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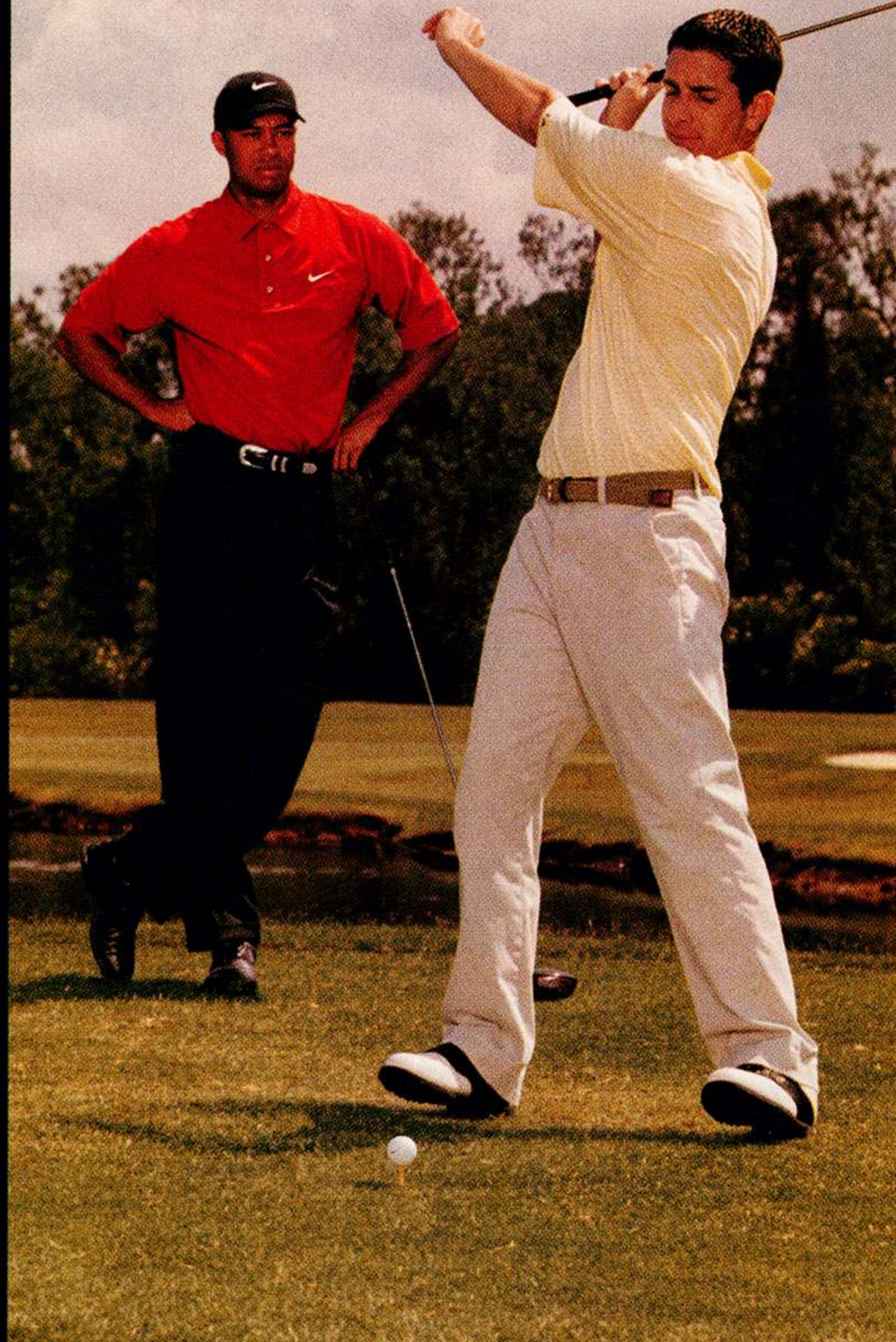
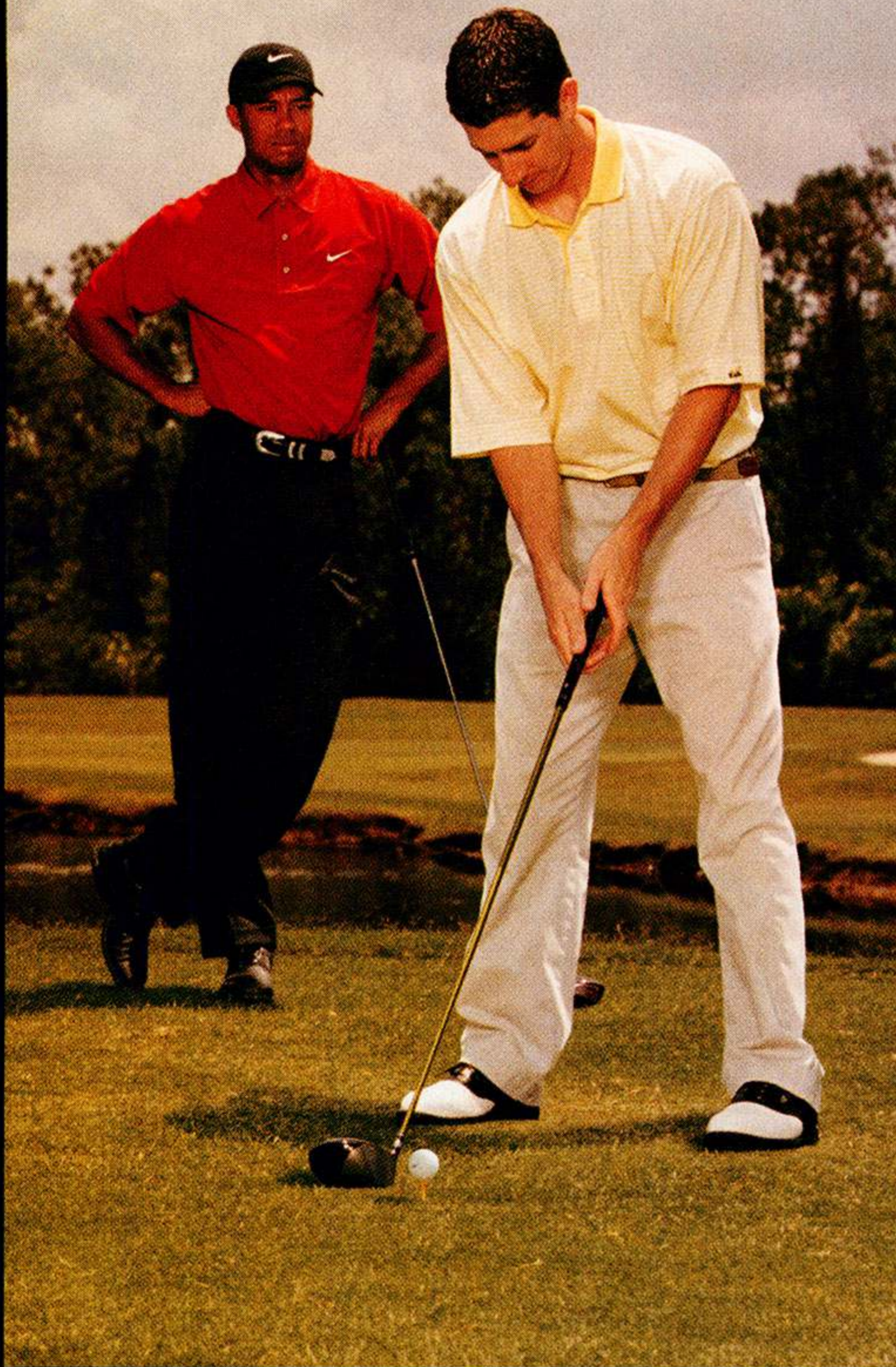
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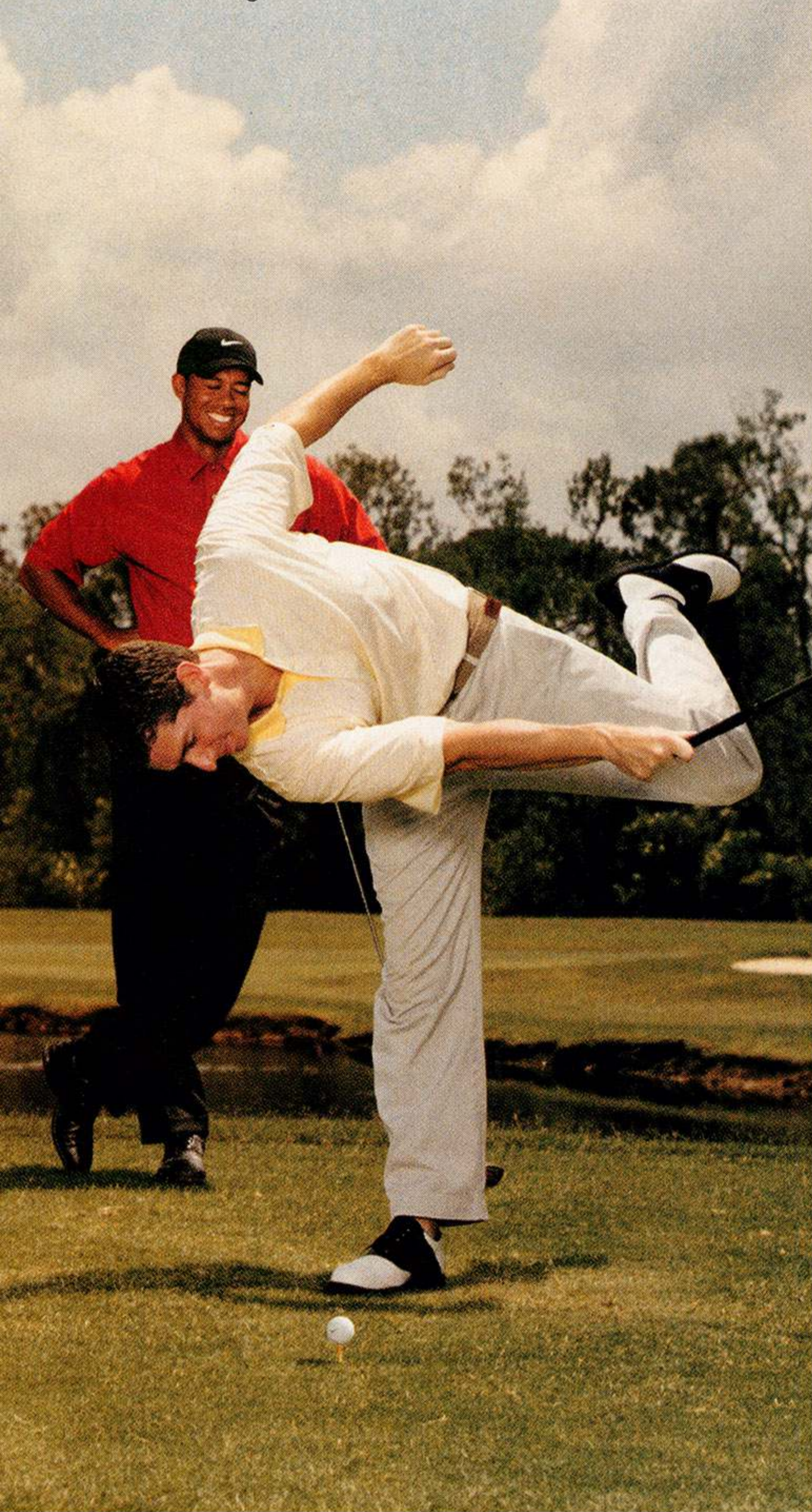
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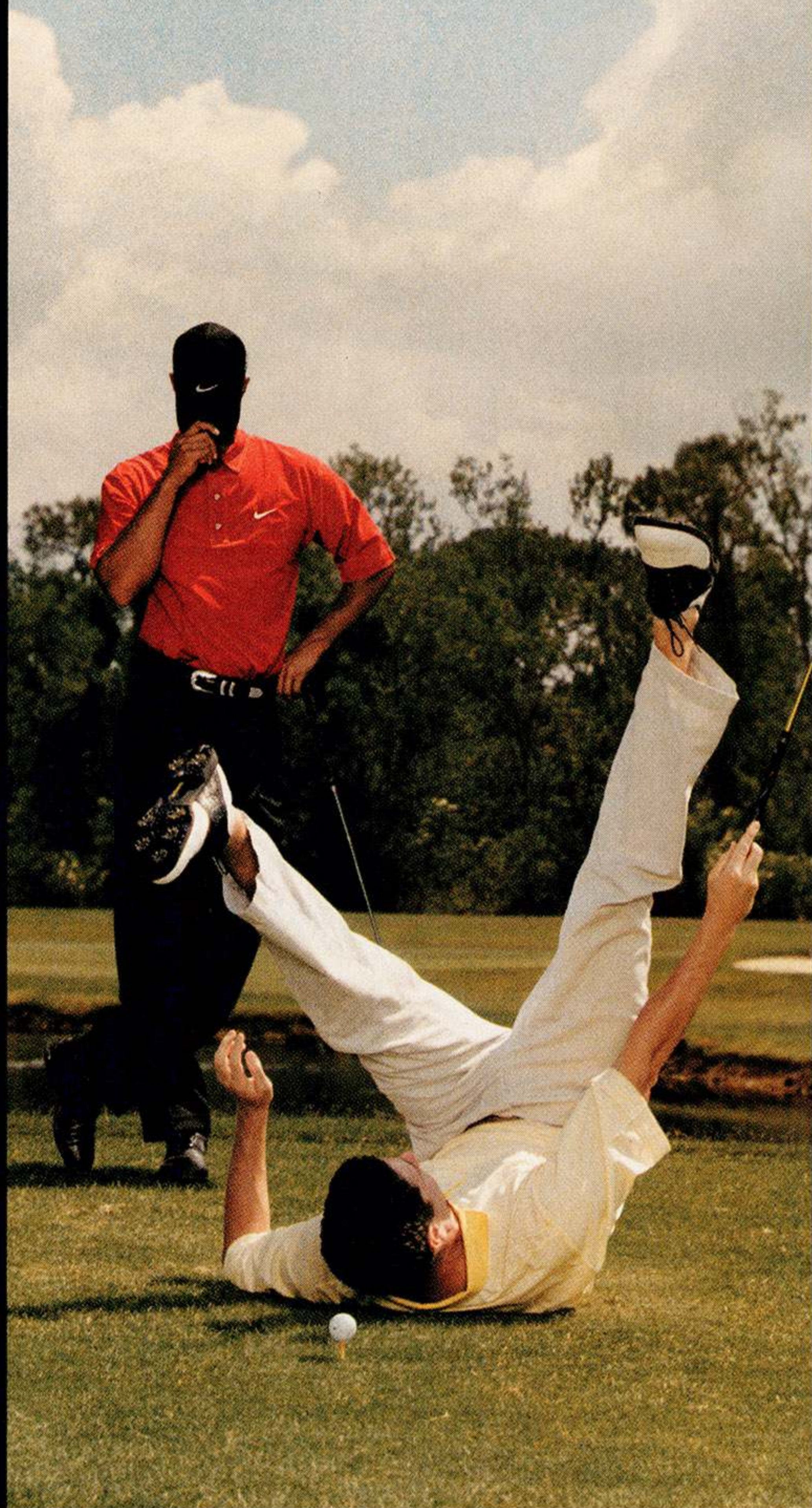
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PlayStation 2



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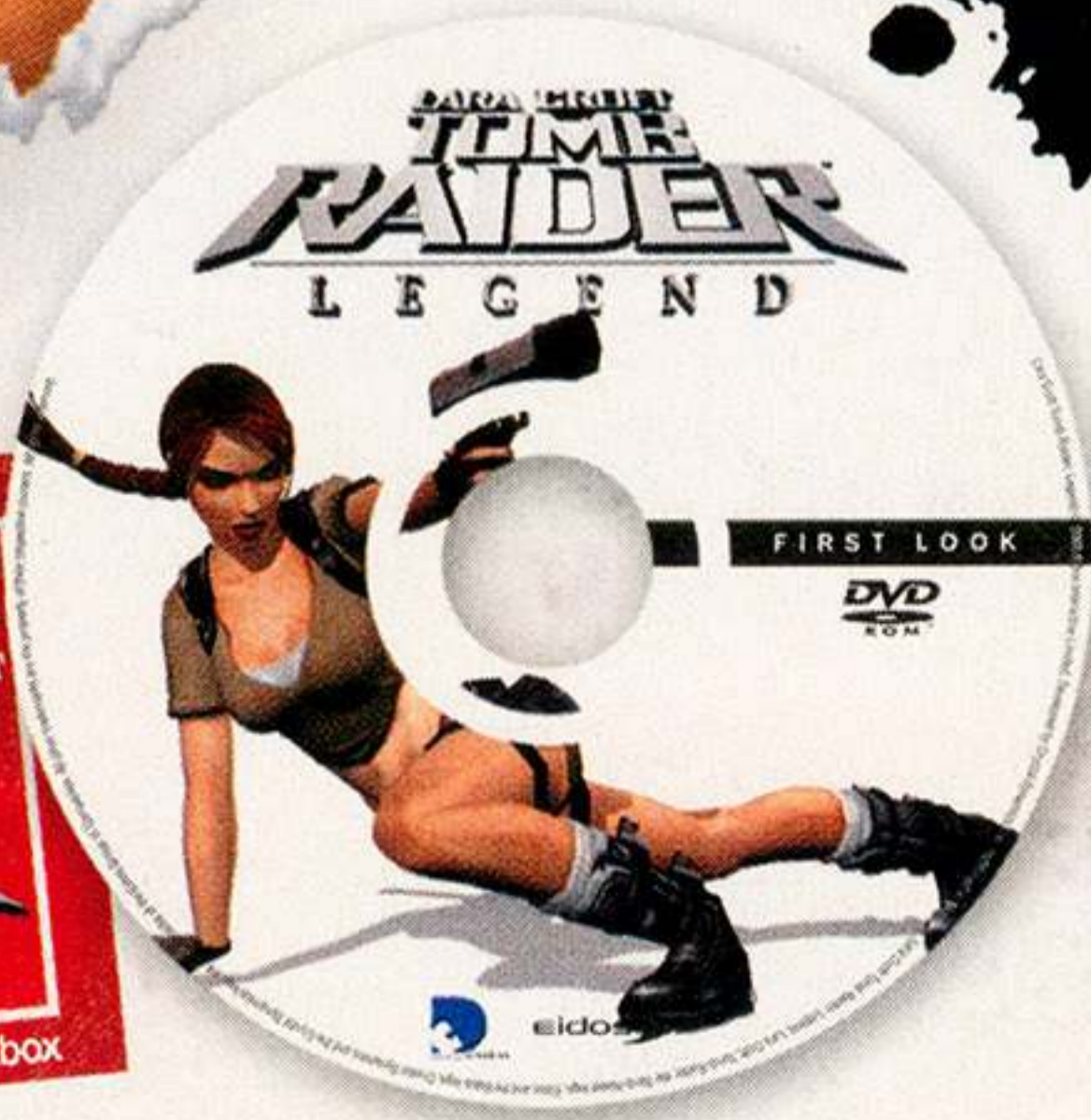


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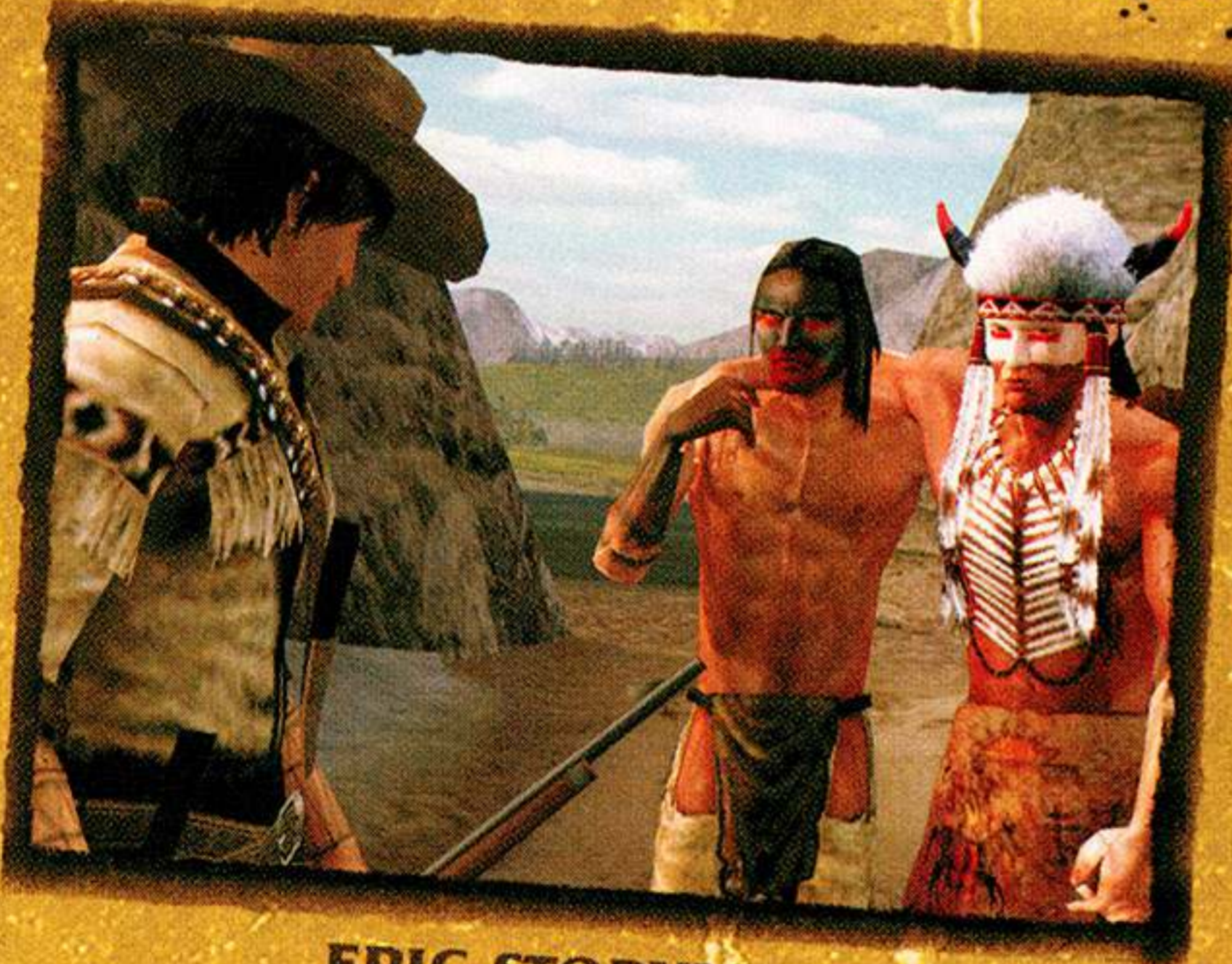
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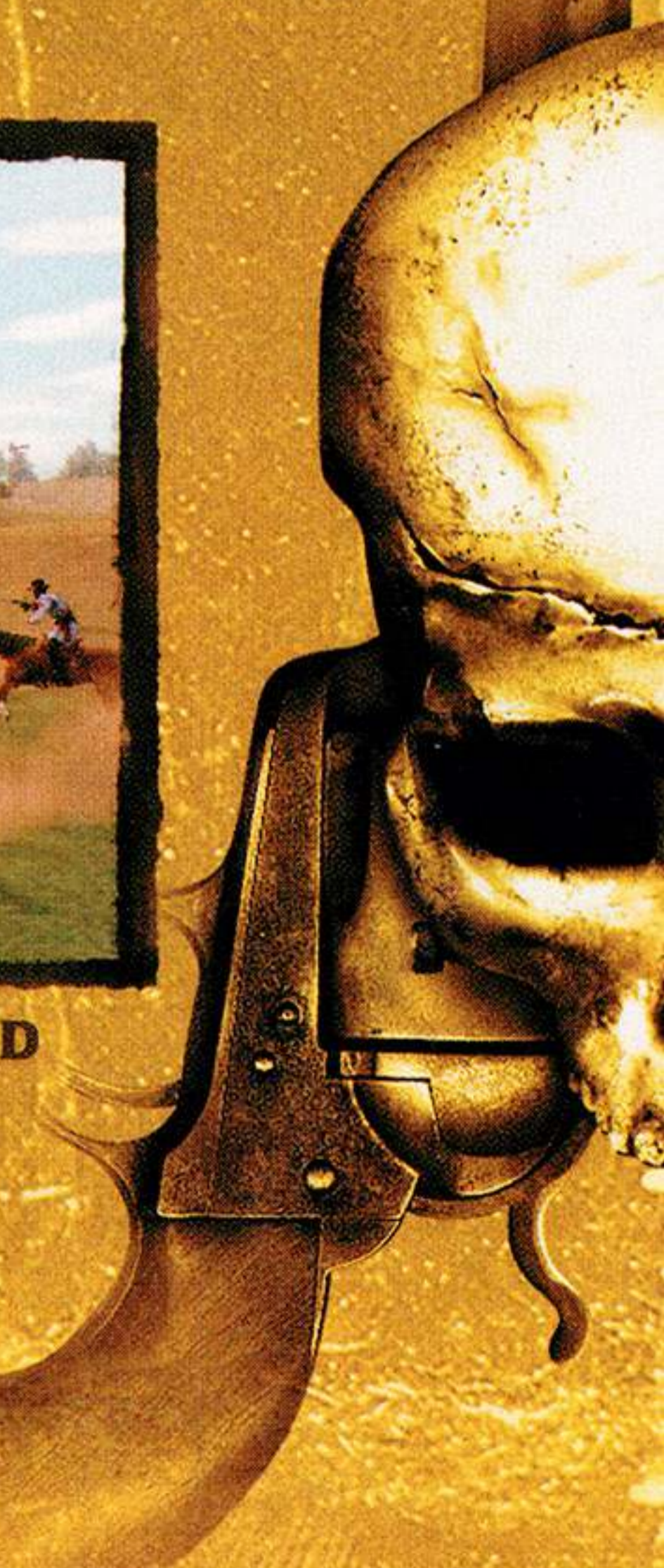
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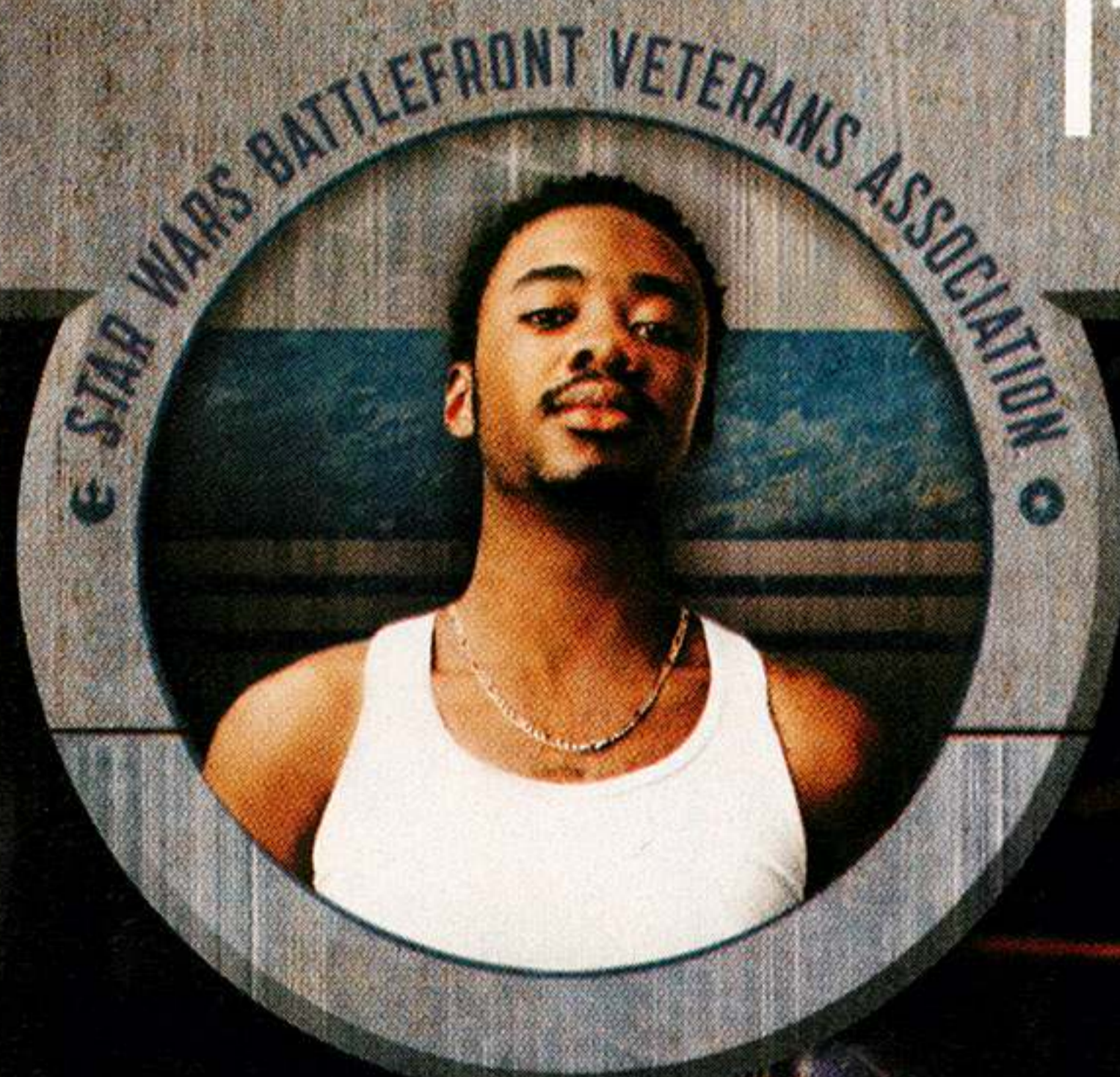
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We know what you want and we got what you need. We've put together a Xbox 360 prize package like only *EGM* can. Find out all about the goodies here



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EDITORIAL



Microsoft's new Xbox 360 console is almost upon us. Let's make some predictions, shall we?

1. Assuming both of these games launch on time, *Perfect Dark Zero*

will be the 360's top-selling game, followed by *Madden NFL 06*.

2. *Perfect Dark Zero* will come together at the last minute and impress the crap out of everyone, just like *Halo* did on the original Xbox. *Halo 2* playtime will drop significantly as online gamers flock to *PDZ*'s frag-filled pastures.

3. Players will flock back to *Halo 2* when they realize *PDZ*'s multiplayer is busted (unbalanced, cheater friendly, et cetera). It's just way too ambitious a game (see pg. 89) for Microsoft to get right on the first try without any updates or patches. I'll eat my old Xbox if *PDZ* ships totally balanced. I won't even add any seasoning.

4. Most early adopters will buy the more expensive, hard-disk-drive-equipped Xbox 360 (see pg. 75) since they're, well, early adopters and want the best possible hardware. Microsoft will make a big deal out of this and announce to the world, "See? We told you the \$400 package would sell. Thus, the hard drive will be well supported by the development community." Fast-forward three or four years, when the mass market has bought enough of the cheaper, no-hard-disk-drive 360s, and you will weep as you see your hard drive sitting lifeless, unused, and unloved. No more spinning for you, HDD.

5. Sony will scramble to get any PlayStation 3 news that it can out there to combat Microsoft's better-than-expected sales of the 360. Sony will realize it now has a serious, legitimate contender for console top-dog honors.

6. Nintendo will sit back, chill as a rap star sipping martinis, babes on each arm, just waiting patiently to show its next-gen Revolution goods whenever it damn well pleases. PS3? Xbox 360? They don't matter to the company who, against all odds, will continue to live in its own world.

7. I will be late on a future deadline because I was up all night playing *Perfect Dark Zero*, despite what I said above. If we're all lucky (well, you more than me), I'll be plunging little bits of black and green plastic out of the toilet, too.

—Dan Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORT

By the time this issue went to print we, like the rest of the world, had our eyes and hearts on New Orleans. If you are interested in helping please visit www.redcross.org.



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LOOK INTO THE EYES OF THE



THINK YOU KNOW KONG? THINK AGAIN.

BREATHING HEAVILY, YOU CROUCH IN A DENSE THicket OF JUNGLE VINES. Twenty yards away, a hungry Tyrannosaur rages through the trees, hunting for his dinner. Fear pierces your gut as you realize your trusty weapon is empty. Suddenly, an impossibly huge ape bodyslams the T-Rex, sending it sprawling. And a titanic struggle erupts before your eyes. Welcome to Skull Island – and the unforgettable world of Peter Jackson's King Kong.

BEAST



K

ING KONG FIRST MADE HIS CINEMATIC DEBUT in 1933, thrilling audiences with a powerful story and

groundbreaking special effects for its time. Peter Jackson's current reimagining promises to do no less, bringing the perilous world of Skull Island to life as only Jackson can – Jackson and famed game designer Michel Ancel, that is.

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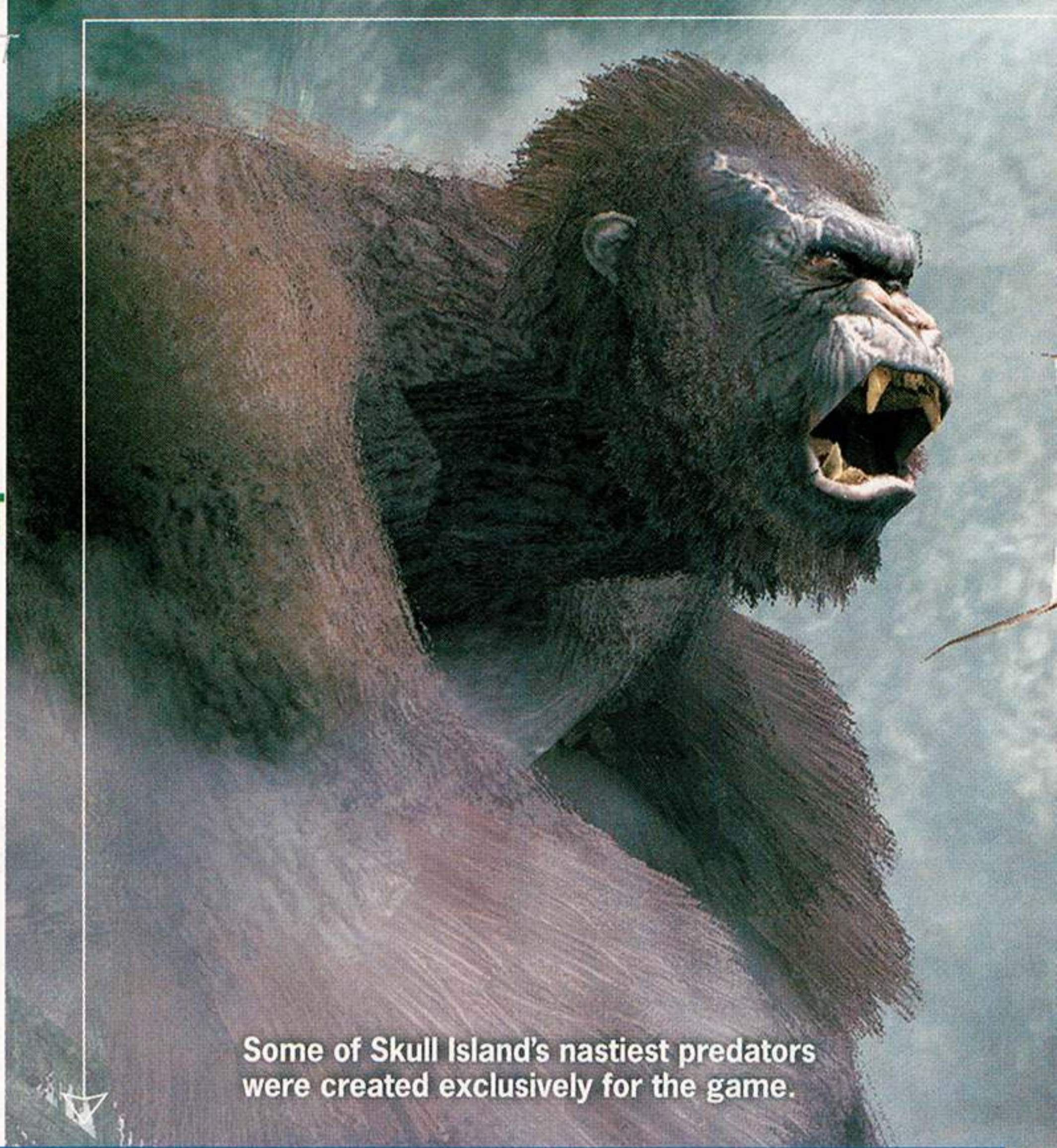
AN AVID GAMER, PETER JACKSON STARTED DREAMING UP IDEAS for a King Kong video game as soon as he started the movie. But to make a video game as memorable as the movie, he needed a creative partner with a true talent for rendering both fantasy and emotion. Then he played *Beyond Good & Evil™*, an epic adventure crafted by renowned game designer Michel Ancel. Right away, Jackson knew he'd found his man. And, judging by the jaw-dropping beauty and intensity of the gameplay, Jackson and Ancel have succeeded brilliantly.

BREATHING LIFE INTO A LEGEND

Jackson and Ancel set out to create a game deeper and more immersive than the film itself. So the game had to look and feel just as convincing as the "real" world captured on film. To achieve this, the development team used every trick in the book – plus a few that aren't.

A rare technique called "inverse kinematics" adds frightening realism to the behavior of Skull Island's predators. This technique varies and synchronizes the animations used for each type of creature, depending on the creature's AI. For example, if you're detected by a T-Rex, you'll see the monster turn its eyes and head directly toward you, lunging over rocks and smashing through the jungle in a convincing attempt to make you its dinner.

But techniques like inverse kinematics would mean little without a sophisticated AI system governing the behavior of Skull Island's denizens. Some species attack alone, while others use clever pursuit tactics to attack in groups. Fortunately, your enemies aren't the only intelligent creatures on Skull Island. Your crew will protect you, suggest solutions to problems, and generally react as real humans – real scared humans – would.

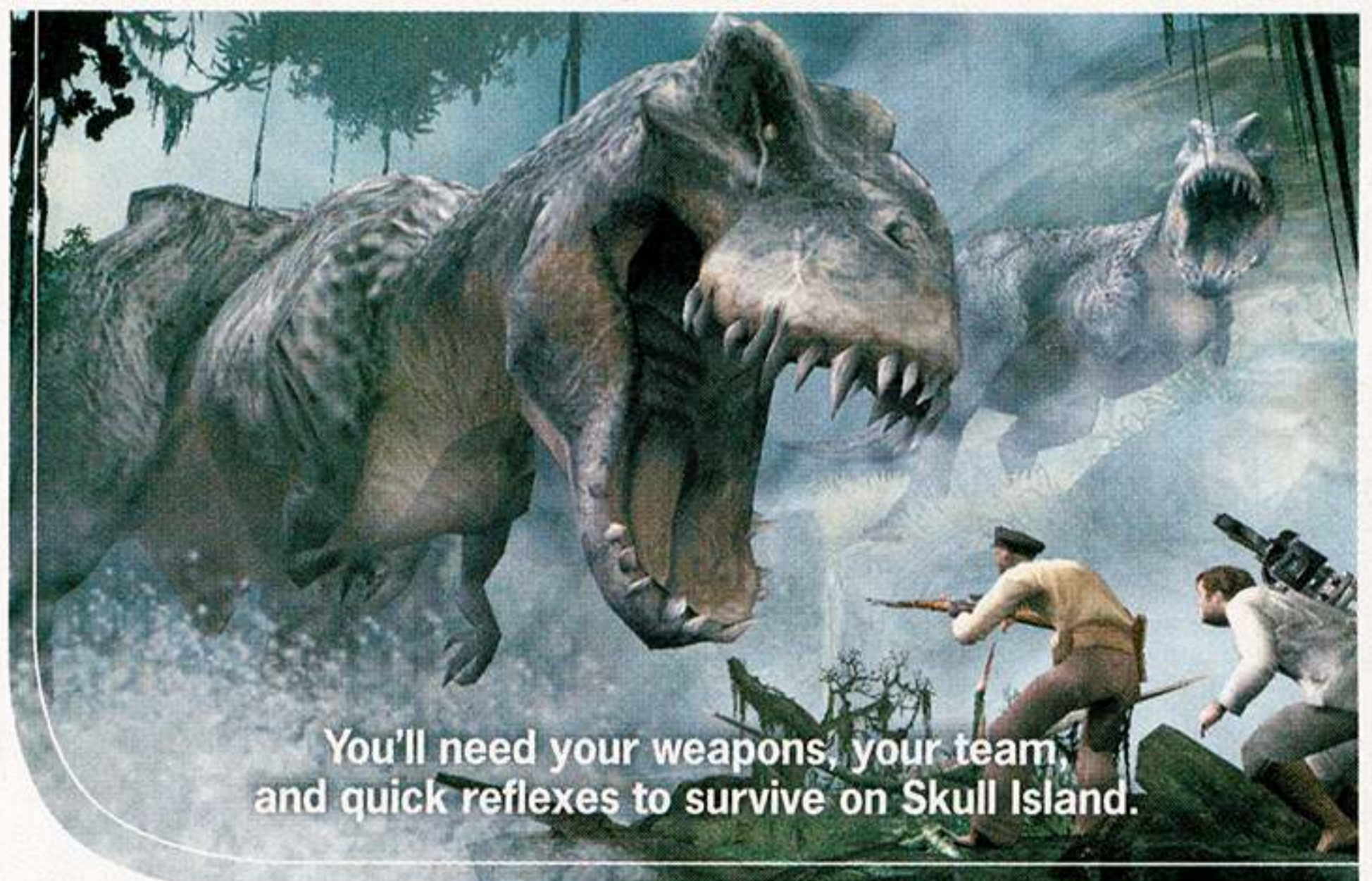


Some of Skull Island's nastiest predators were created exclusively for the game.

"[Ancel] has just a great storytelling skill in making you so involved in the game as a player that you actually become emotionally attached to the characters that you're playing with." – Peter Jackson.

And just wait till you feast your eyes on the stunningly detailed jungle of Skull Island. Thanks to clever layering of the largest number of 2D sprites, filters, and effects ever used in any video game – including meteorological effects like water, fog, wind, fire, and smoke – you'll almost be able to feel the hot, humid jungle air. Blades of grass rustle convincingly around your legs. Sunlight patterns shift subtly. In short, this jungle doesn't just look pretty. It feels alive.

Perhaps the greatest creation of all is Kong himself. Agile and powerful, Kong moves through Skull Island with remarkable force and speed. And take a close look at his fur; the dev team used intricate 3D effects to actually animate each separate strand. The overall effect is breathtakingly real.

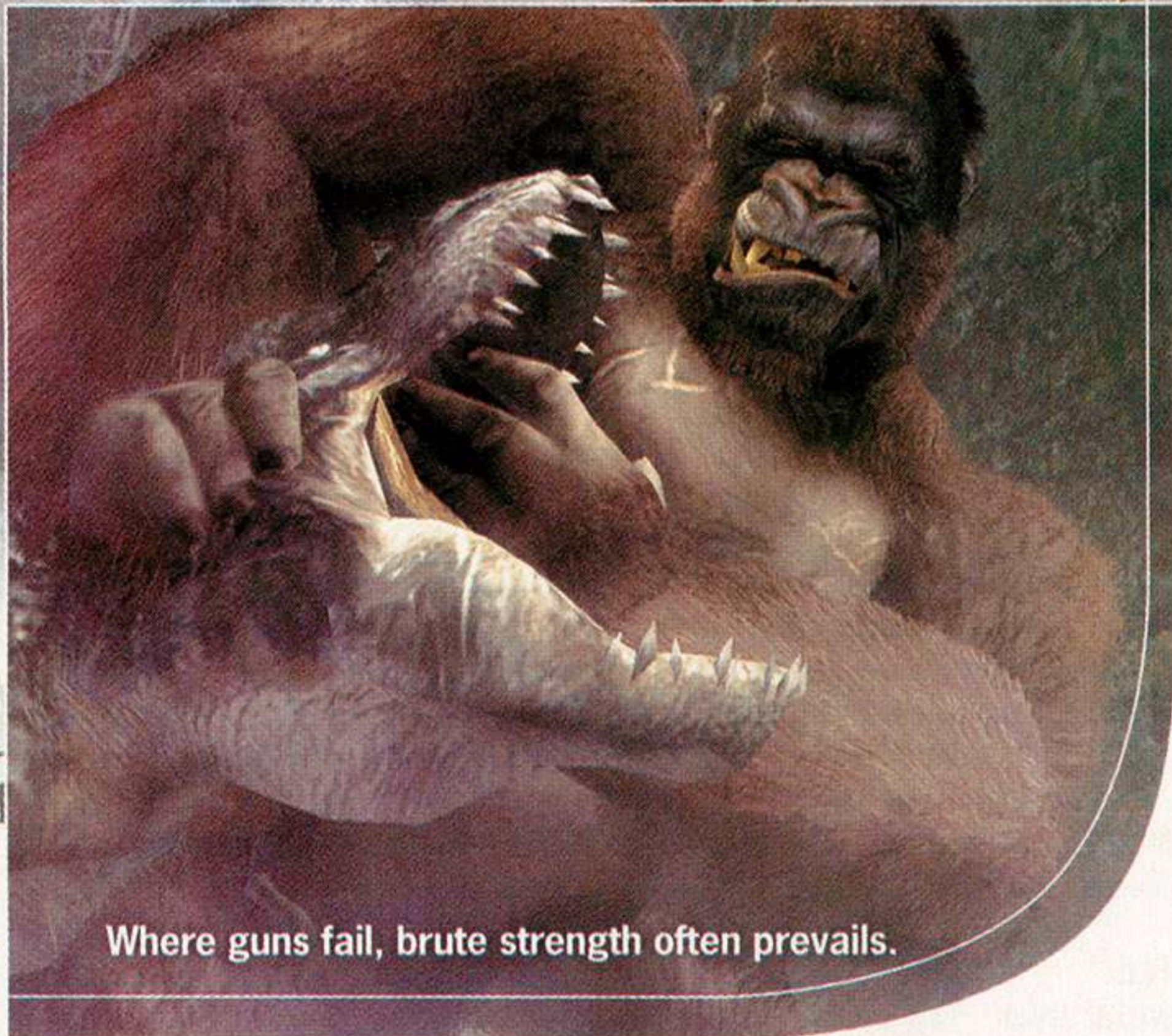


You'll need your weapons, your team, and quick reflexes to survive on Skull Island.

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Where guns fail, brute strength often prevails.



with the weapons you can carry, you'll never win just by fighting. To stay alive, you'll need other strategies, such as tricking predators into battling each other and using the environment to set clever traps.

At a key moment, you begin playing Kong in third-person. When the camera pulls back to reveal Kong's mighty perspective, you feel a rush of freedom and power. Delivered from the harried perspective of Jack, you inherit swift movements, powerful battle attacks, and the gratifying ability to smash, throw, and scale just about everything around you. But playing as Kong isn't just a walk in the park. Confronted by multiple enemies with clever attack patterns, you'll have to fight hard to defeat huge T-Rexes and outsmart swarms of smaller predators.

The alternating gameplay intensifies the emotions already inherent in the story. Ancel, like Jackson, never loses sight of his audience, meting out new challenges just when you want them the most. The result is nothing short of an unforgettable game experience. ■

A MASSIVE STEP FORWARD: INNOVATIONS IN IMMERSION

Every technical decision for Peter Jackson's King Kong has been made with an eye to thoroughly immersing the player in the world of the game. For example, you can still move and look around while scripted plot events occur, unlike nearly all other games. And the absence of a heads-up display makes the action feel more immediate. For example, when your character suffers an injury, you won't see any shrinking "health bar." Instead, your vision will blur and turn red.

The game also offers new experiences that don't appear in the movie. In addition to movie creatures, Jackson added beasts not seen in the film. Multiple pathways offer you a different experience every time you play, so that you'll never have to play the same game twice. The difficulty level scales fluidly according to your performance, growing more challenging as you improve.

Most impressive of all is the range of emotions evoked by the alternating gameplay possibilities. By inviting you to play as both Jack Driscoll and Kong himself, the game delivers an unforgettable mix of intensity, realism, and entertainment through a rare combination of first- and third-person play.

PLAYING WITH POWER: HEROES GREAT AND SMALL

Conceived by Jackson and realized to phenomenal effect by the development team, the dual gameplay between Jack and Kong delivers a dramatic shift in perspective and power.

As Jack Driscoll, you're outnumbered and overpowered by predators bigger, stronger, and faster than you. To heighten the sense of fear and danger, you play Jack's role in first-person. You'll have to advance through a dense jungle, never knowing what lurks behind the next tree. Armed only

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG



PlayStation 2



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Letters

stalkers, gimps, and gaming wimps

Xbox 360 MPG

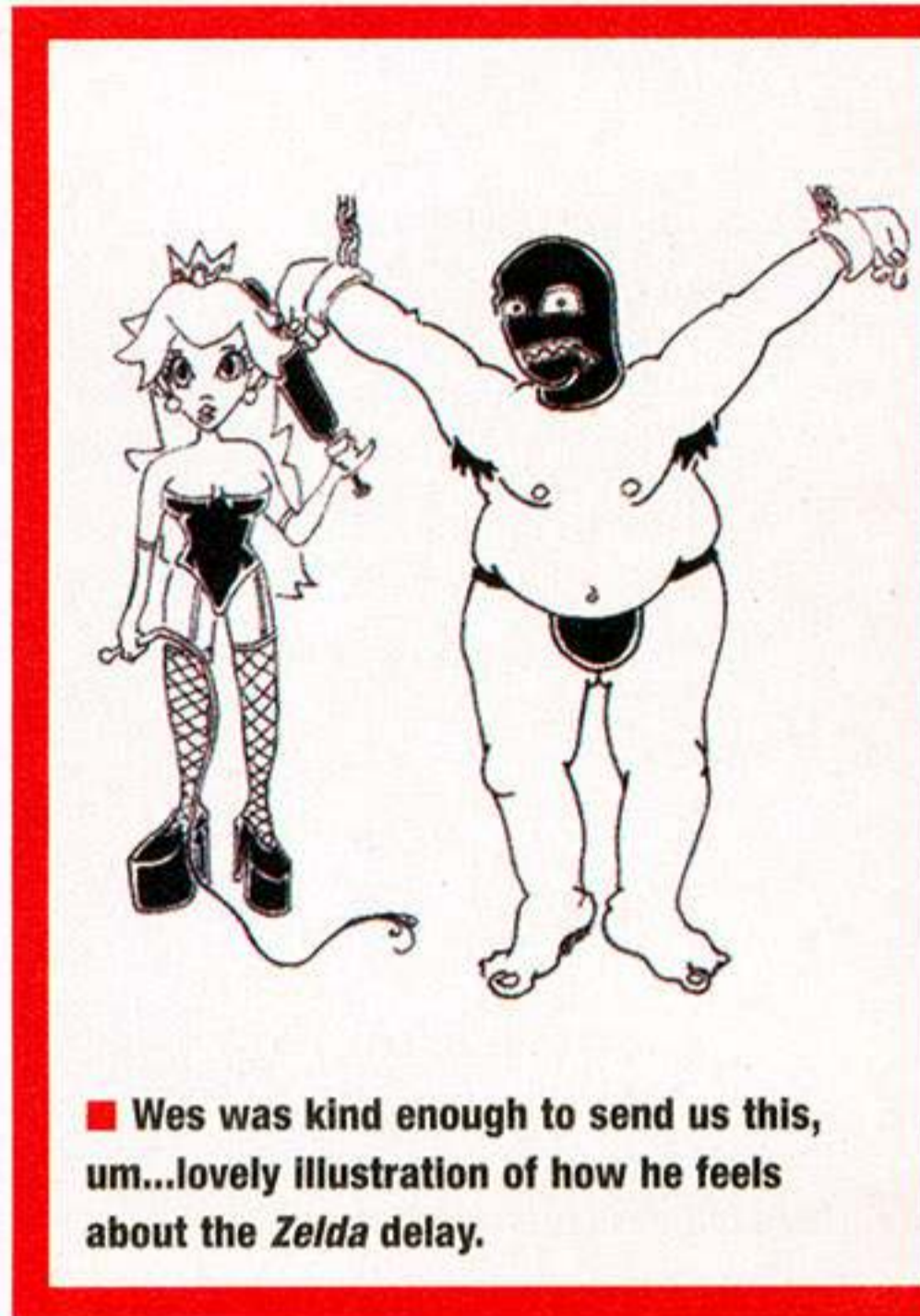
Do the Big Three take power consumption into consideration when designing their chips? I used to play my Dreamcast four to eight hours a day and found no noticeable increase in my electric bill. But when I started playing my Xbox just as much, my bill doubled! I checked the instructions and I found that one hour on Xbox [uses as much power as] about four hours on Dreamcast (100 vs. 27 watts). The Xbox 360 has three faster CPUs and one faster GPU. I would expect this thing to be a power hog. If this keeps up, only rich people will be able to afford to play games for more than 30 minutes a day.

—DMC C

We repeatedly requested a response from Microsoft on your power question but only got the runaround. That means you'll probably have to invade an oil-rich country to power your 360.

The Greatest Won't Party, Demands Respect

I play multiple online role-playing games. I am always the creator and leader of my guild and the commander of my party. My plans are almost always flawless. My party members and



■ Wes was kind enough to send us this, um...lovely illustration of how he feels about the *Zelda* delay.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Tortured by Nintendo

I've heard the news: *Zelda: Twilight Princess* has been delayed until next year. Actually, I'm not all that surprised; I know the ways of Nintendo. Scary time boys and girls: I actually like this game that Nintendo plays with us, this tease that they do so well. They give you a peek at what you want and then take it away, give a release date and then change it. It's cool, though. I like to be teased. I like waiting for the game to come out, getting excited about screenshots and "exclusive" coverage, to dream of swinging that sword, slaying a Moblin, collecting hearts, and finding those damn jars. I'm a sick bastard, Nintendo. Drip that hot candle wax of new screenshots on my naked body. Tickle me with [Roc's feather] until I beg to play the game. Make me collect them all! I'm the gimp locked in the basement of Tom Nook's shop!

—Wes V.



Congrats, Wes! Your slightly creepy take on delayed gratification earns you a game from the vault. Please keep it sanitary.

guild members always comment on my skill. Just today, someone told me, "You're the greatest." Now this might be a shocker: I just turned 13. I want older gamers to look at younger gamers differently. I know there are some really annoying noobs out there, and yes, these punks give us younger gamers a bad name. But I've run into a 41-year-old dad who insisted on repeatedly calling me "gay" because I wouldn't party with him. So, uh, some respect please?

—D.

This one's just too easy.

Jen Stalker #104

Jennifer Tsao, you won't be my friend on 1UP.com, you heartless bastard.

—Robert Springer, aka Darth_Spanky

At press time, our neighborhood social butterfly and managing editor Jennifer Tsao had some 1,018 friends on her 1UP blog (egmjennifer.1UP.com). The fact that you're not one of them can only be attributed to astrology, advanced

artificial intelligence, and/or a deep and abiding discrimination against *Star Wars* nerds. That or there was a bug or something that prevented her from accepting your friend request, because she told us she basically accepts everyone, no questions asked.

Saudi Readership Checks In

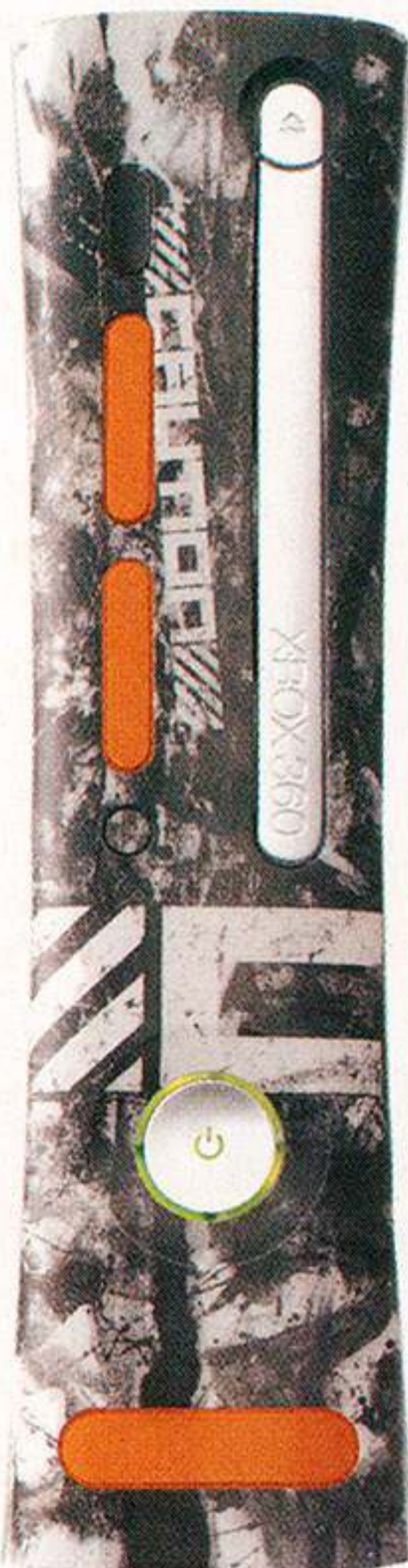
I know about your love for games, but don't you have a hate for some videogames' characters for being really mean as villains or very impolite sometimes? I, for example, hate M.

Bison, the final boss in *Street Fighter*, for being a godless and aggressive person while fighting against him. And I really don't like Duke Nukem for being really impolite! And since kids are watching, I don't directly say about his deed, but he is, as you know, the guy who likes hanging out with really bad women.

—Wael Al-Abri, Riyaadh, K.S.A. [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia]

Prison Readership Checks In

Sitting here in a correctional institution tends to give a man plenty to think about. Reading your 'zine tends to make me wish I had a Game Boy in here. I got the TV and the CD player, and now all I need is some gaming goodness to help balance the tedium. Other than my job as a call-center rep, I don't ▶



■ Will the electric bill grow with next-gen hardware?

POST OFFICE

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

The *Zelda* delay: tragedy, or necessary evil?

TemplePilot: A tragic, necessary evil.

JaundiceJuice: If this delay means no narcolepsy-inducing end-game fetch quest like the oceanic world tour we got at the end of

Wind Waker, then it's a good thing.

BurningMaster20002003: The GameCube just died.

Solid Penguin: When they delayed this game, they pretty much gave an indirect kick in the pants to all the Nintendo fans waiting. Hopefully, they'll make lots of improvements.

SaiFPS: *Zelda* got delayed? I'm assuming they delayed Christmas as well....

Dofan4life: This means no failing grades until the second quarter of school.

Skett: With the price Microsoft is selling Xbox 360 for, I need every dollar I can hold on to.

Erdricks Boxers: No *Zelda*. No *Halo*. No *Final Fantasy*. No *GTA* (except PSP). Gee, guess the mainstreamers might have to play something new.

EB Unleashed: I'm going to slit my wrists while watching the trailer. I might write a poem about my sorrow. Or, I might shut up and wait.

CONTACT EGM

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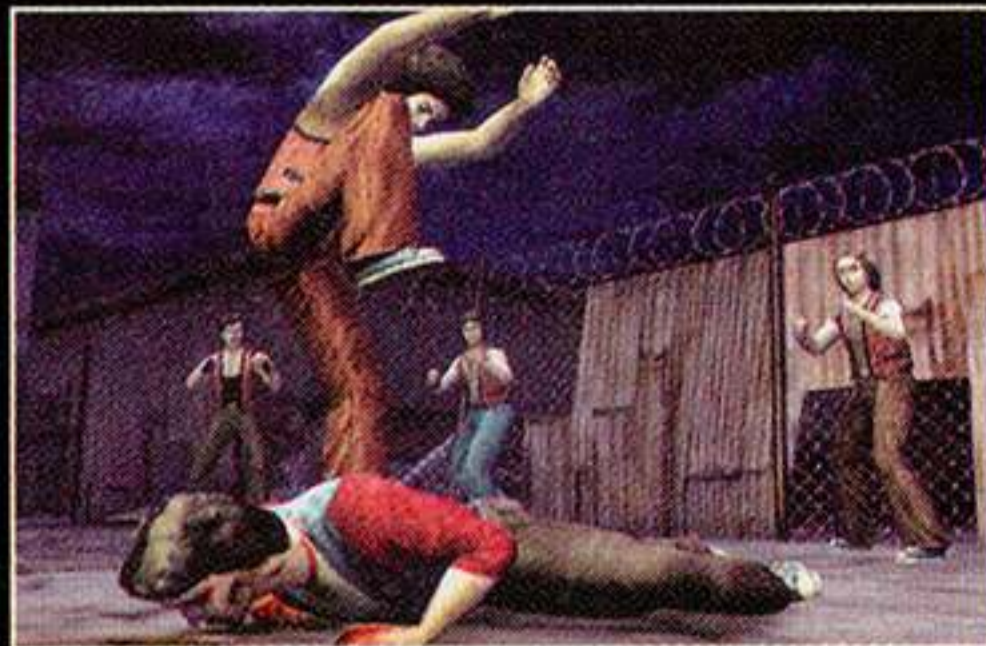
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PlayStation 2



BONUS GALLERY

Going the extra mile for love of the game

Gaming Wunderkind

I'm the guy who put headphones on the belly of my wife and played some videogame songs when she was pregnant (*EGM* #195, "Sephiroth is Born"). I just wanted to send you a picture of the result of this "gaming therapy." Look at what I have created: a future gamer!

—Jean-Marie Alneus

We were getting ready to make another mean joke, but the kid's actually pretty cute. Nice work.



▶ really have much to do, aside from talking to the occasional amusing caller. It tends to slow down as I sit here at my computer and stare at the screen.

I won't bore you with tales of the shower room or how insanely neurotic my cellie is (everything *has* to be spotlessly clean with him). But thank you for bringing a rare beam of gaming sunshine into my otherwise dull and pointless day.

—Terence Chi-Hui

Here's the plan: White Boy Steve picks up sheets from the laundry room on Tuesdays at noon, sharp. He'll deliver your linen (GBA stashed inside) for a carton of nonfilter Camels. Only, you gotta let Carlos play *Advance Wars*, or he'll tip off the warden.

He Said, He Said

Reader Ryan LeCocq [Letters, *EGM* #195] stated that *Gran Turismo* isn't a realistic racing simulator. I rebuild, restore, and race Datsun Z cars, and I'm here to tell you this guy has no idea what he's talking about. He said that 1978 Datsun 280Zs didn't come with five-speed transmissions. Well, they did, and about 55% to 65% of the cars produced that year had them optionally

equipped (not including Fairlady Zs). Think before you try to discredit one of the greatest racing simulators of all time.

—RJ Haber, HaberZ Racing Inc.

As Abraham Lincoln once said: Owned!

Crybaby Cries About Being a Nerd

In the Next Month section at the end of *EGM* #195, you referred to the people who cried [while playing] *Final Fantasy VII* as nerds. You guys should understand that calling gamers who got caught up in the story of *FFVII* "nerds" is misguided.

Videogames have gotten to a point where the most original story ideas out there come not from Hollywood, but from games. If it's wrong to shed a tear (which is all I did, not full on crying—honest) at a sad point in a brilliantly woven tale, then what should developers be striving for? I'm sure someone on your staff cried at some point in the game.

—Ryan Cendejas

Games have more original story ideas than Hollywood? We would hope so. And yes, Previews Editor Shane Bettenhausen has a special oversized Harry Potter

pillow he cries into every time Aeris gets the sword (seriously).

Going Broke for Bundles

I plunked down \$125 yesterday for my Xbox 360 preorder at EB Games only to find out the next day that they're doing bundle deals I really can't afford, packaging the system with games I really don't have interest in.

Is it even legal for retailers to do such a thing? If they know their demographics, then they should know that the average gamer can't afford \$700. I can barely afford the system plus one game! It reminds me of the separate line for the rich people at Universal Studios.

—Ryan Acosta

You might be interested in the new *EGM* Titanium subscription package: For the low price of \$279, you get six awesome issues emblazoned with gold-leaf cover logos, each shipped in a crimson velour bag, every Dan Hsu editorial rubber-stamped with a realistic approximation of his signature. A serious value for serious *EGM* readers.

Metal Gear Speculation

The more I read about *Metal Gear Solid 4*, the more confident I am that I know where the game will take place. I knew it the very first time I read an interview in which [*MGS* creator] Hideo Kojima said: "It'll be someplace hard to hide." He's also said that it will be a sequel to *MGS2*. If you were able to understand the story of *MGS2*, it should be fairly clear that No. 4 is going to have to do with digital something-or-another. Others have guessed a desert or a city, but there are plenty of places to hide there. My guess? *MGS4* will be...well, fake. It'll take place in a computer system.

—Del Pera

Sounds plausible, but we're still leaning toward Roanoke, Virginia's world-famous Mini-Graceland.

WIN THE GAME OF THE MONTH

We've hidden movie quotes in this issue—spot one and you can win our Game of the Month. As an added bonus, courtesy of Microsoft we're also giving each

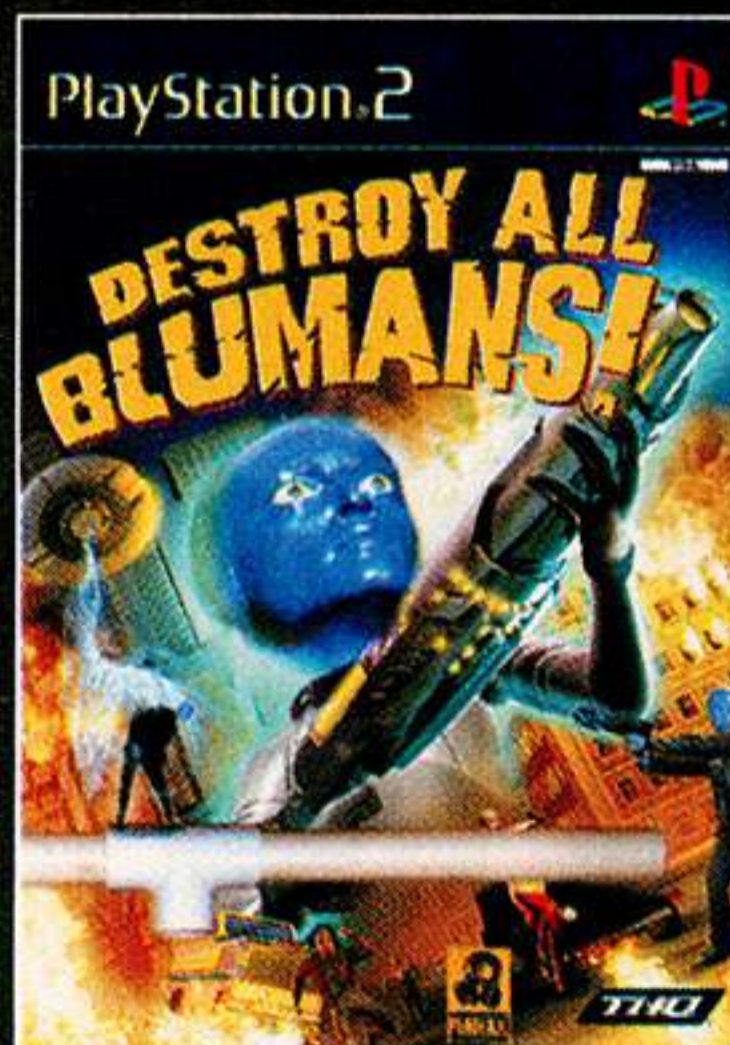
of the winners this month a copy of *Conker: Live & Reloaded*. If you find one, go to EGM-GOTM.1UP.com. There you can send us a message

(subject head: Movie Quote: *EGM* #197) 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. Three randomly selected readers will win copies of the Game of the Month and *Conker*.



GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

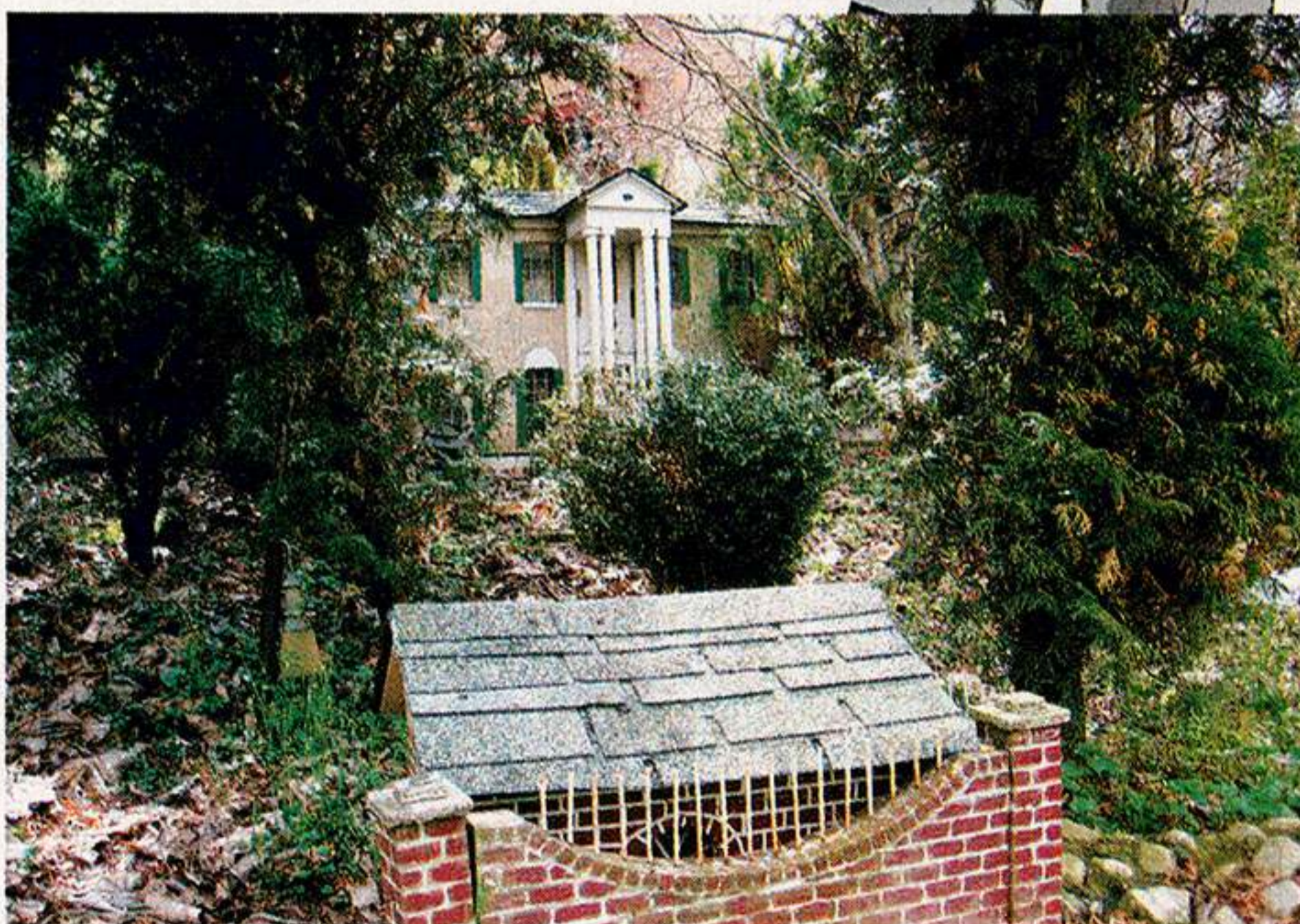
Got proof that game design is best left to the pros? Send your concept (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama



Destroy All Blumans

After 15 long years, the real intentions of Blue Man Group have surfaced! *Destroy All Blumans* is this summer's newest blockbuster. Summon your fellow PVC beaters from outer space to do your seminefarious bidding. Spray the populace with various foods and paints, and watch them run away in baffled, sticky terror. Make music on the lamest of instruments. Work your way up the pop-art ladder until you succeed in committing the most heinous of crimes: producing butt-awful computer commercials!

—Dirty-D



■ Mini-Graceland looks pretty overgrown these days, but we doubt Snake (the mullet-rocking grizzly man above) could hide in the tiny pool out back.

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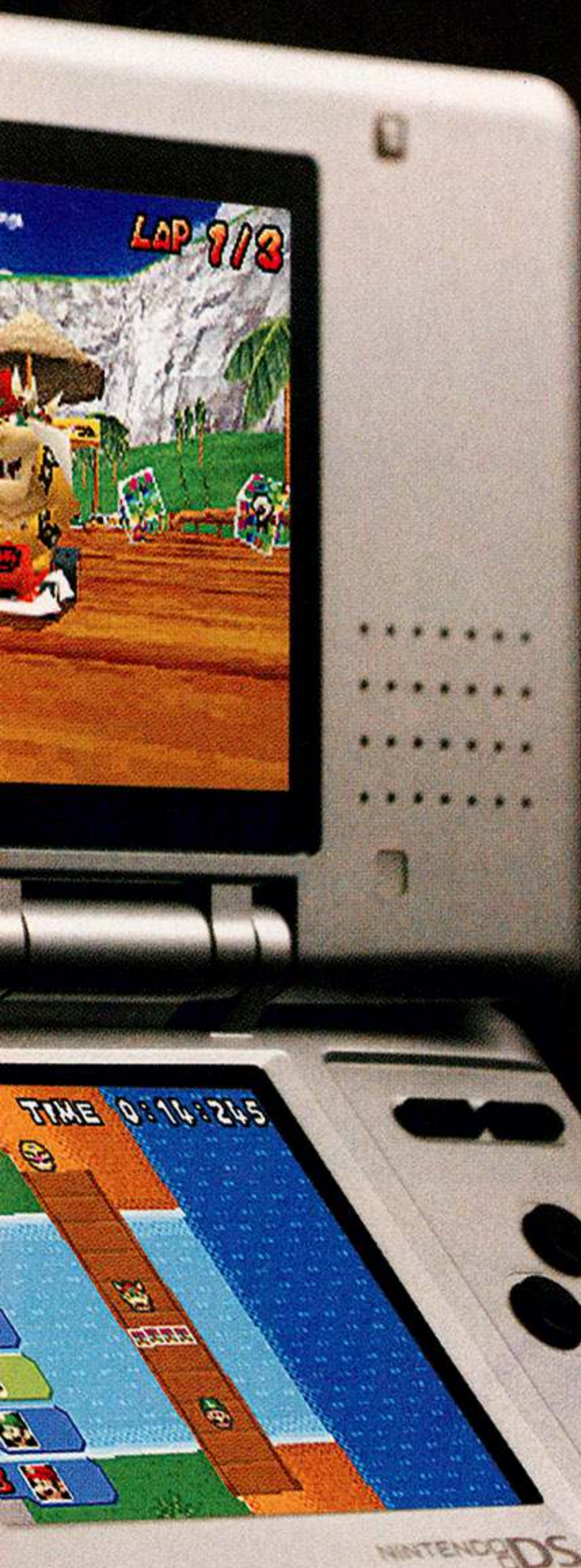


press start

gaming news, previews, phat camp, and other stuff

SEPARATE,

Nintendo's and Sony's handhelds couldn't be more different.



NINTENDO DS

Quickly becoming more than just a portable kennel

Just a month ago, Nintendo unleashed the puppy-loving *Nintendogs* onto the market, and it's rolling over the competition (Nintendo is reporting week-one sales of 250,000 copies). DS and PSP hardware sales are currently neck-and-neck in the United States, despite the fact that the DS released five months earlier, so it'll take more *Nintendogs*-style hits to put the DS firmly on top. But with these upcoming games, that might not be a problem....

The games

Nintendo's first online game is a back-to-basics reworking of the *Mario Kart* (November) formula that's worked so well for the past 13 years. The draw here, of course, is the networked multiplayer.



■ *Mario & Luigi: PIT* also stars the bros.' wee versions.

To keep things rolling, Nintendo's throwing over 30 tracks into the mix—most are new, but the game will include some from past editions.

The GameCube hit *Animal Crossing* proved that games about aimlessly dicking around can be rewarding. The series heads to DS this December and, like *Mario Kart*, online play is its key feature. The touch screen also allows for big improvements over the last game's clunky interface.

Mario & Luigi made for one GBA role-playing heavyweight. The DS follow-up, dubbed *Partners in Time* (November),

follows the pair on an adventure to rescue Princess Peach...again. The real appeal here, though, is another dose of the last game's fractured sense of humor and action.

Sonic Rush (November) looks to be the most promising portable hedgehog yet, as the dual-screen view actually makes a big difference for clearing massive jumps and viewing branching paths. Also in November comes *Viewtiful Joe: Double Trouble*. Look for a lot of puzzles utilizing the touch screen in this side-scroller.

The highlight of the 2006 lineup for DS



■ The DS gets all mature with *Resident Evil*.

has to be the *New Super Mario Bros.*—a game Nintendo was forced to make after running out of *Mario* games to rehash. Also, *Resident Evil: Dead Silence* (a remake of the original game in the series) offers a first-person view, and aside from using the handheld's bottom screen for maps and puzzles, you'll have to "wipe" blood off it from attacks and blasting enemies in the head.

(DS continued on pg. 26) ▶

>> FOR THE 23 FOLKS WHO HAVEN'T PLAYED HALO OR HALO 2 (XB), MICROSOFT HAS SOMETHING FOR YOU: ON OCTOBER 4, YOU CAN

BUT EQUAL?

We see how each has performed so far, and what the future holds

PSP

Will it ever live up to the hype?

Sony's first-ever handheld got off to a slower start than we were expecting...with months of mediocre software. Despite this, gamers seem unable to resist its slick black charms, as the company is reporting almost 3 million units



■ *Grand Theft Auto*: just as big (and quite controversial) in portable form.

shipped in the United States since its March debut. Can the PSP keep its momentum? This lineup should help.

The games

Things are finally heating up for the PSP. Leading the pack of exciting new games is *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* (October). Taking place in the same town that saw all the depravity of *Grand Theft Auto III* (PS2/XB), the PSP edition features all-new interiors and shorter missions (the better to play on the go, of course) in the lively metropolis.

If you're looking for the PSP's first online killer app, though, you might want to give *SOCOM U.S. Navy SEALs: Fireteam Bravo* (November) a shot. This handheld version will offer the same gritty third-person shooting thrills as its commanding officer. Perhaps most interesting

is that *Fireteam Bravo* will communicate with the PS2's *SOCOM 3*; objectives accomplished in one game can affect the battlefield in the other. Let's hope the controls have improved since our first playtest this past spring.

Feeling a little less violent? The PSP should be the perfect place for *The Sims 2* (November), a game designed to give you freedom—
(PSP continued on pg. 26) ▶



■ *The Sims 2*



■ *SOCOM U.S. Navy SEALs: Fireteam Bravo*



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DS (CONT.)



■ Slim pickings: Only *Mario Kart DS*, *Animal Crossing DS*, and *Metroid Prime: Hunters* are currently slated to include network play.

► (DS continued from pg. 24)
Time to play—online

We've already covered the first two online games for Nintendo's dual-screen handheld; *Mario Kart DS* and *Animal Crossing DS* are both perfectly suited for online in totally different ways. Problem is, the first-person shooter *Metroid Prime:*

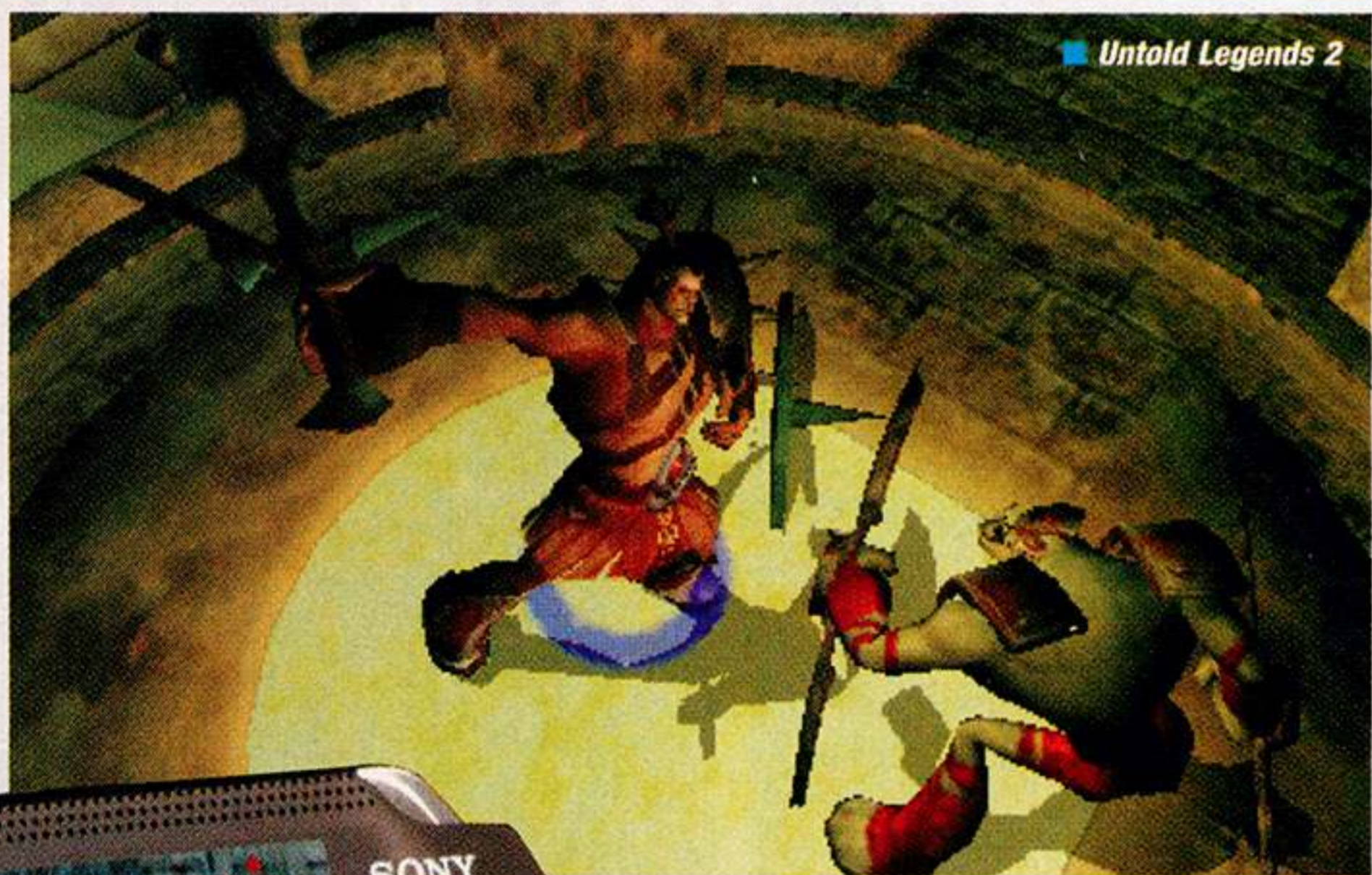
Hunters (due early next year) is the only other game that's committed to having this feature. Let's hope this doesn't become the DS' version of "connectivity": forgotten after a few hits.

Final analysis

Right now, the DS easily has the edge in

innovation, and third parties are giving their all to support the system. We can only hope this situation holds. With a wider array of original games, the DS will always have a place in the hearts of the hardcore, but will it ever achieve the mainstream success of Nintendo's Game Boy and Game Boy Advance?

PSP (CONT.)



► (PSP continued from pg. 25)

while investigating alien abductions, you can still perform usual *Sims* duties, such as house remodeling and trapping hapless virtual people in cages until they wet themselves. That same month *Star Wars Battlefront II* arrives and, like the console version, it brings the fight to space.

As for next year, the PSP will get its first nonsports sequel: *Untold Legends 2* (February), which will feature online co-op play. Next spring Sony will release its *Jak* spin-off *Daxter*, which should finally offer platformer fans the chance to get in touch

■ The PSP version of *Def Jam* will feature rappers not found in last year's console game, *Fight for NY*. Here's hoping for Sir-Mix-A-Lot...

with their inner otter...weasel...thing. Plus, two EA franchises—the boxer *Fight Night* and brawler *Def Jam*—will hit PSP in '06.

Time to play—online

The PSP supported online gaming from day one, thanks to launch games such as *Twisted Metal: Head-On*. Yet this feature has been slow to show up outside of Sony-published titles. Games that could have ruled online, like the first-person shooter *Coded Arms*, are local play only, with few third-party online titles in sight. Fortunately, *SOCOM* should ease the pain.

Final analysis

With a lineup of high-profile games that bring ambitious 3D gameplay to a handheld, the PSP will undoubtedly keep things cooking. But are sequels and spin-offs enough to maintain our interest? What the PSP lacks is more original titles like the techy puzzle game *Lumines* that take advantage of the handheld format. But as the PSP reaches critical mass, more creative games should start popping up, as happened with the PlayStation 2. The PSP should fare well into 2006 and beyond.

—Christian Nutt

► APPARENTLY, MARC ECKO CAN'T GET IT UP...YET—ATARI HAS PUSHED BACK THE RELEASE OF ITS GRAFFITI-FILLED ACTION GAME MARK

THE DS GAMER

Main characteristics—this better be you

The DS gamer has been playing Nintendo games since the '80s and isn't ashamed to keep doing so, even if they don't feature drive-bys. Gameplay is key, whether it's time-tested (*Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow*) or innovative and fresh (*Nintendogs*). The DS gamer isn't afraid to experiment and is willing to forgive a lack of top-tier 3D graphics.

Subcharacteristics—this might be you

The DS gamer is really interested in classic gaming, preferring to play new editions of old franchises rather than the flavor-of-the-moment stuff found on the PSP. The idea of *New Super Mario Bros.* makes the hardcore DS gamer cream his jeans. But the DS gamer is a nurturer, with a pack of *Nintendogs* and an *Animal Crossing* town on the way.

Secret characteristics—nobody knows it's you

Unlike Sony's handheld, you can't do a lot with the DS except play games. The DS gamer's favorite secret activity? Going to a really big nerdfest—like one of those *Final Fantasy* concerts—and popping into *PictoChat*. Oh yeah, and using the system's Wi-Fi feature to play the puzzler *Meteos* on a plane, even though you're not supposed to. The DS gamer is secretly a rebel like that.



THE PSP GAMER

Main characteristics—this better be you

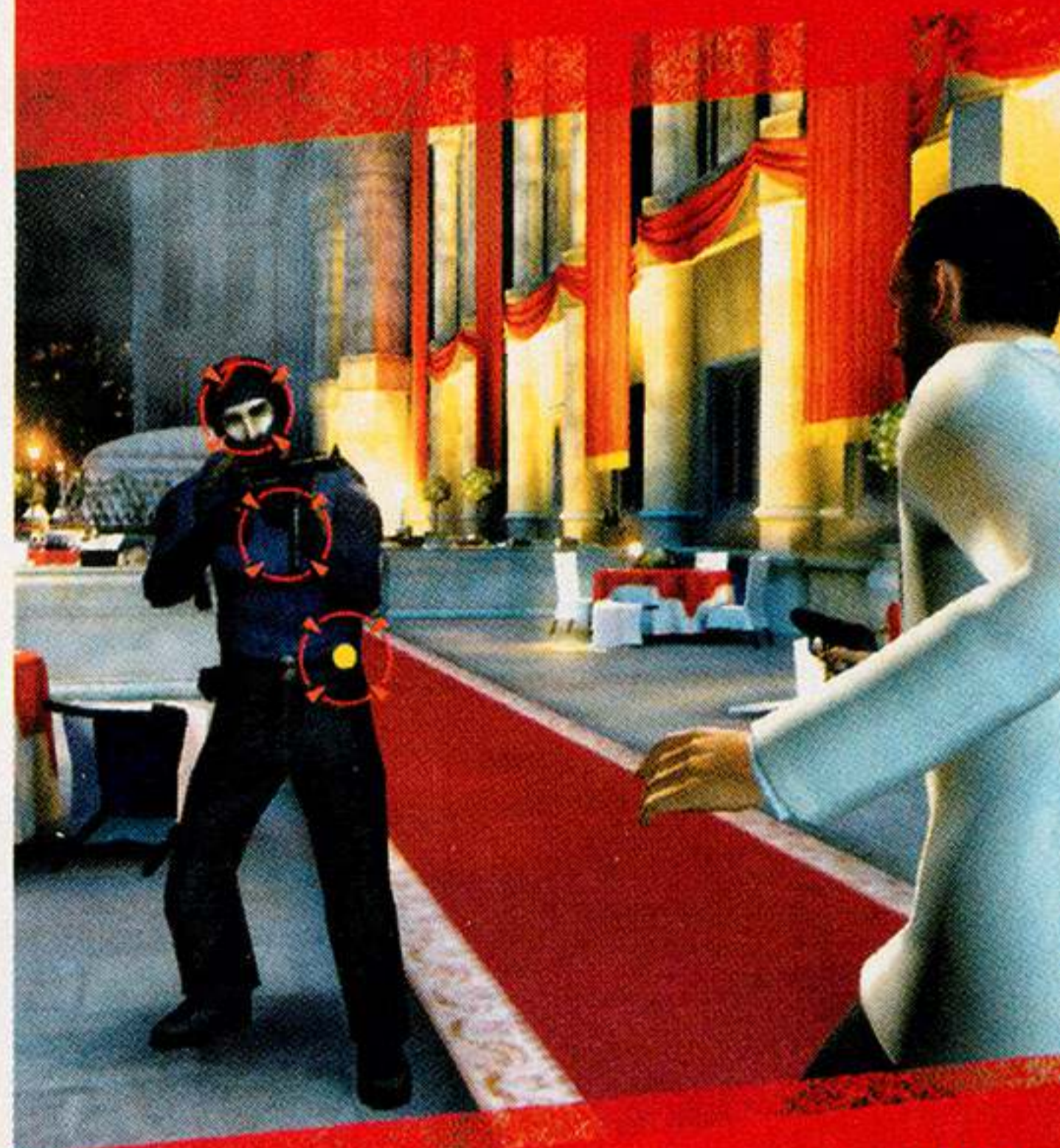
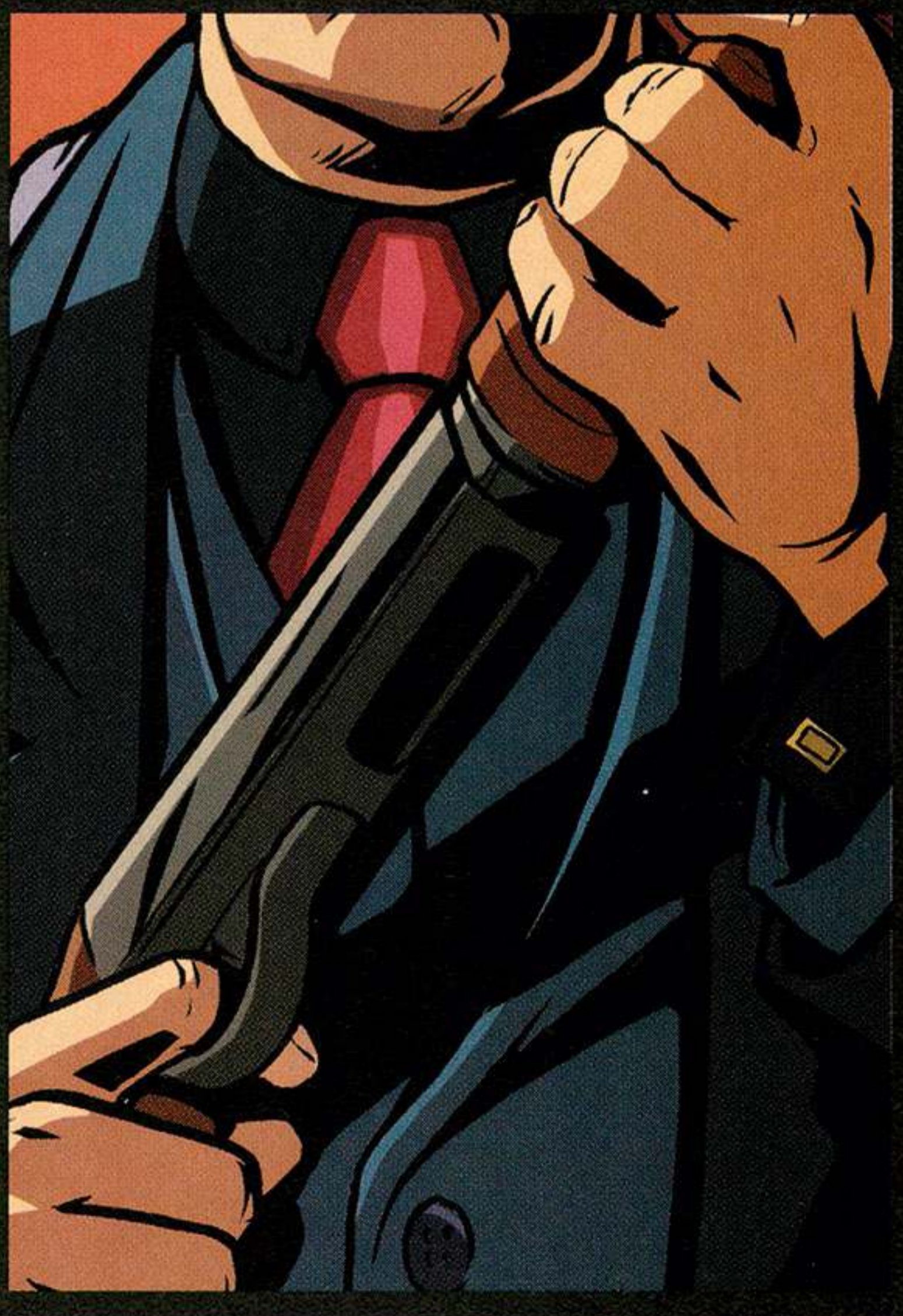
The PSP gamer is interested in visual stimulation. Who cares if a game is innovative and quirky as long as it looks great and plays well? The last five years of PlayStation 2 games were fantastic—the PSP gamer wants more of the same. He or she is also a stickler for technological quality and mature content.

Subcharacteristics—this might be you

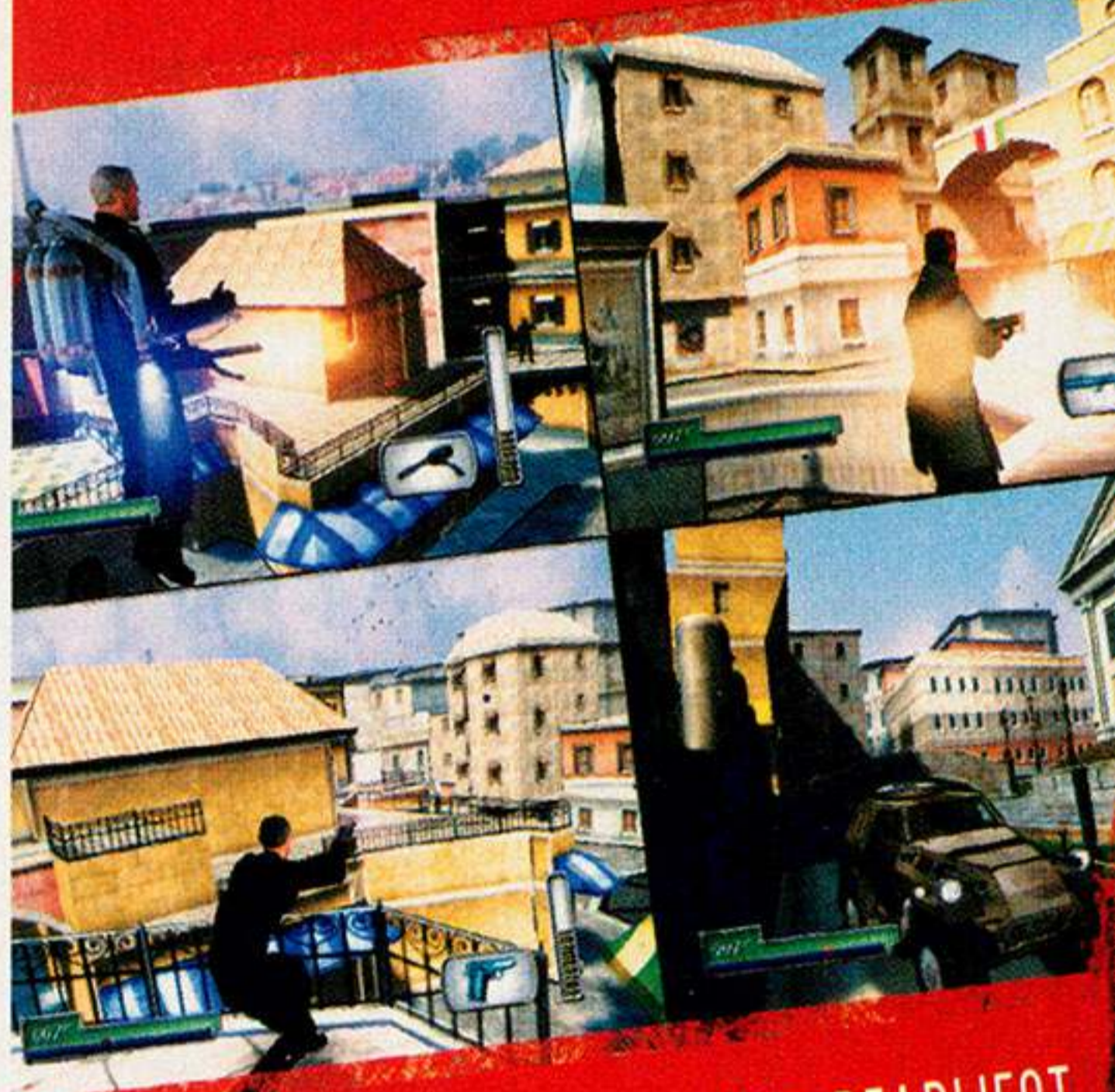
Music and movies are as enjoyable as games. UMD movies are a great way to kill an hour or two. A big-ass memory stick filled with music tracks and photos is the PSP gamer's most prized possession. Web browsing on the go rocks, too.

Secret characteristics—nobody knows it's you

The PSP's memory stick isn't just good for saving games—it's also for loading the system with emulators that let you play classic Nintendo and arcade games. Comics? Videos downloaded or ripped from DVDs? It all works for this media junkie.



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BRAIN PRESS

How gaming builds your mental muscle

We've been told from a very young age that every minute spent gaming shaves a point off your IQ, but author Steven Johnson argues the opposite in his new book *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*. He spells out what any avid *Zelda* player may have already suspected: Videogames are a workout for the mind. —Robert Ashley

EGM: So, the kid camped out in front of the television with his mouth open and his eyes glazed over isn't brain-dead?

Steven Johnson: [People assume] that what's happening to kids while they are watching television is the same as what's happening to them while they are playing a videogame. But there's a huge difference between a passive medium like television and a participatory one like videogames. When you see a kid staring at a videogame, you're seeing concentration and focus. You're seeing them deal with a very complicated environment full of variables. Lots of problems to solve. That's the look of somebody who's paying attention, not the look of a zombie.

EGM: In the book you talk about the mental labor involved in playing games, but gaming doesn't really feel like work.

SJ: But I think that most gamers will attest to how frustrating games can be, that you can easily get stuck in a game. There's a lot of grinding your teeth, trying to get things to work. That's shocking news to

most parents and cultural authorities who don't know anything about games and just dismiss them. They have no idea how much time is spent being challenged and frustrated by games. Despite what everyone says, one of the things [gaming] teaches kids is patience. It teaches them that if you apply yourself and work through a problem, you'll be able to solve it.

EGM: Are some videogames better for your mind than others?

SJ: Definitely. There are some games that are all about exhilaration, a first-person shooter like *Quake* [for example]. But then there are the sports games where you're playing baseball, managing your team, and trading players at the same time.

There are the adventure games like *Zelda* that are full of problems and puzzles to solve. It's these games where you feel your brain working at some level. It's just working on something that you find entertaining and interesting [as well].

