THE DARKNESS: Console FPS enters the Next-Generation

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HYPER

The Future Of NINTENDO

60

Wii & DS Games Previewed!

METROID PRIME 3

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Celebrating 20 Years of the NES

HAZE PS3

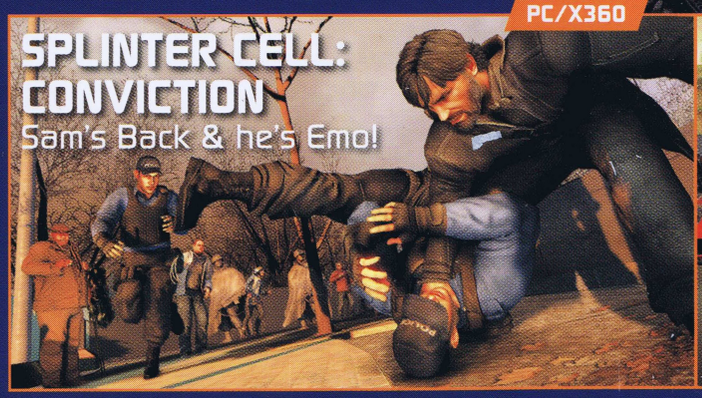
Guns and Drugs!

MOBILE GAMING

Can mobile phone games ever be any good?

FAREWELL OLD FRIENDS

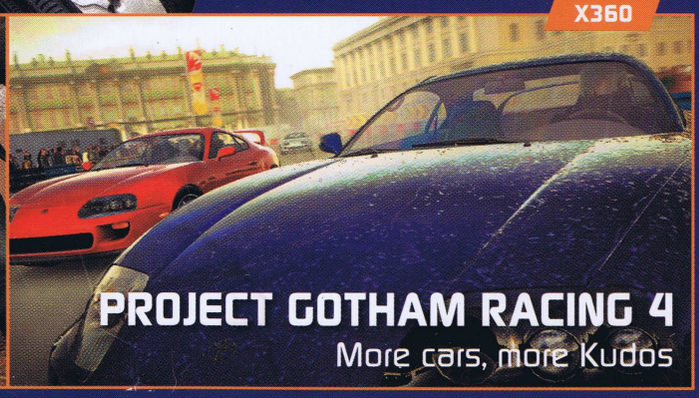
We round-up the 10 best games on PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube



PC/X360

SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

Sam's Back & he's Emo!



X360

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A next MAGAZINE

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UBISOFT

Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX®
VEGAS

Contents

6 Editorial

8 News

11 Columns
Press Pass

12 Previews
Splinter Cell: Conviction, Haze, Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway, Pirates of the Burning Sea, Project Gotham Racing 4, Mercenaries 2.

20 The Future of Nintendo
We preview 60 upcoming DS and Wii titles for your Ninty loving pleasure

32 Happy Anniversary
20 years ago the NES hit Australian shores. We take a look back at those heady days.

38 Farewell to a Generation
We take a look back at the generation leaving us and pick our top ten games for the Xbox, PS2, GameCube and Dreamcast

46 The Taurus Awards
Christian Read hangs out with professional stuntmen to get the inside goss on the upcoming Stuntman: Ignition

52 Subscriptions
Subscribe for a chance to win a Wii, a DS and a hell of a lot of games!

54 Reviews

74 Games on the Run
Can games on mobile phones ever be good?

78 WoW Chronicles

79 WIN WIN WIN

82 DVD Reviews

84 Anime Reviews

86 Collections

87 Reader's Survey
Have your say for a chance to win some great prizes!

89 Hyper Special Offers

90 Hyper's Top 10 Games Never Made

92 Mail

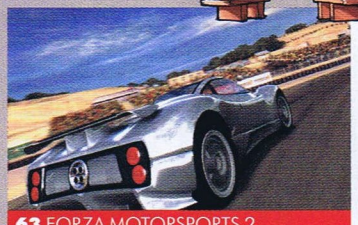
96 Gameboffin

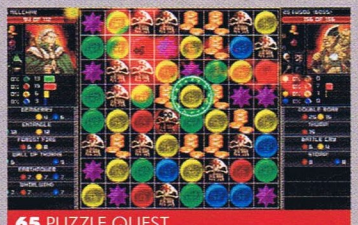
97 Charts

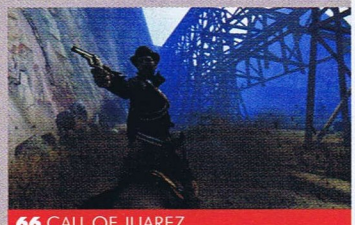
98 Next Issue

Reviews

56 The Darkness
60 Resident Evil Wii Edition
62 Ouendan 2
63 Forza Motorsports 2
64 Mario Strikers: Charged
65 Puzzle Quest
66 Call of Juarez
67 Senko No Ronde
68 Atelier Iris 3
69 Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer
70 Scavenger
72 Mortal Kombat: Armageddon Wii
72 Mercury Meltdown Revolution
72 Shadowrun







56 The Darkness

I believe in a thing called love

HYPER»
AUGUST 2007 ISSUE 166

Editorial

>>I'm really chuffed with issue #166. I think we did a good job bringing together some great features and content. Unfortunately this happy feeling is masking something that has been troubling me for a week and a bit now. As you may or may not know, in June, a restaurant critic was successfully sued by a restaurant for criticizing their food. This sets a very dangerous precedent. Now that someone has been sued for an opinion it can happen again. And it will.

Now I've been threatened with litigation on many an occasion over my career. Back when I first started at PC PowerPlay way too many years ago I was first threatened with litigation for a review of a Saitek Xbox controller that was, without going into details, rubbish. A few weeks later a small PC fabricator threatened to sue me for calling him on his woefully underpowered "gaming" PC that didn't even feature a graphic card. I was worried back then for a while until it was explained to me that they could huff and puff all they liked but I was immune to their legalese as long as I had my facts straight and hadn't defamed them in any way.

Since then I've prided myself on pushing as hard as I can while still being bulletproof. I like to call a spade a spade and a shit game Rogue Ops but now I have the fear in me again. Is someone going to take offence to getting a low score on a game and hit me with some legal proceedings to recoup the money they assume the game would have made? Am I going to have to pass the magazine through some kind of legal team to make sure we are bulletproof every month? Worse still, am I going to have to censor myself and others for fear of getting a gavel shoved where the sun don't shine? I really hope not. Anyway, as far as I'm concerned it's business as usual. I'll continue calling a spade a spade and keep my Polyanna glasses on to keep everything rosy. See you next month – fingers crossed I won't be poorer than usual.

Daniel Wilks >>Editor

Hyper Crew

MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

DANIEL – Editor

1. **The Darkness** – *Xbox 360*
   "Hellishly good"
2. **Puzzle Quest** – *DS*
3. **Shadow Hearts: FtNW** – *PS2*
4. **Blue Dragon** – *Xbox 360*
5. **LotR Online** – *PC*

MOE – Deputy Editor

1. **Puzzle Quest** – *DS*
   "Puzzle-tastic!"
2. **Call of Juarez** – *Xbox 360*
3. **Castlevania: Symphony of the Night** – *PSone*
4. **WarTech: Senko no Ronde** – *Xbox 360*
5. **King Kong** – *Xbox 360*

MALCOLM – Art Director

1. **FFXII** – *PS2*
   "Zodiac Spear Get!"
2. **Brain Training** – *DS*
3. **Elite Beat Agents** – *DS*
4. **Crash 'n Burn** – *PS2*
5. **Micro Machines v4** – *PS2*

RICO SUAVEZ – Latin Lover

1. **Mercury Meltdown Revo** – *Wii*
   "I have some balls on my Wii"
2. **Ouendan 2** – *DS*
3. **Mario Strikers: Charged** – *Wii*
4. **Dungeon Runners** – *PC*
5. **Phone Tag** – *Real Estate Agents*

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4 DISC SET

From the writers of RAHXEPHON
Based on the classic manga

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PLANETES
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It's A Dirty Job, But Someone Has To Do It

The year is 2075 AD. Space debris has become mankind's newest threat. Follow the men and women of the "Half-Section" space debris collection agency, and witness the harrowing experience involved with such dangers.

6 DISC SET

Directed By Sci-Fi Veteran
Goro Taniguchi
(s-CRY-ed, GUNxSWORD)

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6 DISC SET

From The Director Of RAHXEPHON
With Animation By Studio Bones
(FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST)

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COMP!

Telstra Unveils Project Joystick

Great opportunity or idea harvesting?

Every gamer thinks they have the idea for the perfect videogame. The problem is, the path to a career in the games industry is a long and difficult one, and few actually get the opportunity to see their game ideas come to life in phosphorescent lights.

It seems that there is at least one way to have your dream game made without a lifetime of backbreaking toil behind a keyboard, with Telstra Bigpond and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) joining forces to create Project Joystick, a competition that promises to make your dream videogame into a reality.

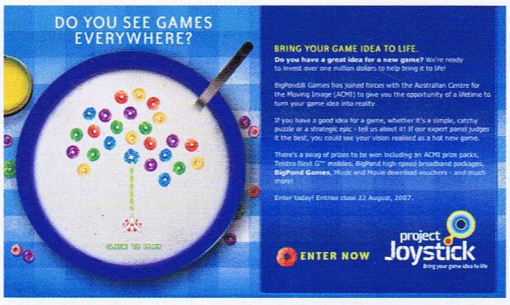
Entrants into the competition simply have to outline their game idea in less than 300 words, give it a catchy name and send it off to be in the running to have their idea made into a real game. Telstra and ACMI have promised that the game will receive a development budget of up to 1 million dollars.

The competition's title is somewhat of a misnomer, however, since it seems that the game produced by the competition will not require joysticks to play. Instead the winning idea will have to be playable on both a mobile phone and online via a PC.

The title isn't the only thing that seems a bit suspect about the competition though, something that has caused a stir in a certain corner of the Australian game development community.

Melbourne-based writer and independent game developer Alan Downie recently caused a few waves on the Internet with his revelations that the Project Joystick competition may not be as good a deal as it purports to be.

"Bigpond are harvesting IP." Wrote Downie. "If you win, they will take your idea, create a game from it and you will get $20k in Telstra prizes. They laugh all the way to the bank with your amazing idea, and in return you get 12 months Internet, phone and some Bigpond content vouchers. You also get a shiny new computer, but that will be of little consolation should your game become an international best seller, because you won't see a penny in royalties."



The contentious issue here is that the terms and conditions of the comp clearly state that "to the extent that any intellectual property rights exist, [the eligible entrant] assigns all rights in their Entry Idea to the Promoter." Potentially, this clause means that even if you don't win the competition, Telstra still retains the rights to your idea.

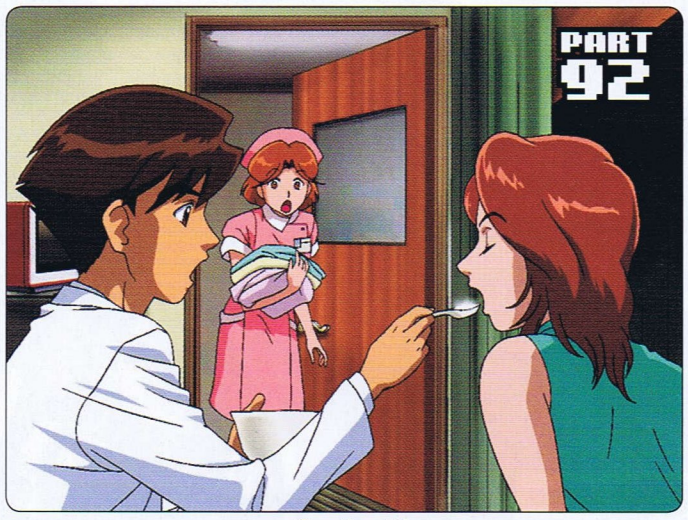
Even if you do win, there are some problems. The major prize package is valued at up to $20,609.40, including a computer, Internet access, a trip to Melbourne to visit the ACMI and not much else. No cash is offered and no royalties will ever be earned for your genius game design. Furthermore your involvement with the development of the game will be limited to "participating in public relations activities during the launch of the BigPond Game or attending an event to announce the Major Prize Winner."

Telstra Bigpond maintain that the conditions of the competition are fair, and that the chance to have a game idea turned into a reality is such a rare one that Project Joystick represents the only real opportunity for wannabe game creators to get their ideas made without any game development experience. A fair point.

So, if you don't mind having your IP harvested and you'd like a chance to have your dream game turn reality, and have a crack at that $20,000 prize pool, get yourself over to http://offers.bigpond.com/joystick/. Just don't expect to get your ideas back if you don't win.

CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at *captionthis@next.com.au* with **Caption This Part 92** in the subject line.



Caption it!

Not shown: Akira Yamaoka rocking the house

MUSIC!

The Symphony Play!

And Akira Yamaoka rocks the house.

Following up on our previous news piece on Play! A Videogame Symphony in issue #162, this month we actually got the chance to attend the opening night of the concert's Australian tour at a packed-out Sydney Opera House.

Backed by the Sydney Symphony and the Cantillation Choir, Grammy Award-winning conductor Arnie Roth led the orchestra through two hours of videogame music, including recognisable songs from games like Super Mario Bros, The Legend of Zelda, Castlevania, Shenmue, Halo, Metal Gear Solid an many more.

The real highlight of the night though was an appearance by Akira Yamaoka, the composer of the entire Silent Hill series, including the movie. Yamaoka flew in from Tokyo to attend the concert, and when he took to the stage it was not just as a guest, but as a performer. Yamaoka wailed away on his electric guitar like a rock star while the Sydney Symphony Orchestra played along with him on one of the most rocking tracks from the series.

The show was a fantastic night out, and the Hyper team would like to extend a personal thankyou to Arnie Roth, Akira Yamaoka, the Sydney Symphony and Cantillation Choir for making it so.

Independent Aussie Developer Lectures at QANTM

Aberrant Entertainment shows their new game.

Being an independent developer in today's gaming climate is kind of like diving for treasure in a pool full of lemon sharks while wearing a fishpaste overcoat. But as long as you can fend the bastards off with quick bops on the nose it's all the more rewarding.

This was one of the facts of life learned by students of QANTM in Brisbane when indie developer Aberrant Entertainment, made up of former members of indie developer Gridwerx, held a guest lecture and beta testing session for their new casual game project, ECO. The event was organised through John Moss, the academic director of QANTM College, and was held on the 12th of June.

"The students had a lot of fun testing out the game in a professional-style testing environment." said Aberrant managing director Mahomed Ayoob. "I had a lot of fun giving the talk and answering their questions. It was good to see that a lot of students are keen to get out there and do it for themselves.

After winning the Australian Game Developer's Conference award in 2005 for their FPS RPG demo Genesis (as documented in Hyper #150), Gridwerx began work on casual titles. But when Gridwerx opted to change direction, the core members of the team broke off and became Aberrant, taking the unfinished casual projects with them.

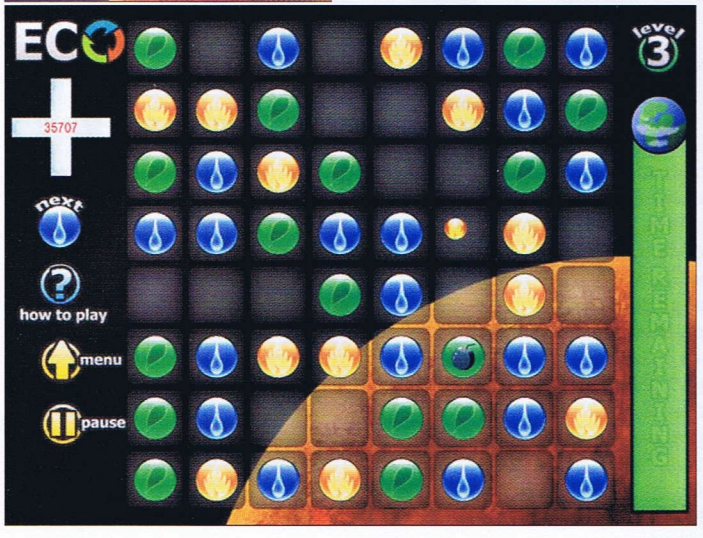
Not shown: Anything interesting.

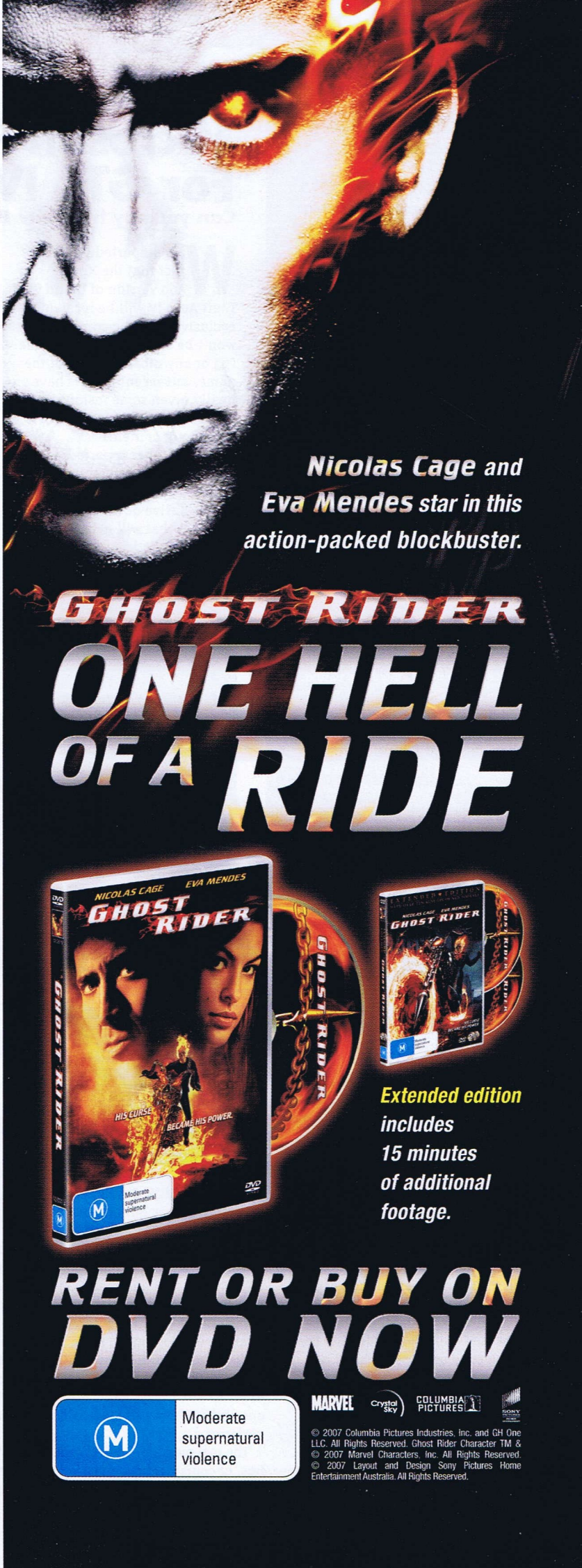
Casual games like Bejeweled are becoming a surprisingly lucrative subset of the gaming industry. They have proved remarkably popular with the 25-55 bored housewife demographic, since it seems that shagging the TV repairman has fallen out of favour. The casual game-centric Popcap framework reportedly makes millions every year, and that's some action that a struggling indie developer ignores at their peril.

ECO is a puzzle game that differs from the usual match-3 gameplay of most casual games," said ECO's lead designer Scott Leaman. "It's got more in common with scissors-paper-rock. We were aiming to make something different while still making it simple enough to be picked up by anyone.

The QANTM session was very encouraging. "It was cool to see the hardcore gamers get into ECO, which is aiming for a casual market."

ECO is pencilled in for a digital release at the end of August.





GAMES!

380 New PS3 Games

Kaz Hirai promises to deliver the goods

The PlayStation 3 has thus far had a slow start on the software front, with the best games like Resistance: Fall of Man and Virtua Fighter 5 far outclassing the majority of the console's line up of games.

Along with the PS3's premium price tag, the lack of enticing games is considered by Sony to be the main cause of the console's flagging sales behind those of the Nintendo Wii. This is something Sony Computer Entertainment is eager to remedy.

The company's President, Kazuo "Kaz" Hirai, announcing to the Nikkei newspaper that Sony will be releasing as many as 380 games for the console within the next business year.

Kaz reportedly promised that there would be 200 new PlayStation 3 games released in the next 12 months, while a further 180 download-only titles would be distributed via the PlayStation Network.

This software injection will significantly bolster the PlayStation 3's existing library of about sixty titles, and with any luck at least a few of those 380 will be good enough to pull the console out of its present slump.

SPENDS!

Microsoft Pays Big For GTA IV Content

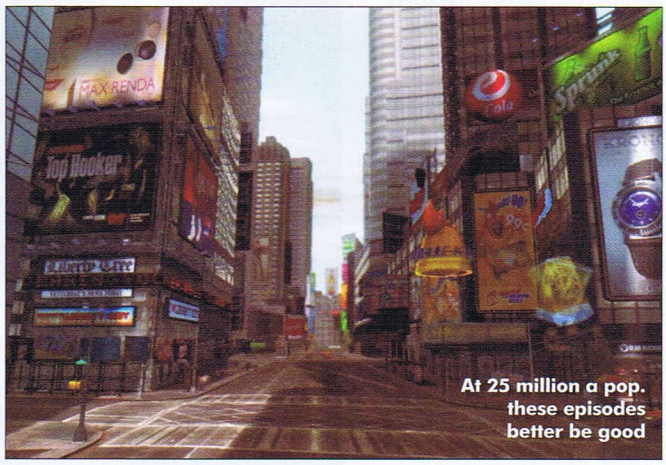
Can you say fifty mil? Bill Gates can!

We've reported on the fact that the Xbox 360 version of Grand Theft Auto IV will be receiving exclusive episodic content that won't be available for either the PS3 or any other versions of the game, but recent reports have finally given some insight into why Rockstar decided on this division of content.

Microsoft has reportedly paid Take-Two Interactive $50 million (US dollars) to produce two exclusive downloadable episodes that will extend the retail version of GTA IV.

The payments aren't as underhanded as they may seen, however, since the $50 million is actually an advance that will go towards the production costs of the two episodes, and not just a cash incentive to encourage Take-Two to leave Sony's PS3 without.

No details about either of the episodes have been revealed but the simple fact that the Xbox 360 will receive them exclusively is a definite coup for Microsoft.



At 25 million a pop. these episodes better be good

TEH RAWK!

Rock Band Guitar Revealed!

But how much will it cost?

One game we've been waiting on ever since we heard it was in development is Harmonix and Electronic Arts' latest entry in the rhythm genre, Rock Band.

Rock Band will combine guitars, bass, drums and vocals all into the one rocking experience, and since Harmonix are of course the developers behind the Guitar Hero phenomenon, you know that this will be something to keep an eye on.

One detail about the game that has eluded us thus far is what the Rock Band guitar peripheral will look like, until now that is.

Feast your eyes on the most gorgeous guitar peripheral we've ever seen: a replica of a classic black-bodied Fender Stratocaster with a white scratch plate. Not only does it look like it will be larger than Guitar Hero's miniature Gibson guitars, but it has ten fret buttons instead of only five, meaning Rock Band will potentially feature more opportunities for improvisation than Activision's rocker.

Overall the Rock Band Stratocaster looks much more realistic, and sturdier than Guitar Hero's peripherals, making us very eager to actually get our hands on one and see how well it actually performs.

The real question on everyone's lips, of course, is how much will Rock Band cost. With no less than four peripherals, including a microphone, drums, and guitars/bass guitars required to form a complete band.

Speculation has raged that a copy of Rock Band with the complete set of peripherals will cost as much as US$300 (approx AU$355), although Harmonix has been quite quick to deny that the game will be that expensive. Whatever the price, it's best to assume that Rock Band isn't going to be a cheap trick.

With one of these Moe might win that Guitar Hero comp...

OVERFLOW

According to market research firm GfK, this month the Xbox 360 hit a significant milestone. In the fourteen months since the console first launched, the Xbox 360 has both won and lost the crown of the fastest selling game system in Australian history, only being surpassed by the phenomenal release of the Nintendo Wii.

Now it seems that it has managed to earn another crown, the fastest console to sell a million games in Australia and New Zealand. Games like Call of Duty 2, Gears of War and Saints Row helped the console beat the previous record, held by Sony PSP, by two months.

Although the game is yet to be looked at by our classifications board Manhunt 2 is beginning to look less and less likely of ever being seen in any country other than the USA.

The sequel to Rockstar's controversial murder 'em up has already been banned in the UK, with the "unrelenting focus on stalking and brutal slaying" being the main reason it was considered unsuitable for public consumption.

The United States classifiers have been a bit more lenient, only giving the game a restrictive AO rating.

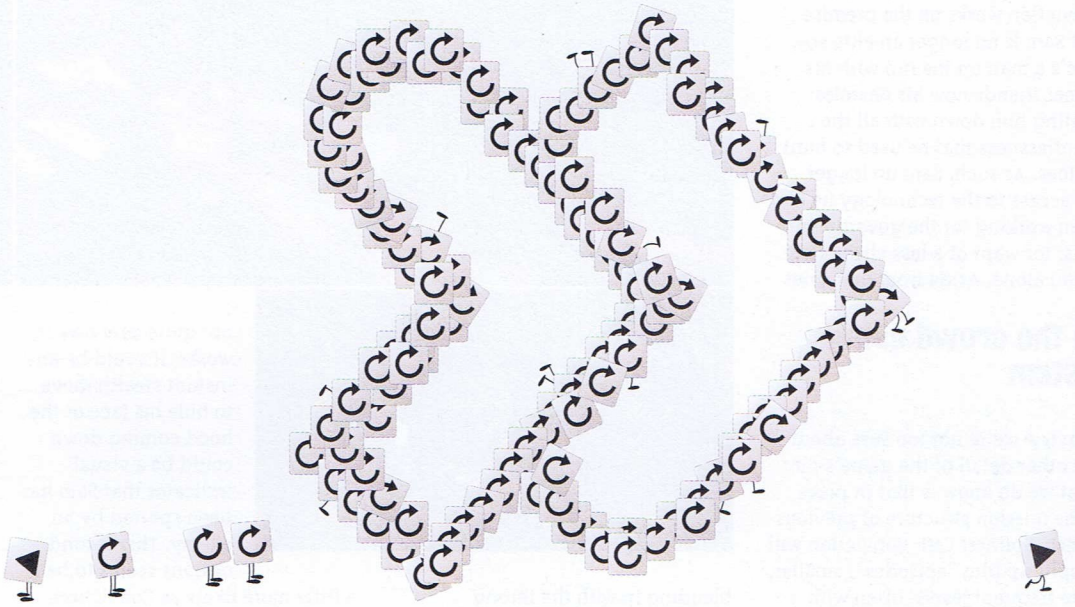
After reporting on the sacking of as many as 160 staff from Sony Computer Entertainment Europe only two months ago in Hyper issue #164, it seems that the company is once again letting go of its staff in bulk numbers.

This time it is Sony Computer Entertainment America who is showing employees the door, with as many as 100 staff being made redundant in an effort to reduce costs.

The job losses are apparently being attributed to a need to restructure the company's business model to counter the costs of rising PS3 development, as well as to lessen the blow of the recent financial losses the company has endured.

PRESS PASS

DANIEL STAINES



Let Me Entertain You

So far as the buying public is concerned, magazines generally serve two major purposes: to inform and to entertain. In most cases, these two things are inextricably linked, and information often IS entertainment. But there are instances in which a choice has to be made, and an editorial preference expressed for one over the other. Game magazines are one of those instances.

It might surprise many of you to learn that, historically speaking, the coin more often than not fell in favour of entertainment. Back in the late 80s and early 90s, magazines such as Zzap, CVG, and Super Play (even early Hyper) were text-light and picture-heavy, with reviews and previews condensed to allow space for more things like comics and photo-shoots of the staff being crazy and such. This of course reflected the maturity of the games industry at that stage. But as gaming has grown up, so have gamers, and magazines like this one have adapted accordingly – usually by cutting back on fun and emphasising raw information.

I don't mean to imply that modern gaming magazines are as enjoyable to read as a textbook on textbooks. One of the things I've always liked about this particular magazine is that it never stopped being entertaining. But there's no doubt that entertainment is no longer the emphasis. Just compare the size of the articles. News, reviews, previews, features – all of them are longer now. For example, these days it's rare for a big game get less than a 1,000 word review. But back then, back when these magazines were new, even the biggest game would be lucky to get more than 500.

Christ. I sound like an old man. "Back in my day, the reviews were shorter and the games were better! Now where's my colostomy bag?" At any rate, the point is this: game magazines have shifted their emphasis. But the question remains as to whether or not they've shifted in the right direction. There's no denying gamers like information. That's why sites like IGN and Gamespot and so on exist. Their primary virtue is their ability to provide huge amounts of information quickly. Something happens – some game goes gold, or Ken Kutaragi spouts some gibberish about the PS3's divine powers – and almost immediately after it happens, all the major game sites have stories on it. That's the beauty of the internet.

In this respect, magazines are positively sloth-like. Something happens, we write about it, then the story sits inert for weeks until the mag is produced and ready for sale. So I guess the question is: why are we bothering? Is this even what our readers want? Do you guys want news from a gaming magazine? Do you want all these 5,000 word reviews that more or less boil down to a list of the game's features with a score attached?

I dunno. Perhaps some of you don't have the internet or simply prefer to get your news from magazines instead of websites. Perhaps some of you like your reviews and so forth to be as straight-laced and serious as possible. Whatever your preference, the fact is that gaming mags aren't doing as well as they used to, despite the fact that there are more gamers than ever before. Clearly something has to be done.

Maybe game magazines need to adapt back the other way, where raw information such as news, previews, and reviews are cut back in favour of content such as feature articles, opinion pieces, and essays. And also fun. Maybe gaming mags need to have more fun. What do you think?

Until next month.

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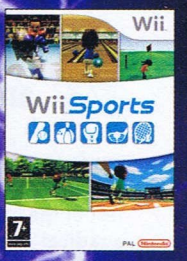

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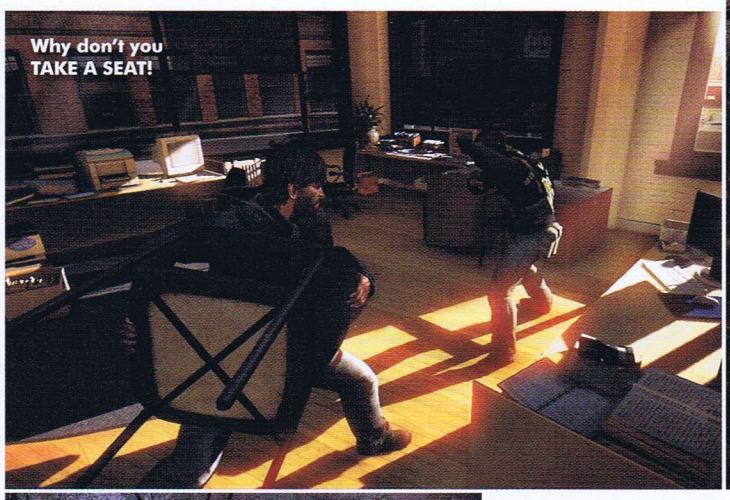
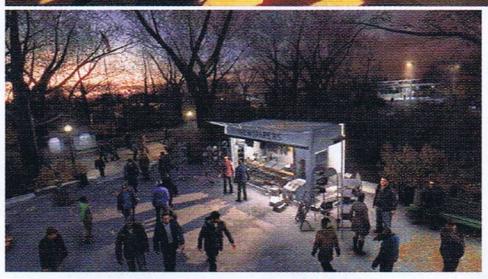
Splinter Cell: CONVICTION

SYSTEM: **PC, XBOX360**
CATEGORY: **STEALTH ACTION**
PLAYERS: **1-TBA** / DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
DUE: **TBA**





It's a very brave move on Ubisoft's behalf to change the Splinter Cell formula as dramatically as they have for Splinter Cell: Conviction. Most companies leave well enough alone when making continuations on franchises, offering small tweaks and graphical upgrades whilst leaving the vast majority of mechanics unchanged. Witness every sports game by EA, the Devil May Cry franchise, the Call of Duty franchise and the like. While the central character of Splinter Cell: Conviction remains the same, our favourite Michael Ironside voiced hard-man, Sam Fisher, the rest of the format has undergone a radical upheaval. Gone is the light and dark stealth dynamic, replaced with a stealth system that uses decoys and blending in with crowds. Gone is the wide array of tech gadgets to spy on or take down enemy guards – they've been replaced with a combat system that integrates physics and environmental interaction and a few punch/kick combos. These are only small changes, however. There's one bombshell that stopped us in our tracks when we saw the game in San Francisco. Sam Fisher is no longer bald. He has terrifyingly floppy EMO hair.

Taking place a few years after Splinter Cell: Double Agent, Conviction works on the premise that Sam is no longer an elite spy – he's a man on the run with his former friends now his enemies, hunting him down with all the relentlessness that he used to hunt his foes. As such, Sam no longer has access to the technology he had when working for the government. He is, for want of a less cliché term, a man alone. Aside from that brief overview we're not too sure about any other detail of the game's plot. What we do know is that in place of the mission structure of previous games, Splinter Cell: Conviction will be split up into "episodes", smaller, more frequent levels, often with cliff-hanger endings, much like a television series.

» Sam can blend in with the crowd using an "active stealth" system

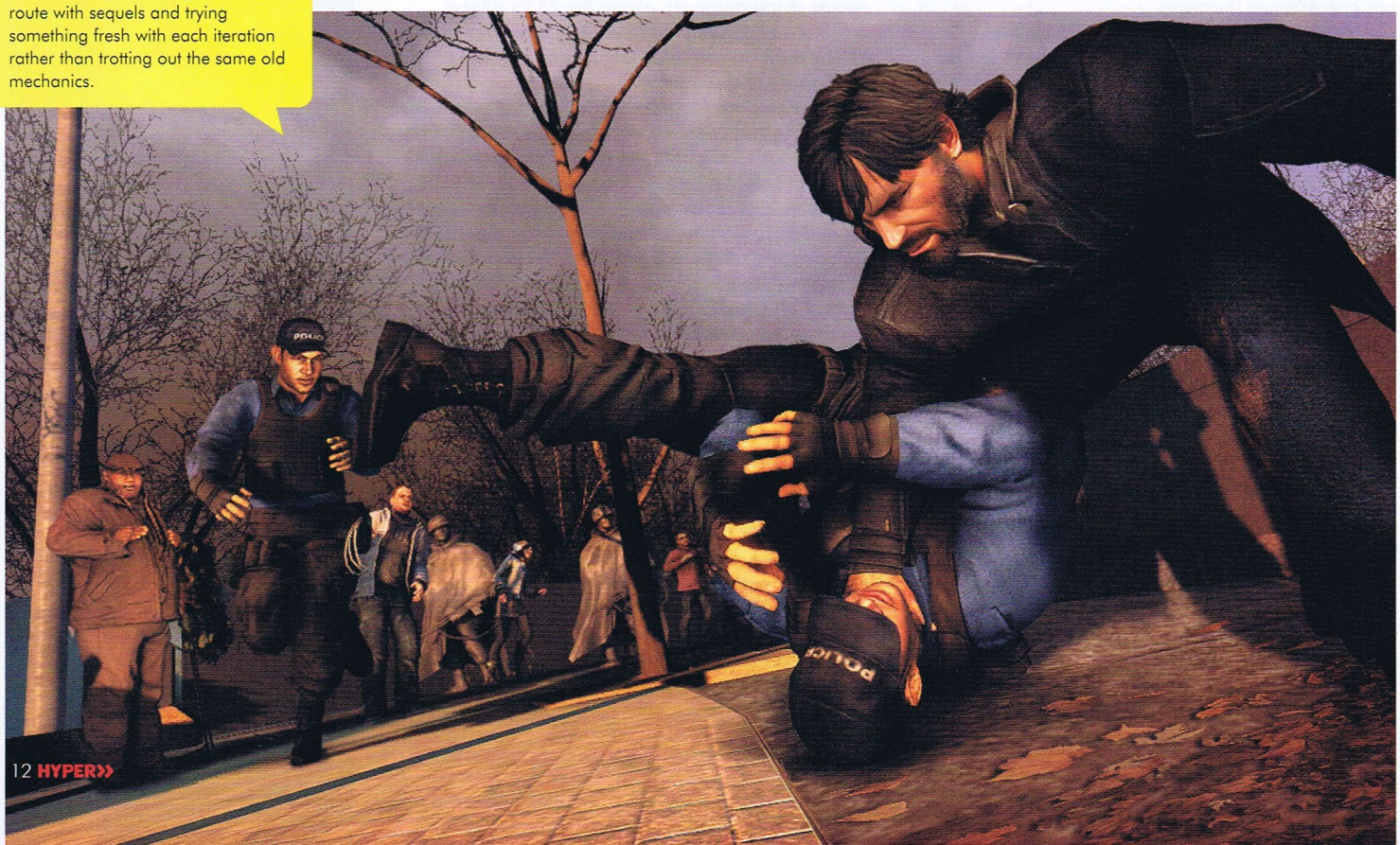
The level we saw during our demonstration took place in a public park. 30 or so pedestrians milled around, some chatting in small groups, some walking somewhere with purpose, others performing or trying to sell merchandise or fast food. Dressed in a hooded jacket, Sam can blend in with the crowd using an "active stealth" system, effectively blending in with the throng either by wandering close t them and doing as they do – walking aimlessly, reading signs, looking at sculptures and the like or by actively mimicking someone, activating what appeared to be some sort of automated follow command that sees Sam path directly behind one of the AI civilians.

From what we saw there seems to be some stealth mechanic that involves raising or lowering the hood on Sam's jacket but we're not quite sure how it works; it could be an instant stealth move to hide his face or the hood coming down could be a visual indicator that Sam has been spotted by an enemy. This second options seems to be a little more likely as Conviction, like Double Agent before it does away with a HUD and instead shows health on screen as damage to the character model. It seems likely that some sort of visual clue would indicate being watched or not.

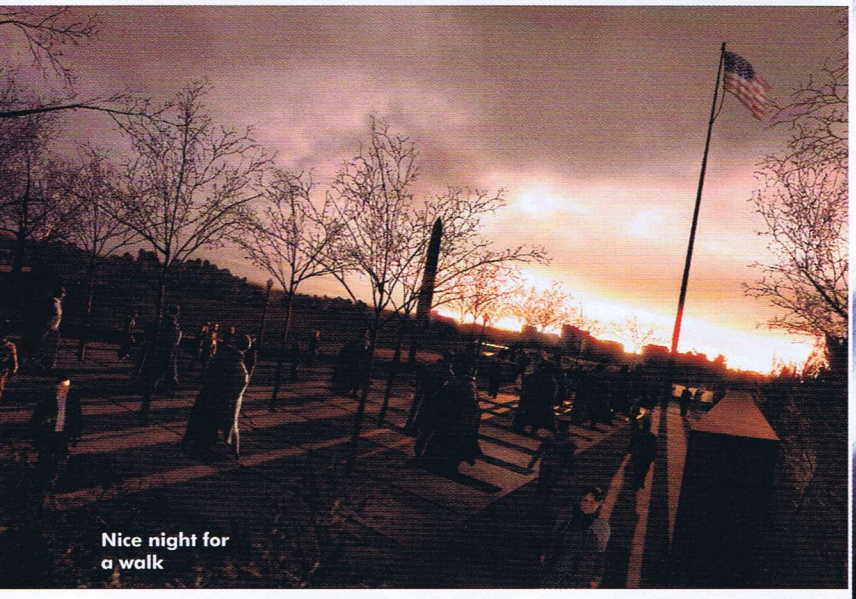
Unlike previous games in the franchise that have utilized all of the buttons on the control pad to perform some kind of function, Conviction pares back the controls

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

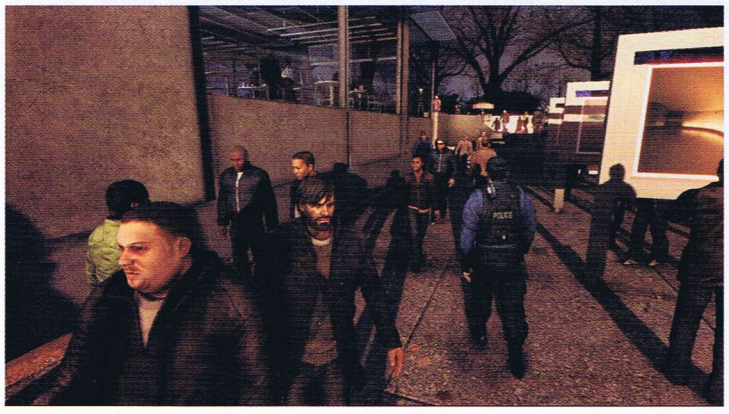
Other developers taking the same route with sequels and trying something fresh with each iteration rather than trotting out the same old mechanics.



Never make fun of the hair



Nice night for a walk



Sam uses the fat guy as cover

Sometimes Sam cuts himself so he can feel

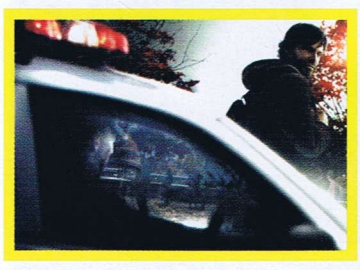
to their very essentials, limiting them, for the most part, to three buttons, and Aggression button that controls combat, an Interaction button and a Stealth button. Each of these buttons appears to be context sensitive so pressing them at different times will yield different results; hit the aggression button in the middle of a crowd and you may shove someone out of the way, potentially alerting guards or causing a distraction, hit it in combat at it will throw a punch or kick. The context sensitivity of the combat runs further than that, however; depending on the location and what is around a normal attack may pick up something in the environment – a piece of furniture perhaps – and clobber the enemy with that.

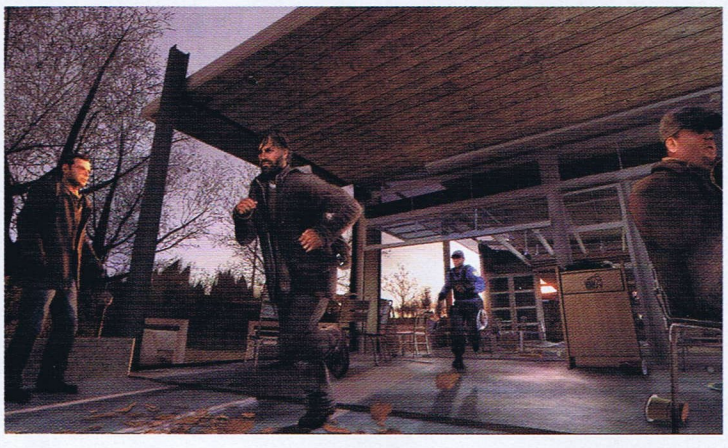
The "episode" that was demonstrated to us required Sam to make his way through Washington park to wipe some information from a computer HDD. Naturally it couldn't be as simple as just walking into the room containing the PC and doing his business – numerous policemen patrolled the route on the lookout for the fugitive. At different points in the episode we were shown how creating distractions, such as stealing a woman's laptop, blowing up a gas tank and the like could draw otherwise static guards from their positions and allow Sam to sneak past. Although this mechanic does look like it has a lot of potential for fun gameplay we have a few concerns at the moment. The demonstrator kept telling us that the game is going to be non-linear and it's up to the player to come up with their own solutions to problems, each time the level was shown off to the press he used exactly the same route and did exactly the same thing leaving us to wonder if this is actually going to be the case. From the way it looks currently it will be up to the players to look around the level and find the event that will trigger the distraction rather than coming up with a distraction themselves. Naturally this is just speculation – we'll be able to give you a definitive conclusion when we get our hands on the code in a few months.

Even though we see a few potential shortfalls in Splinter Cell: Conviction we can't help but be a little excited for two reasons. We've been fans of the Splinter Cell franchise since it first appeared on the Xbox but more importantly, in an industry that seems to be stagnating with umpteen yearly iteration sequels that do little but ad a few more bells and whistles to what is essentially the same game, Ubisoft are throwing the old gameplay mechanics out the window and trying something new. We can't wait to see if they can pull it off. <<

MULTIPLE CONVICTIONS

There are not too many details at the moment as to what will be happening with the multi-player elements of Conviction save to say that there will be some kind of multi-player included in the game. We're keeping our fingers crossed that there will be some kind of co-op multi-player with levels specifically designed for such. Imagine being able to have two people to set up distractions and achieve objectives. That would be a fun.





Haze

SYSTEM: **PS3**
CATEGORY: **FPS**
PLAYERS: **1-MULTI** / DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
DUE: **LATE 2007**

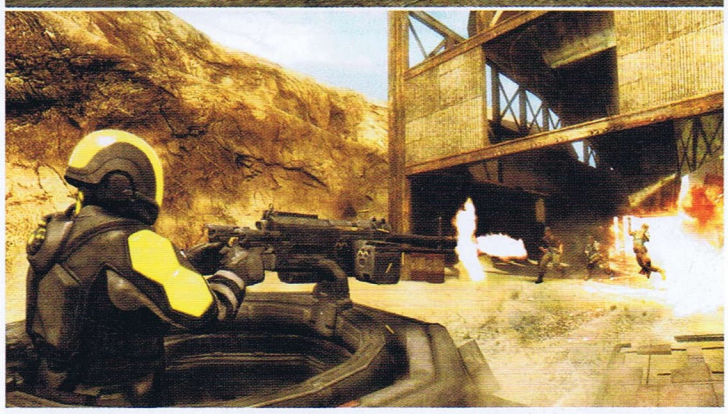
It came as a little bit of a surprise to us when it was announced that Haze was going to be released as a PS3 exclusive. Of course we realize that exclusives nowadays aren't particularly exclusive – it goes without saying that six or so months down the track Haze will appear on 360 and PC – but this could be just the thing that the PS3 needs in its stable of games; a killer app in a line-up that doesn't contain too many. Yes, we said it – Haze is looking like a killer app, one of the most exciting things to come on the console shooter front in quite a while. You're probably familiar with the concept by now – future corporate society, privatised armies taking down guerrilla forces, mercenaries jacked up on a revolutionary combat drug called Nectar that enhances their abilities making them almost superhuman. It's a pretty cool concept on paper but when you get to see it, or better yet, play it, Haze is a whole other animal. It's fast, clever and from the teasers we've been given will have a story that will drag you into the world and action in a big way.

Why is it going to be so big? Yes, the setting, story, graphics and action are all shaping up to be top notch but they all fall short of Haze's real trump card – co-op. Gear of War may have paved the way for flawlessly integrated 2 player co-op but Haze takes the concept one step further and has been built from the ground up for four player online co-op. If that doesn't excite you then you're probably not a fan of shooters.

When we first saw the game being demoed a while back we were shown a single player blazing his way through a jungle with a couple of AI soldiers backing him up. At this time the AI showed the type of reaction you'd want from a single player game – tight scripting, some clever decision-making and a level of difficulty commensurate with a single player experience. When we first heard the game would be four-player co-op we were a little sceptical. Surely the AI, tuned to single player, as it seemed to be, would prove no match for four players. Our scepticism looks to have been misplaced. The "Conspire" AI technology the development team is using scales depending on the number of players to deliver a commensurate level of challenge.

Another thing that struck us during the demonstration was the clever use of sound. The Nectar supplements and body armour that the mercenary main character wears distorts his view of the world, sanitizing battle, making it a good deal more...attractive and, if anything, calm. During one part of a level we were shown there was a malfunction with the armour, dropping the level to a more realistic setting full of harsh metallic surfaces, dirt, rust, blood and screams. Horrible screams. Screams that the sound guys can be really proud of. When the armour kicked in again the screams faded, leaving the gunfire and little else. Colours became more vibrant. Everything became more unreal. We can't wait to get our hands on more finalised to see more. <<

Someone forgot to draw n the smiley faces



» ... future corporate society, privatised armies taking down guerrilla forces

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
More of the story – what we've been teased with so far is great.

This is your brain on drugs

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Brother's in Arms: HELL'S HIGHWAY

SYSTEM: **XBOX 360, PC, PS3**
CATEGORY: **TACTICAL SHOOTER**
PLAYERS: **1-MULTI** / DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
DUE: **LATE 2007**

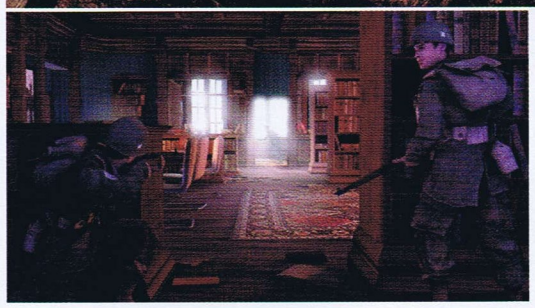
A friend of mine who was in the army once told me that the rule of cover in combat is that anything you can put your arms around will not keep you alive. Of course movies and games often tell you different, allowing you to hide behind barrels or crates, office partitions (according to games these are some of the hardest things on Earth), tables, sheets of wood and in some rather disappointing cases, chain-link fences – basically anything you could get your body behind. This is not the case for Brother in Arms: Hell's Highway. As Colonel John Antal, the military advisor for the game and unofficial cheerleader/drill sergeant for the Brother in Arms franchise bluntly stated at the beginning of our demonstration, "do not stand behind a wooden fence while people are shooting at you. It will get you dead." Of course, Colonel Antal also said a lot of loud, rather obnoxious and distracting gung-ho crap during the demonstration but that was one lesson we took to heart. In Hell's Highway anything short of sandbag fortifications and stone does not offer you cover and will get you dead.

Quick - everyone jump backwards in slow motion!

