

FIRST REVIEW AND STRATEGY GUIDE FOR XENOSAGA

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**FIRST LOOK AT
ACTIVISION'S**

**X-MEN
LEGENDS
RPG**

— PLUS —

X2

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REVENGE**

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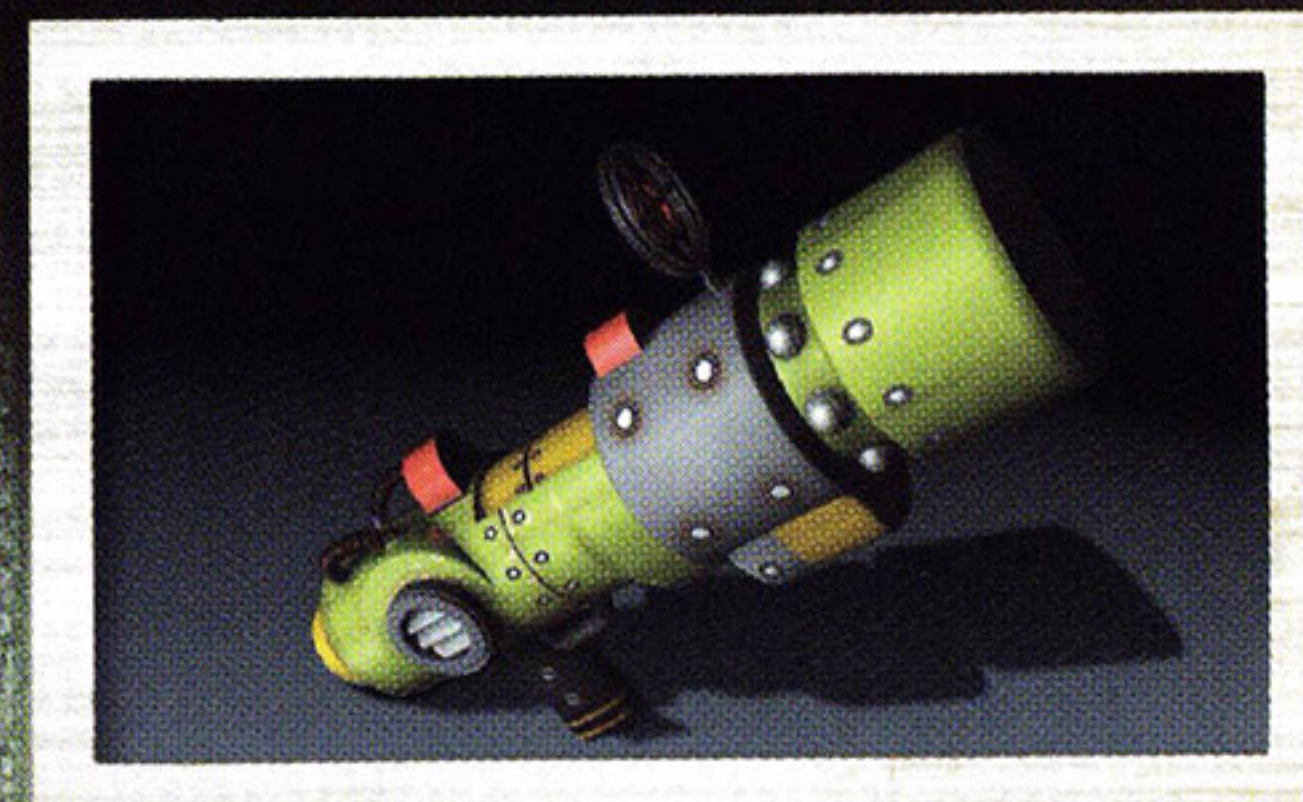




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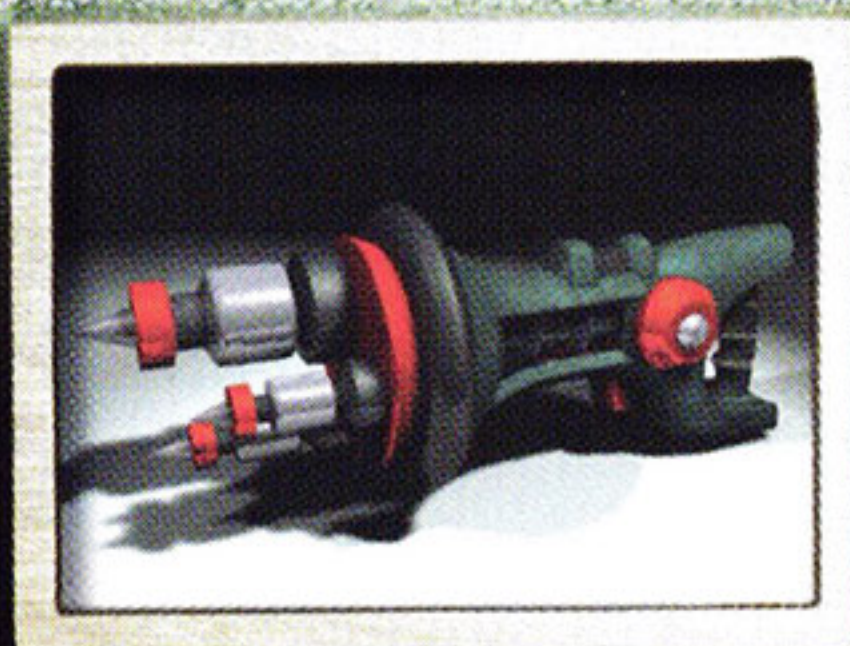


R.Y.N.O.
IT STANDS FOR RIP YOU A NEW ONE.
GET IT?



DEVASTATOR
COME ON, IT'S CALLED THE DEVASTATOR.
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT DOES?

ONE GIANT STEP BACK



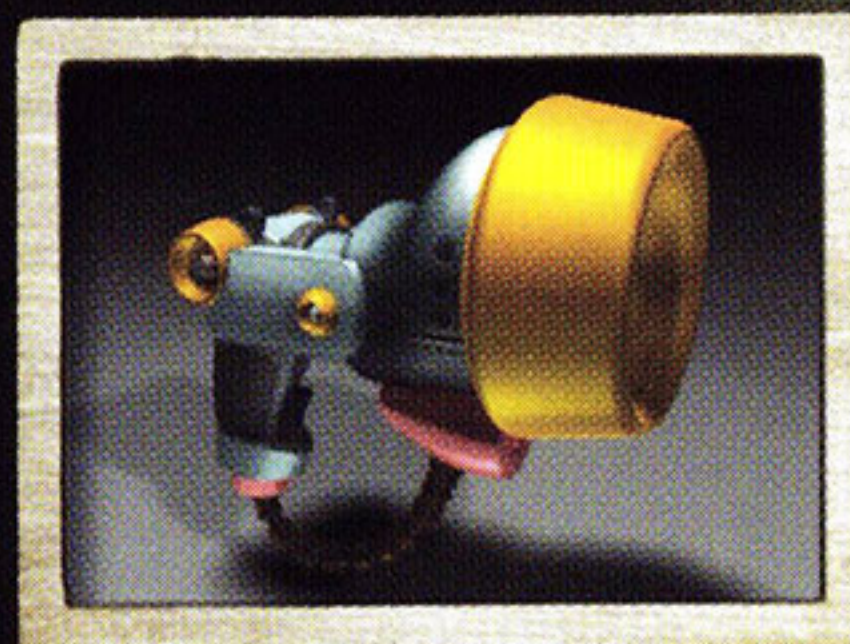
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YOU NO LONGER HAVE TO PAY
ATTENTION TO THOSE
"NO TRESPASSING" SIGNS.



BLASTER
IT'S RAINING BULLETS AND SOMEONE
FORGOT HIS UMBRELLA.



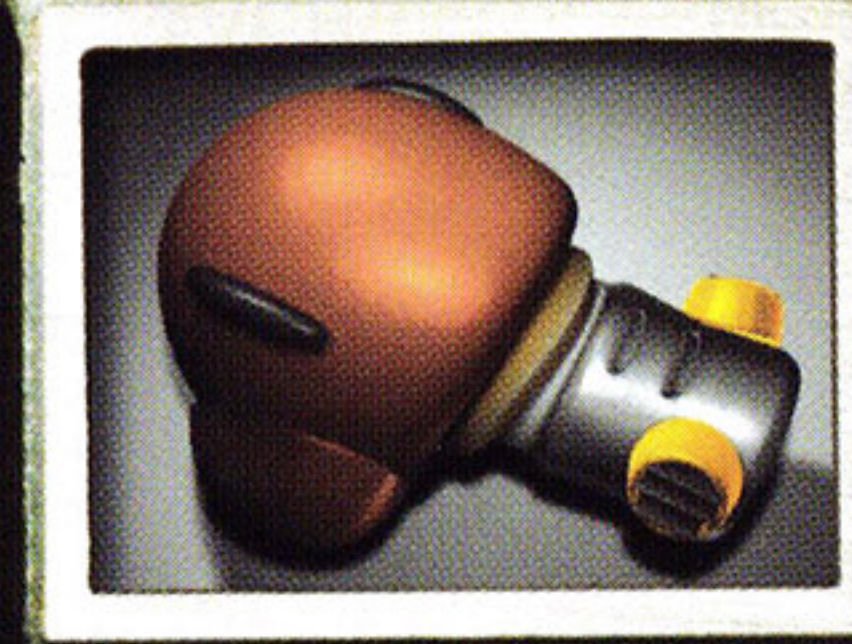
TESLA CLAW
LET'S JUST SAY THE RESULTS
ARE NOT PRETTY.



MORPH-O-RAY
DID SOMEBODY
ORDER CHICKEN?



TAUNTER
"YOUR MOMMA IS SOOOO FAT,
NO, REALLY, SHE IS."
SEE? TAUNTING IS FUN.



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INTO NEXT WEEK.



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FISH OUT OF WATER!

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RIP THE GALAXY A NEW ONE.
YOU DECIDE HOW.



PlayStation 2

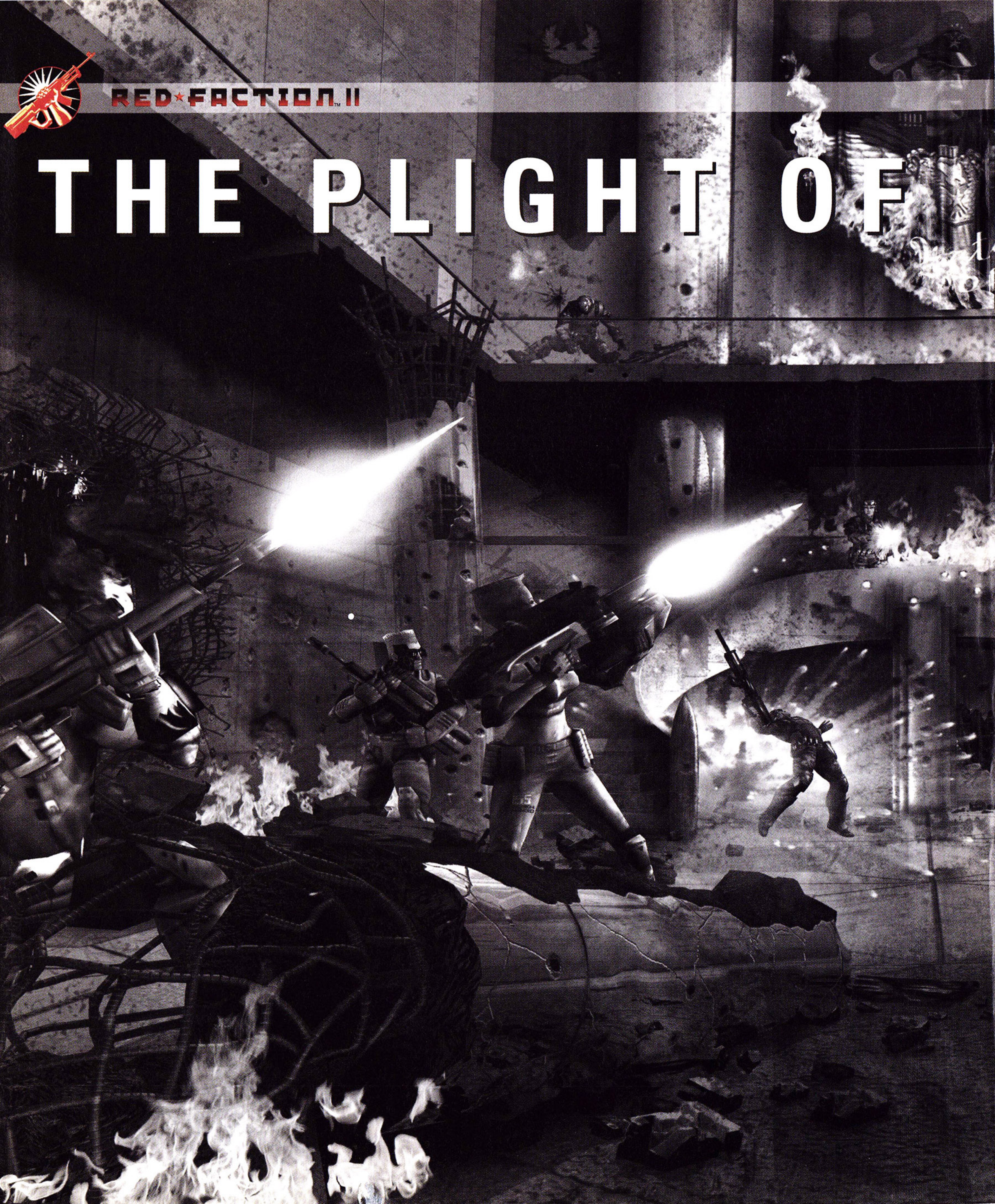


Mild Violence



RED★FACTION™ II

THE FLIGHT OF



EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS

THE RED FACTION®



■ SOPOT'S LAST STAND

Commonwealth soldiers attempt to fend off Red Faction rebels in a last ditch effort to save Dictator Sopot from certain demise. From the beginning, the Red Faction's heavy artillery was underestimated by the Commonwealth Army, who are now paying the price.



RED FACTION II

COMMONWEALTH COUP

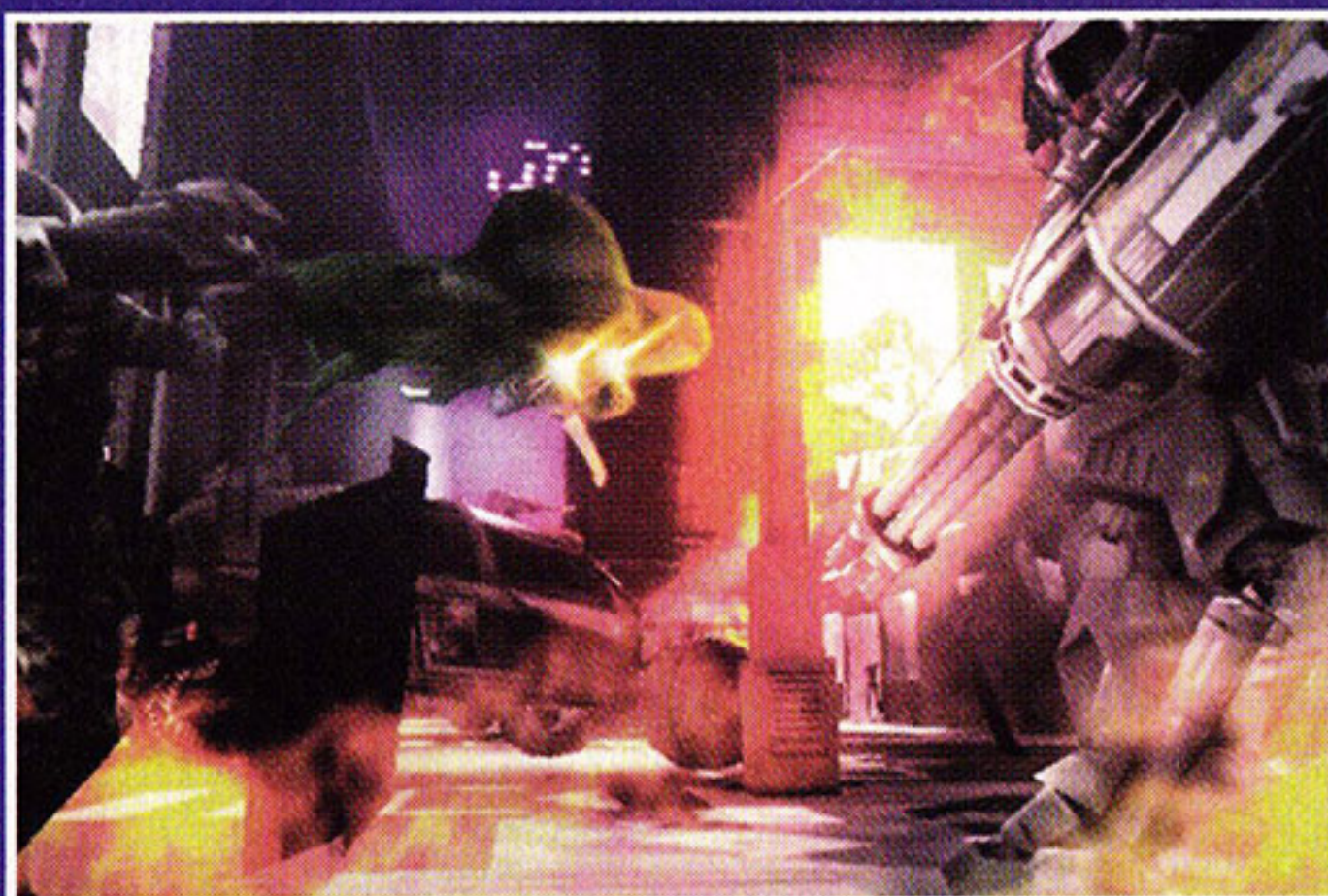
The Red Faction is using their entire arsenal in the latest attempt to



Aesir Fighter 2.0

FROM THE AIR

The Red Faction customized Aesir is a maneuverable air assault vehicle equipped with optical zoom which allows for precise hits on enemy targets.



Drop Point 5:37am
Troops assemble at the Sopot Harbor.

SOPOT CITY

CIVILIAN UPRISING

After Sopot's forces withdrew from the main city, several Red Faction rebels raided Harbor Island and desecrated the symbolic statue of the dictator.



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Blood and Gore
Violence

For more up-to-the-minute coverage of the conflict, go to www.redfaction2.com



D'ETAT

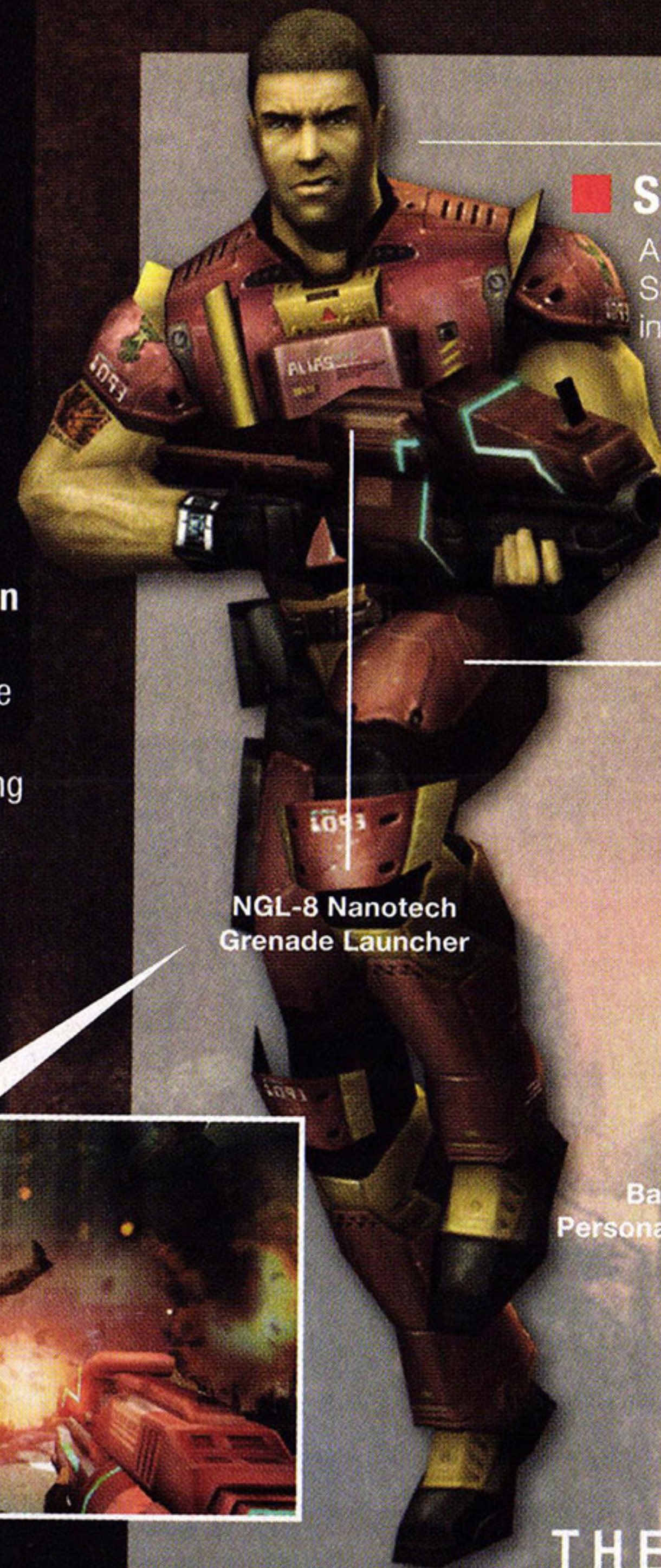
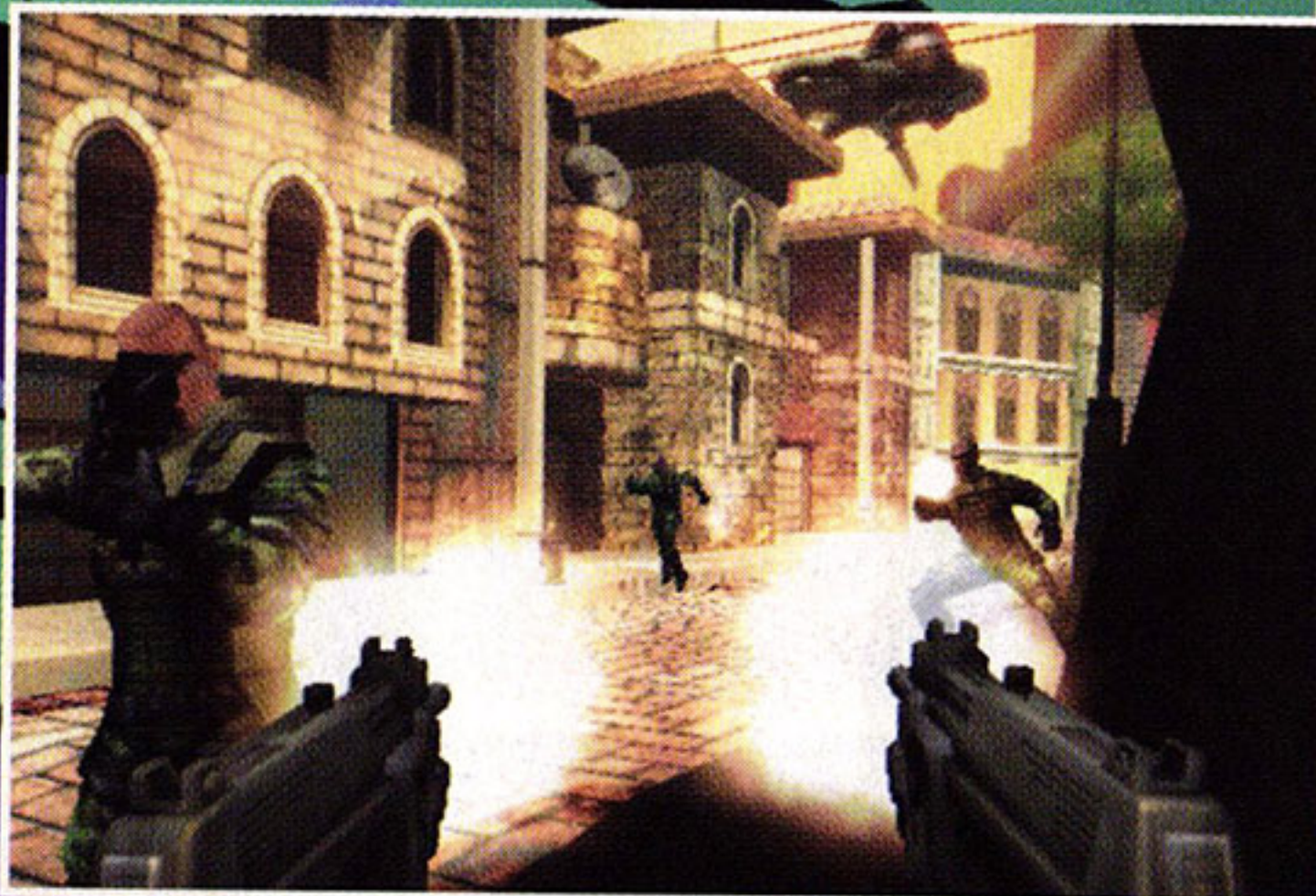
overthrow the Dictator Sopot.



Public Information Building 6:05am
Commonwealth Elite Guards attempt to fend off the attacking Faction soldiers.



The Slums 6:22am
Rebel soldiers continue to fight despite rumors of growing animosity between Faction leaders.



THE REBELS

■ SUPER SOLDIERS

ALIAS, the best of the Faction Super Soldiers, is shown here in demolition gear.



Demolition Charges

NGL-8 Nanotech Grenade Launcher

Battle Armored Personal Combat System

THE WEAPONRY

These are only a few of the many weapons at the disposal of the Red Faction army.



■ CMRD-32 MAGNETIC RAIL DRIVER

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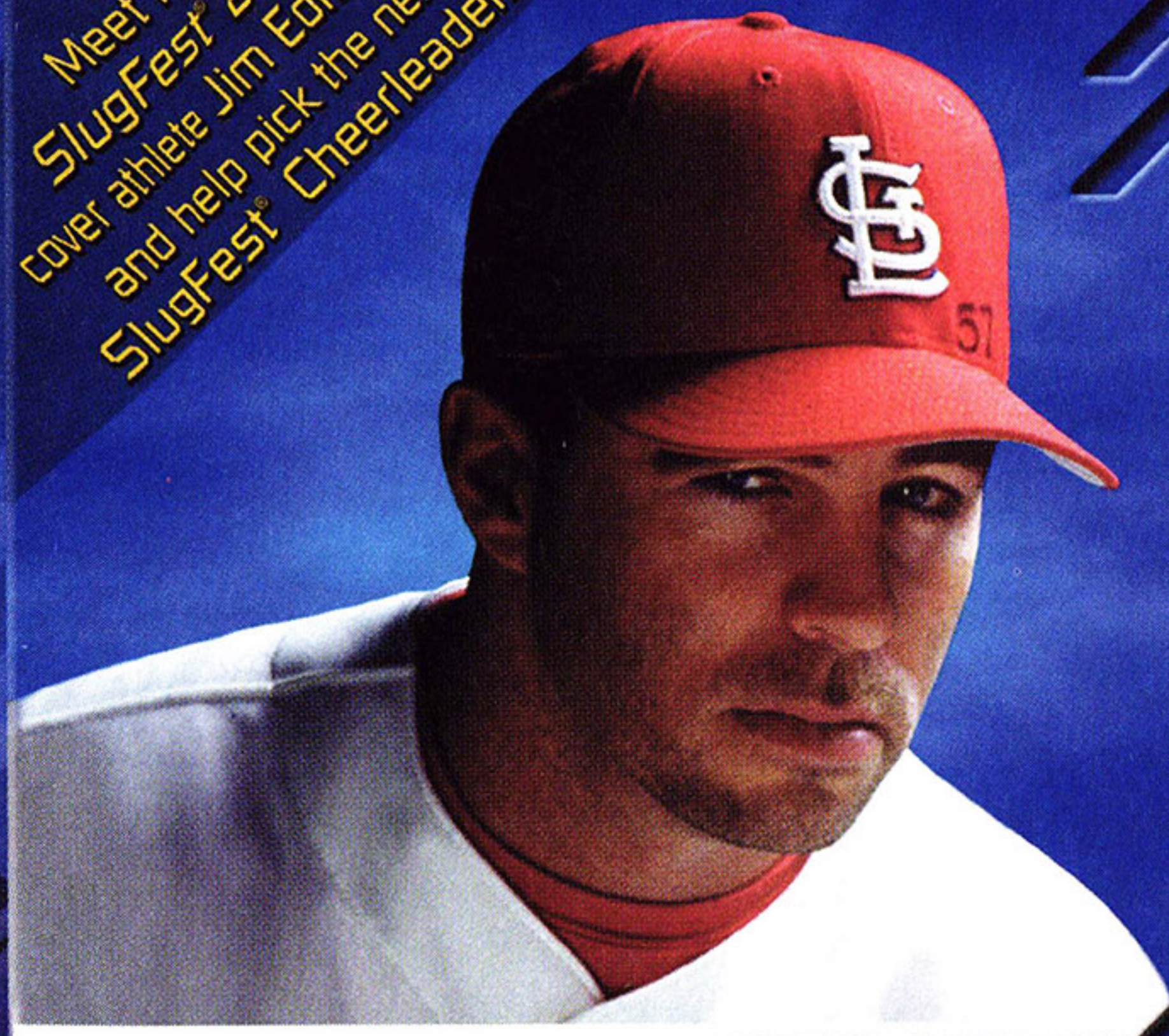
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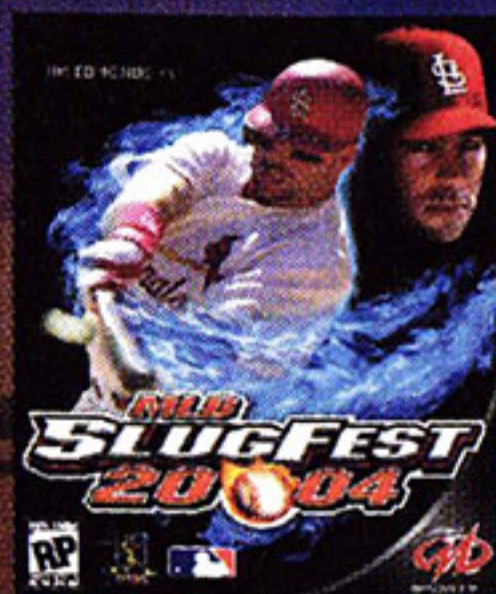
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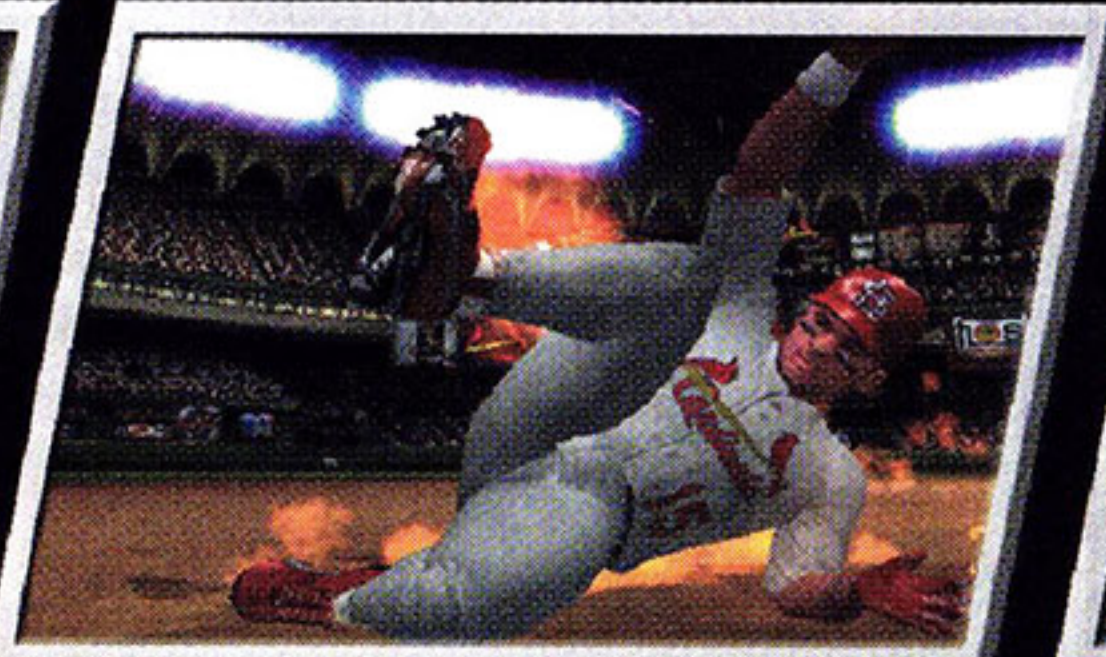
game preview at midwaysports.net



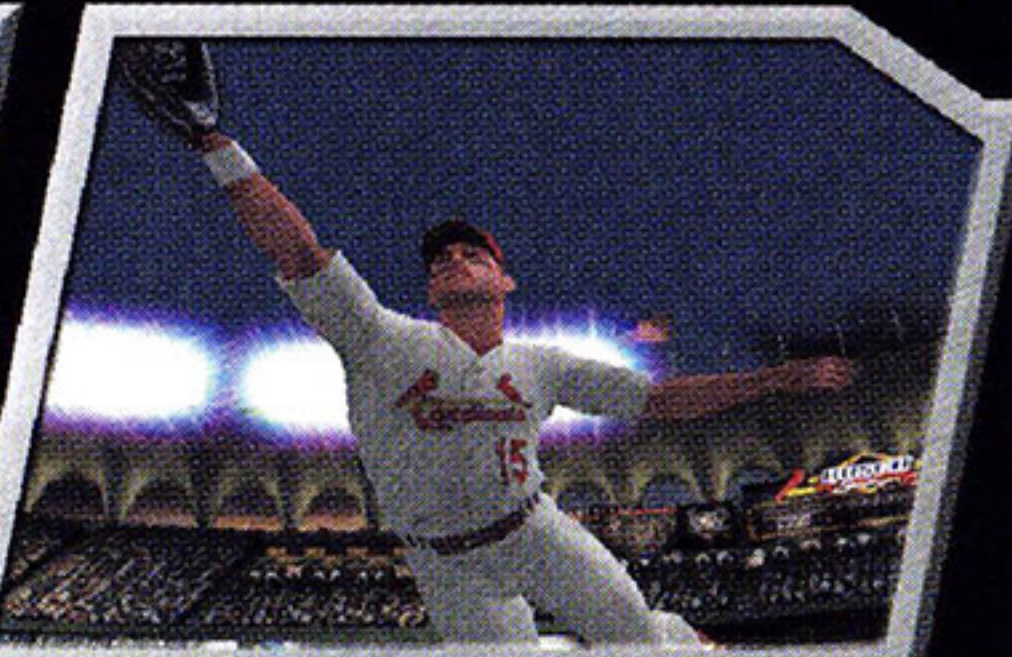
top-selling, exclusive, adrenaline-style baseball videogame is back with a ton of new features.



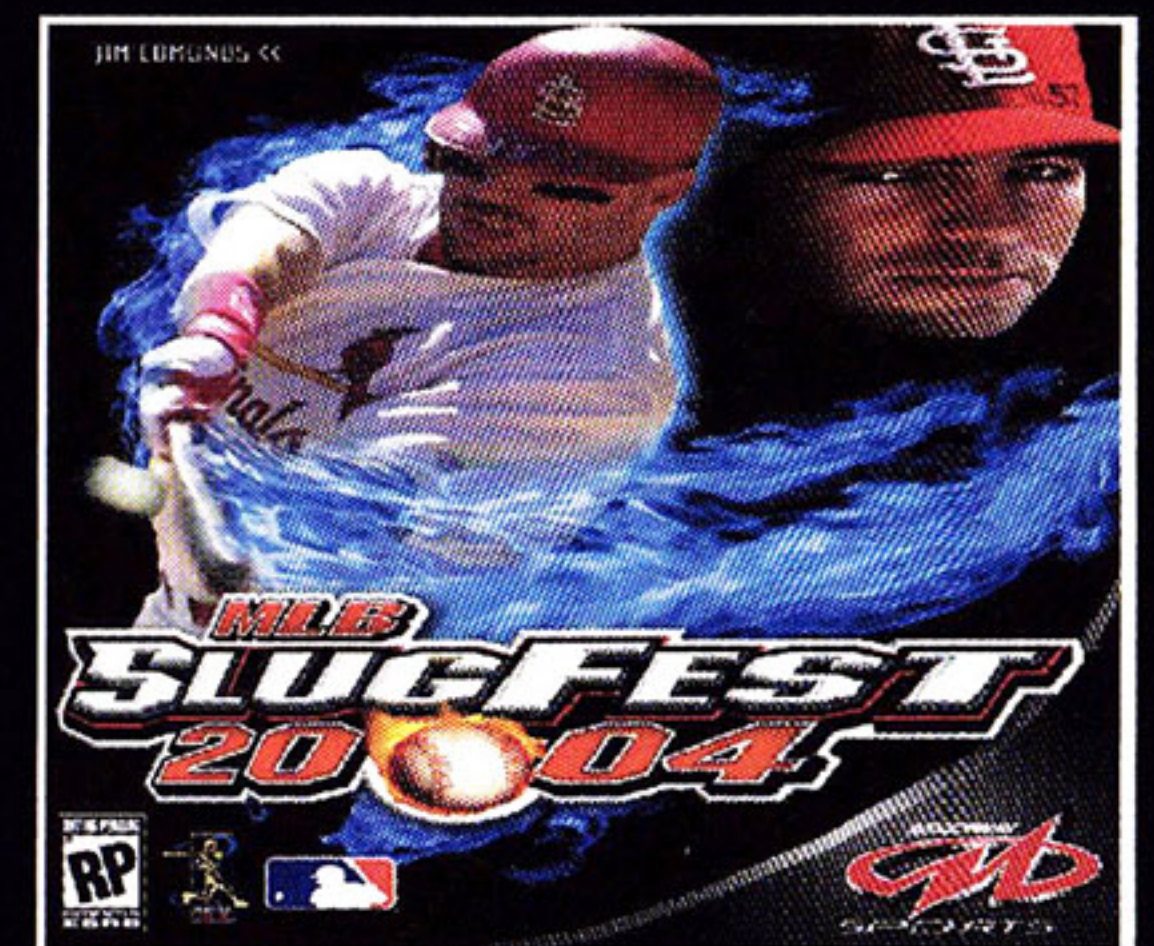
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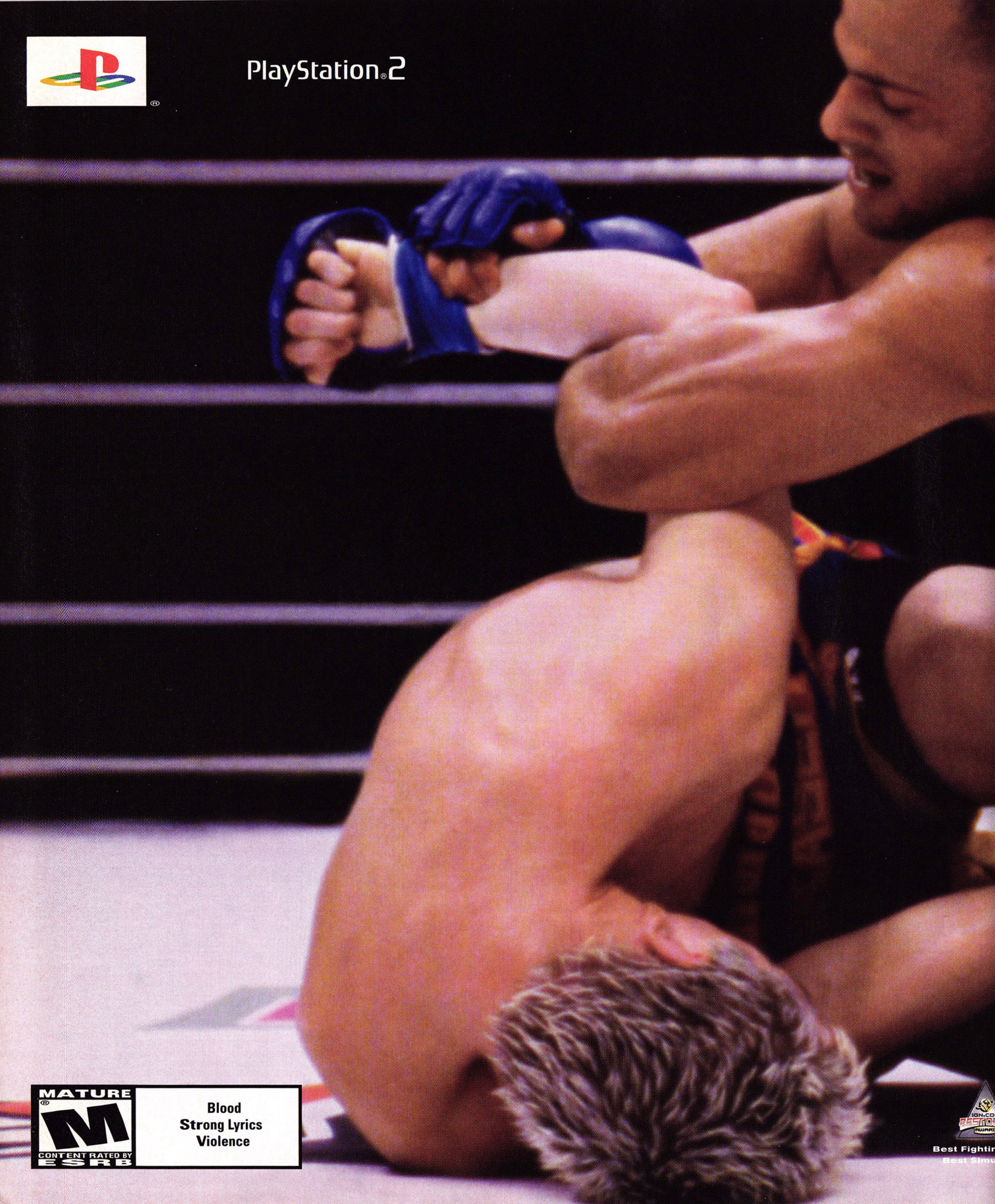
PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE





PlayStation 2

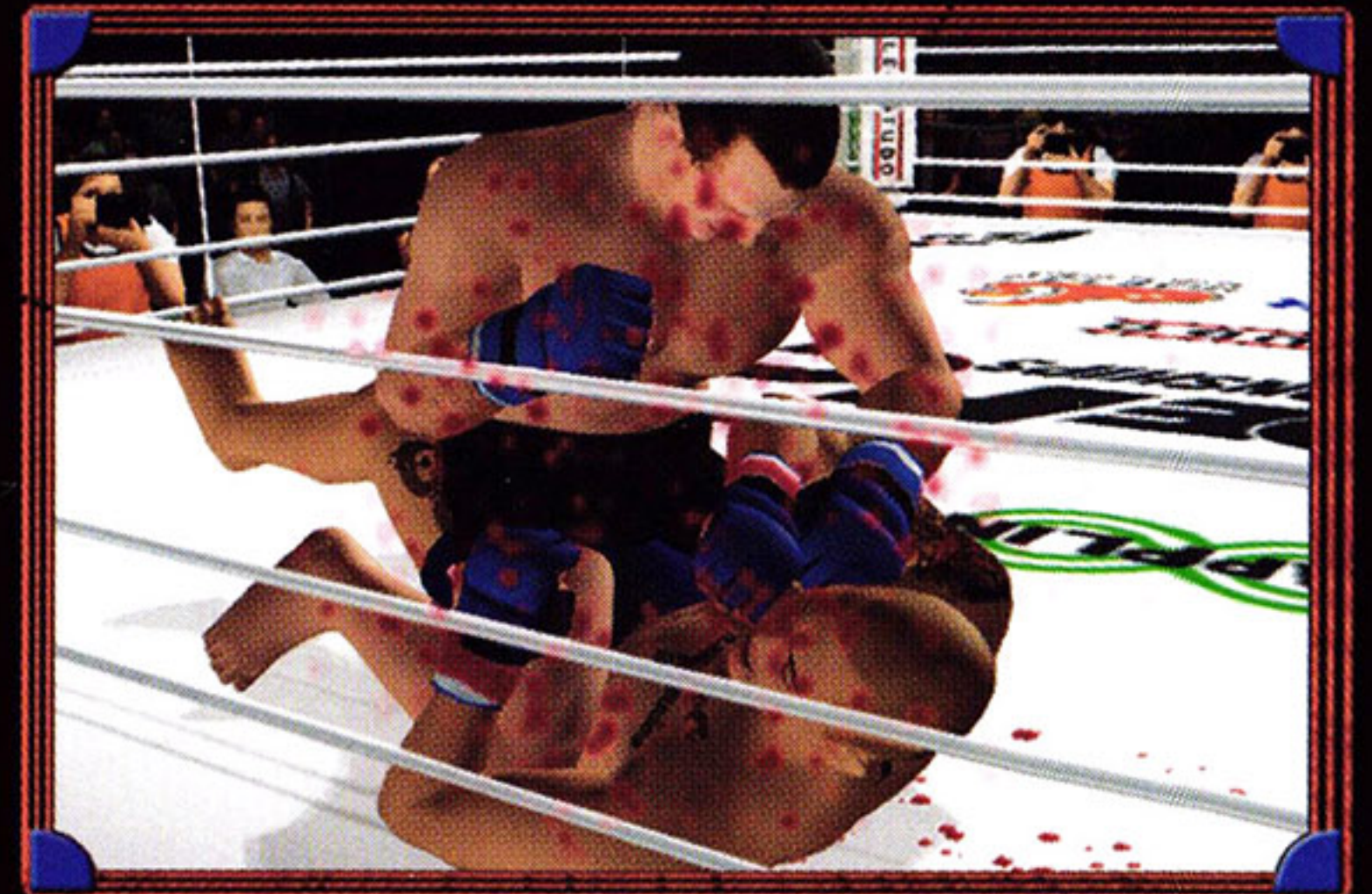


Blood
Strong Lyrics
Violence





BREAK FACES

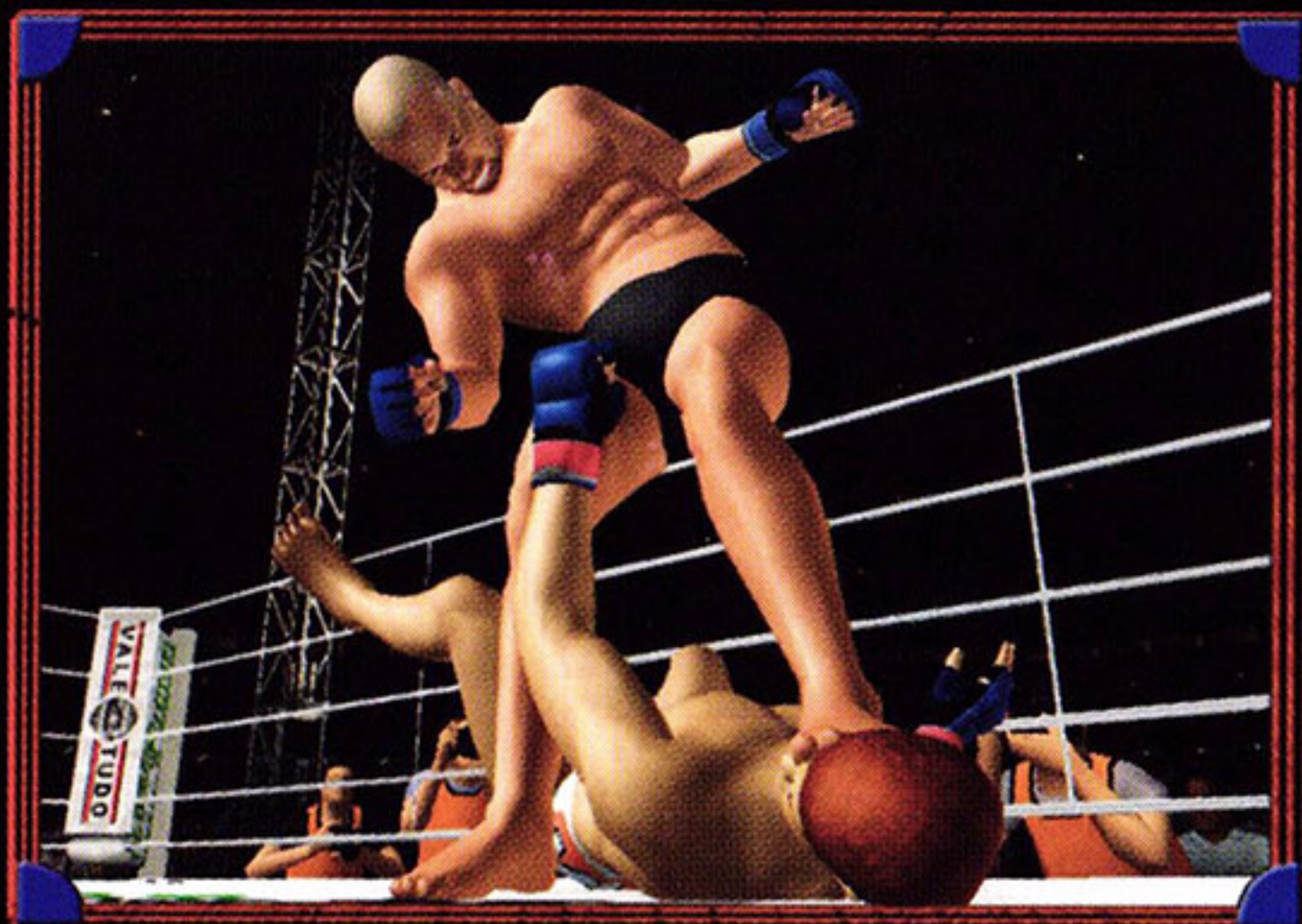


DRAW BLOOD

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QUITTING WOULD FEEL
MUCH WORSE.**

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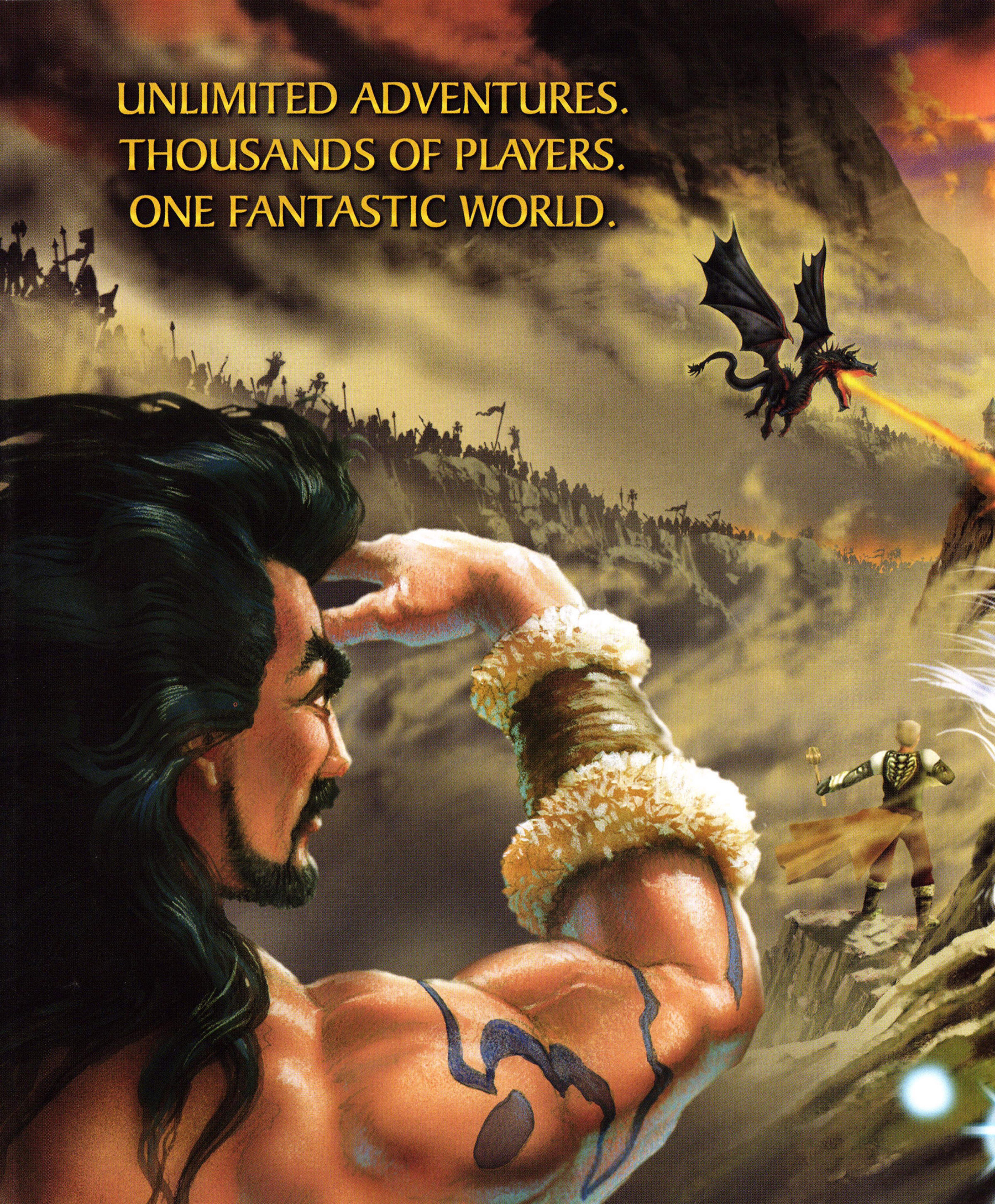


DREAM STAGE
entertainment



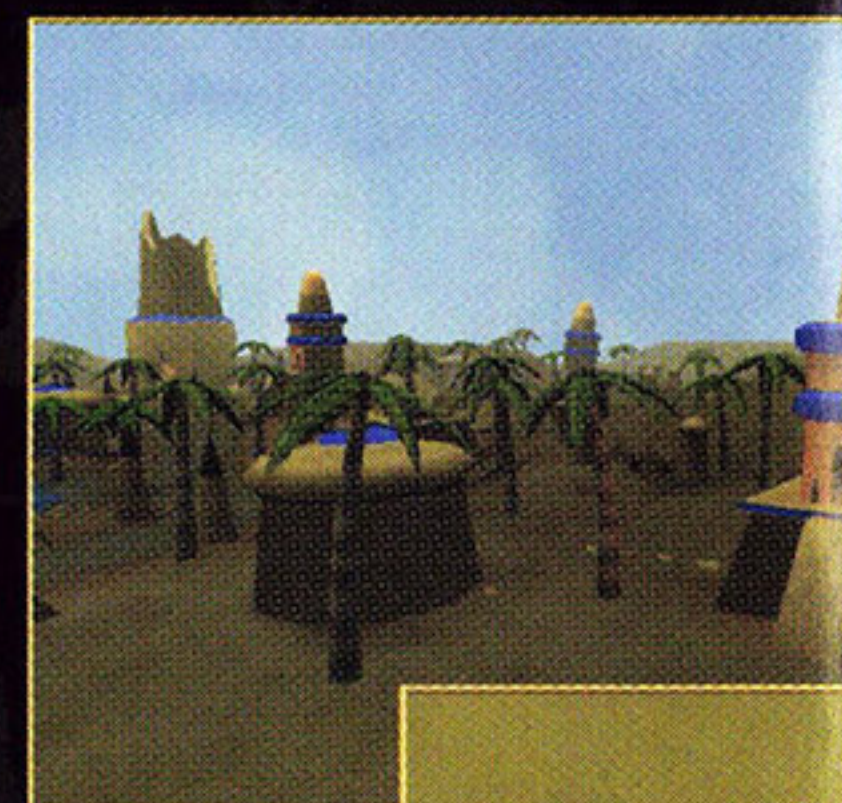
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COVER STORY

34 ACTIVISION'S X-FACTOR

GI goes in depth with two new X-Men gaming extravaganzas. There's X2 Wolverine's Revenge, based on the soon to be released movie sequel. Will it reveal what happened at the mysterious Department H facility? If furthering movie plotlines isn't your bag, look into X-Men Legends, a Boulder's Gate: Dark Alliance-inspired RPG with a bevy of characters to satisfy the comic scholar.

FEATURE

46 BASEWARS: THE BATTLE FOR COOPERSTOWN

The boys of digital summer battle it out once again in GI's annual baseball roundup. Will last year's All-Star Baseball be a contender again? What about Microsoft's foray to the mound with Inside Pitch? Has EA rejuvenated itself with MVP Baseball? Step into the dugout and find out.



FEATURE

54 CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

Madcap celebrity antics aren't confined to the Viper Room anymore. Soon, rivalries will be hashed out in living rooms across America, courtesy of Gotham Games' upcoming Celebrity Deathmatch title. GI grilled some of the lucky and famous subjects to see what it's like to go from silicone to clay to polygon.



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Xenosaga[™]

EPISODE I

Der Wille zur Macht



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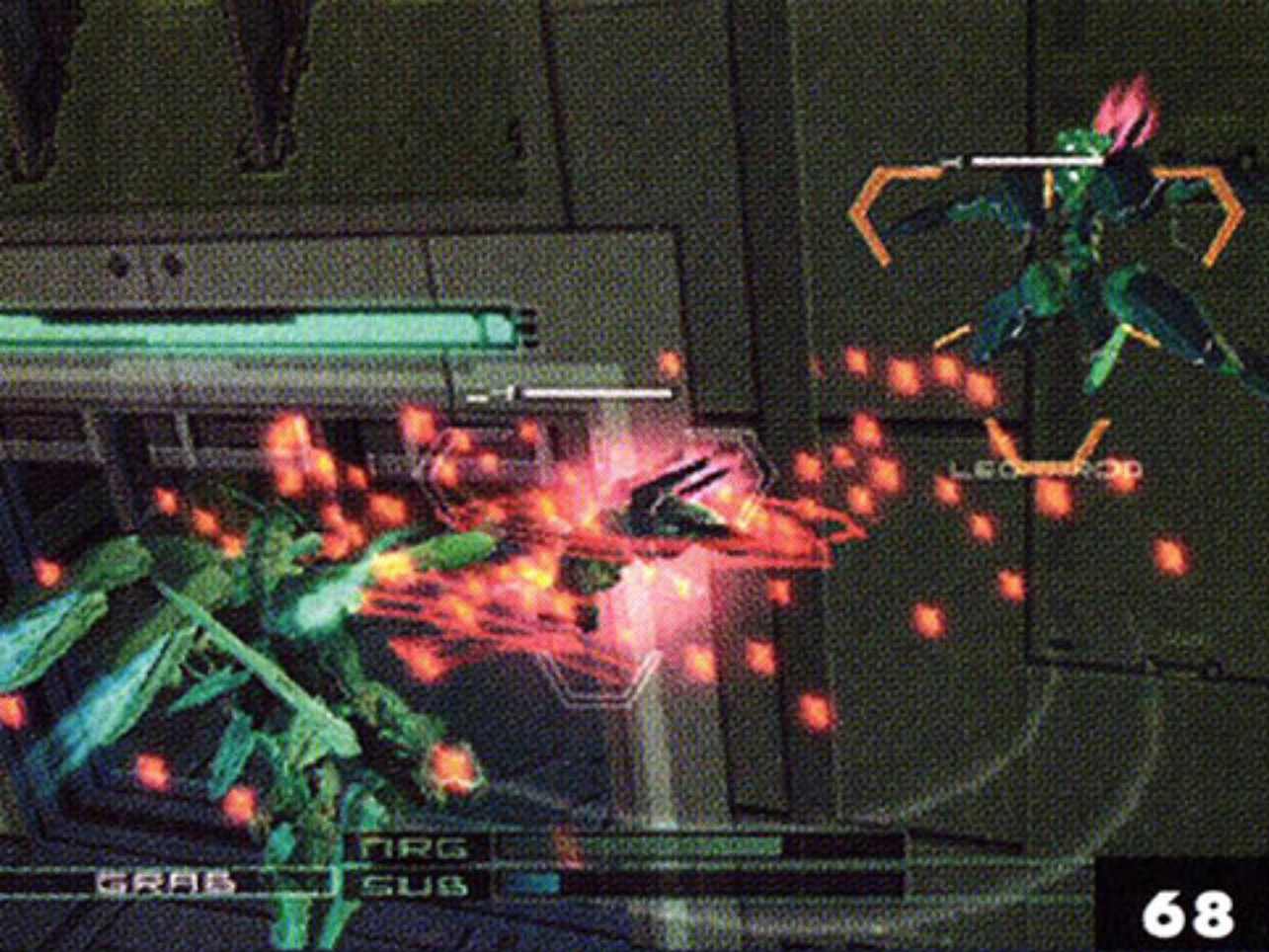
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PlayStation[®]2



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68



60



71



80



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18 EDITOR'S FORUM

This is the place where the editors babble about video games. This month, they do not disappoint.

20 GI SPY

The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

22 DEAR GI

Yes, there were other good games in 2002...we know already! Sort-of famous people for \$1,000, Alex. Who doesn't want to race apes? 12-step programs suggested. We finally get a list of great games. Is Justin hot?

26 NEWS

GBA SP – figure that acronym out! Gates and co. still Platinum. Sequel-happy Nintendo? P.N. 03 gets defensive. Mr. Moore is no longer "platform agnostic." Another new console to jump to?

60 PREVIEWS

Each of the systems are going to play with Soul Caliber 2 and NBA Street Vol. 2. Chaos Legion and Unlimited Saga are hanging out with PS2. Xbox is hosting Dino Crisis 3 and Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow graces the Game Boy Advance.

74 REVIEWS

Xenosaga receives Game of the Month honors. Sequels for Devil May Cry and Dark Cloud make their presence known for PS2. Vexx and Black & Blue usher in the teeny GameCube. Indiana Jones headlines the Xbox offerings that also include Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball and Murakumo. The big questions left to ask about The Sims Online are finally answered.

97 CHARTS

What's hot? What's not? What's up? What's down? It's not NASDAQ, it's the Retail Sales Data and the GI editors' Top 10 Games.

100 PLAY TO PERFECTION

The much-anticipated follow-up to Xenogears will fall to its knees with GI guiding you, the intrepid gamer, through every strategy to total domination. Fear the power that comes with this great responsibility.

104 SECRET ACCESS

GI's legendary codebreakers unleash a fierce torrent of codes and tips, peeking under Spider-Man's pajamas and showing you his underwear.

108 CLASSIC GI

Classic GI examines the TurboGrafx 16, one of gaming's most unfairly overlooked consoles. Read on to see the 10 best Turbo titles of all time, plus some interesting historical facts on NEC's little overachiever. Also, watch in horror as our Classic Reviews plumb the depths of the Atari Jaguar and Sega CD, handing out Game Informer's first goose-egg score ever!

112 ETC

More little figure-things to play with, a chair to sit in while doing it, classic games to throw down, a "keycontroller," and more kindling with which to burn that copious free time you surely have.



76

The Human Anatomy

as deconstructed by Tao Feng



FIG. 1. – Considerable Pain
The process of deconstructing the anatomy begins with bruising at the point of contact, leading to bloody contusions and cerebral hemorrhage.



FIG. 2. – Physical Disability
The deconstruction nears completion as limbs weaken and break from continuous physical abuse, finally rendering the enemy useless.

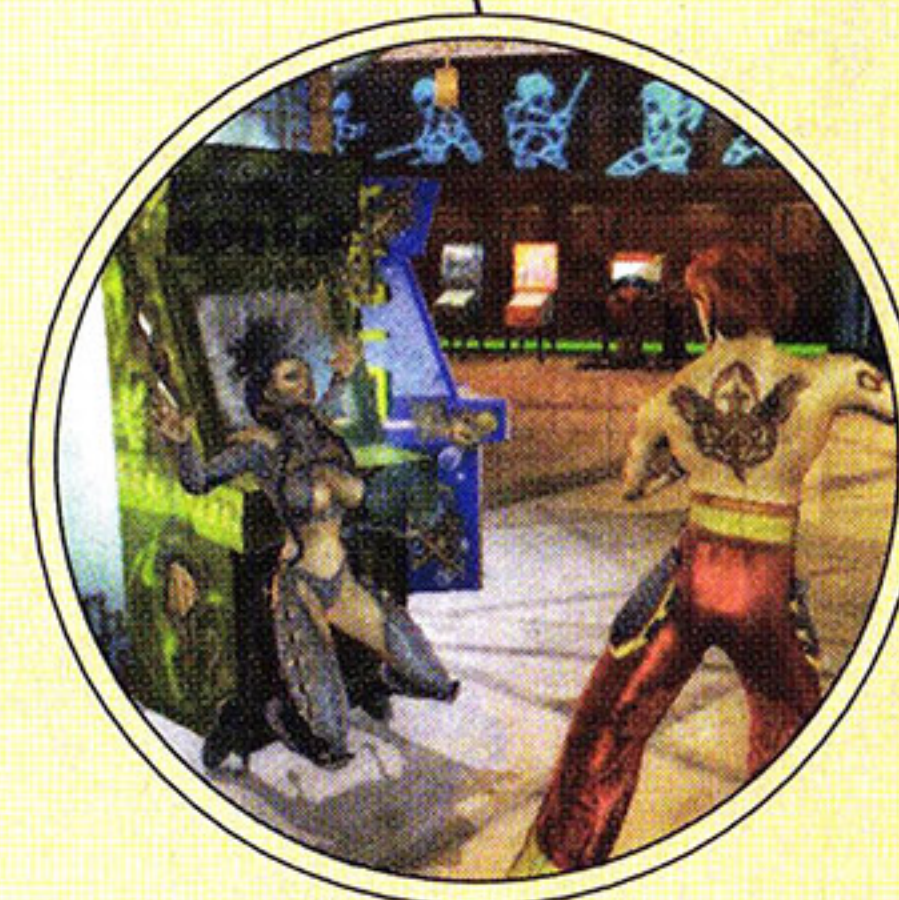
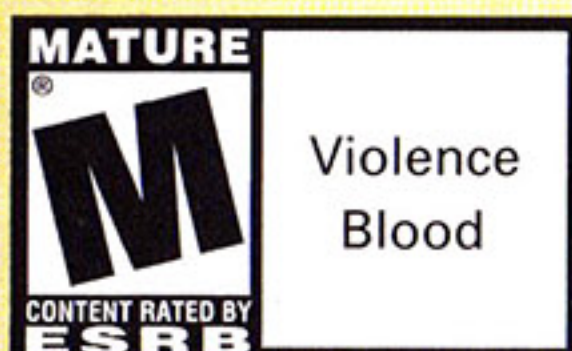


FIG. 3. – Environmental Destruction
Opponents are often hurled into walls and glass situated nearby, resulting in injuries of variable depth and size.

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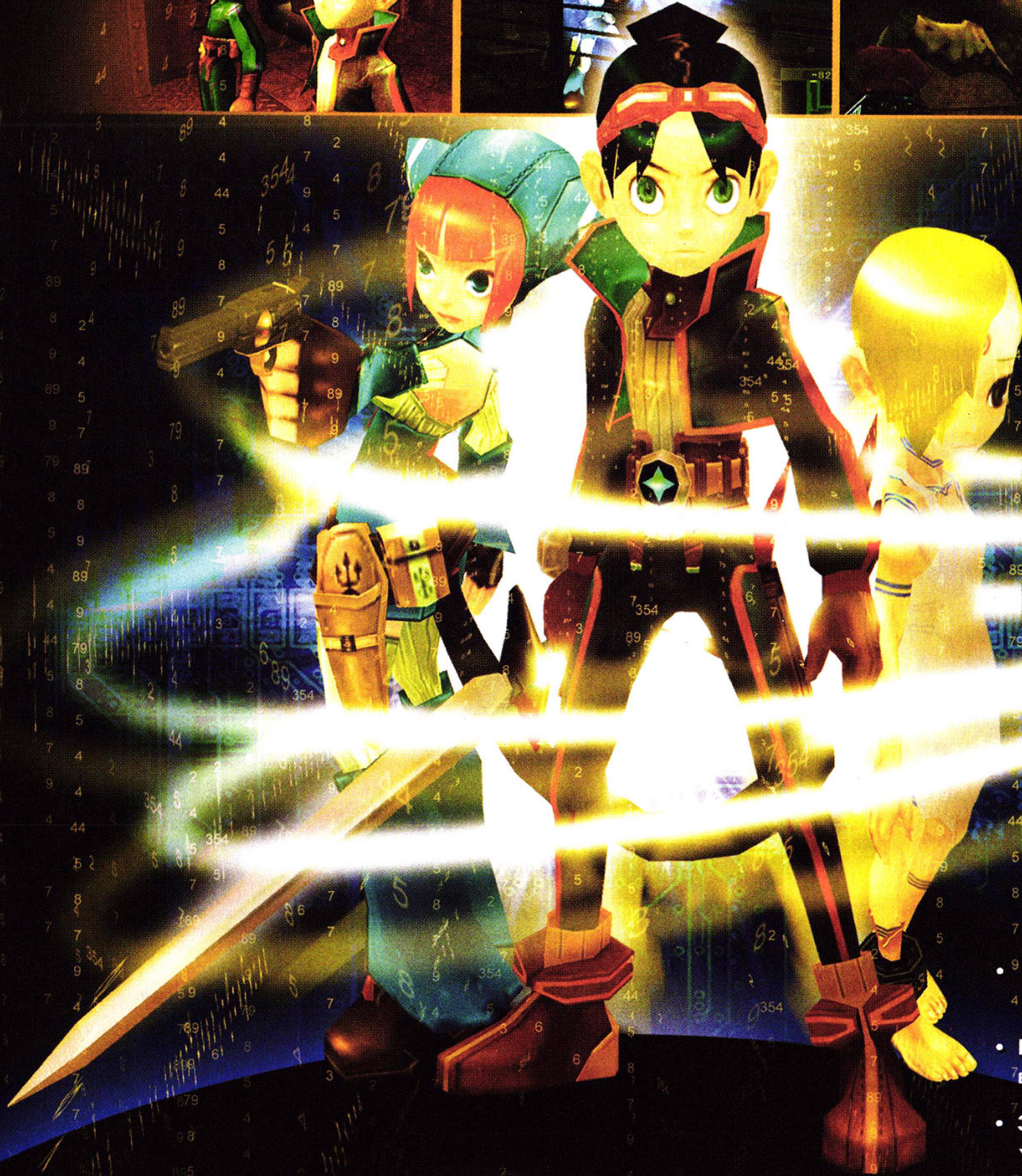


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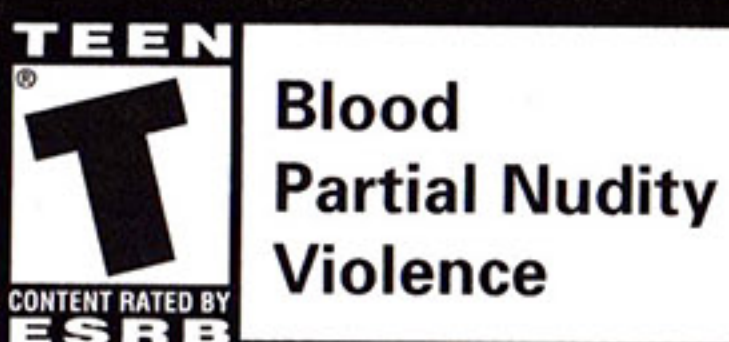
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EDITORS' FORUM

GO WITH THE FLOW



Things are getting hot already in 2003 with a ton of great games coming down the pipe and lots of big news. From Nokia entering the video game fray with its N-Gage handheld to Namco announcing exclusive secret characters for each console's version of Soul Calibur 2, the video game industry keeps giving us more reasons to keep gaming.

About the biggest complaint anybody could have right now is that there just isn't enough time to play Xenosaga, Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb, Dark Cloud 2, and Unreal II. If you're like me, you still haven't finished with all the big games from last year. I know my stack of must-play games just keeps getting taller and taller. This is especially scary since I know I'm not going to get through them all before Zelda

comes out next month along with a host of other killer games. Oh, the humanity!

As for the issue, this month we bring you some big news on X2 Wolverine's Revenge, as well as a world exclusive first look at Raven's X-Men RPG. Although the X-Men have had their problems conquering the video game realm, these two titles are looking fantastic. As comic book fans, we are very excited, especially about the original Wolverine art we received from legendary *Preacher* artist Glenn Fabry (see page 34). Enjoy the issue, and make sure you tune in next month when we bring you a double-barreled cover story unveiling two (that's right – two!) highly anticipated PlayStation 2 blockbusters. You won't want to miss it.

Andy McNamara
Editor-In-Chief
andy@gameinformer.com

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball has awakened an inner demon of mine that hasn't been seen since that fatal day where, as a young high school freshman, I "accidentally" walked into the girl's locker room just moments after a highly competitive swim meet. Truth be told, whenever the lovely DOA ladies shake their ya-ya sisterhood groove thang, I feel like a voyeuristic sleaze. It's fantastic! Never before has a video game stimulated such an emotional sensation! All games should incorporate the glorious mouth-watering titillation of Dead or Alive! It's girls or bust for 2004!

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com

Working for a magazine, you get a lot of strange free stuff. Sure, anime videos and weird toys are fine and good, but no company's mailing list has given me more pleasure than Artisan Home Video's. Thanks to them, I now own DVD copies of *The Playaz Court* (starring ex-Onyx rapper Sticky Fingaz), the Peter Sellers/Ringo Starr oddity *The Magic Christian*, and a bunch of stuff starring Rob Lowe and Treat Williams! Artisan – you rock! Keep the movie magic coming!

KRISTIAN, THE VIDEO VIKING

kristian@gameinformer.com

First, I must give a shout-out to our production staff. It isn't easy dealing with seven writers who all live in a state of retarded adolescence, but they're always patient and understanding when we come to them with 11th hour changes. Next, I'd like to send out some love to my cousin Zach Mushkatel, who is nearly done with law school at the University of Minnesota, for hooking me up with some legal jargon when I needed it. Lastly, I'd like to welcome the second generation of sea monkeys into the world who were recently born in the little tank that sits on my desk. If you'd like to name one, I'm taking suggestions.

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT

justin@gameinformer.com

We each do more than write a few reviews every month. Many assignments are in the bowels of the magazine, where most never look. We tend to have fun with these ho-hum sections, and you'll find a lot of what we consider "humor" – though you might disagree. For example, in spots like Table of Contents and Charts, we turn the boring into the head-scratchingly random. Newbie Cheat Sheet and Classic Reviews may hold a hidden word or two. Even code credits in Secret Access could elicit a chuckle. You bought the whole magazine, so it's the least we can do to try making every page worth reading.

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com

In reviewing three RPGs this month, I think I stumbled onto a cure for ADD and Tourette's Syndrome. By playing *Dot Hack*, *Dark Cloud 2*, and *Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter*, I was actually able to enjoy an RPG without swearing. I used to have to rock myself to and fro in my chair – in what Chet calls "Rain Man fashion" – to stay awake. This cocktail may produce side effects like drowsiness and irritability, but any gamer with taste will only enjoy themselves. Now if you excuse me, I have a presentation to do for the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

CHET, THE JOYSTICK JOCKEY

chet@gameinformer.com

Reading is a healthy means of relaxation and discovery, especially for a gamer. It almost acts as a counterbalance to the constant virtual immersion. Furthermore, reading might teach you something about life – cool, no? If you think I'm preaching, consider this: If you dream of working at Game Informer, where you get paid to play games, you need solid writing skills. And how do you best do that? Go to school and read books! Here's a list of some of my favorite authors: Natsume Soseki, Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. You're bound to dig one of these talented writers.

LISA, LA GAME NIKITA

lisa@gameinformer.com

Being shamefully consumerist, I felt compelled to hide my excitement at the new Game Boy Super Duper Advance flip-top, backlit, pimp daddy extravaganza that Nintendo's been blabbing about. My initial thoughts were, "Kick ass. Now I can have a truly portable GBA....Wait, I already have a GBA that is, by definition, portable. Am I a sucker?" I came to the realization that I don't particularly care if I'm buying (slightly improved) multiples of the same thing. Call me, "Lisa, Consumer, Lacky to Minor Improvements."

NON-EXISTENT STUDIES PROVE GAMINEX WORKS BETTER THAN A PLACEBO

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ACTUAL GAMER TESTIMONIALS*

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- KATO

"I CAN GAME CONTINUOUSLY FOR 2.27 HOURS WITHOUT FOOD, WATER, OR SLEEP!"
- KRISTIAN

"NOW I REACH ALL THE LEVELS AND FINISH OFF THE BOSSES."
- CHET

"I...UGH...YAGHH...EFT... GRGGH...ER...YGCH!"
- REINER

*ON FILE WITH GAME INFORMER MAGAZINE

You may wonder how the editorial staff has the stamina to play all the games to the end AND write reviews. Well, here's how we do it. (Top left to right) Scientist: Justin, Diagram: Matt, Lab Tech: Lisa, Pharmacist: Andy.

ALGOPHOBIA

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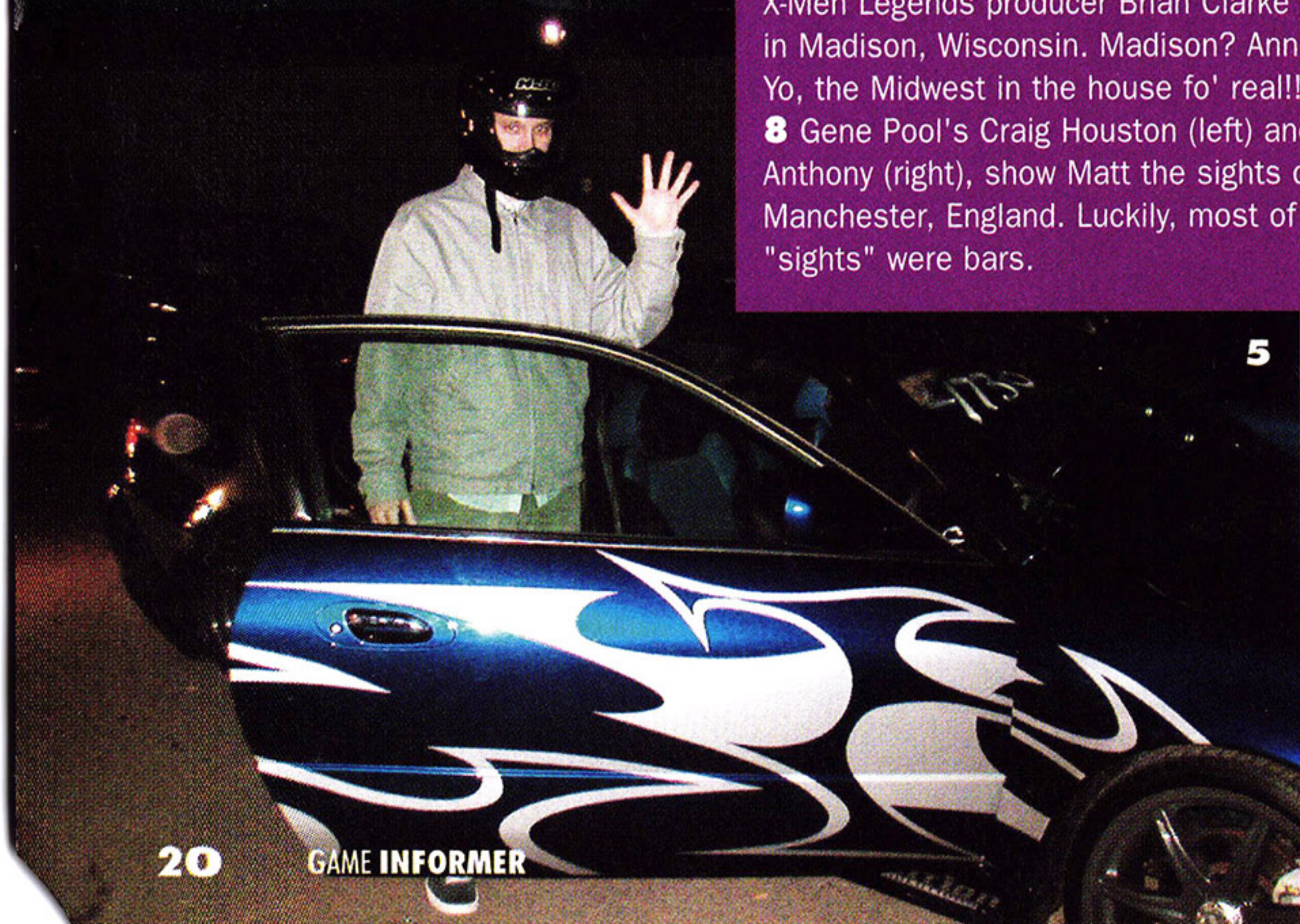
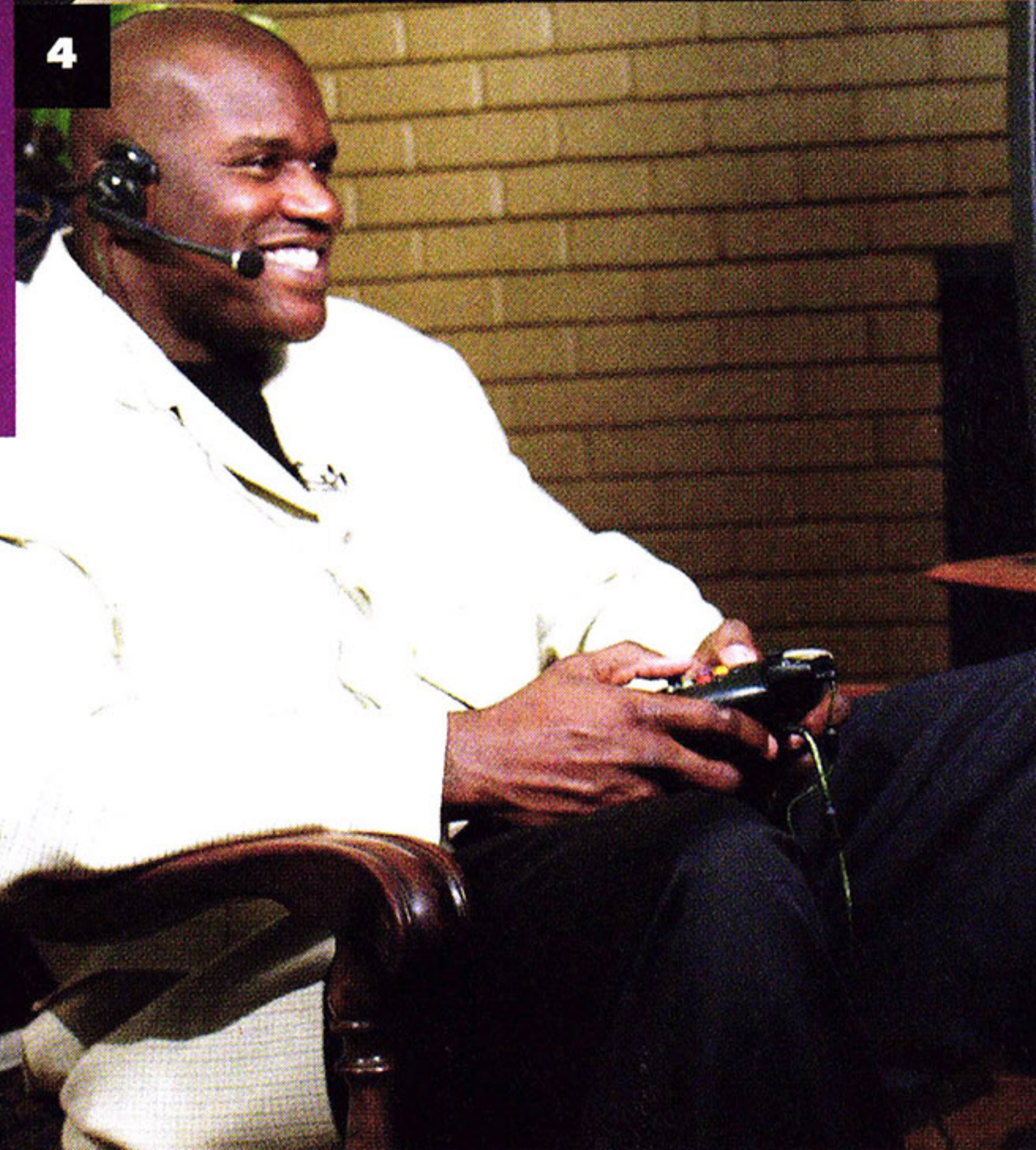
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GI SPY



CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

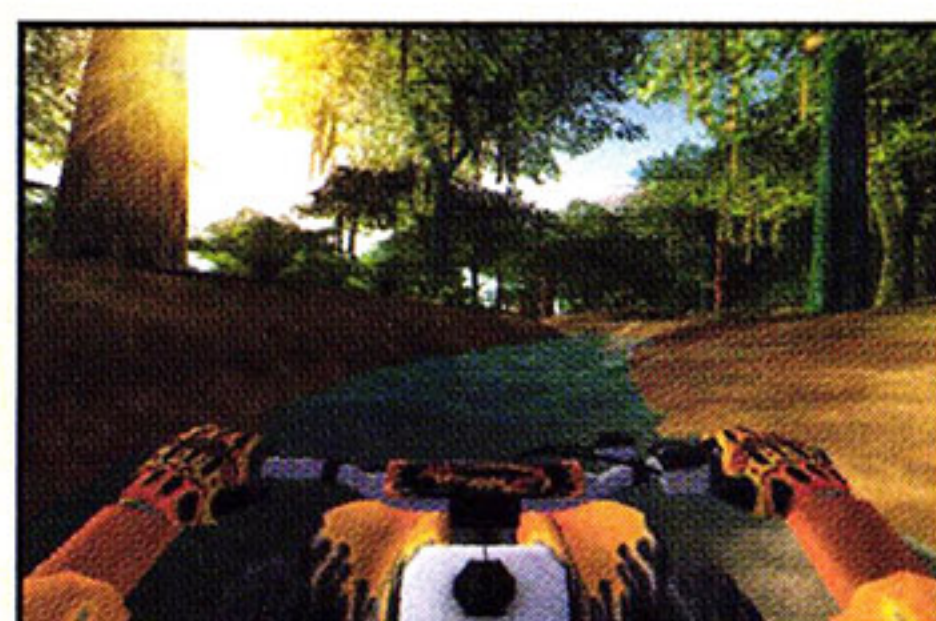
1 Here's Chet's little brother Jonathan dressed up as Batman. We really have to stop letting Reiner buy that kid's clothes. **2** Playboy Playmate Miriam Gonzalez at the epicenter of the entertainment world: the Touchdown Café in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Miriam was on hand to promote Sony's ATV Offroad Fury 2 and give dozens of sweaty Midwestern boys the thrill of their lives. **3** Kingdom Hearts director Tetsuya Nomura (center) poses with voice-actors Hayden Panettiere (Kairi) and David Gallagher (Riku) **4** Is Shaq smiling because he's playing Xbox Live, or because he's just happy to get a break from getting stuffed by Yao Ming? **5** Matt gets ready to ride along in a drag race in San Diego. Don't fear for him; fear for his underwear. **6** Feelance journalist Tom Ham cozies up to a "dancer" at a BMX XXX event at Scores in NYC. **7** Activision's Lisa Fields and X-Men Legends producer Brian Clarke get down in Madison, Wisconsin. Madison? Ann Arbor?? Yo, the Midwest in the house fo' real!! Holla! **8** Gene Pool's Craig Houston (left) and Dave Anthony (right), show Matt the sights of Manchester, England. Luckily, most of these "sights" were bars.



ATV 2
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FURY



SO REALISTIC, YOU'LL SWEAR YOU WERE THERE. The Rocky Mountains? Merely a speed bump. The Mojave Desert? A sandbox. The Black Forest? A flower garden. Welcome to an insanely realistic new world of offroad racing. 40 massive environments, more than 20 real-world ATVs, minigames, a hard-core soundtrack, plus intensely competitive online gameplay. So find yourself a comfortable chair, sit back and get ready, because it's gonna get dirty. **BLAZE YOUR OWN TRAIL.**



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www.playstation.com ATV Offroad Fury is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Rainbow Studios. Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). ©2002 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World. Play In Ours.", "Blaze Your Own Trail" and the Online icon are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.



PlayStation 2

DEAR GI

PAGING DR. MARIO

Do not let Dr. Mario touch your genitals. He is not a real doctor!

Josh
Via hotmail.com

Hmm...we wondered why he wanted us to strip naked for an eye exam. Oh well, live and learn.

GENERIC LETTERS OF THE MONTH

Why did you guys rate [insert game here] higher than [insert game here] on your Best of 2002 list? I hate you!

John Q. Reader
Anytown, USA

Why was [insert game here] included on your Best of 2002 list? That game sucks! You all smell like used dental floss and have poor math skills!

Irate Ronnie
Via messageboard.com

Why was [insert game here] not included on the Best of 2002 list? It's the best game ever and I love it more than my family! I hate you and hope you all die of cancer sometime in fiscal year 2003!!!

Lord High Executioner
Fanboy City, Middle Earth

As per usual, our annual year-end awards issue generated a great deal of controversy and dissent among our readers. The letters above reflect the three basic types of letters received, minus copious amounts of harsh language. If anything, the complaints illustrated just how diverse the video game audience has become. No one seems to be able to agree on much about the games of 2002, except maybe for the near-unanimous sentiment that *Metroid Prime* should have been higher on the list. For every reader that thought *Vice City* was the greatest game since *Super Mario Bros.*, there was one who deemed *Rockstar's* masterpiece an over-rated piece of crap. For every fan of *Kingdom Hearts* that thought the game should have been ranked much higher on the list, there was a detractor who felt that such childish, Disney-oriented pabulum had no place in a serious game magazine. Even more numerous were the titles that many felt were slighted, most notably *Eternal Darkness*, *Virtua Fighter 4*, *WarCraft III*, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, and



many more. If anything, the absence of these (admittedly top-notch) titles only serves to illustrate just what an amazing year 2002 was for gaming as a whole. Our 10 were whittled down from a roster of over 30 candidates, a majority of which would have been shoo-ins for the list in years past. We tried to pick the games that we felt represented the best of the best in 2002.

WHERE'S DONKEY KONG?

For two years I have been waiting for *Donkey Kong Racing* to release, and yet there are no signs of it showing up. I am really sick and tired of waiting for this game. Do you have any idea when the release date is?

Mastersnap
Via email

Unfortunately, the outlook for *Donkey Kong Racing* is a bit cloudy following Nintendo and Rare's much-publicized split. Rare, the creator of *Diddy Kong Racing* for the N64, was slated to create *DK Racing* (an aerial sequel of sorts to *Diddy Kong*) for the GameCube, but the project has been cancelled due to the fact that Rare is now under the wing of Microsoft. According to the terms of the deal in which Nintendo sold its controlling interest in Rare to Bill Gates and company, Nintendo retains all rights to games starring its long-running characters like *Donkey Kong* and *Banjo-Kazooie*. Hopefully, there is a chance that Rare reworks the game with new characters, or Nintendo continues on the *Donkey Kong Racing* project with some of its in-house talent. As always, Nintendo would not comment on the status of the project.

WHAT'S UP WITH JUSTIN?

I was just wondering why in every picture Justin crosses his arms, flexes, and makes that disgusting face. He looks extremely constipated. So Justin, I invite you to chill out with a bottle of Ex-Lax and let the good times roll...

Jeremy Fisher
Via email



Hey don't hate on the Digital Deviant just because he's a big, greasy, pumped-up slab of beefcake! Seriously, don't mess with him. He knows how to karate kick and stuff. For more flicks of Justin's mean-face flexin', check out www.hotornot.com.

MO' MAGAZINE, MO' PROBLEMS

I would like to blame the following problems in my life on your magazine:

1) Insomnia. Whether it's from staying up all night to play a game you recommended, wondering if *Project Ego* (a.k.a. *Fable*) is going to come out during my lifetime, or reading *Game Informer* into the wee hours of the morning.

2) Poverty. This stems mostly from buying any and all games you suggest. However, finding out that to win the console vs. console vs. PC debate I must have them all (see issue 116) did not help my depleted funds.

3) Uncontrollable Rage. This is most often caused by games recommended by you that refuse to bow down to my undeniable gaming prowess.

Thank you for your time, and may God have mercy on your souls.

Jeremy
Via yahoo.com

Guess what? We blame our insomnia, poverty, and uncontrollable rage on the magazine, too. We have so much in common, Josh. Let's start a support group.

RAISE YOUR VOICE!

I've been a subscriber to GI since Dec '95 and I would first like to say congratulations on the successful direction you have taken the magazine since then. I like all of the new columns you have added and look forward to seeing GI in my mailbox every month. Now that you have an extra editor around, maybe you finally have time to put in a Reader's Opinion column. In this section, GI would give a subject in which readers, in three hundred words or less, could explain his or her view on a hot topic that has been floating around in the video game world. I think it would be a great addition to the magazine as a whole.

Lars
Via aol.com

That's a good suggestion, Lars, but we already have a "reader's opinion" column. Here's the amazing part – you're in it right now!



ENVELOPE ART

Although our Dear GI section does often showcase the sillier side of our readership's psyches, we do welcome well-written letters on hot topics in the video game industry. So, to anyone out there with a gripe to air or an axe to grind, get typing and send us your manifesto. If it's fit to print, you'll see it in these hallowed pages in the coming months. Just lay off the swearing...we are a family magazine - for really messed-up, neurotic families.

ALL-TIME FAVORITES

Now, I know that each one of you've probably played literally thousands games, so you guys have had thousands of more opportunities to experience great games than I have. So, what I'm really asking is: What are your personal favorite games of all time?

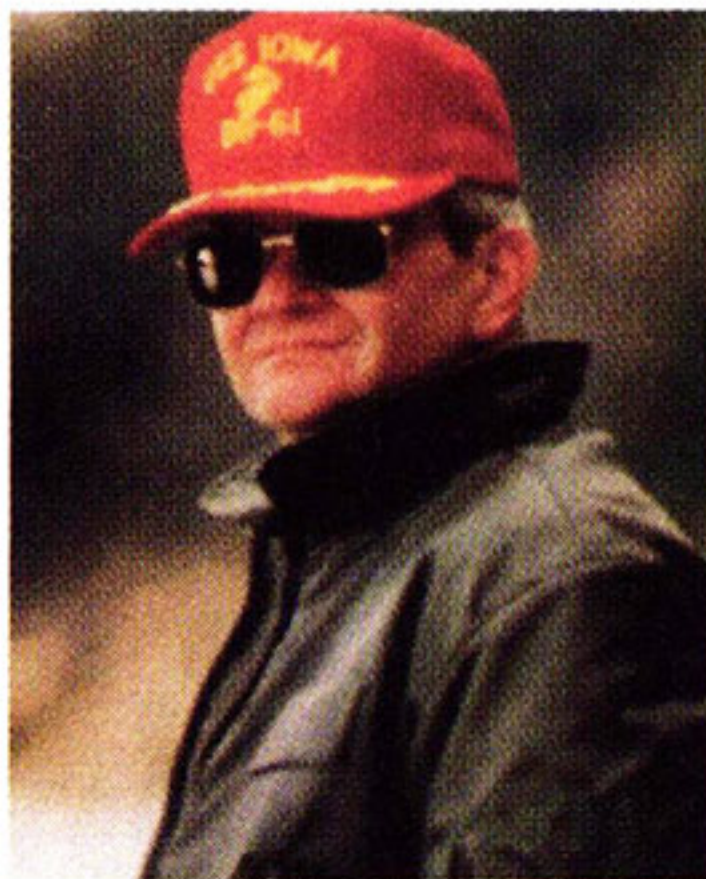
Matt Redman
Via email

Your letter sparked a lot of soul searching amongst the GI staff, but we did manage to pin down everyone's absolute favorite game of all time. Not surprisingly, the old school 8- and 16-bit eras were well represented. So here, without further ado, are the titles that are nearest and dearest to our hearts:

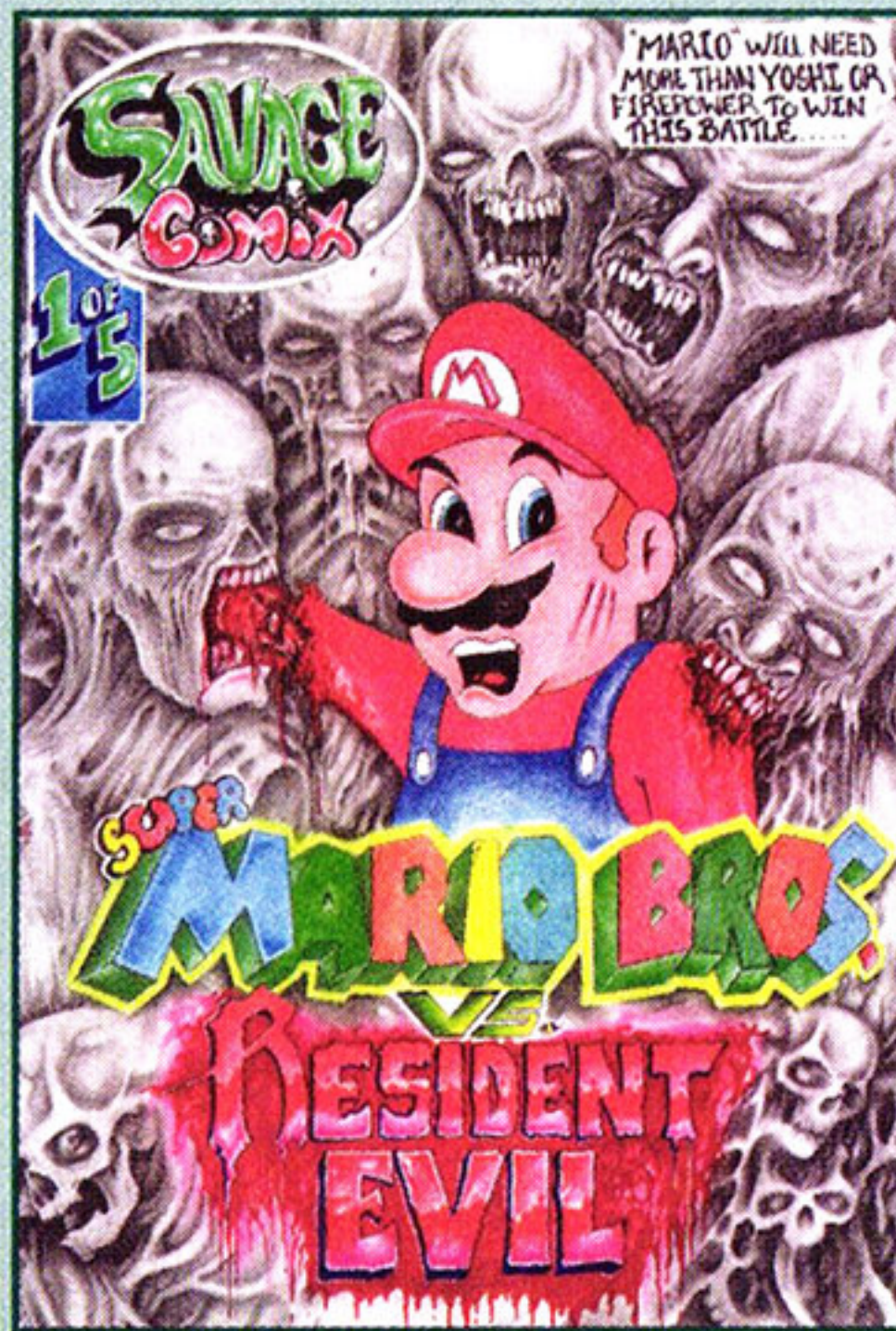
- Andy: Metroid (NES)
- Reiner: The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (SNES)
- Matt: Super Mario Bros. 3 (NES)
- Kristian: Ultima VI: The False Prophet (PC)
- Kato: Madden NFL Football (All years)
- Justin: King's Bounty (Genesis)
- Chet: Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting (Arcade)
- Lisa: Tetris (All systems)

IDENTIFY THIS MAN

Who is Tom Clancy?
Game Freak
Via email



Despite the sheer number of games that have been released under the Tom Clancy banner in recent days, "Old Clancy-pants" (as we affectionately refer to him) is not a game developer of any sort. In actuality, he is one of the world's most popular authors. Clancy was the pioneer of the literary genre that has come to be called the "techno-thriller." Starting in the mid-eighties, he combined a knack for crafting complex tales of military and political intrigue with an immense knowledge of cutting-edge military weaponry and tactics. In doing so, he became perhaps the most successful American author since horror master Steven King. This success spawned many Hollywood adaptations of his books, including *The Hunt For Red October*, *Patriot Games*, and *Clear and Present Danger*. More recently, Clancy has lent his name to many tactical military games, like *Splinter Cell* and the *Rainbow Six* series.



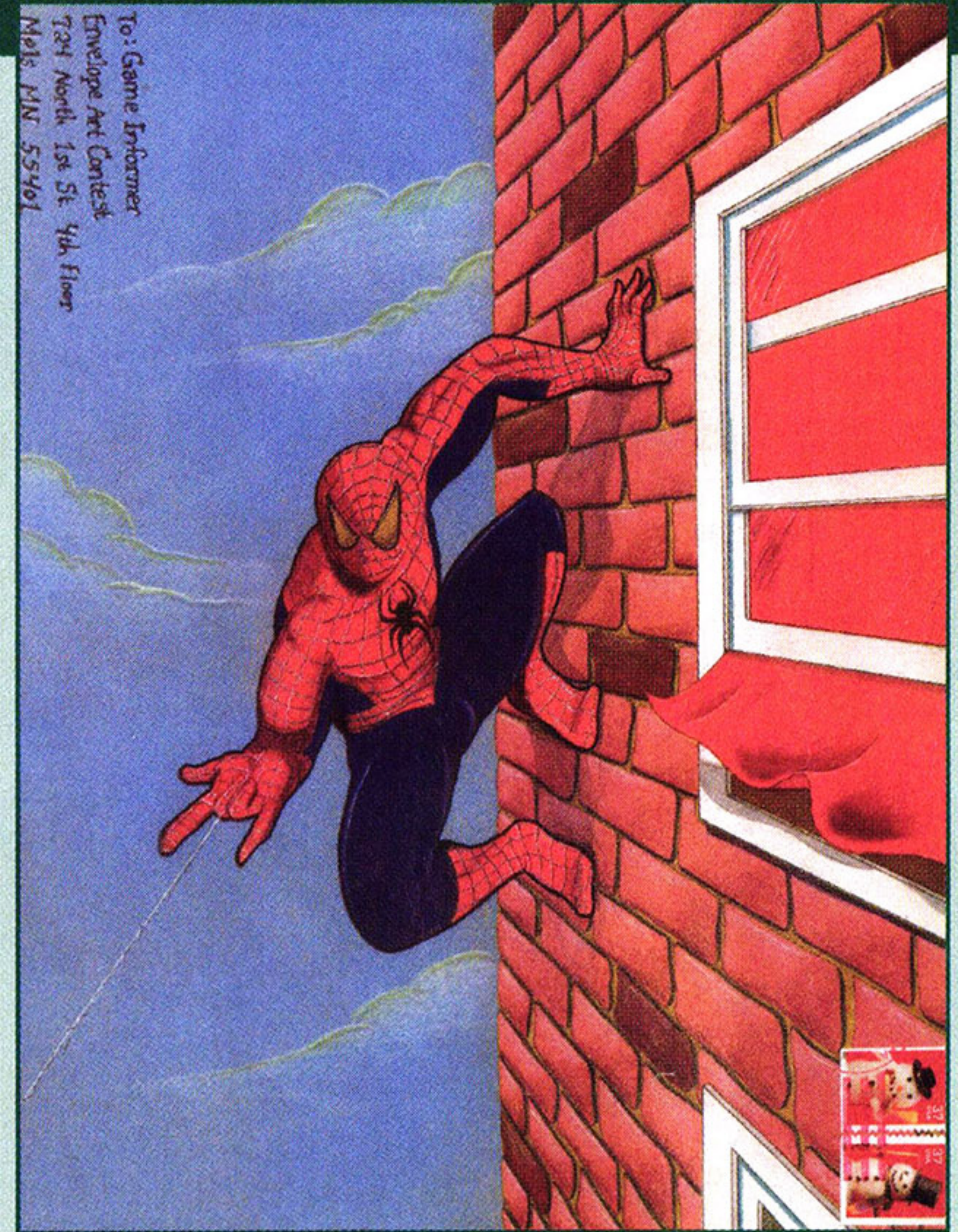
John Bisonette
This guy needs therapy



Derick T. Morales
Three Ninjas Kick Back...again!!!