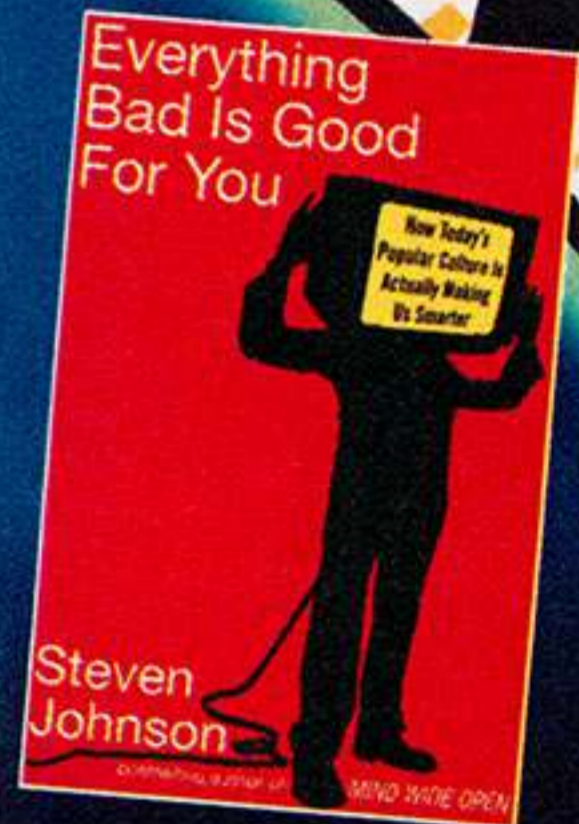
EGM: Besides training us to be better gamers, what does gaming teach us to do? Will it help you in college or at your job?

SJ: I think that kids who have spent time [playing] games have a comfort level with new [nongaming] software, sitting down and figuring it out on the fly. They're used to immersing themselves in games where you're supposed to learn the interface and learn the rules of the game as you play it.

That's a real skill. If we're moving towards this increasingly virtual world, [the person who has] the ability to just pick up a new interface without having to sit and read the manual has a great advantage.

EGM: Do you ever play videogames?

SJ: Or do I just opine about them? [Laughs] I would describe myself as a pretty regular gamer through most of my life. But now I have two little kids, so I don't have as much time. I play all the Will Wright [best known for creating the *Sims* franchise on PC] games when those come out, 'cause I think those are pretty great. Truthfully, the games have gotten so complicated that I don't have time to sit there and figure out everything you need to know to enjoy them.

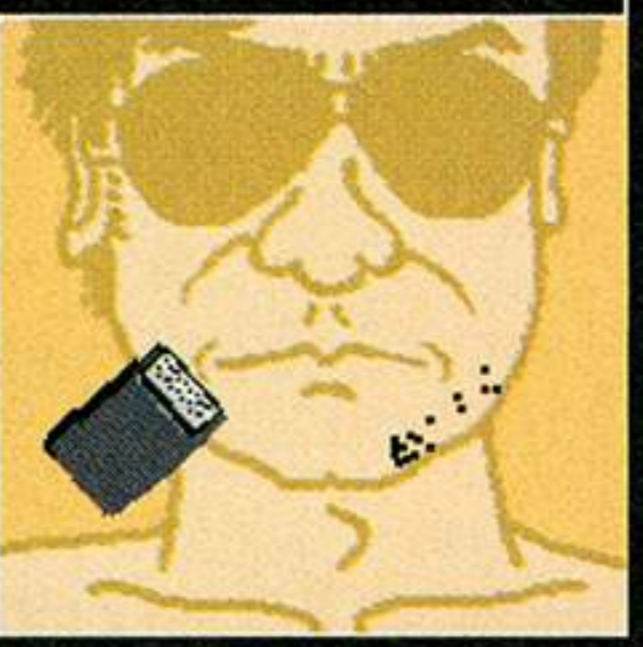


GAMES TO IMPROVE YOUR MIND

The Sims (PS2/XB/GC)
Author Steven Johnson calls managing multiple variables (a character's happiness, financial well-being, and social status) great mental exercise. We call it sadistic torture waiting to happen.



WarioWare: Twisted! (GBA)
An extreme example of learning the rules while playing a game, *Twisted!* only hints at what to do in its "microgames" and gives you only seconds to figure out the solution.

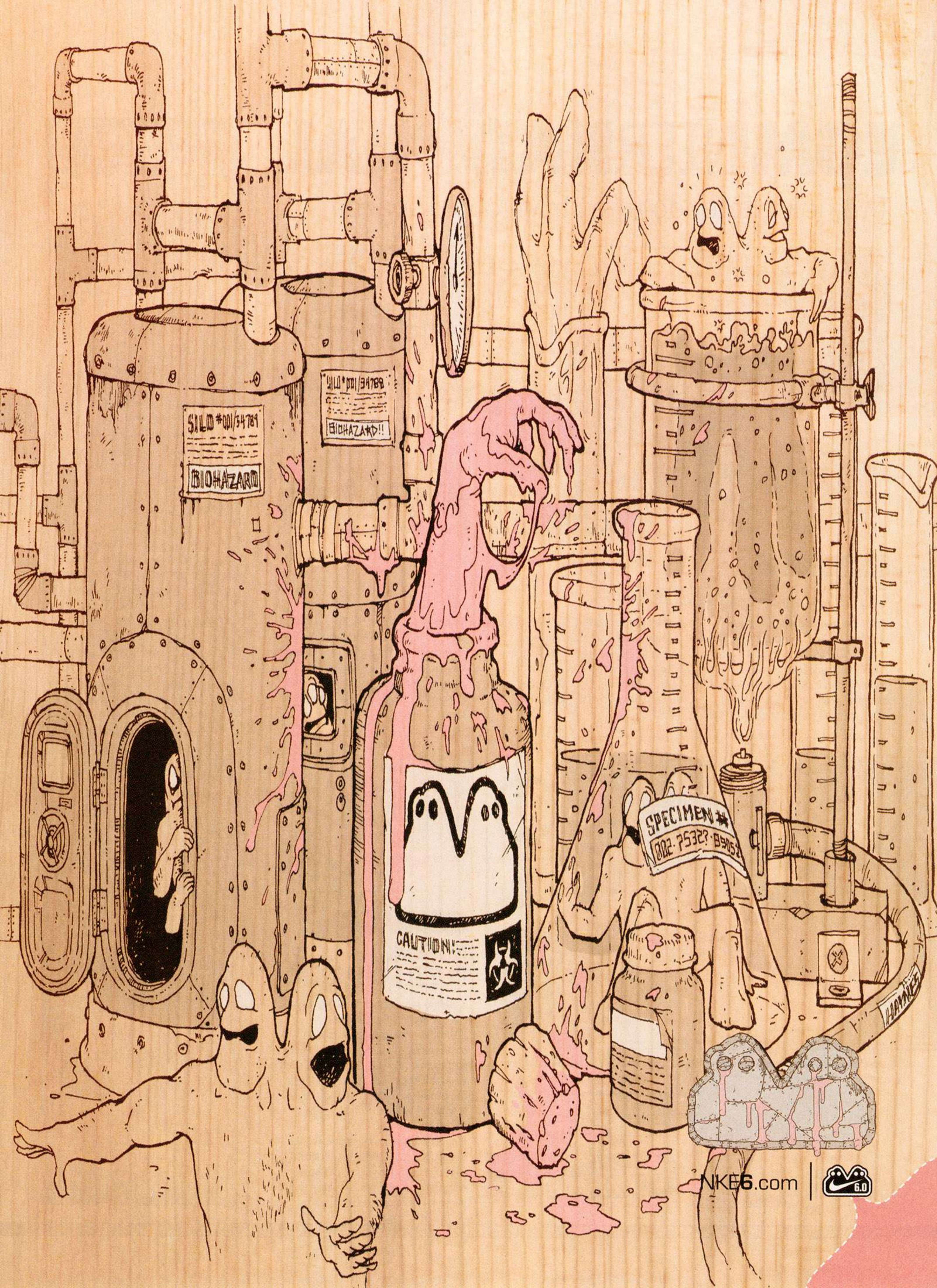


The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (GC)
Johnson uses *Wind Waker* as an example of what he calls "telescoping," the ordering of priorities in a game. For instance, you have to water the bomb plant to get a bomb to blow up the boulder that's blocking the water to swim to the other side of the gorge. Whew....



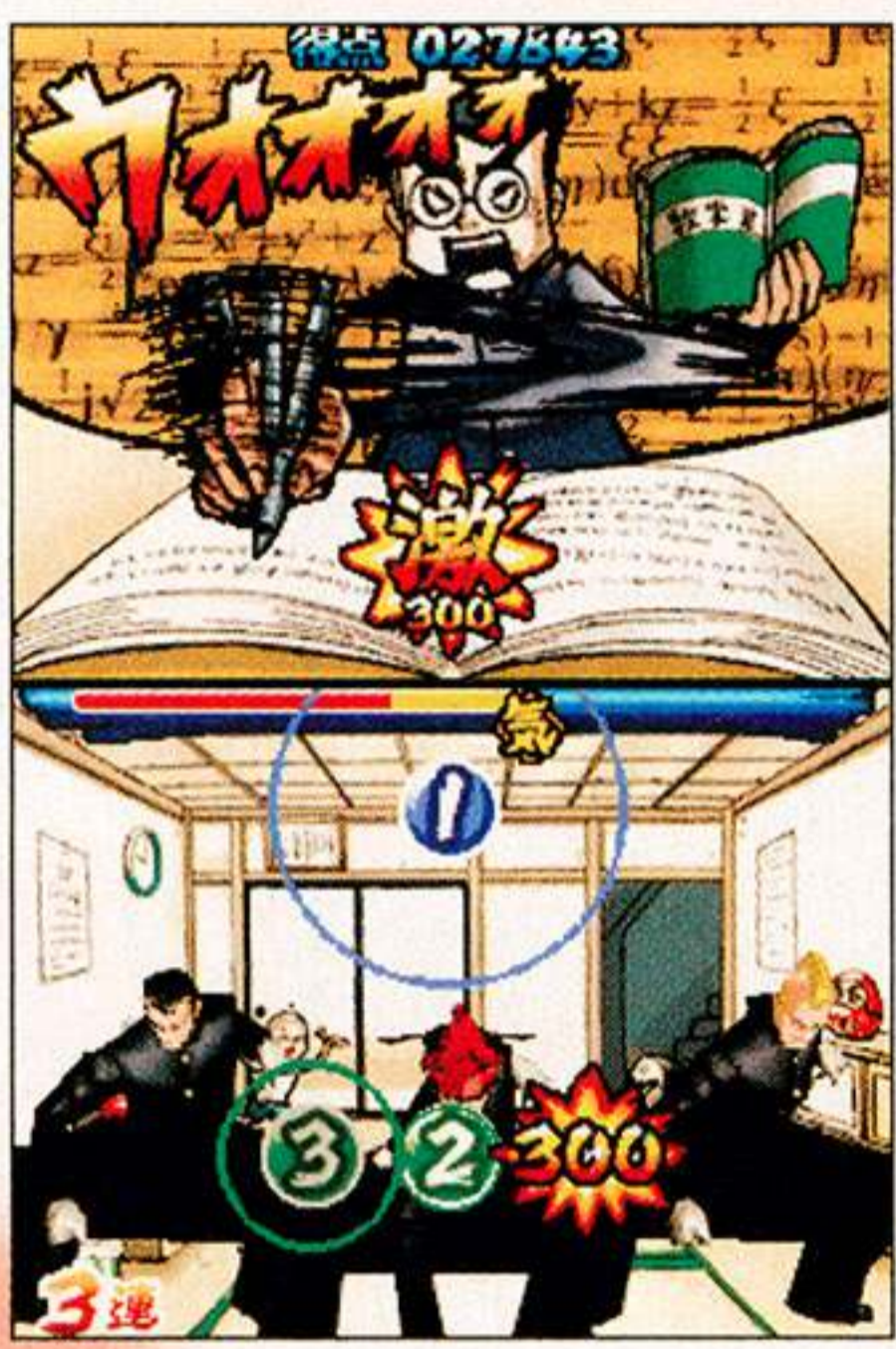
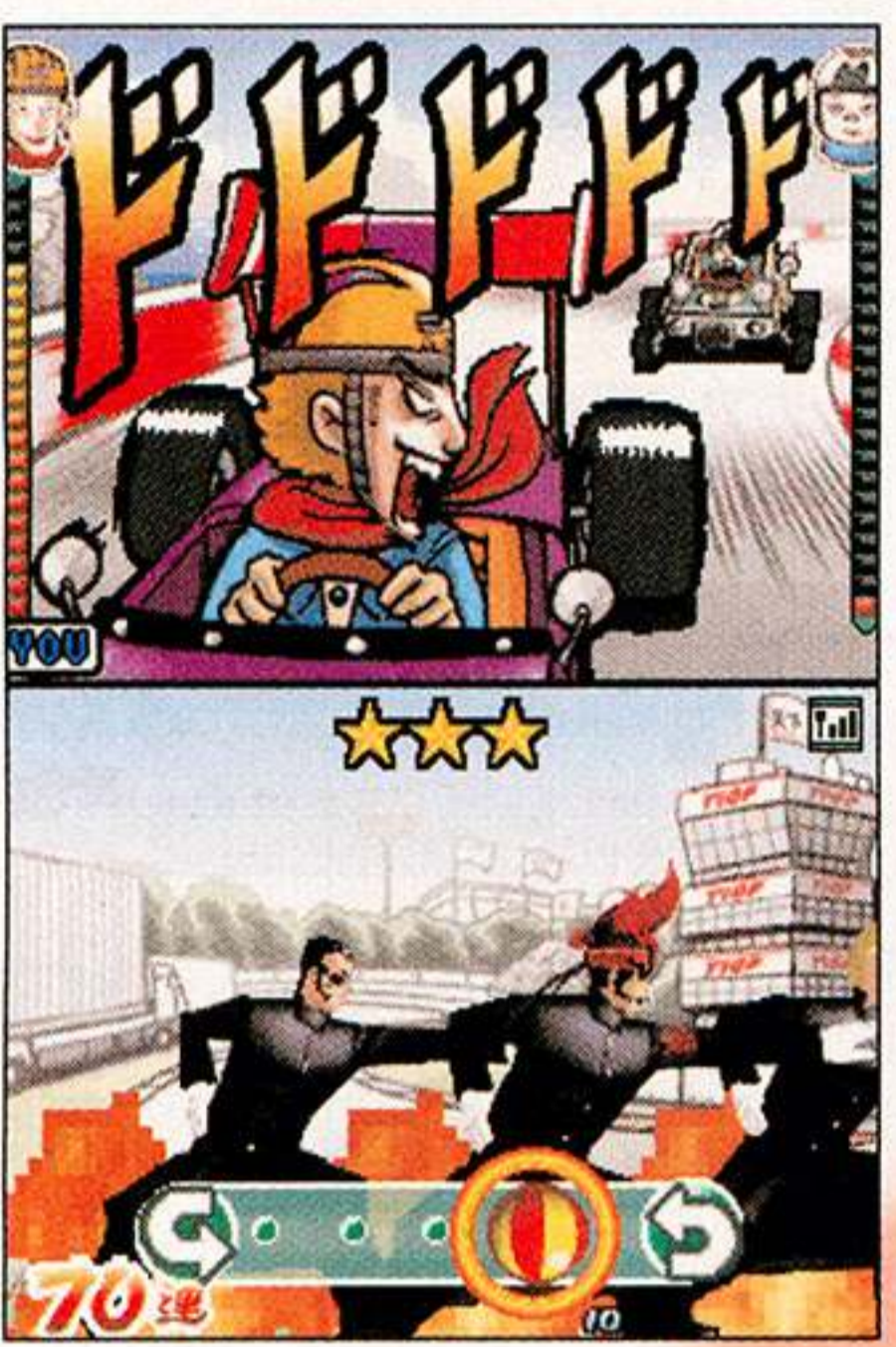
Illustration by Jason Cruz

>> EA ANNOUNCED THAT WORK HAS BEGUN ON THE HIP-HOP-STUDED BRAWLER DEF JAM 3 FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF CONSOLES... >>



EGM INTERNATIONAL

Two new Nintendo titles from outer space



■ Nintendo DS

OSU! TATAKAE! OUENDAN

Help! I'm in big trouble! Then call the *ouendan*—a trench-coat-wearing group of macho Japanese cheerleaders that helps you overcome any crisis (no matter how ridiculous) with the power of peppy J-pop tunes. This fruity DS game from the makers of *Gitaroo Man*

works similarly to that cult PlayStation 2 classic: You'll tap to the onscreen beats while the personal cheering section helps a failing student cram for a test, a down-and-out racehorse chase after a scooter-riding criminal, and more.

Sounds insane. It is, but like *Gitaroo Man*, the music here (as well as the manga-style vignettes that kick off each song) is infectious. It's also way too Japanese for a U.S. audience—but they said that about *Katamari Damacy* (PS2), too, so....

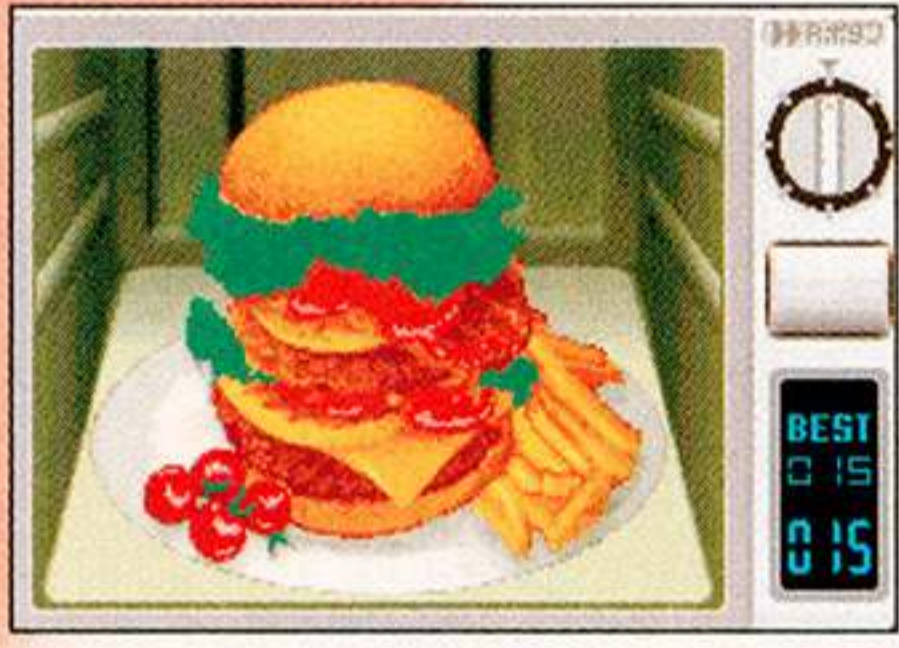
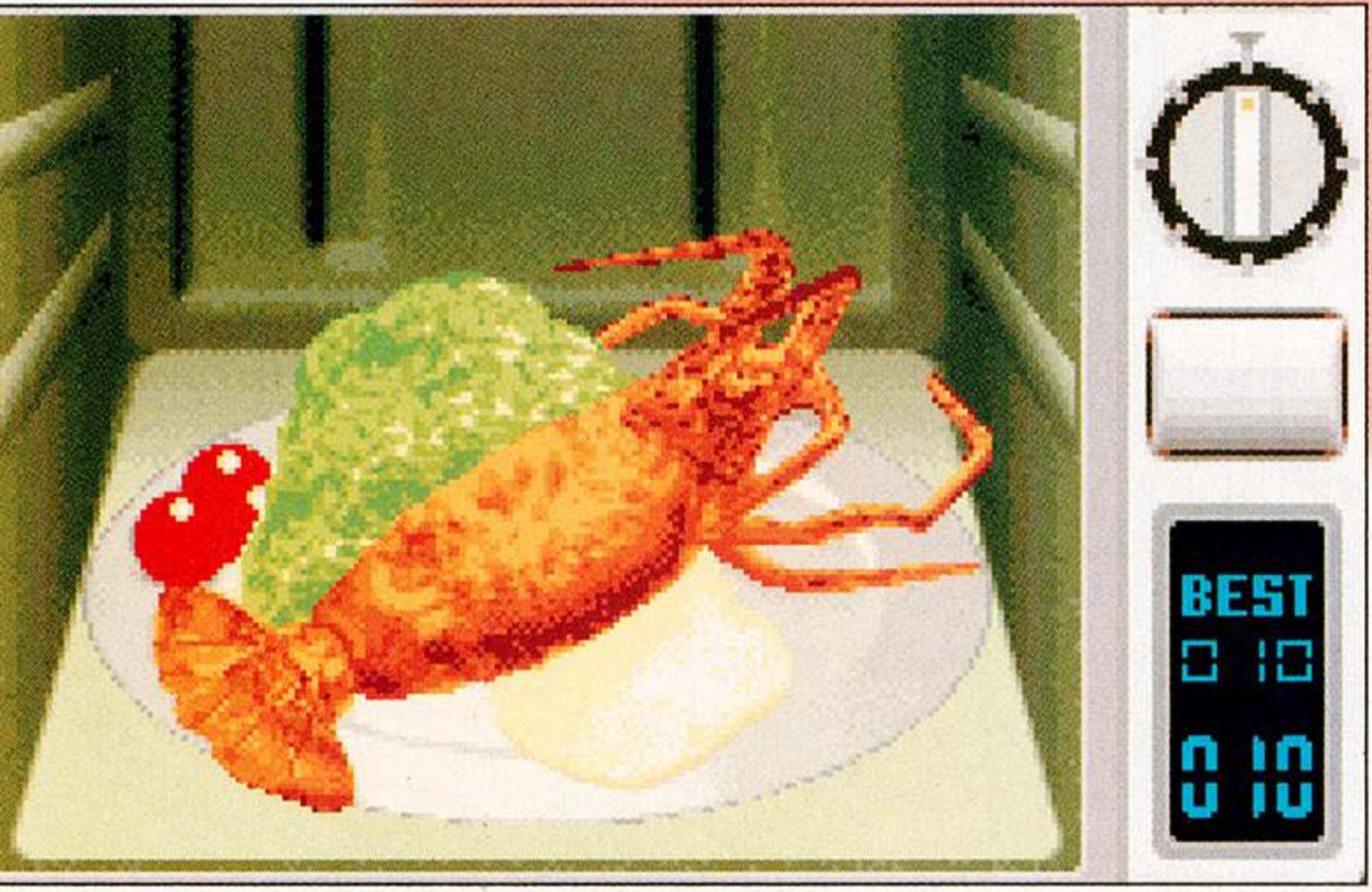
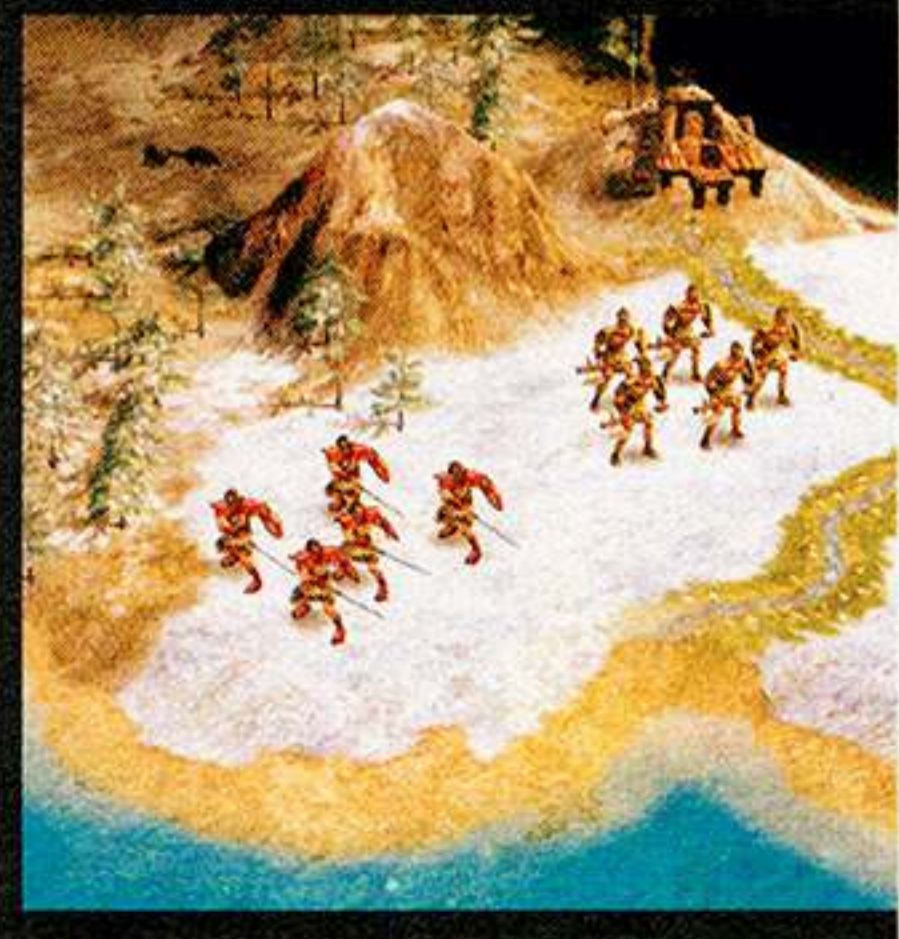
WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Civilization 4



If you've never played one of Sid Meier's *Civilization* games, you can come out of your cave now. The series' clever mix of complicated *SimCity*-esque world building and turn-based strategy continues to enthrall PC gamers by the masses, and if you ignore *Civ III*'s shoddy multiplayer expansion, these games have a great track record. *Civ IV* finally takes the franchise into 3D, with a vibrant living world, a modernized real-time-strategy-style interface, and the elimination of its predecessors' complicated menu system in favor of convenient, context-sensitive commands.

Some gamers may be skeptical due to Meier's hands-off approach (he's acting in an advisory capacity this time around), but rest assured that the design team at Firaxis Games is addressing a number of criticisms. *Civ IV* will cater to a wide audience thanks to three game lengths, which means no more 20-plus-hour sessions for casual players—and far more than 20 hours for true *Civ* diehards. Combat units receive an injection of personality, as the new RPG-like progression system now nets your troops extra levels and abilities. And lastly, Firaxis is promising a good multiplayer experience, which features a team-based co-op mode and persistent turn-based servers for the hardest of the hardcore. The construction begins this November.
—Ryan Scott, *Computer Gaming World*



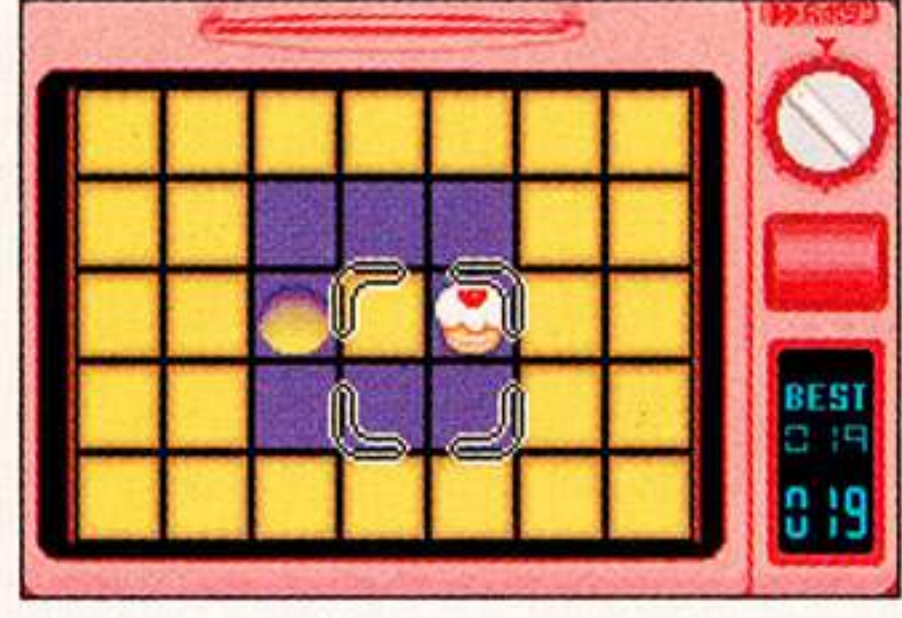
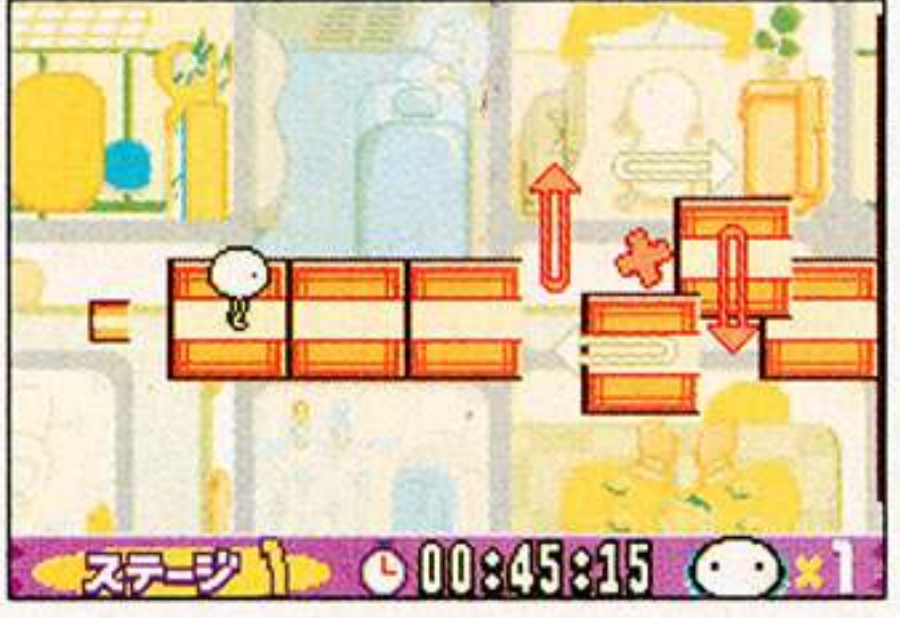
■ GBA

NONONO PUZZLE CHALIEN

A sliding-puzzle game? Oh, joy. But this one has goofy ant-sized aliens, *WarioWare*-style cut-scenes, and an obsession with junk food. Nintendo obviously isn't feeding the development team well enough, because a good third of the game involves shunting food into holes in order to make pizza, ramen, and fried shrimp.

A game for brainy obese people? Not exactly. The cute characters will likely appeal more to Japanese grade-schoolers...or female Hot Topic shoppers, should the game ever come out here.

■ Assemble all manner of artery-clogging delights in the strangely fast-food-fixated *Nonono*.



>> FUMBLE! 989 SPORTS HAS CANCELLED ITS STORY-BASED, NONLICENSED PRO FOOTBALL SIMULATION, ROAD TO SUNDAY (PS2)... >>

DOOM-A-RAMA

What the hell could be freakier than **Doom 3**? Well, the **Doom** movie, hopefully...

No wonder so many world-traveling hipsters travel to Prague in the Czech Republic—it holds the gateway to hell. Or at least it did temporarily, as *Doom*, the movie based on Id Software's demon-filled first-person shooter franchise, set up shop in the Eastern European metropolis for a few months this past year. One needs only to wander around the film's lavish set to see that the necessary steps are being taken to, as the saying goes, please fans of the series. Sets are dead ringers for their in-game counterparts; we were privy to some laboratories, a host of dingy, underground corridors, as well as

the location's crown jewel—a cavernous auditorium-style building constructed to accommodate *Doom*'s infamous wormhole (and undoubtedly the apocalyptic destruction that comes with such a thing).

While there's no telling how good the movie's actually going to be before its release (October 21), it looks to be several steps above the typical game-to-movie translation—90 percent of which Director Uwe Boll (*House of the Dead*, *Alone in the Dark*) has personally trashed. Just how many steps above, of course, remains unknown....

—Evan Shamoon

He's the Man Now, Dog

Karl Urban, Rohan warrior Eomer in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, sounds off on his role as *Doom*'s leading man: "John Grimm is a thinking man's soldier—and I'm hoping that he's going to especially appeal to a lot of the gamers, who, you know...they're not these guys who are built like brick s***houses and stuff... they're just normal guys like you and me. And so I was really conscious of the fact that I wanted to invest a lot of down-to-earth human traits in this guy."



Pee Oh Vee

Jon Farhat, *Doom*'s visual effects supervisor, is quite candid when he talks about the film's money shot—a four-minute first-person sequence that happens near the finale: "In all of the point-of-view-based games, they've always seemed to be neglecting [the first-person factor], and we're hoping that by the time this thing comes in—John Grimm opens his eyes, and now you're in full POV—that the audience is like, 'Yeah, this is what we thought *Doom* is and what it should be.' And I guarantee you it will be pretty intense." We eagerly await the final result.



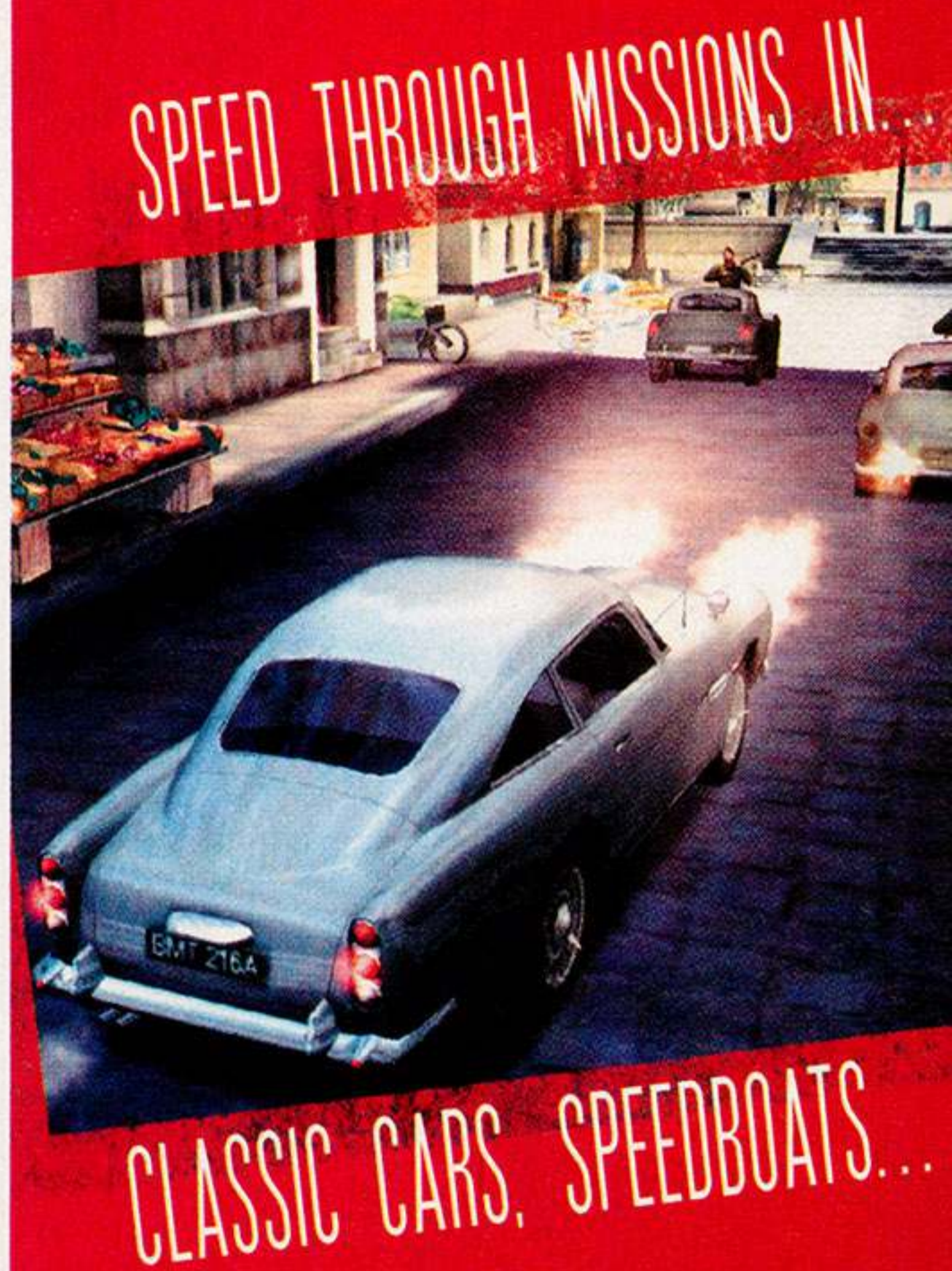
Rock and Role

As supporting character Sarge ("I get to play what I call my first BMFOP—the baddest motherf***er on the planet"), WWE superstar turned actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson gets his hands on more than a few guns. "It's almost like reliving a childhood dream—being able to carry around these four guns," he says. "I've got a BFG, a rifle, a handgun, and this chain gun—which is basically one of those guns that's mounted on top of a Humvee that our soldiers use, so if you can imagine taking that gun and putting a strap to it.... [Smiles] It's awesome."



Monster Closet

One of the more impressive accomplishments of the Prague team is the startlingly realistic re-creation of some of *Doom*'s infamous monsters. Director Andrzej Bartkowiak (*Romeo Must Die*) is using real models whenever possible in an attempt to minimize the use of green screens and give these hellspawn a more genuine appearance. But don't think it's all method acting—the baron costume (that ugly, festering scab of a creature), in particular, uses several dozen internal remote-controlled motors to simulate everything from heavy breathing to heavy drooling.



CLASSIC CARS, SPEEDBOATS...



OR A JETPACK.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

STARRING SEAN CONNERY AS JAMES BOND

007



PS2/XB PREVIEW

THE WARRIORS

Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Rockstar Toronto
Release Date: October 2005

Rockstar injects an obscure movie with GTA DNA to resurrect a classic game genre

The fact that most of *The Warriors'* potential audience has probably never heard of the cult classic 1979 film it's based on, much less seen it, doesn't phase Rockstar rep Devin Bennett. "Of course we want the dudes who [love] the movie to try it and think, 'They nailed it,'" he says. "But we also want that 19-year-old kid who doesn't know a thing about *The Warriors* to pick it up and fall in love with what we did with it." Turns out that for all the niche appeal of the license Rockstar Toronto is working with, accessibility is something of a

motto for the developer. "We wanted to make something that anybody can pick up and look really cool doing stuff," says Bennett. Hence the decision to model the game on the classic brawlers of old; in the course of an hour-long demo of the game, legendary beat-em-ups *Double Dragon* and *Final Fight* are both name-checked. The idea is to take that kind of classic gameplay and bring it into the 21st century with the Rockstar touch. "It's not just endless waves of enemies you have to beat your way through," says Bennett. "There are open environments, stealth [sections], side-scrolling

[chases]—you never do the same kind of mission twice." Oh, and if you *are* already a fan of the *Warriors* movie? You're in for a treat. The game is religiously faithful to the film (which is retold during the final third of this new version), using only characters from the script, the trademark female DJ voice for narration, and a New York City subway motif for all the menus. "We just love the movie," says Bennett. "We didn't mess with it at all." Instead, the game starts 90 days before the night of the film, establishing a backstory and answering fan questions like why Cleon

first formed the Warriors, why the Moonrunners have a beef with the Van Courtland Rangers, and just who is that gang in the Hawaiian shirts. As for those of you who haven't played a brawler since *Streets of Rage* and don't know *The Warriors* from *The Goonies*, Bennett realizes there's a lot of competition for your attention. "It's tough because it [doesn't have an established name like] *Scarface*, and it's not *King Kong*, and it's not next gen," he says. "But you know what? It's a frickin' hell of a game, and there's nothing like it out there."
—Mark MacDonald

>> XBOX 360 SUPPORT GROWS—ATARI RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT NEXT SPRING, THE COMPANY WILL RELEASE AN XBOX 360 VERSION

THE WARRIORS CODE

Three rules to live by if you want to survive life on the streets



Revive a fallen comrade (or save yourself) by taking the "flash" you can buy from a dealer or find in the levels.

Never Go Alone

Being in a gang means someone always has your back—unless they're lying unconscious on their own. In *The Warriors*, you always roll with at least one fellow gang member (sometimes as many as nine) who you can give simple commands to via the D-pad, such as run, hold up, or trash everything. Even better, a second player can join in and take

over that other member at any time for co-op game-play. Both players have complete freedom; if one wanders away, the screen splits to follow both characters separately. "We wanted to relive the experience of pumping quarters into [an arcade game] with your buddy," says Rockstar's Bennett, "but bring it into the new technology [offered by] PS2 and Xbox."



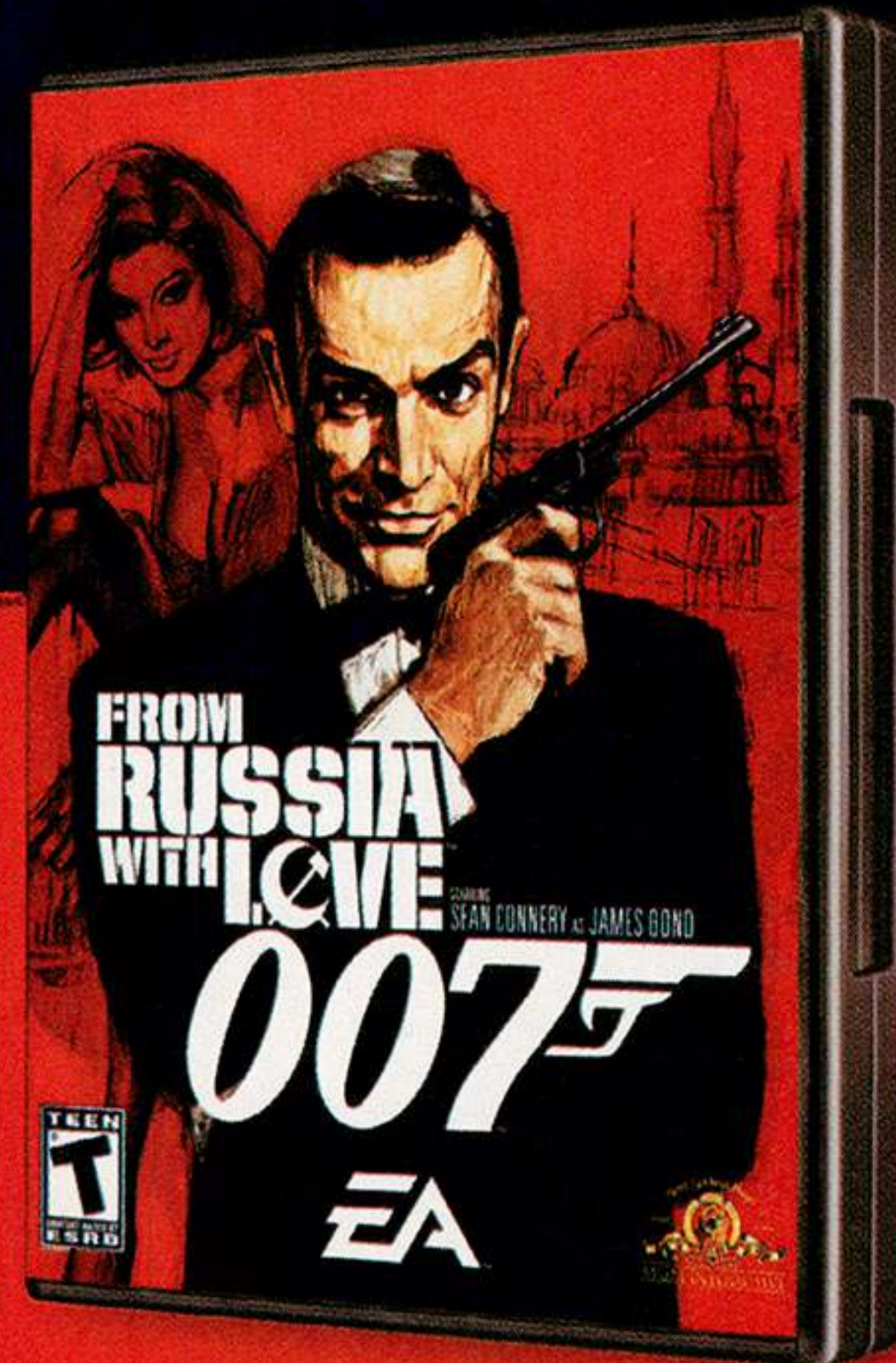
Know How to Fight

You can pick up a controller and be bashing heads in seconds, but Rockstar says it'll take time and practice, young grasshopper, to truly master *The Warriors'* art of fighting. "We made a pretty simple fighting mechanic that's also really deep," says Bennett. "If you really learn how to use combat, you'll find a fighting game [level of complexity]." Moves include reversals, throws, ramming enemies into walls, two-player tandem attacks, and a powered-up rage mode activated once you do enough damage. Real weapons like guns and knives are scarce, but you can always improvise with what you find lying around the inner-city environments: bottles, bricks, boards, even trash cans.



Be Ready to Run

Kenny Rogers knew what he was talking about—you've got to know when to run. Whether it's chasing down a rival gang or getting away from the cops, being fast on your feet is crucial in *The Warriors*. Take the famous scene in which our heroes flee from the bat-wielding Baseball Furies; in Rockstar's retelling, it's a minigame of sorts—you leap fences, pick door locks, and jump over obstacles as the camera pans around to follow the action. Sometimes hiding is important; find a dark area and wait until your pursuers get tired of looking or sneak up behind them for a stealth kill. Sound familiar? "Someone who's played *Manhunt* will think, 'Oh yeah, I know how the stealth system works,'" says Bennett. "There's a creative thread that runs through all our games."



NOVEMBER 1

007.ea.com



PlayStation 2



Suggestive Themes
Violence

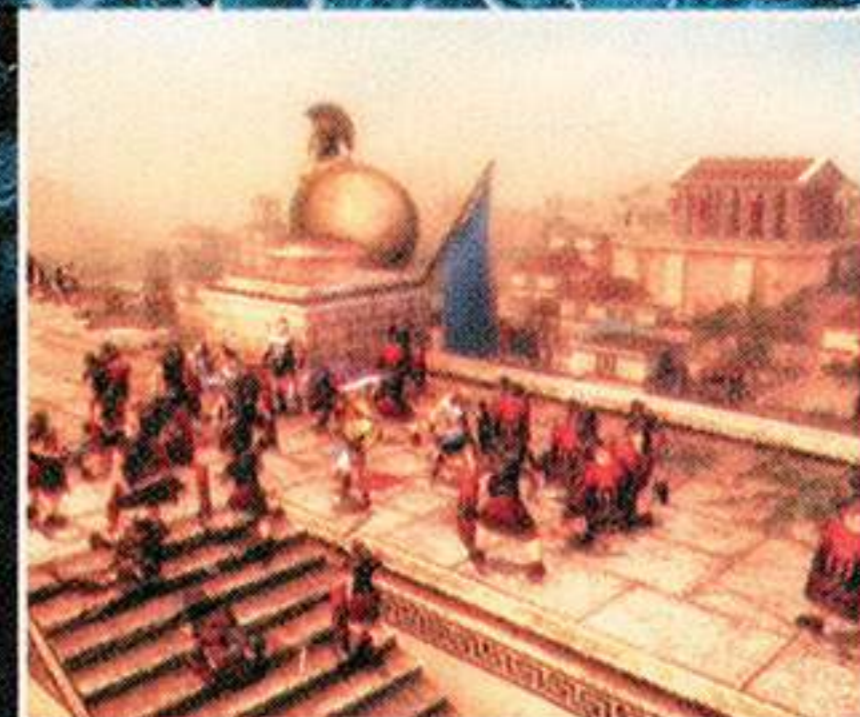
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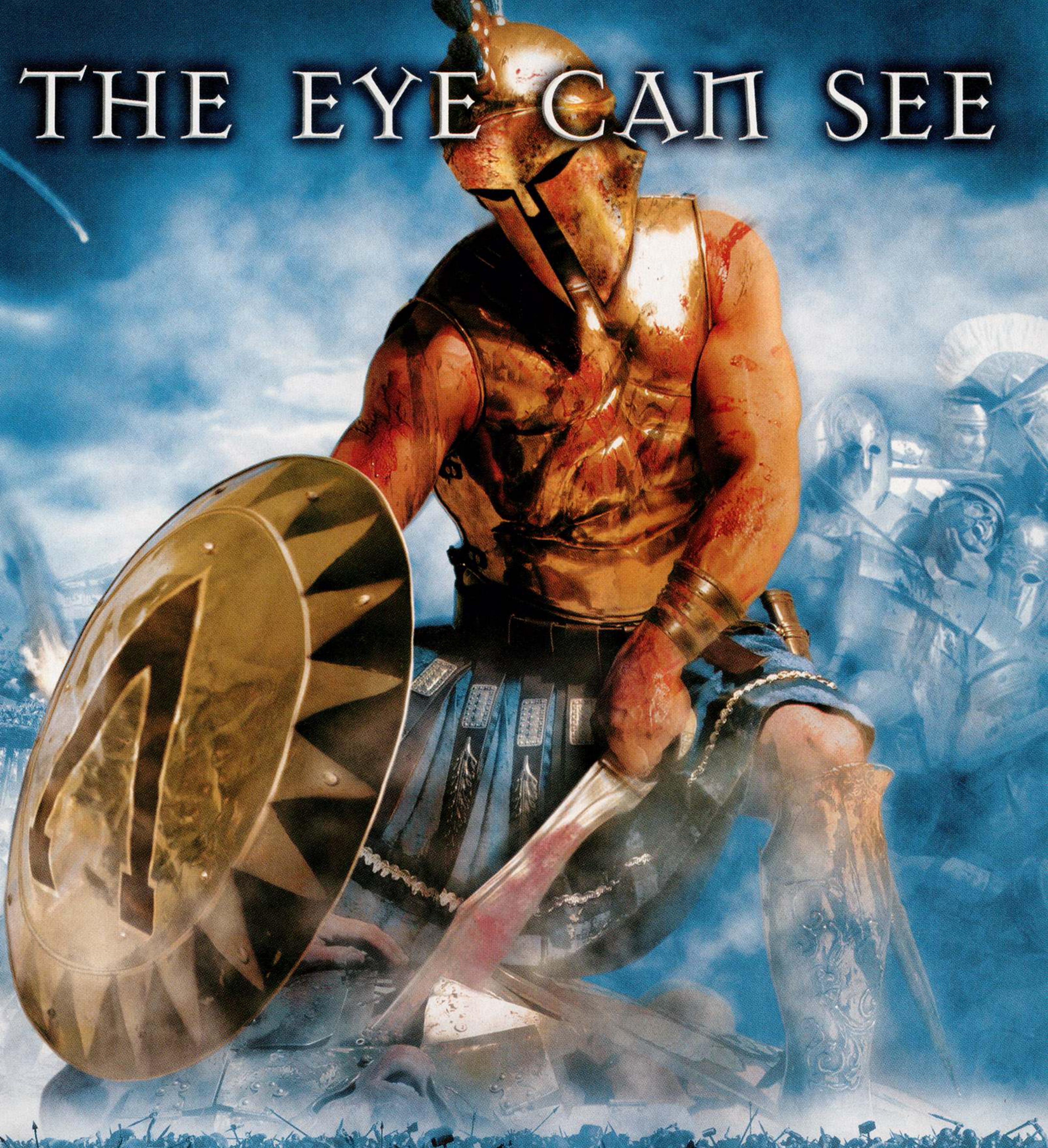


PlayStation®2



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fire-spewing warrior.

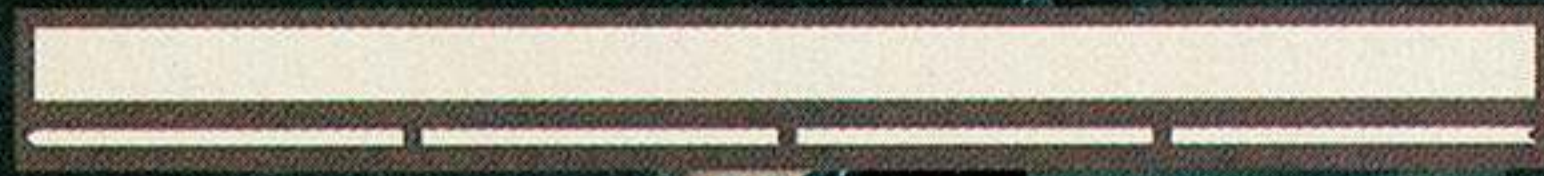
Mess with me,
you mess with all of me.

boulder-heaving,

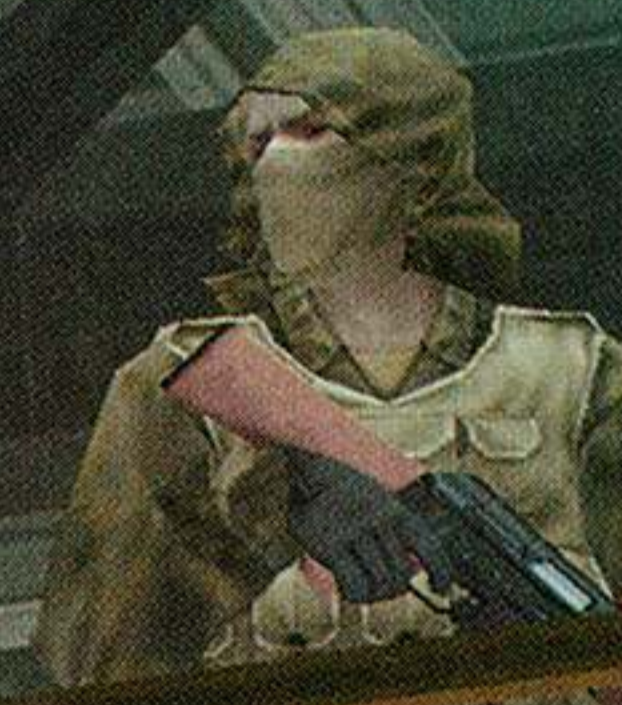


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JOHN



HIDEO_K



ONLINE

THIS MONTH

How to subsist in Metal Gear's new world

Here's a move they don't teach you at deathmatch boot camp: If you want to incapacitate a deadly sniper, leave a too-alluring-to-resist porno mag lying around. Or better yet, sneak past him while disguised as a cardboard box. Yep, online warfare's about to get gleefully absurd: Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence* (coming to PS2 March 2006) expands 2004's stealth epic by adding a new broadband-only online multiplayer mode.

In our exclusive tour of the online modes in *Subsistence*, we admit to getting caught perusing our own share of the filth (for the articles), as well as fighting over a frog, saving baby ducks, and engaging in other wackiness you won't find in *SOCOM*. ➤

—Nich Maragos



>> WHO SAYS ARCADES ARE DEAD? SEGA RECENTLY REVEALED VIRTUA FIGHTER 5, HOUSE OF THE DEAD 4, VIRTUA TENNIS 3, AND MORE... >>

MIDWAY

Online play requires internet connection and Memory Card (MCM) for PlayStation 2. (each sold separately). Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows © 2005 Midway Home Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. MIDWAY and the Midway logo are trademarks of Midway Home Entertainment Inc. Used by permission of Midway Games West Inc. "Powered by GameSpy" and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

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PlayStation 2



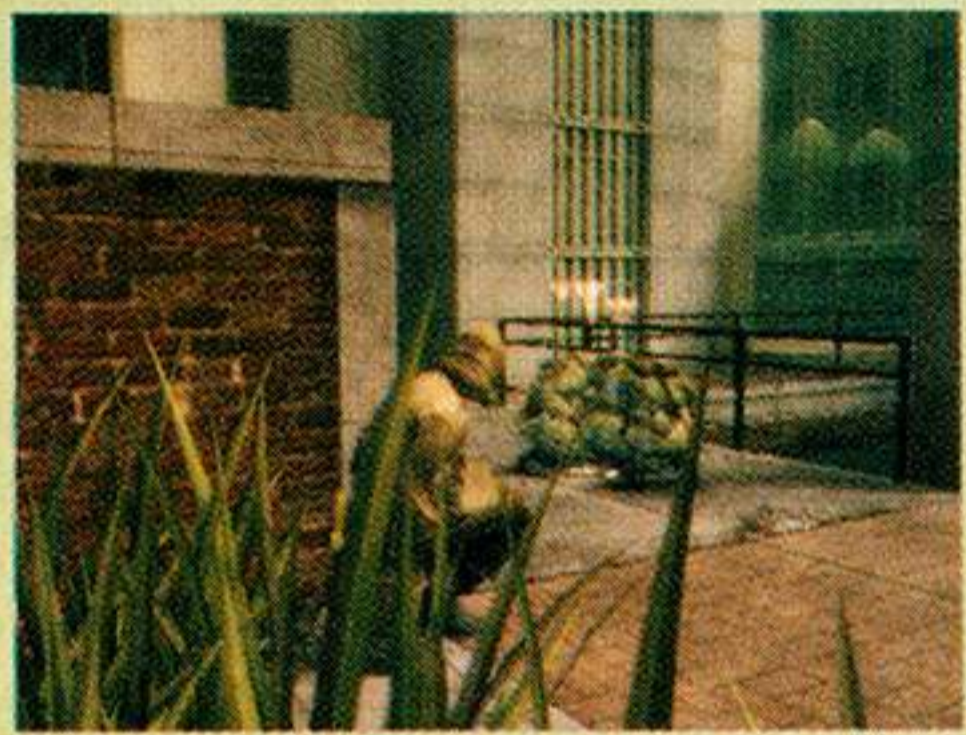
ONLINE: MGS3: SUBSISTENCE (CONT.)



➤ *Subsistence* brings the trademark *MGS* charm to garden-variety deathmatch and team deathmatch modes for up to eight players. Gameplay here borrows heavily from *MGS3*, but a new adjustable camera (à la *Splinter Cell*) and a retuned button setup help to modernize the proceedings. Most of the controls are the same as in the single-player adventure (Square for shooting, Circle for CQC: close-quarters combat, and R1 for first-person aiming), but there are two important changes.



DEATHMATCH / TEAM DEATHMATCH

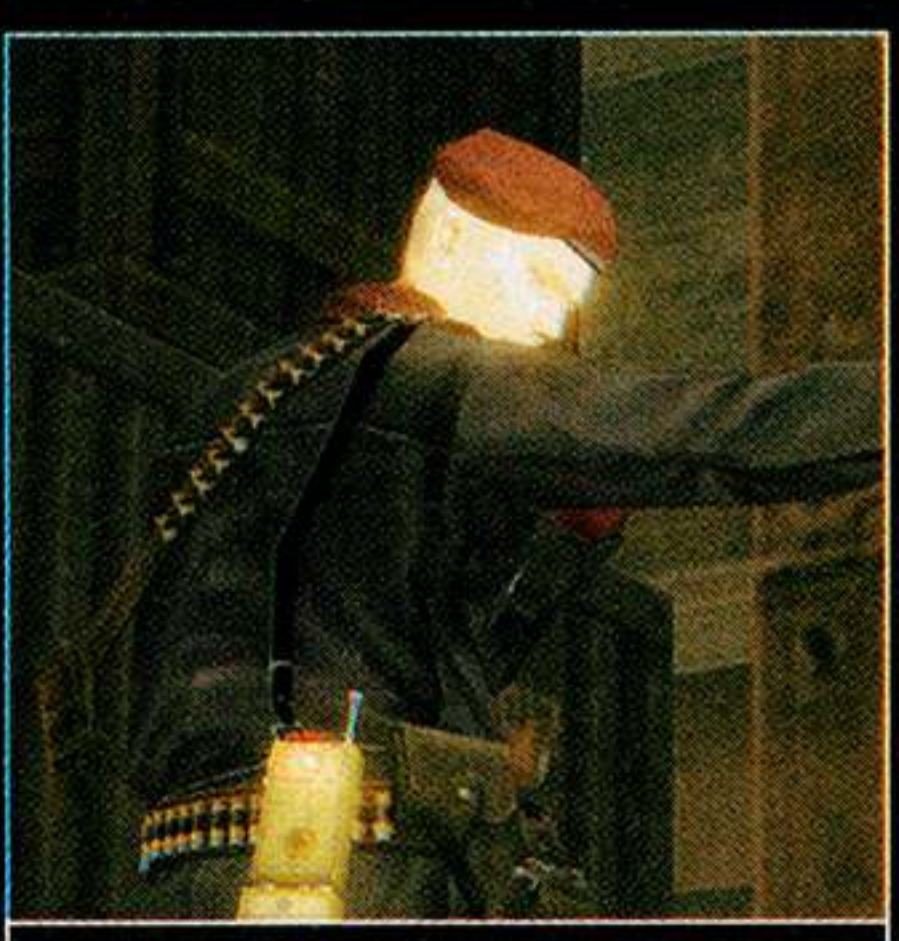


First, the L1 button has a new job: Tapping it instantly readjusts the camera behind the character's back, providing a rough aim at your closest foe. It's not as accurate as a lock-on or autoaim, but in a tense situation, it's much better than switching to first-person view—especially since holding down L1 allows you to strafe and dodge as you fire.

Second, though holding down the R2 button will bring up the same familiar weapon menu, tapping R2 will no longer de-equip your weapon for bare fists. Instead, it allows quick access to the three main weapon types: pistol/knife, grenade, and heavy weaponry. The quick-select weapons change according to what you last equipped, so if you had been using the chaff grenades and switched to the stun grenades via the regular weapon menu, then the stun grenades will now pop up in the grenade slot when toggling between the three weapon types.

A MATTER OF CHARACTER

A few of the special skins you can unlock for your character—Konami isn't saying just how yet, but we're guessing it's by earning some kind of achievement reward (i.e., snipe five guys in one round and you unlock Ocelot).



Revolver Ocelot
Toss on this skin and you'll snag a special SAA weapon that allows for killer trick shots—bullets aimed at walls ricochet toward foes.



Raikov
If you encounter someone playing as this mysterious Russian pretty-boy, watch your package. His exclusive CQC move involves your crotch.



Solkolov
An old Russian dude with a monocle might not seem like a rockin' skin, but he actually sports stealth technology that makes him transparent.



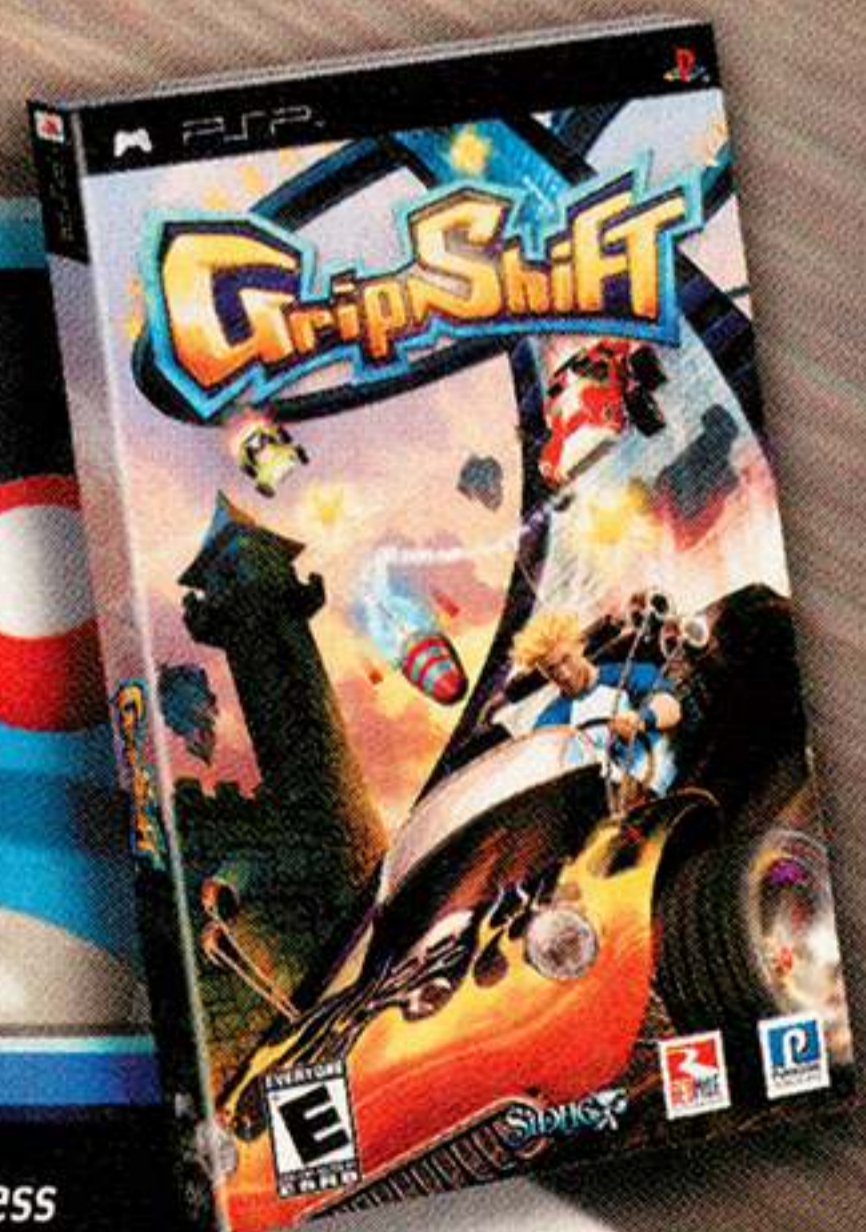
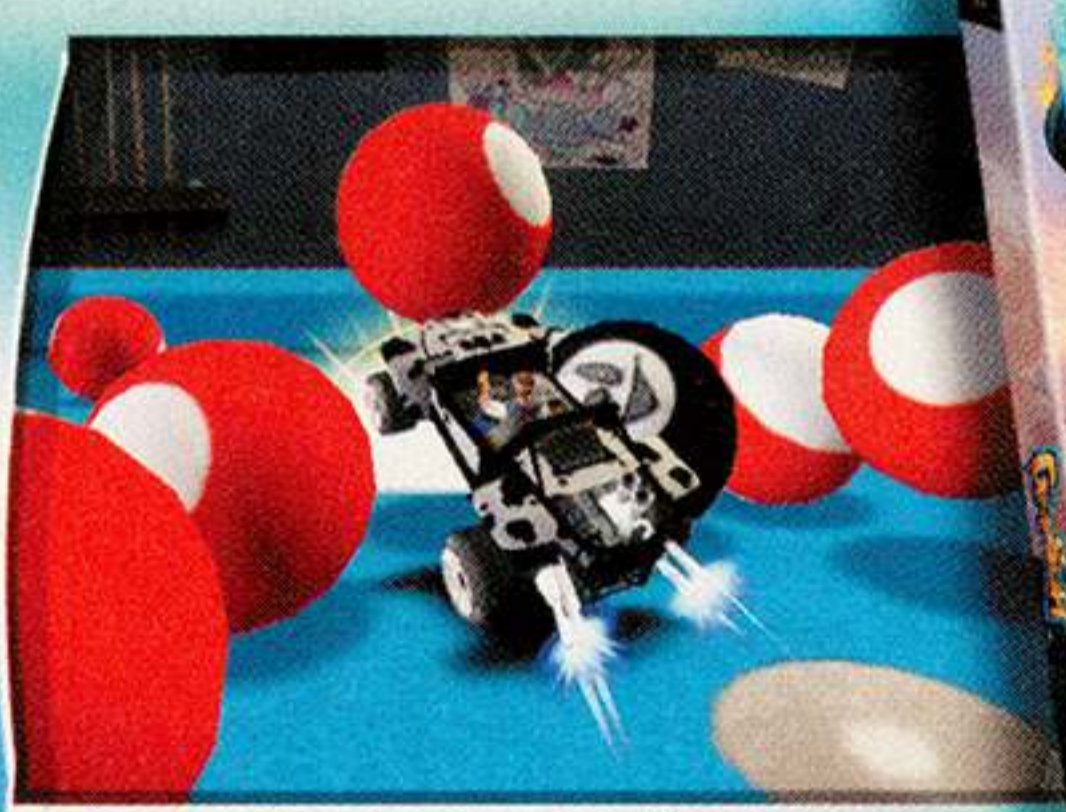
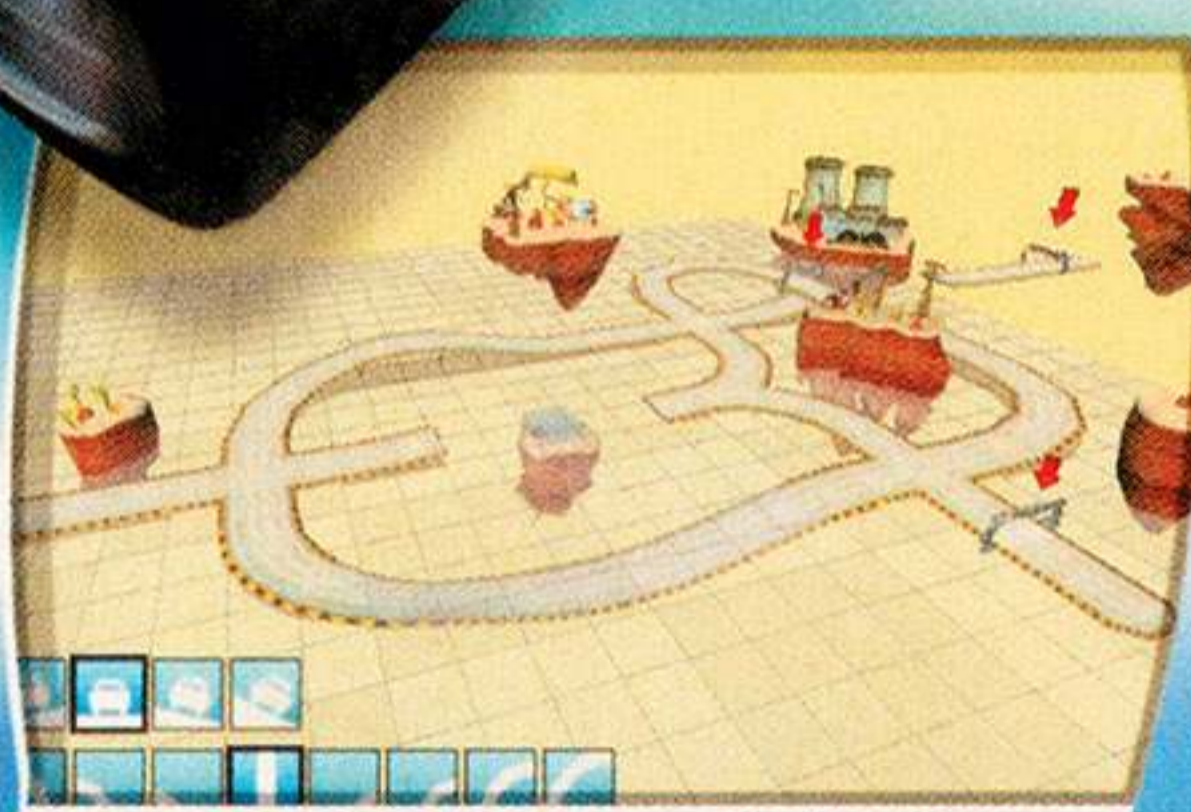
Babyface Reiko
Not every skin is from the *MGS* world. The hot-to-trot Reiko getup (of *Rumble Roses* fame) comes with a wicked CQC move (see pic).

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ONLINE: MGS3: SUBSISTENCE (CONT.)

2

CAPTURE MISSION

Capture mission is *Subsistence's* spin on the popular capture-the-flag mode in almost all online first-person shooters. The objective here is simple: Be the first team to retrieve one of the series' infamous Kerotan frogs and bring it back to your base. Then it's a matter of playing defense, as this kind of mission requires you and

your team to guard the secured frog for 20 seconds. If your team gets wiped out before the clock runs down, the opposing team can steal the frog back, and the wait to respawn can be pretty tense. Each successful capture-and-defense earns a point, and you can play either to a set point total or until an overall game timer runs out.

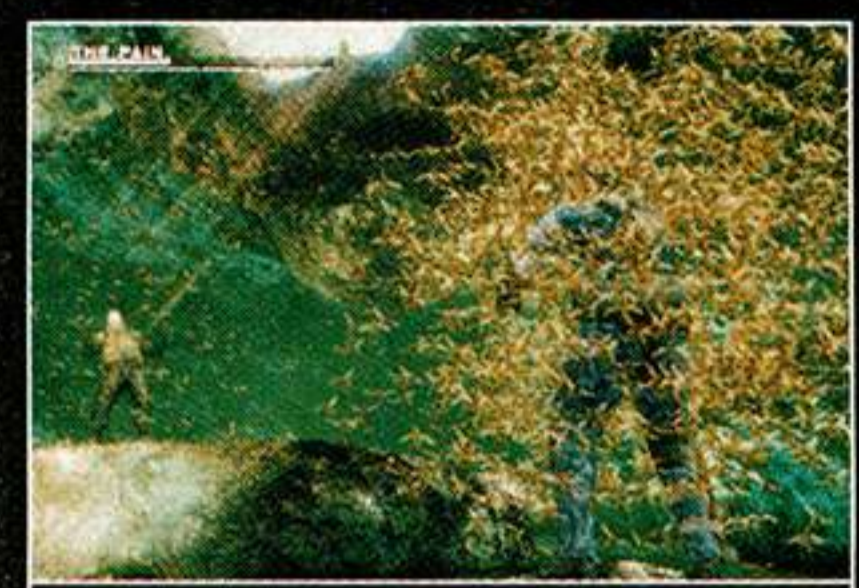
If you want to succeed at this mode, you'd best familiarize yourself with the maps. While many of the areas hail directly from *MGS3's* jungles and military bases, some are entirely original, like an expansive new urban environment and the evocatively titled Kill House warehouses (packed with catwalks and crawl spaces).



■ Perhaps you can talk your way out of this one: All modes will support voice chat.



WHAT'S CHANGED IN THE OFFLINE MGS3?



A new third-person adjustable camera should please all those whiny Sam Fisher wannabes.



Tackle additional Snake vs. Ape missions, including a duel against a massive Metal Gear Ape.



Play through the original *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2* (first time in English) for the old MSX system.



Enter duel mode and challenge any of the game's zany bosses to another throwdown.



Visit the demo theater to rewatch cinema scenes and check out hilarious bonus clips.

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...a cheery online battle with a few of your closest pals. You hunt down a few terrorists, blow off some heads with your sniper rifle, and use night vision to stalk each other in the dark. In the world of Rainbow Six, only one rule of friendship applies: watch your back if you want to get out alive.



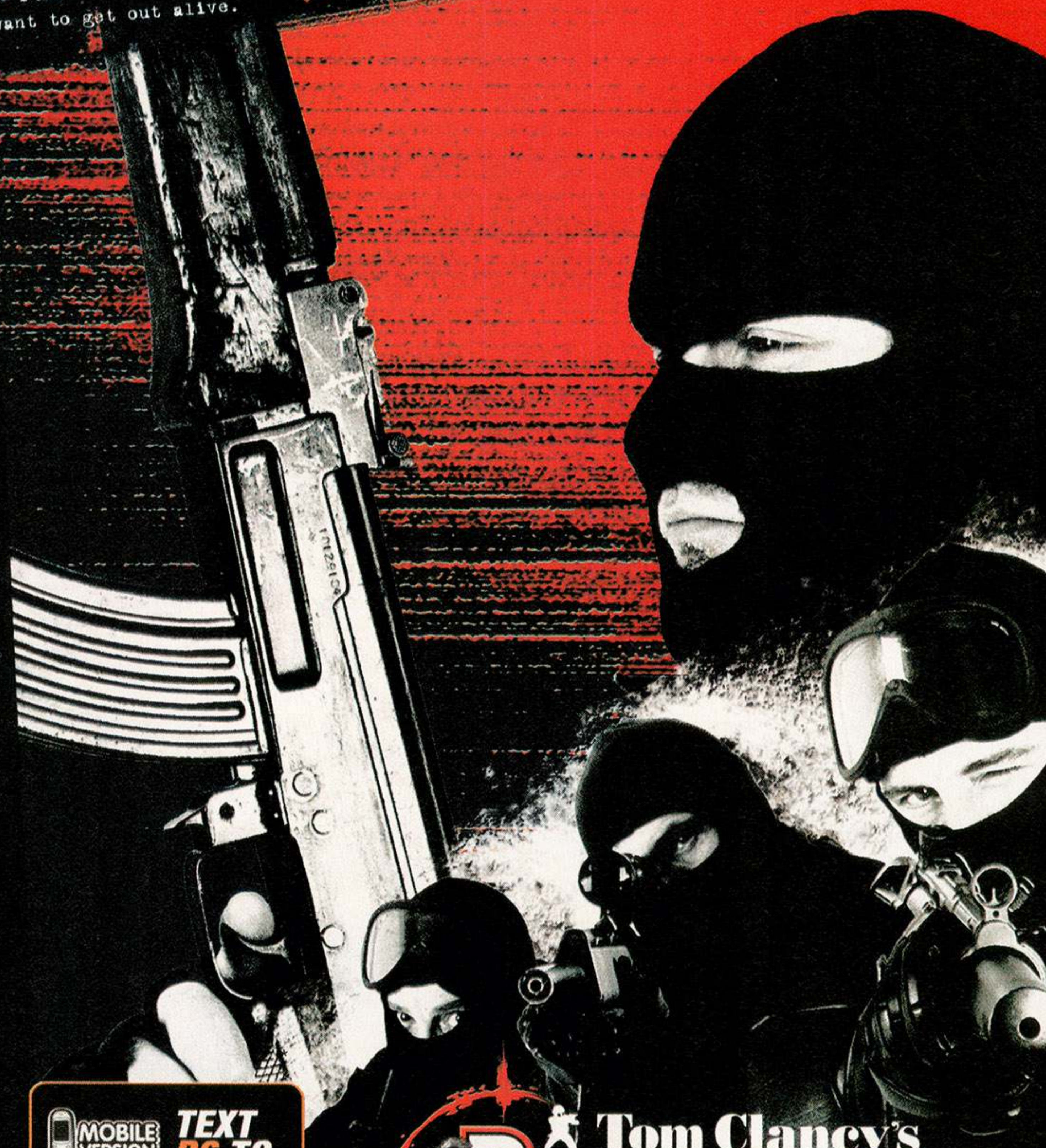
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PlayStation 2



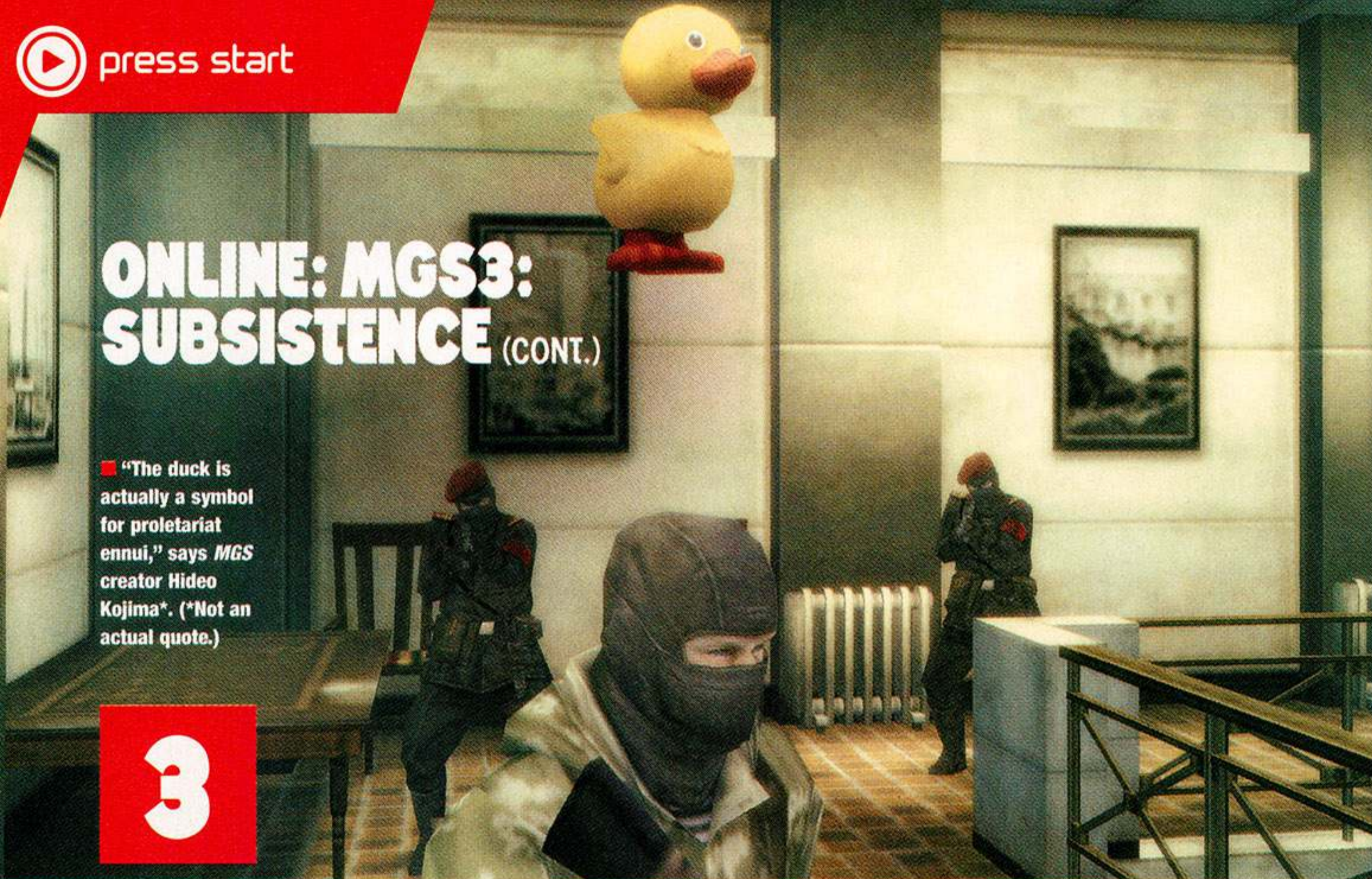
UBISOFT

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ONLINE: MGS3: SUBSISTENCE (CONT.)

■ "The duck is actually a symbol for proletariat ennui," says *MGS* creator Hideo Kojima*. (*Not an actual quote.)

3



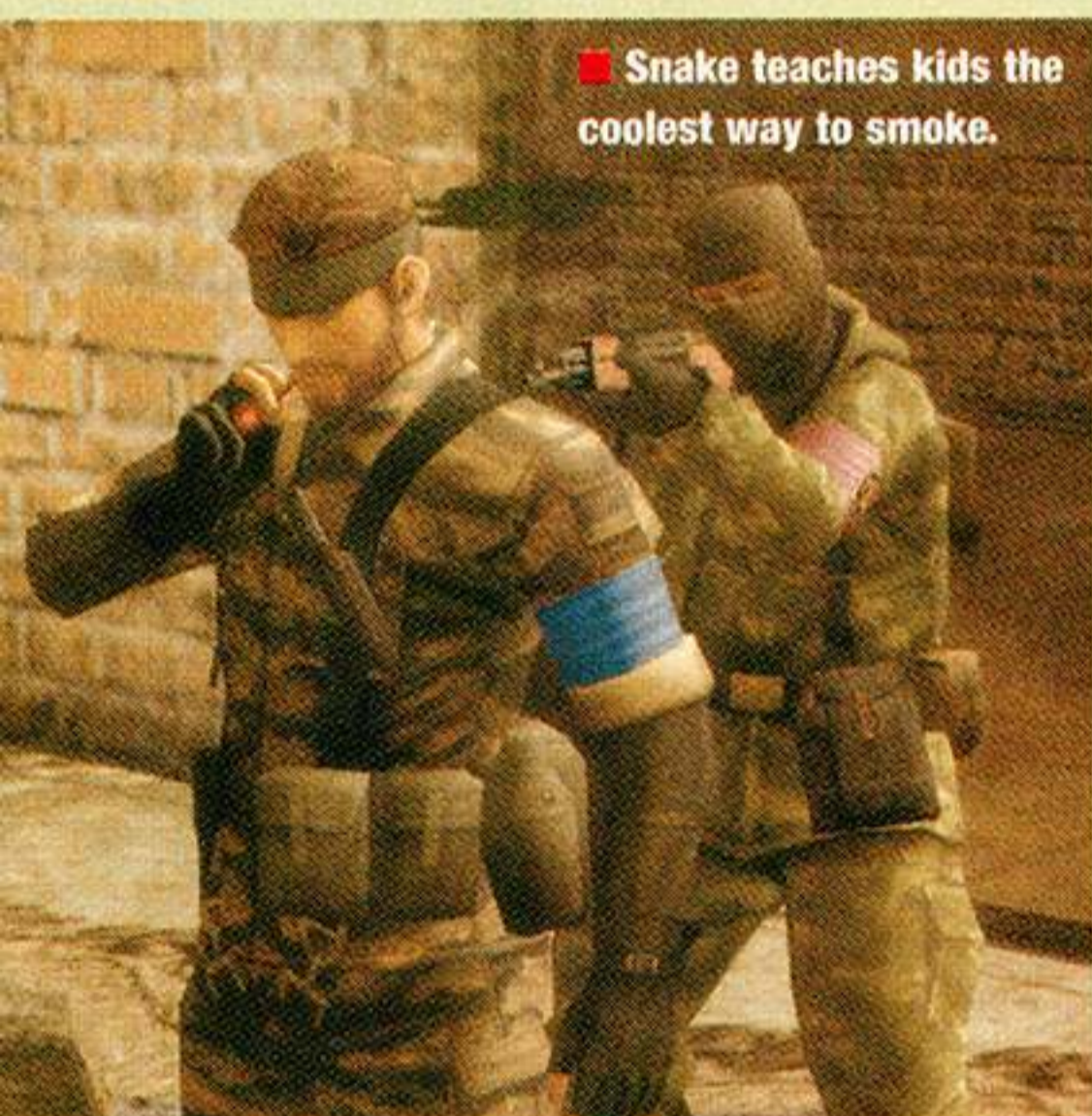
RESCUE MISSION

Like capture, rescue centers on your team controlling one particular (and, in expected *MGS* tradition, particularly goofy) item. The difference is, here only one team can score by safely returning the rubber duck to base. The opposing squad's sole job is keeping the duck out of the rescuers' hands, which means all they've got to do to win is eliminate the other team with extreme prejudice.

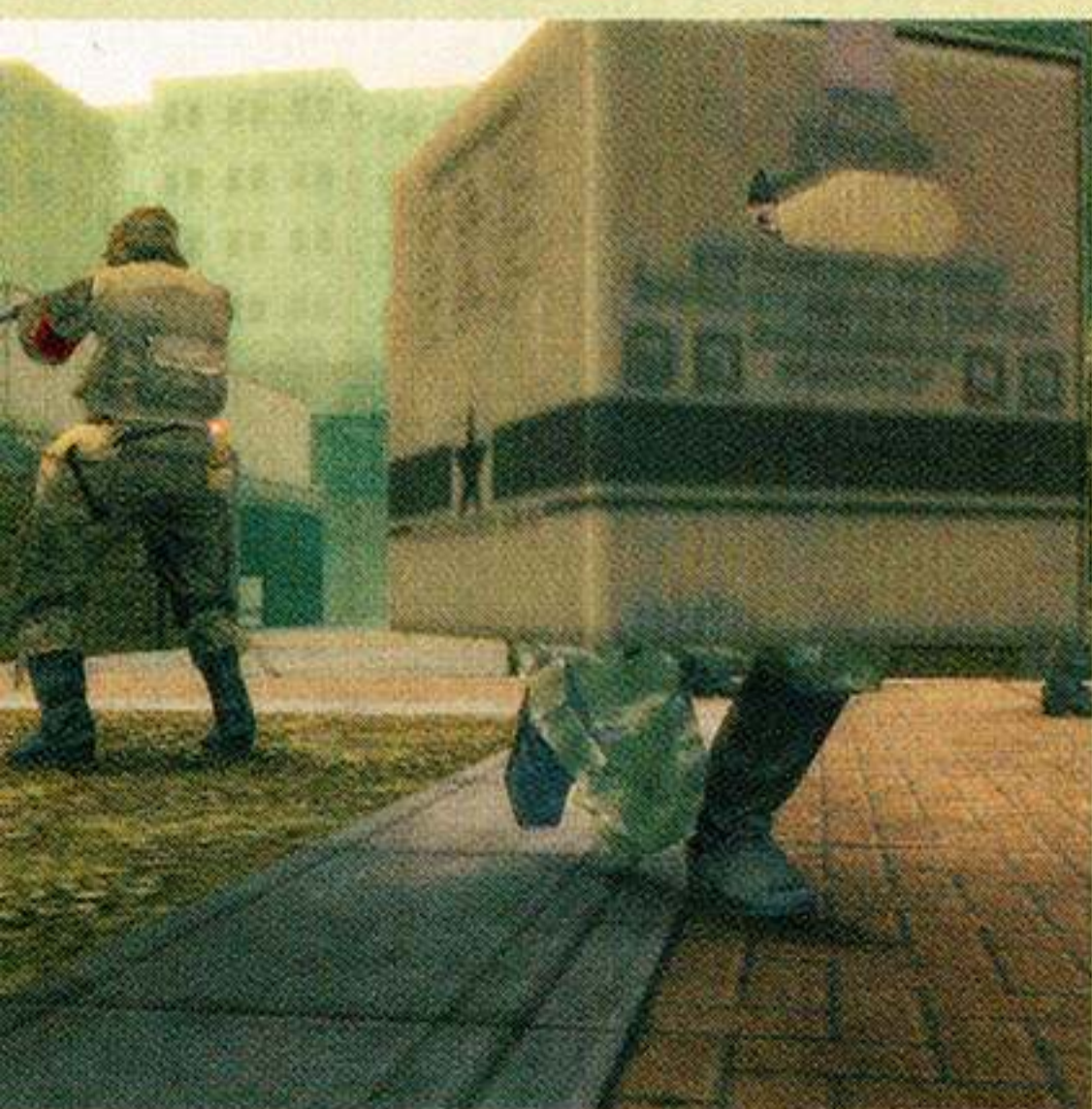
Rescue mission features no respawns, so if you die, you're dead for good. But perhaps death isn't so bad: You can still scamper around the battlefield as a ghost after taking a bullet to the brain. In the version we played, ghosts weren't visible to other players, but a trailer prepared by Konami indicates that this may change, so even dead teammates might be able to help by creeping out the enemy. Spooky.

Where Did It Go?

Both rescue and capture missions feature an onscreen radar that shows the location of the item—even when an enemy teammate has it. It won't, however, indicate any possible enemy escorts, so you'll have to use caution before making a beeline for the carrier.



■ Snake teaches kids the coolest way to smoke.



4

SNEAKING MISSION

Unfortunately, we didn't get to try sneaking firsthand—a real shame, since it's potentially the most intriguing of *Subsistence's* online modes. This variant of rescue mission, which pits one player as Snake versus everybody else as guards, is so elaborate that it won't be available on all of the game's nine maps—Snake needs a lot of space to fully get his sneak on.

Obviously, with seven-against-one odds, the lucky Snake player will have a full arsenal of goodies at his disposal, including those aforementioned cheesecake mags, cardboard boxes, and other creative distractions. Assuming Konami can get smooth, lag-free games up and running, this distinctly *Metal Gear* mode may be the central draw when the game hits next spring. 🦊

WHAT'S UP AT



EGM.1UP.COM

Thanks to the many folks who helped create this thing we call the Internet, we're now able to provide you with additional content outside these pages. Look for the section labeled *EGM Extras*, where you'll find reviews of games like *FIFA 06*, *X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse*, and *Rainbow Six Lockdown*.

CHEATS.1UP.COM

Are you impatient? Do you lack skills? That's OK, as 1UP.com will always be full of cheats to help people like you. Go to the URL above to learn how to see what your friends saw when they finished the game months ago.

Featured Clubs: Halloween

Does October 31 involve more preparation and anticipation than any other holiday? You're not alone. Those characters at halloween.1UP.com don't call it cosplay and you shouldn't either. Check out their ideas for gaming costumes under \$40.

Gaming on the Cheap

Unless you're an Olsen twin or a trust fund baby, the price tag on the Xbox 360 may have you nervously eyeing your credit limit. Thankfully, the very savvy shoppers at gamingonthecheap-club.1UP.com feel your pain. Stop by and share ideas on how to scare up the cash.

Featured Blog: Rainbow Six Lockdown

Does the latest edition of *Rainbow Six* got you all twitterpated? Then visit with fellow soldiers, watch in-game videos, and get your war on at rainbowsixlockdown.1UP.com. This blog is updated by the developers themselves, who provide tons of valuable recon.

ADAPED

Drop in this winter on the only snowboarding game spinning on the Xbox 360.

Jeremy Jones
David Benedek
Mikey LeBlanc
Marc Frank Montoya
Torah Bright
Wille Yli-Luoma
Devun Walsh
Travis Parker
Gigi Rüf
Nico Droz

Snowbird, Utah

Avoriaz, France

Laax, Switzerland

Valle Nevado, Chile

Northstar, California

Zugspitze, Germany

DC Mountain Lab, Utah

On Shelves
This Season.



XBOX 360™

XBOX
LIVE

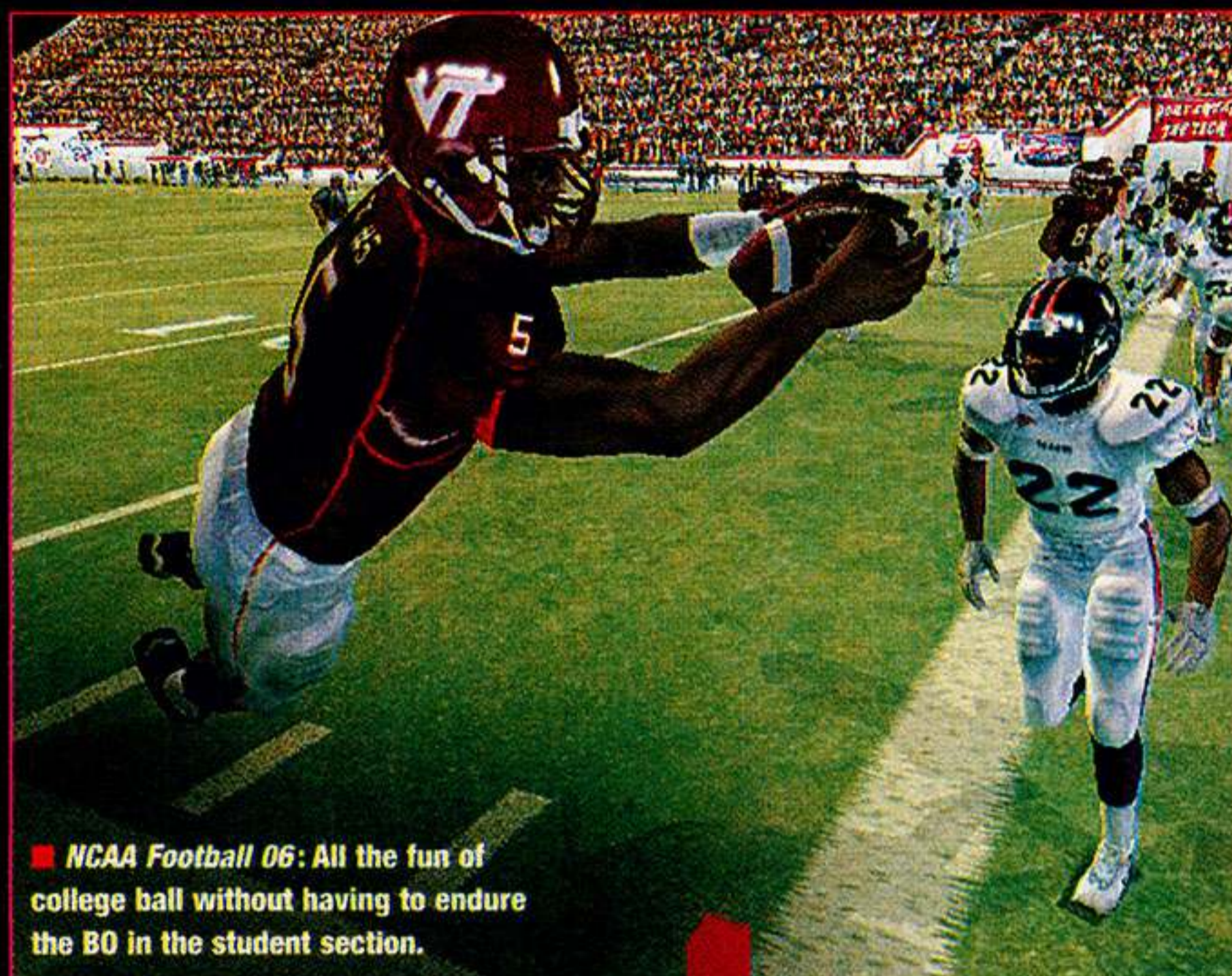
2K
SPORTS

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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
RP

THE SALES CHARTS | FOR JULY 2005

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES



■ **NCAA Football 06:** All the fun of college ball without having to endure the BO in the student section.

