the reasons behind the undead's return. Dally too long on one of many maddening escort side missions, and you run the risk of arriving late for a crucial story event. The upshot: You'll have to start this game over a few times until you learn to focus on the important stuff and avoid getting burned by the save system (fortunately, you keep the special moves you earn from building your character). It turns *Dead Rising* into a sort of *Groundhog Day of the Dead*, in which you replay the story from scratch over and over until you get things right. It's as if *Dead Rising* keeps resurrecting itself, as unkillable as your Aunt Karen.

DEMIAN: I just don't understand *how this could happen*. And no, I don't mean, "How could a whole town come down with a bad case of the zombies?" I mean, "How could a game with so much potential just totally fail to get the easy stuff right?" *Dead Rising* shows moments of awesomeness, but the good bits are often buried under classic, cardinal design sins, such as the horrible save system that Crispin already eviscerated, stop-running-into-the-wall-already ally A.I., and unfun, frustrating boss battles.

But if you can come to terms with *Dead Rising*'s peculiar quirks—and avoid flying into a rage when it totally screws you—you'll find some really cool moments. Wade into a gaggle of undead with a chain saw, bust open a gum ball machine and watch the zombies go into pratfall mode, heat up a frying pan on the stove, and then one-shot the brain-dead.... If you have the patience, there's a great game here.

1UP.COM—ROBERT: *Dead Rising* nails the ambiance of shopping in America: the dinky music, the gaudy decor (Wild West–themed food court!), and the creepy neatness (stacks of shirts, rows of canned goods, etc.). The whole thing is a send-up of consumer culture, which elicits a simple customer complaint: High-definition is great, but you've gotta include an option for old-school boob tubes. I destroyed my eyes trying to read the microscopic text in *Dead Rising*. It didn't ruin the joys of conducting zombie dismemberment experiments with power tools and "fixing" the game's terrible story scenes with silly costumes (*Mega Man* helmet + drama = hilarity). *Dead Rising* is only frustrating when you play it in a straight line. Enjoy some carnage, take some pictures, level up, then restart and make a run for the ending.



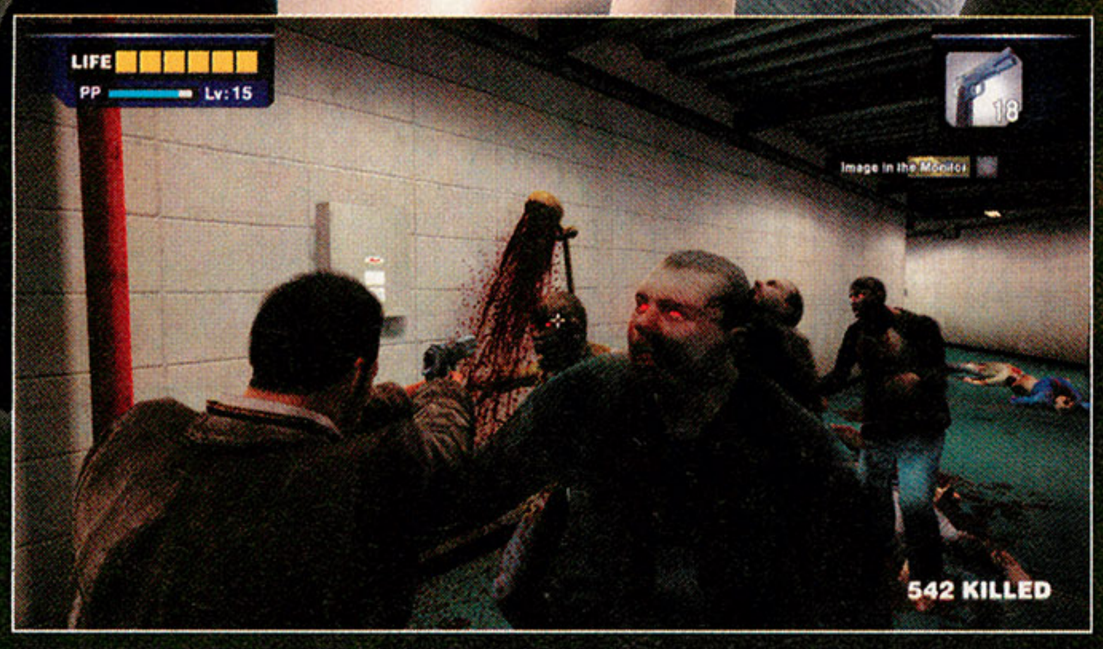
Good: Dozens of ways to kill hundreds of zombies
Bad: Too easy to screw up and have to start over
Don't Expect Much Help From: Brad while fighting Carlito

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	7.0	8.0
	CRISPIN	DEMIAN	ROBERT

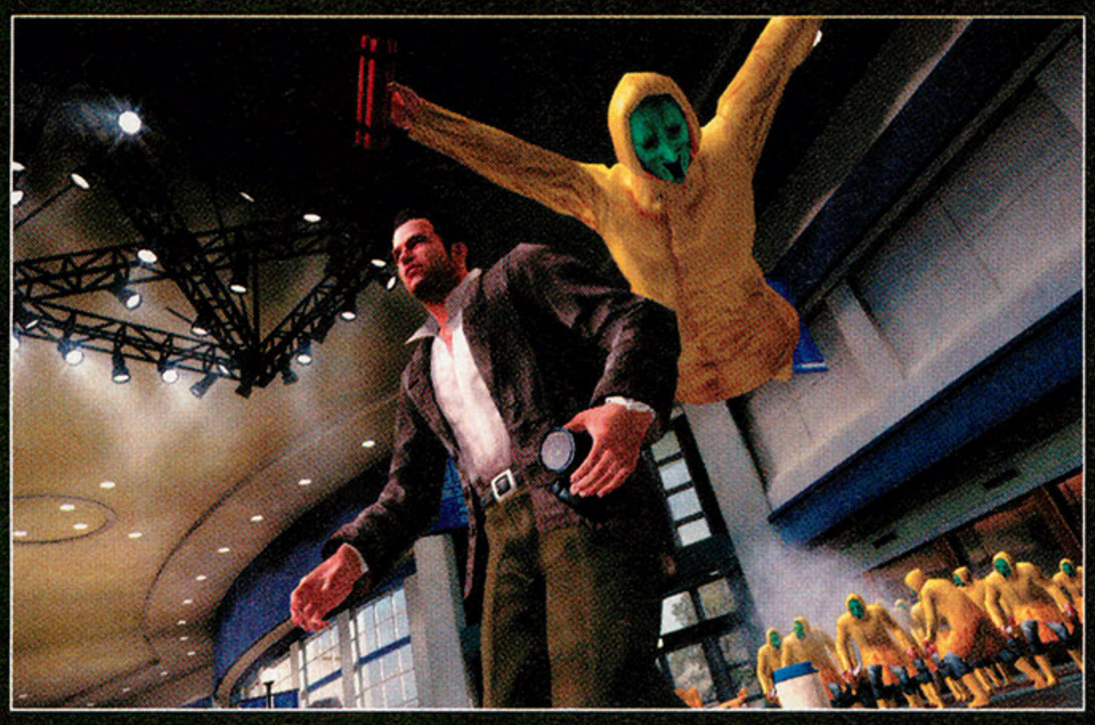
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com

■ **All this and brains, too. Delicious brains.... Braaaainss.....**



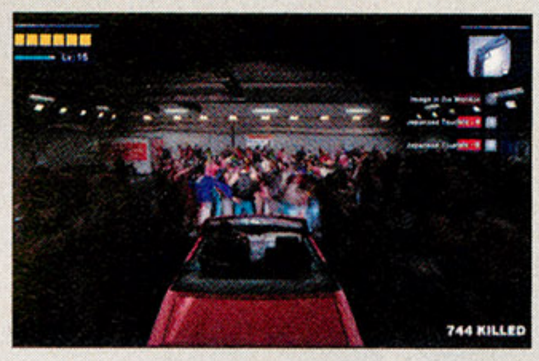
■ **It's the little things that put a smile on our faces while playing *Dead Rising*. Ramming a showerhead into rotting foreheads, for instance, brings new meaning to the word "bloodbath."**



■ **Zombies become the least of your worries as the game progresses. Soon you'll dodge rain-slickered suicidal cultists keen on sacrificing you in your skivvies. Seriously!**

The Good and Bad Side of Dead Rising...

That's Awesome!



Hard driving — Cruising through wall-to-wall zombies is rad, but don't break down!

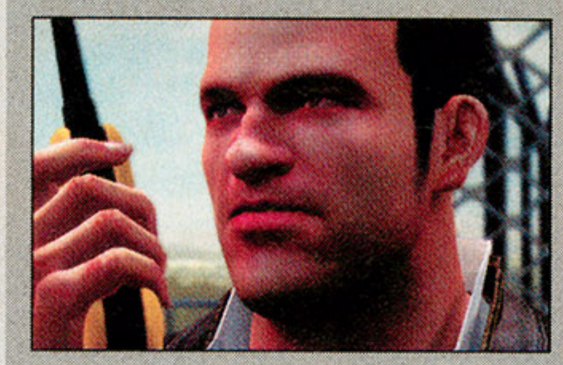
Style points — Raid stores for outfits. Hey, It's not stealing when it's the apocalypse.

Sharp shooting — Taking hot photos (i.e., upskirt zombie erotica) gets you experience.

Smooth moves — Experience grants you killer hand-to-rotten-hand fighting moves.

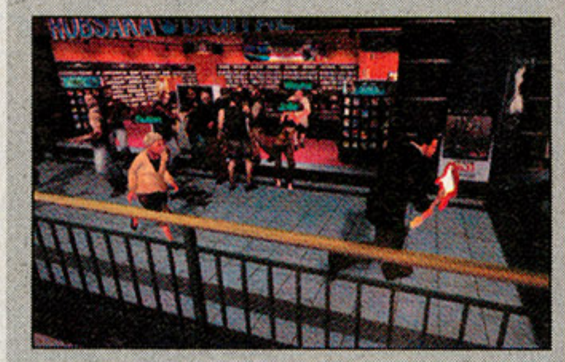
Grave humor — Intentional or not, the cheesy plot evokes B-movie hilarity.

That Sucks!



Hate radio — Answering this gizmo for mission info leaves you defenseless.

Busted bosses — Most main baddies blow. One will ruin clownophobes for life.



Escort service — Leading idiot innocents to safety, often in groups, is no fun.

Rest areas — You get just one save slot, only accessible in areas like the bathrooms.

Readers' block — The game's tiny text will send non-HDTV gamers to LensCrafters.

Near-Death Experience Points: Five not-in-the-manual tips that'll save your sanity...

You can't save everybody: Over-eager completist players may find this hard to take, but there just aren't enough minutes in *Dead Rising*'s three days to do every side mission. That brings us to our second tip....

Focus on the big stuff: The main missions, called "cases," kick off at specific times and places. Missing a key event closes all future cases, locking you out of the unfolding story. So, here's our third tip....

Don't be afraid to start over: Call it a bold game-design concept or just busted gameplay, but you'll likely have to redo the story at least once. Fortunately, you can skip cinemas, so do-overs go much faster.

Friendly fire: Those annoying bosses go down easier if you use the Uzi lying in the Al Fresca Plaza fountain. You'll find another Uzi in the parking garage, located along the western wall of the park.

Shake it up: Toss every food item you find into restaurant blenders to whip up super smoothies. Coffee creamer and OJ, for instance, nitro-boost your speed—handy for when you're running behind schedule.

Mead
money madness™

Buy Mead®
Get Rewarded®™

Buy Mead®
school supplies
and you could
win great gear!

Stuff You Could Win!

Check it out today
MeadMoneyMadness.com/games

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. OPEN TO LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE 50 UNITED STATES AND D.C., 13 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Game begins 12:00:01 AM EST on 7/14/06 and ends 11:59:59 PM EST on 11/5/06. GAME SUBJECT TO FULL OFFICIAL RULES. For full Official Rules visit www.meadmoneymadness.com. Sponsor: MeadWestvaco Consumer & Office Products, a division of MeadWestvaco.

The makers of the prizes in this promotion are not connected in any way with Mead and do not sponsor or endorse this promotion.

©2006 MeadWestvaco Corporation

Prey's portals and anti-gravity tricks are fun for the first few hours....

Xbox 360

PREY

ONLINE

Unanswered prayer

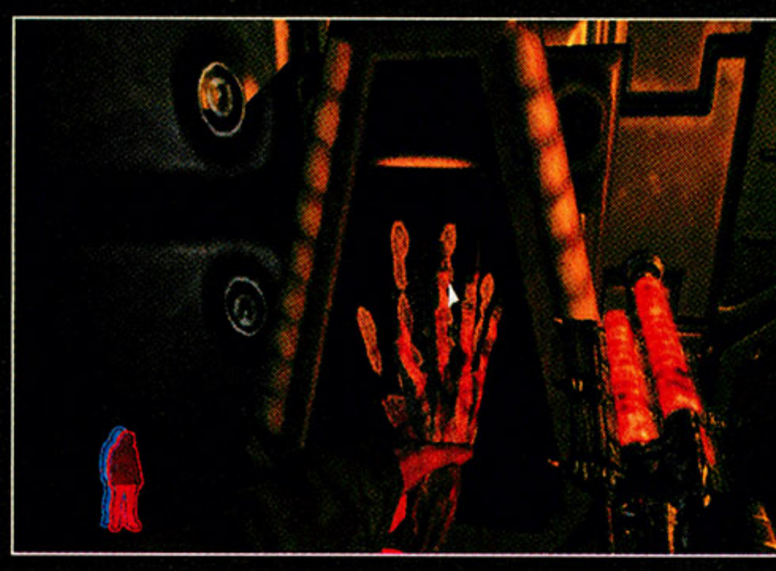
Good: Portals, fun with gravity, wall-walking...
Bad: The creativity doesn't extend to level design
Worth a Listen: The in-game Art Bell radio broadcasts

G. FORD: For an enthralling few hours, out-there first-person shooter *Prey* blew my mind. The game opens with some edgy extraterrestrials abducting your ass and dropping you into their organic, pulsating, Death Star–sized ship, which houses a bevy of awe-somely otherworldly rules. To wit: Rooms with multiple gravitational fields create M.C. Escher–esque scenes, as enemies walk on walls while you stand on a different "floor." Your ghostlike spirit lets you both spirit walk (leaving your body behind as you sneak through force fields and pick off enemies) and death walk (in which, upon dying, you head to a trippy shooting gallery and take potshots for health before pop-ping back where you left off). Finally, both you and enemies can see, shoot, and hop through portals to reach other parts of the ship all quicklike.

After this multihour undertaking of discovery, though, it seems all creativ-ity gets sucked away. The level design devolves into the straightforward, corridor-based layouts you'd find in any generic FPS, and each innovation stumbles to some degree (as the other guys will point out). *Prey*'s atmosphere and creativity deliver—it's the uneven execution (especially with the portals) and multiplayer (just deathmatch and team DM, plus lag) that holds it back.

MICHAEL: Spend a couple hours globe-trotting *Prey*'s extraterrestrial fun house and witness your mind turn to mush as it soaks in all the bizarre gimmicks—portals, walking on walls, immortality—that help the game stand out from other ho-hum shooters. Well, at least until the wackiness wears thin. After that, the game is about as interesting as any game involving fugly demons and a balls-out hero (i.e., any first-person shooter from the '90s). Being immortal (thanks to death walking) is cool, but once you realize you can't die, the challenge goes down the crapper. Bosses? Who cares about 'em if you're a wiseass Cherokee god? And while the multiplayer does its duty, having only two play options is pretty pathetic—not to mention that the action suffers from nasty lag if slow-connected users join your game.

1UP.COM—GARNETT: Wow, I remember the days when *Prey* was billed as the first-person shooter that would change (PC) gaming. That was a decade ago (I'm not kidding). The inter-vening years have made portal-hop-ping and wall-walking no less unique, but a retrotastic residue remains. Mowing down biomechanical aliens and fragging online elicits the involun-tary "Hell yeah!" old id games did (like *Doom*). If only it stepped past that. But the story misses a chance to elevate the game further (think *Half-Life*), instead delivering a narrative that amounts to nothing more than a reason for the hero's cool supernatural powers.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	7.0	8.0
	G. FORD	MICHAEL	GARNETT

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Human Head
Players: 1 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.2kgames.com

Part notebook.

Introducing FIVE STAR flex™

The NEW Hybrid NoteBinder.™
You asked for it. We built it.

Get a FREE Five Star Flex™ Card at FlexItNow.com

Buy any Five Star Flex™. Then, register online today and get access to thousands of discounts. Save on food, movies and more of the things you love!

OFFER AVAILABLE TO LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE CONTINENTAL U.S. WHO ARE 13 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER. Visit www.FlexItNow.com for Official Terms and Conditions. Offer good while supplies last. Void where prohibited. Offer expires 10/31/06.

©2006 MeadWestvaco Corporation

Part binder.

Xbox 360

NINETY-NINE NIGHTS

99 problems and this game is one of them

BRYAN: *Rez* (PS2), *Meteos* (DS), *Space Channel 5* (Dreamcast)—as evidenced by this résumé, Tetsuya Mizuguchi is one developer who doesn't stick to the videogame norm. Or that's what I thought. His latest project, the fantasy-rich hack-n-slasher *Ninety-Nine Nights* (*N3*), is as generic as they come. Is this really what we should expect from Microsoft's much-hyped Japanese support for the Xbox 360?

Similar to the *Dynasty Warriors* series, *N3* is all about the kill. It packs an insane amount of enemies onto the battlefield (the action rarely chugs), and the simple yet stylish combo system ensures you'll always look like a pro while bludgeoning thousands of orcs and goblins. Technological feats aside, *N3* doesn't do much else...er, make that *anything* else that you haven't seen from this stuck-in-the-mud genre. The missions here—regardless of the character you use—are cut from the same superrepetitive mold; go from point A to point B while slaughtering as many foes as possible. Innovative? No. Add to that the lack of checkpoints, and trudging through these areas multiple times (especially when some missions can be 40-plus minutes long) suddenly becomes a major hassle. Well, maybe it wouldn't feel so taxing if my A.I. troops actually had something upstairs. These guys act more like spectators than bloodthirsty warriors.

Ninety-Nine Nights would've benefited greatly from an online—or even splitscreen—co-op mode.

SHOE: Cutting down enemies in *N3* is about as thrilling as singing through "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall"... while sober. Hack and slash and hack and slash endlessly until your fingers, mind, and soul are numbed away with repetition and boredom. Are developers powerless to turn this army-busting genre into something, you know, fun? Even with the power of the Xbox 360, all the game really gives us is *more* enemies, which equates to *more* hacking and slashing. Great, now my brain knows what next-gen anesthesia feels like.

I can appreciate the occasional mindless, all-action affair, however, and *N3 is* technically superior to any *Dynasty Warriors* game (with more moves, varied environments, and a near-comprehensible story line). But what's with the awkward save system, lack of checkpoints, useless allies, and enemies that blend right in with your own army?

1UP.COM—MILKMAN: It's too bad that plowing through countless enemies and finishing *N3*'s narrative is such a repetitious chore, because its multiple-perspective story line (with no clear-cut good and evil sides) is worth unveiling. It has solid controls, sexy character designs, and when you play it on a high-def setup, *N3* is occasionally stunning. Thankfully, *N3* avoids any broken strategic elements and focuses on the action, but clearing one scenario with one character only to move on to more of the same with another is a tough sell. If you're tired of the *Dynasty Warriors* formula, this won't change that, but it is a solid foundation for future iterations.

Ninety-Nine Nights vs. Dynasty Warriors

Two busy battlefields

Ninety-Nine Nights	Dynasty Warriors
Enemy Casualties	
Orcs, trolls, giant royal toads **Advantage: N3**	War heroes that only folks with a Ph.D in Chinese history would know
Allies	
Troops who are dumber than a box of rocks **Advantage: Tie**	Ditto **Advantage: Tie**
Rations	
Red vials	Steamed pork buns **Advantage: DW**
Say What?	
Unlockable character Vigk Vagk	Cao Pi of *DW5* (that's pronounced "cow pee") **Advantage: DW**
WINNER: Dynasty Warriors	

In the end, it was the energy boost from the dim sum table that put Koei's hack-n-slasher over the top in this enemy-drenched war zone.

Good: Sweet-looking combos
Bad: Stupid A.I. troops, repetitive mission structure
At Least: The music's good

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

BRYAN	SHOE	MILKMAN
4.5	4.5	6.0

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Q Entertainment/ Phantagram
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.xbox.com

Xbox 360

BOMBERMAN ACT: ZERO

This bomb really blows

SHAME OF THE MONTH

ONLINE

Good: Despite the changes, it plays like *Bomberman*
Bad: Ridiculous new getup, severely lacking play options
Should Have Been: An Xbox Live Arcade game

MICHAEL: Who green-lit this abomination? Now I'm a mature lad, and yes, I understand cutesy bomb-chucking characters may not be all that hip with the kiddos these days, but did the developers really need to transform *Bomberman* into a hackneyed *Halo* holocaust? Just the idea of replacing warm-spirited fun with coldhearted killing completely negates the happy-go-lucky feel of the original games.

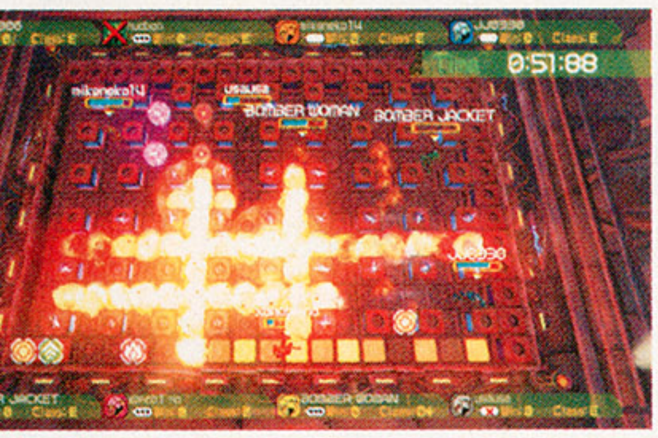
But enough about the tacky makeover; the real problem with *Act: Zero* is the fact that you get royally ripped off when it comes to gameplay variety. Sure, the single-player game has 99 stages, but considering the levels offer little to no differences, it's more a marathon of monotony than anything closely related to fun. Not even the multiplayer—the series' hallmark—saves this from being a dud. Hell, the PSP *Bomberman* (page 108) has more multiplayer options than its console cousin. Of course, that's not saying much, considering *Act: Zero* offers a whopping two modes to choose from.

Even the new "first-person bomber" view is lame—all it does is hamper your view. Sorry, B-Man, you went from hero to a big zero.

CRISPIN: Twenty-first century makeovers for classic game characters are one thing, but—yeesh!—seeing these revamped Bombermen (plus new heaving-bosomed Bomberwomen) in action is like watching Nintendo's Mario morph into a cold-eyed mafia hit man. It's like the Borg assimilated the cute, square-skulled TNT poopers of this classic series and then set them loose in a schlocky future-shocked world.