Alfonso E. Elias
"Must...not...fart!!!"



MARCH WINNER!

David Parzych
Once again, Spider-Man is caught peeping in Mary Jane's window



Ryan Gaw
We would call this piece "Attack of the Spaghetti Zombies," but we fear that this is what George Lucas is going to name the next Star Wars movie



Josh Klein
This is the first picture of Kato after a sex-change operation

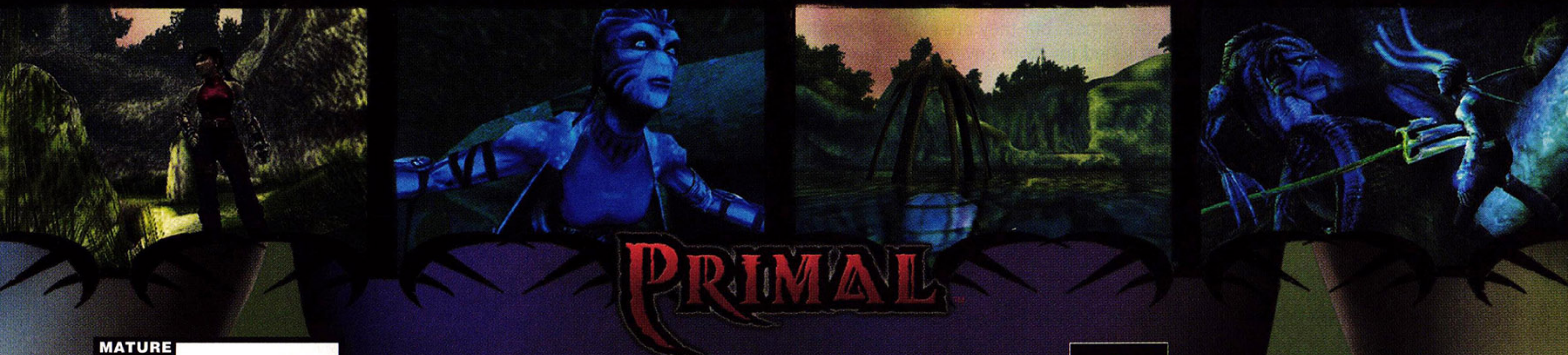
Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault. Sorry, art cannot be returned.

Send to:
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724 North First St., 4th Floor
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CIVILIZATION IS ONLY SKIN DEEP.

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PRIMAL



Blood
Violence

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GI NEWS

NINTENDO UNVEILS NEW GAME BOY ADVANCE

Nintendo is making the premier handheld console even better with the release of the **Game Boy Advance SP**. This new system will solve the major gripe that players have had with the otherwise solid console: the need for a backlit screen. No longer will you have to stretch and strain for the perfect lighting conditions. The SP gives you this luxury in a handy flip-top design.

The Game Boy Advance SP comes in the colors of cobalt and platinum, and will hit stores on March 23 for a suggested retail price of \$99.95 – \$30 more than the current **GBA**. For this price you also get a rechargeable lithium-ion battery which will provide approximately 10 hours of gameplay after a three-hour charging period. Nintendo says that it could last for up to 18 hours if you turn off the screen's backlight function. Although this battery can be charged while you play, you cannot use standard AA batteries to power the system. Cosmetically, the SP features shorter shoulder buttons and a front-loading cartridge slot.

Nintendo says that all current and future Game Boy Advance titles will run on the SP, and it will be backwards compatible with almost all **Game Boy Color** cartridges. This new handheld will also accommodate the e-Reader, Link cable, and other GBA accessories. Nintendo will continue to produce the regular Game Boy Advance as well.

The reason behind this move is due to the fact that Nintendo has showed below-expected sales in the last six months. Game Boy Advance SP is expected to boost sales, as the GBA is already the workhorse behind the company's success. Nintendo anticipates to sell around two million units of the new system worldwide by the end of the spring.



Game Boy Advance SP Specs

- **CPU:** 32-bit CPU with embedded memory
- **Screen:** 2.9" reflective color LCD w/integrated backlight
- **Display Size:** 1.61" by 2.41" (same as the GBA)
- **Resolution:** 240x160 pixels (same as the GBA)
- **Colors:** More than 32,000 colors possible (same as GBA)
- **Power Supply:** Rechargeable lithium-ion battery w/10 hours continuous play and a three-hour recharging period. 18 hours continuous play with backlight disabled
- **Hardware Color:** Cobalt and platinum
- **Release Date:** March 23
- **Suggested Retail Price:** \$99.95



NINTENDO'S NEW GAMES

Nintendo of Japan has announced a roster of future titles that stretches into 2004 and covers both the **GameCube** and **Game Boy Advance**. This lineup includes everything from sequels (**Animal Crossing 2** and **Pikmin 2**) to ports (**Mario Golf** for GBA) to some intriguing new entries (**Legend of Zelda: The Triforce Gods and the Four Swords**).

Other surprises not on the official release list were also revealed. **Super Mario Advance 4** for the Game Boy Advance is expected at the end of the year. It is believed that this will continue the tradition of reworking older *Mario* titles for the handheld. Here's to hoping that this latest re-release is **Super Mario Bros. 3**. On the opposite end of the good/evil spectrum is a game titled **Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgames** for the GBA. This should also appear later this year.

Nintendo of Japan has announced these games, but they are expected to show up in the States shortly after their overseas releases. Stay tuned for more coverage on many of these titles in the upcoming months.

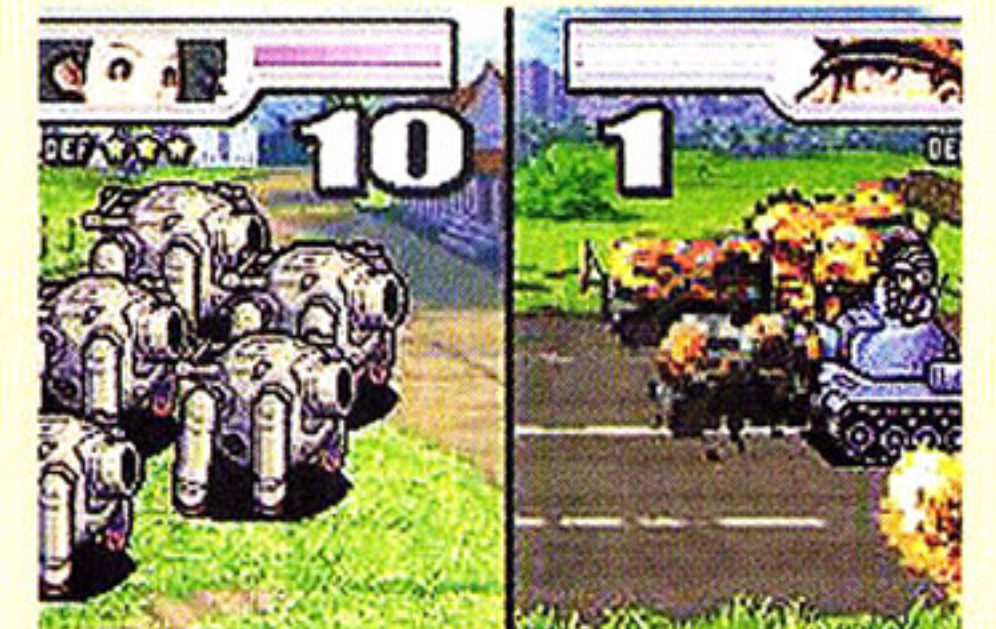
Further out on the hardware front, Nintendo has just announced that it expects the **GameCube's successor** to hit retail in 2005. The Company believes it will beat the next **Xbox** and **PlayStation 3** to market by a year.

As if all of this news about Nintendo's future titles wasn't enough to make your tongue sweat something fierce, it gets better. Nintendo is bringing back the **Player's Choice** discount program. **Super Smash Bros. Melee**, **Luigi's Mansion**, and **Pikmin** will all retail for a suggested retail price of \$29.95.

GameCube

- *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicle* – Spring
- *F-Zero* – June 23
- *Wario World GC* (tentative title) – Fall
- *Kirby's Airland* (tentative title) – Fall
- *Mario Golf GC* (tentative title) – Fall
- *Mario Tennis GC* (tentative title) – Winter
- *1080°: White Storm* (tentative title) – Winter
- *Star Fox* (tentative title) – TBD
- *Mario Kart GC* (tentative title) – TBD
- *Pikmin 2* (tentative title) – TBD
- *Animal Crossing 2* (tentative title) – TBD

Nintendo has also spilled the beans about **Advance Wars 2** for the Game Boy Advance. Developer **Intelligent Systems** is back at the helm, and it looks like gamers can expect more of the great turn-based strategy that was the hallmark of the first title. Expect to see **AW 2** on shelves this fall.



Advance Wars 2

Game Boy Advance

- *The Legend of Zelda: The Triforce Gods and the Four Swords* – Spring
- *Lunar Brace* (tentative title) – TBD
- *Mario Golf GBA* (tentative title) – TBD
- *Mario Tennis GBA* (tentative title) – TBD

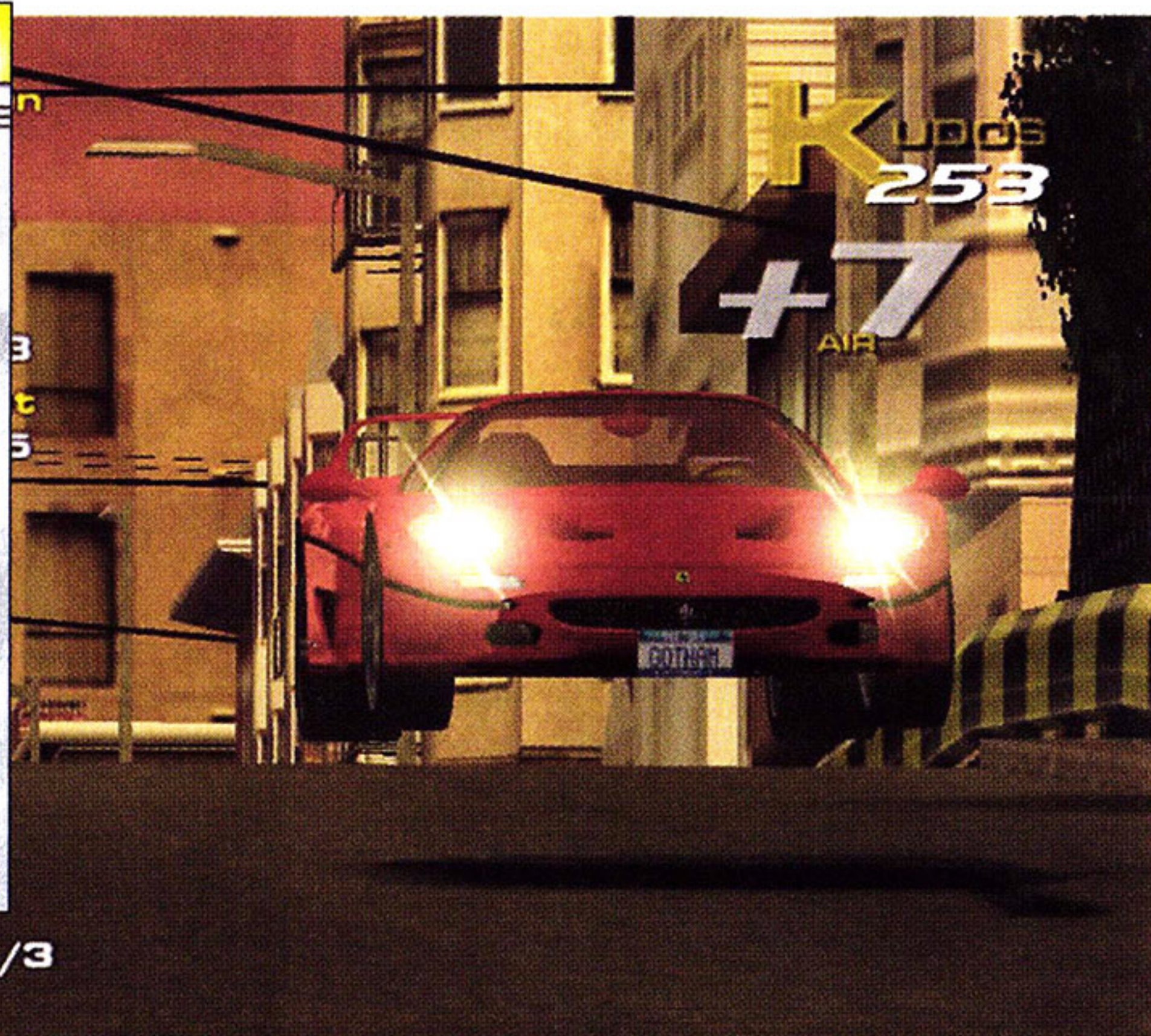
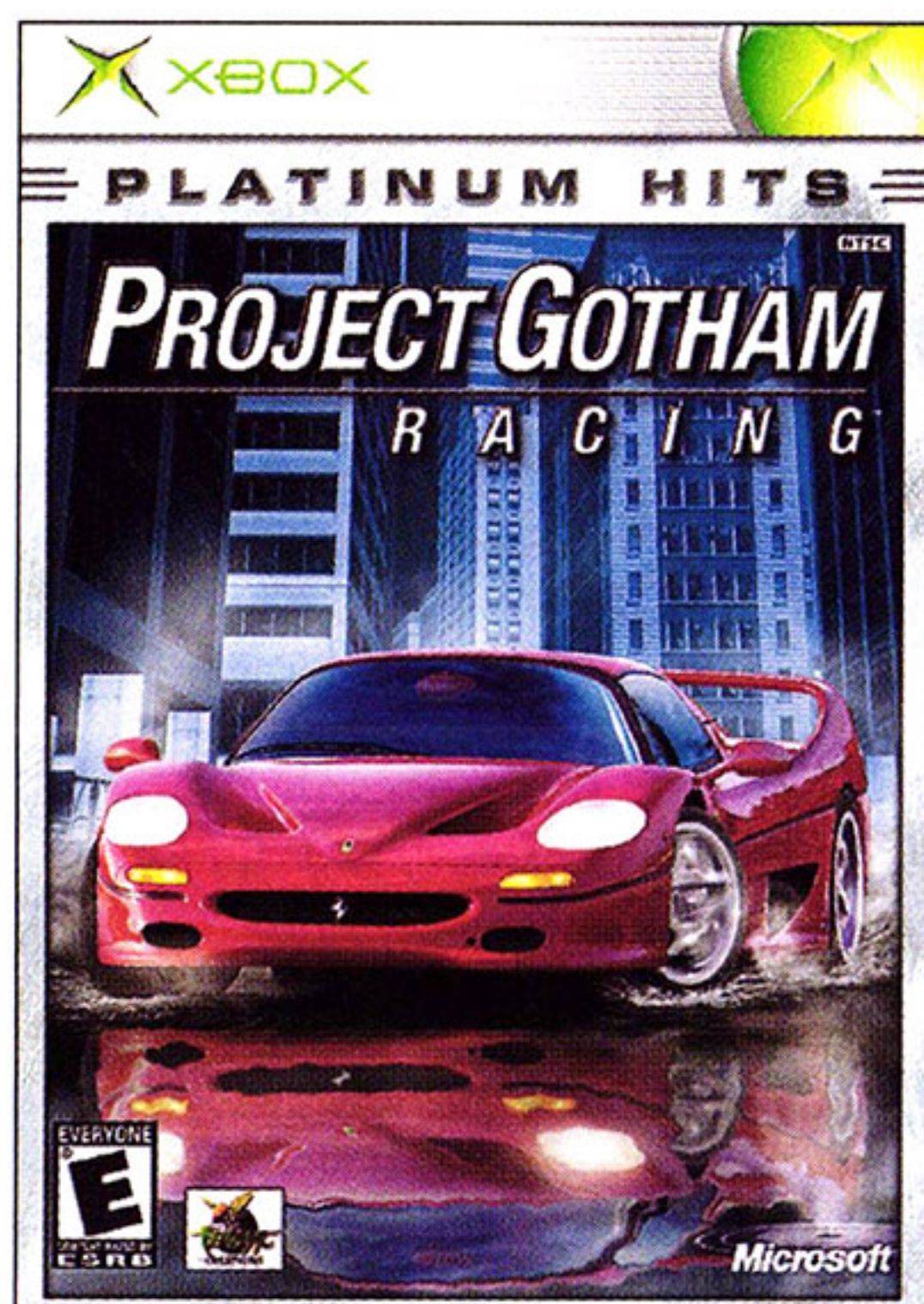
XBOX CREATES GREATEST HITS PROGRAM

Microsoft is inaugurating the **Platinum Hits** discount program to offer their best-selling Xbox titles – with the exception of **Halo** – to gamers at a reduced price of \$19.99. Although Microsoft won't go into specifics, the company says that future titles have to be "top sellers, and have positive consumer and editorial feedback in order to make the program." These games also have to have been in stores for at least nine months.

The nine titles below are just the beginning for the Platinum Hits program, so check your local retailer for more in the future.

Xbox's Platinum Hits Discount Titles

- *Project Gotham Racing* (Microsoft)
- *Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding* (Microsoft)
- *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* (Microsoft)
- *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* (Activision)
- *Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions* (Activision)
- *Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex* (Universal Interactive)
- *Star Wars: Starfighter* (LucasArts)
- *Spy Hunter* (Midway)
- *Max Payne* (Rockstar)

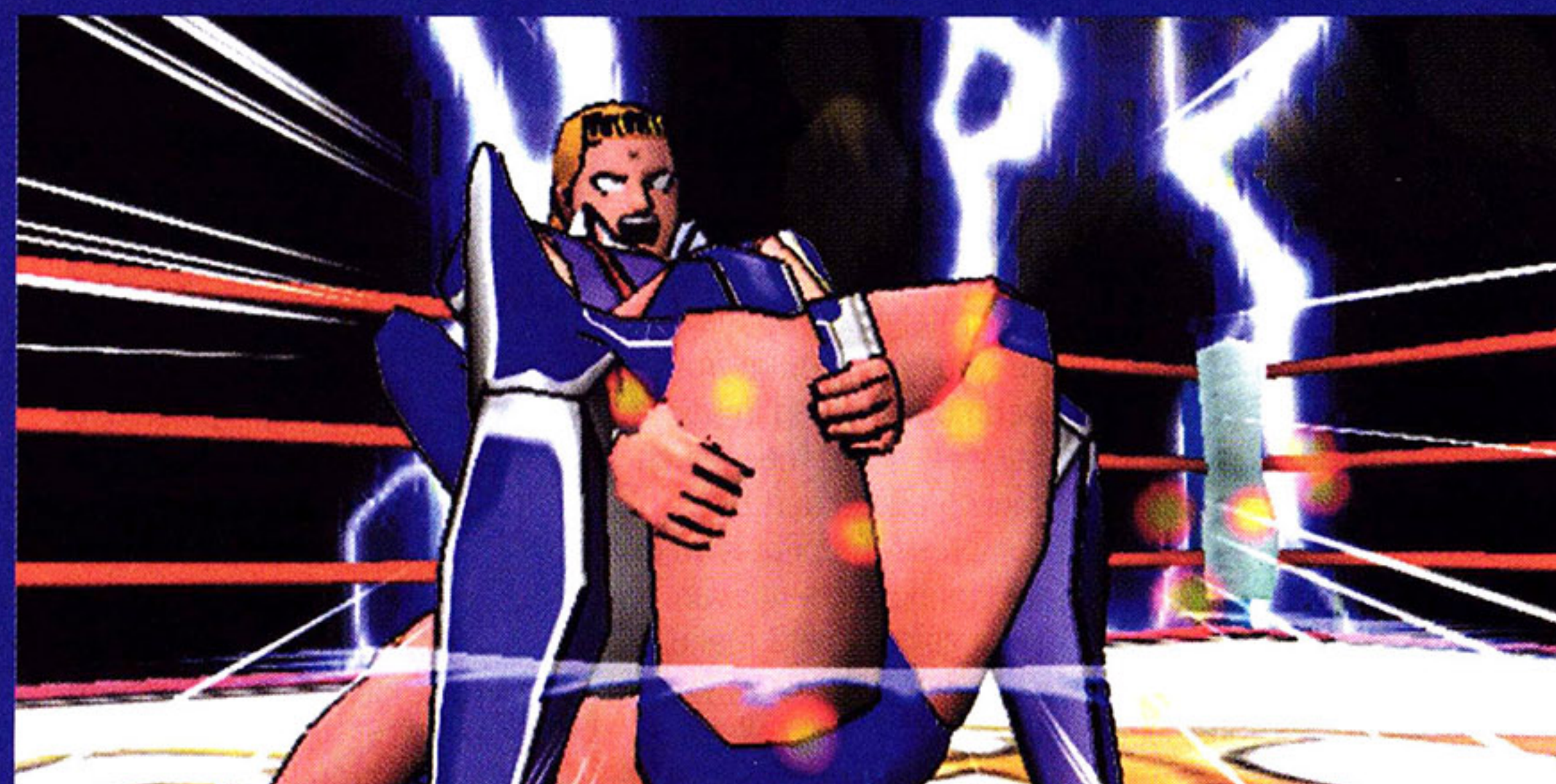


Project Gotham Racing

FLEXING THE ULTIMATE MUSCLE

Bandai and AKI, arguably the world's best wrestling developer, are joining forces to bring you **Ultimate Muscle: Legends vs. New Generation** this spring on the **GameCube**. The title is based on the diminutive new wrestling figures currently enjoying their own cartoon on Fox.

Ultimate Muscle features classic video wrestling gameplay as well as offering a whole new feel for your grappling entertainment. Fill up your super meter and you can finish off your opponent with an elaborate cutscene finale. Story, Versus, Tournament, and Edit (where you can create your own character) modes are all in the house, and word is that you can even unlock the original, pink Muscle figures from the eighties.

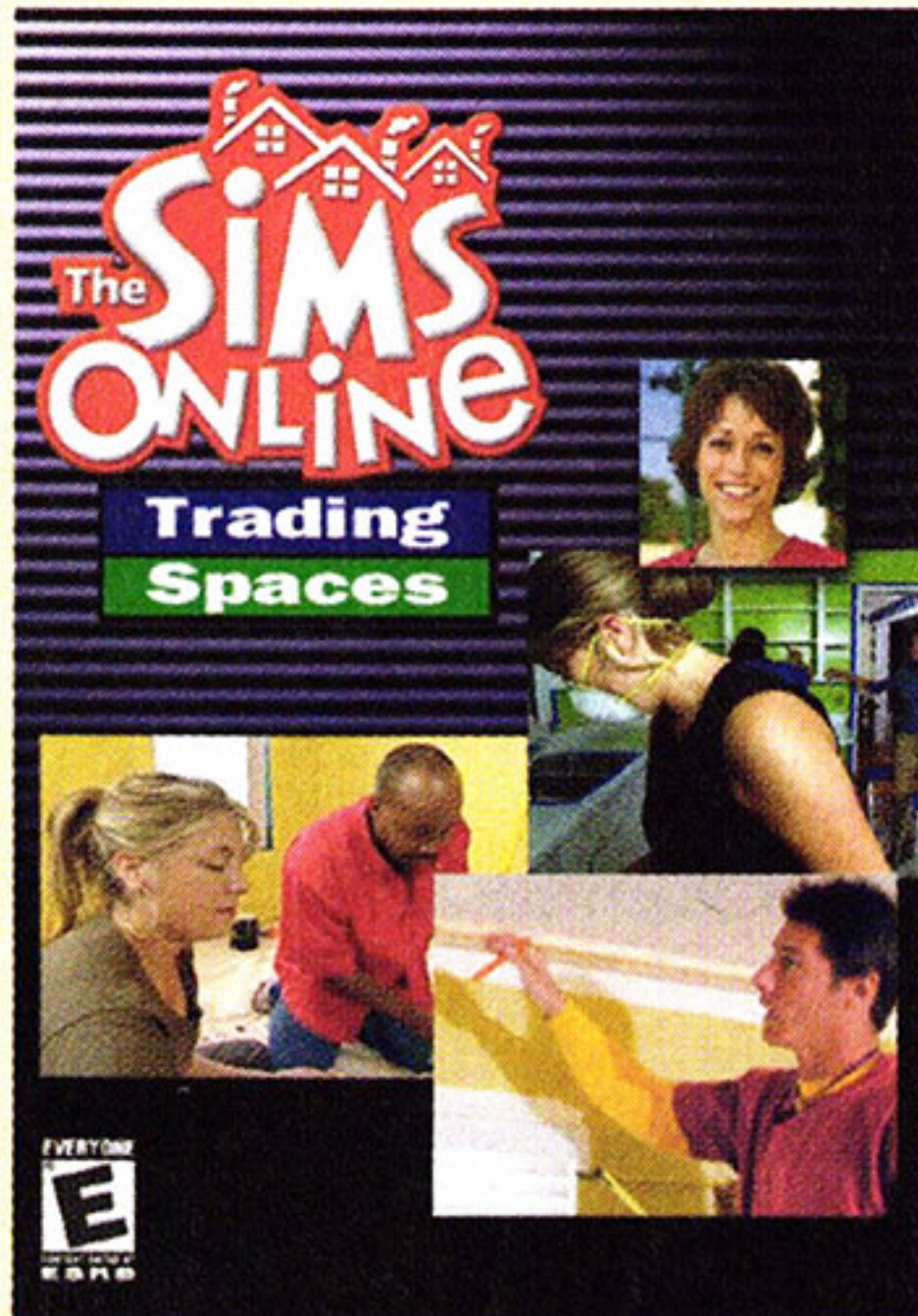




R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

THE SIMS ONLINE: TRADING SPACES EXPANSION PACK



Building your own humble abode is a big part of The Sims Online. After all, gamers from around the globe will be taking the ten-cent tour of the place. But what happens when your design gets a little stale and old? You bring in the home-changing pros of the hit TLC

show, *Trading Spaces*! The Trading Spaces Expansion Pack allows wannabe decorators to look like popular *Trading Spaces* personalities, such as peppy Paige or the dirty old man, Frank. Then, enter any dwelling you choose, and give it a refreshing facelift while the owner is away. Imagine how surprised your neighbors in the bungalow down the street will be when they return from a day of shopping to find their bedroom covered in hay instead of carpet, a tub full of pudding where their couch used to be, or their upstairs removed altogether! Do whatever you like to amaze and impress the people who will be unwittingly stuck with your creation. It's not vandalism; it's art! Besides, it's only a game, right? Make sure to tell that to the people who want to know why there's now a stripper pole coming out of their toilet.

TOP 10 RPG CLICHÉS

- 10 "Aspiring young adventurer" is destined to defeat unspeakable evil and save the world – all before the tender age of 16
- 9 Having amnesia is as common as catching a cold
- 8 Spiky hair is cool
- 7 Reading lots of text boxes are what video games are all about
- 6 Androgynous males are hot
- 5 The longer the game is, the better it is
- 4 Slow, oozing slime always kicks your ass at first
- 3 By randomly talking to people, you are able to uncover grand plots to destroy the world
- 2 Girls love a man with an oversized sword
- 1 True love exists

DEVELOPER TOP 5

STAN LIU
President, Kronos



- 1 Counter-Strike – PC
- 2 Tribes – PC
- 3 Alone in the Dark – PC
- 4 Samurai Shodown II – Neo Geo
- 5 Final Fantasy III – SNES

READER TOP 5

JESSICA BROWN
San Diego, CA



- 1 Final Fantasy VII – PS-X
- 2 Super Mario Bros. 3 – NES
- 3 Final Fantasy VIII – PS-X
- 4 The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past – SNES
- 5 Ranma 1/2: Bakuretsu Rantoh-hen – Super Famicom

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives and a photo of yourself to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
email: topfive@gameinformer.com
(attach digital picture)

Everyone that enters each month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO MIDWAY

In a recent financial meeting, **Midway** gave us a glimpse of what we can expect to see this year. The company has announced that it is taking a new direction to its arcade-style sports titles **NFL Blitz** and **NHL Hitz**. *Game Informer* has already heard from an inside source at Midway that it is planning on moving the franchises to more sim-like gameplay territory, while still keeping with the traditional rough-and-tumble Midway mantra. Also new to the lineup is **NBA Ballers**, a title developed by the team responsible for **NBA Jam** and **NBA Showtime**.

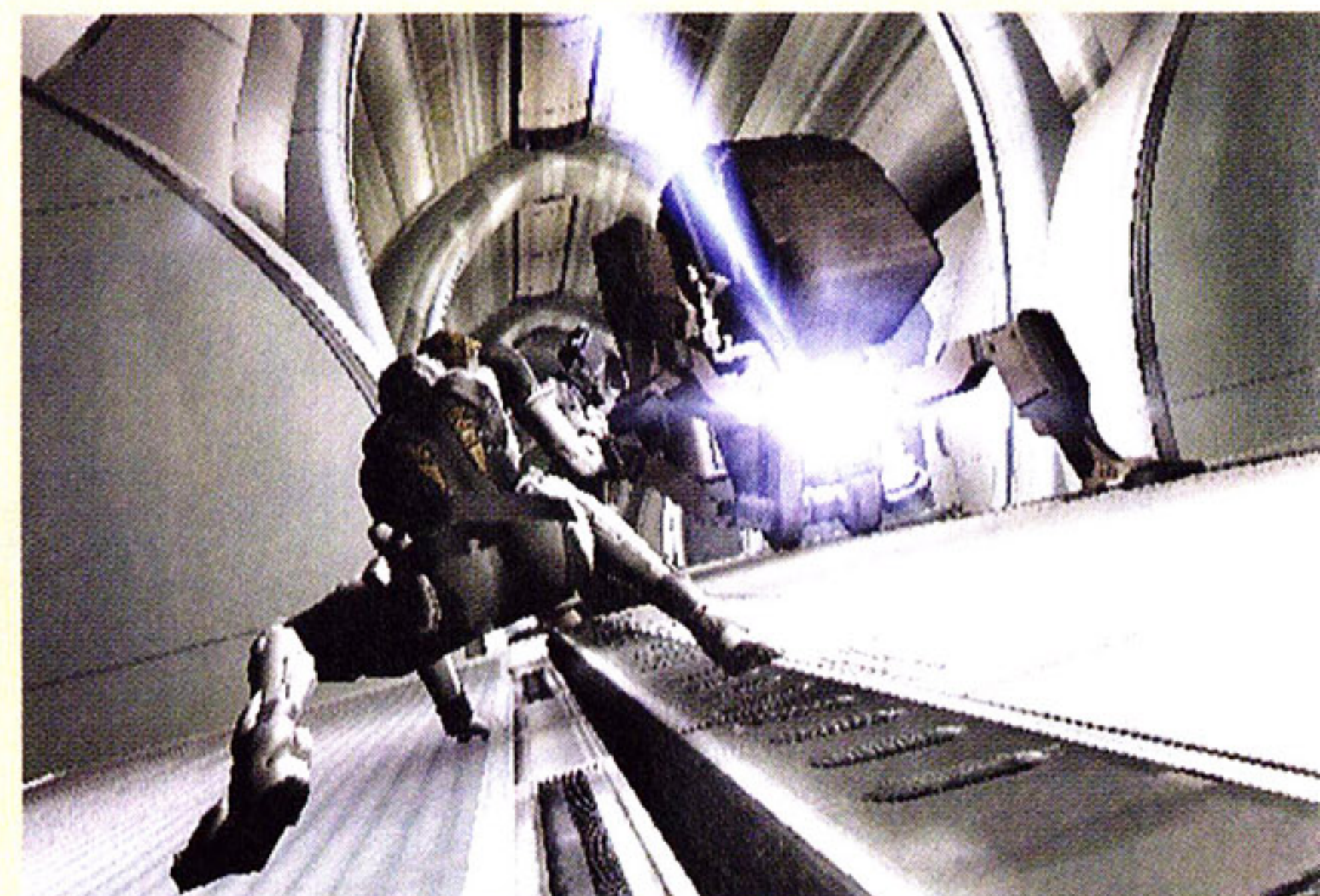
Apart from sports, Midway is coming back with **Spy Hunter 2**, as well as other action/racing games. Also planned are a third-person military/espionage shooter, a survival horror title, and a **Grand Theft Auto**-esque crime offering. Although unspecified, these games are expected to appear on multiple consoles.



CAPCOM ENDS 'CUBE EXCLUSIVITY

Capcom is saying that four of its recently announced games are not **GameCube** exclusive, as previously reported. **Killer 7**, **P.N. 03**, **Viewtiful Joe**, and **Dead Phoenix** from Capcom's **Production Studio**

4 will be available to other consoles. Although the company has no plans at the moment, these may initially appear



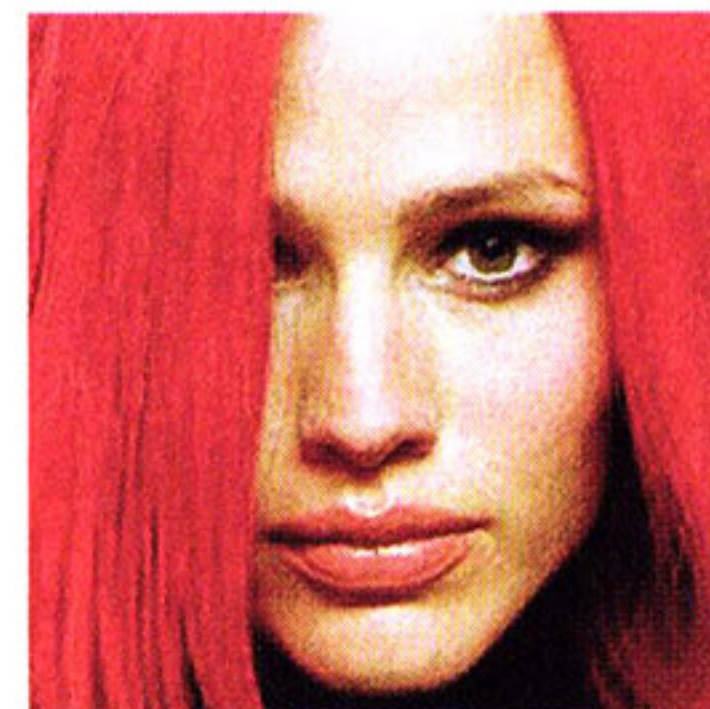
P.N. 03

exclusively on the GameCube before being ported to other systems. Capcom states that the false information was due to a miscommunication on its part. At this time, only **Resident Evil 4** is definitely slated solely for the GameCube.

In related news, *P.N. 03* producer **Shinji Mikami** says that he's redesigning the game. He felt that the initial gameplay structure was too close to **Devil May Cry**. Thus, he is changing it so that players are rewarded for pulling off more defensive moves with heroine Vanessa Z. Schneider.

ALIAS FOR ACCLAIM

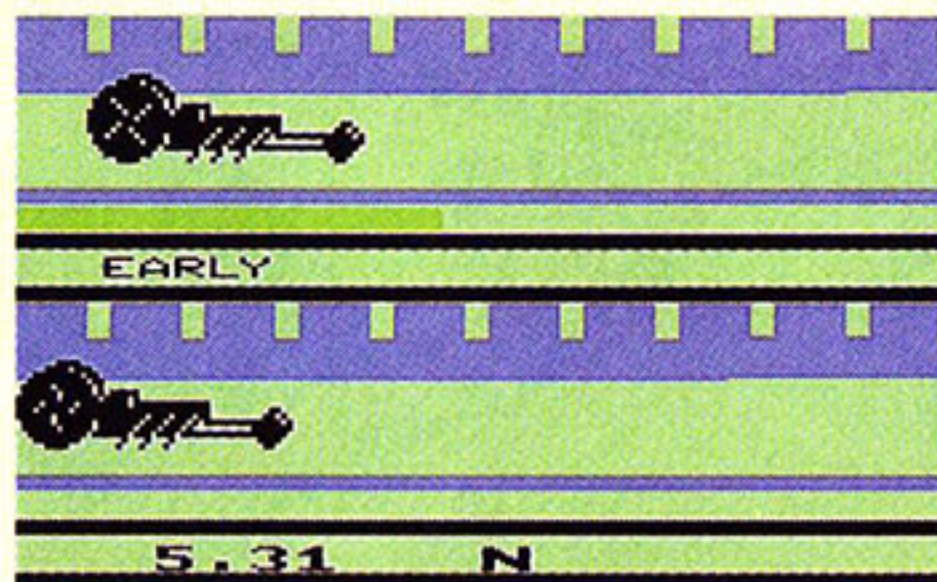
Looking to capitalize on the success of the popular television series, publisher **Acclaim** has secured the rights to produce video games based on ABC Television's **Alias**. It plans to do so for all the major consoles before the end of 2003.



Alias is just one piece in the larger picture for the company, which also announced a slate of other products for this year. **Legends of Wrestling III** is a no-brainer, and is accompanied by fighter **I, Gladiator** in the fall. Before then, however, **SX Superstar** (a supercross sim), **Speed Kings** (extreme motorcycle racing), **Urban Freestyle Soccer**, and **XGRA** (futuristic racing) will appear this spring or early summer.

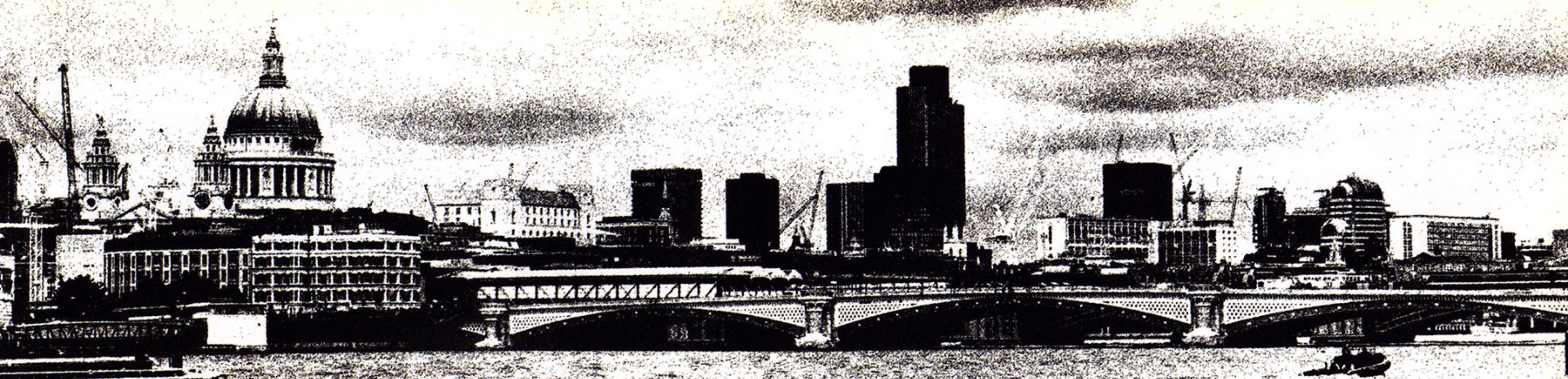
NAME THAT GAME

After walking out of Atari because they weren't getting any royalties, developers David Crane, Alan Miller, Bob Whitehead, and Larry Kaplan formed Activision. This month's game



was one of the first four titles the company debuted with on the Atari 2600. This cartridge not only offered sharper graphics; it also spurred Atari to sue Activision to stop production of what was the 2600's first third-party software.

(Answer on page 33)



- MAXIM

The Getaway

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA PRESENTS A TEAM SOHO PRODUCTION STARRING DON KEMBRY RICKY HARDS ANNA EDWARDS MICHAEL PRESTON JOE RICE
DIRECTORS OF PROGRAMMING WILLIAM BURDON AND NARESH HIRANI DIRECTOR OF ANIMATION GAVIN MOORE ART DIRECTION SAM COATES AND RAVINDER SINGH PRODUCTION DESIGN SIMON WOOD
WRITTEN BY BRENDAN MCNAMARA AND KATIE ELLWOOD ORIGINAL SCORE ANDREW HALE GAME DESIGN CHUN WAH KONG DIRECTED BY BRENDAN MCNAMARA



Blood
Drug Reference
Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Violence

PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

NEW WARCRAFT ASCENDS THE THRONE

Blizzard Entertainment is unleashing the PC expansion pack **WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne** this summer. This is only fitting, as the original, **WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos**, has become the fastest-selling PC title since its release last July.

The Frozen Throne takes place in Azeroth several months after *Reign of Chaos*. Imprisoned inside the Icecrown glacier is the evil Lich King Ner'zhul. Here his soul lays in wait for some means to take physical form and escape. What lies inside this glacier is unknown, but Illidan the Night Elf and Arthas the Death Knight seek to uncover its mysteries. If you're geek enough to understand all of that, then feast your eyes on this: *Frozen Throne* features one new Hero per race, three additional tile sets, extra multiplayer maps and options, and a world editor. Also included are new units bristling with exclusive abilities and spells, neutral buildings and Heroes, and much more. Note: The rest of the issue will be in English. Enjoy.



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

GOOD – Sega's Yu Suzuki will receive the Hall of Fame award from **The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences** at this year's **D.I.C.E. Summit** (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) in Las Vegas. Last year's winner Will Wright will present the award to him.

BAD – The **GameCube** version of **Ubi Soft's Splinter Cell** is behind schedule and will ship in May. This news could turn "good" if all of the bugs from the **Xbox** version are worked out, or it'll be "very bad" if they aren't.

BAD – A brawl broke out at a Los Angeles Internet café after rival **Counter-Strike** gangs showed up and squared off in real life. Pipes and chairs were brandished, and a kid was even shot. If only they would have stayed cooped up at home and played video games instead...

GOOD – **Nokia** is entering the handheld gaming market with the **N-Gage**. Publishers such as **Sega** and **Electronic Arts** are already on board to produce software for the unit, which also uses **Bluetooth** technology for wireless, close-proximity gaming. Stay tuned for more on the N-Gage in the coming months.



UGLY – Direct from a sold-out, whirlwind tour of Germany it's...**David Hasslehoff!** **Tri Synergy** is bringing the **PC** title **Knight Rider** to the States. The game has already spent a few months whipping European gamers into frenzy. Is it the Trans Am or David's tight pants?

LOOSE TALK

Whenever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, *Game Informer* experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else! In the industry and need to get back at the boss who fired you by spilling some secrets? Email us at loosetalk@gameinformer.com and we'll be your shoulder to cry on.

Change is in the wind for **TimeSplitters** developer **Free Radical**. The makers of the first-person shooter are branching out by working on a third-person action title. Free Radical's usual partner in crime, **Eidos**, will not publish this unnamed effort.

Who's picking up the out-of-place apes? **Activision** is, that's who. The publisher is set to put out the formerly Japanese-only game **Ape Escape 2** for the **PlayStation 2**. The original Ape's publisher, **Sony**, has already passed on the rights.

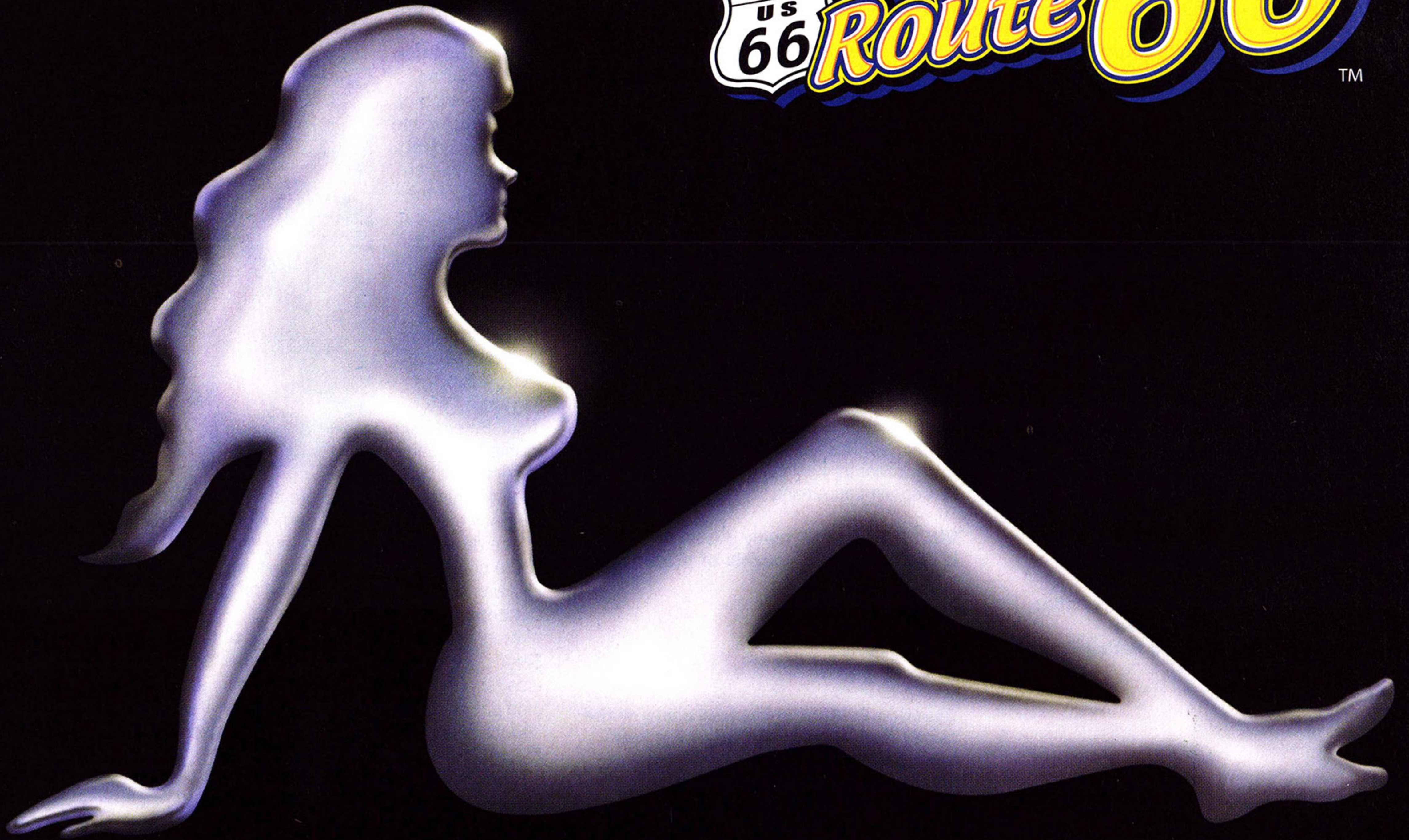
Word is that all three of the console companies, **Nintendo**, **Microsoft**, and **Sony**, are considering smaller and cheaper versions of their respective systems. Nintendo in particular is looking at a price drop for its **GameCube**, due to **Satoru Iwata's** (president of Nintendo of Japan) own admission that the company is selling fewer worldwide than was projected.

After two promising but ultimately disappointing titles, *Loose Talk* has heard that **Sega's Jet Grind Radio** series is done for good.

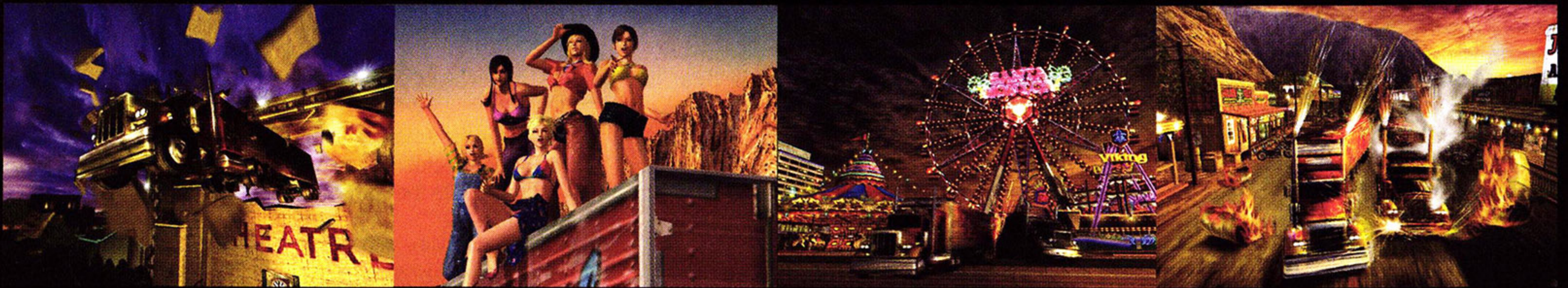
The strategy series **Worms** is currently undergoing some changes. The next iteration of the franchise will feature nothing but full 3D graphics for your viewing pleasure.



ROUTE US 66 *The King of* Route 66™



DRIVE IT HARD, DRIVE IT FAST



PlayStation®2



RATING PENDING

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 call 1-800-771-3772
 for Rating Information.

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VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

If you were summoned to participate in the Mortal Kombat tournament, you would need your own specialized Fatality in order to Kompete. Take our test to discover what your ultimate finishing move would be.

QUESTION 1: In 1999, EverQuest released, creating a culture of game maniacs dedicated to playing with their guild come hell or high water. How many players were supported per server at the launch?

- A. 500
- B. 1,500
- C. 5,000
- D. 10,000

QUESTION 2: What is the name of the PlayStation emulator that came out for Apple's G-3 based Macintosh?

- A. Virtual Game Station
- B. AppleStation
- C. PlayApple
- D. PS-G3

QUESTION 3: What year did the video game industry establish the Entertainment Software Rating Board?

- A. 1990
- B. 1992
- C. 1994
- D. 1995

QUESTION 4: When Sonic the Hedgehog 2 debuted, how many copies sold within the first five days?

- A. 100,000
- B. 250,000
- C. 400,000
- D. 1,000,000



Question 5: Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour Golf included a controversial episode of this TV show, which required the developers to recall 100,000 copies of the game. Name the TV show.

- A. The Simpsons
- B. South Park
- C. Married With Children
- D. The Man Show

QUESTION 6: What was the name of Sega's first video game console to release in Japan in 1983?

- A. SG-1000
- B. The Master System
- C. Family Computer
- D. Pluto

QUESTION 7: Who was the famous wrestler that played Mario on the Super Mario Bros. television show?

- A. Sir Oliver Humperdink
- B. George "The Animal" Steel
- C. Task Master Kevin Sullivan
- D. Captain Lou Albano

QUESTION 8: How many different colors is the Dreamcast capable of displaying?

- A. 1.6 Million
- B. 16.77 Million
- C. 6.7 Million
- D. 11.77 Million

Question 9: What is the last name of the family that all of these following kids belong to: Larry, Wendy, Roy, Iggy, Morton Jr., Lenny, and Ludwig Von?

- A. Robotnik
- B. Belmont
- C. Koopa
- D. Pliskin

QUESTION 10: The original MDK was developed by Shiny, the current crew doing The Matrix game. However, MDK 2 switched to an unsuspecting developer, who actually improved it. Who is this developer?



- A. Interplay
- B. Sega
- C. Electronic Arts
- D. BioWare

Score & Rank



0-1:
Insult



2-4:
Tongue to Ear



5-7:
Titty Twister



8-9:
Crack Rip



10:
Decapitation

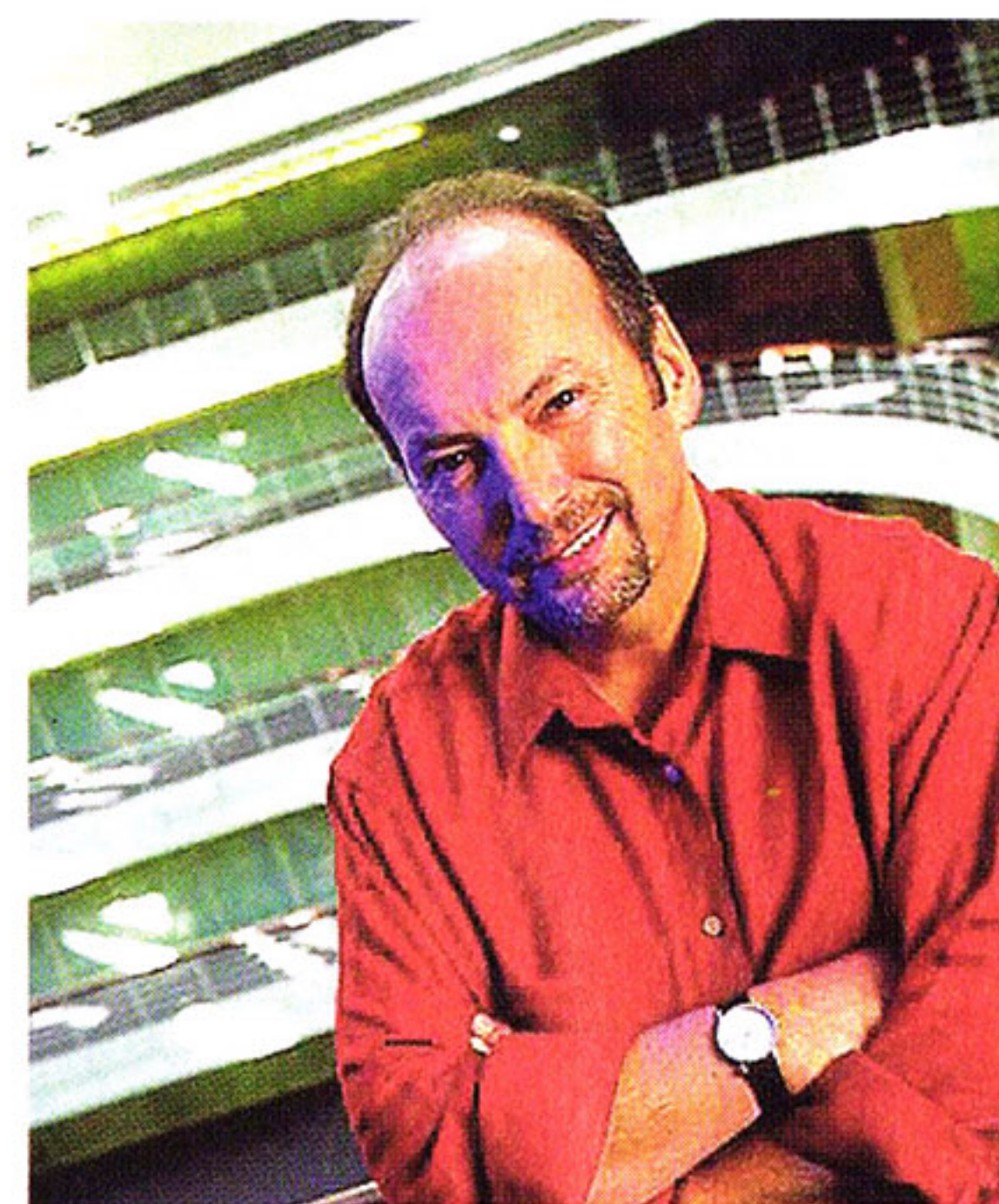
Video Game Trivia Answers:

1. B 2. A 3. C 4. C 5. B 6. A 7. D 8. B 9. C 10. D

SEGA'S LOSS IS MICROSOFT'S GAIN

Sega of America

has announced the resignation of **Peter Moore**, the former president and chief operating officer of the company. No reasons were given for the sudden departure other than this brief statement from Moore's replacement, **Tetsu Kayama**: "We



thank Peter Moore for his four years of service at Sega and wish him well in his future endeavors." Kayama is also currently the chief operating officer for Sega worldwide.

The departure of Moore is largely believed to be because of the company's recent poor performance. A large part of this was due to the disappointing retail numbers of **Visual Concepts'** Sega Sports titles.

Moore not only oversaw the birth of the **Dreamcast**, Sega's last foray into console manufacturing, but he was also there to watch its subsequent demise. From that moment on, Moore was responsible for transitioning Sega into its current position as a third-party software provider that is, in Moore's words, "platform agnostic."

Shortly after his resignation, however, **Microsoft** announced that Moore had joined the Seattle giant as its new corporate vice president of retail sales and marketing. In his new position, Moore will oversee the retail business of the **Xbox** and **Microsoft Game Studios** software in Europe and Japan.

BREAK DOWN

100% That's the amount of Xbox Live Starter Kits sold over Microsoft's expectations. Early numbers showed 250,000 of the kits sold – double the company's projections.

68% of our interview with celebrity Ron Jeremy (also known as "The Hedgehog") was not suitable to print

54% of attendees of the Golden Globe awards thought Reiner's ruby-sequined strapless dress was "hot"

35% of Acclaim's total budget will have to be cut in the upcoming year, according to the company

10% of the dialogue in The Getaway is intelligible. The rest takes a dirty Limey thug to decipher. Blimey!

WARCRAFT'S MILLAR JUMPS TO JALECO

Longtime **Blizzard Entertainment** producer **Chris Millar** has left the company to join his brother **Ron** at **Jaleco**. The pair will work to develop an unnamed title for the company in its Boulder, Colorado production house. Says Paul Meegan, the studio's director, "Ron and Chris bring incredible depth to our **Jaleco Entertainment** teams. They are currently spearheading a project that will result in a landmark title for us."

The Millar brothers have a slew of experience at real-time strategy titles for the **PC**. Chris was the producer for **StarCraft: Ghost**, and had worked on **WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos** and **Diablo II: Lord of Destruction**. Ron, on the other hand, was the original designer of **StarCraft**, and led the design of both **WarCraft I and II**.

It is unknown what platform the Millars' latest creation will appear on, or if it will be an RTS. More details on this endeavor will be announced shortly.



From left to right: Chris and Ron Millar

PS2 GRADIUS AMONG US

The Vic Viper is heading to the **PlayStation 2** for the first time. **Konami** is releasing **Gradius V** for the console in the fall. The shooter series is renowned as a 2D classic and for being one damn hard game to conquer. Details on this fifth installment are scarce, but Konami has stated that certain design elements, as well as the controls, will be different from previous titles.



DATA FILE

➤ **Ravensoft** is working on **Quake IV**. The game's storyline will pick up where **Quake II** left off, while the engine was designed using **Doom III** tools.

➤ At a recent **Konami** press event, **Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow** producer **Koji Igarashi** mentioned that he is working on a secret, non-handheld project. Igarashi said that we can expect more on this new game at **E3**.

➤ **Electronic Arts** has cancelled the **Xbox** version of **Battlefield 1942**. The first-person shooter was reportedly canned so that the development team could concentrate on the **PC** expansion pack entitled **Battlefield 1942: The Road to Rome**.

➤ Ever heard of **The Sims**? Now **Xbox** owners can get in on the action like their **PC** and **PlayStation 2** brethren when **EA** ports the game over to **Microsoft's** platform in late March.

➤ Lara's lost. **Eidos** has once again delayed **Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness**. This time it's until this summer, where the game hopes to piggyback on publicity for the film **Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life**.

➤ We all loved **Nintendo's e-Reader**, but it's going to get better. **Nintendo of Japan** is planning to release a new product this summer which would allow for the data from your e-Reader cards to be transferred to your **GameCube**.

➤ **Ubi Soft** has acquired the **Nightmare Creatures** franchise – the third publisher to do so in as many iterations of the series. **Nightmare Creatures 3: Angel of Darkness** should appear in 2004 on all the major consoles.

➤ The French giant **Vivendi Universal** has announced that it is preparing to sell off its games division. **Microsoft** is reportedly interested, but information on any prospective deals has not been announced.

➤ **SkyPerfect TV** has struck a deal with **Square** to air a **Final Fantasy XI** television series in Japan. The show will apparently introduce players to the online game, as well as offer downloadable content.

➤ **Activision** has just signed a deal with **Marvel Comics** for the exclusive rights to make video games based on the **X-Men**, **Spider-Man**, the **Fantastic Four**, and **Iron Man**. This deal is in effect through the year 2009.

THE NEXT NEXT-GEN CONSOLE?

Tampa Bay area company **Infinium Labs** says it is planning to develop a video game system called the **Phantom**. Infinium has already engineered prototypes for the system, and expects to launch the console in December. The **Phantom** claims to trump all other platforms by being able to play titles across different platforms. Infinium says that developers are being approached to supply **Phantom**-specific titles as well.

It appears that **Infinium** plans to supply cross-platform games by having the **Phantom** act as a delivery system which would offer titles through game on demand, rental, and demo formats. **Infinium's** web site states: "There are currently 32,679 retail game titles available and 418 shareware game titles. We will be working with developers to create a licensing model to distribute all of these titles electronically to our customers."

The system also plans to support online play through a broadband connection (including cross-platform matches with **PCs**), patch upgrades, accessories, and pre-loaded games. **Infinium** has not released specs on the **Phantom** at this time.

Sound too good to be true? It probably is. **Infinium** is likely to encounter problems from publishers, developers, and the three major console manufacturers (**Sony**, **Microsoft**, and **Nintendo**) as it would essentially be stealing **PlayStation 2** games, for example, in order to showcase them on the **Phantom**. **Game Informer** contacted **Sony** about this matter, but it would not comment on the console. As far as future third-party support, it doesn't look good. We contacted **Electronic Arts**, who told us, "We have a comprehensive set of criteria by which we evaluate what platforms we support. We have no plans to support **Infinium**." **Phantom**, indeed. Could this be a hoax?



Name That Game Answer: Dragster



ACTIVISION'S

Spider-Man's silver screen success shocked the film industry as it pulled in more than \$300 million in 2002. Eager to capitalize on its newfound box office might, Marvel is unleashing an onslaught of comic book-inspired movies for release in 2003. In addition to Ang Lee's *The Hulk* and Ben Affleck's starring role as *Daredevil*, we'll see the return of the franchise that set the gold standard for comic book films, *X-Men*. Entitled *X2*, the sequel is expected to eclipse its precursor and set a new standard for comic book-driven motion pictures when it hits theaters on May 2. The all-star cast reunites Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart, Halle Berry, and Hugh Jackman; while newcomers Alan Cumming and Kelly Hu set the stage for things to come. Building off of the momentum set by the first film, Xavier and his school for the gifted are forced to join sides with Magneto and his brotherhood of mutants to combat the formidable new foe, Stryker.

Hoping to capture the movie magic of *X2*, Marvel has once again partnered with Activision to release not one, but two games based on the X-Men universe. The first of these, *X2 Wolverine's Revenge*, was first revealed at last year's E3 convention. Recently, Game Informer trekked to Manchester, England to get the inside story behind the making of this extraordinary action title. Starring the most

popular (and most bad-ass) of the X-Men, Wolverine, the game translates all of Logan's malevolent rage into a third-person combat formula that is as stylish and dynamic as it is easy to play. Basically, it's the best comic book-based action game we've seen since *Spider-Man*, and should go a long way towards establishing Wolverine as a major video game star.

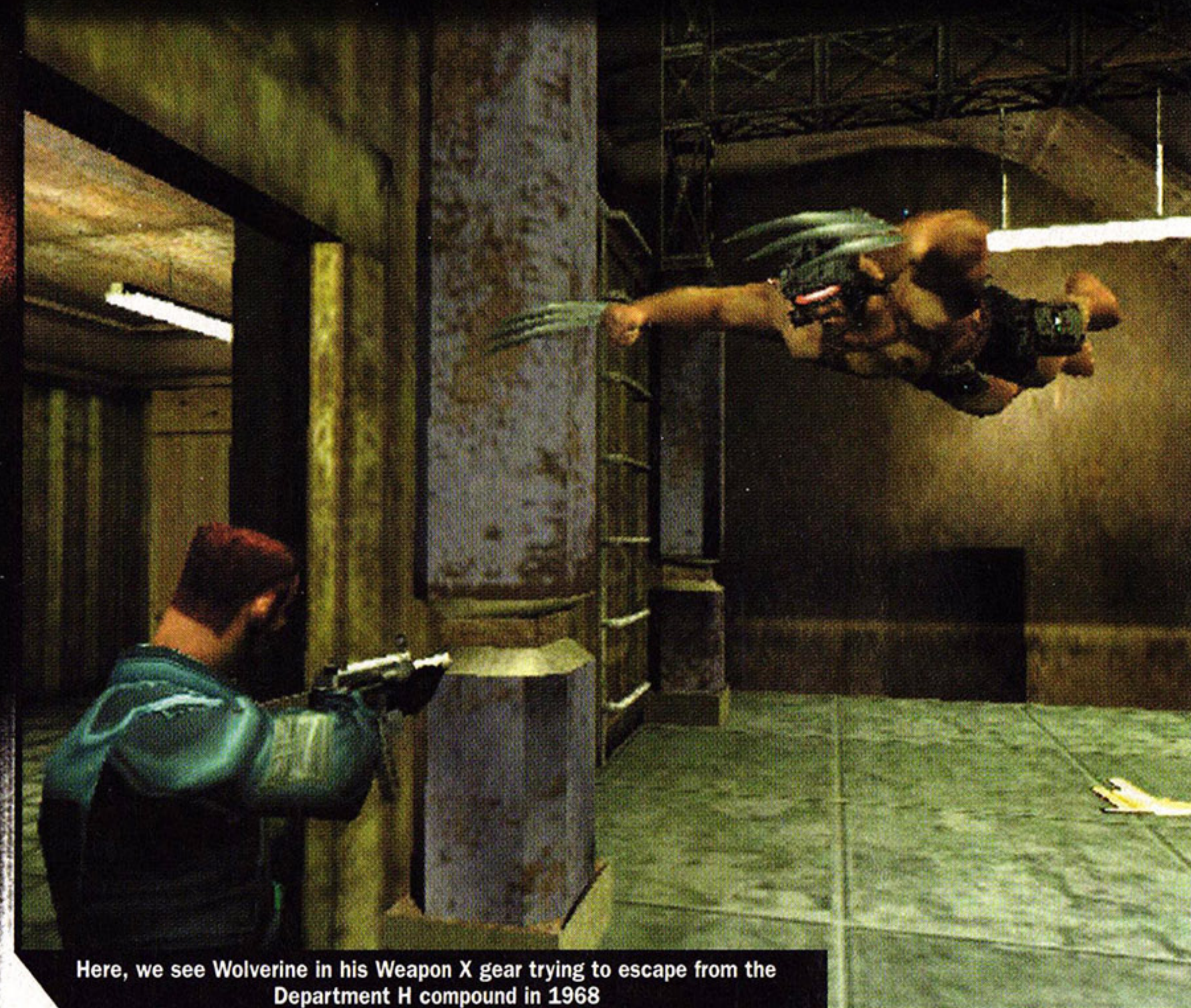
The second offering in Activision's mutant-powered lineup focuses more on the X-Men team dynamic than it does individual heroics of a specific character. Dubbed *X-Men Legends*, gamers will finally have the ability to get up close and personal with all of Xavier's children. Developed in secrecy amid the snowy drifts of Madison, Wisconsin by famed PC powerhouse Raven Software, *X-Men Legends* combines high-caliber, team-based gameplay with the depth of a role-playing game. In many ways, it can best be summed up as an X-Men RPG. Although the release date is still a ways off, and is tentatively listed as a late 2003 hopeful, Game Informer was treated to an exclusive first look at this innovative title that, for the first time in video games, does the world of X-Men justice. From Wolverine's renaissance to the X-Men's collective might, Activision is bringing the best of the comic book industry to the consoles.

X-FACTOR

WOLVERINE'S™

REVENGE

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **DEVELOPER** GENE POOL (XBOX/GC), GENE POOL/WARTHOG (PS2) ■ **RELEASE** LATE APRIL

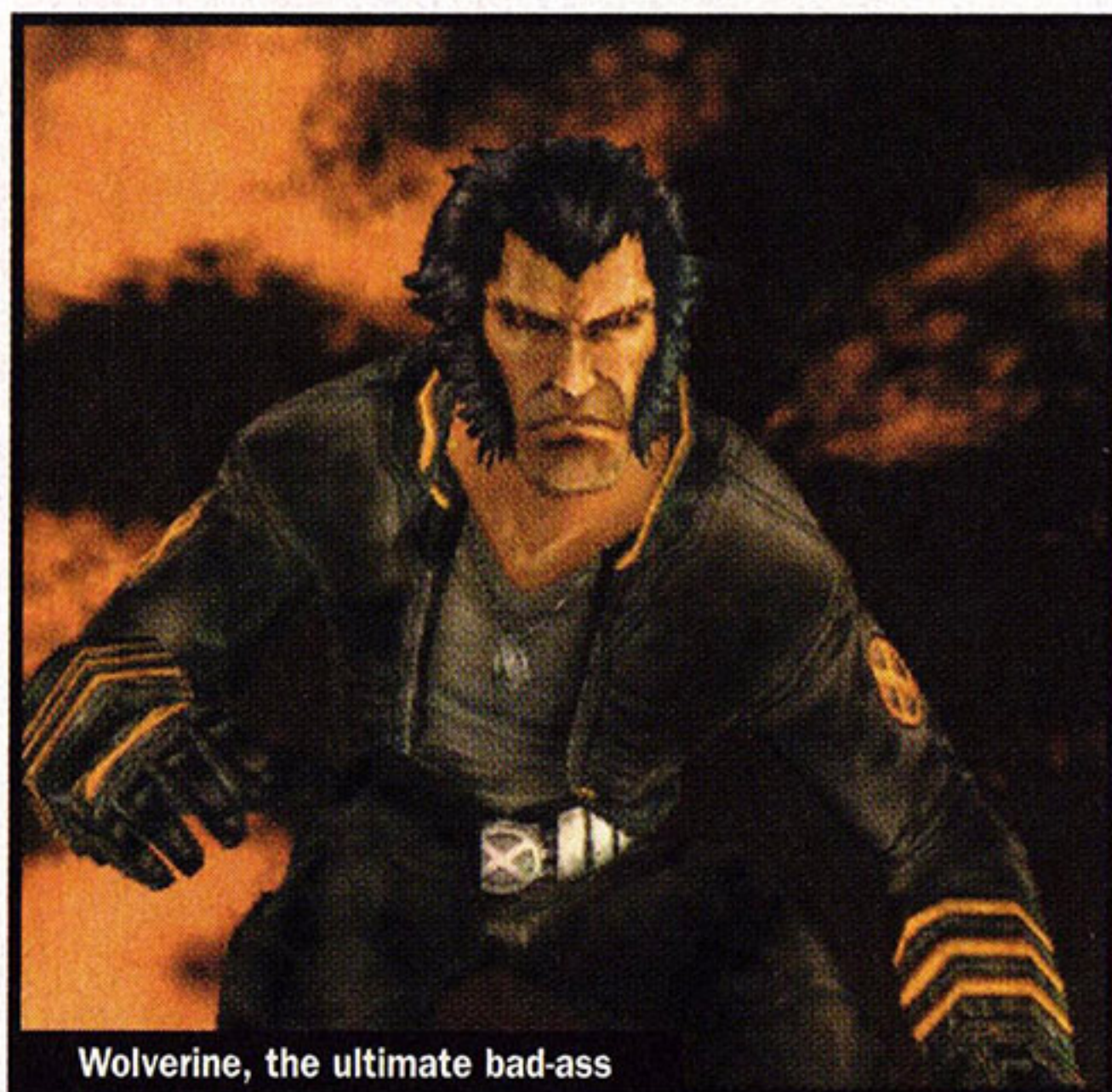


“Basically,” comments X2 Wolverine’s Revenge executive producer Rob Letts, “It’s like 48 of the worst hours in Wolverine’s life.”

Considering that Wolverine has been shot in the head at point-blank range by the Punisher, had his adamantium skeleton bent from the inside by Magneto, and been mauled by Sabretooth on countless occasions; that’s a bold statement. Still, after spending a day at English developer Gene Pool’s Manchester studio, we feel it’s safe to say that X2 Wolverine’s Revenge is well on its way to becoming a major addition to the comic book icon’s storied history.

Given that the X-Men have thus far fared less-than-well in their video game endeavors [see our X-Men Video Game Anthology below for more details], creating an action title that truly captures the vicious essence

of Wolverine would seem to be a daunting task. However, for Gene Pool the opportunity to build a game around one of comics’ most dynamic characters was an opportunity that simply couldn’t be passed over. “It’s a dream come true for us,” said Gene Pool managing director and co-founder Dave Anthony. “The guys absolutely love Wolverine [as a] char-



Wolverine, the ultimate bad-ass

Here, we see Wolverine in his Weapon X gear trying to escape from the Department H compound in 1968

acter; they’re big X-Men fans.... When this opportunity came along, there was absolutely no choice. It had to be this; it’s perfect for us.”

As true comic fans, Gene Pool has taken great steps to ensure that its take on Wolverine and the X-Men universe will stand up against both the best of the comic series and the films. To do this, they enlisted the help of famed comic writer Larry Hama, who authored a very well-regarded Wolverine solo series for Marvel in the early 1990s. A respected Marvel veteran, Hama’s presence lent the project weight with the comic company, who quickly approved both Hama’s script and rough storyboards for Wolverine’s Revenge.

“He is, in my opinion, the best Wolverine writer ever,” comments Rob Letts. “We were

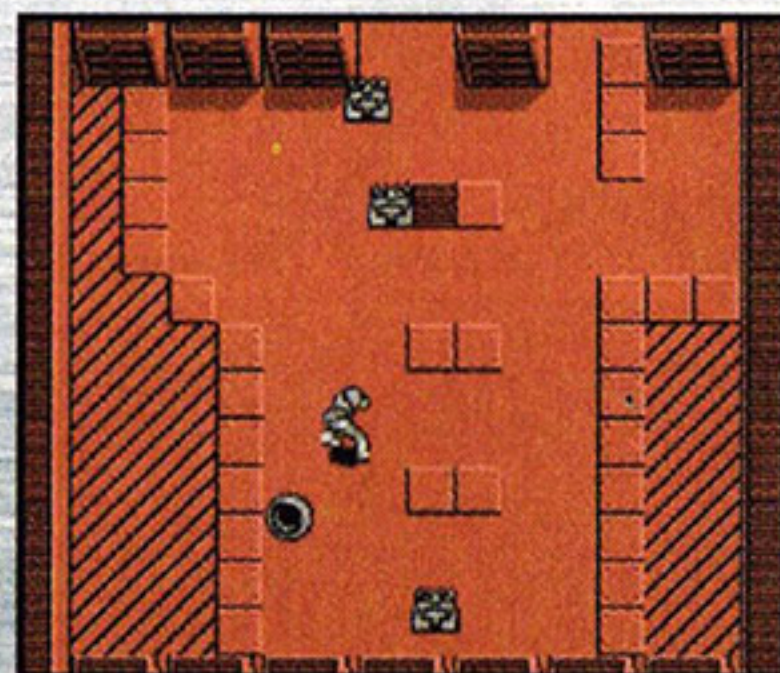
really lucky to get him onboard, and his writing style was perfect for video games, actually, because he’s straight to the point.”

The story itself is compelling, following Wolverine as he fights for his life and discovers the terrible secrets behind his origins. The game starts as a flashback to 1968, where we experience Wolverine’s escape from the Department H facility and the Weapon X program, which made him into the war machine he is today. Flash forward 35 years, and we find our hero in a weakened physical state, obsessing over a series of terrible dreams and visions. Wolverine soon discovers that, as part of the Weapon X experiments, he was injected with a virus, one that was intended as a failsafe control over the Department H test subjects. Without the antidote for the deadly toxin, it was thought, the mutants would not be able to survive outside of the test facility. Of course, Wolverine’s

1988 X-MEN – NES

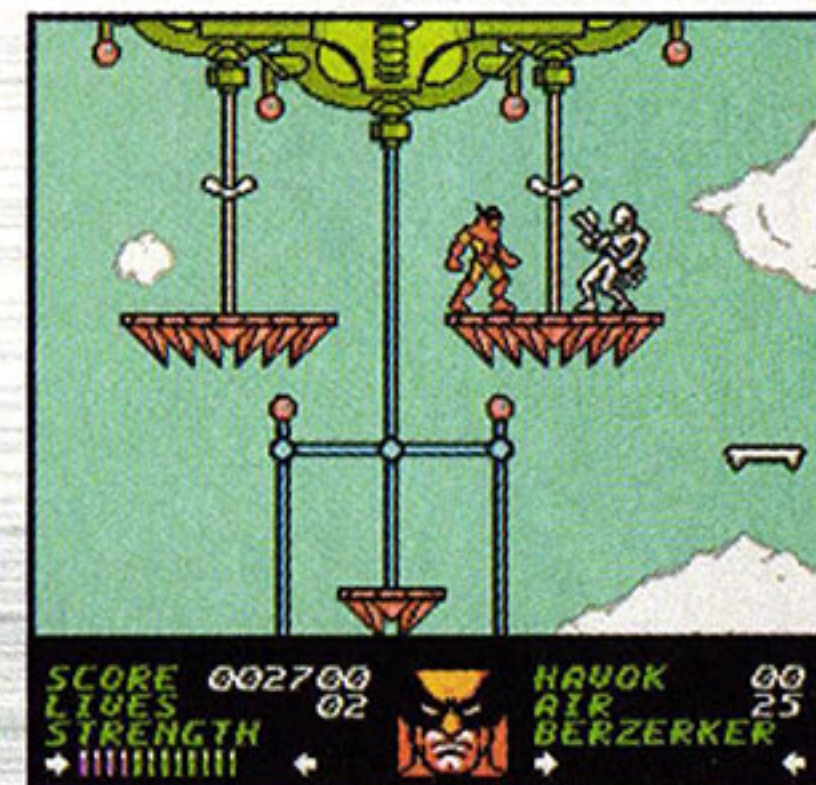
LJN’s desire to bring Marvel’s mutants to the video game realm backfired horribly. Where exactly did it go wrong, you ask? The graphical qualities were but a hair better than the Atari 2600 game *Combat*. The unmanageable controls blended in chaotically with the incomprehensible gameplay design. Worst of all, one can’t help but picture Pac-Man farting when they hear the sound effects. It was as frightening as Wolverine during a bad hair day and ranks as one of the worst NES games of all time.

Playable Characters: Cyclops, Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Iceman, Colossus, Storm



1991 WOLVERINE – NES

Sporting his famous brown ‘80s attire, Wolverine was Marvel’s first mutant to emerge from the team and make an impact in video games. In fact, he remains the only mutant to start a solo video game career. While one might be led to believe that this game would focus on Wolverine’s combat prowess in some sense, it stuck to the basics and specialized in asinine platforming exercises. The television show *Will & Grace* comes to mind whenever we reflect on this game, but we couldn’t tell you why.





The cutscenes, written by comic writer Larry Hama, feature voice-overs by *Star Wars* legend Mark Hamill

environments and the film, as 20th Century Fox gave the developers permission to go on the movie set to take still photos. These pictures were used as reference in creating many of the level designs. Movie buffs will also be pleased to note that Wolverine's voiceovers were performed not by

Hugh Jackman, but rather *Star Wars* notable Mark Hamill, who is renowned for his work on the *Batman* animated series. Even more impressive, X2's Patrick Stewart came in to reprise his role as Professor Xavier.

Having laid a solid conceptual foundation for its Wolverine saga, Gene Pool was then faced with an even greater challenge – coming up with a gameplay formula that does justice to one of the most visceral comic heroes ever created. At the same time, it had to make a game that would stand apart from the scores of third-person action titles already on the market. This is being accomplished through some innova-



You'll put Wolverine's claws to good use

tive ideas and meticulous attention to detail.

"[The] main aspect of Wolverine is his combat ability," said Dave Anthony. "He's a very strong character. He's got claws; he can take out groups of

people very easily. So, we've created a way that Wolverine can actually take out multiple opponents in one go – if the player plays the game in the right way."

These techniques have been dubbed "Strikes," and are the real meat of Wolverine's *Revenge's* combat system. Yes, any game based around Logan is inherently a hack n' slash affair, but Gene Pool has devised an ingenious way to add a greater degree of depth, while still maintaining a relatively simple button configuration. Basically, Strikes can be performed when an enemy is stunned. At first, this is done by simply pressing the circle button. However, if players perform well, they will earn dog tags that allow them to unlock more complex combos. What's more, by correctly positioning Wolverine between attacking enemies, you can take out up to three adversaries at one time. Seeing these Strikes in action, we were taken aback by some of the awesome animation sequences

superhuman healing abilities allowed him to thrive in the outside world, but now the disease has begun to break down his natural defenses. Unless he finds the antidote, Logan will be a dead man in less than two days. In the face of these impossible odds, Wolverine sets off toward the Weapon X fortress on a quest to defeat the enemy living in his own body.

Gene Pool placed a strong emphasis on the game's story and character development, but sought to do so without the longwinded cutscenes that hamper so many modern-day titles. "The style of the cutscenes is very similar to *Pulp Fiction*," said Rob Letts. "We don't want the sort of 15-minute-long, *Metal Gear Solid 2*-style cutscenes. We deliberately tried to make them very fast and punchy – very comic book style."

Although the plot veers away from that of the film, there are several crossovers that tie the two products together. "It's always interesting, because I feel it's very much like the *Batman* origin – you can tell it in many different ways...and put a slightly different spin on it," posits development manager Craig Houston, a loquacious Scotsman who once wrote for the *Marvel* comic *Warheads*. "That allows us to do things with Wolverine's origin that the movie deals with in slightly different ways, but it's not necessarily contradictory; it's complementary."

Filmgoers will recognize some key similarities between the game's



A stealth Strike in action

1991 X-MEN – ARCADE

Developed by Konami, this side-scrolling brawler boasted a stunning comic book appearance, yet shared a common gameplay link with Konami's other licensed coin-op brethren, *The Simpsons* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. With simultaneous four-player action and countless Sentinels to slay, it proved to be an enjoyable romp in the arcade heyday.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Storm, Colossus, Nightcrawler, Dazzler



1992 SPIDER-MAN/X-MEN: REVENGE – SUPER NINTENDO, GENESIS, GAME BOY, GAME GEAR

In a day where *Double Dragon* could team up with the *Battletoads*, LJN concocted the crazy idea that Spider-Man could help the X-Men combat the most worthless of enemies, *Arcade*. The idea of Spider-Man joining forces with the X-Men isn't so bad, but who the hell cares about *Arcade*? He's seeking revenge for what reasons exactly? This title packed a lot of star power, but came up way short in gameplay.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Storm, Spider-Man

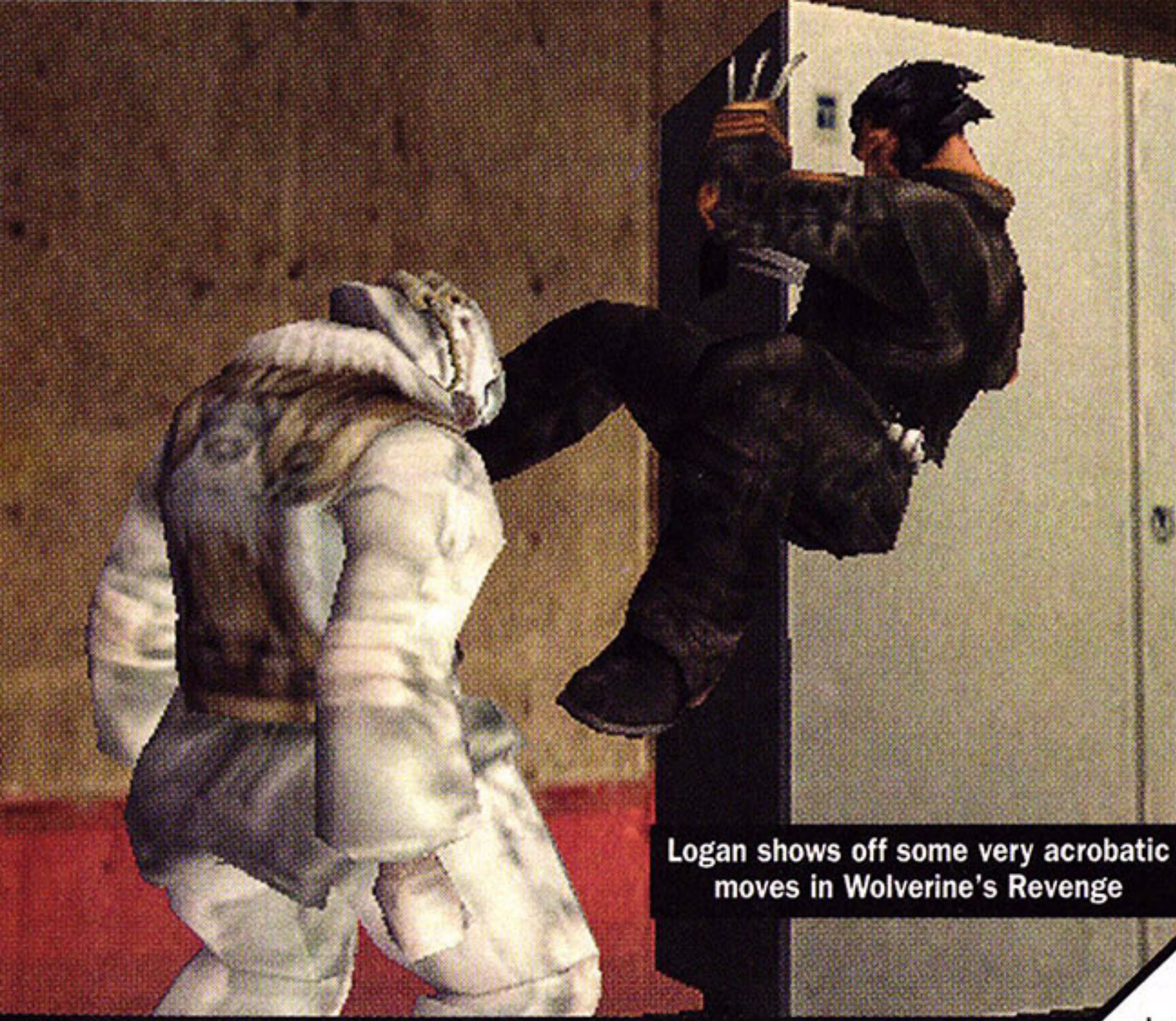


1993 X-MEN – GENESIS

This was one of the better X-Men games as a whole, and even today, it remains thoroughly entertaining. With four different playable characters, all who were diverse in their very nature, and the ability to summon teammates on the fly for specific attacks or needs, this Sega-developed game captured the essence of the X-Men better than anyone had up to this point.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Nightcrawler





Logan shows off some very acrobatic moves in Wolverine's Revenge

strategy. Wolverine's famously heightened senses are readily accessible at any point during the game. Holding down the L2 button enters this Sense mode. When this happens, the screen takes on an eerie, infrared glow, allowing you to see enemy footprints, scent trails, or hidden dangers like land mines.

remote control mech to clear a path for himself through a series of corridors, with the action being displayed through a fuzzy, first-person monitor view reminiscent of Steel Battalion. In another stage, Logan dons a disguise to infiltrate a highly secured compound.



In one level, Wolverine will take control of this mech

that took place as we unleashed Logan's fury on unsuspecting foes. Imagine Freddy Krueger starring in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and you'll begin to get an idea of what we're talking about. You'll literally gasp in awe as you see Wolverine slash, jump, and flip enemies with ease – often three at a time. All told, there are 16 different combos, in addition to several situation-specific Strikes strewn throughout the levels.

Conscious of the fact that 20-odd stages of mindless violence is not sufficient to hold today's finicky gamers' attention, Gene Pool has also put a good deal of effort into making sure that *Wolverine's Revenge* places an equal emphasis on stealth and savvy

Although you will be able to progress through the game relying on your fighting skills alone, using stealth is necessary to really get the best possible experience. For example, if you enter a room with two guards manning computer consoles, you could just run in and kill them in a murderous rage. However, by sneaking up on them, you would be able to position yourself to pull off a double stealth strike, thereby gaining more bonus points and another set of dog tags to unlock more moves.

Adding even more variety to this already heady mix are a few level-specific sequences that briefly explore different genres of gaming altogether. In one instance, Wolverine pilots a

Despite the fact that it's being marketed under the banner of X2, that designation would seem to be more an indication of Activision's marketing plans than the essence of the game itself. Like the Spider-Man series, Gene Pool has gone to great lengths to ensure that the game maintains the true spirit of the comic series and is very successful in doing so. Comic fans will be treated to a host of hidden extras, unlockable costumes, and bonus materials that help to make *Wolverine's Revenge* a reflection of the traditional X-Men universe.

As in Spider-Man, most of Wolverine's classic costumes can be found hidden throughout the game. After picking up a comic book icon, players

can go into the frontend and see both the costume, and a large picture of the cover of the comic in which it first made its debut. Hidden outfits include the traditional yellow and blue costume, fan favorite tan and brown, the X2 movie gear, the new Ultimate X-Men Wolverine, and a special costume designed by famed comic artist Alex Ross.

On top of this, the game is filled with cameos by numerous X-Men characters past and present, like Colossus, Rogue, Beast, Professor Xavier, Magneto, Sabretooth, Juggernaut, Wendigo, and Lady Deathstrike, who we have learned plays a pivotal role in both *Wolverine's Revenge* and the new movie.

In all, X2 *Wolverine's Revenge* is well on its way to becoming one of the best X-Men games ever released. Certainly, it's not pushing the envelope of the action genre, but it is noteworthy for the obvious level of care and craftsmanship that is exhibited in its finely tuned combat. Quite literally, this is the complete package for comic enthusiasts and action fans alike. You've got a legendary character, a rollicking storyline, a sharp graphical presentation, and a unique, stylish take on traditional hack n' slash fighting; all in a game that relies as much on strategy and stealth as it does on lighting fast button mashing. What more could you ask for, Bub?



Strategy and stealth are often as important as fighting skill



Sense mode has its own unique infrared look

1994 X-MEN – GAME GEAR

The X-Men may have been cute and tiny on Sega's Game Gear, but they also kicked a lot of ass. The gameplay design would be considered feeble by today's standards, but it was actually quite enjoyable back in the day. Of course, our memory of this game may be blinded by the fact that Storm wore her tight, sensual white garments, but we seem to remember playing it religiously in the...uh...bathroom...and...um...under the sheets. Needless to say, it represented the look and feel of the X-Men nicely.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Storm, Psylocke, Nightcrawler, Rogue, Iceman



1994 X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM – ARCADE, SATURN, PLAYSTATION, PC

Capcom's legendary fighting formula proved to be the perfect fit for the X-Men universe. The variety in characters was a tad strange, especially with Street Fighter's Akuma hidden, but attention to detail was a top priority. Every character was equipped with their signature comic book attacks and attire. The arcade game received great praise, while the console versions (which were handled by Acclaim) didn't live up to their coin-op counterparts in fluidity or precision.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Collosus, Iceman, Omega Red, Psylocke, Sentinel, Silver Samurai, Spiral, Storm, Wolverine, Juggernaut, Magneto, Akuma



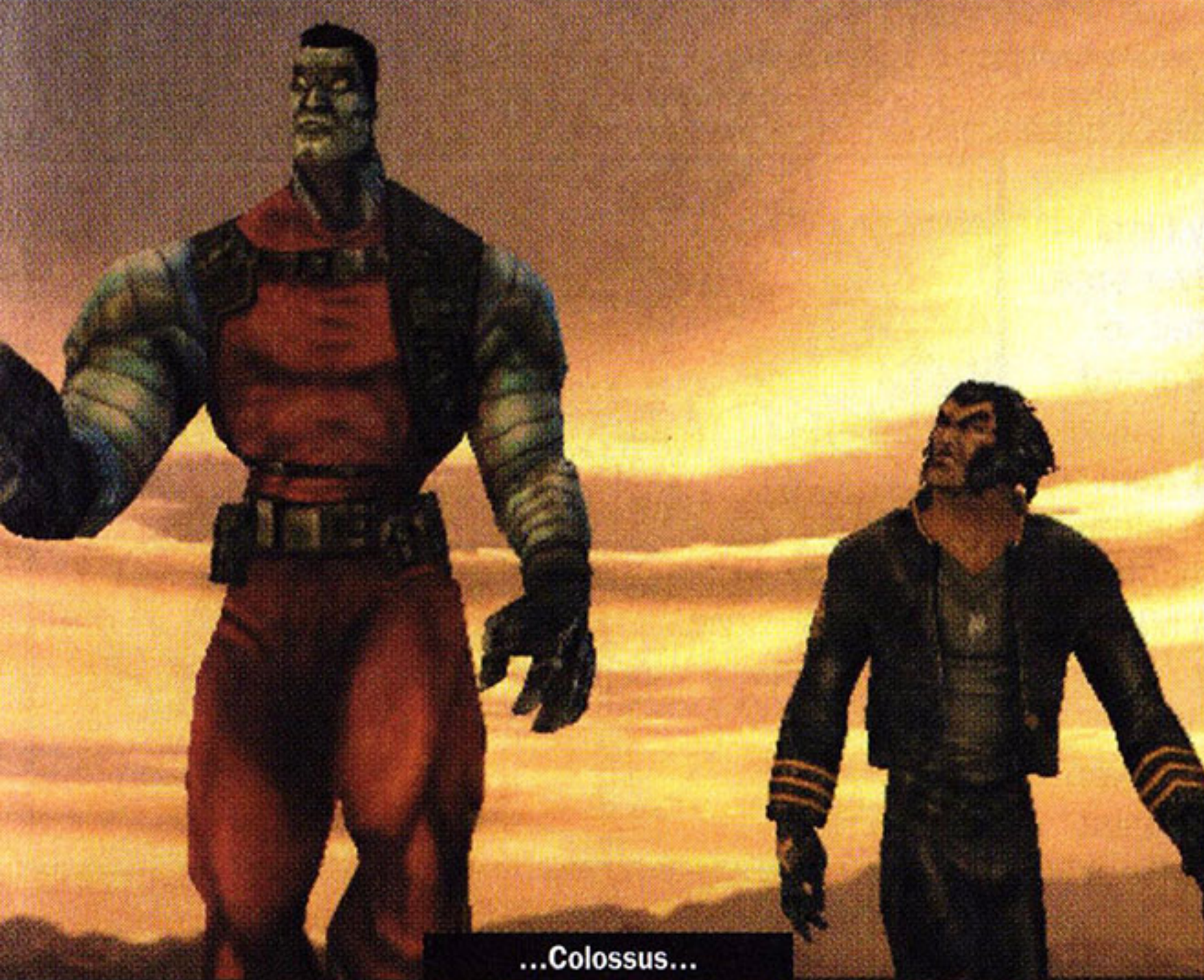
1994 WOLVERINE: ADAMANTIUM RAGE – SUPER NINTENDO, GENESIS

This game was very amusing, but in all of the wrong ways. Wolverine continually got his ass kicked by scientists wielding dissecting knives. As if this wasn't bad enough, he somehow managed to launch himself into space, where asteroid debris pounded away at his skull while knee-high aliens gnawed at his ankles. If anything, this game proved that even the most bad-ass characters can look like lily-livered sissies.





During his quest, Wolverine meets up with Juggernaut...



...Colossus...



...and Lady Deathstrike, among other familiar X-Men characters



WOLVERINE

First Appearance:

The Incredible Hulk #181

The world's favorite Canadian mutant made his comic book debut on the last page of *The Incredible Hulk* #180 in 1974. His gritty carefree attitude, razor-sharp adamantium claws, and rapid mutant healing made him a fan favorite overnight. After all, it's not every day that you can see someone take a bullet in the lung, slice and dice his opponent to shreds, then pull up to the bar and down a shot of tequila.



X2 MOVIE MADNESS!

X-Men was, in many ways, a watershed event in comic book filmmaking. It was a phenomenal success at the box office, generating gross receipts of nearly \$300 million worldwide. It also launched a nearly unknown Hugh Jackman into the ranks of Hollywood's A-list leading men. Although *Superman* and *Batman* preceded it in making comic book



movies a bankable proposition, *X-Men* was really the first film in the genre to turn the difficult trick of pleasing the general movie audience, movie critics, and hardcore comic book fans alike.

Anticipation is running high for the sequel to *X-Men*, entitled *X2*. Set to be released on May 2, *X2* promises to be an even bigger big-screen spectacle, delving deeper into the X-Men legacy and incorporating a mix of new comic characters in with the old favorites. Director Bryan Singer (*Usual Suspects*) is back at the helm, crafting a film that expands upon the first's use of the anti-mutant movement as a metaphor for racial prejudice. In fact, humankind's increasing hatred and distrust of mutants actually sets the stage for the film's villain, a corrupt government covert ops leader named Stryker. After

a heinous and highly publicized crime committed by an unknown mutant causes public hysteria, the President authorizes Stryker to launch an offensive against Professor Xavier's famous mutant academy. The X-Men return to defend their home, but this conflict has several unforeseen repercussions. For one, it becomes apparent that Stryker has ties to Wolverine's mysterious past, forcing Logan to return to Department H to unravel the clues.

This brief summary only touches the surface of an extremely complex saga. As opposed to the last film, which focused primarily on Rogue and Wolverine, the other X-Men get more face time in *X2*. In addition, there are a host of famous characters from the comic series being brought to life. These include such X-Men stalwarts as Beast, Jubilee, and Colossus. New villains abound as well. Joining

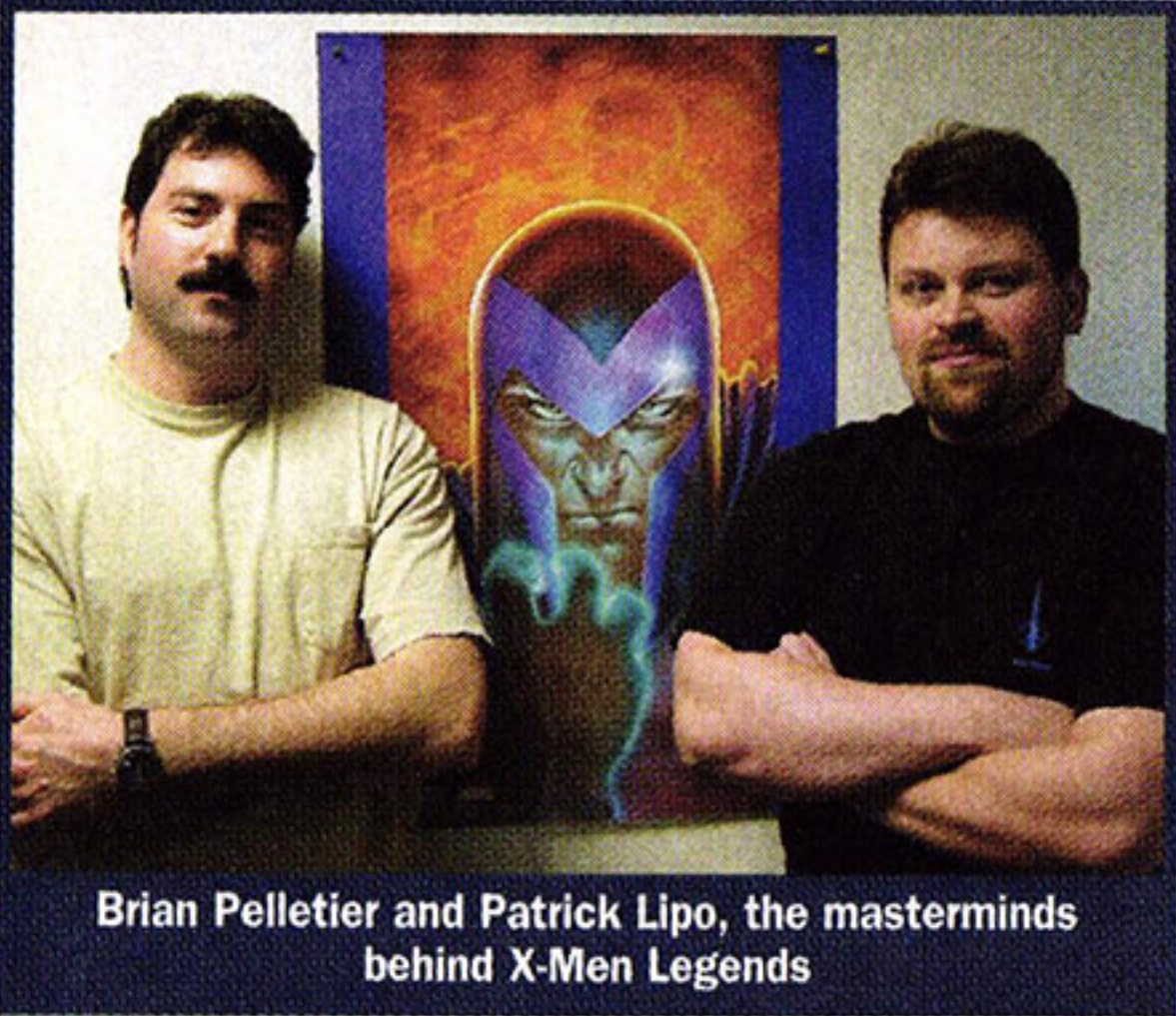
Stryker, Nightcrawler (played by famed British actor Alan Cummings) makes his unsettling presence felt, alongside Lady Deathstrike and an enigmatic new character called Mutant 143.

All signs point to *X2* being every bit the equal of the original, and should be embraced by the same audience that made *Spider-Man* such a massive success last summer. With another blockbuster on the way to theaters, and two promising video games on the way, the next 12 months should usher in a new golden age of X-Men greatness.



X-MEN LEGENDS

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RPG
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** RAVEN SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



Brian Pelletier and Patrick Lipo, the masterminds behind X-Men Legends

“We wanted to move beyond some of the games we’ve done before,” comments Raven Software’s programming services director Patrick Lipo.

“In particular, we wanted to make a move into the console world.” As a company, Raven’s roots have been firmly planted in PC development since its inception in 1990. Formed by brothers Steve and Brian Raffel, Raven started small – so small, in fact, that it only had one computer. Its office space was tucked away in a basement, and only five employees were on the payroll. At the time, the brothers dreamt of creating an epic role-playing experience for the Amiga computer. After two long years of development, which was quite a milestone at the time, Raven finished work on its first game, entitled Black Crypt. The title, which was a labor of love for the Raffel brethren, released on March 20, 1992. Since then, the company has been rolling in success.