In one of the most impressive shows of environmental destruction we have yet seen in a game our demonstration took us through a sample level of the game with the player and two AI squads taking on a few squads of entrenched Nazi bullet-magnets. During the encounters, bullets from both sides shredded "cover", forcing combatants to take cover behind stone walls. The overall effect was breathtakingly realistic, not to mention hectic.

» one of the most impressive shows of environmental destruction we have seen

Also adding to the sense of realism is the franchise's new approach to health, damage and healing. Instead of having a health bar that chips away as you get shot and is recovered through various artificial ways such as health packs or rapid regeneration when behind cover, Hell's Highway instead uses a threat system. Combatants have a circular threat counter above their heads representing how much danger they are in – when the circle becomes red you're going to be shot dead. Taking cover lowers your threat, as does stealthily moving to a new firing position as it stops enemies from already having your position locked in the next time you pop-up to fine a few shots. Although this seems like little more than a cosmetic change it truly adds to the feel of the combat.



I bet they wish they were chilling by the windmill

Not all is realistic though. One other thing we saw added a very cinematic touch to the proceedings – score an impressive kill and the camera will pan to a good viewing position and show you the carnage playing out in slow motion. At one point the demonstrator threw a grenade perfectly so it landed in the middle of a group of enemies dug in behind a sandbag fortification, using a heavy MG to make sure that the allies had a hard time of passing their position. A fraction of a second before the grenade exploded the camera moved slightly to show a better view of the slow motion carnage, complete with splintering wood, flying sandbags and ragdolling bodies. Although the effect definitely looks impressive we have to wonder if it will detract from the gameplay. Without knowing how often it will occur, however, all we can do is speculate and wait to see more. <<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some details, no matter how small, of the proposed multi-player elements of Hell's Highway. Fingers crossed for co-op.

Pirates of the Burning Sea

SYSTEM: **PC** / CATEGORY: **MMORPG**
PLAYERS: **MULTI**
DEVELOPER: **FLYING LAB SOFTWARE**
DUE: **2007**

Like a line drawn the middle of a sheet of paper, and then being turned into a cross with a second, perpendicular stroke, the MMO scene is quite easy to categorise. Split in two on one side, Role Playing games set in fantasy worlds (World of Warcraft, Age of Conan), sci-fi ones (Eve Online) or a bit of both (PSO) rack up kudos and attention from your more hardcore gaming market. On the other exist the Second Life's and Habbo Hotel's of the world, soon to be joined in concept by the likes of Sony's Home project. Pirates of the Burning Sea, then, while perhaps fitting with the more hardcore crew, seems to be lacking a precise home to categorise itself.

Burning Sea is set to offer plenty of land-based heroics, despite the focus on ships

IRON MAIDEN! EXCELLENT!!

... I have no idea why I just said that. However, obscure nonsense comments aside, Pirates of the Burning Sea looks well overdue. Considering that Pirates have found their scruffy, knotted-haired chic again this decade thanks much to a now-finished trilogy of surprisingly charismatic movies based on a ride at Disneyland (and a now-finished triumvirate of games that are, unsurprisingly, utter garbage), not to mention Sid Meier's toying with the wily blighters, we're surprised that a proper swashbuckling RPG of Online proportions hasn't been done before.

Not that we're complaining, mind, as Burning Sea looks set to be a fine way to bring Pirates and MMO gaming together. And besides, today's graphic cards can render water which is real pretty-like. In all seriousness, though, Burning Sea is looking to be a very picturesque piece of adventuring, and from pansy posers and scurvy peg-legs through to colour-filled evening skies and their reflection upon the seas you sail, Burning Sea should be a both a pleasing and unique game to behold; the romanticising of centuries past behind the art direction doing plenty to keep it distinct from already well-trodden fantasy scenery.

Should you want your clean visuals to support clean characters, then take heart in knowing that just because pirates are in the title doesn't mean you have to play as one. You could always go out as a more noble seafarer of British, Spanish or French origin should you so desire. However, while we will have to wait for the game to be fully completed and bustling with online activity to know for certain, we do expect that many gamers will be drawn to the looting and plundering character type, and that it could well prove dangerous to play as anything else.

So who is rostered on for barrel duty?

Adding a little extra variety Burning Sea is set to offer plenty of land-based heroics, despite all of this focus on ships. Duking it out with cannonballs does appear to remain the central focus, but players should also expect to cross cutlass with cutlass. The combat system looks lovely from what we've seen in motion, and while perhaps not as inventive in Conan's in execution, it's at least more varied and animated in motion that you're typical MMORPG ilk. Expect naval battles to offer more depth and invention, especially as owning a boat in this game is closer to a right than a privilege, and wind will affect not only your sails but also your firing arcs.

Pirates of the Burning Sea has been a long time coming. It may have spent much of its development life buried beneath the mainstream gaming press limelight, but now that it's coming out to play for real you should certainly take the opportunity to get a look at the creature. <<

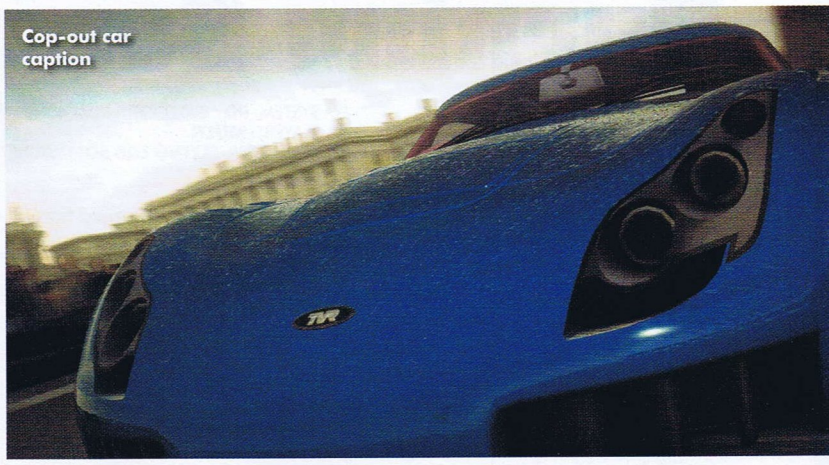
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A cameo by Guybrush of Monkey Island fame. Hell may very well freeze over before this happens, but hey – we can always dream.

Avast! A curiously morbid rock!

Project Gotham Racing 4

SYSTEM: **XBOX 360**
CATEGORY: **RACING** / PLAYERS: **1-MULTI**
DEVELOPER: **BIZARRE CREATIONS**
DUE: **TBA**


Cop-out car caption

Bizarre Creations are great. Ever since they first turned their hand to the racing genre with the amazing Metropolis Street Racer for the Sega Dreamcast (a spiritual prequel to the Project Gotham series), Bizarre Creations have been one of the most reliably brilliant figures in the field of vehicular videogames.

With Project Gotham Racing 4 for Xbox 360, they're looking to outdo even their own high standards, making this the car game to watch this year.

THE PERFECT STORM

One of the biggest points of difference that Bizarre Creations seem to be pushing with Project Gotham 4 is weather effects, something that this game really looks like it will deliver by the cloud-load.

In all of the glimpses we've had of the game so far the elements have played a starring role, with the skies heaving down a torrent of rain onto the streets of St Petersburg, or a an equally torrential snowfall in Nürburg. In both cases the weather looks to greatly affect the driver's experience behind the wheel.

In the heavy rains your visibility will be reduced with your flailing windscreen wipers clearing off your shield every few seconds, deep puddles will form around the track that will ruin your perfect lap, and the entire road will be slippery and dangerous in general.

In a gorgeous display of the PGR4 engine's graphical power individual beads of water can be seen collecting on the vehicle's body, the light bouncing off each of them in a different way.

Meanwhile, in the snow the puddles have now turned to solid ice, and if you thought the track was slippery in rain, you'll be in for a surprise.

These aren't the only two variables, of course, and Project Gotham Racing 4 will have no less than ten different kinds of weather, ranging from bright and sunny clear days to turbulent storms, overcast skies, waterlogged roads, pea-soup-like fog and everything in between.

Apart from the game's newfound meteorological accuracy, all of the usual Project Gotham hallmarks look to be returning in a big way. Take for example the cities; in PGR3 a paltry five of the world's greatest cities were available for you to cruise around, but PGR4 will be offering at least double that figure.

» PGR4 will be sporting a massive garage of some of the world's fastest vehicles

Only three locales have been announced thus far, including the Nürburgring track found in Nürburg, Germany, St. Petersburg, Russia and Quebec, Canada, although we would expect at least a few places that have appeared in previous instalments of the series to return, such as New York, Tokyo and London.

Each city and track will be painstakingly reassembled in the digital realm after Bizarre Creations have pored over satellite photographs, road maps and other research data that has made the PGR series' tracks some of the most realistic ever made.

Then there are of course the cars. You don't play racing games just for the pretty cities, and neither do we, so it's a good thing that PGR4 will be sporting a massive garage of some of the world's fastest and most recognisable vehicles.

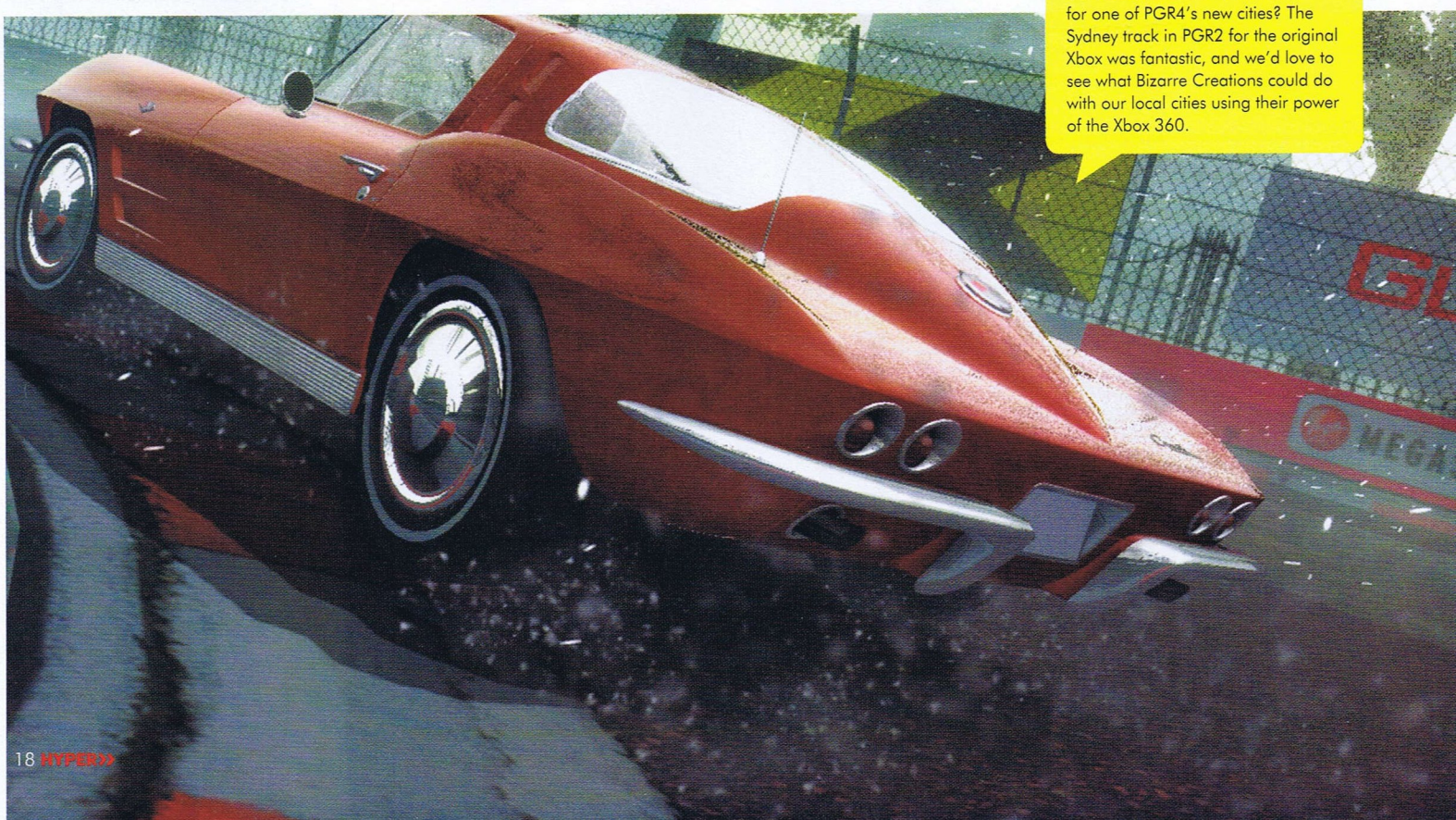
No limit on how many will appear in the final game has been set, but Bizarre have assured us that the selection will include some of the most desirable sports cars ever to hit the tarmac, including the 1978 Lamborghini Countach, 2007 Lotus GT3RR, 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO and the 1998 Subaru Imprezza, among countless others.

Whichever angle you look at it, PGR4 is looking like a worthy sequel in what is arguably the Xbox brand's best racing series. With vastly upgraded weather effects, ten cities, the world's most iconic cars and untold new features that have not yet been unveiled, Project Gotham Racing 4 should ensure that Bizarre Creation's fans will come out on race day no matter what the weather's like. <<

Not pictured: Nicholas Cage

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

How about a return to Australia for one of PGR4's new cities? The Sydney track in PGR2 for the original Xbox was fantastic, and we'd love to see what Bizarre Creations could do with our local cities using their power of the Xbox 360.



Mercenaries 2:
WORLD IN FLAMES

SYSTEM: **XBOX 360, PS3, PS2, PC**
CATEGORY: **THIRD-PERSON SHOOTER**
PLAYERS: **1-2** DEVELOPER: **PANDEMIC STUDIOS**
DUE: **2007**

In case you're new to the Mercenaries series, here's the rundown: In 2005 Pandemic Studios, the team behind such games as Full Spectrum Warrior, Destroy All Humans and Star Wars: Battlefront turned their hand to the open-world action genre.

Featuring a free-flowing open world, airborne and ground-based vehicles, as well as non-stop action, explosions and gunfights, Mercenaries: Playground of Destruction was one of 2005's best multi-format games.

If you though the first game's playground was destructible though, you haven't seen anything yet...

DO YOU DIG DESTRUCTION?

Mercenaries one took place in political hotspot North Korea, and the sequel again opts for a real-world location to stage its fictional conflict. The entire nation of Venezuela has been recreated for Mercenaries 2, although Pandemic Studios have admitted that their aim was not realism when creating their version of the South American republic. Instead, they describe it as the "Disneyland version" of Venezuela, with all the boring bits taken out, and a whole lot more things to blow up put in.

The back-story leading up to you trip to Venezuela is pretty straightforward; a power-hungry tyrant is messing with Venezuela's oil supply, which inevitably sparks an invasion that turns the country into a war zone.

Being the mercenary that you are, you can see the bright side of war, and once again your main motivation in Mercs 2 being to acquire as much cash money as possible.

Only one of the three original characters from the first game have been confirmed to return, with Mattias "The Animal" Nilsson, voiced by actor Peter Stormare (Fargo, The Big Lebowski) making a welcome comeback. Pandemic have also confirmed that there will be at least one new mercenary to play as, a female character named Eva Navarro.

Playing as one of these soldiers for hire, you'll need to earn your pay by forming alliances with the numerous waring factions, doing their dirty work and collecting the bounty on a number of VIPs. In the first game this was handled in a topical manner; by using a deck of 52 cards, each listing the identity of individuals wanted by the Allied side, just like the ones used by the United States military in Iraq. Mercenaries 2 will use a similar technique, although this time every faction will have a list of bounties, and not just the Allies, which will make for a hell of a lot more bad guys to bring in dead or alive.

While you're tracking your bounties, you may want to stop and admire the game's environments, one feature that looks to be a highlight of Mercs 2.

The urban areas are particularly detailed, with plenty of looming buildings, bright neon signs, and dirty litter-strewn streets. The rural areas are more picturesque, with trees, tall grass, flowers and other foliage surrounding small villages and isolated farms. Admire them while you can though, since you'll also find yourself spending a lot of time blowing the crap out of them.

In one scene alone we saw an entire city block reduced so rumble in a matter of seconds by a barrage of guided missiles, the rubble falling to the ground while flames and plumes of concrete dust flew up into the air.

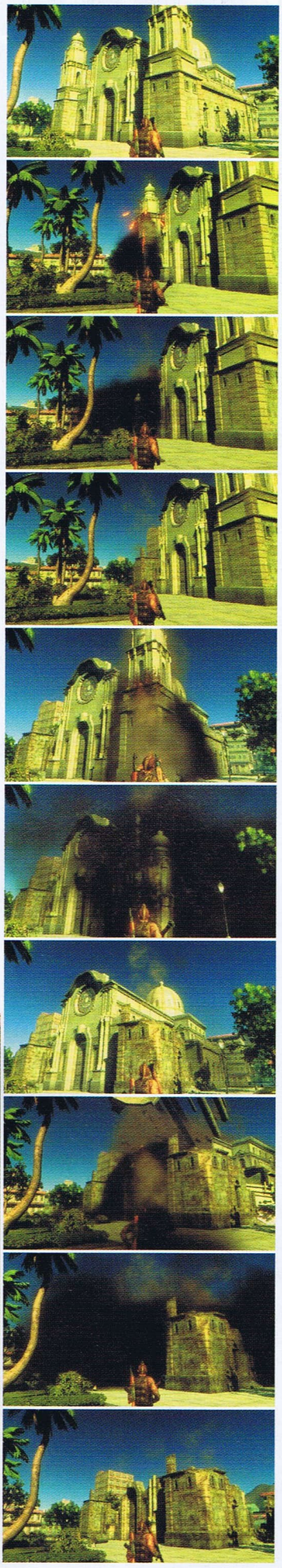
Pandemic are also promising at least 130 different vehicles, including helicopters, motorcycles, cars, tanks and more, as well as an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction that would give a United Nations weapons inspector nightmares. Mercenaries 2: World in Flames is looking primed to set the gaming world alight. <<

» Pandemic are promising at least 130 different vehicles, including helicopters

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

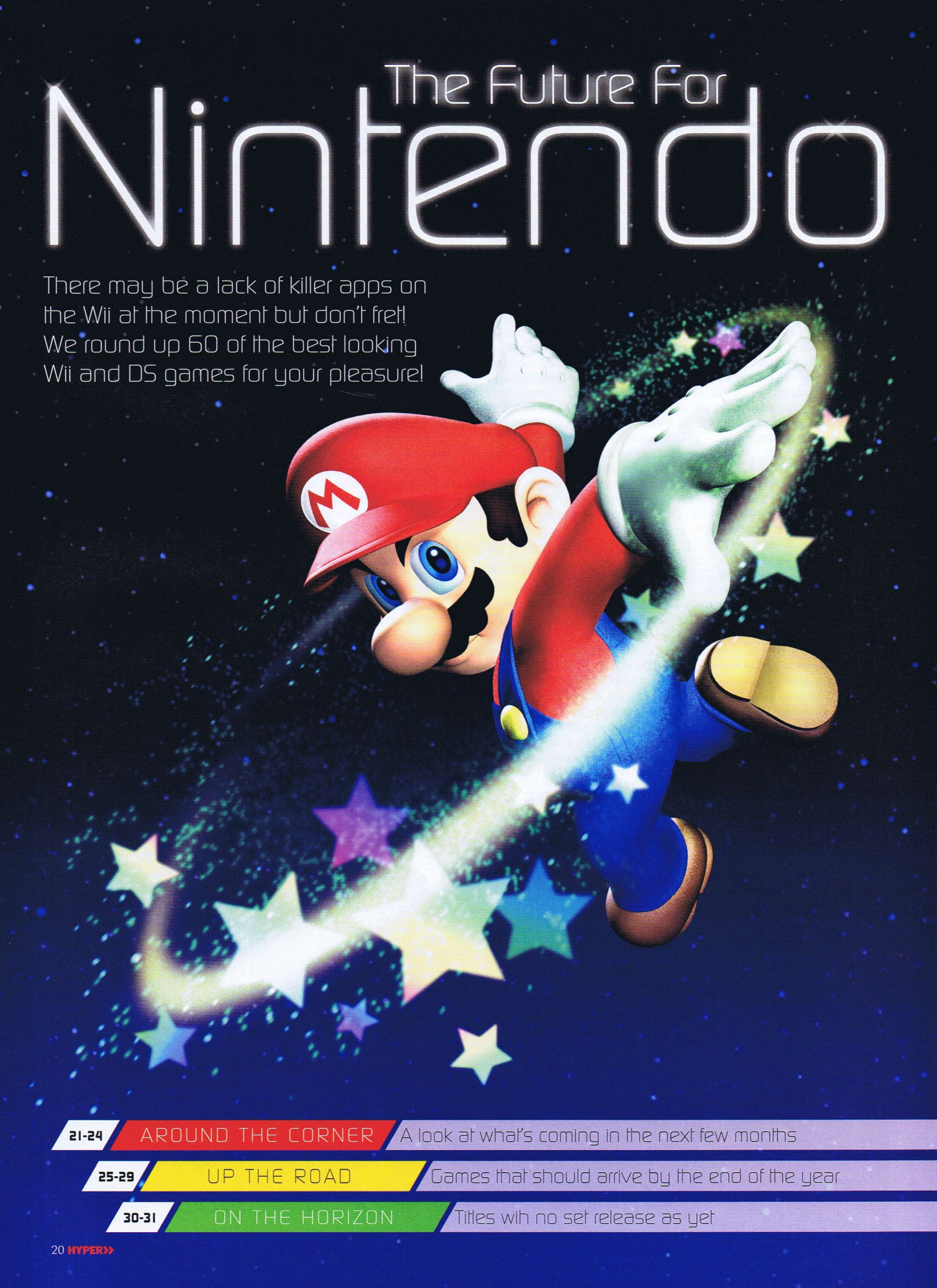
Another gameplay mechanic Mercs 2 will have are quick-timer events. In one scene we saw Mattias climbing onto the turret of a tank, opening the hatch, disarming the driver and then dropping a grenade into the vehicle's hull. At each step of the scene the player had to enter in a button press to complete the task. Using interactive cinematics is always a risky move, so we just hope Pandemic gets these scenes right.

The beret/mullet look is hot this year



The Future For Nintendo

There may be a lack of killer apps on the Wii at the moment but don't fret! We round up 60 of the best looking Wii and DS games for your pleasure!



21-24 AROUND THE CORNER A look at what's coming in the next few months

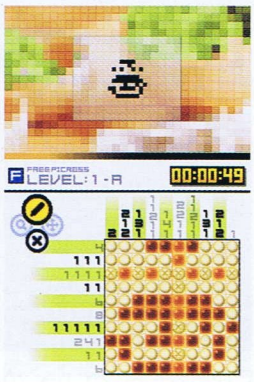
25-29 UP THE ROAD Games that should arrive by the end of the year

30-31 ON THE HORIZON Titles wih no set release as yet

Picross

DS

OUT: JUNE // DEVELOPER: JUPITER



If you've played any of the Mario's Picross games you'll already know what to look forward to in Picross DS, but if you haven't then you need look no further than the game's name for a hint of what to expect from Nintendo's new puzzler. Picross, short for picture crosswords, are grid-based puzzles where you must use numbers on the edge of the grid to decide which squares you should colour in and which you should leave white. The aim of the game is to colour in the correct squares in order to reveal a secret picture, which is represented in a sort of mosaic style.

The mathematical logic game's similarity to another Japanese puzzle craze, Sudoku, will be sure to interest older gamers, and even non-gamers, just like many of Nintendo's "Touch Generations" titles, like Brain Training, have managed to do.

With 300 picross puzzles to solve and a variety of additional features including unlockable bonus games, Picross DS also promises plenty of longevity making it perfect for thinking gamers.

Lifesigns: Hospital Affairs

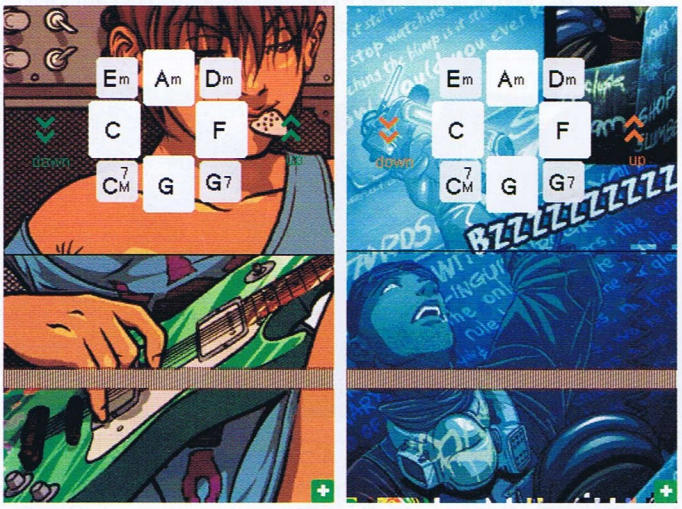
DS

OUT: JUNE // DEVELOPER: SPIKE

For anyone who enjoyed Trauma Centre: Under the Knife, Lifesigns: Hospital Affairs looks to deliver the same scalpel wielding, cancer-removing, ailment-curing gameplay that made Atlus's surgical sim such a hit. This time, however, the formula looks to have been given a dramatic twist, with emphasis place squarely on the drama.

In Lifesigns you will not only need to attend to the patients, perform invasive operations and generally be all doctor-like, but you'll have to contend with the behind-the-scenes goings on at the hospital.

There will be an ongoing soap opera-style storyline to follow, and since your playing a fresh-faced young doctor in a hospital full of gorgeous nurses, we're betting there'll be a hefty helping of dating simulator in the mix as well. Saving lives and making out with cute nurses? Sounds good to us.

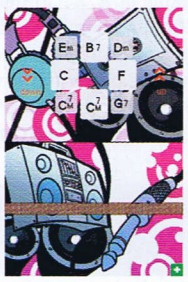


Jam Sessions

DS

OUT: JUNE // DEVELOPER: PLATO

Billing itself as being a "guitar in your pocket", Jam Sessions is a game in the Guitar Hero vein, only without the replica SG peripheral. Instead you'll use the DS's touch screen to strum up and down on the virtual guitar strings, whilst working the D-pad like a fret board. We're not sure how holding a chord will work using this method, but we're definitely intrigued by what we've seen so far. The game will allow you to both play along with popular songs and make up your own in free play mode. Ubisoft are even promising a musical notation mode, where real musicians will be able to write down music that they've composed on the go.



More Brain Training From Dr Kawashima: How Old is your Brain?

DS

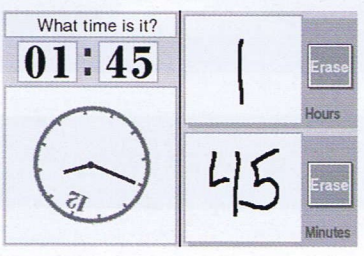
OUT: JULY // DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

So you think you've flexed your grey matter as much as you can with you current copy of Brain Training? Well, Nintendo have the solution for you in the form of this timely sequel featuring everybody's favourite disembodied floating head – Dr Kawashima!

The bodiless bonce himself will guide you through a variety of new brain-teasing mini games, including a game that sees you reading musical notation and playing a piano on the DS's touch-screen, a game that sees you working the register at a store and calculating how much change to give a paying customer as well as many more educational but fun activities.

Follow on from the original game More Brain Training will even include another 100 new Sudoku puzzles for you to solve in between the god doctor's more structured cerebral workouts.

Even better, gaming yourself smart no longer needs to be a solitary pursuit, since More Brain Training also adds multiplayer capabilities, with up to sixteen players able to participate in mental exercises with one game card.



Sim City DS

OUT: JUNE // DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC

DS

Sim City has been one of the most popular simulation series for more than two decades, so you probably already know what to expect from this DS version of the well-known metropolis construction simulator.

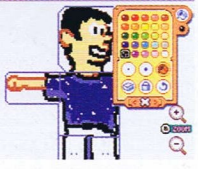
As always, Sim City DS will see you erecting plenty of buildings and connecting them with roads and essential services like electricity and water and skilfully managing your city to keep your citizens contents, all in an effort to cover the countryside in and endless urban sprawl.

The difference here is of course that the classic game mechanics have been completely integrated with the DS's unique control methods. You now control the entire game via the touch-screen, and you even have the ability to blow into the DS microphone to put out fires in your city or to sign off on Mayoral declarations with your own signature. There's no news yet on whether Godzilla will be returning to his role as a natural (or should that be unnatural) disaster, but our hopes are high.

Drawn to Life

OUT: SEPTEMBER // DEV: 5TH CELL

DS



Have you ever looked at the characters in a videogame and thought that you could do better? Well, that is precisely what Drawn to Life will let you do. By using the DS's touch screen and stylus Drawn to Life allows you to sketch out your hero in whatever style you see fit, colour him/her in, and then put them right into the game as a playable character.

Apparently there will be five different characters that you will be able to control, and each of them will be drawn to life by the player, making this DS game one of the most original and exciting portable games we've heard of in quite some time.

The protagonists aren't the only things you'll have to draw, since numerous important objects throughout the game world have somehow been lost or stolen. Using you magical stylus and touch-screen you will once again have to get scribbly in order to bring bridges, houses and other such worldly things to life with you artistic techniques.

Part platform-adventure, part MS Paint, Drawn to Life definitely looks like being one of the most original DS games of the next year.

Brothers in Arms DS

OUT: JUNE // DEVELOPER: GAMELOFT

DS

Continuing the campaign against the Nazi menace is something few games on the DS can boast, but Gameloft and Ubisoft are looking to change that with an all-new instalment in their Brothers in Arms series hitting the handheld.

The first thing to notice about Brothers in Arms DS is its really quite attractive 3D visuals. For a console that is more often used for two-dimensional graphics these days, it nice to see a developer pushing the capabilities of the DS with some great looking environments and characters.

Of course, the game uses the DS's touch screen to control your soldier's aiming reticule, which should work well, so long as the control system isn't made too complex. The gameplay too promises to have been designed specifically for the DS from the ground up, so there will be no messy porting issues to contend with. Other interesting features include drivable vehicles and even a multiplayer mode, making Brothers in Arms DS something to keep an eye on for fans of the series.

Full Metal Alchemist Trading Card Game

OUT: MID 2007 // DEVELOPER: DESTINEER

DS

Based on the Press Pass trading card game of the same name, this little piece of Full Metal Alchemist-licensed merchandise is likely to have a pretty small target audience, but is nevertheless an exciting prospect for anime and card game fans. Accurately recreating its source material, Full Metal Alchemist Trading Card Game uses the touch screen in a few interesting ways, including letting you shuffle and move cards with the stylus, and oddly enough, even letting you rip open booster packs that you buy in the game, which is interesting in a consumerism simulation kind of way.

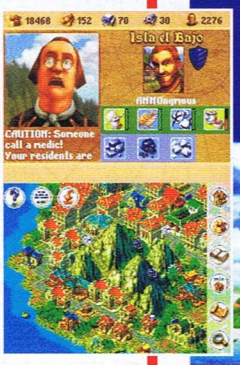
AROUND THE CORNER

Anno 1701: Dawn of Discovery

DS

OUT: JULY // DEV: SUNFLOWERS INTERACTIVE

With enough strategy and simulation to make Das Powerteam soil a completely good pair of lederhosen, Anno 1701: Dawn of Discovery will be sure to satisfy even the most hardened and demanding of historical world-building fanatics out there.



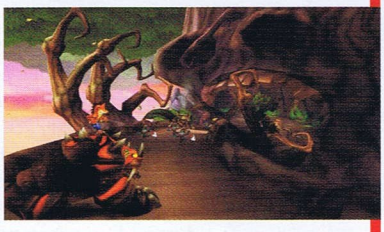
Set in the eighteenth century, the game allows you to develop your own period colony and then expand it into an empire through a combination of micromanagement, exploration and conquest.

The game will be entirely touch screen controlled, with the world represented in isometric 2D on the bottom screen, while vital statistics and game info are fed to you via the top screen. Very sexy.

Crash of the Titans

OUT: OCTOBER // DEVELOPER: RADICAL

Wii DS



The game series that has probably done more than any other for gamer/crate relations, Crash Bandicoot, is finally making a comeback to the platform genre. After 2004's pretty average Crash Twinsanity the mischievous marsupial has resorted to doing several party games to earn a living. Hopes are high though for the first real Crash sequel in three years though, with a variety of new features heading our way. Crash will once again go up against his nemesis, Dr Neo Cortex, but this time he'll have an army of helpers on his side, with the new "jack to attack" feature. Using this technique Crash can now possess and control a variety of enemy characters, and use their unique attributes to beat the snot out of the rest of his enemies. Apparently there will be fifteen "outrageous" enemies for you to control, as well as a completely retooled combat system that now lets you kick, punch and more.

With a title like Crash of the Titans though, if the latest Crash Bandicoot game really wants to live up to its name it had best feature some enormous Ray Harryhausen-esque monsters for bosses though. We won't be satisfied unless you get to battle some kind of Kraken constructed entirely from crates.

Pangya! Golf With Style

Wii

OUT: SOON // DEVELOPER: NTREEV SOFT

The PC version of Pangya has quickly become one of the most popular online golf games available today. Now it's set for a console debut on the Nintendo Wii, complete with wiimote controls. Thanks to its South Korean origins (developer Ntreev Soft is based in Seoul) the game has a distinctive anime style that can be cute, colourful and bizarre in equal doses.

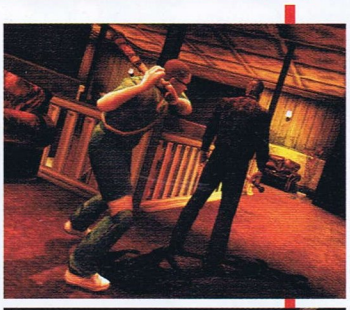
Thanks to some particularly robust customisation features, you can create your player character in any image you see fit. Do you want to look like a cute schoolgirl with a skirt that's almost long enough to cover the parts that count? You've got it. Or perhaps you'd rather look like a sad self-harming emo. You can do that too.

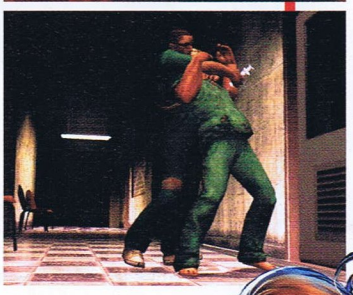
Whether or not the golfing controls will be good enough to warrant putting your copy of Wii Sports Golf on the shelf to trade up to Pangya is yet to be seen, but given the popularity of the PC version, and how cool it looks on the Wii, we're looking forward to finding out.

Manhunt 2

OUT: SEPTEMBER(ISH) // DEV: ROCKSTAR

Wii





» You've doubtlessly heard all about Manhunt 2 already. Even if you didn't read our extensive preview in issue #164, it's almost impossible to avoid hearing at least a little about one of the most controversial games of the year. For the uninformed though, Manhunt 2 sees you taking the role of a slightly unbalanced scientist who can't help but kill people ALL the time. In the sequences we've seen thus far the scientist, named Danny, has to kill his way out of a mental institution. At present there doesn't seem to be much in the way of context for the wholesale murder of everyone in sight, but nevertheless, the nebbish anti-hero seems to really get into stabbing hospital guards in the face a million times with a pen, or airing out the hospital staff's guts with a few scalpel slashes.

If that sounds like your kind of leisure activity then SEEK HELP NOW. If you're just morbidly curious, however, then read on.

For the Wii version of Manhunt 2, the Nintendo faithful will get a bonus feature that is probably more disturbing than it is intriguing. Using the motion-sensitive wiimote and nunchuk, you will apparently need to do the stabbing yourself. Thrusting your wiimote into an imaginary innocent will cause said innocent to be slaughtered on the screen for your viewing pleasure, and the same can be done with garrotte wires, guns and any other weapons the game chooses to arm you with.

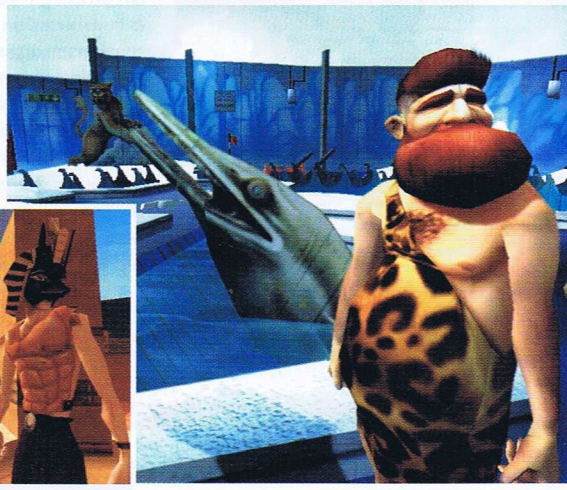
We have yet to see the Wiimote-controlled version in action, but with all the cold-blooded nastiness, it's bound to be the guiltiest of gaming pleasures, and by guilty we mean 25-to-life. The real question is of course whether the classification board lets the game anywhere near Australian shores...

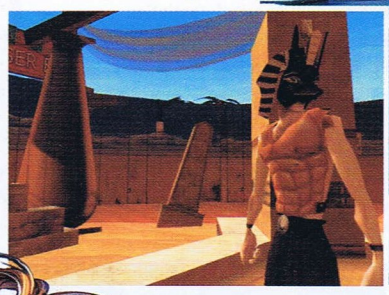
King of Clubs

OUT: AUGUST // DEV: OXYGEN INTERACTIVE

Wii

» King of Clubs is a bit of an oddity amongst golf games, something that could work in its favour when it plunks down onto Nintendo's Wii later this year. Instead of taking you to a lush green course roughly approximating reality, King of Clubs instead takes you to the middle of the Nevada Desert, where you will take part in mini-golf tournaments set against a backdrop of trashy Americana. The mini-golf park's owner, Big Bubba King, looks somewhat like an obese Elvis Presley in a ten-gallon hat and has set up a variety of worlds, and more than 95 holes of golf for you to putt through until your inevitable showdown with the king himself. If mini-golf's your thing, look out for the king.



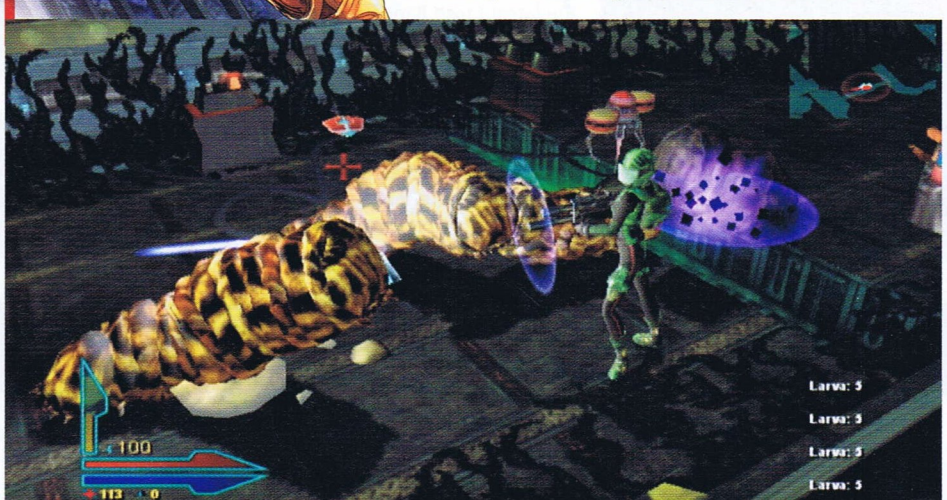


Alien Syndrome

OUT: JUNE // DEV: TOTALLY GAMES

Wii

» Based on Sega's classic top-down shooter of the same name, Alien Syndrome for the Wii looks to continue its predecessor's trigger-happy alien-blasting gameplay. The game will be completely 3D, but will adopt a similarly top-down viewpoint to the old Alien Syndrome, with wave after wave of otherworldly creatures swarming upon you and promptly getting turned into a fine mist by your weapons of mass destruction. Apparently there will also be a considerable role-playing component to the Wii version of the game, with you character developing as the game progresses. Alien Syndrome will also use the Wiimote's motion-sensitive controls in some way, although how is not entirely clear. As long as it increases our efficiency when killing aliens, we'll be satisfied.



Luminous Arc

DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEVELOPER: EPOCH

Luminous Arc is a turn-based, tactical RPG in the vein of Final Fantasy Tactics and Fire Emblem. Set in a world experiencing a resurgence of monster-related activity, this game puts you in control of a band of specially trained teenagers (it's always teenagers) entrusted with the task of wiping out the fiendish menace. Grid-based battles are interspersed with "adventure" sections where you can explore the game world and interact with its inhabitants. You'll also need to manage your relationships with your party members in order to get the most out of them in battle.

Balls of Fury

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: ZOO DIGITAL

Based on the soon-to-be-released movie of the same name, Balls of Fury follows the story of Randy Daytona, a former ping-pong champ recruited by the FBI to infiltrate a crime lord's underground ping-pong tournament. This isn't any ordinary tournament, either – the losers are executed! Movie tie-ins don't often make for great games – but a ping-pong game using the Wii remote? That could be something worth investigating. Balls of Fury will also feature a multiplayer mode and if what we hear about the movie is anything to go by, it will all be very, very silly.

Ghost Squad

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: SEGA AM2

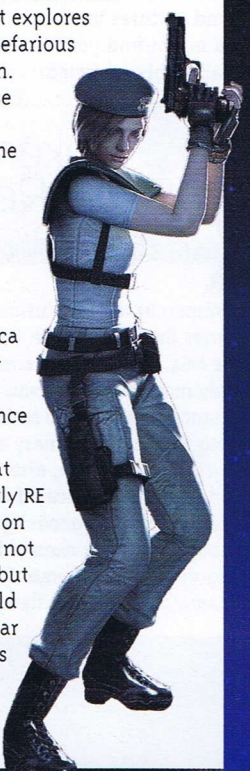
A game that has surprisingly little to do with ghosts, Ghost Squad promises to bring some arcade-style light gun action to the Wii. As an elite soldier on a mission to thwart the plans of terrorist scum the world over, you'll be using the Wii remote to blow away pop-up enemies, among other things. You'll also run into challenges such as defusing bombs or blocking an opponent's knife attacks. With a fully fledged multiplayer mode, two-player co-op and multiple routes to completing each of the main missions, this game could prove to be one of the most satisfying shooters the Wii has to offer.

Resident Evil Umbrella Chronicles

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: CAPCOM

A light-gun-style shooter set in the Resident Evil universe, Umbrella Chronicles revisits some familiar territory as it explores the downfall of the nefarious Umbrella Corporation. Fans should recognise their surroundings from Resident Evil (the Gamecube remake), Resident Evil 0 and Resident Evil 3 as they reprise the roles of characters such as Chris Redfield, Jill Valentine and Rebecca Chambers. This spin-off promises a much faster paced experience than the room-by-room exploration that characterised the early RE games. The "shooter on rails" mechanic may not appeal to everyone, but hopefully there should be enough spectacular zombie decapitations to make for an eventful ride.

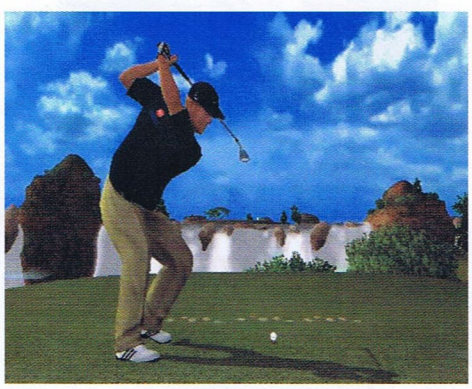


Worms Open Warfare 2

DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: TEAM 17

If you like your strategy gaming with a side-order of wacky weapons and talking invertebrates, you're probably already well-familiar with the Worms series, known for its highly accessible and uniquely ridiculous take on turn-based tactical combat. Worms Open Warfare 2, like its predecessor, stays true to the series' 2-D roots and includes single-cart multiplayer (always a bonus). The upcoming sequel appears to have smoothed over some of the control issues that plagued the first DS game and includes a bunch of new features, including DS-specific mini-games, new multiplayer game types and a single player "puzzle mode".



Tiger Woods 08 Wii

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: TIBURON

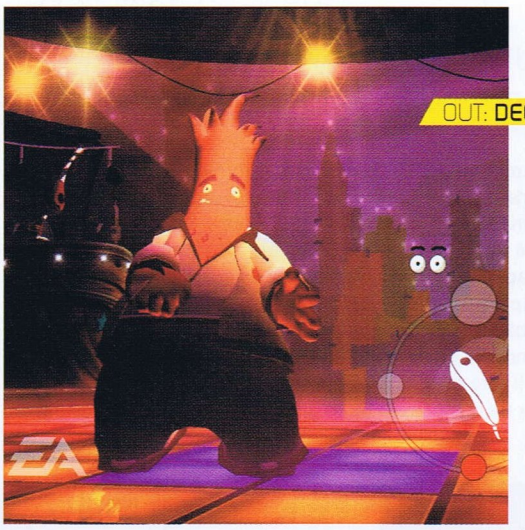
While much of the hype surrounding Tiger Woods 08 has been focussed on the "photo-face" and online networking features on the PS3 and 360 versions of the game, there are still a few nuggets of information that Wii gamers can get enthused about. The game's developers have placed more focus on the technical aspects of a good golf shot, with improved fade and draw mechanics and a new "player confidence" feature. Weather conditions are also expected to play a bigger role than in previous versions of the game, adding an extra level of challenge for experienced players.

My Sims

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: EA REDWOOD

Cutest. Sims. Ever. Seriously, have you seen the screenshots? Awww! Apart from the extreme cuteness, My Sims puts a heavy emphasis on player creativity. After you've customised your own adorable little avatar, you can go about building an adorable little house and fixing up an adorable little town full populated by other adorable little people. Using the Wii remote, you can assemble your own buildings from a series of... well, "building blocks" and apply textures and colours as you see fit. As you achieve certain milestones within the game you'll be rewarded with more objects and textures to play with. You might find your find yourself adorably addicted.



Boogie

Wii

OUT: DECEMBER // DEV: EA MONTREAL

With its groundbreaking combination of singing and dancing (you heard right, folks!), it would appear that Boogie is an attempt at creating the ultimate party game. Shake the Wii remote and the nunchuck in time to the music to make your on-screen character shake their groove thang, or – if you're feeling a little adventurous – plug in the microphone peripheral and karaoke your way through the level. The sing-along mechanics include pitch recognition à la Singstar, as well as an option to crank up the pre-recorded vocals if you're not game to hear your own voice coming through the speakers.

Operation Vietnam

DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: COYOTE

The DS seems like an odd choice of platform for a squad-based tactical shooter set in the jungles of Vietnam but, apparently, someone thinks this is exactly what the Nintendo handheld needs. Operation Vietnam puts you in charge of a troop of soldiers shot down behind enemy lines at the height of the Vietnam conflict. Each squad member has a unique talent (sniper rifle, heavy weapons, grenades etc.) that will help you all make it out of the jungle alive. You'll be able to control each player individually, as well as issue commands to the whole squad using the stylus.

Pokémon Battle Revolution

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: GENIUS SONORITY

Pokémon Battle Revolution is the next iteration of the series that began with Pokémon Stadium back on the N64, eschewing the role-playing aspects of the Pokémon games to focus on the combat – with the chance to see all the action in 3-D. While there's nothing truly revolutionary about the upcoming game (this is Pokémon, after all!), online play and DS connectivity are nice additions to the formula. The (admittedly gorgeous) graphics alone should be enough to entice many a Pokénthusiast. Hell, just having the word "Pokémon" on the box guarantees this game's going to be flying off the shelves.

Namco Museum Remix

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: NAMCO BANDAI

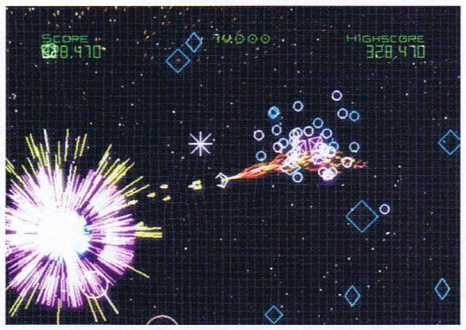
This compilation features nine old-school Namco games including Xevious, Dig Dug, and Super Pac-Man alongside "remixes" developed especially for the Wii. The five "revitalised" classics – Pac'n Roll Remix, Gator Panic Remix, Galaga Remix, Rally-X Remix and Pac-Moto Remix – sport spiffy new graphics and incorporate the Wii's motion sensing controls. At this point, we don't have a lot of details about how they'll achieve the latter, but we suspect that Pac'n Roll will require some precision remote-tilting, while Gator Panic brings to mind some sort of virtual whack-a-mole game. Most of the remixes support up to four players – this could be a surprise party game hit.

Geometry Wars: Galaxies

Wii DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: KUJU ENTERTAINMENT/BIZARRE CREATIONS

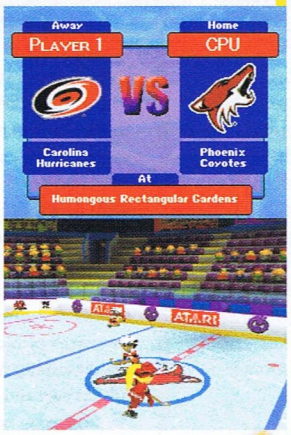
The retro-tastic shape shooter, Geometry Wars is already something of a cult classic on Xbox Live. Now Nintendo fanboys and girls can see what all the fuss is about when Geometry Wars: Galaxies arrives on the Wii and DS. As expected, the Wii version will use the system's motion controls, while the DS version will be controlled with the stylus. Galaxies expands upon the first game, with an extensive single player campaign and new multiplayer modes. The original Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved is also included, for those who want a taste of the game in its "classic" form.