But even minus the sense of crapped-on nostalgia, *Act: Zero* still doesn't offer enough stuff for its 50-buck price tag. You get repetitive single-player missions with soul-crushing music you'll switch off in a jiff. And the all-important multiplayer doesn't deliver enough options or power-ups—or even enough players. (C'mon, only eight?! *Saturn Bomberman* supported 10 players nearly 10 years ago!)

1UP.COM—RAY: Hardcore *Bomberman* fans like myself recognize only a handful of games in the series as being great, with the rest being mostly missteps. And *Act: Zero* is the biggest misstep of all—more of a misleap, really. Where, exactly, is the logic in a full-price, single-player-only *Bomberman* game that requires an Internet connection for multiplayer and saving stats? (It doesn't even support single-screen multiplayer!) The core game is still enjoyable, but no attempt was made to flesh out the single-player mode. And the camera is either too zoomed in or out (and hard to see without an HDTV) depending on the mode. Basically, you have to be really desperate for some form of *Bomberman* to pick up *Act: Zero*.

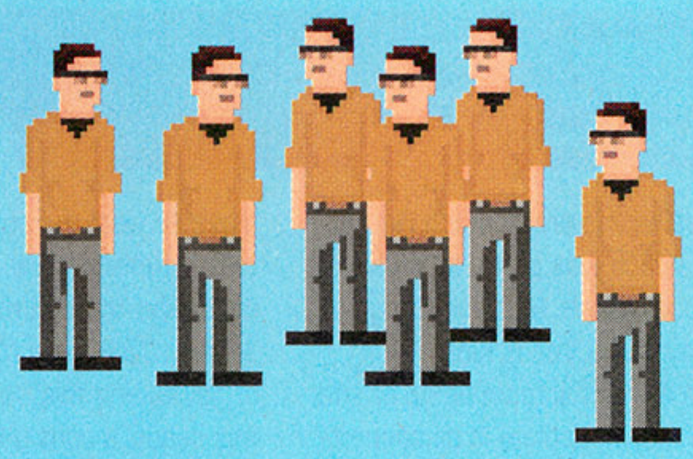


THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.0	3.0	2.0
	MICHAEL	CRISPIN	RAY

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Hudson Soft
Players: 1 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.konami.com

{geek}



{clustergeeking}

University of Advancing Technology
UAT
Learn. Experience. Innovate.

Please geek responsibly.

You may speak the langauge,
but are you geeked?
Here's a chance to prove it.

GAME DESIGN
DIGITAL ANIMATION
ARTIFICIAL LIFE
DIGITAL VIDEO
WEB DESIGN
COMPUTER FORENSICS
NETWORK SECURITY
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT
GAME PROGRAMMING

www.uat.edu > 800.658.5744

PS2/XB

FLATOUT 2

ONLINE

Another trip to the dump

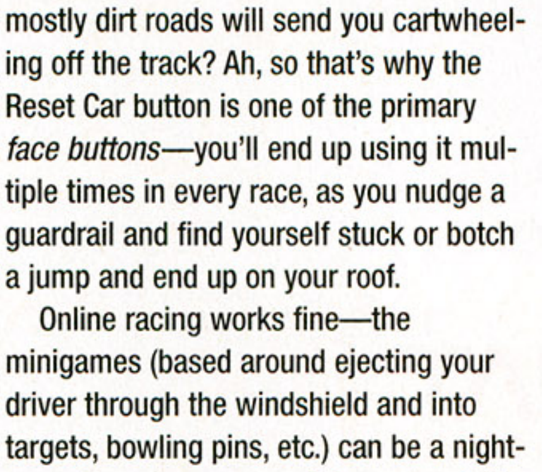
Good: Eject-the-driver minigames are funny...at first
Bad: Running over garbage for nitro = fundamentally flawed
We'd Rather Be Playing: *Burnout*. Checkers. Trombone.

DEMIAN: *FlatOut 2* is pretty much like the first *FlatOut*, which was pretty much like a poor man's backwoods *Burnout*. Nudging a fellow jalopy into a tree is kind of fun (although the driver's scream as he or she flies through the windshield is disconcerting), but smashing old fridges and other junk in order to build up your nitro is just stupid. Really, who thought that running over garbage was enough fun to be a core mechanic in a racing game? And why is it that some of the detritus littering *FlatOut*'s mostly dirt roads will send you cartwheeling off the track? Ah, so that's why the Reset Car button is one of the primary *face buttons*—you'll end up using it multiple times in every race, as you nudge a guardrail and find yourself stuck or botch a jump and end up on your roof.

Online racing works fine—the minigames (based around ejecting your driver through the windshield and into targets, bowling pins, etc.) can be a nightmare, though, as you wait for up to eight people to take their turns. It ain't worth it.

BRYAN: Good thing the developers wised up and made all of *FlatOut 2*'s minigames playable from the onset—crazy stunts such as launching your rag-doll driver through rings of fire (cue that Johnny Cash tune) remain the *only* reason to get behind this franchise's wheel. Yep, this sequel's conventional races—whether you're fishtailing on muddy backcountry roads or burning rubber on those new city streets—are just as worthless as the original's. Poor handling and ridiculously skilled A.I. drivers make a repeat performance here, as does that whole ass-backward gameplay mechanic of plowing into stuff around the track (which slows you down or causes you to wreck) in order to earn nitro boosts. Seriously, why deal with these speed bumps when you've got so many high-quality racing alternatives?

1UP.COM—JOHN: Though I liked the game a little more than these guys did, I gotta agree with them: Much of the "proper" racing in *FlatOut 2* is like a grungier, jalopy-filled ghetto take on *Burnout*. The crashes are spectacular, the sense of speed remarkably convincing, and the feel of sliding a crappy car sideways through the dirt suitably visceral. Sadly, it's not exactly jam-packed with originality, and while the rag-doll stunts that proved so popular in the first game are now modeled on stuff like ski jumping and basketball, they still involve little more than just driving in a straight line, holding down a button for the right amount of time, and then hoping for the best. It's a post–night out, guys-passing-around-the-controller time killer at best, albeit a reasonably well-executed one.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	4.5	6.0
	DEMIAN	BRYAN	JOHN

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Bugbear
Players: PS2 1-2 (2-6 online), XB 1-4 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.vugames.com

PS2/GC

SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

A not-so-super sequel

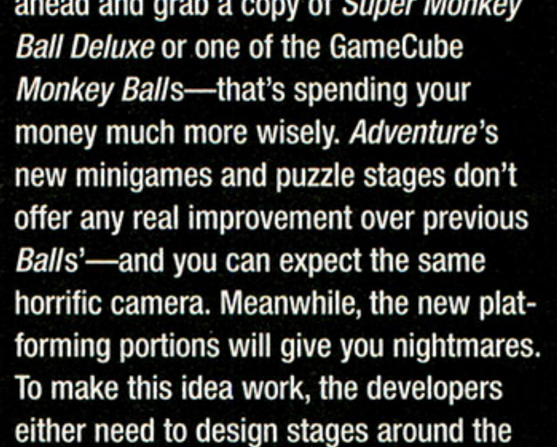
Good: Classic minigames are still good
Bad: Story mode—all of it
Thank God For: The mute button

JAY: It's all here: the puzzle stages that have you rolling precariously inside your ball from point A to point B, as well as the always entertaining party games such as monkey boxing and hang gliding. So if all the pieces that make the *Monkey Ball* games great are here, why the lame score? Because you can get a bigger, better version of this game already via *Super Monkey Ball Deluxe* (on the XB and PS2)—which nets you more content for half the price. *Adventure* (or *Diet Monkey Ball*, as I like to call it) gives you a measly 50 puzzle stages (*Deluxe* has 300) and fewer than half the party games of its predecessor (five versus *Deluxe*'s 12).

The newest addition, the story mode, sucks hard. You roll around in your ball, talking to amazingly annoying monkeys (their voices are so bad that I scrambled for the mute button), who give you mundane tasks that'll have you heading back to the puzzle stages in no time. Also, the long load times and confused camera system feel awfully sloppy. *Monkey Ball* has been a good series these past few years, so let's pretend this game never happened.

ADAM: Sometimes when you hand a little kid a gift, he ends up beguiling himself with the box instead of the toy inside. That's pretty much what *Adventure* was to me. The whole time I was playing the game's supposedly appealing adventure (which is essentially a collection of tedious errands), I just craved the series' traditional wrappings of ball-rolling puzzles and minigames. Thankfully, you can find them in a separate mode and lightly sprinkled throughout story mode. *Adventure* is also home to perhaps 2006's most annoying videogame voice acting. The characters' vocabulary consists solely of the word "monkey"...which is as excruciating as it sounds. Play *Adventure* for the solid traditional modes and adequate multiplayer, but don't expect to get much enjoyment out of the dull platforming.

1UP.COM—PATRICK: Don't spend 40 bucks here. Go on, friend; keep walking. Move over to *Sly Cooper*, pick it up, and go ahead and grab a copy of *Super Monkey Ball Deluxe* or one of the GameCube *Monkey Ball*s—that's spending your money much more wisely. *Adventure*'s new minigames and puzzle stages don't offer any real improvement over previous *Ball*s'—and you can expect the same horrific camera. Meanwhile, the new platforming portions will give you nightmares. To make this idea work, the developers either need to design stages around the idea of a rolling character or just let you be a monkey, sans ball. Instead, you're a monkey in a ball in a world full of monkeys who *aren't trapped in balls*—and it's a crummy, barely navigable world indeed.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.5	4.5	5.0
	JAY	ADAM	PATRICK

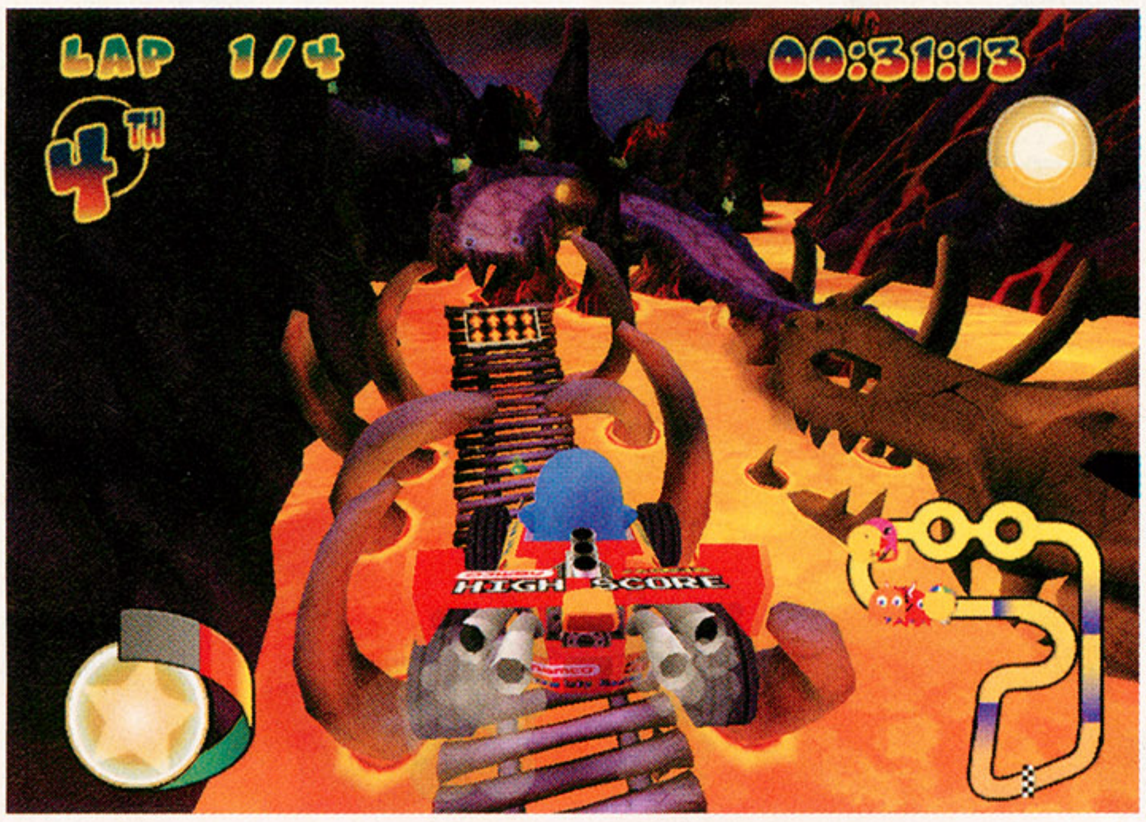
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Traveller's Tales
Players: PS2 1-2 (2-4 w/Multitap), GC 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.sega.com

PS2/GC

PAC-MAN WORLD RALLY

A trip down easy street



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	6.0	5.0
	JAY	ADAM	SHARKEY

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Smart Bomb
Players: PS2 1-2, GC 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.namcobandaigames.com

Good: Overall a solid kart racer but...
Bad: ...it's way too easy
Most Random Character: Toc-Man

JAY: Well here's a shocker: Megamascot Pac-Man and friends star in their very own kart racer. And as you'd expect, you choose from a selection of classic Namco characters and race through various themed circuits, all while making use of shortcuts, powerslides, and carefully placed weapons. *World Rally* breaks the kart-racing mold ever so slightly with its Pac pellets. Grabbing enough of these yellow orbs allows you to temporarily transform into a mechanical Pac-Man monstrosity on wheels, chasing down and eating opponents who have changed into unicycle-riding ghosts—good stuff.

The easy-to-learn, tight controls will have you powersliding to victory in no time. Many times I blew ahead of computer-controlled opponents and never looked back, even on the toughest difficulty settings. Multiplayer offers a nice distraction (these games are always best played with friends), with a couple of battle modes and a Pac pellet collect-a-thon—and it's worth noting that the action runs smoother on the GameCube. Though it's a solid entry to the staid genre, *World Rally* is a bit too kid friendly to recommend to anyone who reads past a fifth-grade level.

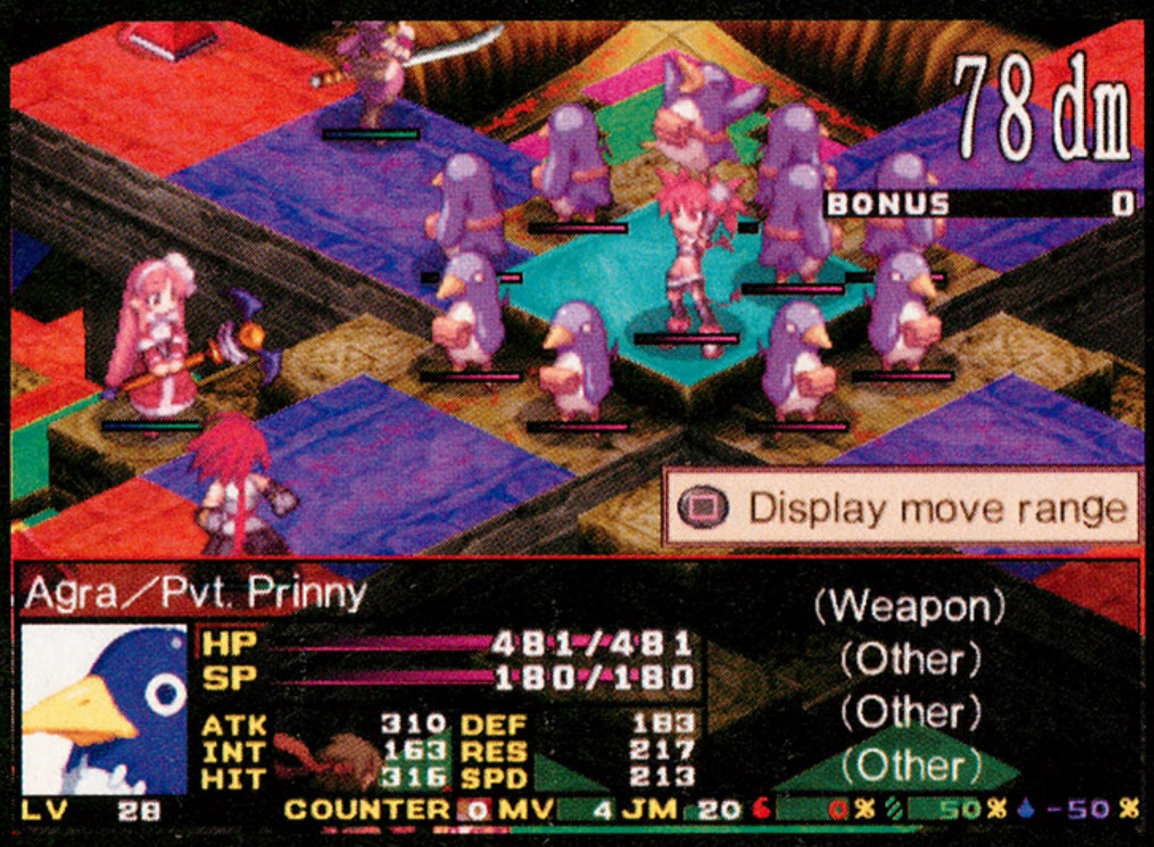
ADAM: While playing this derivative game, I wanted to call it *Mario Kart Pac-Man 64*, but that name isn't entirely fair. Sure, Pac-Man and friends peel out powerslides with multiple-color exhaust—just like in a *Mario Kart 64*—but the colors vary in this game, and the item boxes are different shades! But you know what? *Mario Kart*'s gameplay is nearly flawless, and *Pac-Man World Rally* wisely simulates the better elements of that classic series. It has particularly strong course design, and the whole *Pac-Man* vibe—characters gobble fruits and ghosts aplenty—extends its appeal. Regardless of *World Rally*'s DNA, it turned out sturdy and quietly entertaining. I'd be thrilled to find this game in a cereal box.

1UP.COM—SHARKEY: Like these other guys said, in a world already choked with mascot kart racers, *Pac-Man World Rally* doesn't do much to stand out. It may seem lazy to blow off one of these things as "*Mario Kart*, but with Sonic/Crash Bandicoot/Pac-Man/whatever characters," but in this case, it's completely deserved. The developers didn't even bother to switch around the colors and functions of the shells...er, bombs. Red ones track the car ahead of you, blue ones take out the leader, and greens are dumbfire. It isn't a bad game; it's just unnecessary. Really young kids might dig it, but hell, little kids try to eat rocks.

PlayStation 2

DISGAEA 2: CURSED MEMORIES

More strategy gone crazy



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	8.0	6.5
	SHOE	SHANE	RAY

Publisher: NIS America
Developer: Nippon Ichi Software
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.nisamerica.com

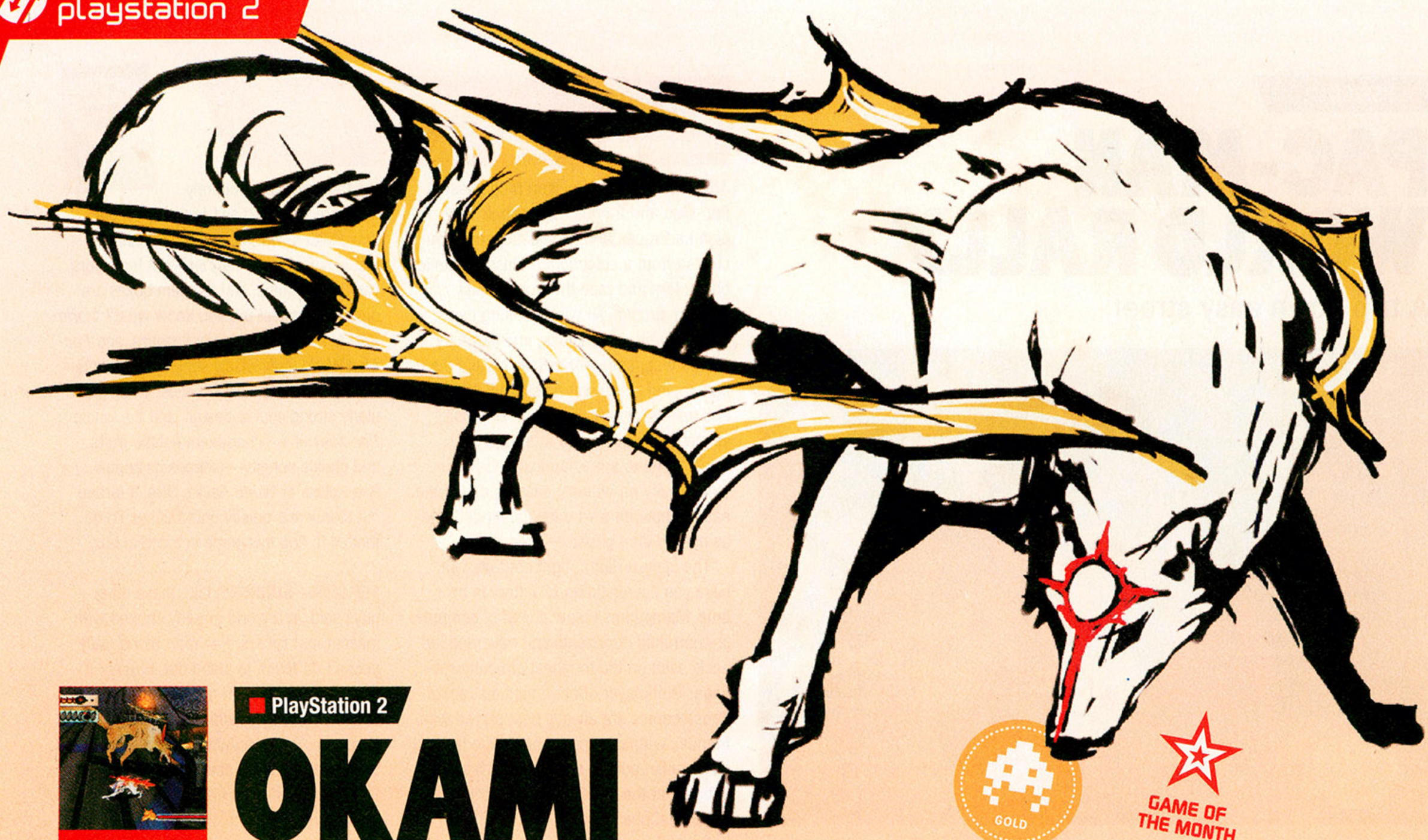
Good: Deep, flexible strategy gaming
Bad: Very Japanese story line and dialogue
Dood!: Playable prinnies are back

SHOE: Once again, I risked good mental health by delving into the latest strategy-RPG from those lunatics at NIS. *Disgaea 2*, like others before it, unapologetically throws together deranged characters (like a dual-personality talking frog...who's French) and eardrum-piercing voice acting with the deepest, most hardcore gameplay around. If you regularly immerse yourself in the crazy s*** that comes out of Japan, *Disgaea 2* probably won't faze you. Everyone else: You've been warned.

Like I said, this game is hardcore. You can (but don't have to) worry about things such as setting up your fighters for team attacks; raising their skills; "cheating" the system by moving characters around for support actions, then canceling their moves to do something else; having them throw each other around to position for maximum efficiency; improving items; creating combos to find better bonuses; bribing the Senate to get what you want out of the game (new characters, better items, tougher enemies, etc.).... You get a *ton* of strategy options here, though most of what *Disgaea 2* is offering, its predecessors (including its own prequel) have already given us. Still, I can think of worse ways to go insane than by playing another excellent NIS strategy-RPG...just do yourself a favor and skip the story and dialogue stuff.