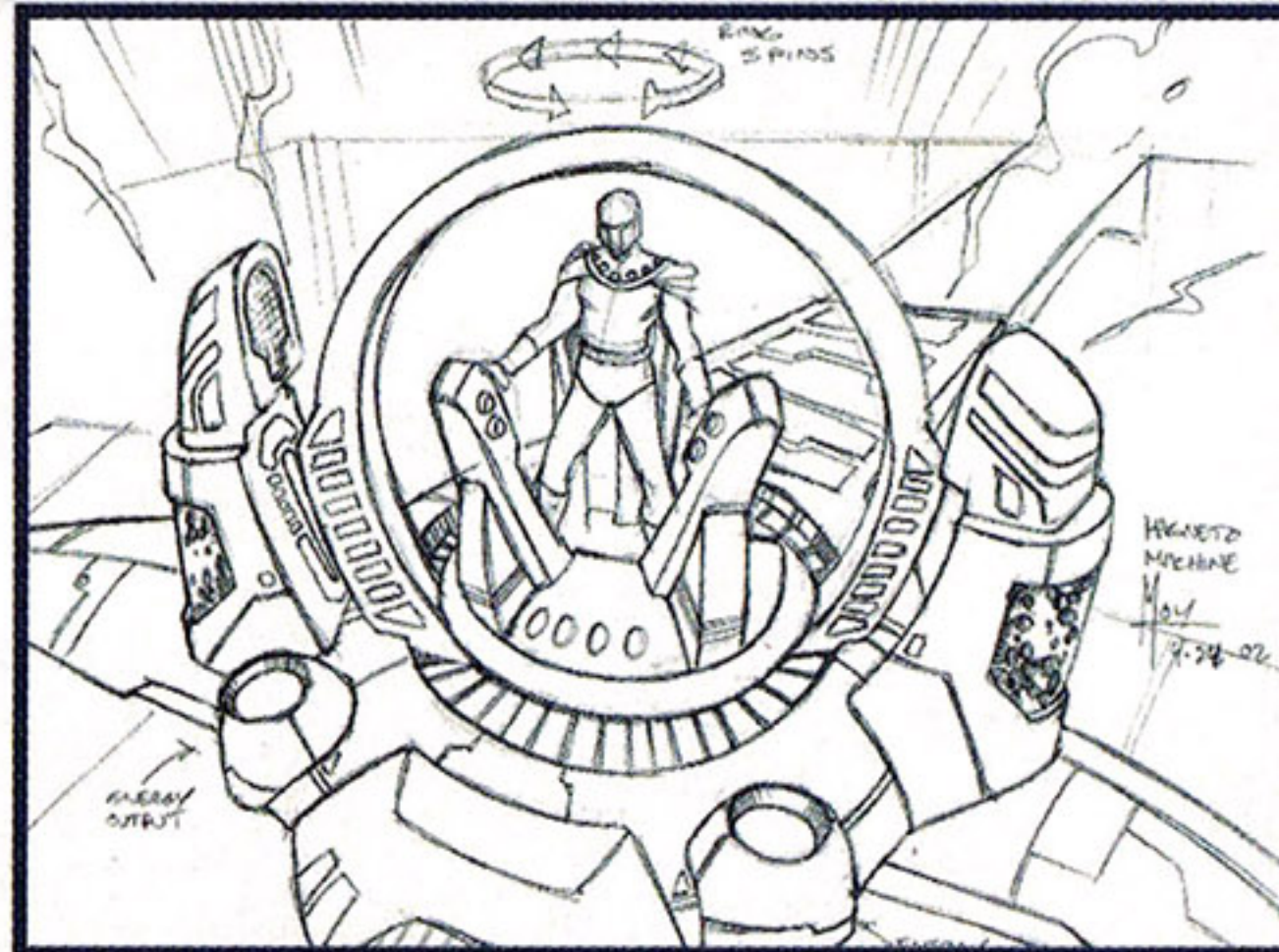
From science fiction titles based on the Star Wars and Star Trek universes, to one of the most critically acclaimed PC franchises of all-time,

Soldier of Fortune, Raven has had its hands in nearly everything that the world of game development has to offer. Everything, that is, except console gaming. X-Men Legends is Raven’s first foray into the highly competitive console field. Over the last few years, Raven has specialized in first-person shooters. Creating a console RPG is a huge departure from the corridor-based shooting galleries of PC gaming. It’s also a great stretch for the X-Men license. This is no small task for Raven, especially since the project is being developed simultaneously for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube.

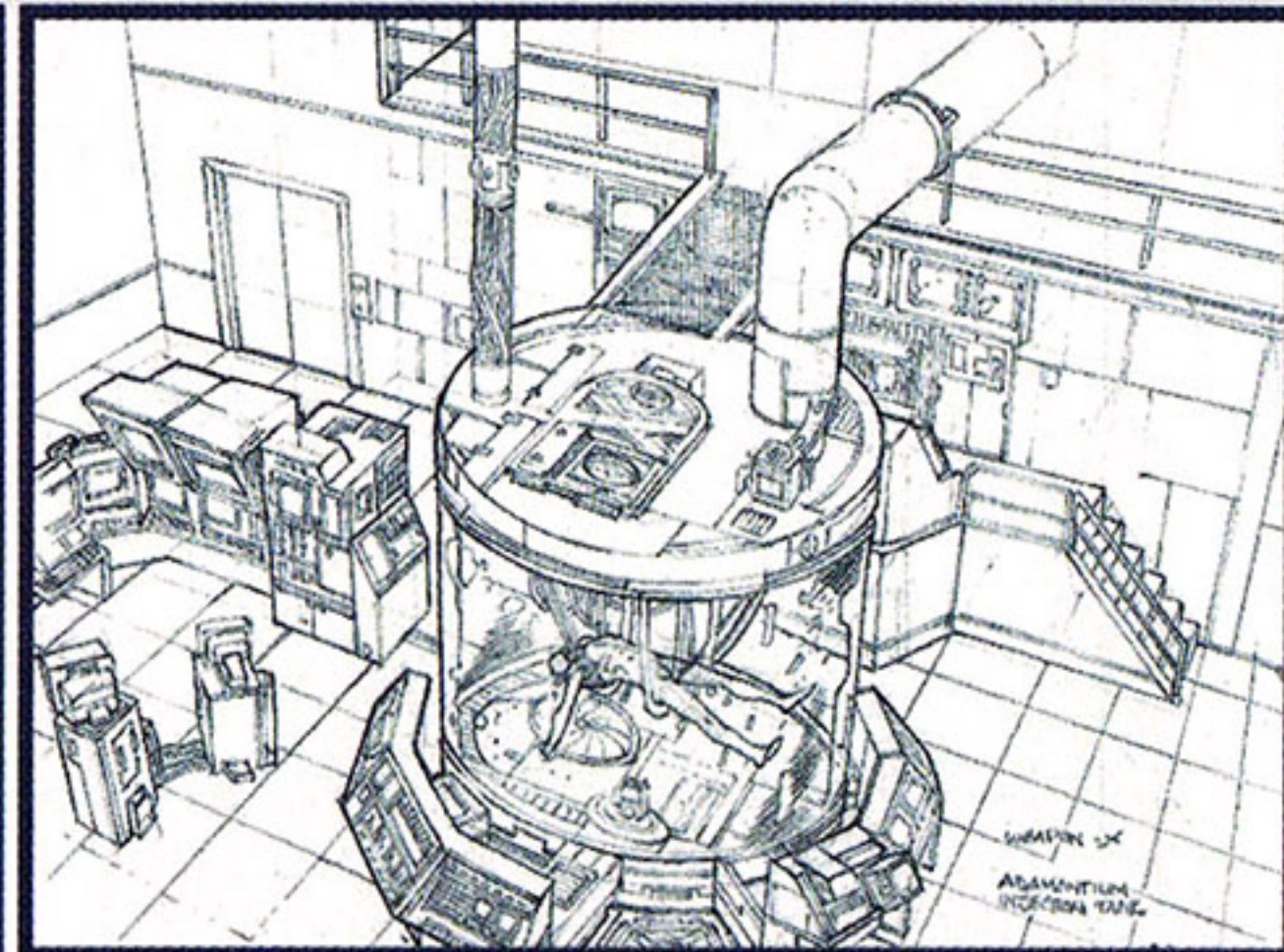
Lipo reflects, “It started with two words: X-Men RPG.” From there, the team started to brainstorm gameplay directions, story ideas, and the general design of the game. “Originally, we wanted to create a hardcore

turn-based game,” Lipo adds. “It was basically Final Fantasy with X-Men. Over time, however, it really started to evolve.” Raven soon learned that, when dealing with superheroes, gamers would want to control the action and unleash the powers of the particular characters rather than hitting a button and watching the character assault the opposition. In the end, Raven found that turn-based gameplay and a Final Fantasy feel didn’t suit the X-Men universe.

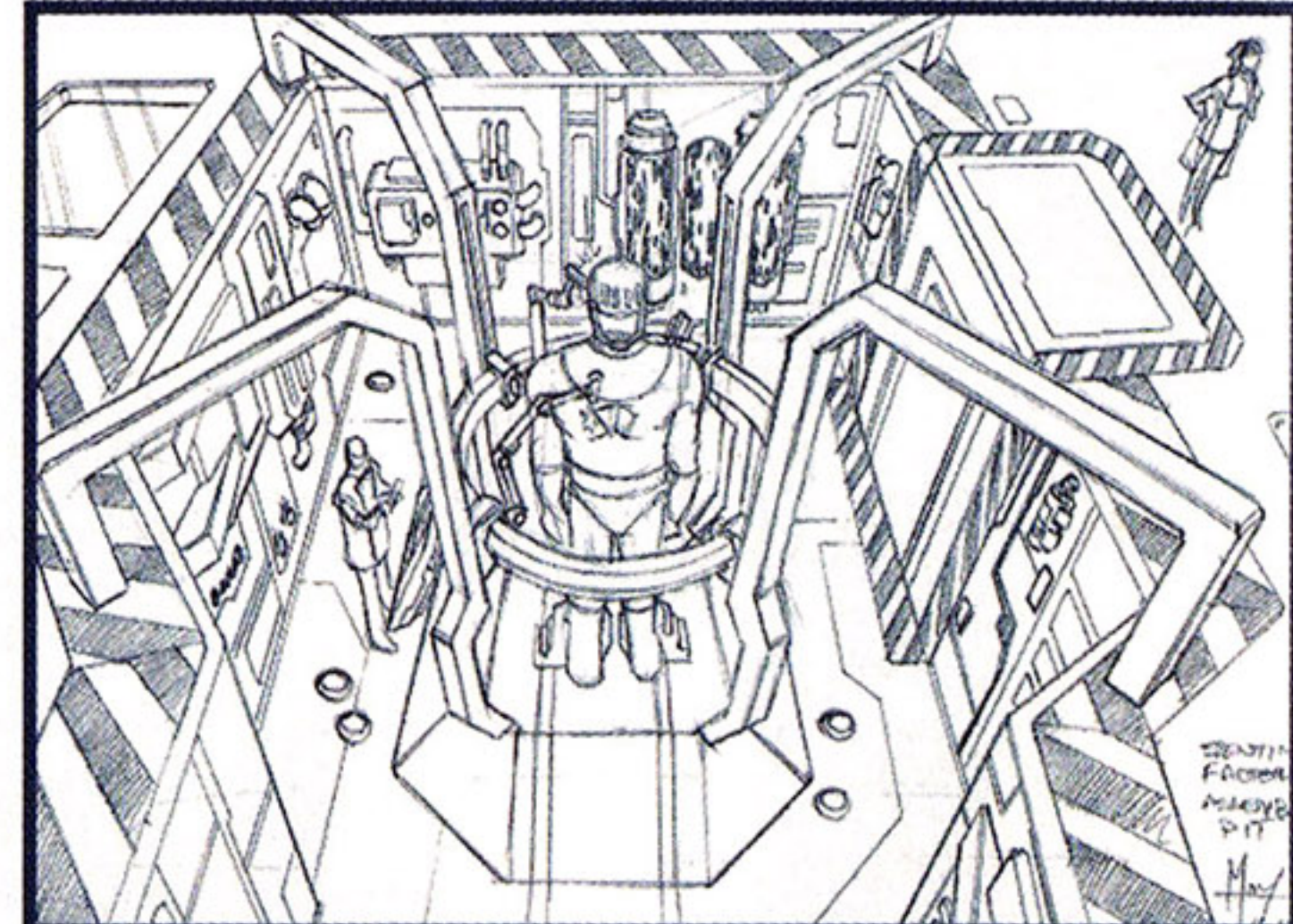
“As development moved along, we added more and more elements of action and combat into it,” explains Lipo. Heading in this direction increased the level of interaction that gamers would have with the product, but also created a rift in the team-based dynamics that Raven deemed an absolute necessity. Since the inception of X-Men video games, most developers have steered away from the team dynamic and have either created a brawler or a fighter. “One thing that has remained a consistent mantra through development of the game over the last few years has been



Here’s an early conceptual piece of Magneto and his mutation machine



In unraveling clues, the team will travel into Wolverine’s disturbing past and the Department H facilities



An X-Men game just wouldn’t be complete without the Sentinels

The Morlocks are just one of the adversary types in the game



1995 X-MEN 2: CLONE WARS – GENESIS

This sequel played identically to its precursor, yet allowed players to control a number of different X-Men. In a surprising story twist, Xavier’s nemesis, Magneto, became available for play as well. Epic cinematics and the flashiest effects the Genesis had to offer accompanied the gameplay. A follow-up game that focused on the gals in the team called X-Women was in development, but was cancelled before completion.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Beast, Nightcrawler, Psylocke, Magneto



1995 X-MEN: MUTANT APOCALYPSE – SUPER NINTENDO

With large, fluidly animated character sprites, 16 action-packed levels, and a comprehensive list of attacks, Mutant Apocalypse emerged as one of the more memorable X-Men titles from the 16-bit era. If you can track this game down, it’s well worth investing in. Beast can cling to ceilings for strategic purposes; the Sentinels tower over your character and the conflict between Xavier and the Genoshan government is well illustrated.

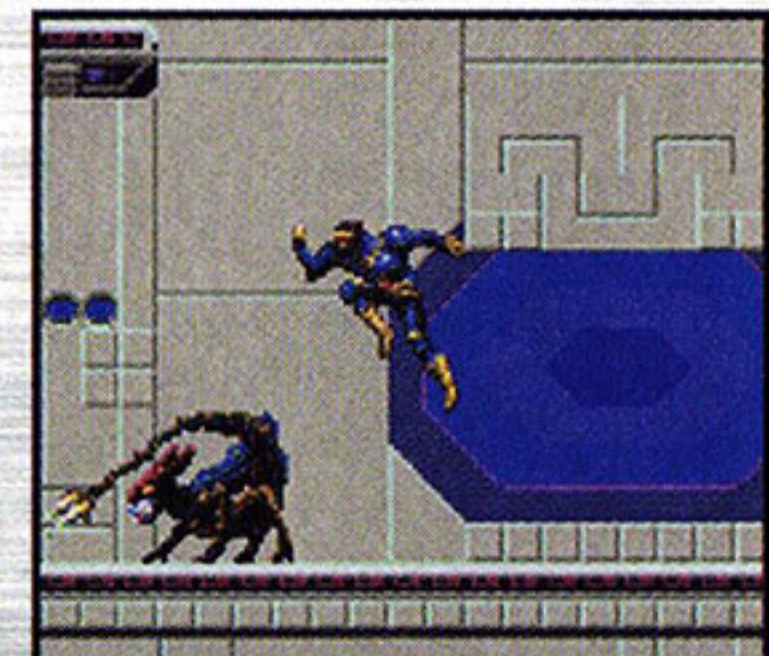
Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Psylocke, Gambit, Beast



1995 X-MEN: THE GAMESMASTER’S LEGACY – GAME GEAR

Despite its size, this handheld packed quite a punch. With gameplay stylized in the same vein as Sega’s 16-bit series and a fairly vivid graphical palette, The GamesMaster’s Legacy emerged as one of the Game Gear’s elite titles. For comic book fans, it will more than likely be remembered for its obscure assortment of villains such as Stryfe, Shinobi Shaw, Fitzroy, and Fabian Cortez.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Gambit, Rogue, Bishop, Jean Grey, Cyclops, Storm





The gameplay focuses on individual heroics and the combined efforts of the entire team



Wolverine is best used as a tank because his attacks are close-range

In total, Legends will allow players to suit up as 19 different X-Men. Raven's art services director Brian Pelletier added, "Some of these characters are from different timelines in the X-Men universe. We're basically taking all of the most memorable characters of the X-Men and grouping them into a team. This doesn't mean it's the X-Men from the '80s or the X-Men from the '90s. It's all of the cool X-Men from the last 40 years."

To our surprise, the story in this epic adventure centers on a lesser-known character – a character who hasn't made an appearance in comics for years. For those of you who read the comic book *New Mutants* back in the day, Magma (a.k.a. Alison Crestmere) is making a return, and X-Men Legends is her coming of age story. Of course, this tale isn't just about a girl coming to terms with her powers. The heavy hitters of the X-Men play pivotal roles in the outcome of the plot and are instrumental to Alison's development. Along with Wolverine, players

will be able to select Cyclops, Storm, Colossus, Psylocke, Nightcrawler, Angel, and Jean Grey along with a handful of others.

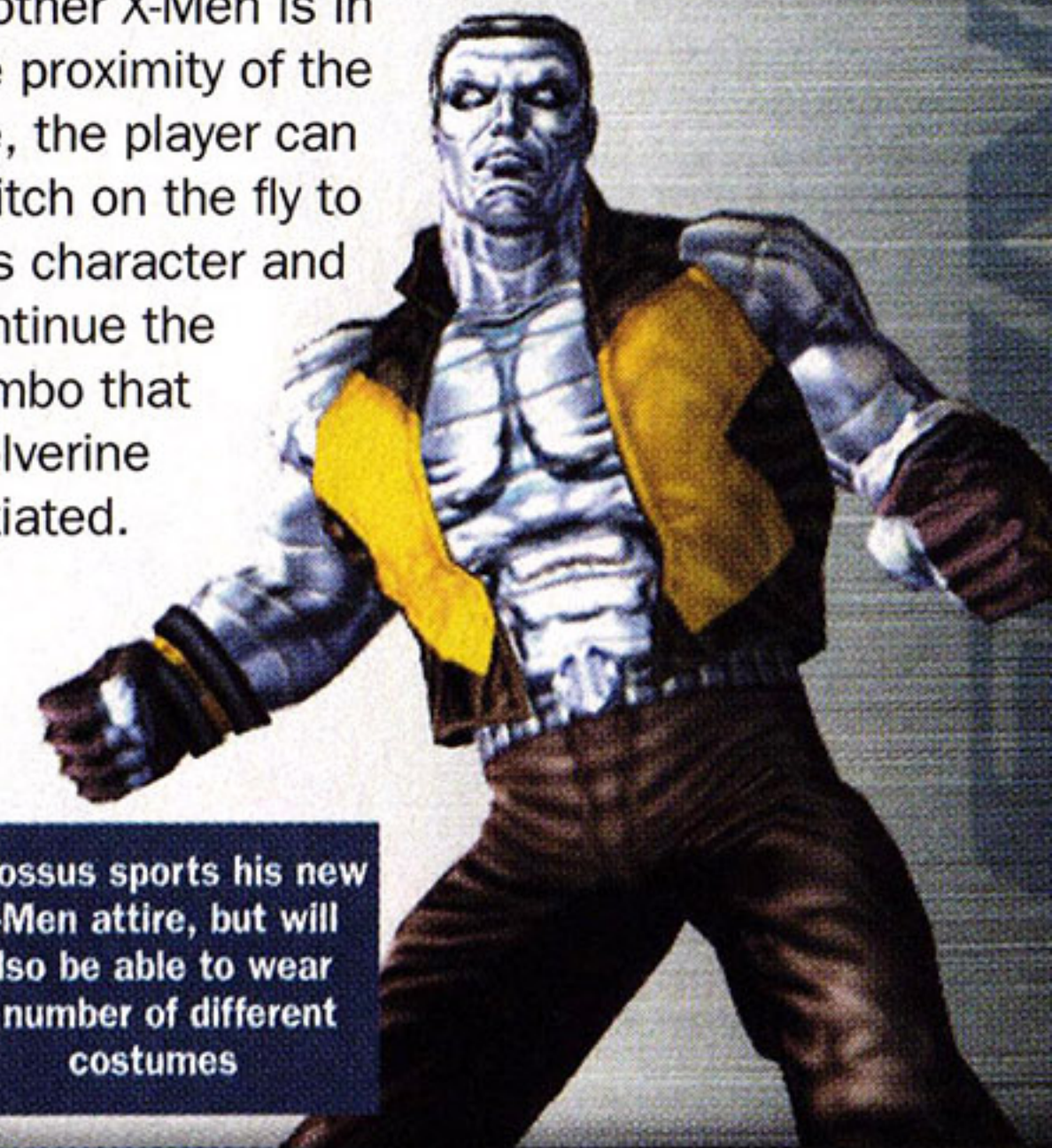
Of course, to ensure that the game feels just like a comic book, Raven enlisted the writing skills of Man of Action – a studio of comic book veterans including Joe Casey (*Uncanny X-Men*), Steven Seagle, Joe Kelly, and Duncan Rouleau. The story will unfold in a number of ways, including real-time cutscenes, out-of-game CG

sequences, and conversations with spoken dialogue.

Rather than just creating a hack n' slash game in the vein of *Baldur's Gate* or *Gauntlet*, strategic elements stem from the individual characters and his or her interaction with the team as a whole. "[The teammate aspect] is very important," comments Pelletier. "You may need to sacrifice muscle and choose a flying person to reach an unattainable area. We're really playing up the strategy aspect, which will hopefully force players to switch the teams continually during play. This may mean selecting someone you don't like, but you'll need to do it to move on in the game." Deciding who to bring on missions may come down to trial and error, but players will have the option to backtrack and switch the lineup at extraction points that are littered throughout the levels. Furthermore, if an ally perishes during a mission, you'll be faced with the tough decision of moving forward shorthanded, or backtracking to get a different character who is waiting in the wings at an extraction point. Pelletier adds, "Usually in an RPG, when a team is knocked out, that's it. With this game, you have the option to continue on."

someone with projectile attacks whittle down an enemy's defense before engaging with a melee character. As the player becomes accustomed to the gameplay, they'll also have the ability to create combos with their teammates. Iceman can freeze an enemy, and then the player can switch to Cyclops to obliterate the frozen foe with an optic blast. Angel could also pick up Colossus and drop him on an unsuspecting adversary. The combo system also works for hand-to-hand purposes. While Wolverine beats the living daylights out of a Sentinel, if another X-Men is in the proximity of the foe, the player can switch on the fly to this character and continue the combo that Wolverine initiated.

Colossus sports his new X-Men attire, but will also be able to wear a number of different costumes



X-Men's New Face

MAGMA



First Appearance:
New Mutants #8

Magma specializes in geothermal powers. She can manipulate Earth's tectonic plates to create seismic blasts, telepathically move rock, and summon volcanoes. Her abilities are unique and should blend nicely with the team that Raven has assembled. She first appeared in comics in the *New Mutants* series as Amara Juliana Olivians Aquilla. She was later renamed Alison Crestmere. On this same note, she was originally from Nova Roma, Brazil; but with the name change, her place of birth was moved to England.



1996 X-MEN: MOJO WORLD – GAME GEAR

Oh no! Wolverine's mojo has been stolen, baby! Actually it hasn't, but any self respecting X-Men fan is familiar with the vile Mojo and his detestable world. Although the Game Gear had already gone the way of the dinosaur, this game proved to be a nice end cap for the Game Gear trilogy.

Playable Characters:
Wolverine, Havok, Rogue, Psylocke, Storm, Cyclops, Gambit



1996 X-MEN VS STREET FIGHTER ARCADE, PLAYSTATION, SATURN

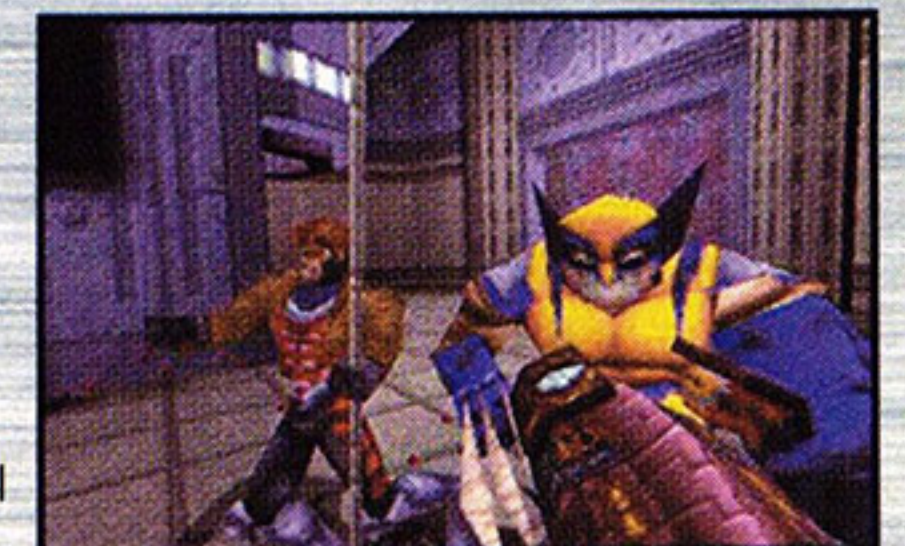
This seemed like a bad idea at first, but the two factions actually matched up quite well. Rather than focusing on just the good guys, Capcom inserted three of the more recognizable X-villains as well. The teaming of Wolverine and Sabretooth against Ken and Ryu became a fan favorite.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Rogue, Storm, Sabretooth, Juggernaut, Magneto



1998 X-MEN: RAVAGES OF THE APOCALYPSE – PC

This commercial Quake mod transformed every character into familiar X-Men. Players assumed the identity of a new mutant who was created by Magneto. As it turns out, this mutant's specialty was quite odd. His arm could actually transform into different weapons. The goal of the game was to gun down countless X-Men clones and then defeat your maker. As expected, this X-Men shooter didn't fare well and disappeared rather quickly from retail shelves.





Familiar villains like Juggernaut appear as boss confrontations



Cyclops jumps in and continues the combo that Wolverine began

After missions are completed, the team will return to the mansion. This is essentially where everything takes place. You'll learn of new missions, have the ability to train in the Danger Room, and communicate with your fellow children of the atom. Some of the X-Men you speak with will recall some of their greatest of expeditions. When these instances occur, you will actually have the ability to enter a flashback mission. Lipo elaborates, "This is very much an homage to the X-Men series. We do have flashbacks to specific issues in particular. You can

go back to the '60s-era X-Men and play as the original team." This particular sequence actually ties into a specific X-Men comic book from yesteryear. The look of the characters changes to reflect the difference in time. Beast will, of course, revert back to his human form.

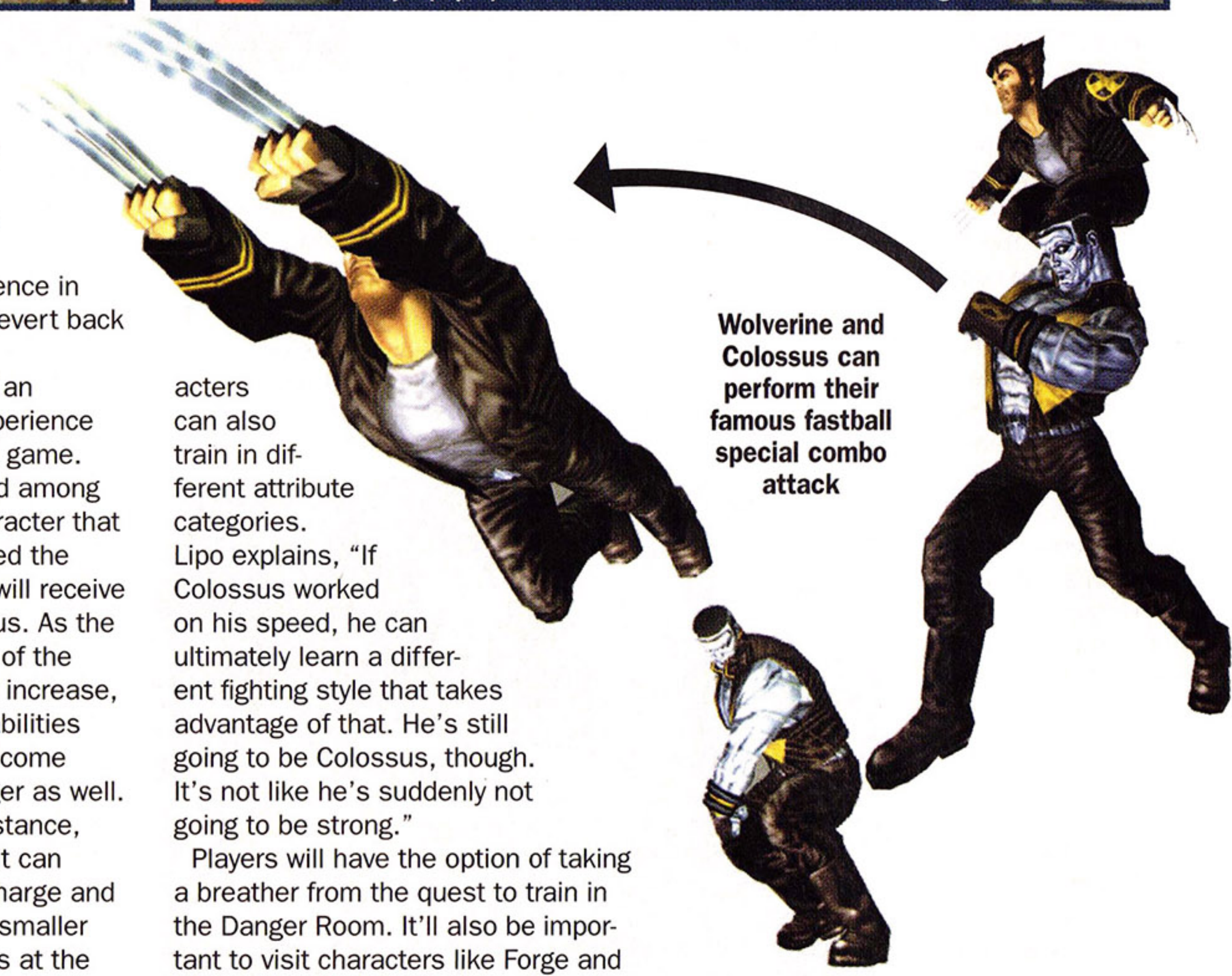
Since its backing is that of an RPG, characters will gain experience throughout every step of the game. Experience points are divided among the entire team, but the character that

excelled the most will receive a bonus. As the levels of the X-Men increase, their abilities will become stronger as well. For instance, Gambit can only charge and throw smaller objects at the beginning of the game. As his powers increase, he'll be able to command larger objects. Char-

acters can also train in different attribute categories. Lipo explains, "If Colossus worked on his speed, he can ultimately learn a different fighting style that takes advantage of that. He's still going to be Colossus, though. It's not like he's suddenly not going to be strong."

Players will have the option of taking a breather from the quest to train in the Danger Room. It'll also be important to visit characters like Forge and Beast. As you work your way through levels, you'll stumble upon tech components that can be collected. If you bring these items to Forge, he can create new equipment for your team. Beast will aid in the enhancing of

Wolverine and Colossus can perform their famous fastball special combo attack



certain powers. "You're not just out on missions to fight people," comments Pelletier. "You're also out there to collect items to build up your team."



Wolverine draws first blood against Sabretooth

1998 X-MEN: WOLVERINE'S RAGE - GAME BOY COLOR

Digital Eclipse pieced together a fairly comprehensive brawler with smooth animations and responsive controls, but didn't deliver much by way of variety. The game also ran into the problem of taking on damage when Wolverine's body would touch an enemy. Since his attacks are close range, these cheap hits occurred all the time. Regardless, it was still an enjoyable action game, but it could have been so much more.



2000 X-MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY - PLAYSTATION, GAME BOY COLOR

Capcom had already developed high-caliber fighting games with the X-Men license, but Activision was determined to enter the fray as well. Tying in more with the movie than the comic series, the cast of characters wasn't the best and the combat was riddled with holes and balancing issues. It wasn't a complete loss, but it didn't come close to touching the legacy that Capcom had already brought to gaming years before.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Storm, Beast, Phoenix, Mystique, Sabretooth, Magneto, Toad



2000 X-MEN: MUTANT WARS - GAME BOY COLOR

If the early NES game didn't exist, Mutant Wars would be the unanimous choice for worst X-Men game ever conceived. It's a tossup as to which one is worse. Mutant Wars' monotonous side-scrolling combat and noticeable two frames of animation for each move didn't combine to create a winning formula, let alone anything that even comes close to qualifying as a game.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Storm, Gambit, Iceman



From a visual perspective, Raven has built a world that is as beautiful as it is interactive. The environments, which range from Department H to Muir Island, harness the true essence of the comic books, but are also completely destructible. The level of devastation that players can unleash will even allow for enemies to be thrown through brick walls. This is especially impressive as debris showers the ground and dust clouds emerge. Of course, only the stronger X-Men will be able to accomplish a feat of this magnitude. If Nightcrawler attempts something

like this, the enemy will simply dent the wall, and only a few bricks jostle free and tumble to the floor. Players will be able to manipulate the angle of the camera and can zoom in and out of the action. When a teammate leaves the perimeter of the screen, his or her location is pinpointed by an arrow. Of course, you can freely switch control over to these characters. With the team dynamic, Raven is throwing around the idea of making Legends a simultaneous two-player game, where a second person could freely pick up another controller and jump into the action at hand. Head-to-head multiplayer

fighting will likely emerge from the Danger Room as well. The idea of allowing the selection of specific X-Men nemeses like Magneto or Juggernaut as combatants is also being thrown around. X-Men Legends is still early in development, but it's already shaping up to be one of the most exciting action/RPG's we've seen in quite some time.



The environments are more or less completely destructible



Colossus is strong enough to knock down walls



The Morlocks come in different shapes and sizes



If you lose allies, you can backtrack to extraction points to bring in fresh blood



If a character can fly or levitate, they'll be able to do it in the game

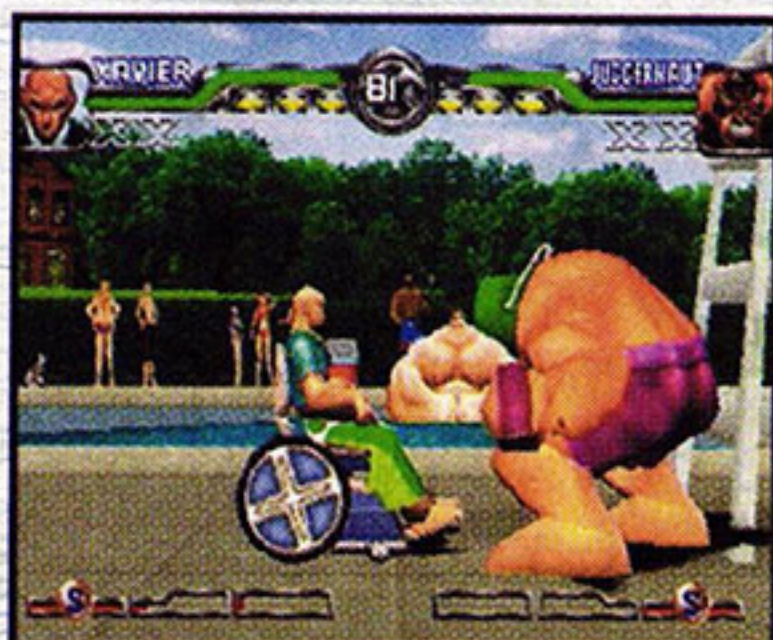


You won't land every hit

2001 X-MEN: MUTANT ACADEMY 2 - PLAYSTATION

If anything, this sequel will be remembered for a shocking hidden character. Unbeknownst to anyone, Charles Xavier was tucked away as one of the best kept secrets in all of gaming. Complete with wheelchair, Charles would roll back and forth, and tilt back on his wheels to kick.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Storm, Beast, Phoenix, Mystique, Toad, Sabretooth, Magneto, Havok, Nightcrawler, Forge, Rogue, Psylocke, Juggernaut, Xavier, Spider-Man



2001 X-MEN: REIGN OF APOCALYPSE - GAME BOY ADVANCE

You have to love the fluid animation that went into this game. The character movements are a tad slow, but the gameplay design is definitely intriguing. Picture if you will Final Fight with an X-Men kick. There were only four playable characters available during Story mode, but additional ones, such as Cable, Iceman, Gambit, and Bishop, could be unlocked for versus play.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Storm, Rogue (Bonus Characters) Cable, Gambit, Bishop, Magneto, Silver Samurai, Iceman



2002 X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION - PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

For the first high-end sequel to Mutant Academy, Activision and developer Paradox delved deeply into the X-Men license as it delivered 24 characters and a unique plot stylized like a comic book.

Playable Characters: Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Storm, Beast, Phoenix, Toad, Mystique, Sabretooth, Magneto, Nightcrawler, Rogue, Blob, Bishop, Psylocke, Dark Phoenix, Bastion, Sentinel A, Sentinel B, Lady Deathstrike, Havok, Betsy, Juggernaut, Forge

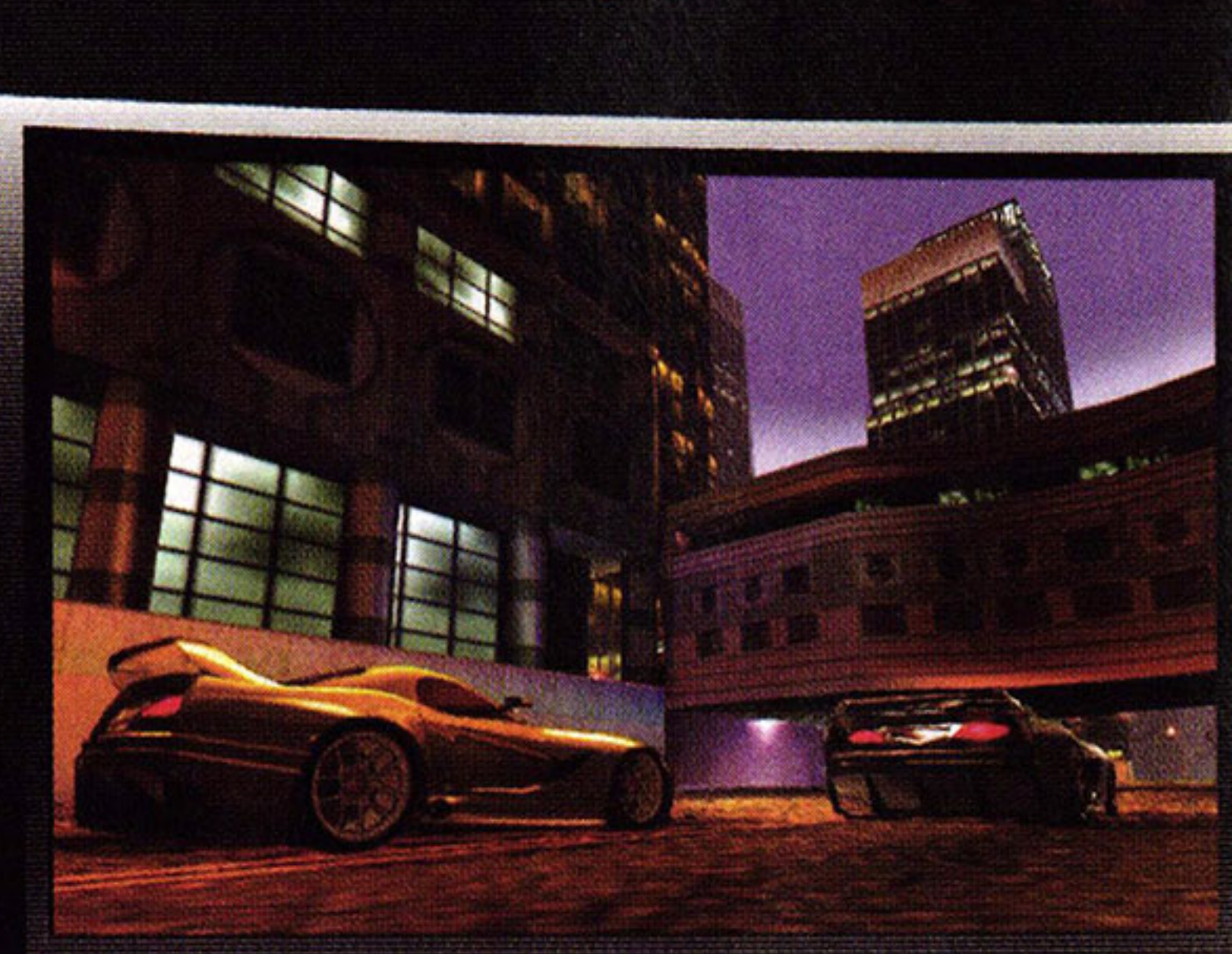




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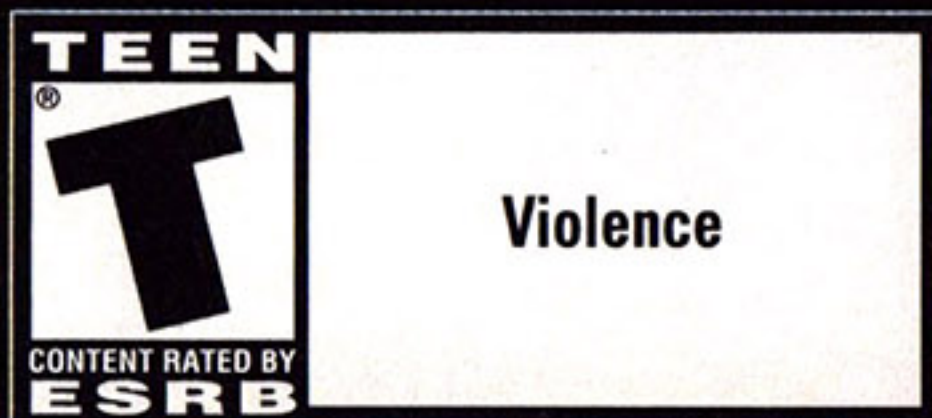
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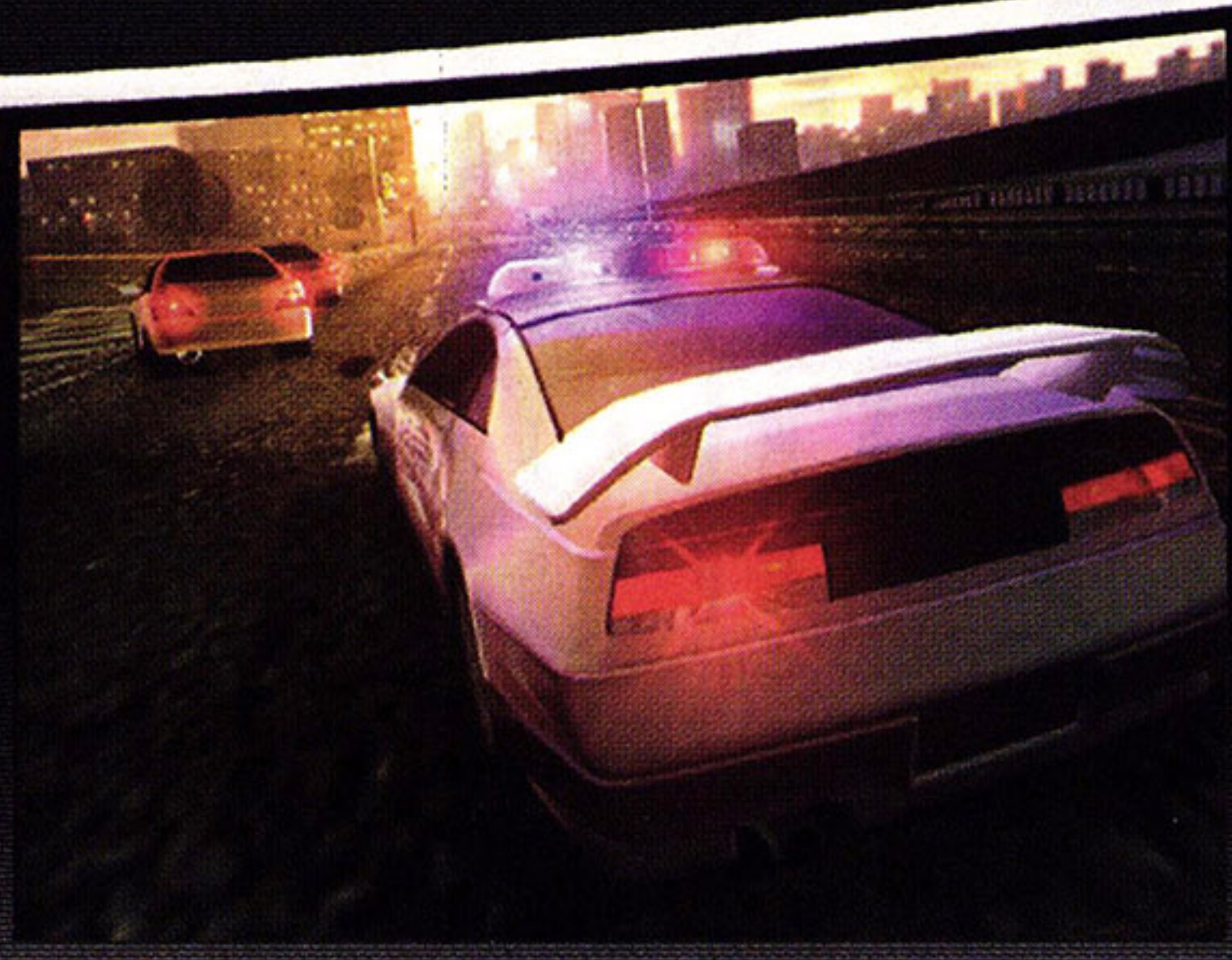
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PlayStation®2





Base Wars: The Battle for COOPERSTOWN

On a typical day in baseball, the extent of physical contact can range from a player nonchalantly patting his teammate on the buttocks, to a disgruntled fan hurling half-eaten food at the right fielder. To be quite frank, you're more likely to be accosted by an inebriated Jose Canseco at your local watering hole than you are of seeing a baseball player assault someone on the opposing team. That's not to say that it doesn't happen, however. On very rare occasions, the mild-mannered athletes of America's favorite pastime lose their tempers and do the unthinkable. Who can forget George Bell charging the mound and unleashing an acrobatic karate kick onto the thigh of Bruce Kison, or Nolan Ryan using Robin Ventura's skull as a punching bag for a good minute and a half? Baseball may seem like a passive-aggressive sport with the excitement level of a mosquito flying into a bug zapper, but there are moments where it can be as bloody as war and as violent as a Holyfield/Tyson fight.

While you'll be hard-pressed to ever see a batter use a pitcher's head as a ball, the most heated battle in all of baseball is actually taking place on the video game front, and like it or not, you're directly involved. In previous years, it was easy to pick out the best baseball game. Whether it's

a coincidence or not, for some strange reason, every developer chose to use this year's edition as the vehicle that would set the tone for years to come. Every game hitting the market this spring has received numerous upgrades, or has been completely reinvented from the ground up. In many ways, it's a whole new ballgame and anyone could come out on top as this year's baseball champion.

Rather than blindly choosing which title you should purchase this spring, the baseball faithful at Game Informer have dissected every inch of this year's crop, giving you an in-depth analysis that pinpoints the pros and cons of each game. In the end, you'll know exactly which one you want to invest in. Does High Heat finally have the fantasy options to back up its incredible gameplay? Rather than introducing a new game and franchise, should EA have tried to salvage Triple Play? Did Acclaim spend too much time tinkering with the frivolous material in All-Star? Can Microsoft's rookie entry, Inside Pitch, upstage

the veterans? And where exactly does Sega stand now that the World Series franchise is spreading its wings onto the PlayStation 2?

The big question is: Which game is the best suited for your playing needs? Read on to find out!

2003 or 2004?

Before we break apart each game, we feel that it's our civic duty to inform you that the video game industry hasn't the faintest idea as to what year it is. Some of the games boast the moniker 2003, as they should, while others feature 2004 at the tail of their titles. We don't understand this phenomenon ourselves, and we can only imagine how confusing it is for you the consumer. Just make a mental note as to the year of the title you desire before running out and making a purchase.



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3

■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER VISUAL CONCEPTS/BLUE SHIFT ■ RELEASE MARCH 11

Now that World Series Baseball is no longer an Xbox exclusive, it will finally get the attention that it truly deserves. While most people will find themselves completely entranced by the visual realism, true baseball enthusiasts will more than likely fixate on the depth of the Franchise mode rather than the flashy graphical details. The amount of material that you'll digest throughout the course of a season is unprecedented. You'll be asked to build a front office by hiring coaches; sending out scouts to locate top prospects; entering salary negotiations with superstars; managing lineups and bullpens; setting the percentage of times a bench player starts for simulation purposes; and determining whether or not you want to conduct a random-order, traditional, or serpentine draft. You'll even be asked if you want the entire league to be fictional, which basically boils down to all of the player names changing. At the end of the day, however, everything you do is dependent on fan interest, as your budget is tied to how many people come to see your games.

Simply said, you won't find a deeper Franchise mode out of any of the games released this season. That's not to say there isn't room for improvement, mind you. Enhancements have been made to this year's installment which seem to reflect the options in Acclaim's All-Star

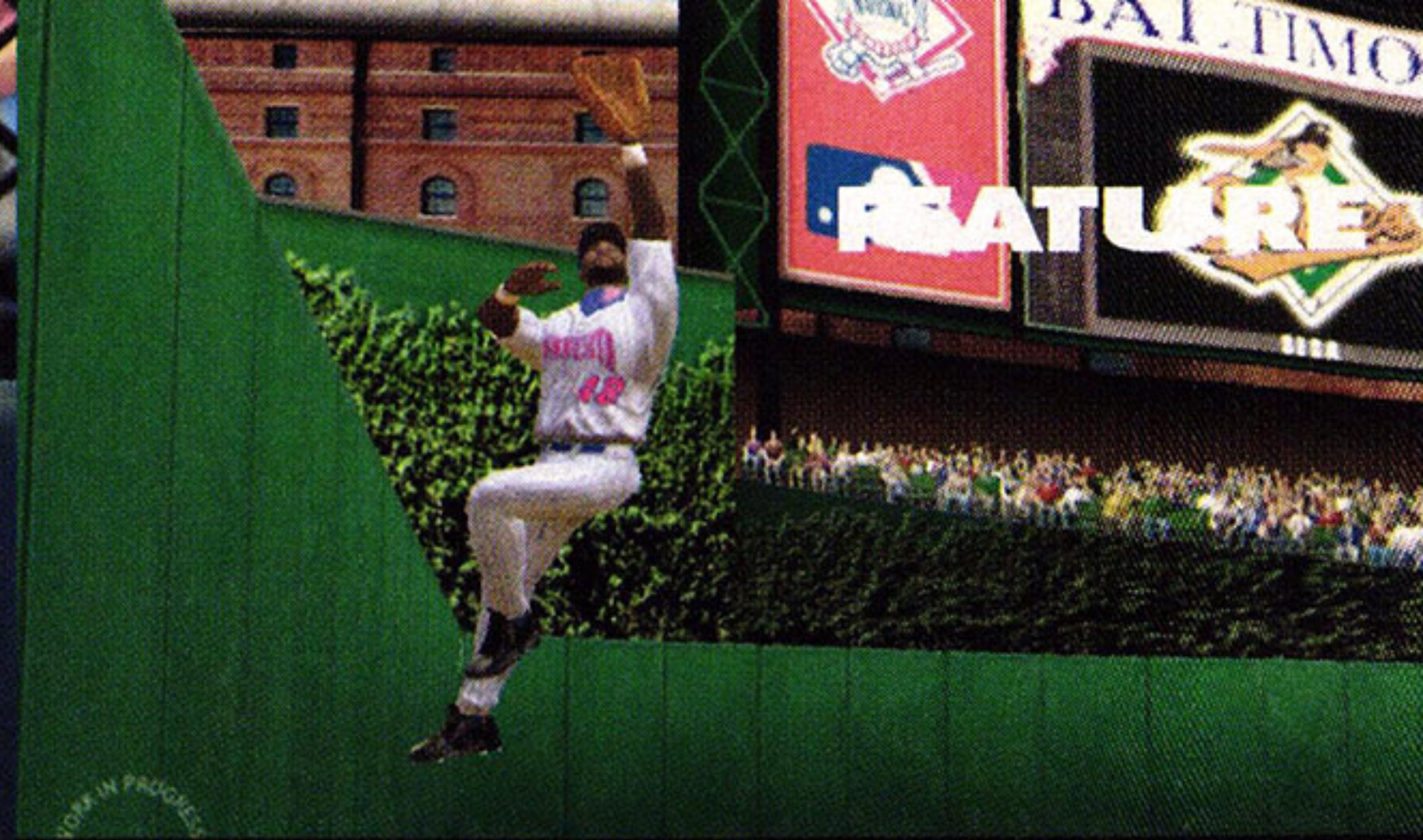
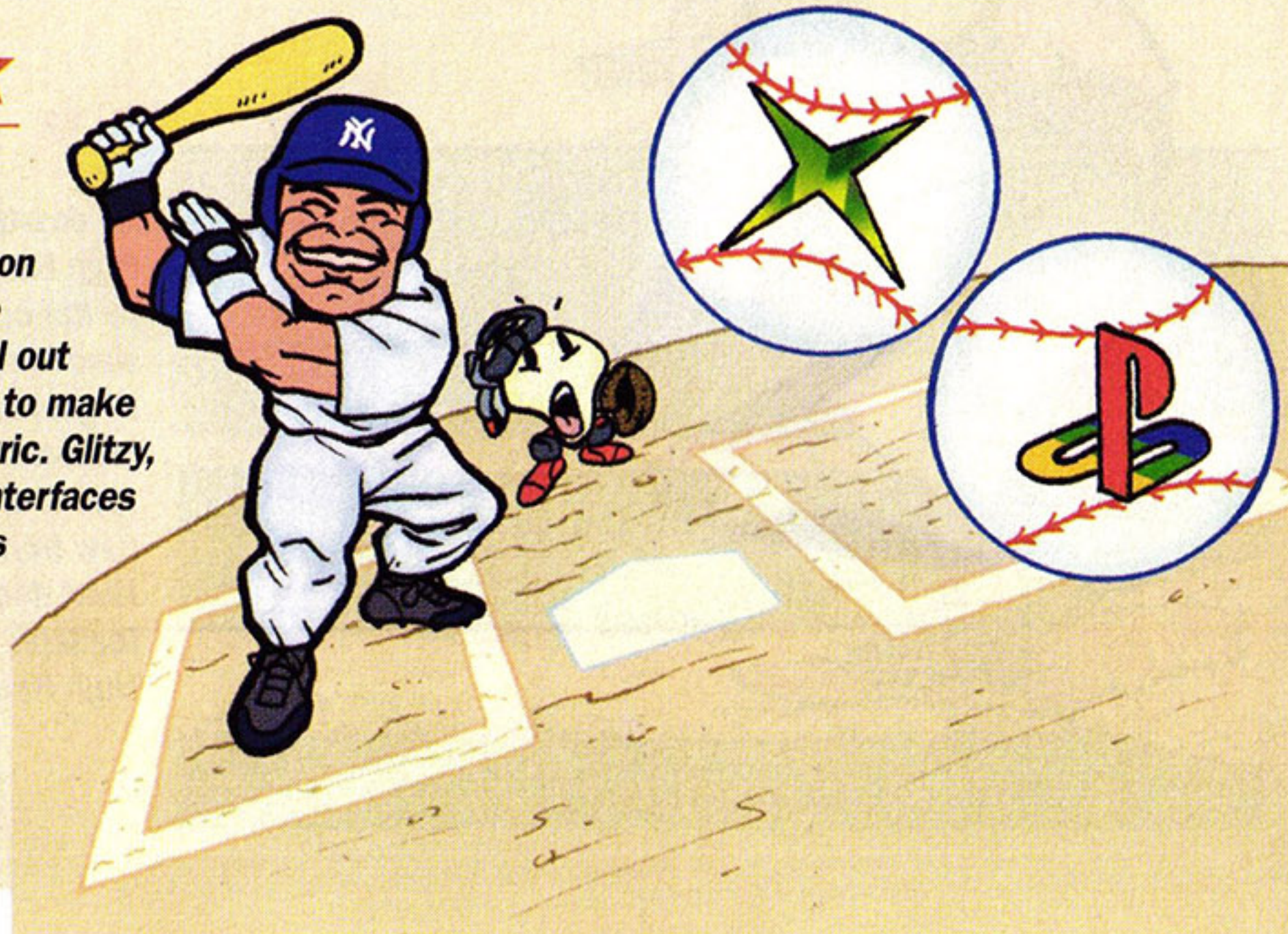
series. Players can now choose from a number of different batting controls. You can stick with the traditional one-button swing, toggle to individual power and contact strokes, or choose the difficult charge-up swing. Whether or not Sega adds some zip to pitched balls remains to be seen, but from what we've experienced thus far, the overall speed of gameplay doesn't seem much different.

While the title does make for an accurate simulation, the speed of the pitches, the rate at which junk balls cut, and the new feats that you can perform in the field lean more toward an entertaining arcade experience. You'll now be able to perform home run-robbing jumps at the wall, outrageous running grabs, and offline throws. Stealing thunder from 989, Sega has secured the exclusive rights to Major League Baseball's Big League Challenge home run derby festivities.

Although dwarfed by All-Star's gargantuan selection of baseball legends, World Series is the only other game on the market with Hall of Fame players. There are only 25, just barely enough for a game of baseball, but they do feature authentic stances and pitching styles. Sega also went out of its way to incorporate all of the classic uniforms. Interestingly, if a team is too new to have throwback jerseys, the MLB authorized Sega to create fictional uniforms for these teams in the game.

★ Scouting Report ★

World Series Baseball's franchise mode is the deepest on the market. So, if you're looking for a game with incredible simulation capabilities, this is the closest you'll come to the big leagues. While the verdict is still out on the gameplay, Sega has made an effort to make it much more user-friendly and arcade-centric. Glitzy, over-the-top plays and innovative batting interfaces give it a new look and feel, but it still lacks the zip of All-Star and the authenticity of High Heat.



You'll now have the ability to leap at the wall to rob home runs



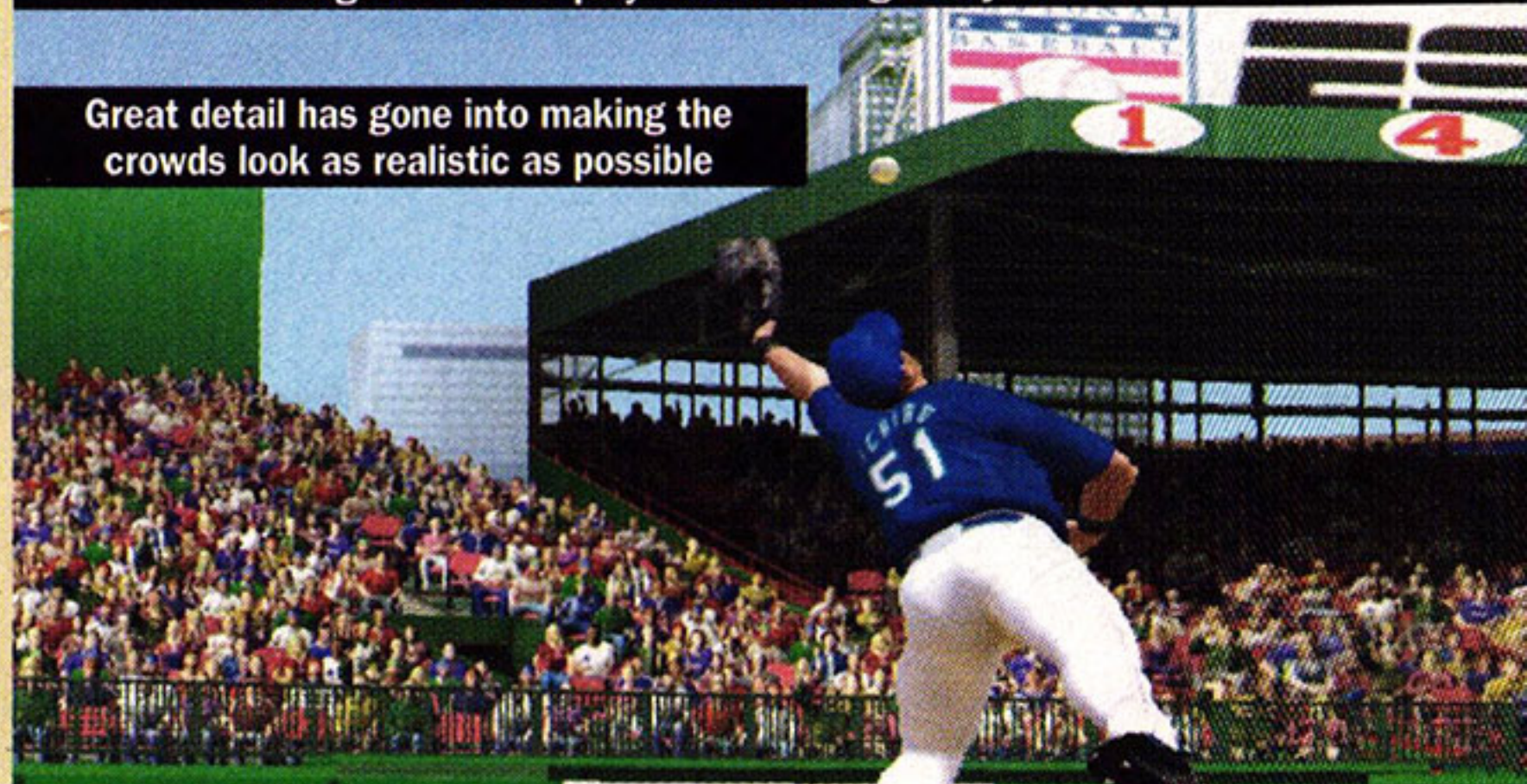
Throwback jerseys are included for all of the teams. Sega even created fictional uniforms for newer teams



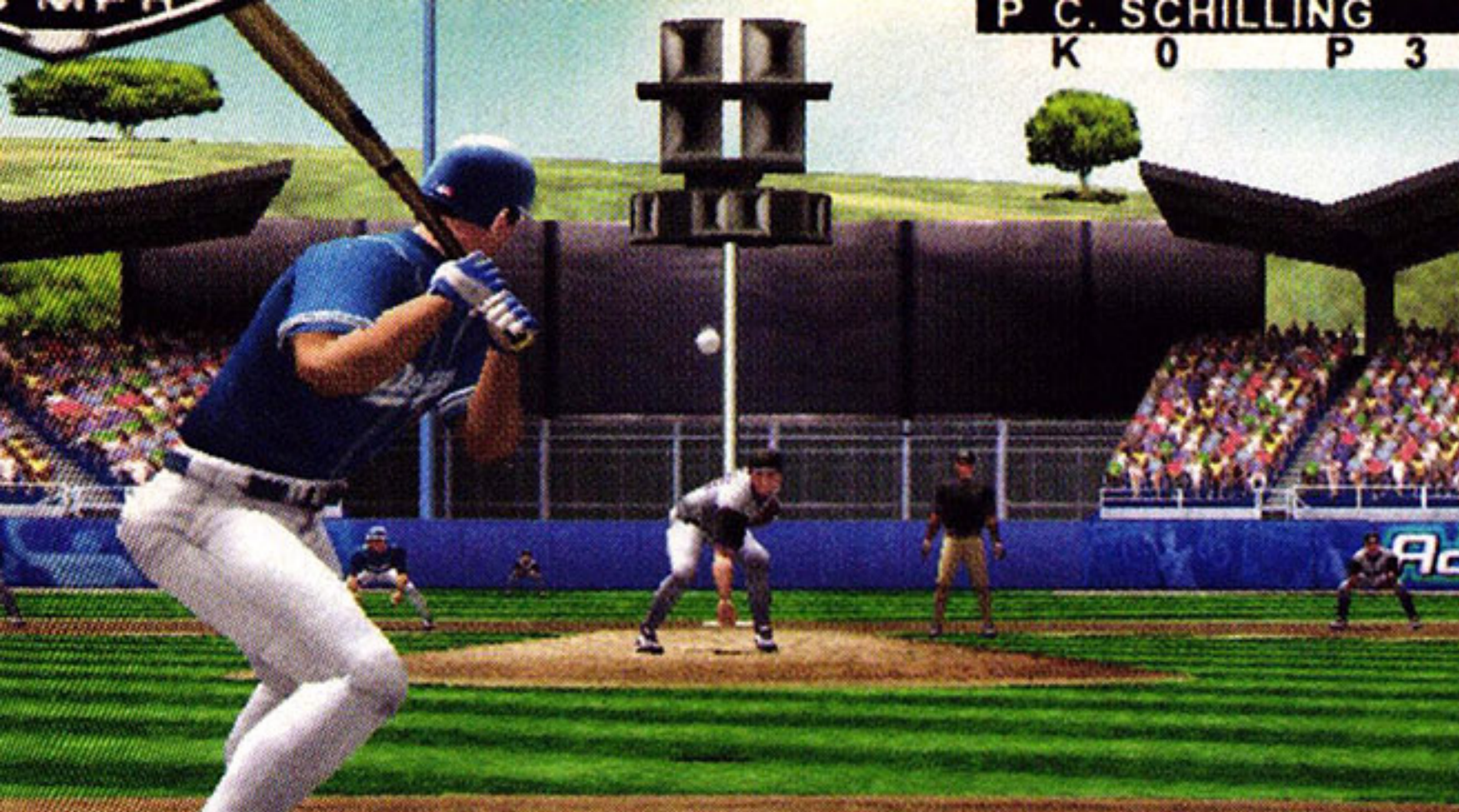
The pitcher cam brings about a realistic TV-style broadcast



New fielding animations include players turning outrageous double plays and exciting relay throws

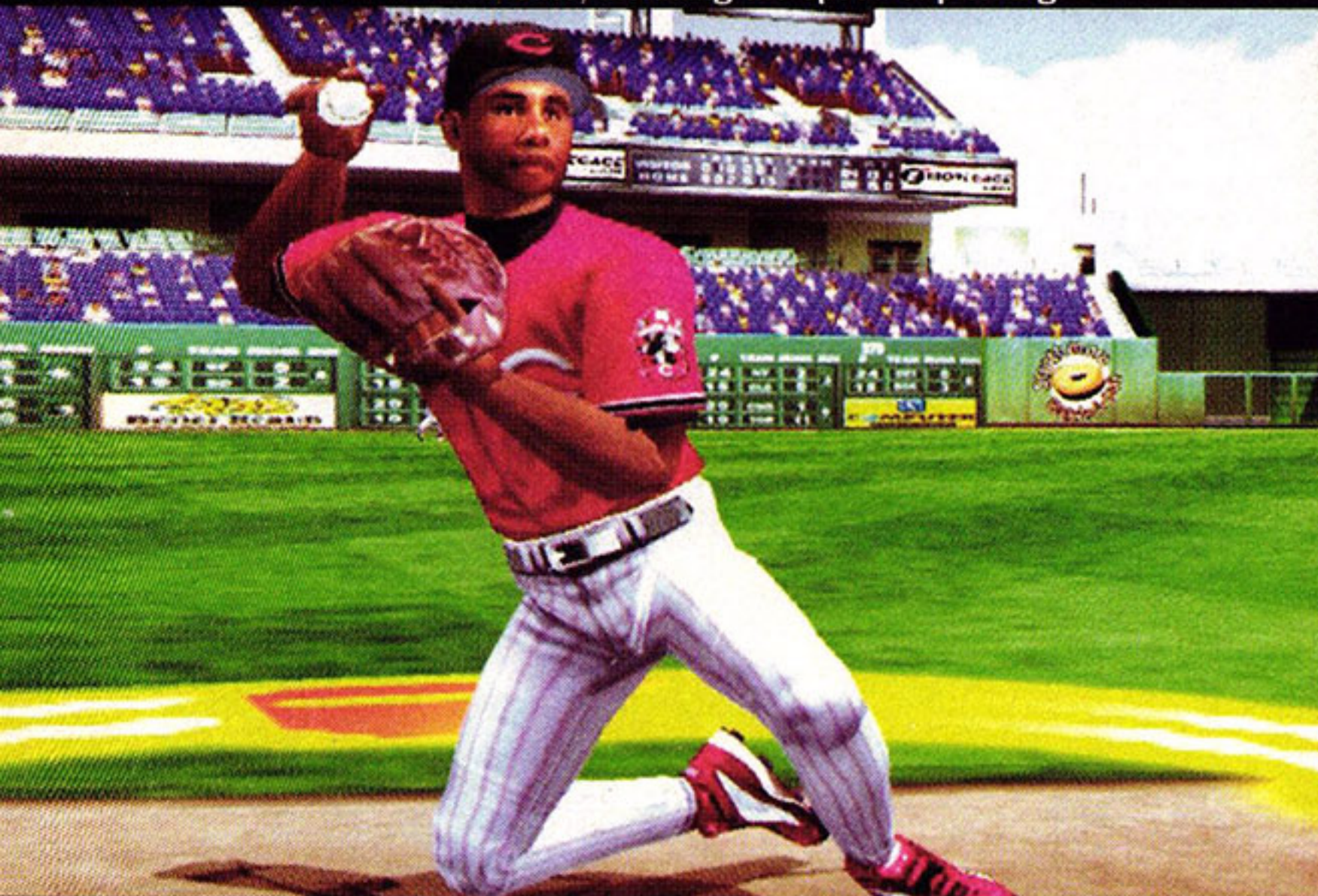


Great detail has gone into making the crowds look as realistic as possible

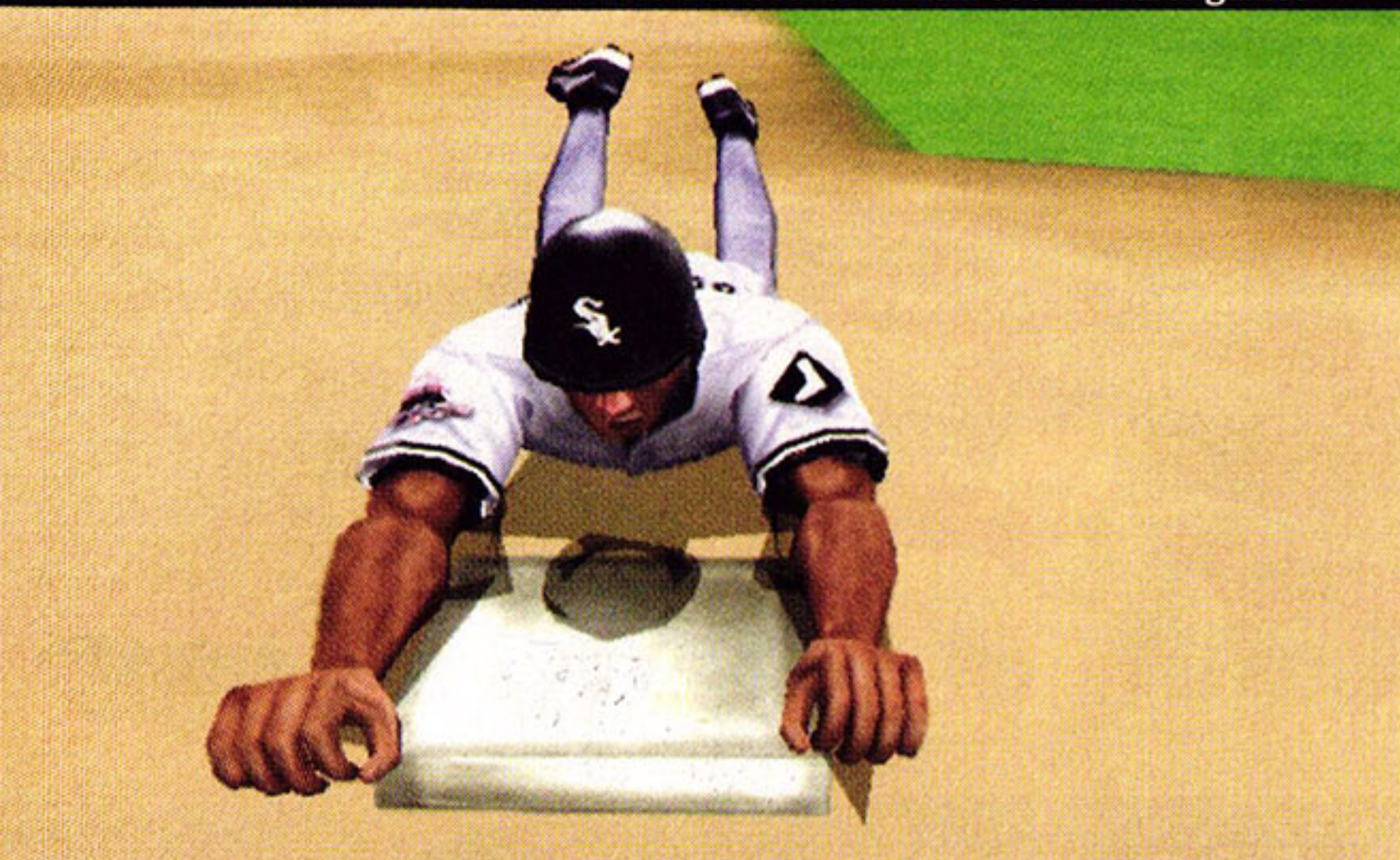


P. C. SCHILLING
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4 P. LODUCA
Players will be able to alter every little gameplay attribute, including the speed of pitching



The detail in the character models has improved significantly, but still doesn't harness the level of realism seen in other games



Another base is stolen and defiled

League Leaders

All Teams A. L. N. L.

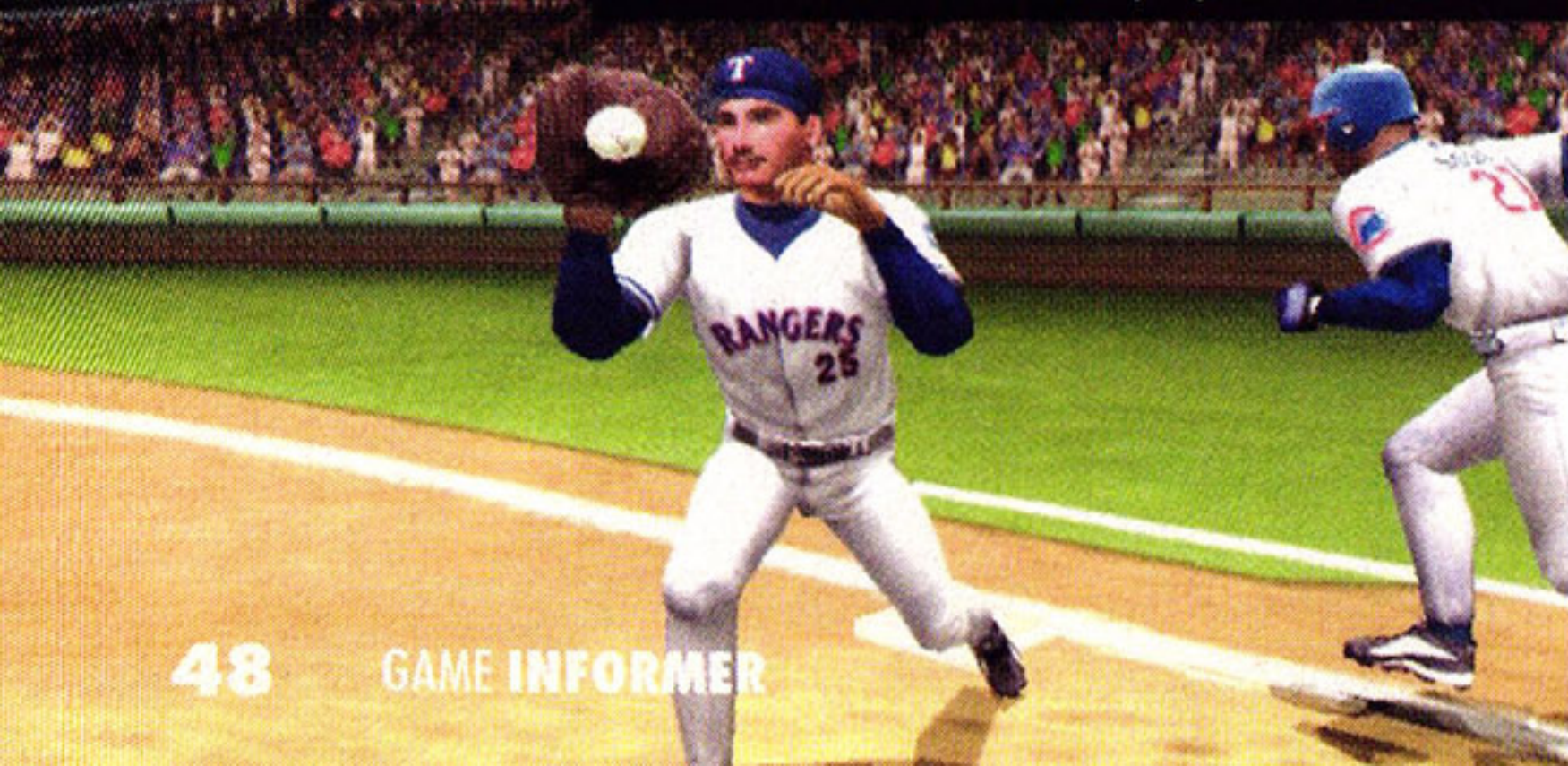
Batting Avg. Home Runs Runs Batted In

Name	Team	HR
Thomas, Frank	CHW	5
Long, Terrence	OAK	3
Koskie, Corey	MIN	3
Mondesi, Raul	NYY	3
Cruz, Jose	TOR	3
Ramirez, Manny	BOS	3
Williams, Bernie	NYY	3
Segui, David	BAL	3

HELP

High Heat has the cleanest statistical screens out of any release this year

Cinematic camera angles are but one of the new additions to the TV-style presentation



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC/PSONE/GBA

HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2004

PUBLISHER 3DO ■ DEVELOPER 3DO ■ RELEASE FEB. 11 (PC), FEB. 18 (PS2, XBOX), MARCH 25 (GBA), APRIL 15 (GC, PSONE)

Over the last few years, this series has established a healthy underground following, but has yet to make a splash in the mainstream. In terms of gameplay and authenticity, no title played better than last year's High Heat. While we'd like to say that the graphical realism was unparalleled as well, High Heat was actually at the bottom of the barrel in this department. To be quite frank, sock puppets holding toothpicks depict a more realistic picture than last year's High Heat.

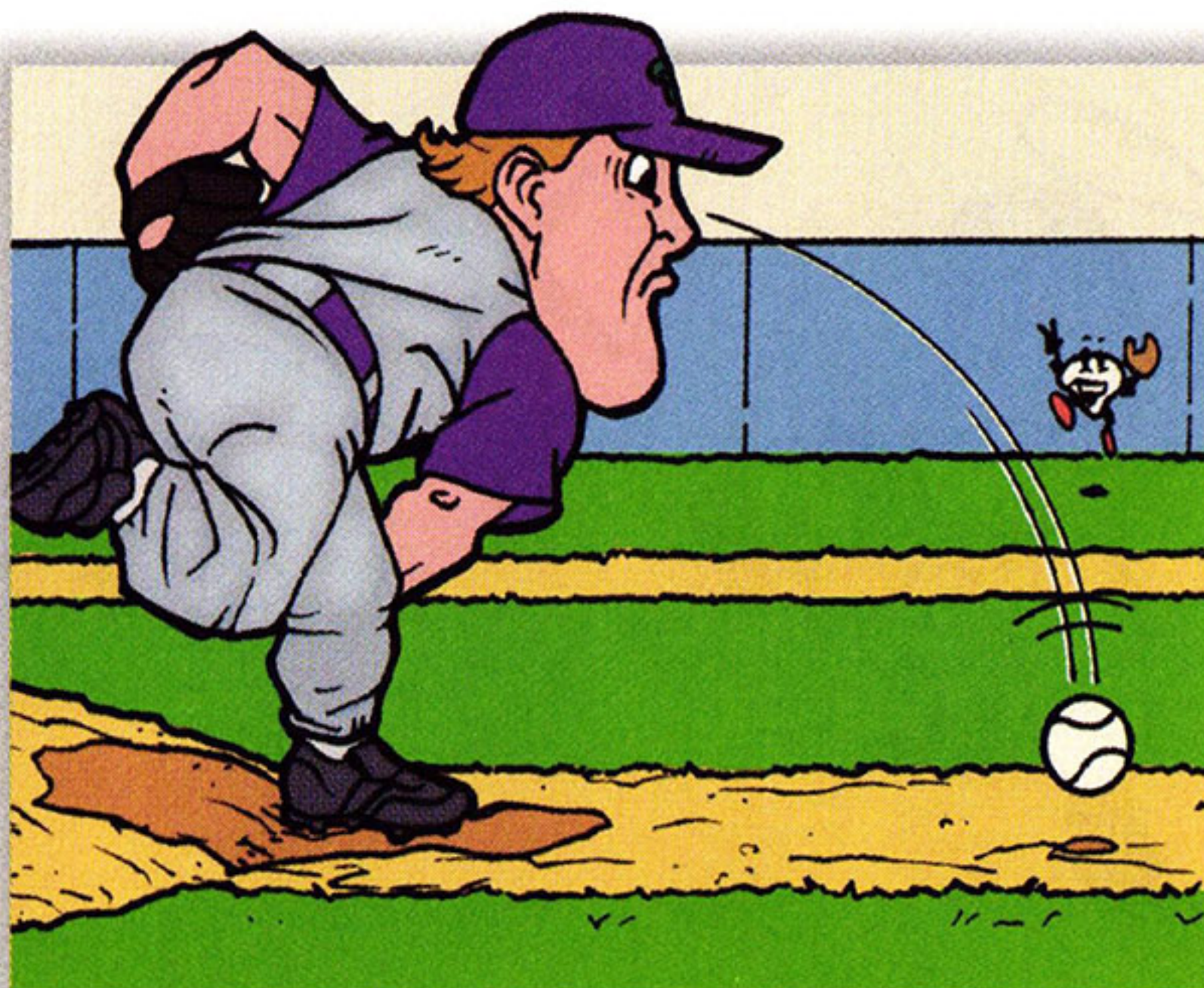
Sadly, the underwhelming visual presentation wasn't High Heat's only drawback. The game also came up short on the fantasy and option fronts. When the create-a-player feature is the most dynamic aspect of the frontend, you know you're in trouble. Rather than playing catch-up for another year, 3DO decided to kill two birds with one stone, as it has enhanced the graphics and installed fairly deep Career and Franchise modes. The annoying Atari 2600-like font from the statistical screens has also been renovated with a flashy new appearance. In many ways, High Heat is finally firing on all cylinders, but it's still far from perfect.

As improved as the player models and stadium details may be, stiff animations, awkward batter swings, and floaty ball physics still haunt this series. Some of the

problems can be subtly toned down as players can now enter a new Tuning menu that allows for the alteration of gameplay attributes. To site a specific problem, you will be able to alter the velocity of pitching to eliminate the slow-pitch softball sensation that is set as the game's default.

Even with authentic dropped third strikes, complete minor league farm systems, and every trackable statistic known to man, High Heat still lacks realism in its look and has been upstaged and outclassed in its gameplay. Despite being one of the few games that clings to the old aim-to-swing hitting system, the batting and pitching interfaces are beginning to show their age – especially when lined up next to EA's MVP. The fielding controls are still as smooth as can be, but again, there's nothing extraordinary or new to it.

While we'd like to say that High Heat will once again be the only game that hardcore baseball fanatics need be concerned with, it now faces stiff competition as many of the other baseball games feature rules that are just as authentic – not to mention featuring better graphics, fantasy options, and overall gameplay performance. High Heat may have the more ergonomic statistic screens, but that's a hollow victory at best.



★ Scouting Report ★

As drastically improved as this game may be, High Heat still comes up short in comparison to the competition. This year's version actually stacks up quite well against last year's batch of games, but lacks the depth or innovative features needed to stand a chance against this year's overhauled games. Even with an entirely new frontend and a hefty graphical upgrade, High Heat doesn't have what it takes to challenge the leaders. Sadly, other games are now matching High Heat's realism in gameplay as well.



XBOX

INSIDE PITCH 2003

■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT ■ DEVELOPER MICROSOFT ■ RELEASE MAY 30

Entering into the frenzied baseball war this late in the game may not be the wisest decision, but Microsoft is determined to get its baseball franchise off of the ground. Whether the name stemmed from a snappy branding specialist or mere coincidence, one can't help but groan at the common link shared between Inside Pitch and Microsoft's basketball title, Inside Drive.

While we'd like to think that Microsoft could start off with a bang and give the competition a run for its money, it appears as though it will be a gradual climb to the top rather than a jumpstart. Instead of trying to match what other baseball games are doing, Microsoft opted to begin with a solid foundation. First comes the gameplay, then, at a later date, the substance. Inside Pitch focuses solely on the 2003 calendar year and doesn't go any further than that. The only fantasy-like mode is Season, and when we say season, we mean just one – where you won't be able to roll into the 2004 schedule or beyond. As disappointing as this is, Inside Pitch does mimic the 2003 season perfectly, as it authenticates everything – right down to 22 of the Expos "home" games in Puerto Rico rather than Montreal.

As bare bones as the frontend may be, there are a few standout features. You'll hopefully be able to sign a fictional rookie and work on their skills in the

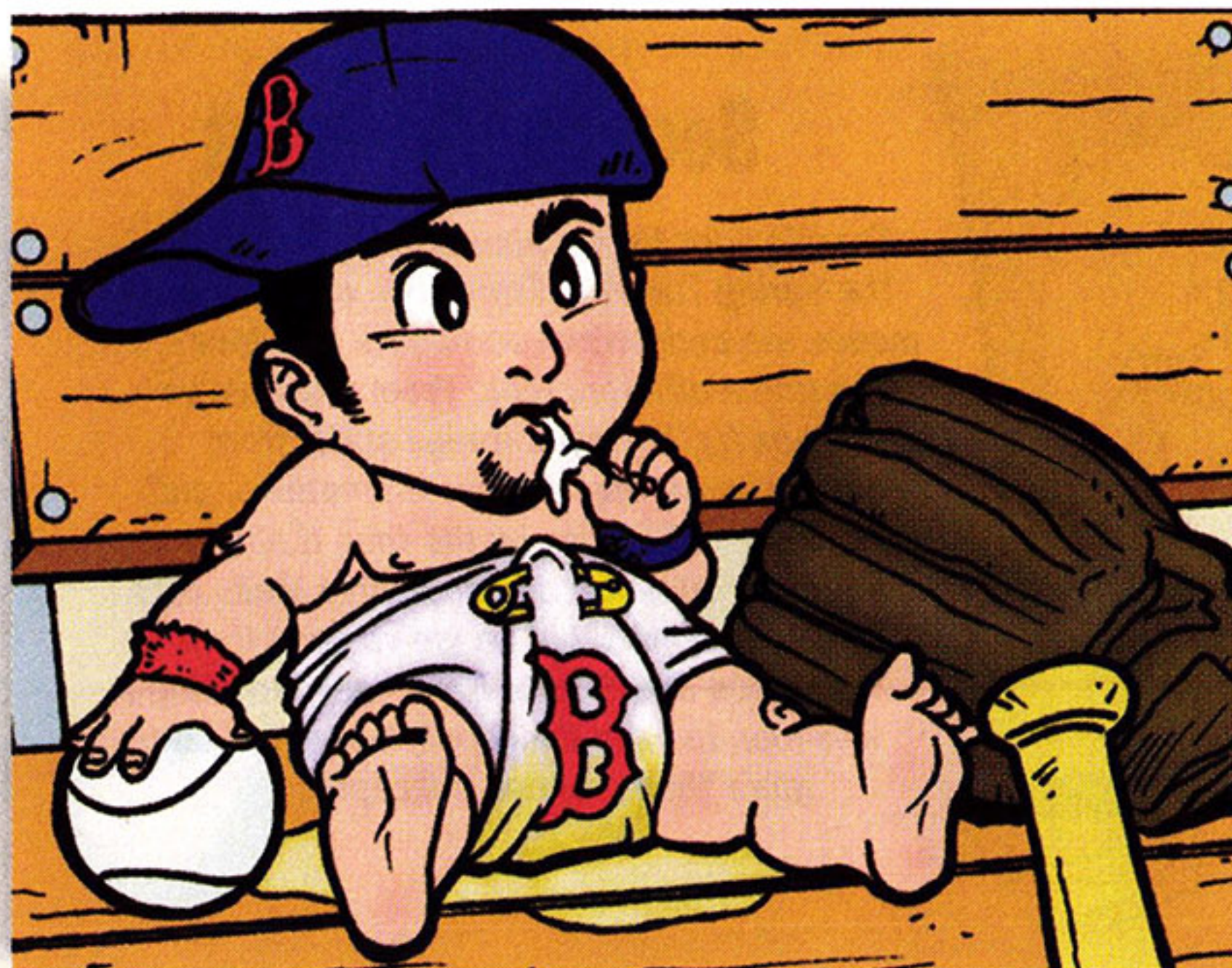
Create/Train Player mode. This unique option features a number of interesting sub-games that will reward players with attribute points that can be used to build their rookie faithful into a superstar. You will also be able to play through historic events from the 2002 season in the scenario-like Championship Challenges mode. One such game pushes players to find a way to break the 7-7 tie in the All-Star Game before Bud Selig sends everyone to the showers. Best of all, though, Inside Pitch is equipped with online functionality. That's right; it may not offer much in the way of options, but it is only one of two games with online gameplay, and the only one with voice support. Oddly, even with this feature in place, you will not be able to download roster updates.

From what we've seen thus far, however, Microsoft is striving for realism with this release, which is obvious when you see the 80+ camera angles and abundance of TV-styled material. Microsoft even went to great lengths and consulted with an actual MLB cameraman to refine the presentation.

Since the release date is much later than the other baseball games, Microsoft is still fine-tuning the gameplay. We have no idea how the batting and pitching interface will pan out, or how exact the rule set will be, but we have a feeling that given the shallowness of the remainder of the game, it will be something to look forward to.

★ Scouting Report ★

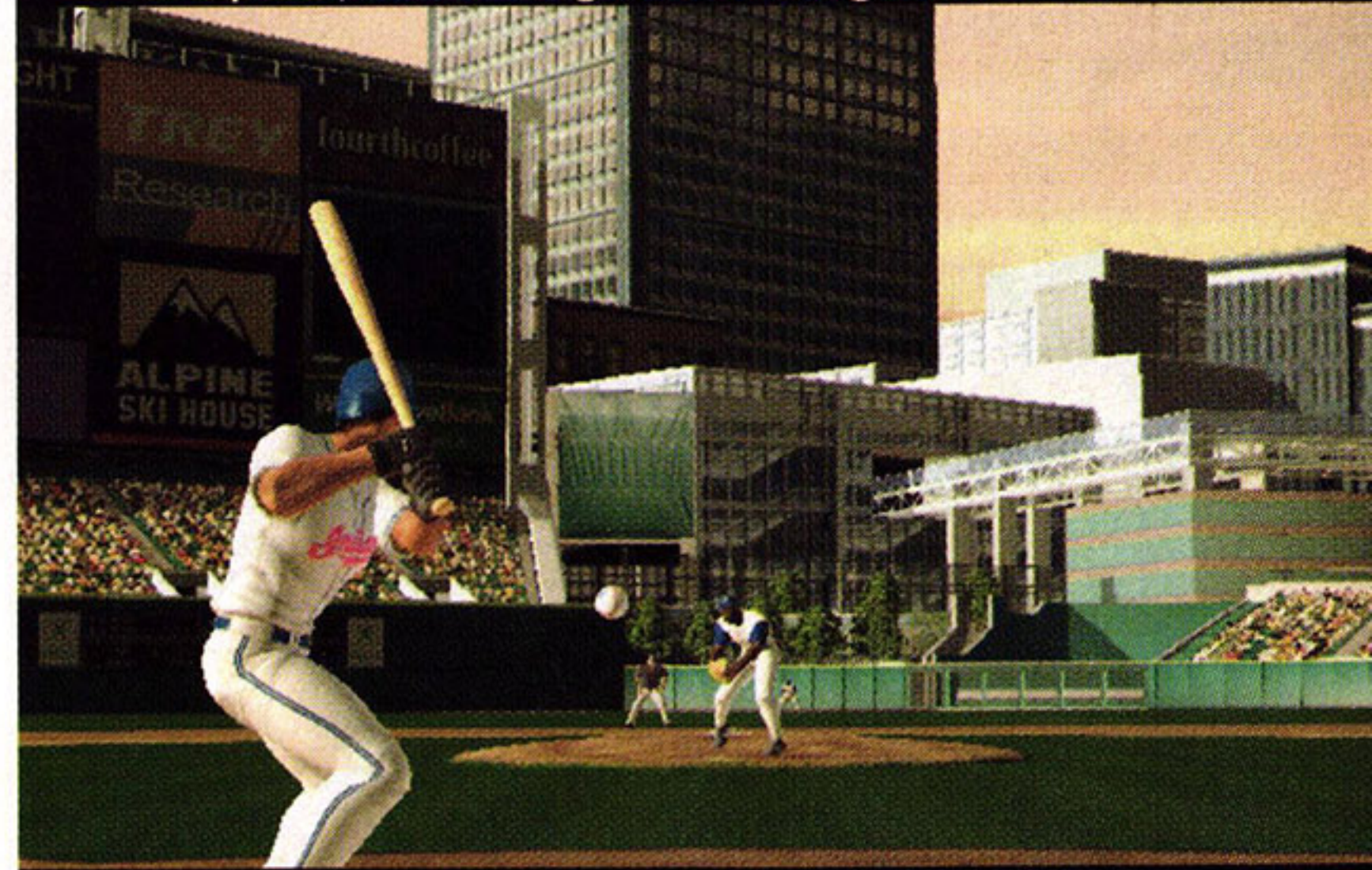
This franchise is still in its infancy, and we applaud Microsoft's decision to focus on the material that matters, but it may be a few years late. The competition has ramped up to unattainable levels; and no matter how entertaining Inside Pitch's gameplay may be in the end, it won't have the fantasy, statistical, or bonus options needed to lure baseball fans into Microsoft's mitt. Nevertheless, the online aspect is entertaining, and could be its saving grace if Acclaim falters with its Internet play in All-Star.



