

TOMB RAIDER

Angelina on the new movie, her fears, and a sexier Lara

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Whose upcoming lineup is the best? Special 6-page report inside

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GameShark and Action Replay codes you won't find anywhere else

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NEW for PS2, Xbox, GC

SONIC HEROES

12 characters, 4 teams, 3 consoles

The world's fastest hedgehog streaks toward his biggest adventure ever

Announced!

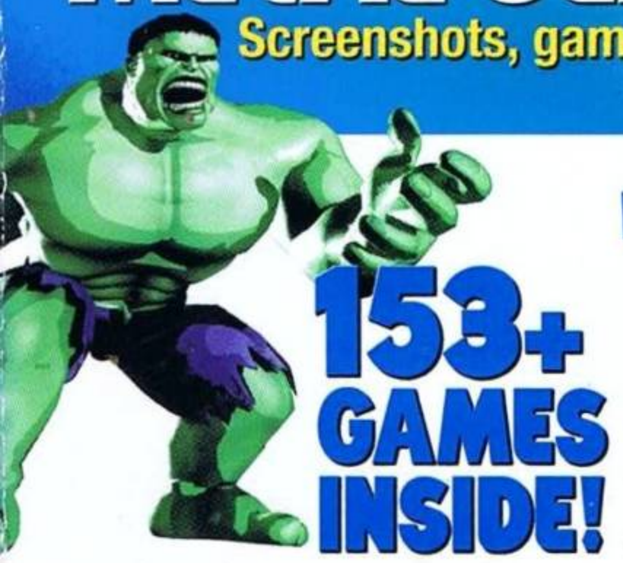
SONY'S NEXT SYSTEMS

PSP takes on Game Boy and superconsole PSX takes on TiVo

Big Updates

HALO 2
METAL GEAR SOLID 3

Screenshots, gameplay info, and more!



153+ GAMES INSIDE!


GRAN TURISMO 4


FINAL FANTASY XI


TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND


SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

■ Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles ■ Mario Kart: Double Dash ■ Ninja Gaiden ■ NCAA Football 2004 ■ Resident Evil: Outbreak ■ Brute Force ■ Star Fox 2 ■ Spider-Man II ■ The Hulk ■ Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes ■ Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

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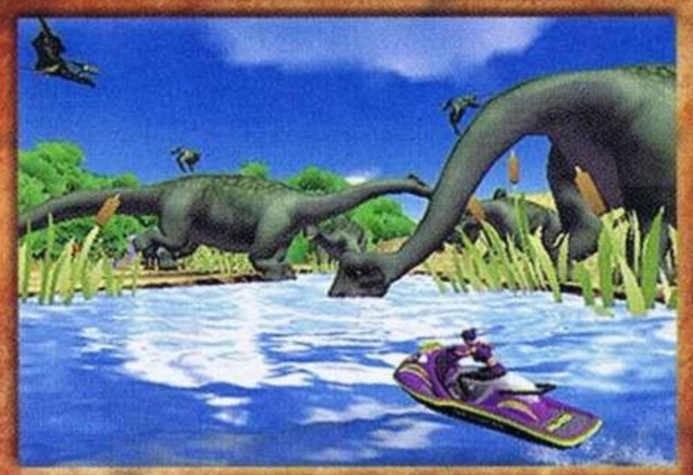
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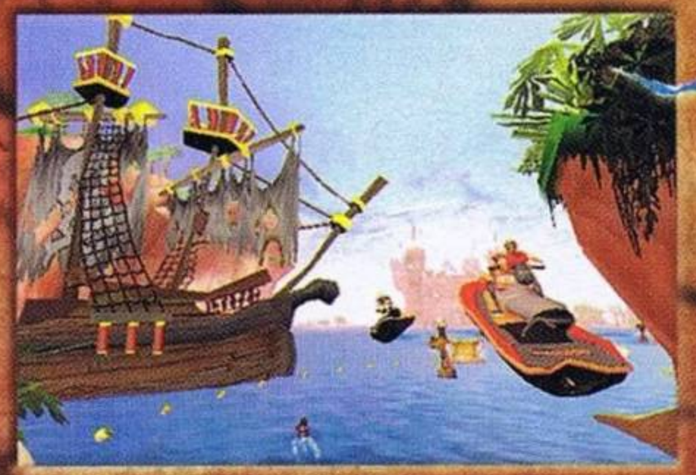
Each lap changes to open new paths and shortcuts



Insane stunt system



Wild waves, rapids and jumps



EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Lyrics
Mild Language

PlayStation 2

rainbow STUDIOS

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Downhill Domination. Are you equipped for the challenge?

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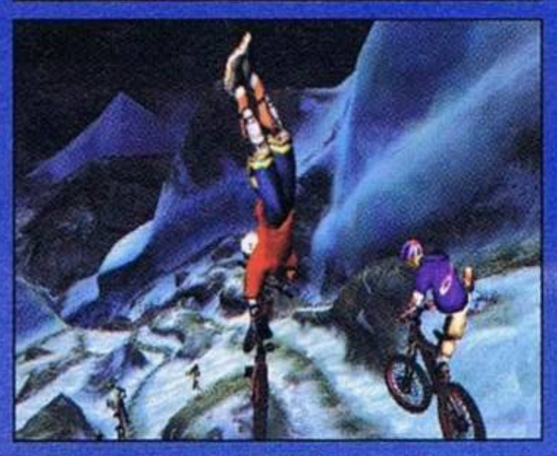
PlayStation 2

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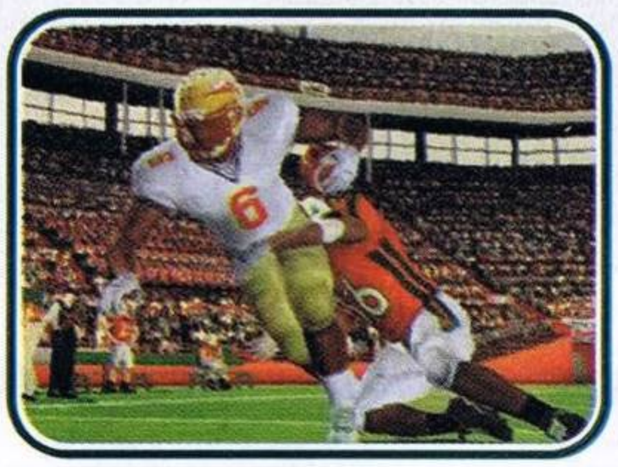
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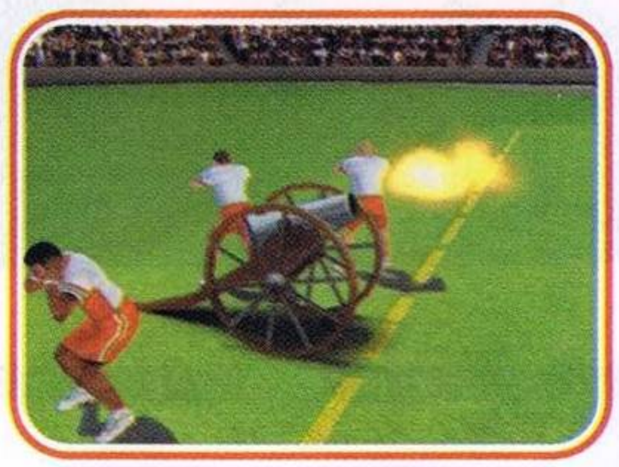
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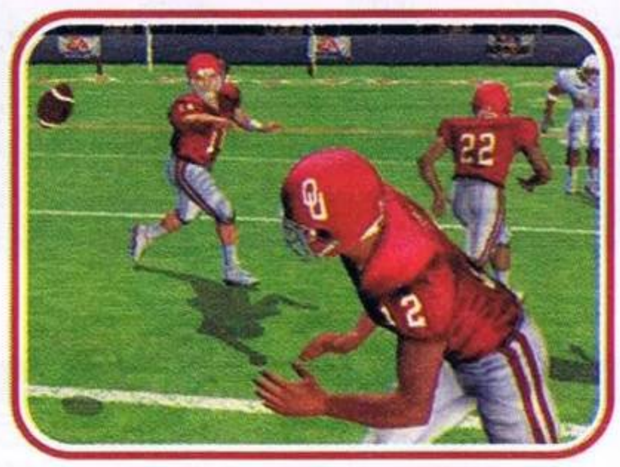
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XBOX

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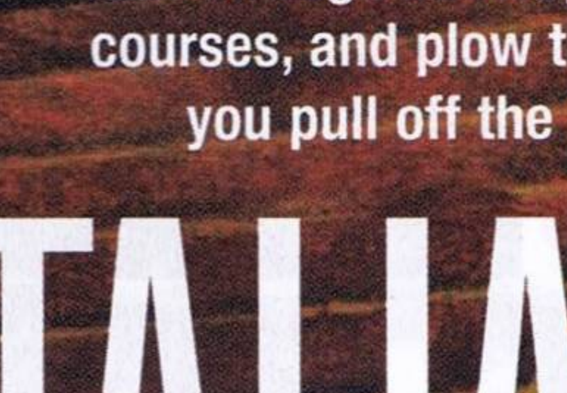
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OUR OPINIONATED GUIDE TO THE GAMES YOU'LL BE PLAYING NEXT

72 We're never afraid to voice our opinions, and that's one of the reasons why you love (or hate) us. Read initial impressions of over 50 games we played during our trip to the gaming bonanza known as the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), including *Gran Turismo 4*, *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles*, *Resident Evil: Outbreak*, *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, and *Spider-Man 2*.



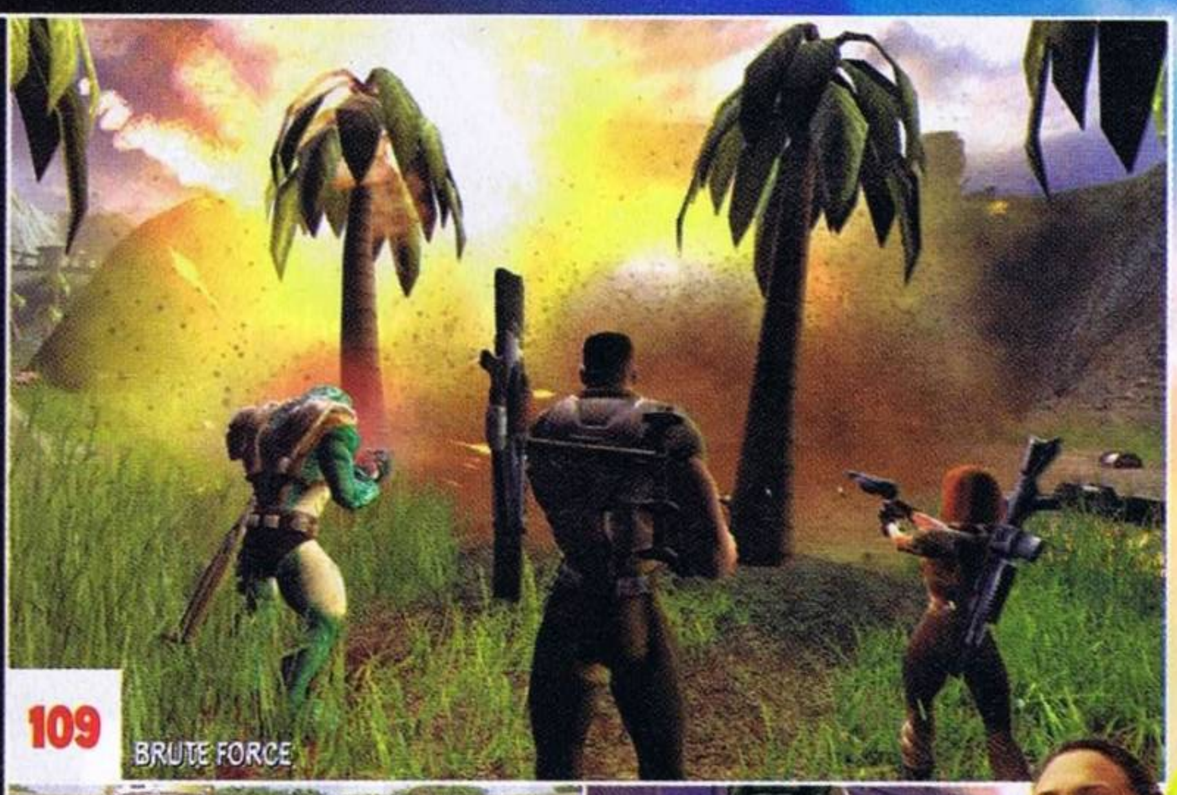


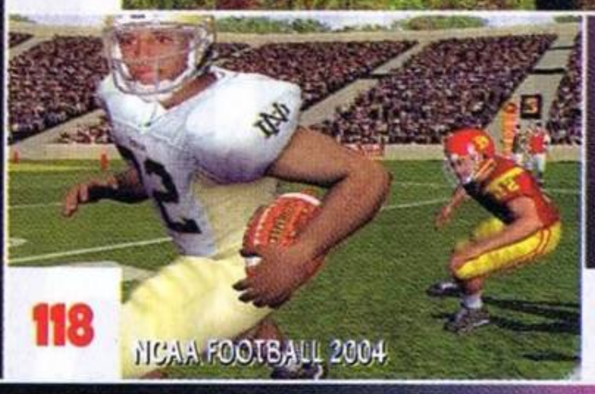


REVIEW CREW

The only mag that offers three reviews for each game

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COVER STORY:

SONIC HEROES

Sega's speed freak is in such good shape his next adventure will take place on three systems: PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube. We slow down the blue hedgehog just enough to deliver all-new info and screens of *Sonic Heroes*



editorial



Our longtime readers are longtime readers for a reason: because we're brutally honest. Sure, lots of magazines like to brag that they "tell it like it is," but hey, I'm telling it like it is when I tell you that...uh, we tell it like it is.

Case in point: We just came back from the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), a videogame trade show where companies show off their latest goods to journalists, analysts, retailers, and kids who lie their way in. Usually, the game press is supposed to provide you with middle-of-the-road coverage that represents all products equally and fairly. Pfft. That's not really what you want now, is it? You want to know what was good and what was bad. You want to know how your favorite console compares to the others. You want journalists who're willing to risk accusations of bias and favoritism (not to mention the wrath of countless rabid fanboys) so they can tell you about the things you want—no, need—to know.

That's where we come in. In this issue, we grade how Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo fared at the show (see pg. 24—sorry guys, some of you didn't score so hot). We let you know how their demos played, even if they're early in development (see pg. 72—I can't wait to field the angry calls from game publishers on this one). We...well, tell it like it is. Can you dig it?

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staff

150 twitchy fingers

the review crew



DAN "SHOE" HSU
Editor-in-Chief

■ Shoe's brain-cell count always takes a dive when the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) trade show rolls around. Sleep deprivation, booze, noise, conversations with L.A. women....
■ Now Playing: *Soul Calibur II, Rebel Strike*
■ Fave Genres: Everything



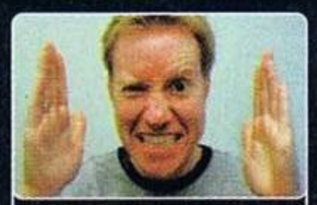
MARK MACDONALD
Executive Editor

■ After recent legal hassles, Mark isn't taking any chances with his pic this month (IMAGE COURTESY OF KEVIN KRAYNAK, AGE 12, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED).
■ Now Playing: *Phantasy Star Online* (Xbox), *SOCOM*
■ Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Shooters



JENNIFER TSAO
Managing Editor

■ It was business as usual for Jennifer at this year's E3. She played tons of insane videogames, cruised all the best parties, and got her picture taken with the usual buxom booth babes.
■ Now Playing: various *Castlevania*s
■ Fave Genres: Action Sports, Adventure, RPG



CRISPIN BOYER
Features Editor

■ The *Matrix* flick's plot plus all the E3 racket gave Cris a headache "this big." OK, Excedrin, send the endorsement check to 101 Second St., San Francisco, CA.
■ Now Playing: *Brute Force, Midtown Madness 3*
■ Fave Genres: Adventure, RPG



CHRIS "CJ" JOHNSTON
News Editor

■ Reviewing *Rent A Hero No. 1* this month inspired young CJ to take on a second job as hero-for-hire. Question is, who will hire him...is it you?!
■ Now Playing: *.hack, Wario Ware, Phantasy Star Online*
■ Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Puzzle



SHANE BETTENHAUSEN
Reviews Editor

■ Shane hopes that the *Final Fantasy XI* beta test does for him what *EverQuest* couldn't. Well, the *EQ* PS2 game at least—the action figures are spectacular.
■ Now Playing: *Final Fantasy XI, Virtua Fighter 4 Evo*
■ Fave Genres: Action, RPG, Fighting



JOE FIELDER
Previews Editor

■ After reviewing three shooters this month and writing hands-on reports for several more, Joe keeps wandering around saying, "Charlton Heston is my precedent...."
■ Now Playing: *Zelda: Wind Waker* (still!)
■ Fave Genres: Action, Shooters, Adventure



DEMIAN LINN
Editor-at-Large

■ Something funny is supposed to go here, probably referencing E3 and some games and whatnot. Amusing jokes to come. Laughs aplenty! Rimshot!
■ Now Playing: *Wario Ware, NBA Street Vol. 2, Bobobo Bobobobo: Gagglefest*
■ Fave Genres: Action, Hockey, Racing



PAUL BYRNES
Associate Editor

■ True story: Once, while Paul and his brother were straight trouncin' fools in *Mortal Kombat II* at the arcade, a disgruntled opponent set Paul on fire.
■ Now Playing: *Soul Calibur II, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*
■ Fave Genres: RPG, Fighting, Shooters



BRYAN INTIHAR
Associate Editor

■ Bryan's quite perplexed. Seeing *The Matrix: Reloaded* twice hasn't helped him understand a single word of that double-talking Architect guy's long-winded sermon.
■ Now Playing: *Enter the Matrix, PSO* for Xbox (still!)
■ Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports



SHAWN ELLIOTT
Associate Editor

■ Shawn jerryrigged the ergonomically ingenious N-Gage to call for air support in *Castle Wolfenstein*. "It's a bit bigger than what dad used in WWII, but..."
■ Now Playing: *Soul Calibur II, Return to Castle Wolfenstein*
■ Fave Genres: Fighting, Shooters



JON DUDLAK
Contributing Reviewer

■ Jon's been up nights worrying about Konami pulling another N64 job with the new *Castlevania*. The added stress has forced his fast-graying hair to grow like the mighty oak.
■ Now Playing: *Ikaruga*
■ Fave Genres: Action, Fighting, Racing



GREG FORD
Contributing Reviewer

■ Young Ford survived his first E3...or did he? It looks as though an avalanche of tchotchkes took their revenge on him. And he thought it was all fun and games....
■ Now Playing: *Downhill Domination, Ikaruga, Burnout 2*
■ Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports



JOHN RICCIARDI
Contributing Reviewer

■ Ricciardi was a true sport at this year's E3, constantly taking time out of his busy partying schedule to take photos with loyal *EGM* readers like this guy.
■ Now Playing: *Final Fantasy XI, Soul Calibur II, Ikaruga*
■ Fave Genres: Action, RPGs, Sports



GREG SEWART
Contributing Reviewer

■ With the NASCAR season in full swing, *Big Mutha Truckers* on the review slate this month, and *Thunder 2004* just around the corner, Sewart's in redneck heaven.
■ Now Playing: *Phantasy Star Online, NASCAR Thunder '03*
■ Fave Genres: RPG, Racing, Action

the contributors

■ United Kingdom native and BBC writer **NICK WALKLAND** shoots the breeze with tomb-raiding temptress Angelina Jolie (page 56)....
■ **CHRIS BAKER** of *Wired* fame, storms the stacks of the Brainy Gamer's Library (page 48)....
■ Longtime strat-guide writer **CASEY LOE** transforms you into an instant expert on blast-from-the-past emulation gaming (page 50)....
■ Freelancer extraordinaire **PATRICK MAURO** played all the football games on display at E3, so staffer Bryan Intihar didn't have to for a change....
■ Review Crew alumnus **SHAWN SMITH** quit his day job with *EGM* to get a degree in design. He's back drawing pictures for us—go figure....
■ Thanks to layout pinch hitters **EUGENE WANG** and **REY SERRANO**, whose help made meeting our hectic E3 deadline possible....
■ **CHUCK ERNST** and **NIK SCHULZ** collaborated to forecast the shape of handheld gaming to come with their PSP schematic (page 42)....
■ Artist **MIKE REISEL** ran Sega's mascots through the Warhol ringer for our cover story (page 100)....
■ Photographer **AARON LAUER**'s magic lens made a bunch of books look interesting (redcheese.com)....
■ Comic-book buff Chris Baker and sports enthusiast Todd Zuniga from **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** gave us a helping hand in reviews....
■ Vowel intolerant **GMR** gurus James "Milkman" Mielke and Andrew Pfister also chipped in....
■ **XBOX NATION**'s resident madman Greg Orlando sharpened his rapier wit on *Rent A Hero*....
■ And Ethan Einhorn of **GAMENOW** infiltrated our office disguised as a game reviewer.

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letters

ranting, raving, and a gal named Angelica Bridges

Knight Rider redux

In response to Pedro "Hasselhoff" Perez's wish for a (good) *Knight Rider* game [Letters, *EGM* #167], I've decided to share a bit of my top-secret project sooner than planned. My goal is to legally obtain the *Knight Rider* license, extract all the enjoyable bits from the TV show, and squeeze them onto an 8K ROM cartridge for the Atari 2600 VCS. *Knight Rider 2600* (working title) will be a mix of stunt driving, investigation, stealth tactics, fisticuffs, resource management, and puzzle solving, all balanced with a countdown clock and a bit of mood music.

The license will be difficult to secure, and mass production is highly unlikely (both are expensive and require lawyers), but not impossible. I can personally produce at least 10 copies and hand them out as gifts. The *EGM* editors, Kevin "Silent Bob" Smith, and Pedro Perez will be recognized. I hope to feature the finished product at the 2006 Classic Gaming Expo.

—James C. Snyder
hardwork007@hotmail.com

James, we dedicate this classic KITT quote in your honor: "Michael, at our present speed of 310 mph, the odds of our survival are...my odds calculator just malfunctioned! Michael, can't we slow down?"

And with that, any mention of David Hasselhoff or *Knight Rider* is banned from the *EGM* Letters section for at least three months.

Contest!

Think you can come up with a better game idea than Jonathon Smeby's *Wario Ware* homage or James C. Snyder's *Knight Rider 2600*? Send us a mocked-up screenshot and a brief description and we'll publish the best entries. The worst entries will be taped to the office wall and ridiculed.

letter of the month

Jonny Ware Inc.

How often do you get a letter where someone's not complaining about what you wrote in *EGM* or how terrible whatever game is? Believe it or not, I'm writing to say thanks! In *EGM* #167, you reviewed *Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$*. That review totally convinced me to buy *WW*. It's great, of course, and it even inspired me to make my own PC game, similar to *WW*. The minigames in my collection, though, are made by people from all over the world [see descriptions below]. So thanks a whole lot; it might not have happened without that review!

—Jonathan Smeby
www.jonnycomics.com



Game: Extreme Surveyor
From: California
Object: Fill out a two-page survey. Write too fast and the page bursts into flames; go too slow and you fall asleep.



Game: No! Not My BMW!
From: Netherlands
Object: Snipe the crows trying to take a dump on your precious BMW. Notice the "interesting" crayon graphics!



Game: Terrible Tuesday
From: California
Object: In this *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*–ish game, you have to save the neighborhood from various monsters.



Game: Gnomania
From: United Kingdom
Object: You're an underpants gnome, and you search out valuable underpants or something. Should be big in Japan.

"Any mention of David Hasselhoff or *Knight Rider* is banned from the *EGM* Letters section...for three months."

He's gotta have it

In Overheard, *EGM* #168, you quote Sega's Yu Suzuki saying that the story for *Shenmue III* is already written, but no decision has been made to actually develop the game. Tell me he's joking. How can he not make the final chapter of one of the great epics in videogames? He can't just leave us hanging, can he? If, in the end, he finds that a third game isn't marketable, could I at least get my hands on that third story? I can't go to my grave without finding out what happens to Ryo.

—Jesse Gruber

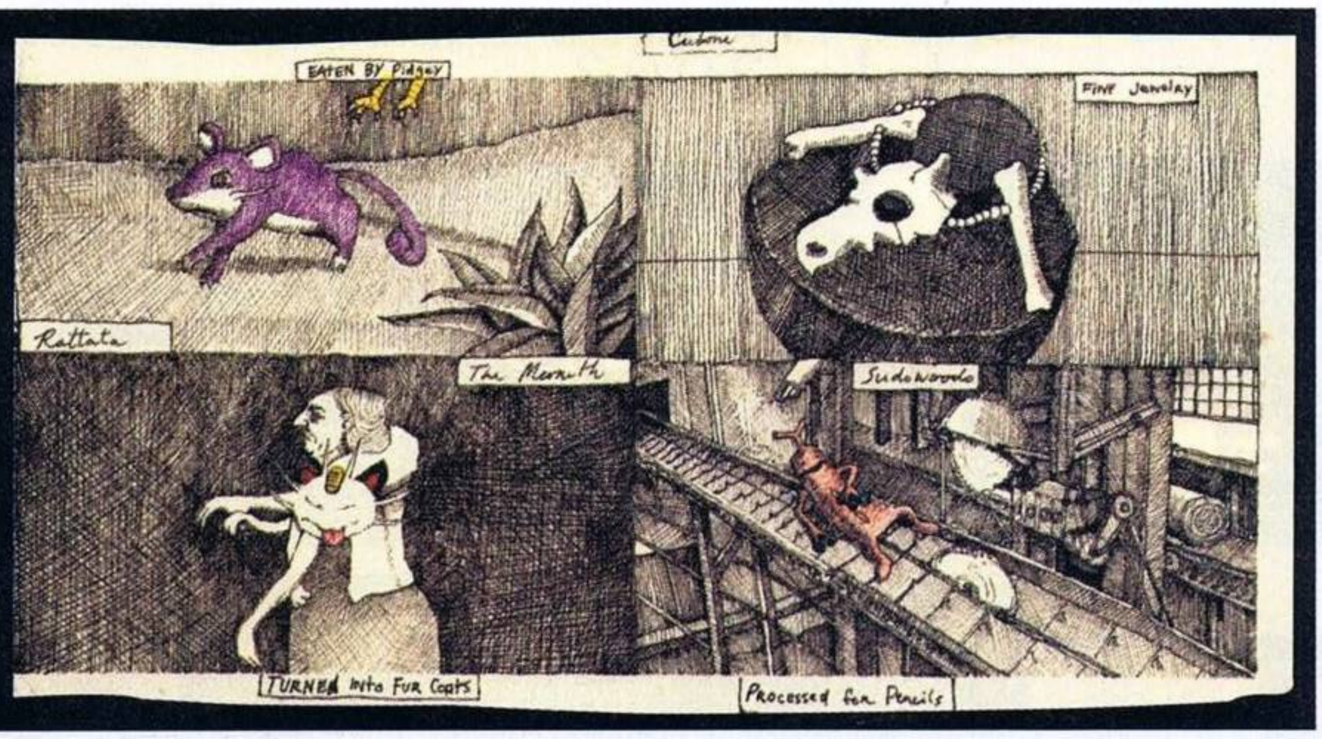
Sure, Yu Suzuki would be more than happy to show you the story for *Shenmue III*—just shoot him an e-mail at yu_suzuki69@hotmail.com. Tell him *EGM* said it was OK.

You are suing Sony

Recently on the local news, the idiot newscasters, whose videogame experience probably doesn't extend beyond the hallowed halls of ancient NES gaming, actually touched on something worth discussing. They aired a story about a class-action lawsuit against Sony, which alleges that the DVD-player component in

More Tales of Pokédeath

As promised, here's part two of reader Leo Hussey's morbid exploration of Pokémon mortality. Wondering why Rattata, Cubone, Meowth, and Sudowoodo aren't in *Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire*? Now you know. It's because they're, like, totally dead.



CONTACT EGM

Because we really want to know why you wake up screaming in the middle of the night. It can't be healthy. EGM@ziffdavis.com is your best bet, but this also works:

EGM Letters
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San Francisco, CA 94105

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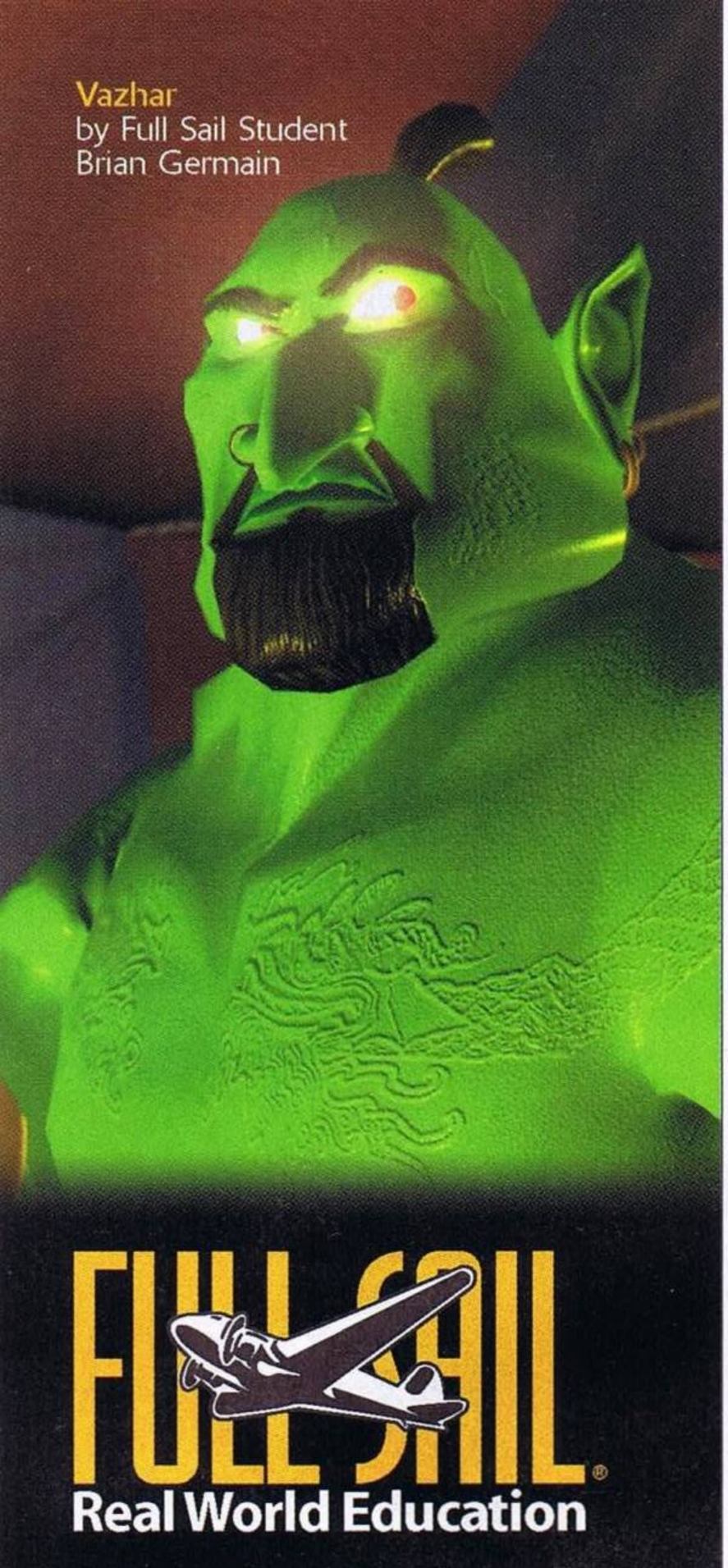
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REPRINTS?

When you absolutely, positively have to have that one article about that thing we did that one month, call (800) 217-7874 and ask for Bruno.



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letters

the PlayStation 2 does not work as advertised. This struck a chord with me, because a few months ago, after I finally played a movie on my PS2 (I had been playing games on it for well over a year), it suddenly broke down. But I thought all PS2 games were on DVD discs anyway…so what the heck's going on?

—Dante Johnston

Many, but not all, PS2 games are on DVD discs. Whether or not playing DVD movies is more likely to bring on the dreaded "Disk Read Error," though, we really don't know. There is indeed a lawsuit pending against Sony, however; for more info, check www.sheller.com/sonyPS2classaction.html.

Here comes the neighborhood

I recently went back and played the original *Grand Theft Auto* for PS1 and saw something interesting: The three locales you run riot in are Liberty City, Vice City, and…San Andreas. Could this be the setting of the next *Grand Theft Auto* game?

—CKnud90634@aol.com



No. How much mayhem could you cause in sleepy San Andreas, CA, population 2,115? We have it on good authority that the next *GTA* game will be set in Las Vegas, and while the name hasn't been decided, how could it not be called Sin City?

Grand theft…skateboard?

I made a skateboard in art class that was inspired by *Grand Theft Auto*. Thought you guys might like to see it.

—Stephen De Medicis

Wait, Eraserhead was in *GTA3*?

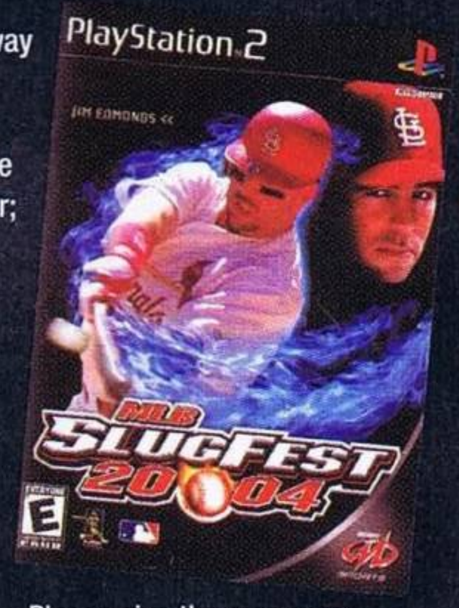
War widow

I just watched the *Halo 2* trailer Microsoft showed at E3 and I cried not once, but twice: once when the trailer started, and again when the Brute jumped onto the Warthog and started bashing in the heads of the marines riding with Master Chief. I have never seen something so beautiful in my entire life. Words can hardly describe how I feel about the release of this game. All I can say is how truly glad I am that I preordered in August of

sputtering outrage

Jim Edmonds fan (kinda)

I am writing this letter because of the way you guys dissed Jim Edmonds [*EGM* #166, page 50] as being the so-called "lamest cover since cover athletes came about." Edmonds is a tremendous player; he is probably the best overall centerfielder in baseball today. He combines his great fielding ability with a big bat for the St. Louis Cardinals. Without him, they wouldn't be the same. I am sure that there were "worse" cover athletes than Jim Edmonds. Let me think of a cover athlete that is worse…well, I can't think of anyone right now, but anyway…. Please give the man some respect—he deserves it for all his hard work on the diamond.



—Scott Lee

So you can't think of a worse cover athlete than Jim Edmonds either? What's the problem here again?

Just relax, dude, reeelaaaax

Are you idiots on crack or something? I was reading your "Old Link versus Young Link" Grudge Match in *EGM* #167 [page 34], and I have to say that your information is screwed. First of all, old Link is stronger, faster, and more experienced, and he can kick some serious s*** out of any and all who oppose him. Young Link is slow, gets pushed around quite easily, and takes a hell of a lot of effort to waste a weak enemy. In the Nintendo 64 Zelda games *Ocarina of Time* and *Majora's Mask*, young Link is a child with no skill whatsoever, while old Link has more gadgets and gizmos than your favored young Link does. Next time you idiots set up a match against older and younger versions of a game character, at least try to do a little research.

—Steven Fischer

We had originally planned to refute your arguments using logic and reason, but then we realized our folly. You probably think Batman could beat up Superman (see Grudge Match this issue) because he's got a utility belt and Batarangs. Congratulations! You're a lunatic.

OOPS!



I just wanted to point out that in *EGM* #168, page 123, there was an error in the *Dragon Ball Z* review. Chris Johnston referred to Piccolo as a Saiyan warrior. He is not a Saiyan—Piccolo is a Namek. Goku, Trunks, Gohan, and Vegeta are the Saiyans. Or maybe it wasn't an error and you just wanted to see how many *DBZ* fans you could get to write angry, threatening letters. I know how you like to stir things up.

—James Grey

While we do indeed like to stir things up, News Editor and resident *Dragon Ball* expert Chris Johnston was shocked by his grievous faux pas. He's now rereading the entire *Dragon Ball* canon (seriously, he is), and if that doesn't cleanse his conscience, he can always pen some fan fiction. Preferably of the erotic variety.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR DEATH.

IT WAITS FOR YOU.







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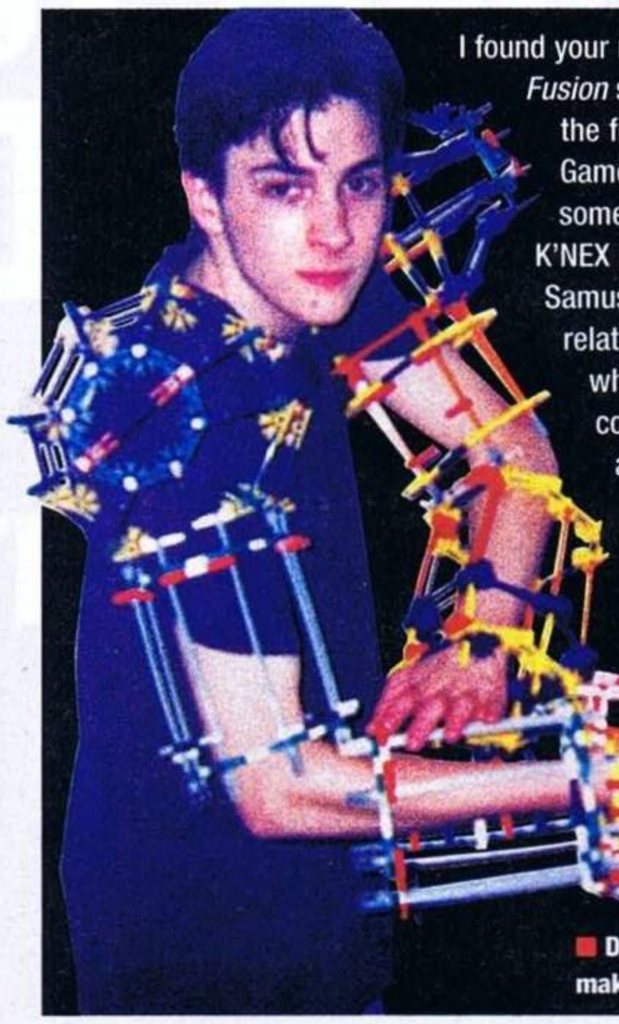
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back away slowly



I found your reviews of *Metroid Prime* and *Fusion* so agreeable that they gave me the final push to go buy a GameCube. I got hooked on *Metroid*; some free time and a big box of K'NEX later, I had created these Samus arms, a nice piece of game-related mechanics/cosplay (or whatever you want to call it), complete with missile launcher and all five beams. Anyway, I just wanted to show you my creation and tell you that you've got one remarkable game-devoted magazine goin' on.

—Joshua Thom

That's, uh…wow.

Do not make eye contact. Do not make eye contact!

2002. I encourage everyone to download the trailer and cry as I did. I guarantee you will be forever changed.

—Greg McGinniss

We're as excited about *Halo 2* as the next guy, but jeez, pull yourself together, soldier! You other sissies check page 44 for more on the tear-jerking *Halo 2* trailer.

More plushy love

Many thanks for telling me where I can find *Animal Crossing* plush toys [Letters, *EGM* #167]. I ordered Gulliver. Once a week, I pretend he washes ashore in my bedroom and gives me a tribal mask.

—Jared Thorbahn

As long as that's all he does.

Smells like…crap

I have what is probably the greatest idea ever conceived in the field of publishing: smell-o-zine. Think of the possibilities if you could sniff your favorite videogame all-stars (did someone say *Xtreme Beach Volleyball*?). Each editor would have his/her own distinct smell so you would know who wrote the piece you just read. Now, if you'll excuse me, the corner awaits my weeping.

—Martin Gerardo

That is quite possibly the worst idea in the history of ideas.

OH NOOOO!



In the Coming Soon section of *EGM* #167 [page 62], you mentioned the old Atari 2600 game *E.T.* and said there had also been a videogame about the Kool-Aid Man. I researched it, and is this what you're talking about? I see it's from the era when he didn't sport pants.

—Matt Boblet

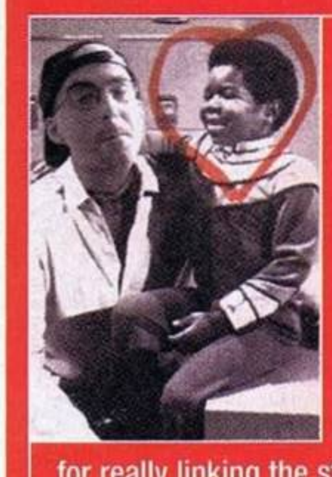
Mega anti-kudos to Matt Boblet for tracking down that damn *Kool-Aid Man* game. It burns! Get it away!

OOPS!

In the June 2003 issue of *EGM*, we published a photograph of Ron Jeremy, unaware that *Foul Magazine* claimed to own the copyright. We are sorry for the unauthorized publication.

word on the street

■ DID ENTER THE MATRIX LIVE UP (OR DOWN) TO THE MATRIX: RELOADED?



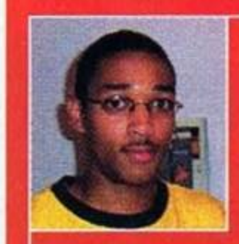
It's a pretty cool step in terms of looking at how the different forms of entertainment we dig today can be combined in the future, way beyond the early attempts (back in the mid-'90s) to mix live movies with games. Although the game wasn't perfect, the Wachowski brothers deserve some kudos for really linking the stories together in a creative way instead of just rehashing the movie.

—Andy Crosby



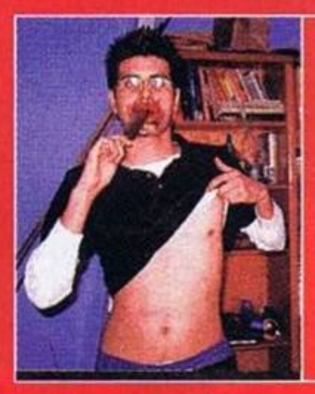
The visual effects of *Matrix: Reloaded* were so off da hook, they were off da hinges, and in some parts, *Enter the Matrix* for the consoles held their own as well. The game starts off slow in some areas but does get better, and the overall connectivity to the movie is interesting and worthy. Had *Reloaded* come out in November, thus giving *Enter the Matrix* several more months of development time, the project would have most likely turned out considerably better.

—Paul Gale
Eagle Scout



Enter the Matrix: No boring speeches, no overly philosophical dialogue, no useless sweaty Zion dance scene, no over-the-top special effects, and no spectacular-but-makes-no-logical-sense freeway chase. But, overall, I'd say it was a huge disappointment compared to the movie.

—Eugene Wright



I think *Enter the Matrix* is on par with Keanu Reeves' acting talent.

—JJ Sape

Oh, *burned!* Bet you never thought we'd run that pic, eh JJ? That'll learn ya.

■ If you'd like to participate in Word on the Street, check our message boards at www.egmmag.com.

A woman scorned

As a female gamer, I do not agree with some of what your "Gaming Beauty," Angelica Bridges, had to say [*EGM* #168, page 51]. Not all of us female gamers are turned on only by *Mario Sunshine* and *Ms. Pac-Man*—some of us women like a good game with blood and guts (not to mention competition). While I was raised to be a respectable young gal, chopping heads off *Mortal Kombat*–style is an excellent release, and I don't consider it unladylike. In fact, I'd say stripping off all your clothes to pose in a magazine is far less classy.

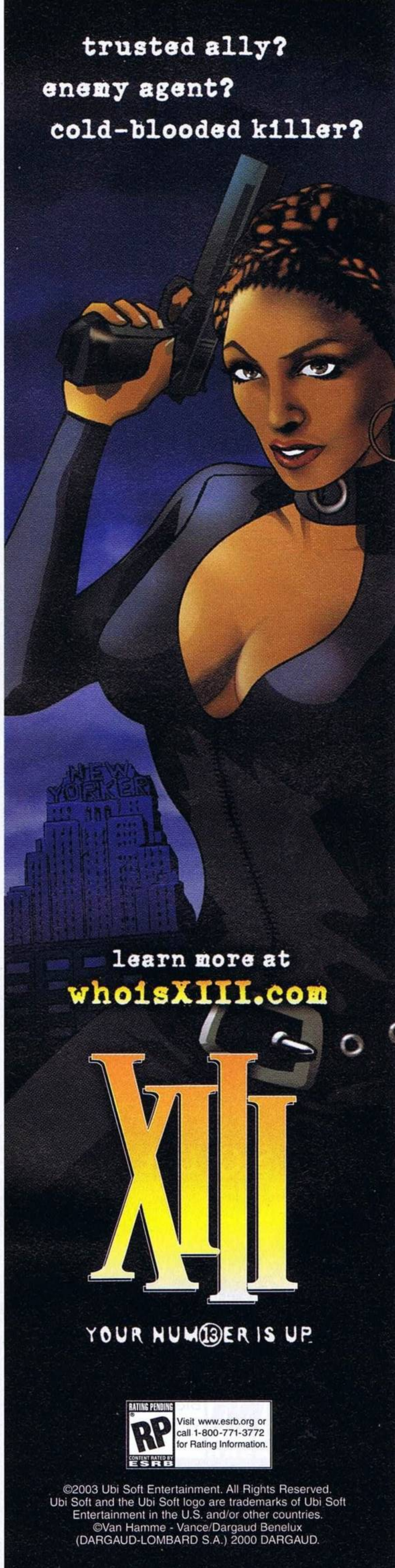
While your gaming beauty is certainly very beautiful, I would not say that she epitomizes all girl gamers. In fact, she's everything most of us—the few true ones there are—strive not to be.

—Dawn Hirsch

We hear you, Dawn, and you're not the only reader who wrote in questioning Angelica Bridges as an ideal role model for girl gamers—not that we ever claimed she was. Then again, there was the even larger contingent that laminated said page and affixed it to the bedroom ceiling. That's why we just can't stop ourselves from running another Angelica picture. Sorry!



■ ***Playboy*** **model Angelica Bridges gets all dressed up for a hot and heavy *Mario Sunshine* session.**



DEEP IN CUBA, THE GHOSTS

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Xbox screen shots shown

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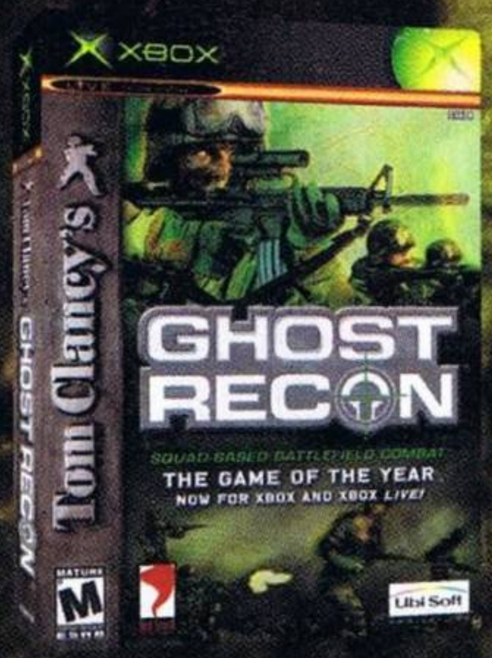
XBOX LIVE

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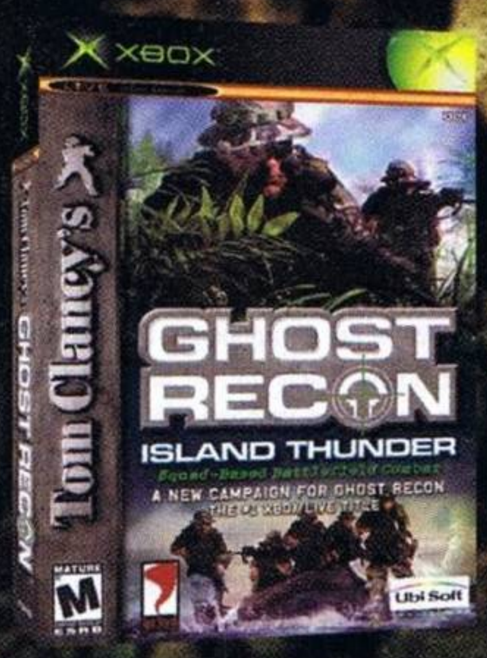
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press start

gaming news, interviews, Rise of the Robots fiction, and other stuff



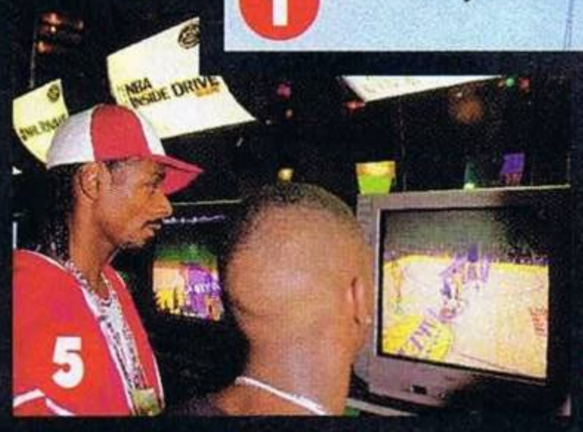


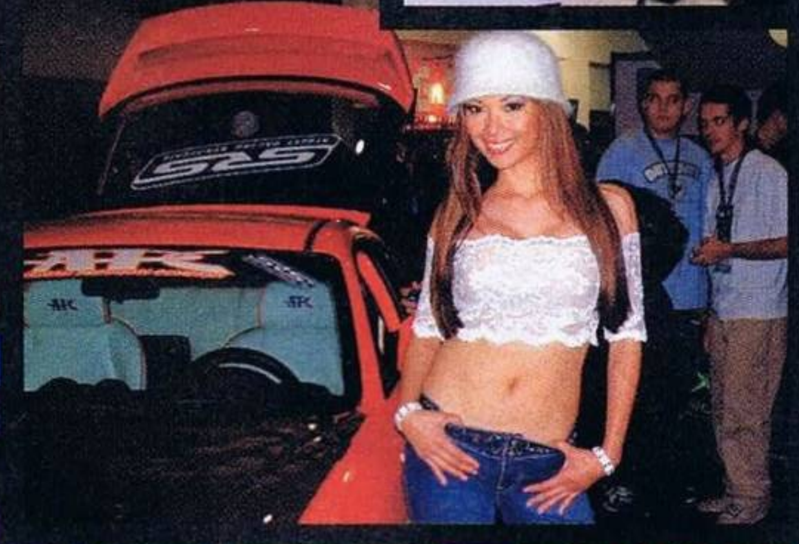






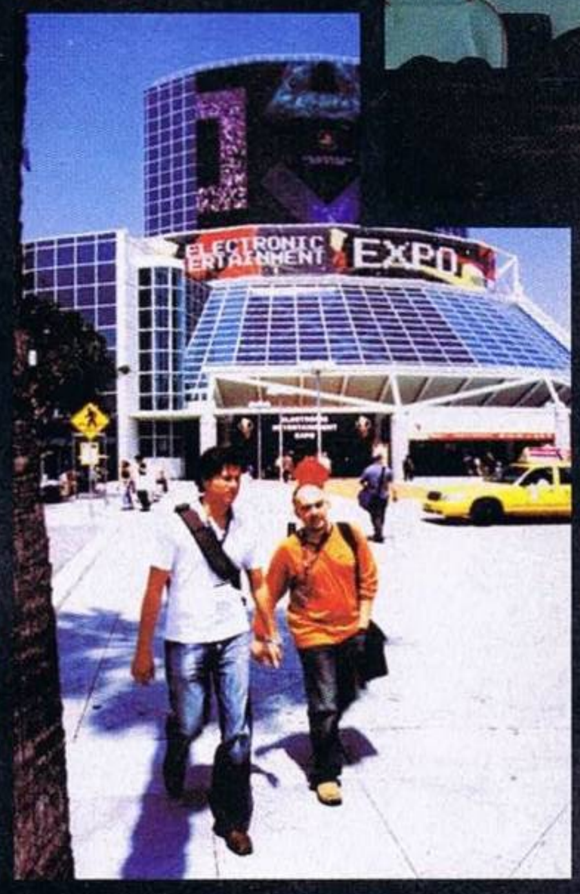




















E3 WRAP-UP

SHOW OF FORCE

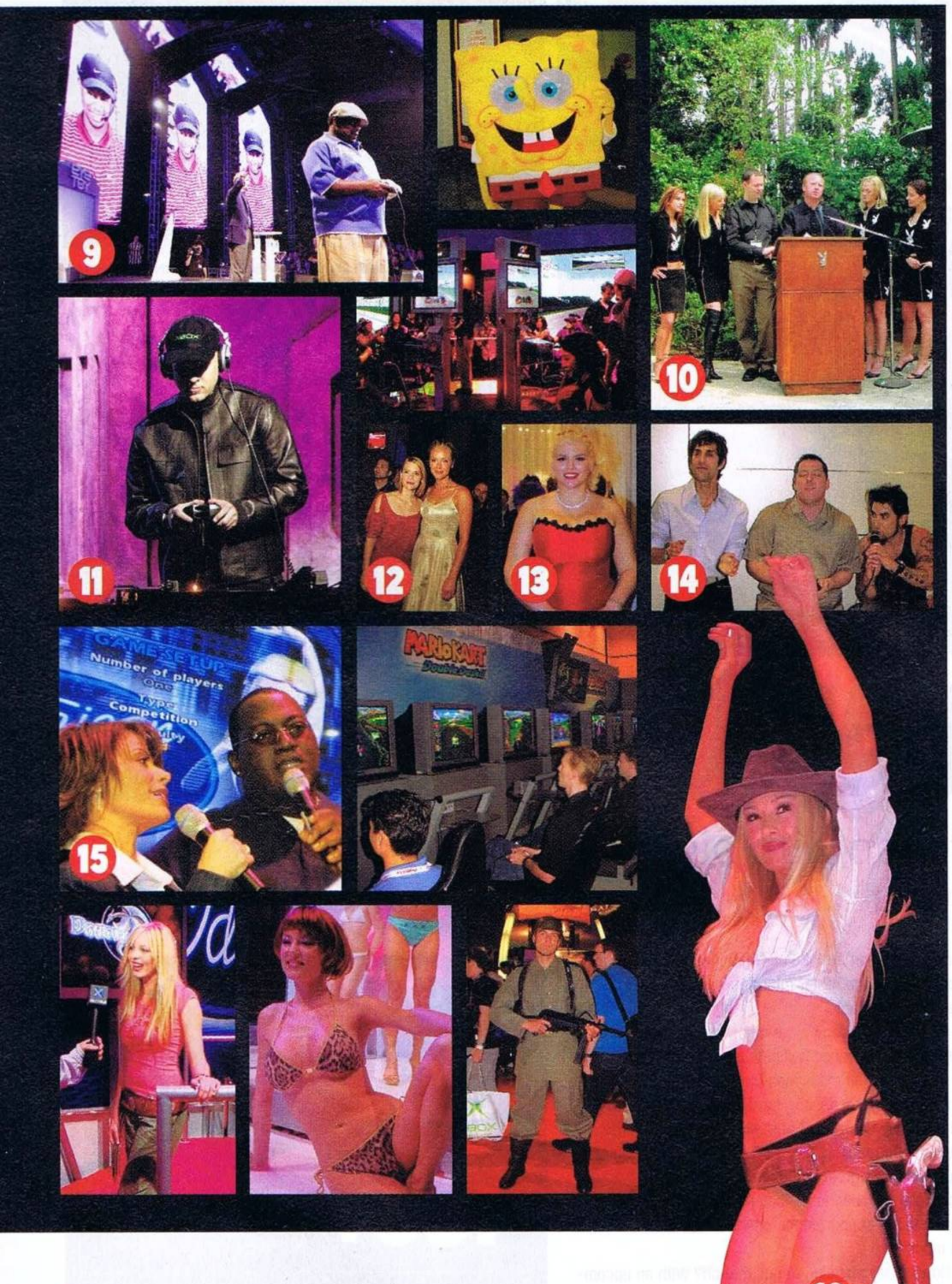
Nerds, babes descend upon L.A. for E3 gala

Ah, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the most cumbersomely named of all videogame trade shows—which is why we'll call it E3 from here on out. It's a chance for game publishers to crank the hype machine up to 11, for the big three console makers to unleash a crushing avalanche of marketing synergies wrapped in a bow of PR spin, and for the slack-jawed nerd herd (don't get us wrong—we're card-carrying members) to stammer in the general direction of genetically engineered booth babes. Everybody wins, but only the booth babes make a profit.

Still, this E3 was a little on the quiet side. Sony's planned entry into the portable gaming market was big news (see page 42), but don't expect to get your hands on the device—dubbed PSP—for another year and a half. We saw new hardware bundles (Network Adaptor with PlayStation 2, Game Boy Player with GameCube) coupled with minor price drops, but…...oh, sorry, dang narcolepsy kicking in again.

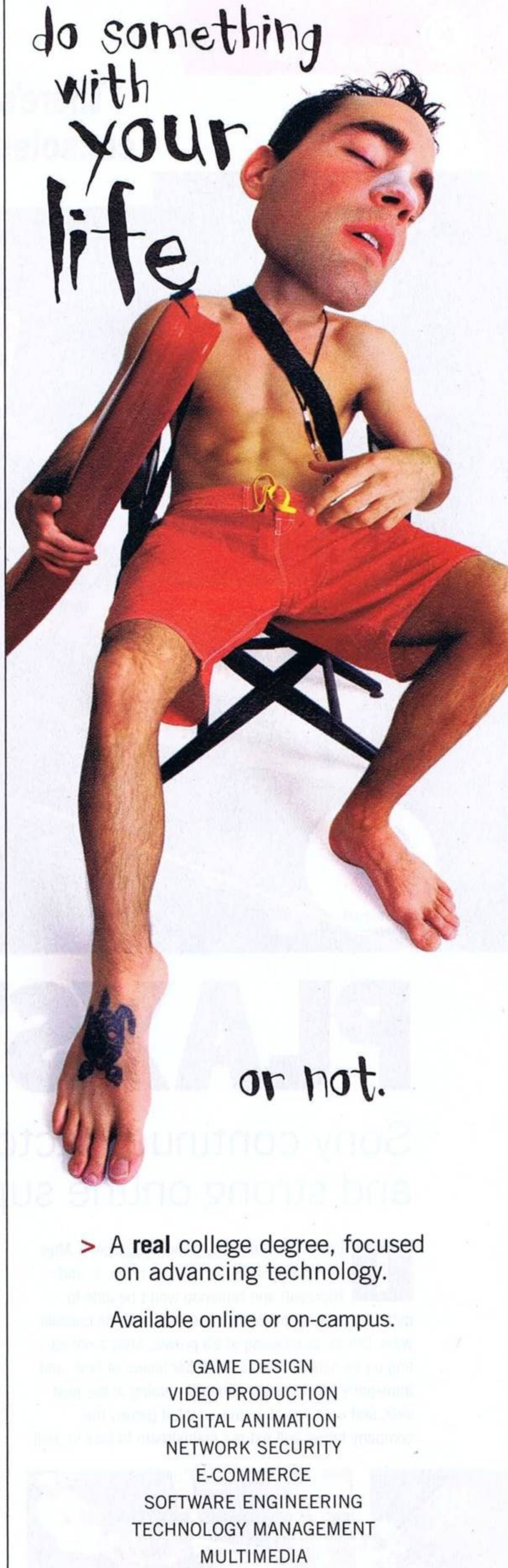
We're not complaining, though, because we finally, finally got our hands on some of the games we've been really lusting after, such as *Gran Turismo 4*, *Ninja Gaiden*, *Mario Kart: Double Dash*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, and about 50 others you'll be reading about in this issue. Our system-by-system coverage begins when you flip the page....

>> THE PRESS START NEWS TICKER...STARTS NOW >> LISTEN UP, STINGY GAMERS: *ROGUE SQUADRON 2*, *JAMES BOND 007: AGENT UNDER FIRE*, *SPIDER-MAN*, *SONIC ADVENTURE 2:*



■ **Show and tell: 1 U.S. Army troops promote PC shooter *America's Army* by exiting vehicle before it comes to a complete stop. 2 PlayStation creator Ken Kutaragi manhandles the li'l discs you'll cram into Sony's newly announced handheld. 3 Extreme human Tony Hawk. 4 Polio vaccine inventor Jonas Salk. 5 Snoop Dog, sans bitches. 6 Mario papa Shigeru Miyamoto (left), *Sims* creator Will Wright (second from right), and Nintendo bigwigs play...*Pac-Man*? (See page 31) 7 *Junior*'s Ah-nuld Schwarzenegger with Atari CEO Bruno Bonnell. 8 *Gran Turismo 4* mastermind Kazunori Yamauchi exorcises his speed demons. 9 Cedric the Entertainer beats Tiger Woods at his own game. 10 Physicist Jack Kirby receives Nobel Prize. 11 Microsoft VP J Allard mixes so-called "phat jams" on Xbox. 12 *T3* stars Claire Danes and Terminatrix Kristanna Loken. 13 Anna Nicole Smith (family-size chicken bucket not pictured). 14 Guess which one of these guys is not a rock star. 15 Arbiters of talent hawk crappy game. 16 Microprocessor co-inventor Stan Mazor.**

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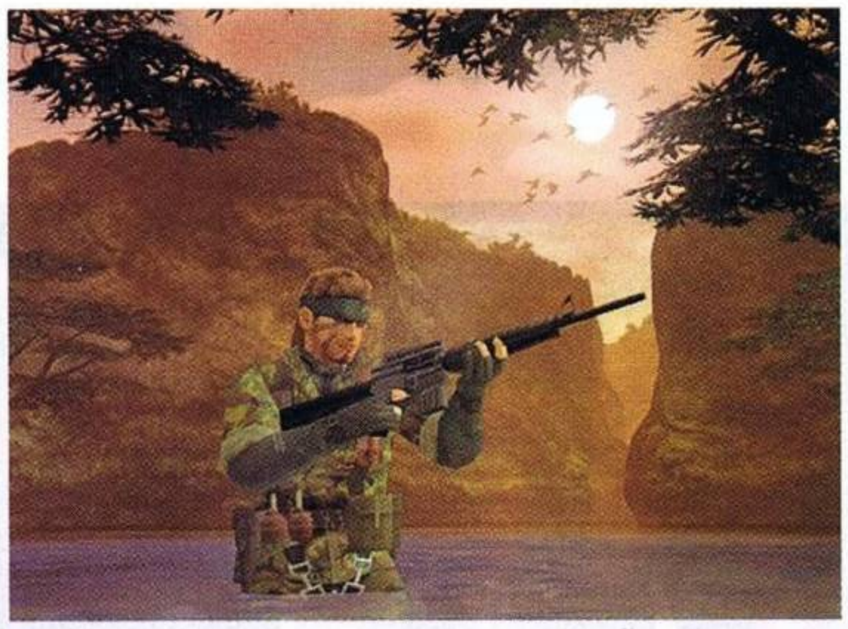
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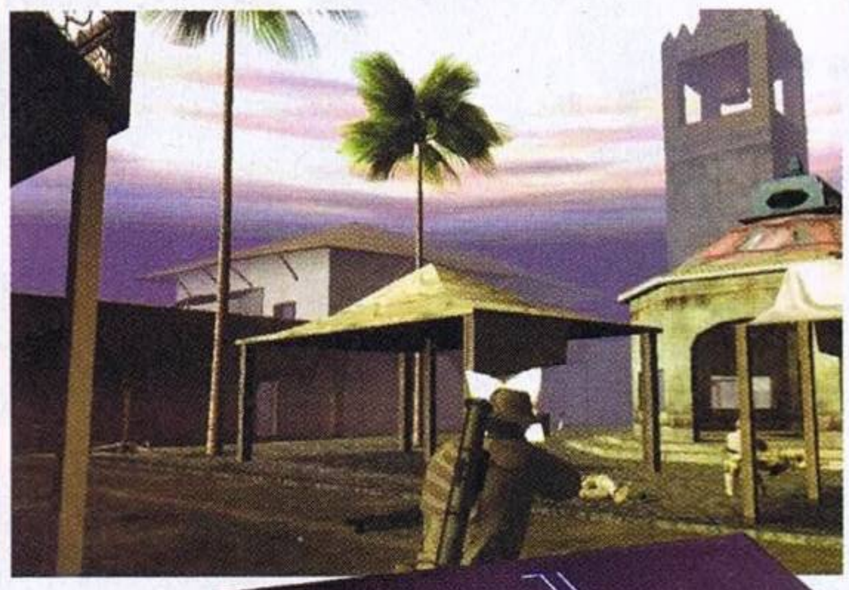
"There's a place where you can find the other videogame consoles, and that happens to be in the rearview mirror."



—Sony CEA President and COO Kaz Hirai on PS2's enviable position in the hardware market







■ **The next year's filled with big sequels for PS2, the heavyweights being *Gran Turismo 4* (left), *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* (above), and *SOCOM II* (below). It's a good time to have a PS2 next to your TV.**



PLAYSTATION 2

Sony continues victory lap with big sequels and strong online support

It'd be easy for Sony to be complacent. After all, its PlayStation 2 console is No. 1, and Microsoft and Nintendo won't be able to catch up, at least not in this generation of the console wars. But as its showing at E3 proves, Sony's not sitting on its hands; PS2 has a stellar lineup of first- and third-party titles (mostly sequels) coming in the next year, and a deluge of online-enabled games the company hopes will get the mainstream to jack in. Hell, Sony's even fixin' to take on Nintendo in the portable market (see page 42 for information on the PSP: PlayStation Portable).

"I think we've done a great job thus far [getting] the core gaming audience [online], but now we're going to be taking it to the mass market, who will expect a different kind of experience," says Kaz Hirai, president and COO of Sony Computer Entertainment America. "The challenge for us is making people think that the online experience is a great one to keep them coming back for more. And we need to do that without alienating the core that has supported our online initiative for the past six months."

How's Sony planning to pull that off? With an upcoming online roster that includes all of EA's sports games (see sidebar next page), *Tony Hawk's Underground*, *SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs*, *Final Fantasy XI*, *Gran Turismo 4*, and more. No other system's Net-enabled lineup can match that. Offline gamers won't be left out either, with the likes of *Jak II*, *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando*, and *Final Fantasy X-2* all due before the end of the year.

So if you're a PS2 owner, start saving your pennies now and prepare for another year of "so many games, so little time."



■ **Gamers lined up to take a stab at networked *Turismo* and have their mugs plastered on big televisions overhead.**

PS2: BY THE NUMBERS

51.2 Number of PlayStation 2s (in millions) sold worldwide as of 3/31/03

450+ Games released thus far on PlayStation 2 in North America

18 Number of online games released for PS2 as of May 2003

2500 Average number of Network Adaptor owners that log on for the first time each day

>> EA GAMES WILL START PRODUCING *SUPERMAN* GAMES IN 2004. THAT INCLUDES TITLES BASED ON BOTH THE COMICS AND THE UPCOMING LIVE-ACTION MAN-OF-STEEL MOVIE.... >>

SONY PUTS YOU IN THE PICTURE WITH EYETOY

The watchword at this year's E3 was "gimmick." Nintendo had GBA connectivity, Microsoft had *Xbox Music Mixer*, and Sony had EyeToy, a small USB camera that uses motion-tracking technology to put you in the game, literally. The $39 gadget (on sale in September) comes packaged with 12 minigames that'll have you defeating hordes of marauding ninjas, bouncing soccer balls off your head, or cleaning bird crap off of a window (among other things). Killer games like that could keep our attention for two, maybe three minutes easy!

Sony hinted that future titles may use EyeToy as a controller (though none have been announced yet), but they've already got their sights set on nongaming tasks, including video messaging. You'll be able to record 60-second video messages to your PS2 memory card, complete with sound and your choice of background (we're already getting visions of parents using this to tell their kids to stop playing with those damn videogames and do their homework). A demonstration of future videoconferencing capabilities of EyeToy was also on display at E3, but there's no word yet on when (or if) it'll be available to consumers.



■ You mean I can see myself on television and fend off a ninja onslaught? Where do I sign up?



■ Perch this on top of your TV and you, your family, and your friends will soon be making complete asses of themselves.

NOTABLE GAMES

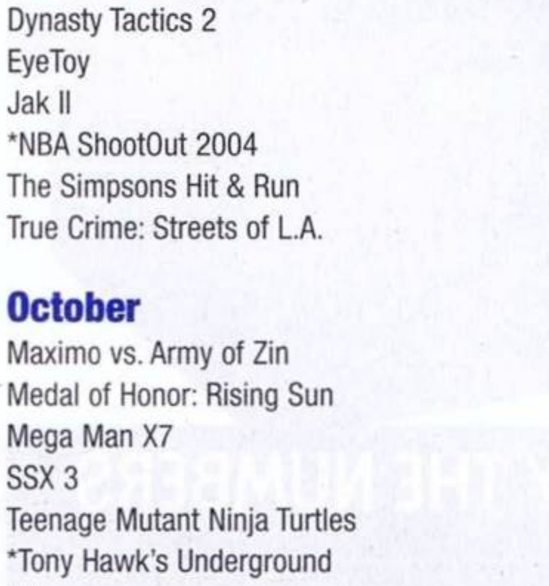
A list of some of the big PlayStation 2 titles at E3. (Games that are confirmed to feature online connectivity are denoted with an asterisk.)

August
*Madden NFL 2004
*NFL GameDay 2004
Soul Calibur II

September
Conflict: Desert Storm II
Dynasty Tactics 2
EyeToy
Jak II
*NBA ShootOut 2004
The Simpsons Hit & Run
True Crime: Streets of L.A.

October
Maximo vs. Army of Zin
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun
Mega Man X7
SSX 3
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
*Tony Hawk's Underground
XIII

November
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King
R: Racing Evolution
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando





*SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs
Virtual On Marz

Fall 2003
007: Everything or Nothing
Beyond Good & Evil
Final Fantasy X-2
Legacy of Kain: Defiance
Prince of Persia: Sands of Time
Sphinx and the Shadow of Set
Spy Hunter 2
*Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior

Winter 2003/2004
*Final Fantasy XI
*Gran Turismo 4
Onimusha Blade Warriors
*Resident Evil Outbreak
Rise to Honor
Sonic Heroes
Starcraft Ghost
*Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain

2004
Altered Beast
Drakengard
Onimusha 3
Vectorman

EA Sports online exclusive to PS2



EA and Sony, sittin' in a tree…or something. EA's sports games (including *Madden*, *NBA Live*, and *Tiger Woods PGA Tour*) will feature online play exclusively on PS2. That's right, Xbox Live gets the cold shoulder and possibly the stink eye. In addition, each title will feature EA Sports Talk—a fancy name for voice chat—so players can trash talk via a USB headset, and EA plans to hold online tournaments with cash prizes.

Final Fantasy XI hits with hard drive



The next massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) to hit PS2 is Square's *Final Fantasy XI* (see page 73 for more details). *FFXI* will be the first title in the United States that requires PS2's 40GB hard drive add-on, so expect it to arrive simultaneously with the game in early 2004. At press time, Sony (who's publishing *FFXI*) had not announced a price for the drive or said whether it'll be bundled with the game.

Grand Theft Auto still PS2 exclusive



Details on the next *Grand Theft Auto* are scant at best, but we do know one thing: It'll be released exclusively for PS2. So all you Xbox and GameCube owners hoping *GTA* will appear on your favorite system too can stop holding your breath (but *all* hope is not lost—see Q-Mann on page 64 for the scoop on a possible Xbox *GTA* headed your way). At least through 2004, the series will always debut on the box that Sony built.

PLAYSTATION 2'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:
+ Largest game library and widest variety of any platform
+ Lots of big online titles coming, like all of EA Sports' games, *SOCOM II*, *Final Fantasy XI*, and *Resident Evil Outbreak*
+ Big exclusives: *Metal Gear Solid 3*, next *Grand Theft Auto*, and *GT4*

Weaknesses:
- Strengths are in franchise titles, not as much in new, original games
- No big surprises at this year's show outside the announcement of the PSP handheld system, which is more than a year off

Overall:
Incredibly strong lineup of games fueled mostly by third-party exclusives and the best selection of online-enabled titles

B+

>> TECMO'S BOOTH WAS TEMPORARILY SHUT DOWN DURING E3 CUZ ITS *DEAD OR ALIVE* GIRL STAGE SHOWS PACKED THE AISLES WITH ONLOOKERS, CREATING A FIRE HAZARD.... >>



"Who's bundling in their broadband adapter? Who's trying to add voice to their online system? It's pretty clear that Xbox and Xbox Live are setting the tone for where [Sony's] going in the industry. **It seems like we're the ones looking in the rearview mirror there.**"

—Xbox Game Content VP Ed Fries responds to Sony President Kaz Hirai's boast about Sony leading the console pack

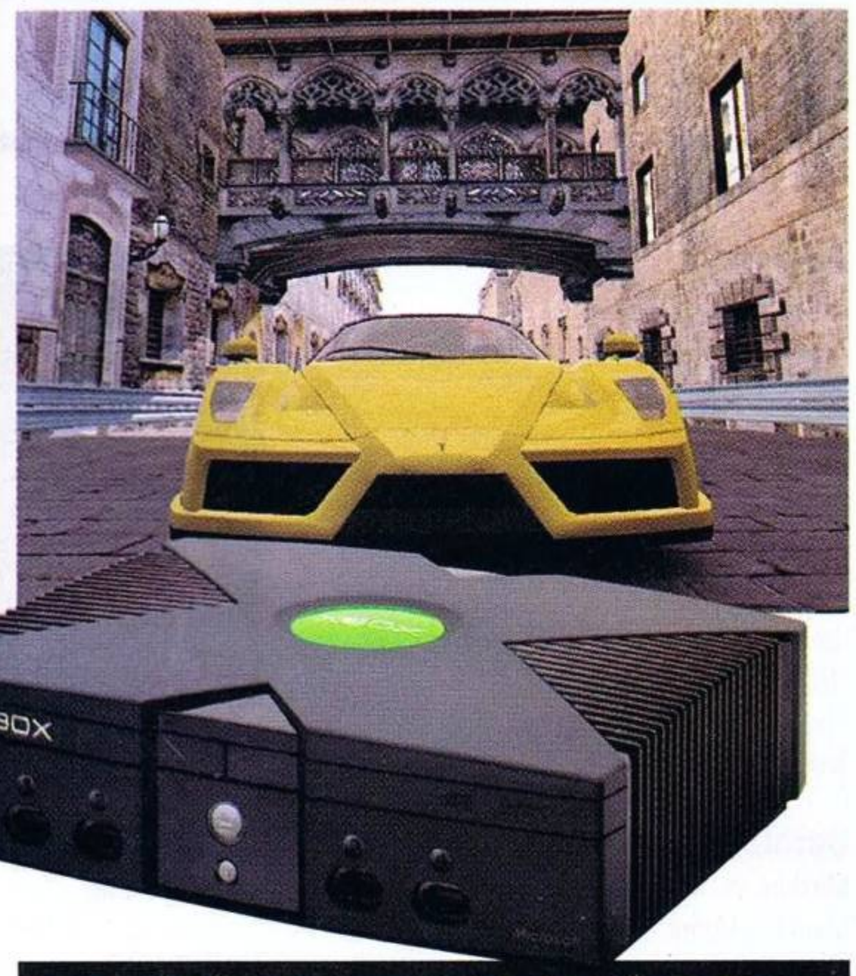


WRAP-UP

■ **Black beauty: *Doom III* is officially Xbox bound, but we don't expect it this year.**



■ **The razor-sharp *Ninja Gaiden* (above) and *Project Gotham Racing 2* (below) are two of this fall's few big-name Xbox exclusives.**

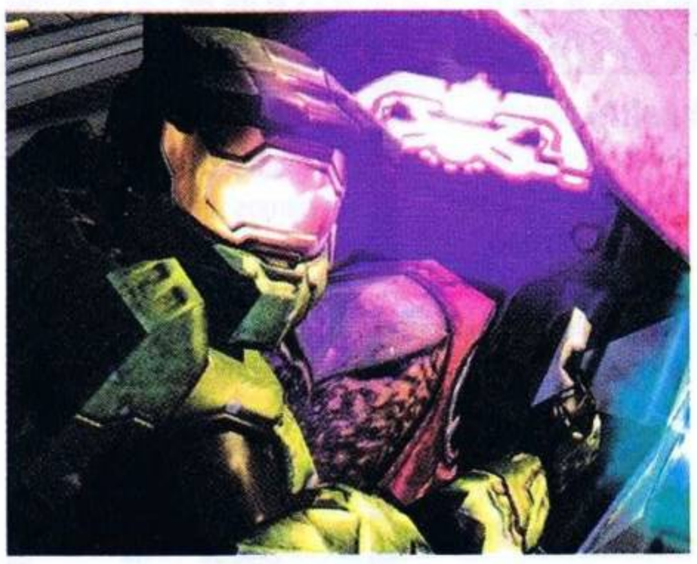


XBOX

Microsoft glitzes up online, but this year's game lineup lacks star power

"The Xbox is designed to enable the digital-entertainment lifestyle," Chief Xbox Officer Robbie Bach told the throng of game-biz bigwigs and journalists at Microsoft's E3 press conference, which at times had all the stilted charm of a live-action infomercial. Hey, wait a sec…"digital-entertainment lifestyle?" Sounds like schizoid talk (and even a little like Sony catchphrasing) for a company that until now held a die-hard we-just-care-about-the-damn-games attitude. But while hype for Xbox-PC connectivity (see the *Xbox Music Mixer* on the opposite page) and an online network that stalks you at work (see how on the opposite page, upper right) showed that Microsoft is indeed expanding its console's horizons, the games still took center stage. And one game in particular—*Halo 2*, played live in an explosive eight-minute demo—damn near stole the show (see why on page 44).