UP THE ROAD

Backyard Hockey

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: HUMUNGOUS ENTERTAINMENT **DS**

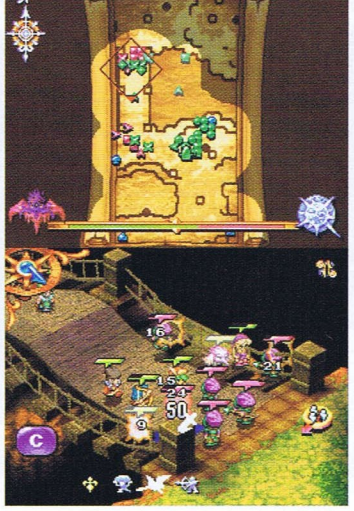


Ice hockey may be one of the most brutal sports on the planet, but Backyard Hockey does its level best to package the sport as a "family friendly" experience. Of course, people hoping to see blood on the ice probably aren't this game's target audience. According to the press release, younger gamers should jump at the chance to play as child-sized version of real-life NHL players (the game has a full NHL licence). Backyard Hockey also boasts a realistic representation of ice hockey gameplay and tactics, as well as "whacky animations", "comical and fun scenarios" and "racial diversity". Uh huh.

Mega Man Star Force

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: CAPCOM

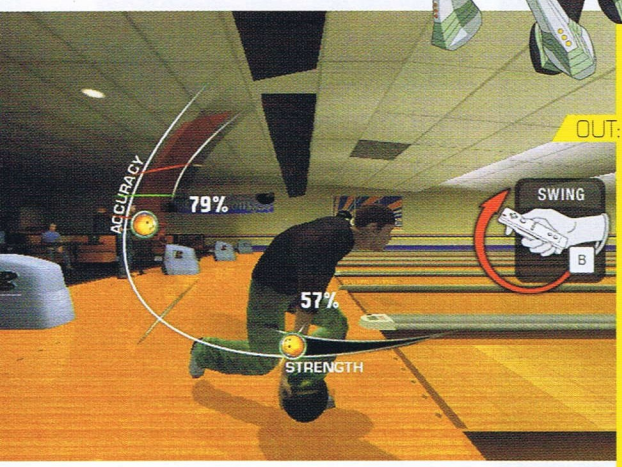
It looks like Capcom have decided to go the Pokémon route with Mega Man Star Force. They've released the game in three different coloured boxes and they're encouraging players to connect with other versions as part of a co-operative power-up system called "Brother Band" (which sounds like it could be a Christian rock group). Star Force is an extension of the Mega Man Battle Network series and delivers more of the same action-RPG-style gameplay. The game will see your time split between exploring the "real" world and a virtual "Wave World" where your human character will transform into his Mega Man alter ego.



Heroes of Mana

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: SQUARE ENIX/ BROWNIE BROWN **DS**

Set just after the events of Secret of Mana's Japan-only sequel, Heroes of Mana is a real time strategy game, of all things, based in the Mana universe. It might seem like an odd change of direction for a long running JRPG series but it came about after the developers realised how well the RTS genre suited the DS. Battle stats and character attributes are relegated to the top screen, leaving plenty of room for touch-controlled battle below. Despite the genre-shift, Mana fans should still feel at home when they see rabites gathering their resources and familiar Mana spirits being summoned.



Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: RETRO STUDIOS **Wii**

Metroid Prime 3 has been established as a Wii must-have almost as soon as we knew it was in development. Everything we've seen so far (aside from a slightly iffy on-rails boss fight demo) has cranked up our excitement levels even further. Put aside any doubts you may have had about the Wii's controller setup – movement and aiming feel remarkably smooth and natural (adjustable sensitivity is a real bonus here). Stylistically, Prime 3 is very similar to its Gamecube predecessors (a good thing – those games were gorgeous!) with a generous helping of action set-pieces and spectacular cinematic sequences thrown in. Can't wait!

Brunswick Pro Bowling

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: POINT OF VIEW INC. **Wii**

If Wii Sports whet your appetite for motion-controlled bowling sims, Brunswick Pro Bowling is set to deliver the main course. There's an option to hop in for a quick round of multiplayer but this game's biggest drawcard is its career mode. Create your own character and take him or her on the pro bowling circuit, where you'll get to play in bowling alleys around the world, modelled after the real thing. As your career progresses, you can use your winnings to buy new clothes and accessories, as well as useful things, like balls. Better start warming up your bowling arm!

Space Station Tycoon

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: WAHOO STUDIOS

Wii

One can't help but wonder if the newest addition to the ever-growing list of Tycoon games is trying a teeny bit too hard to make economic management seem like fun. As if transporting the "business strategy" genre into outer space wasn't quite exciting enough, the protagonist of Space Station Tycoon is a pirate. With a monkey for a sidekick. (The game's ninja content is yet to be determined.) Aside from a cast of totally outrageous characters, the game features a non-linear single player campaign, co-operative play and a multiplayer party mode. We're also told to expect some "light puzzle solving", whatever that means.

Turn it Around!

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: TAITO

DS

This collection of rotation-themed mini-games has the potential to keep players amused for hours – or strike them down with a triple-whammy of dizziness, sore wrists and a severely scratched touch screen. Hazards aside, Turn it Around! could be worth a look. Each of the 24 mini-games provides a different take on the art of spinning. Sometimes you'll need to focus on speed, sometimes power and sometimes technique. Your rotational talents will be put to use in such diverse areas as baseball, elevator operation and staying upright on a crowded train. Plus, if you've ever wanted to challenge someone to a "spin off", you'll soon get your chance.

Dave Mirra BMX Challenge

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT

Wii

Don't get your hopes up, extreme sports fans. This is just a port of a PSP game – one that scored between two and four out of ten from most reviewers. We have been assured that the Wii version of Dave Mirra BMX Challenge will feature re-tooled Wii-specific controls. Whether that will be enough to save it, we're not too sure. If your enthusiasm for the game hasn't been completely extinguished yet, you may be interested to know that Dave Mirra BMX Challenge includes 12 riding areas, 13 bikes and the option to choose between races and trick-oriented game modes.

Disaster: Day of Crisis

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: MONOLITH SOFT

Wii

Disaster: Day of Crisis pits man against nature as it follows one man's fight for survival in a world plagued by catastrophe. The game is set in a future where the USA is reeling from an unprecedented series of natural disasters. On top of that, a rogue Special Forces unit has decided that now might be a good time to get their hands on a nuclear weapon. Players will step into the role of Ray, a former member elite rescue squad who has decided to fight back. Gameplay details are scarce at the moment but we've been told to expect plenty of action.

Brothers in Arms: Double Time

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE

Wii

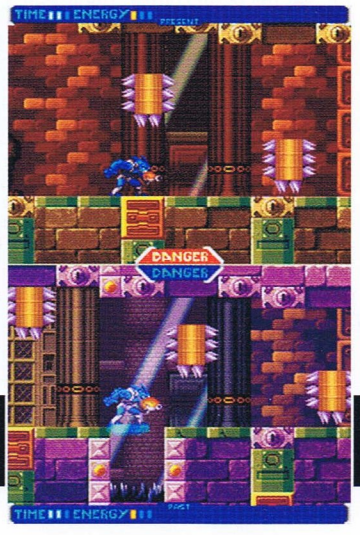
You know what there isn't enough of on the Wii? Shooting Nazis. Brothers in Arms: Double Time aims to rectify this sorry situation, giving Wii owners the chance to shoot Nazis with a remote control. You'll also be waving the remote around to direct your squad into better Nazi-shooting positions as you play through three different campaigns based around the invasion of Normandy. The game has an extensive multiplayer component, which will allow you to shoot your friends who are pretending to be Nazis. It's not all Nazi-shooting though. The Brothers in Arms developers are promising an emotionally engaging single player experience.

Chronos Twins

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: ENJOYUP

DS

Get ready for some dual screen time-travelling action when Chronos Twins hits the DS. This puzzle-platformer hybrid stars a hero who can appear in two different time periods simultaneously. You see the same area on both screens, with the past version up the top and the present below. As you might expect, you'll need to manipulate your surroundings in the past to overcome obstacles in the present. We're hoping this will amount to more than nudging a few old-timey blocks around. There's the potential for some very clever puzzles in this game and we'd hated see it wasted.



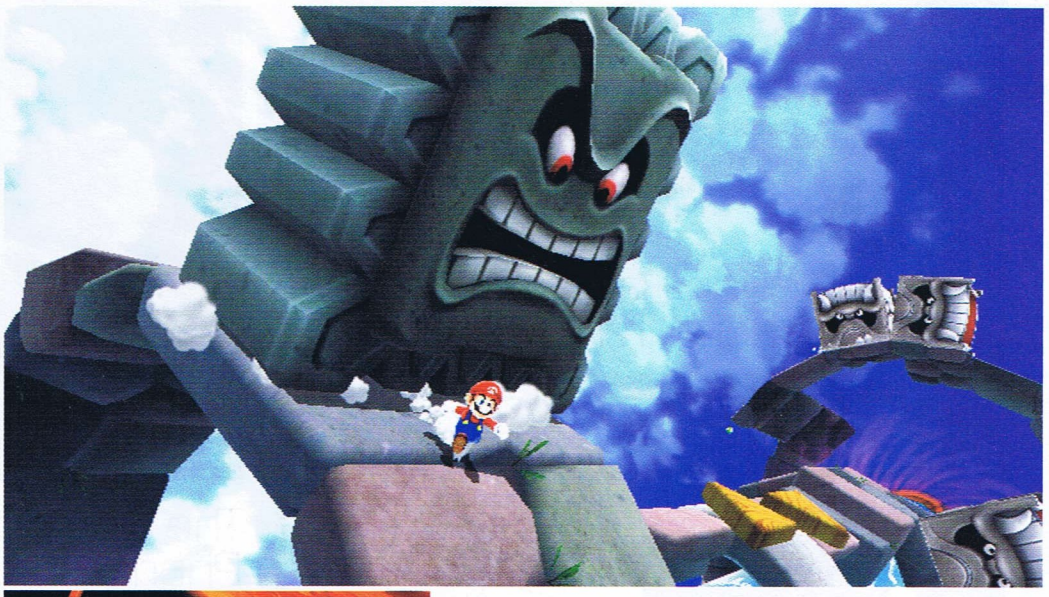
UP THE ROAD

DK Bongo Blast

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: PAON

Somebody out there thinks it's high time for a rhythm-based Donkey Kong flight simulator. This game features DK and friends careening through the sky in their rhythm-powered Barrel Jets, racing and launching weapons at each other in something akin to an airborne Mario Kart. As its name might suggest, DK Bongo Blast was originally planned for release on the Gamecube, to be played the bongo drum peripheral that came with Donkey Konga. Since the game has been deferred to the Wii, the bongo control mechanism has been replaced by rhythmic shaking of the nunchuck and remote. At this stage, there's no word on backwards bongo compatibility.



Super Mario Galaxy

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

The long-awaited Super Mario Galaxy sees our hero launching himself through space as he traverses the series of small "planets" that make up each level. The game derives much of its unique appeal from the fact that you can typically run all the way around one of these mini-planets in a matter of seconds. This adds a fresh, truly three-dimensional feeling to the gameplay, which is otherwise classic Mario. The controls are nice and intuitive, making use of the nunchuck's analogue stick and just the right amount of waggle. What's more, Galaxy looks absolutely gorgeous and – most importantly – it looks like it will be a whole lot of fun.

Godzilla: Unleashed

Wii DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: PIPEWORKS SOFTWARE

Godzilla: Unleashed delivers everything you'd expect from a game about a giant lizard monster known for battling other giant monsters and destroying many a skyscraper in the process. There's also a plot involving crystals or something but the focus is primarily on smashing things. You can play as Godzilla in a number of his incarnations (e.g. MechaGodzilla and Godzilla 2000), as well as other legendary monsters such as Megalon and Gigan. Be prepared for some awesome displays of power and destruction, such as tearing buildings out of the ground to use as weapons and engaging your opponents in tense energy beam duels.

Fire Emblem: Goddess of Dawn

Wii

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEV: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

Fire Emblem: Goddess of Dawn is set three years after the events of Path of Radiance on the Gamecube. It should feel like a natural progression for the series to anyone who played the previous game. The two instalments are very similar in presentation and the Wii game is designed to be played with the Classic or Gamecube controller. There are a few subtle differences in gameplay – for example, experience points are awarded to individual characters rather than being distributed to whole team at the player's discretion – but the core Fire Emblem formula hasn't changed. You will still be thoroughly screwed if someone important dies.

Dementium: The Ward

DS

OUT: LATE 2007 // DEVELOPER: RENEGADE KID

In the most blatant attempt yet to scare the crap out of DS gamers, Dementium: The Ward is set in an abandoned insane asylum inhabited by "failed medical experiments" – presumably of the shambling, brain-eating variety. The game combines gory 3-D combat with the somewhat incongruous puzzles we've become accustomed to seeing in the survival horror genre. It seems like the biggest obstacle to Dementium's success is creating a sufficiently creepy atmosphere on a handheld. Sure, all the ingredients for a scary old time are there – but just how absorbed can you get when the action takes place on two tiny screens?

Disclaimer: these games have no set release date as yet – they could be coming in a few weeks, they could be here in a few months and some of them may never come at all

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3

Wii

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI/SPIKE

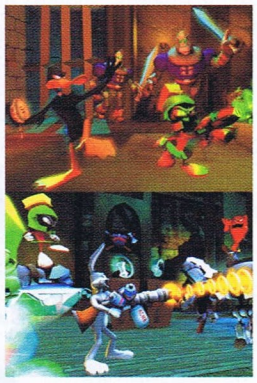
Dragon Ball Z fans rejoice – the third in the highly popular Budokai Tenkaichi franchise promises to be the biggest game to date with 150 playable characters (over 20 more than before), greatly improved Wii motion controls that will allow players to activate special powers by mimicking the actions of characters in the cartoon and a very attractive cel-shaded engine that looks just like the source material.

Loony Tunes Acme Arsenal

Wii

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: RED TRIBE

A mad scientist with a time-machine and a giant eraser is hell-bent on rubbing out the Looney Tunes characters once and for all. It's up to seven characters, Bugs, Daffy, Marvin the Martian, the Tasmanian Devil, Foghorn Leghorn, Gossamer and an unannounced character (fingers crossed for Wile E Coyote) to stop him. Yeah, it's a kids game but if they get the humour right it could be a blast.



Battalion Wars 2

Wii

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: KUJU ENTERTAINMENT

With any luck Battalion Wars 2 will be released in Australia in late September along with the American and European releases but so far we have had no confirmation. It's a pity because the combined RTS/Shooter action of the game looks top notch. We'll let you know as soon as we have a firm release date. Fingers crossed it's soon.

The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

DS

OUT (AUS): TBA // DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

The first ever Zelda game created specifically for the DS is on it's way but there's still no real details as to when the game is going to be released in Australia but never fear – we have our man in Japan, Jonti Davies, working on an import review of the recently released Japanese version for issue 167.

Project H.A.M.M.E.R.

Wii

OUT: TBA (2007?) // DEV: NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY

Originally set to be a release title for the Wii, Project H.A.M.M.E.R. has since disappeared from the radar leading to some speculation that the game may have been cancelled. We hope not; the idea of swinging around a big hammer using the Wiimote and smashing some giant robots sounds too good to miss.

Jewel Quest Expedition

DS

OUT: TBA // DEV: ACTIVISION

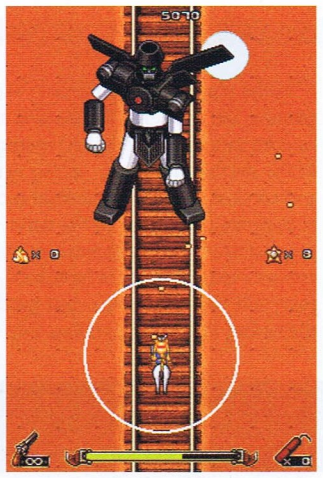
Aside from the name we really know bugger all about the title. We assume that the gameplay will remain similar to that of previous Jewel Quest games – shifting jewels to make lines of three. We suspect that the game will somehow incorporate some RPG elements like the sleeper hit Puzzle Quest. More info when it comes.

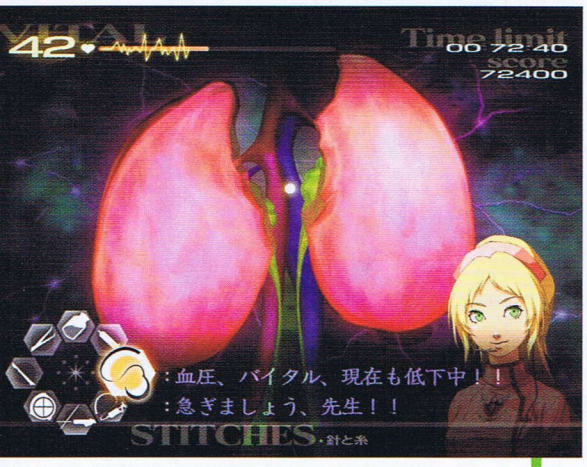
The Wild West

DS

OUT: TBA // DEV: HAPPY HAPPENING

A throwback to the heady games of shooters like Blood Brothers, The Wild West is a screen tapping shoot-em-up set in the Wild West (as the name suggests) that will see the player shooting the hell out of enemies of a number of 2D and 3D levels. This ain't your ordinary western either – instead of simply shooting bandits and Indians, The Wild West also includes enemies like vampire bats, cave dwelling primitives and giant laser shooting robots.

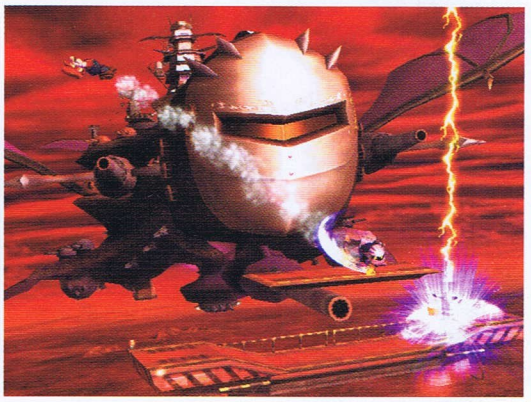




Final Fantasy Chronicles: CRYSTAL BEARERS

OUT: TBA // DEV: SQUARE ENIX — Wii

» No concrete detail have been released as yet about the plot of the sequel to Crystal Chronicles save a teaser trailer showing some realistic character design and a brief bit of footage showing a character fighting some ogres but we do know that the multiplayer elements of Crystal Bearers will utilise a second controller rather than the clumsy GBA interface of the first game.



SSB: Brawl

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: NINTENDO — Wii

» We're at a loss to explain the constant delays of Super Smash Bros: Brawl – the game doesn't feature any Wiimote functionality so that can't be holding up development. Nor does it contain much in the way of wi-fi apparently. In a recent play-test between Hideo Kojima and the game's director Masahiko Sakurai, Kojima apparently said that the game feels complete and could be released now. No matter what the case may be, SSB: Brawl remains one of our most anticipated games on the Wii.

Trauma Centre: Second Opinion

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: ATLUS — Wii

» It may have been out for six or more months in Japan and America but there's still no set release date for the highly anticipated stitch-em-up on the Australian calendar. Mores the pity, as Second Opinion has been universally well reviewed and looks like a hell of a lot of fun.

Animal Crossing

OUT: TBA // DEV: NINTENDO EAD — Wii

» Little is known about the Wii version of Animal Crossing as yet aside from the fact that it is going to be the real poster-child for Wii Connect 24 with features including the ability for people to be able to SMS or email messages to people's towns as well as allowing visits by other players when someone's Wii is in standby mode.

Spore

OUT: TBA // DEV: MAXIS — DS

» We're really curious to see what will be missing from the DS version of the highly anticipated evolution simulator from Maxis. We're assuming that players will have to create their creatures based on some set skeletons rather than being able to create them from scratch and have a progressive AI work out how they move like in the PC game and that players won't be able to visit other people's planets.

Forever Blue

OUT: TBA // DEV: ARIKA — Wii

» It's doubtful that Forever Blue will ever be released in Australia but we're keeping our fingers crossed one of the smaller publishers picks it up as an experiment. If Arika's previous "Blue" games are anything to go by, Forever Blue will revolve around exploring sunken wrecks, collecting sunken treasure and photographing undersea creatures.

Dragon Quest Swords: THE MASKED QUEEN AND THE TOWER OF MIRRORS

OUT: TBA // DEV: GENIUS SONORITY/8ING — Wii

» Created specifically (and solely) for the Wii, Dragon Quest Swords promises to utilise the Wii controls to their fullest extent. All we've seen of this control so far is the combat but this really whets our appetites for more. Players control the characters sword attacks with the Wiimote with the angle of attack reflecting the angle in which the Wiimote is swept, attacks are blocked by pointing with the controller and hitting the A button and lightning can be shot at distant enemies with the B button. We can't wait to see more.

Eyeshield 21

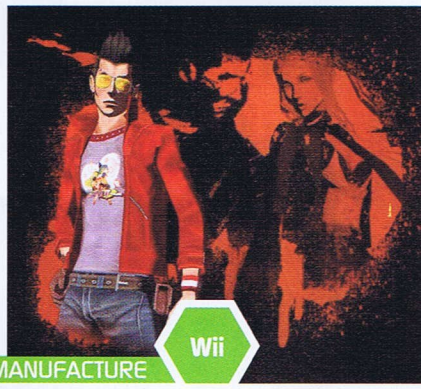
OUT: TBA // DEV: EIGHTING — Wii

» Eyeshield 21 for the Wii is the latest in a long line of football themed games based on a popular Shonen Jump comic of the same name. Rather than strictly being a sports game, Eyeshield 21 is instead a party game with a sports theme by way of an adventure game with football controls. Yeah, it all sounds a little confusing but check out the trailer available online – it looks awesome.

Soul Calibur Legends

OUT: TBA // DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI — Wii

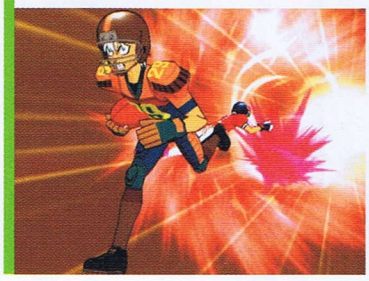
» An action/adventure game set in the universe of the greatest weapons based fighting game – sign us up. All we know so far is that the game will definitely feature Siegfried, Mitsurugi and Ivy. Fingers crossed the game doesn't suck as much as the Mortal Kombat: Mythologies games.



Kirby

OUT: TBA // DEV: HAL LABORATORIES — Wii

» Little information has been revealed about the lovable pink blob's next adventure. What we do know is that the game will be entirely 3D, it will feature more than one playable character, Kirby will be able to ride on the backs of other characters/monsters and he will have access to 16 or so powers taken from absorbed enemies.



No More Heroes

OUT: TBA // DEV: GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE — Wii

» No new information on the adventures of Travis Touchdown and his quest to kill the best assassins in Japan with his motion controlled Beam Katana has been released but No More Heroes remains our number one most anticipated Wii game on the horizon. To recap what we know so far, Travis Touchdown, the main character wins a Beam Katana on ebay and decides to become a professional killer. The combat will be real time and motion controlled, Travis will be able to ride around town on his bike and do side missions to make cash and the game is set to be non-linear in its approach to killing the killers. We can't wait to see more.

NES

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM.

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The NES pretty much defined 8-bit gaming

IT'S 20 YEARS SINCE THE NES DEBUTED IN AUSTRALIA, SO WE'VE DECIDED TO CELEBRATE BY LOOKING AT THE HISTORY OF THIS OLD BEAUTY. MEMORY LANE, HERE WE COME.

Nintendo launched the Family Computer into 'bubble' era Japan in 1983, at a time when everything about Japan – its robust (although fatally overvalued) economy included – screamed "Positive future!!". But while that 8-bit format was a tearaway success in NCL's domestic territory and had effectively established the home console market in Japan by 1984, the console scene in America was comatose after the videogame crash of 1983/4.

With Minoru Arakawa, son-in-law of former NCL president Hiroshi Yamauchi, in charge of the newly established Nintendo of America (which, at the time, was nothing more than an empty New York warehouse), and Yamauchi, keen to export his company's most promising invention since Gunpei Yokoi's Ultrahand, various avenues into America were explored. One of these routes involved negotiation with Atari concerning the possible manufacture of an American version of the Famicom hardware, albeit labelled with an Atari license. But what would have become the Nintendo Enhanced Video System by Atari became simply the Nintendo Entertainment System. By, yes, Nintendo.

The reasons for the collapse of this deal between Nintendo and Atari are well documented (see David Sheff's definitive Game Over for the gory details), but the point is: it wasn't Nintendo's fault that Coleco decided to show off an unlicensed Coleco Adam conversion of Donkey Kong at a trade show, and it wasn't Nintendo's fault that Atari decided to take umbrage at this seeming act of sleeping with the enemy. In retrospect, however, it was good for Nintendo that this deal didn't come off. Atari would flounder and soon be out of the console race entirely, while NCL's export version of the Famicom would achieve international success to establish Nintendo as the market-leader going into the 16-bit era.

NCL'S EXPORT VERSION OF THE FAMICOM WOULD ACHIEVE INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

OPTIONS

The formation of Nintendo's American hardware was still to be decided. Nintendo toyed with the idea of marketing a multi-part version of the Famicom that would be geared towards competing with low-cost computers such as

THANKS, PAL

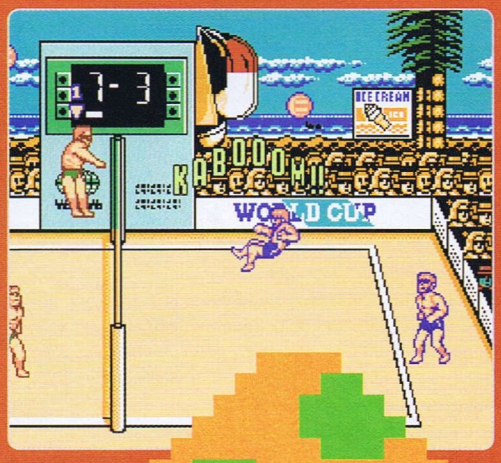
Although the NES in PAL territories received weaker software support than the NTSC model, and conversions of NTSC titles generally went unoptimised, there were some titles that appeared as PAL exclusives. Unusually, the NES version of David Braben and Ian Bell's Elite was developed for the European NES by stalwart Japanese production house Imagineer. NES Elite appeared in 1991 and goes as the finest console port of the BBC/Acorn original. Imagineer published other PAL exclusives, as well, including Super Turrican and Kick Off.

Jaleco's wonderful Rodland appeared in the Australian market shortly after its 1992 launch as a Famicom title, even though it wasn't granted a release in the States. It's essentially the same game as the Japanese version, although with vastly inferior James Pond-esque artwork. (Go for the Famicom edition if you have a choice.)

As mentioned, in general America benefited from the greatest NES support in all respects. Bubble Bobble Part 2, for example, was released only in the States. The next game in the series, though, was another PAL exclusive: Ocean's NES conversion of Parasol Stars. Palcom's 1992 conversion of Konami's Famicom hit Parodius Da!, released simply as Parodius down under, is another PAL exclusive worth mentioning.

MULTIPLAYER MADNESS

Although multitaps were common on later machines such as the PC Engine and Super Famicom, and those were backed up by plenty of four-/five-player games, the NES also received a multitap in the form of Nintendo's NES Four Score Four Player Module. It didn't receive much in the way of software support, though. There are only a handful of NES games compatible with the Four Score, and most of them aren't worth bothering with. Get it for Technos Japan's Super Spike V'Ball, which offers gripping four-player doubles matches of volleyball.



Famicom: It looked less like a lunchbox than the NES

the Commodore 64 (which, with Jack Tramiel's guidance, was maintaining its position as the most attractive home computer choice for American gamers). The Nintendo Advanced Video System computer kit would have included a BASIC keyboard and cassette deck, designed to encourage home coding and provide an alternative to the simple DIY scene that was popularised by the Vic 20 and C64.

In fact, these accessories were released in Japan in 1984, along with a Family BASIC cartridge containing Nintendo-programmed examples of the results that could be attained from coding with this dialect of the language. Although the hardware and software released there provided Japan's amateur coders with the necessary tools and knowledge, the homebrew scene never flourished in Japan. Eventually, the idea was dropped and Nintendo opted to market its hardware purely as a gaming system.

By CES '85, Nintendo had finalised its plans for Western markets. The American version of the Famicom – with its outside completely redesigned and its insides tweaked slightly – had become the Nintendo Entertainment System.

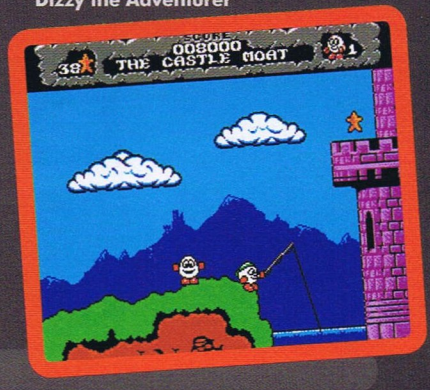
One of the most obvious design differences between the NES and Famicom – both aesthetically and technically – is the number of pins on each format's cartridge connector: the Famicom uses 60-pin cartridges (or 'cassettes', in the true lingo of Japanese console terminology), while the NES increases that pin count to 72 for the sake of protecting Nintendo from the woes of unlicensed titles and pirated games.

The inherent similarities in the NES and Famicom hardware make for a console whose territorial lockout is fairly easy to open up. It's not difficult to play Famicom games on the US NES; a simple T89 Cartridge Converter suffices to bridge the gap between connectors. Even Nintendo made use of the likenesses in design – for economical reasons, adapter technology enabled Nintendo to take the boards from overproduced Famicom carts and enclose them in NES cart housings.

Unfortunately for players who were expecting perfect NES conversions of original Famicom games, however, Nintendo decided to remove two of the Famicom carts' connector pins – namely those which enabled developers to bolster their productions with external sound chips. The result was that games which, in Japan, had initially been developed with cartridge-inserted independent sound chips, sounded noticeably less impressive in their NES incarnations. No great loss for the average player, granted, but nevertheless an inadequacy in the NES' design that goes some way towards marking the Famicom as a superior machine.

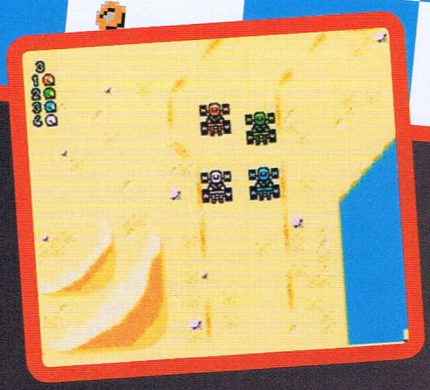
Of course, the NES' casing was also radically different from that of the Famicom. It turns in a steady sandwich box of a design, whereas the form of the Famicom presciently regarded the shape (and format, with cartridges slotted in vertically rather than the NES' horizontal loader) of its immediate successor, the Super Famicom. It wasn't until the 1993 release of the NES 2, and the earlier Japanese launch of the AV Famicom, that near parity in the

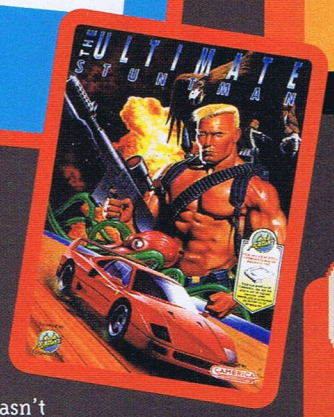
Dizzy the Adventurer



RGB, OR NOT RGB?

Unfortunately for image quality purists, the 8-bit Nintendo hardware is generally incapable of outputting an RGB signal. There are a few notable exceptions to this statement, though: specifically, the PlayChoice-10 game selector used in arcades (and still on display in some Japanese shops) outputs pure RGB, and the French version of the NES is capable of delivering an RGB signal (albeit one that appears slightly washed out). In most other models of the NES (and Famicom), RCA composite is the best AV solution.





[above, left] Micro Machines: All the fun without the choking hazards. [right] Ultimate Stuntman: Looks spookily like Dolph Lundgren

external design of Nintendo's 8-bit format on both sides of the Pacific was achieved.

But while the AV Famicom belatedly introduced RCA composite video-out (the original Famicom had been pumping out a grainy RF image for ten years), the NES 2 actually dropped the original NES' RCA signal and instead provided only RF-out. This regression is mystifying, and we can only assume that it was made in order to keep the price low (NES 2 launched in the States for just $49.99).

The NES 2 was also without Nintendo's 10NES lockout chip, effectively enabling unlicensed and foreign games to be played on the system. The lockout chip had a rocky history until this 1993 omission: developers and publishers that were variously unwilling or unable to comply with Nintendo's licensing rules, such as Codemasters and Camerica, found innovative ways to produce unlicensed games that would still be playable on standard NES hardware. The T89 had done a good job of enabling imports to be played on the NES, but it took the know-how of Camerica and Codies to completely dodge the issue of lockout, rendering it meaningless and in the process producing one of the NES' most successful accessories: the Game Genie.

Although the NES wasn't quite successful enough to be classed as a phenomenon in Australia, UK support for the format (and particularly the work of Codemasters, even without Nintendo's blessing) gave the NES' PAL software library a nice flavour. Titles such as Micro Machines and Dizzy's Excellent Adventures were sufficient to expand the developer's cult following beyond its primary audience of C64 owners. Many of Codemasters' NES releases were US exclusives, however, published there by Camerica. Ultimate Stuntman and Dizzy the Adventurer fall into this category.

THE NES' CASING WAS ALSO RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE FAMICOM...

One incentive for customers to avoid these (and all other) unlicensed titles was Nintendo's decision to grant licensees the right to print a Nintendo Seal of Quality, a golden stamp of NCL's approval, on the packaging and cartridge casing of their games. Titles that didn't feature this seal were implied to lack quality (at least, Nintendo wasn't trumpeting the virtues of these games, even if, like Micro Machines, some of them were veritable classics), although there are dozens of games bearing this seal that obviously don't have

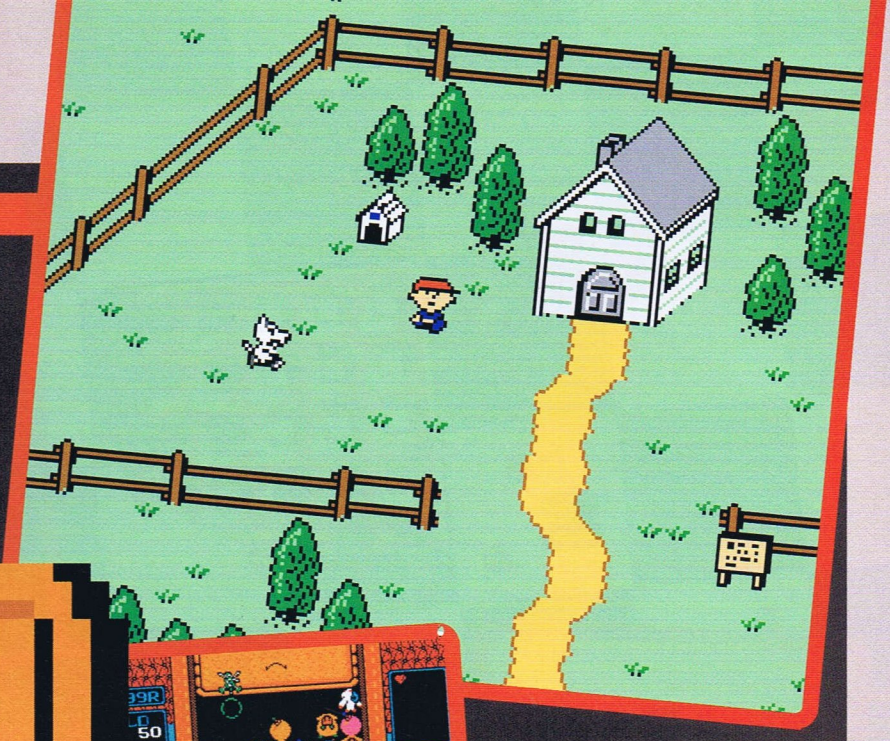
GAME AXE

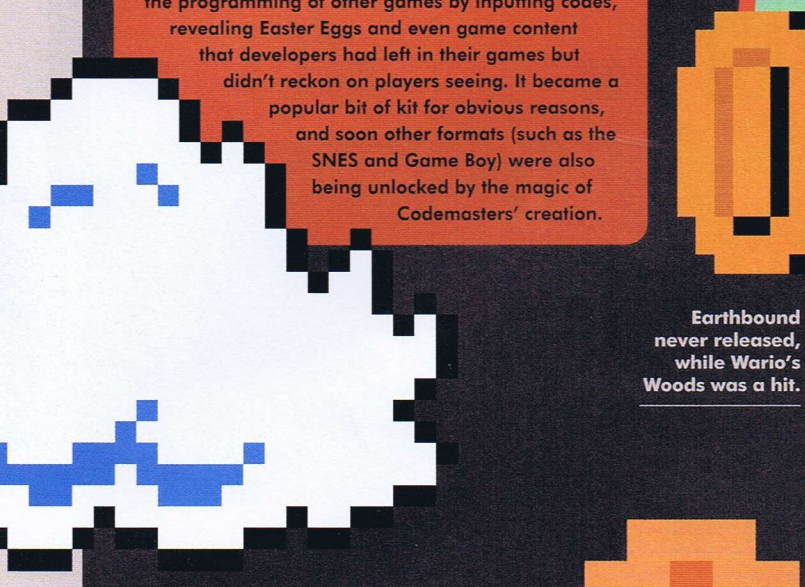
The number of unofficial NES/Famicom clones in circulation is impossible to count without a thorough inspection of all the market stalls in China, but the few models that do something novel are internationally (in)famous. The Game Axe (also available as the Game Boy Color-referencing Game Axe Color, with a font identical to Nintendo's for the Americanized 'Color' spelling) is one such example: a handheld Famicom roughly the size of an Atari Lynx, with the capacity for playing NES cartridges via an adapter. Granted, NES carts and notions of portability are only barely compatible, but the console does its job and presents the games reasonably well via its 3.75-inch LCD. More interestingly, for those who are put off by non-portable handhelds such as this, there is an AV-out jack for RCA connection to any TV. And further blurring the lines between handheld and home console, the Game Axe even has two 9-pin controller ports, so you can use the Amiga/Mega Drive stick/pad of your preference.

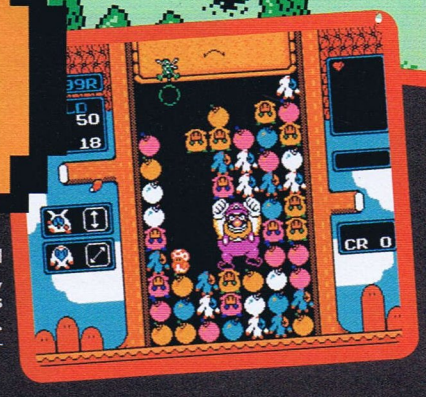
The Game Theory Admiral, by an Asian outfit called Mystery, is the only real alternative to the Game Axe Color. The Game Theory Admiral is about the size of a Game Boy Advance – its design is based squarely on the GBA template – and it offers greater portability than the Game Axe Colour. On the downside, the GTA has a smaller screen than the Game Axe (just a 2.5-inch TFT) and also limits controller input to only one custom port. If you don't care about screen size or two-player action, the Game Theory Admiral represents a more solid purchase than the Game Axe.

GAME GENIE

Codemasters was threatened by a lawsuit from Nintendo over the development of its Game Genie NES cart, but Nintendo lost and the Game Genie won. The Game Genie essentially enabled users to tweak the programming of other games by inputting codes, revealing Easter Eggs and even game content that developers had left in their games but didn't reckon on players seeing. It became a popular bit of kit for obvious reasons, and soon other formats (such as the SNES and Game Boy) were also being unlocked by the magic of Codemasters' creation.







Earthbound never released, while Wario's Woods was a hit.

qualities worthy of a golden seal. It was indicative of Nintendo's iron-fisted stance in that era, when Nintendo did everything it could to avert the possibility of any repeat Atari-like disaster that might be caused by lack of quality/volume control – another measure that Nintendo took in this regard was to limit most publishers to releasing just two games per calendar year.

CREDITS

More than one million NES consoles were sold here before production was officially discontinued in 1995. In total, though, only around 220 officially licensed NES games were released in Australia (this number obviously excepts Codemasters' output). In the States, and particularly under the Famicom umbrella of Japan, far more 8-bit Nintendo games were made available outside of PAL territories. (See 'Thanks, PAL'.) But some games were kept back from Western markets, both NTSC and PAL areas alike. Of all the unreleased NES titles left in the vortex, the first Earthbound game stands out as a golden (missed) opportunity.

The story of Earthbound's production and eventual non-release follows the segue between Nintendo's 8- and 16-bit generations, a period of the early Nineties when gamers were being moved from NES to SNES. The Earthbound game that was released on the SNES was a translation of Mother 2, but the real original Earthbound would have been a NES conversion of the first Mother game. The English scriptwriter hired by Nintendo America for this project was Phil Sandhop. He explains the rationale behind Nintendo's treatment of the finished Mother translation: "Earthbound was not cancelled, it was just not produced. Once the SNES squatted in the pipeline and shoved the game aside from its appointed time, I believe that the marketing execs just decided that the game would be too expensive to produce and unsuccessful without marketing, and that's why it fell into oblivion."

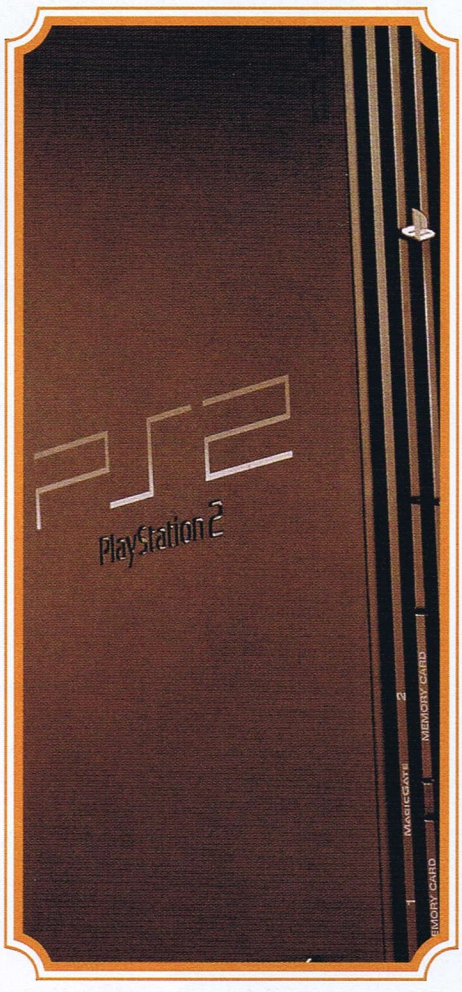
Later on, as the SNES really began to take hold, developers were quick to migrate to the new platform. The final licensed NES game produced in the States was Wario's Woods, which was released in December of 1994. In the decade since its debut in the West, the NES had established Nintendo as the dominant force in America. In the UK, sales of the NES gathered pace at the turn of the 1990s – in 1989 only around 50,000 consoles were sold here, but sales for the calendar year 1991 shot to more than 550,000 – and this coincided with more focused marketing from Nintendo Europe.

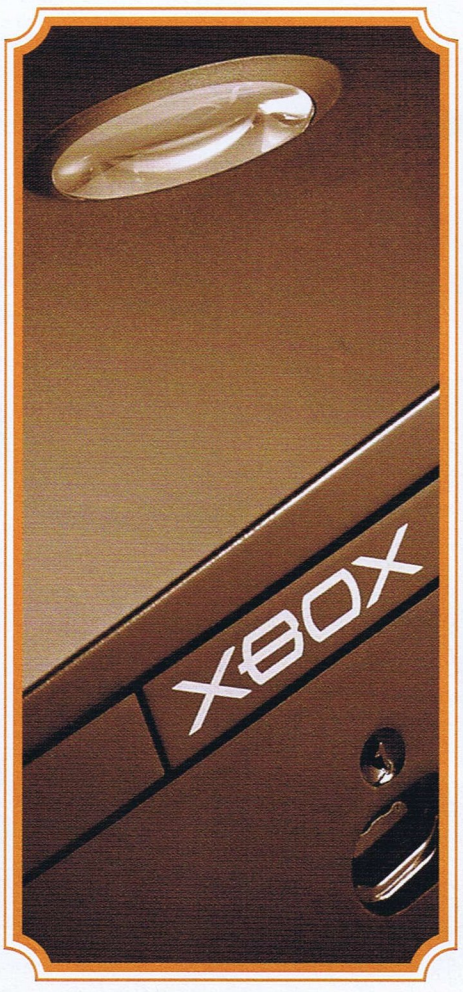
Nintendo Magazine System, launched in October of 1992, built on this momentum with a popular (although editorially questionable) magazine format that effectively promoted all three of Nintendo's systems (the NES, Game Boy, and SNES) to an ever more impressed Australian audience. And that's where the SNES era truly began. <<

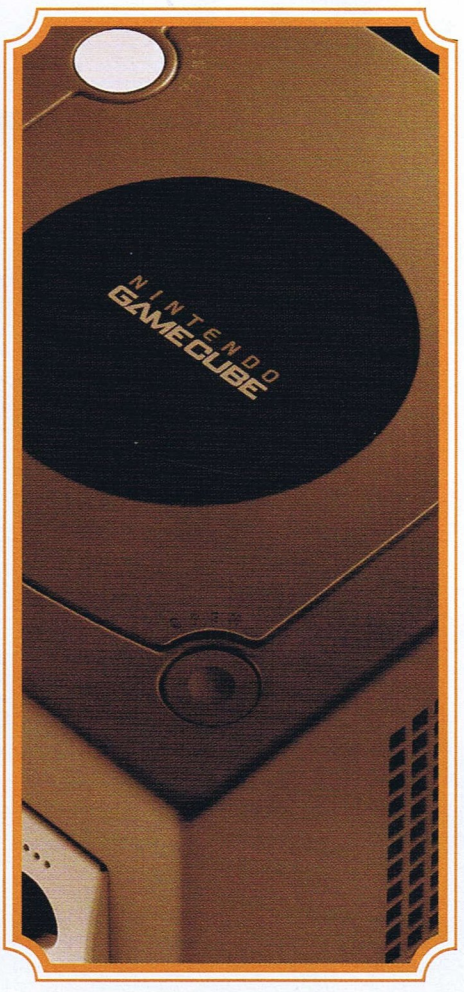
TAME YOUR FEROCIOUS HUNGER
KRAFT
EASY MAC
4 Pack
KRAFT
EASY MAC
Cheese
Microwaveable Macaroni & Cheese Snack

Farewell TO A GENERATION

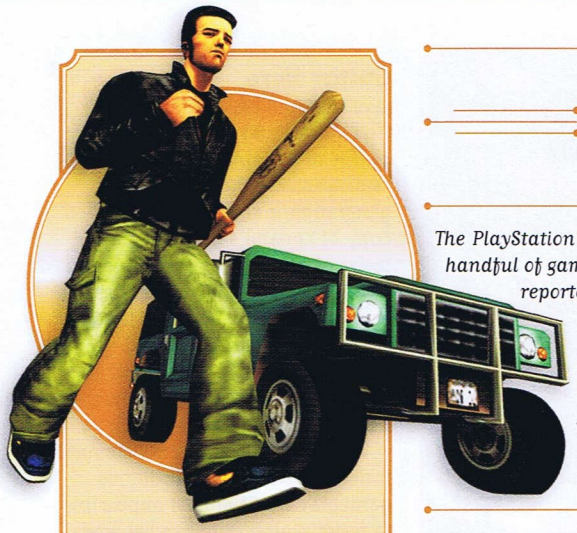
· PlayStation 2 · · Xbox · · GameCube ·







It's that time again readers. For every new console generation there must be a farewell to the last one. Machines that once took pride of place in your entertainment system are slowly relegated to back cupboards and dusty packing boxes in favour of the newest, shiniest next-generation consoles. / The previous generation gave us such joy, excitement, fun and frustration, but now that all of the next generation consoles have been released it's finally time for the PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube to take their bows and make way for their successors, the PS3, Xbox 360 and Wii. / Join us in celebrating the best that the past generation had to offer, with our comprehensive list of the top ten best games for each system. Where possible we've tried to keep the nominated games in as many varied genres as possible, and we've decided to only include the most noteworthy game in each franchise. We hope you agree with our selections, but if you don't, the ***freakscene@next.com.au*** *mailbag is always willing to hear your opinions. / Now, dear readers, it's time to pay our respects...*



PlayStation 2

The PlayStation 2 was the reigning champion of the console generation just gone by. Releasing in 2000 with only a handful of games including Tekken Tag Tournament and Ridge Racer V, over the following seven years the PS2 would reportedly sell well over 100 million units, making it fairly safe to call it the most popular console in the industry's history. With so many consoles sold, there was also a wealth of games to choose from when we were assembling our list of the best the system has to offer. It was an unenviable task, and you can bet that there are plenty more classics that we couldn't fit on this list, but these are our picks of the best of the bunch. / Interestingly enough, while the two other competing consoles went into retirement the moment their succeeding machines arrived on the scene, the PlayStation 2 is actually the only one of the three last-gen consoles that looks as though it may survive at least a little further into the current console era. All we can say is long live the king.