The game makes use of a staggering 80 different TV-style camera views



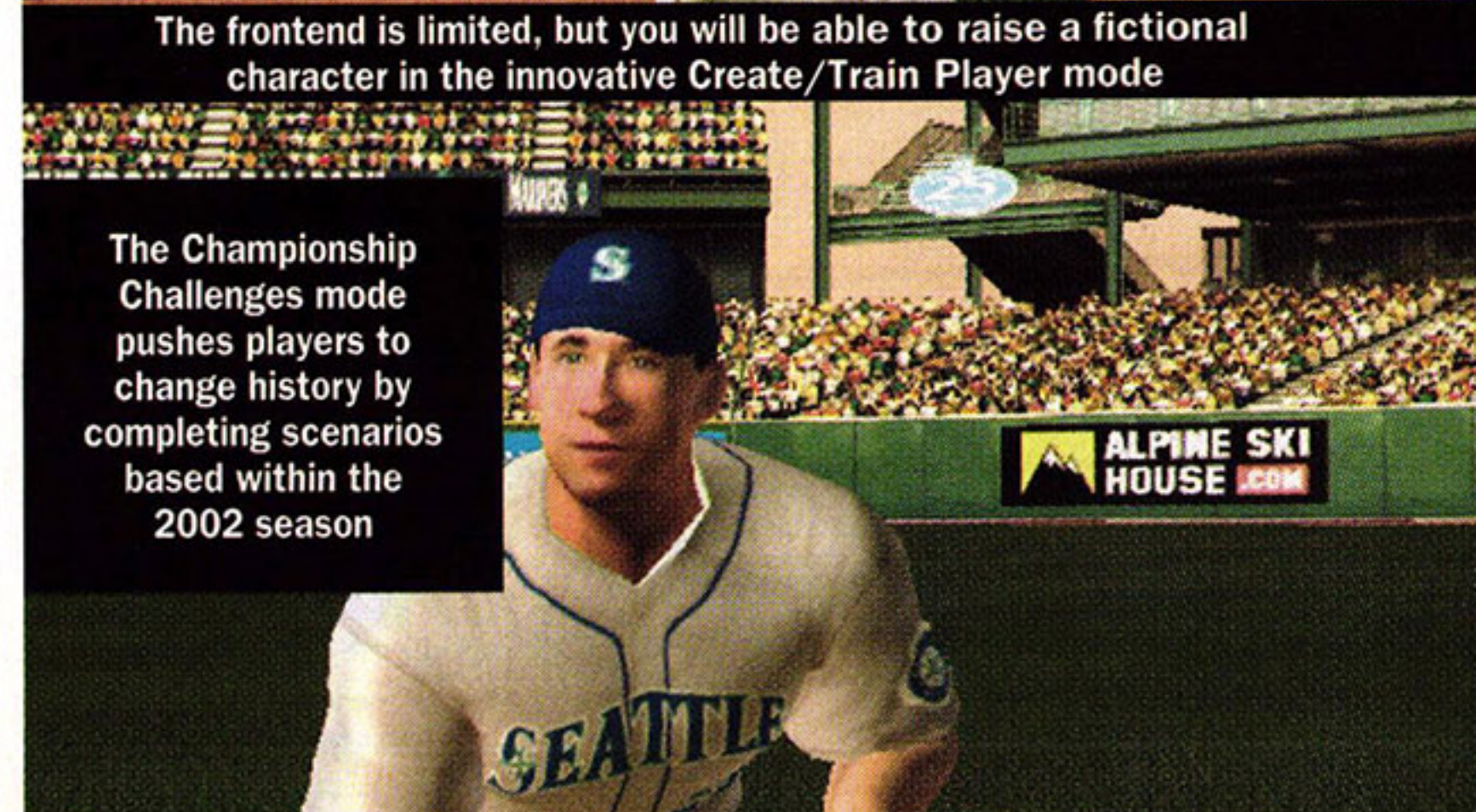
As expected, the Xbox can generate amazing stadium details



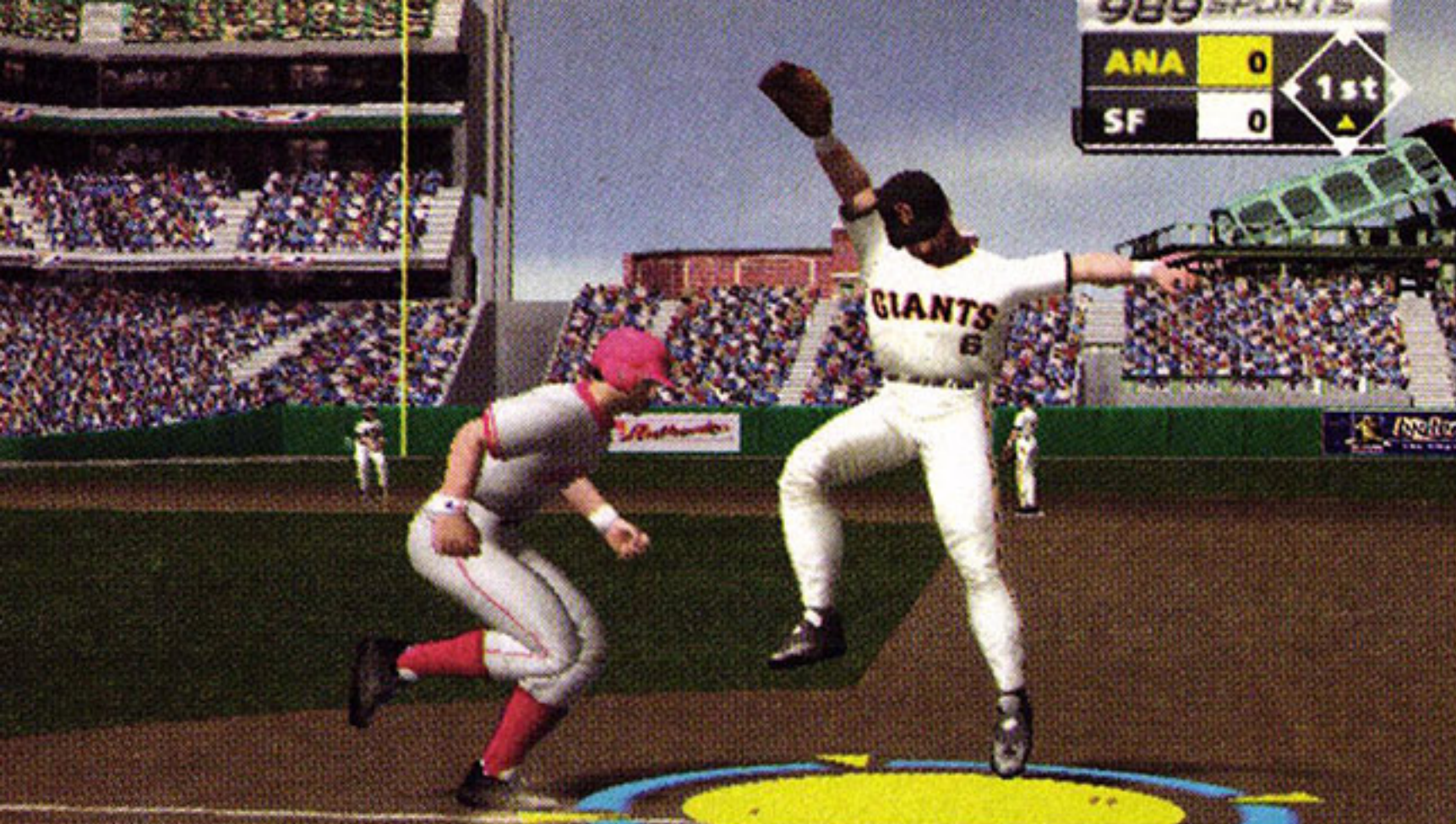
Microsoft has yet to reveal how its batting and pitching interface will fare, but it appears to be fairly simplistic



The frontend is limited, but you will be able to raise a fictional character in the innovative Create/Train Player mode



The Championship Challenges mode pushes players to change history by completing scenarios based within the 2002 season



989 sought out expert advice from Shawn Green, Troy Glaus, Tony Gwynn, Roger Clemens, and Tevorn Hoffman for AI surrounding pitching, defense, hitting, and base running

Chicago
NL Central

Rookie

Value: 4350

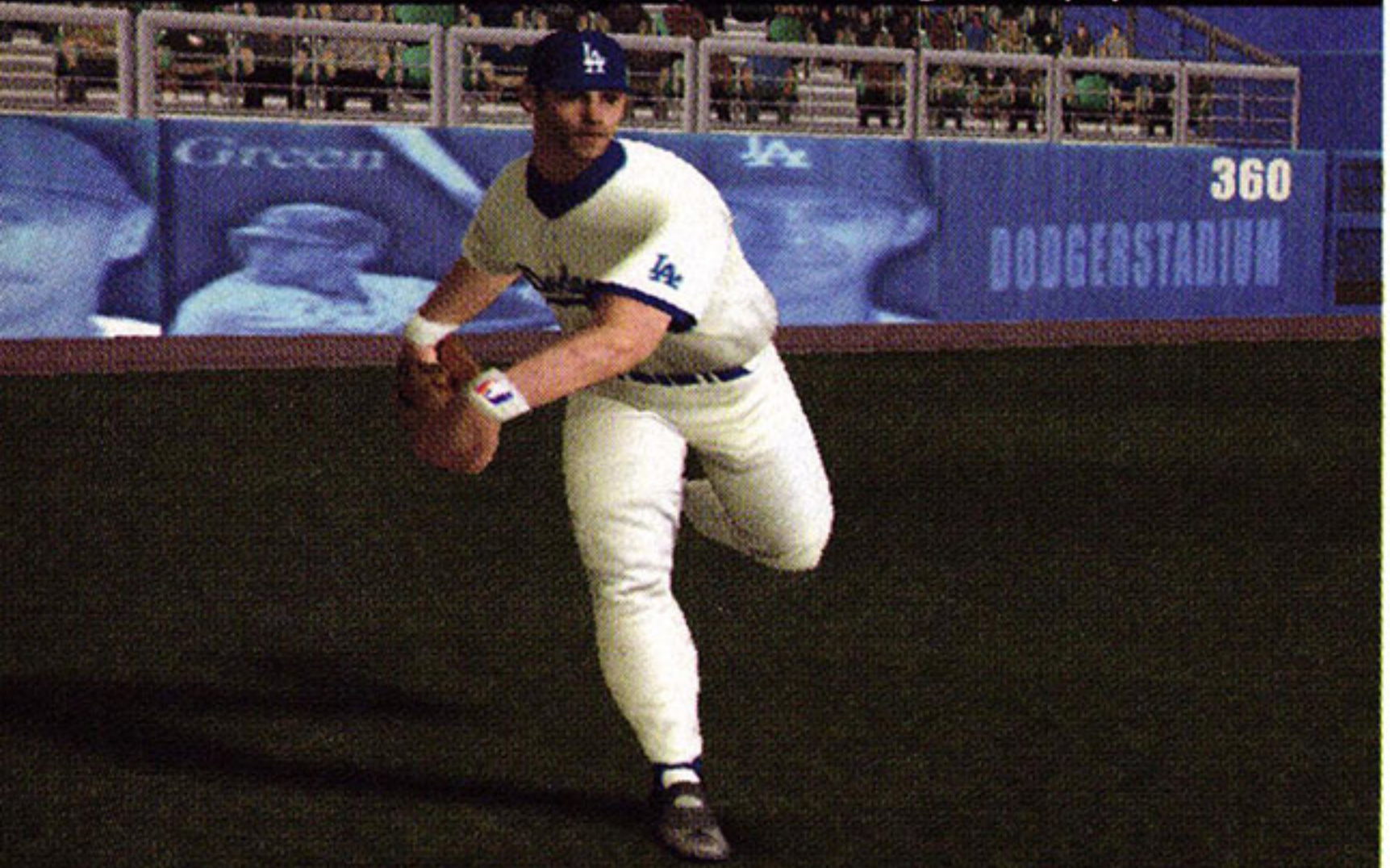
Roster

NAME	POS	RANK
Sheets	P	68
Swindell	P	66
Redmond	C	67
Colbrunn	1B	69
Cairo	2B	63
Feliz	3B	70
Perez	SS	68
Liefer	LF	77
R. Christenson	CF	70
Martinez	RF	76
McEwing	DH	71

When you begin a game in Franchise mode, you'll start with a skeleton team and will need to build a winning ball club



Among the 2,100 motion-captured animations are take-out slides, which you'll see during double play balls



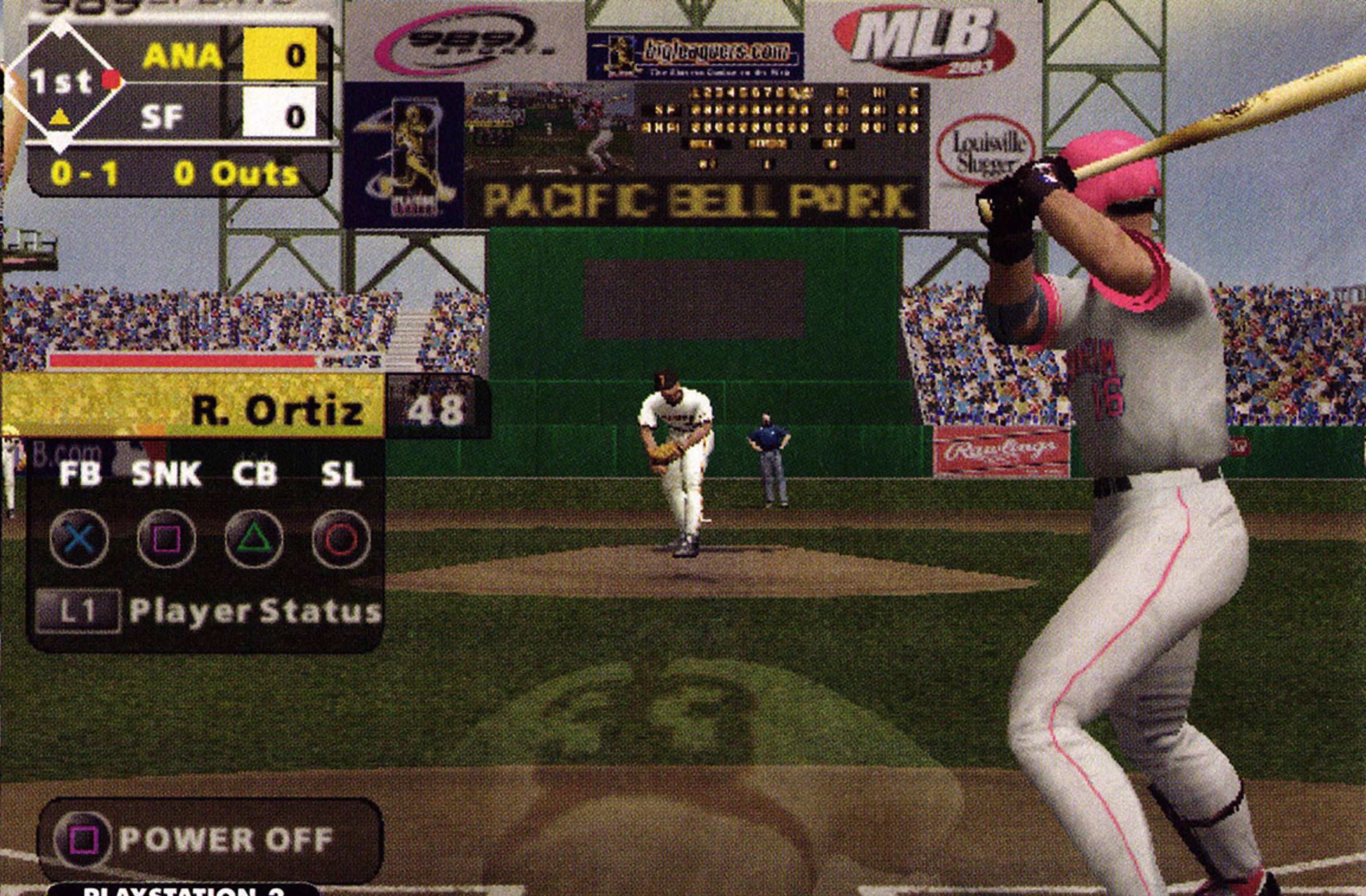
Great detail is showcased within the stadiums

CAREER MODE

In Career mode, the option is available to track a created player as opposed to an entire team

Modify Batting Attributes

Bat Style:	Bagwell	Fly Avg	Ground
Bat Hand:	Right	Day Avg	Night
		Home	Away
		vs LHP	RHP
		Run	83
		Arm	78
		Fielding	70
		Reaction	75
		Clutch	70
		Power	70
		Bat Avg.	70
		Points available:	0



PLAYSTATION 2 MLB 2004

PUBLISHER 989 SPORTS ■ DEVELOPER 989 SPORTS ■ RELEASE MARCH 11

Days before last year's spring training commenced, 989 pulled the plug on the next-generation incarnation of its MLB franchise and opted to wait until next season. Given the quality (or the lack thereof) of other 989 titles that have hit the market, this delay came as a surprise, but one can only wonder what the reasoning behind the cancellation was. Nevertheless, the extra year in development could only produce a more dynamic product.

Despite the high-end polish and noticeable enhancements in the graphical department, MLB 2004 still clings tightly to its 32-bit formula. The gameplay speed has increased a tad and the control is much smoother, but the functionality hasn't changed too terribly much. The batting and pitching controls once again make use of sophisticated cursor-based mechanics that allow players to accurately determine pitch placement and switch between power and contact swings. You'll now see that the strike zone is scaleable to the batters' height and they now have sweet spots on their bats. In Season, Career, and Franchise modes, player performances are based on hot and cold streaks, which is denoted by the fluctuation of batting cursor sizes. If a hitter takes one for the team and gets nailed on the noggin by a beanball, he'll be able to charge the mound and exact revenge. Of course, he'll be sent to the showers and may find himself faced with a league-

enforced suspension.

The most exciting additions to this year's installment of MLB don't take place on the diamond, but rather in the front office. In Career mode, you'll have the option to track the day-to-day activities of an entire team or simply concentrate on the performance of one created player. The Franchise mode boasts a number of interesting and innovative options as well. The team you start with has a skeleton roster of has-beens and no-name players. So, if you were to select the Cubs as your team, a jobber named Martinez will replace Sosa in right field. To assemble a winning franchise, you'll need to excel in gameplay to earn points that can be used to sign superstars. For instance, five wins in a row will generate 300 points. Individual player feats are worth something as well. Every home run will bring in 20 points, and every stolen base another five. Conversely, points will be deducted for losing. If you don't enjoy playing the game, 989 has also included a Manager mode where you can monitor everything from bullpen activity to scouting reports.

The amount of material that this game has to offer is definitely in line with All-Star's and World Series', but its graphical prowess and attention to the rules of the sport are still lacking. The player models look sharp, yet the animations don't embody the level of realism that its competitors offer.



★ Scouting Report ★

There's a lot to like about MLB's frontend. The Spring Training, Franchise, and Career modes are conceptual standouts that give the game a different look. From what we've seen thus far, however, it may suffer from problematic AI, unattractive animations, and balancing difficulties by the time it ships. One can't question the innovative ideas 989 has implemented, but as we've seen from numerous 989 Sports franchises, creating a well-rounded and finely polished game takes more than creative concepts.



FEATURE

The new pitching/batting interface brings about the realism of baseball more so than any other game

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

MVP BASEBALL 2003

■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER EA CANADA ■ RELEASE MARCH 11 (PS2, XBOX), JUNE 2 (PC)

TEAM SELECT

ANGELS

54 56 54 40

BUDGET 211200
PAYROLL 153650

RIVAL TEAMS

FRANCHISE GOALS

- ✗ 7 Seasons over .600
- ✗ .700 vs. Rivals in 10 Seasons
- ✗ .800 Division Record in 5 Seasons
- ✗ 350 Road Wins in 7 Seasons
- ✗ 3 Pitchers with 20 Wins in a Season
- ✗ Win 2 Cy Young Awards
- ✗ Win 15 Consecutive Games
- ✗ Lead the AL in Wins (Team)
- ✗ Have a 40 HR / 40 SB Season (Individual)
- ✗ Achieve 20/25 Milestones

In Franchise mode, you'll be asked to complete a unique number of goals within 10 years. One such feat is to record a .700 winning percentage against your team's three rival clubhouses

The world may view Electronic Arts as the leader in video game sports, but its reign of supremacy is beginning to disintegrate. This is especially apparent in baseball. Last year's edition of Triple Play Baseball proved to be generations behind the competition. Knowing full well that its series was in dire need of a facelift, EA opted to bury its troubled Triple Play franchise and start with a clean slate.

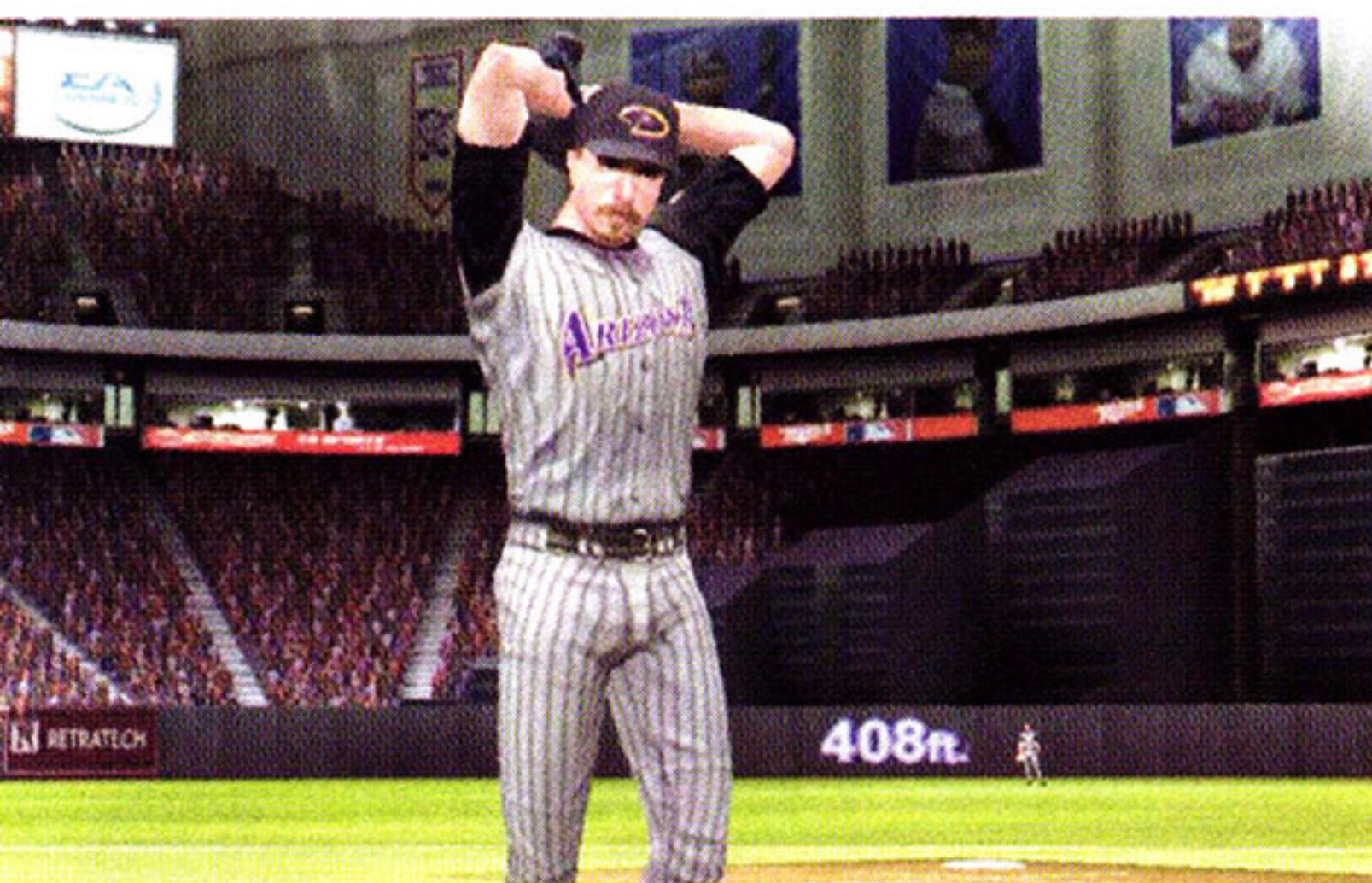
With the new name comes a new game. MVP Baseball is essentially a rookie attempt on EA's part. Unlike the previous entries in this series, EA opted to keep this game in-house at its Canadian development studio, which is already proving to be a brilliant move. As illustrated throughout every inch of this product's coding, EA is gunning for the top. Rather than following the trends that the competition has established, EA is essentially rewriting the rules as it strives to innovate rather than duplicate. The

most noteworthy idea that EA has dreamed up is actually a solution to the age-old problem of human controlled pitching.

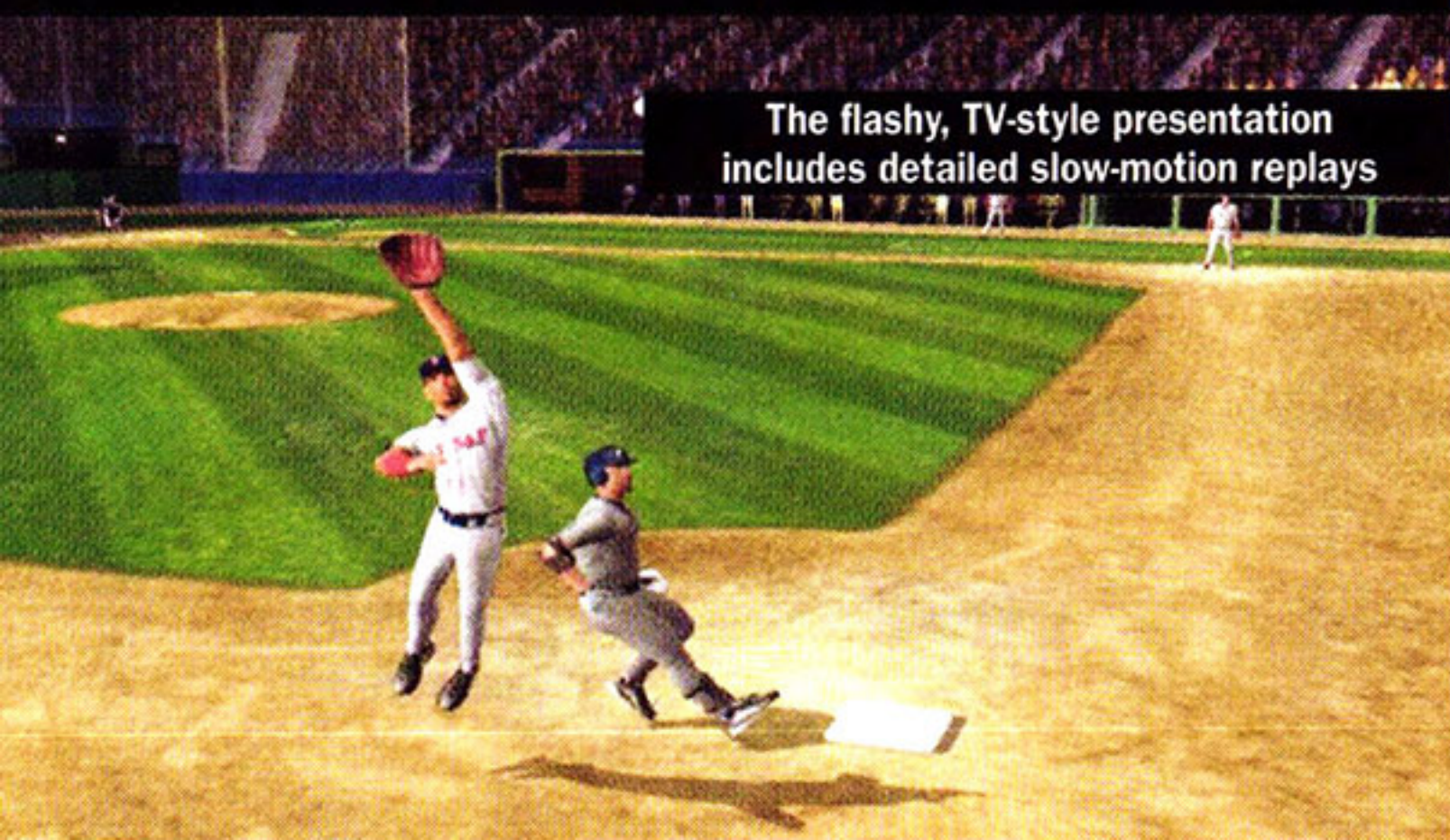
If you've played a fair share of baseball games before, you know that the ratio of strikes to balls is way out of whack. Truth be told, in most of the titles on the market, you can complete an entire game without throwing one errant ball. EA's resolution brings about the realism of the sport, yet appears to be inspired by Sony's Hot Shots Golf series. When the pitcher begins his windup, a meter that monitors the momentum and accuracy of the pitch appears. It's up to the player to time his or her button presses with the meter's moving cursor. If your timing is off, the pitch won't be as accurate. You may serve up meat or miss the strike zone completely. Naturally, the hit zones on the meter will shrink as the pitcher's fatigue increases. It's a beautiful system and a breakthrough that virtual baseball has been in dire need of.

While the batting functionality remains solely based on timing, the type of contact that you make will be affected by hot and cold zones, swing types, and the hitter's ratings. EA has also implemented a picture-in-picture display for baserunning. This system allows players to monitor the activity on the base paths at all times, and is instrumental in stealing, pick-offs, and fielding.

The gameplay has a fresh approach and user-friendly functionality, but the AI is a tad suspect and fielder movements seem slow. As always, the visual material is as photo-realistic as can be, and for the first time in years, EA's game finally has a deep frontend. You'll be able to follow a team through unlimited seasons in a uniquely styled Franchise mode that pushes gamers to complete a specific number of goals within 10 years or they'll lose their job. This means that you'll have to balance budgets and monitor scouting reports among other things.



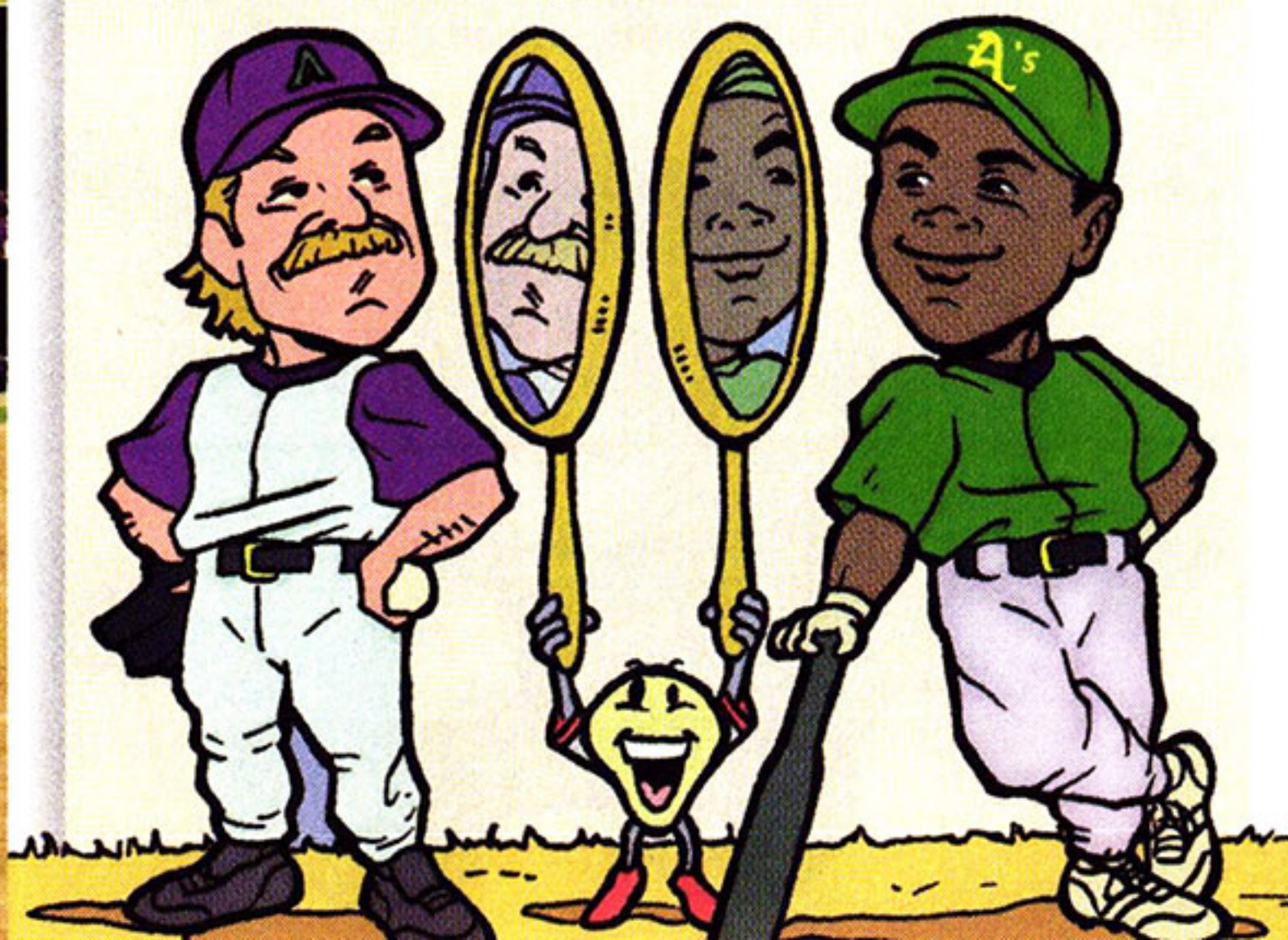
When you simulate games in Franchise mode, if a particular game seems exciting as the numbers flash onto the scoreboard, you'll have the option of intervening and joining the game in progress



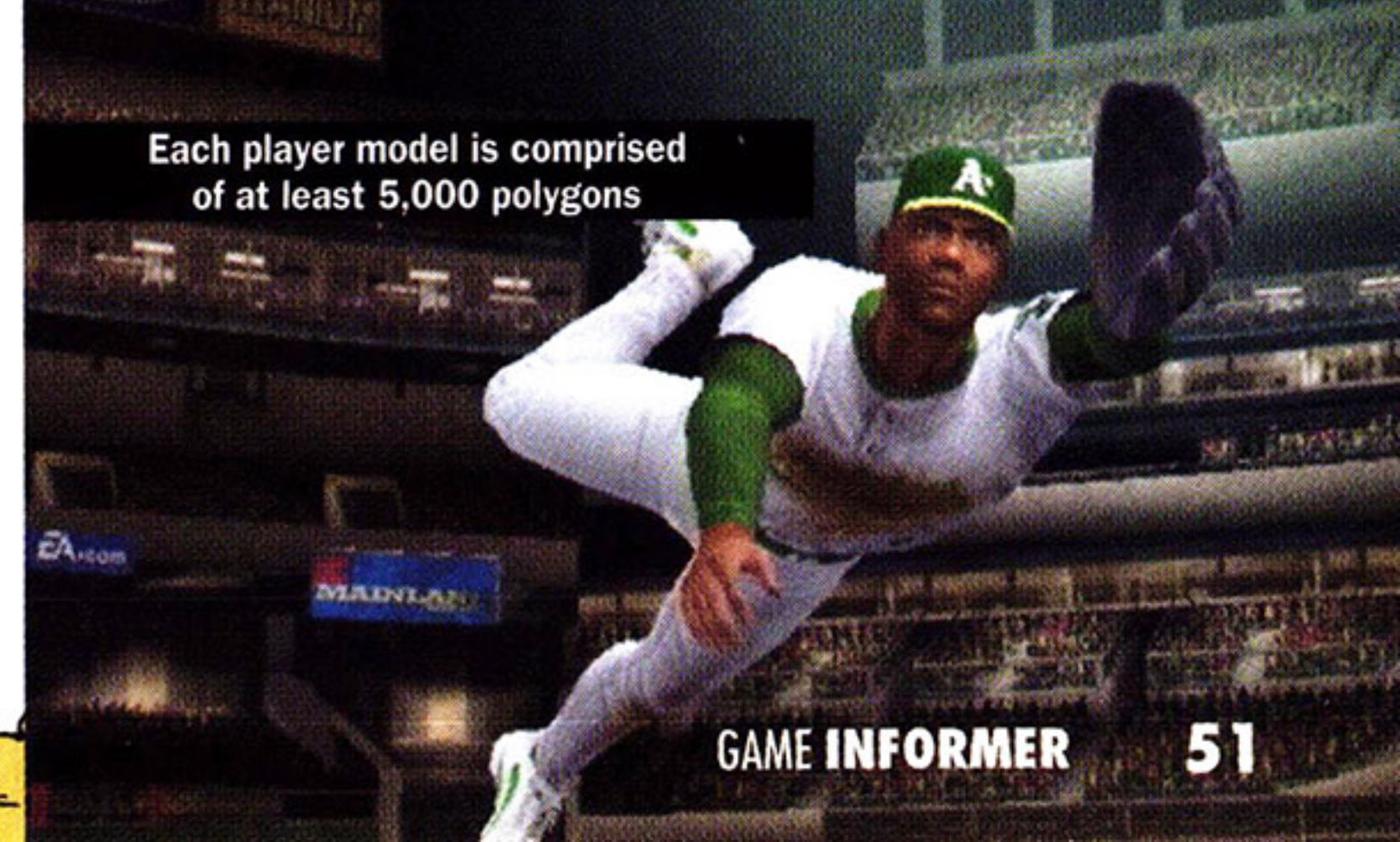
The flashy, TV-style presentation includes detailed slow-motion replays

★ Scouting Report ★

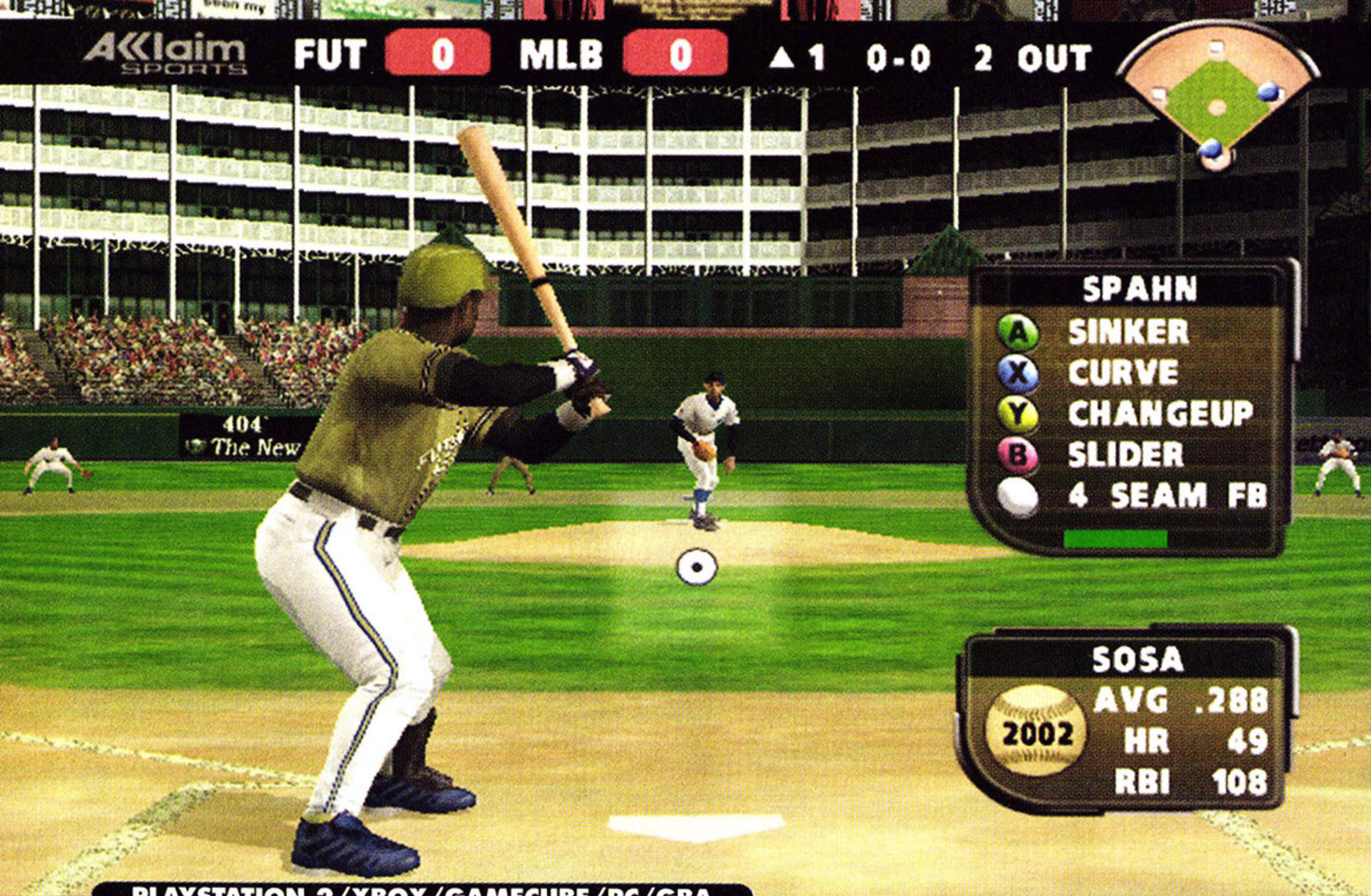
As the name implies, MVP Baseball could very well be the most valuable game of the year. EA strove to reinvent itself, but in doing so, may have reinvented all of video game baseball as a whole. Without a doubt, MVP has the most unique gameplay package. The batting/pitching interface is the closest any company has come to accurately depicting this sport, and the unique twists in Franchise mode set it even further apart from the pack. As outstanding of an effort as it is, the questionable fielding and uncharacteristic AI may hold it back from greatness.



The unique baserunning windows allow players to monitor runner activity at all times



Each player model is comprised of at least 5,000 polygons



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC/GBA

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004

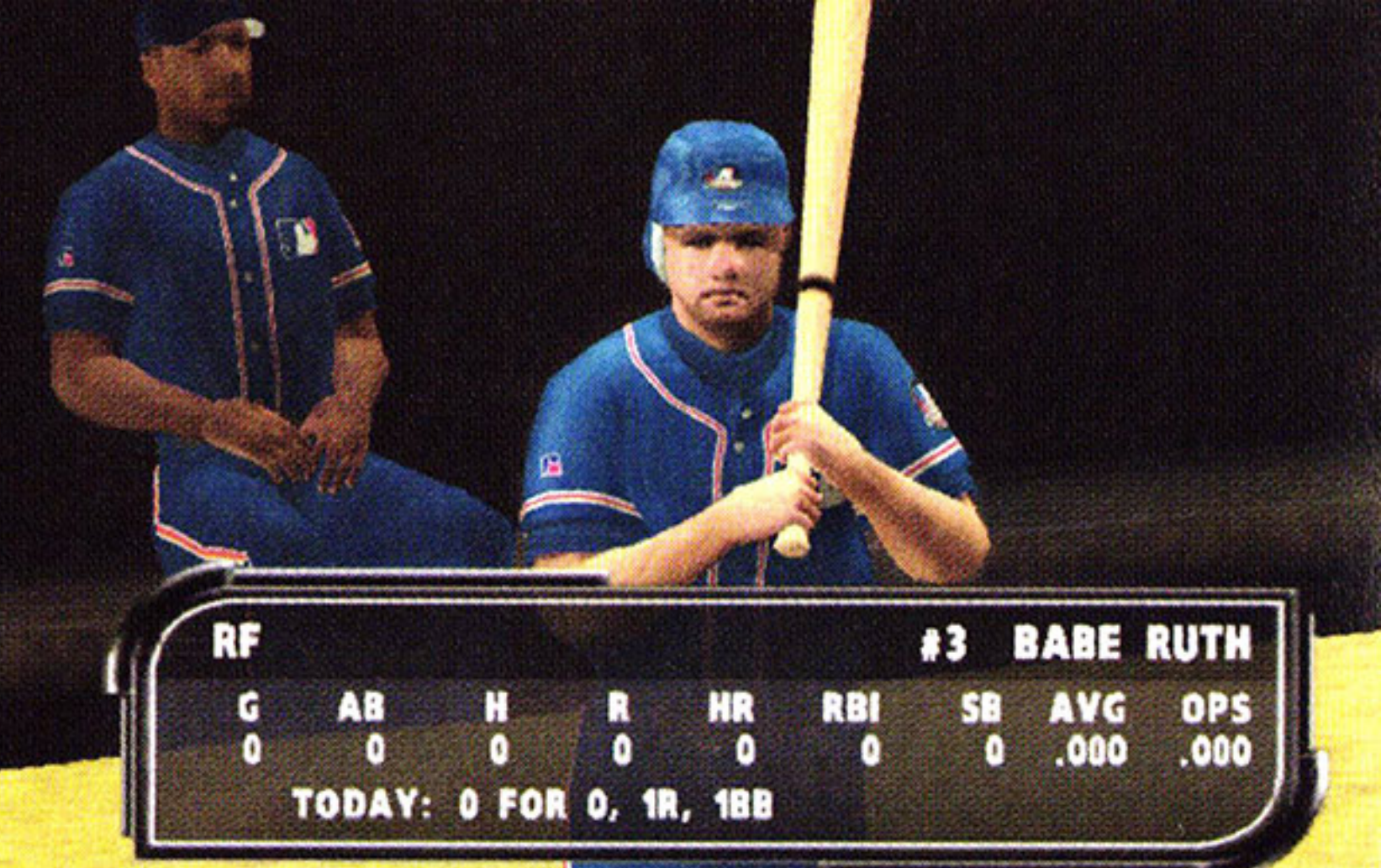
■ PUBLISHER ACCLAIM ■ DEVELOPER ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 28

The gameplay might not be as exciting as one would hope, and it may end up being a little buggy around the edges, but one can't help but fall head-over-heels in love with this game. The amount of new material Acclaim has incorporated into All-Star Baseball 2004 not only dwarfs every other baseball game on the market, it outperforms all sports games as a whole. With 110 retired legends from the MLB and Negro Leagues, classic stadiums, an enhanced Expansion mode, trivia, ballpark tours, a Scenario mode, collectible trading cards, a rookie Tutorial with Derek Jeter, online play, in-game saves, downloadable rosters, and over 80 other new features and improvements, Acclaim has forged the ultimate baseball game.

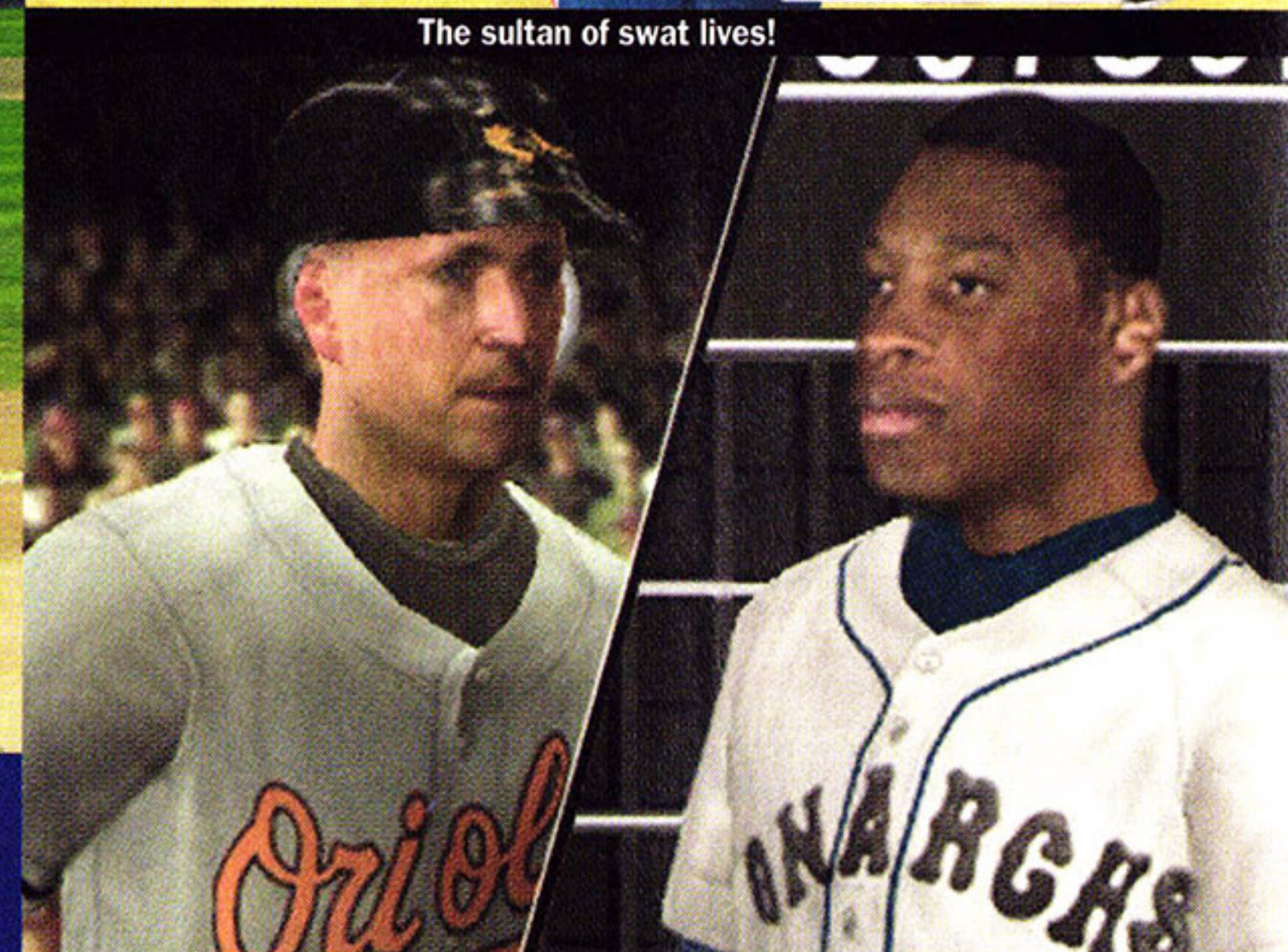
Very little has changed in terms of gameplay or TV-style presentation, but Acclaim has worked extensively on

improving the fielding, batting AI, and base running aspects. As has been the case since the series' inception, the main concern with this year's version is how buggy it will be by the time it hits retail shelves. As many of you may remember, previous incarnations would completely crash as your player would step out of the batter's box and never return. Last year's game was fairly bug-free, and seeing that this follow-up is essentially an update, this should remain the case.

Acclaim's real focus was to create the most impressive frontend known to man. Everything you could ever want is included in some fashion. The fan-favorite Expansion mode now boasts more options, fictional teams, on-field mascots, and stadium choices. The Franchise mode contains an unparalleled number of statistics and managerial options, and players will be able to keep their rosters up to date to the day with the roster download feature. If the fantasy



The sultan of swat lives!



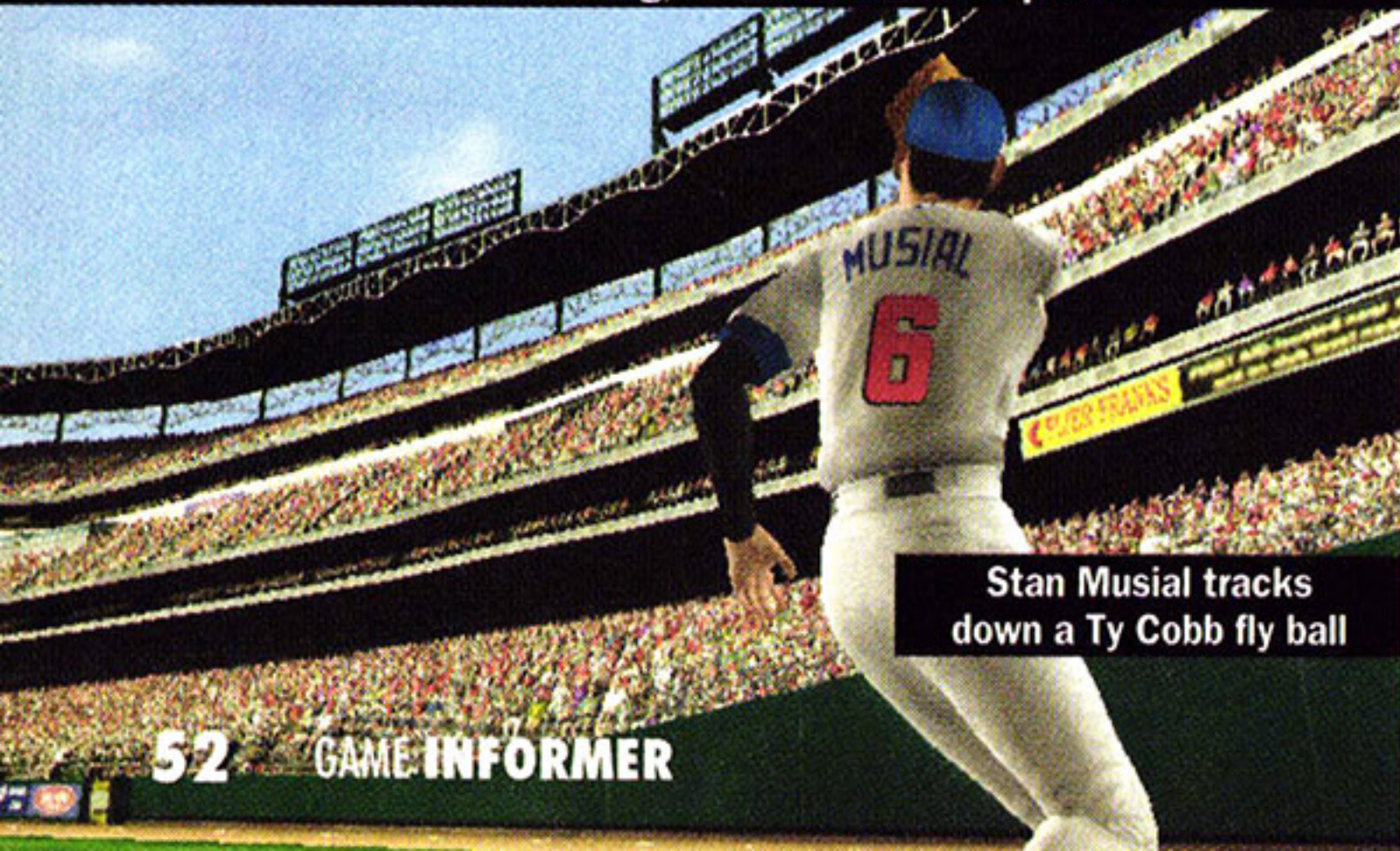
The attention to detail in the player faces and uniforms is second to none. Acclaim actually cyber-scanned over 500 players

material is too much for you to handle, you can always compete in a pick-up game, watch real game footage in the multimedia section, or rewrite history in the "what if"-like Scenario mode. Of course, you can always spend some of the cash you've earned to buy a wax pack of trading cards. Who knows; you may even find a card that unlocks a bonus team, uniform, or stadium. There are 70 playable teams, 75 stadiums, and 200 uniforms to unearth in total. You'll even have the chance to play ball in proposed concept stadiums, such as the Minnesota Twins' forthcoming outdoor ballpark.

In all honesty, we could gush for pages over all of the new material that has been included. Acclaim went out of its way to take video game baseball to the next level, although we were hoping that the gameplay would have made larger leaps than it has. Regardless, All-Star is this year's title to beat.



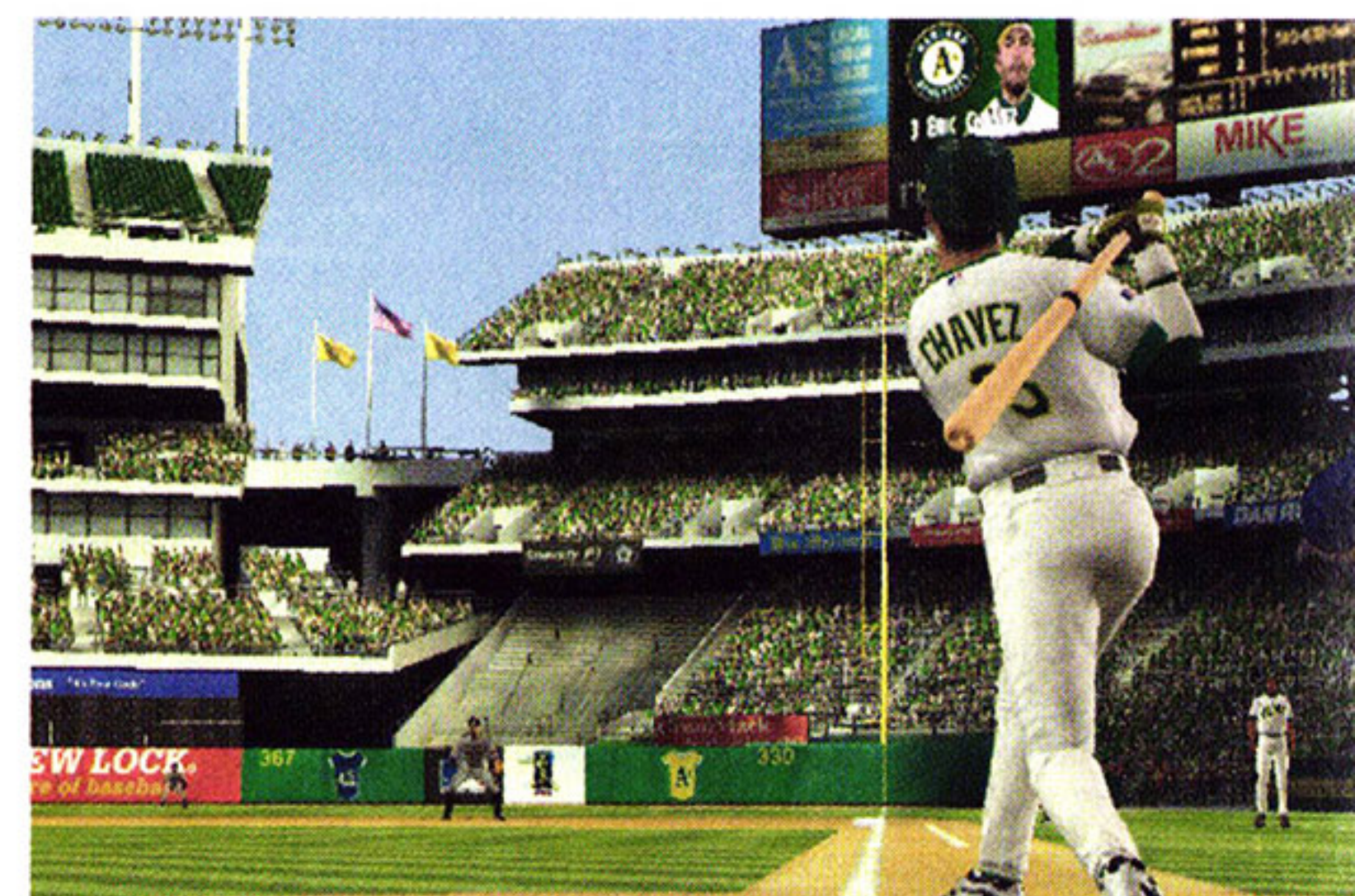
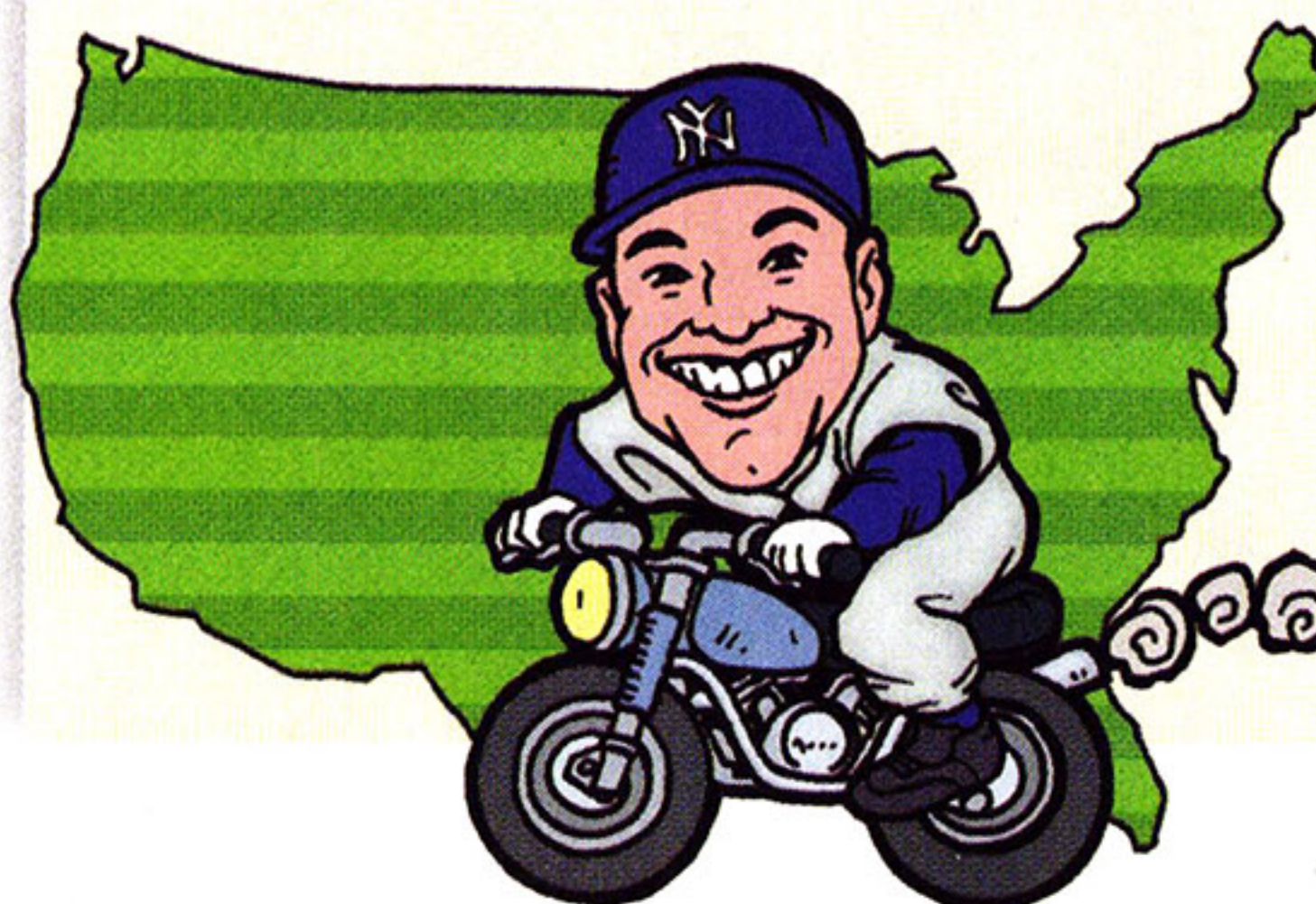
Derek Jeter provides commentary for the stadium tours, rookie training, and scenario descriptions



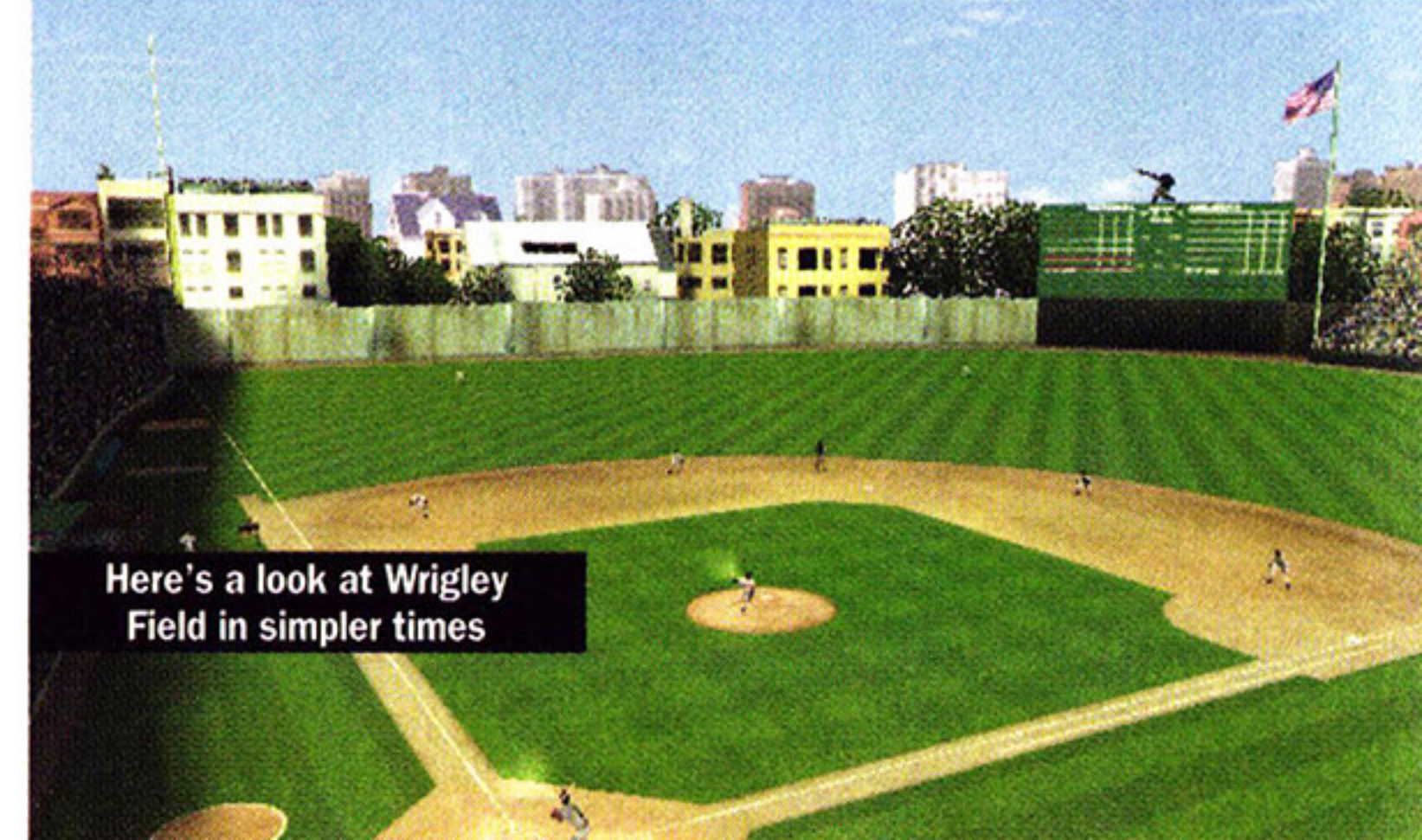
Stan Musial tracks down a Ty Cobb fly ball

★ Scouting Report ★

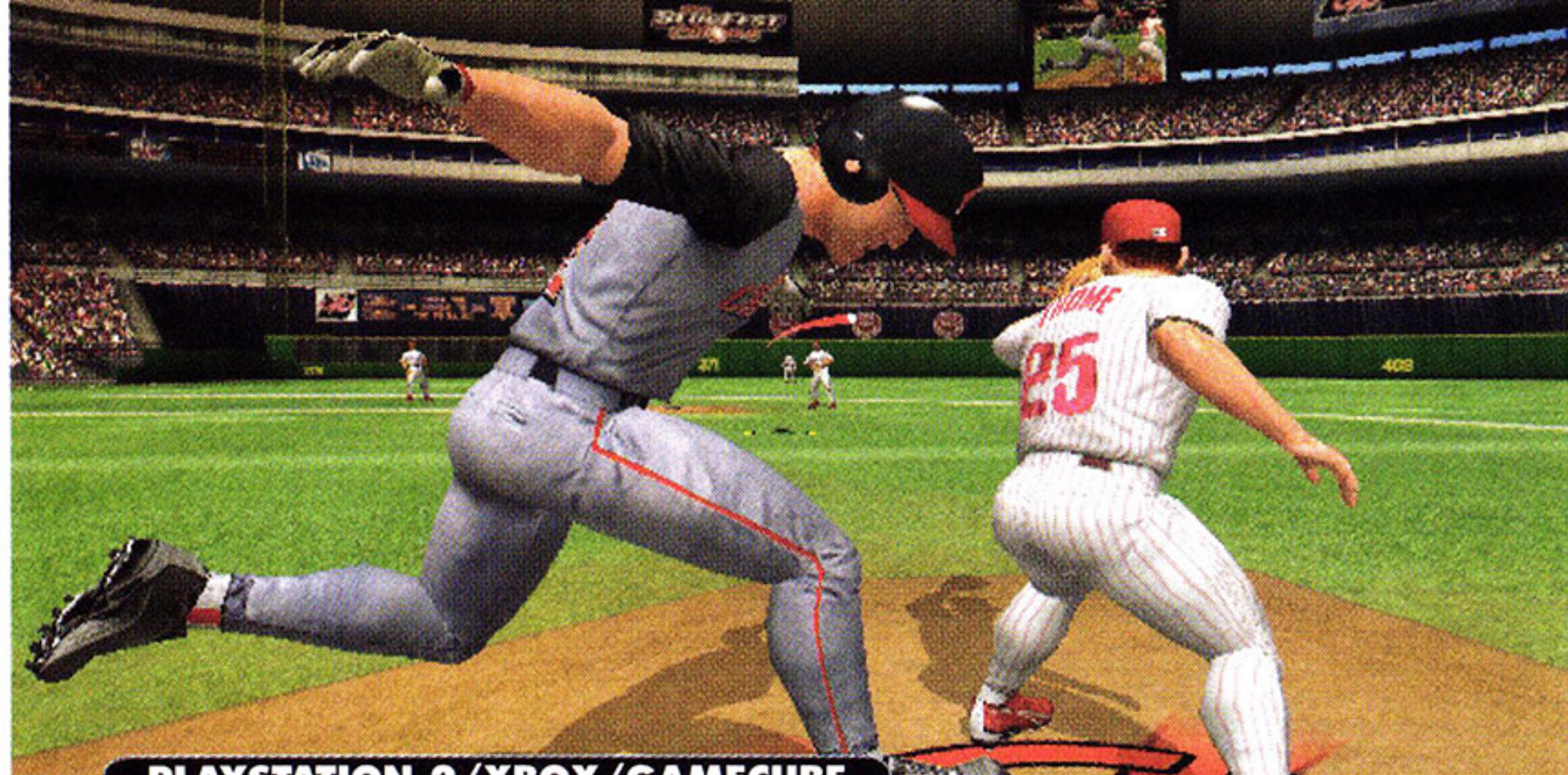
Once again, All-Star Baseball receives Game Informer's vote as the most desirable game of the season. EA and Sega are lobbying to steal Acclaim's thunder on the gameplay front, but nothing comes close to touching All-Star's deep and rewarding selection of game modes, bonus features, and historical aspects. Gamers may turn toward the more gameplay-centric titles on the market to suit their gaming needs, but All-Star will more than likely be this season's most complete and rewarding release. It will also unite gamers from one coast to another with its comprehensive online play for PlayStation 2, Xbox, and perhaps even GameCube.



The average stadium is comprised of over 40,000 polygons



Here's a look at Wrigley Field in simpler times

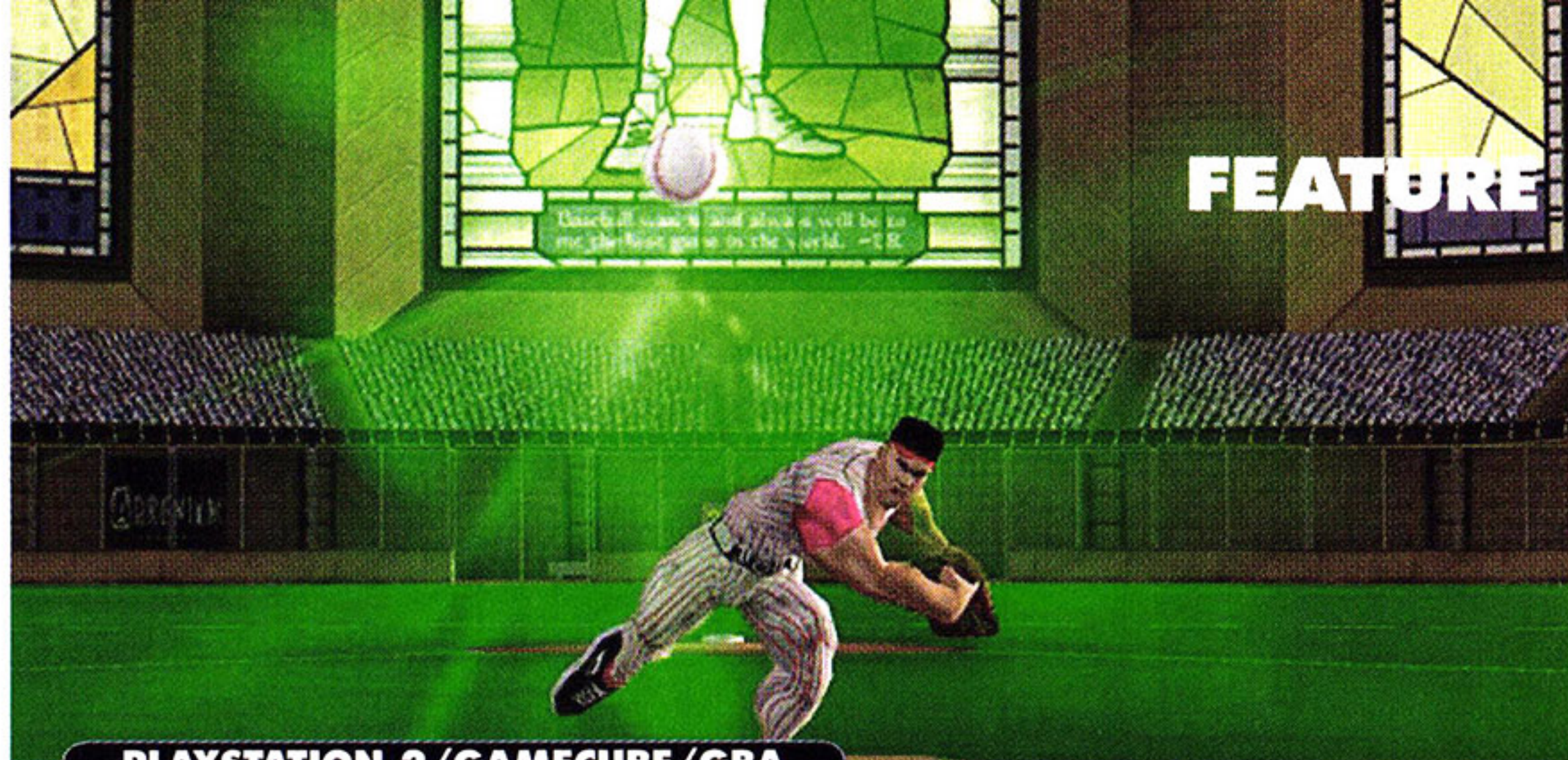


PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

MLB SLUGFEST 2004

■ PUBLISHER MIDWAY ■ DEVELOPER MIDWAY ■ RELEASE MARCH 17

If sales are any indication as to how a professional sport should be played, baseball is in desperate need of violence. Midway's inaugural arcade-styled baseball game flew off of store shelves, and judging by the improvements that have been made to the follow-up, Slugfest 2004 should be just as successful. With the ability to create a team, customize replays, and compete in a home run derby, Midway has given players more to tinker with outside of the riotous gameplay. Of course, charging the mound, crushing mile-long homers, and blazing across the base paths are the main attractions. Joining in the fun of being energized, pitchers can now catch fire and mow down even the best of contact hitters with outrageous corkscrew and whirlwind pitches.



FEATURE

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/GBA

CRUSHED BASEBALL 2004


■ PUBLISHER BAM ENTERTAINMENT ■ DEVELOPER ADRENEM ■ RELEASE JUNE 3

The success of Slugfest has spawned a competitor from the least likely of places. Bam Entertainment is entering the baseball foray with this fantastical title. While the MLB license is noticeably absent, some of the big league players, such as Barry Bonds and Barry Zito, are included. The look of the game is decidedly cartoon-like and the gameplay is nothing short of absurd. By completing specific goals during a game, players will unlock special Mojo abilities that will enhance their performance. Hitting a homer through a stained glass window will reward you with such a power. Trick pitches, over-the-wall catches, female characters, and playable mascots are all a part of this wacky baseball alternative.



★ COMPARISON STATS ★

	HIGH HEAT MLB 2004	MVP BASEBALL 2003	ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004	WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3	MLB 2004	INSIDE PITCH 2003
Platform(s)	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSone, PC, GBA	PS2, Xbox, PC	PS2, Xbox, GC, PC, GBA	PS2, Xbox	PS2	Xbox
Developer	3DO	EA Canada	Acclaim Studios Austin	Visual Concepts & Blue Shift	989 Sports	Microsoft
Publisher	3DO	EA Sports	Acclaim	Sega Sports	989 Sports	Microsoft
Authentic 2003 Schedule	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Franchise Mode	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	No
Number of Continuing Seasons	Unlimited Years	Unlimited Years	20	Unlimited Years	1 (Franchise), 10 (Career)	None
Fantasy Draft	YES	No	YES	YES	YES	YES
Career Statistics	YES	No	YES	YES	YES	No
Year-by-Year Career Statistic Breakdown	YES	No (only one year and current season)	YES (but varies by platform)	YES	YES	No
Fictional Rookies in Franchise	YES	YES	YES	YES	No	No
Retiring Players in Franchise	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	No
User Stat Tracking	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of Stats Tracked	Over 200	75	40	46	200	55
Number of League Leader Stats Tracked	30 Batting, 35 Pitching, 12 Fielding	21	20	41	20	32
Number of Player Attribute Categories	52	40	20	106	38	TBA
CPU-Offered Trades	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES (balanced)	YES
End of Season Awards	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Hall of Fame Elections	YES	No	YES	YES	YES	No
Number of Motion-Captured Animations	1,500	1,500	2,400	2,000	2,100	1,200
Number of Star Player Animations	100	150	100	400	All Players	TBA
Number of Star Player Facial Maps	325	250	500	500	All Players	300
Number of Polys in Player	6,000	5,000	5,000	6,000	6,000	8,000
Number of Polys in Stadium	12,000	11,000	40,000	13,000	12,000-15,000	10,000-13,000
Number of Camera Angles	7 Batting, 7 Fielding	3 Batting, 3 Fielding	5	4	5 Batting, 3 Fielding	TBA
Retro Jerseys	No	No	YES (200+)	YES (every team)	No	No
Retired and Old-Time Players	No	No	YES (100+)	YES (25)	No	No
Online Play	No	YES (PC only)	YES	No	No	YES
Online Chat	No	YES (PC only)	No	No	No	YES (voice)
Online Tournaments	No	YES (PC only)	No	No	No	TBA
Online Roster Updates	YES	YES (PC only)	YES	No	No	No
Number of Different Pitch Types	27 (with 70 different pitch trajectories)	10	15 (with 4 grades and 2 types =120)	9	8	9
Wild Pitches & Passed Balls	YES	No	YES	YES	No	YES
Dropped Third Strikes	YES	No	YES	YES	No	YES
Broken Bats	No	YES	YES	No	YES	No
Umpire Arguments	No	No	No	No	YES	YES
Onfield Coaches & Managers	No	YES	No	YES	No	YES
Create-A-Player	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of Created Player Customize Options	34	61	45	93	TBA	63
Create-A-Team	No	No	YES (35 cities & 35 mascots)	No	No	No
Collectible Trading Cards	No	No	YES	No	No	No
Expansion Mode	No	No	YES	No	No	No
Big League Challenge	No	No	No	YES	No	No
Musical Licenses	No	YES (TBA)	The Natural Soundtrack, DMX, Pantera	ESPN Baseball Tonight Music	TBA (100 musical variations)	TBA
Commentary Team	Dave O'Brien & Chuck Valenches	Duane Kuiper & Mike Krukow	Thom Brennaman & Steve Lyons	Ted Robinson & Rex Hudler	Vin Scully & Dave Campbell	TBA
Cover Star	Curt Schilling	Randy Johnson & Miguel Tejada	Derek Jeter	Jason Giambi	Shawn Green	Nomar Garciaparra
Last Roster Update	Mid-January	Jan. 31	Jan. 20	Mid-January	TBA (Shooting for January 11)	Right Before Spring Training



CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

PUNCH A FALLING STAR



Egolicious

Deep in the bowels of a New York City office building, people are going insane. Why, you may ask? Why don't you try coordinating 18 – count 'em – 18 different celebrities (some who are more deserving of that title than others) to appear in and promote one little game. From lawyers and publicists, to agents, hairdressers, yes-men, hangers-on, and everything in between, the good folks over at Gotham Games definitely have their hands full.

"It's been a legal nightmare," says Justin Schwartz, a public relations specialist for Celebrity Death Match. Say what? You mean things like getting Justin Timberlake's approval on his character's exact eye color have been a pain? Inconceivable! But the road to this game's release has been paved with patience and skill. "Some of the celebs have been really cool," says Schwartz. "Cindy Margolis has been really supportive, and Ron Jeremy is so excited, he wrote a rap song about the game and sent it in to us." When asked when we could hear it, and why the Gotham team didn't bring it with them to Minneapolis, Schwartz replied, "I don't know where it is. I think it's still floating around the office somewhere." Likely story, Jason. We know you listen to it every morning on your iPod as you go to work.

Here's the low-down on the celebrity sign-off rigmarole: The first thing that happens is a wealthy executive at MTV thinks, "Hey, I need some licensing fees for this show that went off the air a while ago. What do I do?" Duh! You make it into a video game!

Then, many months, and deductible over-priced Friday evening sports bar "strategy" meetings later, the artists over at Big Ape (the developer, dummy) start drawing sketches of the celebrities who've agreed to be in the game. We won't go into what it takes to entice the likes of Mr. T and Shannon Doherty into engaging in digital mayhem, but it can be summed up in three words: cheeseburgers, hair extensions. So the preliminary sketches are sent over to Gotham Games, and after much hemming, hawing, and back patting, the sketches are transferred to the celebrities to be approved. Approved means either the person's lawyer/publicist looks at it and says, "Hey, Lance Bass doesn't have a harelip! Remove this!" or the actual individual looks it over and signs off after making changes, but before berating their assistant for giving them a bowl of the wrong color M&M's.

Eventually, these endorsed sketches are filtered back to the artists who then make the necessary changes, and the 3D modelers get to work on digitizing the completed version. "We are closely emulating the show," says Schwartz. "Everything will be as true to the original as possible." Because of this dedication to accuracy and consistency, the completed digital models are then sent back to the celeb for a final okay. Assuming that say, Mills Lane is happy with the number of lumens of glare coming off the top of his head, then the developer can get to work on the meat of the game (no, not Ron Jeremy).

■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** GOTHAM GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** BIG APE ■ **RELEASE** MAY 13

LANCE BASS

Career Highlight: Voice of Sephiroth in Kingdom Hearts
Special Move: TBA
Likes: Space
Hates: Russia
Weakness: Can't understand why Vladimir Putin won't return calls



JOSHUA "JC" CHASEZ

Career Highlight: Once saw Justin and Brittany making out backstage
Special Move: TBA
Likes: Girls
Hates: Being called "flamboyant"
Weakness: Unrepentant mullet wearer



JOEY FATONE

Career Highlight: Appeared in the 1993 box office flop Matinee as an extra
Special Move: TBA
Likes: Food
Hates: Being mistaken for Cyndi Lauper
Weakness: Krispy Kreme doughnuts with mayonnaise

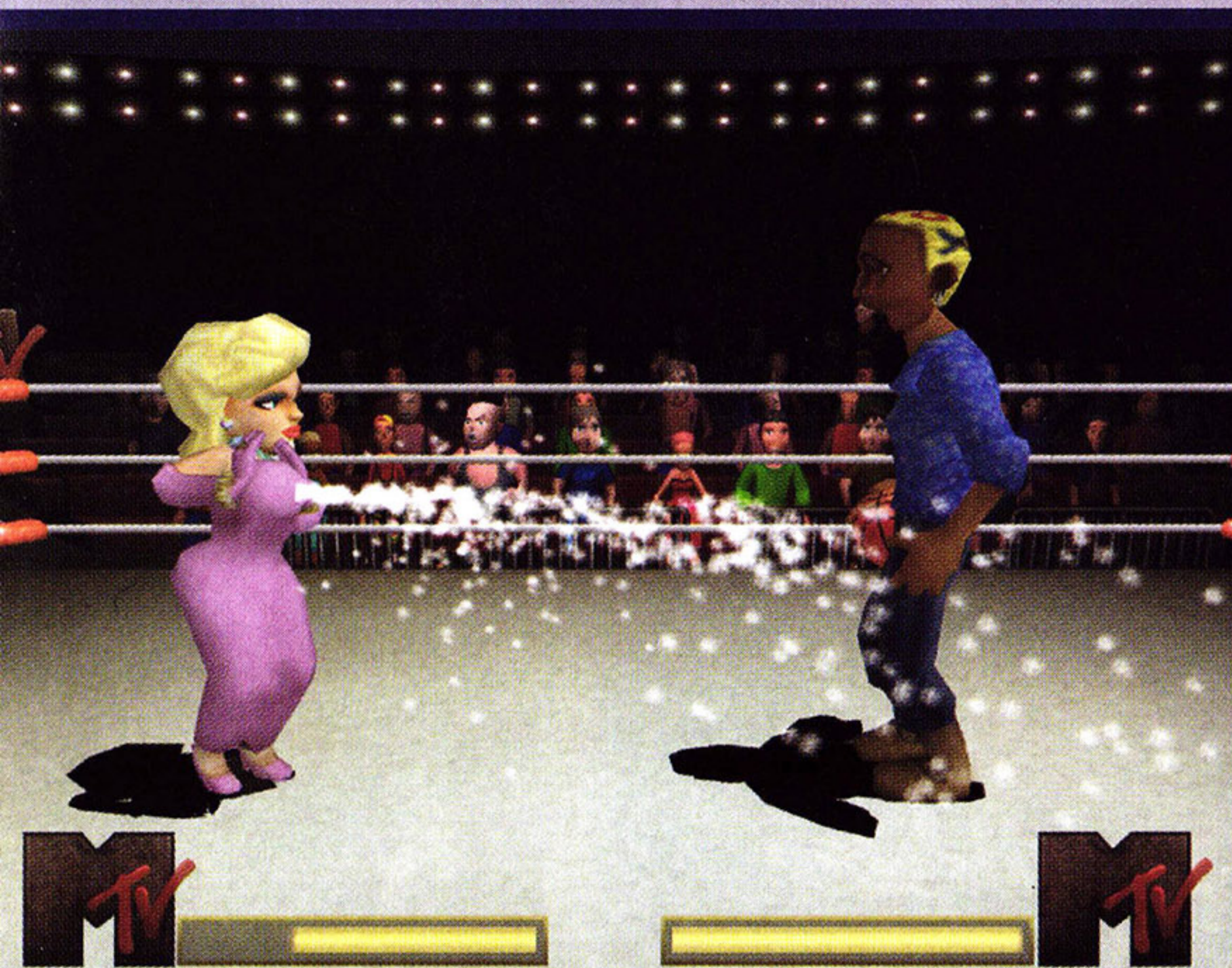


Say What?

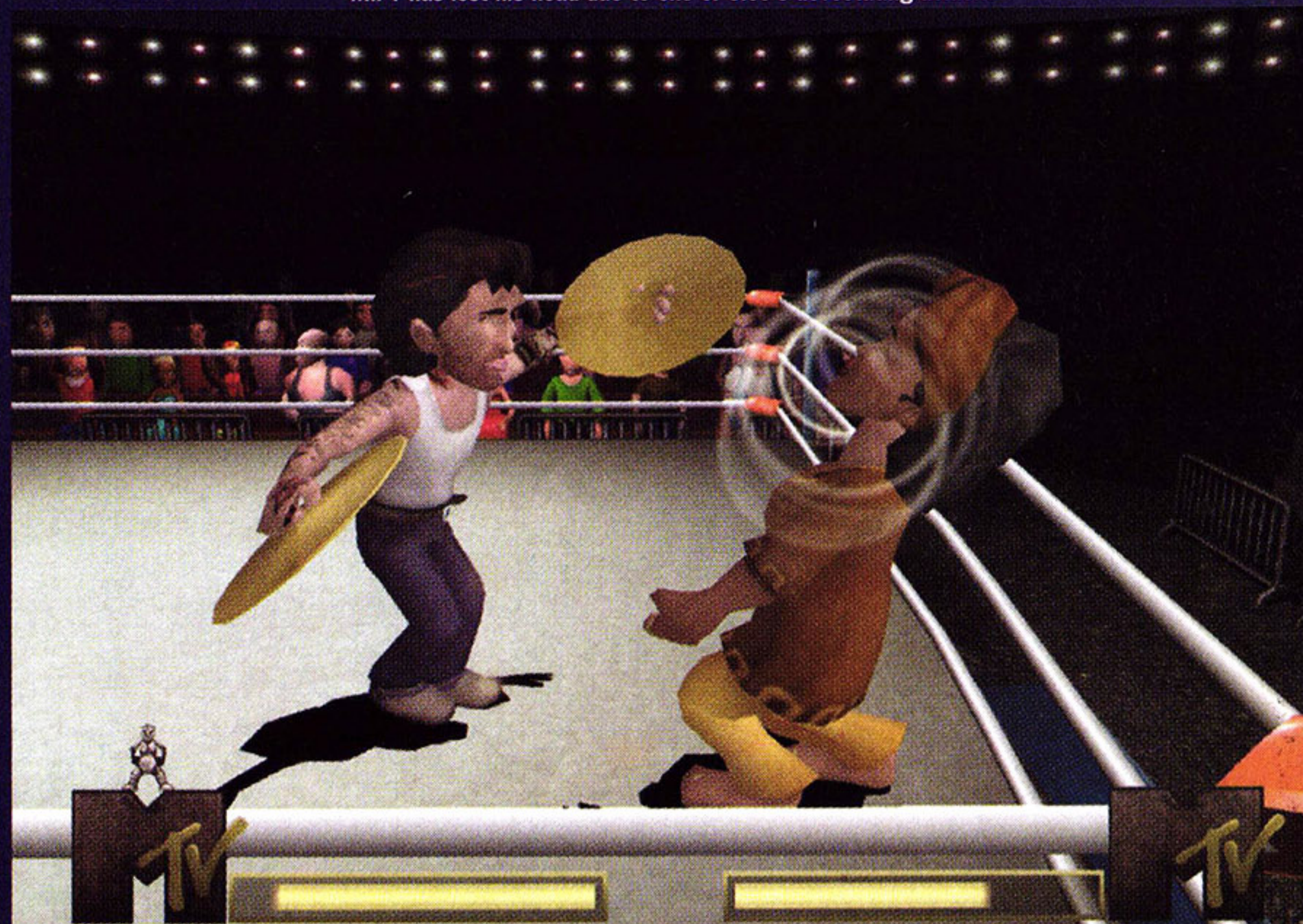
For those who have seen the MTV show, the look and feel of the game will be very familiar. Producer David O'Conner told us, "We're trying to have a very TV-style presentation. Johnny and Nick [the announcers] have done a ton of new voice work just for the game, and a few of the celebrities have, too." Speaking of...well... speaking, O'Conner has confirmed to us that over 3,000 lines of dialogue are in the game, and all of the characters will benefit from a cutting-edge lip syncing system. This means that when you're playing Mr. T and he says something like, "I pity the foo' who gets in the ring with me," it actually looks like he's saying that, instead of anime open/closed mouth speaking animations. With this dialogue comes an added sense of connection to the character you're playing in the game. Additionally, the commentary will closely reflect the action in the ring. "You'll hear Johnny and Nick talking about specific actions and moves that happen all the time," says O'Conner. We heard a sample of what the completed audio will sound like, and it mimics the show quite successfully.



Mr. T has lost his head due to one of Cleo's devastating attacks



Always one to keep her dignity, Anna Nicole squirts milk at Dennis Rodman



Each special move is tied to the character's real-life identity

Anna Nicole for President

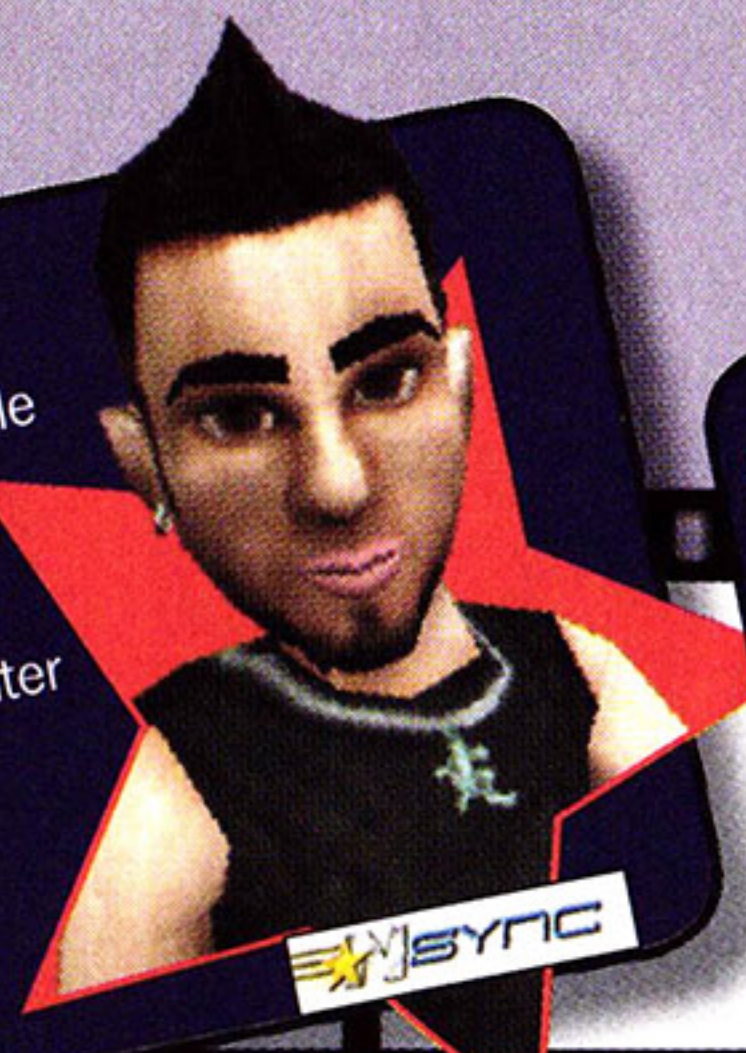
So, what about the ass kicking? Don't worry, you little hedgehog followers, there's more than enough pounding to go around. Each character has a number of set moves, special moves, super moves, and one unique finisher. As in almost every other fighting game ever invented, you'll share a list of basic moves with your adversaries. The requisite fare (high kick, low punch, etc.) is all included, but the special moves are particularly noteworthy.

Certain celebrities gave input as to what they wanted to see their character do. "Anna Nicole Smith came into the office one day," remembers Schwartz, "and she had that E! camera crew with her. So, she's walking around and talking with people, and at one point she says, 'Can you guys make it so I have milk squirting out of my boobs?' We looked at each other and were like, 'Yeah, Anna. We can do that.' So, that made it in the game. It

was kind of weird, too, because when the camera was on, she was being – you know – stupid. Then when they turned the cameras off, she was pretty normal. Except when we asked her if she wanted any promo stuff, and she said, 'Yeah! I want all of this!' and picked up this huge armful of shirts and stuff that we had out." That's nice – we know she's hurting after marrying for love instead of money. In any event, each celeb has a special move that pertains to them: Tommy Lee will pound on your face with drumsticks, Jerry Springer throws heat-seeking microphones at you, Dennis Rodman does a ballet spin in a pink tutu – the list goes on and on. The super moves are still being finalized as of press time, but we do know that, as your character lands attacks, your special meter will increase until you unleash a devastating assault on your opponent.

CHRIS KIRKPATRICK

Career Highlight: Was once able to communicate with dead barber through facial hair
Special Move: TBA
Likes: Lucky Charms with water instead of milk
Hates: Slim Shady
Weakness: Not convinced Joe Millionaire isn't actually rich



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

Career Highlight: Doing unspeakable things to/with Brittany Spears
Special Move: TBA
Likes: Hatching a solo career featuring choreographed dancing and faux R&B driven quickies
Hates: Disney
Weakness: Christina Aguilera

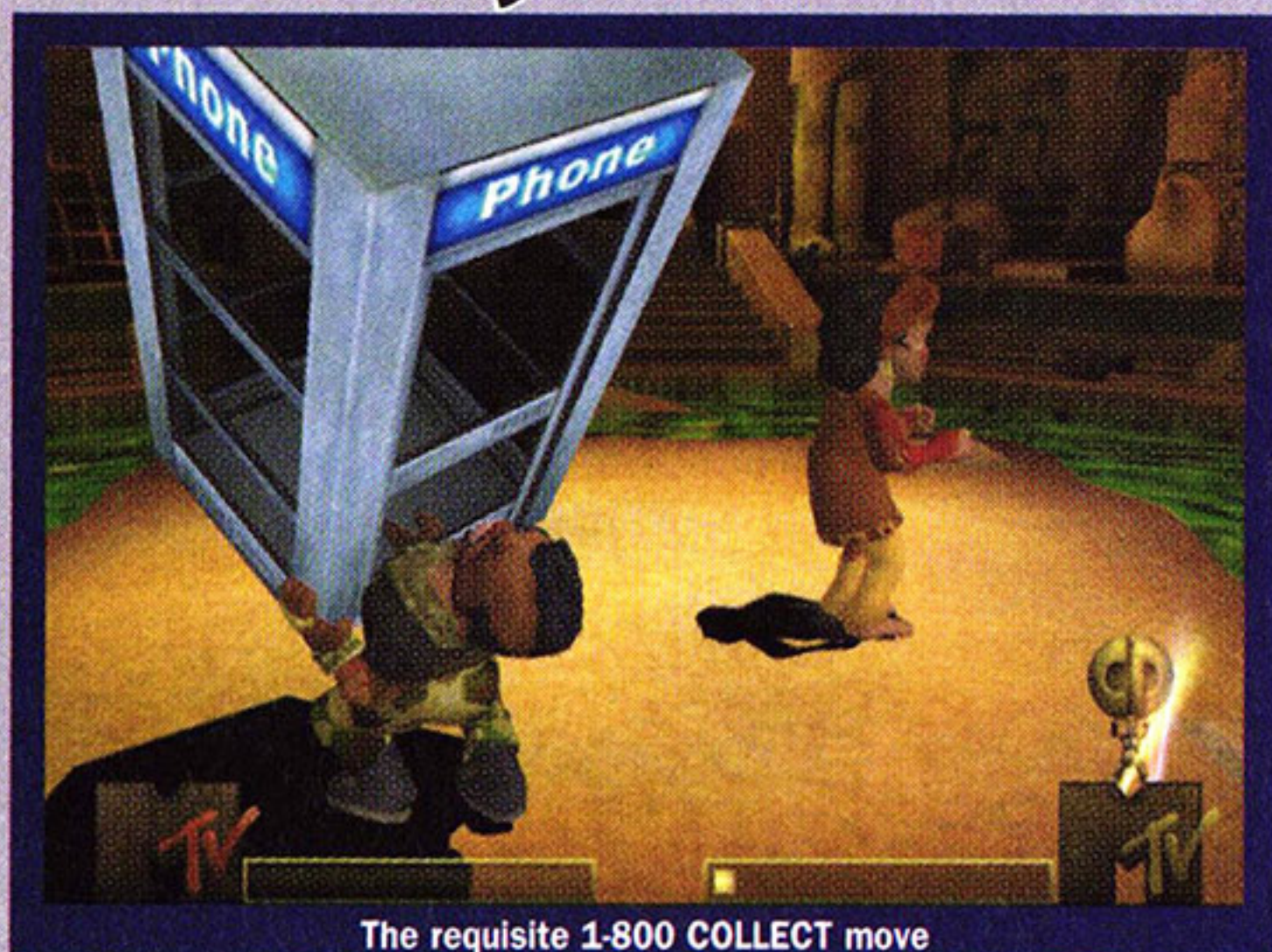


CARROT TOP

Career Highlight: Appeared in Space Ghost Coast to Coast episode # 21
Special Move: Heat-seeking carrots
Likes: Tang
Hates: Boy bands, butter
Weakness: Knows AT&T commercials are lame, but does them anyway



Butchery 101



The requisite 1-800 COLLECT move

Celebrity Death Match just wouldn't be the same if you couldn't tear someone's arm off. When we saw the game, O'Conner succeeded in grabbing a chainsaw that had dropped into the ring and cleaving Jerry Springer's left arm and right leg completely off. "As the characters lose limbs, their moves will change accordingly," he says. While he's telling us this, Springer is maneuvering around the ring trying to get a shot off at his opponent, and it's not going well. Jerry is hopping around on his good leg, and punching with his good arm, but he's basically down for the count. Call it poetic justice, or bouncer Steve's worst nightmare (what does life after *Springer* entail for Steve, do you think?); it's undeniably funny, and slightly disturbing – but so is watching Mariah Carey try to act in a serious role.

Throughout a match, each player will have the opportunity to unleash copious amounts of damage on their opponents in the form of weapons and accessories. Sometimes, as in the case of the aforementioned chainsaw, items will drop into the middle of the ring (bazookas were another one we saw), and the first person to pick it up gets to unload on their opponent. Aside from dropped items, each person also has personalized props. For example, Miss Cleo (called "Cleo" in the game due to her recent legal unpleasantness) will whip out a deck of tarot cards and try to chop your thingy off with a Kitana-esque fan attack. Anna Nicole Smith takes watermelons out of her chest and smashes them on your head, and Jerry Springer has the ability to launch at you from springs coiled under his feet. Hey, no one ever said this game was subtle. We'd be shocked (pun intended) if there wasn't some sort of electric attack by Carmen Electra, and Lance Bass will probably throw a cosmonaut at you.

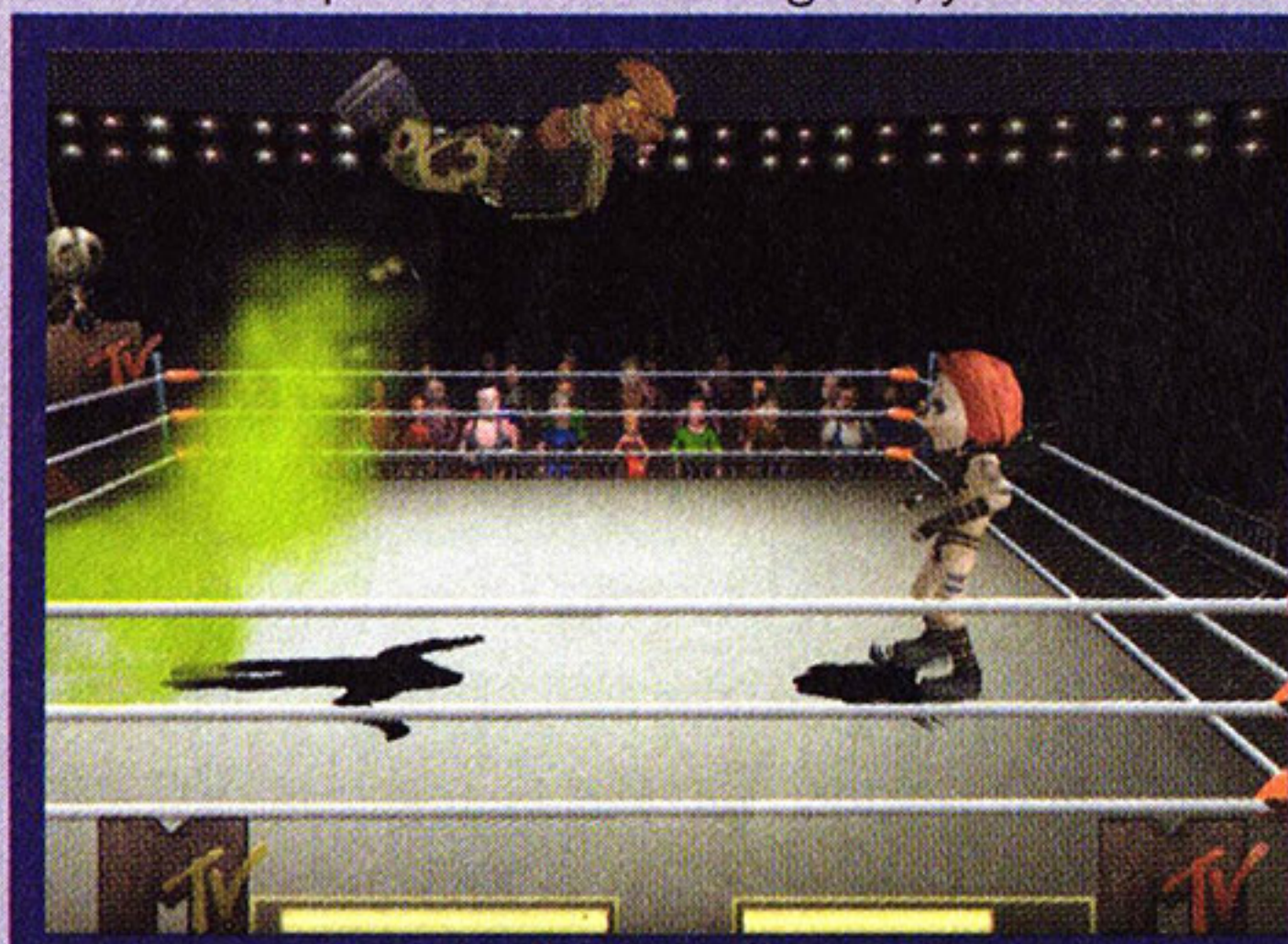
Any fighting game would be boring without a heaping helping of blood (SNES *Mortal Kombat*, we still love you), and *Death Match* does not disappoint. Let's say you're Cindy Margolis, and you unleash your *Austin Powers* Fembot boob-shooting attack. Not only will you see your contender's body issue up pint after pint to the mat, but he or she will retain localized damage from your barrage. Suffice it to say that after a two-minute match, each of the onscreen characters are going to look like they spent 24 hours in an enclosed room with a powder-nosed Whitney Houston.



If you look closely at Tommy Lee's face, you can see the bruising he has sustained during the fight

Your 15 Minutes

Let's go out on a limb and say you don't want to take on the persona of a pampered prima donna. If this is the case, then *Create a Celebrity* is the option for you. As you fire up this section of the game, you'll see that Big Ape has enabled you to make your

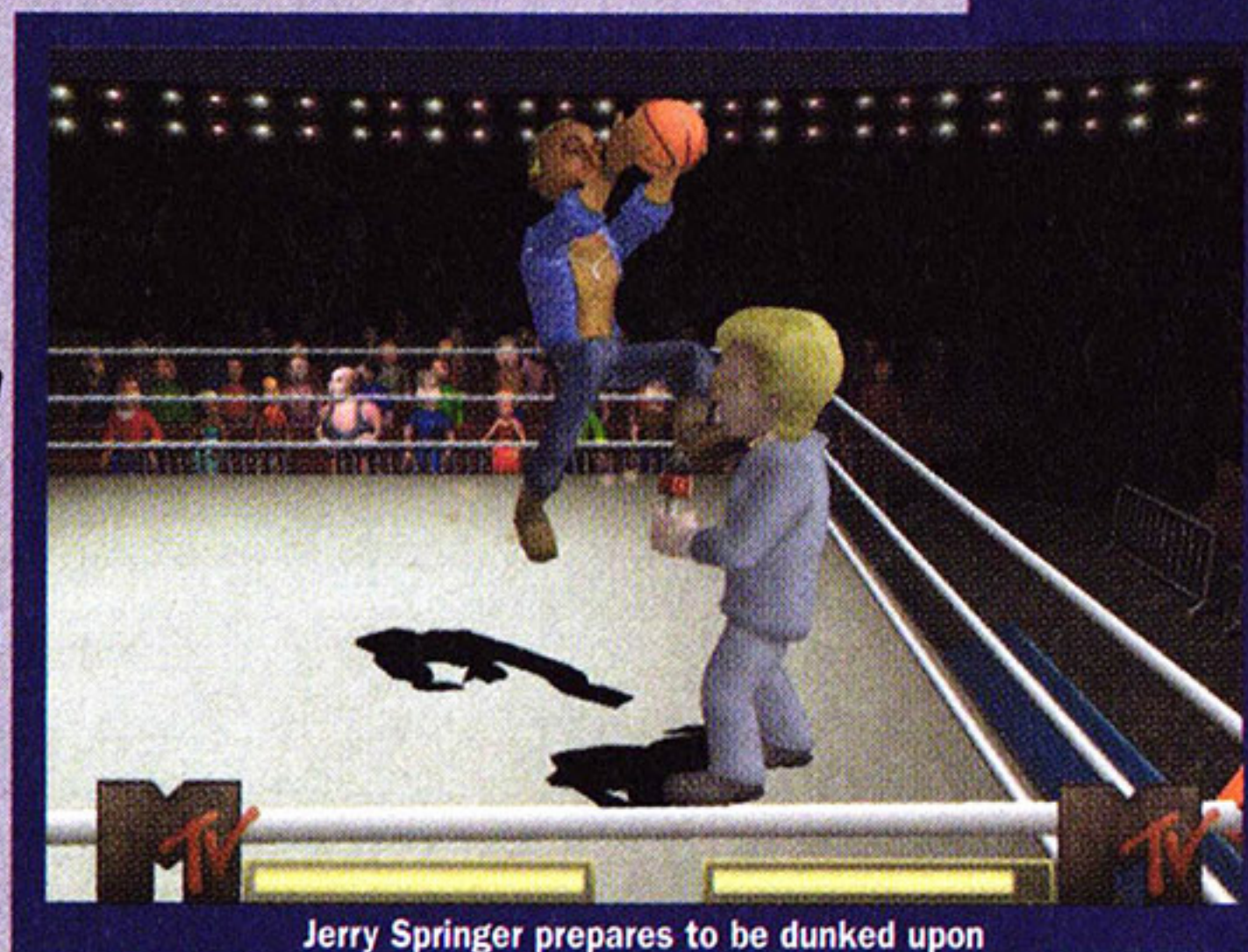


Mr. T does a fart leap at Marilyn Manson

alter ego in your own image – that is as long as that image doesn't include an abnormally large skin tag or webbed feet (sorry, Alabama readers). Fill out your character's moves, then take your angst into the ring for some good old catharsis. When you're done beating up on the computer, play with a friend for a rousing multiplayer battle, or simply walk into your local mall and demand that the bewildered Cinnabon worker you're giving your order to let you "live your life in peace."

We all have our guilty pleasures.

For some, it's stealing medication from old people, and for others it's chasing their kids around the house with power tools. *Celebrity Death Match* will be a similar vice, but less invasive. When you get mad at Mr. T for those ridiculous phone commercials, feel free to flip on your copy of CDM and saw his arms off. When you see a picture of Marilyn Manson and fear for your life, turn on the game and hand him a beating. Comprendé? This game isn't hard to wrap your mind around, kids. If you can press buttons and you have a sense of humor, you're halfway home. Now all you need is a copy of CDM and 20 minutes of free time to blow off some steam. Plus, the finishing move for each celebrity alone is worth the price of entry – and we know you're going to play until you've seen them all, just like us. So, get off your high horse and quit being such a gaming snob. Not everything has to be a *Final Fantasy* sequel to be fun! Look at your game collection – you own *Simpsons Skateboarding* for crying out loud! What's the matter with you? You can obviously convince yourself that anything's good, so lucky for you CDM actually is.