The bad news, of course, is that this super-duper sequel isn't due out until next year, leaving us to wonder which titles will fit with our busy new digital-entertainment lifestyle. "*Halo 2* is the most anticipated game ever," VP of Xbox Game Content Ed Fries tells us. "It makes everything else seem less important in a way, but we still have a ton of great content this year." As for what that content is—and whether it qualifies as "great"—keep reading….



■ **Green machine: *Halo 2*'s Master Chief came, saw, and conquered Microsoft's E3 press conference.**

XBOX: BY THE NUMBERS

13 Number of Xboxes (in millions) sold worldwide as of 3/31/03

180 Xbox's new retail price, in dollars, as of May 14

100 Number of Xbox Live-enabled games that will be available a year from now

70 The new price, starting this fall, of the Xbox Live Starter Kit and year subscription

>> GET YOUR DANCIN' SHOES READY FOR TWO MORE *DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION* TITLES THIS FALL: THE LIVE-ENABLED *ULTRAMIX* FOR XBOX (OCTOBER 2003) AND *MAX2* FOR PS2

XBOX LIVE GETS LIVELIER

If you haven't yet stuck something in that hole on the rear of your Xbox (and by something we mean a network cable, pervert), then Microsoft is about to tease you with another reason to jack online. At E3, the company hyped a set of souped-up features for its burgeoning Xbox Live broadband-only gaming network. Starting this fall, gamers will "instantly hook up with friends, check [their] stats, and see what's new on the service," says J Allard, general manager of the Xbox platform.



■ ***True Fantasy Live Online*—announced for U.S. release next year—brings a massively multiplayer world to Xbox Live.**

The biggest piece of the new online puzzle is Live Alerts, a system that beams tournament results, game invites, and other community-nursing signals to devices such as cell phones and Pocket PCs. "So, if you're stuck in class or traffic or at the office late and want to know what's happening on Xbox Live, no problem," Allard says. Another new service, called Live Now, will give players a place to voice-chat online, pick the games they want to play, coordinate teams, etc.

The potential of these improvements is tackled by XSN Sports, Microsoft's new Xbox online sports network, which hits the field in August with the launch of *NFL Fever 2004*. "You can compete in all the sports you want, kick butt, build your own legend, then read about it the next morning on a virtual sports page at xsnsports.com," Allard says. It's the Xbox's answer to EA Sports' PS2-exclusive online games, although Microsoft hasn't written off the possibility of EA becoming a team player again. "We continue to talk to them," says Microsoft's Ed Fries. "I'm an optimist. I think ultimately, we'll have them on the platform."



■ **Live (nearly) nude girls: *Dead or Alive*'s she-ninjas will kick curvy butt this fall in *DOA Online*, a collection with Xbox Live-enabled versions of *DOA 1* and *2*.**

NOTABLE GAMES

A list of some of the big Xbox titles announced at E3. (Games that are confirmed to support Xbox Live online play are denoted with an asterisk.)

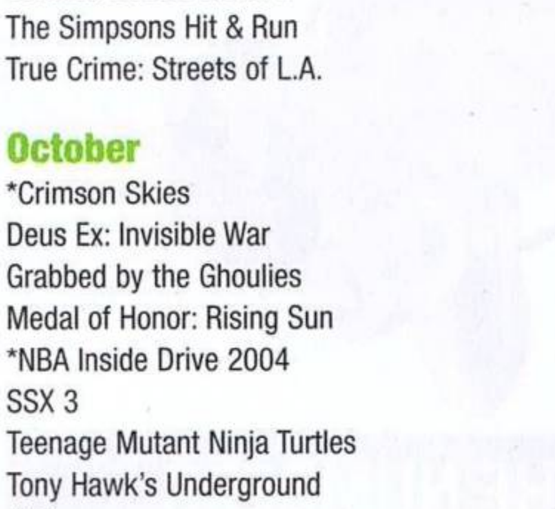
August
Madden NFL 2004
*NFL Fever 2004
Soul Calibur II

September
Conflict: Desert Storm II
The Simpsons Hit & Run
True Crime: Streets of L.A.

October
*Crimson Skies
Deus Ex: Invisible War
Grabbed by the Ghoulies
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun
*NBA Inside Drive 2004
SSX 3
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Tony Hawk's Underground
*XIII

November
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King
Ninja Gaiden
R: Racing Evolution
*Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3

Fall 2003
007: Everything or Nothing
Beyond Good & Evil



■ ***Prince of Persia***



■ ***Top Spin***

*DOA Online
Legacy of Kain: Defiance
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun
Morrowind: Game of the Year Edition
Prince of Persia: Sands of Time
*Project Gotham Racing 2
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy
Sudeki
*Steel Battalion: Line of Contact
*Thief III
*Top Spin
Voodoo Vince
*Xbox Music Mixer

Winter 2003/2004
*Amped 2
*Counter-Strike
Fable
Sonic Heroes
Starcraft Ghost

2004
B.C.
*Conker: Live and Uncut
Doom III
Half-Life 2
*Halo 2
Kameo: Elements of Power
*Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow
Star Wars: Republic Commando
*True Fantasy Live Online

Xbox Faces Music



Wannabe Backstreet Boys and everyone else with marginal talent, embarrass yourselves with *Xbox Music Mixer*, a glitzy multimedia package due this fall that—like *Karaoke Revolution* for the PS2—lets you belt out included pop songs (it comes with a microphone) or tunes from your own CDs. You can even download photos and movies from your PC to produce your own karaoke slideshows. Preferably X-rated ones.

Rarely There



Rare, the formerly Nintendo-chummy developer Microsoft nabbed last year, showed off its first Xbox games at E3. But instead of debuting something big (like no-show shooter *Perfect Dark Zero*), we got goblin-slapping sim *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* (see page 84) and the fairy-filled *Kameo: Elements of Power* (page 80). The online potty-talking of *Conker: Live and Uncut* is promising, but it won't be ready until 2004.

Half-Life Will Travel...



...to the Xbox. VU Games tells us it will publish *Half-Life 2*—only the most mind-blowing PC game at E3—for Microsoft's machine. Developer Valve, the same guys behind the PC version, will handle the port, although they're keeping mum on the game's release date and console-specific features. We figure online play via Xbox Live is a possibility. You'll probably hit stuff with a crowbar, too.

XBOX'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:
+ The most robust online network, and it's only getting more feature packed
+ Strong third-party support. Publishers are bringing a lot more games to Xbox than to GameCube
+ *Halo 2*, *Halo 2*...oh, and *Halo 2*

Weaknesses:
- Few big-name games
- Lots of ho-hum and just plain lame-looking titles
- Zero online content from EA Sports, which is making online games only for PS2
- A disappointing lineup from the much-vaunted Rare

Overall:
The Xbox's online network can't be beat, but it's a shame that many of the system's biggest games don't hit until next year.

C

(SEPTEMBER 2003)... >> ATLUS COMES TO THE RESCUE OF FANBOYS EVERYWHERE BY ANNOUNCING IT WILL RELEASE SEGA'S GBA ROLEPLAYER *SHINING SOUL* IN SEPTEMBER... >>

"Mario will never start shooting hookers."

—Nintendo Senior Vice President of Marketing George Harrison on the "Nintendo Difference"







■ **Clockwise from left: *Mario Kart*, *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles*, and *Metal Gear Solid* showcased the best the GC had to offer.**





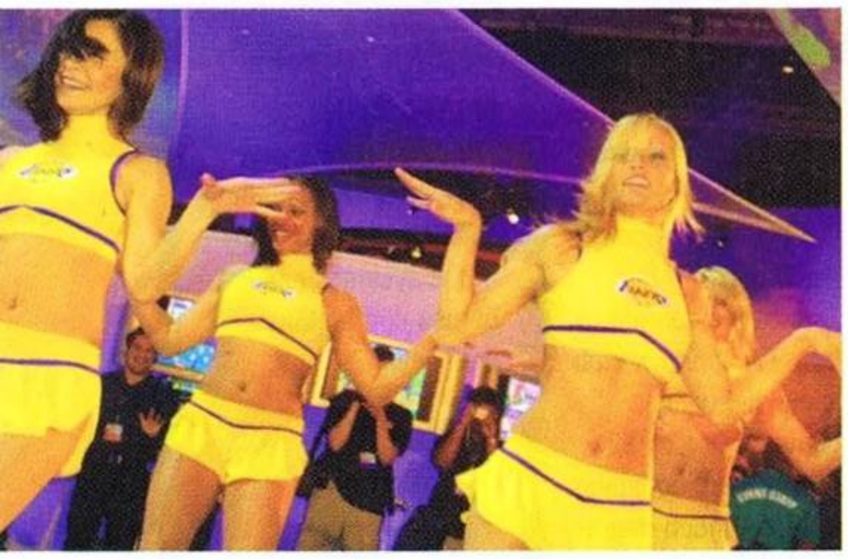
GAMECUBE

Nintendo fields a broad team of quality titles, but a lack of surprises quells the fun

Nintendo's E3 press conferences are usually the stuff of legends: Rousing applause, impassioned cheers, and swooning fanboys are standard issue at its annual lineup unveilings. This year, however, during a brief (and remarkably unimpressive) clip of *Star Fox 2*, the cheers quickly faded to stunned silence, finally broken by a single loud boo. Something was definitely wrong.

Sure, a lot of quality first-party titles were on display, like *Mario Kart: Double Dash*, *F-Zero GX*, *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour*, and *Pikmin 2*. Oddly, though, many of these heavy hitters are driving or sports games, with precious little in the way of traditionally excellent Nintendo action/adventure fare. Meanwhile, a few third-party gems like *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, *Resident Evil 4*, and *Rogue Squadron 3: Rebel Strike* demonstrated that Nintendo does actually care about support from other publishers. But a serious lack of exciting, previously unannounced games and a distressing fixation on questionable Game Boy Advance-to-GameCube connectivity (see next page) imparted the feeling that Nintendo's stuck in neutral.

When speaking on GameCube's overall success, Senior VP of Marketing George Harrison focused on the global GC versus Xbox race, where Nintendo claims to have a "solid No. 2 position, right in the middle of the home console business." Even if that's true (and there's mounting evidence that it's not), it's hardly inspiring talk, but at least Nintendo's planning for the future. "Change is needed," admitted Harrison. "And we will not be behind our competitors with the next round of consoles." Is all the good stuff in a holding pattern waiting for GameCube 2? Maybe that would explain this year's underwhelming display.



■ **All it took was a li'l dance from the Laker Girls for us to momentarily forget about GameCube's lackluster showing.**

GC: BY THE NUMBERS

9.4 Number of GameCubes (in millions) sold worldwide as of 3/31/03

20 Number of GC games expected to feature GBA connectivity by year's end

150 New price (in dollars) for a GC bundled with one game or the Game Boy Player

2 Number of online GC titles (once *Phantasy Star Online: Episode III* comes out)

>> HENRU WANG OF BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA BROKE THE RECORD FOR THE FASTEST COMPLETION TIME IN *METROID PRIME* ON GAMECUBE: ONE HOUR AND 46 MINUTES—BEAT THAT!.... >>

CONNECTIVITY, CONNECTIVITY, CONNECTIVITY!

If Nintendo had one overriding message at this year's show, it's that GBA-to-GC connectivity is the future of gaming—or at least Nintendo gaming. Several new titles shown were all about bringing four friends with link cables together in front of a TV set. Two new GameCube *Zelda* games, *Four Swords* and *Tetra's Trackers*, demand that all four players use GBAs as controllers, and a new GC *Pac-Man* remake has three folks playing ghosts via controllers while the Pac-player uses a GBA.



■ *Four Swords'* complex recipe for fun—four friends, four GBAs, four link cables, one television, one copy of the game

Apparently, Nintendo views these multiplayer diversions as a substitute for online gaming—playing with three friends where you each have a private screen vaguely simulates online play in a way that's cheap for consumers and pure profit for Mario's coffers. Nintendo Senior VP of Marketing George Harrison adamantly believes that connectivity is a safer bet than going online. "We know consumers are interested in aspects of online gaming, but they've shown a reluctance to actually pay for it," Harrison explains. "Sure, Xbox Live has generated a lot of users, but it hasn't generated anything in the way of revenue yet."

Harrison reminds us that "there are plenty of GBAs in consumers' hands already, and we can attract them to try the GameCube with these connectivity games." We're not entirely convinced, though, based on the games at the show. Both of the *Zelda* games and *Pac-Man* were fun in a fleeting, minigame fashion, but not really meaty enough to sustain prolonged play. Nintendo wouldn't talk pricing on these titles, nor comment on whether you can even play them in a single-player capacity. *Four Swords* Director Eiji Aonuma freely admits, "It's not as if you'll always have three friends around when you want to play." *Sonic* creator Yuji Naka probably sums up how many gamers will feel about connectivity: "Sure, it's interesting, but really, will four people gather with four GBAs, cables, and a GameCube to play?"



NOTABLE GAMES

A list of some of the big GameCube titles at E3. (Games that are confirmed to feature GBA-to-GC connectivity are denoted with an asterisk.)

August
F-Zero GX
*Madden NFL 2004
Soul Calibur II

September
1080° Avalanche
Conflict: Desert Storm II
P.N. 03
The Simpsons Hit and Run
Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike
True Crime: Streets of L.A.
Viewtiful Joe
WWE Wrestlemania XIX

October
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai
Kirby's Air Ride
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun
Pikmin 2
*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
SSX 3
Tony Hawk's Underground
XIII

November
*Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King
R: Racing Evolution
Yu-Gi-Oh!: Falsebound Kingdom



■ *The Legend of Zelda: Tetra's Trackers*



Fall 2003
007: Everything or Nothing
Beyond Good & Evil
Mario Party 5
*Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes
*Pokémon Colosseum
Prince of Persia: Sands of Time

Winter 2003/2004
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg
Go! Go! Hypergrind
Mario Kart: Double Dash
Phantasy Star Online Episode III
Sonic Heroes
Starcraft Ghost

Release Date TBA
Custom Robo
Geist
Giftpia
*The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords
*The Legend of Zelda: Tetra's Trackers
The Legend of Zelda (Wind Waker sequel)
Mario Tennis
Metroid Prime 2
Nintendo Puzzle Collection
*Pac-Man
*Pokémon Box
Pokémon Channel
Resident Evil 4
Resident Evil Code: Veronica
*Stage Debut
Star Fox 2

Primetime Debut



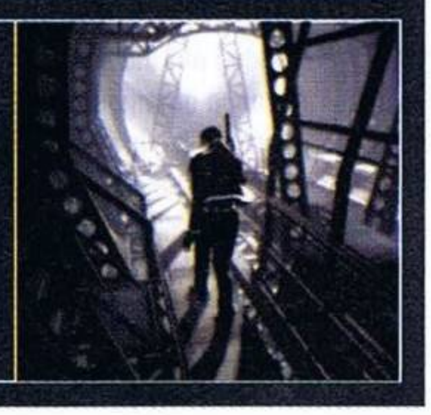
Nintendo teased gamers with a tiny glimpse of *Metroid Prime 2* footage at its press conference. The miniscule preview showed Samus getting pounded by a freaky enemy in a rocky alien landscape. No other info was given, but Nintendo's creative mastermind Shigeru Miyamoto promises that "you'll be playing it next year."

The Wind Wakes Again

Nintendo is working on a sequel to *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker.* Director Eiji Aonuma commented on how *Waker*'s ending seemed to close the book on the realm of Hyrule. "There is a desire in me to create a world for Link to explore," says Aonuma. "There is a lot of potential to do something different." The graphics, however, won't be changing. "I do believe that I'll be using the same characters and style in order to release the game in a timely manner," explains Aonuma.

Of Zombies and Urine

A brief clip of previously unseen *Resident Evil 4* footage carried a stern warning from creator Shinji Mikami: "It will be scarier than ever before...DON'T PEE YOUR PANTS!" To his credit, it did look awfully scary—and beautiful to boot. Mikami also dismissed rumors that he'd been fired from Capcom and reiterated *RE4*'s exclusivity on GameCube.



GAMECUBE'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:
+ A fairly strong lineup of first-party titles for the fall—assuming you like racing games
+ Co-development projects with Konami, Square, Sega finally paying off
+ New $150 GameCube-with-GB Player bundle is a great deal

Weaknesses:
- Connectivity games seem limited in both gameplay and appeal
- Third-party support is improving but still not up to Xbox or PS2 levels
- *Star Fox 2*, *Kirby Air Ride*, and the *Pokémon* games all disappointed

Overall:
An uneven showing, coupled with the obsessive focus on connectivity, made for an uncommonly lackluster E3 for Nintendo.

C-

>> SINGER/ACTRESS EVE HAS SIGNED ON TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MAJOR JONES IN UBI SOFT'S UPCOMING FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER *XIII*, COMING IN THE FALL FOR ALL CONSOLES.... >>



Samus returns to GBA next year in an apparent update to the original NES *Metroid* called *Metroid Zero Mission*.





Plumber power: ***Super Mario Advance 4*** **is a remake of the classic** ***Super Mario Bros. 3*** **(left). Mario and bro team up with Bowser (yes, it's freezing in hell) to save Princess Peach in** ***Mario and Luigi*** **(right).**

WRAP-UP

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Nintendo's games shine, others...don't

Checking out the selection of Game Boy Advance offerings at this year's show gave us a distinct feeling of déjà vu. As usual, Nintendo arrived at the Los Angeles Convention Center with a number of quality titles, including *Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3*, *Fire Emblem*, the *Paper Mario*-esque RPG *Mario and Luigi*, *Mario & Donkey Kong* (that's a whole lot of Mario), and even treated show attendees to video footage of a new portable *Metroid*, subtitled *Zero Mission*. Squaresoft also made a splash with its debut GBA games *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance* and *Sword of Mana* (Nintendo is publishing both).

But, like a year ago, the majority of third-party games sucked wind. Only two outside of the Nintendo camp really caught our eye: *Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand* from *Metal Gear Solid* mastermind Hideo Kojima, which features a solar sensor in the cartridge, rewarding gamers for playing outdoors (sometimes even requiring it), and a GBA version of *The Sims* (see below) from famed PC developer Will Wright. We continue to be amazed that, given the huge popularity of the GBA, so few publishers are releasing quality games for it.

Pocket-Sized Sims

Will *The Sims* stop at nothing short of total world domination? Series creator Will Wright appeared at Nintendo's press conference to announce details of the upcoming GBA version of *The Sims*. Players will be able to level up characters on GBA, import them into the GC game, and unlock secret levels and objects only available via the GBA-GC link.



The Sims (GC)

Additional Scanning Required

Nintendo is prepared to keep its e-Reader peripheral alive with all-new card sets. The company plans on adding to its existing selection of Game & Watch cards, as well as designing a deck that delivers exclusive levels to *Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3*.



NOTABLE GAMES

A list of some of the big Game Boy Advance games E3. (Games that are confirmed to feature GBA-to-GC connectivity are denoted with an asterisk.)

August
Pokémon Pinball:
Ruby & Sapphire

September



Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand

Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance
*Harvest Moon:
Friends of Mineral Town
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee
Super Mario Advance 4

October
Onimusha Tactics
SSX 3
*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Tony Hawk's Underground

November
Frogger's Journey:
The Forgotten Relic

December
Disney's Aladdin

Winter 2003/2004
Fire Emblem
Mario and Luigi
Sword of Mana
*The Sims

Release Date TBA
Mario & Donkey Kong



Mario & Donkey Kong

Mario Golf: Advance Tour
Metroid Zero Mission

GBA: BY THE NUMBERS

120 Number of new Game Boy Advance games announced this year at E3

15 Percentage of those 120 games we have any desire at all to play

40 Minutes of the *Pokémon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh!* TV shows that one GBA Video Pak can hold ($20, coming this winter)

GBA'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:
+ Another stellar GBA lineup from Nintendo
+ Squaresoft's GBA games

Weaknesses:
- Too many third-party projects that make our eyes (and brains) hurt
- Many sequels and remakes; few new big franchises

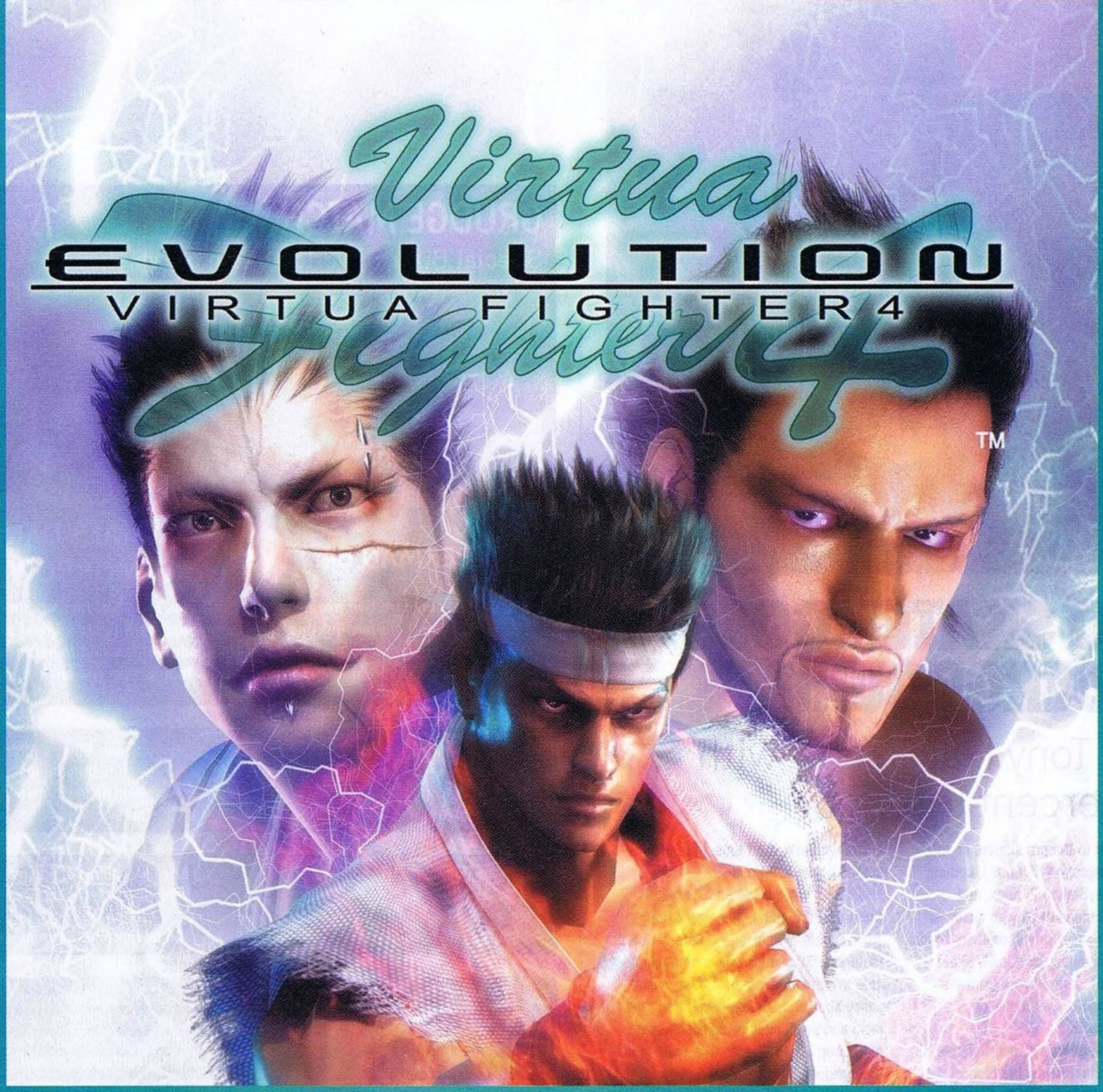
Overall:
Nintendo impresses us again, but what's happenin' in third-party land?

B

>> THREE NEW *YU-GI-OH!* GAMES ARE COMING THIS FALL: A GC STRATEGY TITLE (*FALSEBOUND KINGDOM*), PC CARD GAME (*POWER OF CHAOS*), AND GBA RPG (*THE SACRED CARDS*)...>>

Virtua Fighter 4 EVOLUTION

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



THE BEATDOWN EVOLVED



SEGA

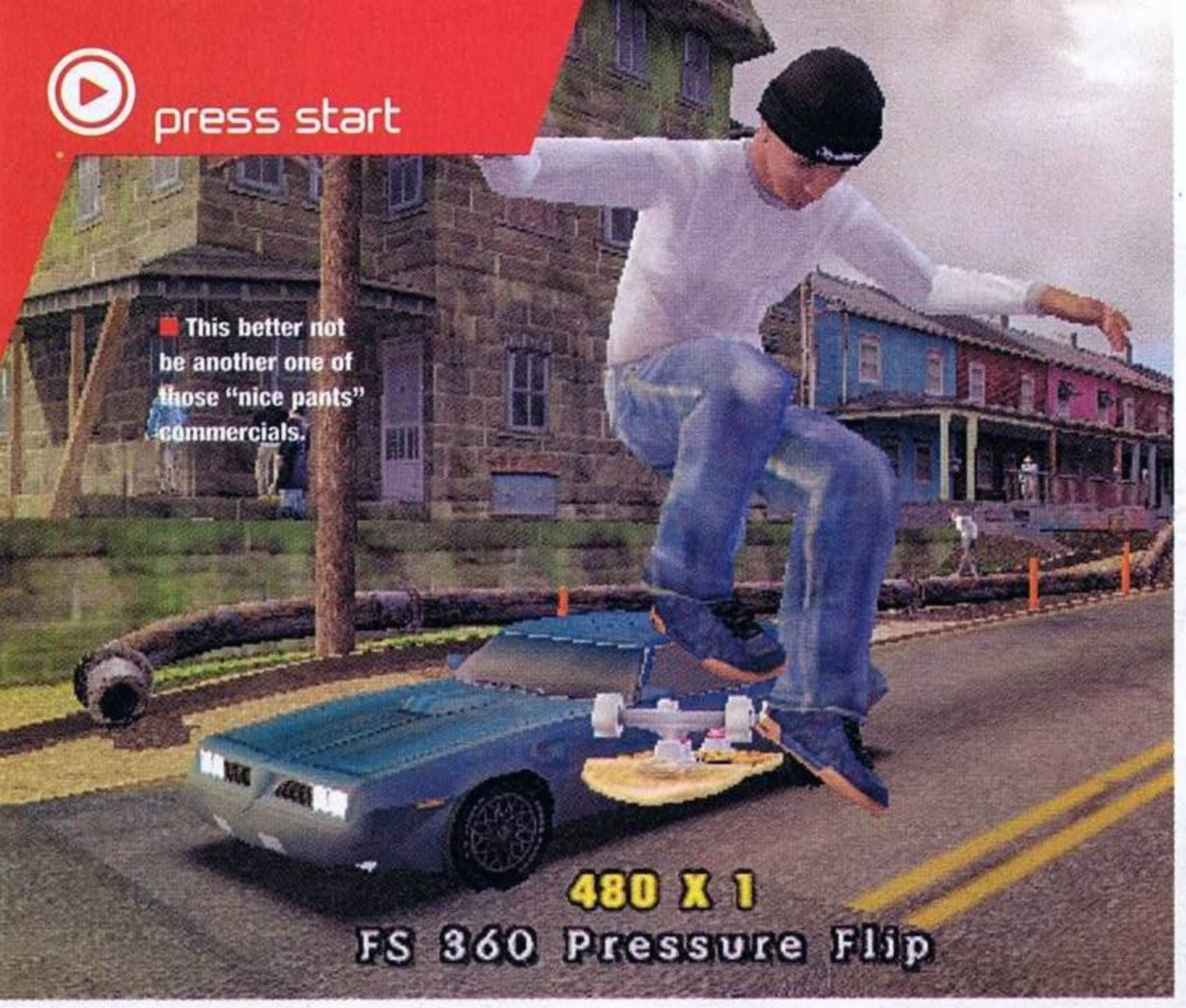
AM2 SEGA-AM2 Co.,LTD.

PlayStation.2

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Suggestive Themes
Violence

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PRO SKATER GOES UNDERGROUND

New Tony Hawk, now with 80 percent less Tony

Say good-bye to the pro skaters in *Tony Hawk's Underground (T.H.U.G.)*, coming this fall to PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube. Instead of playing as world-class boarders like Tony and others of his ilk, you'll create your own lowly skate punk and work your way up from the street to compete, eventually, on a professional level.

Besides the game's switch to larger, sprawling environments, the biggest change to gameplay is that you can now—wait for it—get off your board. This presents new options like climbing up the side of a house to grind nearby telephone wires. And as long as your next move occurs within a short time limit, the combo points keep rollin'.

T.H.U.G. will include an expanded Create-a-Park editor, plus new Create-a-Trick, Create-a-Goal, and Create-a-Board features. PS2 skaters will once again be able to compete with each other online (sorry Xbox and GC fans—you don't get jack) and swap custom-designed skate parks. You'll also be able to e-mail a photo to developer Neversoft, get a code to download a converted file through your PS2, and then map it over your skater's head. We've already got pics ready for a couple custom characters: "The Crack" and Richard Face.





GRUDGE MATCH

Special Bizarro World edition on which is worse:



SUPERMAN 64 **vs.** **BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW**

Usually, we compare two people, places, or things (also known as nouns) to decide which is *better*. But this month, reminded by *Batman*'s latest pile (Xbox, GC) of *Superman*'s infamous load (Nintendo 64), we had to settle which god-awful superhero game is worse. Grab a Tootsie Pop and suck along.

HERO'S GETUP	
Blocky Spandex uses all three primary colors, separating Supes from drab, gray backgrounds. **Disadvantage: *Superman***	Black and gray give Batsy a more formal look, though that petite utility belt arouses suspicion as to where all those Batcuffs are actually stored….
GAMEPLAY	
Hissy-fit "fighting" style and nonsensical controls. The developers were apparently banking on gamers being totally enamored with the ability to fly.	Technically—there is gameplay. Except when it locks up. Then there isn't. **Disadvantage: *Batman***
INCENTIVE FOR PURCHASE	
Play the game in French or Spanish and learn a second language.	Free limited-edition *Batman* comic, featuring the Dark Knight in his most affordable comic adventure to date. **Disadvantage: *Batman***
MOMENTS OF SUPERHEROISM	
You have five seconds to fly over, pick up, and throw a car—including four seconds to read the directions. **Disadvantage: *Superman***	Fall to your death countless times as you make awkward attempts to cross rooftops. Fortunately, all crime in Gotham waits patiently for you.
LEAST-SUPER VILLAIN	
Lex Luthor, whose diabolical ring mazes and sensible business dress will rip apart your very soul! **Disadvantage: *Superman***	The Ratcatcher. Props for appearances by Mr. Freeze and Killer Croc…but Ratcatcher?

THE WORSER GAME: *Superman 64*

***Batman: Dark Tomorrow* was bad, but if you want to take on the mess that is *Superman 64*, you've just got to bring more to the table. Er, less to the table.**

NEWS BITS: BETTER FOR YOU THAN SPROUTS, AND LESS STINKY



SONY RELEASES SEPARATE HEADSET

Since the USB headset isn't just being used for *SOCOM*, Sony has decided to release a standalone model in September. This higher-quality set sports a better mic, volume control, and a mute button for $29.

NEW PS2 HITS STREETS



A new version of the PS2 is in stores now. It includes the Network Adaptor, a built-in DVD remote receiver, and a quieter fan. It can also read recordable DVD formats and has progressive-scan DVD playback, all for $199.

ATARI INVESTIGATES YU YU HAKUSHO

Yusuke Urameshi and his spirit-detective pals from the *Yu Yu Hakusho* television series are coming to consoles soon from Atari. No word yet on what form the games will take (though a fighter seems the best fit) or exactly which systems they'll be on.



>> NEC INTERCHANNEL RECENTLY FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST XICAT, ALLEGING THE COMPANY FAILED TO PAY ROYALTIES FOR ITS XBOX RPG *BLACKSTONE: MAGIC AND STEEL*.... >>

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MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

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Includes Soundtrack CD

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LET THEM EAT SNAKE

We interrogate Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater's creator about his game's jungle environments, online features, and what he thinks of Splinter Cell

Pity Hideo Kojima—not for the countless hours and endless personal sacrifices he and his team have endured in creating *Metal Gear Solid* or its sequels, day after day for over five years straight. No, pity him because every summer at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, instead of enjoying the public reaction as his latest labor of love is unveiled, he's sitting in a small, dark room just off the show floor, granting interviews to a long procession of pasty game journalists. Every half hour. For three days.

This year, that labor of love is *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* for PlayStation 2, and the public reaction he wasn't around to enjoy was the sort usually reserved for rock stars—crowds gathered, fans cheered, fists were pumped, girls lifted their shirts (well, had there been any girls, they probably would have). Quite a high level of excitement for a game that's not even due until sometime late next year, but then, this is *Metal Gear* we're talking about. The intense interest surrounding each new title in the stealth-espionage series is matched only by the lengths that Kojima and his team go to keep everything secret until the last possible moment.

So yes, we pity Kojima, but not so much that we didn't arrive at his makeshift prison this year for our half hour, perk up our pasty ears, and take full advantage of a rare opportunity to talk with him about *MGS3*....

EGM: So why the jungle setting for *Metal Gear Solid 3*?

Hideo Kojima: I think what the [*Metal Gear*] fans really want to see is field combat, like a battle in the jungle. You've seen many games, like a lot of PC games, that have tried to portray the jungle. But [in those games] you always see routes—you never get to walk into the trees. There's always a couple paths. But we're not going to lay any paths in our game—you can go in any direction; you can take any route. There might be a vertical wall that you can't climb up, but then you can climb a tree and use the branches to go to the other side. You can go down a cliff. And if you take too high of a fall, you might break a leg bone and have to treat yourself. There are so many ways to get around instead of just seeing two paths.

EGM: You've mentioned that your enemies in the jungle will include more than just soldiers....

HK: In the jungle, there are small animals and poisonous animals that could be your enemy. If it starts raining, you could get really cold and start losing energy. So it's not just enemy soldiers who are after you, but another enemy—the natural environment.

Once you go into the enemy base—artificial buildings—then you'll experience what you've seen in previous *Metal Gears*. So you'll be using totally different strategies for the enemies [indoors and outdoors]. When you're in a building and a guard sees you, he'll use his radio and ask for backup, and they all come pouring out. This is what you've seen before in *MGS2*. But when a guy in the jungle spots you, even if he asks for help, they're not going to arrive for a few seconds. So that's why you'll see four guys working as a team [as was shown in the trailer], and they're not going to call for help. They're going to work together on the spot; they'll be scouting—they'll be

the mgs3 trailer, minute by minute

0:00 Open on a dense jungle... birds fly by, sunlight streams through the leaves; cut to Snake skydiving, then parachuting into the trees.

1:13 "New setting, new era, new gameplay" and "Back to the origin" appear onscreen before the logo finally appears in dramatic fashion.



2:00 Snake chows down on a big fish; if he doesn't eat wildlife (yep, snakes too) he risks problems like shaky aim.

3:38 Snake walks through a muddy puddle, leaving behind realistic bootprints, which enemies could use to track him.



4:15 Snake climbs a tree and hangs from a branch with one arm, using the other to shoot two nearby soldiers (reloading one-handed in between), then drops down on top of a third, knocking him unconscious.

>> INFOGRAMES HAS CHANGED ITS NAME TO THE MORE FAMOUS AND LESS FRENCH "ATARI".... >> MICROSOFT WILL RELEASE BLUE AND GREEN XBOX CONTROLLERS IN OCTOBER.... >>





Outdoors, guards will work together differently—note how the last guard faces backward. Sneaking up on these guys won't be so easy.

following you, tracking your footprints. So it'll be a totally different experience because they work in different ways.

EGM: You went to New York to research *MGS2*—what have you done for *MGS3*?
HK: The biggest thing we did is [go] on a one-night trip with our military advisor into the mountains. He gave us training, like into the night—we wore camo gear, we did stalking, we practiced walking techniques. We had guards in front of our cottages, and we did exercises like team A attacks team B around midnight and such. We'll be doing this more often. There were three teams—my team survived, but the other ones got killed [laughs].

EGM: You practiced "stalking"?
HK: There's this thing [in *MGS3*] called the Stalking mode, where you walk very slowly in order not to make any noise. With the previous games, you could walk slowly, but this stalking is even slower.

EGM: So does *MGS3* take place entirely in the jungle? Or are you going to pull another *MGS2*, where everyone thought the whole game was set on a tanker, and it ended up being only the first hour of the game?
HK: The basic structure of a *Metal Gear* game is there's a military structure or some base you infiltrate. Then you might have to destroy something to accomplish your mission and get out of the place. In *MGS 1* and *2*, very strangely and conveniently, you always start right near the base. That's really impossible. Normally, in a real sneaking mission, you'd usually land maybe a few hundred miles away from where you want to go, maybe in some other country, and you'd go across the ocean or a desert or the jungle or the mountains. And this sequence is what's critical in espionage—and what's really fun. So what you'll experience in *MGS3* is this natural environment—the jungle, the mountains, maybe even caves—which leads to some artificial structure, maybe the enemy base. Then you get out of that place and go into the wilderness again and move on to another structure. It's not that simple of a sequence, but that's basically how it goes.

EGM: Can you talk about how camouflage will be implemented in the game?
HK: There's this thing called the camouflage index. In addition to your regular sight and hearing in previous *MGS* games, there's now this index of recognition. So even if you're standing right in front of the enemy, just a few feet away, if this guy's camouflage index is high—meaning he's wearing the proper camouflage gear, if he's got his face painted correctly for that given background—you won't be able to spot him. And it's not only what you wear or how you paint your face but also where you stand or how you stand. Maybe it will be better if you crouch—things like that. And since the enemies will be dressed in camouflage as well, it'll be camo versus camo. There might even be snipers hidden in the jungle, stuff like that. It's a sort of strategic thing going on between you and the enemy.

EGM: When you say painting your face, do you mean you choose between different patterns?
HK: That's right. Originally, we were going to have you actually paint your face [like with a painting program interface], but it was hard to come up with the controls for it, so we decided to go with templates. There are conventional camo patterns we took from the real world, and then we also came up with our own. As of today, we have over 100 patterns. And hopefully, if we can, we'd like to upload our own patterns so people can download them. We'd like to get camo patterns from our players where they design it and upload it, and we include it in the game.

EGM: So people would be able to download them onto their PS2?
HK: Yes. And you could also use this camo thing as a sort of fashion. Maybe you don't want to wear a shirt—you can take it off. Also—this is something we haven't told anyone—there's this thing called the bloody camouflage. If you wear it and lie right next to a dead body, they'll think that you're dead, too.

EGM: Cool. But does all this camouflage mean the old *MGS* radar will not return? After all, you'd be able to see enemies on it....
HK: The game would be more enjoyable if there were no radar, but I'm sure there would be many players that wouldn't be able to play without a radar—people who aren't the best game players. So we're going to throw in a radar system similar to previous *Metal Gear*s'. We know it's not going to blend into the time setting, but we'll include it to help gamers. You'll be able to turn it on or off. And there won't be a Codec [the high-tech transmitter that let you see people's faces as you talked to them]; it'll be more like a real, actual radio.

EGM: Speaking of the time setting, it sounds like *MGS3* takes place in the

4:45 A fourth and final enemy leans up against a tree to take a rest, when his stomach suddenly explodes in a fountain of blood. Snake has shot him through a hole in the tree trunk. You gasp at the badass-ness of it all.



5:10 A soldier patrols the rainy jungle. Snake suddenly "appears" out of the background (perfectly camouflaged), sneaks up from behind, and slits his throat.

6:00 Snake takes on another group of soldiers head on; explosives, smoke grenades, and countless automatic weapon rounds shred the jungle foliage.



6:50 Snake swims up to a dock, shooting a soldier from below through the wooden planks.

7:30 Guards fire at Snake in the water, bullets leaving tiny bubble trails in their wake; a fish swimming by is hit and floats up to the surface.

>> TIGER HILL GAMES, A DEVELOPER BACKED BY HONG KONG ACTION DIRECTOR JOHN WOO, ANNOUNCED IT IS PARTNERING WITH SEGA IN A MULTIYEAR DEAL FOR SEVERAL TITLES.... >>

Cold War era—does that mean all the weapons are going to be from that time period?
HK: Yes, there will be weapons that existed back in the '60s, in the Cold War era. At the same time, there will be weapons that the Russians came up with but never used. Military research is always about 10 years ahead of what's actually used on the battlefield, so when you play the game, people might say, "Oh, they didn't have this back then," but it existed—it just wasn't used on the battlefield. There were prototypes even if they weren't used, [like infrared goggles]. And we're also coming up with our own stuff from our imaginations.

EGM: What do you think of *Splinter Cell*? It obviously borrowed a lot from *Metal Gear*.
HK: I haven't really played it because it's difficult, but I've seen it move, and it's really well crafted. I'd like to see a lot of sequels come out for it. I personally can't play it, 'cause the controls are quite tough, so I'd love to see an easier version [laughs], but it's cool to watch when someone else is playing.

EGM: Do you feel flattered or violated about what *Splinter Cell* took from *Metal Gear*?
HK: Somewhere in the middle [laughs].

EGM: Is there a big Raiden-sized surprise in store for *MGS3*, where everything we all think we know will suddenly change when we play the game?
HK: We'll throw in a lot of surprises, but probably not anything of that magnitude. Because [Raiden was] a hidden protagonist. You probably can't go beyond that.

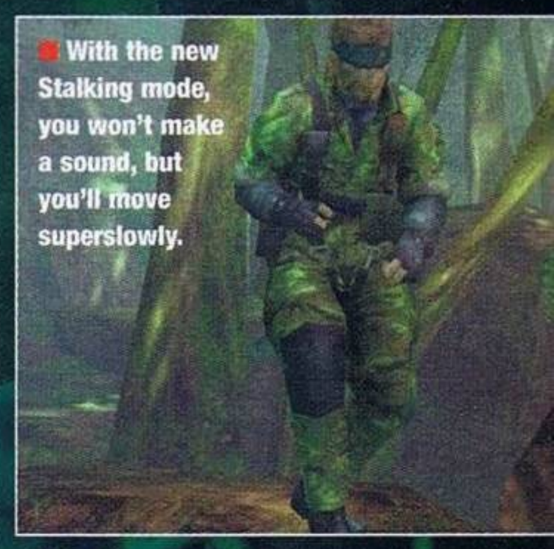
EGM: Speaking of hidden protagonists, if the main character we've seen in all the *MGS3* pics and movies is Solid Snake, and the game takes places in the '60s...let's say he is even just 20 years old then, wouldn't that make Snake 65 in the original *MGS* (which takes place in 2005)?
HK: [Smiles] It's probably exactly as you imagine.

EGM: Oh? Some people are imagining that it's actually not Solid Snake at all, but Big Boss [Snake's perfect-soldier "father," whose DNA Snake was cloned from].
HK: [Smiles]

EGM: Well, when I write about *MGS3*, how should I refer to the main character in all the screenshots?
HK: Snake.

EGM: All right, well, thanks for your—
HK: Actually, maybe Code Name: Snake [smiles]. —*Mark MacDonald*





■ With the new Stalking mode, you won't make a sound, but you'll move superslowly.

the mgs3 trailer, minute by minute (cont.)



8:30 In the trailer's funniest moment, Snake pulls his gun on a guard starting his motorcycle. The guard puts his hands up and says, "What is this? Another grand theft auto!?"

9:39 Snake fights a dramatic battle next to a waterfall; explosions toss rocks and unlucky fish into the air.



10:24 The action ends in dramatic fashion with Snake unloading his rifle in the foreground while the jungle burns behind him. The camera gets so close you can see his facial expression change as he lets off the trigger.

11:23 As a final joke (Kojima always likes to end his game trailers with a laugh), Snake shoots a beehive out of a tree; it falls and lands near a group of patrolling guards; stinging-insect-related hilarity ensues before Snake attacks the bees with his knife.

>> WORKING DESIGNS' PLANS TO RELEASE THE PS2 *GOEMON* GAME HAVE BEEN CANCELED; THE GAME (WHICH WASN'T GREAT TO BEGIN WITH) FAILED TO GET SONY'S APPROVAL.... >>

JOSHKALIS
SIGNATURE MODEL
THE PROOF

SWITCH BACKSIDE LIPSLIDE. BLABAC PHOTO.

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SONY'S POCKET MONSTER

TOP SECRET

PSP	PlayStation R&D
	New PSP Design
	EGM Artist's Rendition
	DRX-2-65 | Drawing 6a

■ **One thing Sony didn't do when it announced PSP was show us what it looks like—so we made this artist's rendition based on the available info.**

Long-awaited PlayStation Portable announced

Nintendo's Game Boy has ruled the handheld market for well over a decade, but that could soon change. At its annual pre-E3 press conference, Sony announced a challenger to the almighty Game Boy: PSP, or PlayStation Portable.

Billed as "the Walkman of the 21st century," the PSP packs an impressive list of features (see sidebar below), including some that may yield nongaming applications. As Ken Kutaragi, designer of the original PlayStation and president and CEO of Sony CEI, told us, "PSP will have a huge potential for delivering other forms of entertainment, as well as live entertainment through the network anywhere, anytime." Everything from listening to music to browsing the web to watching movies is a distinct possibility. Sony also hinted that PSP could connect to PS2, perhaps in a manner similar to Nintendo's GC-GBA link.

So, is Nintendo shaking in its boots? "We really aren't," says George Harrison, Nintendo's senior VP of marketing. "In some ways, we've been expecting Sony to jump into the portable area since 1989, and for the next couple years (2003-2004), we're in very good shape. We've always focused on value and keeping Game Boy under $100, so we're anxious to see what price point they establish and the approach they take."

As are we. But don't write PSP into your Christmas list just yet, unless you're talkin' *next* Christmas—it isn't due until the end of 2004, and Sony hasn't announced a price.



Illustrations by Nik Shultz

inside the psp

Display: 4.5-inch widescreen (16:9 ratio) backlit LCD display (GBA SP's is 2.9 inches)
Resolution: 480x272 pixels (GBA's is 240x160)
Disc medium: UMD (Universal Media Disc) 2.4-inch optical secured ROM disc with cartridge (1.8GB)
Video codec: MPEG 4, delivering high-quality video with smaller file sizes. Sony could potentially put full-length movies on a UMD for PSP playback.
Graphics: 3D polygons using NURBS (Non-Uniform Rational B-Spline) rendering to make smoother rounded surfaces
Sound: PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) with built-in stereo speakers and stereo headphone output
Input/Output: USB 2.0 and a slot for Sony's Memory Stick data storage
Battery: Rechargeable lithium-ion (like GBA SP's)

SUPER-DELUXE PLAYSTATION 2

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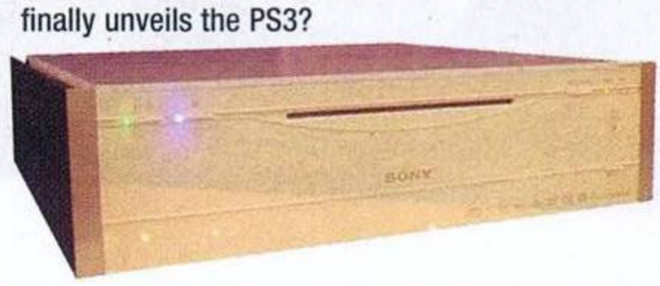


■ **Like the PS2, the PSX can stand vertically or horizontally. The difference here is that you'll have to keep the top clear so you can slide discs into it, toaster-style.**

Two weeks after its PSP announcement at E3, Sony announced another new piece of hardware: the PSX. Think of it as a PlayStation 2.5—a sleek, do-everything machine that fully consummates the relationship between Sony's gaming and consumer electronics businesses.

As you may have guessed by now, the PSX plays PS2 games. But it's also a DVD player and recorder, a satellite TV tuner, and a digital-video recorder so's you can save your favorite shows to its built-in 120GB hard drive, like you can with TiVo or Replay TV. As if that's not enough, it's got an Ethernet port on the back for quick and easy access to the Internet, and both USB 2.0 and Memory Stick slots for high-speed data transfers.

Unfortunately, as with PSP, Sony hasn't yet announced a price for this super machine; all we know is that it's set for release before the end of the year in Japan, and sometime in 2004 in the United States and Europe. Could this be an early hint at what we'll see when Sony finally unveils the PS3?



■ **PSX looks like '70s-era hi-fi, don't it?**



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EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Violence

ADVANCE WARS 2
BLACK HOLE RISING

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Master Chief finally comes out of hiding and reminds the world why Halo 2 will rule

While Microsoft is expanding Xbox's appeal to reach both the mainstream *American Idol* crowd (*Xbox Music Mixer*, see page 29) and retarded children (*Grabbed by the Ghoulies*, see page 84), it hasn't forgotten the game everyone has been waiting for: *Halo 2*. The first-person-shooter sequel to our 2001 Game of the Year made its first public appearance in nine months in front of a large crowd at Microsoft's press conference at the 2003 Electronic Entertainment Expo. The reaction? *Halo 2* didn't show up with a bang—it arrived with a nuclear explosion.

The last time we saw *Halo* hero Master Chief, he had left a destroyed alien artifact (the actual Halo) and returned to Earth to help fend off an attack from the marauding alien race known as the Covenant. This time, we got a chance to see what the action is like on Earth's surface. Here's a recap of the short demo shown by Microsoft and developer Bungie Studios:

Scene 1: The Intro

We see Chief and Sarge on a dropship, approaching a futuristic metropolis (it is the 26th century, you know) that stretches high into the sky. The city is under siege and the landing zone is hot, but they make the drop anyway.

What the scene revealed: *Halo 2* pumps up the first game's sci-fi action-movie feel with the equivalent of 26th-century crack. "[Bungie] wanted to put you in the middle of this giant city where this war is taking place," says Vice President of Xbox Game Content Ed Fries, "with tons of guys on your side and tons of guys on the other side. Giant weapons, vehicles…it's super ambitious."

What the scene didn't reveal: Why Sarge is so chatty and, well...alive, considering he was blowed up along with almost everyone else at the end of the first game.

Scene 2: The Firefight

After he lands, Chief enters the fray with his fellow soldiers. A few moments later, we see some friendly spacecraft successfully bombing a giant alien cannon in one of *Halo 2*'s many pre-scripted in-game events. For an idea of how it all looks and feels, mash together your fondest memories of *Aliens* and *Starship Troopers* and you're halfway there.

What the scene revealed: Master Chief's assault rifle now boasts a scope for quick sniping action. And Chief can lean around corners, destroy parts of the environment, and shoot parked cars until they go kaboom and kill anyone nearby (it's *Halo 2*'s equivalent of the videogame exploding oil barrel). More significantly, Master Chief can now hold two weapons at once. And that's not just so game magazines can write captions about him "going all John Woo–style."

"For example, you can hold a plasma pistol in one hand and a submachine gun in the other," explains Pete Parsons, studio manager for Bungie. "Take out a Jackal shield with the pistol and then cap him with the SMG. It's not just about having an extra machine gun—it'll affect the way you play." But double gunning doesn't come without sacrifice: You lose the handpower to throw grenades. "It's hard to throw grenades when your hands are full," says Parsons.

What the scene didn't reveal: In these wide-open environments, how will we see all the pre-scripted scenes—like the bombers taking out that cannon—if they can take place anywhere around (or behind) us? Parsons says Bungie is conscious of this and will make sure players can enjoy everything that's going on.

Scene 3: The Vehicles

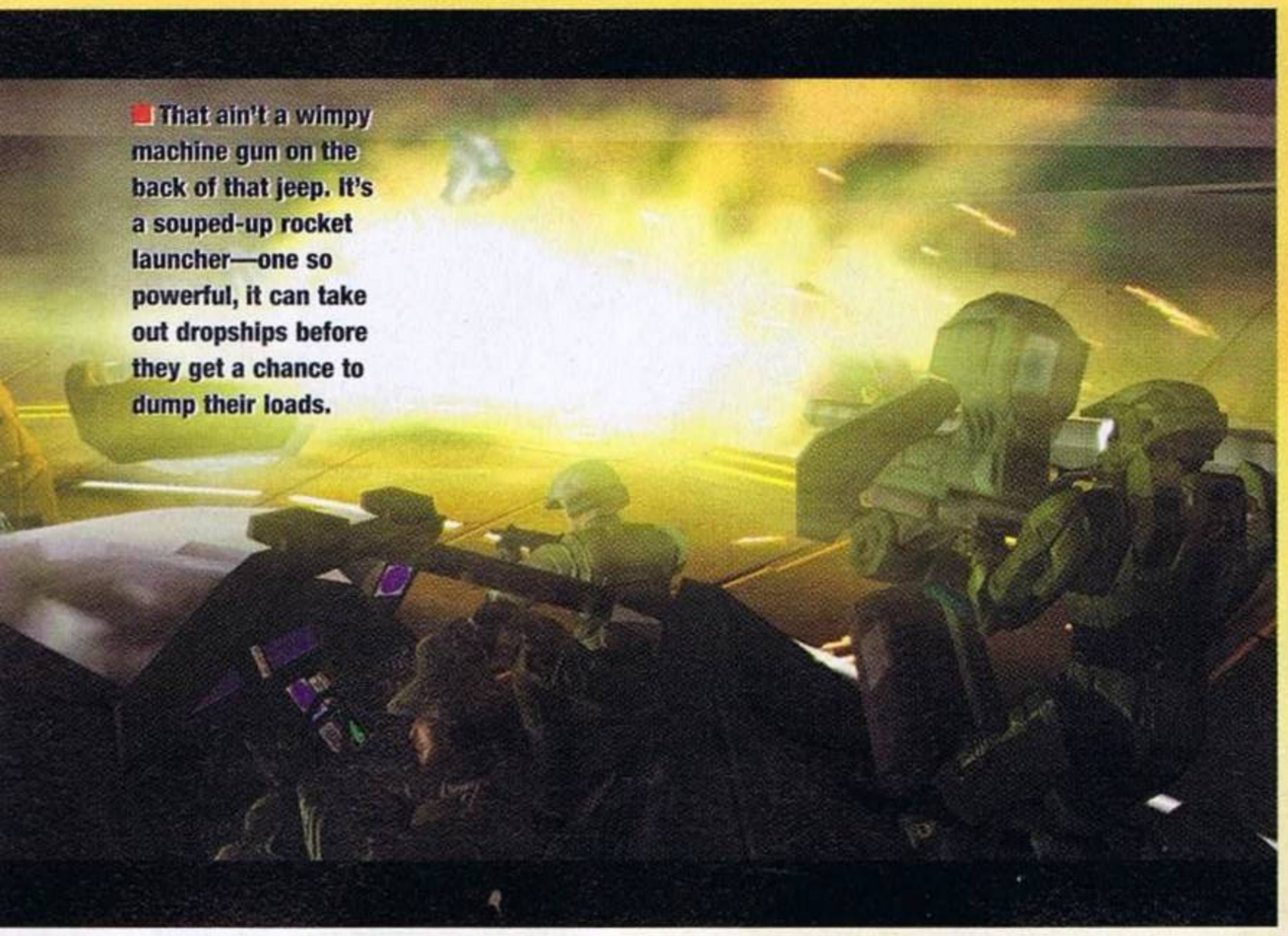
Next, Master Chief jumps on the back of a Warthog jeep so he can man the cannon (yup, that means the computer A.I. can do a bit of the driving this time around). Moments later, an alien drops down on the car, killing the driver and forcing Chief to hop out. Then, in a move that got the audience whoopin' and hollerin', Master Chief, on foot, faces off against another enemy bearing down on him in a speeding Ghost hovercraft. At the last second, Chief jumps onto the craft's hood, pulls the pilot out, and then takes the ship for himself.

What the scene revealed: Gameplay changes will make *Halo 2* quite the new experience. Bungie did say that it's going to make the timing difficult for jacking ships to keep people from overdoing it in multiplayer games. This isn't *Grand Theft Auto: Deathmatch*, after all.

What the scene didn't reveal: After Chief flies off in the stolen Ghost, the demo is pretty much over. There's still plenty about *Halo 2* that we don't know—like its story line, its available multiplayer options (we do know it will be online and that Bungie will provide downloadable content after it's released), or its exact release date. "When it's ready" is the official line, which we expect will be sometime in early 2004. All we know is that "when it's ready" can't come soon enough.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu

>> NOKIA ANNOUNCED A PRICE AND RELEASE DATE FOR ITS FRANKENSTEIN-ESQUE DOES-EVERYTHING (EVEN PLAYS GAMES) N-GAGE CELL PHONE: $299 AND OCTOBER 7, RESPECTIVELY... >>



That ain't a wimpy machine gun on the back of that jeep. It's a souped-up rocket launcher—one so powerful, it can take out dropships before they get a chance to dump their loads.



See the energy swords on those aliens? Bungie is toying with the idea of letting Master Chief use them.

useless questions:
we have 'em so we'll ask 'em

We had some extra time during our interview with Bungie Studio Manager Pete Parsons. Can you tell?

EGM: When will we see Master Chief's face?
Pete Parsons: Do you really want to see Master Chief's face?

EGM: I don't know, but people wanted to see Darth Vader's face.
PP: One of the cool things about *Halo* is that you get to be the Master Chief, so I don't know if we need to see his face.

EGM: Who would win in a fight: Master Chief, Solid Snake (*Metal Gear Solid*), or Sam Fisher (*Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*)?
PP: [laughing] Chief's from the 26th century, so was he even born yet to be able to fight those guys? I like all those characters, so I'd hate to put them in a brawl. Master Chief's a Spartan, and Spartans are bred for war—and with his full-body armor, Chief would be a match for Snake or Fisher.

>> AMONG THE FIRST GAMES FOR N-GAGE ARE *TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER* AND AN EXCLUSIVE VERSION OF *RED FACTION* PRODUCED BY EX-ID SOFTWARE DESIGNER JOHN ROMERO.... >>

1. Must remember to throw slider on 0-2 count.

2. Must remember to keep slider out of strike zone.

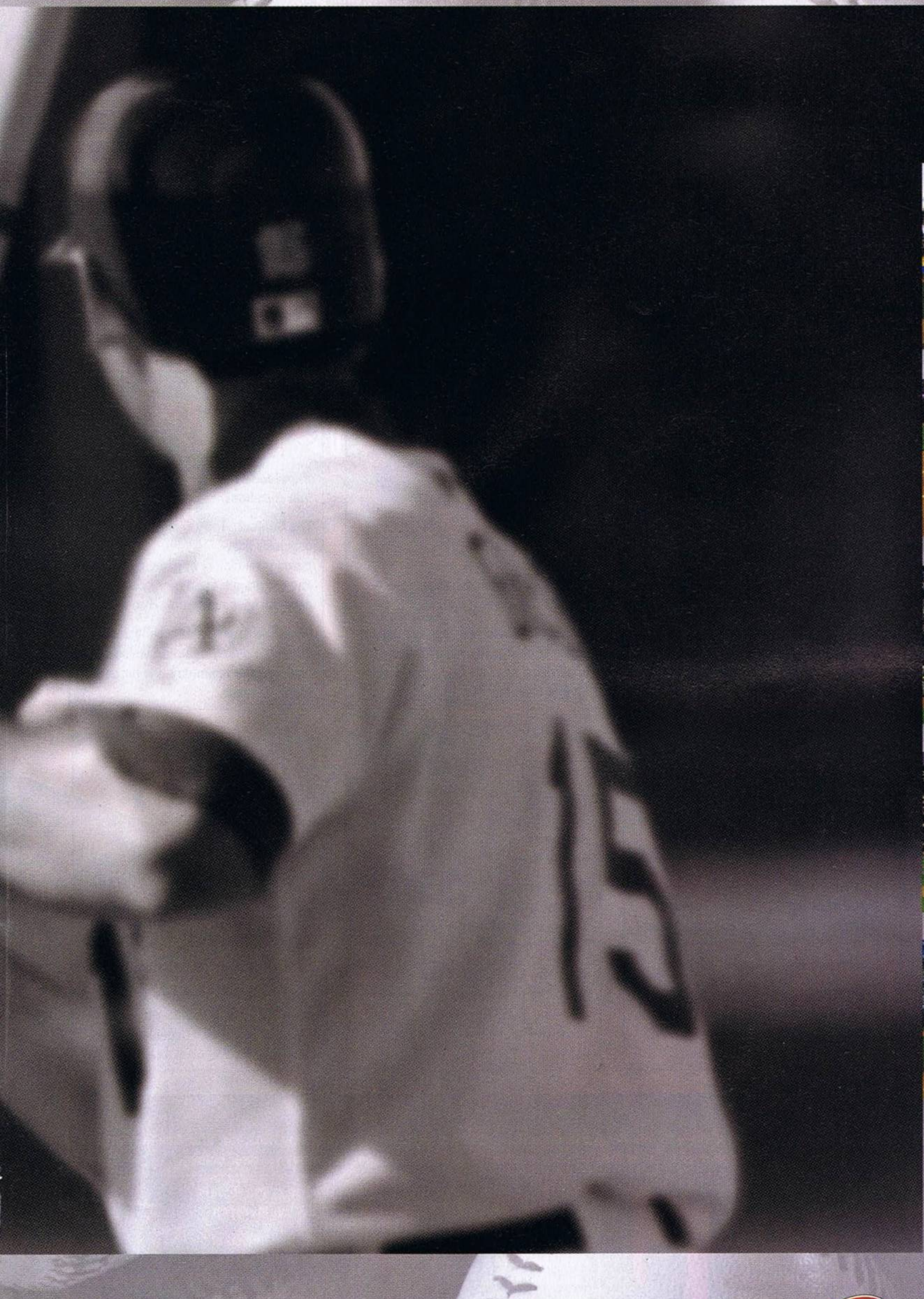
3. Must remember to get real estate license if 1 and 2 fail.

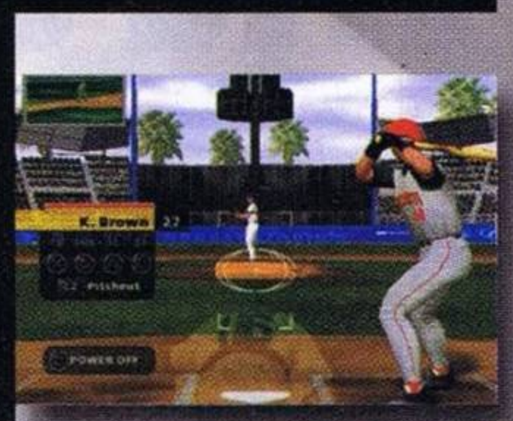


LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION. Welcome to the harsh reality of MLB™ 2004, our most authentic, cage-rattling baseball experience ever. This season, we swung for the fences and made gameplay trademarks like Total Control Pitching,™ Batting and Fielding even more realistic. Hitting the cheap seats is more challenging, getting shelled is more humiliating, and, in between the roars of the crowd, you can almost hear the chin music. MLB™ 2004. It's game time.

PlayStation®2

MLB 2004













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ESRB

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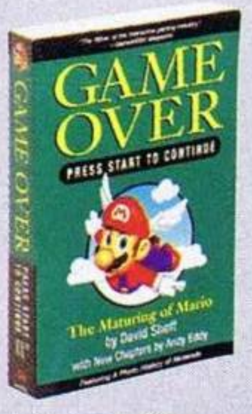
THE BRAINY GAMER'S LIBRARY

Seven books that'll power up your gaming smarts

Even the most unintellectual gamer will occasionally feel the need to turn off the television and feast upon the written word. No, poring over strategy guides doesn't count, and neither does scouring the Web for *DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* nudie codes. We asked ourselves, what are the most important books in the history of gaming? Then we bit the bullet and narrowed the list down to seven titles that make for the most well-rounded reading experience. So clear out some of those *DragonLance* paperbacks and make shelf space for this ultimate summer-reading list.

—Chris Baker

The Bible

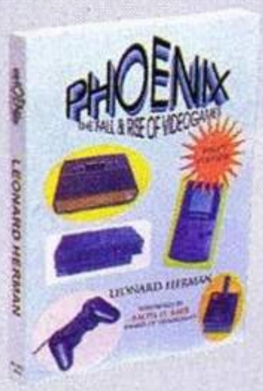


***Game Over* by David Sheff**

The Subject: The complete history of Nintendo, from its humble origins as a 19th century playing-card manufacturer through its early '90s domination of the console industry.

What You Learn: In the early '70s, Nintendo almost went bankrupt when its chain of indoor light-gun shooting ranges floundered.

Raw Data

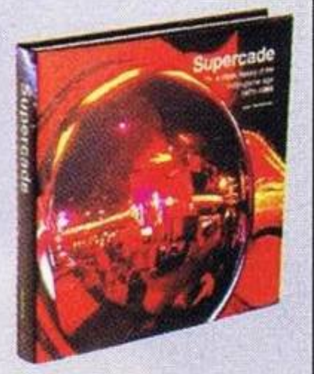


***Phoenix: The Fall and Rise of Videogames* by Leonard Herman**

The Subject: A meticulously detailed system-by-system record of the history of videogames. Now in its third fact-packed edition.

What You Learn: Who was the uptight egghead dissing Atari in all those Intellivision ads? Snobby pseudo-actor George Plimpton, of course.

The Coffee-Table Topper

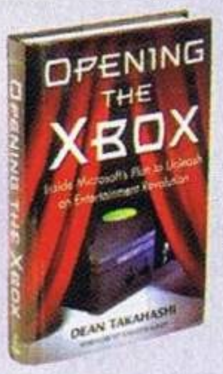


***Supercade* by Van Burnham**

The Subject: A copiously illustrated pixel history of games. Chunky low-res graphics and funky coin-op cabinets have never looked so sexy.

What You Learn: Atari's early arcade offering, *Gotcha*, featured two joysticks hidden under mammary-like pink-rubber mounds.

The Birth of a Game Station

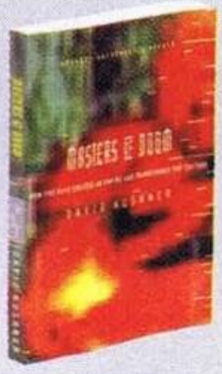


***Opening the Xbox* by Dean Takahashi**

The Subject: The tech strategies, hardware wars, and corporate wheeling and dealing that led to Microsoft's entry into the console market.

What You Learn: Xbox was initially codenamed Project Midway, in honor of the WWII battle in which America (read Microsoft) outwitted the Japanese (read Sony and Nintendo).

The Rags-to-Ferraris Tale

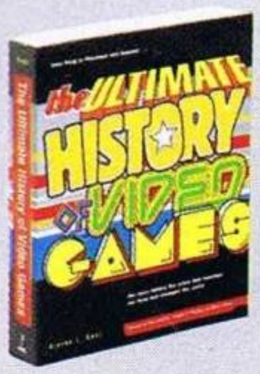


***Masters of Doom* by David Kushner**

The Subject: The rise of *Doom* developer Id Software and 3D gaming, and the tempestuous partnership of founders John Carmack and John Romero.

What You Learn: Carmack was a child hacker, sorta like Matthew Broderick in *War Games*. He even did time in juvie for trying to steal some Apple IIs.

The Inside Story

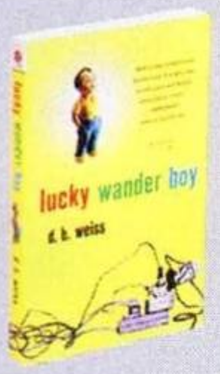


***The Ultimate History of Video Games* by Steven Kent**

The Subject: A reporter who has walked the game beat since the 8-bit days shares his greatest scoops.

What You Learn: As punishment for the failure of the Virtual Boy, gadget guru (and Game Boy creator) Gunpei Yokoi was forced to man the demo booth at trade shows.

The Great American Game Novel



***Lucky Wander Boy* by D. B. Weiss**

The Subject: A fictional account of one twentysomething's nerdy quest to write an encyclopedic history of games and his search for the most obscure title ever made.

What You Learn: A youth wasted on game trivia and Nintendo can result in highbrow literature. "Undeniably entertaining!" says *The New York Times*.

pulp fiction

Major publishers are waking up to the fact that gamers are just as likely to buy tie-in merchandise and novelizations as die-hard *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* fans are. Here are a few excerpts from current and old-school game-derived novels...plus one fake we made up. See if you can spot the phony (answer below).

***Resident Evil Code: Veronica* by S.D. Perry**



"They were about halfway across when they heard it, echoing up from somewhere in the black running waters below—a strangely high, piercing trill, inhuman but not like an animal either. Whatever it was, it sounded extremely pissed—and from the splashing noises, it was coming closer." (Page 110)

***GTA: Sicily* by Mario Puzo**



"Don Salvatore sipped his espresso and stared absently at a marble bust of Mussolini. He mumbled, 'Perform this final service for mia famiglia, and I will give to you the Garibaldi Cement Mixing Company, which has a hidden flamethrower and can generate up to 70,000 lire per day.'" (Page 138)

***Brute Force: Betrayals* by Dean Wesley Smith**



"His finger pressed down on the laser cannon, firing into the blinding snow as two more shots smashed into him. His armor deflected one, but the other got through, burying itself in his gut. They were using projectile weapons of some sort, with armor piercing rounds." (Page 264)

***Rise of the Robots* by Jim Murdoch**



"Coton thrilled at the strength he felt surging through his chassis. His vision stabilized as light flooded across the floor at his feet—then he saw he had company: two sets of steel lifting forks protruded on his side of the door.... They had to belong to loader droids." (Page 283)

The fake? GTA: Sicily

Photographs by Aaron Lauer

>> NAMCO'S *DEAD TO RIGHTS* WAS JUST OPTIONED BY NICOLAS CAGE AND IS SLATED FOR A HOLIDAY 2004 THEATRICAL RELEASE. AND *METAL GEAR SOLID* STILL AIN'T A MOVIE?.... >>

CONFORMITY IS SUCH AN UGLY WORD



NOT YOUR ORDINARY GAME

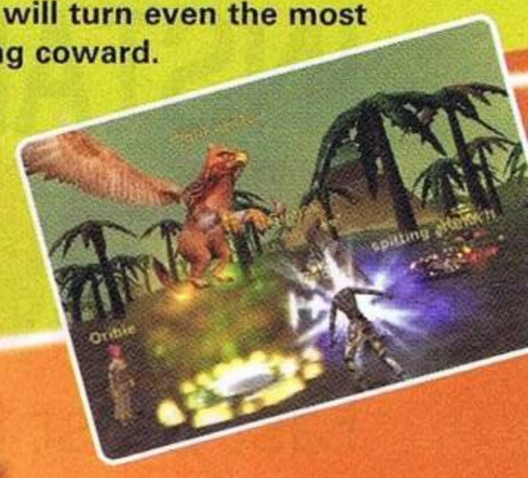
EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES PS2

Thousands of players. Hundreds of challenges. One game.

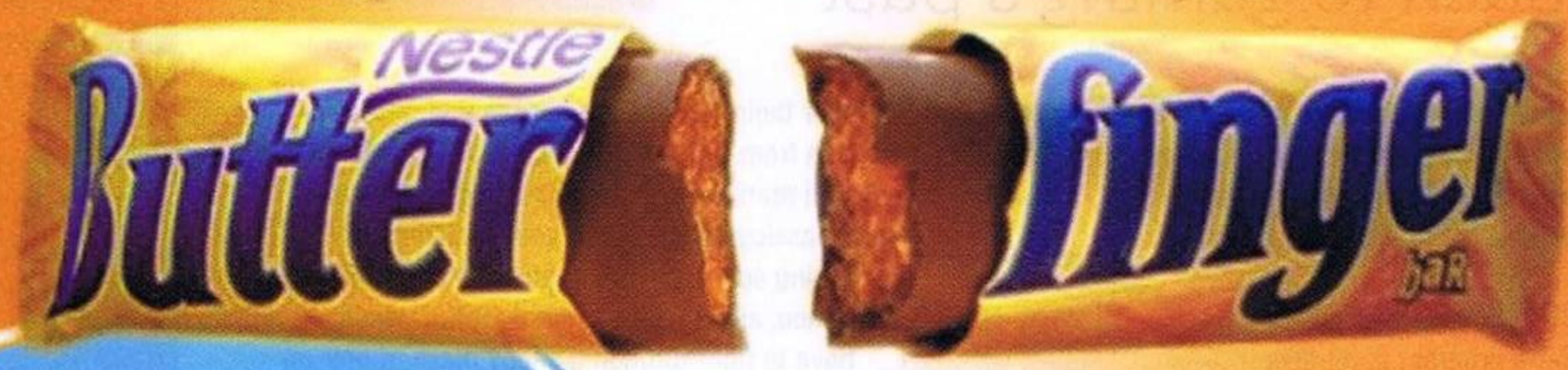
Build a mighty hero as you complete formidable quests, battle countless monsters and unite with players from around the globe to explore the mystical land of Norrath. Welcome to the world of EverQuest Online Adventures, a 3D massively multiplayer fantasy roleplaying game made exclusively for the PlayStation 2. Prepare to enter an enormous virtual environment—a seamless realm populated by sorcerers, elves, and creatures both friend and foe. But will you take shelter in parties or dare venture out by yourself?

You and five thousand of your best friends will explore a world inhabited by monsters that will chill your blood and weaken your heart. With hundreds of spells to discover and steel enough to arm a legion of men, EverQuest Online Adventures will turn even the most stalwart gamer into a quivering coward.

EverQuest Online Adventures is ready for you. But are you ready for it?



BREAK OUT OF THE ORDINARY







BREAK OUT TRICKS

SOULCALIBUR®II PS2

A—Horizontal Slash K—Kick
B—Vertical Slash G—Guard
A dark arrow means to hold the direction until the move is complete.

IVY
This is a throw move that must be done while Ivy's weapon is in whip form.

To Change into Whip: ↓↙←

Calamity Symphony: During Whip ↘↖→↓↘↙ Ⓐ + Ⓚ

If this one is too complex, here's an easier move:

Spiral Punishment: ← Ⓐ + Ⓑ Ⓑ

HEIHACHI
Spinning Demon Uppercut: →↓↘ Ⓚ Ⓚ Ⓚ Ⓑ



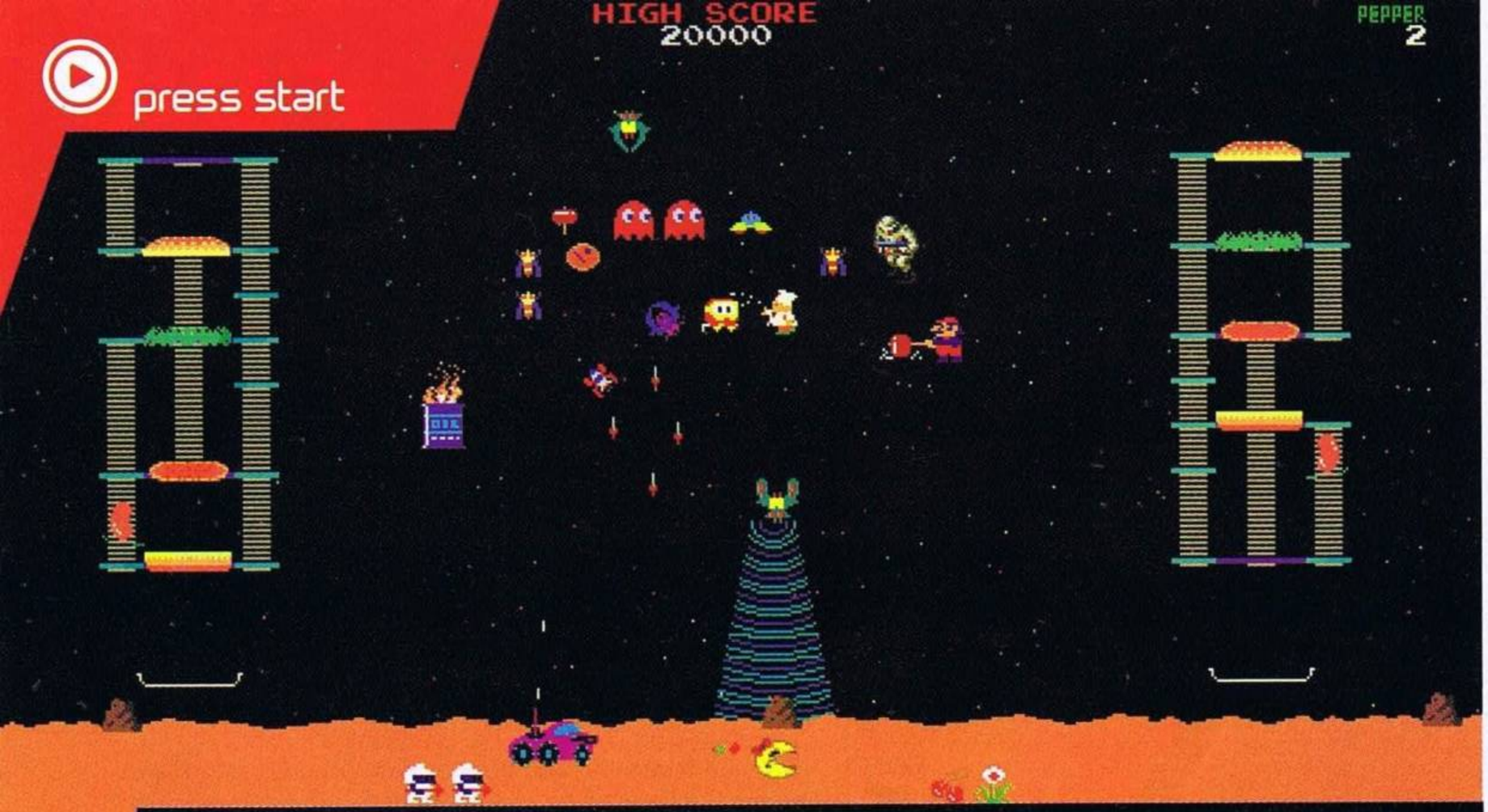
SWEET CODES

MLB SLUGFEST 20-04 PS2

CHEAT CODES
2, 4, 2, GPCD_DOWN), 16" SOFTBALL
0, 0, 4, GPCD_RIGHT), WHIFFLE BAT
2, 0, 0, GPCD_RIGHT), BIG HEAD
0, 0, 4, GPCD_UP), LOG BAT
0, 0, 3, GPCD_UP), ICE BAT
0, 0, 2, GPCD_UP), BLADE BAT
0, 0, 5, GPCD_UP), SPIKE BAT
0, 0, 1, GPCD_UP), BONE BAT
3, 3, 3, GPCD_UP), COLISEUM STADIUM
3, 2, 1, GPCD_UP), ROCKETPARK STADIUM
3, 3, 3, GPCD_DOWN), MONUMENT STADIUM
3, 2, 1, GPCD_DOWN), MIDWAY PARK STADIUM
2, 4, 2, GPCD_UP), RUBBER BALL
0, 0, 4, GPCD_LEFT), MACE BAT
2, 0, 0, GPCD_DOWN), TINY HEAD
3, 0, 0, GPCD_DOWN), MAX BATTING
0, 3, 0, GPCD_DOWN), MAX POWER
0, 0, 3, GPCD_DOWN), MAX SPEED
1, 1, 3, GPCD_DOWN), GLADIATOR TEAM
1, 3, 3, GPCD_DOWN), BOBBLE HEAD TEAM
1, 0, 2, GPCD_DOWN), DOLPHIN TEAM
1, 1, 2, GPCD_DOWN), SCORPION TEAM
1, 2, 2, GPCD_DOWN), SUBZERO TEAM
1, 3, 2, GPCD_DOWN), RODEO CLOWN
1, 0, 1, GPCD_DOWN), LITTLE LEAGUE
2, 1, 1, GPCD_DOWN), EVIL CLOWN TEAM
2, 3, 1, GPCD_DOWN), ALIEN TEAM

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DARE TO LOG ON TO BUTTERFINGER.COM



If you download just one emulator, make it M.A.M.E. (www.mame.net). It plays all the coin-op oldies, such as *Commando* (below).

