

# ELECTRONIC® GAMING

The #1 Videogame Magazine **MONTHLY**

Trouble  
**VEGA**  
VADA



## RAINBOW SIX: **VEGAS**

R6 hits next-gen consoles and it's looking hot. What happens in Vegas...we'll tell you all about inside

Plus: **Splinter Cell Double Agent** previewed / **Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter** reviewed

**Also Inside:** Next-gen questions answered • **Stuntman 2** • Virtua Fighter 5 • **X-Men 3** • Metal Gear Ac!d 2 • **Tekken PSP** • and more!





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Suggestive Themes



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Man on rooftop with flashlight

Man on rooftop pointing

Two men on rooftop

Men on balcony

Man falling from balcony

Laundry on balcony

Man in window

Man in window

Men in window

Men in window

Man in window

Men in window

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Man in red shirt

Man in hat

Man in hat

Man on ground



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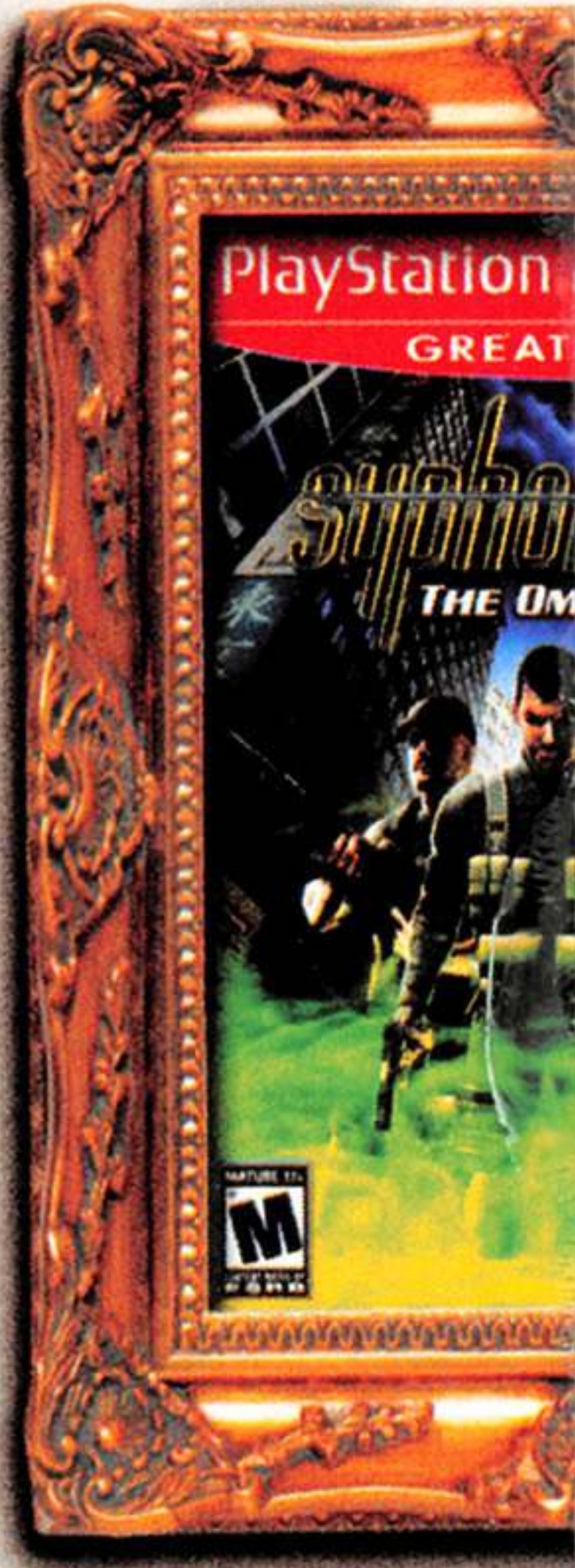






HOW WILL YOU PLAY THE GODFATHER? 03.2006





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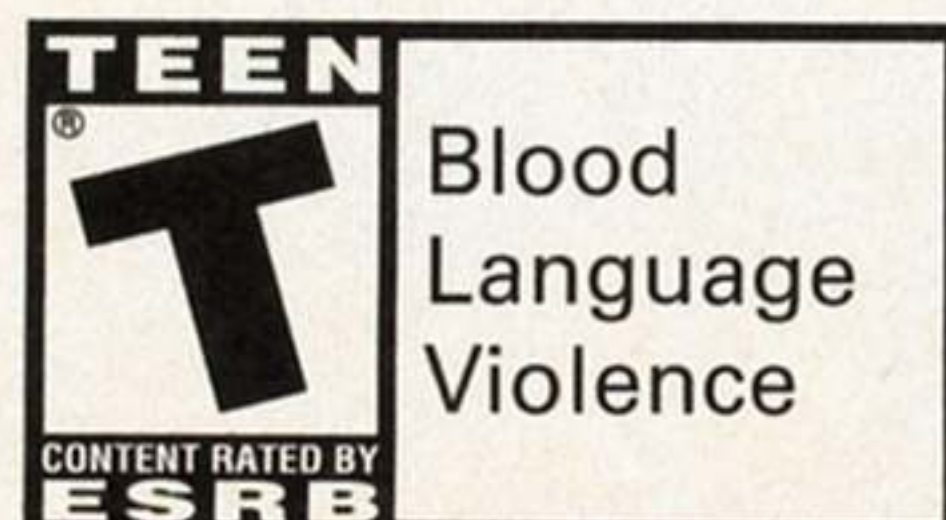
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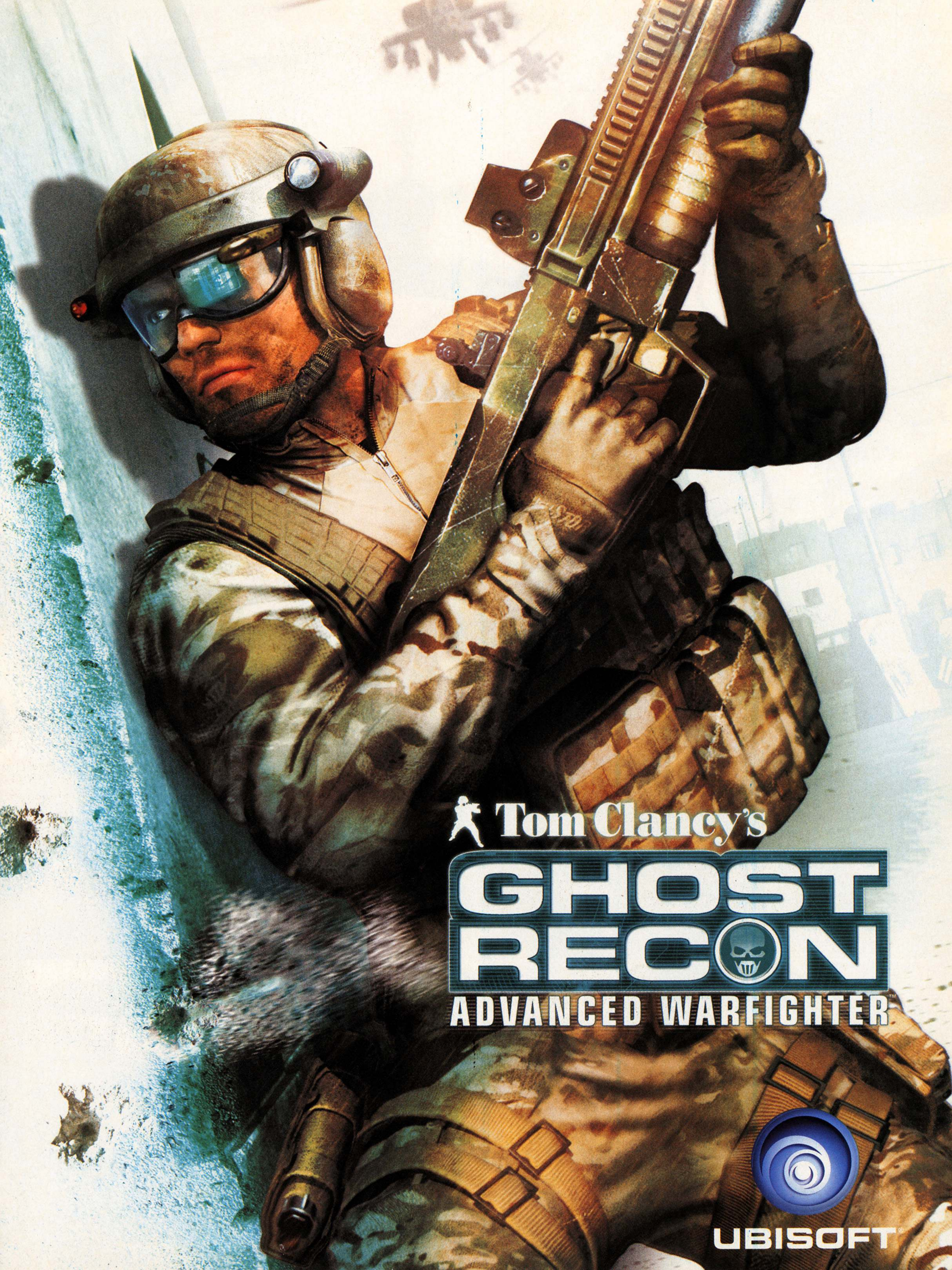
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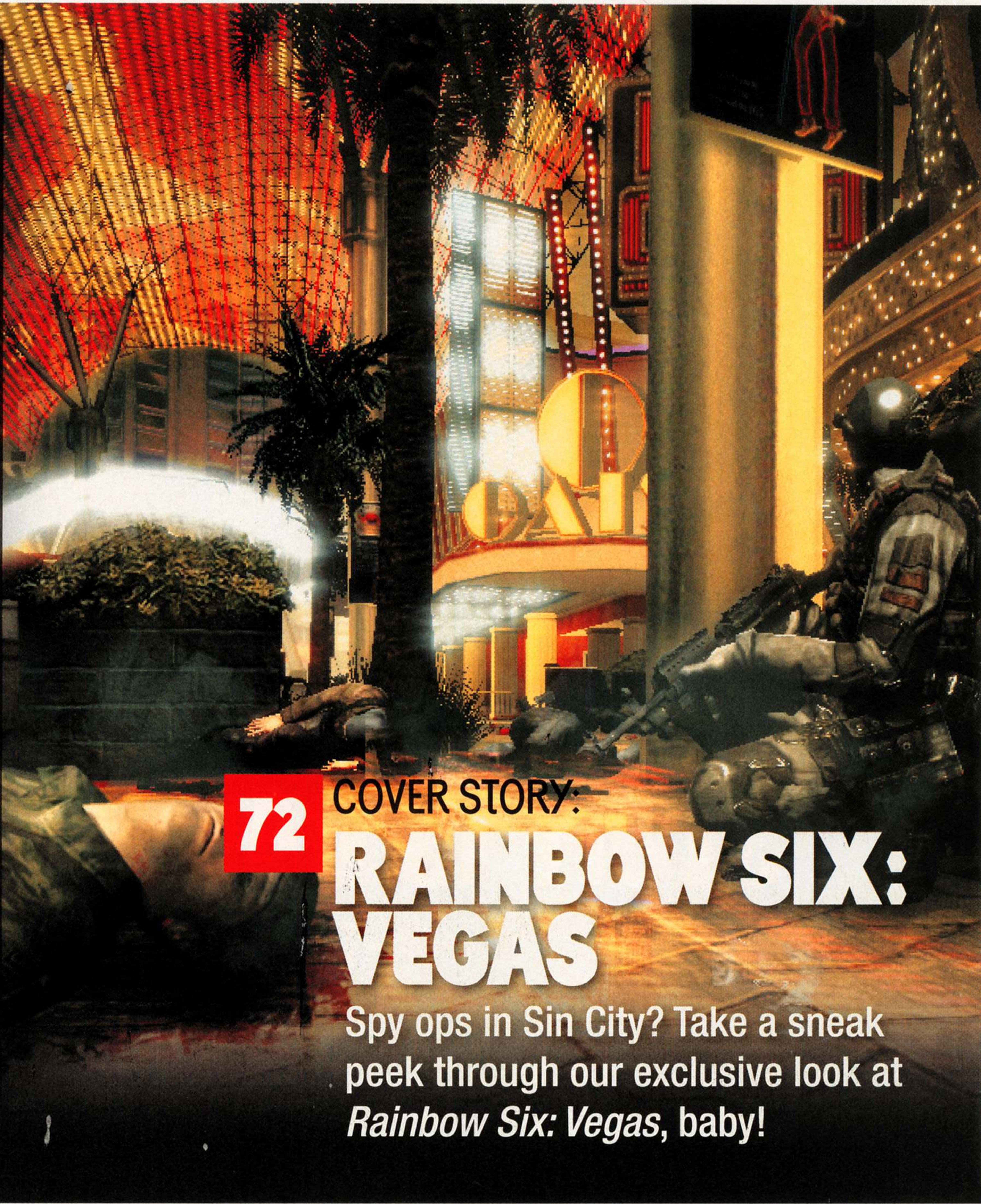
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ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

### ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

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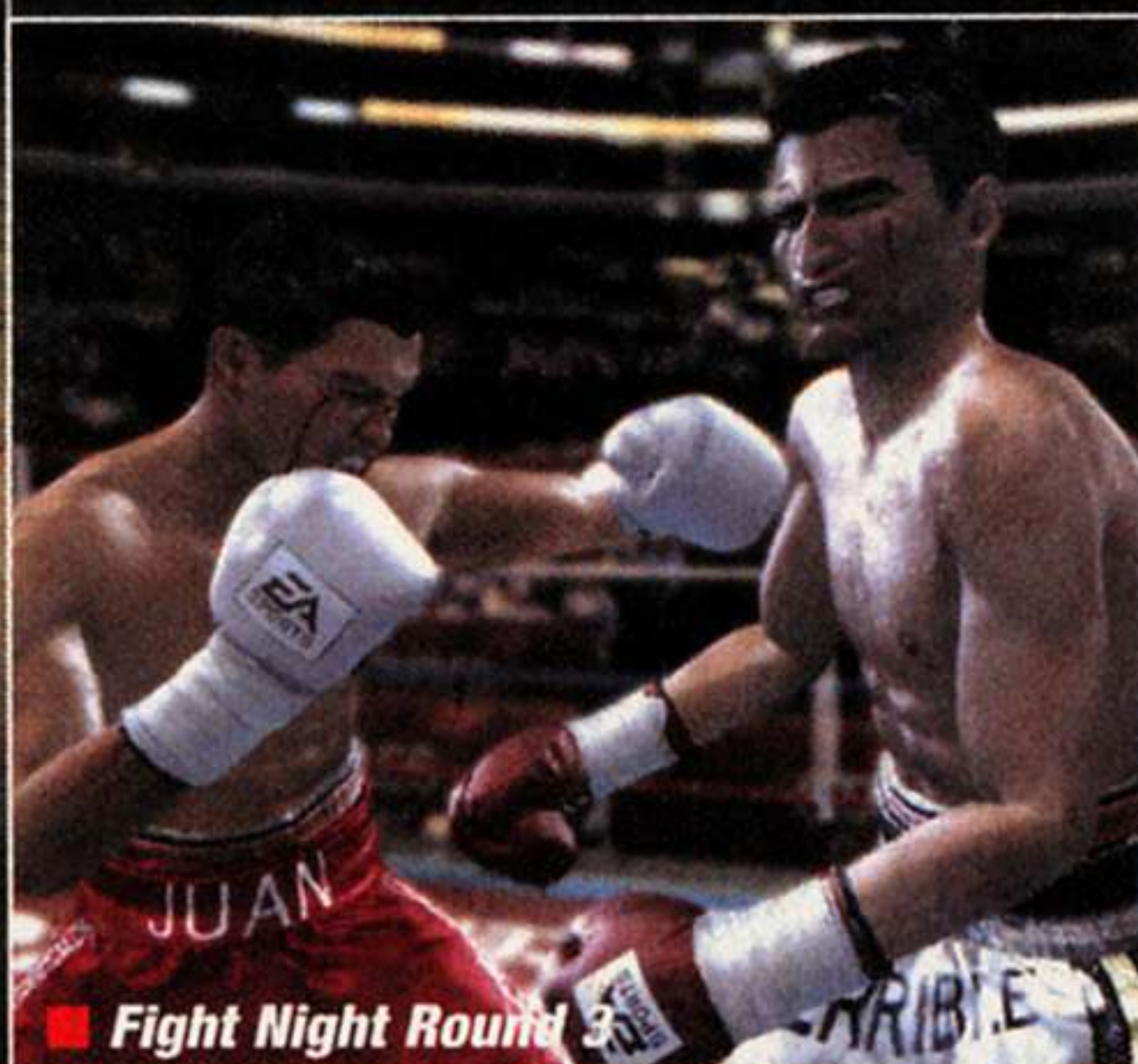
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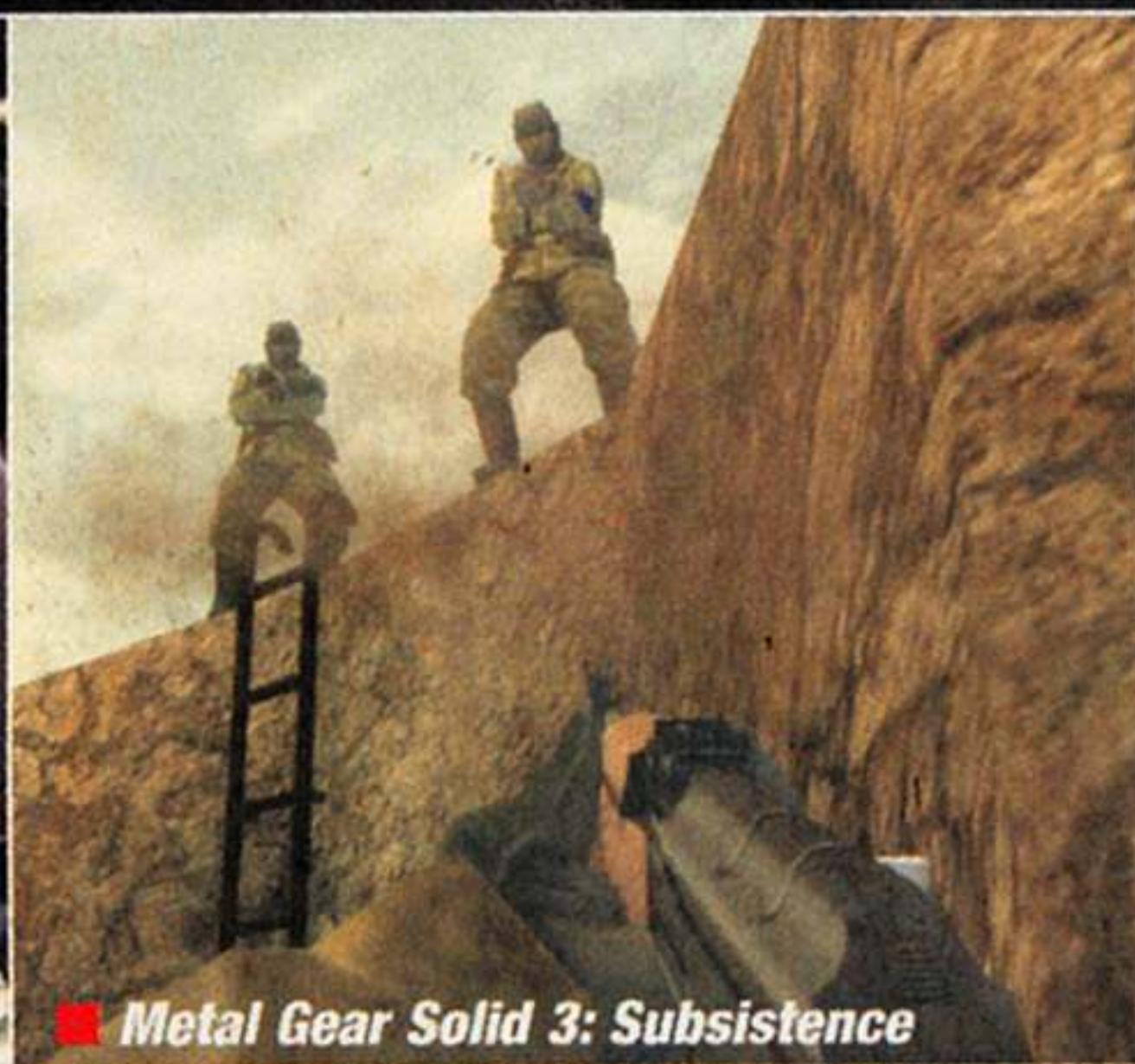
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■ *Fight Night Round 3*



■ *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*

## EDITORIAL

It was the closest I've come to seeing nerds faint en masse. It was May 2005, and Sony was showing off the PlayStation 3 for the first time at a press conference, and they made it a hell of a splashy affair, showing incredible "gameplay" videos that were supposed to demonstrate just how powerful their machine is. I'm looking around at all these dropped jaws and thinking to myself, "Are you kidding me? No way these videos are of real gameplay." Sure, I'm a cynical old bastard, but I've been around long enough to know fake when I see it.

When we did a *Godfather* cover story last year, same deal—look at this screenshot:



We didn't think these screens were legitimate gameplay shots, either. So we challenged publisher EA on it, then ran a disclaimer in the story that said, according to the company, the screens were representative of what the game will look like. Were they

close? Go to 1UP.com, search for "*The Godfather*," check out the latest batch of screens, and shake your head along with us.



Naturally, I don't like this business of BS-ing gamers, though I understand why it happens. Sony had to go up against Microsoft's Xbox 360 debut, so they cheated (or "stretched the truth," if you'd rather) to gain the upper hand. EA wants to make a good first impression; otherwise, their stockholders may get a little freaked. It's just the corporate way.

But aren't these companies just setting everyone up for disappointment later? How many people are going to look at the real *Killzone* for PS3 and laugh at what Sony tried to pass off as gameplay back in 2005? How bummed out will gamers be that *The Godfather* doesn't really look like those initial screens?

It's not like these companies (and others) will change their ways just because I complained in this editorial. So it's just up to us as journalists and you as consumers to challenge the gamemakers whenever possible. Sure, the world doesn't need more cynical old bastards, but if enough of us are critical enough, perhaps these guys will try a bit harder to stay honest.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

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– GameInformer

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# Letters

fanboy baiting, review crew hating, barrel exploding, and videogaming

## Point

I am tired of all your digs on the Xbox 360. In [EGM #200] you had the nerve to call out Peter Moore on games that don't look "next generation." But you didn't have the nerve to point out that almost every title you cited was a multiplatform port.



■ Peter Moore: Marketing skill or sexy beast?

Only one exclusive for 360 was mentioned. Why didn't you point to *Project Gotham Racing 3*, *Gears of War*, *Perfect Dark Zero*, *Kameo*, or *Quake 4*? Why? EGM is biased toward Sony. Those titles look truly next gen on the 360, and you know it. In the same issue you state that PS3 and Xbox 360 sports games will use the same engines because it would cost too much to make each version from scratch.

Guess what? That's the reason most of the games you mentioned don't look next gen. You think the developers should start a game on 360 from scratch when it's almost finished for the Xbox? Surely you jest.

—Diana Reels

## Counterpoint

I happen to be a big fan of the Xbox 360, and I think it's a phenomenal gaming machine. I got

it shortly after launch, and I've barely put the controller down since. Your interview with Peter Moore was pretty rough, and I just want to say...thank you. By asking the questions you did, you make [Microsoft] aware of things that need attention. None of the game companies is perfect, Microsoft, Sony, or Nintendo. If we don't let them know about issues that we have with them, how are they supposed to improve? I'm hoping to see the same type of article with the launch of the PlayStation 3 and Nintendo's Revolution. Thanks for trying to make gaming better for all of us.

—Brad Reinardy

Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu responds: "This is a new interview style for EGM. We started with Peter and the Xbox 360, but we will be equally tough on the other console makers after their next-gen platforms launch. If gamers are complaining about something, we'll ask the powers that be about that something. If some crazed Nintendo fanboy kills me later this year after the Revolution launches, please tell my loved ones that...they were loved."

## 15 seconds of fame

I think that people are getting too

worked up over all these next-gen things. They're all like, "Oh, we need perfect graphics!" People are getting too caught up in all the HDTV junk and are totally ignoring story lines. Well, what I'm sayin' homies is that when I buy a game, it's about 25 percent graphics, 74 percent gameplay and story line, and 1 percent other.

—Chris Sulisz

This letter is approximately 25 percent ridiculous, 74 percent embarrassing, and 1 percent the greatest achievement of its author's life.

## Wall run disproved

After buying *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones*, I played it for seven hours straight without stopping. The only reason I finally stopped was because I had to go to my job. When I went outside, I seriously thought that I could run up the side of my house, though all laws of physics say otherwise. Trust me, you can't.

—David S.

Boy, does the Internet have something for you, David. Check out [www.parkour.com](http://www.parkour.com), then try telling those urban acrobats about your "laws of physics."

## The crumbling critical wall

It used to be that in your reviews section each writer's review was not shared with the other reviewers, and they were published to give separate points of view. Unfortunately, the reviews now include

■ Scantly clad villainess says: "Wall runs are the No. 1 cause of brain damage in America."

interplay between the writers' reviews. For example, in Issue #200, the *Perfect Dark Zero* review includes Shoe saying, "I'm not sure what upsets me more...all the glowing reviews out there (including Che's)." And Che responds with, "I can't really defend...against Shoe's laundry list of criticisms." Come on guys, it's not *The View*.

—Pano

Reviews Editor Demian Linn responds: "Our reviewers don't discuss their opinions of a game while they're playing ▶"

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### More than a feeling

You know that *Monster Ballads* CD that is constantly being advertised on TV? Well, I thought it would be hilarious to rip those 32 tracks of hair-sprayed mayhem onto my Xbox and do some guitar-solo tomfoolery in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. I did drive-bys to Saigon Kick, performed loopy-loops to Slaughter's "Fly to the Angels," and sent people to heaven while listening to "Heaven" by Warrant. But as I was running down pedestrians, something happened. The song "When the Children Cry" by White Lion started playing, and I felt an emotion that I haven't felt in all my years of gaming: guilt. I wondered if the hooker I just ran over had kids. Teary-eyed, I flew CJ to the highest point of the Golden Gate [Gant] Bridge. My guilt was transferred to CJ as he did a swan dive off of the bridge. He actually landed on the hood of a car, and the driver got out to beat up his splattered corpse. I turned the game off and haven't played it since.

—Vanbergs

Thanks for the in-game report, Vanbergs. For your letter, you'll be receiving a guilt-free game in the mail.



## POST OFFICE

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

"What would you roll up into a katamari?"

**Scatterheart:** Daddy, so he'll stop hitting mommy.

**BPierce158:** All the fanboys so we can send them into space and never have to worry about them again.

**Ichigo\_the\_first:** The million idiots who bought *50 Cent: Bulletproof*. The world doesn't need them.

**N\_lord:** Gummy bears, unicorn kisses, and rainbow sherbet.

**Shibbydashang1:** Uwe Boll. That way it'll keep him from making crappy movies.

**Old School Gamer:** I'd like to roll over my cell phone minutes.

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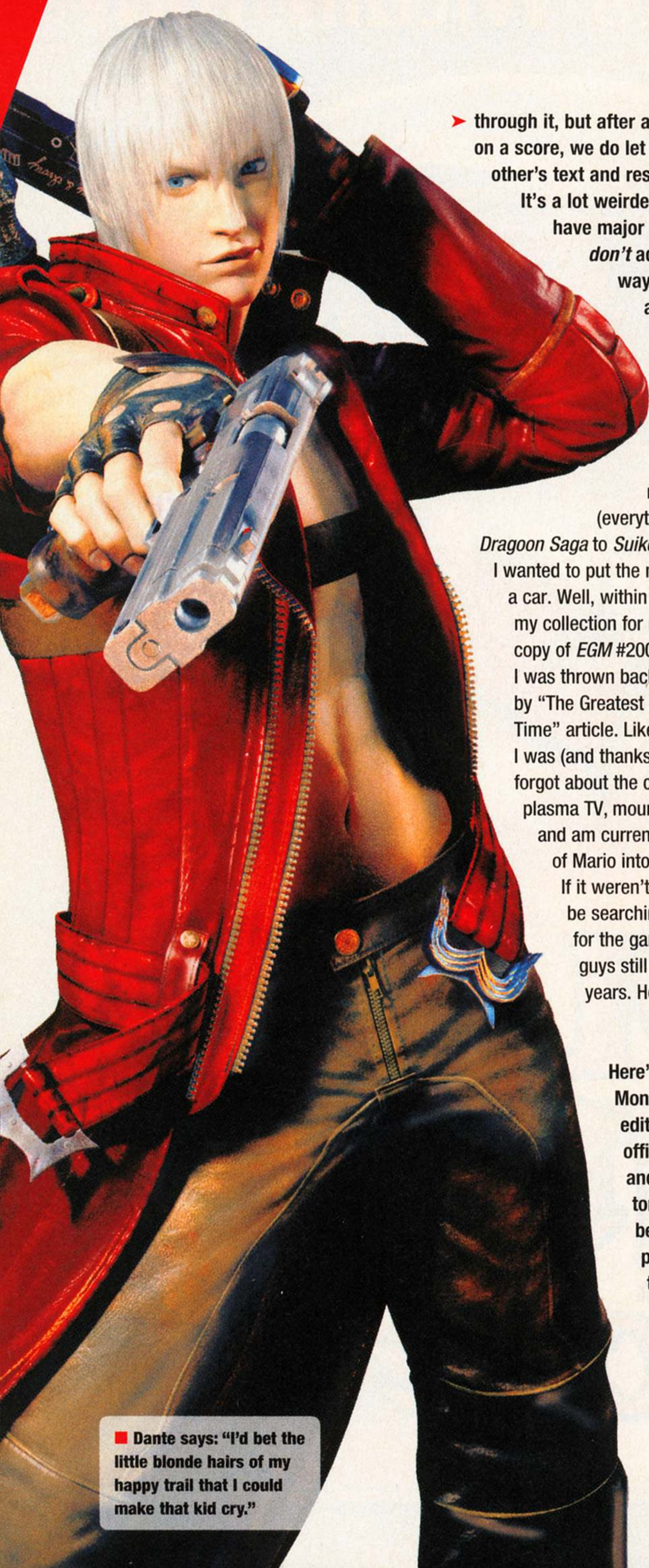
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■ Dante says: "I'd bet the little blonde hairs of my happy trail that I could make that kid cry."

► through it, but after all three have settled on a score, we do let them read each other's text and respond if necessary.

It's a lot weirder if our reviewers have major disagreements but don't address them in any way. Also: *The View* is an excellent program."

**Car > Games**

I recently sold almost all my gaming goods (everything from *Panzer Dragoon Saga* to *Suikoden II*). The reason? I wanted to put the money toward buying a car. Well, within weeks of selling my collection for money for a car, my copy of *EGM* #200 came in the mail. I was thrown back quite a few years by "The Greatest 200 Games of Their Time" article. Like the crazy gamer I was (and thanks to you, still am), I forgot about the car, bought a 50-inch plasma TV, mounted it on my wall, and am currently burning an image of Mario into the 50-inch monster. If it weren't for you, I might not be searching all over the place for the games I just sold. You guys still got it after all these years. How do you do it?

—Brad

Here's how we do it: Monday, 10:30 a.m., our editor-in-chief hits the office for *Soul Calibur* and his first gin and tonic. By 11:30 he's betting his mortgage payment against the senior editor's mom's kidneys. Around 2 p.m., the first drunken-fist Xbox 360 power-supply fight breaks out over "cheap bulls\*\*\*." Then we scribble some stuff and call it a night.

—Neato Jinkins 2

**Devil makes kid cry**

I love *Devil May Cry* games, and I want to get *Devil May Cry 3: Special Edition*. Anyway, I want to tell a funny story: A long time ago I was at a birthday party and tried to do a *Devil May Cry* move on the birthday boy. I accidentally sprained my arm and broke the birthday boy's arm. It was funny 'cause I didn't act wimpy and didn't cry, but the birthday boy was crying 10 rivers. It was hilarious. I got kicked out of the party, but I got to keep my present to him, which was a PS2.

—G.I.

Nice work on the whole evil-douchebag thing you got going on, G.I. It's heart-warming tales like yours that give game-hating lawyer Jack Thompson a hard-on.

**Defending exploding barrels**

I know exploding barrels have been in a lot of games, but I don't see why people are annoyed whenever an enemy rushes to the nearest one. Think of it from the perspective of the enemy: They're up against someone who probably has more experience than they have, so they blindly seek the nearest cover. If I were a futuristic mercenary fighting against, say, Joanna Dark, I probably wouldn't realize that the barrel I'm standing behind says "highly flammable."

—Melody Warbington

You would think that over thousands of years the "I probably wouldn't realize that the barrel I'm standing behind says 'highly flammable'" gene would become pretty rare. You must have a lot of relatives in the Generic Bad Guy Army.

**Fanboy call to arms**

I just want to say that everyone over at *EGM* is now an official Nintendo hater. I'm not talking about 15 years ago when you all loved Nintendo. I'm talking about today. There are tons of old NES and SNES games on your top 200 list, but the amount of GameCube games is low (five), and there is not a single DS game on the list. It seems with every system that Nintendo comes out with, you hate [the company] more and more. I think that this list needed to be done by a nonprejudiced

**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. Go to **EGM-GOTM.1UP.com**. There you can send us a message (subject head:



**Movie Quote: EGM #202**) with the quote, the movie it's from, and the page number you found it on. Include your mailing address (no P.O. boxes!) and your full name. Three randomly selected readers will win copies of this issue's Game of the Month.

magazine (if there is one), and you guys can go rot in hell.

—William Chidiac

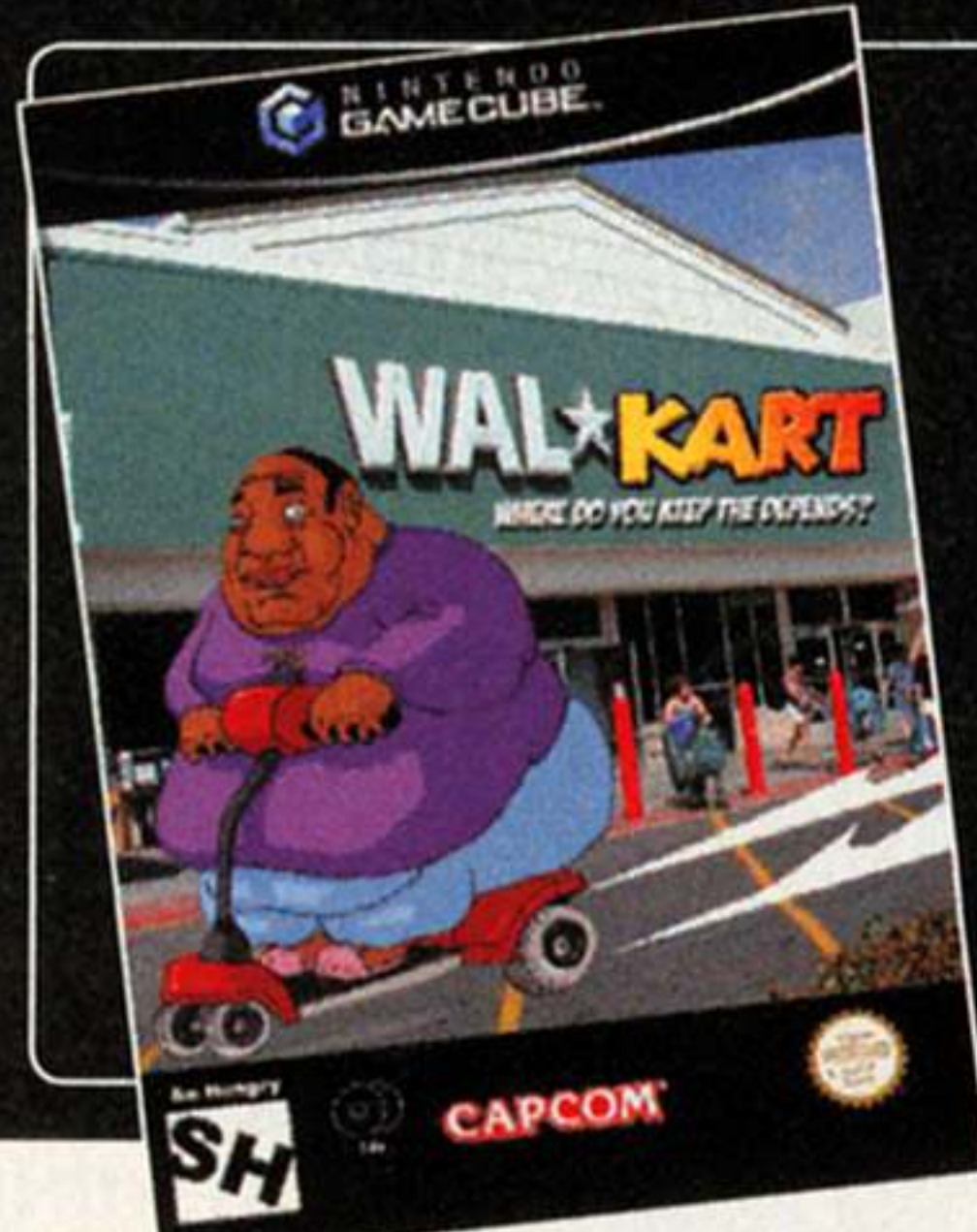
Are all you Xbox and PlayStation psycho superfans just gonna sit there and let this guy win?

**Q&A**

1. Are you going to make a *Primal 2*? I loved the first game.
  2. Are you going to bring Raziell back to his former beautiful-winged self? I miss him dearly.
  3. We need more vampire games. Those are my favorite.
- Mary
1. We don't make games. We write about them.
  2. If we made games, we would probably make one about forklift-driving death matches. We would call it *Forklift Kill*. You would ride around Sam's Club knocking huge shelves of supersized consumer goods onto your opponents.
  3. Vampire games are for Depeche Mode fans and 43-year-old loners.

**GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA**

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



**Wal-Kart**

Get ready for the most intense karting experience of your life. *Wal-Kart* takes you to the world of high-stakes sitting and complaining! Navigate tight corners while avoiding Little Debbie snack cakes. Customize your chubby racer with slave-labor-made clothes (what a bargain!). Go for the toilet paper on the top shelf! Can you make it back to your seat in time?

**BONUS GALLERY**

Going the extra mile for love of the game

**The Toil of Fandom**

Maybe I'm just the world's biggest geek, but I really enjoyed working four and a half months on this stained-glass window in my glass working class. It is exactly 1 foot, 4.75 inches in diameter, and the design was taken from *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*.

—Wesley Rea







It only plays like it's still there. The new Xbox 360™ Wireless Controller. Unmatched precision and performance to instantly reflect your every move. And with an advanced ecosystem of wireless products, you'll have the freedom to get the most out of Xbox 360, because they come from Xbox.



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Universal Media Remote



Play and Charge Kit



Jump in.

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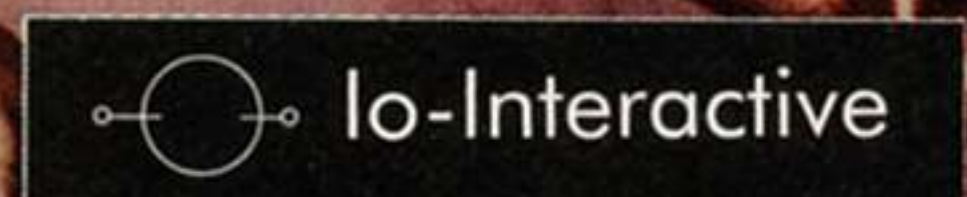
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PlayStation 2



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# FAR CRY INSTINCTS PREDATOR™

What's the only Xbox 360™ game you'd need on a deserted island?



PUBLISHER: UBISOFT    DEVELOPER: UBISOFT    RELEASE: SPRING 2006

**O**K, maybe it's not so deserted, since it's actually the base of operations for a ring of modern-day South Pacific pirates – bloodthirsty warriors, in more ways than one. Far Cry® took awards in 2004 on the PC, and in 2005 on Xbox®. Now, in Far Cry Instincts Predator, Jack Carver will stalk the most dangerous prey of his career, played out against the jaw-droppingest settings you've ever seen on Xbox 360.



This new Far Cry adventure uses that Xbox 360 processing power as much for ass-kicking gameplay innovations as for the unbelievable new graphics. In the levels we played through that power was on full display, from the enormous new maps and incredibly detailed settings to the insane number of enemies on-screen – all boasting the most lethal, most realistic enemy AI ever seen. You'll be challenged to play your best if you hope to survive in this deadly paradise.

Then there's the game design itself, featuring wide-open levels (you'll even play across multiple islands at once, picking your goals at your own pace), destructible environments, and new gameplay elements that let you use the environment as a weapon as deadly as your guns and



**WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE**  
This is not only the best-looking shooter we've ever seen, but also the deadliest...



**NEW RIDES**

Ride in deadly style! From the pirate sampans to armored pickups (Fast! You're gonna love these in Multiplayer!) and transport trucks (Think Multiplayer, here, too – like say, why not pack a truck with teammates and thunder up to the enemy for truly devastating blitz attacks?), you'll be packing both heat and speed!



SAMPAN



TECHNICAL TRUCK



TRANSPORT

grenades. For instance, we fought an army of pirates on their drug plantation, using logs as traps, setting fire to fields to flush out the enemy, even blasting those guard towers to topple them right on top of the bad guys' hiding spots.

Far Cry's CryEngine® looks better than ever on Xbox 360. It'll blow your mind with lush, tropical settings – dense green jungles, amazing blue seas, and soaring mountain peaks so real you'll swear you're touring an island paradise. In fact, it'd be relaxing if this paradise weren't so dangerous!

As Jack Carver, you'll put your powerful feral abilities to work from the moment the game begins, facing enemies that sport the same powers. So you'll have to think like these tough new enemies, and use your feral abilities to their fullest. Use your Feral Smell to actually sense the fear of your enemies, and, like the predator you are, dispatch your prey with a lightning-fast Feral Attack. It's all about the law of the jungle: only the top predator will survive.

Amazingly, Far Cry Instincts Predator for Xbox 360 contains not only the all-new Far Cry game (see right) but also the entire, award-winning Far Cry Instincts™ original – completely updated with mind-blowing Xbox 360 graphics. Thanks to some amazing work by Ubisoft's design team, this promises to be among the most phenomenal shooters you have ever experienced.

And of course, multiplayer action is going to be a big part of Far Cry Instincts Predator. You'll battle through all-new multiplayer maps, playing the familiar Chaos, Team Chaos, Steal the Sample, and Predator modes, as well as the all-new and incredibly addictive multiplayer mode, Seek and Secure.

**“The best tropical vacation a shooter fan could hope for!”**

It keeps getting better, too, thanks to the one-of-a-kind Far Cry map editor for even more varied multiplayer island action. With its new template and brush sets, you'll be able to build your own huge levels, share them with friends, and play your maps online! And if you don't feel like creating maps yet, this baby ships with a staggering 22 multiplayer maps – eight new ones, 14 of the best from Far Cry Instincts, and every one of

them optimized for incredible visuals, amazing depth, and action-jammed multiplayer gaming like

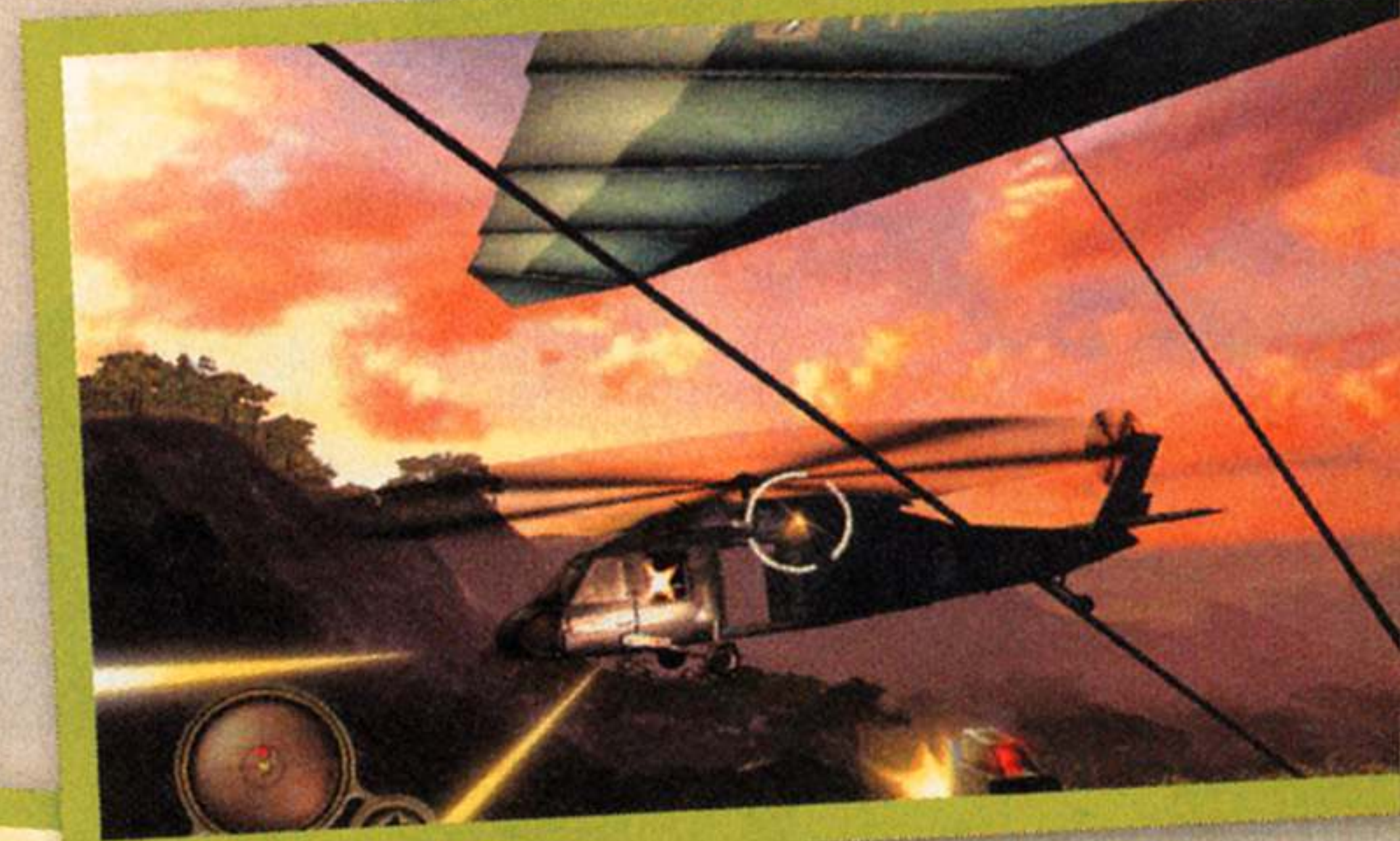
you've never experienced before.

Add it all up, and Far Cry Instincts Predator is the best tropical vacation a shooter fan could hope for! With its intense combat and cool new weapons, unbelievably lifelike graphics, and fully customizable multiplayer maps, you can bet Far Cry Instincts Predator is going to quickly become one of the most popular shooters available.



**FAR CRY INSTINCTS EVOLUTION FOR XBOX**

Don't worry, Xbox fans! All the killer gameplay innovation, the new weapons, vehicles, and amazing new locales are coming to Xbox. Watch for Far Cry Instincts Evolution if you're looking for the absolute best first-person shooter available for Xbox!



**LOOKING GOOD** As these screens prove, Ubisoft is cooking up some of the best graphics yet on Xbox!

**BECOME THE ULTIMATE PREDATOR**

Far Cry Instincts Predator has a hefty loadout of weapons, including a few new attacks that are destined to become favorites...

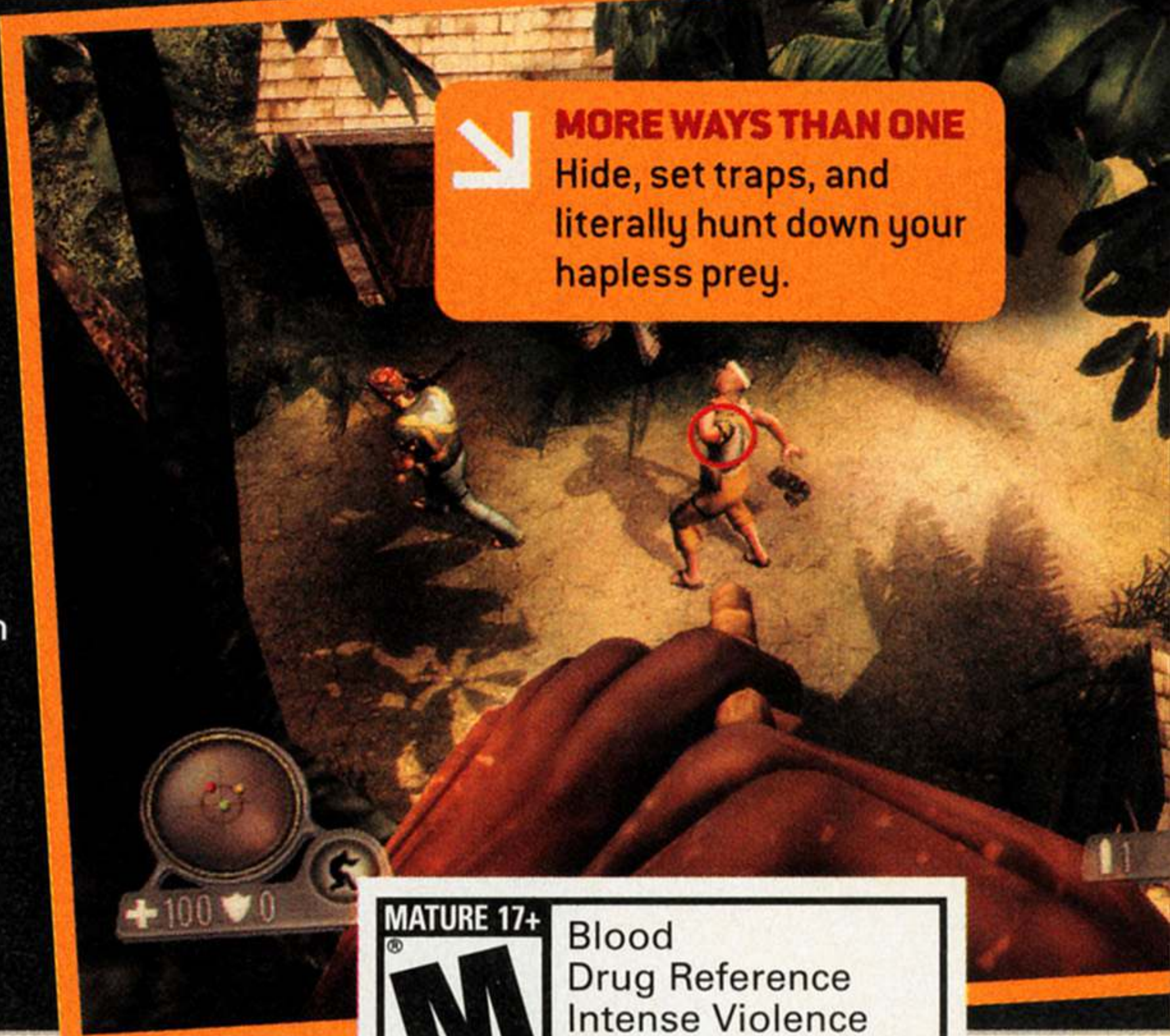
**POISON DARTS** Climb a tree, camp out, and silently take down foes.

**PIPE BOMB** Not as quiet, but just as fun. Plant a bomb and detonate it.

**MOLOTOV COCKTAIL** Light it, throw it, and watch your enemies burn.

**DEADLY TRAPS** Set devastating traps on patrol routes, or lure unsuspecting enemies to their brutal doom.

**MORE WAYS THAN ONE** Hide, set traps, and literally hunt down your hapless prey.



**MATURE 17+**  
**M**  
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB  
 Blood  
 Drug Reference  
 Intense Violence  
 Strong Language  
 Suggestive Themes





# press start

gaming news, previews, the best butler since alfred, and other stuff

# THE BIG QUESTIONS

We tackle the major questions for each next-gen console

—Bryan Intihar and Crispin Boyer

>> HOLDING OUT FOR AN XBOX 360 PRICE DROP? WELL, IT'S GONNA BE A WHILE. MOST FOLKS IN THE FINANCIAL WORLD TELL US THAT



## playstation 3

# Graphically, will PS3 games live up to the hype?

According to several developers we spoke to, creating PS3 software that looks as freakishly good as the *Metal Gear Solid 4* trailer is definitely possible, but it won't happen overnight. "I never expected to see the PS2 produce visuals like those we've seen in *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Resident Evil 4*, or *Black*," admits Producer Cord Smith of *Full Auto* (XB360) maker Pseudo Interactive. "So it becomes less a question of whether or not we'll achieve a semblance of the visuals

promised by next gen and more a question of when." Shiny President Dave Perry (*The Matrix: Path of Neo*) agrees. "Make no mistake; the PS3 chipset is bloody amazing," he says. "But do be patient and let the development teams get their hands dirty as they work out how to really push the box to its limit." And remember, unlike EA's CG "gameplay target" video for a next-gen *Madden*, the visuals in all previous *Metal Gear* trailers haven't misled us yet.



■ *Metal Gear Solid 4*

# Just how much is this sucker gonna cost? \$400? \$500? More?

While talks of a \$700 price tag have swirled around the Net, most on Wall Street believe that the PS3 will set you back \$500. "Sony will likely launch the console slightly above Xbox 360's price," says Martin Shkreli, a hedge fund manager at Elea Capital. "This allows them to monetize their brand value, position it as the premium console, and recoup the large manufacturing costs. \$499 for the system is what I'm thinking."

So why the extra Benjamin? Part of

the blame goes to the console's Blu-ray disc drive, a new, yet superexpensive, technology that will enable developers to pack in roughly six times the amount of data of a regular DVD. And the rest of the blame goes to...well, you. "As the Xbox 360 launch proved, the kind of consumer who needs to own a PS3 on day one is willing to spend a lot of money on a console," says a financial analyst who wishes to remain anonymous.

# Will Sony ever get its online act together?

Yep, and it's about damn time. A group of developers who wish to remain anonymous tells us that Sony's stealing quite a few pages from Microsoft and its superb Xbox Live service. The PS3 online community will even have its own version of achievement points for in-game accomplishments, which we hear will be called "entitlements." Hopefully, that's not the final name for these things.

## Little Q: Will the PSP ever be home to more than movies and stripped-down PS2 ports?

Aside from the techno puzzler *Lumines* and *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories*, Sony's handheld mightily struggled to produce original hits in year one. The PSP will again see several recognizable faces in 2006, but at least some game companies aren't simply shrinking down console titles. Take *Killzone: Liberation* (fall): The developers are turning its PS2 first-person shooter into a top-down stealth-action game

(think along the lines of *Metal Gear Solid*) for the PSP. *Daxter* stars *Jak's* sidekick, and this late-March release is a pure platformer rather than an action-shooter.

As for completely original entities, keep an eye out for the quirky side-scroller *Loco Roco* (it has *Katamari*-like appeal written all over it) and *God of War* creator David Jaffe's new PSP game (he wants to make you cry with this one). ►

MICROSOFT WON'T REDUCE THE 360'S COST UNTIL 2007. AS ONE ANALYST PUT IT, "THIS CONSOLE WAR REALLY STARTS NEXT YEAR..." >>>



THE BIG ?'s (CONT.)

nintendo revolution

> The Nintendo 64 and GameCube both had pathetic third-party support. Will the Revolution suffer the same fate?

No doubt about it—the development community has a major hard-on for the system's motion-sensitive, TV-remote-like controller. "Everyone who sees and, more importantly, plays with the Revolution [controller] is excited about it," says Backbone Entertainment (*Death, Jr.*) Senior Producer Chris Charla. "And developers are absolutely no excep-

tion." But while gamemakers are eager to start a Revolution, several outside Japan are still waiting on Mario's bunch for the proper tools. "Few—if any—Western developers have Revolution development hardware, so it's not an easy step to start taking risks in that direction," says President Randy Pitchford of Gearbox Software, makers of the first-

person shooter franchise *Brothers in Arms*. "As I learn more about Revolution, we may discover that there is an audience that can support an idea I'm interested in. If that's the case, I won't be afraid to invest in it. I think that most developers and publishers that aren't directly part of Nintendo are sort of in the same situation." What's taking so long, Nintendo?

The Revolution will be cheaper than its competition, but by how much? And what about the cost of downloading those classic Nintendo titles?

The Revolution will be the console of choice for thrifty gamers. "\$250 seems appropriate," says Shkreli (as do several others the financial world). Also, buying older Nintendo software should do little damage to your wallet. "Downloading games will likely be priced at the present value of the past games," says Shkreli, "NES titles might be a few dollars, Super Nintendo \$5, Nintendo 64 \$10, etc." We've also heard talks of a monthly subscription model for these retro games.



The next Zelda: Will it be for GameCube or Revolution?

Well, both. Last issue, Reggie Fils-Aime, Nintendo's executive VP of sales and marketing, was adamant that the oft-delayed *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* would still arrive on the Cube ("We want to satisfy the GameCube fan base and have it be on that system," he said). And thanks to the Revolution's backward-compatibility feature, this fall you can play it on Nintendo's next-gen console, too. Fils-Aime even hinted that *Twilight Princess* would include some special Revolution-only features. Using the motion-sensitive controller as your sword, perhaps? Yeah, we'd dig that. Acts as your reel in the fishing minigame? C'mon, that's an easy way out.

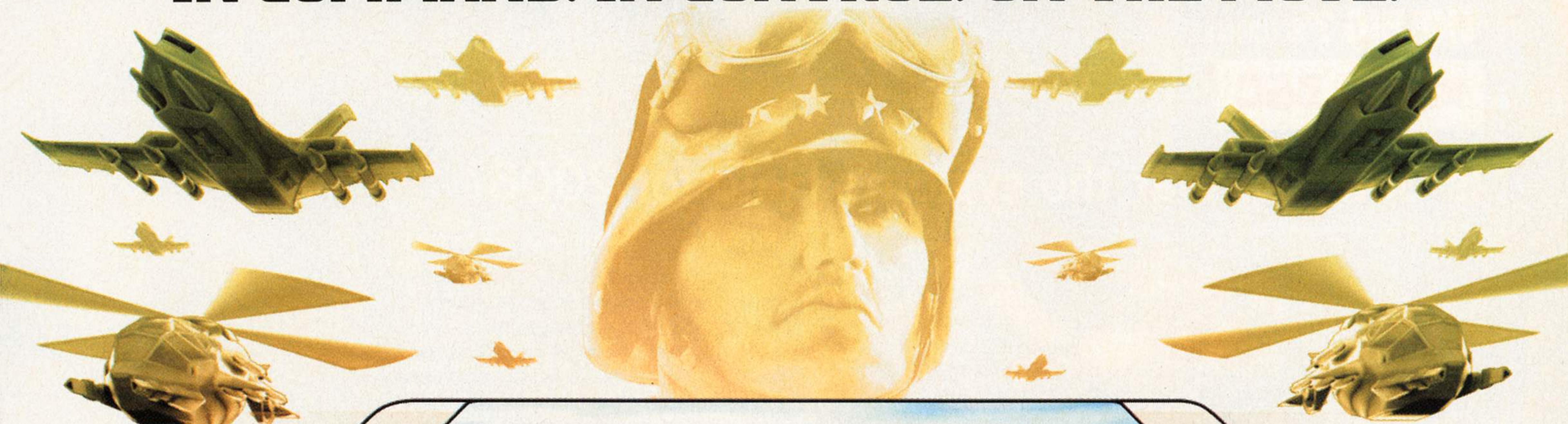
Little Q: Puppy simulator Nintendogs gave the DS an edge in 2005. Which game's gonna keep the dual-screen machine ahead of the pack this year?

Exchange your pooper scooper for a thinking cap—2006 is all about getting your noggin in shape with *Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day*. Nintendo's minigame-esque mind exercises are all the rage in Japan, as the first three titles in the series (known as *Brain Training* over there) have each sold more than 1 million

copies. *Brain Age*, which comes here April 17, will include challenges like number puzzles that involve memorization and math skills. One month later, Nintendo will release a follow-up in the form of *Big Brain Academy*, featuring a multiplayer mode that supports eight DS owners. >



# IN COMMAND. IN CONTROL. ON THE MOVE.



## STRATEGIC MILITARY WARFARE IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND.



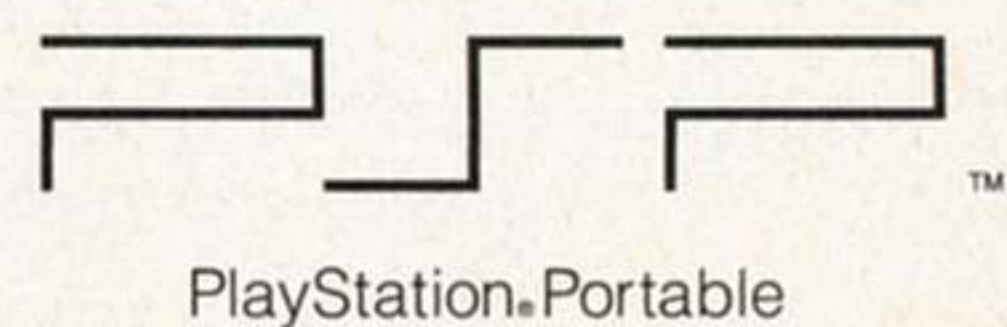
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THE BIG ?'s (CONT.)

xbox 360

► Is Gears of War the system's Halo for 2006?



■ While *Gears of War* is due out this fall, we've recently heard rumblings that it may slip into 2007.

Microsoft exec Peter Moore may have dodged this question a few months ago ("*Gears of War* is *Gears of War*, and *Halo* is a unique franchise," he told us in issue #200), but *Gears* Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski doesn't fear such a label. "We're not the ones who said [*Gears of War*] was the system seller. The gamers, fans, and press are the ones that were kind enough to bestow us with that title," he says. "But we're more than happy to carry the standard for the platform."

Bleszinski also ain't shy about telling people exactly why developer Epic's sci-fi shooter will meet expectations. "*Gears* is going to be the triple threat of single player, cooperative, and versus multi-player," he says. "Wrap that up in a new, compelling universe with interesting twists on the shooter mechanic, a lot of polish, and stunning graphics and you've got a product that the public is eager to play."

So does that mean we have to wait until 2007 for the third coming of Halo?

Sure looks that way. The only game we've heard to expect from developer Bungie this year is an Xbox Live Arcade title, due as early as the spring. *Halo 3*, on the other hand, likely won't arrive until 2007, with its launch coinciding with the release of the megabudget *Halo* movie.



■ Perfect Dark Zero

What's next for Xbox Live?

Downloadable game demos, a spectator mode, *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved*—Microsoft's online service was hands-down the star of the 360 launch. And this is just the beginning. "We'll be bringing lots of new and exciting Xbox Live Arcade titles each and every month, like *Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting* and *Texas Hold 'Em Poker*," says Aaron Greenberg, group marketing manager for Xbox Live. "We also are planning to roll

out upgrades and new features to Xbox Live and the Marketplace throughout the year." In the next few months, expect new *Perfect Dark Zero* multiplayer maps and bot types (maybe even specific bot personalities like in the original *PD*), plus downloadable content for *Project Gotham Racing 3* and *Kameo*. We'd also be shocked if by year's end Microsoft didn't release its camera peripheral for video chatting.

Little Q: In the midst of all the next-gen hoopla, will the PS2, Xbox, and GameCube survive this year?

One of them will, anyway. Sony's machine will be home to a number of triple-A exclusives, including roleplayers *Kingdom Hearts II* (March) and *Final Fantasy XII* (fall), plus the off- and online adventure *Phantasy Star Universe* (fall). Microsoft meanwhile, has shifted gears to the 360 (the Xbox's third-party support is also declining), and only the new *Zelda* is keeping the GameCube alive.





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PlayStation 2



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# EGM INTERNATIONAL

Twice as exciting as karaoke and vodka

PS2

## IBARA

**Why do developers in Japan keep making vertical shooters?** Because it's in their DNA—that, and what else are you supposed to play in arcades when all the *Capcom vs. SNK 2* machines are occupied? *Ibara* is the latest from developer Cave (maker of *DoDonPachi* and a lot of other shooters), and as you might expect, it's for those with RoboCop-like reflexes only. **Sounds way too hard to me.** Obviously, you lack the discipline an upbringing in Tokyo arcades can provide. Like the infamous *Ikaruga* (GC), this game packs an almost ludicrous amount of enemies onscreen, and can only be conquered with practice, memorization, and more practice. With the shooter genre basically on life support in America, don't expect *Ibara* anytime soon.



PSP

## BAITO HELL 2000

**Another minigame collection?** Yes, and it may even be kookier than Nintendo's *WarioWare* titles. You're a man looking for *baito* (part-time employment), but you must have stumbled into the Benny Hill Job Agency, because the work you get isn't particularly rewarding. Putting caps on ballpoint pens? A monkey could do that. Juggling a soccer ball? Not much room for growth there. Chicken sexing? Uh...OK. **Still, that's more fun than my work.** And unlike in real life, the money you earn here goes toward useful things: additional minigames and a few "tools" such as a world clock and restaurant tip calculator.



## BY THE NUMBERS

Dance the fat away

**1998** The year Konami released *Dance Dance Revolution* in Japanese arcades

**300** Number of songs in *DDR SuperNOVA*, which comes to U.S. arcades this spring

**28** Percentage of West Virginia residents a 2004 study found to be obese

**765** Number of West Virginia schools that will add *DDR* to their fitness programs over the next two years



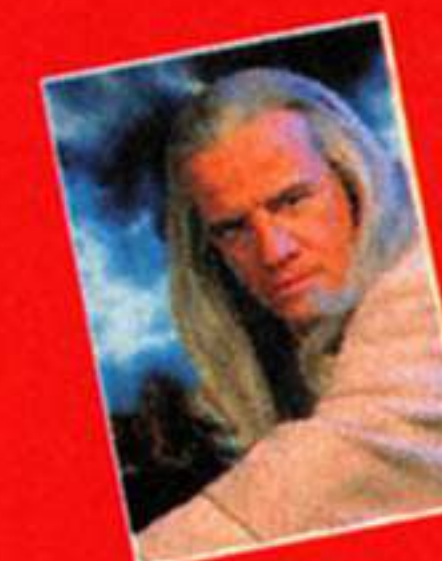
Obviously, she's not a resident of West Virginia.

## THE HOT SEAT: CHOOSE OR LOSE



Ed Boon, cocreator of the *Mortal Kombat* series, knows a little something about handling pressure. Remember, this is the same dude who dealt with U.S. senators bashing his popular yet controversial fighting franchise throughout the '90s. Now it's time to see if Boon—who's currently working on this fall's *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* for PlayStation 2 and Xbox—will break a sweat in our Hot Seat.

### Fave Movie



or



*Mortal Kombat*

*Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*

Ed Boon: "You're joking, right? The first movie. Now I have a question for you: Favorite drink—lemonade or urine?"

### Alternative Fighter



or



*Virtua Fighter* series

*Soul Calibur* series

EB: "I'd say *Soul Calibur*. The crazier, the better!"

### Forgettable Kombatant



or



Stryker

Ermac

EB: "That's like asking me, 'Which one of your kids you'd like to see die?' OK, Stryker."



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■ Sexier than the Gizmondo? Check.

# i GOT GAME

## Apple bites into the portable-gaming market

**I**t's a rumor that flares up every couple of years: Microsoft's getting into the portable-gaming market—it's big bucks, after all. Leave it to a lifelong competitor to beat Gates' gang to the real deal. Apple, well known for its line of computers, iPod portable digital-music players, and delicious pies, will be releasing its iGame portable gaming device late this year. The official debut of the machine isn't scheduled until this May's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles, so we're short on details right now. But we did get our hands on an early image of the iGame, as well as some initial plans for how the games will be distributed.

The iGame is set up like a typical portable system, with a digital D-pad on the left side, four buttons on the right, and two shoulder buttons. It has a large widescreen and a thin overall profile (it's reportedly just a tiny bit bigger than the current video iPod on its side). But look a little more closely. See the symbols on the face buttons? And that ring around the D-pad? (It's a touch scroll wheel). Yep, the iGame is a fully functional iPod as well, complete with photo display and music

and video playback.

No word yet on how big the internal hard drive will be, but it better be pretty fat—not only will it have to store pictures, tunes, and videos, but all the games as well. The iGame won't play any discs or cartridges; instead, you sign on to Apple's user-friendly iTunes Music Store and purchase individual titles for a fee. Like all other iTunes products, the game downloads to your computer (but as nonplay-

able files), then transfers to your iGame upon synchronization via FireWire or USB 2.0 cable. The game lineup includes a mix of PC ports, original iGame exclusives, and very likely some Game Boy Advance and other handheld titles licensed from various companies (including some out-of-print classics from years past).

Like we said, details are scarce right now, but watch 1UP.com for more updates on the iGame as news breaks. **✎**



■ iTunes: It's how the "game" gets into iGame. Each title will cost a fee to download.

## GAMING FOR THE MASSES

Of course Apple's portable game machine is going to be sci-fi sleek and sexy—these are the guys who brought digital music to the mainstream, and they're itching to do the same with gaming. But is the machine too mainstream friendly? The design's a big step backward in terms of game functionality: no analog stick, no dual analog controls (try playing any shooter on the PSP to see why that's needed), no touch screen, etc. The hardcore gamers may not dig it, but that may not matter. If the mainstream picks up on it like everyone did the iPod, iGame may be the next big thing.

Here's an unofficial list of licensed games our sources say should be available for iGame when it launches this winter. No word yet on iGame-original titles. Expect those to be announced this May and throughout the year.

- *Call of Duty 3*
- *Casino Royale*
- *Madden NFL 07*
- *Splinter Cell Essentials 2*
- *Tak and the Power of JuJu on the Go*
- *WarCraft Armies*
- *Final Fantasy II*
- *X-Men 3*





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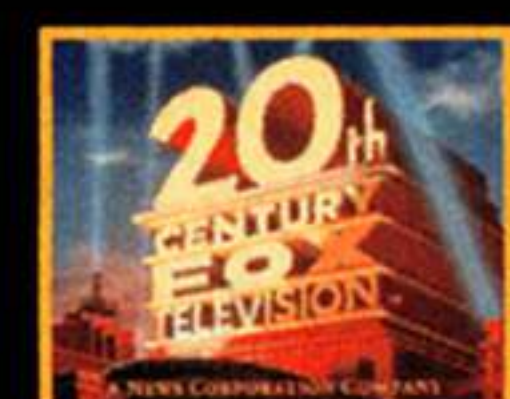
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PlayStation®2



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■ *Splinter Cell Double Agent*, now starring *The Chronicles of Riddick*'s Vin Diesel as Sam Fisher.

■ XBOX 360 PREVIEW

# SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

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

Sam Fisher comes into the light in his latest thriller

**S**am Fisher is so over those glowing green goggles. Sure, they got confiscated when he landed in jail on the undercover mission that starts out his new game, so he'd better be able to get by without them. But a true superspy like Fisher doesn't need fancy gadgets—at least not in *Splinter Cell Double Agent*. The fourth outing in the stealth series (coming to Xbox 360, Xbox, and PS2 this fall) is the first in which a substantial amount of action takes place in broad daylight. So the gorgeous, detailed environments for which *Splinter Cell* is renowned? You might actually get to see 'em this time around.

"The art design [in *Chaos Theory*] is absolutely incredible—but the game's so dark, you don't see the incredible work on textures," says Julian Gerighty, producer for the Xbox 360 version of *Double Agent*. "There's art in there that's never been seen." Now that the team can move beyond the limitations of darkness and shadows, the world is its oyster—you'll swim in freezing waters in Iceland and infiltrate a cruise ship in Cozumel. At least one level, Kinshasa, takes place in the harsh daylight under a menacing African sun. It's an element of game design that's reinvigorated the team—many of whom have worked on previous iterations of the series.

"People get tired of working on very similar games year in, year out," says Gerighty, explaining how the game's design has been opened up by the new technology available to them. "We've been able to do things we couldn't have [done] a couple years before."