SHANE: Year after year, publisher NIS consistently delivers complex, enjoyable strategy-RPGs, and *Disgaea 2* will handily satiate fans of the genre. Like its predecessor, *Cursed Memories* feels like a twisted fun-house version of *Final Fantasy Tactics*, blending deeply strategic gameplay, nearly limitless customization, and cornball humor with finesse. Sure, it's similar to the last game, but subtle improvements (high-res graphics, earlier access to the cool Dark Congress system, and a less exploitable endgame) make it a worthwhile investment for strat fans.

1UP.COM—RAY: I was completely into the original *Disgaea* but was burned out by the time its NIS successors (*Phantom Brave*, *Makai Kingdom*, etc.) arrived. Still, it's nice to come back to a familiar world. Apparently, the developers wanted something overly familiar, though, because *Disgaea 2* feels a heck of a lot like the game I played three years ago. It certainly *looks* more colorful and detailed—or as detailed as these games get, anyway. Still, battling foes and upgrading your party follows the same routine as the original. I'm playing a good guy this time; shouldn't that warrant some new takes on things? I couldn't help but be drawn back in, but this so-called *Disgaea 2* just isn't as cool as it could have been.



A Fair Fight? *Okami* borrowed most of the good stuff from *Zelda*, but it left out one crucial bit: It has no lock-on button to help you engage the enemy head-on. To enjoy yourself in *Okami*'s battles, you need to be a pro at controlling the camera yourself (using the right analog stick). The game is so generous with power-ups, however, that sucking won't often get you killed.

PlayStation 2

OKAMI

Refusing to paint by numbers

ROBERT: I've never been the type to go googly-eyed at the sight of a pretty game, but I can't talk about *Okami* without first giving a nod to its visionary art direction. Fuzzed out on faux paper, punctuated by thick black lines, and stained with a cornea-buzzing palette of bright and muted colors, *Okami* is a painter's imagination come to life. It proves that intrepid game-makers can blow your mind without the use of bleeding-edge computer hardware, confirming what I've long suspected: Great art is more important to the visual experience of a game than great technology.

That painted-canvas look ties directly into *Okami*'s hook. An adventure game very much in debt to the *Zelda* series, *Okami* replaces the usual inventory of puzzle-solving, path-unlocking gadgets with a paintbrush. As you traverse mythological Japan, killing monsters and solving puzzles, you can pause the game at any time and use the Celestial Brush to affect the onscreen action. From drawing in a missing section of bridge to slicing an enemy in half with a single stroke, the brush plays into every aspect of the game. *Okami* throws new brush uses at you all the way up to the end, quite a feat considering its length of approximately 40 hours.

Epic adventures are great and all, but *Okami* could have used tighter pacing. The first five hours of the game are a slow mix of long-winded character speech and basic training. In fact, the entire game is packed with reams of text. That's fine in principle, but you'll find yourself forced to read the same details over and over as helpful townspeople beat clues into your brain (while you wish for an adult text-speed option).

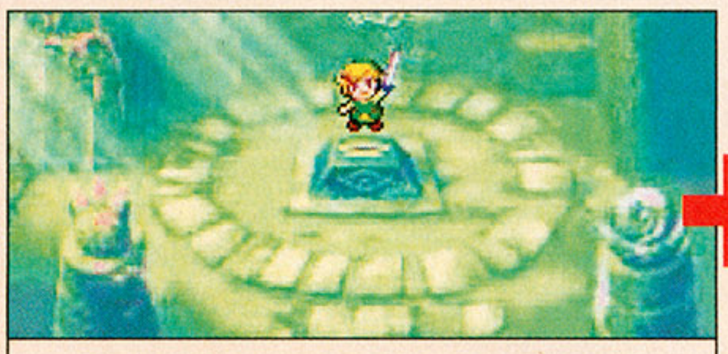
But just when it seems that Amaterasu (the game's wolf-goddess protagonist) and Issun (her sprite sidekick) have settled into a rut, *Okami* wows you with something new, a shrink-ray jaunt into the garden to fight spiders and ride on the feet of passersby or a journey into the snowy North. *Okami* developer Clover obviously put a lot of love into its creation and, as you travel the countryside, painting barren landscapes into bloom, that love radiates from the screen.

MARK: Next gen schmext schmen. Who needs expensive new hardware when *Okami* delivers graphics so rich, so vibrant, and so spectacular that you often can't help but pause just to admire them? Who needs extensive online options when you have a world full of great characters, sharp dialogue, and tons of secrets? Who needs fancy new controllers when *Okami*'s brilliant brush system innovates, simplifies, *and* entertains all in one (ahem) stroke? As recent *Castlevania* games did with the *Metroid* formula, *Okami* takes a well-established game template (in this case the *Zelda* series) and reinvents it with a style all its own. The sleepy villages, sprawling valleys, and clever dungeons of *Okami*'s mythic Japan induce the same wide-eyed wonder and thrill of discov-

GOLD

GAME OF THE MONTH

Is Okami Too Exotic to Understand via Words? Look, Pictures!



Take *Zelda*'s puzzle-heavy adventuring...

...let the player use the game as a canvas...

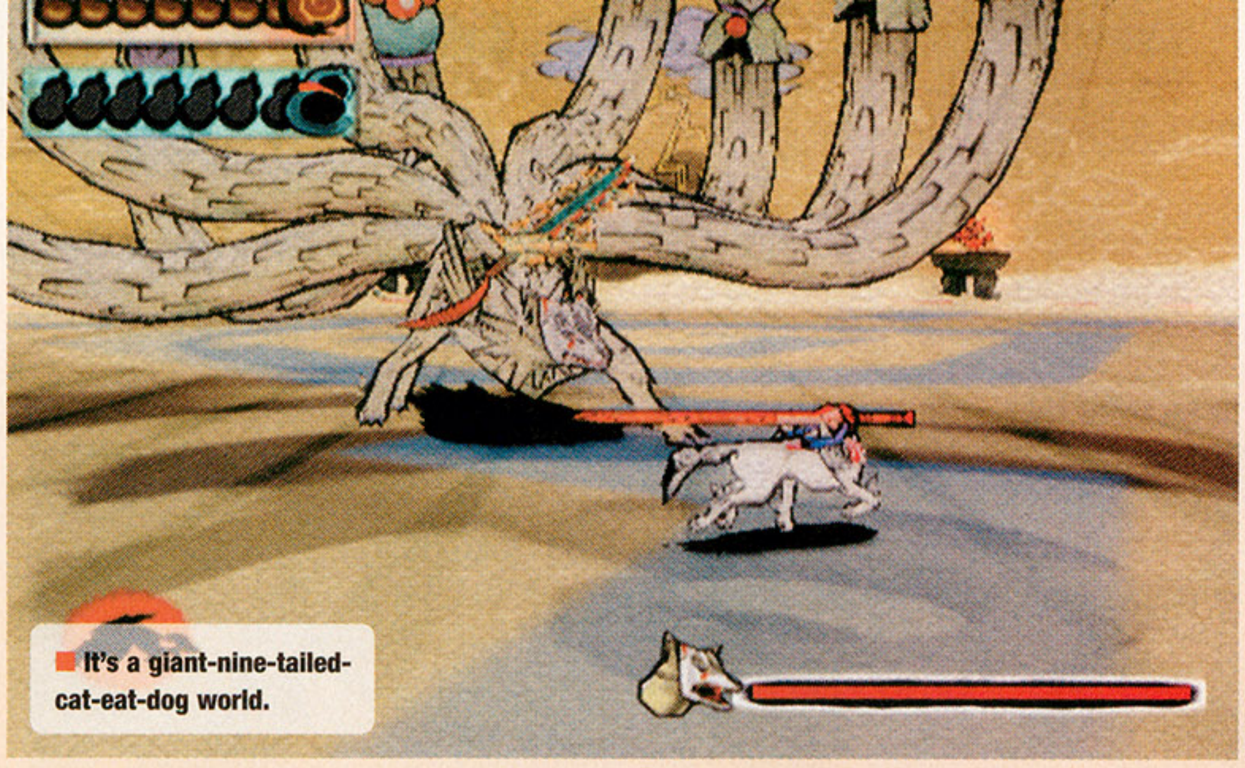
...throw in a healthy dose of flowery landscaping...

Good: Amazing art, novel gameplay ideas
Bad: Long-winded, repetitive text, no locking on in battle
Did You Know: *Okami* originally didn't feature its painted look

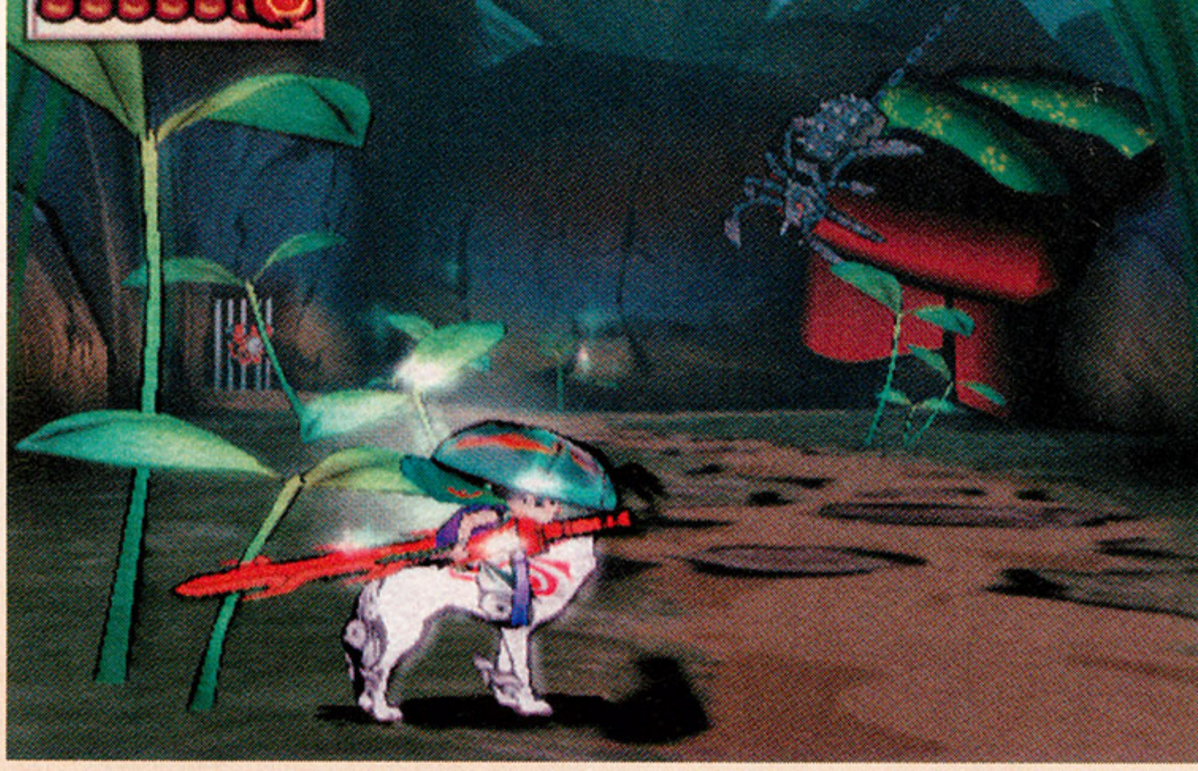
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	ROBERT	MARK	ANDREW
	9.0	9.5	9.0

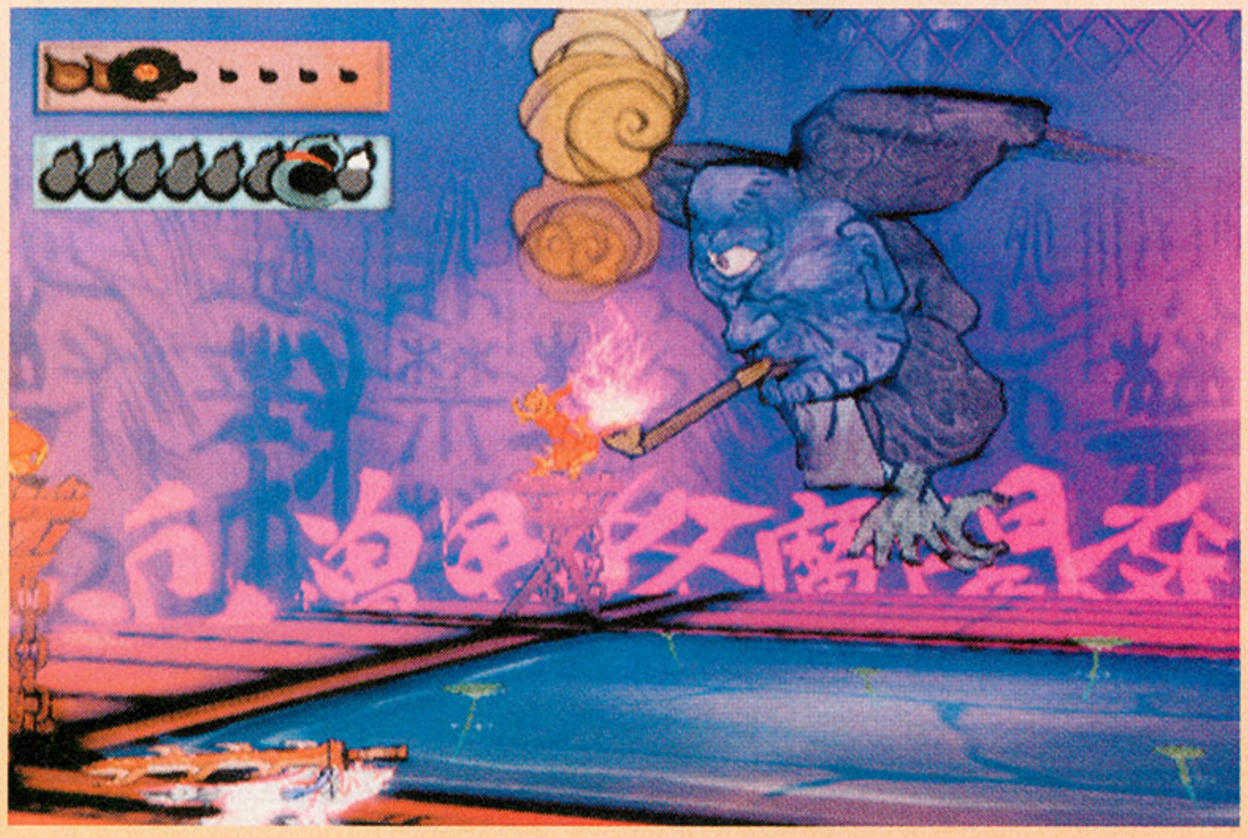
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Clover
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

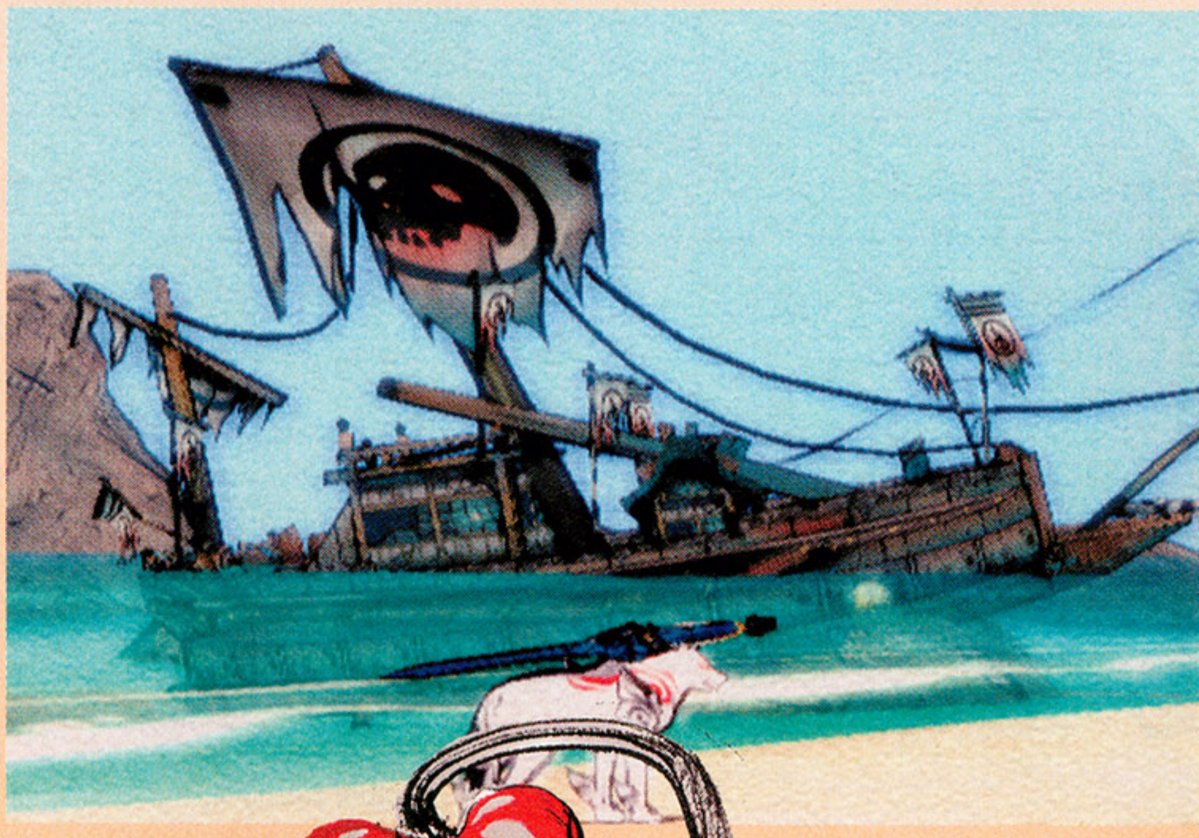
www.capcom.com



It's a giant-nine-tailed-cat-eat-dog world.





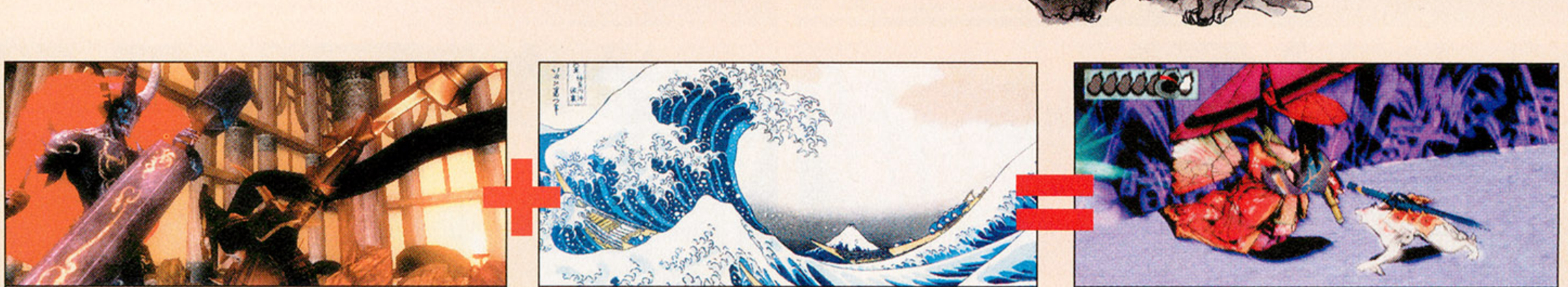


ery you'd encounter in Link's finest adventures. Which is not to say it's the same old game with a fresh coat of ink; the developers have seamlessly worked the unique brush mechanic into every aspect of *Okami*, especially its epic boss battles.

I could've done with a bit more challenge in combat and fewer, less preachy story bits, but these complaints are so minor in the face of *Okami*'s achievement that I almost feel silly even bringing them up. I'd be surprised if you find a better game on any system this fall.

1UP.COM—ANDREW: As much as it owes to the *Zelda* series, *Okami* is every bit as good: It has a charming, classic story; characters who actually possess *character*; entertaining and varied side quests; and a visual aesthetic that manages to make *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* look like a paint-by-numbers piece. But every time my mind crept toward "This is a total rip-off" territory, *Okami* surprised me by doing something new. The Celestial Brush had much to do with this, as the other two guys have said. What they didn't point out was this creative technique's misstep (cue evil eyes in Mark and Robert's direction): Whether it's due to finicky recognition or the DualShock 2's shoddy analog sticks (or perhaps even your own lack of artistic talent), sometimes your lines and curves won't translate into the actions you want. (I'd love to see what the developers could do if they ever bring the game to the DS or Wii.) But once you get the hang of it, you'll love it: Whether drawing bombs to open up new areas or bringing barren trees to bloom, you'll find that this game world truly does feel like a giant canvas that you're breathing life into.

But Robert is absolutely right: If you're a developer thinking of pouring tons of money into graphical engines and CG cut-scenes, for the love of dog, *stop* and hire some brilliant artists. *Okami* proves that we'd all be better off for it. ➤



...add an *Otogi*-like tale based on Japanese mythology...

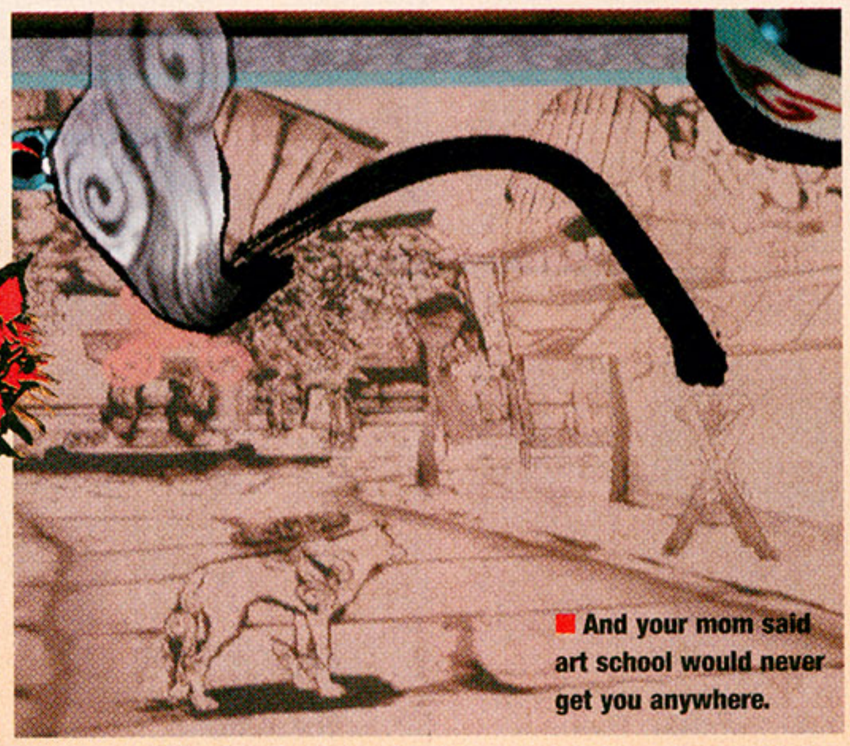
...use Japanese artist Hokusai's woodblock print style...

...and you get *Okami*.