Jerry Springer prepares to be dunked upon

SHANNON DOHERTY

Career Highlight: Played Jenny Wilder on *Little House on the Prairie* from 1982 to '83

Special Move: Circle of Protection: Fire

Likes: Being a celebrity

Hates: Glasses

Weakness: Prone to slamming her fist into assistants, cast members



CLEO

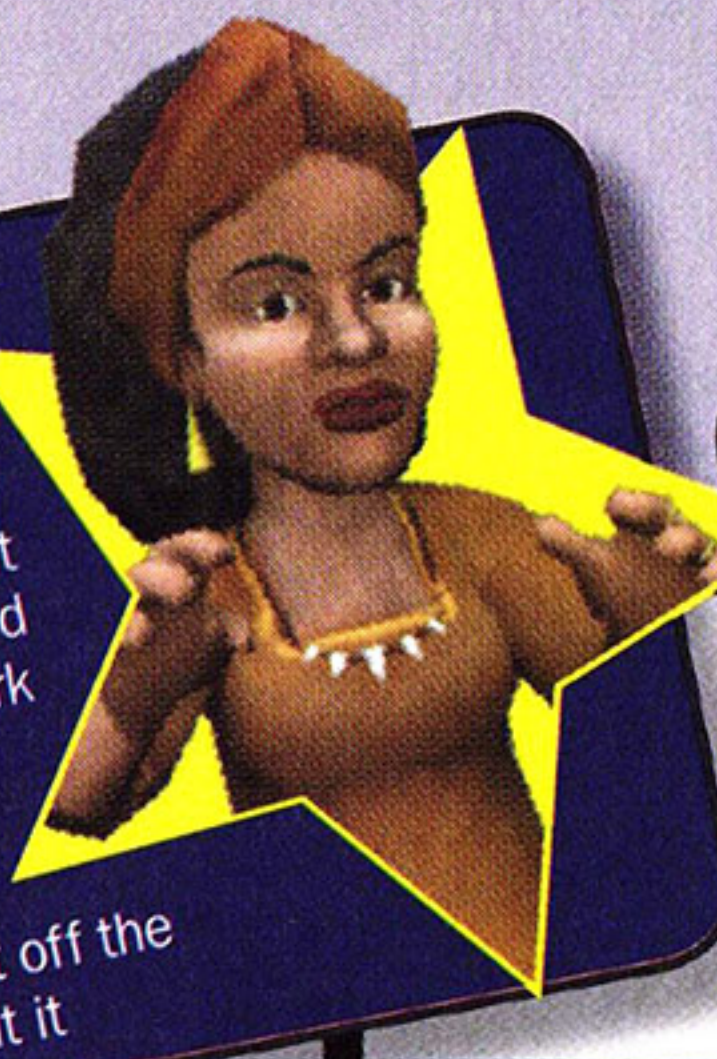
Career Highlight: Bilked millions of suckers out of their money; almost got away with it

Special Move: The Death Card

Likes: Anything related to pork

Hates: The FCC

Weakness: Knows what you're going to do before you do it, but unable to get off the couch to do anything about it



CARMEN ELECTRA

Career Highlights: Elevated hand lotion sales to new levels with Baywatch role

Special Move: Wrist Rocket Missiles

Likes: Dennis Rodman (when drunk)

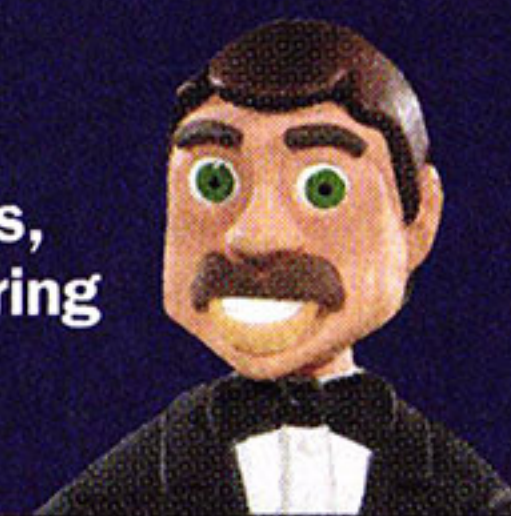
Hates: Complicated films like *XXX*, *Butterfly*

Weakness: Will pose nude for money, polite requests





Game Informer braved the rapids of Hollywood to bring you some of the most in-depth and hard-hitting interviews the entertainment industry has ever known. There was laughter, tears, screaming, whispering, and long stretches of appalled silence – all of which we cut out to bring you easy to read, bathroom-worthy fluff. Enjoy!



Cindy Margolis

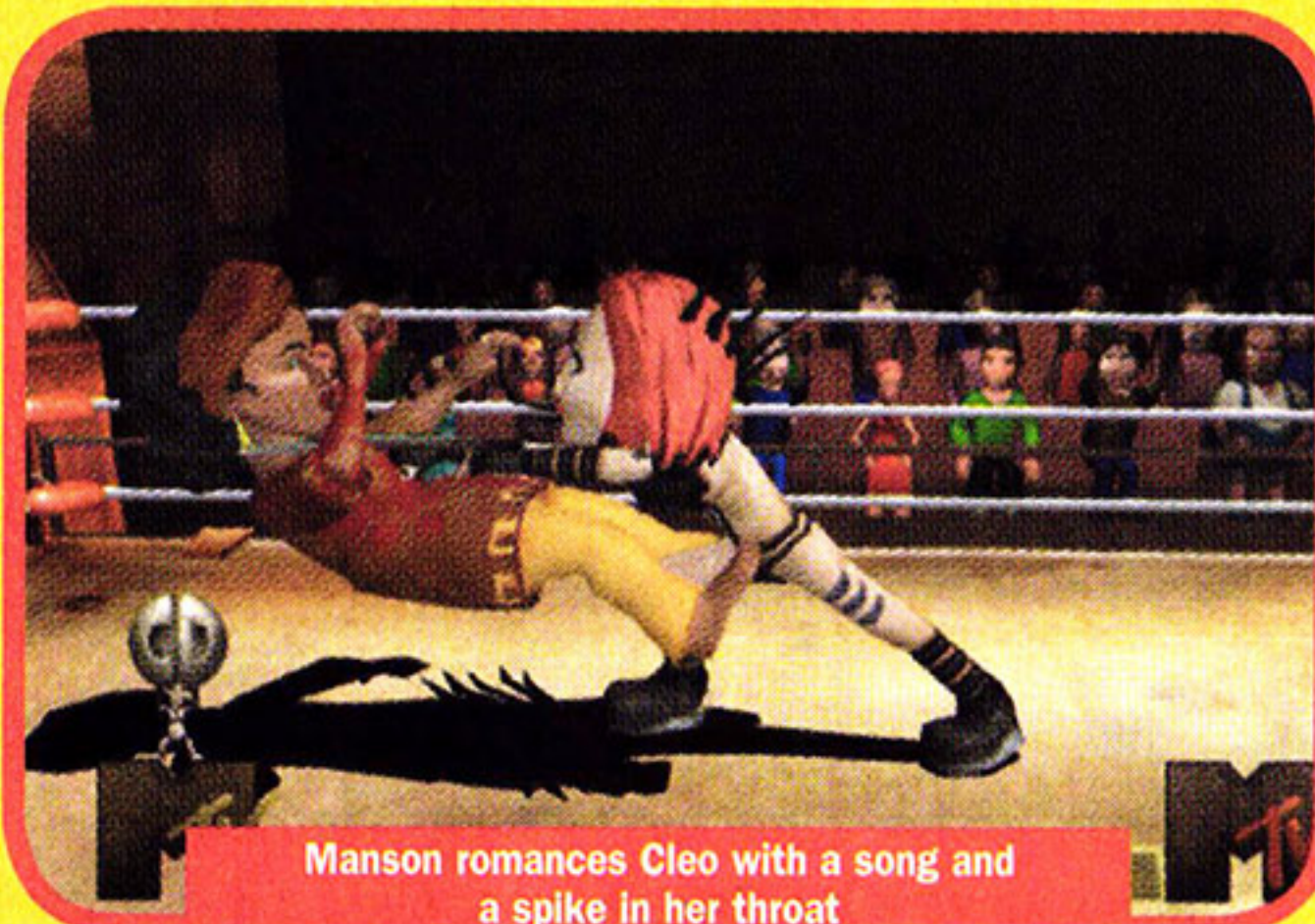
Game Informer: What was your favorite episode of *Celebrity Deathmatch* when it was on MTV?

Cindy Margolis: Well, of course I always liked the models. You know, Naomi [Campbell] kicking Cindy Crawford's butt, or something like that – those were always my favorites. I thought they were all good, and a great way for celebrities to make fun of themselves and not take themselves too seriously.

GI: Who's the biggest bad-ass you can think of?

CM: Mike Tyson, pre-Buster Douglas. You know, when he was like 20 years old and he'd knock everybody out in the first round.

GI: Besides a post-Douglas Mike Tyson, who's the one person in history you'd most like to fight?



Manson romances Cleo with a song and a spike in her throat

CM: I'd have to say Pam Anderson because the pay-per-view money would be huge. [Laughs] Yeah, there'd be some big bucks there, so I'd have to say Pam Anderson for the pay-per-view rights.

GI: We'll broker that deal right now – just call us Don King. Would there be a lot of hair-pulling?

CM: That's probably all there'd be. Well, that and smearing each other's make-up.

GI: So do you play video games?

CM: Yeah, I really like the driving games – like RalliSport Challenge for the Xbox, because I'm really into cars, and I have really good cars myself.

GI: Really? What do you have?

CM: I have a Ferrari 360 Coupe that I love, and I have the Mercedes Benz SL 55, and CL 55, but they both have the new supercharged AMG 495 horsepower engine. There's only 1,000 of those in the country, and I have both of them.

GI: And we thought we felt inferior before. Where do you use that kind of power?

CM: That's the problem. You have to drive out to Vegas to get that long open stretch, but I also have a long private road leading up to my house in the mountains that doesn't have any cops on it, so I'll open them up there. Otherwise, I have to be kind of careful.

GI: Who do you think would win in a fight between Conan O'Brien and Carson Daly?

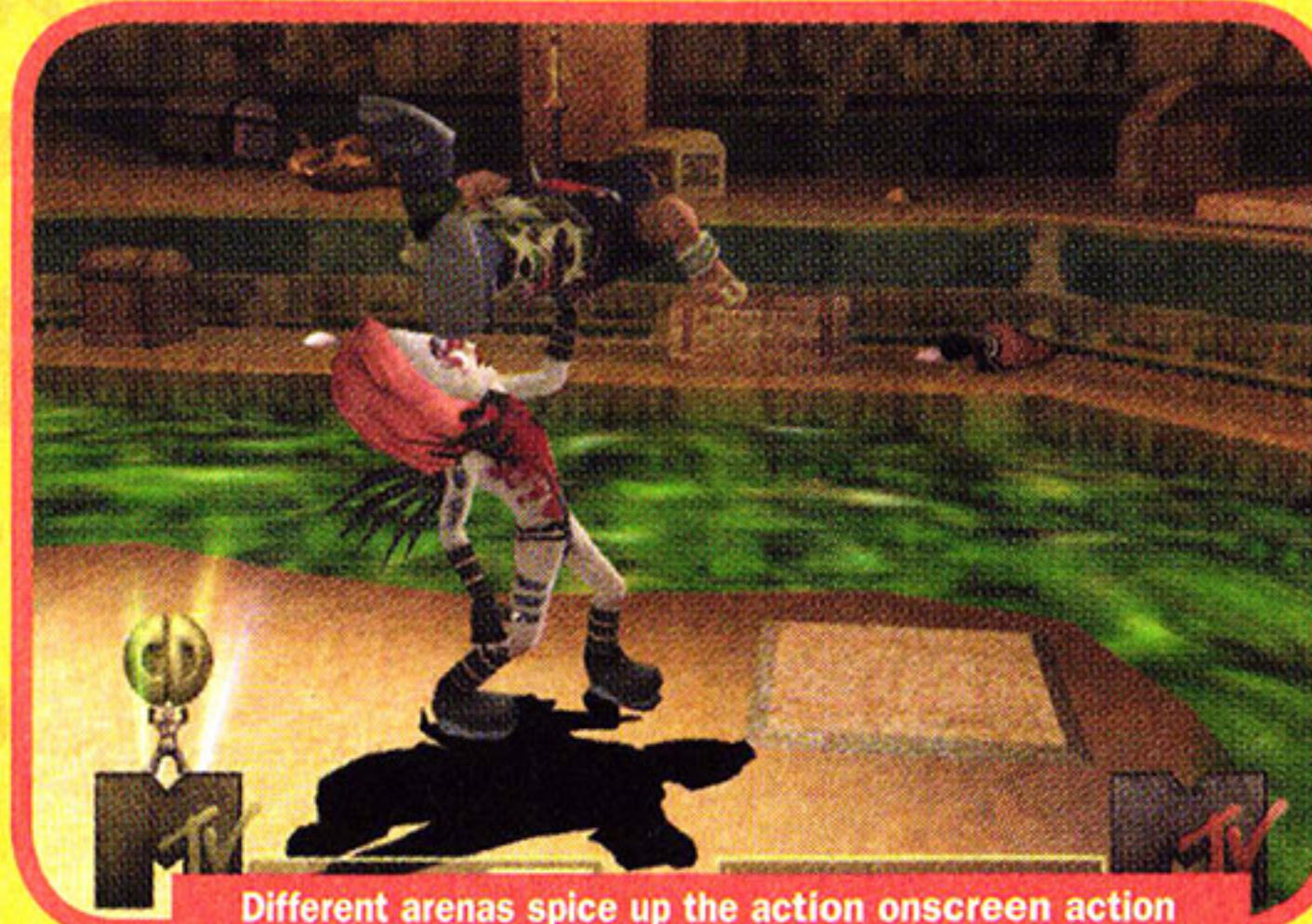
CM: I love Conan, I think he's hysterical and definitely funnier [than Carson], but I would have to say Carson Daly, because he's more street. He has the tattoos and stuff...but in a contest of wits or comedic skills, I would go with Conan.

GI: Speaking of celebrity hosts, when you were on *The Price is Right*, did Bob try to get a little somethin'-somethin' from you?

CM: I was at *The Price is Right* at a really weird time when all of that controversy was going on, and I was only there for a year so it was actually just the opposite. Bob was completely scared of me. One time he came to my dressing room and knocked on the door, and I answered it in my robe – and when you're [onstage] you're in a lot less than a robe – and he just ran away. He was like, "Oh, I'll talk to you later!" He wouldn't get near me with a 10-foot pole.

GI: Did you play Plinko?

CM: How could you not play that?



Different arenas spice up the action onscreen action

GI: Was it awesome?

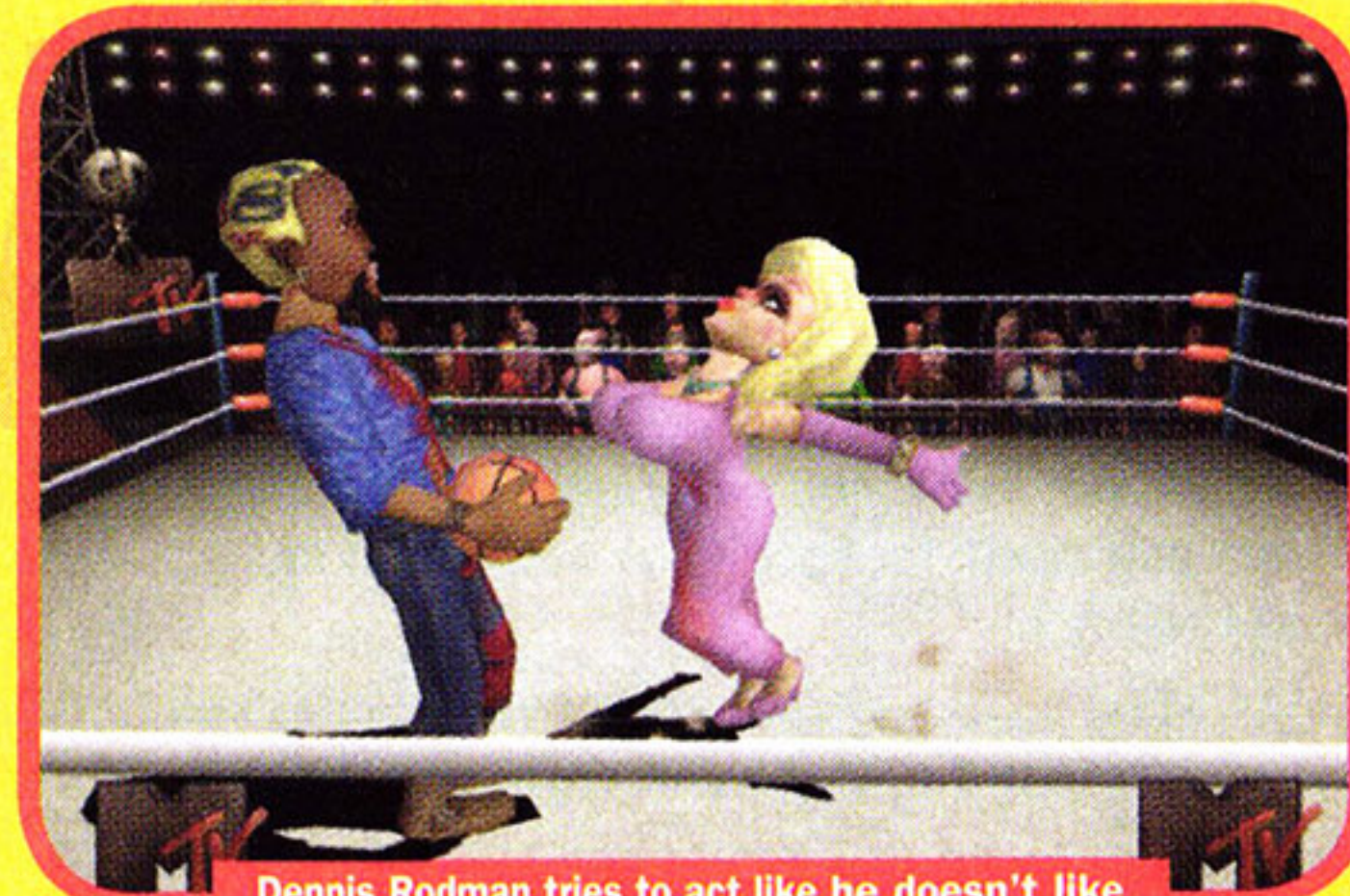
CM: Totally. We would play on the breaks, and I would sneak people in to play backstage. It was the neatest thing, especially if you grew up with it.

GI: You're in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, too. Did you meet the two fat guys riding the motorcycles during your induction ceremony?

CM: [Laughs] No I didn't. I would have loved to, though. You know what? Now that I think about it, next to Pam Anderson I think I would like to fight Bill Gates.

GI: You could probably take him.

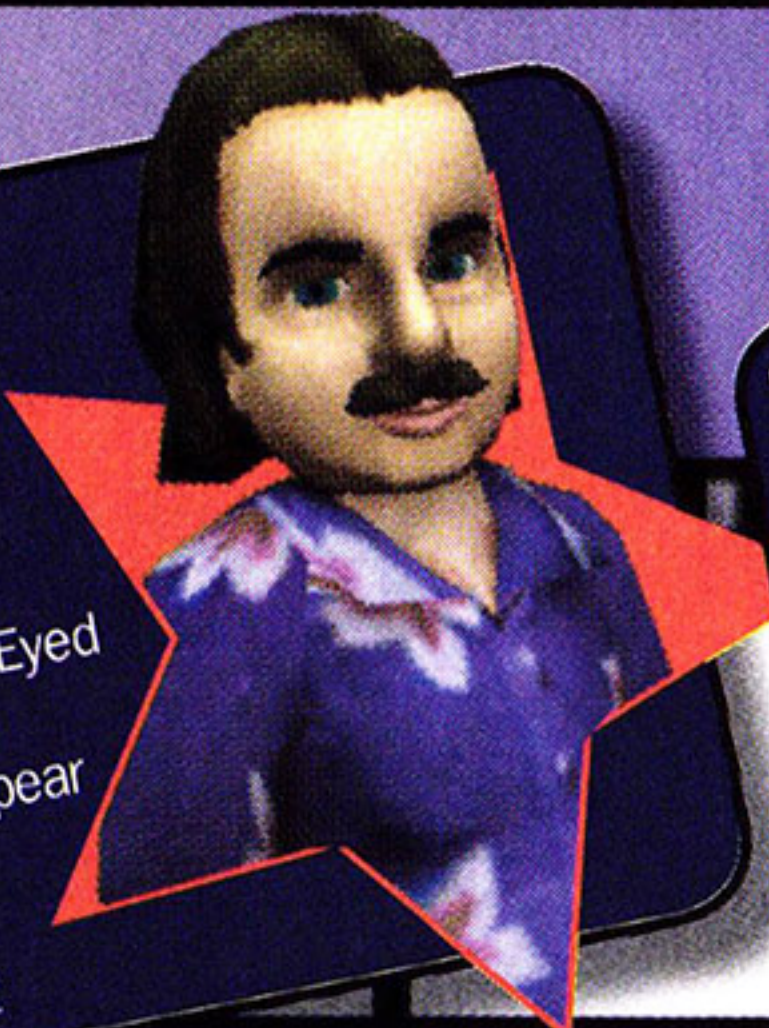
CM: Yeah, I think so.



Dennis Rodman tries to act like he doesn't like Anna's new move

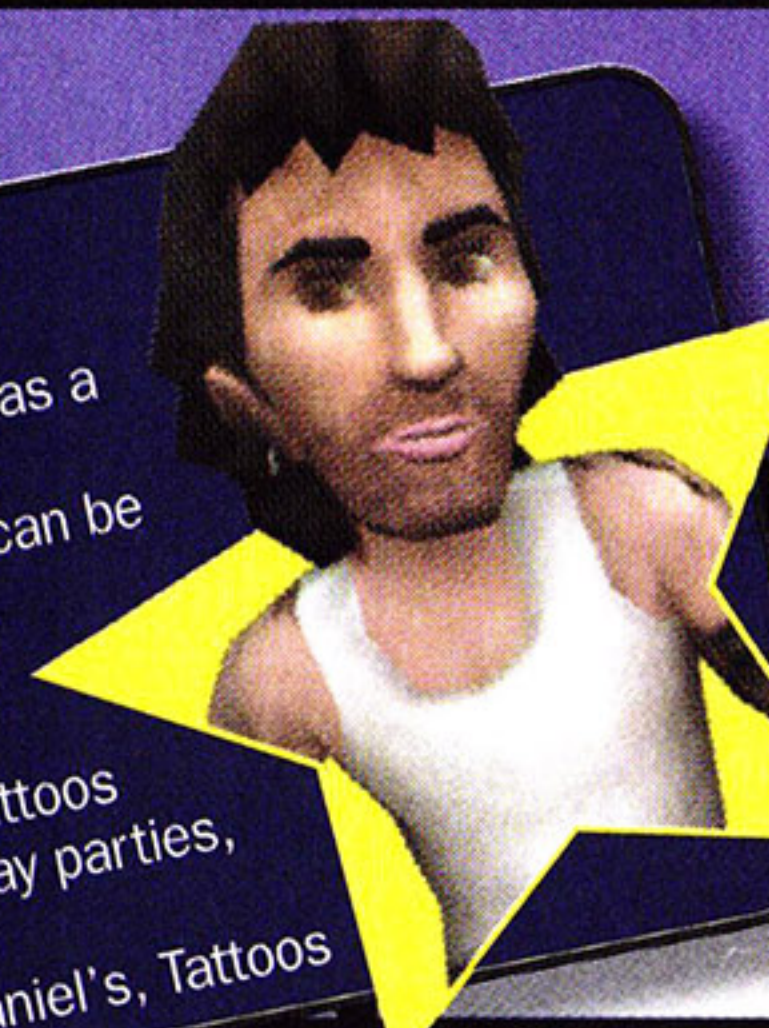
RON JEREMY

Career Highlights: Consulted on *9 1/2 Weeks*, *Boogie Nights*. No wonder they were so good!
Special Move: Purple, One-Eyed Cyclops Attack
Likes: Making things disappear
Hates: Chaffing
Weakness: Only gives interviews while on toilet



TOMMY LEE

Career Highlights: "That was a private film!" (Sounds of countless cash registers can be heard in background)
Special Move: Human Blowtorch
Likes: Jack Daniel's, Tattoos
Hates: Poolside birthday parties, Mick Mars
Weaknesses: Jack Daniel's, Tattoos



MARILYN MANSON

Career Highlights: Scared the bejesus out of the Bible Belt
Special Move: Ghostly Summon
Likes: '80s cartoon blockbuster, Care Bears
Dislikes: Stage names
Weakness: Enjoys watching football, mowing the lawn, and working on his Camero, but is forced to do so in extreme secrecy



Anna



Nicole Smith



Game Informer: Can you tell us about a real-life fight you've been in?

Anna Nicole Smith: Back when I was in junior high there was this mean girl who would always push me around and say, "Fight me, you bitch." I was really scared of her, so I didn't do anything until one day everybody kind of circled around us and was trying to get us to fight. Then, out of nowhere, my best friend at the time came up to me and knocked down my books. I got really mad because she was supposed to be my best friend so I started punching her and she went down and started bleeding. It was really bad, but the mean girl backed off. She didn't want any part of me after she saw what I could do.

GI: Why would we want to play you in the game?

ANS: I'm a bad ass and I'm funny as hell. I can squirt

• milk from my breasts and my dog Sugarpie is there to help me out, too. She's got a big surprise for anyone who fights me. If you're a regular viewer of my television show on E! Entertainment, you might know what I mean.

GI: Yeah, our Tivo hasn't been working right lately. Anywho, if you could fight one person in history, who would it be and why?

ANS: Right now, it would have to be Howard Stern. Not my lawyer, but the radio guy. I don't know why he treats me the way he does, but he's really hurtful. He deserves a big ass-kicking.

GI: You never know, your lawyer might need one, too. What made you want to be a part of *Celebrity Death Match*?

ANS: I thought it would be fun for my son Daniel to see his mom in a game. He plays games and reads all the

• magazines, too. So, when the game designers came to me, I really wanted to be involved.

GI: Who would you want to fight in the game?

ANS: Any of those "boy band" guys. And Jerry Springer, too. Except I'd fight him on a waterbed with oil, if you know what I mean. I actually like Jerry a lot. I hope he's the second best in the game.

GI: Okaaay. Who would win in a fight between Conan O'Brien and Carson Daly?

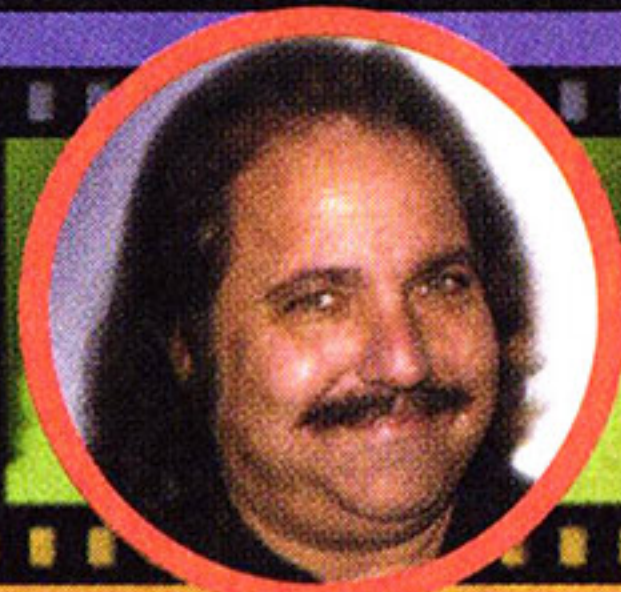
ANS: I'd want to see Carson take Conan. Conan always says these mean jokes about me.

GI: What is the craziest thing a fan has ever asked you?

ANS: "Please find enclosed my underwear. Send them back dirty." Is that crazy enough?

GI: That'll do.

Ron



Jeremy

Game Informer: How did you get involved with *Celebrity Death Match*?

Ron Jeremy: Well, [Gotham Games] called me up and asked me if I wanted to be in it since I was in the MTV show when it was on the air. I said yes, and I got to do my own voice for my character too. So it's my actual voice saying stuff like, "Oow! Ooo! Uhh!"

GI: Can you tell us about a real-life fight you've been in?

RJ: It's funny, I'm such a playful guy – I subscribe to the "make love, not war" routine.

GI: Who do you want to take on in this game?

RJ: Well, fighting a woman is never a good idea, so I'd have to say the band *NSYNC, because the odds are in their favor. It would be like four or five guys against me.

GI: You'd probably have the advantage anyway, Ron. Who would you want to fight if you could take on anyone in history?

RJ: Hmm... Maybe Gary Busey. I saw him get smacked once by a former Hell's Angel, plus he's always doing silly things.

GI: Yeah, Gary's silly. If you could orchestrate a fight

• between any two people, who would you want to see fight, and who would you want to win?

RJ: Anna Nicole Smith fighting Katey Sagal, and I'd want Anna Nicole to win because once Katey Sagal kind of dissed me for no reason. Christina [Applegate] from *Married with Children* took me backstage once to meet people, and [Katey] was kind of unfriendly just because of who I am.

GI: *Married with Children* was the high watermark for quality television. Anyway, lately the controversy in American video games has been showing women naked. Would you want to be the first naked guy in video games?

RJ: Sure, I wouldn't mind.

GI: What's your advice for gamers out there who are looking to get lucky?

RJ: Be yourself, and try to be a little bit humorous – girls like that. If you go to a club or a bar or someplace like that where you meet women and stuff, say something nice or friendly, that's all. Tell her you like her outfit, or that she has a nice smile or something, you know. Or tell her you like her peg leg – no, I'm kidding [Laughs]. You want to say something sweet and natural and girls

• will like it. Remember, being dweeby and nerdy is in right now.

GI: Wow, who would have thought that everyone in this office would be trendy. So, can you tell the difference between silicone and the real thing on sight?

RJ: Absolutely. Nine times out of ten.

GI: What's the craziest thing a fan has ever asked you?

RJ: To sit on a shot glass and make it disappear.

GI: When you were on *The Weakest Link*, did you meet the hostess [Anne Robinson]?

RJ: Oh yeah. I met her backstage and she gave me a big hug.

GI: She's not irritating off the air?

RJ: No, she's a sweetheart.

GI: Fair enough. Anyway, we were reading your bio and we found that you had an uncredited role in *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 1973.

RJ: I was actually in the play – I played Herod, you know the dancing guy.

GI: Hallelujah! Thanks Ron, you are an inspiration to us all.

CINDY MARGOLIS



Career Highlights: Holds world record for being the most downloaded woman on the Internet, played a Fembot in *Austin Powers*
Special Move: Breast Cannon
Likes: PayPal
Dislikes: Dial-up connections
Weakness: Can take up to 90 minutes to decide which \$100,000+ car she will drive that day

DENNIS RODMAN



Career Highlights: Was married to Carmen Electra for a brief period of time
Special Move: Sexy Glamour Photoshoot
Likes: Lace, eye shadow
Hates: Horace Grant
Weakness: Peroxide

BUSTA RHYMES



Career Highlights: When Disaster Strikes
Special Move: Chi Gathering Energy Balls
Likes: Mountain Dew
Hates: Buster Keaton, Dave & Buster's
Weakness: Lyrics are strange enough to confuse himself from time to time

Game Informer: Tell us about being in **Celebrity Death Match**.

Carrot Top: It's funny, I was in a show in Vegas last weekend, and Ron Jeremy comes to my show and he's going on and on like, "Dude! I'm in this game **Celebrity Death Match**! You should have gotten in it." I was like, "I'm in it!" It was pretty funny.

GI: Have you seen your character model at all?

CT: No, am I attractive?

GI: From what we've seen, yeah completely.

CT: Oh good.

GI: Who's the one person in the history of the world you'd like to take on?

CT: I get along with pretty much anybody – I'm not too confrontational. I'm a lover not a fighter [Laughs]. I'm assuming I'll probably fight Mr. T [in the game] because he does the phone commercials.

GI: What's the deal with you being all buff in your 1-800 CALL-ATT commercials?

CT: I've always worked out, I think they're trying to change my image a little bit from being too goofy with the shirts they put me in. But I've always worked out.

GI: We're going to say one word, and you tell us what it means to you. Ready? Tang.

CT: Yeah, that's something I haven't had in a while. I love Tang.

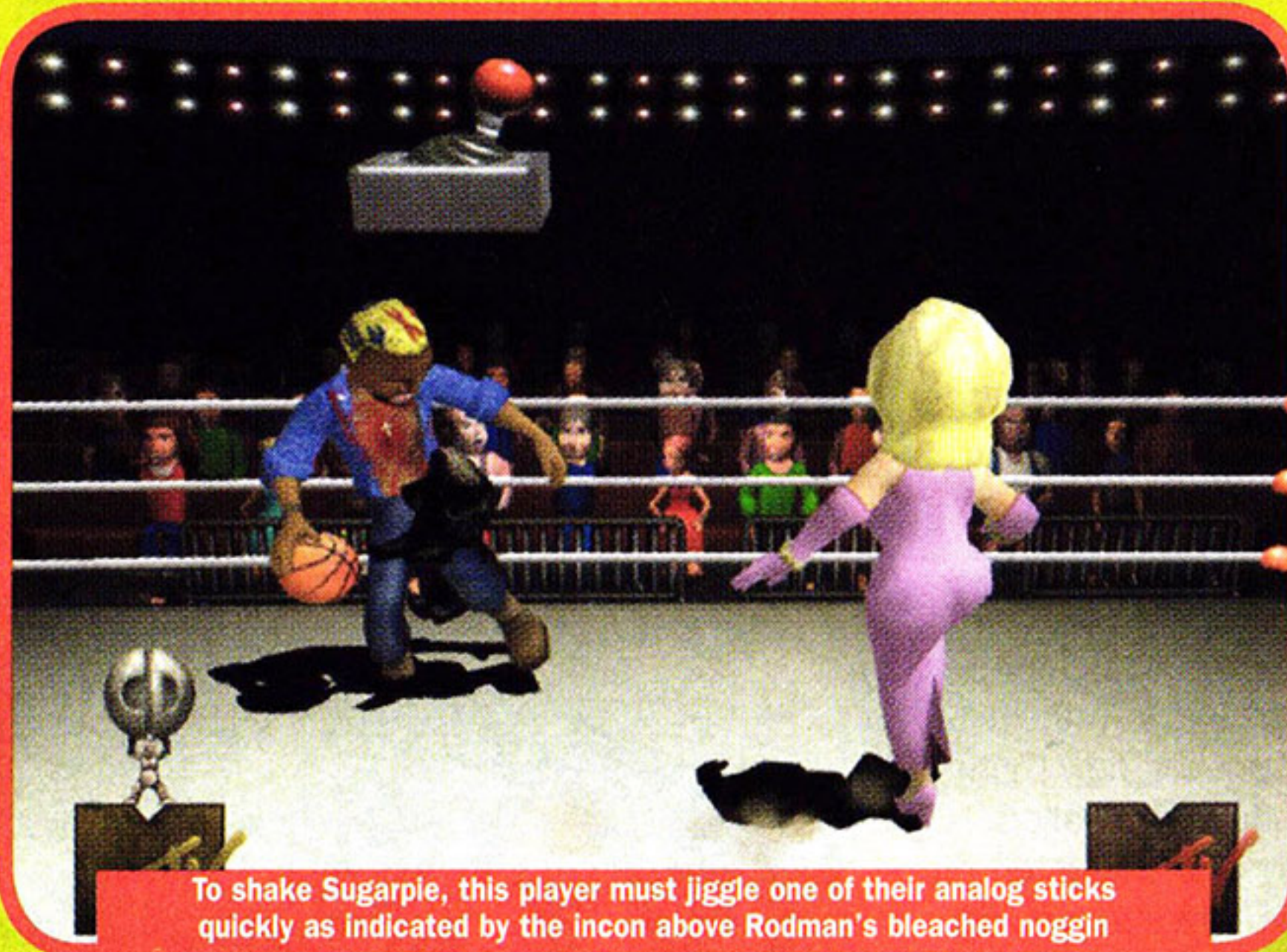
GI: Really? We heard you drink it all the time.

CT: Oh you mean the drink? I love that, too [Laughs]. I guess I haven't had either one in a while. Growing up, my dad worked at NASA, so we always had it in the house.

GI: Did you have the freeze-dried ice cream and stuff like that?

CT: Yeah, it was really cool for show and tell. I'd bring all of this frozen astronaut food in and people were like, "Ooh, this is the real deal."

GI: If you were a fight promoter, who would you want as your main event?



To shake Sugarpie, this player must jiggle one of their analog sticks quickly as indicated by the icon above Rodman's bleached noggin

CT: Let's see, Anna Nicole Smith and that big marshmallow dude, what was his name?

GI: The Stay Puft Marshmallow Man?

CT: Yeah! I'd love to see that! She'd probably eat him.

GI: What do you go out as for Halloween?

CT: I go out as me, and people are like, "Hey, that's a great Carrot Top costume," and I'm like, "No it's really me." I don't know. A little kid came to my house as me one year. He says, "Dude, what do you think?" and I go, "Who are you supposed to be?" and he says, "You!" I wasn't sure if it was a compliment or not, though. I gave him extra candy anyway.

GI: Damned kids. Okay, who wins in a fight between you and Gallagher?

CT: I think I could take him easily. Even with the hammer I could beat his ass. He should take some of that food he's smashing and feed some countries.

GI: Didn't his brother try to copy him to get some easy money or something?

CT: Yeah, that's another thing. Let's hope there's never a Carrot Top 2. That would probably be a sign of the apocalypse.

GI: Let's hear you talk a little trash to someone you want to fight in the game.

CT: With Anna Nicole, you've got to keep your hands and feet away from her mouth, that's for sure.

GI: Did you hear that she requested that her character squirt milk out of her boobs?

CT: What? That's my move! Dammit!

GI: What kind of props would you want to use in the game?

CT: Basically anything you could find in Robert Blake's kitchen.

GI: Is there anything that makes you violent?

CT: Phone commercials.



Carrot Top rides his pony while Cleo tries to gather her strength after climbing into the ring

ANNA NICOLE SMITH

Career Highlights: Became disgustingly rich by marrying a semi-corpse
Special Move: Breast Milk Squirt
Likes: Being a role model to her impressionable son
Hates: Doing phone interviews
Weakness: Can't look at a ham without gnawing on something



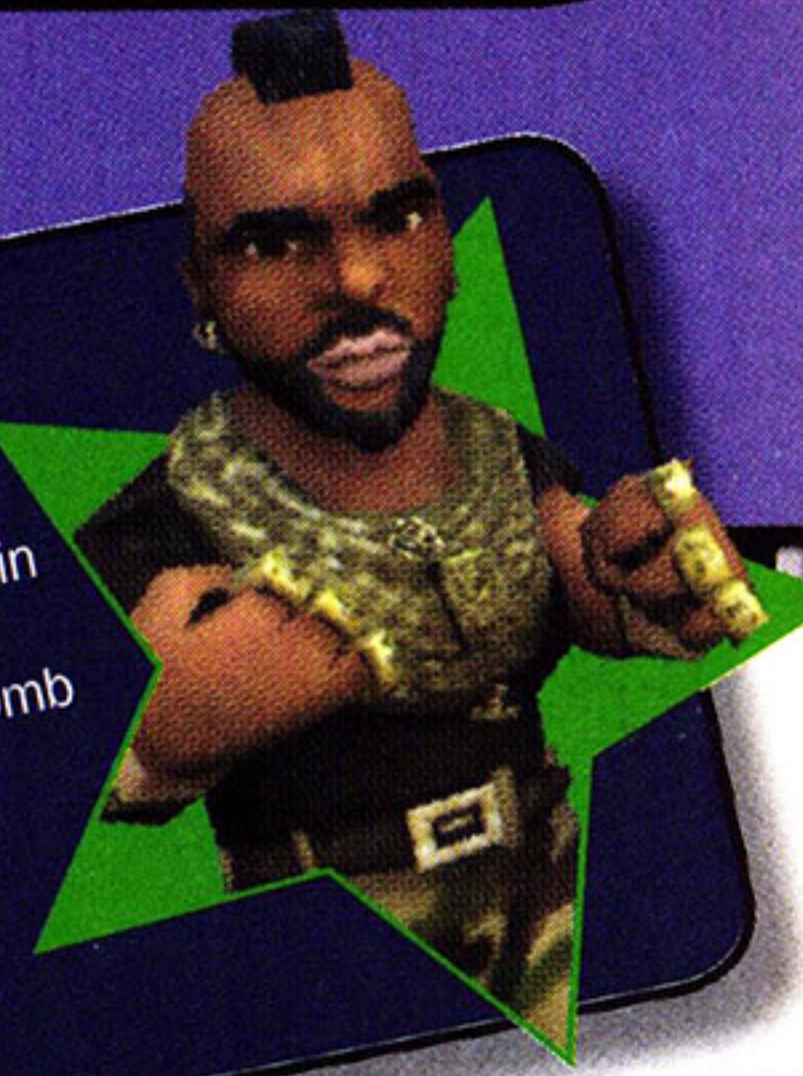
JERRY SPRINGER

Career Highlights: Gave rednecks a place to intelligently settle differences
Special Move: Springy Shoe Leap
Likes: Putting his law degree to good use
Hates: Being forced to resign as mayor of Cincinnati
Weakness: Infatuated with Oprah, Dr. Phil



MR. T

Career Highlights: Appeared as B.A. Baracus on TV's The A-Team, pitchman for Wisconsin Auto Title Loan
Special Move: Demolition Bomb
Likes: Chains
Hates: Pyrite, Murdoch
Weakness: Pities fools, afraid of flying



PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

SOUL CALIBUR II

SOUL CAMEOS

Soul Calibur II may be the most eagerly anticipated fighter in all of gaming, but that hasn't stopped Namco from keeping its profile low. Thankfully, the thimbleful of information we've received in the past six months has now runneth over. The first update involves confirmation of a mission mode, to be called Weapon Master. A total of 200 weapons can be equipped by your character, and your fighting style will have to adapt to finish each battle. More surprising, though, is news about three exclusive characters – one for each console's version of the game. Which one will you go with? You have until August to decide.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 18



LINK

NECRID

This is a new character created by Todd McFarlane Productions who will appear in every version of the game. Necrid's got some crazy weaponry and fancy moves, but this is all we're showing you of him for now. Try not to drool too much on this page.

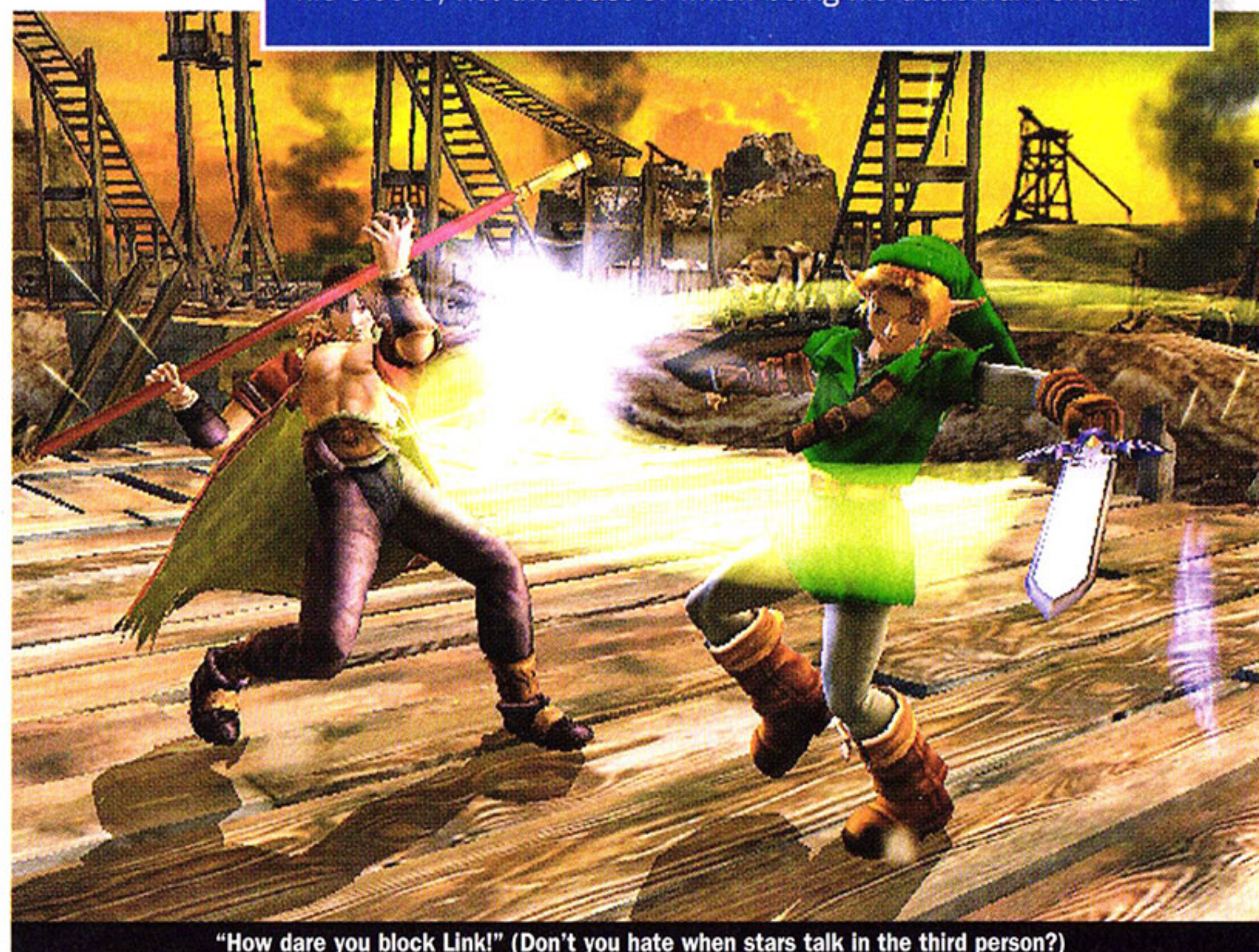


GAMECUBE EXCLUSIVE

Anyone who's ever held a controller in their hand should be familiar with this young lad. His newest game, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, will be out in mere months. In spite of Zelda's new cel-shaded makeover, Namco has decided to stick with his more traditional look. Link is no stranger to a good fight, having appeared in both *Super Smash Bros.* games. From these screens, it's apparent he'll have an arsenal of tricks up his sleeve, not the least of which being his trademark sword.



That arrow shot just barely missed its intended target: le crotch



"How dare you block Link!" (Don't you hate when stars talk in the third person?)



We remember this attack – and we reckon Taki will, too

HEIHACHI MISHIMA



PLAYSTATION 2 EXCLUSIVE

This guy has already appeared in two PS2 games, but things are a little different this time around. Something tells us winning this tournament will be harder than being crowned King of Iron Fist, because the big bad Tekken daddy has a major disadvantage: He'll be the only combatant in Soul Calibur II without a weapon. At least he left the diaper at home.



No game in the Soul series would be complete without some raft-riding!

SPAWN



XBOX EXCLUSIVE

The man recruited by Hell has a lot more in common with the Xbox than you may initially assume. Fact one: They both wear black. Fact two: They both have an eerie green glow. Fact three: Um, they're both cool. With battle-axe in hand, Spawn will lay waste to the pansies that get in his way. The cape is off; the chains are tightened – it's time to throw down!



Even the axe has green eyes – how bad-ass is that?!



"Schwing!"



PLAYSTATION 2

CHAOS LEGION

DEVIL MAY CRY ON STEROIDS

Devil May Cry set a precedent for fluidity, control, and precision that finally bridged the gap between 2D and 3D action games. Chaos Legion adopts this model and places even more significance on the action component by rewiring the intensity level. Devil May Cry is to Castlevania as Chaos Legion is to Guardian Heroes.

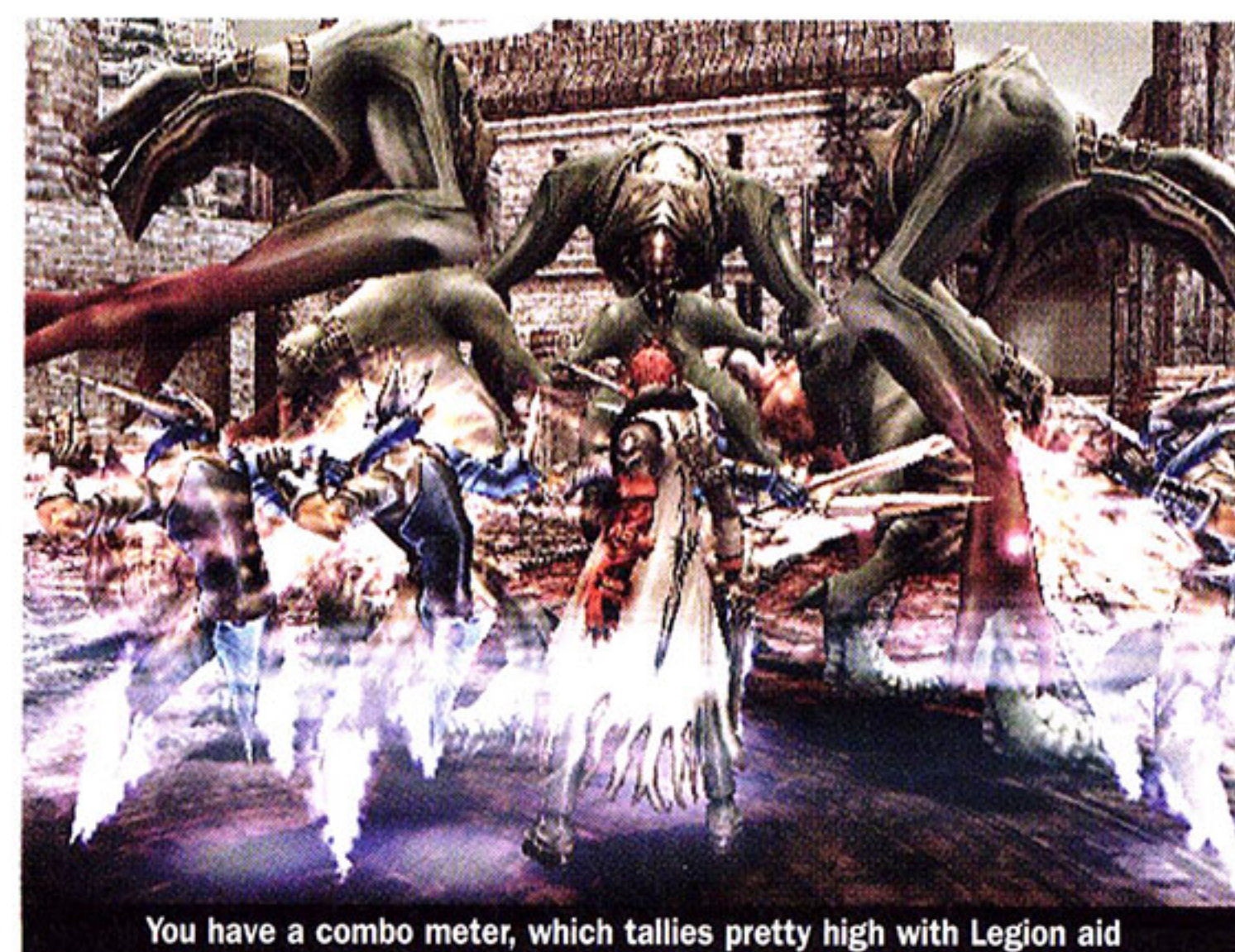
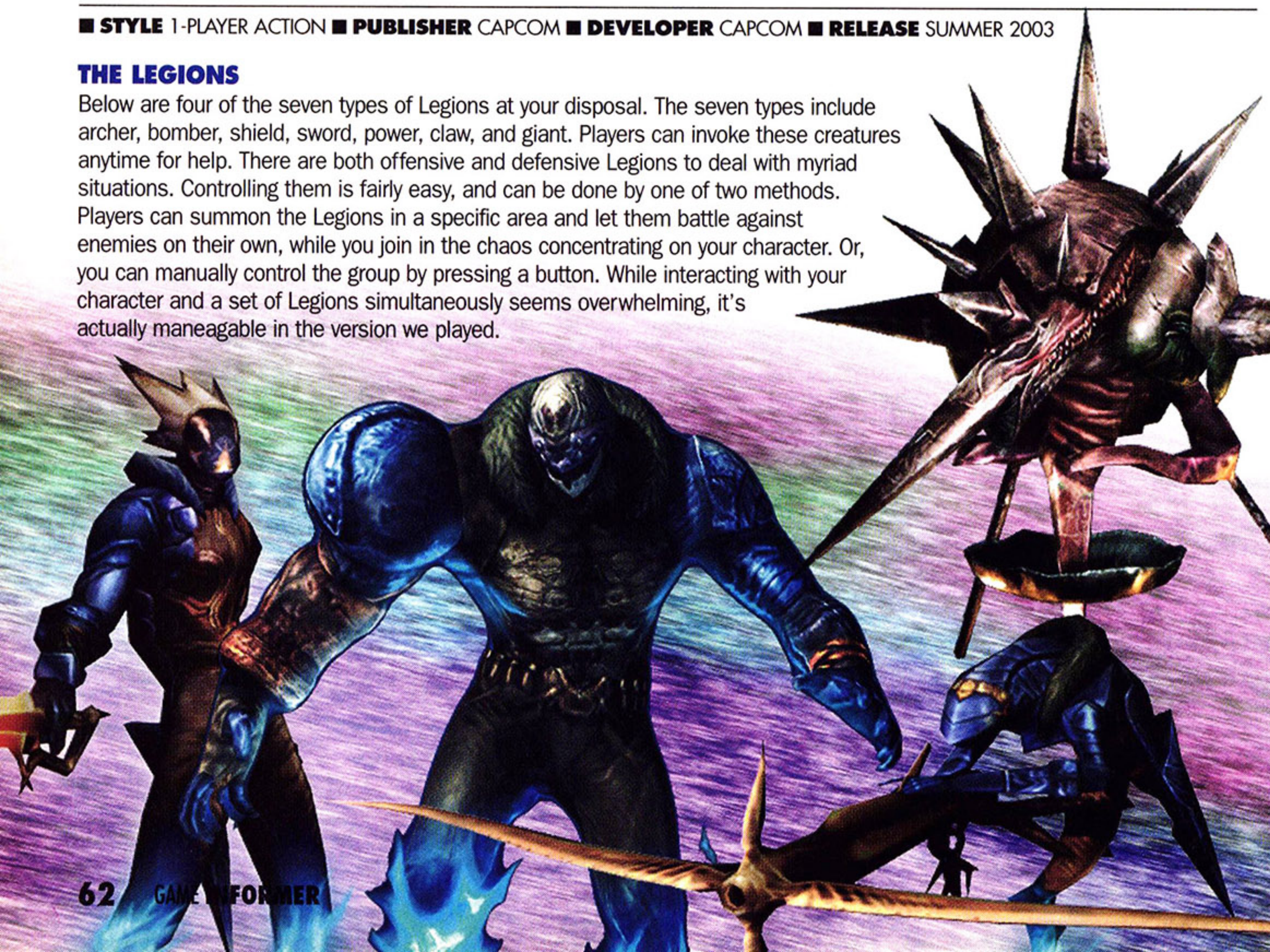
Capcom clearly prides itself on Chaos Legion's utter pandemonium. At a recent showing, Capcom stated, "Chaos Legion will feature dozens of enemies onscreen simultaneously!" After having played the demo, we were thoroughly addicted to the game's nonstop, heart-thumping slicing and dicing. At nearly every corner of Chaos' 13 ominous levels, players will encounter hordes upon hordes of enemies, all of whom employ different offenses and defenses – a dynamic which helps elevate it beyond a typical brawler.

We were also fortunate to discover that Chaos Legion will incorporate a few RPG elements. For the main character, Sieg Wahrheit, this basically means that you'll upgrade his powers as you progress through each area. But, our protagonist really only composes part of the entire gameplay experience. Players will also be able to summon creatures called Legions to aid in battle.

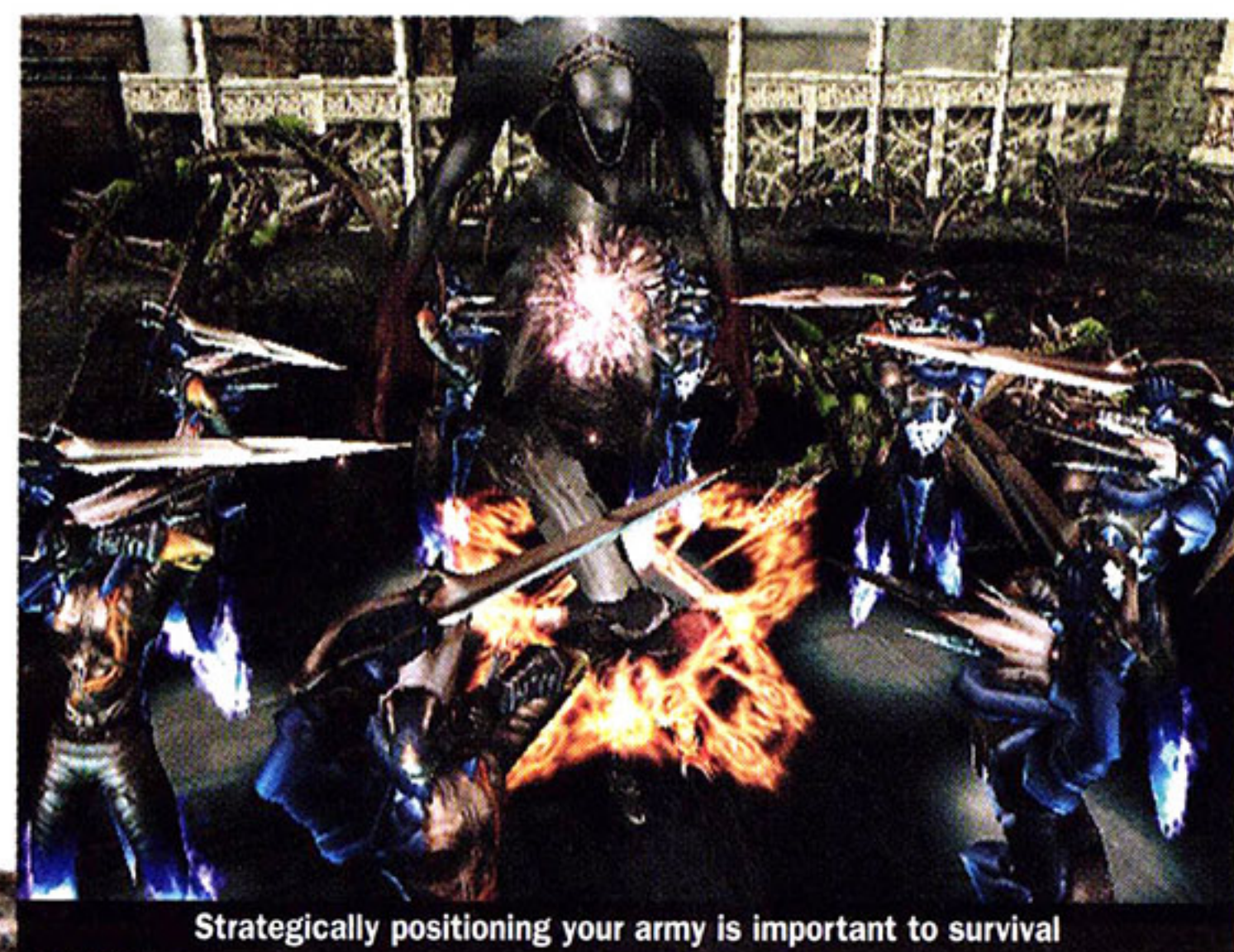
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** SUMMER 2003

THE LEGIONS

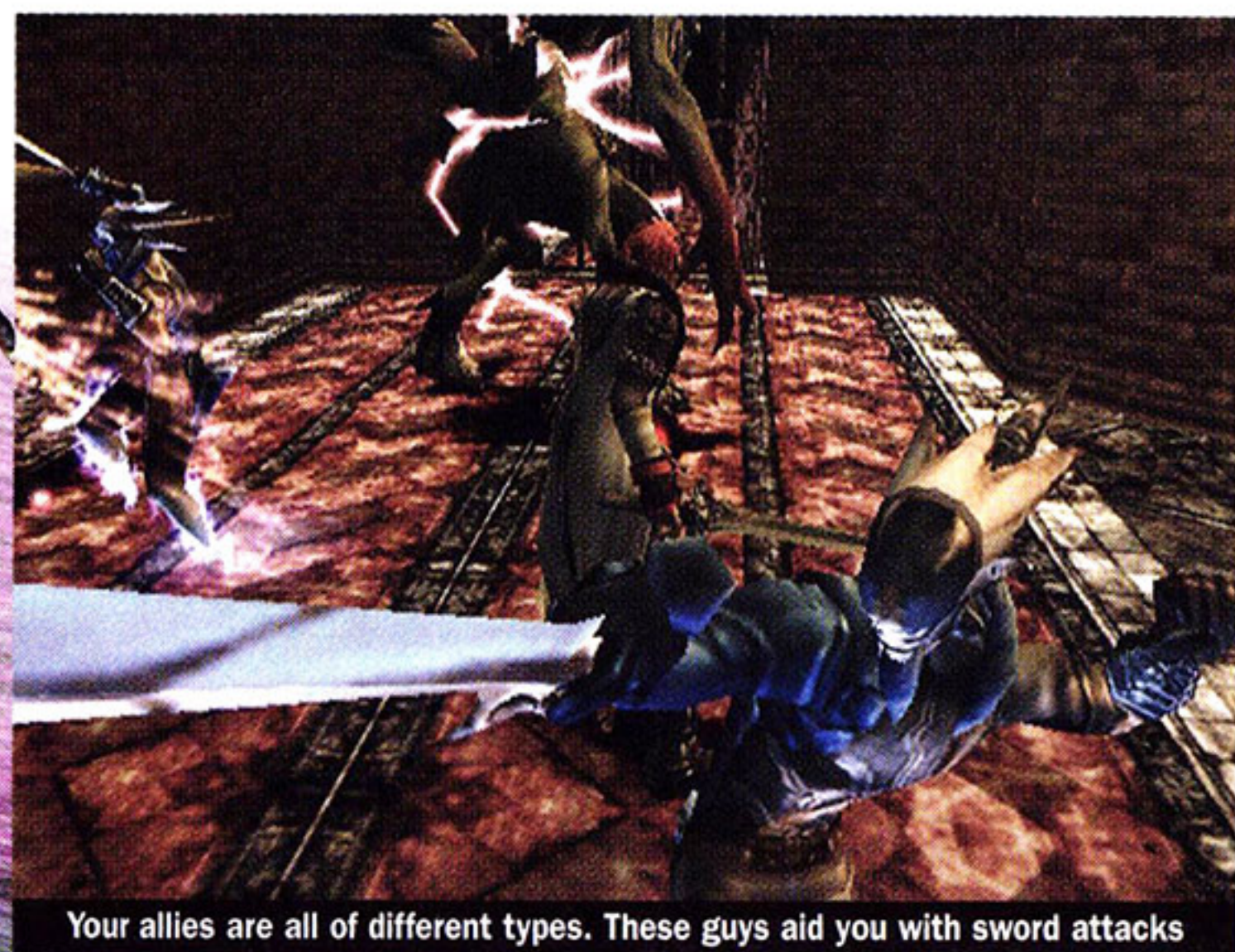
Below are four of the seven types of Legions at your disposal. The seven types include archer, bomber, shield, sword, power, claw, and giant. Players can invoke these creatures anytime for help. There are both offensive and defensive Legions to deal with myriad situations. Controlling them is fairly easy, and can be done by one of two methods. Players can summon the Legions in a specific area and let them battle against enemies on their own, while you join in the chaos concentrating on your character. Or, you can manually control the group by pressing a button. While interacting with your character and a set of Legions simultaneously seems overwhelming, it's actually manageable in the version we played.



You have a combo meter, which tallies pretty high with Legion aid



Strategically positioning your army is important to survival



Your allies are all of different types. These guys aid you with sword attacks



FIGHTING MODES

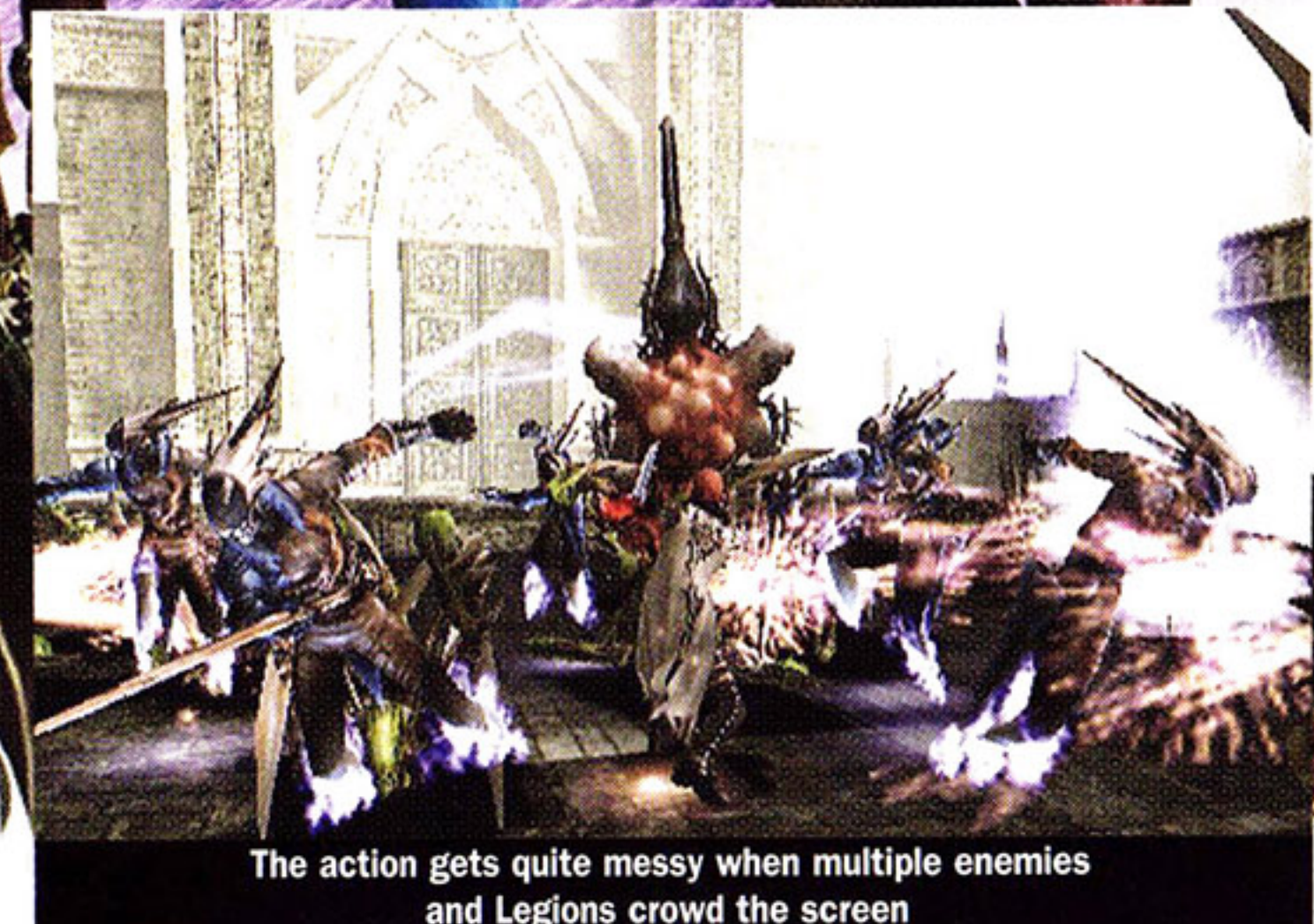
Chaos Legion will offer two main modes of play: Normal and Legion. Normal allows players to fight freely within an environment against easier odds, but without the aid of Legions. Legion is the mode we've been describing throughout most of the article: fighting insurmountable odds in a specific story with the aid of your monstrous pals.



Summon your allies at will



You can direct your allies to fight while you remain safely behind



The action gets quite messy when multiple enemies and Legions crowd the screen

THE PRINCIPALS

This is the main cast. The first person is an NPC, Siela Riviere, and the last one is our villain, Victor. The characters in between are Sieg (our hero) and another NPC, Arcia Rinslet.

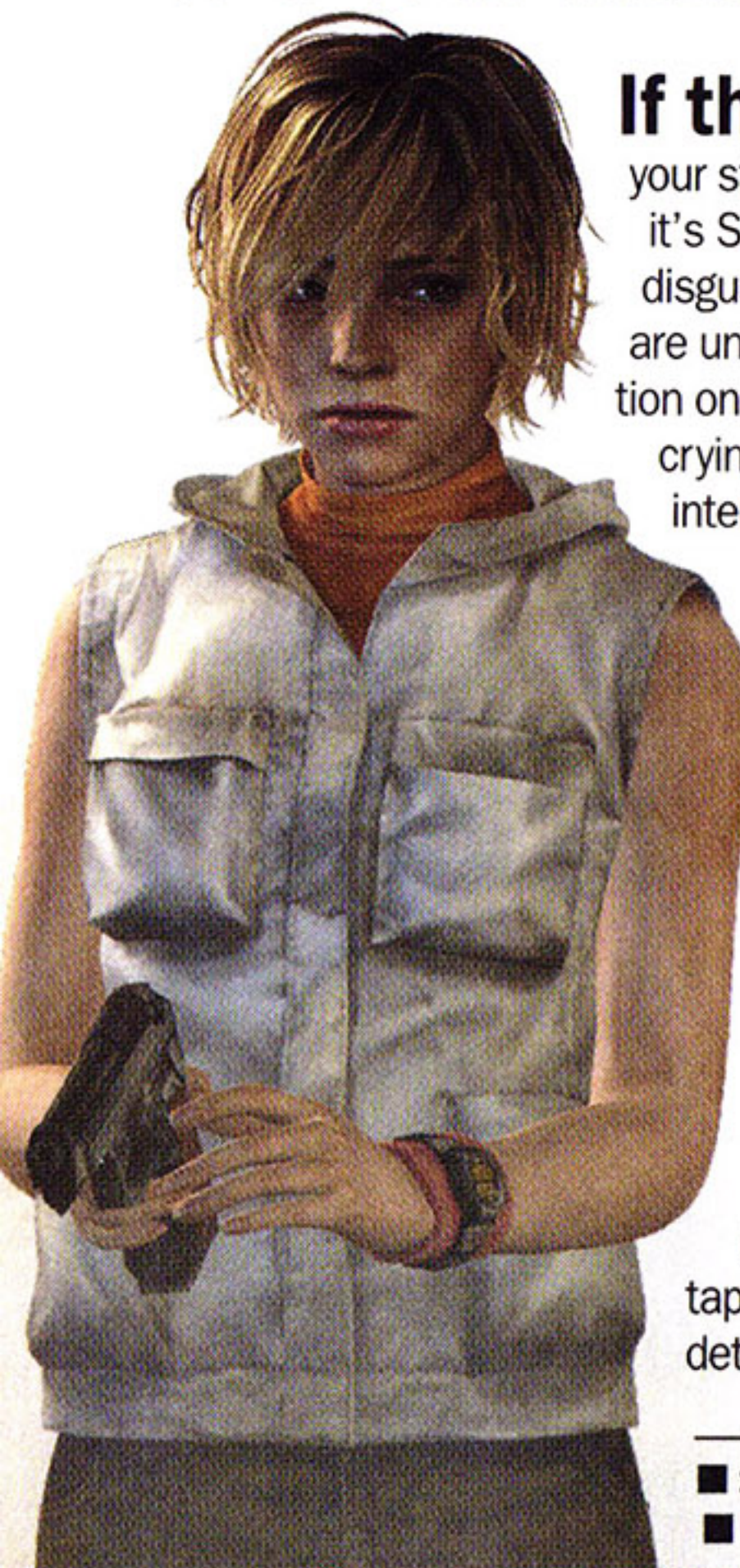
Unfortunately, we have no information regarding the supporting cast outside of Sieg's nemesis (and former friend), Victor Delacroix, who is hell-bent on destroying the entire world. You and (we're assuming) your NPC allies are charged to quash Victor's dastardly plans and save life on the planet.



PLAYSTATION 2

SILENT HILL 3

IT'S THE SILENT ONES THAT ARE DEADLY



If there's one game out there that will get your stomach churning and have you sprinting for the porcelain god, it's *Silent Hill 3*. This game is so morbid, disturbing, and downright disgusting, roughly 99 percent of the screen captures Konami supplied are unsuitable for publication. For those of you who need illumination on this matter, picture, if you will, a girl on her hands and knees crying within a room soaked from ceiling to floor in human blood. As intended, it's the kind of imagery that will send shivers up your spine and will make you sleep with your nightlight on for weeks on end.

The story in *Silent Hill* focuses on yet another hapless victim. Players will assume the role of Heather Morris, an ordinary teen who enjoys spending her afternoons with friends at the mall. As luck would have it, not only did she miss the Gap's big clearance sale, but ghastly demons with the thirst for blood have overrun the mall. It's up to little Miss Morris to stay alive and discover the root of the problem. *Silent Hill 3*'s monster designer, Masahiro Ito adds, "The town's history plays a large part in this game and the story brings back the occult element."

If you thought that *Splinter Cell* excelled in graphical realism – especially in shading – you haven't seen anything yet. *Silent Hill 3* taps into a new graphics engine that delivers lifelike environmental details. Shadows will roll off of character faces realistically as they

move beneath lights. "Darkness has always been part of *Silent Hill*, but now we've brought it to a different level," remarks Ito. The in-game visuals are so sharp, in fact, that Konami decided to use them within the CG movies. If you've played through the previous entries in the series, you know that the game has always used different models within its cutscenes.

With the graphics drawing in players, Konami decided to rework the gameplay to keep them engrossed. "We've made the gameplay more enjoyable," comments Ito. "We've included more variations in battle so that you are not becoming familiar with what is happening." In one such instance, Heather will stumble upon beef jerky. While the player's reflex is to eat it to regain health, it's actually used as bait for a creature. When Heather drops it to the floor, the beast will lunge for it. As it feasts, Heather has an open window to attack or flee.

When *Silent Hill 3* releases on May 6, players will receive a special bonus: Konami is bundling the game with an original music soundtrack. This score, which is composed, performed, and edited by *Silent Hill 3*'s producer, Akira Yamaoka, features four exclusive vocal tracks not featured in the game.

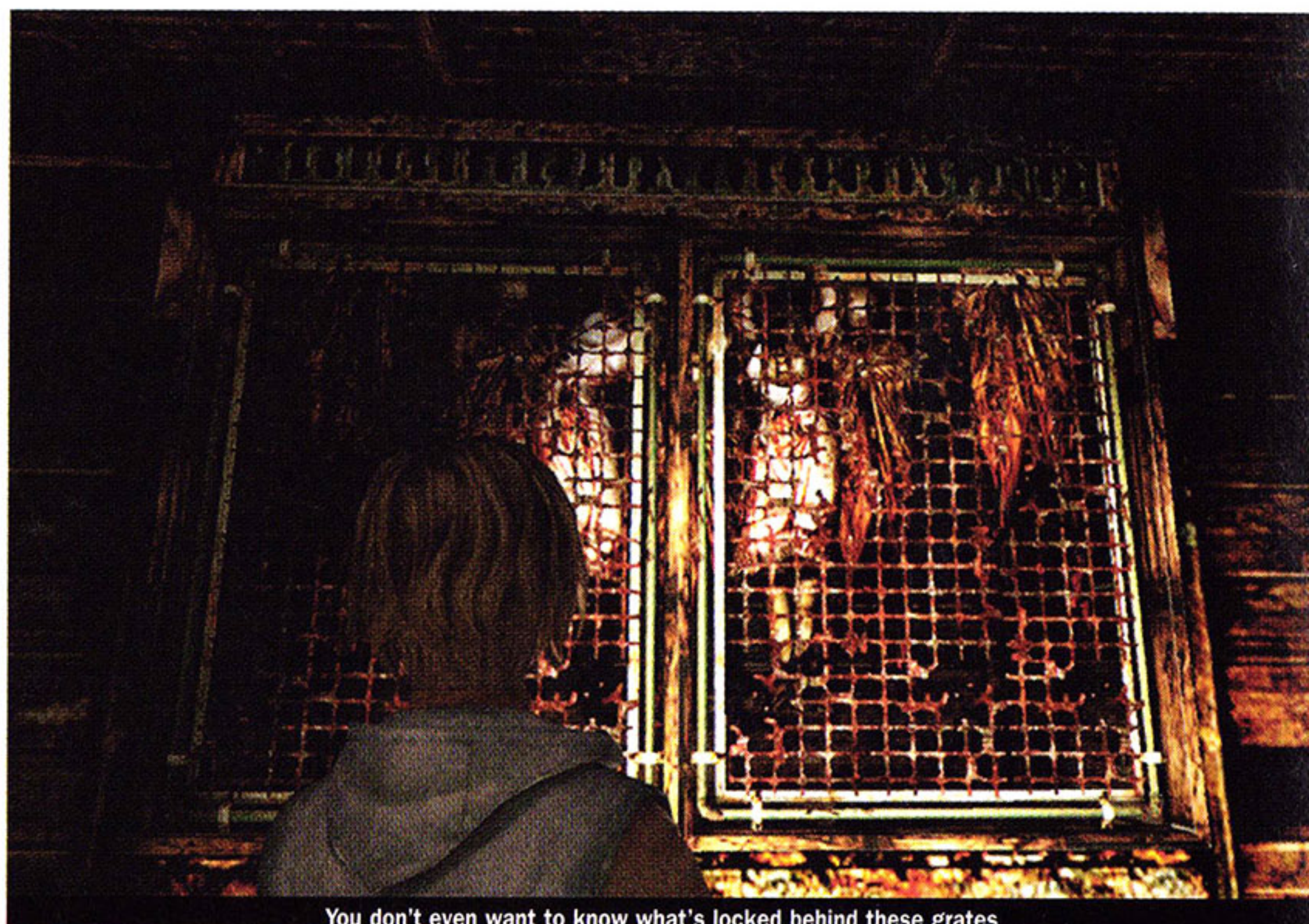


The characters in the cutscenes are the same as the in-game models

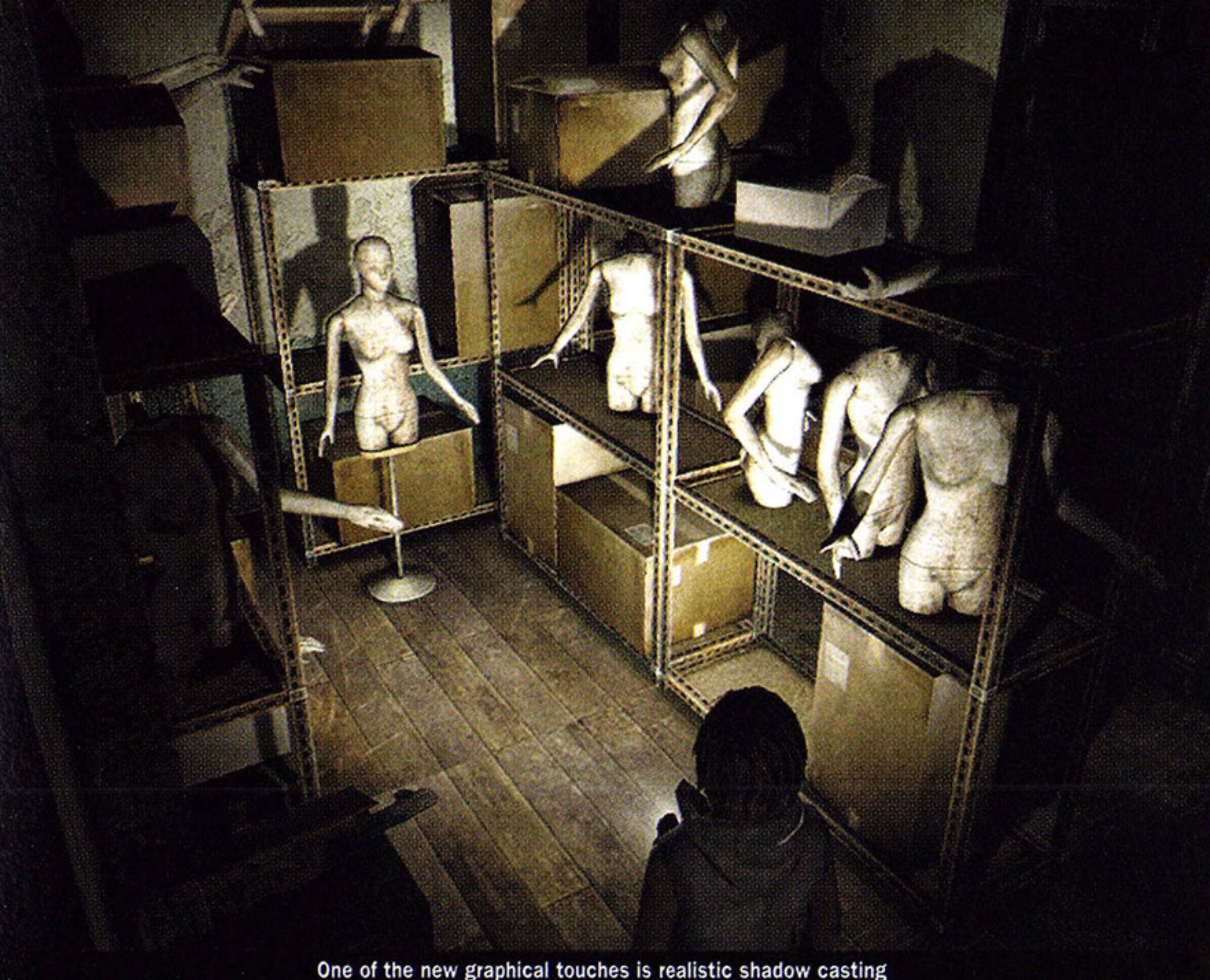
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** MAY 6



"Oh dear lord! The Limited is closed, too!"



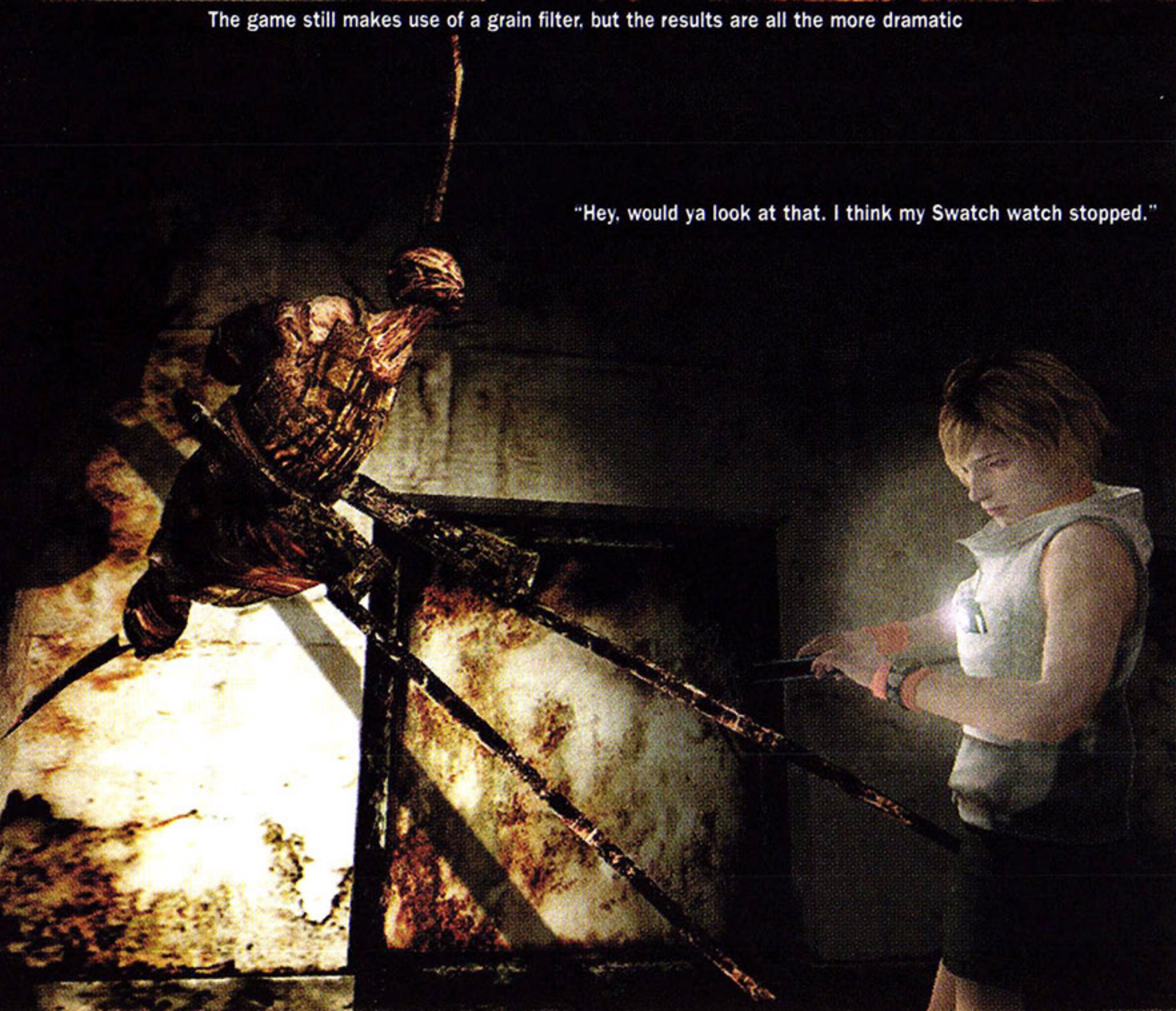
You don't even want to know what's locked behind these grates



One of the new graphical touches is realistic shadow casting



The game still makes use of a grain filter, but the results are all the more dramatic



"Hey, would ya look at that. I think my Swatch watch stopped."



PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2

GREGORY HORROR SHOW

CUBIVORE MEETS SURVIVAL HORROR

Without a doubt,

Gregory Horror Show deserves recognition for being the most unique of Capcom's upcoming titles – both in look and gameplay design. Players assume the role of a girl who stumbles upon Gregory House. Upon entering the mansion, our heroine meets a square-headed mouse named Gregory, who warns her that she's trapped inside unless she can collect enough of the lost souls that haunt the mansion.

Doing so, however, presents more of a challenge than the infamous Proton Pack/Ghost Trap combo. Since each ghost has its own personality, the approach to catching them constantly changes. For example, some simply want to speak with a living person, so making conversation with a soul becomes the best means of capturing it. Others are malicious, and can only be caught through trickery.

Perhaps the most interesting mechanic involves the game's unique use of time and space. Some ghosts will only appear at certain times performing certain activities (sleeping, eating, etc.), which means you'll have to take special note of the title's real-time clock. This innovative design also means that gamers will experience non-linear gameplay!

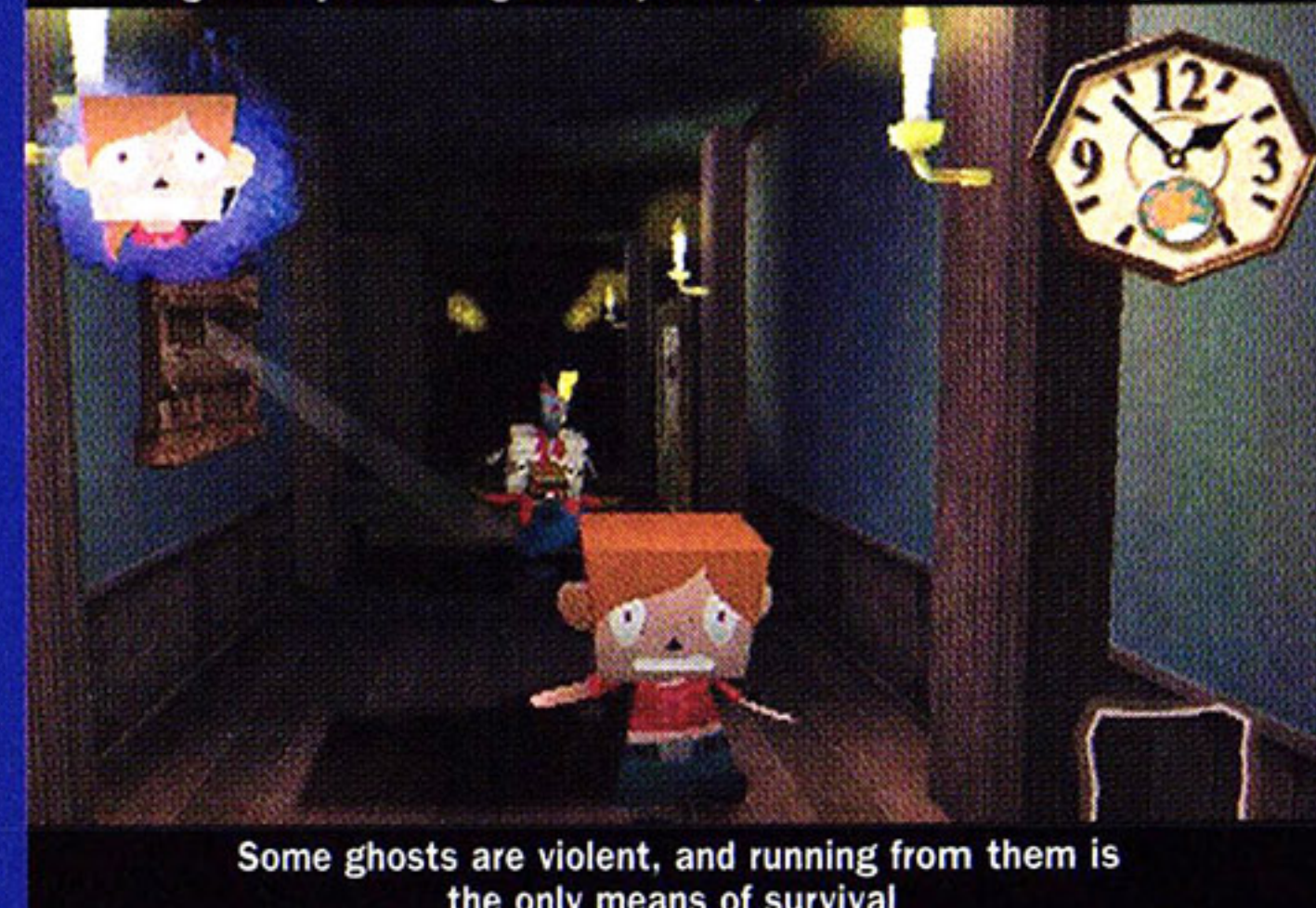
If we're lucky, Gregory Horror Show's strange approach will offer us a refreshing, light-hearted new type of horror.



Puzzles are also a part of the game



Being sneaky and using trickery is required to catch some ghosts



Some ghosts are violent, and running from them is the only means of survival

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 2004



Our hero, Patrick!



XBOX

DINO CRISIS 3

DINO HORIZON

Capcom's blitz of survival horror retreads has seemingly come to an end – and what better way to mark that conclusion than by redesigning the second series that helped establish it?

Although *Dino Crisis 3* loosely retains elements that keep it tied to the *Dino* series (dinosaurs, frightening sequences, guns), the story and gameplay are significantly different. Players assume the role of Patrick, a member of an elite military team, who the government sends to infiltrate and investigate a gigantic spaceship called *Ozymandius*. 300 years prior, the ship suddenly disappeared, and it has reappeared in the year 2548. Patrick boards the ship and quickly discovers that ravenous dinosaurs mysteriously inhabit the place. Quite simply, he must kill or be devoured!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 2003

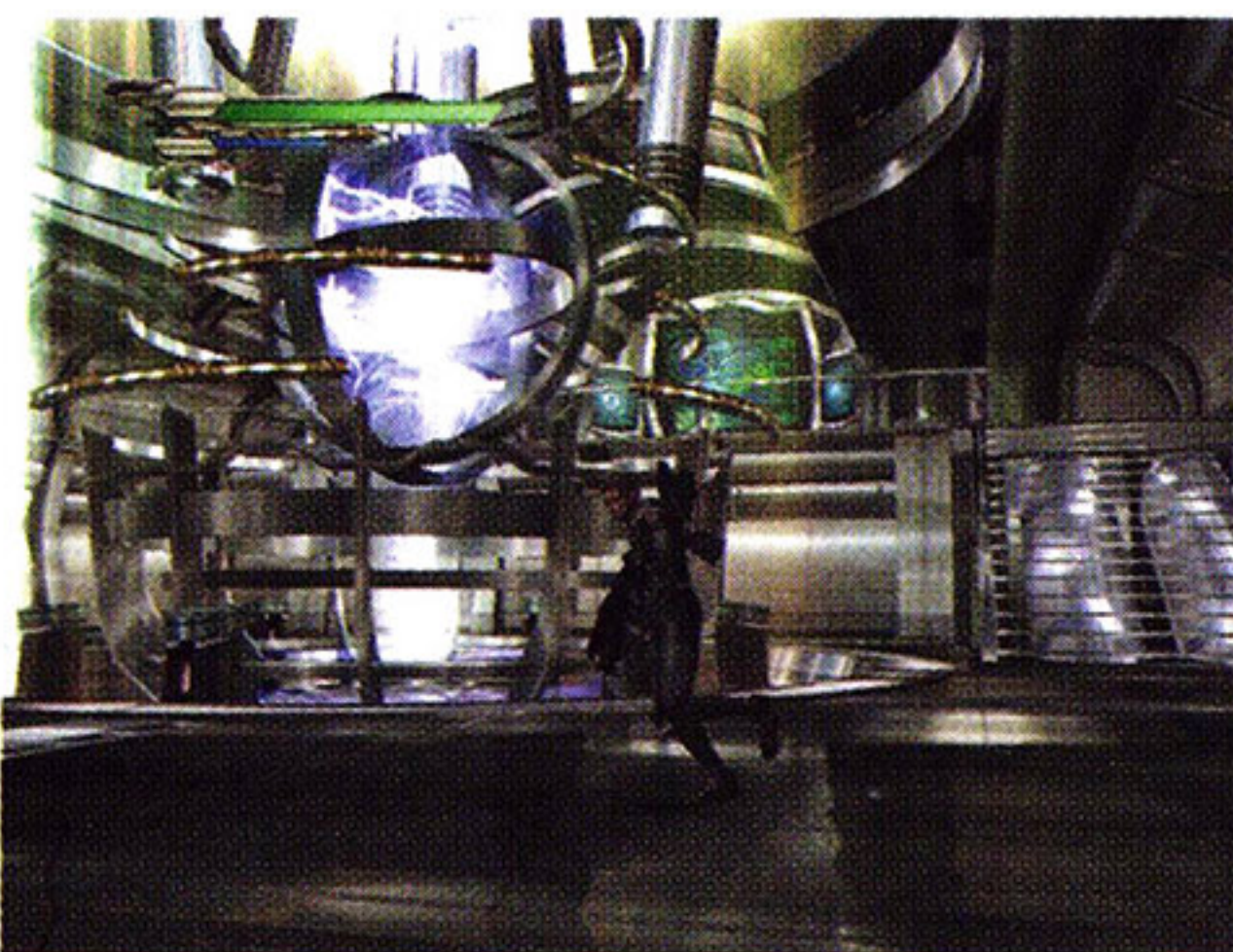


GAMEPLAY

The basic gameplay design remains the same: Players kill dinosaurs and solve puzzles. However, the idea behind each of these elements is quite different. As with other games, Capcom is taking *DC 3* down a more action-oriented route. The combat is extremely fast-paced, and the weapons and control are far easier to manage. Patrick wears a jet pack (a la *Burning Rangers*); zipping around while quickly dodging dino attacks and countering with blasts of his own. Patrick also has the ability to use a weapon called Wasps. These little flying machines search out a target, surround it, and release a barrage of fire! Although we don't know of any puzzles specifically, Capcom says, "the puzzles revolve around the changing environment," which means that players actually alter the environment upon completing a puzzle. This not only creates a new area out of the old one, but allows you to access previously locked sections.

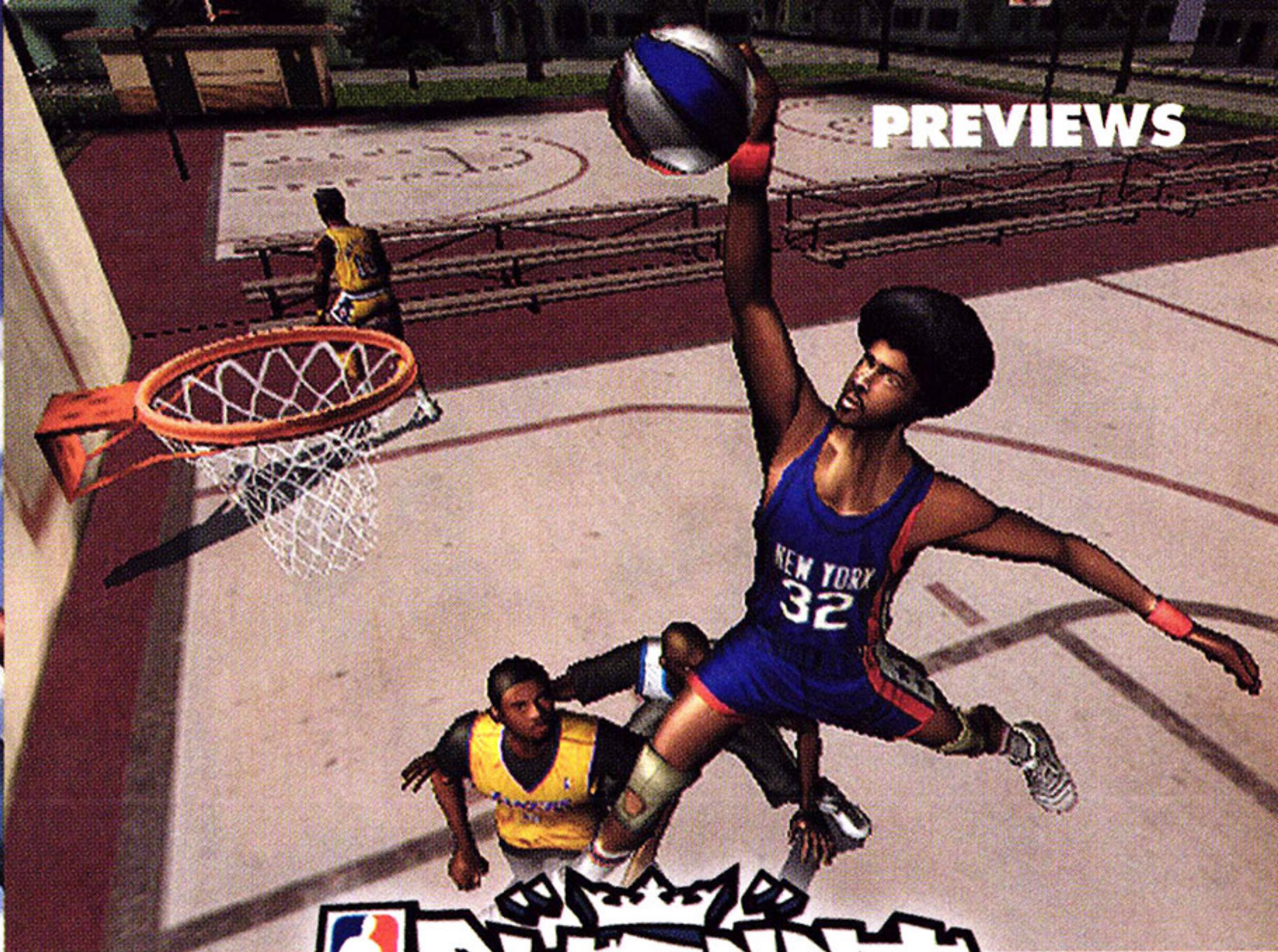
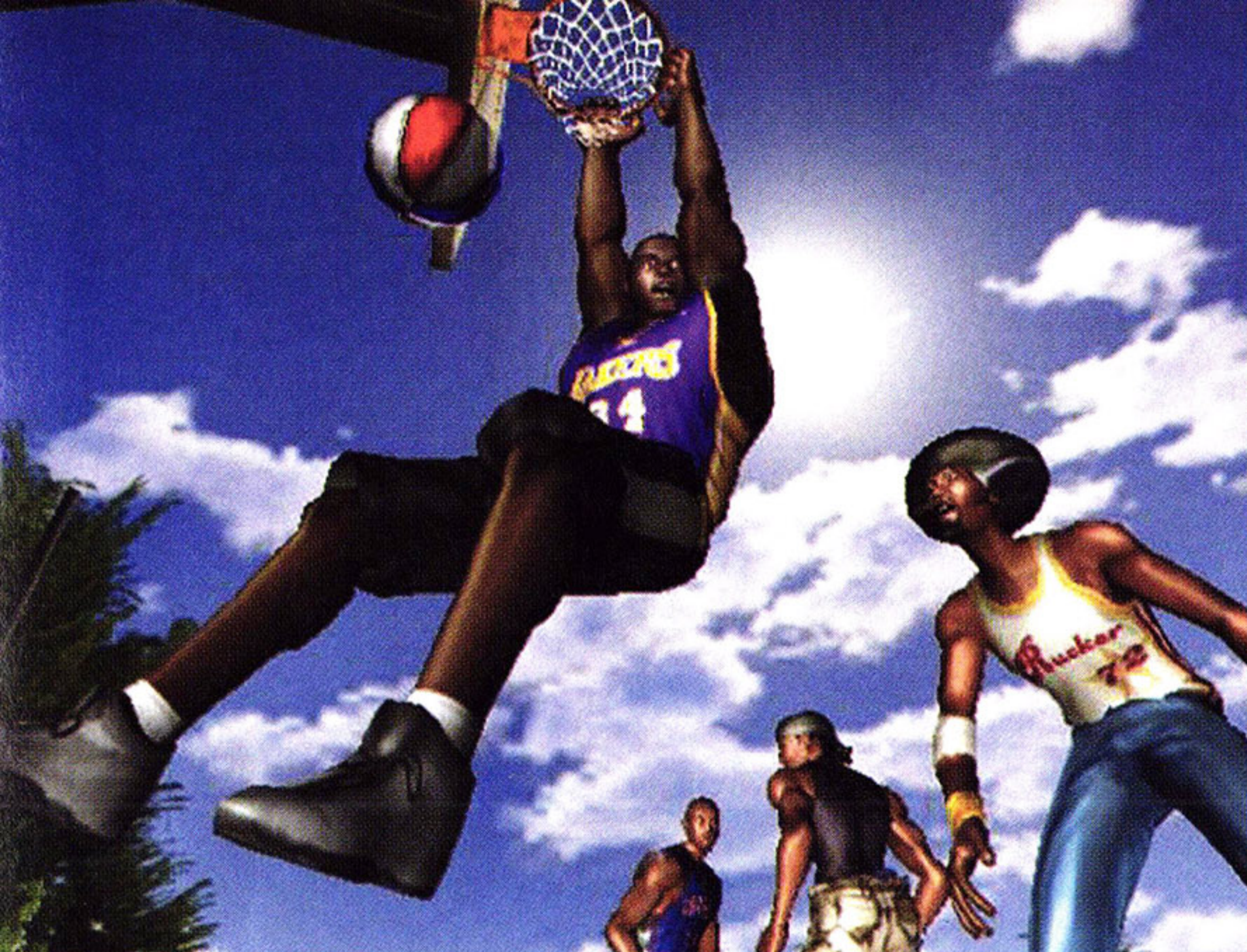


As you can see, there appears to be a Wasp just above the dinosaur's head



A SHINY LOOK

As you can tell, most of the game looks metallic, which is because the adventure takes place within *Ozymandius*. The cold, plain appearance makes it tough to properly see the level of detail *DC 3* has attained. But rest assured, the weapon effects and myriad reflections create quite the spectacle. You can see some reflections in these pictures.