Well-lit environments aren't the only way the team is utilizing Xbox 360's greater processing power. It has also created more challenging—and realistic—enemies. In that same Kinshasa level, for instance, you're witnessing a civil war. The team created different A.I. for the rebel faction and the military. Their fights will play out differently every time, so the way Sam interacts with them will be unpredictable. The enemies should also look

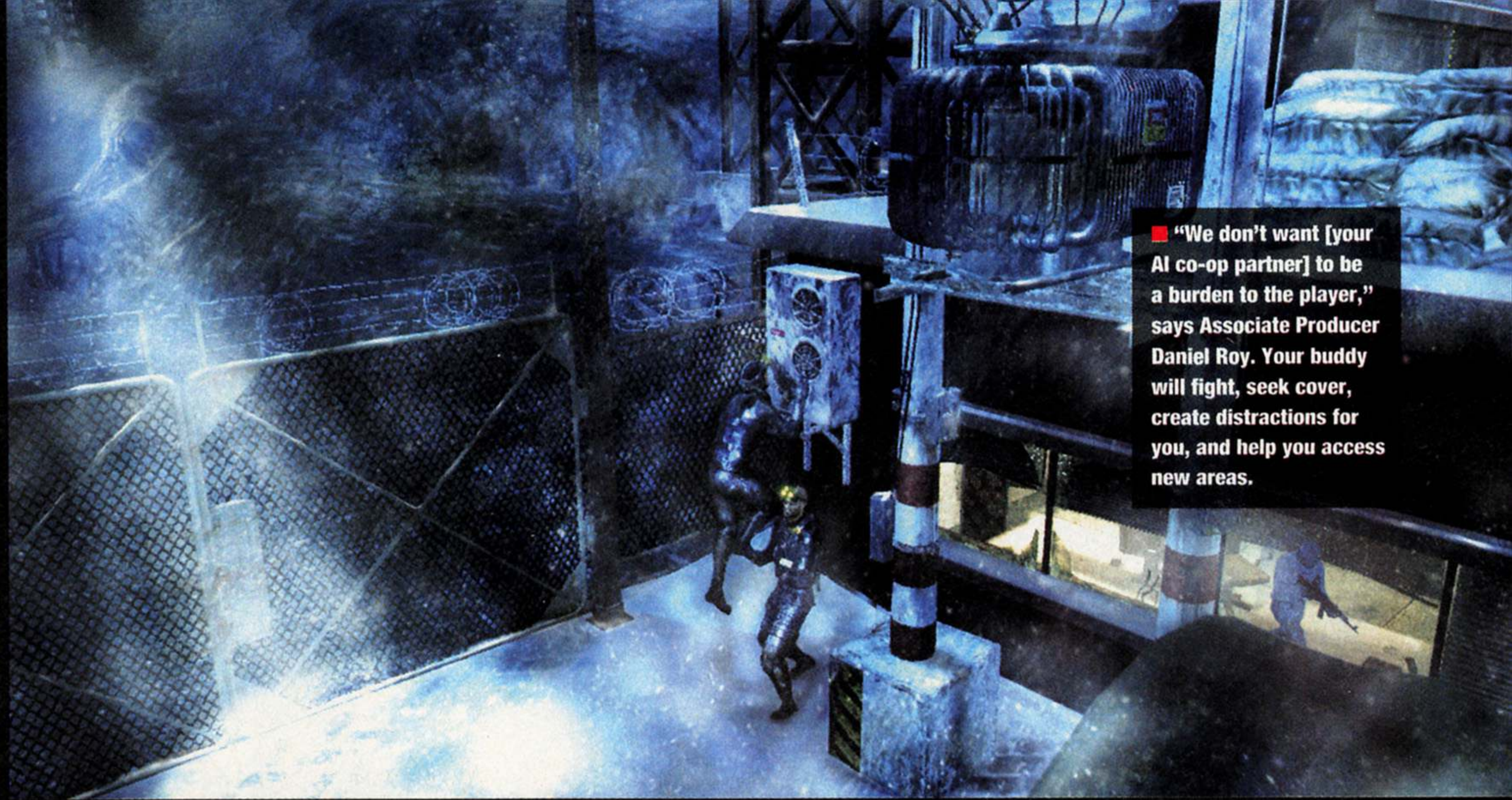
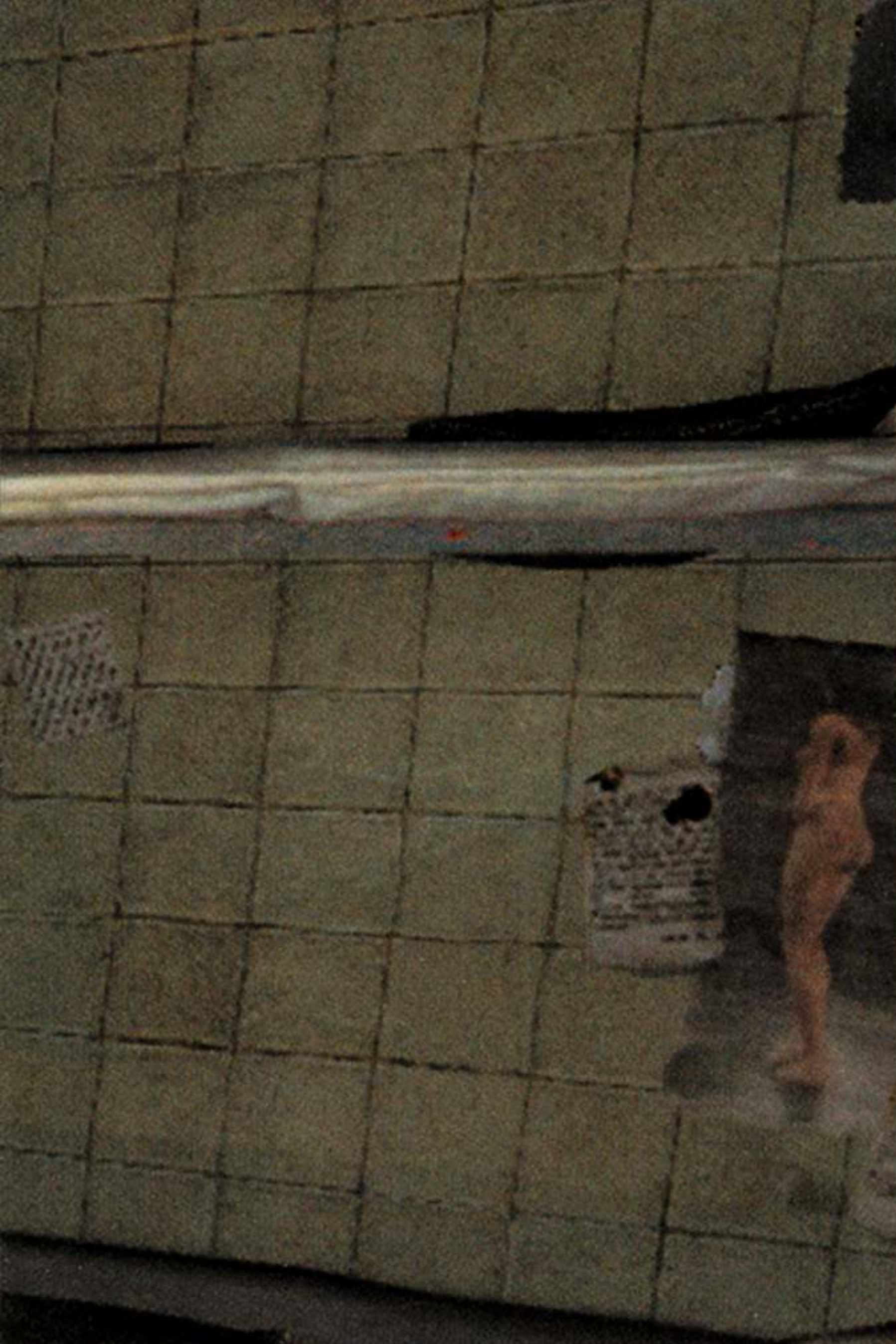
more realistic than ever; the game boasts almost 200 individual models, each painstakingly designed down to the pores on the skin.

So yeah, the new *Splinter Cell* ditches the dark—but the game's still all about stealth. Now, though, you'll learn to use environmental hazards, such as snow, or other circumstances (a jail riot that distracts guards, for instance) for Fisher's all-important cover. It's a gameplay switch that should freshen up the series for veterans while possibly broadening its historically somewhat limited appeal.

Another big change is that Fisher now has to play the role of a double agent infiltrating a worldwide terrorist organization. This will present some major choices for him— ➤

➤ SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT IS BEING DEVELOPED ACROSS THREE CONTINENTS. THE SAME TEAM THAT CREATED THE MULTIPLAYER MODES

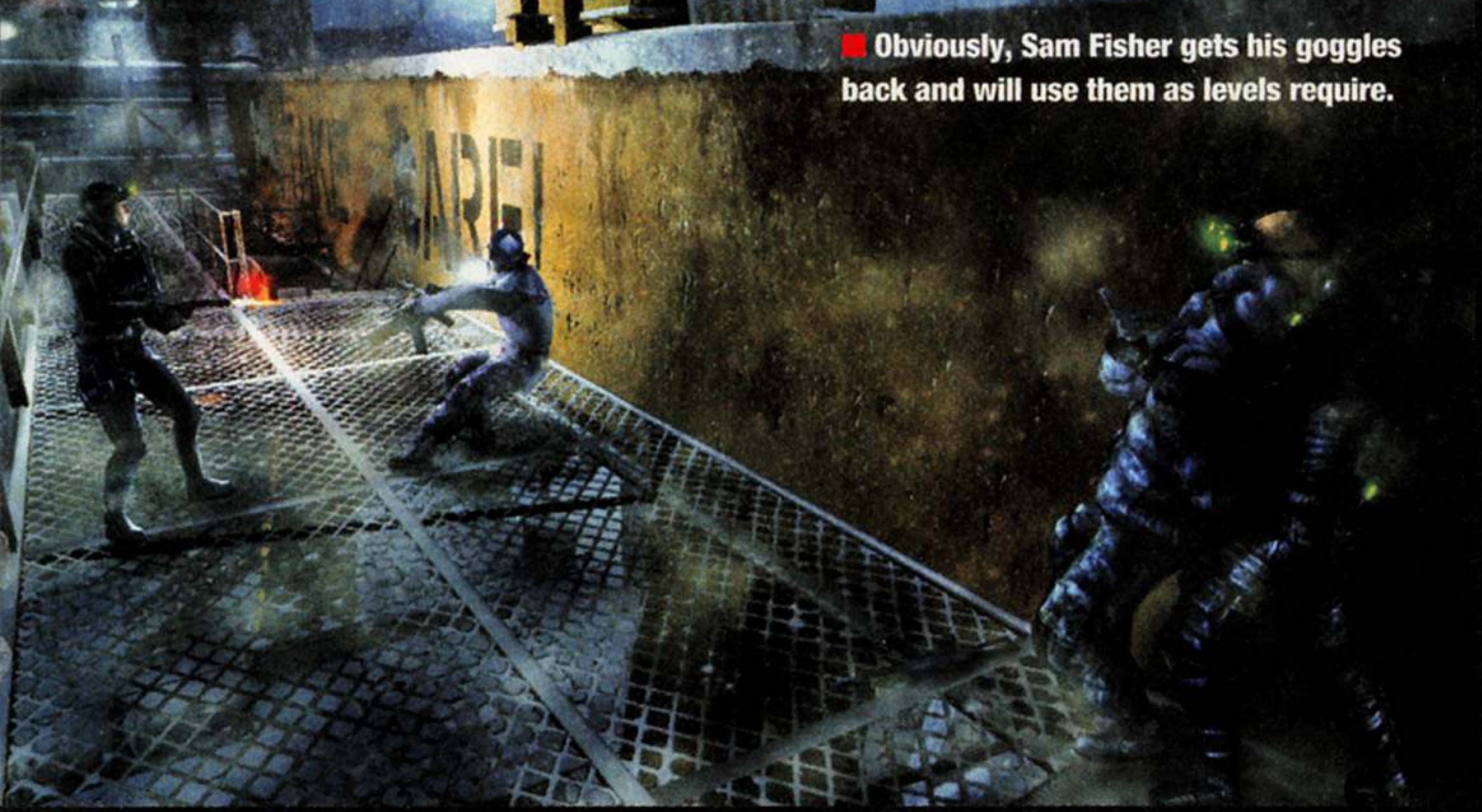
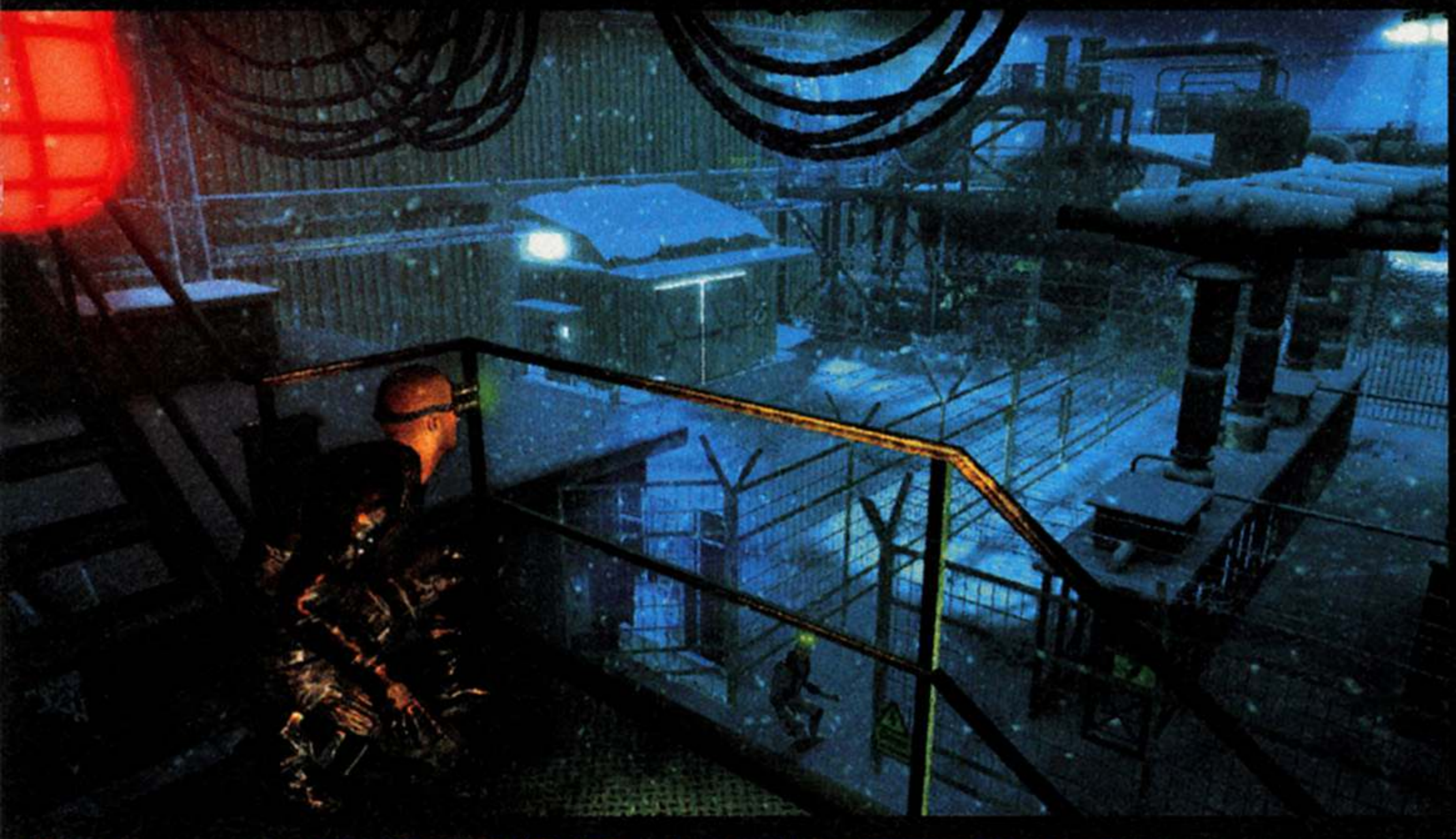




■ "We don't want [your AI co-op partner] to be a burden to the player," says Associate Producer Daniel Roy. Your buddy will fight, seek cover, create distractions for you, and help you access new areas.

**Getting Schooled**

"It's a great game, but it's an elite game," says Producer Julian Gerighty of *Splinter Cell*'s online multiplayer. "We know that people try it about three times before giving up because they're tired of being shot immediately." This time, the team is attempting to make the new 3-on-3 spies-versus-mercenaries battles more accessible. The concept is a spy school—you climb the ranks from rookie to superspy, and community features will require that you take care of rookies in your clan.



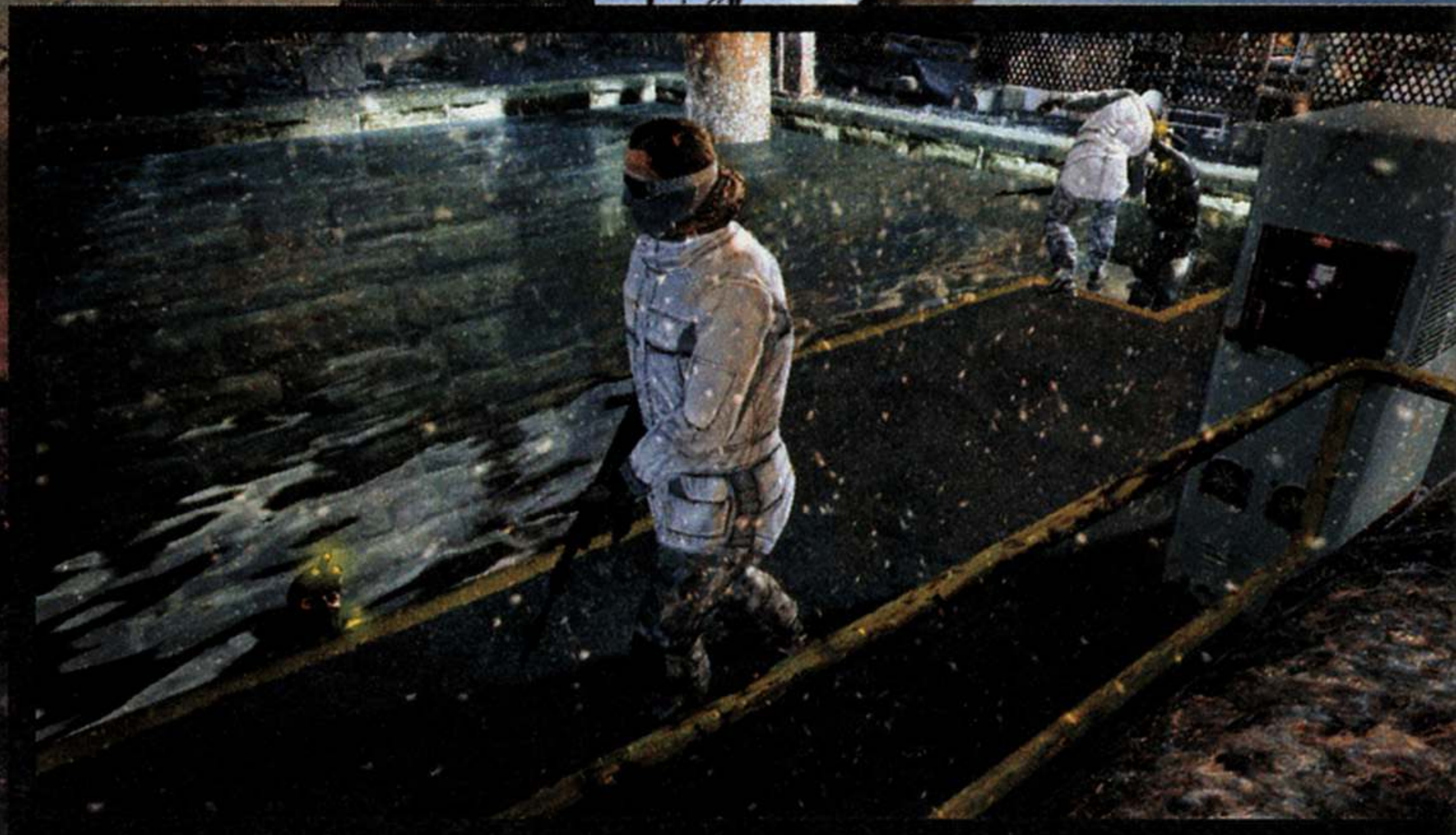
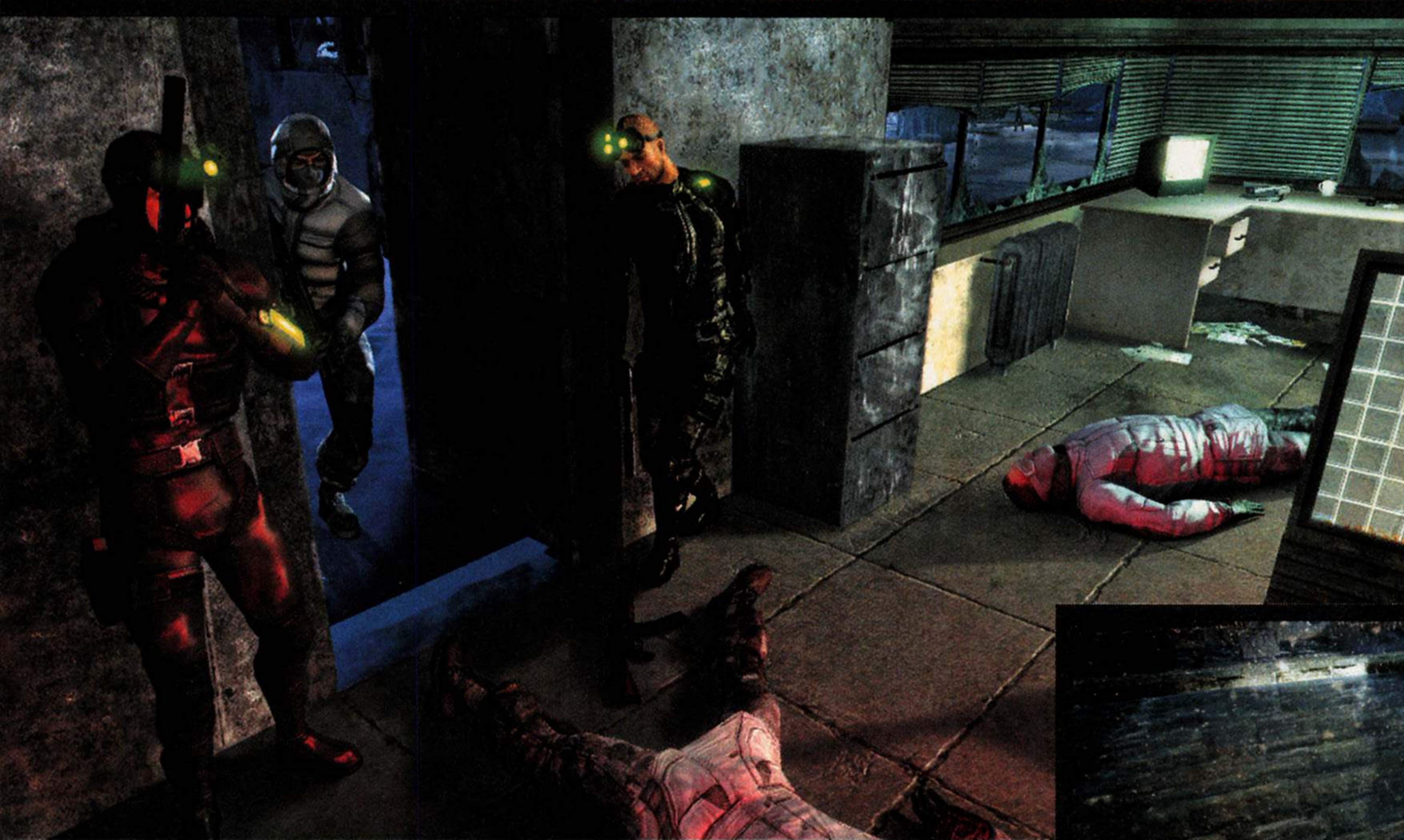
■ Obviously, Sam Fisher gets his goggles back and will use them as levels require.



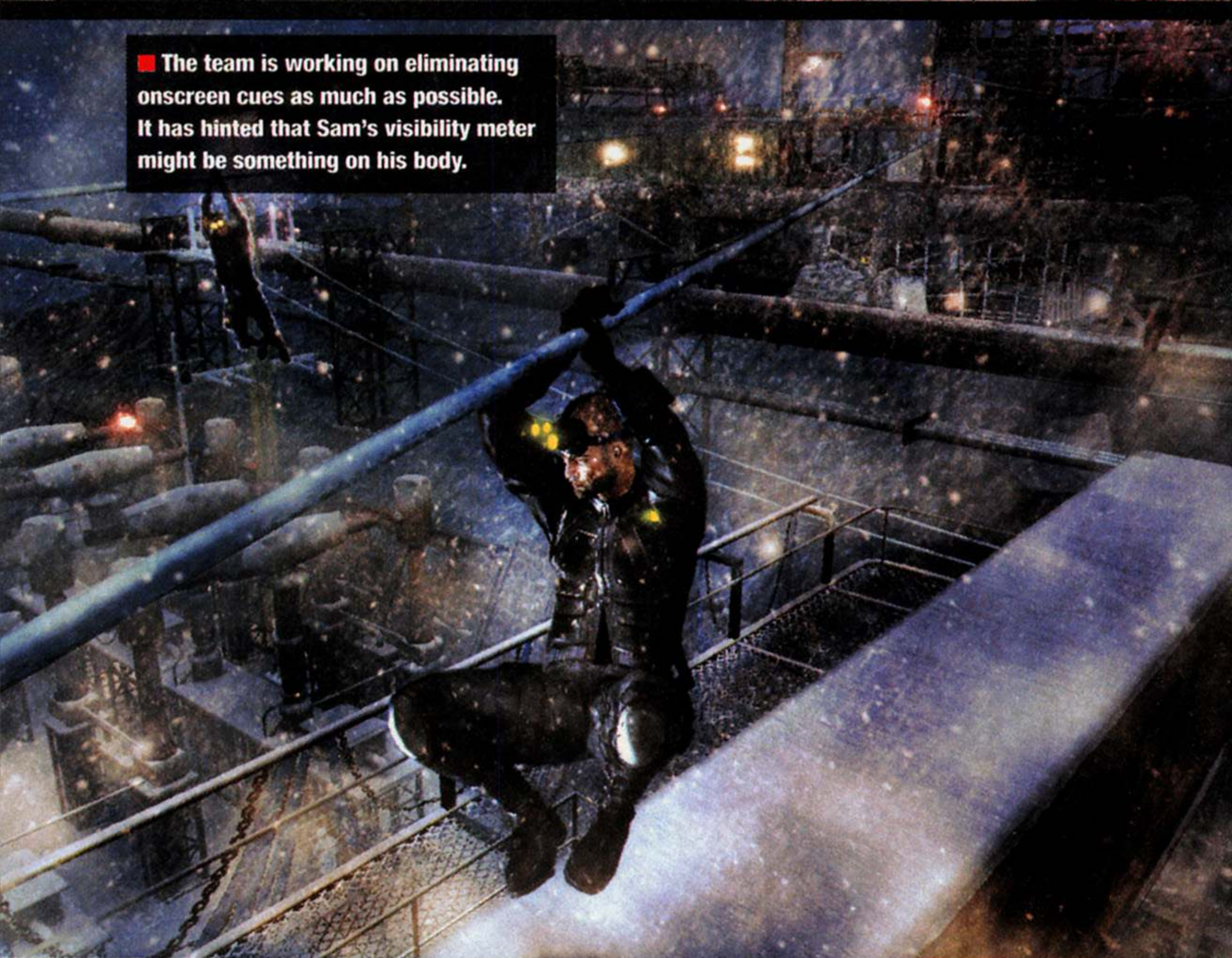
FOR PANDORA TOMORROW AND CHAOS THEORY WILL BE DOING DESIGN DUTIES FOR DOUBLE AGENT'S NEW MULTIPLAYER MODES.... >>



# SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT (CONT.)

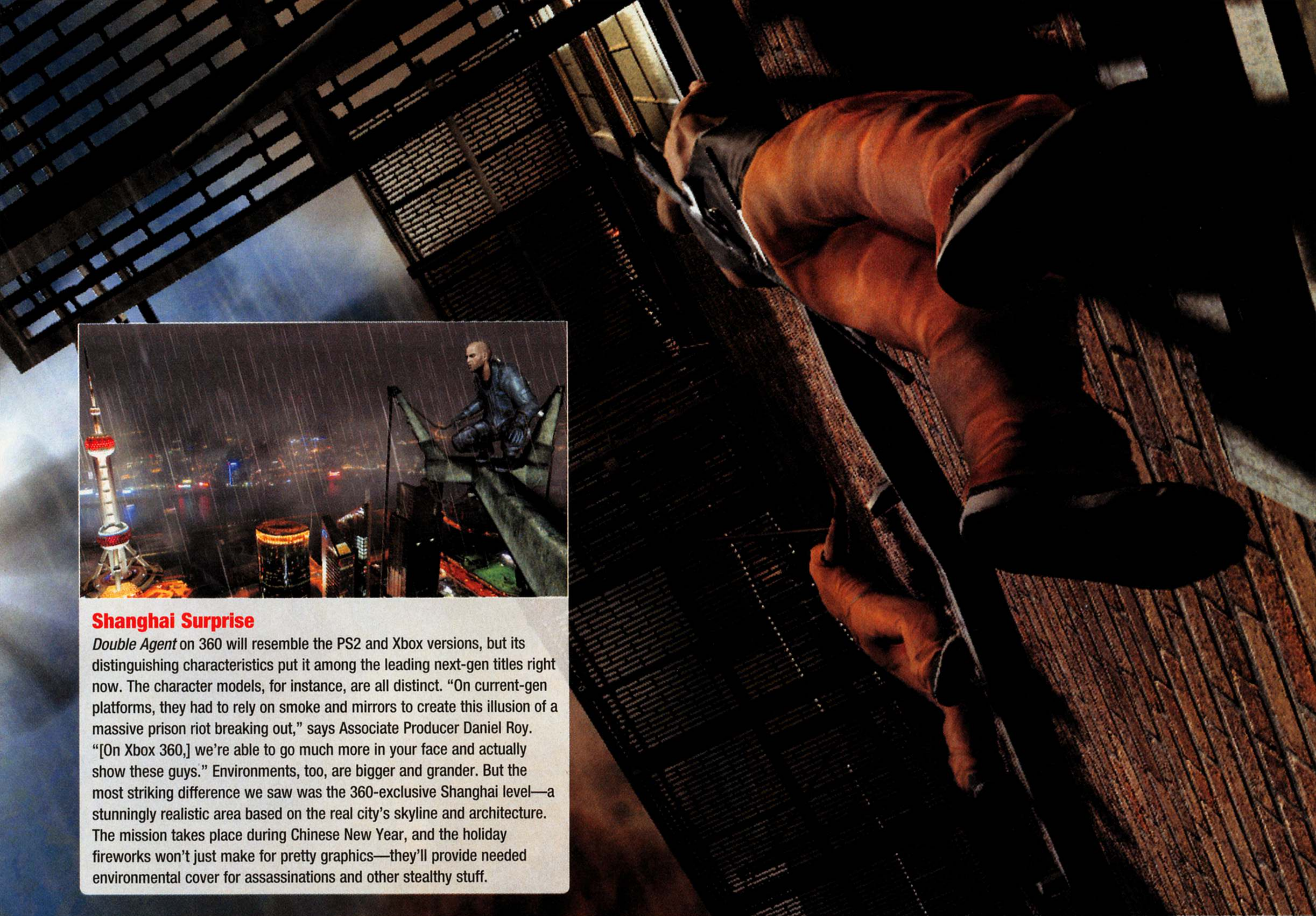


■ The team is working on eliminating onscreen cues as much as possible. It has hinted that Sam's visibility meter might be something on his body.



>> JIN WHO? THE UBISOFT SHANGHAI TEAM COULDN'T GET THE RIGHTS TO USE THE ACTUAL BUILDING SAM FISHER SCALES IN THE SHANGHAI





### Shanghai Surprise

*Double Agent* on 360 will resemble the PS2 and Xbox versions, but its distinguishing characteristics put it among the leading next-gen titles right now. The character models, for instance, are all distinct. "On current-gen platforms, they had to rely on smoke and mirrors to create this illusion of a massive prison riot breaking out," says Associate Producer Daniel Roy. "[On Xbox 360,] we're able to go much more in your face and actually show these guys." Environments, too, are bigger and grander. But the most striking difference we saw was the 360-exclusive Shanghai level—a stunningly realistic area based on the real city's skyline and architecture. The mission takes place during Chinese New Year, and the holiday fireworks won't just make for pretty graphics—they'll provide needed environmental cover for assassinations and other stealthy stuff.



► choices that won't be so simple. "When we thought about the tension of being undercover, the greatest tension is the notion of choice," says Associate Producer Daniel Roy. "It's not, are you evil [or] are you good? [Do you] preserve your cover and gain the trust of these enemies you're trying to infiltrate at the cost of killing someone? Or do you say, 'This is wrong, I can't do it,' and then risk the lives of thousands afterward?" These choices form the backbone of the story's dramatic progression—and can be the difference between a dramatic failure and resounding success. "Main characters will live or die depending on these choices," says Roy.


Fisher is largely out of touch with past games' NSA voice-in-your-ear Lambert this

time. It's not that he won't receive guidance, but he might get it, say, from a terrorist agent, and it's up to you to decide whether to follow that advice. Previous games' single-minded missions may look innocently simplistic in comparison with the depth of storytelling the team is striving for this time around. There will be multiple endings, and certain missions will only be playable depending on the decisions you make at certain key moments.

Emotional storytelling will also come through in the game's interactive cut-scenes ("directed moments," as the team calls them). We saw one where Fisher escapes from the first prison level, and an innocent helicopter pilot has been caught in the crossfire. You must choose whether to shoot

the pilot and maintain your cover, or let him live—saving a life, but possibly eliminating your chance to carry out the greater mission. The choice seems rather clinical—if you don't shoot the pilot, the terrorists may doubt your devotion to their cause, so any idiot would do it without flinching, right? Not necessarily. The animation of the guy cringing, his desperate eyes pleading with you as he's bound and gagged, makes the decision a painful one.

To create such visceral cinematics, the team employed an Oscar-winning animator, and the results look fantastic. Whether it's skydiving into a mission or deciding the fate of a hostage, these scenes add a new level of life to the game—and making many of them playable works toward the team's

goal of eliminating traditional cut-scenes altogether. "The idea is to make people feel the same emotions without relying on video," says Gerigthy. "Of course, it's hard to tell the narrative without any cut-scenes at all, but it's really reduced to a minimum." Consequently, throughout the game you'll see little to no loading or onscreen menus. Directed moments also set Fisher up in a mission. Where previous games simply plopped him down in a cave or swamp, now you'll see and control him as he falls through the sky or swims to the mission's insertion point. It's lots of little touches like these that will differentiate *Double Agent* from its predecessors and bring *Splinter Cell* into the next generation.  —Jennifer Tsao

LEVEL OF *DOUBLE AGENT*. WHAT YOU'LL SEE INSTEAD OF THE 88-STORY JIN MAO TOWER IS A VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY CLOSE REPLICA... >>



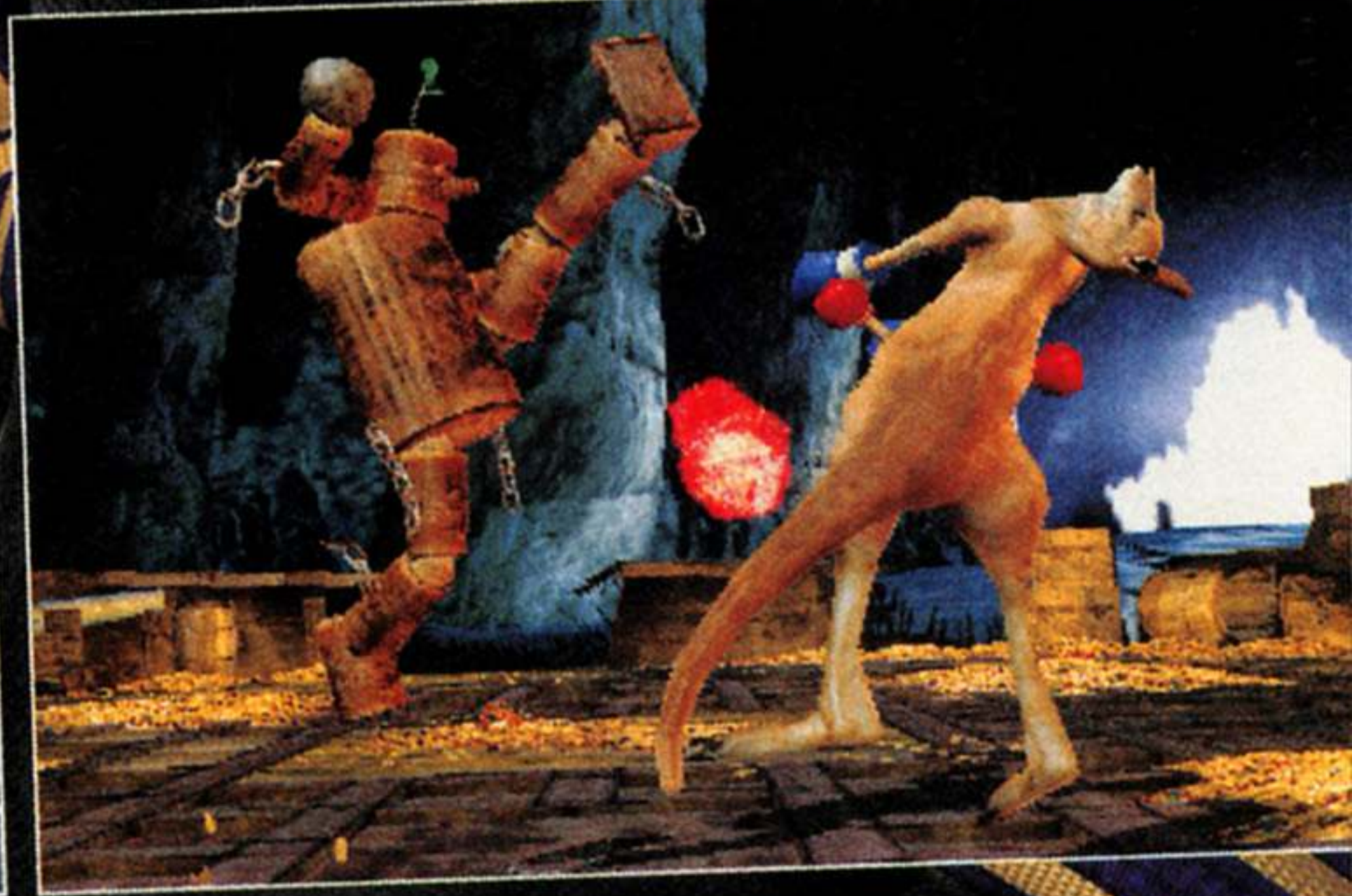


PSP PREVIEW: FIRST LOOK

# TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

Publisher: Namco Bandai  
Developer: Namco  
Release Date: Summer 2006

Ruling the PSP with an iron fist?



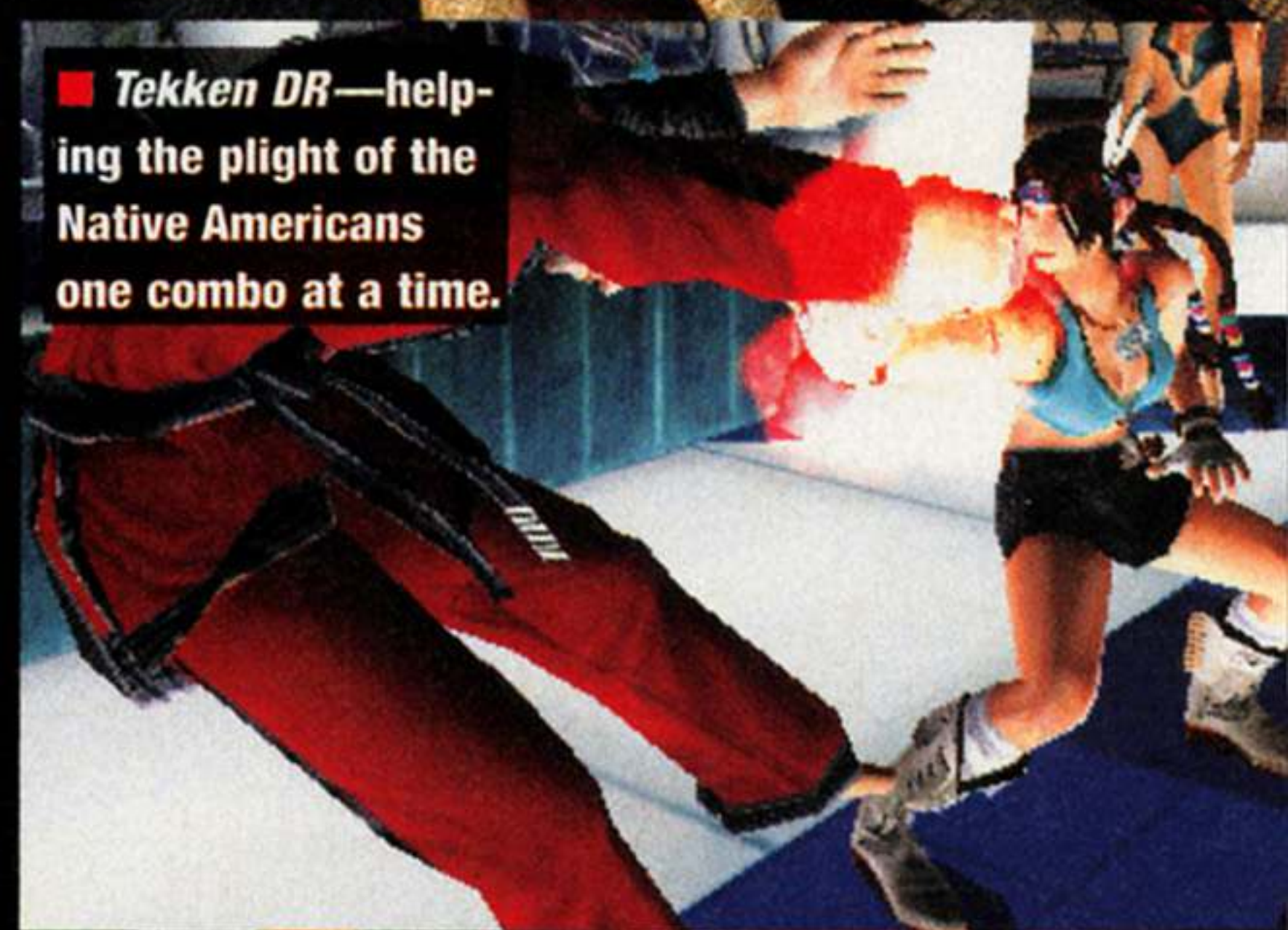
In years past, gamers knew better than to expect top-quality ports of arcade fighters on handheld systems. Spend five minutes with the deplorable *Tekken Advance* (GBA) and you'll see why—cramming Namco's crowd-pleasing 3D fighter onto an underpowered portable transforms it into an ugly, dumbed-down 2D mess that no self-respecting fightin' fan would touch. Progress in this arena has remained slow: we're just now getting decent versions of

older 2D hits like Capcom's *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max* (PSP). Thankfully, Namco hopes to raise the arcade-to-handheld bar with *Tekken: Dark Resurrection*, a direct port of the latest coin-op entry.

All the familiar fighters, stylish stages, and killer combos from *Tekken 5* reappear here. Two new pugilists enter the fray—Dragunov, a creepy undead soldier sporting a Marilyn Manson look, and Lili, the spoiled daughter of an oil tycoon. Also, look for the official return of fan-favorite

characters Eddy Gordy (he's no longer just a different skin for Christie) and Armor King. You'll also get some additional stages (some new, others from classic *Tekken* games) and a heap of new accessories and doodads to customize your fighters with. Of course, the coolest addition to this PSP iteration will be wireless multiplayer combat. Sadly, true online "infrastructure" play won't be supported, but at least you'll be able to beat up a nearby pal using local "ad hoc" play. —Shane Bettenhausen

**Tekken DR**—helping the plight of the Native Americans one combo at a time.



>> ACTIVISION ANNOUNCED *TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM*, A NEW KID-FRIENDLY SKATING ROMP, FOR UNSPECIFIED CONSOLES THIS FALL... >>



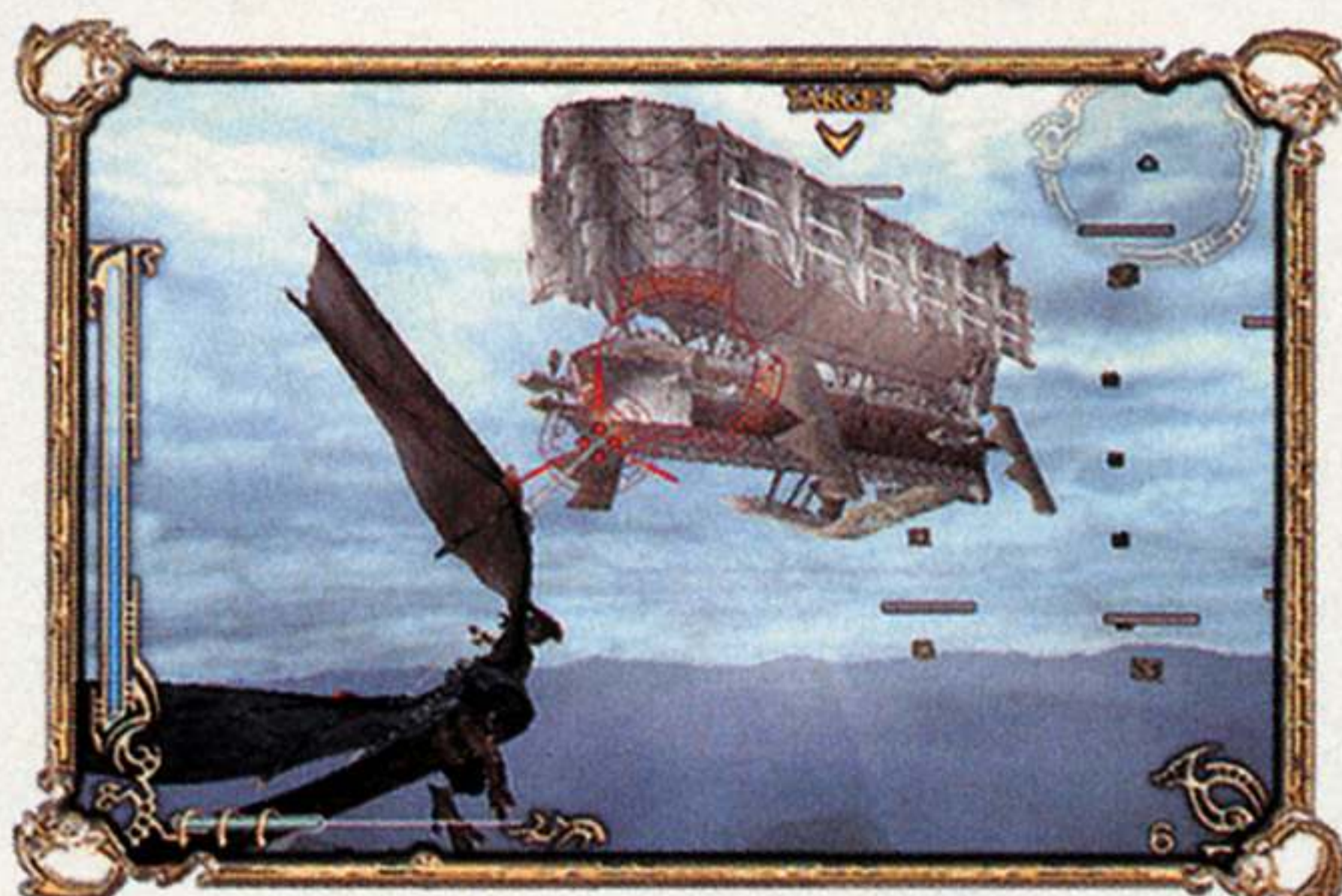
# From the chaos of battle, four heroes rise



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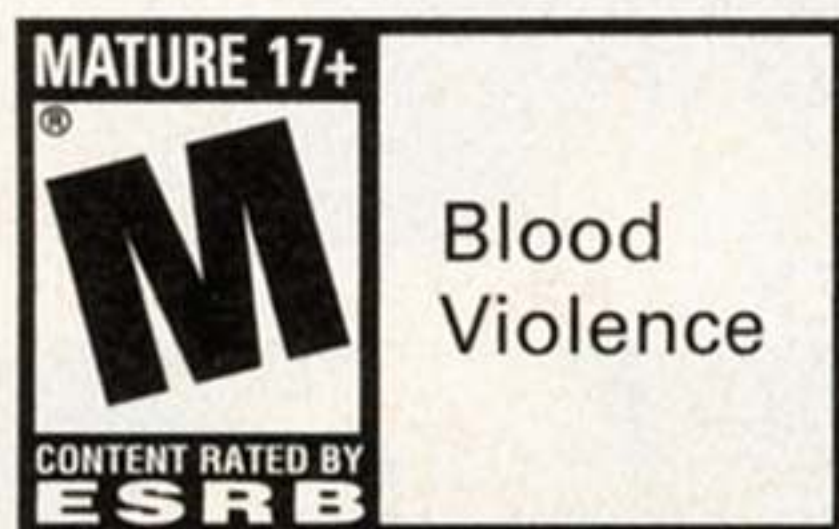
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PLAYSTATION 2 PREVIEW: HANDS-ON

# DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII

Publisher: Square Enix  
Developer: Square Enix  
Release Date: September 2006

Is this **FFVII** spin-off shooting blanks?

**F**irst-person shooters are about as popular in Japan as horse-racing simulators are in America. The genre, for whatever mysterious reason, has just never caught on. But then again, we can remember a time when RPGs weren't popular in America, either—until *Final Fantasy VII* arrived for the PS1, changing everything. *FFVII* Producer Yoshinori Kitase and his team at Square Enix hope to bottle lightning twice, but this time, in an unfamiliar genre. *Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII* is a "TPS," or third-person shooter—a third-person/first-person hybrid designed specifically to show Japanese gamers just what they've been missing out on.

Set three years after the events of *Final Fantasy VII* (and one year after the upcoming CG flick *FFVII: Advent Children*), *Dirge* stars Vincent Valentine, everyone's favorite red-cloaked undead lady-killer, as he uncovers a massive new threat to the planet's health. The story relates only loosely to the original game's; *Dirge's* narrative mostly focuses on new characters, like the shadowy Deep Ground soldiers and the flamboyant supervillains who make up the nigh unpronounceable Tswetts unit.

At first glance, the game looks like a typical third-person action game, but when Vincent takes aim at an enemy, it shifts to a *Resident Evil 4*-style over-the-shoulder camera view. Aiming and firing control like in an FPS; in fact, FPS-happy gamers can permanently set the camera to that perspective. Vincent's weapons are constructed from several parts: stocks (pistol, shotgun, and machine gun), barrels (short, medium, and long), and scopes (sniper, autoaim, and others). Players will need to balance firing speed and power against weight (heavier weapons impede Vincent's movement) and range to find the play style that suits them best. Additional support parts and accessories improve weapon handling, let Vincent cast magic, and so forth. And when his magic meter fills, Vincent can "Limit Break" to transform into a powerful monster that deals incredible damage

by throwing heat-seeking fireballs.

*Dirge of Cerberus* aims to be Japanese gamers' first gun-action game. Unfortunately, our extensive playtime with the final Japanese version made it clear that it was the developer's first shot at the genre, too. The graphics and music definitely impress—what else would you expect from Square?—but the gameplay falters with embarrassing, last-generation problems, like poorly cued level design; an awkward, jerky control scheme; and severe hit-detection issues, especially around doors and ledges. The *Final Fantasy VII* fan service can only carry the game so far. Though it seems unlikely, we hope that Square will address these issues for the more experienced Western shooter market.

*Dirge* also includes an online multiplayer mode tied to Square's PlayOnline service. Don't get too excited, though—getting online requires the optional HDD hard drive (which happens to be incompatible with the current PS2 slim-line design) and \$8 a month to play, so the chances of a massive online turnout seem slim. **✪** —Andrew Vestal



Dirge sure looks pretty...let's hope Square can punch up the gameplay for its U.S. release.



Several new characters debut in *Dirge*, including sexy cyborg Shelk.

>> MLB 2K6 (PS2/XB) WILL BE THE ONLY GAME THAT INCLUDES TEAMS FROM THIS SPRING'S WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC TOURNEY... >>



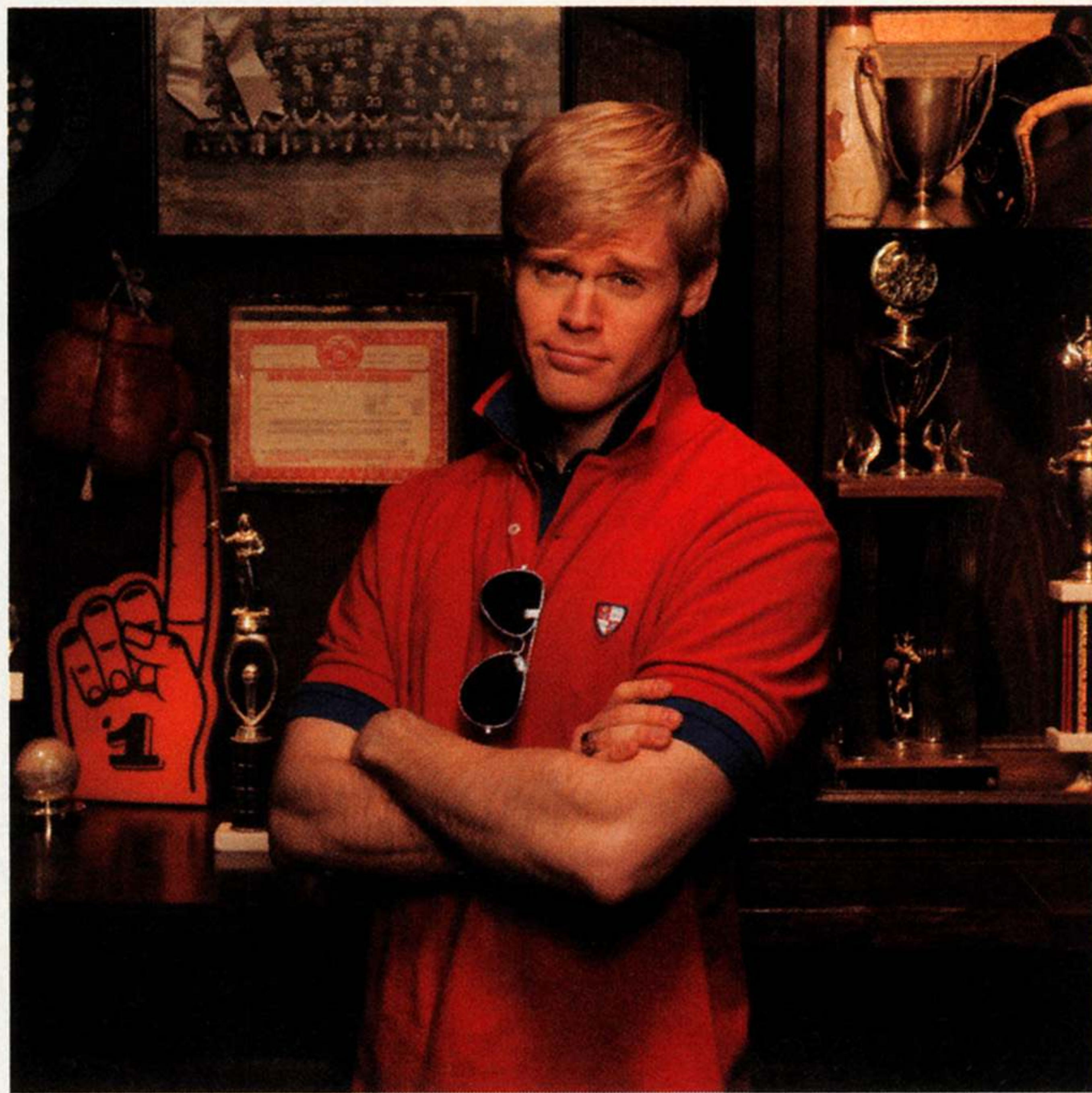


## THE GAMEKILLERS

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# Xbox Live

## Burning Sky



Rep

Gamerscore

Zone



???

Pro

ONLINE

## THIS MONTH

Achieving dreams...and bountiful points

**W**hen we first heard about the Xbox 360's achievement system and Gamerscore, we were skeptical. Didn't high-score tracking die with the arcade era? Man, were we wrong. Not only do we find ourselves checking our Gamerscores against our friends' every time we log on to Microsoft's Xbox Live service, but some *EGM* editors even willingly played through the underwhelming platformer *Kameo: Elements of Power* just to unlock its achievements.

You shouldn't have to go to such extreme measures to boost your score, though. Here are some of the easiest points you can nab (as well as a few tasks totally not worth the effort). So free up a weekend, hit the local Blockbuster, and get ready to earn some cred...cheaply.

### Madden NFL 06



We know some fanboys would die before playing a game intended for sportos, but ask yourself: Is playing one game of *Madden* for up to 580 achievement points worth your hardcore gamer soul? Hell, yes!

You can gain 20 points for getting a first down, 30 for a TD, 30 for completing a game, 100 for winning a franchise game, and 100 for winning the Super Bowl. But why work so hard? Just start a franchise, sim to the Super Bowl, and earn all these points while playing only in the big game. The remaining 300 points will be tougher. It means rushing for 200 yards, throwing for 350, and recording four sacks (100 points per accomplishment). But getting all three during four quarters is definitely doable.

### Gun



This romp through the Wild West offers a steady stream of easy points to make up for its not-quite-next-gen feel (let alone the extra \$10 cost over current-gen versions).

Simply start *Gun* on the easy difficulty and play through the entire game. Each of the 20 story missions unlocks achievements worth between five and 70 points, and you can scurry through them real fast-like. But beware the empty calories that are the side missions; while they do beef up your character's stats, completing all of

them for only 40 points is too much of a time commitment.

### Project Gotham Racing 3

Wait, you mean we get 15 points simply for trying both *Geometry Wars* demos in the game's garage?

### Peter Jackson's King Kong

Showing the big monkey a little love isn't asking much considering the game's quality. Plus, he'll reciprocate that love with some easy achievements. Solve this game tape (it takes roughly eight hours) for a respectable 1,000 points.

### NBA 2K6

Specializing is the key to big points here: You can unlock achievements worth 150 points for scoring 50 points with one player, 250 for pulling off a triple-double, and 250 for nabbing 20 rebounds in a game with one player. Feeling cheap? Tweak the difficulty and quarter length in your favor, and get ready for the easiest 1,000 yet.

### NBA Live 06

Earn some easy points for creating a player (20) and winning an online game (40).

### Call of Duty 2

Wait, boot camp is easy? You'll get a quick 50 points for completing basic training...but it gets tougher after that. —Greg Ford

### Not Worth It: Avoid these demanding milestones when trying to inflate your Gamerscore.



#### Perfect Dark Zero

As if the single-player game weren't revolting enough, the fact that you get just 10 points for finishing the entire game on the easy difficulty (15 for normal) seems like one last giant "F\*\*\* you!" to gamers.

#### Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06

Wake us when you finish 1,000 online matches or achieve the No. 1 ranking in the online mode. You know, 'cause golf was that exciting to begin with.

#### Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved

A score of 1 million in *Geometry Wars* may seem nigh impossible. Now imagine doing it without dying...and for only a measly 30 achievement points.

## WHAT'S UP AT



### EGM.1UP.COM

When something can't fit into print, we give it to our online crew knowing that they'll love the content as if it were their own. This month, read more on *Stuntman 2* (XB360/PS2/PSP) and how it hopes to even impress *The Fall Guy's* Lee Majors.

### CHEATS.1UP.COM

Are you a fan of sin and villainy? Sure! We all are. So stop by here and learn all-new strategies for playing games the wrong way.

### GAMETAB.COM

Got only two minutes and 37 seconds to catch up on the daily videogame happenings? Then head over to our sister site, which organizes the news all nice and neat for busy bees like you.

### Featured Blog: Noah Eichen

This guy helps produce Spike TV's *Fresh Baked Videogames*. The show features machinima, skits made in videogames that star the games' cast of characters. Check out [freshbaked.1UP.com](http://freshbaked.1UP.com) for more on the program.

### Featured Clubs: Uwe Boll Fan Club

Director Uwe Boll used a loophole in German tax laws to finance epically horrible videogame-based movies (*House of the Dead*, *Alone in the Dark*, *BloodRayne*). Meet some of his loyal supporters at [uwebollfan-club.1UP.com](http://uwebollfan-club.1UP.com) and heckle the crap out of them.

### Kingdom Hearts Club

If last issue's *Kingdom Hearts II* cover story has your wee heart all aflutter, imagine your way to [kingdomhearts-club.1UP.com](http://kingdomhearts-club.1UP.com) and chat with other Sora and Mickey Mouse fans.





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**METAL GEAR GOES MULTIPLAYER.**

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**A MULTIPLAYER MISSION**

PLAY AGAINST OTHER AGENTS ONLINE.

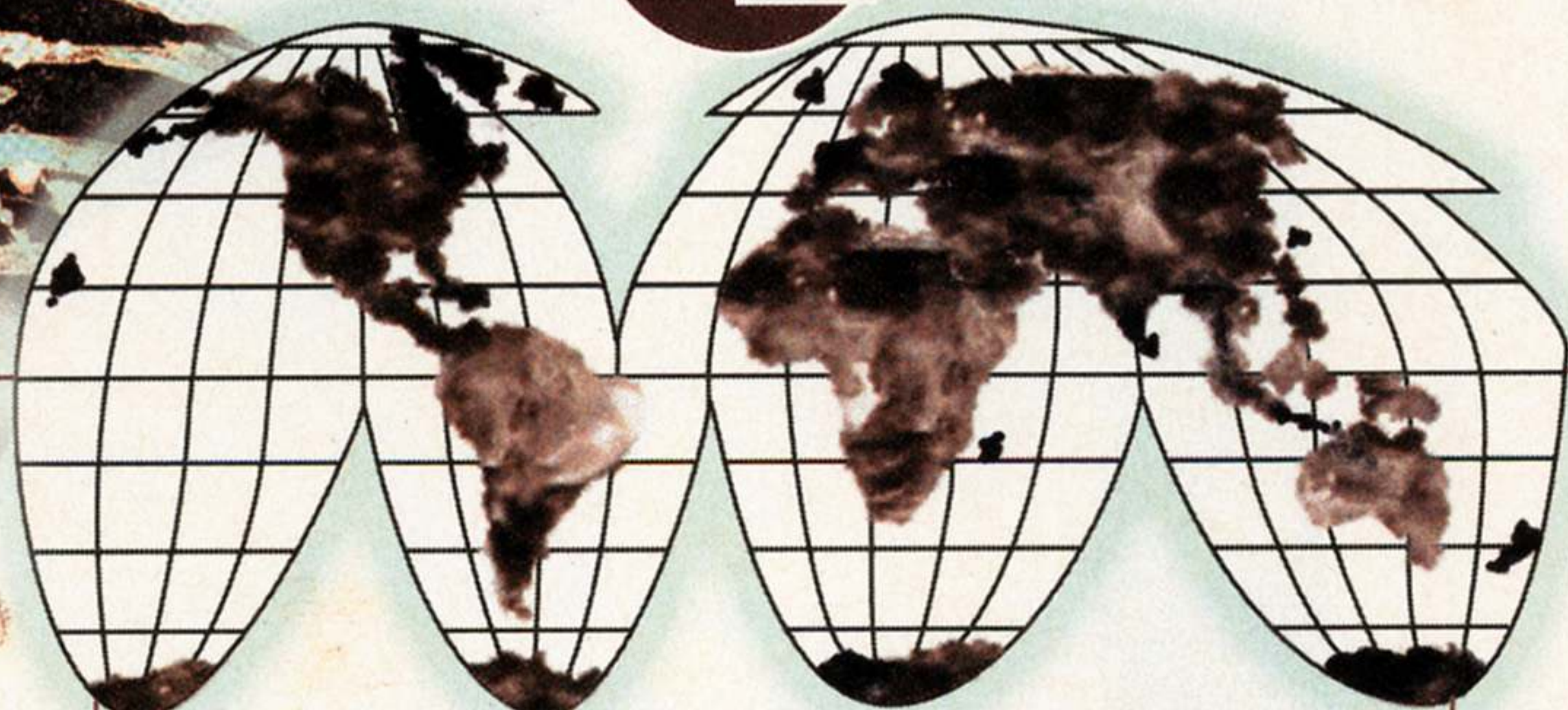
**SNAKE**

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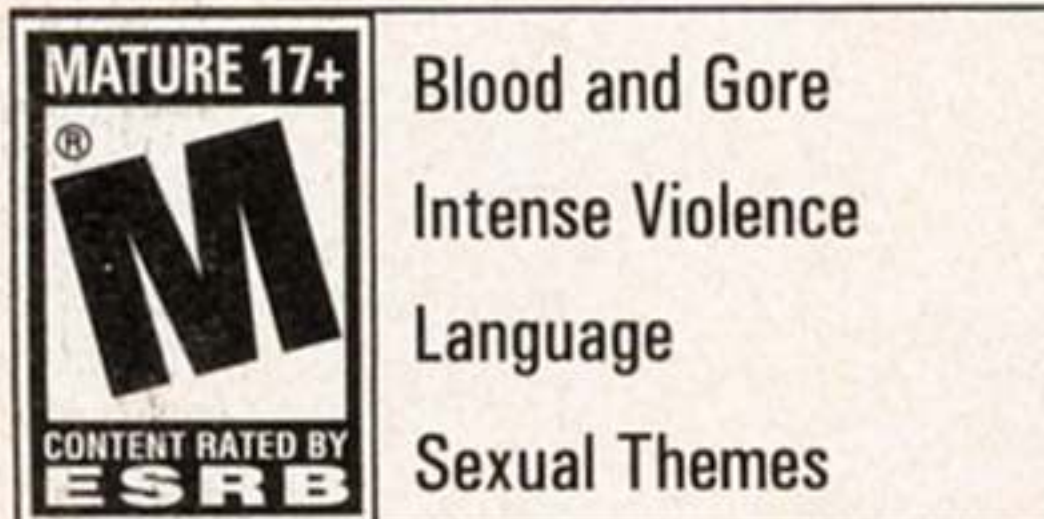
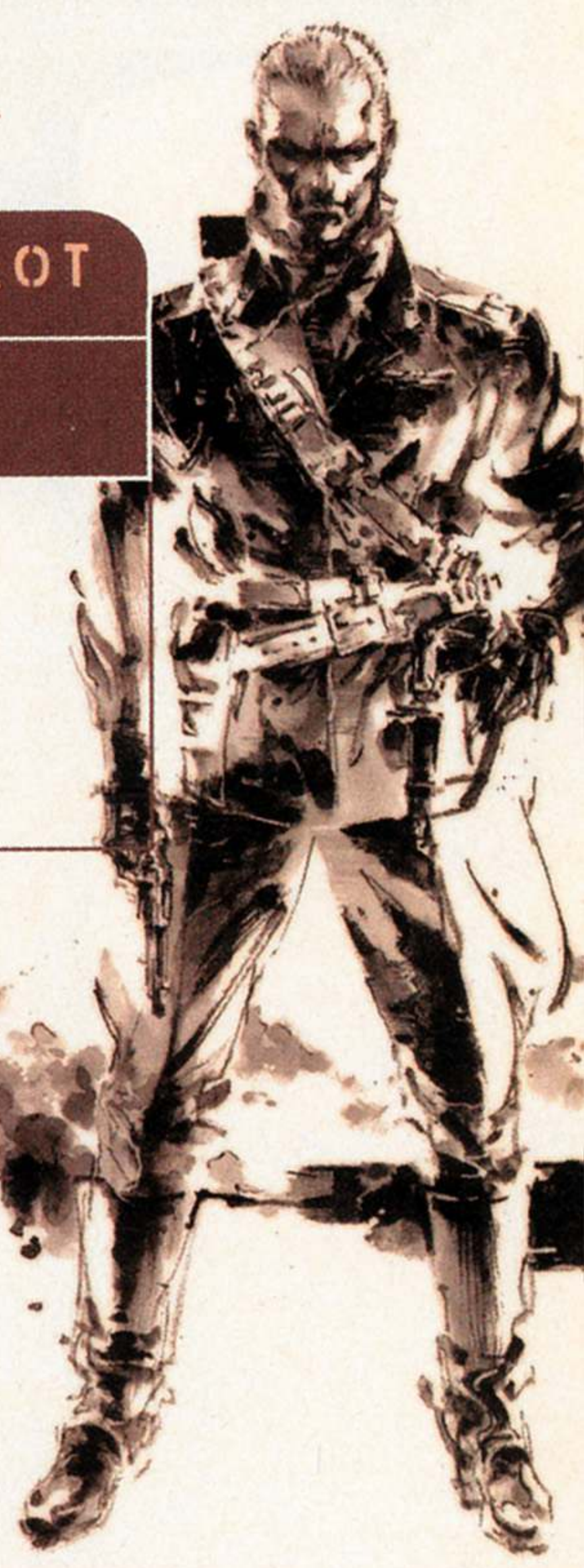
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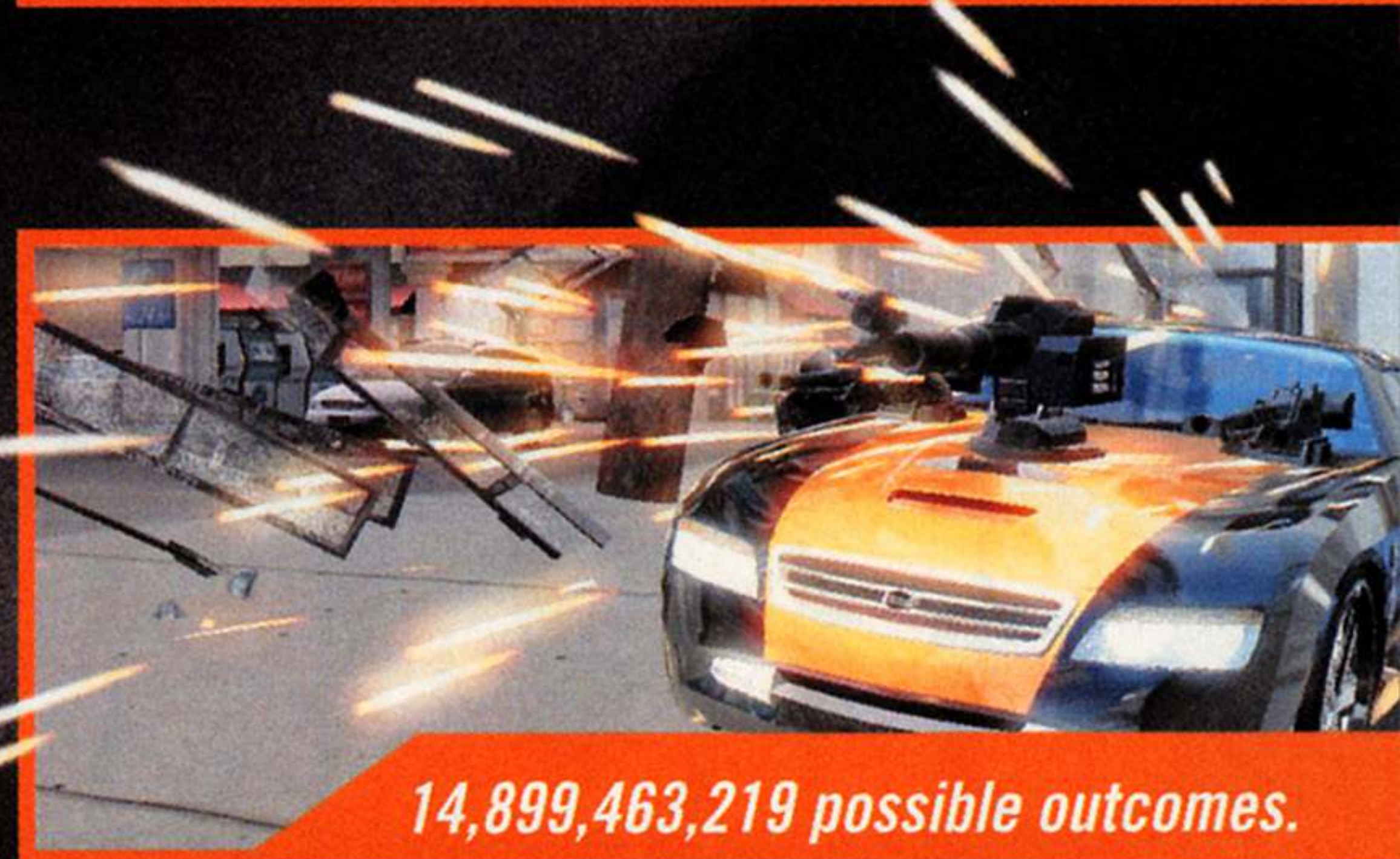
Game experience may change during online play.