- 1 NCAA Football 06 • PS2 • EA Sports
- 2 NCAA Football 06 • XB • EA Sports
- 3 Halo 2 Map Pack • XB • Microsoft
- 4 Pokémon Emerald • GBA • Nintendo
- 5 Fantastic 4 • PS2 • Activision
- 6 Destroy All Humans! • PS2 • THQ
- 7 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas • XB • Rockstar
- 8 Lego Star Wars • PS2 • Eidos Interactive
- 9 Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition • PSP • Rockstar
- 10 Star Wars Battlefront • PS2 • LucasArts

TOP 10 PS2



- 1 NCAA Football 06
- 2 Fantastic 4
- 3 Destroy All Humans!
- 4 Lego Star Wars
- 5 Star Wars Battlefront
- 6 MVP Baseball 2005
- 7 Medal of Honor: European Assault
- 8 Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition
- 9 Star Wars: Episode III ROTS
- 10 Burnout 3: Takedown

TOP 10 XBOX



- 1 NCAA Football 06
- 2 Halo 2 Map Pack
- 3 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
- 4 Conker: Live & Reloaded
- 5 Destroy All Humans!
- 6 Delta Force: Black Hawk Down
- 7 Fantastic 4
- 8 Lego Star Wars
- 9 Burnout 3: Takedown
- 10 Star Wars Battlefront

TOP 10 GAMECUBE



- 1 Fantastic 4
- 2 Super Smash Bros. Melee
- 3 Pokémon Colosseum
- 4 Super Mario Sunshine
- 5 Animal Crossing
- 6 Madagascar
- 7 Kirby's Air Ride
- 8 MVP Baseball 2005
- 9 Harvest Moon: Another Wnd. Life
- 10 Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

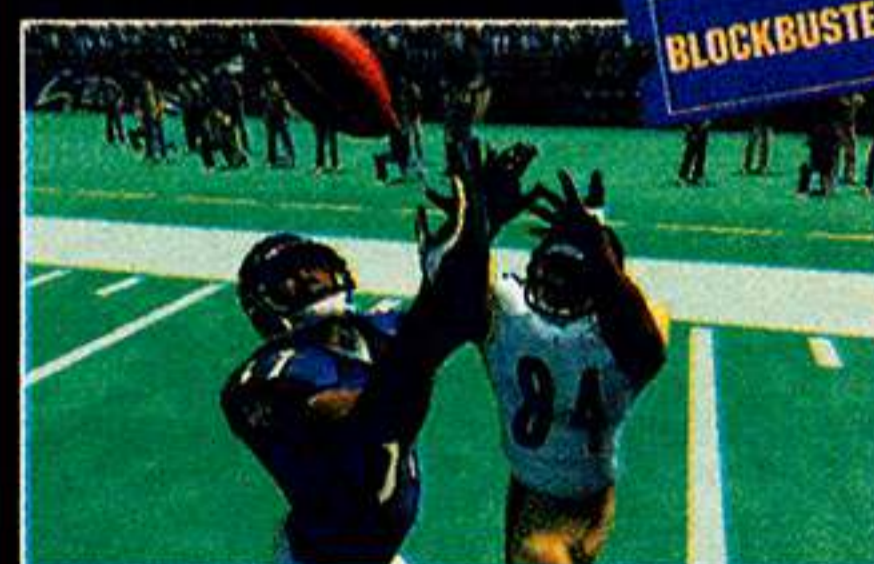
TOP 10 PORTABLES



- 1 Pokémon Emerald • GBA
- 2 Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed. • PSP
- 3 Coded Arms • PSP
- 4 Fantastic 4 • GBA
- 5 Star Wars: Ep. II AOTC • GBA
- 6 Kirby: Canvas Curse • DS
- 7 Madagascar • GBA
- 8 Lego Star Wars • GBA
- 9 Fire Emblem: Sacred Stones • GBA
- 10 Mega Man BN5: Protoman • GBA

TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 8/14/05



- 1 Madden NFL 06 • PS2
- 2 Madden NFL 06 • XB
- 3 Destroy All Humans! • PS2
- 4 Fantastic 4 • PS2
- 5 Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed. • PS2
- 6 Delta Force: Black Hawk Down • XB
- 7 NCAA Football 06 • PS2
- 8 Medal of Honor: Eur. Assault • PS2
- 9 Delta Force: BHD • PS2
- 10 Destroy All Humans! • XB

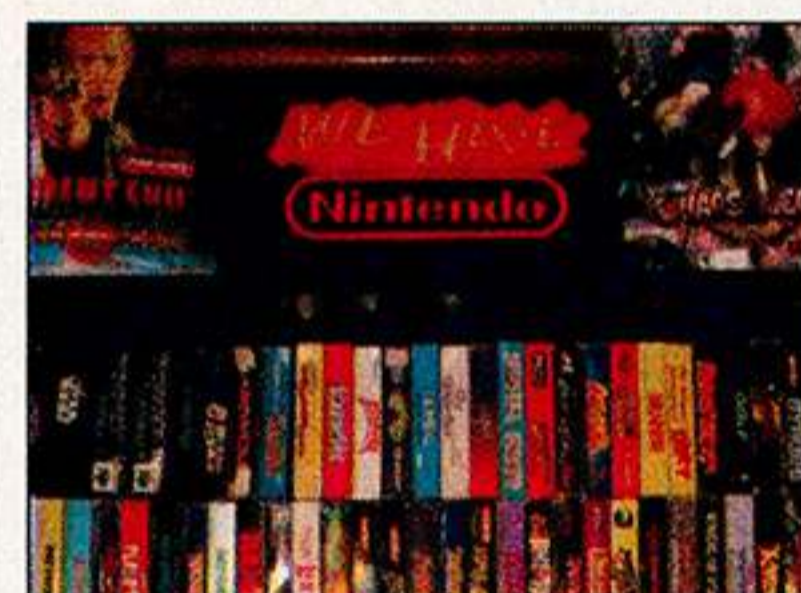
ON THE AUCTION

BLOCK

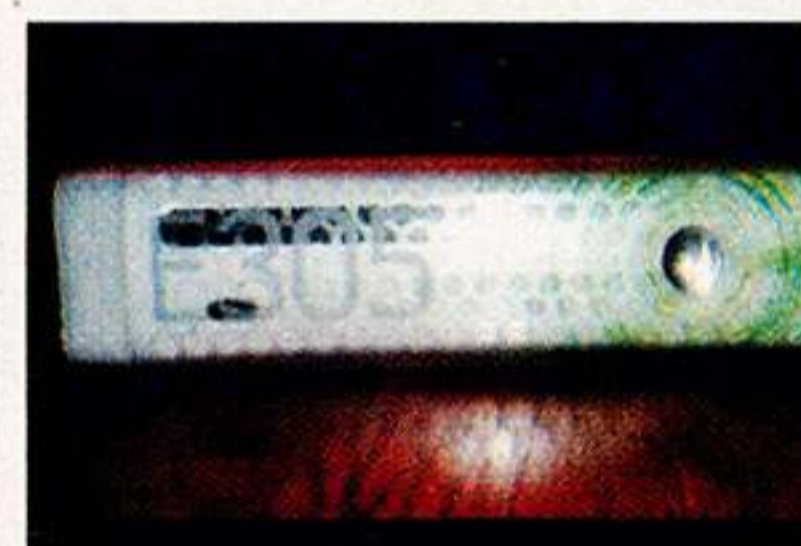
Not just for Beanie Babies and limited-edition *Dukes of Hazzard* TV trays, eBay has this crap, too.



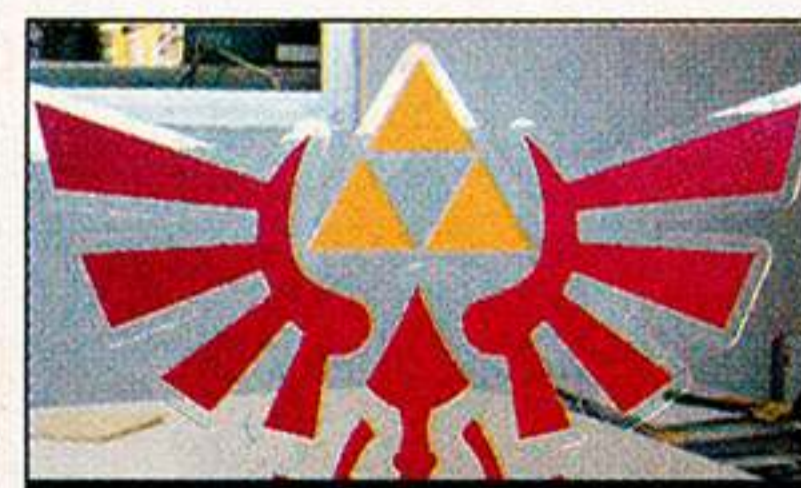
Item: All the praise Mom got for your little bro's Wario costume went to her head. She put a set of four *Mario Bros.* hats on eBay.
Winning Bid: Zero bids! Aw!



Item: This collection of 776 NES games is one of the largest of its kind ever sold on the Internets.
Winning Bid: \$10,099.99 (\$13 per game!?)



Item: No. 1 of 5,000 Xbox 360 faceplates given away at a Microsoft press gig went for more than twice what the others did.
Winning Bid: \$612



Item: Looking for something nerdy to spruce up the office? How does an acrylic Triforce/Hyrule symbol with your name engraved on it sound?
Winning Bid: \$33

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Service. Call (616) 625-6190 for questions regarding this list.

Source: Blockbuster Video

>> EA STEPS BACK INTO THE RING NEXT SPRING WITH *FIGHT NIGHT: ROUND 3* FOR XBOX 360. EXPECT RIVALRIES TO PLAY A LARGE ROLE...>>

DESTINY HAS CHOSEN ITS MESSENGER

"Sniper Elite™ takes combat to the next level."

IGN

ONE BULLET CAN CHANGE HISTORY

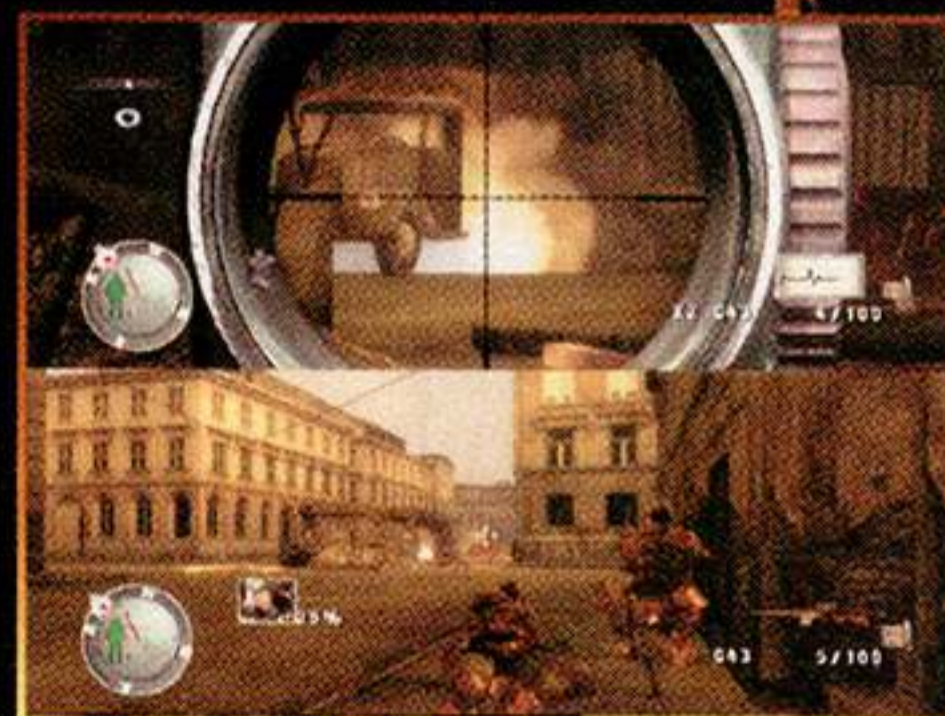
SNIPER ELITE™



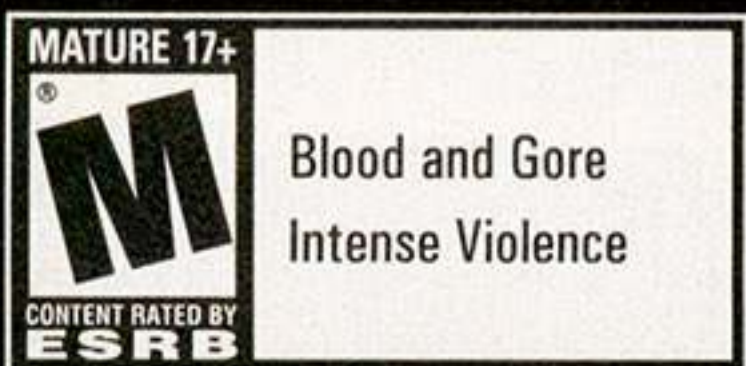
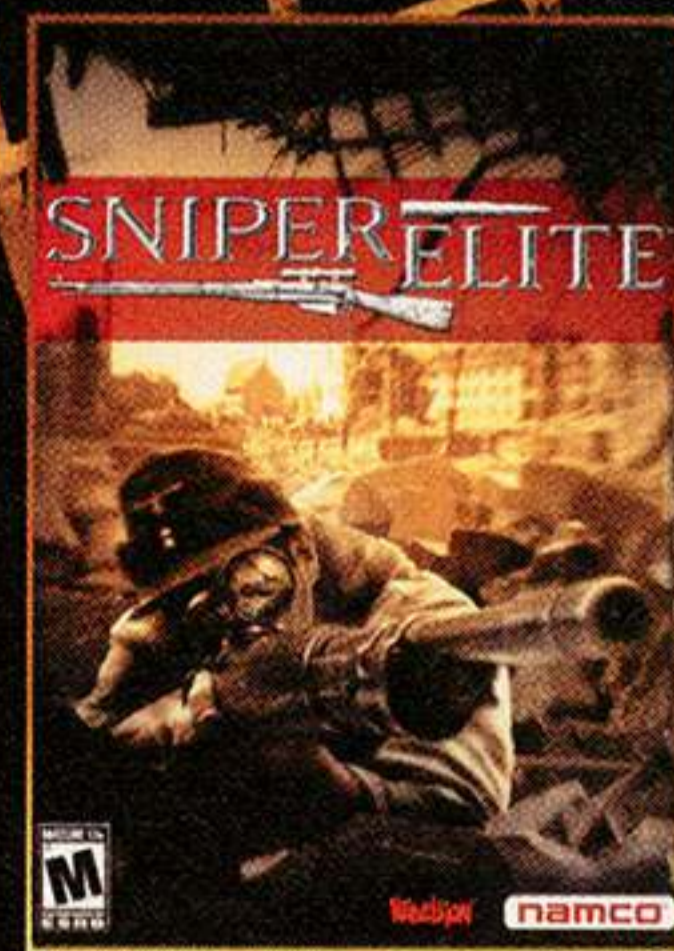
TENSE MULTIPLAYER SNIPER BATTLES.



REALISTIC SNIPING WITH ADJUSTMENTS FOR GRAVITY, WIND, HEART RATE AND MORE.



28 SINGLE PLAYER AND CO-OPERATIVE MISSIONS.



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PHAT CAMP

It's four weeks of roughing it in the wilds of game design, but the select few students picked for the annual trek to videogame camp aren't complaining. *EGM* raids their SoCal cabins...

It's another sunny July afternoon in Los Angeles, and the students at the University of Southern California are enjoying the day as only they can. Neo-hippies float neon Frisbees between cascading fountains. A bottle blonde in booty shorts leafs through her biology textbook under a tree. An iPod jock browses retro T-shirts in an outdoor market.

But not everyone is lolling outside. In a darkened room on the fifth floor of the Olin Hall of Engineering, class is in session again. Rows of students sit in front of their Alienware computers as their

instructor paces in front. Behind him is an overhead projector showing a *Lord of the Rings* strategy game. "You've got two castles but no player has been assigned," he says, "so you have to change the object tool to assign that castle to a specific player. Any questions?"

"Yeah," replies a young pupil with shaggy dark hair and a backward baseball cap. "Why are there tanks in my map editor?"

Roughing it

This is no ordinary class—it's USC's Interactive Entertainment Summer Camp, the ultimate hot spot for would-be

gamemakers. Now in its second summer at USC, the four-week session gives high school students a crash course in game production, from field trips to the nearby offices of publisher Electronic Arts to, today, creating mods for *Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth* (PC). In return, students receive college credits and, more important, insight into this burgeoning art and industry. "Most of the kids come here thinking they're going to just be playing games," says instructor Andy Dunn, a veteran game producer, "but they end up discovering what it takes to make them."

Videogame education is nothing new.

Specialized schools—including the Nintendo-sponsored DigiPen in Redmond, WA, and Full Sail in Orlando, FL—offer degrees in game production and design. Universities such as Stanford, the University of North Texas, and the Georgia Institute of Technology offer tracks in game study as well. While these programs are for college students, USC's videogame camp is unique for bringing high school kids into the fold.

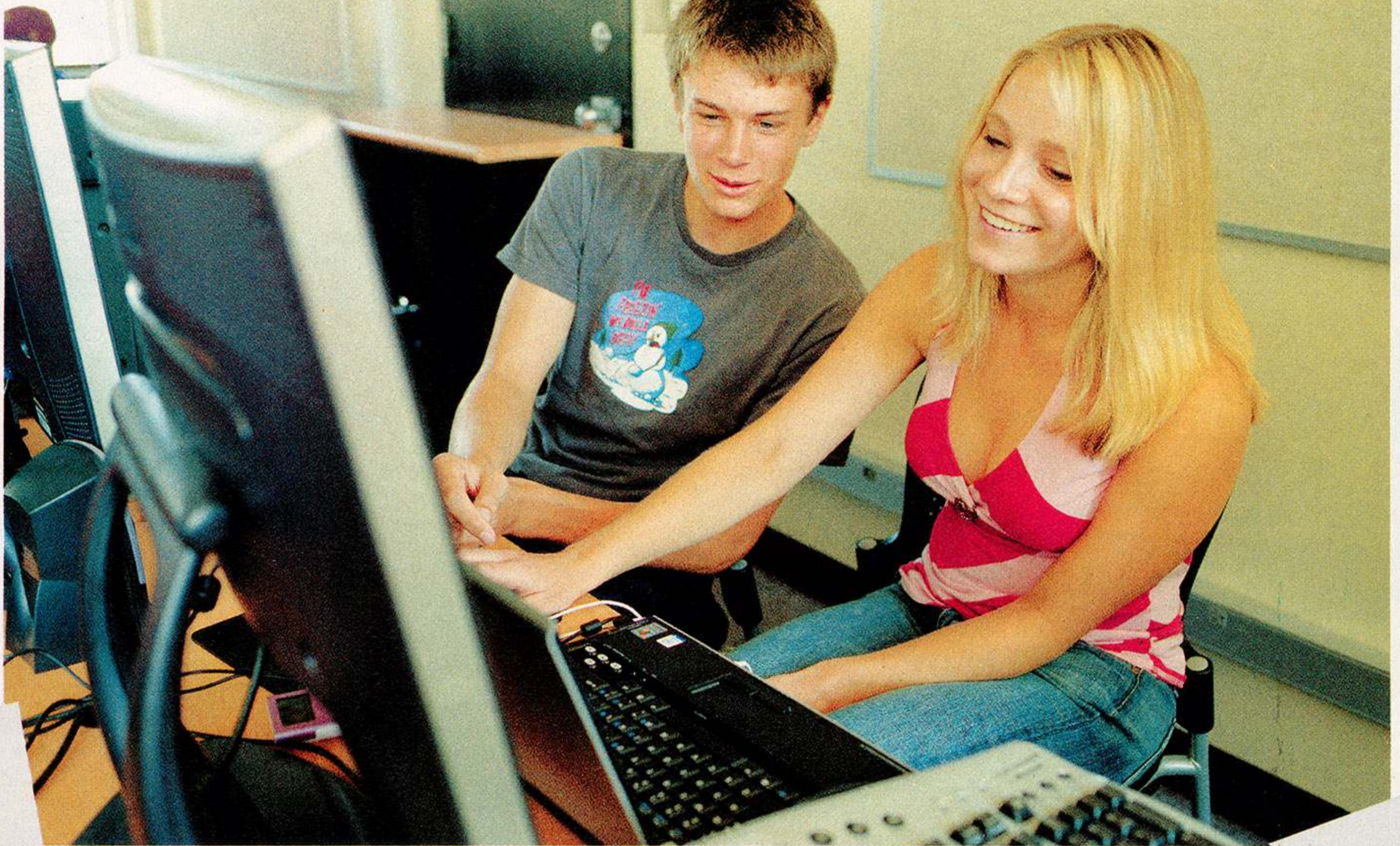
"The goal is to help connect kids with their dream," says Steve Seabolt, director of the EA Education Initiative, which provides a scholarship for a qualifying



■ What with their camp's notable lack of hiking and canoeing, these kids owed our photographer a spirited footrace at the very least.

>> LOOKS LIKE IT DOES INDEED PAY TO BE THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN—EA RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT *MADDEN NFL 06* (PS2/XB/GC)

■ This boy is closer to touching a pretty girl here than he will be for the next 10 to 15 years.



Photographs by Kate Romero

female student at the camp (it costs \$4,000, including room and board, to attend). "If we can encourage them to pursue those dreams, some percentage of those kids will come pursue them at Electronic Arts."

"It's going to be all nerds!"

With only 27 spots available, though, not every kid's pixelated dreams can come true. Applicants must be at least sophomores with a minimum 3.0 grade point average, as well as a recommendation from a high school teacher. They also have to write an application essay. And that

doesn't mean composing 500 words on how best to jack cars in *Grand Theft Auto*. "We want to know why they're interested in working in the industry," Dunn says.

This year, campers came from as far as New York, Nebraska, and even Taiwan. Adam Beckett, a 16-year-old senior from Los Angeles who makes *Tribes 2* (PC) mods for kicks, welcomed the opportunity to take his hobby to the next level. "I've always had an interest in game design," he says, adding with a smile, "All my friends are kinda jealous that I'm here."

Ivona Edry, a 16-year-old senior from Seattle attending camp on the EA schol-

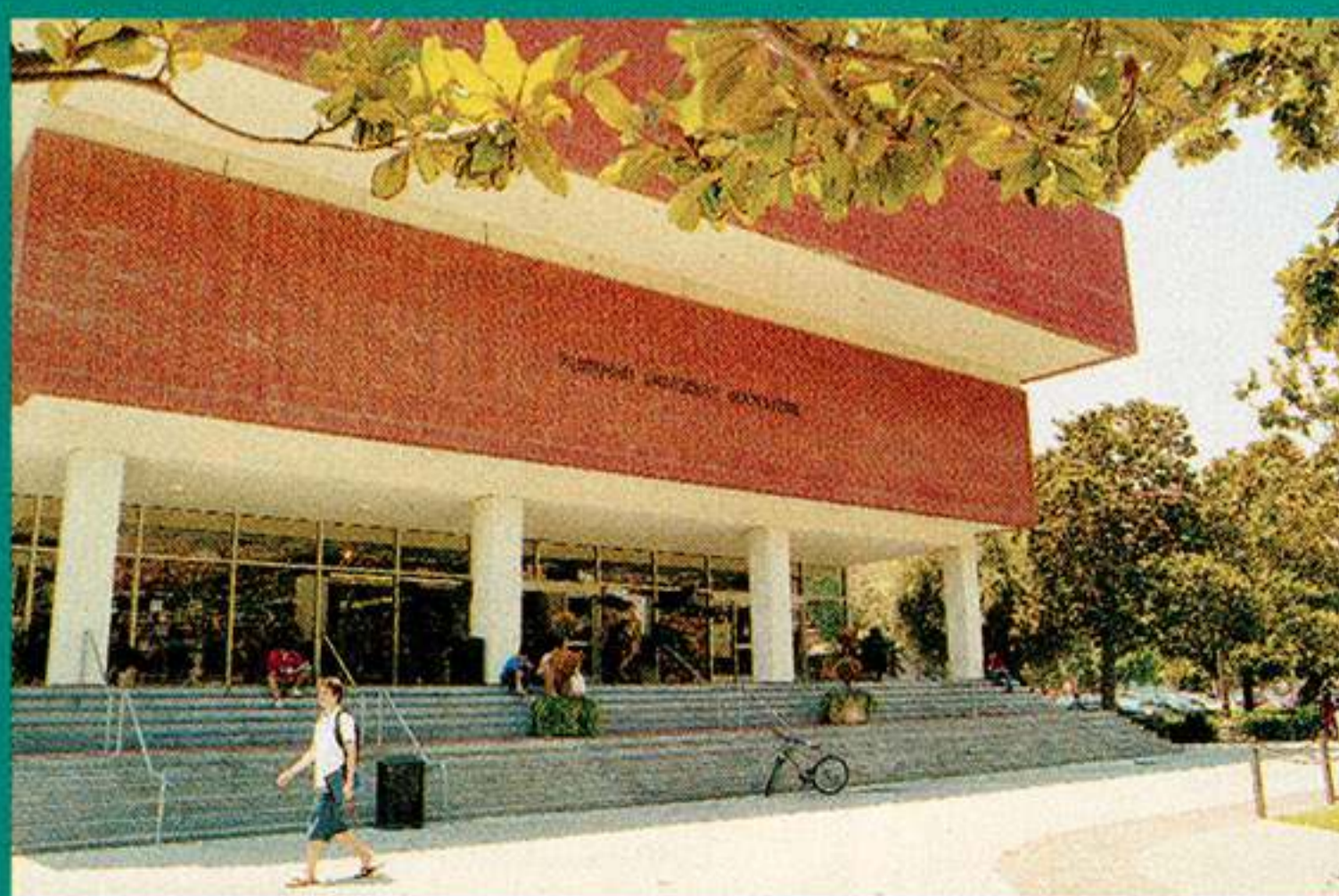
arship, came on the suggestion of her guidance counselor, who thought the program might appeal to her interests in computer science and business. While her high school buddies made summer plans to work and laze around the Puget Sound, Edry packed her bags. "My friends," she says, "were like, 'Why are you going to videogame camp? It's going to be all nerds!'"

But as Edry and the other campers discovered, it takes more than a pasty-faced geek behind a computer to bring a game to life. The camp days are split between a morning lecture on videogame production,



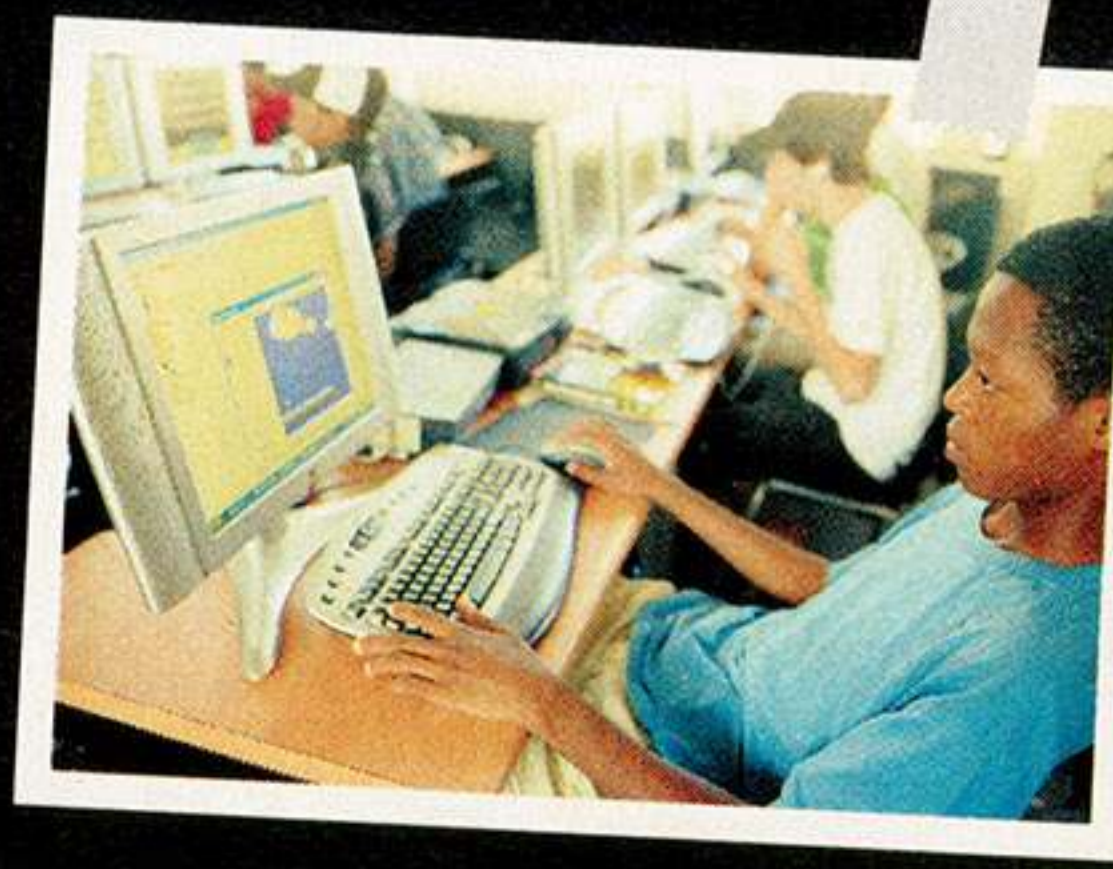
■ See kids? Summer camp is fun!

CAMPING OUT



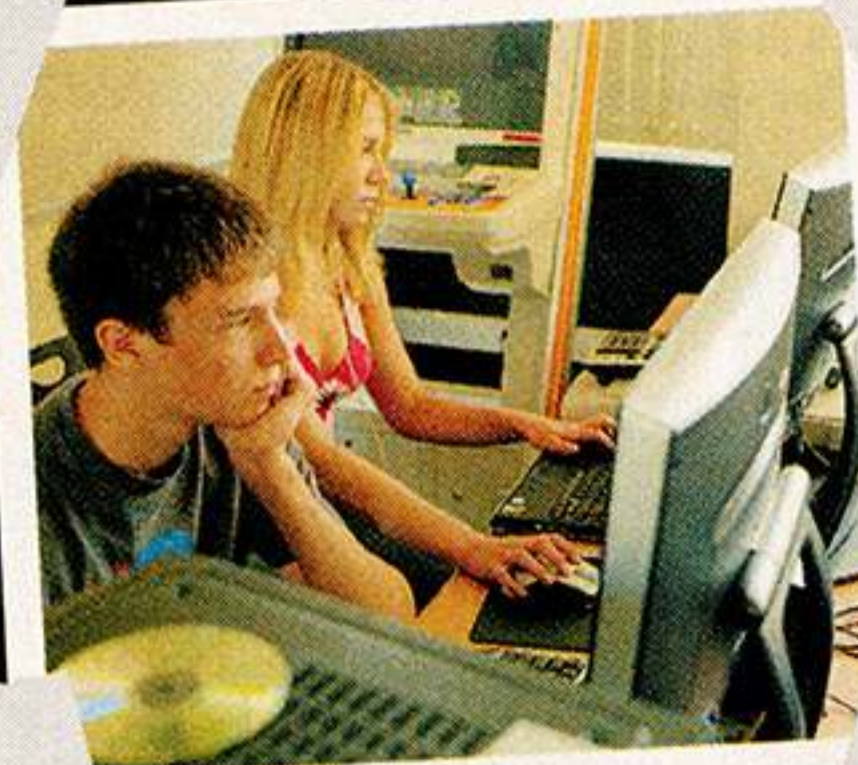
Beginning your hike to USC

Your first stop on the trail to game camp—which runs from July 3 to July 30—is this hefty URL: www.usc.edu/dept/admissions/programs/summer/seminars_apply.shtml. You'll find an application, plus all the dates and pricing details. Prepare for some sticker shock—the camp will run you just over \$4,000 (EA offers a scholarship for female campers). Competition is fierce: You'll need to be a high school junior or senior with at least a 3.0 GPA and a recommendation from a teacher. You'll also have to dazzle camp administrators with your essay-writing skills. But if you make it in, you'll earn invaluable experience for that future career in game design.



SOLD MORE THAN 1.7 MILLION COPIES IN ITS FIRST WEEK. THAT'S THE MOST EVER IN THE FRANCHISE'S 16-YEAR HISTORY... >>

PHAT CAMP (CONT.)



and a hands-on afternoon workshop in a lab stocked with PlayStation 2s, Xboxes, GameCubes, and dozens of games. Dunn says the lecture topics, which range from role-playing games to 3D graphics, are meant to "give them a sense of the bigger picture, and a better sense of how games are produced."

Building blocks

Though programming skills are not a prerequisite, the lab introduces students to the fundamentals of the coding that makes games tick. To supplement classes on 2D graphics and audio technologies, students learn to code their own rudimentary game and write up a design document for a more ambitious dream project. Beckett proposed a title called *Supermarket Smash-Up*, a food-fight role-playing game set in a grocery store. Edry came up with *The Love Game*, in which players progress through acts of random kindness. "I don't enjoy shooting people in *Halo 2*," she says. "I'm an optimist, so I made a game where you go around the

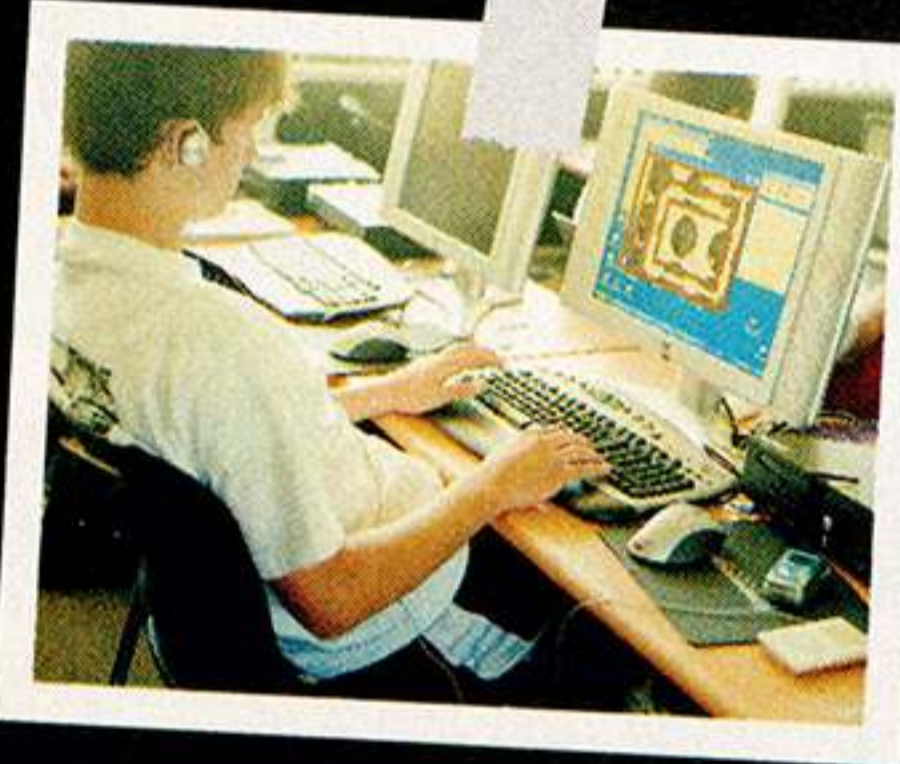
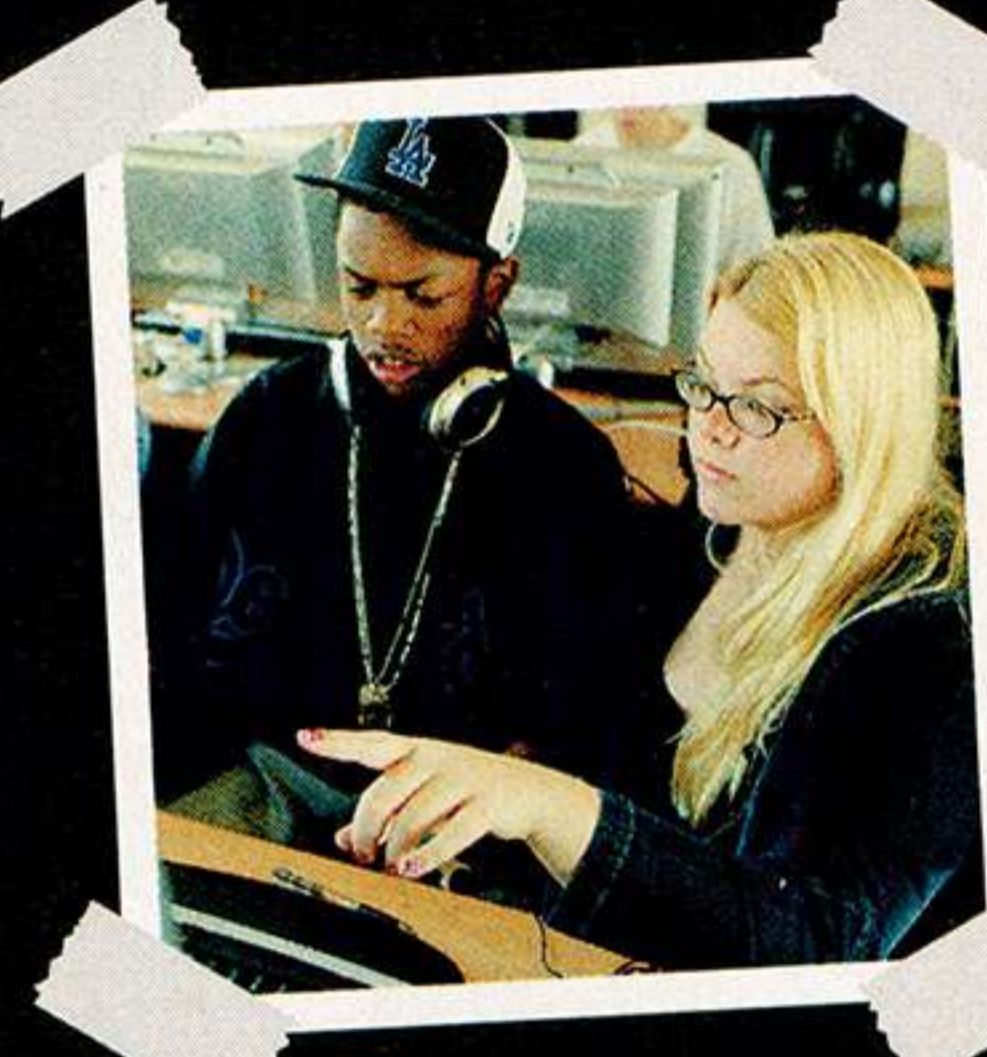
world and try to solve problems."

But the camp isn't just fun and games. Students have to read handouts and textbooks—*Game Programming for Teens* and *Game Design: The Art and Business of Creating Games*—and pass midterm and final exams. The test questions range from multiple choice ("Which independent videogame company was created by disgruntled Atari employees?" Answer: Activision) to essays ("Select one of these games—*Final Fantasy*, *Halo*, or *WarCraft*—and tell the design genre it best fits into and why.")

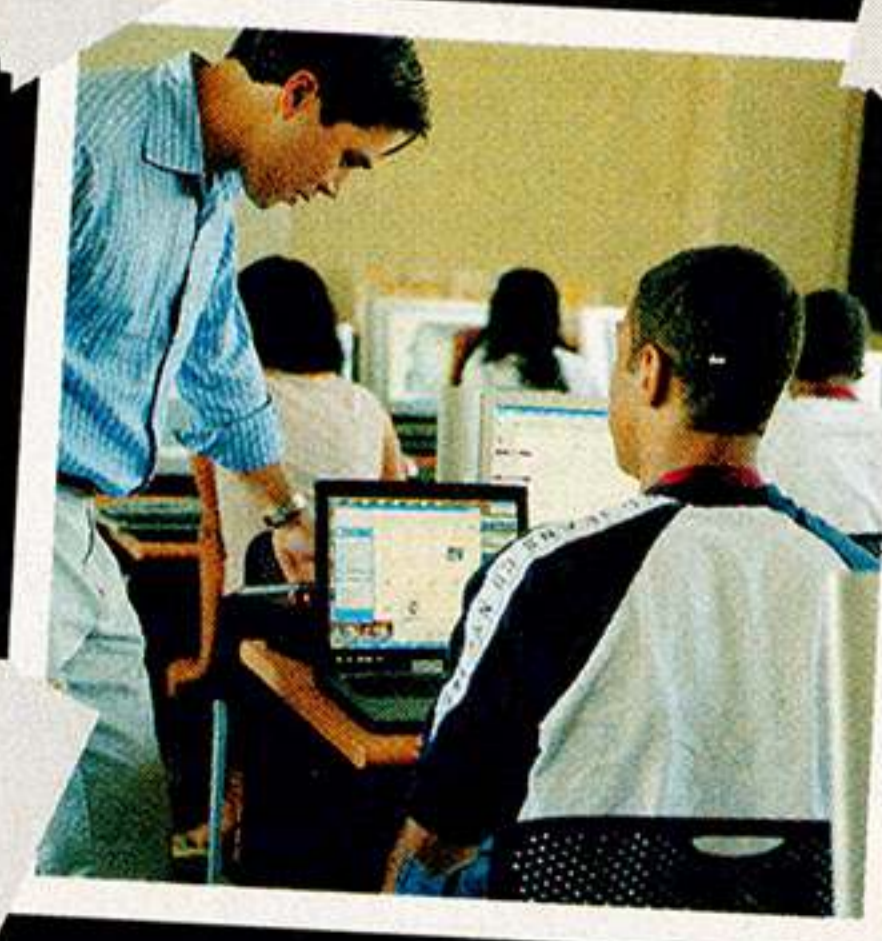
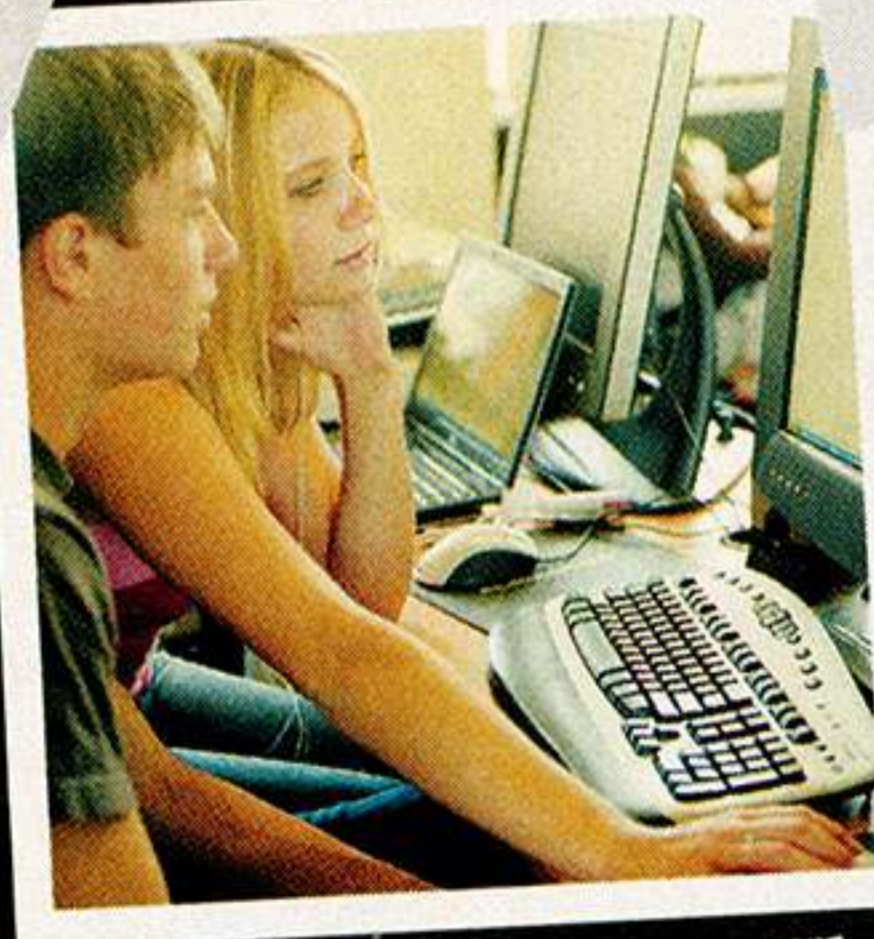
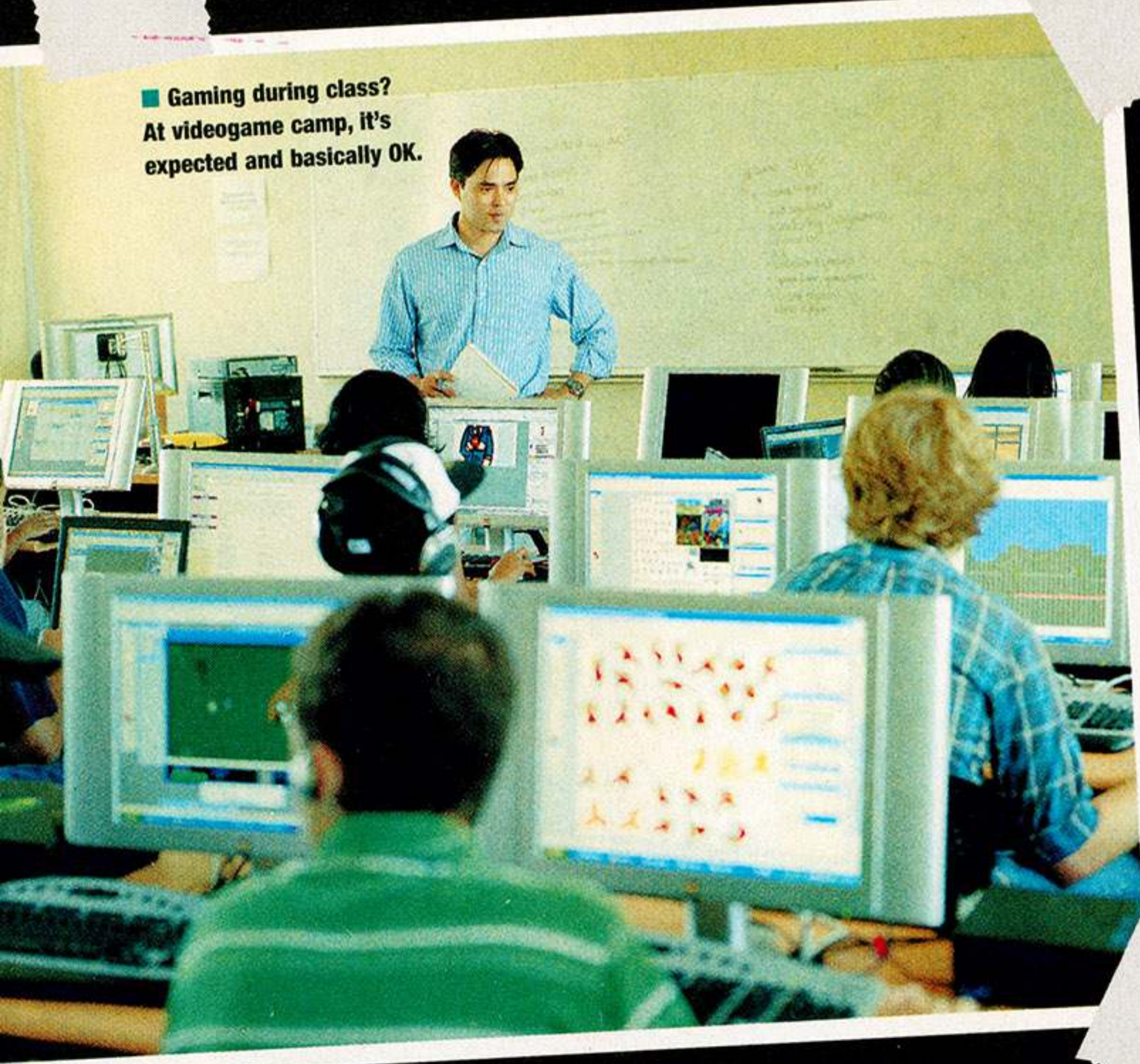
It's still summer camp, though, and the kids (who live under the supervision of counselors in the USC dormitories) do get time to goof off. The campers take a trip to Disneyland, and they can borrow free videogames and consoles from a campus store. While playing a game during class might be grounds for suspension at your average high school, at camp, it's no crime. Even if the kids are gaming during a lecture, says instructor Vincent Diamante, "It's kind of OK." —David Kushner



By the end of their four-week stay, students will have coded their own rudimentary game.



Gaming during class? At videogame camp, it's expected and basically OK.

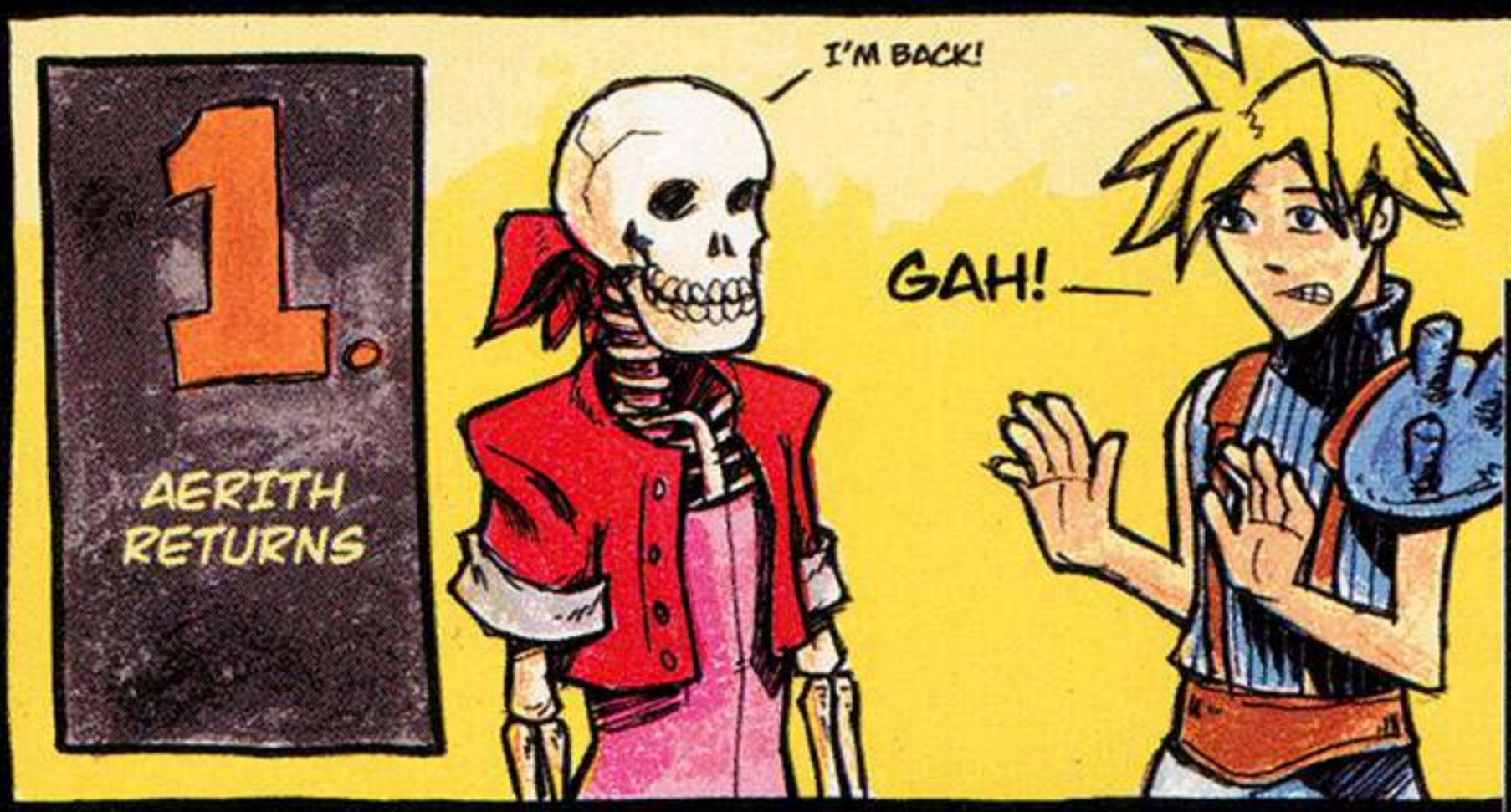


>> PLAYLOGIC ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL PUBLISH STATE OF EMERGENCY 2 (PS2), WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE LATE THIS YEAR.... >>

OVERHEARD

Nothing escapes our giant ear on the game industry—nothing!

TOP 3 DELETED SCENES FROM "ADVENT CHILDREN"



©2005 Jeremy Parish toastfrog.1up.com

"I tried to persuade him to go home, but he kept saying, 'Just one more game.'"

—Unidentified colleague of a South Korean man who died, apparently from an exhaustion-induced heart attack after playing computer games for over 50 consecutive hours

"You have entered unhealthy game time, please go offline immediately to rest. If you do not, your health will be damaged and the benefits you can win will be cut to zero."

—Warning that will pop up for Chinese PC gamers after five hours of continuous online gameplay, according to a plan proposed by the Chinese government. The warning will be accompanied by the player's character losing powers

"Personally speaking, I'd jump at any chance to develop a 2D game for any console, or even the PSP, but those chances are getting fewer and fewer. I feel like the [Nintendo] DS is the last fortress of 2D gaming."

—Castlevania producer Koji Igarashi

"They call me 'Halo god.' Half my deployment I've spent playing Halo 2."

—Baton Rouge, LA, National Guard Specialist Chris Foster, on his tour of duty in Iraq

"360 great, PS3—pain in my ass."

—Id Software CEO Todd Hollenshead paraphrases world-famous programmer John Carmack's initial impressions of developing for the next-gen systems

"This is one of those silly [marketing] concepts dreamed up by a middle-aged nongamer who once worked at Procter & Gamble. To him or her I say, 'Stick to Tide and Pringles.'"

—Founder of Bethesda Softworks (The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind) C.S. Weaver gives his opinion of the stripped-down \$299 version of the Xbox 360

"Chat-room traffic on the Atari site indicates that current graffiti vandals anticipate a growth in their numbers with the game's release."

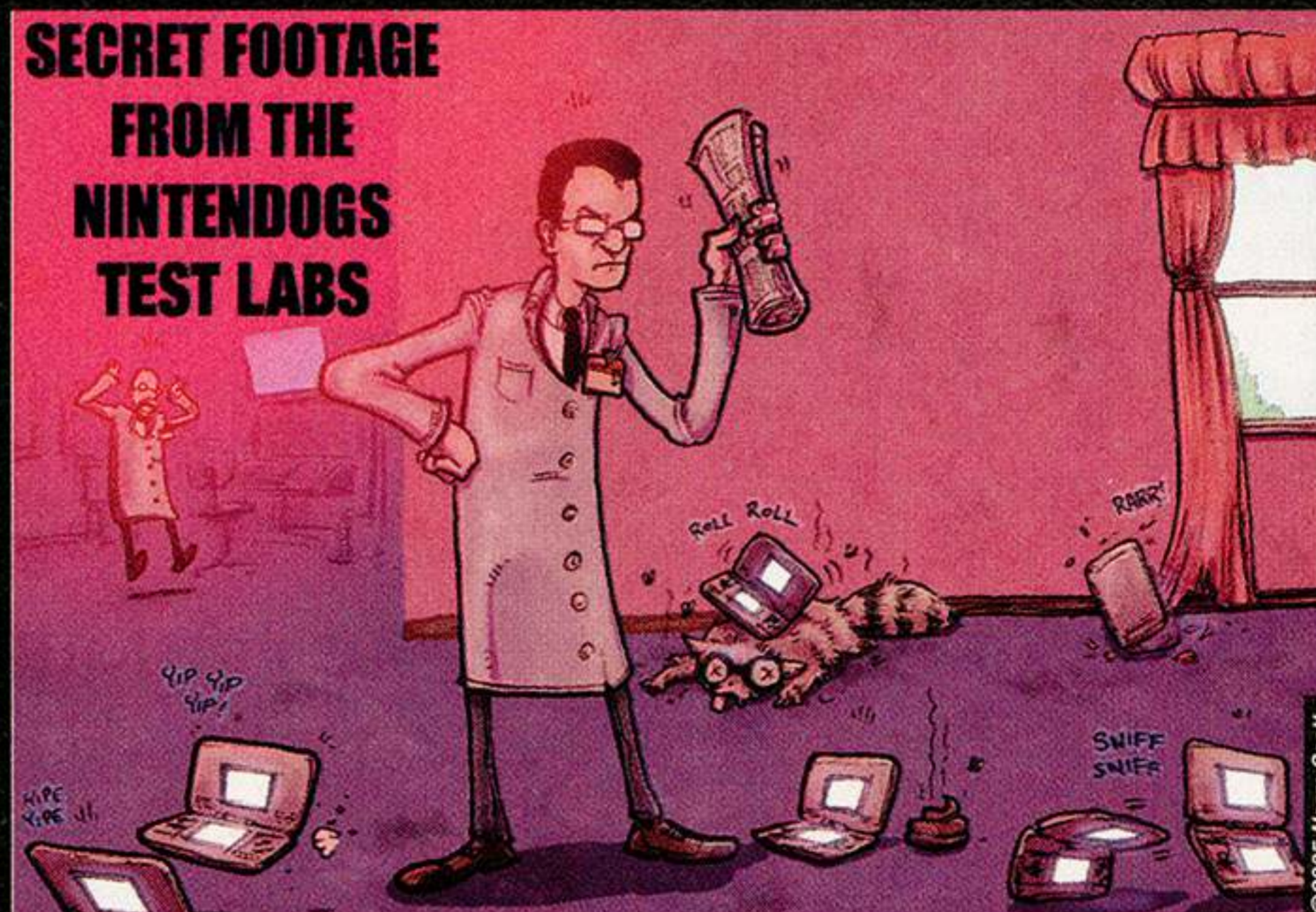
—Keep America Beautiful President Ray Empson on the perils of the upcoming Marc Ecko's Getting Up

"The idea of a handheld rivalry with Nintendo is an irrelevance. [The DS and GBA] don't appear in our planning. It's not a fair comparison; not fair on them, I should stress. That sounds arrogant, maybe, but it's the truth. Nintendo knows its target audience because it has really narrowed that down, and it's pretty much defined by a boy or girl's ability to admire Pokémon."

—For someone who doesn't see Nintendo as competition, Sony Europe VP Phil Harrison spends quite a bit of time discussing the company on the eve of the PSP's European launch

"Honestly, are all of you gamers on drugs, or what?"

—Attorney Jack Thompson, in a letter to videogame webtoon artist Scott Ramsoomair, mistakenly accusing Ramsoomair of initially contacting him via e-mail. Thompson has been involved in a number of game-related court cases and is an outspoken critic of the ESRB game-ratings system



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QUOTATION SOURCES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: THE CHOSUN ILBO, BUSINESSWEEK.COM, GAMASUTRA.COM, NYTIMES.COM, NEXT-GEN.BIZ, GAMEINFORMER.COM, KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL PRESS RELEASE, MCVUK.COM, VGCATS.COM

>> ADD ONE MORE TO THE FANTASY CAMP—SQUARE ENIX ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL PURCHASE PUBLISHER TAITO (PUZZLE BOBBLE)... >>

TAKE THIS JOB: PRODUCT MANAGER

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

THIS MONTH:
JOHN FIORITO
PRODUCT MANAGER
AT INSOMNIAC

FIORITO'S DETAILS

Experience: 19 years in the industry
Notable games: *The Spyro the Dragon*
and *Ratchet & Clank* series

Product manager job data

Salary range: \$60,000 to \$80,000
Recommended education: Computer
science, art, business
Location of most jobs: West Coast
Current level of demand: Medium

What's a product manager?

This guy (or girl) makes sure things get done. He coordinates traffic between different departments and is usually the liaison between the publisher and developer.

Fiorito's typical day

Meetings, meetings, meetings. Fiorito must keep everyone at Insomniac on their toes. Mondays are the worst, demanding a full day of meetings to set the week's pace and keep up momentum.

On any given day, Fiorito must get progress reports from the development heads, keep the soundtrack on schedule, and help plan out new online elements. "Programmers program and animators animate," he tells us. "[Someone has] to bring that all together." After each of these meetings, Fiorito types out his notes and sets the schedule. Schedules and assignments keep people account-

able, grounding the development process in reality. They may be making games, but this is still a business.

How he got the gig

Fiorito started off his gaming career designing flight-simulator levels, which led to level design on the *Spyro* series, then to product manager at Insomniac. As employee No. 6 there, Fiorito has witnessed the company's evolution from a single room into a studio 130 employees strong. "There is an element of chaos with this many people," Fiorito says. "If everything went well, I wouldn't be here [as a product manager]." —Johnny Liu

TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

Spreadsheets

To keep the different development groups on the same page, Fiorito is armed with schedules and spreadsheets. One database, for instance, tracks bugs discovered throughout the game's development.

Organization

To keep others organized, Fiorito must keep *himself* organized. His desk—in contrast to nearly every other desk at Insomniac (or in the game industry for that matter)—is impeccably neat.

Burns

A disc "burn" contains the up-to-date compiled code for testing and evaluation. Everything from trade-show demo discs to games-media versions requires a burn properly timed in the development schedule.

People

Ted Price, CEO of Insomniac, describes Fiorito as a "hub for development." When push comes to shove, Fiorito must keep everyone on track. And thus, Fiorito's most important tool is his team, the people of Insomniac.



NEXT UP:
LEVEL
DESIGNER

>> KONAMI ANNOUNCED THAT WINNING ELEVEN 9, WHICH COMES TO PS2, XB, AND PSP EARLY IN '06, WILL INCLUDE ONLINE PLAY... >>

Dracula gave him his start.
Now he's back for the finish.

Castlevania[®] Curse of Darkness[™]

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PlayStation[®] 2

KONAMI

www.konami.com/castlevania



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Dominate the:

- PAINT
- BACKCOURT
- PERIMETER
- ALL OF THE ABOVE



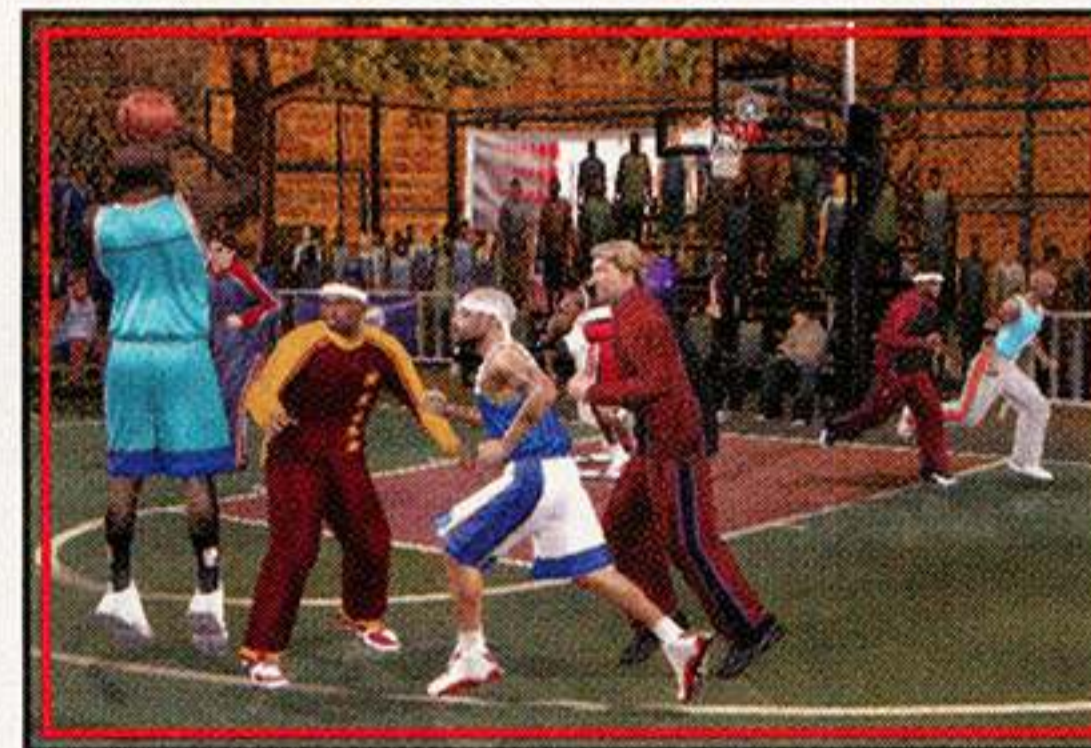
Pull off runners, fade-aways, finger rolls and dunks with the hot new *Shot Stick*.



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PlayStation®2





PENNY ARCADE EXPO '05

■ Hey kids: Can you find *Penny Arcade* creators Gabe and Tycho in this collage?



■ So-called tabletop games somehow magically work *without electricity or a TV!*

Fans of the gaming webtoon geek out in Seattle

A veritable zoo of gamers of every stripe—including the video, card, and tabletop types and even quite a few of the rare female variety—packed a convention hall just outside Seattle in late August to celebrate their hobby and their host, Web cartoon *Penny Arcade* (www.penny-arcade.com). Known as PAX (and not to be confused with the Kevin Spacey bomb *K-PAX*), the annual convention, now in its second year, felt like a combination industry trade show, fan gathering,

and giant game party, with just a hint of music festival tossed into the mix. More than 10,000 attendees took part in console and computer game tournaments, Q&A sessions with the creators of *Penny Arcade*, pro-player challenges in *Soul Calibur* and *Halo 2*, and performances by game-music rockers like the Minibosses.

But the highlight of the show was the Omegathon, a gaming decathlon of sorts (but with only six events). Twenty randomly chosen gamers competed in

games like *Karaoke Revolution*, *Katamari Damacy*, and the final secret title (which was not announced until just before the match began), the Atari 2600 classic *Combat*. The champion, Luke "Coreside" Armstrong, won a near-complete collection of 8-bit Nintendo games and paraphernalia along with a supercharged PC system. Not bad for three days of "work," especially when the work was sitting on his ass playing games. But then, who are we to talk....

ZELDA WATCH

Waiting for Twilight

Nintendo announced that it will delay *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* until after the end of the company's current fiscal year. This means the soonest the game will come out is April 2006. Citing requests from the dev team for more time to add "new levels, more depth, and even higher quality," a Nintendo spokesperson acknowledged in a statement that the news "may come as a disappointment to many eager fans." The delay means Nintendo has virtually no big GameCube titles for the holiday season. (*Super Mario Strikers* and *Fire Emblem*, anyone? Not bad, but they're no *Zelda*.) And because of the new release date (and with little new info in sight), our monthly *Zelda* update is taking a hiatus. In the meantime, visit zeldawatch.1UP.com, which will surely let you know the next time someone on the dev team passes gas.



THE HOT SEAT: CHOOSE OR LOSE



J Allard, corporate vice president for Xbox, definitely lives in the fast lane. He drives a Ferrari, isn't afraid to break some bones mountain biking, and loves the pressure of launching a new console. But before Allard gets the Xbox 360 out the door, he jumped into our Hot Seat where we asked him to make some tough (or you might say ridiculous) choices.

Halo 2 Partner



Bill Gates

Steve Ballmer

J Allard: "He'd scare the crap out of the other team! He'd do all the talking and I could do all the shooting."

Handheld



PlayStation Portable

Nintendo DS

JA: "The device isn't quite as sexy [as the PSP] and the games aren't quite there yet, but it's something that actually inspires my creativity more."

Xbox 360 Dream Exclusive



Super Mario

The Legend of Zelda

JA: "I think that *Super Mario 64* [for Nintendo 64] is the literature of 3D gaming. And Mario is a charming, approachable character that brings personality to a system."

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PlayStation. Portable



Developed By



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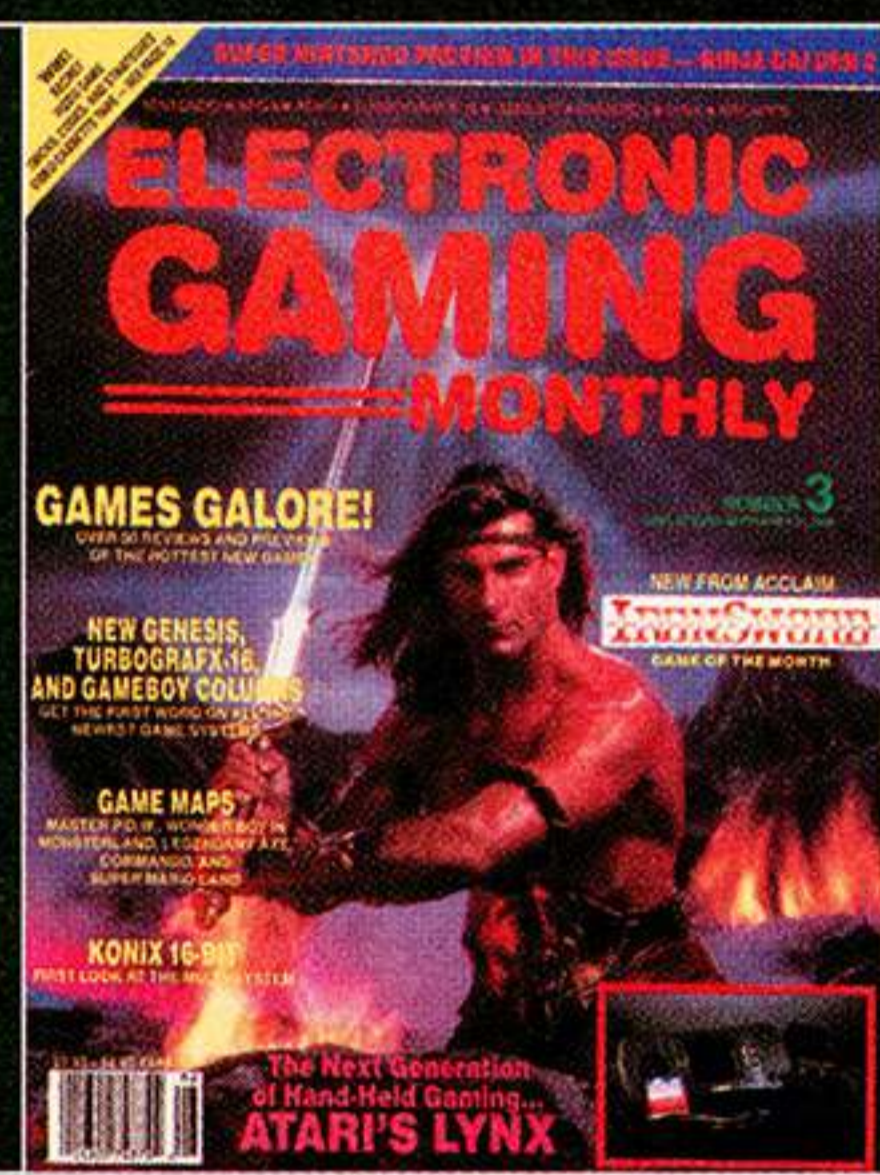
COUNTDOWN TO ISSUE 200: THE TOP 10 WORST EGM COVERS



We hear it's different for books, but when it comes to magazines, they're all judged by their covers. And looking back at almost 200 EGM issues, we have to judge some of ours as really quite crappy. Hey, everybody makes mistakes...they just don't always print 800,000 copies of 'em.

10

One word: Fabio
EGM #3, August 1989
Back in '89, Fabio wasn't the ex-international sex symbol he is today. He was just some guy on the box art of our Game of the Month, *Ironsword: Wizards and Warriors II* (Nintendo Entertainment System). Since our photography budget was about \$10 back then, we used the *Ironsword* box art (cost: \$0) for our cover image and the rest is history. Before you knew it, Fabio was all over the news, running into low-flying geese while riding roller coasters and second-guessing the identity of his snack spreads.



9

EGM goes avant-garde
EGM #121, August 1999

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Do something a little different for our *Resident Evil* cover; you know, *push the boundaries*, man. But it turns out a *Ren & Stimpy*-esque art style didn't fit with *RE*. Not surprisingly, *RE* publisher Capcom also hated it.



8

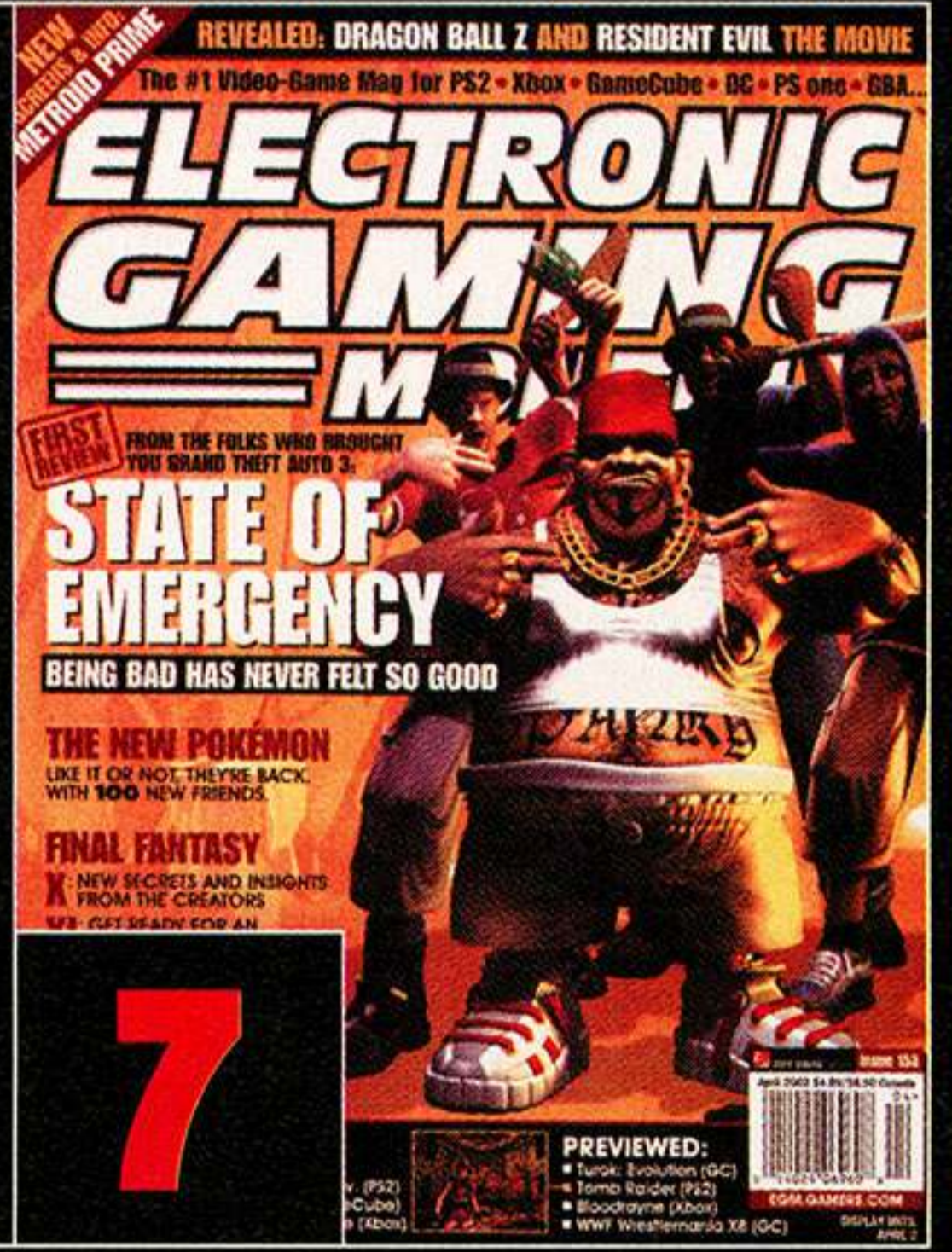
Is that... fan-letter art?
EGM #89, December 1996

Sure, having a horrible cover is always a gutsy move, but we went through the looking glass with *EGM #89*. We asked a guy to draw two covers of atrocious *Street Fighter* art, and boy did he ever come through. Then we printed them both. It was like a big "screw you!" to the whole world that we still feel a little good about. We're like, "Remember #89? Hahahaha!"



We do apologize
EGM #153, April 2002

These days at the magazine, whenever we think about doing a first-review cover, someone always says, "But what if the game really sucks like *State of Emergency*?" That could never happen, of course, unless the game in question also features a short, fat man with a tattoo on his beer belly that we can put on the cover.



7

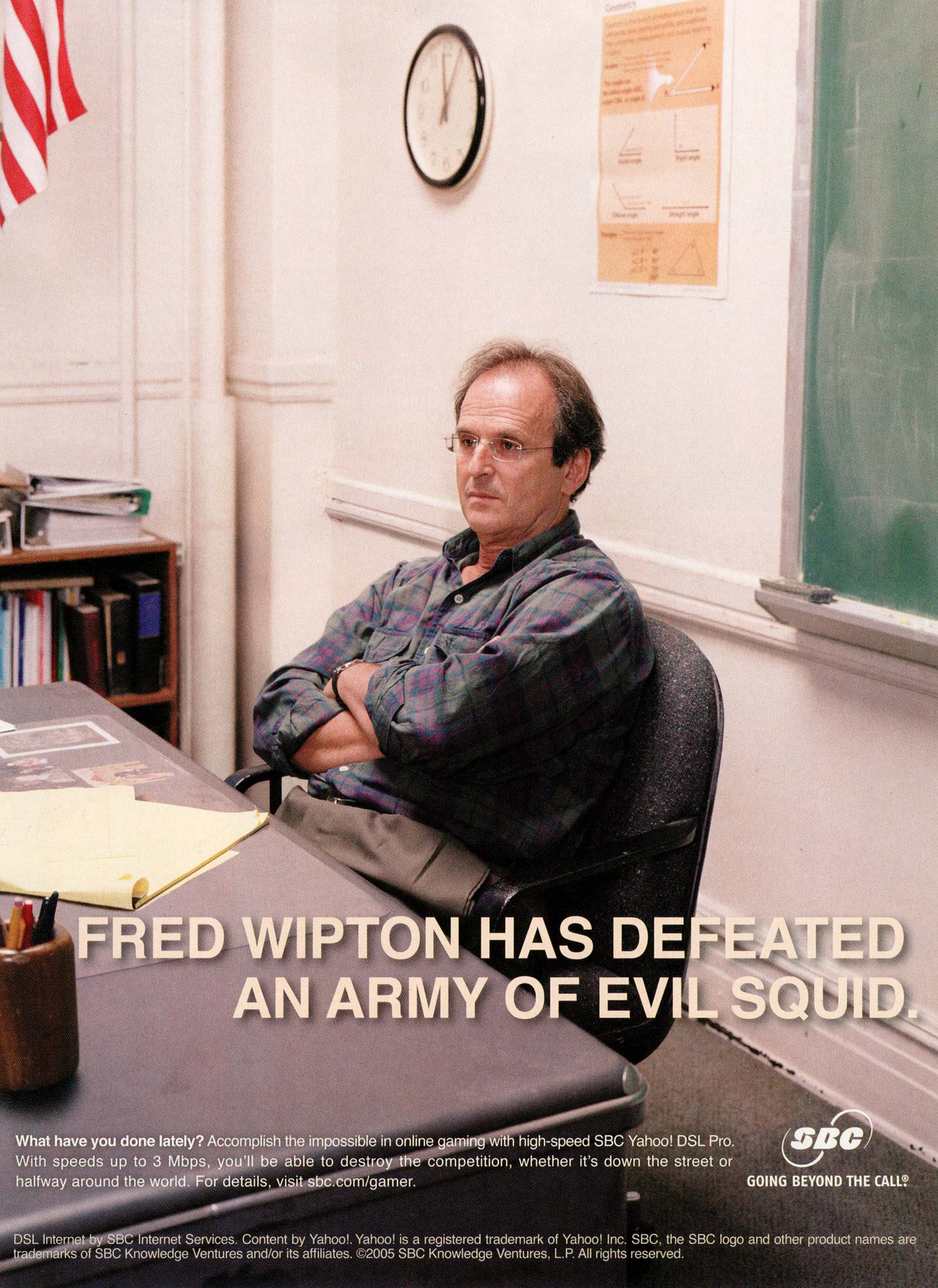
6

Is that... more fan-letter art?
EGM #70, May 1995

Try to look past the incredibly clumsy airbrush work on *Mortal Kombat 3*'s Sheeva (did our artist buy Fisher-Price's My First Airbrush *that day*?) and hone in on the word bubble. "Come and get some!" it says. Come...and...get some. And that's why we don't do word bubbles anymore. >



Clock render by Chuck Ernst



FRED WIPTON HAS DEFEATED AN ARMY OF EVIL SQUID.

What have you done lately? Accomplish the impossible in online gaming with high-speed SBC Yahoo! DSL Pro. With speeds up to 3 Mbps, you'll be able to destroy the competition, whether it's down the street or halfway around the world. For details, visit sbc.com/gamer.



GOING BEYOND THE CALL®

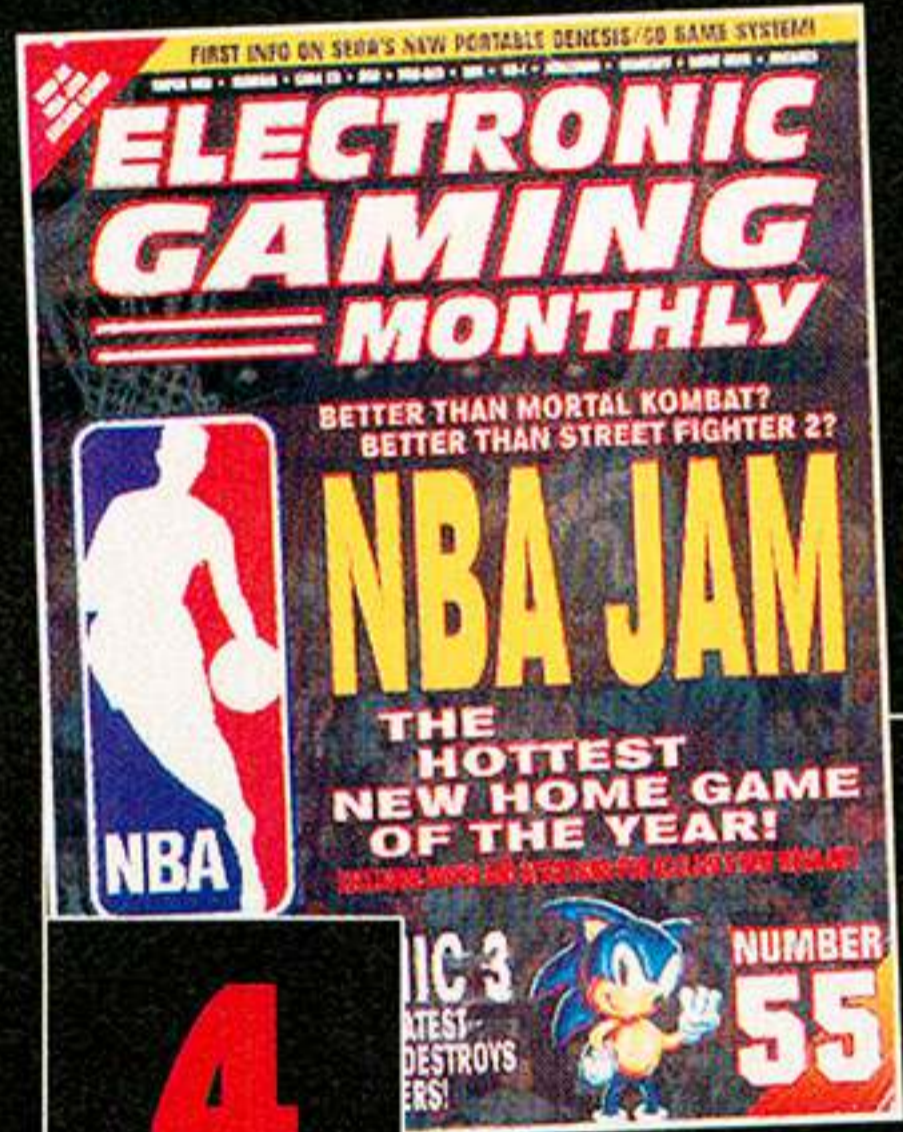
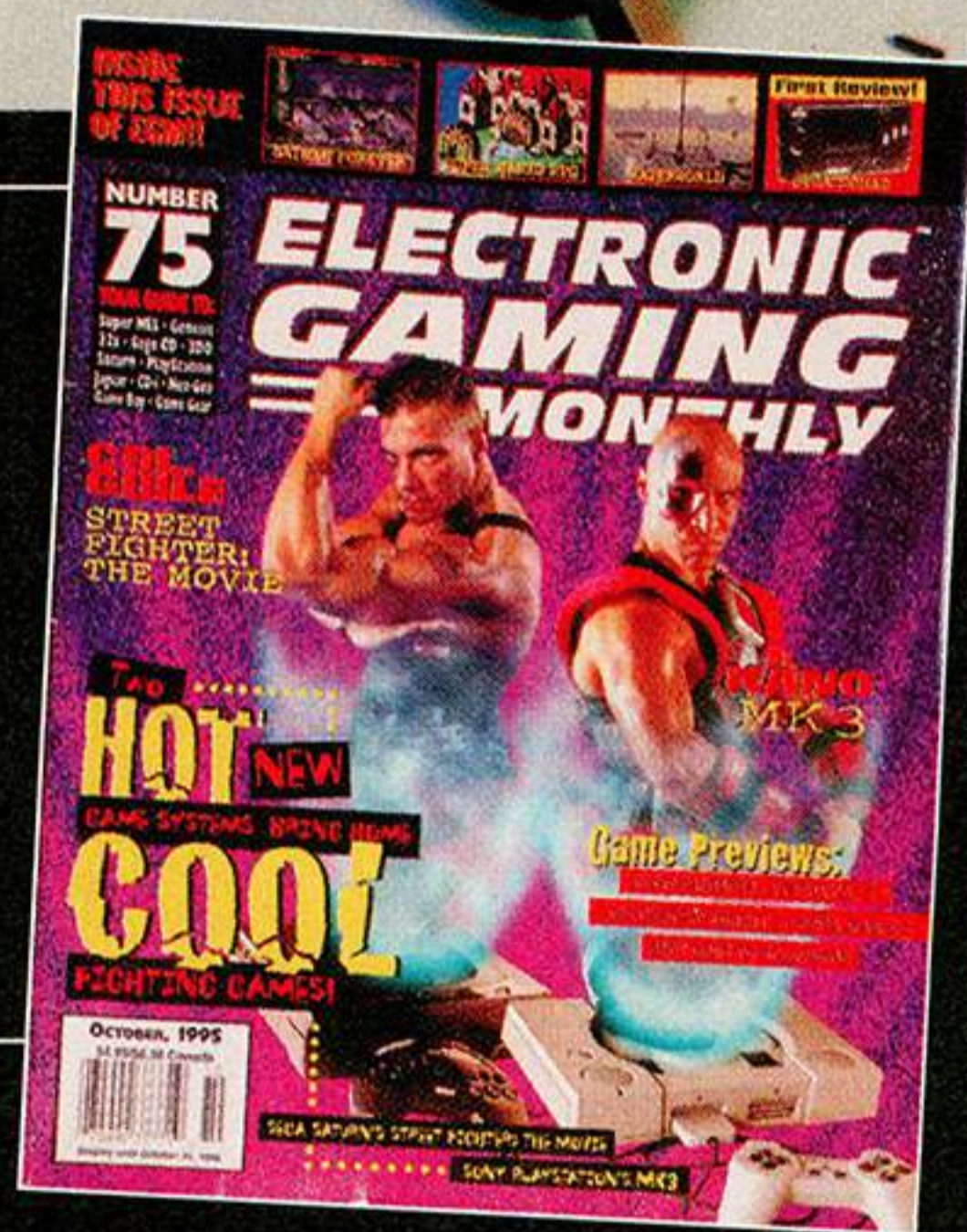
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THE TOP 10 WORST EGM COVERS (CONT.)

5

The Van Damme cover EGM #75, October 1995

It's not just that we had Jean-Claude Van Damme and that dude who played Kano in the *Mortal Kombat* movie on the cover, it's that, like two sweaty genies, they were somehow materializing out of a Sega Saturn and PlayStation. This also qualifies as one of EGM's top-10 raddest covers.



4

Special guest star: the NBA

EGM #55, February 1994
As a concept, an *NBA Jam* cover really wasn't so horrible. Slapping the NBA logo on there and then calling it a day, though... that's pretty bad.



3

Somebody could use a laxative

EGM #105, April 1998
A cover with *Tekken 3* fighters looking all constipated? It was an April Fool's joke. Yeah, that's it....

2

The woof man

EGM #53, December 1993
We saw the box art for *Eternal Champions* (Genesis) and the room was dead silent, until someone said, "That wolf man is freaking wicked! Print it! Ship it!" Another top-10 raddest covers contender.



1

Return of Bruno

EGM #23, June 1991
Bruce Willis. On the cover. For the game based on *Hudson Hawk*. A nation wept.



Honorable Mentions

EGM #175

The top 15 games of the millennium? The one we were three years into? Long story, but these things happen when you collaborate on a show with MTV.



EGM #120

Of the three WWF (now WWE) covers, Sable's was the worst. She looked like she was straight out of a David Lee Roth video.



EGM #43

Bubsy of Bubsy (Genesis/Super NES) infamy. With a word bubble that said, "Holy hairballs, I made the cover of EGM!"



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TEEN
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 Game Experience May Change
 During Online Play

This title is available for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and PSP™ (PlayStation®Portable) system.



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X-MEN LEGENDS II

RISE OF APOCALYPSE II

X-Men-Legends2.com

September 21, 2005



■ Look for the PS3 to employ *Jade Empire's* brute squad.

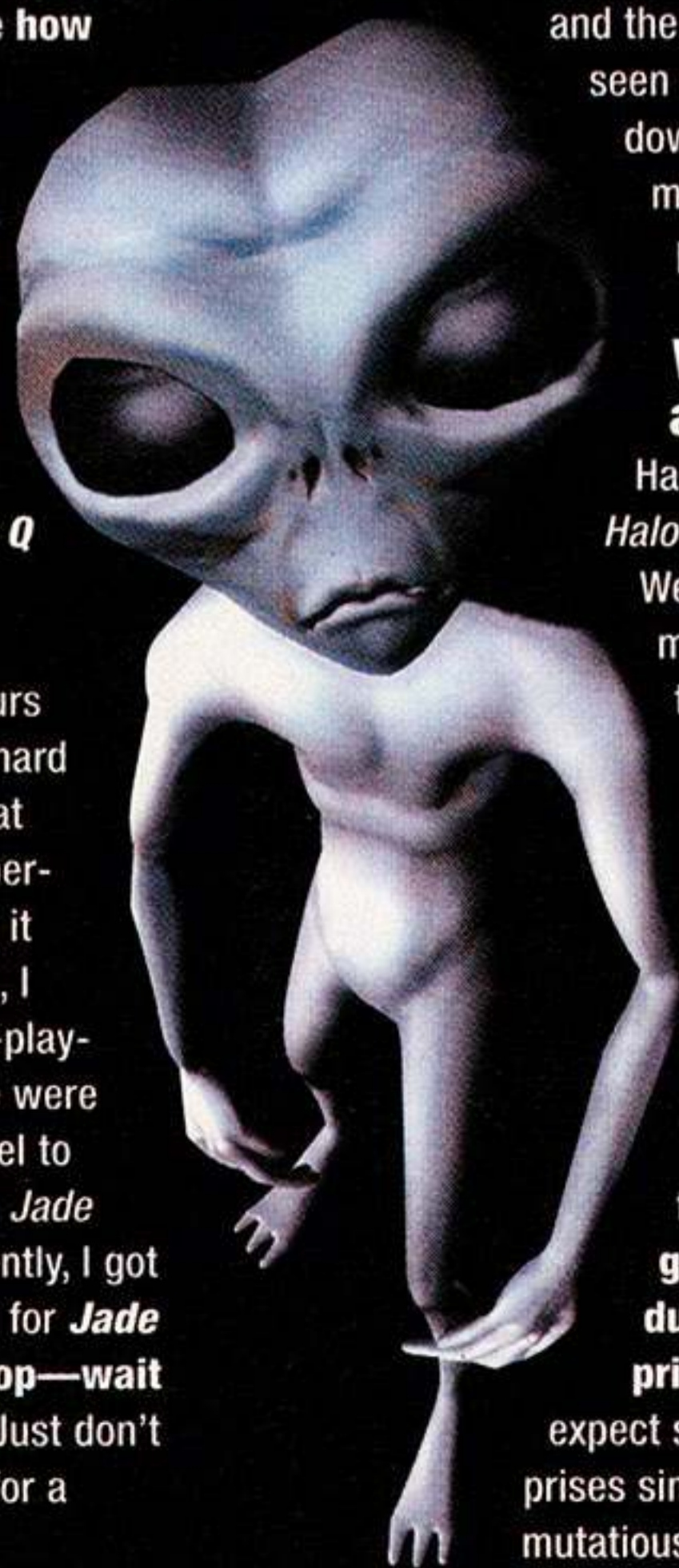
THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip so sweet it'll make your teeth ache

For me, the arrival of a new console is like having a significant other—they both break my piggy bank, but at the same time, uh...OK, I can't think of any other way that they're similar. Moving on, I'm glad the Xbox 360 will at least help keep my rumor mill full of delightful gossip for years. As always, send your e-mails to quatermann@ziffdavis.com and, if you don't mind, tell me how you plan on breaking the news to your sweetie that you need \$600 for Microsoft's next-gen system and a few games. This old man could really use the advice. —The Q

Changing teams

Every now and then, yours truly makes a mistake (hard to believe, I know). But at least I'm a big enough person to admit it. So, here it goes: A few issues back, I mentioned that the role-playing geniuses at BioWare were busy working on a sequel to their martial-arts-happy *Jade Empire* for Xbox. Apparently, I got the system wrong. Look for *Jade Empire 2 to karate chop—wait for it—PlayStation 3*. Just don't expect this action-RPG for a long while....



Boo!

Very few things freak me out, but playing a *Silent Hill* game (with its blood-drenched bunny suits) has, on occasion, sent me crying for my momma. So imagine my concern when I heard that those sick *Silent Hill* dudes are now developing an entirely new horror franchise for Xbox 360. This one should make its debut sometime early next year, and the folks who have already seen the game say it's downright scary...and I mean that in the best possible way.

When aliens attack...again

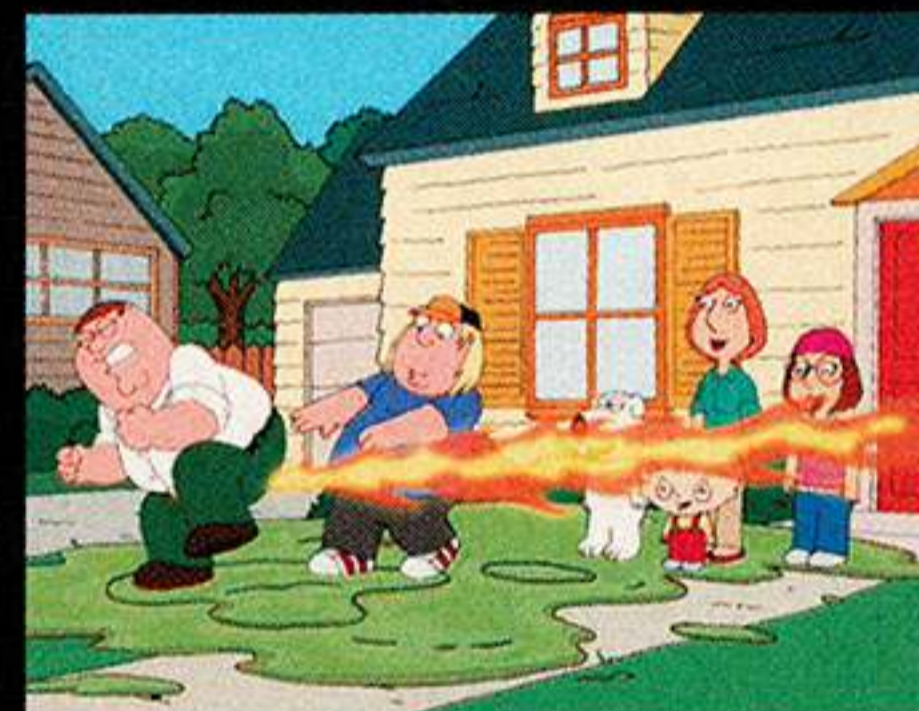
Have you played through *Halo 2* for the 50th time? Well, stop—no matter how many times you finish it, the ending will still suck. Anyway, if you're looking for a quality first-person shooter, you may want to go back and pick up *Area 51*. And do so quickly, as Midway is already prepping a follow-up for the next-gen consoles, dubbed—surprise, surprise—*Area 52*. Also, expect some big gameplay surprises similar to the first game's mutatus twist.

Online timeline

Sony may be winning the console war, but man, the company is really dragging its ass when it comes to creating an online network that's comparable to Microsoft's Xbox Live service. It seems the wait may soon be over, though, as I'm hearing that Sony will unveil its grand online plans (including user transactions, multimedia functions, and a bunch of other fancy-schmancy features) right before the Xbox 360 goes on sale this November. Now, how 'bout committing to a launch date for all this stuff, Sony?

Family matters

To all the folks who bought those *Family Guy* DVDs (which in turn, convinced the impatient suits at Fox to bring back The Q's fave animated series), I say thank



■ *Family Guy*: ready to light up your console.

you. And now it seems Sunday nights won't be the only time I'll be spending with Peter, Stewie, and the rest of the Griffons: A *Family Guy* videogame is coming out for the current crop of consoles in the first half of next year. I only hope those responsible for that trash called *The Simpsons Skateboarding* aren't behind this one.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT



■ \$400? \$500? Either way, PS3 will cost a pretty penny.

Q: Now that the Xbox 360 is coming out at \$399 (or \$299 if you go for the cheapo package), will the PlayStation 3 have a similar price point?

A: Probably. Even though rumors persist that Sony might slap a \$500 tag on its next-gen system, everyone we talk to (especially those folks who work on Wall Street) believes \$400 is a more realistic price. And as one financial contact (who wishes to remain anonymous) tells us, "The price of the PlayStation 3 will probably have a lot to do with how hot the Xbox 360 is selling at that time." 🎮

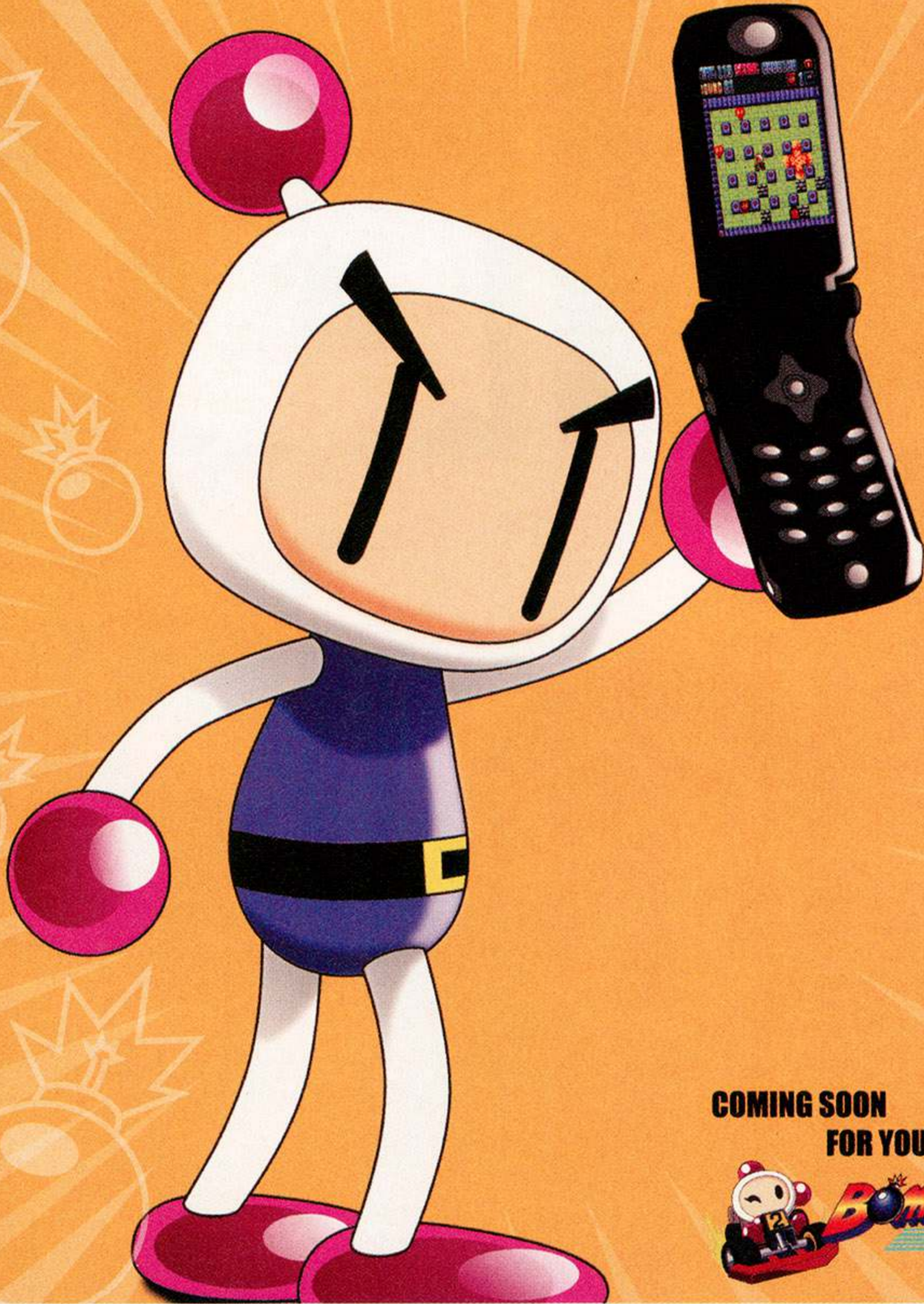


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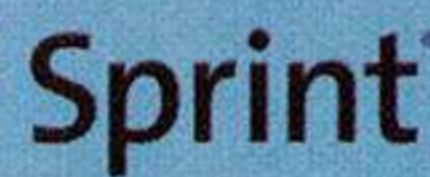
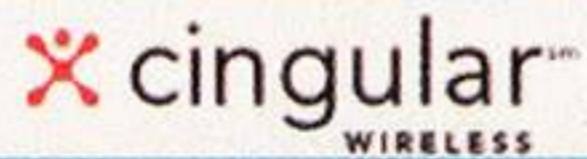
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 XBOX 360™

THE HOT 10

Ten more things for you to waste your time and/or money on

1



OSU! TATAKAE! OUENDAN

DS • Out now in Japan

This bizarre Japanese import kicks the rhythm-action genre on its ass with inventive stylus control, a sweet J-rock soundtrack, and a gleefully absurd plot. For more info, check out EGM International this issue. (Good news: We hear some U.S. publishers are interested....)



FINDING NEW USES FOR YOUR GAMECUBE

What else are you supposed to do with it now that *Zelda's* been delayed until next summer?

3

SOCOM BLOG

A lot of developers "care" about their "community," but Zipper Interactive puts its mouth is at socomblog.typepad.com.