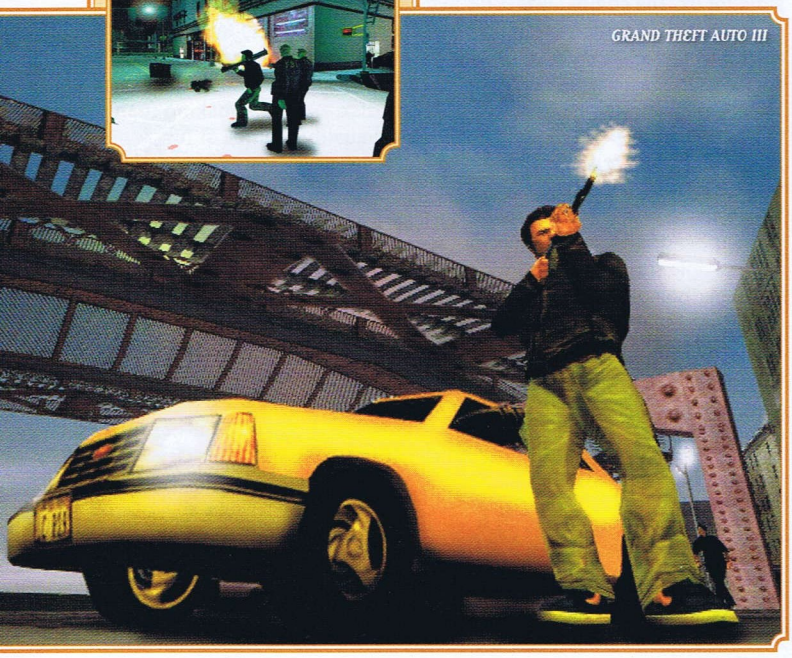
Grand Theft Auto III

1

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **99**
HYPER SCORE: **96**

Whether you love it or hate it, there's no denying that Grand Theft Auto III is the most influential game of the last console generation. With a free-roaming world the likes of which we'd never seen before, a brilliant Mafioso atmosphere and unique go-anywhere, do-anything gameplay dynamic, GTAIII would spawn countless imitators, like Saints Row, and inspire games as far afield as platformers like Jak & Daxter and action/adventure games like Spider-Man 2.

GTAIII would also spawn two brilliant semi-sequels, Vice City and San Andreas, both of which elaborated on GTA III's core gameplay, but we think the original is still the best.



GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Final Fantasy XII

2

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **160**
HYPER SCORE: **96**

While Final Fantasy X may have been an unmistakable masterpiece, Final Fantasy XII was even better. For the twelfth instalment in the perpetually final role-playing series, Square Enix took all the good parts of the Final Fantasy formula and threw the rest out the window. The traditional (and irritating) random battles were gone, the new "gambit" system allowed you more control over your party than ever before and the world could now be completely explored in 3D, setting yet another high watermark for the Final Fantasy series.

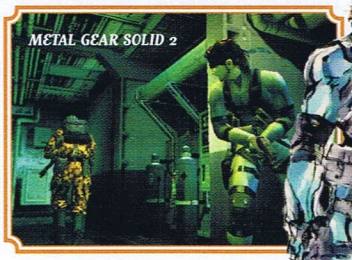
FINAL FANTASY XII

Metal Gear Solid II: Sons of Liberty

3

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **101**
HYPER SCORE: **96**

The ending may have made no sense at all, and the introduction of the effeminate new protagonist, Raiden, may have bothered some fans, but Metal Gear Solid II: Sons of Liberty was still a cracking game.



METAL GEAR SOLID 2

From the moment the game opened with Solid Snake leaping from the Manhattan Bridge onto the deck of a glistening, rain-swept oil tanker, to the ridiculously overblown ending, Sons of Liberty was a stealth action game like no other. There is some contention as to whether MGS3: Snake Eater was the better of the two sequels, but for us, the second is the most solid.

Pro Evolution Soccer 6

4

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **158**
HYPER SCORE: **95**

For some Pro Evolution simply represents the finest example of a sports game ever made, while to others it's a crippling addiction that consumes their every waking moment. Whatever your thoughts, Pro Evo is good. Damn good.

With team A.I. and ball physics that put the competition's efforts (read: FIFA) to shame, as well as gorgeous graphics and the truest representation of the drama and tension of a real soccer match, Pro Evo rightfully deserves its reputation as the best sports series in existence. With this sixth instalment Konami included more official licensed teams than ever before, including the entire Australian 2006 World Cup side. It doesn't get much better than this.

PRO EVO 6

by Maurice Branscombe.

Okami

5

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **155**
HYPER SCORE: **93**

With visuals that look more like a traditional Japanese painting than a videogame, Okami saw the player controlling a white wolf named Amaterasu in a Legend of Zelda-inspired adventure through Japanese mythology. Not only is the adventure vast and absorbing, but also with its unique celestial brush device, you can paint commands onto the screen to attack enemies and solve puzzles.

It may be a late entry when compared to some games on this list, but in the short time since its release Okami has definitely earned its spot amongst the best games of the PS2 era.

Dreamcast

It's easy to forget that SEGA's sadly underrated dream machine was even part of the console generation just past. After all, the Dreamcast was officially laid to rest in early 2001, just one year after the release of the PlayStation 2.

Nevertheless, SEGA's final console had some truly amazing games, and what's more, you can probably pick up most of the games on our top-ten for ridiculously low prices (with the exception of Ikaruga, of course). You'd best get collecting people!

1. Soul Calibur
2. Shenmue
3. Marvel Vs Capcom 2
4. Ikaruga
5. Rez
6. Jet Set Radio
7. Metropolis Street Racer
8. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
9. Virtua Fighter 3TB
10. Sonic Adventure

Katamari Damacy

6

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **137**
HYPER SCORE: **93**

Few games of the PlayStation 2 generation were as blindingly original as Katamari Damacy. Seeing you take the role of the Prince of All Cosmos, you are tasked with the job of rolling everything in sight into a huge ball, and eventually sending the ball into space to reform the stars and planets that your father accidentally destroyed.

Criminally, the original Katamari Damacy was never released in here in Australia, but after the game's better than expected performance in the North American market, PAL regions did receive the sequel, We ♥ Katamari. While the second outing was just as good, the innovator remains our favourite.

ICO

7

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **102**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

Telling the story of an outcast young boy who must rescue a princess named Yorda from being consumed by the shadowy demons that lurk in her castle, ICO was brilliant in its simplicity. You must simply guide Yorda by the hand around the castle, solving puzzles and staving off the demons – all the while forming an unspoken bond with the helpless girl. ICO was one of the most beautifully designed games of the PlayStation era, something that garnered it critical praise, but despite this it sold poorly. Just goes to show that there's no accounting for taste...

God of War

8

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **141**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

No list of great PlayStation 2 games would be complete without an appearance from possibly the hardest man in gaming, Kratos. By perfecting the use of cinematic camera angles, God of War avoided one of the most irritating things about so many 3D action games, poor camera control, but that wasn't all this game had in store for us. The combat was straightforward button mashing stuff, but there was enough variation in Kratos' abilities to always stay entertaining, while the game's implementation of quick-timer events was actually made fun, unlike the frustrating interactive cinemas seen in so many other games. Cap it all off with an epic story ripped from Greek mythology, enormous boss battles and brain teasing puzzles and you have the recipe for one hell of a game.

Guitar Hero

9

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **153**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

One of the greatest innovations of the past console generation is actually just a direct copy of Konami's GuitarFreaks series of games, but, since Konami never got off their arses to released their rhythm game outside Japan, the blokes at RedOctane and Harmonix did us the favour of releasing their, admittedly much better, riff on the same idea.

With a soundtrack of classic rock tunes and simple but addictive gameplay that's almost impossible to resist, Guitar Hero has become not just one of our favourite PlayStation 2-era games, but it's become one of the rest of the world's favourites too.

Capcom vs. SNK 2 Mark of the Millennium

10

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **98**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

Without doubt, Capcom vs. SNK 2 is the greatest 2D fighter ever devised – no wait, let me correct that – it's the greatest fighter ever devised in any number of dimensions.

Combining the best fighters from Capcom's Street Fighter II, Alpha and Darkstalkers series, with combatants from SNK's King of Fighters, Samurai Showdown and Last Blade games, CVS2 allowed you to see who really ruled the roost with almost 50 characters. With six "grooves" (options that completely change the rules for your character) to choose from, there are essentially six different games locked up in this one disk, basically making it an inexhaustible source of fun.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

- *Onimusha*
- *Devil May Cry*
- *Wipeout Fusion*
- *Tekken 5*
- *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*
- *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories*
- *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*
- *Spiderman 2*
- *Soul Calibur III*
- *Silent Hill 3*
- *Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec*

Xbox

In 2002 the Microsoft Xbox released unto an expectant public. The machine's sheer bulk and weight made it a curiosity amongst consoles, and had many sceptical gamers claiming that the Xbox was little more than a PC masquerading as a console. Nevertheless, the Xbox's superior graphical capabilities when compared to the PlayStation 2 won it a loyal fan base, and the machine went on to experience limited success, selling upwards of 25 million units. While that figure may seem minuscule when compared to the staggering PS2 sales, it was still enough to put the Xbox in second place ahead of Nintendo's GameCube. / Over the years the Xbox experienced many ups and downs; the discontinuation of the enormous "Duke" control pad and the instatement of the "Controller S" as the standard game pad and a scandal that saw them having to replace more than 14 million faulty power cables in an effort to prevent a fire hazard, but in the end it's the great games that we'll remember the Xbox for. Here are but a few of the best...

1 Halo: Combat Evolved

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **102**
HYPER SCORE: **96**

Halo is probably more responsible for people buying the Xbox than any other game, and as such it takes its rightful place at the top of the console's greatest hits.

The level design may have been a bit repetitive, but the amazing visuals, intelligent AI enemies, and superb action made the Master Chief an instant legend.

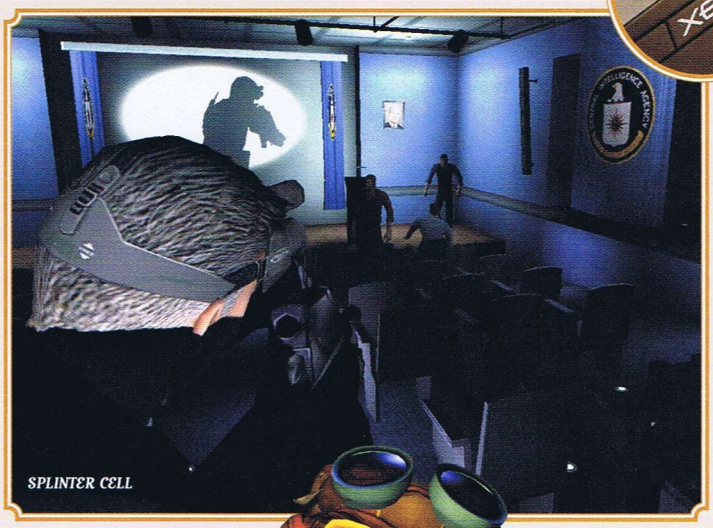
The sequel was fantastic too, but that game's lacking single player game let it down — so we think the original remains the prime example of the Halo franchise.

2 Splinter Cell

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **111**
HYPER SCORE: **94**

Although Sam Fisher would later appear on every platform known to man, he made his debut on the Xbox, and quickly established himself as the new face of tactical espionage action.

Featuring all the shadow sneaking, gadget-using, split-jumping action (and let's not forget the voice of Michael Ironside) that would make the game an international success, the original Splinter Cell was easily one of the Xbox's most elite.



3 Psychonauts

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **145**
HYPER SCORE: **94**

Not only did Tim Schafer's game about a summer camp for psychic school kids feature platforming action that would make Nintendo jealous, but it was one of the smartest, funniest, and most fun, games to ever set down on Microsoft's big black box.

If you didn't play Psychonauts when it first released, then you're not alone, since it didn't sell at all — something that still shocks and appals us to this day. This game is so good that we could have even included it in the top ten of every console, but the Xbox version had the best visuals, so we'll just settle for one.

4 Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **122**
HYPER SCORE: **93**

Making you an Indiana Jones-esque hero in an alternate reality 1930s, Crimson Skies put you and your aeroplane up against sky pirates in a dog-fighting air duel to the death, and what's more, it looked and played fantastically.

Most people would have encountered Crimson Skies as a free bonus when they purchased a year's worth of access to the Xbox Live service, since Microsoft deemed the game so good they made it the standard entry point for all new Xbox Live subscribers. While most subscribers just went on to play Halo anyway, Crimson Skies was definitely one of the Xbox's best.

5 Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **130**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

It's surprising to think that a licensed game could have made it into the top ten list of Xbox games, let alone a game licensed from a pretty mediocre film, but that is the situation we find ourselves in with Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay.

Starring Vinny D himself as

the titular character, Escape from Butcher Bay was set before the events of Pitch Black, and saw you getting into, and out of, a triple-maximum security prison using stealth, craftiness and extreme violence.

Not only was Butcher Bay better than both the movies it was based on, but it was also better than most other action games on the Xbox, making it one of the consoles best.

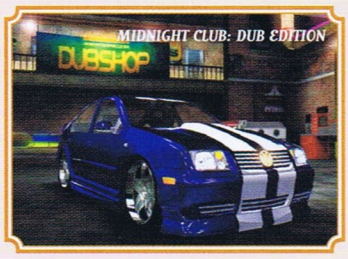
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition

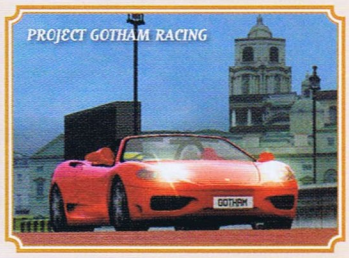
6

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **140**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

The product of a partnership between car rag DUB Magazine and Rockstar Games, Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition was the pinnacle of last-generation's tuner racing games, and on the Xbox, it never looked better.

Letting you ride lead-footed through the streets of San Diego, Atlanta and Detroit in a huge variety of completely customisable licensed vehicles from manufacturers like Nissan, Chevrolet, Dodge, Lamborghini and more, DUB was everything a car freak needed. When we first reviewed it we gave it our big rubber stamp of approval, and we're giving it another today.





Project Gotham Racing

7

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **102**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

Inheriting all the best things about Bizarre Creation's previous car game, Metropolis Street Racer on Dreamcast, Project Gotham Racing took you to four of the world's most recognisable cities, London, New York, Tokyo and San Francisco and let you loose in some of the fasters cars to ever burn rubber.

The cities were accurately modelled and intricately detailed, while the cars handling was a cross between simulation and arcade styles, making it look and play great. One of the best features though was the "Kudos" system, which rewarded you with points based on how well you raced and not just what place you went through the chequered flag.

Ninja Gaiden

8

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **128**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

Ninja Gaiden was so good that its developers, Team Ninja, decided to remake if two more times instead of moving on to a sequel. It's the original Xbox version, however, that stands out as being the best, most original, iteration of the game.

With a rock-hard difficulty level, gorgeous graphics, a varied combat system and compelling level design, this is the game that made most other Xbox action/adventure games look half-arsed in comparison.

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II

9

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **136**
HYPER SCORE: **91**

Thankfully avoiding being in any way connected to the prequel trilogy, KOTOR II was set thousands of years before the events of any filmed Star Wars adventure, and not only that, but it was far better than even its own prequel. Playing as an exiled Jedi, you had to explore a galaxy far, far away, recruit a variety of party members and battle your enemies – turn-based style! Add into the mix the ability to align yourself with either the light side or the dark side and the force was certainly strong with KOTOR II.

Fable

10

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **133**
HYPER SCORE: **89**

It never fulfilled creator Peter Molyneux's ambitious promises, but nevertheless Fable remains one of the Xbox's best games. Allowing you to choose the path of good or evil, Fable presented you with an epic fantasy experience, with some great real-time combat, magic powers and a branching storyline. The game's world was ultimately small, and the game could be finished in around twenty hours, but believe us when we tell you that Fable was a case of quality over quantity.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

- *Halo 2*
- *Amped*
- *Dead or Alive 3*
- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*
- *Shenmue II*
- *Voodoo Vince*
- *Jade Empire*
- *Full Spectrum Warrior*
- *Forza*
- *Jet Set Radio Future*
- *Burnout Revenge*

GameCube

The GameCube was the underdog of the last console generation. While it had some phenomenally good games and graphics that bested the PS2 and rivalled the Xbox for attractiveness to the eye, it never really picked up steam. The GCN managed to sell a reported 20 million units since its release in 2001, with the console fading into obsolescence long before its successor, the Wii, would arrived in late 2006. / Despite its relative unpopularity, the GameCube had some of the best games of the past generation, mostly thanks to Nintendo themselves and a select few of their first-party developers. / Nintendo's "quality over quantity" motto certainly held true, since the GameCube didn't have nearly as many games as the other two consoles, but amongst its small library of titles were classics like the ones listed right here.

The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

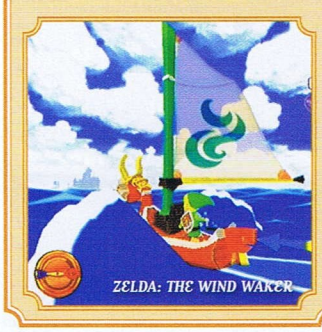
1

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **116**
HYPER SCORE: **97**

While it caused its fair share of controversy in its time, Zelda: The Wind Waker is quite rightly recognised as the crowning achievement of the Gamecube era. The controversy of course came from the game's cel-shaded graphics, which were a radical departure from the previous game, Ocarina of Time, with many feeling that the cartoon-like visuals were too childish.

Nevertheless, the game looked and played gorgeously. The cel-shaded graphics game an entirely fresh outlook on the world of Hyrule, something that was further felt in the new Water World-like setting, where the entire land is covered in ocean. Link's nautical adventures would include galleons, pirates, buried treasure and, of course, plenty of ingeniously designed dungeons to challenge you.

While we did consider including The Twilight Princess in its place (since it's technically a GameCube game that got a Wii port), we still think The Wind Waker is the better of the two. A genuine masterpiece.



Metroid Prime

2

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **113**
HYPER SCORE: **96**

The first game in the series to make the transition from two dimensions to three, Metroid Prime had a lot riding on its success. Thankfully, not only did it come good on changing Metroid from platform game to first-person shooter, but it also managed to be on of the best Gamecube game of all time.

With all the hidden upgrades, secret passageways and labyrinthine level designs intact, as well as enemies that included space pirates and the metroids themselves, Metroid Prime remains one of Samus Aran's greatest adventures.

Resident Evil 4

3

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **138**
HYPER SCORE: **94**

When Capcom announced that the Resident Evil series would be exclusive to the GameCube for the entire last console generation, it understandably caused quite a stir. Not without good reason either, since the resultant game, Resident Evil 4, is considered the series' most brilliant instalment.

With a complete re-imagining of the series formula, the replacement of traditional zombies with intelligent villagers who are under a mysterious mind control and a compelling storyline centred on a strange Spanish cult, this was Res Evil as we'd never seen it before – and it was great.

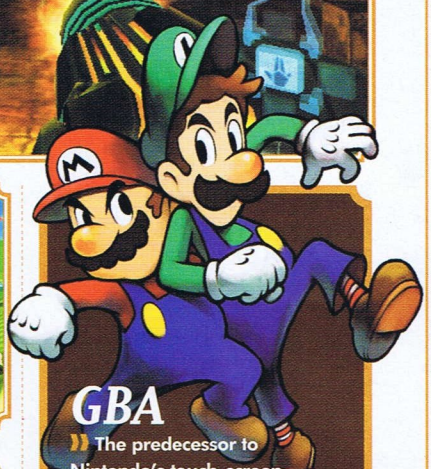
The game would, of course, make it to other platforms eventually, but by that time we'd already played it to death on our GameCubes, making this version our favourite.

Super Mario Sunshine

4

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **109**
HYPER SCORE: **93**

While it may not have met the lofty expectations many held for it, there is no doubt in our minds that Super Mario Sunshine was the finest platform game of the GameCube generation. Sunshine took everything that was great about Super Marion 64, and introduced a new gadget for Mario to use, the FLUDD, a powerful water cannon/jetpack contraption. In the tropical paradise of Delfino Island Mario had to track down the sneakily hidden "Shines" to bring light back to the world. With plenty of trademark Mario moments, the reappearance of Yoshi as a rideable character and of course, Princess Peach getting kidnapped a couple of times, Super Mario Sunshine shone brightly.



GBA

The predecessor to Nintendo's touch-screen phenomenon, the DS, was the Gameboy Advance. Widely considered to be a SNES in portable form, the GBA had its fair share of lazy ports from the 16-bit days, but amongst the rubbish were a huge library of fantastic games. Here are but a few of the best.

1. Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga
2. The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap
3. Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising
4. Metroid Fusion
5. Astro Boy: Omega Factor
6. Pokemon Emerald
7. Fire Emblem
8. Mario Kart: Super Circuit
9. Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow
10. Final Fantasy Tactics Advance

Super Smash Bros. Melee

5

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **105**
HYPER SCORE: **93**

Is there anything that's not cool about beating the stuffing out of a Pikachu with a surly Italian plumber, a master swordsman or a cyber-suited bounty hunter? No there's not, and that's why Super Smash Bros. Melee is among the GameCube's best.

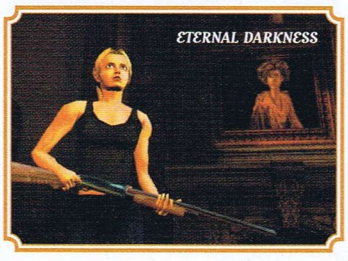
With a roster of classic Nintendo characters including Mario, Luigi, Samus, Link, Donkey Kong, Captain Falcon and many more all going at it in four-player melee mayhem, Smash Bros. Melee was an intense fighting game experience. Best of all though was the trophy collection system that kept you playing for months trying to collect every trophy to put in you virtual Nintendo museum.

Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem

6

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **109**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

Set firmly in the Resident Evil mould, Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem was a survival horror game with several very unique differences. The first of which was that the story spanned over thousands of years, with you taking control of different characters throughout history, all following the same story, that of three evil gods attempting to invade and control the Earth. The second, and most amazing addition was the "sanity effects". When your character's sanity is put under pressure by the game's many horrors, they will start to hallucinate, causing weird things to happen in the game. Examples include a fake message appearing to congratulate you for finishing the game, or the game pretending to reset itself, a fake blue screen of death among other very strange occurrences. Freaky, but good.



Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door

7

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **134**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

The second in the Paper Mario series and the third time the moustachioed mascot had branched out into the world of role-playing games, Thousand Year Door was a humour-filled quest that showed the Mario universe in an entirely different light. Princess Peach is, once again, kidnapped, but this time not by Bowser, but by a mysterious gang called the X-Nauts. Mario makes friends with a ghost, a koopa, a goomba and a few other misfits and they set out to rescue her, with much turn-based fighting and treasure hunting to be done. Meanwhile Bowser has grown jealous of the X-Nauts, because kidnapping Princesses is supposed to be his hobby, so in the end you'll get to control Bowser, Peach and Mario throughout the game.

It never takes itself seriously and is more than willing to make fun of the traditional Mario conventions, making sure Paper Mario 2 never falls flat.

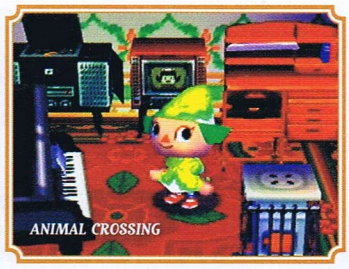
Resident Evil (Remake)

8

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **108**
HYPER SCORE: **92**

The second Resident Evil title to make our top list of GameCube games is the console's exclusive remake of the original survival horror game from Capcom. When the world first laid eyes on the Resident Evil remake, we could hardly believe what we saw.

Heavily detailed characters set against some beautifully animated pre-rendered backgrounds gave this game a look unsurpassed by any of Capcom's games of the time, and the gameplay while it remained true to its source material, provided enough surprises to keep even the most experienced Res Evil fan hooked. It's the ultimate version of this classic game, and as such deserves its place in GameCube history.



Pikmin

9

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **105**
HYPER SCORE: **90**

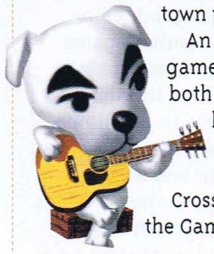
Apparently Shigeru Miyamoto got the idea for Pikmin one day whilst he was doing a spot of gardening. If that's the case, then we demand that Shiggy get back in the garden, because Pikmin was brilliant. A combination of strategy and action, Pikmin allowed you to lead an army of sentient carrots into battle, as well as getting them to solve puzzles and collect mechanical parts for your broken spaceship. Here's hoping for a new Pikmin on Wii or DS.

Animal Crossing

10

REVIEWED IN ISSUE: **149**
HYPER SCORE: **86**

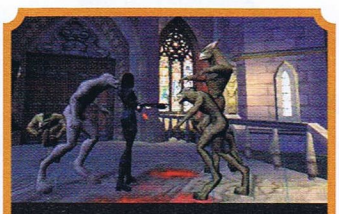
Allowing you to immerse yourself in a town full of cute anthropomorphic inhabitants, Animal Crossing quested you with the task of making friends, growing fruit trees, digging up fossils, fishing, and acquiring as many worldly possessions as possible, with the ultimate goal being to pay off your home loan, and make your town perfect.



An addictive game that attracted both casual and hardcore gamers in droves, Animal Crossing is one of the Gamecube's best.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

- *Zelda: Twilight Princess*
- *Metal Gear Solid: Twin Snakes*
- *Viewtiful Joe*
- *Killer 7*
- *Super Monkey Ball*
- *Soul Calibur II*
- *Resident Evil Zero*
- *F-Zero GX*
- *Star Fox Adventures*
- *Metroid Prime 2: Echos*
- *Luigi's Mansion*



THE SHAME OF A GENERATION

Roll up, roll up, dear readers and cast your eyes upon just a few of the most deformed, twisted games of the last generation to ever be reviewed in the pages of Hyper. These freaks of game design are so hideous that we wouldn't even recommend you play them if they were the last games on earth. Particular mention really should go out to Cricket 2004, a game that probably gave more Aussies tears for Christmas than any other on this list – and they definitely weren't the tears of joy kind.

They're grotesquely bad readers, so approach them at your own peril...

1. *Underworld*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **12** • IN ISSUE: **127**

2. *Catwoman*
PLATFORM: **PS2/XBOX/GCN**
SCORE: **24** • IN ISSUE: **132**

3. *Rogue Ops*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **24** • IN ISSUE: **128**

4. *Army Men: Green Rogue*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **30** • IN ISSUE: **92**

5. *The Simpsons: Skateboarding*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **30** • IN ISSUE: **112**

6. *Th3 Plan*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **31** • IN ISSUE: **154**

7. *Rampage: Total Destruction*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **32** • IN ISSUE: **152**

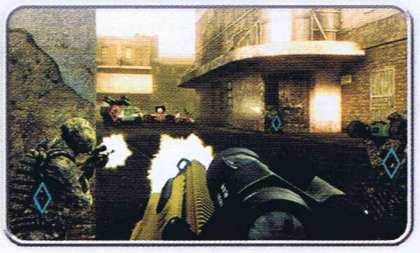
8. *Spawn: Armageddon*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **33** • IN ISSUE: **125**

9. *Urban Reign*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **33** • IN ISSUE: **149**

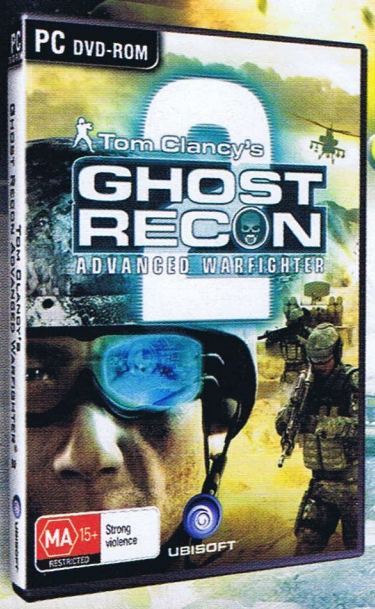
10. *Cricket 2004*
PLATFORM: **PS2**
SCORE: **39** • IN ISSUE: **125**

THE TACTICAL FIRST PERSON SHOOTER DEVELOPED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PC

Individual order system, strategic planning phase, extended supports, specific maps, various environments.



Battle with up to 32 players in one of the 7 coop and adversarial multiplayer modes including the brand new "Recon vs Assault" mode.



Tom Clancy's
GHOST RECON
ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

INSTORE JULY 12

MA 15+ Strong violence
RESTRICTED

POWERED BY gamespy
PhysX by ageia
www.ghostrecon.com
PC DVD ROM

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UBISOFT

GOING BACK TO CALI

CHRISTIAN READ HANGS OUT WITH SOME PRO STUNTMEN FOR AN INSIDE SCOOP ON STUNTMAN: IGNITION

I am shaking Mr. T's hand. I am on a red carpet and looking at Jessica Alba. BA frigging Baracus is making the same joke over and over and calling himself 'T'. My god. What happened in my life to lead me to this?

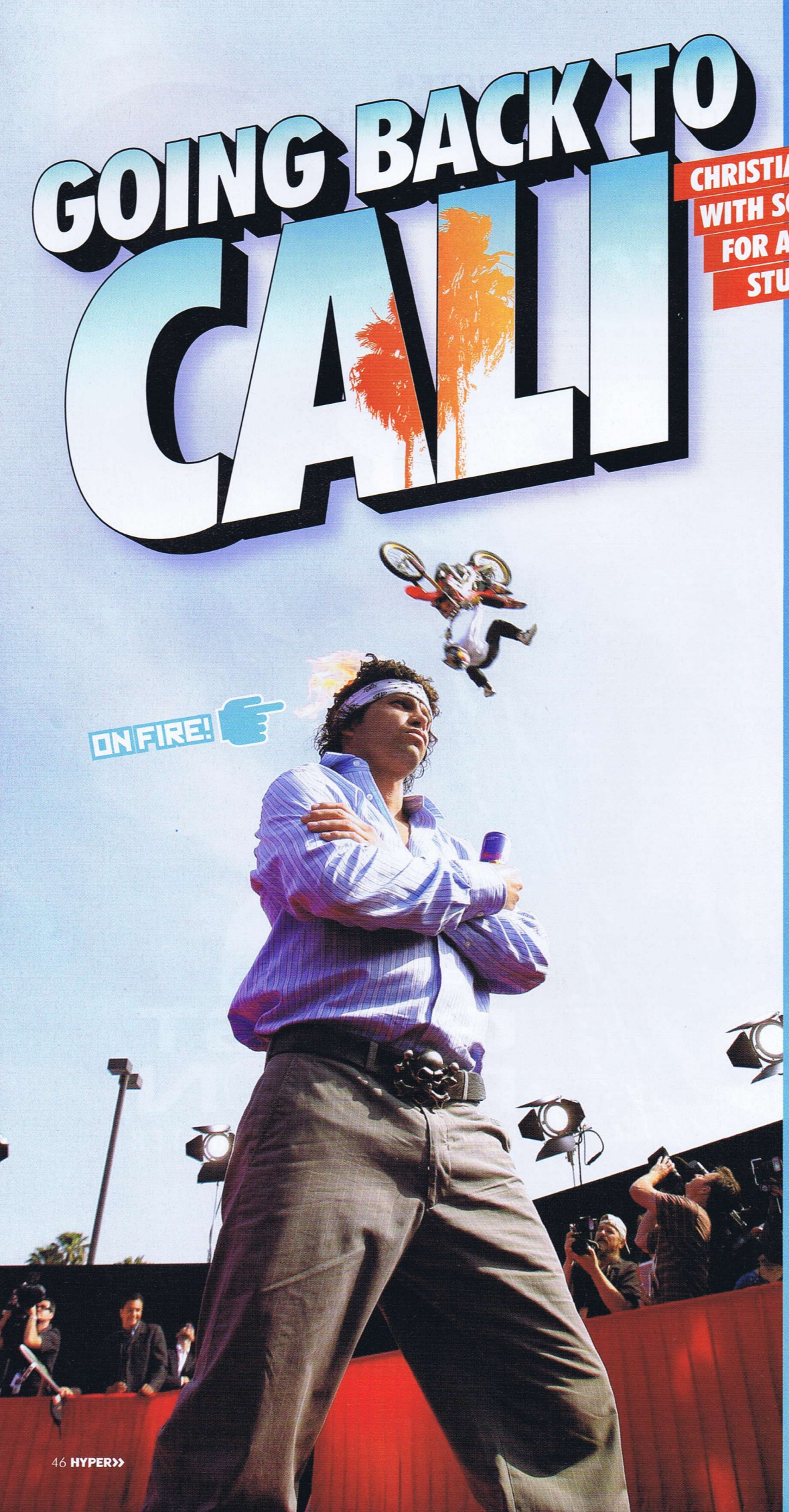
Very simple, really. THQ are releasing Stuntman: Ignition, a new game where you play, well, you can guess. Therefore, they have decreed that I need to go over to LA and experience the mind-bending insanity and breath-taking lack of self-regard and preservation that is the existence of the stuntman and believe me, these lads are not like you and me. Well, not like me.

Stuntman is at heart a driving game and benefited from extensive input from James Cheek, a stuntman and driver from many, many films. This self-effacing and rather laid back fellow, who asks me to simply call him Cheeks, got his start as a Gladiator from the dopey old TV show where men in tights hit citizens with nerf weapons. Gold. From there, Cheeks got his breaks stunting in the movies where he took a punch meant for Shaquille O'Neal. 'The gig was falling down two flights of a concrete spiral staircase.' I asked him what kind of preparation you do for this kind of thing. I had visions of elaborate planning, of padding, of ducking and rolling techniques. No. Nothing like that. 'You tuck.'

That's it for the preparation?

'Yeah. Well... and you hope nothing goes wrong.'

I would spend a lot of time with Cheeks over the next few days and it was the recurring theme of hanging out with the guy. He detailed a lot of stunts, showed us a lot of crazy driving. The thing that both wildly impressed and terrified me was not the lack of fear he displayed but the very casual attitude he had towards his own abilities. It wasn't that he was somehow unaware of the danger or super-macho in laughing it off. There's no 'stuntmen laugh at calamity and eat death for tea!' He simply accepts it and greets it with due respect. And then ignores it. Which is why he worked on 2Fast 2Furious and Into the Blue and more besides.



MAIN PHOTO: TAURUS WORLD STUNT AWARDS.

'It's the opposite of hard, making a living driving sideways,' breezes the affable Sam Hubinette. Sam, nicknamed the Crazy Swede, is here to show us the stunt driving he did for Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift. He discusses his early training in small town Sweden, driving on ice lakes as a boy, eventually going to work as a test driver for Volvo. He casually discusses spinning out on his way to work, flipping the car twice. As stunt men seem to be adept at, he literally shrugs the story off as I gaze at him, amazed. 'It happens.' From there he moved into stunt driving for films, working under stunt legend Terry Leonard, a man who doubled for John freaking Wayne.

Cheeks describes himself as a 'Rent-a-Car Felon.' Apparently, one of the secrets of the trade is that you can't always get the good cars all the time. 'Beaters', Cheeks calls them. 'So you rent cars and you... thrash them.' He has problems hiring cars now because he's destroyed so many. How the hell do you get so good at driving? 'I dunno. Trial and error?' grins Sam. 'You just have to keep concentration. It's when you relax that you're in danger.'

I can't help but wonder how you maintain a career driving extremely fast and dangerously for a living, continually risking a terrifying and violent death. Both of them seem almost puzzled by the question, as if any other way to make a crust was beyond contemplation. 'You just develop a need for driving,' says Sam. James seems equally as addicted to danger. 'Sometimes you just plain have to get out there and go fast. It's Saturday today. I'll be able to hold out to Monday then I'll have to get a car, somehow, and go.'

I've never faced anything more dangerous than a deadline. They don't even care about said danger. They're not unaware of the risks, or elaborately suicidal. Nope. They've simply touched the power of speed, the elaborate thrill of motion and have no desire to let go.

Cheeks had a lot of input into the game. 'They didn't know about how cars feel on grass, on roads, the difference in traction. I had to talk to them about how a car handles at those kinds of speeds. They didn't get it.' Until he took one of the developers into the carpark and showed what drift feels like. By molesting an Audi. 'They got a lot of it right now, though'.

When the talking is done, me and some fellows along for the ride are at a bit of a loose end with how to spend our Friday night. We know we should probably go to bed early, be responsible journalists and prepare for the stunt driving displays. We know that the jet lag is still at us a little bit and we must prepare ourselves for the rigors of a working journo's life.

We know we are in LA and are drinking on someone else's tab. We go to the hallowed bastion of Hair Metal, the Rainbow Room.

In his autobiography, Lemmy of the band Motorhead describes how he spends most of his time there, drinking. The walls are festooned with images of the kinds of patrons of this fine establishment. A quick glance immediately fills your hair with spray, sticks mascara on your eyes and lycra on your legs. Codpieces may fill those pants. The Rainbow Room rocks out so hard it mutates the physical properties of things! Women are transformed into vamps with tiny cut off shorts! All around us are men with too many rings on their fingers and ripped jeans. Every second is like being in a Motley Crue video.

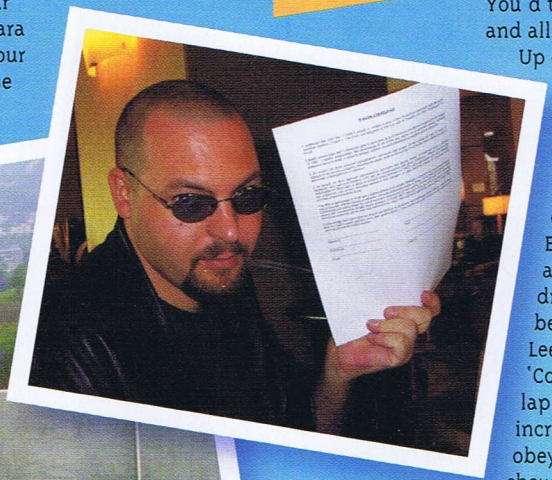
Some fool is about to be pitied and some jibba-jabba is going to be challenged

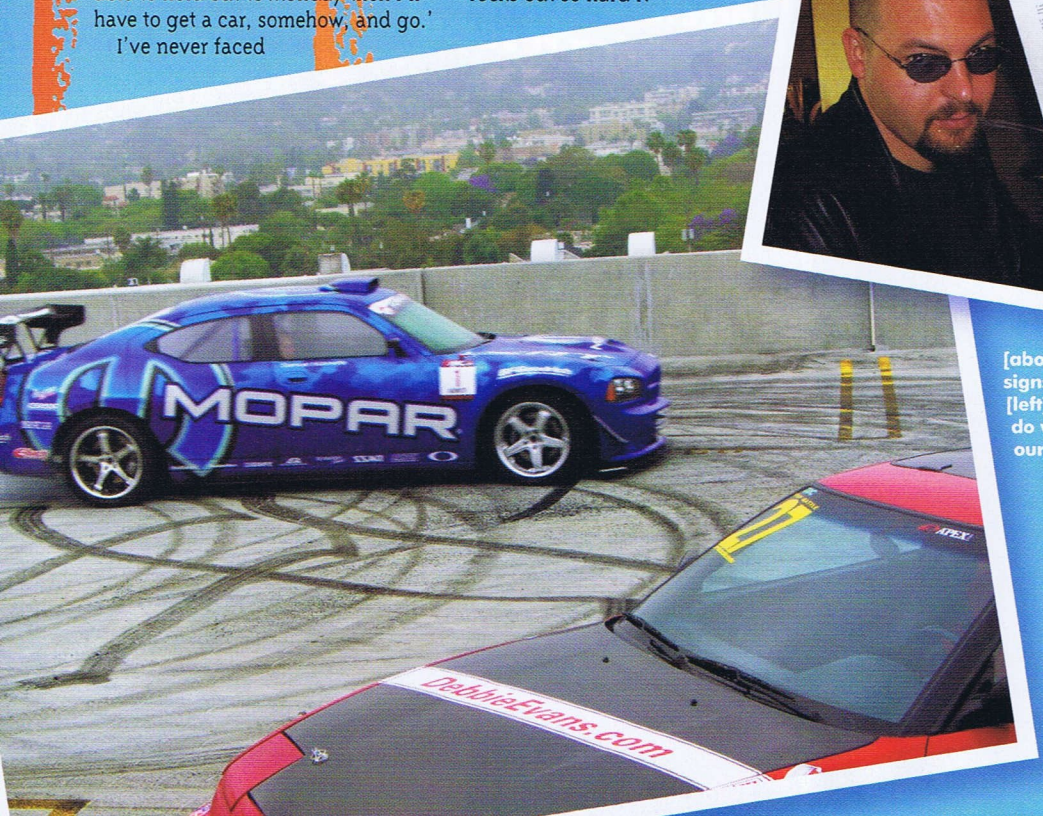
> "How the hell do you get so good at driving? 'I dunno. Trial and error?' grins Sam."

In LA, celeb spotting is a big deal. Never mind that celebrities are so protected and insulated from the real world that the idea of descending from the heavens to, you know, have a drink and a spot of dinner is impossible. You can tell the hiring policies at the Rainbow aren't exactly based on any Fair Practice law. Fakes boobs everywhere. Collagen inflated lips. You'd think it would be super sexy and all rock star hot but it isn't.

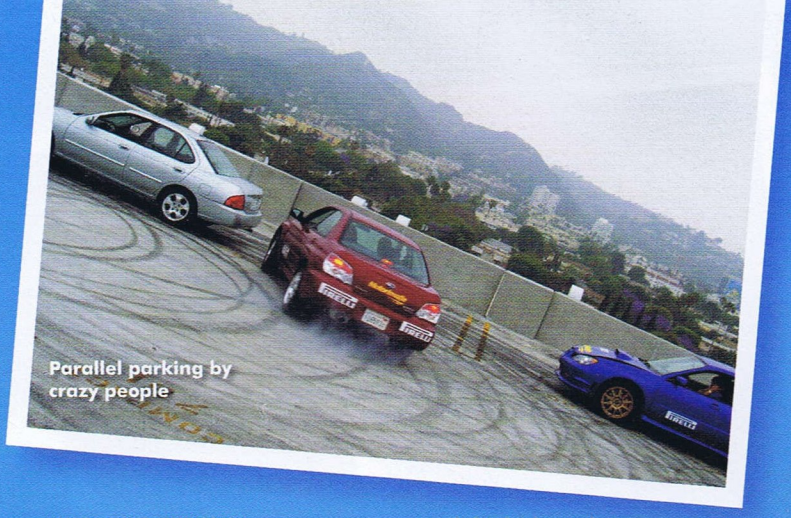
Up close, the poor waitresses don't even look real but more like something that feasts upon the ocean floor. And the guys are magnificent in the way that only Americans can get. Enormously loud, arrogant and apparently content to drink their effeminate light beer. I am convinced that Stan Lee is sitting two tables down. 'Come here and sit on daddy's lap!' Stan commands and the incredible redhead waitress obeys him. All this as Cheeks shows us home videos of stunts and describes a scene in Gone in Sixty Seconds where cops got involved in a car chase. 'The extras thought the cops were other extras in fake cops cars. They went driving everywhere.'

Then, James Brown's widow, Tommy Rae sits down with us to have a chat and that, my friends, is the absolute truth. She struts about like a queen with a sway to her hips like a gunfighter. Nothing can top that so I stagger away from the Rainbow. I have stunt driving to do.





[above] Christian signs his life away [left] We could do with less-Par ourselves



Parallel parking by crazy people

JUST DRIVE, SHE SAID

I am sitting on bleachers seven storeys up, looking at the famous Hollywood sign through evil layers of smog, calmly smoking a cigarette and hoping not to get burned by the relentless Cali sun when the Great Beasts begin to growl. Have you ever heard a racing car up close? I have. The enormous power of the machines is only really appreciable when your ears are vibrating with it. Seven floors below and I can hear them getting closer. Some atavistic sense in me tells me I'm being hunted and to flee. Then, they race into view. Hubinette and his Charger and absolute legend and innovator, Debbie Evan, stuntwoman supreme, synchronized drift directly in front of me, screeching doughnuts that send plumes of smoke out into the sky. The speed and precision is overwhelming.

Then I see how Hubinette got the nickname 'Crazy Swede'. The insane bugger, while drifting, opens the door, leans out and begins to wave. There is no choice but to cheer the bastard on.

Russ Swift is an affable Northern Englishman who looks like your dad. He holds many world records, including parallel parking. Now, I don't actually drive myself. Never got around to learning how but that doesn't stop me being kind of unimpressed with that. He has a record for parking? Bah.

He accelerates the Impressa down the open air parking lot that I'm watching this on, then hurls the car into an insanely tight turning circle, slamming on the handbrake, bringing the car from 100kph to nothing, perfectly parked between two cars. Up against a concrete wall. He has about a foot on each side of him. Hamming it up he asks 'Closer?' Of course. Three times he does the same trick, the gap between the cars becoming perilously smaller each time. Later, Russ will tell me that he made the record for this trick three times. First, he parks with fifty three centimeters to spare. Then forty. His closest park is in the Guinness book of world records, thirty three centimeters of space to park in. Hold out your hands for a second and think about that.

'I was going for thirty five but someone got the measuring wrong,' he laughs.

Stuntmen. They laugh a lot.

Russ does a bunch of trick driving before, eventually, the inevitable happens. 'In you go.' And I am in a car with a mental patient who wants to drive me on two wheels. You know. The diagonal trick. The car drives up a ramp then glides over concrete on two wheels. I vaguely expect to be terrified so I'm as surprised as anyone when I start to laugh like a hyena.

I have a bad hip, ironically caused by a driving accident a few years ago. I walk on a cane. When a car lands down from this maneuver, there's a surprising amount of force and weight that shoots through you. After five goes, I have to beg out. No more two-wheel tricks. Instead, we just fang about like hoons. Doughnuts, high speed reversals, spin outs, high speed drifts, things I have no idea what to name. Gravity presses down on my chest and adrenaline strikes my blood like lightning. I've driven fast before but never like this. There's a music term, 'accelerando'. It means to speed up rapidly, usually on a piano. This man plays his car like a mother loving maestro.

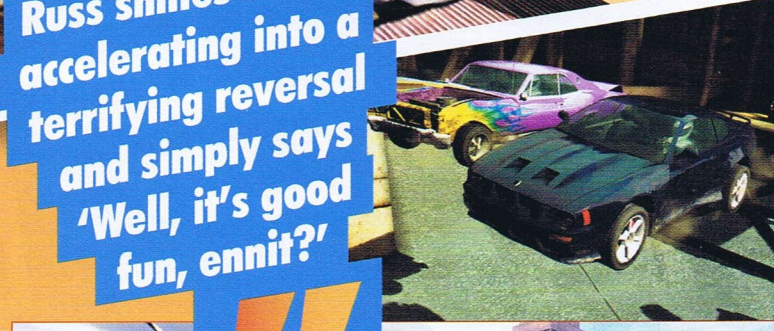
'How can you keep doing this after thirty years with the same enthusiasm?' Russ smiles while accelerating into a terrifying reversal and simply says 'Well, it's good fun, ennit?'

The thing is, despite all the speed and rubber flying and total lack of control of my own, you know, ability not to die in a car crash, it never even occurs to me to be afraid. The man's skill and precision are total. This isn't some bogan doing spin outs in his old Holden. I manage to look down during one reversal to note the extraordinary speed Russ' hands shifting through the gears. I get out of the car elated. 'I shall devote my life to the arts of drifting and scorn writing forever!' I cry out to the smoky skies. And I would, too. If I knew accelerator from brake.

Several stiff drinks later and the rush is over. Its time to have a look at the game.

SINGLE-PLAYER

"Russ smiles while accelerating into a terrifying reversal and simply says 'Well, it's good fun, ennit?'"



MULTI-PLAYER

STUNTMAN IGNITION

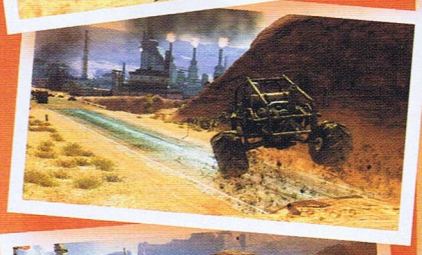
Stuntman plays out like a racer with a variety of added extras to give the impression that you are actually on a film set rather than in a race. The deal is that you're a young stuntman just starting out, looking to make a name for yourself. As the game races, directors let you know what to do, where to drive, what tricks you should be performing. For instance, on a motorcycle, you immediately have to race between two cars, immediately drift out to the right, move through oncoming traffic, jump a cable car, slide under a helicopter then move rapidly through an underground parking lot. That's about as far as I got. All the time a director yells, cajoles or congratulates you as you race about the course, constantly looking for more and more dangerous tricks and moves to pick off.

The directors are one of the great joys of the game. The Carl Weather's-esque action director is a posing, arrogant bastard who yells and berates. There's a weird European art house auteur quietly encouraging you on and more besides. It's a rather neatly designed little technique that really brings home that on-the-set feeling. The intro video for Overdrive, the old school 70s cop film, racing through the streets of San Fran has got to take the cake for cop-on-the-edge cool.

Stuntman is, to be honest, a little difficult. On the normal play mode, you have five strikes, five mistakes you can make before the director kicks you off the set. That's not many in a game with a relatively steep learning curve. There is an easy mode but that only adds another two strikes.

Still, that doesn't matter so much because I suspect that multi-player will be the mode where Stutman will shine. It doesn't so much sacrifice the complex controls and finely tuned simulations of, say McCrea, as it ignores them in favour of balls. This is a game that rewards giant brass ones and racing against mates is where you show off that sense of audacity. It's a hell of a thing to be racing along, racking up the points with sweet combo moves when your opponent, who happens to have been fanging it on a nearby rooftop, leaps down on you, steals a NOS kit and slams it all on away.

This game sacrifices the extreme depth of control and details that fans of the race recreation drivers might crave but adds a hell of a lot of fun to compensate. This is the perfect multi-player party game, fast, crazy and wild. Playing out like Tony Hawk with the revhead power everyone craves in their hearts. You'll fancy it.



Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson with a stunt woman on fire

THE TAURUS AWARDS

Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans and Michael Chiklis

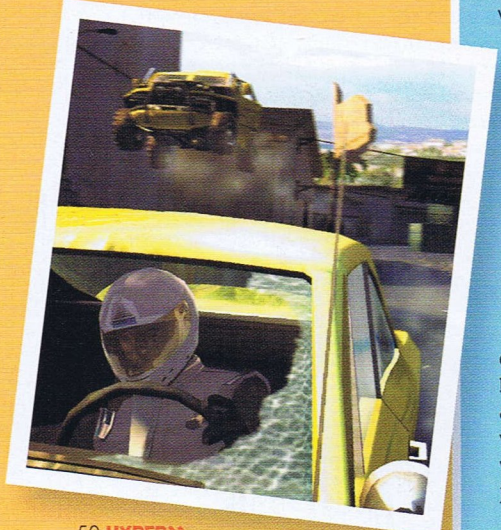
DEVELOPER Q&A

Lead designer Shawn Wright, a dapper and bespectacled chap, chatted briefly with me about the game. 'We rebuilt the engine from the first game. There's twenty five director stunts you can do. We call these strings. The more strings you put together, the more points you get. That's the heart of competitive play. In solo play, you want to be the best stuntman in the world so that means scoring stars. A simple pass level gives you one star, out of five.

We abandoned the time limit and replaced it with the [strikes] as we thought it just wasn't fun enough to always be chasing the clock.'

And how did the likes of Cheeks and Russ contribute from their end?

'Well, we had to make them understand it was a game, first and foremost and it had to be fun. We really had to be open about our communication at the beginning of the process. They really helped us understand what stunts felt like. More importantly, though, they let us in on what it was like to work with directors. Apparently, some of them really do have the kinds of personalities our script writer gave them.'



Chatting with the stunt guys really made me appreciate one thing: they're job is a much art as science and its much less high tech than what you'd think. Rolling down stairs, jumping off buildings, being set on fire, precision driving; the whole deal. You'd think there'd be hours of extremely careful set ups, health and safety, paramedics, physics and geometry working out speeds and impact zones. No. It's a lot more casual. These guys just... they just do it. No messing about.

So it is that in the last two years they've organized the Taurus Awards to celebrate the enormous amount of ungodly and dangerous work these deeply mental heroes do. There I am on the Red Carpet itself. Jessica Alba and the Fantastic Four walk past and the poor girl is so tiny, so thin she looks sick. Mr. T is there, in tennis shoes and he makes me wait while he poses with the pretty girls. So it is, I watch the extraordinary cheesiness of the Rock himself, his affable charisma washing out the worst of the stiff jokes and failed sketches and lame pirate swordfights and the rest. From there, it's just a cavalcade of celebrities.

Arnie himself comes out to play, looking very, very... presidential. Kelly Hu, Lady friggin' Deathstrike, is surprisingly lovely. David Spade is a nightmare of nastiness and there's a bunch of B-listers I never heard of. But then out he comes.

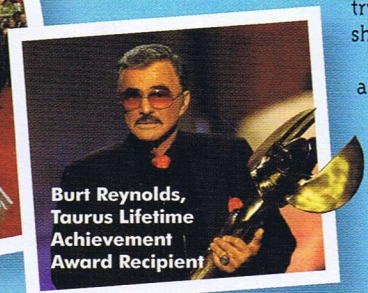
Most of you youngsters won't appreciate how great he was when he was the biggest star in the world but Burt Reynolds was the coolest. Seeing him, with his magnificent moustache back, is a bit of a personal thrill to me.

Then there's the entertainment. The first is the Diablo dance company. A group of pastel clad men and women do some kind of vaguely sexy dance, leaping about an automobile. It is a terrifying display of the worst kind of poncing about. Thankfully, there's a parkour show, a bunch of kids happily Free Running over a huge, fifty foot high stage, jumping and somersaulting at terrific heights and speeds, fearless and brilliant. Team Tempest, they're called and they are magnificent.

Casino Royale is the big winner that night, its free running and brutal fights loudly applauded. After some days with the stuntmen, I've got a little bit of insight into how this stunt bizzo works and Bond seems to me the best of the bunch. I'm left with one startling image. The Biggest Hit award doesn't go to dudes on fire, jumping off buildings. No. It goes to a simple stunt from a kid's movie in which a chap back flips onto a marble staircase. No pads, no fake stairs. He just takes it. Harsh. After that, it's dancing the night away with Hollywood babes at a Hollywood after-party, something I recommend you all try. Open bar, baby and a light show from world class VJs.

So it is I leave LA with a new appreciation of, and a desire to become, a drift racer. I can't do that. I guess the game is the closest I'm gonna get. Plug it in, brothers and sisters. Let's drive. <<

Kelly Hu



Burt Reynolds, Taurus Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

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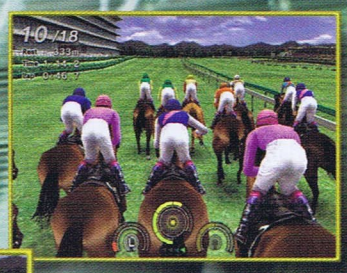

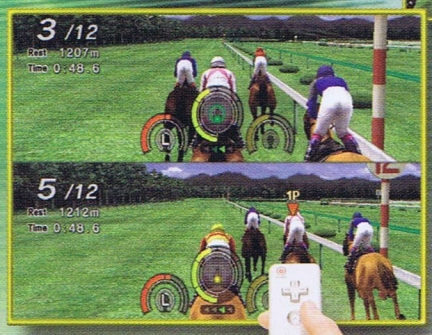

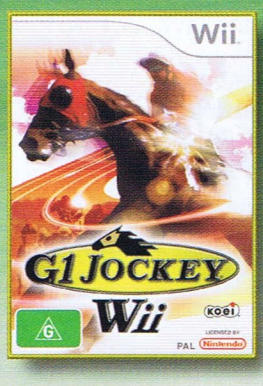

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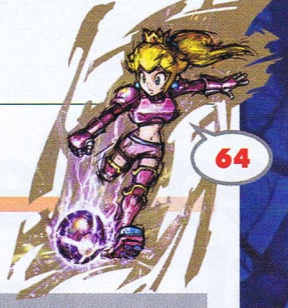
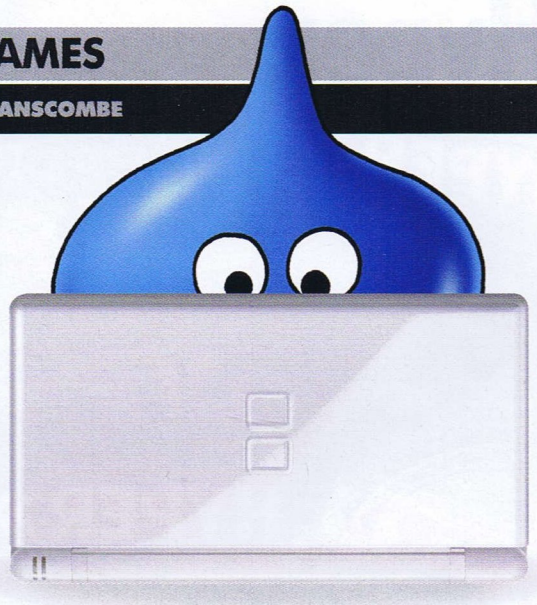


WAR GAMES

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE



Next Generation Over-Engineering

It's a question that gamers have been asking themselves ever since they first calculated the true cost of getting the most out of their next generation games machines, and one that game developers have been asking themselves since first getting their hands on next-gen development kits – are today's most powerful consoles too complex for their own good?

According to Yoichi Wada, the answer to that question is yes. As the Chief Executive Officer of Square Enix, makers of some of the most famous and popular console games of all time, Yoichi Wada is inevitably one of the most influential figures in the Japanese game industry. Not only that, but he is also the Chairman of Japan's Computer Entertainment Supplier's Association (CESA) a representative body that promotes and researches the Japanese games industry, a position that makes Mr Wada's opinion count for something more than just a trivial remark.

In an interview with The Financial Times Wada stated variously that the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 are poorly matched for today's marketplace, that they are too complex as well as restating Square-Enix's dedication to the Nintendo DS as a platform for their most prestigious games, including Dragon Quest IX, which will now be a DS exclusive.

Wada described the Xbox 360 and PS3 as being "over-engineered", and followed on to say that the consoles have "too many specs – and you also need a high-definition TV, a broadband connection, and a deep knowledge of gaming – these consoles are mismatched to today's environment."

"There is a new breed of gamers in the market – we have to make games for all kinds of people," continued Mr Wada. "In the old days, we could just focus on the PlayStation... but the environment has changed completely."

"We chose the Nintendo DS [for Dragon Quest] because the widest array of people use it, including people who previously did not play games before."

The man has a point. When PS3 or Xbox 360 games are beginning to cost upwards of $20 million to create a game for a console that has a smaller install base than either the Wii or the DS, game developers are bound to think twice about exclusive development for either of those consoles.

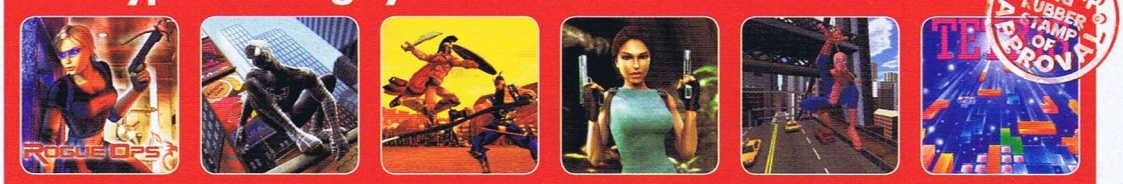
From a gamer's standpoint the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 consoles also require a hefty investment to get the most from your machine. The cost of the console aside, you also have to buy that 1080p TV, a 5.1 surround sound system and be wired up to the fastest Internet connection your already battered wallet can handle.

When you look at it that way, it makes a lot of sense why many developers, including Square-Enix are looking for a more viable alternative.

Yoichi Wada didn't predict all doom and gloom for the PS3 and Xbox 360 though, and ended on an optimistic note, saying that "in a year, or two years, they will fare better."

A year or two? That wouldn't have anything to do with Final Fantasy XIII releasing would it Yoichi?

The Hyper Scoring System - *What's It All About?*



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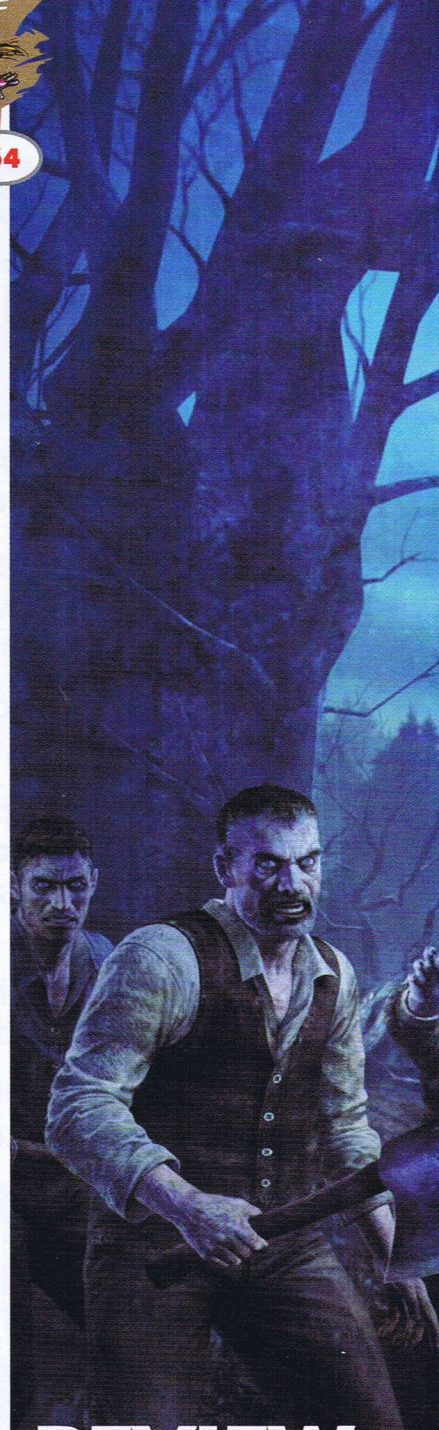


REVIEW INDEX

56 The Darkness

60 RESIDENT EVIL 4 Wii EDITION
Could this be the ultimate version of Capcom's classic?

62 Ouendan 2
63 Forza Motorsports 2
64 Mario Strikers: Charged
65 Puzzle Quest
66 Call of Juarez
67 WarTech: Senko No Ronde
68 Atelier Iris 3
69 Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer
70 Scavenger
72 Mortal Kombat: Armageddon Wii
72 Mercury Meltdown Revolution
72 Shadowrun

X360 / PS3 / WII / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

The Darkness

DANIEL WILKS has a one-way ticket to hell and back

category: **FPS**
players: **1-???**
developer: **Starbreeze**
publisher: **2K Games**
price: **$109.95 (360) $119.95 (PS3)**
rating: **MA 15+** / available: **Now**

There's no two ways about it – Starbreeze are the go to guys when it comes to interesting, clever and just downright brilliant licensed games. When Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay was released a few years ago it was the proverbial bolt from the blue, a movie license game that was so good that it could renew people's faith in licensed games. Now comes The Darkness, a ray of light in an otherwise crowded and mostly crap market of games based on comic books. Although short, clocking in at roughly ten hours in length for the single player game, The Darkness is an absolutely brilliant game, combining excellent FPS gameplay, clever mechanics and some of the best story-telling techniques we've seen in a long time. A hell of a long time.

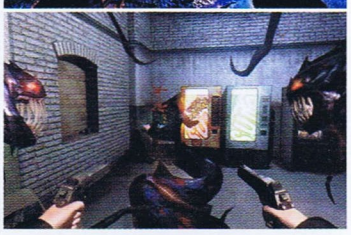
The Darkness tells the story of Jackie Estacado, an orphan brought up by his mob-boss uncle to be a contract killer. Jackie is good at his job and has no moral qualms about putting two in the back of someone's head. Make no mistake. Jackie is not a hero. The Darkness is not a game about heroes. It could be argued that Jackie isn't really an anti-hero. He's not a moral character and he's not doing the wrong thing for the right reason. He's a bad man doing bad things to bad people. The Darkness is, essentially, a game about the bad guy. The Bad guy trying to kill the worse guy.

[below] Figure 1: Improper use of a jackhammer

GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY WOMAN

On the day of Jackie's 21st birthday two things happen to change his life. Firstly his uncle, mad with power, decides that Jackie is an impediment to business and tries to have him whacked, setting up a series of tragic events that lead to an immensely satisfying, if somewhat downbeat conclusion. More importantly, Jackie's 21st birthday sees him coming into his birthright, the power of The Darkness - an ancient evil that possesses a human host and gives them immense power. With his newfound power, Jackie sets off on a trail of revenge.

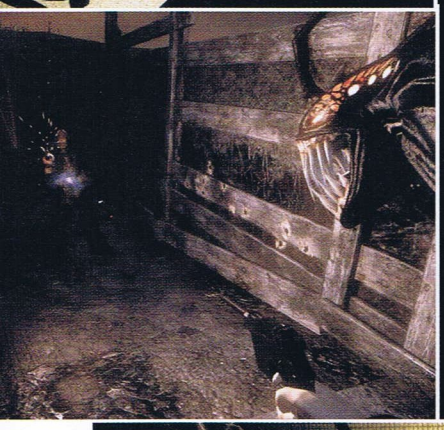
Although at core an FPS, The Darkness, like many modern first person shooters gives the player a number of extra tools to play with. Thankfully Bullet-Time, the most overused of FPS mechanics doesn't make an appearance. Instead Jackie, over the course of the game acquires the ability to send out wall-crawling tendrils of Darkness to unlock doors, stealthily kill enemies or scout out locations, Darkness tentacles that can smash lights, impale enemies or throw

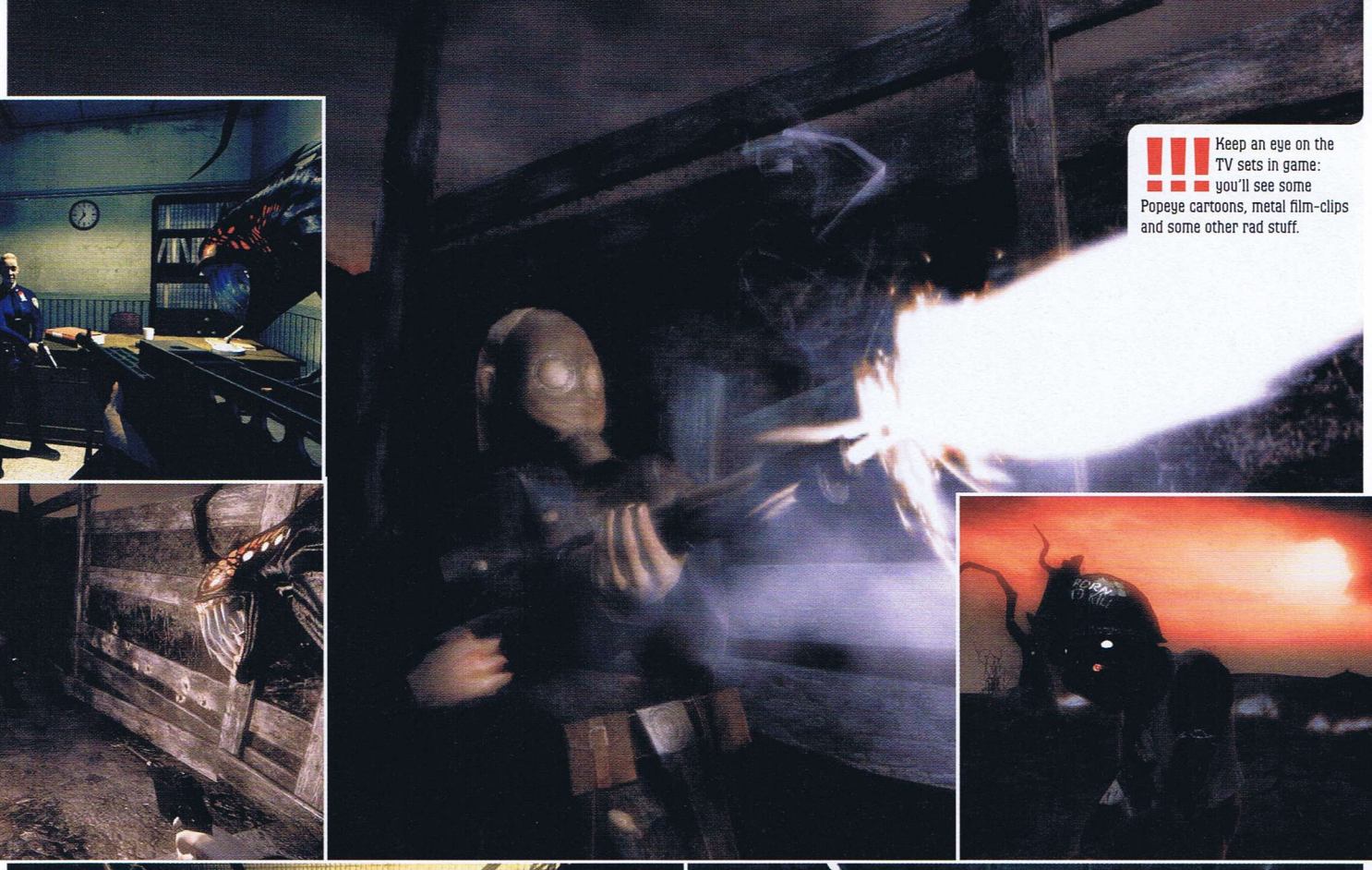


[above] The Darkness tendril has a craving for Coke

around objects, Darkness guns that fire concentrated darkness and a Darkness black hole, a kind of physics based smart bomb that sucks in everything nearby. The Darkness also works as a kind of damage shield for Jackie, enabling him to take far more damage than a mortal man as well as a form of night vision allowing Jackie to see in the dark, surrounding objects and people with a reddish outline. That last bit is especially handy as The Darkness, as the name suggests can only exist in the darkness and needs to eat shadows (or the hearts of downed enemies) to regenerate power. Of course Jackie also has guns; a surprisingly small range considering that the game is an FPS but the weapons, from the simple dual wield pistols through to a meaty drum-fed automatic shotgun are remarkably satisfying.

The pace at which the abilities are metered out is great. At the





Keep an eye on the TV sets in game: you'll see some Popeye cartoons, metal film-clips and some other rad stuff.

Those are some feral dreadlocks

[above] ZOMG! U R teh kill polices!

beginning of the game Jackie only has access to the damage shield, night vision and Creeping Darkness (the aforementioned wall-crawling tendrils) abilities but within an hour or so of play he unlock the ability to use the Darkness tentacle to fling objects around, impale enemies and knock out lights. The manner of attaining the extra powers fits in wonderfully with the storytelling; the Darkness feeds on two things, shadows and the hearts of evil people. Eating hearts is a visceral and rather grotesque thrill as the tendrils that surround Jackie lash out and tear the heart from a fallen enemy's chest. Eat enough hearts and the Darkness increases in power, enabling it to exist in the light for longer periods of time. Eat the heart of a particularly evil person and a new power is unlocked

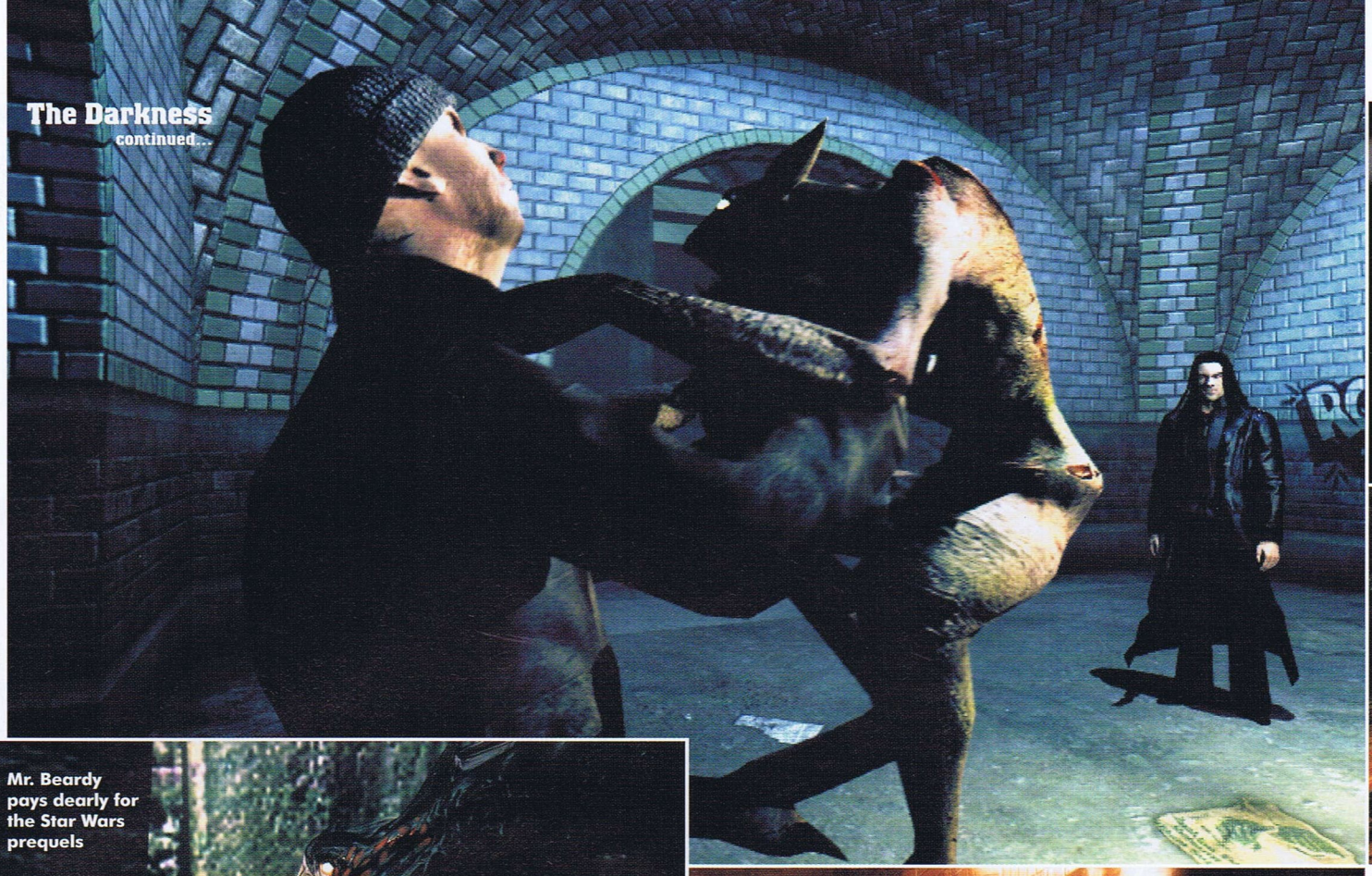
» tendrils that surround Jackie lash out and tear the heart from a fallen enemy's chest

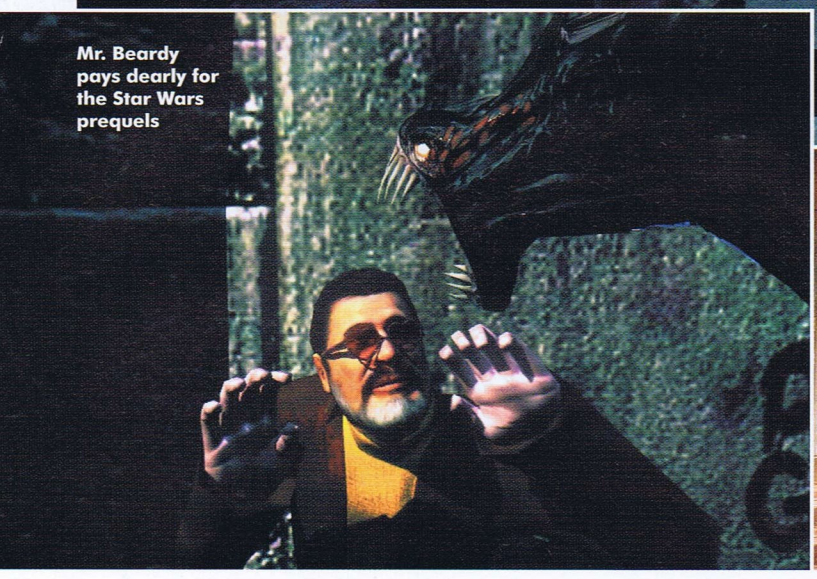
SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME

And then there are the Darklings, malevolent little demons summoned from darkness to follow Jackie's bidding. The basic Darklings, the Berserkers, are crazy little mutants who wield all manner of close range weapons ranging from knives to power-tools and attack enemies in melee. Gunners, as the name suggests, use guns. Lightkillers use bolts of electricity to kill lights, and people and Kamikaze Darklings blow themselves up. Although the player has a little control over the Darklings, enabling them to roughly tell them where to go, by and large they're controlled by their rather chaotic AI making them the weakest part of the game. Gunners will often stand behind obstacles and fire at an enemy, sending all their bullets into whatever they're standing behind rather than something that will scream and bleed and Lightkillers often neglected to kill lights where directed and instead ran off to do something else. Darklings are also indiscriminate killers so you need to be careful where you summon them, as they will target enemies and innocents with equal gusto. That said, they're still funny little buggers with great evil personalities and quirks; Gunners talk about commies being the enemy and Kamikazes call everyone comrade and war against the Bolsheviks.

Created specifically for console, the controls work beautifully. The Darkness utilizes a great combination of free aim and snap to targeting that can be tweaked to the player's preferences. Even at the highest sensitivity, the snap-to targeting doesn't make the game too easy, as it requires the player to manually aim within about a centimetre of the target (on a 102cm wide screen) before it snaps to their centre of mass. When dual wielding the left and right triggers fire their respective guns, when firing a rifle or the like the right trigger fires and the left does a melee attacks.

The level design is compact but cleverly done with two train stations serving as hubs to five or so small suburbs, some of which have secondary areas branching off them. The relatively small size of the levels allows Starbreeze to really keep the level of detail at a premium and also allows for some brilliantly staged set pieces. I'm deliberately being very coy about

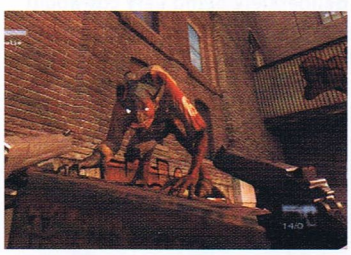




Mr. Beardy pays dearly for the Star Wars prequels

talking about specific events in the game because, ultimately, the gameplay mechanics are essentially bridges between elements of the story. Often you can talk about the story and gameplay separately but in The Darkness they are intrinsically entwined. Suffice it to say that whilst the story is quite simple it is absolutely brilliantly told, metered out at a pace that keeps you glued to the controller just so you can find out what is coming next. One thing I will talk about is the area we like to call Hell. Sure, it's not actually hell but it may as well be, a blasted WWI battlefield full of grotesquery's including a crucified angel of death, faceless zombie German soldiers and chipper British soldiers who look like the remnants of professor Frankenstein's lab sewn together, somehow remaining upbeat in the most disheartening of situations. The art direction in these levels is exceptional with a true highlight being a giant rail mounted cannon that may very well be the physical embodiment of the horseman of the apocalypse, War.

[below] A face only a mother could..AARGH!

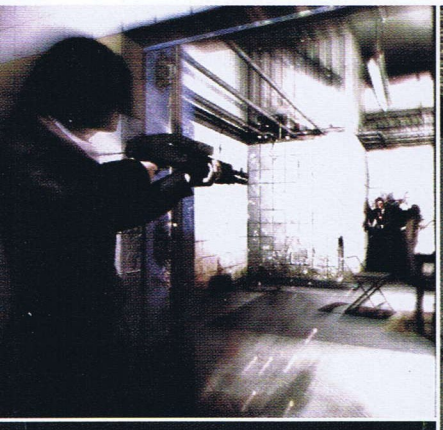


LOVE ON THE ROCKS WITH NO ICE

As we said in our previews, The Darkness is a game that really screams "next-gen". The graphics engine is beautiful and full of life. Although some of the character models feature a few rough edges these shortcomings are more than made up for with the depth of the animations and the incidental details that litter the levels. There are so many small things in The Darkness that add to the overall flavour and storytelling prowess of the game that it's hard to list them all. Graffiti stains the walls on many of the streets and train stations, telling small stories within the city. Instead of load screens, every time the game loads the player is presented a short monologue or animation starring the main character, Jackie, giving the player a deeper understanding of his character and motivations. Handy information kiosks located in the train stations give the player direction for how to get to the various game locations in a bored Jersey accent. Bonus content is unlocked by calling

[above] Behind you!

TV TIME If I may indulge in a brief anecdote, I fell in love with The Darkness early on into the game as I sat (in game) on a couch with Jackie's girlfriend watching a movie. After a few minutes of ignoring the on screen prompts to get up and leave I was rewarded with an Achievement for being a romantic. The reason for me falling in love with the game was not this, however. I wasn't sitting on the couch to cuddle up to a virtual girl for virtual reward. I was doing it because To Kill a Mockingbird was on the TV. Moe and I watched the movie for half an hour and it didn't look like stopping any time soon. A full movie playing on a TV in game – now that's attention to detail. And you know what? I bet that if I stayed around for the whole thing they would have rewarded me with some kind of Achievement for being a movie buff or suchlike. That one moment elevated The Darkness from simply being a shooter to being a story grandly told.



Aiming at the wrong head methinks

numbers on payphones leading to some hilarious answering machine messages. B-Boys dance for spare change in one of the stations. A female passenger on a train gives Jackie the most wonderfully passive-aggressive headshake when he takes her seat. Jackie has a number of instant kill executions he can use up close but some of these are so brutal you actually feel bad using them.

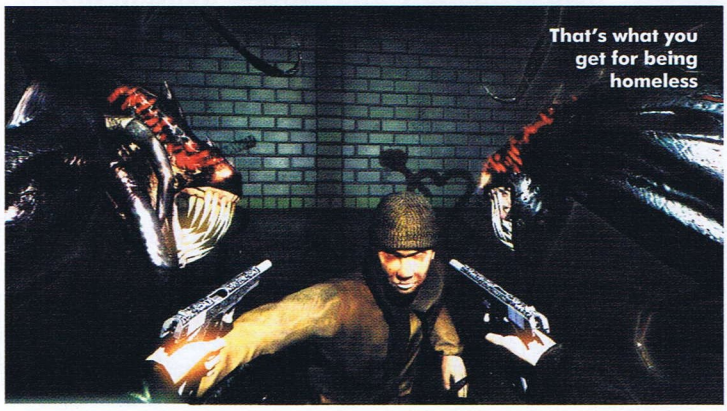
If there are any real gripes to be had about The Darkness they are that the physics engine and AI sometimes let the side down a little. For the most part the enemies act intelligently but we did occasionally notice enemies shooting in random directions, running in circles or just standing about rather stupidly. The physics engine is functional for the most part, providing some rather brutal ragdolling but the interaction with the Darkness tentacle seemed to be a little lacking and had a habit of feeling a little floaty, like everything from a garbage bin through to a mini-van weighed the same and could be thrown the same distance. There was also one instance that truly stood out as more than a little dodgy in which we could push a car around simply by walking into it. At the moment we'll give it the benefit of the doubt and say that this rather obvious physics glitch is a problem with the review code and won't be present in the final code.

I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE

The quality of the voice acting is equally good and full of character. Mike Patton of Faith No More and Mr. Bungle fame makes a fantastically creepy Darkness and the various actors portraying the old Mafia stalwarts are fantastic. The only questionable voice is that of Jackie himself; not that he's bad. Jackie is brilliantly voiced but we couldn't really see that voice coming from a 21-year-old goth-ish bad boy. Oh well, you can't win them all.

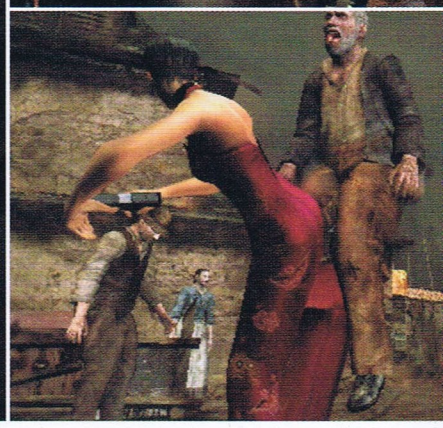
We haven't had a chance to test out multiplayer as yet but The Darkness will feature all the old multi-player stalwarts like Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag as well as a few others. Although we haven't been able to test them we imagine that the use of Darkness powers in multi-player could lead to some rather engaging mayhem. Of course it remains to be seen if anyone will actually play it – Xbox Live is dominated by a few games and it's hard to break into the market. Not that it matters though; even though the single player game only lasts ten or so hours the experience is fantastic and, dare we say it, well worth the price. Other developers of licensed games could do well to pay attention to The Darkness. In a marketplace filled with lazy pap like Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer or abominations like Superman 64 it gives us hope that there is still hope left when it comes to licenses. We can't wait to see what Starbreeze has in store for us next. Can they capture lightning in a bottle three times? Let's hope so. If there's any justice in the world this game will sell. And sell big. <<

[above] Team huddle



That's what you get for being homeless

Brilliant storytelling; looks great; excellent level design	Weak physics engine; some AI problems	HYPER VERDICT
A game of the year contender	VISUALS 92 / SOUND 90 / GAMEPLAY 94	92



X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition [IMPORT]

JONTI DAVIES has a bloody good time

category: **Survival horror**
players: **1**
developer: **Capcom**
publisher: **Capcom**
price: **¥5800** / rating: **TBC**
available: **Now (Japan)**

We thought we'd seen the last of Resident Evil 4 and were just wishing it a tearful farewell when the Wii came along, and Capcom sat up to announce that it had a brilliant idea; Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition, which would use this new fangled remote controller thingy to simulate Leon's gun-toting antics with more realism. A few months later, Capcom has delivered on its promise and we're left welcoming Resi 4 back to our bloodstained-but-loving arms.

Were the original game not so very damn good, of course, we'd be inclined to label this as a cynical exercise in cashing-in. But the source material is flawless – the most gripping entry in the Resident Evil series to date, and the translation to Wii control makes perfect sense. It feels as though this was always going to be the logical destination for Resi 4.

In order to facilitate a proper conversion of control from the Cube pad/Dual Shock, the Nunchuk is employed here to offer control of Leon and Ashley's body movements, with walking assigned to the Nunchuk's analogue stick. And by holding the Z button, you can make Leon/Ashley run. Simple. The Nunchuk's C button is used to produce Leon's knife, which can then be aimed with the Wii remote or slashed automatically.

[above] It's been awhile, but here goes... BLAU!

Understandably, though, the hand that's holding the Wii remote has all the fun. A crosshair now becomes visible on-screen whenever the remote is pointed in that direction, which gives an idea of exactly what would be in your sights if you chose to hold the B button and aim a shot.

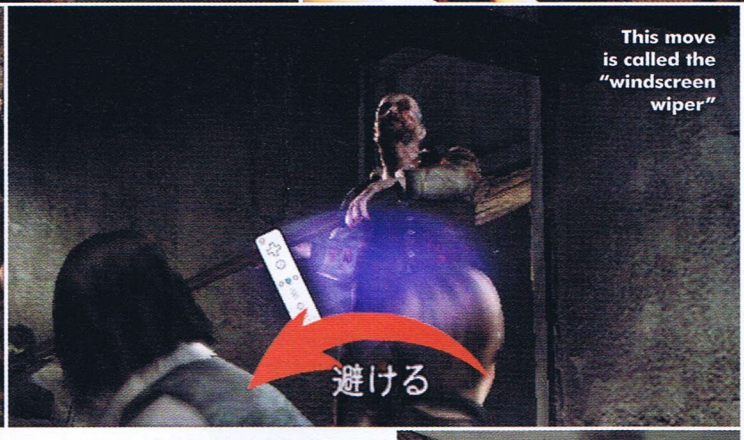
[below] "Don't shoot! We're just here for the cosplay comp!"

» The crosshair and aiming system are calibrated perfectly, we're happy to say. There's no shakiness at all.

The crosshair and aiming system are calibrated perfectly, we're happy to say. There's no shakiness at all, and the sensitivity of the pointer is weighted in a really convincing and satisfying way. No need to wave your arm around or constantly correct incidental movement – the crosshair will always be exactly where you want it to be, and only slight wrist movements are sufficient to change your target. As a result, even when a whole gang of zombie villagers is advancing on you, Resi 4: Wii Edition doesn't frustrate because it gives you the ability to pick off any part of their anatomies with just a slight movement of your hand.

Other improvements are mostly aesthetic. Wii Edition runs in 480p mode (progressive scan) and its default ratio has been shifted to 16:9 widescreen. The widescreen display, in particular, enhances the sense of panoramic zombie-vision. It's even scarier now than it was in 4:3 narrowscreen. Logically, Capcom decided to use the GameCube version's engine as its base for Wii Edition, so all of the character models and environments are on a par with those seen in the Cube

!!! At the time of going to print the Australian version of Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition was due in early July, and was priced at the reasonable price of $79.95.



[above] "I told you - I DON'T have emo hair!!!"

game. In many ways, the difference between the GameCube and Wii versions of Resident Evil 4 is similar to the gap between both versions of Zelda: Twilight Princess. In both cases, the Wii versions have a 16:9-over-4:3 advantage and make excellent use of the Wii remote.

Still, parts of the PS2 version have also been included in this remake: Ada Wong's side-quest is featured here, and the PS2 edition's unlockable uniforms for Leon and Ashley are also included. There's also an Easy and Amateur mode to play through, alongside the Normal (but rock-solid) default difficulty level. There's even a trailer for Umbrella Chronicles, which is being developed from scratch for the Wii. In short, this is the definitive, complete Resident Evil 4 package.

For those of you who haven't experienced Resident Evil 4 already, we'd suggest that you head straight for the Wii Edition. But even if you've completed the GameCube/PS2 versions many times over, the control system used here is fresh and far more satisfying than traditional joypad control. Beneath the progressive scan sheen, after all, this is one of the finest games of the last generation.

Resident Evil 4 still has the power to shock. Thanks to some expertly planned pacing and ingenious use of incidental music, the game always has an advantage over the player. The game leads you, not the other way round. Tension flows in waves throughout the adventure,

and it's impossible to predict when something scary is about to happen. The soundtrack, in particular, has capacity to trick the player into feeling secure just when the script is about to deliver a fright. That's the thrill of Resident Evil 4: the not knowing. Bizarrely, or perhaps just because we're getting old, even our past experience with the GameCube version failed to prepare us for the surprises Resi 4 keeps in store. Forgetfulness? Maybe, maybe not. Something sinister, no doubt. <<

SHAKE YOUR WII The cutscenes in Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition use the in-game engine (no FMV nonsense) and many are even playable, forming sequences similar to the Quick Timer Events that were pioneered by Shenmue. Using the Wii remote, you'll be directed via on-screen commands to move the remote – waggle, shake, or spin it – so as to help Leon and Ashley escape from dangerous situations. The A and B buttons are also used to this effect. When escaping from a boulder that's been rolled at him by a group of village zombies, for example, Leon can only succeed if you wave the Wii remote vigorously left and right, helping him to run quickly, and then finish with a button combo to ensure that he dives out of the way. These sequences, like the game's revamped-for-remote-control aiming system, only add to the sense of player involvement.

↑ It's Resident Evil 4; Wii remote controls; visual improvements	↓ No new content.	HYPER VERDICT
Although it's just a port, this is the definitive version of RE4.	VISUALS 89 / SOUND 93 / GAMEPLAY 93	85

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / **DS** / PSP

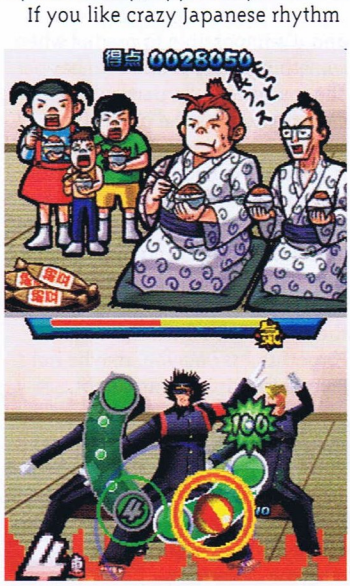
Moero! Nekketsu Rizumu Damashii Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2 [IMPORT]

SALLY WOELLNER'S name is shorter than the game title, for once

category: **Rhythm**
players: **1-4**
developer: **iNiS**
publisher: **Nintendo**
price: **STBA** / rating: **TBA**
available: **Now (on import)**

There's this shoe salesman with a fetish for strange sneakers. He has a mountain of said peculiar shoes he's unable to sell - and when a flippant suggestion to his wife is taken seriously, he's unexpectedly sent across the universe to sell the sneakers to distinguished alien octopi, and save his business against all odds. What would any sane shoe salesman do in such a situation? Why, call a militaristic male cheer squad for help, apparently...

If you like crazy Japanese rhythm games, you will have heard of Ossu! Tatakae! Ouendan, the original import hit. Apart from the excellent gameplay, its premise was unmatched - when people of the world are in their deepest troubles, they scream, "Ouendan!". A group of huge guys in imposing black outfits (the Ouendan, or cheer squad) burst from nowhere, and cheer them to success. Or in this sequel's case, two rival cheer squads compete for cheering supremacy, and the welfare of their charges. A kind of Guitar Hero for stylus, you'll be tapping numbered markers, tracing lines, and spinning awesome flaming discs to help (mostly) ordinary people via a soundtrack of Japanese pop and rock songs (it sounds strange, but it's very well-designed and addictive).



The dynamic manga-style comics that tell each person's story have been improved - there's better animation, and sillier storylines. You might need a FAQ to make sense of one or two, but really, part of the charm of Ouendan has always been ignoring the Japanese speech bubbles and making up your own explanation for whatever happened to the poor sod you're trying to help. Like its predecessor, this game can be enjoyed without any knowledge of Japanese whatsoever.

[above] He's just like Al Bundy, only intergalactic.

Ouendan 2 addresses a couple of the annoyances from the previous game, stealing good ideas from the series' English-language incarnation, Elite Beat Agents. You can skip song intros (a blessing in the final stages), and there's not only a whole heap of extra options, including a gallery, a movie theatre, more variations in the storylines in each stage and extra score info, there's also 4 more stages, bringing the total songs to 19. And if you're lacking friends with copies of their own for multiplayer, you can record your play through and play against yourself later on.

Unfortunately, those aren't the only things Ouendan 2 took from EBA — if you've played both, one or two of the scenarios in Ouendan 2 will seem a little too familiar. It also shares the same annoying tendency to occasionally repeat a storyline section twice within the same song.

This sequel suffers a little in the song selection too. There aren't as many pop tunes in this incarnation, and one or two of the songs make it difficult to find the rhythm. But Ouendan veterans will be glad to know they've increased the complexity of the higher levels — so even though you'll breeze through the easy levels, there's still some that'll stop you in your tracks later on, with some fun additions to the gameplay styles.

All that said, it's one of those titles that lifts your spirits and makes you laugh, then has you cursing five seconds later when you miss that tricky last marker and stumble again. The pros of this game far outweigh the cons. <<

!!! Just in case you were wondering, the game's crazy title translates to "Burn! Hot-Blooded Rhythm Soul: Hey! Fight! Cheer Squad 2"

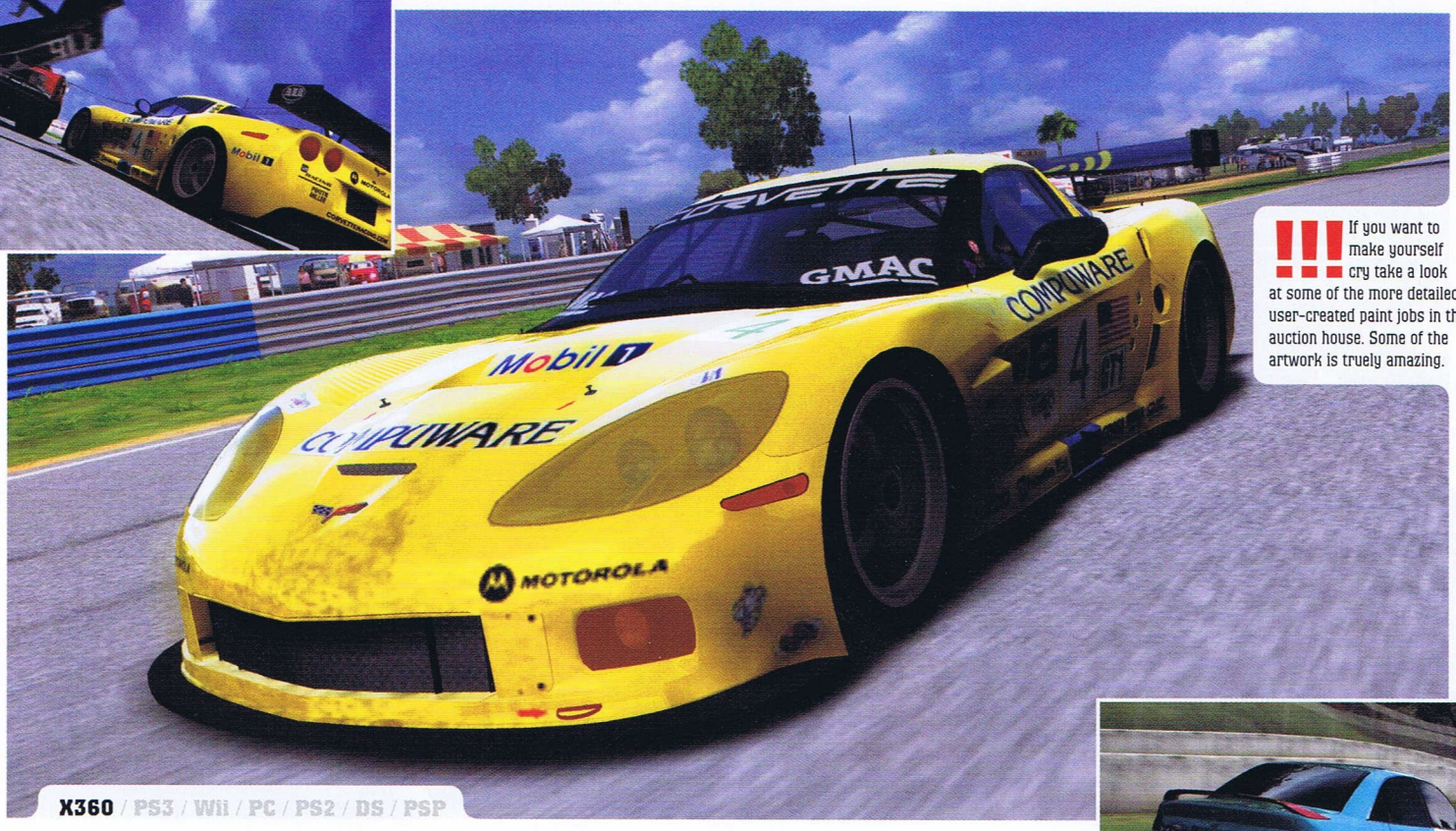
Still awesome; more levels; distinguished octopi

Occasional repetitive levels; song selection is weaker

HYPER VERDICT

This is the best kind of crazy

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
85	80	90	**89**



!!! If you want to make yourself cry take a look at some of the more detailed user-created paint jobs in the auction house. Some of the artwork is truely amazing.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Forza Motorsport 2

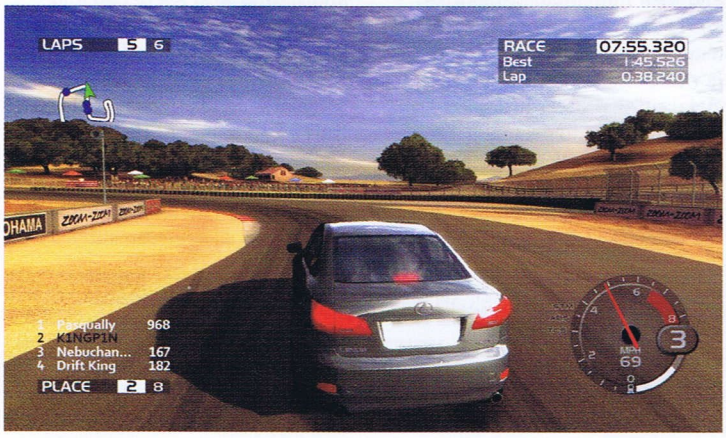
DIRK WATCH wishes he could customise a van

category: **Driving Sim**
players: **1-8**
developer: **Microsoft**
publisher: **Microsoft**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **G**
available: **Now**

[above] **Just a few of the VERY cool user-created skins**

Forza 2 is hard game to score – it's the most hardcore of driving sims on the mass-market at the moment that will undoubtedly appeal to people who are fans of driving sims. Therefore it's a great game. But it's rather too confrontational for people with a more arcade driving bent. So it's not that good. But it's got an incredible customisation system that has already resulted in some truly amazing looking paint-jobs on sale in the game's online auction house. So it's good. But the game is almost indistinguishable from the first game from a handling perspective making it feel almost identical. So it's bad. But the physics in the first game were so spot-on that the developers didn't need to fix anything. So I guess that makes it OK. So do we condemn Forza 2 for being derivative and iterative in approach or do we praise it for the phenomenal custom paint jobs, improved AI, excellent online and refusal to reinvent the wheel? We've settled on a little of both.