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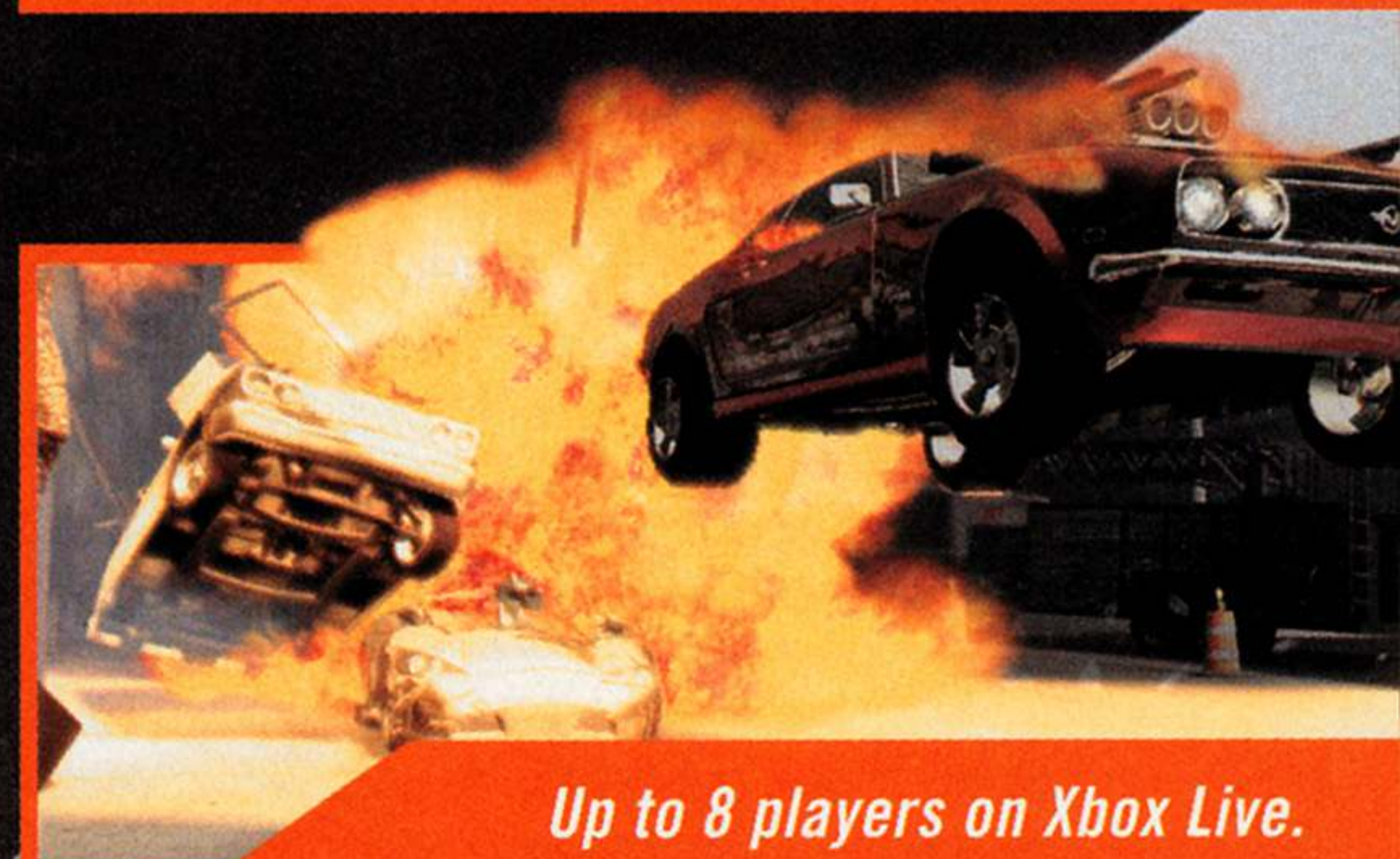




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- Dan "Shoe" Hsu, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

**5 OUT OF 5 STARS (GAME OF THE MONTH)**

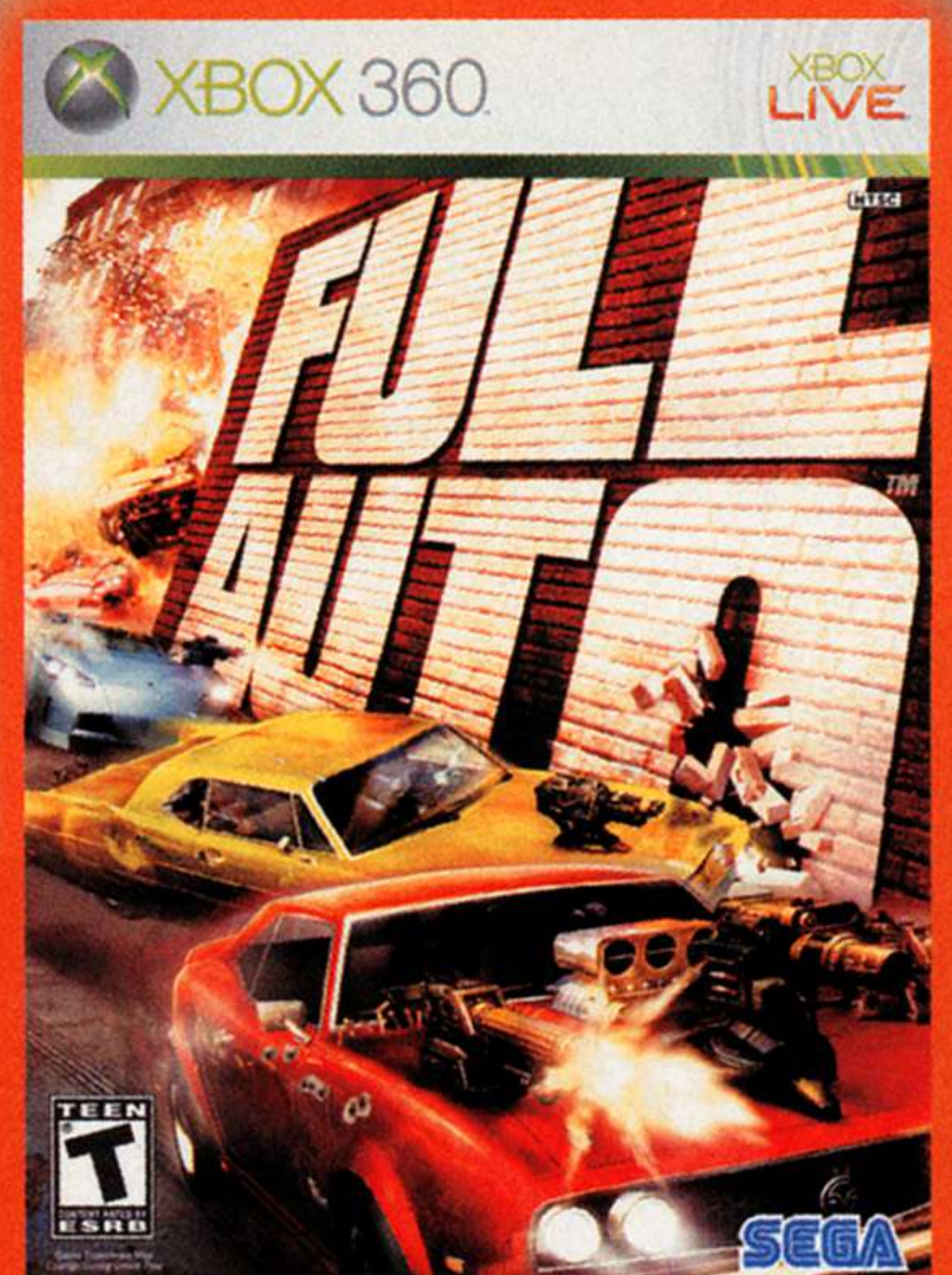
- *Maxim*

**"THE MOST SENSATIONAL CAR COMBAT EVER."**

- *Official Xbox Magazine*

**8.5/8.0/8.0 OUT OF 10 (SILVER AWARD)**

- *Electronic Gaming Monthly*



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PS3/XB360 PREVIEW: FIRST LOOK

# JOHN WOO'S STRANGLEHOLD

Publisher: Midway  
Developer: Midway Chicago  
Release Date: Fall 2006

## We'll take our action *Hard Boiled*, thank you

**P**eter Jackson, James Cameron, Steven Spielberg—these days, it seems like every Hollywood director needs to scratch that videogame itch. And at this rate, it's only a matter of time until that German hack Uwe Boll (*BloodRayne* movie) announces he's also making a game tape (which will undoubtedly cause the moon to turn to blood and signal the end of mankind).

At least John Woo and Midway's collaboration is starting with solid material. *Stranglehold*, coming this fall to the PS3 and the Xbox 360, will act as the interactive sequel to Woo's acclaimed 1992 Hong

Kong action flick, *Hard Boiled*. Inspector "Tequila" Yuen (who sports the looks and voice of actor Chow Yun-Fat) returns, and this investigation brings him to the "stilt city" slums of Hong Kong and windy Chicago. Like in the director's films, it's the stylish stunts and gunplay that'll take center stage here, making Lead Designer Brian Eddy's goal quite clear: "Take [Woo's] vision for what works well in movies and integrate it into the gameplay."

### Tequila's "sixth sense"

No, you don't get all Haley Joel Osment and see dead people. "Inspector Tequila

is famous for his 'sixth sense' of knowing where enemies are and using his environments in unique ways to get the edge over his opponents," says Eddy. Sounds great, but what about the ongoing problem of this stuff looking prettier (and performed easier) on the silver screen than in most action games? That's where *Stranglehold's* simplified control scheme comes into effect. "We want you to concentrate on the smooth-flowing gunplay action and not fumbling with controller buttons," says Eddy. "We clearly highlight what you can interact with in the area, and then a single button press kicks off

a cool interaction stunt, and while doing almost any interaction, you can smoothly continue to aim and fire."

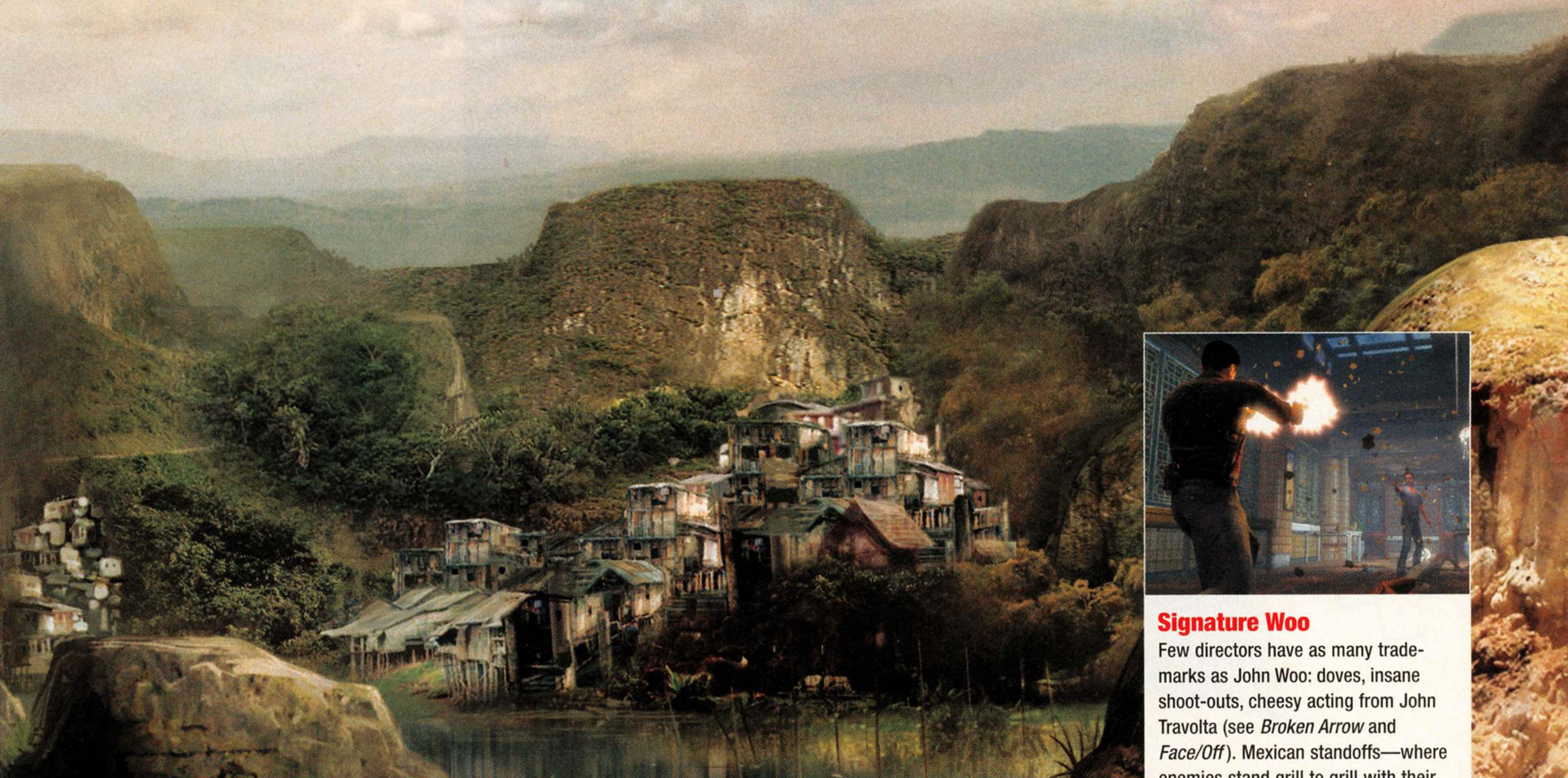
Good thing for the straightforward mechanics, as you're gonna need all the help surviving this game's spectacular one-against-many encounters. One scenario has you on a rooftop surrounded by several shady fellas, and your only escape route is zipping across a power line while firing at the supports of a nearby water tower, which eventually collapses and hurls your now-soaked enemies into the marketplace below. Another, as Eddy describes, "finds you at the top of a stair-

■ Grab the wheel: Midway ain't ready to show it just yet, but *Stranglehold* will also have vehicular combat. This includes on boats, too.



>> ACTIVISION RECENTLY ANNOUNCED A NEW ACTION ROLE-PLAYING GAME CALLED *MARVEL LEGENDS*. AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, THIS ONE





### Signature Woo

Few directors have as many trademarks as John Woo: doves, insane shoot-outs, cheesy acting from John Travolta (see *Broken Arrow* and *Face/Off*). Mexican standoffs—where enemies stand grill to grill with their firearms pointed inches away from each other, waiting to see who'll pull the trigger first—are another Woo staple. These tense situations will also appear in *Stranglehold*. “[Mexican standoffs] are very cinematic moments turned into a minigame,” says Lead Designer Brian Eddy. “Do well in the standoff—like managing to target a lot of enemies so when the standoff is resolved, you have taken out or wounded them—and you move forward with an advantage in battle as you flow right back into action.”

case overlooking a restaurant dining room with a bunch of enemies that you have to get through quickly. Running toward the stairs, you can jump onto the banister and begin ‘surfing it’ down, which triggers Tequila Time and allows you to take them out faster.” The aforementioned Tequila Time is simply *Stranglehold*'s term for slowing down the action à la *Max Payne*...not a sign that the Inspector could really use a stiff drink.

### Trash the place

Even though *Stranglehold*'s environments have the necessary coat of next-gen pol-

ish, they won't stay all nice and shiny for long. Each setting has loads of destructible props, and with that come several curveballs during missions. “This can lead to gameplay where you are moving through buildings by destroying walls, fighting enemies above and below you as roofs and floors collapse from weapon fires and explosions,” says Eddy. “We've made our environments multilevel so that the player is moving and fighting on the horizontal and the vertical.”

And don't worry about tripping over all that extra debris; according to Eddy, those fine engines under the hoods of the

PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 will keep the action running smoothly. “We came up with a system where you can go through rooms—even ones filled with tables and chairs and tons of broken objects—without being slowed down or having your combat abilities interfered with,” he says. “Everything that accumulates on the floor will get pushed aside as you move through the environment so you'll never get hung up on a broken chair or cement pillar piece. This works because all the objects are dynamic and have physics properly applied.” Bragging about your game's garbage? That's next-gen. —Bryan Intihar



■ Internet shoot-outs: Expect the usual online multiplayer options (deathmatch, capture the flag, etc.), plus, as Lead Designer Brian Eddy puts it, “special modes that tie into the game's unique features of interactions, Tequila Time, and Mexican standoffs. We also hope to be able to have downloadable content like new multiplayer maps and characters.”



WILL STAR A HOST OF CHARACTERS FROM THE MARVEL UNIVERSE. SPIDEY AND WOLVERINE ON THE SAME TEAM? SOUNDS SUPER... >>





■ The DS Lite: Shown here not to scale (but it ain't much bigger).

## LET THERE BE **LITE**

### Redesigned DS arriving this May

**T**he DS may have the best crop of portable games these days, but let's face it—this thing wouldn't win any beauty contests (especially when matched up against Sony's slick-looking PSP). Thankfully, Nintendo will give its dual-screen hand-

held a bit more sex appeal in the form of DS Lite. This redesigned model, due in May, will be roughly two-thirds the size and weigh 20 percent less than the current DS (screen sizes will stay the same).

The changes here aren't just cosmetic, either. The DS Lite will feature

four brightness settings for both of the machine's screens. While Nintendo hasn't announced any pricing for the slimmer version, we're hearing it'll cost the same as the standard model (so \$130). Prettier and affordable? We'll take that.

## WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE COMPUTER **GAMING** WORLD

### Crysis



Developer Crytek caused a stir with its 2004 first-person shooter *Far Cry*, a game that—despite mixed critical reaction—caught late-coming genre heavy hitters like *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* with their pants down. *Crysis* marks the studio's sophomore development effort and utilizes an updated version of the trademark CryEngine that powered Crytek's first project. These paltry screenshot thumbnails don't do the game justice: If you weren't told otherwise, you'd be hard-pressed to distinguish the lush jungle and village environments from reality.

You'll get more than just eye candy, though. *Far Cry* fell noticeably short in the story department, and *Crysis* conjures up a spooky extraterrestrial plot that finds U.S. and North Korean armies butting heads after an apparent UFO crash. Crytek says that the player's choices have a heavy impact on story progression, making the game much more interactive than your typical rail shooter. "Tactics" is the watchword as you work to outsmart opposing North Korean operatives who sport A.I. that—from what the developer claims—could put even last year's *F.E.A.R.* to shame. And of course, those mysterious space invaders we mentioned aren't just simple plot devices, either. But as with early seasons of *X-Files*, the men behind the curtain aren't showing us any aliens just yet.

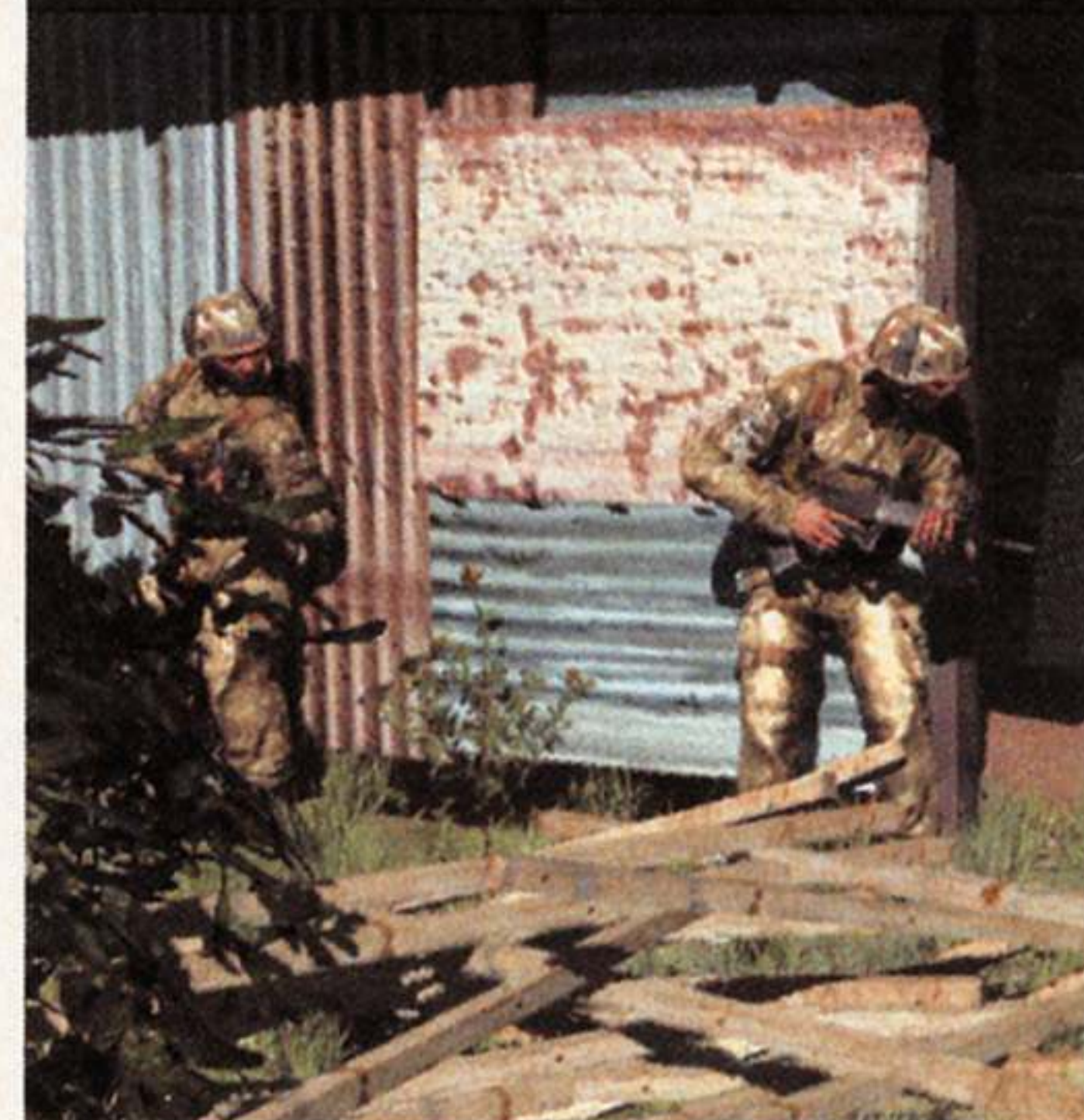
—Ryan Scott,  
*Computer Gaming World*

## KONAMI BRINGS COMIC RELIEF TO PSP



### Metal Gear and Silent Hill comics hit PSP

Konami has devised a new way to use Sony's UMD format—digital comics. These discs augment the traditional art form with animation, sound, and even small bouts of interactivity (think: *Choose Your Own Adventure* books). First up, look for *The Silent Hill Experience* (due in March for about \$20), a collection of comics, music, and cut-scenes from the *SH* games. Later this year, look for *Metal Gear Solid: The Digital Comic*, a stunningly animated rendition of artist Ashley Wood's revered *MGS* graphic novels.





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ARCADE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

# VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Publisher: Sega  
Developer: Sega AM-2  
Release Date: Summer  
2006 (Japan)

## Fighting school is back in session

**S**ega's *Virtua Fighter* stands proudly as the wizened grandpappy of the 3D fighting scene. Sure, it's not most accessible series in town, but hardcore players swear by its lifelike martial arts moves and shockingly deep gameplay. In fact, *EGM* recently ranked the original *VF* as the 20th greatest videogame of its time (see Issue #200 for the full scoop), and every competitor from *Tekken* to *Soul Calibur* owes it an immense debt for busting the genre free from the 2D paradigm established by *Street Fighter II*. Thirteen years later, this series' legacy continues to grow: Japanese arcades are currently abuzz (that's right, people still go to arcades there) following Sega's surprise deployment of an

early test version of *Virtua Fighter 5*, the hotly anticipated sequel to 2001's monumentally popular (in Japan, at least) *VF4*. This isn't merely a glorified expansion pack, à la *VF4: Evolution*—instead, *VF5* showcases a stunning visual upgrade, tweaked gameplay, and two new characters. We recently sat down with *VF5* Producer Hiroshi Kataoka to talk shop about his latest creation. Sadly, he wouldn't answer one of our biggest questions—when will we see *VF5* on a home console? In *EGM* #200 we jumped the gun by announcing a PlayStation 3 port of *VF5*. Although we stand by our source, Sega of America has yet to officially confirm this title. —Ali Almaci, Heidi Kemps, and Shane Bettenhausen

**“With *VF*, we're trying to create a competitive experience, like that of a sport....”** —*VF5* Producer Hiroshi Kataoka

**EGM: *VF5* debuts two new characters, El Blaze and Eileen. What can you tell us about these fighters?**

**Hiroshi Kataoka:** El Blaze is a Mexican luchador, and he reflects the current tastes of the *VF5* staff. As you know, Wolf is a very large, heavy wrestler character. His skills are slower and more damaging. We wanted a smaller, more technical wrestler—the opposite of Wolf. In the junior heavyweight wrestling class, El Blaze has no equal. In spite of this, he has remained envious of Wolf, who ranks one class above him. He believes that only by defeating Wolf will he be able to erase the spectre of self-doubt around him.

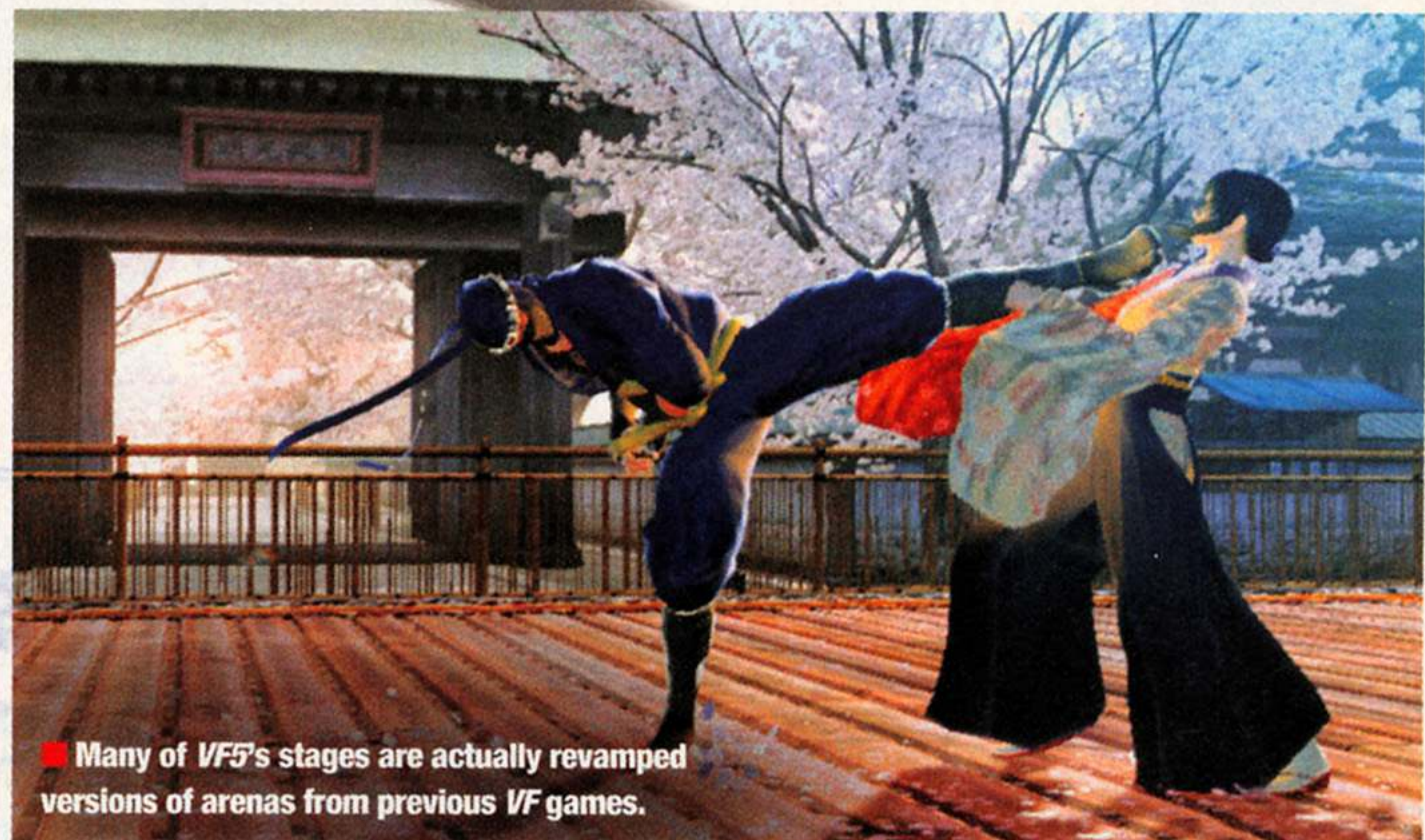
When we were designing the second new character, we looked back at the *VF4* games and realized that only one of the four new fighters—Vanessa—was female. We figured that we need another lady in the roster. That's how Eileen was born. Eileen is a Chinese girl who fights with the Kou-ken monkey fist style. She was inspired to join the tournament after attending a Chinese opera in which Pai was performing. [Pai's] grace and finesse impressed Eileen greatly, and she immediately felt a desire to meet [Pai] in person.

[Eileen] is such a cute-looking fighter, monkeying around her opponent with fancy footwork. She's really unique, and a good choice for beginners. I hope those people enjoy fighting with her.

**EGM: Several well-known fighting-game series, such as *Soul Calibur* and *Dead or Alive*, have become console exclusive. Why do you think this is happening? Do you think there will ever be a console-exclusive *VF* release?**

**HK:** There are big differences between fighting games designed for the arcade and those designed for the home. Arcade games need to have finely tuned balance between the character strengths—you can't have one character stronger than the others. This is very difficult to accomplish and presents a lot of restrictions and challenges for the developers. Console games, though, focus more on immediate enjoyability than [on] balance. *Soul Calibur* and *Dead or Alive* fall into this category. They don't have the restrictions of an arcade game, so they can present an entertainment experience better suited for the home market. With *Virtua Fighter*, we're trying to create a competitive experience, like that of a sport. There's just no way that could become the standard for the home market.

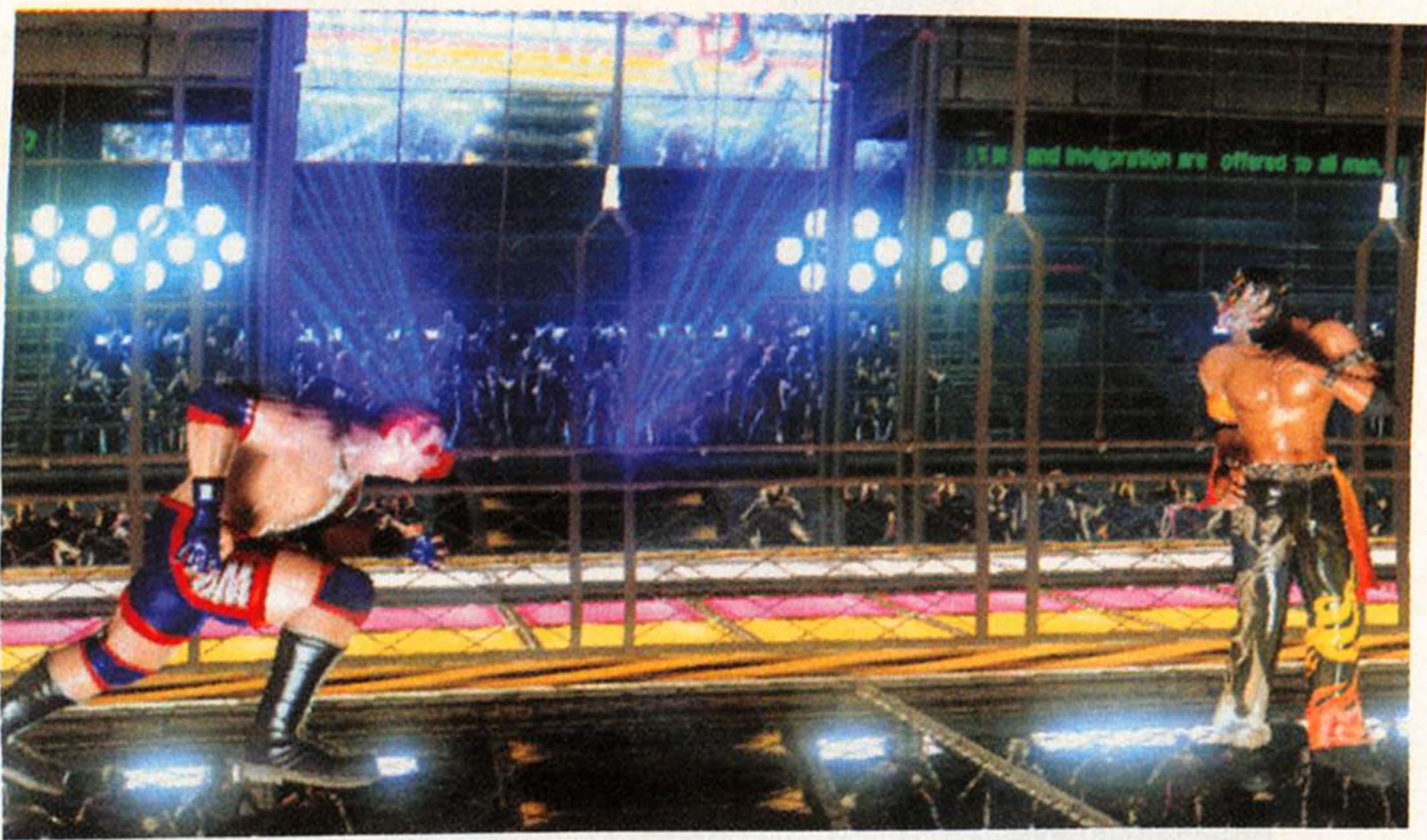
**EGM: It's been mentioned that *VF5* will offer much more to players in the way of character customization. Other games have built upon the precedent *VF4* established—in**



Many of *VF5*'s stages are actually revamped versions of arenas from previous *VF* games.

>> *VF5* ARCADE UNITS FEATURE A COOL INNOVATION: A SECOND MONITOR THAT OFFERS COMMENTARY ON THE MATCH, SHOWS UPCOMING





■ Sick of *DOA*'s doe-eyed anime Realdolls? *VF5* serves up a double dose of greasy grappler dudes.



fact, *Soul Calibur III* has a full-fledged character creation mode. Do you think something like this would work in the context of *Virtua Fighter*?

**HK:** *Soul Calibur*'s system isn't really the same as what's in *VF*. It's different in that you build a character from scratch. The concept in *VF* is to take an existing character, like Jacky, and give him an item to make his appearance a little bit different and distinct. I think part of the fun is collecting and shopping for the items, as well. So I'm not really concerned about competing with them on that front.

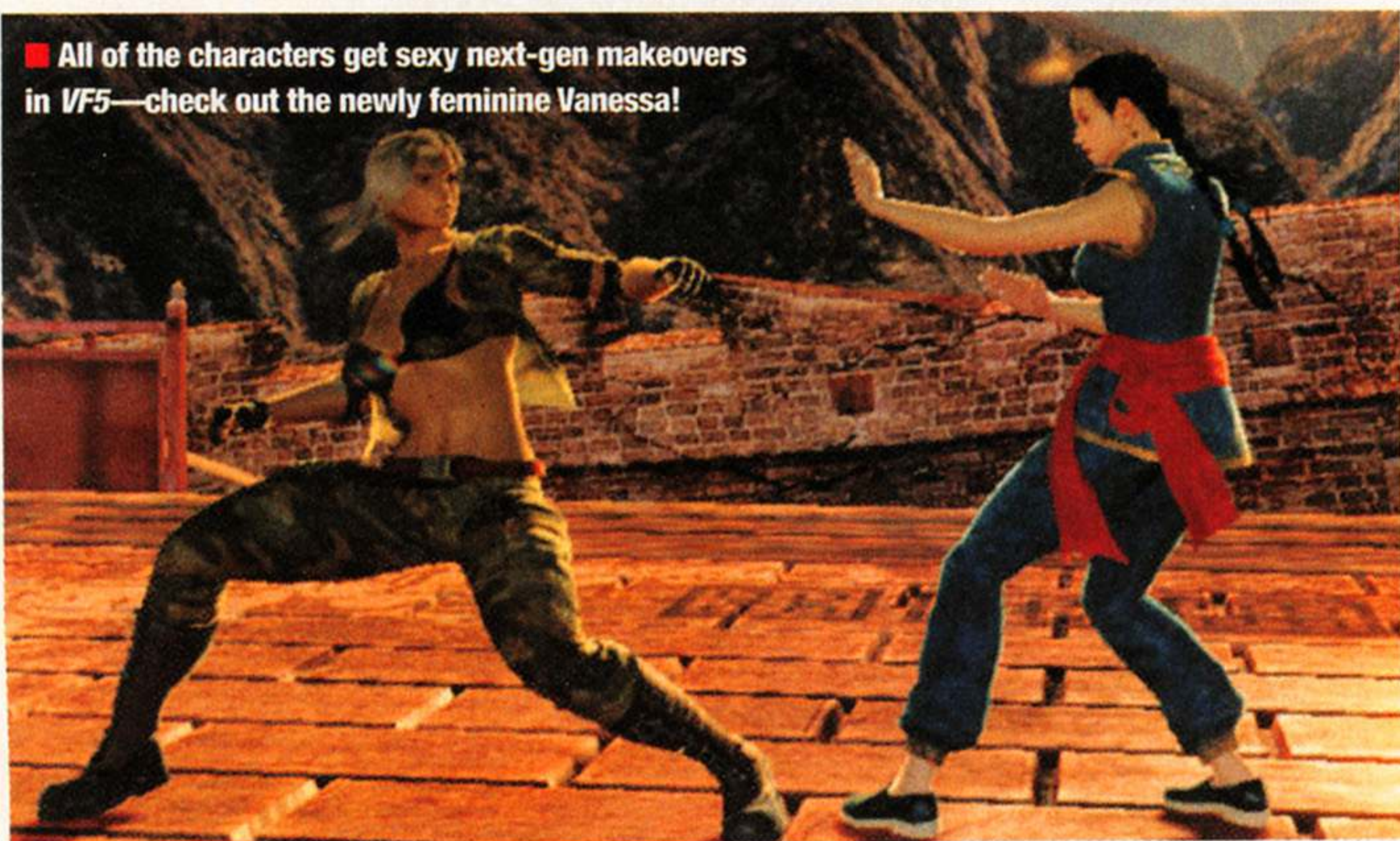
**EGM:** There's a lot of controversy among Western *VF* fans about the lack of online play capabilities in the games. What is it specifically about *VF* that you think doesn't work well in an online context?

**HK:** The biggest problem is the time lag when executing techniques. *VF* runs at a very fast 60 frames per second, and every frame is important. We could make adjustments to eliminate lag, but if we did that, there would be no difference in the timing of the various moves, and the competitive aspect of the game would be ruined. We ran some tests in-house with

simulated lag, but it wound up feeling like a completely different game! We've come to the conclusion that if we ever wanted to do an online fighting game, it would need to be called something besides *Virtua Fighter*. I'm sure the players would feel the same way.

**EGM:** While Japanese arcades are thriving, arcades in the West are in a state of severe decline. What do you think has caused this? What sort of differences are there between Japanese game centers and Western arcades? Do you think there is anything that can be done?

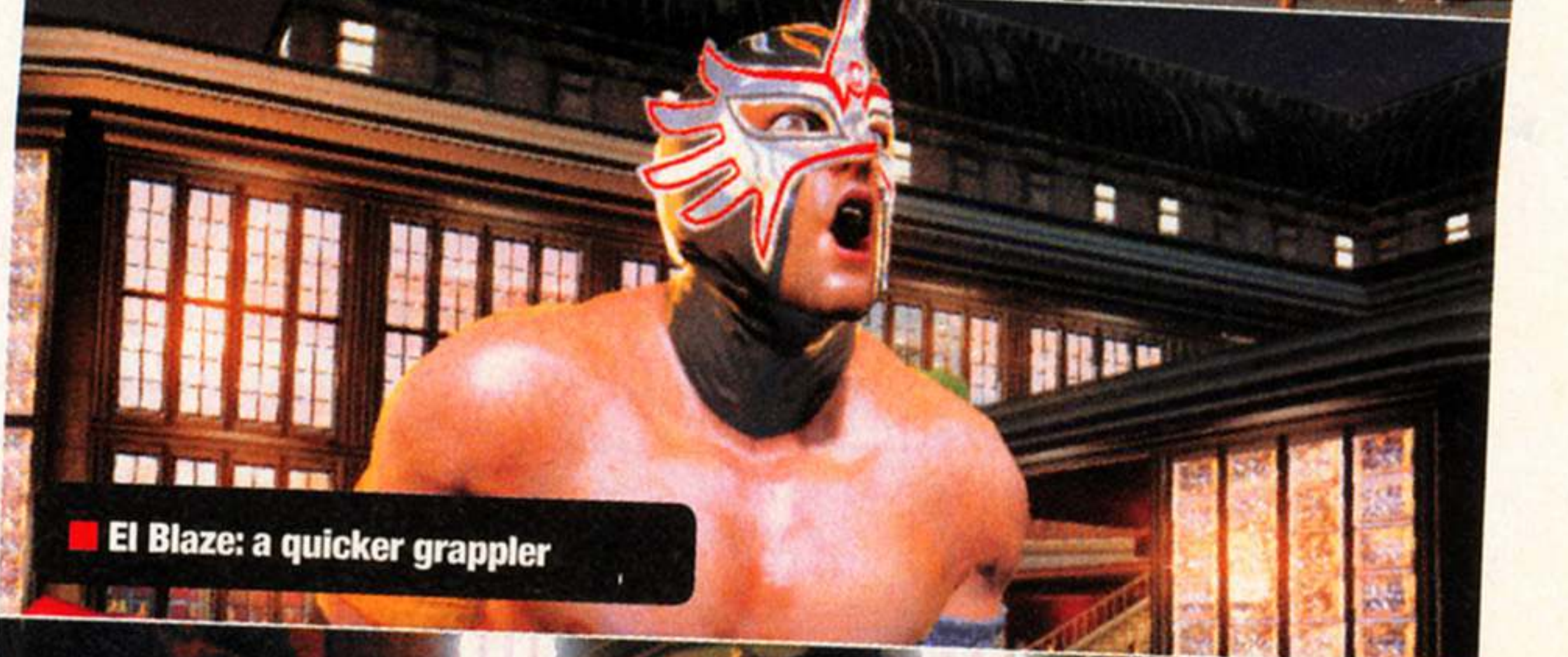
**HK:** Game centers in Japan are a place you go on an impulse—you stop in to play on the way home from school or work to kill some time. Young adults and salarymen go there thinking, "Instead of playing at home by myself, I'll play against others." In the Western market, you have to get motivated and plan to go to an arcade. Most people in the West, it seems, would rather just stay home and play on PCs or consoles. The conclusion I came to, after examining these markets, is that Western arcades should have an atmosphere where a family can have fun. Sega should ➤



■ All of the characters get sexy next-gen makeovers in *VF5*—check out the newly feminine Vanessa!



■ Akira: choice of the *VF* hardcore



■ El Blaze: a quicker grappler



■ Brad: bare-knuckle boxer



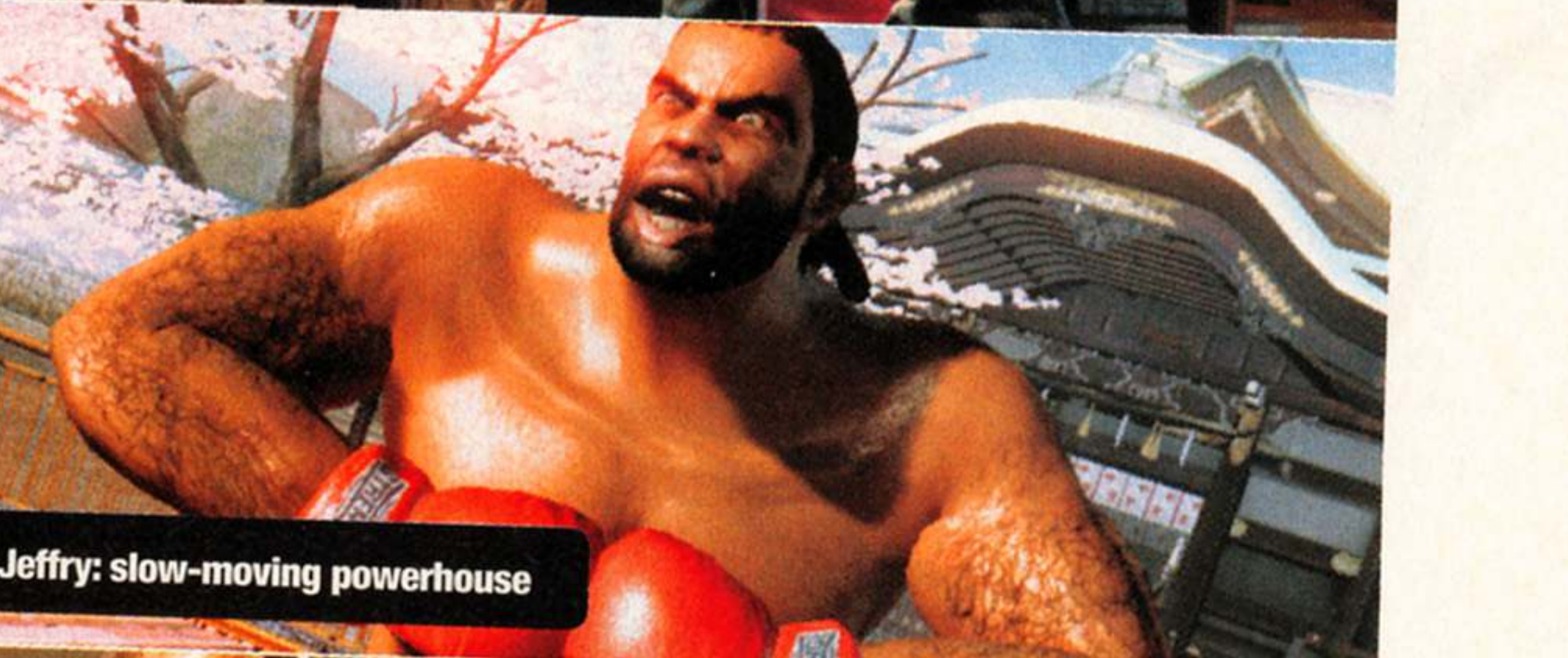
■ Eileen: newbie-friendly cutie



■ Goh: defense-minded judo creep



■ Jacky: well-rounded brawler



■ Jeffrey: slow-moving powerhouse



■ Kage: dangerously agile ninja



# VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 (CONT.)

➤ work toward creating those outlets and producing more family-oriented games to serve them.

**EGM:** What do you think of the upcoming generation of new console systems? How about the portable consoles, DS and PSP?

**HK:** Actually, rumors were going around a while back that the Lindbergh hardware, the new arcade board that *VF5* runs on, was based on the Xbox 360, but those were false. One impression I have is that making software for the PS3 and Xbox 360 will be much more difficult. Part of the problem is the variety of televisions currently in peoples' homes. Some people have smaller normal TVs, and some have newer 50-inch widescreen HDTVs. You have to take that sort of thing into account. Getting the software to work well with those many different types of monitors is quite tough.

As for the portables, I'm a big fan of them, personally. The networking aspect of things like the DS is an interesting new technology in that medium, though it's been around in home systems for a while.

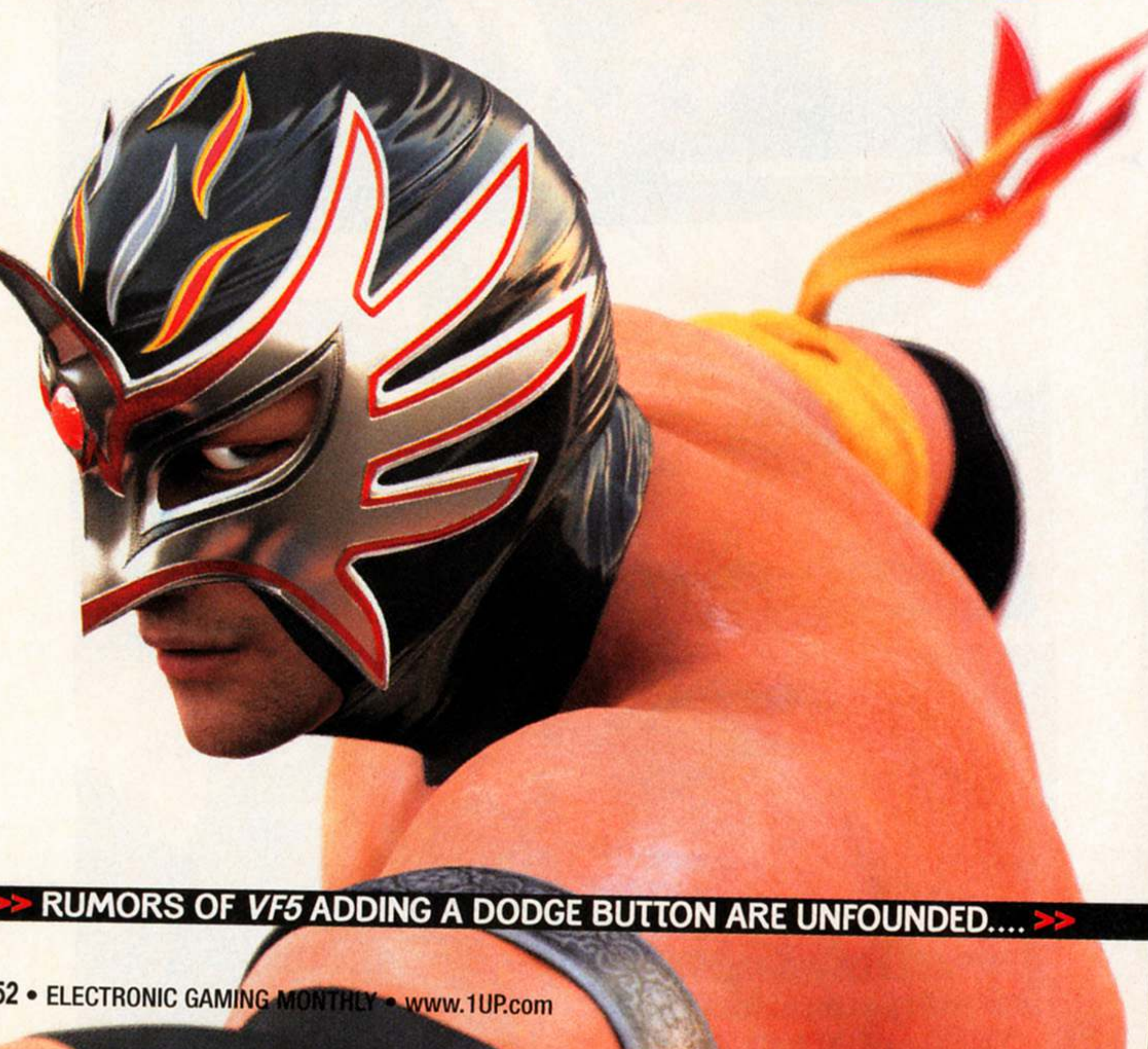
**EGM:** The Nintendo Revolution has a unique controller, unlike anything we've seen before. What do you think of it? Have you given any thought to making arcade games based around similar technology and then porting them to that platform?

**HK:** Arcade games always use the peripheral that best suits the game. The Revolution controller is certainly an interesting new option we now have available. If the controller suits a particular game concept we have, we just might use it for an arcade title.

As for console ports, in recent times it has become more difficult to do home conversions of light-gun games due to the wide variety of TVs in use by consumers. While the arcade games use specialized, high-resolution screens, you don't have that sort of standardization in the consumer market. So I'm personally hoping the Revolution's controller will allow us to do more ports of our gun games [neither *Virtua Cop 3* nor *House of the Dead 4* has received a console port yet].



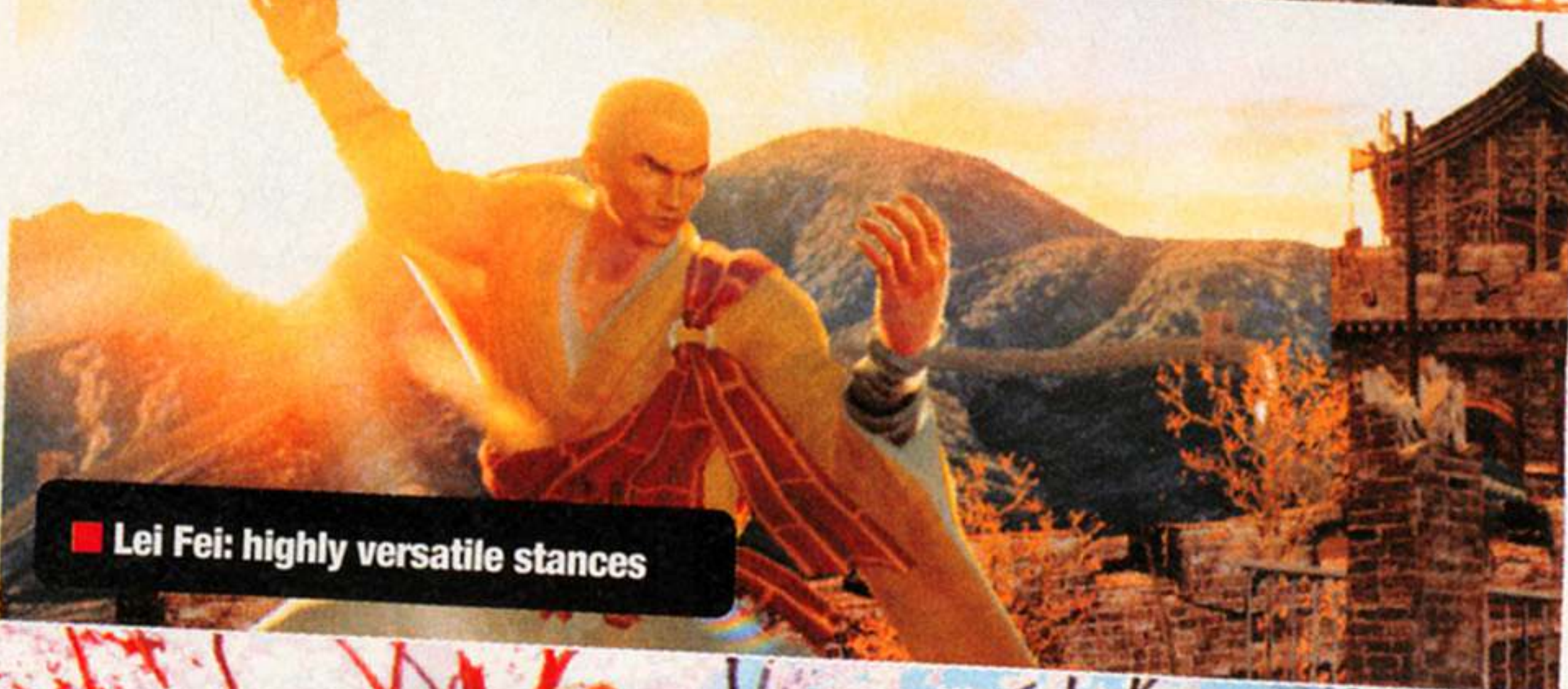
■ Nope, we didn't forget about Aoi, the demure aikido champ with bone-snapping reversals.



>> RUMORS OF VF5 ADDING A DODGE BUTTON ARE UNFOUNDED... >>



■ Lau: insanely fast for his age



■ Lei Fei: highly versatile stances



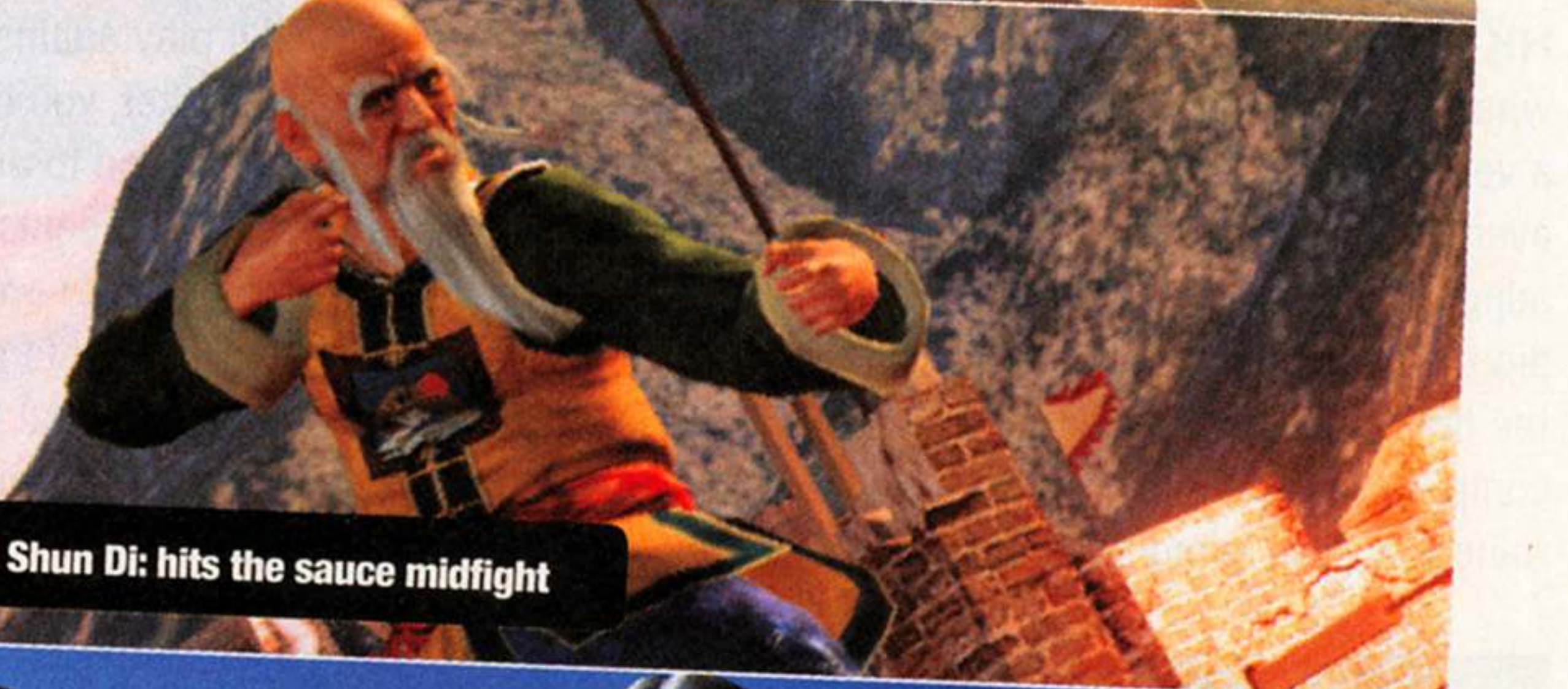
■ Lion: deadly precision and range



■ Pai: speediest punches ever



■ Sarah: long, lusty legs inflict pain



■ Shun Di: hits the sauce midfight



■ Vanessa: delivers crippling throws



■ Wolf: pure power in the ring



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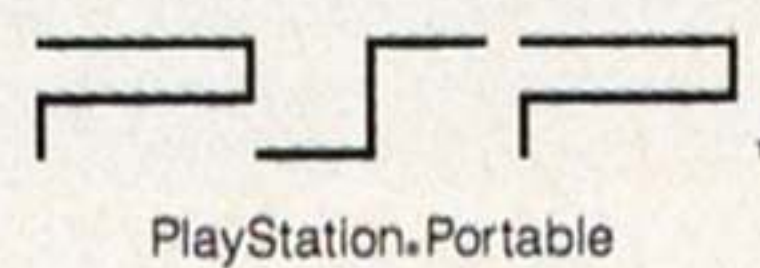
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Photograph by Robinson/SFMS/STTS

# WE GOT SERVED

It's a luxury hotel for gamers—complete with a PSP-serving butler. EGM lives the good life for a day

I'm lounging poolside at the Viceroy Hotel, sipping bourbon on the rocks while the sun sets on Santa Monica, CA. From behind the screen of a hotel-loaned PlayStation Portable, I scope out the throng of Hollywood hipsters squeezed onto couches in canvas-covered bungalows. My eyes wander from *Wipeout Fusion* to a girl sitting in the bungalow next to me. She's swirling a lemon slice around an empty cocktail glass and staring into space. I'm a married man, but for professional, journalistic purposes, I need to ask her a question: "So, uh...do you like videogames?" She looks at me like I've spoken Esperanto and resumes the conversation she wasn't having with a soap-opera extra sitting opposite.

You wouldn't know it by the crowd, the designer décor, or the ocean-view rooms, but the Viceroy is a gamer's hotel. Having struck a deal with Sony, it doles out PSPs and PlayStation 2s, games, and UMD movies along with its rooms, which start at

around \$350 a night. Certainly not cheap, but for those with deep pockets, the Viceroy offers one amenity no other hotel in the world can match: a game butler.

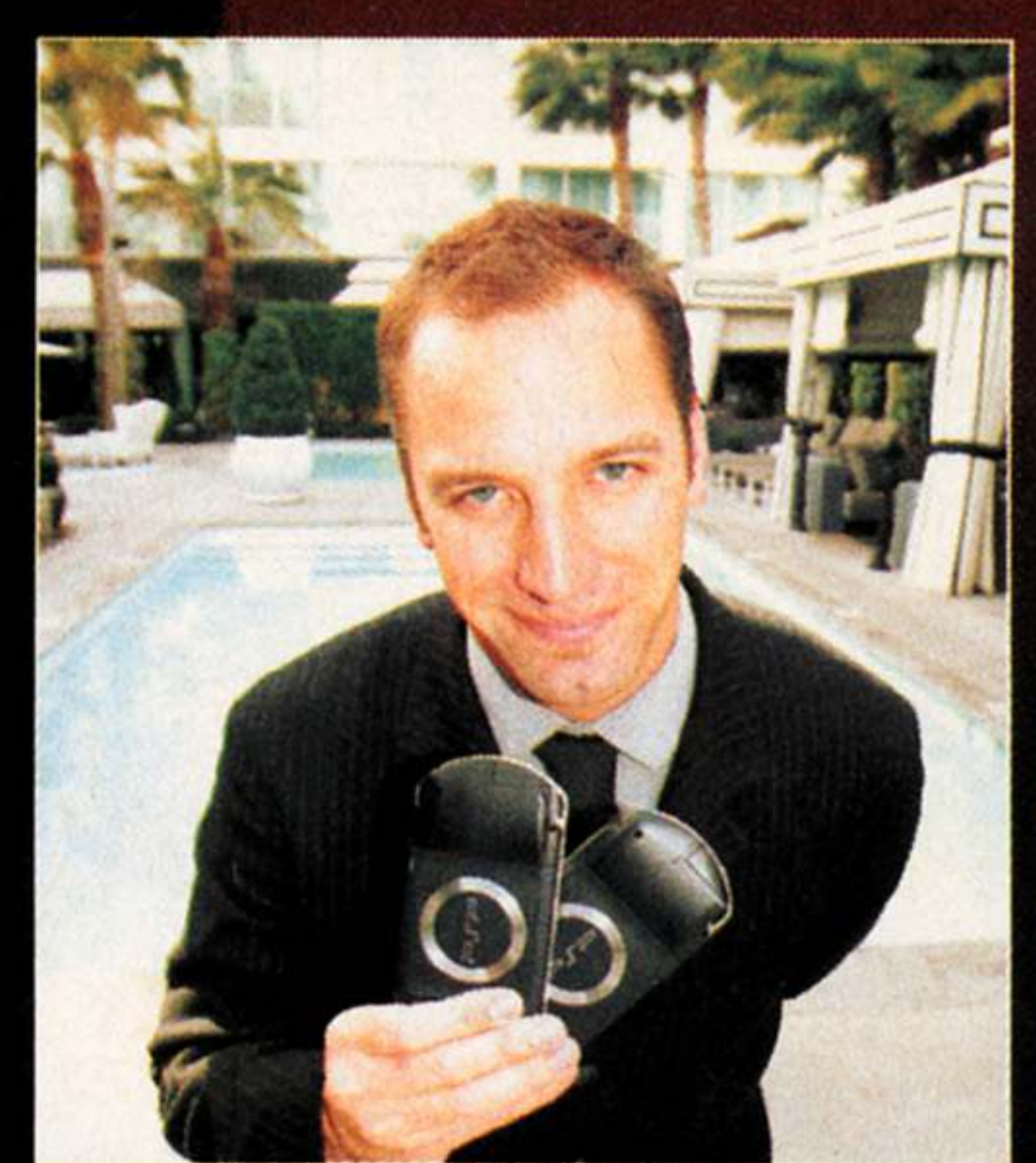
His name is Kelly Conway. Dapper in a slate-gray suit, he is a concierge with an unusual specialty: helping patrons with all things interactive. "I play quite a bit with the guests," says Conway, kindly refilling my highball glass. "I'll guide them through the first stages and help them if they have any problems. And when it's wanted, I'll definitely go mano a mano." Conway describes an average Saturday at the hotel like this: Mom and Dad drink mojitos by the pool as little Jimmy plays NBA basketball against the concierge.

And sometimes he'll see the power of videogames firsthand—like when a British couple came for their honeymoon around the same time the hotel got its first shipment of PSPs. "It was supposed to be a time for romance and hand-holding and all of that," says Conway, "but they played a bit of PSP soccer, and the husband was

like, 'All right, I forbid you to let us play this anymore.' He wanted to take a walk down to the beach. And the wife was all, 'You know what? I think I'm too tired. I'll just stay here.' As soon he walked out the door, she ran down, got the PSP and the soccer game, and bolted for the outside. She could not get enough."

When guests can't get enough of the games on hand, the game butler is there for shopping runs. "This family was flying back to Jerusalem the next day," says Conway. "It was 9:30 at night and the dad was like, 'I'm leaving at 6 in the morning and I need you to buy two PSPs and two of every game.' I found a local place, got a hold of the owner, and told him I'd pay him an extra \$100 if he came in and opened the [store]."

Conway's a pro at procurement. But could he score a still-hard-to-find Xbox 360 if a guest demanded one? "It's funny how tracking things down changes when you have the means," he says. "I'm sure I'd be able to find a 360 somewhere.



Photograph by Kate Romero

Conway has pals at Microsoft and Nintendo, where he used to sneak in and try games.

That's my job, to help people find things when they can't."

And so I ask Conway to find me a copy of *God of War*. Retreating to the pillowy king-size bed in my room, I order room service and luxuriate in gaming decadence. Life is good. —Robert Ashley

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MUCH, HOW WILL YOU CHANGE?





XBOX 360 PREVIEW: SHOW & TELL

# X-MEN 3

Publisher: Activision  
Developer: Z-Axis  
Release Date: May 2006

## Actually, make that X-Men 2.5

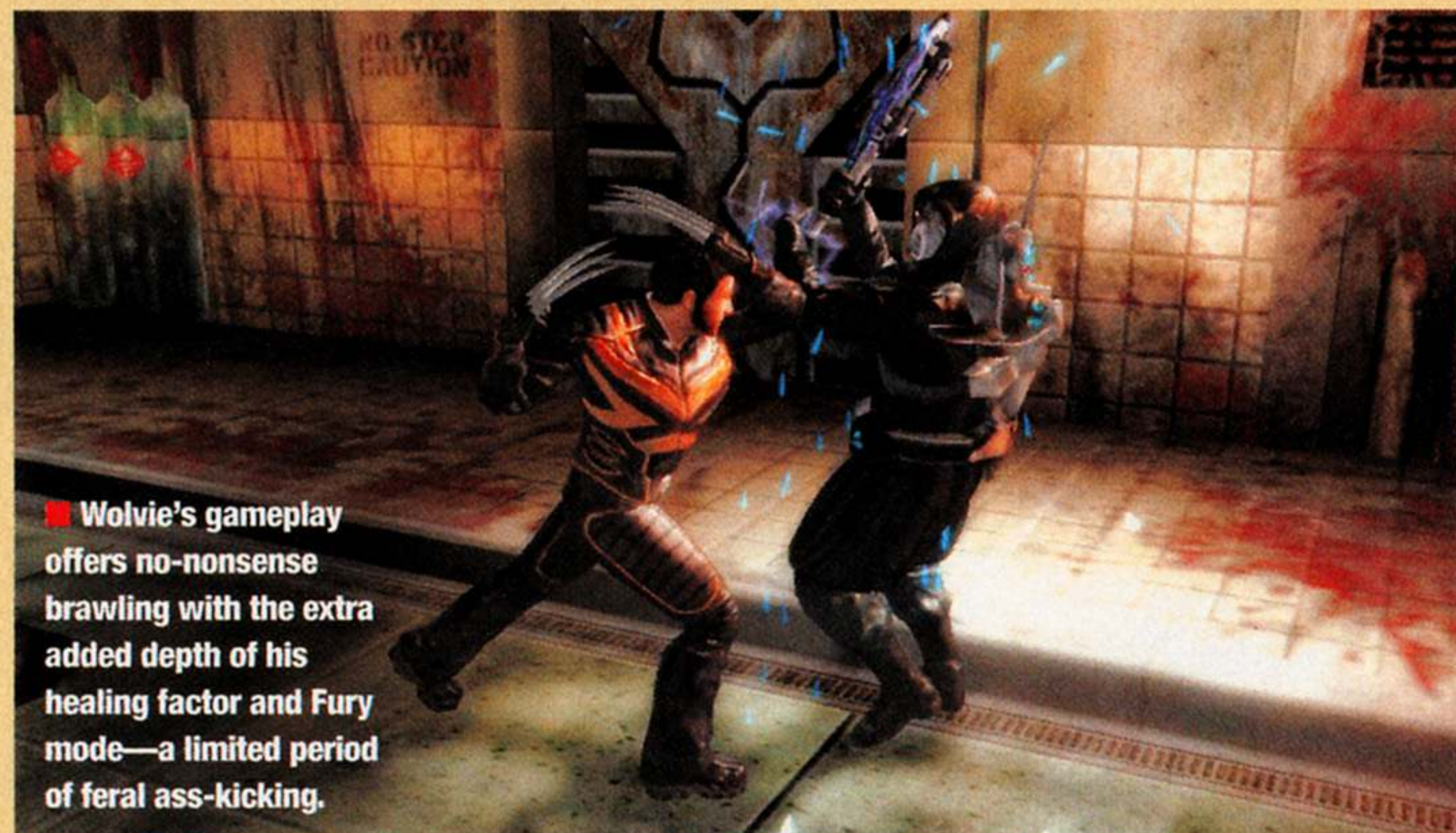
**O**ne week before *X-Men: The Last Stand*—the third (and reportedly final) big-screen adaptation of Marvel's hit comic series—lands in theaters, true believers will want to get up to speed with Activision's *X-Men 3* (working title), an action game starring three fan-favorite X-Men that fills in the gaps between the second and third films. Like any unstoppable marketing juggernaut, it'll hit just about every console known to mankind (PS2, XB, GC, GBA, DS), but the swankiest version graces the Xbox 360. *X-Men 3* Producer Scott Bandy offers us a guided tour of the mutants' debut next-gen performance. —Shane Bettenhausen



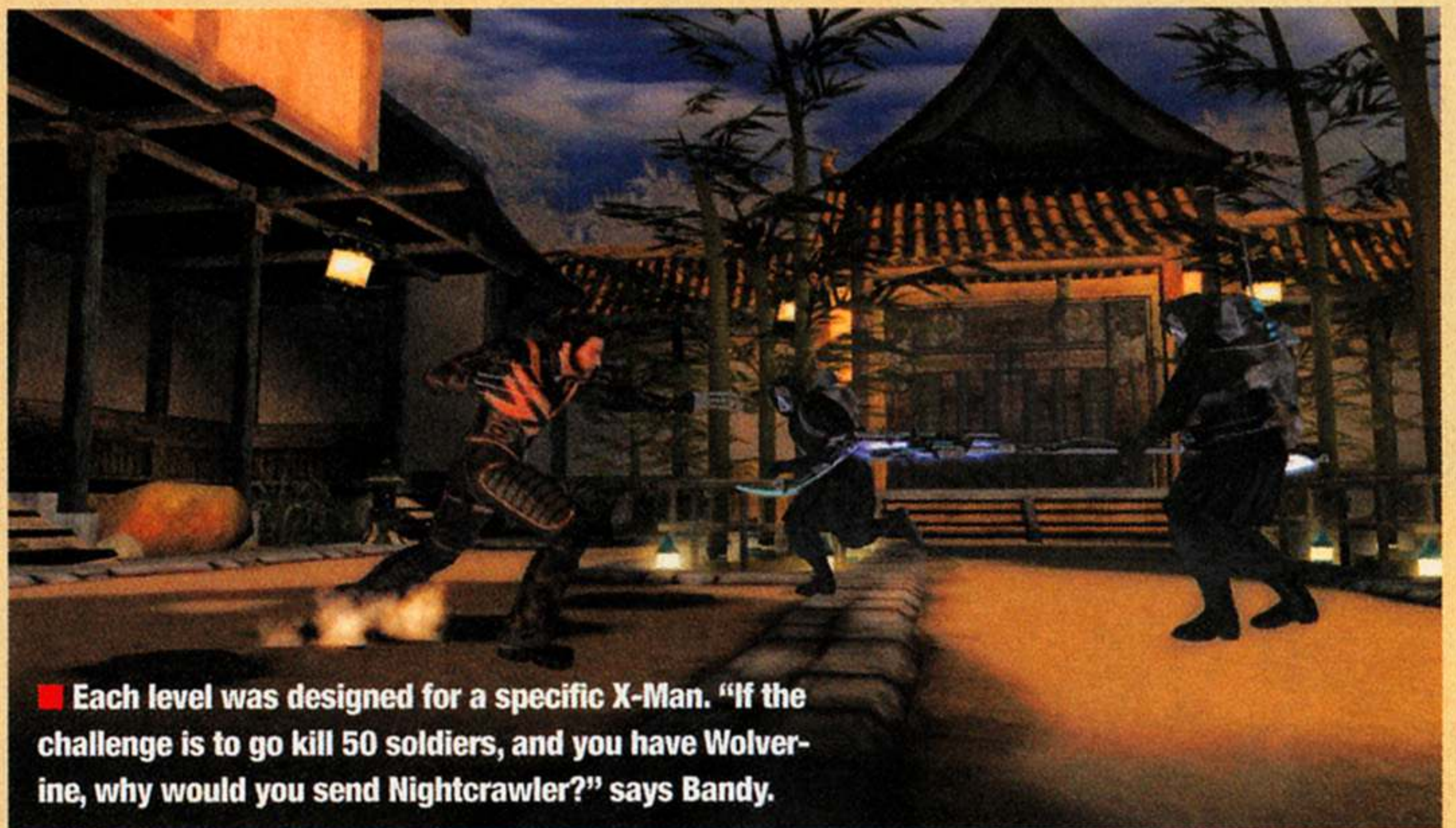
■ Despite his scene-stealing turn in *X2*, Nightcrawler is AWOL in the new flick. Why? Play the game and find out...