4



VIDEO MODS

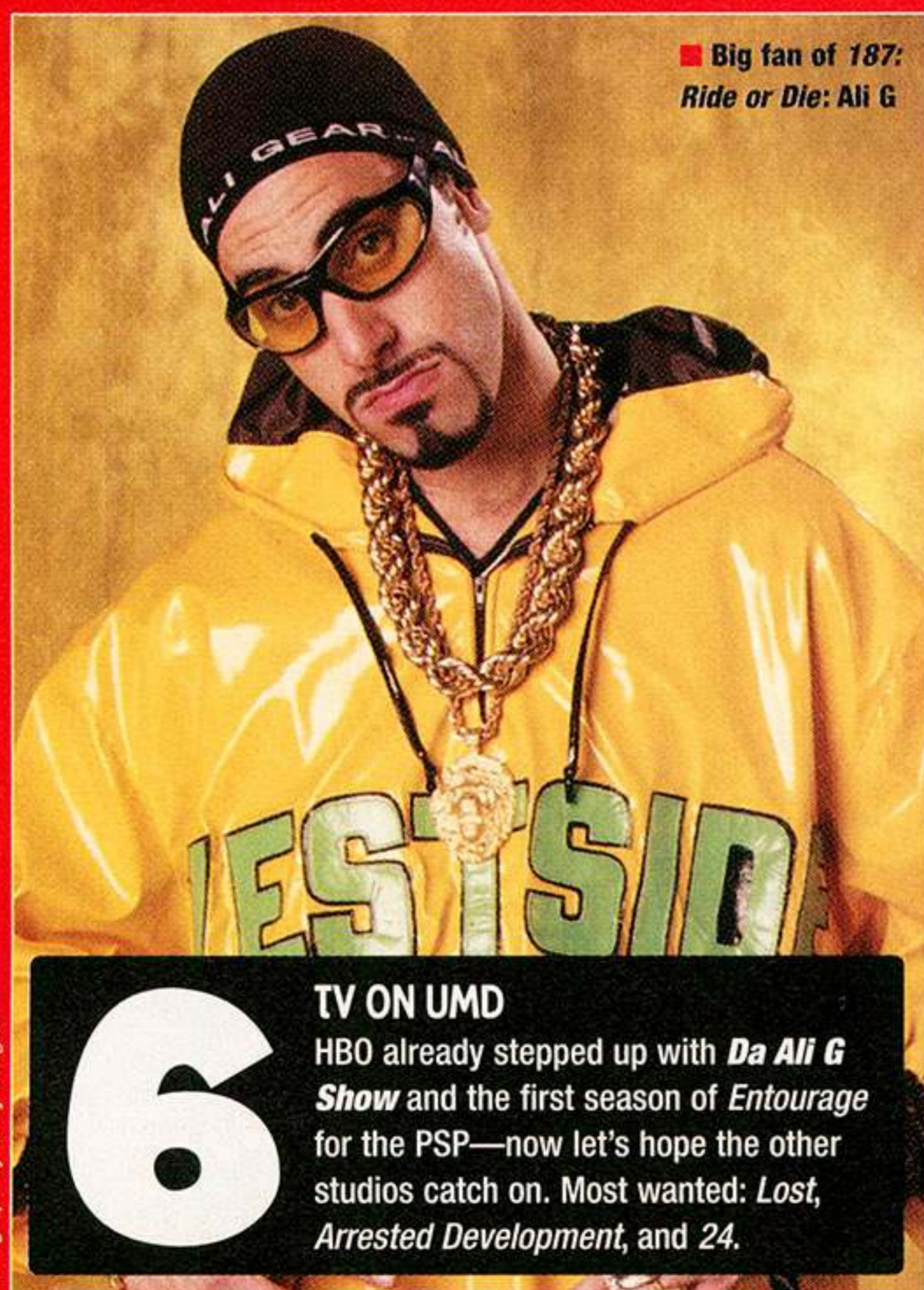
Watching videogame characters dance and sing along to "today's hottest music" on the MTV2 show is like seeing a horrible clown-car accident on the highway: **You don't know whether to laugh or cry or throw up, but you can't look away.**

5

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

XB • November 2005

Obviously built upon the *Halo* engine by an ex-*Halo* team member, this zombie actioner manages to actually...feel kind of like *Halo*! (This **despite the fact you're eating brains and unleashing massive farts.**) Don't be surprised to find yourself raging through the co-op mode with a pal later this year.



■ Big fan of 187: *Ride or Die*: Ali G

6

TV ON UMD

HBO already stepped up with *Da Ali G Show* and the first season of *Entourage* for the PSP—now let's hope the other studios catch on. Most wanted: *Lost*, *Arrested Development*, and *24*.

7

INDIGO PROPHECY

PS2/XB • Out now

Give this unique sleeper a shot.

8

THE HALO MOVIE

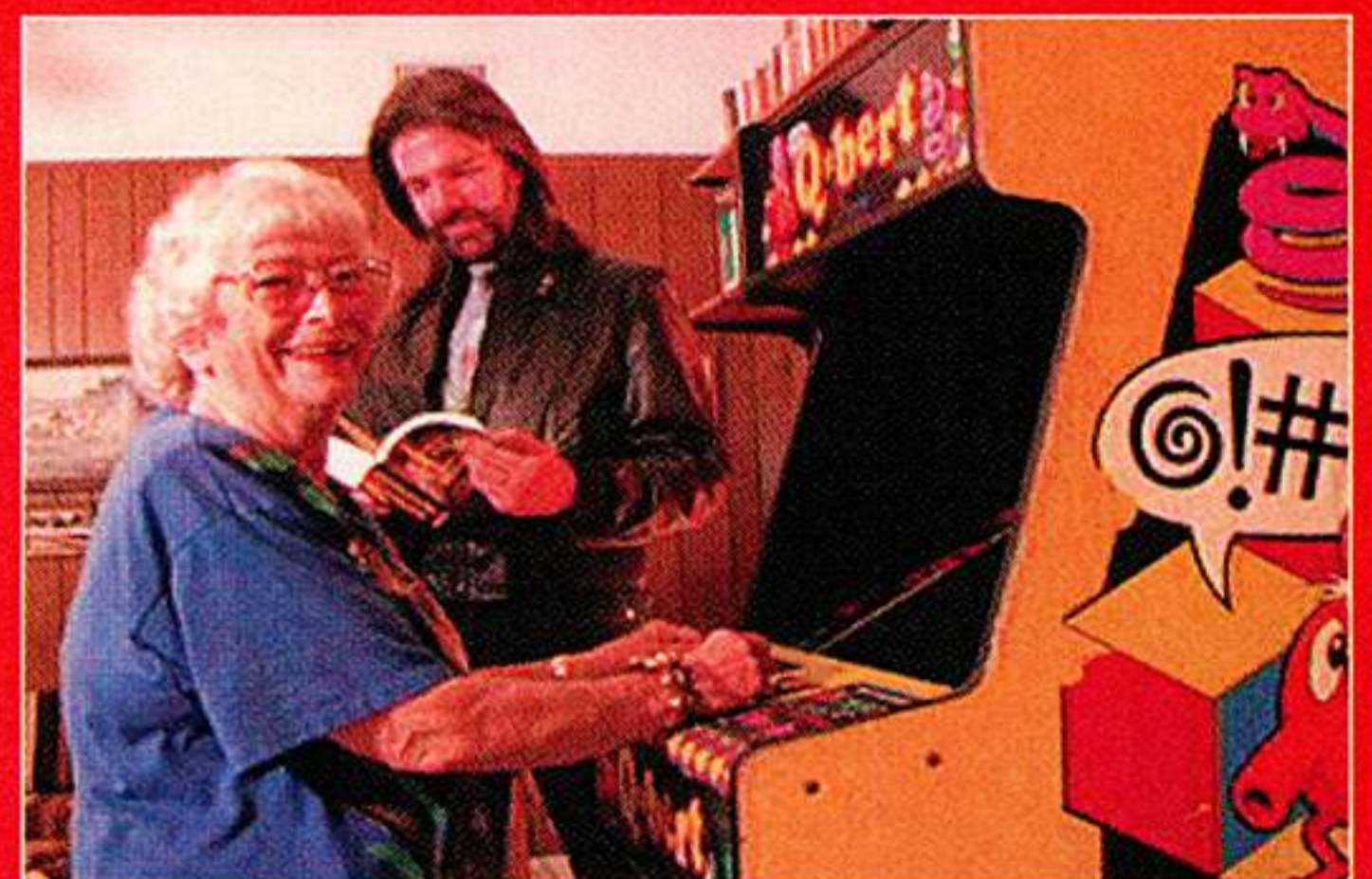
Summer 2007. Written by the *28 Days Later* guy. Overseen by Bungie. According to Hollywood insiders, it **has an ending.** So far, so good.

9

ALUCARD RETURNS

The dapper silver-haired hero of fan-favorite *Castlevania*:

Symphony of the Night (PS1) reappears after an eight-year exile as a playable character in the new *Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow* for Nintendo DS. You'll have to beat the game before unlocking his vampiric visage, though....



■ "You gotta get that look back, Doris. The eye of the tiger, man."

10

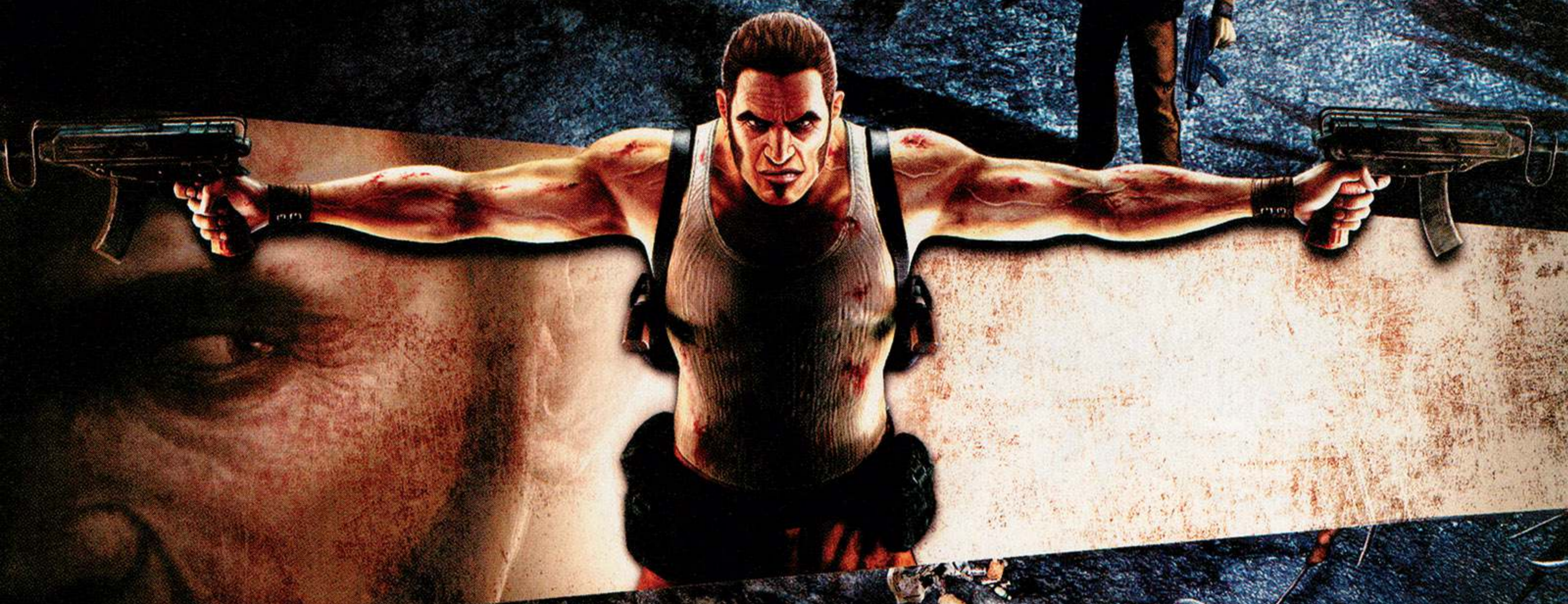
GAMING GRANDMA

Doris Self, an **80-year-old gamer**, is out to reclaim her place in the record books as the world *Q-Bert* champion and oldest videogame record holder. With hot-sauce magnate/classic-gaming Olympian Billy Mitchell as her Apollo Creed, how can she lose?

>> WICHITA STATE, YOUR DREAM HAS COME TRUE: NEXT SPRING, EA WILL RELEASE A COLLEGE BASEBALL GAME FOR PS2 AND XBOX.... >>>

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MIDWAY



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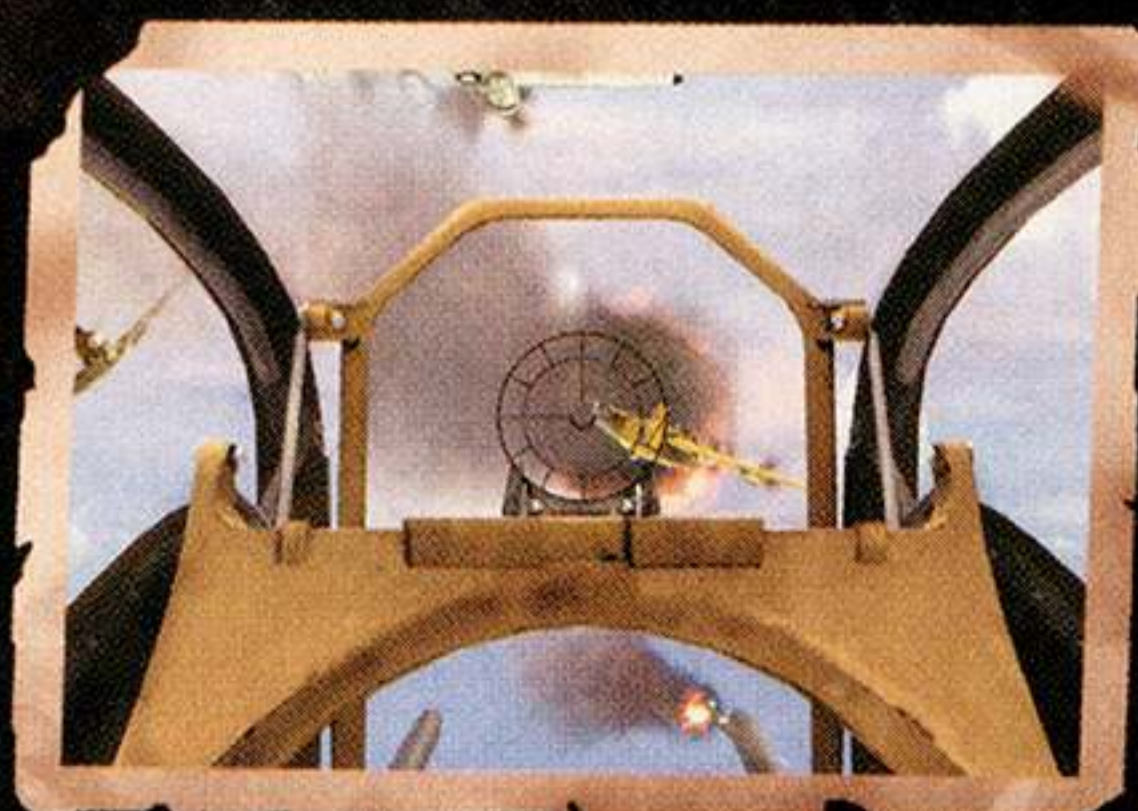
LEGENDS IN MILITARY HISTORY.” *—PlayStation World*

CALL OF DUTY 2

BIG RED ONE

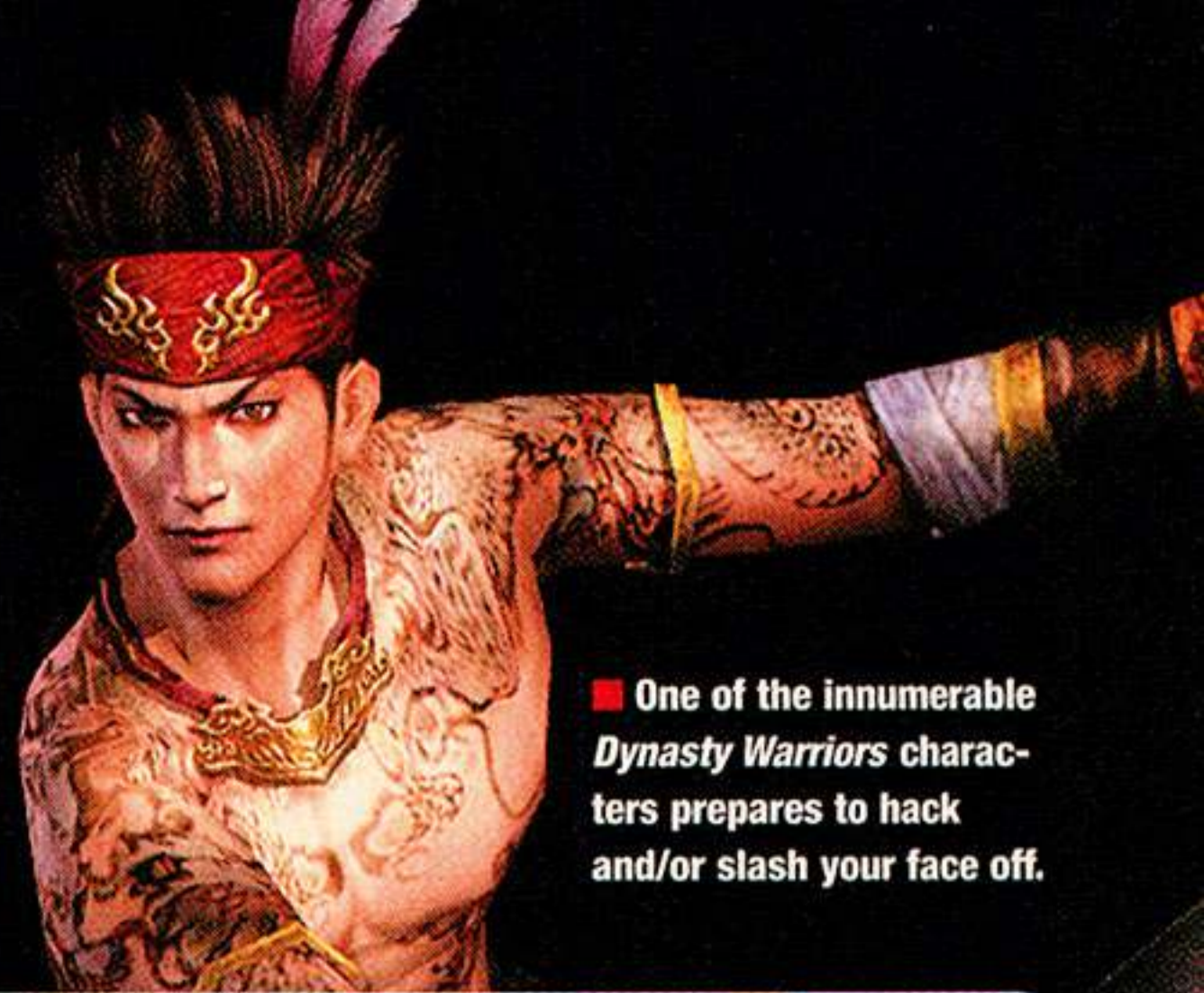
Join the Big Red One, America's most legendary infantry division, to experience the cinematic intensity and chaos of battle as never before on consoles.

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COMING SOON

We just have so many things to be thankful for



■ One of the innumerable *Dynasty Warriors* characters prepares to hack and/or slash your face off.

NOVEMBER 2005



24: The Game
2K Games • XB — If Jack loses, the terrorists win. We know you hear that all the time, but this time it's for real.



Aeon Flux
Majesco • PS2/XB — *Flux* heroine Charlize Theron leaps, shoots, and sports skin-tight latex in this movie tie-in.



Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King
Square Enix • PS2 — In Japan, this huge RPG reigns as the #1 PS2 game of all time.



Guitar Hero
Red Octane • PS2 — Put all of those hours spent watching VH1 Classic to good use with your own scorching version of "Iron Man." You shred tunes on the included guitar controller, and gameplay borrows heavily from Konami's *Guitar Freaks* arcade series.



Dynasty Warriors 5 XL
Koei • PS2 — Insatiable *DW* fans can get even more ancient Chinese family feuding with this hack-n-slash pseudosequel.



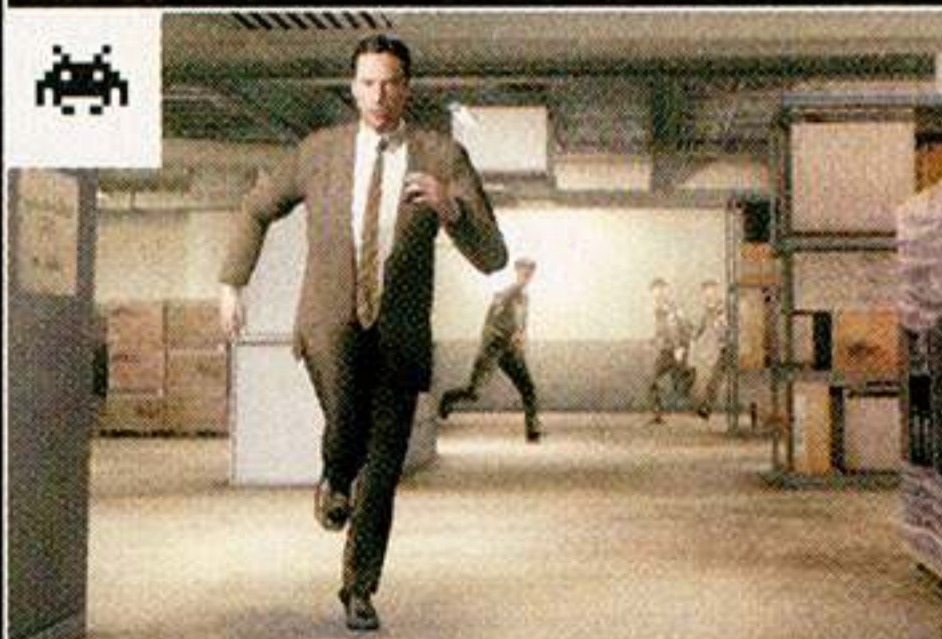
Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC — Ms. Rowling's ubiquitous boy wizard joins his pals for another *Zelda*-inspired action-adventure.



Karaoke Revolution Party
Konami • PS2/XB/GC — Here's hoping that it's a bloodless revolution. Invite some pals over, grab the mic, and rock out.



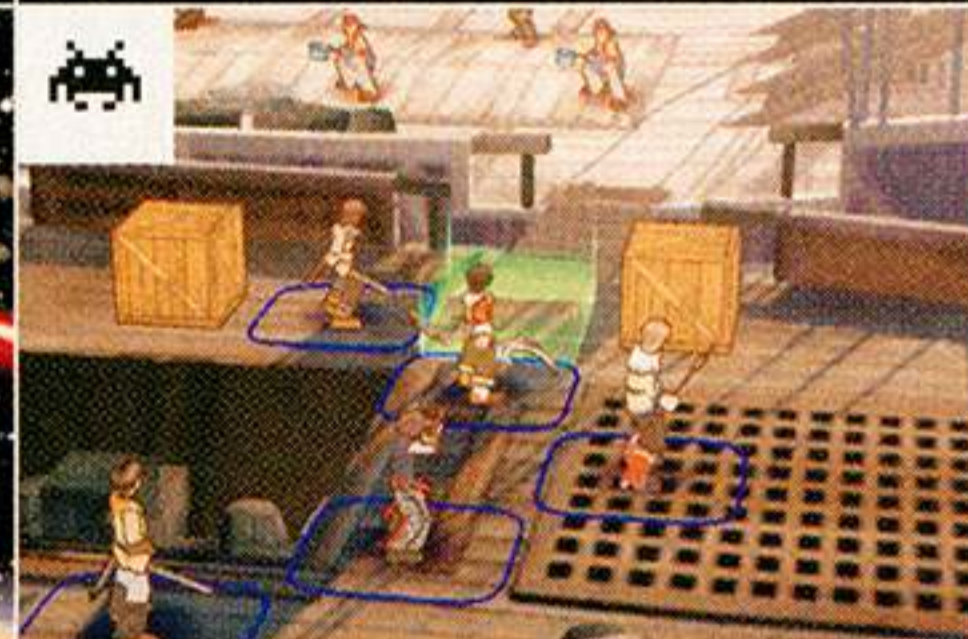
Magna Carta: Tears of Blood
Atlus • PS2 — Despite the misleading title, expect a swords-n-sorcery RPG, not a history lesson on constitutional law.



The Matrix: Path of Neo
Atari • PS2/XB — You are Mr. Whoa himself this time, and we hope there is a path that doesn't lead to two lousy sequels.



Star Wars Battlefront II
LucasArts • PS2/XB — Pass those endless hours stuck on your uncle's moisture farm with online shootin' and flyin'.



Suikoden Tactics
Konami • PS2 — All the really complex, methodical parts of RPGs put in one place to keep them safe from normal people.



Without Warning
Capcom • PS2 — Here it is. This is it. This is your warning. If you choose to play this espionage action-thriller, it's all you.

Also in November

Atomic Betty
Namco • GBA

Mario Kart DS
Nintendo • DS

Panzer Elite Action
JoWood • PS2/XB

The Sims 2
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC/PSP/DS

Crime Life: Gang Wars
Konami • XB

Mario Party 7
Nintendo • GC

Ratchet: Deadlocked
Sony CEA • PS2

Space Invaders Evolution
Rising Star • PSP

Jak X: Combat Racing
Sony CEA • PS2

Need for Speed: Most Wanted
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC/PSP/DS

Shadow the Hedgehog
Sega • PS2/XB/GC

WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2006
THQ • PS2



■ *NFS: Most Wanted* next-gen booty.

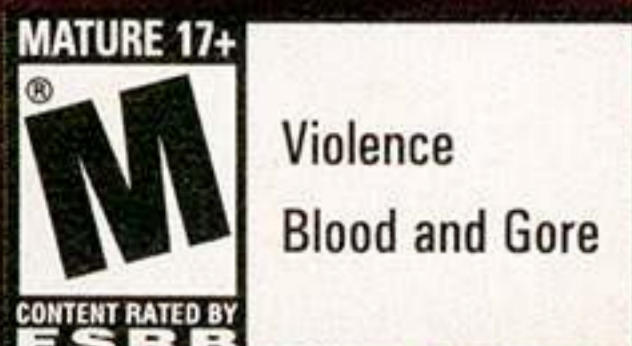
>> A VAGUELY MODERNIZED REMAKE OF MIDWAY'S MONSTER PUNCH-A-THON RAMPAGE WILL HIT PS2 AND GC NEXT SPRING... >>

IT'S IN THE DARKEST DAYS
WHEN A LEADER MUST STEP INTO THE LIGHT.

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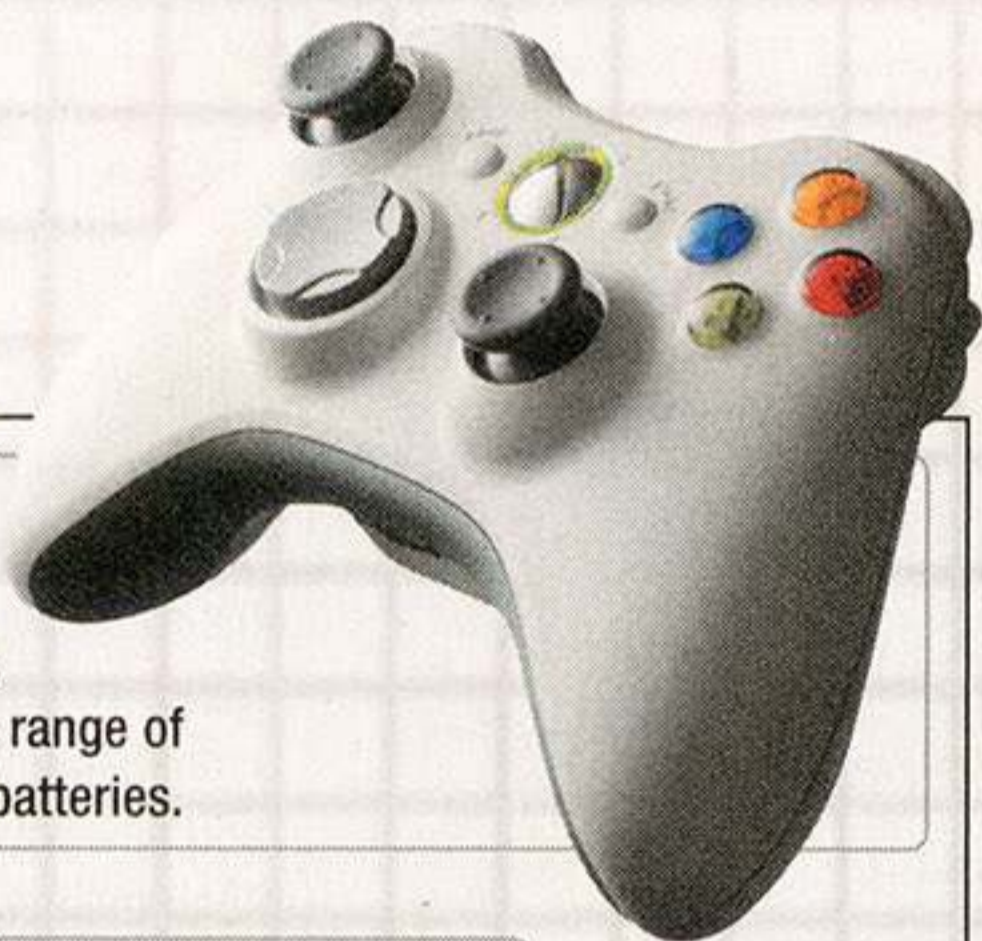
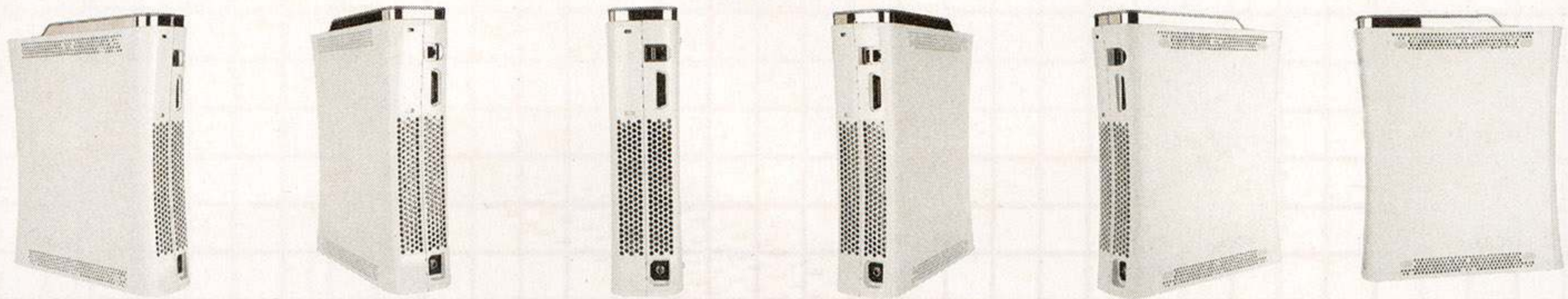


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DUNGEON SIEGE
II





• **The Wireless Controller (sold separately for \$50)**—Instead of the wired pad packed in the core system, you get this wireless variety, which has a range of 30 feet and runs for 30 hours on two AA batteries.

• **Component HD AV Cable (sold separately for \$40)**—Got an HDTV (or HD-ready monitor)? Then you'll need this cable—which also connects to standard composite inputs—to play your games in dazzling high-res 720p mode. If your television doesn't support 720p (and many older HDTVs don't), the Xbox 360's video scaler will adapt the signal to run in your tube's 1080i mode.

• **Headset (sold separately for \$20)**—You won't need this to chat online (you can use your old Xbox headset or any cell-phone headset, or even a USB keyboard if you don't feel like talking), but this comfy model includes a mute button and volume control.

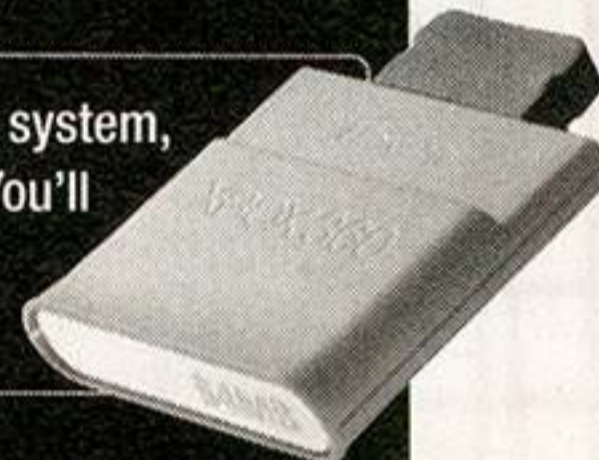
• **The Detachable 20GB Hard Drive (sold separately for \$100)**—This shiny little gizmo—which clips onto the top of your 360 and holds 320 times more data than a memory card—is a must-own for serious Xbox Live users who plan on downloading lots of content. You'll need it to play original Xbox 1 games in the 360's backward-compatibility mode. Massively multiplayer online games like *Final Fantasy XI* require the drive. You'll need it to update games that end up requiring patches. Some titles, such as launch game *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, make optional use of the drive for faster load times. Oh yeah—it also comes preloaded with puzzle Xbox Live Arcade game *Hexic HD* (see page 116), several bonus background themes for your Xbox 360 dashboard, and other undisclosed goodies, including possible demos and music. You can plug USB mass-storage devices into the 360, but only for music- and picture-streaming purposes.



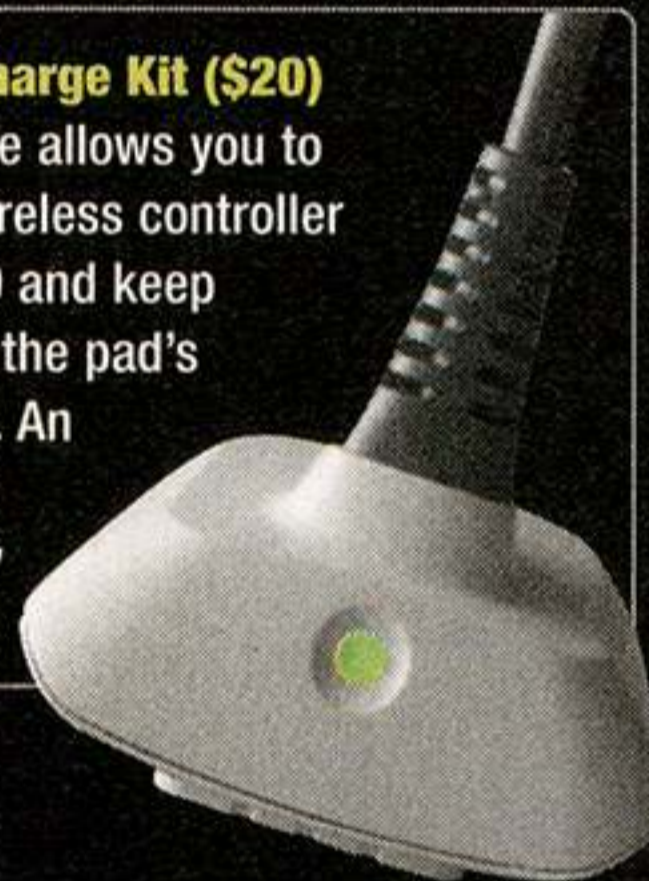
BELLS/WHISTLES

None of this stuff comes with either unit, but you might want some of it anyway, because people will think you're cooler, and your self-worth and identity depends upon their approval. (Oh, and a few things here save batteries.)

• **Memory Card (\$40)**—If you didn't get the hard drive with your system, you'll want this 64MB gizmo to save games or access Xbox Live. You'll need a memory card if you buy the core package, so why not just spend \$60 more for the premium hard-drive package?



• **Play and Charge Kit (\$20)** This USB cable allows you to charge the wireless controller from your 360 and keep playing when the pad's battery is low. An onscreen icon shows battery strength.

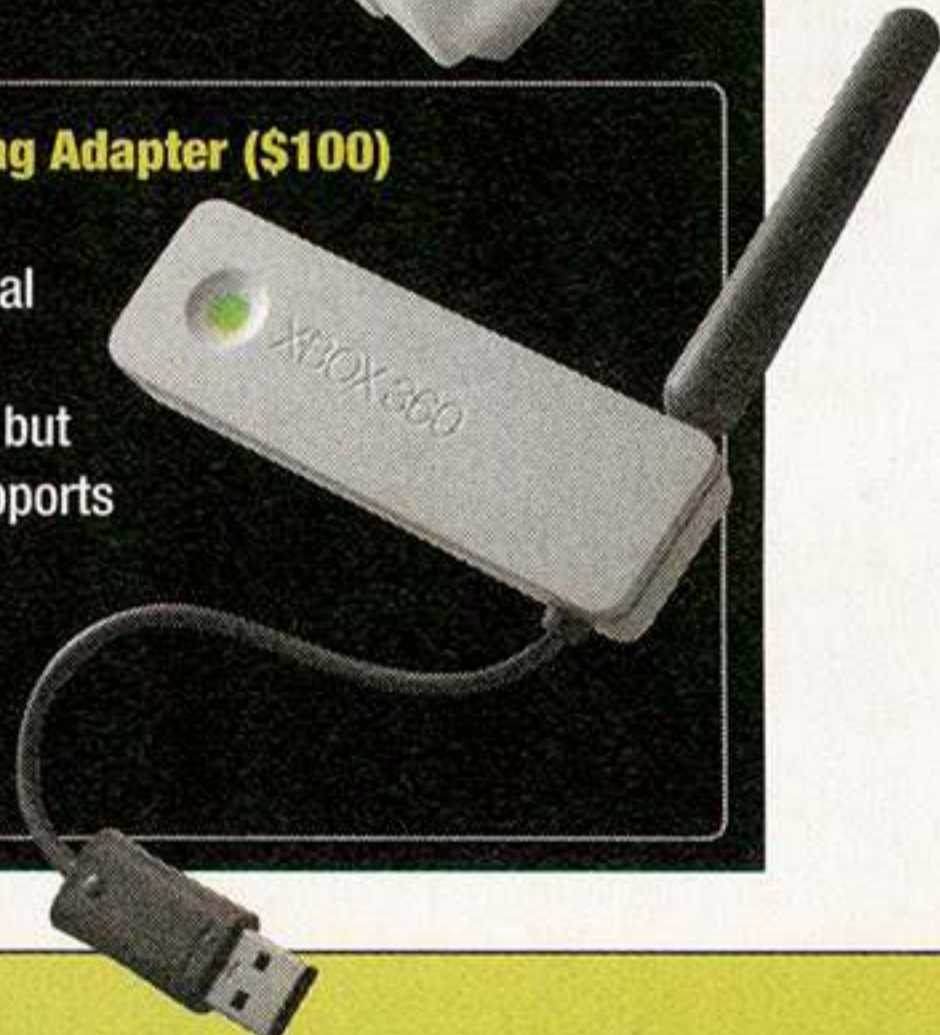


• **Rechargeable Battery Pack (\$12)**—An extra battery for the wireless pad so that you'll always have enough juice to stay wire free.



• **S-Video AV Cable (\$30)**—Gamers who've stepped up to televisions that support sharp S-Video signals but not HDTV-ready component inputs will need this cable.

• **Wireless Networking Adapter (\$100)** Bought the wireless adapter for your original Xbox? Good news: You can use it for the 360, but this sexier adapter supports newer protocols more suited to streaming music and high-def video from Xbox Live.



Taking it home

Microsoft wasn't always dead set on releasing a cheaper, hard-drive-free 360 package. When we first saw the Xbox 360 earlier this year, company reps assured us the drive would be packed in. They even played with the idea of releasing one package with the drive for \$350 and being done with it. But in the end, says J Allard, corporate vice president for Xbox, they wanted to offer gamers a choice. "We need to get more gamers," he says, "and part of that is going to be on the low end, with the more price-conscious consumer who

isn't going to want [to go online], who isn't going to want to download a bunch of stuff. They're going to want it, frankly, because it plays movies and music and games, and they're only going to buy five games, and they're not the type of gamer who will ever read *EGM*."

Hey, no reason to get personal. And while Microsoft hopes its pricing options will grow the gaming market (the company is shooting to sell 10 million 360s worldwide by the time the competition launches next year), some gamemakers don't appreciate the effort. "The Xbox

360 doesn't make my life any better," says Gabe Newell, managing director of *Half-Life* creator Valve, "and, in fact, it makes it a lot worse.... You're telling me I can't rely on the hard drive?"

Other developers are rolling with the punch. "We've known that [it] wouldn't have a hard drive since day one," says Todd Howard, executive producer of launch-day role-playing epic *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. "We knew that announcement was coming. I think every person was like, 'Oh my God—what does that mean for *Oblivion*?'"

It meant something that should give ▶

Xbox 360 Do's and Don'ts

Do: Sign up to Microsoft Passport (www.passport.net) and link your Xbox 1 Gamertag to your Passport account. That'll make it easier to transfer your old account to the Xbox 360 (just enter your Passport and Gamertag into the console and you're done). You don't have to sign up this way—it just eliminates a few steps from the process.



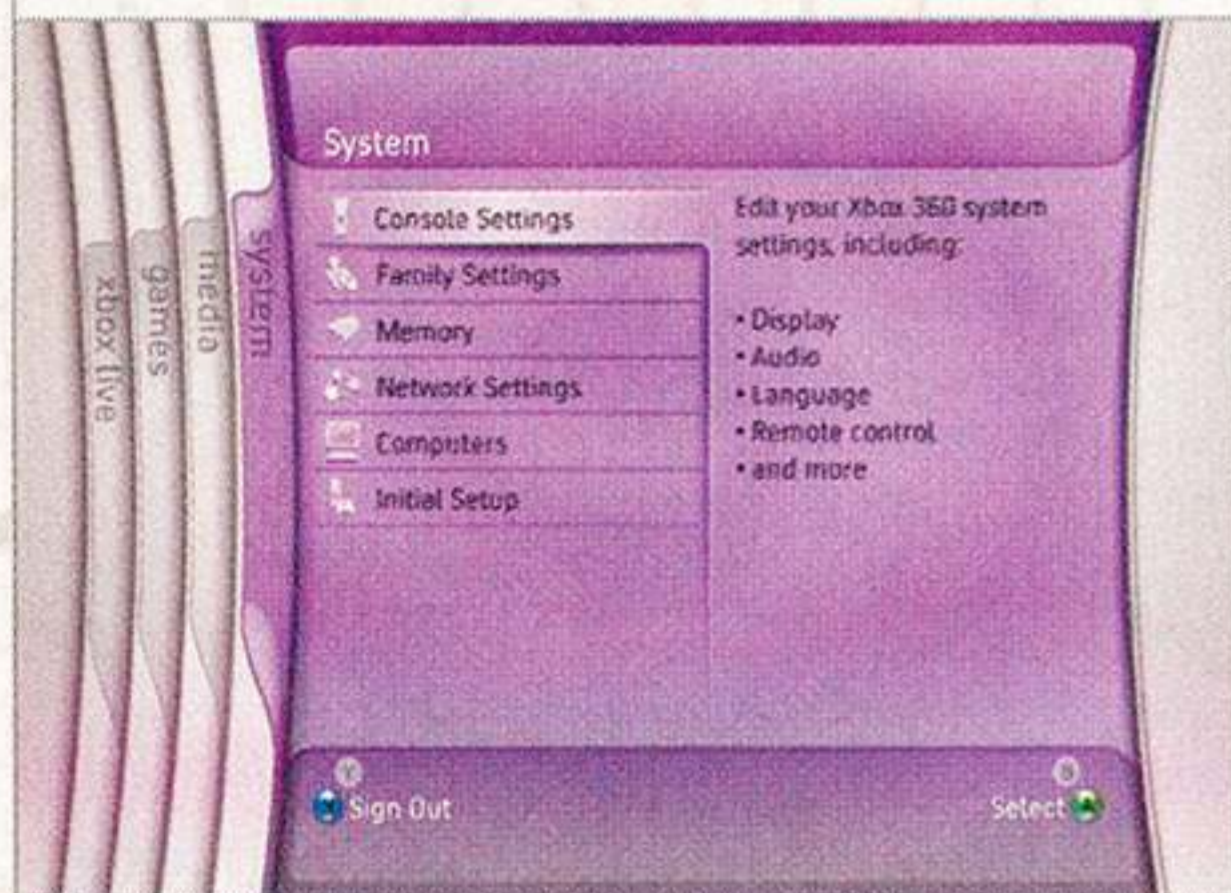
XBOX 360: you turn me on

A six-bladed guide to what you'll see when you switch on your 360...

You early adopters love the smell of shrink-wrap and Styrofoam first thing in the morning. Smells like... technology. And the only thing better than that new-console stank is plugging the thing in and watching it hum to life. Switch on the 360 without a game and you'll find a dashboard composed of six pages—called blades (eat that, Krull!)—that let you tweak every aspect of the system. Here's what does what...

System Blade

Let's get the boring one out of the way first. Here's where you'll tweak all your console's settings, from its high-def output (480p to 1080i) to memory-card and hard-drive management to ratings restrictions for the kid gamers in the house (such as password protection for Mature-rated games and R-rated flicks). The System blade comes with a network troubleshooter to walk you through tricky Internet connections. Download and run a special program called *Windows Media Connect* for your Windows XP-powered PC and it'll let you use a USB flash device to transfer all your network settings to your 360. Fear not, technophobes: Your 360 will give you instructions on how to do this.



Games Blade

The first blade you see at power-up if you're not connected to Xbox Live, the Games page gives you easy access to Xbox Live Arcade games (such as *Hexic HD*, which is included on the hard drive), plus trailers and demos downloaded to your 360. Your profile will even store common game preferences—such as an inverted control axis for first-person shooters, difficulty options, transmission settings in racing games, etc.—so you don't have to tweak them in each new game.

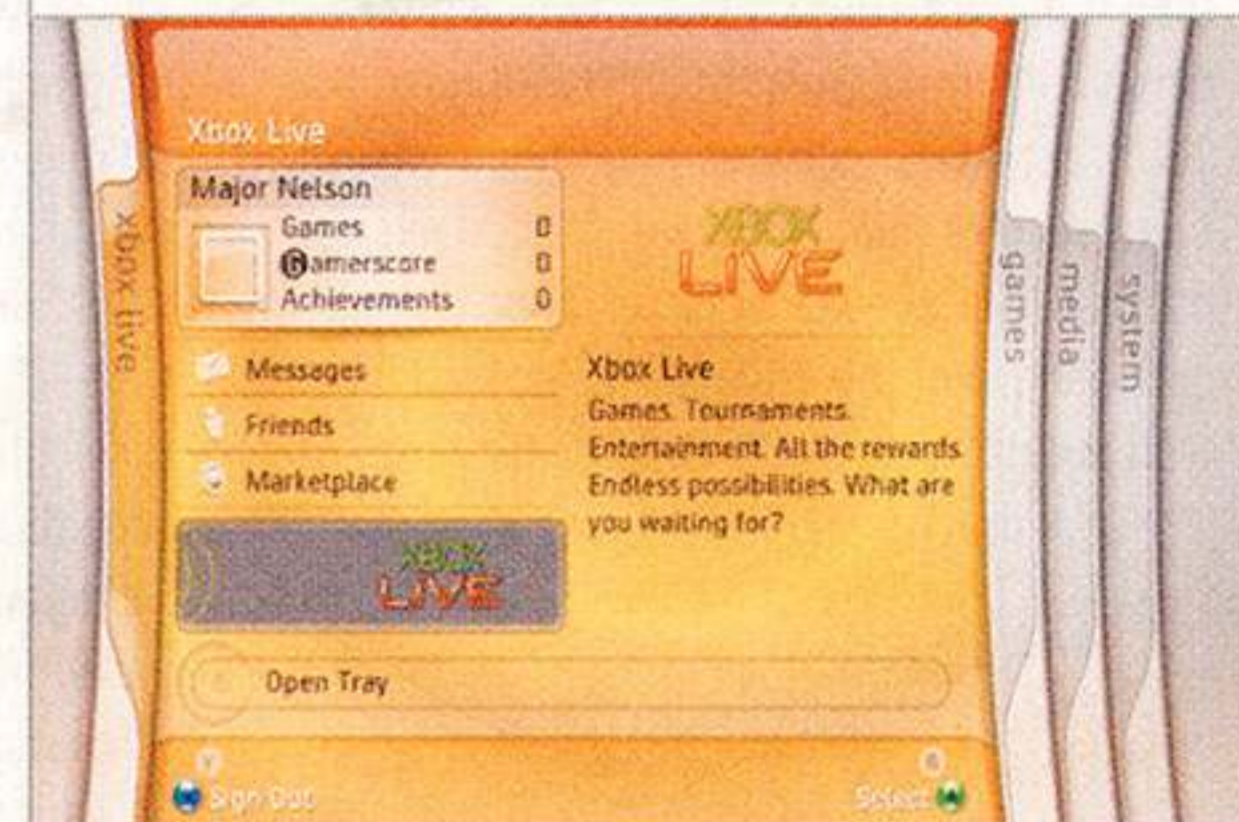
The Games blade also packs a history of all titles you've played on your system and your achievements for each. Think of these achievements as trophies for meeting specific objectives in Xbox 360 titles. Beat *Perfect Dark Zero* on the Perfect difficulty, for instance, and you'll earn an achievement icon visible to everyone who checks your profile on Xbox Live. All 360 titles—online or not—are required to have at least five achievements, with a maximum of 50.



The Xbox Live Arcade blade

Xbox Live Blade

If your system is hooked online (even if you're using the free Silver membership that comes with the 360), it'll start on this blade—your go-to page for friends management and communication. From here, you can add new friends, initiate voice chat with them, or send them voice or text messages. And see that Gamerscore, currently at zilch? (Major Nelson here clearly has some work to do.) That score rises as you complete achievements in all your Xbox games, even offline ones. Although privacy settings let you hide your achievements and the list of games you own (no point advertising that you play *Yourself! Fitness 360*), your Gamerscore is always visible to everyone on Xbox Live, ensuring healthy one-upsmanship and giving an at-a-glance gander at how hardcore a potential opponent might be. "If you go into someone's profile and they've got 2,800 points and have only played three games," says Xbox Live Group Program Manager Jerry Johnson, "that's someone who's serious about playing games in depth. If somebody's got 2,800 points but has played 40 games, you can tell they don't spend a lot of time with each title."



(continued on pg. 78)

► the message-board naysayers some hope. Although *Oblivion* will work just fine without the hard drive, the game will detect its presence and use it to speed up load times. Other developers, too, are pressing ahead with plans to support the drive despite knowing not every 360 owner will have it. Massively multiplayer role-playing game *Final Fantasy XI*, due next spring, will require the drive. And you'll need it to play Xbox 1 games in the system's backward-compatibility mode. Microsoft, in fact, is convinced that the deluxe, hard-drive-equipped package will sell much better

than the core version anyway. "Up to 80 percent of the systems sold will be at the higher price point," says one industry analyst. "I hear some retailers don't even want the [\$300] package."

And, really, spending the extra \$100 for the deluxe system is a no-brainer. You'd need to spring for a \$40 memory card to save games or go on Xbox Live if you got the cheaper system anyway. And anyone planning to take full advantage of even the free, basic Silver level of the Xbox Live broadband-only online-gaming service will want a hard drive in order to store downloadable demos,

trailers, skins, game-updating patches, and other freebies. "My belief is that if you don't have the hard drive, you won't be on Xbox Live," says Moore. "I think \$399 is a great price point for what you get. \$299—I don't know why you'd buy that if you're a hardcore gamer."

In the end, despite developer and gamer gripes, analysts figure Microsoft's choose-your-own-package approach is a smooth move. "I think that the two-price strategy is intended to allow Microsoft to claim that it didn't raise the price from generation to gen-

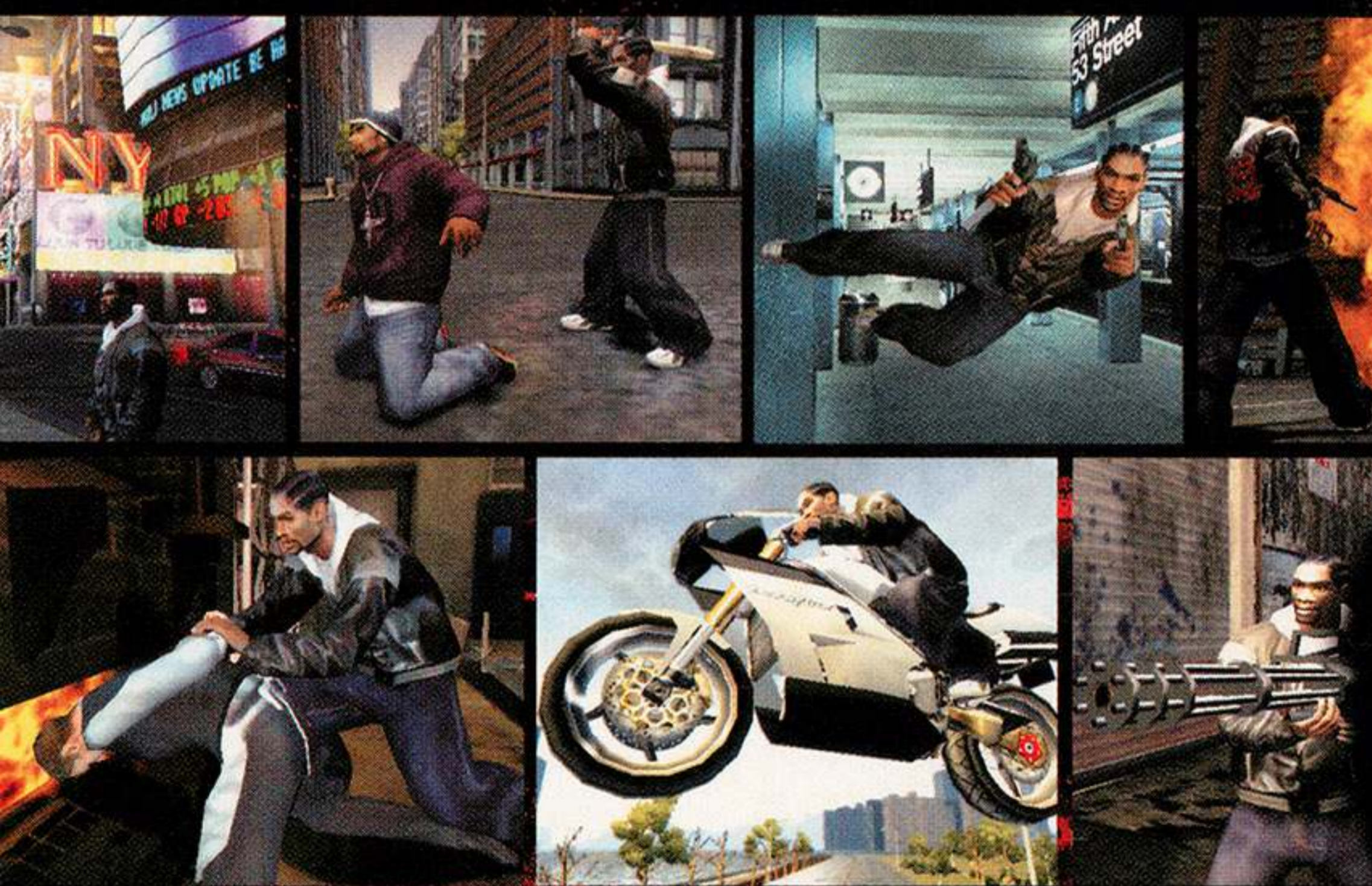
Xbox 360 Do's and Don'ts

Don't: Buy any more songs from Apple's iTunes if you plan to stream them onto your Xbox 360—the console won't recognize music purchased from that service. If you use iTunes, you're better off buying CDs and ripping them to your PC. Microsoft is offering a free downloadable codec that lets the 360 play CDs ripped to iTunes.



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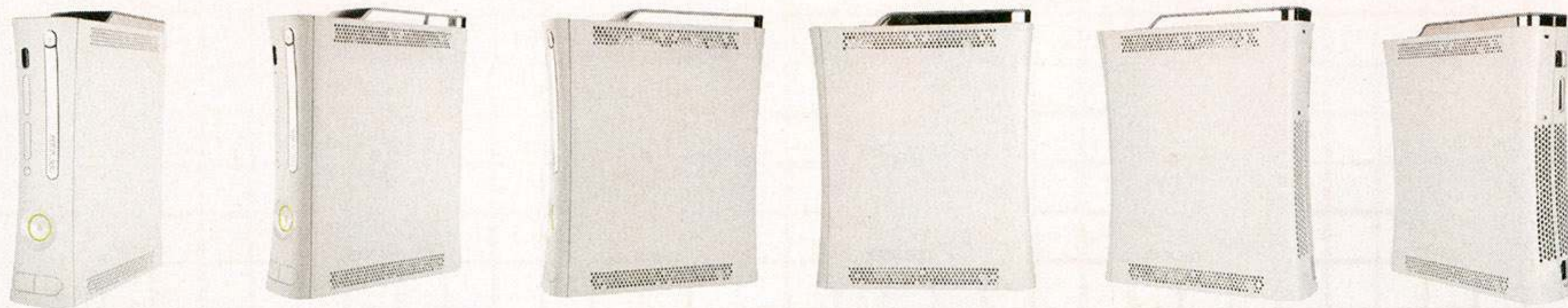
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PlayStation 2



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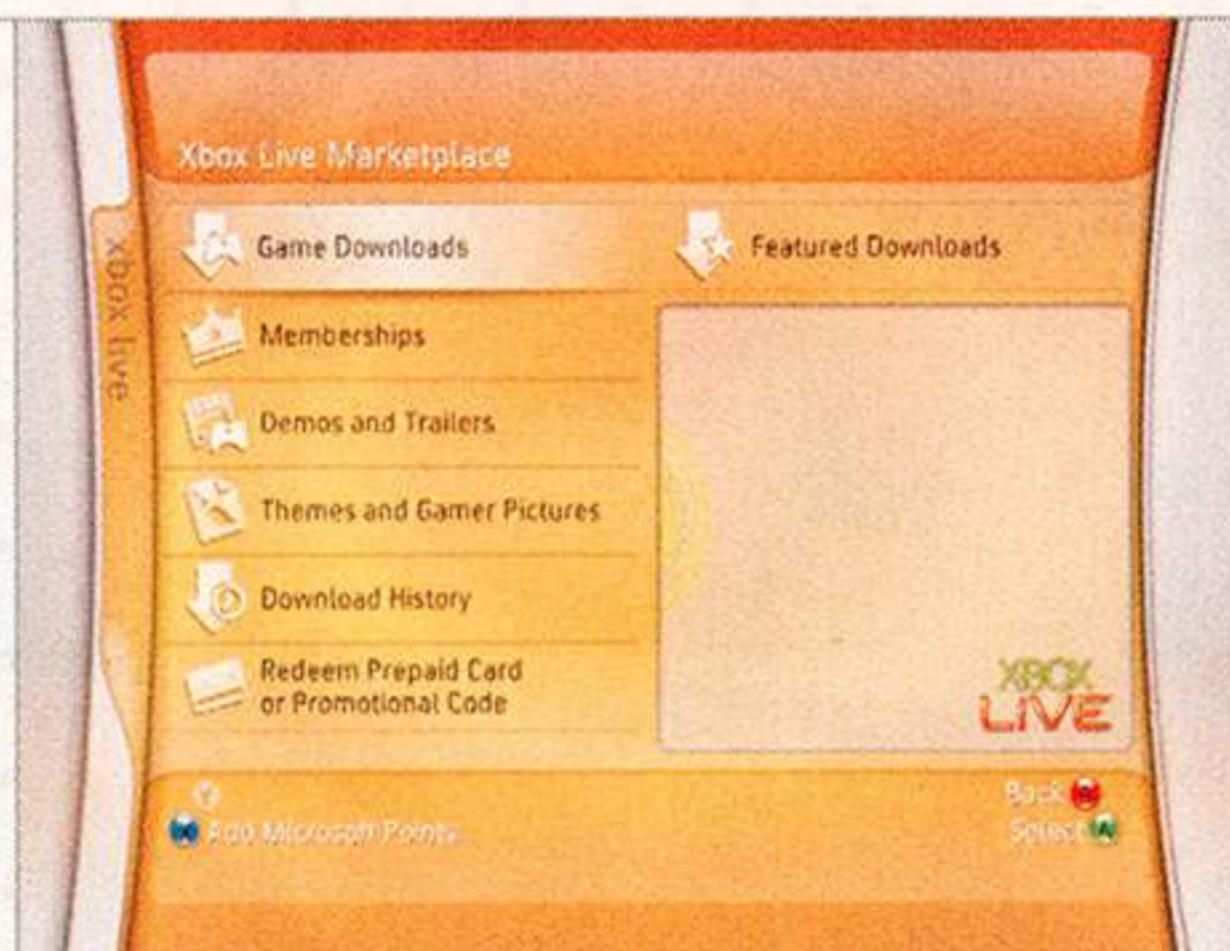


XBOX 360: you turn me on (cont.)

Marketplace Blade

Access this online store through the Xbox Live blade and you can browse content—demos, trailers, downloadable levels and characters, etc.—for every game on the system. “You don’t have to have a game to see its content,” says Johnson. “This is like a storefront that shows everything available in Xbox Live.” Enter the Marketplace through an Xbox 360 game, and you’ll find goodies related to that specific title. The Marketplace also lets you manage Xbox Live account info (you can upgrade to the Gold level of service, for instance) or accounts for subscription-based massively multiplayer online role-playing games (which won’t require the Gold service in addition to their monthly fees).

Eventually, the Marketplace will become a cottage industry for player-made content (custom auto paint jobs, home-made courses, etc.). Microsoft is still figuring out the logistics. “You have to realize, the ratings boards like the ESRB put a wrench into that stuff,” says Microsoft VP J Allard. “I mean, are we going to have to rate a user-made tattoo?”



The Xbox Gamer Guide

The final dashboard page—and the one you’ll likely see the most—is the Gamer Guide, which combines the functions of several blades and superimposes itself over whatever game you’re playing when you jab the glowing Guide button on your 360 controller (answering incoming chat requests with the Guide button also pops up the Gamer Guide and initiates communication). The Guide gives you quick access to your message inbox, lets you see which friends and recent players are online (including the games they’re currently playing, right down to what levels they’re on—info you can hide with privacy settings), offers customization options for your dashboard theme and Gamer Picture avatar (the little pic you pick as your Xbox Live avatar), and lets you browse your music library. The Guide also shows your Gamer Card, which leads us to the numero uno reason you should buy an Xbox 360 on day one. Go ahead and turn the page.

Media Blade

Here’s where you’ll access the system’s beyond-gaming bonus features, which include the ability to replace soundtracks with your own music in any game (finally, you can pump up role-playing adventures with Vanilla Ice tunes), watch slide shows of your personal photos, or stream high-def video from your computer (a feature that works only with Media Center PCs, unfortunately).

You have myriad methods to get all this stuff to your 360. Using a USB cable, you can simply plug portable music players (including Apple’s iPod and Sony’s PSP) into the 360 and voilà—up pop your tunes neatly divided into their playlists. (Note that you’ll need to download a free codec to your 360 to listen to iTunes ripped from CD in the AAC format. You’ll find the codec in the Marketplace on the day the system launches.) Or you can insert music CDs directly into the 360 and rip them to the system’s optional hard drive. The 360 will go online and retrieve song and album data.

Loading photos is just as easy: You can insert a CD filled with JPG images, plug in your digital camera via USB, or access your PC’s pictures via your home network. (You’ll need to download the free *Windows Media Connect* program onto your PC before your 360 can access it. The Media blade will give you the Web URL for the program.) The point of all this digital-data convergence (besides making a nice blurb on the console’s box): to turn Xbox 360 into your home’s mission control for all multimedia content. “Our consoles are connected to typically the best television in the house and the best stereo in the house,” says Greg Gibson, director of Xbox console development. “Get your content to it however you want, and we’ll give you the best output.”



■ Hitting the silver button (above) brings up this (below):



eration [the original Xbox sold for the same amount as the 360 core system],” says Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter. “They are interested in demonstrating a pricing advantage over Sony, and it’s pretty clear that [the PlayStation 3] will price at \$400 or higher.”

Trying it on

So let’s pretend you get your hands on an Xbox 360 on launch day. Want games with that? Moore says to expect between 25 and 40 for the system by the end of the year. At the same time, he says, “there’s no benefit to having 40 titles on

day one. They get lost. They get stale on the shelf very quickly.” Our own math gives a clearer picture. We’ve tracked 20 games ready for the “launch window,” the period between the system’s ship date and Christmas. Of these, we estimate fewer than 10 will be ready on day one—even the three Microsoft first-party games (*Perfect Dark Zero*, *Kameo: Elements of Power*, and *Project Gotham Racing 3*) aren’t guaranteed for launch. Skip ahead to our previews section to see what launches when. “The key,” says Moore, “is having a portfolio at launch that meets the genres I think those day-

one guys are looking for: driving, first-person shooters, maybe a [role-playing] game, action-adventure, and sports.”

While the launch lineup seems ever-changing (which has us furrowing our brows), it’s all systems go for Microsoft’s enhanced Xbox Live online service for the 360. Everyone who buys the system will get a free basic Silver subscription, which shares your Gamer Card profile and achievements with everyone on the service (see the Games Blade section in the “You Turn Me On” section), allows you to purchase goodies and download free demos from the Xbox ▶

Xbox 360 Do’s and Don’ts

Don’t: Count on *Halo 3* launching the same day as the PlayStation 3, despite Microsoft overlord Bill Gates’ comment that the game would be ready to combat Sony’s next box. “That wasn’t a launch commitment from Bill,” says Microsoft’s Peter Moore. “He knows that software, particularly creative software, will be ready when it’s ready.”

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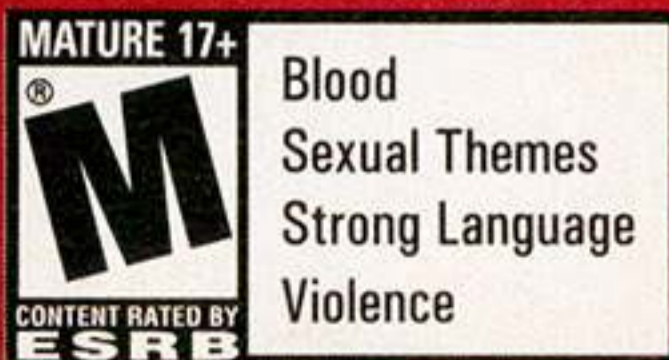


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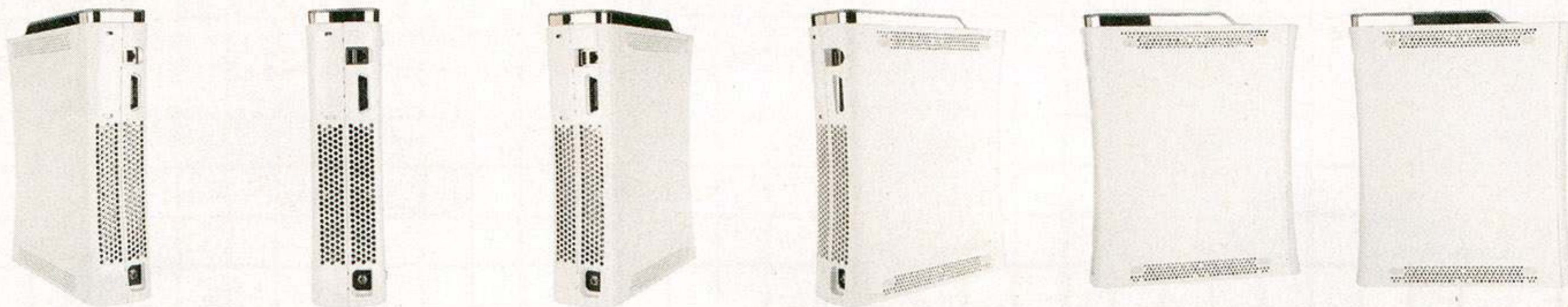
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**INTERNET CONNECTION required for online play. PlayStation®2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). Online play may not be available on all platforms. See product pack for details.





Five reasons you should buy a 360 on day one...



You're Addicted to Xbox Live

Remember the Gamer Card thingie we mentioned last page? It's a basic batch of player info that's visible to everyone on the Xbox Live broadband-only gaming service, regardless of privacy settings, and it's the linchpin of the new Live experience. The card shows your mug (or whatever image you choose to represent yourself), your Gamerscore, and your reputation, a five-star meter affected by how you play in your chosen Gamer Zone.

What's it all mean? Your reputation and Gamer Zone determine how you're matched up with other players. Zones come in four flavors: the anything-goes Underground, the keep-it-clean Family zone, the play-for-keeps Pro area, and the casual-gamer R&R zone. Refuse to abide by your chosen zone's vibe, and you'll earn lousy feedback from other players, which will eventually kick down your rep and make it harder to get matched with opponents. Likewise, you can bestow negative feedback on a-holes (which seem to make up the majority of the online population) who are clearly in the wrong zone. Your reputation will drop almost immediately if you start to get lousy feedback (unless an opponent refuses to play with you because you're too good; you'll never be penalized for being a skilled player). It takes between eight and 15 pieces of positive feedback to lift your reputation back up, so don't be a smartass, OK? Er, unless you're in the Underground zone. Then carte blanche.

The upshot of it all: If it all works as advertised, playing with strangers on Xbox 360 should be a less racist, insulting, annoying, fear-for-the-youth-of-America experience. "We're trying to help people make friends," says Ken Lobb, head of the Microsoft studio overseeing *Perfect Dark Zero*.



You're a Graphics Whore

So maybe we're not completely blown away by the visuals in the first wave of 360 games (see next page), but if you want to play the very best-looking versions of third-party games like *Gun* and *Need for Speed: Most Wanted*, you'll need this system.

It Does Other Things

"The 360 is the best digital media amplifier that you can buy this year," says J Allard, corporate vice president for Xbox. "And it's just kind of chunked in there for free and mentioned on the side of the box." Digital amplifier? Whazzat? Like the original Xbox, the 360 plays DVD flicks (now in sharper 480p progressive scan) and custom soundtracks (for any 360 game, not just select titles that support them), plus, it'll run slide shows of your pics. The 360 can get this stuff from anywhere—cameras or MP3 players you plug into the system, JPGs stored on CD or streamed off any PC in your home network, etc.

"I've got tons of storage on my PC," says Microsoft's Peter Moore, "but I want to watch and listen [to that stuff] through where I spent my money—my TV and home-theater system."

You've Got Your Own Style

It's Microsoft's gift to the so-called remix generation (Microsoft's words, not ours): a 360 that's customizable from its swappable faceplates to its dashboard themes to its customizable playlists. Because you have to be you.



■ The many faces of 360: Each faceplate will run you \$20.



You're a Shopaholic

Right from day one, you'll find downloadable demos, trailers, dashboard themes, and other goodies in the Xbox Marketplace, your online shop for all Xbox 360 content. The Marketplace's monetary system is based on points: First you buy some (purchased in \$5, \$20, or \$50 chunks, with each point worth basically a penny), then spend away. You can buy these points online or in stores (they'll come on cards with an authorization number). But not everything in the Marketplace'll cost ya. The plan is for all launch titles to come with free dashboard themes and Gamer Pictures. "This is a way for us to distribute things, not necessarily just sell things," says Xbox Live Group Program Manager Jerry Johnson. "Expect to find a lot of free stuff here."



■ *Mutant Storm*: Buy it on Xbox Live!



► Live Marketplace, enables voice chat with anyone online at any time (even if he or she's watching a DVD movie or playing a single-player game), and gives you access to any massively multiplayer online role-playing game that requires a separate subscription. You'll need to

upgrade to the Gold level of service if you want to play any games online. Microsoft is not raising the price of the annual Xbox Live membership—it's still \$50 a year if you sign up for the Gold service online or buy a prepaid card from a store. Xbox Live starter kits—

which come with a headset, rebates on games, points to spend in the online Marketplace, and free Xbox Live Arcade titles—are pricier. A three-month Gold Starter Kit is \$40. A 12-month kit: \$70 (it comes with a heftier rebate and more Marketplace points). Your current Xbox Live membership will carry over to the 360 and run the rest of its course. You also get a free 30-day trial to Gold when you buy the system, and Microsoft plans to offer free Gold weekend promotions.

The company is going with the free-taste strategy for a reason: It thinks the new Xbox Live—with its talk-to-anyone-

anytime voice chat, tweaked player-matching system, Marketplace of content, and casual-play Xbox Live Arcade games—is the 360's big gun in the war against Sony and Nintendo (both of which are vague about their next-gen online plans). And Microsoft not only figures gamers will be hooked once they try Live's features, it also claims the service will change the way games are both played and made. "You're going to be able to find nuggets and learn new things about your games from the community," says Allard. "I'll go online and see a buddy who has two achievements ►

Xbox 360 Do's and Don'ts

Do: Continue playing with your clan buddies in online *Halo 2* matches. You won't have to leave them behind after you buy a 360. The system's backward-compatibility mode supports online play with folks still gaming on an original Xbox. You can even exchange messages and invites as if you were both playing on the old system.



WARNING

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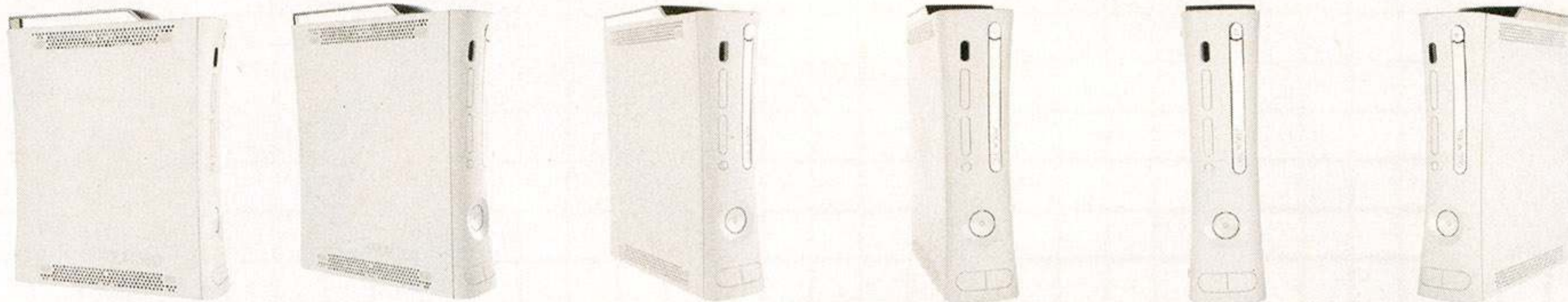
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Five reasons you should hold off on buying a 360...

To Avoid the Pricy Bundle Deals

If you haven't preordered your Xbox 360 by now, you probably won't get one on launch day. "We're going to make as many as we can," says Xbox Corporate Vice President J Allard, "and we won't create artificial scarcity—that's BS. But it's an incredibly ambitious system that we've done with our partners. There's a lot of cutting-edge stuff coming together."

Your sole option at this point: hilariously expensive Xbox 360 presale bundles from online retailers www.ebgames.com and www.gamestop.com. Even the core, hard-drive-less system will run you \$600 with five predetermined launch-day-ish games, an additional wired controller, and a memory card. Then prices and options range up to a \$2,000 behemoth (aka the "divorce-guilt remedy for wealthy and emotionally absent parents kit") that drowns you in a glut of Microsoft emblazoned merchandise, every accessory, three additional wireless controllers, 20 games, a one year warranty, and an orphaned Chinese infant.

The real rub: These stores do not guarantee you will get the systems or the games on launch day, but a few do offer extended warranties for the hardware, which is a good idea when dealing with historically glitch-ridden first-batch consoles.



You're Not Sure About Those Day-One Games

Even after figuring in wishful thinking, it looks like the Xbox 360 will hit with no more than 10 games on its launch day. See 'em in our Xbox 360 previews starting on page 88; all day-one titles are marked. Half of 'em are sports games (the big one being *Madden NFL 06*), and none screams "killer app." At least the original Xbox had *Halo*. Right now it's up in the air whether *Halo*-caliber shooter *Perfect Dark Zero* will ship the same day as 360.



You're Not Sure About That Hard Drive

By not packing the detachable 20GB hard disk drive into every Xbox 360 and selling it separately for a pricey \$100, Microsoft has split its market between the HDD haves and HDD have-nots—a risk for developers planning to support the drive. That doesn't mean games won't take advantage of it; launch title *Oblivion* uses it for speedier load times, and you'll need it to play online role-playing games like *Final Fantasy XI*. "We wanted to give gamers a choice," says Allard of the decision to sell a cheaper, hard-drive-free 360 package.

Well, you did: They can choose to avoid the system until it's clear that the hard drive is used for more than online downloads and playing Xbox 1 games.



The Graphics Just Aren't Advanced Enough for Ya

Ever since we first saw Xbox 360 games back in March, we've felt underwowed by their visuals, which on a bad day look like good Xbox 1 games. Microsoft says to keep our expectations in check. "As we get closer to reality, the visual quantum leap is going to be smaller by definition," says Allard. Great, but that doesn't explain blah-looking ports like *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*.

If you're waiting to see if first-generation PlayStation 3 titles pack more dazzle, don't, say developers. We're told to expect a similar level of visual quality from PS3 launch games. Allard says, ultimately, it's the new gameplay features (especially those tied to Xbox Live)—not graphics—that'll make Xbox 360 games special. "There wasn't a 30-second trailer that would have made any of us say *Grand Theft Auto* is going to sell 20 million copies," he says.



Is This Thing Future-Proof?

Gigabit Ethernet. Blu-ray high-definition DVDs. Ultrasharp 1080p resolution. If you techie types haven't passed out from your raging erections, you're probably wondering if the 360 will cry uncle when the PlayStation 3—whose Ethernet port is 10 times quicker, DVD capacity is about three times greater, and max resolution is sharper—hits next year. "We're not in this for big marketing numbers," says Director of Xbox Console Development Greg Gibson. "We're in it for real customers with real applications and real televisions." Gibson insists the PS3's pumped-up features are irrelevant to gamers, adding that Microsoft has upgrade plans in the works should features like high-definition DVD become important.



► [special goals unique to each 360 title] I'm missing in a game. And I'll say, 'Hey, how'd you get that one?' It's like when [strategy] guides first took off. Game makers will be able to dial up the difficulty because an outlet like this exists."

Adds Moore: "The games themselves are a means to an end, not an end themselves. They really build community. I'm not sure Sony gets that."

Parting shots

Ah, Sony—the leader in hardware sales and Microsoft's mortal foe. Remember that 10-million-sold magic number from

the beginning of this story? It's not arbitrary. "There were 10 million PlayStation 2s [sold] before we launched [the original Xbox]," says Allard. "We couldn't catch up. It's kind of like having a 30-point lead in the third quarter."

Whether Xbox 360 sales reach that

number globally by the time PS3 launches is up to you, of course. But Allard thinks that if the system doesn't reach critical mass, it won't be for lack of trying. "If you name 25 of the best game creators in the world," he says, "we're going to have 23 of them on Xbox 360."

(Who's missing? *Mario* series creator Shigeru Miyamoto and *Gran Turismo* mastermind Kazunori Yamauchi.) It's the kind of focused effort that has analysts giving the 360 a better than fair chance.

"This is a clash of the titans, but I give the nod to Microsoft, who has billions of cash in the bank and a very focused strategy," says one analyst. "Sony, in general, is a mess right now. They are climbing out of a hole and they need the PS3 to save their ass."

Now there's a comment you can expect to see quoted on a message board near you. 🎮

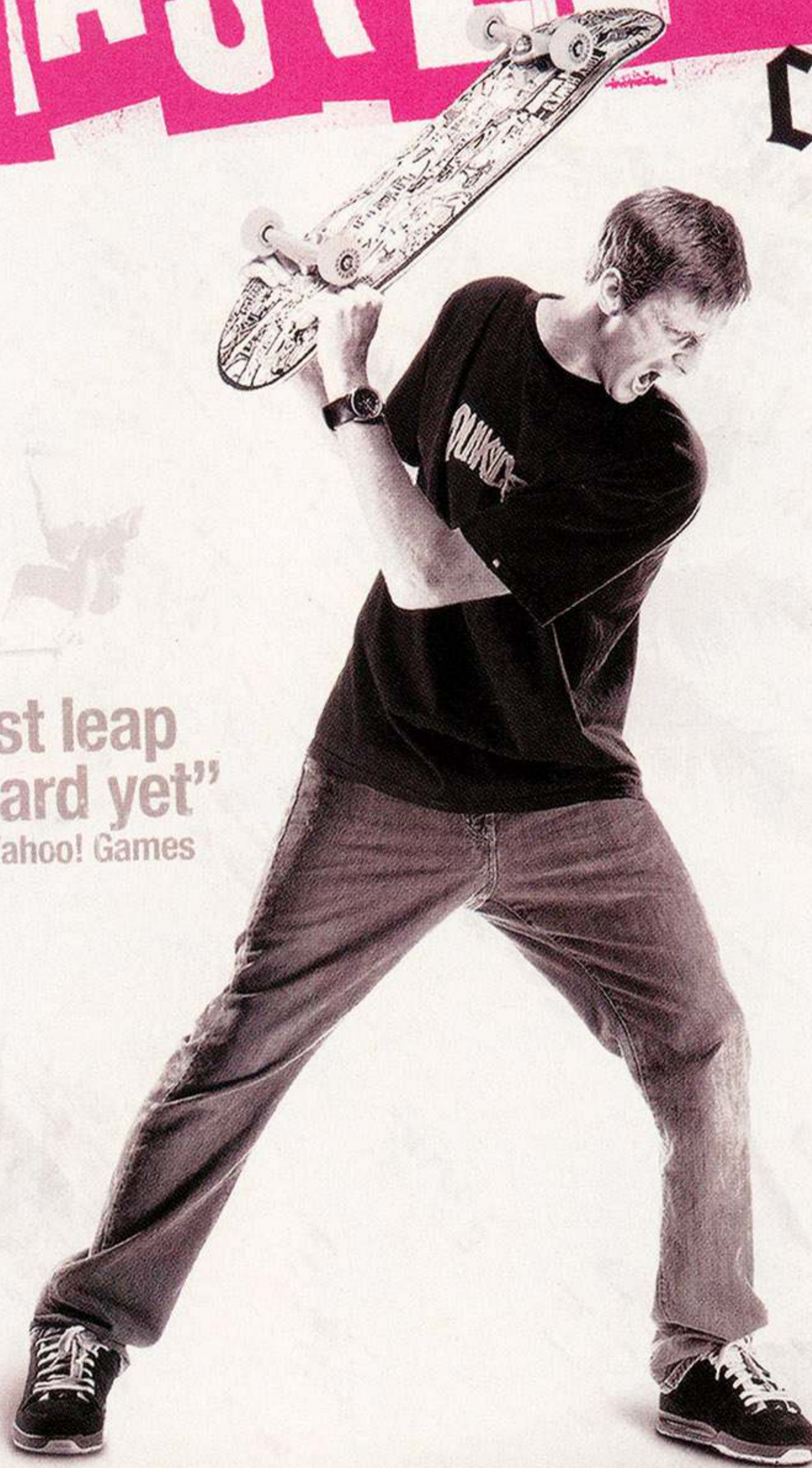
Xbox 360 Do's and Don'ts

Don't: Bother getting all gussied up for your close-up. The Xbox 360's digital-camera gizmo—which will allow for high-resolution video chat—won't be hitting the system until next year. You'll still be able to plug in any digital camera or storage device (via USB) and transfer pics to your 360 for your Gamer Card avatar or photo slide shows.

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PlayStation 2



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Blood
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Violence

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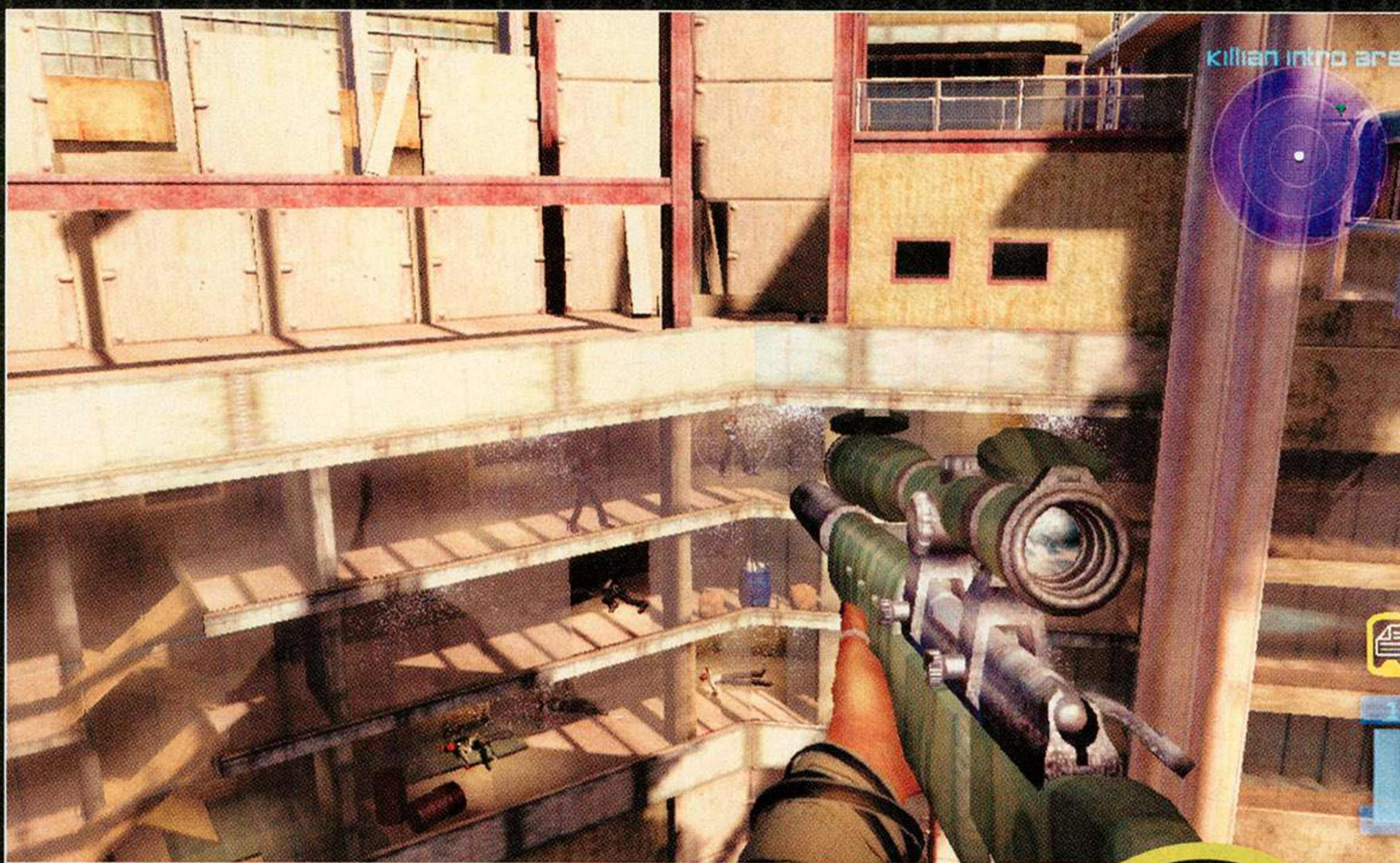
SOUL CALIBUR
III



XBOX 360

the games

People do crazy things when a new game console launches—take, for example, spending \$50 on crap like *Fuzion Frenzy* and *Kabuki Warriors* (both stinkers from the original Xbox's debut). We're here to keep you from wasting cash on next-gen rejects: These five games sparkle with promise...



PERFECT DARK ZERO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rare
Release Date: November 2005

#1
LAUNCH
BEST BET

The basics: Bullets smack the wall behind Ken Lobb, manager of the Microsoft studio overseeing some of the Xbox 360's biggest launch games, but he's too busy watching paint dry to notice. Lobb is giving us an in-game tour of a tundra-packed multiplayer level in *Perfect Dark Zero*, developer Rare's forever-in-the-works Xbox 360 prequel to its hit 2000 Nintendo 64 first-person shooter. Our opponents: game testers in nearby cubicles, who stalk us mercilessly despite Lobb's current pacifistic purpose. "Just look at that paint texture," Lobb says, pointing with the tip of his gun at a glistening red dab

smear on the wall of a rustic temple. "This game looks so good, sometimes I get distra—oh dammit."

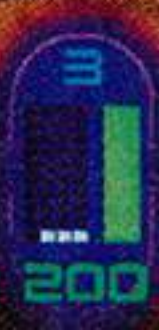
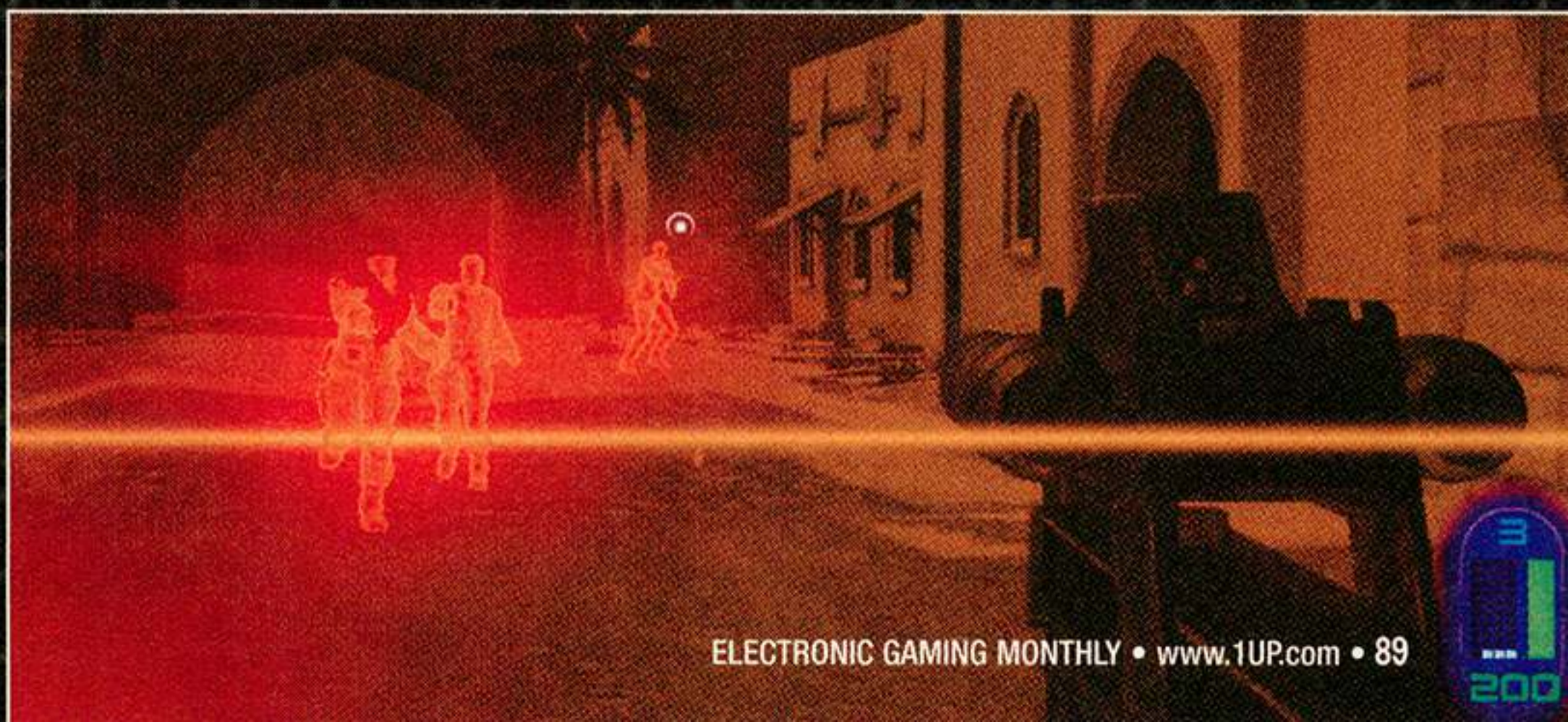
Man down. A tester just bull's-eyed Lobb from 30 yards. Suddenly feeling vulnerable without our tour guide, we dive into a combat roll—one of the game's new tricks—round a corner, and flatten ourselves against a wall, ready to pop out and return fire (another new feature). Say, look at the subtle 3D texturing on this wall. Pop! We go down. Dammit.

With three months to go until launch, *Perfect Dark Zero* is up and gunning and looking lethal. Which is a good thing, because it was precisely looks that killed

early buzz for the game. When *EGM* debuted the first screenshots of *Zero* back in our July issue, readers, message-board posters, and even our own editors found the game's visuals underwhelming—especially for Microsoft's premiere Xbox 360 launch game. The developers bristled, claiming *Zero* was a work-in-progress that looked better in motion. After taking Lobb's bullet-riddled tour, we agree that the visuals have improved. *Zero* is looking more and more like a proper next-generation title, although it's really the game's features that made it No. 1 on our best-bet five. ➤

Earning Cred

As we mentioned in the hardware discussion, every Xbox 360 game will offer special "Achievement Awards," a virtual trophy case of your game accomplishments that other Xbox Live users can view. For example, in *PDZ*, you'll score an award for trying out all of the myriad multiplayer modes.





NEED FOR SPEED
MOST WANTED





PERFECT DARK ZERO (cont.)



Perfect Dark Zero on Day 1? Hell If Microsoft Knows...

Officially, *Perfect Dark* isn't a launch-day game for the Xbox 360. Rather, it's in the "launch window," that slice of holiday madness between the system's launch and Christmas. So whether you come home with *Zero* or zilch on launch day is up in the air. "We're not going to ship games before they're ready," says Xbox Corporate Vice President J Allard. "The *Perfect Dark* franchise is too important to us to compromise it." He adds that Rare knows what's at stake. "If you have that killer launch game, you will be heroes," he says. "What we ship with *Perfect Dark* is going to be very special, and everything now is pointing to it being a very special day one."

■ Bad guys are always red. Good guys are always green. Hey, it's the simple things.

► **Why it made the list:** If you read our A to Z Guide to *Perfect Dark Zero* in our July issue, you already know why *Zero* is No. 1. It's the most ambitious online first-person shooter ever made for consoles. Let's recap: Aside from novel features such as the already mentioned evasion move, you get gadgets that let you hot-wire enemy vehicles, maps you can scale in size depending on how many players you have, a noise-sensing radar spoofed by silenced weapons, 28 guns with secondary functions (and sometimes tertiary ones), and an innovative health system that levels the field for newbies and elites.

Playing multiplayer (which, unfortunately, has been limited to 32 players online rather than the original 50 Rare was gunning for) reveals a dozen nifty details. We tried one gun whose secondary function projected a hologram of our character a few feet ahead—a per-

fect way to distract opponents while teammates race to flank any enemies taking shots at your doppelgänger. Savvy players will find a weapon to diffuse any situation. The good ol' RCP90 submachine gun displays a threat detector that'll expose holograms for what they are, as well as reveal players who use the plasma rifle's secondary invisibility function. And remember *Perfect Dark*'s laptop gun? It returns, once again turning into a stationary turret. But beware: Enemies wielding the RCP90 can reprogram your turrets and turn them against you.

You'll even find strategy in going bare-handed. Players who put away their guns run slightly faster than weapon-wielding opponents—and they can swipe enemy weapons with their fists' secondary attack. "I saw one tester," says Executive Producer James Veevaert, "he'd run up to people without

a weapon, steal theirs, kill them, then throw it down and run to the next person, steal their weapon, kill them, and so on. It was so cool and such a hardcore way to play."

What could possibly go wrong? A lot of stuff, actually. *Zero*'s multiplayer modes, which include special dark-ops missions that have players taking on roles, are ambitious and will require heavy play balancing. We also hope the number of supported players doesn't drop once again. The latest version we tried got a bit choppy at times, but Rare is promising that the final game will run at 30 frames per second (about as smoothly as *Halo 2*, but not the blazing speed we'd expect of a next-generation title).

And we've barely gotten our guns dirty in the single-player game, which tells how Joanna Dark landed her secret-agent gig and involves her pop

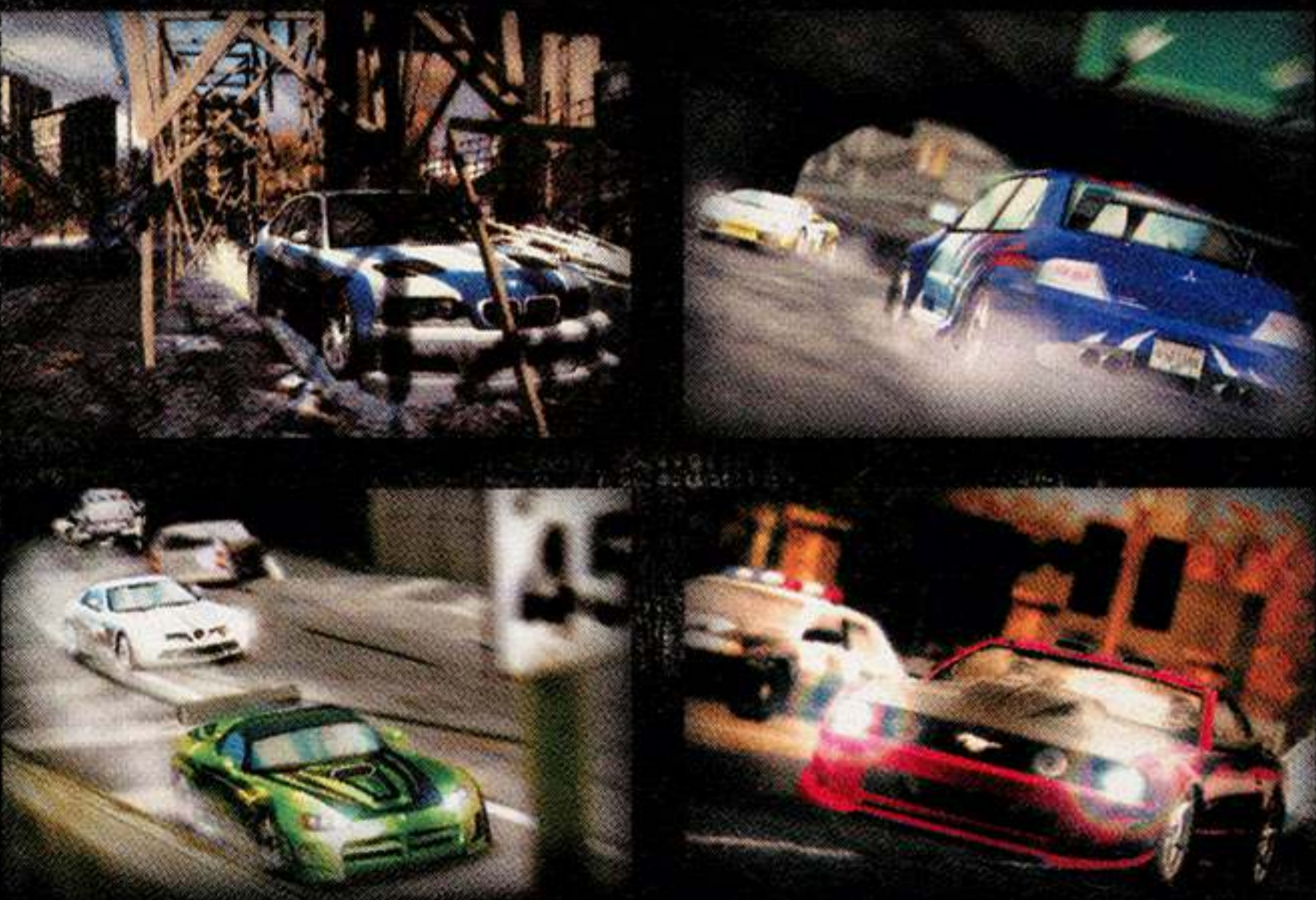
and a huge cast of characters. These characters become more important in the intriguing two-player cooperative mode. In the co-op level we tried, set in a skyscraper-crammed futuristic city, one player controlled Joanna Dark while another guided one of the secondary characters and got to see a vast section of the level that was unavailable in the single-player game. For instance, the Dark player protected the second character from afar with a sniper rifle—an objective in the single-player mode—but the second player actually entered a building and completed tasks that Dark never got to do while solo. "You will have separate objectives and link up and split up throughout the level," Veevaert says of the cooperative mode. "It's just adds a whole different experience." And, yes, those drying-paint textures look nice in single-player, too.