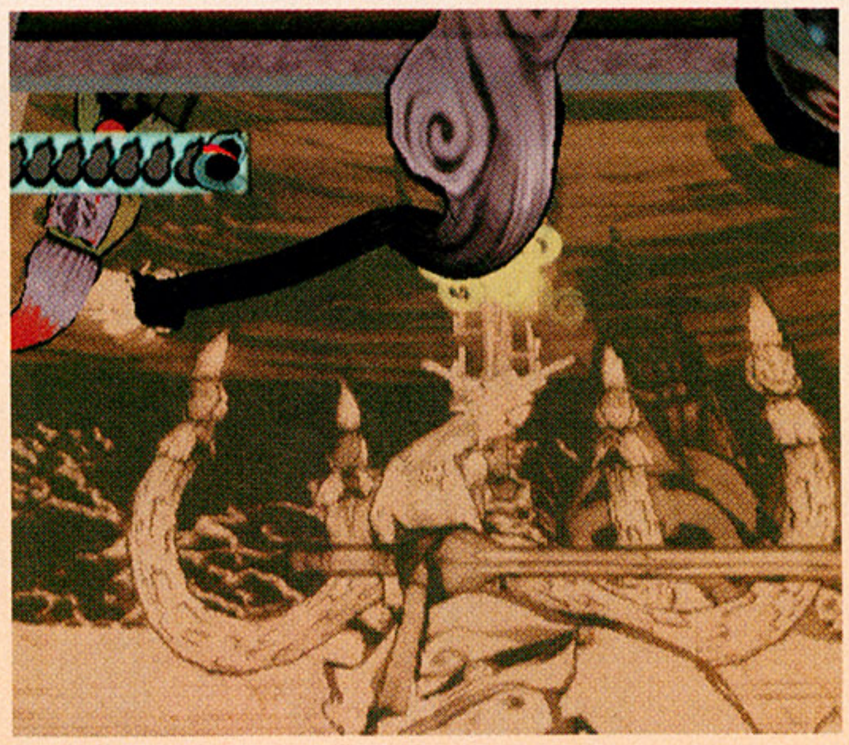
OKAMI (CONT.)

The Write Stuff

We paint a picture of *Okami*'s in-game calligraphy



■ And your mom said art school would never get you anywhere.

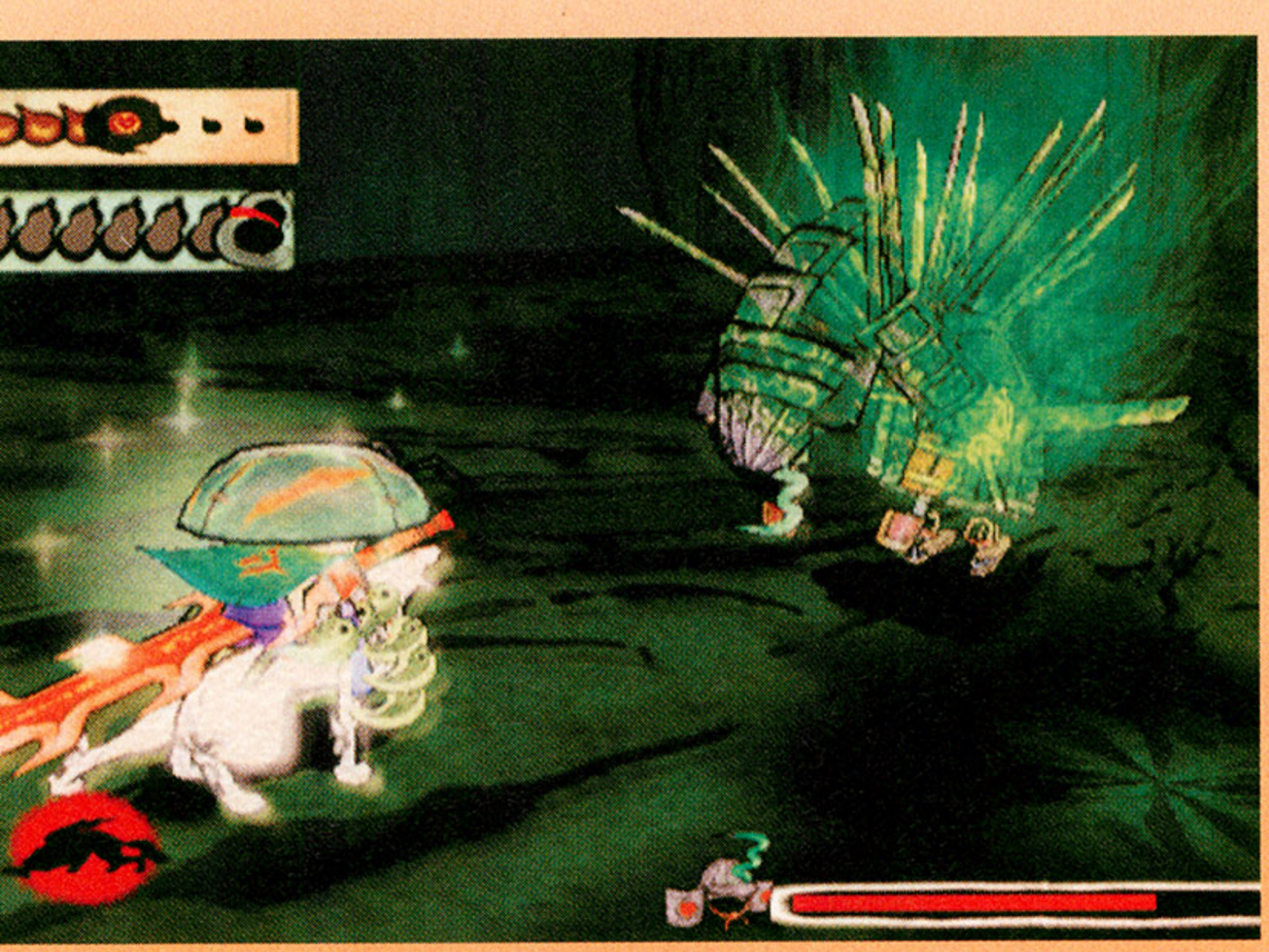


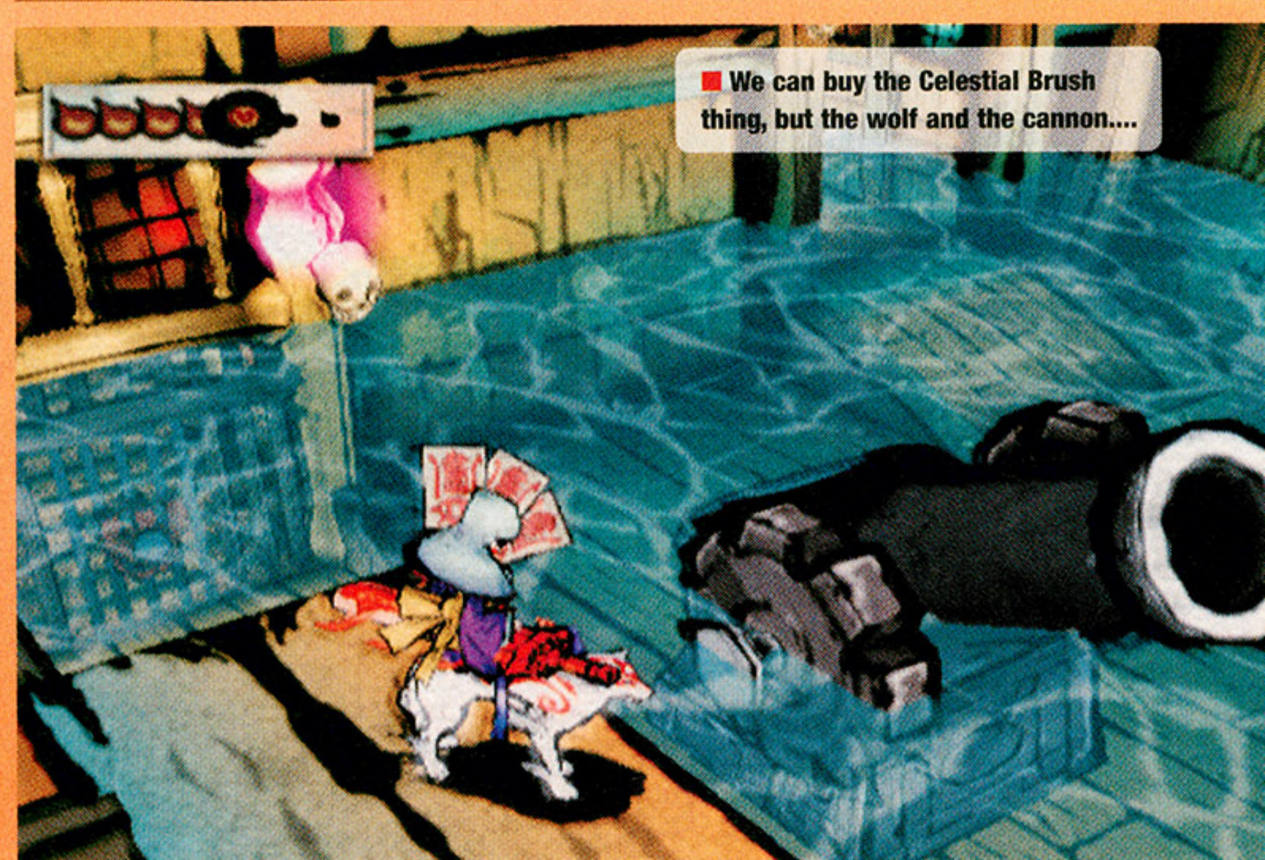
So, how do you draw a picture in the middle of an adventure game? *Okami* allows you, via the R1 button, to pause the action at any point, turning the colorful scenery into a washed-out canvas. You then use the left analog stick to guide the brush across the screen. You'll come across 13 brush techniques in all.

Battle: Among other methods, you'll find yourself slashing enemies with a quick stroke, channelling the power of wind by drawing curlicues to blow away flying foes, and firing "ink bullets" by covering an enemy in dots.

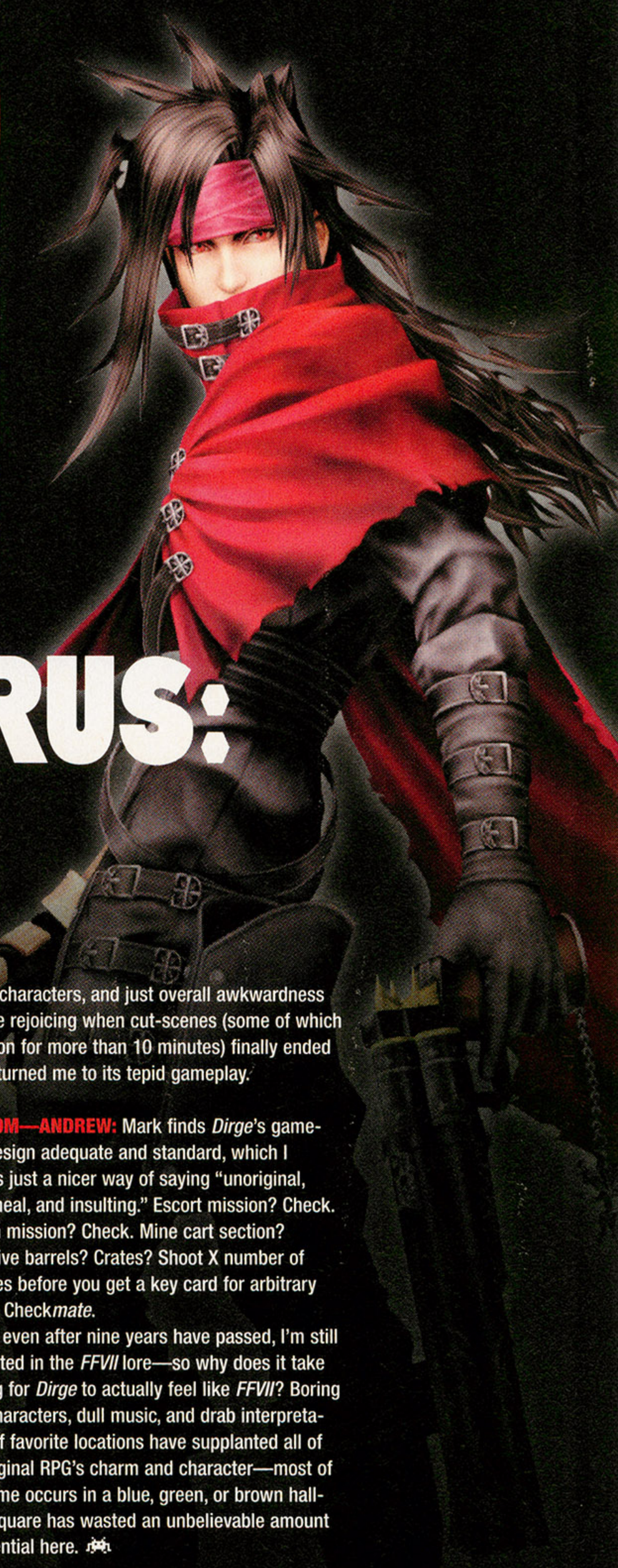
Puzzles: Bringing out your inner artist is also key to solving most *Okami* puzzles. You'll often find yourself drawing a line from a flame to a flammable surface, changing the night to day by drawing a sun in the sky, and slipping past fast-moving gates by slowing down time with a special symbol.

Travel: Much of *Okami*'s world is sealed off until you learn the right brush techniques to pass. You'll gain the ability to bomb your way through walls by drawing a bomb (a circle with a line through it), to make your way to upper reaches of forests by connecting vines to Amaterasu, and to slice your way through giant boulders.





■ We can buy the Celestial Brush thing, but the wolf and the cannon....



PlayStation 2

DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII

Funeral for a friend

SHANE: Let's face it: This whole "Compilation of *Final Fantasy VII*" thing has turned out to be a total bummer. The world's most beloved role-playing game should have provided the perfect springboard for killer sequels, but so far, the results have been dire. The visually stunning CG-animated flick *Advent Children* ended up a confusing bore, mobile phone game *Before Crisis* soiled Japanese handsets with its crappy gameplay (watch out: America is next!), and now *Dirge of Cerberus* makes a dull stab at the shooter genre.

Weak-willed *FFVII* fans who take the plunge will find that *Dirge* isn't really much of a shooter—you can easily power your way through the game à la *Devil May Cry* using Vincent Valentine's meager hand-to-hand combos to dispatch the legions of brain-dead Deep Ground soldiers in your way. Of course, the game encourages gunplay, but eager-to-assist autoaiming leeches much of the challenge, while sloppy camera angles in the claustrophobic levels often obscure your targets.

Ultimately, the game simply isn't that engaging: The unique *FFVII* setting feels totally wasted here, as you're often running through boring corridors looking for keycards. The sickest moves that you'll see Vincent pull off appear only in *Dirge*'s gorgeous CG cut-scenes...the game itself offers no surprises. Hardcore *FFVII* nuts might eke out enough enjoyment from the flashback-laden story line to validate their purchase, but, truthfully, Vincent's past is about as enthralling as his mediocre game.

MARK: *Dirge* surprised me. Not that I expected great things, mind you—I'd played the import. But it was *how* the final English version disappointed me that I didn't expect. It wasn't in the adequate gameplay, a fairly standard (if slower and slightly clunky) take on *Devil May Cry*'s run/gun/melee template, or in the decent graphics. No, it was actually the one aspect I was genuinely looking forward to: the plot. The thought of continuing *Final Fantasy VII*'s epic story line is damned exciting in theory, but *Dirge*'s melodramatic dialogue, idiotic characters, and just overall awkwardness had me rejoicing when cut-scenes (some of which drone on for more than 10 minutes) finally ended and returned me to its tepid gameplay.

1UP.COM—ANDREW: Mark finds *Dirge*'s gameplay design adequate and standard, which I think is just a nicer way of saying "unoriginal, piecemeal, and insulting." Escort mission? Check. Stealth mission? Check. Mine cart section? Explosive barrels? Crates? Shoot X number of enemies before you get a key card for arbitrary gates? Check*mate*.

And even after nine years have passed, I'm still interested in the *FFVII* lore—so why does it take so long for *Dirge* to actually feel like *FFVII*? Boring new characters, dull music, and drab interpretations of favorite locations have supplanted all of the original RPG's charm and character—most of the game occurs in a blue, green, or brown hallway. Square has wasted an unbelievable amount of potential here.

Hot Mess

Dirge of Cerberus introduces several utterly embarrassing new characters to the *FFVII* universe, but none is quite as alluring/repulsive as Shalua Rui, the sultry yet handicapped scientist tasked with saving her sister from the Deep Ground project. Sure, she might have only one working eye and one human arm, but we'd still hit it.

What About Online Play?

Although *Dirge* offers an extensive online multiplayer mode (with both deathmatch and co-op mission play) in Japan, all of that content has been stripped from the U.S. release. What gives? Well, the game requires the optional PS2 hard drive unit, which isn't compatible with the redesigned slim-line PS2. Oops. If it's any consolation, Square Enix reworked some of these quests as bonus levels for the new Extra Hard difficulty setting.

Good: Gorgeous cut-scenes, fleshes out the *FFVII* backstory
Bad: Too short, too easy, camera issues
Nobody Wants: Crappy stealth missions

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	SHANE	MARK	ANDREW
	5.0	5.0	4.0

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.square-enix.com

PlayStation 2

VALKYRIE PROFILE 2: SILMERIA

SILVER

Joyride of the Valkyries

SHANE: Finally, a Japanese role-playing game for everyone who hates how talky and slow-moving the genre has become—*Silmeria* thrusts you into an action-packed quest laden with complex dungeons, tricky puzzles, and plenty of intense, strategic combat. Don't expect a real crowd-pleaser, though—*VP2* isn't afraid to kick your ass and leave you for dead. But hardcore questers who welcome a sizable challenge will likely love what developer tri-Ace has done with this new *Profile*.

Although narrative often takes center stage in RPGs, gameplay reigns supreme in *Valkyrie Profile*. And, at its core, *Silmeria* plays much like its PS1 predecessor—you control a spunky Norse Valkyrie who amasses a small army of warriors (both living and deceased) while traversing various towns and dungeons. Surprisingly, exploration here still unfolds like in an old-school 2D platformer. You're constantly running, jumping, solving puzzles, and dodging enemies in real time; *VP2*'s tightened-up controls and clever new twists (the previous game's Photon system now allows you to both freeze enemies and teleport to their location) make these labyrinths wonderfully engaging. Plus, the mazes get exponentially more complicated as you progress, thanks to the new Seal Stone system (you can add or remove gems that imbue either your party or dungeons themselves with various effects) and plenty of difficult block-sliding puzzles.

Whereas the original *VP*'s battles are simple 2D affairs that often boil down to frantic button mashing, *Silmeria*'s new 3D melees actually demand your full tactical attention. You still execute attacks by jamming on the face buttons (each one corresponds to a party member), but now you must also run around the battleground, carefully choosing your opponents while trying to avoid enemies' sights. You have several attack options—you can choose to quickly fell the leader (thereby ending the battle early), target foes' individual body parts (to snag bonus items), or split up your party to handle multiple enemies at once. With all these options at your disposal, combat never bores, and the game's many boss encounters provide the perfect showcase for how deep the system truly is.

Silmeria isn't a complete success, however. The otherwise fantastic combat engine sometimes glitches out when you use the R1 button to dash around the battlefield—your party members can get stuck, becoming easy targets for foes. Lame. And the overly intricate skill and equipment systems could have easily been streamlined...the game is tough enough already. But really, the game's plot presents the biggest problem. Narratively, it's a slow burn from the outset—newcomer Alicia fails to inspire confidence as a heroine, and her exploits don't really get interesting until the endgame. Likewise, very little effort goes into characterizing her comrades (scope the sidebar to see the sad fate of the Einherjar), making them infinitely interchangeable and weirdly disposable. Luckily, stellar gameplay, lush audiovisual trappings, and sizable challenges easily eclipse the story line's shortcomings.

Good: Lifelike visuals, complex and rewarding battles
Bad: Plodding story line, too difficult for newbies
Recommended Prerequisite: *Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth* (PS1, PSP)

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	9.0	8.0
	SHANE	JAY	MILKMAN

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: tri-Ace
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

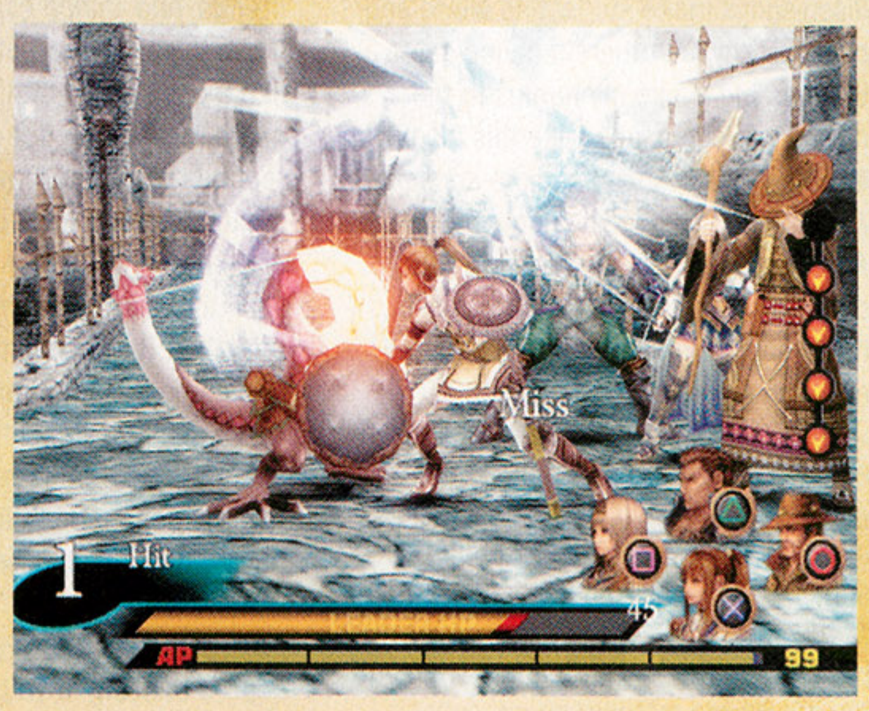
www.square-enix.com

To My Side, My Noble Einherjar!

That random roadside trash could be a valuable ally....

Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth vets will likely be disappointed by how *Silmeria* handles the Einherjar (undead warriors our heroine summons to her side in battle). In the first game, locating these heroes constituted a large chunk of the overall quest, and each one offered an intriguing backstory to flesh out the game world. This time around, you simply run across random Einherjar-filled loot scattered around dungeons, sucking out the souls with little fanfare (only a few characters even warrant dialogue scenes). You won't even want to hang on to these guys for long—once they reach a certain experience level, you're better off releasing them in exchange for rare swag. Not only does this net you a valuable item (often a potion that permanently enhances stats), but it also allows you to track down the newly released hero later in the game to snag another piece of equipment.

The photon teleport system transforms every dungeon into a brain-bending platforming puzzle.



JAY: The PS2 has certainly aged well. We are seeing some truly beautiful games in the console's twilight years, and *Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria* is no exception. The game's realistic visual style (which looks a lot like Square Enix's upcoming *Final Fantasy XII*, oddly enough) pushes the PS2 to the brink—every environment and character impress with meticulous detail and breathtaking lighting. You'll even spot some cool depth-of-field and focus tricks that lend the game an unexpected cinematic edge.