INSTANT EXPERT: EMULATION

Fast blast back to gaming's past



In olden tymes, tracking down classic arcade games meant spending a day sifting through giant, dusty arcade boards that cost megabucks. Now, nostalgic gamers with a PC can locate classics with a quick online search. Ah, progress.

Keys to the kingdom

First, download an emulator—a program that tricks your PC into thinking it's a particular piece of game hardware (you'll find emulators for every system, from coin-ops to consoles to old computers). These programs are easy to find at sites like www.zophar.net, and they run on everything from phones to digital cameras. The world's emulator designers will not rest until you can play the SuperGrafx classic shooter *Aldynes* on your microwave.



Breaking the law

While emulators are legal to own, the actual games they run—called ROMs—are copyrighted. You can't lawfully download an old 8-bit Nintendo ROM, even if you own the actual cartridge. But in the vast ocean of legal gray areas known as the Internet, piracy laws are widely ignored in favor of the "if no one complains, it's OK" principle. Nintendo, Sega, and Sony have complained loudly, so ROMs for their systems are hard to find. But coin-op ROMs and titles from fringe platforms like the NeoGeo, TurboGrafx-16, and Atari Lynx are readily found at sites like www.classicgaming.com. If you're looking for something specific, just pop the title into Google or Yahoo, along with the word "ROM." You'll have to fight through a seedy maze of pop-up porn site ads and dead links, but the ROMs *are* out there. Emulate the classics because it's convenient (why drag out your dusty Atari 2600 just to play *Combat*?) or to preserve gaming history—not 'cause you're looking for a free gaming fix.

Spice it up

Now that the golden oldies are widely available, they can be altered by techheads who, say, want to see Link bed Zelda. Many ROM and emulator sites have libraries full of fan translations, tweaks with modified graphics and text (often pornographic), and full-on hacks with new levels, enemies, and difficulty modes. Most emulators even have built-in GameSharks, so you can pump in your own nifty codes.

—Casey Loe

NEWS BITS: TASTES GREAT, LESS FILLING

My Robot's Bigger

Richie Rich Xbox gamers who blew $200 on *Steel Battalion* and its hulking controller better start lubing that thing's chassis: At E3, Capcom showed *Steel Battalion: Line of Contact*, an online *Battalion* due in the fall that pits two teams of five against each other. Players will get a third-person view, plus 10 new megamechs with which to mete out hot metallic death.



Pokécrap

Three new *Pokémon* titles for GameCube were at E3 this year: *Pokémon Colosseum* is a version of the yawn-inducing Nintendo 64 *Pokémon Stadium* games; *Pokémon Box* isn't a game at all (it lets you store and organize your critters from the GBA *Sapphire/Ruby* games); and in *Pokémon Channel* you watch Pikachu watch TV. No, we're not kidding. Is his favorite show a GBA/GC link-cable infomercial?



OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM



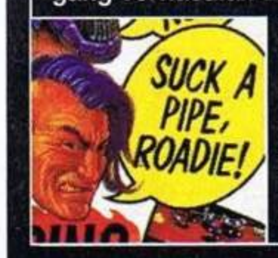
On the Cover:
***Aero the Acro-Bat* (Genesis/SNES)**
In *Aero*, an acrobatic bat sets out to save the circus from an evil saboteur who has messed with the big top's attractions. Even we are baffled as to how this mediocre platformer landed on our cover a decade ago.



Game of the Month:
***Zombies Ate My Neighbors* (SNES)**
Before *Resident Evil* made the undead popular, there was *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*, a li'l game from LucasArts and Konami that pitted two teenagers armed with water pistols against an army of B-movie monsters. Giant babies, anyone?

Rock 'n' Roll Trash Talk

In the early '90s, it was cool to make second-grade-caliber trash talk sound like it came from the biker-gang vernacular. Enter exhibit A: the



ad for *Rock 'n' Roll Racing* (SNES), which proclaims, "Blow dirt, ya road turd!"

Sonic Invades Arcades

Back in summer '93, Sega began testing its first *Sonic the Hedgehog* arcade game, which, unfortunately, was never given a wide release. This coin-op oddity, covered for the first—and last—time in the August '93 *EGM*, let up to three players control Sonic or his pals Ray and Mighty using trackball controllers.



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AFTERTHOUGHTS: RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

A peek behind enemy lines at the making of this Xbox (and PS2) shooter



■ Hans' leatherette ensemble seems to say, "C'mon guys, let's take over the world!"

Having just launched the most ambitious team-based assault on Xbox Live to date, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*'s creators are brimming with confidence. Six hours after the game went on sale and the bullets began to fly online, we sat down with Nerve Software President Brandon James and Id Software Director Marty Stratton for an inside look at bringing this popular PC shooter to Xbox.

EGM: Nazis are the perfect videogame villains, followed closely by zombies and demons. Did you ever have the feeling that you might be overextending yourselves by including all three in one game?

Brandon James: No. I would like to do it again [laughs]. You have all the ultimate evils wrapped up into one package.



Marty Stratton: The great thing about *Wolfenstein* is how naturally you can combine demons and Nazis all into one story line. It's kinda all based on the half-truths of Hitler and the Third Reich and their experiments with the occult and that kind of thing. So you get an *Indiana Jones*–style story line that seems plausible in the context of the game and its backstory.

EGM: Were there any challenges in porting *Wolfenstein* to consoles?

BJ: Oh yeah. Probably the biggest was that we'd never developed an online title for a console. Plus, with a PC game, you have 102 keys on a keyboard and more on the mouse. Trying to make sure that all of the most important controller functions are brought over to the 10 buttons on the Xbox controller was a challenge.

EGM: Are there many medics among the first draftees online now? Why play the backup bitch?

BJ: Medics may not be the best fighters, but they are the best support class. People who're learning the ropes, don't have the aim of other competitors, or just don't like plastering people tend to gravitate toward the medic. We have one guy in the office who we call "the cockroach" that plays as a medic because he can't shoot straight. And if you've got a good healer on your team, you're set.

EGM: What kind of anticheating measures have you taken?

BJ: Since this is based on the PC stuff, we've had a year to see how things balance out. A number of exploits or cheats came about where things like the flamethrower could shoot through a wall in a certain area—those kind of things we were able to work out. We don't expect any cheating. As far as the hacking you'd expect on the PC side, Xbox Live does a superb job of taking care of all that stuff.

EGM: If an exploit is found that ruins online play, would you offer a downloadable patch to fix it?

BJ: Yeah. If something major comes up, we're prepared to do an autoupdate. But [that's not gonna happen].

EGM: What can Xbox Live users expect in the way of downloadable content?

BJ: Three extra levels. The first will be available [by the time you read this].

—Shawn Elliott

ps2 wolfie, minus online



A big part of the Xbox *Wolf* experience is being able to play online via Xbox Live. But PS2 *Wolf* fans are stuck like Macaulay Culkin—home alone. Why? Id's Marty Stratton explains: "We looked at what Sony had available when we began and what online solutions they were providing, and it wasn't much—nothing, actually. They really haven't had a clear direction on how their games should work over the Net. So, in the end, we decided not to make it a priority." As for the lack of splitscreen Deathmatch, Stratton tells us "that's just not what *Wolfenstein* multiplayer is all about. It's really more about teamplay." See what our Review Crew thought of the PS2 version on page 119.

>> ATARI SHIPPED FOUR MILLION (NOT A TYPO, *MILLION*) COPIES OF ITS GAME *ENTER THE MATRIX* FOR PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, AND PC ON MAY 15, 2003.... >>

IN SPACE, OR ON LAND, I WILL HUNT THEM DOWN.

MACE GRIFFIN™ BOUNTY HUNTER











I used to command the Galactic Rangers. We uncovered a conspiracy that threatened to destroy the entire frontier. The corporations turned the galaxy into a battlefield. They murdered my squad. I was framed and spent ten long years in prison. Now I'm out. As a bounty hunter, I travel the galaxy bringing down criminals for cash. But the only thing I'm after... is revenge.

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BLOOD and GORE
VIOLENCE

PlayStation.2

WARTHOG

BLACK LABEL GAMES

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games

huntthemdown.com

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EGM INTERNATIONAL

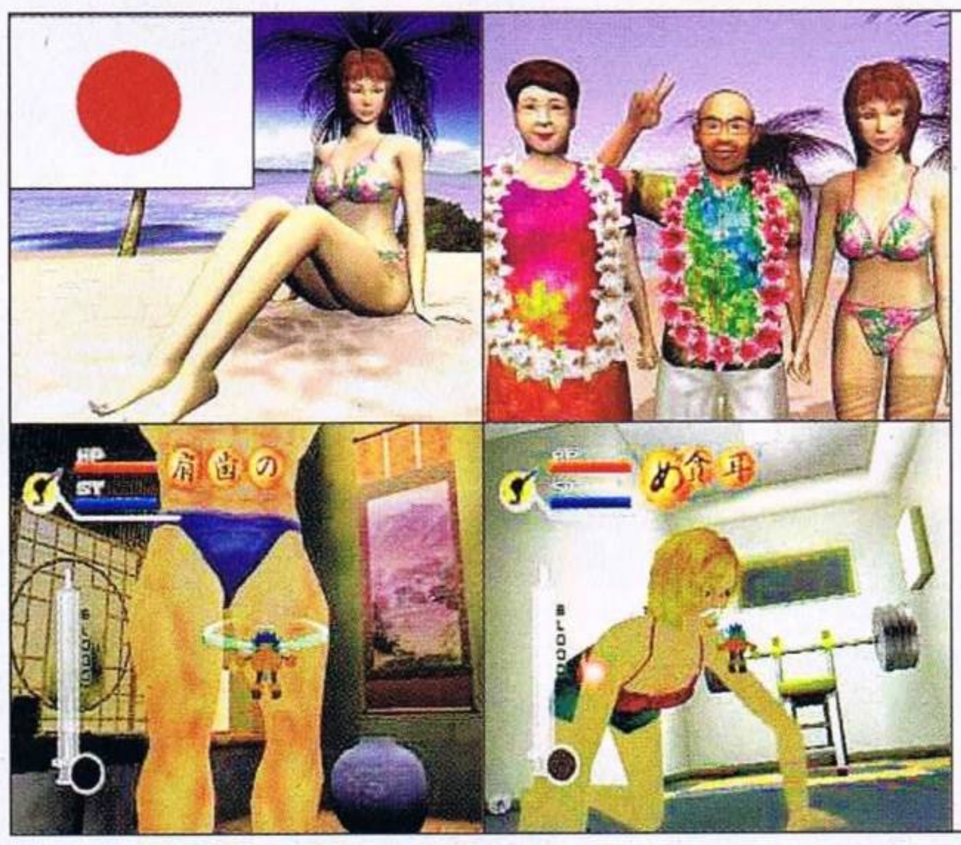
Play as a tiny mosquito or a giant...giant



BIG, YELLOW, DIFFERENT

You're big man on campus in Nintendo's freaky Doshin the Giant

Here's a rarity—a GameCube title from Nintendo published in Europe but never brought here. *Doshin the Giant*'s a lot like other "god games" (*Populous*, PC's *Black & White*) but without the disembodied deities. Instead, you play the part of a rubbery yellow beanpole (complete with outie belly button) waiting on diminutive and demanding villagers. You lumber around planting trees and doing general landscaping, while trying not to crush the wee folk beneath your jaundiced heels. And if playing happy god ain't your bag, you can always transform into a towering devil and dish out some divine wrath. Interested? Grab a copy of Datel's *Free Loader* (it'll let you play Euro games) and *Doshin* from gameplay.com.

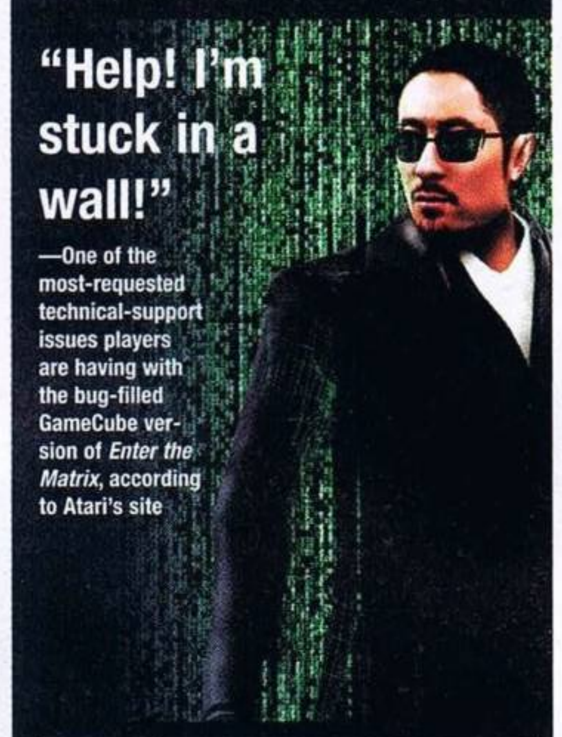


HAWAIIAN PUNCH

Mr. Mosquito visits the U.S. in this Japan-only sequel (ironic, no?)

Last year, Fresh Games treated us to the oddball import *Mr. Mosquito* (*Ka* in Japan). As the titular bloodsucker, it was up to you to turn an unsuspecting family—in this case, the Yamada clan—into a living smorgasbord. Although the graphics and gameplay were rough, everyone agreed the concept was worthy of further exploration—including Sony Japan, as it just released *Ka 2: Let's Go Hawaii* across the Pacific (no U.S. release is planned). This time, the plucky skeeter stows away for the Yamada's Hawaiian vacation, the tropical setting lending the perfect excuse to plague the family's nubile daughter as she works on her tan. (And good news, ladies: You can snack on dudes in Speedos, too.)

OVERHEARD



"Help! I'm stuck in a wall!"

—One of the most-requested technical-support issues players are having with the bug-filled GameCube version of *Enter the Matrix*, according to Atari's site



"The air speeds up around Joe so fast, it actually combusts and causes you to be surrounded by fire. Of course, that's dumb, but it looks cool!"

—Capcom Producer Atsushi Inaba on his project *Viewtiful Joe* for GameCube

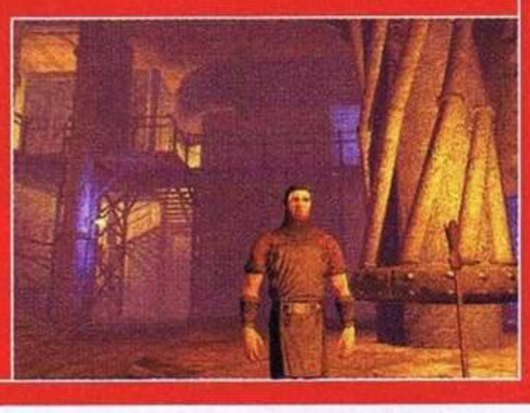
"Capcom keeps letting me make [niche] games that I like. If you like them, too, and want me to keep making more, then please buy them! I'm serious. My butt's on the line."

—Inaba again (whose previous work includes the $200 *Steel Battalion* for Xbox), half-joking to the press at E3

LI'L PREVIEWS: FIRST LOOKS AT THREE NAUGHTY GAMES

THIEF III

Xbox • Eidos • Winter 2003—The acclaimed PC series of first-person stealth games (from the people who brought us the brilliant *Deus Ex*) creeps over to the Xbox. Main character and pickpocket extraordinaire Garret goes all Spider-Man with a new ability to scale walls.



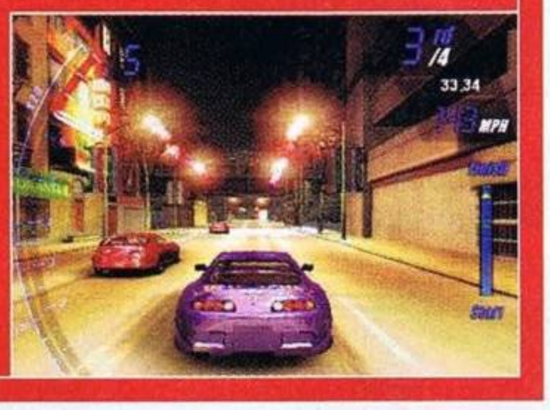
MCFARLANE'S EVIL PROPHECY

PS2 • Konami • November 2003—This fast-paced *Dynasty Warriors*-style action game based on comic artist Todd McFarlane's toys—which typically range in appearance from cool to completely f***ed up—will feature four-person play, various weapons, and (we can only hope) a kung-fu grip.



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games • March 2004—It's time to trade in those exotic dream cars for tuned-up rice rockets, neon rear wings, and hardcore street racing. *Underground* looks so cool, it could even give Rockstar's *Midnight Club II* a run for its money. (Or, should we say, pink slip.)



>> MICROSOFT LOWERED THE XBOX TO $179.99 TO MATCH SONY'S CLEARANCE PRICE ON THE OLD-MODEL PS2. REPS WOULD NOT SAY IF THE SYSTEM WILL STAY AT THAT PRICE.... >>

P.N.03™
PRODUCT NUMBER

P.N.03

DANGER AROUND EVERY CURVE.

EXHILARATE YOUR SENSES in this all-new, all-out fast action frenzy created exclusively for the Nintendo GameCube™. A Computer Arms Management System has gone haywire on a distant planet. The hopes of an entire civilization rest with Vanessa Schneider, a mercenary robot killer with a personal grudge to settle. With moves that amaze and an attitude to match, only she can demolish the mechanical menace.

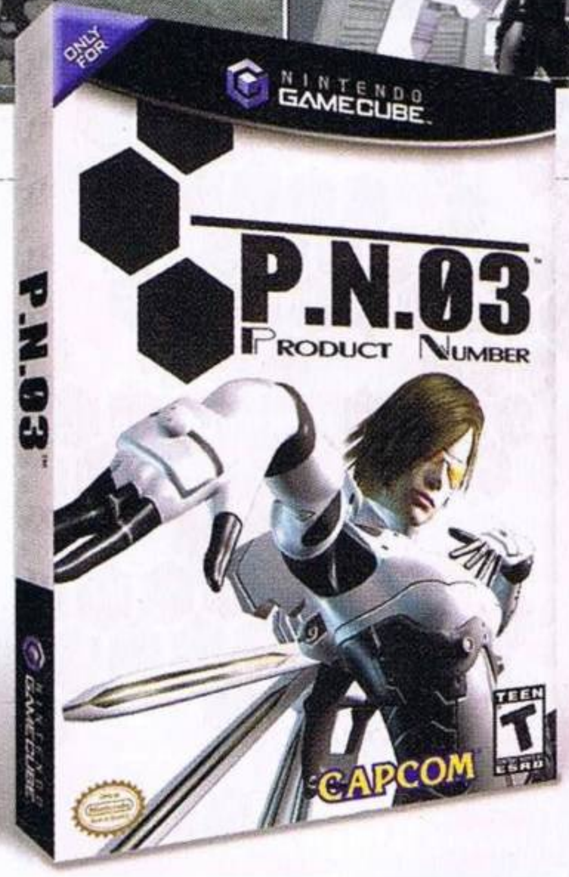
YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ACTION LIKE THIS.

demolish robots, machines, mega weapons and transforming enemies with your bare hands





master stylish moves and powerful attacks for enhanced choreographed gameplay



NINTENDO GAMECUBE™

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BRADYGAMES Strategy Guide AVAILABLE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Suggestive Themes
Violence

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SLIPPERY WHEN WET

Angelina Jolie talks about playing the legendary tomb raider, being nuts, and errant shotgun shells

Ms. Croft's return to the big screen is shaping up quite nicely compared to her next videogame appearance (which, by the way, had a June 17 release date at last check—but we wouldn't be surprised if it still hasn't shown up at your local game store as you read this). While we wait for the movie and game, we had the chance to chat with the actress who portrays the sexy artifact finder, Oscar-winner Angelina Jolie, during a break from shooting *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (hitting theaters on July 25). She was wearing a silver wet suit at the time, like the one you see here. Just thought you might want to know that.

EGM: Besides the obvious, uh, physical similarities, what does the real Angelina Jolie have in common with this virtual tomb raider?
Angelina Jolie: We both love adventures, are slightly nuts, have relationship issues [giggles], and find ourselves alone. She's a fighter, and I think I'm very happy when I fight for something I believe in, and I will fight all out for something I care about. Her fears are also very similar to my own…not having something I love and being confined.

EGM: The wet suit is a good look for you. Did you find it difficult getting into tomb-raiding shape again?
AJ: I'm a mom now, so nothing is more exhausting than that! But my training was all fun.

EGM: What kind of training did you do for the sequel? Aside from chasing around the little nipper, of course.
AJ: Kendo, plus loads of physical training.

EGM: The toughest part?
AJ: The stand-up Jet Skis—it's harder than it looks. I kept saying, "Can't you find something that looks hard, but actually is really easy?"

EGM: You're performing a lot of your own stunts in this movie. Had any close calls?
AJ: Yeah. I'm missing a piece of my right elbow from a boat collision. And a shotgun shell went into my eye, but it wasn't anything serious.

EGM: Firearms and eyes just don't mix. So do you enjoy being an Evel Knievel?
AJ: Yeah. Probably to the point of stupidity, but yeah, I like it. I think it makes me feel really alive and happy, so happy I'm excited. And right now, I'm excited.

EGM: Happy and excited, good to know. But as for your character, what's different about Lara in the sequel?
AJ: Now, she's more of a woman, and she's sexier to me. We've added things and changed her a bit, so she's a little less cute and more aggressive.

—Nick Walkland

it's so (not) real

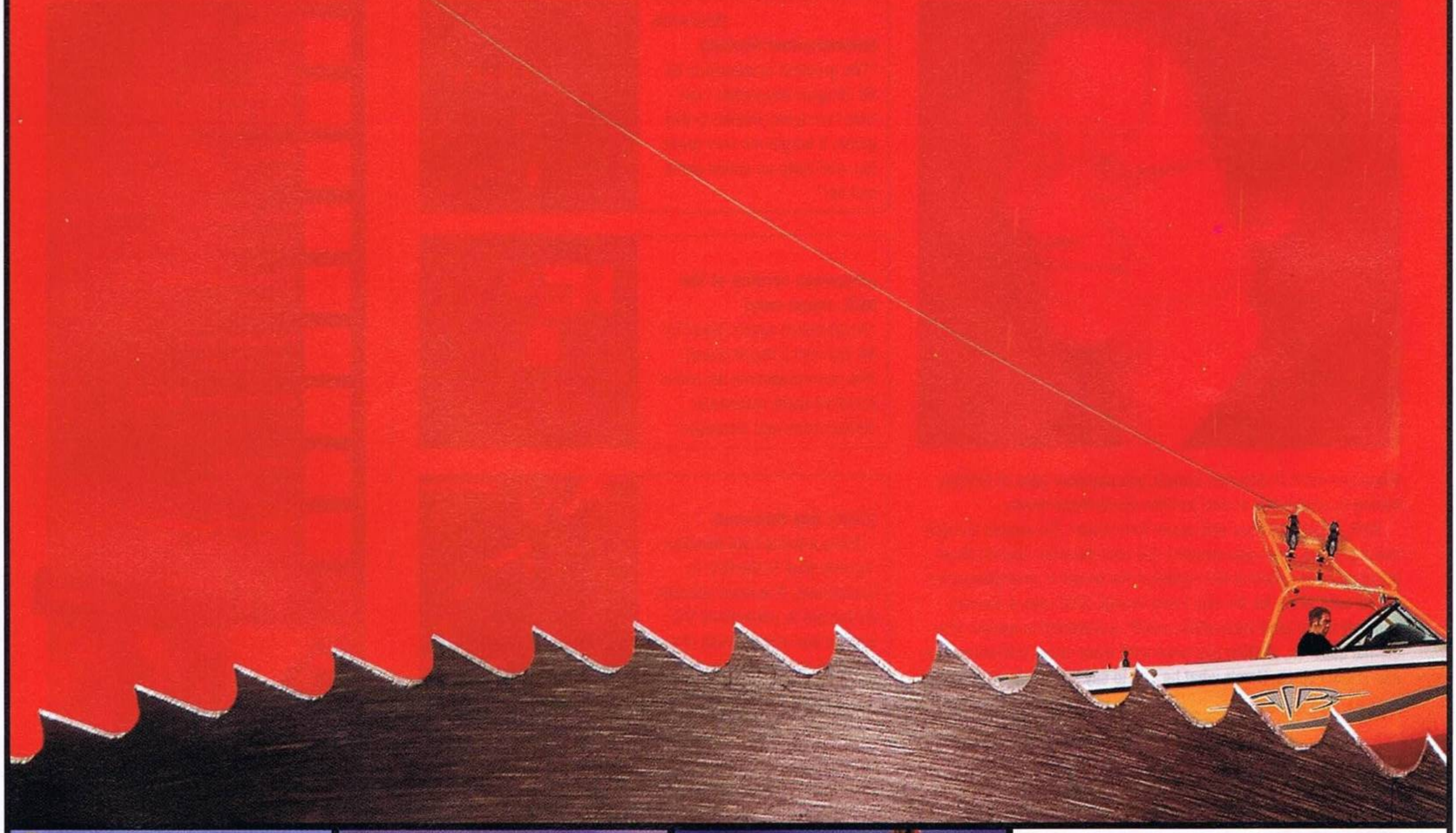
Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life
Writer/Producer Lloyd Levin says this summer's sequel is "more realistic; it's edgier, more dimensional, and more complex than the first [film]." Does a journey to locate Pandora's Box sound real? We don't think so, unless "Pandora's Box" happens to be the name of some smelly soap chick store that's just really hard to find. What *is* distressingly real is the total lack of gratuitous onscreen shots of Jolie in her birthday suit. Game publisher Eidos (which owns the rights to the *Tomb Raider* franchise) restricts the Lara Croft character from baring it all. Shucks.

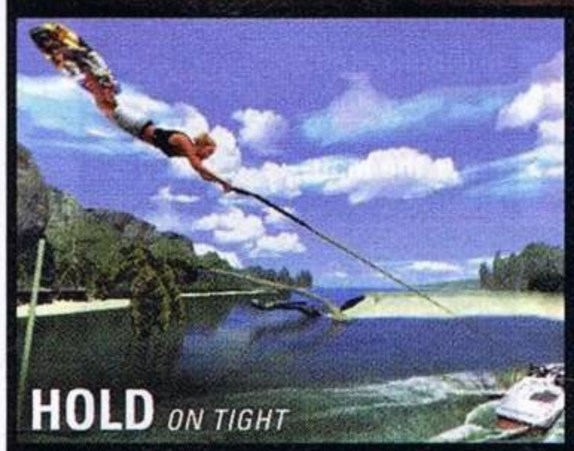
Photograph by Alex Bailey

>> CAPCOM TO CELEBRATE *STREET FIGHTER II*'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A NEW GAME.... >> SEGA'S MERGER WITH SAMMY IS OFF; PROPOSED UNION WITH NAMCO IS ON THE ROCKS.... >>



HANG ON FOR YOUR LIFE.









WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED™ FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY

Water moves. Screenshots don't. For the real experience, check out **www.wakeboardingunleashed.com**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief

PlayStation.2

XBOX

shaba GAMES

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STRANDED WITH 3 GAMES!

HIDEO KOJIMA

The Metal Gear maestro's must-have picks



Super Mario Bros. (Nintendo Entertainment System)
"The greatest masterpiece by Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto! I am who I am today thanks to this game; it taught me how great, fun, and deep an action game can be."



Portopia Murder Case (Japanese version of the NES, Japan only)
"An adventure-game classic by Mr. Yuji Horii [*Dragon Quest*]. This game taught me the potential of the game medium to deliver drama and messages."



When you think of deserted islands, you probably think of Gilligan, talking to volleyballs, or that horrible *Swept Away* movie.

Well, forget Madonna and screw Tom Hanks. (On second thought, make that the other way around.) The only thing we want to know about being stranded in the middle of the ocean is what games you would want along for the trip. Every month, *EGM* asks a famous game designer (and every other month, a celebrity) to answer that eternal question, starting this issue with *Metal Gear Solid* series creator Hideo Kojima. Here's what he had to say.... *—Marc Saltzman*

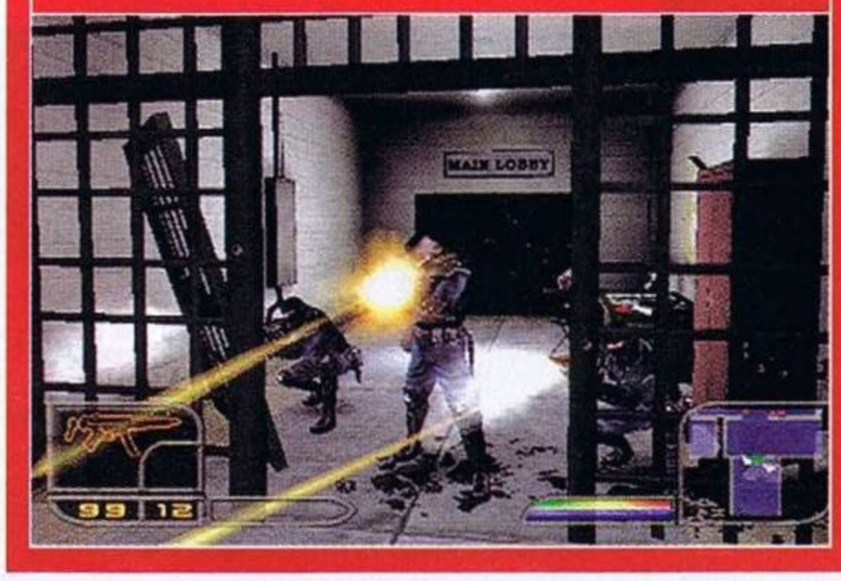
Boktai (Game Boy Advance)
"This is a game I am developing now [due in the U.S. in September]. It is most suitable, as you get to understand the climate and environment of a deserted island." (see page 32)



LI'L PREVIEWS: NAMCO'S GONE SHOOTER CRAZY

EXTREME FORCE: GRANT CITY ANTI-CRIME

PS2, Xbox, GC • Namco • Winter 2003 — Slip on the night vision, blow that door open, and set off a bullet festival in this *Dead to Rights* spin-off that mixes action and stealth gameplay on the mean streets of Grant City. You play as a member of the local SWAT team, fighting the bad guys with machine guns, sniper rifles, and a host of nifty moves. Don't expect to jump into bullet time, though. That feature died with *Dead to Rights*.



TIME CRISIS 3

PS2 • Namco • Winter 2003 — Do the details really matter here? *Time Crisis 3* is just another excuse to plop down the cash for a GunCon light gun and shoot bad guys. Not sold yet? All right, then: *Crisis 3* lets you flip between a pistol, machine gun, shotgun, and grenades, plus this installment features new sniper combat missions. As before, the hyper-accurate guys in the red jumpsuits are the ones you need to worry about most—always shoot them first!



CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES OF APRIL 2003



1. **Def Jam: Vendetta** PS2, EA Sports Big
2. **Splinter Cell** PS2, Ubi Soft
3. **The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker** GC, Nintendo
4. **Midnight Club II** PS2, Rockstar
5. **NBA Street Vol. 2** PS2, EA Sports Big
6. **Dynasty Warriors 4** PS2, Koei
7. **Pokémon Ruby** GBA, Nintendo
8. **Final Fantasy Origins** PS1, Square Enix
9. **Golden Sun 2** GBA, Nintendo
10. **Pokémon Sapphire** GBA, Nintendo

Source: EB Games

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 5/20/03

BLOCKBUSTER



1. **Enter the Matrix** PS2, Atari
2. **Midnight Club II** PS2, Rockstar
3. **Enter the Matrix** Xbox, Atari
4. **NBA Street Vol. 2** PS2, EA Sports Big
5. **X2: Wolverine's Revenge** PS2, Activision
6. **Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell** PS2, Ubi Soft
7. **Def Jam: Vendetta** PS2, EA Sports Big
8. **Enter the Matrix** GC, Atari
9. **NBA Street Vol. 2** Xbox, EA Sports Big
10. **X2: Wolverine's Revenge** Xbox, Activision

Source: Blockbuster Video, 5/20/03

>> WARM UP THE CHOCOBOS—SQUARE ANNOUNCED THAT IT EXPECTS TO SHIP *FINAL FANTASY XII* IN JAPAN SOMETIME BEFORE THE END OF ITS FISCAL YEAR (MARCH 2004).... >>

MIDWAY

IT'S TIME TO GET YOUR FREAK ON

Explore, dogfight and race with some of the most freaky characters you have ever played with, in the first-and-only, fully-open, interactive, 3-D, racing videogame.

- *13 alluring characters and dozens more hidden*
- *12 massive and enticing tracks*
- *Enthralling race and dog fight modes*
- *Unique and mesmerizing mini games*
- *Amazing head-to-head multiplayer action*







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PlayStation 2

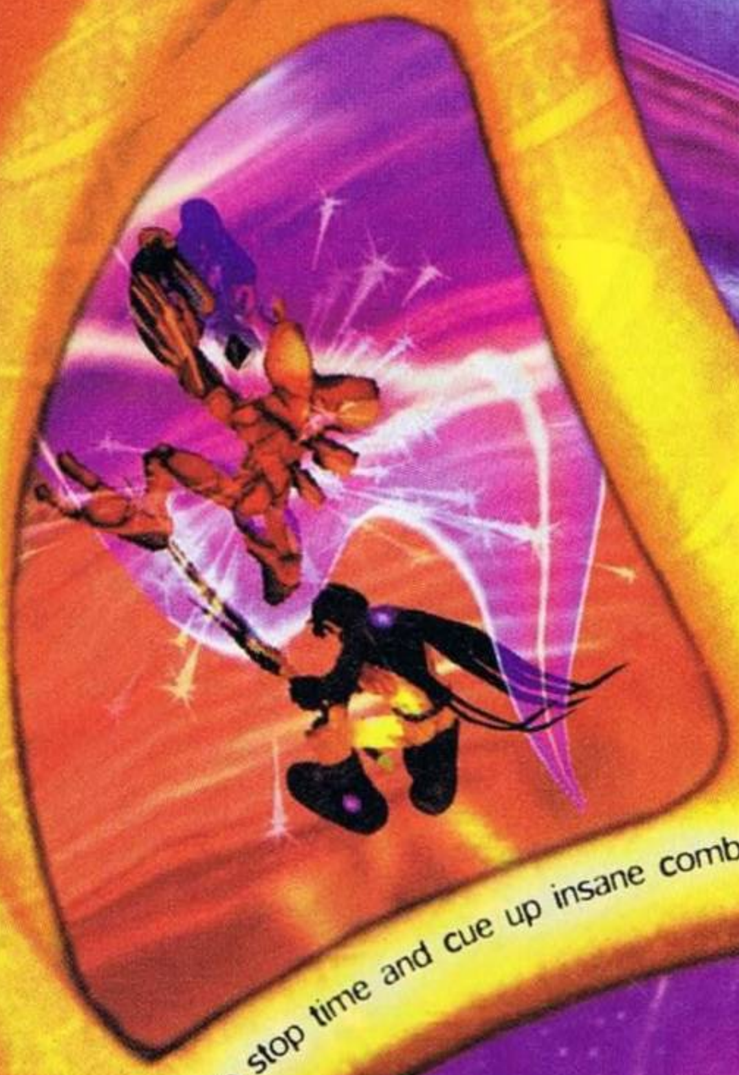
XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

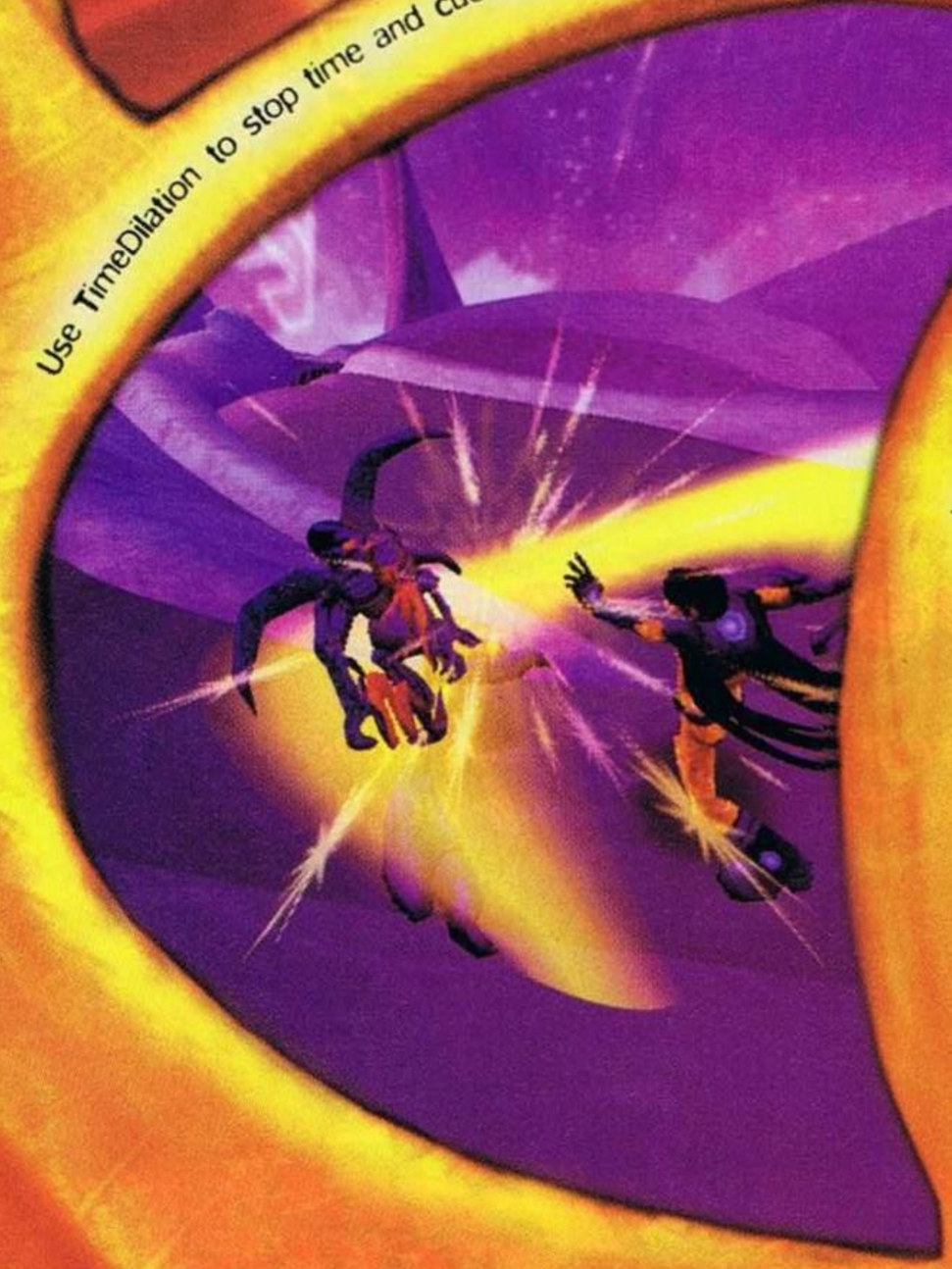
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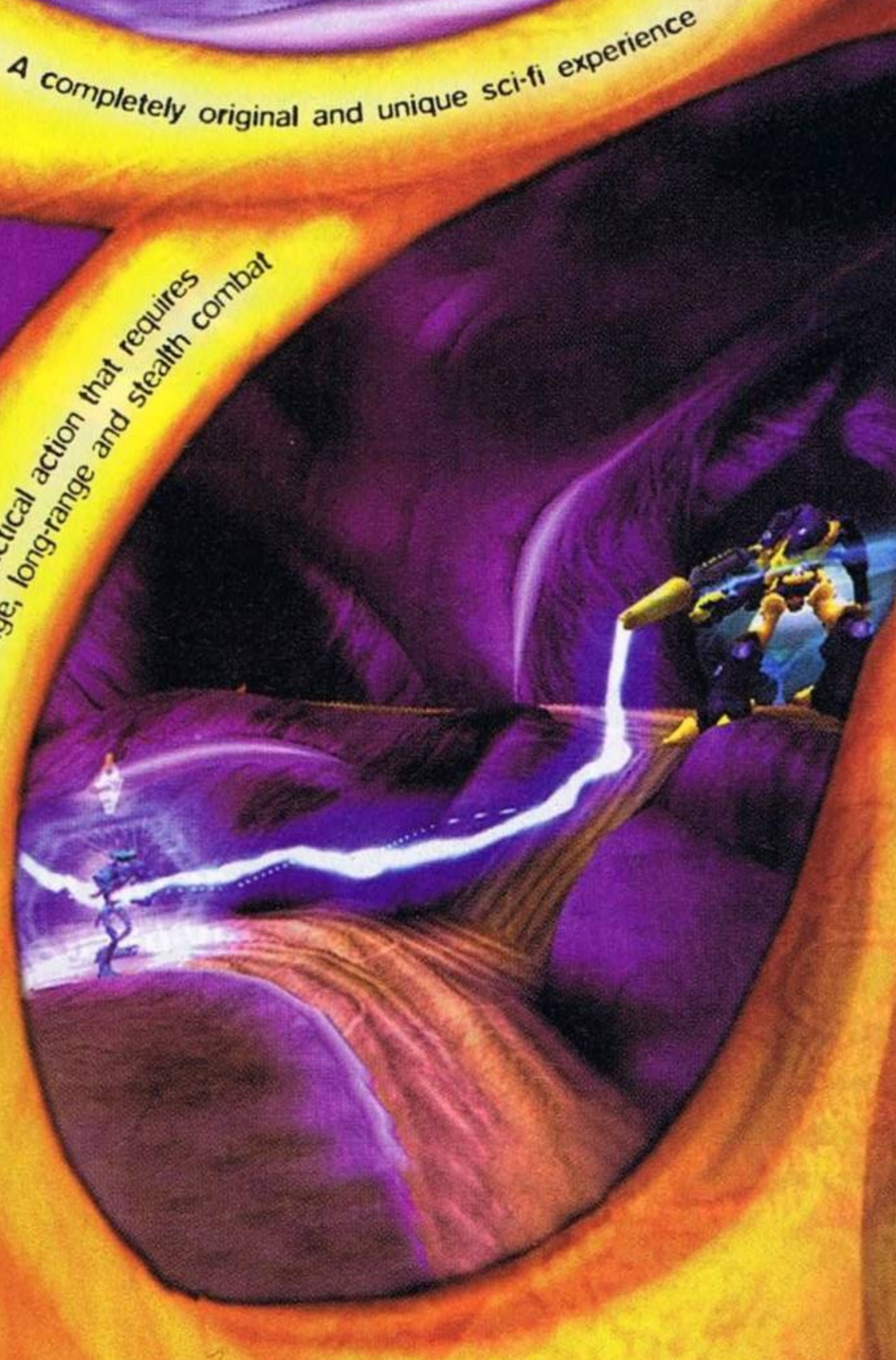
Use TimeDilation to stop time and cue up insane combos



A completely original and unique sci-fi experience



Intense tactical action that requires close-range, long-range and stealth combat



"Alter Echo could be one of the most original, imaginative, visceral, and best of all, fun games we've ever seen."
- PSX2.com

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

PlayStation.2

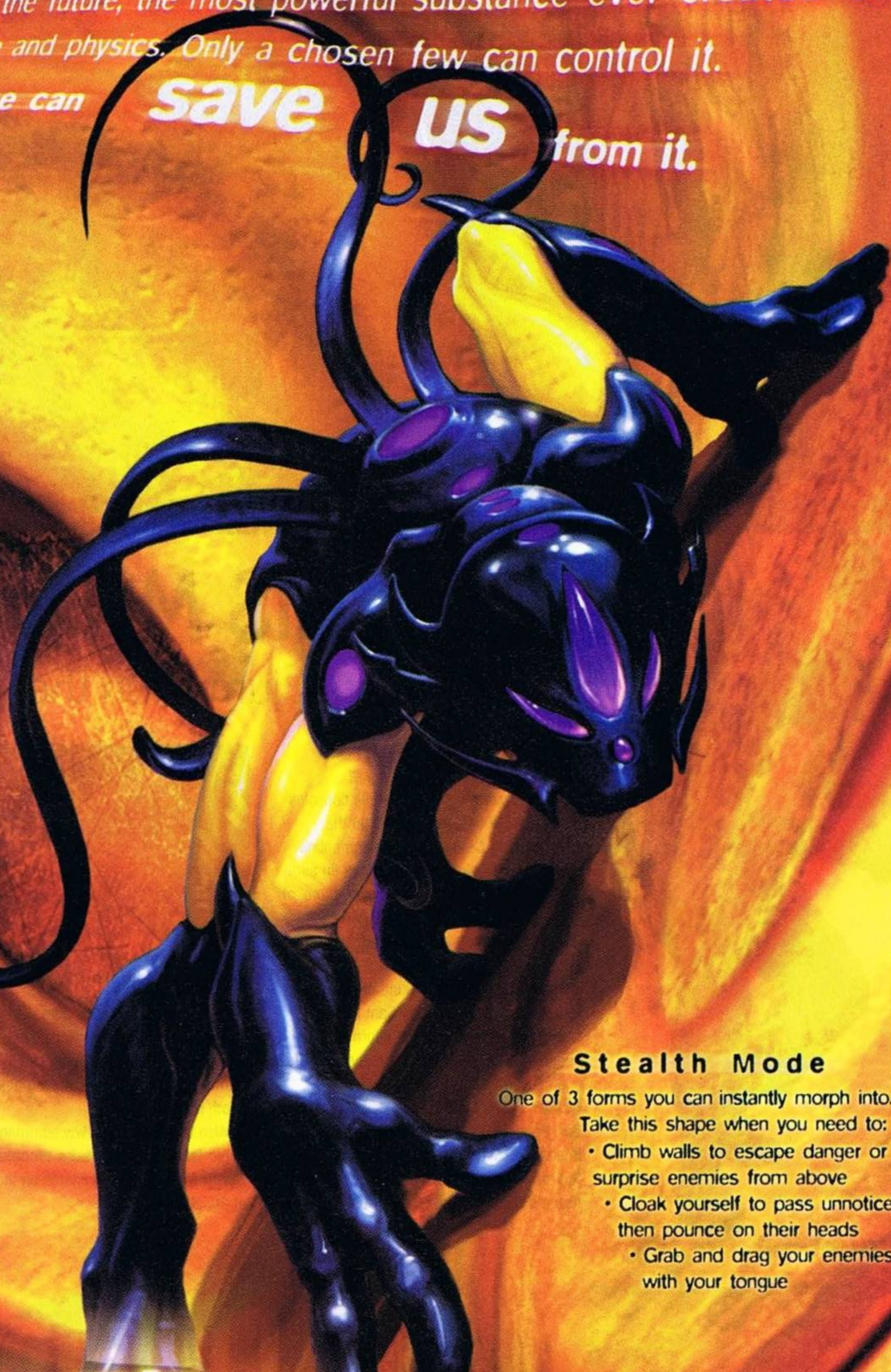
XBOX

Outrage games

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In the future, the most powerful substance ever created can control time and physics. Only a chosen few can control it.

But only one can save us from it.



Stealth Mode

One of 3 forms you can instantly morph into.
Take this shape when you need to:

- Climb walls to escape danger or surprise enemies from above
- Cloak yourself to pass unnoticed, then pounce on their heads
- Grab and drag your enemies with your tongue

alter echo™

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■ "Hi. Thought it was just a bush here, right? Ha! Name's Sam Fisher—master of stealth and star of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*."



ONLINE THIS MONTH

Splinter sequel jumps on the Net

Ubi Soft made it official—the next *Splinter Cell*, subtitled *Pandora Tomorrow*, will target multiple consoles in early 2004. Intel states that the upcoming *Cell* will be sneaking online with multiplayer co-op missions (in addition to a full-length single-player game, of course). Our deep cover spies report the game may well show up on Xbox first, although that's not confirmed.

We can only guess what kind of chaos will ensue when the legions of Sam Fisher wannabes converge on the information superhighway—will no light fixture be safe?



■ **Feelin' lucky? In the *Splinter* sequel, you'll get to test out your stealthiness...online.**

More news, less paper

Can't get enough E3 info, screens, and interviews? We can only cram so much into the mag—check www.gamers.com/feature/e32003 for a full E3 wrap-up, including extra stuff from our compadres over at *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*, *GameNOW*, *GMR*, and the crack Gamers.com staff. You can even ogle the booth babes.

Also this month at www.egmmag.com, Sonic Team prez **Yuji Naka discusses *Sonic Heroes*** and ruminates on the future of the *Sonic* bloodline.

must-hit websites



www.tanteifile.com/baka/2003/01/28_01_yamaki3_03/—Watch as two gamers, dressed up as characters from SNK's *King of Fighters*, light their fists afire and generally look like idiots. You'll be e-mailing your friends this link, we promise.



www.gbacentral.net—Like some sort of virtual altar dedicated to all things Game Boy, fansite GBA Central offers the latest news, previews, reviews, a release calendar, technical info, and interviews with developers of portable hits.



www.emulationzone.org/fanfare/ghz/—Hungry for more *Sonic* info after reading our *Sonic Heroes* cover story? Visit the Green Hill Zone for a virtual encyclopedia of all things hedgehogian, including detailed info on every *Sonic* game.

PC GAMING UPDATE

Maybe it's time you upgraded the Apple IIc



■ *Half-Life 2*

With people waiting in line up to four hours for a 20-minute demo, there was little doubt that *Half-Life 2* ruled E3. As incredible as the game looked a few months ago, it was exponentially more impressive at E3. The A.I. and physics in this game are going to set impossibly high standards, and not just because they're incredible programming feats, but because they actually make the relentless life-and-death action more immersive and threatening. Of the new monsters featured, the Strider was hands-down the winner—what's not to love about a 40-foot-tall, three-legged alien daddy longlegs that warps space right before blasting your ass? In a heart-touching show of mercy, developer Valve Software has let slip that an Xbox port will be released sometime after the PC game.

The biggest surprise of the show was Vivendi Universal's Blofeld simulator, *Evil Genius*. This wickedly humorous base-building strategy game is like *Dungeon Keeper* shot through with *No One Lives Forever's* '60s superspy style. As a budding madman, you build and booby-trap an underground fortress on a remote island, construct a death ray, and undertake nefarious missions, like stealing the Eiffel Tower. If a good guy with a license to kill happen by, you can set your stable of evil henchmen on him, subdue and torture him, and then gloat right in his face for good measure, possibly steeple-ing your fingers and outlining every last detail of your heinous plan. If only it came with a fluffy kitty for you to pet malevolently....

—Robert Coffey, Computer Gaming World



■ **A true *Evil Genius* always has plenty of these guys on-hand to do his bidding.**



The year is 2340 and more than fifty star systems are populated with colonies. But when an alien invasion threatens to put every living organism on the endangered species list, the Confederation of worlds must dispatch its elite special forces unit, code-named Brute Force. That's you. As Brute Force, you command four separate intergalactic mercenaries. The trigger-happy assault trooper, cyborg sniper, stealthy assassin and feral alien are all played by you. As you guide these shooters through 20+ missions and 6 exotic worlds, your knowledge of squad based combat will be severely tested. Depending on the danger at hand, you'll need to utilize the right Brute Force member for the job. Whether you play alone or in co-op mode, the battles escalate, the plot thickens and the violence gets addictive. It's an experience of such epic proportion that it could only exist on Xbox. Good luck. To all four of you.

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Blood

digitalANViL

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DANGEROUS ALONE DEADLY TOGETHER

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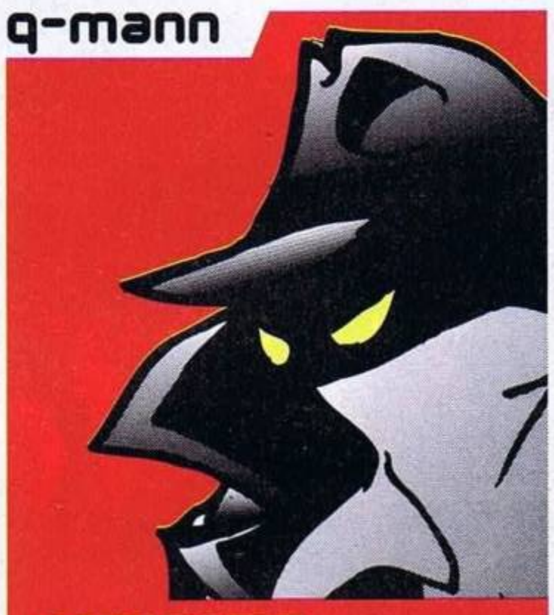
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THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that gets this party started



q-mann



SNEAKY

Konnichiwa, gamers! Welcome to another edition of the Quartermann's Rumorpalooza. Yours truly, the Q-Mann himself, shall be your host for this tour de gossip, gleaned from the musty hallways and back-alley dumpsters that me and my network of spies have access to. But enough talk…read on! And as always, if you have any comments for The Q, write to quartermann@ziffdavis.com. See you in 30! ***—The Q***



■ **Vercetti prepares for an Xbox assault.**

Grand Theft Xbox

One of the hottest rumors The Q-meister picked up this month has to do with the best-selling *Grand Theft Auto* series. While it's true that Rockstar has a deal with Sony to keep the next *GTA* PS2 exclusive, somehow a loophole's been found and word has it the illustrious series will appear on Xbox before the end of 2003—and may even include Xbox Live connectivity. Will it be a reworked version of *Vice City*? I just don't know…yet. But you heard it here first!

Nintendo's next console

Wonder why Nintendo's GameCube lineup at the E3 trade show wasn't quite as amazing as in years past (see page 30)? One of the reasons might be this li'l doozy of a rumor: Allegedly, Nintendo has already begun discussing its next console with third parties for—get this—a fall 2004 release. Guess they weren't kidding when they said they weren't going to be last next time around. Sound crazy? Hey, this is the *rumors* page, ya know. Rumors!

Big N to respond to PSP

Nintendo let Sony wrest the console market from its grasp the first time, but it isn't going to hand off the portable baton so easily. Look for Nintendo to make an announcement mid-next year about an evolved Game Boy to counter Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP—see page 42).

Talk of PSP price, games

And speaking of PSP (hey—it's the talk of the town), there's much speculation going on about its price. It won't launch at Game Boy's sub-$100 levels, that's for sure, but the $199 ballpark sounds feasible. Even more interesting is talk that Sony's licensing structure makes producing games for the thing super-cheap, so some games may retail for as low as $15!

Sequel to FFVII coming?

Ever since *Final Fantasy VII* first appeared on PlayStation, gamers have wondered if there'd ever be a direct sequel. At least that's the question every second e-mail in my inbox is asking (the other: How do you revive Aeris? People, please! She died—get over it). Now that they're doing *FFX-2*, it's possible, right? Well, prepare to flip, Cloud mavens: Current gossip indicates that *FFVII-2* is in the works for...PSP! Talk about your killer apps….

NEWS BITS

■ **Back to the future**—Mad Catz has something for those of you yearning for the days of simpler controllers. Their RetroCON controller (shown above for PS2) is coming to all systems later this summer for $25 a pop.

■ **Capcom and Disney conjure up Nightmare game**—It's been 10 years since *The Nightmare Before Christmas* hit theaters. But only now are Capcom and Disney teaming up to turn the Tim Burton stop-motion animated classic into a game, coming for PS2 in fall 2004.

■ **3DO files for bankruptcy**—This could spell the end of *Army Men* forever. But sadly, also *High Heat*.

DIGITAL DUSTBIN



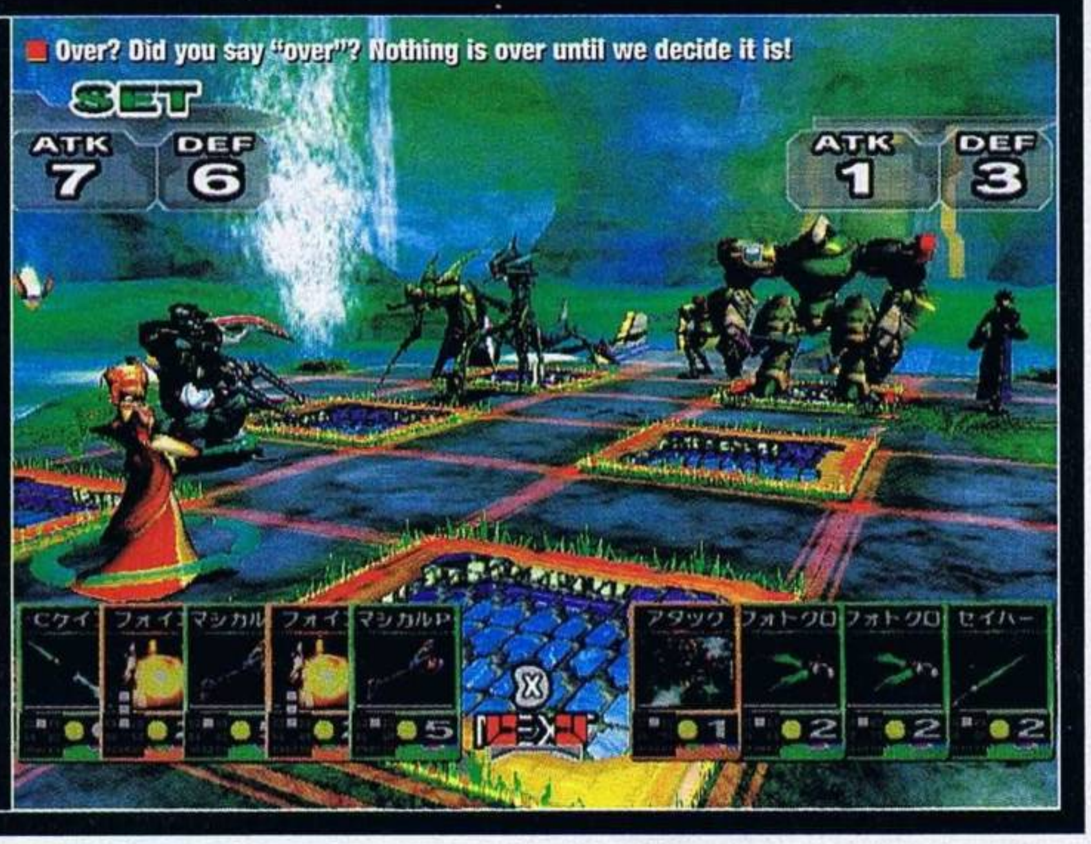
Those of us who scoured toy-store liquidation bins in the late '80s will never forget wasting a week's allowance on the ActionMax video entertainment system. The cream of ActionMax's five-game killer-app crop was *The Rescue of Pops Ghostly*. More or less a recording of someone's ride through Disneyland's Haunted Mansion, *Pops Ghostly* let you pretend to shoot at string-puppet poltergeists with a light gun. But because ActionMax's "software" were all non-interactive VHS tapes (it merely gave you points based on when you pulled the trigger), no amount of infrared lead could ever fulfill your dream of reducing Pops to a puddle of ectoplasmic goo.

believe it...or not?

Hard as it may be to accept, The Q realizes there are other sources of gaming gossip angling for your precious ear. Listen at your own risk….

What you heard: "*Phantasy Star Online* will be done, dead, nada, zilch after *Episode III C.A.R.D. Revolution* comes out."

The Q's sources say: Well, this one's half right—*Episode III* (at right) will be the last chapter…of this *PSO* story. It'll wrap up the current plot line of Red Ring Rico and Pioneer 1 and 2, but it's definitely not "over for good." Talk that Sonic Team is working on a new, full-length *PSO* has been going on for some time, but the hot tip now is that the game will feature a full, separate offline *Phantasy Star* in addition to the online adventure. Say, I'd like to play that right now….



■ **Over? Did you say "over"? Nothing is over until we decide it is!**

New Original Resident Evil ON PlayStation®2

RESIDENT EVIL®
DEAD AIM

Face your gravest fears in an all-new, nightmarish first-person action-shooter adventure for your PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. Encounter a new level of horror as you battle flesh devouring zombies and murderous mutants to regain control of a sea-jacked cruise ship lost in the Atlantic.



Intense blend of action, puzzle solving and DEAD-ON graphics

UPGRADE your weapons as you progress through the game

Supports GUNCON™2 light gun and DUALSHOCK™2 controllers

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MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

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THE HOT FIVE

You vote, we find something to write about

Vote for your most-anticipated games between the 1st and 15th of each month at www.egmmag.com.

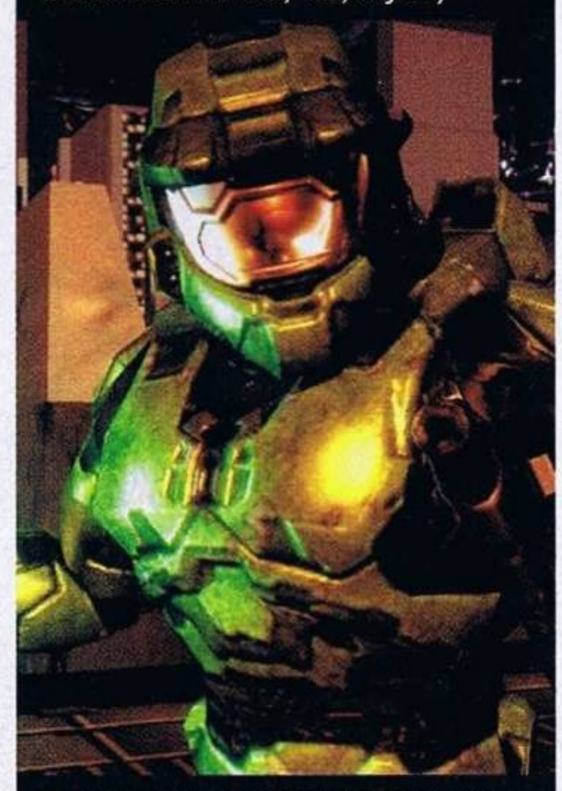
1 METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

- PlayStation 2
- Publisher: Konami
- Genre: Action
- Release: Late 2004

Lucky Electronic Entertainment Expo attendees walked away from Konami's big-screen *MGS3* demo with a collectible folder full of goodies: a seven-page kit for assembling folded-paper versions of Metal Gear Rex (from *MGS1*) and a "classified mech" for *MGS3* (which looks a lot like an old Soviet mobile missile launcher); teaser cards for GameCube's *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* and GBA's *Boktai*; and a black briefing file on *MGS3*. The file explains, as creator Hideo Kojima said in his interview with us on page 38, that the team is listening to what fans want in *MGS3*. That's great, but what's with the snake-eating stuff, Kojima-san? This is *Metal Gear*, not Iron Chef.



We bet you can bid on these "secret files" on eBay. Be prepared to offer up your first-born chil' for them, though.

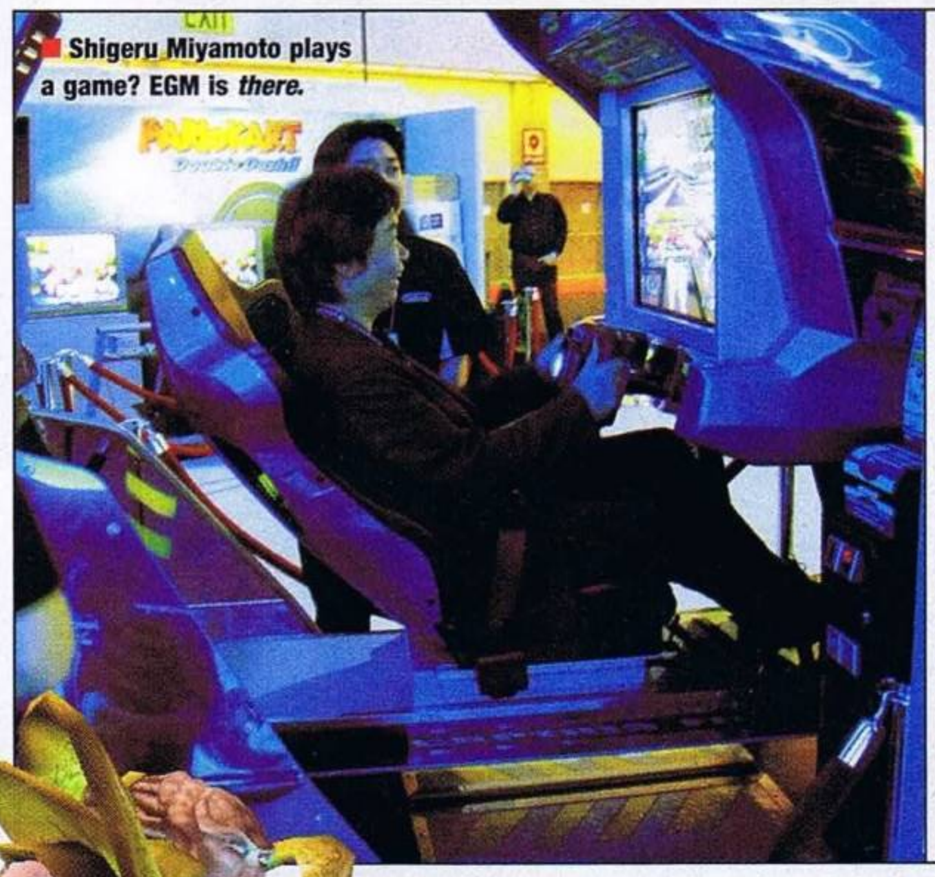


2 HALO 2

- Xbox
- Publisher: Microsoft
- Genre: Action
- Release: Early 2004

Seriously, you can vote for something new any time now. We've got ***Halo 2*** covered like a blanket on page 44. But here are two extra peeks, since you asked nicely.... (And since we have space, we want to tell you about this *great* fan fiction story we're writing. OK! So Chief walks into Cortana's room and the music's all *boom-chugga-boom*. And he's like, "So, *hey*....")

Covenant forces? Meet Master Chief. For those of you about to die, we at *EGM* salute you.



Shigeru Miyamoto plays a game? EGM is *there*.

3 F-ZERO GX

- GameCube
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Genre: Racing
- Release: August 25, 2003

Spotted just before the show floor opened at E3: Nintendo's famed designer Shigeru Miyamoto quietly but enthusiastically playtesting Sega's superb *F-Zero AX*, which is nearly identical to the arcade title *F-Zero GX*. (The deluxe *AX* cabinet uses a high-definition display and a moving chassis to envelope players.) Two surprises: Not only did he display incredible technique by pulling off a first-place finish on the game's challenging Aeropolis stage, but he also entered an interesting code name for his driver: "Miyahon." (Long-time Nintendo players and obsessive freaks may recognize this as the errant translation of Miyamoto's name that appeared in the credits of the original *Legend of Zelda* release in the United States, back before he became world-famous. Cute.)



4 STARCRAFT: GHOST

- PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube
- Publisher: VU Games
- Genre: Action
- Release: Early 2004

You can't wait for *Ghost*, and who can blame you? From what we've seen, vaunted developer Nihilistic is staying true to Blizzard's *Starcraft* universe while creating a *GoldenEye* and *Tomb Raider* hybrid that "feels just right," exciting even those unfamiliar with its PC predecessor. (The upside-down sniper mode is especially cool.) It's been pushed to 2004 in order to perfect its 25 distinct levels (including "iconic *Starcraft* locales such as Aiur and Char"), but we're not complaining.



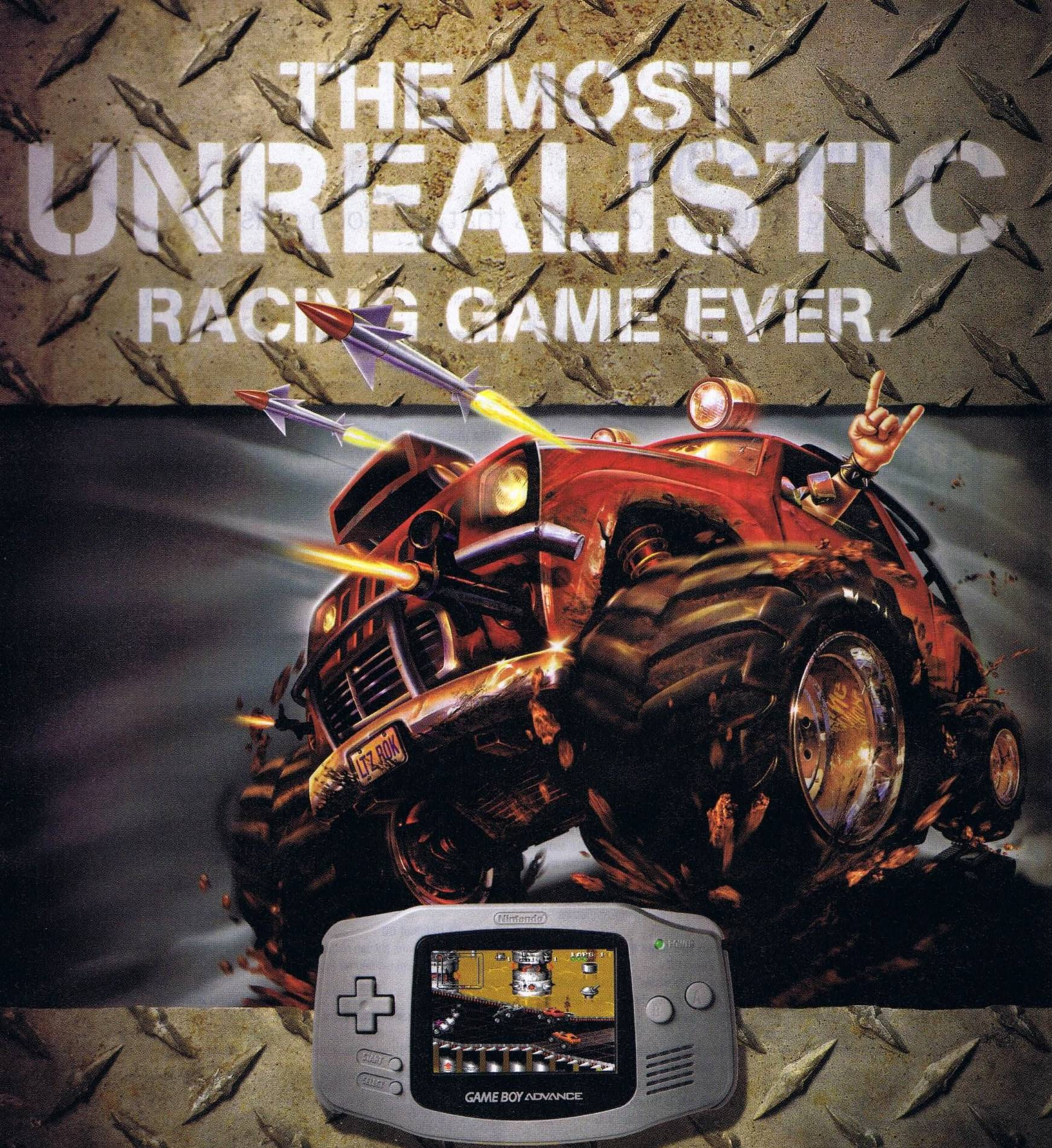
5 STAR FOX 2

- GameCube
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Genre: Action
- Release: TBD

Star Fox Armada? *Star Fox 2*? Whatever the name, the story's the same: Namco has plenty to improve before release (see page 90). We've heard that, although Namco and Nintendo's unusual partnership requires *Star Fox*'s team to be separated from other Namco workers, staffers have been drifting in and out of team *Star Fox* for a while now. Judging by the lame early version on display at the show, we don't blame them.

>> TWO CLASSIC BRAWLERS WILL STAGE COMEBACKS ON THE GAME BOY ADVANCE THIS WINTER: *DOUBLE DRAGON ADVANCE* AND *RIVER CITY RANSOM EX*, BOTH FROM ATLUS.... >>

THE MOST UNREALISTIC RACING GAME EVER.



Heavily armed renegade racing on 29 interplanetary tracks.

ROCK 'N ROLL RACING™

The Blizzard classic. Now on Nintendo Game Boy® Advance.

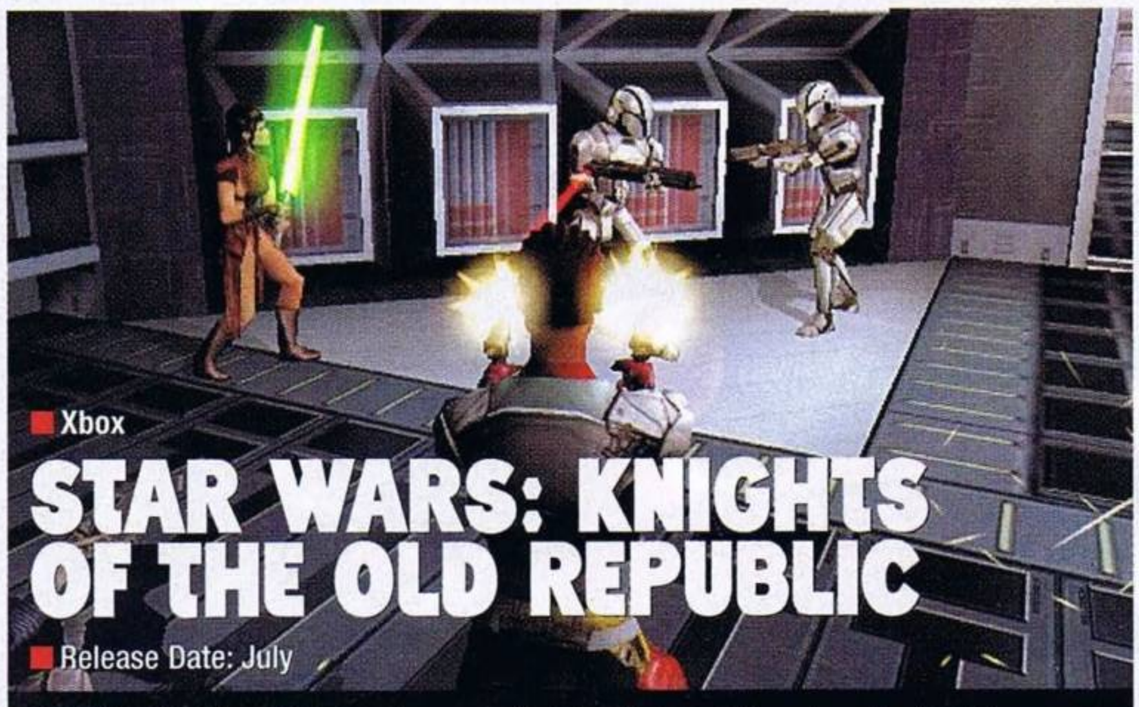
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Violence

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BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT CLASSIC ARCADE

COMING SOON

The looming avalanche of games that will soon crush you



Xbox

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Release Date: July

(RPG) In this Xbox RPG, you become a light or dark Jedi based on the decisions you make. We suggest dousing Chewie's love child, Lumpy, with Nair to join the dark side

JULY

Ape Escape 2 (Action) PS2
Collect quirky gizmos to corral a troop of time-traveling simians

Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits (RPG) PS2
This *Arc* ups the ante in the combat, story, and visual departments

Chaos Legion (Action) PS2
Hack-and-slash your way through an anime-inspired creature collection

Dinotopia (Action) Xbox, GC
The extinct TV series based on the book will soon hatch on consoles. Make way: license coming through!

Disgaea: Hour of Darkness (RPG) PS2
Use a little strategy—and a little role-playing—to help heir-to-the-throne Prince Laharl reclaim his Netherworld crown

Downhill Domination (Racing) PS2
Streak past alpine scenery and more ads per square foot than Times Square

DroneZ (Action) Xbox
In the future, Frisbees will replace firearms and the letter S will become obsolete

Fugitive Hunter (Action) PS2
Instead of capping crooks, this hit man with a conscience captures 'em

The Great Escape (Action) Xbox
Old-school movie star Steve McQueen stages a WWII POW jailbreak

Ice Nine (Action) PS2
It's the new trend: a first-person shooter with stealthy gameplay. Sounds like something that Robocop would disapprove of, eh?

K-1 World Grand Prix (Fighting) PS2
Like *Pride FC* minus the man-pretzels

Madden NFL 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC
John's "Maddenisms" continue to baffle us, but we're confident he'll release another gridiron classic

NCAA Football 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC
The game tens of thousands of college frat boys will play in between keg-stands on Saturdays for months to come

Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII (Strategy) PS2
Nothing says "romance" like feudal warlords brandishing sharp objects in a menacing manner—*strategically*, of course

Shrek: Reekin' Havoc (Action) GBA
Like the title says, this GBA game promises to stink. Or at least the last one did

Smash Cars (Racing) PS2
Race RC cars among real-world hazards—why is that brown mountain steaming?

Tetris Online (Puzzle) Xbox
Shouldn't this have come with the Xbox Live Starter Kit?