—Crispin Boyer ►



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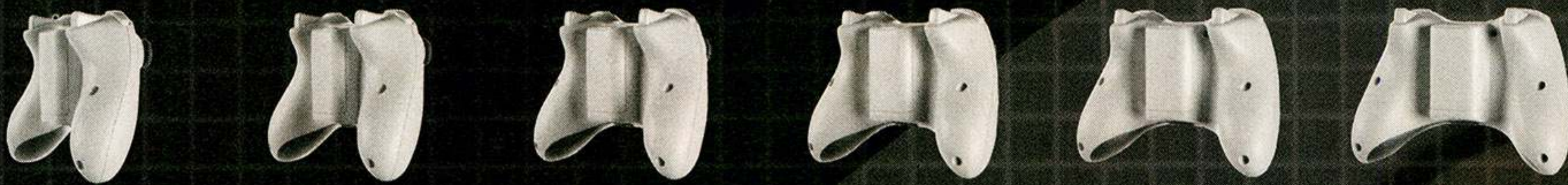
NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED



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TEEN
Mild Violence
Game Experience
May Change During
Online Play

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PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Release Date: November 2005



The basics: The latest installment in Microsoft's snazzy street-racing franchise rolls onto the factory showroom as an audio-visual showcase for the Xbox 360.

Why it made the list: "Do you want a game that really shows off how cool your new Xbox 360 is?" asks *PGR3* Project Manager Chris Lee. "Just look at the game—from both a high-end audio and high-definition video standpoint, it really pushes the boundaries." Must be hard to be humble when your game looks like this. *PGR3* aims to be the prettiest, fastest, and most accessible racer in the already competitive 360 lineup. "We believe that life begins at 170 mph," states *PGR3* Product Manager Kathie Flood. "We don't give new players a mediocre car to start out with—nearly every single car is available from the outset, and they're all fast." It's all about freedom: Take any car and race it on any track at any time. *PGR3* will still

offer unlockables, but Microsoft wanted to make sure that mainstream gamers could have a blast with minimal effort. "It's still deep enough for hardcore racing fans," says Flood. "But at the same time, it's broadly accessible, with the perfect blend of realistic physics and thrilling arcadey fun."

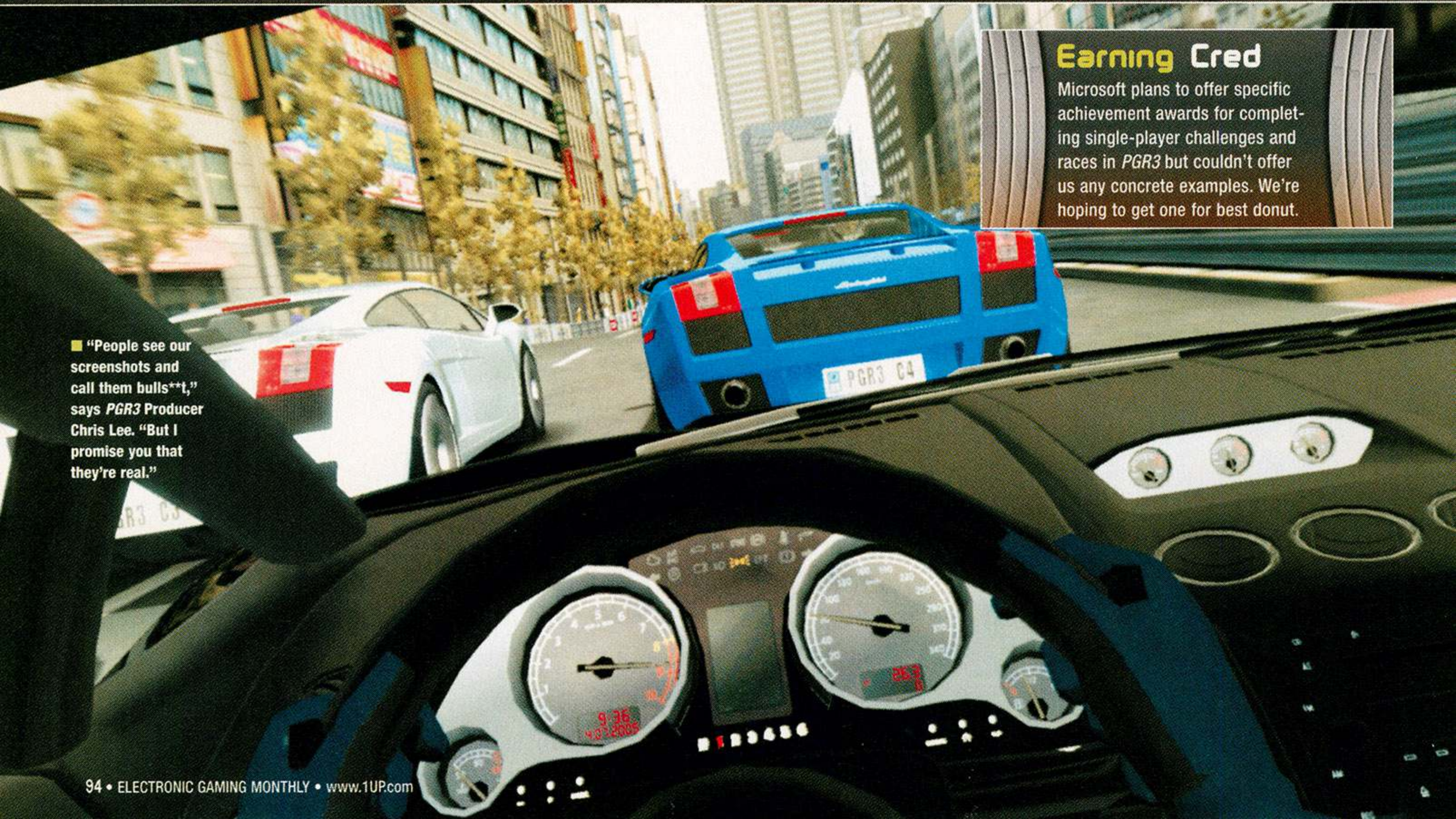
Microsoft also hopes that *PGR3* will be a landmark title in terms of building a constantly evolving Xbox Live community. Eight-player online races and leaderboards are expected, along with an innovative spectator mode, in which thousands of onlookers watch the world's top players compete in championship races.

What could possibly go wrong? Although Microsoft seems adamant that *PGR3* will make it to store shelves within that mythical "launch window," the version we viewed still had some slow-down issues to overcome.

—Shane Bettenhausen ▶



■ (Below) Random office buildings in Tokyo's Shinjuku ward have never looked better.



■ "People see our screenshots and call them bulls**t," says *PGR3* Producer Chris Lee. "But I promise you that they're real."

Earning Cred

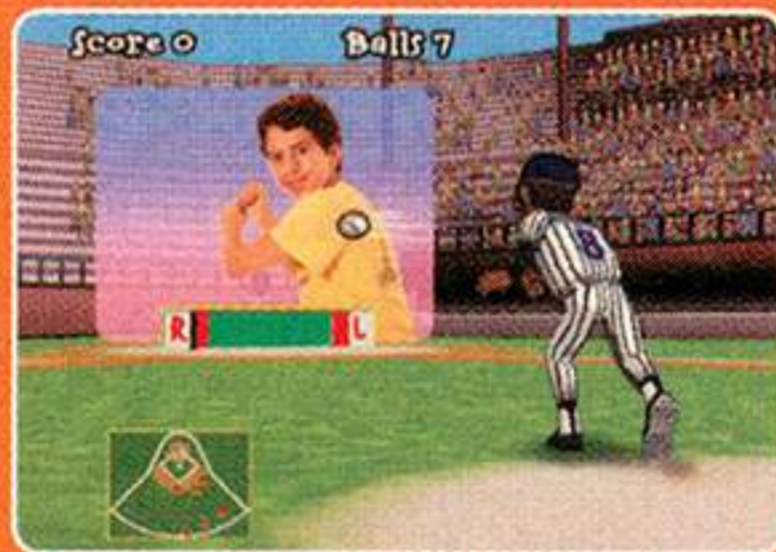
Microsoft plans to offer specific achievement awards for completing single-player challenges and races in *PGR3* but couldn't offer us any concrete examples. We're hoping to get one for best donut.

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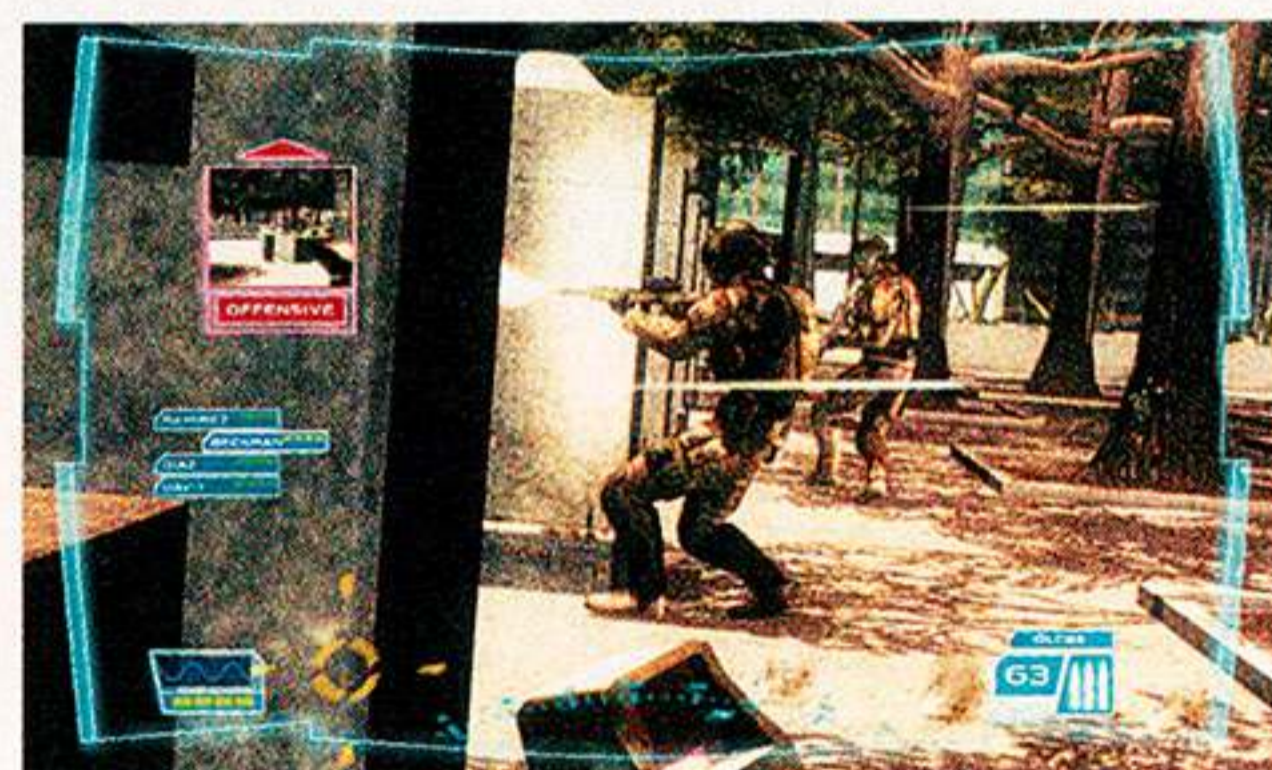
Countersnipe rifles that blow through walls to eliminate targets, assault rifles that shoot around corners, and a host of other high-tech weapons and equipment let players employ advanced technology based on actual military research.

WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF



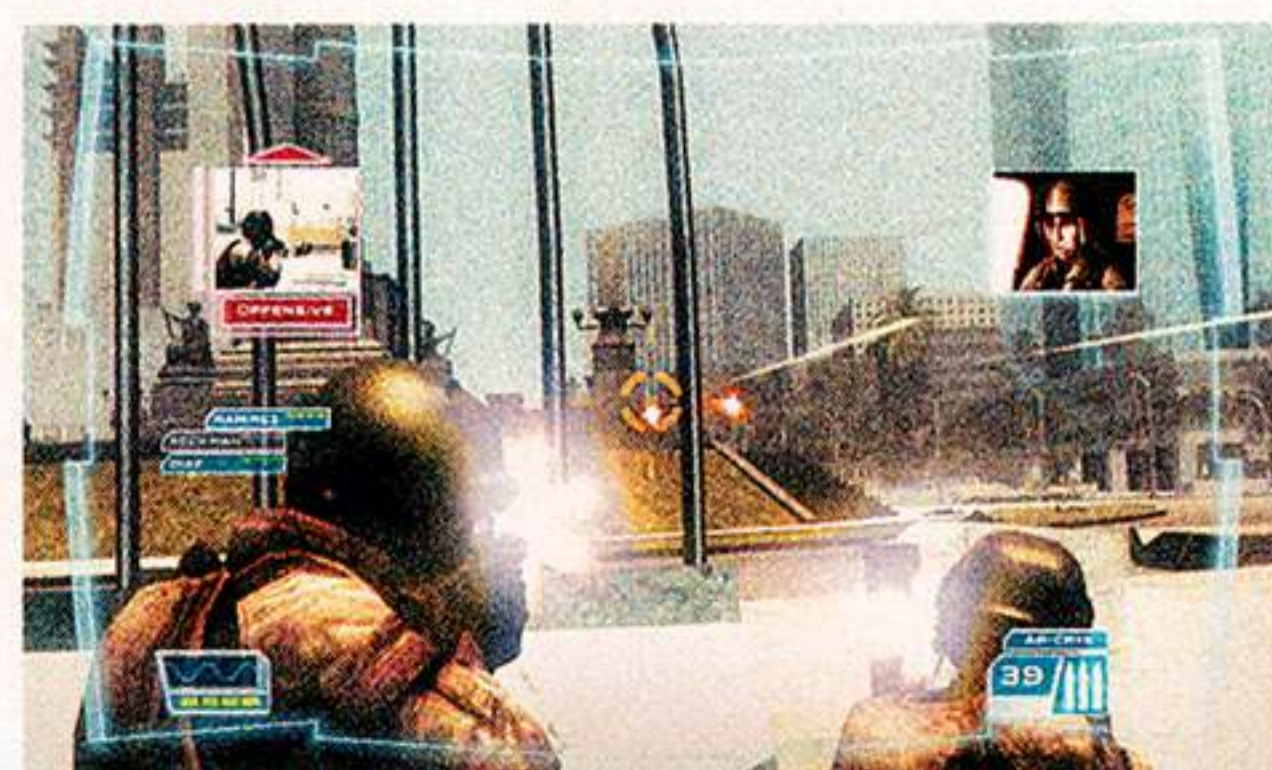
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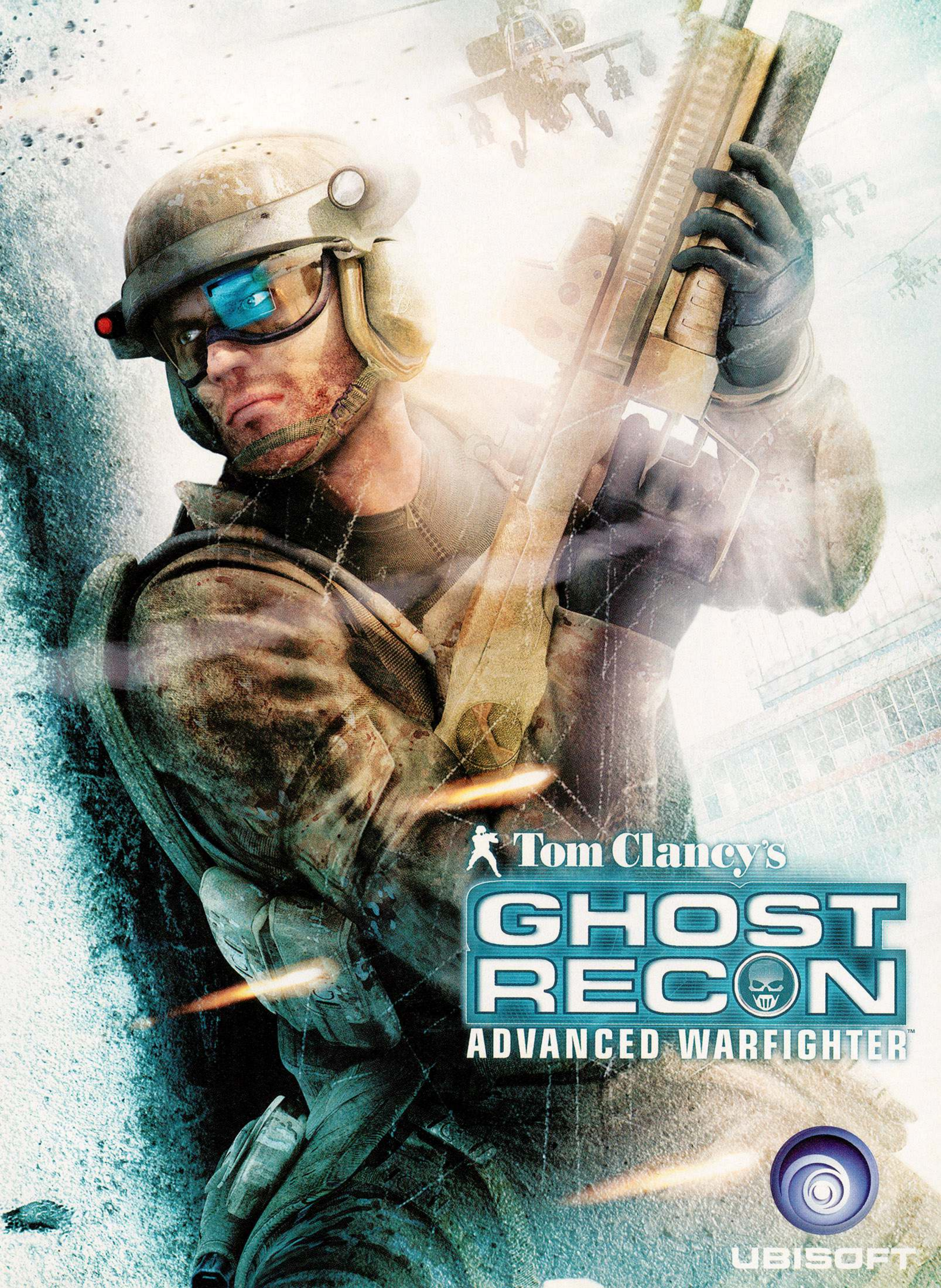



UNIQUE MULTIPLAYER CO-OP CAMPAIGN

Exclusive to multiplayer, this campaign takes the team from the unrest in Mexico to civil war in Nicaragua. Team tactics and strategy must be implemented to progress through this robust campaign.



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CALL OF DUTY 2

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



The basics: The current king of the World War II first-person shooter hill (sorry, *Medal of Honor*, your reign is over) continues its dominance with this sharp-looking follow-up. Not to be confused with the current-generation sequel *Big Red One*, *COD2* mimics the upcoming PC game of the same name: You command American, British, and Russian forces through grueling battles in the European and East African theaters of war.

Why it made the list: How's this for a sales pitch: "*Call of Duty 2* has been designed from the ground up as the No. 1 Xbox 360 shooter," claims Vince Zampella, chief creative officer at *COD2*

developer Infinity Ward. "It's an intense game with a huge, immersive world, deep team-based gameplay, amazing enemy A.I., next-gen graphics, and unbelievable special effects." Nothing wrong with being a little proud of your baby, eh?

Seriously, though, *COD2* seems to offer a pretty sweet package—challenging, realistic squad combat across many of WWII's most dramatic battles. And while the first *COD* popularized a tightly controlled, scripted approach to level design, this sequel opts to put more gameplay choices in the player's hands. "We wanted to give you a more open, realistic experience," says Zampella. "Levels now offer multiple

nonlinear objectives that you can complete in any order." Also, those famous on-rails scripted sequences now happen with or without you, so depending on your position, you may see some crazy stuff going down from across the battlefield...or right in front of your face. "In one level, part of your squad commandeers a large antitank gun and blows up a huge missile silo," Zampella explains. "You can see this from anywhere on the level—we don't lock you in place, and this way you'll want to replay levels to see these events from different angles."

Although the single-player experience (sporting more missions than its predecessor) remains the focus, *COD2* will also offer a meaty online multiplayer

component. As of now, Infinity Ward can only confirm eight-player simultaneous action, but it's aiming for a higher number in the final release.

What could possibly go wrong? Not much, it seems. We've played an early version and everything seems to be falling into place nicely. *COD2* should be one of the safest bets on launch day. Oh, and it's definitely going to be on shelves for day one...we can't say that for its main competition, Microsoft's *Perfect Dark Zero*. —S.B.



■ These lovely battlefields won't be very serene: *Call of Duty 2* implements a new battle chatter system in which soldiers on both sides constantly blurt out commands, reactions, and expletives.



Earning Cred

If you complete single-player missions on the very hardest difficulty setting (Veteran), you'll get some hard-earned achievement awards. If you see players online sporting that brass, you want them on your side.



#4
LAUNCH
BEST BET

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Developer: Bethesda Softworks
Release Date: November 2005

The basics: Fans of the previous *Elder Scrolls* role-playing epic, *Morrowind* (XB), still swear by its open-ended gameplay, deeply customizable characters, and immense game world. Then again, those reverent fans tend to be a pretty hardcore lot: A lot of lightweight questers gave up on the gargantuan undertaking somewhere between Ashurnabithashi and the shrine of Ularradallaku. If you're brave enough to enter *Oblivion*, a sparsely populated social calendar is a must.

Why it made the list: The purists might cry foul, but we're stoked that developer Bethesda Softworks wants this installment to be more accessible to average Joes. "Everybody likes the size of our games, but a lot of players were

lost and confused," says *Oblivion* Executive Producer Todd Howard. "With *Oblivion*, we're still offering a massive world, but we're going to hold players' hands a little more." Now you'll actually know if you're doing a primary, plot-advancing quest, an optional subquest, or just screwing around wasting time.

Also, expect *Oblivion* to deliver more drama and excitement, even right from the outset. As in *Morrowind*, character creation is up to you...but this time, rather than answering a long-winded survey, you start the game by staging a prison break. The way you use weapons, spells, and different skills to escape helps the game determine the sort of player you are.

Morrowind's combat was universally regarded as boring, so it was important to *Oblivion's* team to punch up that

aspect of play. "We really wanted to make a game that we wanted to play," says Howard. "We've added a ton of new action-oriented attack moves, and combat isn't about random die rolls—you're going to run around and bash people a lot."

A colossal RPG of this caliber seems ripe for a harvest of Xbox Live Marketplace doodads (see page 78 for the scoop on this service), and Bethesda agrees. Players in possession of the 360 hard drive will be able to purchase exclusive equipment using Xbox Live points. "Marketplace 360 is going to be a big deal for us," says Howard. "One of the first mods we're offering is horse armor: We have horses you can ride around on in the game and we had this idea kind of late in the process—wouldn't it be cool if you could buy armor for your horse?"

shelves alongside the 360 hardware on day one, a few nasty bugs are still infecting its mammoth fantasy. "There is a unicorn in the game, and the other day when I was playing I found it dead," explains Howard. "The Minotaur killed it; he's supposed to protect it, but his A.I. is just too aggro." If the game's inhabitants can't get along, is there any hope for players? Massive patches, bug-fixes, and even recalls happen surprisingly frequently in the realm of PC games, but nobody wants to bring home a busted, buggy, and potentially crash-ridden console game on launch day. —Kathleen Sanders >

What could possibly go wrong? Despite the fact that its developer guarantees that we'll see *Oblivion* on



■ For the kids, pulse-pounding combat (left). For the oldsters, pretty covered bridges (right).

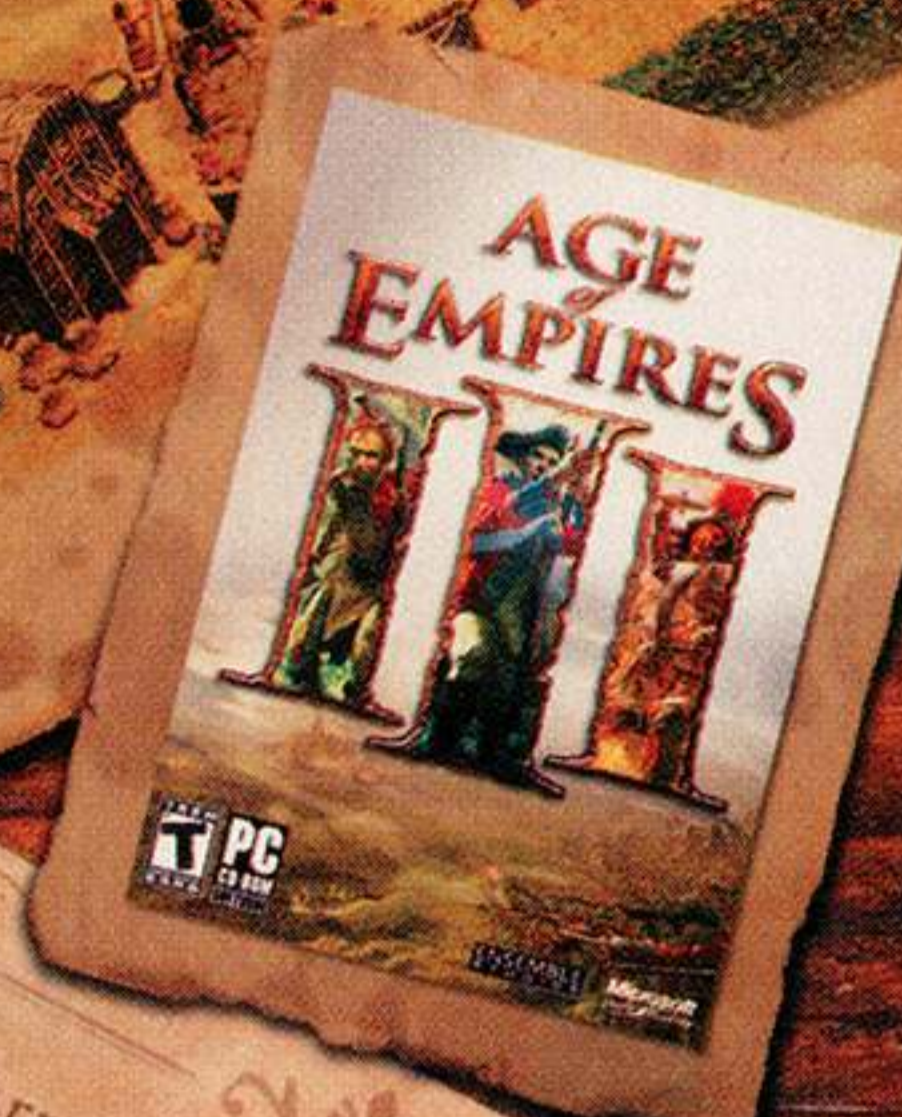
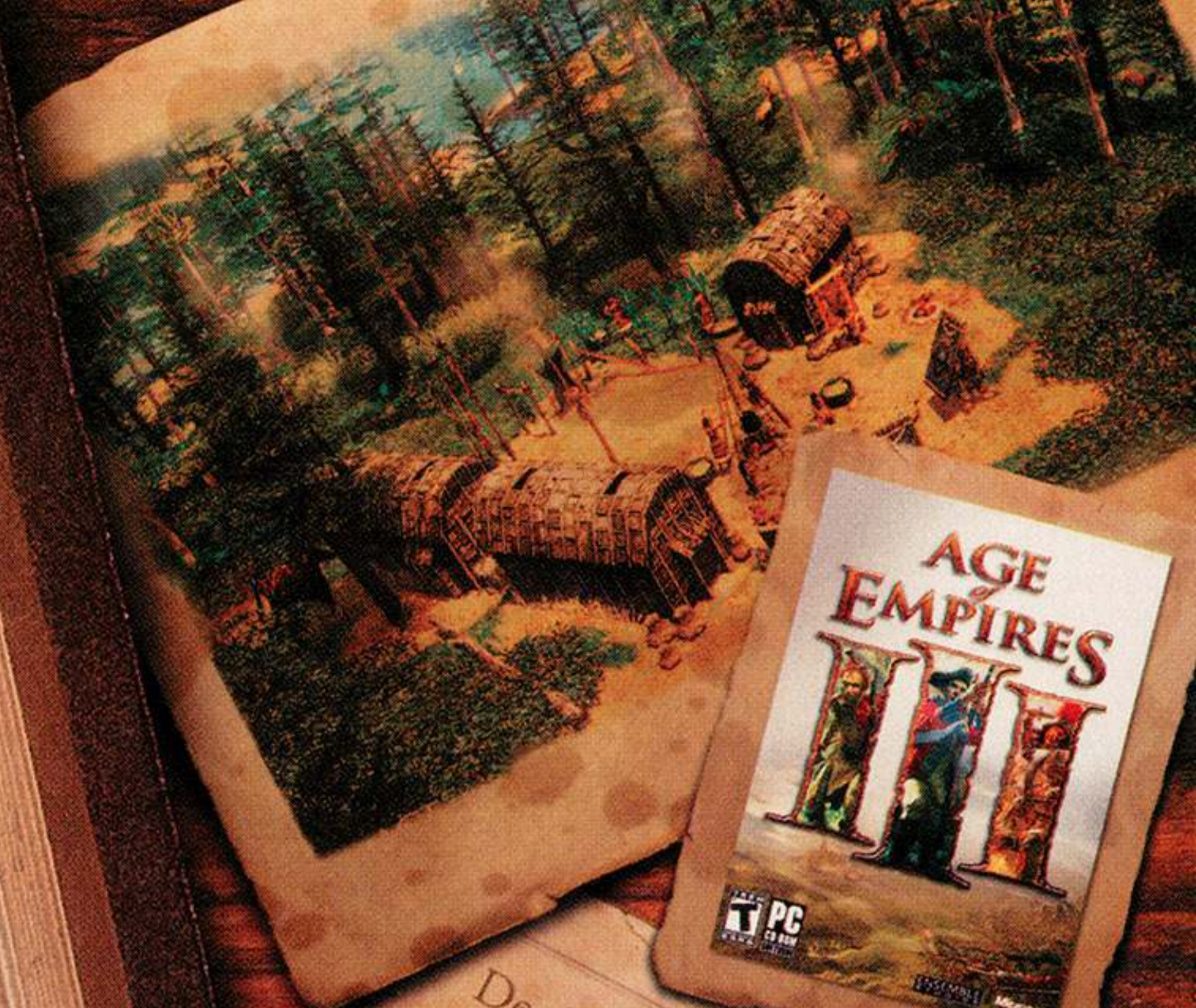
Earning Cred

Oblivion's Achievement Awards directly relate to the game's largest quests. "You'll be able to get a total of six different awards," explains Executive Producer Todd Howard. "Each medal relates to one of the six main quest lines—fighters, mages, thieves, dark brotherhood, and Arena."



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DEAD OR ALIVE 4

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Team Ninja
Release Date: November 2005

#5
LAUNCH
BEST BET

The basics: Tecmo's renowned 3D fighting franchise has remained a loyal Xbox staple for years, and the latest installment pushes the series' lush visuals even further. Scantly clad vixens engaging in jiggly catfights have never looked better.

Why it made the list: Many hardcore fighting purists still consider *Dead or Alive* inferior to *Virtua Fighter* and *Soul Calibur* in terms of complexity, but even the most jaded pugilist has to give *DOA* props for its full-featured online play (introduced last year in *Dead or Alive: Ultimate*). Of course, the father of Tecmo's sexy series regards this title with his normal level of humility. "There is no other fighting game in the world that can compete with *DOA4*," explains *DOA* creator Tomonobu Itagaki. "I am also not good-natured enough to call something that doesn't even support online fighting in the year 2005 a fighting game." (Cough, *Tekken 5*.) *DOA4* will up the online ante with planned four-player matches over Xbox Live. (*DOAU* offered one-on-one only.)

And although it's not terribly chic to be a graphics whore...the *DOA* titles provide fast 'n' dirty thrills for those gamers in search of sexy visuals (of sexy gals). Realistic clothing, wicked motion blur, and vast, multitiered arenas should make this the prettiest *DOA* to date.

And for those fans hoping for deeper gameplay, this game may actually deliver. Itagaki and his team plan to rework the subtler aspects of offense, grappling, and reversals in *DOA4*. Also, expect more signature moves for each fighter and maneuvers that more closely reflect each character's personality.

What could possibly go wrong? Probably not much: It's not as if *DOA4* could turn out to be crap—the series has a solid pedigree, and this sequel doesn't significantly alter the recipe. The previous *DOA* titles could prove a tough act to follow, though: While *DOA4* looks great, so did *DOAU*. Fans expecting an astronomical visual leap from Xbox to 360 might feel a tinge of disappointment upon seeing the similar-looking character models here. —S.B.



Earning Cred

"I'm a bit confused about these so-called achievement awards," admits *DOA4* creator Tomonobu Itagaki. "Having said that, though, I'm pretty sure that they're in the game."



XBOX 360: the rest of the lineup

CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Monolith
Release Date: November 2005

If shooting, racing, and football just aren't your thing, maybe Sega's offbeat crime-adventure hybrid *Condemned* will keep you cozy this winter. In the words of Producer Dave Hasle, "*Criminal Origins* is the unique combination of a gritty first-person action game set in the tense atmosphere of a psychological thriller." Prepare for a blend of *Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* gameplay (first-person exploration and fisticuffs with grimy hobos) and *CSI*-inspired sleuthing (get ready to spray some luminol and dust for prints). You do holster the occasional pistol, but strictly limited ammo makes this feel more like a survival-horror escapade than a run-n-gun first-person shooter.



■ The awful new face of terror: Derelicts with lead pipes.



GUN

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Release Date: November 2005

This ambitious merger of open-ended, *Grand Theft Auto* design and a brutal Wild West setting could be gaming's next big thing. You're a brooding cowboy with a brave new world to explore: the American West at its most lawless and enchanting. You'll discover your manifest destiny while fighting from horseback across vast prairies, hijacking strumpet-filled stagecoaches, and surviving deadly saloon shoot-outs.

Gun hails from a veteran development team (Neversoft, the guys behind the megapopular *Tony Hawk* games), and we're definitely impressed by the scope of the game. Still, we're a bit let down that the 360 version doesn't look too terribly different than the Xbox one. But even if the visuals aren't mind-blowing, at least solid design and gameplay should make it one of the deepest launch titles.

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Release Date: November 2005

The man behind the *Lord of the Rings* flicks will make the oversized ape cool again with this can't-miss holiday film, and he's working closely with Ubisoft to assure that the videogame version of his brainchild doesn't suck.

Kong offers two distinct types of gameplay: First, you portray heroic Jack Driscoll (Adrien Brody) as he tackles unruly jungle beasts in a first-person shooter-adventure hybrid. These paranoid encounters with bloodthirsty dinos give way to an altogether different experience: acrobatically swinging, jumping, and grappling as monstrous Kong himself. Think *Prince of Persia*, only you're the size of a house. Amazingly, this lovely 360 game looks nearly as sweet on Xbox and PS2....



■ Not pictured: The titular ape.



Bound for 360?

OK, these titles haven't been officially confirmed yet, but trust us—they're on the way.

- Halo 3 • Microsoft
- Splinter Cell 4 • Ubisoft
- Fable 2 • Microsoft
- Forza Motorsport 2 • Microsoft
- Rygar 2 • Tecmo
- Shadowrun • Microsoft
- Mercenaries 2 • LucasArts
- True Fantasy Live Online • Microsoft
- Marvel RPG • Microsoft

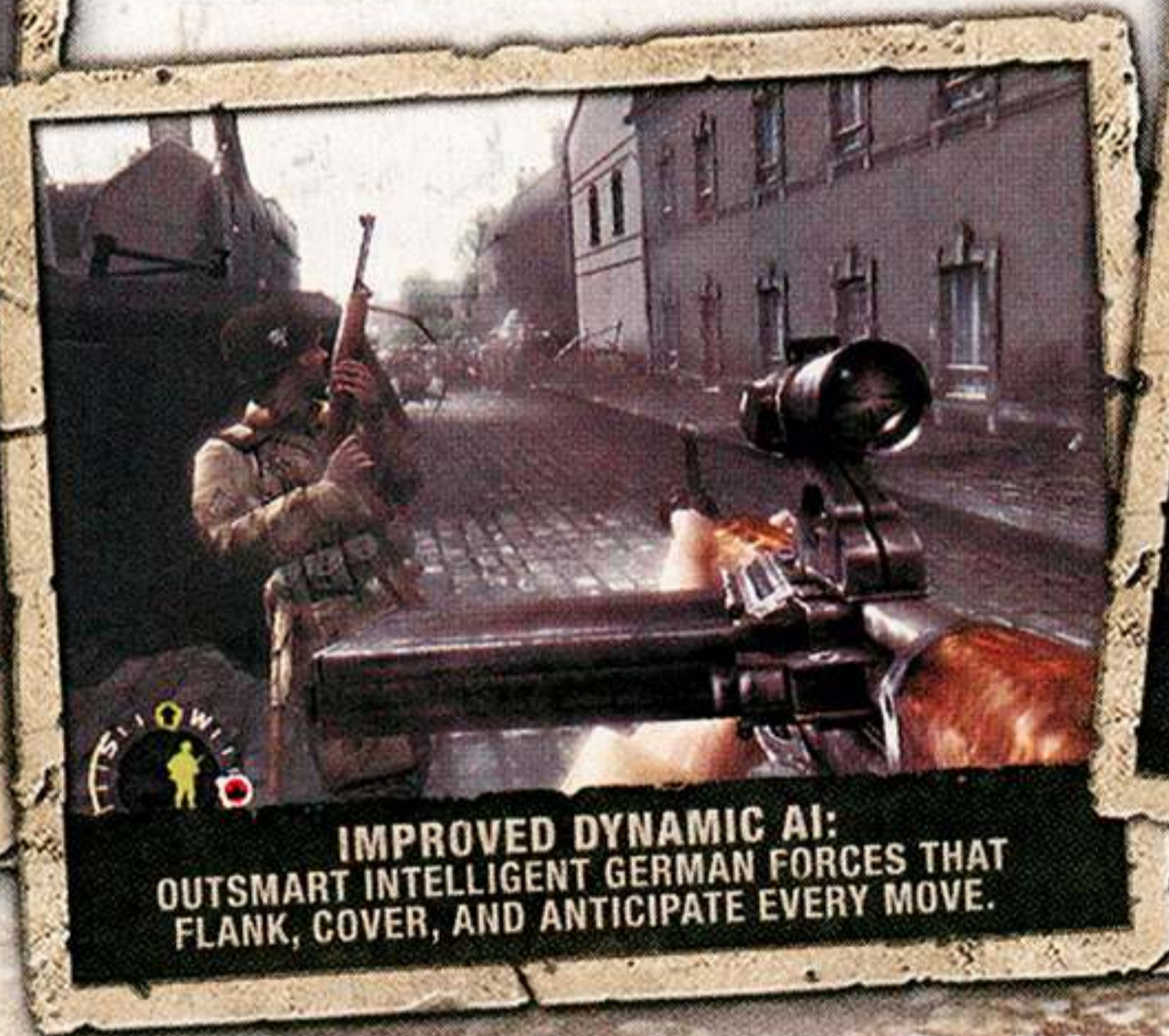


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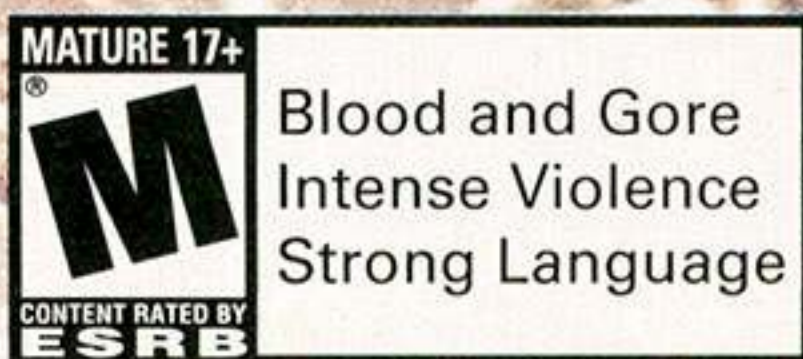
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NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

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

EA's street racing phenomenon evolves again with *Most Wanted*—a far different beast than the previous two best-selling *Underground* games. This time, the road rage takes place on brightly lit highways in gritty, industrial environments, and you're more interested in blazing past the cops than installing neon ground effects. Moving up the ranks of the cops' "black list" requires plenty of offensive driving, and you'll learn to navigate the nooks and crannies of the game's massive, open-ended environments before ascending to the coveted "most wanted" spot.

Since this game also hits the current-gen consoles this fall, the 360 version doesn't deviate too far from the source. Even so, expect upgraded visuals, slightly more realistic physics, and more responsive enemy A.I. compared to its last-gen cousins.



■ If this is next-gen hair, we want no part of it.

FRAME CITY KILLER

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Release Date: November 2005

Namco's oddly titled shooter casts players as Crow, a badass hitman tasked with taking down a deadly terrorist in a futuristic East Asian metropolis. Assassinations and car chases point to a deliberate *Hitman*-meets-*Grand Theft Auto* recipe, yet the Hong Kong aesthetic and trigger-happy gameplay should hopefully separate it from the sea of mediocre *GTA* clones of

the past two years.

Of all the "launch window" games still slated to hit shelves by year's end, this one's particularly dubious. Visually, it's all over the place: Some environments look lifelike while others appear sparse, and the character models seem to be hewn from plastic. Of course, graphics aren't everything, and perhaps the final product will come together.



Big in 2006

The fun's just starting: These titles will grace the Xbox 360 next year



■ 99 Nights • Microsoft



■ Saint's Row • THQ



■ Full Auto • Sega



■ Gears of War • Microsoft



■ Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter • Ubisoft

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KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rare
Release Date:
November 2005

"It's not a collect-a-thon," Microsoft's Ken Lobb says about this colorful fairy-powered adventure from Rare—a developer notorious for making games based on nab-every-doodad busywork. That's not to say *Kameo*, which has you guiding a sassy fairy who morphs into different monsters, doesn't give you things to grab. She'll find coins to buy more health and fruits to power up her creatures, but it's all optional.

So instead of collecting, the focus here is on puzzle solving and combat. Lots of it. You'll plunge on horseback into four massive battles—the largest in videogame history—set on fields crammed with thousands of jostling enemies. It's a powerful display of the Xbox 360's hardware hutzpah. We're just not so sure grown-up gamers will be down with game's kiddified visuals and story line.



■ Like *Lord of the Rings*...but with googly-eyed monsters aplenty.

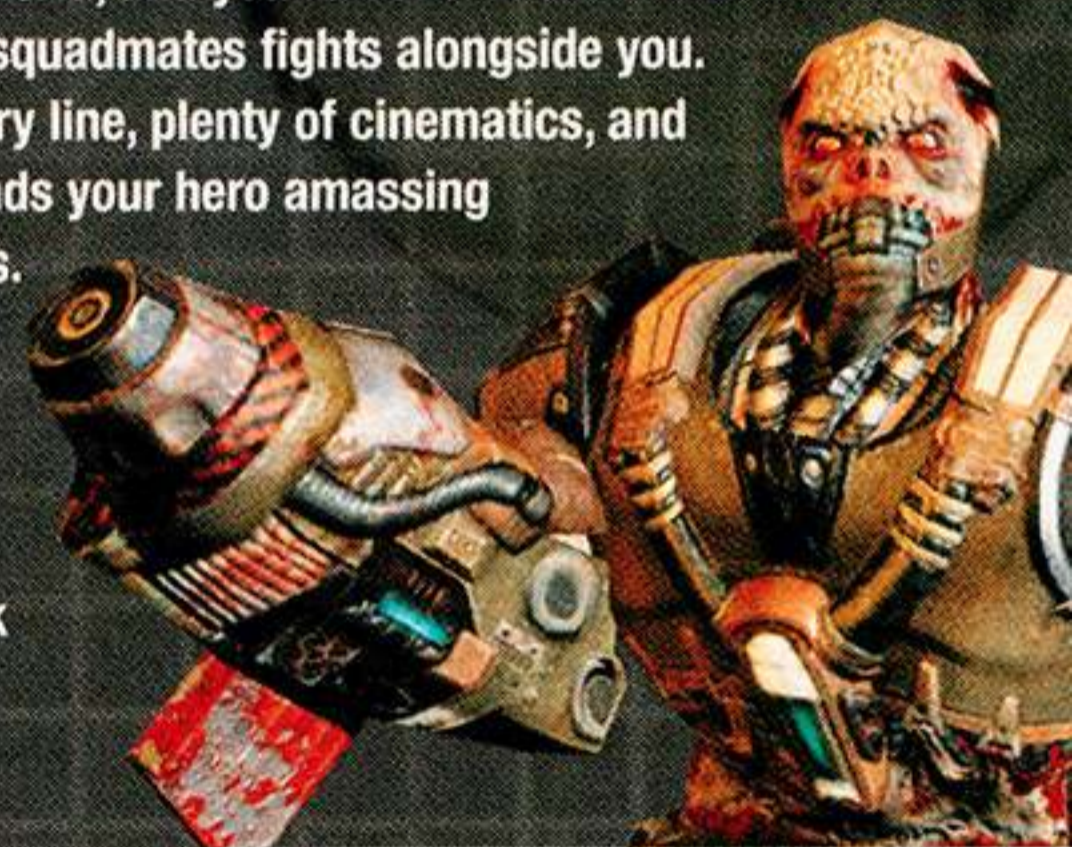


■ Would it kill the *Quake* guys to give us screens that actually show gameplay?

QUAKE 4

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

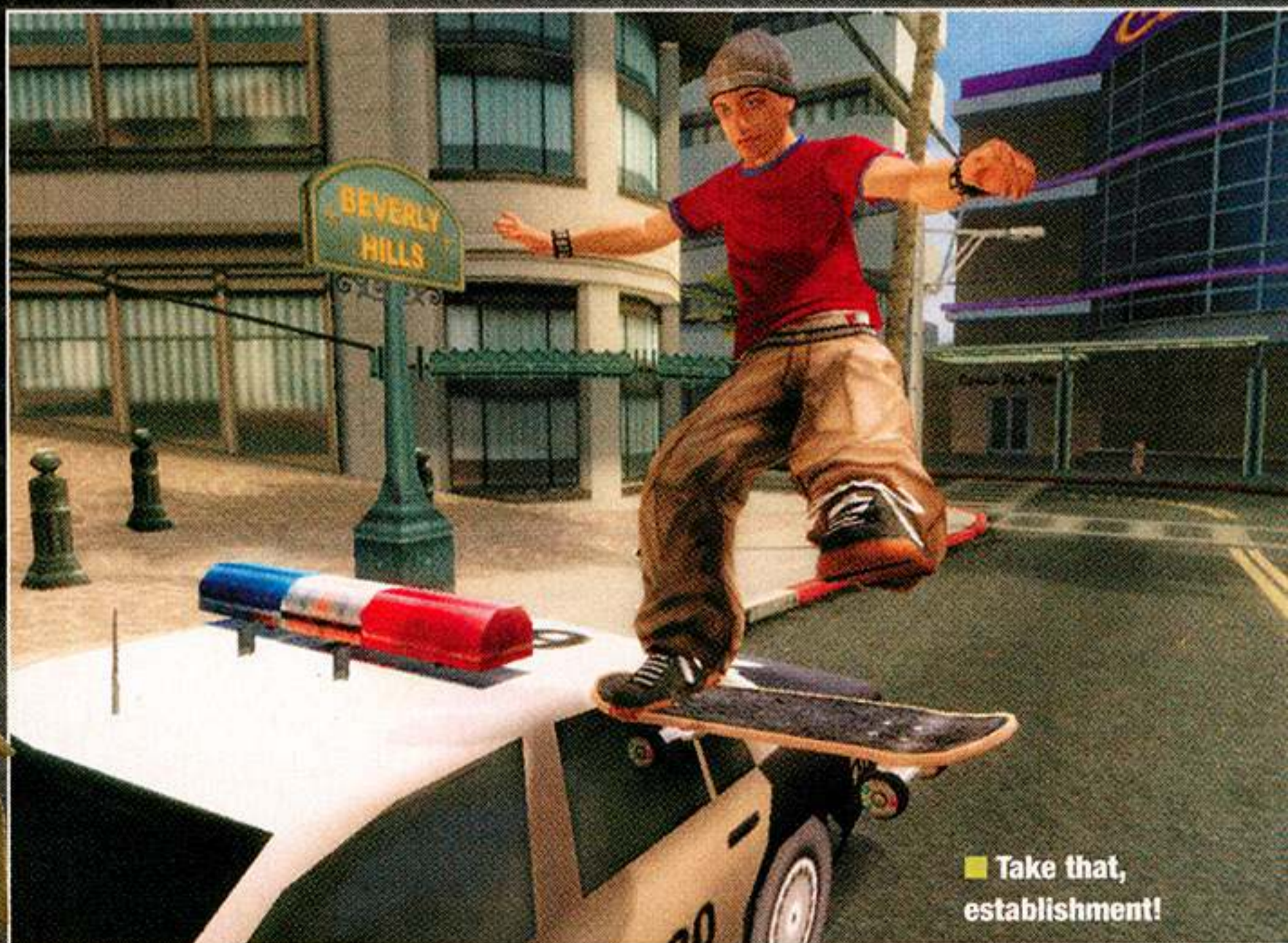
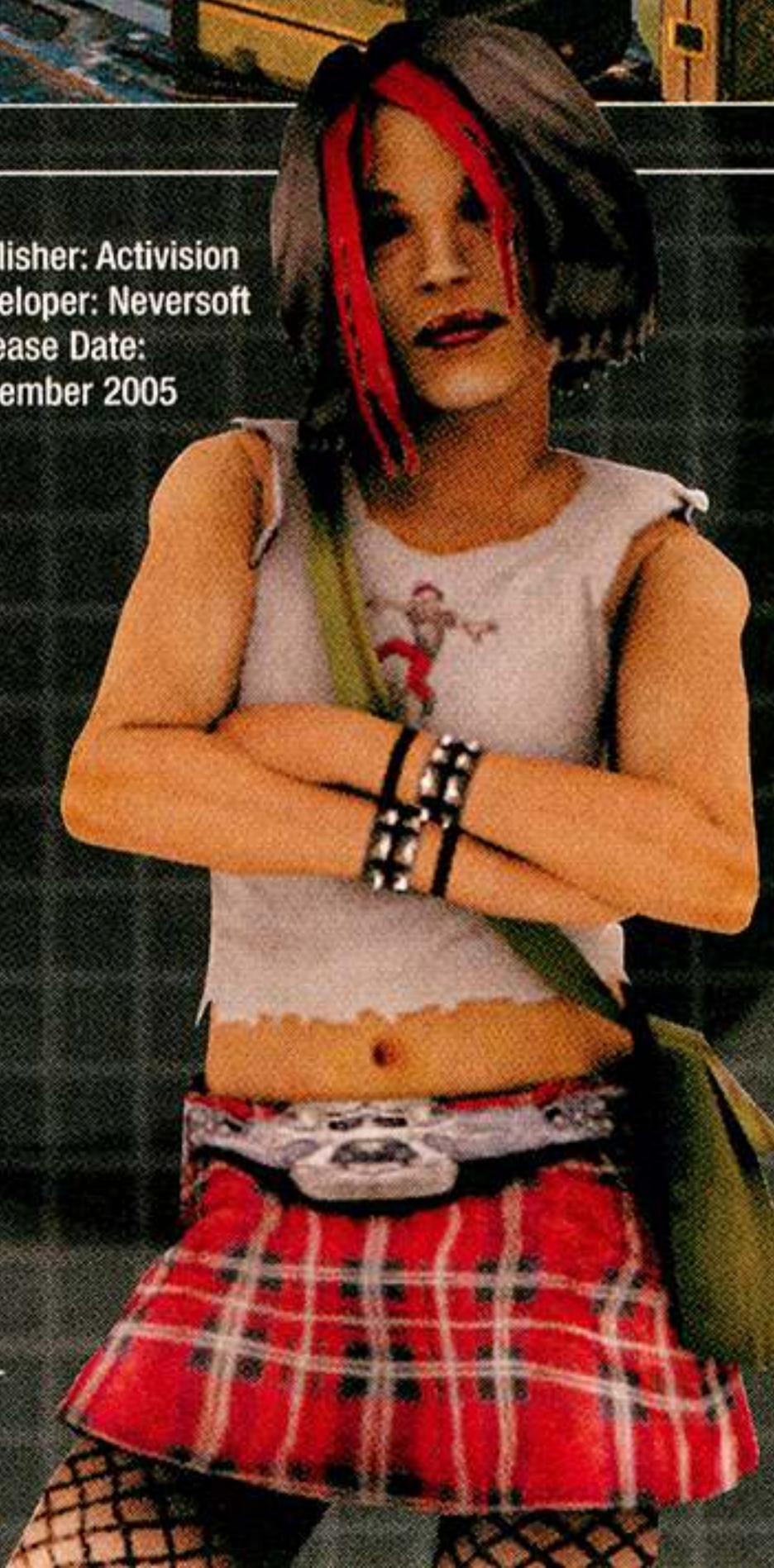
Does developer Id Software really need to keep making both *Doom* and *Quake*? Couldn't you just shoot aliens and demons in the same game? Actually, in the wake of *Doom 3*'s dark, claustrophobic vibe, maybe a trip to *Quake*'s planetside shootin' is in order. This time, you're invading the nasty Strogg homeworld, and you're not alone—a *Halo*-esque group of A.I. squadmates fights alongside you. Expect a deeper story line, plenty of cinematics, and a twisty plot that finds your hero amassing superhuman powers. Factor in some creative new weaponry, vehicles, and hearty online multiplayer, and this dark horse could make a big impact on 360.



TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Release Date:
November 2005

While you were out, *Tony Hawk* games got all high-concept on us—here, you're a Podunk skate brat trying to bust into the gritty L.A. skate scene. The series' trademark humor remains safely intact, but *Wasteland* does sport a more realistic tone than the cornball *THUG* games. Pioneering skaters, artists, and skate-scene musicians add a bit of history to the grindin' action. Los Angeles also provides an impressive, interconnected, free-roaming environment. No levels here, just sandbox-style *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired missions you can complete at your own pace. It's solid fare as usual, and the 360 version edges out its current-gen relatives in the visual department...though not by as much as we'd hoped. ▶



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MADDEN NFL 06

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

If it's in the game, now it's really in the game

You throw the ball. You catch the ball. You tackle the man carrying the ball. Aside from players whining that they can't feed their family when making \$7 million a year (we're looking at you, T0), professional football really hasn't changed that much since EA started the *Madden* franchise 16 years ago.

But sportos don't wanna hear excuses;

they anticipate a major leap forward when the videogame series moves to the next-gen consoles. Luckily, the people responsible for making the Xbox 360 edition have just as high expectations. "It's all about redefining the NFL experience," says Senior Producer Jeremy Strauser. And after some exclusive hands-on time with this highly anticipated launch title, we'd say Strauser and co. are reaching their goal. —Bryan Intihar



The Stadiums

Over the past two years, the crew at EA Tiburon has racked up some serious frequent-flier miles. The dev team visited all 32 NFL homes, as well as Aloha Stadium in Hawaii (home of the Pro Bowl) and Mexico City's Azteca Stadium, in order to painstakingly re-create these massive structures. Just how accurate is each football palace? Well, in the Xbox 360 version of San Francisco's Monster Park, every single seat has been accounted for, and you can even see the sections where the sun has caused the seats to fade in color. "We remodeled the stadiums in ultimate detail," says Line Producer Rod Moya. "This allows us to put the camera in some pretty interesting places." You'll also be treated to working JumboTrons that display *SportsCenter*-worthy events like sacks and interceptions, plus light boards that instruct the fans (who are now fully 3D) to get off their asses and start cheering.

EA is also paying as much attention to the actual gridiron. "Each stadium will have its own unique field," says Moya. "For instance, New England's stadium has vertical mow lines, while Pittsburgh's grass will degrade faster."



■ What's next-gen football without fans, cheerleaders, and...uh, pirate ships?



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**EXCLUSIVE
HANDS-ON
PREVIEW**

■ Seeing is believing: You're looking at an actual in-game screenshot of *Madden NFL 06*. It may not instantly blow you away, but it looks much prettier in motion. After playing the 360 *Madden* for a while, we found it hard to go back to the current-gen edition.

Earning Cred

Like all games for the 360, *Madden NFL 06* will reward you for superb play. "We will have a number of achievements—anywhere from 10 to 20—that will be specific milestones in-game, in the interface, or in franchise (mode)," says EA Sports Marketing Director Jordan Edelstein. "Every game [for Xbox 360] has 1,000 cred to give away via achievements, so we have logically broken this down based on the difficulty of the task. Therefore, finishing 30 years of franchise would be worth significantly more than activating a [vision control passing] card." ▶



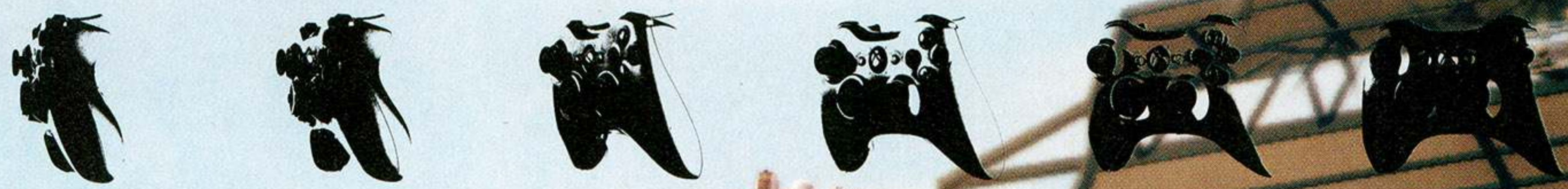
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MADDEN NFL 06 (cont.)



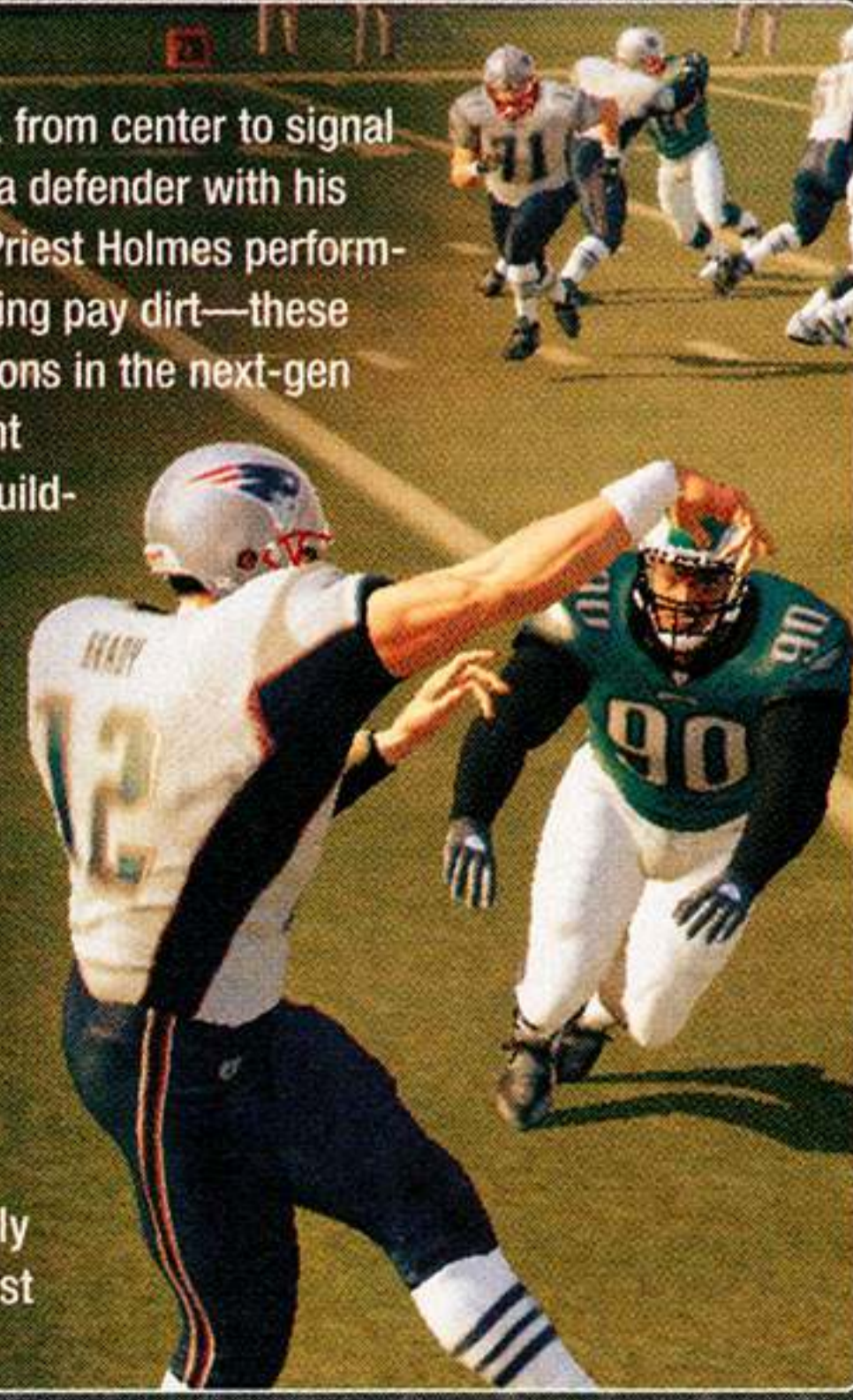
The Sidelines

Just as in a real NFL game, the sidelines will be littered with players, coaches, cameramen, and pom-pom-waving cheerleaders. But no longer will these out-of-bounds folks stand there like emotionless figurines. "Players and coaches won't just react when you score," explains Associate Producer Ian Cummings. "Say you've just broken away from the pack on a kickoff return. You'll run by the sidelines and your coach and teammates will excitedly jump up and down."

The Animations

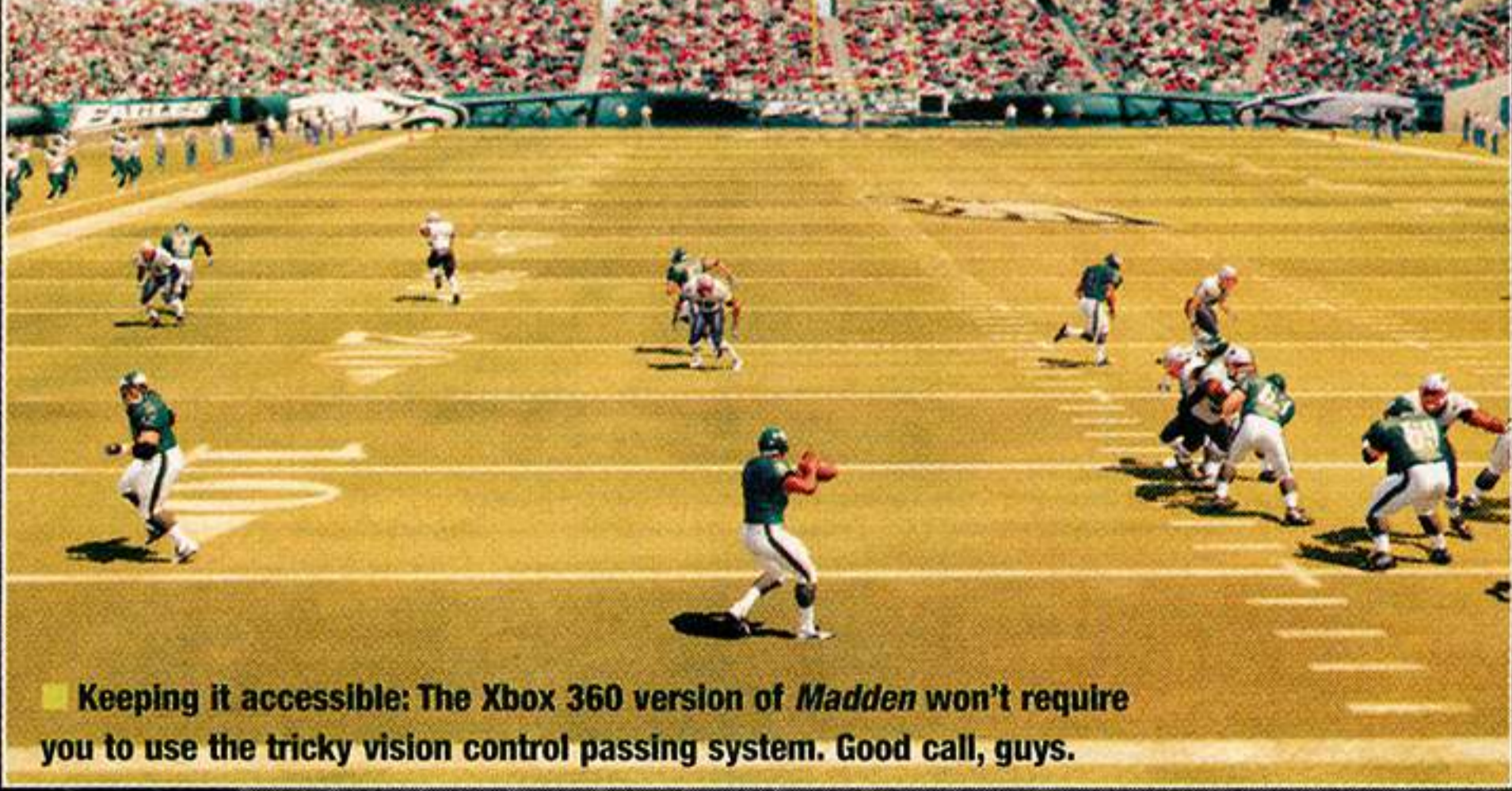
The Eagles' Donovan McNabb pulling back from center to signal an audible, Indy's Peyton Manning fooling a defender with his double-handed pump fake, Kansas City's Priest Holmes performing his "can't touch this" taunt after reaching pay dirt—these are just three of the roughly 4,000 animations in the next-gen *Madden* (which is about double the amount found in current-gen versions). "We're rebuilding the animation system from scratch," says Cummings. "And for every team, we have at least two or three players who have specific animations."

But it's more than just a numbers game; this one will also include hundreds of actions that are absent from (or technically not possible in) previous editions. So now you'll see the offense rush up to the line of scrimmage in a panic to spike the ball, receivers cry for pass interference, and yes, you can finally jump over the pile at the goal line. The list goes on and on....



The Play-by-Play

Sorry, Johnny Ballgame, but it's time for you to zip it. With the move to a new console, EA has replaced the duo of John "I state the obvious" Madden and Al Michaels with a no-name announcer who'll call the action like he's working for your team's local radio station. And since this guy has ties to your squad, he'll sound a lot more emotional when you make a spectacular score...or a boneheaded turnover. But the game ain't totally Madden-free; you can still ask him for advice when picking plays.



Keeping it accessible: The Xbox 360 version of *Madden* won't require you to use the tricky vision control passing system. Good call, guys.

The Weather

Don't be surprised if you see NASA thanked in the game's credits, as EA used those brainiacs' resources to obtain weather data for each NFL city. This info also enabled the developers to make sure the sun hit each stadium at the appropriate angle, meaning that "shadows actually fall where they do in real life," says Moyer. In addition, expect snow and rainfall (along with the parts of the field that are getting the toughest workout) to now affect surface degradation.

"IT'S THE KILLER APP WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR."

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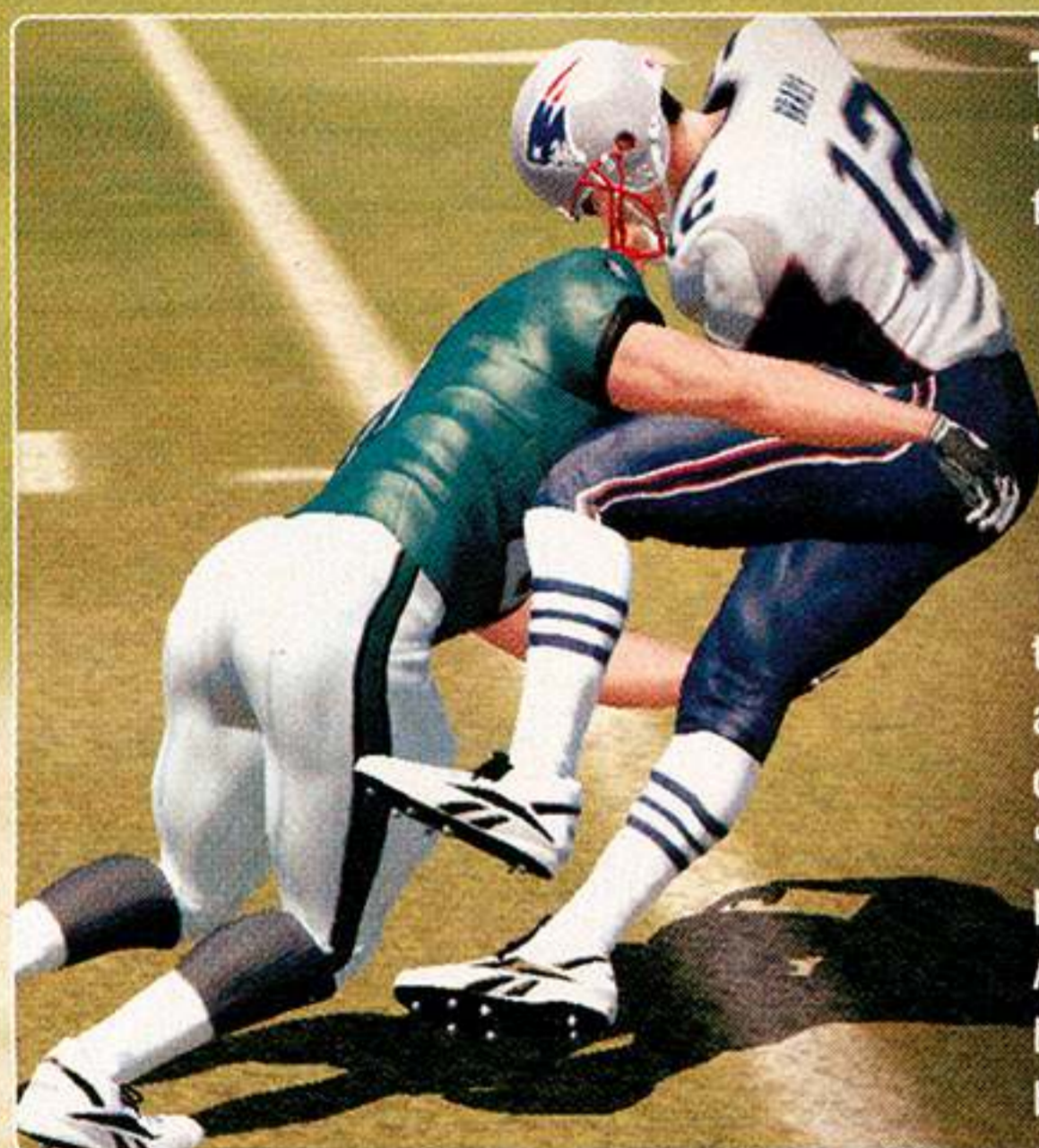


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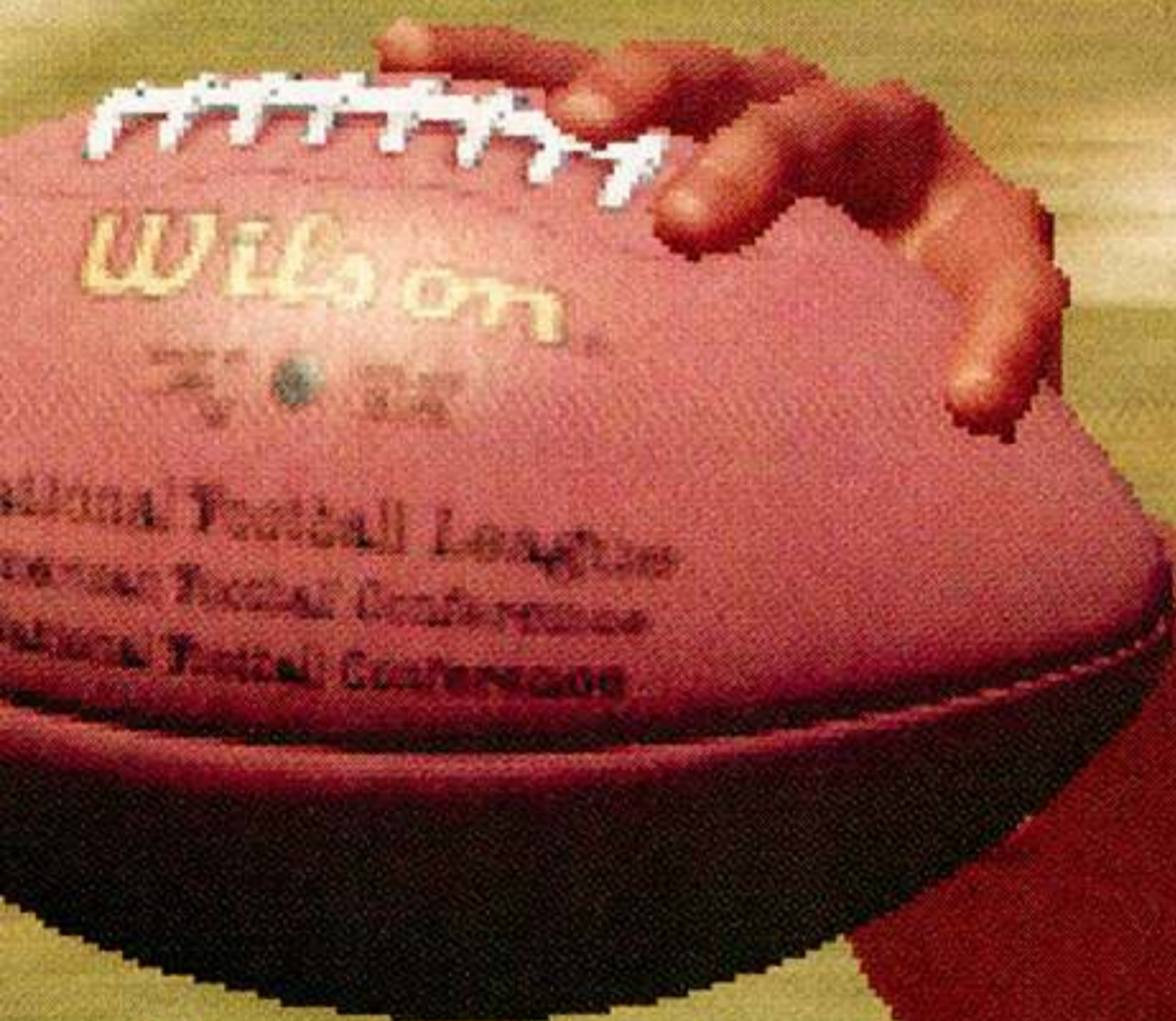


MADDEN NFL 06 (cont.)



The Sounds

"We're taking you out of the booth and onto the field," says Audio Director Aubrey Hodges. Using NFL Films' vault of miked-up player tracks, EA has added sounds that you never hear while watching football on television. So when Peyton Manning calls an audible, you'll actually hear his voice. When the Ravens' Ray Lewis makes a presnap defensive check, it'll sound just like him. And when the Eagles' Terrell Owens brags to the opposition about how they can't stop him, well, you get the drill. Yet that's just part of the audio equation. "Tackles will really sound like tackles," says Hodges. "Blocking will really sound like blocking." And if you own a surround sound system, you can hear a chasing defender's footsteps (and his heavy breathing) behind you. Awesome.



Madden Makeover

The muscles: "We can now adjust how muscular or not muscular each body part is," says Producer Jeff Luhr.

The equipment: Players will now have different-sized shoulder pads corresponding to their position (so big pads for fatty lineman, itty-bitty ones for skill players).

The face: EA did 3D head scans of 200 key NFL players, plus the head coaches.

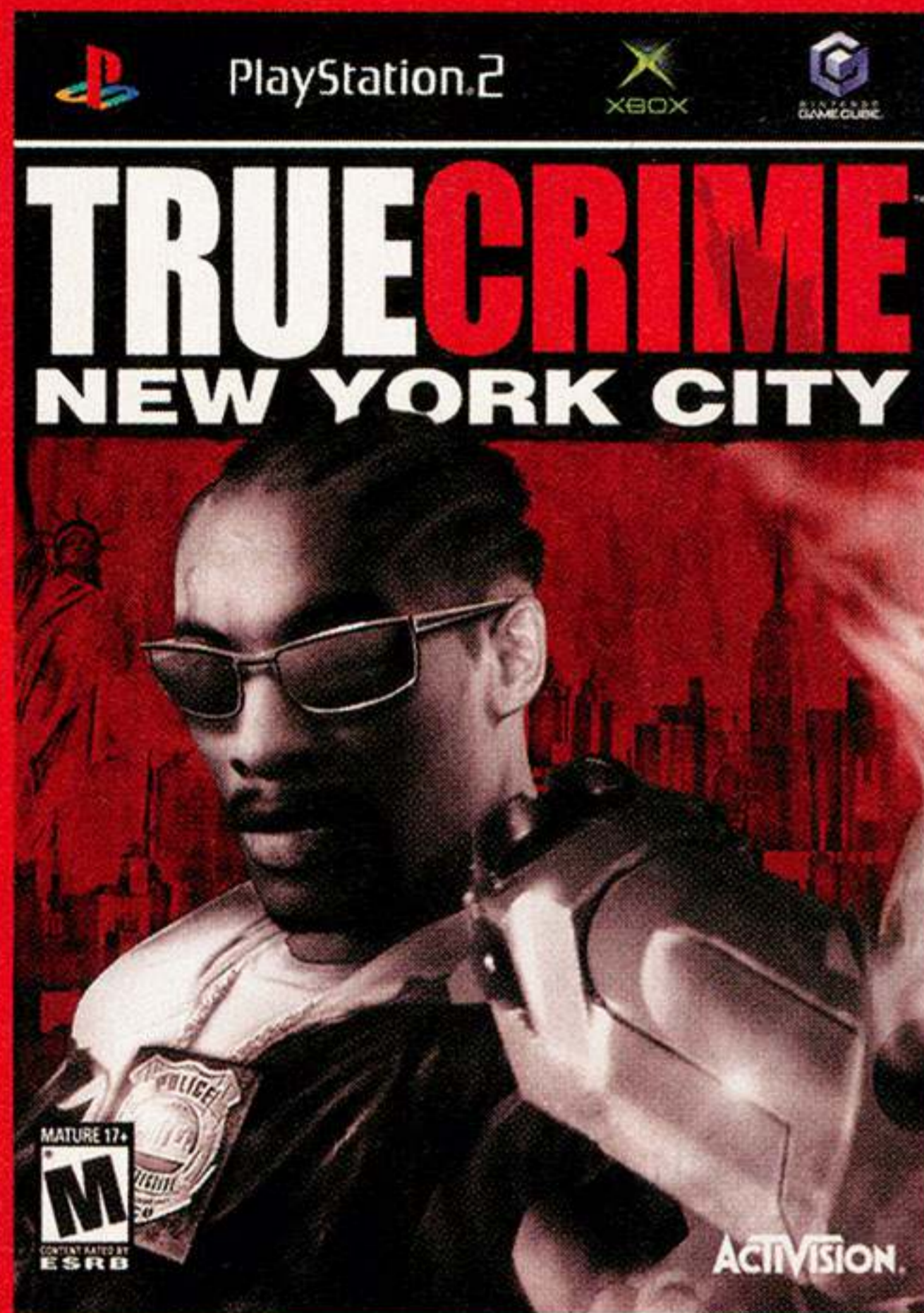
The extra gear: Players will sport roughly 200 different accessories (gloves, wristbands, extra-large cups, etc.). Sadly, no hand-warmer pouches. ("Next year," EA says.)

Why Next-Gen Madden Ain't ALL That

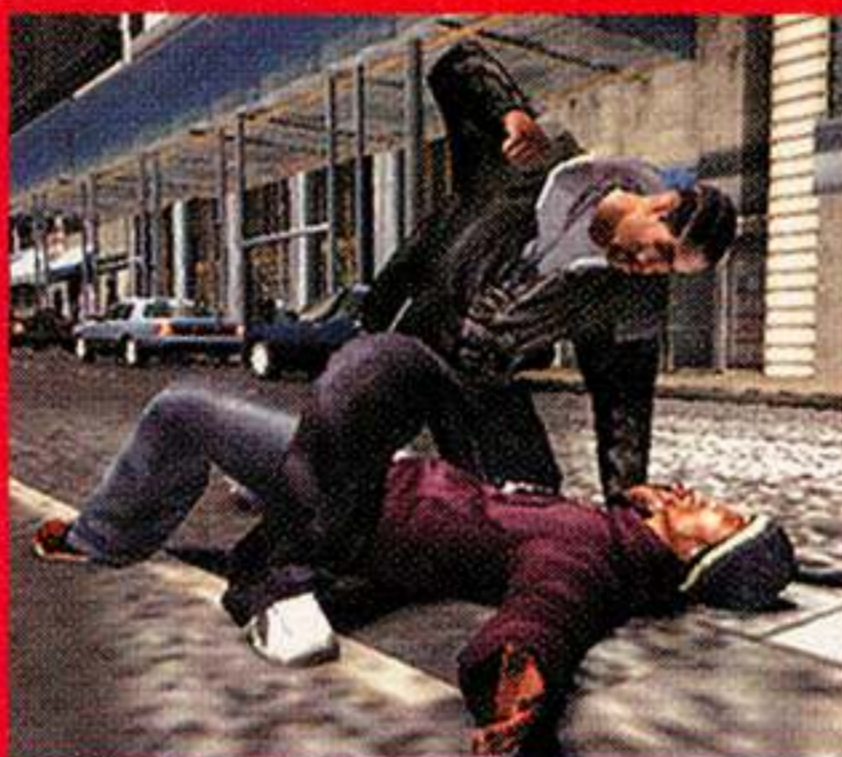
Beautiful visuals, all-new animations, a true-to-life atmosphere—how can the next-gen edition of *Madden* not be the ultimate football prize? Well, aside from the game's online play and 30-year franchise mode, this version's feature set is pretty bare bones when compared to the current-gen installment. You won't find the robust owner or superstar mode here, and forget about a create-a-player option and classic teams. So don't trade in your PS2, Xbox, or GameCube copy of *Madden NFL 06* just yet.

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XBOX 360: sports roundup

Microsoft's next-gen console will have plenty of balls

R eason No. 45 cosplayers hate sports: They always get the most games at the release of a new console, and 360 is no different.

If you missed our exclusive *NBA Live 06* preview last issue (#196), you should know that EA's basketball sim will storm the court with a much more physical game, a dynamic camera system, plus an achievement system that rewards you for winning the MVP trophy and NBA finals.

NBA 2K6 and *NHL 2K6* are also slated to appear in the launch window, but we're a little weary: The only thing 2K Sports can tell us about either title is that both will feature all-new cloth animations. We can hear your excitement.

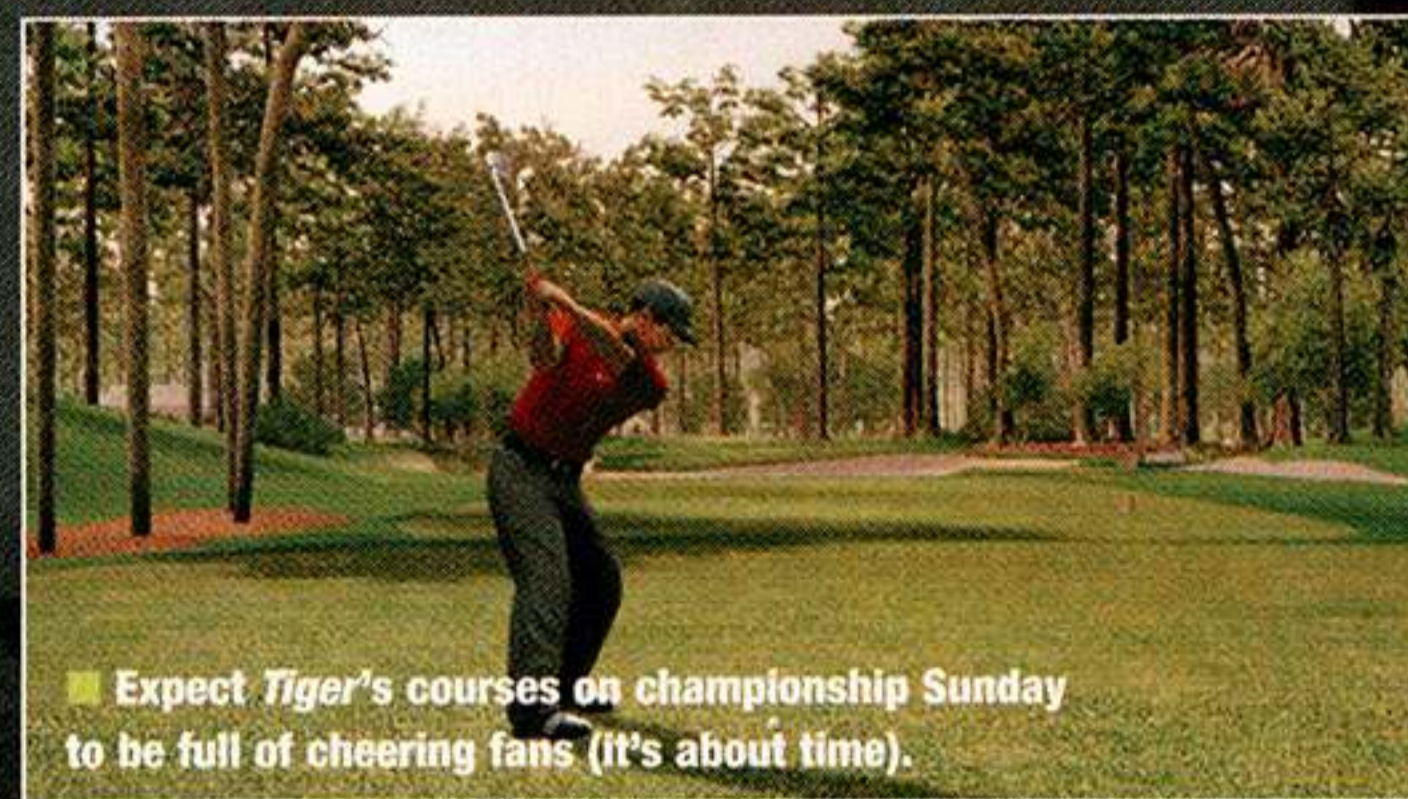
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06 will receive some much-needed upgrades, and it'll be mostly noticeable around the links (as in actual fans). The next-gen golfer will also feature 16 achievement awards such as ranking No.1 in one of the game modes.

Still don't know who David Beckham is? Well, then you might not care that *FIFA 06* will have almost quadruple the number of animations, which translates into distinctive running styles, freestyle kicks, and player reactions.

Outside of mainstream sports (at least for videogames), *Top Spin 2* will offer smarter opponents, and shredfest *Amped 3* goes big with huge mountains (six times larger than the previous game's) and an ambitious story mode.



■ Not pictured: impressive next-generation graphics.



■ Expect *Tiger's* courses on championship Sunday to be full of cheering fans (it's about time).



■ *Top Spin 2*: A good reason for those country-club snobs to buy an Xbox 360.

Xbox Live Arcade: You Just Spent \$400 to Play Bejeweled

Come Xbox 360 launch day, you may find yourself overwhelmed by all the whiz-bang next-gen visuals and trippy quadrasonic soundscapes. Should this hap-

pen, make like a soccer mom and visit the all-new Xbox Live Arcade (incompatible with original Xbox). Here, you can download various action, puzzle, and

parlor games that you save on either the Xbox 360 hard drive or a memory unit. Demos are free, and the full games (most of which offer online multiplay-

er) will run between \$9.99 and \$19.99 each. Other titles available on launch day include *Joust*, *Bankshot Billiards*, and *Marble Blast Ultra*.



Wik: Fable of Souls: Thrill to this simple 2D platformer-puzzler hybrid starring a hideous troll doll with a long prehensile tongue. No relation to hit game *Fable*.



Mutant Storm Reloaded: Save humanity from endless waves of deadly alien scum in this classic arcade-style shooter. Aliens...shooting...it's kind of like *Halo*!



Hexic HD: Every Xbox 360 hard drive comes preloaded with this popular tile-based puzzler from legendary *Tetris* creator Alexey Pajitnov.

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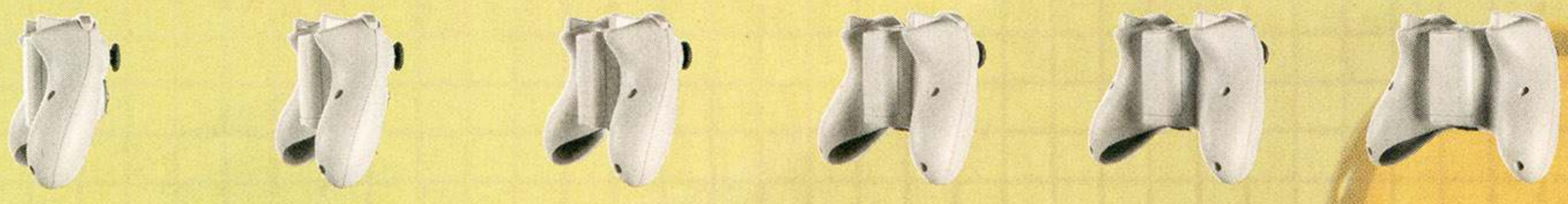
For more game information visit www.battlefield.ea.com.



PlayStation.2



INTERNET CONNECTION required for online play. PlayStation®2 Online play requires Internet Connection and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). See product pack for details.
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THE ULTIMATE XBOX 360 GIVEAWAY!

We're giving away stuff. Lots of stuff. Lots of really, really cool stuff! A bunch of you will win one of the awesome prize packages shown below. And it's all official gear, direct from Microsoft—no third-rate knockoffs here! Check out what we're giving away:



Ten (10) Grand Prizes: THE ULTIMATE XBOX 360 DREAM PACKAGE

Including:

Hardware

- Xbox 360 console (with hard drive!)
- 4 Wireless Controllers

Games

- *Perfect Dark Zero*
- *Kameo: Elements of Power*
- *Project Gotham Racing 3*

Official Xbox 360 Accessories

- Xbox 360 Camera
- 9 Xbox 360 Faceplates (including several that aren't available in the U.S.!)
- 4 Headsets
- Universal Media Remote
- Wireless Networking Adapter
- Memory Unit
- Play & Charge Kit
- 4 Rechargeable Battery Packs

Plus: A one-year membership to Xbox Live Gold (a \$50 value!)



Five (5) Runner-up Prizes: XBOX 360 ACCESSORIES TRAVEL CASE

A metal, lockable hard case that can hold one game and comes packed with:

- Wireless Controller
- Memory Unit
- Play & Charge Kit

How to Enter (And How to TRIPLE Your Chances of Winning!)

Go to <http://xbox360.egmmag.com> and submit this code:

U8ESAK

This is the code for the November issue (the one you're holding in your hands). Then be sure to check out the next two issues

of *Electronic Gaming Monthly* (December 2005, January 2006) for two new codes you can submit to **DOUBLE** or **TRIPLE** your chances of winning! Yes, you can enter this giveaway up to three times total (one for each issue/code, including this one), but alas, you can only win one prize in the end.

For full contest legal rules, restrictions, and details, visit <http://xbox360.egmmag.com>.



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PRESENTS

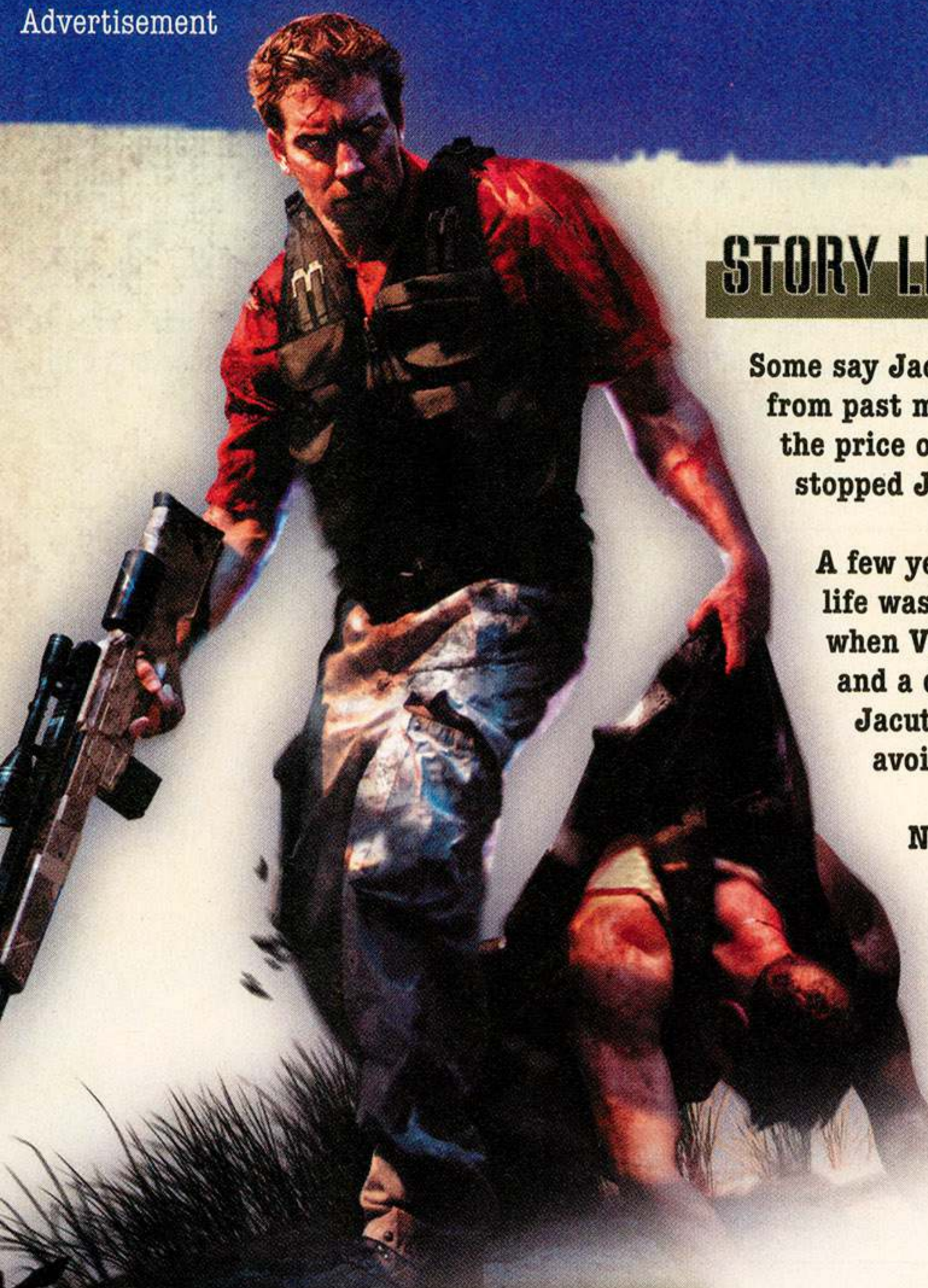
**“A STRATEGY PREVIEW FOR
FARCRY INSTINCTS”**



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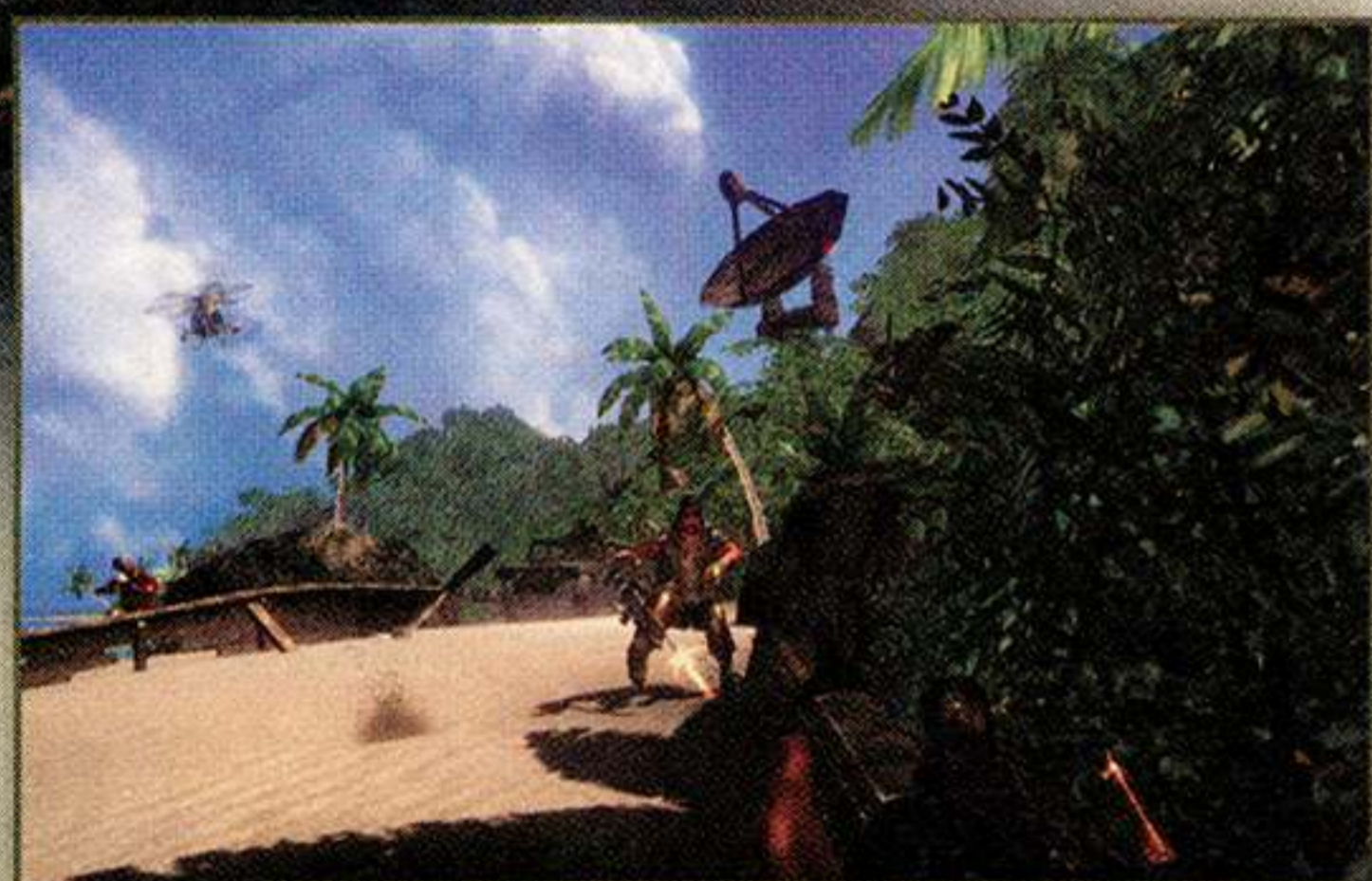
STORY LINE

Some say Jack Carver settled down in Micronesia because he was on the run from past mistakes... And while it's true that the dishonorable discharge and the price on his head made it hard to earn an honest living, that had never stopped Jack before.

A few years and lot of boat trips later and Jack can almost imagine that life was always this simple. Maybe that's why he doesn't smell trouble when Val Cortez shows up at his dock with her cameras and her swimsuit and a day-pack full of cash. Or when she asks him to take her to the Jacutan islands, a remote archipelago that the locals know enough to avoid...