### Berserker Barrage

**Scott Bandy:** "If you look at Wolverine, he's a massively powerful character for melee combat but not very stealthy—it's like that line from the film, 'What are you gonna do, stick your claw in a lock?' He's also a very confident guy and the team's emerging leader, yet [he] has a rogue element. In our game, he actually goes to Japan to settle a personal vendetta."



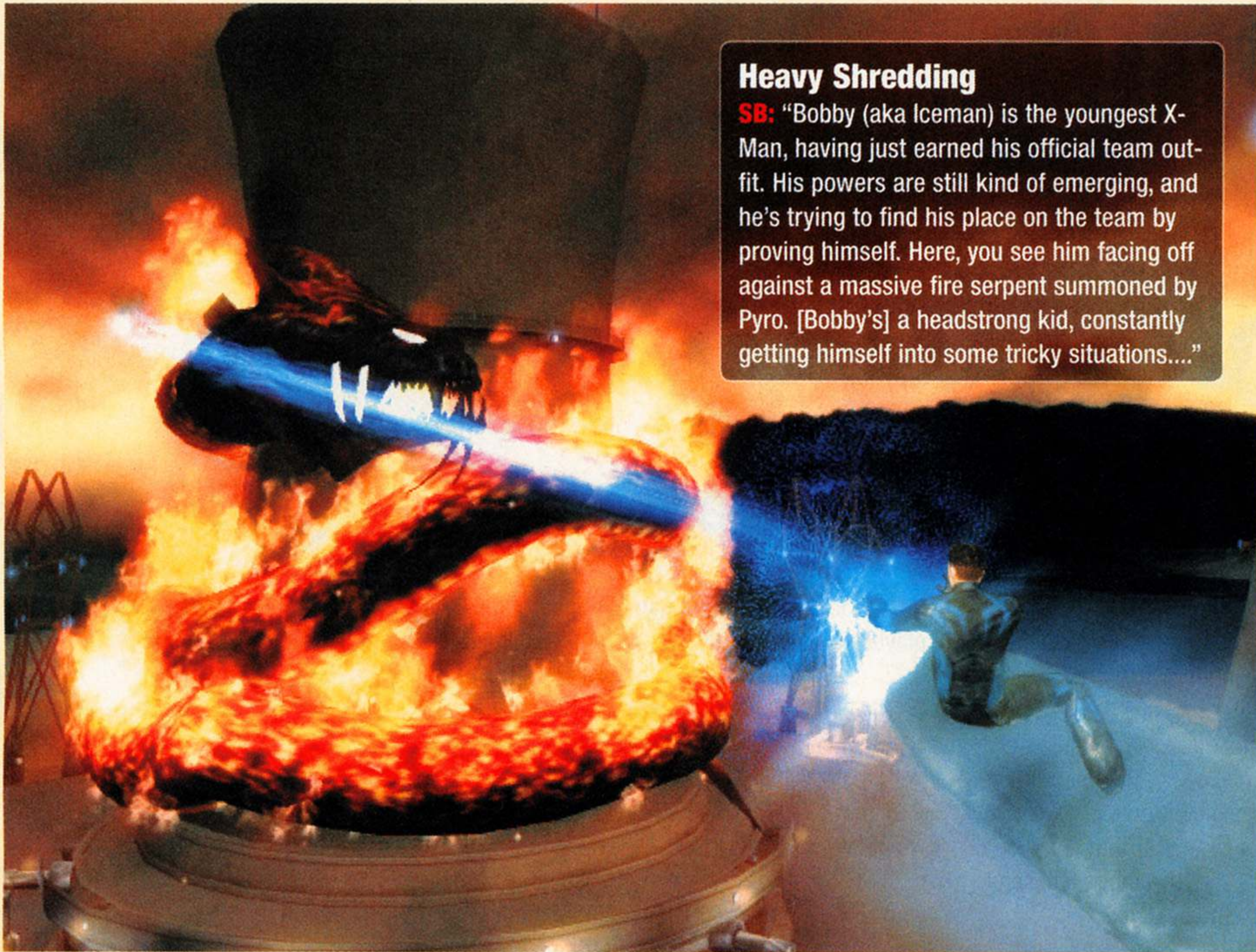
■ Wolverine's gameplay offers no-nonsense brawling with the extra added depth of his healing factor and Fury mode—a limited period of feral ass-kicking.



■ Each level was designed for a specific X-Man. "If the challenge is to go kill 50 soldiers, and you have Wolverine, why would you send Nightcrawler?" says Bandy.

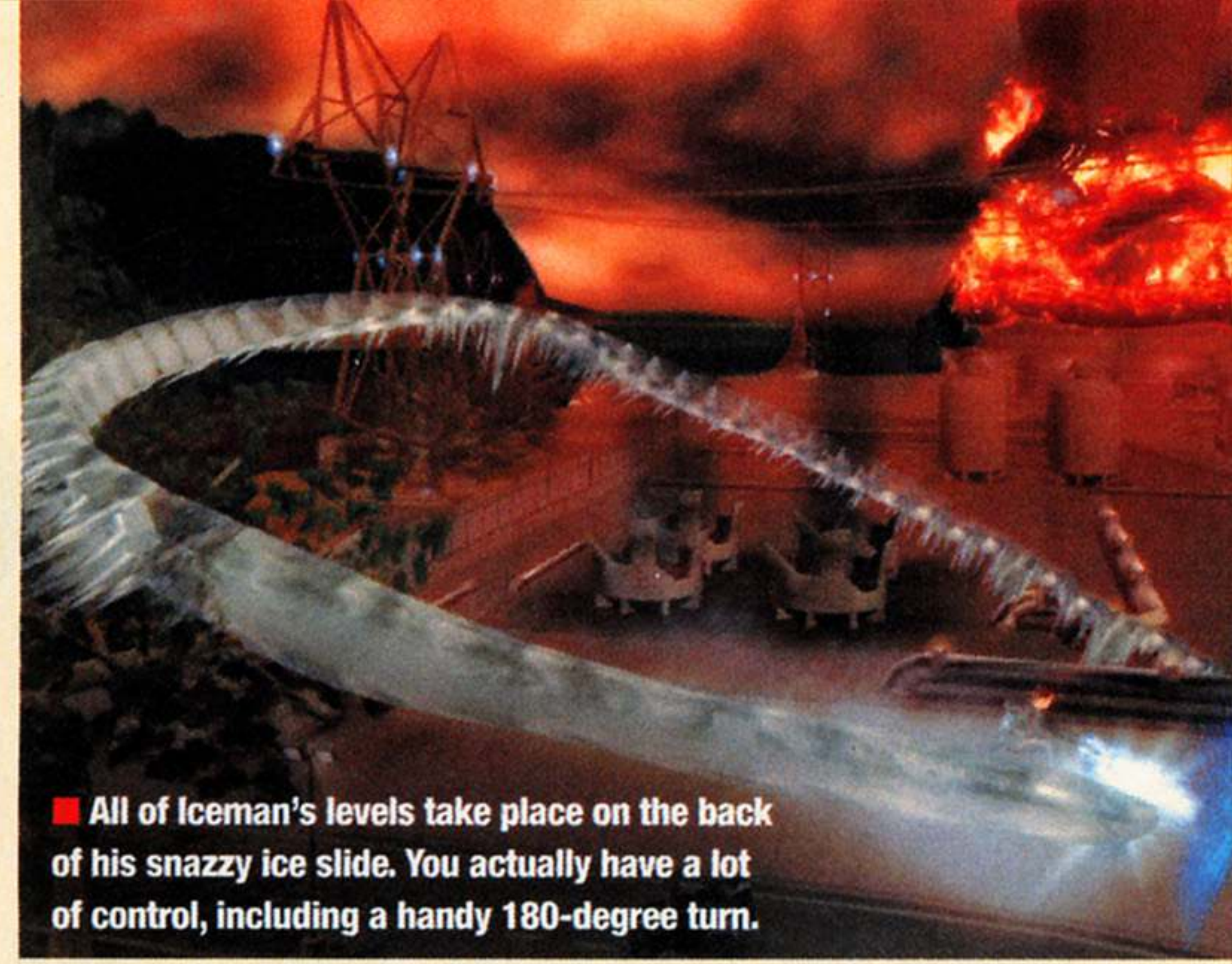
>> APPARENTLY, WE WON'T SEE YOU AT THE MOVIES—ACTIVISION HAS CANNED THE PS2, XBOX, AND GAMECUBE VERSIONS OF ITS HOLLYWOOD



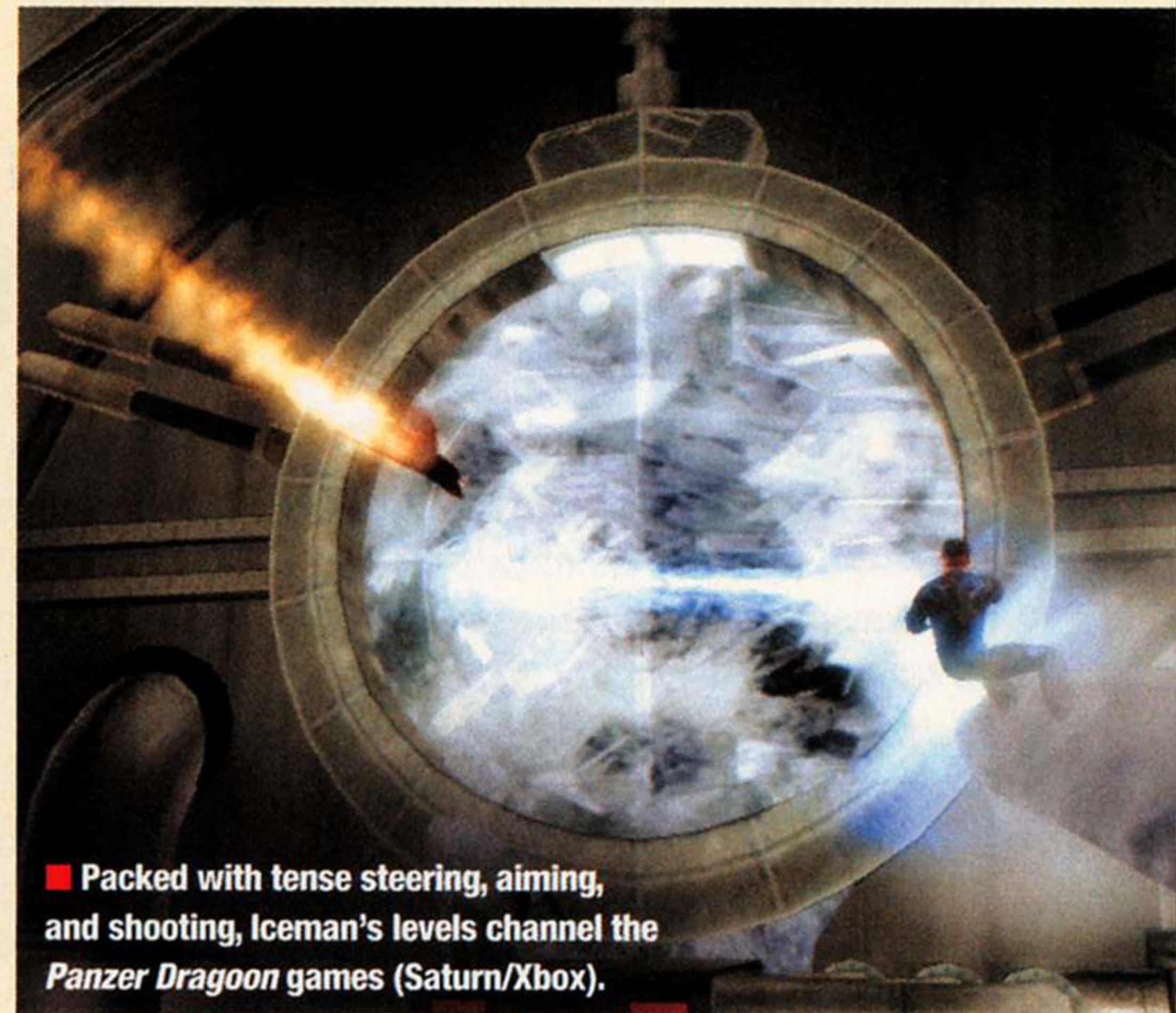


### Heavy Shredding

**SB:** "Bobby (aka Iceman) is the youngest X-Man, having just earned his official team outfit. His powers are still kind of emerging, and he's trying to find his place on the team by proving himself. Here, you see him facing off against a massive fire serpent summoned by Pyro. [Bobby's] a headstrong kid, constantly getting himself into some tricky situations...."



■ All of Iceman's levels take place on the back of his snazzy ice slide. You actually have a lot of control, including a handy 180-degree turn.



■ Packed with tense steering, aiming, and shooting, Iceman's levels channel the *Panzer Dragoon* games (Saturn/Xbox).



### Bamf!

**SB:** "Professor X didn't have Superman, so that's why he has a team. No one X-Man is perfectly suited to every task. When you need someone to sneak in somewhere, you call Nightcrawler. As you know, Kurt is a very conflicted character, and the resolution of that conflict leads to his absence from the team in the third movie." 🐈

■ Nightcrawler's absurd agility allows you to scamper around on all fours and relocate your body at will. Imagine: the Prince of Persia mixed with a teleporting house cat.



■ Although all of these shots show solo missions, expect A.I.-controlled X-Men to lend a hand.



■ Since Nightcrawler can't withstand much punishment, always try to get the jump on your foe.

**SIMULATOR THE MOVIES. WHAT HAPPENED? THE PUBLISHER DECIDED TO NIX THE PROJECT AFTER POOR SALES OF THE PC VERSION... >>**



# AFTERTHOUGHTS: GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED

Looking back at the Xbox 360's \$4 killer app

**W**hat's your high score?" We hadn't asked that question in years—we hadn't thought that way in years—but the neoclassic 2D shooting of *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved* on Xbox Live Arcade is like a little slice of 1984, and we love it. Hard to believe it's all the result of Stephen Cakebread's after-hours tinkering while on Bizarre Creations' *Project Gotham Racing* programming squad....

—Mark MacDonald and Demian Linn

**EGM:** So you were writing code for the first *Project Gotham Racing*, and somehow, while you were supposed to be working on a game about, you know, cars, you had the time to make a 2D space shooter. What the hell?

**Stephen Cakebread:** Yeah, it was something I just kinda...it was a late night, and I got bored of what I was supposed to be working on. I needed to test both joysticks, so around this controller input stuff I just wrapped a really simple game, which was basically moving the ship with the left stick and shooting with the right stick. There was no flash of inspiration; it was just purely a need to test a bit of code.

The blue diamonds were the original bad guys in the game; there were no

waves—they'd just spawn randomly. From there, over the next couple of days when I wasn't working on *Gotham* stuff, I would add another bad guy type. Then one of the guys, Chris Pickford, came in one day and saw me playing. He had a go at it, and then he copied it onto his Xbox. It was just kind of viral after that. Everyone was playing it. Then it was just a case of tweaking it over the next year.

**EGM:** The game (included in *Project Gotham Racing 2*) proved to be one of the greatest Easter eggs of all time—about how many seconds did it take you to think, "Hey, we should make a stand-alone version?"

**SC:** It was amazing how popular it turned out to be; it was completely beyond our expectations for *Geometry Wars 1*. We were always talking about how, wouldn't it be cool to do a version for Live Arcade? *Geometry Wars* was something I put together in like 40 hours. Wouldn't it be cool to actually spend some time and make something that takes advantage of what the 360 can do in terms of power?

**EGM:** It is kind of like *Robotron*, though. There, we said it.

**SC:** When I did the first game, I hadn't played *Robotron* at all.

**EGM:** [Head explodes]

**SC:** When everybody was saying, "You've gotta play *Robotron*, you've gotta play *Robotron*," one of the things I didn't do was play *Robotron*. It's just too easy to go, "Hey, this game's great," and then you look at all the good things in the other game and you go, "Oh, well, I'll try and put them into this." But after I finished *Geometry Wars 1*, I did go and play it, and I am absolutely terrible at it. But it's a good game. Jeff Minter [an influential U.K. game designer—Ed.] did a remake called *Llmatron*; I think they're both good games, but I like that one more because it's just mad.

**EGM:** Speaking of a different kind of mad, *Retro Evolved* has actually made us commit the most tragic gamer cliché—we've thrown our controllers in frustration. Damn you, Stephen Cakebread, and your hard as hell game!

**SC:** To be honest, I've nearly done that myself. There was a long point...I was having a really good game of it, and I got past 2 million [points], and I just hadn't really balanced it much past that. About



**Geometry Wars:** Proof that good things can come outta goofing around at work.



>> NOT QUITE GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE SILVER SCREEN—THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD MOVIE SEQUEL (DUBBED HOTD: DEAD AIM) WILL SKIP





Wanna know why the Bizarre higher-ups banned its employees from playing *Geometry Wars*? Check out the "EGM Extras" section at [egm.1UP.com](http://egm.1UP.com) for that answer and more.

## WINNING THE WAR

These tips from 1UP.com's *Retro Evolved* savant, Jared Rea (high score: 2.5 million), will help you climb the game's leaderboard. Check the full strategy at [geometrywars.1UP.com](http://geometrywars.1UP.com).

### Mayfly extermination



By far the most deadly opponent on the board, the tiny blue mayflies will always attack in swarms of hundreds from all four corners of the field. It's tempting to use a bomb, but there's another way—position your ship along a wall, then move toward a corner and blast your way through the swarm. Repeat until the mayflies stop spawning, then corral them and blast away.

### Red kamikazes



They're tiny, bright red, and fast as hell—and their one objective is to crash into your ship before you even realize they're there. Worse, they've got a force field that absorbs head-on shots. Dodge their initial beeline charge, though, and blast 'em from behind. The toughest part is spotting them as soon as they spawn on the board.

### Don't look back

Try not to retreat. In later, tougher waves, you'll be surrounded on all sides and chased by a huge horde—a sudden backpedal will get you killed almost immediately. It's best to have confidence in your move, find a happy place on the board, and stay focused on how to get there, prioritizing your threats and dealing with them.

## "When I did the first game, I hadn't played *Robotron* at all."

—Bizarre Creations' Stephen Cakebread

a hundred of the reds, the ones that charge at you, just appeared onscreen, and I was like, "You bastard!" So that was it—I had to immediately go and tweak the code. When people are playing at Bizarre, there's always lots of swearing.

### EGM: What's your high score?

**SC:** About 2.1 million. The problem is, it's difficult to play at work, because, you know, when you start to get a high score, people start crowding around. I reckon I could probably get higher, but I've not got a 360 myself yet, so I can't play it at home.

### EGM: So the game starts off really, reaaally slow. Too slow?

**SC:** The start of the original game was, you know, it was just mad. You'd go from shooting two or three things, and then it would just go insane. What I wanted to do this time around was have a beginning that was almost adaptive to the player's skill. So it'll watch the speed at which you destroy the enemies, and then it'll speed up in reaction [to this]. It didn't work as well as I'd hoped, but it's...I think the slow start was important so it'd be more accessible to other people.

### EGM: And the score multiplier is based on the number of enemies you've killed?

**SC:** Yeah, every time you die, the multiplier resets to one. From memory, after you kill 25 bad guys, the multiplier goes up to two. Then after [you kill] 25 more, it goes up to three, and so on and so forth. The maximum multiplier is times 10, and that's at 2,000 bad guys. To hit 2,000, you're probably talking like 800,000 points, so you've got to be pretty good to hit times 10.

### EGM: Are there certain point levels at which *Retro Evolved* suddenly gets harder? It seems like some games are tougher earlier on than others.

**SC:** It's difficult to explain, but it does work separately from the scoring structure. The scoring just goes off on its own, and whatever score you get, it's

set. But it's almost like there's a second score that's hidden from you. That score determines how fast the game is gonna progress. It's difficult to explain because it's one of those parts of the code that's a bit of a tangled black box—it got tweaked and tweaked until it worked well, and trying to explain exactly how it works is....

### EGM: So that second score, just to speak in general about it, is that based on how fast you kill enemies, or how long you go without dying, or all of those things?

**SC:** It's mainly based on how fast you're killing the enemies and how quickly you move through the different waves. There are circular waves and waves that spawn from the corners and that kind of stuff. If you get rid of those faster, it will advance you faster through the game, because obviously those are more difficult things to work around.

### EGM: What do you think is the hardest enemy type to deal with?

**SC:** Well, the hardest one I always find is with the mayflies, the ones that come out of the corners, when you've got thousands of them. There was one point when I couldn't get past those without a smart bomb and I was thinking, "You know, I'm going to have to take these out because they're just not fair." But then I worked out how to get around them. I'm not going to say [how], because that would just be spoiling it [see sidebar, we'll spoil it—Ed.], and the way you do get around them isn't obvious, but you can get around them every time, even when thousands of them spawn.

### EGM: The game automatically swaps weapons every 10,000

### points—and we have to say, we kind of hate the slow, spread-fire gun.

**SC:** I know a lot of people complain about the fact that it keeps switching weapons, but one of the reasons why it switches weapons is to make you change your strategy all the time. You can't just go, "Ah, I've got the best weapon in the game, so I'm just gonna power through everything aggressively." It switches to the gun that ripples through the background just to make you play that little bit more defensively. And that gun is actually better at killing certain types of enemies, such as the mayflies. I would say obviously the fast-firing gun is the best because it allows you to be accurate over a distance. But if you ever get surrounded by anything, the gun that ripples the background will just get you out of that.

### EGM: What's your day job? What did you do on *Project Gotham Racing 3*?

**SC:** Well, technically, I didn't actually work on *PGR3*. I did some research stuff way back in the beginning, but I'm actually on a different team this time around, which I'm not allowed to talk about, so....

### EGM: What's next? Any talk of downloadable add-ons or maybe a *Geometry Wars* sequel for Xbox Live?

**SC:** I don't think I'm allowed to speak anything about that, I'm afraid....

### EGM: Thwarted at every turn. So it's great that this thing is doing so well, but do you get any of that? A bonus? Points on the gross?

**SC:** I'm not allowed to speak about that either [Laughs]. You know, Bizarre is a great place to work, so it's...yeah.



# OVERHEARD

Sayin' it like they mean it



©2006 Jeremy "Norm" Scott

## "Two words: Emotion Engine."

—Cesar Menendez, online community manager, Xbox Global Marketing and Xbox Live, debunking the hype that Sony will launch a broadband service better than Xbox Live

"Rapper 50 Cent was arrested today at his home on charges of criminal drug possession and intent to distribute crap music. Agents discovered several pounds of high-grade marijuana, cocaine, and approximately 800,000 copies of his own videogame, *50 Cent: Bulletproof*."

—Forum member "Westonian" writes in response to news that 50 Cent: Bulletproof has sold 1 million copies

"I can trace [my weight gain] back to when I was given the best birthday present of my life: a Nintendo. [My parents] tried restricting my Nintendo time, but I found ways to get around it. I usually had one hand on the controller and one in a bag of chips."

—Professional not-obese person and annoying Subway shill Jared Fogle makes us hate him a little less. A little



"I have more respect for [B-movie king] Ed Wood [than] I do for all the guys writing all the Internet bulls\*\*\* [complaining about me] and sitting there in their houses where mommy still pays for everything."

—Schlock Director Uwe Boll gives a shout-out to the cinematic pioneers who went before him

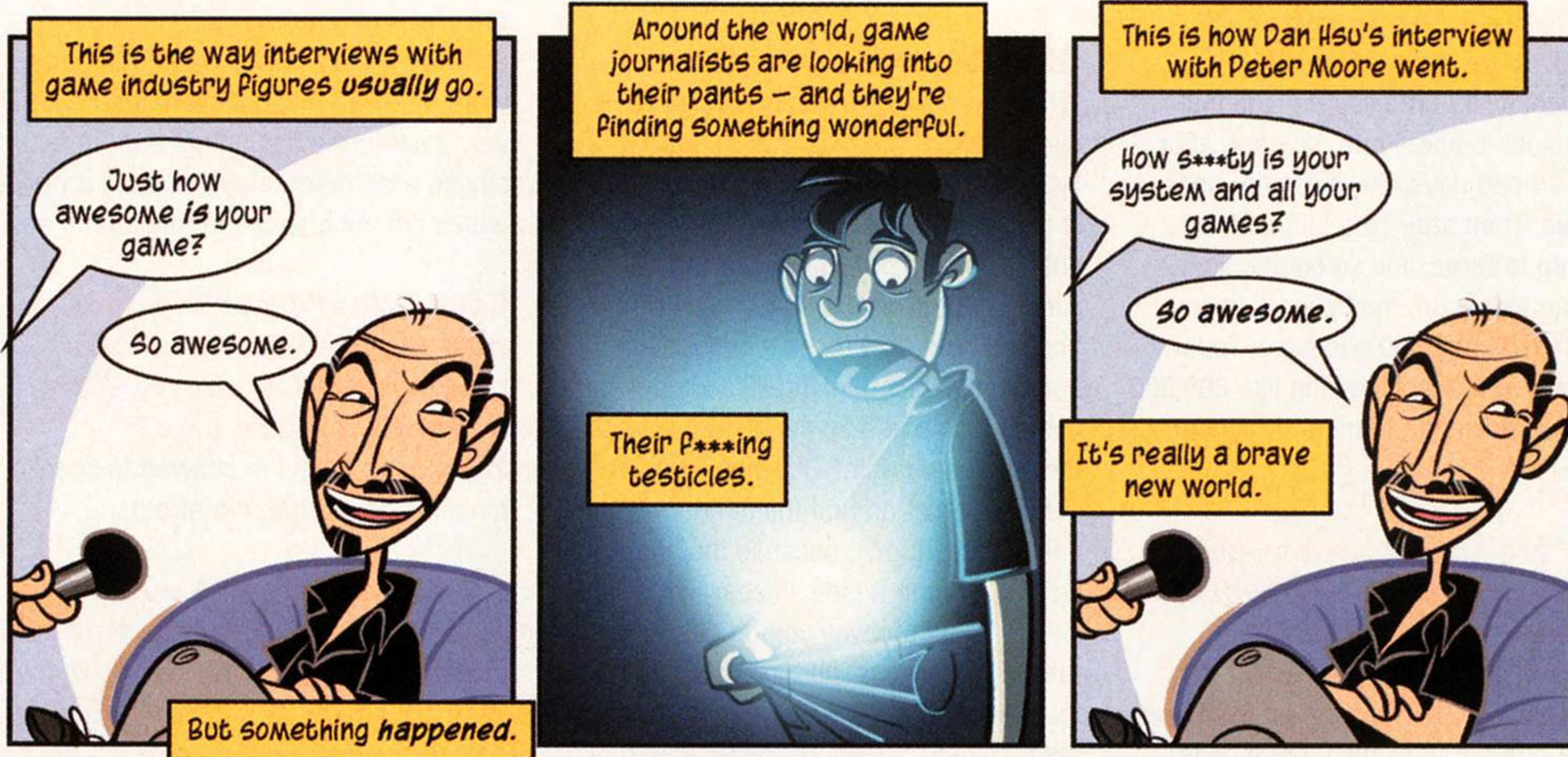
"I don't know why Uwe Boll is even talking about these kind of things. We've never talked to him. It's impossible that we'd ever do a movie with him."

—Metal Gear creator Hideo Kojima, addressing Uwe Boll's comments about wanting to do an MGS movie

"I'd rather my son take a more proactive, less habitual drug like cocaine than lock himself away and play videogames. It's so lazy. At least with pills and coke, you're out and doing something."

—Roxanne Richardson, a 35-year-old mother who just became the most popular parent among troubled teens in England

### PENNY ARCADE WWW.PENNY-ARCADE.COM

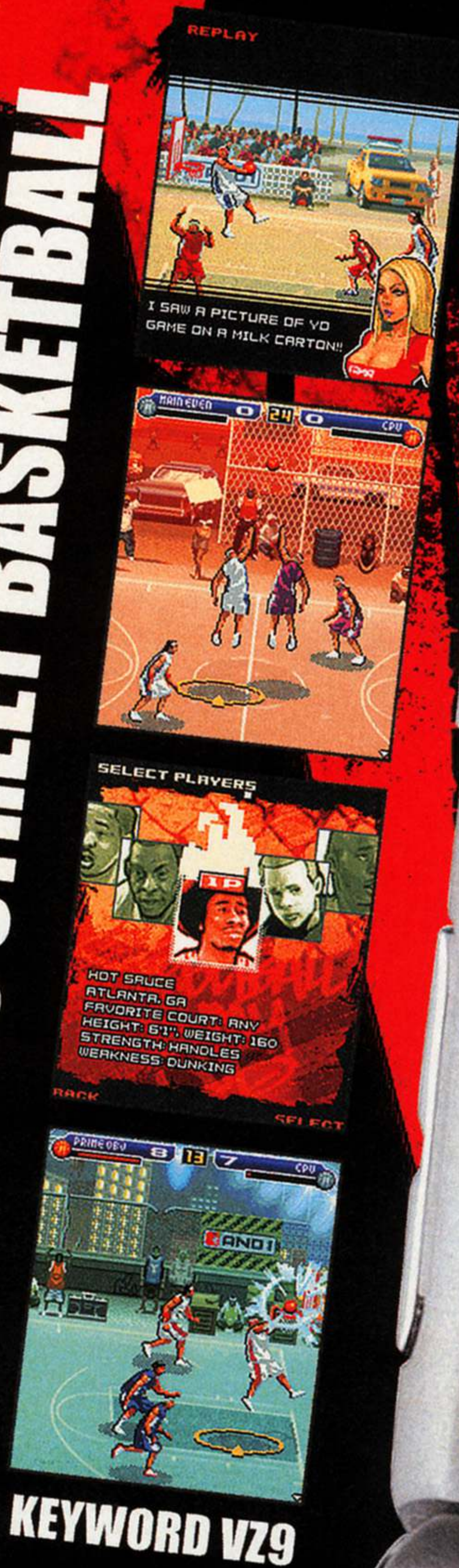


QUOTATION SOURCES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, STARTING WITH LEFT COLUMN: COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE, GAMERSCORE BLOG, GAMING-AGE.COM, SPIKE TV'S GAME HEAD, KOJIMA'S AUDIOBLOG, INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

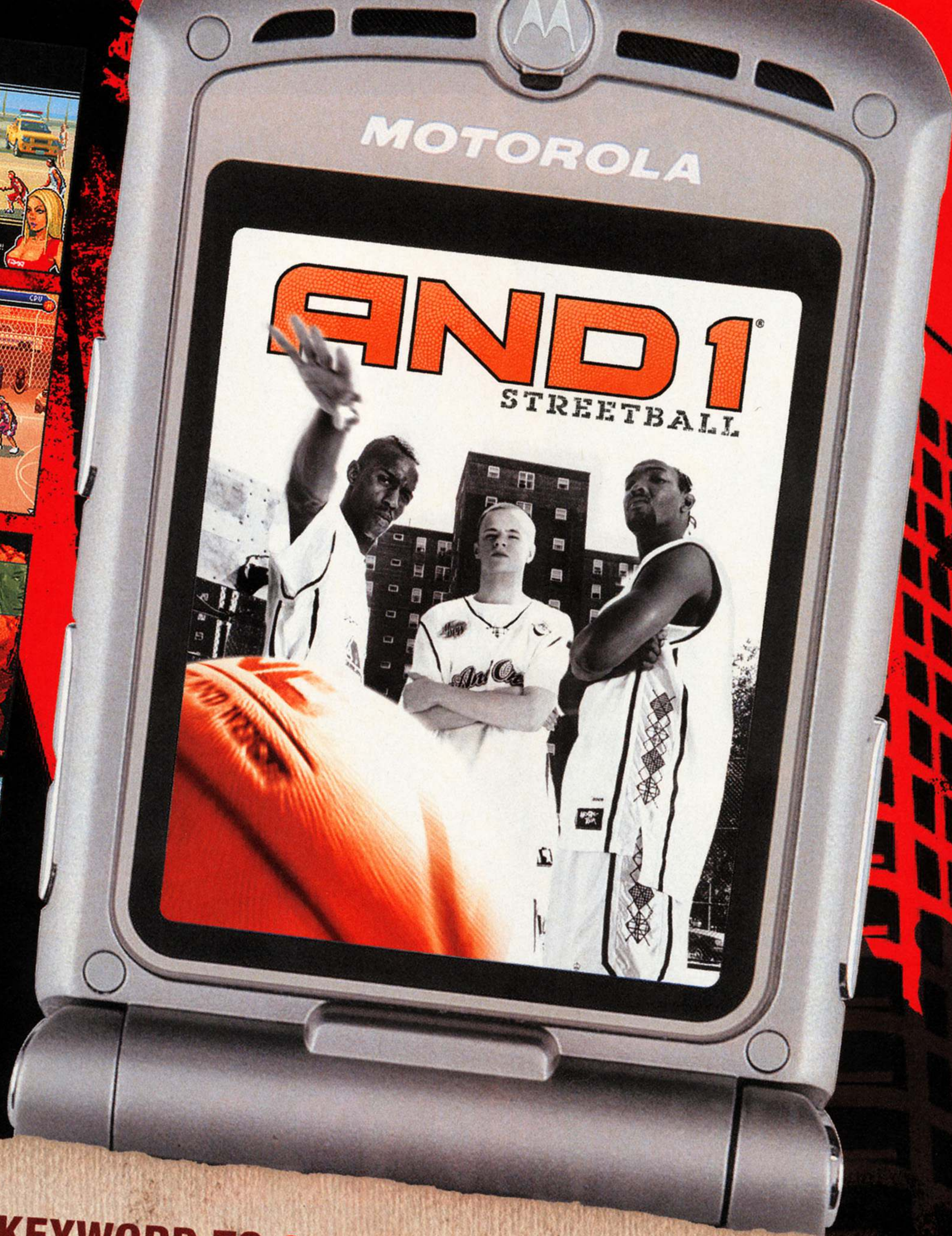
>> START YOUR ENGINES—THIS SUMMER, THQ WILL RELEASE A GAME BASED ON PIXAR'S NEXT CG FLICK, CARS (PS2/XB/GC).... >>>



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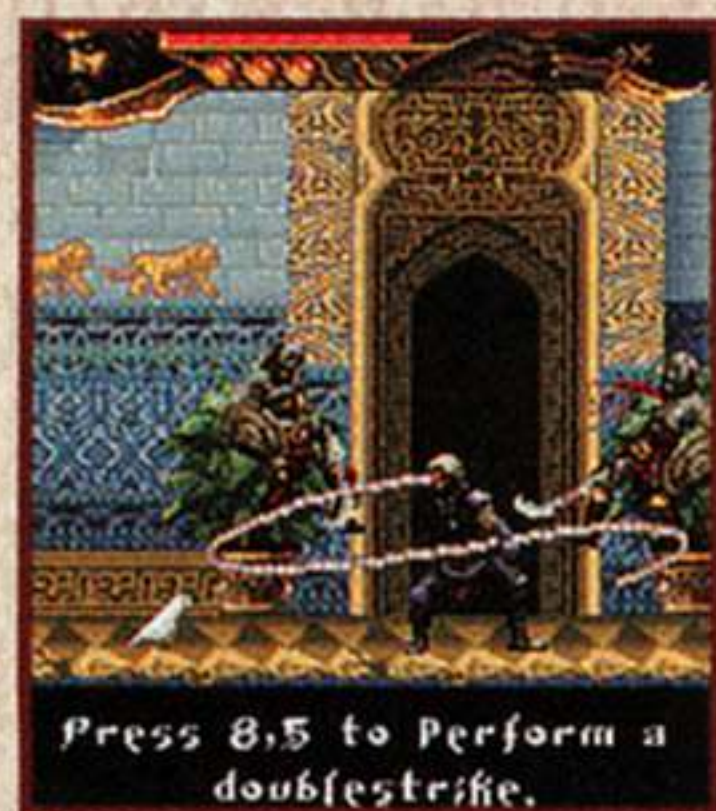
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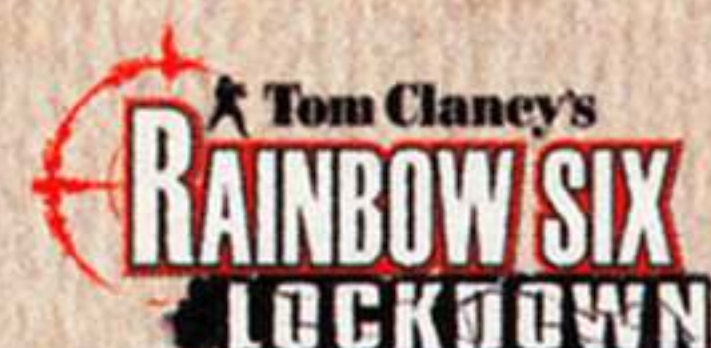
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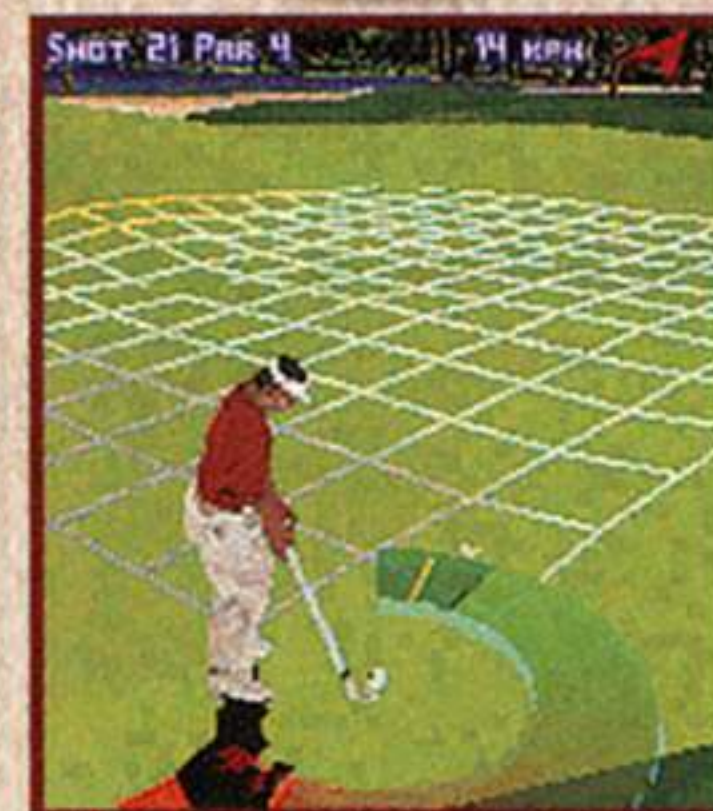
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■ "We've made some enhancements and some fixes to [the first game's physics engine], but it's basically the same," says Paradigm's Dave Gatchel.

■ XB360/PS2/PSP EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

# STUNTMAN 2

Publisher: Atari  
Developer: Paradigm  
Release Date: Fall 2006

With a new developer behind the wheel and less-frazzling gameplay, this hard-driving sequel might be worth strapping into

**M**ore than just the T-boned virtual cars got totaled when wreckless-driving simulator *Stuntman* hit the PlayStation 2 back in 2002. The maddeningly unforgiving gameplay had players smithereneing so many joypads, we're surprised activists didn't form some kind of society for the ethical treatment of controllers. One zag when you shoulda zipped meant having to redo lengthy stunt-driving sequences from scratch, each do-over preceded by one long, long, loooong game load.

So this nicer-on-the-nerves sequel, due for the Xbox 360 (screens shown here), PS2, PSP, and possibly PS3 this fall, is dedicated to all those DualShocks sacrificed to the first game. "We're making sure everything has a positive feel in the levels," says Shawn Wright, *Stuntman 2*'s

lead designer and the creative director for Paradigm (of *Spy Hunter* and *Pilotwings 64* fame). *Stuntman*'s original developer, Reflections—which is focusing on its *Driver* franchise—tapped Paradigm to work on the new *Stuntman* game, and the Texas-based studio is giving players more freedom to do their own stunt work rather than get stuck attempting the same mandatory sequences over and over again. Because that was, you know, not fun.

#### Open road

That's not to say Paradigm is giving the series the wide-open, *Grand Theft Auto* treatment and creating a city-size stunt park. You're still playing a stuntman progressing through a career spanning six movies (see sidebar), plus new side jobs like driving for commercials and

stunt-arena competitions. You'll still have specific stunts—called director stunts—to perform along a predetermined route. These will be the most spectacular tricks, such as hitting a ramp to ram a helicopter out of the sky, for instance.

But in between these major stunts you'll find lots of smaller feats that earn you points. "It's a little like the kudos system in *Project Gotham Racing* and the [trick driving] in the *Burnout* games," Wright says. "If you get close to a wall, you get points. If you go up on two wheels, you get points. If you get close to an explosion, you get explosion points. You get points for [being] in the air, for drifting, for breaking through boxes, for getting close to civilians—anything you perform with your vehicle, you're rewarded for."

Stringing together these ministunts

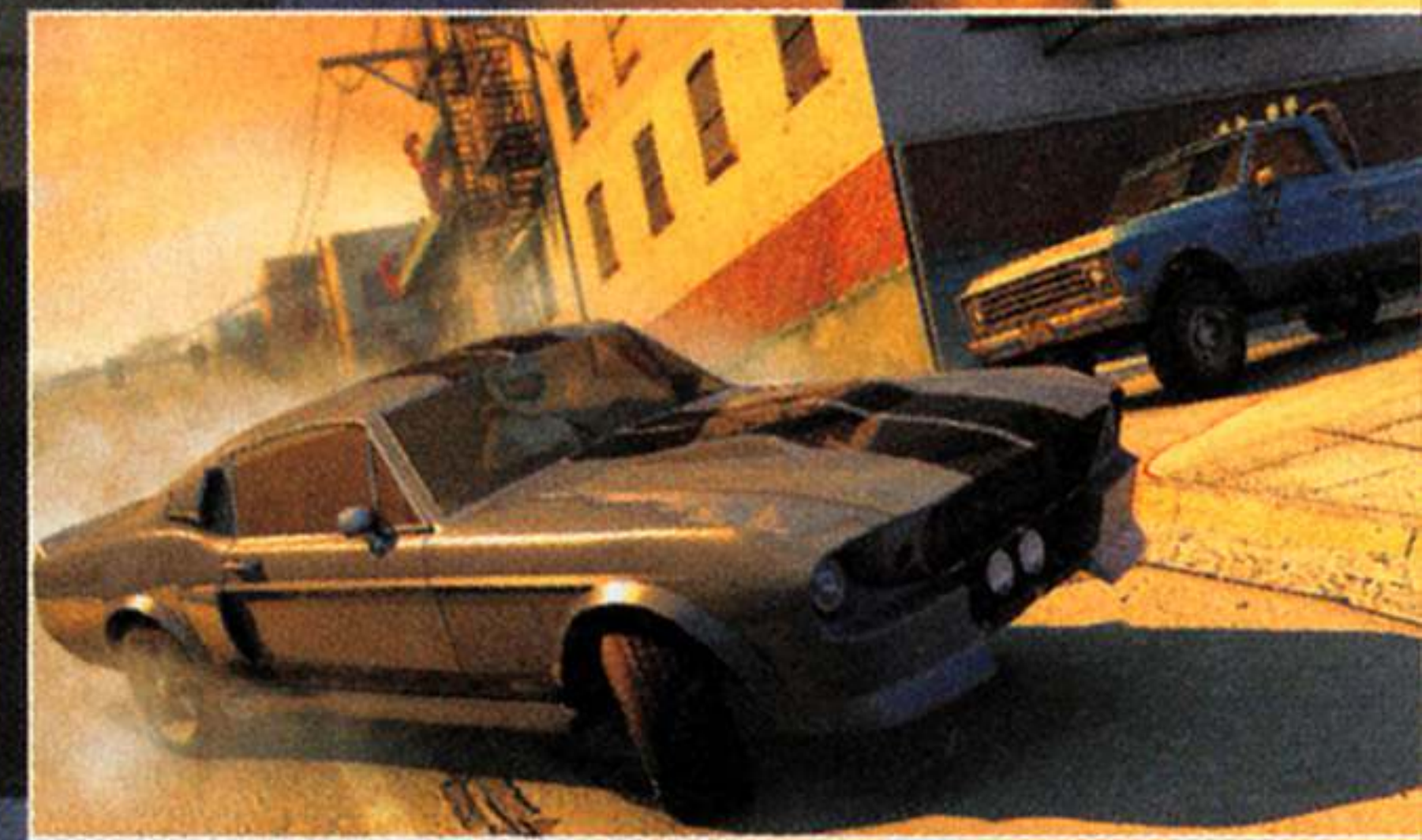
fires up a score multiplier, kind of like the trick-combo system in the *Tony Hawk* series. "It's going to be up to the player to find their own best line," says Wright. "But what that best line is, we don't even know, because of the many combinations you can do throughout the level." The first game's time gates return, too, but instead of failing the level if you don't reach them in time, you simply miss out on a score multiplier. The level continues regardless. And if you do decide to restart the stage, good news: "We're shooting for zero load times," says Wright.

#### Turning up the heat

What's the point of earning points? They build your heat meter, an indicator of your stuntman's status in show biz and what kind of jobs he'll unlock. So you don't

>> RE-DUBBING THOSE RIMS—THIS MARCH, ROCKSTAR WILL RELEASE *MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION REMIX* FOR BOTH PLAYSTATION 2





## DRIVING THEATER: THE SEQUEL'S SIX FLICKS STARRING YOUR CUNNING STUNTS

### A **Whoopin'** and a **Hollerin' 2**

Sequel to the first game's backwoods blockbuster, *Hollerin' 2* once again stars two good ol' boys and their hillbilly hot rod as they outrun Sheriff Emmitt P. Porkswine.

### Never **Kill Me Again**

Another Bond-flavored spy thriller starring Her Majesty's slickest agent, Simon Crown, who in the last game played chicken with a helicopter and used a snowmobile to knock a hang glider from the sky.

### Outlander

You play a postapocalyptic road warrior in the Australian outback, running death races against gas-hungry mutants in hell-spawned vehicles such as the armored Volkswagen van pictured below.

### Driver: The Movie

Wheelman Tanner hits San Francisco's streets for some crossover action. "There's a *Driver* movie in production," says Paradigm Prez Dave Gatchel. "We thought giving a nod back would be cool."

### Two **unnamed** movies

The last two flicks, which Paradigm isn't ready to talk about, are a superhero and a disaster movie. We know the disaster flick involves asteroids. Could the other film involve radioactive cars?

necessarily need to complete all the boffo director stunts to reach the next level; cranking up the score multiplier via general daredevil driving could do the trick. The missions will vary in length from 20 seconds to two minutes in an effort throw "some quick feel-good" scenarios into the mix, says Wright.

For instance, one 20-second stage, set in the chaotic disaster flick, starts with a fireball falling from the sky and destroying a bridge right in front of you. "You jump from one bridge to another as pedestrians and cars are going crazy around you," adds Paradigm President Dave Gatchel. "That gives you a lot of opportunities to pick up some points." You'll then dodge falling trees and pop up on two wheels to dart past flaming cars coming at you. "You have to do a 180 and turn around and

come back," Gatchel continues, "then you jump over another rooftop that's just collapsed. You drift really close to the edge of the cliff, and then you end up beating two other cars into a safe zone."

Add in new multiplayer modes that'll have players competing in a stunt arena for points, and this sequel has the makings of a wild ride that won't get wildly frustrating. Joypads, it looks like your national nightmare might be over. 🚗

—Crispin Boyer



■ The game's garage packs about 60 vehicles, from muscle cars to monster trucks to motorcycles to a hover craft—even a fire truck.

AND XBOX. THIS \$20 RERELEASE COMES WITH 24 ADDITIONAL CARS, SOME NEW MUSIC, AND A BRAND-NEW CITY—TOKYO.... >>



# TAKE THIS JOB: GAME JOURNALIST

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

THIS MONTH:  
**GEOFF  
KEIGHLEY**  
FREELANCE GAME  
JOURNALIST

## TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

### iWork

"If you don't have a computer, you're in trouble," Keighley says. "If you cover PC games, you need a desktop PC, obviously. Beyond that, all that really matters is you get something you're comfortable writing on."


### Early bird

While game companies do send early copies of games to writers for previews and reviews, you can't play them on a regular console. Instead, you need a "debug" machine from the hardware makers. "You can't just call up Sony, Microsoft, or Nintendo and say, 'I want to write for *EGM*—can I have a debug unit?'" Keighley notes. "Once you've been writing for a while, the companies will send you one."

### Take note

If you do a lot of interviews, you'll need a tape recorder. Get lots of notepads, too. "Anyone who says they're going to play a game for 12 hours and not take notes is fooling themselves," Keighley says.

### Bring out the comfy chair

"You spend a lot of time sitting," Keighley says, "so a good, sturdy, comfortable chair is vital. I actually have one of those Herman Miller Aeron chairs." 

NEXT UP:  
COMMUNITY  
MANAGER

## KEIGHLEY'S DETAILS

**Experience:** 13 years in the industry

**Notable outlets:** *Entertainment Weekly*, *Business 2.0*, *GameSpot*, *Official Xbox Magazine*, *EGM*, *Premiere*, and *Time Digital*, plus TV shows *Extra*, *Electric Playground*, and Spike TV's *Game Head*

### Game journalist job data

**Salary range:** \$25,000 to \$55,000

**Recommended education:** Though Keighley has a bachelor's degree, he didn't study journalism and says that it's not crucial—but it can't hurt. "You don't need a degree in journalism to write a game review," he says, "but one of the weaknesses of a lot of game writers is that they are gamers first and writers second. The guys who are successful... actually know how to write."

**Location of most jobs:** Anywhere, but being close to the biz (San Francisco, New York, or Los Angeles) does help.

**Current level of demand:** Medium

### What's a game journalist?

Someone who writes about games, either as part of the staff of a magazine or website or on a freelance basis. "There are two kinds of game journalists," Keighley explains. "Those who write about the games—reviews, previews, strategy guides—and those who write larger feature stories or news stories about trends in the industry and the personalities behind the games." Either way, he adds, there's more to it than just playing games all day. "The secret to doing well at this is to not play games to the exclusion of everything else," he says. "You don't want to forget to call your editor because you're totally engrossed in *Black*."

### Keighley's typical day

It starts "around 9-ish," he tells us. "It's a lot of e-mailing companies, talking to companies on the phone, doing some

writing, doing some editing, and playing games for a couple of hours. But one of the cool things about being freelance is that you can set your own schedule. You might have to work on a Saturday, but you can then take Wednesday off."

### How'd he get the gig?

Keighley tested games for Sierra Online when he was still in junior high and would sometimes post tips on CompuServe. This led an editor of *Strategy Plus* magazine to ask Keighley if he'd like to write previews—which, Keighley says, is as good a way to start as any. "You can't just call *EGM* and say, 'Hey, give me a shot,'" he says. "You need examples of your writing you can show an editor. Write a blog or do something like the reader reviews on 1UP.com. Then you'll have something to show people. If it stands out, if it's well written, someone will notice."  
—Paul Semel



# HONOR COURAGE

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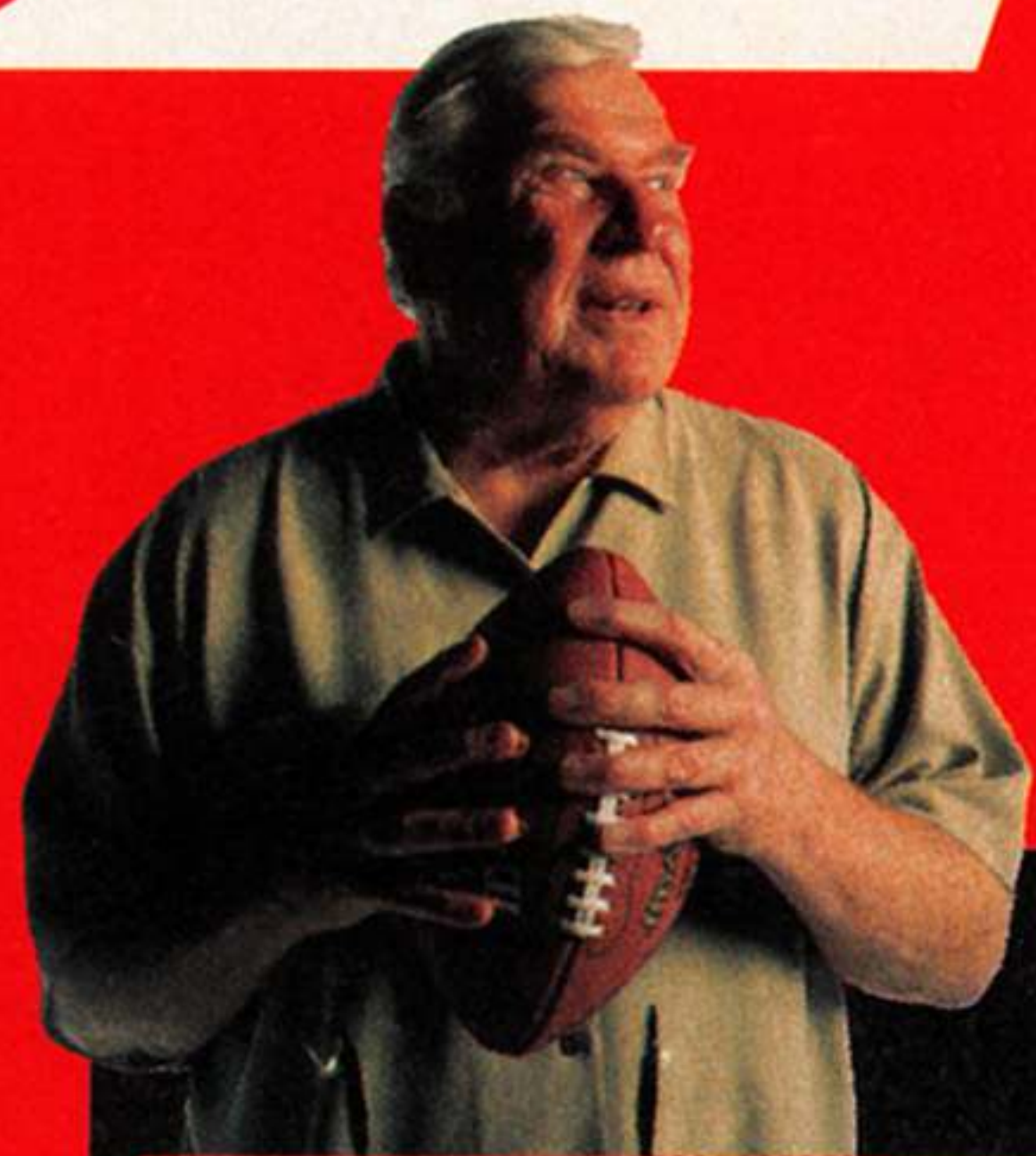
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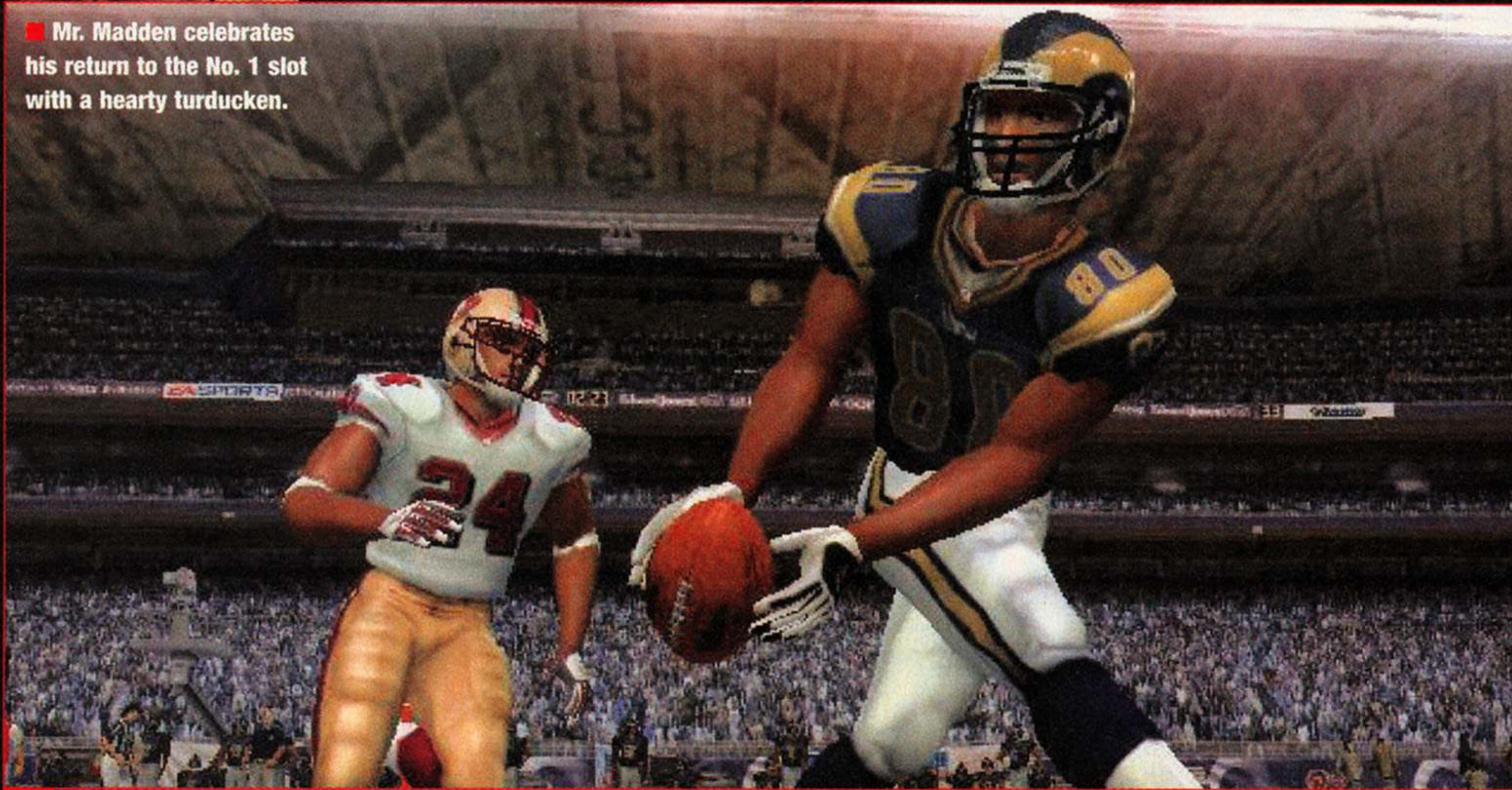




# THE SALES CHARTS | FOR DECEMBER 2005

## TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES

■ Mr. Madden celebrates his return to the No. 1 slot with a hearty turducken.



**1 Madden NFL 06** • PS2 • EA Sports

**2 Star Wars Battlefront II** • PS2 • LucasArts

**3 Need for Speed: Most Wanted** • PS2 • EA

**4 WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006** • PS2 • THQ

**5 Call of Duty 2: Big Red One** • PS2 • Activision

**6 Mario Kart DS** • DS • Nintendo

**7 Tony Hawk's American Wasteland** • PS2 • Activision

**8 Peter Jackson's King Kong** • PS2 • Ubisoft

**9 Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories** • PSP • Rockstar

**10 50 Cent: Bulletproof** • PS2 • Vivendi Universal



■ Call of Duty 2: Big Red One



■ 50 Cent: Bulletproof

## TOP 10 XBOX 360



**1 Call of Duty 2**

**2 Madden NFL 06**

**3 Perfect Dark Zero**

**4 Need for Speed: Most Wanted**

**5 Project Gotham Racing 3**

**6 Peter Jackson's King Kong**

**7 Condemned: Criminal Origins**

**8 Quake 4**

**9 Kameo: Elements of Power**

**10 NBA 2K6**

## TOP 10 PS2



**1 Madden NFL 06**

**2 Star Wars Battlefront II**

**3 Need for Speed: Most Wanted**

**4 WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006**

**5 Call of Duty 2: Big Red One**

**6 Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**

**7 Peter Jackson's King Kong**

**8 50 Cent: Bulletproof**

**9 NBA Live 06**

**10 Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones**

## TOP 10 XBOX



**1 Star Wars Battlefront II**

**2 Madden NFL 06**

**3 Call of Duty 2: Big Red One**

**4 Need for Speed: Most Wanted**

**5 Peter Jackson's King Kong**

**6 Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones**

**7 Fable: The Lost Chapters**

**8 50 Cent: Bulletproof**

**9 Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**

**10 NBA Live 06**

## TOP 10 GAMECUBE



**1 Mario Party 7**

**2 Super Mario Strikers**

**3 Shadow the Hedgehog**

**4 Lego Star Wars**

**5 Super Mario Sunshine**

**6 Mario Superstar Baseball**

**7 Nicktoons Unite!**

**8 Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness**

**9 Madden NFL 06**

**10 Super Smash Bros. Melee**

## TOP 10 PORTABLES



**1 Mario Kart DS** • DS

**2 Grand Theft Auto: LCS** • PSP

**3 Madden NFL 06** • PSP

**4 Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time** • DS

**5 Animal Crossing: Wild World** • DS

**6 Nintendogs: Dachshund** • DS

**7 SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo** • PSP

**8 Need for Speed: Most Wanted** • PSP

**9 Star Wars Battlefront II** • PSP

**10 Nintendogs: Labrador** • DS

## TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 01/15/06



**1 WWE Smack! vs. RAW 2006** • PS2

**2 Call of Duty 2: Big Red One** • PS2

**3 Peter Jackson's King Kong** • PS2

**4 Star Wars Battlefront II** • PS2

**5 Gun** • PS2

**6 True Crime: New York City** • PS2

**7 Madden NFL 06** • PS2

**8 Call of Duty 2: Big Red One** • XB

**9 Need for Speed: Most Wanted** • PS2

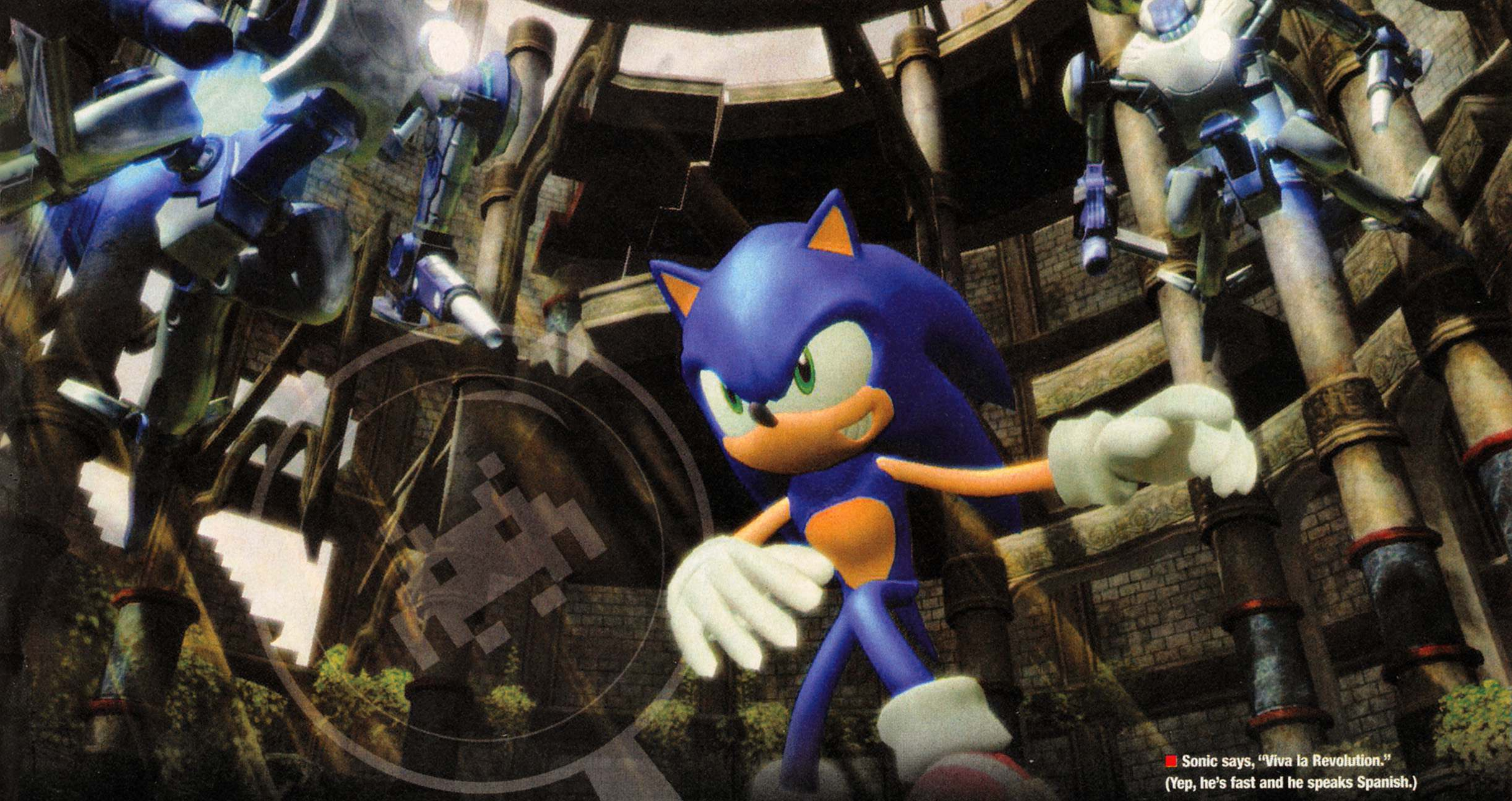
**10 Gun** • XB

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

Source: Blockbuster Video

>> SEGA HAS PUSHED BACK THE RELEASE OF ITS OFF- AND ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE (PS2) TO THIS FALL... >>





■ Sonic says, "Viva la Revolution."  
(Yep, he's fast and he speaks Spanish.)

# THE RUMOR MILL

Where we shoot the proverbial s\*\*\*

**K**ingdom Hearts II, Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence, Ghost Recon on Xbox 360—now that companies have finally wised up and started consistently bringing out high-profile titles in the springtime, when are they gonna get the memo about summer releases? Seriously, I'm tired of choosing between crapola like *Barbie's First Zit* and *That's So Raven: She Can't Stop Eating* during those months. Anyway, take a bite of these rumors; they've got some serious flavor. Catch you in 30....

—The Q

## It's just me, bub

Brash, metallic, supersweet chops—how can you not be a fan of Wolverine? And you're gonna be seeing a lot of Marvel's popular mutant, as in addition to this spring's *X-Men 3*, **Wolverine will star in**

**his own game.** This 2007 next-gen action title will delve even deeper into Logan's backstory (including his involvement in the Weapon X program), plus pit him against those towering Sentinels. Cross your fingers it turns out better than the lackluster *X2: Wolverine's Revenge*.

## Duty calls...again

Good thing *Call of Duty 2* found its way to the Xbox 360 launch. Otherwise, I'd be stuck playing *Perfect Dark Zero* to get my first-person shooter fix. Zinger aside, thanks to No. 2's overwhelming success, the developers are stepping on the gas to get ***Call of Duty 3* ready for PlayStation 3's big day.** Good decision, guys.

## Lost to your console

When I'm not watching *Laguna Beach* reruns or *Skating With Celebrities*, my

television's usually turned to *Lost*. I simply can't get enough of ABC's thrilling fantasy drama, and it seems the surviving members of Oceanic Flight 815 are now heading to consoles. **Expect a *Lost* videogame this fall** that'll even feature an online multiplayer mode called something like "Passengers versus The Others."

## Revolutionary hedgehog

Man oh man, it's been rough on ol' Q finding out anything on Nintendo's upcoming console (as much as I push, Mario's peeps simply won't crack). But like my grandpappy always told me, the sun even shines on dog's butt some days. I'm hearing that **Sega will make a *Sonic the Hedgehog* game exclusively for the Nintendo Revolution.** And that's not all: **Spider-Man will also sling his webs across this next-gen system.**



## Download the Chief

In last issue's Rumor Mill, I mentioned that Xbox 360 owners will soon be able to buy full Xbox 1 games via Microsoft's Xbox Live Marketplace. And now I've got the juicy scoop on the first game that Bill Gates' crew will make available. **Look for Bungie's epic first-person shooter *Halo* on the Marketplace sometime before this summer.** I only hope the developer makes this version's multiplayer mode Xbox Live compatible.

■ *Call of Duty 3* as a PS3 launch title? Sounds like a no-brainer.



## BITS OF Q

- Sega's prepping a *Condemned* sequel for the PS3 and the Xbox 360. Hopefully, this first-person survival-horror game will be longer (and have a less predictable ending) than the original.
- Poor Tony Stark—looks like publisher Activision is killing the long awaited *Iron Man* game. We can only say we knew him...well, never.
- Step on the gas and pull the trigger—*Full Auto 2* will race to the PS3 and the 360 next year. 🏎️



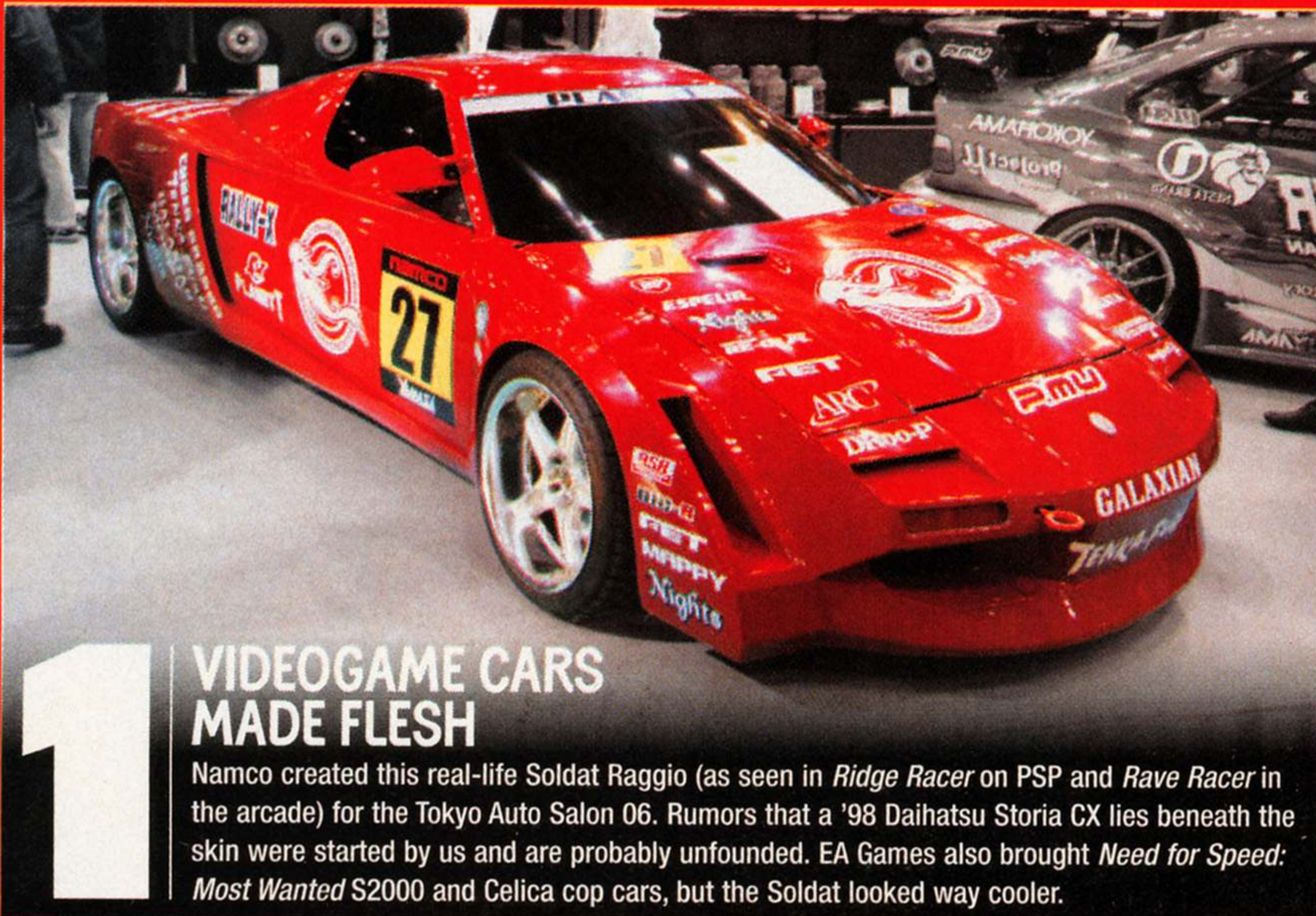
■ *Condemned* will catch a severe case of next-gen sequelitis in 2007.