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder (Action) Xbox
This squad-based shooter features both all-new maps and some of your favorites from the original *Ghost Recon*

XGRA (Racing) Xbox, GC
The latest round of *Extreme G* racing piles insane speed on sinuous, corkscrewing tracks. Not pronounced "EX-GRA"

AUGUST

Alter Echo (Action) PS2, Xbox
Meet Nevin, a shapeshifting third-person action hero with the ability to slow time

Silent Line: Armored Core (Action) PS2
Lumbering mechs lumber once again onto PlayStation 2, although presumably this time they're quieter

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC
Now that the TV show is over, this is the only *Buffy* action you'll be getting

Choplifter: Crisis Shield (Action) PS2
The one-time gunship has gone strictly search and rescue

Freaky Flyers (Racing) PS2, Xbox, GC
Think *Diddy Kong Racing* with airplanes, body wax, and breast implants

F-Zero GX (Racing) GC
It pioneered the genre, but can Nintendo's antigrav racer reclaim the trophy? Pretty frigging likely

Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward (Action) PS2
Don't confuse this PS2-exclusive action-adventure with October's Xbox-exclusive action-adventure *Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer.* It's *a lot* different

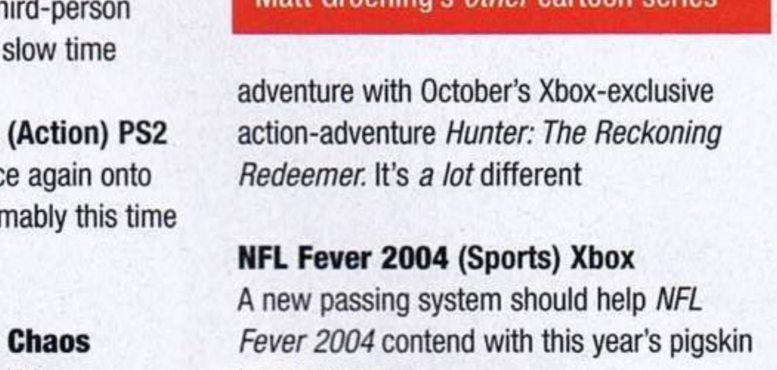
NFL Fever 2004 (Sports) Xbox
A new passing system should help *NFL Fever 2004* contend with this year's pigskin heavy hitters

Silent Hill 3 (Adventure) PS2
Order within the next 24 hours and get a month of complimentary psychotherapy

Soul Calibur II (Fighting) PS2, Xbox, GC
The sequel to the world's finest weapons-based fighter finally hits America. (Expect an in-depth look at the game next issue.)

Splashdown 2: Rides Gone Wild (Racing) PS2
Would you buy anything with "gone wild" in the title?

Star Trek: Shattered Universe (Action) PS2, Xbox
Classic *Trek*'s mission to seek out green-skinned seductresses continues

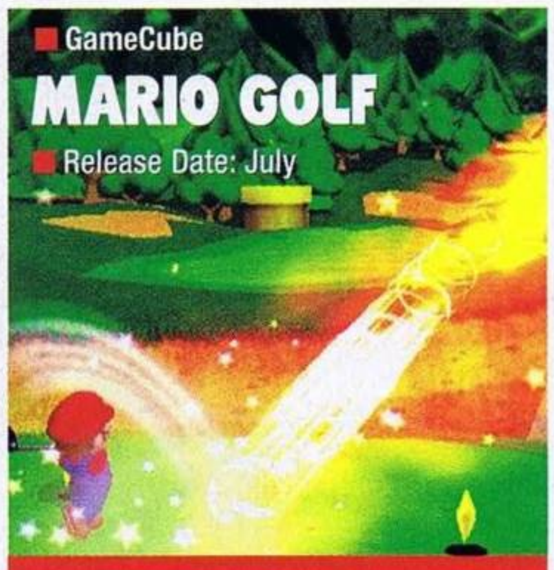


PlayStation 2, Xbox

FUTURAMA: THE GAME

Release Date: August

(Action) Play as each member of the Planet Express team in an attempt to save Earth from a maniacal businesswoman in this videogame rendition of Matt Groening's *other* cartoon series



GameCube

MARIO GOLF

Release Date: July

(Sports) Further evidence that everything's more fun with a mustachioed plumber. As if you needed more proof



Xbox

DINO CRISIS 3

Release Date: July

(Action) Inspired by B-movie favorite Jason Voorhees, dinosaurs hijack a starship. OK, not really, but the story is equally preposterous. We can't play any of these games without saying, *"I'm having a dino crisis!"*

Nine essential nutrients for my one essential body.

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got milk?®

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER THE CRADLE OF LIFE

In theaters July 25

A New Class of Monkey



Pink Monkey
Most Likely to Be a Pop Star



El Toro
Most Likely to Grab the Bull by the Horns



Harley Q. Win
Most Likely to Annoy the King



Billy
Most Likely to Get a Speeding Ticket



Monko Polo
Most Likely to Find a Legendary Banana



Natalie
Most Likely to Lose Her Wits



Marshall
Most Likely to Punch the Ref



Larry
Most Likely to Step in Monkey Poo



Mr. White
Most Likely to Be an Evil Scientist



Balboa
Most Likely to Live in a Meat Locker



Norman
Most Likely to Drive a Humvee



Specter
Most Likely to Take Over the World





EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Violence

Ubi Soft
ENTERTAINMENT

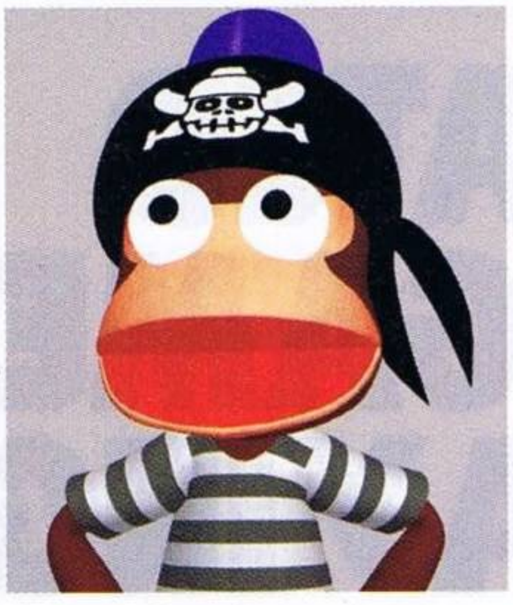
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Catching Madness



Leo
Most Likely to Catch a Fever



Stephenson
Most Likely to Walk the Plank



Jimmy
Most Likely to Save the World



George
Most Likely to Be Inquisitive



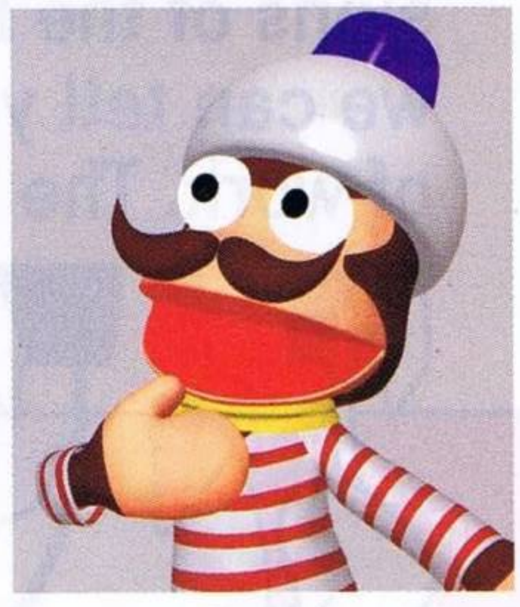
Buzz
Most Likely to Be Lost in Space



Arthur
Most Likely to Get Pierced



Parka
Most Likely to Chill



Punto
Most Likely to Sink the Gondola



Cleo
Most Likely to Walk Like an Egyptian



Yellow Monkey
Most Likely to Be a Pro Wrestler

Libby
Most Likely to Swim to Ellis Island

Spud
Most Likely to Be a Hypnotist

300 monkeys. They're smarter. They're zanier.
And they're trying to take over the world.

PlayStation®2



OUR OPINIONATED GUIDE TO THE GAMES YOU'LL BE PLAYING NEXT

At this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, we played early versions of the biggest games coming out over the next year, so now we can tell you what's looking good and what needs a hell of a lot of work. The kid gloves are off....



KEY

PLAYSTATION 2 | XBOX | GAMECUBE | MULTIPLATFORM

FANTASTIC
If this game were a horse, we'd bet money on it. A lot of it.

GOOD
This game looks really promising. It's definitely one to watch out for.

BORING
The demo we played at E3 failed to inspire us.

BAD
Drastic changes are needed for this game to be worth your money.

Please note: These "ratings" are based on the early, incomplete demos that were on display at E3. Any of our opinions are subject to radical change when the final product comes out.





■ Playing as a stylish character makes the *FFXI* experience a good one. (Taking on the persona of a butt-ugly character in *EverQuest* simply isn't good for your self-esteem.)





■ Boss encounters can get really nasty. Luckily, you can hook up with as many as 15 friends to fight really heinous baddies.

FINAL FANTASY XI

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ Developer: Squaresoft ■ Release: Early 2004

THE BASICS:

For a while, the chances of *FFXI* coming to America seemed slim. But somehow, the planets have aligned: PS2 gamers will experience the massively multiplayer online RPG in early 2004. Why the delay? Chalk it up to the HDD, the PlayStation 2 hard-drive unit that users need in order to play the game. Rolling this prohibitive peripheral out to consumers won't be easy, and Sony isn't discussing a price just yet. (A small monthly fee will also be required to play.) For our money, we'd like to see a $99.99 *FFXI* and *HDD* package deal.

HOW WAS IT?

My skepticism looms large after *EverQuest* for the PS2, but *FFXI* seems primed to not suck. Snazzy visuals, cool characters, and the ability to play with PC *FFXI* owners (and Japanese players, too) all pique my interest. I'm not entirely hooked on the semiautomatic combat, but it's admittedly better than *EQ*'s. With intricate character customization, a complex job system, and more than 100 areas to visit, the addiction factor—and subsequent chance for embarrassing online weddings—increases exponentially. —*Shane Bettenhausen*



■ It's *Castlevania* in 3D...and it's good. Really.





CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

■ Pub: Konami ■ Dev: Konami Tokyo ■ Rel: November 2003

THE BASICS:

Last month, we dug deep into *Lament of Innocence*, the first PS2 *Castlevania*. It's still progressing nicely. The team behind cult classic *Symphony of the Night* (PS1) is slaving away in its laboratory, ensuring a timely fall release.

HOW WAS IT?

Don't write *Lament* off as a *Devil May Cry* wannabe based on screens alone. I've played it, and its instinctive, addictive gameplay, creative levels, and amazing artistry guarantee greatness. —*Shane Bettenhausen*



Illustrations by Shawn Smith and Matt Vincent

GRAN TURISMO 4

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ Developer: Polyphony Digital
■ Release: Early 2004

THE BASICS:

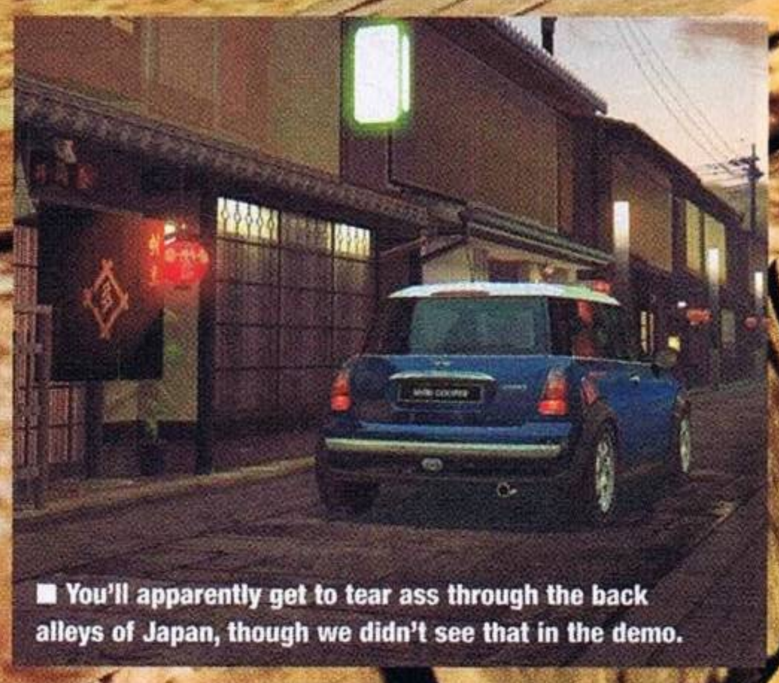
It's *Gran Turismo*, it's online, and you may commence sweating. Sony boasts that *GT4* will include more than 500 cars and 50 tracks (though we suspect that's inflated by stuff like eight trim levels' worth of Fairlady Zs and night/day versions of the same course), including a New York City course and real-world racetracks like Japan's Tsukuba circuit. Serious tinkering with the physics engine, hailed by Polyphony Digital Director Kazunori Yamauchi as "the first major refinement in *Gran Turismo* history," should make driving easier and more realistic—in-game and real-life lap times around Tsukuba in a Honda S2000 differed by just .4 seconds. Yamauchi also promised improved driver A.I., which will exhibit more humanlike behavior, such as learning from its mistakes and actually avoiding your car instead of ramming into it.

Expect an all-new Museum mode, the triumphant return of used-car dealers, and possibly, according to Yamauchi, cosmetic customization options à la *Auto Modellista*. Few details about online modes have been revealed, but we know the six-cars-per-race maximum will remain in effect. Unfortunately, voice chat has been confirmed as a no-go.

HOW WAS IT?

The E3 demo had three playable tracks: Tsukuba, NYC, and Grand Canyon (a rally course). The extensive car list included 23 models on the NYC track alone, ranging from classic muscle like the Barracuda to the Le Mans–trim Mazda RX-8 racer. If this truncated lineup is any indication, we'll see more North American cars than ever before—but who wants to race a Pontiac GXP or Vibe GT (both of which were in the demo)?

The most striking changes are visual, as you can see from this shot of the Grand Canyon course. But one thing screenshots can't convey is the amount of suspension travel the cars exhibit—especially on the rally courses, where they seem to bounce constantly on the bumpy track. On the road, the cars handled much as they do in *A-Spec*, although the dirt-course racing felt much improved and on par with the best rally games. The promised A.I. tweaks weren't, alas, apparent in what I played, and I could still bounce off cars with impunity when I went into a corner too quickly, but Yamauchi says that'll change in the final release. —*Demian Linn*

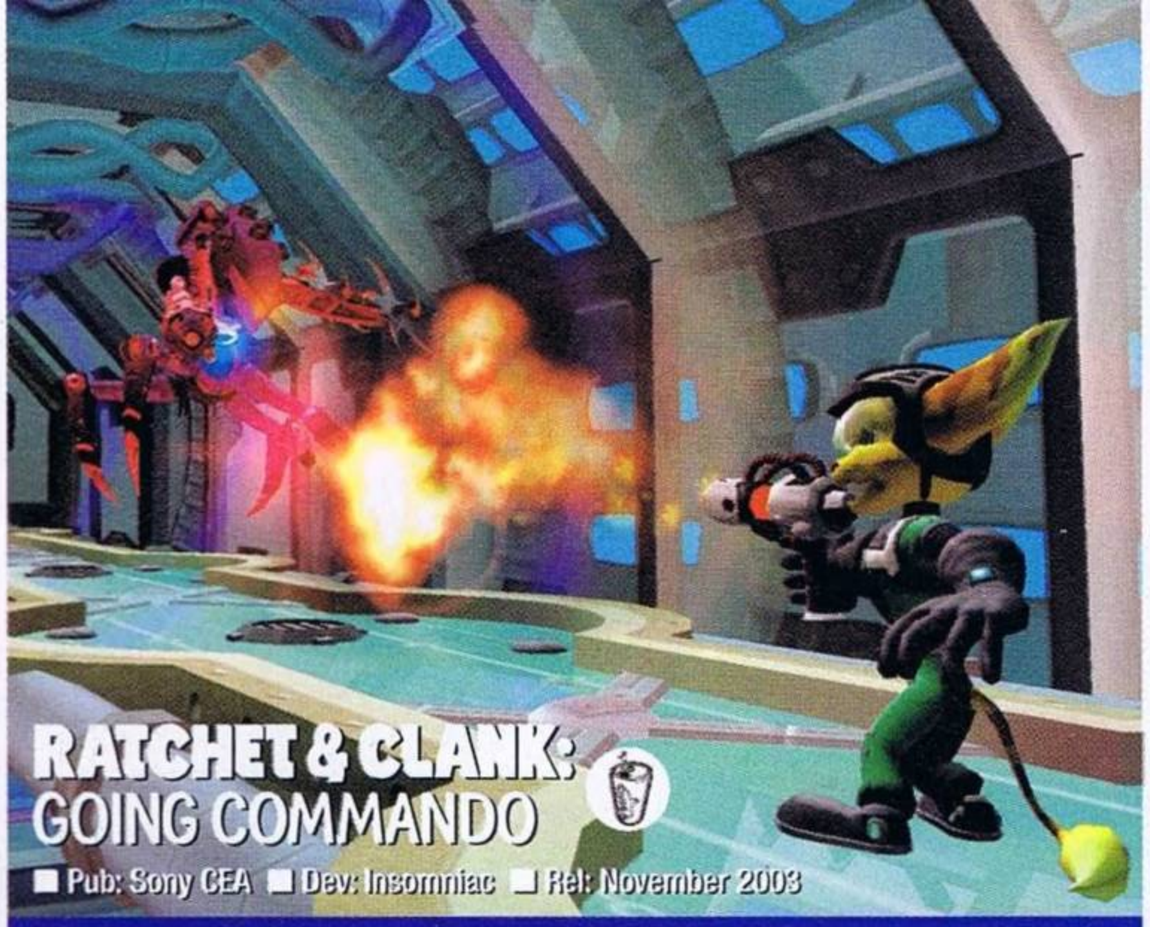


■ You'll apparently get to tear ass through the back alleys of Japan, though we didn't see that in the demo.





■ We don't remember a rally course on the lip of the Grand Canyon, but we're not arguing.



RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

■ Pub: Sony CEA ■ Dev: Insomniac ■ Rel: November 2003



■ Ratchet "goes astronaut" on one of the worlds' many moons.

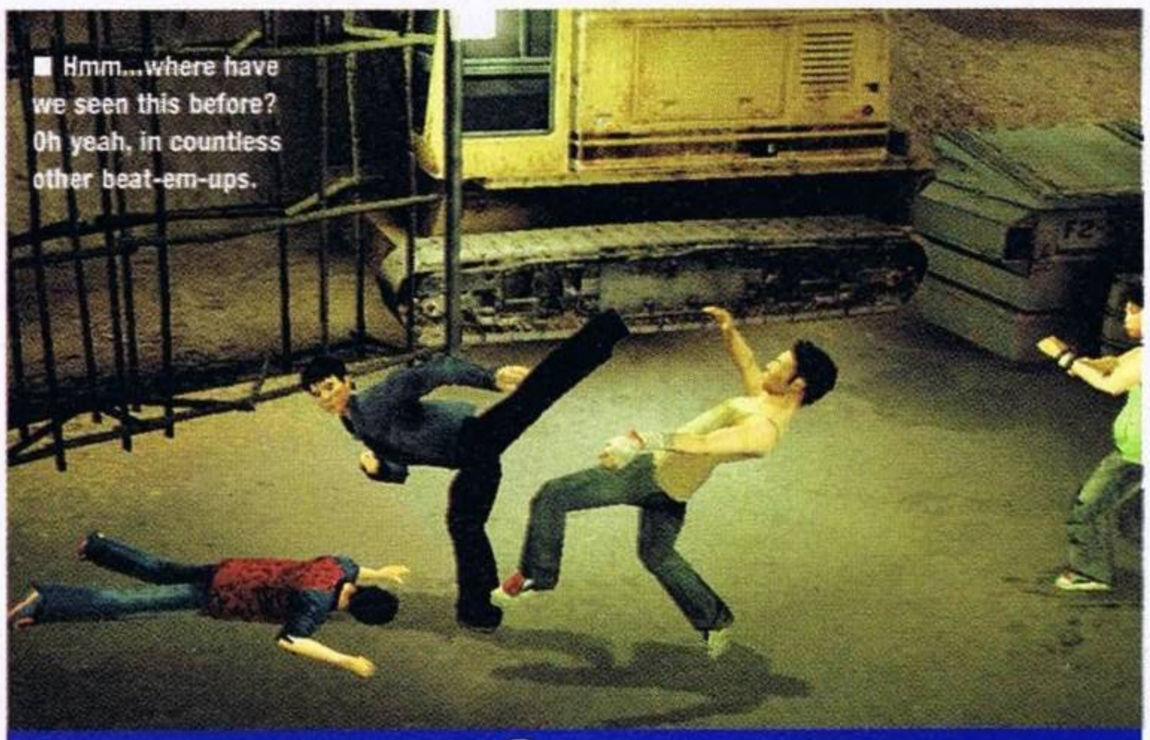


THE BASICS:

Ratchet and his bucket-o'-bolts buddy Clank are back for more in *Going Commando*, which picks up where the last adventure left off. Ratchet, now a full-fledged commando, travels to the Bogon galaxy to accept a mission for his new boss, Abercrombie Fizzwidget, CEO of Megacorp. Naturally, chaos ensues.

HOW WAS IT?

The first *Ratchet* was plenty fun, and since this is pretty much the same game with tweaks and enhancements—like experience-based gameplay and a new weapon-upgrading system—I'm looking forward to it. One thing worries me, though: I hear the amount of time you play as Clank hasn't increased. I want more, dagnabbit! —*Chris Johnston*



■ Hmm...where have we seen this before? Oh yeah, in countless other beat-em-ups.

RISE TO HONOR

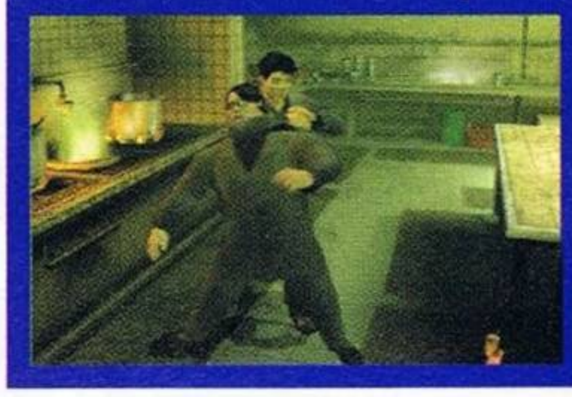
■ Pub: Sony CEA ■ Dev: Sony Foster City ■ Rel: January 2004

THE BASICS:

You're kung fu superstar Jet Li, and you're not interested in having dim sum with the thugs in this beat-em-up.

HOW WAS IT?

Rise's claim to fame is its 360-degree fighting, whereby you use the right analog stick to hit anyone in any direction. Sounds cool—but at heart, this felt like just a ho-hum button masher (well, technically a control-stick masher) with some gunplay. It's going to need more variety to rise to "fun." —*Shoe*







■ Walk softly and carry a large lightsaber.

VECTORMAN

■ Pub: Sega ■ Dev: Pseudo ■ Rel: Early 2004

THE BASICS:

Sega brings *Vectorman* back from the Genesis scrap heap in this new PS2 actioner. This time, Vectorman is searching for his creator, Aura, while saving his homeland from a maniacal dictator.

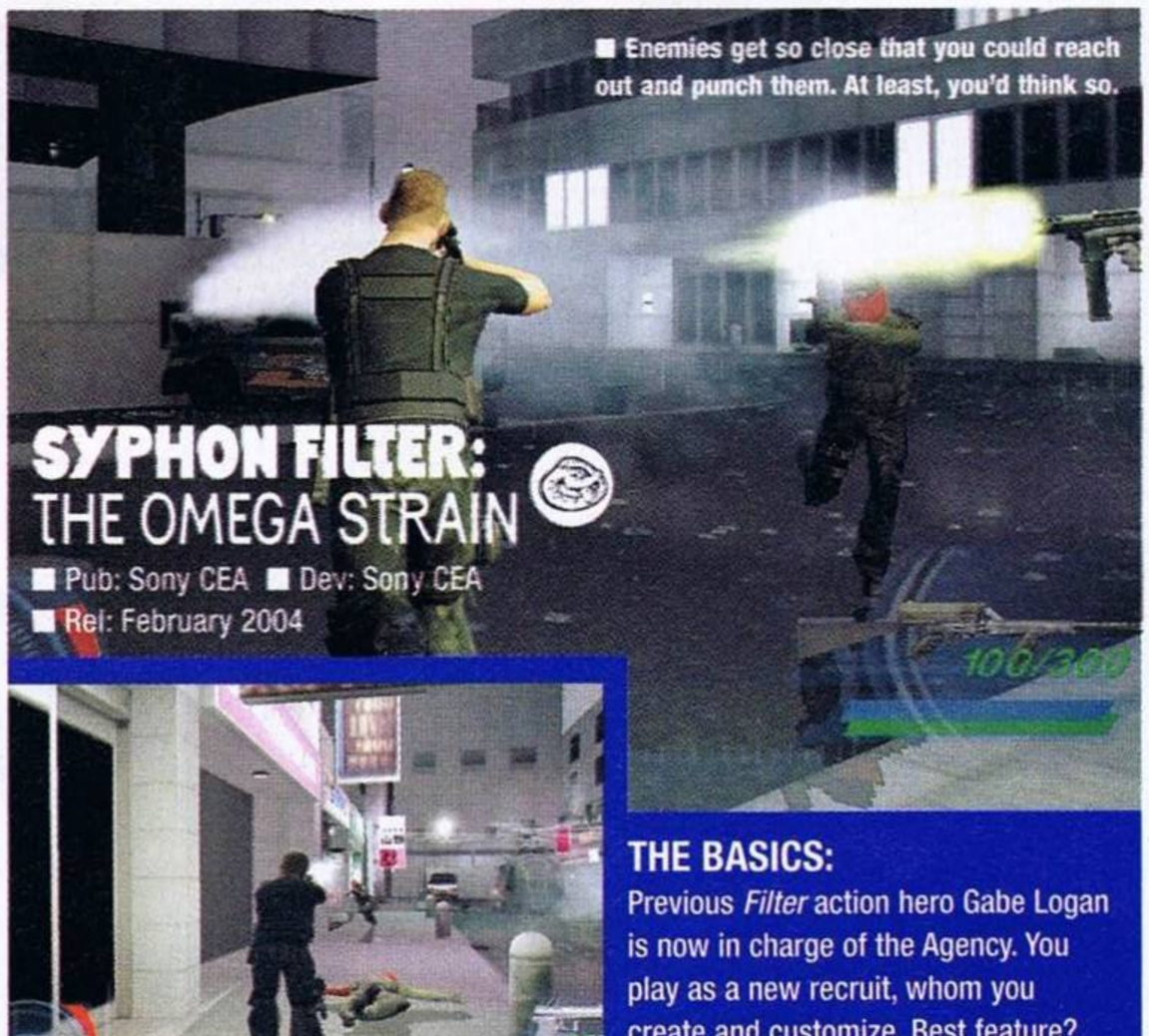
HOW WAS IT?

It's still early, but ol' V-man isn't looking so hot. The visuals were dull and lackluster, and the gameplay felt like a garbled mix of *Ratchet & Clank* and *Red Faction*. —*Chris Johnston*









■ Enemies get so close that you could reach out and punch them. At least, you'd think so.

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

■ Pub: Sony CEA ■ Dev: Sony CEA
■ Rel: February 2004





THE BASICS:

Previous *Filter* action hero Gabe Logan is now in charge of the Agency. You play as a new recruit, whom you create and customize. Best feature? Tackle the game's 13 missions alone or with up to three other players online (broadband only).

HOW WAS IT?

It's not a positive sign when the shooting in a game based around gunplay gets repetitive. And the inability to hit nearby enemies while waiting to reload makes the game feel dated already. Prognosis: It's good that February is so far off. —*Joe Fielder*



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■ Once you're infected, you'll slowly turn into a zombie unless you get treatment.





RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

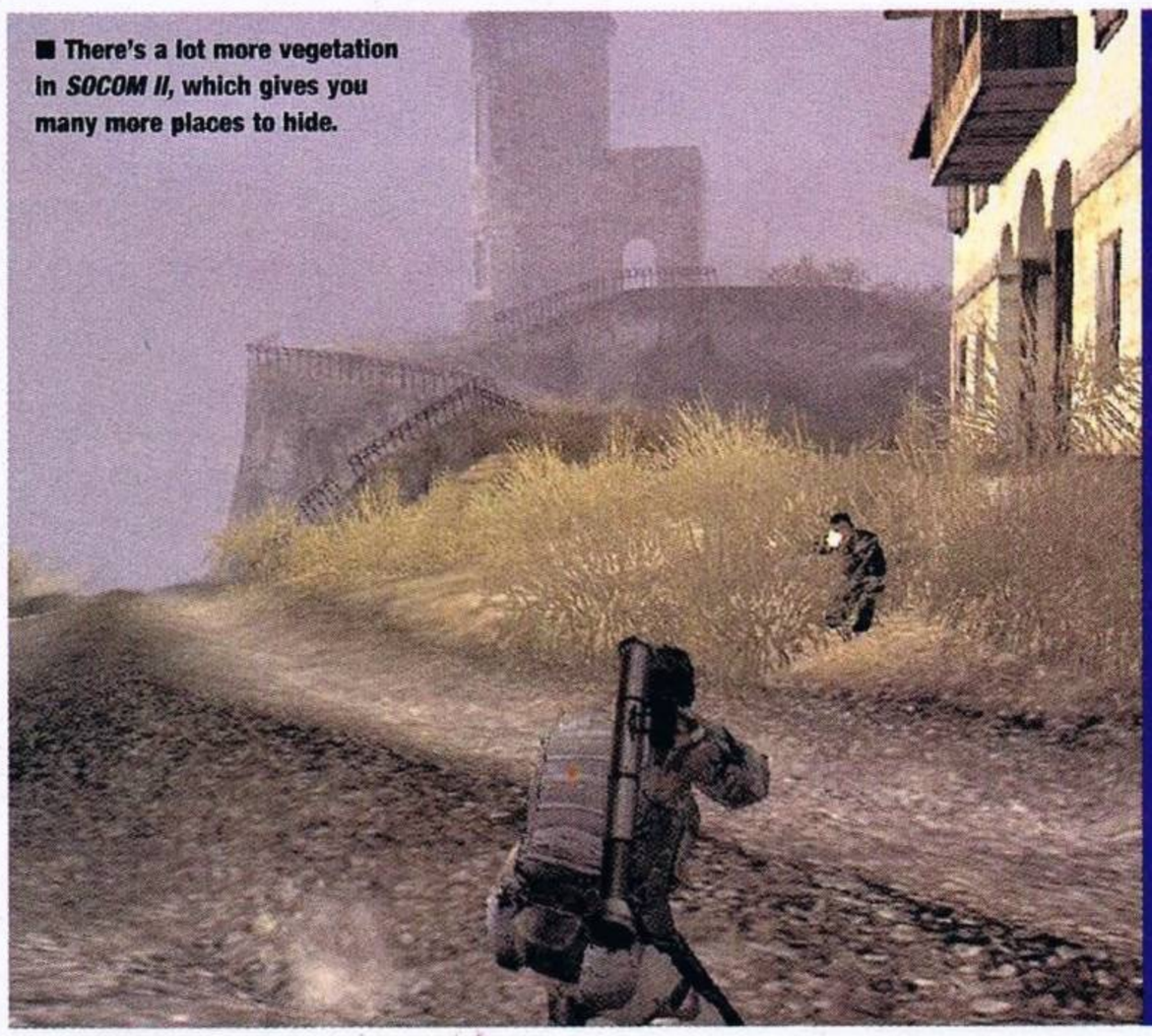
■ Pub: Capcom ■ Dev: Capcom ■ Rel: Winter 2003

THE BASICS:

You like to play with yourself. That's OK—it's a perfectly normal, natural thing. It's also why Capcom dumped *Outbreak*'s old name (*Resident Evil Online*) and added single-player capability to this fully 3D horror adventure. Up to four gamers can still play together over the Net, using teamwork and good ol' fashioned violence to solve puzzles and fight the undead. Or, if you like, you can play the same game solo, with the computer controlling your three partners. (In fact, it might be more fun that way, depending on who you're playing with.)

HOW WAS IT?

The different characters' (there are eight) abilities and points of view on the same events (think *RE2*) are a clever hook, the graphics look sharp, and the whole teamwork vibe is something new that *RE* desperately needs. Only the inexplicable lack of voice chat or a virtual keyboard—you can communicate only through frustrating context-sensitive phrases the game chooses for you—kept my excitement in check. *—Mark MacDonald*



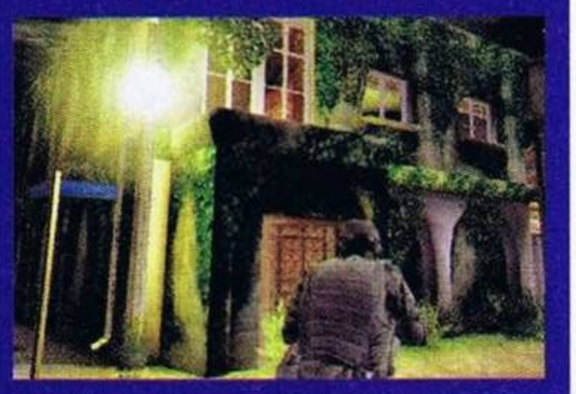
■ There's a lot more vegetation in *SOCOM II*, which gives you many more places to hide.

SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

■ Pub: Sony CEA ■ Dev: Zipper ■ Rel: November 2003

THE BASICS:

"Our SEALs are uglier this time," says Zipper Interactive Creative Director David Sears. "But that's good—it means they're more realistic." And realism drives every improvement to this squad-based-shooter sequel. Computer-controlled troopers, both allies and enemies, are brainier. "They'll run to seek cover and reload when their ammo runs low," Sears says. You get new shotgun and rocket-launcher weapon classes. Best of all, Zipper is pulling double duty to make sure the online game—which also packs all the maps from the first game—is cheat resistant.



■ If you stay stealthy and eavesdrop, you can learn info to help you in later missions.

HOW WAS IT?

I could argue that most of *SOCOM II*'s improvements should have been in the first game to begin with, but I had too good of a time playing the more urbanized maps online, coordinating air strikes with the new radio towers, and storming the enemies' fortress in the Breach mode. My one gripe: Manning the new gun emplacements makes you a sitting duck. *—Crispin Boyer*



■ You wouldn't like Jak when he's angry. Like, say, now





JAK II

■ Pub: Sony CEA ■ Dev: Naughty Dog ■ Rel: September 2003

THE BASICS:

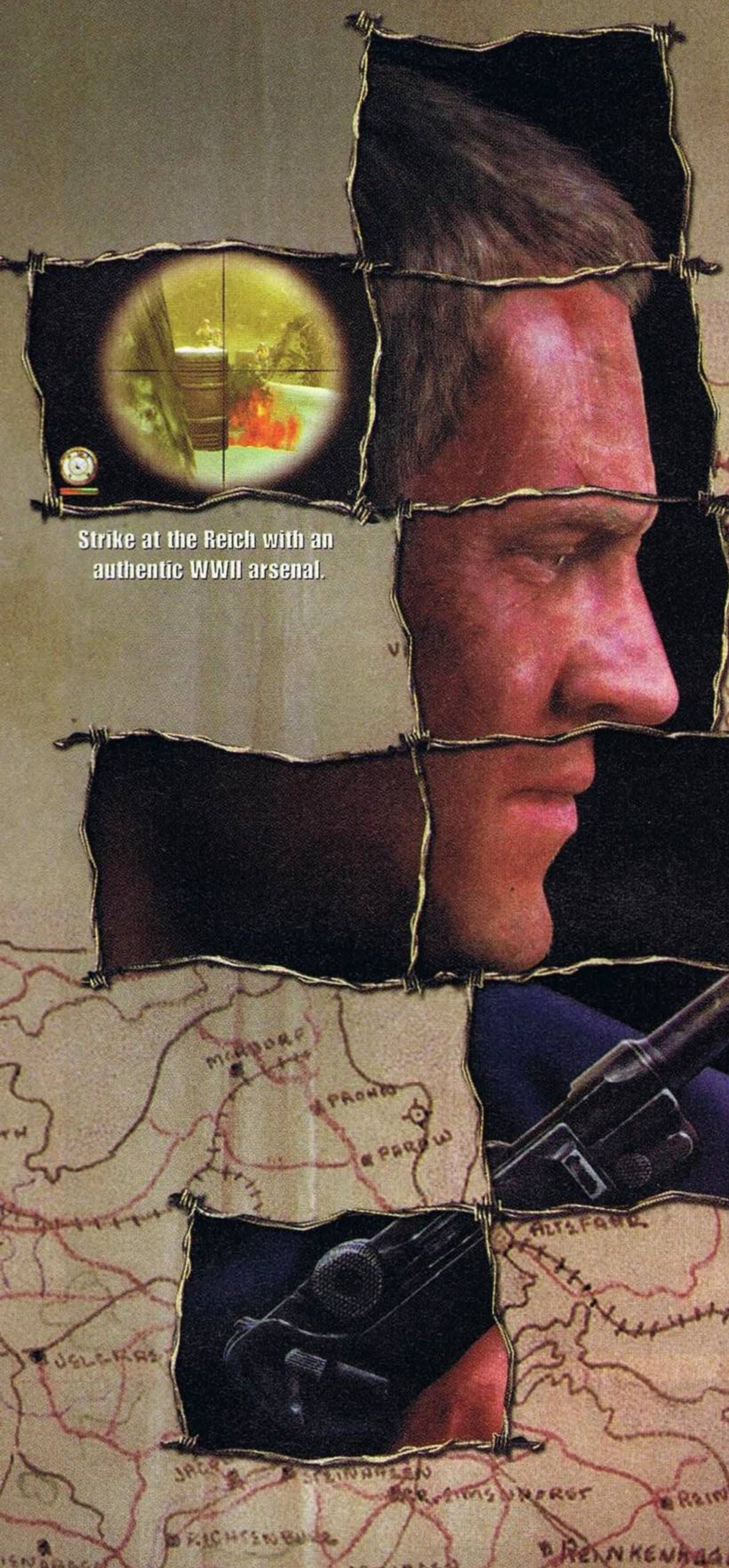
In the sequel to spirited PS2 platformer *Jak and Daxter*, Jak grows up, picks up an arsenal of weapons, and takes up residence in a living, breathing futuristic city. Oh, and he talks now, too.

HOW WAS IT?

Somehow this game feels like the original *Jak and Daxter*—and completely fresh and new at the same time. I'm happy to report that it's not dark for dark's sake or the *Grand Theft Auto* clone it might seem at first. It's got the last game's inventive puzzles, great timing, excellent vehicle physics, and a spot-on camera, but now there's shooting and even more variety. I can't wait to get my hands on the completed game. *—Joe Fielder*

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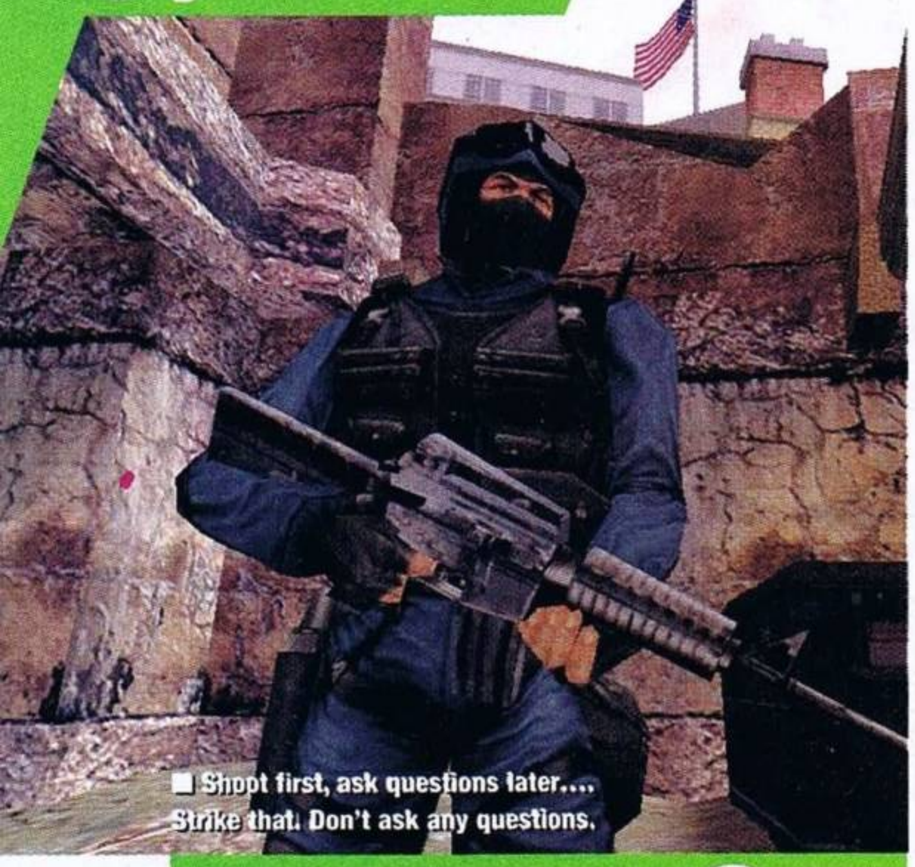
MGM INTERACTIVE

GOTHAM GAMES

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■ Shoot first, ask questions later.... Strike that. Don't ask any questions.

COUNTER-STRIKE

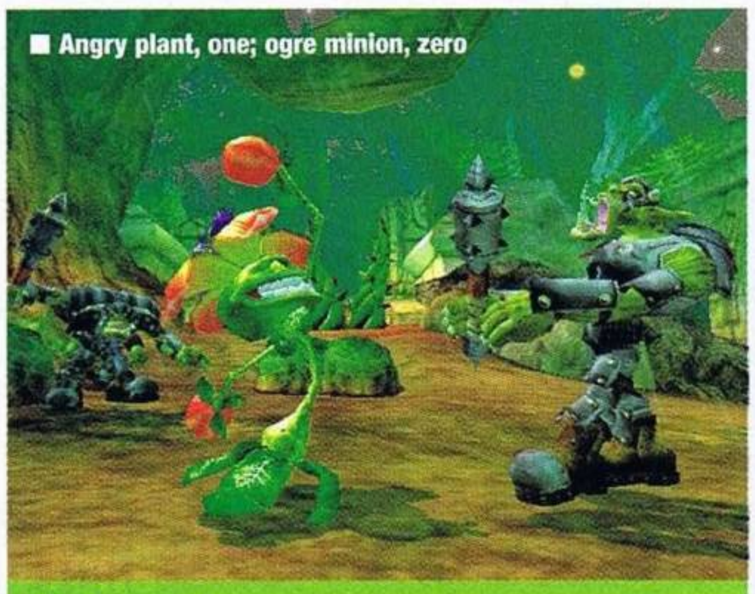
■ Pub: Microsoft ■ Dev: Valve/Ritual
■ Rel: Winter 2003

THE BASICS:

Originally a user-created *Half-Life* add-on, *Counter-Strike* has become the most popular online PC game. Now, the first-person shooter's team-based combat comes to the console world via Xbox Live.

HOW WAS IT?

The PC game's realistic weapons and balanced maps are complemented by new gadgets, some graphical polish, and built-in voice communication. Tight joypad controls substituted admirably for the traditional mouse/keyboard setup. Fragtastic. *—Paul Byrnes*



■ Angry plant, one; ogre minion, zero

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

■ Pub: Microsoft ■ Dev: Rare ■ Rel: Spring 2004

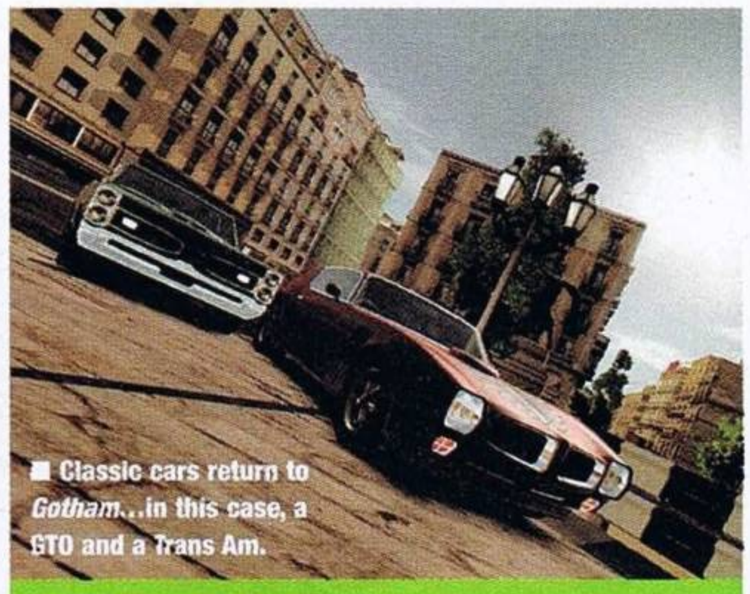
THE BASICS:

Join shape-shifting Kameo as she captures and transforms herself into various beasts in order to rescue her ancestors from the Troll King in this action-platformer.

HOW WAS IT?

Kameo was first announced three years ago, and it's *still* a long way off. Not a good sign. It tries to be a more action-oriented *Pokémon*, but it seems more interested in the means than the end—catching and raising a monster to squeeze through a tight doorway just isn't entertaining. *—Chris Johnston*





■ Classic cars return to *Gotham*...in this case, a GTO and a Trans Am.

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

■ Pub: Microsoft ■ Dev: Bizarre Creations
■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

Double the cars, all-new tracks (including Chicago, Florence, Barcelona, Edinburgh, and Moscow), and eight-player Xbox Live races are the big improvements for this sequel. You'll also be able to race against the world-record holder for each course, thanks to the magic of downloadable ghost cars.

HOW WAS IT?

Wicked, so far. The game looked and played like a finished product, although the demo had only 10 cars and a handful of tracks. *—Demian Linn*



XBOX





■ That lightsaber's headin' straight to where the sun don't shine.

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

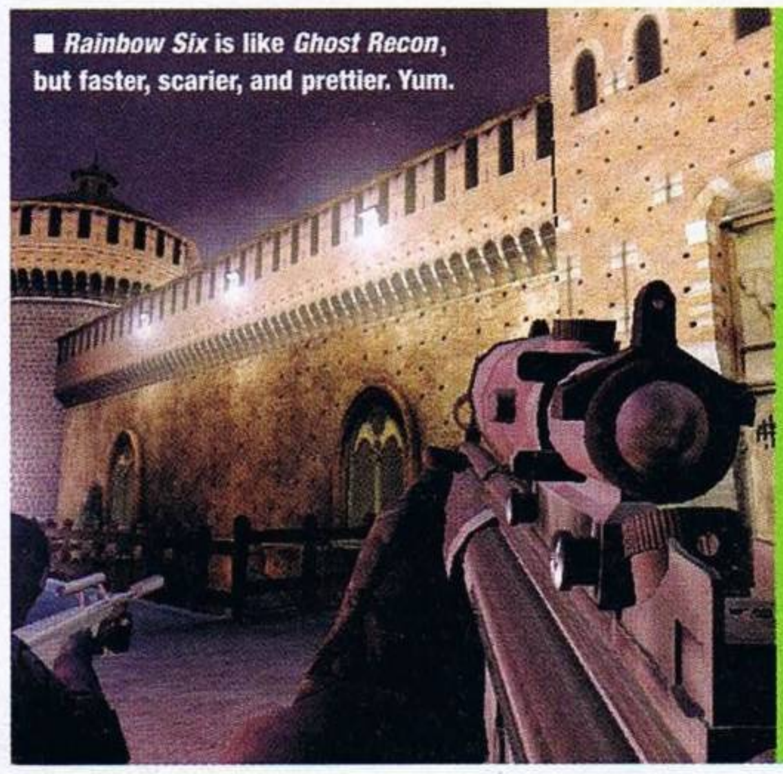
■ Pub: LucasArts ■ Dev: Raven
■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

Train at Master Skywalker's Padawan ranch and complete missions in the single-player campaign. Then, test your Jedi skills online in versus or cooperative play.

HOW WAS IT?

It's apparent after playing the demo that *Jedi Academy* will retain the excellent puzzle elements of previous *Jedi Knight* games. I'm also psyched for combat that focuses on lightsabers and Force powers to battle Sith scum and towering rancor creatures. *—Bryan Intihar*



■ *Rainbow Six* is like *Ghost Recon*, but faster, scarier, and prettier. Yum.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

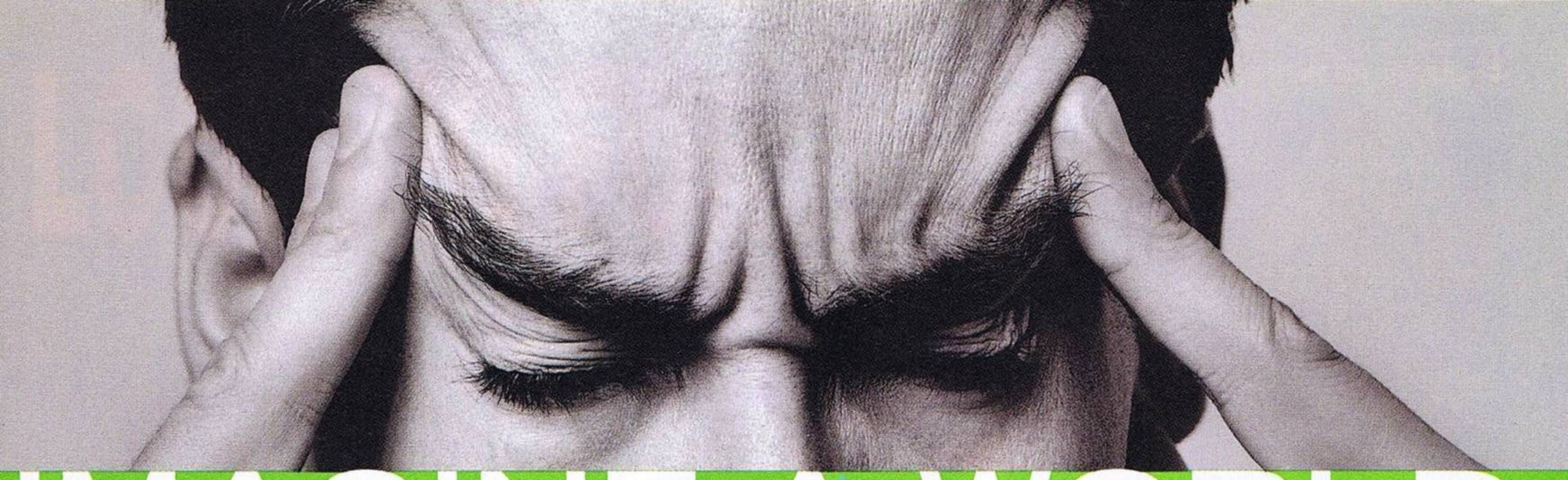
■ Pub: Ubi Soft ■ Dev: Ubi Soft ■ Rel: November 2003

THE BASICS:

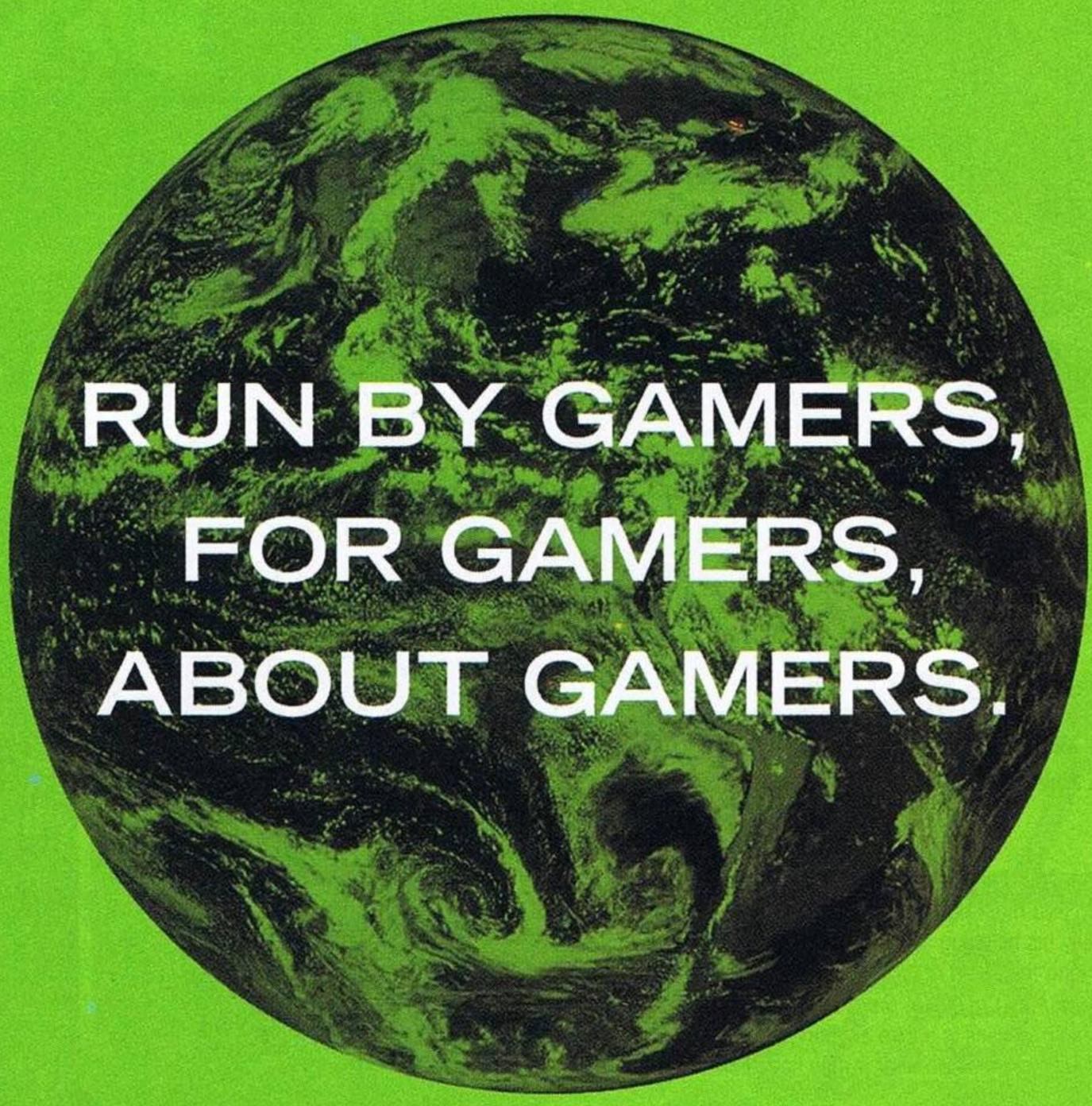
In this first-person military sim, you command a multinational squad of antiterrorism specialists. Use ballistics and wits to neutralize the no-goodniks before they do their dirty deeds.

HOW WAS IT?

RS3 is smooth like a Teflon-coated bullet. I ran through the gritty/drippy Alcatraz level, thermal goggles on, spotting hostiles and sniping their heads, all while coordinating my squad's movements for maximum carnage. All that, and full Xbox Live support! *—Paul Byrnes*



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■ Want to see actual gameplay (non-cinematic) shots? Sorry, Team Ninja wouldn't give us any.

NINJA GAIDEN

■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Team Ninja ■ Release Date: November 2003

THE BASICS:

Ryu Hayabusa is a man on a mission. The Vigor Empire has wiped out his ninja clan and stolen its magic sword, the Ryuken. Now, Ryu must fight his way to the Holy Emperor's stronghold and take back what is rightfully his by using all of his ninja skills. As Team Ninja's first nonfighting game in years (not counting the *Dead or Alive Volleyball* offshoot), *Ninja Gaiden* offers fast-paced action (think *Devil May Cry* meets *Shinobi*), amazing visuals, and an Xbox Live online component that Tecmo promises is unlike anything offered by others in the action genre. (How it'll work is still a mystery, but we hear it may have something to do with the rating you're given after completing each level.)

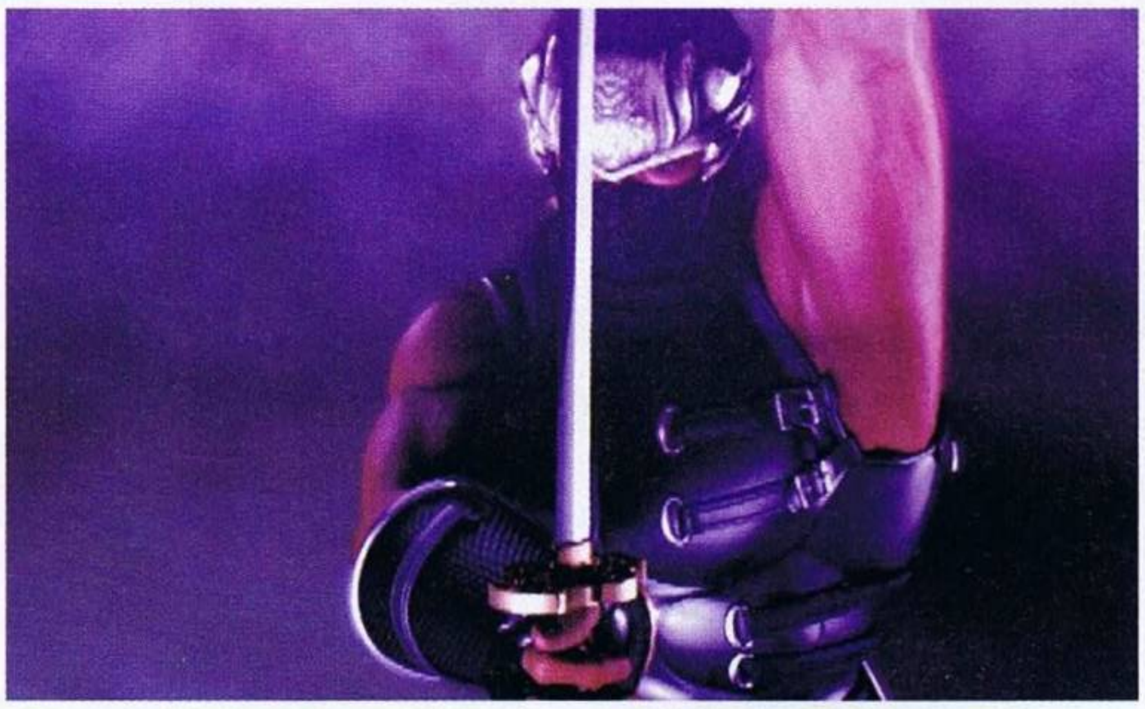
HOW WAS IT?

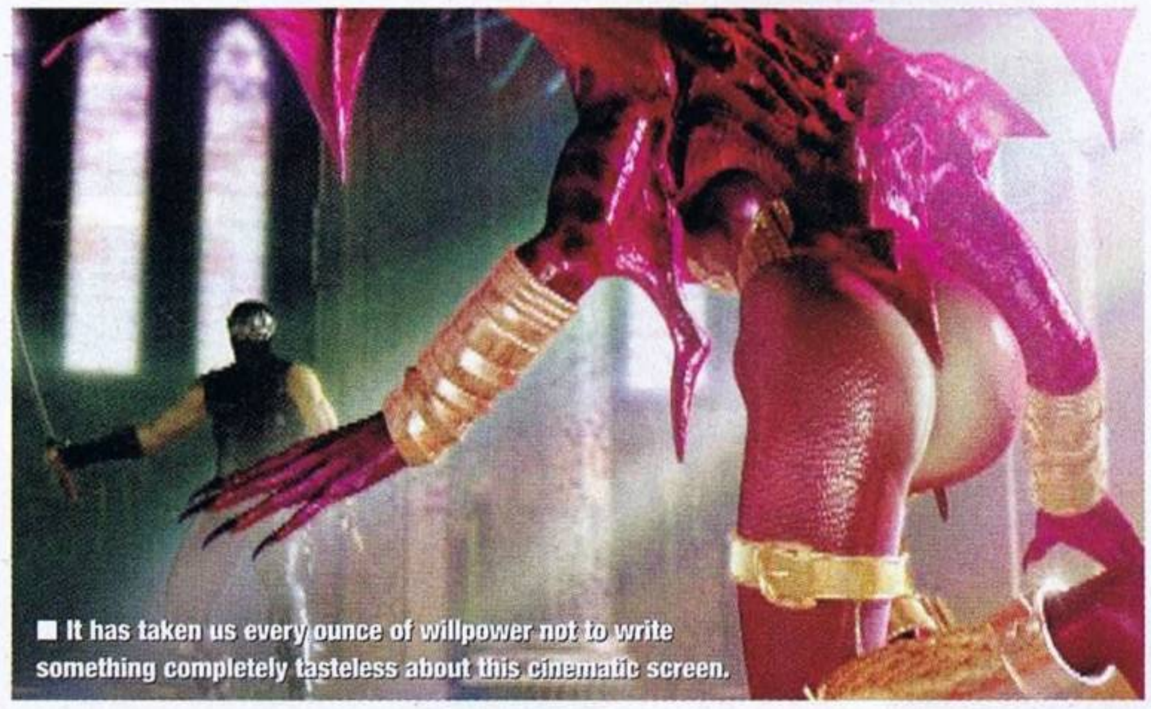
Imagine my surprise when during an interview with Team Ninja front man Tomonobu Itagaki, he hands me the controller and says, "Play." Then imagine the pressure of playing a game you've never touched before in front of its creator. Luckily, the controls were so intuitive, I quickly felt comfortable. Jumping, attacking, the button used to swing the camera around—everything was where it should be, and *Gaiden* felt supersmooth and responsive. By tapping the Attack button, you can rack up combos, or you can hold it down for a second and release it for a more devastating blow.

Although the demo featured only a sword and nunchakus, Tecmo promises an extensive arsenal of ninja weapons in the final game. Plus, you also have a limited number of spirit attacks that can spontaneously combust all nearby foes—useful when a group of enemies has you surrounded. Cool? Oh yeah. But there's more. Part of the demo lets you scale a room by running counterclockwise around its walls. Admittedly, I did have some trouble before being clued in that I had to jump at every wall's edge to get to the next one. But by the next room, I'd learned my lesson and was able to cross a broken bridge by jumping and running across a nearby wall.

Without question, *Ninja Gaiden* is one of the most visually stunning action games yet. Amazing environments, great water effects—I was in awe of every room in this short demo. The only question I have now is, can this frantic pace and attention to detail be kept up throughout the final game?

—Chris Johnston





■ It has taken us every ounce of willpower not to write something completely tasteless about this cinematic screen.

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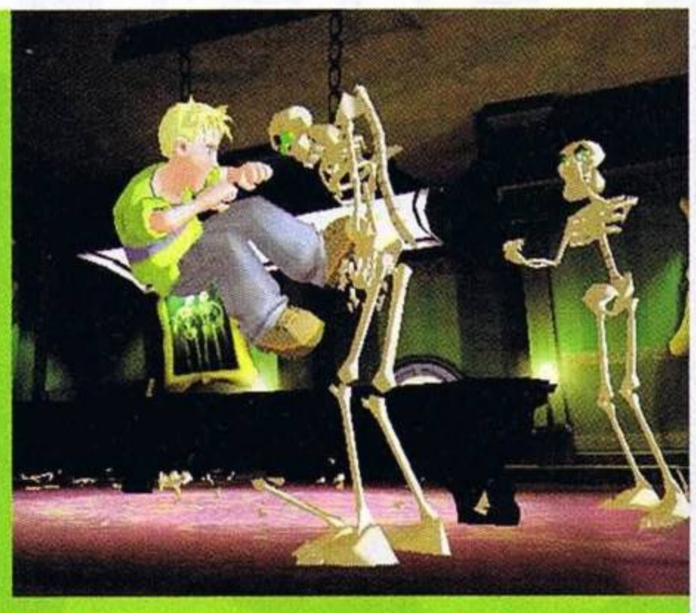
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GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

- Pub: Microsoft
- Dev: Rare
- Rel: October 2003

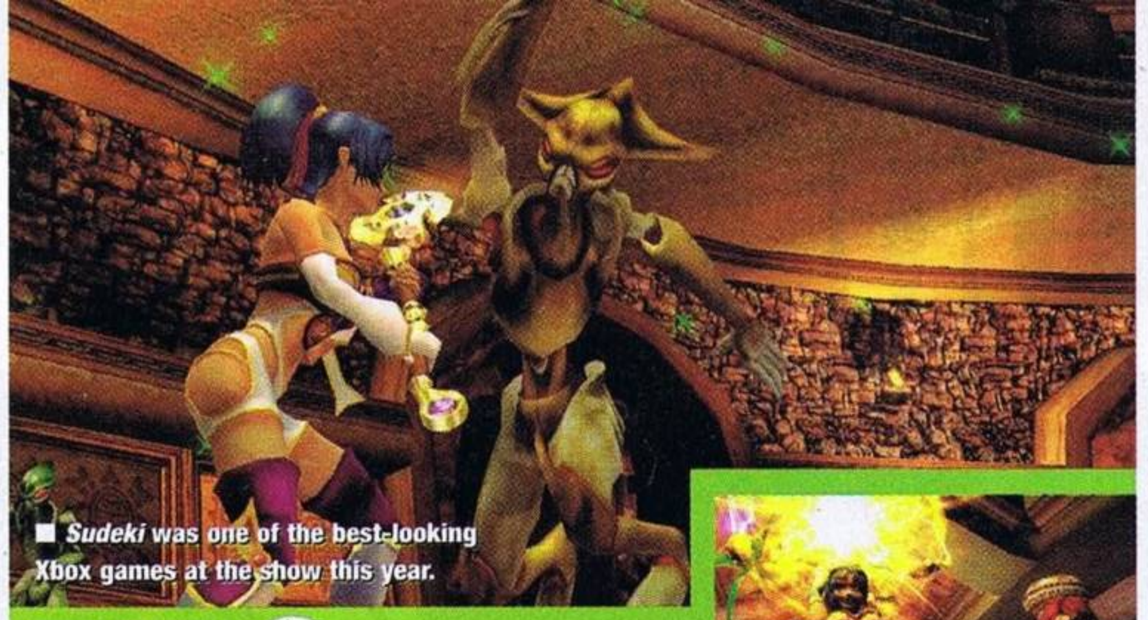


THE BASICS:

Cooper ventures into *spoooky* Ghoulhaven Hall to save his girlfriend, who was—wait for it—grabbed by the Ghoulies!

HOW WAS IT?

Meh. It's a *Goosebumps* story that plays like *Hunter: The Reckoning*. The left stick directs movement, the right aims attacks. Unfortunately, that's it. Give us some real puzzles and gameplay! Or give Cooper a second, *secret* girlfriend—a Ghoulie girl. A living vs. dead catfight never hurt anybody. *—Paul Byrnes*



■ *Sudeki* was one of the best-looking Xbox games at the show this year.



SUDEKI

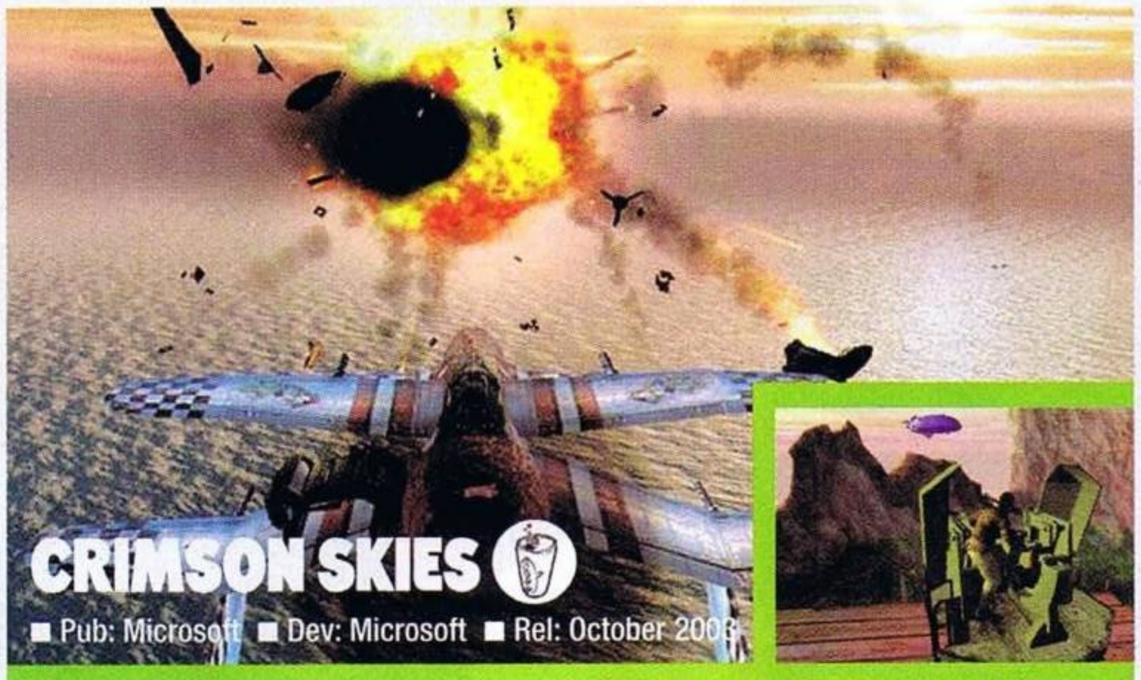
- Pub: Microsoft
- Dev: Climax
- Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

This action-RPG helps fill a major void in the Xbox library. You lead a four-person squad across a mystical world and battle in real-time combat.

HOW WAS IT?

Sudeki could be a sleeper hit. Besides its lush *Phantasy Star Online*–like visuals, the ability to slow down combat, à la *The Matrix*, while performing traditional RPG commands rocks. Based on the three levels I played on the show floor, I think even *Final Fantasy* addicts will want to pay attention to this one. *—Bryan Intihar*



CRIMSON SKIES

- Pub: Microsoft
- Dev: Microsoft
- Rel: October 2003

THE BASICS:

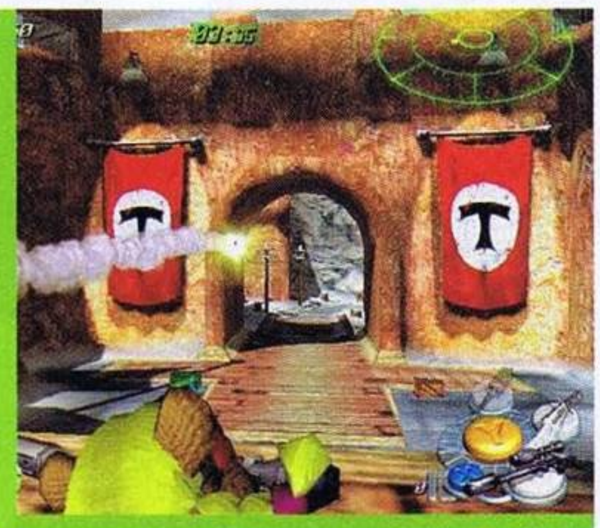
Set in the soaring '30s, *Crimson Skies* straps you into 11 prop planes for its single-player campaign and 16-player online dogfighting via Xbox Live.

HOW WAS IT?

Aside from an excuse to spout blimp-related innuendo, the main reason *Skies* has me flying high is its strategic multiplayer play. Aerobatic special moves meant I wasn't stuck just trying to circle behind bad guys until I got airsick. *—Crispin Boyer*

CONKER: LIVE & UNCUT

- Pub: Microsoft
- Dev: Rare
- Rel: TBA



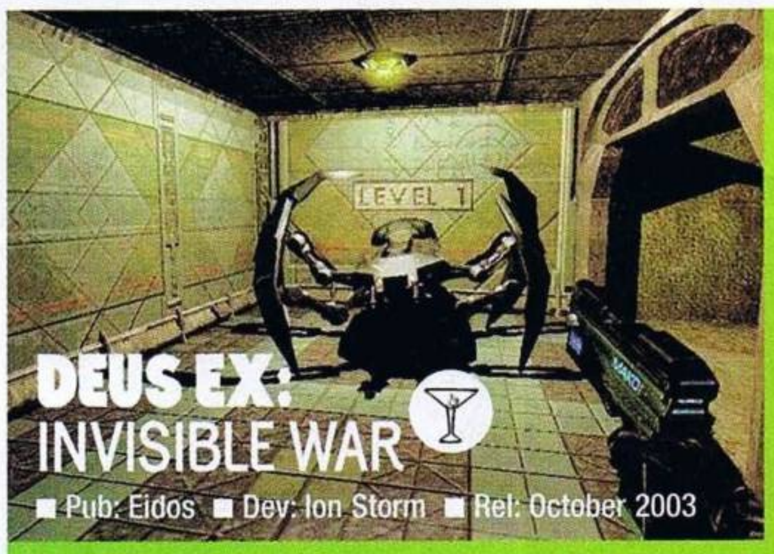


THE BASICS:

The scurrilous squirrel from *Conker's Bad Fur Day* (N64) makes his next-gen debut in *Live & Uncut*, featuring new 12-player combat on Xbox Live and a remake (with updated graphics) of the entire original *Conker* platformer, including the bits Nintendo nixed. (Guess it's *Conker: Too Hot for Nintendo*.)

HOW WAS IT?

When the humor of cute (but ultraviolent!) woodland creatures waned—and that didn't take long—*Conker*'s simplistic gameplay and "wacky" assortment of weapons couldn't keep me interested. *—Paul Byrnes*



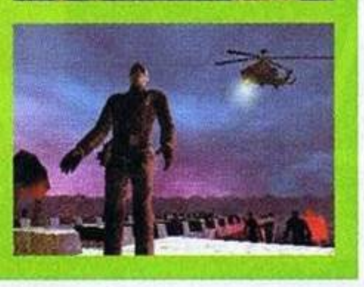
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

- Pub: Eidos
- Dev: Ion Storm
- Rel: October 2003

■ Cyberpunks: Hey, if you wanna spend your nightmare future gawking at holographic hotties, *Deus Ex*'s wide-open gameplay gives more power to ya.





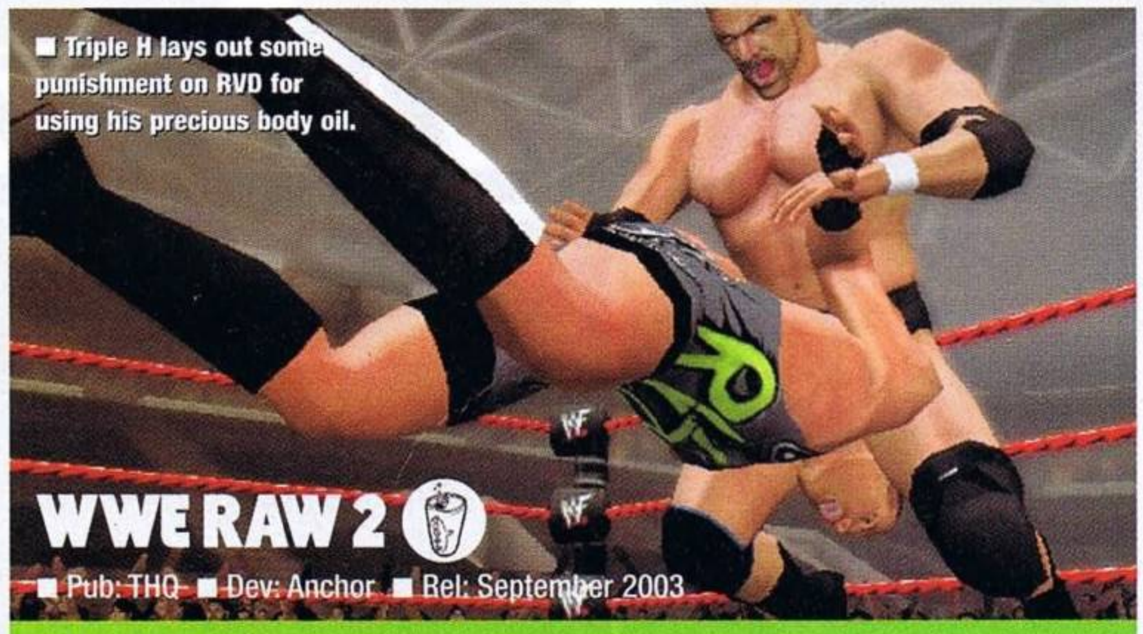


THE BASICS:

Wildly nonlinear, this sequel to the PC and PS2 cyber thriller mixes RPG elements with first-person blasting—or nonblasting, if you prefer. "We designed the game so you could play through it without killing anybody," says Producer Bill Money.

HOW WAS IT?

I found three ways to solve a puzzle in the level I played, making *Invisible War* one future-shocked playground I can't wait to explore more. *—Crispin Boyer*



■ Triple H lays out some punishment on RVD for using his precious body oil.

WWE RAW 2

- Pub: THQ
- Dev: Anchor
- Rel: September 2003

THE BASICS:

A new multiplayer Season mode enables you and up to three of your wrestling comrades to either join forces or backstab each other during your ascent up the WWE ranks. That should add a lot more to what we got from the original *WWE Raw*.

HOW WAS IT?

This series isn't all about eye candy anymore. The developers added a slew of new arenas and match types, like Hell in a Cell, plus sped up the in-ring action. Also, the wrestler models look better than ever. *—Bryan Intihar*

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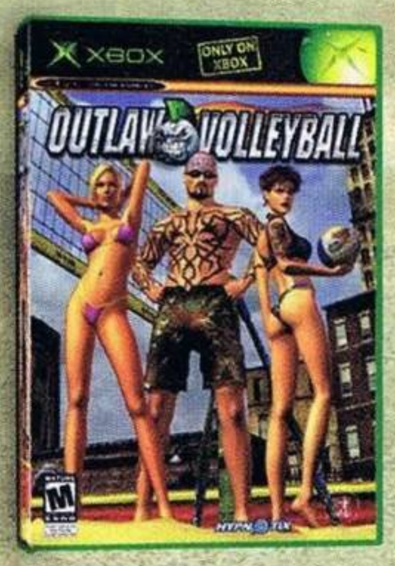
SHE SPIKES LOW!