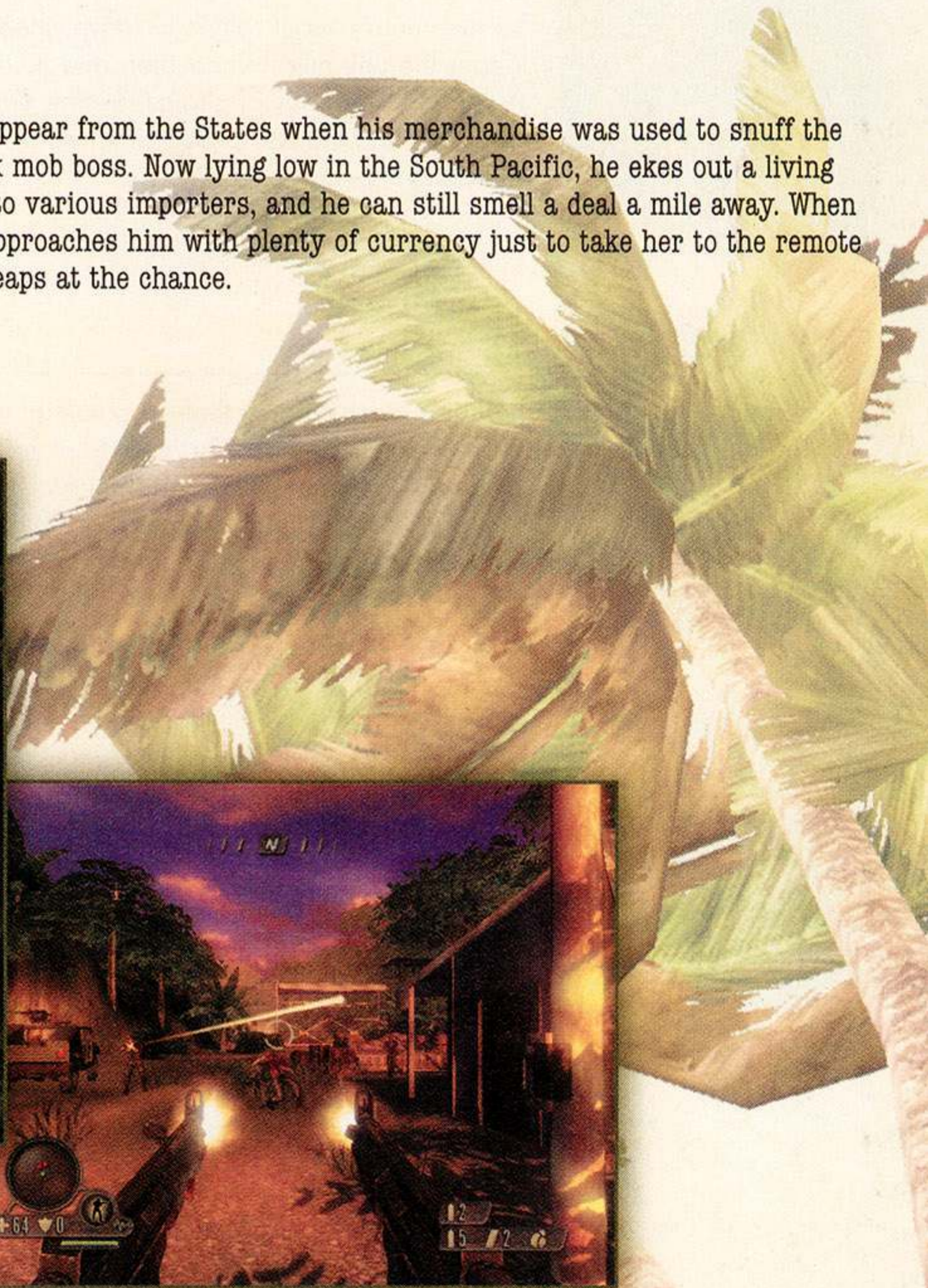
Now his boat and livelihood are so much burning debris, Val's disappeared, and everywhere he runs Jack finds more wackjobs in fatigues trying to shoot him or blow him up or run him over. On top of that, he's cornered in a merciless tropical jungle, where a violent death lurks just an inch below the natural beauty.

Jack has to either embrace the wilderness and make its brutality his own, or he'll face extinction at the point of a mercenary gun.



JACK CARVER

Carver was forced to disappear from the States when his merchandise was used to snuff the nephew of a top New York mob boss. Now lying low in the South Pacific, he ekes out a living delivering "fishing gear" to various importers, and he can still smell a deal a mile away. When an attractive journalist approaches him with plenty of currency just to take her to the remote Jacutan archipelago, he leaps at the chance.



YOUR OPPOSITION IS FIERCE

It will feel like open season in a 100% open environment: Do whatever it takes to exterminate the mercenaries, in any situation. Take cover in the undergrowth, set traps, and kill by stealth. Battle from extreme long range, from gun-mounted vehicles. Fight in close quarters or through the wilds of the island. Here are just some of the challenges you will face.



GRUNT

Dressed in simple attire and fatigues, these mercs are your basic grunt enemy, filling the Jacutan islands like ants on a fallen ice-cream cone. During combat, a grunt's primary concern is to find cover in order to gain an edge in the gunfight.

Difficulty: ++



SNIPER

Decked out in Ghillie suits, these mercs are highly trained in long-range weaponry. They are extremely effective killers and should be regarded as considerable foes.

Difficulty: +++



SCOUT

The mercenary scout role is to move ahead, spot and assess any potential danger the unit might encounter, and then return the intel to the squad leader. His weapons of choice are the Benelli M3 shotgun for close-quarter battles and the M4 assault rifle for when the target is at a distance.

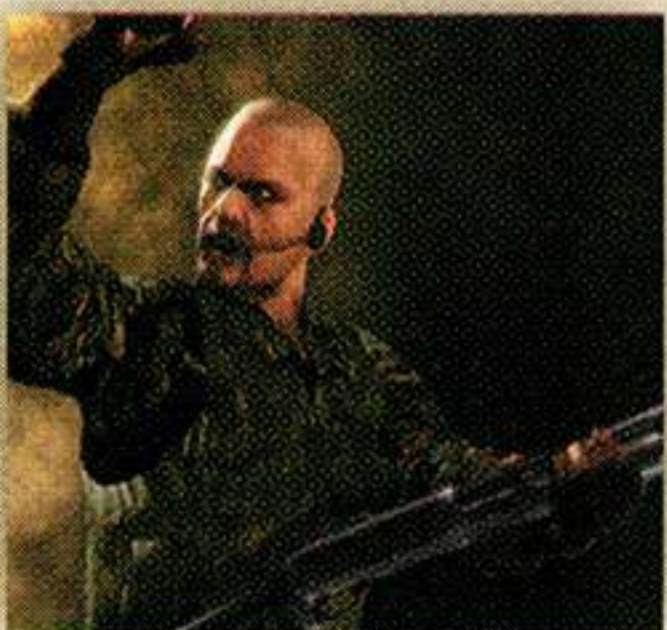
Difficulty: ++



TAIL GUNNER

The tail gunner ensures that no potential threats are able to sneak up on the unit. He carries a variety of goodies, like M82A1 anti-personal Claymore mines, that he can rig as booby traps against pursuers. These dangerous mercs are highly trained in the use of explosives and midrange weapons.

Difficulty: ++



SQUAD LEADER

The squad leader hands out orders and orchestrates the unit's maneuvers using the information relayed by the scout. Taking out the squad leader is like cutting the head off a chicken.

Difficulty: ++





EQUIPMENT

Equipment that looks and feels real: Plunder an arsenal of responsive, realistic weapons and vehicles including P90s, MP5s, mortars, ATVs, gunboats, hang gliders and much more. Turn the mercenaries' stockpile into the instruments of their own destruction.

A SMALL SAMPLE OF AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT

Light

BUTTERFLY KNIFE

Small, compact, and rapidly deployed, this small knife will be the first weapon that Carver finds.

GLOCK

The Glock 18 is an extremely reliable weapon capable of a high rate of fire. Its extended magazine is able to handle 31 rounds, which can be very effective. Akimbo possible.

Heavy

MP5

Small, lightweight, accurate, the MP5 is perfect for close-quarter battle. This is one of the first weapons you will find in the game. Akimbo possible.

P90

It may not have the range of an assault rifle, but because of the caliber it uses, the P90 can still defeat standard CRISAT helmets and armor vests at reasonable distances (50-100 meters). Akimbo possible.

CARBINE

The carbine is perfect for covert operations. It enables the individual soldier operating in close quarters to engage targets with accurate, lethal fire. It's also equipped with a zoom for long-distance kills.

Deadly

MACHINE GUN

The M249 S.A.W. is a lightweight, gas-operated, magazine or disintegrating metallic link-belt fed, individually portable machine gun capable of delivering a large volume of effective fire.

MORTAR STATIONARY WEAPON

The mortar excels in tactical environments for defense, retrograde, patrolling, rear area security, and special operations. Its 40 mm bullet causes a lot of damage.

Land Vehicles

HOVERCRAFT

The hovercraft is slow, hard to maneuver, and doesn't accelerate very fast, but it's the most versatile vehicle available. The military-equipped hovercraft is ideal for areas where land and water terrain are plentiful.

Air Vehicles

GLIDER

Frequently used by the mercs for emergencies, the glider will let the player descend to the ground smoothly.

Sea Vehicles

PATROL BOAT

The patrol boat is big, sturdy, and armed with a .50 cal Browning M2; it's useful for getting across contested water in a hurry. It is not amazingly fast, but it can take a great deal of damage.

MAP EDITOR

One of the coolest features of Far Cry Instincts is the Map Editor. It allows you to create your very own multiplayer maps, which can be used individually or published on Xbox Live® for use with others. While the possibilities for map creation are unlimited, we are going to show you just how powerful and easy to use the built-in Map Editor is. We are going to create a simple, yet functional and entertaining sample map right from the mind of Shawn LeBlanc, the Programmer/Designer for the Map Editor portion of Far Cry Instincts.

THE BASICS

With these early parameters there are nine possible combinations at the very start of the map creation process. For the sample map, select the Tropical map template, and the Military brush set.



Once the map template and brush set have been decided, the terrain must be created. After the terrain is placed and modified to your satisfaction, the next thing to do is add in the physical objects like trees, shrubs, fences, tents, and other incidental objects that aren't directly related to map strategy. Once this is all in place, you must place the Health Kits, the Armor, the Flag positions, the respawn points, and the vehicles; in other words, you must place everything that does affect gameplay and strategy. Once this is done, the map can be used. However, you will probably want to take another pass over the map to add the grace touches.

CREATING THE MAP

This simple map has two islands, two bridges, two blue and two red respawn points, and two flag positions.

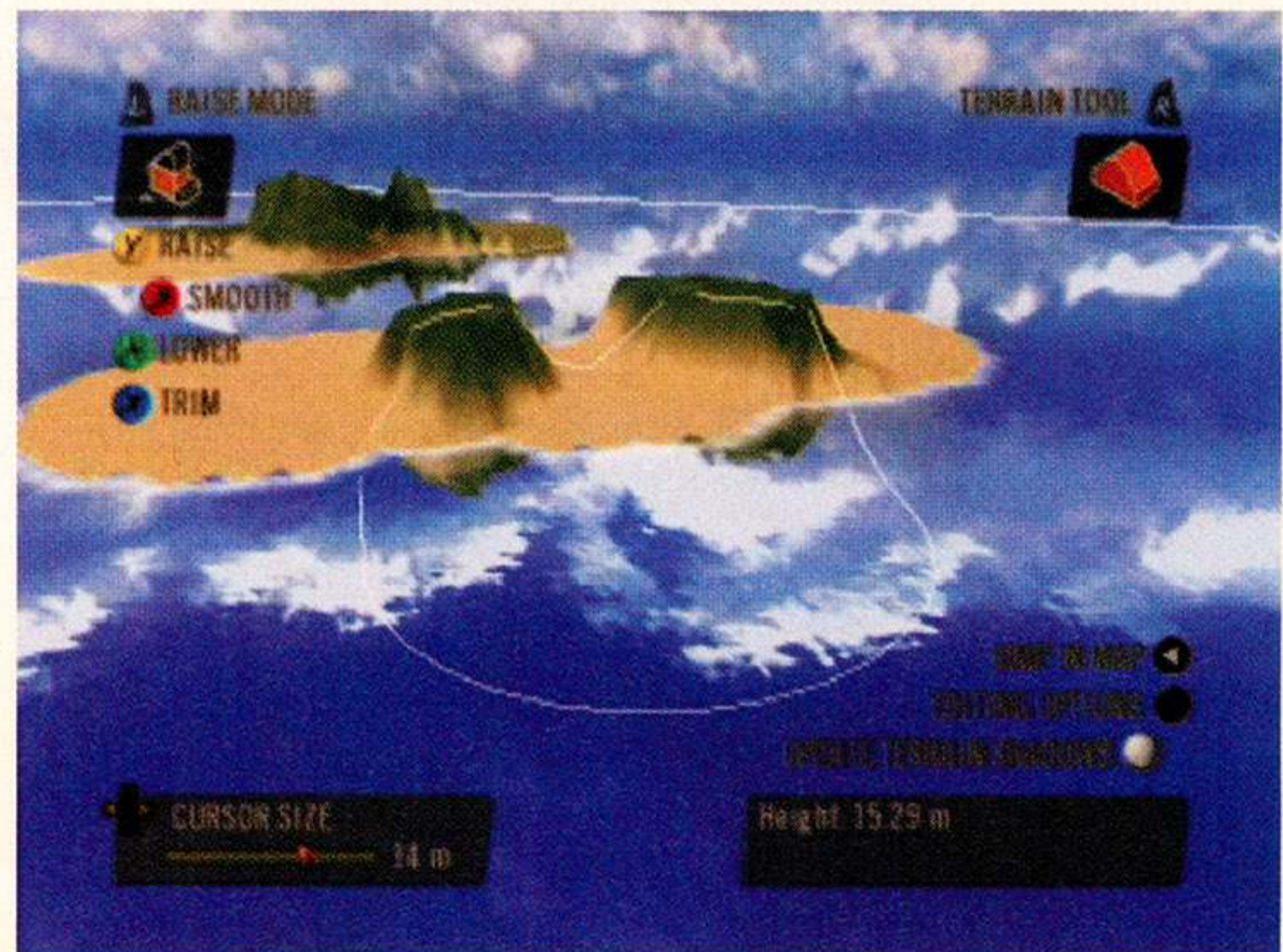
Lay out the Land

As mentioned previously, select the Tropical template and the Military brush set. From here, go directly into the Map Editor, where you can begin to create the land masses. Use the left trigger to enter Raise mode. The right trigger selects Terrain mode.



Make the cursor large and raise your land mass on the first island.

Use the Y button to raise the terrain inside your cursor; note that you should make your cursor fairly large to create the initial land masses. Move the cursor around and create two islands that are similar in size and close enough to each other that a reasonably long bridge can connect the two.



Make the second island close enough that the two islands can be connected by bridges.



Use the tools to smooth things out and create exactly the land mass you have envisioned.

Once the two basic land masses are created, you can smooth them out (B button) and raise (Y button) or lower (A button) them as much as you want until you have the exact islands you envisioned.

Place the Flags and Respawn Points

Now that the islands are set up, place the Blue Team and Red Team flags and respawn points on the islands. Try to place them in roughly equal proximity to key island locations on both sides so that one team doesn't have an advantage over the other. Two respawn points for these maps is optimal, but four would not be out of line.



Place the flags and respawn points.

Populate the Island with Objects

Now that you have the basic layout and you know where the respawn points and flags go, it's time to populate the island with trees, shrubs, tents, rocks, whatever your heart desires. The only caveat is that you always place objects with a eye on gameplay balance. That is, don't put a fence around one of the flags and not the other, for example.



Populate the island with trees.



Place objects such as Health Kits.

This is also the time to place key bonus items such as Health Kits, Armor, Mega Armor, and weaponry. For powerful weapons like the Rocket Launcher, it can be a good idea to place the item in the middle of the bridges between the two islands, or even on a mini-island in between the two main land masses. This way whoever gets there first wins the prize.

This is also the time to erect fences and other barriers (again, equally on both sides) that will direct the flow of player movement into choke points. If you don't want to include these sorts of things, then don't, but for the map created here, there are short fence segments on both sides.



Fence segments direct the fighting into choke points or "hot spot."

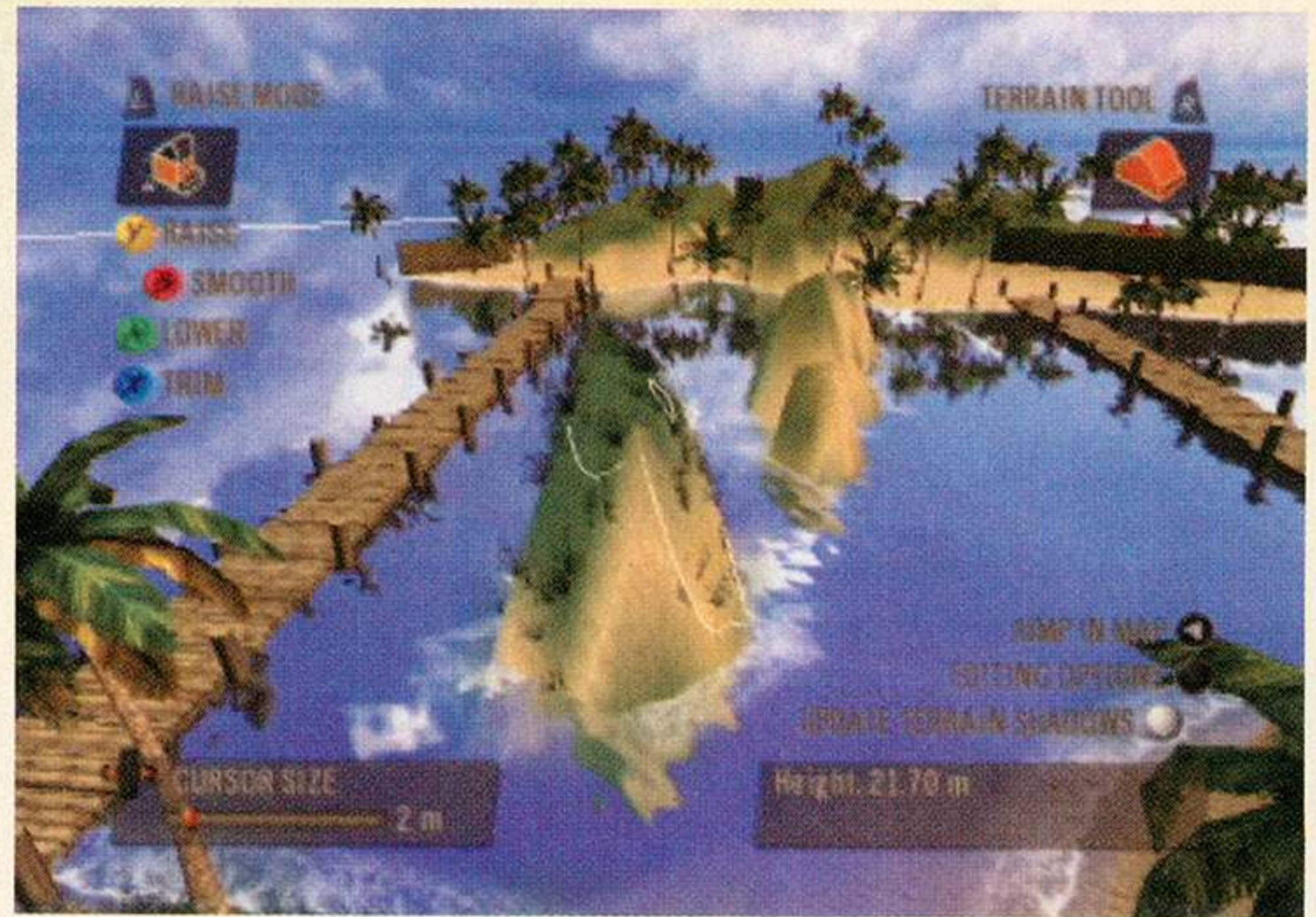
Build the Bridges

This map includes two bridges. The two bridges in this map have excellent lines of sight to each other, so some land masses were added between the bridges to make things a little more interesting. Lay down your bridges across the islands



Place two bridges.

with an eye on play balance. In other words, don't put a bridge too close to a path to one of the player's flags.



We placed land in between the bridges in order to eliminate sight lines between the two.

Place Vehicles and Weapons

You're almost done. Now is the time to place whatever vehicles you want on the island. Since this map is a water-based map, two Water Scooters were included. For the land portion, a Humvee and a pair of ATVs were included. While the Humvee doesn't have much ground to drive over, its gun is a powerful and handy weapon that can give whichever team occupies it an advantage.



Place a Water Scooter or perhaps a boat.



Also place a land-based vehicle or two as well.

Apply the Grace Notes and Explore Your Map

That's it, you're done! The map can now be used. You could now move around and apply the grace notes, cleaning up or altering the map as you see fit. You can also hop into the map and actually run around to give it a go. Cruising around a map you just created is plenty of fun, but when you actually play the map with your buddies, the fun really begins!



You're done.



Hop into the map and go for a spin!



review crew

a ball-rolling game, a surgery game, a lawyer game, and a kleptomaniacal raccoon

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THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

Castlevania is an unstoppable force. The last four portable *Vania* games have all walked away with Game of the Month honors (including this issue's *Dawn of Sorrow*), despite the fact that Dracula himself seems to have retired as the main villain. The latest pulls a Buck Rogers and takes place in the year 2036, for crying out loud—and yet still manages to be absolutely great, thanks to deep, challenging gameplay, old-school yet flawless graphics, and perfect controls.

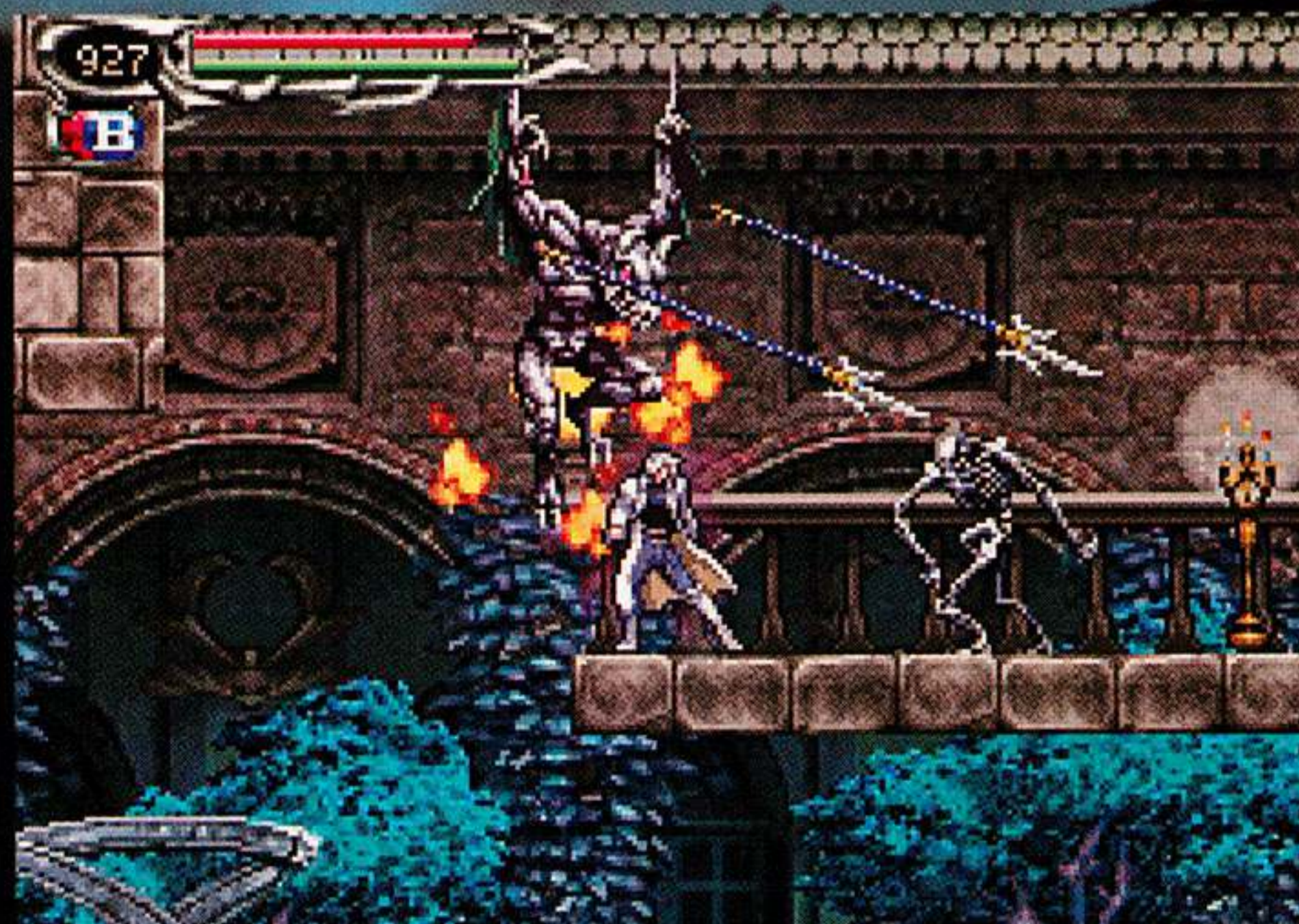
But it almost didn't win. *Burnout Revenge* (PS2/XB), *Burnout Legends*

(PSP), and the pseudosequel to cult-classic *Ico*, *Shadow of the Colossus*, all came within half a point of *Dawn of Sorrow*. But if you like a dark horse, *Indigo Prophecy*—from long-dormant developer Quantic Dream (maker of *Omikron* for Dreamcast and PC)—is the biggest surprise by far. One reviewer called this riff on the nearly dead point-and-click adventure genre “one of the most unique games this year.”

And if you're wondering about all extra the faces on our Review Crew this month, blame Christmas. The videogame silly season is just beginning.



CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW





THE REVIEW CREW

DAN "SHOE" HSU, Editor-in-Chief

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 Dislikes: Spending money on system launches
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 Dislikes: Optional hard drives, *Katamari* co-op
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 Dislikes: *Zelda: Twilight Princess* being delayed, your daddy
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 Dislikes: Waking up next to his PSP
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 Dislikes: Single jumps, working vacations
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 Dislikes: Writing about likes and dislikes
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Likes: RPGs, rhythm games, root beer
 Dislikes: PS1 RPGs repackaged and slapped on PSP
 Blog: debaser.1UP.com



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Likes: *Virtua Tennis* and *Madden* on my handheld, break dancing
 Dislikes: Things that don't involve sports
 Blog: What, me blog?



CHRISTIAN NUTT, Staff Reviewer

Likes: *Shining Force Neo*, *Meteos*, and *Meteos*
 Dislikes: Playing bad games instead of those
 Blog: ferricide.1UP.com



KATHLEEN SANDERS, Staff Reviewer

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 Dislikes: One-shot kills, cowboy justice, *Celebrity Justice*
 Blog: cookiecups.1UP.com



GREG SEWART, Staff Reviewer

Likes: The return of the NHL, anything NASCAR, fast women
 Dislikes: What happened to the new *Lunar* (DS)
 Blog: stewy.1UP.com



JUSTIN SPEER, Staff Reviewer

Likes: Choosing his own adventure, having an impact
 Dislikes: Novelty for novelty's sake
 Blog: zepyulos.1UP.com



■ We also like to call our foolhardy friends over at **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** and **1UP.COM** to help us out in times of great desperation. They wash their hands often and avoid eye contact, so everything's cool.

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 each month gets a star.



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

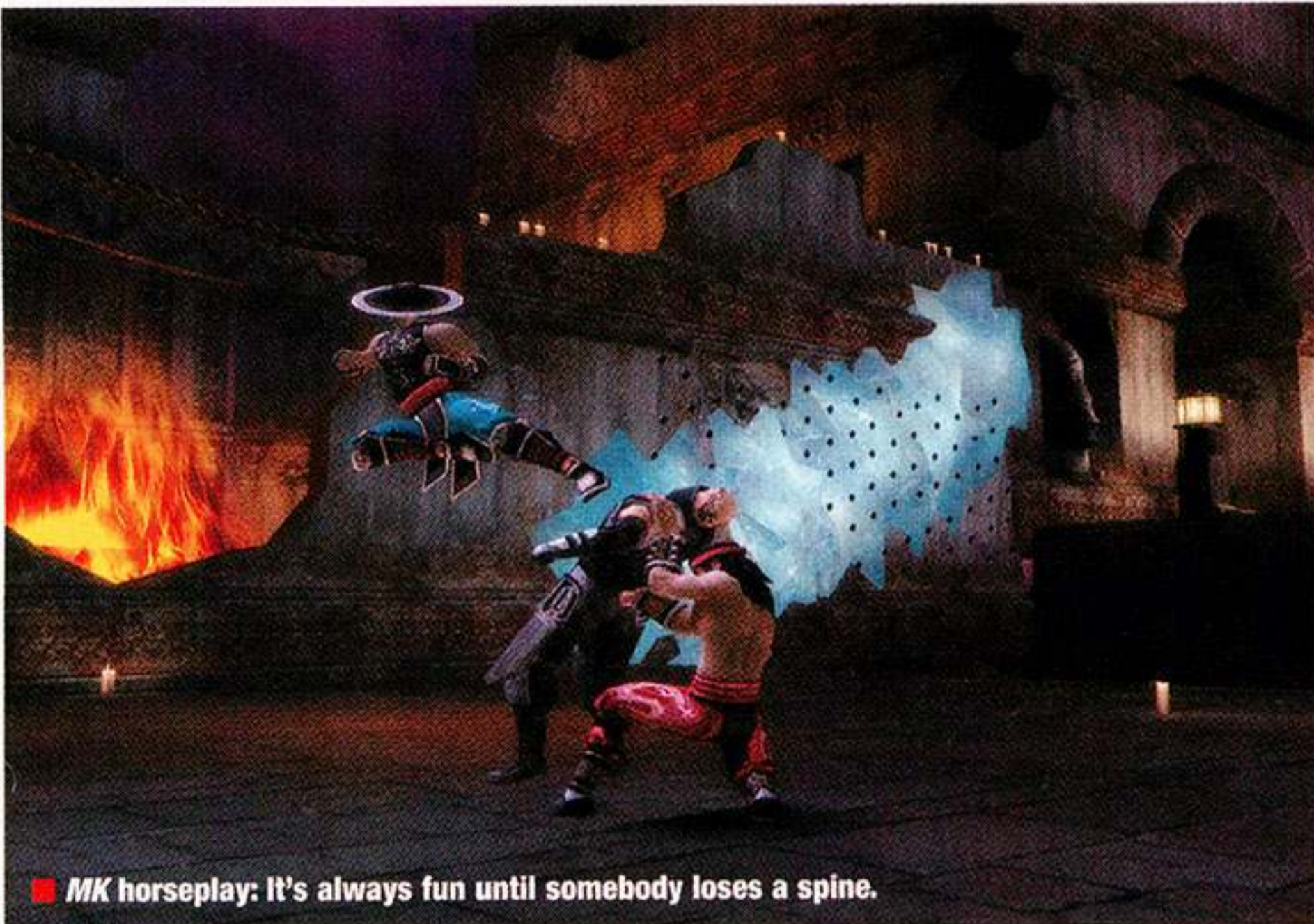
ESRB Ratings

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

PS2/XB

MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

Dynamic duo



■ MK horseplay: It's always fun until somebody loses a spine.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	8.0	7.5
	G. FORD	CHE	MATT

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Mature

www.mkmonks.com

Good: Solid fighting system, entertaining multiplayer
Bad: Objectives can be unclear; simple puzzles
Unlockable Fun: *Mortal Kombat II*



G. FORD: You'd be excused for taking one look at this game and running for the hills. Fact is, the *Mortal Kombat* nonfighters (the *Mythologies* and *Special Forces* of the series) haven't exactly brought honor to the mostly fighting-game series. But *Shaolin Monks*—an action/adventure/brawler starring series vets Liu Kang and Kung Lao—shows how to correctly execute a spin-off.

Right off the bat, it's easy to get a hang of the game's fluid pace and responsive controls. In fact, the fighting and combo systems are so well designed that you'll find yourself naturally creating combos almost immediately. (The combo system is similar to *God of War's* string-hits-together approach, though more forgiving.)

Co-op play is particularly enjoyable and actually rewards you with unlockables. And it wouldn't be an *MK* game without some fan service, so expect plenty of character cameos, familiar stages, and fatalities. Were it not for the sometimes-unclear objectives (coupled with a tough-to-follow map); puzzles that almost always involve throwing an enemy into a wall, spikes, and the like; and some minor annoyances, this one would be award worthy.

1UP.COM—CHE: For a hardcore 3D fighting fan and a grouchy ol' *Mortal Kombat* cynic like myself, *Shaolin Monks* is the

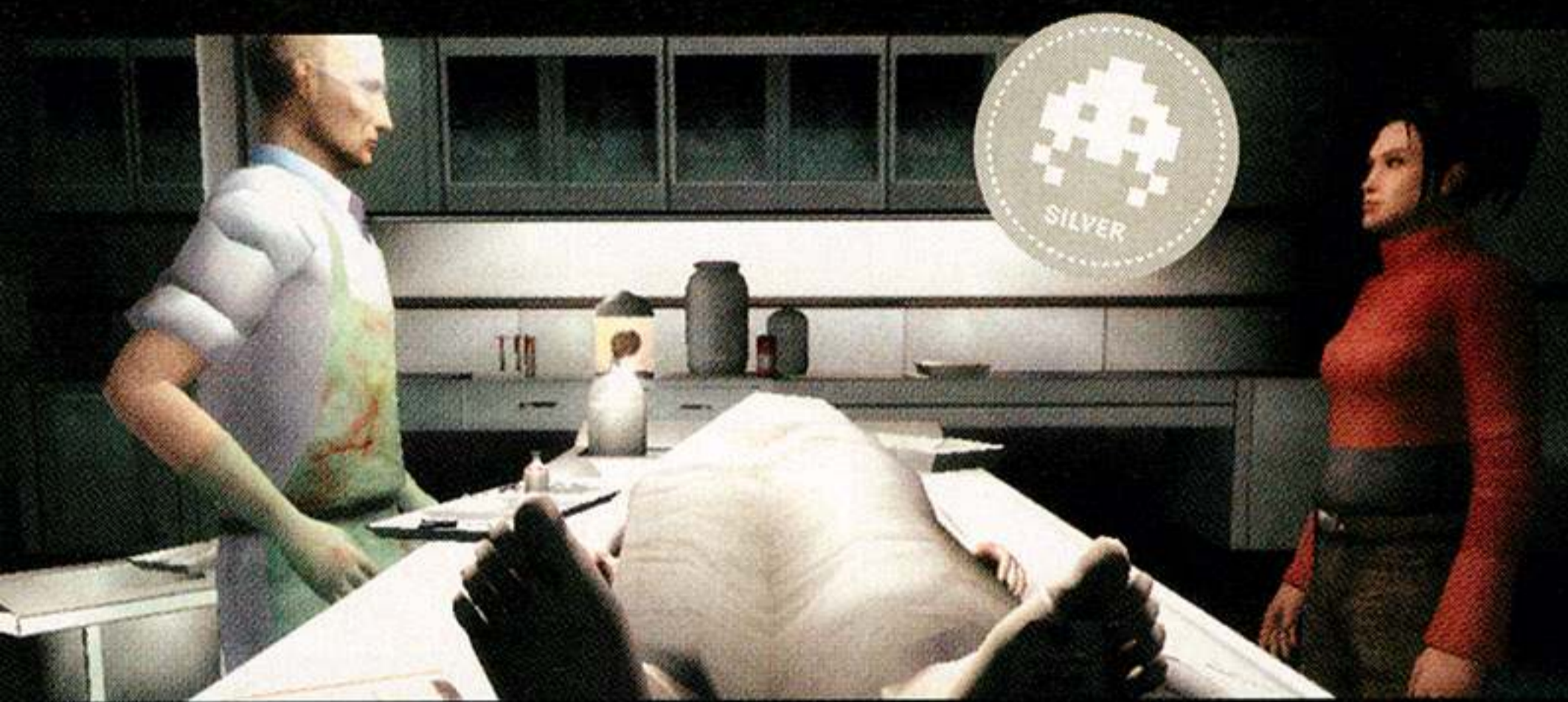
kind of game this series has needed for years. What makes this title click is that, for a 3D action brawler, the controls here feel surprisingly similar to its fighting game counterpart; mash buttons to impress friends and loved ones—or actually learn the combat system and rack up insane combos with gratifying air juggles. *Monks* doesn't pretend to be an ultra-deep fighting game, realizing instead that the key to being fun lies in granting players the power to shatter opponents into bite-sized chunks. Sure, there's the inevitable déjà vu from trendsetters like *God of War*, and the game itself can be finished (multiple times) over a weekend, but taken on its own merits, *Monks* is an excellent departure for the *MK* series.

1UP.COM—MATT: It actually makes a lot of sense to shift *Mortal Kombat* into the action genre. The extensive backstory, the hidden collectibles, the larger-than-life boss characters—these series hallmarks fit naturally into this kind of game (perhaps more naturally than in a fighting game, even). Add in a fluid combat system that's better than some full-fledged fighting games out there, and it's all very impressive. The main story is pretty cheesy and short, but the combat and aforementioned *God of War* similarities make this a pleasant surprise.

PS2/XB

INDIGO PROPHECY

Nostradamus didn't predict this one



■ When the bathroom is also the crime scene, sometimes it's better just to hold it.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	9.0	8.5
	JUSTIN	JOHN	CHE

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Quantic Dream
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.indigoprophecy.com

Good: Subtle player actions have real impact; makes you think
Bad: Big action sequences feel like button-pressing minigames
Out of Character: Conspicuously noninteractive sex scene



JUSTIN: As a mystery/adventure/thriller in videogame form, *Indigo Prophecy* has you playing both sides of a supernatural murder mystery with your analog sticks. The game focuses on individual actions instead of the broad strokes, giving you control of situations other games present as passive cut-scenes. Interrogating a witness, hiding evidence at a bloody crime scene, or pouring a glass of wine all require your deliberate touch—influencing the story moment-to-moment like this is amazing. Basic character movement can feel somewhat awkward, alas, but it's a minor annoyance.

You'll handle traditional game activities like martial arts duels or running for your life via timed button presses (think *Resident Evil 4* or Dreamcast's *Shenmue*) and punishing, button-mashing stress tests. These aren't the highlights of the game, but you'll push through to experience what's next. The involving plot gets messy as you near the end, but it's worth finishing.

Even with its frustrating imperfections, *Indigo* is unquestionably innovative and genuinely interesting. The adventure genre (hell, the industry in general) should take notes. If your mind's open, let this one in.

1UP.COM—JOHN: *Indigo Prophecy* finally delivers on the promise of "interactive movies" more than 10 years after the term was coined. By blending ideas from

Shenmue, old-school point-and-click adventures, rhythm games, and survival-horror, it blazes a trail that will certainly appeal to older gamers thanks to its strong narrative and Hitchcock-influenced cinematic feel. It's not without fault, though. The otherwise well-written story sadly degenerates as it unnecessarily accelerates toward the end, and gets lost in its own pseudo theology and techno mysticism. And did we really need not one, but two stealth missions to spoil the pace? Overall, though, *Indigo's* a unique, beautifully presented, and genuinely mature experience that shouldn't be overlooked.

1UP.COM—CHE: From a gameplay standpoint, *Indigo* isn't much to write home about. Most of the interaction consists of exploring static environments for clues and items, while action sequences consist of Simon Says minigames. But then again, *Indigo's* writer/director David Cage intends for the game to be experienced like a movie—and as such, *Indigo's* mechanical shortcomings seem more forgivable. The problem is that, even as a movie, *Indigo's* sci-fi pulp pastiche is so full of plot holes that you're left with nothing but disappointment at the end. Such a bummer. Still, *Indigo* is one of the most unique games this year and something you've got to experience for its audacity alone.

PS2/XB

EVIL DEAD REGENERATION

Ash backward



■ Good: Ash (above). Evil: His wisecracking sidekick (inset).

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

5.5

CRISPIN

4.5

JON D.

6.5

CHRISTIAN

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Cranky Pants
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.evildead3.com

Good: Great-lookin' Ash, some funny quips

Bad: Grating sidekick, repetitive missions

Cool Extras Tidbit: An *Evil Dead* documentary is in the works



CRISPIN: I love the *Evil Dead* movies and star Bruce "Ash" Campbell as much as the next guy in line for his book signing at Barnes & Noble. So a small part of me (say, my right hand) gives this third installment in a line of truly evil *Evil Dead* games an automatic thumbs up for its delivered-with-gusto Bruce Campbell voice acting, unlockable interview clips, and accurate-down-to-his-mega-chin Ash character model.

But then the gamer side of me steps in and lops that possessed hand off at the wrist, because while *Regeneration* is the best *Evil Dead* game yet, it's still not quite the howlingly fun experience this license deserves. Set as a side story to the *Evil Dead II* film, *Regeneration* has Ash blasting and chainsawing deadites everywhere from a loony bin to a ghost town to a blood-sloshed other dimension. The combo-powered combat is repetitive but satisfying—especially once you find the nifty grapple-hook gun and flamethrower. Now, if only your pip-squeak sidekick—a perpetually reincarnating "little person" you can drop-kick onto enemies or into deadly traps—wasn't so grating. Chuck in repeat-20-times egg-finding quests (yes, egg-finding!) and a totally weak finale, and you have a mediocre game that only obsessive-collector *Dead* fans would give their right hands for.

JON D: Ah, the shrimpy wisecracking sidekick—a clear signal that you're fresh out of substantial ideas. Ash's lickspittle Sam takes *Evil Dead* from tongue-in-cheek to mouth-in-gutter while forcing gameplay down the path of "hero with helper" clichés. The game's scenarios and combat ideas are ripped right from *Resident Evil 4*, *The Suffering*, and *Devil May Cry*, which is admittedly good fodder—it makes the game something of a guilty pleasure if you're up for a no-brains, ghoulish-smashing romp. But even promising finds (I had higher hopes for the grappling gun) turn out to be one-dimensional wonders that help make up a very linear quest.

CHRISTIAN: After two pretty abysmal attempts to bring *Evil Dead* to consoles, publisher THQ has finally gotten it right. This game isn't exactly original—you run around, blasting and chainsawing zombies—but it's fast paced and has a few clever touches. The best has to be Ash's undead sidekick Sam (never mind Crispin and Jon D.), since he serves to break up the monotony of the combat (you use him to solve puzzles) and gives Bruce Campbell someone to play off of for one-liners. The game is funny and fun, if a little basic. Pick it up (it's just \$20) if you want a quick burst of action that isn't a head-scratcher.

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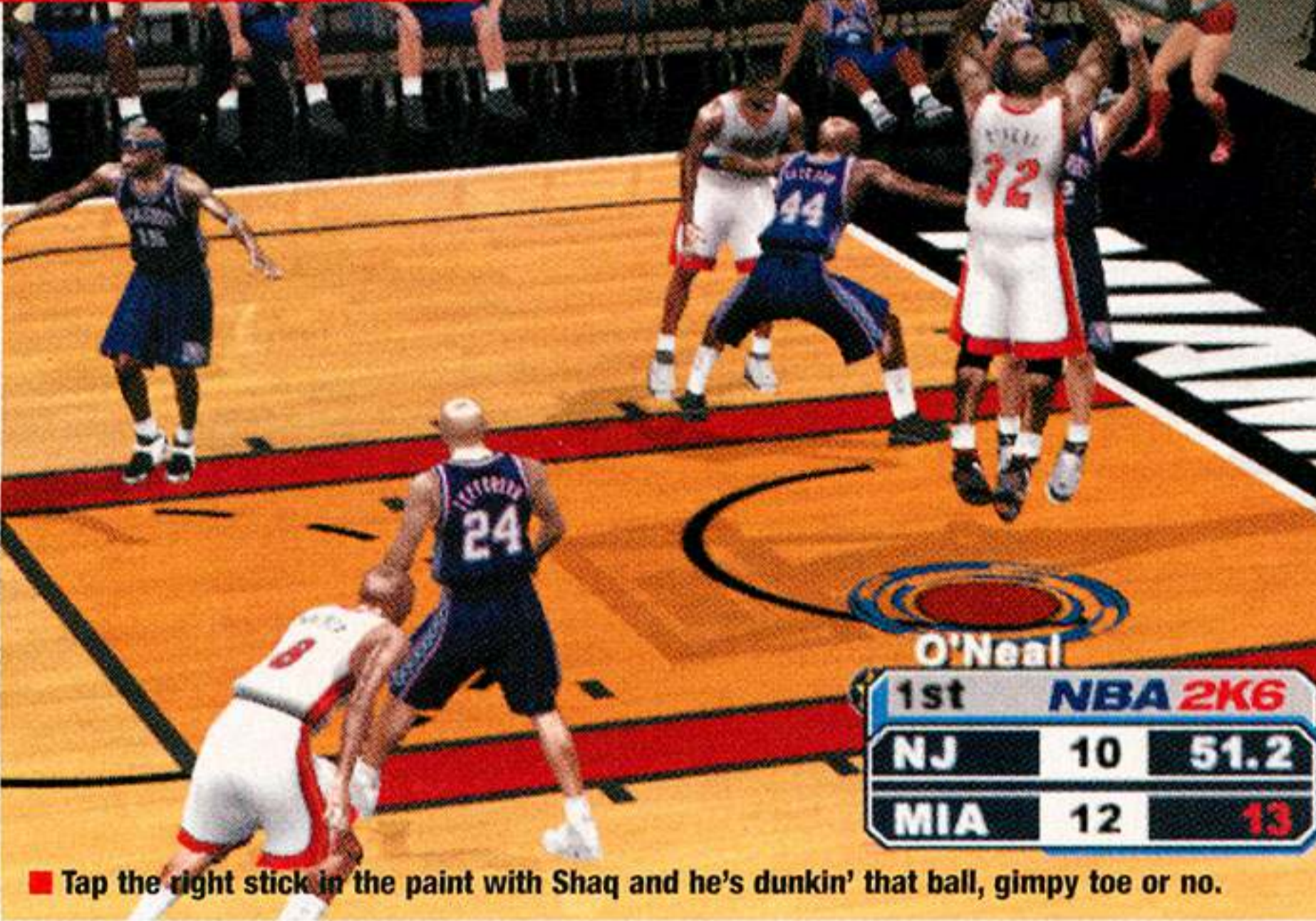
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■ Tap the right stick in the paint with Shaq and he's dunkin' that ball, gimpy toe or no.

PS2/XB

ONLINE (PS2/XB)



NBA 2K6

This year's winning team

- Good:** Spectacular graphics
- Bad:** No slam-dunk contest
- Wins an Award For:** Most in-game advertising



BRYAN: Wow—what a comeback. After a so-so performance last year (well, if you ask this reviewer, anyway), the *NBA 2K* series has made all the necessary steps to once again become the best baller out there.

And it begins on the court. Just play a few quarters and you'll quickly notice a much smarter (and more realistic) A.I.; the Kings' Peja Stojakovic will work off screens and drain three-pointers while the Heat's Dwyane Wade will drive the lane for the bucket. *2K6* also introduces some easy-to-master gameplay tweaks, including right analog stick shooting (which makes sinking jumpers just feel right) and controlling two players at once with a few simple button presses. From an audiovisual standpoint, this game sends it home with authority. Arenas full of electricity replace last year's sterile venues, and when it comes to graphics, I challenge you to find a better-looking sports sim from this generation. Its version of franchise mode is even entertainingly interactive; you can now put your players through minigame-esque training drills to improve their skills. Now next



year, just toss in a slam-dunk contest and three-point shoot-out like *NBA Live*'s....

PATRICK: Talk about a franchise overhaul...you'll have to relearn the game from scratch, as almost everything has changed in *2K6*, right down to shooting and dribbling the ball. The new shot stick really sets *2K6* apart from the rest and gives you a great sense of controlling your shot versus simply pressing and releasing a button. This innovative addition lets you hang in the air and draw fouls, and it ups the hoops experience in a big way. One thing that didn't change is the perfect NBA pace of play. No hoops game captures it like this one. Even without the ESPN license, the presentation looks sharp. One complaint: too many jump balls.

1UP.COM—GREG M: I'm a hardcore basketball fan, so *2K6* had me immersed immediately. The upgraded graphics help, but it's the ingenious shot stick that really dominates the feel of the game. Pull down on the right analog stick and release at the apex of the shot for a jumper or free throw; hold down the Aggressive button (formerly known as Turbo) in conjunction with the stick when near the basket and you'll perform a layup or a multitude of different dunks, depending on the direction of the stick. It's a control style we haven't seen in any other hoops title.

2K6 also borrows the VIP system last seen in *NFL 2K5*, which lets you track your playing tendencies and even those of your opponents. Nice.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.5	8.5
	BRYAN	PATRICK	GREG M.

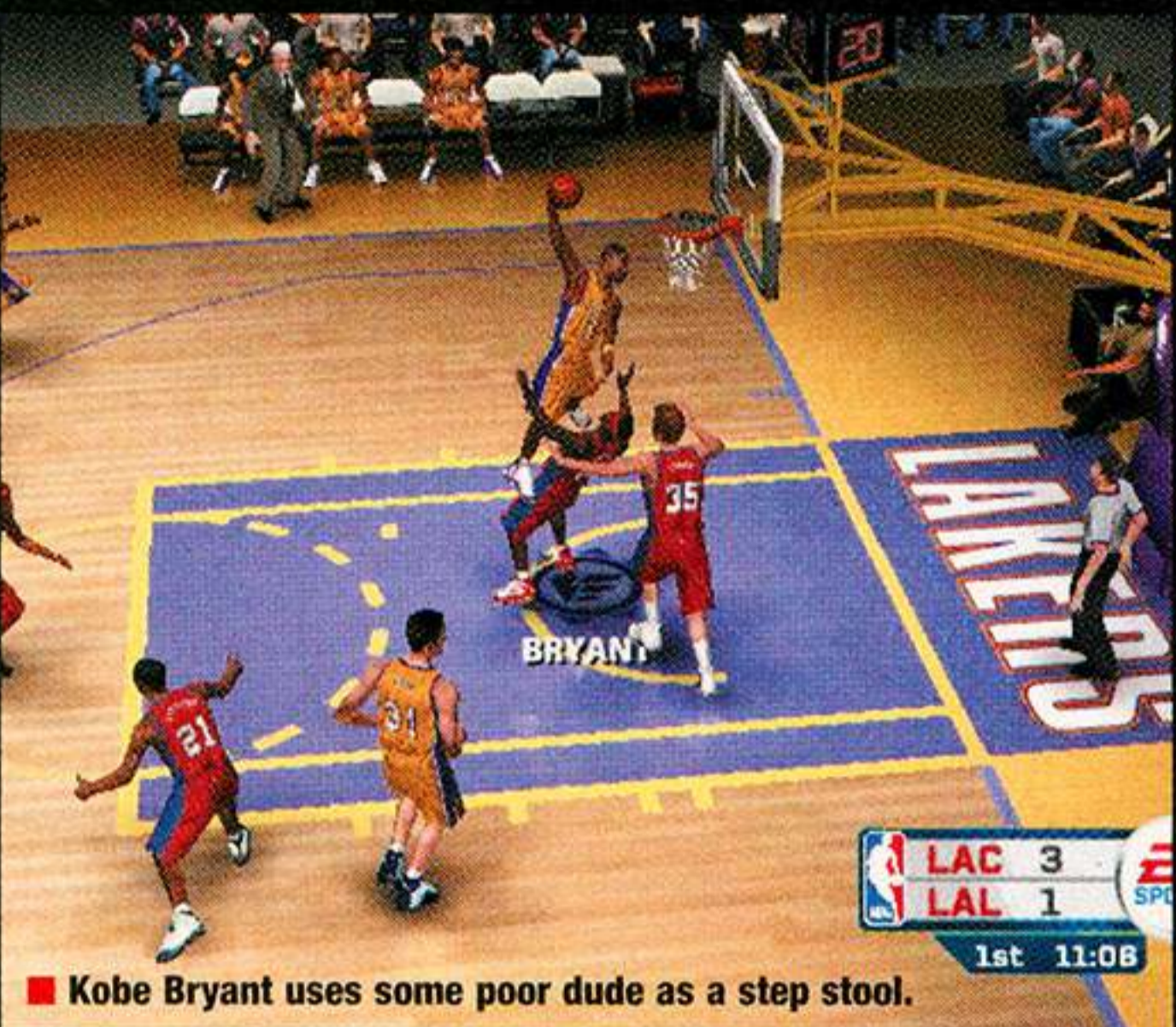
Publisher: 2K Sports
Developer: 2K Sports
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-10 Multitap, 2-10 online), XB 1-4 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Everyone
www.2ksports.com

PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE (PS2/XB ONLY)

NBA LIVE 06

Rattles off the rim



■ Kobe Bryant uses some poor dude as a step stool.



- Good:** Freestyle superstar moves
- Bad:** Slow-moving camera
- Old School:** The PS2 version includes *NBA Live '95*



BRYAN: *NBA Live 06* suffers the same fate as last season's Pistons—it performs well enough to get back to the big dance, but a few key mishaps send EA's baller home without the crown.

So what does it get right? For starters, the new "freestyle superstar" classifications, which provide certain players with poster-worthy moves, really help differentiate the NBA's finest from the scrubs making the league minimum. Also, executing one of these maneuvers—whether it be a no-look dish with Phoenix's Steve Nash or a "get that crap outta here" rejection with Shaq—is simple. Staying with the on-court action, the transition game is much improved. Players fill the lanes and continue toward the basket after receiving the rock, rather than stopping dead in their tracks like in last year's game. And finally, *Live* is no longer the ugly duckling of the b-ball community (though it still has a ways to go before catching up to *NBA 2K6* in the looks department).

But like I said, this one has minor problems. The camera doesn't swing around fast enough after a change of possession, causing some turnovers and missed fast-break opportunities. Plus, the dynasty mode, slam-dunk contest, and three-point shoot-out have all basically gone untouched.

PATRICK: The chief issue with this franchise—stars that play like clock-punching journeymen—is history now that the freestyle superstars feature brings the game's greats to life. Ben Wallace defends with the tenacity of his real-life

counterpart, and Ray Allen really lights it up from beyond the arc. Bryan's also right about the transition game—players go where they're supposed to on the break.

But Bryan complains that last year's huge addition, the All-Star Weekend, is mostly unchanged—I'd argue that unchanged or not, it still remains the best nonsimulation mode in any of this season's hoops games. And I'll make a prediction: Next year's *Live* will have a shot stick à la *2K6*'s.

1UP.COM—GREG M: Chalk me up as another fan of the new freestyle superstars feature—it's great to see Nash, LeBron, Shaq, and the other heavyweights dominate with their superior playmaking, power, and monster dunks. The players look better than they did last year, too, even down to details like Tim Duncan's pigeon-toed free throw stance.

But is *Live* enough of an improvement compared to last year, and is it worth the extra cash over *2K6*? Not for this guy—I'd go for *2K6*'s slightly more balanced take on hoops.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	8.0	7.0
	BRYAN	PATRICK	GREG M.

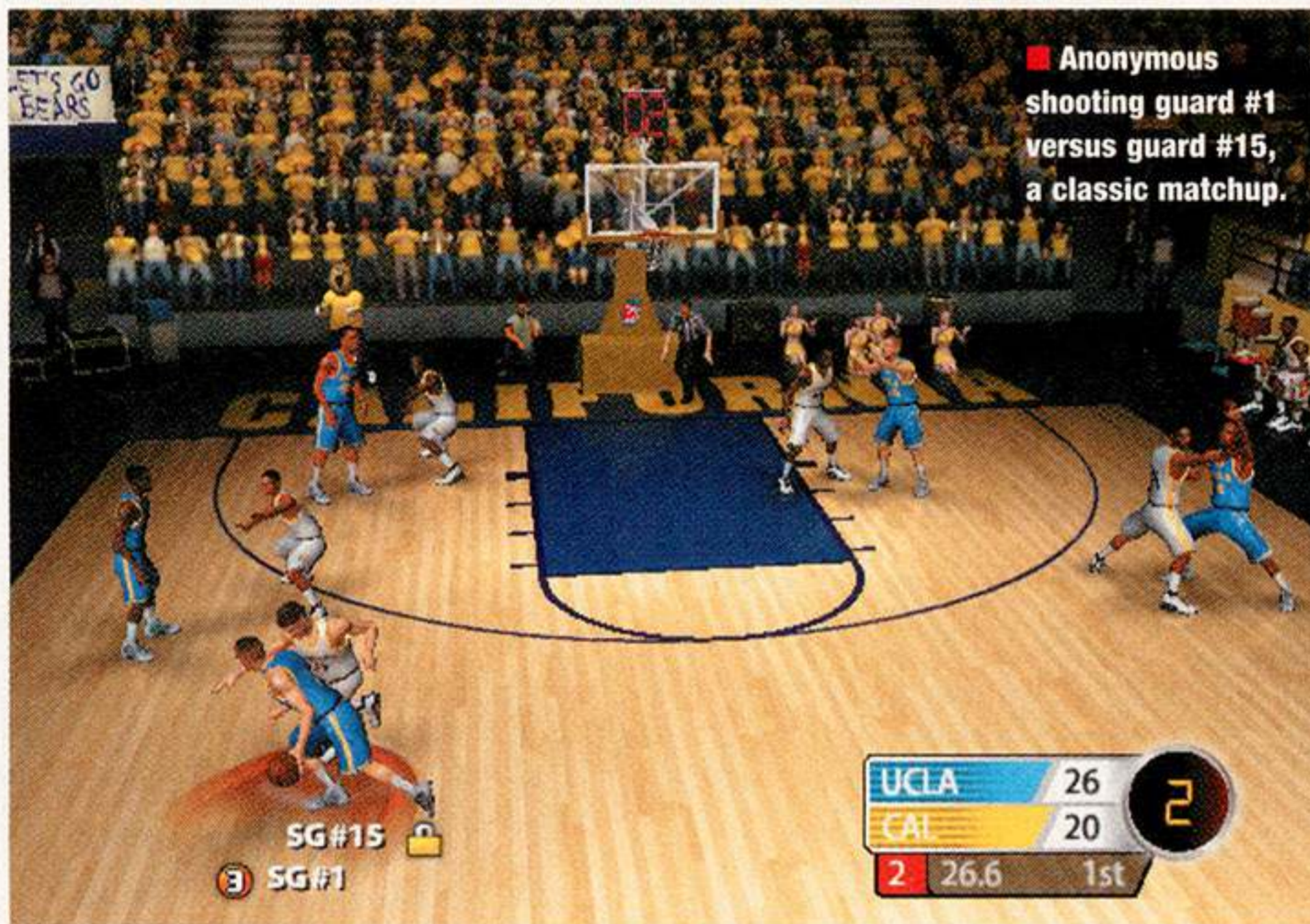
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multitap, 2 online), XB 1-4 (2 online), GC 1-4
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com

PS2/XB

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 06

Prepare nets for cutting

ONLINE
(PS2/XB)



Anonymous shooting guard #1 versus guard #15, a classic matchup.

UCLA	26
CAL	20
2	26.6 1st

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

7.5	8.0	8.5
PATRICK	BRYAN	GREG M.

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multitap, 2 online), XB 1-4 (2 online)
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com

Good: New lockdown stick brings the stifling D
Bad: Lazy camera lags behind play
Debunking the Rumor: Dick Vitale does *not* have a glass eye



PATRICK: Successful college coaches know how to make adjustments depending on the situation. *NCAA March Madness 06's* new defensive play-calling system forces gamers who want success to make similar adjustments on both ends of the court.

The series' hyped new feature, the "lockdown stick," really allows you to take charge on defense. Position a player with the left analog stick, then use the right stick to put pressure on your man or deny the pass. This definitely beefs up your defensive options, and though you might think the added emphasis on D would lead to low scores and ugly basketball, that's not the case. The upgrades encourage up-tempo action and scores that make sense, even when announcer Dick Vitale doesn't.

Added depth and using assistant coaches to help with recruiting make the dynasty mode a bit more interesting, but the new team-chemistry feature adds nothing. I do like playing as Shaq versus the late Hank Gathers in college classics mode, though.

BRYAN: A frenzied student section, suffocating full-court presses, Dickie V. shouting about God knows what—that's college basketball, all right. And it's exactly what you can expect from EA's university hardwood. While last year's edition brilliantly

replicated what it's like when you've got the rock, *06* (thanks to the new lockdown stick) adds the ability to play in-your-face defense. Plus, *March Madness* keeps its rep as having the brainiest b-ball A.I. out there; computer-controlled squads aren't afraid to trap your freshman point guard at key moments. This one also shares two things in common (one good, one bad) with its big brother *NBA Live 06*: The visuals have been nicely spruced up, but the camera is too damn slow after a possession change. Still, *06* is letter-worthy.

1UP.COM—GREG M: Unlike a lot of college basketball titles throughout the years (cough...*ESPN College Hoops*...cough), *NCAA March Madness 06* isn't just a pro baller with a university paint job. This one has a look and feel all its own, with the emphasis being on team play and defense. And I'm with Patrick and Bryan: The new lockdown stick really helps you put the clamps on an offensive player, and it's so simple to execute. The ice-skating effect from previous editions (players looked like they were gliding across the court rather than running) isn't as evident this time around, and scoring doesn't come automatically; the computer also takes advantage of the lockdown stick, so you're going to have to do your homework and call plays.

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■ A new golf-game-swing-meter-like mechanic now determines your initial boost in Crash mode, adding (a little) strategy.



PS2/XB

BURNOUT REVENGE

Insurance adjusters will cry

DEMIAN: What a disappointment—*Burnout 3*'s announcer, Stryker, and his 100-criinges-per-minute commentary have been axed, and now a grouch like me has almost nothing to complain about. The Stryker-less *Burnout Revenge* is the kind of incredibly fast, incredibly fun arcade racer that even driving-game haters can't help but love.

It is great. But it is also not very different from *Burnout 3*, which came out just one year ago. The basic mechanics are the same: weave through traffic at subsonic speeds, earning boost for dangerous maneuvers and knocking your fellow racers into the weeds. The biggest change is traffic checking—head-on collisions still result in a slow-motion smash that borders on car-accident porn, but smack same-way traffic and cars skitter and slide into chain-reaction crashes. It's a key tactic that's good for earning boost as well as taking down rivals, and even though it makes the game considerably easier, it's also undeniably fun.

You know something else that's fun?

Explosions. Formerly Crash-mode-only, crash-breakers are available in the later race events too, so if you wreck, you can trigger an explosion and (hopefully) take out nearby rivals. Like all of *Revenge*'s tweaks, it's a minor one—but *Burnout* wasn't anywhere near broke, so we're not too surprised that the fixes amount to a buff and polish.

SHOE: Crumpling steel, shattering glass, sparks from metal grinding on asphalt...these aren't fingernails-on-chalkboard moments but rather, the twisted-metal beauty of *Burnout*. And then you have that sense of speed—the sweet, eye-searing sense of speed that only *Burnout* can deliver. No other driving game can redline your adrenaline to such dangerous levels.

The last *Burnout* is a helluva tough act to follow, however, and as such, *Revenge* may disappoint some fans. Everything feels and looks really familiar, especially in the online modes, which are mostly the same as before. But *Revenge* still ekes an

“awesome!” out of me for its new track designs with branching paths and high-flying ramps that only add to the excitement and intensity that's already there. Yee-haw.

G. FORD: *Burnout Revenge* is hard to rate. On almost every level, it's superior to *Burnout 3*, yet it lacks the impact of that game, which had so many pieces come together to create arguably the best arcade-racing experience ever.

But *Revenge*'s beauty is bounteous. The additions of track-opening shortcuts, an intuitive rating system, and the ability to hit same-way traffic are significant and integrated flawlessly. I have a list of tiny complaints—I'd still like to see fewer loading screens and some sort of map or indication a track is nearing the end—but the fact is, I relished each minute with this game. Just as I did with *Burnout 3*. *Revenge* offers the visceral thrills and constant level of satisfaction that few games reach, practically eliminating my desire to ever put it down.

What's the Diff?
Revenge looks amazing on the PS2, and not really much better on Xbox. We'd still get the Xbox version because it supports custom soundtracks and if we're paying for Live, we might as well use it. Both versions offer voice chat.



But Wait! You Also Get...
Got a *Burnout 3* or *Madden NFL 06* game save? If so, set up your *Revenge* profile on the same memory card and you'll unlock special cars. A *Madden 06* save opens up the Madden Challenge van in Crash mode, while a *Burnout 3* save unlocks the Dominator Assassin. Both cars pack a more explosive punch than the default Crash mode car.



Good: You won't want to put it down
Bad: Not much different from the last game
New: Hit another car from behind...and you won't crash



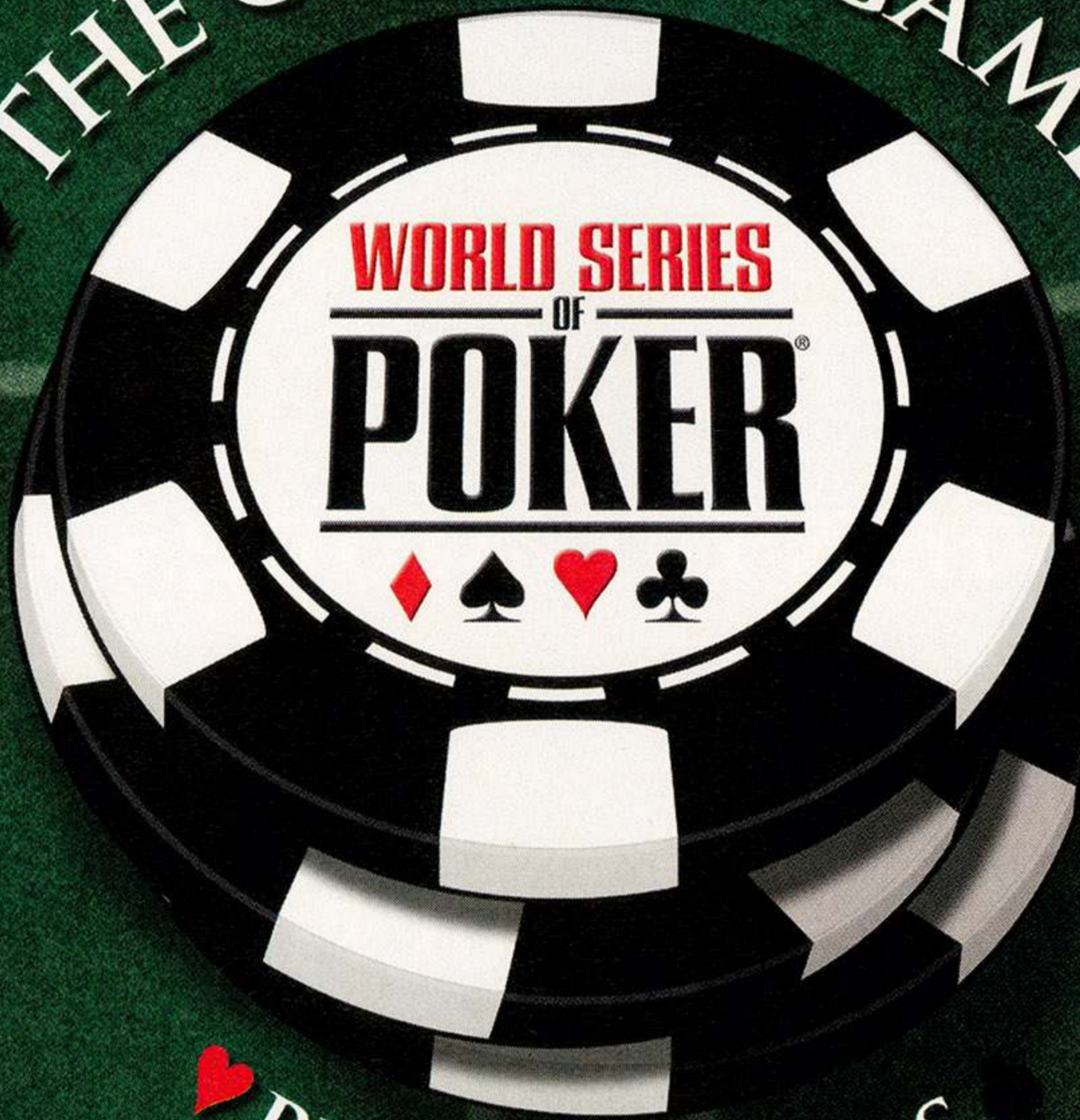
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	8.5	9.0
	DEMIAN	SHOE	G. FORD

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Criterion
Players: 1-2 (2-6 online)
ESRB: Everyone 10+

burnoutrevenge.ea.com

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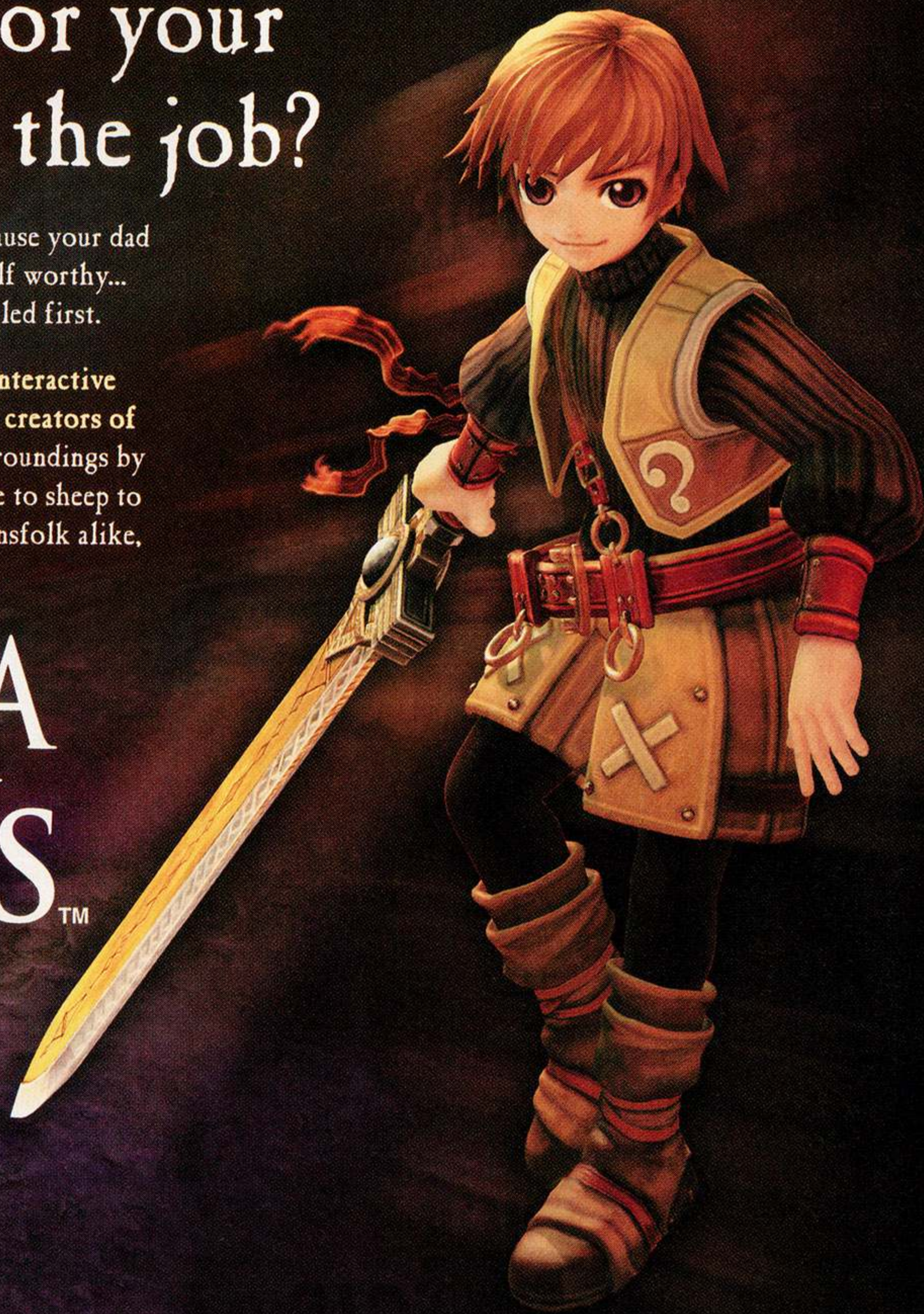


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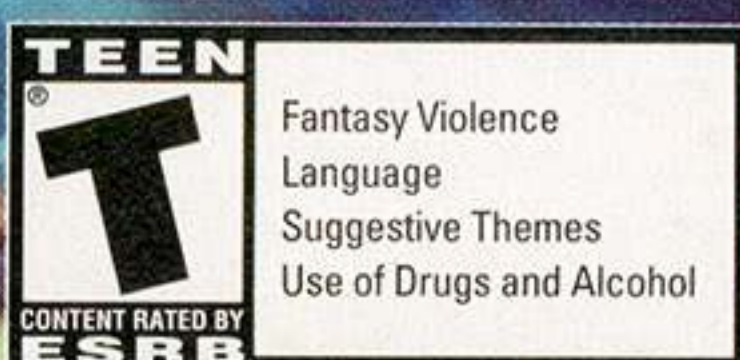
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PlayStation®2



PS2/XB/GC



SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

Get your warrior on



Spartan: It's like a flashback to the great Cabbage Patch Kid hysteria of 1983.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	9.0	8.0
	JUSTIN	ROBERT	TOM

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Creative Assembly
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.totalwarriorgame.com

Good: Battlefields that look like battlefields, no shortage of challenge

Bad: Can feel unfairly difficult, some not-so-hot boss fights

God of War Cameo: Ares, as himself



JUSTIN: *Spartan: Total Warrior* is a total action game that looks totally impressive, but it feels like something is partially missing. Even though battlefields seem alive with possibility, your path through each level and every spectacular moment of glory along the way is preordained. So while you'll feel like a hero multitasking between slaying wall-scaling invaders, pouring boiling oil on engineers, and firing catapults at an advancing stone giant, you're not changing the course of battle—you're following it.

Still, being the driving force behind the game's spectacular and dramatic set pieces can be a powerful experience. It can also be controller-smashingly difficult. The controls and moves are well suited to taking on literal legions of enemies, but incredibly chaotic battles and fatalistic design can combine to kill you off a dozen times in the space of an hour. After three or four failed attempts at glory, you'll start feeling a lot less heroic. A free-roaming city section that does nearly everything wrong and a couple of flat boss encounters also take away from what's otherwise a great action game, but *Spartan* still has some epic qualities.

ROBERT: Darting around the busy streets of Athens silencing would-be snitches.

Charging across an open battlefield with my battalion in tow. Slicing through hundreds of soldiers in the open pit of the Roman Colosseum. *Spartan: Total Warrior* is full of these memorable scenes and hell-yeah moments. It's always changing gears—from epic battles to smaller, intense brawls, always introducing new elements, always briskly moving to the next expertly crafted level. And the combat...have you ever thrown a brick through a plate glass window? Every decapitating sword swipe through a Roman horde has that satisfying crunch, like 100 ceramic vases lined up for batting practice. The subtle autoaim and simple but deep controls provide just the right bat.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—TOM: Once I got past the blah story and uninteresting main character, *Spartan* treated me to an action thrill ride from start to finish—it's one of the most polished games I've played since *The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*. From the excellent control set and weapons-upgrade path, to the vast levels and awesome combat, *Spartan* is a certifiable PS2 must-buy. The game's difficulty is a bit harsh, though—even on the "easy" setting most levels are really tough. But, like a marathon, finishing *Spartan* will leave you both exhausted and satisfied.

PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE
(PS2/XB ONLY)

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

Imperfect Strangers



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.5	4.0	7.5
	JON D.	CHRISTIAN	JAMES

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: EA Canada
Players: PS2/XB 1-2 (2 online), GC 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.eagames.com

Good: Thoroughly interactive fighting arenas

Bad: Gameplay is button-mashing drudgery

In Short: EA teaches new dogs old tricks



JON D: Who was that masked man? No, seriously—who was he? Heavyweight publisher EA decided to inject its own homebrew heroes alongside classic Marvel crusaders into this beat-em-up arena fighter (think Dreamcast's *Power Stone*, not *Marvel vs. Capcom*). New supermen are well and good, but the resources it took to create "Johnny Ohm" (whose tag line *should* have been "resistance is futile!") could have been put into making a much deeper game starring existing Marvel folks.

The fighting arenas are slick and fully interactive; found objects like parking meters and antenna towers all become weapons. But the combat creativity ends there. Faceless-cyborg-smashing melee battles are repetitive, uninspired, and glitchy. And with each story line presented in a series of minimeissions averaging 3 to 4 minutes apiece, you spend a lot of your time switching characters and saving and loading instead of just playing the darn game. Despite some balance issues that give jacked-up projectile chuckers a hefty edge on short-range strikers, the versus game is a decent way for comic fans to spar with as many superheroes as they're willing to unlock. But for me—no thanks. I take my Marvel with a Capcom attached.

CHRISTIAN: How does something like this even happen? EA splurges on this awe-

some license, which brings together a gaggle of classic comic heroes and even a full slate of original characters, but the so-called story mode is a narrative-light, repetitive bashfest. Thanks to the detail-free graphics and a severe lack of gameplay ideas, this game runs out of steam after an hour or two. The fights may be intense, but they're also cheap as hell.

Nemesis doesn't work well as a 1-on-1 fighter, either. It's so simplistic you can squeeze every drop of fun out of it in one evening. What a waste—and a disappointment for comic fans.

JAMES: I hate you guys.

This newish take on the fighting game genre pits Marvel heroes like Elektra and Daredevil against each other as if they were arguing about whose movie was worse. The story jumps all over the place (you'll find yourself suddenly playing a villain who's an evil ballerina cyborg), as does the difficulty: As Wolverine, I struggled against a mind-controlled Storm but was repeatedly kicking a seemingly defenseless Daredevil in the crotch with Elektra the next minute. But it's not about single player—*Nemesis* kicks costumed ass when you play head-to-head. Fighting on top of the *Daily Bugle* as Wolverine against the Thing is like a wet dream come true for this comic geek.

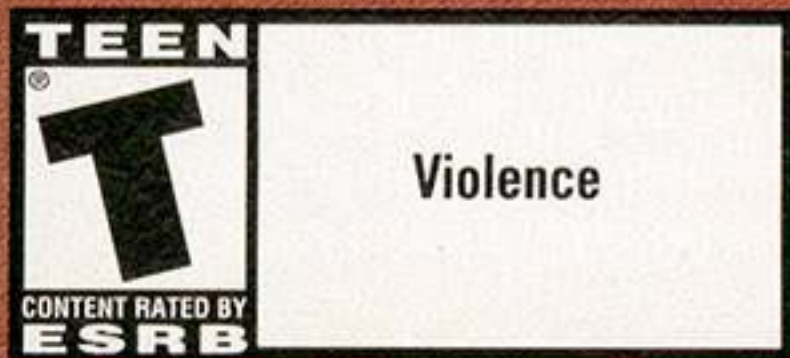
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PS2/XB

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

King of the damned



When you've got blades instead of hands and feet, getting blown away by a shotgun is really your best-case scenario.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	5.0	6.0
	GREG S.	G. FORD	JAMES

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Surreal Software
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.sufferingtiesthatbind.com

Good: Creepy, disturbing atmosphere, challenging action sequences

Bad: Forgettable story, lame find-the-switch puzzles

Doom's John Carmack Called: He wants his ideas back



GREG S: The haters will tell you that *The Suffering: Ties That Bind* is just a retread of the first game, that it's mostly style and relatively little substance, with puzzles that are nothing but switch-pulling busywork.

And they're right on all counts. But much like *Doom 3*, *Ties That Bind* is more than the sum of its parts. Thanks to the unique behaviors of its various imps, demons, and human scum, each battle tends to require a different strategy. You'll want to duck and cover when battling human soldiers or syringe-chucking main-liner demons, but stay on the move and use long-range weapons when you've got to deal with brutish (and hungry) gorgers.

The story does wear a bit thin, but the supremely frightening atmosphere will keep you from caring that much. There's just something inherently freaky about blasting holes in hellspawn while a junkie cowers in the corner, with the faint cries of an infant in the distance. *The Suffering* is truly disturbing.

So let the haters hate. The bottom line is that *The Suffering: Ties That Bind* is a gory good time. And that's really all that matters.

G. FORD: Gritty dark alleyways. Ghostly apparitions running rampant. Voices in the dark. *Ties That Bind* certainly nails the creepy, shock value mood it's going for. In

fact, the rampant swearing and grotesque images will undoubtedly turn off some players. The real problem with this game, though, is its janky game-play mechanics. Whether in first or third person, controlling main-guy Torque rarely feels smooth, leaving you a step behind and often perplexed as to where and how you got hit. Couple that with bland set-pieces that could be from any other recent run-of-the-mill action game, and you're left with a bunch of empty scares.

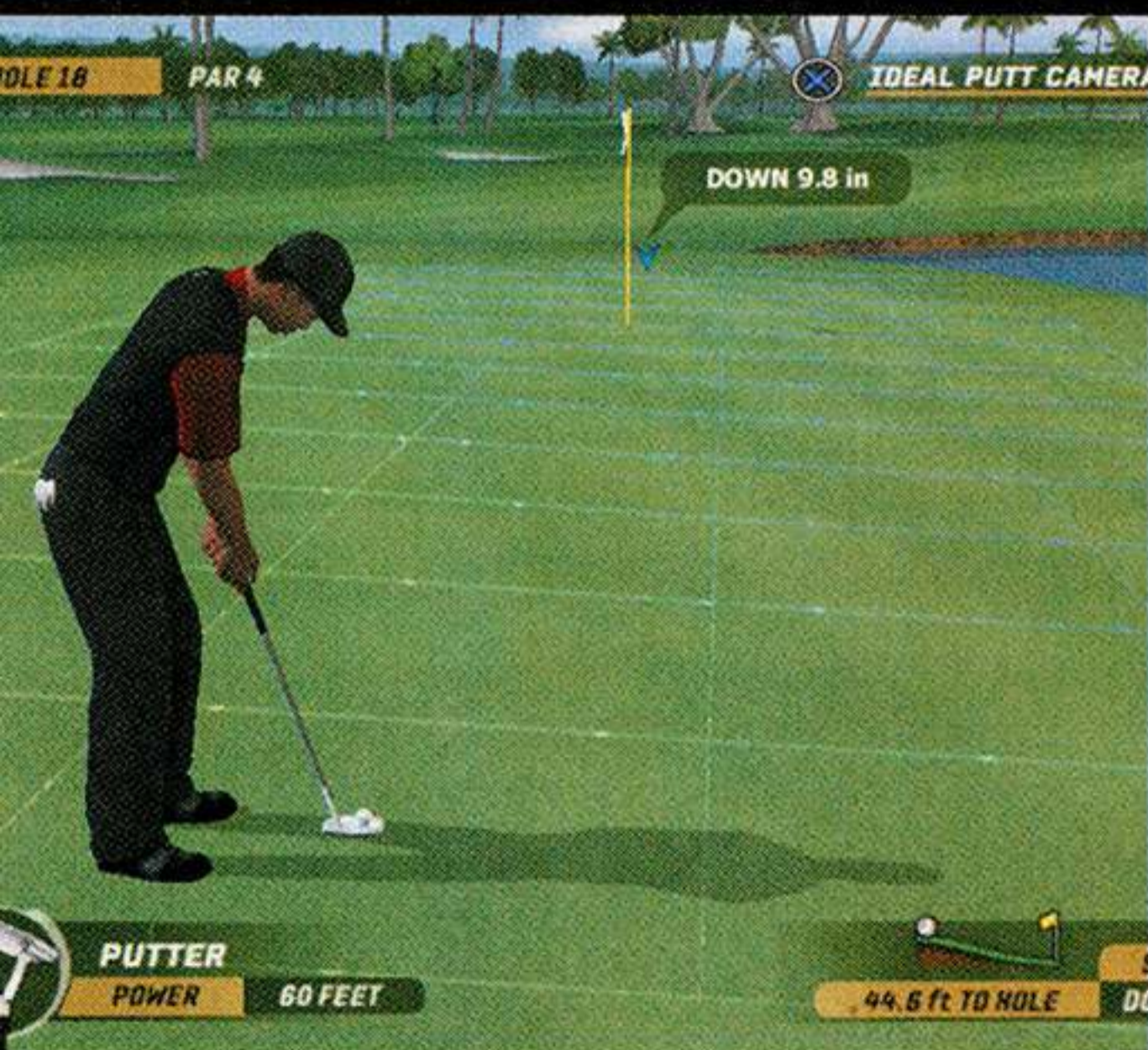
JAMES: I wouldn't be surprised if the developers of *The Suffering* were seated right between the makers of *Max Payne* and *Doom* during Videogame Making 101 and had a hard time keeping their eyes on their own damn paper. This game has the *Max Payne*-esque run-down city environments (but more cramped), trippy flashbacks (that are way too frequent), and even the same bottles of pills for health packs. Then it apes *Doom* with deformed mutant hell creatures jumping out from every dark corner. Even though I'm easy to please when it comes to shotgunning the faces off ugly monsters, and the twisted story line got my attention, *Ties That Bind* has a hard time putting it together, like when you find yourself fighting creepy crawlies that are armed with Uzis. Huh?

PS2/XB/GC

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

Still (mostly) grrrrreat

ONLINE
(PS2/XB ONLY)



Putting: More challenging and realistic, sure, but also rewarding once you get the swing of things.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	8.0	7.5
	PATRICK	BRYAN	JOE

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Players: PS2/XB 1-4 (2-4 online), GC 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com

Good: Major tweaks to putting system

Bad: Really doesn't need a gamebreaker meter

If Only: You could play as *Caddyshack's* Al Czervik



PATRICK: *Tiger* seems to be a perennial contender (both the game and the guy), and this year *Tiger 06* gets marginally better through some basic additions. The most obvious, the new putting system, brings more realism to the green. No more simple but tedious guesstimating based on caddy tips—30-foot putts aren't as easy to sink as 3-foot tap-ins anymore now that *Tiger* makes you read the green yourself and adjust your (now analog) stroke accordingly.

Drives and approach shots are a bit different, too—you can use the right analog, or "shape stick," along with the left to pinpoint where the club strikes the ball, so you can hit fades and draws (abbreviated slices or hooks for you hacks) and get creative. Then there's the new Rivals mode, which pits you against some of the game's greats. You'll take on Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus (among others) in their respective primes, using equipment from those time periods.

Other minor improvements include created players that can finally talk and four-player online rounds. I don't understand why EA Sports decided to graft on the gamebreaker concept from its *Street* series, though—the gamebreakers are as ineffectual as they are silly.

BRYAN: Bogey, bunker, bulls***—spend an afternoon with me on the real links and

you'll hear these words quite often. Yet it's a different (and much cleaner) story when I tee off in this year's *Tiger*. Thanks to the added ability to strike the ball high, low, or on its sides, I now have even greater control over the Titleist's final destination. And don't let the new putting system scare you; while reading the green with the onscreen grid isn't as simple as 2005's caddy tip system, I still recorded more than my fair share of birdies (and some eagles). Too bad *06* doesn't address my continuing complaint with this series: lifeless courses. Hey, they gotta save something for the XB360 version, right?

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE: For years I've been saying that the only significant problem with the *Tiger* games is the putting interface. So what did they do this year? They made putting harder by removing caddy tips and employing the same analog swing interface as tee shots. It's more realistic, sure...but considering the rest of the game involves chasing Tiger Woods *through time* (in Rivals mode—I wish I were making that up), I'm not really sure of the importance of realism here. I do like the use of the right analog stick to control ball striking, but overall the game feels like a step in the totally wrong direction, to me at least. The fundamentals are still quite solid, but overall I vastly prefer last year's version.

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LOOK EASY FROM THE MORPHINE END,
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PACING OF REAL-WORLD OPERATIONS..."
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UNDER THE KNIFE
THE PATIENTS' LIVES ARE IN YOUR HANDS!

OPERATION SCORE 200
MISS LIMIT ██████████
TIME LIMIT 02:53:13

Wh-what? How could something like this happen...?

97

SCALPEL
This razor sharp instrument is the doctor's main weapon. Use it to make incisions or remove tumors and other objects that don't belong in the human body.

OPERATION SCORE 620
MISS LIMIT ██████████
TIME LIMIT 04:40:26

Ha... This is serious. We can't let them get infected.

77

FORCEPS
With a steady hand and a keen eye you can extract harmful materials from your patients and pick up delicate objects like synthetic membranes.

OPERATION SCORE 200
MISS LIMIT ██████████
TIME LIMIT 04:54:77

What's going on? The entire intestinal membrane is inflamed.

90

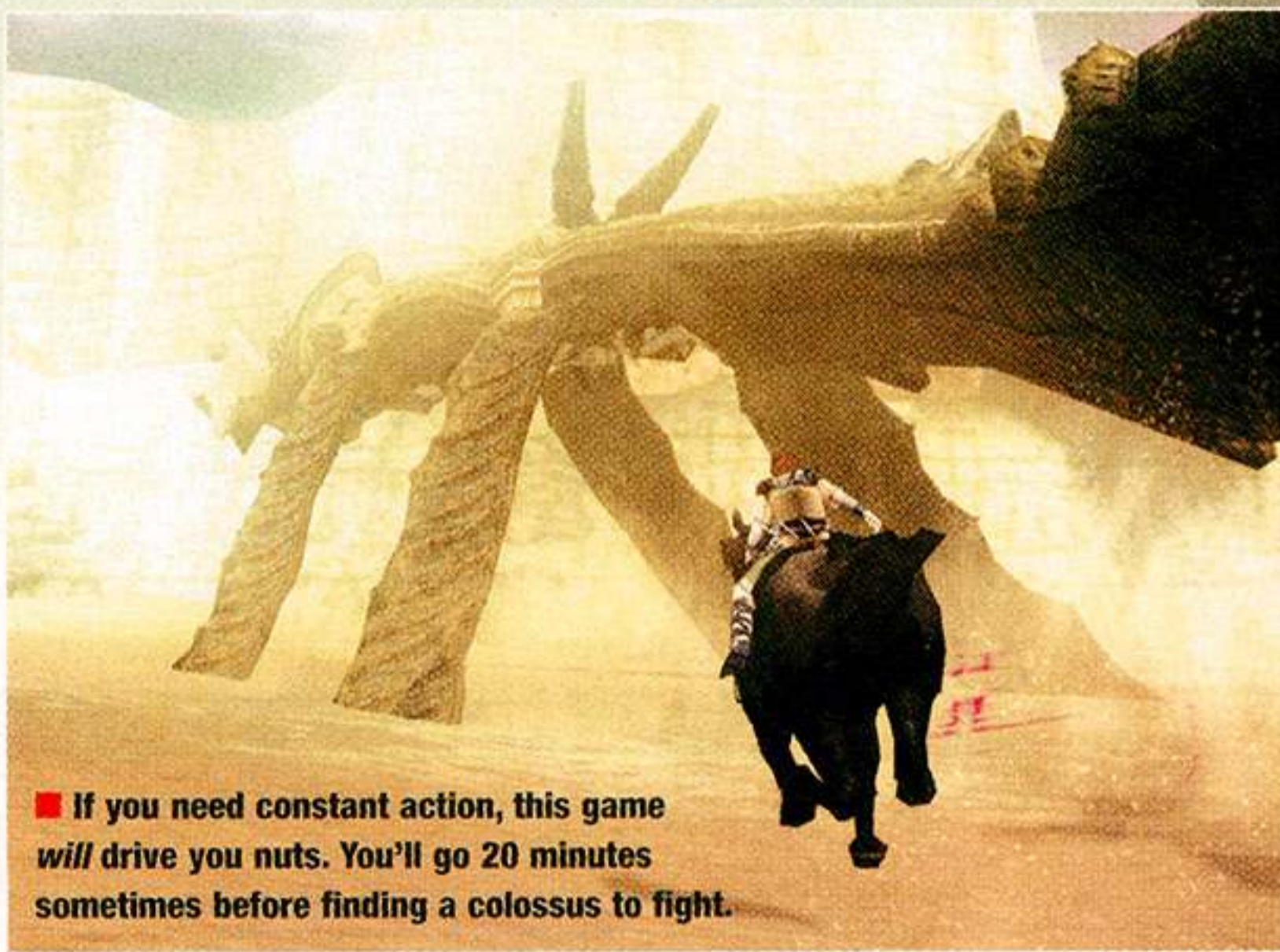
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TEEN
Blood
Mild Language
Mild Violence
Partial Nudity
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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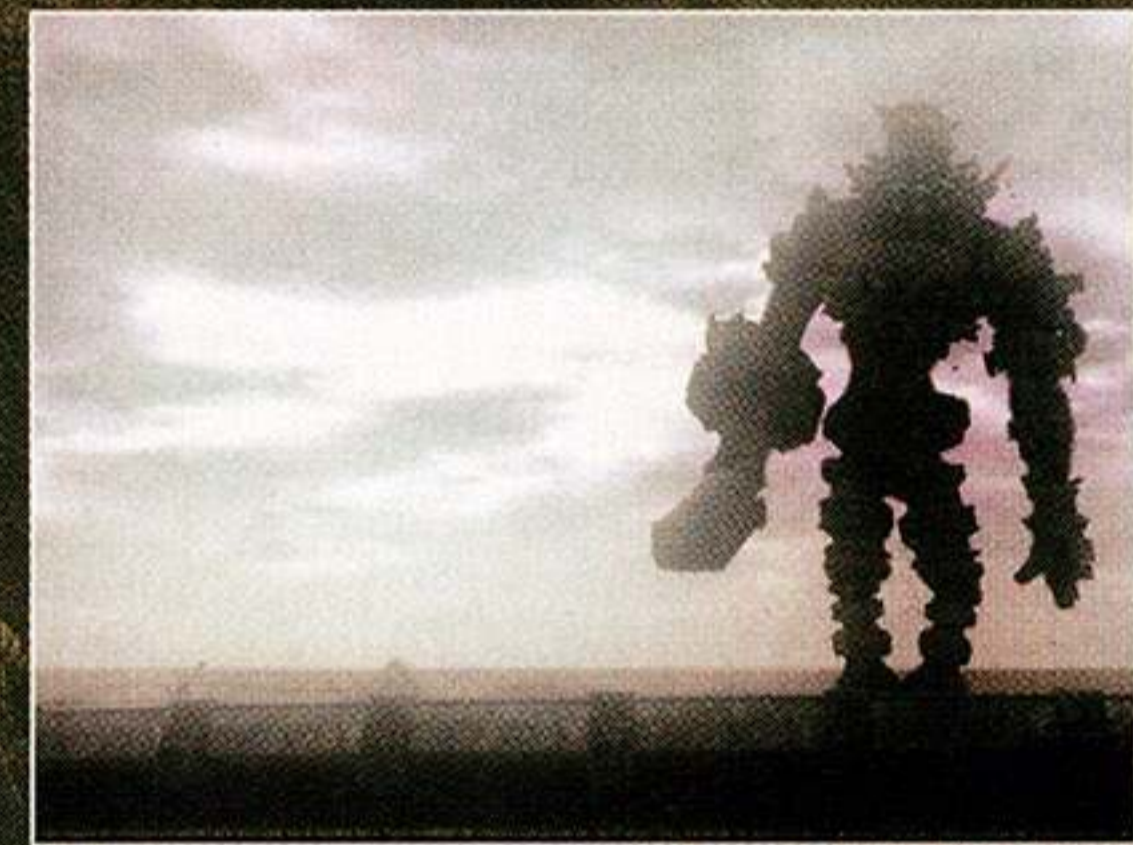


■ If you need constant action, this game will drive you nuts. You'll go 20 minutes sometimes before finding a colossus to fight.

■ PlayStation 2

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

The little game that could



MARK: The reasons some people won't enjoy *Shadow of the Colossus* are as easy to spot as one of its 40-story-tall monsters. Yes, the entire game is 16 David-versus-Goliath boss fights (you're David), with nothing—and I mean *nothing*—in between except long horseback rides through an impossibly vast, sprawling world in which you'll search for your next opponent. The graphics are gorgeous but choppy, at times chugging along with entire mountains suddenly popping into view. And even with constant manual adjustments, the camera swings so wildly at times it's hard to tell what's going on.

But none of this says much about how it actually *feels* to play the game, and I'm not talking about the controls. Unlike so many of its market-driven, focus-tested peers, *Shadow* has a *soul*, a creative vision that provokes real gut-level emotion. Take, for instance, the thrilling "Eureka!" moment when you piece together, through observation and experimentation, exactly how you're going to get on top of a hulking colossus. Your guts will twitter when you scale beasts often 100 times your size—moving mountains of crumbling

stone and matted hair—and experience the exhilaration of bringing them crashing down using only a bow, a sword, and your wits. *Shadow* is a perfect example of how videogames, at their best, can transcend technical flaws and physical limitations to become something greater. If it never quite matches its ambition, it's only because *Shadow* dares to reach beyond what we currently expect from games.

SHANE: *Shadow* offers the most riveting first hour you've ever played—from the serene opening cinema (that you direct with your controller), to your initial horseback trek through the gorgeous countryside, and climaxing with the first brutal, visceral colossus battle, it's absolutely brilliant. The 10 proceeding hours impress, as well...yet, at the same time, the game's glaring technical problems and perplexing design choices continually force you to second-guess the ingenuity and subtle beauty you're beholding. It's not that the graphics are bad: In fact, they're absurdly ambitious. The aging PS2 simply can't keep up, so ever-present slowdown, pop-up, and glitches assault your eyes.

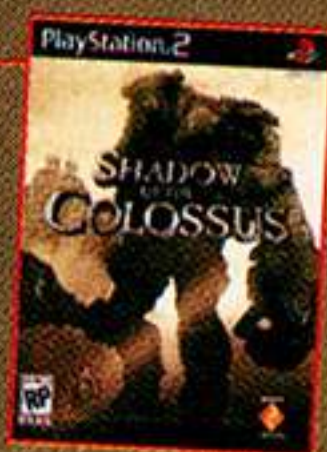
Shadow's gameplay leads to head-scratching, too: Its desolate, empty world, purposefully convoluted control scheme, and unexpected ending all add to its otherworldly mystique. But even as the complaints pile up, the game's amazing, deeply effective impact never diminishes.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE: Let's be clear: *Shadow* is not *Ico*, even though it hails from the same development team. It shares a certain atmosphere, but it's a more visceral and less cerebral game—much of the challenge is working with the complex controls (significantly more complex than *Ico's*) to bring down 16 colossi. Figuring out how to beat them can occasionally be a bit of a mental stretch, but mainly the game consists of riding to a colossus, climbing up the colossus, and stabbing the crap out of the colossus. All that said, it's an incredibly engrossing experience, and so starkly beautiful and odd that it is completely justified in being called art. It's unlike anything else you've ever played, and so you may love it or you may hate it. Count me firmly in the "love" boat.



What's the Story With the Story?

Like *Ico*, much of *Shadow's* appeal comes from its minimalist plot. All you know is you're hunting colossi to appease a booming voice that has promised to resurrect a dead girl you brought to an ancient temple. Despite this, and thanks largely to its revealing final act, *Shadow's* story becomes one of its strongest assets.



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

9.0
MARK

8.5
SHANE

9.0
JOE

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Sony CEE
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

us.playstation.com

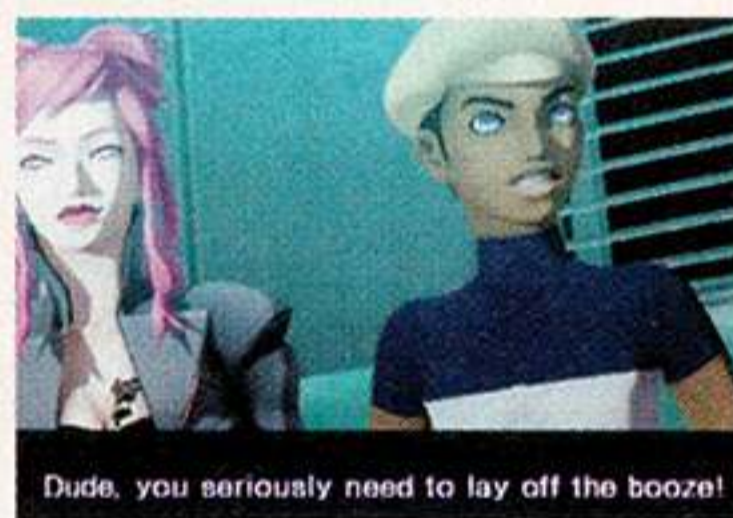
Good: Thrilling, inventive gameplay
Bad: Choppy graphics, tricky camera
Soundtrack: Of the Year

PlayStation 2



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA 2

Dark side of the sun



Dude, you seriously need to lay off the booze!