>> THQ HAS PUSHED BACK THE RELEASE OF ITS XBOX 360 HARDCORE RACING SIMULATION *MOTOGP 06* UNTIL THE SUMMER....>>



# THE HOT 10

This stuff's so hot right now



## 1 VIDEOGAME CARS MADE FLESH

Namco created this real-life Soldat Raggio (as seen in *Ridge Racer* on PSP and *Rave Racer* in the arcade) for the Tokyo Auto Salon 06. Rumors that a '98 Daihatsu Storia CX lies beneath the skin were started by us and are probably unfounded. EA Games also brought *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* S2000 and Celica cop cars, but the Soldat looked way cooler.

## 2 THE 1UP SHOW



It's a certifiable Internet phenomenon, with more gaming content in a half-hour episode than in a week of G4techTV programming. Oh! Get it here: [the1UPshow.1UP.com](http://the1UPshow.1UP.com).

## 3 METAL GEAR SAGA VOL. 1



The 30-minute doc on this preorder bonus disk follows the convoluted *Metal Gear* narrative, starting with the 1960s origins of Big Boss in *MGS3: Snake Eater* and ending with the postmodern mindf\*\*\* of *MGS2: Sons of Liberty*, five decades later. True Hideo Kojima-philes should head over to the *Metal Gear* creator's English audioblog at [www.blog.konami.jp/gshideoblog\\_e](http://www.blog.konami.jp/gshideoblog_e).

## 4 TETRIS DS

History's most addictive puzzle game + stages and minigames based on Nintendo's beloved games + 10-player online action = total fangasm.



## 5 HADOKEN

*Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting* on Xbox Live Arcade. Just say it over and over.

## 6 EXCAVATING E.T.

Check [keithschofield.com](http://keithschofield.com) and click on the "Wintergreen" link to see this minidoc about a bunch of friends who go to the desert and dig up buried (as the legend goes) Atari 2600 *E.T.* carts. Even the game's creator loves it (read his e-mail there, too).

## 7 I AM 8-BIT: ART INSPIRED BY CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES OF THE '80S

We're not much for coffee-table books, but when they're full of game-inspired art (including this painting of Hunter S. Thompson holding a *Duck Hunt* gun), well, damn it, we'll sit down at a table and drink some coffee.



## 8

### RETROZONE

Hit [www.retrousb.com](http://www.retrousb.com) to order authentic game controllers (from the NES, Intellivision, Genesis, and more) retrofitted with USB plugs. Playing emulators on your PC just got a whole lot awesomer.



## 9

### HACKING THE DS

Speaking of emulators, visit the "DS2Key" forum at [1emulation.com](http://1emulation.com) and you'll find an application that'll turn your DS into a Wi-Fi PC game controller. The same app also lets you use the DS as a powerful Wi-Fi hot spot scanner, if you need to "borrow" an online connection....

## 10

### GET CRAFTY

Got a lot of time on your hands? And construction paper? Check out [fccafe.fc2web.com/paper\\_craft.html](http://fccafe.fc2web.com/paper_craft.html) for templates to create paper-craft versions of the Prince from *Katamari Damacy* and a little diorama of the *OutRun* Testarossa, among other cute crap. Tape is for cheaters, remember that.





# COMING SOON

Don't you wish it were November?

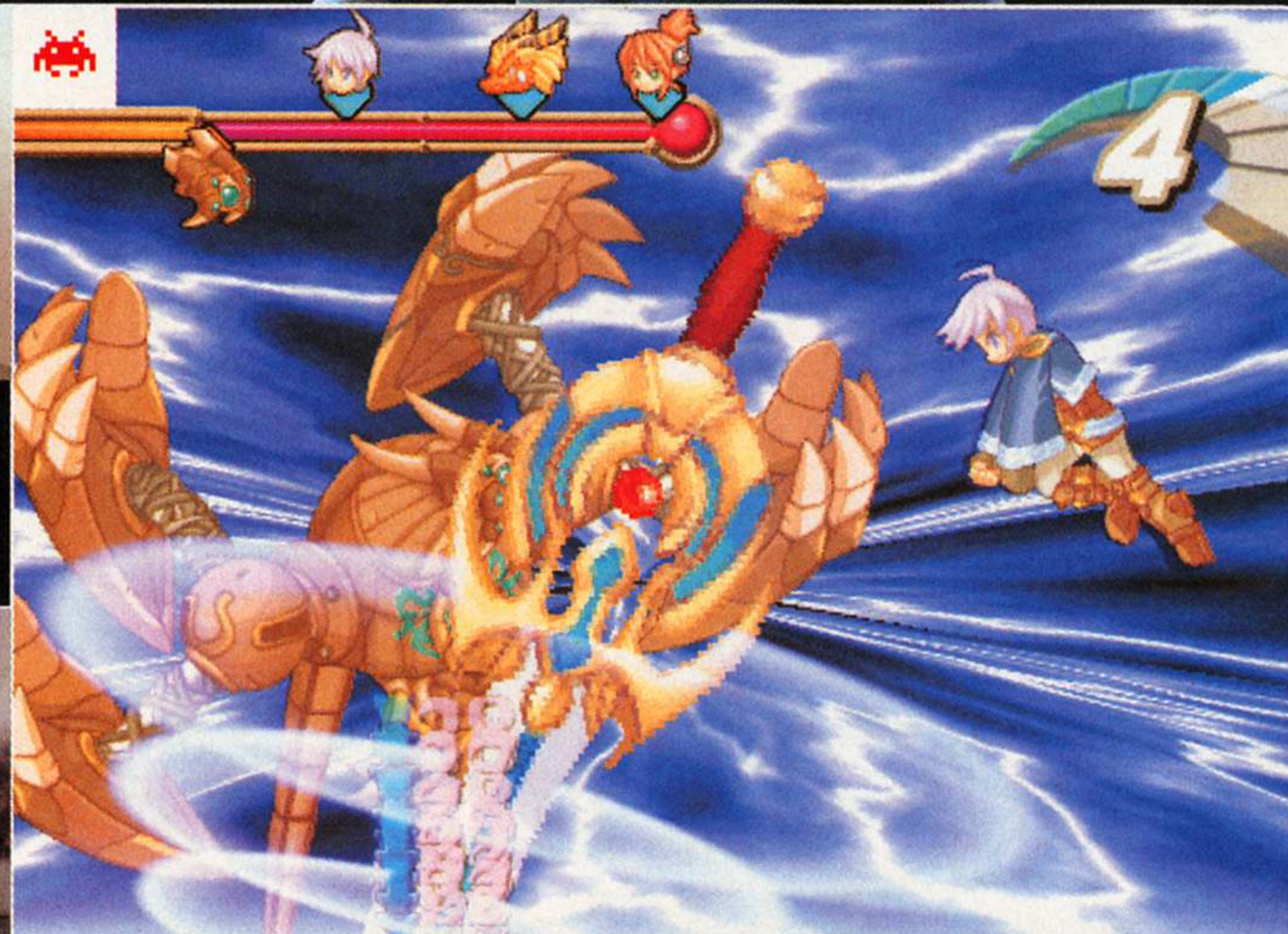


■ This rogue trooper is just wearing this until they find a color darker than black.

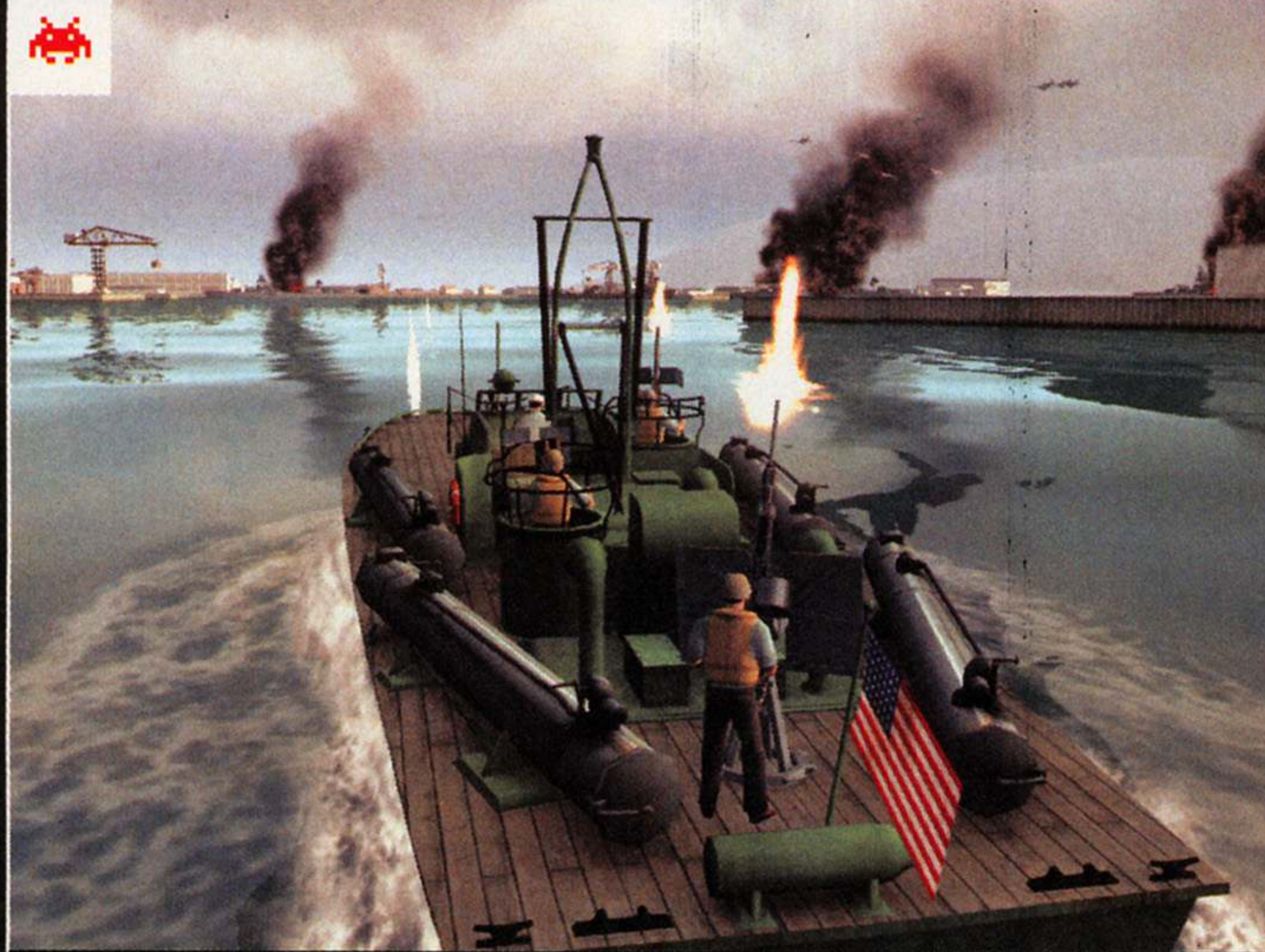
APRIL  
2006



**Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War**  
Namco Bandai • PS2 — Dogfight rivals amid the (totally made-up) skies of Belka.



**Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana 2**  
Nippon Ichi • PS2 — This second *Iris* outing delivers a dual quest: You control both a young male hero (who traverses dungeons and fights monsters) and a young lady (who stays at home and whips up potions). Maybe RPGs could use a little women's lib...



**Battlestations: Midway**  
THQ • PS2/XB — Command fleets of Allied gunboats, subs, and aircraft in large-scale strategic battles against the Axis powers in this refreshingly aquatic take on WWII. A streamlined point-and-click interface should appeal to sedentary History Channel fans.



**Rogue Trooper**  
Eidos • PS2/XB — Just another first-person shooter, you say? As if! What other FPS offers wisecrackin' comments from your hat, gun, and backpack (three objects that have been electronically embedded with the souls of your dead comrades). Creepy!



**Commandos Strike Force**  
Eidos • PS2/XB — This marks the WWII shooter's unprecedented SEVENTH appearance on the Coming Soon list. <clapping>



**MotoGP 4**  
Namco Bandai • PS2 — Not to be confused with the *other* motorbike series called *MotoGP*. That one's only on Xbox.



■ Rampage ain't exactly King Kong.

## Also in April

**Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**  
Bethesda • XB360

**MLB 2K6**  
2K Sports • XB360

**Samurai Champloo**  
Namco Bandai • PS2

**Juka and the Monophonic Menace**  
Orbital Media • GBA

**Rampage: Total Destruction**  
Midway • PS2/GC

**Top Spin 2**  
2K Sports • XB360



■ Top Spin 2 ain't exactly Match Point.

>> BETHESDA SOFTWARES WILL BE RELEASING TWO STAR TREK GAMES THIS YEAR TO COINCIDE WITH STAR TREK'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY... >>



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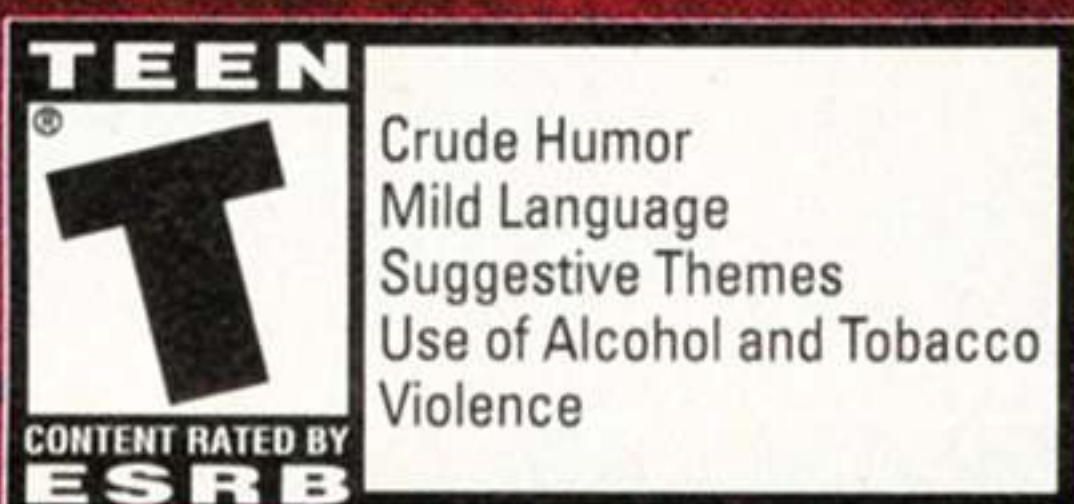
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PlayStation 2







# OPERATION





# DESERT STORM

Rocket launchers? Plasma grenades? An elite soldier craves not these things. Ubisoft brings NATO and a heaping dose of gritty realism to Sin City in **Rainbow Six: Vegas**

By Evan Shamoon



et's face it: If we were terrorists—sick to death of capitalism, Celine Dion, and the American Way™—Las Vegas would be the obvious first stop on our whirlwind North American tour. It's a city characterized by waste, excess, sin, and hundreds of thousands of gallons of scented hair gel. Plus, it's got all the amenities the discerning insurgent could ask for: poker, free liquor, and more "professional" young women than you can handle. What's not to hate (and/or love)?



Find extended interviews, exclusive screenshots, and sneaky footage from our trip to *Rainbow Six: Vegas*' Montreal-based makers in the "EGM Extras" section at [egm.1up.com](http://egm.1up.com).



■ *Vegas* is also due on PlayStation 3. Ubisoft is just waiting for Sony to approve the game's concept.



➤ As the game's title implies, the terror-mongers in Ubisoft's latest squad-based first-person shooter—*Rainbow Six: Vegas*, due on Xbox 360 this September—make Sin City their home. And where you find terrorists, you'll find counterterrorists, hauling along all the high-tech weaponry, gadgetry, and shooting-guys-in-the-face-ery the *Rainbow Six* games are known for.

*Vegas* takes the series to new heights, quite literally—you'll be scaling buildings, diving through windows, and destroying more neon signage than *Godzilla* with a wicked case of explosive diarrhea. *Vegas*

is, in many ways, the perfect playground for destruction, and the team at Ubisoft plans to take full advantage of this fact.

It's also, however, a very conscious stylistic choice, a clear reflection of the team's desire to make this game more friendly to tactical-shooter newbies. "We're trying to make the game more accessible while still keeping the hardcore happy," says Lead Designer Maxime Béland. "And trust me, the audience is hardcore. It's a very fine line, and it's easy to fall between the cracks of these two sides—we're working hard to get ➤







## THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING (POLYGONAL)

While the *Rainbow Six* series has never been interactive Shakespeare, the *Vegas* team hopes this new chapter will usher in an era that sees the player actually caring about the characters. An early glimpse does not seem entirely promising, however: Your character, Logan Keller, is the barrel-chested, scruffy leading man with the itchy trigger finger. He's flanked by two of the oldest clichés in the book: On one side is Michael Walters, a weapons and demolition expert; on the other is Jung Park, a sniper and computer-hacking expert. Oh, and let us not forget Joanna,



the lone, disembodied female navigator, whose velvety voice streams through your

headset as you clear rooms first and ask questions never. (Note: Members of the Ding Chavez fan club will be happy to hear that the cheery Latino badass will be the one character making a return appearance in *Vegas*.)

More impressive, however, is the level of textural detail at which the team is digitally re-creating these characters—a level impossible on lesser hardware. Indeed, as is quickly becoming status quo on Xbox 360, these are less the sort of character we're used to controlling, and more the sort we're used to watching in prerendered cut-scenes. Individually rendered fingers? Try individually rendered fingernails. Character eyes and heads that follow the action? Think of this as the next logical step: eyes and heads that move independently of one another. Dynamic, procedural lighting means that when a character moves his arm, the lighting on the rest of his body will change accordingly. All in all, it's a remarkable effort and a paean to the gods of realism, the likes of which you'd be hard-pressed to find elsewhere.



New allies





► this right." After developer Red Storm's somewhat disappointing *Rainbow Six: Lockdown*, Ubisoft has brought the new game back in-house at *Rainbow Six 3*'s original studio in Montreal and has thrown a team of 150 people at the title, which has been in development since early 2004.

So, what should you expect? Less dying, for one: The team is adding a *Halo*-style health system, whereby avoiding fire will give you time to heal, meaning you'll ultimately spend less time picking "Retry Mission" from a menu screen. "We want to

go back to the core values of the series," says Senior Producer Chadi Lebbos. "This is something that was not really addressed in previous titles. We know this is a very important franchise; we understand what people want and why they want it, and we're working toward that goal."

#### Wall guy

As is becoming de rigueur for first-person shooters, *Vegas* requires the player to make frequent and intelligent use of environmental cover. It's a significant change

**"Gameplay will be very cat-and-mouse. Kills will not come easy."**

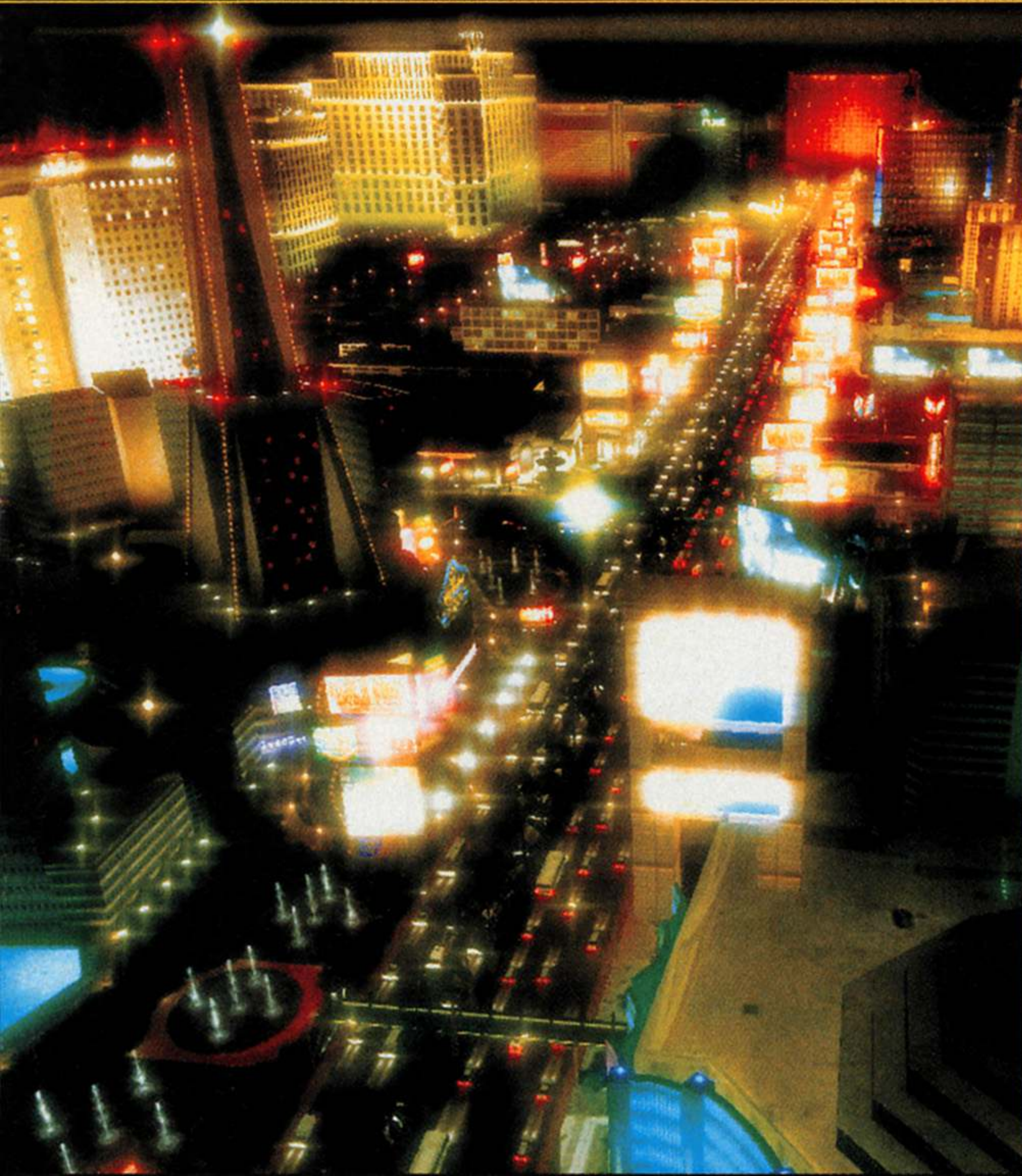
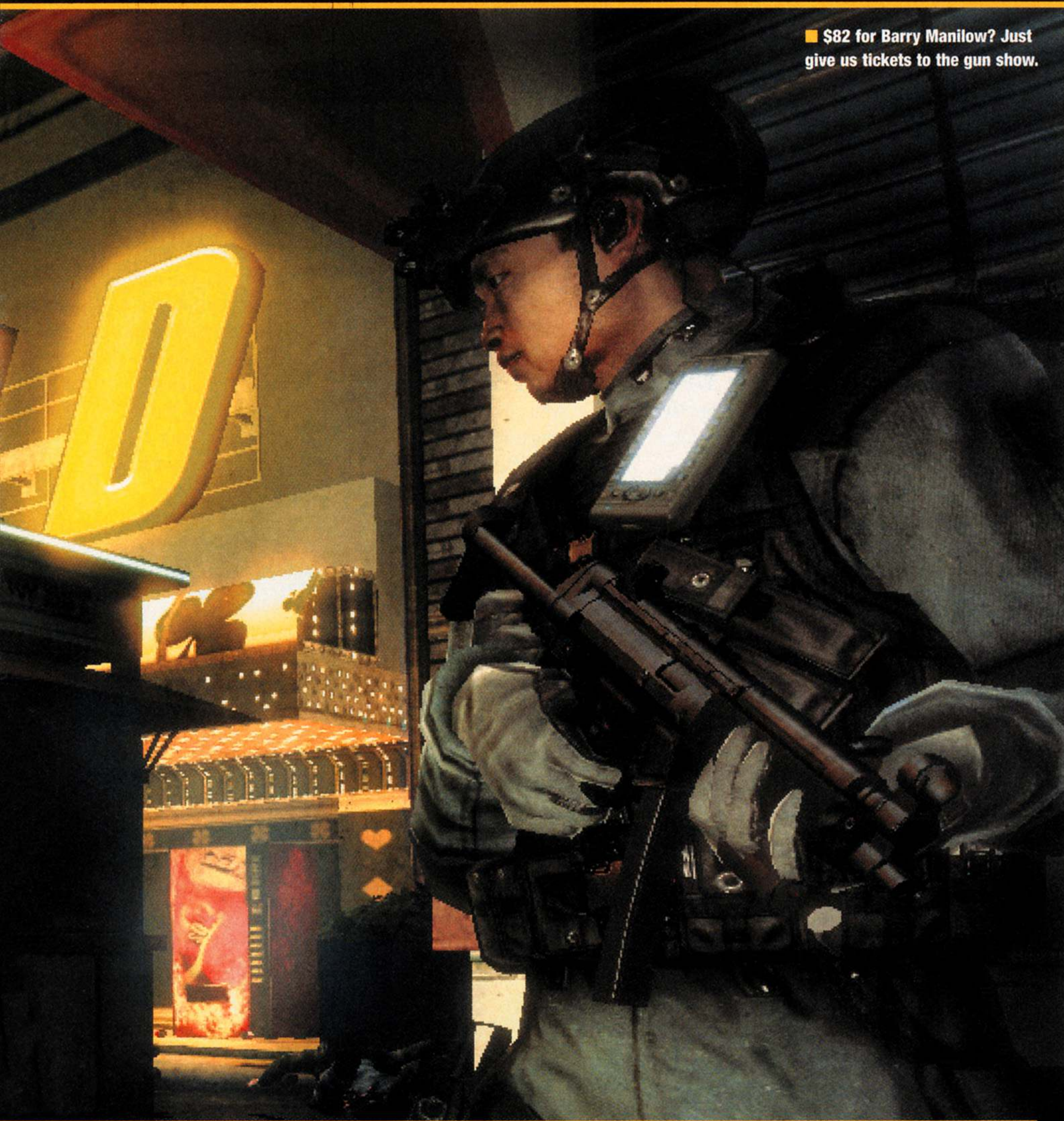
—Lead Designer Maxime Béland

in the pacing and style of the action: Walls, slot machines, and various other Vegas-centric obstacles will all provide protection from enemy bullets, and the ability to properly navigate your way behind these objects will be vital to your success. Blind

fire and "no look" suppressing fire will be important components as well; the action switches to a third-person, over-the-shoulder camera during these moments, much like in 360 launch title *Perfect Dark Zero*. "Gameplay will be very cat and mouse," ►

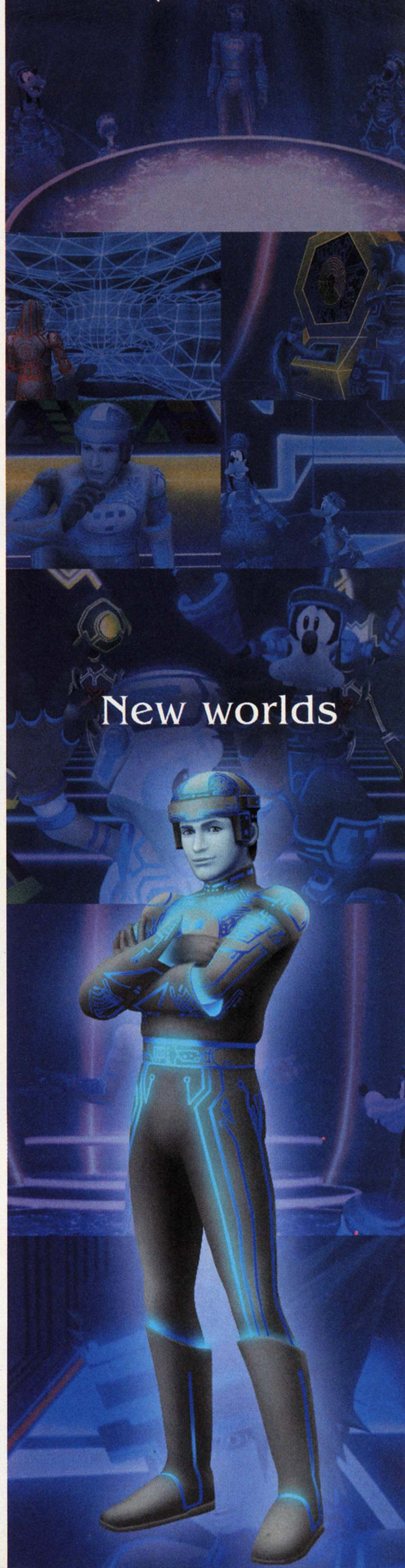


■ \$82 for Barry Manilow? Just give us tickets to the gun show.



## WHAT RAPPELS IN VEGAS...

In order to create a compelling recreation of Sin City, the *Vegas* team has taken a ground-up approach. Our behind-the-scenes look was promising: The Strip (along with the infamous Fremont Street) is being rendered in striking detail, with all the garish, extravagant charm it's known for. Las Vegas might not seem like as much of a geographical challenge as, say, New York City, but it's easy to forget that the Strip is roughly four miles long and chock-full of casinos, nightclubs, and hotels—nearly all of which will be included in the game... at least from the outside. Licensing issues will prevent the casinos' interiors from making their way into *Vegas*; it's perhaps unsurprising that the management over at Caesar's Palace is resistant to the idea of virtual terrorists taking and killing virtual innocent hostages amongst its virtual blackjack tables. P\*\*\*ies.



New worlds



## MULTI-CULTI-PLAYER

Of course, once you polish off the single-player campaign, it's the multiplayer modes that Ubisoft hopes will keep you sucking on the *Rainbow Six* teat for months afterward. To this end, the team has redoubled its efforts, adding new modes, options, and mechanics to deepen the battles.

For one thing, the multiplayer contests incorporate the same use of cover as the campaign mode; when you get up against a wall, the camera swiftly moves into third-person mode for a better view of the action and allows for various forms of suppressing fire. It's a significant alteration. While this mode was not yet playable at the time of our visit, we can imagine (up to) 16-player games of duck-and-cover, cat-and-mouse warfare being fairly intense.

Also key to the equation is customizability. Each

player will be able to tailor his or her character in various ways, ranging from gender and hairstyle to various camouflage styles, face paint, and forms of headgear. But your bod is only half the battle—the weapons themselves can be custom-fitted with suppressors, scopes, flashlights, and laser pointers, allowing for considerable variation in armament. Various accomplishments will unlock items in the multiplayer mode. Score 20 head shots, for example, and a brand-new pink-and-black camo flak jacket could make your ensemble all the rage this fall. It's all about the bragging rights, as the game essentially integrates a standard online role-playing game element into a first-person shooter...without the flaming swords or Fedoras of *Ultimate Destiny*.

On a more practical level, the developers are building an entirely new matchmaking system, with the

hopes of avoiding unfair pwnage and making the game more accessible. "The first time you put your DVD into the drive, you're not going to end up in a game with people who have been playing for 200 hours," promises Lead Multiplayer Designer Jean-Pascal Cambiotti. A host of new game modes will vary the action, and objectives will actually change within levels; you may be asked to infiltrate a building, plant some C-4 at a door, take out an enemy encampment, and then get to the hostages, all within the course of a single level.

The developers are also including a co-op mode, with all of the same levels and objectives as in the single-player campaign. You'll be able to use your customized character from Xbox Live, and the game will support two-player splitscreen play, as well as four-player matches over Xbox Live.

**"For the first time we've got...a designer dedicated solely to A.I."**

—Lead Designer Maxime Béland

■ **Saving face:** You can point your rifle blindly around corners to lay down suppressive fire.

► says Béland. "Kills will not come easy, and expect fewer, harder enemies than in previous games in the series."

There's also talk of a riot-style ballistic shield, which will provide movable cover. "Realism, tactical strategy, and close-quarters battles—that's what *Rainbow* is all about," says Lebbos.

As mentioned before, the game is also no longer limited to solid ground. With so much of Las Vegas towering some 80 stories above street level, the city provides countless opportunities to scale

up and rappel down buildings. Standard rappelling, fast-roping (quickly sliding down a rope, slowing the fall with only clenched hands), and invert rappelling (also known as Australian rappelling, for those of you without a TiVo topped off with the Military Channel) will all be part of your acrobatic arsenal. Know that some terrorists are holding hostages and/or eating small children two floors below you? Climb out the window, secure a line, rappel down the side of the building, and crash through the window, catching the

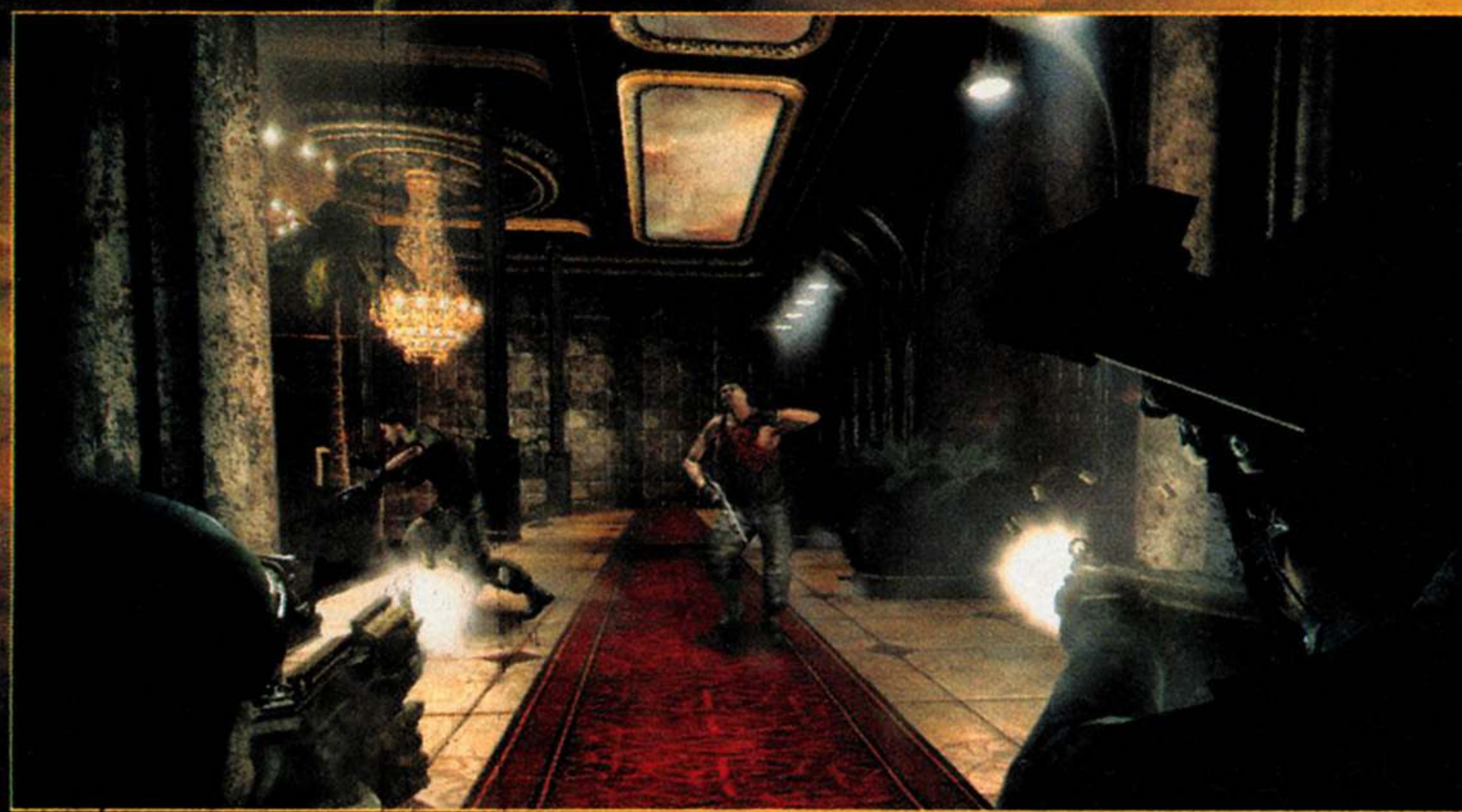
bastards off guard and giving them a taste of good old American justice in the process. "Essentially, the next-gen systems will allow us to do what we've always wanted," says Béland. "That is, to bring all the cool stuff—the stuff we used to have in cut-scenes—to the actual game. To let you control it. Basically, that's our goal."

### Special forces effects

More than perhaps any other shooter on the map, *Vegas* has a realistic gameplay style that demands corresponding visual

realism. Though the code is still very early in development, some graphical flourishes are already taking shape. Smash through the aforementioned window, for example, and the glass shatters into thousands of shards in real time. Likewise, an impressive blur effect deepens the fog of war as you peek out from behind cover into a hailstorm of enemy fire. The environments are full of kiosks, gambling machines, storefronts, and various other altars of consumer worship, all of which can be effectively blown to smithereens or used





to tactical advantage. More impressive is the detail being put into character models themselves: While not necessarily the most distinctive individuals you've ever laid eyes upon (after seeing the main character for the first time, the attendant 1UP.com editor asked, "Is that Sam Fisher's brother?"), these characters are rendered in frighteningly exquisite detail.

To capture the specific movements of the soldiers, the team is using motion capture extensively and applying it to nearly every appropriate animation in the game—thanks in no small part to a new, Ubisoft-owned mo-cap studio just down the street from the enormous, 1,600-person development house. Aaron Gilman, a well-

established Hollywood animator (his work includes *The Matrix Revolutions*, *Hellboy*, and *Constantine*, to name a few), has been brought on to improve nearly all aspects of the game's animation—including maintaining its human realism but also allowing for enough variety to differentiate one character from the next. The motions of your two squadmates will be captured from individual actors, for example, and the voracity with which Béliand and Gilman argue about seemingly simple decisions—like, say, whether hero trooper Michael Walters will draw his gun in an upward or a downward arc upon entering a room—hints at the level of thought being put into such decisions. The idea, quite simply, is that when you see ➤



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PlayStation®2



Mild Blood  
Use of Alcohol  
Violence









■ Not pictured: Senior citizens gambling away their pensions playing nickel slots. Vegas, baby!

► one of your men moving out of the corner of your eye, you'll instinctively know who he is based on how he moves.

Of course, all of this attention to detail requires something of utmost importance: superior, reliable A.I. To this end, the team knows it has its work cut out for it. "We all know that making good A.I. is very hard," says Béland. "For the first time [at the studio], we've got not only a s\*\*\*load of programmers, but also a designer dedicated solely to A.I. It's a game that's not just the people you're shooting—it's also the people that are following you." Easier said than done, certainly, but the team seems well aware of the task at hand. "In old *Rainbow Six* games, the enemies were in deathmatch mode," he continues. "Now, they're in *team* deathmatch mode."

This applies to the behavior of both your enemies and your squadmates.

Béland explains: "You play some [of the old] *Rainbow* games, and sometimes you feel like you should leave [your squadmates] behind and go into the map by yourself. Now, we've built some mechanics where you won't want to do that—you'll want and need your team with you." Squadmates will be proactive about offering up relevant advice, and a D-pad-based orders system will allow you to give commands with a single button press rather than the ways of old—namely, gazing directly at the spot where you want a player to go. The developers assure us that these commands will be context sensitive, and that advanced players will be able to layer these commands chronologically as well. Essentially, the idea is that they'll provide the same level of control as with what you'd find in *Rainbow Six 3*—with signifi-

**"[The TV show] 24 is definitely a big inspiration for us."**

—Lead Designer Maxime Béland

cantly less hassle.

While the developers are staying mum on story details, we do know that the game will start in Mexico and then, due to unforeseen circumstances, call for your expertise in Vegas, where the vast majority of the action will play out. The game takes place over the course of 12 hours, from sunset to sunrise—a nod to a show that's been on the televisions of many team members. "24 is definitely a big inspiration for us," says Béland with a wink. The team is also keeping its technology under wraps. We know that

the game will not be using the Unreal Engine (as did *Rainbow Six 3*), nor will it be using the fantastic engine behind *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* (which, incidentally, was developed by the same mad genius who created the tech that powers both *Peter Jackson's King Kong* and *Beyond Good & Evil*).

#### Lifesavers

And according to the developers, the game isn't just about shooting. "At the end of the day, we want to create an experience for the player," claims Béland.



**“We really want to get the player engaged, to create emotional experiences.”**

—Lead Designer Maxime Béland



■ Surprise party: As this sequence shows, these Rainbow guys know how to clear a room.



“It’s not just, ‘load the map, play the map, do my objectives, tell me a story in a 2D interface, and load the next map.’ We really want to get the player engaged, to create emotional experiences.”

To achieve this, *Vegas* doesn’t use any cut-scenes whatsoever; rather, the

developers are relying on the smart use of environmental storytelling, à la *Half-Life 2*, to get points across. We’re shown an example: a screenshot of a dead office worker slumped over his keyboard, with a “Happy Birthday Daddy” Crayola drawing tacked to his cubicle wall. It’s not subtle,

but it’s very much in-game; Béland repeats the phrase “emotional hostage rescue” nearly a dozen times in the course of the day we spent with him, and a point is clearly being made to achieve this end. “The difference between *Rainbow* and a lot of other shooters is

that we are not about killing terrorists but about saving lives. So we came up with some cool mechanics and story elements based around this concept—saving lives.” High-res head-shot simulator or Hallmark Channel first-person shooter? We find out this September. 🐯

## DON’T SHOOT THE WHITE TIGER!

Five Things We’d Like to Do With Our Virtual Weaponry in **Rainbow Six: Vegas**

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>1 Shoot Siegfried.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>2 Shoot Roy.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>3 Shoot Celine Dion.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>4 Shoot Celine Dion again, just to make sure.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>5 Flee the country before any of the aforementioned entertainers, their publicists, and/or the FBI gets ahold of this magazine.</p>
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# review crew

since when did all the games start coming out in march?

## THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

**I** hate online games. Well, that's not quite true—I hate setting up online multiplayer sessions for a game that's not actually on sale yet. Because the only people we can play against are other reviewers and the game's developers.

So that's what we do. We call up the game publisher's minions and ask them to organize a full session (or multiple sessions) for us. But sometimes we're met with blank stares. "It's pretty rare that other mags request an online match," said a rep for publisher Codemasters. "EGM is the only one that asked for one for *ToCA3*." (To be fair, a GameSpy.com reviewer also joined a session we played in—and it's GameSpy policy, as well as 1UP.com's and GameSpot's, to only review games with online components after they're at retail. IGN posts reviews based on prerelease multiplayer but will often revisit a game's online play after it's on sale.)

Even with a game like *SOCOM 3*, we didn't find many other reviewers to frag. "There weren't many folks requesting time," said a Sony PR guy. "We sent the invites to the full...distribution list, which is about 80 people or so. A few of the [online site reviewers] were there or played in other sessions, but not many others..." Ditto this month with *Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers*: "You are the only one [that asked]," said a company rep.

Aren't multiplayer modes as important to test out as the single-player stuff? Isn't eight-player *Full Auto* more fun than two-player splitscreen? As a reviewer, it's depressing to know that some of my peers don't bother to fully play the games they're rating. And if I were a game developer, I'd be *pissed*.

—Demian Linn  
Reviews Editor



GAME OF  
THE MONTH

# METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SUBSISTENCE

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# REVIEW CREW

Just who do these clowns think they are?

## DAN "SHOE" HSU • Editor-in-Chief

Despite his next-gen fever, Shoe's spending most of his waking hours on his DS. He's looking to beat *Advance Wars DS* for the third freakin' time.

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



## MARK MACDONALD • Executive Editor

When Mark isn't playing *Final Fantasy XI* online—dressed in costume while listening to Ratt—he's in expensive therapy. The best.

**Now Playing:** *FFXI, Dancing Undercover*  
**Blog:** egmmark.1UP.com



## JENNIFER TSAO • Managing Editor

Jennifer visited her ancestral homeland of China this month, so she had to ditch *Geometry Wars* for some gaming of the portable variety.

**Now Playing:** *Tetris DS, Castlevania DS*  
**Blog:** egmjennifer.1UP.com



## CRISPIN BOYER • Senior Editor

Unfortunately, *24: The Game* didn't answer Crispin's two biggest Qs about the show: When does Jack Bauer eat, and when does he take a dump?

**Now Playing:** *24: The Game, Guitar Hero*  
**Blog:** egmcrispin.1UP.com



## SHANE BETTENHAUSEN • Previews Editor

When he's not busy defending *Metal Gear Solid 3*, Shane enjoys beating interns (and Demian) at *Soul Calibur III*.

**Now Playing:** *Tetris DS, Soul Calibur III, MGS3: Subsistence, Flipnic*  
**Blog:** egmshane.1UP.com



## DEMIAN LINN • Reviews Editor

Demian's changed his politics after playing *Full Spectrum Warrior*. Turns out the terrorists can't be beaten. Even with infinite respawns.

**Now Playing:** *Soul Calibur III, World of Warcraft (PC)*  
**Blog:** egmdemian.1UP.com



## BRYAN INTIHAR • News Editor

This boy's sick and tired of hearing how *Splinter Cell*'s Internet play is super-duper awesome. Bryan prefers a *Solid* online experience.

**Now Playing:** *Kingdom Hearts II, MGS3: Sub.*  
**Blog:** egmbryan.1UP.com



## ROBERT ASHLEY • Staff Reviewer

In Robert's dreams he's stalked by strings of blue and white *Beatmania* notes that descend like guillotines onto his hopelessly fumbling hands.

**Now Playing:** *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan!*  
**Blog:** robertashley.1UP.com



## ROBERT COFFEY • Staff Reviewer

To unwind from the hectic day to day of working from home, Robert unwinds by punching people. They punch him back. A lot.

**Now Playing:** *Fight Night Round 3, Resident Evil 4*  
**Blog:** citizen\_pain.1UP.com



## SHAWN ELLIOTT • Staff Reviewer

After a taste of the sissy "fantasy" world in *Chibi Robo*, Shawn fled back to the harsh worlds of his beloved can-vandal sim with +10 graf bomb.

**Now Playing:** *Call of Duty 2*  
**Blog:** egmshawn.1UP.com



## GREG FORD • Staff Reviewer

Want to get on Greg's good side? Quell his Xbox Live addiction by feeding him some easy achievement point techniques. He's easy like that.

**Now Playing:** *King Kong (XB360), Full Auto*  
**Blog:** egm\_ford.1UP.com



## NICH MARAGOS • Staff Reviewer

After a taste of the harsh "real" world in *Getting Up*, Nich fled back to the fantasy worlds of his beloved RPGs with +10 haste.

**Now Playing:** *Chibi Robo, Digital Devil Saga 2*  
**Blog:** debaser.1UP.com



## JOHN RICCIARDI • International Editor

Just when he thought it was safe to stop buying Nintendo handhelds for a while, along comes the DS Lite to empty Ricciardi's wallet yet again. Drat!

**Now Playing:** *Brain Age*  
**Blog:** johntv.1UP.com



## KATHLEEN SANDERS • Staff Reviewer

This month Kathleen tried to embrace her "hater" and "hardcore" reputation. She still knows unicorns and puppies kick ass, though.

**Now Playing:** *Age of Empires DS*  
**Blog:** cookiecups.1UP.com



## GREG SEWART • Staff Reviewer

When not reviewing the games none of the EGM staffers wants to play, Sewart spends his time with *PGR3* and *Mega Man X Collection*.

**Now Playing:** *Project Gotham Racing 3*  
**Blog:** stewy.1UP.com



## JUSTIN SPEER • Staff Reviewer

From *Pirates of Dark Water* to *Alien vs. Predator*, Justin can't stop playing beat-em-ups lately. For him, there will never be a "final fight."

**Now Playing:** *Final Fight 3, Warship Gunner 2*  
**Blog:** zepyulos.1UP.com



■ The folks at **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** and **1UP.COM** are always willing to provide honest opinions and shouts of "Yes, you can!" when we need them most.

## 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](http://www.esrb.org) for the full lowdown.





Xbox 360



# FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

## Punch drunk love

**ROBERT C:** How much do I love this pugilist? Enough that my controller is coated with the eraser-like rubber dust my blistering thumbs scrubbed from the analog sticks. I can't stop playing.

I'll get the bad stuff out of the way first. *Fight Night Round 3* drops the rankings sheet in favor of something far grayer, taking away the rewards of watching your tooth-and-nail rise to the top. Worse, excessive corporate sponsorship force-feeds you commercials and supplants the achievement-based trophies of earlier entries with lame corporate hardware. Would you rather be the Under Armour winner or Knockout King? I thought so.

That said, *Round 3* is simply amazing and extraordinary if you can run it on a high-def TV. I've really enjoyed all the *Fight Night* games, but this one I love. Obviously, the 360 version varies from the others graphically, but it's how it uses those graphics that matters. Without the PS2/XB games' health and stamina bars, you're forced to gauge your fighter's condition through body language, movement, and

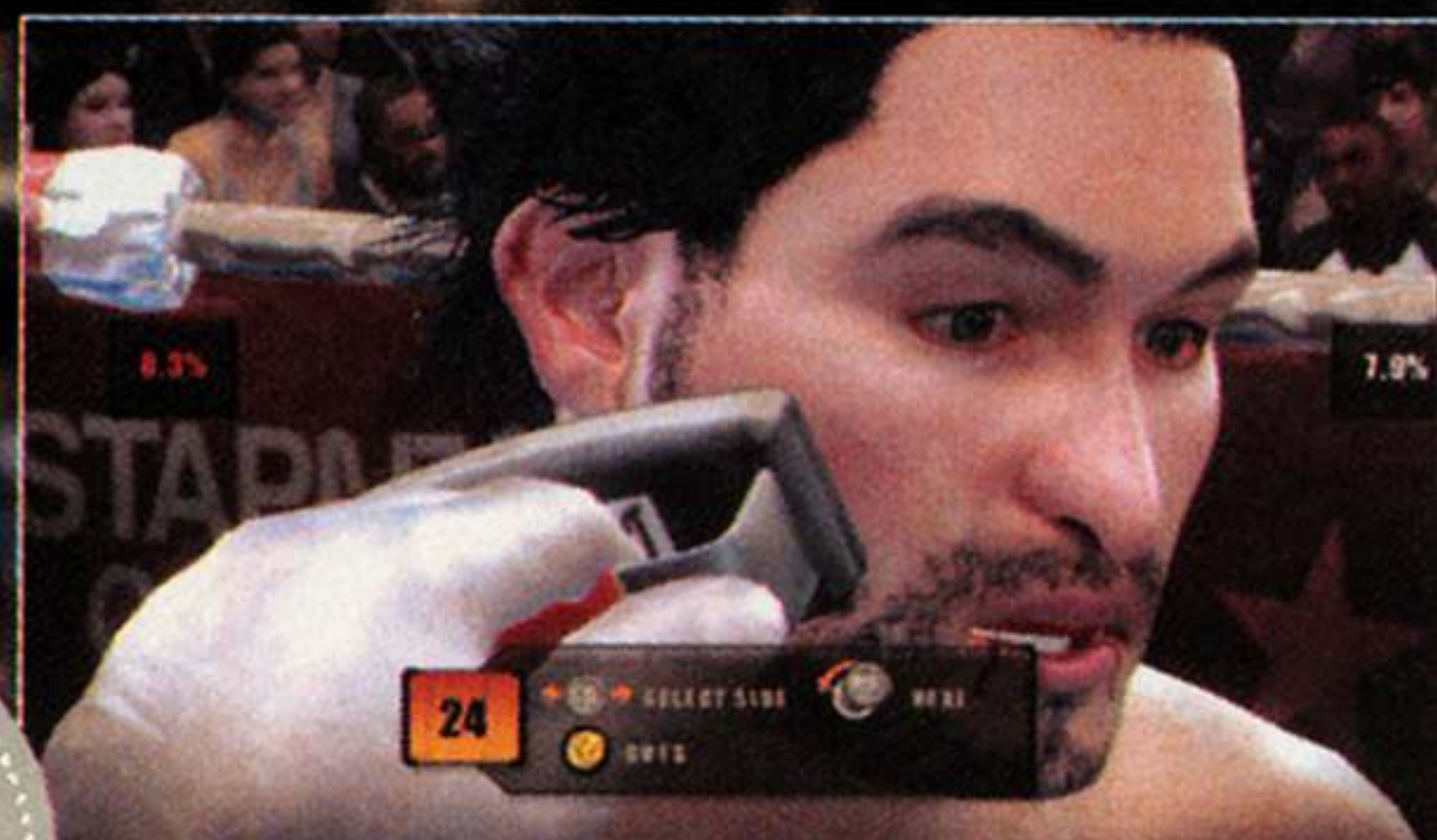
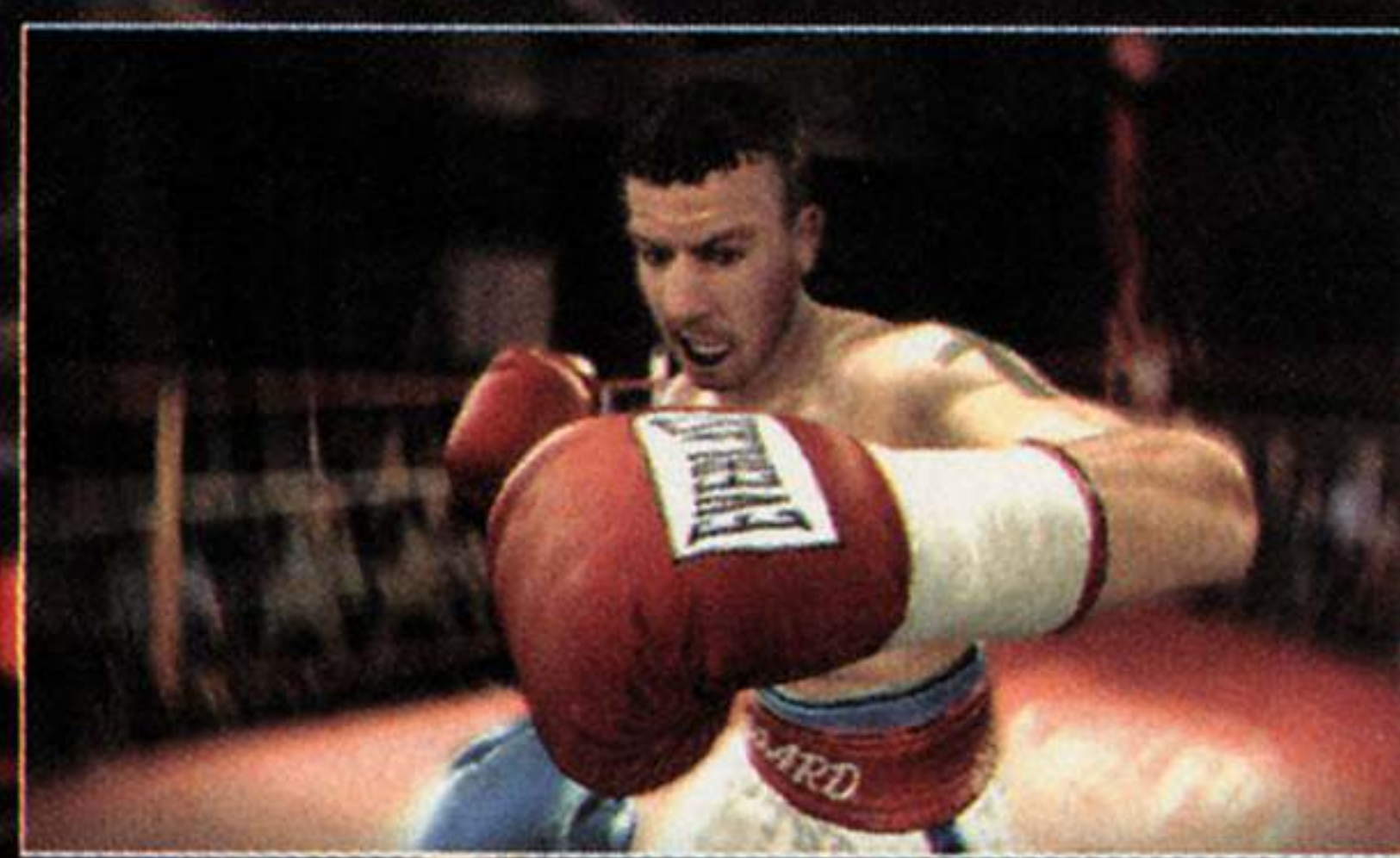
facial expression—and the onscreen action is precise enough to do this perfectly.

*Round 3* addresses the imbalances of the previous games for a more realistic but still gripping experience. Super punches are much riskier now, so you can't lean on them for cheap victories (ditto for relying on excessive jabbing and body punching to outpoint opponents). The A.I. is improved as well, making for dramatic bouts even on the easy setting.

**BRYAN:** It's late in round 7 and my unrelenting hooks to De La Hoya's midsection (delivered via the two analog sticks) have him sucking for air and dropping his hands—time for the knockout. I connect with a devastating haymaker that ripples his cheeks and sends blood spewing from his mouth in slow-mo. Eight...nine...10, and he's down for the count! Not only do *Round 3*'s triple-A visuals make me feel all warm and fuzzy, but its subtle graphical cues tell me when to play defensively and when to let loose. And I had to pay extra attention here, as

CPU opponents are tougher (actually, too tough at times) and finally mimic the fighting styles of their real-life namesakes. The next *Round*, though, needs to play up rivalries in career mode more.

**G. FORD:** Things have gotten ugly for the *Fight Night* series, and I'm not just talking about the ring girls, who apparently came direct from the Skeleto Modeling Agency. The knockout punch I delivered to one sorry opponent resulted in a spray of sweat from his pate and about a pint of blood from his mug. The near photo-realism EA has achieved with *Round 3* borders on disgusting perfection. So yeah, I love the look, and I appreciate the knockout-based, hard-hits matches and new stances and such as well. But the game still plays very close to *Round 2*, and I gotta side with Robert in bemoaning the loss of the ranking ladder. Who doesn't love the methodical ascent, finally taking it to a rival you eyeballed months before? It'd make those skull-deforming haymakers all the more beautiful.



**Portable Ring**  
Like its next-gen debut, *Fight Night* on PSP will definitely tickle the graphic whore's graphic-whore spot. And despite the system's one-handed-the-back single analog stick, the game's developers have done an admirable job adapting their series' signature punch controls for on-the-go sock and block.



### Other Contenders

While the other home versions of *Fight Night Round 3* are inferior to the 360 game, they're not bad—just different. Due to their graphical limitations, the PS2 and Xbox editions include traditional health and stamina bars while overcompensating with the gore. They do, however, sport the same A.I. upgrades and boxer customization options as their big brother. So expect the same great game, but without all the next-gen flash.



**Good:** Outstanding action with graphics to match  
**Bad:** That spooky Burger King guy is actually in the game  
**Beat the Pants Off Big-Name Fighters:** To unlock their trunks



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

9.0	8.0	8.0
ROBERT C.	BRYAN	G. FORD

Publisher: EA Sports  
Developer: EA Chicago  
Players: 1-2 (2 online)  
ESRB: Teen

www.easports.com



# Winged MARC ECKO

**Marc Ecko, designer of *Getting Up:*  
*Contents Under Pressure***

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Xbox 360

ONLINE



# GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

## What's this war good for? Justifying your \$400 purchase

**SHOE:** I hit the gritty, sun-baked streets of Mexico City with my three squadmates. Everything's eerily quiet—no traffic, no civilians, not even a squeak from some distant relative of Speedy Gonzalez. A recent military coup has everyone terrified and hiding, so it's just the empty city and us...and a bunch of out-of-sight, armed rebels. I'm not scared, though. It's 2013 and we're packing the best tech an inflated U.S. military budget can buy. Suddenly, a bullet whizzes past. We slam into the nearest wall for cover. A quick peek around the corner doesn't divulge anything, so we send in our low-altitude recon drone. A red blip appears on our heads-up display (HUD), revealing our foe hiding behind a car. As I take aim, waiting for his head to pop up, more red blips dot my visor. And more. And more. Crap, a dozen rebels are waiting for us around the corner. I catch a brief glimpse of a couple of them sprinting off to the side, getting into better positions, perhaps

preparing to flank us. Now I'm scared.

THIS is how a military/tactical shooter ought to be. Intense. Exciting. Unpredictable. The A.I. has been training in the off-season and is noticeably better than the mess that was *Ghost Recon 2* (you'll still see plenty of bonehead moments, however, like teammates running around out of cover). The environments are huge and wide open, with danger coming at you from 360 degrees, and numerous paths, alleys, and backstreets to get from point A to B, giving you a real, tangible sense of "being there." The action's varied, from solo missions (which give you a welcome break from baby-sitting your three amigos) to manning a helicopter's chain gun to hiding out and ordering a gunship to take out all targets in an area (while you watch the carnage via remote camera).

THIS is how a next-gen game ought to be. The streets look so real. Trees sway when grenades explode near them. If you're running for cover

and need to crouch to avoid gunfire, you will slide into place, animating like your life depended on it. *GRAW* looks and sounds good. *Really good.*

THIS is how multiplayer ought to be. Endless customization options. Support for 16-player co-op (!) play (or versus, if you prefer). *GRAW's* multiplayer is incredibly ambitious and fun—it will dominate Xbox Live for a great part of 2006.

If you can overcome its fairly steep learning curve, occasional A.I. hiccups, and periodic difficulty spikes, you will be floored by *GRAW*. It's truly a next-gen masterpiece.

**G. FORD:** Sometimes it takes an online-gaming session to really get to know someone. I mean, who would've guessed that Shoe was a relentless flanker? Every time I branched off the main path while playing *GRAW* online, Shoe would be there, ready to go all Scarface on me...the jerk. And maybe he's just afraid to tackle problems

### The wonderful world of advanced warfighting your friends

Our reviewers spent more than 15 hours combined in multiplayer, and they didn't come close to discovering all the different ways to play the game. That's 'cause *GRAW* rivals *Halo 2* and *Perfect Dark Zero* as one of the most customizable shooters around. Tweak this, change that, and you've got yourself a new style of war to fight. The developers are already at work on downloadable extras, too.

Two complaints, however. Sucky thing No. 1: You can't just browse all *GRAW* matches—you have to pick one of the many modes first and then find a game of that type. No. 2: Although you can change and then save your match settings, you can't name them (à la *Halo 2*), so keep some crib notes handy. No biggies, though.

Here's a small sampling of what multiplayer *GRAW* has to offer.

#### Campaign

It's like playing the single-player game cooperatively *with up to 15 other people* (online or via system link)! Turn off explosives and respawns to keep it challenging.

#### Co-op Territory

Your team has to keep the enemy A.I. from taking over the bases on the map...and those computer guys are *aggressive*. Try ▶



**Good:** Most next-gen-looking game yet, great multiplayer  
**Bad:** It's not the most accessible game in the world  
**A.I. Teammates:** Usually more trouble than they're worth



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

10

SHOE

9.0

G. FORD

9.5

CHE

Publisher: Ubisoft  
Developer: Ubisoft/Red Storm  
Players: 1-4 (2-16 online or system link)  
ESRB: Teen

www.ghostrecon.com





See what your squadmate—or when available, a recon drone, tank, or helicopter—sees.

A pop-up cam with news feeds and instructions from the folks in charge.

Your squad's health. Green is good.

An enemy, flagged on your heads-up display (HUD). The 100.0% is his health, while the 16.8 is your distance to him. The larger red diamond indicates another bogey way back there.

Your squad, clumped together like a trio of idiots. One is even facing away from the obvious danger. Gee, thanks for watching my back...literally.


head-on, but at least it made for a good challenge. (Yes, I learned...eventually.) But multiplayer options abound, letting you craft matches that are as tense or haphazard as you'd like, and while no single aspect jumps out as wildly innovative, collectively, *GRAW*'s slick online shenanigans would be enough to carry the game, much like *Perfect Dark Zero*'s do for that game.

Thing is, they don't have to, thanks to a rock-solid single-player campaign. No, the story doesn't do anything new; the A.I. could use some occasional help (allies will walk into your line of fire and the like); and some sections are way too frustrating (though easier when you figure out where the enemy trigger points are). But the controls, which easily could have been a mess, perform admirably, and the near-photo-realistic graphics feature the level of detail we'd expect from a next-gen release.

Between the intense single-player campaign

and solid multiplayer, this *Ghost Recon* is one of the 360's most well-rounded games so far...just be sure to keep track of which of your friends are the flankers.

**1UP.COM—CHE:** Enlisting for a tour of duty with the latest episode of *Ghost Recon* is like getting two sweet games on one disc. Ubisoft has wisely sculpted both the online and offline sides of its military shooter to be distinctly different products, each playing to the strengths of its relative field. In single-player mode, *Warfighter* retains the one-shot-buys-the-farm tension of the previous titles (well, one head shot at least) while giving other aspects of the gameplay a much-needed overhaul. The revamped third-person perspective does an incredible job of creating a sense of spatial awareness, so you always know where your soldier stands in relation to enemy tracer fire and just how well entrenched behind cover he is.

Combine that with a new shaky-cam effect when sprinting and the ability to slide as well as dive headfirst, and *Warfighter* is the only game in town that does justice to the third-person gameplay mechanic. More importantly, it seems Ubisoft has listened to past complaints of shoddy A.I. and ultralinear, by-the-numbers scenarios with little room for solo improvisation. *Warfighter*'s most rewarding moments come when you hunt for insurgents with your hovering Cypher drone and coordinate flanking maneuvers against respectable adversarial A.I., who, thankfully, also miss as often as you do—but much less so on the hard difficulty option. As with most *Ghost Recon* titles, multiplayer will give this game longevity beyond its expected shelf life. In both online versus and co-op, *Warfighter* feels like a baby-step evolution from its single-player leap, but it retains the slower-paced, *SOCOM*-like bouts of explosive action mixed with patient, careful stalking. As a package, *Warfighter* is by far the best *Ghost Recon* game in the series and a hands-down must-buy shooter for the 360. 

### Advanced warfighting (cont.)



▶ this setup for some truly awesome awesomeness: one extra life, infinite enemies, just the home base, and a 5- or 10-minute time limit. We had to fight off never-ending waves of rebels charging toward us (think *Black Hawk Down*, the movie). When we started running out of ammo, we had to make bullet-dodging runs to pick up

the dead enemies' guns. We died off one by one...but damn that was cool.

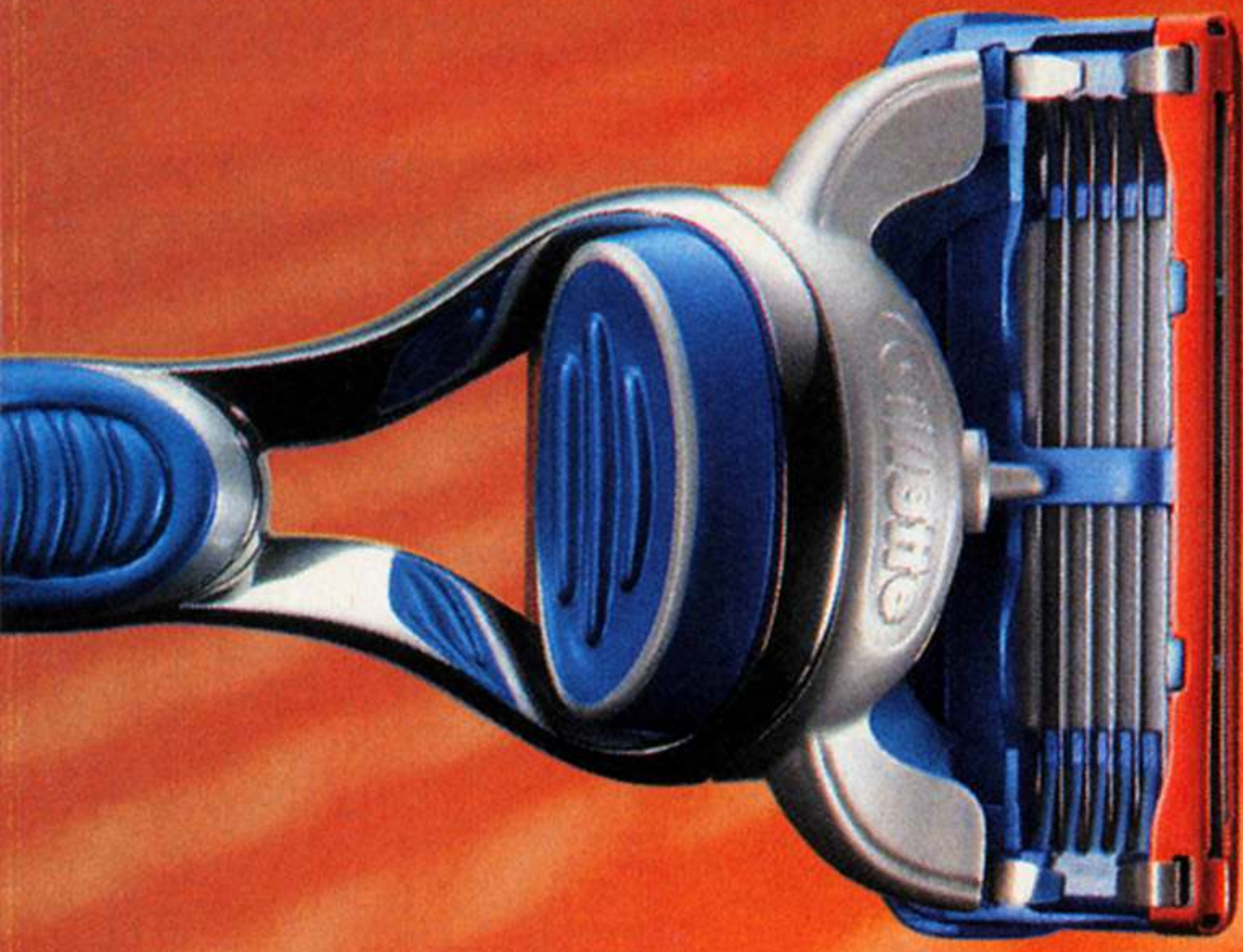
#### Team Territory

Your crew has to hold more territories (for longer) than the opposing team. Try the Hamburger Hill variant with helicopters on. Both sides fight over one spot, and whoever's in control also gets a gunship on his team. The gunship is your friend. The gunship's chain gun is your best friend.

#### Team Objective

Collaborate to complete certain goals. In the search-and-rescue variant, you seek out officers and escort them back to your base as the other team tries to woo these officers back to their side.





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■ Spray it, don't say it: The elaborate graffiti tags go on in seconds.

■ PS2/XB

# MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

Pretty, shallow, and messy...kinda like graffiti

**Good:** Star-studded art and music direction, which...

**Bad:** ...attempts to mask the crapitude of everything underneath

**Faux Pas:** *Getting Up*'s cops look like Darth Vader crossing guards



**ROBERT A:** Clothing designers exist to dress up the ordinary, to glamorize the plainest of faces and liven up the deadest of personalities. So it comes as little surprise that clothing designer Mark Ecko's game is a bargain-bin throwaway dressed up like a million bucks. From the sparse, moody soundtrack by überhip soundscape artist RJD2 to the undeniably cool paint-can-gunslinger design of the lead character, the presentation of *Getting Up* was obviously a high priority. The game underneath the makeup...less so.

*Getting Up* is a Frankenstein of used game parts. Propelling graffiti writer Trane from ghetto decorator to skyscraper-defacing revolutionary involves a little sneaking (think *Splinter Cell*), some climbing around (à la *Prince of Persia*), and tons of fighting (name a generic brawler). None of the stitched-together parts really works. It usually goes down

like this: You attempt to sneak around the various cops and rival crews. Trane's sneaking moves are so bootleg-quality Sam Fisher, though, that you often have to brawl. The fighting is slow, sloppy, and strangely difficult, but once the decks are cleared, you climb around and paint. You enjoy this part, because pretty pictures are all *Getting Up* has to offer.

**KATHLEEN:** Trane, the street tough you play as in *Getting Up*, is no Prince of Persia. His unreal acrobatic abilities, the better to climb all manner of urban topography with, feel clunky and unconnected due to a sticky control system. The totally spastic camera, which often left me staring at a wall while our hero was taking kicks to the face, only compounds the frustration. The fighting combos you unlock to throw down with rival graffiti gangs and the occasional po-po get more involved as you go

and are the best part of this game, but even those aren't really actively fun. Similarly, controlling the actual artistic vandalism isn't very fulfilling either—despite obvious graph skills, Trane makes tagging tedious.

**NICH:** If this game is all about youth rebellion, why does everyone seem so beaten down and numb? That was rhetorical, but this question for my fellow reviewers ain't: Why all the hate? *Getting Up* could be way worse, and it shines in a lot of areas: The hand-to-hand fighting is simple to learn but rewards experimentation, and the movement controls make getting up, down, in, and around effortless. (OK, not always.) The graffiti-spraying leaves a particularly strong mark, feeling realistic without getting boring. The story and environment, though, are so oppressive that you might be tempted to stage your own rebellion via the off switch.



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

4.5

4.0

6.5

ROBERT A.