"...the realistic gameplay of *Virtua Tennis* slapped upside the head with a dose of *South Park*."

—TEAM XBOX LIVE

"While DOA teased and giggled, *Outlaw* bumps and grinds."

—OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



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MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Nintendo
■ Release Date: December 2003

THE BASICS:

It's *Mario Kart* tag-team style, with one character behind the wheel and the second chucking turtle shells, banana peels, and whatever else comes along courtesy of those spinning, question-marked power-up containers. You can switch drivers right on the fly, and since both characters can hold an item, there's a whole new layer of depth to the combat-racing metagame we all know and...sniff...love.

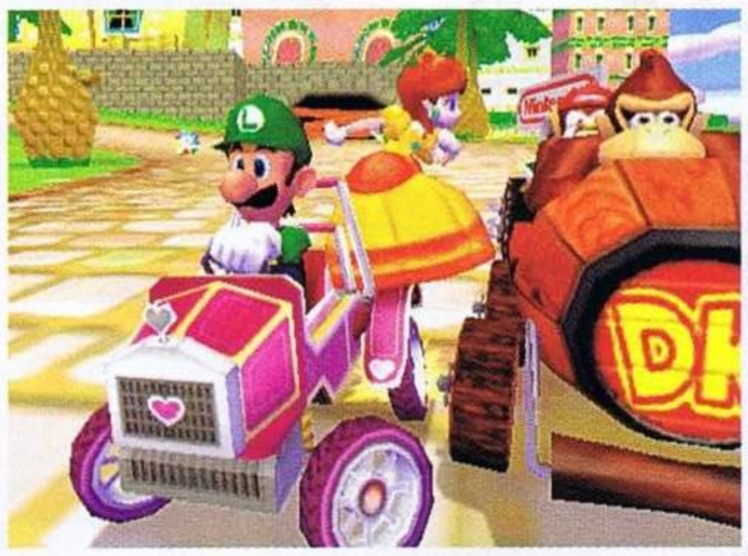
HOW WAS IT?

Very good, thanks, especially when hooked up to other Cubes for LAN play (you can connect up to eight systems via broadband adapters and hubs). After selecting a pair of racers (there are 16 total), you pick one of three karts. In the version I played, some karts are available only to certain characters, and all have somewhat different handling. Aside from the usual roster of power-ups from earlier *Mario Kart* games, there are character-specific special items like an enormous Chain Chomp, which is perfect for clearing the road ahead.

As for the racing, it was a little slower than expected—even in the 150cc class—although that could be because the brief time I had on the stick wasn't enough to figure out how to get a boost using the powerslide. There's gotta be a way.

—Demian Linn

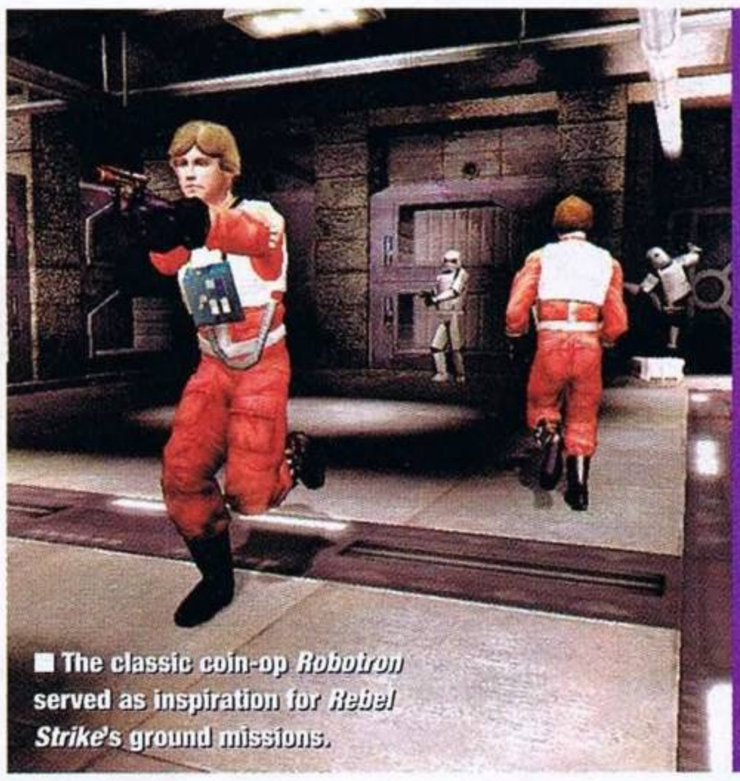






■ **Unless you have a room full of GameCubes and televisions—and you don't—you'll be playing four-way splitscreen.**





■ **The classic coin-op *Robotron* served as inspiration for *Rebel Strike*'s ground missions.**

STAR WARS ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE

■ Pub: LucasArts ■ Dev: Factor 5 ■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

Speederbike chases, AT-AT attacks, the escape from Jabba's palace, and every other classic *Star Wars* scenario finds new life in this jack-of-all-Jedi-trades action game.

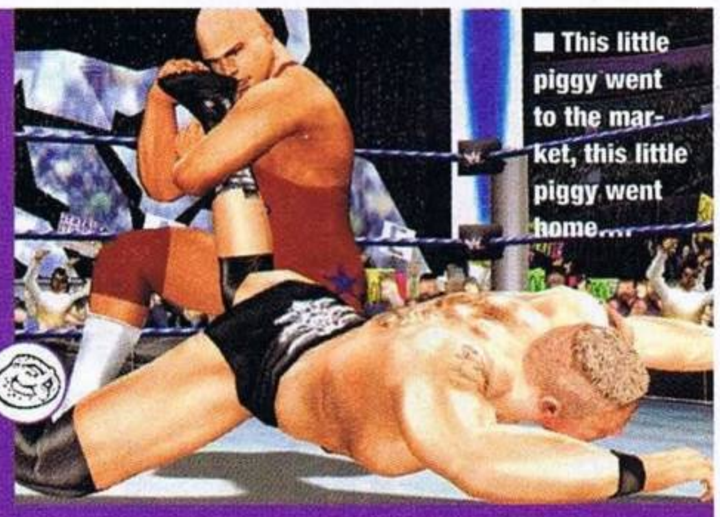
HOW WAS IT?

The new on-foot missions feel a little wonky right now (it's obvious the constantly shifting camera has yet to be finalized), but my blurry-fast, white-knuckle-inducing speederbike trip through Endor's backwoods rocked my galaxy.

—Crispin Boyer







■ **This little piggy went to the market, this little piggy went home...**

WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX

■ Pub: THQ ■ Dev: Yukes ■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

The WWE reenters the GameCube arena with new features, including a more simulation-style weak/strong grappling system and a number of counters and reversals.

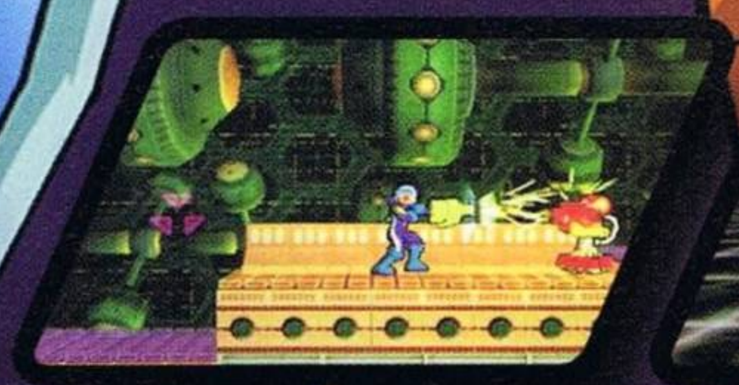
HOW WAS IT?

I'm digging the game's *WWF No Mercy*–like (N64) control scheme, but I'm not entirely sold on the new Story mode; its matches take place in environments outside the ring and are more in the style of a beat-em-up than a wrestling game. Then again, *XIX*'s biceps are already looking stronger than *X8*'s puny pectorals.

—Bryan Intihar

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Mild Violence

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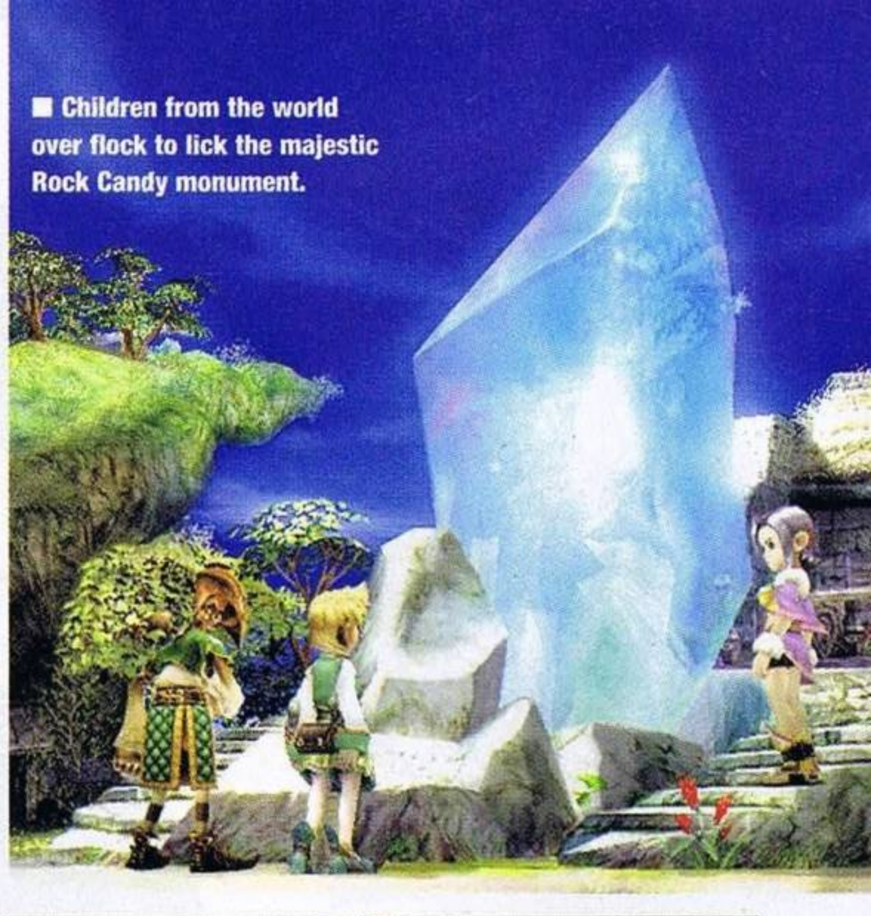
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■ Yep, finally a screen that actually looks like it's from a *Final Fantasy* game. Huzzah!



■ Children from the world over flock to lick the majestic Rock Candy monument.



FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: The Game Designers Studio ■ Release Date: November 2003

THE BASICS:

The famous RPG series finally returns to the Nintendo party after years of absence, but *Crystal Chronicles* might not be the same glittering homecoming queen everybody expected. "I think people will find the game to be quite different from all of the *Final Fantasy* games we've seen up until now," explains Producer Akitoshi Kawazu. It's hard to predict how fans of the PS1 and PS2 RPGs will react—*Crystal Chronicles* barely resembles the 10 previous proper *FF* titles. Forgoing the heavy plot, sullen heroes, and turn-based combat typical of the series, *Chronicles* is a multiplayer action-RPG that's meant to appeal to a much wider audience.

That's not to say *Chronicles* lacks a gripping story line, but it definitely takes a backseat to the action. At the game's outset, you (and up to three comrades) assume the roles of Crystal Caravan members Ciaron, Lu'ge, Cyadd, and Hias—four young heroes sworn to rescue the world from diabolical smog by finding powerful magic crystals.

The adventure unfolds in a series of missions across fields, cities, and dungeons, with you and your companions swinging swords and casting spells against hordes of enemies all the while. Luckily, the combat is smooth and fun—you've got three-hit weapon combos (à la *Phantasy Star Online*), charge-up attacks, and real-time versions of familiar *FF* magic spells. Puzzles appear to be on the light side (i.e., match the key to the similarly shaped lock), and climactic boss encounters await you at the end of each mission. Overall, it's simple, easy-to-pick-up stuff.

HOW WAS IT?

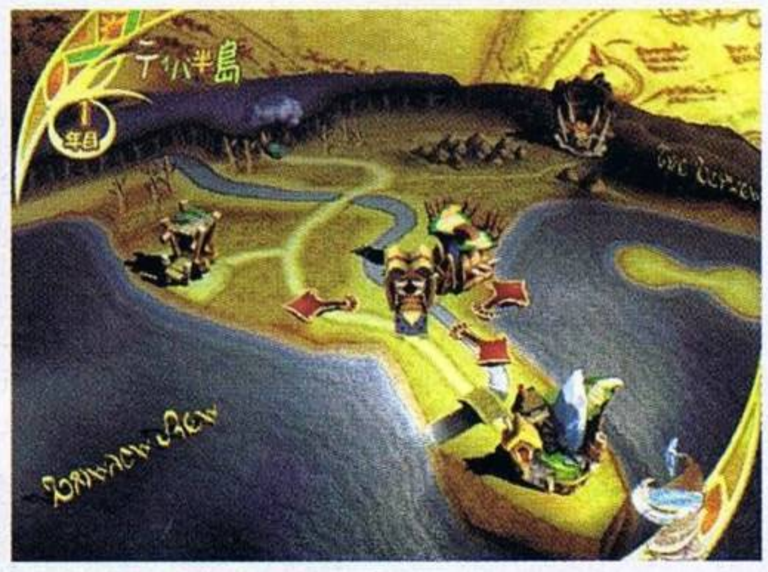
All right, I get it—this isn't like the other *Final Fantasy* games, but then again, I happen to like them. Even so, I really enjoyed the early build of *Chronicles*. It's a truly unique blend—imagine *Gauntlet* meets *Phantasy Star Online* with a chaser of *Final Fantasy* mythos and you're almost there. I especially dug the slick visuals, haunting music, and rewarding combat. The jury's still out on the much-vaunted GBA connectivity, though. Your pals don't have to use a GBA to play, but it does offer them a map and enhanced inventory management. Neat, but quite gimmicky, really.

—Shane Bettenhausen



■ Just as you'd expect from an *FF* title, the spell effects are off the proverbial hook. Sadly, you won't find any overblown, over-the-top, check-your-watch summon spells here, though....





"...the best game of its type this year." -- PS2.IGN







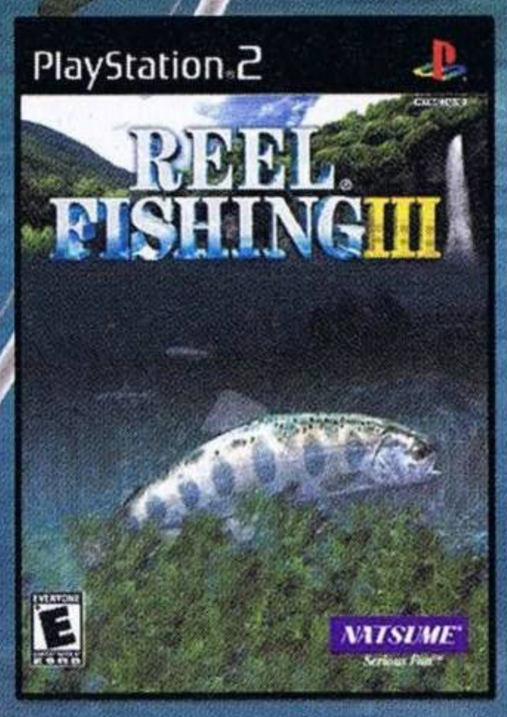
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* Based on total franchise sales through 2002 TRST.

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STAR FOX 2

■ Pub: Nintendo ■ Dev: Namco ■ Rel: TBA

THE BASICS:

After a brief stint with some on-foot *Adventures*, Fox and crew are back to take on a new threat, this time with more vehicular combat reminiscent of the pre-GameCube *Star Fox* games. Two players can play cooperatively, and four-player battles return.

HOW WAS IT?

The only part of *Star Fox 2* that Nintendo had to show was Versus play, and the only thing I have to say is "Bleh." You know those forgettable Nintendo 64 titles, the ones with generic deathmatch modes that no one cared to play? That's what this short demo of *SF2* was like (the so-so graphics reinforced that, too): run around or hop in a tank or Arwing ship, then blast the other guy until he dies. If the main game (which we haven't seen yet) can duplicate the original's intense space-combat action, however, I'll be a happy fox. *—Shoe*



■ At least the chairlifts aren't full of snow-bunny spectators in case you wipe out here.





■ You can race against the CPU or up to three others in this long-awaited sequel.

1080°: AVALANCHE

■ Pub: Nintendo ■ Dev: Nintendo ■ Rel: September 2003

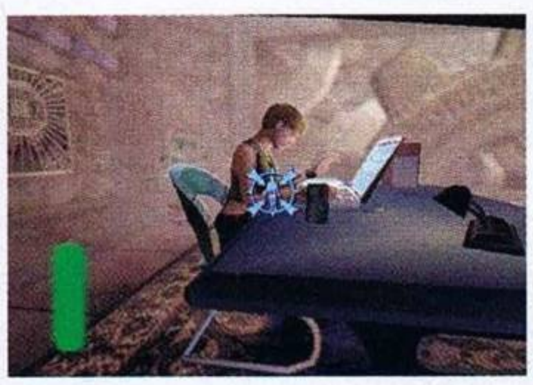
THE BASICS:

It's snowboarding, livened up with rockslides, cave-ins, collapsing bridges, and slopes teeming with wildlife and pesky skiers.

HOW WAS IT?

Avalanche felt solid and shouldn't disappoint fans of the Nintendo 64 original. It's fast—tucking on the straightaways, I felt like a rocket on a deck—and the controls were challenging but not frustrating. I had to work the joypad for those quadruple-digit spins, and when I landed awkwardly, I had to rotate the analog stick to regain balance. This extra level of control over my rider made me feel much more involved than in your typical snowboarding game. *—Shoe*





GEIST

■ Pub: Nintendo ■ Dev: N-Space ■ Rel: TBA

THE BASICS:

It's a first-person shooter, but spoooooky. As a "Spectral Operative," you're a decidedly unfriendly ghost, possessing the bodies of your foes and then using their weapons and equipment to your own ends. Or take on your friends in splitscreen deathmatch.

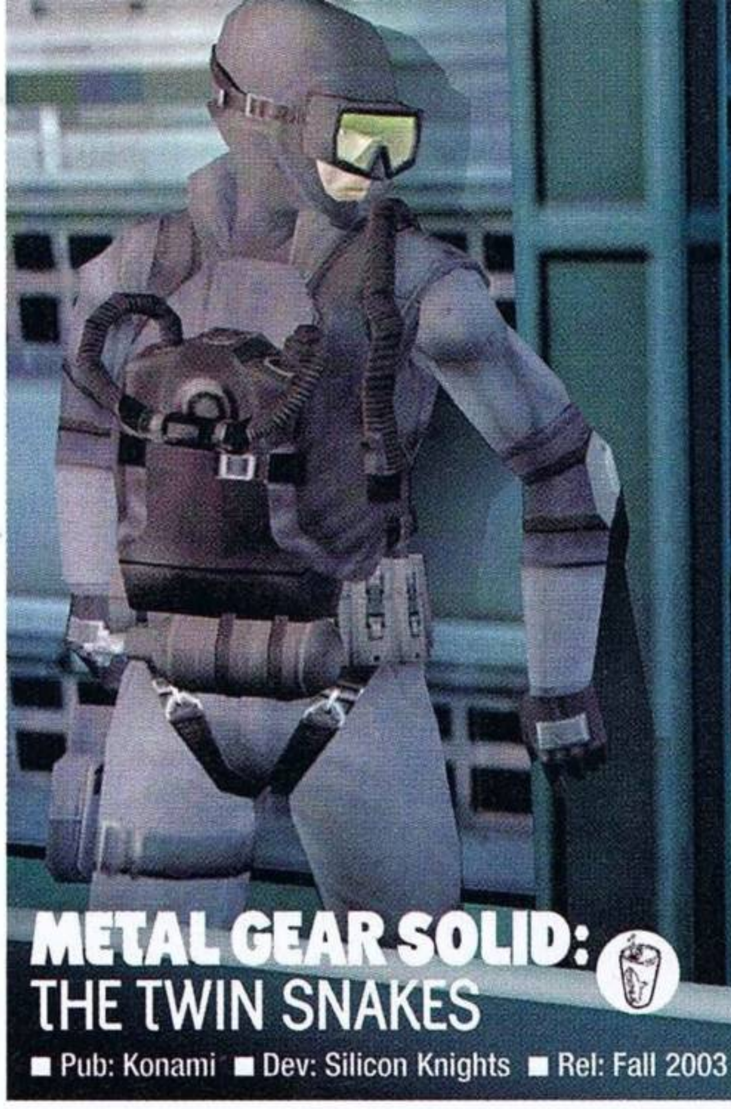
HOW WAS IT?

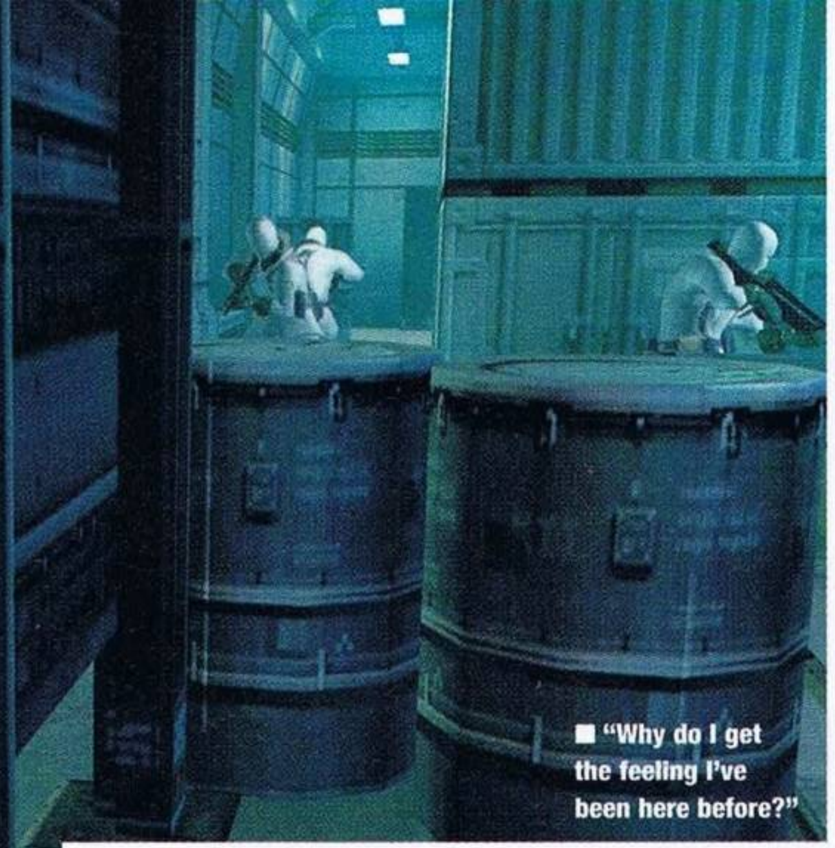
Looks like *Geist* needs some graphic and gameplay refinements, but judging from the early demo, there's plenty of promise. Though running into a room and possessing one enemy after another kind of takes the shooting part out of first-person shooter, at least it's different—and you can still bust in with guns blazing if you're so inclined.

—Demian Linn



■ When you're in ghost form, the puny humans can't see you.





■ "Why do I get the feeling I've been here before?"

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

■ Pub: Konami ■ Dev: Silicon Knights ■ Rel: Fall 2003



■ Additions include a first-person-shooting mode, the ability to hang off ledges, and revamped cinema cut-scenes.

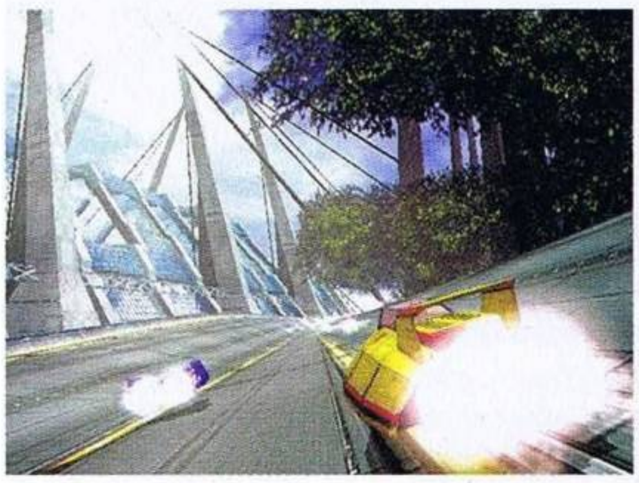
THE BASICS:

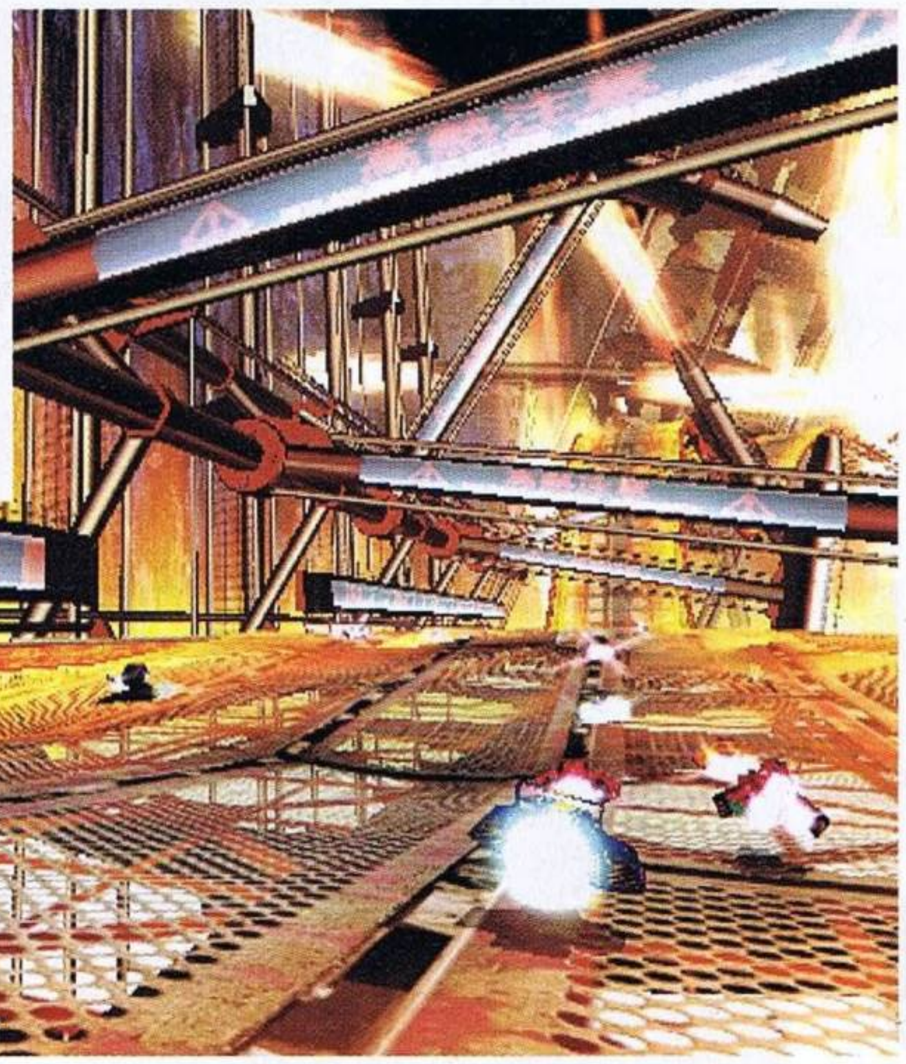
The original *Metal Gear Solid* stealth-espionage adventure (previously released for PS1) comes to the Cube with a graphical face-lift and a few gameplay features added from its PS2 sequel. "It's no simple remake," says series creator Hideo Kojima. "[It's] a combination of the best parts of [*Metal Gear Solid* and *Metal Gear Solid 2*]."

HOW WAS IT?

On the one hand, it's *MGS*—how could it not be good? It's guaranteed rock-solid gameplay and a great story, plus a few gameplay tweaks and some kind of GBA link-up feature (still under wraps). On the other hand, it's *MGS*—most of us are now familiar with the surprising plot twists that were one of the game's biggest selling points, and, in terms of graphics and animation, it didn't look quite as good as *MGS2* yet.

— Mark MacDonald





■ Even with a ton of cars on the track, *F-Zero GX* looks great.

F-ZERO GX

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Amusement Vision ■ Release: August 25, 2003

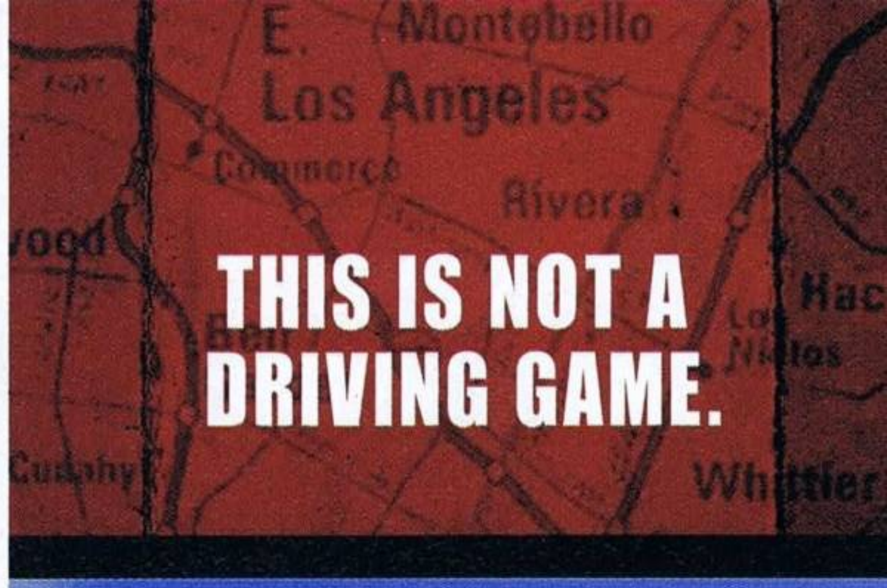
THE BASICS:

The hovercraft battle-racing franchise we all know and love is updated for the Cube, with enough turbo boosts, gigantic jumps, and crazy corkscrewing tracks to make you sick (but, duh, in a good way).

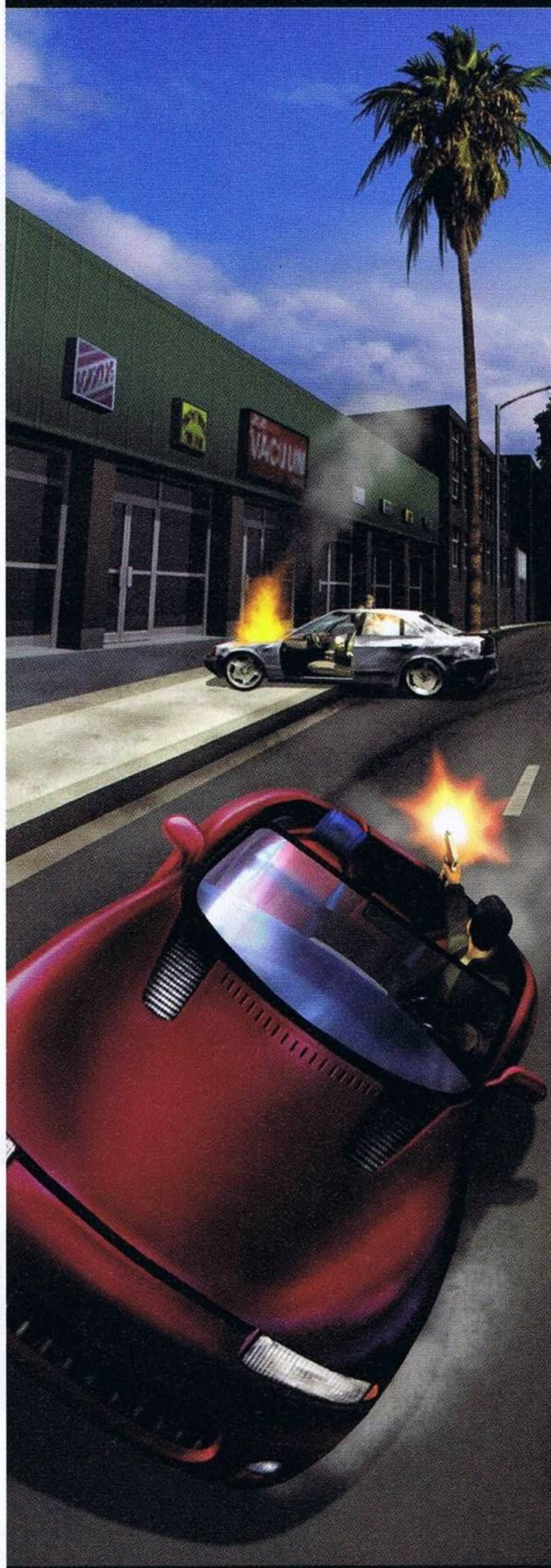
HOW WAS IT?

GX controlled just like I remember previous *F-Zero*s—the steering felt too sensitive at first, almost twitchy. But as soon as I adjusted and learned to use the shoulder buttons to lean properly, I appreciated the subtleties of the controls. The two ramming attacks (spin and slide, just like in the N64 version) were fun, the sense of speed was intense, and the courses looked absolutely gorgeous—hopefully the empty black voids that surrounded the tracks in splitscreen multiplayer were just placeholder graphics.

— Mark MacDonald



THIS IS NOT A DRIVING GAME.



"...an immense landscape covering hundreds of miles of LA streets..."

–IGN.com



■ You will believe a pink puffball can fly.



■ One of *Air Ride*'s modes lets you bust it up, *Twisted Metal*–style.

KIRBY'S AIR RIDE

■ Pub: Nintendo ■ Dev: HAL Laboratory ■ Rel: October 13, 2003

THE BASICS:

Control Nintendo's infamous pink puffball in a series of fast-paced races and multiplayer challenges for up to four players. All you need is one thumb on the control stick and another on the brake—slowing down charges up speed bursts and lets you powerslide through turns. Kirby takes care of the rest, sucking up enemy powers and attacking foes when you steer close to them.

HOW WAS IT?

Its simple one-button gameplay will please younger *Kirby* fans, but it runs the risk of leaving anyone over 10 unsatisfied. —*Chris Johnston*



■ We don't know what the hell that thing is on the right, but we kinda want to club it with a bat.







BILLY HATCHER & THE GIANT EGG

■ Pub: Sega ■ Dev: Sonic Team ■ Rel: Winter 2003

THE BASICS:

Using the power of eggs, both as weapons and—after hatching them—fighting animals, Billy must save his world from eternal darkness.

HOW WAS IT?

Hatcher feels so similar to a *Sonic* game that you might have to check under Billy's rooster suit to make sure he ain't the 'hog in disguise. But instead of speed, the hook is in how you constantly use eggs to attack or solve various puzzles. Nothing in the demo was wildly innovative, but even at this early stage, it's an incredibly solid platformer. —*Chris Johnston*





PIKMIN 2

■ Pub: Nintendo ■ Dev: Nintendo ■ Rel: October 2003

THE BASICS:

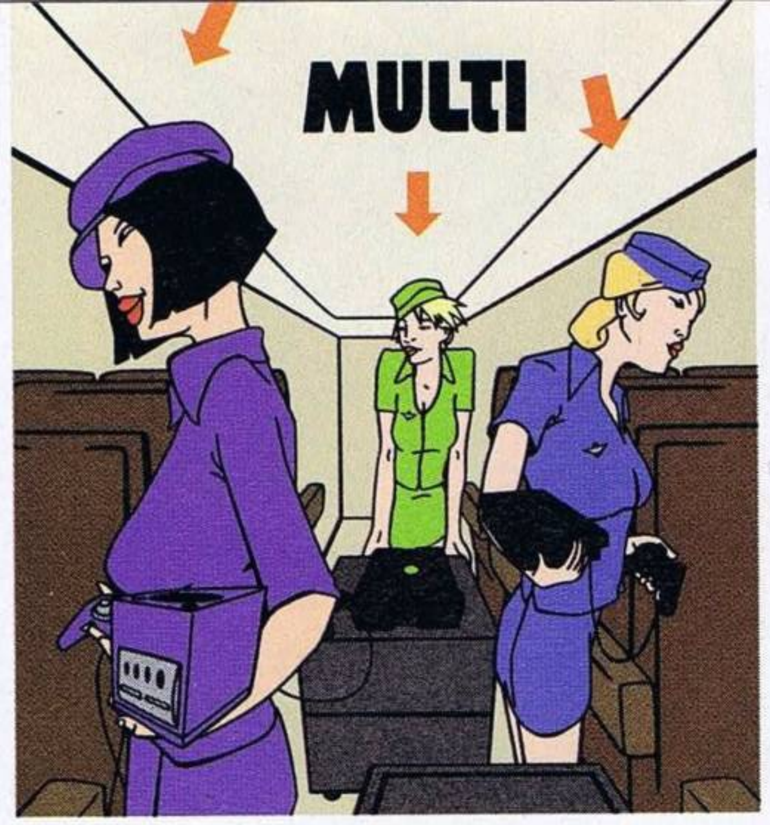
Two thimble-tall alien astronauts are better than one, or so goes the theory behind this sequel. Aside from two-player play, it tosses in new photosynthesis-fueled critters—a burly purple fella and a creepy, poisonous white one.

HOW WAS IT?

Pikmin 2 centers on quests for doodads, which isn't much different from the goal of the first game. So far, it just feels like more of the same. (But *man*, that white thing scares me.) —*Crispin Boyer*



■ In solo play, you can flip-flop between the two heroes, split them up, and then delegate tasks to each one's Pikmin slaves.





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

XIII

■ Pub: Ubi Soft ■ Dev: Ubi Soft ■ Rel: October 2003

THE BASICS:

You wake up with no memory. You have "XIII" tattooed on you. You might have assassinated the president. Armed men are trying to kill you. Welcome to the worst hangover of all time.

HOW WAS IT?

This first-person shooter has *style*. Comics-inspired effects highlight important objects, showcase head-shots, and reveal hidden enemies. And its groovy funk soundtrack had me tappin' my toes while I was cappin' foes. Get down!

—Paul Byrnes



■ Dispatch this soldier, then find the polar bear in this snowstorm.



■ You'll have numerous chances to shout, "You *shall NOT PASS!!!*"



■ Level 16 dragon attacks white mage: roll 20-sided die.





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING

■ Publisher: EA Games ■ Developer: EA ■ Release Date: November 2003

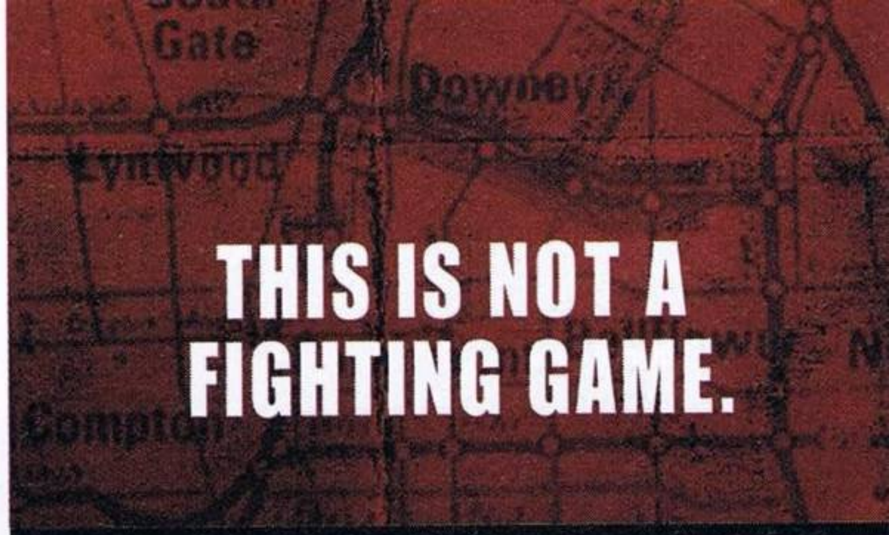
THE BASICS:

Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, and four secret characters join Middle-earth MVPs Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli in this sequel to last year's hit hack-and-slash adventure. Depending on the character you pick (hairy half-pints included), you'll play through one of three distinct paths (with additional detours for determined explorers) that overlap to match events in the forthcoming film. But if anything makes this *the* movie game to keep an eye out for, it's the new two-player cooperative play. Of all the new features, that one's the most intriguing.

HOW WAS IT?

Involved, eye-pleasing, majestic—*Return of the King*'s epic scale is simply overwhelming. Sulfur-spewing dragons soar overhead, waves of orcs advance beyond the citadel walls, siege engines roll up against ramparts, the camera spins dramatically to capture incoming catapult fire...maybe it's all just smoke and mirrors disguising a straightforward slasher, but I set down the controller totally convinced of my role as a lone, yet indispensable player in a world-changing war.

—Shawn Elliott





"The fighting in *True Crime* looks just as good, if not better, than many of the fighting games out there."

–Electronic Gaming Monthly, Jan. 2003

■ Nova's ghost suit enhances her stealth abilities.

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

STARCRAFT: GHOST

■ Publisher: Blizzard ■ Developer: Nihilistic ■ Release Date: Early 2004






■ "I hate bugs!"



THE BASICS:

It's a stealth actioner with acrobatics! Svelte protagonist Nova's ghost (or psionic) abilities get you through the game's 25 levels firing an absolute minimum of shots. All that, plus it's set in the story-rich *Starcraft* universe (although you don't have to play the PC/N64 strategy game classic to properly enjoy it).

HOW WAS IT?

The levels—and Nova's catlike navigation through them—look beautiful, and so far the game plays smoothly. I could jump onto a conveniently placed ceiling pipe, hang upside down, zoom in with a sniper rifle, and execute enemies without ever touching the ground. On other levels, you can maneuver siege tanks, call in nuclear strikes, and use fancy bullet-time attacks. What's not to like?

—Jennifer Tsao


■ The face of Pierce Brosnan, and the hands by Andre the Giant.

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

■ Pub: EA Games ■ Dev: EA ■ Rel: Fall 2003



THE BASICS:

It's hard to get too excited about a new Bond game after years of mostly subpar gaming schlock (OK, *007: NightFire* was fairly hot). Enter *007: Everything or Nothing*, a third-person shooter complete with all the gadgets and vehicles you've come to require—plus, Pierce Brosnan's likeness as Bond, Shannon Elizabeth as new Bond girl Serena St. Germaine, 007 übervillain Jaws, two-player co-op missions, and multiplayer Deathmatch modes.

HOW WAS IT?

I had a surprisingly great time with *Everything or Nothing*'s first level. The third-person shooting was tight, the camera worked well, and little touches like how you can grab weapons from nearby foes and start punching them spoiled me on other games. Definitely one to watch.

—Joe Fielder



■ Heh, like this Foot-clan ninja ever had a chance.

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

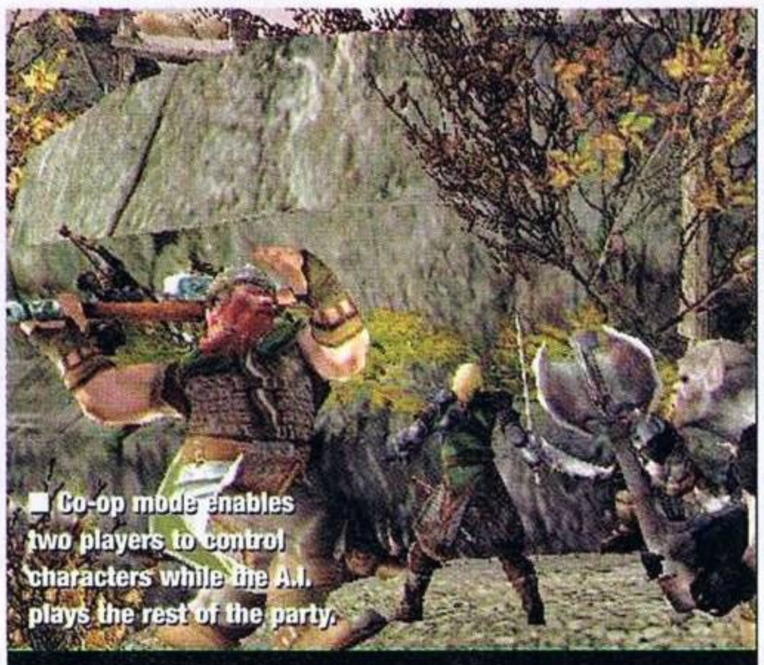
■ Pub: Konami ■ Dev: Konami Studios
■ Rel: October 2003

THE BASICS:

In this arcade-style beat-em-up, you and a friend slice and dice through the Foot clan on your way to defeating the Turtles' archnemesis, Shredder. Or challenge your bud in a Versus brawl with characters you've unlocked in the Story mode.

HOW WAS IT?

TMNT replicates the TV series nicely with cartoon-style visuals and voiceovers. Two-player co-op is definitely more enjoyable than playing solo, and the simple controls give you the opportunity to perform some impressive juggle and multihit combos. *—Bryan Intihar*



■ Co-op mode enables two players to control characters while the A.I. plays the rest of the party.

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox

LORD OF THE RINGS: TREASON OF ISENGARD

■ Pub: VU Games ■ Dev: Surreal
■ Rel: Winter 2003

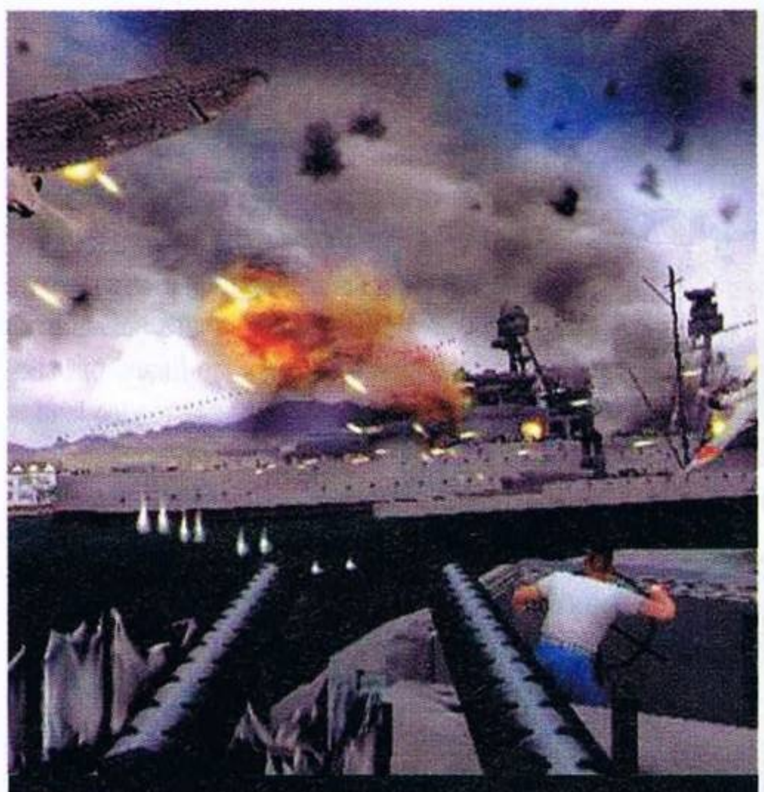
THE BASICS:

With three different types of gameplay—hack-and-slash, stealth, and one still-top-secret mode (I'm hoping for rhythm-action!)—at least this "other" *LOTR* title has variety.

HOW WAS IT?

Despite a decent combo system, the mundane fighting portion still has to evolve to compete with EA's impressive *Return of The King* (see page 93). Playing a stealth game as Gollum sounds intriguing—his personality changes depending on whether you play him as good or bad—but I'll believe it when I see it.

—Jennifer Tsao



■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

■ Pub: EA Games ■ Dev: EA ■ Rel: Fall 2003

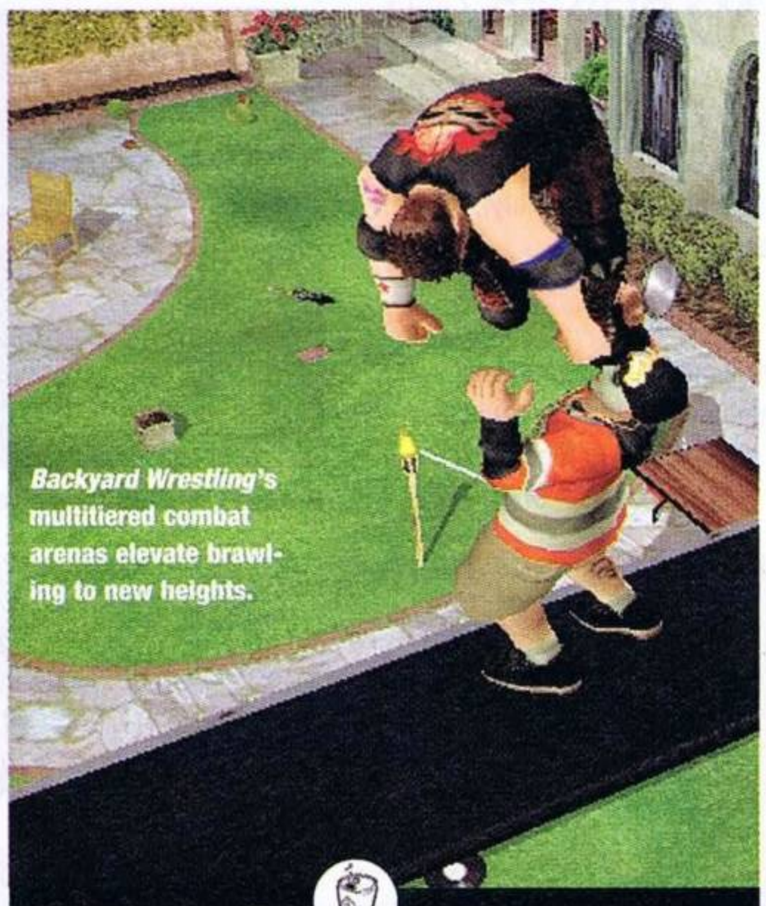
THE BASICS:

EA's *Honor* series of hard-hitting, historically accurate (well, more or less) first-person shooters sails across the clear blue Pacific.

HOW WAS IT?

From scrambling through the USS *California*'s burning holds to grabbing a turret and tearing into Japanese Zeros, *Rising Sun*'s Pearl Harbor opening level packed even more of a punch than the last *Honor*'s Normandy invasion—definitely a good sign.

—Shawn Elliott



Backyard Wrestling's multitiered combat arenas elevate brawling to new heights.

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox

BACKYARD WRESTLING

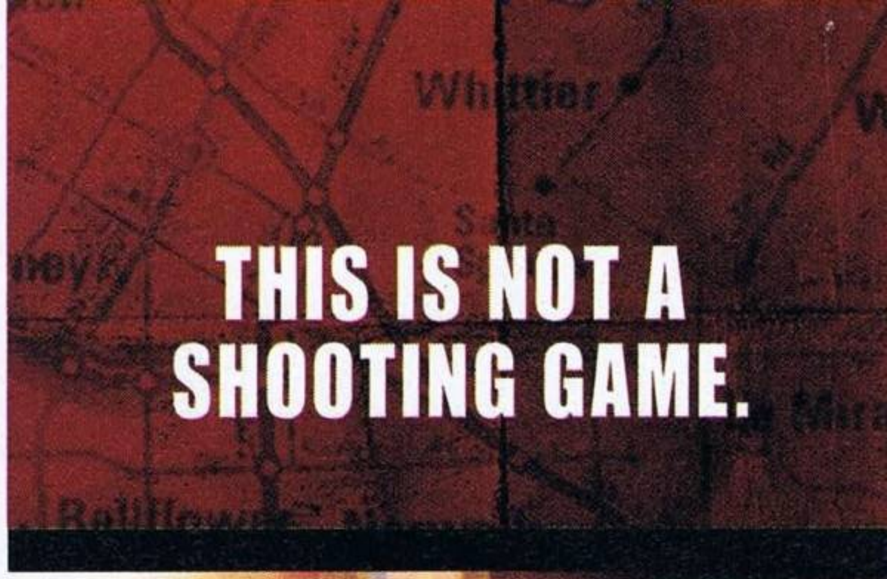
■ Pub: Eidos ■ Dev: Paradox ■ Rel: September 2003

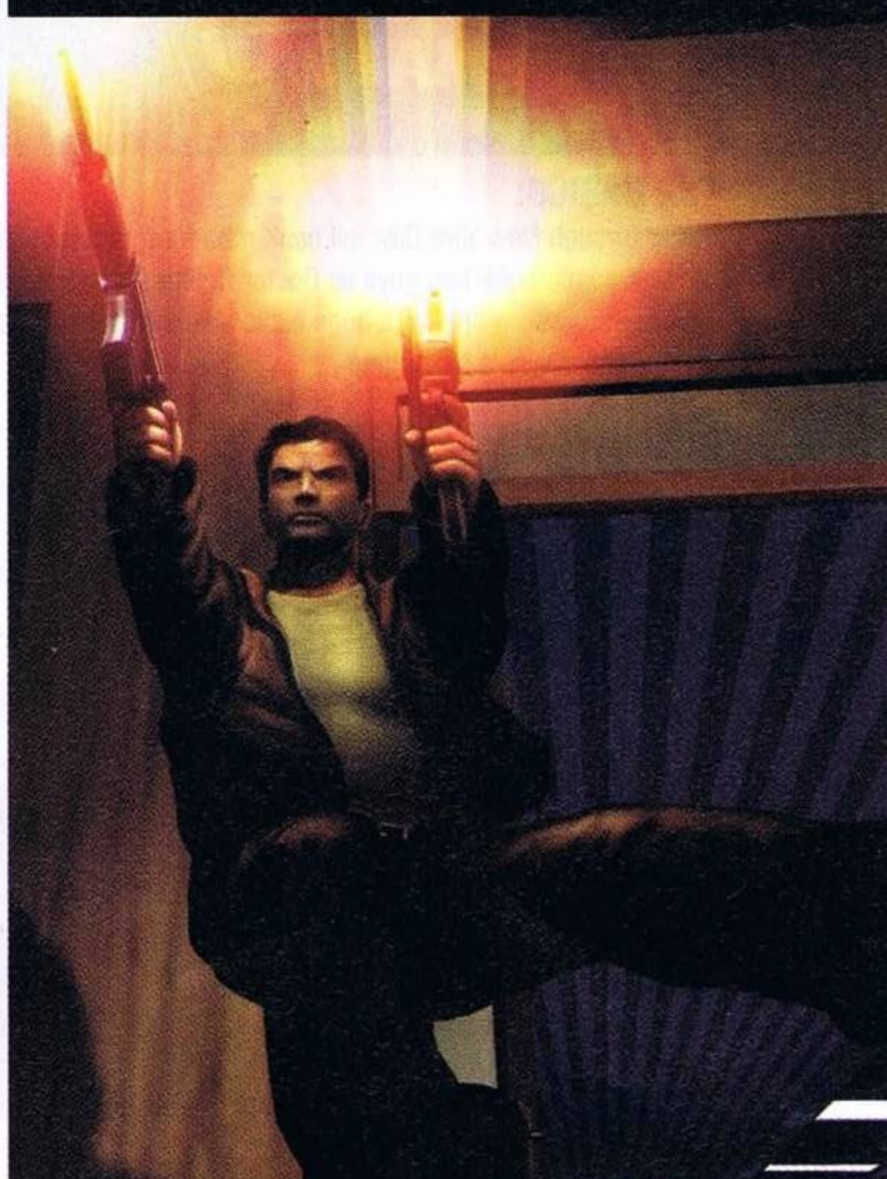
THE BASICS:

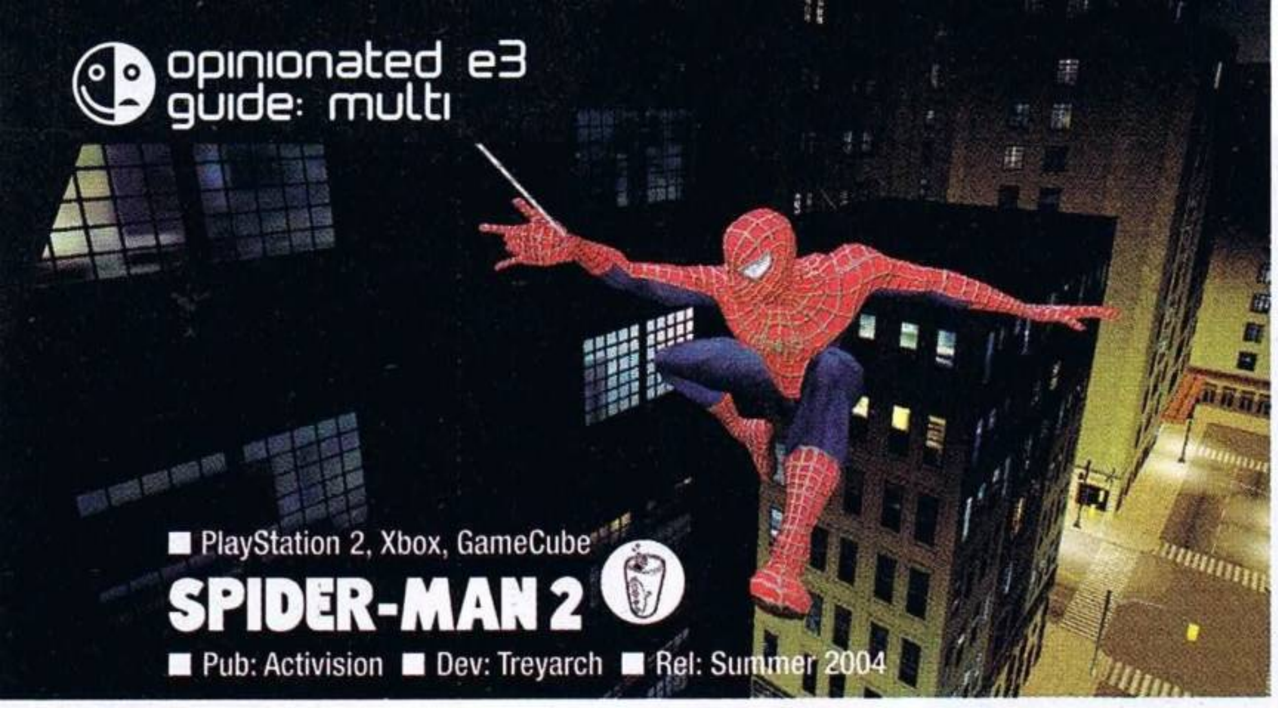
The ancient art of men launching each other off three-story buildings onto folding tables, tacks, and broken glass gets its due in this lowbrow videogame incarnation of the trailer-park sensation.

HOW WAS IT?

The unwashed mass of cornball heroes and slutty gals here made me feel dirty, but I gotta admit I had a great time finding new ways to dish out pain in the sprawling environments. *—Crispin Boyer*







■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

SPIDER-MAN 2

■ Pub: Activision ■ Dev: Treyarch ■ Rel: Summer 2004

THE BASICS:

Swing through New York City, foil bank robberies, return balloons to crying children, and battle such comic-book bad guys as Doctor Octopus, Mysterio, and the Lizard. New features include improved graphics, a huge explorable world, and a Spidey-sense capability reminiscent of *Max Payne*'s bullet time.

HOW WAS IT?

This one's very early, but Treyarch has really captured the feeling of *being* Spider-Man, as you swing from building to building, legs and camera flailing. It feels more like taking part in last year's film, than playing one of the earlier *Spider-Man* games. Nice. —*Joe Fielder*



■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

SPAWN

■ Pub: Namco ■ Dev: Point of View ■ Rel: Fall 2003

■ **Well, it certainly looks like hell on earth.**

THE BASICS:

You're a demon who'd rather do good than the devil's bidding. Rampage through Gothic ruins, stab and shoot hideous escapees from hell, and absorb their souls to fuel your profane powers. In a word (or three): *Devil May Spawn*.

HOW WAS IT?

So far, *Spawn* looks noticeably worse than the three-year-old Capcom game it shamelessly copies. And I'd say the first boss (a spider-legged car with a face on its grill) is proof enough that aligning creator Todd McFarlane's name with a project is more incriminating than it is compelling. —*Shawn Elliott*







■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

■ Pub: Atari ■ Dev: Black Ops ■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

A first-person shooter based on the movie (with some one-on-one fighting for variety), *T3*'s big draw is the inclusion of Schwarzenegger's voice and likeness.

HOW WAS IT?

Without major improvements, this game will go the way of Arnie's career. The targeting system wasn't yet in place, so the shooting sections were a pain, and I found the game's fighting controls floaty. Hopefully, a cyborg from the future will appear to help Black Ops save this one. —*Greg Ford*





■ **Kang gives bad guys a boot to the head.**

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

■ Pub: Activision
■ Dev: Luxoflux
■ Rel: September 2003

THE BASICS:

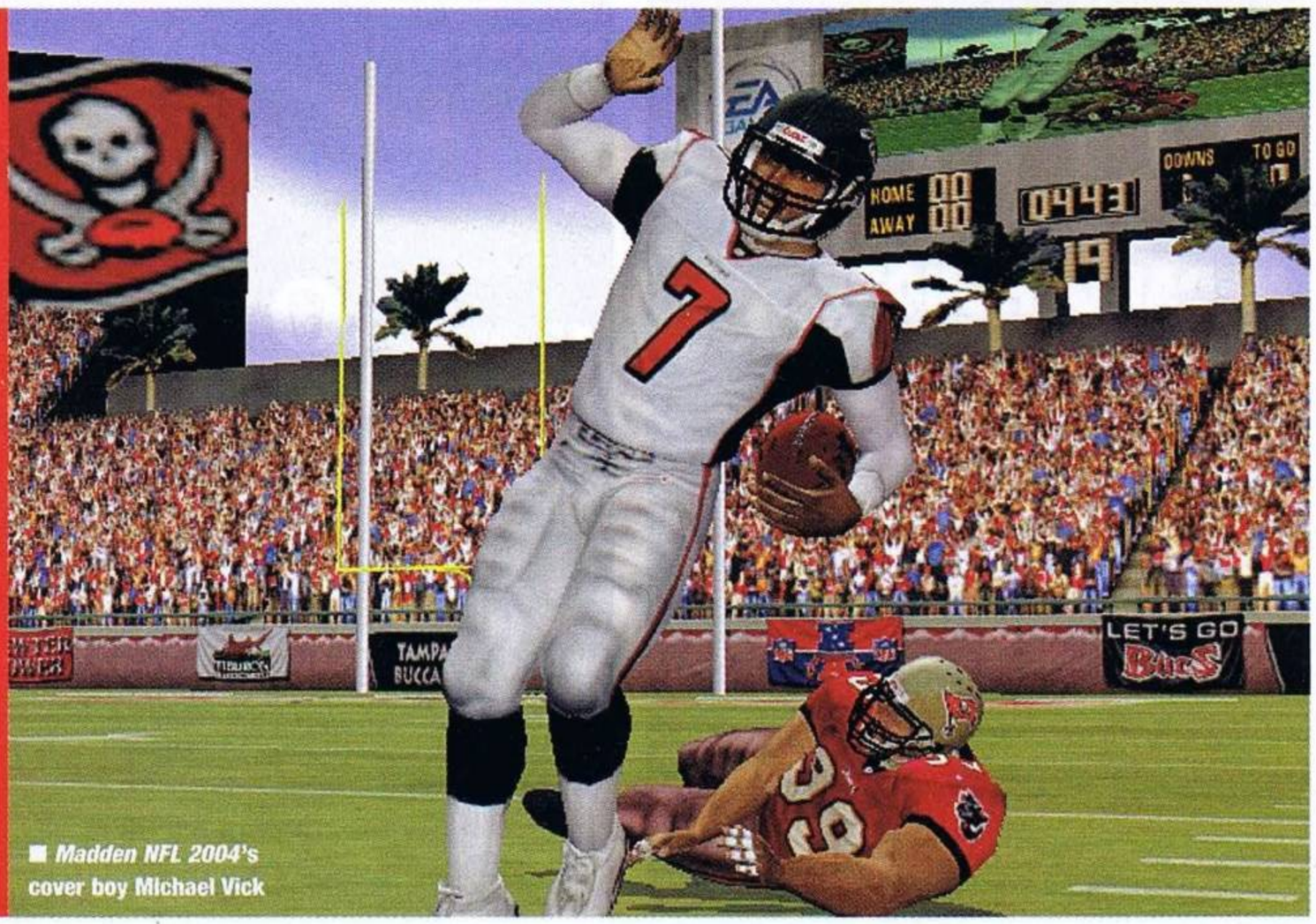
True Crime is clearly out to carjack Rockstar's big-money bandwagons *Max Payne* and *Grand Theft Auto*.

HOW WAS IT?

The true crime here might be copyright infringement. Hardboiled cop Nick Kang's freeform shooting spree could just as easily be set in any of the *GTA* series's crime capitols. But considering America's new addiction to bloodletting, that's not such a bad thing. And Kang's kung fu and ballistic ballet could give his game a needed lead on Rockstar's crooks. —*Shawn Elliott*

THE FOOTBALL WRAP-UP

EA Sports' ***Madden NFL 2004*** wowed the E3 crowd with its Playmaker Control feature, which allows you to make adjustments before the snap of the ball without tipping off your opponent (so no more of those Audible pop-up icons) and during the play (like manually moving receivers to open spots in the coverage via the right analog stick)—very cool. Sega Sports' ***NFL 2K4*** received a total face-lift, with more than 1,000 new animations and a new, more efficient play-calling system. Surprise, surprise. 989 Sports' ***NFL GameDay 2004*** actually isn't looking like #$@% this year with improved graphics, completely redesigned playbooks, and exciting additions to the PS2 online mode. What about Microsoft's ***NFL Fever 2004***? Its new passing system is currently frustrating, but the online modes might work out well. And even though Midway's ***NFL Blitz Pro*** has bumped up the number of players on the field (now it's 11-on-11), the game looks like it'll retain the over-the-top play that helped make the series an arcade classic. Plus, PS2 owners will be able to take it online (if they've got broadband). —*Patrick Mauro*



■ ***Madden NFL 2004*****'s cover boy Michael Vick**

hangin' with the

Bling Bling King





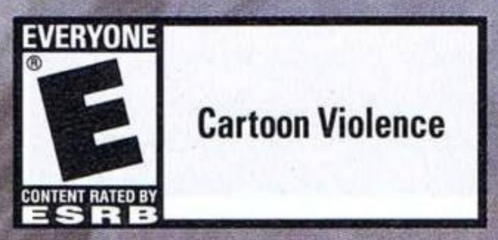








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DOLBY SURROUND PRO LOGIC II



Telekinesis makes it so you could do this all day.





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

■ Pub: Eidos ■ Dev: Crystal Dynamics ■ Rel: Winter 2003

THE BASICS:

Dueling vampiric antiheroes Kain and Raziel return for one last chance to wrap up the ponderous dangling plotlines of this action-adventure series. Expect nifty 3D puzzles, improved combat and visuals, and top-notch voice acting.

HOW WAS IT?

Oh. My. Goth. The duo's new telekinetic powers made it easy to spend half an hour experimenting with different combinations for beating the hell out of enemies before devouring their blood or souls. And that's *exactly* what the series needed. If the puzzles (not seen) meet or exceed ones past, this should be the best *Kain* yet.

—Joe Fielder





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

■ Pub: Ubi Soft ■ Dev: Ubi Soft Montreal ■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

Tinker with time in *Prince*'s latest puzzle-solving, platform-scaling escapade.

HOW WAS IT?

Prince's time-warping premise doesn't just pervade every inch of gameplay; it entirely renovates the longstanding series. For starters, you've got the power to stop the clock and school your foes in slow-mo. OK, so we've all seen how retarding time can supercharge combat—but turning back the clock to retry bungled leaps or botched battles? That's enough to make even Neo envious. Inspired, gorgeous, and smooth—I'm sold.

—Shawn Elliott

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II BACK TO BAGHDAD

■ Pub: Gotham
■ Dev: Pivotal
■ Rel: September 2003







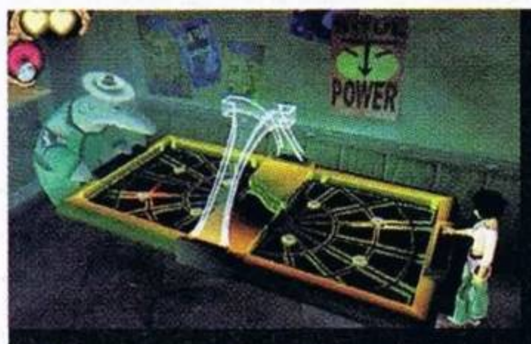
THE BASICS:

In a game torn from yesterday's headlines, your squad of four troopers airdrops into mostly urban war zones to tackle three times as many Iraqis as in the original.

HOW WAS IT?

"Enemies and teammates no longer just stand in the open—they take cover before they fire now," Producer Marc Nesbitt says of *Desert Storm II*'s improved computer smarts. Funny, but I didn't notice any boost in brainpower in the version I tried.

—Crispin Boyer



■ Hover-hockey—yet another glorious way to waste time in Hillys



■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

■ Pub: Ubi Soft ■ Dev: Ubi Soft
■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

A kidnapping conspiracy is afoot on teen photographer Jade's homeworld, Hillys. Armed with a zoom lens and her trusty Dai-jo staff, it falls on you and pig pal Pey'j to foil the plot in this action-adventure game.

HOW WAS IT?

Beyond's world and character designs aren't particularly eye-pleasing (blame the the same Frenchman who brought us *Rayman*), but the game offers oh-so-many fun ways to play. When Jade's not beating down baddies, sneaking past alien security, or racing her hovercraft, she captures evidence of the conspiracy with her camera.

—Shawn Elliott





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

THE SUFFERING

■ Pub: Midway ■ Dev: Surreal ■ Rel: Fall 2003

THE BASICS:

Awaiting execution for a murder you may not have committed, you escape your cell when vengeful specters of the prison's previous victims attack.

HOW WAS IT?

Smeared blood and ominous background noises—think *Silent Hill*—keep things creepy even when no one's being gruesomely killed (which happens plenty). Despite some problems with third-person control and camera management, I'm looking forward to suffering through this gory story.

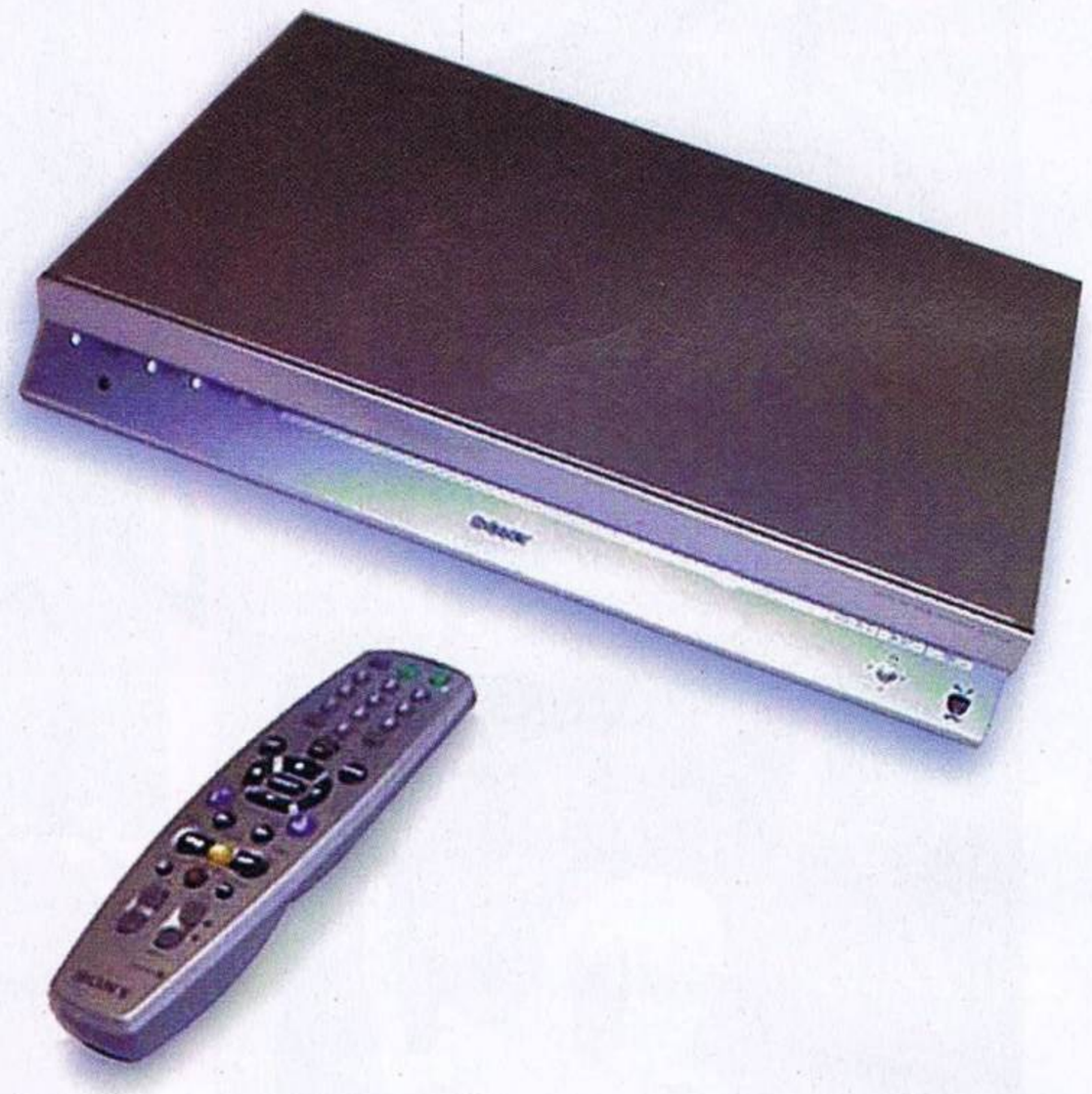
—Paul Byrnes



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ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

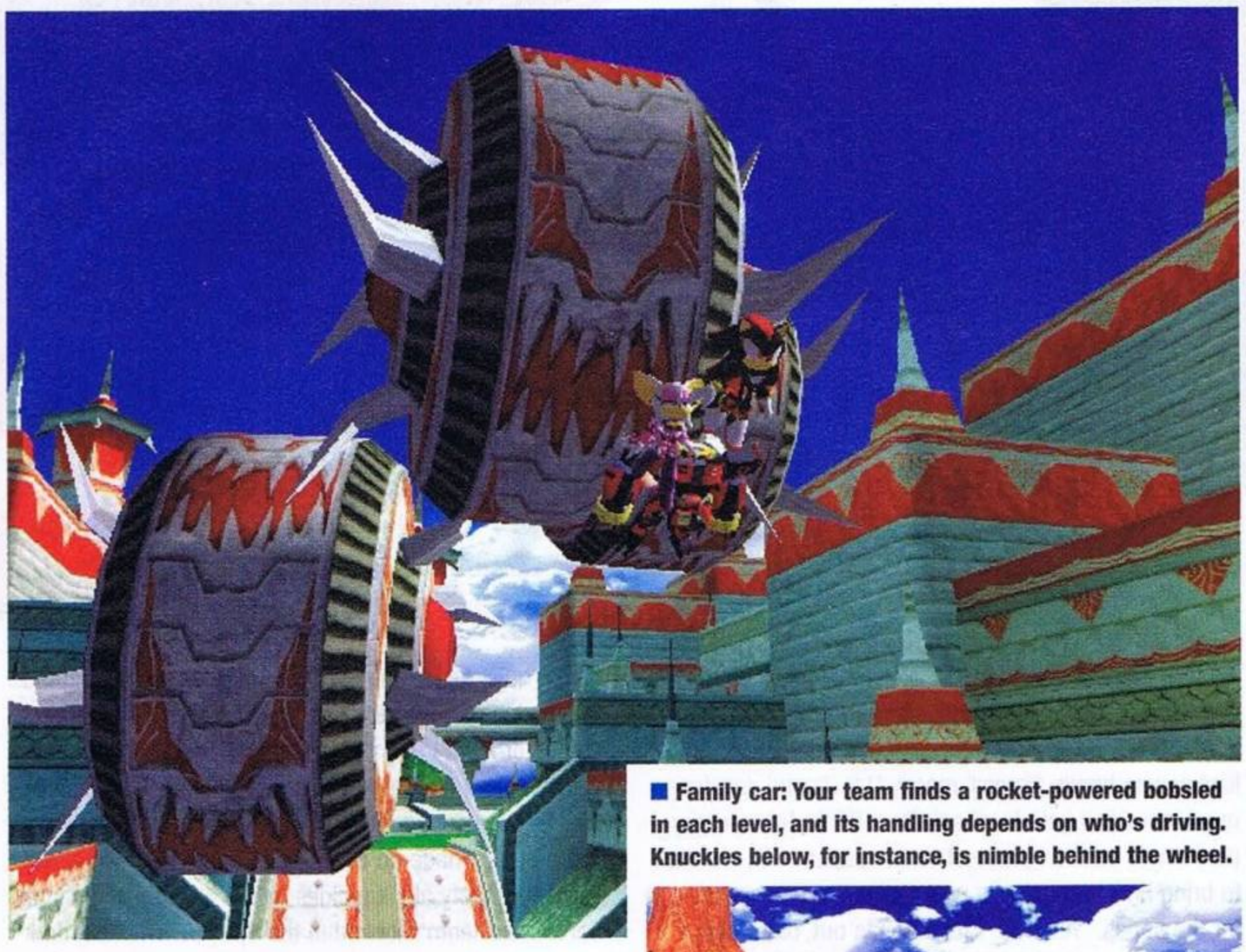
ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA
GAME GROUP



Illustrations by Mike Reisel

SONIC'S BOOM

Sega's star varmint is zipping to every system, yanking along all his pals—plus his slickest enemy—and (hedge)hogging the spotlight more than ever. It's a good time to be blue



■ **Family car: Your team finds a rocket-powered bobsled in each level, and its handling depends on who's driving. Knuckles below, for instance, is nimble behind the wheel.**



By Crispin Boyer and Chris Johnston

"We've made parts of this game so fast that your eyes start to roll," says Takashi Iizuka, director of Sonic Team USA, who's showing us the not-exactly-shocking side of Sega's newest *Sonic the Hedgehog* title. We've come to Sega's San Francisco–based U.S. offices fully expecting to see Sonic setting land speed records and blazing through corkscrewy scenery. Sonic goes fast. That's his job. He has done it ever since 1990, when Sega ordered three designers to come up with the company's first million-selling game, and they unleashed the superspeedy *Sonic the Hedgehog* on Genesis a year later.