Forza 2 isn't a game for everybody. If you're not a hard-core driving sim player then there's not a lot in the game for you. Sure, aside from the actual career mode there is an arcade style section in which all of the cars and tracks are unlocked and a driver assist helps you around the track but there is no real risk and reward to be had in the game mode. There's nothing to unlock and no rewards for winning so the whole experience feels a little lacking. If you're into driving sims then you're probably just skimming this review to look at the final score because Forza 2 is the game you've been waiting for and probably already own it.



[below] **"Gah, coffee in my lap again, damn you cup holders!"**

CAR PORN

On a purely visual front, Forza 2 is once again a mixed bag of praise and disappointment. The game looks better than the original Forza, which is to be expected with the "next-gen" leap but it lacks the true beauty that we've seen recently in DiRT and the PGR games. Sure the cars are beautifully detailed and the tracks are probably more accurate representations of the actual real-world tracks but overall the graphics lack that extra little kick that makes them truly memorable. That said, Forza 2 more than makes up for the lack of final polish with an amazing toolkit for custom paint jobs. Instead of giving players only a handful of layers to play with as they did in the first game, the developers have included an astounding number of layers to be played with and some simple looking tools that allow for some truly exceptional paint jobs. This in turn gives rise to a great auction house and a car modding culture that is almost a game unto itself.

When it comes down to the final crunch, Forza 2 is a game for people who know they will like Forza 2. If you've been eagerly anticipating the game then you should go out and buy it (if you haven't already). If you haven't then it's probably not the game for you. <<

Excellent handling, fantastic customisation

Not particularly user friendly, feels almost identical to Forza

HYPER VERDICT

You know if this is the game for you

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
90	88	80	**80**

Super Mario Strikers: Charged Football is the first Australian Wii game to be playable online. You still need those horrible friend codes, but at least it's a start.

X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Mario Strikers: Charged Football

RICO SUAVEZ is an expert ball-kicker

category: **Sports**
players: **1-4**
developer: **Nintendo**
publisher: **Nintendo**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **G**
available: **Now**

We desperately wanted to like Mario Strikers: Charged more than we actually do. We've been secretly hoping that the game would be the next killer app for the Wii but alas this is not to be. Kind of a strange way to start a review, huh? Tell you we don't particularly like the game and then go into details as to why but it's the lingering sense of disappointment that sticks with us rather than any other aspect of the game. We're not saying that Mario Strikers: Charged is a bad game – it's not – it's just that the entire game boils down to two things; passing the ball until it turns white and special kicks that send multiple balls at the opponent's goal.

That's the real disappointment with Mario Strikers: Charged – there's no real balance in the gameplay mechanics. There's no point in trying to score a single goal when you can just as easily set up a super kick and score up to six. Likewise there's no real point to tactically moving the ball when you can just pass it about and charge it up for a shot on goal. This, of course only refers to the single-player game. It's a shallow experience that doesn't really amount to a whole load of fun.

[below] Mariozilla tramples some puny koopas

OW! MY BALLS!

We're not saying that multi-player really shines but it is a hell of a lot better than the single player mode. As always a second player performs so much better than AI making for some entertaining and frantic matches. More importantly, Mario Strikers: Charged is the first game to feature online play that we've been able to get our hands on and we're pleased to say that the net-code performs fantastically. Unfortunately there is an overall lack of options in online play that once again makes the gameplay a little lightweight. It would be great if we could turn off the power up items and MegaStrikes so we could have a normal game of soccer but such is not to be.

On a purely aesthetic note there is very little to distinguish Mario Strikers: Charged from its GameCube predecessor. Character models are fairly well designed and animated but there is little overall personality in any of the players aside from special moves and their individual MegaStrikes. The sound ranges from decent Mario-style tunes through to some horrible and painfully repetitive Metal riff that bores into your brain and tries to destroy it. OK, that may be a little exaggeration but it's still really bad.

That's the best frog splash we've ever seen

Control is handled quite well with the Wiimote and Nunchuck, with the Wiimote handling the ball-handling duties with the buttons, faking and sliding with the d-pad and tackling why shaking the controller and the Nunchuck handling player control via the thumbstick.

Overall Mario Strikers: Charged isn't a bad game. As it stands it's the best sports-ish game on the Wii at the moment but in a playing field you can count on one hand that's not too big an achievement. <<

Great net code; immediately fun	Shallow; lack of options; lightweight single player	HYPER VERDICT

Immediately fun but disappointing overall

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
75	78	74	72

!!! The DS version of Puzzle Quest utilises the touch screen exclusively for switching gems, while the PSP version relies on the old D-pad and buttons method. Both work fantastically though, so either will satisfy your puzzle/RPG cravings.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / **DS / PSP**

Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE has three matching skulls

category: **Puzzle RPG**
players: **1-2**
developer: **Infinite Interactive**
publisher: **D3 Publisher**
price: **PSP: $49.95, DS: $59.95**
rating: **G** / available: **Now**

Steven Fawkner is a name that fans of the Warlords series will know quite well. Not only is he the founder of one of Australia's most prominent development houses, Infinite Interactive, but as the creator of the strategy/role-playing series, he's been delivering fantasy gaming goodness to the masses for almost seventeen years.

Now Fawkner and Infinite Interactive have a new instalment in their premier franchise, although the latest game to be set in the Warlords universe may not be what you might expect.

Instead of real-time strategy, Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords is, as its title implies, a puzzle game, albeit with one very cool difference – it's also an RPG.

CONNECT THREE!

We have to admit that as soon as we heard about Puzzle Quest, we were intrigued. Being big fans of the puzzle and role-playing genres, the chance to see both combined into one gaming experience set within the Warlords universe was an opportunity we didn't want to pass up. Upon actually getting our hands on the game (no easy feat, since the distribution of the title is quite limited), it was easy to see that we were right to be so eager, since Puzzle Quest is really quite a remarkable game.

It all starts out with you creating a new character. There are four different classes to choose from, Druid, Knight, Warrior and Wizard. Each has their own individual traits, such as requiring certain colours of mana (gained by clearing out coloured orbs) to power their magical attacks. They also level up differently and learn different spells, making choosing your type of puzzler a real strategic choice.

Once you've chosen and named your fantasy character the adventure begins. You'll find yourself travelling from village to village accepting quests to kill vampire bats, zombies, giant spiders and countless other fantasy creatures. The difference is of course that instead of fighting them with a sword and shield, you'll have to puzzle them to death.

These puzzle elements play a bit like Bejewelled, with a full grid measuring 8x8, filled with coloured gems. You have to take turns switching jewels to form lines of three or more, which will then clear out leaving spaces for more jewels to fall into the grid.

The puzzling premise is not unlike many others we've seen before, but what Puzzle Quest does to differentiate itself from the pack is to fully integrate the puzzle game with role-playing concepts like gathering mana, earning experience, looting gold and using magic. By matching together skull-shaped jewels you can damage your opponent, and by matching coloured mana orbs you can power-up both defensive and offensive magic spells, adding an entirely new layer of gameplay into the mix.

The role-playing elements that go along with this are quite simple, but undeniably compelling. You go where your quests lead you, travelling across a world map slaying beasts and unravelling the game's narrative as you go. As you delve further into your quest though, the game reveals far more depth than is first apparent.

Your home castle, for example, can be upgraded with many new buildings that will actually give you new skills. Adding a dungeon to your family abode, for example, will allow you to capture an enemy to learn its spells, among many other cool abilities.

The story and dialogue are perhaps a little hackneyed, but even still, Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords offers us something that's both fresh and thoroughly playable, and plus it's made by an Aussie developer, making it one of our favourite games this month. <<

Fantastic puzzle game, mixed with simple, yet compelling, RPG elements.

Cookie cutter RPG story.

HYPER VERDICT

Puzzle Quest has +10 gameplay of coolness.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
77	83	90	**90**

!!! The multiplayer mode offered by Call of Juarez is also quite robust, letting you pit yourself against up to 32 other gun-slingers online. Along with FPS staples like deathmatch, Juarez has a capture the flag-style game and even some scripted objective-based missions that can be played co-operatively, making for a well-rounded single and multiplayer experience.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Call of Juarez

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE wrote this review for a fistful of dollars.

category: **First-Person Shooter**
players: **1-32**
developer: **Techland**
publisher: **Ubisoft**
price: **$109.95** / rating: **MA15+**
available: **July**

When I tell you that I had been catching up on episodes of HBO's recently-cancelled (quite unjustly might I add) Western series, Deadwood, in the week leading up to having Call of Juarez land on my desk, you could probably understand the mix of both anticipation and scepticism that overcame me when it came time to play Polish developer Techland's latest offering.

Thankfully though, Techland have really outdone themselves with Call of Juarez, As not only is it far better than their previous FPS effort, Chrome, but its one of the best gun-slinging simulators in the West.

Faux pas: Showing up to a gunfight in the same outfit.

100

SHOOTY AND STEALTHY

One of Call of Juarez's best features is that instead of giving you one multitalented protagonist, you are instead given two.

The first is Billy Candle, an innocent young Mexican-American boy who is wrongly accused of the brutal slaying of his own family. Billy goes on the run from the law, but not before a slightly insane man of god, Reverend Ray, decides to take his one-man posse after him.

Playing as both characters in turn, you first get to experience a level as Billy, who is a stealthy and resourceful character. Billy's chapters invariably see you taking to the shadows, hiding from potential enemies and sneakily stealing any items that may be useful in your escape, like a bullwhip which can not only be used as a weapon, but also for swinging over chasms – Indiana Jones style.

The good reverend on the other hand is more adept to charging in with both barrels blazing. His gung-ho approach is a fantastic counterpoint to Billy's more strategic levels. Even better, as the Reverend you typically get to blow away all those pesky bandits that you have been hiding from when playing as Billy, which never stops being satisfying.

Apart from the great stealth and shooting gameplay, there are also a few other game mechanics at work in Call of Juarez. As you'd expect, there is both a "quick-draw" mode and gun duels to contend with. The quick-draw mode can be used at any time during the game, and to use it you simply holster your pistols and draw them, with a hail of slow-motion lead slugs ensuing. Although there is a brief cool-down each time you use the move, it's only for a few seconds, so you can use quick-draw often to effectively, and stylishly, dispatch the game's villains.

Gun duels use a similar "bullet-time" system, with you having to wait out the five-second countdown, draw you gun as fast as you can and then aim and fire in slow-motion. Both of which work extremely well.

The game's level design too deserves mention. At first glance Call of Juarez appears to be an open-world style game, and even looks to have to same depth of environment as a game like The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion. This is an illusion, but a welcome one nevertheless. Call of Juarez is in fact chapter-based, and quite tightly scripted, with little room for diversion from the linear design path laid out for you. The immediate and distant surroundings, however, are so well rendered that the impression of a vast seamless world is given.

The game does have a few blemishes, like the slightly lame physics when bullwhip swinging across gaps, or the fact that there are many frustrating bottomless-pit style jumps in the game. The load times between chapters are also far too long, but when the game's as fun as Call of Juarez, I guess you just have to be willing to wait. <<

Gun-slinging Western action done right.	Physics fail in some sections, load times.	HYPER VERDICT
Neither bad, nor ugly. Call of Juarez is good.	VISUALS 83 / SOUND 74 / GAMEPLAY 82	82

!!! We don't know about you, but we're pretty tired of paying $119.95 for any game, let alone a game that really deserves to be priced far cheaper.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Wartech: Senko No Ronde

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE goes into "Boss mode" when Wilks is on holidays

category: **Shooter**
players: **1-2**
developer: **G.Rev**
publisher: **Ubisoft**
price: **$119.95** / rating: **PG**
available: **Now**

Taking elements usually only found in bullet hell-style shooters like Giga Wing or Mars Matrix and melding them with the revolving mech combat of Hideo Kojima's Zone of Enders series, has produced a game called WarTech: Senko no Ronde, a one-on-one fighting game that plays like a top-down shoot 'em up.

It should go without saying that this is not the kind of game that will appeal to everyone reading this review, but for those of you who like both shmups and fighters, WarTech definitely has something special to offer.

BULLET HELL IS HEAVEN

WarTech: Senko no Ronde sees you piloting one of a selection of mechs, or "rounders" as the game calls them and taking it into a deep-space battle against other like-minded fighters. During play you are locked into a circular orbit around your opponent, allowing you to strafe around them at a distance to avoid their reign of bullets or to move in closely for a few heavy-hitting melee attacks.

When you're far away the camera zooms out to an almost top-down perspective, reminiscent of a traditional arcade shooter. At this distance your opponent will be sending wave after wave of bullets after you, creating a curtain of deadly projectiles for you to dodge. Almost every bit of screen real estate is taken up with bullets, and you have to find a safe path through them whilst simultaneously trying to kill your rival.

[below] Pew pew pew pew pew pew pew pew pew!

Thankfully, you too can unleash your own bullet hell to send back at them, with your mech's varied arsenal at the touch of a button. There's your straight-shooting primary blaster, a shotgun-like spreader gun and a grenade launcher, all of which are available at from the start of each match. Another weapon that actually ends up being one of the coolest features of WarTech is your mech's "boss" mode. By initiating this desperation attack your little mech is transformed into a screen-filling behemoth, capable of pumping out an obscene number of bullets and other attacks unique to each character. Use of boss mode is of course limited, making it similar to "super combos" found in most modern 2D fighters.

Admittedly, the up-close melee combat is the least fun part of WarTech's game design. While reminiscent of Hideo Kojima's Zone of Enders, the robot fisticuffs in Senko no Ronde don't quite have enough variation to be good in their own right. Good thing we still have the cracking shmup techniques then...

Like all shooters originating in the arcade, Senko no Ronde was built from its very concept to be played in short bursts, not for hours at a time with an endless supply of continues. As a result, the single-player experience doesn't last long, and if you're not a particularly dedicated shmup fan your interest in the game may wane soon after the credits roll. As a consolation Senko no Ronde does have impressive online and offline multiplayer modes, which will go a long way to filling that void for all but the most antisocial of gamers.

Perhaps the most detrimental of WarTech's problems though, is its extortionate price tag. Ubisoft have unfortunately set the game's entry fee at a pretty hard to swallow $119.95. While we couldn't honestly recommend you pay full retail for WarTech: Senko no Ronde, it remains a successful amalgamation of the shoot 'em up and fighting genres, and is an entertaining but limited effort from developer G.Rev. <<

Successful melding of shooter and fighter, great weapon effects.

Limited single player, melee needed work, price tag.

HYPER VERDICT

Pricey, but for the shoot 'em up inclined WarTech is good fun.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
79	73	77	**77**

Atelier Iris 3 may have an annoying and overly looped soundtrack, but it redeems a few sound points for including the option for both English and Japanese spoken dialogue on the one disc.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / **PS2** / DS / PSP

Atelier Iris 3: Grand Phantasm

In search of the recipe to make **TIM HENDERSON**

category: **RPG**
players: **1**
developer: **Gust**
publisher: **Koei**
price: **STBA** / rating: **TBA**
available: **TBA**

There's no doubt about it - Atelier Iris 3 is cute. There's a refined sweet sickliness on display here that transcends standard definitions and becomes cuteness personified. Characters are basic archetypes, and NPC's often let forth self-aware bursts of onomatopoeia: Roar, uh-huh! The 2D graphics are chunky, simple and bursting with colour. A SNES RPG on happy smack. People will react in any manner of ways – love, distain or apathy – towards the game's visual styling and limitations as a result. It must be said though, that everything still boils down to a fairly generic anime styling in lack of its own sense of character and personality.

MIXING THINGS, MAKING THINGS

The Atelier Iris games have always played up the common connection between anime and JRPG's. Glorious animated sequences lend additional life to the always straightforward graphics, and the game structure is divided into episodes - a breaking of structure that seems to be taken even further in this third installment.

While Atelier Iris 2 presented what felt like the one, openly linear quest, it's sequel fragments itself entirely. Everything now begins in a hub world, where lead characters Edge and Iris (and eventual company) can peruse different quests at their local Guild before stepping through a portal to an Alterworld to do whatever must be done. Such activities tend to be poorly masked Role Playing clichés, and range from killing a specific monster through to fetch quests that don't even try and pretend to be anything else. The honesty is welcome, but that doesn't change an objective of catching ten fish into anything more exciting.

Likewise, the story is predictable and dull. A larger fetch quest for more significant items and nothing much more, it barely makes its presence felt, something that will please some players and frustrate others. It certainly could have been much more imaginatively told.

[above] A flame grilled dish of bouqet costume cane?

Fortunately, there are aspects of the game that do work. Combat is brisk, and the burst chain system (which rewards considered risky play with a chance to chain some seriously damaging moves) keeps the tempo up nicely. Encounters aren't random, and monster representations on the battlefield are even colour-coded to differentiate difficulty; weak ones can even be rid of with a slice of your sword on the world map itself.

Then there's the item synthesis, something of a celebrity feature for the franchise. Being able to cook up new items by discovering recipes has a certain appeal, and is a nice change from simply spending more gold on a better sword. Being able to experiment with switching items is equally genial, and Iris can now gain stat benefits from gaining Alchemy levels the more she plays around. It's harmless fun, if a bit shallow at the end of it all.

Everything about this game seems to feel brisk – the Alterworlds will even kick you out if you hang around too long, to the point where we wonder if we'd enjoy it more as a PSP title. As it is, being a Playstation 2 title is a bit of a problem, as while a reasonable game in it's own right, you'll be hard to find the will to persevere unless you've well and truly played the likes of Dragon Quest, Okami and Final Fantasy XII within an inch of their lives. <<

Some nifty ideas for creating items; speedy combat

Uninspired quests; annoying soundtrack

HYPER VERDICT

A bit of fun, but there are better options out there.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
69	45	72	**70**

!!! One of the only cool things about Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer is that Doug Jones plays the Surfer himself. Jones also played Abe Sapien in the Hellboy movie, as well as pretty much every monster in Pan's Labyrinth.

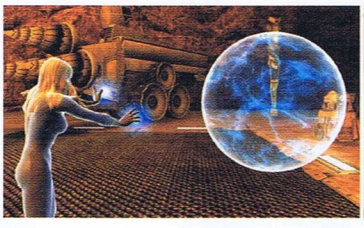
X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver

DANIEL WILKS begs Galactus to eat the planet

category: **Lazy Licensed Game**
players: **1-4**
developer: **Visual Concepts**
publisher: **2K Games**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **PG**
available: **Now**

Rise of the Silver Surfer is one of those lazy games that tries to excuse itself by saying it's a casual game, not intended for a "gamer" market. This is not a valid excuse – no matter how casual the market lazy is still lazy and boring is still boring. Take four characters with amazing powers, make those powers rather samey in their use, pit them against hordes of identical enemies that, no matter the skin, seem to follow one of two combat patterns – run in and punch or stand back and shoot – and then pit them against a boss or mini boss who can be defeated with little or no input from the player. That's Fantastic 4 in a nutshell.



The weakest aspect of the game by far is the team AI if you play the game solo – instead of acting rationally in a situation the AI instead does whatever the hell it wants to. Early in the game we were presented with a "puzzle" that required the Invisible Woman to turn invisible, sneak past a bunch of sentry guns and switch them off so the rest of the team could get through. Unfortunately as soon as we entered the room the three AI team members charged directly at the sentry guns. Sure, the player has a tiny amount of control over the AI, telling them to stay put or get moving but when under attack they seem to follow a very basic attack routine.

THE BEIGE SURFER

Level design is painfully straightforward and scripted. During one section the team needs to cross a river of lava. The Human Torch is fire proof and can fly so you'd think there's no problem there. Mr. Fantastic can stretch over. Invisible woman can create a force-field walkway for herself and Thing. Nope. That doesn't work. How about throwing some boulders into the lava and walking across? Nope – that doesn't work either. How about fighting through a series of faceless corridors until we come up to some rocks that are now lava proof and throwing them in? Yeah, that's the ticket.

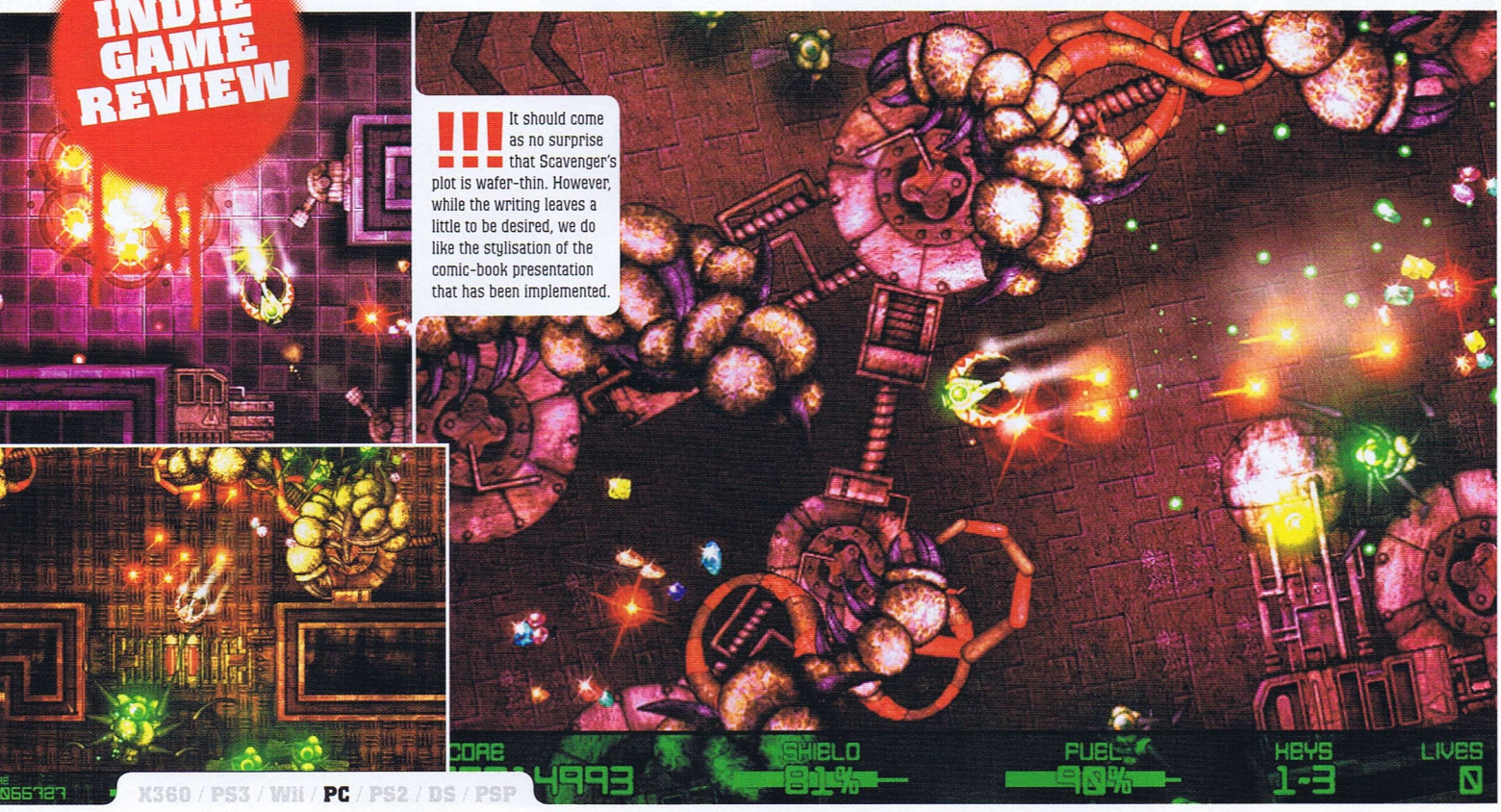
No creativity is ever necessary to complete any objective. Just button mashing. It's a game that refuses to let super heroes be super, limiting your powers to a few uses before you have to recharge. Fallen characters revive in about ten seconds so it's almost impossible to die and boss battles can be completed by simply choosing one character and staying out of range, letting the others take care of the big bad. The PS3 version has the obligatory tacked-on SixAxis control section; overlong flying chases in which the Human Torch chases the Silver Surfer through a variety of dull tunnels.

There is nothing technically wrong with Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer – the engine works, the control works, hell, even the camera is passable. It's just that there's nothing good about the game. It is the epitome of average, of lazy, of everything that's bad about licensed games. Give it a miss. <<

[below] Crap game, but they do have a sweet ride.

^ It's over in an afternoon; better than PotC: At World's End	˅ Dull, repetitive, lazy			HYPER VERDICT
Everything that's bad about licensed games in one convenient package.	VISUALS 75	SOUND 65	GAMEPLAY 60	50

INDIE GAME REVIEW



It should come as no surprise that Scavenger's plot is wafer-thin. However, while the writing leaves a little to be desired, we do like the stylisation of the comic-book presentation that has been implemented.

Scavenger

TIM HENDERSON tries to salvage his cynical attitude

category: **Shooter**
players: **1**
developer: **Pi Eye Games**
publisher: **Pi Eye Games**
price: **AUD $25.00(ish)** / rating: **N/A**
available: **Now**

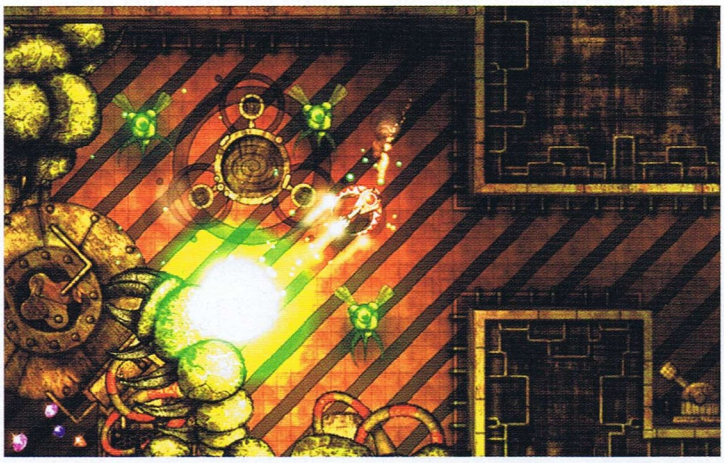
Straightforward in concept, presentation and execution, Scavenger feels very much reminiscent of the shareware high of the early nineties. The only real difference is that Scavenger benefits from sharper visuals and over a decade's worth of interface refinements to draw inspiration from. Now we have to wonder what Apogee would have come up with had the thought of using both the keyboard and mouse in tandem been a logical idea for everyone.

MIXING THINGS, MAKING THINGS

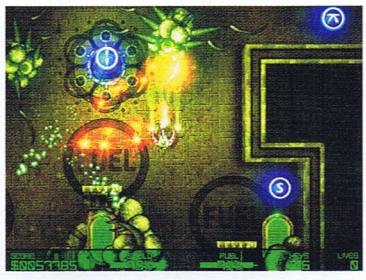
As it so happens, it is actually perfectly possible to play Scavenger using only the mouse, and it even feels quite agreeable. Sprawling a few fingers over the familiar WSAD layout, however, will inevitably make overall control that bit more precise. With your left hand controlling your gravity-defying thrust, and your right the direction your little ship faces and shoots its laser from, Scavenger brings an aging genre modestly up to date in a way that feels so second nature, you barely notice it.

Games like Scavenger have come and gone before, the screenshots alone should speak for that, and some of us continue to play some of the better ones. Scavenger gets its welcome to the pool by being oh-so-slightly different. For one, digital precision is rudely disturbed by the presence of gravity – one of many small touches that may not be an innovation on its own, but together with other inclusions makes for more than a mere sum of parts. Having the literal weight of the world on your shoulders and dragging down your movement adds a sense of dynamic life to moving around the grimy metal interiors that house an odd number of colourful and valuable gems, and it certainly adds an extra layer of consideration when you are required to pull out the gunfire.

[below] **"I guess that button isn't for the air conditioner"**



There are only limited power-ups available for your weaponry, and they only last a short time at that. Beneficially, it just so happens that your goal for completing each stage is to round up a number of glowing orbs and to tow them to the exit to the next one. You can return these orbs one at a time if you so desire, but that would hinder your journey as each orb you carry in tow will let loose a little laser fire each time you do. The benefits here are immediately obvious, and we do kind of wish that some sort of trade-off were worked into the mix, as it would add a nice instinctive level of strategy to the objective. We also wish that the levels allowed for more creative use of that ricocheting ammo, but these aren't flaws so much as desired refinements.



[above] **Mr. Pewey Pewenstein, ready to pew.**

Scavenger has an absolute stack of stages, and they're all incredibly short. This works in the game's favour greatly, as its appeal is that of a quiet achiever and an entertaining way to kill a little time – had it tried to be epic it would have collapsed under itself. Pleasingly adequate in every way, and never trying to be anything it isn't, Scavenger is something of an ideal Indie game: fun, playable, just a little bit different and never, not for a second, deluded about its place in the world. <<

Accessible, simple, mildly nostalgic fun

A little untapped potential

HYPER VERDICT

Not a meal in itself, but a perfect snack and diversion.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
77	75	82	**82**

MANHATTAN
YEAR
2006
EXIT ONLY
978
LANE
DRIVER
PARALLEL LINES
POLICE
IN 1978 YOU PAID FOR YOUR SINS.
NOW EVERYONE ELSE WILL.
PC DVD-ROM
Wii
MA 15+
Strong violence, Coarse language
RESTRICTED
INSTORE NOW
PC DVD ROM
Wii
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UBISOFT

X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Mercury Meltdown Revolution

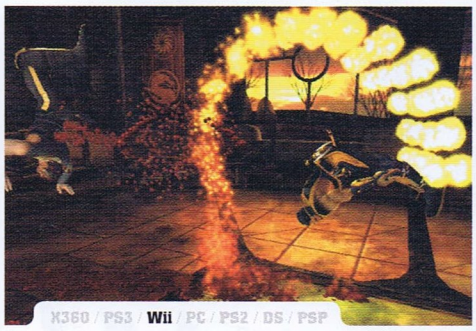
category: **Puzzle**
players: **1**
developer: **Ignition**
publisher: **Ignition**
price: **$99.95**
rating: **G**
available: **Now**

When we had a look at Mercury Meltdown for the PSP a while back we though it was a pretty good game but one that felt a little lacking. This could have been because the game was initially designed for a motion sensing peripheral for the PSP that never saw the light of day. So now how does the game fare on the Wii not that motion control can be instituted? The answer to that is that it feels good. Really good. The aim of the game remains the same; players guide a little blob of mercury through 150 or so maze/puzzle rooms tripping switches, avoiding traps and deadfalls, changing colour to activate colour specific switches and even splitting yourself into smaller blobs to solve some of the more difficult puzzles. The Wiimote is perfectly calibrated for control , better even than Kororinpa and SMB: Banana Blitz making the game feel incredibly smooth and natural. Never fear though – if you can't handle using the motion controls for some reason, Mercury Meltdown Revolution also works with the Classic controller. The only place where the game is significantly let down by motion control is when trying to check out levels with the free look camera before launching into the race against the clock; trying to control the camera to get a good and precise view of level structure by tilting the Wiimote just doesn't work nearly as well as you need it to. That one small flaw aside, Mercury Meltdown Revolution is a corker of a game and probably the best puzzle game on the system at the moment, It also shows just how precise and good the motion control can feel when done right.

WINFRED THE PO

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
76	72	90	**89**



X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Mortal Kombat Armageddon

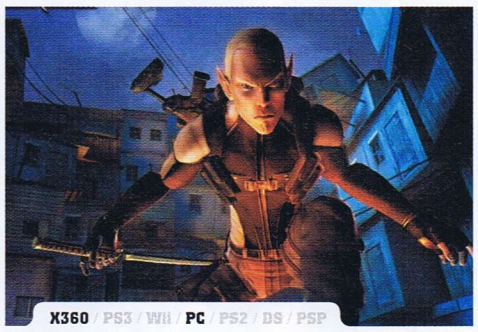
category: **Fighting**
players: **1-2**
developer: **Midway**
publisher: **Midway**
price: **$99.95**
rating: **MA**
available: **Now**

While we were quite fond of the earlier incarnations of Mortal Kombat: Armageddon the same can't be said about the title's latest port to the Wii. Sure, the graphics translate over well and the game looks about as good as it possibly can but the addition of Wii specific motion controls takes a game about precise button mashing and canned combos and turns it into an imprecise mess of flailing arm movements and strangely mapped controls. It's pretty telling that the game can be played with the Wiimote and Nunchuck, the Classic Controller addon or through a standard GameCube controller. This says to us that much like nearly all of the games that utilize the SixAxis motion control, the motion control in Mortal Kombat for the Wii is little more than an obligatory addon. Swinging the Wiimote to perform special moves is fun for about five minutes but you'll soon find yourself pining for a thumbstick and attacks keyed to buttons, not the d-pad as they are on the Wiimote. The lack of online Kombat also really detracts from the appeal of MK on the Wii – instead players are left with the rather perfunctory Motor Kombat kart game, Konquest, a decent but repetitive action game and a roster full of characters that are little more than reskinned versions of other character. As an added bonus the Wii port of Armageddon features probably the dullest exclusive character we've yet seen in a fighting game Kameleon, a character model with a transparent skin. Ooh, special.

PORCINE THE YOUNGER

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
81	80	72	**68**



X360 / PS3 / Wii / **PC** / PS2 / DS / PSP

Shadowrun

category: **FPS**
players: **1-16**
developer: **FASA**
publisher: **Microsoft**
price: **$69.95**
rating: **MA**
available: **Now**

We'll leave aside for a second our gripe about the brutal misuse of a fantastic roleplaying license to make a multi-player only shooter entirely devoid of story and or character and focus instead on the game. It's an FPS, players choose a race for special abilities, equip themselves with some starting gear and maybe some magic or tech (special abilities like being able to see through walls, teleport short distances, glide or resurrect fallen teammates) and shoot the crap out of each other with a range of fairly standard weapons in an array of fairly standard game modes that, although they have their names changed are classics like CTF, and Team Deathmatch. Well, you could shoot the crap out of each other but in all honesty we had a hard time navigating the maps. The lack of an in-game map or some kind of compass made it hard to find people half the time unless you fork out some of the money you are awarded between rounds on some Enhanced Vision enabling you to get a glimpse of where the action is happening. The single player element of the game is limited to a few training missions and some rather lame bot-matches. Multi-player is an online only affair as ther is no split-screen support for two players on one TV. Shadowrun isn't a terrible game but it is one that just doesn't add up to much at all. The single player is nonexistent, the multiplayer is lackluster, there is no character to the game, the fact that the game allows PC and 360 users to play against each other is a bit of a moot point when is comes to quality and the only real saving grace are the Tech and Magic powers but they're just not enough to recommend Shadowrun over any other online shooter.

PANTHERA TIGRIS

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
84	80	75	**70**

SUPER VEHICLE-001
METAL SLUG
ANTHOLOGY
10th Anniversary
METAL SLUG SINCE 1996
Wii
PlayStation Portable
PlayStation 2
7 ALL-TIME ARCADE CLASSICS
INCLUDES ALL-NEW METAL SLUG 6
M
Moderate Violence
Celebrate the 10th Anniversary of METAL SLUG by joining the METAL SLUG team on 7 separate adventures that span across the life of the franchise in this definitive collection.
(c) SNK Playmore
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SNK PLAYMORE
IGNITION entertainment

Games on the Run

Forget calling your mum, there's better things to do on your mobile, and here are just a few of them.

by Christopher Taylor

Mobile phones are just so pervasive. Invasive too, if you're like me and find yourself disturbed rather than delighted by the prospect of being contactable twenty four hours a day. And too, as that stupid "I've got something in my pocket" ad keeps reminding us, mobile phones aren't just phones any more. They're cameras and mp3 players. Portable televisions and GPS receivers. Fashion accessories. And, of course, gaming devices.

It's even been suggested that mobile phones do – or eventually will – pose a serious threat to dedicated handheld gaming devices like the PSP and DS. Initially, the idea sounds silly, but then, if you spend some time researching what modern phones are capable of and notice some of the big names that've gotten involved in mobile gaming in recent years, you really start to wonder.

And so we, being the curious sorts we are, decided to investigate. To figure out if mobile games actually posed a threat to our beloved Sony and Nintendo handhelds. To find out, too, how this sector of the games industry – which we admit we've ignored in the past – works, what it's up to at the moment and what it's planning for the future.

THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The mobile games industry is, at current, worth a couple of billion dollars US according to Robert Murray, CEO of Melbourne's Firemint Game Development. "The top games sell millions of copies," he says. "But the price point is lower than that of a console title. The mobile industry is currently not as lucrative as console gaming, but those interested in the industry aren't here for today's money alone. They're looking to the future and to ride a wave of market growth. It's also not just about what's happening in the United States, Japan and Europe. A lot of businesses are looking to the massive growth of mobile usage in China, India and other emerging markets. Most consumers in India and China will have a powerful mobile phone before they ever get hold of a PC or console. There will be massive content markets emerging that will only be accessible through the mobile platform."

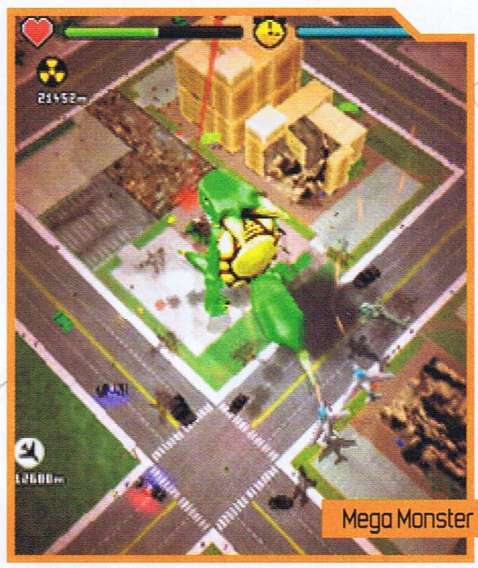
Locally, there are about fifteen studios involved in mobile games development. For some like the New South Wales based Spectrum Wired, it's all they do. But for others, such as Torus, mobiles are just one of the many platforms they develop for.

Fifteen mightn't sound like an awful lot, but it's not bad when you consider that mobile games development is still a relatively immature industry. "The mobile games market that we see today was born in early 2002," explains Murray. "However, it was preceded by a burst of commercial activity in WAP gaming. Many of the WAP gaming companies were dying out just as the colour screen Java and BREW handsets were establishing a worthwhile market in themselves. It was during 2002 that a new breed of mobile games publishers established themselves and developers like Firemint began to gather momentum."

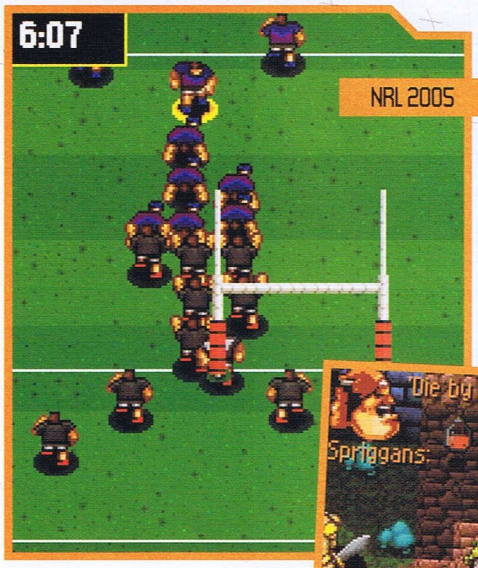
LIMITATIONS GALORE

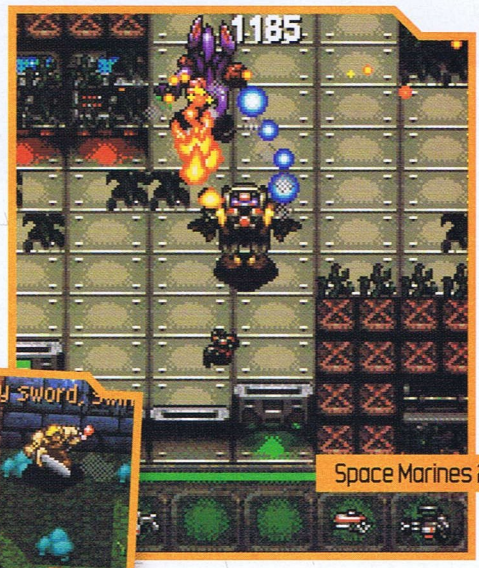
Mobile phones are incredibly limited, and they present developers with countless difficulties and obstacles that must be overcome. "Traditionally, phones don't have the best keypad functionality," says Daniel Visser, CEO of Wicked Witch. "In fact, for a long time phones could only have one key down [at a time]. Not cool when you want to move and shoot the alien!"

A handheld console is – any multimedia functionality aside – primarily designed for gaming. Mobile phone keypads, though, are designed for more than just gaming. It's a problem that games developers can't avoid, as



Mega Monster





demonstrated by the ill-fated N-Gage. Developers just have to work around them or, as is the case in South Korea, where the tycoon genre rules supreme, design games in such a way that they actually benefit from the keypad layout.

File size is an issue too. Back when DoCoMo first introduced downloadable Java applets to i-mode, for instance, the file size was restricted to a miniscule ten kilobytes. It's obviously improved since then – with some modern games weighing in at a comparatively hefty sixteen megs – but it's no less of a concern. And, speaking of size, mobile phone screens are often piddly. And the resolution on most of them sucks.

Even on a top-of-the-line phone that has a decent keypad layout and respectable resolution, there's one issue that mobile games developers always have to keep in mind: the external environment. Mobile games are, for the most part – even more than DS and PSP games – designed so that they can be played in a wide variety of environments. A person isn't going to enjoy a game if it's constantly demanding 100% of their attention while they're on a crowded, smelly, noisy peak hour train, for instance. That mobile games pretty much have to be casual, "pick up and play" affairs is something that really stops them from posing a serious, credible threat to Sony and Nintendo's rule over the portable gaming market. Especially now that numerous RPGs and action titles like the brilliant GTA: Vice City Stories have proven that it's possible for a handheld title that requires a lot of investment from the player to be a success.

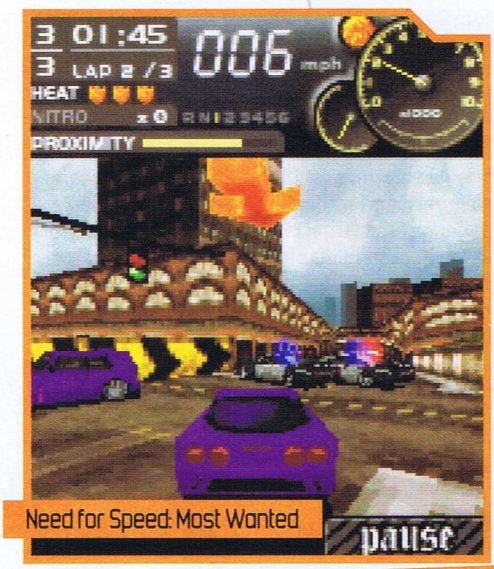
Of course, not all developers view these limitations and restrictions as being inherently bad. "It's amazing what you learn about game design fundamentals when you are challenged like this," says Murray. "It's certainly not enough to simply emulate traditional genres from the console or PC markets verbatim." From our perspective, with the limited file sizes, prohibitively expensive data rates, crappy keypads and countless other problems that the platform poses, developing a mobile game is akin to writing a short story. Each word and every turn of phrase has to earn its place on the page.

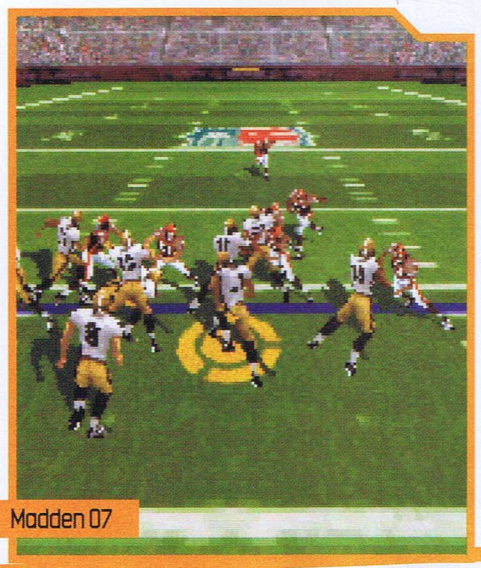
> "It's amazing what you learn about game design fundamentals when you are challenged like this"

It should be noted that mobile games developers technically aren't just developing for one platform. As Murray explains to use, studios like Firemint usually only develop the "reference build" of the game. External companies then port it – and, of course, test it on – a wide variety of handsets. The development of a typical game can take anywhere from a few weeks to ten months. The porting is reasonably time-consuming (considering the short development time), taking anywhere up to three months. There can be anywhere up to fifteen people working on a game, depending on its complexity.

In 2002, it would've set you back $30,000USD to develop a game, then another $5000 for testing. Now, though, the development could easily cost up to $200,000, plus $100,000 or so for porting. If you want to do something really fancy that supports both singleplayer and multiplayer, 3D hardware acceleration and the various other features that the latest phones have, you could easily throw a million bucks into it.

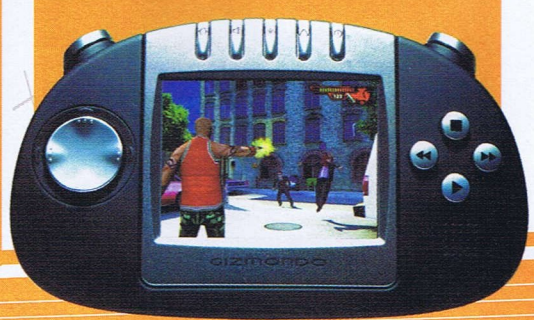
Occasionally, the developers will actually develop a couple of versions of a game - one for higher end handsets, and another for the lowest common denominator. As Murray explains, "That way, the best handsets get the best possible version of the game, while the weaker handsets don't get locked out altogether. They just get a cut down version."





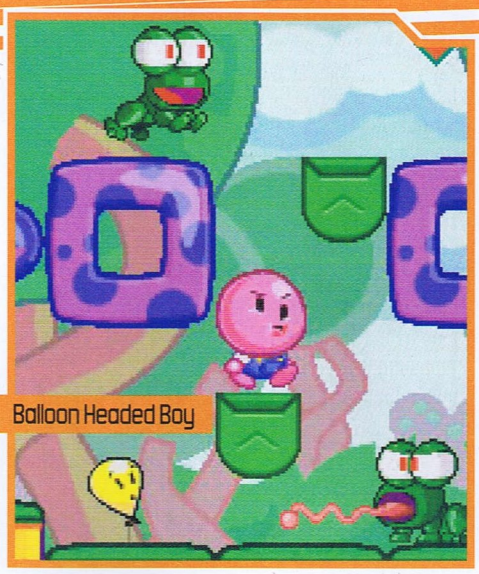
Gizmondo. Or, how to fail at everything.

Before you post a thread on the forums telling us that we're silly, we understand that the Gizmondo wasn't a phone. We understand that it was a handheld gaming device that supported GPS, GPRS, Bluetooth, SMS, MMS, MP3, WAV and WMV, but not the ability to make calls. We also understand that it sucked. The barbarians that engineered this pocket-sized atrocity went bankrupt in February 2006. Whether it was an honest to God miracle or not isn't the point, but we certainly sensed divine intervention.



I've got a Snake in my pocket...

Everyone in the mobile-carrying world has poured countless hours into guiding that pixelated snake on its noble quest for pixelated fruit. Snake was the first mobile game, making its first appearance on Nokia handsets in 1997. Truly the gaming equivalent of crystal meth.


Balloon Headed Boy

EARNING A CRUST

And that, in a roundabout way, brings us to one of the big issues with mobile games development: which is being able to make money from it. Over the years, publishers have tried out all sorts of online payment and distribution models for mobile games - some inanely complex and convoluted. Few of these models have been successful.