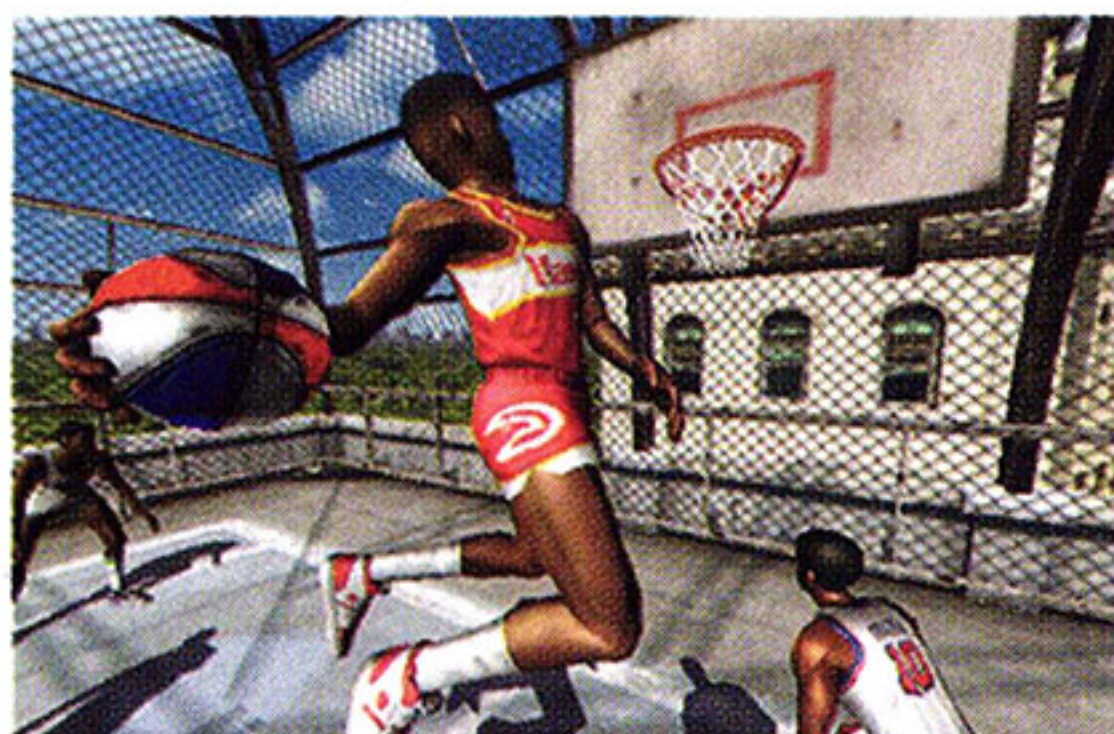
PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

NBA STREET VOL.2

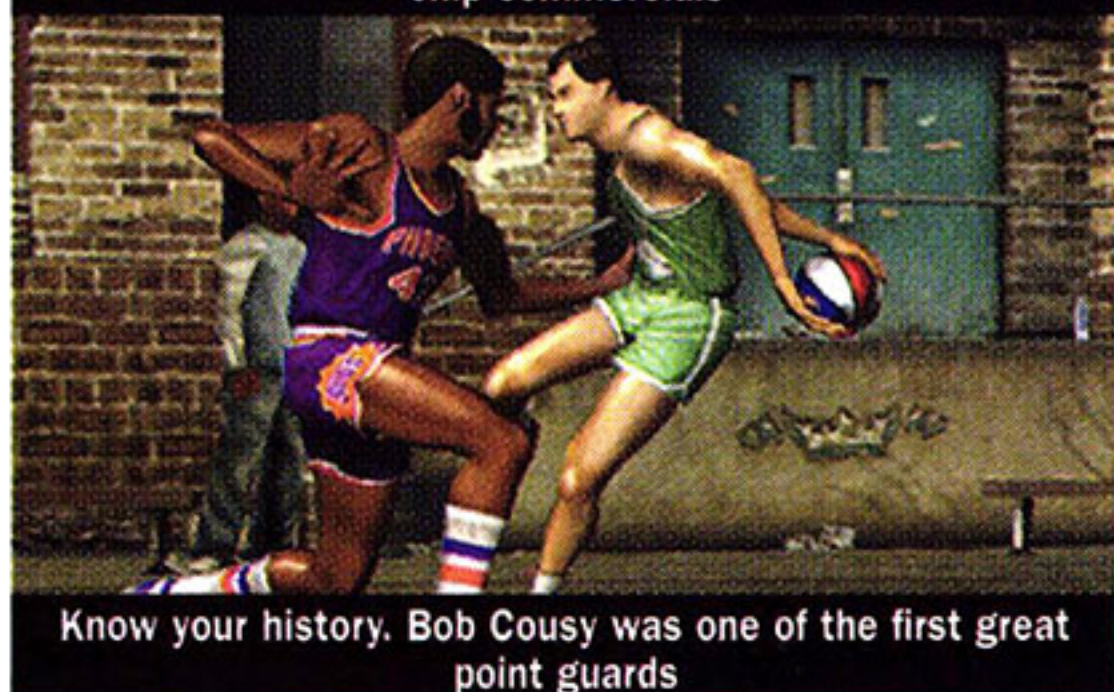
NEWLY PAVED AND REMODELED



■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ PUBLISHER EA BIG
 ■ DEVELOPER NUFX/EA CANADA ■ RELEASE MARCH 4



The Human Highlight Film is back, and not just on Fritos chip commercials



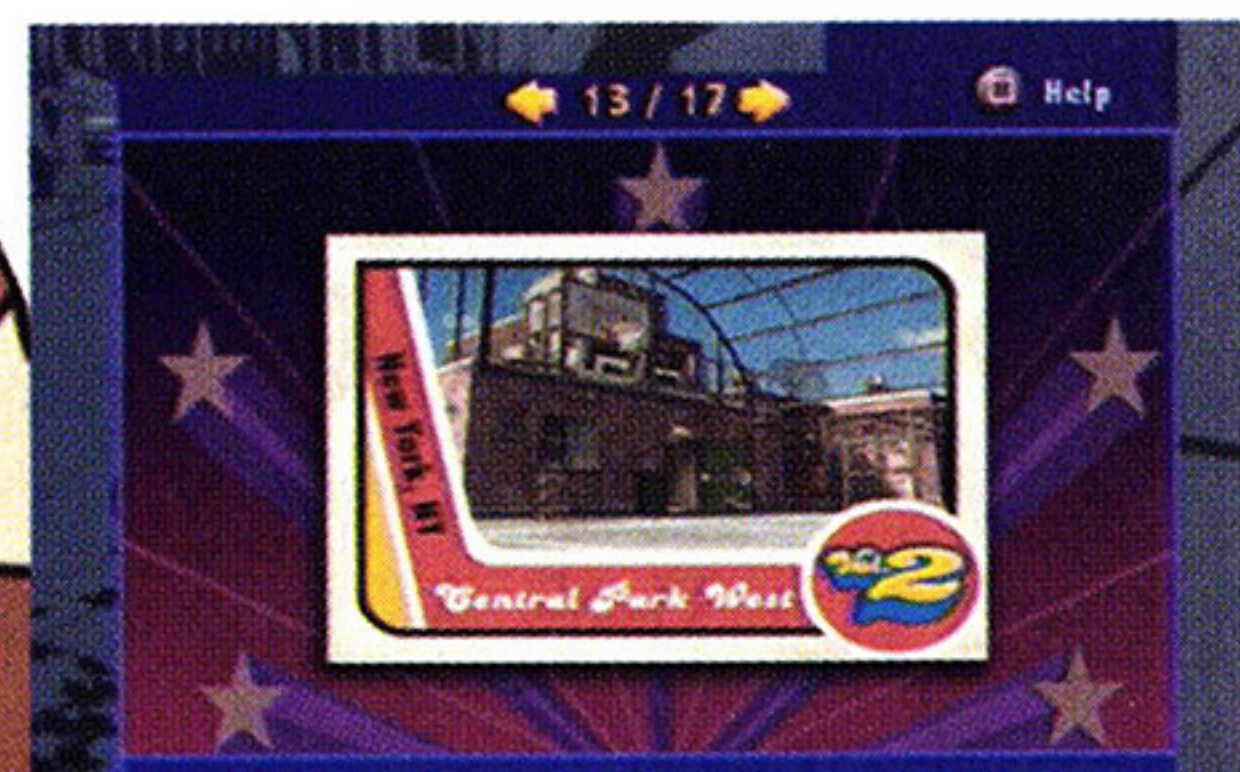
Know your history. Bob Cousy was one of the first great point guards



The ladies are in the house

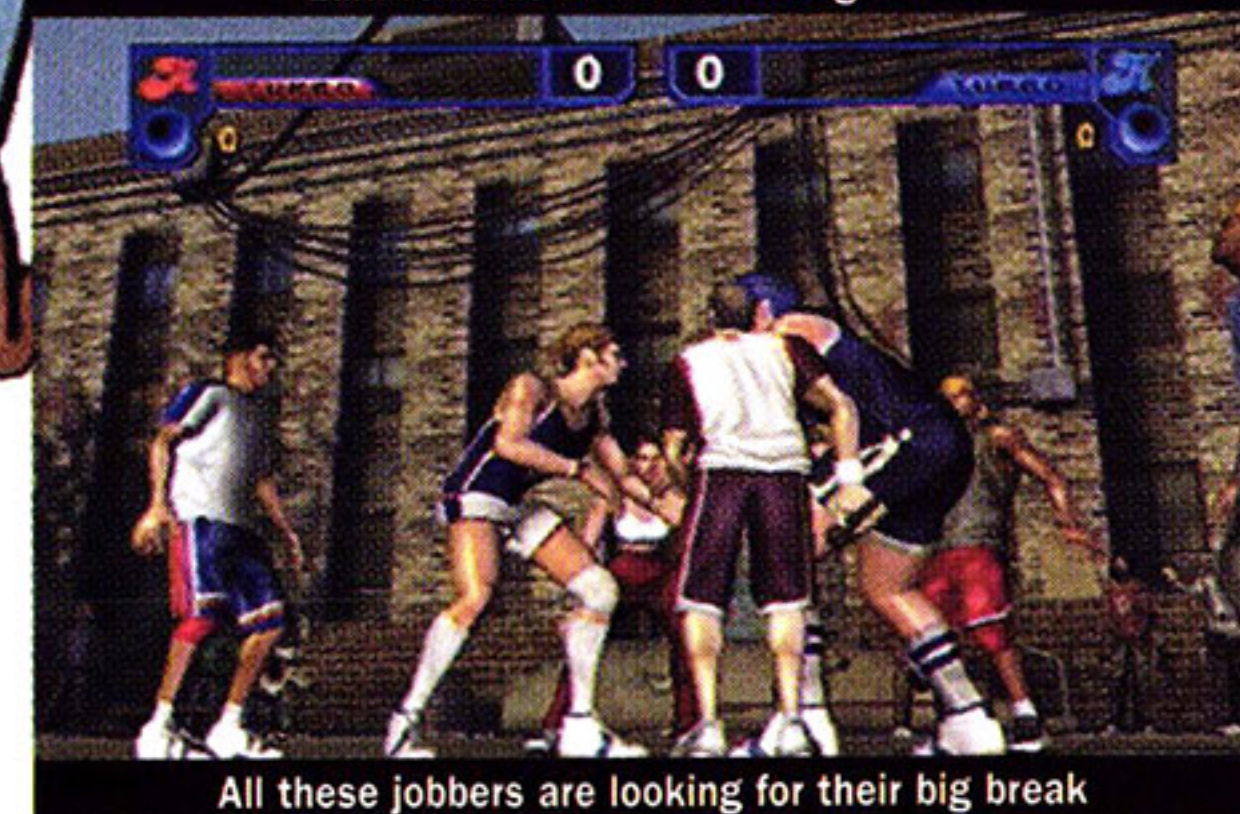


Most outfits fit the game's retro motif



This Court is now unlocked.

Earn rewards in NBA Challenge mode



All these jobbers are looking for their big break

OLD-TIMERS

Twenty-five classic players join the NBA Street Vol. 2 roster and add to the retro style of the game. These include no-brainer selections like Magic Johnson and Dr. J, as well as more obscure picks such as "Chocolate Thunder" Darryl Dawkins and James Worthy. Even if you don't unlock one of these greats, you can pay homage to their legacy by letting your created player don their jerseys.

THE NEW YOU

Thankfully, Street 2's baller creator is much deeper. Both males and females can be custom-built. There are a total of six body types (four male, two female), and four player sizes. Once you pick a height, that's it – no changing. The taller or buffer he or she is, the less initial development points you get for dishing out skills, which fall into these categories: Shots, Dunks, Power, Blocks, Steals, Handles, and Rebounds. Overall look, hairstyle, facial hair, outfit, and shoes all have several options to choose from. It's far from most NBA sims' create-a-player depth, but it's far better than the first Street's.

MOVIN' ON UP

As dazzling as NBA Street's moves were, EA got even more creative in this second installment. Bounce the ball off a defender's face, or off the backboard back to yourself. Anyone can make a dish with their hands, but now passing with a kick is possible. Perhaps the best addition is the ability to temporarily lock in your player control. This means that you can dish the ball off while keeping control of the passer, break to the paint, leap up, then call for a pass from the computer-controlled ballhandler for a picture-perfect alley-oop!



You can now initiate alley-oops

NAME YOUR GAME

Most games are lucky to give you one mode with legs, but Street 2 tosses two heavy hitters at you. Sure, you can go for a one-game exhibition or get some higher learning in Street School, but that's not what we're talking about. NBA Challenge is just like the main mode in the first Street, where you take your group from team to team until they all go down. However, your crew is now limited to five people, and you can't pick up new players from the squads you beat. Winning gives you reward points, which can then be used to buy things like new courts, players, tips, and development points.

The other mode is called Be A Legend, and is more like a career mode for your created player. It features predominantly generic court jesters who wouldn't stand a chance against the NBA's elite. The goal is to amass experience by entering various tournaments and pick-up games, while earning developmental points to better your custom baller, who is on the court every outing. Unlike NBA Challenge mode, you can take a member from a defeated crew – including fictional Street Legends – who will replace one of your four teammates.



PLAYSTATION 2

ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER

DINGO TO THE RESCUE!

The original **Zone** of the Enders sold incredibly well, but the question remains: Were people buying ZOE for its namesake alone, or the demo of Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty that came packaged with it? Seeing that Hideo Kojima is at the development helm again, we have a feeling that Zone should fare well even without Solid Snake attached.

The first thing you'll notice about this sequel is that it's much larger in scale. The wickedly fast mech combat now has some girth to it. For instance, enemies can now number in the hundreds and attack in large swarms. To combat an onslaught of this size, players can tap into a number of new moves and powers, including the ability to tear a sheet of metal off of a building to use as a shield. You can also grab a steel girder to use as a weapon. The amount of tactics that

players can unleash is staggering and the strategies that can be concocted from them are all the more impressive.

Depth and diversity reside in the game modes as well. Players can enhance their skills in a Metal Gear-like VR Training mode, or combat one another in the fairly robust Verses mode.

Instead of tying the story to the innocence of children, as Kojima did with the first game, this tale exhibits a newfound maturity. You'll step into the shoes of Dingo Egret, a horribly named space miner who pilots an Orbital Frame and quests to defeat the alien forces that may lead to the extinction of mankind. As it stands, the fate of Jupiter and Mars rest in the capable hands of Dingo.

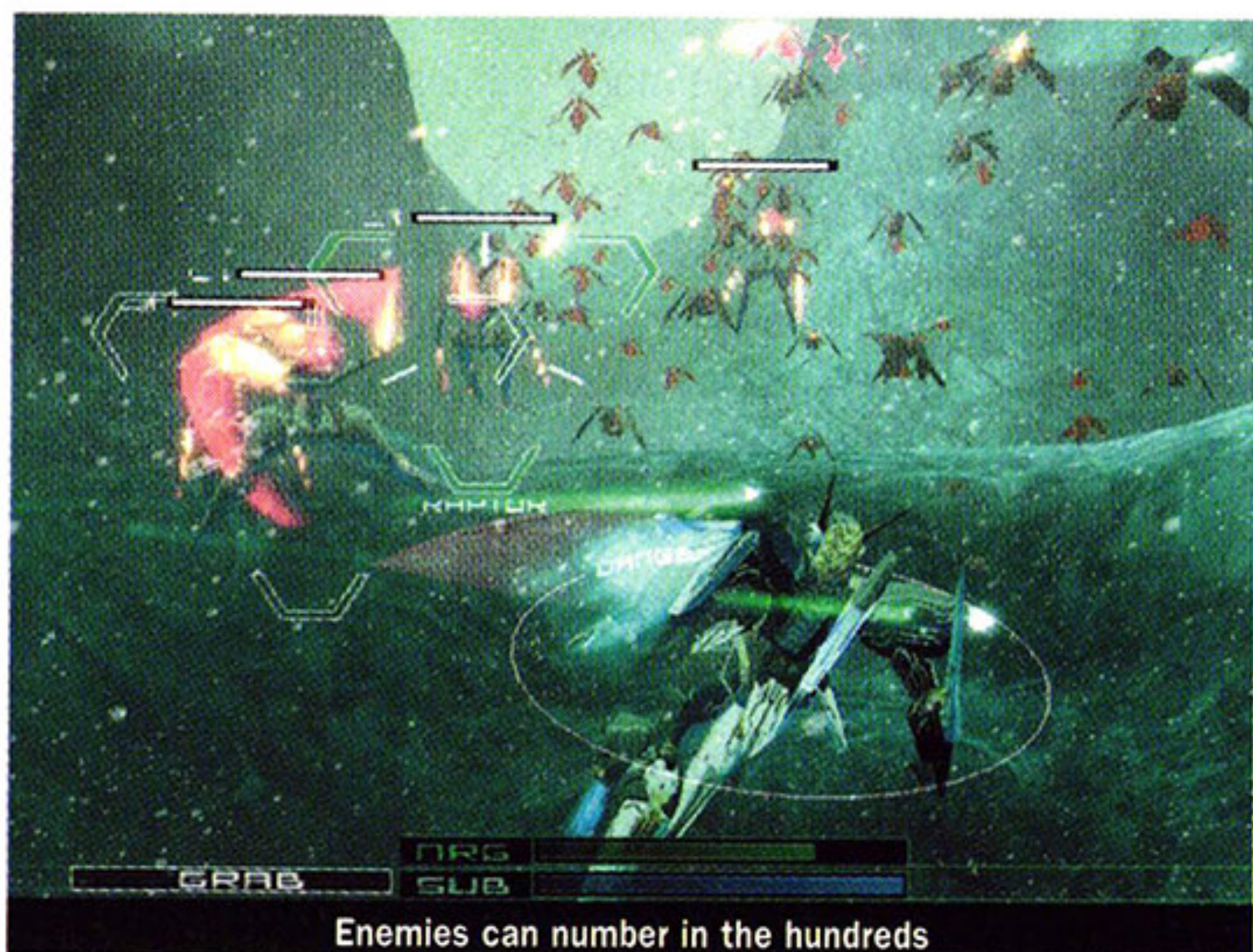
The 2nd Runner is scheduled to ship on March 11 for the PlayStation 2.



With the click of a button, players can flip behind the enemy for an unrivaled attack position



The visual effects are intense and angelic



Enemies can number in the hundreds



Most levels conclude with a boss battle

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI ■ RELEASE MARCH 11



Like others on a Friday night, this stooge pays homage to Iron Maiden's Eddie



If you look closely, you can check out some sweet particle effects



This girl gives off heat in more ways than one



"I swear we parked the jeep in the zebra lot!"



Knowing your terrain is as important as managing your squad



XBOX

BRUTE FORCE

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

It isn't often that a company makes a good non-online, squad-based shooter for a console. However, developer Digital Anvil says it knows what it takes to succeed. "To start with, getting squad-based combat right is a very difficult task," said Erin Roberts, the game's producer. "It takes a lot of patience, redesign, and testing to really bring all the elements together."

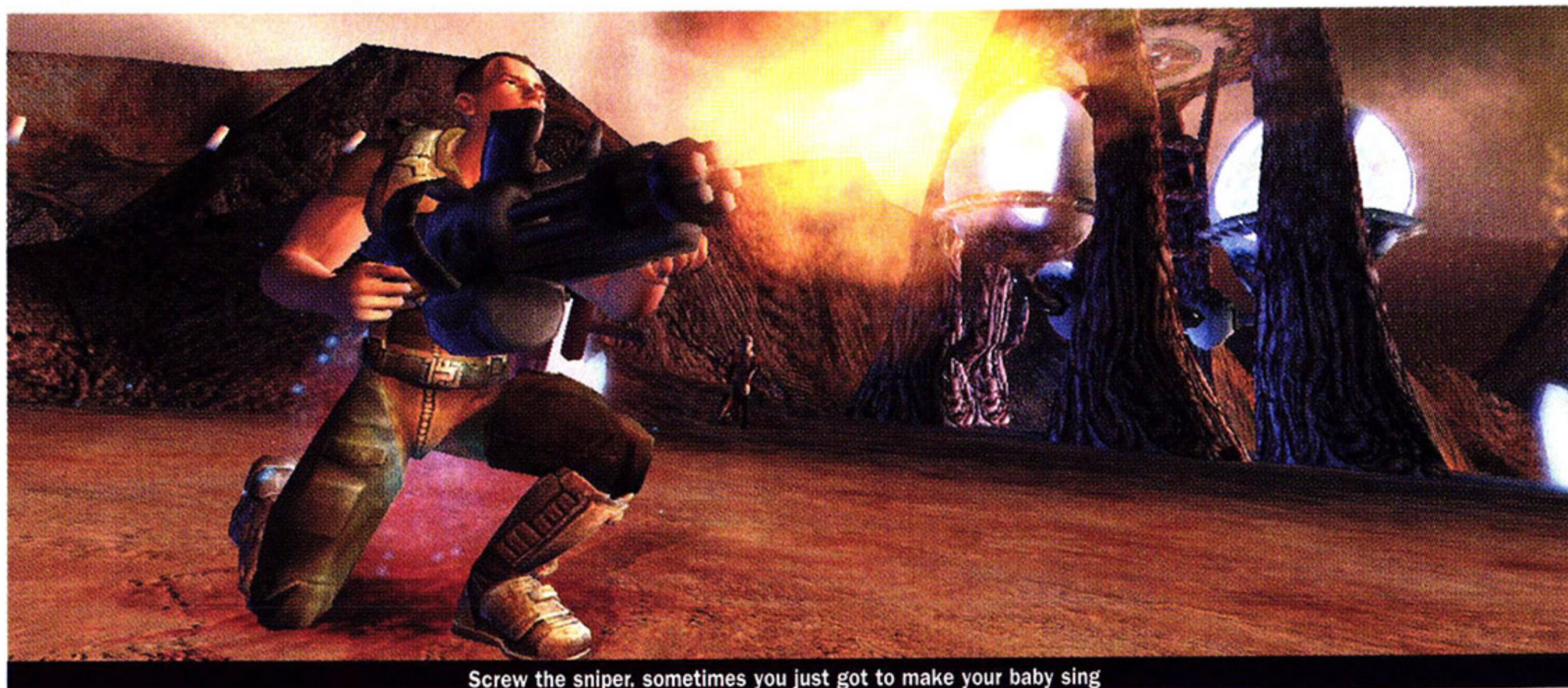
The core of the game revolves around how well your squad works together. Your team is comprised of four different characters you can play at any time: Hawk, Flint, Tex, and Brutus. Each has different skills. Hawk, for example, is the group's sniper. Treat her right, and you'll shoot your way to success. Brute Force features 60 different pickups, and you'll have to learn which ones work best for each team member.

We've played an early version of the game, and it does capture the need to correctly utilize your squad. After being filled full of lead a couple times in a row, we finally

positioned Hawk correctly so she could snipe a ridge, enabling Tex and the boys to storm down an otherwise perilous valley. Of course, you don't have to handle everything yourself. Commands can be issued, and if it all breaks down during a surprise attack, your comrades won't run around like chickens with their heads cut off. "We spent a great deal of time working on this [AI]," says Roberts, "so that not only do squad members follow the right orders, path-find correctly, et cetera; but they also react in a realistic way to situations."

Brute Force has 22 missions spread out over six worlds (some of which even favor certain characters) in its Campaign mode (multiplayer is also included). In an interesting twist, you can have a buddy come over to your house and join you at any time.

If Digital Anvil's take on squad-based combat can withstand the pressure, Xbox owners will be happy to know that someone's got their back come April.



Screw the sniper, sometimes you just got to make your baby sing

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT ■ DEVELOPER DIGITAL ANVIL ■ RELEASE APRIL

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

AERO ELITE COMBAT ACADEMY

PLANES OF POWER

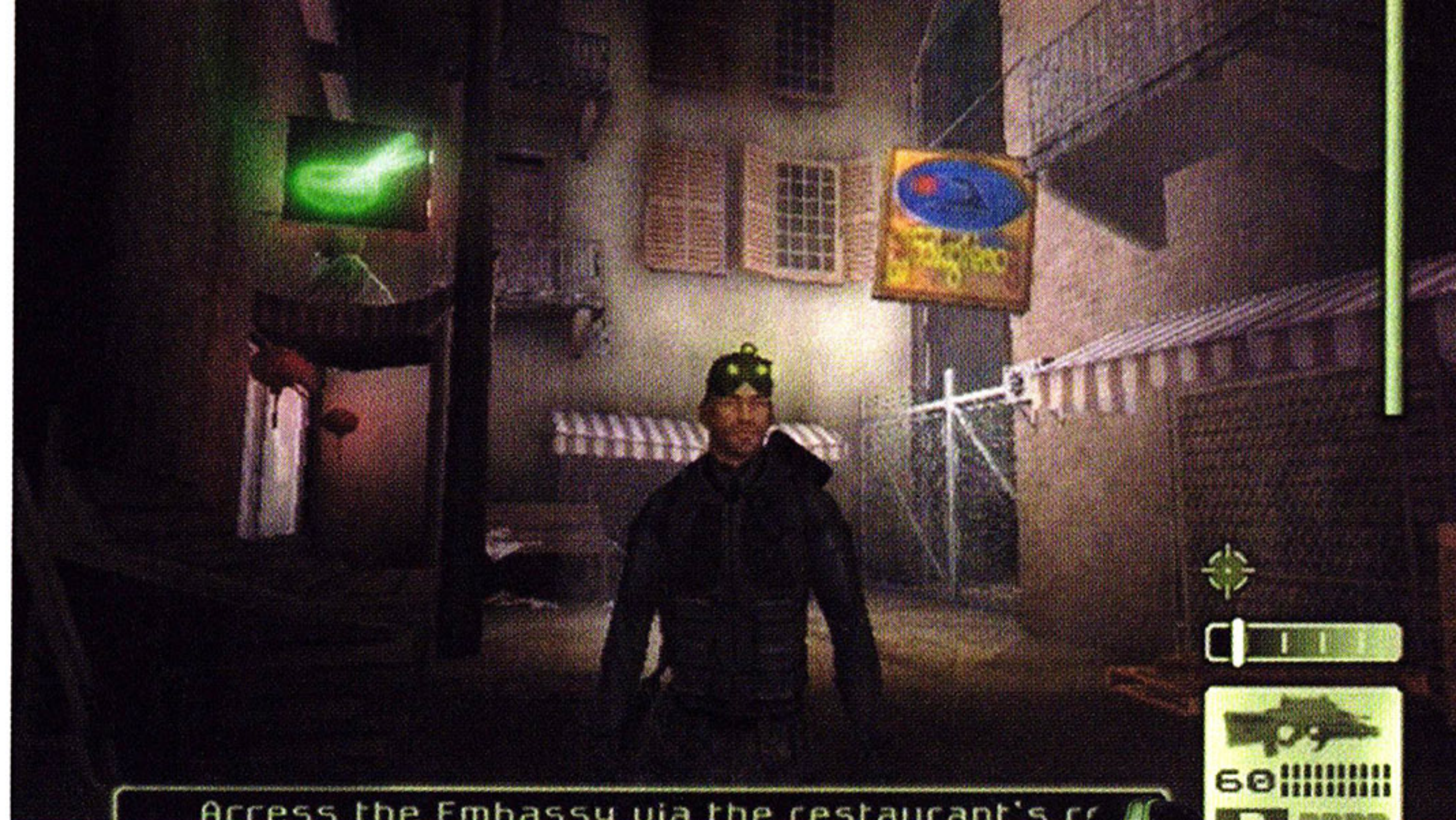
Do you have a nickname that translates well into a fighter jock call sign? If you answered yes, and people call you something like Jimmy "The Corn Hole," or "Babs," then you're a filthy liar. Fighter pilots need cool names like "Maverick" or "Heater" and – thanks to Aero Elite Combat Academy – you can now think up your own call sign and take it to the skies. Featuring more than 60 different aircraft, players will embark on a series of missions as they fight to keep the airways clear of bogeys.

When we say 60 aircraft, we're not just talking about planes; there are helicopters and transport craft to pilot, as well as a remote-controlled pterodactyl. That was a joke – the pterodactyl part, not the other stuff. In any event, AECA will draw on every bit of processing power the PlayStation 2 has to offer, and as you can see from the pictures, it's going to look quite awesome. We were hoping for head-to-head online play, but just pounding out the graphical details and handling issues will be quite enough to keep Sega plenty occupied as the game's March release date creeps ever closer. Look for a full review in Game Informer very soon.



Helicopters are deadly in the hands of a trained pilot

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 5



PLAYSTATION 2

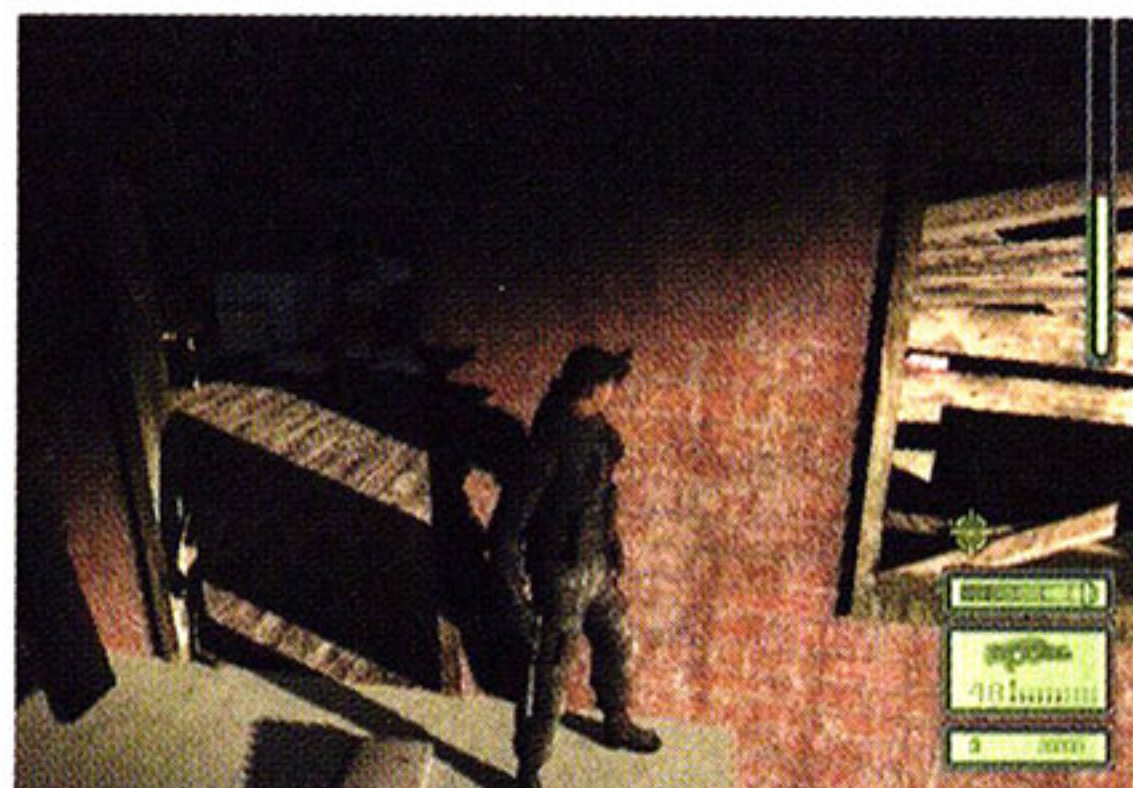
SPLINTER CELL

HERE COMES THE GUN

Most, if not all of you, know about Splinter Cell at this point. If you don't, you're reading the wrong magazine. The question on everyone's mind isn't whether or not Splinter Cell will be a good game on the PS2, but rather, will it look as good? The Xbox version has unbelievable visuals, and it's expected that the older and slower PS2 be able to keep up. As you can see in these pictures, it comes close, but that sharpness the Xbox version enjoys is noticeably missing. Muddy textures and blurry environments mask the PS2's weaker graphical capabilities, but the result is obvious to someone who has seen both. That's not to say that the PS2 version looks bad – it's still freaking incredible graphically – it's just different than the 'box.



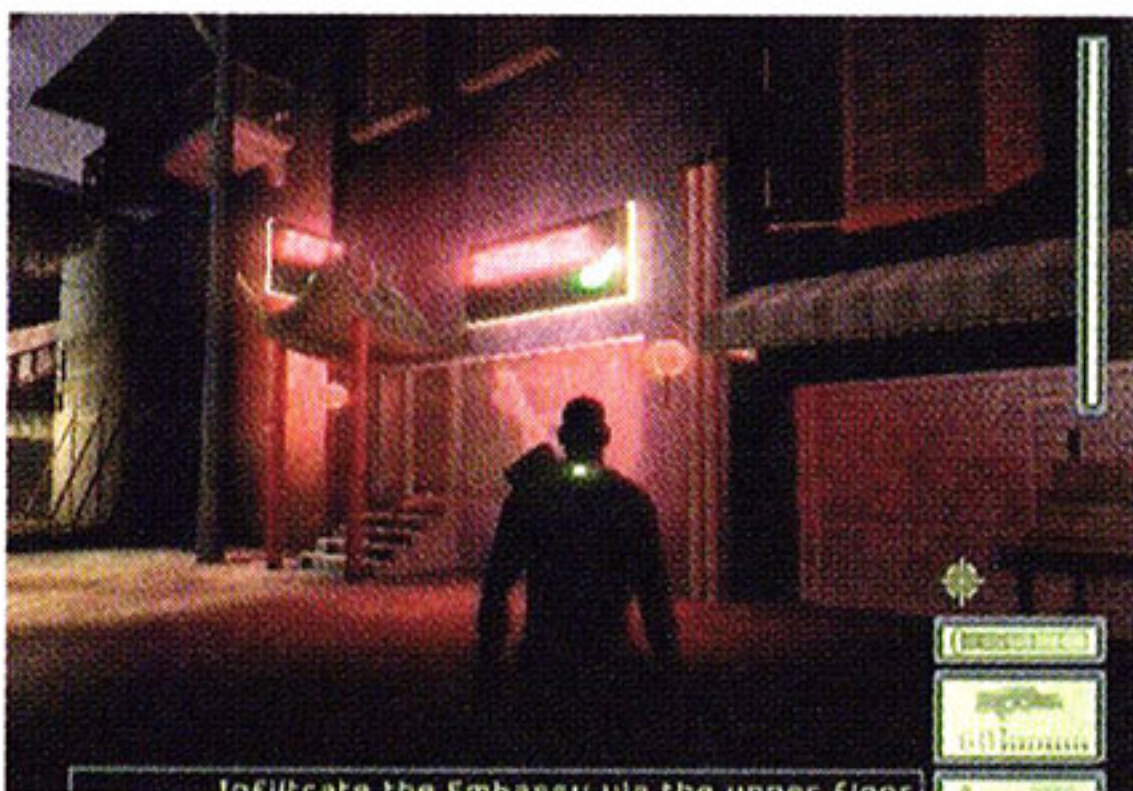
XBOX



The drop in detail is abundantly apparent in this comparison. You can see the PS2 shot lacks the complex shadowing the Xbox enjoys, as well as a noticeable downgrade in texture quality.

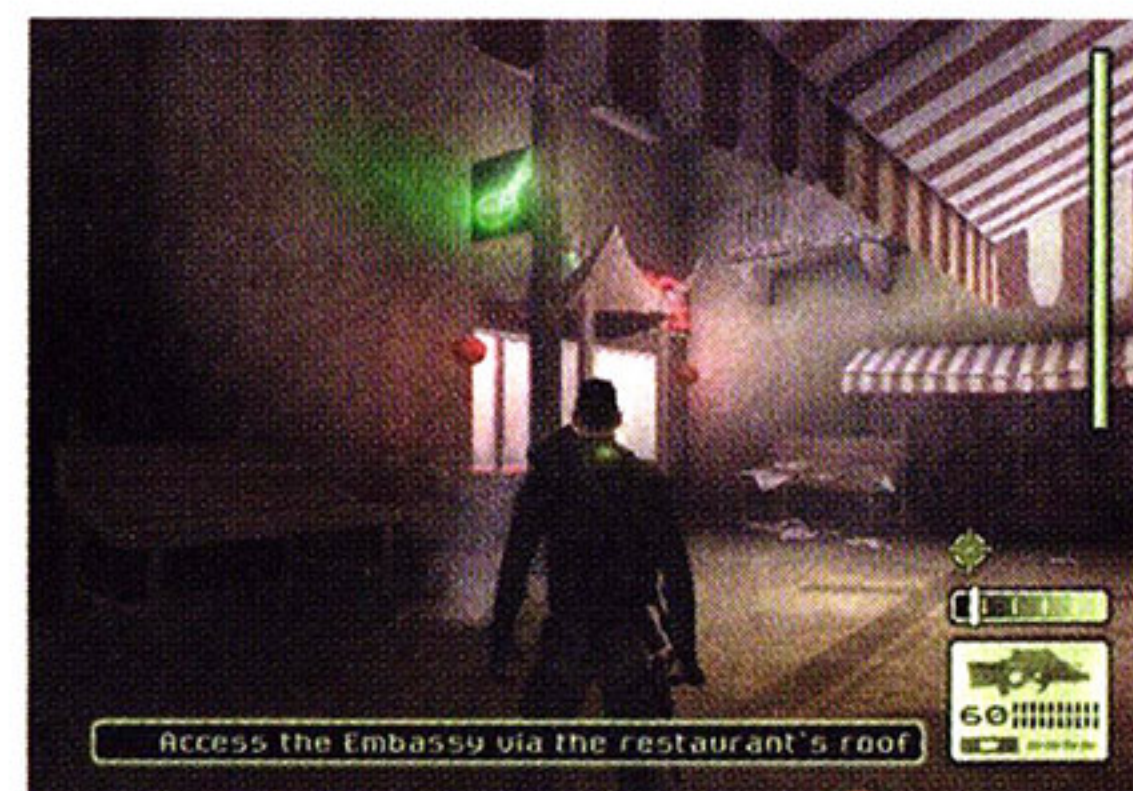
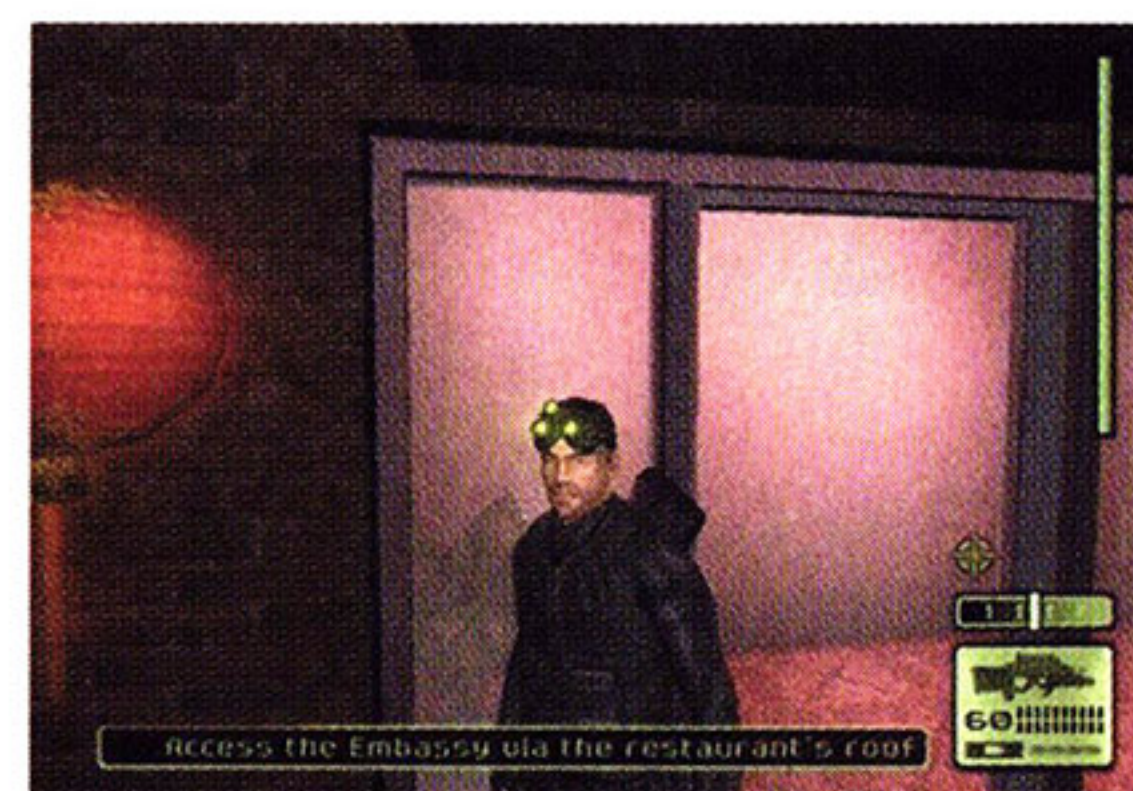
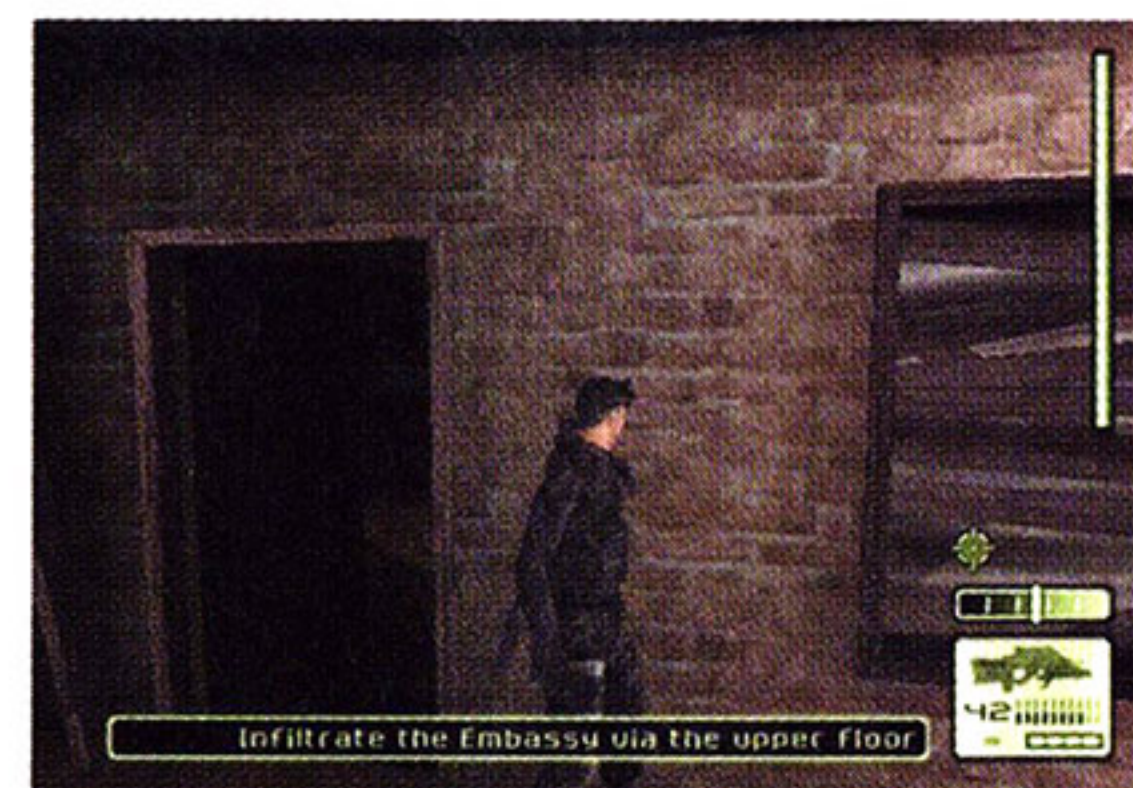


Here we see subtle lighting effects on Sam's face and clothes from the soft glow of the red lamp in the Xbox shot, but its PS2 counterpart not only lacks this effect, it's also missing the background modeling.



Notice how the location of the door has been completely moved in the PS2 version, and the low-light glow effects, as well as Sam's eerie silhouette, have been seriously curtailed.

PLAYSTATION 2



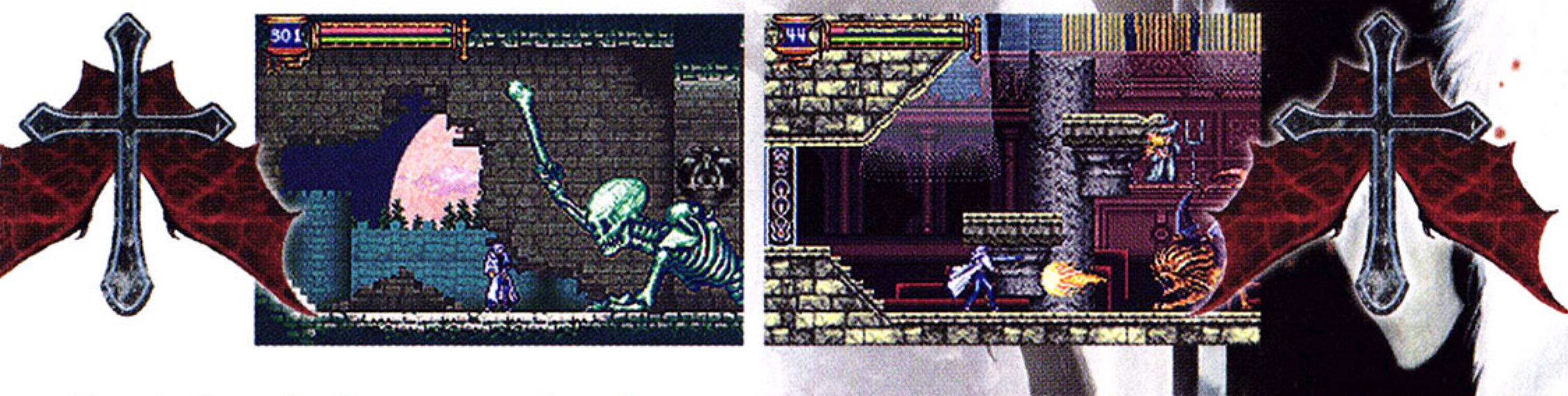
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT MONTREAL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



GAME BOY ADVANCE

CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

CASTLEVANIAS OF FUTURE PAST



Castlevania has remained relatively immune to the advances of next-gen technology. In fact, when the series tried to go 3D on the N64 in 1999, fans decried it as sacrilegious and a blight on the Castlevania lineage. Not surprisingly, the franchise has found a home on the 2D prairies of the Game Boy Advance. Does that mean that *Aria of Sorrow* has nothing new for us? Not quite. Koji Igarashi, the series' mastermind, assures us, "We certainly made a lot of strides forward in the game system and what's available in the game, but we also left it very much a Castlevania game so that fans of the series will enjoy playing it."

Probably the biggest change in store for Castlevania stalwarts will be the game's futuristic plot. It's 2035 and there isn't a Belmont in sight. Soma Cruz, an ordinary teenager, is witnessing a solar eclipse in Japan. He loses consciousness and finds himself in a mysterious castle trapped within the eclipse itself. How did he suddenly come across these special powers? More importantly, where's Dracula?

SOUL SURVIVOR

Aria of Sorrow is different than the other Castlevanias because of its Soul System. The game's 100-plus souls become available as you defeat enemies and traverse the map. Souls are broken down into roughly four categories. Three are controlled in the Soul Set menu and are assigned to spirits. These allow you to do everything from changing your form into a dragon to summoning Familiars to offering attacks similar to the subweapons of previous Castlevania titles. Using these will drain your magic meter to varying degrees and will be necessary to open up areas of the game. The final category of souls you'll use allows you to acquire moves permanently. This type is arranged through the ability slot in your menu. Declares Igarashi, "Think of them as Relics in *Harmony of Dissonance*. They work the same way in that they give you the power."

For the first time ever, *Aria of Sorrow* will allow you to hook up with friends to trade souls. "There are so many different souls in the game," explains Igarashi, "and I realize that it's a pain in the ass to try to get them all by yourself." Beware of this little helper, however, as this isn't just a transfer of souls from one person to another. Once you give it to someone else, it's gone. "That's, of course, providing you have friends," laughs Igarashi. Despite the changes in this Castlevania, we have no worries that it'll make friends fast among old fans and new once it releases.



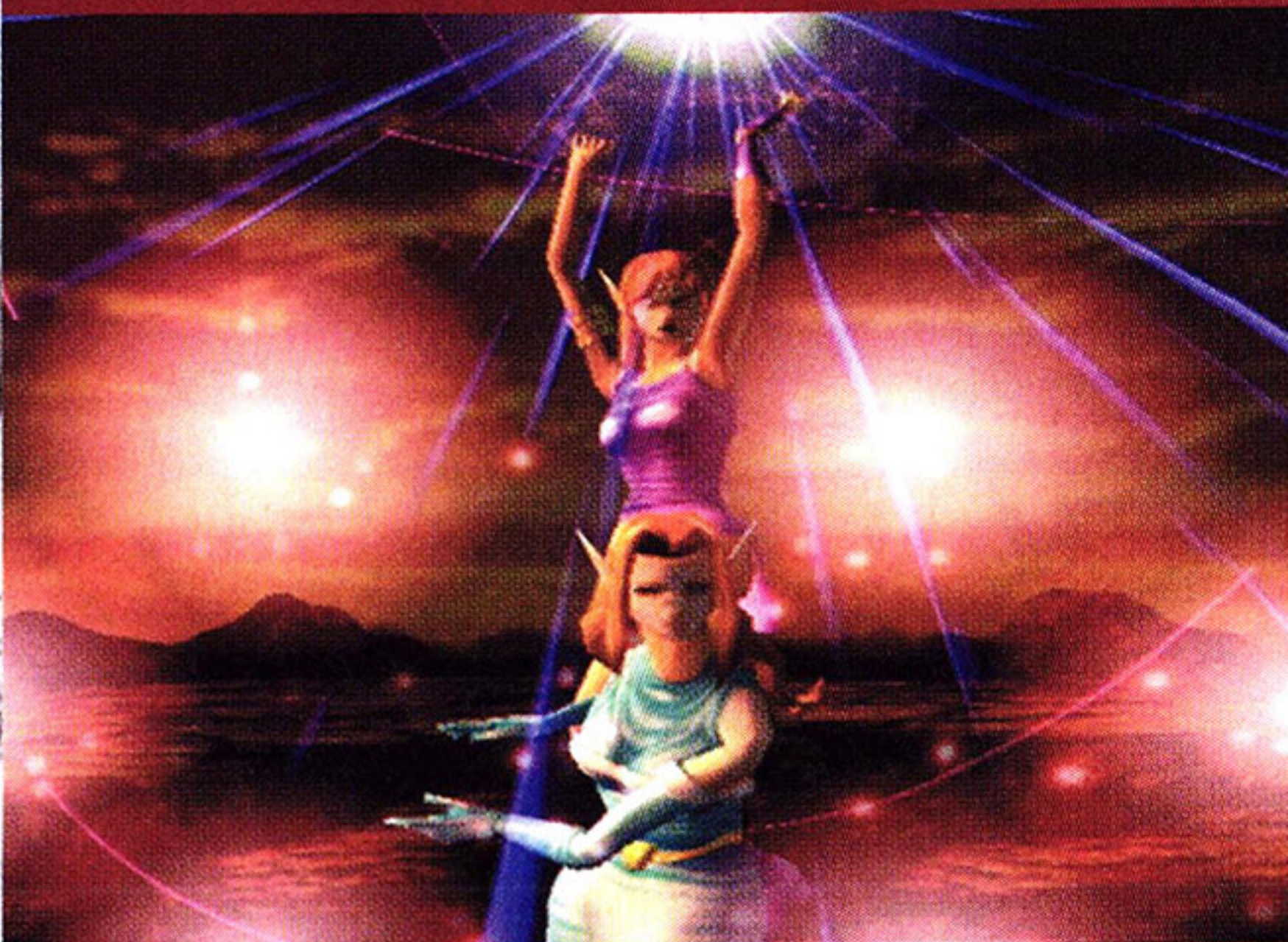
The new soul system allows you to transform into different beasts...



...gain abilities in your times of need...



...or even walk on water



PLAYSTATION 2

YU-GI-OH! THE DUELISTS OF THE ROSES

PLAYING WITH A FULL DECK

Yu-Gi-Oh has been thought of as a kid's game, and most of Konami's titles based on this franchise have catered to the younger market on Game Boy. The company is now bringing the series to the PlayStation 2 for the first time, and this is definitely not kid's stuff. Most old folks can balance a checkbook; but are you ready for a total of 850 cards, including over 600 monsters? Get your deck on or get your butt kicked.

In this new chapter of the legendary Yu-Gi-Oh saga, you are the Legendary Rose Duelist from the future. You have landed in 1480s Europe to help win the War of the Roses. Unfortunately, the other side is stronger and can help you get back to your own time. Which side you ultimately help is up to you. Story aside, *Duelist* operates the same as the other Yu-Gi-Oh games. Draw a hand of 40 cards, assign a Deck Leader (this represents you on the 7x7 grid board), and let the dance begin. Move around the board collecting and playing cards strategically in order to capture the other Deck Leader. The big difference now is that everything is in full 3D. This spices up both the playing field and the battles you'll encounter. These unfold in dramatic cutscenes filled with bold graphics.

There's no doubt that there is a limitless depth and strategy to this series that'll have your head spinning before you can say "850 pick-up." Konami is betting that all it'll take is some snazzy graphics to get you thoroughly hooked.



The game's Card Movement Battle System really comes to life in 3D

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI ■ RELEASE MAY 6

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI
■ DEVELOPER KONAMI ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 18

PHOTOPHILE

XBOX

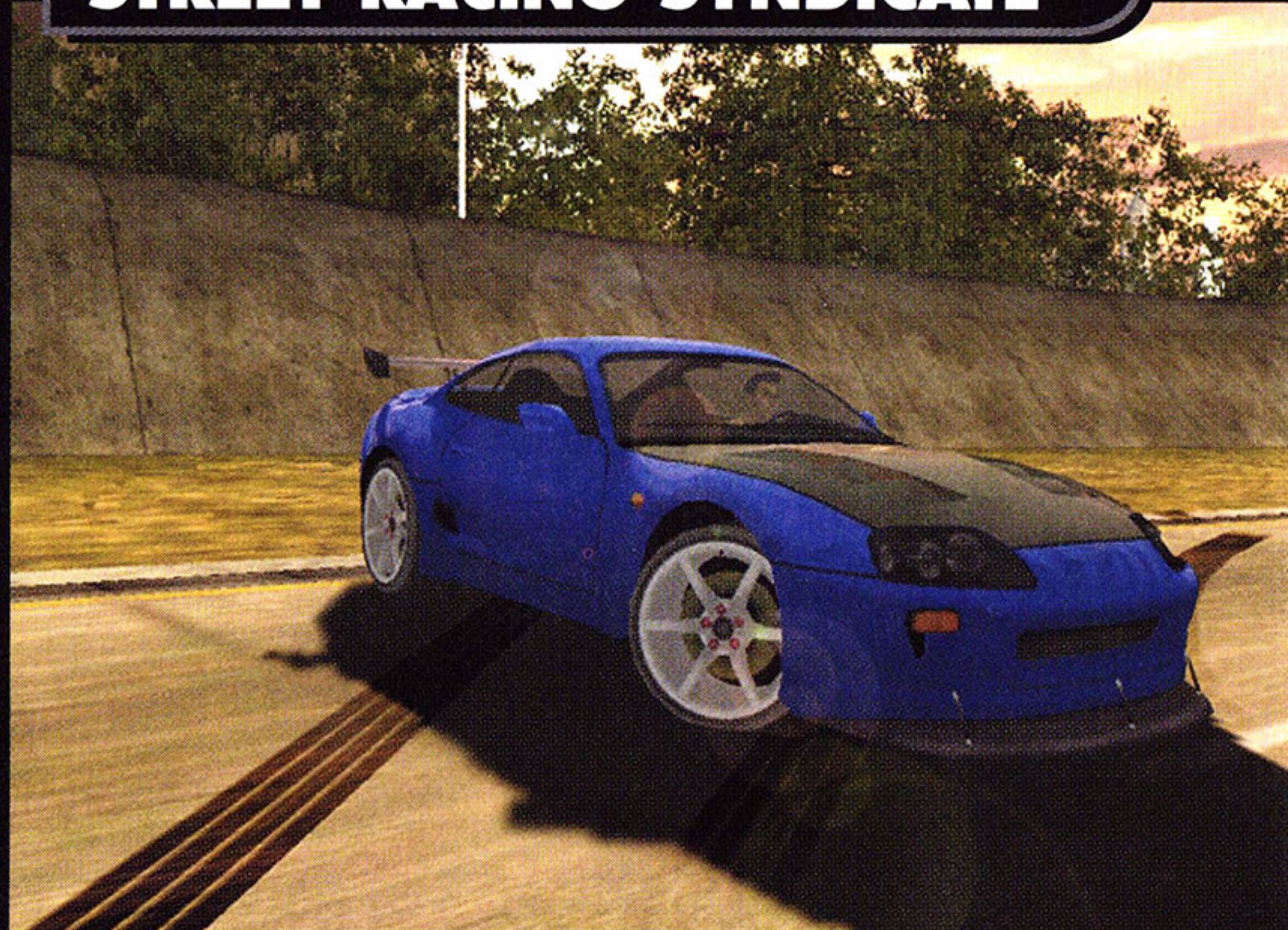
STATE OF EMERGENCY



If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. In State of Emergency's attempt to break all the laws of the land in an orgy of rioting violence, it has joined up with the authoritarian power that is Bill Gates. What's in it for you, the average Joe/Jane? Exclusive Xbox features such as four-person multiplayer, 14 new missions, a revamped Revolution mode, better textures, and the ability to put your own music in the game for starters. All this for only \$20. With a price that low and additions this big, where's the need for a protest and a riot? You just might be tempted to walk into a store this February and buy it like any other law-abiding citizen.

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX

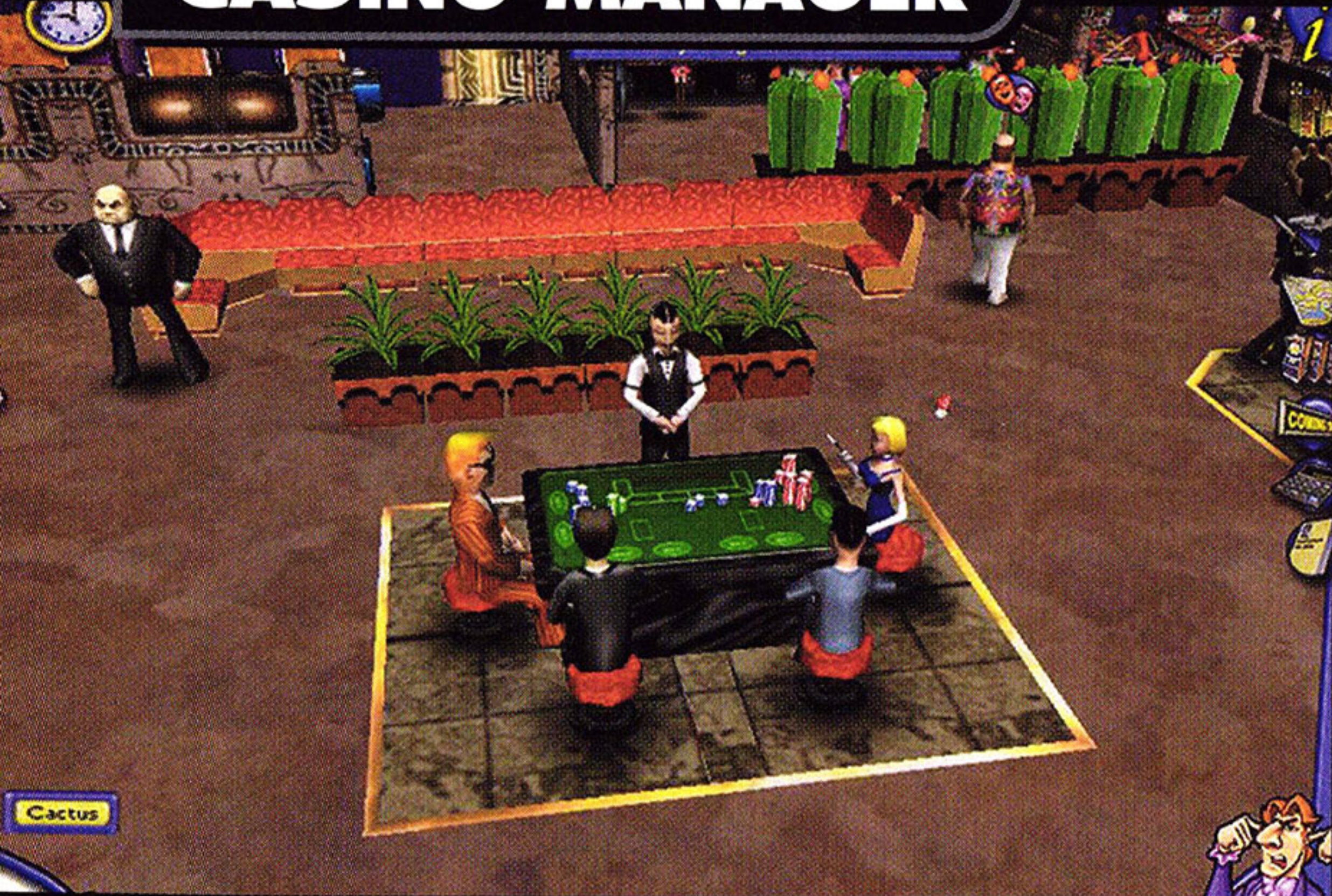
STREET RACING SYNDICATE



You may drive a 1985 Chevy Nova in real life, but once Street Racing Syndicate releases, smooth rides and lovely ladies will be the order of the day (unfortunately, you'll have to supply the ladies). 3DO is betting on the fact that it can take you to a racing world where you'll love watching vehicles take realistic damage and compete in illegal or officially sanctioned events. After creating your character, you'll be able to upgrade your car with licensed after-market parts and take to the streets. Look for SRS to release late in the year.

PC

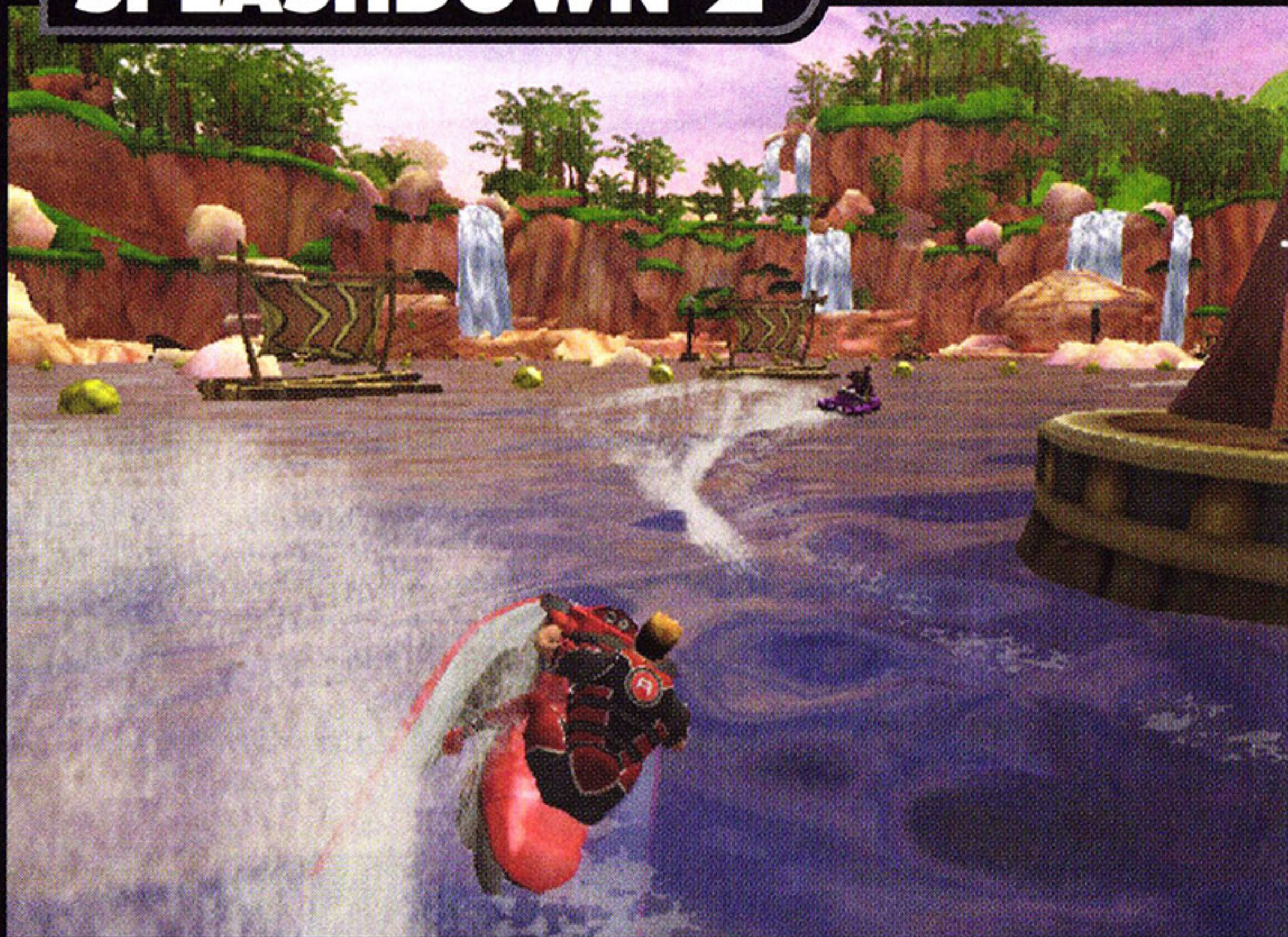
CASINO MANAGER



Konami isn't known for its PC library, but it'll give 'er a whirl this March when it releases the tentatively titled Casino Manager. As the leader of an up-and-coming casino, it's your job to get butts in the door and money on the tables. Use any means necessary – thugs, hookers, crooked dealers – just make sure people stay inside and gamble away their life savings. If you fail, well, just remember that there a lot of holes in the desert, and a lot of problems are buried in those holes. With 120 characters and a mountain of freestyle gameplay, Casino Manager will be a bargain (\$29.99) when it makes its way into your machine.

PLAYSTATION 2

SPLASHDOWN 2



While we'd hate to support anything that would possibly encourage Kato to get into a skin-tight wet suit, we're all happily getting ready for THQ's Splashdown 2 for the PlayStation 2 as it hits this summer. Justin's always going on and on about how good the physics were in the original. Well, shut up already Poindexter! Let's close the textbooks and hit the waves with the sequel to the best wave racer ever made. More courses, stunts, and thrills are just the beginning of this very sea-worthy vessel. Last one in the water has to rub lotion on Matt's back!

PLAYSTATION 2

RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM



First and foremost, Capcom's Resident Evil: Dead Aim will be compatible with the GunCon 2. No, that isn't a misprint (for once). Using the familiar third-person perspective for exploring, and a first-person view for shooting, Dead Aim looks to erase gamers' memories of the execrable Resident Evil Survivor. Along the way, you'll get to know Bruce MacGavin as he tries to fight his way out of a T-virus-infected cruise ship which has been pirated in the middle of an ocean. While exploring every part of the vessel, you'll unleash the firepower of a grenade launcher, assault rifle, shotgun, handgun, and particle rifle all while trying to conserve your ammo and health. Due to release in June, Dead Aim is looking to be another creepy installment in this franchise's vaunted history.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

ONIMUSHA TACTICS

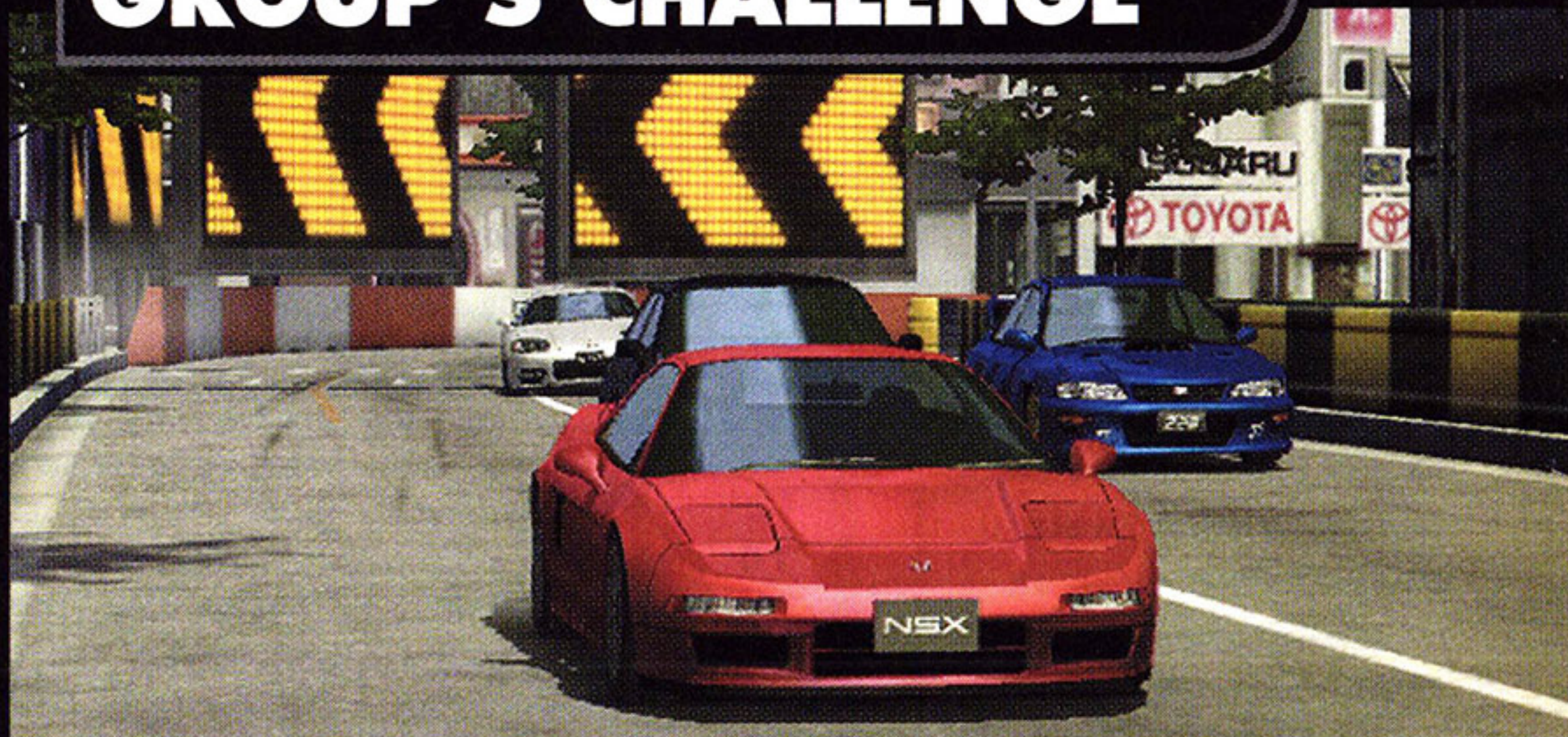


It doesn't seem like Onimusha would lend itself very well to a tactics-oriented game, but Capcom will prove us wrong this fall with Onimusha Tactics. Following a story where Genma, an evil underworld-type creature, begins to invade the surface country to establish the Genma Empire, you'll play as a young Ogre clan warrior who must thwart the advancing hordes. OT will use the familiar isometric layout for overworld movement and battle scenes. Players will have the ability to use up to eight different characters when taking on the enemy, and will enjoy the usual RPG experience progression that makes these games so fun.

PHOTOPHILE

XBOX

GROUP S CHALLENGE



In what looks to be a Gran Turismo homage, Group S Challenge puts players in licensed cars from makers such as Toyota, Nissan, Subaru, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Audi, and the ever-popular Renault. As you race around Monaco, Tokyo, and Australia, be sure to pay attention to the incredible detail in each vehicle model, and notice how each environment is completely modeled in 3D – giving you unparalleled replay capability and umpteen camera angles. Also, depending on how well you race, sponsors will give you money for car upgrades and overhauls. Expect Capcom to release Group S Challenge this spring.

PLAYSTATION 2

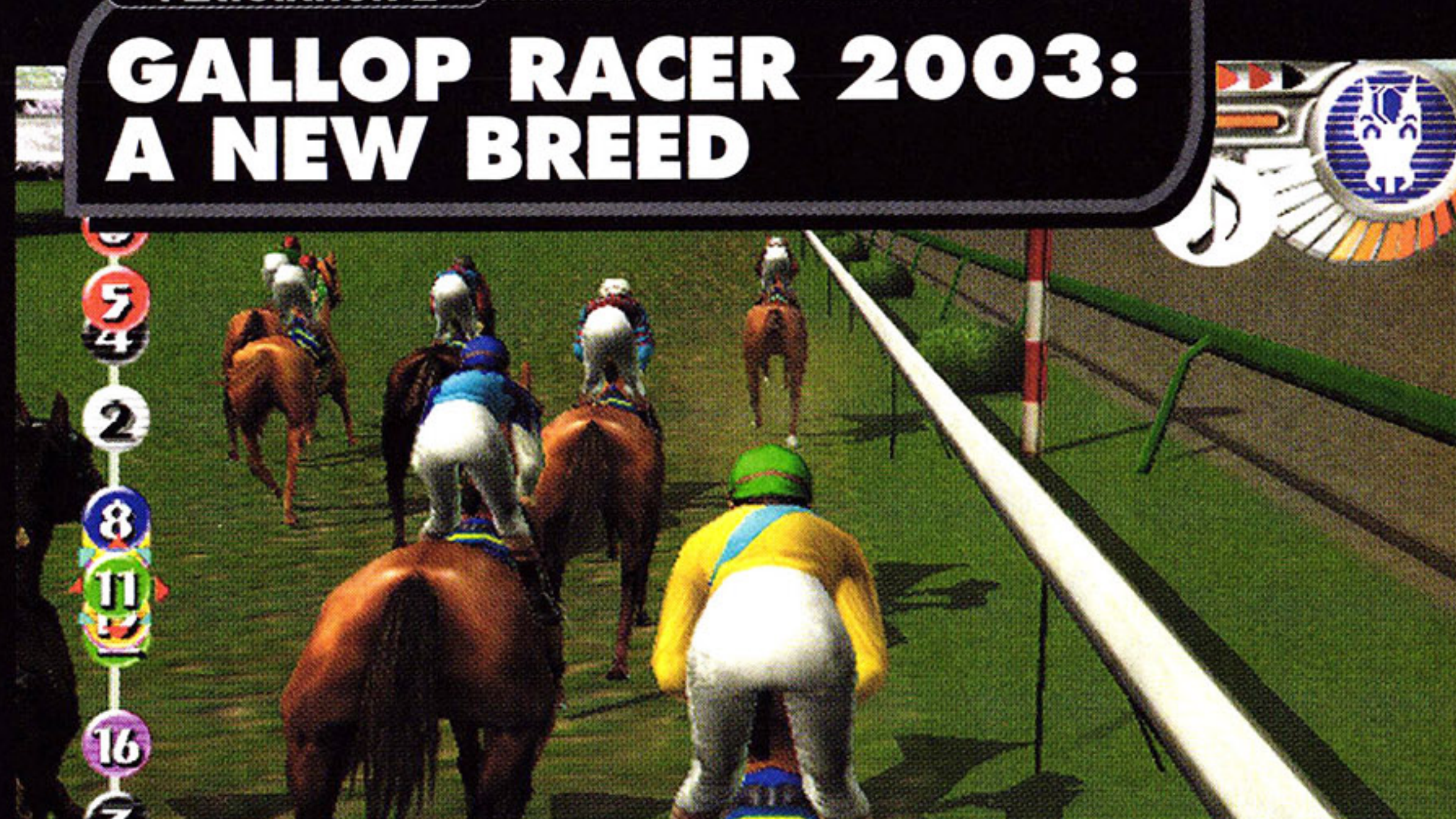
FUGITIVE HUNTER



"Fugitive Hunter was inspired by the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List, and completely captures the excitement, drama, and danger associated with hunting down today's worst criminal elements." So says Jean-Philippe Agati, senior vice president of Infogrames' Los Angeles studio. How he knows about that excitement level, we have no idea. Maybe he was a beat cop in France or something. In any event, Fugitive Hunter puts you in the role of a modern-day bounty hunter named Jake Seaver. Long story short, you get to travel to exotic locations and kill a bunch of people. We hope this game gets a graphical touch-up before its March release, or it could be in some trouble.

PLAYSTATION 2

GALLOP RACER 2003: A NEW BREED



Japan has some bizarre games that never made it over to the U.S., but somehow Gallop Racer did. In an even stranger turn of events, Gallop Racer 2003 hits shelves later this year showcasing updated graphics, increased play options, and a heaping helping of horse racing action. In an interesting turn of events, Game Informer has learned that online play is a definite possibility for this version, so keep your fingers crossed, and we'll keep you updated on this unique Tecmo title.

GAME INFORMER

73

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.



THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 – Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 – Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 – Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 – Limited appeal. There are always a few people who will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW – Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS

How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND

Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY

Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT

Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

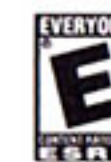
- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.



Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.



Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.



Content suitable only for adults.



Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.



Product is awaiting final rating.



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** iPod, *The Matrix*, *The Lord Of The Rings*, N.W.A., Archers Of Loaf **Dislikes:** Marvel's Wussy New Vision For Wolverine, Empty CD Cases (When You Have No Idea Where The Music Is) **Current Favorite Games:** *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, *Dark Cloud 2*, *EverQuest Online Adventures*

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.



REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** *The New He-Man*, *Preacher* Comic Books (*The Best Reading You'll Ever Do*), *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Cell Phone Gaming **Dislikes:** *The New Transformers*, *Matt's Dog (The Evil Thing Craps On Carpet)*, *The Current State Of WWE* **Current Favorite Games:** *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *Dark Cloud 2*, *Breath Of Fire: Dragon Quarter*, *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 629 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** Fruit Smoothies, Manchester, The Oranges Band, *Confessions Of A Dangerous Mind*, 24, *The Super Bowl* **Dislikes:** Potty Training Dogs, Cold Weather, Overestimating How Good The Eagles Were, The Staff At The Pleasant Hills Saddle Shop, iPod Envy **Current Favorite Games:** *Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc*, *Galarians: Ash*, *Medal Of Honor: Frontline (Xbox)*

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.



KRISTIAN

Handle: The Video Viking **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** *Triumph The Insult Comic Dog*, *Ember's Breakfast*, *Static Electricity*, *Super Bowl Sunday*, *March Madness* **Dislikes:** *Frozen Pipes*, *Heating Bills*, *Slow Computers*, *Illogical Arguments*, *Bureaucracy* **Current Favorite Games:** *Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal*, *Madden NFL 2003 (Xbox)*, *Unreal II: The Awakening*

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.



JUSTIN

Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Sports, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Saunas (We Finlanders Pronounce It Sow'-Nah), Ripped Fuel, Dips, Getting New Wrestling Gear, David Cross **Dislikes:** Beginning Sentences With "Yeah, No...", Unemployment, Ending Sentences With "So...4th." **Current Favorite Games:** *Xenosaga*, *Everblue 2*, *NBA Street Vol. 2*, *Fire Pro Wrestling 2*, *Animal Crossing*, *Eternal Darkness*

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWAR slave and moonlights as wrestler Justin Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Justin's gaming tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.



KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** *Mattel Old-School Handheld Football*, *The Soundtrack Of Our Lives*, *Marvel Hero Clix*, *Pistol Whipping* **Dislikes:** Shaq, Light Bulbs, Road Salt (*Disregard If You Live In L.A.*), *My Abusive Relationship With Cable-TV* **Current Favorite Games:** *Dark Cloud 2*, *Winning Eleven 6*, *The Getaway*, *NCAA Football 2003*

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out as a reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.



CHET

Handle: The Joystick Jockey **Expertise:** Fighting, Action, RPG, FPS, Shooter, Platform **Interests:** *Freedom Of Speech*, Stephen King, *Nightmares On Wax*, *Rue Morgue*, Buddhist Thought, Love **Dislikes:** Greed, SUVs, Taco Bell, A Few Other Things I Can't Say, and Corporate America **Current Favorite Games:** *Xenosaga*, *Street Fighter II Turbo*, *Unreal II: The Awakening*, *Metroid Fusion*

Chet considers gaming to be a lifestyle, which means that he spends a ridiculous amount of time with his games. When he's not in an intense session of UT, or relaxing with one of his consoles, he's hopelessly seeking out arcades where fighting games still rule. Although he places all other activities at a distant second, he realizes the importance of society. Unfortunately, mimicking the motions for Dragon Punches and Fireballs only confuses and scares most people.



LISA

Handle: La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform, Action/Adventure **Interests:** *Neverwhere* On DVD, *Crop Circles*, *White Oleander* (The Book Version), *Hulk Foam-Rubber Gloves That Talk* **Dislikes:** Hats That Don't Fit, Poor Science In Movies, Ugly Yarn, SUVs, Lost Mittens **Current Favorite Games:** *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Animal Crossing*, *Uru*

Barring a brief and ill advised "I want to be popular, so I'll stop playing games" phase in late junior high, Lisa has been subjecting her friends to drawn out boss battles since age 8. She has been known to wax philosophically about why Jigglypuff is desperately under-appreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less pretty.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party

bump-mapping – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures

cel shading – A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels

CG – Computer-Generated graphics

defenestration – The act of throwing someone or something out of a window

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, & Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like StarCraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

jaggies – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

motion blur – Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

NPC – Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PS-X – Sony PlayStation

particle effects – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time

PKer – Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter-Strike

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – A term we use for games like Madden NFL

strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer

Xenosaga

EPISODE I

Der Wille zur Macht [力への意志]

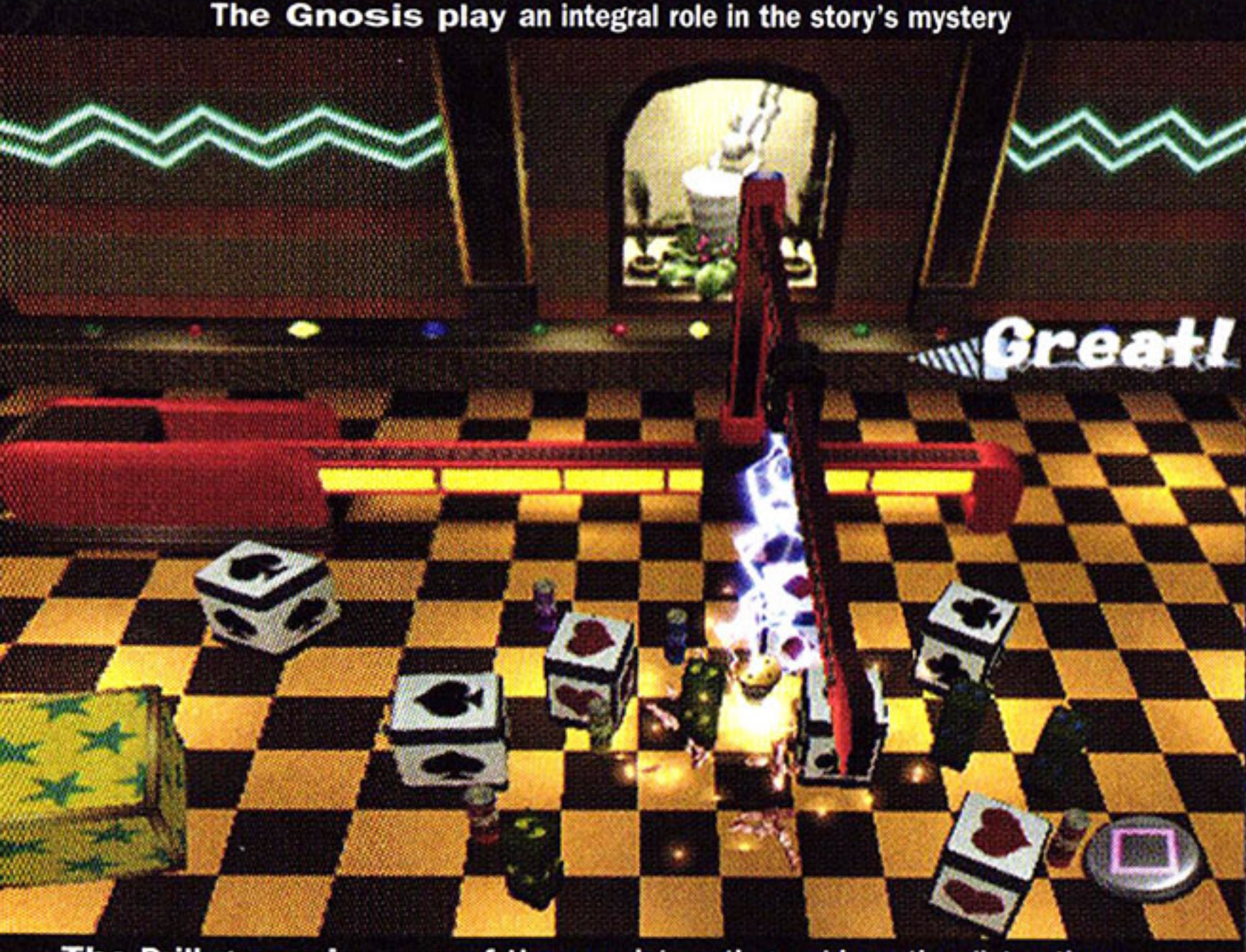


GAME OF THE MONTH XENOSAGA EPISODE 1: DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

In Japan, critics gave Xenosaga nearly perfect marks, making it one of the most acclaimed games of all time. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm has only made the wait for Xenosaga to come to our shores all the more painful. However, the exorbitant amount of time has been well worth it. Flip to the next page to find out just how good this potential Final Fantasy killer is. Page 76



Like *Final Fantasy*, some special moves are quite cinematic



The Drill game is one of the more interesting and inventive distractions



PLAYSTATION 2

XENOSAGA EPISODE 1: DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

FF X KILLER?

Any seasoned gamer will immediately recognize the numerous parallels, in both appearance and feel, between *Xenosaga* and *Final Fantasy*. This shouldn't come as a surprise, considering that many Monolith employees formerly worked at Square. Fortunately, this obvious appropriation of FF elements has been done with smart discrimination. Monolith essentially took everything that makes FF successful, filtered it into *Xenosaga*, and then cast out everything bad. The final result: a nearly flawless RPG experience.

Gameplay-wise, the basic RPG formula has been applied to *Xenosaga*. Players will spend considerable time engrossed in the story and combating enemies and several imposing bosses. However, Monolith has diversified the experience by emphasizing the exploration component and adding minigames.

Collecting mechanical parts to build super-weapons and playing poker are just a couple of the fun diversions.

Battles consist of elements that mostly belong to the Xeno universe and resemble *Final Fantasy X* only in their appearance. Certain protagonists can operate the Anti-Gnosis Weapon Systems (mechs), which can now be accessed anytime during an encounter. Each character also possesses his or her own unique spells (Ether) and fighting style (Techniques). The two new additions (the Skill and Boost systems) actually create significantly more depth and strategy. Every piece of armor and accessory possesses a certain Skill. By extracting a Skill such as Ether Defense +4 from an item, players can place it in one of their characters'

three slots. Boost Points are earned through physical attacks; the more you attack, the faster you'll accumulate BP. Once the meter fills, that character can take an extra turn. Ultimately, knowing what Skills and Techniques to utilize and when to Boost will often dictate the outcome of a confrontation.

Despite a host of involving gameplay mechanics that most RPGs can only envy, *Xenosaga's* crowning achievement is its story. While it's indeed very adult, it doesn't make gratuitous use of nudity or violence. Rather, its mature themes involve a refreshing dose of politics and ethics – two subjects often lacking in the medium. The plot revolves around a society of humans and androids trying to live together peacefully and equally; but, given the bloody past between the two, they're still suffering growing pains. When a mysterious race of conquering aliens (Gnosis) from another dimension get involved, war breaks out. Episode 1 chronicles the events of this war's beginning, introducing all of the principals and the precarious situation that just started. Although the plot is intriguing thus far and I'm hopeful that the six sequels will only improve it, some gamers will certainly dislike Episode 1's ending just as some moviegoers disliked *The Fellowship of the Ring's* abrupt finale.

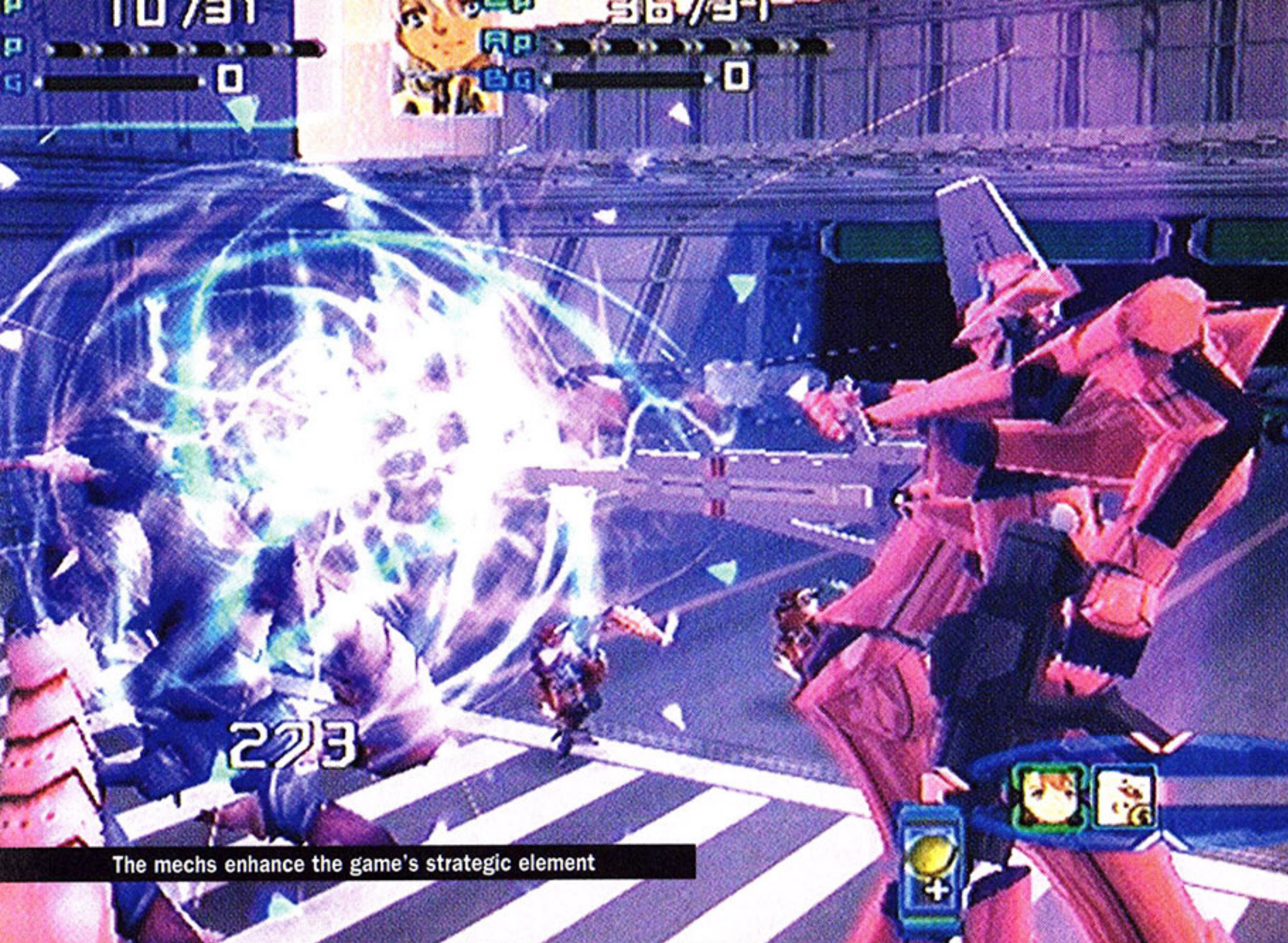
Fortunately, *Xenosaga's* only other faults are very minor – occasionally forced dialogue and a few exceedingly tough battles. However, none of these problems will hinder your enjoyment of Episode 1. If you've been awaiting the next big RPG, your wait is finally over. – **CHET**

8♠	8♥	J♣	K♠	J♥
HOLD	HOLD	HOLD	DRAW	HOLD
DRAW				
Royal Flush	x100	Straight	x5	
Straight Flush	x60	Three of a Kind	x3	
Four of a Kind	x20	Two Pairs	x2	
Full House	x10	One Pair	x1	
Flush	x7			
				PRIZE
				100

Our favorite minigame. Too bad real-life poker isn't so easy

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** MONOLITH SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25

GAME OF THE MONTH XENOSAGA EPISODE 1

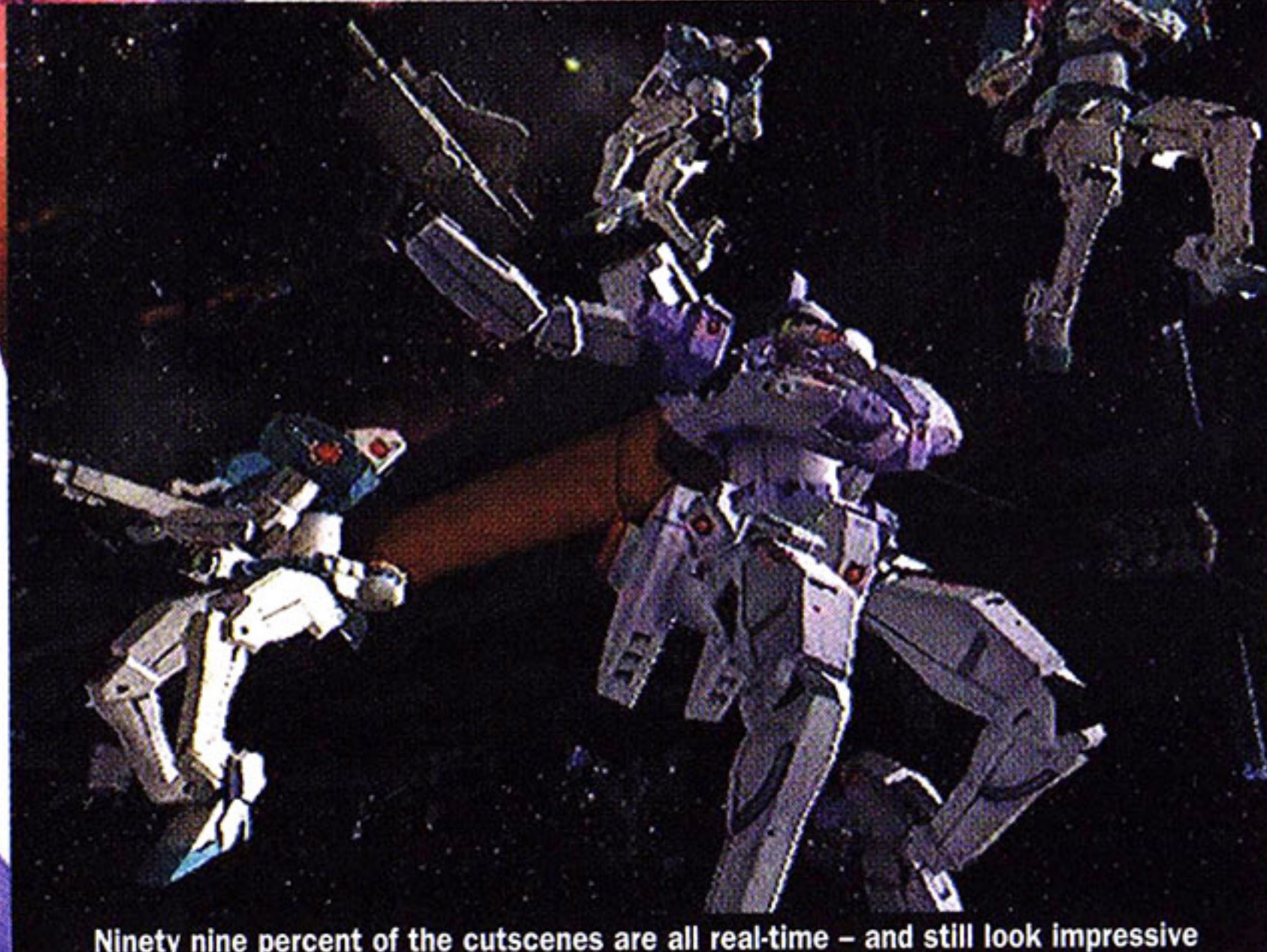


The mechs enhance the game's strategic element



Each character possesses a couple of super attacks

"Despite a host of involving gameplay mechanics that most RPGs can only envy, Xenosaga's crowning achievement is its story."



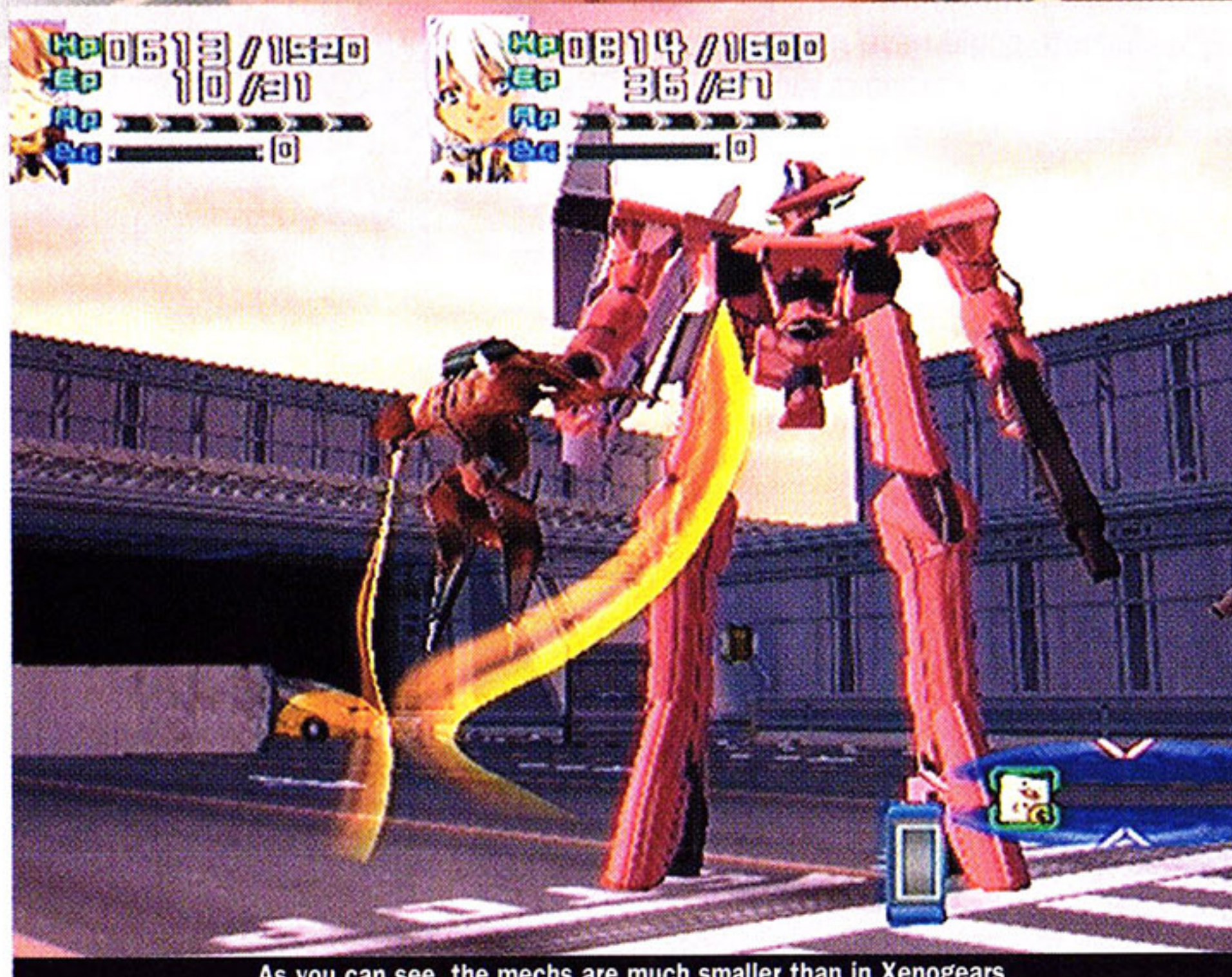
Ninety nine percent of the cutscenes are all real-time – and still look impressive



Kos-Mos is a powerful android with heavy firepower



Some boss battles are tough, taking over an hour to defeat!