Now, after more than a dozen major titles, several supporting roles, and worldwide sales of 35 million units, Sonic's big deal isn't how fast he can dash (for the record, it's 760 mph), but where he's breaking the speed limits and who's tagging along for the ride. Sonic's next game—called *Sonic Heroes*—is blitzing PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube simultaneously at the beginning of next year, making it Sonic's first multi-platform bonanza. (And you thought it was weird when this one-time mascot for Sega's game systems debuted on just Nintendo's GameCube.)

Although it's from the same guys behind the *Sonic Adventure* games for Dreamcast and GameCube, *Sonic Heroes* packs entirely changed-up gameplay: a new team-based system that has you flip-flopping between nearly every fuzzball character in the pantheon of hedgehogdom—12 heroes and villains (yep, you can play as bad guys) in all.

It's a big roster for a game that the financially shaky Sega is banking on in a major way, and the company is ramping up accordingly. "The rollout of *Sonic Heroes* is going to be Sonic's biggest launch ever," says Rich Briggs, senior product manager at Sega of America. "Everything we have going on—the Happy Meal promotion, the TV series, the GBA games [see page 104 for details]—all this stuff is really making this the year of Sonic. And the launch of *Sonic Heroes* is really going to be the biggest event in Sega's recent history."

MEET YOUR HEROES

Never before have 12 giant mammals, insectoids, and robotic marsupials gone after an evil egg-shaped super-criminal together in such interspecies harmony. Here's your guide to *Sonic Heroes*' four teams. Use this key for an at-a-glance gander at which formation each character will lead.



Speed Formation **Power Formation** **Flight Formation**

TEAM SONIC



Without this trio, you wouldn't have a *Sonic* series. We're guessing most gamers will want to cut their teeth using these bad boys (who're focused on the speedy gameplay that defines *Sonic*) before toying with the other teams.

■ SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic the Hedgehog (Genesis, 1991)



ATTACKS:
Homing Attack—Sonic's signature attack, but this time all three members home in on enemies.
Rocket Accel—Your two buddies push you into baddies at high speeds, turning them into scrap.

SPECIAL MOVES:
Tornado Attack—Sonic and his pals create a twister to fly up poles or hurl enemies.
Light Dash—A sprint up a path of rings
Triangle Jump—A leap off vertical walls

■ KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (Genesis, 1994)



ATTACK:
Fire Dunk—Knuckles palms Tails and Sonic and tosses them at enemies.

SPECIAL MOVE:
Triangle Dive—Clasp paws with your pals in a skydiving triangle to catch updrafts and reach higher areas.

■ MILES "TAILS" PROWER

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (Genesis, 1992)



ATTACK:
Thunder Shoot—Tails uses this li'l attack to toss Sonic and Knuckles at any airborne foes lurking nearby.



■ **Ciao, Chaos: While the *Sonic Adventure* games let you raise your own adorable virtual pet Chaos (that's "cha-ohs"), the little guys are gone from *Heroes*. The only Chao is Cream's pet Cheese (above), who helps her team collect nearby items.**



TEAM DARK



Sometimes it's good to be bad. These characters used to work as Eggman's henchcritters, but now they've got their own agenda to track down their former boss. This group of wannabe T-1000s is more heavily focused on combat than the other teams.

■ SHADOW

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic Adventure 2 (Dreamcast, 2001)

ATTACKS:
Homing Attack—The dark hedgehog cops Sonic's signature move in which he (and in formation, your buddies, too) homes in on an enemy while jumping.
Rocket Accel—Your two buddies push you into enemies at high speeds, turning them into smoking debris.

SPECIAL MOVES:
Tornado Attack—Like Sonic, Shadow and his cronies create a twister around an enemy to send 'em skyward or propel themselves up poles.
Light Dash—Shadow can use this handy move ingrained in his hedgehog genes to dash up a path of rings.
Triangle Jump—Shadow steals yet another of Sonic's moves to quickly grab onto vertical walls and jump off them again.

■ OMEGA

FIRST APPEARANCE:
New, although very similar looking to E-102, who made his debut in *Sonic Adventure* (Dreamcast, 1999).



SPECIAL MOVES:
Machine Gun—Omega's robot arms transform into machine guns to spray a rapid-fire attack against nearby foes.
Omega Bazooka—Strap the other characters to your arm and fire them off in a long-range bazooka blast.
Other Weapons—Omega's arms will be able to transform into various other weapons, too.

■ ROUGE

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic Adventure 2 (Dreamcast, 2001)

ATTACK:
Thunder Shoot—Throws Omega or Shadow at flying enemies when Rouge is aloft.

"We tried to vary the gameplay for people who like battles, who like speed, who like exploration."
—Sonic Heroes *Director Takashi Iizuka*

You can be heroes

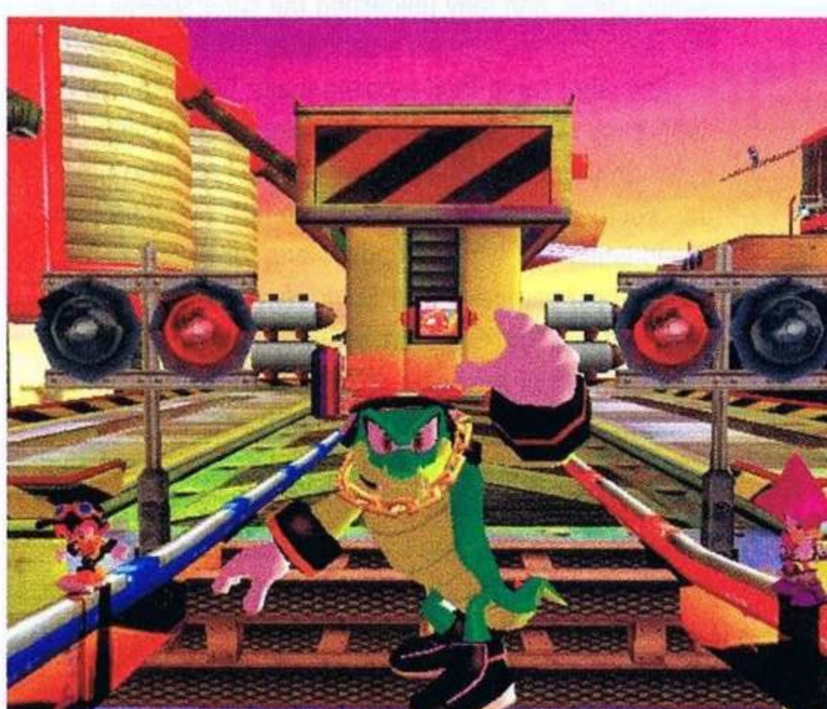
"We didn't want to make just another *Sonic Adventure* game, like a *Sonic Adventure 3* with a new story," says Iizuka, who heads *Heroes*' mostly U.S.-based development team and gets feedback from Sonic Team leader (and series co-creator) Yuji Naka in Japan. "We wanted to bring new gameplay, a new feeling, a new evolution for the series." After all, Iizuka points out, other character-driven games like Sony's *Ratchet & Clank* have their gimmicks. Sonic's already fast and he has already made the transition to 3D—it's time he did something new.

But setting up exactly what's new with *Sonic Heroes* takes some math: The game gives you four set teams of three characters each, including a trio of villains. You pick one of these teams at the game's outset, then guide its threesome through 14 mission-based levels ranging from the usual Green Hill zones to water worlds to stages made entirely of twisting rails. Although you control just one hero at a time, the remaining two tag along close behind. You can switch to one of them—with a quick jab of the button that character's assigned to—as long as you're not in midair, and as long as that character hasn't been grabbed by an enemy.

Each team has three basic formations, depending on which character you're controlling. Take, for example, Team Sonic, made up of the hedgehog leader, sidekick Tails, and beefy ally Knuckles. While you cruise along as Sonic, your team's locked in the Speed Formation, and thus can access the fastest path through the levels. Switch to Knuckles and you change to the Power Formation, which is a bit more sluggish but packs more punch when it comes to fighting baddies. More importantly, Knuckles can smash blocks and open up new routes. Flip to propeller-assed Tails, and the team hops to Flight Formation, the least offensive of the three forms but the only one that can zip to hard-to-reach areas. Tails picks up the other two characters and can soar high off the ground for a limited time, plus he's the only critter in the trio who can attack airborne enemies (by chucking Sonic and Knuckles at them).



■ **Go where no hedgehog has gone before using Sonic and Shadow's new wall-clinging Triangle Jump.**



MONDAY EVENING - JULY 05, 2003

	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	
2	Kirby™: Nightmare in Dream Land ★★★★		GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing		Crash Bandicoot® 2 N-Tranced		Yoshi's Island™: Super Mario® Advance 3 ★★★★			2
5	The Incredible Hulk™	Sonic Pinball Party™		The Legend of Zelda®: A Link to the Past®/ Four Swords ★★★★			Bratz™ ◄(09:50)	Sonic Advance™ 2		5
7	Sega Arcade Gallery™ ◄(06:30)		Rayman® 3 ◄(07:45)		High Heat™ Major League Baseball® 2004 ★★★★			Wario Ware,™ Inc.: Mega Microgame$ ►		7
9	Justice League™ In Justice for All ★★★★		Super Puzzle Fighter™ II ★★★★			Pokémon® Sapphire Version (09:45) ►		All-Star Baseball™ 2004		9
11	Wings™ ◄(06:30)	Ed, Edd n Eddy™ Jawbreakers! ◄(07:15)		The Legend of Zelda®: Oracle of Ages®		Daredevil™	Pokémon® Ruby Version ★★★★			11
20	Sega Rally™ Championship			The Lost Vikings™		MLB Slugfest® 20-04		Digimon® BattleSpirit		20
26	F1 2002	Lufia®: The Ruins of Lore		X2 Wolverine's™ Revenge ★★★★		Boulder Dash® EX™		Hamtaro™: Ham-Ham Heartbreak		26
32	Samurai Jack™ The Amulet of Time		Donkey Kong Country™		MegaMan™ & Bass ★★★★		◄ Golden Sun™: The Lost Age (09:50)			32
38	Crazy Taxi™ Catch a Ride™ ◄(06:30)		Ninja Five-O™ ★★★★		Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel			Street Fighter® Alpha 3		38
44	The Legend of Zelda®: Oracle of Seasons™ ★★★★				Metroid® Fusion ★★★★		Advance Wars™	Disney/Pixar Finding Nemo (SEE REVIEW)		44
66	Castlevania® Aria of Sorrow™ ★★★★			Tony Hawk's Pro Skater™ 4 ★★★★			James Bond 007™: Nightfire™ (SEE REVIEW)			66

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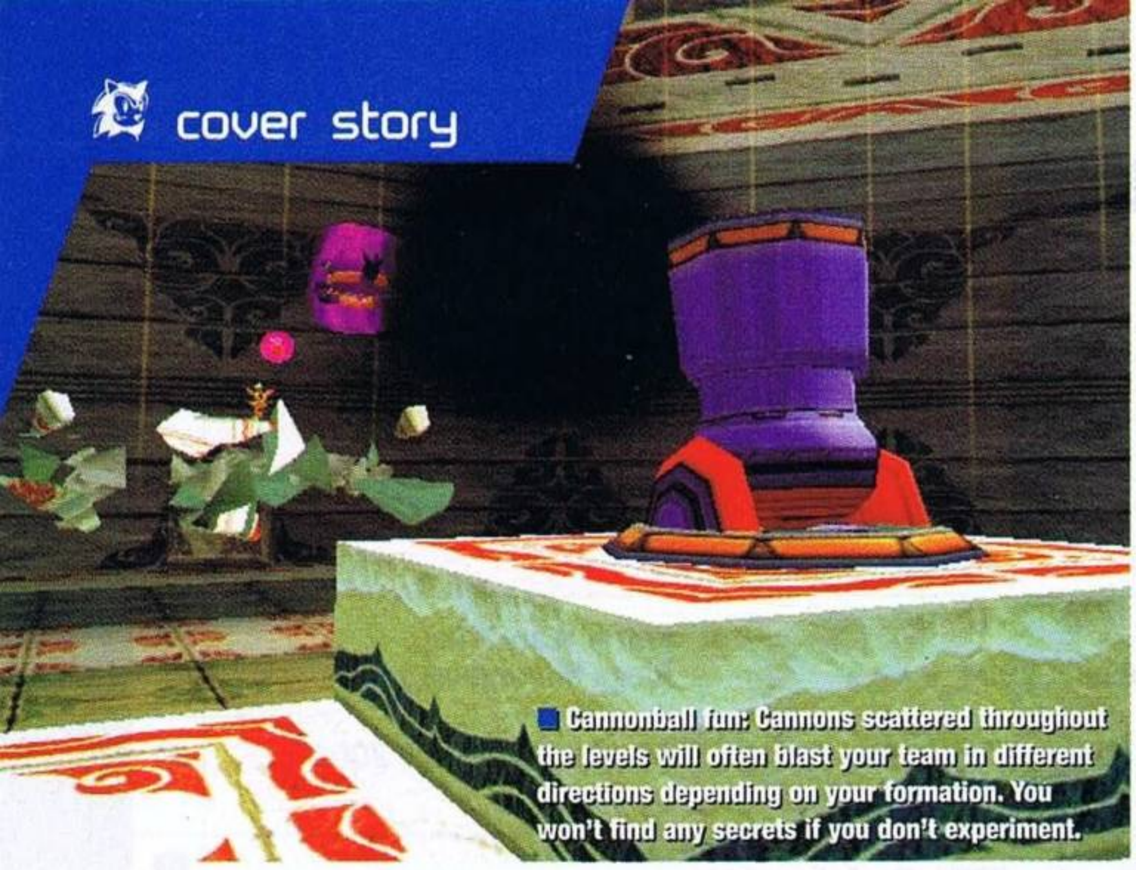
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■ Cannonball fun: Cannons scattered throughout the levels will often blast your team in different directions depending on your formation. You won't find any secrets if you don't experiment.



Character study

The trick, then, is to pick the right character—and, therefore, the right formation—for the job. See a swarm of airborne foes up ahead? Knock 'em to the ground as Tails in the Flight Formation, then switch to Knuckles' Power Formation and knock 'em dead while they're dazed. "It's a lot deeper combat than you see in the *Sonic Adventure* series," Briggs says.

Adding to the variety: Although each of the four teams has the same three basic formations—Speed, Power, and Flight—it'll also have special abilities unique to its members. Knuckles in Team Sonic, for instance, can wrangle the other two characters into a triangle-shaped skydiver formation and glide down to earth. Sonic can spin-dash the group into a whirling tornado that whisks them up special poles. The android Omega in Team Shadow has a super attack that decimates squads of enemies at once. Espio in Team Chaotix can become transparent to sneak past enemies for missions that require stealth. "The characters all have the abilities that you sort of knew from the previous games, just sort of powered up," Iizuka says.

These abilities aren't just fluff—team members will actually need to use them to get through the levels, since the stages actually change depending on which team you've chosen (just as levels changed slightly based on the character you picked in *Sonic Adventure 2*). "So you have 14 levels," says Briggs, "but you'll really have four variations of each one of those that are created for the specific team, and each team is going to have its own story, different cut-scenes, different plot lines, different endings, and different missions." One Team Sonic mission, for instance, will have you trying to find a particular route through a level. Team Chaotix missions will focus more on finding particular items or using stealth to evade baddies. But although the level

TEAM ROSE

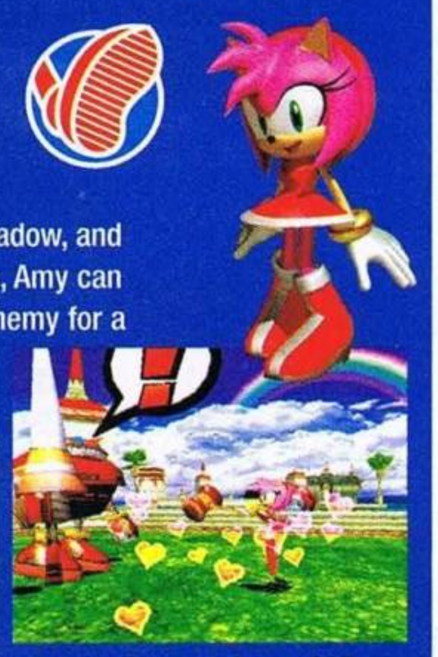


Team Rose is billed as the easiest of the groups to play as, giving you increased flight times so it's harder to fall to your death. Think of this as *Sonic* for your younger sister.

■ AMY ROSE

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic CD (Sega CD, 1994)

ATTACKS:
Homing Attack—Like Sonic, Shadow, and Espio on their respective teams, Amy can help her team home in on an enemy for a critical hit.
Rocket Accel—Cream and Big push each other into Amy to propel her forward, giving her a lethal burst of speed.



SPECIAL MOVE:
Hammer Swing—Amy wields a hammer that she can use to bash enemies, create a whirlwind that propels baddies into the air, or allow her team to climb poles. By busting out the Hammer Swing in the air, she can hover for a few seconds.

■ BIG THE CAT

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic Adventure (Dreamcast, 1999)



SPECIAL MOVE:
Umbrella/Fishing Pole—Good ol' boy Big has an umbrella that can be used for gliding down from high places or as a fishing pole to attack enemies.

■ CREAM

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Sonic Advance 2 (Game Boy Advance, 2003)



ATTACK:
Thunder Shoot—Like the other Fly Formation characters, Cream can toss her partners toward flying enemies to knock them to the ground.

SPECIAL MOVE:
Cheese—Cream's Chao buddy Cheese hovers around her at all times and is able to help her out by collecting nearby items and attacking weaker enemies.

sonic's world

THREE OTHER WAYS THIS HEDGEHOG'S GETTING IN YOUR FACE...

Sonic X (Fall 2003)
Coming this fall to Fox's Saturday-morning cartoon lineup, *Sonic X* is a new anime series starring the cast of *Sonic Adventure* (and thus, many familiar faces from *Heroes* as well). The concept: After accidentally activating one of Eggman's machines during a battle, Sonic and all his pals (plus Eggman) are transported to an Earth-like planet. When they come to, the evil doc resumes his quest for the Chaos Emeralds, and Sonic and his buddies, now befriended by a young boy named Chris, set out to stop him.



McDonald's Happy Meal Toys (July 2003)



It's probably been a good 10 or more years since you bought a McDonald's Happy Meal, but if you're a Sonic fan, it might be worth your while to order one right now. (Don't worry...you can always get it to go and say it's for your kid bro.) Beginning in late June and continuing into July, the fast-food joint is offering six handheld games (the first time *electronic* games have been doled out as a premium in the Meals) starring Sega's *Sonic* and *Monkey Ball* games, including one in which you can "experience track-car racing, *Sonic*-style." Supersize that, please.

Sonic Battle (GBA, Early 2004)
In keeping with the "let's make something different" tone of *Heroes*, *Battle* turns the series on its head again, transforming the speedy action into a strictly versus affair. Up to four friends can pick their favorite of eight of the series' mainstay characters, customize their special attacks and game rules, then duke it out in two-on-two team combat using the GBA link cable. Or if you'd rather go it alone, you can work through the game's Story mode solo with a trusty computer-controlled partner.



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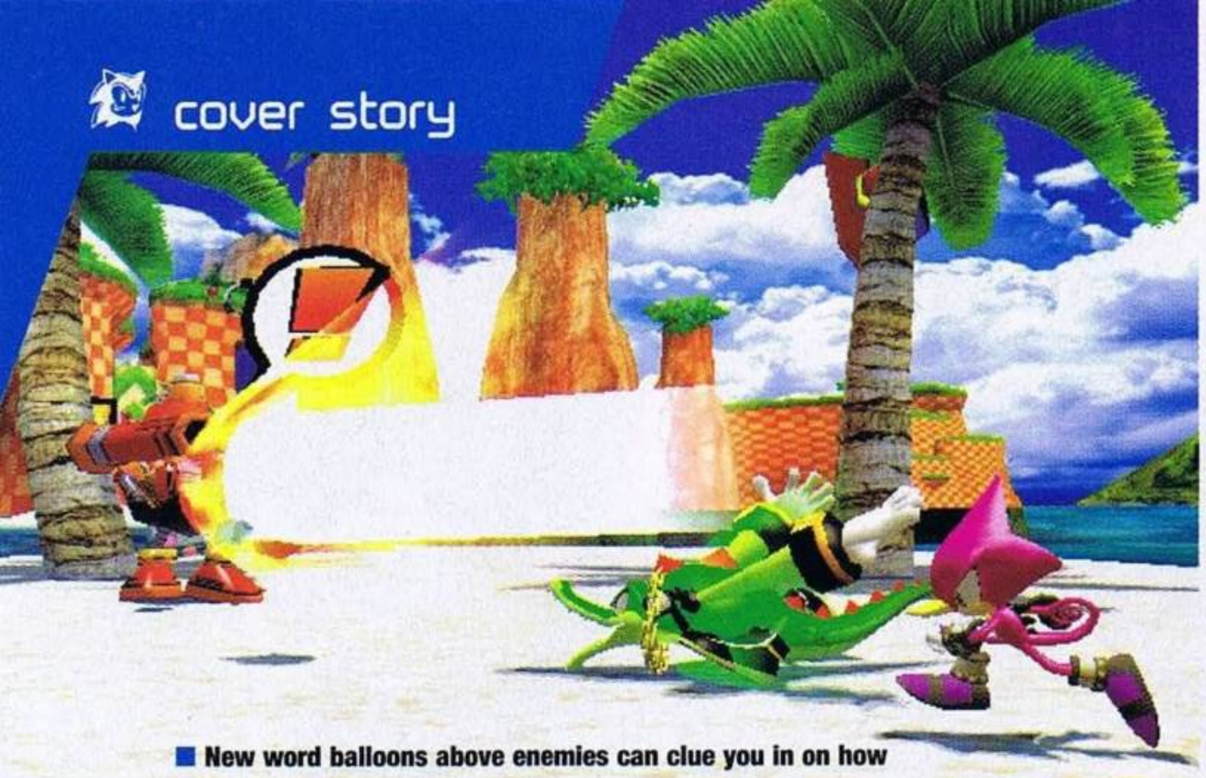
DYNASTY WARRIORS 4™

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING TO TEEN

RP-T

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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■ New word balloons above enemies can clue you in on how best to attack (for example, if they're sleeping, you should sneak in for a close-range hit) and act as health gauges.



objectives vary among the teams, they all share the same overall goal: to stop Eggman and his new villain, a back-from-the-scrap heap reincarnation of fan-favorite Metal Sonic (see sidebar below). Iizuka tells us that when you finally do go through the game with all four teams and get all four endings, "you get something else after that." He's just not telling what that something is.

up capability for the GameCube version and online features for Xbox and PS2 are a natural. But Sega seems reluctant to even consider those possibilities at this point and instead is hell-bent on making each version identical, right down to the graphics. "If we can bring online to all three platforms simultaneously," Iizuka offers as an example, "that's something we will look

"...this title has turned out to be the one where more people can enjoy Sonic's charm."

—Sonic Team Head Yuji Naka

Sonic for everybody

Now that he's dashing to every system, Sonic has his big chance to impress a massive new audience. Sega knows this—hence the tweaked team-based gameplay. "We tried to vary the gameplay for people who like battles, who like speed, who like exploration," says Iizuka. "We've made it so every type of player will find something they like." Segaheads who grew up with Sonic on Genesis may stick with Team Sonic and play mostly as the hedgehog, just to relive his supersonic glory days, while gamers who want more combat will go with Team Dark. Younger players can stick with Team Rose, whose star character has a hover ability that gives a handy second chance if you miss a jump. "I believe this title has turned out to be the one where more people can enjoy Sonic's charm," says Yuji Naka.

Iizuka won't reveal what platform-specific goodies will grace each version of *Heroes*. Extras like GBA link-at." Multiplayer modes, on the other hand, are definitely in the works for all three versions.

The adventure continues?

Fans of the *Sonic Adventure* games can see that *Sonic Heroes* is not a sequel—it's a new game that emphasizes combat and classic speed-freak gameplay over story and single-character action. But that doesn't mean the *Adventure* series has come to an end. "This isn't the death of *Sonic Adventure*," Iizuka tells us. "We're just trying this new thing." Whether *Heroes* becomes the tip of a new series depends on you. "If a lot of people like this idea, they'll get a continuation of the *Heroes* branch of games. If we find that the story line is really important and people want the single-character gameplay, we may do another episode of the *Adventure* series." Either way, now that Sonic is hitting the multiplatform big time, there's no slowing this hedgehog down.

TEAM CHAOTIX



Never heard of these guys? We're not surprised. *Heroes* Director Takashi Iizuka included the obscure Team Chaotix "because they are so unique from the mainstay *Sonic* characters," he says. The team's missions vary from stage to stage, with objectives that aren't just to run straight through as fast as you can.

■ ESPIO THE CHAMELEON

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Knuckles Chaotix (Sega 32X, 1995)



ATTACKS:
Homing Attack—Used when jumping to home in on and destroy nearby enemies.
Rocket Accel—Charmy and Vector give Espio a speed burst that destroys foes in front of you.



SPECIAL MOVES:
Invisibility—Espio can use this to temporarily disappear and sneak past opponents or walk through laser fences.
Other Ninja Moves—Sonic Team's being tight-lipped on the specifics, but Espio will be able to use other ninja-esque moves as well.

■ VECTOR THE CROCODILE

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Knuckles Chaotix (Sega 32X, 1995)



SPECIAL MOVE:
Mouth Attack—As most crocodiles would, Vector swallows his two buddies. But unlike other crocs, he'll spit them out, shooting them at an unlucky foe.

■ CHARMY THE BEE

FIRST APPEARANCE:
Knuckles Chaotix (Sega 32X, 1995)



ATTACK:
Thunder Shoot—Like other Fly Formation characters, Charmy tosses his buds at flying enemies to daze them.

SPECIAL MOVE:
Stinger—Charmy uses the only weapon he's got—his pointy ass—to dispatch enemies. Sonic Team also says he'll use the sharp extremity for "other (as yet unspecified) things," too.

recycled metal

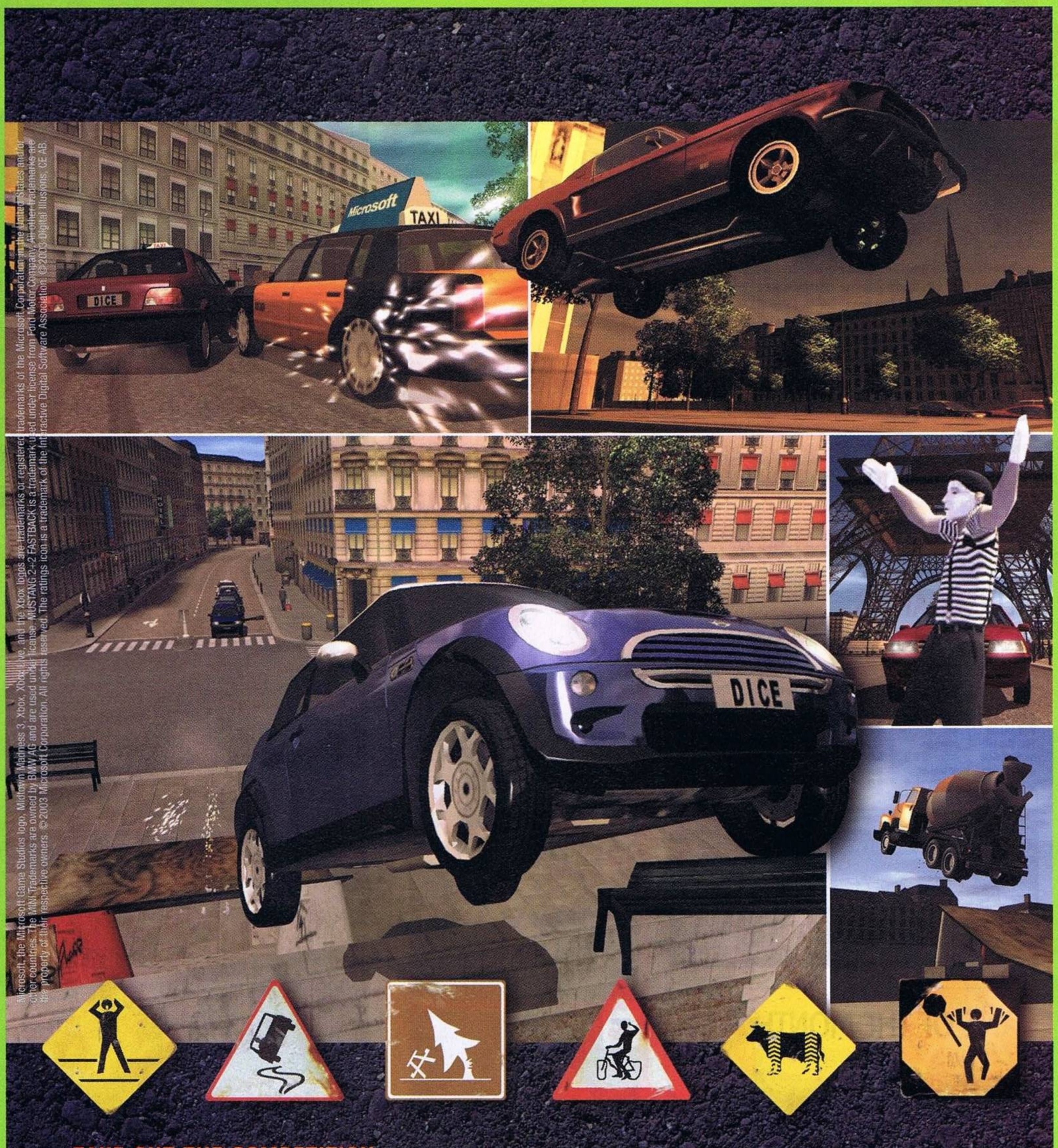
SEGA REACTIVATES CLASSIC ROBO-BADDIE METAL SONIC



■ Metal Sonic then (at right) and now.

It's the way of the world in the *Sonic* series: Boss baddie Eggman always has some robot or beast in tow ready to do his evil bidding, which of course includes trying to crush Sonic into a puddle of blue goo in the process.

Back in the days of Sega's Genesis and Sega CD, that henchman was Metal Sonic, a nuts-n-bolts version of our blue hero. He has been dormant for years, sitting out for the last two *Adventure* titles on Dreamcast, and playing a very minor role in the Battle mode of *Adventure 2 Battle* on GameCube. But for *Heroes*, he's making a triumphant return...sort of. Iizuka explains that in this game, Sonic will face "a brand-new villain, very similar to Metal Sonic. We have the original designer here on campus who is updating that character. You definitely won't be disappointed if you're a Metal Sonic fan." And just when we were thinking ol' ironsides would never climb outta the junkyard.



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review crew

Your monthly guide to gaming's winners and losers

THE RATING SYSTEM

Each reviewer assigns an overall grade to each game, on a scale from 0 to 10. When a game receives a 10, you can rest assured that it's one of the best games ever made, a classic that will endure throughout the ages. Conversely, when a game gets a 0.0, it's complete and utter crap and should be treated like a deadly biohazard. We utilize the entire scale, so a game that gets a 5.0 is average, not bad. We repeat: 5.0 IS AVERAGE. The scores are color-coded, so the brighter the reds, the better the game.

0-4.5 BAD	5.0-6.5 FAIR	7.0-10 GOOD

OUR AWARDS

Platinum Awards go to games that get all 10s, the ultimate review a game can get.

Gold Awards go to games with an average score of 9.0 or higher. Quality stuff.

Silver Awards go to games that average at least an 8.0 (but are lower than 9.0).

GAME OF THE MONTH This honor is bestowed upon the highest-reviewed game each month. A worthy buy.

SHAME OF THE MONTH This dishonor goes to the worst game each month that gets unanimously bad scores.

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

EC-Early Childhood: Games bearing this mark are suited for infants, toddlers, and Seanbaby.

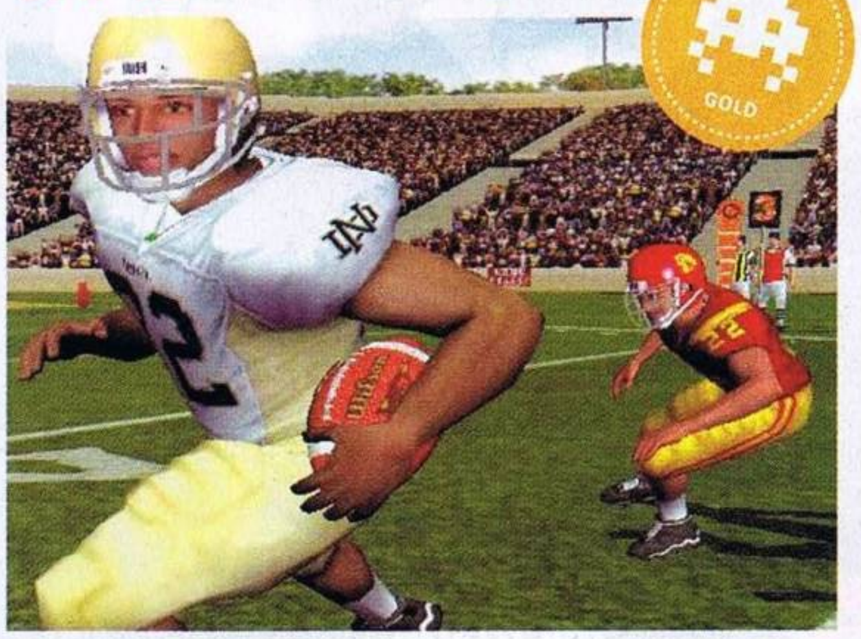
E-Everyone: Wholesome fun for the whole family, devoid of hookers, head-shots, or heroin use.

T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies, Teen games feature mild violence and "comic mischief."

M-Mature: Whereas these games offer all the gore, sex, drugs, and fun of R-rated fare.

AO-Adults Only: A rare find. We haven't seen an AO game since *Neurodancer* on the 3DO.

GAME OF THE MONTH



PAGE 118

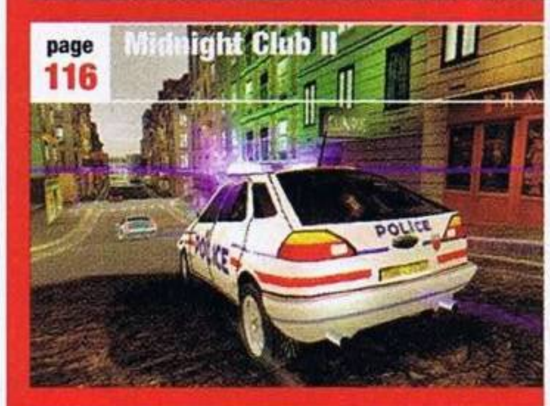
NCAA FOOTBALL 2004

Nobody does pigskin like EA Sports, and this season's stellar *NCAA Football 2004* improves upon last year's model by adding real-time voice chat to online play. Let the trash-talking commence.

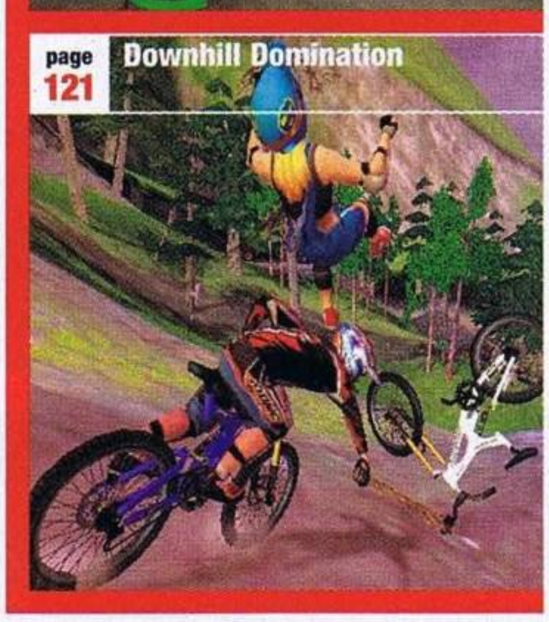
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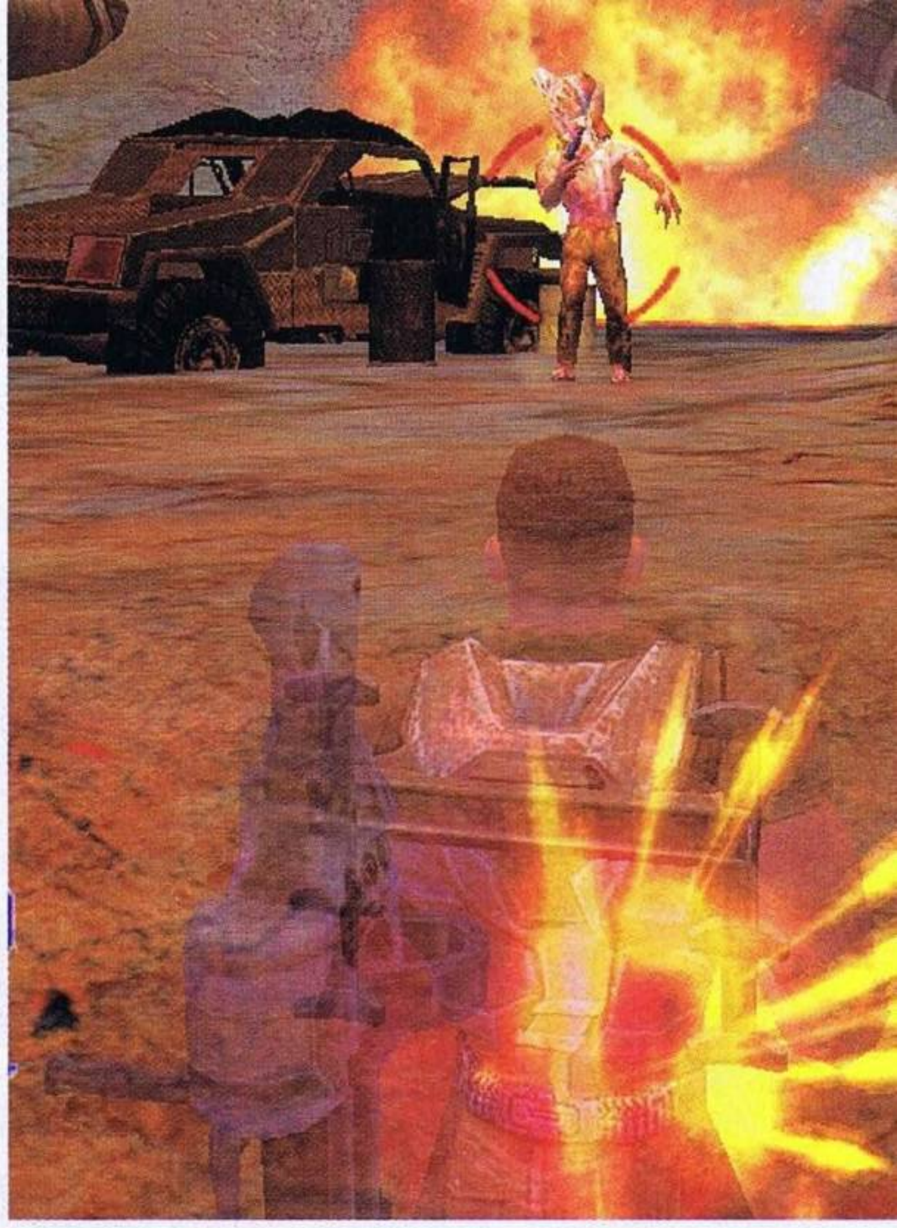
109 Brute Force
111 Ape Escape 2
111 Big Mutha Truckers
112 Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix
112 Smash Cars
113 Silent Line: Armored Core
113 K-1 World Grand Prix
114 Enter the Matrix
116 Freestyle Metal X
116 Midnight Club II
118 NCAA Football 2004
118 Rent A Hero No. 1
119 Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Operation Resurrection
119 Midtown Madness 3
120 The Hulk (PS2, XB, GC)
121 Downhill Domination
121 Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
122 Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
122 Speed Kings
123 The Incredible Hulk (GBA)









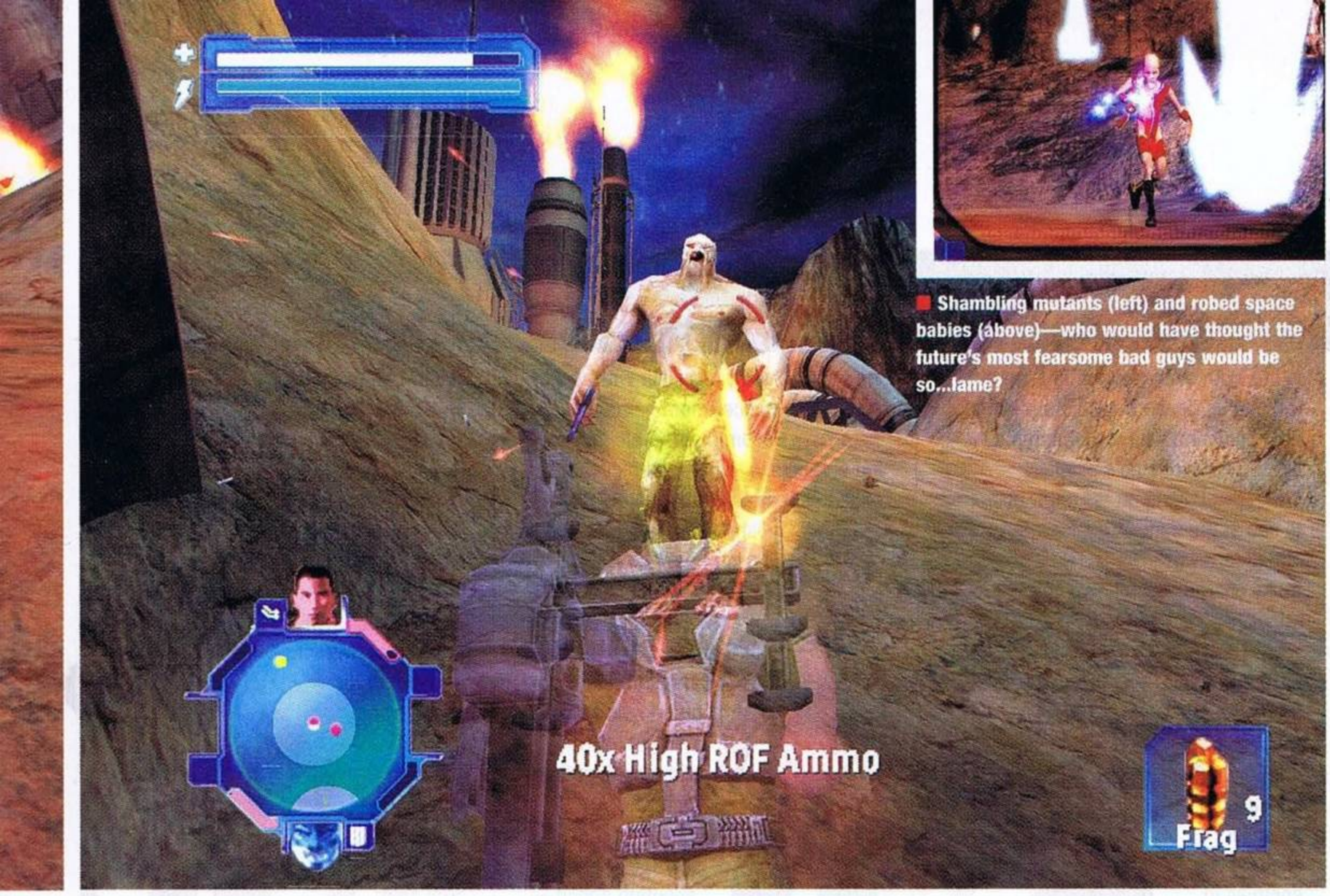








■ **Deja views: Get used to this lava world because you'll revisit it a lot, along with a swampy jungle planet, a post-apocalyptic trailer park, beachhead ruins, and a mazelike asteroid.**



■ Shambling mutants (left) and robed space babies (above)—who would have thought the future's most fearsome bad guys would be so...lame?





■ You won't read this in the manual: Once you find it, never put down the Jax-IC blaster cannon (above). It's the best damn gun in the game.

■ Xbox / Also On: None

BRUTE FORCE

Shoot first, think later, and don't hit the alligator guy!

CRISPIN: The name is the one thing developer Digital Anvil got right with this summer's biggest Xbox game. It's a giant, dumb, brutish squad-based third-person shooter that slugs you in the gut with a drunken country-boy roundhouse of screen-rocking explosions, platoons of enemies, gorgeous environments, and a man-lizard who runs like a dog—all without a second thought for pesky details like a coherent plot, cool enemies, or interesting level design. In other words, if your summer ambition is to chill in the A/C with some buds, gulp suds, and shoot and shoot and shoot till your index finger burns, thy game is *Brute Force*. If you want something that matches the Einstein A.I. and cinematic pacing of Xbox launch classic *Halo*...better just go play that game on Legendary difficulty again.

That's not to say *Brute Force*, which underwent extra incubation so developer Digital Anvil could make it be all it could be, doesn't bristle with great ideas—many of them borrowed from *Halo*. You get the same excellent control and two-weapon limit, for instance. But you also earn money from every confirmed kill and completed mission goal, which you spend to respawn your trooper clones when they die (don't fret—they seem fine with it).

The big twist—aside from the third-person perspective—is your squad of computer-guided teammates, whom you can order around or assume control of at any time. In theory, each member of *Brute Force* (meet them on page 110) has unique skills you'll call upon to complete missions. In practice, it works—I'd use my scout to snoop ahead, my sniper to clear a path, etc. But the squad rarely ran like a well-oiled machine. More often than not, I'd command team members to stay put while I picked just one to move ahead and take care of business. And that business got dull and confusing, thanks to repetitive mission environments, spotty enemy A.I., and too many similar-looking bad guys. The whole thing ends with a whimper, too—a nonsensical final-boss puzzle precedes a wussed-out finale. You'll still have a good time up until that point, especially when you airdrop into battle with friends (see the multiplayer sidebar at the bottom of page 110). It's just not the total blast I was hoping for.

MARK: Like any *Brute*, Microsoft's new squad shooter gets the basic job done, but not without heavy casualties—starting with character design. Sure, the graphics engine is impressive (you can even see people's hair move), but it's hard to care about friends and enemies that all look so clichéd (Tex), dull (mutants), silly (lizardmen), or just plain ugly (too many to list). Levels are also a mixed bag; for every beautiful beach or realistic grassy field, you have endless bland moon surfaces and blocky caves to wander over and over. Which brings me to *Brute Force*'s biggest problem: repetition. Sure, it offers almost 20 levels, but when you keep returning to the same six or so worlds ➤









Evil Twins
As if *Brute Force*'s repetitive levels weren't enough to make you feel caught in a *Groundhog Day* loop, the game throws a nearly identical boss at you in two separate levels. In mission 10, you face black-suited Gunthar Ghent (above). Four levels later, you'll fight Ty McTavish (below). Yeesh. At least give him some Clark Kent glasses or something.



Good: Cooperative gameplay
Bad: Repetitive, confusing environments
Dumbest Line: "Time to disappear...without a trace."



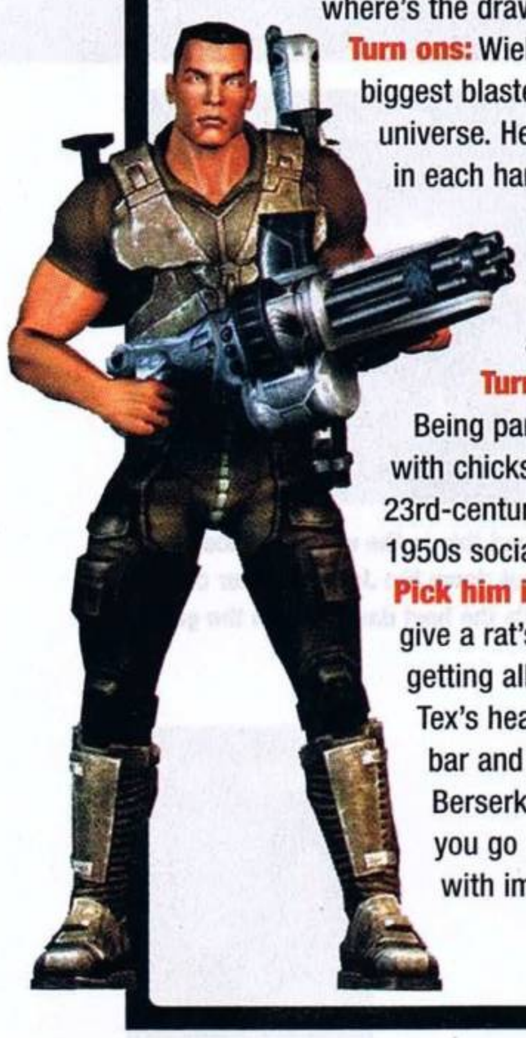
CRISPIN	MARK	JOE
6.5	6.0	7.5

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Digital Anvil
Players: 1-4 splitscreen, 1-8 system link
ESRB: Mature

www.gamers.com/1103061

Who the Hell are You?

Match your personality with *Brute Force*'s brutish enforcers to find out which woman, man, or beast-man you should charge into battle....



Tex: A grizzled gun-nut mercenary named after George W.'s home state. So where's the drawwwwl?

Turn ons: Wielding the biggest blasters in the universe. He'll heft one in each hand if you enable his special Berserker ability.

Turn offs: Being partnered with chicks. He's a 23rd-century man with 1950s social values.

Pick him if: You don't give a rat's ass about getting all tactical. Tex's hearty health bar and twin-gun Berserker mode let you go gung-ho with impunity.



Brutus: An overwrought dinosaurian. Oh, and he doesn't always run like a dog; sometimes he walks upright. Awww, he thinks he's people.

Turn ons: Calling on his spirit power to see in the dark and unleash a tricky charge attack.

Turn offs: Getting fried by friendly fire because he looks like half the enemies in the game.

Pick him if: You wanna play rough and wield big guns like Tex.

Hawk: A stealthy assassin with abs of steel and a soccer-mom hairdo.

Turn ons: Becoming invisible and dicing enemies with her laserblade, the only melee attack in the game. (We wish every character had an up-close attack.)

Turn offs: Running out of invisible juice in the middle of an enemy camp and eating blue-laser death. This gal has the slimmest health bar by far.

Pick her if: You like the idea of scouting ahead—but also don't mind sitting out of the action for minutes on end while your stealth power recharges.



Flint: A sure-shot she-bot sniper, also with steel abs and a soccer-mom 'do.

Turn ons: Engaging her advanced targeting to auto-lock enemies.

Turn offs: Going into battle with nearly the same hairdo, makeup, and outfit as Hawk, that bad-dye-job bitch.

Pick her if: You prefer helping the squad from distant grassy knolls...or if you're just a crap shot. Auto targeting makes the killin' easy.

(with different layouts each time, but made up of the same basic building blocks), fighting the same enemies and facing the same situations, what's the point? Sadly, *Force*'s ho-hum story and merely adequate enemy A.I. won't help you forget you've seen and done it all before with each "new"

desire, it creates interesting strategic possibilities (set up a sniper in the hills while you go in cloaked for some stealth kills, for example) that only get better in Co-op mode. Or, take it as a simple, straight blast-a-thon/decent deathmatch game, and *Brute Force* will suffice.

you might turn invisible to scout out an area as Hawk, switch to Flint to sniper a few guards, use Brutus' heat vision to spot hiding enemies, then finally wade into a melee as Tex, guns blazing. You're rarely able to properly coordinate the squad's movements on the fly, but it's entertaining to hop around into the different characters and use their unique skills in battle.

The game clearly has a few knocks against it: sub-standard character designs; a story that'll seem basic to you if you have, you know, ever read a book or watched a movie (see: Tex's textbook response of "You're partnering me with a woman?!?" when a lady joins the Force); and reuse of environments. But, at the end of the day, *Brute Force* offers up a fun single-player experience that's bolstered by its many multiplayer options. It's like an action movie that, if you don't set your expectations high, you'll end up enjoying.

Back in action

Beat *Brute Force*? Enjoy the R&R while you can, lizard-man, because the developer is readying new multiplayer maps you can download via Xbox Live (they should be available now). At least one new single-player mission is in the works, too.

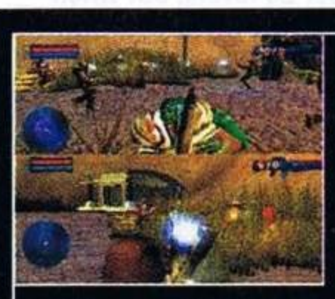
> **"...you have endless bland moon surfaces and blocky caves to wander over and over."**

stage. But bear these flaws and you can squeeze some fun from this *Brute*. Solid controls and a clever interface make managing your *Force*, as a whole or one by one, surprisingly intuitive. Truly utilizing your squadmates slows the game way down, but for players with the patience and

JOE: Once you get over the mind-numbing, "Christmas-is-cancelled-this-year" disappointment that *Brute Force* isn't a *Halo*-killer, you can enjoy it properly. The game starts off slow but becomes fairly enjoyable. The squad members' unique skills come into play nicely. For example,

Sizing up the Multiplayer modes

Brute Force lets you slay with your friends in just about every possible multiplayer configuration—short of actually playing online through Xbox Live. Here's a rundown of every multiplayer game, beginning with the niftiest.



Campaign Mode

Why play with yourself when you can invite pals to guide other squad members in up to four-player splitscreen play on one Xbox? Or screw splitscreen by connecting two Xboxes via a link cable or up to four through a network.

Upside: Gunning through the Campaign mode with live allies is the best way to play this game, and friends can jump into splitscreen at any time by pressing Start on a connected controller. Being able to play on your own television is the one co-op feature we pined for in *Halo*.

Downside: You still face the same deja-vu level design and silly enemies, but at least you're in this s*** together.

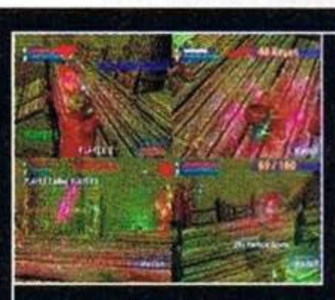


Squad Deathmatch

Command a squad of computer-controlled characters against another squad on one Xbox or up to seven if you link systems into a network.

Upside: Nifty arenas with sniper perches and fortresses let you create your own multiplayer scenarios (and that's good, because the only mode you get is Deathmatch). Players can also team up on the same squad instead of getting stuck with A.I. compadres.

Downside: Not nearly enough tweaking options or modes. You're stuck choosing from pre-built teams, some vastly underpowered. Few squads to choose from at first, until you unlock them in the single-player game.

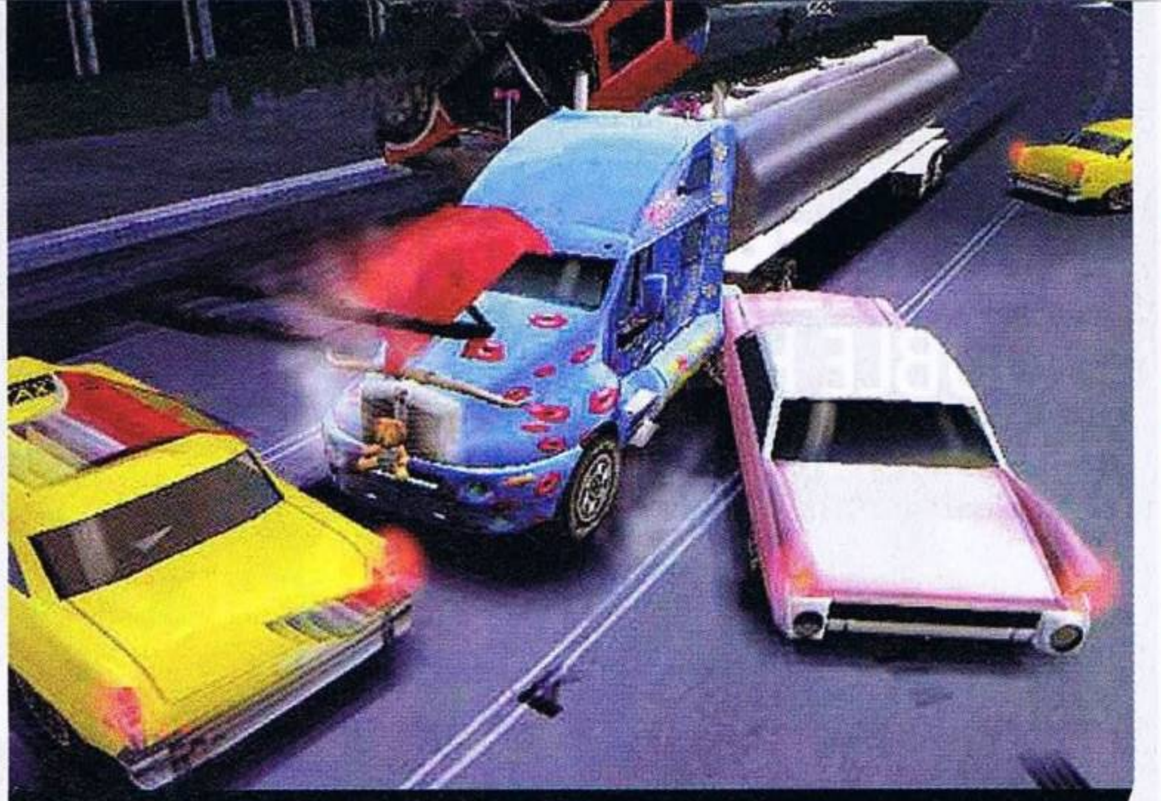


Deathmatch

It's simple: You pick a character, then try to kill three other players on one Xbox or up to seven in a network of linked systems.

Upside: You can play as all the silly enemies in the game—as long as you find their DNA canisters in the campaign first. Many even have secondary attacks.

Downside: Not enough modes (c'mon—at least give us Capture the Flag). Some characters can pick up grenades but can't toss them. Select eight Seer followers or priests, crank up the volume, then repeat Deathmatch sessions until neighbors call Animal Control to your house.



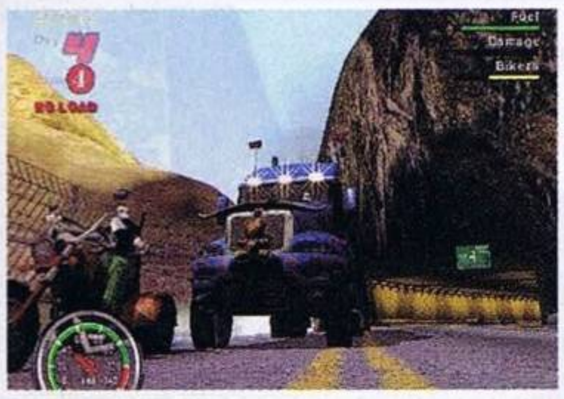
How's my driving? Call 1-800-Truck-Off to lodge any complaints.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: Xbox, GameCube

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS



It takes a certain man to truck all night





A warning to readers from America's southern states: *Big Mutha Truckers* may offend you.

Good: Lighthearted fun, easy to play
Bad: Gets repetitive quickly
We Apologize For: The bad puns. We have no trucking shame



SHOE: It starts off well enough: Drive a big rig from town to town and try to make a profit by delivering goods while outrunning biker gangs and ol' smokey. The trucks are easy to control, and since they're not too expensive to repair, you can have fun and let loose a little by smashing through obstructive traffic. A few off-the-wall nondelivery missions (which you can play in another mode) keep things interesting. Tired of shipping beer? Run over a few radio-station billboards as a service to an angry listener.

But over the course of the story mode's 60 in-game days—whether you're on day five or 55—you're still performing the same basic routine: pick up shipment, drive somewhere, sell shipment, repeat (the aforementioned interesting missions only pop up occasionally). Now, while I like trucking as much as the next guy, I only have so much stamina for it. I recommend *Big Mutha Truckers* for the occasional distraction or one-nighter, but don't expect it to keep you entertained for the long haul.

GREG S: I agree with Shoe—*BMT* is moderately engaging. I got caught up in its intricate big-rig shipping economics. Do you upgrade your truck or buy more stock? Do you have enough gas to get to the city with the best prices? Should you take out a loan or avoid the extra debt? Choices like these add surprising depth to a driving game, and they kept me hooked. Too bad most people will overlook this title because of the lowbrow redneck angle. Ah, sweet irony.

XBN—GREG O: Pay these fools no heed—keep right on truckin' past this mediocre driving game-cum-economic simulation. *BMT* takes the appealing notion of violently plowing a huge semi through traffic like a hot knife through butter and saddles it with economic drudgery requiring players to tote junk from point A to point B, buying low and selling high until they're bored to tears. Cash races and chases pitting the truckers against cops and bikers serve up mild amusement, but it's not nearly enough to salvage the game.

SHOE	GREG S.	GREG O.
6.0	7.0	4.5

Publisher: Empire
Developer: Eutechnyx
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/196832





(Right) Steer the RC Car to scare apes and flip switches.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: None

APE ESCAPE 2

New monkeys, same fun gameplay





Often, a good old-fashioned net is all that's needed to snag an aberrant ape.

Good: Monkeys—in helmets!
Bad: Hasn't evolved much from the first one
Nice Bonus: Widescreen support



JOHN R: Why it took so long for someone to bring this over from Japan is beyond me, but it's about time. Despite being over a year old, *Ape Escape 2* still stands as one of the most original and fun PlayStation 2 platformers to date. The unique dual-analog controls take a bit of getting used to, but after a few minutes, you'll be swatting monkey ass with the best of 'em.

Those of you who've played the first *Ape Escape* (PS1) should know exactly what to expect here—the gameplay hasn't changed a bit. This familiarity may seem disappointing to some—only three of the 12 gadgets here are actually new, making it feel more like an extended remix of the first game than a true sequel—but the colorful graphics, quirky humor, and great gameplay definitely help ease the pain. The new Gotcha Box and minigames make for nice diversions (Monkey Soccer is actually quite fun with four players), and the voiceover localization is surprisingly good. One gripe: the new sidekick, Pipotchi, is almost totally useless.

SHANE: Like its PS1 predecessor, *AE2* is certainly cute and clever, but I wish there was more here than, well, just catching escaped apes. The dual-analog-stick control scheme is great, but the gimmicky primate retrieval gadgets don't alter the gameplay enough to keep me enthralled. Plus, the game's far too easy—even kids could likely finish this in an afternoon. Factor in some dull visuals, annoying music, and worthless unlockables (like stupid stories about apes…seriously), and you have a fine rental, but nothing more.

CJ: Lucky for *Ape Escape 2* there's something incredibly fun about chasing monkeys around with a net. It helps to hide the fact that this isn't very difficult or long—even a spazzy camera can't spoil the simian hijinks. I love the satisfying mix of action and puzzles as you find, disarm, and nab rogue apes, and the colorful, cartoony graphics and wacky story are top notch. (Plus I'm a sucker for games that use the voice actors from *Pokémon*.) Overall, a fun way to spend a weekend.

JOHN R.	SHANE	CJ
8.5	6.0	7.5

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: SCEI
Players: 1-2 (2-4 w/ Multitap)
ESRB: Everyone

www.gamers.com/1335979

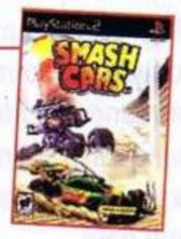


Imagine the sound effects: "Brrrrrrrrzzzz, bbbbrrrrrrrrrzzrrrr...screeech!"

PlayStation 2 / Also On: None

SMASH CARS

What's the frequency?



Good: Interesting, varied objectives
Bad: Bad layout and control
Spend Your $50 On: A real RC car instead

GREG S: The best way to sum up *Smash Cars* is "frightfully average." It delivers ho-hum RC car racing that, true to the title, involves inadvertently smashing into things…and that's about it.

Since you're steering tiny cars around life-sized environments, the tracks are visually unique and inspired. Too bad the developers ruined everything with downright confusing directions (I can't tell you how many times I went completely off course without even noticing it) and annoying obstacles (like kids on go-karts who ram you offtrack with almost no warning). Plus, RC cars can naturally travel over any type of terrain, but my miniature racer would often freak out when taken off-road—usually leading to a stalling 180-degree turn or a harrowing wall smash while the field screamed by.

On the bright side, the level objectives vary greatly. It's refreshing to take a break from straight racing to pull some crazy stunts or to help a slower car finish by ramming other drivers, so the game never gets that boring. The problem is it just never gets that good, either.

DEMIAN: I'm gonna have to completely disagree with Greg S. on this one and give him the stink eye. *Smash Cars* won't go down in history as a classic, but I thought it was really fun. Yeah, the cars are squirrelly, but they're RC cars—what do you expect? And cry me a river...you have to learn the tracks in order to be successful—just like every other half-decent racing game in existence. I found them to be pretty well designed and interesting. Greg can have *Speed Kings* (see page 122); I'll take *Smash Cars* any day. Now, if only it were a bit longer….

BRYAN: "Frightfully average," Greg? C'mon…. *Smash Cars* provides the perfect brand of rough-and-tumble racing you'd expect from manning the transmitter of these gas-powered beasts. Any kid would love to maneuver an RC car through fantastical, creative tracks like these. I'll concede that the graphics look dated, the tunes are painful, and the multiplayer is really unbalanced unless everyone knows the courses. Still, it's worth the trip to your local Blockbuster.





GREG S.	DEMIAN	BRYAN
5.0	7.0	6.0

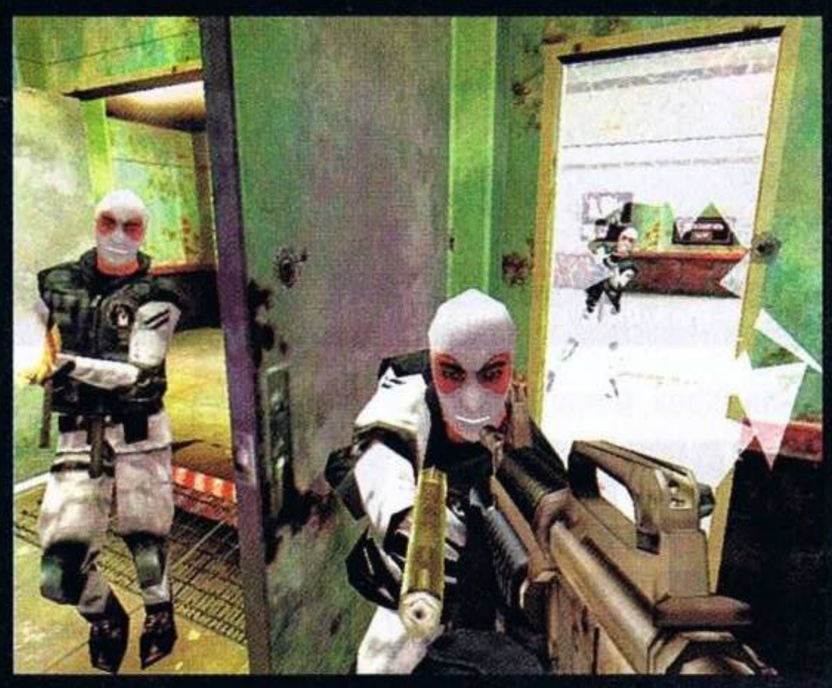
Publisher: Metro3D
Developer: Creat Studios
Players: 1-2 (2-4 w/ Multitap)
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/15964

Xbox / Also On: None ONLINE

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

Tons of action and gallons of blood







You're John Mullins—unwanted suicide assister extraordinaire.



Good: Random-mission generator and online play
Bad: The enemies are dumb and dumberer
Best Weapon For Splattering Foes: Shotgun

JOE: Like *Halo*, *Soldier of Fortune II* is made up of a series of intense shoot-outs—but unlike *Halo*, your foes aren't smart enough to make the combat infinitely compelling. Geographically, *Fortune II* provides huge bang for the buck with nine massive levels and a unique random-mission generator (although it rarely generates *fun* levels). The single-player game is certainly enjoyable in short sessions, but it can turn into a dull parade of enemies too stupid to put up any real challenge in a fight, yet frustratingly too wary to sneak up on with a silenced pistol.

Fortune II's single-player game is a bit too straightforward and unpolished, with choppy animations, blocky graphics, and weird dead-body physics. Its online modes, though, add just enough to make it worth picking up. Playing Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and Capture the Flag with real people offers unscripted (if somewhat no-frills) manhunting thrills. If you don't have Xbox Live, though, consider renting rather than investing.

BRYAN: *Fortune II* delivers buckets of gore, but you'll actually wanna play this sequel for reasons other than turning the opposition into amputees. I'm talkin' tough enemy A.I. and enough gameplay change-ups (like tricky stealth missions or being a helicopter's gunner) to make it feel less like your run-of-the-mill shooter. But would I choose to fight the good fight against bioterrorism over annihilating *Wolfenstein*'s undead Nazi legion? Nope. *Fortune II* doesn't have the same visual polish or addictive team-based online play of Activision's other wartime offering.

SHOE: This game tries to be part *Doom*, part *Medal of Honor*, and part *Tom Clancy*, but it doesn't try very hard. The extremely bland graphics and inconsistent A.I. (some enemies have Superman hearing; others don't notice me shooting people five feet away) dog an otherwise average experience. And I certainly don't agree with Joe with regard to online: No way I'd play this plain-Jane, dumbed-down shooter online when I can fire up *Unreal Championship* or *Wolfenstein* instead.





Welcome to the war on terror. Glad you could make it.

JOE	BRYAN	SHOE
6.5	7.0	3.5

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Gratuitous Games
Players: 1 (2-12 Xbox Live)
ESRB: Mature

www.gamers.com/1249427



Do you long to cosmetically alter this robot's head? If so, this is the game for you.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: None

SILENT LINE: ARMORED CORE

For those who can't get enough Armored Core





Choose your robot's arsenal from a plethora of screen-searing, whiz-bang weapons.



Good: Lots of unique robot creation options
Bad: Clunky controls limit game's appeal
Secretly: The fourth *Armored Core* game for PS2

JOHN R: Although I've dabbled with previous *Armored Core* games, *Silent Line* is the first one I've actually spent a good amount of serious time with. Now that I've been to hell and back with my trusty 'bot, I can see why hardcore mech fans get their rocks off on this giant-robot combat series.

Just like its three PS2 predecessors, *Silent Line* offers an unprecedented amount of customization, allowing you to tinker with every aspect of your mechanical pal's design, from the hundreds of different parts you can acquire straight down to shell colors and custom emblems. Unfortunately, also like its predecessors, *Silent Line* features an unwieldy control system that makes maneuvering your mech a serious test of patience—a virtue most gamers probably won't have. It's a shame, because the game's numerous missions are varied and interesting, and the gameplay, while not much different from that of past *AC*s, is really quite polished. Ultimately, *Silent Line* has made me a partial believer; if they'd simplified the controls some, I'd be completely sold.

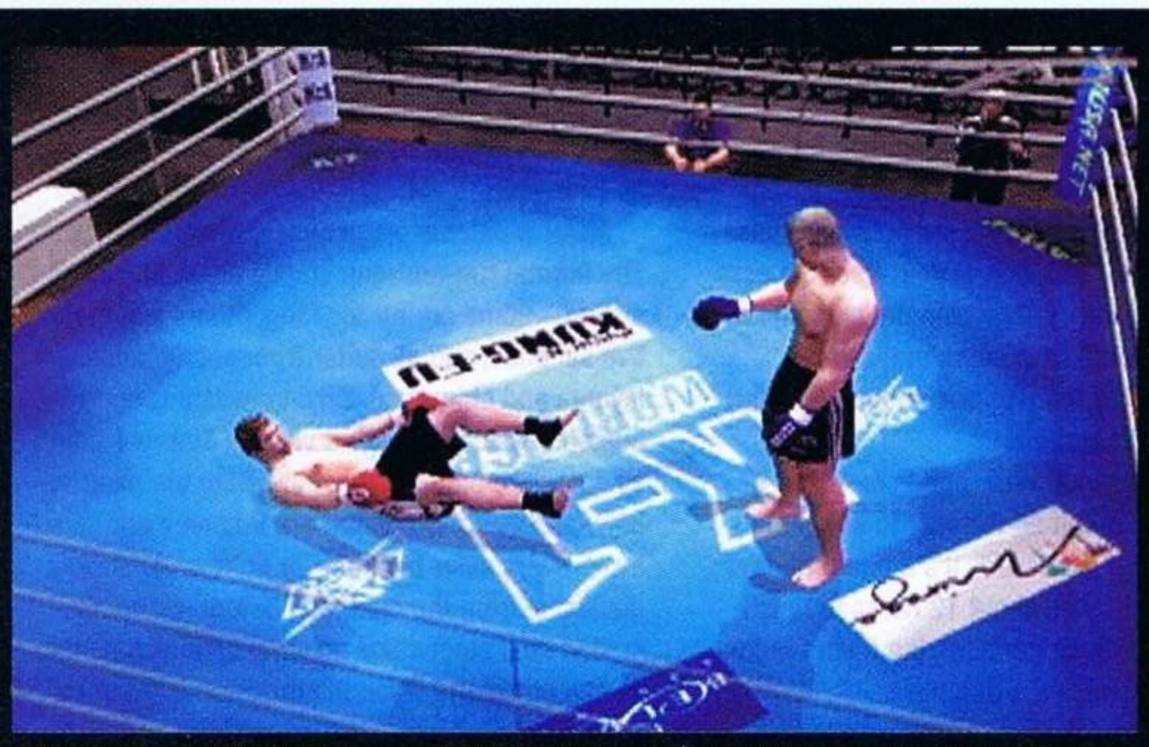
JON D: The others might have been enticed by these armored clunkers, but not me. Trudging around with stripped-down battle gear before graduating to stylish mechs is a chore, and an abysmal control scheme mires the cool-looking robo-on-robo combat. The game forces you to use button presses to look up and down, even though the right analog stick is the intuitive choice. That may seem minor, but it frustrated me to no end. Try first before you ever consider buying.

GMR—MILKMAN: Disregard the hater—the *Armored Core* series continues to evolve nicely. I love the increasingly vast collection of possible mech combinations and fine-tuned gameplay of each successive iteration. Also, assembling your own Cores and tailoring their colors and emblems to suit your taste is practically a game unto itself. *Silent Line* still offers the same rewarding (albeit sterile and linear) arena combat that series fans expect. Hopefully, From will infuse a little more personality into the next installment.

JOHN R.	JON D.	MILKMAN
7.0	4.5	7.0

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: From Software
Players: 1-2 (2-4 w/ iLink)
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/1341867



Live out your wildest K-1 fantasies! Unless of course, you don't have any K-1 fantasies.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: None

K-1 WORLD GRAND PRIX

It won't knock you out. It'll just leave you bruised



(Center) Yep, it's athlete's foot all right. (Right) Here's a useful gameplay tip: Punch...a lot.



Good: Clever Revive meter beats mashing buttons to get up
Bad: Lethargic fights lack intensity
How To Tell This Apart From *UFC* Games: No spooning

SHAWN: With nothing more than two chiseled combatants and a buxom card girl onscreen, fighting sims ought to look sharp. So what's with *K-1*'s lethargic brawlers and barely animated ladies who couldn't titillate a death row inmate? An authentic slugfest should also emphasize the punishing force behind simple punches—because, let's face it, without stylish fighting-game-style special moves, plain punches and kicks are all *K-1* has to offer. Its spongy blows feel incapable of cracking eye sockets or ending careers, nor are there enough moves to consistently entertain.

What you're left with are ugly, repetitive squabbles lacking the thrill of a brutal beatdown. Sure, kickboxing connoisseurs could point to unlockable perks such as the Revival bouts in which you reenact classic matches to earn movie clips, but unless you're a fan, you really won't care. And even the faithful will cry foul when they find the game lacks recognizable American K-1 greats like the beastly Bob Sapp. In the end, *K-1*'s pared-down approach is forgivable, but its bland execution is not.

CRISPIN: I'm sure the cross-smidgen of gamers who also happen to be fans of obscure mixed martial arts (like Milkman, apparently) will appreciate *K-1*'s roster of international kick-brawlers and the agonizingly lengthy ceremonial pomp that precedes each fight (even if you flick off the intro movies). But if you're not in that fight club, you're left with a decent basic fighter that doesn't demand much time to master yet doesn't give you much reason to give a crap, either. Give it a rent, at least, to see some brutally fun K.O.s.

GMR—MILKMAN: Unlike a reality-deprived buffoon like Shawn, I can accept the fact that human beings like Ray Sefo, Jerome Le Banner, and Mike Bernardo (of the real-life K-1 League) don't do flying guillotine crotch attacks like his favorite *Soul Calibur* fantasy-friend, Voldo. Know that *K-1* is an arcadey sports sim with real-life characters who don't have 18,000 crazy moves. Once you come to grips with that, you'll find yourself enjoying a well-rounded brawler. A true sleeper hit.

SHAWN	CRISPIN	MILKMAN
4.5	6.0	8.0

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Osaka
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/178896



Don't be fooled by this seemingly awesome screenshot—playing *ETM* is about 43 percent as cool as looking at this picture.





Which version of *Enter the Matrix* should you play?
If you have access to all three consoles and have an unyielding desire to play through this game, we'd suggest going with the PlayStation 2 version. The Dual Shock 2 offers the best control setup, and the game runs smoothly most of the time and crashes less often than its even buggier Xbox or GC counterparts.