Fine, young, post-modern cannibals like to get riiiiiiiiipped on Friday night (center).

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.0	8.0
	CHRISTIAN	JUSTIN	SHANE

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Atlus
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.atlus.com

Good: Slick, sleek, fascinating

Bad: Overlong, mazelike dungeons

Your Party Members: Are demons that devour their enemies



CHRISTIAN: I've loved Atlus' role-playing games for years...but with the release of *Digital Devil Saga 2*, I demand that more of you start taking notice of them. Simultaneously packing one of the most fascinating RPG stories in years and taut, streamlined gameplay, it's a robust game that will live up to anyone's standards.

Set in the immediate aftermath of its prequel—but cleverly designed to let newbies jump right in—the game tells a bleak tale of a world destroyed by a sun turned black, and people forced to assume the forms of demons to survive its harshness. This is the first RPG since *Final Fantasy X* where I always felt a drive to get to, instead of through, the next cut-scene.

DDS2's battles are turn-based but tense—if you don't strategize, you're toast. You might die at any time, but can almost always win by figuring out the most effective tactic. Meanwhile, the game's improved Mantra system offers some of the most addictive character customization on the PS2. This is an RPG anyone can get behind, with depths to plumb that I simply don't have space to mention. Give it a shot.

JUSTIN: Like the first chapter, *Digital Devil Saga 2* nearly perfects the traditional console RPG formula, polishing up everything with a shiny electronic/demonic lacquer. Stats are there, but micromanagement isn't. Random turn-based battles are a

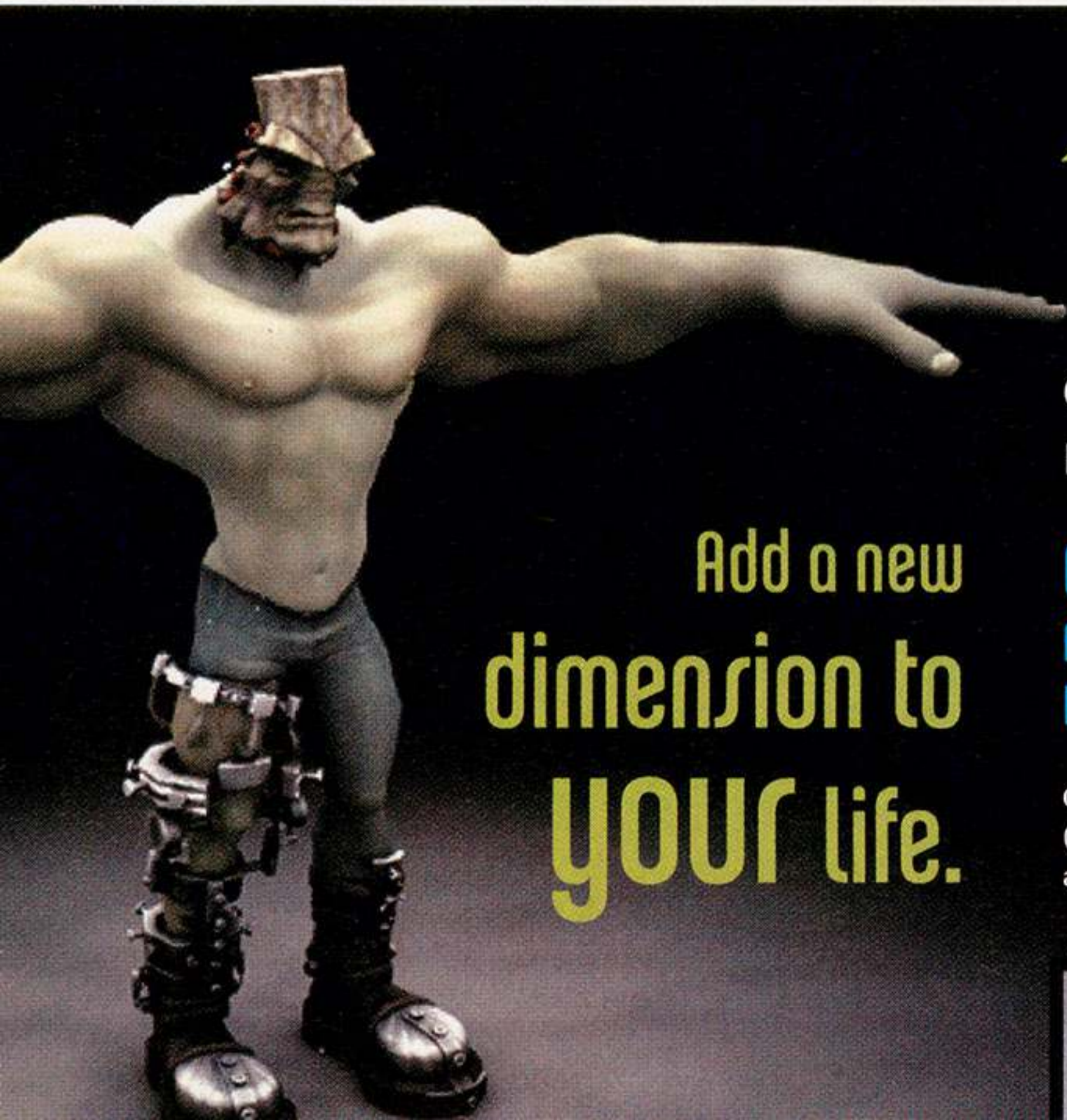
fact of life, but they're brisk and strategic with a real sense of momentum. And when a tough fight lies beyond a closed door, your characters "feel a strong presence," giving you a chance to psych up, heal up, and save your game before charging in.

Of course this won't mean much if you don't appreciate a good Japanese RPG. If you do, though, play the first game first—it does a better job of standing on its own, and the techno-religious story line only gets more convoluted here.

SHANE: Here's just what the fans of the first *DDS* ordered: another dose of wildly esoteric role-playing featuring well-dressed demons, rampant cannibalism, and oodles of Hindu mysticism. Don't expect the whole game to be self-consciously weird, though; beneath the stylized visuals and experimental soundtrack lurks a fairly traditional, *Final Fantasy X*-inspired RPG. Returning fans will spy a few small improvements to gameplay, but it's more or less a direct continuation of the game you played six months prior. And on the subject of serialized role-players, *DDS2* isn't quite the repeat repetition offender that the *.hack* series was, yet Atlus could still have easily grafted these two titles into one larger game. But they're still both worthwhile escapades for RPG fans seeking quality outside the mainstream.



Main guy Serph models the new half-human, half-demon Berserk mode (left).



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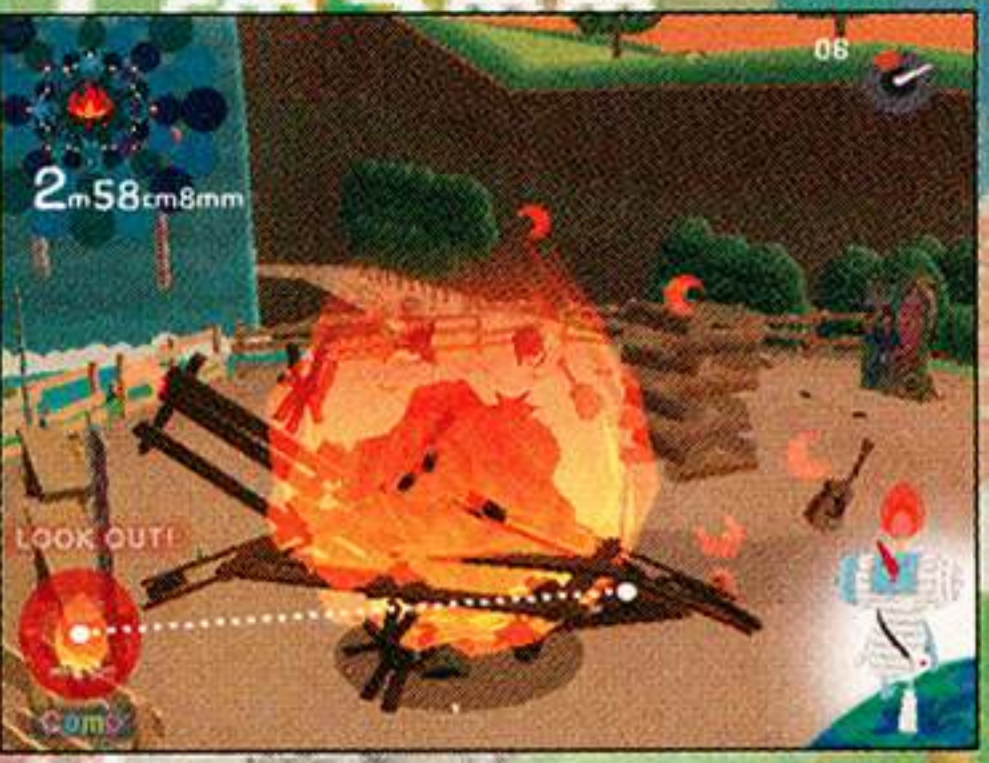
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by Rick O'Connor



Great ball of fire: You'll have to keep rolling up fuel to keep the fire burning (above).



PlayStation 2

WE ♥ KATAMARI

The biggest ball of them all

JENNIFER: Action ball rolling, apparently, is here to stay. It isn't quite yet a genre unto itself—that won't be the case until another two or three games come along that mimic *Katamari's* unique and highly original gameplay, where you roll a ball around various environments and pick up objects to complete particular goals. As your ball grows, you can roll up bigger and bigger objects, and the changing perspective you gain throughout each level—you progress from picking up erasers to rolling up skyscrapers—is probably the coolest aspect of the game.

♥ takes everything that was wonderful about last year's hit game and...actually doesn't change all that much. The levels feel familiar, as does the most awesome soundtrack in gaming. The cut-scenes are a bit spiffier, but the game's overall look is exactly the same puffy, pastel-colored paper-doll-with-foot-long-pompadours animation. Perhaps it feels more like an expansion pack than

a true sequel, but since this is one of the most satisfying pick-up-and-play games out there, more of the same isn't much of a problem. Those needing something truly new can now play the entire game in the co-op two-player mode, which can be fun or frustrating depending on how well you communicate with your buddy. Even so, ♥ serves as a unique kind of videogame crack; it's scary when a 10-minute level feels way too short—and not because you can't finish the goal in time, but because you just want more. Which, by the way, I do. Right away, please.

MARK: We ♥ *Katamari* succeeds in exactly the same ways as its predecessor: elegant dual-analog-only controls; iconic, colorful graphics and a stylish interface; quirky, catchy music; and the satisfaction of progressing from rolling up clothespins to running down screaming people to eventually swallowing whole buildings. In fact, the only disappointment here, besides the frustrating

new co-op mode (trying to coordinate movement just adds another layer and slows the game down), is how little has changed. More formula-tweaking stages, like the one that puts you in a race or another that challenges you to keep your ball on fire, would seem appropriate for such an innovative series. Luckily, the title is right—we do heart *Katamari*, so the same simple, silly fun is welcome just the same.

DEMIAN: I wish ♥ boldly rolled where we've never rolled before a bit more often—because when it does, like when you're gathering storm clouds in midair so rain won't spoil a school field trip or when you're rolling up fireflies so a bookworm can read by their collected light, it's great. All the other times, when you're bouncing around yet another random living room floor amassing paper clips and stray sushi, it's just good and fun and weird. Like the last game. And nuts to co-op—this *katamari* ain't big enough for the two of us.



Free Interpretation

What we heart so much about the *Katamari* universe

Katamari's cut-scenes, though less obtuse than the last game's, are a Rorschach test of sorts. The story's broad strokes are (we think) as follows: The eventual King of All Cosmos is born and is trained by his father, the current King (and grandpa of *Katamari's* main ball roller, the Prince). Then he fights with his father and goes away, eventually coming back when the father is on his deathbed. Then the newly crowned King falls in love and has his own baby, the new Prince, thereby completing the Circle of Life™. Basically, *Rocky* meets the Prodigal Son meets...*Romeo and Juliet*, except with the father dying and not the kids.



The future king during his "seedy street hustler" phase.

Good: They totally didn't change what wasn't broke
Bad: They added something (two-player co-op) that's a little broke
Our Favorite Rolled-Up Object: The Colosseum



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.0	8.0
	JENNIFER	MARK	DEMIAN

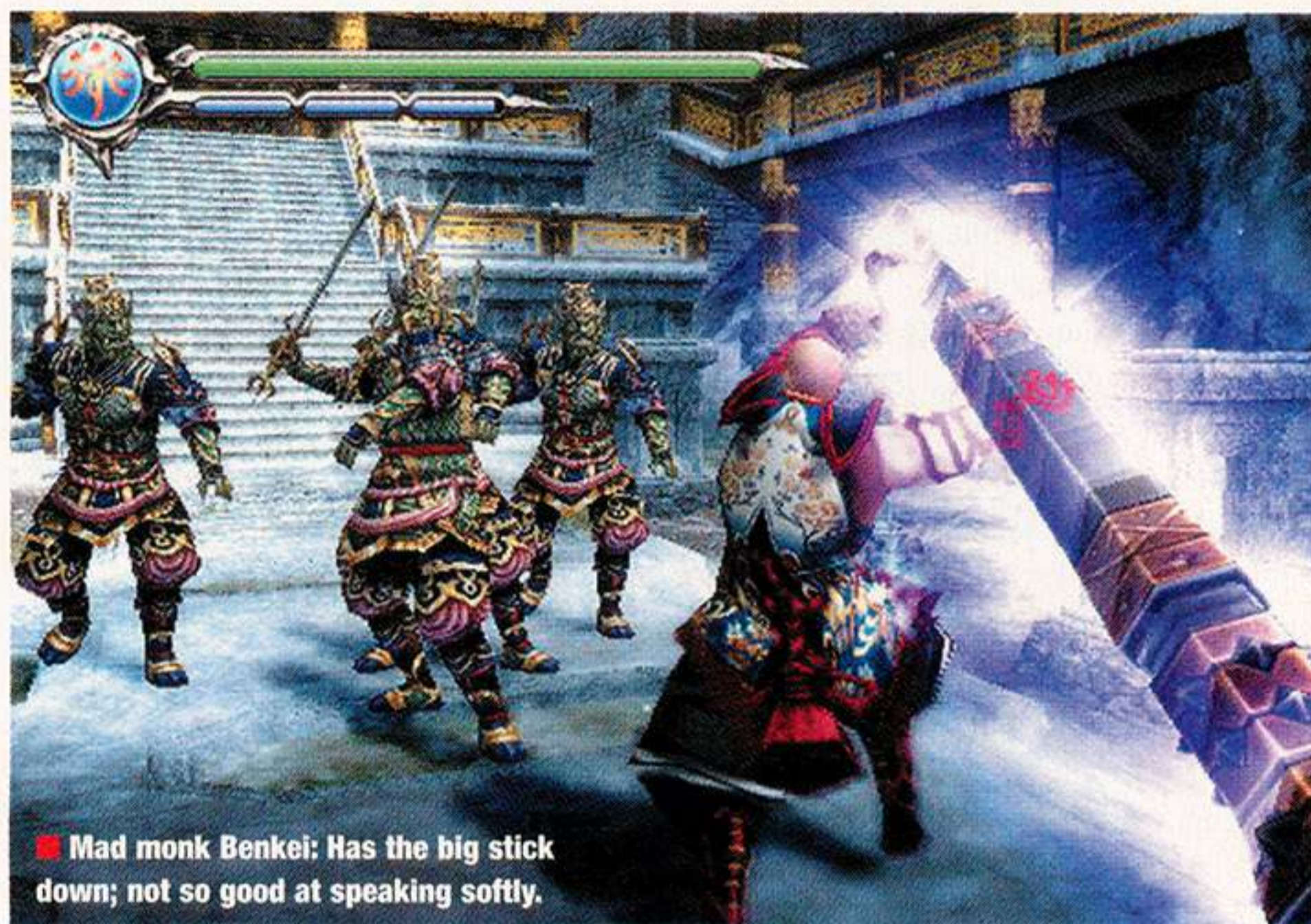
Publisher: Namco
 Developer: Namco
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Everyone

katamari.namco.com

PlayStation 2

GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI

Fleeting moments of Zen



Mad monk Benkei: Has the big stick down; not so good at speaking softly.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	5.0
	JUSTIN	G. FORD	KATHLEEN

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Game Republic
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.us.playstation.com

Good: Stunningly beautiful, a good choice for casual players

Bad: Brief and unlikely to make a lasting impression

No Relation to the Book: *The Tale of Genji*



JUSTIN: A relatively straightforward action game with breathtaking Japanese scenery, *Genji* stars a samurai named Yoshitsune and a monk named Benkei who whack and hack their clan's enemies to rid the land of evil and a poor plot.

Our heroes gain power through defeating enemies and buying equipment, but their real trump cards are magical stones that slow time, stripping the game down to its basic essence: knowing when to hit the Attack button. With slo-mo engaged, a button icon flashes to indicate the precise moment when an attack will result in a graceful killing blow. You'll stay focused until you screw up or all your enemies lay dead at your feet. There's an elegant beauty to this kind of swordplay, and it comes across as very Zen.

But as your enemies fall like cherry blossoms in a stiff wind, you might start to feel somewhat disconnected. Yoshitsune is rising into the air with the grace of a freaking swallow, and here all you're doing is hitting the Square button. The game plays smoothly and is lovely to look at, but there's little depth under the reflective surface.

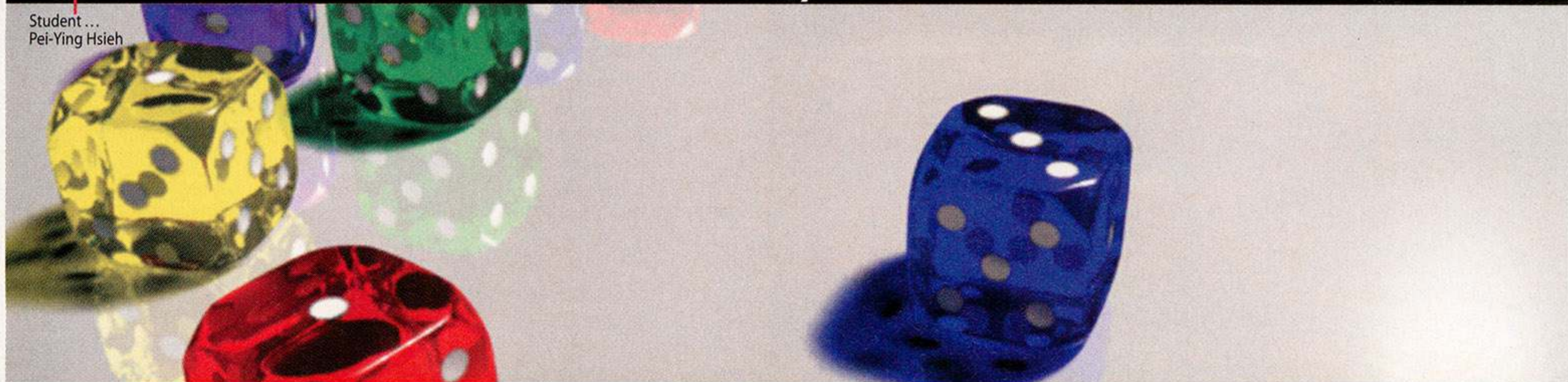
G. FORD: For a game that doesn't do anything particularly new or spectacular, *Genji* certainly kept me entertained. I particularly enjoyed the interplay between the two

main characters. Sure, running circles around baddies as Yoshitsune is fun, but laying the smack down with mad monk Benkei offers a nice change. Shared experience points ensure that neither gets too powerful, though you can beef up your hero of choice through ability points and equipment. Plus, replaying levels as the alternate character usually lets you crack character-specific secrets, which nets you bonus items and gives the game some legs. Some legit complaints exist—recycled bosses, invisible walls, reappearing enemies—but *Genji*'s a solid slash-em-up.

KATHLEEN: The ratio of crappy samurai games to good samurai games is about 8:1—I was hoping *Genji* would restore a little balance to Bushido. Alas, underneath the pretty environments and fluid control, *Genji* is really nothing more than a button masher. The slo-mo death blows require twitch reflexes, but the gimmick wears thin well before *Genji*'s five hours of playtime are up (though both Justin and G. Ford took way longer—my theory is they suck). Maybe the game would be tougher if you didn't have piles of cash to blow on healing items and weapons. Add in routine drudgery to get to save points and dull cut-scenes, and the little chinks add up to a full-blown hole in this warrior's antique armor.



Student ...
Pei-Ying Hsieh



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PlayStation 2

SLY 3: HONOR AMONG THIEVES

Smooth raccoon criminal



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.0	9.0
	G. FORD	JENNIFER	DANA

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Sucker Punch
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.us.playstation.com

Good: Great platforming and stealth gameplay
Bad: Some missions and minigames miss the mark
You Do Look Silly: Wearing the packed-in 3D glasses



G. FORD: Though not carrying the same cachet as Sony's *Ratchet* and *Jak* series, the *Sly* games have always been just as solid, and *Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves* continues the tradition. This time, the jet-setting Cooper gang is on the hunt for Sly's family fortune, an adventure that spans six multimission episodes. It's typical *Sly*—a mix of stealth and polished platforming gameplay, with dozens of (mostly entertaining) minigames breaking up the action—and some key additions to keep things interesting.

The game's biggest faults are the rare uninspired collect-a-thon missions and an inconsistency in the quality of some levels—the outback stage pales compared to the marvelous *Sid Meier's Pirates!*-esque high-seas stage, for example. The good far outweighs the bad, though.

As for the new stuff, the optional 3D stages (time to put on the included 3D glasses) wash out the graphics and are hard to play for extended periods of time. The new characters each offer a welcome unique feel, though, and the two-player co-op and competitive action delivers harmless fun, which aptly describes the overall enjoyment you'll get from this entertaining game.

JENNIFER: I've always loved the look and personality of the *Sly* series, and with

each iteration, the run-sneak-and-occasionally-pummel platforming has gotten more and more refined. This time around, I really enjoyed the continued variety in the missions, which range from rhythm-action puzzles and simple, elegant exploration to rolling side-kick Murray up into a bouncing ball, stomping scorpions with a two-ton truck, and sneaky pickpocketing. I also loved globe-hopping through the gorgeous, wide-open levels. The kiddie story isn't quite my speed, and some of the irritating jumping puzzles and missions are strictly for those with nothing better to do. But the forgiving respawn system makes it accessible, and hey, sometimes you don't have anything better to do.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA: While not very innovative, the *Sly* series has always been a hallmark of good production values and fun gameplay—it's hard to argue with following a solid formula. Though none of the new playable characters have an extensive move set, they're still fun in their limited way, and I particularly enjoy the way developer Sucker Punch has structured the missions so that you're switching back and forth among characters a lot. All in all, this raccoon's game is still fun—no need to call Animal Control just yet....

PlayStation 2

DEVIL KINGS

The devil is in the 100-hit combos



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	5.5	6.5
	JUSTIN	JAMES	RICHARD

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

www.capcom.com

Good: Flashy combat that never slows down
Bad: Battles tend to feel the same, no co-op mode
The Wackiest: Faux history lesson ever



JUSTIN: With numerous next-gen console games preparing to pump out thousands of disposable digital soldiers, battlefield brawlers like *Dynasty Warriors* aren't going out of style anytime soon. Publisher Capcom adds another few thousand bodies to the pile with *Devil Kings*, a game that bears all the signature marks of its maker: It's technically solid, obsessed with combo counting, and maybe a little too concerned with its over-the-top style.

Controlling a superpowered parody of a historical figure from Japan's warring states period, you'll hack through hundreds of enemies in pursuit of more power, more moves, and ridiculously huge triple-digit combos. Your mission isn't to win battles as much as it's to find out just how much ass the shotgun-and-samurai-sword-toting Devil King or an 8-year-old girl with a huge mallet can kick. With straightforward stages that typically lay out a field full of foes and ask you to hack from point A to point B, you don't need to worry about defending the gate or helping out allies unless the game explicitly tells you you're going to lose if you don't. It's fun for what it is but lacks long-term appeal.

JAMES: I wish I could say I love *Devil Kings* as much as the game loves the damn Square button on my controller. You'll be mashing on that attack button to fight off

countless soldiers...and fighting carpal tunnel syndrome afterward. The game is quite difficult at the start but gets easier, although the bad guys' quips will drive you nuts throughout (a sample: "I see millions of butterflies").

Eventually, the joys of being a one-man army wear thin even for this short game, though I admit, between the opening anime cut-scenes and bosses with silly accents, I did enjoy playing as the Devil King—especially when using his special attack that has him whipping enemies with his cape as if it were a wet towel in a high-school locker room, but maybe that's just me.

1UP.COM—RICHARD: Wait a minute, is this *Dynasty Warriors*? I'm fighting a billion enemies at once, executing 300-plus-hit combos, and my character isn't even breaking a sweat! While *Dynasty* is the pioneer in mind-numbing action, Capcom has brought a bit of flair to differentiate *Devil Kings* from the competition. The action-packed combat—which has a speed and style similar to *Devil May Cry's*—moves faster than *Dynasty's*, and you're rewarded for those huge combos with even more devastating attacks. Unfortunately, it feels a bit dull after performing your 50th 200-hit combo. Still, *Devil Kings'* fine graphics and interesting level design make it a decent addition to the stale hack-n-slash formula.

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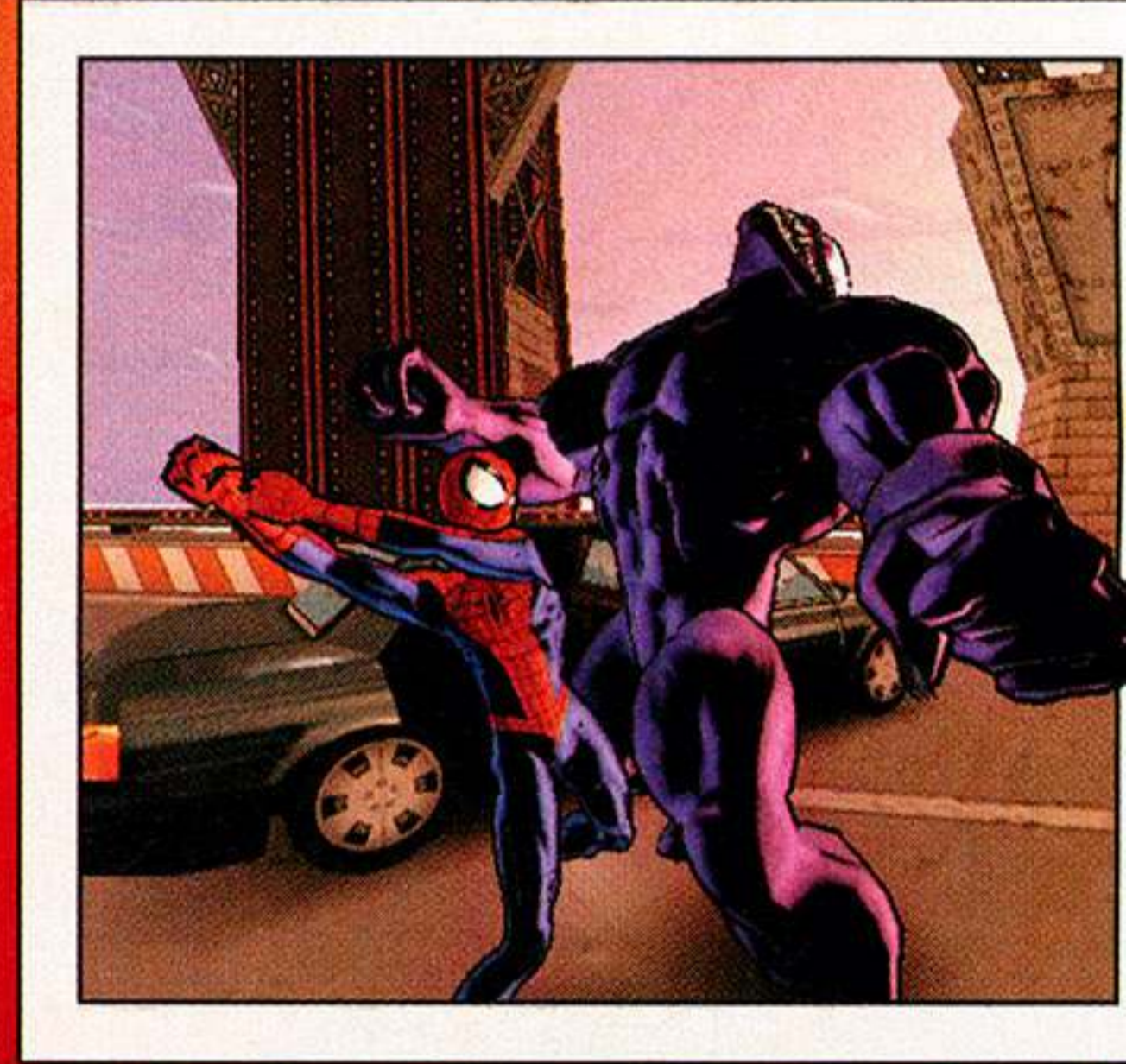


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Xbox

ONLINE

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES

Outnumbered by villains

- Good:** Mix of action and strategy elements
- Bad:** General pervasive ugliness
- Cheesy:** Elves in armored leotards



ROBERT: With enemy troops at a comfortable distance, I send my archers around the woods to catch them from behind. My spearmen follow, protecting us from reinforcements. I whip my troop of heavily armored knights into formation and head straight for the fight. Swords clash. The camera swoops in for a closer view of the action as I clear the field with simple combos, throwing ogres to the ground left and right. But just as the battle swings my way, new enemy troops break through, flooding the screen with characters. Suddenly, it's the animation taking a beating as the battle slows and I'm locked in mortal struggle with the camera. What started as a manageable, organized fight descends into chaos.

Heroes wants to be a great war game. It wants to serve up epic battles and oceans of enemies, *Dynasty Warriors*-style massive action, and real-time strategy. But it can't back up these ambitions on a technical level. The meltdown that results when too many characters join the fray and the camera freaks out often renders the game unplayable. We weren't

able to test online play, but I can't imagine it faring much better.

CHRISTIAN: I didn't get to play the first *Kingdom Under Fire*, but I read the reviews, and most of them said the same thing: cool game, crap interface. Now I get my hands on the sequel...very cool game, very crap interface.

I love how *Heroes* expands on *Dynasty Warriors* by letting you command your troops and adds real strategy elements that that series lacks. The clever leveling system also adds genuine depth.

All of this, however, is betrayed by weak controls and confused, mashtastic action gameplay. Add in the fact that you can't see elevation on the minimap and the strategy gets hosed. The game has a lot of good ideas, but it should have been sent back for more serious retooling.

GREG S: Robert hit the nail on the head; *Heroes* could be great if not for the technical issues. My main beef is that the cool strategy bits become pretty much useless if you end up fighting more than one enemy army at a time. The camera—which goes haywire frequently—is completely useless for doing things like setting your archers in a good position or even seeing where your next enemy is during the actual fighting.

All the neat strategy gameplay and upgradeable characters mean squat when everything falls apart during the missions. *Heroes* has loads of potential that can hopefully be realized on the Xbox 360.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	6.5	5.0
	ROBERT	CHRISTIAN	GREG S.

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Phantagram
Players: 1 (2-6 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.xbox.com

Xbox

ONLINE

FAR CRY INSTINCTS

It's a jungle out there



- Good:** Huge environments, lots of vehicles
- Bad:** Brain-dead enemies
- Do It Yourself:** User-friendly map editor included



SHOE: Ubisoft needs to send its game enemies to game-enemy college. Lessons learned there include how not to stare blankly at walls with your back turned toward the rest of the world, why you shouldn't run straight into machine-gun fire, and (sigh) why you shouldn't hang out near explosive barrels. So *Far Cry Instincts*' A.I. won't revolutionize the first-person-shooter genre, but the rest of the game is still pretty damn cool. You really feel like you can go anywhere you want, any way you want (walk or swim or swipe a jeep, ATV, jet ski, hang glider, gun boat...) in these supersized environments, yet you won't get lost as often as you ought to, thanks to clever level design. Some of the stages do tend to drag on, but then the story line picks up the slack by drip-feeding you supernatural powers (like night vision or superjumping) that slowly turn you into more animal than man—a dual-machine-gun-wielding, rocket-launcher-using, ass-kicking animal, that is.

Multiplayer, although only four modes deep, is a lot more fun than you'd expect. It's not as smooth or pretty as *Halo 2*'s, but I couldn't get enough of Predator mode, in which a few superpowered players try to take out a team of mercenaries before they can power up a transmitter.

KATHLEEN: The PC version of *Far Cry*, with its numerous unreasonably alert enemies and lack of a quicksave feature, left me scarred and bitter. Thankfully, *Instincts*' new story twist grants you mutant "predator" powers that provide the game with what it was missing—fun.

Superspeed is a happy perk during some of the longer levels, and since your health regenerates, you don't have to spend time pussyfooting around. Sniping your foe through tree foliage because your mutant senses can detect his B.O. is a joy.

The frustrating checkpoint save system remains and the *Dr. Moreau* plot doesn't make any sense, but it feels more forgivable with a pile of enemies you've mauled to death under your mutey feet.

1UP.COM—ANDREW: I also played *Far Cry* on the PC, and though the locales were pretty and the vehicles were fun, I was totally soured by the incredibly cheap A.I., which had no problem spotting—and then shooting—me from 200 yards.

Instincts comes across as an apology for this, thanks to the health-regeneration ability and a more powerful melee attack. But even though the cheap-shot factor has been toned down, it's still fundamentally flawed, as the incentive to stay stealthy disappears when you realize the A.I. usually sees you comin' a mile away. Shame, because when *Far Cry*'s not frustrating, it's a good time.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	8.0	6.5
	SHOE	KATHLEEN	ANDREW

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Players: 1-4 (2-16 online and system link)
ESRB: Mature

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■ For the ultimate in micromanagement, you can direct individual units within a squad (below left). Doing so takes your attention away from the overall battle though, which isn't smart.



■ GameCube

BATTALION WARS

War is heck

SHOE: You charge into the enemy stronghold with a battalion of tanks, flamethrowers, bazooka men, helicopters, riflemen, and antiaircraft missile launchers. You point to a bogey chopper and tell your missile launchers to take it out before it blows up your tanks. You then turn to the machine gun nests and tell your flamethrowers to smoke 'em. You personally take control of a bazooka unit to shoot at enemy armor. You then cross your fingers, hoping that, after all the explosions, dead bodies, smoking wrecks, countless bullets, and general chaos, it's your team raising its arms in victory.

It's real-time-strategy warfare made simple, complex, and messy, all at the same time. Instead of a *Pikmin*-style ring or a PC-style click-and-drag to select units, you use your C-stick to pick a squad and tell it to either stand still, shoot at a particular target, or you can take full control of a unit. It works in theory, but when the stuff hits the fan, your hand-eye-brain coordination better be running at max capacity or else you'll be cursing the game,

reloading the same stage for the umpteenth time because you didn't micromanage the right unit at the right time. It's a lot of frantic switching between squads and analyzing the battlefield situation at the same time, all the while wishing the game would just slow down a tad and give you a minute to think. Even for this seasoned real-time-strategy veteran, *Battalion Wars* was a bit too frenzied.

MARK: It's a brilliant plan: combine the tactical thrills of real-time strategy with the visceral pleasures of an action-shooter. I'm happy to report that, overall, the mission is a success; whether you're leading a column of tanks, dodging bullets on the ground, or directing chopper air support, *Wars'* controls and handy C-stick troop management system perform well under fire, once you adjust to the quirks. Even the cartoony graphics and goofy characters serve their purposes, making it easy to recognize different soldier types in the heat of battle and lending the story a certain charm.

But these *Wars* do suffer a few key casualties. Weaknesses—your dumb troops aren't effective without direct orders, the game lacks a checkpoint system, and keeping units of the same type separated is almost impossible—limit strategy and turn the more challenging levels into frustration.

1UP.COM—MILKMAN: On the one hand, *Battalion Wars* is a welcome change from all the serious war games (*SOCOM*, *Ghost Recon*, etc.) that have risen to prominence in these globally dour times. Here lies the thrill of combat without the gory carnage, the multiplayer cheating, and the tumult of rockets' red glare as virtual bullets whiz by. On the other hand, the overly chirpy Saturday morning cartoon voice-acting drove me a little nuts, and I found the controls to be on the fussy side. It's usually a struggle to lock on to your target of choice, and the camera falls you more often than not in the typically hectic vehicular segments. A lot of potential, but potential unfulfilled in this patchy debut.

Military Intelligence?

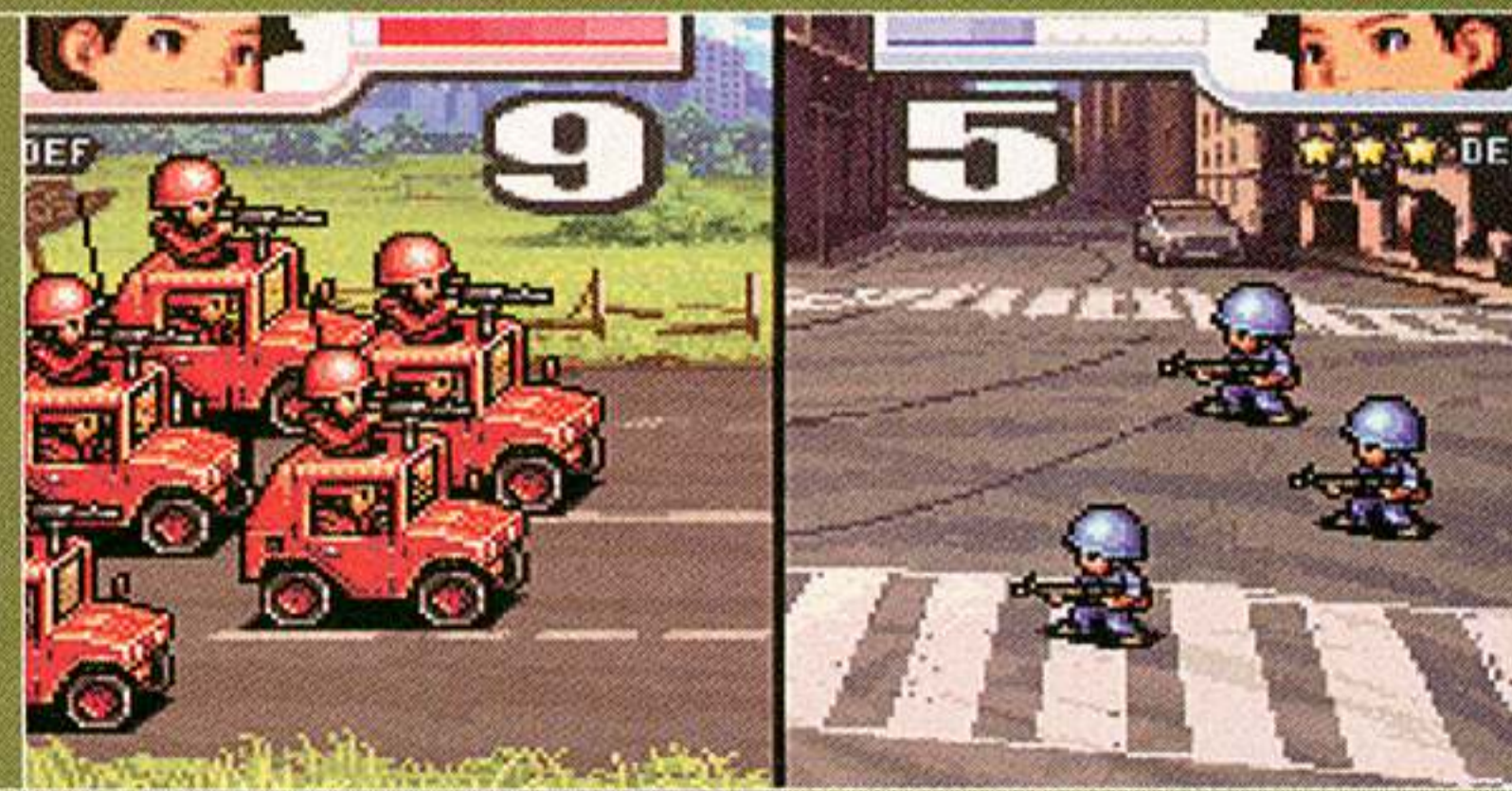
The A.I. is the real problem here. You can control individual units, but the other troops that follow you around...if you don't tell them what specifically to do, they won't always be so gung ho about engaging the enemy in the smartest way. That means you have to micro-manage the hell out of your grunts or watch them die a lot.



■ Since you can target your own guys, locking on to enemies becomes more frustrating in the heat of battle.

The History of War

Battalion Wars started off life as a real-time, GameCube edition of *Advance Wars* (GBA/DS). You can see the kiddie aesthetic influences, from the cute, squat soldiers to the toylite tanks. Even the characters look and sound like they belong right at home with *Advance Wars'* cast of chattering idiots. Luckily, Nintendo changed this game's title from *Advance Wars* to *Battalion Wars* to separate it from the excellent turn-based strategy series.



Good: The easy stages aren't bad
Bad: The hard stages are frustrating
Dumb: No multiplayer



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

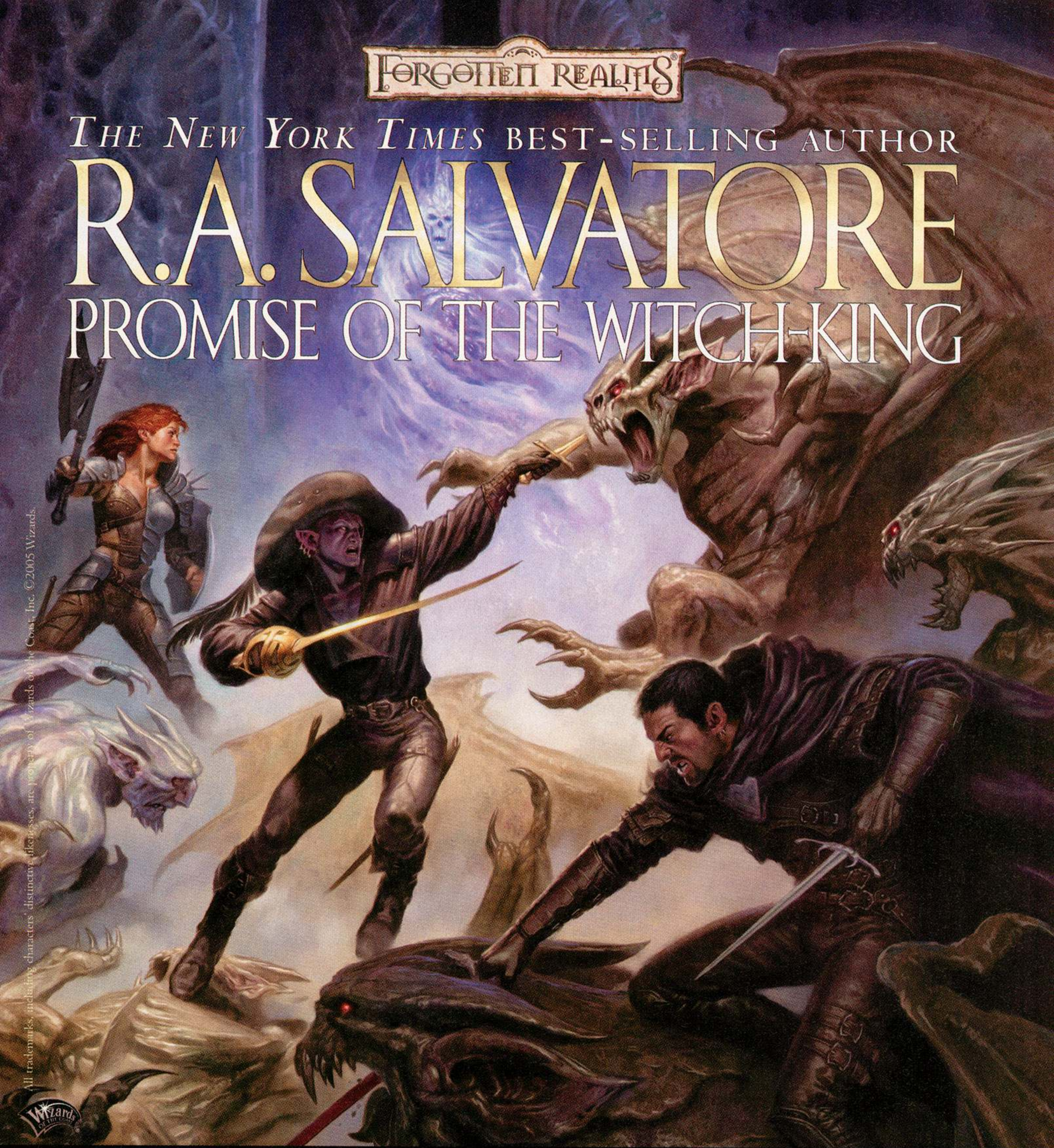
6.0 **6.5** **7.0**
SHOE MARK MILKMAN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Kuju
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.nintendo.com

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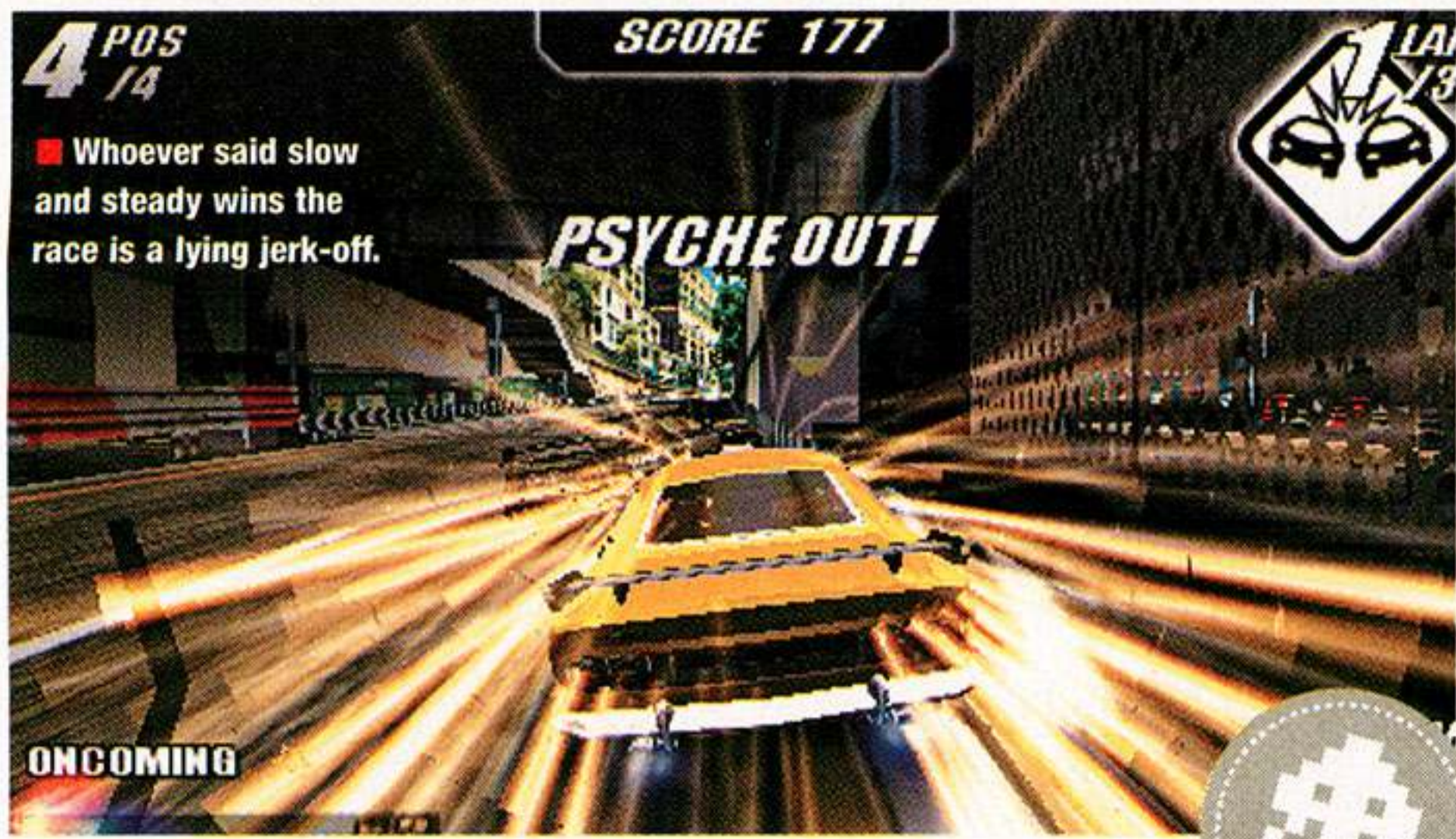


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PSP
BURNOUT LEGENDS

Pocket rocket

Good: Controls, speed, general *Burnout*-ness
Bad: We already pine for *Burnout Revenge*'s gameplay
Sure Would Be Nice: If it was online, and not just local Wi-Fi....



DEMIAN: Man, I'm starting to run out of good things to say about demolition racer *Burnout*—not that it isn't great; it's just that pretty much everyone already knows how and why it's great. It's fast, it's visceral, it's intense...and now it's on PSP.

Legends cherry-picks the best from the first three games in the arcade racing series: classic tracks, *Burnout 2*'s Pursuit mode (you play a smokey chasing down a runner), and *Burnout 3*'s basic gameplay. That's a pretty solid lineup, but after playing *Burnout Revenge* (see page 134), I already miss that game's new traffic checking—smacking same-way traffic to create chain-reaction accidents and take out rivals—and alternate-route-filled stages.

But none of that stops *Legends* from being probably the best racer on PSP. The loading times aren't too bothersome, and it's lengthy and packed with unlockables, including cars you can earn only by racing other *Legends* owners in Wi-Fi multiplayer—but, unfortunately, we couldn't test the Wi-Fi modes due to a shortage of game discs.

G. FORD: Further proving that *Burnout* rocks in any capacity, developer Criterion delivers this gem to PSP. In fact, I've gotta say I'm shocked by how well *Burnout Legends* turned out. Here's a series that is jaw-dropping on home consoles yet loses very little in the transition to the small screen. The speed, the takedowns, the resulting white knuckles—so much is done perfectly here as *Legends* nails that smooth feel we've grown to expect. Most important is that even at the game's high speed, seeing oncoming traffic and upcoming turns rarely proves troublesome. I did find it somewhat disorienting to go back to avoiding same-way traffic after playing *Burnout Revenge*, but the return of Pursuit mode acts as decent compensation.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE: The thing that really impresses me about *Legends* is the way the developers managed to translate the breakneck pace of *Burnout 3* to a handheld. Sure, it's a little bit slower than its PS2 counterparts, but I still felt that ridiculous sense of speed. Even more impressive is the fact that the controls are as tight as anyone could hope for. The only real disappointment is that event type Pursuit is a bit of a snooze compared to the immediate, visceral thrill of taking an opponent down. Chasing and slowly tearing apart your opponent is a bit *too* slow for my taste. Beyond that, it's a top-notch handheld translation—and expansion—of one of my favorite PS2 games ever.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	9.0	9.0
	DEMIAN	G. FORD	JOE

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Criterion
Players: 1 (2-6 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.eagames.com

PSP

VIRTUA TENNIS: WORLD TOUR

Not quite love-all



Good: Smart A.I., familiar and simple controls, fun multiplayer
Bad: Really nothing new, leveling up stats is tedious
Bargain: Only \$10,000 to have Sharapova as a doubles partner



JAMES: I know from playing Dreamcast's *Virtua Tennis* that hitting tennis balls at gigantic bowling pins (one of that title's minigames) can captivate me for hours. And the thought of doing so on my PSP made me as happy as if I had just found out Anna Kournikova had a twin.

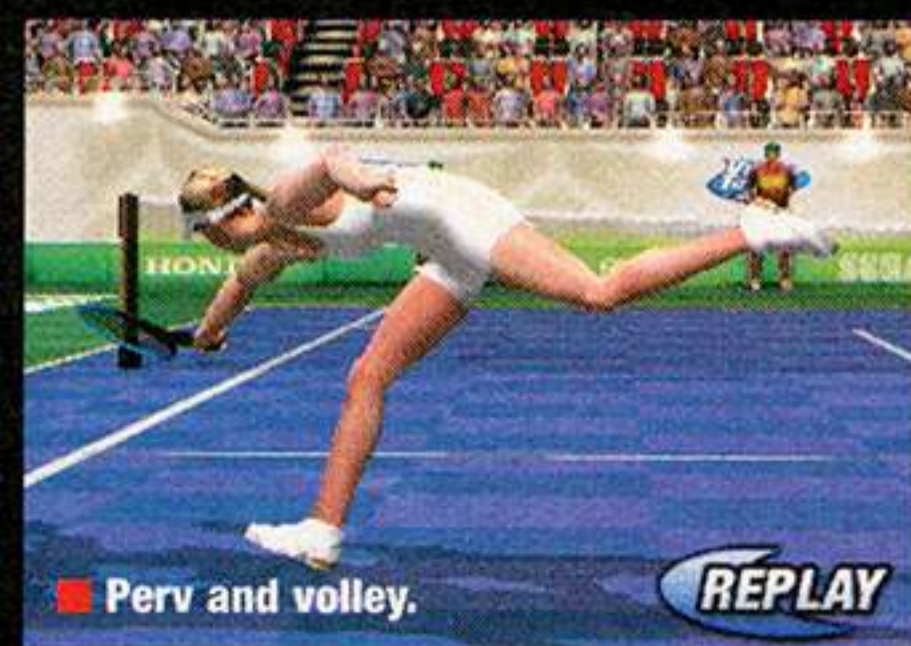
Unfortunately, the game doesn't serve up the kind of addictive *Virtua Tennis* I'm used to. The familiar World Tour mode, in which you have to struggle for a No. 1 ranking, is now based around a high-maintenance competition calendar. And strangely, you'll play as both male and female characters that share everything—rank, money, clothing accessories—as if they were a weird married couple. The wacky minigames (like dodging tennis balls and collecting flags) are back, but much like your climb to the top, they're slow going and no longer as much fun.

Thankfully, the multiplayer is just as much fun—but you'll be quoting potty-mouthed John McEnroe at your ball hog of an A.I. doubles partner. You'll also find cool new playable characters such as Federer, A. Rod, and, more importantly, "the legs of Slovakia" Hantuchova and Sharapova. The game's slick graphics even do them (and their gams) justice.

JENNIFER: Boo to you, James. Next time you serve, I'm going to whistle unmercifully. *Virtua Tennis* fabulously re-creates everything that's awesome about tennis. It's *Pong* on steroids, with lifelike graphics, technically deep controls, and awesome sound effects—I love hearing my player's feet shuffle on the court and that

satisfying thwop of a well-hit ball. And like real tennis, it's a game anyone can pick up and at least pretend to play, but practice and skill are everything. The game shines in multiplayer, in which psychology is as important as technique. So why isn't my score just a little higher? The single-player story mode has some fun and addictive minigames, and I like how the game rewards you even for failed challenges by awarding skill points. But it all takes a bit too long, and the calendar of tournaments is tedious.

PATRICK: The best tennis franchise in videogame history looks pretty much like the game you've played on platforms past. In World Tour mode you'll build up your players' attributes via completing a series of minigames—they not only are addictive but also teach you the ins and outs of the different strokes. Then you enter tournaments to win cash and climb the rankings—I liked the process much more than James, but he's right that *Virtua* is at its best in multiplayer via Wi-Fi. It's easily the most fun sports game I've played on the PSP.



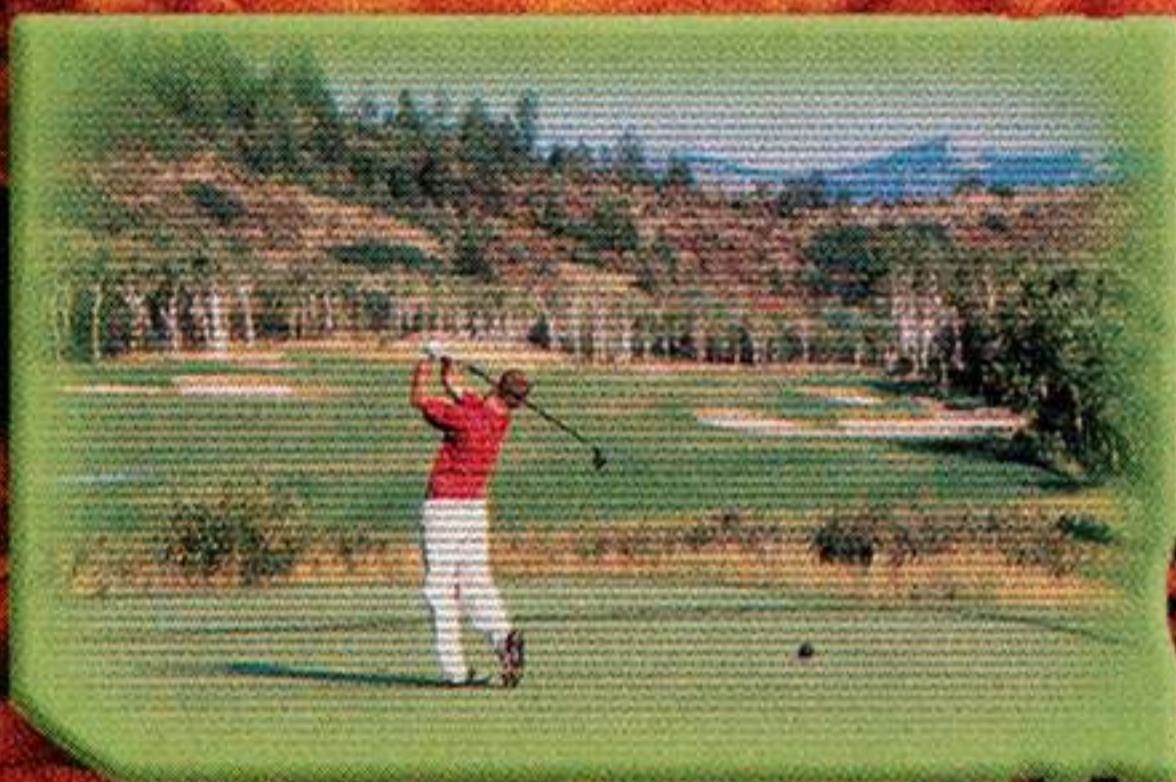
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	8.0	8.0
	JAMES	JENNIFER	PATRICK

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sumo Digital
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone

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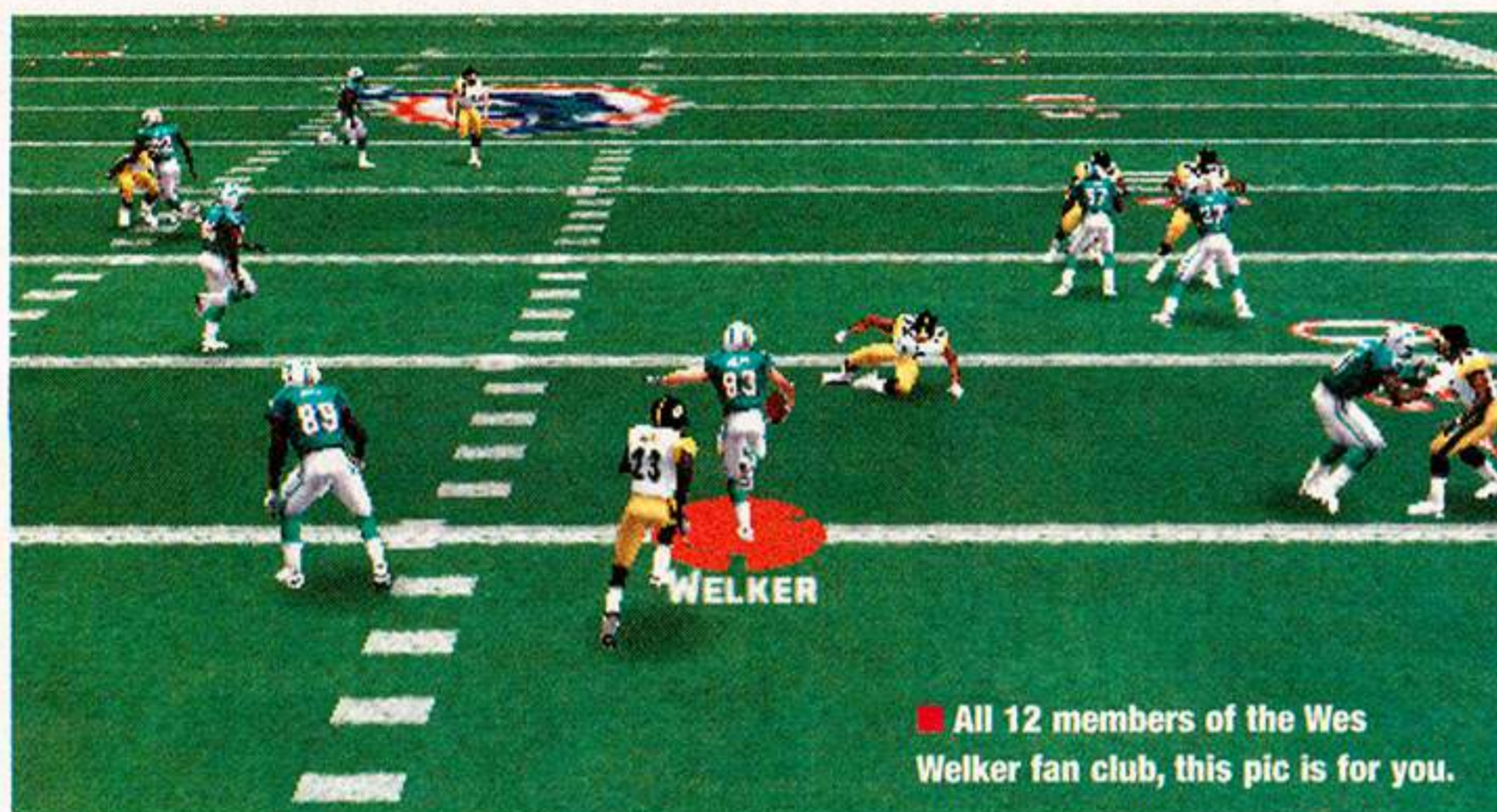
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PSP

ONLINE

MADDEN NFL 06

In playoff contention



All 12 members of the Wes Welker fan club, this pic is for you.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	9.0
	BRYAN	G. FORD	PATRICK M.

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi, 2 online)
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com

Good: Tons of game modes
Bad: Loads at really weird times
Transfer: Your franchise saves to the PS2 version and vice versa



BRYAN: Unlike the home editions, *Madden's* handheld performance over the years has mirrored that of the Arizona Cardinals. That's not good, people. But thankfully, the move to PSP has helped bring the portable franchise back to respectability.

On the field, this one plays just as well as (and sometimes better than) the console version. It moves extremely fast, the flashy animations help spice up the somewhere-between-PS1-and-PS2 visuals, and you can now pass with precision (throw the ball high, low, and ahead of or behind the receiver) without worrying about the console version's finicky vision cone. And *Madden* is stacked with modes: You've got loads of quick-hitting, minigamelike training drills (punt return is my fave), it's playable online, and if you own the PS2 version of *06*, you can transfer your franchise saves between the two systems—why don't more sports series utilize the PSP like this?

Still, *Madden* does suffer some first-year growing pains on the platform. Loading a game takes a while (almost a minute), and it stutters at odd moments (after you pick a play, right before an interception), thus dragging out each four-quarter experience. And next year, the developers gotta find a way to let you challenge plays.

G. FORD: I've gotta hand it to the PSP's inevitable *Madden* entry for making a decent rookie showing. When the game's in motion, you can't help but be impressed. The player models, while jaggy, move smoothly and swiftly, and the solid controls are classic *Madden* (although there are no buttons for pump fakes or throwing the ball away). But when the play ends, the cracks start showing. What's with the weird hiccuping load times after every play? Also, that kicking meter needs to be bigger and less herky-jerky, and the lack of replays hurts. Still, on the field, *06* mostly nails the *Madden* feel, which makes the prospect of helping my Pats defend their title while I'm on the go very appealing.

PATRICK M: *Madden* on PS2 already takes up enough of my life—now that I can continue my franchise game on PSP, I'm a prime candidate for a *Madden* intervention.

Despite the lone analog nub on PSP (versus the dual analog sticks on the console versions), the controls are surprisingly smooth and intuitive. The console *Madden's* QB vision control system also got the ax, but I can't say I really miss it. As Bryan noted, you can still lead your receiver or place the ball low to avoid an INT, which is nice. *Madden* fans, time to buy a PSP.

PSP

POPOLOCROIS

Old-time roleplayer goes small-time



So that's what 10 years ago looks like.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	5.5	6.5
	NICH	SHANE	JENNIFER

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: G-Artists
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone
www.agetec.com

Good: Finally, a real role-playing game for PSP
Bad: It's made for 6-year-olds
Fashion Faux Pas: Forest witch Narcia's terrible hat



NICH: If nothing else, this release of *PoPoLoCrois*—a remixed version of two old PS1 games—will please the few diehard RPG fans who've always wanted to sample the series. Unfortunately, unlike other long-delayed role-playing game series such as *Arc the Lad* and *Shin Megami Tensei*, this one wasn't exactly worth the wait.

PoPoLoCrois for PSP is actually the first two games in the series merged together; it's a solid RPG without major flaws, but it's also dull and unchallenging. Intended for young kids, it errs too far on the side of uncomplicated story and dead simple battle systems. The game plays out a lot like the similarly kid-focused *Rhapsody*, a PS1 RPG from 2000 that you probably don't remember unless you like games about singing puppets.

Though you'll find little depth or hidden content here, the fact that *PoPoLoCrois* is on a portable system means you can at least play it in short bursts—and hey, unlike most RPGs, it doesn't even have much of a story for you to worry about forgetting in between sessions.

SHANE: The distressingly inter-capped *PoPoLoCrois* finally weaves its weird way to America, where it doubtlessly plans to lie about its age. Antiquated as the source material may be (parts of it date back to 1996), the game's not entirely out of place

in the PSP library. With basic, turn-based gameplay, charming storybook visuals, and an easygoing vibe, it's an RPG well suited for intermittent play on the go. Well, in theory, at least. Some nagging issues quickly transform the fantasy romp into a throbbing headache. Problems include a sloppy, blurry graphical glitch when the camera scrolls, copious bouts of loading (try three seconds to load laughably lame spell effects), and imprecise analog control, all of which whittle away the simple pleasures of protagonist Prince Pietro's quest.

JENNIFER: It feels wrong playing this decidedly old-school game on the slick, seemly PSP. The simplistic graphics and turn-based gameplay don't wow on any level. Nor does the story, the iffy controls, or the broken map and nonexistent quest systems, which give you no clue whatsoever, at any point, where you're supposed to be heading or why.

But even with no wow factor, some things about the game are downright pleasant: You can save anywhere, your party members are easy to manage, and the combat system is quick to learn. (And hey, I liked the spell effects, Shane!) Too bad about all that aimless wandering, which would be annoying on its own but is even more bogged down by the frequent battles and their requisite load times.

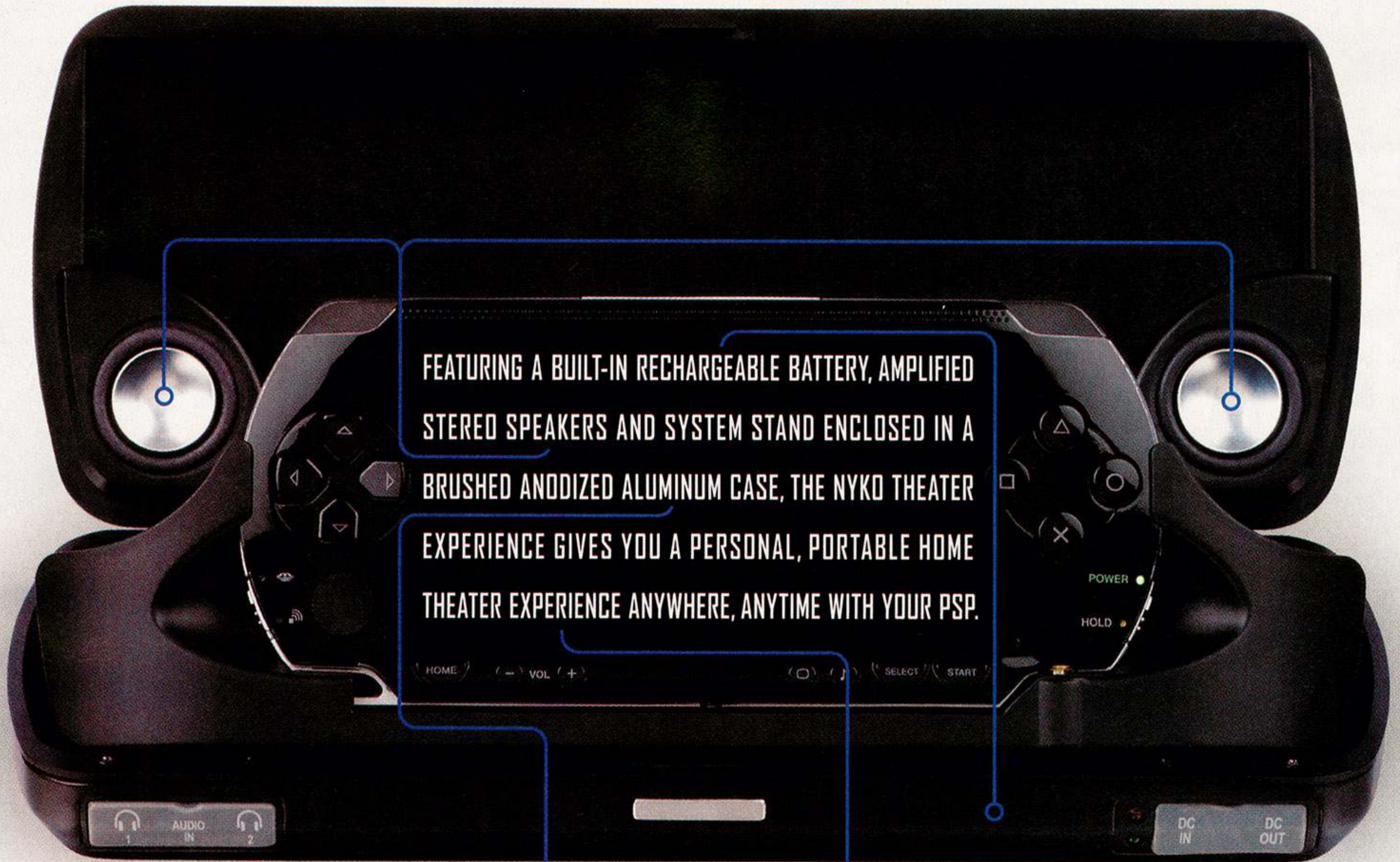
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GAME OF THE MONTH



■ "I said we're using the buddy system. Now hold my hand, damn it."



■ DS

CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

Rad dawn

SHANE: In many ways, *Dawn of Sorrow* actually trumps Konami's quintessential "Metroid-vania" that started it all—*Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* for PS1. Here, girly-man hero Soma Cruz amasses more varied equipment (everything from swords to rocket launchers), masters more powers, and weaves his way through a perfectly paced, respectably difficult side-scrolling adventure. Everything fits into place: Vibrant graphics (peppered with a stylish 3D backgrounds), tight controls, inventive boss encounters (expect very few repeat performances by classic series villains), and a haunting musical score combine to form a remarkable gameplay experience.

And if you're a slightly addictive personality...say, a recovering crackhead or fresh-out-of-rehab Pokémaniac, *Dawn's* soul-collection aspect will make your head explode. Sucking up enemy souls grants Soma such startlingly cool abilities (which can be upgraded by gathering additional copies of said souls) that you can really get caught up in catching 'em all. Factor in a treasure trove of unlockable modes and multiple reasons for replay and you're bound to be in a hazy, twitchy *Castlevania* stupor for a good month.

For my money, *Dawn of Sorrow* is the DS' second must-buy title after *Meteos*. Unlike most of the oddball DS software it shares shelf space with, *Dawn* isn't some think-outside-the-box experiment in synergistic touch-panel technology (in fact, its tacked-on touch-screen bits feel pretty weak), but hell, who's complaining? Quality lasts; gimmicks fade from memory. Sure, it's an awful

lot like its Game Boy Advance forerunners, but don't listen to the critics—that's a very good thing.

MARK: As reliable as Dracula's castle reappearing every 100 years, *Dawn of Sorrow* is everything we've come to expect from the excellent handheld *Castlevanias*: responsive controls; beautiful, crisp 2D graphics; and old-fashioned gameplay that'll keep you up way past your bedtime. It's a formula that's changed little in almost a decade (since *Symphony of the Night*), but the many refinements here do make a difference, especially the ability to collect multiple monster souls to increase powers and upgrade your weapons. It keeps you gladly swatting at enemies as you crisscross the castle and, along with awesome new playable characters and plenty of secrets, makes it impossible to put down *Dawn of Sorrow* until long after the first time you see the credits roll.

SHOE: Musty hallways. Skeletons, bats, and flying Medusa heads. The slick weapon that's just out of reach because I haven't scored the double-jump boots yet. Wait...haven't I visited this castle many times before? Yes, *Dawn of Sorrow* walks down the same design path as its GBA predecessors, but that's just fine because it has the same excellent pacing that makes exploration, combat, and leveling up so compelling.

If you don't have that urge to collect stuff, you won't get the best mileage out of this game. I didn't spend hours beating up on the same monsters over and over just to get a new soul like Shane "Mr. Yawn of Sorrow" over there, so my end experience wasn't as deep as his. But still, I'd recommend this game just for its dedicated map on the upper DS screen. *Castlevania* veterans understand why....

Alucard and Pals

After glimpsing the first of *Dawn's* multiple endings, you'll unlock Julius mode, in which you tackle the game as a trio of vampire hunters—Julius Belmont, sultry shopkeeper Yoko Belnades, and Drac's legendary son (and *Symphony of the Night* star) Alucard. You can switch between the three unique protagonists on the fly, and each character sports his or her own special powers. Kudos to Konami for including this stellar unlockable bonus. ★



Multiplayer 'Vania?

Dawn's sole multiplayer mode (a series first) isn't exactly the tag-team vampire-whipping party you might have hoped for. Instead, you and a pal each fill a pre-designed level with enemies from your soul collection and then race to see who can complete the other's stage first. It's a fun diversion at best.

Good: As addictive, challenging, and engaging as a console game
Bad: More evolutionary than revolutionary
Cooliest Weapon: Throwing giant platters of beef curry



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

9.5 SHANE 9.0 MARK 8.5 SHOE

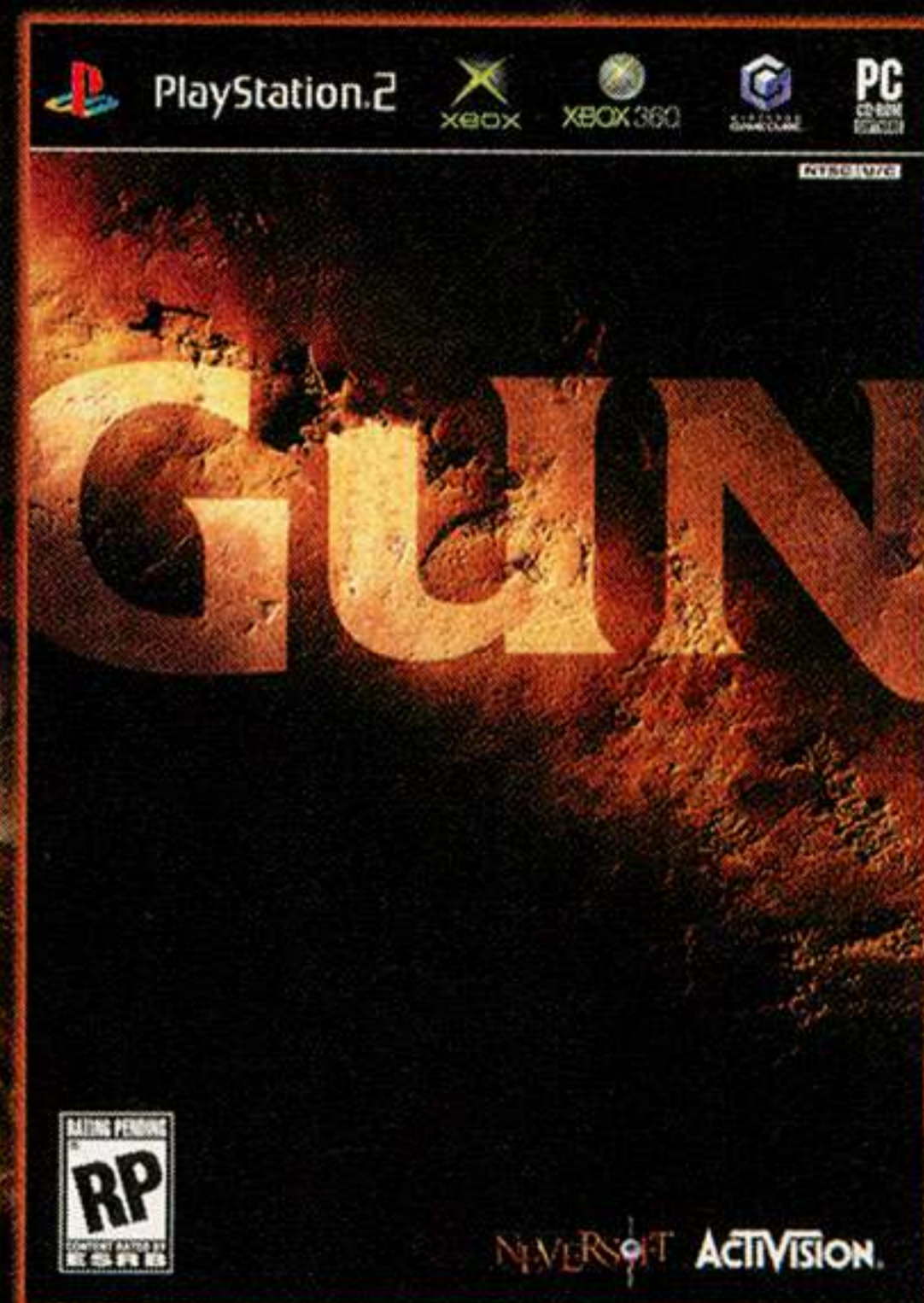
Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Konami Tokyo
 Players: 1 (2 via local W-Fi)
 ESRB: Teen

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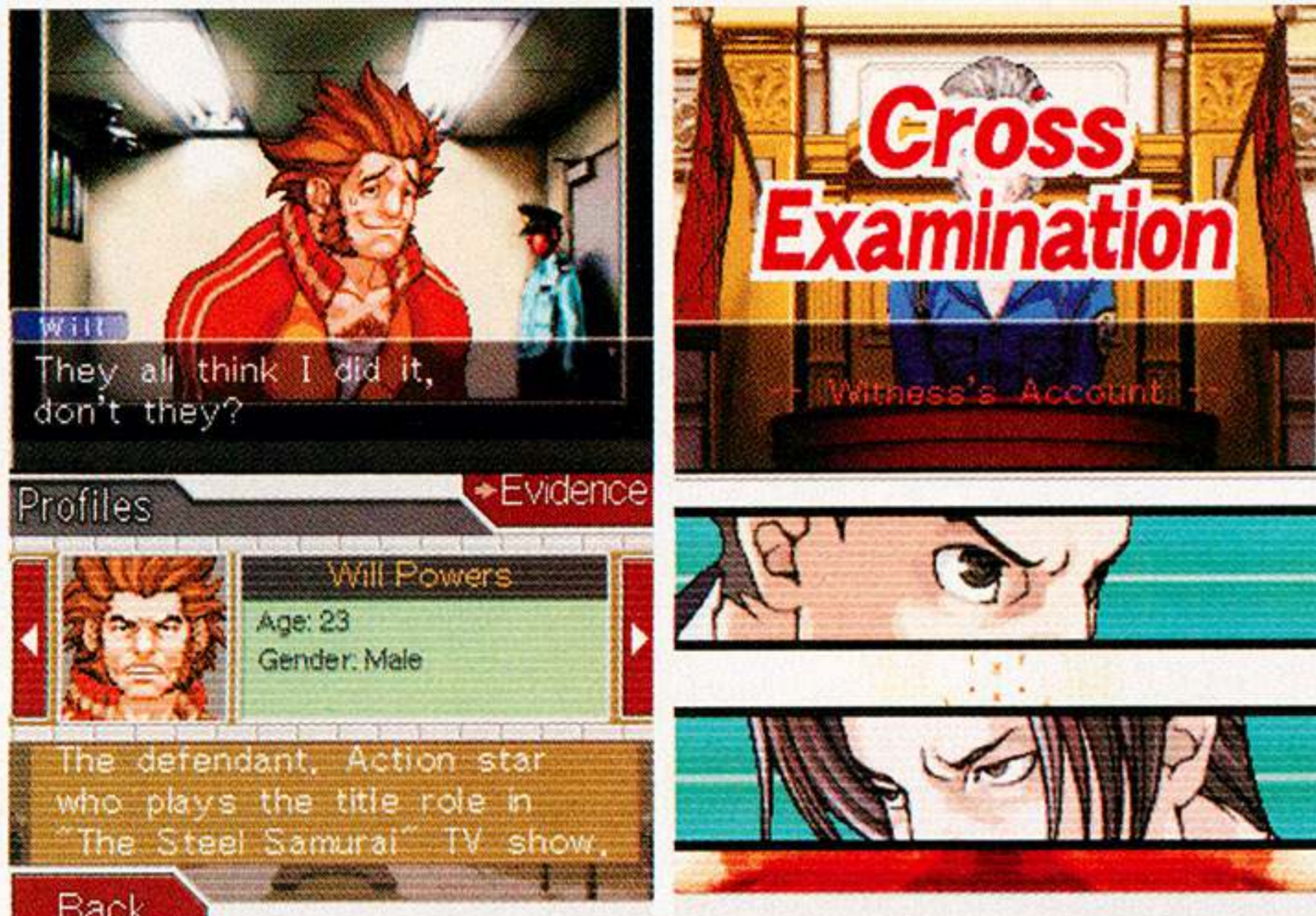
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DS

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY

It pleases the court



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	6.5	8.5
	SHANE	JENNIFER	ANDREW

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

www.capcom.com

Good: Fantastic translation, clever jokes
Bad: Repetitive, occasionally frustrating
Prerequisites: Literacy, patience



SHANE: Commonly referred to (in my experience, at least) as “that lawyer game,” *Phoenix Wright* arrives as a relative mystery. I mean, how exactly does one simulate the act of...er, lawyering? Somehow, Capcom’s managed to pull it off reasonably well. In terms of gameplay, *Wright* bears a close resemblance to old-school adventure fare like cult-classic *Snatcher* (Sega CD)—lengthy dialogue trees, plenty of menus, and lots of furtively moving a little cursor in hopes of finding something to interact with.

OK, so that sounds awfully dull, but here, it’s not. And fortunately, the entertaining, well-localized story and climactic courtroom “battle scenes” (basically logic, memory, and comprehension puzzles) keep *Wright* interesting. That said, it’s certainly not a game for everyone. Solving *Wright*’s epic courtroom dramas takes considerably longer than you’d expect. Also, the game doesn’t reach its stride until the fifth and final case (the only one designed specifically for DS; *Wright* started as a GBA game). This wildly complex, surprisingly serious übercase sports several creative new touch-screen gameplay segments that nicely complement the narrative. A full game like that would have been truly sweet.

JENNIFER: *Wright* made me grateful to live in the United States, where if anyone ever

casually accuses me of murder, at least I get a jury trial. In Japan, all it takes is the false testimony of one questionable witness and you’re hosed—that is, if *Wright* is accurate. Which it probably isn’t. It also isn’t exactly a game; it’s more like an interactive mystery novel. But it reminds me of that old beloved board game *Clue*. Anyone with half a brain could figure out the answer in *Clue* through a couple quick rounds of elimination, but it was still pretty fun because of the stories, props, and characters. *Wright* is much like that: memorable characters, loads of personality, an engaging story with plenty of intrigue...all it needs now is a bit more gameplay.

1UP.COM—ANDREW: I enjoy a good murder mystery: *Law & Order*, *CSI*, that other *CSI*, *Matlock*... “Whodunit?” is perhaps my favorite question to ask people, even when nothing was done. And because I never was able to get into law school, *Wright* has quickly become my favorite DS game.

Its beauty is not just in the novelty of investigating crime scenes, interviewing difficult witnesses, and taking part in the complex back-and-forth cases that dramatically unravel in the courtroom. What’s great about *Wright* is that, unlike most other games, it really gets you thinking critically, and not just within the rules of a game.

DS

TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE

It slices, it sutures, it...doesn't suck



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	8.0	6.0
	CHRISTIAN	KATHLEEN	ROBERT

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Atlus
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.atlus.com

Good: Innovative and slick, very polished
Bad: Tough, unforgiving, and repetitive
Female Patients: Have no nipples. Sorry, Dr. Pervert



CHRISTIAN: A surgery game on the touch-sensitive Nintendo DS—it’s exactly what Nintendo promised us when it unveiled this machine: crazy new game experiences we never expected.

Trauma Center casts you as a rookie doctor, Derek Stiles, fresh out of his residency and finally able to perform surgery on his own. It’s a clever setup, and the story, while a bit goofy (a mysterious disease called GUILT! Surgical powers inherited from a Greek god!), is pretty entertaining.

The surgery itself requires perfect memory of what to do when and absolute precision with the stylus. Something I never expected is just how much the game relies on reflexes—you have barely enough time to complete the trickier operations. I’ve lost count of the patients I let die. It’s a tough game, and fighting the clock, my memory, and my reflexes wasn’t always all that much fun.

This helps make *Trauma Center* intense, but it also makes it frustrating. Still, it’s a clever, creative game, and DS fans will love how it takes advantage of the system’s unique features. I respect the innovation found here, but I wish the game were a little more forgiving.

KATHLEEN: With *Trauma Center*, the fourth wall isn’t just broken, it is clamped, drained, and excised. Offering up a plot

that melds your grandmammy’s favorite daytime stories with the most basic of *Resident Evil* premises, you star as a preternaturally gifted young surgeon who has to sever, suction, and suture his way through various patients who are suffering from an otherworldly disease.

Managing each surgery requires an addictive balance of tools and timing. Certain actions must be exact, and getting it right can be aggravating—some operations took many, many tries, but I completed them. No one is going to die today! Do you hear me, God? *Not on my watch!*

ROBERT: After a few ordinary stitch-ups and tumor removals, *Trauma Center* takes a turn for the weird. Granted, we’re already talking about a surgery game here, but I mean bizarre: An outbreak of an unknown disease finds our surgeon laser-blasting alienlike creatures in the organs of his patients. But for all its oddness and originality (administering stylus cootie shots and sloppy squiggle sutures), the game never strays far from the familiar arcade-style shooter. It’s all memorizing and repeating patterns.

Trauma Center would have been a lot more interesting and fun without the chatty assistants constantly interrupting with instructions. Still, it’s fresh quirk for the weird kids, myself included.

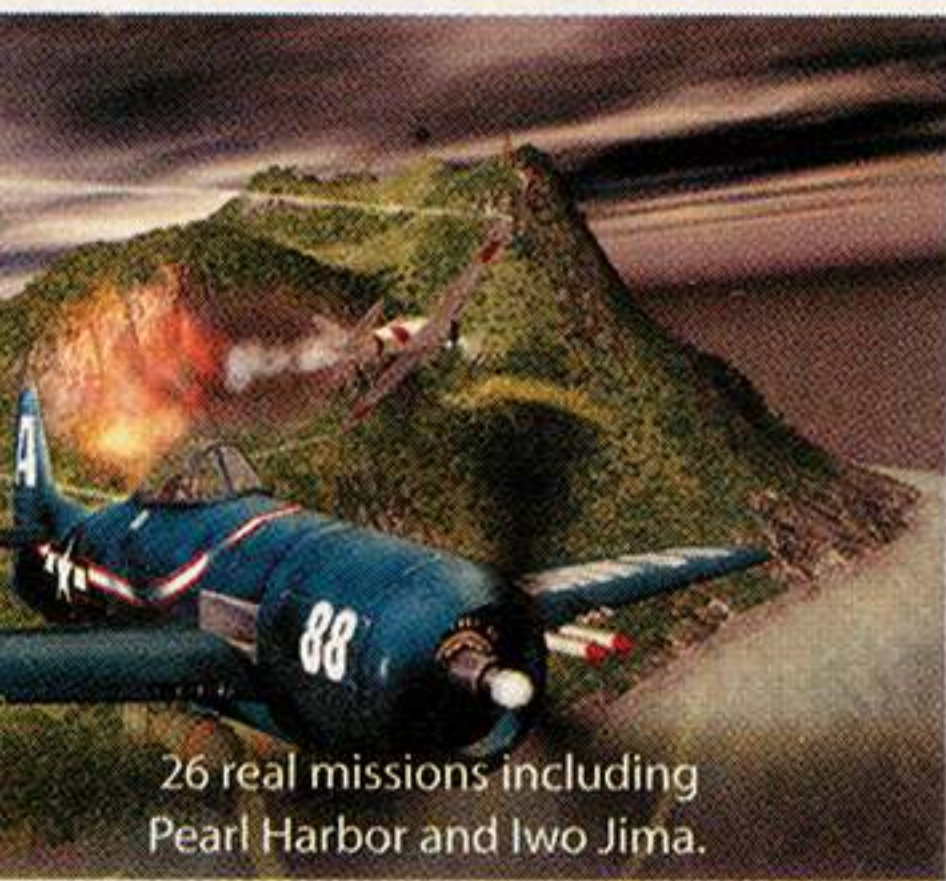
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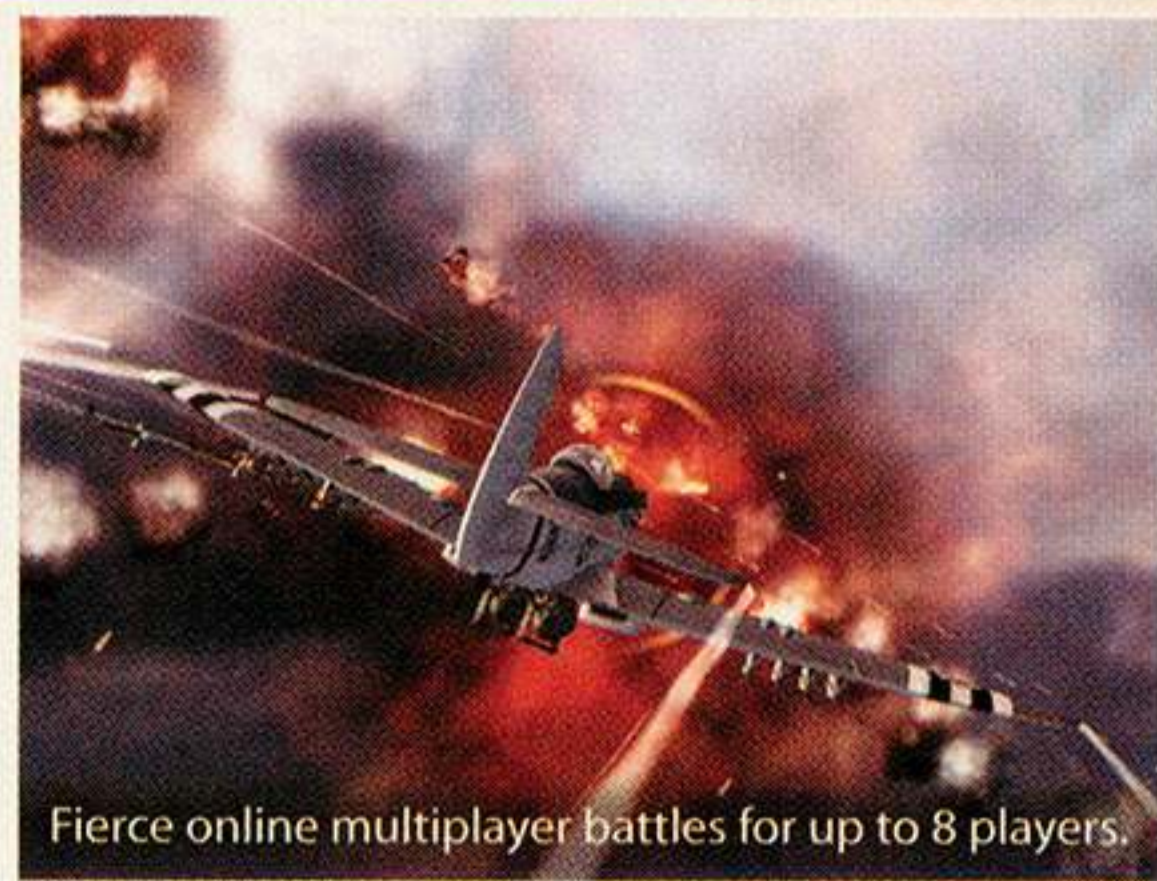
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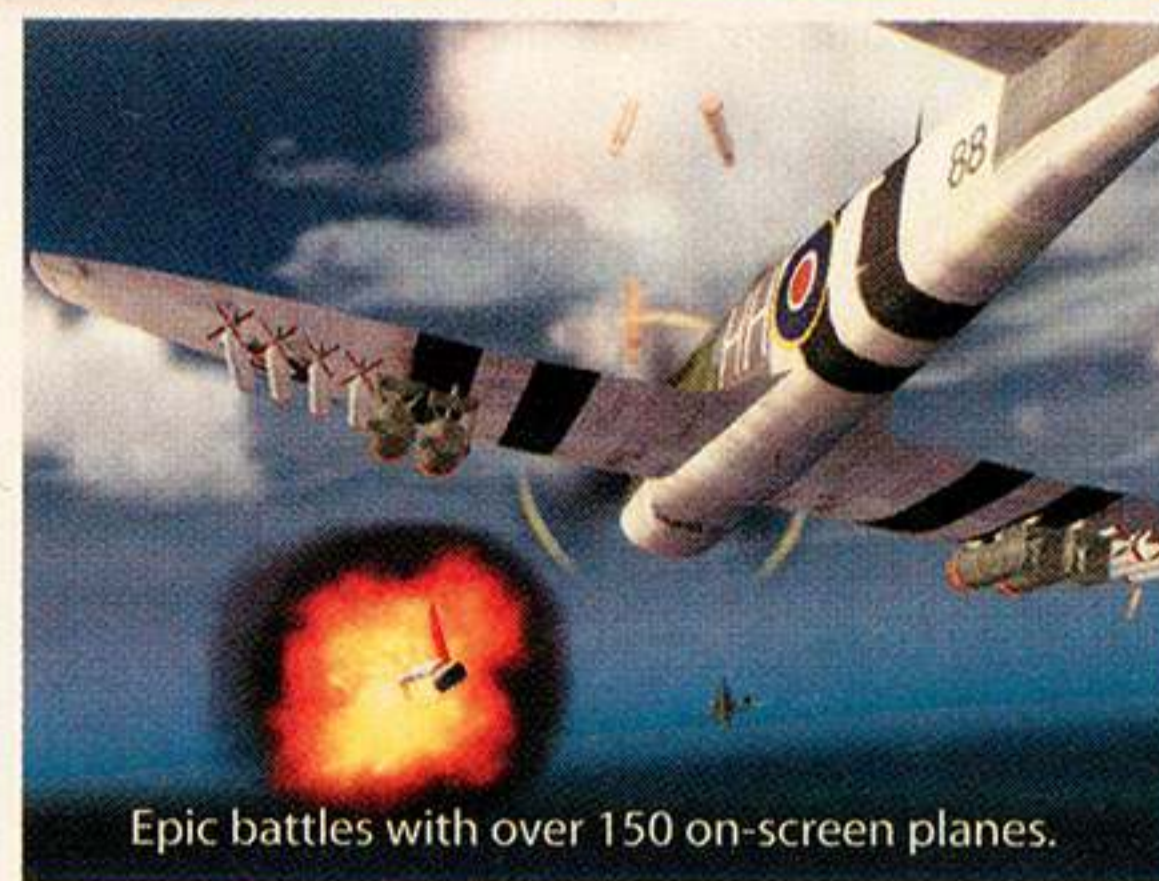
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PlayStation®2



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R



Where's the fire? Building one requires blowing until your face is blue.

DS

LOST IN BLUE

La dual-screen vita

Good: Fishing for dinner at sunset
Bad: The actual fishing minigame
Do Not Eat: The red mushrooms



ROBERT: This is teenage-boy fantasy for the kids who dug *Huckleberry Finn* more than *Lord of the Rings*. Stranded on an island with a cute girl, fending for yourself by hunting, fishing, and exploring, you make your living by gathering the bare necessities. The minigames this entails are novelties at best and annoyances at worst: digging for veggies with the stylus, blowing on sparking tinder (via the DS microphone) to start fires, jabbing fish with a spear (the stylus), etc. But taken together they add up to something special, a slice of domestic bliss as you hunt, gather, and make your cave cozy with driftwood furniture.

That said, the early hours of the game are tiring. You'll find yourself straining just to keep your pair of castaways nourished and rested. Breaking out of this



hand-to-mouth monotony takes patience and (too much) effort. But once you acquire better tools, the pace relaxes and you can concentrate on exploring and enjoying your island paradise.

CRISPIN: Water...need water. Must find firewood. Starving. Just have to spear a few more fish to eat. Read the desperation in these words: It sums up the first hours of *Lost in Blue*—a unique, fascinating, and at times relaxing desert-isle adventure that begins with a frustrating life-and-death struggle. As in the flick *Cast Away* (except with a hot-chick companion instead of a volleyball), you start your tropical exile with zilch and must learn how to survive off the land while unraveling the mystery of an island that may or may not be inhabited. Once you've figured out how to keep your gal alive on her own and she gains gourmet-cooking prowess, life becomes a beach.

1UP.COM—JEREMY: *Lost in Blue's* stranded-Sims formula works, although the joys of exploring your new island home are dampened by the day-to-day grind of keeping your status indicators out of the red. The interface could use some help, too: For instance, the command to feed your companion (important if you want to keep her from dying and stuff) is buried three menus deep. Expect to spend a lot of time performing the same button presses over and over. Still, while it could use a little streamlining, *Lost* is quietly satisfying—once you get over the “constantly dying” thing.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	7.5
	ROBERT	CRISPIN	JEREMY

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com

DS

LUNAR: DRAGON SONG

Bark at the moon



Good: Above-average graphics for the DS
Bad: You lose hit points when running, archaic battle system
Play: *Lunar Legend* on your GBA instead



GREG S: How could they have screwed up *Lunar* this badly? I don't mind the developers messing with one of my favorite role-playing game series—after all, the originals are more than 10 years old—but when they go so far backward as to make the game feel archaic, it's really upsetting.

Fans probably remember the cool distance-based battle system of the old *Lunar* games—well, not only have the developers excised that from *Dragon Song*, they've even taken away your ability to actually target specific enemies. That's right: Throw your intricate strategies right out the window, because all targets will be chosen at random.

And I hope you like menus, because even the most basic actions in the overworld involve dozens of them. But maybe that's just to keep the overall theme of quiet frustration going, since movement is agonizingly slow and commanding your party to run from place to place actually costs you hit points. (Most levels are massive...so that's a lot of fun.) When its fundamentals are botched this badly, not even *Dragon Song's* semidecent story can save it.

JUSTIN: *Lunar* fans won't complain about the handsome art and catchy soundtrack, but what in the name of *Lunar* goddess Althena happened to everything else? You lose HP for running? For running? Monsters can break your equipment with lucky hits, and you have to alternate between two battle modes—with absolutely no gameplay difference between them—to get either experience

points or material gains. With boring, superslow fights that require you to hold down a button just to bring them up to regular old slow, you won't appreciate the double duty. *Dragon Song* has a few interesting ideas, but many of its twists result only in aches and pains.