You'll still be traversing dungeons, temples, and towns in classic side-scrolling *VP1* style, but the surprising new 3D battle system might overwhelm even returning *VP* fans. Those with enough patience to master its complexities will be rewarded with some of the best role-playing combat in the genre, but don't expect an easy acclimation. After a few hours of practice—and a lot of dying—I was darting across the battlefield, splitting up my party, and tag-teaming hordes of lizards, kobolds, and all other manner of fantasy beasts in a flurry of seizure-inducing magic attacks and flashy sword combos.

That learning curve sure is steep, though. Managing endless stats and skills isn't easy, and the daunting combat initially frustrates as you learn the path to victory through painful trial and error. Be patient though—this is one the best role-playing experiences on the PS2 and shouldn't be missed.

1UP.COM—MILKMAN: This *Valkyrie Profile* prequel certainly took a long time, and it's really quite amazing that one was made at all. So thank developer tri-Ace for caving in to fan demand and creating the sequel everyone wanted but didn't expect.

It's funny, though, even with six years between *Lenneth* and *Silmeria*, how familiar things seem. While obviously a design choice, the decision to stick with side-scrolling exploration segments in towns and cities allows the developer to create beautiful 3D environments that maintain the spirit of the 2D backdrops of the original. Shimmering, warm, and bright, *Silmeria*'s landscapes sparkle in the glow of an almost overt use of oversaturated lighting effects. Of course, it goes the other way once you make your way down into any of the game's wonderfully labyrinthine dungeons.

While the graphic detail of the dungeons veers from mediocre to stunning, one thing that always remains beautiful to watch is the battles themselves, particularly the Soul Crush moves. *Silmeria* isn't easy, though. If you don't pay attention to the equipment you're wearing, explore all of the abilities at your disposal, or master the art of dashing in the increasingly difficult battles, you may find *Silmeria* tough going. But veterans who wanted a fresh spin on the original formula will truly enjoy tri-Ace's best game since the original *Valkyrie Profile*.

Bigger in Japan

While *VP* remains a cult phenom here, the original game was a success in its home nation of Japan. So, when *VP2* hit there earlier this year, it was also available in a limited edition "Artifact Box" containing a Silmeria action figure, soundtrack CD, and special key chain. Before you get too envious, know that Japanese gamers had to pony up $125 for the set, while overzealous importers coughed up nearly $250 for their goodies.

She'll totally kick any Bratz's ass.

PlayStation 2

DANCE FACTORY

The rhythms of randomness

Good: Dance to your favorite tunes
Bad: Makes those tunes seem extremely boring
A Shame: The game's record mode won't let you edit your work

ROBERT: *Script for* Dance Factory *TV commercial (to air during* Dr. Phil*)*: **Mom:** "Get your greasy fists out of that chicken bucket, Billy. It's time for another round of good-for-you dancepad gaming!" **Billy:** "Aw, Mom, but those Japanese disco songs make me feel all weird and tingly.... Why isn't there a dance game that lets me shake my humps to the disposable pop songs I like this week?" **Mom** [*Chime sounds as game appears in her hands*]: "That's why I got you *Dance Factory*, the only game that lets you dance to your own CDs." **Billy:** "Gosh... that's hella crunk! Maybe I won't need my stomach stapled after all!"

But *Dance Factory* doesn't really work as advertised. After you replace the game disc with your own CDs, the game slowly digests your chosen song(s), then spits out a bargain-bin version of *Dance Dance Revolution* to the tempo (not the beat) of the track. The timing works, but the moves are totally random, defying all graceful movement and sucking the life out of ass-shaking hits. Fun dance patterns, not great music, make dance games worth playing. It's an interesting idea that doesn't quite work.

JENNIFER: I couldn't disagree more with this bunch of haters. You have to be a hardcore geek to care about choreography in a dancing game. For me, these games are about having fun and looking silly with a bunch of friends, and *Dance Factory* lets in all those people turned off by the sounda-like techno drivel that dominates this genre. Who cares if the autogenerated routines won't make me look cool in the arcade? And so what if the trappings are a bit...low-rent? If I really wanted style and choreography, I'd be watching the latest Beyoncé clips on MTV. Plus, this game has the first fitness mode that's good for the long haul, because you get ready-made routines to your favorite songs. Don't listen to these guys—they're clueless!

1UP.COM—JARED: If you find the concept of dancing to your favorite songs fascinating enough to consider playing a videogame based around it, I have a suggestion for you: Open up iTunes on your computer and commence dancing immediately instead. While *Dance Factory* works as advertised, it does so in the most piss-poor way imaginable (and don't let Jennifer convince you otherwise). The step charts gradually become more and more off synch as songs progress, breaking the single most important rule of any music game. Couple this with repeated crashes, a total lack of interesting step generation, and an absolutely appalling interface and you have a game more ghetto than your downtown club.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	ROBERT	JENNIFER	JARED
	3.0	7.0	2.0

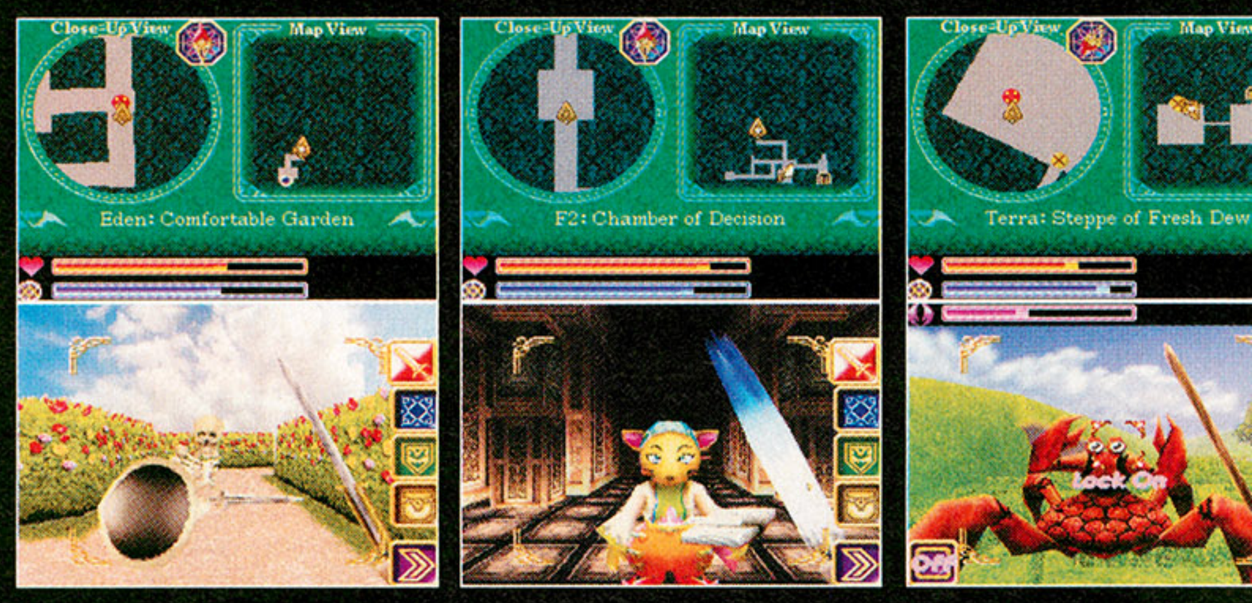
Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Codemasters
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everybody

www.codemasters.com

DS

DEEP LABYRINTH

Bad touch!



Good: Decent full-motion video bits
Bad: Horrible controls
Originally: A role-playing game for cell phones

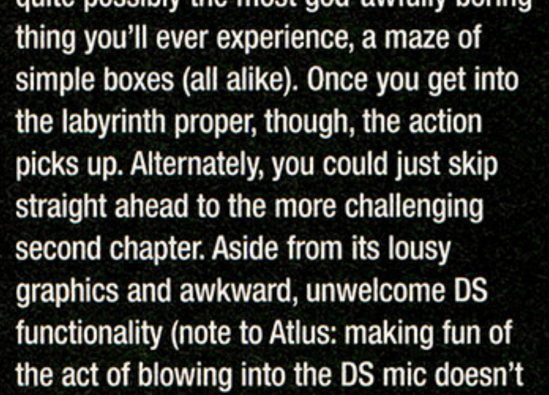
GREG S: It seems as though the RPG mediocrity fairies have left the PSP alone just long enough to work their magic on the latest roleplayer for the Nintendo DS. Wow, is *Deep Labyrinth* ever boring.

This game hearkens back to the DS' early days, when using the touch screen for *something*—no matter how awkward or useless, like it is here—was more important than the game's quality. *Deep Labyrinth*'s combined D-pad/touch screen control scheme will have you begging for mercy within an hour, as it actually makes everything more complicated. Rather than just hitting a button to cast a spell, you have to touch the proper onscreen icon, draw the spell from memory, then hit another icon to cast it. As you can imagine, this leads to loads of fun while you wrestle with the digital pad, especially when a group of enemies surrounds you.

And honestly, the pain ain't worth it. I can forgive *Deep Labyrinth*'s bizarre story about a boy and his mutt lost in a world where useless memories go to die, but it's not nearly compelling enough to make me suffer through the fugly visuals and knuckle-knotting interface.

JAY: Talk about underwhelming. This game looks (and plays) like a student project out of junior college. You'll trudge through the similar environments with repeatedly recycled characters, although they'll be a different color or have a new accessory, which is supposed to trick us into thinking we are seeing something new. The lame, stylus-driven combat and cheesy dialogue further compound the game's problems. I'll give *Deep Labyrinth* points because it actually works when you boot it up and the music is surprisingly enjoyable. But only hardcore RPG apologists (looking your way, Jeremy) will mine fun from this turd.

1UP.COM—JEREMY: What the...? These guys are *way* off (well, except on the lame interface thing). Despite initial impressions, it's quite easy to enjoy *Deep Labyrinth*. The secret? Be patient. The first hour is quite possibly the most god-awfully boring thing you'll ever experience, a maze of simple boxes (all alike). Once you get into the labyrinth proper, though, the action picks up. Alternately, you could just skip straight ahead to the more challenging second chapter. Aside from its lousy graphics and awkward, unwelcome DS functionality (note to Atlus: making fun of the act of blowing into the DS mic doesn't excuse forcing us to do it), *Deep Labyrinth* is a classic dungeon hack (stranded in a dungeon, no way out, fighting from level to level, acquiring better gear and skills, etc.) straight out of the *Wizardry* school of RPG design. That is, the *old* school. Oh, and bring headphones—Yasunori "*Chrono Cross*" Mitsuda's soundtrack is truly a thing of beauty.

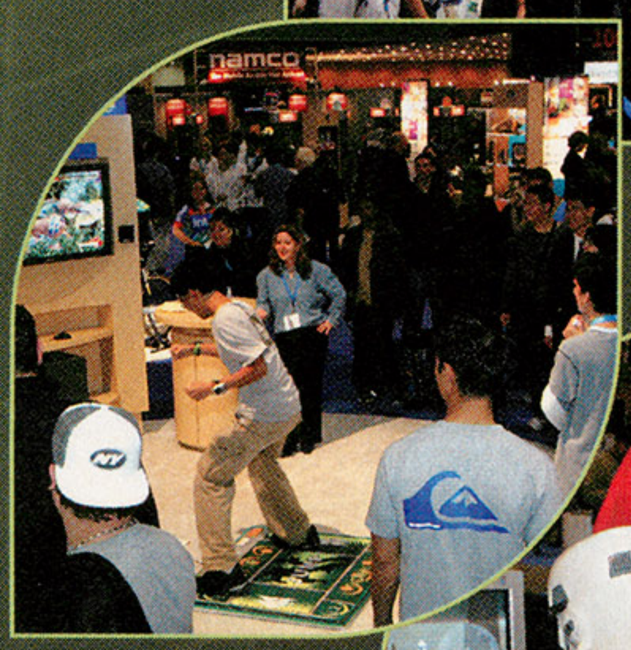


What, they couldn't afford the third head?

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	GREG S.	JAY	JEREMY
	2.0	3.0	7.5

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Interactive Brains
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.atlus.com



got game?

Compete in DigitalLife's **$100,000 Pro-Am Gaming Tournament** and find out.

Play the latest, unreleased games at the PC & console arcades and get your hands on the hottest gear before it hits the streets.

Meet your favorite **celebrities.**

Win tons of **cool prizes.**

Don't miss the **largest gaming tournament** on the East Coast!

Get Tickets NOW to DigitalLife!

50% off with promotional code: **EGM** at www.digitallife.com

each adult ticket is only $6.00!

digitallife®

the ultimate consumer technology, gaming and entertainment event

october 12-15, 2006
javits convention center
new york, new york

learn it · hear it · try it · play it · rock it · live it

www.digitallife.com

presenting tournament sponsors: ALIENWARE · ATI Radeon · intel

produced by: GGL Global Gaming League

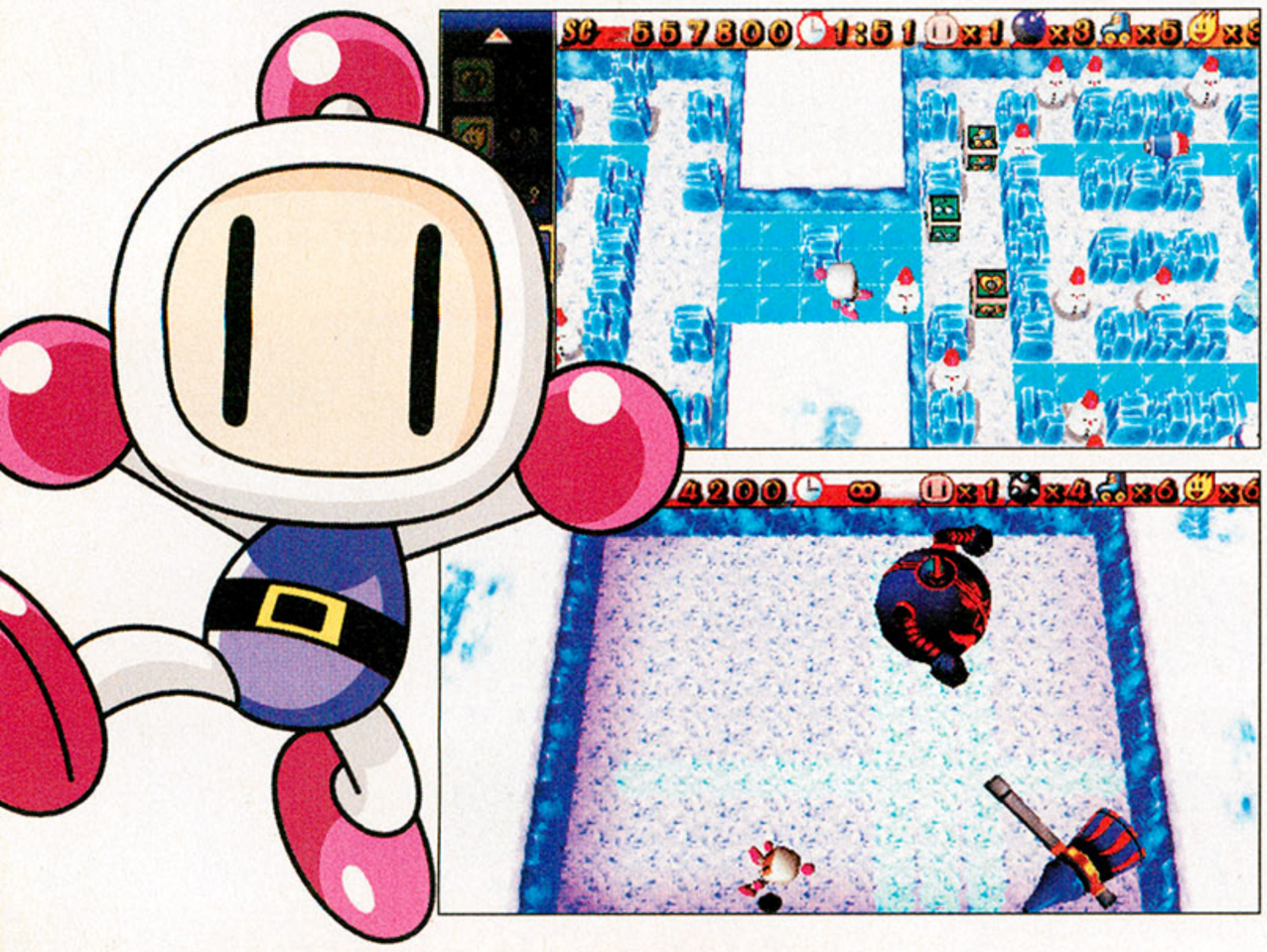
supporting sponsors: PhysX by ageia · Vivendi Universal games · Best Buy · hp invent · Windows xp Media Center Edition · Toshiba · AMD · Belkin · eBay · Logitech · LG · Thomson · TiVo · Verizon · EA Electronic Arts · TWICE

official media partner: 1UP.com

PSP

BOMBERMAN

Not quite dynamite



Good: Classic gameplay survives intact
Bad: Boring single-player mode, no online play
Not Worth Your Time: Collecting the key in each world

CRISPIN: Maybe I'm just relieved to play a new *Bomberman* game that hasn't been reimagineered into "edgy," future-shocked horridness (see my review of *Bomberman Act: Zero* on page 97), or maybe I'm just a softy for this classic series. Whatever. The multiplayer formula here—immolate buddies with bombs while dodging theirs and nabbing power-ups—is as dandy as ever, even if the rest of the game is a dud.

Take the single-player story mode, a collection of 100 levels that offers so little variety that only gamers with *Rain Man*–style single-mindedness will have a blast playing through them. You do get to hoard a huge variety of power-ups and essentially customize your *Bomberman* experience, but eventually, you'll amass so many invincibilities that later levels lose their challenge.

But really, it goes without saying that multiplayer is why you show up to a *Bomberman* game. Fortunately, this version comes with game sharing, so you only need one disc to play with other PSP-owning pals over local Wi-Fi—although you get niftier stages if all players have their own game. If only the wackier worlds of the single-player game were available in multiplayer....

MICHAEL: See, it *is* possible to make a *Bomberman* without balls. So what if this portable bombarder's saccharine appearance lacks *Act: Zero*'s forced future crap? You don't need grizzled visuals and smokin' bomberbroads to have a blast. But you do need some variety, something this offering fails to pack. Like Crispin said, once you dismantle the single-player game, you'll find it isn't worth the time (or frustration) to complete. The better route is the explosive multiplayer. Just don't expect as many options as in previous *Bomberman* games...or players—only four peeps can make each other go "ba-boom." Sure, it's fun, but it's hard to plop down your dough considering last year's *Bomberman DS* allowed eight-man fragfests.

1UP.COM—RAY: Now this is better: a *Bomberman* game that doesn't kill my spirit (see my *Act: Zero* review as well). The PSP game takes the same road of simplicity as the DS version, but the single-player mode is more robust, with actual worlds to travel to and stages that aren't as bland looking (though they're still unimpressive). I'd even say the trancey soundtrack is the best music in the series in years. The only big nuisance is the forced item storing. *Bomberman* items are meant to be instant, and the shoulder buttons add more multitasking to an already hectic game. Multiplayer is nice, but the seconds-long pause before matches can get irritating. Quirks aside, it's a challenging *Bomberman* that's not half bad, especially for a handheld.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	CRISPIN	MICHAEL	RAY
	6.5	5.5	7.0

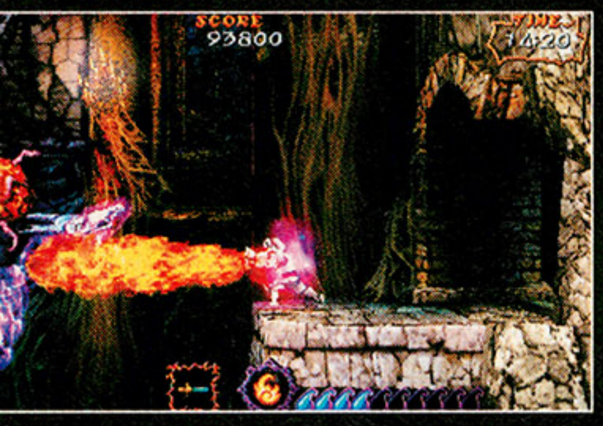
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Hudson
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com

PSP

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

From the arcade to the grave



Good: Sharp visuals, old-fashioned gameplay
Bad: Cheap deaths, old-fashioned gameplay
Gold Rings: Ignore them at your own peril

MARK: "Single Japanese PSP platform-action game (3D graphics/2D gameplay) looking for dedicated gamer to enjoy fun times. You: into older games, patient, willing to put up with me when I get difficult (which I do a lot, even on my Novice setting!). Me: absolutely gorgeous, simple controls, no story worth mentioning. Into double-jumping, epic boss battles, and (I admit it!) cheap deaths. I need a gamer who's willing to put in the time to *really* know me; if you think you're gonna get to my ending without truly exploring my levels, replaying them over and over until you find key hidden items, you'll be disappointed. And yes, I know I can be difficult, especially at first. But stick with me, and eventually, I'll reward you with powerful shields and new spells. Hell, you might even come to appreciate my toughness. I guess I'm an old-fashioned kind of game (people tell me I play just like my 16-bit parents all the time), so if you're an old-fashioned kind of gamer, I know I can make you happy. If you're just looking for a quick thrill, you're better off with one of those easy DS platformer sluts."

G. FORD: Looking at the above personal, I'll admit I was intrigued. I've always considered myself a hardcore gamer...until I took on this beast. While I love *Ultimate*'s throwback-yet-gorgeous graphics, the difficulty drove a stake through this former traditional romantic's heart. The relentless reappearing enemies make progress a frustrating grind, rewarding good fortune (like stumbling upon the correct weapon) as much as skill. The fact that I greeted each completed level with relief rather than satisfaction ain't encouraging. Yet, like some poor, abused pooch, I kept coming back for more. And while this could be misjudgment on my part, it says something about the game's definitely mixed appeal. Or maybe it's just the remaining bit of stubborn hardcore blood in my veins. Oh, pick up any gold rings you find—it'll save you from some additional grief later on.

1UP.COM—JEREMY: Even though playing through *Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins* was the worst thing to happen to me all month, it wasn't a complete loss. For instance, while playing through the game, I invented dozens of interesting new obscenities, one for each time I died due to cheap deathtraps or clumsy controls. *Ultimate* put me in touch with my emotions, too—I wept a little every time I came across one of the game's sporadic good ideas, heartbroken that it was wasted on such a lousy update of an arcade classic. Best of all, I finally have a perfect example of how not to revive a franchise. On the whole, though, I think I'd have simply preferred a better game.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	MARK	G. FORD	JEREMY
	7.5	6.0	4.5

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.capcom.com

PSP

TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

Tekken it on the road

Good: Lightning-quick load times
Bad: No gameplay improvements from past *Tekkens*
Where in the *Tekken* World: Is the stumblin' Dr. Boskonovitch?