As you can see, the mechs are much smaller than in Xenogears

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
9.75

■ Concept:

It resembles Xenogears in terms of gameplay, but has many enhancements and additions. The epic story surpasses all in the genre, and the presentation is easily on par with FF X

■ Graphics:

The textures and animation are remarkable

■ Sound:

Xenosaga excels in this area. The music and sound effects are top-notch. Voiceovers accompany much of the dialogue

■ Playability:

The control is flawless

■ Entertainment:

The story and gameplay are phenomenal. However, a few of the sequences were slightly cheesy, and the dialogue occasionally felt forced

■ Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Never before have I been as entranced with a storyline in a game. Intriguing characters just keep appearing, with tons of bad-asses (Kos-Mos, Ziggy) and few duds (Jr.). Each has depth enough for their own game, but they're together here, stuck in a tangled web. The emotion the story conveys is real, without a cheesy feel to it. When an android is forced by a greedy Lieutenant to sacrifice his life, you feel awful. When twists arise, you'll gasp in awe. The presentation complements the great writing, with Sulkoden III's cinematography meeting FF X-caliber models. Combat is extensively detailed and fun in execution. Upgrading skills isn't automatic – it's your responsibility. I also like the overworld stealth and interaction. The only flaws I see are bad lip-synching, and not being able to tell if the for-sale equipment is superior to what you have. Xenosaga is truly a triple-A title, and destined for RPG greatness.

JUSTIN – 9.5



"Devil May Cry 2 is not only a grave disappointment, it's a painful one."

PLAYSTATION 2

DEVIL MAY CRY 2

AND GAMERS MAY WEEP

Just when it appeared as though Capcom had struck gold with another franchise that could be serialized until the end of time, *Devil May Cry* runs headlong into the feared sophomore slump. Not only is the low quality of this sequel uncommon for Capcom, I can honestly say that this is one of the worst follow-up games I've had the displeasure of playing in my tenure at the magazine.

In theory, it should be a far greater game. The environments are much more expansive and diverse in atmosphere. Dante's arsenal of moves has expanded tenfold as well, as he can now perform acrobatic feats such as running up walls and shooting blindly over his shoulder. Longevity also emerges with the ability to play through the quest with the new character, Lucia. As you're probably gathering, the new features sound fantastic, but in reality, these elements don't make enough of an impact to keep gamers interested, as the rest of the game reeks of poor design.

The nonstop, motion picture-quality action from the first game has been replaced with obscurity and dreadfully boring moments of nothingness. You'll find yourself running aimlessly for minutes on end without encountering a single foe. Some of the boss battles are so poorly designed that you can achieve victory by simply holding down the fire button. Believe it or not, there are some encounters in the

game that are never actually represented onscreen. Without the ability to move the camera, a flying creature may never make contact with the TV screen. You may see its shadow, and get a glimpse of a wing, but that's about it.

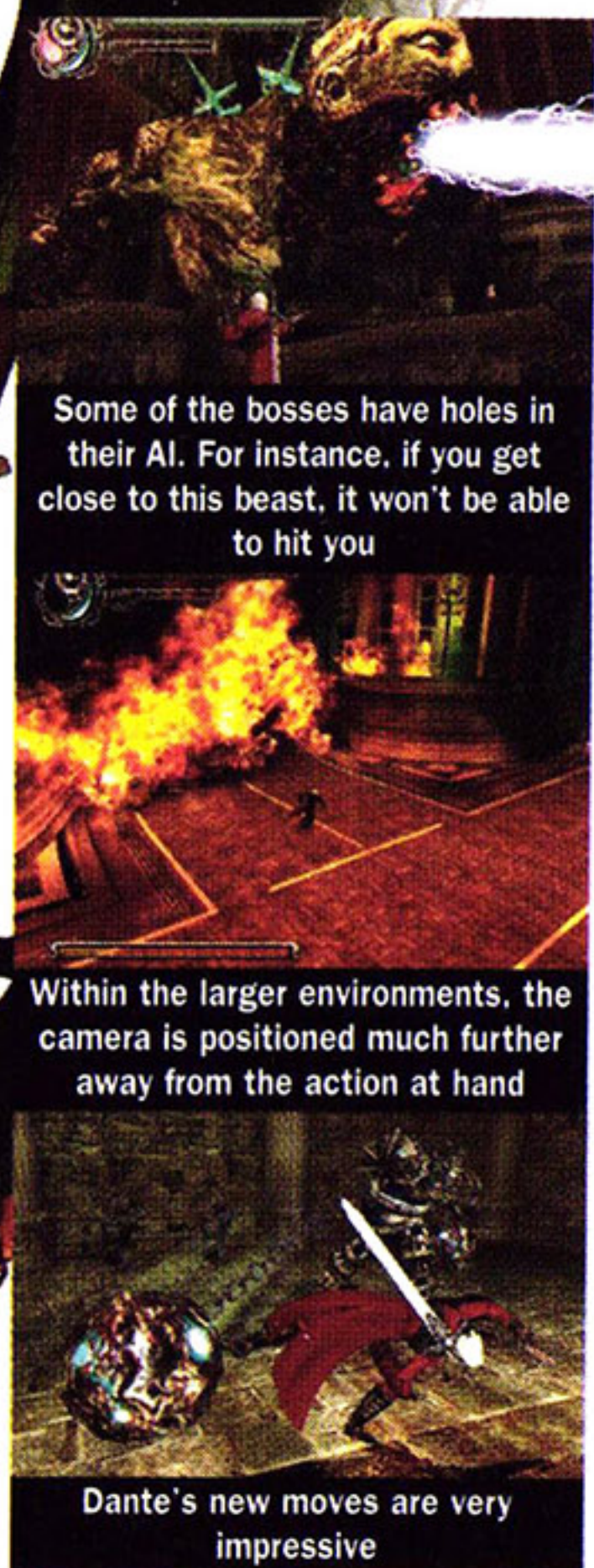
Furthermore, there doesn't appear to be a rhyme or reason as to why Dante and Lucia need to save the world.

The storytelling is even worse than it was in the first game. Since the plot was tied to a curse and the mansion, you could kind of make sense of what was going on. This time around, it's impossible to piece together. Within the span of an hour, I was battling a large moth in a cave, helicopters with eyeballs in a city, and flaming monkeys in a factory that was about to explode.

The only part of *DMC2* that is commendable is the intricacies of the gameplay. The new moves are easy to manipulate and visually magnificent. Unfortunately, since the overall design of the game is of a much lower grade, these innovative maneuvers will basically go to waste.

If you were a fan of the original title, I'm sure *Devil May Cry*'s fall from grace will come as a shock. Believe me; I stared at the television in disbelief for a good hour wondering how Capcom could have messed up this bad. *Devil May Cry 2* is not only a grave disappointment, it's a painful one. — **REINER**

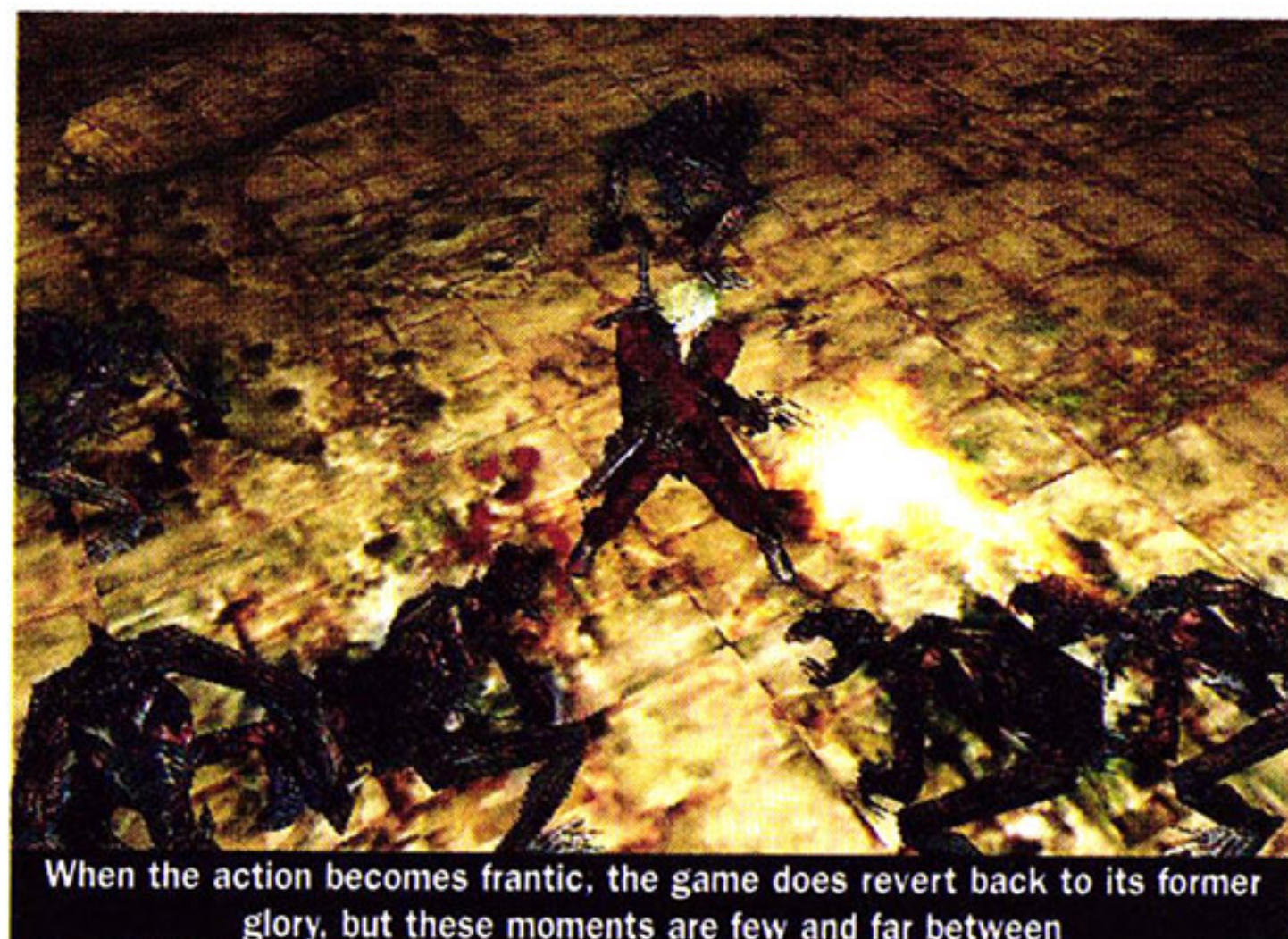
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 28



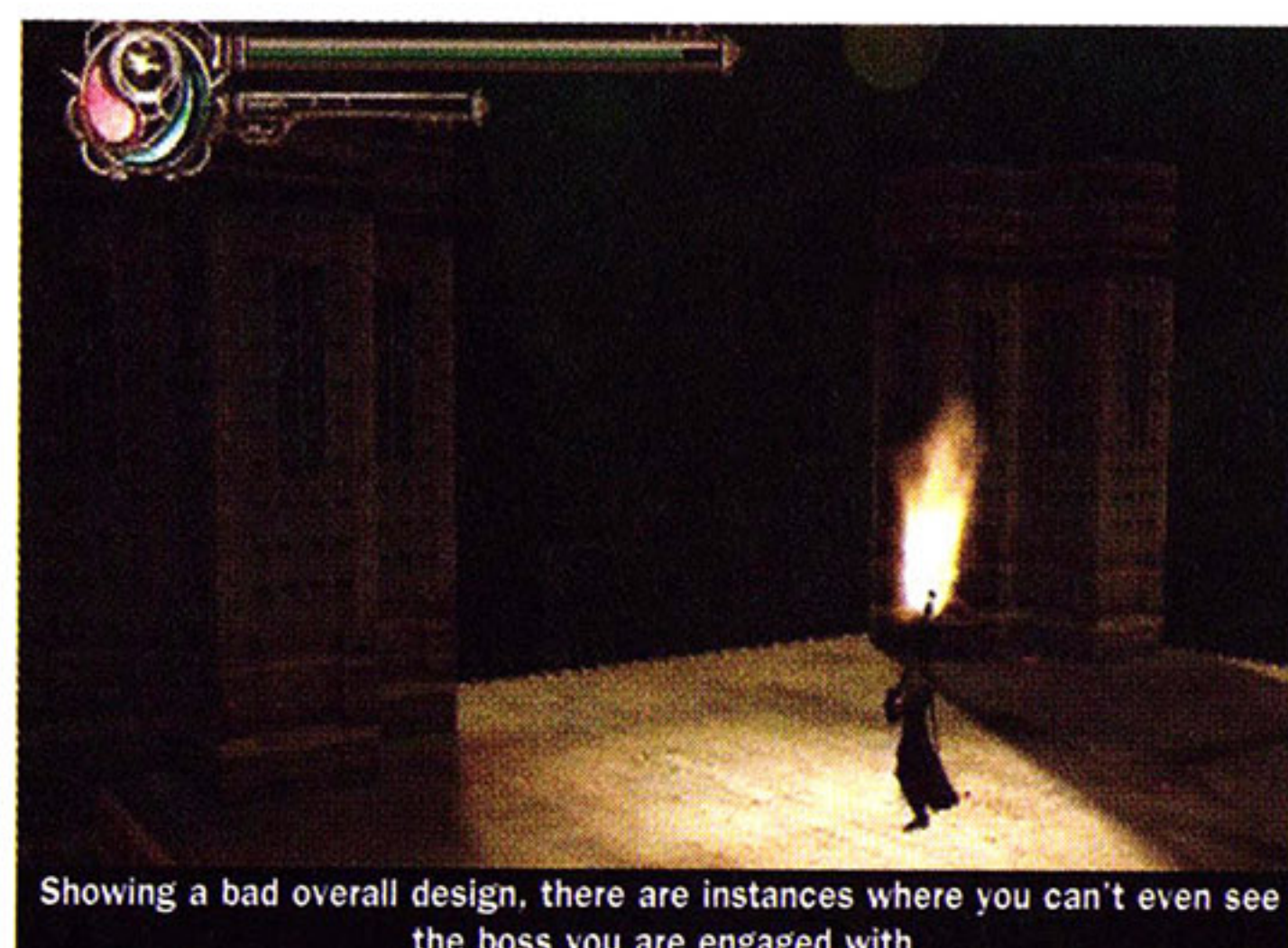
Some of the bosses have holes in their AI. For instance, if you get close to this beast, it won't be able to hit you

Within the larger environments, the camera is positioned much further away from the action at hand

Dante's new moves are very impressive



When the action becomes frantic, the game does revert back to its former glory, but these moments are few and far between



Showing a bad overall design, there are instances where you can't even see the boss you are engaged with



■ **Concept:**
Capcom expands upon Dante's combat prowess, yet neglects to create a compelling or polished game

■ **Graphics:**
The beautiful animations are rarely seen as the camera is panned out way too far. The environment details are also quite minimal

■ **Sound:**
Slaying in the name of cheesy '80s hair rock

■ **Playability:**
Over-the-top moves with spot-on play mechanics

■ **Entertainment:**
Even the amazing gameplay can't save this game from the horrible design

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Being cool isn't all it's cracked up to be, kids. We know Dante's a bad mofo — now what? This sequel's primary asset is that you get to play as Lucia (who's more fun to play, by the way). Apart from that, however, old and new problems still remain. The game's camera is still a stick in the mud. The new upside-down gunning is cool, but you can't see what you're shooting at, or where that enemy is going to be when you land. Overall, *DMC 2* just didn't get the juices flowing like the original did. I think that the game's easy difficulty has a part in this, but so does the fact that the larger, more open levels aren't conducive to great action. Their expansiveness requires you to do more running around looking for orbs, which takes away from the suspenseful, hemmed-in fights of the original — in favor of larger areas that allow for cool midair combat. *Devil May Cry 2* is one case where bigger isn't necessarily better.

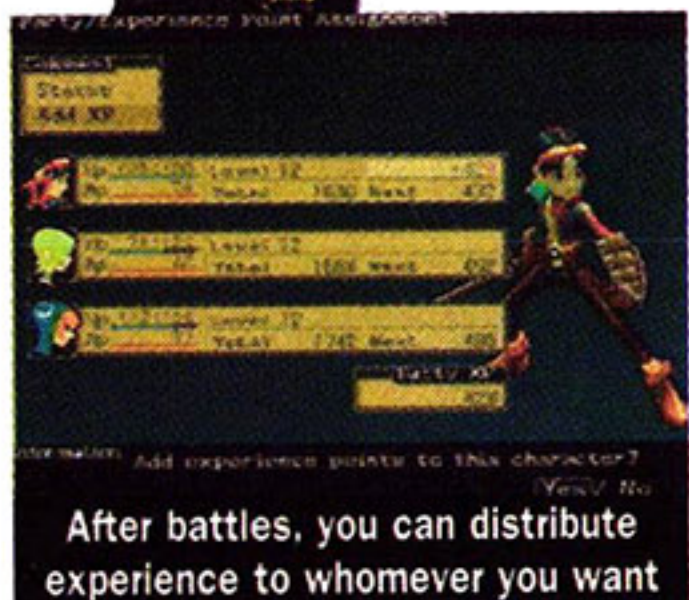
KATO — 7.5



REVIEWS

39%

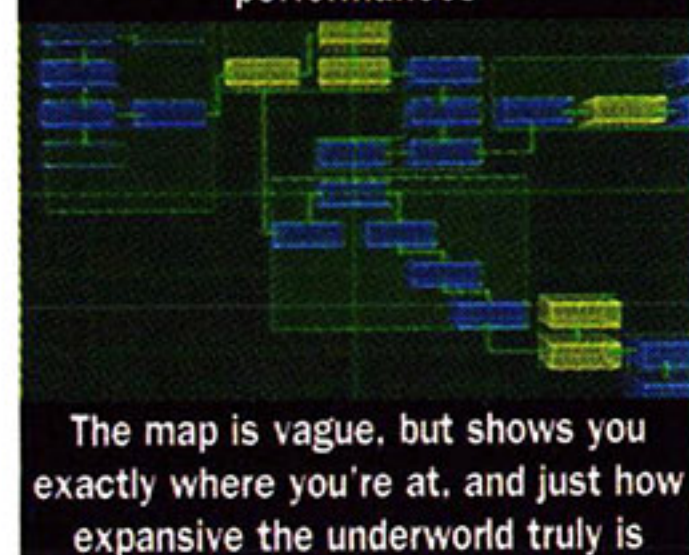
"If anything, Dragon Quarter will likely tear the Breath of Fire fan base apart."



After battles, you can distribute experience to whomever you want



Some familiar elements, like the Fairy Kingdom, make repeat performances



The map is vague, but shows you exactly where you're at, and just how expansive the underworld truly is

PLAYSTATION 2

BREATH OF FIRE: DRAGON QUARTER

THE WORLD BENEATH

Since Breath of Fire's inception in 1993, Capcom hasn't deviated from its original design. While enhancements were made to each installment, similarities remained constant and each chapter held true to the traditional console RPG formula. With the arrival of Dragon Quarter, Capcom is starting with a clean slate. Not only is it a fresh look for the series, it breaks free of the genre's stereotypes and stands on its own two feet as a completely original property. Though innovative, Capcom's eagerness to push the role-playing boundaries may prove costly. If anything, Dragon Quarter will likely tear the Breath of Fire fan base apart.

For better or worse, Breath of Fire has evolved into something completely different. The only identifiable traits reside in the most insignificant of areas. Stepping into the shoes of Ryu and befriending a mysterious girl name Nina will likely bring a nostalgic smile to the faces of many, but the rest of the content will surely leave you petrified. If the previous entries in the series can be considered traditional RPGs, Dragon Quarter is best described as an intense dungeon crawler.

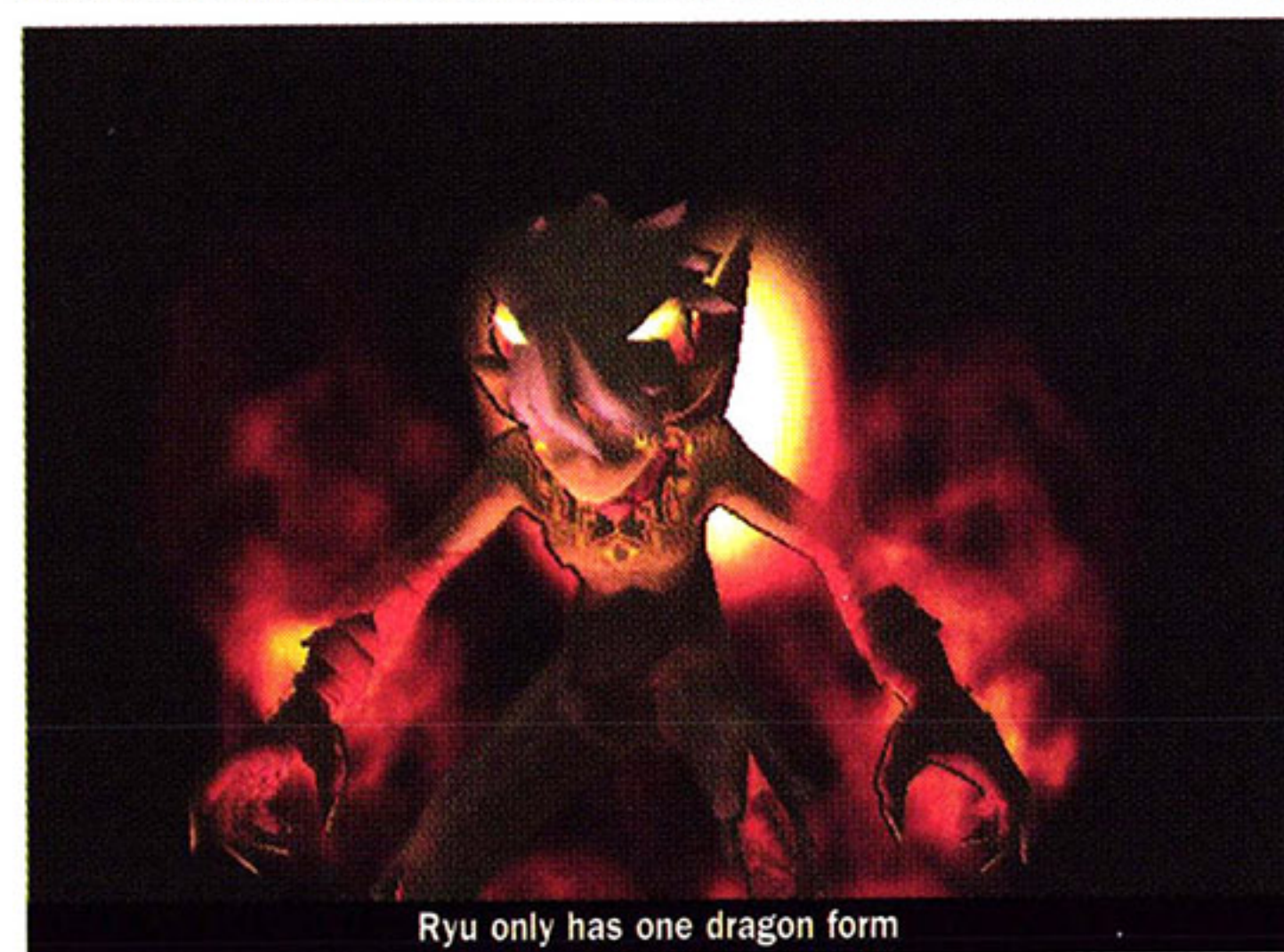
Instead of traversing the face of a world, the game takes place underground...way underground. The underlying goal is to work your way up to the fabled surface and sky. This element is definitely unique, but it's essentially what you'll be doing through the majority of the game. It's all about exploring the vast underworld. Once a floor has been navigated, you'll move on to the next.

Roughly 99 percent of the game is now centered around combat. Interacting with villagers to learn of plot points really isn't a part of Dragon Quarter. You'll spend most of your time building up your characters, which proves to be a highly repetitive and laborious project. New techniques and moves are sparse, and the pacing in battles is slow. While the combat does have a few hang-ups, not having random encounters is nice, and one can't help falling in love with the unique trap system.

Ryu still has his dragon form, which produces spectacular visuals, but this aspect is not nearly as deep as it once was. He only has one transformation, and you're penalized each time you use it. You see, whenever you tap into this power, a meter begins to fill. Each dragon action adds one point. When the meter is full, your game is over. Basically, you have to pace yourself and use it sparingly, if at all. Interestingly, Capcom did implement a solution: When a game ends, your stats carry over to a new game. This not only gives players an advantage, it allows you to get further than you had before, and may also open up once-unreachable areas. In this regard, the game thrives on replay and gives players a reason to come back for more.

Dragon Quarter doesn't carry on the legacy of the Breath of Fire series – it doesn't necessary try to. It's a different type of game, and a different taste for role-players. As intended, it's unlike anything you've experienced before. – REINER

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 18



Ryu only has one dragon form



Players can set traps to damage enemies

THE BOTTOM LINE

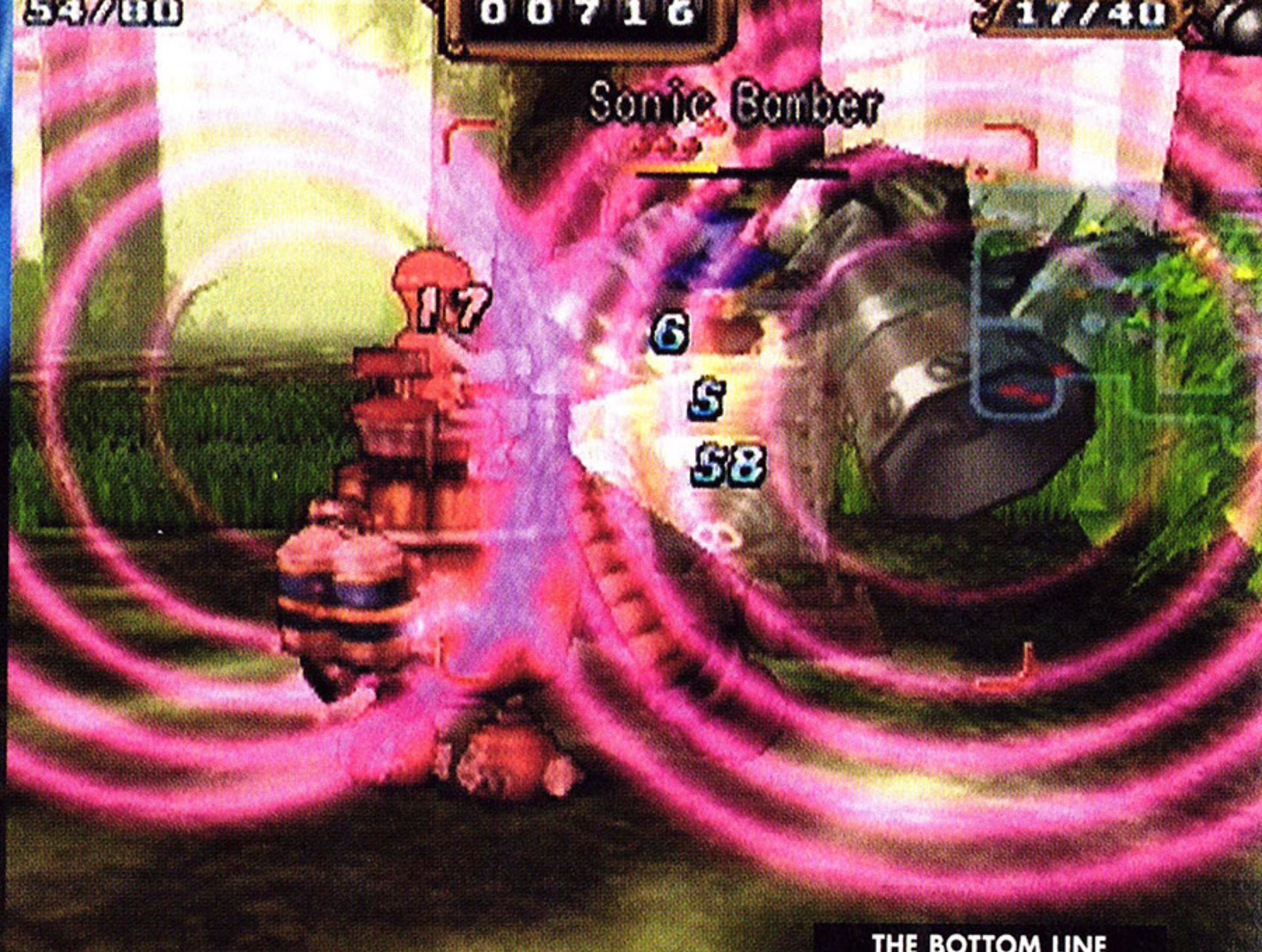


- **Concept:**
A drastically different approach to one of gaming's elite RPGs
- **Graphics:**
Beautiful cel-shaded characters, blinding battle effects, and colorful backdrops
- **Sound:**
Easily the best score in the series. You'll be humming these songs for months
- **Playability:**
Very slow in pace, but loaded with options and unique features
- **Entertainment:**
The quest is short (roughly 20 hours), but it rewards players for going through the game again
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Capcom is bringing the Breath of Fire series into full 3D in this PlayStation 2 debut, and this is just the first of many surprises in store for you. Graphically, this move couldn't have been executed better. It not only keeps the franchise's signature look, but it expands it in some wonderful ways. The center of the game, however, is the new combat system. I, for one, love not having random encounters, and couldn't get enough of the total freedom in being able to manage my party's movement, attacks, and traps. That's not to mention the combos and Ryu's wicked dragon form. I think this pushing of the turn-based envelope is exactly what the genre needs to keep itself fresh and interesting to the rest of us. If there's a fundamental problem with the game, it's that the dungeon-crawling environments can stretch a little thin at times. Still, RPG fans should have absolutely no trouble staying glued to this title.

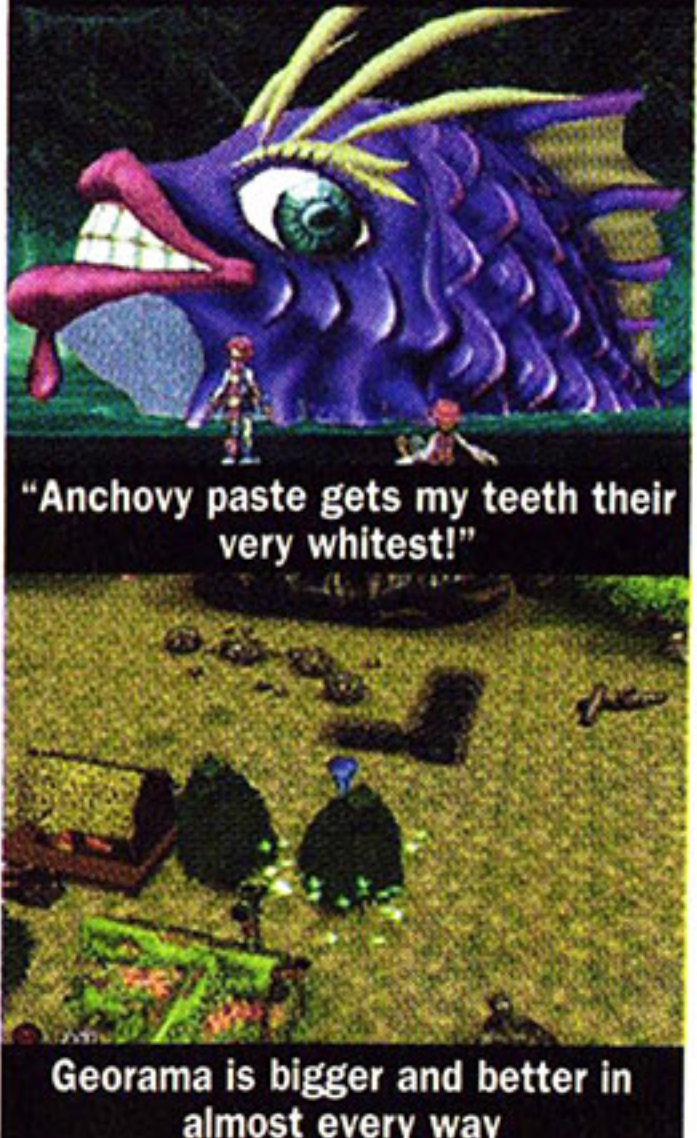
KATO – 8.5



"Dark Cloud 2 is the complete package for RPG enthusiasts. The exhilarating heights of the story are equaled by great gameplay depth."



Change the past and visit the results in the future



"Anchovy paste gets my teeth their very whitest!"

Georama is bigger and better in almost every way

PLAYSTATION 2

DARK CLOUD 2

THERE'S NO COMING DOWN

If you're not already a Dark Cloud fan, you've probably never heard of Level-5, the franchise's developer. Dark Cloud 2 is only its second product, but it certainly won't be its last. How's this for a future: Enix has enlisted the services of Level-5 to help with its newest chapter in the Dragon Warrior series – the godfather of RPGs. The developer, however, is already making waves in the genre here and now. Dark Cloud 2 is the complete package for RPG enthusiasts. The exhilarating heights of the story are equaled by great gameplay depth.

Fans of the series will immediately be heartened by the fact that, in many ways, the game is far less drab than its predecessor. Whether it's the splash of vibrance caused by the cel shading or dungeons that are more exciting to fight through, combat simply isn't a chore like it once was. Although the lock-on targeting often does more harm than good, I was always eager to see what the next battle would bring. A big part of this is that you don't have to be as paranoid about breaking weapons and keeping hydrated as before. Also, the story seamlessly integrates all the game's elements into one grand, rolling adventure.

Another big reason I loved the battles was the customizing afterward. Although it's actually simpler than the first Dark Cloud, the expanded weapon attributes and branching upgrades brought back giddy memories of Vagrant Story. I

was kind of hoping Dark Cloud 2 would offer a party system where your allies could fight with you simultaneously, but it's still a lot of fun to switch between characters and build up the experience of hero Max, heroine-from-the-future Monica, and Ride Pod Steve. To top it all off, I was always on the lookout for invention ideas and objects – many of which would be used as Georama items. No matter where you look, the game moves from strength to strength.

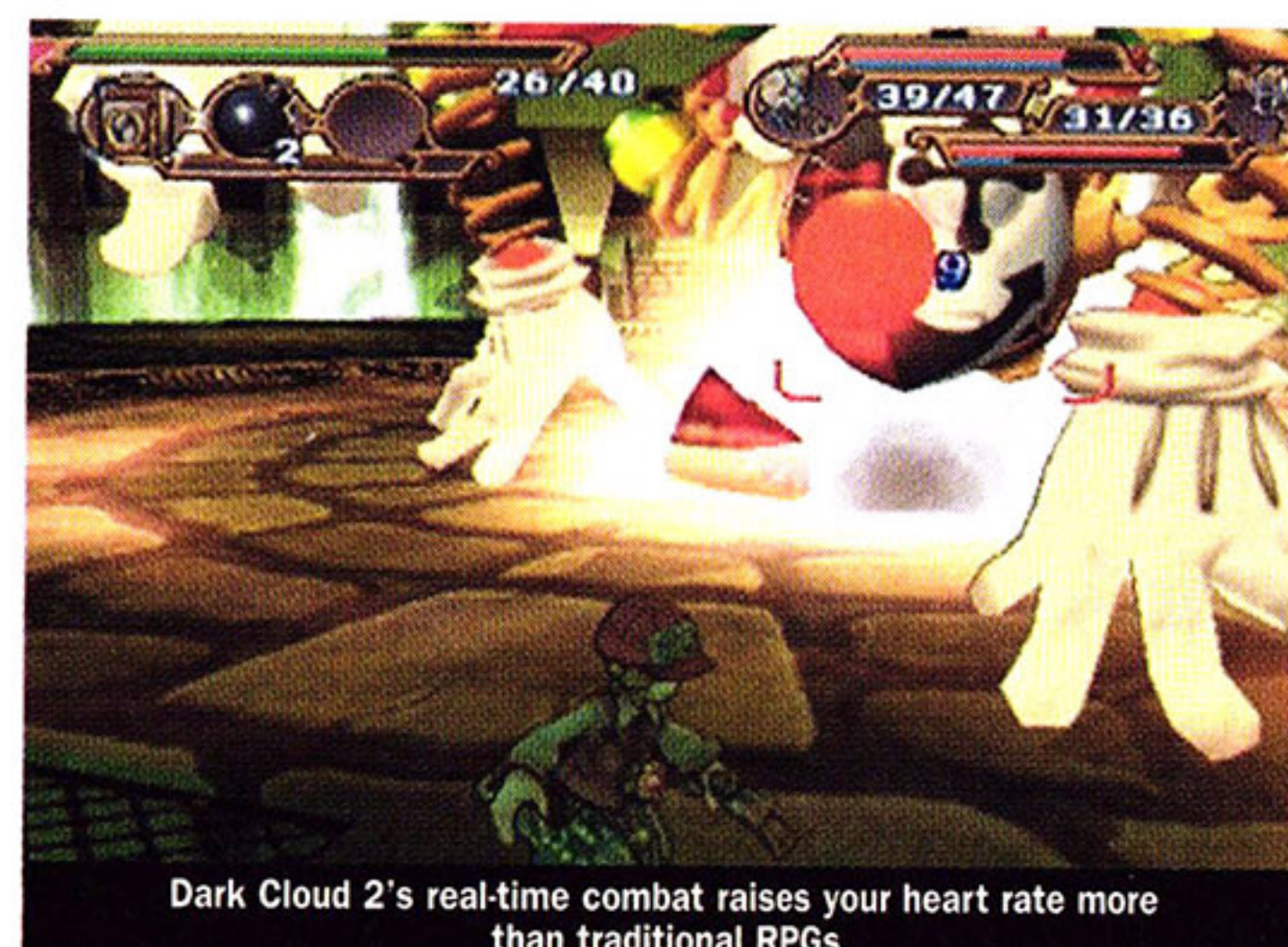
Dark Cloud 2's Georama feature was a pleasure before, but now its more open-ended approach (instead of simply finding objects for a location) rewards your creativity with Culture points. I wouldn't say it's SimCity, but I love being challenged to provide the best surroundings for my peeps. Also different from the first DC is the fact that you have to build each item out of the raw materials that you get in battle. You'll then move characters from your hometown into these new abodes. These friends can be chosen to join your adventures and give you certain combat bonuses.

It's not a lot to ask of a sequel that it simply be better than the original. Dark Cloud 2 does this, but it does so in a way other than just adding more stuff. The series is refined and improved, and it has grown into an RPG that should be considered among the very best on the console. – KATO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** LEVEL-5
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 18



"Die Ent, die!"



Dark Cloud 2's real-time combat raises your heart rate more than traditional RPGs

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** Just what you want a sequel to be: superior to the original in almost every way
- **Graphics:** DC 2's cel-shaded graphics aren't just cute; the game features alluring visual changes in several areas
- **Sound:** Hats off to Sony for springing for some top-notch voice talent
- **Playability:** The imperfect real-time combat is backed by an incredibly deep weapons system
- **Entertainment:** Borrowing elements from different games, Dark Cloud 2 succeeds at them all, and is definitely not to be missed
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Retooled with great precision and polished to a blinding sheen, Dark Cloud 2 soars above its predecessor and emerges as a role-playing masterpiece. Rather than reinventing the wheel, developer Level-5 stuck with the original formula and simply fixed all of the problems that plagued the first adventure. You'll no longer need to keep a constant eye on your meters, as your character rarely goes thirsty and the weapon strength doesn't deplete nearly as fast. Due to the random generation of dungeons, the environments remain blocky, but exploration is less tedious because the combat is quicker in pace and more complex in its design. Level-5 also reworked the Georama world-building aspect so that the player has more freedom as to what he or she can do with the land. Although it can be considered a dungeon crawler, Dark Cloud 2 has enough variety within its content that it breaks the mold and stands as a truly original role-playing experience.

REINER – 9.25

In a world of villains, a goddess reborn
struggles to fulfill a prophecy.

Summoner™

A GODDESS REBORN

Real time party-based combat where you control a variety of characters, from spellcasters to assassins

Transform yourself into 12 powerful summons, from the Blood Juggernaut to the Blade of Sand

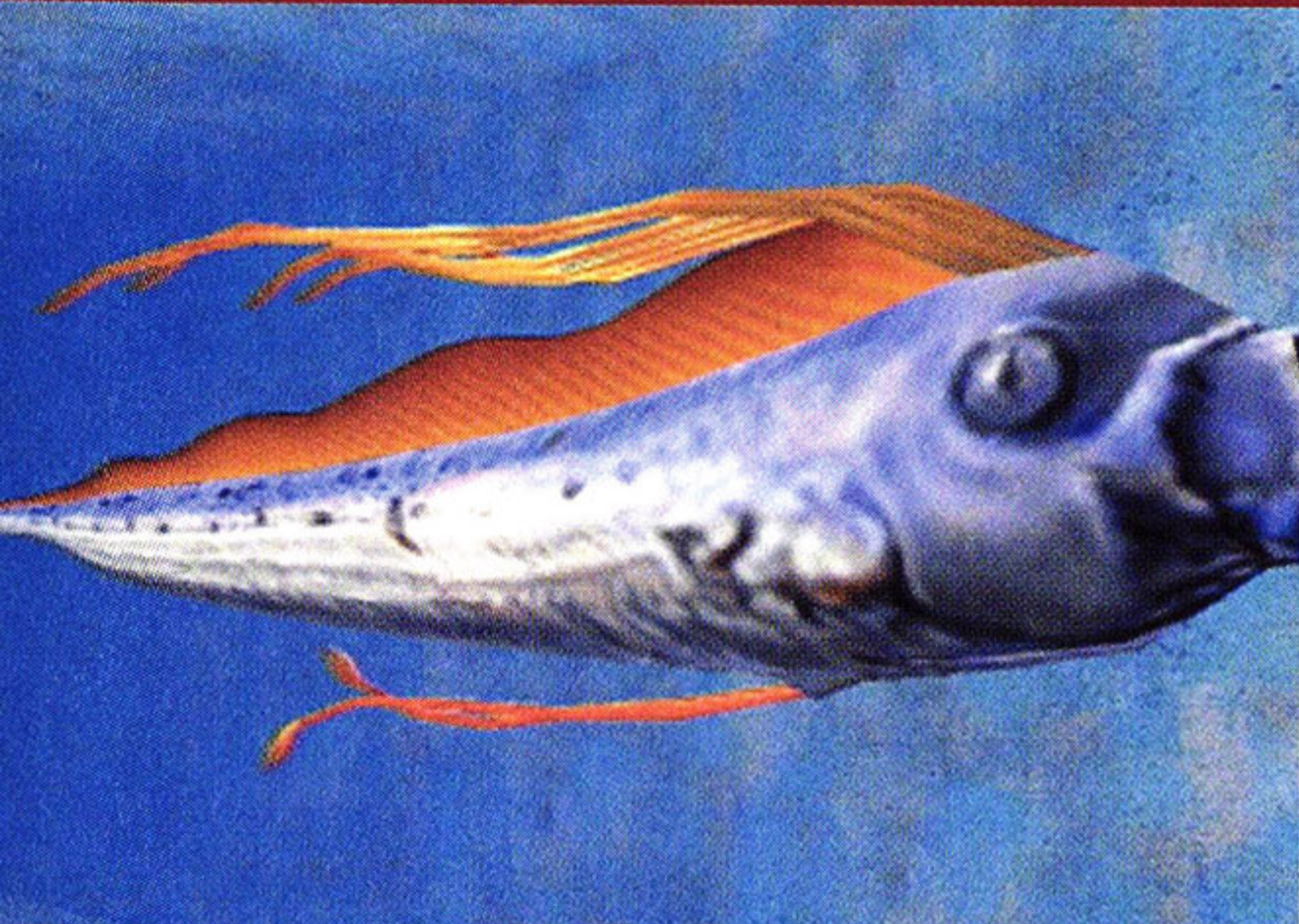
Complex, character-based story set in a unique world that combines sci-fi and fantasy



Blood
Violence



www.thq.com



PLAYSTATION 2

EVERBLUE 2

A REALLY DEEP GAME

The prospect of playing a video game revolving around deep-sea salvaging is about as exciting as spraying for roaches, so imagine my surprise when I was absolutely unable to put Everblue 2 down. Night after night, I found myself staying late, captivated by the aquatic utopia set before me.

Much like Grand Theft Auto, Everblue 2's gameplay is open-ended and filled with countless things to do. Take pictures of dozens of realistic sea creatures (some of which attack you), use an element detector to hunt for materials to build a house, explore a sunken airplane or pirate ship, and bid in an auction. RPG elements abound as you upgrade your gear to allow for faster swimming, deeper diving, or the ability to carry heavier salvaged objects. The way the game starts you slow and builds up your abilities and expands your boundaries is masterful.

You don't know how close I came to giving Everblue 2 a nine, but I just couldn't do it. A game about diving can only be so good, but that's exactly how good it really is. Its control, ambient life, longevity, and evolving gameplay will captivate you, no matter how obscure you find the core subject matter to be. Put your initial thoughts aside, pinch your nose, close your eyes, and dive in. — JUSTIN

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 8.75
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Explore the depths of the ocean while helping out your neighbors
- **Graphics:** Short draw distance, but what you can see looks darn pretty
- **Sound:** Decent underwater fare. If you can listen with headphones, it greatly enhances the audio
- **Playability:** At its heart, Everblue 2 feels like a first-person shooter, minus the shooting
- **Entertainment:** I couldn't believe how much fun I had with this game. The variety, beauty, and addictive qualities are staggering
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Everything about Everblue 2 would seem to point towards a laughable stinker (diving for scrap = thwarting evil?), but Everblue 2 captivates with its quirky gameplay and addictive mission structure. I wouldn't suggest it to people who are used to playing things like SOCOM, but it's definitely a decent way to have a relaxing time.

KRISTIAN – 8.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ARIKA ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



PLAYSTATION 2

DOT HACK VOL. 1: INFECTION

FEAR DOT COM: THE GAME? :)

Bandai has come up with a great concept for this RPG. The hero, Kite, is a person playing a massively multiplayer online game called The World. When a friend is attacked by a monster during an adventure, he mysteriously falls into a coma in real life. As the story progresses, your character must search through clues in The World and offline (including an anime DVD that comes included) to uncover the root of this video game violence.

At its most basic, Dot Hack successfully creates an engrossing RPG where you receive missions in a hub world similar to Phantasy Star Online. Although the real-time combat is basic and the dungeons are bland, the game excels through its engrossing trade system. Since special attacks are tied to specific weapons, you'll gladly spend your time tracking down a cool sword or haggling for better armor.

The more I played Dot Hack, the more I got sucked into it. I also realized that what really made it good wasn't just its refreshing take on conventional RPGs, but that it also captured some of the community aspects of a MMORPG. — KATO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** BANDAI ■ **DEVELOPER** BANDAI
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11

SECOND OPINION

At first, I thought nothing was lamer than a pseudo-MMORPG. However, this game is as much *The Matrix* as it is EverQuest. It's not amazing, but decent – with adequate combat, some detailed visuals, and a moderately compelling story. It's no Xenosaga, but it's still relatively high in the RPG hierarchy.

JUSTIN – 7.75

THE BOTTOM LINE
 TEEN
T 8.25
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** It's like an offline Phantasy Star Online, but with a great story
- **Graphics:** The dungeons could do with some furniture
- **Sound:** The fact that there are voice actors is about the only notable thing
- **Playability:** The real-time combat isn't very inventive and the camera needs babysitting
- **Entertainment:** It's a good RPG that's a step away from greatness
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High



PLAYSTATION 2

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

He's never mentioned in the same breath as the Marios and Crash Bandicoots of the world, but Rayman has built up a very impressive platforming track record over the years. After the disappointing minigame collection Rayman Arena, I was beginning to wonder if my limbless homie was slipping. Rayman 3 assuages my doubts by delivering another deep and satisfying entry in the series. I didn't think it was possible, but there's actually even more to do than in previous Rayman titles, from a few bizarre space surfing levels to piloting a hovercraft through a series of obstacles to an unlockable side-scrolling minigame.

As usual, the plot is equally fanciful and incomprehensible, but – let's face it – you're not playing Rayman games for the storytelling. You're playing it to marvel at the gorgeously rendered environments, giggle at Globox's antics, and enjoy some good old-fashioned platforming done with a fresh twist. By that standard, Rayman 3 is a great success. — MATT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 5

SECOND OPINION

Scads of platform titles should hope to have just the miniscule issues that Rayman 3 exhibits. If they were all this solid, pretty, witty, and had good sound to boot, you wouldn't need reviews – you'd just buy them all. Get Rayman and love again.

LISA – 8

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 8.5
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Finally, a true successor to the Dreamcast classic, Rayman 2
- **Graphics:** As always, lush organic environments and outlandish character designs rule the day
- **Sound:** I like Ubi's strange, tribal, new age music
- **Playability:** The camera isn't perfect, but it's a solid platformer
- **Entertainment:** If you can stand the whimsical Frenchness (is that a word?) of Rayman, there's a lot of game here
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 20



I know this is going to sound like a "no duh" kind of review; but if you're not a hunter, you're not going to like this game. There's a lot of detail involved with how to set up your kill, how to position yourself in your

environment, and things of that nature; but Cabela's fails to transcend its subject matter to broaden its appeal for all audiences. Plus, I just can't get into shooting a moose – digital or otherwise. Sure, I can mow down countless humans in any FPS, but drilling a gentle animal is not my idea of a good time. Plus, humans usually deserve it more, anyway. – **KRISTIAN**

T 7

GUILTY GEAR X2

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SAMMY
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



Change within this genre comes in minute doses, as if a weaning process is a necessary precursor to innovation. For this reason, the enhancements made to GG X2 will only be appreciated by those who

are hardcore enough to know what Guilty Gear is in the first place. For you fans, buy it for the new characters and modes – the Mission mode being reason enough to warrant a purchase. If you're unfamiliar with the series, you'll want GG X2 because it reigns as the best 2D fighter outside of the Capcom universe. – **CHET**

T 8.75

BLACK & BRUISED

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 28



All in all, this is a jovial romp of fisticuffs, also known as a decent boxing game. The cartoony characters look good, the gameplay works, and it has not one, but two sweet gimmicks: battling for power-ups and a

CG-filled story mode. I still miss the strategy elements of Punch Out however, where you have to figure out how to beat each foe. Also, the personalities of the fighters here weren't too distinguished via their fighting styles; they all pretty much hit the same. Definitely worth a look-see, though. – **JUSTIN**

T 7.5

FISHERMAN'S CHALLENGE

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 22



Fisherman's Challenge is the complete package, with all of the options and modes that any angler could wish for in a fishing title. It also does a good job of making the player work hard to land fish, by forcing you to complete a number of quick

actions to keep your prey on the hook. It can be frustrating at times, since a lunker can slip off the hook so easily, but overall the experience is rewarding. There are a couple of nagging control issues, but in the end Fisherman's Challenge delivers. – **ANDY**

E 7.5

HYPERSONIC EXTREME

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 28



HyperSonic Extreme isn't the most jaw-dropping racing game I've ever seen, but, at a MSRP of \$9.99, it definitely delivers a lot for your money. That's less than a pizza

costs, and HSX will still be giving you high-speed racing thrills when that large pepperoni has left you with nothing but a bad case of gas. Yes, it's just another Wipeout clone, but it is fast, and offers up some solid tracks and challenging racing. Be sure to check out the very nice Track Editor, which is easy to use and more intuitive than most. Consider this a nice little blue light special for racing fans. – **MATT**

E 7.25

P.T.O. IV

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



While I found it a little strange that a Japanese company would want to revisit that country's naval campaign of World War II, I also found it very enjoyable. P.T.O.

IV effectively functions as a spruced-up board game that throws in real-time battles, non-Pacific encounters, and other interludes. It reminded me of the board game Axis & Allies, but with tons more depth and the freedom to control my resources and forces as little or as much as I wanted to. The battle scenes themselves can be bland, but fledgling commanders will have no trouble grabbing this game's reins of power. – **KATO**

E 7.75

DISASTER REPORT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



I'll give this game a few points for having a genuinely unique premise – one that casts you as an investigative reporter trying to find the cause of an urban calamity. In your quest,

you collect clues and items in a survival horror fashion, while narrowly dodging all types of instant death. This interesting concept makes this game's horrible execution an even greater shame. The graphics are poor, the control erratic, and the camera downright abysmal. There is simply no reason for a PlayStation 2 game to look this bad. I mean, the framerate chugs when you're walking, fer Chrissakes! Sorry, but looks do matter, especially for a title that aims to be as cinematic as Disaster Report. – **MATT**

T 5



PLAYSTATION 2

GALERIANS: ASH A METAPHYSICAL MIND-BENDER

Galerians: Ash is certainly not your average game. Ostinently, it's survival horror, but it's not particularly scary – unless extremely convoluted plots horrify you. In a nutshell, the story centers around a supercomputer named Dorothy that rebelled against humankind. Dorothy started creating her own race, the Galerians, to do her bidding. You are Rion, one of the last surviving Galerians, who must save humanity from Dorothy.

In terms of gameplay, Galerians: Ash continues the unique combat pioneered by its precursor. Rion has three basic psychic attacks, which are accessed by injecting various drugs into your system. You must also shoot up to manage your Hit Points, prevent your Addiction Points (a measure of mental stress) from reaching dangerous levels, and to fashion a mental shield that can block enemy salvos.

Graphically, the cutscenes are very stylish, exhibiting some striking sequences and Gigeresque character designs. On the downside, the gameplay sections are not nearly as detailed. Also, once you've become accustomed to the odd playstyle, it's apparent that the game simply involves a lot wandering around until you stumble across the next boss battle. These fights are compelling, but seem to depend more on having the correct inventory than your skill. Despite its shortcomings, I was charmed by Galerians: Ash. – **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 8
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

■ **Concept:**
 An odd psychic twist on the traditional survival horror formula, featuring a barely comprehensible plot

■ **Graphics:**
 The cutscenes are as exquisite as the in-game graphics are workmanlike

■ **Sound:**
 For such a dark saga, the voice actors are gratingly chipper

■ **Playability:**
 A new targeting system and shield move improves the combat, but the camera is still lacking

■ **Entertainment:**
 For those with an affinity for futuristic anime weirdness, this is one to check out. Galerians: Ash has "cult classic" written all over it

■ **Replay Value:**
 Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

The combat of Galerians: Ash isn't quite up to par with some of the top games in the genre like Resident Evil or Eternal Darkness, but it does offer an incredibly over-the-top story that reminded me many times of the anime classic Akira. If you can look past the repetitive action and are just looking for an intense, anime-styled tale, Galerians: Ash will not disappoint. Be warned however, that the adventure is short and not for everyone.

ANDY – 7

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SAMMY STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** POLYGON MAGIC ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



"Vexx has great potential that is mostly realized by the excellent production values."

GAMECUBE
VEXX
 MARIO WITH POWER MITTS?

Vexx is a new character with a new game of the same name developed by Acclaim. Like the rhyming? Sorry, I'm done now. Vexx has great potential that is mostly realized by the excellent production values. However, some areas could have used a little tweaking to get the title into the upper echelon of platform godliness.

Vexx, as a character, has a very mundane backstory. His people live a quiet and peaceful existence in Rockhaven until the corrupt and evil Dark Yabu overrun them. Predictably, the Dark Yabu force the nonviolent co-existers into slavery. When Vexx's dear, reverent grandfather tries to rebel, he is cruelly slaughtered in front of the poor boy. Fierce acts of ingenuity allow Vexx to get onto the bad guy's ship and adopt the Astani Battlegauntlets, a set of metallic power gloves that give our hero his powers.

The worlds that Vexx must explore are one of the best aspects of the game. They are large, varied, and extremely vertical. These areas include an impressively gigantic tree, a smoking volcano, desert sandscapes, and underwater ruins. Even more noteworthy are levels which have you jump into a tapestry and play in a 2D environment. Said sequences are very cool and imaginative – something you owe it to yourself to see.

While seven or eight missions are listed for each area, not

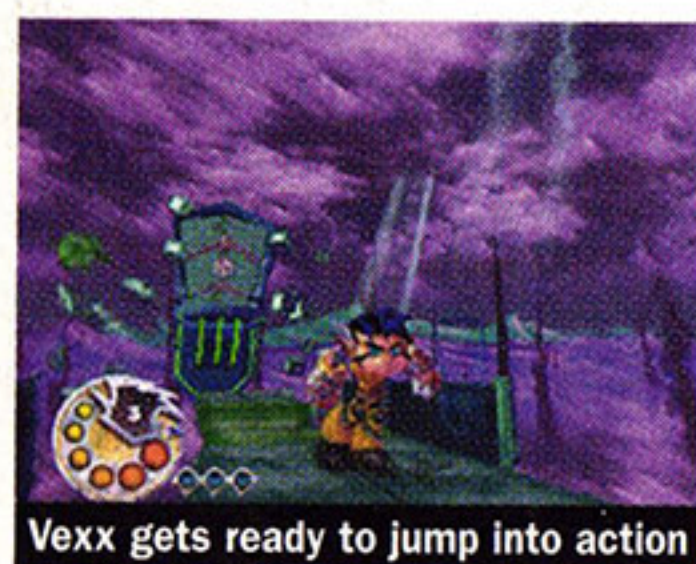
all need to be completed to finish the game. Most of Vexx's tasks revolve around collecting the hearts of Shadowraith to power the hub, open more doors, and let you explore more areas. Some of these objectives include the predictable "collect 100 thingies" or the traditional "collect six of these more rare thingies," but the majority of goals are laid out through cryptic riddle-clues. Most are much more creative (like my personal favorite, where you knock the big sumo dude off the top of a tree).

The super-gloves Vexx sports provide some intense combat action. Because of these accessories, he can power jump, uppercut hapless enemies, and adapt different abilities with the possession of runes. Although the combo-strings are rudimentary, it never gets dull.

Any annoyances with this title are caused by the sometimes-problematic camera. Its usual sin is leaving you blind under ledges, around corners, etc. This is the kind of problem that most platform games have, but it's sufficient to knock Vexx from the front-runners of the genre.

There is great potential here, and Vexx is a game that I would certainly recommend to friends purely for the level design, fun (if somewhat repetitive) combat, humor, subtle sound effects, and sheer size. Mario? Not quite, but I wouldn't call Vexx a pushover. – **LISA**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



Vexx gets ready to jump into action



Vexx can teleport into paintings that produce classic 2D gameplay



Minigames are sprinkled throughout



Battle multiple monsters with little additional effort



"By the power of Grayskull!"

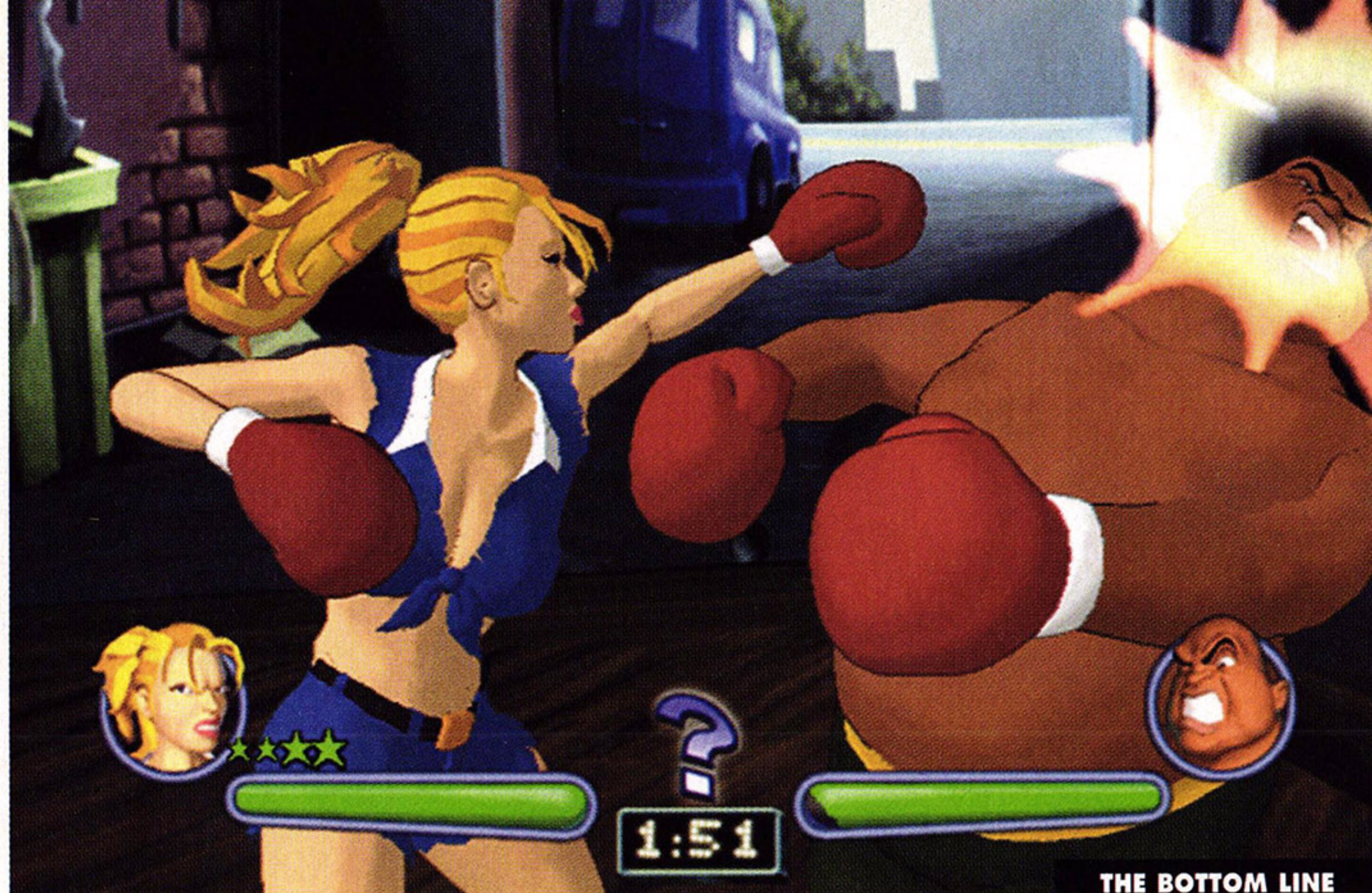
THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN T
8.25
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
Vexx, like all good platform stars, must save his brethren from an evil tyrant
- **Graphics:**
Somewhat bland textures aside; the level, character, and enemy design is top notch
- **Sound:**
Don't expect a soundtrack CD for this one. Not bad – just not a huge part of the experience
- **Playability:**
Unacceptably bad camera work in some areas is the only downfall to an otherwise nice debut
- **Entertainment:**
The game is huge and still does a good job of making you want to play more
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Acclaim hasn't exactly been known for having the magic touch when it comes to platformers (see: *Fur Fighters*, *The Simpsons: Bart Meets Radioactive Man*), but Vexx goes a long way towards establishing the company as a force in the genre. Although the game is not nearly as polished as *Ratchet & Clank* or *Jak and Daxter*, mostly due to a disagreeable camera and very lackluster texturing, it has a sense of grand scale and inventiveness that smacks of Rare's N64-era output. Most notable of Vexx's strengths are the vast levels, which are truly awe-inspiring and hold many secrets and hidden areas. Also, our hero is no slouch in the combat department, performing juggles and rudimentary chain combos like a kiddie *Street Fighter* combatant. If this game had just a little more fine-tuning, it would get the highest honors. As it stands, it is still one of the better platforming experiences you'll have this year.

MATT – 8



THE BOTTOM LINE



GAMECUBE

BLACK & BRUISED

FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY, SHADE LIKE A CEL

Cartoon boxing games are hit or miss, but *Black & Bruised* lands a few solid punches. Its cast is large and features some colorful characters. While a tad stereotypical, most fighters are anything but boring, and all look great.

Each pugilist has his or her own story in *Boxer's Life*: six different matches linked together by cutscenes. The fights are varied, sometimes requiring you to only use one hand, other times poisoning you before the bout.

Power-ups are a big key to the entertainment of *Black & Bruised*. There are six of them, and they're earned through successful swings. Each can be upgraded to be even more devastating. Fighter-specific punches and rapid-fire combos are just the tip of the iceberg.

Don't bet the farm on this one just yet though, folks. There are a few hits against *Black & Bruised* that definitely knock some of the wind out of it. First off, the camera is suspect. Despite being called "Stationary," the default angle is about as stable as a drunk in an earthquake. Balance problems make who you pick more important to your success than how you fight. Also, I don't like that your opponents always get up, unless it's a TKO. It makes watching the knockdown count useless.

In the end, I rule *Black & Bruised* a draw. If boxing's your thing, you'll most likely dig it; and at least it's a new direction for the tired sport. Just don't expect the next *Punch Out*. — JUSTIN

■ **Concept:**

A boxer that revolves around the fighters more than the action

■ **Graphics:**

The character models look hot and they take detailed damage

■ **Sound:**

The voiceovers are well done. The script, on the other hand, is covered in cheese

■ **Playability:**

Nothing special, control-wise. Combos are erratic and blocking seems random

■ **Entertainment:**

The power-ups and lengthy *Boxer's Life* mode are highlights in a fun package

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

After watching Midway try in vain to capture the classic essence of Nintendo's *Punch Out* series with *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing*, Majesco and developer Digital Fiction try to pull off the cartoon fighter with a solid effort in *Black & Bruised*. Graphically, it's a great title, using cel shading to update the look and feel of the 8-bit era. I also like the *Boxer's Life* mode, which tells each character's unique story through between-match cutscenes. The boxing itself has some great aspects, and some bad ones. The camera, as in many boxing games, is poor, and it's way too easy to get caught in corners. While I like the creative power-ups, sometimes it seemed like the outcome of the matches was too dependent on who got which power-up when. Also, the characters are a bit unbalanced, and the four-knockdown TKOs are just weird and wrong. All in all, though, this is a solid attempt.

MATT — 7.5



This arcade *Punch Out*-esque camera angle points out a size difference between these two

He didn't just get beaten with the ugly stick... they used the whole damn ugly tree!

Little icons circling your head mean you're about to hit canvas

Cutscenes between *Boxer's Life* bouts will keep you playing

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL FICTION ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 27

GAMECUBE

DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 6



Disney isn't as good at bringing football (the American variety) to the kids as it is in doing football (or soccer, as we call it). The intention is the same: Give youngsters a pretty accurate taste of

sports through a sim approach that also includes fun magical powers. However, since football is harder to recreate than soccer, this title largely stumbles and fumbles in a variety of ways. Not only is the running game slow as ass, but I once saw a failed field goal earn my opponent three points. For kids, this won't be a bad football primer, but the rest of us already know that, unlike Bo Jackson, Konami don't know football. — KATO



GAMECUBE

DISNEY'S PK: OUT OF THE SHADOWS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 31



I'm glad that I finally get to use the word abysmal. Why, one might ask, would I be so excited to use the word abysmal? Because it accurately describes the camera (painfully in your way), plot (only the

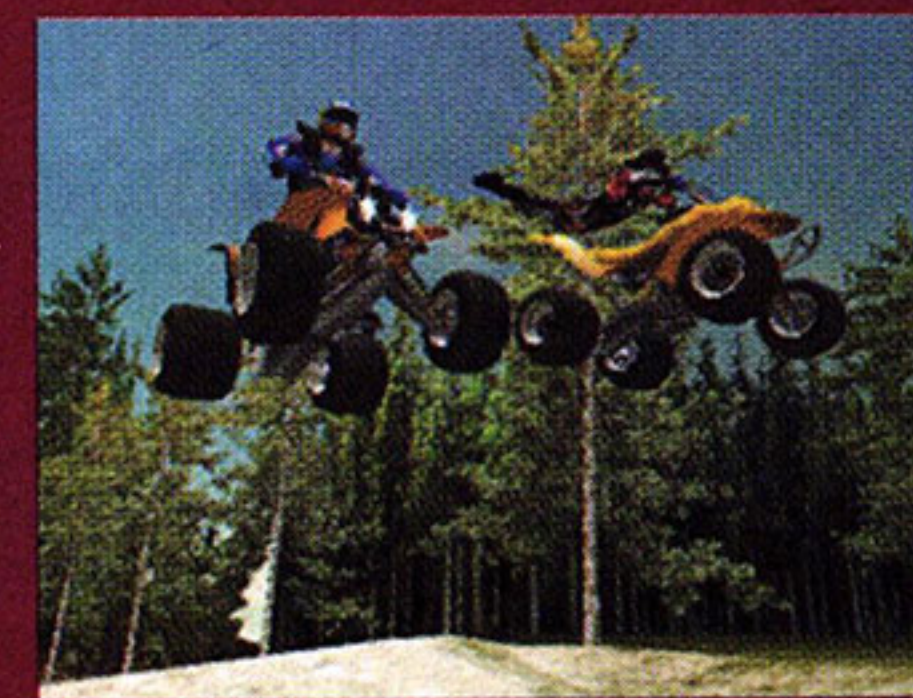
duck can save Earth), and sound (repetitive and forgettable) of Disney's homage to Donald's crime-fighting alter ego. The icing on the proverbial cake of poo is that PK has only a few levels with overly linear layout, bland textures, and sub-par cel shading. — LISA



GAMECUBE

ATV: QUAD POWER RACING 2

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 24



Don't think about it; just give it a try. I know most of you aren't too big on the whole ATV racing scene, but this game will grow on you. It has excellent physics, nice graphics, and

a beefy little career mode for you to throw your time at. I especially enjoy the assorted tricks you can perform in the air, but the controls needed to successfully execute those moves seem to be a little hit-or-miss. Definitely rent it, but if you're in a buying mood and in the market for a racer, I wouldn't try to convince you otherwise. — KRISTIAN





"This game delivers everything a fan of the movies could want and even a little bit more."

XBOX

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

SO GOOD, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A MOVIE

I got a chance to see Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb early in its development and walked away slightly concerned that Dr. Jones might once again get a game that didn't quite live up to his legacy. However, after putting this title through its paces, I can tell you without a doubt that it delivers everything a fan of the movies could want and even a little bit more.

The adventure starts off with Indy in a classic tomb environment, where you will find yourself learning the ropes by solving puzzles and taking out a sea of baddies. Much like The Collective's previous project, Buffy the Vampire Slayer for Electronic Arts, the combat engine really shines, letting you use various objects like shovels, bottles, and chairs to smack enemies; or weapons like a pistol or submachine gun to mow them down from afar.

After this rather lengthy intro, the story really kicks into high gear as Indy learns that the world is in mortal danger from an ancient Chinese artifact (known as the Heart of the Dragon) that can control the will of men. This is when you start to realize that this game would have made one heck of a movie, and that your adventure is just beginning.

Overall, the gameplay could easily be compared to Tomb

Raider, since you can do almost anything that Lara is capable of doing. Luckily, the control is not as mathematical and gives the player more freedom of movement, along with a number of improved play mechanics. The most notable of these is the combat engine, which gives Indy a plethora of hand-to-hand combos as well as a wealth of weapons to use. In addition, Indy has to interact with his environment quite a bit, both to navigate and solve the game's puzzles. For example, you can use your whip to swing on various objects or to disarm enemies. And that's just the beginning of the long list of things Indy has over Lara, since you can also throw skulls to shake enemies off your scent, or even go into a semi-stealth mode where you can hug the wall to avoid detection. Let's just put it this way: Anything you see Indy do in a movie, he can do in the game – the control is that good.

Like every other Indy fan in the world, I am still waiting anxiously for his long-awaited return to the big screen, but let's not hold our breath. The good news is Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb offers up more than enough action to keep any fan happy until that glorious day becomes a reality. If you own an Xbox and are looking for some adventure, you really can't do much better than this. – **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** THE COLLECTIVE ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 18



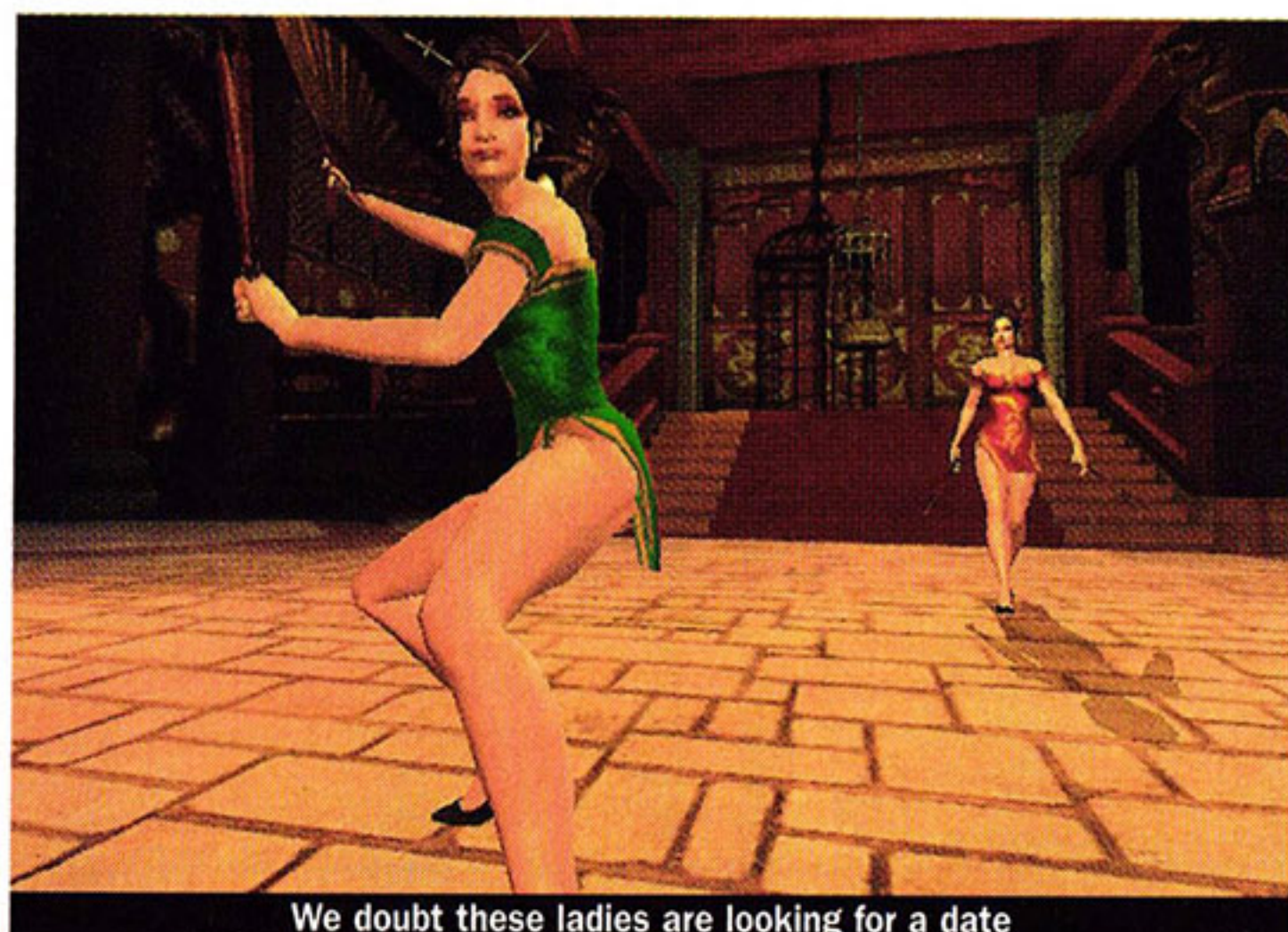
Use your machete to hack through vines



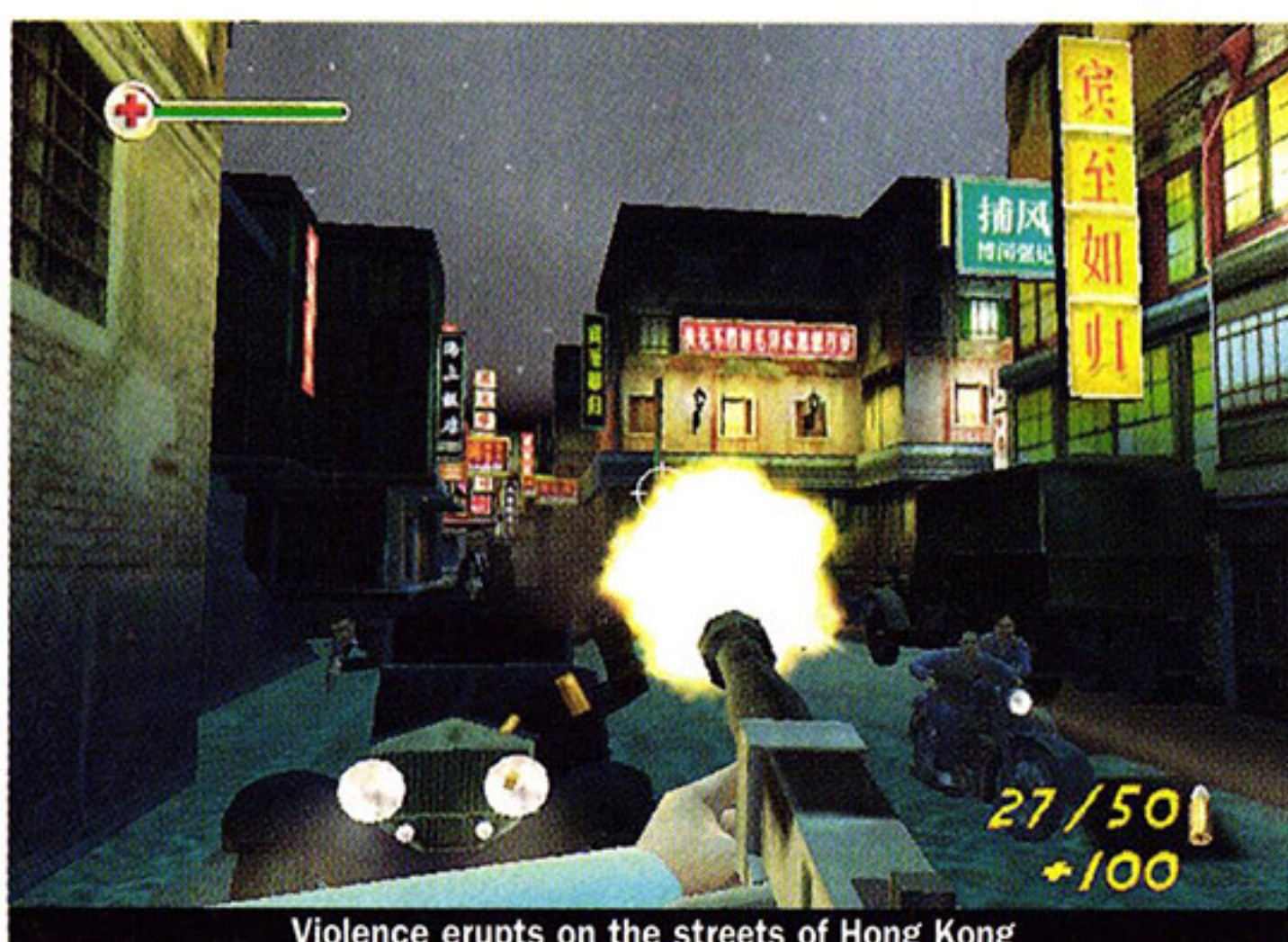
Fisticuffs will solve almost any problem



"I've got a bad feeling about this."



We doubt these ladies are looking for a date



Violence erupts on the streets of Hong Kong

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

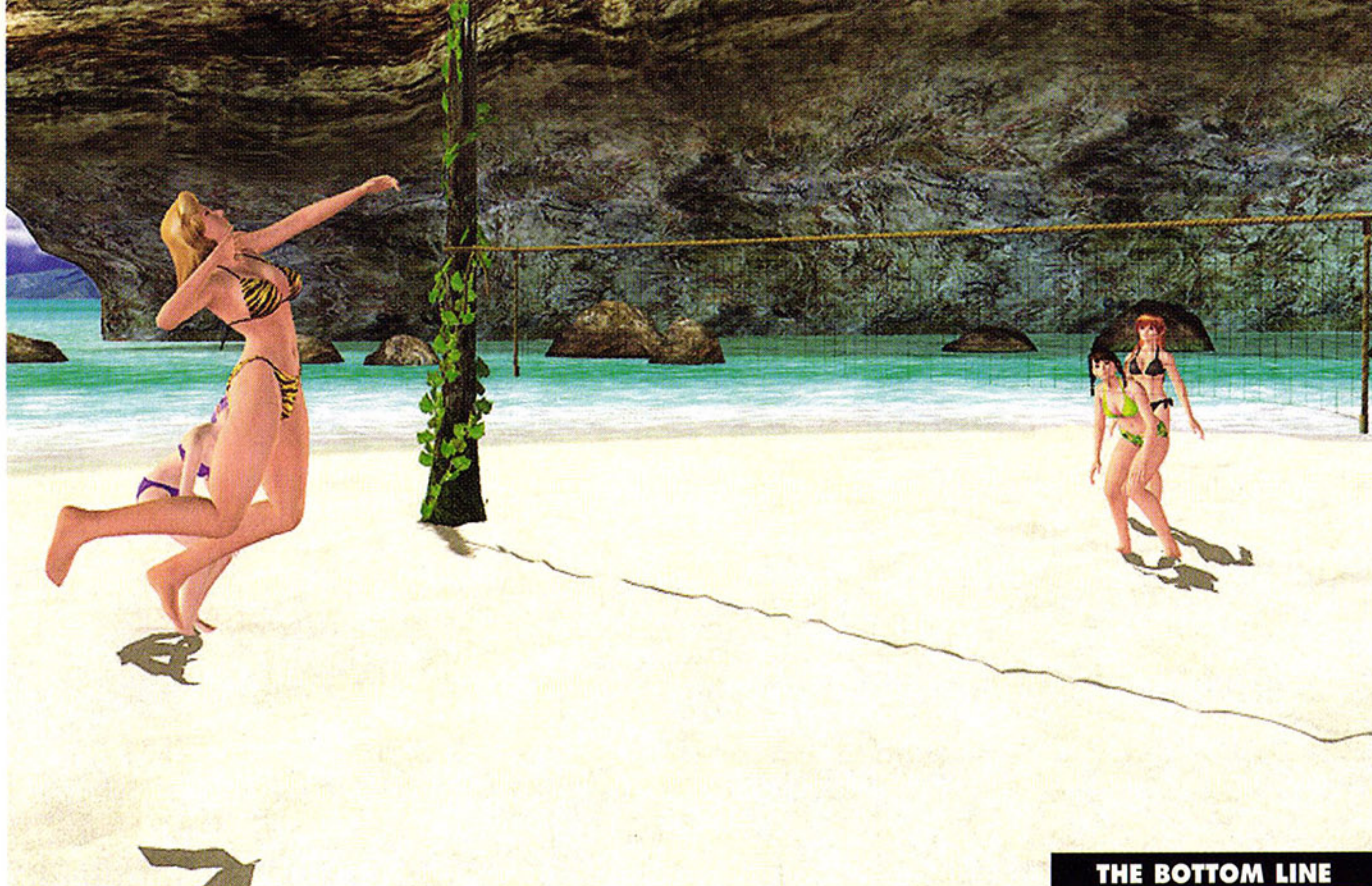
8.5

- **Concept:** Give Tomb Raider a run for its money with the original bad boy archeologist
- **Graphics:** Nothing overly amazing, but solid through and through
- **Sound:** Within minutes, you will find yourself whistling the theme song
- **Playability:** The jumping component is not as predictable as I would have liked it to be, but otherwise the control is fantastic
- **Entertainment:** Great from beginning to end, The Emperor's Tomb is perhaps Indy's greatest video game adventure
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

The tutorial seemingly goes on forever, and the game doesn't really hit its stride for a few hours; but once it does, it's an action-packed extravaganza worthy of the Indiana Jones license. If you played The Collective's first Xbox game, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, you know exactly what to expect – high-pitched pacing and explosive hand-to-hand combat. Indiana Jones follows suit but is more puzzle-intensive. The game's true strength, however, is that its brawling aspect allows Indy to pummel adversaries in numerous ways. You can even pick up random objects, like a shovel or chair, and use them to beat the opposition senseless. The puzzles may be a tad linear, and not nearly as engrossing as Lara Croft's exploits, but the action is in a league of its own and the story is worthy of a film. I think you'll agree that it's good to see Dr. Jones in action again.

REINER – 8.25



XBOX

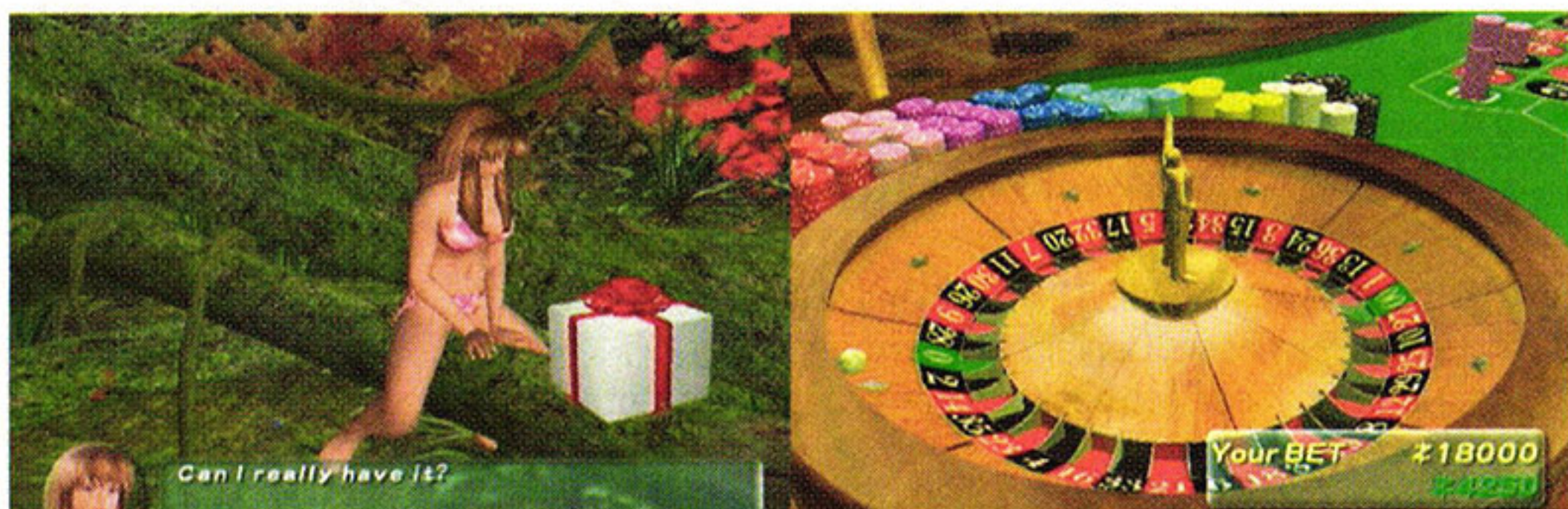
DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

CALGON, TAKE ME AWAY!

I'll say this: DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball is not your average sports game. Instead, think of it as the video game equivalent of a tropical vacation. You hang out on the beach, do some tanning, go shopping for overpriced swimwear, do a little gambling at the hotel casino, and play sand volleyball with your companions. What's the difference? Well, in this case, your companions are stunningly gorgeous bikini models who have physiques that defy the laws of physics.

If you're buying this solely for the cheesecake factor, I must say that you won't be disappointed. Tecmo's digital divas are extremely detailed, and show off Team Ninja's unparalleled knack for creating realistic animation and amazing (top-heavy) character models. In terms of gameplay, I was surprised to discover that the "lifestyle" elements of the game – particularly the gift-giving and gambling features – are as important to the overall experience as the volleyball itself. You'll have to really learn the girls' likes and dislikes, because this catty bunch isn't shy about dissing you to your face and throwing your present in the trash if you don't meet their high standards. Dealing with the characters' personalities as crucial as winning matches if you want to maintain positive team chemistry.

The volleyball itself is fairly well done. With a very simple control scheme, depth is added by forcing you to rely on timing and how hard you hit the analog buttons. But, this is not intended to be a hardcore sports sim, and you'll spend just as much time shopping, gift giving, and picking up obscure trinkets as you will bumping and setting. It's kind of like the video game version of playing dress-up with Barbie dolls – and I put my, uh, I mean, my sister's Barbies away years ago. – **MATT**



Gift giving is a crucial...oh...uh... what were we talking about, again?

At night, you'll play roulette, blackjack, and slots at the island casino



DOA 3's infamous "She Kicks High" commercial is one of the hidden extras

Underneath it all is a decent volleyball game, as if you care

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO ■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM NINJA ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 21

THE BOTTOM LINE
MATURE
M
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
7.5

- **Concept:** A beach-life simulator with hot babes in bikinis...and some volleyball, too
- **Graphics:** Nobody does virtual eye candy better than Tecmo and Team Ninja
- **Sound:** A wide variety of cotton candy fluff. Use your tunes off the hard drive
- **Playability:** There is a lot of strategy to the gift giving and team building, and the volleyball is satisfactory
- **Entertainment:** Strip away all the glossy visuals, mini-games, and collectable items; and you've got a reasonably decent volleyball game
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

You would think a game called Xtreme Beach Volleyball would be all about playing volleyball, but oddly enough, it's not. In fact, to do well in the single-player mode, you need to spend most of your time gambling or shopping if you hope to ever convince a girl to team up with you for a quick game of volleyball. Now, I know you must be thinking that I am completely off my rocker here and reviewing the wrong game, but this really is what XBV is all about. Finding out what gifts work on which girls and making the money to afford them is the real meat of this title. That said, I don't think it's a bad thing. I kind of got into it after a while, but it certainly wasn't anything that I expected. This game will be a little too much for most, but others will really enjoy this odd – and I do mean odd – Xbox adventure. Rent it first, or sucker a friend into buying it, as it is certainly good for a laugh.

ANDY – 7.75



XBOX

VEXX

I'M TERRIBLY VEXXED

For people who love their heroes small and pissed off, Vexx certainly delivers. With special gloves that allow your character to administer many beat downs per second, Vexx is on a mission to free his grandfather's soul from an evil power and save a bunch of other people while he's at it. As you may have gathered, the plot doesn't sparkle with originality, but it's decent enough that you stay somewhat interested in what's happening onscreen. Where the plot falters, the game's graphics and combat system shine with lush and spacious environments that house many meanies on which you can unleash devastating combo attacks.

Unfortunately, Vexx falters where many of its kind do – the camera system. The number of times I was frustrated by not being able to see what I wanted were too many to be easily forgiven. This, and the fact that I felt like I was playing a been-there-done-that type of game, led me to believe that only the platform faithful will really be able to sit down and enjoy this one consistently from sitting to sitting. Fortunately, there are some inventive gameplay elements, such as jumping around 2D paintings and setting the time of day with a magical sundial, that will serve to pique your interest each time you throw it in. If you're pining for a decent Xbox platformer, this is it. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN
T
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
8

- **Concept:** Follow a typical platformer story, and do platformy things, but in interesting ways
- **Graphics:** The Xbox is able to generously pump out the textures, and the game looks great because of it
- **Sound:** Worth listening to for an hour, then it's snooze-ville
- **Playability:** Camera issues hamper the overall quality of Vexx, but the controls are more than adequate
- **Entertainment:** You can do much worse when platformer shopping for the Xbox
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Due to its dark story and blistering difficulty, Vexx really isn't a game for the masses. On that same note, it's a dream come true for adults and hardcore platforming fans. In every conceivable way, Vexx assaults the player with brutally challenging goals. So, if you tire of extensive tutorials or games that hold your hand until the end, look no further.

REINER – 8.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11

REVIEWS



XBOX

KUNG FU CHAOS

PLEASE! NO SONG LYRICS HERE!

Kung Fu Chaos is a fighting/party game with levels that are unlocked based on performance. In half of them, you'll star in an action scene for a crazed Hong Kong director. Expect to be forced across collapsing bridges, pits of doom, uprooted floors – all the while battling the minions of ninja hell.

This is (clearly enough) where the fighting aspect of the game is supposed to take hold. Unfortunately, the combo system is designed for a button-mashing extravaganza – and combos of X-X-X just don't cut it today.

Sprinkled between the combat levels are party offerings that include Save the Stuntmen (sort of Kaboom-esque), traditional duck-and-jump timing tests, and a lovely rendition of "Chuck the Princess at the Bad Guys Until They Die."

The good news for everyone is that the graphics are nice, the voice-overs are funny while not annoying, and the fun factor is certainly above that of Fusion Frenzy. For a party game, this is simple and fun. As a fighting game, though, it is pitiful and somewhat painful.

Microsoft's Kung Fu Chaos can be compared to a classic '70s detective flick – *Shaft*. John Shaft, like Kung Fu Chaos, has a self-deprecating sense of humor, inane action, witty banter, and loose kung fu skills. – **LISA**



Concept:

A big, over-the-top satire of the '70s kung fu fad

Graphics:

Tiny bodies, big heads, tons of people on-screen, and enough polygons left over to make some cone hats

Sound:

Even if the song isn't playing, I still hear Carl Douglas' classic, "Kung Fu Fighting." Very unfortunate

Playability:

Sloppy combos and manic action produce serious button crunching during the fighting levels

Entertainment:

Party game or fighting game? I'm leaning heavily toward party, because it's good at that

Replay Value:

High

SECOND OPINION

Mediocre fighting game plus an unoriginal making-a-movie-by-playing-a-game concept equals yet another stinker from the crew at Microsoft. I will admit that the gameplay engine behind Kung Fu Chaos isn't all bad news, but I just don't see who this game is marketed towards. Fighting fans will scoff at its lack of depth, and people that actually might find its movie concept funny aren't old enough to read the instruction manual.

ANDY – 5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** MICROSOFT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25



XBOX

MURAKUMO

ARMORED CORE, IT ISN'T

Hands down, From Software makes the deepest, most involving mech title for PS2. Ever since Armored Core released on PSone, the series has defined what other mech titles hope to achieve. Unfortunately, From's Murakumo is surprisingly boring.

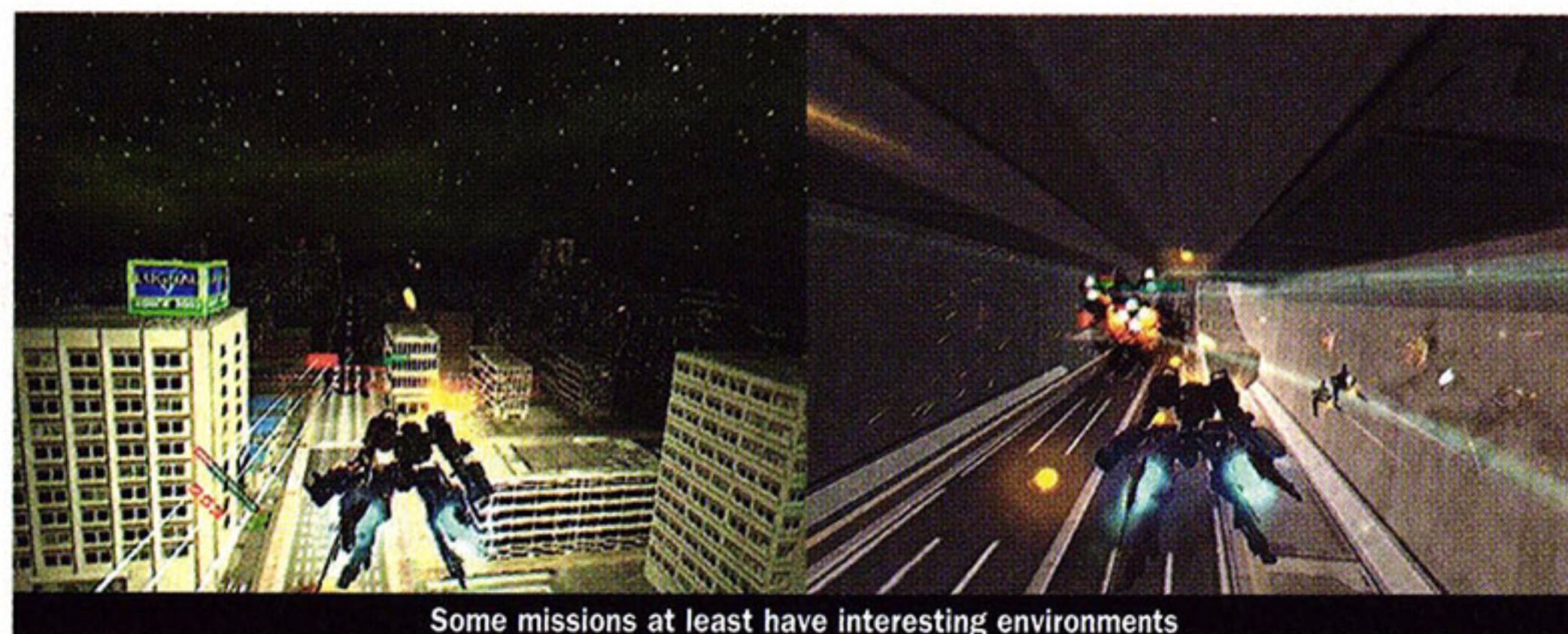
Murakumo's plight is the result of shallow and uninspired game design. Nearly every level places you in one of a few assorted mechs chasing an enemy robot. If you accomplish the task in the allotted time and avoid death, you win. Fun!? It gets worse. Since the computer usually aims for you, players really take charge of just one gameplay mechanic: the pursuit. Needless to say, the repetition lulled me into a mindless daze after the third mission.

Furthermore, mech fans will certainly be disappointed from the lack of elements typical of mech titles. In fact, with hardly any elaborate weapons or parts, and no customization, its appearance is the only component defining Murakumo as a mech game.

On a more positive note, the simplistic, fast-paced action and interface make it easy for anyone to sit down and immediately play. Plus, most will initially find it exciting to zip in between buildings at breakneck speeds. However, these two positives don't compensate for the game's fundamentally flawed design. – **CHET**



After completing a mission, you can watch a fun replay



Some missions at least have interesting environments

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** FROM SOFTWARE
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

5.75

Concept:

A very basic mech shooter that has gameplay similar to old Sega CD titles like Sewer Shark

Graphics:

The character models are okay and the large city environments look decent, but you never really get to explore them

Sound:

Strange electric guitar on the menu screen is annoying, and the rest of the sound is boring

Playability:

Fine control, but the city levels are almost too fast, sometimes making maneuvering tough

Entertainment:

A fast-paced mech shooter is a cool idea, but nearly every level is exactly the same: Chase the enemy and shoot it down

Replay Value:

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Murakumo's gameplay design is definitely different, but seeing that I grew bored of it after an hour, I'd have to say it's an experiment gone awry. If you can picture a video game adaptation of *The Return of the Jedi's* speeder bike chase, you have a good idea as to how the action in Murakumo unfolds. It's basically a high-speed chase through sprawling metropolitan high-rises. The goal of the game is to pursue and destroy rival mechs. Of course, your adversaries will do anything and everything in their power to shake you. They'll zoom between narrow gaps, blast through skyscraper windows, and even collapse bridges onto you. It sounds exciting, but it's actually anything but. In fact, I'll go as far as to say that Murakumo brings about not-so-fond memories of the Sega CD's FMV games. Turn left. Dodge the building. Turn right. Duck below the pass. Fire!