KATHLEEN

NICH

Publisher: Atari  
Developer: The Collective  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Mature

www.atari.com

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PS2/XB

# BLACK

## Paint it bland

**DEMIAN:** *Black* is gun porn.

I've shot a grand total of one firearm in my life, an MP5...and firing an MP5 in *Black* is altogether more exciting, violent, and visceral than the real deal. Divots pop up from the dirt, wood splinters and explodes, the gravestone an enemy covers behind disintegrates into dust. *Black* delivers a lurid feeling of power. But as it turns out, that isn't always enough to hang a game around.

*Black* could have been so much better. Instead, it offers up a litany of gaming clichés. Exploding barrels dot the lush landscape, attracting bad guys like bears to flammable honey. Faceless, nameless foes spawn from *Doom*-esque monster closets—featureless nooks with no purpose but to generate waves of enemies as if by some dark magic.

Still, it's fun in a mindless, orgy-of-destruction sort of way. Lobbing a grenade onto the roof of a building and taking out the two guys inside, along with most of the roof—that's satisfying. It also

makes for a nice story to tell the grandkids when you're senile and the less than five hours it took you to beat *Black* are seared into your brain. Oh yeah, it's kind of short. And forget about multiplayer; there isn't any.

**SHOE:** You pull the trigger and a mad flurry of hot lead flies out. Your controller rumbles with each rat-a-tat-tat. Bullets spray everywhere, turning concrete to rubble and bad guys to rag dolls. You hit an explosive barrel and BOOM... your subwoofer just woke up everyone on your block. Remind your neighbors they're not in Iraq—you're just playing *Black*.

It should've been named "*Gun*" or "*Shoot Stuff: The Shooter*" instead, because that's all the game's about. *Black* almost gets away with crap like respawning enemies or foes that purposely hang out next to those clearly marked explosive barrels because it wants you to shoot...and that's it. But a videogame can only live on "visceral" for

so long before you're yawning, longing for better A.I., a more involved story, or...well, just about anything with more substance.

**MARK:** *Black* is all about the little things...I mean, literally, the little things—the tiny bits of wood, shards of glass, and bits of concrete that fill the air as you pepper your surroundings with gunfire. And since most of the action revolves around you and your enemies using cover, this is more than just an awesome graphical flourish; it has a real effect on gameplay. Shotgunning your way through flimsy drywall to nail a bad guy, watching as enemies chip away at a column you're hiding behind, breaking apart gravestones with sniper bullets—these are destructive thrills no other game has delivered (sorry, *Red Faction*). So if *Black* comes up short in some other areas (the lack of multiplayer, occasional confusion over where to go next, shoestring story that ends with a "wha—?"), I'm willing to forgive it.

### That Guy...Again? Getting to know all of *Black*'s five enemies

#### Machine-gun guy

Check this guy out. He shoots at you. You'll see a lot of him.



#### RPG guy

This one likes his rocket launcher. He pops up every once in a while.



#### Shotgun guy

Shotgun guy wears body armor, so he can take about a full clip. Serious business.



#### Sniper guy

This angry fella shoots from afar. He hurts! Good thing there are, like, three of him.



#### Shield guy

This annoying gent hides behind a bulletproof shield. Flank him or 'nade the guy.



**Good:** Explosions, explosions, explosions

**Bad:** No multiplayer, short single-player game

**You'd Think:** In a game about guns, there'd be a few more



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

6.5

DEMIAN

6.0

SHOE

8.0

MARK

Publisher: EA Games  
Developer: Criterion  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Mature

www.eagames.com





■ The PS2 version wasn't available in time for review—if we find major differences, we'll note them in next month's Reviews Wrap-up.

ONLINE  
(PS2/XB)

■ PS2/XB

# FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

## Major malfunctions

**Good:** Play through in co-op, blame the other guy when you fail

**Bad:** Wonky rules of engagement, idiot squaddies

**It's No:** *Brothers in Arms*



**DEMIAN:** Bravo team storms the upstairs of some forsaken tenement, but my boys don't even blink (much less shoot) when a startled terrorist runs out the doorway they just came through, possibly mumbling "pardon me" as he squeezes by before turning and slaughtering my witless squad. Meanwhile, around the block, I'm controlling Alpha team's rifleman and I've got a bead on a bad guy. He's behind a stone wall and I can't see an inch of him, but there's a red dot in my aiming reticule, which means, wall or no, he's a dead man.

Welcome to *Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers*, maggot, where the rules of engagement are as clear as the air from the smoke grenades you'll need to chuck every step of the way if you want to avoid frequent deaths. *Ten Hammers* is still all about suppressing your enemies with one team and then flanking them with the other, and the tweaked controls give you more

options for how you go about the task (although they're also five times more complex as a result). Unfortunately, it's spoiled by painfully awkward gameplay, lobotomized recruits (on both sides), and a million annoying ways to die. This war isn't quite hell—it's just profoundly frustrating.

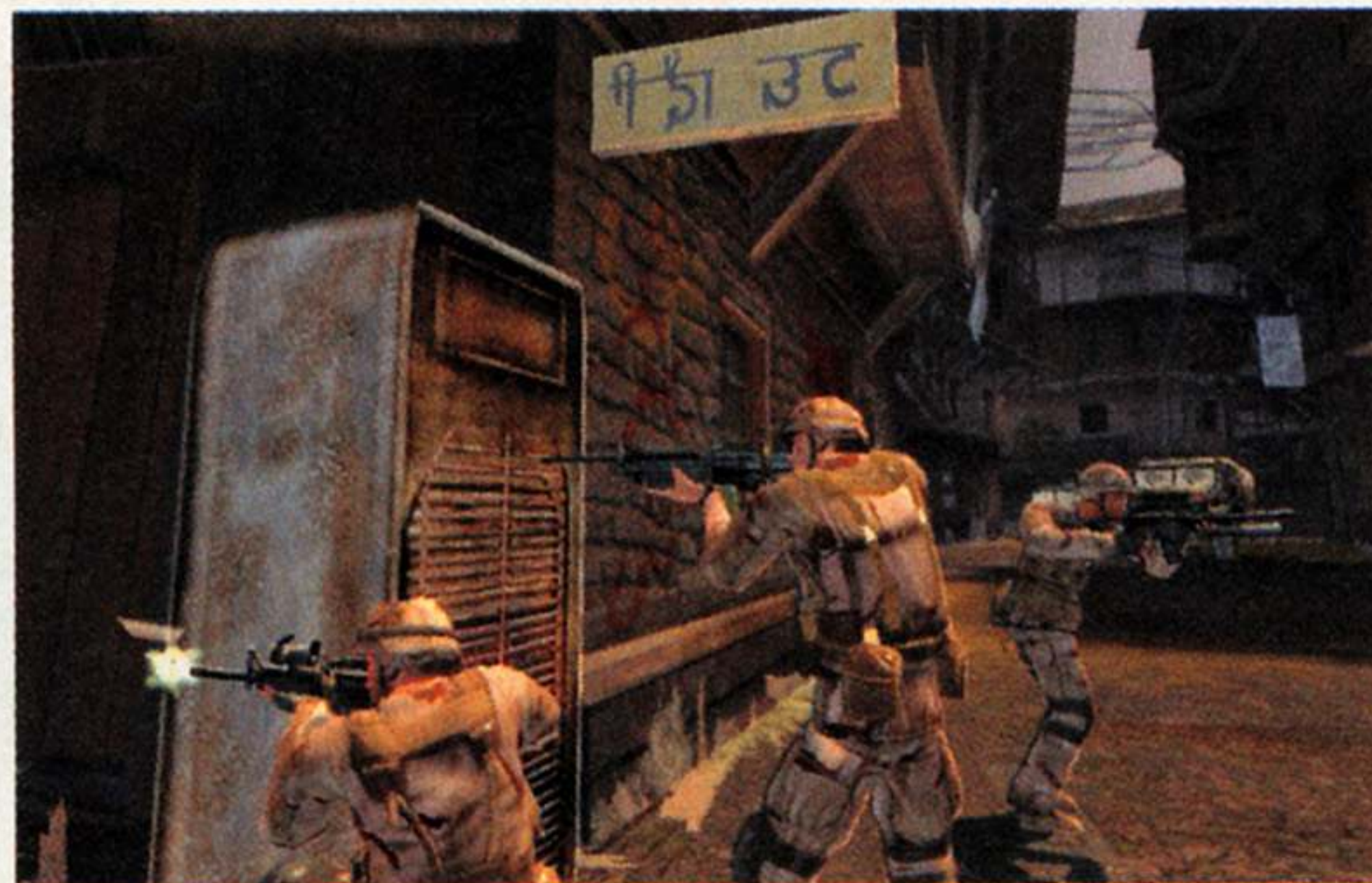
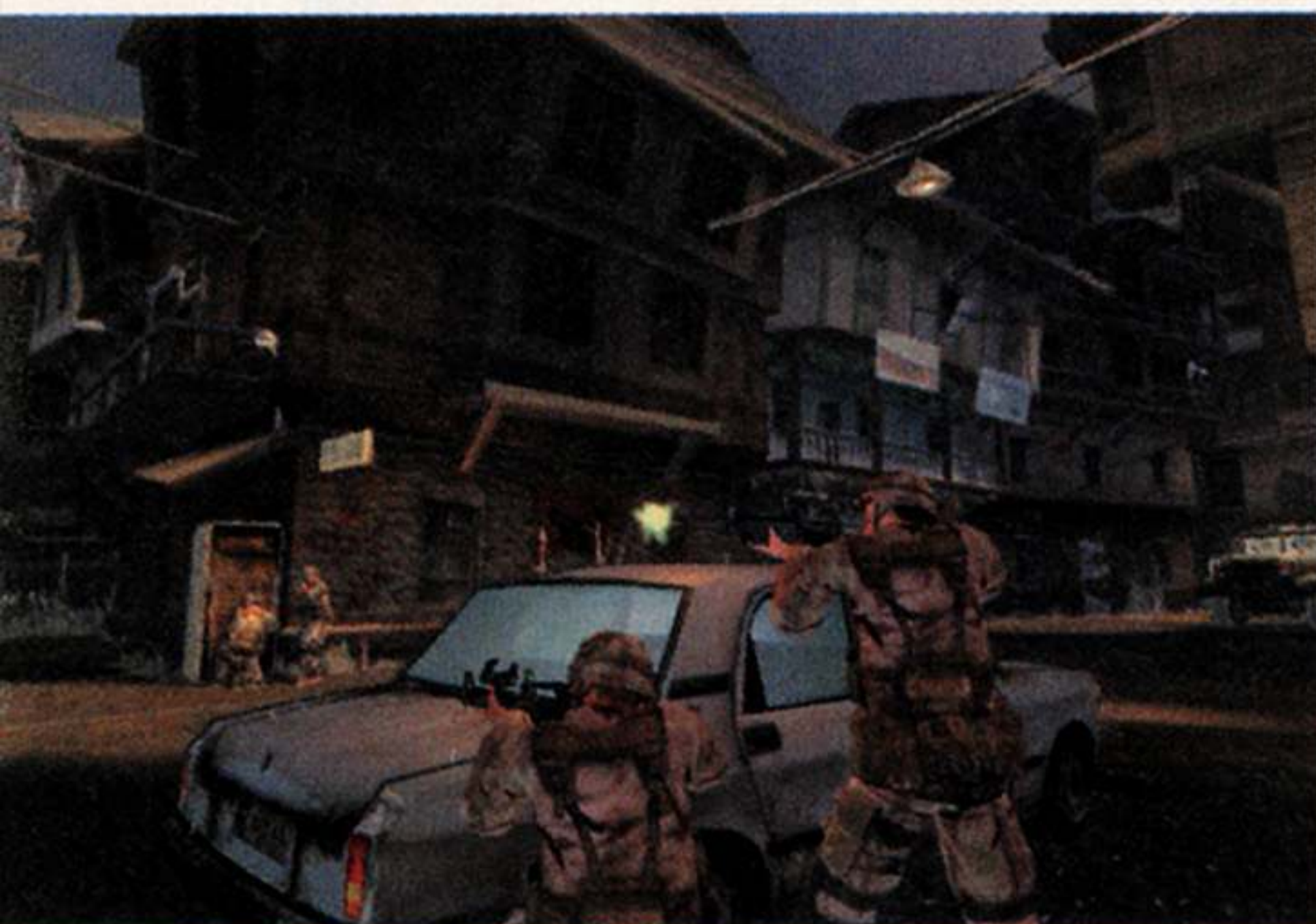
**SHAWN:** Trial and terror—it taught me what triggers ball-busting ambushes where and when, so I set up counterambushes. But when *Ten Hammers'* insurgents saw me sitting in *their* fallback spots...the numbskulls still fell back. Rather than reward my resourcefulness with kills and a "suck it down, s\*\*\*bags," the game then let 'em turn tail and get safely away, because for some stupid reason my men stood down.

Sometimes, *Ten Hammers* is an imbroglio of A.I. snafus and overcomplicated control. When combat is so scripted, and when only one or two

orders of operations work, it's a puzzle game in a tactics sim's package.

**CRISPIN:** Well, this game won't boost recruitment. *Ten Hammers'* constant die-and-retry gameplay shell-shocked my nerves until I could only stomach it for 30-minute sessions before developing a thousand-yard stare. It's like the developers took the promising tactical-shooter premise of the original and dialed back its fun, replacing it with unwieldy controls, Gomer Pyle-caliber A.I., and just plain glitchy moments. I lost too many good men because they were slow to retreat in a firefight or they couldn't drop enemies who ran right up to them.

At least the multiplayer is all it can be. Along with the original's cool co-op mode, *Ten Hammers* deploys novel deathmatch and mission-based online games that remain fun despite their complexity. Can't say the same about the rest of the game.



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

**5.0** **5.0** **5.0**

DEMIAN SHAWN CRISPIN

Publisher: THQ  
Developer: Pandemic  
Players: 1 (PS2 2-4 online,  
XB 2-8 online)  
ESRB: Mature

fullspectrumwarrior.com

nerds are for dorks

**GEEKS  
ARE 4-EVER**

hacker instead of slacker  
Alpha Geek, Turbo Nerd, Proto-hacker

I'M NOT ABOUT  
TO TEST MY  
\$ most alive when

24/7 **LIFE**

Im playing in the sandbox  
Network guru. CGI characters  
Network security backbone

Bang the board beige toaster

blog, command z  
Pearl Ruby and Ada

Blackberry, Cell phone ring tone, emails and  
Laptop for my bot projects contacts.

Gots to get the cheddar

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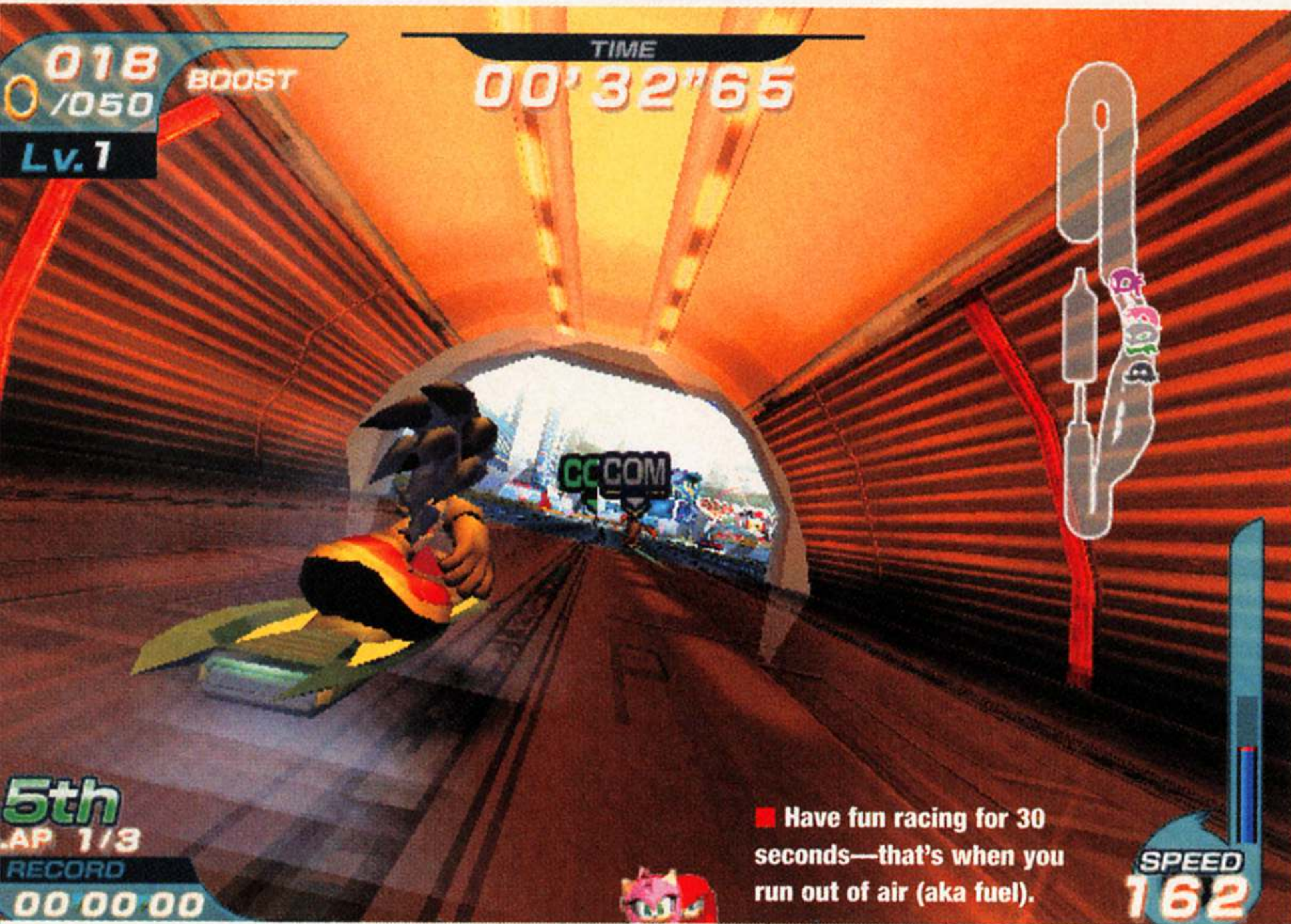
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PS2/XB/GC

# SONIC RIDERS

Taken for a ride



Have fun racing for 30 seconds—that's when you run out of air (aka fuel).

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	5.5	5.0
	ROBERT A.	SHANE	ANDREW

Publisher: Sega  
Developer: Sega  
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-4 via Multitap), XB/GC 1-4  
ESRB: Everyone

www.sega.com

**Good:** Not just another *Mario Kart* clone

**Bad:** Limited interactivity, emphasis on shortcuts over skill

**Baditude:** Sonic's dated, grating personality. Time for a change



**ROBERT A:** Sonic and his ever-growing entourage of blank-the-animal pals have hacked apart the sacred cows of racing in *Sonic Riders*. There's no gas button and no need to brake. Rails, self-correcting jumps, and auto-piloting cut-scenes constantly limit your control of the race. Like some kind of bizarre *Mario Kart*, *Riders* trades go-karts for hoverboards (called "extreme gear"—barf!), powerslides for turn-on-a-dime "air slides," and the skill of the steering wheel for the smooth ride of the passenger's seat.

What do you do in a game that practically plays itself? Look for shortcuts, mostly. *Riders* has a tiny track roster: seven courses total. For extra padding, each track has three types of shortcuts that can only be used by certain types of characters. The majority of your gameplay time will involve trying and retrying the courses, feeling out the alternate routes. Sure, you've got to pull off a few tricks here and there to keep up your momentum, but *SSX* it ain't.

**SHANE:** Try as he might, Sonic seems totally incapable of matching mascot rival Mario's stellar success in the karting arena. Add *Riders* to his shameful driving record. From the get-go, *Riders* lacks the pick-up-and-play simplicity it needs: Wrapping your

head around the surprisingly complex controls requires a gander at the manual. But even after you've mastered the basics, a perplexing design choice—the need to constantly refill your board's air meter—imparts an annoying, unnecessary restriction on the racing fun. Skillful play makes this resource management less of an issue, but the game's difficulty curve ramps up fairly steeply...so expect younger players to quickly sour on this misguided *F-Zero*-meets-*SSX* experiment. Meanwhile, older players should be advised to avoid viewing any of the game's phenomenally dippy cut-scenes.

**1UP.COM—ANDREW:** Wait, what the hell is going on here? After a close examination of the game's manual and several hours of gameplay, I never really got an answer. It's as if *Sonic Adventure* married *F-Zero GX*, they had an ugly baby together, it wouldn't shut up, and nobody knew what was wrong with it. The problem is that *Sonic Riders* becomes far more complex than it needs to be by having an arbitrary "air" (read: fuel) system that's depleted when you use not only special moves, but regular moves necessary to navigate the spaz-tastic courses. If you can get a handle on the controls, there's plenty of adrenaline to be rushed... but it shouldn't require this much effort.



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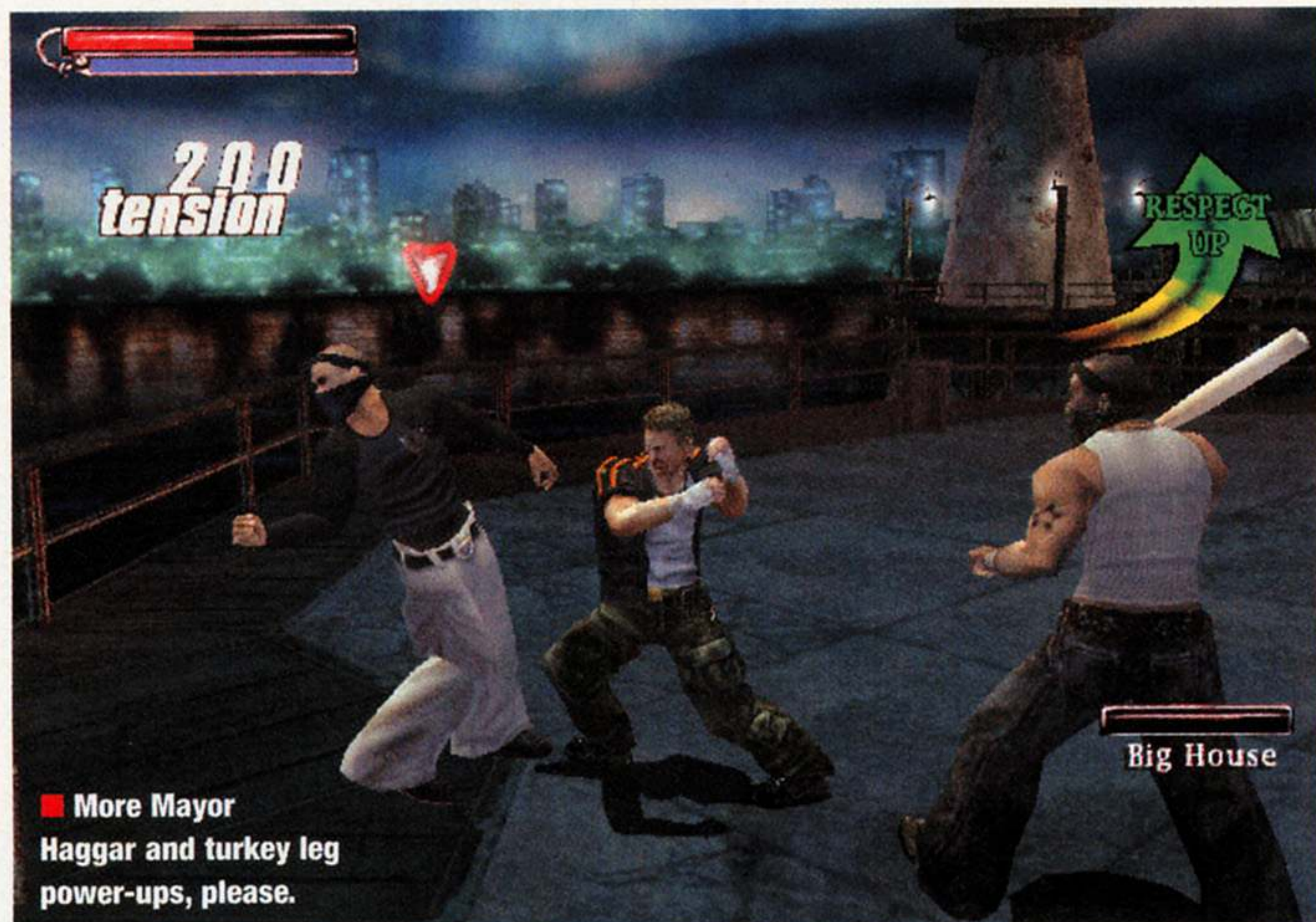
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PS2/XB

# FINAL FIGHT: STREETWISE

New-school feel, old-school flaws



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	7.0	7.0
	G. FORD	ROBERT A.	MILKMAN

Publisher: Capcom  
Developer: Capcom Studio 8  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com

**Good:** Competent brawling, interesting minigames

**Bad:** Action gets rote; save system is crappy

**Always Appreciated:** Unlockable original game



**G. FORD:** A few months back—trudging through *Beat Down* and *Urban Reign*—I thumbed my broken nose at the sorry state of the beat-em-up. Then *The Warriors* arrived, and knuckle-dusting the crud outta street punks was fun again.

*Final Fight: Streetwise*—based on the classic coin-op series—finds itself stuck somewhere in between. True, Capcom tries to keep things interesting, peppering the standard save-your-brother story with stat building and a collection of occasionally bizarre (though rarely standout) side missions and minigames—fancy crushing cockroaches or trying a round of three-card monte? Even so, these time fillers (and some sweet moves you learn late in the game) fail to elevate the fun above “mildly amusing,” and it’s unlikely you’ll want to brawl again after *Fight’s* finished.

A two-player arcade mode adds body, but like the old-school format it’s based on—fight a wave of enemies, walk forward a few feet, fight another wave—it gets really old fast. And that’s the problem with the whole thing, the nagging, never-ending sense that you’re simply going through the punch-stroll-punch motions.

**ROBERT A:** You might not be able to tell from its humdrum grittiness and blatant *Fight Club* plagiarism, but *Streetwise* keeps

things weird and whimsical. I thought I was in for another boring urban-underbelly odyssey when—10 minutes in—I was asked to (literally) stomp out a cockroach infestation in the local diner. The game swings manically between reality and absurdity, from brutally stabbing some punk with a knife to picking up goofy hot-dog power-ups. I was constantly reminded of the lovable old-school brawler *River City Ransom*. Which is not to say that *Streetwise* is a great game. It’s just that the technical issues and unambitious design come with a chaser of charming silliness.

**1UP.COM—MILKMAN:** In an attempt to rejuvenate a dormant series, Capcom reinvents the *Final Fight* franchise as *Fight Club*, with brotherly love as the motive for baseball-batting and knifing waves and waves of thugs. Forget that Capcom released a shockingly similar game in *Beat Down* mere months ago; *Streetwise* has its own merits. Combat superior to *Beat Down’s* collides with competent, if overwrought, voice work and cinematics, setting the stage for the game’s respect system, which ensures you pick the proper victims in your hunt for your brother, Cody. Various camera issues and graphical slowdown limit the appeal of an otherwise perfunctory and adequate 3D brawler, but you’ll find a better game here than what’s offered by tripe like *Urban Reign*.

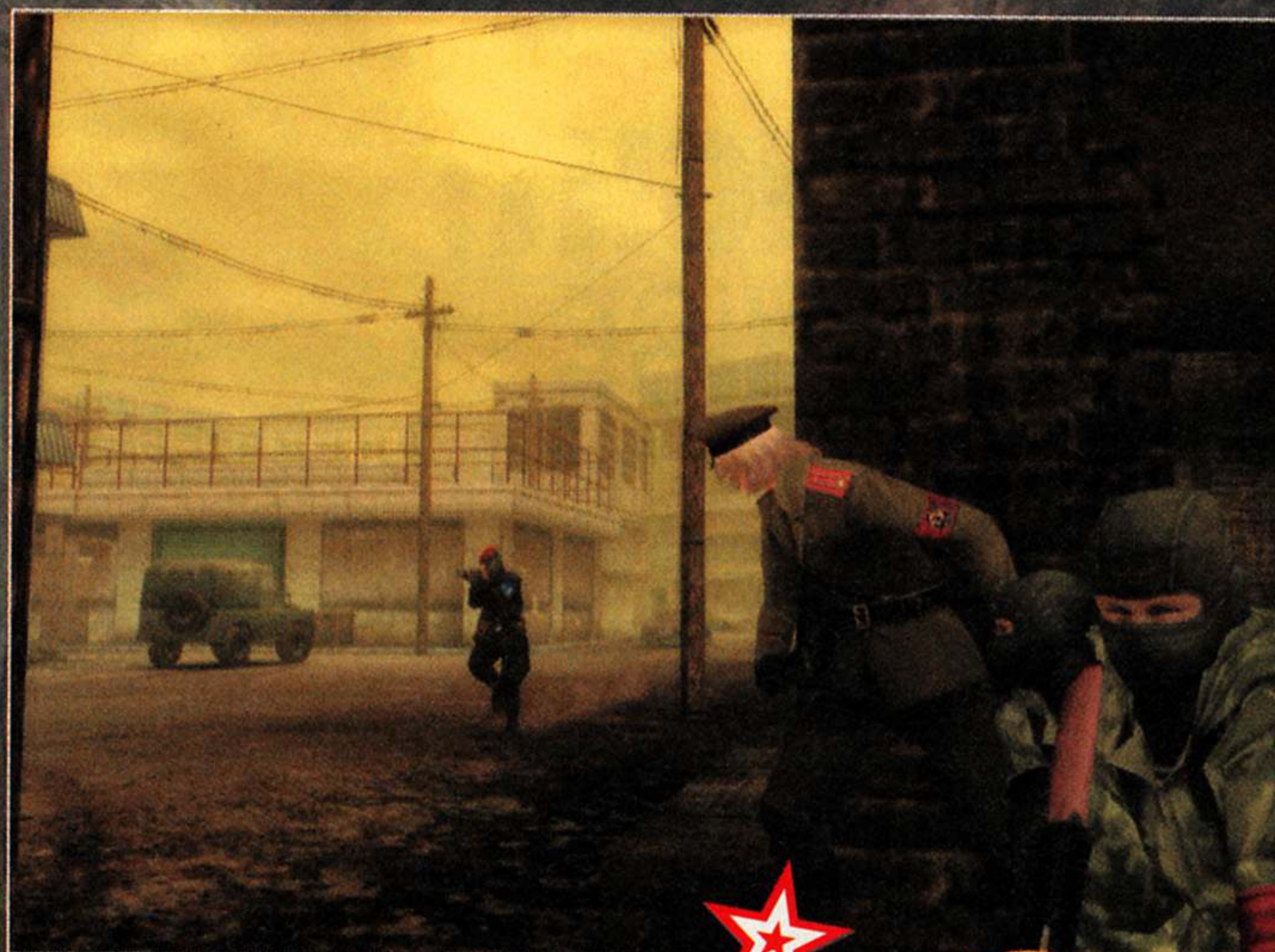


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PlayStation 2

ONLINE

★  
GAME OF THE MONTH



# METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SUBSISTENCE

## Second chance for a first impression

**SHANE:** Over the past year and a half, I've had more heated arguments about *MGS3* than any other game ever. And these aren't just friendly disagreements; around here, we debate *Splinter Cell*-versus-*MGS* the way normal people tackle religion and politics—with stern words, dirty looks, and the occasional Molotov cocktail. In fact, these face-offs got so nasty that we put an official moratorium on the subject at the *EGM* lunch table. Despite all the drama, my opinion hasn't wavered: *MGS3* remains my favorite PS2 game ever, and this tricked-out rerelease only further solidifies that stance.

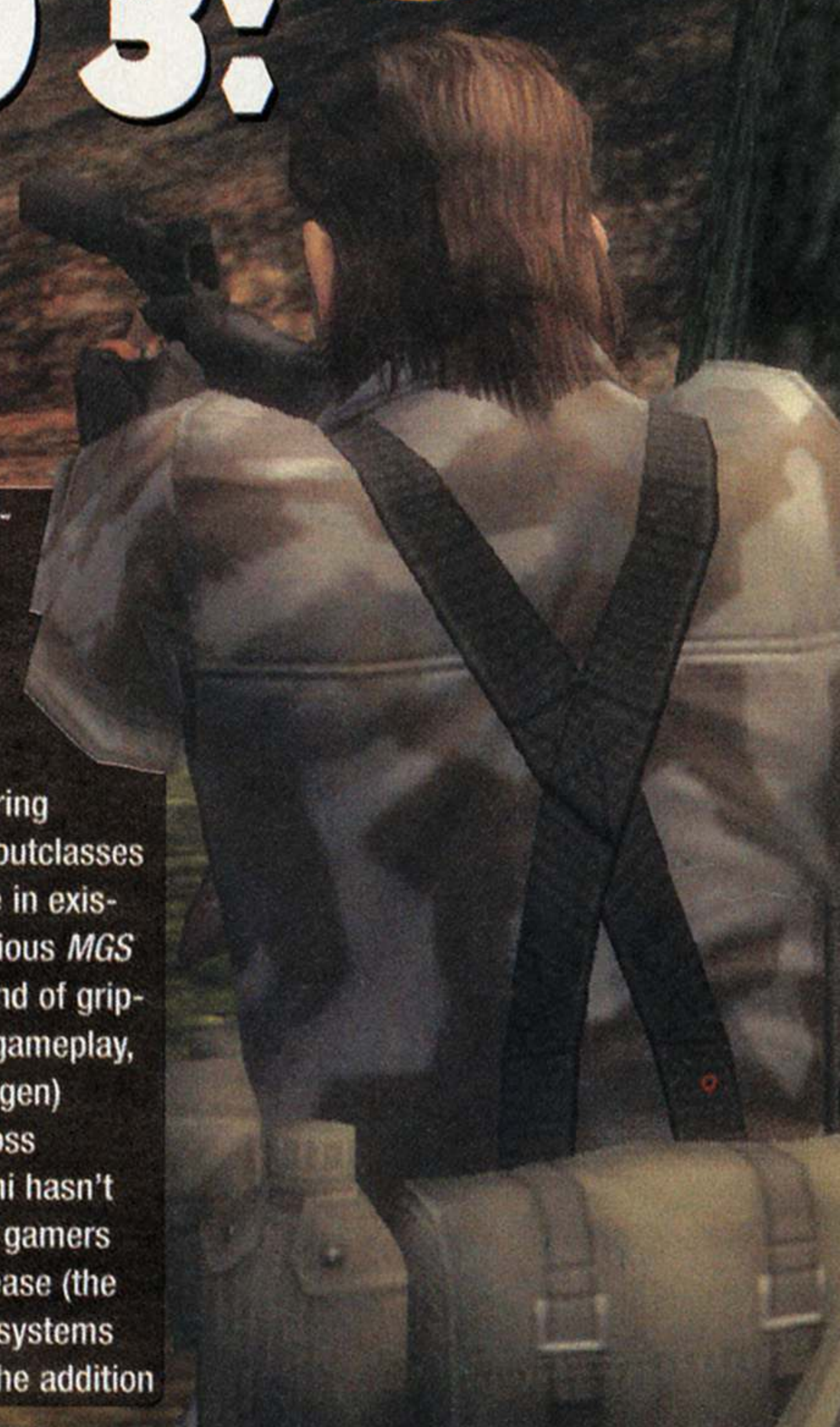
We've seen Greatest Hits games that up the ante with new content (*Devil May Cry 3* and *Silent Hill 2* come to mind), but nothing as absurdly value-added as this. *Subsistence* offers a surprisingly fun and accessible online multiplayer mode, extra Snake-versus-Ape missions (the goofy *MGS-Ape*

*Escape* crossover), boss battle time attacks, a collection of legitimately hilarious bonus cut-scenes, and two classic 8-bit-era *Metal Gear* games (see page 118) in their entirety. Konami deserves kudos for such ambitious extras, and even more luxurious *MGS* esoterica awaits fans that preorder the four-disc limited edition (see sidebar).

While *Subsistence's* multiplayer action won't displace *Halo* as your online shooter of choice, it's no throwaway, either. Most of the match types feel basic, but you'll still be impressed by how enjoyable a deathmatch bout in the world of *MGS3* can be. Stealthily moving through a dense jungle creates a thrilling paranoia: Landing a successful head shot after you hear your opponent rustling through some foliage feels satisfying and real. Plus, the innovative Sneaking mission delivers on its unique promise of balanced Solid Snake-versus-everyone else gameplay. This stuff's good

enough to keep you coming back....

The true success of this package doesn't stem from its impeccable extras, however. *Subsistence's* awe-inspiring single-player adventure outclasses every other stealth game in existence, including the previous *MGS* titles. It's the perfect blend of gripping narrative, nuanced gameplay, astonishing (nearly next-gen) graphics, and creative boss battles. And while Konami hasn't addressed every quibble gamers had with the original release (the camouflage and healing systems still feel a little clunky), the addition



### But Wait, There's More!

In order to ensure that *Subsistence* stands as the most lavish budget-priced rerelease of all time, Konami will offer a limited edition with even more content. This special package sports a third disc, dubbed Existence, that features *Snake Eater's* amazing cut-scenes edited together into a three-hour movie. Even better, if you preorder this version of the game from select retailers, you'll snag a fourth disc called *Metal Gear Saga Vol. 1*, a 35-minute documentary featuring *MGS* designer Hideo Kojima's insights into the entire series' history.

★ ★ ★  
CHAPTER 003 MG2



One evening, the staff of *Snake's Revenge* and I found ourselves on the same train heading home after work.

**Good:** Everything  
**Bad:** Too much story for impatient gamers  
**The Bar for Rereleases:** Has been raised



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

10

SHANE

10

BRYAN

9.5

SCOOTER

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Kojima Productions  
Players: 1 (2-8 Online)  
ESRB: Mature

www.metalgearsolid.com





Before and after: old *MGS3* camera on the left, *Splinter Cell*-ified *Subsistence* camera on the right.



of a controllable third-person camera view should quiet a lot of naysayers. Playing through it again, I do realize that the game ramps up too slowly for a lot of people—you really do have to play for a few hours before it gets truly great—but I'm not going to make any excuses for you. If you can't enjoy the brilliance of this game, it's your loss.

**BRYAN:** Don't worry, Shane; when it comes to this ongoing argument, I've always got your back at the mag's lunch table. This marks the third time I've snuck around *Gear*'s jungle (I reviewed *MGS3: Snake Eater*, solved it again at home, and am now playing *Subsistence*), and this mission easily feels the best. If for some crazy reason you missed it before, here's a quick rundown of the phenomenal main campaign: It's got drop-dead gorgeous environments, stellar boss fights, and an emotional narrative that even pulls at this

tough guy's heartstrings. And for all you whiny *Splinter Cell* bitches who've cried about the camera, it now resembles the one in Sam's game (though it's still not perfect since the game's levels weren't originally designed with the improved perspective in mind, making some bits easier than they should be).

Yet it's the added multiplayer that brings this rerelease to a 10. (I gave *Snake Eater* a 9.5.) Now sure, I wouldn't dare call *Subsistence*'s Internet play as groundbreaking as *Cell*'s, but it's more accessible and just as varied. Stealthy eight-person deathmatches? Beating the odds as Snake versus many? Yep, I've found my next online obsession.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER:** I get really annoyed when DVDs do crazy double-dips, and I'm kind of annoyed that this is happening with

*MGS3*. Except if you're going to double-dip, then this is definitely the way to do it. I always loved *MGS3: Snake Eater* despite its camera, and now with the new perspective, it's nearly flawless. I say "nearly" because the game's still got a bit too much yapping, and the new camera actually makes a bunch of the boss fights really easy (but not so easy as to feel broken, like *MGS: Twin Snakes* on the GameCube).

Multiplayer is pretty good, even though you can't move and shoot simultaneously in first person, but the best part is easily the Snake-versus-other-dudes mode. Not much is quite as satisfying as slamming guys into the pavement and making off with the objective as Snake. OK, maybe one thing is more satisfying: when you reach that goal only because you've tricked your online opposition into staring at a bunch of girly magazines on the ground. 🎮

### Metal Gear Online

Getting online with *Subsistence* isn't terribly difficult, but as with all PS2 games, the process lacks Xbox Live's ease and efficiency. Luckily, Net play runs smoothly—we experienced almost no lag during our games. We're not thrilled about having to hold down the Select button to chat, though. Still, the action's good enough to keep us going, and Konami has added nice incentives. Log 50 hours online and you'll unlock the sexy secret characters Reiko and Dixie from *Rumble Roses*. These scantily clad grapplers even bring their own close-quarters-combat wrasslin' moves to the battlefield.







■ The game, set between the second and third seasons, fills in a lot of gaps. Still no bathroom breaks, though.

PlayStation 2

# 24: THE GAME

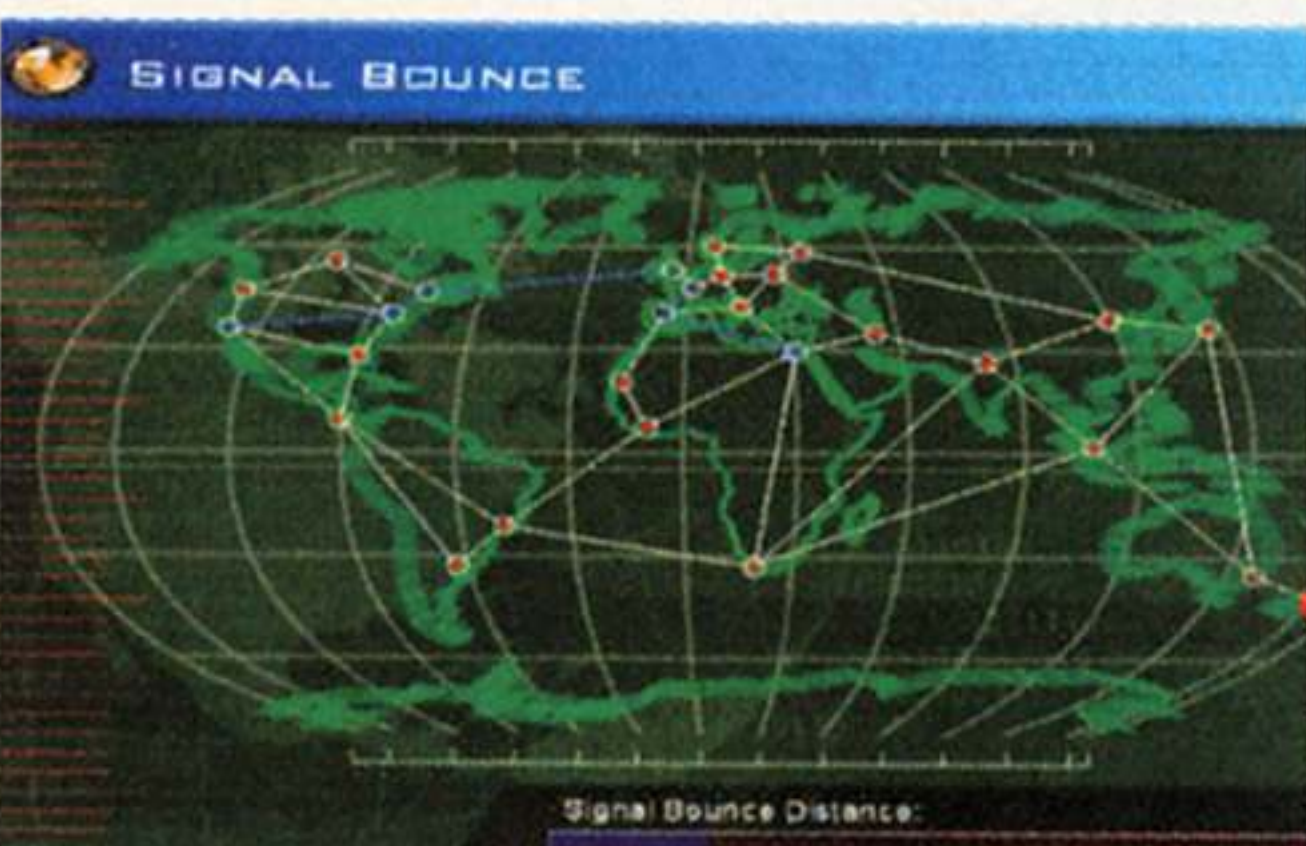
This game knows Jack

**Good:** Incredibly faithful to the killer show  
**Bad:** Escort missions; gunplay gets old after a while  
**Jack Bauer Fun Facts:** [notrly.com/jackbauer/index.php?topsixty](http://notrly.com/jackbauer/index.php?topsixty)



**CRISPIN:** Solid Snake and Sam Fisher? P\*\*\*ies. At least compared to Jack Bauer, the redoubtable terrorist tackler in the hit TV series 24. And his game captures his loose-cannon spirit in a story crafted by the show's makers, starring all of its characters, and presented with the same splitscreen camera work. The plot—punctuated by the show's ticking clock to give the illusion of real time (it rarely factors into gameplay)—is solid but not as gripping as the series' better episodes. With no threat of main characters dying (a factor that keeps the show riveting), it's easy to dismiss the plot as one of Bauer's less intense days—except for one event that literally rocks L.A.

While the gameplay often comprises gets-old-quick shooting and *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired driving, it still unloads some innovations. One level has Jack infiltrating a tour group to dodge security. Another starts with your character suffering from a head injury that swirls his perspective in and out of red-tinged focus. It's the kind of cool stuff you'd expect from a game based on the unconventional show. If only there were more of it.



■ Jack's PDA defuses bombs, hacks computers, and, we assume, calculates tips, too.

**SHANE:** With a game like this, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking, "Fans of the license will enjoy it." Well, I'm totally nuts for 24, and quite frankly, Jack Bauer and his CTU buddies deserve better than this. The game succeeds in delivering an intriguing story line with full participation from the talented cast, but sadly, neither the presentation nor gameplay can keep up. Sloppy camera work and subpar visuals make the game look far older than it is—hell, the real-time graphics in *Metal Gear Solid 3* look better than 24's cut-scenes. These shabby trappings could be overlooked if the gameplay rocked, but 24's wildly diverse missions feel far too inconsistent—some missions sparkle with creativity, but the clunky, overly arcadey gunplay wears thin quickly.

**1UP.COM—ANDREW:** Nothing helps licensed games more than having strong source material to work with, and when the developers are themselves fans of the license—fans who truly understand and appreciate the finer details—it prevents the game from becoming cash-in dreck. Without Jack Bauer star power, 24 would be just another average 3D action-adventure: Enemy A.I. is fairly basic, the gunplay and targeting are serviceable (sometimes quite good, actually), and the driving and stealth bits are clumsy and annoying. But with a stellar script from the show's writers and outstanding cinematography and voice acting, it really feels like you're playing through a season of 24. Good show.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	5.5	7.0
	CRISPIN	SHANE	ANDREW

Publisher: 2K Games  
 Developer: Sony CEE  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Mature

[www.2kgames.com](http://www.2kgames.com)

PlayStation 2

ONLINE

# MLB 06: THE SHOW

Career minor-leaguer?



■ From this angle, we dunno why Randy Johnson's called "The Big Unit."

**Good:** Great animations, Rivalry mode, solid fundamentals  
**Bad:** Another day at the same ol' ballpark, no analog swinging  
**Props:** For finally getting the year right



**G. FORD:** Last season, *MLB* had a good enough showing to offer a solid baseball-sim alternative. This year, however, the developers seemed to have enjoyed the off-season a little too much. While EA's *MVP 06* (now NCAA endorsed) and 2K Sports' *MLB 2K6* (the other MLB-licensed game) have stepped up, what with analog swinging and all, *MLB 06* hasn't come any closer to making the leap.

For the new stuff, we've got a hit and a miss. On the side stage is King of the Diamond mode, which mixes a clock, a pitcher, a batter, and tons of targets in a point-based contest. Interesting, but it didn't excite me. My thing is the "pick two teams, set the series length, then have at it as stats accumulate" Rivalry mode. Yeah, I'm a little competitive.

Otherwise, we're talking cruise control. The pitching, hitting, fielding, and baserunning mechanics are all sound but beg for some fine-tuning. Throw in some deep franchise modes, the genius fast-forward feature, and tons of new animations, and once again we've got a reliable spot starter.

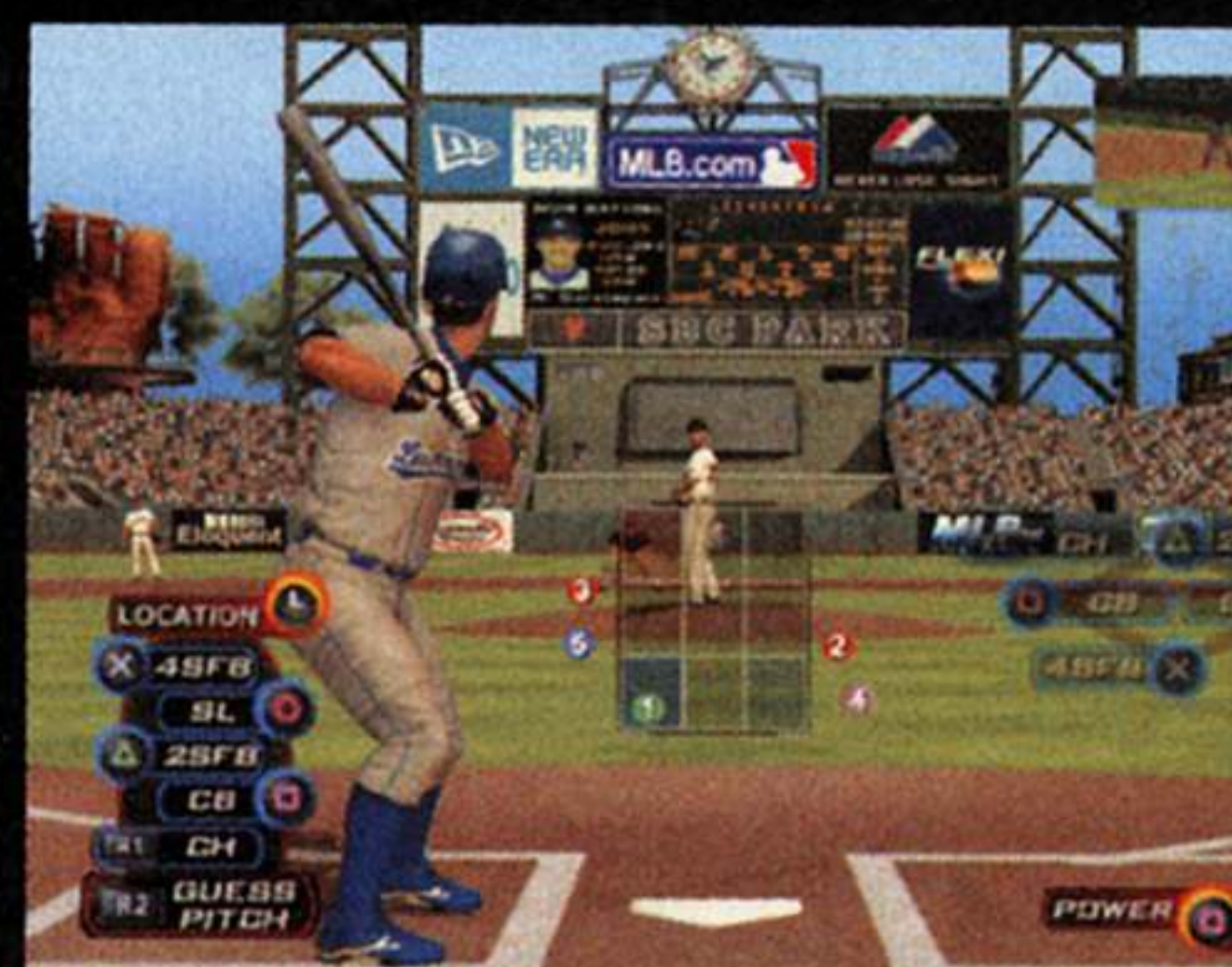
**BRYAN:** Whoa, *MLB* now has a power-swing button? Too bad one of 06's biggest new features is something most baseball games have been doing for more than 10 FREAKIN' YEARS! And sadly, this dated mechanic is worthless here—I jacked just as many homers when taking routine cuts at the ball. Miscues also happen in the field, as passed balls are way too common and pitchers don't always remember to cover home plate.

This edition of *MLB* does a great job of dramatizing America's pastime at the right moments. Yankee players will threaten to rush the mound after a BoSox pitcher beans A-Rod. Announcers sound more emotional during close ballgames. But this franchise desperately needs to spice up—and after this year, clean up—the gameplay.

**ROBERT C:** This game may have a bunch of options, but all those modes are worthless if the core game doesn't feel like baseball, and 06 doesn't. Not to me.

I hate the pitchers' confidence rating and the havoc it wreaks on games—if real players were this emotionally fragile they'd never make it out of Little League. Almost every outfield catch is an unlikely over-the-shoulder grab. Fielding controls are unresponsive, and the fielders impotent, narcoleptic, crow-hopping double-pumpers. The fielding A.I. is off as well, with the CPU frequently and stupidly throwing behind runners and failing to cover the plate properly.

Oh, and King of the Diamond mode is an unholy aberration right from hell.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	6.0	4.0
	G. FORD	BRYAN	ROBERT C.

Publisher: Sony CEA  
 Developer: Sony CEA  
 Players: 1-2 (2 online)  
 ESRB: Everyone

[www.us.playstation.com](http://www.us.playstation.com)



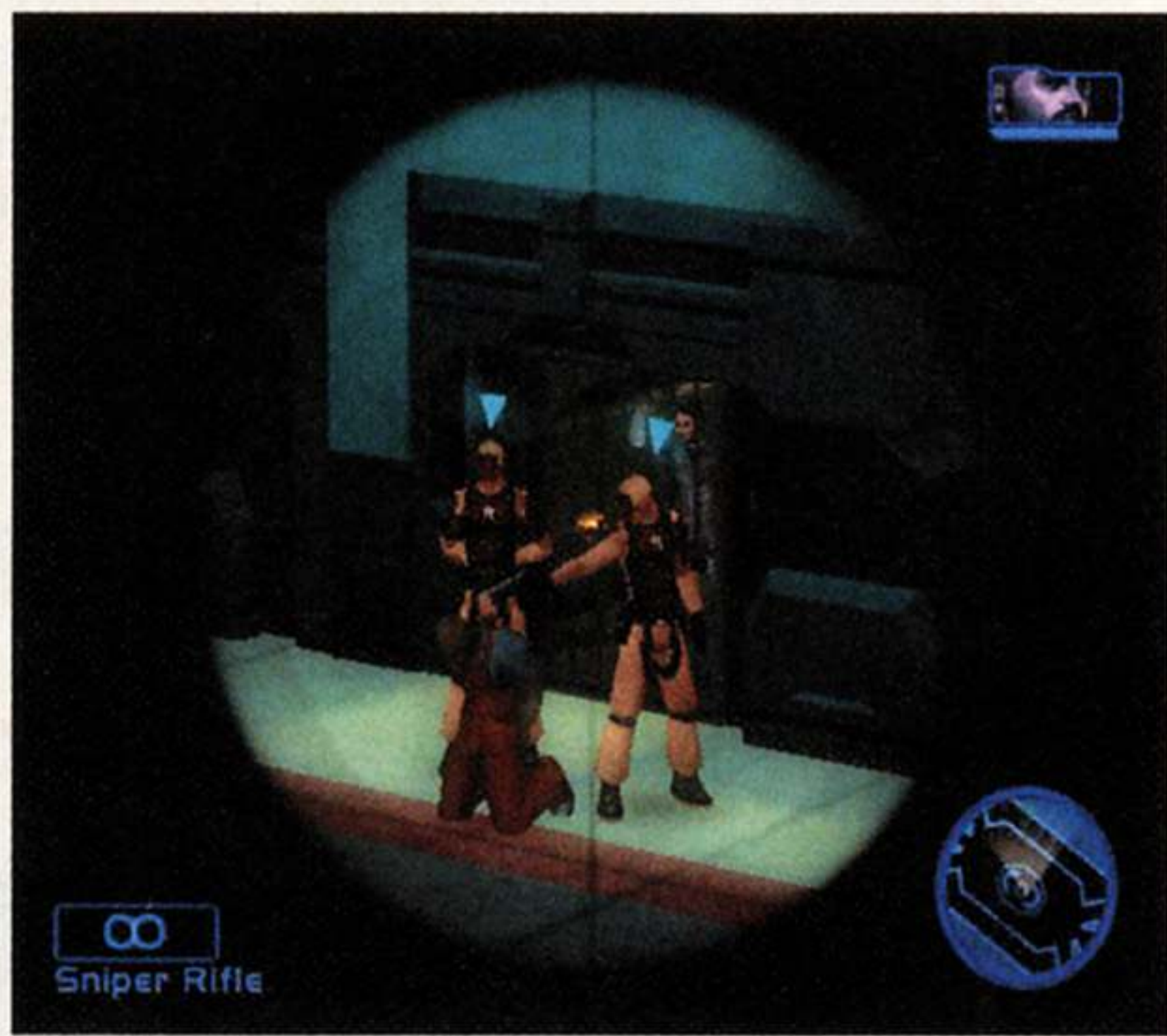
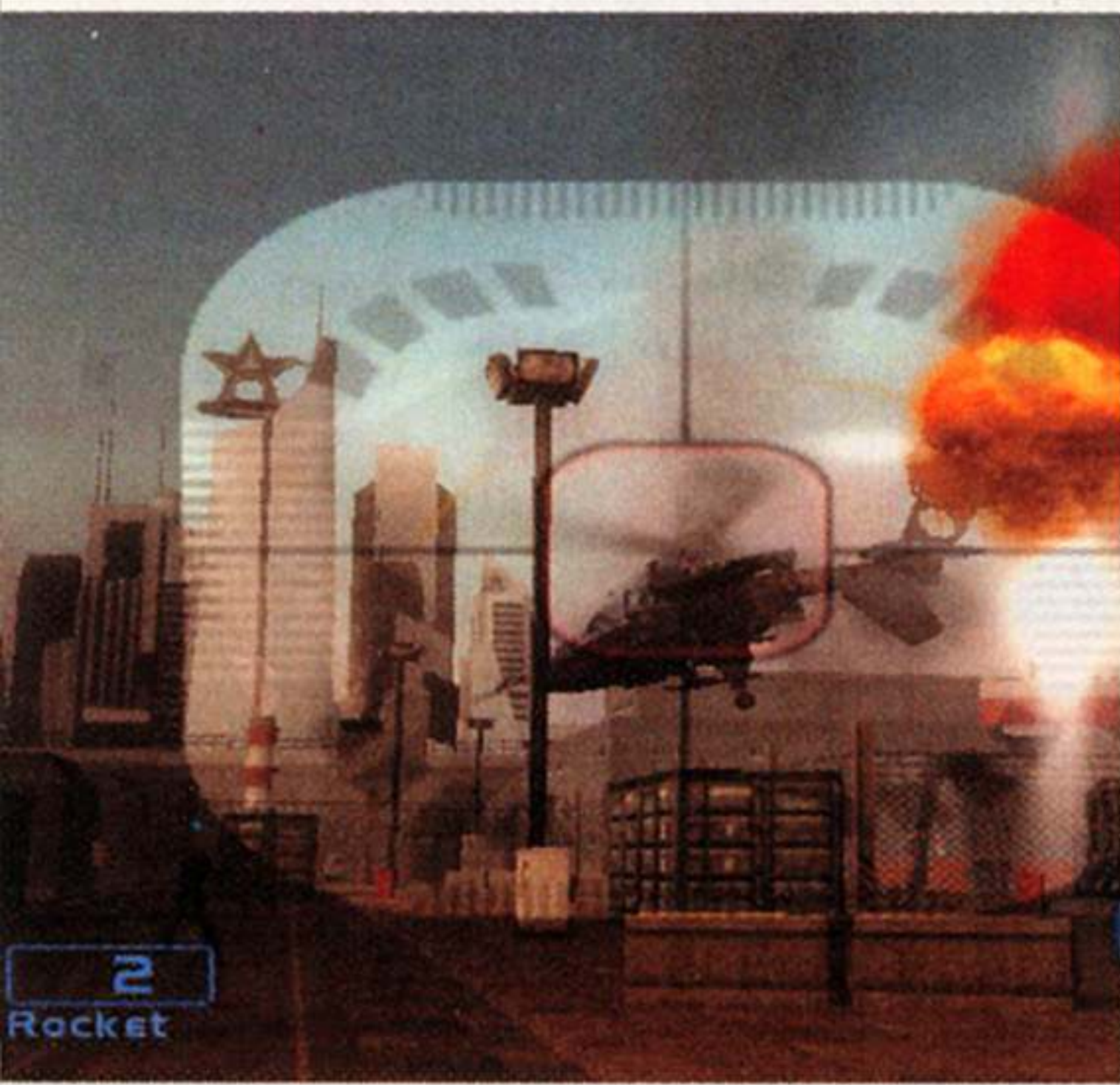
PlayStation 2

# STATE OF EMERGENCY 2

## State of complacency



Spanky (below) is a pair of shoes away from not getting served at 7-Eleven.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	5.0	6.0
	JUSTIN	G. FORD	CRISPIN

Publisher: SouthPeak  
Developer: DC  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Mature

[www.southpeak.com](http://www.southpeak.com)

- Good:** Bullets and blood flow freely; chaotic onscreen action
- Bad:** Feels like a generic shooter
- Like:** *Smash TV* meets a crazed antigovernment website



**JUSTIN:** Some loved it, most hated it, but *State of Emergency* had ideas. It made you feel like you were in the middle of a riot and gave you an excuse to rip off some poor guy's arm and use it to smash in a store window. The sequel continues the tradition of shooting stuff and subjects players to a ridiculous antiestablishment story line some punk in junior high might cook up for his blog. But hey, if you hate The Man and everything he stands for, and you love games where shooting guys totally makes limbs and bloody chunks fly off every which way, knock yourself out.

The game's basic controls are fundamentally sound; in its best moments, the shooting action feels fairly tense, even somewhat tactical. But the solid, if unremarkable, shooting is really the only thing the game totally nails. Rioters get to throw down and stomp heads, but there's no hand-to-hand combat for you. Piloting a tank, helicopter, or speedboat feels janky and not too enjoyable, and the offline multiplayer seems basic and dated. You'll find nothing near a cutting edge here. Just blunt, brute force.

**G. FORD:** Welcome to this month's totally unnecessary release. Really, was anybody asking for another nondescript third-person shooter, let alone a sequel to a game no one really liked to begin with?

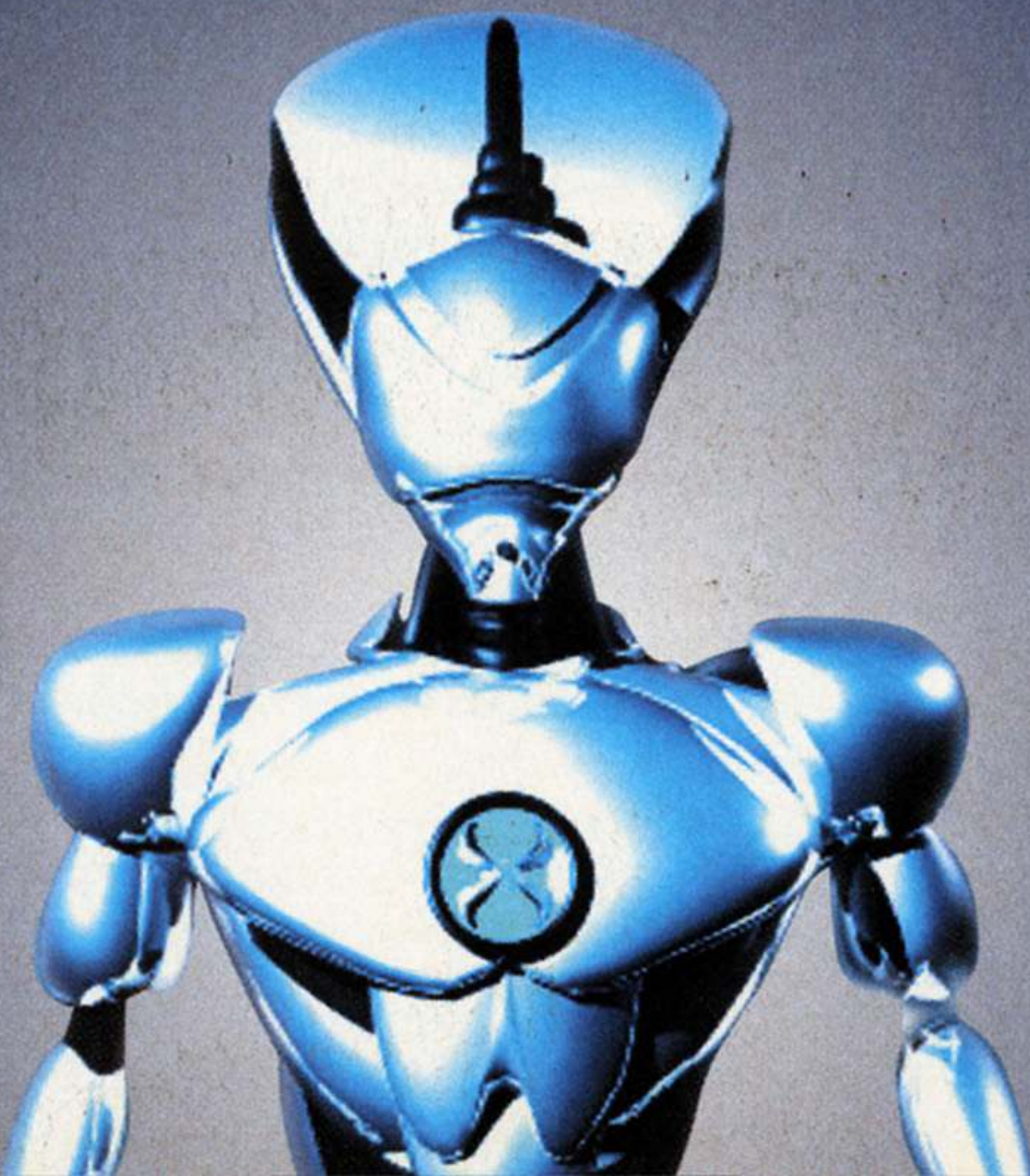
*Emergency 2* does actually do some things well; I dig its crisp, cartoonish art style, as well as its ability to support tons of onscreen characters, resulting in stages that bustle with artificial life. But seriously busted checkpoint placement makes missions far too frustrating, and the tanks, boats, and choppers all control poorly. Also worthy of a call-out: probably the hardest-to-see sniper-rifle reticule ever. While I'd love to throw in something about mediocrity like this inciting a gamer-led riot, *Emergency 2's* narcoleptic gameplay serves as the ultimate pacifier.

**CRISPIN:** The best thing I can say about this outta-nowhere sequel to 2002's overhyped, hyperactive beat-em-up: It's not as bad as you might think. *Emergency 2* is much more ambitious than your average shooter (it's not exactly a brawler anymore). Walk by while someone's playing it and, at any given time, you'll see him or her flying a helicopter, using a turret to mow down hundreds of enemies, or sneaking through a military base.

The game also relies less on the manic megacrowd spectacle that was the prequel's gimmick; now you can sway the populous to launch helter-skelter attacks against enemies. It still all boils down to fairly generic action—along with a few frustrating missions—but at least this sequel attempts to deliver new thrills.



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by Rick O'Connor



PlayStation 2

# SHADOW HEARTS: FROM THE NEW WORLD

Starring a young Franklin Delano Roosevelt



**Good:** Fantastic timing-based battle system

**Bad:** Relatively short quest

**Best Character:** Frank the Ninja



**GREG S:** *Shadow Hearts'* story takes more left turns than a race car in the Daytona 500. Its playable characters range from serious-as-a-heart-attack Native Americans to giant, talking cats who want to be movie stars, and the game continues to pile one new play mechanic atop another seemingly without end. And I dig it.

If you allow yourself to enjoy the quirky sense of humor, you'll find a great role-playing game underneath it all. The uniqueness of each and every character in the *Shadow Hearts* universe combined with the excellent, timing-based battle system just works. It turns even random encounters into strategic fights as you learn to combine each member of your party for better and better combos.

Despite the weirdness, the story is enjoyable as well. *Shadow Hearts* eschews the knights and dragons backdrop that's been done to death in the genre for a semi-contemporary setting in the early 20th century. Anachronisms abound, but it's still a refreshing change from the norm.

*Shadow Hearts* is relatively short for an RPG—just around 25 hours—but the sheer character and locale variety make up for it. Definitely worth checking out.

**JUSTIN:** This game has the personality of a ninja trained by a giant cat in the

rainforests of Brazil, and the heart of a New York orphan with the guts to open his own detective agency. You visit memorable locations in a wonderfully anachronistic version of the Roaring '20s, fight battles that feature a nice mix of interactive and strategic elements, and fall in love with a cast of characters that exhibits battle prowess and comedic value.

Absurd humor does a lot for the game, but it's still a traditional console RPG, one that's not perfect. Unfortunate music choices and awkward slips on the comedy/drama tightrope annoy, and you probably have to kill a few dozen foes per single line of clever dialogue, but it's arguably worth it.

**NICH:** It takes some special minds to imagine that Native American hotties were slaying demons in the Roaring '20s, or that the New York City of the same era granted private detective licenses to 16-year-olds. But those minds let their creativity run away with things, overcomplicating a battle system that was perfectly fine in the first two games. The timing-based Judgement Ring mechanic still works, but now you also have to worry about esoteric variables such as the enemy's vertical position. This info overload can't take away from a fine RPG, but a story this entertainingly weird shouldn't be buried under lengthy random battles.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0	7.5	7.0
GREG S.	JUSTIN	NICH

Publisher: Xseed  
Developer: Nautilus  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Teen

www.shadowheartsnewworld.com

PlayStation 2

# BEATMANIA

Don't stop till you've bled enough



**Good:** Serious, possibly dangerous rhythm gaming

**Bad:** Controller requires as much practice as a real instrument

**Cheesy:** Faux Burt Bacharach tune, "Love So Groovy"



**ROBERT A:** Just as my fingertips had begun to heal from *Guitar Hero* abuse, the granddaddy of crazy-controller rhythm gaming showed up at my door. *Beatmania* arrived on the back of a donkey, looking worse for wear from years of travel. He told me some crazy stories about wandering the desert searching for the meaning of carefully timed button presses. Maybe you don't know him, but *Beatmania* was hot s\*\*\* in Japanese arcades way back when our president lied only about BJs.

It was an innocent time, a time when a turntable/keyboard controller was too novel for gamers to notice its flaws. Unlike the slim, interweaving ivories of a piano, *Beatmania's* keys are ham-hock fat and separated into two clumsy rows. Navigating them requires serious practice, which is what you'll be doing...a lot. Tapping and scratching out strings of notes as they fly down the screen like musical space invaders, you'll find *Beatmania's* patterns to be fast and rhythmically furious. The hard stuff requires Carnegie Hall-level chops. It's good fun, especially once you've really learned a song or two. But the music (mostly textbook techno and canned J-pop) could use more U.S.-friendly songs.

**KATHLEEN:** *Beatmania* promises to start you off easy with three beginner-mode, five-key songs—and then it's no more Mr.

Nice Guy. Eventually, you'll graduate to IIDX mode, with all seven, clunky buttons delivering more variety and very inconsistent difficulty. If you're not Harry Hugehands, the cumbersome controller, with its two rows of thick buttons, won't help. Unfortunately, unlike the other recent music-accessory rhythm/timing game *Guitar Hero*, *Beatmania* also lacks the sing-along fun. Although the song selection is impressive, it's the stuff people who wear glow sticks listen to under the cover of black light. If you're determined to don cans and rock the boards, you'd be better off just buying the real thing.

**1UP.COM—JARED:** Imagine you bought *Dance Dance Revolution* and it was missing the highest difficulty setting. I get what Konami was aiming for with this, its first stab at getting American gamers addicted to *Beatmania*. But titles like *Guitar Hero* and even Konami's own *DDR* series have proven that American gamers are tough. The lack of progression in difficulty will leave most players (OK, maybe not Robert and Kathleen) asleep at the turntable, wondering what the big deal about this series is. Considering the game's crippled song list (50-odd songs split between the five- and seven-key versions of the game) and a bare-bones approach, Konami gets its "border bonus"—a little *Beatmania* lingo there for ya—but just barely.