SILVER

BRYAN: Think *Tekken 4* is the black sheep of the franchise? Pfft, that game's a beaut compared to the series' portable debut, the disastrous *Tekken Advance* (GBA). So, yeah, I had some reservations about stepping into *Dark Resurrection*'s ring. But they sure didn't last long.

Minus a slight graphical dip (Shane's nutso for thinking otherwise), this handheld fighter can easily stand toe-to-toe with the series' last console installment. It plays just as well (don't expect any refinements to the fighting engine, though), and the new Dojo mode, albeit being a complete rip-off of *Virtua Fighter*'s character-customization system, provides enough incentive to continue punching and kicking. And while Shane may disagree, I find the two new brawlers here—the powerful Nazi-wannabe Dragunov and long-legged blonde Lili—welcome additions to the King of the Iron Fist lineup. Still, we can't help but agree that *Dark Resurrection* is a fine fit for on-the-go fisticuffs, thanks to lots of minigames, blisteringly fast load times (by which all PSP games should now be judged), and Wi-Fi matches that are mostly lag free.

SHANE: I traditionally begin my *Tekken* reviews by reminding readers that both *Virtua Fighter* and *Soul Calibur* handily outclass *Tekken* in every way—but hell, neither of those franchises has made the leap to the PSP. Until they do, you won't find finer 3D fighting on any handheld—this port successfully puts the latest arcade revision of *Tekken 5* in your pants. You'll notice a nasty visual downgrade, especially with the character models, but everything else survives the trip unscathed.

The mash-happy, offensively-minded gameplay remains dumb fun, especially against a real human opponent (props to Namco for including download play with just one disc). Plus, a smorgasbord of modes makes this the perfect game to return to time and time again. Unlockables like goofy fan-fave Tekken Bowl and the new combo-for-money Gold Rush mode provide perfect pick-up-and-play thrills in bite-sized chunks.

1UP.COM—PATRICK: *Dark Resurrection* will have people on your commute staring at your PSP, wondering, "How quickly can I get a PSP and that game?" This one is so good that the PSP's D-pad, which is crappy for most fighters, doesn't cripple it. In fact, it works pretty well if your pad is broken in.

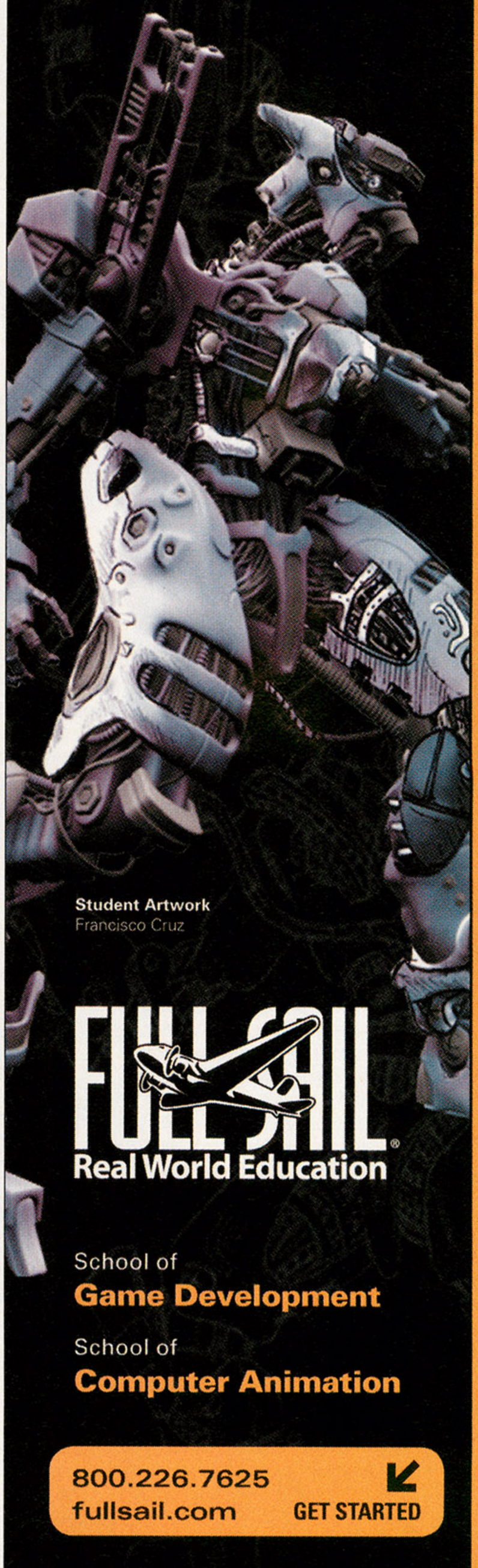
All the game's modes load whip-fast, the PSP's batteries can go for a good three hours running *Resurrection*, and the *Tekken* gameplay is intact and excellent. Also cool is the bounty of unlockables, nary a one of them a fighter—*every* character starts unlocked from the get-go. This should be required for all fighters. Pick up *Resurrection* and you'll discover how robust a PSP game can be—the great fighting just sweetens the package.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)		
8.0	8.5	8.0
BRYAN	SHANE	PATRICK

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
Players: 1 (2 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Teen

www.namcobandaigames.com

ONE OF THE
TOP FIVE
GAME-DEGREE
PROGRAMS
– Electronic Gaming Monthly



Student Artwork
Francisco Cruz

FULL SAIL®
Real World Education

School of
Game Development

School of
Computer Animation

800.226.7625
fullsail.com
GET STARTED

3300 University Boulevard
Winter Park, FL 32792

Financial aid available to those who qualify
Career development assistance
Accredited College, ACCSCT

SCHOOL OF: COMPUTER ANIMATION > DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > RECORDING ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

Little and late games, surveying the scene

MADDEN NFL 07

XB360 • EA Sports • ESRB: E

Talk about power of the people—after several gaming journalists and fans bellyached about next-gen *Madden* lacking (again!) the series' popular Superstar mode (which now sports position-specific camera angles and training drills like the 40-yard dash and bench press), the developers suddenly found a way to include it. Also, *07*'s on-field action is moving more smoothly (actually, the entire game seems to be much more polished) than EA's first pro season on the next-gen gridiron.

Bottom line: Thanks to the last-minute addition of Superstar mode, Johnny's finally looking like he's worth $60. Expect a full review next issue.

Street Fighter II' Hyper Fighting

XB360 • Capcom • ESRB: T — Good news for fans anticipating this Xbox Live Arcade port of the classic fighter: It runs smoothly online (though missed the occasional button push during some of our test matches), and the Quarter Match mode—in which two players fight while others wait to challenge the winner—adequately re-creates the arcade turn-taking tradition of "quartering up."

Bottom line: Plenty of more recent versions of this series exist in compilations, but *Hyper Fighting*'s splendid simplicity (the 12 original characters, no specials) on Live Arcade has its appeal.

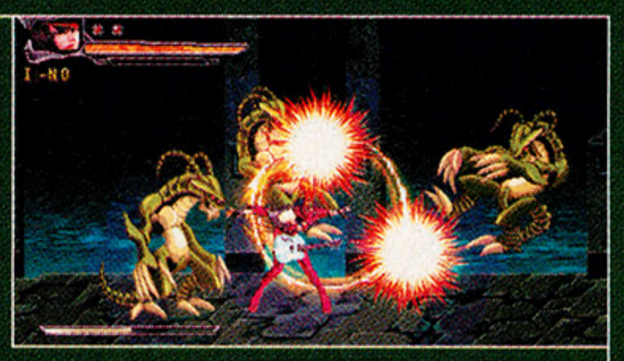
MotoGP 4

PS2 • Namco Bandai • ESRB: E

Even despite its aging graphics, *MotoGP 4* is, hands-down, the best choice for two-wheel racing this year. Forget that *other* MotoGP, *MotoGP 06* on Xbox 360. Forget *Tourist Trophy*. *MotoGP 4* delivers in almost every department. It's got excellent online play, a wonderful selection of bikes, plenty of tuning options, and a fantastic career mode that'll take your driver from the lowly 125cc rides to the powerful beasts of MotoGP.

Bottom line: Even the slightly dated driver roster doesn't hurt this game.

Guilty Gear Judgment

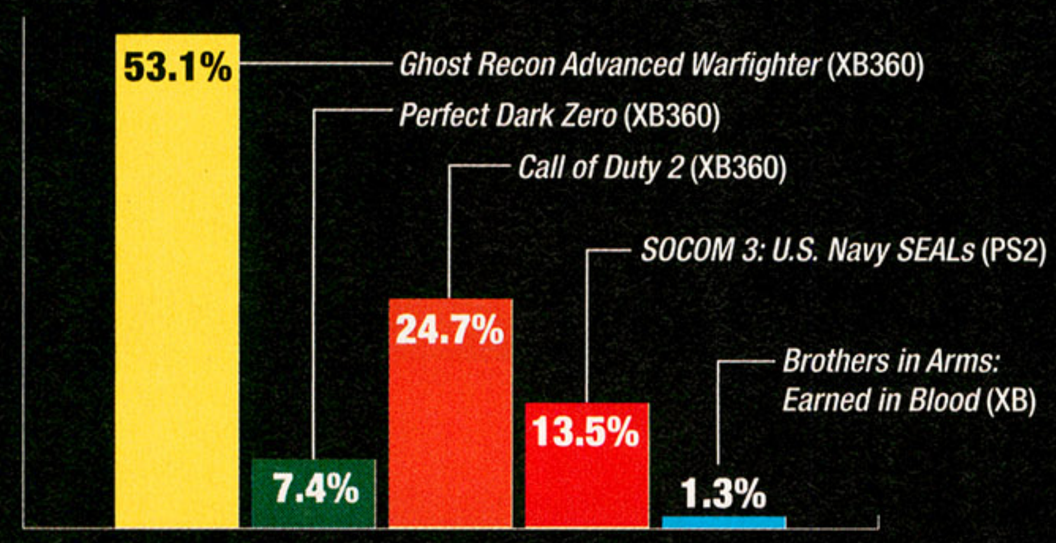


PSP • Majesco • ESRB: T — Tired of *Street Fighter*? Well, put up your dukes for this wacky 2D fighter that sports a huge cast of kick-ass crazies. Sure, the side-scrolling beat-em-up mode is hokey, but it's really just an opener for the main act: a full arcade version of *Guilty Gear X2 #Reload*.

Bottom line: Don't buy this for the wonky side-scroller (though it does support two-player co-op). Rather, get it for the pristine arcade port.

DEADEYE DOWNLOADS

Which of the following console shooters has had the best additional downloadable content (map packs, weapons, etc.)?



Results from an online survey of EGM and 1UP.com readers taken in July 2006.

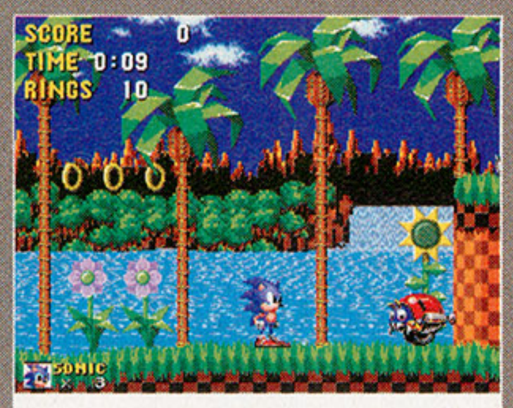
reviews archive

Scored, but not forgotten

■ *Lord of the Rings* orc plus Yoda equals *uuugly*.

SONIC BOOM

The spiky-haired blue rodent with an attitude started as Sega's edgy mascot but eventually evolved into a multiplatform hedgehog. Like most videogame icons, Sonic's starred in various genres, some that were a good fit, others—well, check out what we thought (all scores out of 10).



Sonic the Hedgehog (Genesis)

9.0 • 9.0 • 9.0 • 9.0

Sonic Shuffle (Dreamcast)

5.5 • 5.0 • 5.0

Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast)

8.5 • 9.5 • 8.5

Sonic Riders (Multi)

5.0 • 5.5 • 5.0

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War	PS2	■ Great graphics can't make up for boring missions and a forgettable story	5.5 4.5 6.0	
AND 1 Streetball	PS2/XB	■ All the moves and personalities of the sport but with none of the excitement	5.0 4.5 5.0	
Astonishia Story	PSP	■ Looks and plays like a 12-year-old role-playing game—oh wait—it is	3.0 5.0 4.0	
Atelier Iris 2: The Azoth of Destiny	PS2	■ A niche RPG that, despite new features, still ends up feeling dated	5.5 6.0 7.0	
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	XB360	■ Over-the-top shooter with lots to do—and lots to ride—that's best played online	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Big Brain Academy	DS	■ Brain-buster with tons of minigames and multiplayer	8.5 9.0 7.5	Silver
Blade Dancer: Lineage of Light	PSP	■ Another crappy portable role-playing game—nuff said	3.0 4.5 2.0	
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	XB360	■ A pick-up-and-fly WWII flight-combat title full of planes, but its missions get tedious	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!	DS	■ A smart "game" filled with tons of brainteasers that graphs how smart you are (or aren't)	8.5 7.5 9.0	Silver
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	PSP	■ Bright graphics and classy, classic games fill this portable powerhouse	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Chromehounds	XB360	■ Big mechs with big guns in big, boring environments	6.0 5.0 8.0	
Crusty Demons: Freestyle Moto-X	XB	■ This poorly named *Tony Hawk* clone with bikes can't seem to break mediocrity	3.5 6.0 5.0	
Daxter	PSP	■ This bright, beautiful action-platformer feels cramped by the PSP's limitations	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Def Jam Fight for NY: The Takeover	PSP	■ A console port with hardly any new content and cheap A.I.—it looks good, though	5.0 7.0 5.0	
Dreamfall: The Longest Journey	XB	■ This adventure title offers an immersive narrative but no game to go with it	4.0 6.5 4.0	
Drill Dozer	GBA	■ Sweet. Classic 2D platforming returns in a great little portable form	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	XB360	■ Flawed, but ultimately a fun RPG with a great story and a huge world to explore	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Field Commander	PSP	■ Sure, it's a rip-off of *Advance Wars*, but it's so good that you won't care	7.0 7.5 9.0	
Final Fantasy XI Online	XB360	■ This online-only sequel has all the things you love—and hate—about the genre	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Freedom Wings	DS	■ Flight sim meets RPG and sky pirates, but complicated controls hold it back	5.5 4.5 4.0	
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter	XB360	■ Amazing, war-is-hella-fun shooter with great multiplayer. Next gen is finally here!	10 9.0 9.5	Gold
The Godfather	PS2/XB	■ *Grand Theft Auto: Gangster*. Atmospheric, faithful to the films, but a bit cheesy	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Hitman: Blood Money	PS2/XB	■ The bald assassin returns with some great level design but a hurtin' save system	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Kingdom Hearts II	PS2	■ Everything an RPG sequel should be, starring all your Squenix and Disney favorites	10 9.0 9.5	Gold
The Legend of Heroes II	PSP	■ A role-playing adventure that plays solid but still feels like more of the same	5.5 6.0 6.0	
Lemmings	PSP	■ The addictive puzzler returns with new levels and updated graphics	5.5 8.0 6.0	
Lost Magic	DS	■ This innovative strategy-RPG unfortunately lacks the magic touch	5.0 4.0 6.0	
Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth II	XB360	■ A controller-friendly strategy port with tons of treats for Tolkien nerds	8.0 7.5 7.0	
Major League Baseball 2K6	PS2/XB/GC	■ Reworked the swinging and hitting but forgot to help fielding and baserunning	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Marc Ecko's Getting Up	PS2/XB	■ This partly broken, gritty graf-art action game isn't half as cool as it thinks it is	4.5 4.0 6.5	
Me & My Katamari	PSP	■ The PSP's controls hobble the Prince's ball-rolling, garbage-grabbing magic	7.0 5.5 7.0	
Metal Gear Ac!d 2	PSP	■ A short, streamlined, card-based tactical roleplayer that stars Mr. Snake	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence	PS2	■ A great story and worthwhile additional content raise the bar for rereleases	10 10 9.5	Gold
Metroid Prime Hunters	DS	■ Samus looks great on the DS, but she can be awkward to control in first-person	7.5 8.0 7.5	
MLB 06: The Show	PS2	■ Innovation isn't defined as finally adding a decade-old feature to your baseball game	6.5 6.0 4.0	
Monster Hunter Freedom	PSP	■ A beautiful action game that is best played with friends...too bad it ain't online	7.0 6.0 8.0	
NBA Ballers: Phenom	PS2/XB	■ Shows good off-court ambition, but the gameplay shoots too many air balls	6.0 6.5 7.5	
New Super Mario Bros.	DS	■ A refreshing mix of classic gameplay with tons of multiplayer	10 9.5 8.0	Gold
NCAA Football 07	XB360	■ A faithful update but with less features than the current-gen version	7.0 7.5 7.0	
Odama	GC	■ This mash-up of pinball and strategy (with voice commands) is more strange than fun	7.5 5.5 4.5	
Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams	PS2	■ We agree this samurai game is beautiful but aren't sure about its RPG aspects	4.5 7.5 6.5	
The Outfit	XB360	■ Linear single player, but this WWII shooter's dash of strategy is fun in multiplayer	7.0 6.0 7.0	
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	PS2/XB	■ A solid arcade racer that's easy to pick up but lacks the variety of a *Burnout*	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Over G Fighters	XB360	■ This extensive flight sim offers realism—and not much else besides sporadic difficulty	5.0 5.0 3.0	
Pirates of the Caribbean: Lgd. Jack Sparrow	PS2	■ Not even Johnny Depp's Capt. Jack Sparrow can save this game from mediocrity	5.5 6.5 5.0	
Point Blank DS	DS	■ It's a port of a light-gun game—but without the lightgun	7.0 6.0 7.0	
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	XB360	■ Ping-Pong done right—but the lack of extras will leave you wanting more	7.5 7.0 8.5	
Rogue Trooper	PS2/XB	■ This action-shooter shows it's easy being blue, thanks to engaging combat and co-op	6.5 7.5 8.0	
Ruff Trigger: The Vanocore Conspiracy	PS2	■ A *Ratchet & Clank* clone that copies everything but the charm	4.0 5.0 5.0	
Rumble Roses XX	XB360	■ Wrestling with sluts has never been more next gen or more pandering to perverts	7.0 6.5 3.5	
Splinter Cell Essentials	PSP	■ The controls might be difficult for some—Sam Fisher just doesn't feel right on PSP	2.0 7.0 6.0	
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	PSP	■ The same *Street Fighter* you loved—without enough new features to make it shine	6.0 8.5 7.5	
Suikoden V	PS2	■ Slow to start and a bit dated, yet a compelling RPG with collect-em-all fun	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll	DS	■ A maze game that blends infuriating ball-rolling and adorable ape themes	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Super Princess Peach	DS	■ A shiny new *Mario*-style adventure that needs to take the difficulty up a notch	7.5 7.0 8.0	
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	PSP	■ Lots of guns and interesting gameplay aren't as much fun with awkward controls	7.0 7.0 6.0	
Tao's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	DS	■ An ambitious RPG that's stunted with a totally broken interface and battle system	4.0 5.0 4.0	
Tetris DS	DS	■ Classic puzzler brought to the DS, but with only one new mode for the touch screen	7.5 7.0 9.0	
Tomb Raider: Legend	PS2/XB	■ The titular raider is back, swinging and clinging in this solid tomb-robbing game	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Top Spin 2	XB360	■ Deep career mode, graphics update, and new shots make this a grand slam	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Tourist Trophy	PS2	■ *Gran Turismo* on two wheels, this racer offers realism with a steep learning curve	6.5 7.0 8.0	
Urban Chaos: Riot Response	PS2/XB	■ With dated graphics and boring levels, this shooter never passes mediocrity	5.0 5.5 3.5	
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	PSP	■ Port issues aside, it's the best role-playing experience on the PSP	6.5 8.0 8.0	
Warpath	XB	■ Bargain-priced action-shooter's online action is smooth but limited and clichéd	4.0 5.5 5.0	
Winback 2: Project Poseidon	PS2	■ A boring, low-budget stealth-action title that's more frustrating than fun	4.0 3.5 4.0	
X-Men: The Official Game	PS2/XB/XB360	■ Not even the X-Men can save this crappy mess of a game	4.0 3.5 4.0	

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

THE 1UP SHOW

The Summer Season

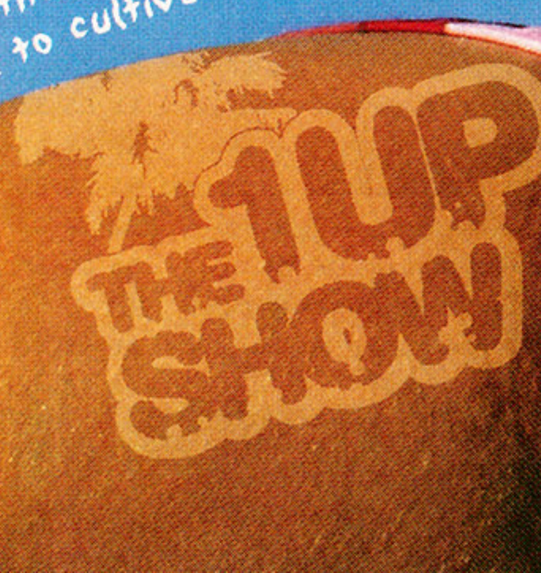
No re-runs. No cheap "best of" episodes.

It's all killer, no filler, dude.

Join us for kick-ass gaming commentary and news with a dose of UV all summer long at 1UP.com.

http://the1upshow.1up.com/

We'd like to thank rotisserie-tanning 1UP Show spokesmodel Staci, who bravely ignored ozone-depletion/skin-cancer causal link evidence to cultivate pre-melanoma coloring on her flank in order to promote the show. Atta girl.



1UP NETWORK

1UP RADIO

Want to hear what our editors are excited about before your next issue arrives?

Tune in to 1UP Radio where the editors of 1UP, Electronic Gaming Monthly, Computer Gaming World, and the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine sound off on various topics each week. Each episode is filled with juicy tidbits and behind-the-scenes info that we couldn't fit in the pages of this magazine.

Log on to http://podcasts.1up.com/
and choose your poison:
1UP Yours
EGM Live
CGW Radio
RadiOPM

* Warning: These podcasts are pretty addictive. You should probably subscribe and download our podcasts to your MP3 player - then you can take us on the road with you!

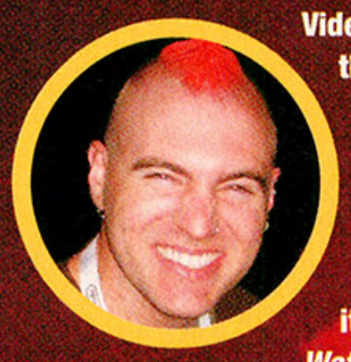
1UP™ NETWORK

game over

not even an army of timecopping van dammes can save us this time

SEANBABY'S VIDEOGAMES THAT PREDICT

'We are all doomed!!!' say top videogame psychics



Videogames have seen through the veil of time, and we're all going to die. Did you know, for example, that our planet won't make it through the year? *Water War* did. It's a Korean cell-phone game made in English by people who don't speak it, but they do speak Future. Here's its bone-chilling description in its entirety (spelling errors made by Koreans, not me): "The gruesome struggle for survival with water.... In 2006, the Water-war happen on the huge disaster, the pole jump!! There are gruesome struggles between Bentley company which held water and 5th Heaven worriers."