"We sell and deliver our products online," says Murray, "and we've done so from the beginning. The telecommunication companies are the retailers. Shelf space is virtual, but it's still just as real a problem as it is for Walmart. The consumer most often pays for their game directly off their telephone bill, rather than needing to establish a new billing relationship just for games, and the purchase price is much lower than mainstream games. There are a lot of different players in the market, from telcos to handset manufacturers, so business is much more complicated and you typically have to maintain a lot more relationships than in console gaming."

Marketing is an incredibly complex process for mobile games. Demos – a staple of the PC and, to a lesser extent, Sony and Microsoft consoles – don't work here. A few publishers tried them and found that the vast majority of gamers didn't end up buying the full version of the title they were trialing. Why would they, when they're just something simple that'll keep them entertained on the way home from work or during their lunch break?

And so developers quite often rely on what's been successful elsewhere. As much as Murray was correct in saying that it's impossible to just bring over genres from platforms, importing brand names and franchises is common practice. It's not uncommon to see mobile games based on established series such as Tomb Raider and Halo, television programmes like The Sopranos and 24, and blockbuster movies. There are a couple of BMW games. There's even a Paris Hilton game. It's called Diamond Quest. And it's a puzzler. Other games rely on gimmicks such as GPS and camera functionality. There have even been karaoke games. But only in Japan, of course...

> "There's even a Paris Hilton game. It's called Diamond Quest. And it's a puzzler."

But the point is, as much as games on other platforms regularly rely on successful brand names to make sales, the gaming press usually manages to sort the wheat from the chaff. PC and console games have to be of reasonable quality if they're going to continue selling after the reviews come in. And sure, mobile games are reviewed by some outlets, but for most of the part the big magazines and websites ignore them.

That's not to say all mobile games are crap. Or that they all rely on crap gimmicks or tie-ins to shift copies. Some developers – including Wicked Witch, who developed WarMonster, the first MMO for mobile phones – do make a genuine effort, but it's an unfortunate reality that it's fads and trends that tend to bring in the cash in this market.

JAPANESE CAM WHORES AND SOME AWFULLY GULLIBLE FINNS

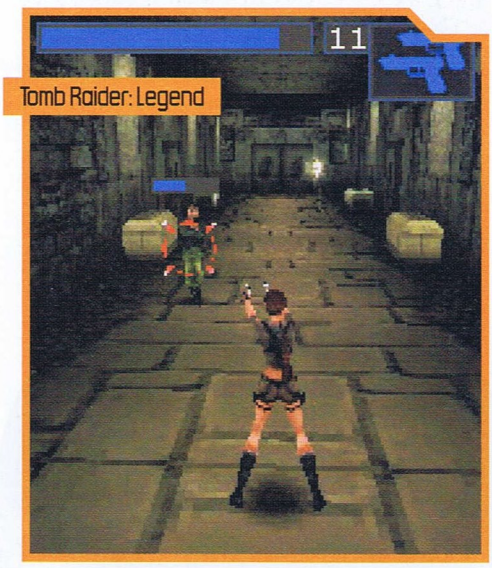
It'd be impossible to cover every technical milestone that's shaped – or at least had an amusing/interesting/disastrous impact on – the mobile games scene, but here's a brief list:

Colour: Introduced in 1997 by Siemens with their S10. Granted, the phone only displayed four colours – red, white, blue and green – and it'd be a while before the technology was widespread, even in Japan, but it was a start.

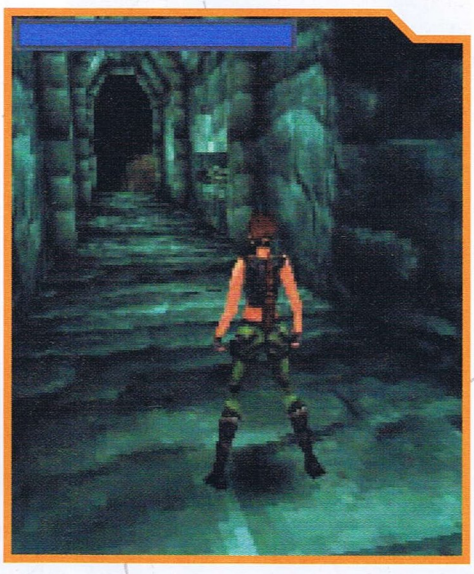
WAP: Short for Wireless Application Protocol. WAP was a mobile web service, pretty much, that, well, let people access the web... while mobile. As mentioned earlier by our good friend Mr. Murray, there were a number of games that could be played through WAP browsers.

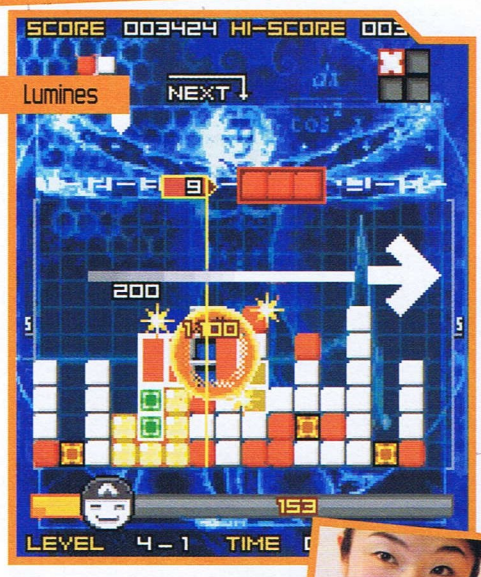
i-mode: i-mode has been around in Japan since 1999. Like WAP, it was mobile web service. Unlike WAP, though, it was actually easy to develop for, thanks to the wonders of the Compact HTML service. DoCoMo certainly struck a chord with the tech-crazy Japanese, as within six months they'd bagged an impressive one million subscribers. Every month after that, yet another million joined. By 2004 – right around the time i-mode was just starting off in the west – DoCoMo had a staggering forty million satisfied customers, making it the largest ISP in the world. Japan, at least – where mobile games are kind of a big deal – i-mode was what drove handset manufacturers to introduce many of the features we take for granted today. Cameras and colour screens, for instance. Although the service was initially quite limited, DoCoMo have continued to gradually introduce new features. In 2001, for instance, they brought in downloadable Java applets.

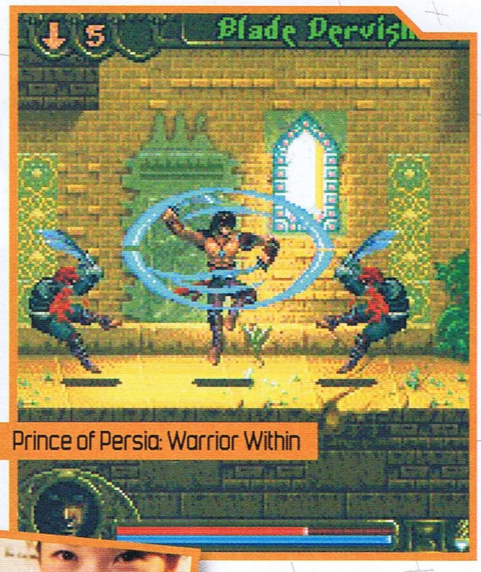
J2ME: Funky acronym that stands for Java 2 Platform Micro Edition. Java, for those uninitiated in the way of geekdom, is a platform



Tomb Raider: Legend







independent programming language. Micro Edition adds a swag of APIs that help developers create content for limited resource devices such as PDAs and, of course, mobile phones.

The do it yourself brain tumor kit: four mobiles.

BREW: Not homemade beer, unfortunately, but Binary Runtime Environment for Wireless. BREW is kind of like – but technically not – an operating system (think Windows, Linux or OSX on PC). If technical stuff gets you wet you can always read on it here (http://brew.qualcomm.com/brew/en/about/about_brew.html), but all you really need to know is that BREW makes the developer's job a hell of a lot easier.

Premium text messaging: In 2002, some particularly entrepreneurial Finnish studios developed a few multiplayer games based around premium text messaging. You'd play on your television, SMSing codes to a given number. If it was an arena-based shooter, say, you might send in an "A" and a "M" to get your character to move up and to the right. You might then quickly send in a "J" to shoot. You could also chat. Only those who truly hate their wallets need apply.

N-Gage: Side talking, anyone? We really don't know where to begin with this bastard child of a handheld and mobile phone that Nokia unleashed upon the world in 2003. It was bloody gargantuan. Most of the games were atrocious. The keypad was crap. The fact that this turkey managed to even get off the drawing board when what should've been a simple task – that is, inserting and removing the game cartridges – was in fact a chore continues to baffle us to this day. The N-Gage was victim to countless faults and ill-thought out "features," but the thing that really put the nail in its coffin was actually quite simple: no one cared. The legacy of the N-Gage will live on, however, as Nokia are planning on updating some of its software – including the multiplayer matchmaker – for their next generation of handsets.

OpenGL ES: If you're at all into computing, you'd have probably heard of OpenGL before. OpenGL ES (the ES, in case you're wondering, stands for Embedded Systems) is a set of graphics tools that make it possible to have games look pretty, without costing a lot in terms of system resources. Debuted in 2003, updated in 2005. If you, like a potential Mobile Infantry recruit, want to know more, point your browser in the direction of http://www.khronos.org/opengles/.

In-built cameras: 2003 saw the release of a few camera games in Japan. Titles ranged from the obvious – Tamagotchi-type things, where you'd literally feed your virtual pet a pinch of make-believe food – to the downright fruity. There was one where players would take photos of themselves – presumably while putting on their best bad arse expressions – trade them via IR and "fight" each other.

Flash Lite: Yet another 2003 release. Flash Lite, as you might've guessed, is the mobile version of Macromedia's Flash Player. Although now, we suppose, it's technically Adobe's Flash Player... Semantics aside, Flash Lite gave developers a serious alternative to Java and the various other mobile development tools out there.

GPS: Mr. Murray told us that games based around silly things like cameras and GPS functionality were mere gimmicks and not the slightest bit innovative, but clearly he has no sense of fun. After all, who wouldn't want to play a location-based, text-based fishing game of all things against their fellow Osakans?

Content creation: Not exactly big, but still mildly worthy of note. 2005 saw the release of some N-Gage pinball titles that featured level editors, allowing players to design their own tables. On a more aural note, Beat Mania – also released that year – offered the ability to customise songs and whatnot.

Hardware 3D: Over the past eighteen months or so, phones with dedicated 3D hardware have started to pop up. The inclusion of hardware 3D – as would be especially obvious to those of us who were gaming during those glorious 3Dfx days – takes a lot of strain off a phone's CPU, freeing it up for other tasks.

SO...

Although modern phones – well, expensive ones, at least – are quite impressive from a technical standpoint, and games like the Wicked Witch's WarMonster really demonstrate the potential of the platform, we feel that mobile gaming will remain a largely casual affair. At least it will in Australasia, Europe, Japan and the US.

There are dozens of reasons why this will continue to be the case, at least in the foreseeable future. The obvious one is the phones themselves – the poorly-thought out keypad layouts, the small screen and, of course, the ever-present possibility of a player being interrupted by a phone call – but as well as that there's the serious lack of quality control that the mobile games industry is notorious for, the all-too-common reliance on cheap gimmicks and the deeply flawed marketing and distribution models publishers employ. This industry will certainly grow, though, and we hope that as it expands into Africa and Asia that quality and competency become the rule rather than the exception. <<

Becoming mobile

If you're at all interested in getting into the mobile games industry, we suggest that you look through your back issues – which you no doubt have tucked away somewhere, being a loyal Hyper reader – and find #160. Everything we said in our feature about getting into the games industry applies here.

We quizzed Visser and Murray about this topic and both said pretty much the same thing: your work needs to be neat, clean and tight. If you're a programmer, your code needs to be ultra-efficient, not only because you're working with devices that are so limited in the way of systems resources, but because you don't want to create any headaches during the porting process.

On the other hand, if you're an artist, you'll want to ensure your traditional art skills are very strong. You won't be able to rely on the various PC and console engine techniques like shadows and normal mapping here.

The WOW Chronicles

I loves me some superheroes

» GRINNING

So, here I am at 67. Bored of Warcraft but not quite ready to quit.

What's an old, grizzled Rogue to do?

Hell with it. I'm a play City of Heroes instead.

I loves me some superheroes. I love the idea of flying around shooting eye beams at the ghosts of dinosaurs from Atlantis. I love the idea of throwing cars at poor people who have turned to crime when Capitalist systems fail them. Booya! CoH seems the way to go.

First up, I create some sort of twisted martial artist mutant. He kicks stuff. That's all. That's not very super.

Then I create a villain. X-Rayzor! He flies around an abandoned city irradiating cops in the face! That's whole lot better. But he's got problems. Getting slapped in the face by an old woman causes him to die. I realise that I'm playing a Mage.

See, nearly every MMO is the same. Classes and Races. In City Of... there's Backgrounds instead of races. They nominate your early missions and not much else. Like Race in WoW, that's pretty much a role playing choice rather than a power or play choice. Archetypes are just that, the typical kind of superhero powers. Tankers are big and slow and hit hard and take damage. Scrappers are your Wolverine and Batman types, who fight crime with the power of kicking thugs in the larynx. Blasters, er, blast stuff.

They're just WoW classes without the hybrids. You go up front if you're a tank, support with ranged fire and expect the only bugger with healing powers to sit up the back and spam the magic health-fixing buttons and scream at him if he complains and blame him for your mistakes.

Thus it comes to pass I finally settle on Wicked Grin, a rather dapper chap with a demon's smile, a stunning red double breasted suit jacket, suspiciously homoerotic leather pants and giant boots. If there's one area City Of... really excels, its character design. In WoW, your biggest decisions on character design is do you want a pony or pigtail. City Of... has many, many thousands of options and totally customisable classes. Indeed, I spent the first hour and a half of the game just making characters to see how cool I could make them look. The answer is that you can make your guys look so totally ace looking you'll fall in love with them.

But the game itself? Ah, I dunno. One of the reasons why WoW is so addictive is that you can learn how to play it. The tactics are always roughly the same but never boring. The thing is, once you've got the basic gameplay down, you're ok to go forever. The enemy AI is great. City Of... not so much. Pulling is as much luck as skill. The difficulties of missions vary wildly. So wildly that you often have no idea of bringing other folks along is a fine idea or a desperate mistake. There's a whole bunch of other stuff that I just seem to prefer in WoW. There, you can pick any of 25 missions. City Of... has three. That just struck me as prohibitive. Like that.

"Note to self: Get X-ray vision powers..."

I hate to say it, bored of the damn thing as I am, but for the casual player who just likes to muck in and see what's going on in the world, WoW is better. But City Of... has way cooler characters.

I put away the superheroes and villains. For now. I can see it's a top game but I'm refreshed for WoW now. And I've got enough money for an Epic Mount. Plus, I'm so close to 70 I can taste it.

A decision is made: I'm going to get to 70 and get a Flying Mount and see how I feel after that.

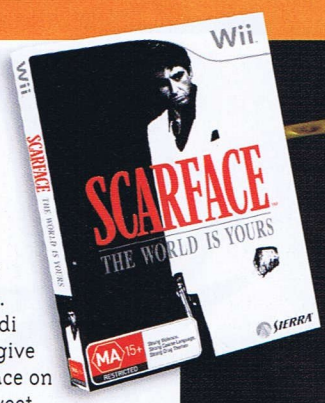
X-Rayzor irradiates a snake-man, IN THE FACE!

Wicked Grin does, er... nothing. IN THE FACE!

Next month – *The Final Grind Part Deux: Death in Netherstorm... From Above!*

WinWinWin

WIN SCARFACE FOR Wii PLUS A COPY OF SCAFACE ON DVD!



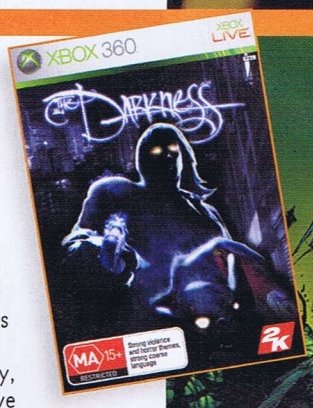
Up until now there has been a severe lack of Tony Montana and chainsaws on the Wii but thanks to Scarface this is all about to change. Thanks to the kind people at Vivendi Games we have five prize packs to give away consisting of a copy of Scarface on Wii and Scarface the DVD. Pretty sweet, huh? Now you don't have to worry about your friends telling you that the Wii is just for kids while they play their monolithic Xbox 360s and PS3s.

All you need to do to win one of these chainsawtastic prize packs is answe the following question in 25 words or less:

If you had a scar on your face, how would you have gotten it?

Send your answers, with your name and address to: **Chicks Dig Scars, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to *hypercomps@next.com.au* with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

WIN THE DARKNESS FOR XBOX 360!



Starbreeze have proven themselves to be the developers capable of doing an interesting, clever and all-round brilliant licensed game. Wilks can rave on at length about how good The Darkness is but really you should play the game for yourself to find out. Luckily, the fine people over at 2K games have given us five Xbox 360 copies of the next-gen FPS to give away.

All you need to do for a chance to win a copy of this awesomely awesome game is **tell us in 25 words or less what license you think Starbreeze should work on for their next game and why.**

Send your answer, with your name and address to: **License to Thrive, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016,** or email your entry to *hypercomps@next.com.au* with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

Terms & Conditions: 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am July 10, 2007 and entries close at 6pm August 15, 2007. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am August 16, 2007 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the October issue of Hyper on sale September 5, 2007. 9) 5 Winners will receive a copy of Scarface on Wii (RRP: $89.95) and a copy of the Scarface DVD (RRP: $29.95). Total competition value $599.50. 5 winners will each receive one copy of The Darkness for Xbox 360 (RRP: $109.95). Total value of the competition is $549.75. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

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ATELIER IRIS 3
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RPG HEAVEN COMES TO EARTH

26 JULY 2007

PG Mild violence

PlayStation 2

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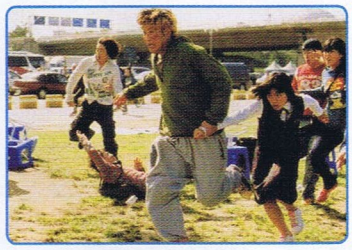
"Oh noes! I missed the StarCraft tournament!"

The Host 2 DISC SPECIAL EDITION

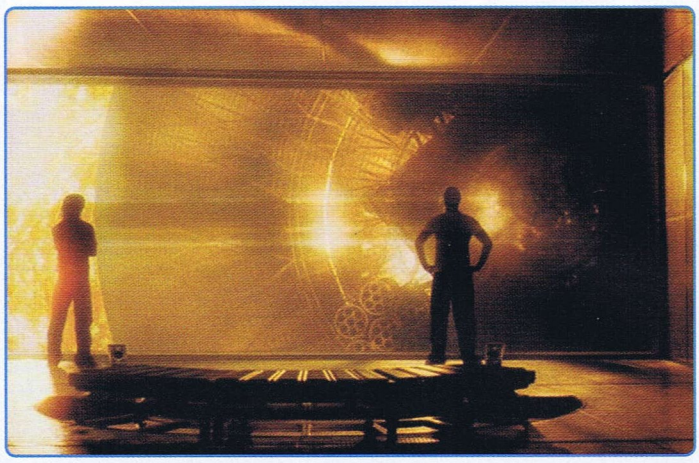
EASTERN EYE, M

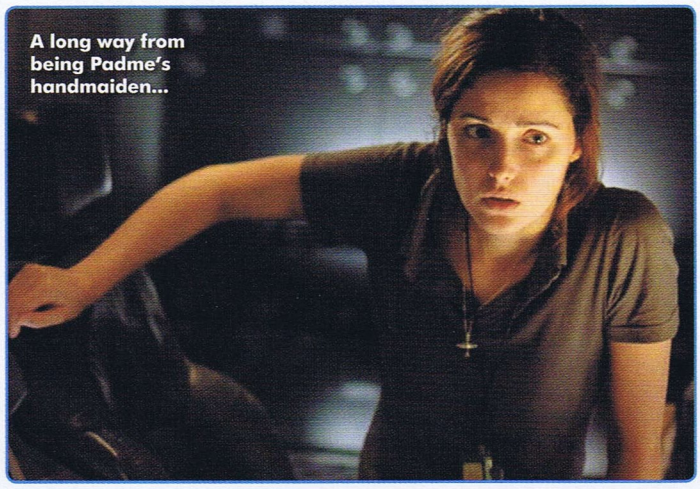


At heart The Host is a monster movie about a big, nigh-unstoppable creature rampaging across Seoul and eating people. It's also a human tragedy, a comedy of errors, a satire of bureaucracy, American foreign relations, governmental control and a simple story about familial love. It's a lot of things and, unlike most films that try to be all things to all men, it succeeds. It succeeds brilliantly. A massive mutant creature, kind of like a partially evolved tadpole on a massive scale scours the shore of Seoul's Han River, eating hapless Koreans and understandably causing a panic. In the first attack, a hapless, simple but well-meaning father sees his daughter taken by the beast. A mobile phone call from the girl catalyzes her entire dysfunctional family – father, Olympic level archer aunt who crumples under pressure, former political dissident uncle and wise, lovable and slightly scatty grandfather – to take up arms and hunt the creature. To make matters more difficult the family has to contend not only with the mutant tadpole but with the South Korean and American armies who have cordoned off the area convinced that the creature is the host of a deadly new virus.

Refusing to follow the rules set out by monster movies in the past, director/writer Bong Joon-ho shows us the monster within the first 15 minutes, in broad daylight no less, concentrates more on the family drama than the monster and doesn't feature any action heroes. Instead the audience empathises with remarkably real and fallible characters drawn together by crisis. Of course, as with all good things, Hollywood, proving once again that it is out of ideas, has already bought the rights to do a remake. See the original. You won't regret it.

FILM: 10 / FEATURES: 9





A long way from being Padme's handmaiden...

Sunshine

FOX, M

Bioshock is gonna rock!

Danny Boyle and Alex Garland reinvented the Zombie film with 28 Days Later, creating a believable scenario for the inevitable zombie apocalypse. With Sunshine the director and writer have once again tried to create a believable scenario for the action but by the third act this realism falls to the side in lieu of metaphysics, stalk and slash thrills and a little religious philosophising. The last 20 odd minutes aside, Sunshine is an interesting and satisfying science-fiction thriller that cleverly looks at man's relationship with the sun as well as the effects of pressure and isolation.

In the year 2057, the sun is dying, leading the Earth into a big freeze from which there is no coming back. In desperation an experimental space craft, the Icarus, and even more experimental bomb are sent on a mission to restart the sun. Seven years on and the Icarus has gone missing, prompting the launch of the Icarus II to pick up where the original crew failed. The fate of the Earth lies in the hands of eight men and women. No pressure there, none at all.

As the isolation sets in, years after they leave Earth, the crew of the Icarus II loses contact with Earth but receive a distress signal from the original Icarus. Should the crew divert their course and investigate? There's no question that the crew of the Icarus is dead but two last chances to restart the sun are better than one. Cillian Murphy, the likable protagonist of 28 Days Later forms the heart of Sunshine as Capa, a gentle physicist who hides his emotions and tensions. Australian Rose Byrne doesn't fare nearly as well as the ship's pilot Cassie. Whilst she serves as an emotional core to the action her part is underwritten and calls upon her to take the emotional route rather than the logical one more often than not.

FILM: 8 / FEATURES: TBA

Hot Fuzz 2 DISC SPECIAL EDITION

UNIVERSAL, MA 15+

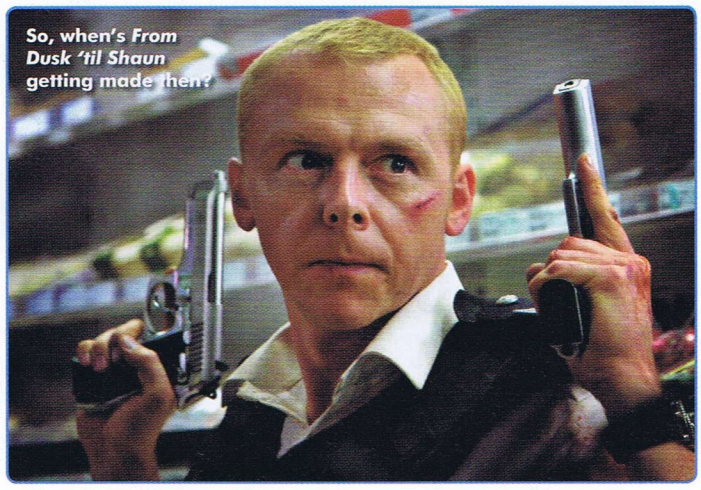
If you come into Hot Fuzz expecting the same brilliance Pegg and Wright displayed in Shaun of the Dead you'll be disappointed as the team's second outing falls a little short of the original film. This isn't to say that Hot Fuzz isn't a great film; it is – just that Shaun set the bar so damn high that it's going to be hard to top. Simon Pegg plays Nicholas Angel, a London cop so good at this job that he's banished to the small east country village of Sandford for screwing up everyone else's arrest numbers and making them look bad. In Sandford, Angel is a fish out of water – the town has next to no crime, the police are inept and every death is labeled as an accident. Of course, being the tough cop that he is, Angel uncovers a dark secret leading to an overblown, Bruckheimer style finale.

Parodying both British crime shows (Midsomer Murders comes to mind) and mega-budget brainless Hollywood cop/action films, Hot Fuzz is by necessity a bigger film than Shaun of the Dead, moving at a languid pace to begin with but

Cornettos again? Don't they eat normal food?

setting up the events that are to come with such aplomb and clever foreshadowing that the film never seems to drag. As was evident in Shaun of the Dead, Simon Pegg and Nick Frost have a wonderful chemistry together. In Hot Fuzz, Frost once again takes the role of the rather dim-witted but likeable second fiddle to Pegg's more capable leading man and it works wonderfully. Frost's PC Danny Butterman is hopeless as a cop but is such a funny and charming character, a great counterpoint to the deliberately dry, police handbook quoting Nicholas Angel.

FILM: 8 / FEATURES: 10



So, when's *From Dusk 'til Shaun* getting made then?

Idiocracy

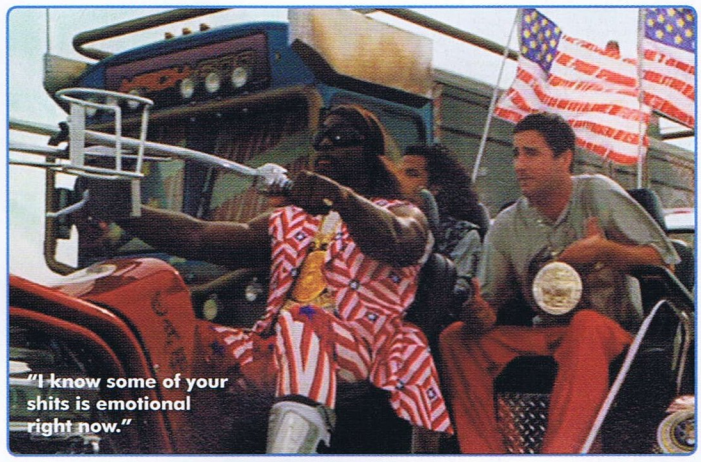
FOX, MA 15+

Every day we are bombarded with images of the future ranging from the ravages of global warming to the end of fossil fuels but Mike Judge's (Beavis and Butthead, Office Space) latest film shows us a far more alarming vision of the future, a planet full of idiots. It's a future that seems dangerously plausible. The general gist of the argument is that whilst Darwinism should see the best traits of the species passed on from generation to generation the truth of the matter is that those who breed more influence future generations more than those who selectively breed; and who breeds more than stupid people? Given 500 years of rampant breeding the stupid inherit the Earth.

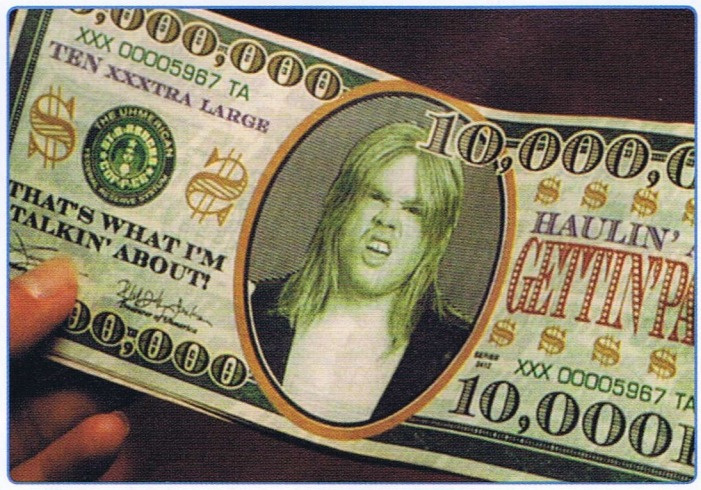
Enter Joe Bauers, a truly average American soldier who, when told to "step up or move aside" will happily move aside and let those with higher aspirations pass. He's right at the middle of the bell curve when it comes to intelligence but after an army cryogenics experiment goes wrong and he wakes up in the moronic future, Joe Bauers finds himself the smartest man in the world.

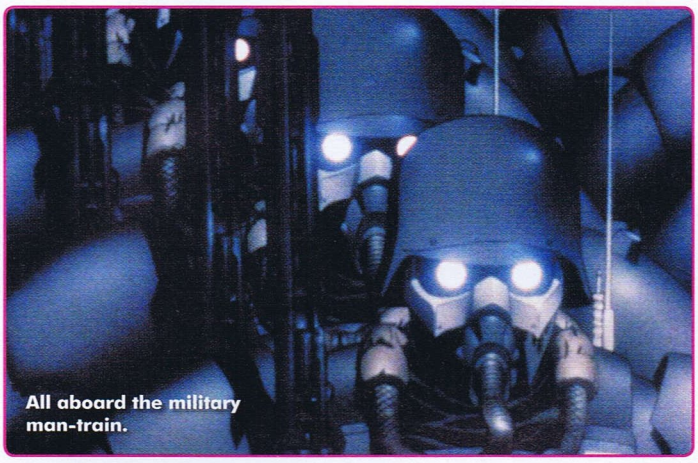
Judge milks the funny premise for all the satire he can, taking potshots as ineffectual governments, the dumbing down of the media, faceless corporate giants and the like but he never reaches the heights of laugh-out-loud funny he did in Office Space. Luke Wilson and Terry Crews as Joe Bauers and 10 times Smackdown champion and President of Uhmerica, President Camacho respectively steal every scene they are in.

FILM: 7 / FEATURES: 7



"I know some of your shits is emotional right now."





All aboard the military man-train.

Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade
SPECIAL EDITION

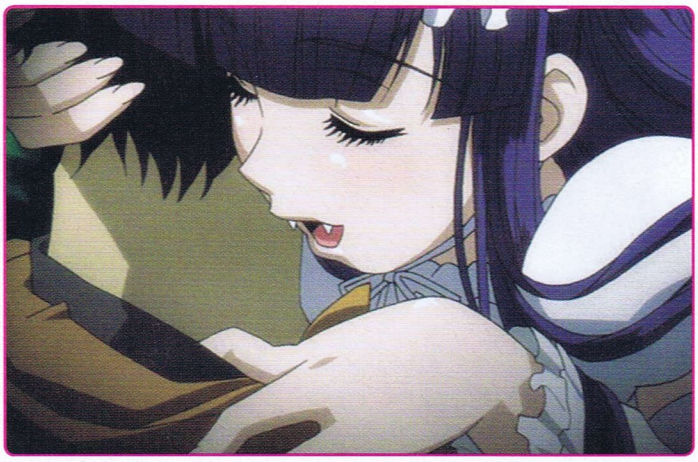
PRODUCTION: PRODUCTION I.G.
GENRE: PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

Jin-Roh is a powerful film, telling a thoughtful if somewhat relentlessly downbeat story of friendship, politics and the human animal in an alternate history in which Germany occupied Japan after WWII. A secret police force, the Capitol Police, clash with violent radicals looking to overthrow the government for their questionable practices. After a failed mission in which a woman blows herself up rather than face imprisonment brings the covert actions of the Capitol Police to light, officer Kazuki Fuze is publicly made a scapegoat and demoted. Obsessed with the woman who blew herself up, Fuse tracks down the girl's sister and they begin a relationship.

The slow, deliberate pace of the film may be off-putting to some viewers and admittedly it does drag at times as the monosyllabic and mournful Fuse sits silent and lets other people do the talking. The art direction and character design are beautiful examples of hand-drawn animation and the music fits the action (or lack thereof) brilliantly. The question, then, is whether or not the special edition of an anime title already available in this country is worth a purchase. If you don't have a copy of Jin-Roh then this is the version for you but there is nothing compelling enough in the special features to warrant a repeat purchase, even from the most hard-core of anime fans.

The Hyper staring competition... she wins

ANIMATION: 8 / STORY: 9
EXTRAS: 6 / **OVERALL: 8**



Just like Def Leppard always said: Love bites.

Tsukuyomi Moon Phase

PRODUCTION: VICTOR ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: SUPERNATURAL ROMANTIC COMEDY DRAMA

If you can sit through the horrible theme song in the opening credits (NEKOMIMI-MODE!), Tsukuyomi Moon Phase is not a bad little show – if you're in the mood for a slightly muddled vampire/goth-loli/romantic/supernatural/comedy/drama that is. When Morioka Kouhei, a photographer for a supernatural magazine (a magazine on the supernatural that is, not a magazine that is supernatural in nature) and who happens to be unable to see ghosts sees a girl sitting on the roof of a supposedly haunted castle he becomes obsessed with meeting her. As it turns out the girl, Hazuki, is a vampire and needs Morioka to break the barrier that traps her in the castle. Cue neck biting. To complicate matters, for some reason Hazuki's vampiric powers don't appear to work on Morioka, leaving him with his own free will instead of transforming him into an obedient slave. Hazuki's personality is also very malleable depending on the phase of the moon (NEKOMIMI-MODE!) leading to some unpredictable behaviour and plotting. This interpersonal conflict is the basis for most of the action in the series.

Character design and animation are uniformly quite good and the series boasts some very nice Gothic background art. The production utilizes a lot of interesting angles instead of just presenting the action straight on. Unfortunately, for all the production skill, the scripting is too cluttered to allow for any real immersion – the story of Hazuki and Morioka's strange relationships is quite strong but the strange fits of comedy, personality changes and unwillingness to stick to one style alienates the viewer a little more than it should.

ANIMATION: 8 / STORY: 7
EXTRAS: 4 / **OVERALL: 6**

WinWinWin

WIN TRANSFORMERS LOOT!

The Transformers G1 Collection 17 disc boxed set, a copy of the Transformers Animated Movie Special Edition DVD and a Transformers T-Shirt, Cap and Hoody!

>> Sure there's a movie at the cinemas featuring robots that transform into vehicles, or something like that, but Michael Bay has nothing on the original animated series. To commemorate all the awesomeness that is Transformers, Madman has been kind enough to give us a pretty damn sweet prize pack to give away consisting of the epic 17 disc Transformers G1 boxed set, a copy of the Transformers Animated Movie Special Edition and a T-Shirt, Cap and Hoody featuring either the Autobot or Decepticon logo (you choose).

1 MASSIVE PRIZE PACK TO GIVE AWAY!

All you need to do for a chance to win this awesome prize pack is answer the following question in 25 words or less:

>> If you were a giant robot what would you transform into and why?

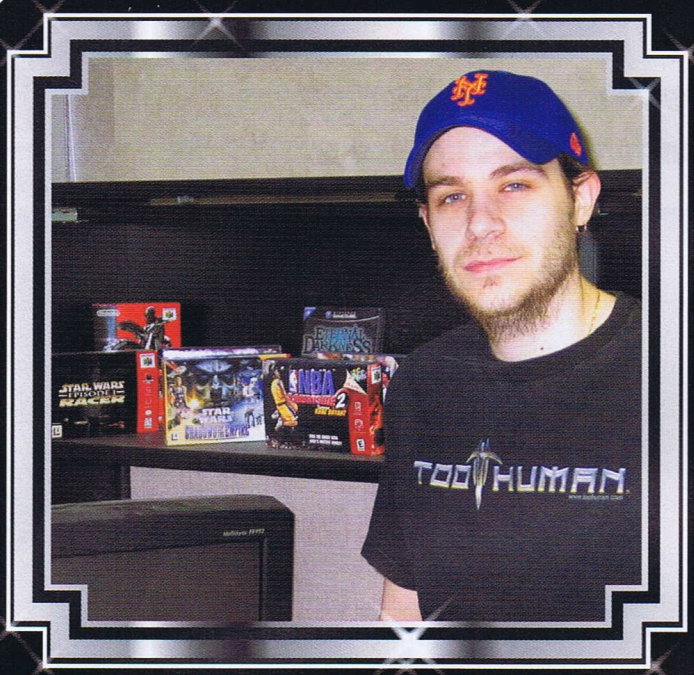
Please be sure to specify Autobot or Decepticon on your entry and provide us with your T-Shirt/Hoody size.

Send your answers, with your name and address to: **Transform and Roll Out!, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to *hypercomps@next.com.au* with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

Terms & Conditions: 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am July 10, 2007 and entries close at 6pm August 15, 2007. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am August 16, 2007 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the October issue of Hyper on sale September 5, 2007. 9) 1 Winner will receive a copy of The Transformers G1 Boxed Set (RRP: $149.95), 1 of the Transformers Animated Movie SE DVD (RRP: $29.95), 1 Transformers T-Shirt (RRP: $39.95), 1 Transformers Cap (RRP: $34.95) and 1 Transformers Hoody (RRP: $79.95). Total competition value $334.75. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON



When Silicon Knights' Henry Sterchi says "Lately I've been working on tracking down a copy of 'Y's Book I & II' for my TurboGrafx CD," it is immediately apparent that he is a developer with a genuine passion for games.

The TurboGrafx 16 (known as the PC Engine in some territories) achieved a measure of success during the late 80s and early 90s. However, the CD expansion unit was an unmitigated flop and very few of today's gamers are familiar with the system. The fact that Sterchi not only owns a TurboGrafx CD but is still actively hunting for compatible software speaks volumes about the man's commitment to his chosen art.

His collection began with a handful of Intellivision, Atari 2600 and Commodore Amiga titles. He was also fortunate enough to own a ColecoVision, a system capable of running Atari 2600 games in addition to its own range titles. It appears that Sterchi's fondness for underdog consoles commenced at an early age.

As is the case with many of his generation, Sterchi's collection grew dramatically following the introduction of the bestselling system of the 80s. "The old NES games still amaze me," he says.

"The gameplay in them still hold up so well, and the system had quite a large technical leap from its earliest games to the later ones. I love going to back some of the more unknown classics."

We ask Sterchi to identify some of the games that have influenced him creatively. While he is pleased to acknowledge the "amazing design qualities" inherent in Nintendo favourites 'Metroid' and 'Super Mario 64', he also sounds a note of caution. "You can see things that have been done well or poorly," he says, "but you have to constantly make sure that you aren't doing something the same way everyone else has just because it has worked. You need to constantly try to bring in new ways of doing things, and entirely new concepts. Every game is a different game and has to do the things that are right for that specific game."

Sterchi's collection may well have swelled beyond the 500 title mark, but when he expresses a desire to purchase a Vectrex console (a largely forgotten relic of the 8-bit era) you realise that he is far from finished.

Hyper would like to thank Henry Sterchi for participating in this month's column. Join us next month as we delve into the collection of Kaos Studios' David Votypka!

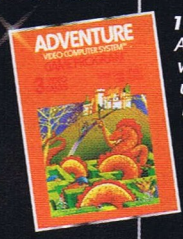
Too Human

Meet Henry Sterchi

Henry Sterchi established his career with Nintendo, where he contributed to titles such as 'Donkey Kong Country' and 'Excitebike'. Today, he is Director of Design at Silicon Knights. The studio is preparing to unleash 'Too Human', a highly-anticipated sci-fi action title exclusive to the Xbox 360.

Cataloguing the classics

From the celebrated to the obscure, Sterchi's collection has something for everyone. Here's a small sample.

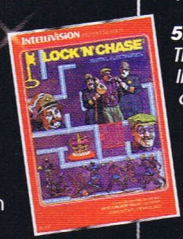


1. Adventure
Atari provided 2600 owners with a fantasy quest of hitherto unprecedented scale. Released in 1978, critics consider it to be a landmark in the evolution of the genre.

2. Bionic Commando
Capcom's action platformer arrived on the NES in 1988. The titular hero overcame the trauma of amputation by strapping on a robot arm and executing fascists.

3. Clash at Demonhead
Vic Tokai's anime-inspired platformer was released with little fanfare in 1990. Track it down if you fancy playing a character named 'Bang'.

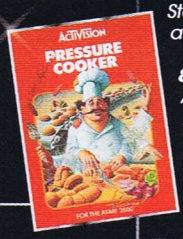
4. Zelda: Ocarina of Time
A worldwide smash in 1998, this N64 adventure has lost none of its charm. Sterchi's copy is emblazoned with the signature of the great man himself, Shigeru Miyamoto.



5. Lock 'n' Chase
This 1983 release allowed Intellivision gamers to instigate their own crime-wave. Negotiate the maze, snatch the coins, avoid the cops and don't mention 'Pac-man'.

6. Miniature Golf
Golf was an early favourite of developers as the basics of the sports could be simulated using rudimentary hardware. Atari's effort hit the 2600 in 1979.

7. Night Stalker
This stylish shooter crawled onto shelves in 1982 and challenged players to survive a deadly maze. Steer clear if you suffer from arachnophobia.



8. Pressure Cooker
Activision's 1982 release for the Atari 2600 provided a much needed wake-up call to those ignorant of the skill and intensity required to flip burgers.

9. River City Ransom
This 1989 title from TJC may reference a ransom in the title, but the only respectable way to retrieve a kidnapped spouse is with some brutal side-scrolling NES action.

10. Utopia
Mattel's Intellivision classic challenged players to create their own civilisations. Released in 1982, it undoubtedly influenced the development of the strategy genre.

HYPER» READER'S SURVEY

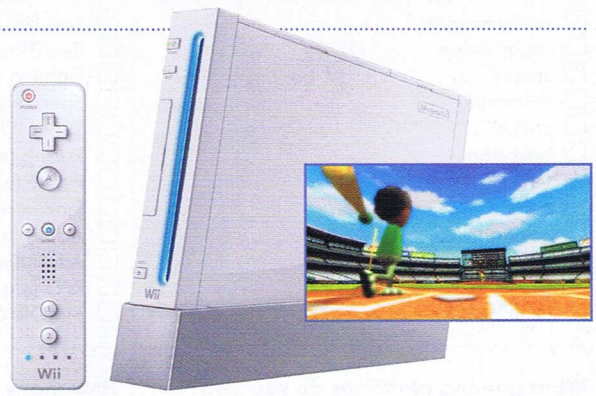
ANSWER OUR SURVEY AND BE IN THE RUNNING FOR A NINTENDO Wii!

Thank you very much for purchasing your copy of Hyper magazine this month.

We value your opinion and to ensure that we continue to develop and deliver a magazine of high quality to you, we ask that you take just 5 minutes of your time to fill out the following survey! Please send back to us by July 31st, filling in your name and address details below and in 25 words or less give us the reason why you would like to win a Nintendo Wii, courtesy of QuikShop!

Hyper Reader's Survey, Hyper,
78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016

Comp closes July 31, 2007.



How often do you buy an issue of Hyper? (Tick one)

- ☐ Every month
- ☐ Every second Month
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ I only read my friend's Hyper

Are you a subscriber to the magazine?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no, what offers would entice you to consider becoming a subscriber?

- ☐ A bigger subscriber discount
- ☐ Consoles
- ☐ PCs
- ☐ Game packs
- ☐ Mobile phones
- ☐ Peripherals (Driving Wheels, Gamepads, etc)
- ☐ Av Gear (Televisions, speakers, DVD/HDDVD/Blu-Ray Players, Projectors, etc)
- ☐ Other .....

If you purchase the magazine at a newsstand, what prompts you to buy the magazine?

- ☐ the front cover image
- ☐ cover lines
- ☐ features
- ☐ competitions
- ☐ the content of the magazine
- ☐ Other .....

What would you like to see more of in this magazine? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Music
- ☐ Movies (Cinema reviews/previews)
- ☐ DVDs
- ☐ Gadgets / Technology

What movie genres interests you? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Action (e.g. 300)
- ☐ Adventure (e.g. Pirates of the Caribbean)
- ☐ Superhero (e.g. Spiderman)
- ☐ Animated (e.g. Shrek)
- ☐ Comedy (e.g. Blades of Glory)
- ☐ Thriller (e.g. Disturbia)
- ☐ Horror (e.g. Hostel)
- ☐ Other

How many times to you go to the movies per month? (tick one)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Twice a month
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every couple of days

How many DVDs would you rent per month? (tick one)

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More than 10

How many DVDs would you buy per month? (tick one)

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ More than 10

Below is a list of what usually appears in Hyper. For each one please tick how much you like it:

	Really Like	*Like*	*It's ok*	*Dislike*	*Don't read*
News	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opinion Columns	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Previews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Features	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Indie Game Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Byte Size Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hardware	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
WIN WIN WIN	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
DVD Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Anime Reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hyper Offers Page	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collections	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Passion of the Gamer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Charts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you play any of the following sports? (tick all that apply) How often?

	weekly	*monthly*	*occasionally*
☐ rugby league	☐	☐	☐
☐ rugby union	☐	☐	☐
☐ soccer	☐	☐	☐
☐ AFL	☐	☐	☐
☐ cricket	☐	☐	☐
☐ baseball	☐	☐	☐
☐ squash	☐	☐	☐
☐ netball	☐	☐	☐
☐ basketball	☐	☐	☐
☐ tennis	☐	☐	☐
☐ swimming	☐	☐	☐
☐ running	☐	☐	☐
☐ walking	☐	☐	☐

What sporting events do you attend? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ rugby league
- ☐ rugby union
- ☐ soccer AFL
- ☐ baseball
- ☐ tennis
- ☐ squash
- ☐ netball
- ☐ basketball
- ☐ swimming

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HYPER READER'S SURVEY

What sports do you watch on TV? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ rugby league
- ☐ rugby union
- ☐ soccer
- ☐ swimming
- ☐ cricket
- ☐ basketball
- ☐ tennis
- ☐ netball
- ☐ gridiron
- ☐ baseball
- ☐ wrestling
- ☐ boxing

What gaming platforms do you own? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Playstation 2
- ☐ Playstation 3
- ☐ PSP
- ☐ Nintendo GameCube
- ☐ Nintendo Wii
- ☐ Nintendo GameBoy / DS
- ☐ X-Box
- ☐ X-Box 360
- ☐ PC

Do you have a computer? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How often do you play games on computers? (tick one)

- ☐ 1 – 2 times per week
- ☐ 3 – 6 times per week
- ☐ 7 – 12 times per week
- ☐ Hardly ever
- ☐ Never

Do you play games online?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What Internet connection do you have?

- ☐ Dial Up
- ☐ ADSL
- ☐ cable
- ☐ wireless

Do you use VOIP?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What genre of games interests you? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ First Person Shooters (e.g. Halo)
- ☐ Real Time Strategy (e.g. C&C)
- ☐ Fighting (e.g. Tekken)
- ☐ Sport (e.g. Fight Night)
- ☐ Survival Horror (e.g. Resident Evil)
- ☐ Racing (e.g. Gran Turismo)
- ☐ Puzzle (e.g. Puzzle Quest)
- ☐ Innovative (e.g. Katamari)
- ☐ Action (e.g. Grant Theft Auto)
- ☐ Adventure (e.g. Broken Sword)
- ☐ RPG (e.g. Final Fantasy)
- ☐ MMORPG (e.g. World of Warcraft)

How many games do you purchase every year? (tick one)

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11+

Where do you mostly buy your games? (tick one)

- ☐ The Internet
- ☐ Specialist Retailers like GAME and EB
- ☐ Department Stores (David Jones, Myer)
- ☐ Mass Merchant Stores (Big W, Kmart)
- ☐ Harvey Norman's
- ☐ Technology Stores like Dick Smiths or JB Hi-Fi
- ☐ Other, please specify: .....

.....

Do you subscribe to or watch Pay TV? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you drink energy drinks? (if yes, tick all that apply)

- ☐ Red Bull
- ☐ V
- ☐ Dare shots
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Other.....

How often would you drink an energy drink

- ☐ 1 – 2 times per week
- ☐ 3 – 6 times per week
- ☐ 7 – 12 times per week
- ☐ 13+ times per week

Which of the following magazines do you also like to read? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Official Playstation Magazine Australia
- ☐ Official Xbox 360 Magazine Australia
- ☐ T3
- ☐ Empire
- ☐ Atomic
- ☐ PC PowerPlay
- ☐ Alpha
- ☐ Geare
- ☐ Smarthouse
- ☐ Other, please specify: .....

How would you rate Hyper as value for money? (tick one)

- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Extremely good

Do you visit the Hyper forums? (tick one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes what do you like about the Hyper Forum?

.....

.....

What Music do you like? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ R&B
- ☐ Hip Hop
- ☐ Rock
- ☐ Metal
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Techno / Electro / Trance
- ☐ Pop
- ☐ Indie
- ☐ Punk
- ☐ Emo

What sex are you? (tick one)

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

How old are you? (tick one)

- ☐ Under 14
- ☐ 14-17
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35 49
- ☐ Over 49

Please tell us what sections you would like to see in Hyper?

.....

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Which one of the following online department stores have you visited?

- ☐ QuikShop
- ☐ dStore
- ☐ BuyQuick
- ☐ DealsDirect
- ☐ AnythingOnline
- ☐ BigShop

Which one do you prefer? .....

What fast food restaurants do you visit frequently? (tick all that apply) How often?