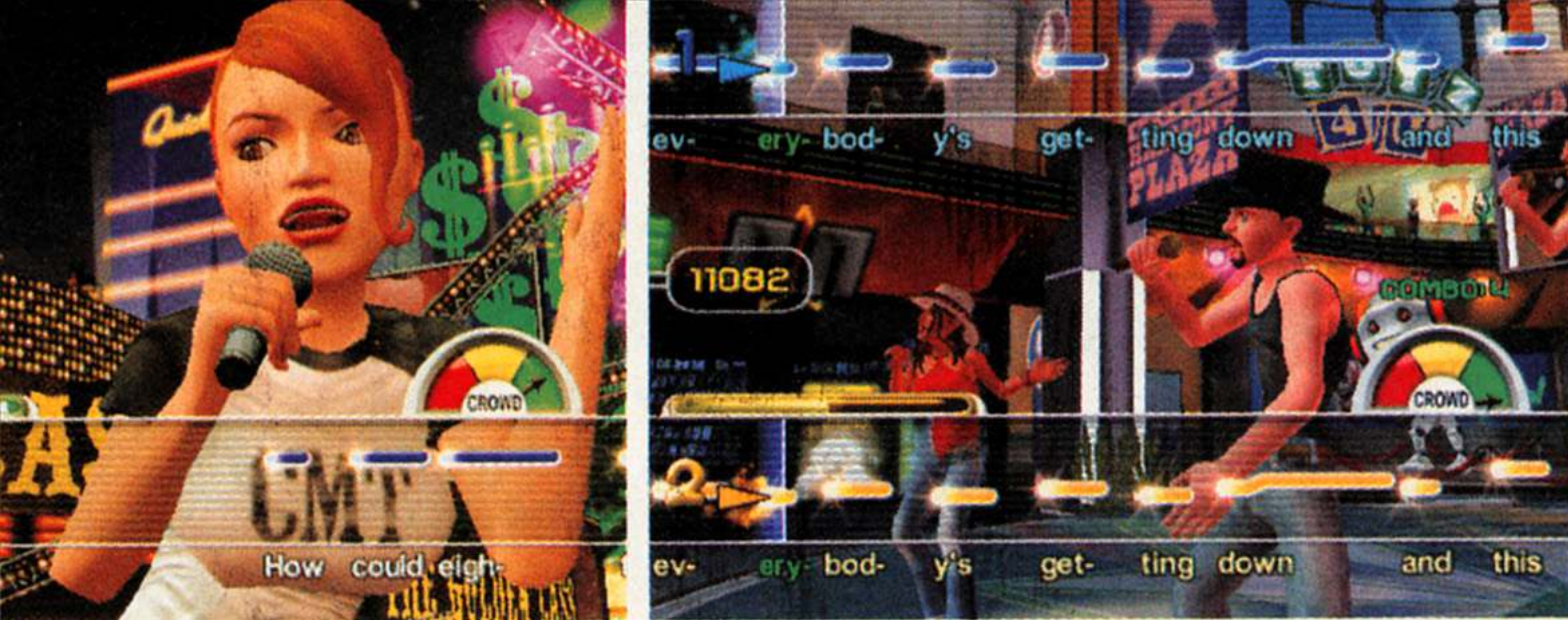
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

7.5	4.5	5.5
ROBERT A.	KATHLEEN	JARED

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Konami  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.konami.com





PlayStation 2

# CMT PRESENTS KARAOKE REVOLUTION COUNTRY

When babies grow up to be cowboys

**Good:** It's all country

**Bad:** See above

**Breakin' Our Achy Heart:** Only two unlockable songs



**JENNIFER:** I always hoped that *Karaoke Revolution* would produce genre-specific spin-offs, but I never predicted the hoedown variety would be first out of the gate. It works pretty well. The setup is standard *KR*: sing songs into a USB microphone and earn points based on how closely your pitch lines up with the notes scrolling across the bottom of the screen. This time, however, you have goofy-looking cowboys to choose as your onscreen persona, and the song list is all country. I give props to the developers at Konami—they really didn't water the soundtrack down. Music fans that don't listen to contemporary country music will find only a handful of familiar songs. But with plenty of duets and no more story mode, this is the most party-friendly version yet. Only those people whose friends actually watch CMT, however, will enjoy whipping this one out at a soiree—the fun thing about previous *KRs* is singing mildly familiar pop hits intermingled with songs everyone in the room knows by heart. I'm sure that's true for the audience to which this is targeted, but I grew bored after my third go-round with Patsy Cline's "Crazy."

**SHANE:** This country-fried take on Konami's hit crooning franchise skimps on ambition—nearly everything here besides the twangy tuneage hails directly from previous *Karaoke Revolution* installments. Recycled environments and minigames probably won't rattle the Wal-Mart crowd, though. They're just looking to sing along to their favorite boot-scootin' boogies, and this series' excellent pitch-judging gameplay performs admirably. As expected, the various two-player co-op and competitive modes provide the maximum hootenanny thrills, so be sure to invest in an extra microphone. Ultimately, your mileage with this game depends solely upon how much you dig the music. And while the song list skews toward recent tracks, a smattering of well-known oldies might even lasso city slickers up to the mic.

**1UP.COM—ANDREW:** If country music clashes with your pop sensibilities, then not only are you not going to buy *CMT*—you're not even reading these reviews. Thankfully, my mother listened to Willie and didn't let me grow up to be a cowboy, but that doesn't mean that I can't see good ol' boys and girls having a s\*\*\*-kicking good time. One thing I did notice: For some reason country music is a lot harder to sing than my preferred rock and/or roll, and the *Karaoke Revolution* A.I. judges can be rather unforgiving. And despite the inclusion of songs like "The Gambler" and the *Dukes of Hazzard* theme, *CMT's* playlist is also not very newbie friendly.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	6.5	7.0
	JENNIFER	SHANE	ANDREW

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Harmonix  
Players: 1-8  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.konami.com

PlayStation 2

# ONIMUSHA: DAWN OF DREAMS

Asleep at the hilt



**Good:** One of the prettiest PS2 games to date

**Bad:** Ridiculously weak A.I. partners

**Unlock:** Costumes from *Street Fighter's* closet



**BRYAN:** When I first saw the French-infused *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege*, I remember developer Keiji Inafune telling me that it would be the franchise's swan song. Too bad he's not a man of his word.

*Dawn of Dreams* makes a considerable amount of alterations to this soul-sucking action series, and while I'm cool with things changing, I'm not cool with the execution. Let's start with the new A.I.-controlled partners: Simply put, these warriors are total wussies. Even when it's not a big fight, you'll usually find them sucking wind and completely out of health (upgrading their stats doesn't help, either). Next up, the camera: You can now swing it around using the right analog stick, but the viewpoint's set way too close to your character, and you know what that means—lots of cheap hits from offscreen enemies. And instead of a more open-ended world, this edition is broken up into stages—which would be fine, except it feels like each chapter has loading sequences every 20 damn steps.

Don't let this one's slick presentation fool you; it's simply another title that looks good from afar, yet is far from good.

**MARK:** I haven't disagreed this strongly with Bryan since he enjoyed the first *Matrix* game. Granted, *Dawn of Dreams'* story is the standard *Oni* combo of awkward dialogue and bizarre cast, but its expanded character-building options make sitting through those snooze-inducing cut-scenes worth it. Improving not only your weapons and armor, but different skills, combos, and special attacks gives the

game an RPG-like flavor, rewarding you for taking down the (sometimes) repetitive respawning enemies. Plus, the combat is excellent, and using your partner effectively (Up and Down on the D-pad, Bryan!) is a snap.

**1UP.COM—MILKMAN:** For the first time in the series, the action game once described as "*Resident Evil* with samurai" arrives without a gimmicky big-name actor to its credit, and while that's hardly more than an aesthetic factor, *Dawn of Dreams* also arrives as just another action game. While the addition of criminally weak CPU-controlled allies makes for an interesting new tweak to the franchise, discarding the original format of prerendered stages with static camera angles in favor of level-based grinds takes something away from *Onimusha*. The familiar weapon and armor upgrading remains, but it's somehow less compelling and merely serves to justify the game's rampant soul harvesting. *Dawn's* unlockable goodies will give *Street Fighter* fans a surefire boost, but anyone simply looking for an evolution in *Onimusha* will leave feeling shortchanged.

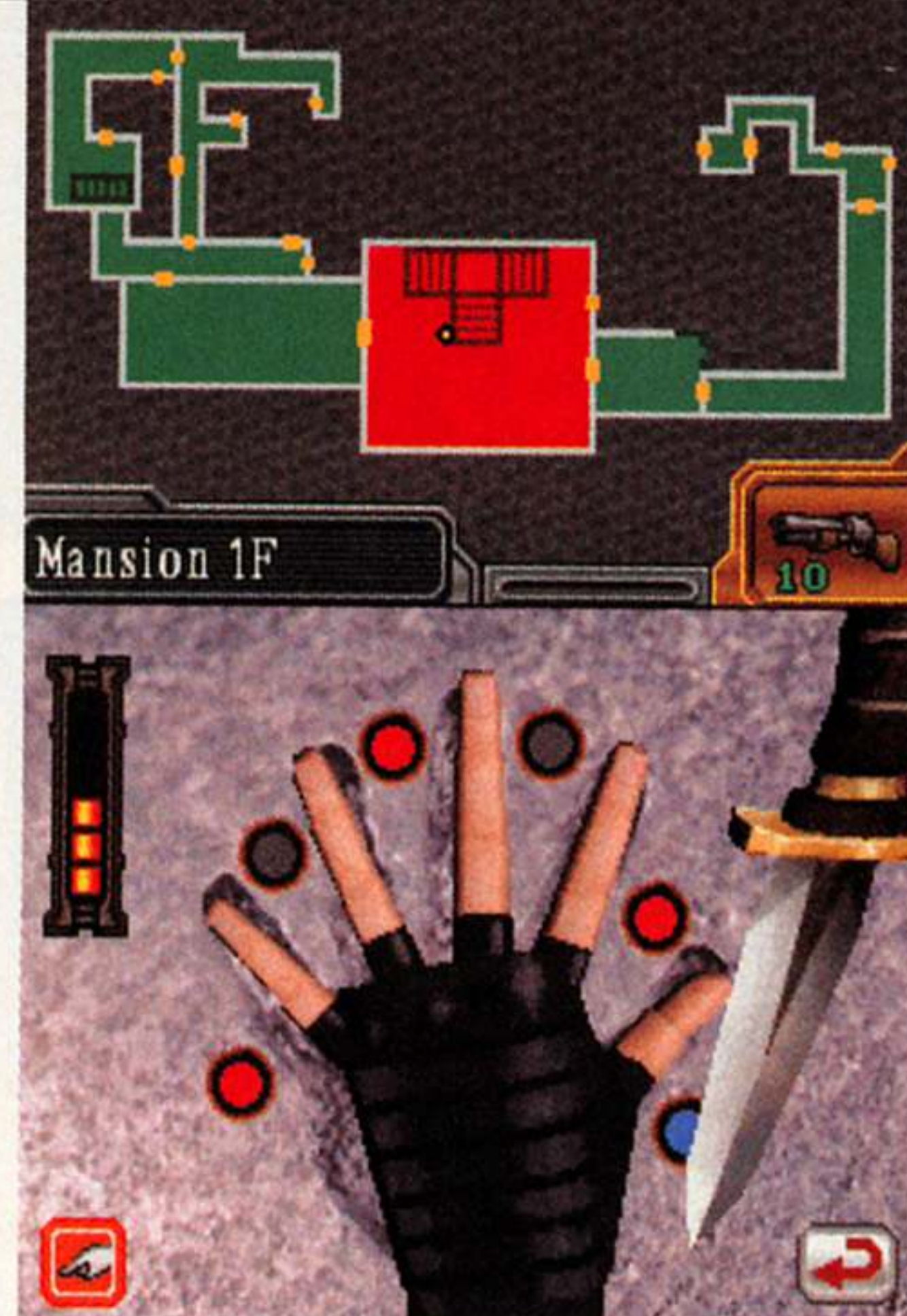
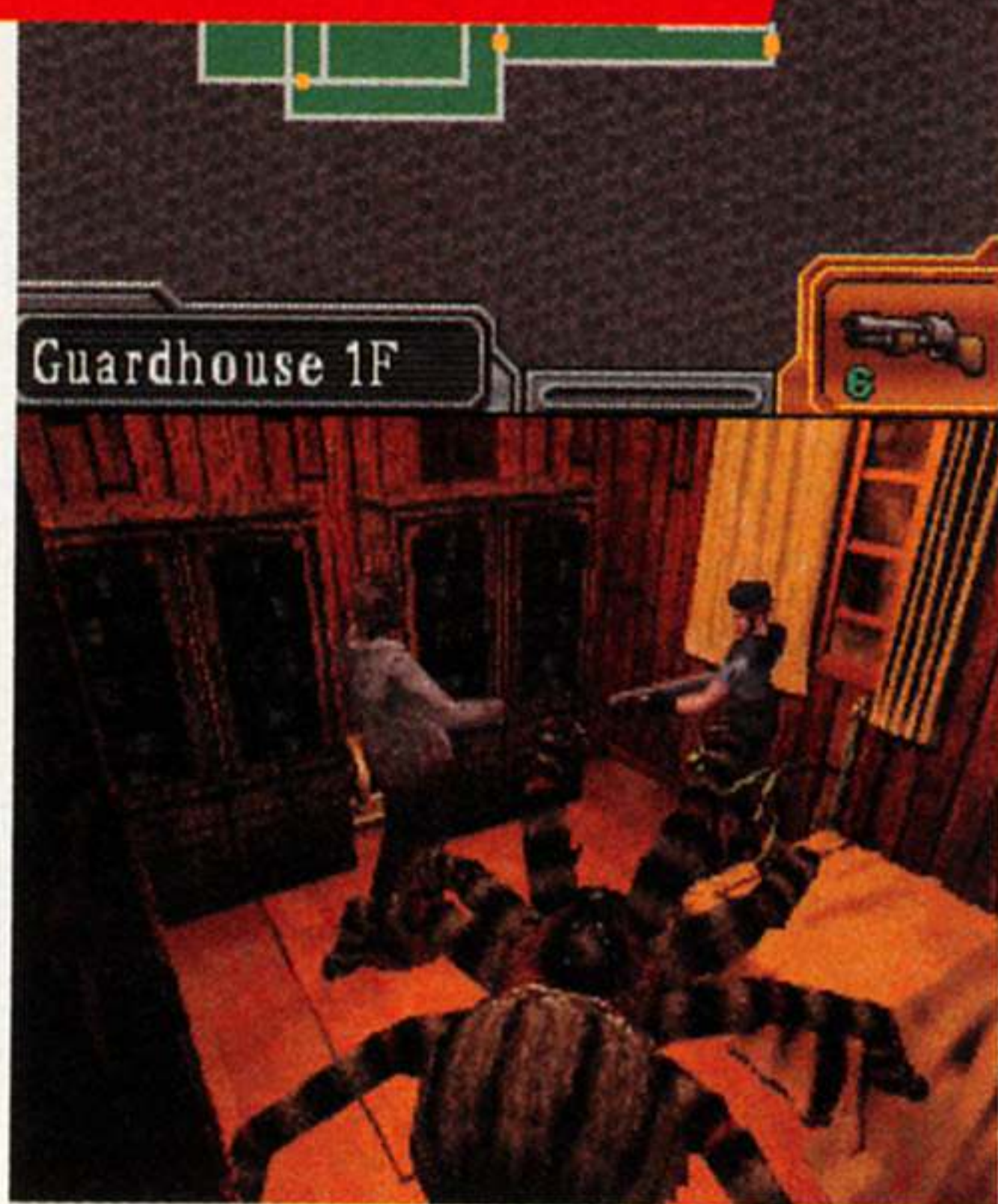


THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.5	7.5	6.5
	BRYAN	MARK	MILKMAN

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

www.capcom.com





# RESIDENT EVIL: DEADLY SILENCE

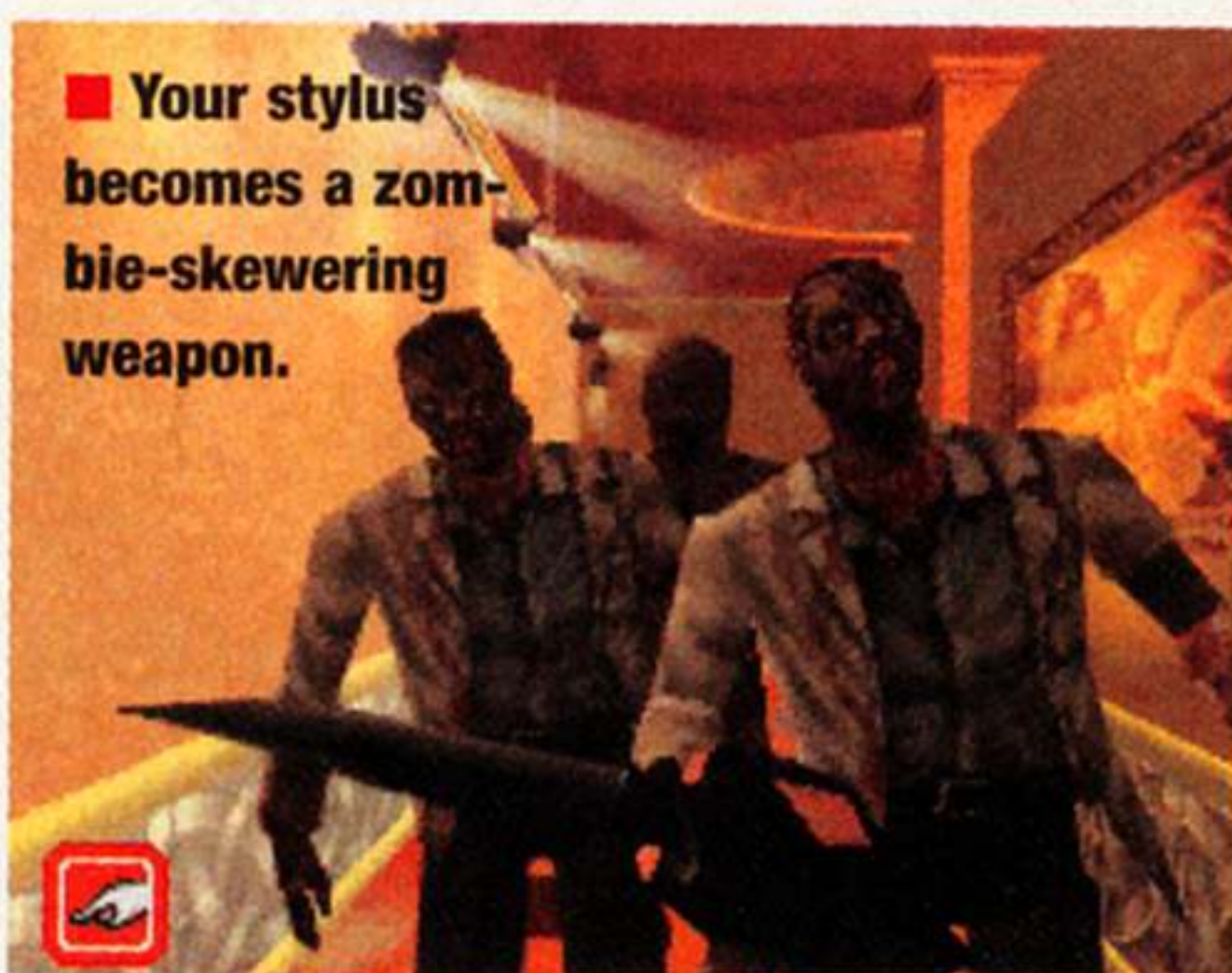
Dawn of the retreat

**Good:** Handy new moves, fun multiplayer modes  
**Bad:** Outdated graphics and gameplay  
**Embarrassing:** Classic *Resident Evil* dialogue



**SHANE:** It's time to ask yourself whether you really need to play through *Resident Evil* again. Sure, the game's a modern classic that helped birth the whole survival-horror genre, but if you want the consummate *RE* experience, tackle the lushly revamped GameCube edition. This portable effort isn't nearly as ambitious—visually, it's about on par with the PS1 original (characters look better but the backgrounds seem worse), and it offers a few handy gameplay tweaks (a useful 180-degree turnaround, quick reloading, and easy access to your knife), but the clunky controls and antiquated inventory system feel more limiting than ever in the wake of *Resident Evil 4*.

Capcom did add new bits that use the DS' unique two-screen, touch-panel functionality, with mixed results. The ever-present mansion map makes navigation too easy, and first-person challenges where you have to stab enemies with your stylus feel tacked-on and cheesy. Hardcore fans will dig the new touch-panel puzzles and basic wireless multiplayer action, but most gamers have already toured this haunted house.



Your stylus becomes a zombie-skewering weapon.

**JOHN R:** I've always had a soft spot for the original *Resident Evil*. But after a decade of ports and reissues, not to mention 2002's definitive GameCube remake, was it really necessary to put out yet another version of the game? *Deadly Silence* does have two things going for it: 1) it's portable, and 2) it's got a pair of wireless multiplayer modes that are fun but flawed (why the onscreen action doesn't sync up exactly during co-op play is beyond me). Rebirth mode offers some DS-exclusive thrills, and the quick-turn and auto-reload features are welcome (if long overdue), but unless you're straight up infected with *RE* fandom, these minor perks don't justify the price.

**1UP.COM—MILKMAN:** Let's see a show of hands: Who here hasn't already played the original *Resident Evil* four times over and is dying for a chance to take it on the road in significantly less terrifying circumstances? Not many? It's OK. Playing *RE* in the dark using a stylus on tiny screens would probably make you go blind anyway, and it's hardly any more frightening. But in terms of the quality of the port, it's all here: cheesy voice acting, cinematic sequences, prerendered backgrounds, 3D character models, and sluggish zombie-shooting action. It's actually pretty impressive for a handheld title, though, and the new stuff gives *Deadly Silence* some legs (the most interesting addition being the heavy-on-the-touchscreen-action Rebirth mode). Not essential, but worthwhile for anyone who hasn't played the original *Evil* in ages.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.5	7.0	7.5
SHANE	JOHN R.	MILKMAN

Publisher: Capcom  
Developer: Capcom  
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com

DS

# POKÉMON TROZEI!

Catch as many as you care to



**Good:** Simple, somewhat fun puzzling  
**Bad:** Simple, somewhat boring puzzling  
**Why Is Only:** The European version called *Pokemon Link!?*



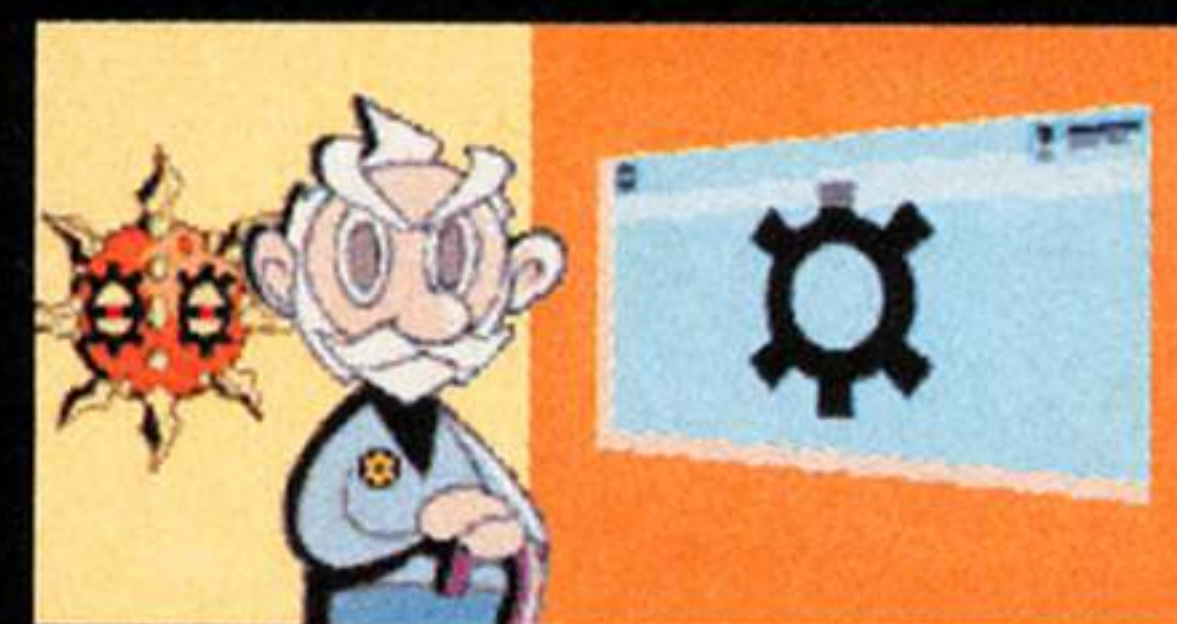
**JENNIFER:** I give props to those who try, but it ain't easy to design an innovative and addictive puzzle formula these days. *Pokémon Trozei's* take on things is to drop little critters down both DS screens, with you matching up four of them in a row, horizontally or vertically, by shuffling them around a grid using the stylus. It's a nice use of the dual screens, and certain "trozeis" (as the matches are called) start off chain reactions, where you get points for combos of two and three. This keeps the rhythm nice and quick. As the game wears on, new Pokémon appear, and you have to trozei them to get them on your list—you'll also get opportunities to share your collection in multiplayer versus and co-op modes.

Unfortunately, that's pretty much it. The chain reaction combos would seem to lend an air of strategy, but in practice they tend to be mostly haphazard. You'll find, except on the much later levels of the story mode, that it's easy to clear the board almost by chance. And while collecting rare Pokémon might be compelling for certain self-professed freaks, I found it tough to care. Perhaps those same freaks will enjoy showing off in multiplayer, but I found these sessions too short and simplistic to be enjoyable.

**JOHN R:** The unfortunately titled *Trozei* is a solid if unremarkable puzzler that manages to succeed where others might have failed because of—get this—the Pokémon factor. It's a fun game in its own right, with gameplay similarities to two of my favorite puzzlers ever—*Tetris Attack*

and *Meteos*—but the additional goal of finding and capturing (err, trozei...ing) all 380-something Pokémon adds a good deal of longevity to what might've otherwise been a quick weekend romp. Of course, multiplayer is the way to go if you want to challenge your skills, but the lack of any kind of true online play is disappointing, especially with the Wi-Fi-enabled *Tetris DS* coming out just two weeks later.

**1UP.COM—JEREMY:** Like puzzlers and Pokémon? Then you might sorta maybe enjoy *Trozei*, another one of those mid-dling brainteasers built around ideas taken from other, better games. In this case, the inspiration clearly comes from Nintendo's own *Meteos* and *Pokémon Puzzle League*. Either archetype's tough to top, but *Trozei* lacks both the manic pace of the one and the exquisite depth of the other. The most impressive things about it are its pseudo-stylish visuals, which manage to make Pokémon look chic, and an excellent array of multiplayer options. Unfortunately, flashy pixels and Wi-Fi features aren't much more than tinsel on *Trozei's* knockoff foundation.



There, you shall recover the stolen Pokémon in their Poké Balls. ▾

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.5	7.0	6.5
JENNIFER	JOHN R.	JEREMY

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Genius Sonority  
Players: 1 (2 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Everyone

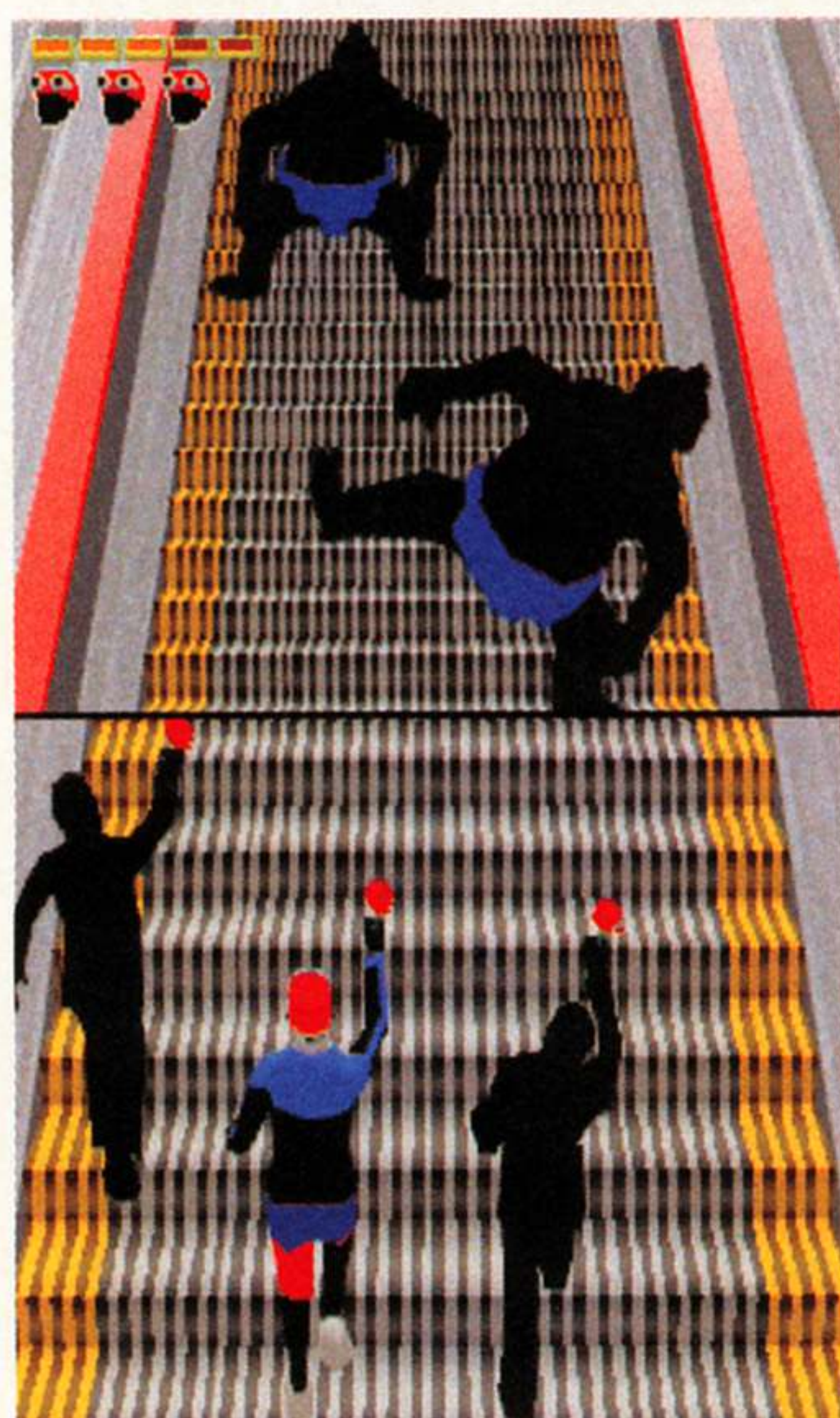
www.nintendo.com



DS

# THE RUB RABBITS!

Fool-for-love's errands



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.0	5.0	6.0
SHAWN	DEMIAN	ANDREW

Publisher: Sega  
Developer: Sonic Team  
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Teen

www.sega.com

**Good:** More minigames than in *Feel the Magic*

**Bad:** Spoils its own surprises

**Nothing to It:** In the wrong way



**SHAWN:** Little wonder that a game called *Where Do Babies Come From?* in the place of its birth (Japan) is about getting by cockblockers—it's just you, her, and 12 other would-be lotharios in the way.

Like *Feel the Magic* before it, this not-so-boffo sequel serves up simple-to-play coordination challenges posthaste. Unlike the similarly minded *WarioWare*—which compensates for minimalist components with volume, variety, and surprise—*Rub Rabbits!* announces its handful of overly long fool's errands with how-tos before they begin. The difference is all that in the world.

When a stage's only objective is to move from one side of the screen to the other, clueing us in to that fact isn't always good, especially when you've taken the trouble to gussy that stage up with unicyclists and freshwater sharks. Just throw it at us; we'll work it out. Then, when something's as simple as that (tapping cattle, tapping piano keys), the longer we play, the less interesting it gets.

*Rabbits'* other content celebrates its novelty-toy nature for forgettable giggles. Apropos the theme, Baby-Making mode gives preteens pretext to touch with a two-player compatibility meter, while Hullabaloo makes the DS a Twister mat for as many cootie fingers as can fit.

**DEMIAN:** I'm all right with *Rabbits'* iPod-ad-campaign-silhouettes-in-love premise—it's the between-cut-scene minigames that get me down. Partly because they aren't mini at all; each consists of five increasingly tough stages of roughly the same thing, and when you flub it up, you've got to play through the fluff again. Problem is, the difficulty level doesn't just vary wildly between minigames—you can replay the same minigame and find it significantly easier or harder.

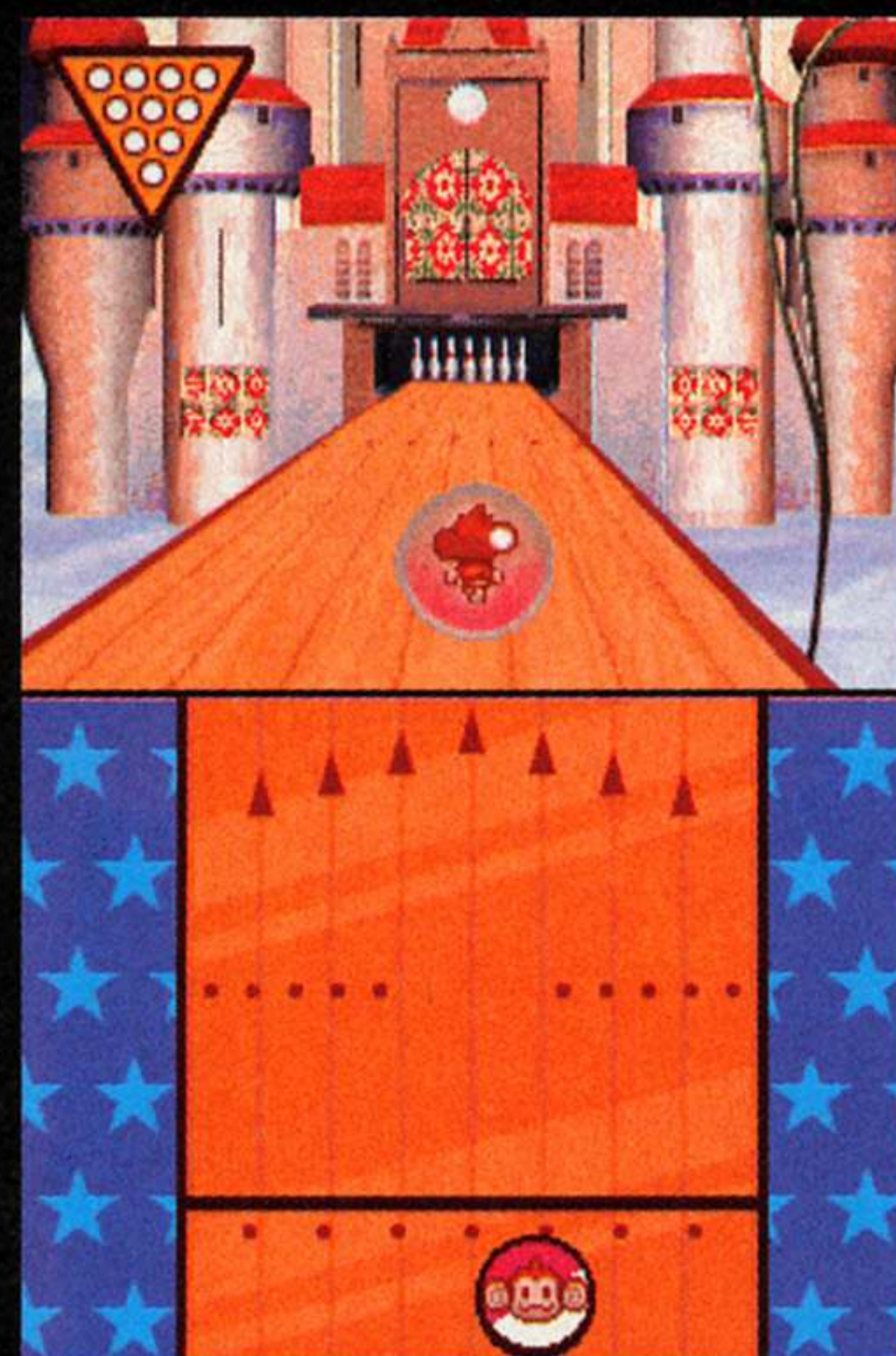
I give *Rabbits!* points for its quirky sensibility and style, and it may take more time to beat than *Feel the Magic*, but, limp multiplayer games be damned, *Rabbits!* didn't keep me happily rubbing for very long.

**1UP.COM—ANDREW:** I felt the magic before, but *Rabbits!* left me feeling a little heartbroken. *Rub Rabbits!* does a better job of inducing carpal tunnel than conveying a sense of fun. Like its predecessor, it's much more enjoyable when viewed as an interactive experience (especially the "events" designed around getting closer to your beau), but I was really hoping Sega would spend more time improving and fleshing out the minigames—many seem like *Feel the Magic* retreads in fashionable new boots (though having to rotate the DS for certain events was a neat touch).

DS

# SUPER MONKEY BALL: TOUCH & ROLL

Will drive you apes't



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.5	5.5	6.5
ROBERT A.	JENNIFER	JARED

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

www.sega.com

**Good:** Finally making it to the exit of an impossible stage

**Bad:** Falling for the 100th time in an impossible stage

**Cut Corners:** *Touch & Roll* recycles stages from past *Ball* games



**ROBERT A:** Portable *Monkey Ball* is a dangerous thing. I mean, if I were sitting on a bus bench rolling my monkey-in-a-ball down a narrow stretch, and the guy next to me bumped into my stylus arm, knocking my cute little monkey into the abyss, I'd probably strangle the dude. That's the real kicker with this game: It matches an infuriating style of play with disarmingly cute themes.

When you boot up *Touch & Roll*, the first thing you see is a cartoon monkey shaking his heart-shaped ass at you and saying "touch me" over and over again. You'd never know that within the next 10-15 minutes, you'd be frightening nearby children with screams of agony. But it hurts so good....

*Monkey Ball's* main gig is a series of mazes suspended in the air, which you can tilt every which way in order to guide your roller-simian to the exit. The microscopic muscle movements of your hand are the difference between making it and falling. It's nerve destroying, and if you're a masochist like me, you'll want to play it until your eyeballs explode from frustration.

**JENNIFER:** It's ironic that this series has a reputation as a good "girlfriend" game—in truth, the challenge mode is such a gauntlet of obscene platforming that nobody but the masochists will be able to stand its punishing

instadeath format. Its difficulty is underscored (though also counterbalanced) by its suspiciously generous life-giving system. (Even so, 14 lives won't be enough to save you in lots of cases where one false twitch spells doom.) I know that the party games are where *Super Monkey Ball* shines, and some of them are really fun—especially bowling, golf, and hockey. The downloadable multiplayer also makes it easy to share (though only a couple games can be swapped that way...what gives?). But some of them have such terrible control—like the first-person shooter or boxing—that they're painful to play. Give it to your girlfriend at the risk of a brisk dumping.

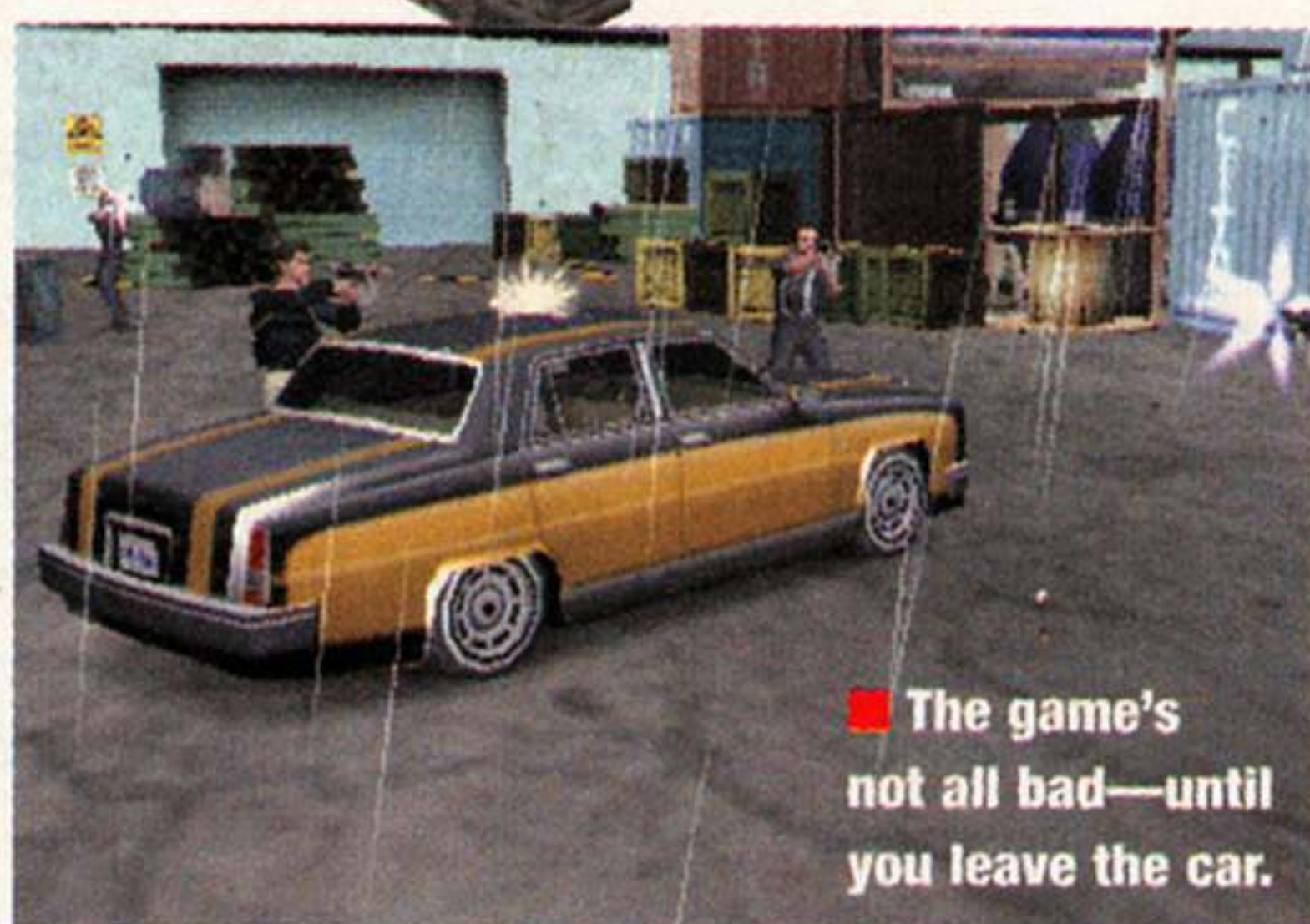
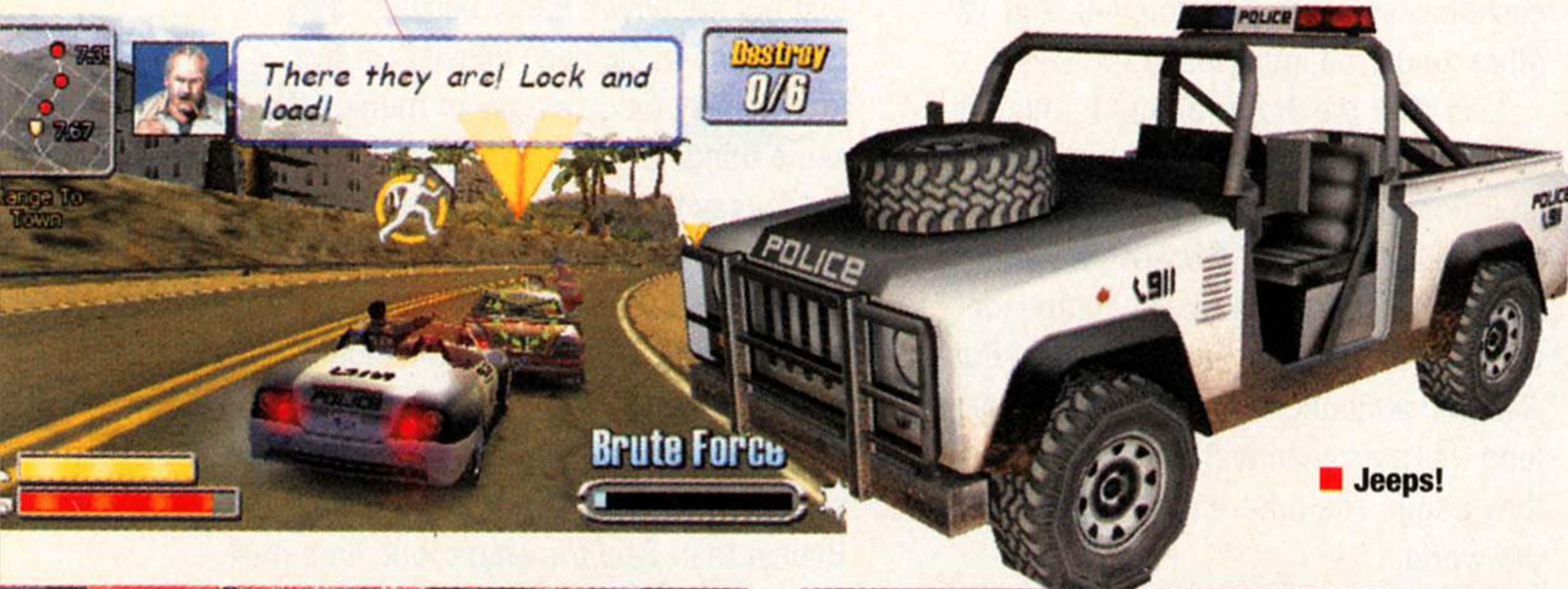
**1UP.COM—JARED:** Take the "Touch" portion of the title with a grain of salt, as it's nigh impossible to maneuver your way through the *Monkey Ball* gauntlet using the stylus controls. Luckily, the D-pad does a decent job of controlling your simian friend, though sore thumbs are unavoidable. *Touch & Roll* impresses with its vibrant graphics and speedy gameplay that brilliantly mirror its console brethren, but its infamous minigames are now hardly worth praise, considering the awkward stylus controls. Overall, the need to live up to the DS' unique potential hampers the experience more than not, but what makes *Monkey Ball* great is still in here somewhere.



■ PSP

# PURSUIT FORCE

The force is wrong in this one



■ Jeeps!

■ The game's not all bad—until you leave the car.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.5	4.0	6.5
	KATHLEEN	JENNIFER	JOE

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

www.us.playstation.com

**Good:** Huge selection of cars...  
**Bad:** ...that are rotten to control  
**Not as Macho as:** Jon from *CHiPs*



**KATHLEEN:** Apparently, someone out there was itching for a game that combines the witless banality of *Jake and the Fat Man* with the absurd chase scenarios of *CHiPs*. The result is *Pursuit Force*, a car combat game in which, as a rookie boy in blue, you make a name for yourself in the department by leaping from your vehicle to the evildoers' car while shooting them. Killing ne'er-do-wells increases your "justice meter," enabling midair targeting and more powerful attacks. Although ridiculous, the vehicle-hopping part of the game works fine, and you scamper onto a wide variety of bikes, boats, and SUVs. Completing typical escort and chase missions unlocks additional, bizarre criminal gangs, like the Vixens (think *She Spies*, only somehow dumber).

The hokey story and stupid gimmick would be forgivable if the vehicle control weren't so lame, the targeting weren't so uncoordinated, the difficulty level weren't so bipolar, and the occasional on-foot missions' rotten camera weren't rage inducing.

**JENNIFER:** I first played this game on a 13-hour flight where the featured entertainment was *I, Robot*—and I got bored and put it away. The racing here is clunky, annoying, and repetitive. I found it unsavory playing a cop who patently murders

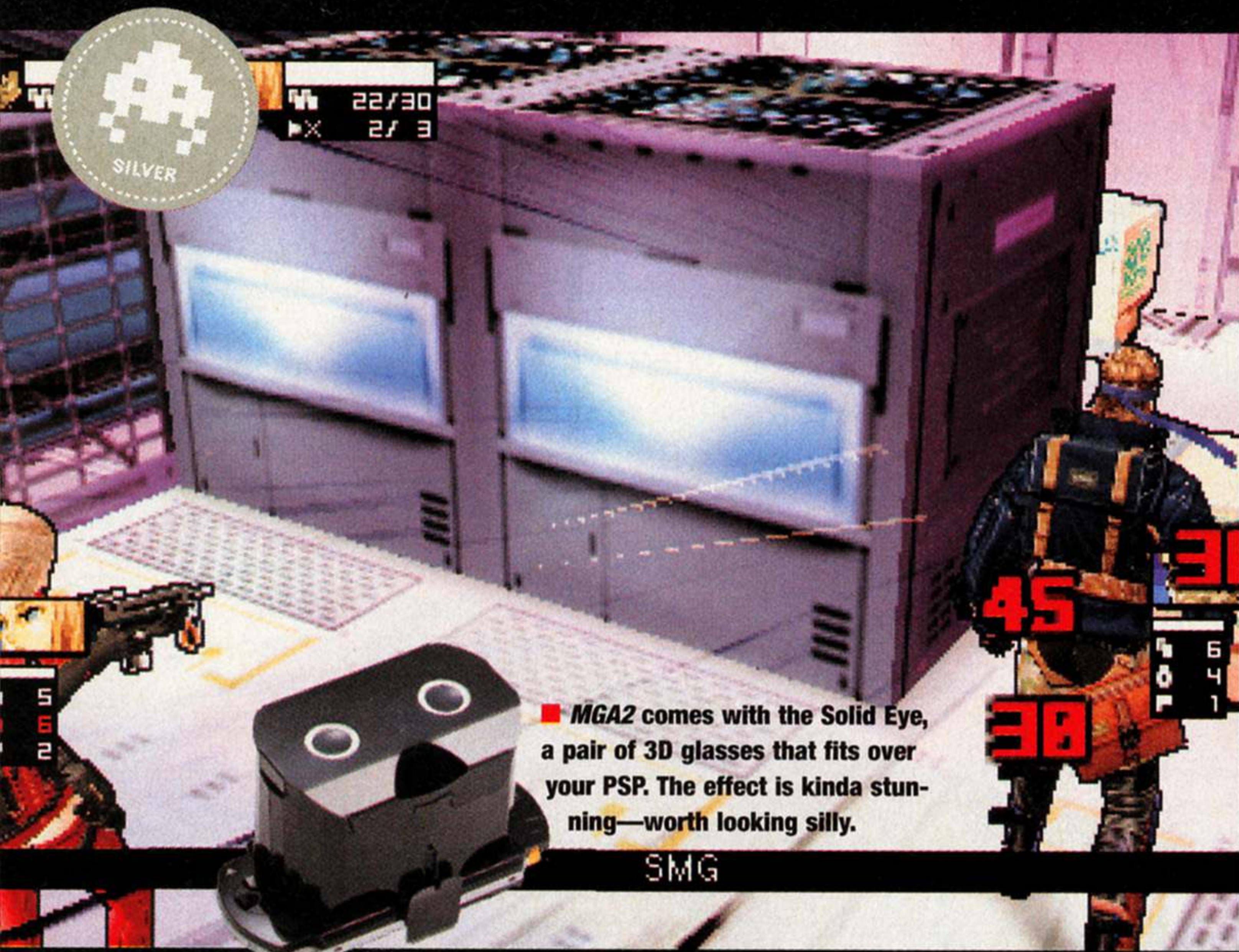
his perps, earning health and power-ups from the increased body count. That kind of thing works in a series like *Grand Theft Auto*, where you're a criminal to begin with and the story gives you plenty of reasons to lay waste to your enemies. Here, I really felt I ought to, y'know, pull these guys over and take them into the precinct for questioning. Instead, my only choice was to race up behind them, jump into their car/boat/Hummer, and shoot 'em in the head. It's not much fun the first few times and really annoying the 50th.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE:** If *Pursuit Force* were nothing but racing, shooting, and jumping between cars, you could easily add a point or two to this score. Trouble is, all the other stuff—on-foot segments, boat racing, manning a chain gun from a helicopter—is implemented poorly. Boats and motorcycles control like complete crap, and the on-foot segments are laughably amateurish. Moreover, the game has some insanely difficult segments due to random traffic and poor track design. It's pretty amazing, then, that in spite of all this the game manages to be solidly entertaining. Think of it like a midnight donut run: reasonably filling but utterly devoid of nutritional value.

■ PSP

# METAL GEAR AC!D 2

Tactical maneuvers on a head full of acid



■ MGA2 comes with the Solid Eye, a pair of 3D glasses that fits over your PSP. The effect is kinda stunning—worth looking silly.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	9.0	8.5
	SHANE	CHE	SCOOTER

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Kojima Productions  
Players: 1 (2 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Mature

www.metalgearsolid.com

**Good:** Streamlined gameplay, cool 3D goodies  
**Bad:** So-so story line, over a bit too quickly  
**Tease:** Ten cards based on *Metal Gear Solid 4*



**SHANE:** I wasn't terribly pleased with the first *Metal Gear Acid*. Though it combined two things I adore—*Metal Gear Solid* and card-based tactical roleplaying—the finished product was as fun as an algebra exam. *MGA2* rights things by revamping the interface. Now you have more direct control over Snake: Cards aren't required for hugging walls, crawling through vents, climbing ladders, or even performing close-quarters fisticuffs. New Linkage cards allow you to combine various cards' effects, and you can upgrade your favorite cards. Also, handy tutorials effectively explain the ever-deepening gameplay as you go, so you're never left clueless. Together, these small tweaks combine to make the game far more engaging.

Some might take offense at the game's bizarre new graphical style, but the pop-art design actually makes discerning the onscreen action easier. The ho-hum story is mundane compared to the first game's trippy tale of killer dolls hijacking airliners. Luckily, you can live out your own killer *MGS* what-if scenarios in the unlockable Arena mode...well, if your dreams involve facing off against Liquid Snake and Vamp in a battle of card supremacy, that is.

**1UP.COM—CHE:** *Metal Gear Acid 2* succeeds mainly because its PSP launch-title predecessor laid down such deep and

innovative groundwork for handheld strategy. The game system, a unique hybrid of random-draw card battles and turn-based tactical combat, remains largely unchanged from the first *MGA*, with the notable exception of a more intuitive interface and better mission structures. Essentially, if you like the way strategy games engage your faculty of forethought and resource management, then *MGA2* will be (at least) a 30-hour trip into grid-based nirvana.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER:** Not only did the developers make this sequel easier for newbie players to get into (via tutorials and improved controls), but they've also added some significant gameplay tweaks for veterans. I particularly like using Linkage cards—which apply bonuses to whatever weapon card you use—to turn a mild-mannered pistol into a crazy weapon that chews through robots and soldiers. Having over 500 cards makes for a decent "collect 'em all" mechanic as well.

While the included Solid Eye (3D goggles) was pretty cool at first, I got a crazy headache after using it for a while. But *MGA2* is a good example of how to do a proper sequel. Even if it's a sequel to a game that changed the way you play your favorite franchise (for better or worse, depending on how you look at it).



PSP

ONLINE

# UNTOLD LEGENDS: THE WARRIOR'S CODE

Bushido called—it wants its code back



**Good:** Customization, graphics, load times  
**Bad:** Brimming with tired-ass RPG clichés  
**PSP's Analog Control:** Hand Cramp Summoning +10



**KATHLEEN:** What you got yourself here is a very competent hack-n-slash roleplayer packed with formulaic elements you've certainly seen before. You'll customize your arms and armor, and level up both your character and your magic...no surprises there, but at least a simple and effective menu system makes it all easy. *The Warrior's Code* does try to spice things up with an *Altered Beast*-esque animal-transformation gimmick, but you don't do much more damage in manimal form than with a well-timed standard attack, so I can't see what the fuss is about.

An elegant map/movement system minimizes monotonous travel, but a few control issues bring me down. The overhead camera occasionally makes targeting ranged attacks annoying, and since the D-pad is mapped to your magic spells, you're stuck using the ungainly analog nub to move.

Multiplayer co-op is fun, and an assortment of versus game modes provides a quick distraction but lacks anything to really hook you. *The Warrior's Code* doesn't have the ambition to be really

memorable, much less legendary, but it's still a fun dungeon crawl.

**1UP.COM—JARED:** Sorry, Kathleen, but what a dreadfully bland disappointment this turned out to be. What was a serviceable action-RPG returns as—surprise! A serviceable action-RPG, only with online play. So now you can stumble about online with other players (whose classes in no way complement one another) across generic landscapes in an attempt to get "phat lewt." Only said loot isn't as exciting as it could be, since everyone is just going to mash the Attack button and spam out spells, anyway, until the only life signs left are those of the righteous. The only gameplay curveball comes from the ability to transform, for unexplainable reasons, into a beast. And even that only serves to dumb down an already brainless game. Sigh.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA:** I like cutting swaths of destruction through waves of enemies as much as the next girl, but the destroying needs to take a little thought and skill in order to be fun. In *The Warrior's Code*, almost all enemies fall to the same maneuvers, even the boss monsters (and I was able to kill some of those without even needing to use a health potion). Yeah, your fighter does have some special attacks, but I never actually needed them, which kind of takes the fun out of it. Repetitive combat and your basic, by-the-numbers fantasy plot (in which you're the lone hope against a mighty evil, blah, blah, blah) equals one bored gamer.



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

6.5  
KATHLEEN

5.0  
JARED

5.0  
DANA

Publisher: Sony Online  
 Developer: Sony Online  
 Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi and online)  
 ESRB: Teen

station.sony.com

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—Electronic Gaming Monthly



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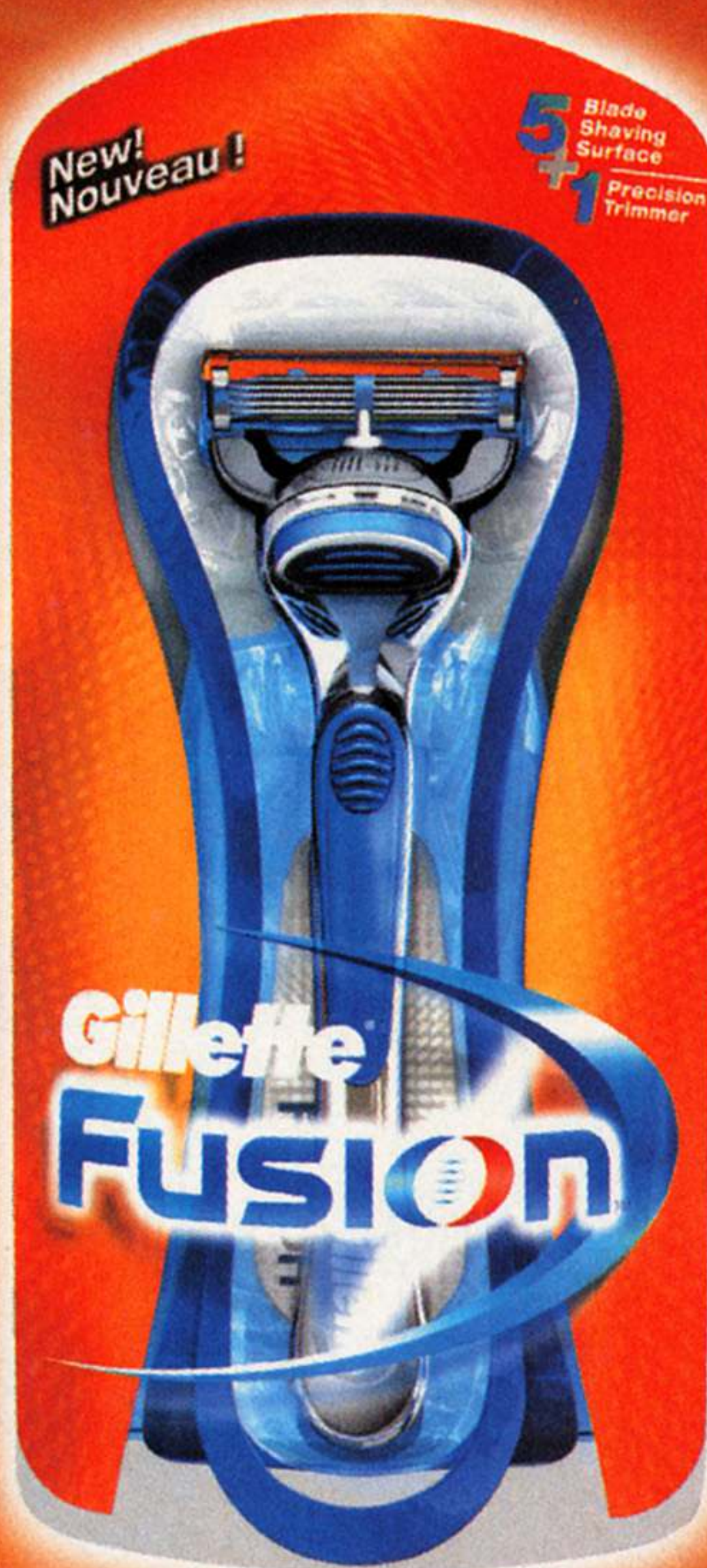
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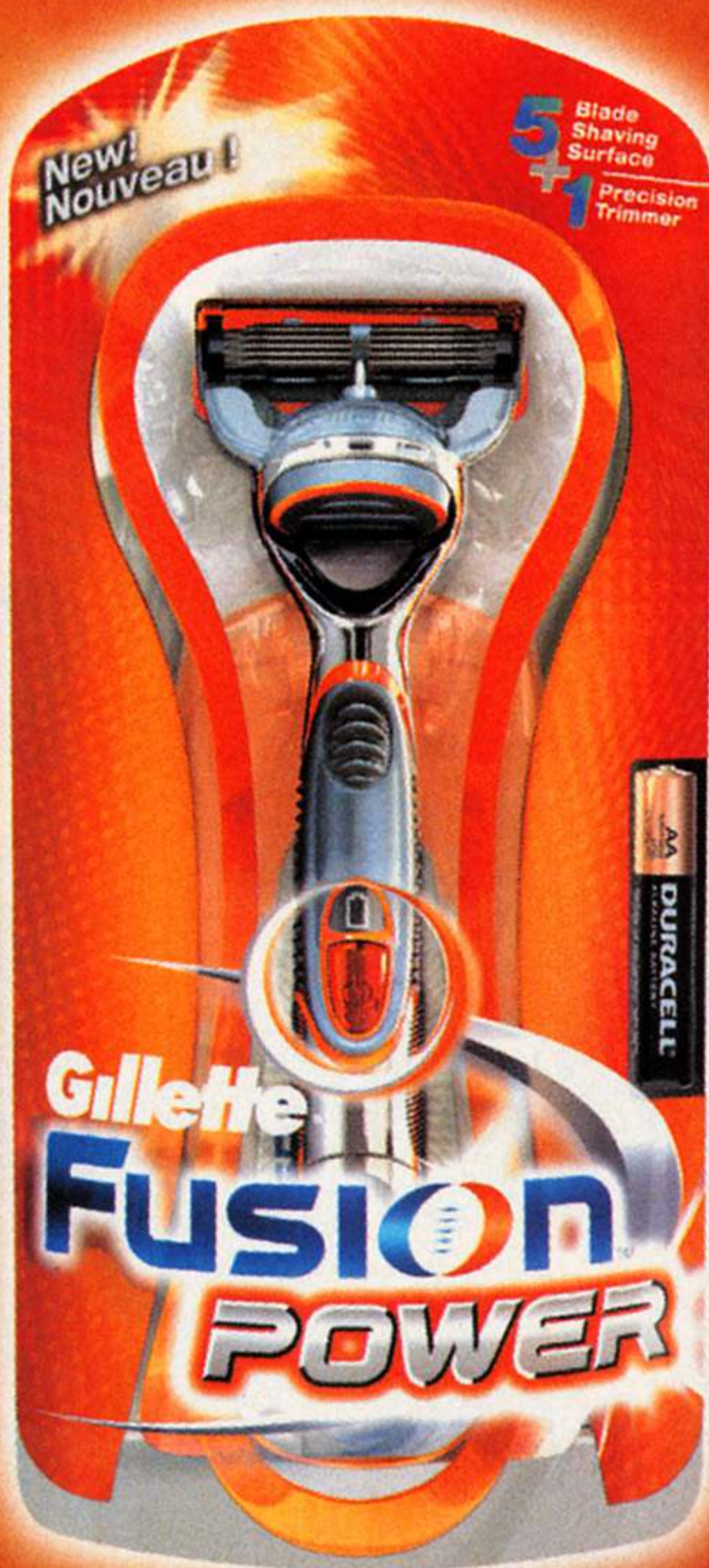
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review crew:  
gba



■ **Battle tip:** Time everything right and your back-row characters will pitch in and stun the enemies while you take a breather for your next assault.



■ GBA

## TALES OF PHANTASIA

Visiting the RPG museum

**Good:** Classic game, fun battles

**Bad:** "Classic" sometimes means "archaic"

**Don't Like It?** Try *Tales of Symphonia* or *Legendia* instead



**NICH:** Like the handheld version of *Final Fantasy IV*, what we've got here is an upgraded Super NES classic roleplayer on the GBA—but those upgrades were made so long ago that now, the game feels like a museum piece that'll fall apart if you look at it funny.

In its day, way back in '95, *Phantasia* stood out from the RPG pack. The linear motion battle system, which made its debut in *Phantasia*, is still a fun action-style alternative to turn-based combat, and the time-traveling story line takes the player on a tour of three iterations of the same world. Now, though, action-RPGs are as common as the traditional variety, and as for the multiple-world gimmick, it seems to show up in half of Nintendo's games these days.

Then you've got the stuff that, even back then, was nothing special. Game menus are awkward

and uninformative—try shopping for new weapons to see what I mean—and the snoozer of a story line was boring at the time and is soporific now. Better-than-average dialogue text makes the game go down a little easier, but it'll still be a bumpy ride.

**JOHN R:** Wrap your head around this: The GBA port of *Tales of Phantasia* came out in Japan in 2003 and was based on a 1998 PlayStation 1 remake of a 1995 Japanese Super NES game. Got that? In other words, this ain't exactly cutting-edge role-playing stuff here.

That said, *Phantasia* still has an awful lot of charm for such an old game, and fans of traditional RPGs will appreciate its long, varied dungeons and action-packed, real-time battles. Granted, the gameplay doesn't hold a candle to that of

more modern *Tales* like *Symphonia* (GC) and *Legendia* (PS2), but the plot and characters are still among the best in the series, and the overall pacing is excellent. Kudos to Nintendo for finally bringing it out here after all this time.

**1UP.COM—JEREMY:** *Phantasia* is a game with a lot of history, a fact that works both for and against it. At heart, it's a 10-year-old game with no major improvements over the original SNES version. The action feels sluggish, the interface is limited, and the script is uninspiring (sorry, Nich and John). On the other hand, it's a lot more open ended and less formulaic than most modern roleplayers. And for many fans, the simple fact that *Phantasia* has finally made it to the States will trump its shortcomings. It's definitely worth checking out, if only for its historical value.



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

**6.0**  
NICH

**7.5**  
JOHN R.

**7.5**  
JEREMY

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Namco  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.nintendo.com



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# REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were  
too late...or too little

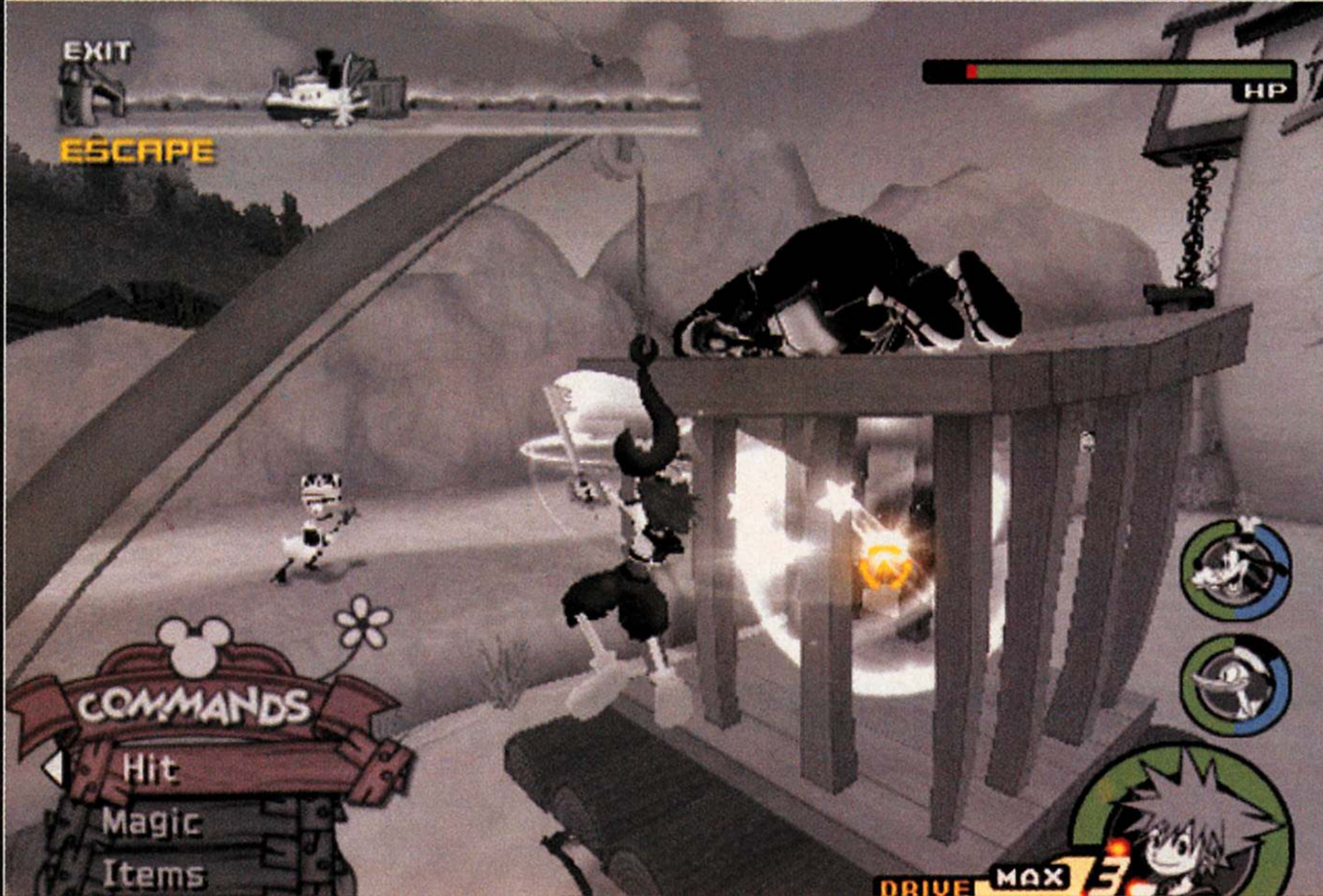
## KINGDOM HEARTS II

PS2 • Square Enix • ESRB: E10+

Few pairings are more head-scratching than Disney and *Final Fantasy*, but it sure as hell works in videogames. And after playing through the Japanese *KH2* and roughly 10 hours of the U.S. version, we'd say this action-RPG console sequel (remember, the card-fighting GBA installment *Chain of Memories* followed the PS2 original) is looking miles better than the first game.

The Disney-themed worlds here—from *Pirates of the Caribbean's* live-action seas to the techy, neon-lit environments of *Tron*—are much more appealing. The game's gaggle of *Final Fantasy* characters play a bigger role (some now fight alongside Sora during battle). But it's the vastly overhauled combat system that gives this one a lot of heart. Crushing double-team attacks, morphing into a dual-keyblade-wielding freak, bouncing enemies on their heads like a basketball thanks to all-new Reaction commands—oh yeah, the gameplay's good.

**Bottom line:** This write-up is so glowing it almost makes us sick. Now just wait till our full *KH2* review in the May issue....





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PlayStation 2



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## REVIEWS WRAP-UP (CONT.)

### College Hoops 2K6

**XB360 • 2K Sports • ESRB: E**

Smell that? Yep, it's another Xbox 360 sports port. And just like its big brother, *NBA 2K6*, *College Hoops* is pretty rank.

This university baller is essentially the same as its PS2/XB schoolmates, except for the marginally (and we stress the word marginally) improved visuals and livelier atmosphere (it sports fully animated student and band sections—whoopie!).

**Bottom line:** 30 extra bucks for this supposed “next-gen” version? We'd rather drop this class.



### FIFA Street 2

**PS2/XB/GC • EA Sports • ESRB: E**

Now that *FIFA* has been *Street*-ified, the inevitable yearly feature-creep begins. *Street 2* offers a much more robust trick system, all-new juggle moves, and a tweaked gamebreaker (fake out all three defenders to earn an instant win).

**Bottom line:** Call us uncultured, uncouth Americans, but the *NBA* and *NFL Streets* still feel more polished.



### Samurai Warriors: State of War

**PSP • Koei • ESRB: T** — If you've got a powerful hankerin' for some tactical samurai action (heavy on the action, lighter on the tactics) and are fine with mindless button mashing and collecting, well, hey!

**Bottom line:** Competitive (no co-op) multiplayer might keep you hackin' and slashin' a bit longer...maybe.



### Generation of Chaos

**PSP • NIS • ESRB: T** — This one could be considered the spiritual successor to cult hit *Dragon Force* (Saturn), if not for the crappy interface during each real-time battle, maze of menus, and extremely sloooooow action.

**Bottom line:** The hardest of the hardcore may slog through it, but plenty of other games do a better job of scratching the portable strategy itch.



### Ys: The Ark of Napishtim

**PSP • Konami • ESRB: E10+**

Whereas the graphics seemed dated in the PlayStation 2 version of this action-RPG, on PSP, they're just right. The analog nub works fine, and the music is just as rockin' through the handheld's speakers.

**Bottom line:** *Ys* on PSP doesn't feel like a downgraded port, but rather the form the game always should have taken.

## on the road again



### WRC: FIA World Rally Championship

**PSP • Namco Bandai • ESRB: E** — Although the full damage model doesn't actually affect the way your car handles and the analog control is so touchy you'll find yourself in the weeds more than on the track, *WRC* is still a solid racer, especially for a handheld.

**Bottom line:** Don't expect the high-speed, arcadey thrills of a *Ridge Racer* or *Burnout Legends*. *WRC* is all about finesse and precision.