***Water War* isn't alone in its psychic ability. Using cryptology and Nintendo manuals, I've decoded terrifying messages from seven old games that are set right about now (which was "the future" back when these suckers were made). To avoid sensationalism, the date of each game's doomsday prediction will be referred to as EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY. Now I could rate the accuracy of these predictions on a scale of one to 10, but we all know numbers will be the first things to turn against us come the apocalypse. Instead, I'll rate the predictions using enemies from *Water War*. Your key: One tiny, spitting dragon is equal to one anything, and a moonwalking bull is worth five tiny, spitting dragons.**

Finally, I'll offer shreds of hope to soften each game's dire prediction. This will almost always be in the form of words instead of moonwalking bulls. And just so we're straight on the code before we start, here's the number 17 in *Water War* enemies:

—*Seanbaby*

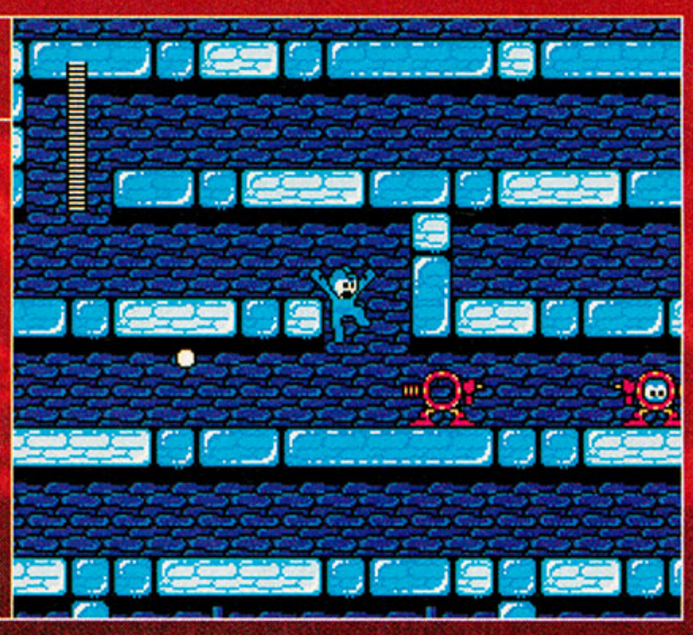
MEGA MAN 2 (NES)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: 200X

OUR FATE: Evil robots capable of countering super robot Mega Man

PROPHETIC ACCURACY:

SHREDS OF HOPE: This game has some good in its vision: Do-gooder scientist Dr. Light creates blue boy Mega Man to stop the evil desires of Dr. Wily. But then these doctors seem to be the only two humans left, and it doesn't take a genius to figure out why the only two humans left alive are the ones who can make robots.



FACEBALL 2000 (SUPER NES)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: Six years ago!

OUR FATE: Faces on shapes too horrible and polyhedral to describe

PROPHETIC ACCURACY:

SHREDS OF HOPE: The only thing that can kill a Faceball, apparently, is sadness, and the only thing that makes them sad is shooting them. So I guess what I'm saying is that if a giant shape takes flight, forms its own smile, and charges you, shoot it. But you probably would have thought of that yourself, so never mind. I suppose that's why we're still alive today.

RAID 2020 (NES)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: 2020

OUR FATE: "A plague of narcotics transcending the boundaries of race, economy, and time"

PROPHETIC ACCURACY:

SHREDS OF HOPE: *Raid 2020* pulls no punches with its terrible lack of gameplay or its grim forecast of our nation's drug problem. In 14 years, drugs that transcend the boundaries of time will hit the street. I know: "What?" That could mean people will be taking drugs way too early in the morning, or that caveman and Old West drugs will fall out of holes in the chronosphere like the rupture of some kind of impossible time piñata.

This prediction should be taken with a grain of salt, since *Raid 2020* was made by Color Dreams, which later went on to change its name to Wisdom Tree and make games based on the glory of the Lord our God. And after the sky didn't open up in the year 2000 and rapture-beam all Christians into His Bosom, I knew right then that these people weren't the ones to go to for magical fortune telling. On the off chance that they're right, *Raid 2020's* ultraviolent gameplay makes it look like you can just kill everyone and things will work out just fine.

The future's so bright, those seagulls gotta wear shades.

THE END TO ALL THINGS

COMMUNIST MUTANTS FROM SPACE (ATARI 2600)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: It's a secret to everybody.

OUR FATE: "The evil ruler of the planet Rooskee has launched a diabolical attack."

PROPHETIC ACCURACY: +

SHREDS OF HOPE: Historical documents from this Atari 2600 Supercharger game do not make it clear exactly when communist mutants will invade our planet—only that they will. It implies that the mutants will be Russian, but this seems unlikely since they're not communists anymore and they've sold all their women on the Internet. It's more likely that the game refers to a Chinese space program, designed to explore the reaches of the unknown, and then turn around and shoot lasers at America. The good news for future victims of commie death, though, is that killing a Mother Creature gives you 500 points. So lay all the eggs on us you want, space Chinese. When we go out, we'll be holding all the points. And you'll have to pry freedom from our cold, dead hands. Future America rules!

REVOLUTION X (ARCADE)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: November 11th, 1996

OUR FATE: Stupid

PROPHETIC ACCURACY: − + + +

SHREDS OF HOPE: In *Revolution X*, you, friend of rock band Aerosmith, battle against a new world order using the power of music. Technically, the simple act of saying those words aloud during a pitch meeting should have fulfilled some dark prophecy and killed us all. And here are two more reasons why this game's a false prophet: **Exhibit #1:** The music industry isn't our savior against oppression and corruption. In fact, it probably gets 25 cents out of every dollar someone spends on evil. **Exhibit #2:** By the year 1996, Aerosmith would have been in their 82nd year of shambling unlife, immune to even the most enchanted weapons. Aerosmith lyrics such as "Yakyakyakyak YOOOW!" are actually an ancient curse designed to bring about the resurrection of Moonwalking Bull, the bull that moonwalks.

SMASH TV (ARCADE)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: The year 1999

OUR FATE: Big money, big prizes.

PROPHETIC ACCURACY: +

SHREDS OF HOPE: Maybe *Smash TV* missed the prediction mark a bit when it forecasted contestant-liquefying game shows would be all the rage before Y2K, but with the unchecked one-upmanship in reality and game shows, a *Running Man* or *Smash TV* scenario could happen any day now. Did you see when they remade *The Bachelor*, only everyone was a midget? Or *Temptation Island*, where happy couples split up and tried not to accept sex from hot people? On *Fear Factor* they eat things that used to be and still are butts—that's like two spin-offs away from hunting a man to death. Luckily, the *Smash TV* dark future, where you win toasters for sawing through swarms of ape-people with a personal force field power-up, is going to be so, so sweet. Man, I can't wait for 1999.

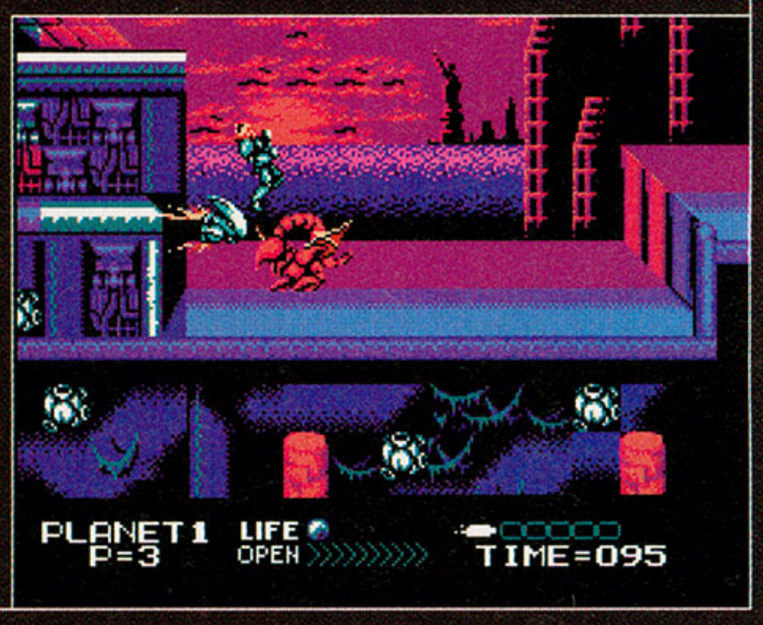
STREET FIGHTER 2010: THE FINAL FIGHT (NES)

EARTHDEATH CORPSEDAY: Less than four years from now

OUR FATE: Awesome cyboplasm-enhanced street combat

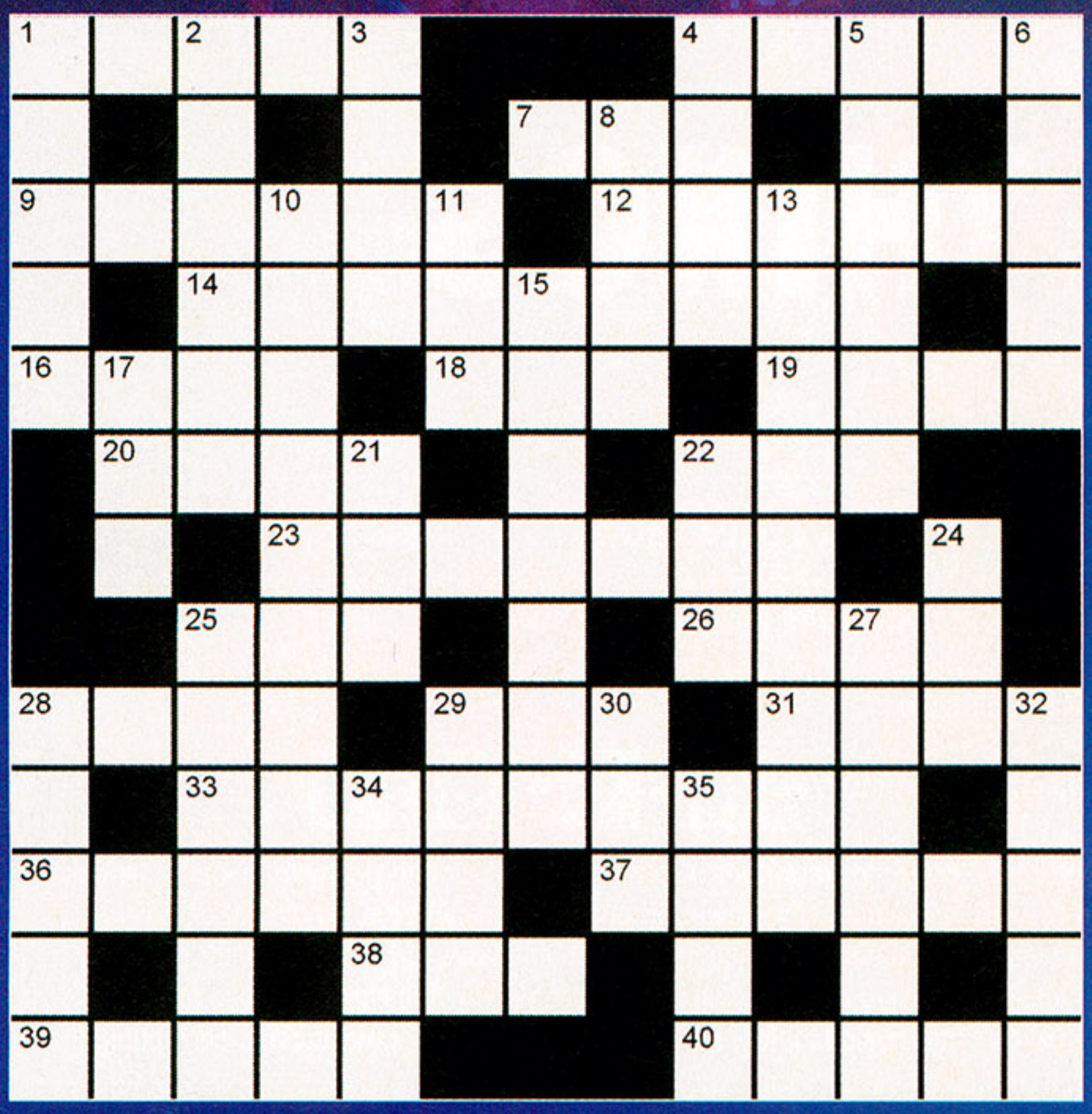
PROPHETIC ACCURACY: + +

SHREDS OF HOPE: By the end of next year, a street fighter named Ken will invent cyboplasm. In small doses, it gives you an edge in a fight. In large doses, it takes over your body and kinda makes you into a scorpion monster, maybe. The prophecy has some holes in it. Now you do stand a chance if you teleport to other planets and street fight. Four years isn't much time to prepare for something like that, but by that point we'll have survived killer boy robots, lethal reality TV, Aerosmith's freedom rock, and one hell of a faceballing. If we're not ready by then, screw it: We deserve extinction.



SPACE CHASE

(Solution on page 121)



ACROSS

1. "Kept up with" in racing games
4. Like *Grand Theft Auto*'s Faggio
7. RPG tavern drink?
9. Indy Xbox 360 title *Project _*
12. Like *Suffering* star Torque
14. SNK fighter
16. *Chronicles of Riddick* prison weapon
18. Guards graves in *Zelda*
19. Futuristic first-person shooter *_ Ex*
20. QB takes one to down the ball in *Madden*
22. Toyota racing acronym in *Sega GT*
23. NeoGeo slasher *_ Shodown*
25. RPG abbreviation for "strength"
26. TurboGrafx-16 puzzle title
28. _man of *Battle for Atlantis* fame
29. Annual charge for Xbox Live
31. *Final Fantasy* Easter egg tombstone text: "Here _ Erdrick"
33. Game Boy's *Adventures of _*
36. *Resident Evil 4* unit of currency
37. *NASCAR* racetrack
38. Atari's early system acronym
39. Up-and-down joystick plane
40. *Dance Dance Revolution* themes

DOWN

1. *Eternal Darkness'* Augustus
2. *Castlevania's* Dracula's bed
3. Two-player *Karaoke Revolution*?
4. Intro screen
5. Picked up a controller
6. Two-player *Star Wars* lightsaber battles
8. 1-up
10. Emulator reloadable file
11. Multi_ accommodates extra controllers
13. Dreamcast/portable digging puzzle title
15. *Project Gotham Racing* British rides
17. *Need For Speed Underground* aftermarket manufacturer
21. Xbox Live headset attachment point
22. *Staff of Dreams* was his PS2 sequel
24. TurboGrafx-16's *Legendary _*
25. *Spartan: Total Warrior* developer's UK location
27. *Mega Man 2* windbag
28. Accept configuration changes?
29. Online kill
32. *Fight Night Round 3* footwear accessory
34. Vehicles of *Offroad Fury*
35. *Tony Hawk* shoe-sponsored skate park

GRUDGE MATCH

A tough sell

SUMMER GAMES vs. **SUMMER JOBS**

Yes, the new-release lineup this summer is bad enough that you might want to consider making some extra scratch at a summer job. You know old man winter's gonna spew out wads of hot new releases this holiday season, so weigh the following and consider planning ahead for once, ya bum:

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Pillage and plunder with Jack Sparrow
Advantage: Game

Grease up yer animatronic mateys at the Disneyland attraction

CARS

Steer Pixar characters through assorted races

Valet park for a local eatery and tip yourself in change-drawer takings
Advantage: Job

BARNYARD

Nickelodeon-movie-inspired-mindless-kiddie romp
Advantage: Tie

Shovel slop and assess bovine fertility in the hot summer sun
Advantage: Tie

HARDCORE POOL

Another damn pool game? Who buys these things?

Could make for a profitable summer porno flick…get the camera!
Advantage: Job

ANT BULLY

"Honey, I shrunk this kid 'cause he's being a dick to those ants."

People are scared of bugs—remember to price-gouge as their new exterminator
Advantage: Job

WORLD TOUR GOLF

Interact with the world's most boring pseudosport

If you're on the PGA tour, you sure as hell don't need our help
Advantage: Job

WINNER: SUMMER JOB

See? Now isn't that better than dedicating your summer to finishing the *Barbie Compilation* on Game Boy Advance? Bah, you'll thank us when everyone else is taking out loans for a PlayStation 3.

Because Sarah plays video games, there is a group of people making sure the games she plays are rated. They're called the Entertainment Software Rating Board, but that's the long way of saying it. Usually, they're just called the ESRB.

They check each game to help make sure it's right for you, your older brother, Mom and Dad, and anybody. Somebody's got to do it. And they're the ones that do.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

www.ESRB.org

© 2006 ESRB. All rights reserved.

egm retro

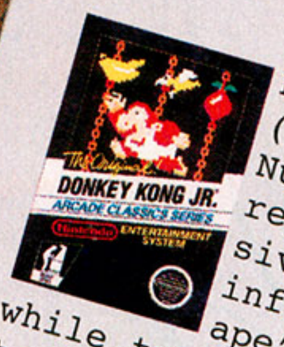
DISASTER KONG

A history of violence

Donkey Kong turns 25 this month, marking the debut of two of gaming's most important characters: the big dumb ape himself and some dude named Mario. Though the goofy gorilla has had his ups and downs, one thing remains consistent: He's always leaving a trail of destruction. All his monkeying around has earned him quite a rep, too—read up on his road to rampage.

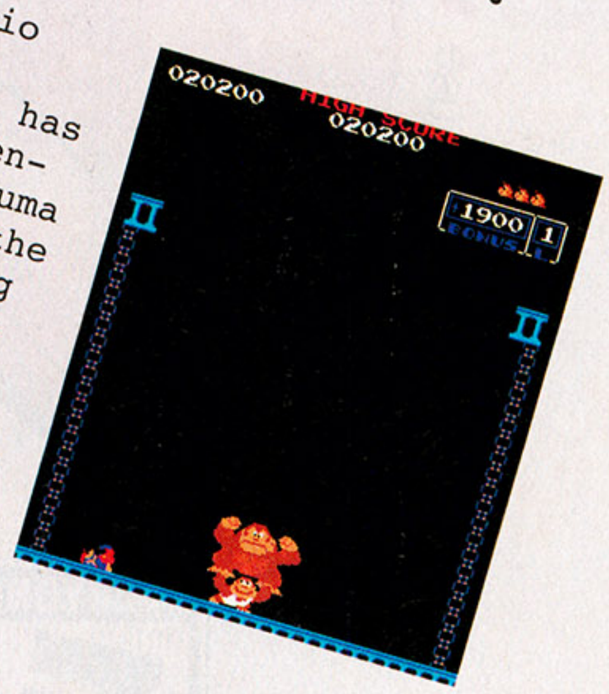
—Jeremy Parish
Claims Adjuster, 1UP Insurance Co.

FILE NUMBER: DKJR
CASE ALIAS: Donkey Kong Jr.
DATE: Spring 1982



Foreman Mario (c.f. File Number DK01) has reported extensive head trauma inflicted by the ape's offspring while transporting beast to circus. (Victim has indicated desire to take up a quieter vocation, such as plumbing.)

STATUS: Pending



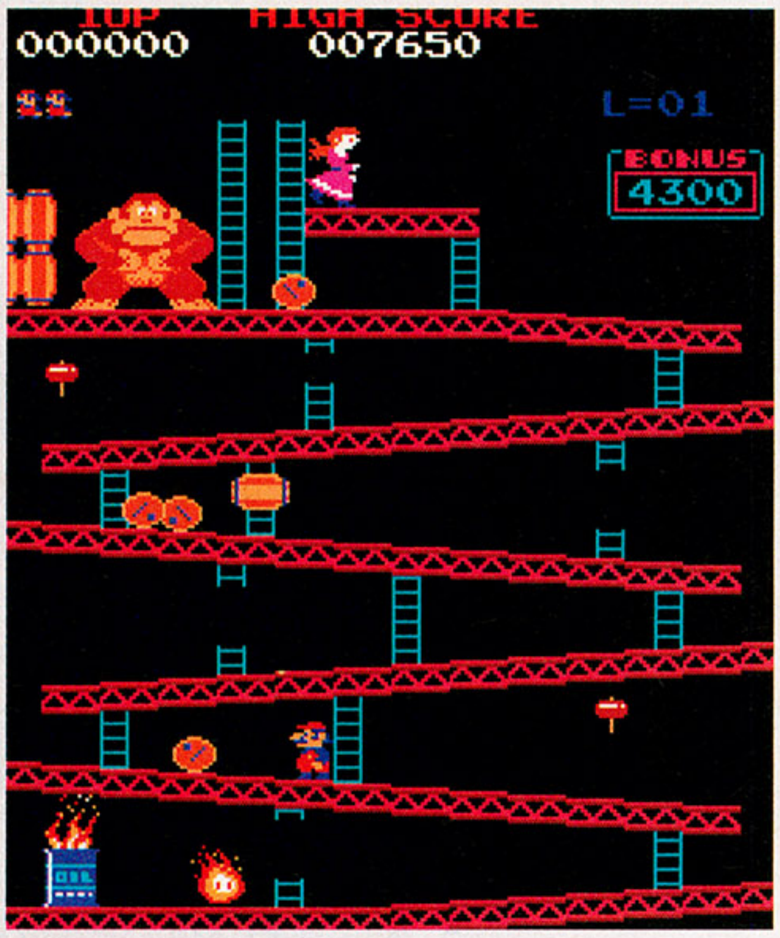
FILE NUMBER: DK01
CASE ALIAS: Donkey Kong
DATE: Summer 1981

Witnesses report seeing an escaped gorilla ascending a construction site, violently warping the building's girders out of shape, and throwing barrels at the site's foreman, Mario (aka, Jumpman), who attempted pursuit. Explosions were also reported, and a secondary site was completely collapsed by Mario in his efforts to subdue the beast.

DAMAGES: Roughly $2.3 million. Fortunately, despite reports of a human abductee, no casualties were reported.

STATUS: Awarded

Note: Extensive damage has been reported in a nearby cement factory, but most witnesses of the incident have no recollection. We will therefore be filing the cement factory claim separately (see report G&W102).



Photographs by R. Dodson/SFMISFITS Inc

FILE NUMBER: DK03
CASE ALIAS: Donkey Kong 3
DATE: Spring 1983

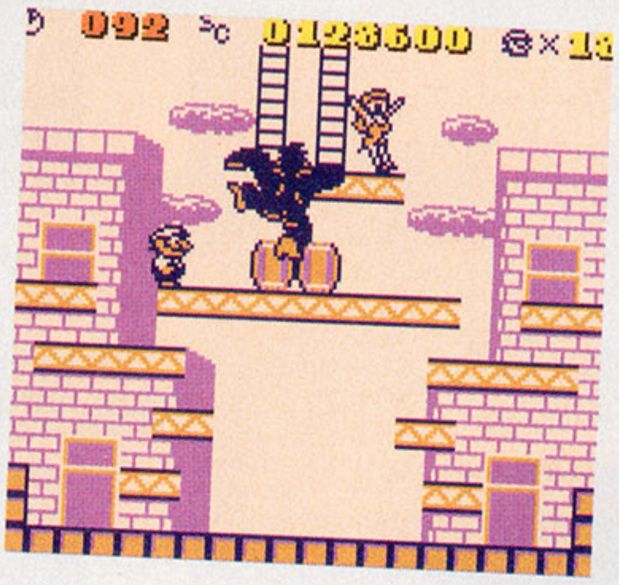
Escaped ape (c.f. File DKJR) last seen holed up in a greenhouse. Severe damage has been reported to greenhouse structure as well as to crops.