	More than once a week	A few times a month	Once a month	A few times a year or less
☐ McDonalds	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Hungry Jacks / Burger King	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ KFC	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Subway	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Nando's	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Oporto	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Domino's	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ Pizza Hut	☐	☐	☐	☐

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HYPER Game Retailer Offers

	STORE NAME	LOCATION	OFFER
games paradise	**Games Paradise** *www.gamesparadise.com.au* *www.jbhifionline.com.au*	Online Retailer, with 2 stores in NSW! Ph: 1300 365 218	Nintendo Wii Joytech Sharp Shooter Shotgun, only **$27.95**
ezygames .com.au	**EzyGames** *www.ezygames.com.au*	Online Retailer *See website for details*	Buy Mercury: Meltdown Revolution on the Wii for only $79.95 or Metal Slug Anthology on the Wii for only $93.87.
bgamer.com.au	**Bgamer** *www.bgamer.com.au* *Info@bgamer.com.au*	Online Retailer. Based in Byron Bay NSW *"If you can't find it on the website, call us direct! 02 66809166"*	• Chipped slim PS2 with two joypads for $299 • Chipped Nintendo Wii $499 • Play your favourite games in PAL or NTSC!
GAMES WAREHOUSE	**Games Warehouse** *www.gameswarehouse.com.au*	Online Retailer Ph 02 96485656 and Warehouse pickup Silverwater,NSW.	Huge Range of Nintendo Wii and DS Games and Accessories! Pre-Order for best pricing and fast delivery
GAME The next level	**Game** *www.gameswizards.com*	Online Retailer, 24 Stores located in NSW, VIC & ACT. Ph: 13GAME.	Transformers Collector's Edition Xbox 360 – $30 down, $30 off when you pre-order. See in-store for details
quikShop AUSTRALIA	**Quikshop** *www.quikshop.com.au* YOUR ONLINE SPECIALTY DEPARTMENT STORE	Online Retailer: Games, Movies, Mobile Phones, Digital Cameras, Video Cameras PH: 1300786151	• **CONSOLES FOR COST!** • Wii MEGA bundle, wii + extra controller + 3 games + FREE shipping only $579 • Save up to 50% store wide on mobile phones and cameras. • Order 4+ games/dvd's and receive FREE shipping..
www.scorptec.com.au scorpion TECHNOLOGY	**Scorpion Technology** *www.scorptec.com.au*	Online Retailer	50% OFF your Delivery Cost Australia Wide for all orders over $1500! Enter the code '**HYPERDEL7**' when placing your order online.
DVDCRAVE	**DVD Crave** *www.dvdcrave.com*	Ph: 08 83955088 Email: service@dvdcrave.com Mail: DVD Crave pty ltd, PO Box 18, Highbury, SA, 5089	Mario Party 8 for Wii shipping now. One week before it hits shelves. Only $81.95!
TRUE GAMER	**True Gamer** *www.truegamer.com.au*	Online Retailer	15% off our already reduced prices during July. Save up to 40%! Simply enter code: **IWANT15** at checkout to take advantage of this great offer!

To place an offer in the next issue, please contact Chris at Next Media

PH: 02 9699 0340 **E:** ChrisG@next.com.au

HYPER'S Top 10 Best Gan

Games get cancelled every day. Some are so incompetently coded and buggy that a commercial release would be irresponsible, some may run into financial difficulties, while others may have just been a bad idea in the first place.

What doesn't happen everyday is the cancellation of a potentially good game, or at least one that would give us a few laughs. This month we're taking a look back at the top-ten most promising games from the past that haven't only been forgotten, but they were never released in the first place! *By* ***Maurice Branscombe***

MOTHER 3 / EARTHBOUND 64

Platform: **Nintendo 64DD**
Developer: **HAL Laboratories**
Supposed to Release: **1998**

For role-playing fans, one of the most anticipated games of the Nintendo 64 era was Mother 3, otherwise known as Earthbound 64 outside Japan. This was to be the third in the series of quirky Japanese RPGs that put you up against the insidious Giygas, the alien ruler of the Starmen, who wants to control the world. Of course, due to the failure of the N64DD, Mother 3 fell into a bottomless development pit, from which it would never return.

In 2006 a 2D game sporting the Mother 3 title was released in Japan, but it was never released elsewhere. We still think the original looked pretty cool though.

STARFOX 2

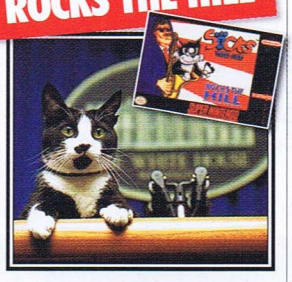
Platform: **SNES**
Developer: **Nintendo/ Argonaut Games**
Supposed to Release: **1995**

Doubtlessly one of the most disappointing game cancellations was that of StarFox 2 on the Super Nintendo. Not only was the game practically one hundred percent finished when it was canned, but it looked and played fantastically as well.

Nintendo permanently shelved the game just before its release, reportedly because the company didn't want to take any attention away from the imminent release of their Nintendo 64 console.

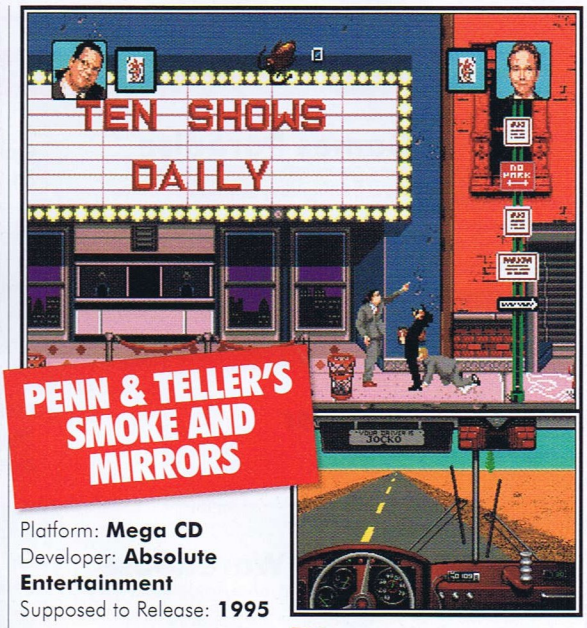
In 1999 a pre-release version of the game was discovered and made public via the internet, so today we can actually play StarFox 2 in its entirety. It very much resembles StarFox Command, which would release on the DS more than ten years later. It would have been far better to have it in 1995 though.

SOCKS THE CAT ROCKS THE HILL



Platform: **SNES, Megadrive**
Developer: **Kaneko USA**
Supposed to Release: **1993**

While we don't think Socks the Cat Rocks the Hill would have even remotely been a good game, the premise is just too oddball to not to make it into our list of top cancelled games. Taking the role of Socks, the feline pet of the 42nd president of the United States of America, Bill Clinton, you presumably had to "rock the hill" in true platform-game style. We'll never know, however, as the game was duly canned, possibly when the Japanese arm of Keneko realised that their American developers were most definitely inhaling whatever it was they were smoking.



PENN & TELLER'S SMOKE AND MIRRORS

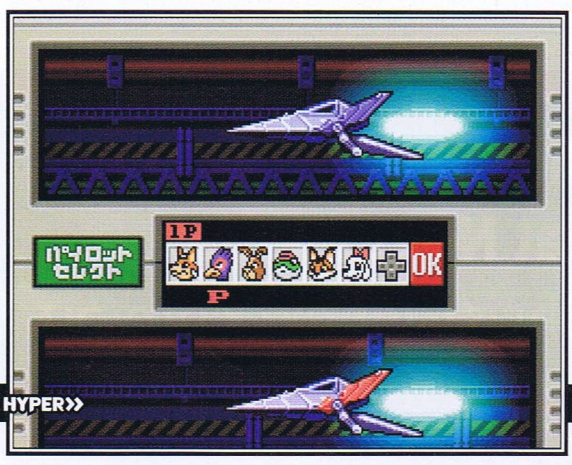
Platform: **Mega CD**
Developer: **Absolute Entertainment**
Supposed to Release: **1995**

Penn & Teller's Smoke and Mirrors was another game that was totally finished before it was unexpectedly cancelled when its developers, Absolute Entertainment, went broke. In essence Smoke and Mirrors was a joke game, and existed for the sole purpose of giving your mates grief. There was a collection of mini-games, each letting you prank your friends, making them think that they broke your TV or making it so they always lost a multiplayer match. The weirdest mini-game of all is "Desert Bus", a real-time bus ride from Tucson, Arizona, to Las Vegas. Driving at the top speed of 45mph, this game would take more than eight hours to complete. On second though, maybe it's best Smoke and Mirrors didn't get released...

TURRICAN 3D

Platform: **PC**
Developer: **Rainbow Arts**
Supposed to Release: **1999**

Anyone who remembers the Turrican series knows it as one of the best shooters of the Commodore 64 era. Combining elements of both Metroid and Contra into one game, Turrican was an intense shooter with sprawling levels and a familiar morph-ball feature. Original developer Rainbow Arts obviously decided that the series needed a three-dimensional makeover, and thus Turrican 3D came to be. Actually, it didn't. Since Rainbow Arts was bought out by THQ in 1999, with their new overlords putting Turrican 3D into permanent retirement soon after. Pity, it could have been something special.



nes NEVER Made

THE LAST NINJA 4

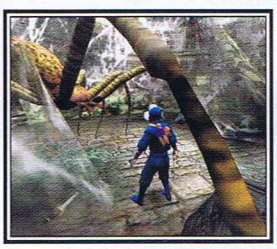
Platform: **GameCube, PC, PS2, Xbox**
Developer: **System 3**
Supposed to Release: **2003**

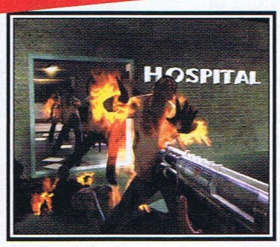
» Another lost sequel in a classic Commodore 64-era series is The Last Ninja 4. Originally slated to release on the GameCube, PlayStation 2 and Xbox in 2003, the date slowly but surely slipped to 2004 and then to 2005 until it was eventually cut loose by developer System 3. From the looks of the screenshots, it was going to be quite an awesome ninja romp, akin to Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden. Nevertheless, this Ninja didn't even need a smoke bomb to disappear.

SONIC X-TREME

Platform: **Saturn**
Developer: **Sega**
Supposed to Release: **1996**

» Sonic X-Treme was to be the first 3D game for the blue hedgehog, and quite unlike most of the three-dimensional Sonic games, it actually looked promising. Since the Saturn took a downward turn pretty much as soon as it went into production we never got a chance to play Sonic X-Treme, but from the video and pics available it looks like it was using the Nights Into Dreams engine, and seems to remain true to previous Sonic games, which would have been no bad thing.

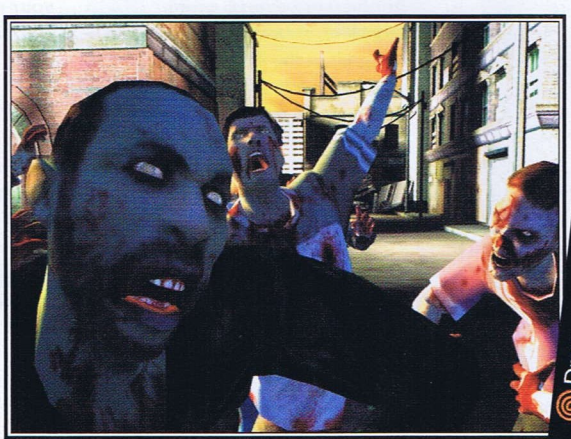


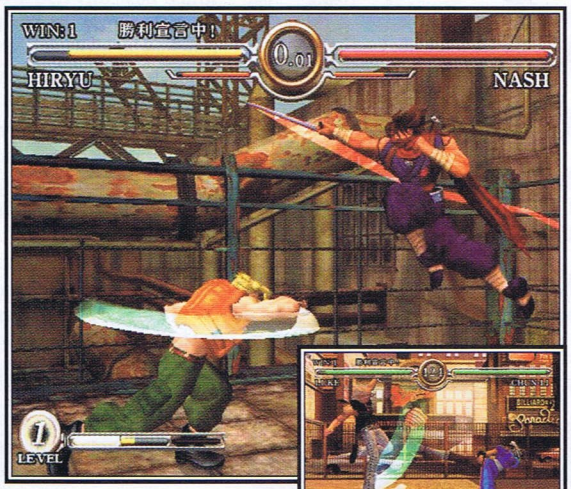


GEORGE A. ROMERO'S CITY OF THE DEAD

Platform: **PS2**
Developer: **Kuju Entertainment**
Supposed to Release: **2006**

» When the name George A. Romero is attached to a first-person shooter about zombies, we sit up and take notice. So when City of the Dead was announced, we got understandably excited. No sooner had our expectations been raised, however, before they were dashed, with Kuju Entertainment taking the game off life support, reportedly due to their prospective publisher running into financial difficulties. While we'd be more than happy to see City of the Dead resurrected, it will more than likely remain in the grave.





PROPELLER ARENA

Platform: **Dreamcast**
Developer: **Sega AM2**
Supposed to Release: **2001**

» Another game to have the distinction of being completely finished before it was cancelled is Sega's Propeller Arena. The game featured futuristic aerial battles between World War II-style aeroplanes. By all accounts the game is a blast, but apparently, after September 11, 2001, it was noticed that one of the game's levels resembled New York City, and Sega decided that since the Dreamcast was essentially over anyway, they'd just forget about releasing Propeller Arena. Just one more thing to add to the ever-growing tally of things that terrorists have ruined.

CAPCOM FIGHTING ALL-STARS

Platform: **PS2**
Developer: **Capcom**
Supposed to Release: **2003**

» Now, as far as we can tell, Capcom didn't really have a very good reason for cancelling the awesome-looking Capcom Fighting All-Stars. The game was to combine a variety of well-known Capcom characters, including Ryu, Ken, Strider, and our favourite, Mike Haggar, into a 3D fighting game that played like a 2D fighting game. A solid formula if ever there was one. Apparently though, after a rocky beta-testing period Capcom threw the entire game out and decided to release Capcom Fighting Jam instead, a 2D fighter with no Mike Haggar. For shame.

MAIL HYPER!

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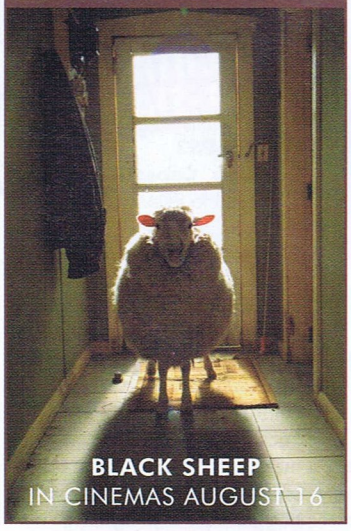
YOU WIN!

All printed letters this month get a double pass to see the movie Black Sheep, from Icon Films!



★★Letter of the Month!★★
WARCRAFT SAVES

Im a thirty six year old Police Officer who has been gaming since my dad bought home a mustard yellow coloured Hanimex game console, which basically had 5 versions of Pong. Imagine the thrill of playing this for the first time on a Black and White television. Ah the memories. Well I have grown up a lot since then, not according to my wife but anyway. I have been lucky to have seen the growth of the gaming world into a socially acceptable form of entertainment. Well... almost.

Gaming still has the stigma of being for kids which isn't helped by the lack of a meaningful ratings system. Sometimes people need to see past the actual graphics and sounds emanating from your platform of choice.

Let me explain. In 2005 I was involved in an incident at work which made it all too apparent I am not some immortal from Highlander. This resulted in me suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the related Depression, Anxiety and Agoraphobia. In short I was a mess. I shut myself out from the outside world and found it difficult to even motivate myself to go to the letter box. I couldn't even game ...ack.

In time and with much support from my family I slowly began to return to a much reduced routine. I have been to psychiatrists and psychologists and after all this professional help, what has helped me more was being able to converse with people online, especially in World of Warcraft. Thinking about it, it makes perfect sense. I came face to face with a knife with my name on it and suddenly realised I can be hurt.

Loading into a world where it matters not if you get injured, you just rez and try again is almost a logical progression. Here I was able to be anything I wanted and face any enemy. I had gone from feeling worthless in real life to being almost a god, a guild leader and someone people relied on again in my virtual world.

Talking to these people and coming to the conclusion that 95% of the MMORPG community are in some way "broken" really helped. I was able to help them through their problems and they gave me a grounding and, realising I wasn't worthless, allowed me to get through the barriers in my real life.

Well after almost two years of rehabilitation I go back to walking the beat next week with a new found enthusiasm. I love the job I do and now I have methods of dealing with critical incidents.

Now if only I could convince the Local Area Commander to install Wow on my computer at work and claim my subscription as a work expense on my tax forms... hmmm.

Keep up the good work Hyperites, your mag was a very welcome companion in those hard times.

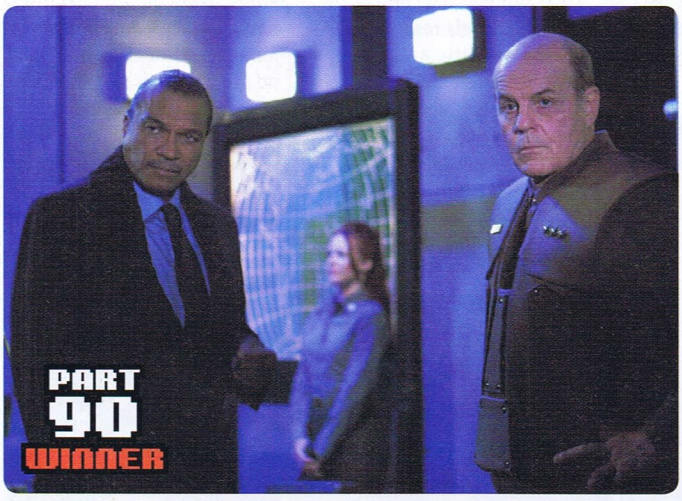
Burg

That's a pretty powerful story Burg, and we'd like to thank you for sharing it with us. We had never considered the effect that gaming could have on the confidence of the player, even being so beneficial as to help with a recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Just one thing we're wondering though, those "methods for dealing with critical incidents" wouldn't happen to be a set of Dreadnaught armour would it?

CAPTION THIS!

Max Cope gave us a little bit of Total Recall love with this caption-tastic effort.



Ironside: "Don't look now, but that woman behind us...
...THAT'S QUAID!!"

HYPER 165 FEEDBACK

When you talk, we listen, and this month we've been listening to a lot of feedback about our review scores, the hotness of the hot doctor from House, and Moe getting pwned in Guitar Hero on national television. Here are some of the best, and remember, if you've got something to say let us know at www.hyperactive.com.au

Mr Incredible
Personally it's one of my favourite issues so far, containing alot of awesome and anticipated games... AND DIRT GOT 95! NINETY. FREAKING.FIVE!!!!!! Wilks I salute you.

Tuki
I grew up knowing a Hyper that rewarded the good and punished the bad (the average were sort of ignored) and it's harder to tell what a good game is anymore with Hyper. Things appear to be good, they can get a good review, but the scores steer me away. I'm still under the impression that 80 and below aren't worth my time.

I could just be stuck in a rainbow coloured past though...

darklord
I'm surprised at the TR: Anniversary overall score. Graphics, sound and gameplay were all in the 80's and gameplay even got 88 yet it only gets 74 overall? I'd have thought more along the lines of 83+.

Same with Ninja gaiden it gets 90 in gameplay but only 79 in overall(although I guess it's more understandable being a remake of only a last-gen game).

KickyFunkFresh
The review for Impossible Mission states that there

WoW: It's not only fun, it's also good for you.

was only one sequel for the original. This is not true. In the mid-nineties, Microprose developed and released Impossible Mission 2025 for the Amiga 1200 and CD32. So there were in fact 2 sequels.

the_watchers_eye
One thing I would like to see, though this may be just me, is a return to the old different-page-colours for the console/PC games and the handheld games. It helped me more easily differentiate between the two, though I may be a bit of an idiot...

Just noticed, in the Shopping in Japan article, there's an amusing typo. Bottom of page 89, "Contrary to poopular belief..."

Poopular... now there's a new word to add to my vocabulary. Awesome.

Andronicarse
Dan Staines in this months Press Pass pondered that the games media should be more critical rather than a PR mouthpiece. This coming from the man who spent a large portion of his Commmand & Conquer 3 review telling us he thinks the doctor from House is hot.

Azzaman
She is seriously hot though.

conan/obrien
Nice issue dudes. Square-Enix and Snatcher articles where a good read on the bus. Also the letters section had a good variety of topics and it was good to see a return of printed fan art.

Sloppy Sailor
Very good issue, this month. The article on Snatcher was really good, and since reading it I have become a JUNKER.

pecka_a
I was watching good game last night and saw Moe on it getting his butt kicked on Guitar Hero. Did they come to hyper and ask who would take them on or do you know the good game guys??

The Moe
I would hardly call a score of over 100,000 getting my butt kicked! But yes, I lost.

In my defence though, the guy I was rocking off against does have mutant powers.

BACK-BREAKING CAMEL STRAW

I've never written to a games magazine before (or any magazine for that matter). This is due to a few factors. Time is one, of course. Laziness is another. But perhaps most importantly is though I do not always agree with what you write, the scores in your reviews, or a number of other things, I can usually let these pass by as reviewing - some would go as far to say journalism itself - is a very subjective profession and should be taken with a grain of salt.

However, in your most recent issue of Hyper (#165 at the time of writing this letter), I found a comment - indeed, a whole "stance" that seems to be widely held throughout the "hardcore" gaming public that I not only take exception to but had to step in and play "Devil's Advocate" for a moment.

The piece that sparked this letter I am writing to you - although, perhaps it is more fair to say "the straw that broke the camel's back" - was Wilks' "Bad Cop, No Donut".

Now although I agree with Wilks' general theme presented in this column (that we, the public, have made game developers lazy and/or afraid to take chances through our continual purchasing of "old" stuff that adds nothing new to the industry as a whole and may indeed lead to its stagnation), what I did take exception to - in this specific instance - was Wilks' use of Starcraft 2 as an example.

Don't get me wrong here - I loved the original Starcraft, but I am by no means a "fan boy" who thinks that Starcraft has reached the pinnacle of the series and should be left as it is lest it we anger some kind of cosmic Starcraft God (who probably speaks Korean).

However Wilks stated that SC2 (for short) is one of the perpetrators in the whole "rehash saga". Having watched the videos on the website, I can't say I agree with this at all. Now, perhaps you guys have seen a lot more than I have. However, judging from the website (which is all I have to go on) Blizzard have added a whole host of new features which, though I doubt will "transcend the genre", they most definitely have not taken the path of "tried and true".

I bring your attention to several examples - firstly, marines with jet packs. Apart from being damn cool, this one solitary feature could completely change the nature of the game - as I'm sure you're aware, in the first game, one of the downsides to marines was their poor manoeuvrability - and the fact that they pretty much had to be drop-shipped anywhere. With jet packs, this whole gameplay dynamic may change.

This is only one example, of course. There are several new units that look very interested from a tactical standpoint, and there are new features added to some other "old" races (for example, Zealots now have some kind of dash attack, etc).

Which brings me to the real purpose of writing this letter to you.

Yes, the games industry is not as innovative as it could be. Yes, it is unfortunate that brilliant games that have a large (or even some type of) original premise are commercial flops (Psychonauts, Ico, Beyond Good and Evil, and so on), whilst there are a thousand new first person shooters released every month - most not even worth the play time of a serious gamer - that continue to top sales charts.

However, we have to remember that innovation does not necessarily equate to fun or a good idea. As you yourself said in the recent Super Paper Mario review, "Innovative? Yes. Fun? Not really." That game tried something new and (according to you guys - I haven't played it so cannot comment) flopped. And we are talking from an artistic and creative standpoint here; not even a financial one

hotseat

It's that time of the month again, time for you to ask the hard questions of the developers. This month in the Hot Seat sits the collective arse of Turbine, developers of the critically acclaimed MMORPG The Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar. So get to writing in your questions - we'll collate the top 10-15 and send them off to Turbine. Answers will be printed in a future issue of Hyper.

Questions can be sent to: *hotseat@next.com.au*

Questions can be posted in the Hot Seat area of the Hyperactive forums *http://forums.hyperactive.com.au/*

StarCraft II: Looks great, but will it deliver?

Winners!
HYPER 164

COMMAND & CONQUER 3
Billy Dee, Billy Dee
- Nicky Kelly, Brisbane, QLD
- Russ Chappell, Toowoomba,Qld
- Sandra Naglik, Kingaroy, Qld
- Rodney Evans, Weston, ACT
- Cullen Garrett, Doncaster East, Vic
- Chris Chen, Upper Mt Gravatt, QLD
- Adam Kok, Hobart, TAS
- Ronnen Leizerovitz, Melbourne, Vic
- Nick Carter, Auchenflower, QLD
- Danni Ferguson, Carina, Qld
- Daniel Bath, Victoria Point West, QLD
- Owen Tiplady, Holland Park, QLD

VALKYRIE PROFILE LENNETH
Norse Code
Who is your favourite Norse god and why?

"Well I would say Crom coz he's strong in his mountain but I think that's barking up the wrong tree, so I'll say Sif because she was married to Thor and therefore enjoyed getting hammered."
- Anthony Harrap, Maida Vale, WA

"Thor: He is almost as hard as Kratos and he rides a thunder creating chariot drawn by two goats. As if that isn't cool."
- Phillip Godfrey, Goulburn, NSW

"Favourite Norse God would have to be Frigg, goddess of marriage. As far as I'm concerned the word "Frigg" sums marriage up perfectly!"
- Liam Hatchell, Broadway Nedlands, WA

- Steve Edwards, Coorparoo, Qld
- Brigette Randell, Walkley Heights, SA
- Joshua Parker, Dunmore, NSW
- Robert Sakaluk, Yagoona West, NSW
- Owen Tiplady, Holland Park, QLD

F.E.A.R.
Spring Loaded Cat!
What fills you with fear?

"Someone giving me a 'Vladimir Putin Agent Eradication Polonium 210 Chemistry Set' as a Xmas gift, would instil fear in me."
- Paul Dixon, Mansfield, Qld

"The postman not delivering my Hyper on time, and me being the only one at school not up-to-date with gaming news!"
- Brigette Randell, Walkley Heights, SA

"Fear itself"
- Al Peck, Cooroy, QLD

- Brodie Ryan, Adelaide, SA
- Ted Kemp, Doncaster East, Vic
- Jamie Campbell, Hawthorne, QLD

(which I believe is a separate issue, as it is our job as consumers to vote with our wallets and not buy crap). There are numerous times that this kind of "creative backfiring" has happened throughout the industry, which is natural - we learn from our mistakes.

However, to take the attitude of "unoriginal is bad" is, to my mind, a Bad Idea.

Again, staying away from the financial side of this discussion (which is a separate although undeniably connected entity), coming up with a revolutionary idea, even a minor one, that adds to the gameplay and isn't just there for the sake of being "different", is a very difficult process and some would argue that such a thing cannot be forced - it happens when it happens. To take an example, and one that crops up a fair bit, perhaps we should do away with random battles in RPGs. How? Go back to Chrono Trigger's method of physically representing enemies on screen? Personally I can't think of any others. And even that idea is ripped from another game.

Most developers create the best game they can. There can be time constraints, financial restrictions, or whatever (who has a Blizzard-esque cash cow like WoW to fund the immense amounts of strippers and cocaine that are vital for such innovation, or their own in-house video crew like Blizzard have?) but by and large most games are meant to be good (an obvious exception being most movie tie-ins which are released for a quick buck chiefly, judging by the quality of the gameplay contained within).

So - we can bitch and moan all we want about how this game plays a lot like something else we've played, but a good game is a good game. Innovation does not necessarily birth a fun experience for the consumer. Genius is rare and should be savoured when it is encountered, not expected. We've all played old games that are great and new games that are woeful.

I don't have the complete answer for this dilemma - no one does - but I do think that as consumers we need to perhaps be a little more appreciative of good games regardless of how "innovative" they are and just appreciate the experience. If it's bad, it's bad - but lack of innovation in and of itself does not make bad games.

Dan

Hi Dan. It's worth noting that Wilks didn't actually say Starcraft 2 would be identical to its predecessor, but rather said that; "there could be tons of gameplay differences in the final game but Blizzard has chosen to show the sequel as all but identical to the first game", in reference to the pretty lacklustre videos shown at the South Korean game announcement in Seoul.

Regardless, we can certainly agree with you on some of your points Dan, but not all. We can agree if you take a game that was great almost a decade ago and play it today it is still just as great as it ever was, the original StarCraft is proof enough of that.

The problem with the initial footage of StarCraft 2 was that it didn't convince us that Blizzard were doing enough to keep the brand fresh. Blizzard have since confirmed that the game will feature no new races, that it will have approximately the same number of units and that the single player mode will no longer be a focus for the game. Some of the units will have been tweaked and a few of the old units will be replaced with new ones, while the new multiplayer-centric approach may bring a better multiplayer game, but so far it still doesn't seem like Blizzard are doing enough to provide us with a game that deserves to be called a StarCraft II, rather than StarCraft 1.5.

For the millions of StarCraft players who are still playing the game, this will not be an issue, but for every player who would be content there's many more who finished up with StarCraft nearly ten years ago.

In our opinion the only way forward in this industry is new ideas. Complacency is not something that should not be encouraged, and while we can't expect every game to be genius, we should expect more from our games, particularly if we're being asked to pay up to $119.95 for them.

Keep in mind that we're not saying that StarCraft II won't be a worthy sequel, were just saying that at the moment, from the information available, it looks like Blizzard could afford to put a few more new ideas into the mix.

After all, Blizzard already have the genius, the only thing we expect them to do is to use it.

[above] New Super Mario Bros: One of the DS's best.

INHERENTLY SHITE

I'm a long time reader, first time writer. Obligatory "you guys rock sentiment", but truly, fantastic magazine. I was really fascinated by your GP2X hardware review, and your trip to DEN DEN TOWN which has to be the best place to be ever! Just a couple of queries and statements;

1. Why don't you guys run GP2X coverage. The GP2X looks like an incredibly versatile machine, and is the next item on my wishlist. Its really just a more niche, more dynamic PSP (which I used to own).

Which brings me to my next point.

2. Why are PSPs so inherently shite? As an aspiring game critic and journalist, I realise I will come in to contact with all sorts of hardware and software that I may or may not like, and that I must keep an open mind, but where are the new games? I think that both last issues Bad Cop No Doughtnut and War Games explain my argument in just as many words. More innovation Sony, and I might love you like days of old.

3. I recently purchased a Nintendo Dual Screen. Give me your Hyper Top 3 Picks for Ninty's best console, handheld or otherwise. Keep in mind, I have Elite Beat and Yoshi's Island.

Sandsky

Hey Sandsky;

1. *The reason we hadn't run GP2X coverage up until last month was because of a variety of factors.*

Firstly, the GP2X isn't a readily available console. You can't walk into your local game shop or department store and pick up the console, and in fact, until recently there wasn't even an Australian distributor for the machine.

Also, the GP2X is a very niche system when compared to the

FORUM TALK

LegendaryFake
Wii Wish
Okay, I've been thinking of some old games that would feel right at home if they were on the Wii via download.

I would personally piss my pants in awe if Rez was to come onto the Wii, it's a longshot, I know, but it would be a perfect fit for the Wii and you never know; it may still make an appearance (If God is as loving as the church says).

losturtle
Wii Wish
Inspired by the recent feature and that I've never played it, Snatcher.

craptest
How is everyone enjoying the current-gen consoles?
I dont own any of the next gen systems. However a friend has all 3. We've played Wii about twice. Finished Resistance once. The rest of the time has been dedicated to the 360.

I'm playing the PS2 exclusively these days, but in terms of future releases its mostly 360 titles I'm excited about. The only game on the PS2 that I'm aware of wanting is Odin Sphere. Compare that with my next gen wants: Bioshock, Mass Effect, Halo 2, GTA4IV, Mario Galaxy,..

Clockw0rk
How is everyone enjoying the current-gen consoles?
I'm loving my DS, but the most played console in the house at the moment would have to be the Xbox 360, which has some brilliant games. Xbox Live is good fun too, once you get over the whole "$100 subscription fee" thing.

I've considered buying a Wii, but then I look at the library of games and just think "why bother?" I've got Twilight Princess for cube and nothing else is really interesting to me. Same goes for the PS3, it just doesn't have the games at the moment.

Lobster
How is everyone enjoying the current-gen consoles?
The Xbox 360 version of GTAIV is the only one to have DLC? Christ, can the PS3 situation get any worse? Seriously, is there any other reason to own the console other than MGS4? Even that will probably get a superior 360 port.

For those who own a PS3, just... why?

Azzaman
How is everyone enjoying the current-gen consoles?
The only reason I could see is as a BluRay player. None of the exclusive games grab my attention (not that I own one), I have a friend who's brother got one at launch (cheap because of staff discount), but they only got resistance and haven't gotten anything else since then.

ElPresidente
How is everyone enjoying the current-gen consoles?
There was a PS3 sized hole under my TV. It HAD to be filled!

Seriously though I get a bit OCD when it comes to games systems. I just HAVE to have them all (well by all I mean the current stuff put out by the big 3... I have no plans to buy a Gizmondo).

Madmangohan
Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan Discussion Thread - Ouendan 2 Out Now!
Honestly, Ouendan 2 to me isn't as good as the first. The overall songlist isn't as good so far, and the stories are sometimes hard to understand (I had no idea the plot for half of them till the end). It definitely shows its Elite Beat Agents influence with how the songs are set up.

hyperactive.com.au

likes of the PSP and the DS. We're betting that the vast majority of our readers would much rather us run coverage on the latest goings on for the consoles they own, and since the GP2X is such a specialist product, there's not much call for game reviews or similar coverage for the GP2X.

2. *As for why the PSP is "inherently shite", it really isn't. The PSP has its problems, like dead pixels in the screen, short battery life and a poorly designed D-pad, but overall its still a fantastic little handheld. While its game library may not be as innovative or interesting as that of the DS, it still has some classics like Ultimate Ghouls and Ghosts, the two GTA games, Me and My Katamari, Loco Roco and more. The argument that there are a lot of pretty awful ports and lacklustre sequels on the console does have some weight, but overall the PSP is still a solid handheld choice.*

3. *New Super Mario Bros, Advance Wars: Dual Strike, and at the moment we're really digging on Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords... which is also on PSP. See, it does have good games!*

QUALIFICATIONS

First off the bat I do feel compelled (as like everyone else) to just congratulate you on a great mag!! I have been a regular reader for god knows how many years now, and your rag is, for me anyway, my bible for the gaming world. I could gush all day BUT I do have some questions I would like answered.

I have a real interest in writing/journalism/reporting, but I have no real idea of how to go about getting into the field. From reading your magazine I have come to the realisation that one profession I would really enjoy would be writing for a magazine relating to my interests. I excelled with English in High School, and did well for myself with my English marks, but that's as far as my "qualifications" go. My question that I put forward to the all knowing at Hyper is, what advice can you give me about getting into the industry?? Have some or all of you done degrees?? What kind of paths have you followed to get to where you are now?? I know my questions are pretty damn vague, but any advice or pointers or answers would be HUGELY appreciated.

Thanks so much guys,
Michael

We get asked this very same question all the time Michael. There seems to be an enduring interest in working for a games magazine (or any other magazine that's based around your interests), but we can assure you that there's no magic to working in magazines, and university degrees aren't essential (although most of our writers do have at least one). It's just a matter of hard work, connections, or talent.

You'll need to have at least one of those things to get started writing for your favourite rag. Connections are the easiest of the three. You may have heard stories of people "falling into" their dream jobs thanks to knowing the right people, despite having capped off their education in grade seven, with the pinnacle of their writing career being that one time they scrawled "I Wuz Ere" on a toilet wall. It does happen, but generally connections are a good way to get you in the door, but you'll need one of the other two to stay there.

Talent is next. If you've got it then you're set, but untrained talent is rare, so the odds are that you don't. Lets just skip to hard work then shall we?

If you want to be a games writer, hard work is what you need to do. My advice to anyone wanting to write about games is to simply write about games.

Find a website or local/student paper who need volunteers and just start writing. Write all the time, amass a portfolio and eventually, with practice and effort, you may even get good enough to get paid for it.

ZOMG CONTROVERSY!

Is it just me or does anyone else think that Rockstar have deliberately pushed the envelope with Manhunt 2 in a move to simultaneously draw heat from their more successful franchise, GTA and get a whole heap of free publicity for their more niche title, Manhunt 2? If you checkout nearly any gaming forum in the world right now you will find umpteen posts complaining about the evils of censorship (this is not censorship - this is voluntary ratings from within the industry) and how they will buy the game no matter what. The common thread in these posts is that people weren't interested in Manhunt 2 before the AO rating from the ESRB and the banning in the UK. You can't buy word of mouth this good. I wouldn't be surprised if te company already had a "watered down" M rated version of the game ready to send the ratings board.
Alfalfa Male

You and Wilks should compare tinfoil hats - he's pretty much of the same opinion as you. We'll reserve official opinion until we talk to Take 2 and Rockstar.

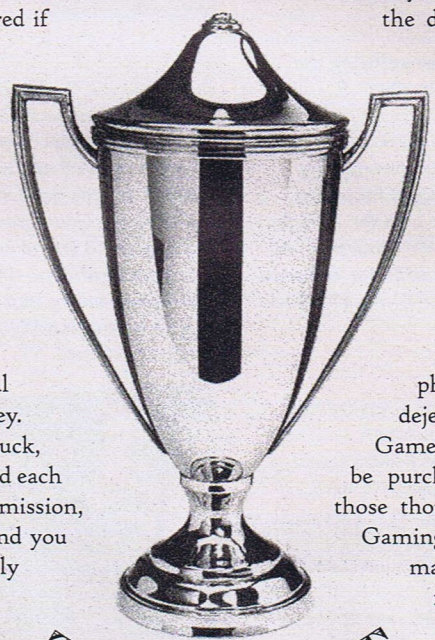
The Passion of the Gamer

Gamerscore: What is it Good For?

By Dylan Burns

Having started this opening sentence a good twenty times and coming up short with the perfect introduction, I'll just go right ahead and say it: I'm a Gamerscore whore. The newfound elation and, dare I say addiction, that Microsoft's Achievement system has brought into my life over the last twelve months has been like a fresh breeze upon a sweated brow. Yet at the end of a long day, and the resultant score whoring it begets, I often can't help but feel dirty and ashamed that I've let my passion for games come second to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. You see, there is nothing quite like experiencing that achievement "pop", and the mad seat-squirming and Dr. Evil mouth-pursing that follows the knowledge that you've unlocked fifty points for naming your character (or a hundred if it's an EA title).

Gamers have always been competitive. It's in our nature to excel at beating that high score and to talk proudly of gaming achievements. I'm sure many of you remember fondly just how damn hard some games used to be: limited lives/credits, insane combos, esoteric button configuration and down right cheating computer AI, just to name a few. In those early days of electronic entertainment, bragging was done verbally and in person. You'd meet up with your smelly mates and gather round the local arcade machines like cavemen stalking wounded prey. Armed with enough shrapnel to fill an armoured truck, the afternoon hours would disappear as you attacked each game with twenty cent coins and beat it into submission, high scores for all. The cleaner would sweep around you and the store owner would clear his throat loudly when it was time to close up, whereupon you tore yourself away from the arcades and returned to cruel reality.



The walk home would feature the post-playing brag, where a kid called Ben would inevitably piss everyone off with his annoyingly casual ability to absolutely smash everyone's high score and then smile condescendingly. You'd slink home and cry into your dinner and then go to bed dreaming of button sequences, level progression and the fact that you'd need to purloin some more coins for the next day's session. Ah the memories...

The next step in the evolutionary wheel was the home console. With games available in the comfort of your own home, you wistfully said goodbye to arcades and secretly rejoiced at the realisation that you'd no longer need to bring an extra hanky along to wipe the remnants of sweat from all the arcade sticks. Suddenly, seventeen hours straight of Super Mario Kart was possible, which evolved your reflexes and wrist muscles to almost superhuman strength, ready for any gaming task that could be thrown at you.

Bragging still occurred, and Ben (the bastard) still beat you all, but now it came down to individual tales of gaming prowess. Your word as an honourable gamer was paramount, but occasionally you'd need to invite everyone over just so that you could show them the score screen, with those lovely large numbers writ beside your three-lettered name (invariably ARS, DIK, BUM or some variation of the three). Gaming achievements were tied to high scores and 'clocking' the game. If you passed a game before everyone else you were a god for a week, or until everyone else passed it also.

Fast forward to the present day and the reason for my somewhat personal and long-winded introduction becomes apparent. We live, dear readers, in an age that heralds a new era in the way that games are played and, more importantly, bragged about. It has started with Microsoft's implementation of Achievement Points for the Xbox 360 and will no doubt continue into future gaming mediums. And it scares me, for the simple fact that I can almost see the whole purpose of gaming changing.

Once you would play the same game for months, but now the dangling carrot of easy achievements provides a strong pull to consume games like hot cakes. Games have become street walkers, parading before us in short skirts and promising us a good time no matter what; if the graphics or gameplay suck, at least we're guaranteed to get our rocks off with all the 'popping' action that will take place! And with every pop comes an associated addition to your Gamerscore, that lovely ascending number of meaningless amassment.

The effect that this has had on me is quite phenomenal. Poor old Compy, my trusty PC, sits dejectedly as I leave him for my popping pursuits. Games that are available on multiple systems must be purchased with Gamerpoints in mind – can't have those thousand possible points disappearing into thin air. Gaming sessions themselves have become point-whoring marathons: collect all the throbbing purple cucumbers, fifty points; pass it on hard mode with your eyes closed and a midget tickling the back of your knee with a feather, a hundred; dress your character up to resemble a morally ambiguous old man sitting on a park bench, twenty points...

It's not a long shot to therefore posit that the achievement lists created by developers act to dictate your gaming experience. For many titles it is no longer about simply passing the game or even getting a high score, but instead all the minutiae involved with a particular game, things that you may or may not have even bothered with if the achievements never existed.

Concordantly, developers may feel that they now need to include more secret packages, more nooks and crannies in their games in order to fill out the required achievement list. Whether or not this is a good thing is a matter for discussion, but all I know is that at present I'm madly trying to buy every car in Forza 2 so that I can get that coveted one point achievement. Seriously, would I (or you) have even bothered before the phenomenon of achievements?

This topic is rich and there's more to be said, but alas my supply of Hungarian ink is running low and this parchment must come to an end. Stay tuned for more ruminations regarding this topic, but for the time being I'll leave you with my current Gamerscore, in the hopes that you do not become as sad or indentured as I.

Gamertag: Sir Gameboffin

Current Gamerscore: 23,848 and rising!

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over $50

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Buzz: The Mega Quiz Bundle	Family
2	▼	Buzz: The Mega Quiz	Family
3	▲	Eyetoy Sports Bundle Ptm	Family
4	▲	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle	Action
5	▼	Pirates Of The Caribbean 3	Adventure
6	▼	Buzz Junior Robojam	Family
7	▼	Tomb Raider Anniversary	Adventure
8	▼	God Of War 2	Action
9	◆	Guitar Hero 2 Bundle	Family
10	▼	Singstar Rocks! Bundle	All Other

TOP 10 Nintendo Wii Games Over $50

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Mario Strikers Charged	Sports
2	◆	Zelda Twilight Princess	RPG
3	▲	Sonic And The Secret Rings	Adventure
4	▲	Warioware Smooth Moves	Family
5	▲	Dragonball Z Tenkaichi 2	Action
6	▲	Need For Speed Carbon	Racing
7	▲	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle	Action
8	✪	Mortal Kombat Armageddon	Action
9	▲	Tiger Woods PGA 2007 Tour	Sports
10	▲	Prince Of Persia Rival Swords	Adventure

TOP 10 PC Games Over $20

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Sims 2 Fashion Stuff By H&M	Strategy
2	▼	World Of Warcraft	RPG
3	▼	Age Of Empires III	Strategy
4	◆	WoW: Burning Crusade	RPG
5	◆	C & C 3: Tiberium Wars	Strategy
6	▲	Sims 2	Strategy
7	▲	Sims 2: Open For Business	Strategy
8	▼	Sims 2: Seasons	Strategy
9	▲	Sims 2: Nightlife	Strategy
10	◆	Battlefield 2142	Action

TOP 10 All Format Games Over $50

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	✪	Forza Motorsport 2	Xbox 360
2	▲	Buzz: The Mega Quiz Bundle	PlayStation 2
3	▲	Resistance: Fall Of Man	PlayStation 3
4	▼	Buzz: The Mega Quiz	PlayStation 2
5	▼	Mario Strikers Charged	Nintendo Wii
6	▲	The Sims 2 Fashion Stuff	PC/MAC
7	▲	Eyetoy Sports Bundle Ptm	PlayStation 2
8	▲	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle	PlayStation 2
9	▲	Motorstorm	PlayStation 3
10	▲	Zelda Twilight Princess	Nintendo Wii

TOP 10 Nintendo DS Games Over $40

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Crash Boom Bang	Family
2	▲	Shrek The Third	Adventure
3	▲	Catz 2006	Simulator
4	▲	Dr Kawashima's Brain Train	Family
5	▲	Spyro Shadow Legacy	RPG
6	▼	Horsez	Family
7	▲	Scooby Doo Whos Watching	Adventure
8	▼	Petz Hotel	Strategy
9	▲	Zoo Tycoon	Strategy
10	▲	Garfields Nightmare	Adventure

TOP 10 Playstation 3 Games Over $60

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Resistance: Fall Of Man	Action
2	◆	Motorstorm	Racing
3	▲	Formula One Champ Edition	Racing
4	▲	Ridge Racer 7	Racing
5	◆	Need For Speed Carbon	Racing
6	▲	Fight Night Round 3	Action
7	▼	Spiderman 3	Adventure
8	▲	Call Of Duty 3	Action
9	▼	Elder Scrolls IV Oblivion	RPG
10	▼	Fear	Action

TOP 10 Xbox 360 Games Over $50

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	✪	Forza Motorsport 2	Racing
2	▼	C & C 3: Tiberium Wars	Strategy
3	▼	Gears Of War	Action
4	✪	Shadowrun	Action
5	▼	Guitar Hero 2 Bundle	Family
6	▼	Elder Scrolls IV Oblivion	RPG
7	▼	Fight Night Round 3	Sports
8	▲	Shrek The Third	Adventure
9	▼	Pirates Of The Caribbean 3	Adventure
10	▲	Fear	Action

TOP 10 PlayStation Portable Games Over $40

W/E 17th June 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Ratchet & Clank Size Matters	Adventure
2	◆	Pirates Of The Caribbean 3	Adventure
3	▲	GTA: Liberty City Stories	Adventure
4	▲	WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 07	Sports
5	◆	Call Of Duty Road To Victory	Action
6	▼	Lego Star Wars 2 Ptm	Adventure
7	▲	Metal Gear Solid Portable	Action
8	▼	Shrek Smash N Crash	Adventure
9	▲	Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	RPG
10	▲	Sega Mega Drive Collection	Action

✪ New Entry
◆ Non Mover
▲ Up from last week
▼ Down from last week

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Next Issue:

THE BLOB

We go hands on with Australia's first Wii game to see how it stack up.

PLUS: Beowulf, Fury, Penny Arcade, Far Cry 2, Burnout Paradise, Bioshock, Blue Dragon and a little thing called GTA IV

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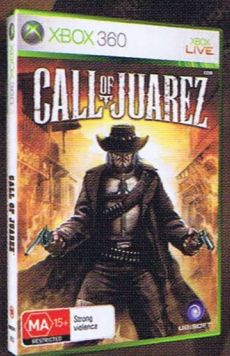

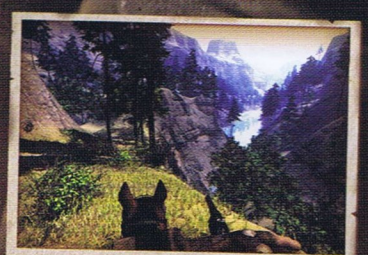

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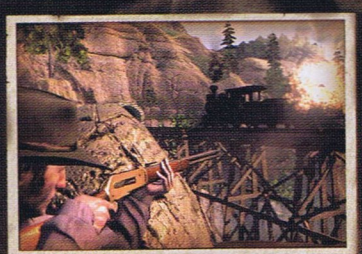

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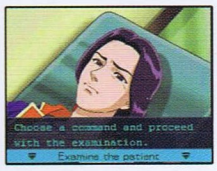

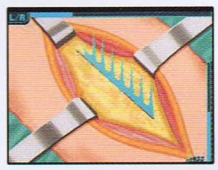

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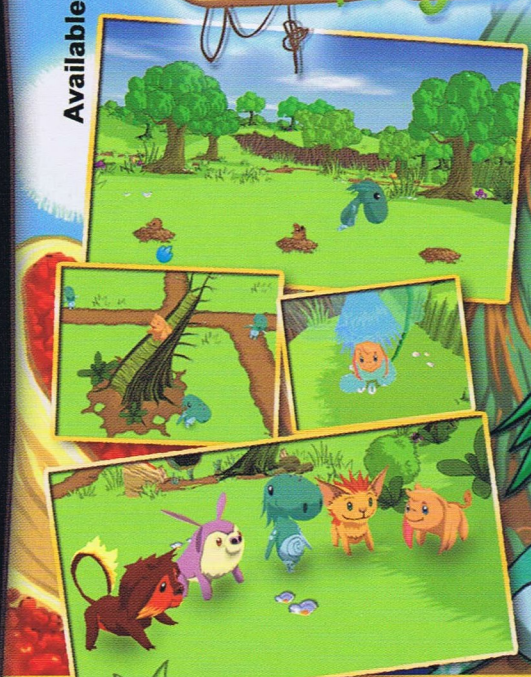

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