### Street Supremacy

**PSP • Konami • ESRB: E** — Don't let the new name fool you; this is actually *Tokyo Xtreme Racer* and all it implies—lots of illegal racing on dark, boring highways with pimped-out rides, combined with horrible driving physics no matter how you tune your grip-deficient car.

**Bottom line:** Not even the two-player Wi-Fi mode can save this one.



### Tokyo Xtreme Racer Drift

**PS2 • Crave • ESRB: E** — *Drift* takes the *TXR* formula of rice rockets and the queer sensation of driving on glass and moves it from Tokyo's highways to the hills. But the sharp turns and narrow roadways only highlight the cruddy driving part.

**Bottom line:** Building a stable of licensed, custom cars, good; driving them, bad.



# REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Tighter, faster versions of our opinions...



■ *Quake 4's* cyborg demons: totally not clichéd.

## A BARREL OF MONKEYS

Who doesn't love those scat-flinging rascallions of the jungle? Due to all the *Ape Escape*-ing and *King Kong*-ing, we decided to peek at the banana-scented history of simian-related games. Here are the average scores of some we've reviewed (all scores out of 10).



Escape from Monkey Island (PS2)

9.0



Skullmonkeys (PlayStation)

7.1



Toki: Going Ape Spit (Atari Lynx)

7.1



Donkey Kong series (11 games)

6.8



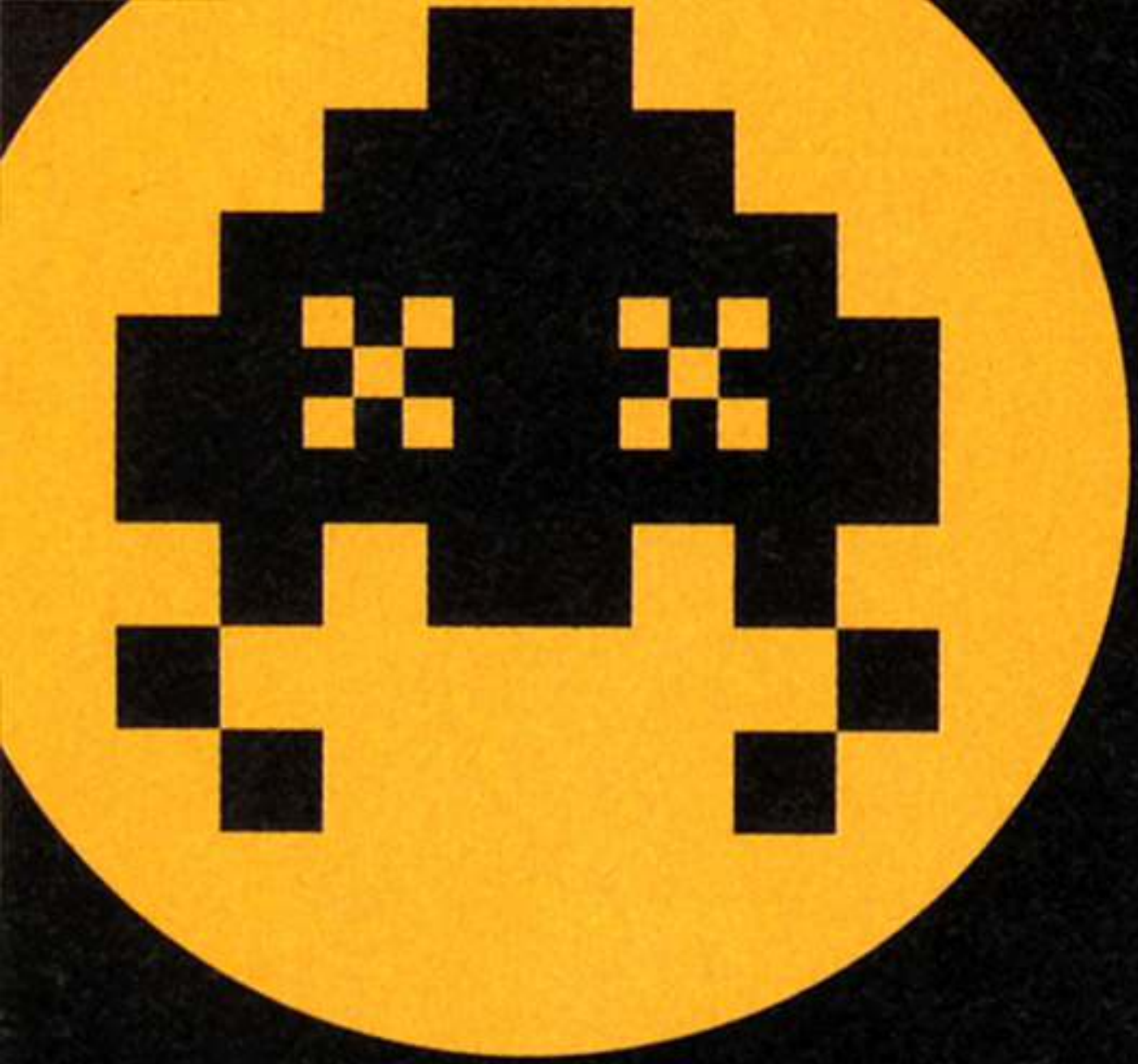
Ape Escape series (5 games)

6.7

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
50 Cent: Bulletproof	PS2/XB	■ Awful third-person shooter looks like a million bucks but plays like, well, 50 cents	3.5 3.0 3.5	
<b>Age of Empires: The Age of Kings</b>	<b>DS</b>	■ <b>This deep, historically savvy turn-based strategy game is fun and good for your brain</b>	<b>9.0 7.5 8.5</b>	<b>Silver</b>
America's Army: Rise of a Soldier	PS2/XB	■ A decent, realistic, Army-themed first-person shooter with less flavor than an MRE	6.0 6.5 5.0	
Amped 3	XB360	■ Crazy-ass cut-scenes are fresh, bright spots in this huge snowboarding game	7.5 8.5 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
Animal Crossing: Wild World	DS	■ The same insane fairy-tale fishing/talking/walking game is now portable and online	7.5 7.0 9.0	
Ape Escape 3	PS2	■ A frustrating camera thumps much of the monkey-snatching fun in this platformer	8.0 5.0 5.5	
Ape Escape Academy	PSP	■ Seeking a good <i>WarioWare</i> -inspired minigame title for the PSP? Keep looking	4.5 5.5 4.5	
Arena Football	PS2/XB	■ Ridiculous defensive rules make <i>Arena</i> more forgettable than the actual league	6.0 5.5 5.5	
Call of Duty 2	XB360	■ A fully functional military shooter with killer A.I., sound, maps, and gameplay	8.5 9.0 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
Chibi Robo	GC	■ Borky camera and slow text screens keep this adorable house robot from being great	6.5 7.5 6.0	
Condemned: Criminal Origins	XB360	■ Clunky controls hobble this macabre survival-horror title's deeply eerie gameplay	7.0 6.0 8.5	
Crime Life: Gang Wars	XB	■ This brawler is a butt-ugly, fundamentally terrible, mindless embarrassment	2.5 2.0 1.5	
Dead or Alive 4	XB360	■ Boobs and button-mashing are the core components of this pretty fighter	7.0 6.5 6.5	
<b>Drill Dozer</b>	<b>GBA</b>	■ <b>Sweet. Classic 2D platforming returns in a great little portable form</b>	<b>8.5 8.0 8.5</b>	<b>Silver</b>
Electroplankton	DS	■ This visually trippy, unsavable-music-making game is all novelty but no gameplay	5.0 7.0 5.0	
Exit	PSP	■ Long-form puzzles and lovely, arty graphics accent this pokey paced, but fun, game	8.5 7.0 7.0	
Final Fantasy IV Advance	GBA	■ A revered role-playing game made even better with new dungeons and portability	9.0 9.0 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
Full Auto	XB360	■ Like <i>Burnout</i> with guns and a do-over button, so nice we woulda liked more of it	8.0 8.5 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows	PS2/XB	■ Another solid, but short and mindless, round of elf clear-cutting is fun with friends	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Grandia III	PS2	■ A beautiful role-playing game with a choice battle system and a stereotypical story	8.0 8.5 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
Gun	PS2/XB/GC	■ <i>GTA</i> meets <i>Deadwood</i> —a sight short on length, but still a rootin', tootin' shooter	7.5 8.0 7.5	
<b>Half-Life 2</b>	<b>XB</b>	■ <b>A beautiful port of the brilliant PC shooter—stellar physics, atmosphere, and action</b>	<b>9.0 9.0 9.5</b>	<b>Gold</b>
James Bond 007: From Russia With Love	PS2/XB/GC	■ Sir Connery voices the titular character in a flaccid action-shooter that plays itself	6.5 6.0 6.0	
Kameo: Elements of Power	XB360	■ Lovely, but brief and sorta disappointing, adventure teases with flashes of brilliance	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Kingdom of Paradise	PSP	■ Hack-n-slash disguised as an RPG with lousy A.I. but sweet graphics and rad moves	7.0 7.5 5.5	
L.A. Rush	PS2/XB	■ This racing game offers a ton of cool cars that crash in random, frustrating ways	6.5 6.5 5.5	
The Legend of Heroes: Tear of Vermillion	PSP	■ "Old school" doesn't always mean "all good," but this RPG is classically sound	6.5 8.5 7.0	
The Lord of the Rings: Tactics	PSP	■ Although cinematic and fresh, this tactical title's sloppy presentation frustrates	6.5 3.5 6.0	
Magna Carta: Tears of Blood	PS2	■ An RPG with strong visual design that drops the ball with an icky battle system	7.5 6.0 5.5	
Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	DS	■ Fun, dungeon-filled RPG with action-packed combat featuring your favorite Bros.	8.5 8.0 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
Mario Kart DS	DS	■ Retains Mario's status as champ of <i>Kart</i> games, now portable and online	9.0 8.5 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
Mario Party 7	GC	■ Seventh entry in the board-game-that-plays-itself series is just what you'd expect	6.5 6.5 5.0	
Mario Tennis: Power Tour	GBA	■ Mario's chatty, RPG-ish tennis game benefits from simple controls and fun multiplayer	8.0 8.0 4.0	
The Matrix: Path of Neo	PS2/XB	■ Playing through the movie trilogy would be a bit more fun with a better combo system	7.0 8.0 4.5	
Mega Man Maverick Hunter X	PSP	■ A treat for <i>Mega Man</i> fans, it will seem outdated and difficult to anyone else	7.0 7.5 7.0	
MS Saga: A New Dawn	PS2	■ <i>Gundam</i> RPG with superbosses and lots of customization but too much step and fetch	6.0 8.0 5.0	
MVP 06 NCAA Baseball	PS2/XB	■ Poor fielding is just one of many errors found on this collegiate diamond	5.5 8.0 6.5	
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	PS2/XB/GC	■ The latest in this racing series lets you drop the hammer on the run from the law	8.0 7.5 7.0	
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	XB360	■ The 360 version's differences are strictly cosmetic and probably not worth the extra \$	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Operation Flashpoint: Elite	XB	■ This überreal military shooter's multiplayer and maps help make up for how ugly it is	8.5 7.0 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
Perfect Dark Zero	XB360	■ This shooter's multiplayer goes the distance to offset the imperfect single-player	6.5 8.0 9.0	
Peter Jackson's King Kong	PS2/XB/GC	■ A cinematic, breathtaking action-adventure game that is fit for a <i>King...um...Kong</i>	8.5 8.5 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness	GC	■ The series makes some strides on the Cube with this passable RPG for Pokémaniacs	7.0 6.0 7.0	
PQ: Practical Intelligence Quotient	PSP	■ A rather ho-hum puzzler that does manage to score a few "AHA!" moments	5.5 6.5 7.5	
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones	PS2/XB/GC	■ The leaping, wall-running, puzzle-solving Prince returns to fighting form	9.5 7.0 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
<b>Project Gotham Racing 3</b>	<b>XB360</b>	■ <b>Totally visually stunning, semiserious racing thrills. The best of the 360 launch titles</b>	<b>9.0 8.5 9.5</b>	<b>Gold</b>
Quake 4	XB360	■ Visually choppy, generic first-person shooter with decent multiplayer	5.5 5.5 8.0	
Ridge Racer 6	XB360	■ A solid racer underneath embarrassingly lackluster (is this really next gen?) visuals	6.0 6.0 7.5	
Samurai Shodown V	XB	■ Sadly, the worst of the beloved classic arcade fighter series is the one that's online	5.5 5.5 6.5	
Shadow the Hedgehog	PS2/XB/GC	■ An adventure shooter with awful targeting and camera, starring Sonic's ugly-ass twin	6.0 5.5 3.0	
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	PSP	■ This combat shooter is pretty and portable but lacks the balls of the console version	6.5 7.5 8.5	
Sonic Rush	DS	■ A step back to the rushing, roller-coaster, side-scrolling <i>Sonic</i> done properly for DS	8.0 8.0 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
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	
Star Wars Battlefront II	PSP	■ This packed-with- <i>Star Wars</i> -toys shooter's controls make it too awkward to enjoy	6.0 7.0 6.0	
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	PSP	■ The same <i>Street Fighter</i> you loved without enough new features to make it shine	6.0 8.5 7.5	
Stubbs the Zombie	XB	■ Third-person, zombie <i>Halo</i> . Sound weird? It is, but brain-eating mayhem should be	8.5 8.5 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
Super Mario Strikers	GC	■ This varsity-level soccer-playing-plumber game lacks the variety to make it great	7.0 7.0 7.0	
Super Princess Peach	DS	■ A shiny new <i>Mario</i> -style adventure that needs to take the difficulty up a notch	7.5 7.0 8.0	
Tales of Legendia	PS2	■ An RPG that is too ugly and unbalanced to make the actiony battles worthwhile	5.5 5.0 7.5	
ToCA Race Driver 3	PS2/XB	■ This flawed and unbalanced racer is partially redeemed by its amazing variety	6.5 6.0 7.0	
Tokobot	PSP	■ A terrible camera and wonky controls short-circuit this puzzle-solving robot game	5.5 4.0 6.0	
True Crime: New York City	PS2/XB/GC	■ An ambitious, but unfortunately buggy and ugly, <i>GTA</i> clone set in the Big Apple	3.5 6.0 5.5	
True Swing Golf	DS	■ A mild pick-up-and-play golf game that makes excellent use of the DS' touch pad	8.0 7.0 7.0	
Wild Arms 4	PS2	■ Fantasy/sci-fi/Wild West RPG with a solid battle system but surprisingly vanilla plot	8.0 7.0 6.0	
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 9	PS2/XB	■ <i>WE9</i> finally catches up with the rest of the gaming world and goes online	7.5 8.0 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	PS2	■ Story mode is much improved, but tag-team partners still act like idiots in the ring	6.5 8.0 7.0	

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





# game over

"all your base are belong to us" is like shakespeare compared to this crap

## SEANBABY'S

# SUPER KNOCKOFF SUPER SUPORIUM!



We put the "game" back in "welcome to purchase of tuna snatch game to fit all child"

**L**ast month, I was at an EB in San Francisco and saw two gents from Wangistan trying to sell an N64 controller to a confused clerk. It said "SUPERTOY" and the buttons were painted on. The two men waited patiently while the girl behind the counter discovered more and more indications that this was many generations of technology removed from an N64 controller. "This joystick is fused—it's just joystick-shaped plastic! Is this thing a cartridge slot? Oh my God, has this been used to kill

chickens?" It never stopped; I bought my game and left. For all I know, those men are still there, watching her mind being blown, hoping to find a clue to why she's screaming in the nonsense sounds of her chattering language. The lesson I took away from the whole thing was that SUPERTOY rules and I should be shopping for games where those two guys do. So I put together this catalog featuring the best of what the Wangistani part of town's Hong Kong stores had to offer.

—Seanbaby

**NOW WITH KEYPAD!**



### The Computer Game

**It goes by many names.** The Computer Game, 20 IN 1 INSTRUCTIONS GAME, Power Window, BC GAME, and SUPER GAME! And if five different names made it onto the packaging, imagine the attention to detail in the three games themselves! Decipher subtle political messages in EMPTY WAR IN SEA! Decipher subtle ball jokes in SUPREME BALL-KING! All games feature words you know, rearranged in ways you never thought possible.

**Words from the product:** "3. Driving, if you meet danger, you should stop it."

### American Blunder

**What was America's blunder?** Letting the Koreans or whoever make this game first! Buyers should be aware that, like the name implies, it doesn't work! One big button labeled "FIGHT" reduces American blundering down to its purity, and with no less than NINE cautionary dangers about the simple act of inserting and removing batteries, this is a great tool to frighten a young loved one away from batteries forever.

#### Words from the product:

"The winner, judging by the high score and energy in turn, can be awarded a golden girdle and get to the higher degree till the third level."



**AMERICA F\*\*ED UP!**

### Pikaciu vs. Dino

**It looks like a Game Boy but plays like a sandwich!** Stop insulting your child with almost-there *Pokémon* knockoffs. Pikaciu vs. Dino isn't trying to fool anyone and passes the savings on to you! Why, your child would have to be color-blind and not quite sure what a bunny in shoes is to be fooled by this! P vs. D is a showdown that could only be dreamed up by proximity to very specific clip art!

**Words from the product:** "Press A or B key to shoot qigong or the assault of kick and beat."

**THE MATCHUP GOD NEVER INTENDED!**







### Boxing King

Boxing King takes all the graphics you loved from *King of Fighters* and uses them again here. Finally, a game with the balls to do that and add its own copyright symbol. Two motion-ignoring punch controllers ensure that only fate decides your fate! And the plot combines English words into exciting and unique combinations. Gasp as your fighter braves his family back to silence and justice!

**Words from the product:** "WHEN THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THINGS, SILENCE, AND JUSTICE ARE BEING CHALLENGED BY BAD ELEMENTS, BEING A MAN WITH HOT BLOOD, YOU COULD NOT HIDE AND AWAY."

ACTUAL PLASTIC

### Long Love

**Vivid game.** Comfortable sense. Exceed large screen display. All of these things can be yours with Long Love. Is it a dating simulator? And if so, why is it also called Street Overlord and Helicopter? Why is it covered in hearts and resort photos? Why does it look like a case of birth-control pills? It's hours of puzzle-solving fun before you even learn it must have been broken during shipping!

**Words from the product:** "Take out the batteries if you will not use this unit for long time or otherwise the leakage will damage the unit!"



WHAT?



### City Patrolman

Tired of law enforcement games that claim to clean a fish in three easy steps? Then ignore the hype and experience City Patrolman. It actually makes fish dirtier! Features include graphics from *Virtua Cop*, music directly from the NES version of *Airwolf* (AWESOME!), and lightgun sensitivity so inaccurate you'll swear you're shooting at the wrong TV. Your bullets will have no effect...on ANYTHING!

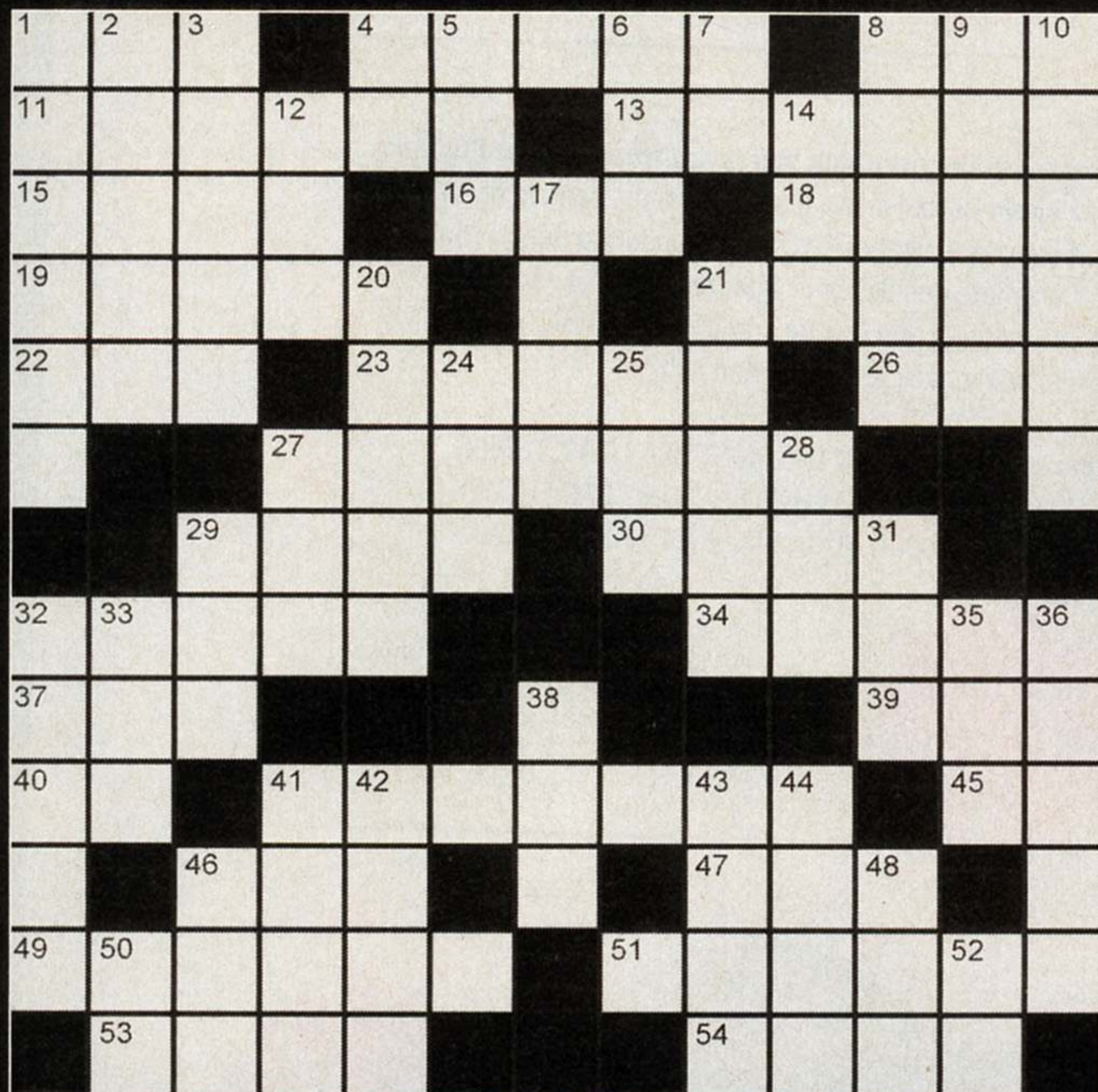
**Words from the product:** "THEY ARE WAITING FOR A JUSTIFIED VOICE WITH YOUR SANCTIFIED RESPONSIBILITY AND HONOR. FIGHT BACK, BOYS!"

OUR COPS DRESS LIKE COWBOYS!



# SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW SIX

(Solution on page 121)



## ACROSS

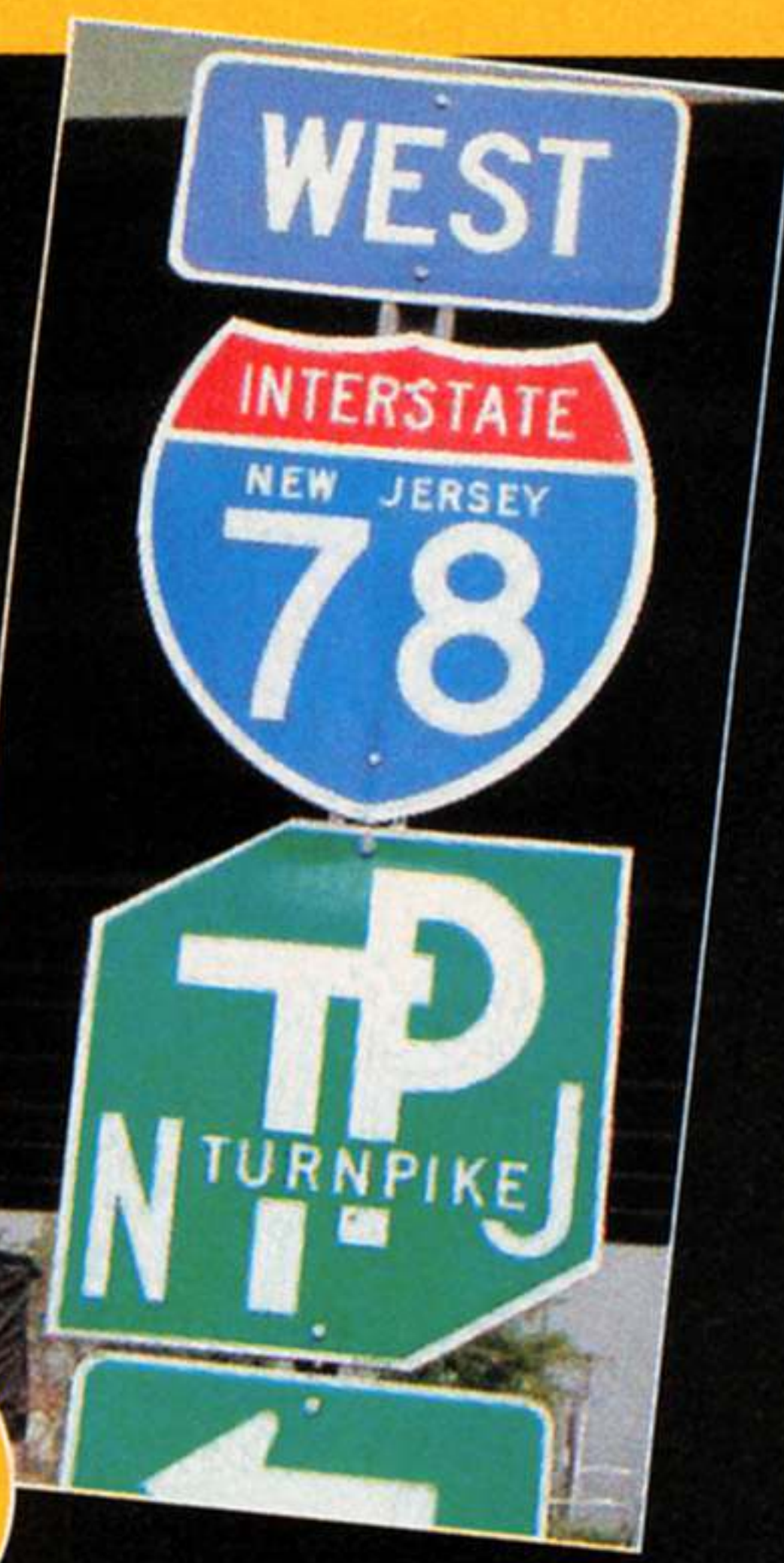
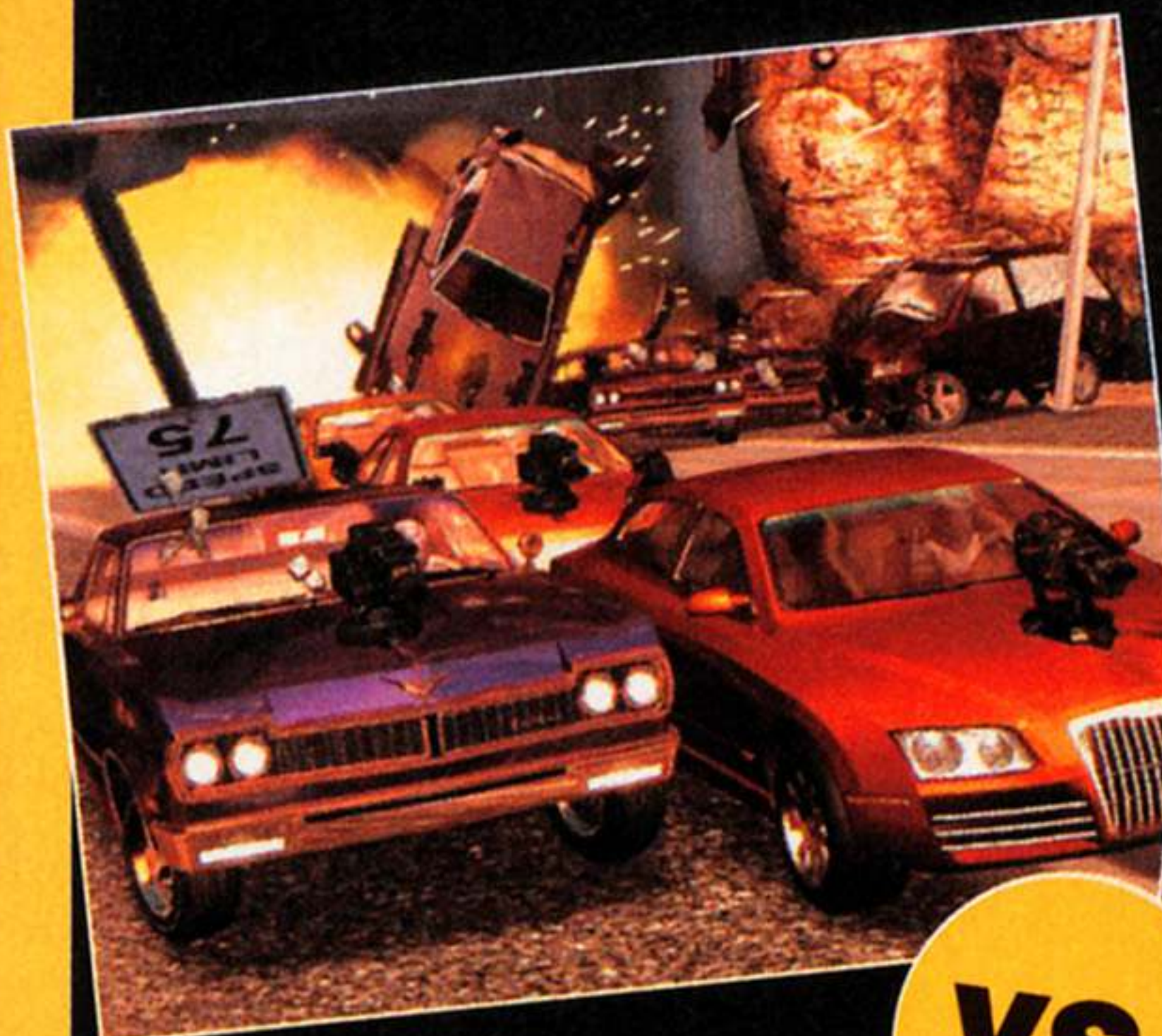
1. \_ Andreas of *GTA* fame
4. Inspiration for *Dragon Ball Z* games?
8. Xbox numbers man Chris Liddell, to Microsoft
11. Rainbow Six's titular Tom
13. *Star Tropics 2* time-bending book \_ *Wonder Word*
15. Early Atari spokes-celeb Alan
16. Crazy taxi, for one
18. Short-lived S.T.A.R. of *Resident Evil 3*
19. *Urban* or *of Fire*
21. *Vice* city of upcoming PS2 title
22. Brea of *Parasite Eve*
23. Celes' big scene in *FFIII*
26. *Unlikely* Lester (SNES), for short
27. *Rainbow Six* publisher
29. Olympic title \_ *Lake 2002* (PS2)
30. *Rainbow Six* claymore
32. Batman's first name
34. *Military Madness* cannon
37. The PSP has 32MB of it
39. *Pen Pen* (Dreamcast) propulsion?
40. Strong but clumsy *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* weapon
41. *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* operation
45. *NBA Live 06* Celtic state (abbrv.)
46. \_ *Chu Rocket* (Dreamcast)
47. Capcom arcade shooter \_ *Fighters*
49. *Rainbow Six: Lockdown* multiplayer medium
51. Make Bruce Banner the Incredible Hulk?
53. Fourth-down fallback
54. Measure of Xbox 360 "flops"

## DOWN

1. *Metroid Prime*'s tunnel-swarmer bug
2. You follow Cheryl into one in *Silent Hill*
3. *Metal Slug 4* gal
4. Console power adapter
5. One real-life Liberty City inspiration, for short
6. 21 DOWN, for short
7. 3D *Street Fighter* series
8. *DK Country* (GBA) level \_ Capers
9. *Fatal* \_ (PS2/XB)
10. Pokémon that evolves into Gloom
12. *Gallop Racer* loser?
14. *Ninja Gaiden* Irene's org.
17. *Top Spin* serve winners
20. *Zelda: Oracle of Seasons* sword
21. PS2/XB organized crime title
24. -fall or *Fighter*
25. CD or DVD game
27. *Doom 3* space station acronym
28. Some Ganados chuck it in *Resident Evil 4*
29. *Guitar Hero* band \_ 41
31. *Gauntlet* quickie
32. Support team in *Rainbow Six* games
33. *Eternal Champions* cyber dude
35. Focus reticule?
36. Kojima's Solid or Liquid
38. *Rainbow Six* submachine gun
41. PaRappa's rival Joe
42. *Duck* (NES) or *Jungle* (Arcade)
43. Test drive a game for a few days
44. *Kingdom Hearts* Pooh setting 100 \_ Wood
46. \_ *Clu Land* (NES)
48. *Kengo* Musashi's unusual weapon
50. Online slang for "no problem"
52. *Madden NFL 06* Falcons state (abbrv.)

## GRUDGE MATCH

King of the road



VS.

FULL AUTO

THE JERSEY TURNPIKE

Some games create outlandish fantasy worlds where you can do all the crap you can't pull off in real life. But we're pretty sure you'll find most of the stuff that happens in *Full Auto* (XB360) during a quick trip on the New Jersey Turnpike. Let's see which is a better road trip.

### SETTING



Double-decker freeways and mountain passes  
**Advantage:**  
**Full Auto**

Scenic New Jersey



### UNIQUE CAR MODS



Drop grenades off your rear bumper  
**Advantage:**  
**Full Au—no, no, that's a sweet spoiler...Jersey**

Yellow wing on a tan Camry, boyeeeee!



### COPS

Nowhere to be found  
**Advantage:**  
**Full Auto**

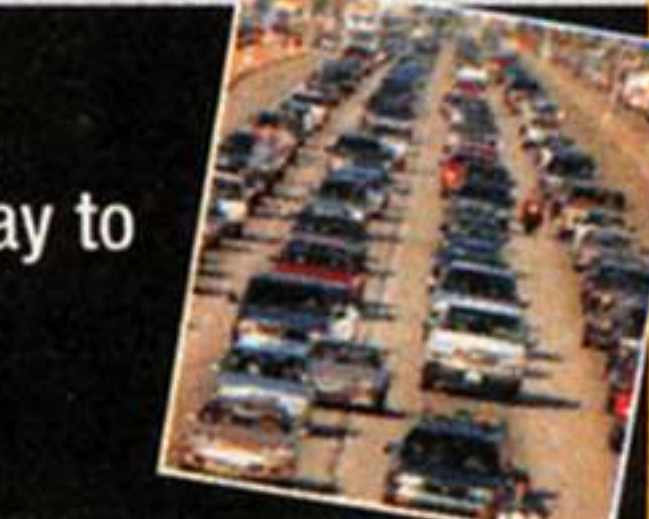
Seem to gravitate to minorities in vans....

### ACCIDENTS



Can be undone by "unwrecking" your ride  
**Advantage:**  
**Full Auto**

Create gridlock halfway to Pennsylvania



### WEAPONS



Are sticking out of your hood

Are usually concealed until needed  
**Advantage:**  
**Jersey**



### NAVIGATION



Huge green arrows keep you on track  
**Advantage:**  
**Full Auto**

God help you if you miss your exit



### OBJECTIVE

Beat everyone home without losing your life

Beat everyone home without losing your life

**Advantage: Tie**

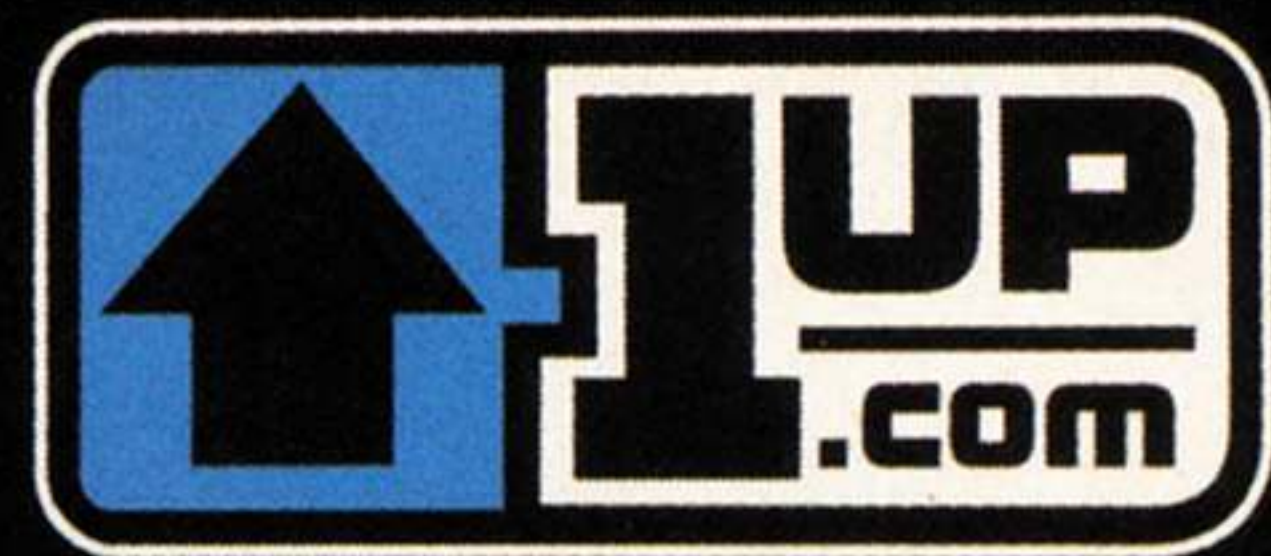
## WINNER: FULL AUTO

Yes, driving anywhere within 50 miles of New York really is that bad.



**ELECTRONIC  
GAMING**  
MONTHLY

**File Front**



HAVE TEAMED UP WITH DELL TO BRING YOU...

# THE EXCLUSIVE **DELL XPS 600** GIVEAWAY!



The Dell™ XPS™ 600 is one of the best gaming systems money can buy...but YOU may not need money to get it! We're giving away this luxury package to some lucky gaming enthusiasts, and we want YOU to be one of them. Check out this amazing package, then learn how easy it is to enter!

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- Realistic video and gaming provided by up to two NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX 256 MB x16 PCIe graphics cards with scalable link interface technology
- Extreme performance with dual-core Intel® Extreme Edition and Pentium® D 8xx processors or single-core Pentium 4 6xx processors
- 8GB 667MHz DDR2 memory
- Massive storage for games and media with up to three internal drives
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- Wireless keyboard and mouse



**XPS**  
e x p e r i e n c e

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For full contest legal rules, restrictions, and details, visit <http://xps600.egmmag.com>

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submit this code: **RSG426**





# EGM RETRO: SNAKES ALIVE!

A look at Subsistence's other Metal Gear games

**I**t's great that *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima finally gave in and put an over-the-shoulder camera in *MGS3: Subsistence*. (See our review on page 98.) And yeah, the PS2 online stuff is completely sweet. But for retro fans, the real appeal of *Subsistence* lies in its historical content: For the first time ever, the real, original versions of the very first *Metal Gear* and its sequel are available in the United States. —Jeremy Parish

## NOT YOUR FATHER'S METAL GEAR

Gamers old enough to remember a time before the first PlayStation are likely familiar with *Metal Gear*'s NES incarnation, a minor hit back in the day. But Nintendo's little gray juggernaut wasn't where Solid Snake's tale began—his true debut was on a Japanese computer/console hybrid called the MSX.

The NES version contains several significant changes, none of them for the best. For starters, the graphics feature less detail and color. But much more noticeable are the new bosses. We got the lame tag-team Twin Shot while Japan got to fight a Russian Hind-D helicopter. Worse yet, the final boss of the NES game is a supercomputer that just sits there while you blast it. On the MSX, the final encounter is much more spectacular: an honest-to-god *Metal Gear* that you have to bomb back into the Stone Age while dodging its defense lasers.

Oh, and bad news for fans of terrible translations: *Subsistence* contains a freshly relocalized *MG* script completely free of head-slappers like "I FEEL ASLEEP!" and "UH-OH! THE TRUCK HAVE STARTED TO MOVE!"



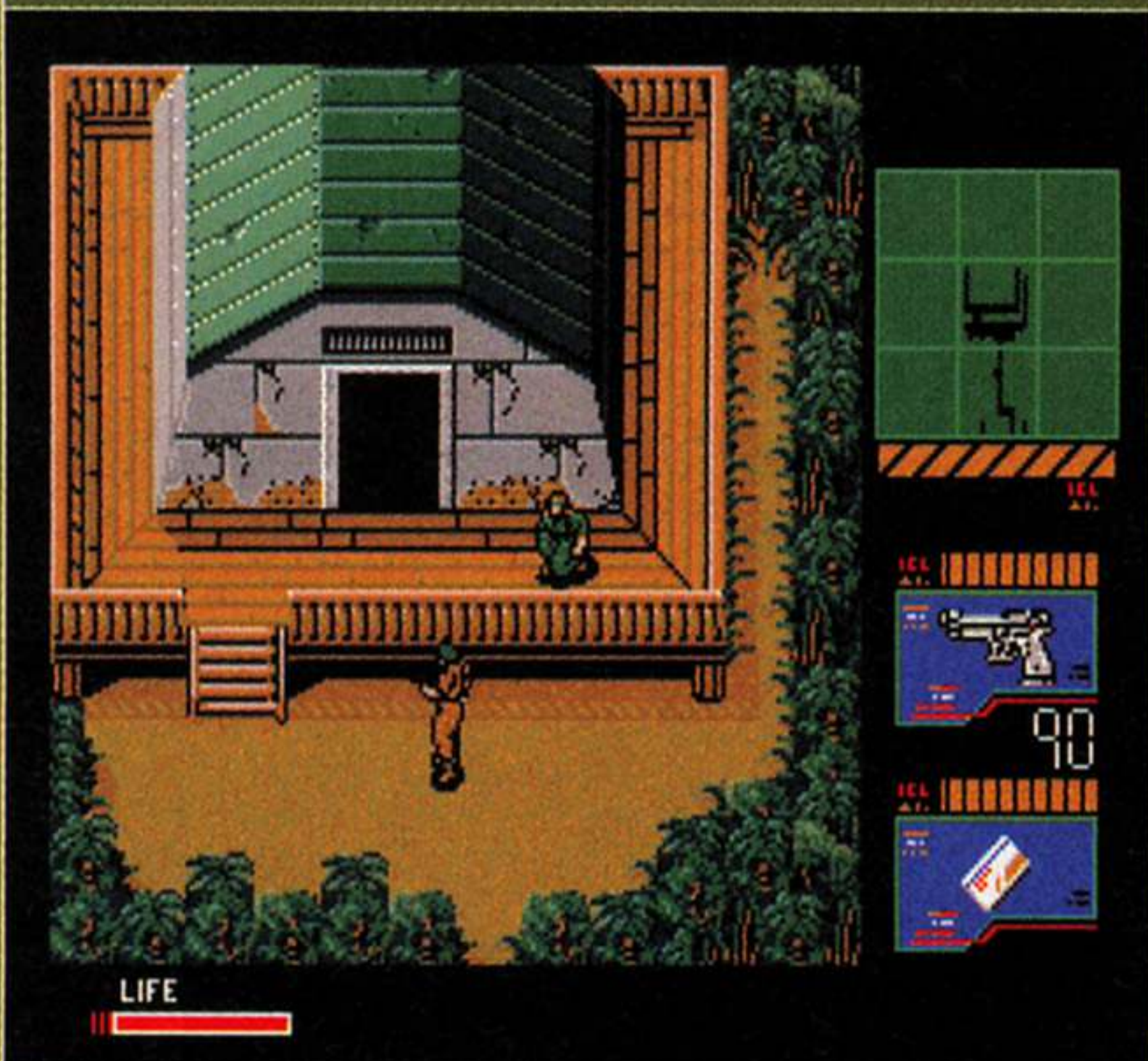
■ No speak English with goodness once! But OK now!

## THIS SNAKE IS SOLID

While *Metal Gear* came to the U.S. in a dumbed-down form, its MSX2 sequel never arrived at all. And that's a darn shame because *Metal Gear 2* fills lots of crucial story gaps between the first game and *Metal Gear Solid* (PS1), including Grey Fox's turn to the dark side and Big Boss' shocking revelation about Snake's father. (Hint: Obi-Wan lied!)

The real draw of *MG2* is that it's a much, much better game than its predecessor. In fact, it plays an awful lot like its sequels—down to some of the same gimmicks and plot points. Fistfight to the death with Grey Fox? Check! Twisting, turning plot-line full of betrayals? You bet! An ambush by invisible dudes in an elevator? Yep. Plus, you can duck behind cover and crawl beneath trucks, and it's even got an early version of the Soliton radar for scoping bad guys' locations.

Interestingly, *MG2* has been slightly tweaked from its original incarnation for *Subsistence*. The game and plot seem to be the same, but mainstay series artist Yoji Shinkawa has redrawn the character codec portraits, and they no longer look like movie stars. So everyone who was looking forward to facing off against a Big Boss bearing more than a passing resemblance to Sean Connery had best brace for disappointment.



## Revenge Is for the Weak

"But where's the original *Metal Gear* sequel?" you ask. "Where's *Solid Snake's Revenge*?" And we'll forgive you, just this once. Despite being presented as a follow-up to *Gear*, *Revenge* (an NES action game) didn't come from Kojima. In fact, he dies a little bit inside every time you mention it. For good reason, too, because it's really awful. Enjoy the *real* sequel and forget you were ever subjected to this terrible fake.



■ "Ship"? We had a similar, but completely different, word in mind for *Solid Snake's Revenge*.

## OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

### On the Cover: Street Fighter Alpha 2

The mid-'90s were a helluva time for punching and kicking games. This month, we nabbed an exclusive on *Street Fighter Alpha 2* (Arcade).



### Game of the Month: Alien Trilogy (PS1)

The *Alien* movies have gotten progressively worse (we're looking at you, *Alien vs. Predator*), but back in the day, the Review Crew got a kick out of this *Doom*-like first-person shooter with its inky levels and sinister villains.



### Atari Pulls Out

Get your mind out of the gutter—we're talking about the hardware biz. In this issue, our rumormonger Quartermann correctly reported that the Jaguar would be Atari's last console. And after seeing the ridiculousness that is the Jaguar controller, we'd say this move was definitely for the best.

## PAC-MAN FEVER

BUCKNER & GARCIA



### Old School's Old School

We still love *Namco Collection Vol. 1* for PS1, but in our preview we mentioned the "Pac-Man Fever" song twice. That was probably two times too many. Still, with classics like *Galaga*, *Pole Position*, and *Pac-Man* all on one disc, maybe we were just feeling sentimental....



# FINAL WORD

## Moanin' and groanin' about online gaming

**E** GM Editor-in-Chief "Shoe" loves online gaming for obvious reasons (he enjoys the attention he gets from his 10-year-old fans). Previews Editor Shane Bettenhausen hates it for obvious reasons (people frighten him). How long can the two discuss this topic before it turns into the inevitable bitch session?

### What are you playing online these days?

**SHOE:** *Halo 2* gets the most online play-time from me, though I'd like to get back into *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory*. Funny (or sad?) enough, they're both Xbox 1 titles.

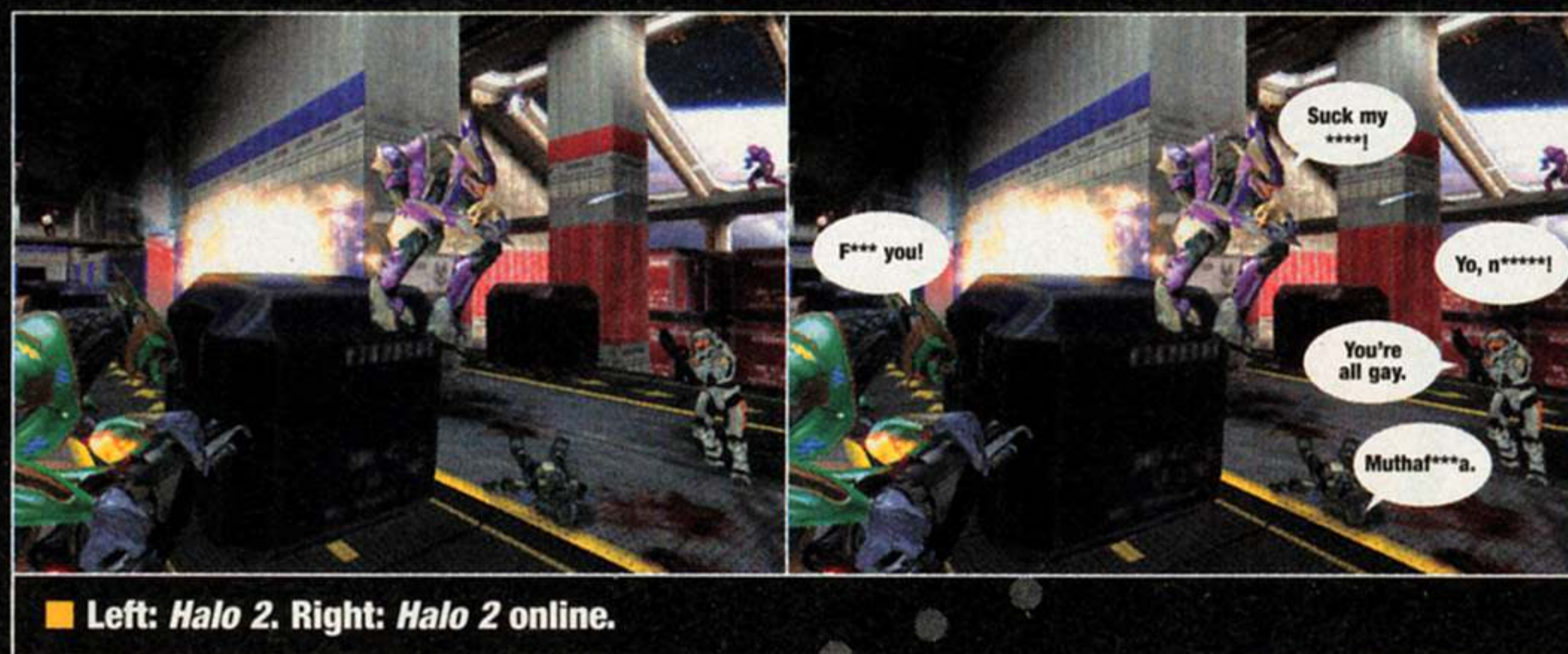
**SHANE:** I was up late last night stealthily cappin' asses in *Metal Gear Online* (the new multiplayer mode in *MGS3: Subsistence*). It's the most fun I've had online with a PS2 since, well...ever. Besides that, I've been closely monitoring the *Geometry Wars Evolved* leaderboards. Does that count?

**SHOE:** I gave up on *Geometry Wars*. Once Mark over here hit 1.8 million, I knew I'd never catch up. Instead, I'm working on being No. 1 on my friends list in *Robotron*, since people aren't playing that as much.

### Will Xbox Live continue to rule? Do Sony and Nintendo have a shot at doing something better?

**SHOE:** I dunno, Xbox Live is pretty awesome on the Xbox 360: voice chat, matchmaking, Live Arcade, leaderboards, downloadable content...all on one universal platform. The only things Sony and Nintendo can offer are their own exclusive games like *Gran Turismo* or *Smash Bros*. But the way Nintendo handled the DS going online doesn't fill me with hope. The company doesn't seem to care too much about stuff like finding you friends to play with. Or maybe it's run by computers who see us all as just a bunch of random numbers. I have a name and identity, dammit!

## "How is your no-education ass affording broadband out there in hicksville, anyway?"



■ Left: *Halo 2*. Right: *Halo 2* online.

**SHANE:** Well, the DS and PSP online services are hardly ideal, but they do function, and hopefully, the interface will only improve with time. I do hope that Nintendo's plan for Revolution online multiplayer doesn't require separate "friend codes" for each game—that's a fairly whack system. And while I agree that Xbox Live rules, I think it'll be fairly easy for Sony to swoop in and duplicate all of its best features, hopefully making it free in the process.

### What does online gaming need? What's holding it back?

**SHANE:** It needs to be less expensive... preferably free. We could also use an upgrade in terms of speed and latency. For example, fighting games still require such precise hit detection and timing that even tiny bouts of lag can ruin the balance of a match.

**SHOE:** Someone needs to ship all those annoying potty-mouths and cheaters to an island

somewhere, then beat them all up to a bloody pulp...then nuke them from orbit. It's the only way to be sure.

**SHANE:** That's the problem, though: Those obnoxious brats are precisely the type of gamer who is drawn to the online experience. I think a lot of casual gamers are turned off by the 8th-grade-locker-room community that permeates most online games. Would you dare send your wife into a random *Halo 2* match? I think not! As functionally limiting as Nintendo's Wi-Fi service is, it does distill the online experience down to its purest, safest, and least offensive form.

### What will it take to get Shane Bettenhausen gaming online regularly?

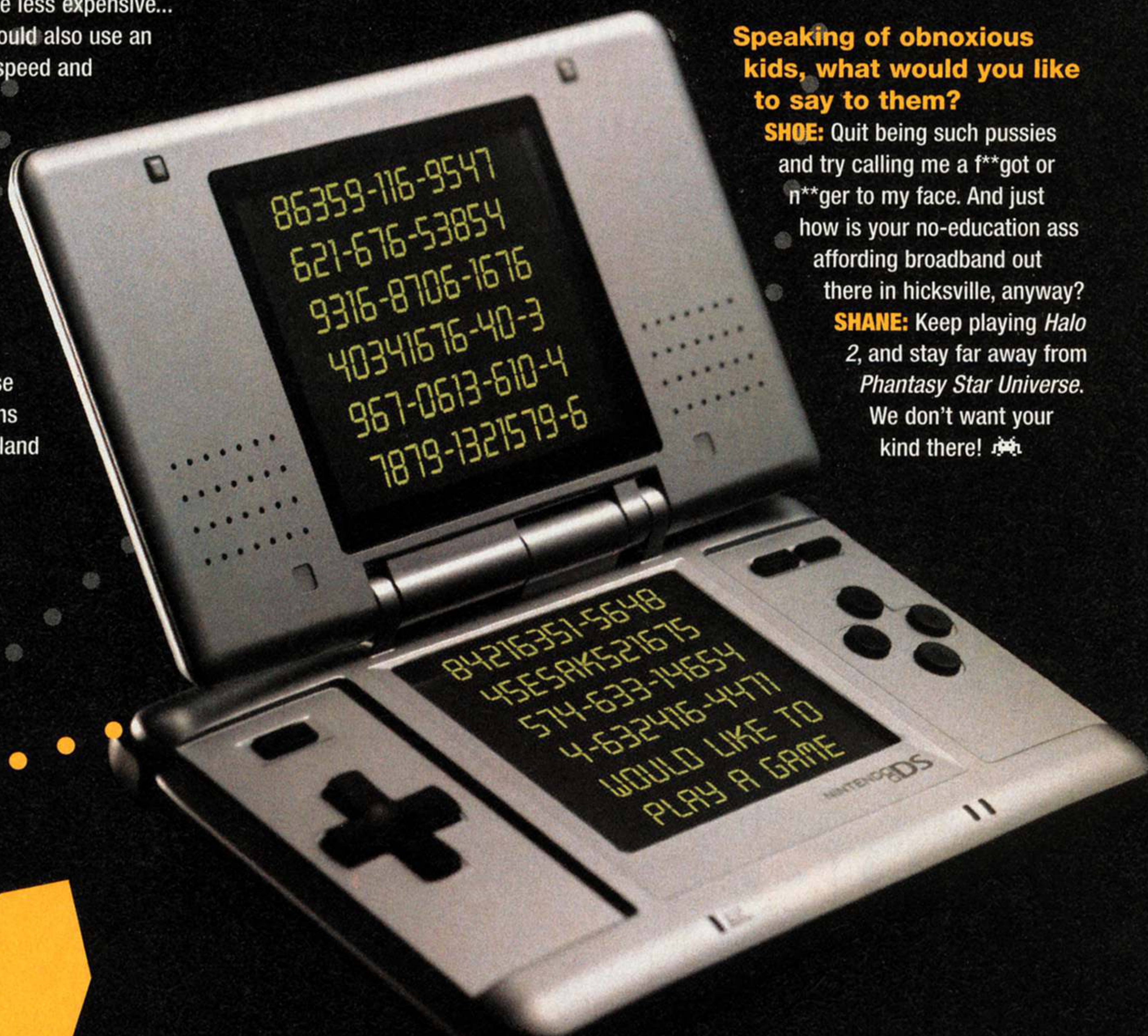
**SHANE:** First, I'd like to see more than just shooters and racers going online. I'm really into action-adventure, role-playing, fighting, and puzzle games, and those genres still don't see a lot of online action. Also, I'd like a better community of potential opponents. From my experience, the majority of Xbox Live players are obnoxious 13-year-olds.

**SHOE:** What if those 13-year-olds are cute Japanese schoolgirls? Then you'd be online all the time.

### Speaking of obnoxious kids, what would you like to say to them?

**SHOE:** Quit being such pussies and try calling me a f\*\*got or n\*\*ger to my face. And just how is your no-education ass affording broadband out there in hicksville, anyway?

**SHANE:** Keep playing *Halo 2*, and stay far away from *Phantasy Star Universe*. We don't want your kind there!



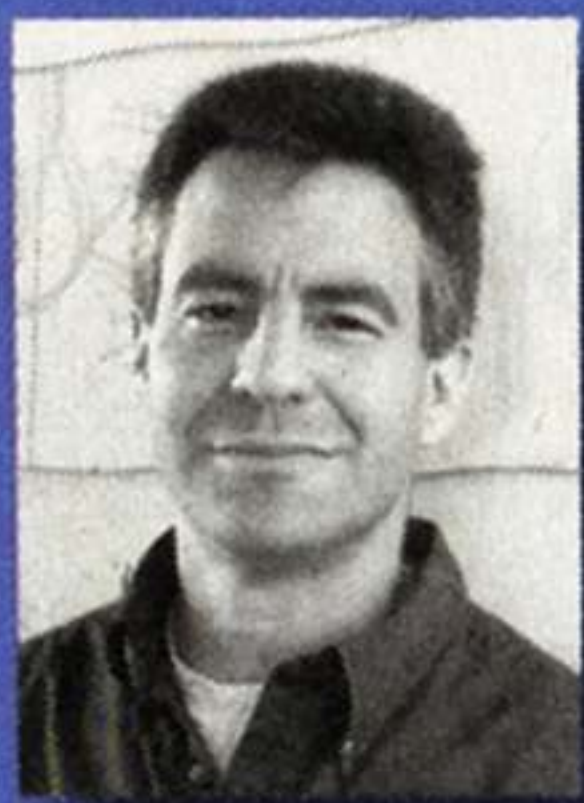


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# NEXT MONTH: MAY • ISSUE #203

## MORE HUMAN THAN TOO HUMAN

**W**e feel your pain, early adopters of the Xbox 360—by now, you've played the bejeezus out of the launch lineup and blasted away at *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved* until your eyes glazed over. When will the next wave of must-have titles grace your lonely next-gen console? Hope may come in the form of Microsoft's *Too Human*—an ambitious action-adventure title (the first in a planned trilogy, even) from the minds of Silicon Knights, the maverick developer of *Eternal Darkness* and *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* (both for GameCube). Early buzz claims the game to be a blend of *God of War*, *Devil May Cry*, and *Diablo*, casting you as a renegade cyborg deity battling to protect the human race. Unreal graphics (well, awesome visuals using the high-powered Unreal Engine 3) and innovative gunplay could make this

exactly the kind of franchise the 360 needs. It's exciting stuff, but we have to wonder if these guys (infamous for delaying their games) can actually deliver on these epic promises. Find out with our exclusive, hands-on impressions....

Along with that, we're pretty keyed up about some of the games we're reviewing for the next issue. We're toiling long hours in sequel city with *Kingdom Hearts II*, *Tomb Raider: Legend*, and *Driver: Parallel Lines*. We're also psyched to give you early looks at several promising titles for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, including Sega's all-new *Sonic the Hedgehog* and EA Games' wildly different *Medal of Honor: Airborne*. Plus, we'll give you an in-depth look at Nintendo's *Brain Age*, a unique piece of edutainment that actually makes you smarter.

### ON SALE: APRIL 11

#### PREVIEWS

- Sonic the Hedgehog (PS3/XB360)
- Okami (PS2)
- Medal of Honor: Airborne (PS3/XB360)
- Valkyrie Profile: Silmeria (PS2)
- Brain Age (DS)



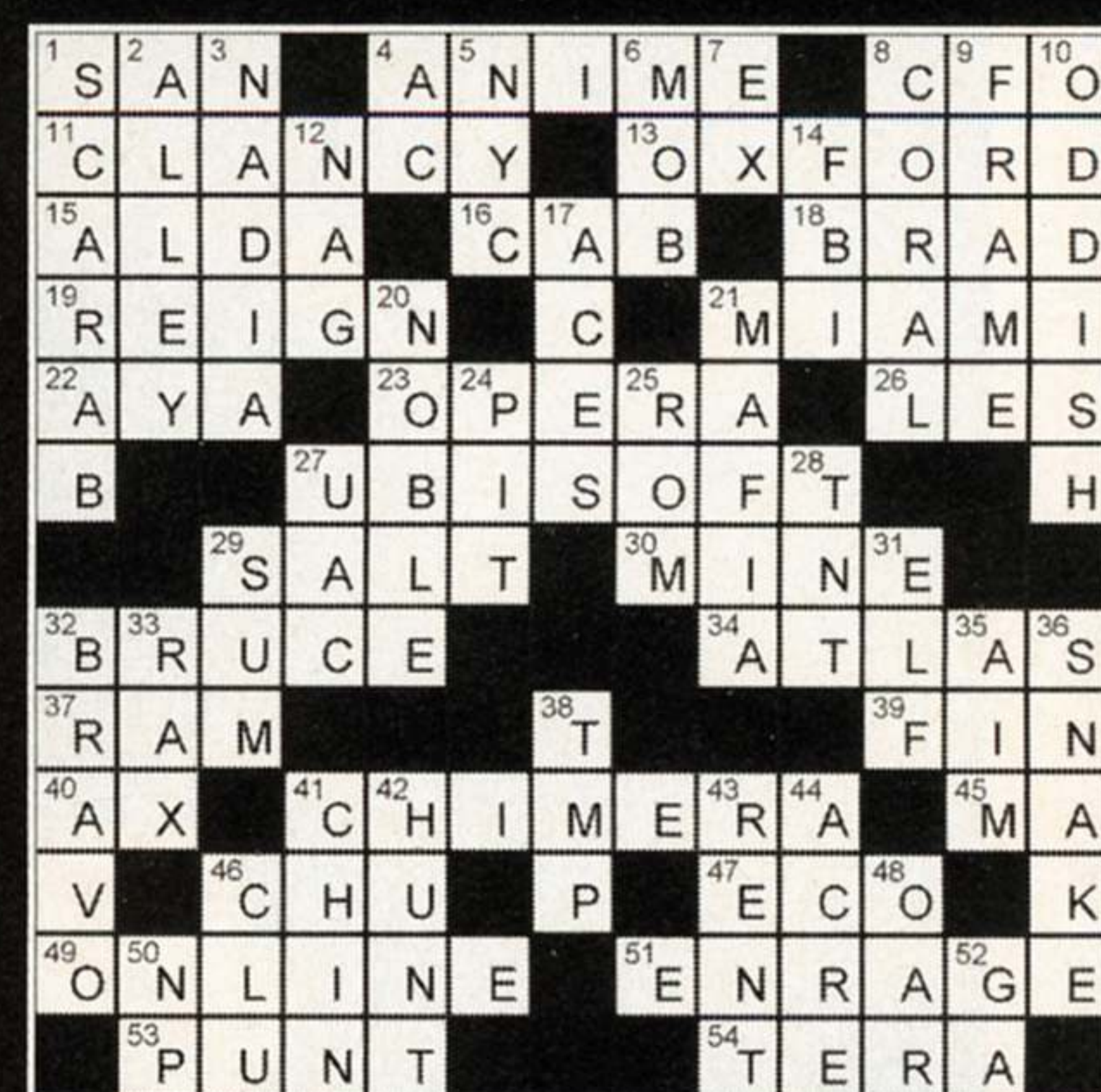
#### REVIEWS

- Far Cry Instincts Predator (XB360)
- Me and My Katamari (PSP)
- The Outfit (XB360)
- The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (XB360)
- Tetris DS (DS)



(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

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HSU AND CHAN:

# ELITE COUNTER-TERRORIST OPERATIVES

WE PUT IN THE LOW BID!

HEY, WHADDYA BET I CAN JUGGLE THESE FUNNY BLUE VIALS THE TERRORISTS LEFT?

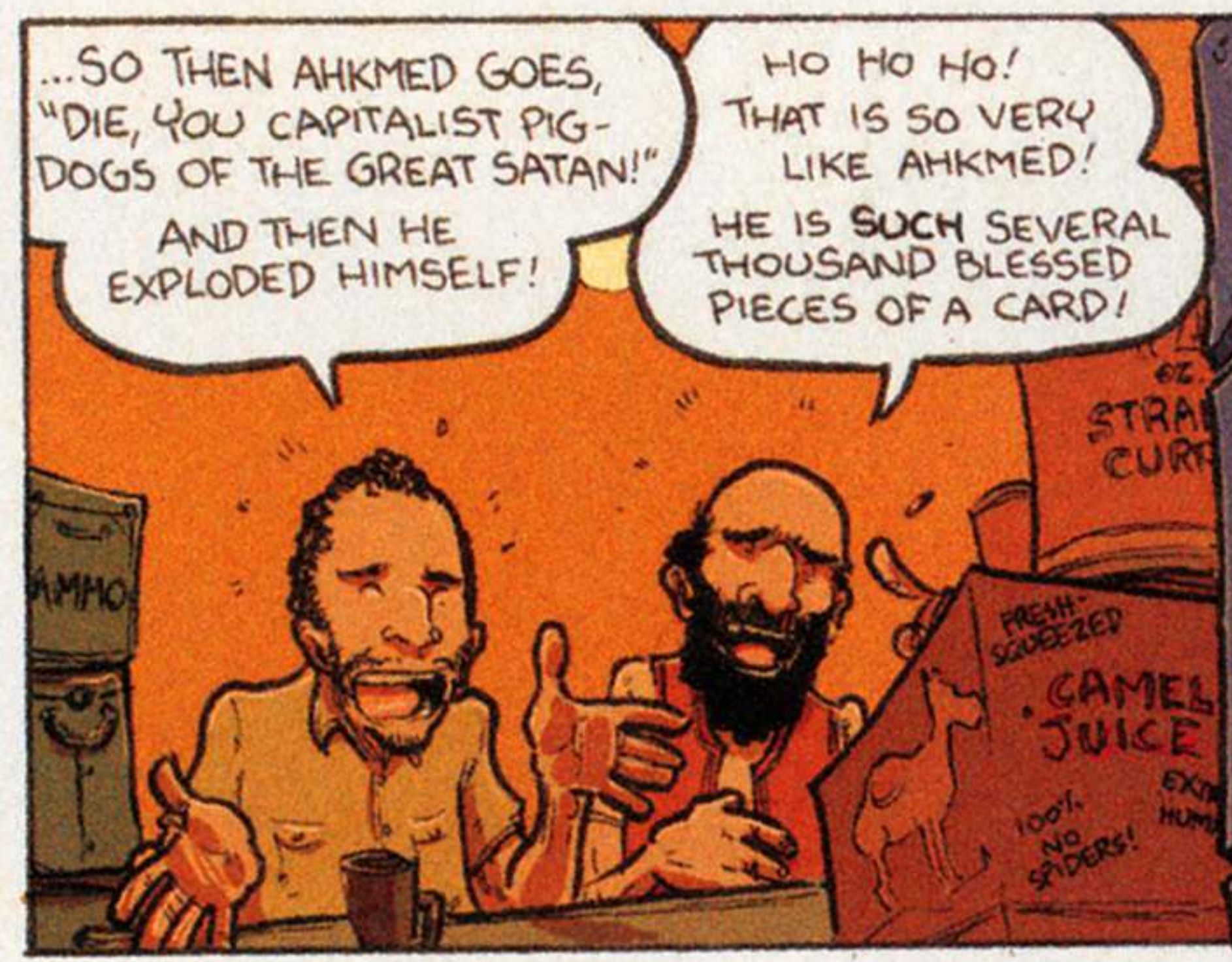


NO TIME! WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY'RE PLANNING AND FAST!

WE STILL HAVE THAT PERUVIAN SLAVE-TRADING RING TO FLUSH OUT BEFORE MONDAY...

FREELANCING IS A HARSH MISTRESS!

QUIET! I HEAR SOMETHING!



...SO THEN AHKMED GOES, "DIE, YOU CAPITALIST PIG-DOGS OF THE GREAT SATAN!" AND THEN HE EXPLODED HIMSELF!

HO HO HO! THAT IS SO VERY LIKE AHKMED! HE IS SUCH SEVERAL THOUSAND BLESSED PIECES OF A CARD!



IT'S THEM!



ALL RIGHT -- GILA MOBSTER! HOT POTATO, ONE, TWO, THREE!

ARNIE, PUT THE DUCK IN THE OVEN!

CHAN! CODE 14! HM! HM! HM!



YOU WANT ME TO... SLIDE INTO HOME?

NO, NO-- THIS!

THROW A CURVEBALL?

NO, WAIT, HOW ABOUT THIS?

THE RUNWAY'S CLEAR TO LAND?



HERE YOU GO, BOSS-- TERRORISTS APPREHENDED!

WHAT? WELL, THANK GOODNESS!

AT LEAST GILA MOBSTER KNOWS HOW TO TAKE INSTRUCTIONS!

NAW, I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD OF IT.

I JUST FIGURED, UNRESTRAINED VIOLENCE, YOU KNOW, PLAY TO MY STRENGTHS.

WE'D HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT, TOO, IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU MEDDLING KIDS, AND THE GREAT SATAN!



I SWEAR, NEXT TIME, WE'RE SPENDING MORE THAN TEN MINUTES ON HAND SIGNALS AND BATTLE CODE.

CHEER UP, BOSS!

DUCK'S ON!

END





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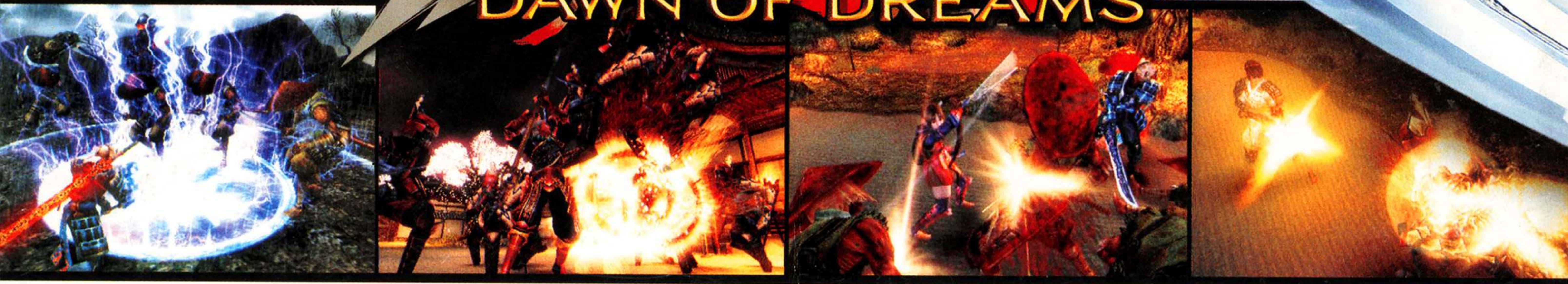


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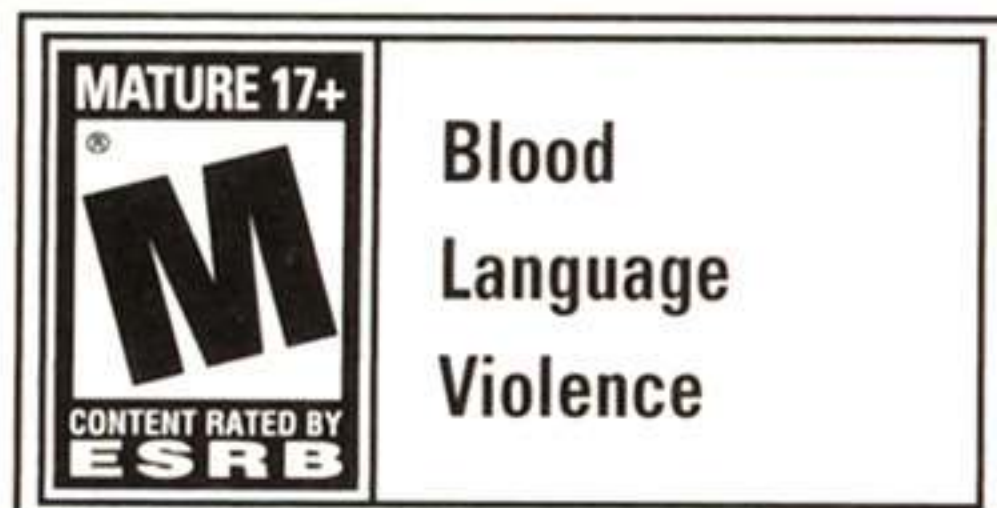
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