STATUS: Dismissed

Note: Claimant Stanley has since withdrawn this claim. Sightings reported of illegal "cash crops" at site. Recommend police follow-up.

FILE NUMBER: DKGB
CASE ALIAS: Donkey Kong GB
DATE: Summer 1994

Rogue ape Donkey Kong (c.f. Files DK01, DKJR, DK03) reported loose within the city; extensive structural and incidental damage incurred before his escape to the jungle.

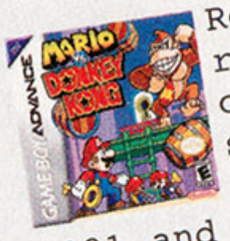


DAMAGES: Upward of $21.9 million. Additional damages forthcoming once bystanders and property owners file civil suits.

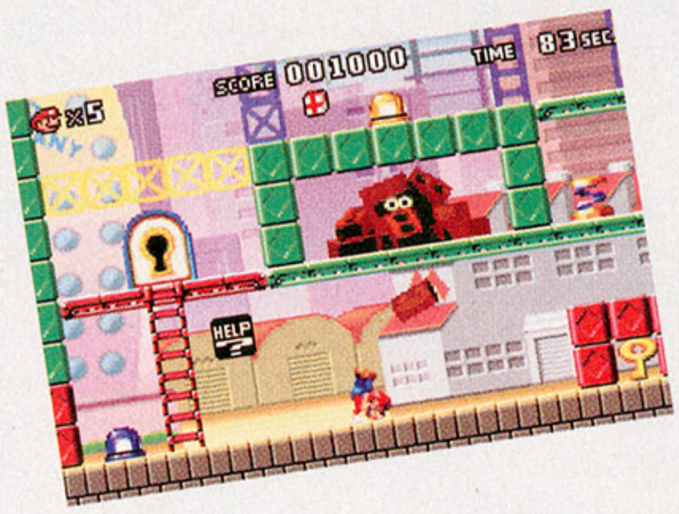
STATUS: Awarded.

Note: Despite remarkable similarities to events of 1981, this event encompassed a far wider area. (Recommend we seek federal assistance.)

FILE NUMBER: MVDK
CASE ALIAS: Mario vs. Donkey Kong
DATE: Summer 2004



Rogue ape looted toy factory, scattering toys throughout the city and causing significant damages. Uncanny similarities to events of 1981 and 1994, but even further-reaching.



DAMAGES: Approx. $38.3 million (plus estimated $12 million in civil suits).

Note: Please find my two weeks' notice attached.

FINAL WORD

Taking sides in the next-gen war

Last month, the two new guys on *EGM* went head-to-head in Final Word. This issue, let's see what the veterans have to say. Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu and Senior Editor Crispin Boyer both started at *EGM* in 1996, back when the magazine was put together by gypsies and old fellas wearing spectacles on their faces and black leg warmers on their forearms. Can these two old-timey *EGM* editors put down their bingo wands long enough to give us intelligible comments on the next generation of gaming?

■ It's like watching two elderly kangaroos trying to box.

PlayStation 3: Preorder or Wait?

Crispin

Wait: As much as I would like to preorder a PS3, sell it on eBay, and donate the profits to save a local orphanage, $600 is just too wallet-nuking for a holiday-season purchase. This'll be the first major console in 10 years I don't get on day one, and unless Sony shows launch games more wowie-zowie than *Warhawk* and *Resistance: Fall of Man*, I'm fine with it. Sorry, orphans.

Shoe

Preorder: I'll have to get a PlayStation 3 right away, and it won't be so I can save an orphanage with it (sorry, orphans...again). I'm not dying to have one at the moment, but I pretty much need all new consoles on day one. It just doesn't feel right being a hardcore gamer and working at a videogaming magazine and not having a system that half your readers have.

Who will have the best classics library: the PlayStation 3, Wii, or Xbox 360?

Shoe

Wii: No one can come close to what the Wii will offer. NES, Super NES, even Sega Genesis...can you imagine playing all those classics on one supersystem? But all that nostalgia might cost us a Princess Peach's ransom. Remember the crazy-ass prices for those rereleased NES games on the Game Boy Advance a few years back, like $20 for the original *Excitebike*? Nintendo better not pull that BS on us for Wii's Virtual Console.

Crispin

Wii: Let's agree to agree, old friend. And don't forget the TurboGrafx-16 games, too (my favorite underdog system). Sure, Xbox Live Arcade has a lot of sweet *old* coin-ops, but it's taken way too long to play *Psychonauts* and a lot of other killer Xbox 1 stuff in the 360's backwards-compatible mode. As for the PlayStation 3, maybe I'm splitting hairs, but it'll be weird playing old hits like *Metal Gear Solid* with the vibration-less PS3 pad.

Wii online: Promising Future or Future Flop?

Crispin

Future Flop: I think Nintendo proved with the DS' overly complex Friend Code system that it has no clue how to approach online gaming—which is ironic, because ease-of-use is one of the things they're touting with the "always-online" Wii. We'll see. But if I have to jot down a different megadigit numerical code for each game and deliver it to friends I want to play with, then I'm not even going to bother hooking my Wii to the Internet.

Shoe

Promising Future: Nintendo would have to be crazy to use the DS system for friends lists on the Wii—but then again, look at what they named that system. But check out the potential here: *Mario Kart* online. *Smash Bros.* online. *Mario Party* online. All those Mario sports games...online.... Imagine playing all those multiplayer games, but you don't have to shower or straighten up the living room because your competition's online! What a life....

Microtransactions: Like 'Em or Hate 'Em?

Shoe

Like 'Em: I'm always afraid that developers will start cutting back on content so they can charge you for the stuff separately, but I gotta admit, I'm a sucker for these tiny, seemingly harmless transactions. What's a few dollars for some extra multiplayer maps or a new theme for my Xbox 360 dashboard? It helps that I'm ignorant to what I'm actually spending—what's the "Microsoft Points to U.S. dollars" conversion rate anyway? Ah, who cares.

Crispin

Hate 'Em: Don't support these things, Shoe—they're a slippery slope! Sure, you can buy nifty stuff now like cars for *Project Gotham Racing 3* and a vampire party lair for *Oblivion*, but your fear will come to pass. Why will developers bust their butts getting in every feature if they can ease back and sell that stuff later for online spacebucks? The second I see more crap like that *Oblivion* horse armor, I'm gonna vote with my dollar by keeping it firmly in my Velcro wallet.

Xbox Live: Online All the Time or Rather Go Solo?

Crispin

Solo: Hoo boy. I've already made myself sound like a grumpy grandpa with my anti-Nintendo and boo-to-microtransactions stances, but I've just never been that good at playing well with others online. I'm tired of getting decapitated in *Halo 2* with that damn plasma sword. The learning curve in the *Splinter Cell* games has always turned me off. But if a decent massively multiplayer role-playing game ever hits the consoles, then I'll change my tune—and you just might never see me again.

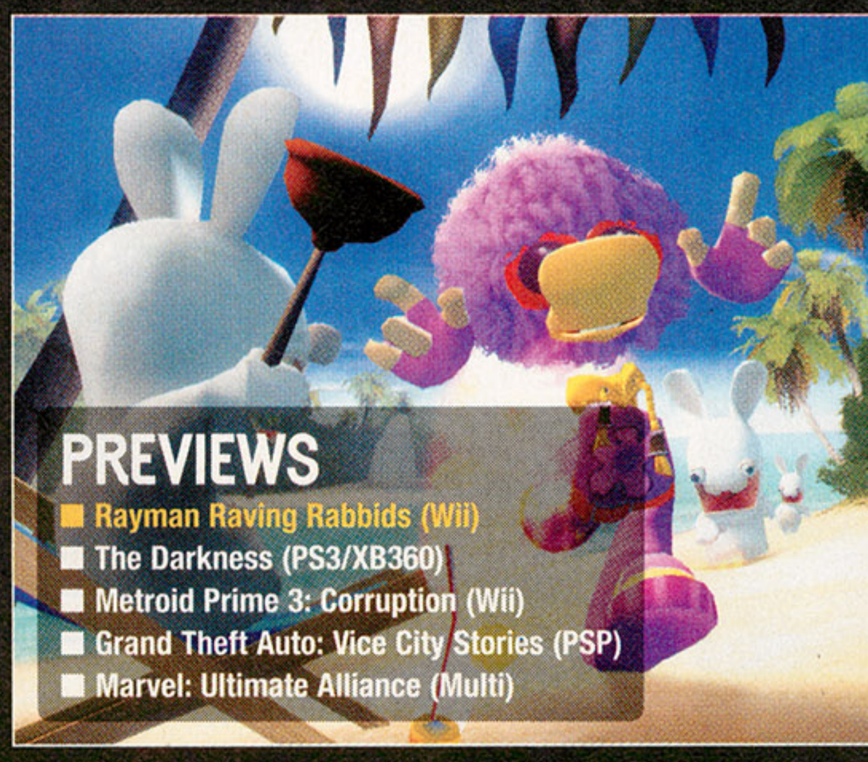
Shoe

Online All the Time: *Halo 2*, *Splinter Cell*, *Phantasy Star Online*, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*...when a cool online game hits, I'm already off the real-world radar and buried in my virtual games for hours a night. I actually hate it because there's no end to it—you can never "beat *Halo 2* multiplayer".... I'm going to be in real serious trouble late this year when the PS3 gets an Xbox Live–like service, Wii games are online, and *Gears of War* is released. And, for the love of god, don't tell me when *Halo 3*'s out, please!

"Don't tell me when Halo 3's out, please!"

NEXT MONTH: OCTOBER • ISSUE #208

ON SALE SEPTEMBER 12



PREVIEWS

- Rayman Raving Rabbids (Wii)
- The Darkness (PS3/XB360)
- Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Wii)
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories (PSP)
- Marvel: Ultimate Alliance (Multi)

REVIEWS

- Madden NFL 07 (Multi)
- Saint's Row (XB360)
- Yakuza (PS2)
- Final Fantasy III (DS)
- LocoRoco (PSP)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE:

SPIDER-MAN 3

Black won't be the new red-and-blue until next summer, but we're way ahead of the fashions with our **world-exclusive first look at *Spider-Man 3* for the PS3, the Wii, and the Xbox 360**. You'll see Spidey resplendent in his gooey coal-black unitard, **tangling with baddies such as Venom, Sandman and more**. We swing by the game's makers at Treyarch, the same gang who developed the *Spider-Man 2* movie game, to see how **they're reinventing the sling-anywhere formula** to mesh with one of next summer's biggest films.

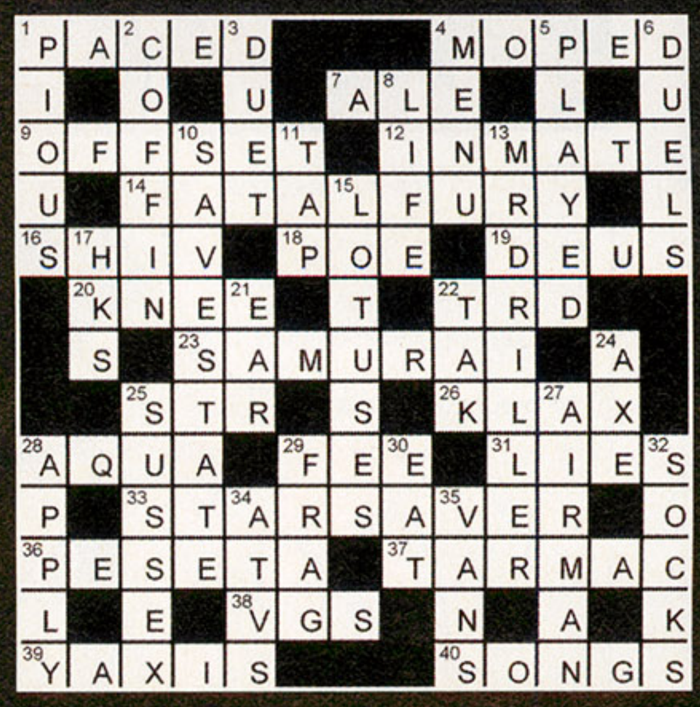
Then we meet some players who are superheroes in their own right: The five most dangerous gamers in the world. From a **7-year-old kid who can kick your ass at *Halo* to an unbeatable *Street Fighter* guru,** these guys (and girl) are making it big in the pro-gaming world, and they're ready to share their skills. Pay attention, and you just might join their ranks someday.

And get ready to level up with our **role-playing-game blowout**. We're breaking down the castle walls with previews of ***Final Fantasy XII, Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII, Blue Dragon, Rogue Galaxy, Persona 3,* and *Phantasy Star Universe,*** to name just a few. It's enough to keep even the most casual cosplayer clothed for months. We hear the chain-mail brassiere is *so* the new leather jerkin.

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

ANSWERS TO SPACE CHASE

on page 116



ADVERTISER INDEX

2k Games
www.2kgames.com 31
Comcast Corporation
www.comcast.com 37
Eidos Interactive, Inc
www.eidos.com 8-9
Foot Locker, Inc.
www.footlocker.com 33
Full Sail Real World Education
www.fullsail.com 109
Gameloft
www.gameloft.com 45
Glu Mobile
www.glumobile.com 59
iBuyPower
http://www.ibuypower.com 68-69
JAMDAT Mobile Inc.
www.jamdatmobile.com 77
Jansport
www.jansport.com 25
Mead
www.mead.com 95
Mead Westvaco Corporation
www.mead.com 94
Midway Games, Inc.
www.midway.com 53
Milk Processors
www.gotmilk.com 15
Mitsubishi Electronics
www.mdea.com 73
Namco Hometek
www.namco.com 6-7
Namco Hometek
www.namco.com 38-39
Namco Hometek
www.namco.com 61
Napster
www.napster.com 124
New Line Home Entertainment
www.newline.com 23
NewEgg.com
www.newegg.com 81
Office for National Drug Control Policy
www.whatsyourantidrug.com 123
Old Spice
www.oldspice.com 17
Sega Of America
www.sega.com 4-5
Sega Of America
www.sega.com 18-19
Sony Computer Entertainment America
www.scea.com 2-3
Square Enix U.S.A., Inc.
www.square-enix-usa.com 55
Square Enix U.S.A., Inc.
www.square-enix-usa.com 56-57
Square Enix U.S.A., Inc.
www.square-enix-usa.com 79
The Gillette Company
www.gillette.com 63
THQ Inc.
www.thq.com 10-11
Ubisoft Entertainment
www.ubisoft.com 35
University of Advancing Technology
www.uat.edu 97
US Navy Recruiting Command
www.navy.com 50a-b
US Navy Recruiting Command
www.navy.com 51
Wizards of the Coast
www.wizards.com 47

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY (ISSN #1058-918X) is published monthly by Ziff Davis Media Inc., 28 East 28th Street, New York, NY 10016. Periodicals Postage Paid at New York, NY 10016 and additional mailing offices. For subscription service questions, address changes, or to order, please contact us at: Web: http://service.egmmag.com (for customer service) or http://subscribe.egmmag.com (to order); Phone: U.S. and Canada (800) 779-1174 or (850) 682-7624, elsewhere (303) 604-7445; **POSTMASTER**: Electronic Gaming Monthly, P.O. Box 55722, Boulder, CO 80322-5722 (please include your mailing label with any correspondence as it contains information that will expedite processing); Fax: U.S. and Canada (850) 683-4094, elsewhere (303) 604-0518; E-mail (please type your full name and the address at which you subscribe): subhelp@egmmag.com. Subscriptions: The one-year subscription rate is $24.97. Electronic Gaming Monthly is published monthly, with occasional exceptions: A special issue may count as a subscription issue, a combined or expanded issue may count as two subscription issues, and there may sometimes be an extra issue. Outside the U.S. add $16 per year for surface mail, U.S. funds only. Please allow 6-8 weeks before receiving your first issue as well as for any subscription changes to take place on an existing subscription. Back Issues: Back issues are $8 each in the US, $10 each elsewhere (subject to availability). Prepayment is required. Make checks payable to Electronic Gaming Monthly. Mail your requests to: Back Issues, Ziff Davis Media Inc., P.O. Box 53131, Boulder, CO 80322-3131. Mailing lists: We sometimes make lists of our customers available to mailers of goods and services that may interest you. If you do not wish to receive their mailings, please write to us at: Electronic Gaming Monthly, P.O. Box 55722, Boulder, CO 80322-5722. The editors and the publisher are not responsible for unsolicited materials. Without limiting the rights under copyrights reserved herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written notice of Ziff Davis Media Inc. Copyright © 2006 Ziff Davis Media Inc. All rights reserved. Electronic Gaming Monthly is a registered trademark of Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission of Ziff Davis Media Inc. is prohibited. For permission to reuse material from our publications or websites, or to use our logo, contact Ziff Davis Media's Rights and Permissions Manager, Olga Gonopolsky, at: permissions@ziffdavis.com or Ziff Davis Media Inc. 28 East 28th Street, New York, NY, 10016 Tel: (212) 503-5438, Fax: (212) 503-3560. For article REPRINTS and E-PRINTS, contact FosteReprints at Tel: (866) 879-9144. Visit www.fostereprints.com to obtain quotes and order reprints online. Electronic Gaming Monthly and EGM are trademarks of Ziff Davis Media Inc. TM and © for all other products and the characters contained therein are owned by the respective trademark and copyright owners. All materials listed in this magazine are subject to manufacturers' change and the publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes. The Canadian GST Registration number is 140496720 RT. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40009221. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to P.O. Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4R6. Is it videogame or video game?

Printed in the U.S.A.

HSU AND CHAN'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE — WWW.APE-LAW.COM/EVILMONKEY

GREETINGS, VIDEOGAMERS! LOOK FOR FULL-LENGTH *HSU AND CHAN* COMICS AT YOUR LOCAL COMIC SHOP! (OR ORDER ONLINE AT WWW.SLAVELABOR.COM.)

HSU AND CHAN: 'THE FINAL RANDOM BATTLE'

HARK, FELLOW DWARVES, ELVES, ENTS, WIZARDS, GOBLINS, AND GUESTS FROM TREKFEST: AKRON.

WAR IS UPON US, AND UPON ALL WHO HOLD TRUE TO THE VIRTUES OF TRADITIONAL ROLE-PLAYING GAMES!

TURN-BASED AND TEXT-BASED RPGS ARE INCREASINGLY FALLING PREY TO THE FLASHY ACCESSIBILITY OF MODERN, ACTION-ORIENTED FARE!

AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT I SAY TO THAT?

"LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!"

NOT EXACTLY, NO!

"I AM KIROK?"

EVEN IN OUR EARLY SKIRMISHES, WE'VE SUSTAINED HEAVY CASUALTIES!

HEAR THESE HARROWING TALES!

I TRIED TO CAST "HAND OF BLA'THARG" ON A PAIR OF "JADE EMPIRE" FANS, BUT THEY WALKED OUT DURING MY FOUR-MINUTE PRE-STRIKE ANIMATION SEQUENCE!

ONE FOUL ROGUE DARED SUGGEST THAT ACTION-RPGS PROVIDE A "MORE-SATISFYING GAMING EXPERIENCE!"

IF ONLY I'D HAD MY ELVEN BLADES...

ROLE

PATRONS PLEASE KEEP TRACK OF OWN ELF EARS

A GUY PLAYING "FABLE" WIPED A BOOGER IN MY HAIR!

WORSE, STILL, IS KNOWING THAT THIS IS A WAR WE MAY WELL LOSE!

AN ILL WIND BLOWS FROM THE BATTLEGROUNDS...

SORRY, THIS MIDDLE-EARTH DIET IS NOT AGREEING WITH ME.

URP!

A NEW ERA IN ROLE-PLAYING GAMES FAST APPROACHES!

HAIL FROM THE FUTURE, SUCKERS!

AAAIGH! RAGNAROK IS UPON US!

O, FLAXEN-HAIRED GLORANDIEL, HOLD ME IN THIS MOMENT OF OBLIVION!

THE CHESS CLUB SHALL REMEMBER THIS DAY IN SONG!

RELAX, WE'RE NOT HERE TO WIPE YOU OUT... ...I DON'T THINK. LEMME RE-CHECK THE MISSION BRIEFS...

HEY-- ARE THOSE TWO MAKING OUT?

ONLY IF HE ROLLS A FOUR OR AN ELEVEN!

POPPA NEEDS A NEW PAIR OF +4 FLAME BOOTS!

NOPE, NO GENOCIDE, YOU LUCKY DOGS, YOU! IT SAYS HERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO LEARN FROM YOU, WHICH IS CONSIDERABLY LESS-FUN!

YOU SEE, PROGRESS ISN'T ABOUT ONE GAME TYPE REPLACING ANOTHER-- GRADUAL IMPROVEMENTS, THAT'S WHAT IT'S ABOUT. SMALL CHANGES WHICH, OVER TIME, ADVANCE ALL ASPECTS OF THE ART FORM! LIKE NEW COKE, OR "THE PHANTOM MENACE!"

WE BELIEVE THAT YOU GUYS CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THE ACTION GENRE -- BUT AT THE SAME TIME, LOOK HOW MUCH THE ACTION GENRE HAS LEARNED FROM YOU! THESE DAYS, WHEN THEY SAY AN ACTION GAME HAS RPG ELEMENTS IN IT, IT'S NOT ALWAYS AN EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADES!

BOTH GENRES ARE CHANGING!

BUT -- BUT I'M SCARED OF CHANGE! WHAT IF TURN-BASED RPGS SIMPLY FADE AWAY INTO HISTORY, LIKE ALL HOPE OF A NEW "MONKEY ISLAND" GAME?*

NONSENSE, ARNIE, NONSENSE! AS LONG AS THERE ARE DEVOTEES OF OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGIES, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A MARKET OF PROPORTIONATE SIZE TO CATER TO THEM!

LOOK AT THE AMISH! THEY'VE NEVER BEEN HOTTER!

* NOTE TO LUCASARTS: GET ON THAT.

BY GOLLY, YOU'RE RIGHT! TRADITIONAL RPGS ARE THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH ALL FUTURE GAMES IN THE GENRE SHALL BE BUILT, AND WE, AS -- RANDOM BATTLE!

W-WHAT?

AAIGH!

QAPLA!!

SAVE AND EXIT!

IF PRESSURE'S PUSHING YOU TO GET HIGH
AND GET INTO THINGS YOU'RE NOT REALLY INTO...
MAYBE IT'S TIME TO PUSH BACK.

PRESSURE

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY/PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA©

abovetheinfluence.com

LISTEN TO OVER 2 MILLION

FREE SONGS*

AT NAPSTER.COM

© 2006 Napster, LLC. Napster and the Napster logos are trademarks of Napster, LLC.

*Really. The music's free. All 2 million songs. So, there's really no fine print to read. But if you insist, here's something to think about. Two Russians are walking down the road. One of the Russians is the father of the other Russian's son. How are the Russians related? A) Husband and wife.