CHRISTIAN: Ten years ago, I picked up my copy of *Lunar: Eternal Blue* for Sega CD, the series' last original game. A decade on, RPGs have changed a hell of a lot. So has *Lunar*...but not for the better. It's still a tale of kids caught up in an epic fantasy adventure, but the new ideas mostly just slow things down, rather than bring *Lunar* up to speed.

While the story here is charming but forgettable, *Lunar* is still a very attractive and overall competent game, despite annoying glacial pacing and a bizarre split between leveling for items and leveling for experience points. Fans will be satisfied and DS owners looking for an RPG will have something to play...but leader of the genre? Those days are over for this series.



Combat: not as strategic as it used to be.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.0	4.5	6.5
	GREG S.	JUSTIN	CHRISTIAN

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: JAM
Players: 1 (2 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone 10+

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PlayStation 2



REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were too little, too late...or already reviewed (Ninja Gaiden)



NINJA GAIDEN BLACK

XB • Tecmo • ESRB: M

Ninja Gaiden Black is essentially a director's cut of last year's *Ninja Gaiden*, which remains one of the most hardcore and, at times, masochistic action-adventures ever. Players were armed with a complex array of twitch-based combos and fancy weaponry to combat some of the most frustratingly difficult bosses this generation; even the normally cannon-fodder minions

demanded complete concentration to overcome. But it was a rewarding good time, and we certainly recognized the game for handing us our asses.

Black offers remixed levels and tweaked enemies, as well as new weapons, techniques, costumes, and difficulty settings (even scrubs can finish *Black* on ninja dog mode...though they may not feel good about it in the

morning). Developer Team Ninja has also included a bunch of fighting scenarios to test your reflexes; the final tiers are so difficult, it's almost inconceivable that a mere mortal could finish every mission. A discount price (\$30) makes *Black* very tempting for fans and casuals alike—if you missed *Gaiden* the first time around, now's your chance to be humbled good and proper.



REVIEWED ON 1UP.COM

Multiplatform

Rainbow Six: Lockdown, FIFA Soccer 06, Conflict: Global Terror, Ty the Tasmanian Tiger: Night of the Quinkan, X-Men Legends 2: Rise of the Apocalypse

PlayStation 2

Sniper Elite, Gretzky NHL 2006, S.L.A.I.: Steel Lancer Arena International

Xbox

Shattered Union, Serious Sam 2

PSP

FIFA Soccer 06, NBA Live

GBA

Mega Man Zero 4

All the reviews we couldn't fit in print

Rough month. Sometimes the three reviewer system bites us on the collective ass, and this is one of those times. We simply did not have the manpower to review every game coming out while this issue is on newsstands, so we had to make some very painful cuts. Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, though, you can consult 1UP.com for reviews of every game on this list, and most of them are written by *EGM* contributors to boot.



Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects

PSP • EA Games • ESRB: T — Is it good that this PSP fighter lacks the console version's weak single-player campaign? (See page 138 for the full scoop on that.) Yes and no. You certainly won't miss it, but the downside is you have to go crazy on repetitive fights to unlock all the characters.

Bottom line: Consider *Nemesis* only if a friend picks it up—and is willing to unlock all the characters and give you the save file. And still be your friend.



Dance Dance Revolution Extreme 2

PS2 • Konami • ESRB: E10+ — Feeling the pressure from the competition, the *DDR* team added new features like dance master mode (a simplistic series of challenges in which you “buy” new songs, characters, and so on with credits earned through rhythmic acumen) and online play.

Bottom line: Concrete goals make for a more accessible experience, and the better-than-ever song list doesn't hurt.



EyeToy: Kinetic

PS2 • Sony CEA • ESRB: E — Less like a game and more like a fancy gym membership, *Kinetic* schedules your workouts, charts your progress, and mixes aerobics, yoga, and martial arts moves. The personal trainers even harp at you like the real thing: “Tighten your torso muscles!”

Bottom line: *Kinetic* is short on the carrot (fun activities) and heavy on the stick (schedules, trainers, nagging).

SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES

Everything old is...well, still old, but now lumped together on one disc!



Final Fight's Cody: knows how to clear a room.

Capcom Classics Collection

PS2/XB • Capcom • ESRB: T — Of all the retro compilations this month, only Capcom's does its subjects justice. And that's no small feat: Weighing in at 22 titles, this collection packs a ton of games truly deserving “classic” status, such as *1943*, *Forgotten Worlds*, *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Final Fight*, and three iterations of *Street Fighter II*. You need this one in your library.



Tecmo Classic Arcade

XB • Tecmo • ESRB: E — Tecmo made its name with great console (not arcade) games, and this compilation makes it easy to see why. Sure, there are 15 titles in this collection, but since none of them is particularly good, save *Tecmo Bowl* and *Solomon's Key*, that just means *Tecmo Classic Arcade* offers a lot of different ways to be mediocre. And where's *Ninja Gaiden*? Skip it.



Midway Treasures 3

PS2/XB/GC • Midway • ESRB: E — Hope you like driving, because that's all there is to do here. It's cool to see a compilation include Dreamcast-vintage titles like *SF Rush* and *Hydro Thunder*, but after the high standards set by the first two *Midway Treasures*, the narrow focus and limited selection (only eight games) found here feels disappointing. But *Super Off Road* still rocks. 🚗

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Collect them all and trade with your friends!



■ Mario of Mario Superstar Baseball is a sucker for a low fast one.

HEAVY PETTING

Those *Nintendogs* are just the latest in a long line of virtually furry (and not-so-furry) pets, designed to offer a safe outlet for those members of society that should not be permitted ownership over actual living, feeling creatures.

Here's a look back to where we've been (talking fish with human heads) and how far we've come to finally earn a wee wagging puppy. Still no pony, though. Dammit.

Pokémon
EGM average (17 games)
7.27 (out of 10)

Digimon
EGM average (5 games)
4.00 (out of 10)

Monster Rancher
EGM average (7 games)
6.87 (out of 10)

Jade Cocoon
EGM average (2 games)
7.14 (out of 10)

Seaman
EGM average (1 game)
8.00 (out of 10)

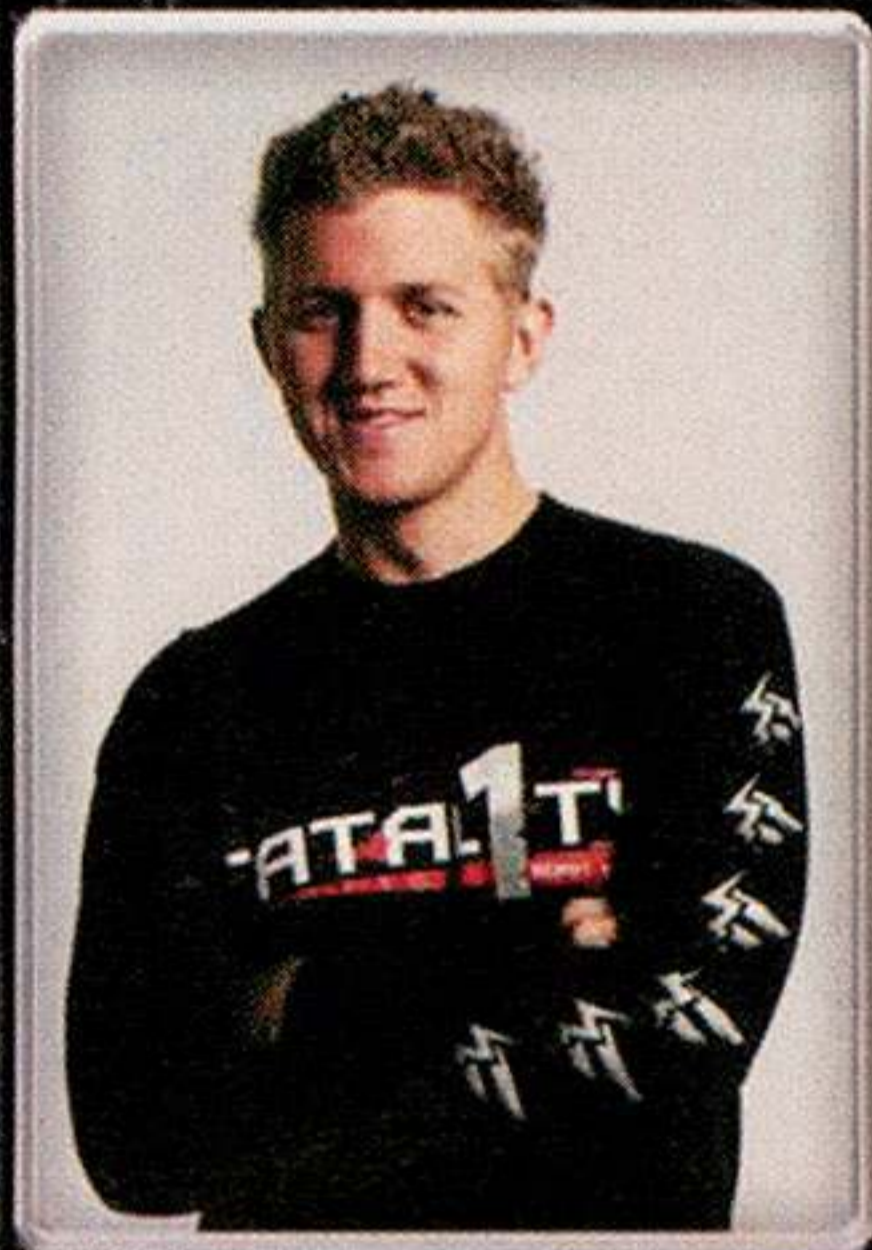
Cubivore
EGM average (1 game)
6.83 (out of 10)

Magic Pengel
EGM average (1 game)
7.67 (out of 10)

Nintendogs
EGM average (1 game)
8.17 (out of 10)

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
187: Ride or Die	PS2/XB	■ Egregiously urban car-combat game that finds new ways to insult you at every turn	4.0 4.5 4.5	
Arc the Lad: End of Darkness	PS2	■ An "action" role-playing game with less action and more dialogue reading	6.0 5.5 4.0	
Advance Wars: Dual Strike	DS	■ The DS is ideally suited for this addition to an awesomely addictive strategy series	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Advent Rising	XB	■ So-so sci-fi story, but you won't get past its numerous bugs and sucky controls	4.5 4.0 6.5	
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	PS2	■ Has a difficult-to-pronounce name, but a worthy RPG with simple, enjoyable battles	8.0 7.0 7.5	
Batman Begins	PS2/XB/GC	■ Superstar voiceovers and cool cars can't overcome dull game design	6.0 5.0 5.0	
Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	PS2/XB	■ A brawler with a good windup but lousy execution and no follow-through	4.5 4.0 4.5	
Bomberman DS	DS	■ Have a blast (get it?) with some classic multiplayer fun or the decent single player	8.0 6.5 8.0	
Coded Arms	PSP	■ First-person shooting comes to PSP...then shoots itself in the foot with this crap	4.0 6.0 3.5	
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	PS2	■ Thought Russell Crowe was a pissed-off gladiator? Try playing this repetitive game	7.0 4.5 5.0	
Conker: Live & Reloaded	XB	■ The squirrel's single-player game should have stayed caged in the Nintendo 64	5.0 7.0 8.0	
Darkwatch	PS2	■ Good atmosphere, but otherwise a mundane cowboy-vampire shooter	6.0 6.5 6.0	
Darkwatch	XB	■ Better looking and online, but otherwise a mundane cowboy-vampire shooter	6.5 7.0 6.5	
Death, Jr.	PSP	■ A lousy camera and dull levels kill off any chance for fun this platformer had	4.0 6.0 4.0	
Destroy All Humans!	PS2/XB	■ The missions get old, but launching cows and anal probing never do	7.0 7.5 6.5	
EyeToy: Play 2	PS2	■ Minigames that double as upper-body workouts. Hey, you're on the TV!	8.0 7.5 8.0	
Fantastic 4	PS2/XB/GC	■ Fantastic, eh? This brawler's a little full of itself if you ask us	6.0 4.0 7.0	
Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones	GBA	■ A great strategy-RPG sequel, but just more of the same stuff from the original	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
FlatOut	PS2/XB	■ You can learn a lot from a dummy: Avoid this car wreck of a driving game	6.0 4.0 4.0	
Forza Motorsport	XB	■ Skids across the finish line as one of the best racers for the Xbox	9.5 10 10	Gold
Frantix	PSP	■ A puzzle game with a balance of moderate mental stimulation and zero actual effort	7.0 7.0 6.0	
Fullmetal Alchemist 2	PS2	■ Diet <i>Kingdom Hearts</i> ; with better RPGs to play, there is no excuse for less than great	5.0 6.0 6.0	
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	XB	■ This ballsy game expands its gangland territory to the Xbox (cue outraged senators)	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
GripShift	PSP	■ Ride your brake around ugly tracks and play with a track editor that isn't so awful	7.0 6.5 3.0	
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	PSP	■ An addictive golf game, even though its cuteness nearly sets off our gag reflex	7.0 7.0 7.0	
In the Groove	PS2	■ Dust off the headband and spandex: a decent dancing game with more crappy techno	7.0 7.0 5.5	
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	PS2/XB/GC	■ Go green and wreak havoc; explosive rage issues have never been more fun	9.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Juiced	PS2/XB	■ Trails the pack, but with A.I. teammates and betting on races, it earns our respect	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Killer 7	PS2/GC	■ A shooter that tries harder for artsy-fartsy style rather than gameplay	5.5 5.0 6.0	
Kirby: Canvas Curse	DS	■ That pink blob's ingenious DS game has us proud of our writers' cramps	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Madden NFL 06	PS2/XB/GC	■ The passing game is now overly complex, but <i>Madden</i> is still All-Pro	8.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Makai Kingdom	PS2	■ Hardcore tactical-RPG fans will love this like they love obsessive organizing	7.5 8.0 7.5	
Mario Superstar Baseball	GC	■ A steep learning curve keeps Mario and crew short of the majors	7.5 7.0 7.5	
Medal of Honor: European Assault	PS2/XB/GC	■ No online multiplayer; new features are nothing to write home about	7.5 6.5 6.0	
Medieval Resurrection	PSP	■ A frighteningly unfunny action-adventure game that might help you kill a few hours	6.0 8.0 4.5	
Meteos	DS	■ Who knew a puzzle game in which you rub space rocks would be so addictive?	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	PSP	■ Long load times keep the tiny version of <i>Midnight Club</i> out of pole position	7.0 8.5 7.5	
MotoGP 3	XB	■ Intense, technical, hardcore bike racing—just like in the last one	7.5 8.0 7.5	
MVP Baseball 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Slick minigames help make this the best hardball sim yet	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Namco Museum Battle Collection	PSP	■ Easily one of the best classic-game compilations ever, plus it's portable	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Nanostray	DS	■ This 2D shooter excels at being deeply, depressingly mediocre	5.0 5.0 5.0	
NASCAR 06: Total Team Control	PS2/XB	■ Good fun for those who love to talk to their game while driving in circles	9.0 7.0 6.5	
NBA Street Showdown	PSP	■ Decent b-ball, but it just double-dribbles the console version of <i>Vol. 2</i> onto PSP	6.5 7.0 6.5	
NCAA Football 06	PS2/XB	■ Go from third-stringer to Heisman winner in this great football game	9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
NHL 06	PS2/XB/GC	■ EA's hockey series finally battles its way back to respectability...	7.0 7.5 7.5	
NHL 2K6	PS2/XB	■ ...while shoddy goalies let the 2K Games team down	7.5 7.0 6.0	
Nintendogs	DS	■ Who doesn't love walking, playing with, and training puppies? Serial killers	7.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Pac'N Roll	DS	■ An entertaining but ultimately soulless and occasionally aggravating platformer	7.5 6.5 6.5	
Pokémon Emerald	GBA	■ Catch those little bastards all over again, if you're into that sort of thing	7.0 7.5 7.0	
Predator: Concrete Jungle	PS2/XB	■ Predator vs. crappy camera: Whoever wins, we lose by playing this bland game	5.5 4.5 4.5	
Radiata Stories	PS2	■ A witty but poky and slapped-together RPG	7.5 7.5 7.5	
Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory	PSP	■ Insanely repetitive—it's more like BattleBots hell than purgatory	3.0 2.0 2.0	
Samurai Western	PS2	■ Yawn as you hack and slash as a samurai who deflects bullets...with his sword	4.0 7.0 5.0	
Smartbomb	PSP	■ Need to get crappy shareware games and <i>Minesweeper</i> on your PSP? Look no further	3.0 3.0 2.5	
Sonic Gems Collection	GC	■ Plural form is misleading—the only gem is <i>Sonic CD</i> , which is the best <i>Sonic</i> to date	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Spider-Man 2	DS	■ If your spider sense is on the fritz, let us warn you to avoid this ho-hum adventure	6.0 5.5 3.0	
Spider-Man 2	PSP	■ Kirsten Dunst looks nice, but the camera has a hard time focusing on anything else	6.0 7.0 6.0	
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory DS	DS	■ Let's all just try to forget this game ever happened	1.5 4.5 5.5	
Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith	PS2/XB	■ Play this repetitive game and you'll understand why the dude went to the dark side	4.5 5.5 6.0	
Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith	DS	■ Maybe in a galaxy far, far away, this side-scrolling crap is still considered awesome	4.5 4.0 4.0	
Trace Memory	DS	■ A point-and-click adventure that doesn't manage to include any actual adventure	5.5 6.5 6.5	
Twisted Metal: Head-On	PSP	■ This fighting game with cars is OK, but the series is due for some maintenance	7.5 6.5 6.0	
Urban Reign	PS2	■ Generic, patchy combat and no co-op make this fighting game hit or miss	7.5 5.0 3.5	
Viewtiful Joe 2	PS2/GC	■ More of what you (hopefully) know and (should) love from Joe's first outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Wipeout Pure	PSP	■ Remind yourself to blink while playing this great, intense racing game	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
WWE Day of Reckoning 2	GC	■ We reckon there isn't much to say about an average wrestling game	5.0 5.0 7.5	

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



Advice from the world's best known PC gamer

"Stay Cool"

-Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel

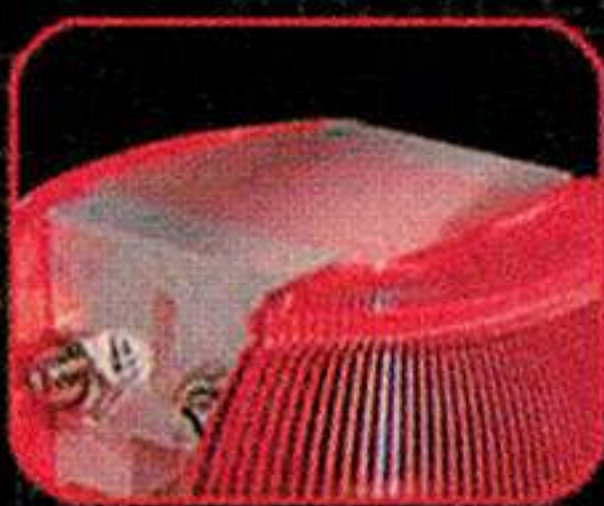
FATAL1TY™ CPU COOLER FS-C77

STABILIZE YOUR BLAZING CPU

- Intel Pentium 4 (Socket 775/478), AMD Sempron / AMD64 (Socket 754/939/940) compatible design for broad compatibility.
- 120mm fan (with red LEDs) mounted in the heatsink for maximum cooling efficiency.
- Wide reach of air flow simultaneously cools the VGA card, Northbridge, FET, and RAM.
- Pure Copper base material ensures excellent heat dissipation.



Large 120mm Fan



Precision Flat-Milled Base



FATAL1TY™ VGA COOLER FS-V7

GET THE SMOOTHEST GRAPHICS

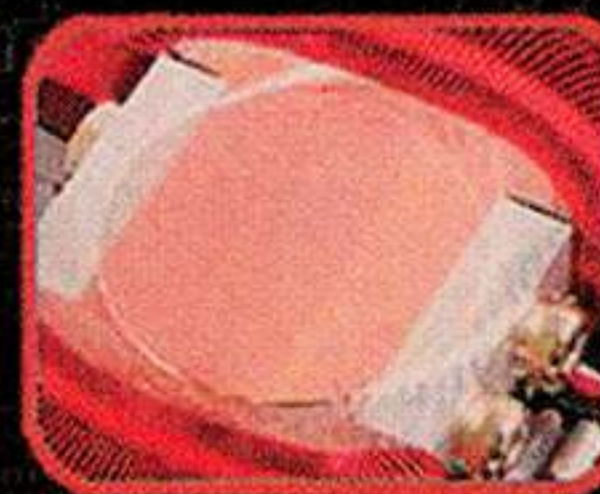
- Pure copper heatsink with ultra large surface area for maximum cooling performance.
- Fast 80mm fan (with red LEDs) installed in the heatsink (FHS) cools not only the VGA chipset and VGA RAM, but all other VGA components as well.



Fast 80mm Fan



Excellent heat dissipation

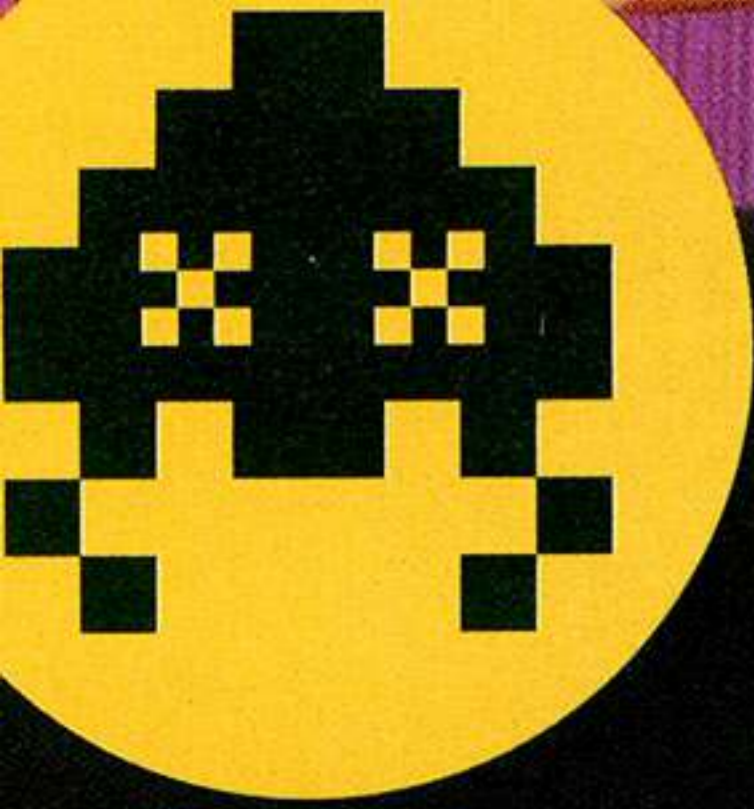


Precision Flat-Milled Base

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game over

where bad games go to get killed and eaten

SEANBABY'S ONE MAN'S HATRED: THAT'S SO RAVEN 2



Oh snap, how Raven can this s*** get?

Five months ago, I reviewed *That's So Raven* for the GBA, and I vowed never to let it happen again. So why am I now devoting an entire page to the former *Cosby Show* kid/tween sensation's newest GBA nightmare? I blame my war against magicians, the people responsible for these abominable game. First, they turn ordinary hats into filth-squirting bird portals, and then they conjure the circumstances required for a faithful Game Boy adaptation of a children's sitcom to exist. They strut around with their prestidigitation and their fruity capes and wands...hey magicians, when you saw a woman in half, she's meant to stay sawed in half. If our laws of physics aren't good enough for you, why don't you levitate to a world where they are?

As it turns out, I got too close to the truth, so here I am reviewing *That's So Raven 2: Supernatural Style*. And I'm in the form of a chicken. —Seanbaby



■ Mall security guards will strangle you if you venture too close, just like in real life.

OH SNAP, THE PLOT

Since this game takes place in a world where the biggest threat is teen pregnancy, it really relies on its dialogue and powerful plot twists to hook the player. And it began with me, Raven, trying to get a date for the big concert. Enjoy this great premise while you can, because once there are TWO companies trying to design games for little girls, the Getting a Date for the Big Concert level will be as tired as the Platforms Floating in Lava level.

The story takes a turn for the unexpected when instead of asking me out,

Devon runs away awkwardly. I spent 20 minutes boringly somersaulting through the school, and now I can't get any brown sugar off my man? Snap! Plus, while acquiring an umbrella power-up that gave me the ability to go nicely with my jacket, I had a supernatural vision that Devon was making out with Chels! Well, luckily for the skin attached to Devon's and Chels' faces, they were just slow dancing, so Devon could impress me. I had no control over the dialogue, but when the game made me say "Oh snap!" three times and



then reassure Devon with "Know what I'm sayin? Keepin' it real," I nodded proudly, since that's exactly what I would have said anyway.

OH SNAP, THE ENEMIES!

Steel yourself, because you're about to meet the deadliest cast of villains since Captain Crunch battled a race of creatures with the ability to dampen breakfast cereal. They were called the Soggies, and to this day, no breakfast on the high seas is safe.

Jocks

If Raven gets too close to the jock, his sweaty, young muscles will flex in a seductive display. If she moves even closer, letting desire take hold and turn her more into animal than woman, he will PUNCH RAVEN IN THE FACE. Which will probably get a nomination as Plot Twist of the Year at the Holy Crap! Awards.



Nerds

The nerd will follow you, which slows you down because you're a dirty, filthy tease and have to strut to torture him with your fine, all-grown-up-now mochaliciousness. He loses interest eventually...his signed copy of *Dragon Trevor's Guide to Hobbits and Halflings* already knows how he needs to be touched.



Bitches

The deadliest of Raven's foes are the bitches. The blond one will hold up her hand with attitude if you get too close; the other one will form hers into a knife and drive it into your pelvis. Time it just right and somersault past them before their attitude gives you fatal injuries. Somersaulting is, of course, the traditional high school way to regain face when insulted by someone from a rival social clique. It's called "recoupin" and it works like this: When you're being tormented, somersault. Enjoy!



PUDDING SUMMER SWEEPSTAKES! AND VIDEO GAME AWARD.



OH SNAP, THE CONCLUSION!

For its dramatic use of repetition in dialogue, *That's So Raven 2: Supernatural Style* receives the respected Bill Cosby Snap Into The Back To School Marketing Window With Pudding Award and Sweepstakes. 🐔

IF YOU'RE GOING TO SIT IN YOUR BASEMENT
PRETENDING TO BE AN ELF,

YOU SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE SOME FRIENDS OVER TO HELP.

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GET TOGETHER. ROLL SOME DICE. HAVE FUN.





THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

(Solution on page 177)

	1		2	3	4		5		6		
7			8				9	10			
11						12				13	14
					15					16	
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ACROSS

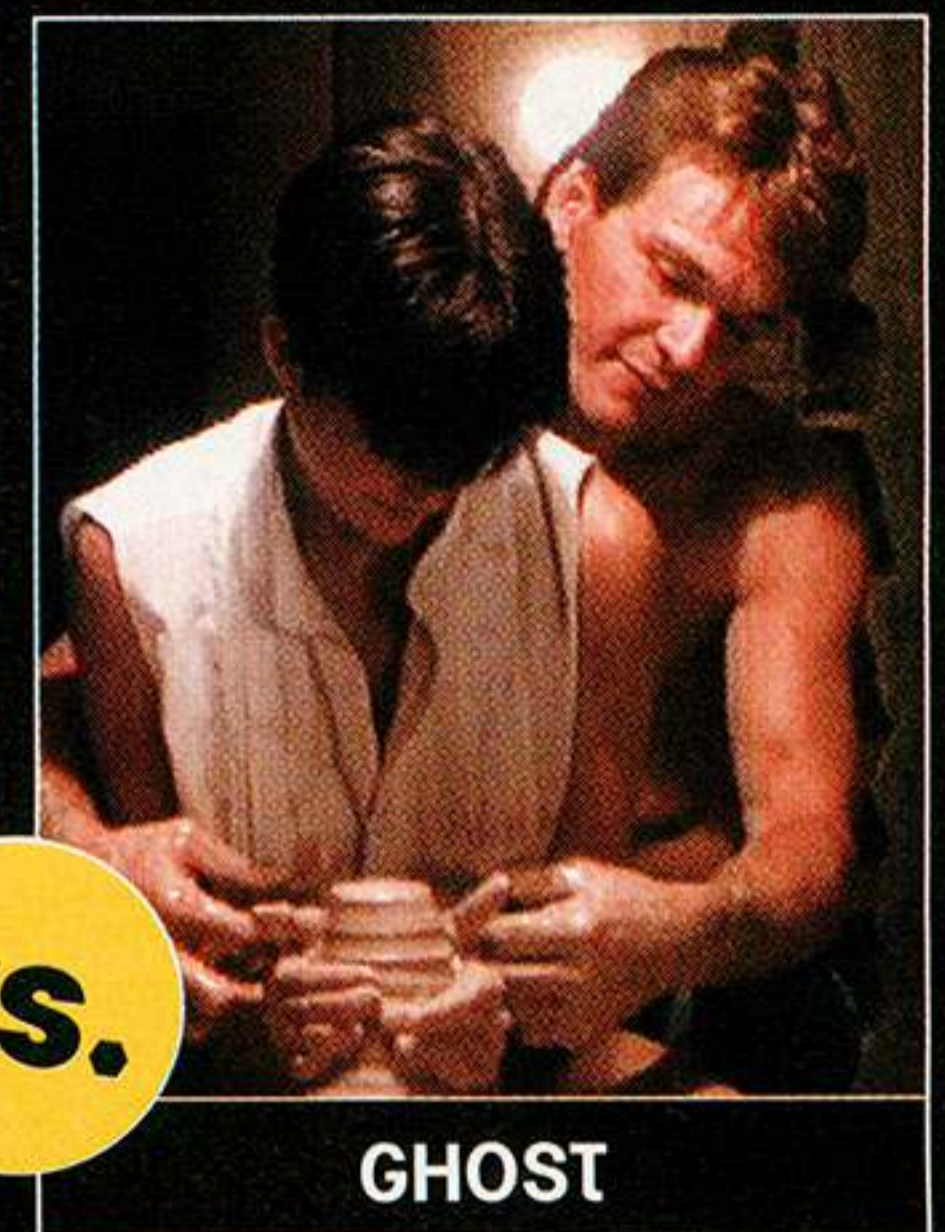
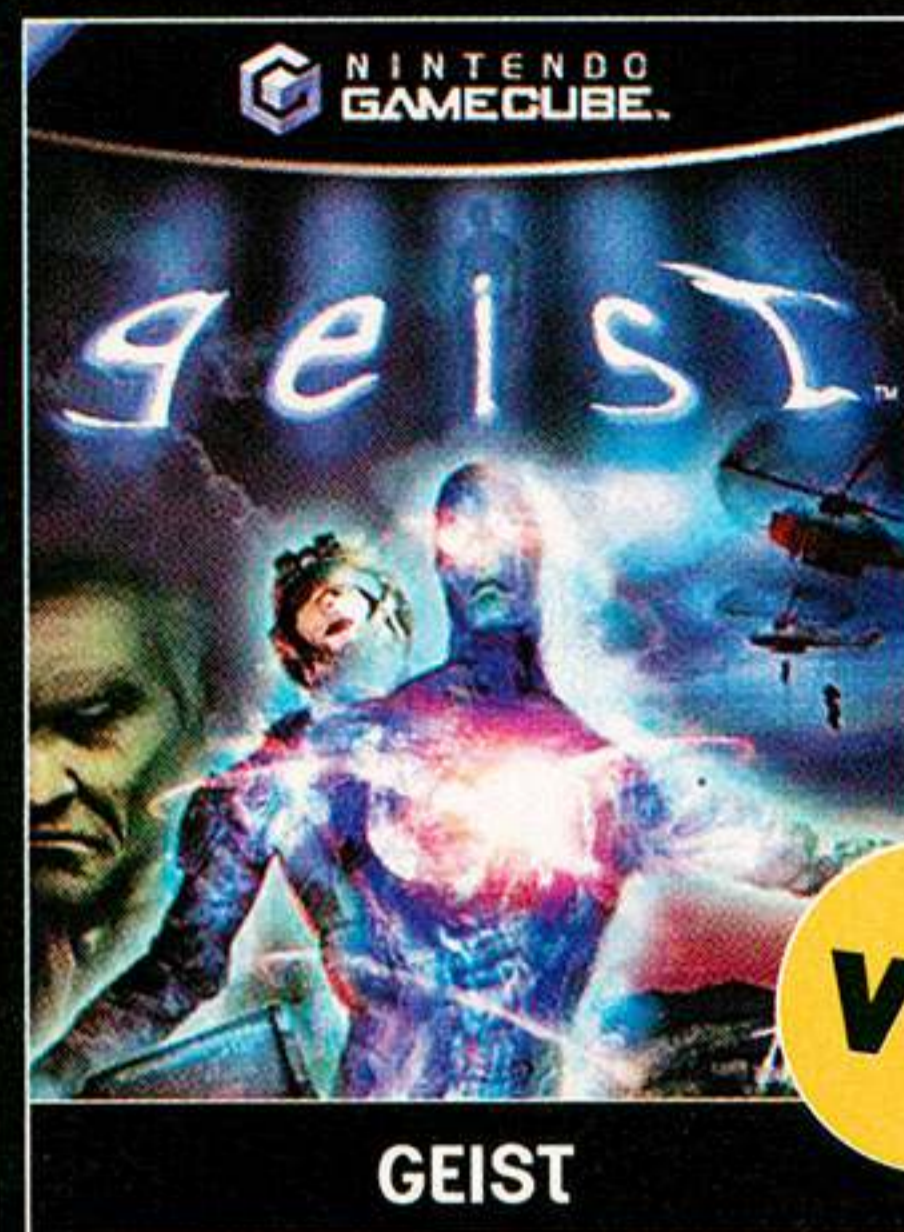
1. Try to hit a pop fly?
6. *GTA* enemy, for one
7. Distance around Halo divided by the distance across it
8. *Simpsons Road Rage* Homer-ism
9. Like *Top Spin*'s Roddick?
11. *Mega Man X* armored boss
13. *Link's Awakening* helper bird
15. DeeJay's *Street Fighter* homeland
17. *The Getaway* Citroen van
21. PS2 *Gundam* prefix
22. *Castlevania* power-up
23. Xbox *Rygar* winged demon
27. Sanrio's periodic game star _ Kitty
29. *Dr. Mario 64* character
30. *FFVII* Freeze spell, potentially
31. Early name for Atari console
33. PS2's *Stargate* _-1
34. *Mortal Kombat* knock-off ninja
36. Like a *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* boss?
41. *GT4* speedy Subaru
42. NeoGeo 2D shoot-em-up
45. *World Class Track* event
46. Lau's *Virtua Fighter* daughter
47. 3DO Dennis Miller "game" *That's News to* _
48. *State of Emergency* developer
49. Part of *Sonic Gems* collection

DOWN

1. Officer in military games?
2. *NCAA Football 06* _ Vandals
3. Opposes GDI in *Command & Conquer*
4. Between "F" and "K" in *Sesame Street ABC*
5. Gaming PDA brand
6. Aptly named Saturn reptile
7. *The Thing* outerwear
10. Unplayable CD-ROMs?
12. *San Andreas* model city, for one
14. *Halo 2* multiplayer map
16. PS2 rhythm title *American* _
18. *Forza* leftover?
19. Served in arcade's *Tapper*
20. Round of *MLB 2005*
24. *SMB3* World 5 Koopa boss
25. He-Man's female counterpart _-Ra
26. What an Xbox 360 video recorder might replace
28. Loser's place?
32. *Chrono Cross* protagonist
35. Game score
37. Gets ready to fire
38. Hanging from *NBA 2006* rims
39. Came from the desert on Turbo-CD
40. Shorter title for *Halo's* Keyes?
43. Xbox Indiana *Jones* locale Peng _ Lagoon
44. PSP media

GRUDGE MATCH

Fight to the Un-Death



VS.

GEIST

GHOST

Ghosthood can be an awkward time in a fella's life. But thanks to the magic of videogames and '90s chick flicks it can also be a thrilling ride full of vengeance-driven murder and supernatural make-outs. In this month's Grudge Match, we pit *Geist* versus *Ghost* to see who's really ruling purgatory.

PLOT

	Disembodied soldier runs amok in science compound Advantage: Geist	Patrick Swayze is a megahunk	
--	--	------------------------------	--

WORTH FIGHTING FOR

	Getting your body back Advantage: Geist	The life of a 13-year-old boy... er, Demi Moore	
--	---	---	--

POWERS

	John controls the bodies of hot geeky chicks Advantage: Geist	Sam moves a tennis shoe, with some practice	
--	---	---	--

PRIZEWORTHY POSSESSIONS

	Dog food	Whoopi Goldberg Advantage: Ghost	
--	----------	--	--

SHELF NEIGHBOR

	<i>Get on da Mic</i> Advantage: Tie	<i>Ghost Dad</i> Advantage: Tie	
--	---	---	--

"BAD GUY"

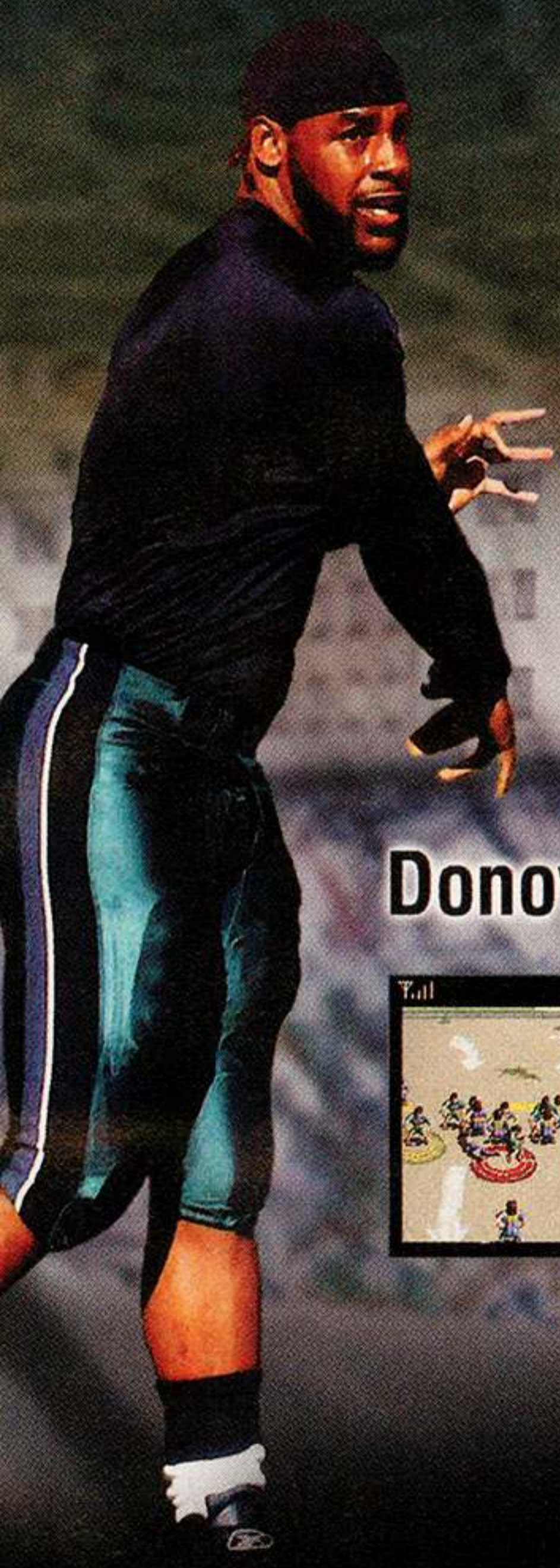
	Is an evil corporation that stole your body Advantage: Geist	Is also the voice of Tarzan in <i>Kingdom Hearts</i>	
--	--	--	--

WINNER: GEIST

Like his character in the 1990 movie, Patrick Swayze goes down for the count without much of a fight. Regardless, this Grudge Match teaches us a valuable lesson: The afterlife kinda blows....

does your phone pop?

Your mobile phone can carry so much more than a dial tone. Make it **pop** with hot games, cool images, fun ring tones and great sounding music. Take a scroll through mobile entertainment at popmobile.com.



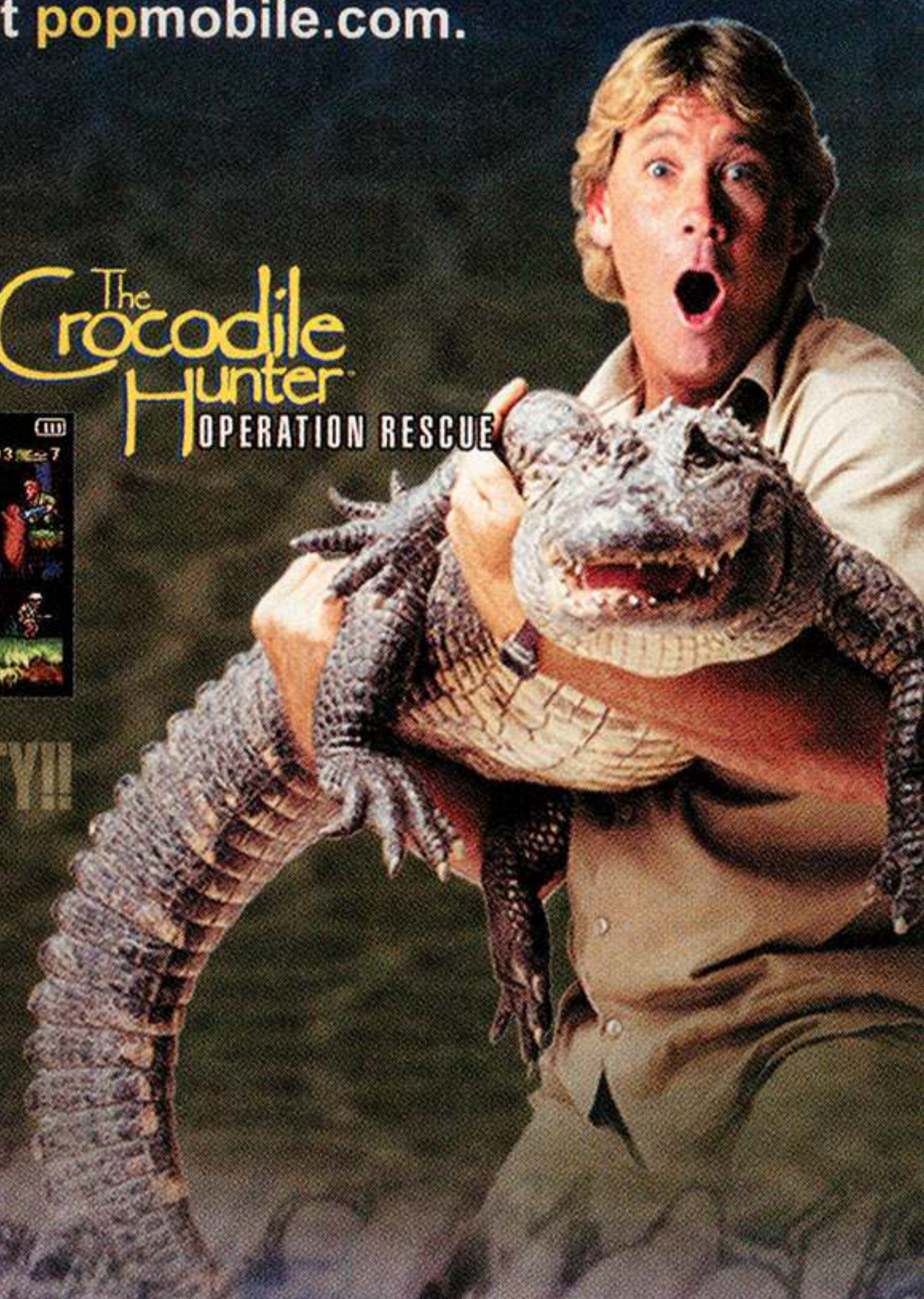
Donovan McNabb Street Action



The Crocodile Hunter OPERATION RESCUE



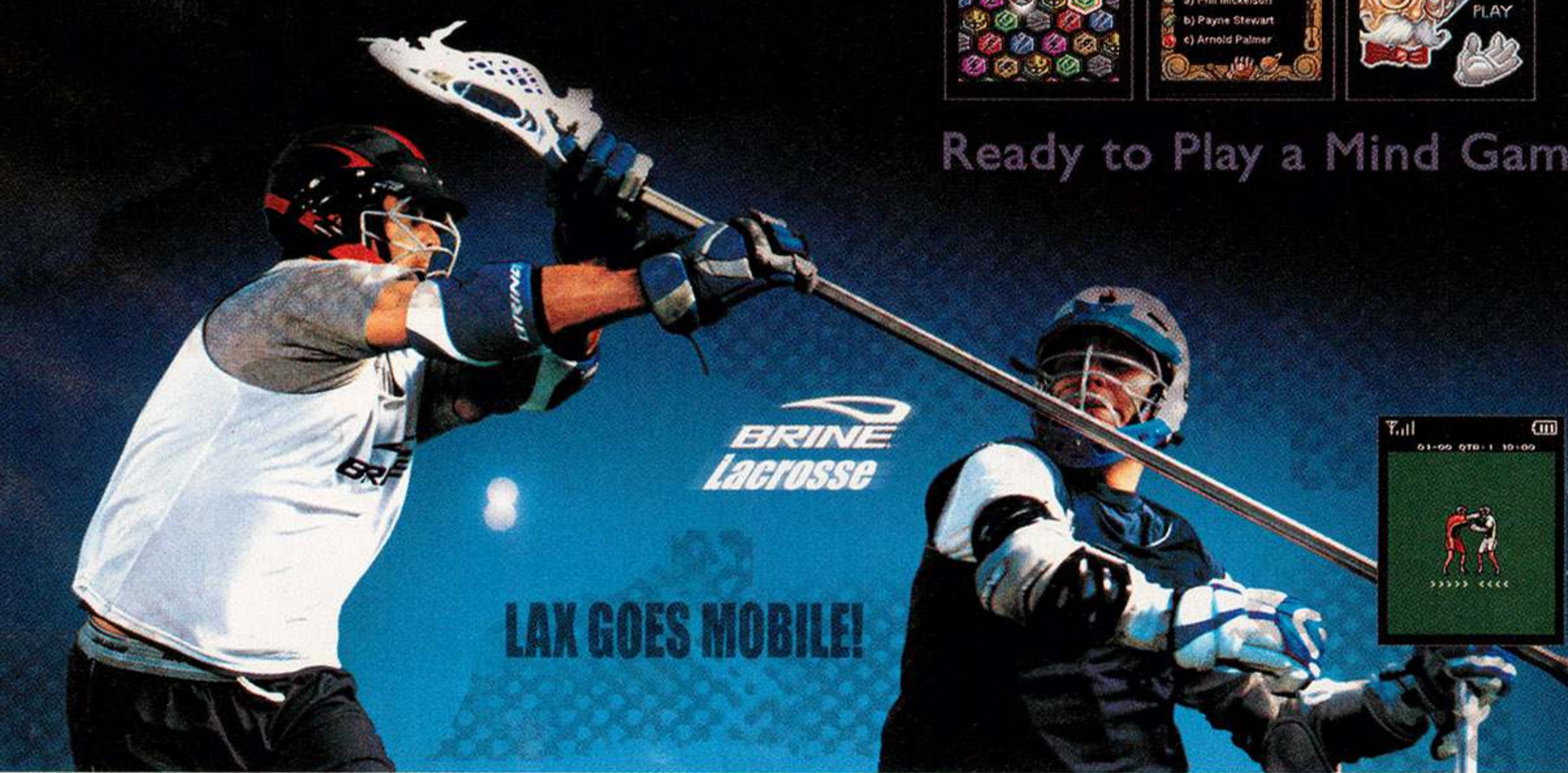
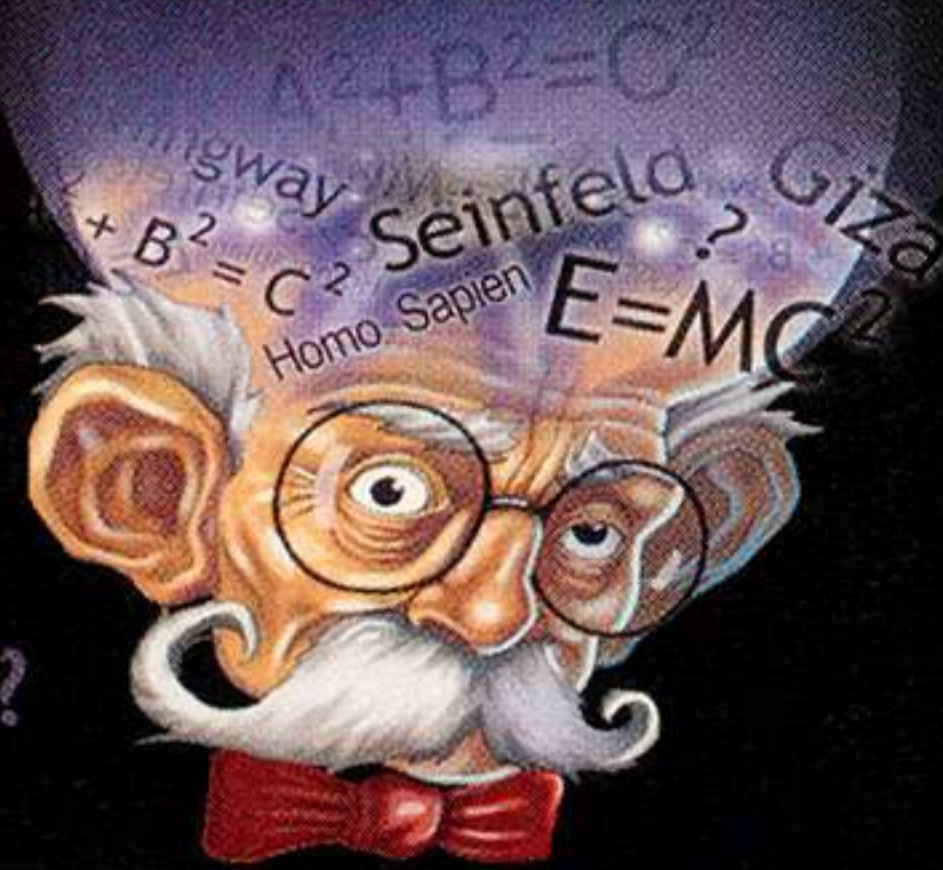
AIN'T SHE A BEAUTY!!



POP! TRIVIA



Ready to Play a Mind Game?

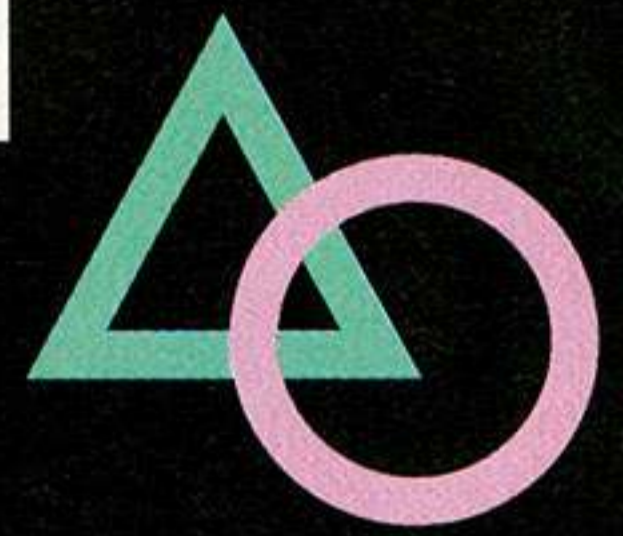


BRINE
Lacrosse

LAX GOES MOBILE!



EGM RETRO: PLAYSTATION TURNS 10



Sony celebrates a decade of domination

This September marks the 10th anniversary of the PlayStation's U.S. launch. That's 70 in dog years—although you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who would actually refer to Sony's first-ever console as a dog. Far from it, as the PlayStation (or PS1, for short) quickly stomped the competition to become the best-selling console the world had ever

seen, enjoying global success to rival even that of the mighty NES.

As the PlayStation's successor, PS2, enjoys its fifth year of ruling the industry, and gamers (and their wallets) brace for the PlayStation 3, we look back at the slim gray console that made Sony a name to be feared in gaming.

—Jeremy Parish



IN THE BEGINNING...



B.P.: Before PlayStation

The PlayStation wasn't Sony's first entry into the hardware market. In fact, the company once had a strong partnership with rival Nintendo, providing the incredible sound chip responsible for so many Super NES musical masterpieces. But things went sour when the Big N decided that the Super NES CD-ROM add-on (code-named Play Station) would offer Sony too big a slice of those sweet, sweet software profits and abandoned the Play Station in favor of Philips' lame-duck CDi system. On a scale of one to 10, we give Nintendo's decision a "boneheaded."



Strong Start

The PlayStation launch kicked ass and took names long before Nintendo's "Reggie" dude arrived on the scene. The secret? Great advertising—and plenty of that all-important buzz. Sony sponsored MTV's 1995 Video Music Awards, beat the Nintendo 64 to shelves by a year, and outperformed Sega's Saturn on both price and 3D technology.



The Sad, Strange Tale of Polygon Man

Nintendo had Mario, Sega had Sonic, and even NEC's TurboGrafx-16 made a vague effort for a mascot with Bonk. But Sony earned a place in history by making PlayStation a success without its own mascot character—something unthinkable at the time. That's not to say it didn't make the attempt: Early PlayStation ads featured a pointy purple head named Polygon Man. Mercifully, Sony quickly came to its senses; by the time the system arrived in the United States, he had been swept quietly under the rug. Farewell, Polygon Man. We'd miss you, except you sucked.

Youthful Indiscretions

Sony has gained a reputation for being a software publisher par excellence, but anyone familiar with the company's NES and Super NES offerings (under the Imagesoft label) had little reason to be optimistic about the PlayStation's prospects. *Cliffhanger* was the worst game of 1993—a far cry from PS1's *Parappa the Rapper* and *Tomb!*

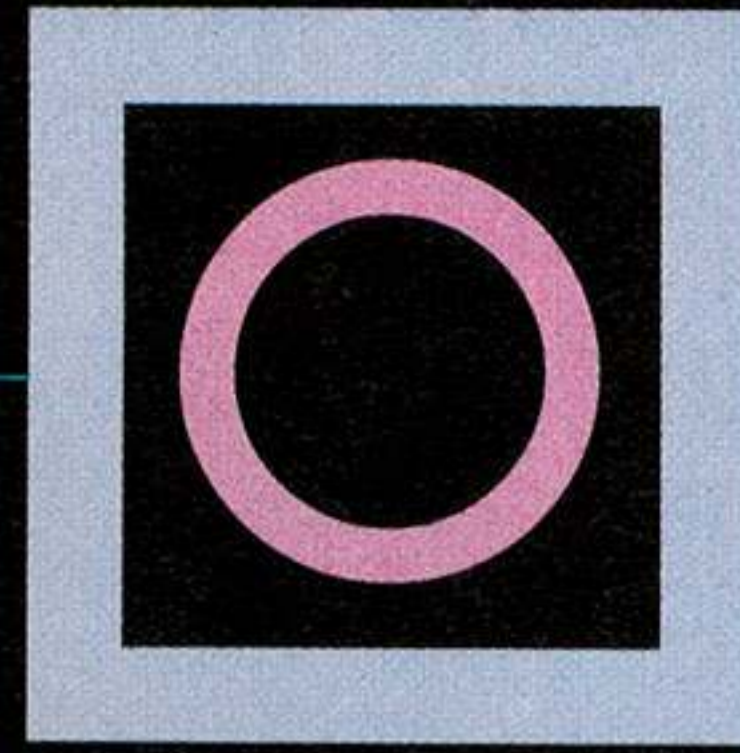


THE GAMES

Library of Awesome

Everyone knows that it's not the hardware that counts (much)—it's all about the games. And the PS1 had no shortage of great games right from the start. *Ridge Racer* proved the system could push arcade-quality visuals, *Jumping Flash!* was the

world's first great 3D platformer, and *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* marked the beginning of a new era of mature console-game design. Not that every first-gen game has stood the test of time. Played the lame 3D fighter *Battle Arena Toshinden* lately?



Wham! (Make It Big)

While the PS1 was a great place for veteran game companies to explore new ideas and update franchises, it also introduced us to fabulous new stars. Developer Insomniac (of *Ratchet & Clank* fame) tested the waters with a decent shooter called *Disruptor* before creating one of the PS1's most successful platformers, *Spyro the Dragon*. Meanwhile, former Sega stalwarts Naughty Dog and Core hit the big time with *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider*, respectively. Sure, Crash and Lara aren't what they used to be, but we'll always have our memories.

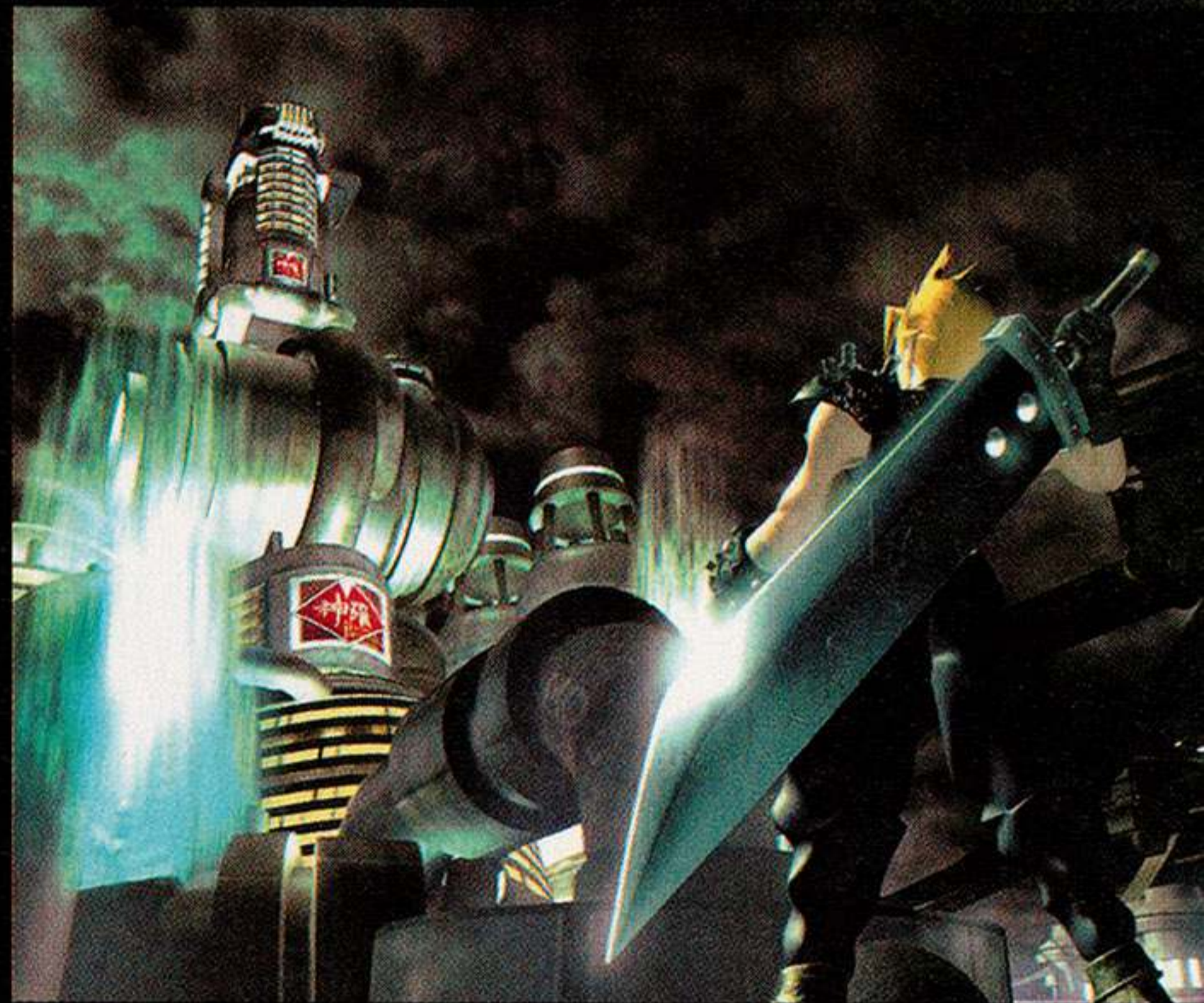
Lost in Translation

The PlayStation played host to a burgeoning import scene, which was admittedly mostly a bunch of nerds who couldn't wait a lousy six months for a version of the latest *Final Fantasy* they could actually understand. But those who dug deeper into the import scene found several great games that never made it to the United States, from 1995's *Gunstar Heroes* (Genesis) rip-off *Gunner's Heaven* to 2001's *ZanacXZanac*. Thanks to eBay, it's still not too late to catch up, but expect to pay dearly for some of the harder-to-find titles. But hey, you weren't using that arm and leg anyway, right?



Flattened

2D or not 2D? That was the question on the mind of many PlayStation fans as Sony developed—perhaps unfairly—a reputation for hating two-dimensional graphics. Many claim the suits making decisions for PS1 didn't want the console to be seen as primitive and refused to release 2D games in the United States. Admittedly, these people have a hard time explaining the proliferation of great 2D games like *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee*, *Suikoden*, *Mega Man X4*, and others. If the tinfoil hat fits....



Defector

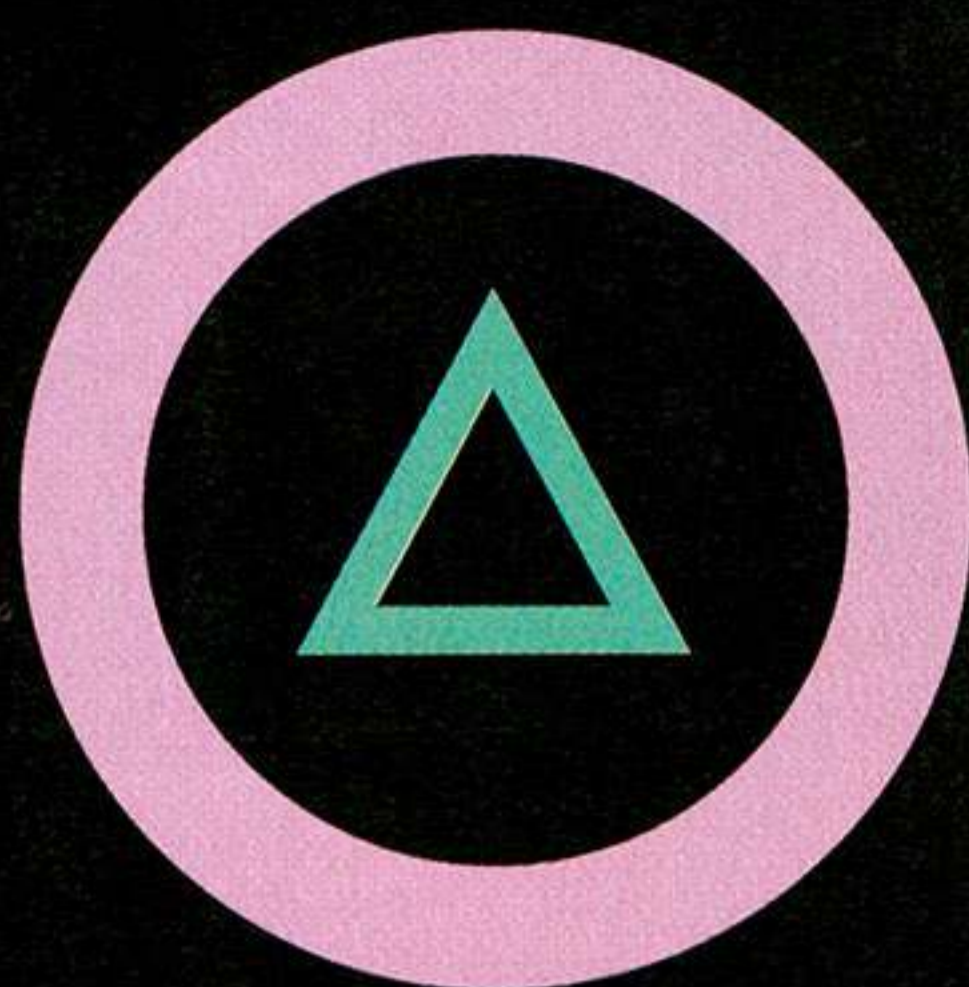
Sony scored major points with some significant coups: Both halves of the modern-day role-playing game giant Square Enix renounced their former allegiance to Nintendo, citing the limitations of the Nintendo 64's cartridge format as a deal-breaker. Between their *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* franchises, these two companies almost single-handedly ensured the PS1's victory in Japan. Quite a few other companies followed suit: Capcom, for instance, reserved its best stuff for PS1 (and sometimes Saturn), leaving the Nintendo faithful with little more than outdated ports and, uh, *Magical Tetris Challenge*. ▶

PLAYSTATION TURNS 10 (CONT.)

THE SCENE

Do It Yourself

Think the PS1's library sucked? Sony gave aspiring developers a chance to do something about it—at least in Japan, anyway. The Net Yaroze was a special PlayStation system that allowed budding creators to create their own games for the system. It was expensive, sure, and all amateur programs had to fit within the system's meager 2MB of memory, but it was a rare effort by a console maker to reach out to the gaming community. (And it makes it all the more tragic that Sony seems so averse to homebrew development on its PlayStation Portable.)

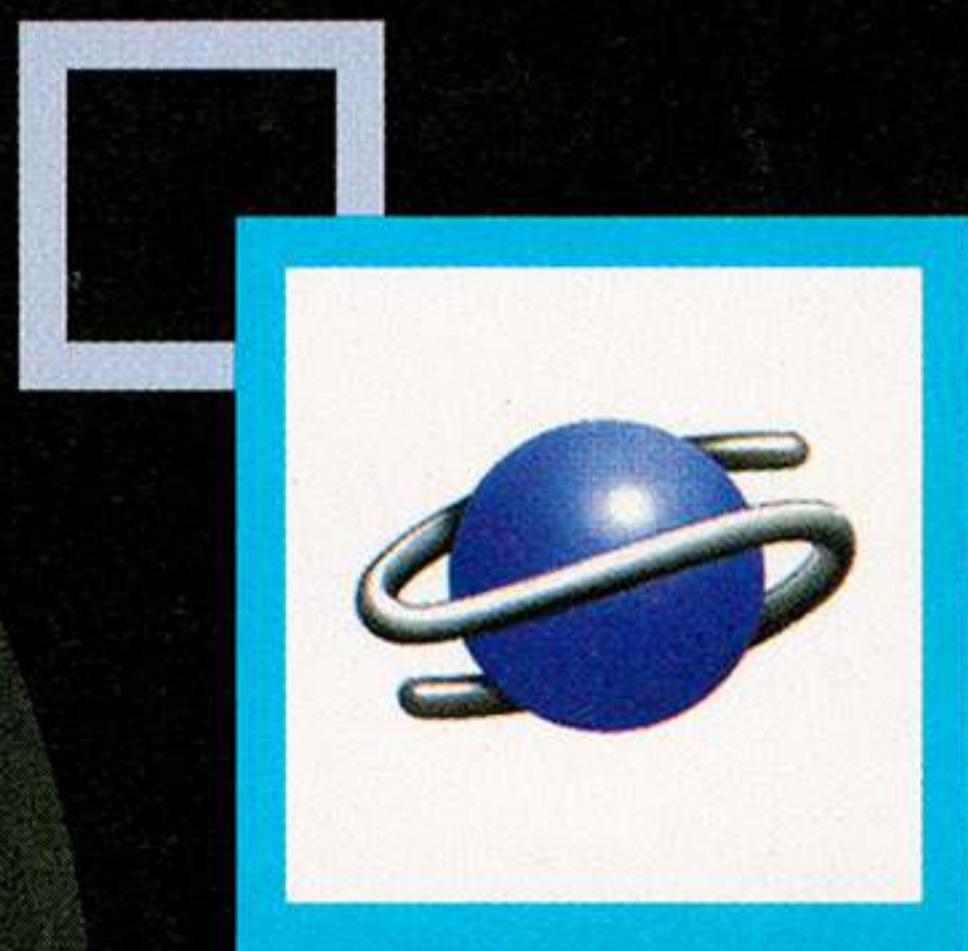


Emulation: The Sincerest Form of Flattery?

The PlayStation was nearly as powerful as a top-end computer at the time of its release, but it didn't stay that way for long. And as PC hardware improved, we witnessed the inevitable attempts at emulation. Sony was surprisingly unamused when commercial PS1 emulators hit the market—but the company was helpless to stop them in court, since their creators took pains to go legit. Still, the Japanese giant came out the winner: *Bleemcast* (which lets you play PS1 games on Sega's Dreamcast console) fizzled under the weight of its ambitions, and Connectix's *Virtual Game Station* (like *Bleemcast*, but for PCs) died mysteriously after Sony bought the rights to it.

Mod Squad

Console manufacturers *really* hate it when gamers buy software intended for other countries, a practice they prevent by making U.S. consoles incompatible with imports. Modding—that is, adding a chip that bypasses the system's regional lockout—became all the rage among PS1 import maniacs. Sony responded by changing the PS1's innards every few months and adding detection routines to games that would prevent them from being played on a modded system. Admittedly, Sony had some cause for concern, since mod chips also allowed less scrupulous gamers to play bootlegs—but mainly it created a comical back-and-forth battle between Sony and a small army of hackers determined to one-up the electronics powerhouse.



A Noble Fallen Foe

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of another game console: PS1's original competitor, the Sega Saturn. But there's a reason we're commemorating one and not the other—simply put, PlayStation stomped the Saturn. That doesn't mean it was a bad system, though. While its 3D power was lacking, it pushed some of the most beautiful 2D games ever. Ultimately, the Saturn died due to managerial incompetence and a lack of clear direction...and it didn't help that most of the best software was stranded in Japan. RIP, Saturn. 🎮

OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

Twisted Metal

To repulse coulrophobics (people who fear clowns, you uneducated swine), we slapped *Twisted Metal* on the cover.



Game of the Month: Jumping Flash! (PS1)

Sadly, *Jumping Flash!* had nothing to do with the Whoopi Goldberg comedy *Jumping Jack Flash*. Still, this platformer wowed us with its then-revolutionary 3D visuals.



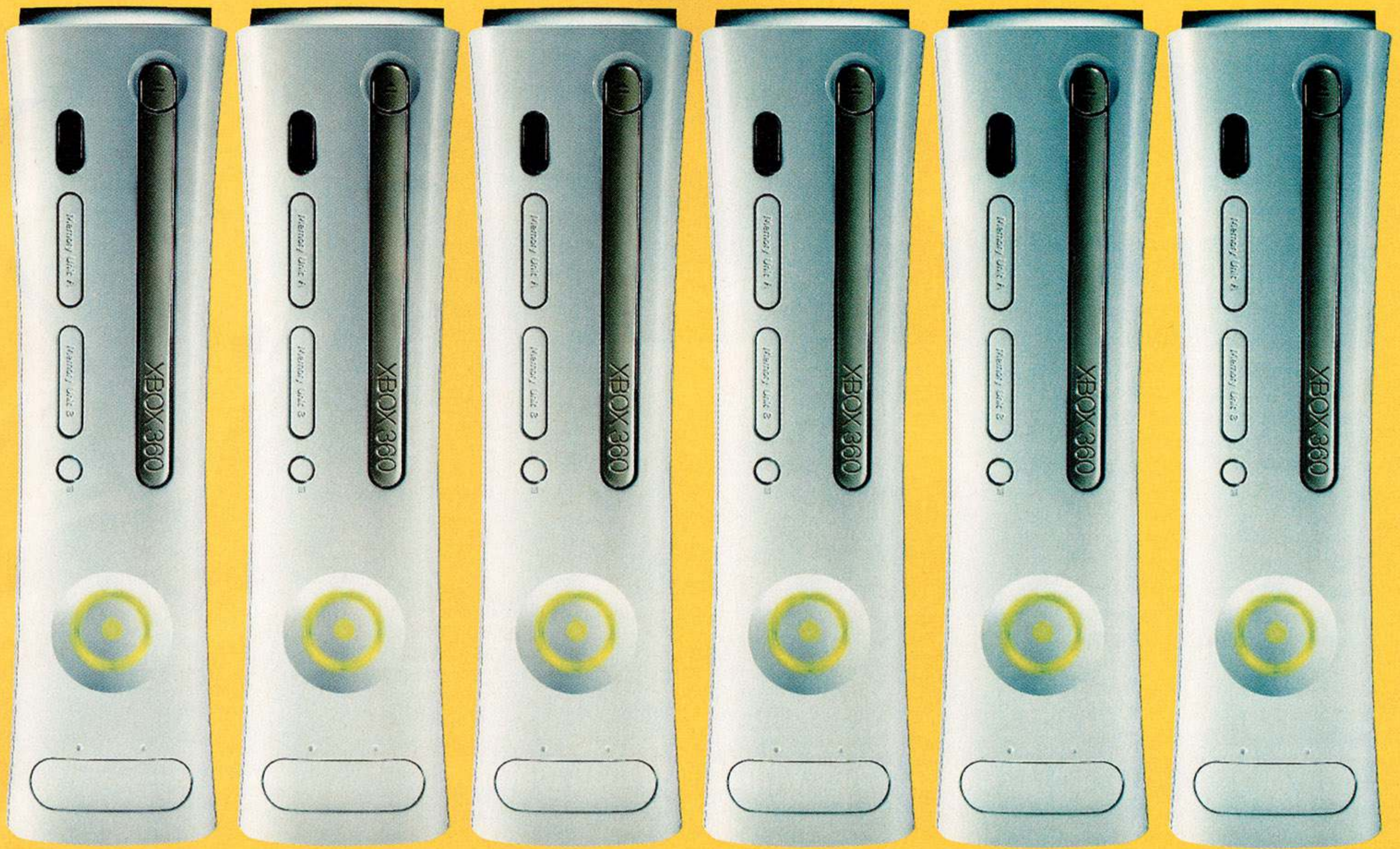
What's Analog?

We broke the news on Nintendo's double secret project, Ultra 64 (now known as Nintendo 64), and its turbo secret feature, analog technology. It seems "analog" makes the controller as sensitive to touch as you are...if someone were to touch you.



Madden Has Loved You Long Time

How perennial is the perennial hit *Madden*? Well, a decade ago, we offered exclusive *Madden 96* strategies. Fast forward to today and EA's blockbuster professional football franchise continues to offer delicious gaming turducken (see pic).



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FINAL WORD

Out with the old, in with the 360

It's been several months since we first saw Microsoft's next-generation system. What do Senior Editor Crispin Boyer and Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu think about the Xbox 360 now?

Xbox 360: So what's on your mind?

Crispin: I want one, of course, but not because of the games. Not much in the "launch window" lineup has me excited. Instead, I'm intrigued by all the media-playing functions and Xbox Live stuff: playing tunes right off my iPod, chatting with friends over Live while chilling out in a single-player game or whatever.

Shoe: I want one, too, but I sure as hell ain't paying over a grand, which some stores are charging for their bullcrap bundles. But even though the 360 seems more like an improved Xbox rather than a whole new system, I'm still getting one for the new features and improved Live.

The system's launching at two prices: a \$300 core package without the hard drive and a \$400 kit with it. Discuss.

Crispin: Oh, Microsoft: Why has thou split thy market just to claim ye olde Xbox 1 price point—a price that will appeal only to cheap parents shopping for little Jimmy? You say you want to offer consumers a choice—much like Apple sells differently priced iPod models. But that analogy sucks. All iPods can play music. Only 360 owners with the hard drive will make practical use of Xbox Live and be able to play Xbox 1 games and games that require the gizmo. Dumb.

Shoe: Yeah, but even dumber...what if down the line, developers don't even bother using the hard drive because the mass-



■ *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*—the only game with edible next-gen unicorns. Maybe.

"I'd rather play with fairies than footballs...."

market gamer doesn't have one? So say *Halo 3* comes out, and the cheaters start breaking it. Can the developers still fix everything via patches downloaded to memory cards? And what about downloadable bonus stuff? Will developers scale back on those?

Crispin: I'm hoping gamemakers will at least tweak their games for hard drive use. *Oblivion* will be optimized for hard drive users. I feel sorry for anyone who gets stuck with the bare-bones 360....

Crispin, you hardly use Xbox Live outside of work. Shoe, Xbox Live is your second home....

Shoe: I love my PS2 for its large software library, my GameCube for its Nintendo-made games, and my Xbox for Xbox Live. No one else does online gaming better, and Microsoft will continue to dominate in this arena. I'm really excited about next-gen Xbox Live, if nothing else but for a nice, consistent way to connect to friends from any game.

Crispin: I'm definitely more interested in Live for the 360. It's just so well integrated into everything. I like how you can bug someone on Live even if they're watching a DVD movie. It's like, "Hey, Bob. Watching porn again, are ya?" People can see what games I own and my achievements in them. It's almost too much information. Fortunately, you can lock what people see if you're the private type, like me. Feel free to let it all hang out, though, Shoe.

Shoe: Good, so you won't catch me when I'm watching *The Hours* for the 10th time.

What 360 game are you most excited for?

Crispin: *Oblivion*. It's got a unicorn. And you can kill it. I think you might even be able to eat it.

Shoe: *Perfect Dark Zero*. On paper, its multiplayer is incredible, probably better than *Halo 2*'s, but I haven't played it yet, so we'll see. No edible unicorns, though.

And the least?

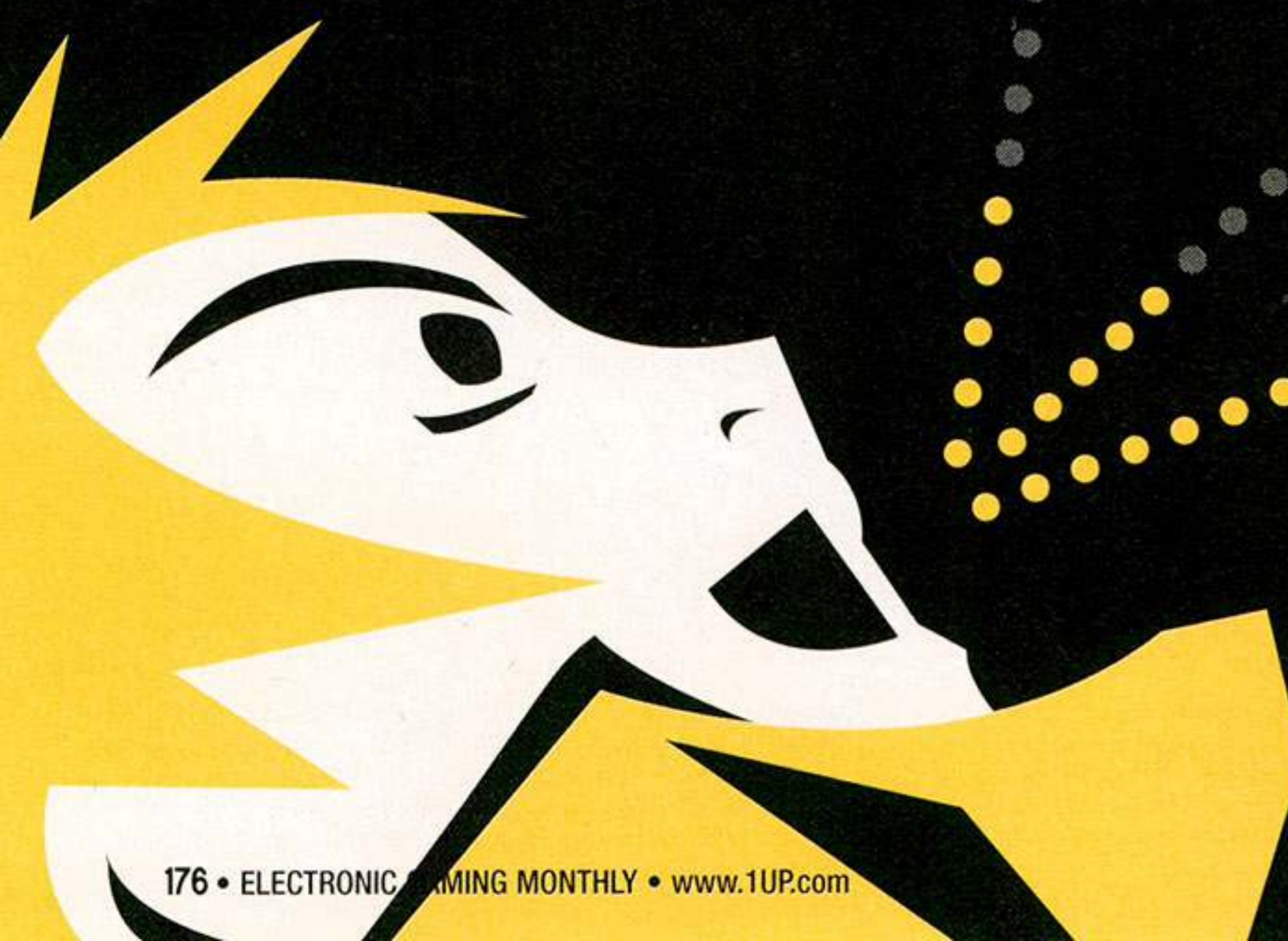
Shoe: *Kameo*. I'm normally a confident, secure guy, but c'mon...playing as a fairy?

Crispin: *Madden*. I dunno what it says about me that I'd rather play with fairies than footballs, but I'm just not a big sports gamer. It will sell huge, though.



■ *Kameo*: so...magical.

■ The tower of power: All these 360s have faceplate concepts Microsoft is considering for release.



NEXT MONTH: DECEMBER • ISSUE #198

ON SALE NOVEMBER 8



PS3 IS HERE!

Well, almost...

Glory be! Behold the many reasons for gamers to be occupied well into next year, as well as totally broke.

We'll have the latest news on **PS3** from Japan, including the first wave of real games, complete with real screenshots! For reals! Of course, we're saving lots of room for *Metal Gear Solid 4*, and we'll snag all scut on **Nintendo's Revolution**. Be prepared when we uncover the mystery behind Revolution's super-double-secret controller (our guess? Mushroom-

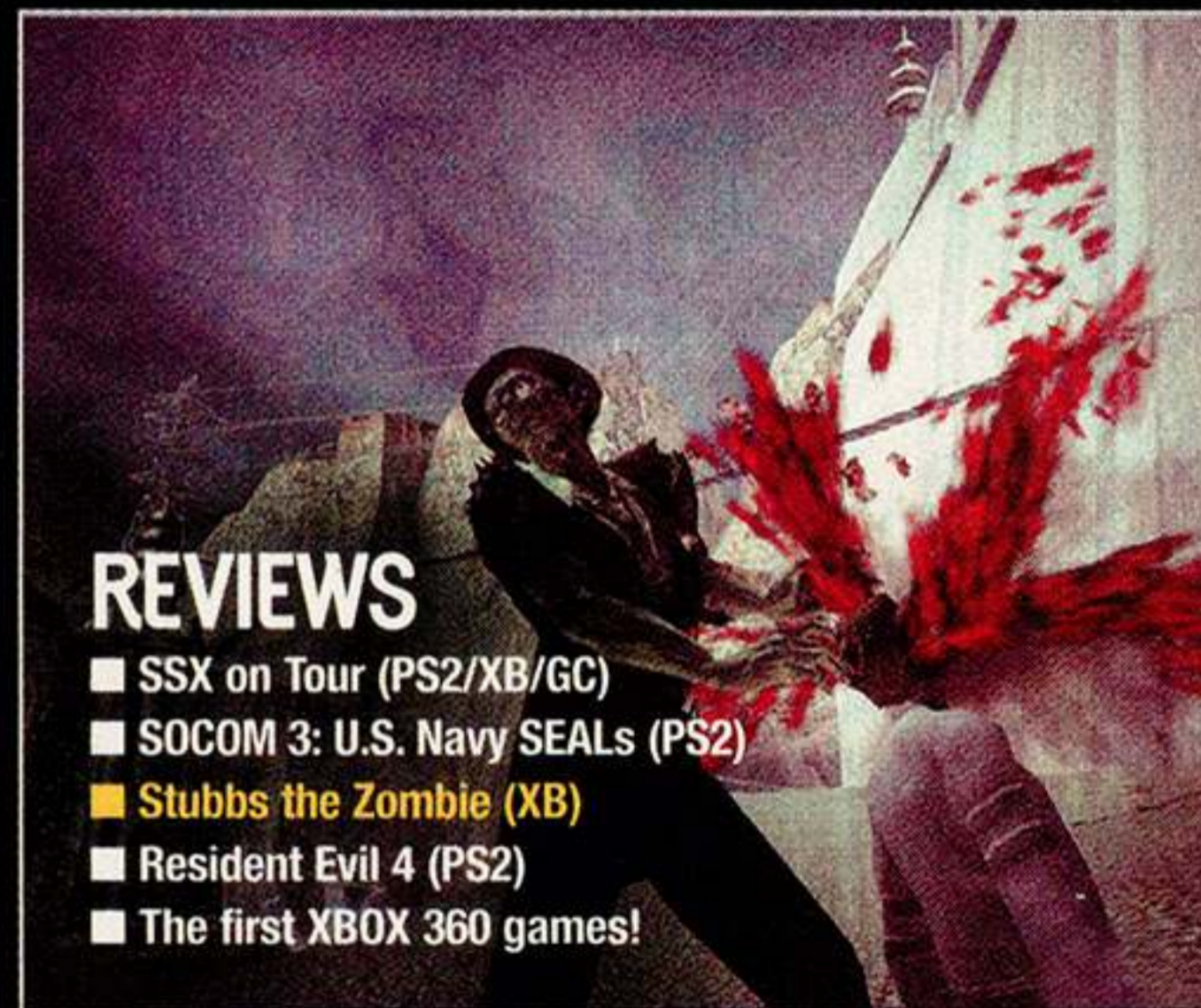
shaped robot microchips implanted in the cerebral cortex). All of which should provide plenty of motivation for you to fatten those piggy banks.

Of course, if you're hesitant to get that third job, we're here to help you, too, lazy ass. We'll bring back another chance to **win the Ultimate Xbox 360 Package**. What is the Ultimate Xbox 360 Package? You must have missed page 118, where we told you how to win a screaming smorgasbord of Xbox 360 goodness. Go on back in and check it out.



PREVIEWS

- Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter (XB360)
- King Kong (XB360/PS2/XB/GC)
- True Crime: New York City (PS2/XB/GC)
- Dragon Quest VIII (PS2)
- Mario Kart DS (DS)



REVIEWS

- SSX on Tour (PS2/XB/GC)
- SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs (PS2)
- Stubbs the Zombie (XB)
- Resident Evil 4 (PS2)
- The first XBOX 360 games!

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

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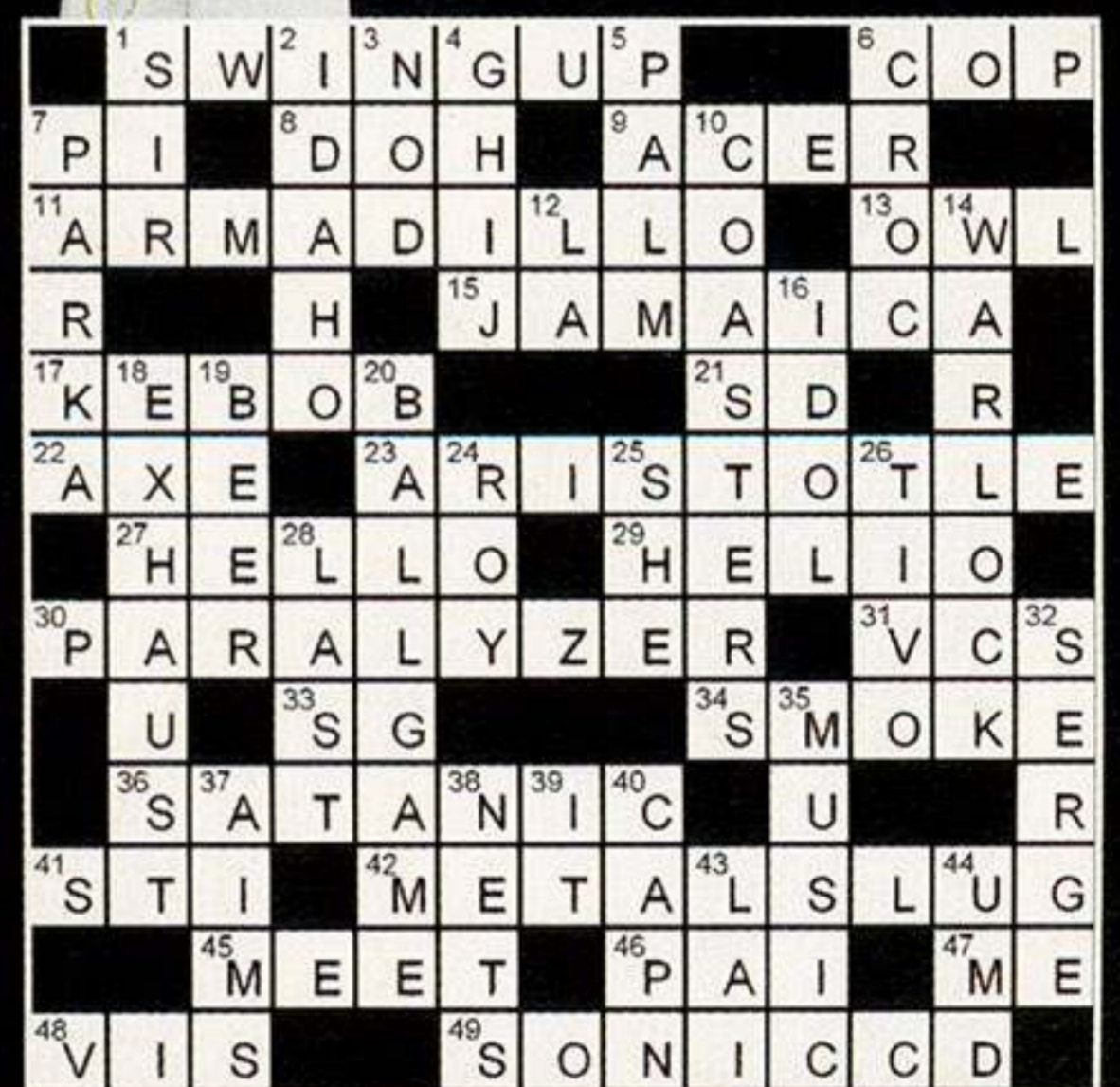
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JERK ★ SIMPKINS, ★ ACE ATTORNEY!

HSU AND CHAN: UNDER FIRE!

BY NORMAN VON SCOTT

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, I INTEND TO PROVE THAT THE TANAKA BROS., WITH PROFITS AFORETHOUGHT, DID KNOWINGLY INCLUDE ADDITIONAL, OFFENSIVE GAME CONTENT IN THEIR SMASH-HIT RELEASE, "STEAL-WHEEL-KILL-THRILL," THAT DID THEREBY CORRUPT AND TRAUMATIZE MY CLIENT, SOMEWHERE TO THE TUNE OF... OF...

NOW, THEN, MISTERS TANAKA-- IS IT NOT TRUE THAT IN "STEAL-WHEEL-KILL-THRILL"-- A GAME FULL OF SEX AND VIOLENCE-- THERE EXISTS AN INACCESSIBLE MINIGAME... FULL OF SEX AND VIOLENCE?!

YEAH, WE WEREN'T SURE HOW MUCH WE WERE GONNA NEED.

IT'S GOOD TO KEEP INSULATED!

IT'S A COMPETITIVE FIELD!

OH, TWO MILLION DOLLARS, EASY.

HE'S A SICK MAN!

AND IS IT NOT FURTHER TRUE THAT LITTLE, INNOCENT BABIES, USING ADVANCED HACKING AND SOFTWARE-ENGINEERING TECHNIQUES, CAN ACCESS THIS HIDDEN MINIGAME?!

I DON'T THINK BABIES CAN ACTUALLY DO THAT.

ANSWER
THE QUESTION!!

DEVIL BUNNIES!

BLARGH!

LOOK, IT'S MATURE CONTENT IN A MATURE GAME-- WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

AHA!
BUT DIDN'T THE GAMES RATING BOARD CHANGE THE RATING ON YOUR GAME FROM "MATURE" TO "ADULTS ONLY" WHEN THIS MINIGAME WAS DISCOVERED?!

OH, PFF! EVERYBODY KNOWS THEY JUST DID THAT BECAUSE CONCERNED POLITICIANS WERE TRYING TO HAVE THE BOARD MEMBERS BEATEN TO DEATH.

WE STILL ARE!

STOP THE VIOLENCE!
YARR!

IF IT PLEASES THE COURT, I WOULD LIKE TO READ, NOW, A SERIES OF STATEMENTS FROM VARIOUS CRIMINALS WHO PLACE THE BLAME FOR THEIR CRIMES ON VIDEO-GAMES, AS OPPOSED TO, YOU KNOW, THEMSELVES.

I OBJECT! THE PROSECUTION IS A WEASEL!

SUSTAINED! STOP BEING A WEASEL, YOU.

YOUR HONOR, IF I MAY, I'D LIKE TO EXAMINE THE PROSECUTOR!

EW. WHY?

EEP!

MR SIMPKINS -- IS IT NOT TRUE THAT YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A GLORY-SEEKING AMBULANCE-CHASER CASHING IN ON THE NOTORIETY OF YOUR NICHE-PROSECUTION BUSINESS?

WELL... IT WAS THIS OR WAITING TABLES...

AND IS IT NOT FURTHER TRUE THAT YOU'VE GONE ON RECORD AS SAYING THAT YOU BELIEVE THAT THE "SIMS" CHARACTERS ARE ANATOMICALLY CORRECT UNDER THE LITTLE MOSAIC BLURS THAT APPEAR WHEN THEY'RE SHOWERING, THUS DESTROYING THE REMAINDER OF YOUR CREDIBILITY?

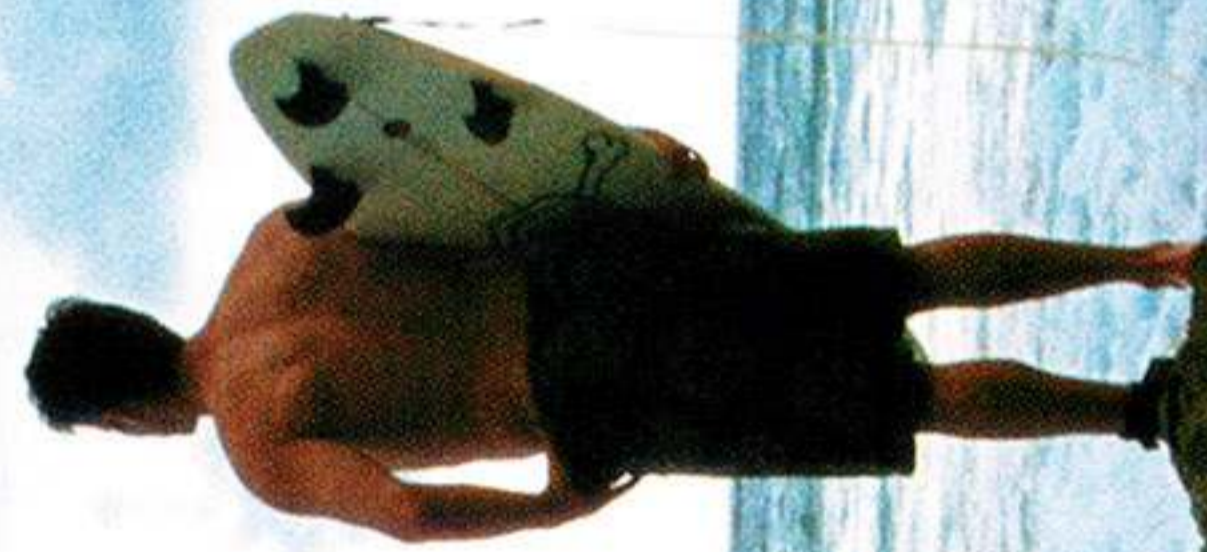
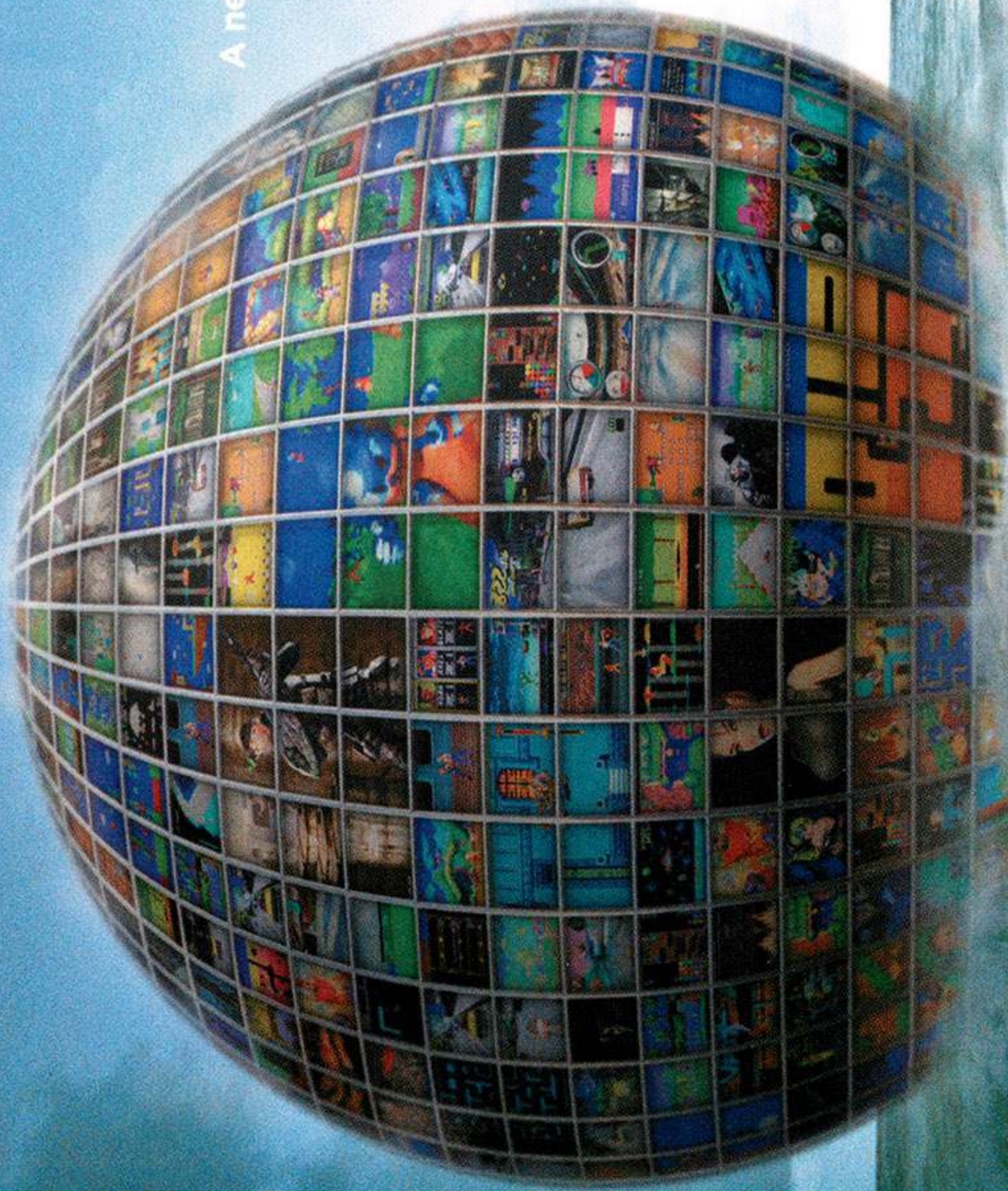
THEY'RE A DANGER TO OUR CHILDREN!

NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, YOUR HONOR.

VIDEOGAMES TRAINED HIM TO BE SNARKY!

END

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PlayStation 2