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

ENTER THE MATRIX

Not quite "The One" we hoped for

BRYAN: If you're a die-hard fan of the flicks, *Enter the Matrix* provides exactly what creators Andy and Larry Wachowski had promised. Playing through this action title gives you a richer understanding of how and why certain events happen in *The Matrix Reloaded*. Loyalists will also enjoy the fact that the paths of each playable character, Niobe and Ghost (who have supporting roles in the film), reveal different nuggets of *Matrix* info, providing further incentive to complete *ETM* with both heroes. It also helps that enough of their missions vary so you don't feel like you're playing the same exact game twice. And let me not forget *ETM*'s biggest draw, the exclusive movie cut-scenes (totaling more than an hour), which will be reason enough for some to fork over 50 bucks.

Yet too many shortcomings will stop those who haven't been unplugged (I mean nonfans) from entering this *Matrix*. The driving and hovercraft portions fail miserably at capturing the same roller-coaster-type thrills of their movie counterparts—piloting the Logos hovercraft is like a bad bumper-boat ride. Plus, it's a shame that a number of the cut-scenes using the in-game engine lack the cool special effects made famous in the films. (You'll know what I mean when you see agents dodging bullets.) More often than not, you'll miss out on catching a good look at your Neo-like acrobatics because of the jumpy camera, and while the motion-captured combat animations are superb, others (like running or climbing a ladder) appear downright odd.

Take the fanboy outta me, and I can't say I'd follow the white rabbit all the way to the game store to buy *Enter the Matrix*. It's a fine rental for *Matrix* addicts (it takes about 12 hours to finish the game with both characters), but it isn't quite good enough to warrant a purchase.

SHANE: *Enter the Matrix* is a polished turd. Pick it up and you'll likely be mesmerized by its sparkly veneer—the exclusive movie clips, glossy character models, stylish bullet-time special effects, and destructible environments definitely impress—but play it for an hour and its sticky fecal filling oozes all over your hands.

Major problems plague every facet of the game. The normal run-and-gun stages are wildly inconsistent—some are far too long, others last literally five seconds, and all suffer from poorly designed layouts and objectives. Driving missions sport busted physics and horrid visuals. The real-time cinemas are unbelievably ugly. Both the hand-to-hand and gunplay combat are tiresome and repetitive—every slow-mo kung-fu fight is indistinguishable from the hundreds before it. The misguided final stages boil down to an anticlimactic, clunky minigame. Even the much-vaunted story

The Ins and Outs of Hacking





If you've seen the films, you should know that computer hackers are the ones who've escaped the machines' control. *ETM* has its own hacking system, which, surprisingly, is entertaining for a couple of hours. Using DOS-like commands, you'll be able to unlock such bonuses as a two-player versus mode, a training mission, and even a sword that can be used to slice and dice during combat. You can also re-watch all of the movie cut-scenes this way. Think of hacking as a progressive minigame that continually rewards you for correct keystrokes.

If you're at all familiar with DOS, you can use the hacking menu to open up the game's Versus mode—which is a simplistic, boring one-on-one brawler that you'll have to bribe your friends to play.



Just when you thought it couldn't get worse, *ETM* tosses you into a horrible retread of the legendarily crappy *Sewer Shark* shooter (originally for Sega CD).

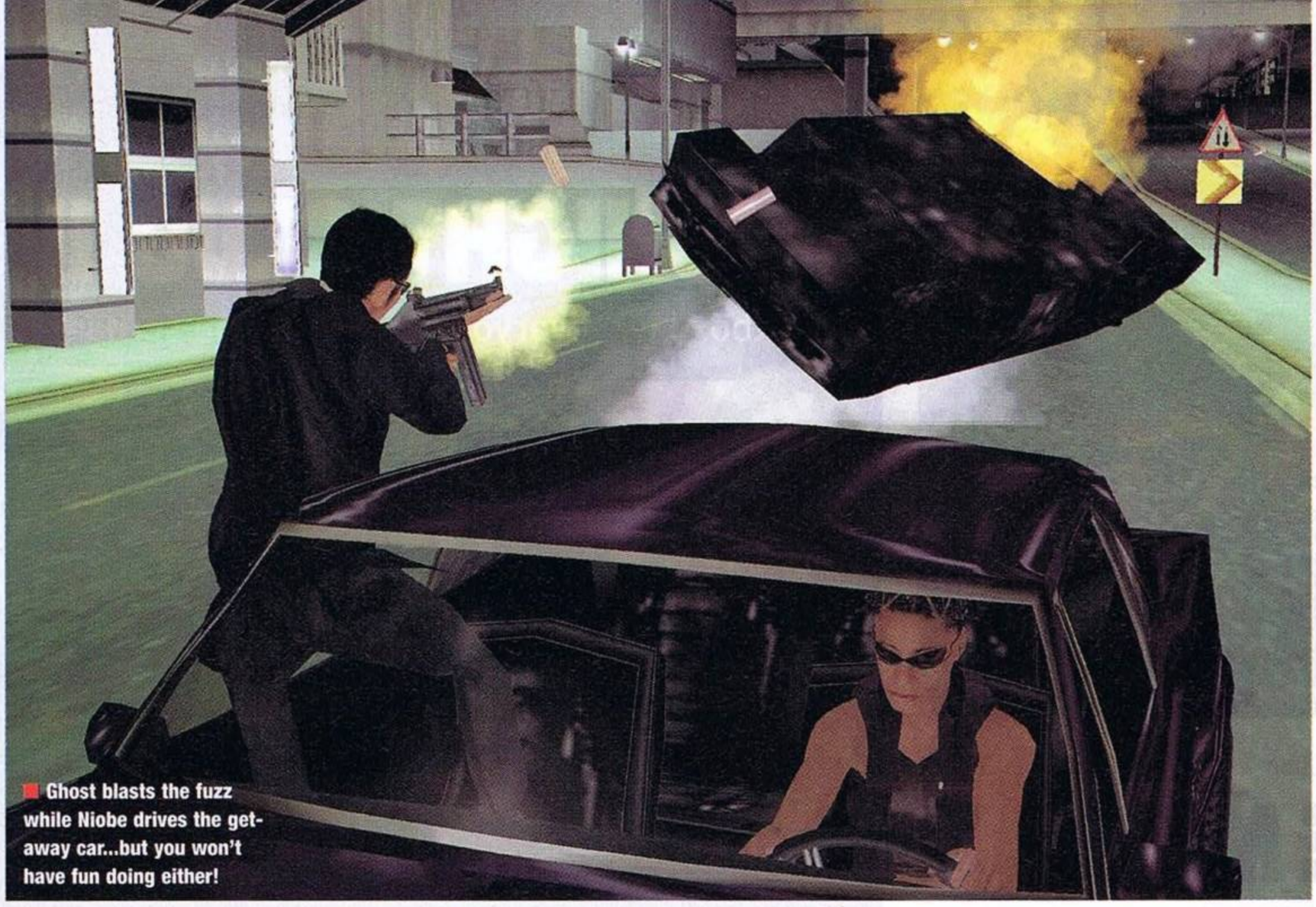
Good: Exclusive movie cut-scenes
Bad: Driving and hovercraft missions
What is Real: Girl-on-girl smoochin'



BRYAN	SHANE	MARK
6.0	3.5	3.5

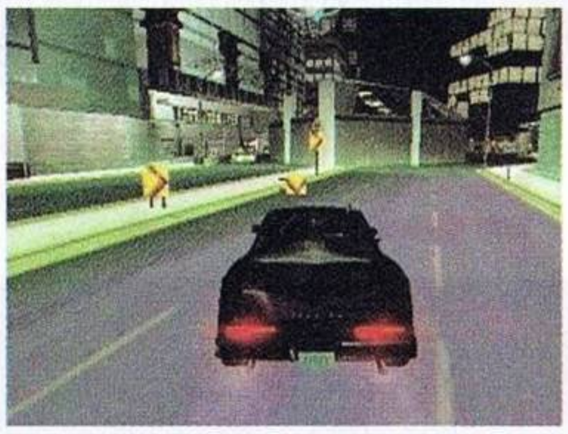
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Shiny
Players: 1 (2 in unlockable Versus mode)
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/1297484



■ Ghost blasts the fuzz while Niobe drives the get-away car...but you won't have fun doing either!







never really heats up, spending too much time exploring the boring periphery of *Reloaded*'s plot. Oh, and expect the game to routinely crash. The PS2 *ETM* is ostensibly the most stable; however, terrible game-ending bugs infect the retail copies of all three versions. Frankly, I'm pretty sure that this game isn't really done, yet it was irresponsibly released anyway to an unsuspecting public in an attempt to cash in on the movie's release.

Bryan seems content simply having a game based on *The Matrix*, regardless of its quality...but I'm not. Red pill, blue pill...at this point, I'd swallow the whole damn bottle of pills to forget my miserable *Enter the Matrix* experience. Sure, that would mean that I wouldn't remember the new movie scenes (like the oh-so-steamy Niobe/Persephone liplock), but that would be a minor sacrifice in order to erase the pervasive pain of *ETM*'s ramshackle graphics and gameplay.

MARK: In more than 20 years of playing games, I have never seen a console game as obviously unfinished and rushed to market as *Enter the Matrix*. Bugs and glitches pile up like so many Agent Smiths: Characters get stuck in walls or float in the air; music and sound effects pop in at the wrong times or are missing altogether; and on many Xboxes (including mine), the game locks up every single time after a certain boss fight. This game is a complete mess, and that's the only thing complete about it.

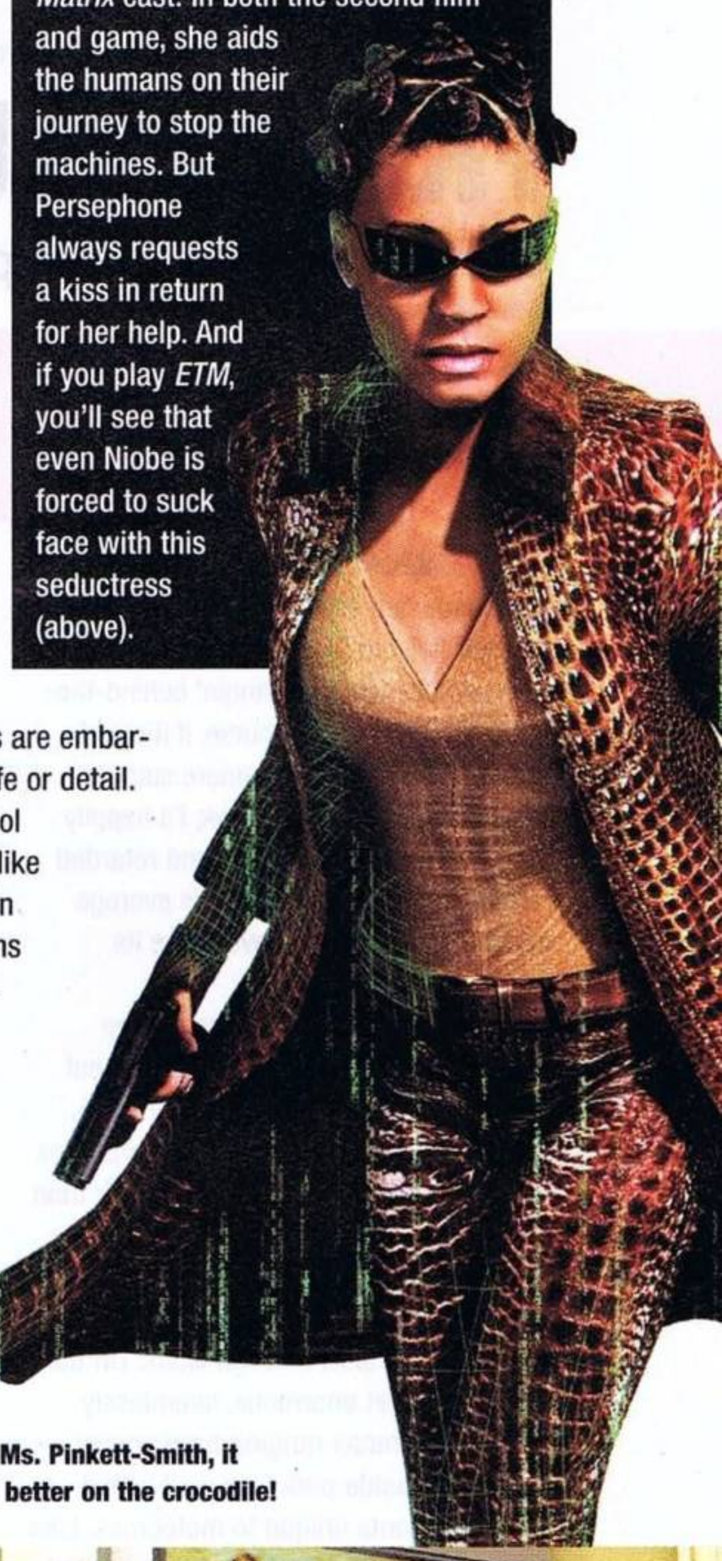
But let's say all the bugs magically disappeared—how would *Enter the Matrix* rate? Average at best. Fans may appreciate a couple of the film excerpts (and by a couple, I mean two), which cleverly weave in and out of *Reloaded*, but the story adds precious little to the overall *Matrix* mythos, and the in-game cut-scenes look laughably bad. Which goes for the rest of the game's graphics as well—most levels are embarrassingly dull, devoid of any life or detail. Combat occasionally offers cool *Matrix*-style action moments, like when you pull off a wall kick in slo-mo, spiral into the fray guns blazing, or fight extended battles mano-a-mano with tougher enemies. But all too quickly, the blue pill of piss-poor A.I. and a frustrating lock-on system (if you can even call it a system) bring you back to reality. Do not *Enter the Matrix*.

It's Just a Kiss

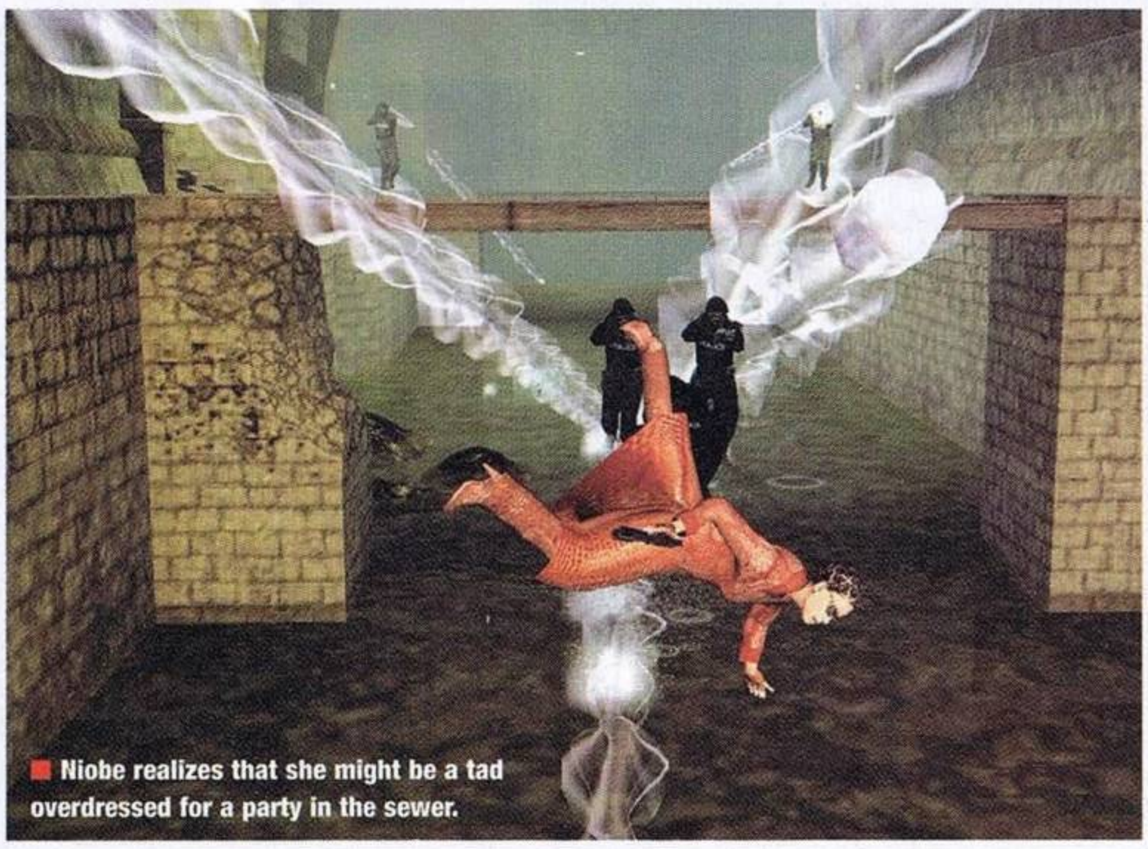




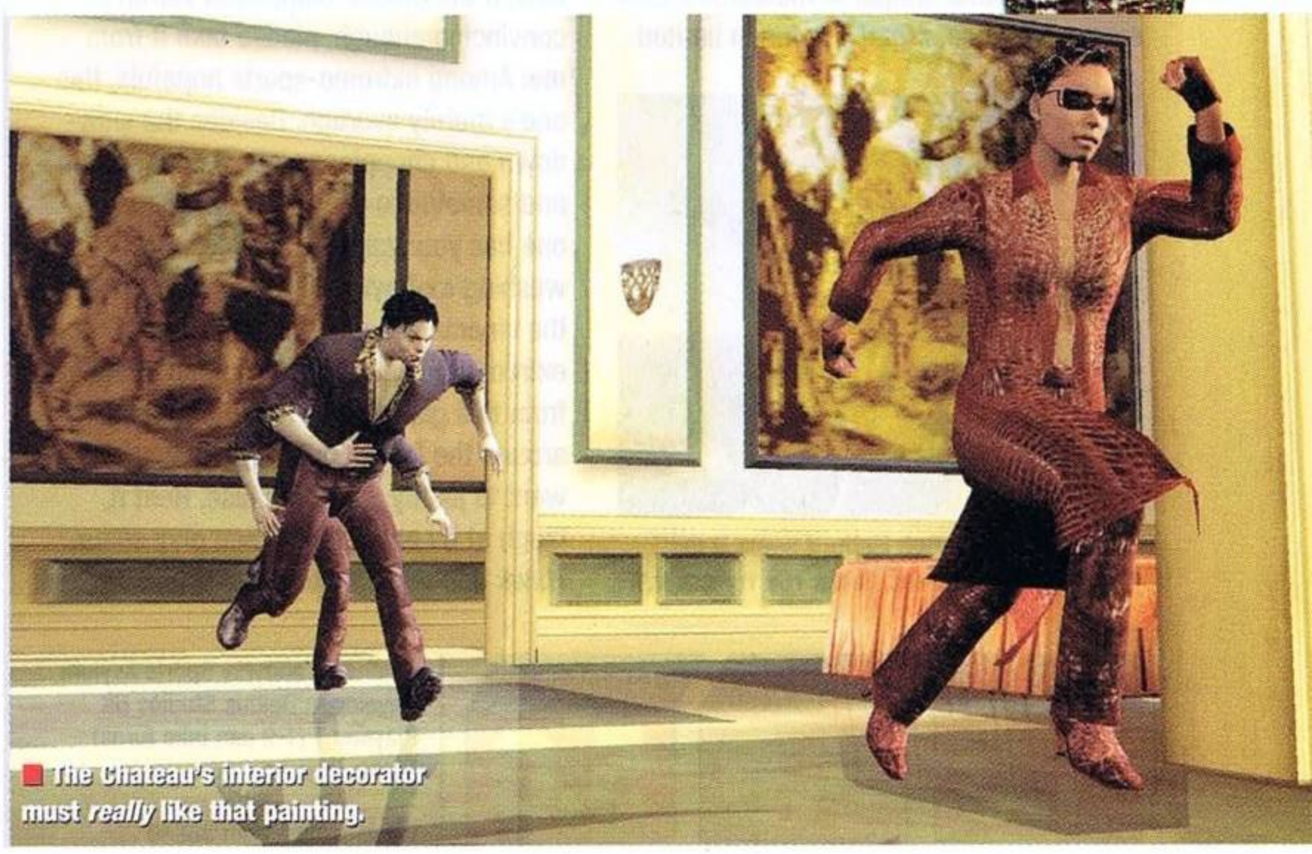
The Persephone character (played by the beautiful Monica Bellucci) is one of the more compelling additions to the *Matrix* cast. In both the second film and game, she aids the humans on their journey to stop the machines. But Persephone always requests a kiss in return for her help. And if you play *ETM*, you'll see that even Niobe is forced to suck face with this seductress (above).



■ Hey Ms. Pinkett-Smith, it looked better on the crocodile!



■ Niobe realizes that she might be a tad overdressed for a party in the sewer.



■ The Chateau's interior decorator must *really* like that painting.



Pulling a wicked trick like this will fill your gnarly Rad-ometer.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: Xbox, GameCube

FREESTYLE METAL X

Grind the heavy-metal parking lot



Good: Massive varied environments
Bad: Buggy gameplay
Naughty Naughty: Bikini bimbo exclaims, "I love water sports!"

SHAWN: *Metal X* has the audacity to arrive at the crowded extreme-sports party in a tattered Twisted Sister shirt, blastin' a butt-rock compilation and slangin' behind-the-times terminology. Of course, if it could truly compete with contenders such as *Mat Hoffman* and *Tony Hawk*, I'd happily ignore its putrid soundtrack and retarded "Rad-ometer." Regrettably, this average motocross action can't overcome its trailer-park trappings.

Challenges run the standard *Tony Hawk*–inspired gamut, but goals repeat level after level with minimal variation. Sporadically glitchy gameplay guarantees that victory is more about dumb luck than finesse. For example, in one level, you're supposed to chase down some delinquent kids...who magically sprint at near-light speed and teleport through walls. On the upside, you get enormous, seamlessly connected arenas ranging from snowy peaks to seaside parks, as well as hill-climbing events unique to motocross. Like most wannabes, *Metal X* is fun in limited doses—provided you have a soft spot for the inadvertently hilarious.



Judas Priest's Rob Halford sums it up: "I'm your Turbo Lover. Better run for cover."

JENNIFER: I'm not a fan of motocross culture, so naturally, this game's chauvinistic innuendos, bikini-clad bimbos, and hellish cheese-metal soundtrack don't appeal to me (and, unlike Shawn and G. Ford, I don't even find them amusing). But last month's *Wakeboarding Unleashed featuring Shaun Murray* showed me that great gameplay can make an excellent game out of a hick sport. *Freestyle Metal X*, however, doesn't have great gameplay, so the terrible accoutrements just become that much more irritating. The repetitive challenges are uncreative, and the game's choppy graphics and collision-detection issues make the whole experience head-splitting. Decent level design can't compensate for these problems.

G. FORD: You should know the story by now. If the others' comments weren't convincing enough, please take it from me: Among extreme-sports hopefuls, this one's merely average. Besides the slow-down and choppiness, you'll find random and sometimes disturbing challenges—one has you scaring a girl's window-washing ex-boyfriend off his perch, with the cinema showing his fall. Is that extreme? Eventually, you'll mine some fun from this game while riding and tricking around the levels, but only because you want to justify your purchase. Rent it, laugh at its absurdities, then play some *Hawk 4* to wipe it from your brain.

SHAWN	JENNIFER	G. FORD
5.0	4.5	5.0

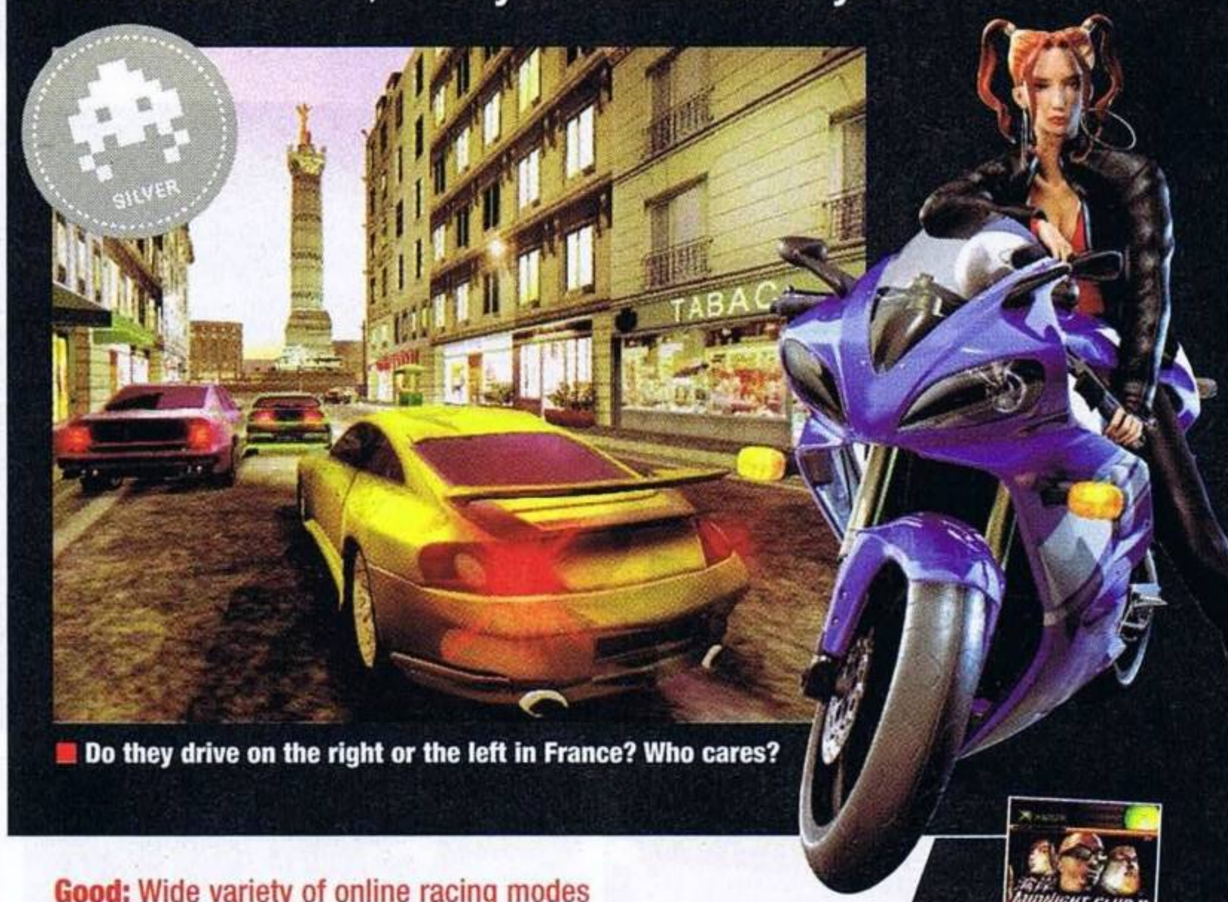
Publisher: Midway Sports Asylum
Developer: Deibus Studios UK
Players: 1 (1-9 can take turns)
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/86640

Xbox / Also On: PlayStation 2 ONLINE

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

On Xbox Live, everyone can hear you scream



Do they drive on the right or the left in France? Who cares?

Good: Wide variety of online racing modes
Bad: Computer-controlled drivers are absurdly precise
Evel Knievel: Eat your heart out

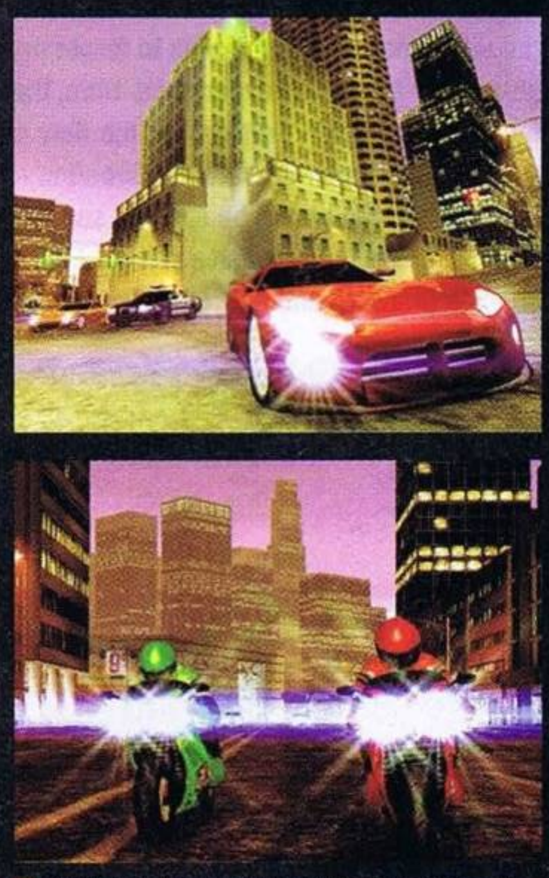
PAUL: What do the underground racers of the Midnight Club respect? Obviously, neither public nor private property. Nor gravity. Nor pedestrian safety. Traffic laws? Please. No, they respect winning. To win in *Midnight Club II*, you'll have to use every shortcut you can find in beautifully re-created virtual versions of Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo. Gain an advantage with two-wheeled driving in cars and wheelies on motorcycles. (Insane moves are commonplace thanks to tight, responsive control.) Hit a nitro and jump over the Louvre. Win however you can—or face the derision of the Midnight Club.

Finishing first in the single-player game is murderously hard. Discovering the route that gives you a fighting chance against the too-perfect A.I. drivers sometimes requires a dozen retries. You can drive that route flawlessly, and the entire pack of computer racers will *still* finish mere car lengths behind you.

Thankfully, the playing field is more level online. Standard versus fare like checkpoint races and capture the flag are fun for a while, but when you customize your own routes through the cities, endless replay value blossoms. *Midnight Club II* is simply the best online racer yet.

GREG S: Paul's right about the obscene difficulty—I'd like this game a bit more if it weren't so friggin' hard! Luckily, the gameplay is so solid and polished that it's easy to keep playing the same races over and over again. The Xbox Live gameplay adds infinite replay value. Breakneck speed, creative online modes, and the ability to talk trash with Live's headset will make you an addict in no time flat.

DEMIAN: I loved *Midnight Club II* on PS2, and it's even better on Xbox—though only slightly. The nicer graphics aren't a big deal to me, but voice chat in Xbox Live races is a major plus. Otherwise, it offers the same high-velocity, up-on-two-wheels, jumping-clear-across-Tokyo-bay action I liked so much the first time. My only beef is that some of the later races get really, really difficult, but hey, at least it'll take you a while to beat.



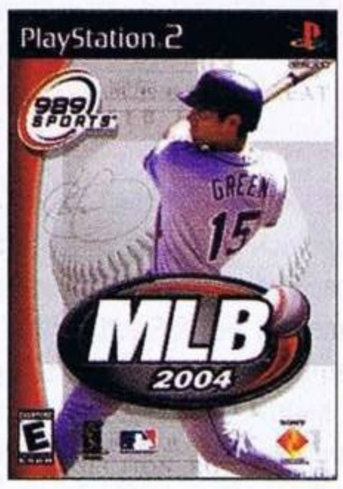
California Highway Patrol officers Ponch and John update their look.

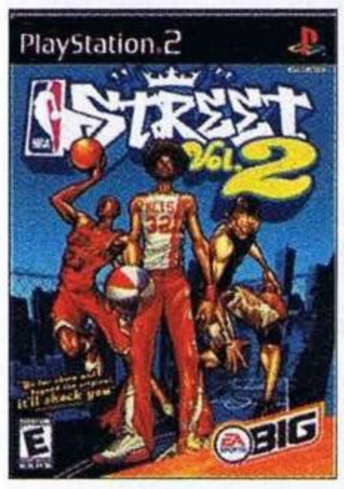
PAUL	GREG S.	DEMIAN
8.0	8.5	9.0

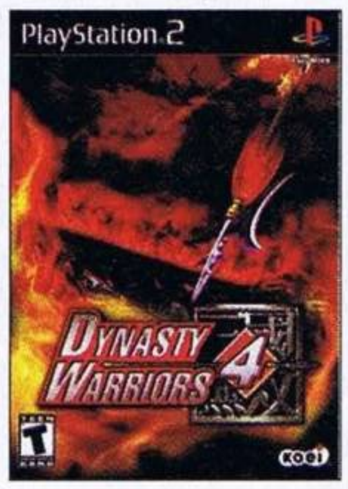
Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Rockstar San Diego
Players: 1-4 (2-8 on Live)
ESRB: Teen

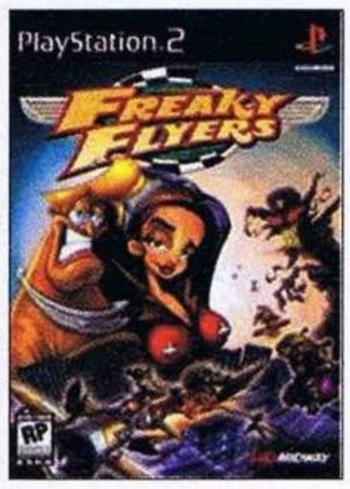
www.gamers.com/1273947

If you bought all these games, it would cost about **$186.**









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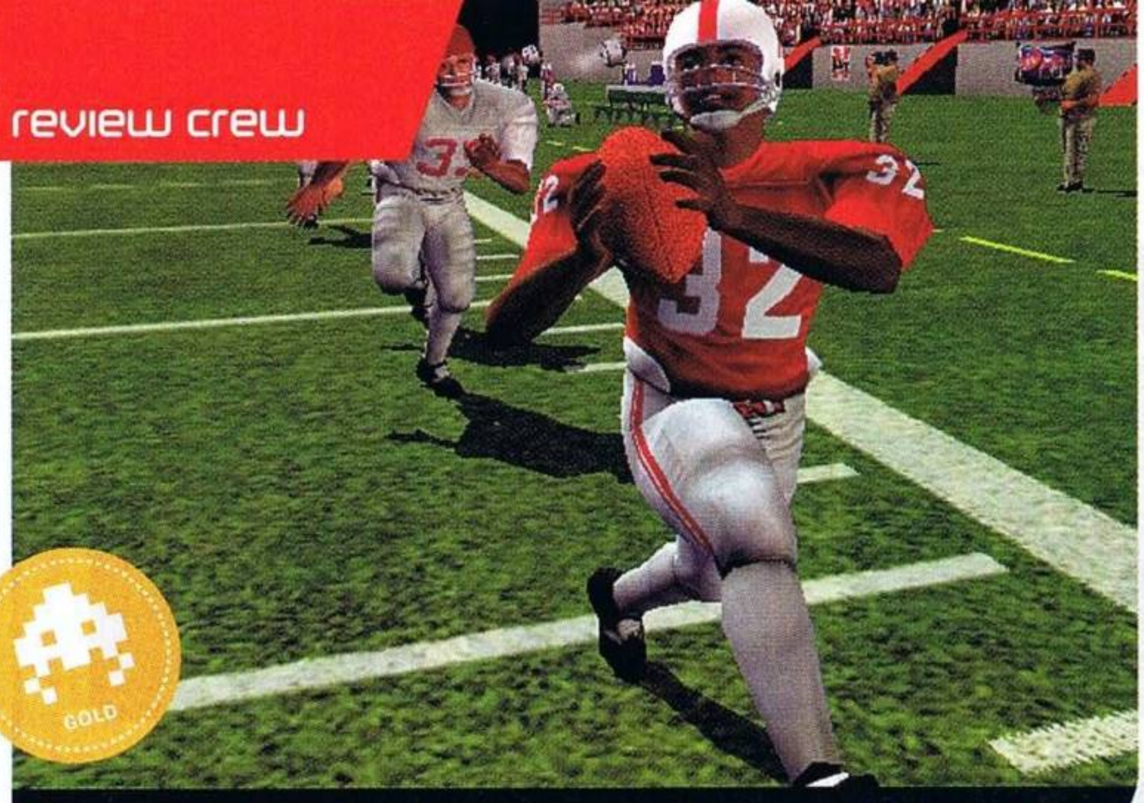
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OFFICIAL U.S. PlayStation MAGAZINE



Someone call the fashion police, 'cause these old-time uniforms are hideous.

PlayStation 2 / Also On: Xbox, GameCube

NCAA FOOTBALL 2004

ONLINE (PS2 ONLY)

GAME OF THE MONTH

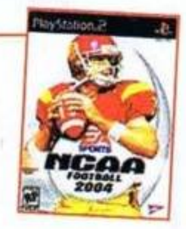
Madden's little brother is ready for the big leagues





(Left) The Ohio State Buckeyes make *EGM* editor Shoe's alma mater (Michigan) look foolish.

Good: Online play (plus voice-chat for broadband users)
Bad: Lack of online tourneys
Greatest Moment: Watching fans rip down the goalposts



BRYAN: The "if it ain't broke, just refine it" approach proves again to be the right coaching choice for EA Sports' persistently excellent *NCAA Football*. But is this year's game Heisman-worthy? Hell yeah.

Improvements abound. Increased crowd involvement breeds a truer-to-life stadium atmosphere. Fans roar louder as you head toward paydirt, and watching them tear down the goalposts after a big win had me sprinting through the office to show Todd this awesome spectacle. Plus, I'm digging the new camera angles, especially when it pans to the side of the field on quarterback rollouts or zooms in on the handoff during a play-action pass.

Even checking out stats in Dynasty mode now sizzles, thanks to the fresh weekly *Sports Illustrated* magazine mock-ups. And traveling back in time to re-create 20 college classic moments (like Doug Flutie's 1984 Hail Mary pass against Miami) is a blast. Add online play with voice chat (for the PS2 version only) to these subtle improvements, and it equals one helluva college football experience.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—TODD: *Madden*'s great. It's the premier football game. It's aces. Big deal. You put me on *Survivor: Belly of a Whale* with one pigskin sim—I'll take this one. *NCAA Football 2004* may not be the best, but it's the most fun. In the pro games, every team is, relatively, equally skilled. So if Detroit beats Tampa in *Madden*, it's improbable, not impossible. But beat Nebraska with Kansas in *NCAA* and you've rearranged the universe's stars! The upsets in *NCAA* make it worth getting good at, and online play seals the deal.

JOHN R: I've been a big fan of EA's *NCAA* games for a long time, and this year's version is the best yet. The gameplay isn't quite as confining as *Madden*'s, allowing for more open-ended games. Sure, blowouts are common, but there's nothing wrong with that—especially now that you can gloat about your online victories with real-time voice chat. Even solo play is fun, with an awesome Dynasty mode and a cavalcade of classic teams to choose from. Now if only I could beat Todd….

BRYAN	TODD	JOHN R.
9.0	9.5	9.0

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: 1-2 (1-8 w/ Multitap)
ESRB: Everyone

www.gamers.com/1358091

Xbox / Also On: None

RENT A HERO NO. 1

Shenmue on laughing gas



Defending city streets sometimes boils down to beating thugs with a big pink stick.







(Center) Looking for more hot nurses in your games? Don't look here.

Good: Insane sense of humor
Bad: Antiquated controls
Avoid: The diarrhea-inducing curry at the SECA cafe



SHANE: While *Rent A Hero* is certainly not for everybody, some gamers (read: Japanophiles, Sega fanboys, and the criminally insane) will sync to its weird groove. It's a goofball RPG packed with bizarre Japanese culture and funny Sega in-jokes.

Fundamentally, its weirdly engaging gameplay isn't far removed from that of Sega's own *Shenmue* series—here, you also play as an easygoing lad who must contend with the rigors of everyday life. But the twist is that you don't have a higher purpose. Rather, you're a superhero-for-hire who's rented out by townsfolk to do hilariously menial tasks, like picking up groceries, finding missing puppies, or hand-delivering love letters. If you stick with it, though, the missions eventually become a lot cooler (like battling a giant robot and rescuing survivors trapped in a cave).

Since I dig Japan, respect Sega, and lack sanity, I had a good time with *Rent A Hero*. In fact, I'd recommend it to everyone—if it didn't look, sound, and feel so old. It's a direct port of a 3-year-old Japanese Sega Dreamcast game, and, well...it shows. Try it if you're brave; you just might like it.

CJ: *Rent A Hero* is extremely quirky, funny, and loaded with enough references to the house of hedgehog to get die-hard Sega fans moist. But anyone else will find it very difficult to see past its dated graphics, bad camera, hackneyed gameplay, and digital-only control. It's a real shame that no one threw *Hero*'s tights in the wash in time for his Xbox debut (which is CoolNet's fault, since they did the port). The Sega fan in me likes it—but more for its collector value than for being a good game.

XBN—GREG O: I'll agree with my comrades that it's cute, but *Rent A Hero* is, nonetheless, a Dreamcast throwback as out of place on Xbox as Pope John Paul II at a Metallica concert and as out-of-date as last week's *TV Guide*. Would it have hurt the developers to port the game over with analog control, improved graphics, and the ability to replace the cheesy pseudo-porn soundtrack with real tunes? Apparently, yes. We don't need another hero.

SHANE	CJ	GREG O.
6.5	6.0	4.0

Publisher: AIA
Developer: Sega/CoolNet
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/161629



Look out, patio furniture—there's a new king of the sidewalk.

Xbox / Also On: None ONLINE

MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

A delightful romp, if not a truly insane one

Good: Lots of cars, big cities
Bad: Not as good as *Midnight Club II*
Needs: To drop the stupid foreign accents



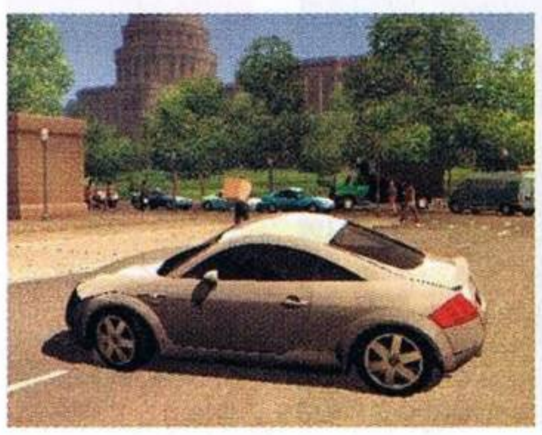
GREG S: *Midtown Madness 3* has the misfortune of hitting Xbox alongside the excellent *Midnight Club II* (which, ironically, was developed by the team behind the original PC *Madness* games). In the realm of blazing, city-based auto action, *Club* (page 116) easily overtakes *MM3* in terms of visuals, variety, and pure, visceral speed.

That's not to say that this is a bad game. It's just second best. The colossal cities (Washington, D.C. and Paris) are quite fun to explore, and there's no shortage of snazzy cars and trucks to drive. It's certainly simple to pick up and play, though maybe a bit too easy—if you're seeking tense races requiring finesse, you should look elsewhere.

MM3 isn't just racing—you'll motor through tons of different missions (including driving a taxi, or delivering money in an armored car). This helps keep the game fresh for a while, but it's no substitute for the flat-out driving competition of Rockstar's title. Don't buy this unless you've already played the hell out of *Midnight Club II*.

CRISPIN: C'mon, Greg—*MM3* may not keep pace with *Midnight Club II* in terms of pure racing thrills, but then, this isn't a pure racing game. It satisfies your need to do stuff—fun tasks like picking up passengers, tailing mob bosses, and running jalopies off the road—as well as your need for speed. (Just wait till you take the Viper-like car for a supersonic test drive in D.C. rush-hour traffic.) Sure, mission goals get repetitive (as do the online modes), and I wish the physics model allowed for end-over-end crashes, but *MM3* still delivers a high-revving good time.

GMR—ANDREW: I was pleasantly caught off guard by *MM3*. At first glance it seems like a piecemeal mix of city-based-driving-game clichés, but it all comes together nicely. Well, most of it. Some of the checkpoint races are too tough, and I could do without the generic story and stereotypical characters. But the arcadey controls handle well, there're plenty of vehicles, the cities are massive, and it looks good to boot. All I can ask for is the option to create custom checkpoint courses.





Even normally sedate garbage trucks take to the air in this insane driving climate.

GREG	CRISPIN	ANDREW
7.0	7.5	7.5

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Digital Illusions
Players: 1-4 (2-8 Online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.gamers.com/1131740

PlayStation 2 / Also On: Xbox

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: OPERATION RESURRECTION

You're on your own, soldier



"I'm Hans and he's Franz, and we're here to pump you full of lead."

Good: Fast-paced firefights
Bad: Dodgy A.I.
Where My People At? With no multiplayer, you're gunnin' solo



SHAWN: *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*'s devilish alliance of Nazis and the undead works surprisingly well. Barring some dopey mechanical zombie dogs, it's a perfect premise for a first-person shooter, and remarkably sharp visuals and sound seal the diabolical deal. Even as a blow-em-all-to-hell-and-let-Satan-sort-em-out affair, *Resurrection* bristles with eerie pulp ambiance, thanks to its torch-lit catacombs and dilapidated castles.

But if anything can bring your romanticized undead WWII fantasy crashing back to reality, it's inconsistent A.I. And, sadly, although some of your enemies employ squad tactics, other not-so-super soldiers wander aimlessly into the open.

Still, it's what you don't get in this version of the game that hurts most. Whether the blame belongs to Activision or Sony is irrelevant—the fact remains that *Resurrection* is devoid of multiplayer modes in any shape or form. Considering that Xbox owners get splitscreen co-op, system-link play, and one of the deepest, most ambitious online games among today's consoles, that's an inexcusably raw deal, indeed.

MARK: As on PC and Xbox, PS2 *Wolfenstein* offers decent first-person shooting: some fun weapons, some lame enemies, a cool new ability to build up your stats, but mostly just what you'd expect from an ol' fashioned Nazi blaster, all under a coat of smooth, crisp graphics. Where the PS2 version takes a hit (and I mean a *big* hit, as in having its arms completely blown off) is in its total lack of multiplayer modes—the addictive online game is gone, without so much as a splitscreen deathmatch in its place. Lame.

PAUL: Do you enjoy shooting Nazis, destroying zombies, and throwing switches? If so, then *Resurrection* is for you. Even if, like me, you're sick to death of switch-finding as the arbiter of progress through games, annihilating Aryans and massacring their macabre minions ought to amuse you throughout this pseudohistorical adventure. Entertaining as it is, however, *Resurrection*'s unadorned action offers precious little replay value. And I hate to beat an undead horse, but the others are right—the multiplayer modes that made the Xbox version so compelling have gone AWOL, and that's a capital offense.



If you're firing the MG-42, you'll run out of Nazis before you run out of bullets.

SHAWN	MARK	PAUL
7.0	6.0	7.0

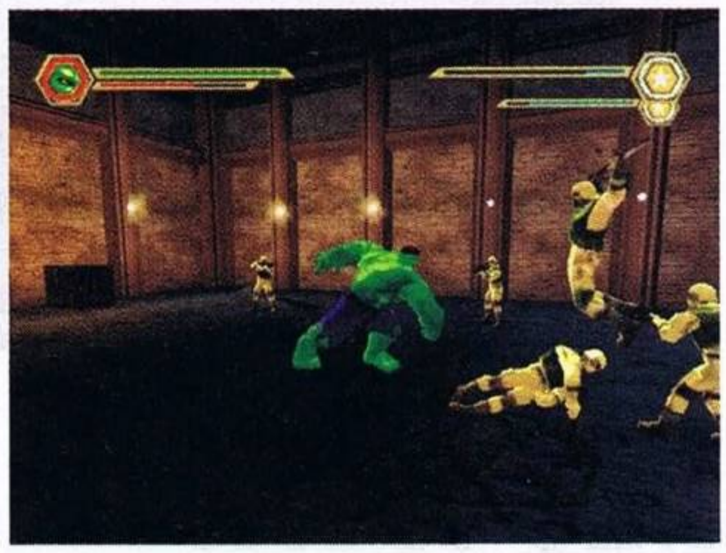
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Raster Productions
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.gamers.com/1282734



The Hulk refuses to be a spokesmonster for corn dogs and Mountain Dew.







PlayStation 2 / Also On: Xbox, GameCube

THE HULK

Slightly less than incredible

SHAWN: *The Hulk* does a marvelous job capturing this dark hero's destructive essence. Every completely interactive smash-em-up level is packed with cars, pipes, and concrete slabs you can use to carve swaths of carnage through General Ryker's cronies. And considering the game might've sold well even if punching were the extent of its pissed-off protagonist's talents, being able to toss oil tankers through research center walls is a welcome break.

Furthermore, you're rarely forced to fight every lackey who irritates you, and by ignoring them, you'll reach your objectives faster (not that some of you won't want to pulverize the saps). Such features aren't exactly awe-inspiring, but they keep the Green Goliath's rampage fast-paced and satisfyingly furious.

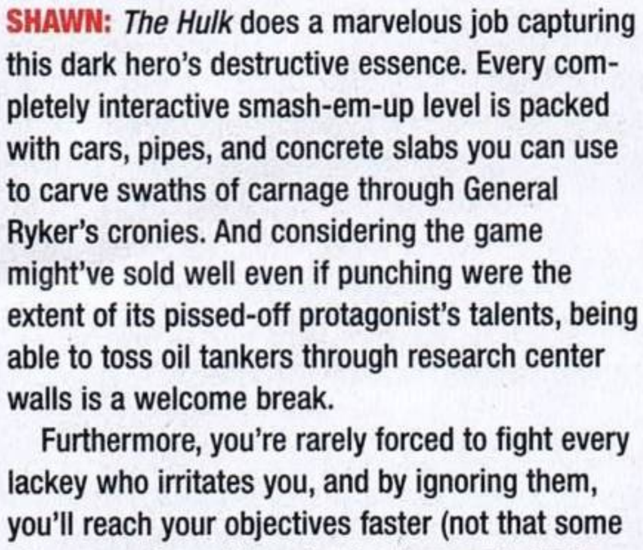
Sadly, when the Hulk transforms back into mild-mannered Bruce Banner, the game takes a turn for the insipid. If you've crept across compounds as Solid Snake or Sam Fisher, Dr. Banner's game of hide-and-seek will bore you. And avoiding detection is a crapshoot—I've been spotted from 20 yards by guards with their backs turned, but strolled right under others' noses. The boss battles, too, seem to borrow a page from the messy showdowns that spoiled *X2: Wolverine's Revenge* (*EGM* #168). They're so infuriatingly cheap, you'll want to Hulk-smash your controller. Try renting if, unlike me, you can control your temper.

CJ: Like Bruce Banner and his alter ego, *The Hulk* is a game with a split personality. It's a visually cool ride (especially when you're destroying stuff) with an excellent cinematic feel and decent brawling control. But after the first few bits as the infamous jolly green giant, it's just wave after wave of the same guards, inexplicably large dogs, and not a whole lot of variety. Like Shawn, I found that you're better off running past the never-ending enemy hordes than gambling your remaining lives by staying to fight. The Banner bits break it up with some light stealth and move the story along, but the package never quite comes together into a cohesive whole. Give it a rental after you see the flick, but it's a keeper only for serious Hulk-heads.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—CHRIS B: It's tough to create compelling gameplay around a giant freak whose gig is just smashing the hell out of things, but *The Hulk* succeeds and is the best pure punch/kick beat-em-up since *Final Fight*. I love all the game's pickups—nothing beats repeatedly whapping away at soldiers with a forklift or taking out gamma dogs by hurling frozen cow carcasses their way. Plus, everything moves just as it should, thanks to an incredible physics engine. Special moves are quite limited, though, and it's a bit ironic that the break-from-the-norm Bruce Banner stealth missions serve only to drag the action down. I wouldn't call this *Hulk* quite incredible, but it is a smashing good time.

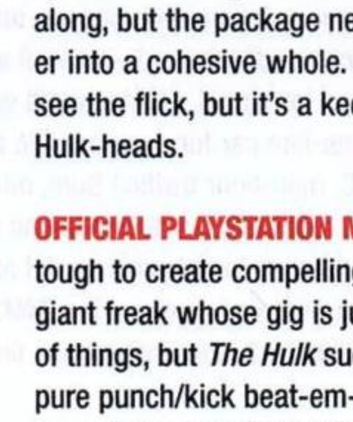


Hack the Hulk's Matrix: Scattered throughout *The Hulk* are a number of computer terminals in which you can input secret codes to unlock Easter eggs. But there's a catch: The info you need can only be found in scenes from *The Hulk* movie. Better bring a pen and pad of paper to the theater with you. Sadly, we couldn't sample these potentially awesome secrets, since uh, the movie wasn't out yet.



Who let the gamma dogs out?

Creating villains to fight a behemoth like the Hulk has to be hard, but irradiated dogs? Apparently, they're taken from the film, but we couldn't stop laughing at these pitiful pooches. If, however, you're part of the weird subculture that finds rabid pit bulls adorable and you'd very much like a gamma dog to call your own, be warned that the ASPCA forbids irradiating your own mongrels in hopes that they'll develop hydrocephalus. Instead, sate your thirst for the obscene with the bitchin' dog goods pictured here.





(Left) Find a T-shirt with this killer logo at K-Mart. (Right) Scour your local toy shop for Hood Hounds.

Good: Smashing stuff with the Hulk's destructive power
Bad: Generic stealth missions
Fugly: Hairless Hulk dogs



SHAWN	CJ	CHRIS B.
6.5	6.5	7.5

PUBLISHER: VU Games
DEVELOPER: Radical
PLAYERS: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/103552



■ Your globetrotting killing spree covers more exotic destinations than a travel brochure.

■ GameCube / Also On: PlayStation 2, Xbox

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

Dressed to kill



Good: Wickedly cunning assassinations
Bad: Bunk mission briefings
Previous Employment: Television's Kojak, Mr. Clean

SHAWN: I can see how *Hitman*'s smartly dressed assassin-for-hire grabbed our review crew alumni when he put a hit on the PS2 last fall. This hairless antihero's contract kills are ingenious. Need to knock off a Yakuza kingpin but can't find him? Poison his son's sushi and trace the corpse back to papa-san. If arsenic isn't your bag, you can just put a bullet in his back. The way you complete each mission is limited only by your sick creativity.

Unfortunately, getting close enough to deliver your sordid calling card can be more frustrating than fun. Your mission briefings are so obscure that vexing trial and error is unavoidable. Half the time, I had no idea what I was supposed to do. Flaky A.I. makes maintaining secrecy a total chore, and seemingly innocuous actions often brought the whole town of Hindustan down on my bald head. But each time I circumvented the immeasurable odds and made the crucial killing blow, *Hitman 2* was briefly a blast.

G. FORD: While *Hitman* may not receive *Metal Gear* or *Splinter Cell*'s hype, it certainly approaches their level of stealth-action greatness. Once you adapt to the slightly weird controls and learn to deal with the unpredictable enemy A.I., you'll find a good-looking game that does an excellent job of putting you in a hitman's shoes. Shawn is right about the difficulty, but I enjoyed the challenge—the open-ended, try-anything nature sucked me in. It's good to see the Cube get a tough and satisfying experience like this.

GAMENOW—ETHAN: *Hitman 2*'s biggest lure: the ability to incapacitate nearly any male character and steal his clothing. This fabulous feature allows you to impersonate flower deliverymen, waiters, soldiers, etc., in order to reach your end goal undetected. It's a play mechanic that forces you to think inventively, and it helps to keep you from concentrating on the game's hiccups (like occasionally choppy visuals and awkward controls). Throw in a solid narrative and surprisingly good voice acting and you have an engaging adventure title that rewards patient players.



■ Who loves you, baby? Ol' baldy does.



SHAWN	G. FORD	ETHAN
7.0	8.0	8.5

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: IO Interactive
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.gamers.com/186429

■ PlayStation 2 / Also On: None

DOWNHILL DOMINATION

As fun as it is fast



■ It's kind of like the Tour de France, but infinitely cooler and with giant hills.

Good: Spectacular speed
Bad: Some really lame characters
Don't Try This at Home: Fitting sheep with handlebars

SHAWN: Lord knows why developer Incog chose to follow up its well-received *War of the Monsters* with a mountain-bike racing game, but the company's fingerprints of quality are all over the place. Each of *DD*'s 27 mammoth tracks boasts intense attention to detail and gripping gameplay. As you race through dense woods in a torrential downpour, skirting sheer cliffs and dodging tree stumps, lightning shoots from the heavens and sets the forest aflame—the game bristles with such crazy moments. And where other racers settle for a few hidden shortcuts, *DD*'s mountainsides offer intertwining trails and plunging drops for derring-do (thanks to some spotless controls, even sliding past obstacles is pure pleasure).

In fact, only a few minor missteps detract points from this otherwise perfect run. The cast of contenders is a case study of clichés (let's keep clowns named T-bag who scream "Dude!" in Kool-Aid commercials where they belong). I could also do without being bludgeoned by my rivals as I'm riding. But when the game is so damn fun, who cares?

G. FORD: What an awesome surprise—*DD* wasn't even on my radar, but it deftly mixes *Road Rash*'s two-wheeled combat with *SSX*'s long and crazy downhill drops to create one hell of a rush. But even with its ridiculous speed and so much going on (pedestrians and wildlife fill the courses), you feel in complete control at all times. And among the Arcade and various Career modes, you'll find plenty to conquer. A few hiccups exist (you sometimes repeatedly respawn at a crash point), but otherwise, *DD* drips with quality.

JENNIFER: Those two might be wowed by this supposed "*SSX* on mountain bikes," but I was let down—I loved *SSX* for its awesome synergy of racing and tricks. *DD* is all about speed, and its merely average tricks system doesn't provide much more fun than keeping your boost up during racing. Once I got over that, I enjoyed the massive, intricate worlds, and a couple creative modes—Moshbowl and Super Jump—also add depth. But if you're not a speed freak, this isn't for you.

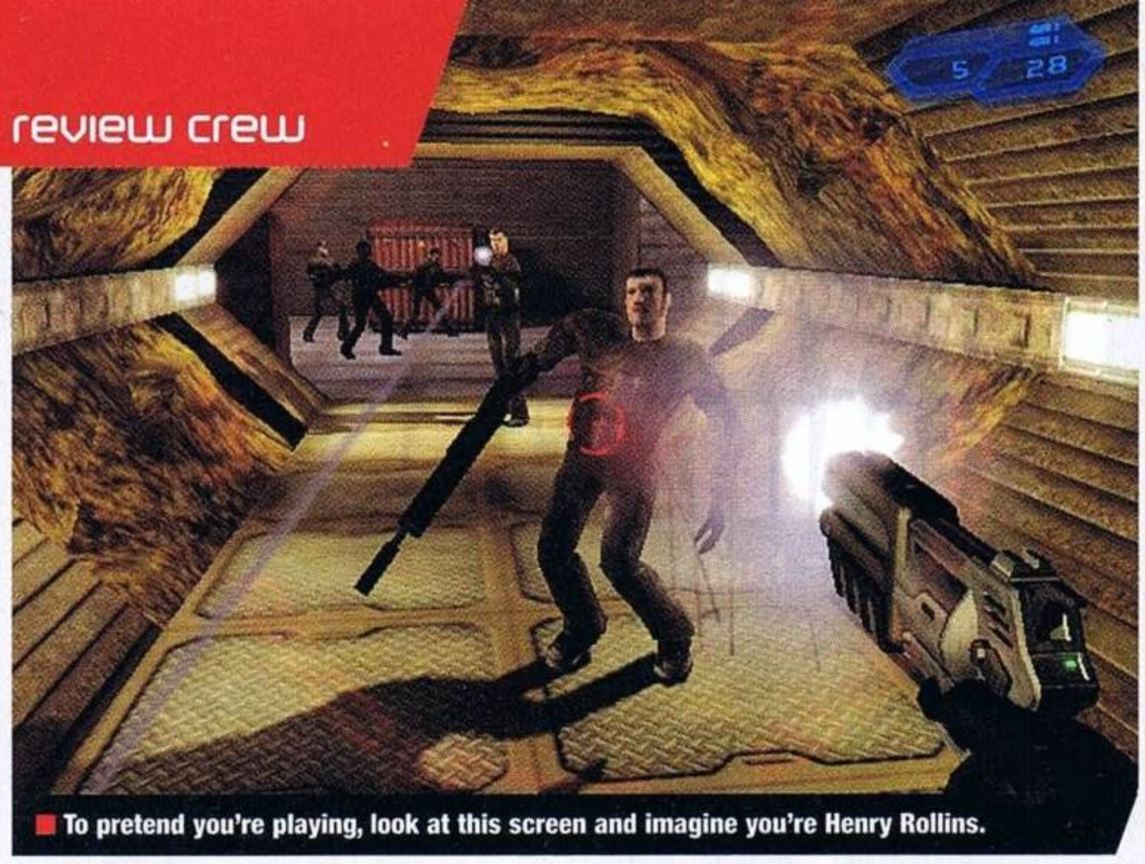


■ Bet the farm on bonus goofball Kineticlops.

SHAWN	G. FORD	JENNIFER
8.5	8.0	7.0

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Incog
Players: 1-2 (2-4 w/ Multitap)
ESRB: Teen

www.gamers.com/1349824

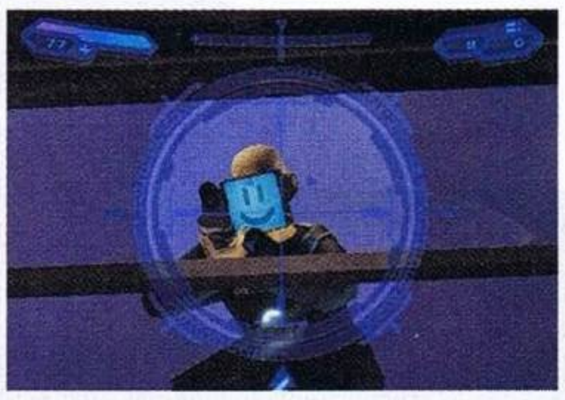


■ To pretend you're playing, look at this screen and imagine you're Henry Rollins.

■ Xbox / Also On: PlayStation 2, GameCube

MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER

Suffers from space's greatest challenge: monotony





■ (Left) The best part of *Mace Griffin* is how often you get to snipe guys like this.

Good: Lots and lots of sniping action
Bad: The space-shooting parts, no multiplayer
Angry Celebrity Actor: Henry Rollins as Mace



JOE: *Mace Griffin* isn't a horrible first-person shooter, but its numerous rough edges wear you down over time. It's tough to overlook its frequent pauses for loading, brain-dead enemies, unrealistic animations, and repetitive graphics. Once you've been in a new environment for five minutes, you've basically seen about every grate, wall, door, and enemy you're going to see for the next hour. The space-shooting sections could have broken up the first-person-shooting action well, but the time limits the game imposes (and lack of a save-anywhere function) mostly just make them annoying. Multiplayer splitscreen or online modes could've helped round out the game, but *Mace* has neither.

Considering the game's small selection of dumb enemies, the firefights are surprisingly enjoyable—but the gameplay *still* gets tedious. Most levels follow the same structure: "Fly in, fight enemies in space, shoot enemies on the ground, and...Hey! Wait! Someone's escaped! Go get in your ship and shoot them down!" Repeat and serve. It's worth renting, but buyers beware.

PAUL: You don't play this game; it plays you. You can do only what you're supposed to do. Not sure where to go? Just find the only door that opens. Mission objectives admirably rise above mere switch-finding, but the linear gameplay is as rigid and joyless as painting by numbers. Mace doesn't have any choices to make, either. If he's a bounty hunter, why can't he decline any assignments? And why doesn't he ever get paid? He could use some more interesting weapons. Or some beer.

BRYAN: Strip away the pretty sci-fi eye candy and celebrity voicework and you'll see *Mace Griffin* for what it truly is—repetitive. Almost every mission adheres to that boring formula Joe mentioned, so surprises are scarce. Blasting baddies in metallic corridors isn't awful, but the spacefaring bits drag—imagine trying to shoot out the tires on a Ferrari from your sputtering Ford Pinto...in space. Overall, the elements just don't add up to much first-person-shooter fun, leaving you with little reason to pay this game's $50 bounty.

JOE	PAUL	BRYAN
5.5	4.5	5.5

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

www.gamers.com/1112411

■ GameCube / Also On: PlayStation 2, Xbox

SPEED KINGS

Neither speedy nor royal. Discuss



■ Driving into an oncoming truck? No problem—this game's so easy, you'll still finish first.



■ (Left) Wayward barrels are an oddly common sight on the highways of *Speed Kings*.

Good: Sliding your bike under a semi at 100 mph
Bad: Choppy animation and interminable load times
Insane: Rear brake on R trigger, front brake on B button



DEMIAN: The marketing types, and even Greg S., might pitch *Speed Kings* as a cross between *Burnout* (the big crashes and trick-based turbo system part) and *Road Rash* (the guys on motorcycles beating on each other part). Don't believe them—it doesn't live up to either game.

You race through a series of meets, unlocking new bikes and tracks, but thrills are relatively scarce. Performing trick moves and brazenly flaunting traffic laws earns turbo boosts, but you'll hardly need the extra oomph in order to beat the weak computer-controlled opposition, despite the frustratingly frequent crashes.

Once you learn all the tricks (also pretty easy—they're in the manual) and play through the meets, that's about it. Oh, there's more stuff to unlock via the tedious Time and Trick Attack modes, but none of it's much fun. Multiplayer is also a letdown: No more than two can play at once, and there's only one mode (Tag) that isn't already in the single-player game. It's a renter. On a very slow night. When everyone you know is out of town.

GREG S: Such haters! I maintain that this *is* a nearly perfect mix of *Road Rash* and *Burnout*. Riding full throttle into oncoming traffic while beating on other bikers will get your pulse racing and your palms sweating. The whole trick system is pretty useless, though. It's cool to pull off a trick at high speeds, but it almost always leads to a wreck. Luckily, it's never required during a race, so no big deal. The only other things really holding *Speed Kings* back are the boring graphics and mind-numbing music.

BRYAN: This racer hits two major speed bumps: unavoidable crashes and dumb-as-dirt A.I. Case in point: I wiped out 12 times on the Sunny Detroit track, yet I still came out victorious because the CPU riders never strayed from the pack. And eatin' the pavement left little time to take advantage of *Speed Kings*' strengths, like sliding under obstacles or brawling with fellow riders. Factor in so-so graphics and poor tunes and you won't find much incentive to unlock new bikes and courses. A next-gen *Road Rash*? Whatchootalkinbout, Greg?

DEMIAN	GREG S.	BRYAN
4.5	7.5	4.5

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Climax
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everyone

www.gamers.com/96224



There's a fair amount of Hulk smashing, but there's also plenty of Hulk wandering.

Game Boy Advance / Also On: None

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

More of a mundane Hulk, really





(Left) The Hulk learns (the hard way) that smashing explosive barrels isn't a good idea.



Good: The Hulk can destroy almost anything
Bad: Mindless, repetitive gameplay
More Bad: Terrible story

JOHN R: If I had a nickel for every crappy licensed game that squirmed its way onto store shelves, I sure as hell wouldn't be stuck reviewing 'em for a living.

The Incredible Hulk falls squarely into this category, thanks to its mindless, repetitive gameplay and uninspired level designs. Technically speaking, *Hulk* isn't so offensive; respectable character animation mixes with a neat angled perspective to offer a decent visual package. In fact, seeing the game in motion made me wonder why EA hasn't attempted a handheld version of *Diablo* (PS1). *Hulk*'s problem lies in its gameplay: It's just plain boring. Walking around massive, confusing levels and punching out enemies over and over (and over and over) with the same three or four moves is not fun—it's tedious.

The awkward controls don't help matters; lining yourself up with objects you want to destroy is often unnecessarily difficult. That said, the option to pick up or destroy pretty much anything in your path *is* pretty cool, but it's not enough to save this otherwise unincredible game.

G. FORD: Want to know what's really annoying about *Hulk*? Each time you turn it on, you're forced to wade through a half dozen licensing screens...which isn't bad in fun games, but here, it seems like a torture-chamber waiting room. The moronic A.I. and repetitive missions will bore you, and the irritatingly humongous levels just prolong the torture. And how come you have to relearn your special Rage moves in every level? I doubt that the Hulk so frequently forgets his natural inclination to smash. Just another unimpressive movie cash-in. *Hulk* bad.

JON D: This portable Hulk does a pretty incredible job of smashing all manner of junk, but his methods leave something to be desired. Punch, punch, jump over obstacle, punch, Super Smash, punch—I agree with John and G. Ford, it gets a bit old. I did, however, enjoy the three-quarters perspective, which imparts a bit of *Diablo*-style strategy and makes *The Incredible Hulk* feel like not-just-another side-scrolling licensed Game Boy quickie.

JOHN R.	G. FORD	JON D.
4.0	4.0	6.0

Publisher: Universal Interactive
Developer: Pocket Studios
Players: 1 (2-4 w/ Link cable)
ESRB: Everyone

www.gamers.com/196291

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The ones that got away







(Left to right) Naval combat isn't dull in *Warship Gunner*; admire the fine fishies in *Reel Fishing III*; and *A Fistful of Boomstick* should be utterly avoided at all costs.

Each month in the Review Crew, we strive to cover every major release. In order to have room for all the heavy hitters, some smaller niche titles and belated ports fall by the wayside. Luckily, in this column, we symbolically stick a bent coat hanger through the cracks these games would otherwise have slipped through.

Naval Ops: Warship Gunner

Fans of Koei's Historical Simulation Series will be shocked by the high-action content in this WWII–flavored aquatic war-waging sim for PlayStation 2. It's more about blasting boats with massive cannons than maintaining a stable socioeconomic climate in ancient China, and frankly, we're OK with that. Check it out if strategically annihilating U-boats is to your liking.

Reel Fishing III

Fishing games bubble under the surface of the mainstream, stealthily selling oodles of copies to gamers desperate to land the legendary killer bass. Natsume's first *Reel Fishing* title for PS2 will definitely please fans—impressive lake locales, soothing sounds, and more than 30 realistically modeled 3D fish make it a fine fishin' endeavor. Oh, and it features a lovable canine fishing companion that will fill your heart with glee, guaranteed.

Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick

Last issue's Shame of the Month returned for a second round of horror on Xbox, and we zealously hate this one just as we did its PS2 cousin. Ugly graphics, poor combat, and asinine puzzles abound. It's seriously not worth its $20 asking price—rent *Evil Dead 2* instead.

Other Notable News

We did get one reviewable title in at the 11th hour that we decided to push to next month—LucasArts' ***RTX Red Rock*** for PlayStation 2. We simply didn't have enough time to give it a thorough playthrough, and every game deserves a fair shake.

This month, the nefarious Lara Croft once again managed to elude our clutches. ***Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*** for PS2 remains cloaked in mystery. Why doesn't she want to be reviewed? Is she harboring some dark, terrible secret that could jeopardize her chances for success? If we're to believe publisher Eidos Interactive, you'll be able to purchase the game by the time you read this (it's slated to ship on June 20). From our experience, though, publishers usually want to build excitement for triple-A titles by getting timely reviews to the masses. Unless, of course, there's some sort of serious problem with the game...(cough, *Enter the Matrix*, cough). Ah well, the jury's still out. Maybe she's just plain shy. Check back next month for the final verdict on Lara's latest... we hope.



REVIEW ARCHIVE

Another look at notable releases from days gone by



.hack Part 2: Mutation PS2 (Also On: None) 6.0, 6.5, 8.0
■ An average RPG with a neat concept—you play in a virtual online world gone berserk

Apex XB (Also On: None) 8.0 Silver
■ You don't just haul ass in this racer—you build your own autos and run a car factory

ATV Quad Power Racing 2 XB (Also On: PS2, GC) 7.5
■ Rusty-around-the-edges racing, turbo-boosted with wild-ride obstacle courses

Auto Modellista PS2 (Also On: None) 5.0, 5.5, 7.0
■ Crappy handling ruins a gorgeous-looking online racer

Batman: Dark Tomorrow GC (Also On: XB) 2.0, 1.5, 1.0 Shame
■ Gaming's answer to the box office hemorrhoid *Batman and Robin*

Blinx: The Time Sweeper XB (Also On: None) 7.5, 5.5, 8.0
■ This Hoover-toting cat's puzzle-platform game doesn't completely suck

Burnout 2: Point of Impact PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 8.5, 8.0, 8.5 Silver
■ This version fixes a lot of the issues we had with the original

Capcom vs. SNK 2: EO XB (Also On: PS2, GC) 7.5, 7.5, 9.0 Silver
■ Xbox Live is the real draw in this fighting fan's dream come true

Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow GBA (Also On: None) 9.5, 9.0, 9.5 Gold
■ With its excellent soul-stealing system, *Aria* outclasses its forerunners

Chaos Legion PS2 (Also On: None) 8.5, 6.5, 8.5
■ More than mindless melees—allies that grow with experience add RPG-ish depth

Conflict: Desert Storm GC (Also On: PS2, XB) 5.5, 5.5, 6.5
■ Co-op combat minimizes casualties in this timely title

Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX GBA (Also On: None) 6.5
■ The Super NES classic shooter loses some of its punch on the tiny system


■ *Chaos Legion*

Dark Cloud 2 PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 8.0, 9.5 Silver
■ An addictive action-RPG that lets you rebuild the world as you save it

Def Jam: Vendetta PS2 (Also On: GC) 7.0, 8.5, 7.5
■ Hip-hop stars and wrestling actually works. Word to ya mutha, yo

Devil May Cry 2 PS2 (Also On: None) 7.0, 7.0, 8.0
■ Dante and hottie-in-need Lucia blast through a cruddy plot in this too-easy sequel

DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball XB (Also On: None) 7.5, 8.0, 6.0
■ Scientists are working to invent a nude code for these bouncing she-ninjas

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 7.5, 7.0
■ *Budokai* stands above any of the previous attempts to turn the series into a fighter

Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22 PS1 (Also On: None) 2.0, 1.5, 2.0
■ Someone crapped in a jewel case and passed it off as a *DBZ* game

Dynasty Warriors 4 PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.0, 8.5
■ Obese warlords in obscure settings snacking on dim sum and severing heads

EverQuest Online Adventures PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 5.0, 6.0
■ Ugly visuals hampered our online quest for fun

Evil Dead: Fistful of Boomstick PS2 (Also On: XB) 2.0, 3.0, 3.0 Shame
■ *Evil Dead* fans will definitely feel as if they're getting the fist with this game

The Getaway PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 6.0, 8.0
■ Looks like a *GTA* clone but plays like a Guy Ritchie flick, complete with naughty words

Godzilla: DAMM GC (Also On: XB) 7.0, 7.0, 7.5
■ It's all fun and games till one monster gets a Seattle Space Needle in the eye

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City PS2 (Also On: None) 10, 10, 10 Platinum
■ As if you don't already know why this game received our highest award

Guilty Gear X2 PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 8.5, 8.5 Silver
■ An addictive, hyperactive 2D fighter acid-washed in '80s hair metal

High Heat Baseball 2004 PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 9.0 Gold
■ The most realistic baseball sim on the market—period

Ikaruga GC (Also On: None) 8.5, 8.0, 8.0 Silver
■ One incredibly innovative, wickedly addictive shooter

Indiana Jones & the Emperor's Tomb XB (Also On: PS2) 5.5, 8.5, 8.5
■ Looks like Ms. Croft has some competition raiding tombs

Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker GC (Also On: None) 9.5, 10, 10 Gold
■ You can't go wrong with *Zelda*'s gorgeous cartoon visuals and classic gameplay

Legends of Wrestling II GC (Also On: PS2, XB) 7.0, 6.0, 5.0
■ More like local-access television than Wrestlemania's glamorous theatrics

Lord of the Rings: Fellowship XB (Also On: PS2) 3.5, 4.5, 3.0
■ True to the novels, but to the detriment of pacing and gameplay

Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 8.0, 7.5
■ Homemade monsters add color to mundane battles

Mega Man & Bass GBA (Also On: None) 8.5 Silver
■ Introduces a second playable character to the side-scrolling classic

Midnight Club II PS2 (Also On: XB) 9.0, 8.0, 9.5 Silver
■ An unrelenting sense of speed and total disregard for realistic physics

MLB Slugfest 20-04 PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 8.0, 7.0, 6.5
■ Tons of multiplayer fun, but don't expect the depth of a baseball sim

MotoGP 2 XB (Also On: None) 8.5, 8.0, 8.0 Silver
■ An intense, unforgiving, but ultimately satisfying crotch-rocket sim

NBA 2K3 PS2 (Also On: XB) 9.0, 9.5, 8.5 Gold
■ Another impressive showing strengthens *NBA 2K*'s rep as the *Madden* of b-ball

NBA Live 2003 PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 8.0, 7.5, 9.0 Silver
■ An innovative control setup breathes new life into *Live*

NBA Street Vol. 2 PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 9.5, 8.5, 8.5 Silver
■ A mix of both new- and old-school flava makes this baller a rockin' sequel

Panzer Dragoon Orta XB (Also On: None) 9.0, 8.5, 9.0 Silver
■ Most beautiful on-rails shooter imaginable, with a vast trove of amazing secrets

Phantasy Star Online: Episode I & II XB (Also On: GC) 9.0, 9.0, 9.0 Gold
■ Still addictive, now with voices in your head

Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire GBA (Also On: None) 7.5, 6.5, 7.5
■ Pikachu and pals are back, but precious little has improved since *Gold/Silver*

Pride FC PS2 (Also On: None) 6.5, 6.0, 5.5
■ Anything-goes combat that looks like two dudes spooning and is about as fun

Red Faction II PS2 (Also On: XB) 8.0, 7.5, 7.0
■ A rocket ride with airtight controls and quicksilver pacing

Return to Castle Wolfenstein XB (Also On: PS2) 8.5, 9.5, 8.5 Silver
■ Online play is not only an utter blast—it's what you bought Xbox Live for

Shinobi PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.5, 7.0
■ Slick bosses and perfect control thrill, but the difficulty cuts like a 3-foot Ginsu

The Sims PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 9.5, 8.5, 8.0 Silver
■ Virtual soap-opera teems with innovation and freedom

Skies of Arcadia Legends GC (Also On: None) 9.0, 9.5, 9.0 Gold
■ This phenomenal skyfaring quest is the GC's role-playing savior

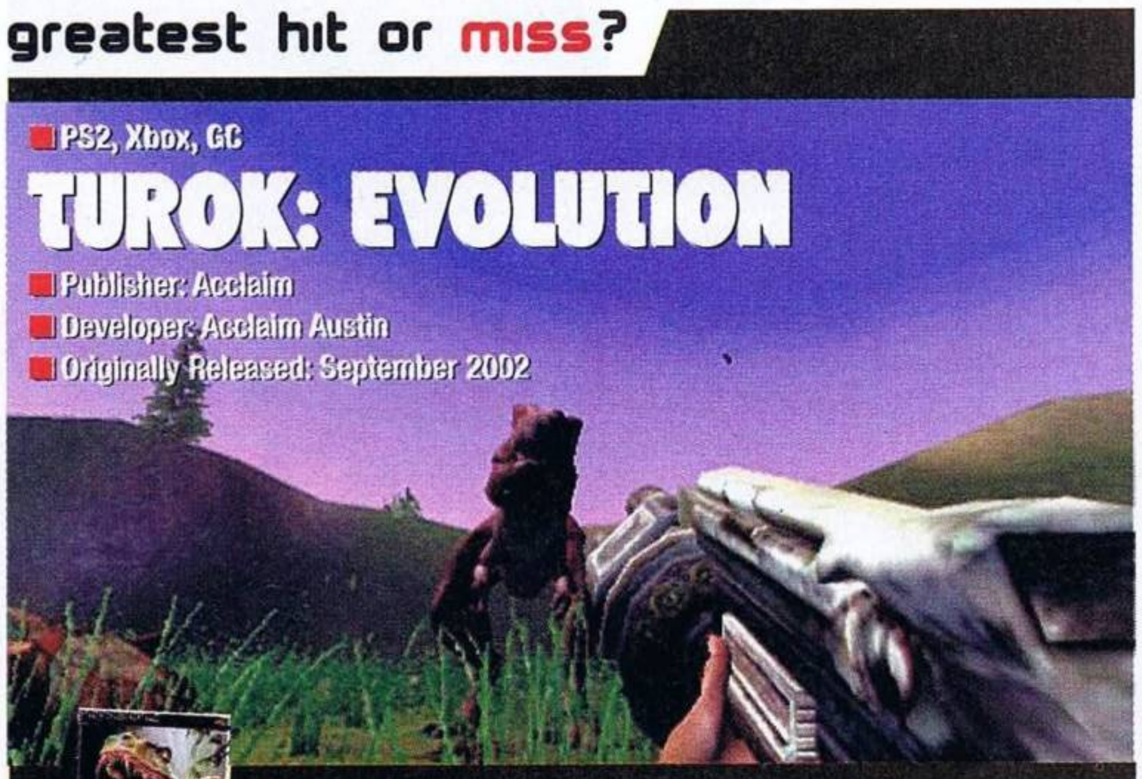
Star Wars: The Clone Wars XB (Also On: PS2, GC) 7.0, 7.0, 6.5
■ Online support puts this prettier version parsecs beyond its PS2 and Cube cousins

greatest hit or miss?

■ PS2, Xbox, GC

TUROK: EVOLUTION

■ Publisher: Acclaim
■ Developer: Acclaim Austin
■ Originally Released: September 2002

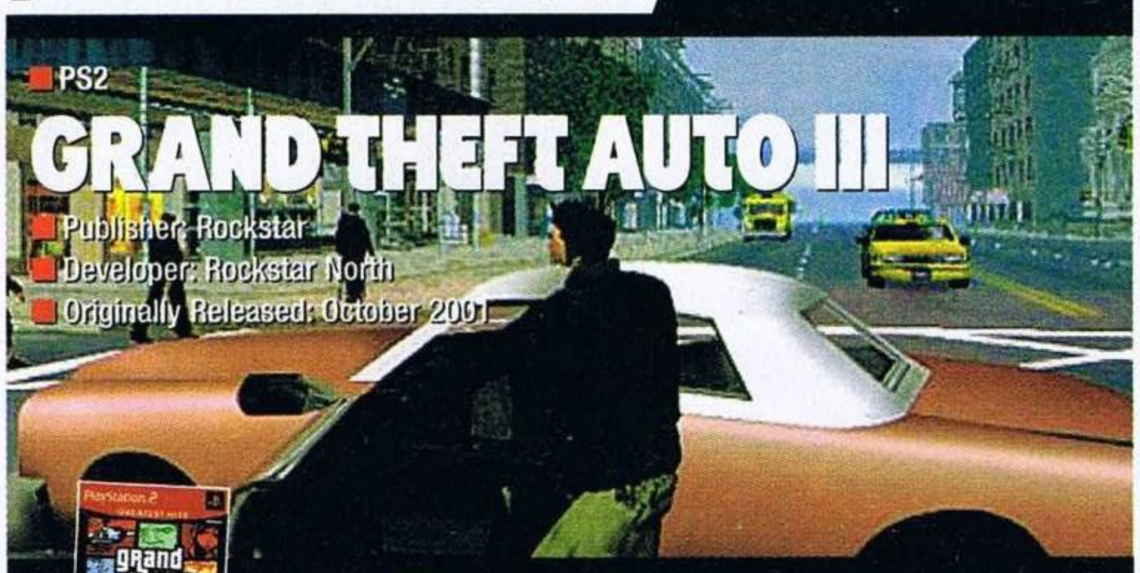


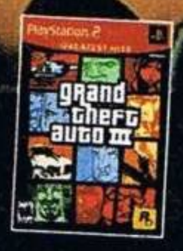


Original Scores: 3.5, 4.0, 5.0 (PS2)

Evolution was supposed to be Turok's big comeback, but it ended up being the nail in his coffin. What made it so bad, exactly? Putrid visuals, boring levels, ineffectual weapons, lame flying missions, and a cyborg Civil War general riding on an equally biomechanical Tyrannosaurus rex all conspired to make this bargain-bin fodder.

greatest hit or miss?





Original Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 10

Now all you cheapskates can find out how rapid-fire cursing, indiscriminant murder, and plentiful prostitutes have forever changed the face of modern gaming. Without the success of *GTA3*, we wouldn't be getting upcoming stuff like *Grand Theft Jak and Daxter*, *Grand Theft Bart Simpson*, or even *Grand Theft Spider-Man*.

Super Monkey Ball Jr. — GBA (Also On: None) — 8.0 — Silver
■ How'd they miniaturize so much monkey mayhem?

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo — GBA (Also On: PS1) — 9.0, 9.0, 7.5 — Silver
■ A pixel-perfect port of the genre's crown jewel...and it's portable, to boot

Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus — XB (Also On: None) — 4.0, 6.0, 3.5
■ Ineffective blocking and generic characters do not a quality fighter make

Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven — PS2 (Also On: None) — 7.5, 7.0, 7.0
■ Ninjas rock, but somehow, a lackluster story and horribly stupid A.I. snuck in

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon — XB (Also On: PS2, GC) — 8.0, 7.5, 8.0
■ Team-based online squad combat and Xbox Live's first nearly killer app

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell — GC (Also On: PS2, XB) — 8.5, 9.5, 9.0 — Gold
■ The GBA radar is a nice addition, but Sam Fisher isn't as pretty on the purple purse

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 — GBA (Also On: All) — 7.5
■ Plays surprisingly like its console big-brother and is nearly as fun

Tube Slider — GC (Also On: None) — 3.5, 4.5, 4.0
■ Drive your space-age clunker down a shimmering tube of boredom

UFC: Tapout 2 — XB (Also On: None) — 6.5, 6.0, 5.0
■ Mixed martial-arts action will excite serious fans but bore everyone else

Ultimate Muscle — GC (Also On: None) — 8.5, 7.5, 7.5
■ *Muscle* proves the WWE's meatheads aren't essential for videogame grappling

Unlimited Saga — PS2 (Also On: None) — 2.0, 4.0, 4.0
■ Weird RPG that breaks so many rules that it just ends up feeling busted

Vexx — GC (Also On: PS2, XB) — 9.0, 7.5, 6.0
■ Sure, the main character looks dorky, but the platforming thrills are solid

Wakeboarding Unleashed — PS2 (Also On: XB) — 9.0, 8.0, 7.5 — Silver
■ Set aside your extreme-sports snobbery and *Wakeboarding* may actually appeal to you

Wario Ware: Mega Microgame$ — GBA (Also On: None) — 9.5, 9.0, 9.0 — Gold
■ The most fun you can have in three-second bursts

Wario World — GC (Also On: None) — 7.5, 7.0, 6.0
■ A perilous journey only the most seasoned jumping-puzzle zealots will enjoy

War of the Monsters — PS2 (Also On: None) — 9.5, 6.5, 7.0
■ Manages to make the woefully underrepresented monster genre fun

World Series Baseball 2K3 — XB (Also On: PS2) — 8.0, 8.0, 8.0 — Silver
■ *WSB* stands out with countless customization options and first-rate player models

World Soccer Winning Eleven 6 Int. — PS2 (Also On: None) — 9.0 — Gold
■ Can this natural-feeling soccer sim take 2003 Sports Game of the Year?

WWE Crush Hour — GC (Also On: PS2) — 2.0, 4.0, 3.5
■ Probing the dankest depths of the car combat genre



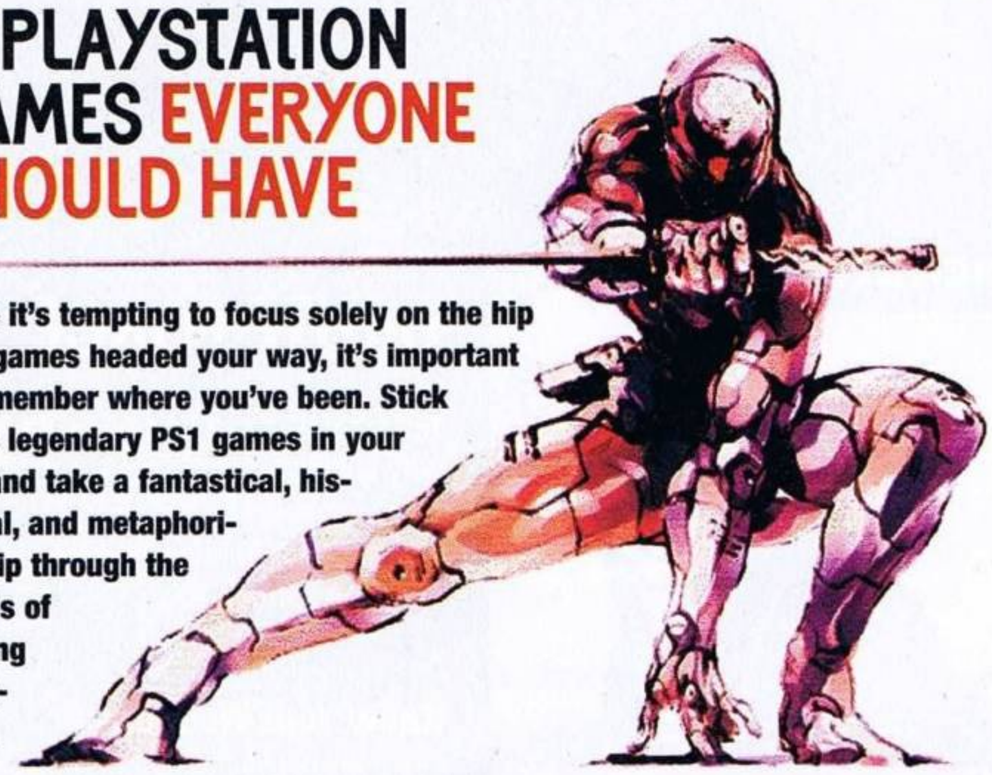
X2: Wolverine's Revenge — PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) — 5.5, 5.5, 4.0
■ A slight cut above most steaming coils of comic-book-based crap

Xenosaga: Episode 1 — PS2 (Also On: None) — 8.0, 8.0, 6.5
■ You don't so much play this RPG as watch its plot unfold in hours of cut-scenes

Yu-Gi-Oh!: Duelists of the Roses — PS2 (Also On: None) — 6.0, 4.5, 4.5
■ Fans will love this confusing card-battler. Everyone else, however, will abhor it

Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner — PS2 (Also On: None) — 7.5, 9.0, 8.5 — Silver
■ Eye-popping pandemonium with a hairy-balled hero—no whiners this time

10 PLAYSTATION GAMES EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE



While it's tempting to focus solely on the hip new games headed your way, it's important to remember where you've been. Stick these legendary PS1 games in your PS2 and take a fantastical, historical, and metaphorical trip through the annals of gaming greatness.

1 **Metal Gear Solid** — 10, 10, 10, 10 — Platinum
PS1
Besides reinventing the stealth genre, *MGS* offered stellar bosses, including Psycho "I can read your memory card" Mantis

2 **Final Fantasy VII** — 9.5, 9.5, 9.5, 9.5 — Gold
PS1
The first PlayStation installment in the longstanding series brought RPGs out of the shadow of geekdom and into the mainstream

3 **Castlevania: Symphony of the Night** — 9.5, 9.0, 9.5, 9.0 — Gold
PS1
This epic 2D adventure is still regarded by many as the best *Castlevania* ever—you might have to hunt on eBay for this one

4 **Gran Turismo** — 9.5, 9.0, 9.5, 9.0 — Gold
PS1
GT realized the potential of a videogame console to create one hell of a driving simulation (and a pretty good-looking one to boot)

5 **Final Fantasy Tactics** — 8.5, 9.0, 8.5, 9.0 — Silver
PS1
Everybody will have a different experience playing this strategy game with countless job classes

6 **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2** — 10, 10, 10, 10 — Platinum
PS1
THPS 2's ramped-up soundtrack, control, tricks, and course design set the standard for all that followed

7 **Resident Evil 2** — 9.0, 9.5, 9.5, 9.5 — Gold
PS1
The second serving of survival-horror went all sci-fi, but with two discs and intertwining stories, it was twice as nice

8 **R-Type Delta** — 8.0, 8.5, 9.0, 7.5 — Silver
PS1
Quite a challenging shooter for even the most hardcore gamers—if you can finish this, you can finish anything

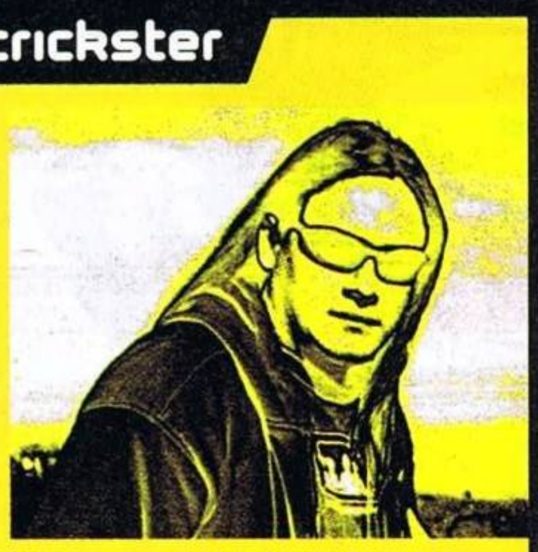
9 **Tekken 2** — 9.0, 8.0, 9.0, 8.0 — Silver
PS1
A metric ton of hidden characters, responsive control, and sharp graphics (for the time) made this the first great PS1 fighter

10 **Silent Hill** — 8.5, 9.0, 8.5, 8.5 — Silver
PS1
Konami saw what Capcom was doing with the survival-horror genre and took it to a whole new gruesome level

tricks of the trade

for people who would rather win than play fair

trickster



We've gone and asked the two biggest names in all of cheatdom—GameShark and Action Replay—to furnish us with the finest codes known to humanity. So, from now until the inevitable heat death of the universe, you'll find exclusive codes for your cheat devices right here in Tricks of the Trade.

—David S. J. Hodgson
tricks@ziffdavis.com

even more fools

Listen, punks. We know the April issue was four months ago, but since we're still receiving charred effigies of the *EGM* staff, we've decided to complete the April Fools of Yesteryear poll. In this round of our Foolish questionnaire, we asked, "Which of the following tricks was most amusing?" The results may surprise you...if you're easily surprised.

11% I've had a humor bypass. I hate April Fools' Day.

13% Ken you dig it? Sheng Long in *Street Fighter II.*

36% Sonic and Tails in *Super Smash Bros.*

38% *DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* Topless mode. WINNER!

Source: Gamers.com poll, May 2003

TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

These strategies were obtained through extreme (and possibly inhumane) questioning of extreme (and possibly inhuman) Prima authors. Need more help? Jog, don't saunter, down to the game store and acquire Prima's full guides.

■ Xbox

BRUTE FORCE

Team combat can be taxing. Which is why we're proud to present these tips for squeezing the last drop of adrenaline from your quartet of killing machines.



■ Me Brutus. Me say red reticule good. Red reticule, shoot, see red blood. Ha ha!

Know Your Weapons

Learn the capabilities of the weapons in your arsenal. Is this gun better for close range? Good at distance? How long is the time between shots? How long until you need to reload? You're not going to figure out the answers from an overly complex chart. Nope, you have to learn them through experience. So spend some time practicing with various weapons. Then practice some more. After that, maybe have a snack, then practice a bit more.

Use the Reticule

It's simple enough. When the reticule turns red, you have an enemy target lined up. Your next shot has a better-than-average chance of hitting the mark. When the reticule is yellow, your next shot will hit some object that you can affect—a missile rack, weapons crate, Shrike technology, and the like. If the reticule is blue, your shot probably won't hit.

Short, Controlled Bursts

Ammo management begins with conservation. With a high-powered, fast weapon like the RVG50 minigun, you can burn through your 600 rounds in about a minute if you keep the trigger depressed. But, of course, most foes fold long before they've swallowed 600 slugs. Deliver just the right dose of damage with quick trigger pulls. This is the way to go with most weapons, especially those with a high rate of fire.

Firing in bursts makes aiming easier, too. So don't hold down the trigger and waste ammunition when a few precise volleys will eliminate an enemy. It's just common sense: the less ammo you use for one kill, the more you have for the next.

Know When to Switch

Ammunition may seem scarce on some missions. Sometimes the weapons you're using and the weapons your enemies wield don't pack the same heat. So if you've exhausted your weapon and enemies aren't dropping the right kind of ammo for your gun, don't be shy. Borrow a boomstick from a fallen foe. Enemies of the same type tend to use the same weapon, so you have a ready supply of additional bullets coming from the bad guys you have to kill anyway. Keep taking them out and picking up their ammo, and you should be set for the rest of the mission.

Although they lack power, laser weapons regenerate over time and don't require ammunition, which can help you squeak through those long missions.

Consider diversifying your weapon loadouts. If several of your characters are carrying weapons that use the same type of ammunition, you'll go through it even faster. Keep a variety of weapons in your squad so you don't burn through ammunition faster than you can replace it.



■ Nice shooting, Tex! Three enemies down, and you've got plenty of ammo left.

Reload, Reload, Reload

Is there anything worse than walking into a pitched battle, pulling the trigger, firing off a shot or two, and then hearing the click of an empty chamber? Yes. Stepping on a sentry bomb is worse. Still, running out of ammo in the middle of a firefight sucks. After a skirmish, always take the opportunity to reload. Make sure your weapon is fully loaded so that if you stumble into a room full of enemies around the next corner, you'll be at top offensive power.

There is another benefit to keeping your weapons full. Your team can carry a limited amount of each ammunition type, but the ammo in your weapons doesn't count toward that total. If you come upon an ammunition cache with your weapon stocked-up, you can have a full inventory plus a full magazine ready to go.

VS.

ACTION REPLAY

The cheaters' battle royale has begun! Action Replay opens with an impressive sports-themed combo.

NBA Street Vol. 2 (PS2)

Yao who? Suddenly being 8 feet tall isn't that impressive. With these codes, you can create Sasquatch-sized players who tower over the backboard and net—or Leprechauns with mad hops. Just type in these codes and create some circus freaks who just happen to play some mean b-ball.

Enable Cheats (enter this first)
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E
EEA447AA BCE352BA



Create an Ultra Taller Baller
FEB32156 BCA99B13
FEB32152 BCA99B13

Create an Ultra Smaller Baller
FEB32156 BCA99BA7
FEB32152 BCA99BA7

MLB 2004 (PS2)

How can you set the home run record while relaxing on your couch? All it takes is an Action Replay and a little know-how. These codes create maxed-out players, giving even the Tigers a shot against the Yankees. Create players with these codes on, then assign them to your team.

Enable Cheats (enter this first)
0E3C7DF21853E59E
EE925622BCD54332

Max Batting Power
FED28F29BCA99B82

Max Fielding
FED28F32BCA99B82

GAMESHARK

GameShark replies with some help for the GBA's best RPG, plus a way to fix our biggest gripe with *Auto Modellista*.

Golden Sun: The Lost Age (GBA)

Handheld gamers, GameShark loves you.



Enable Cheats (enter this first)
993E41C6 E209
9B800659 1605
2A69D0F9 0D98

Max Coins
2D9537BA A1B3
689337B3 815B

No Random Battles
B6B60758 1E05

Auto Modellista (PS2)

This game is beautiful, but its cars handle like butter on a hot skillet. Once again, chicanery saves the day.

Enable Cheats (enter this first)
F450BE3C 73744516

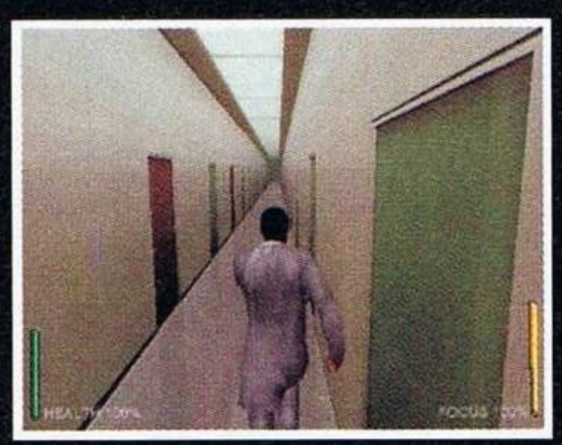
Lik's Custom Setup (Drift)
44549428 16B4474C
3962D6E1 9FA9B1E0
4452B628 1234554C
3942D2E1 BBA9B1E0
4452B628 12B455CC
3941D669 BFA9B1E0
44503528 34A457C8
3942D6E1 9BABB1E0

Skraps' Custom Setup (Grip)
44549428 16B4474C
3941D669 BFA9B1E0
4452B628 1234554C
3942D6E9 BBA9B1E0
4452B628 12B455CC
3943C661 9FA9B1F0
44503528 34A457C8
3942D6E1 9BABB1E0

■ PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

ENTER THE MATRIX

You may not want Shiny Entertainment to develop your next driving game, but the cheat system it created for this game sure is innovative.





Hacking Engine Tools

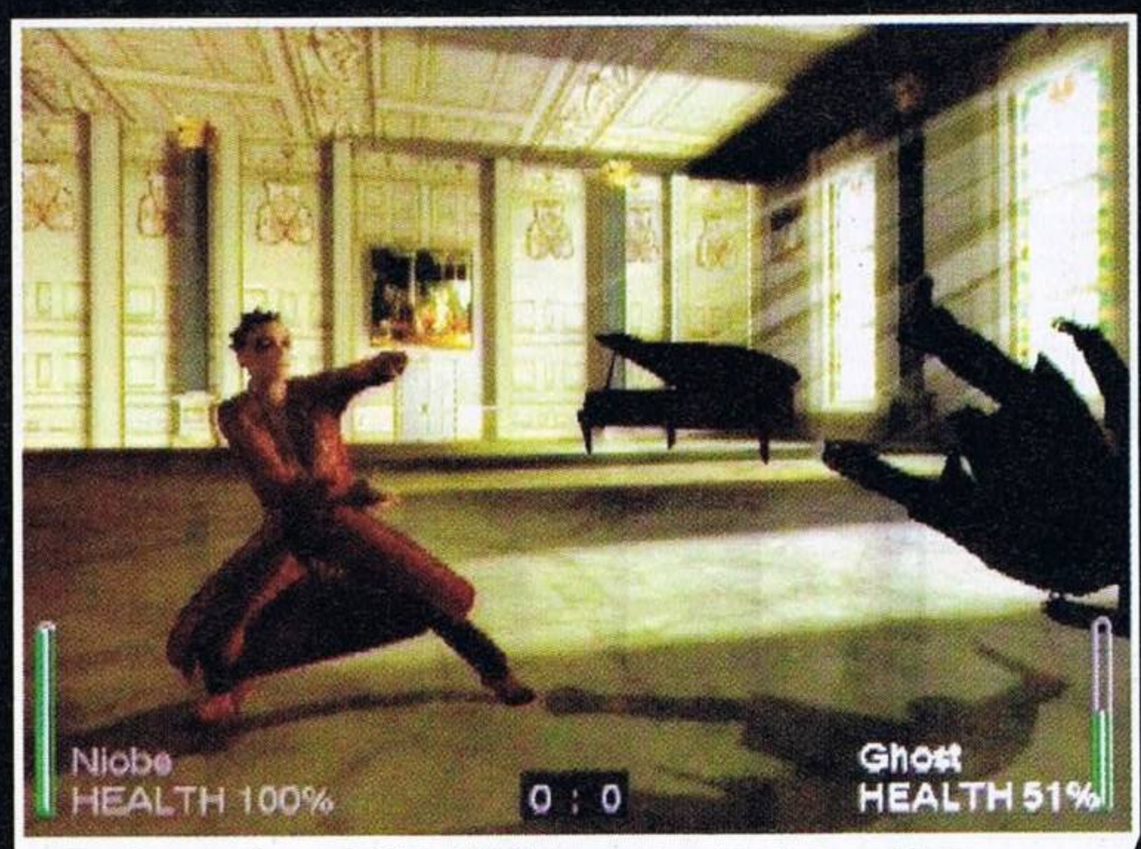
Would you like to while away the hours pretending to hack into the Matrix? Be our guest. These DOS-esque commands ought to get you started.

Command	Function
DIR	List files and folders
CLS	Clear the screen
HELP	Get help for a command
TRACEKILL	Blocks traces
READ	Read *.txt files
VIEW	View *.img files
PLAY	Play *.fmv files

Weapon Drops

What's the use of bullet time without bullets? Use these codes to stay heavily armed in proper *Matrix* style. Punch in the codes, then look for a little extra firepower in the specified places.

Location	Code
Drainage Canal	DROP JXTRR10
North Concourse	DROP PNSRZ10
Airport Tunnel	DROP RKHMS10
2nd Floor West (Chateau)	DROP JDZMT10
Courtyard (Chateau)	DROP ZKHBD10
Skyscraper	DROP RHFTQ10
Warehouse (Chinatown)	DROP ZSZQH10
Transformer Field	DROP JDHQL10
2nd Floor PO Boxes	DROP B1AXXF2



■ Time for some chop-socky! Unlock Multiplayer mode and beat up your friends.

Cheats

Access the hacking engine from the Main menu. Enter CHEAT.EXE to access the Cheat menu. Then put in these codes

Cheat	Code
Maximum firepower	0034AFFF
Unlimited ammunition	1DDF2556
Unlimited focus	69E5D9E4
Fast focus restore	FFF0020A
Unlimited health	7F4DF451
Bonus test level	13D2C77F
Deaf enemies	4516DF45
Blind enemies	FFFFFFF1
Turbo mode	FF00001A
Multiplayer fighting	D5C55D1E
Low gravity	BB013FFF
Superspeed logos	7867F443
Taxi driving	312MF451
Sparks' construct	13D2C77F

■ GameCube

SONIC ADVENTURE DX

***Sonic Adventure DX: Director's Cut* is chock-full of amusing diversions. In addition to all of Sonic's Game Gear appearances, there is an extensive Chao-raising and -racing minigame.**



Minigame Madness

All 12 of Sonic's Game Gear games (such as the Japan-only *Sonic Drift*) are hidden in *DX*. Complete 10 missions or collect one Sonic Emblem to unlock a new Game Gear minigame. After you unlock the first one, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, a Minigame Collection option will appear on the Main menu.



Ch-Ch-Ch-Chao Pets

Raise and race Chao for fun and profit! First, go to a Chao garden and find a likely candidate. Nurture his racing abilities by feeding him fruit and giving him animal role models to learn from.

You see, Chao take on the abilities of nearby animals. Strong animals improve a Chao's strength, fast animals upgrade its running speed, and so on. With the right roster of animal playmates, your Chao can quickly become a racing contender! Please, allow us to drop some science on your Chao-raising shenanigans. With this information, you can improve your pet racer as you see fit:

Swimming. Improve this ability with penguins, seals, and beavers.

Flying. Boost a Chao's flying skill by giving it birds to play with.

Running. For a speedy Chao, look to the wallaby, rabbit, or deer.

Strength. Elephants, lions, and gorillas can help you out here.

Random. Animals from the blue group (mole, koala, and skunk) can have a dramatic impact on any of a Chao's stats. Use with caution.

Special Eggs

Three special Chao eggs are available in addition to the standard blue Chao eggs found in Station Square, Mystic Ruins, and Egg Carrier gardens. The first special Chao egg is silver. Get it by pushing the large stone pedestal near the Mystic Ruins waterfall. A shop in Station Square holds another special egg. Grab the rock in the nearby courtyard and make an Indiana Jones–style switch. The third special egg is in the cell next to Amy's when she's locked up on the Egg Carrier.

Take a Walk, Chao

Developing your Chao is a long process that involves more than giving it animals. Taking your pet on Adventure Walks on your Game Boy Advance is the fastest way to help it along, since stat-boosting fruit is rich and plentiful on GBA.

The coconuts you get from the GameCube Chao gardens are all right, but they have only about half the effect on your pet's stats as the fruit found on Game Boy Advance. Additionally, your Chao might run into various *Sonic* game characters during his Adventure Walk. If he does, he'll receive a significant boost to one characteristic (unless he meets the nonorganic Gamma, who is stingy and will give him nothing).

Character	Improvement
Sonic	Running +10
Tails	Flying +10
Knuckles	Strength +10
Amy Rose	Full HP Recovery
Gamma	No Change!
Big	Swimming +10

The Adventure Walk path you choose for your Chao is critical. Don't bite off more than a Chao can chew. A walk could be dangerous for your racer in training if he hasn't had enough time, fruit, and animals to develop his abilities. If you're not sure whether your pet can handle the excitement, measure his relative skill by entering him in a race.

Races

It's showtime! There are five Sonic Emblems to be won here, one in each race. Begin with a course that plays to your Chao's highest skill. Eventually, you must compete in races where all your pet's abilities will count. Only a well-rounded Chao can win those races.

Pearl Course. Strength is the most important characteristic in the Pearl Course because your Chao needs to get past some heavy pearls strewn near the finish line. If your Chao isn't buff enough, he takes a nap before the finish.

Ruby Course. This course tests only swimming. The entire race takes place in a pool, appropriately enough.

Amethyst Course. This course heavily emphasizes running. However, a wily Chao with good flying ability might opt for a crucial shortcut.

Sapphire Course. This long course tests every aspect of your Chao's abilities. Only the well-rounded need apply.

Emerald Course. This is the ultimate test of a Chao's abilities. The Emerald course combines the Amethyst and Sapphire courses into one long trek. Make sure your Chao athlete is well-rested and fed before trying it.

A Goose for the Chao. As the Chao are racing, you'll have a chance to cheer your Chao toward victory when he's the current crowd favorite (represented by a small red arrow over his head). Encourage the little guy to pour on the speed with a few quick button taps.



■ You can't see it, but those Chao are raising their arms and going "Wooooo!"



■ Mournful miniature elephants now haunt our dreams. Thanks, Sonic.





■ PlayStation 2, Xbox

NBA STREET VOL. 2

This month's cheat sheet reveals *Street 2*'s best codes. To use them, select Pick Up Game, choose either home or away, accept an ID, and enter one of the codes below when the "enter codes now" prompt appears. Figures. Codes for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions are given. Our code scientists have not yet discovered the GameCube codes.

Unlimited turbo
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Squ, Tri, Tri.
Xbox: Hold L and press X, X, Y, Y.

Big heads
PS2: Hold L1 and press Cir, Squ, Squ, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, X, X, B.

Small players
PS2: Hold L1 and press Tri, Tri, Cir, Squ.
Xbox: Hold L and press Y, Y, B, X.

ABA ball
PS2: Hold L1 and press Cir, Squ, Cir, Squ.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, X, B, X.

WNBA ball
PS2: Hold L1 and press Cir, Tri, Tri, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, Y, Y, B.

Ball trails
PS2: Hold L1 and press Tri, Tri, Tri, Squ.
Xbox: Hold L and press Y, Y, Y, X.

No display bars
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Cir, Cir, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press X, B, B, B.

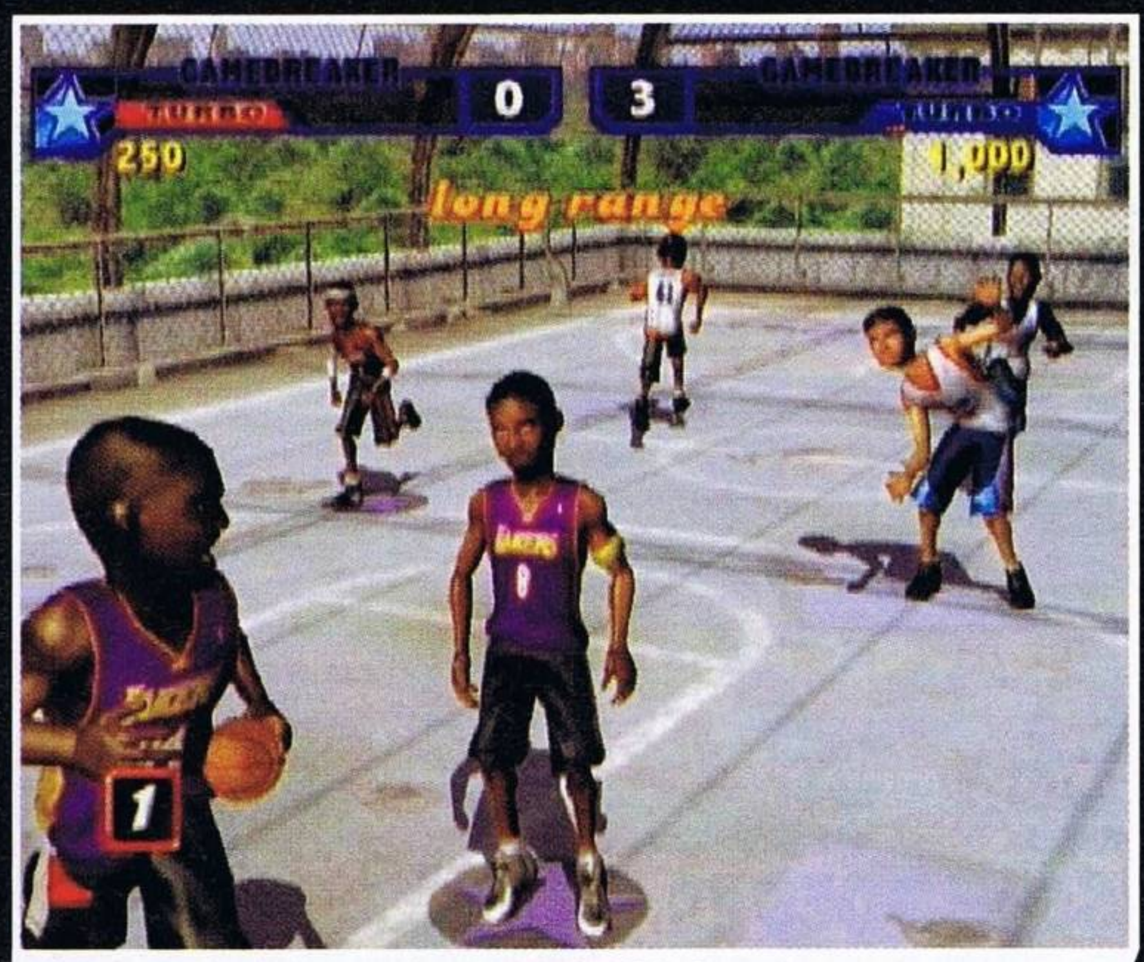
All jerseys
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Tri, Cir, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, Y, X, X.

All courts
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Tri, Tri, Squ.
Xbox: Hold L and press X, Y, Y, X.

Unlock the St. Lunatics team and all street legends
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Tri, Cir, Tri.
Xbox: Hold L and press X, Y, B, Y.

All NBA legends
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Tri, Tri, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, Y, Y, X.

Classic Michael Jordan
PS2: Hold L1 and press Squ, Tri, Squ, Squ.
Xbox: Hold L and press X, Y, X, X.



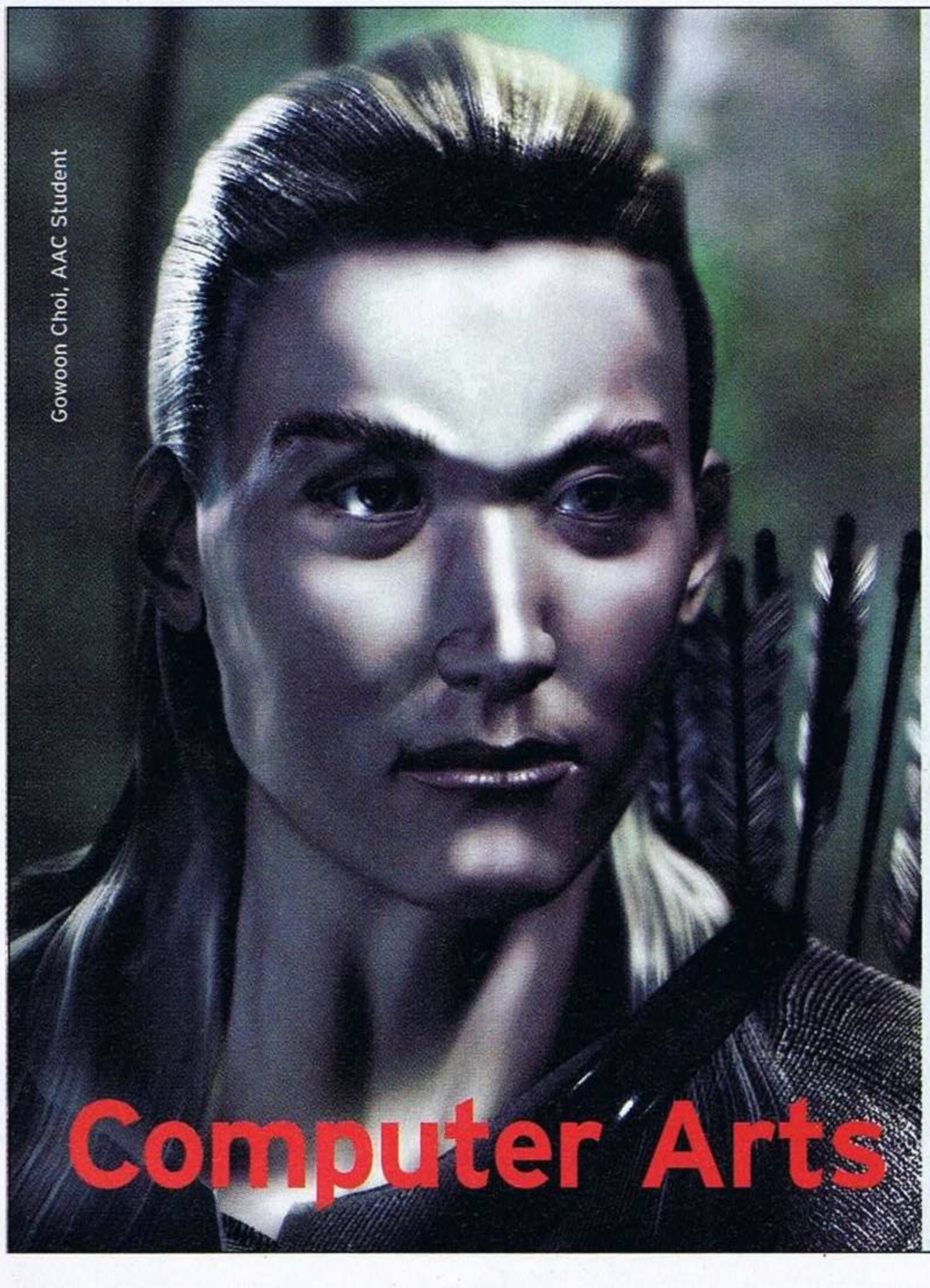
■ The Big Head code gives you larger targets for Off da Heezays.

Explosive rims
PS2: Hold L1 and press Cir, Cir, Cir, Tri.
Xbox: Hold L and press B, B, B, Y.

No counters
PS2: Hold L1 and press Tri, Tri, Cir, Cir.
Xbox: Hold L and press Y, Y, B, B.

Easy two pointers
PS2: Hold L1 and press Tri, Cir, Squ, Tri.
Xbox: Hold L and press Y, B, X, Y.

Difficult two pointers
PS2: Hold L1 and press Tri, Squ, Cir, Tri.
Xbox: Hold L and press Y, X, B, Y.



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THE REST OF E3'S CRAP

Seanbaby attends E3 so that, uh, you don't have to

sound off



■ There's no denying it: *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto is adorable!

SEAN DOES E3

The Electronic Entertainment Expo is a chance for videogame companies to showcase all of the titles coming out in the next year. For most gamers, it's like being teased with pictures of your Christmas presents eight months in advance by evil parents. For me, it's like actually getting my presents early...except the boxes are filled with socks, underwear, and a SARS-infected wombat. Stealing a peek at my upcoming review games means playing *Bob the Builder Fashion Designer* six months early. Gee, thanks. To get a preview of what the future of terror is going to taste like, *EGM* sent me off to Los Angeles to learn more about the games I'll hate later this year. —*Seanbaby*

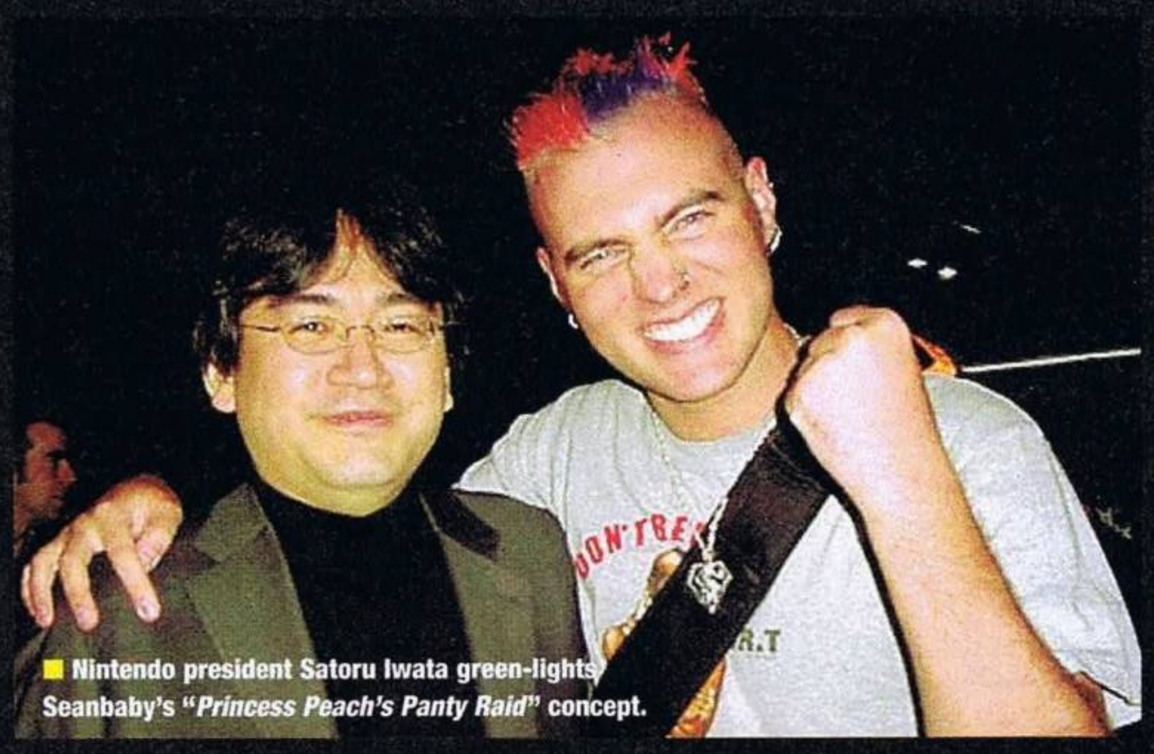
DAY 1

Before I start, I'd like to say that L.A. remains a *Mad Max* wasteland filled with sexy people who would gladly sandpaper a basket of kittens if they thought it'd get them a break at stardom. I'm happy to report, however, that this cesspool has an upside—in Hollywood, you'll find four bars on every block, breasts bigger than your head, and grocery stores that deliver beer right to your hotel room. I spent the night before E3 getting into this Hollywood mindset, so the next afternoon I was in no condition to wade past all the envelope-pushing supergames surrounded by spokesmodels in space bikinis to find the booths about upcoming *Muppet Babies* products. Luckily, within 15 minutes, I found the Crave Entertainment booth. Their upcoming releases feature a game about giant, fat chickens in swimsuits called *Party Animals*, another based on a show called *Butt-Ugly Martians*, one farming title, and a puzzle game based on rap star Eminem. This meant two things to me. One, Crave Entertainment should stop letting the boss's crackhead intern approve game concepts; and two, I'd seen more than enough of the future of bad games to call it a day.

Day 1 Insider Scoop: I snuck into the Nokia N-Gage party, but after finding out that their bar didn't serve liquor, I accidentally played some of the damn N-Gage games on my way out. The N-Gage is a new rocket-age space phone that plays powerful but terrible 3D games while still managing to remain the size of three Game Boys glued to five cell phones. When one of their perky PR representatives asked me what I thought, I pretended to be a confused Austrian journalist to avoid breaking her company's heart.

DAY 2

My thorough investigation into the bars at eight separate parties the night before caused me to sleep through a good portion of day 2. I got there just in time to play *Woody Woodpecker Crazy Castle 5*, and hungover or not, if there were an adjective that meant "forcibly yanked through a diseased fish's colon," I'd still qualify that word with several strong adverbs before I used it to describe this awful excuse for a game.



■ Nintendo president Satoru Iwata green-lights Seanbaby's "*Princess Peach's Panty Raid*" concept.



■ Most people scoped *Halo 2* at E3...I got to play *Woody* f'n *Woodpecker*. Pity me.

At the *American Idol* booth, show attendees could go up on stage and play the upcoming game while the booth's announcer mocked and emasculated them. It's a rhythmic button-tapping game, except that as you do progressively worse, your contestant sings more horribly. To put it in TV producer terms: It's *Star Search* meets *Dance Dance Revolution* meets *Killing a Noisy, Frightened Animal*. Let's cross our fingers that humankind's warlike ways will finally end civilization before this game has a chance to be released.

Day 2 Insider Scoop: Although the Eidos party had nearly naked go-go dancers and the Nintendo party had the inventor of *Donkey Kong*, the Sony party was this year's best. They spared no expense to make sure there was a bar and a buffet table every 17 inches in any direction, and they hired George Clinton to illustrate how 200 straight years of drug abuse affects a performer's supergroovalistic prosifunkstication. However, the company that partied the hardest was Ubi Soft. I got back from Sony to find that after a hard day of showing dorks their videogames, those French bastards still kept their party going for six hours. I was barely there for a beer before a huge French man jumped out of the pool with all his clothes on, hugged our group, and screamed, "Mes amis! Mes amis!" His excitement was infectious, but since I don't have the confidence in my French to know for sure that his invitation didn't mean, "Sir, make love to me in the pool," I didn't join him when he leapt back in.



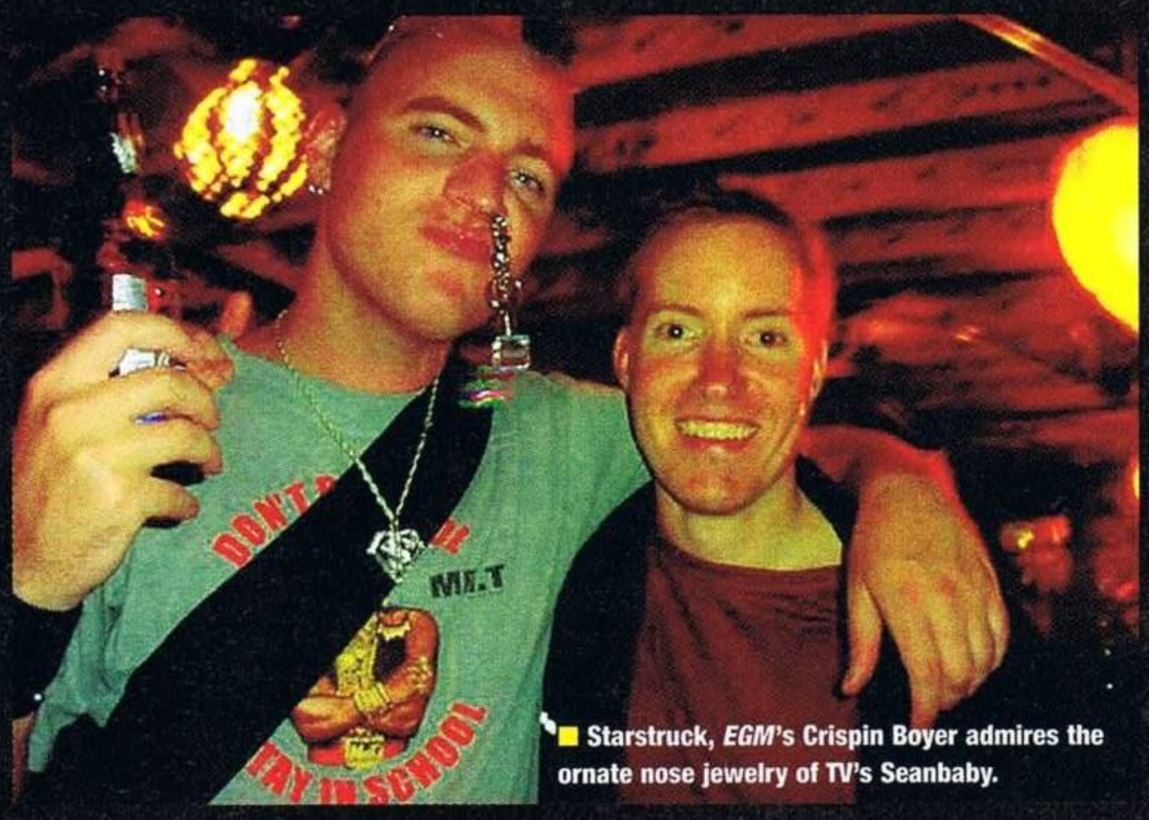
■ *Cyclone Circus*, another of the exciting "games" that I had to play at the show.



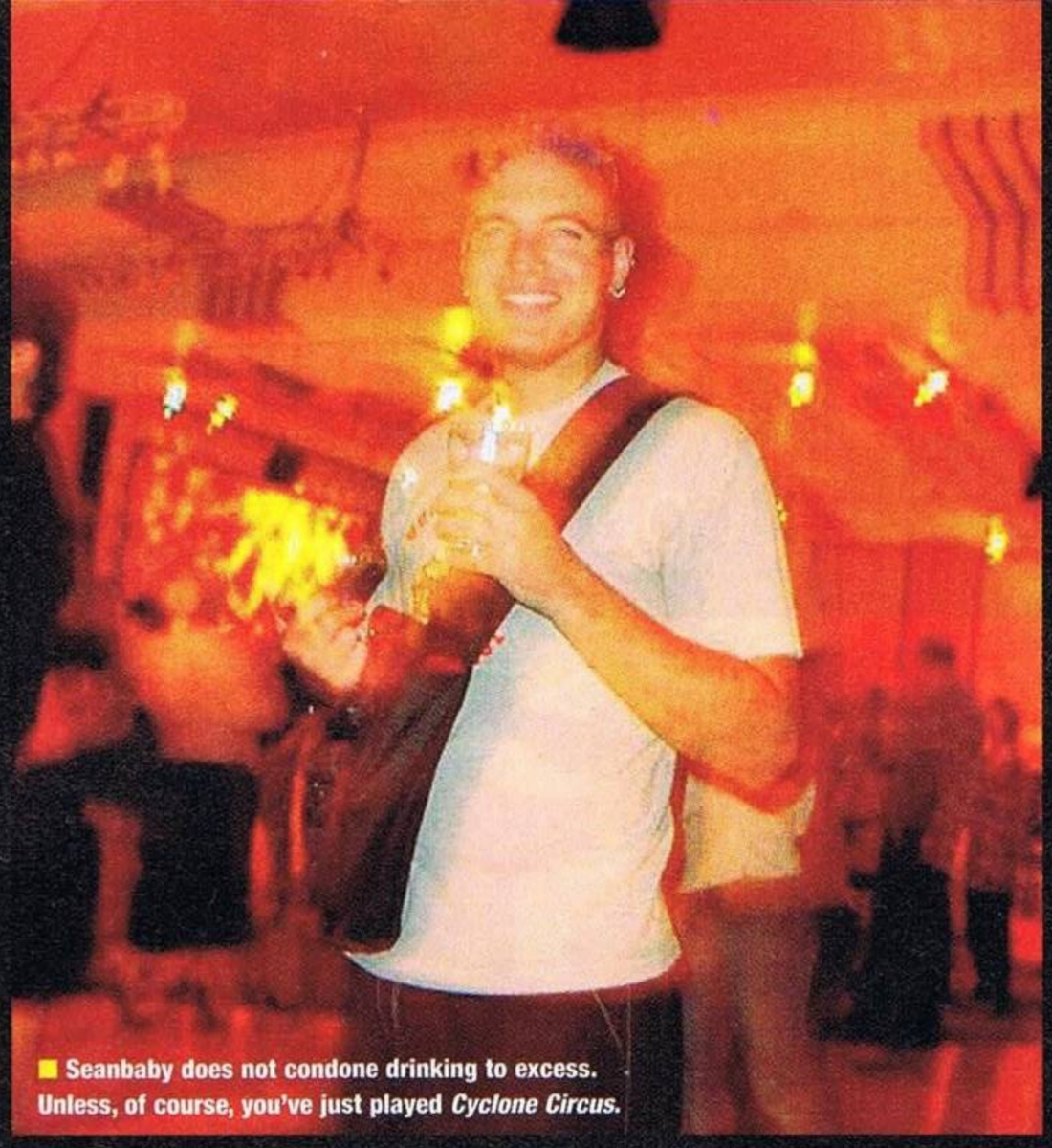
■ Proof that 20 million Americans have absolutely no taste whatsoever.

DAY 3

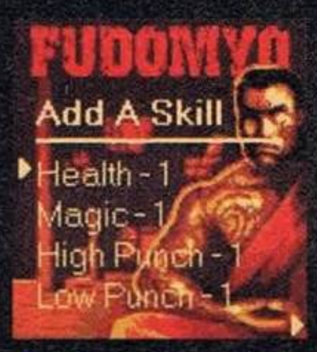
I was feeling especially religious on the third day of E3. Not only because I was praying that I couldn't find the *Cat in the Hat* booth, but also because there was so much liquor in me that, like Jesus, my blood was legally considered wine. Meandering aimlessly through the show floor, I came across a game called



■ Starstruck, *EGM*'s Crispin Boyer admires the ornate nose jewelry of TV's Seanbaby.



■ Seanbaby does not condone drinking to excess. Unless, of course, you've just played *Cyclone Circus*.



■ When Steven Seagal calls, don't answer!

Cyclone Circus, in which players control the unholy offspring of a dune buggy and a sailboat being driven by a woman online mobile phone game starring laconic aikido superstar Steven Seagal. You and a friend each choose between two martial arts moves for Steven Seagal to perform—either punch to the dong or kick to the dong. Then your two Steven Seagals meet via the magic of cell phones and karate each other's crotches as ordered. So if you like rock-paper-scissors and hate crotches, dial Steven Seagal's *Fudomyo* for outrageous mobile fun!

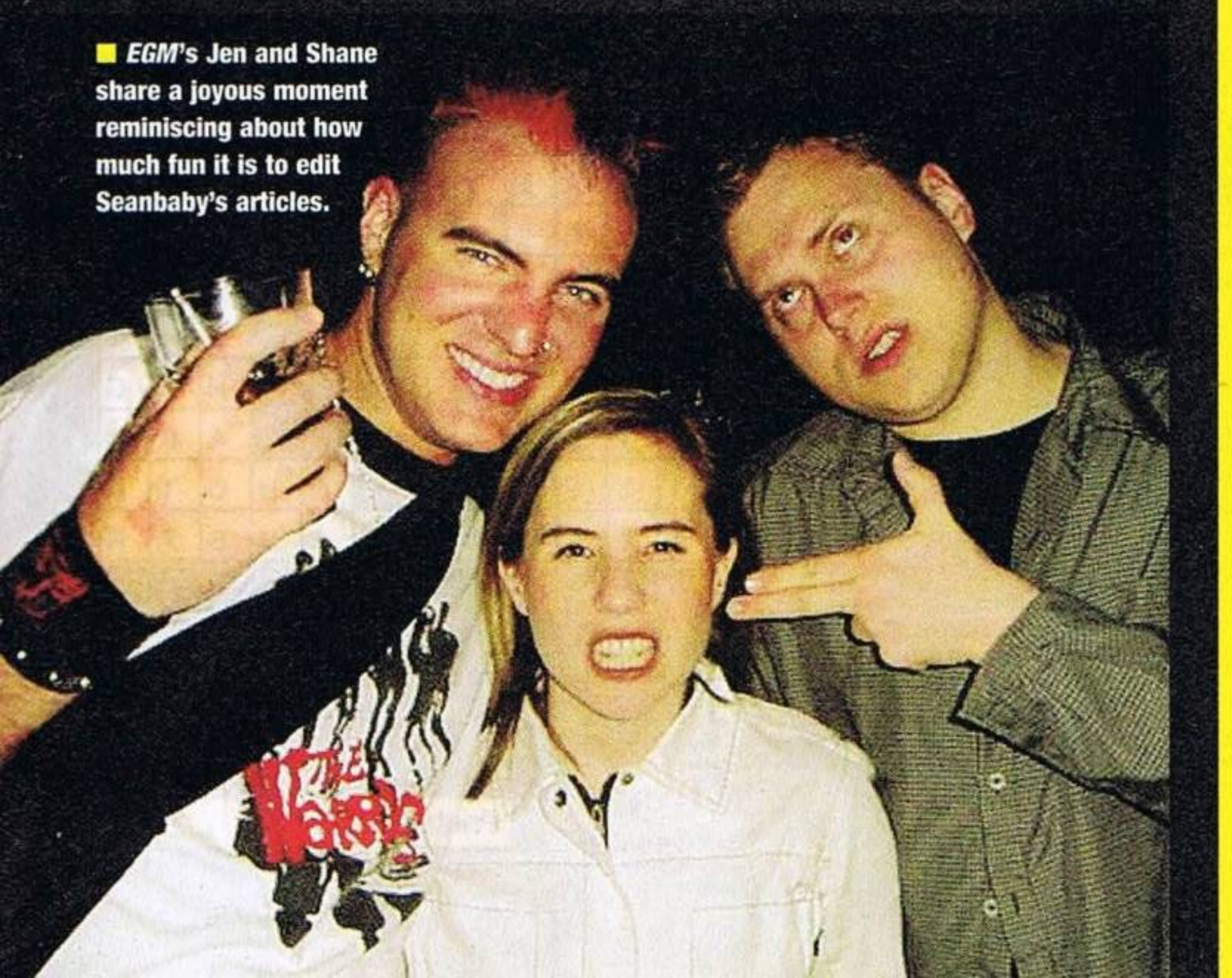
"Four bars on every block and breasts bigger than your head." —*Seanbaby, on what's good about L.A.*

in a thong. The programmers apparently haven't finished the part of the game that distinguishes between mountain and nonmountain, and within 30 seconds I'd driven straight through a wall and helplessly burrowed my misshapen vehicle into the ground. I would have reported the problem, but that would have been like complaining about finding an old sock in your load of manure.

The game I'm most looking forward to never playing again is *Fudomyo*, an

Day 3 Insider Scoop: My desire for scoops had utterly vanished by the third day. I'd seen too much insanity, played far too many awful games, and consumed an illegal amount of pure-grain alcohol. E3 had soundly defeated me. All I could do was return home, burrow under the covers, and wait for a full year's worth of crappy games to arrive at my door.

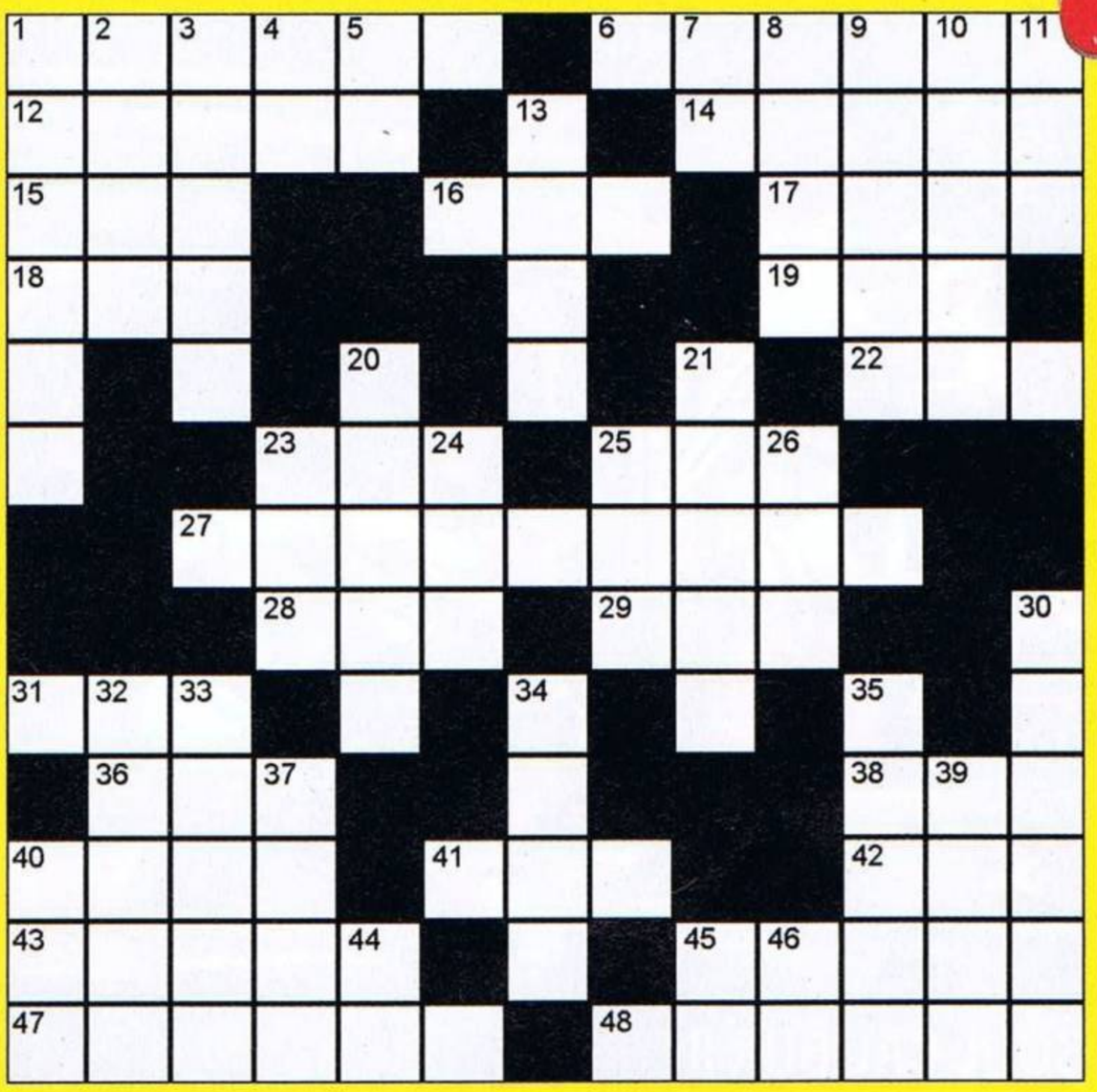
■ *EGM*'s Jen and Shane share a joyous moment reminiscing about how much fun it is to edit Seanbaby's articles.



CROSSWORD: SONIC'S ADVENTURES

(Solution on page 132)





ACROSS

1. Twin stars of *Girls Night Out* (GBA)
6. And they call it "Citizen Kabuto" (PS2)
12. Like *Zelda*'s Deku tree
14. Says "@!#?@!" just before dying
15. Precursor to *Medal of Honor*'s WWII
16. Character in EA's "reality" game
17. Team that bats first in *All-Star Baseball 2004*
18. Daughter of the Green Ranch owner and one of the farm babes you can marry in *Harvest Moon 64*
19. RPG inn necessity
22. *Final Fantasy VII* party member, _ XIII
23. Sonic's girlfriend
25. Team-based *Halo* multiplayer game, for short
27. Original *Sonic* zone
28. Enemy of *Army Men*'s Green force
29. 1.75 is a good one in *RBI Baseball*
31. Playable cat in *Sonic Adventure*
36. Like Sly Cooper's coat
38. Ride one in *Harley Davidson Race Across America* (GBC)
40. Pokémon Diglett evolves into Dug_
41. *Phantasy Star Online* companion
42. Stock up on weapons
43. Frag count
45. Set number of rings needed to advance in *Sonic 2* special stages
47. *Max* and *Blades* of
48. *Gran Turismo 2*'s 300ZX

DOWN

1. _ Cobblepot, aka "The Penguin," of *Batman Returns*
2. You can ride across it in *Paperboy*
3. What Sonic does best
4. Todd McFarlane game from Konami (abbrv.)
5. What *GTA*'s Liberty City is based on, for short
7. Vital stat of 41 across
8. "Punch, kick, punch, kick" in *Double Dragon* (NES)
9. PlayStation 2, to PlayStation 1
10. *Morrowind* guild, occupation
11. Drop a pig off here in GameCube *Zelda*
13. Sonic will die if he gets hit, unless he has one
20. *Vigilante 8* (multi) multiplayer mode
21. What Parappa does to "M-I-X the flour into the bowl"
23. Graphics, before getting made into graphics
24. What Japanese gamers spend on software
25. In *Guerrilla War* (NES), you play as _ Guevara and Fidel Castro
26. *Vice City* state abbreviation
30. He was once known as Dr. Robotnik in the U.S.
32. One hot summon, in *Final Fantasy* games
33. Street fighter who flaunts the Flash Kick
34. *Sonic Adventure* minigame character
35. Like *Sonic*'s emeralds
37. *WWF Smackdown2!: Know Your* _
39. Dragon-riding chick of Xbox fame
40. Team Kills, as abbreviated in *Unreal Tournament*
44. Kurt Warner's home city in *Madden 2003* (abbrv.)
45. _ _ x: Boxy old-school puzzle game
46. Where *SOCOM*'s Navy SEALs are from

NEXT MONTH: SEPT. 2003 • ISSUE #170

ON SALE AUGUST 5



SOUL CALIBUR II

When we heard *Soul Calibur II* was coming stateside, we not only swore to a duel, but also decided to devote three special covers to the showdown. Next month, our cover story includes interviews with the *SC2* development team, plus the exclusive U.S. reviews of the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube versions.

We also survey the biggest battle arena of them all—the Internet. See which upcoming games will make going online a necessity in our special feature. Plus, ever hear of the NGage, the Phantom, the DISCover? No? You will in our in-depth report on the brave new batch of start-up consoles and handhelds hoping to stake a claim in the territory of giants.

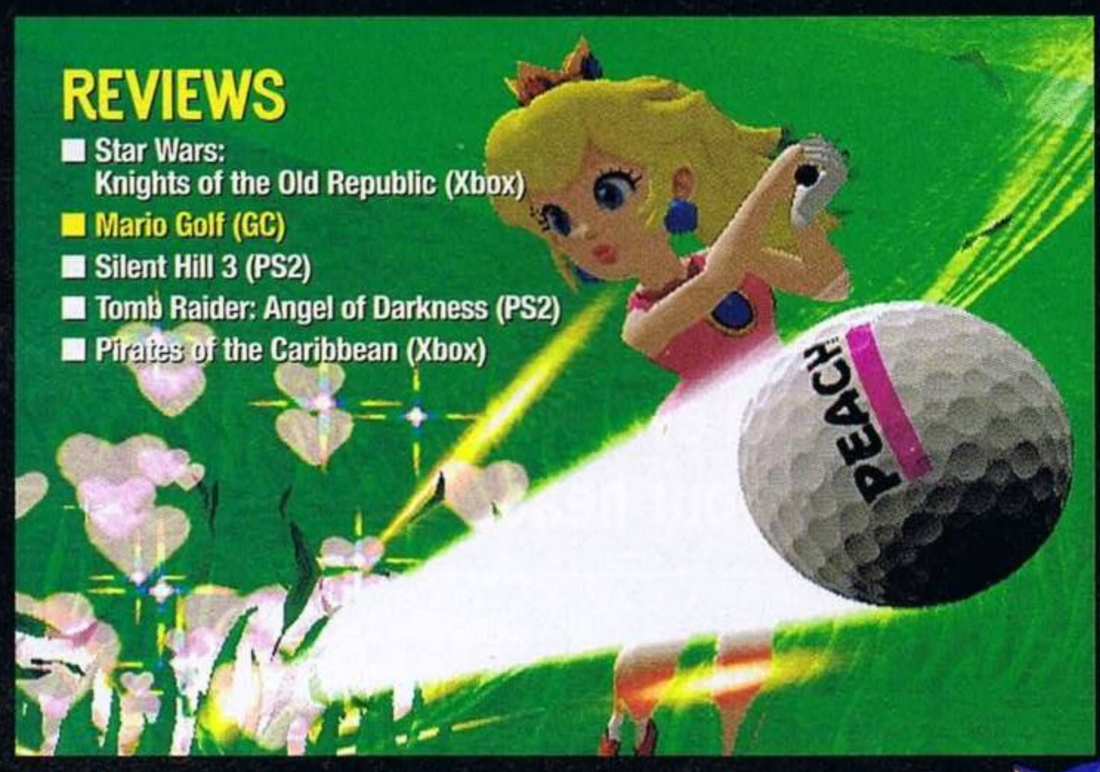


PREVIEWS

- Dead or Alive Online (Xbox)
- Virtual On: Marz (PS2)
- Battlestar Galactica (PS2, Xbox)
- Transformers: Armada (PS2)
- Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand (GBA)

REVIEWS

- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic (Xbox)
- Mario Golf (GC)
- Silent Hill 3 (PS2)
- Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness (PS2)
- Pirates of the Caribbean (Xbox)

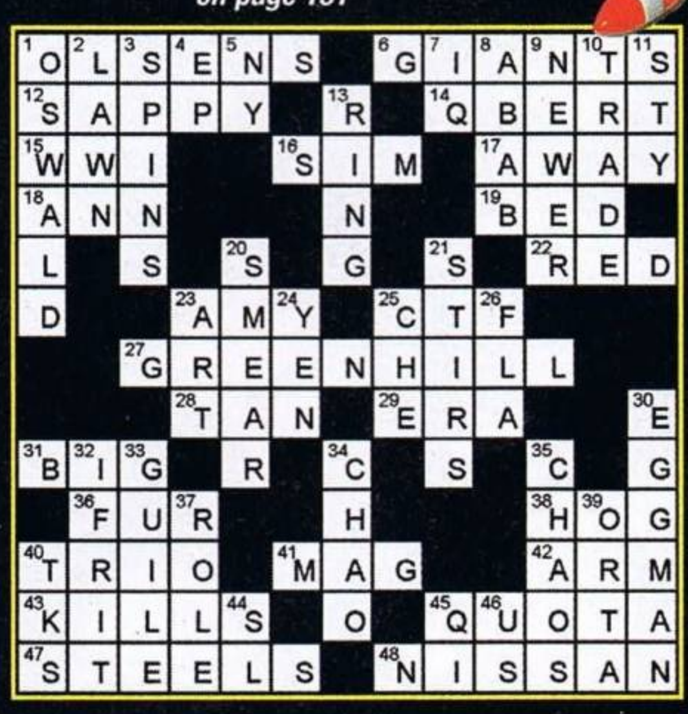


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MMM! REAL ANIMAL-PART TASTE!

HELLO, VIDEO GAMERS! I'M HSU TANAKA, THAT'S MY BROTHER CHAN, AND WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING THE RISE IN COOPERATIVE MULTIPLAYER GAMES OF LATE!

THIS TREND NO DOUBT COMES AS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO PARENTS' GROUPS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, GROUPS LONG INCENSED BY THE QUESTIONABLE MESSAGE PUT OUT BY COMPETITIVE OR VERSUS MULTIPLAYER MODES!

TRUE ENOUGH! WHEN YOU COOPERATE, IT SENDS A MESSAGE EVERYONE CAN AGREE ON, THAT WHEN YOU WORK TOGETHER AND GANG UP ON PERSONS WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU, IT'S FAR EASIER TO UTTERLY DESTROY THEM, THEIR IDEAS, AND THEIR CULTURE!

... WAIT, IS THAT GOOD?

AS LONG AS IT SELLS! WE CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THE DYNAMIC FURRY CRITTERS OF THE "SONIC THE HEDGEHOG" SERIES! OR SIMULACRUMS THEREOF, AT ANY RATE, WHICH IS WHY CHAN AND I ARE, THIS DAY, ACCOMPANYING OUR ASSISTANT, ARNIE, ON A TRIP TO VISIT HIS FAMILY!

WE FIGURE THERE'S GOTTA BE ENOUGH DYNAMO BETWEEN 'EM TO SQUEEZE OUT AT LEAST ONE BEST-SELLING GAME, WHAT SAY, ARNIE?

I DROPPED CHEESE ON MY SHOE.

RIGHT THEN! LET'S HEAD OUT!

THEY ARRIVE!

GOSH, I'M EXCITED! THESE DAYS, I BARELY GET TO SEE MY FAMILY AT ALL!

NOW, PLEASE, YOU TWO, BE ON GOOD BEHAVIOR! I WANT THEM TO BE PROUD OF MY JOB!

ARNIE, YOU MAKE COPIES AND FETCH DRINKS.

WE'RE GROUND SQUIRRELS; THAT'S STILL PRETTY GOOD.

HELLO, ANYBODY HOME?

ARNIE!

BUCKLES! TRUDY! CRIPES! YOU GUYS ARE GETTING BIG! SOON YOU'LL BE TAKING OUT WHOLE CITIES!

DID YOU BRING US PRESENTS?

OF COURSE I DID, YOU GREEDY LITTLE SHARKS! WHERE'S MOM AND DAD?

ARNIE?

MOM! DAD! YOU TWO LOOK GREAT!

I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO..

ARE THESE TWO YER BOYFRIENDS?

HAROLD, PLEASE..

THESE ARE MY BOSSES, DAD.. THE TANAKA BROTHERS.. I WORK FOR THEM!

WELL, I GUESS I SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT MY SON THE HOMOSEXUAL HAS A JOB AT ALL! THREE CHEERS!

DAD, I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT GAY! MY SHOES ARE JUST RED, THAT'S ALL!

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR PUNK HIPPIE FRIENDS, HERE! AFTER ALL, A MAN'S ENTITLED TO SEE WHO'S SPONSORING HIS SON'S DEGENERATE LIFESTYLE!

ER..

HAROLD, YOU PROMISED...

TELL ME, WHAT'D YOU THINK ABOUT THIS WAR OVERSEAS, THEN?

AH.. WELL, WHILE I MIGHT QUESTION THE MOTIVATIONS INVOLVED, I THINK WE CAN SAFELY SAY--

YOU QUESTION THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?!!

I -- UM, I THINK DINNER'S READY!

DINNER!

LORD, BLESS THIS BOUNTIFUL OFFERING PLACED BEFORE US, AND BLESS THOSE AT THIS TABLE, EVEN MY DEGENERATE SON..

I AM SORRY, LORD, FOR THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH HE HAS DISGRACED YOU, ME, AND ALL GOOD FOLK OVER THE COURSE OF THESE LONG YEARS.

I PRAY THAT YOU WILL GRANT HIM MERCY, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS OBVIOUSLY DEFICIENT BRAIN.

INDEED, HIS MOTHER AND I MUST ACCEPT SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS CREATURE, THOUGH IF GOOD INTENTIONS HOLD ANY SWAY, WE WERE ACTUALLY HOPING FOR A DOCTOR OR PRO BALL PLAYER..

DAD, WILL YOU PLEASE STOP APOLOGIZING TO GOD FOR MY EXISTENCE?!

OH! I GUESS YOU'D RATHER JUST SLAP HIM IN THE FACE WITH YOURSELF, EH?

I GUESS NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN OUT IN THE GUTTERS, YOU KNOW MORE THAN YOUR FATHER!

YOU WANNA BE BOSS OF THIS HOUSE? OKAY, THEN FIGHT FOR IT!

PUT UP YOUR DUKES, BOY!

COME ON, DAD, YOU KNOW I COULD NEVER FIGHT--

HIYARG!!

EEK!

ARGH!

YARR!

POW!

WHACK!

OW!

AAIIGH!

THIS IS GONNA BE ONE WEIRD GAME.

FOUGHT LIKE A MAN!

I'M PROUD, SON!

HOT DOG!

THE END!

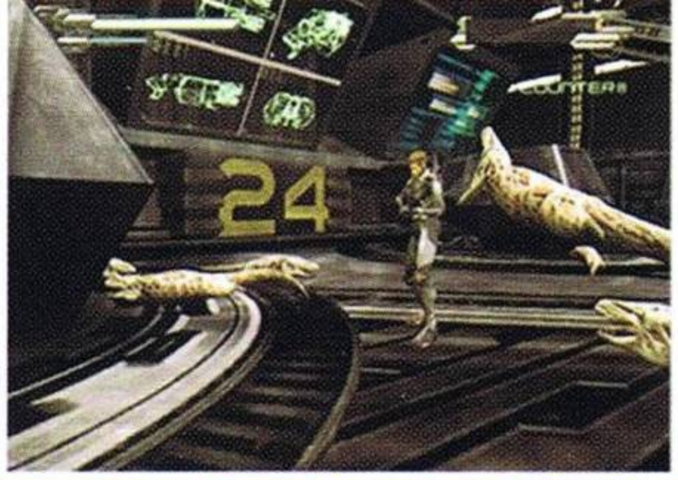
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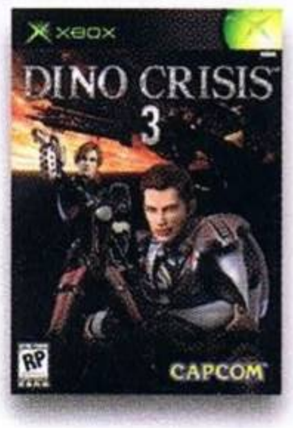
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