REINER – 5.5

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03/03



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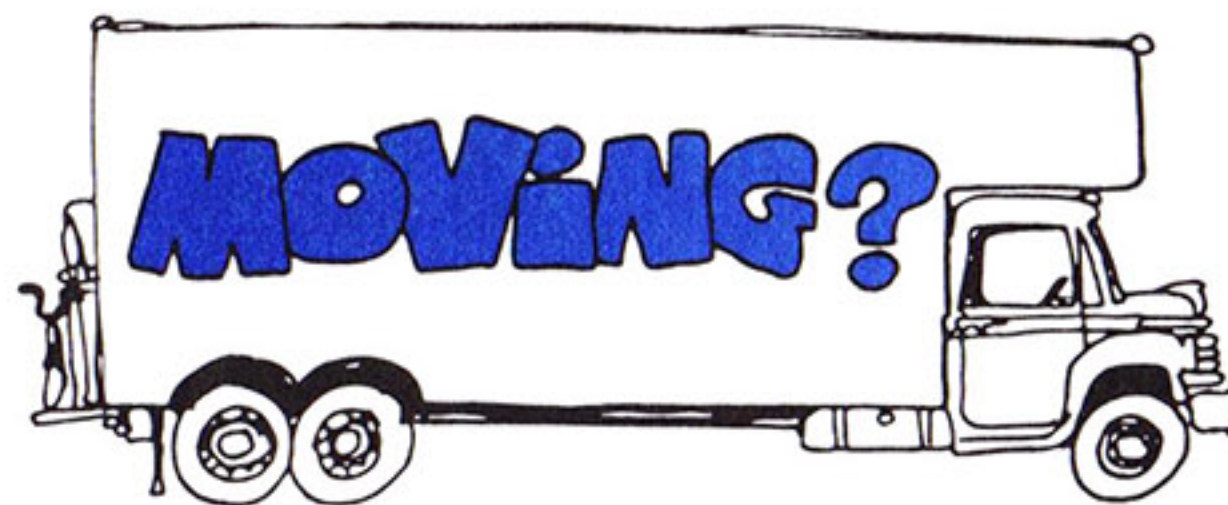
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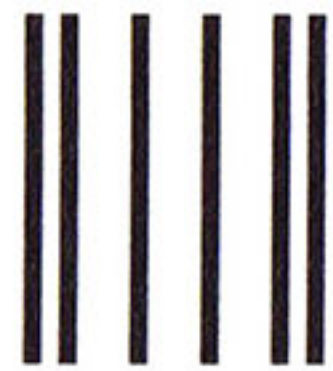
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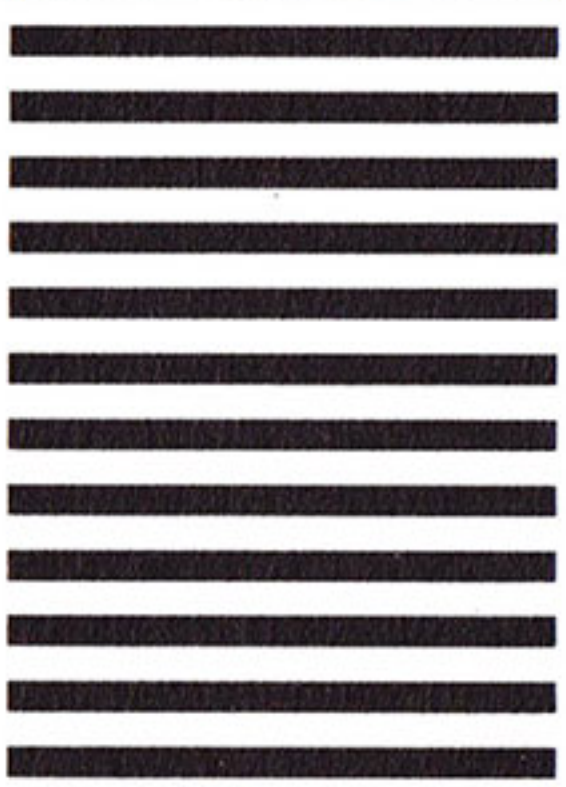
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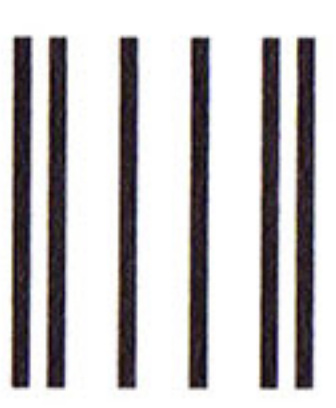


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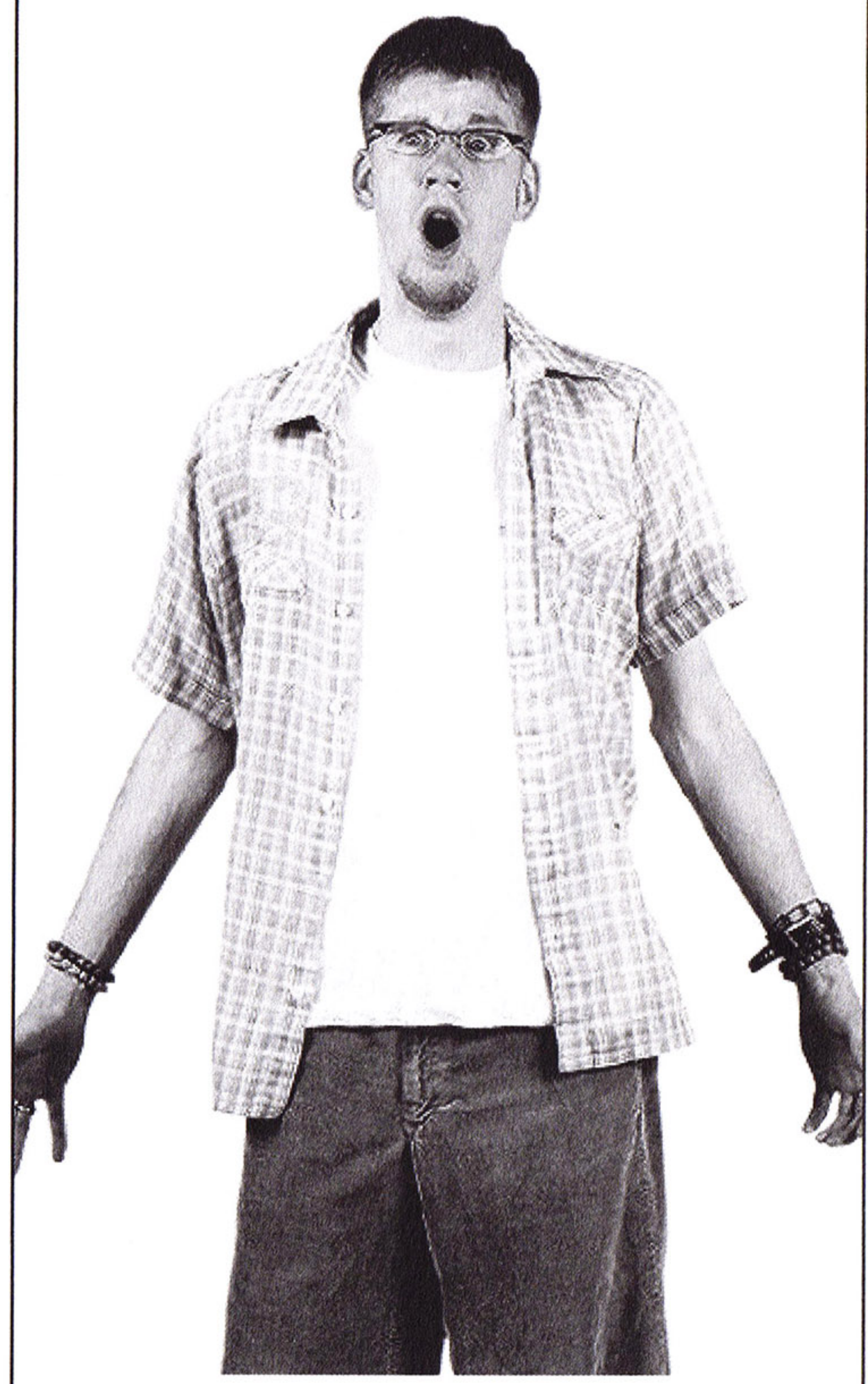
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"What nerd wouldn't want to have a girlfriend, a house, a job, roommates, talent, and a fistful of money?"

PC

THE SIMS ONLINE

CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

The numbers aren't in yet and won't be for some time, but it's painfully obvious that this game is going to live up to the expectations of its fans and the press. That means that not only will it make Will Wright umpteen millions of dollars over and above what his sure-to-be-ailing bank account ("Yes, Mr. Wright? This is the bank. I'm afraid we can't fit this number of zeros into one account") is currently holding, but it will also yield some extremely bizarre real-life ramifications. I can see how it would be incredibly easy to lose one's identity while pouring untold hundreds of hours into making your ether-personality as close to perfection as possible. I mean, what nerd wouldn't want to have a girlfriend, a house, a job, roommates, talent, and a fistful of money? It's only a matter of time until someone has some type of mental breakdown over this game.

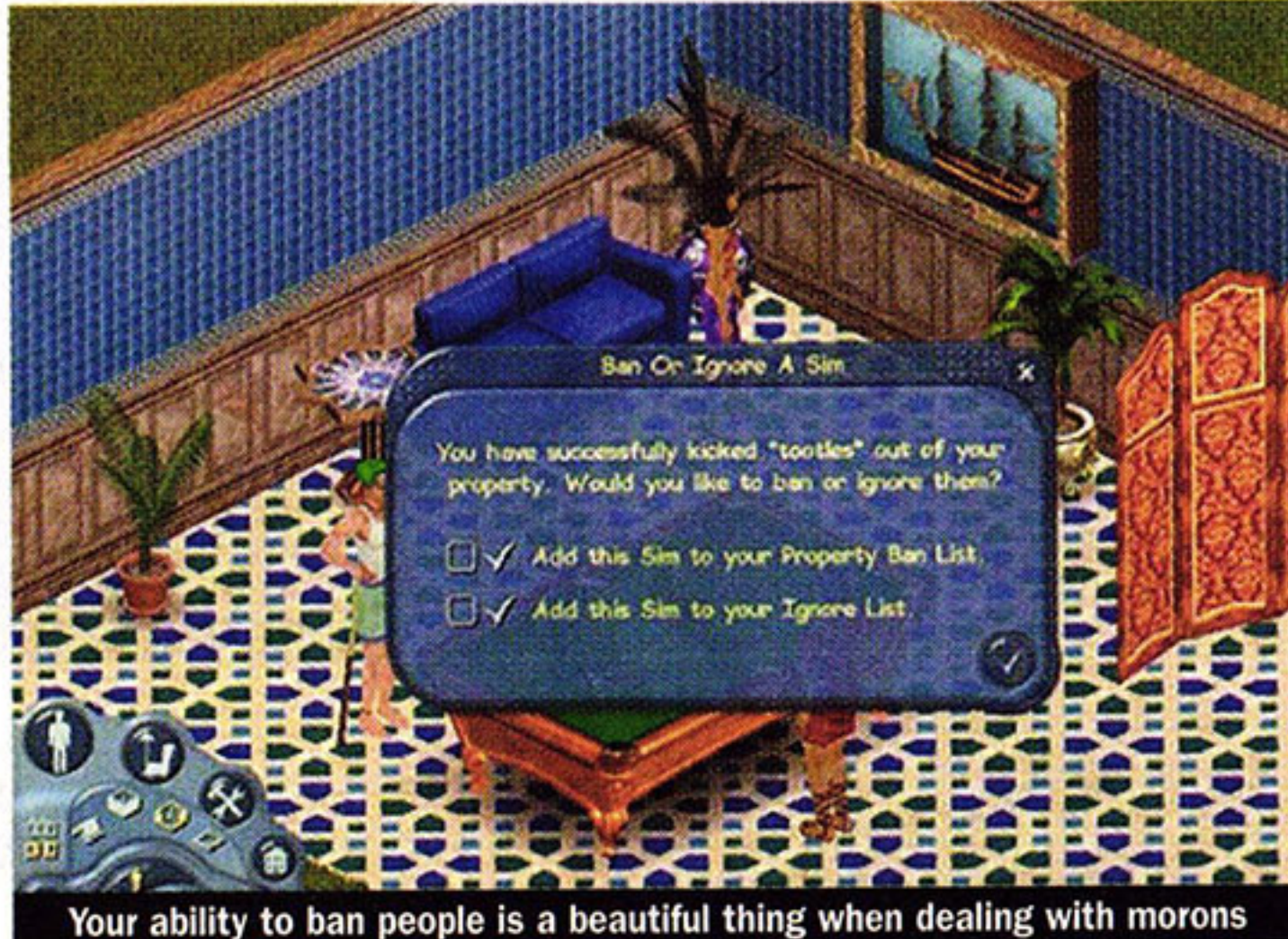
As far as gameplay itself goes, there's really nothing too noteworthy here. Everything that worked in the stand-alone titles works just as well in the online version. The menus are well implemented and suitably ergonomic, the instant messaging is easy and efficient, logging in and out is relatively painless, and the servers are (for the most part) stable and reliable. In a wonderful turn of events, that annoyingly fast time passage the offline titles suffered from is gone, so it doesn't



take you 35 minutes to walk from the den to the bathroom. In addition to improvements in the flow and functionality of the game, there's a new crop of MMO lingo popping up around some of the title's more unique premises. Most notable has been the idea of "greening up" your character; that is, raising his or her status bars (bladder, comfort, hunger, etc.) so you can enjoy more uninterrupted time doing whatever it is you want to do. And there's plenty to do. Each skill point takes a long, long time to elevate. This means you'll find yourself either watching your Sim reading a book or something of that nature for 20 minutes, or earning money in a group activity such like making pizza, formulating potions, or working out equations. While these are fun for a while, the real meat of Sims Online comes from the idea that you're able to build your own place, then open it up to the general public to earn a little scratch. The entrepreneurial spirit is amply rewarded for those with the drive and the time, but there's nothing to say that you can't be someone's roommate and have a great game by just hanging out with your friends and interacting with the other people on your server. Thus, the Sims Online has retained the je ne sais quoi that makes its brethren so fun to play. For many, having a Sim life will be easier than managing a real one. — KRISTIAN

- **Concept:** Just what everyone has always wanted: A way to live life with a do-over button
- **Graphics:** There's very little different from the Sims you know and love
- **Sound:** As with the other games of this ilk, the sound is interesting for about 15 minutes
- **Playability:** Easy to learn for beginners and a no-brainer for veterans
- **Entertainment:** Remember the millions of people who bought the other Sims titles? Well, it's still that good, if not better
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS
 ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 20



SECOND OPINION

Monitoring your virtual character's hygiene and overall well-being is still priority number one; but now that time is no longer an issue and all of the social encounters are strictly human; this game specializes in aimlessness, as opposed to the frantic challenges that made the series so intense and enjoyable. For better or worse, The Sims Online is a glorified chatroom. Almost all of your time is spent socializing and building upon the online community. In such, it's not really that much of a game anymore. Certainly, flirting with complete strangers does prove to be amusing, but I was actually looking for more of gameplay than mindless genial interaction. If most of your nights are spent in chatrooms to begin with, then by all means run out and pick up this game immediately. However, if the idea of making new friends doesn't hold much interest to you, The Sims Online is an option best left unexplored.

REINER - 7.5

REVIEWS



PC

IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES

LOOK OUT FOR THE EATBEAST!

I'm a pretty big RTS fanatic, so I usually want to like new twists on the old formula when they come out. Impossible Creatures is a great idea on paper, but it simply fizzles when the meaty portion of its plot is exposed to play. In theory, combining a number of different creatures together to make one with an amalgamation of talents is cool, but it takes a lot of different things working in conjunction for this to work throughout an entire game.

The plot doesn't help things, with a familiar 1930s anachronistic steamwork-type advanced technology that allows people to fuse different animals together, and a tired "my father's gone, I have to get him back" story progression. That, along with annoying voice audio, substandard AI, and drab environmental texturing, serves to keep Impossible Creatures from being anything other than a title with a great gameplay gimmick, but little else. Additionally, the mission structure becomes stagnant fairly early in the game as each level becomes a battle to wipe your opponent completely off the map. IC is a game for RTS beginners and bargain bin shoppers — don't be fooled by the hype. — **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
7.5

■ **Concept:**

Follow up a bad plot with a decent gameplay premise, but little else

■ **Graphics:**

Bland environments, interesting creature models, and not a whole heckuva lot else

■ **Sound:**

The scoring is quite well done, but the unit acknowledgement audio and the annoying actors grate on your nerves

■ **Playability:**

Creating new creatures is fun, but each level ends up being a battle of attrition

■ **Entertainment:**

This is a good game to buy for under twenty dollars. If you pay any more you're getting screwed

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

The catch for Impossible Creatures is supposed to be the creature creation, but I found the whole concept and execution to be unexciting at best. I do like a number of the innovations in this game's interface, but the gameplay is otherwise pretty standard fare. The story is just plain stupid. I see what the developer was trying for here, but in the end, Impossible Creatures just can't entertain like a Command & Conquer and should be avoided.

ANDY - 6

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** RELIC ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 8



PC

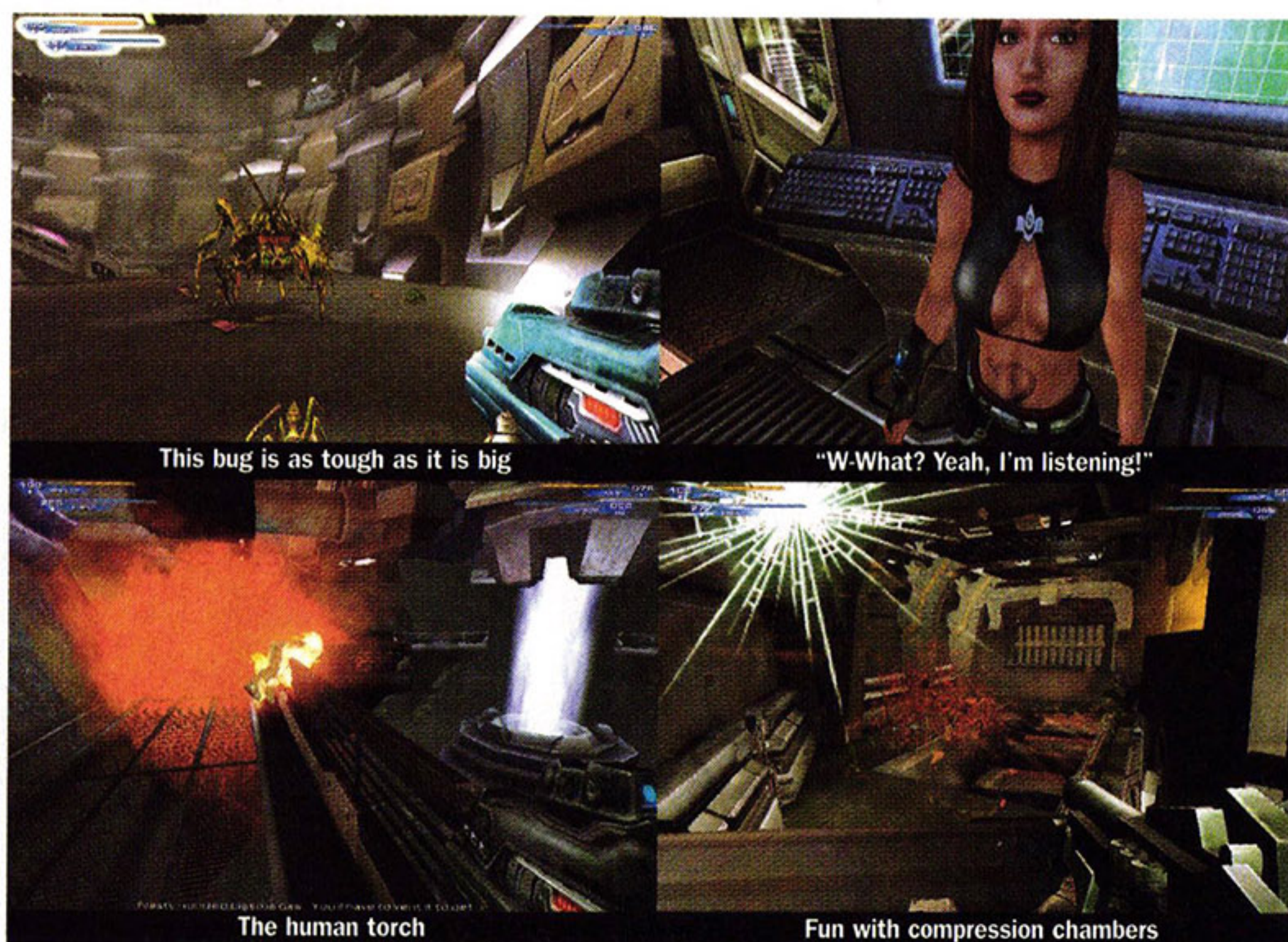
UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

A NEW AGE DAWNS

Never before have I seen this level of detail in a PC game. Unreal II blows the lid off the graphical standards we as PC gamers have set, and elevates the playing field to an unprecedented level. Everything — and I mean everything — in this game is intricately detailed and flawlessly presented. Not once did I see seams in the environments or generic-looking textures. In fact, things that I knew were textures looked to be fully rendered objects. Everything, including each model and surface, was interesting to look at, and added to my sense of involvement.

As far as straight gameplay, there are no surprises. Unreal fans who like the dodge feature have it available to them, and those of us who don't can simply turn it off in the options menu. Everything ran smoothly and the interface was ergonomic, while still having enough options to keep it functional. The story is well paced; but, more importantly, the missions are varied in nature and intensity, so you'll never know what to expect next. The AI, unfortunately, is lacking. I can understand an alien standing stock-still as I unload a clip into his belly, but elite troopers should know better.

All deficiencies aside, Unreal II sets a new benchmark for FPS quality. In the future, it will become the standard by which you measure all others. I would suggest buying it on a Friday so you don't have to skip work/school to finish it. — **KRISTIAN**



This bug is as tough as it is big

"W-What? Yeah, I'm listening!"

The human torch

Fun with compression chambers

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

9.5

■ **Concept:**

Shoot or be shot in a number of inventive scenarios and situations

■ **Graphics:**

The detail in this game is absolutely staggering. The future is now, people

■ **Sound:**

Symphonic transitions, spectacular ambient and action effects, and a scorching soundtrack lend even more depth to an already excellent title

■ **Playability:**

Mastering the secondary fire options for each weapon is a necessity

■ **Entertainment:**

I haven't had this much fun with an FPS since I played Allied Assault

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Although Unreal II took longer than expected to release, the wait was well worth it. Not only is U II one of most impressive titles in the genre, I predict that it will remain one of the most highly acclaimed PC titles of the year. The gameplay takes an action-oriented approach, using the formula from Unreal (i.e. travel through dark corridors blasting various types of enemies). Of course, players will encounter simple puzzles and collaborate with allies along the way, but the main focus throughout remains intense gun blazing destruction. My only complaints are minor. The dodge feature has been modified. Now, when players dodge, your character simply jumps — lame. And, for whatever odd reason, U II gave me motion sickness! Maybe it's me, but I find it strange that Kristian and I (two gamers who play countless FPSs) suffered from this.

CHET - 9.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



GAME BOY ADVANCE

MEGA MAN & BASS

MEGA MAN AGAIN

Mega Man turned 15 this year, and to commemorate his anniversary, Capcom will release six titles bearing the blue bot's name. The first is Mega Man & Bass – a no-nonsense, classic side-scrolling adventure.

Although it features gameplay very reminiscent of previous incarnations, the additions – special moves and a new hero, Bass – enhance the experience, adding a new flair. Bass and Mega Man differ mainly in play styles. Mega Man plays as he always has, while Bass double jumps, shoots rapidly, and runs. Since Capcom designed the levels to accommodate each unique style, there's reason enough to play through the adventure twice.

The special moves are really just different forms that feature unique moves and weapons. If you encounter a situation that you can more easily overcome in a certain form, you simply need to press a button.

In the end, Mega Man & Bass offers everything a solid action title needs. Unless you're burnt out on Mega, you can't go wrong. – **CHET**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18

SECOND OPINION

Think how far Mario has come since Super Mario Bros. Now, ponder the evolution of Mega Man. Kind of sad, huh? This looks good and has the trademark Mega Man action, but I don't see much difference between this one and the dozens before it.

JUSTIN – 7.5

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
8

- **Concept:** Classic Mega Man action that features a new playable character
- **Graphics:** The graphics are nice and colorful. They're nothing special, but good for GBA
- **Sound:** While not bad, the sound is probably the game's biggest weakness
- **Playability:** The control is great, and the interface is suitable for GBA
- **Entertainment:** This is a great 2D action game in the same vein as past titles with a few new additions, including Bass
- **Replay Value:** Moderate



GAME BOY ADVANCE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

A BASTARD SWORD

Eye of the Beholder works relatively well. After all, D&D's dice rolling is replicated by the Game Boy Advance through formulas. This game even features the 3rd Edition rules. Unfortunately, it fails because it simply doesn't offer anything that's more alluring than sitting down with some actual friends and spinning yarns long into the night.

You move about dungeons in the first-person, but the animations are jerky as they plod along frame-by-frame. Furthermore, like in real D&D, the game's learning curve for low-level characters is a very steep one. That's fine, but with Beholder's no-frills (and I'm not exaggerating) isometric combat, there's little here that really screams out for attention. I think Pronto should have gone for something a little more on the Baldur's Gate side of things rather than this stale RPG. For those of you out there who can lay claim to owning a "favorite" 20-sided die, I suggest you use it instead of playing this game. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

If you've ever made the mistake of walking in on your parents doing that one thing that you never wanted to see, you are, in a roundabout way, in tune with the emotional despair that oozes from this game. It's so bad, in fact, that I now have a vague understanding as to what it will be like to play video games in hell.

REINER – 1

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
5.5

- **Concept:** Take the 3rd Edition D&D rulebook and mix it with both first-person movement and isometric combat
- **Graphics:** The animations for the first-person dungeon crawling don't even scroll
- **Sound:** So minimalist, even Philip Glass would get bored
- **Playability:** Check the map and check it often
- **Entertainment:** Why not just play the real thing?
- **Replay Value:** Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** PRONTO GAMES ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 30, 2002



GAME BOY ADVANCE

DAREDEVIL JUSTICE IS BLIND

There's nothing inherently wrong with this game, per se; but then again, it doesn't really do anything extraordinary, either. Developer Griptonite Games created a beautiful world that unfolds like a living comic book, but neglected to fashion a suitable gameplay package for Marvel's man without fear. Daredevil proves to be skilled at the art of punching and kicking, but that's about the extent of his combat prowess. From level to level, the only functionality available to players is to run up to an adversary and jam on the punch button. This action is executed quite well, but as you can probably imagine, applying the fist to the face grows tiresome rather quickly.

The only gameplay element that ties into Daredevil's unique powers is the ability to hone in on power-ups. By pressing the L trigger, Daredevil's senses are heightened, and an invisible power-up will suddenly appear out of thin air. It's a worthless play mechanic and a pathetic way of depicting Daredevil's deftness.

As a whole, this side-scrolling button masher's personality is as dry as Ben Affleck's and the gameplay sucks about as much as J-Lo (take that however you see fit). Simply said, turn a blind eye on this one. – **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
5

- **Concept:** The handheld adaptation of the feature film stylized as yet another nauseating side-scrolling brawler
- **Graphics:** The true essence of comic books is vibrantly displayed through word balloons and onomatopoeia. The animations are also quite smooth
- **Sound:** Daredevil may be blind, but if he had to listen to this soundtrack, he'd wish he was deaf
- **Playability:** Nonstop punching and kicking, and the occasional jump
- **Entertainment:** The repetitive action is only tolerable for a few stages
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Daredevil is not only sightless, apparently he's blind to the laws of good gameplay and level design as well. This weak brawler reminds me of the justly-forgotten NES relic Bad Dudes, and offers the same amount of depth and solid control – that is to say, almost none. Aside from the somewhat unique levels in which you platform on moving vehicles, there is really nothing to see here, folks.

MATT – 4

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ENCORE
 ■ **DEVELOPER** GRIPTONITE GAMES ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



GAME BOY ADVANCE

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC

THANK GOD FOR CONTINUES

While not breaking epic new ground, can you really blame Rayman for sticking with what generally works really well?

Gladly, this Hoodlum Havoc adventure maintains the graphical prowess shown in earlier Rayman GBA games and may even raise the bar a bit. Four layers of action in nearly every setting (background, platforms, characters, and random debris like leaves) make the whole game feel a lot more lush than your average handheld fare.

The oft-mentioned lack of appendages possessed by our dearest Rayman allows Ubi Soft to play with special moves, abilities, and power-ups. This double-edged sword of variety means that Rayman as a character is constantly evolving.

But, with only a few buttons on the GBA, it also means that you must button-crunch to get everything done. Jump off a platform, hover, punch, and hope that you hit the loop that lets you swing. With this many demands, lots of people will repeat many levels; and, as a result, shelve the game before they get anywhere. Bummer.

Although I'm loath to chastise a game for being challenging, everyone that plays it should be prepared to repeat levels. Do it and you will be rewarded with beautiful graphics, great sound, and smart level design. — LISA

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
CONTINUE RATED BY
ESRB

8

- Concept:**
Find your friend that just isn't quite right after an unfortunate dining choice. Do so by swinging yourself and your dukes
- Graphics:**
Hoodlum Havoc will make you weep with joy. The graphics are pretty detailed and nicely animated
- Sound:**
The GBA can make sweet, sweet music!
- Playability:**
The usual horn o' plenty that is Rayman's skills floweth over. This feature is both good and slightly painful
- Entertainment:**
Sometimes pure fun, sometimes pure aggravation via repetition
- Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Ubi Soft has always delivered a high level of quality with its Rayman handheld titles, and Rayman 3 is no different. Not many companies, other than Nintendo, put much effort into making GBA games look this good. Ubi obviously loves the weird little guy and has crafted another challenging, traditional 2D platformer to bear his name. Be sure to check out the cool Mode 7 effects during the water-skiing levels.

MATT — 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 3

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26, 2002



Judas Priest, Barbara, it's one of Acclaim's flaming bags again! I was seriously unaware a wrestling game could be this bad, and I've seen some stinkers. It's virtually unplayable, as you can barely ever grapple or strike your opponent. The "action" is in a permanent state of slo-mo, and yet it still has abysmal graphics. Bret Hart looks like a woman, and everyone else resembles action figures that have been melted beyond recognition in the microwave. Avoid this like a used King Kong Bundy jockstrap. — JUSTIN

E .75

WWE ROAD TO WRESTLEMANIA X8

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 23, 2002



I guess after reviewing Legends II (see above), I've lowered my expectations. Road to WrestleMania X8 plays and looks acceptable. The 15 Superstars have some nice moves, and matches keep up a decent pace. The Shopzone item unlocker is one of the weirdest, most self-serving things I've ever seen. This game is simplistic and primitive, but for the most part it works, and there are enough modes to give you a few hours of WWE entertainment. — JUSTIN

E 7

GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 21



Flat out, this version of Gauntlet Dark Legacy on Game Boy Advance is awful. Actually, it's beyond awful. The graphics are horrendous, and the gameplay is so painfully slow that I contemplated defenestrating this cartridge from the fourth story window of our building in hopes that I would never have to see it again. I can't believe Midway published this stinker and let it put a black eye on a series, that as a whole, is usually quite good. — ANDY

T 1.5

FIRE PRO WRESTLING 2

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** BAM ENTERTAINMENT
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30, 2002

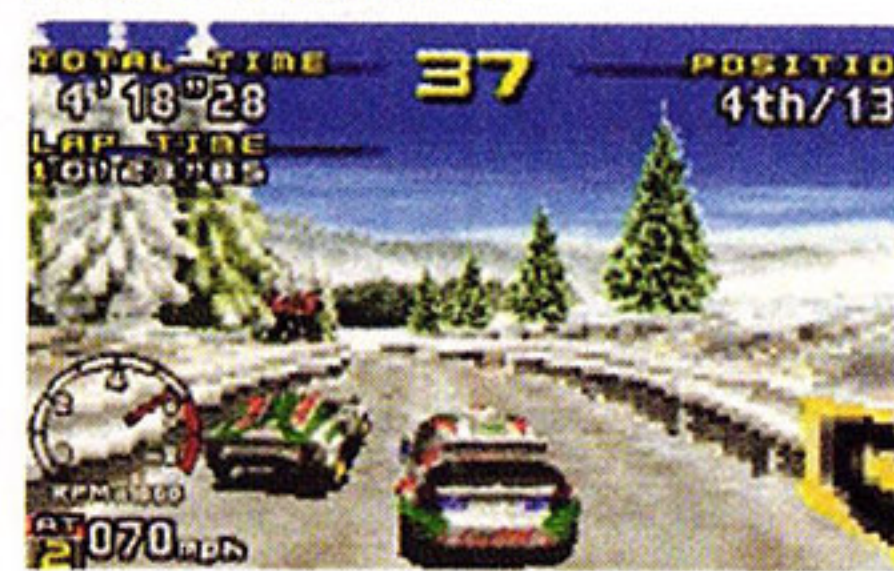


Fire Pro 2 is so high above the competition it's not even funny. Its depth is incredible, and the Practice Dojo gets you quickly up to speed with the intimidating but intuitive engine. At first, I thought only getting a handful of wrestlers to start with was cheap, but having to unlock the others gives them more value. Plus, crafting your own grappler is an amazing experience. This is my favorite wrestling game on the U.S. market right now. I want to see a next-gen Fire Pro soon! — JUSTIN

T 9

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11



Don't judge this book by its cover. The Sega Rally name is respected, but I can't say that I feel the same way about this particular title. Not only does its gameplay come nowhere near replicating the physics and control of rally racing, but it also looks like a chunky ass. If this game was a person, I'd say it has a face made for radio. I can appreciate trying to do full 3D on the GBA, but Rally's got more pixelation, pop-up, and collision issues than water's got wet. The only two redeeming things about it are that you get a good sensation of speed, and your co-pilot shouts out the turns ahead. — KATO

E 5

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 3

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26



If you're looking for a handheld extreme sports game, look no further than Dave Mirra 3. It's really the complete package, incorporating most of the career mode elements that are common in the home console versions of Mirra and Tony Hawk. The Proquest mode is long and deep, and even has a rudimentary Create a Rider feature. Also, check out the soundtrack! That's right — those are the real licensed tracks by usual suspects like Green Day, Saliva, and New Found Glory. The trick system is expansive as well. On the downside, I'm really tiring of the isometric view these games are forced to use, as it just doesn't lend itself to combining long strings of tricks or grinds. Still, this is the best you'll see in this generation of handheld hardware. — MATT

E 8.25

GT ADVANCE 3: PRO CONCEPT RACING

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



GT Advance 3 is trying to be the Gran Turismo of the Game Boy Advance, and with its unlockable cars, licenses, upgrades, and numerous tracks, it is. Of course, cars are much more sexy on the PS2 than through Mode 7 racing, so what's left is a very straightforward title that bowls you over more with its sheer numbers rather than its flash. This game drives more like a rally title, but I can kind of appreciate that the physics are this loose, because the developer makes players conscious of the racing subtleties of the gas and brake. GT Advance 3 is good for a rainy afternoon for the must-complete-everything crowd. — KATO

E 7.25

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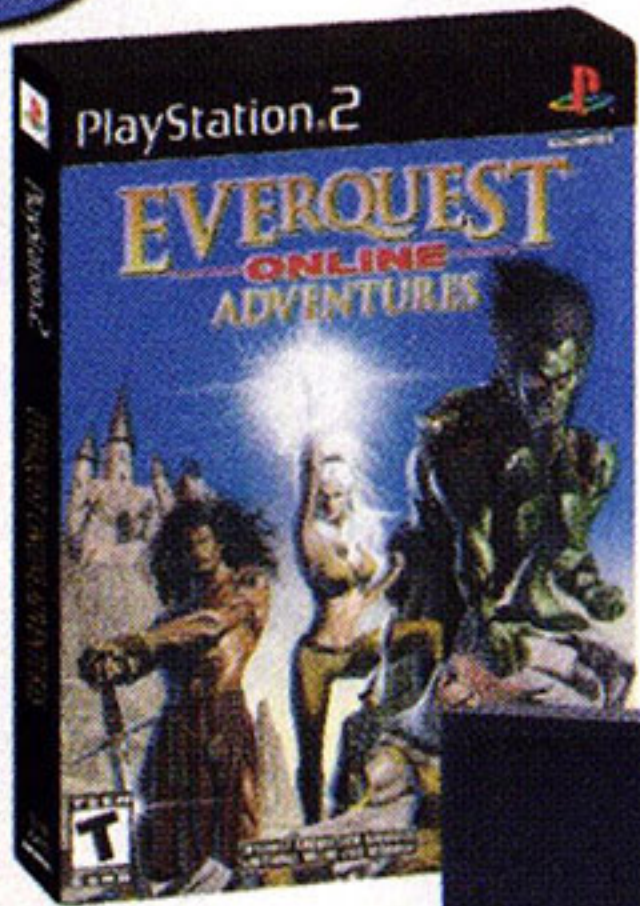
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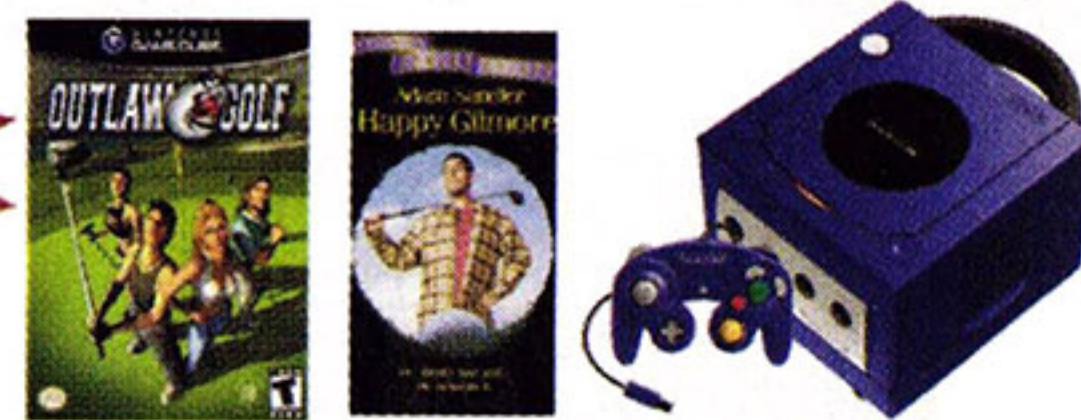
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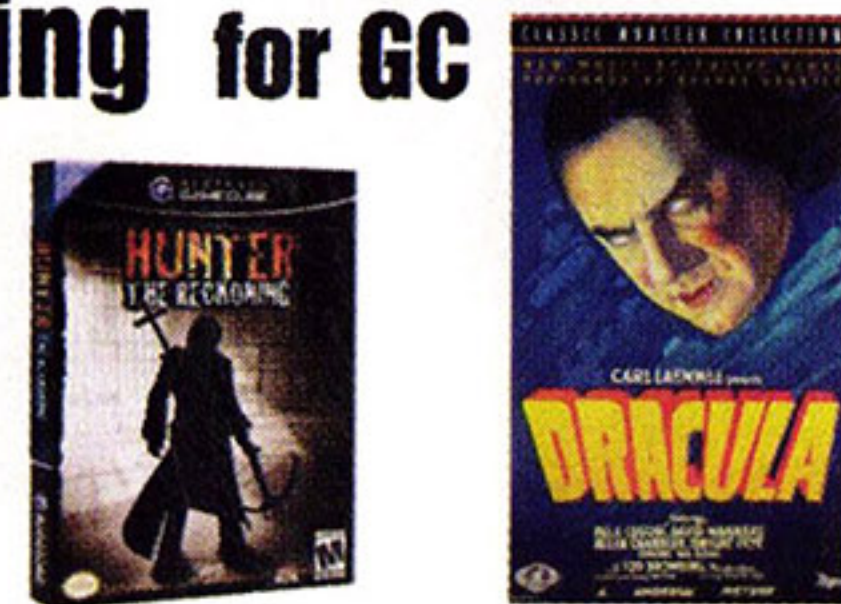


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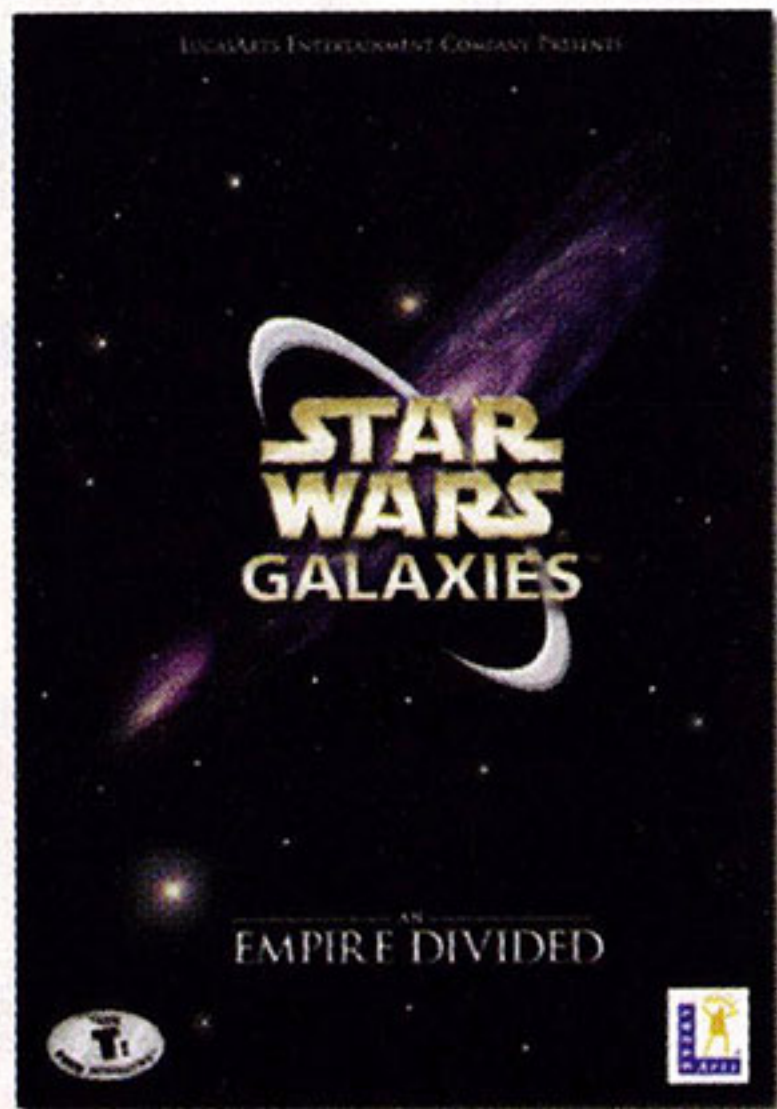
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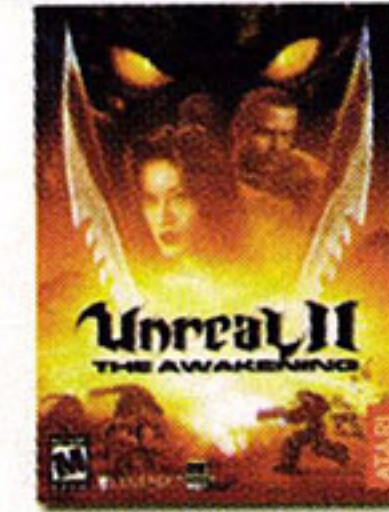


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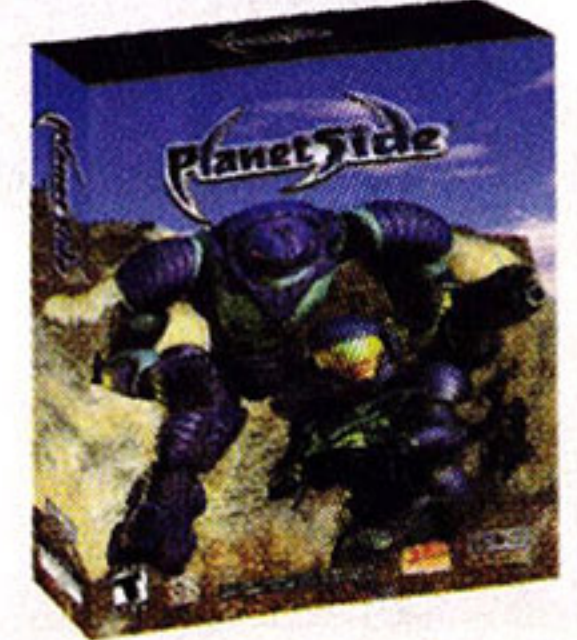


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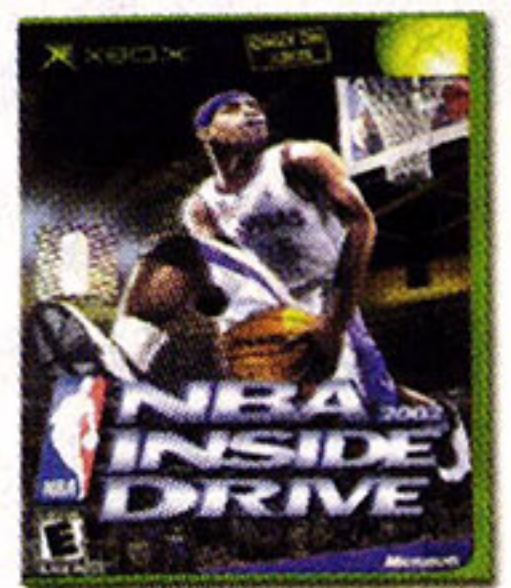


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CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For November 2002 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2	10	Oct-02	\$48

Ray Liotta has had many roles in his illustrious Hollywood career: *Field of Dreams*' Shoeless Joe Jackson, *Goodfellas*' Henry Hill, and the guy who eats his own brain in *Hannibal*. They all pale in comparison to his portrayal of crime-boss-in-training Tommy Versetti in this game, though. It's the only character of his that caused us to FedEx him our underclothes.

2	N/A	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	PS2	7.25	Dec-02	\$50
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DBZ fans have spoken, and they said, quite loudly, "We want anything bearing the likenesses of our favorite anime brawlers! Oh, and some Purplesaurus Rex Kool-Aid." Infogrames, always up for giving the people what they want, gave them Budokai. It looks good, provides some thrills, and has a guy whose eyes are the same color as his skin. What more could you ask for? Oh yeah, the Kool-Aid!

3	6	Madden NFL 2003	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$48
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As usual, Super Bowl XXXVII was a lopsided affair saved by the commercials. We sat through the Osbournes turned into Osmonds and Willie Nelson hired H&R Block – all to see the Game Informer commercial. But it never came on! It was great too, with an expensive CG render of Reiner's goatee, Matt outbenching Magnus Ver Magnusson, and the skeleton of TV's Mr. Ed! Maybe next year...

4	7	Splinter Cell	Xbox	8.75	Nov-02	\$48
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Ever since we first heard of this great game, one question has been on our minds: What the hell is a Splinter Cell? Does it mean Sam Fischer gets under the nail of the enemy, like a microscopic flint of tinder? Does it mean he can contort his body to fit into tiny enclosures, or "cells?" Eh, who cares? A bad spy with glowing green goggles by any other name would still kick as much ass.

5	8	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	PS2	9.25	Oct-02	\$50
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A midget, a dirtbag, and a pretty boy walk into a bar. The midget, carrying a big axe, orders a shot of Goldschlager. The dirtbag, carrying a large sword, orders a shot of Jagermeister. When he gets to the pretty boy with the pointy ears, the bartender asks, "Would you like a shot, too?" The pretty boy says "Sure," pulls out a bow and arrow, and caps the bartender right between the eyes. That really happened.

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	N/A	Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	GBA	9.25	Dec-02	\$27
7	5	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Eternal Dualist Story	GBA	N/A	Oct-02	\$29
8	19	James Bond 007: NightFire	PS2	7.75	Nov-02	\$49
9	4	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	PS2	9.25	Oct-02	\$47
10	9	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	PS2	9.5	Nov-02	\$49
11	12	Kingdom Hearts	PS2	9.5	Sep-02	\$49
12	17	ATV Offroad Fury 2	PS2	9	Nov-02	\$40
13	3	WWE SmackDown: Shut Your Mouth	PS2	7.5	Oct-02	\$49
14	2	Metroid Prime	GC	9.5	Nov-02	\$49
15	10	Metroid Fusion	GBA	10	Nov-02	\$29
16	11	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	GBA	N/A	Nov-02	\$32
17	N/A	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-02	\$20
18	N/A	SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$60
19	18	NBA Live 2003	PS2	8.75	Oct-02	\$49
20	13	Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	GBA	8.75	Sep-02	\$27

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	2	Pokémon Sapphire	GBA
2	N/A	Pokémon Ruby	GBA
3	N/A	Kingdom Hearts: Final Mix	PS2
4	8	Mario Party 4	GC
5	N/A	Ratchet & Clank	PS2
6	N/A	Unlimited Saga	PS2
7	N/A	The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	GC
8	N/A	Momo Taro Train 11	PS2
9	N/A	Kirby's Nightmare in Dreamland Deluxe	GBA
10	N/A	World Soccer Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution	PS2



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Xenosaga Episode 1	PS2
2	6	The Sims	PS2
3	2	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2
4	1	The Getaway	PS2
5	3	Metroid Prime	GC
6	N/A	Dark Cloud 2	PS2
7	8	Splinter Cell	Xbox
8	N/A	Everblue 2	PS2
9	7	Animal Crossing	GC
10	9	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	PS2



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	3	The Sims Deluxe	Sep-02	\$41
2	1	The Sims: Unleashed	Sep-02	\$27
3	2	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Nov-02	\$29
4	4	RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Oct-02	\$28
5	7	Zoo Tycoon	Oct-01	\$28
6	5	Backyard Hockey	Sep-02	\$18
7	6	Age of Mythology	Nov-02	\$43
8	9	The Sims: Vacation	Mar-02	\$28
9	10	Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania	Oct-02	\$28
10	N/A	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	Jul-02	\$42



ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

■ **FORMAT** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TDK MEDIACTIVE ■ **REVIEWED** NOV-02



We all laugh at the wild philosophical ramblings of Konami's Hideo Kojima, but that's what's missing from this title. Robotech, like a lot of anime projects turned video games, hits the high points (like navigating through dense cityscapes in Guardian mode while alternately blasting enemies and buildings into dust), but leaves out some of the larger messages that take the show beyond the realm of cartoon robots. While this game's presentation helps imbue the feeling of the anime itself, I'd like sequels to more fully use the Robotech property. Battlecry gives you some blistering combat, but the franchise could truly explode if it tapped into the series' rich subtleties. — **KATO**



PLAYSTATION 2

Aggressive Inline	9.25	Jul-02
Armored Core 3	8	Sep-02
ATV Offroad Fury 2	9	Jan-03
Barbarian	6	Aug-02
Battle Engine Aquila	7	Feb-03
Blade II	6	Nov-02
BloodRayne	8	Nov-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Britney's Dance Beat	7.75	Jul-02
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	8	Nov-02
Contra: Shattered Soldier	8.25	Dec-02
DDR Max	7.5	Dec-02
Dead to Rights	9.25	Jan-03
Defender	7.75	Nov-02
Dino Stalker	7.25	Oct-02
Disney Golf	7.75	Oct-02
Downforce	7	Jul-02
Dr. Muto	7.75	Dec-02
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	7.25	Jan-03
Drome Racers	7	Jan-03
Dropship: United Peace Force	7.5	Aug-02
Dual Hearts	8.5	Oct-02
Dynasty Tactics	8	Nov-02
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	6.75	Jan-03
Endgame	8.5	Jul-02
EverQuest: Online Adventures	9	Feb-03
Evolution Skateboarding	5	Dec-02
F1 2002	8	Aug-02
Ferrari F355 Challenge	7	Nov-02
FIFA 2003	8	Dec-02
Fighter Maker 2	6.5	Feb-03
Fireblade	7.5	Jul-02
Freestyle	8.5	Jul-02
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	7.75	Jun-02
Getaway, The	9	Feb-03
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	10	Dec-02
Grandia Xtreme	7.5	Nov-02
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	2	Sep-02
GTC Africa	6.5	Sep-02
Gungrave	7	Oct-02
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	6	Jan-03
Haven: Call of the King	8.25	Jan-03
Headhunter	8	Jun-02
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	6	Feb-03
Island Extreme Stunts	6	Feb-03
James Bond 007: NightFire	7.75	Jan-03
James Cameron's Dark Angel	5.25	Jan-03
Jet X20	7.5	Dec-02
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	7	Oct-02
Kingdom Hearts	9.5	Oct-02
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	7.5	Oct-02
Legends of Wrestling II	7	Feb-03
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	5	Jul-02
Lego Soccer Mania	7	Sep-02
Lethal Skies	6	Jul-02
Looney Tunes Space Race	7	Aug-02
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The	3	Dec-02
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	9.25	Dec-02
Madden NFL 2003	9.5	Sep-02
Mark of Kri, The	9	Aug-02
Marvel Vs. Capcom 2	8.5	Dec-02
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	7.25	Sep-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	9	Jun-02
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	7.5	Sep-02
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	6.75	Jul-02
Minority Report: Everybody Runs	6.75	Feb-03
MLB Slugfest 2003	7.75	Aug-02
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation Vs. Zeon	8	Oct-02
Monster Jam: Maximum Destruction	6.5	Sep-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9.5	Jan-03
MX Superfly	7.25	Aug-02
Myst III: Exile	7.5	Oct-02

NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	8.75	Nov-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Oct-02
NBA 2K3	9.25	Nov-02
NBA Live 2003	8.75	Nov-02
NBA Shootout 2003	6.75	Nov-02
NBA Starting Five	6.25	Dec-02
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	5.75	Jan-03
NCAA Final Four	1.25	Jan-03
NCAA March Madness 2003	8	Jan-03
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	8.75	Oct-02
NFL 2K3	9.5	Sep-02
NFL Blitz 2003	5.25	Oct-02
NFL GameDay 2003	7.5	Sep-02
NHL 2003	7.75	Nov-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Ninja Assault	6.25	Feb-03
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	8.75	Sep-02
Pac-Man Fever	7.5	Aug-02
Pride FC	8	Feb-03
Pro Race Driver	9.25	Nov-02
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	8	Dec-02
Ratchet & Clank	8.75	Dec-02
Rayman Arena	6.5	Nov-02
Red Faction II	8.75	Dec-02
Reign of Fire	6.25	Dec-02
Robotic Alchemic Drive	7.75	Dec-02
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	7	Aug-02
Run Like Hell	8	Nov-02
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	9	Dec-02
Savage Skies	5.5	Jun-02
Scooby Doo: Night of 100 Frights	6.5	Aug-02
Shifters	6.75	Jul-02
Shinobi	8	Dec-02
Shox	7.25	Nov-02
Silent Scope 3	7.75	Nov-02
Simons Skateboarding	1	Dec-02
Sims, The	9	Feb-03
Sky Gunner	6.5	Jul-02
Sly Cooper and the Thieves' Raccoonus	9.25	Nov-02
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	9.5	Sep-02
Spider-Man	7.75	Jun-02
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	5.75	Jan-03
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	7.75	Feb-03
Stitch: Experiment 626	6	Aug-02
Street Hoops	5.5	Sep-02
Stuntman	9.25	Jul-02
Sub Rebellion	7.5	Jan-03
Suikoden III	9.5	Dec-02
Summoner 2	9	Nov-02
Super Bust-A-Move 2	7.5	Dec-02
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	7	Nov-02
Tekken 4	9	Oct-02
Tennis 2K2	9.25	Sep-02
Terminator: Dawn of Fate, The	6	Oct-02
Test Drive	8.5	Jul-02
Thing, The	8.25	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.25	Dec-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9.25	Dec-02
Treasure Planet	7.75	Jan-03
Tribes: Aerial Assault	8	Nov-02
Turok: Evolution	7.5	Oct-02
Twisted Metal: Black Online	8.75	Sep-02
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	7.75	Nov-02
UFC Throwdown	8.25	Jun-02
V-Rally 3	8.75	Jan-03
War of the Monsters	6	Feb-03
Way of the Samurai	7.5	Jul-02
Wild Arms 3	7.75	Nov-02
Wipeout Fusion	6.5	Jun-02
World Rally Championship	7.5	Jun-02
World Tour Soccer 2003	8.5	Feb-03
Wreckless	7.75	Dec-02
WTA Tour Tennis	5	Jun-02
WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth	7.5	Dec-02
X-Men Next Dimension	7.75	Dec-02

GAMECUBE

4X4 Evo 2	8	Oct-02
Aggressive Inline	8.75	Sep-02
Animal Crossing	9.5	Oct-02
Beach Spikers	5	Sep-02
Big Air Freestyle	6	Nov-02
Blood Omen 2	7.5	Jan-03
BloodRayne	7	Dec-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Feb-03
Bomberman Generations	8	Aug-02
Burnout	7.75	Jun-02
Capcom Vs. SNK 2 EO	7.5	Nov-02
Cubivore	7.5	Nov-02
Darkened Skye	6.75	Dec-02
Dead to Rights	8.75	Jan-03
Die Hard: Vendetta	6	Jan-03
Disney Sports Soccer	8	Feb-03
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7	Jun-02
Dr. Muto	7	Feb-03
Dragon's Lair 3D	7.75	Feb-03
Egg Mania	7.75	Nov-02
ESPN MLS Extratime 2002	7.25	Jun-02
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	9.5	Aug-02
Evolution Worlds	7	Dec-02
FIFA 2003	8	Jan-03
Freestyle	8.75	Sep-02
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	8	Nov-02
James Bond 007: NightFire	8	Jan-03
Knockout Kings 2003	7.5	Nov-02
Legends of Wrestling	7	Aug-02
Legends of Wrestling II	6.75	Feb-03
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	9.25	Jan-03
Lost Kingdoms	8	Jul-02
Madden NFL 2003	9.25	Sep-02
Mario Party 4	3	Dec-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	8.75	Dec-02
Metroid Prime	9.5	Jan-03
Minority Report: Everybody Runs	6.75	Feb-03
Monsters, Inc. Scream Arena	5	Dec-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9	Jan-03
MX Superfly	7	Sep-02
Mystic Heroes	7.75	Oct-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Oct-02
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	7.5	Nov-02
NFL 2K3	9	Sep-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Outlaw Golf	7.75	Dec-02
Pac-Man Fever	7.25	Nov-02
Phantasy Star Online Version I & II	8	Jan-03
Rayman Arena	7	Nov-02
Resident Evil	9.25	Jun-02
Resident Evil 0	9.25	Dec-02
Robotech: Battlecry	8.5	Dec-02
Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian, The	3	Oct-02
Shrek: Extra Large	3	Jan-03
Skies of Arcadia Legends	9	Feb-03
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	7.75	Sep-02
Sonic Mega Collection	8.75	Dec-02
Spider-Man	8	Jun-02
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	4.75	Jan-03
Star Fox Adventures	8.75	Nov-02
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	5	Feb-03
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	8.75	Jan-03
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	8.25	Dec-02
Super Bubble Pop	8	Feb-03
Super Mario Sunshine	9.75	Sep-02
Super Monkey Ball 2	7.75	Oct-02
Swingerz Golf	7.75	Jan-03
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	8	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.5	Dec-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9	Dec-02
Top Gun: Combat Zones	6.75	Nov-02
Turok: Evolution	7.75	Nov-02
Virtua Striker 2002	6.75	Jun-02
Whirl Tour	7.5	Nov-02

Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	7.75	Jan-03
WWE Wrestlemania X8	6.5	Aug-02
X-Men: Next Dimension	7.75	Jan-03
Zapper: One Wicked Cricket	8.75	Dec-02
Zoocube	8.75	Aug-02

XBOX

2002 FIFA World Cup	8	Jun-02
Aggressive Inline	9.25	Sep-02
Antz Extreme Racing	5.5	Dec-02
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	8.5	Dec-02
Barbarian	7.25	Nov-02
Battle Engine Aquila	7	Feb-03
Black Stone: Magic & Steel	3	Feb-03
Blade II	6	Nov-02
Blinx: Time Sweeper	7.75	Nov-02
BloodRayne	7.75	Dec-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon	1	Sep-02
Buff the Vampire Slayer	9	Oct-02
Burnout	7.75	Jun-02
Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO	8.5	Jan-03
Chase: Hollywood Stunt Driver	7	Oct-02
Colin McRae Rally 3	8.75	Dec-02
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	6	Nov-02
Conflict: Desert Storm	6	Nov-02
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller	8.5	Aug-02
Crimson Sea	7.75	Feb-03
David Beckham Soccer	5.5	Aug-02
Dead to Rights	9.25	Sep-02
Deathrow	5	Jan-03
Defender	8.25	Feb-03
Dr. Muto	8	Dec-02
Dragon's Lair 3D	7.75	Jan-03
Dynasty Warriors 3	7.25	Oct-02
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, The	7.5	Jul-02
Enclave	7.5	Aug-02
Fatal Frame	9	Jan-03
Ghost Recon	8.5	Dec-02
Gun Metal	6	Oct-02
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	8.5	Dec-02
House of the Dead III, The	6.5	Nov-02
Hunter: The Reckoning	8	Jul-02
James Bond 007: NightFire	7.75	Jan-03
Kakuto Chojin	6.25	Jan-03
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	8.5	Oct-02
Legends of Wrestling	7	Jul-02
Legends of Wrestling II	6.75	Feb-03
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	9.25	Feb-03
Madden NFL 2003	9.5	Sep-02
MechAssault	8.75	Dec-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	8.75	Dec-02
Metal Dungeon	6	Feb-03
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	9.25	Jan-03
Minority Report: Everybody Runs	6.75	Feb-03
Monopoly Party	4	Dec-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9.5	Jan-03
MotoGP	8	Jul-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Nov-02
NBA 2Night 2002	6.25	Jun-02
NBA Inside Drive 2003	7.5	Nov-02
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	8.5	Nov-02
NFL 2K3	9.5	Sep-02
NFL Fever 2003	7	Sep-02
NHL 2003	7.75	Nov-02
NHL 2K3	9.25	Dec-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Nightcaster II: Equinox	5.75	Feb-03
Outlaw Golf	7.75	Jul-02
Panzer Dragoon Orta	8.25	Jan-03
Phantom Crash	7.5	Jan-03
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	7.5	Jun-02
Prisoner of War	7	Nov-02
Pulse Racer	3	Feb-03
Quantum Redshift	6	Nov-02
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	8	Jan-03

Robotech: Battlecry	8.5	Nov-02
Rocky	7	Dec-02
Seablaed	4	Jan-03
Sega GT 2002	8.25	Oct-02
Serious Sam	9	Dec-02
Shenmue II	8	Jan-03
Shrek: Super Party	3.25	Jan-03
Soccer Slam	7.25	Sep-02
Spider-Man	8.25	Jun-02
Splashdown	9.25	Aug-02
Splinter Cell	8.75	Jan-03
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	9	Dec-02
Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter	8.5	Jun-02
Steel Battalion	9.5	Dec-02
Street Hoops	5.5	Sep-02
Superman: The Man of Steel	4.75	Jan-03
Terminator: Dawn of Fate, The	6	Oct-02
Test Drive	8.5	Jul-02
Thing, The	8.25	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.5	Dec-02
ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth	6	Nov-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9	Dec-02
Total Immersion Racing	6.5	Jan-03
Totaled	4	Jul-02
Toxic Grind	6.25	Feb-03
Transworld Snowboarding	6.5	Jan-03
Turok: Evolution	7.5	Oct-02
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	6.5	Nov-02
Unreal Championship	8.75	Jan-03

Airforce Delta Storm	6.75	Dec-02
All-Star Baseball 2003	8	Jul-02
Altered Beast: Guardian of the Realms	7.5	Feb-03
Arcade Advanced	7.5	Jun-02
Atari Anniversary Advance	7	Jun-02
ATV: Quad Power Racing	6	Dec-02
Blender Brothers	7.5	Jun-02
Bomberman Max 2: Red & Blue Advance	8	Aug-02
Britney's Dance Beat	8	Jul-02
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	9.5	Oct-02
Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX	6.75	Dec-02
Crash Bandicoot 2: N-Tranced	7.5	Jan-03
Defender	2	Feb-03
Desert Strike Advance	7.5	Jul-02
Dinotopia: The Timestone Pirates	6	Jun-02
Disney's Lilo & Stitch	8	Aug-02
Doom II	8.5	Dec-02
Driver 2 Advance	7.75	Nov-02
Duke Nukem Advance	8.5	Oct-02
Earthworm Jim 2	6.5	Sep-02
Egg Mania	8	Oct-02
Frogger: The Great Quest	5.5	Jun-02
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	7.75	Dec-02
Game & Watch: Gallery 4	3	Feb-03
Guilty Gear X: Advance Edition	8	Aug-02

SPY HUNTER

■ **FORMAT** GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **REVIEWED** JUN-02



The levels are constructed much like the home console version, requiring you to complete a handful of primary and secondary level goals in one run. Doing this isn't always easy, as the courses frequently branch into multiple paths, forcing you to use strategy as well as firepower to finish the mission. The effective control scheme equals low instances of road rage, although I did find myself cursing the fact that the turbo and gas were both mapped to the A button. That's about the worst thing I can say about this game, which is no mean feat for a GBA racer. Short but sweet; put Spy Hunter down as one of life's nice little surprises. — **MATT**

NEW RELEASES ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL YOUR LOCAL RETAILER FOR MORE DETAILS

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
PLAYSTATION 2		
3/18/03	Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega
2/28/03	All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim
3/25/03	Auto Modellista	Capcom
3/25/03	BattleBots	THQ
2/18/03	Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom
5/13/03	Celebrity Death Match	Take 2
3/4/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Chop Lifter: Search and Rescue	Xicat Interactive
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
4/22/03	Clock Tower 3	Capcom
3/18/03	Colin McRae Rally 3	Infogrames
2/18/03	Dark Cloud 2	Sony
3/18/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts
2/18/03	Disaster Report	Tommo
3/11/03	Dragon's Lair 3D	Encore

AUTO MODELLISTA

■ **FORMAT** PS2 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



This intriguing game's peculiar style can be explained, in large part, by understanding the meaning of its title. Literally translated as "Car Designer," this is a release that will push the envelope when it comes to people's perceptions of a racing game. From the pictures, you can already tell this is unlike anything you've seen before, but what you don't know is how much more lies beneath the flashy and highly stylized surface. Auto Modellista will undoubtedly be one of the most unique games to hit the PS2 racing circuit this spring, but will it have the gameplay to back up its novel look? As in all things, time will tell – but from what we've seen and heard, this title seems to be shaping up quite well.

5/13/03	Duke Nukem	Take 2
3/25/03	Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
3/17/03	Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
3/3/03	Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Titus
5/15/03	Fear Effect: Inferno	Eidos
4/21/03	Freedom: Battle for Liberty Island	Electronic Arts
5/6/03	Frogger Beyond	Konami
3/18/03	Fugitive Hunter	Infogrames
3/25/03	Gallop Racer 3	Tecco
5/15/03	Gladius	LucasArts
3/4/03	Grand Prix Challenge	Infogrames
3/18/03	Gunfighter 2: Return of Jesse James	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/25/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
3/18/03	Jane's Air Force	Xicat Interactive
4/8/03	Jo Jo's Bizarre Adventure	Capcom
3/4/03	Kengo 2	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	King of Route 66	Sega
4/15/03	Mafia	Take 2
3/4/03	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames
3/18/03	Midnight Club II	Take 2
3/11/03	MLB 2004	Sony
3/17/03	MLB Slugfest 2004	Midway
3/18/03	Moto GP 3	Namco
3/11/03	MVP Baseball 2003	Electronic Arts
3/11/03	My Street	Sony
3/4/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
3/4/03	Primal	Sony
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Red Dead Revolver	Capcom
5/6/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
3/3/03	Robocop	Titus
3/24/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
5/6/03	Silent Hill 3	Konami
5/1/03	Smash Cars	Metro3D
3/25/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Sum of All Fears	Ubi Soft
3/3/03	Tankers	Titus
3/4/03	Tenchu 3: Wrath of Heaven	Activision
4/1/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
2/17/03	Toon Shade Racing	Xicat Interactive
3/11/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
3/11/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
4/8/03	X2 Wolverine's Revenge	Activision
2/25/03	Xenosaga Episode 1	Namco
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelist of the Roses	Konami
3/11/03	Zone of the Enders: 2nd Runner	Konami

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
3/18/03	Big Strike Bowling	Take 2
3/11/03	Bratz	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22	Infogrames
4/15/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
4/1/03	1080°: White Storm	Nintendo
3/10/03	Army Men: Air Combat	3DO
3/25/03	Army Men: Sarge's War	3DO
3/18/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
3/24/03	BattleBots	THQ
4/3/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
4/8/03	Conflict: Desert Storm	Take 2
3/24/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
5/15/03	Gladius	LucasArts
4/15/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/24/03	Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, The	Nintendo
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames
3/4/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Rally Championship	Encore
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction II	THQ
3/25/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
3/24/03	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
5/27/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/3/03	Tankers	Titus
3/4/03	Top Angler II	Xicat Interactive
5/26/03	Wario World	Nintendo
3/11/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft

XBOX

2/28/03	All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim
3/18/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
4/22/03	Brute Force	Microsoft
3/4/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Colin McRae Rally 3	Infogrames
3/17/03	Dino Crisis 3	Capcom
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
3/17/03	Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
3/4/03	Fila Tennis Champions	Xicat Interactive
4/21/03	Freedom: Battle for Liberty Island	Electronic Arts
3/17/03	Fuel	Dreamcatcher
5/15/03	Gladius	LucasArts
4/15/03	Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Infogrames
2/18/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
2/18/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
2/25/03	Kung Fu Chaos	Microsoft
3/18/03	Lamborghini	Majesco
3/25/03	Loose Cannon	Ubi Soft
5/20/03	Mafia	Take 2
3/18/03	Malice	Vivendi Universal
3/11/03	Marvel Vs. Capcom 2	Capcom
3/3/03	Mercedes Benz World Racing	TDK Mediactive
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames
3/25/03	Midtown Madness 3	Microsoft
5/30/03	MLB Inside Pitch 2003	Midway
3/17/03	MLB Slugfest 2004	Midway
2/25/03	Motor Trend Lotus Challenge	Xicat Interactive
3/4/03	Murakumo: Renegade Mech Pursuit	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	MVP Baseball 2003	Electronic Arts
3/4/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
2/25/03	Phantasy Star Online	Microsoft
3/18/03	Pro Race Driver	Infogrames
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction II	THQ
5/6/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
3/26/03	Robocop	Titus
3/18/03	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Infogrames
4/8/03	Sea Dogs II	Bethesda Softworks
3/3/03	Sergeant Cruise	Titus
3/24/03	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
3/4/03	Sniper	Capcom
3/3/03	Stake	Metro3D
3/25/03	Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts
2/18/03	State of Emergency	Take 2
3/4/03	Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus	Microsoft
3/4/03	Top Angler II	Xicat Interactive
5/23/03	Unseen, The	Microsoft
3/11/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
4/15/03	X2 Wolverine's Revenge	Activision
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft

WARIO WORLD

■ **FORMAT** GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
 ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** MAY 26



Wario is getting his revenge on those who have dissed him. Come May, he'll get a brand new platformer. This time, it's on GameCube, and will get all the applicable trimmings. The graphics have the sharp, cartoony splendor of Mario Sunshine. It won't be easy for a perennial 2D game to make the transition to three dimensions, but it would be absolutely moronic to bet against a Nintendo property – especially after the string of hits it has done on GameCube. Wario is a unique character, so detestable that you can't help but laugh at him. Let's just hope this console game finally gives him the respect he deserves.

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
3/4/03	1503 A.D. The New World	Electronic Arts
5/20/03	Airline CEO	Infogrames Interactive
4/10/03	Aquanox 2: Revelation	JoWood Productions
3/11/03	Backyard Soccer 2004	Humongous Entertainment
2/24/03	Bandits: Phoenix Rising	Tri-Synergy
3/25/03	BloodRayne	Activision
3/11/03	Cabela's Off Road Mud Runnin'	Infogrames Interactive
2/18/03	Castles & Catapults	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
5/22/03	Cold Zero	JoWood Productions
5/6/03	Crusaders Kings	Strategy First
3/18/03	CSI	Ubi Soft
3/12/03	Curse of Atlantis: Thorgal's Quest	Dreamcatcher

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
3/24/03	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Electronic Arts
2/25/03	Devastation	Hip Interactive, Inc
2/25/03	Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	Digital Leisure
3/11/03	Enclave	Vivendi Universal
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames Interactive
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix: Special Edition	Infogrames Interactive
4/8/03	Etherlords II	Strategy First
3/4/03	Eve Online	Vivendi Universal
2/26/03	EverQuest: Legacy of Ykesha	Verant Interactive/989 Studios
3/4/03	Freelancer	Microsoft
2/25/03	Galactic Civilization	Strategy First
3/25/03	Ghost Recon Gold Pack	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Gladiators	Tri-Synergy
4/17/03	Gothic II	JoWood Productions
5/6/03	Harpoon IV	Ubi Soft
2/17/03	Heroes Might & Magic IV: Expansion 2	3DO Company
4/8/03	Humvee Assault	Infogrames Interactive

BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW

■ **FORMAT** XBOX, GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KEMCO ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



Batman is arguably the most popular superhero that has ever walked the earth with a tormented soul. So, why hasn't he had a good video game since the Sega Genesis? Kemco has put together an all-star team to ensure that Dark Tomorrow makes for a happy November for all three consoles. A better writing pair than the one Kemco assembled does not exist. You think we jest? Try Batman writer Scott Peterson and Kenji Terada, the man behind Final Fantasy I, II, and III. Bang! These two take their knowledge of the man behind the cowl and compelling video games, respectively, and weave a tale of seemingly random events that tie together into a devious plot.

3/4/03	IL 2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
3/25/03	Inquisition	Strategy First
3/11/03	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi Universal
3/4/03	Line of Sight: Vietnam	Infogrames Interactive
4/15/03	Lion Heart	Vivendi Universal
2/25/03	Master of Orion III	Infogrames Interactive
4/2/03	Midnight Club II	Take 2
3/25/03	Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undertide	Infogrames Interactive
2/18/03	New World Order	Strategy First
3/11/03	PlanetSide	Verant Interactive/989 Studios
2/28/03	Post Mortem	Dreamcatcher
3/17/03	Praetorians	Eidos
3/18/03	Pro Race Driver	Codemasters
3/4/03	Project IGI2: Covert Strike	Codemasters
3/18/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction 2	THQ
5/15/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory	Activision
3/5/03	Riddle of the Sphinx II: Omega Stone	Dreamcatcher
4/15/03	Rise of Nations	Microsoft
2/18/03	Robot Arena 2	Infogrames Interactive
5/6/03	RollerCoaster Tycoon II Expansion Pack	Infogrames Interactive
5/6/03	Savage	Tri-Synergy
4/1/03	Serious Sam Gold	Global Star Software
3/25/03	Shadowbane	Ubi Soft
2/25/03	Soldier Of Fortune 2: Gold	Activision
2/25/03	Space Ace	Digital Leisure
2/18/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
5/20/03	Star Trek: Elite Force II	Activision
4/15/03	Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts
4/15/03	Star Wars Galaxies: Collector's Edition	LucasArts
5/1/03	Starksy & Hutch	Vivendi Universal
4/1/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
3/25/03	Tron 2.0	Monolith
4/15/03	Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	Take 2
3/17/03	Vietcong	Take 2
3/18/03	Will Rock	Ubi Soft

GAME BOY ADVANCE

3/4/03	Baldur's Gate	Ubi Soft
4/1/03	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Electro Source
3/11/03	Bratz	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride	THQ
4/1/03	Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
4/14/03	Golden Sun 2: The Lost Age	Nintendo
4/1/03	Grand Theft Auto III	Electro Source
4/7/03	Hamtaro: Ham-Ham Heartbreak	Nintendo
3/25/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/24/03	James Bond 007: NightFire	Electronic Arts
3/17/03	Jet Grind Radio	THQ
3/18/03	Lufia: The Ruins of Love	Atlus
4/1/03	Medabots: Metabee-Gold	SVG
4/1/03	Medabots: Rokusho-Silver	SVG
3/18/03	Mega Man and Bass	Capcom
3/17/03	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo
3/17/03	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
4/1/03	SimCity	Electro Source
5/27/03	Space Channel 5: Ulala Cosmic Attack	THQ
3/18/03	Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom
3/3/03	Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames
5/26/03	Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgames	Nintendo
3/25/03	Woody Woodpecker: Crazy Castle 5	Kemco
3/4/03	Worms Blast	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dungeon Dice Monsters	Konami
5/6/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! Stairway to the Destined	Konami

PLAY TO PERFECTION

Xenosaga

EPISODE I

Der Wille zur Macht [力への意志]

Although Xenosaga follows a fairly linear storyline, there are a bevy of extras scattered throughout the adventure. We tell you how to find all of the Decoder Keys and Segment Addresses, which reveal super secret items. Also note that the robot pieces you find can be taken to Professor, who will build you cool weapons. Finally, since Xenosaga has proven to be one of the more difficult RPGs out there, we provide tips on how to beat every boss.



KOS-MOS SIMULATOR

Once in the garage, climb the stairs, then go through the second door (the first is locked) to find your first A.G.W.S. and a save point. The door to the right of it leads to the Mission Key, which opens two doors – including the one to the boss. First, though, take the ladder down, leading to **Address No. 10**.

BOSS: DRONE GX



Use Shion's A.G.W.S. straight away, so he's fighting someone his own size. Defend with Kos-Mos until you can launch a Tech Hit. Repeat. He'll boost in front of you often, so keep your HP up.

THE WOGLINDE

The door on the right leads out of the lab. In the gold tombstone room, the man in orange on the right promises to send you a secret email (it's a bit of humor). Shion's room, north of the big crane, contains the Maintenance Data. The red door with **Address No. 18** is below it. After talking to the Realians, you can learn how to drill, and get the Drill Passport. In D-04, Sgt. Swaine calls you over and gives you the **Segment File** (a recorder for all Segment Addresses and Decoders). **Address No. 7** is right next to him. To the north are two soldiers playing a tag minigame. Just cut corners around the column behind you, then cut straight to the item. Further north is an A.G.W.S. simulator – level-up here if you'd like. Find **Address No. 16** in the back of D-05. Visit the bridge, then head to your room again for a nap. When you wake, use switches and doors to your advantage. The marine by the A.G.W.S. hangar tells you to go there for the Vaporizer Plug-In to blast items in the world. Use the tag tactic, and return to Sgt. Swaine for **Decoder 7** and open the

door. Take the Crewman's Key from the fallen marine and use it nearby. After fighting Cyclops, you come full circle. In the room near No. 16, blast the glass to find **Decoder 18**. Hit up the A.G.W.S. area for A.G.W.S. repair kits, then go back around to Shion's quarters and further south.

BOSS: MINOTAUR



Per usual, use Shion's A.G.W.S. Guard one turn with Kos-Mos, so she can Tech Attack next. Focus on the smaller Sky Fish first. Once you've caused some damage to it, Minotaur will start Boosting and using heavy Gravity Pulse attacks. Get out of the A.G.W.S. before its HP gets too low, since you can't restore them during battle. Use your Boost to let Kos-Mos perform a few Tech Attacks.

PLEROMA

Hold down R2 to sneak by the guards. They follow an easily deciphered walking pattern, so you shouldn't have to tussle with any of them. In the second soldier-pacing obstacle course, blast a statue for **Decoder 11**. Once you get to the A.G.W.S., use the crane on the left side (come back to him later for **Decoder 4**). Take out the cell guards, then go south to the control room and fight the security bot. Each attack you do on him makes reinforcements arrive, so make them count. The Master Key to the cell is behind it. Sirens mean little; just get back to the control room again and flip the switch. Work through the maze, then fight the three A.G.W.S. If one's shield is up, don't attack it. Use Momo's sleep Ether on the side pilots (funny stuff) and

her heal on Ziggy. Now, head to the beginning of the level. However, first you should blast through the wall above the door between the two soldier-pacing areas for a secret route to **Address No. 4**.

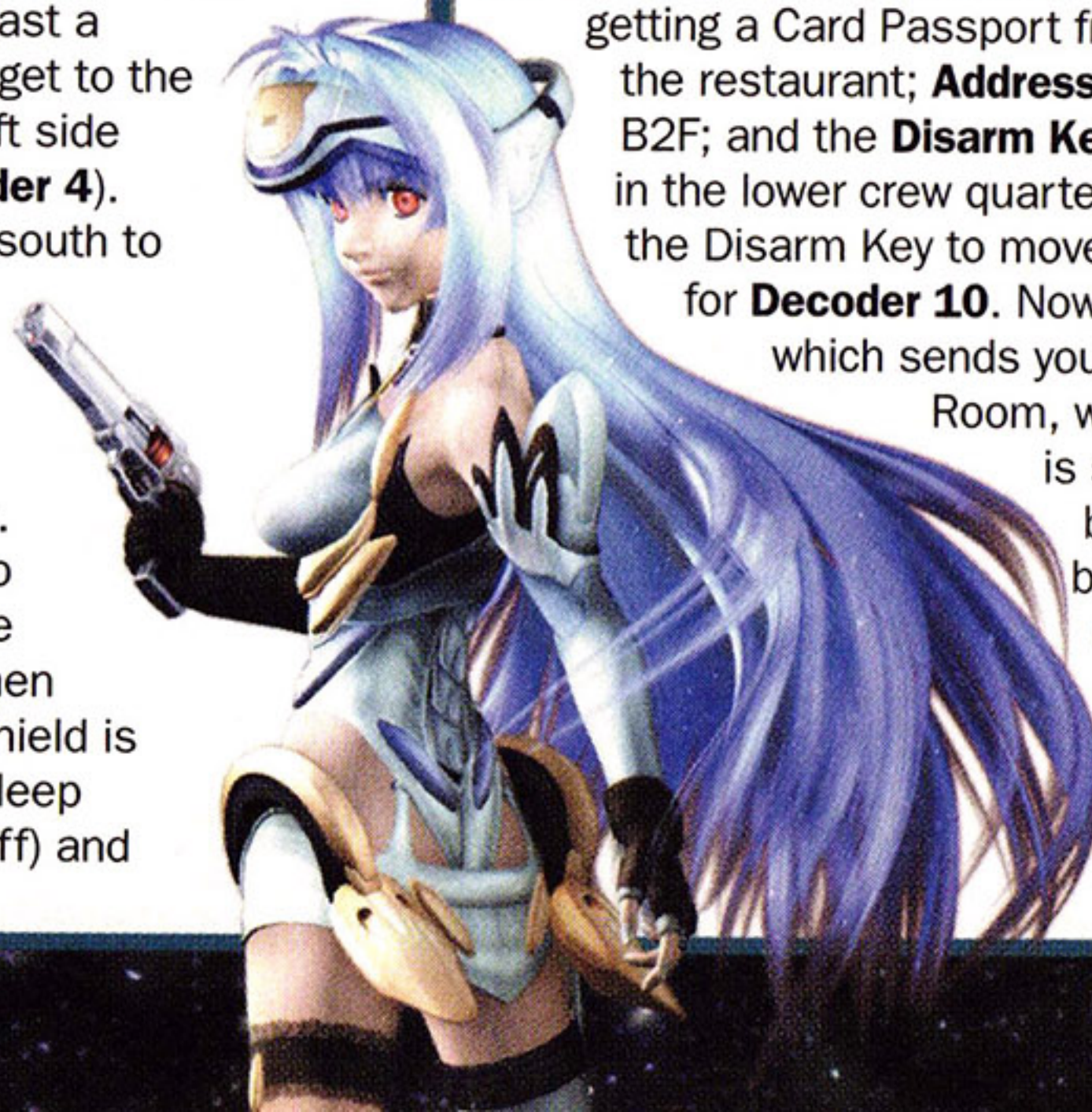
BOSS: MARGULIS



Be all healed up before this bout, or you'll be at an immediate disadvantage. Also, position Ziggy in front of Momo, so he can't be pushed backwards. If you aren't doing a Tech Attack with Ziggy, defend. If you aren't healing with Momo, refuel your Ether. Failure to follow this plan will most likely result in death. Also, try to use near attacks whenever possible.

ELSA

You now get an email giving you EVS, which lets you revisit past areas to retrieve items. However, you've picked up everything we told you to already, right? Take the elevator to B1 for a cutscene then continue on to B2F, around the A.G.W.S. area and up another lift. Other points of interest along the way include getting a Card Passport from the bartender in the restaurant; **Address No. 8** in a corridor in B2F; and the **Disarm Key** in the arching couch in the lower crew quarters (hit circle). Use the Disarm Key to move the bridge in B2F for **Decoder 10**. Now, head to the bridge, which sends you back to the Catapult Room, where **Address No. 14** is stashed behind a box. Set up your party before going below deck. Your target is the hangar, where the vehicles are stored.



BOSS: DOMO CARRIER

For this battle, we recommend using heavy hitters Chaos, Kos-Mos, and Ziggy. Straight off, this boss memorizes when the ring icon comes for its turn, and will do a huge Tremor attack, damaging your whole party. Use Chaos' A.G.W.S., and have the other two heap Tech Attacks on the boss. Ziggy should be able to heal himself, so just watch Kos-Mos' HP and use your supply of Med Kit S. DOMO Carrier will heal itself frequently later in the fight. To combat this, build up your Boost meter and cheat him out of turn, so he can't do it as often. Never let your health get too far down, as he'll self-destruct before dying. After this battle, just show the new passengers around, and rest when prompted in the crew quarters.

U-TIC BATTLESHIP

Another playable character – will wonders never cease? Destroy the A.G.W.S. with ease. Blast the nearby generators to stop the two security systems. Flip the switch. Go down the hall to open the door labeled "4." Blast the generator before entering the doors with glowing green panels next to them. Behind the second one is **Address No. 11**. Door 5 opens before Door 3, via a switch. The U-TIC Card, which opens the place holding **Decoder 16**, is in a side room south of the A.G.W.S. hold. Card No. 3 is slightly down the hall.

BOSS: AMBIX

This boss likes to hit all three of your peeps at once. It's a good idea to build up your W-ACT, as it's like an A.G.W.S. Tech Attack. Either way, you should have no problem with this pushover.

DOCK COLONY

Fetch Ziggy, then go outside. There's not much to do here, except watch the events with the Commander unfold. Inside the Talk To Me store (a few floors down) is **Address No. 2**. Once on the ship, go to the bridge.

GNOSIS HIVE

Proceed through the area. Most of the hive is fairly linear and full of cutscenes, and doesn't feature any secret areas. Just make sure you hit all the side paths and blast every destructible object, and you'll find **Address No. 13**. When you encounter a Cerberus next to a building with stairs attached to it, assign Momo as your lead character and ascend the stairs. There will be some boxes on the left; investigate the blue sparkling orb on the one box for the Star Wind spell. Shortly after that, you'll come to a save point. Enter the laboratory. Go upstairs and into the shop and fight the plant enemy for **Decoder 15**. When you get back outside, descend the ramp and turn right across the bridge with water. When you reach the archway, turn left again. You'll encounter an enemy standing. Beat it for **Decoder 9**. Enter the tower and you'll find an elevator. Destroy the yellow shield generators on the first, second, and third floors preventing use of the lift. On the third floor, pass the elevator on your left. There will be a destructible object which conceals a door. Enter it to find **Address No. 9**. Take the elevator down for a boss battle.

BOSS: GARGOYLE

To defeat Gargoyle, we chose Chaos, Shion, and Kos-Mos. Place Kos-Mos and Chaos in the front line and Shion in back. With Chaos, transform into his A.G.W.S. For Shion's first move, cast Boost on Kos-Mos. For the rest of the match use Shion to heal. Attack the Oudogogue on both sides of the boss with melee attacks. You should allow Kos-Mos to build up her AP so that she can perform a melee Deathblow each time. When you destroy the two cronies, use distance attacks to take out the Gargoyle. Transform back into Chaos and move Shion to the front. The boss melee attack will do serious damage and cause frustration, so cast Kos-Mos' Down Force. While healing with Shion and Chaos, attack Gargoyle with Kos-Mos' Deathblow. When you can, use Shion's Boost on Kos-Mos and attack with Chaos. Once you have Gargoyle below 1000 HP, use Shion's A.G.W.S. and go in for the kill. The A.G.W.S.'s melee attack deals the most damage.

THE DURANDAL

Proceed to the left; answer your email. Return to the Durandal, go to the Park, and investigate it to encounter Momo. If you're prompted in email to make an investment, give 6,000G to Shijima; you'll receive **72,000G** back as dividend payment. Go to the Residential Area. Head down the long corridor. When you get to the junction that indicates the Game Room is to the right, turn left. Explore these rooms

to find plenty of goodies and a special key. Go to the Game Room and get the **Casino Passport** so you can play the Slots and Poker. Go to the first room, where you're prompted to sleep, and take a rest. Go to the dock and speak with Junior.

KUKAI FOUNDATION

Go to the city sectors. Enter the next sector to the left. Ascend the stairs on the right and turn left at the top. Proceed over the metal catwalk and enter the building, exiting to the other side. Enter the open door straight ahead, which is the upstairs portion of a laundry shop. Check the white suit at the top of the stairs and you'll get the **Fish Detector**. Descend the stairs and enter the back room. Destroy the bookshelves to find **Address No. 3**. Ascend the stairs and go through the doorway. Talk to the King's brutes and blast the blue crates on the level below. Speak with the pink thing and head back outside. Return to the previous block and enter the Ironman bar. Speak with the woman on the far left; she is in a pink get-up and crying into her arms. Go to the beach resort and catch fish! Get the **Engagement Ring** and return to the upset woman; she'll reward you with **Decoder 8**. Go outside, turn the crank to the left of the entrance, and then enter the inn next door and rest. Head to the A.G.W.S. area and play the quiz game to the right. Win and you'll get the **PM Card C**. Descend the stairs and speak with the professor. Board the Durandal.

THE DURANDAL

Go to the Park. Pass over the walkway on the right and you'll see a blue sparkling orb. Investigate it, and you'll find that it is **Decoder 1**. Return to the Elsa and go see Kos-Mos. Kill the guards, and make a left down the hall. Get your weapons, and leave through the previously locked door. Go to the room where you slept; blast the closet previously blocked by the robot to find the **Armory Key**. Make your way to Hangar and enter the door on the left that a guard was blocking. You'll get **Decoder 5**. Go to the Elsa and enter the gate on your character's right, since the front entrance is locked. The gate is guarded by a large mech.

ENCEPHALON

Head to the right with the Momo team and then make another right to leave the structure. It will switch to Shion's group. You'll eventually come to two manholes. Make sure that before you enter them, you get the treasure chest close by that contains **PM Card E**. Go to the manhole furthest away. Unlock the doors, find **Address No. 5**, and then enter the other manhole. You'll enter the sewers. After you defeat a few ghouls, you'll switch back to Momo's group. Proceed ahead and you'll enter a subway station. You're forced to go through the ticket machine on the far left. After passing through it, there are more machines on the right and a save point on the left. Go up through the third machine to the right. Enter the door and you'll find **Address No. 15**. Descend the stairs closest to the save point. Get down on the tracks and head to the next area. Enter the train on the far end and head right. You'll uncover a chest; get it to obtain Venom Block. Now go the other way through the train to the next area. Go through the door you opened with the blue triangle above it to receive **Decoder 12**. With

Shion, head straight and destroy the rock pile on the right. The secret path will lead you to **PM Card D**. In the next area you'll watch a weird scene with a rabbit. When you get to the area with the rabbit's house, take the path left (instead of exiting right to a new area). This will take you to the previous section, where you can now reach the carrots. Get the carrot juice and return to the log table in front of the rabbit's house. Place the juice on the table. When he emerges, quickly enter his house and get **Decoder 3**. Enter the church, save, and go to the boss in the back.

BOSS: TIAMAT



Depending on whether Shion or Junior acts, Tiamat's attacks and weaknesses will change. After you perform a move with Junior, beam attacks will become its weakness. After you use Shion, physical attacks become its weakness. What you'll want to avoid here is letting Shion take a turn right before Tiamat. If this occurs, try to Boost with Junior. Otherwise, you'll be subjected to a serious attack. Also, make sure that Shion has anti-Confusion armor on. During the fight, attack with Junior. With Shion, heal and cast Boost on Junior so that he can Boost when Tiamat's turn comes after Shion's. Transform into Chaos' A.G.W.S. and fight until the suit is close to destruction. When you get close to the end, Shion should finish it off. This will destroy its Shion Consciousness. After it heals itself, get Tiamat close to death again and then finish it off with Junior. If you let someone other than Shion or Junior kill Tiamat, it will just revive itself and keep fighting until you follow the rules!

KUKAI FOUNDATION

Go get Allen; he's at the Ironman bar in front of the Iron 3. Now you must rescue 13 people. This rescue mission will be followed by a boss fight, so be sure to save in the hotel after number 13.

EVACUATING THE RESIDENTS

1. Go to Ironman and save the man at the Iron 3 display.
2. Go to the hotel, Our Treasure, next door. Save the girl from the safe (the code is 1-0-2-8). Go upstairs and head right. Destroy the bookcase and go through the hole in the wall. Hit the button to raise the elevator. Go back to the previous room and climb the ladder to the roof. Slide down the roof to the right. In the flat area you'll find **Address No. 1**. Fall to the catwalk and then onto the awnings of the bar. Enter the room with Momo as your lead and you can fight Mintia. She is tough. Just be sure you use the three

female leads and you have plenty of Cure-All and some anti-Poison gear.

3. Head to the bar and destroy the boxes behind the elevator's previous position. A man will be cowering under the rubble. Go back to the hotel and up onto the roof. Slide down and to the left this time. You should reach a passage through a building that leads to the next area. Go through it and you'll be taken to **Decoder 13**.
4. Head back to the roof and slide off to the right into the dumpster area below. Go to the left section of town from the ground level.
5. Kill the Gnosis on the immediate right to save the NPC near the statue.
6. Go to the cleaners through the front entrance. There's a woman in the room on the right. Head around through the next room to rescue her. Notice the destructible object here, which conceals a ladder. Don't use it. Instead, enter the previous room and climb the stairs on the right.
7. Go out the door and onto the catwalk, which is blocked by fire. Enter the door on your character's left. Go back outside, bypassing the flames, and then enter the next door. You'll eventually come to a catwalk that slopes down. Head down it and hit the red button. Turn around and climb the ladder. Enter the door that you can now reach on the right. Kill the Gnosis to rescue the man.
8. Don't go down the chute of the bread shop. Backtrack and then go to the upstairs area of East 6. Talk to King.
- 9 & 10. Enter the lower level of East 6. Kill the Gnosis and destroy the boxes to rescue Mina and Johnny.
11. Head back upstairs and go through the door on the left. Kill the Gnosis in the back of the cleaner's room and rescue the woman.
12. Re-enter East 6. Kill the Gnosis and press the button. Enter the secret passage and ascend the stairs. Talk to the cat to rescue it.
13. Blast the steel door on the left just past the cat. Head to the right and destroy the wall at the end of the passage to find a boy.

BOSS: GIGAS



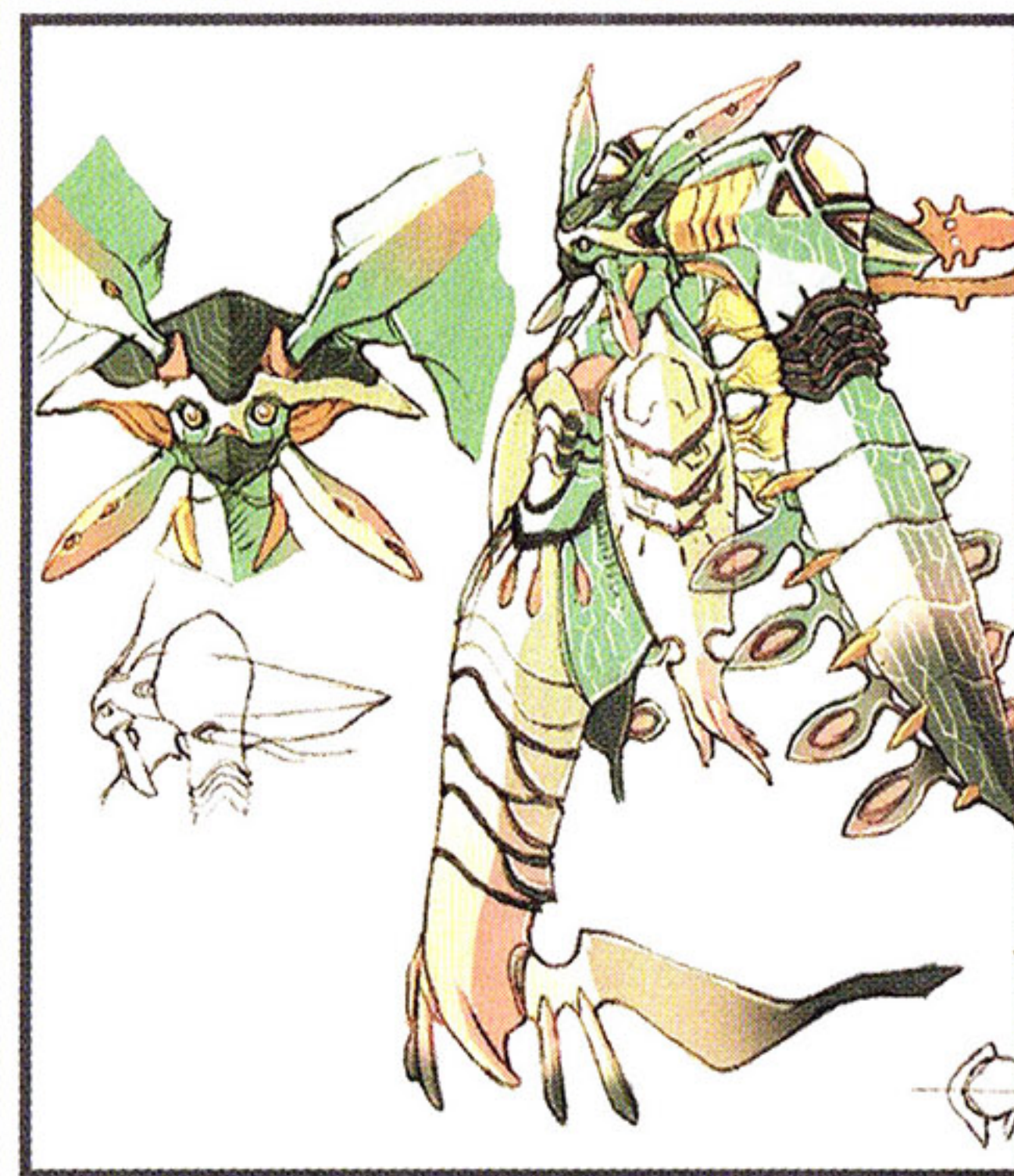
Pick Shion, Kos-Mos, and Junior. Turn into a mech with Junior immediately. Then with Shion, Cast Safety Level on Kos-Mos and then access her A.G.W.S. Attack with Junior and Shion, alternating with Kos-Mos' level 6 Death Blow, but heal when necessary with Kos-Mos. The key here is killing off one Gigas as quickly as possible (we chose the Gigas on the characters' right). If the remaining Gigas starts casting Lightning, transform back into Shion and Junior's

human form. Now, use Junior's Misty to prevent it from casting any spells. For the remainder of the match, heal and cast Boost with Shion. Junior's Moonlit Serenade deals quite a bit of damage, so try using that as often as possible. Kos-Mos's Blaster attacks and X Buster are very effective, too.

SONG OF NEPHILIM

Return to the Foundation and get Momo. Now head to the Durandal's Residential Area. Enter the Song of Nephilim to get Momo. Proceed through each tower (one, two, and three) in order. For the first tower, destroy the cubes to determine which floor you'll encounter. Every three cubes destroyed will take you to another floor. Note that the rectangular pieces consist of two cubes and the large, flat square pieces are four cubes. So, go to the second floor by destroying three cubes. Go through each floor, if you like. Most have some decent items. The fifth floor has **Decoder 14**. To get to the second tower, go to the third floor and go outside through the door that's across from the guard standing in the cove. Now go to the sixth floor. In the second tower you'll encounter the only save spot in the Nephilim. Leave the centerpiece with the save spot and go around. Enter the first door on the left. Proceed down a few floors and you'll find a ladder. You'll encounter a bridge leading to a door. Destroy the boxes to find **Decoder 2** and **Address No. 12**. When you get to the bottom, go to the center door and press the button. Go through the right and left doors and destroy the power generators. Get ready for a boss fight.

BOSS: RIANON SE



Just be sure to heal and cast Boost with Shion, and attack it with as many Death Blows as possible. Its attacks are relatively weak, dealing mostly physical blows. However, it does have an energy drain. Attack with Kos-Mos, but be sure to cast Down Force on the enemy to decrease its strength. For your third character, just deal as many physical blows as possible. Your third character should probably be Junior, since he can access A.G.W.S. and cast Misty. If you must, place Shion behind Kos-Mos, so that she cannot get pushed back out of range.

SONG OF NEPHILIM

Go out the door and press the button. Take the elevator up and save. Pass through the door on the left and go all the way down the ladders. Ascend the second level of the next ladder. Cross the bridge and go up the following ladder. You'll come to a hole; fall down it to find **Decoder 17**. Now head to the bottom of the far-left tower. This puzzle is easy. Shoot the red pole four times; shoot the blue pole three times; and shoot the green pole once. Move on to the third tower. Go outside and press the red button. This will allow you to enter the area in the center of the towers, which leads to a boss fight. However, don't go right away. Take the blue triangular elevator up and go into the second tower to save.

BOSS: ALBEDO

Choose Shion, Junior, and Kos-Mos. If you want, you can transform into their A.G.W.S.; but be sure to equip Anti-Beam armor, Gear Shields, Armor Protect Units, and Guard Recovery. If you guard and use W-Act function, you can deal quite a bit of damage, and you might be able to defeat him with this method. If your A.G.W.S. are unusable, the Bravesoul item is useful, as it will deal insane damage when your HP is low. Also, equip any anti-Slow equipment or Skills available. At the start, cast Kos-Mos' Mode A7, Junior's Psycho Arm, and Shion's Safety Level and Quick on everyone. Finally, cast Junior's Coin Lock on everyone. Throughout the fight, you'll want to maintain health and clear any status changes with Shion, but fight with her when you can. With Kos-Mos, attack Albedo with Buster X and F-RSHOT. Use Junior's Moonlit Serenade. This scuffle will take a while, but he isn't too tough to defeat. Afterwards, return to the second tower to save. Gear up for another boss battle.

BOSS: EIN RUGEL

Well, then...

If available, use anti-Bind, anti-Confusion, and anti-Slow Skills or armor. At the start, you will have some time before Ein Rugel performs any serious attacks.

Use this opportunity to cast Safety and Coin Lock on everyone. For the rest of the fight, simply attack with everyone straight up, healing when necessary. After defeating him, he will transform into Doppelwogel. Again, heal and Boost as often as possible while trying to attack him with your strongest attacks.

PROTO MERKABAH

Before proceeding to Merkabah, load up on all of the items you need. This will be your final stand. Fight the various mechs and you'll soon come to an elevator that takes you to level 40. There are only two save spots here, so make good use of them. One is on level 43 in the control room; the other is towards the end. Once at level 44, proceed down to level 43. Press the switch and enter the room close by; you will find **Address No. 17**. Hit the green button on level 42, too. After going to level 41 for an item, save and then head to the door you just unlocked on level 44. After you go through the gate, go to the left and drop down onto the satellite dish for a boss fight.

BOSS: PROTO DORA

The battle is against M type enemies, so all of the attacks are either physical or beam. Adjust your characters' offenses and defenses accordingly. We picked Shion, Junior, and Ziggy for the fight. It would also be prudent to transfer Shion's Medical All spell to either Junior or Ziggy. First, destroy the cronies on both sides before going after Proto. Using Ziggy's Lightning Fist and Junior's Moonlit Serenade work well. With Shion, heal, cast Boost, and attack whenever you can with Spell Ray. When you finally manage to kill the cronies, you'll realize his beam shield is blocking your attacks. First, cast Safety Level and increase speed with spells for everyone, as Proto Dora has one attack that can kill the entire party instantly. Use beam attacks to damage him. Junior's Moonlit Serenade and Ziggy's Lightning Fist and Executioner deal the most damage. Again, with Shion, heal and cast Boost, but you'll find her Spell Ray to be most effective. The key to winning this duel is making sure that all your characters always have Safety Level cast on them. At the end of the bout you'll get **Decoder 6**.

PROTO MERKABAH

You'll enter a circular room. The door on the right will lead you back to your save point (definitely go save!). On the lower floor of the circular room, you'll find **Address No. 6**. The next room will have stairs that are destroyed. Go into the room on the left first and then take the elevator down. Save and proceed down the next elevator. You'll have a few fights as you descend. The first two battles consist of enemies

(the dual sword wielders) from the area with the destroyed stairs and the elevator. The third battle is against a G-type character that mainly uses fire spells. The fourth battle is against the same G-type enemy from battle three and two healers from the second fight.

BOSS: ALBEDO AGAIN

Choose Junior, Shion, and Kos-Mos. Transfer Shion's Safety level to either Kos-Mos or Junior so that you can keep up with Albedo's devastating beam offensive. Also, it would make your life easier if everyone has Medica All. Albedo will use mostly fire-related attacks, and one beam attack that always deals over 1,000 HP worth of damage. Also, in the fight immediately preceding this one, the enemy will cast Ether Attack Down. So, equip any Skills or armor that counter these attacks and ailments. Junior's gun attacks deal considerable damage, especially his Moonlit Serenade. Kos-Mos' F-RSHOT, physical attacks, and R Blade are best. With Shion, cast Safety Level on everyone first, then heal and Boost throughout the rest of the match, attacking with her when you can.

BOSS: SOPHIE PEITHOS

Cast Safety Level, Coin Lock, and Boost (x3) on everyone. Take your time at the beginning. Sophie won't do any overly damaging attacks. Heal and Boost with Shion throughout the battle. When you can, attack with her using the Lunar Blade and Spell Ray. Kos-Mos' X Buster, F-RSHOT, and R Dragon are very effective, and Junior's Moonlit Serenade works best here again. As long as you heal often and have Safety Level cast, you should have no problems beating this imposing Gnosis. When Sophie summons the Ratatosks, your priority is destroying them quickly. To do this, use your three Boosts and try to attack using your strongest spells that hit all enemies onscreen. Once Sophie starts using Dark Omen, you'll need to recast Safety Level and heal immediately afterwards. It will also help if you conserve your Boosts for when this happens.

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



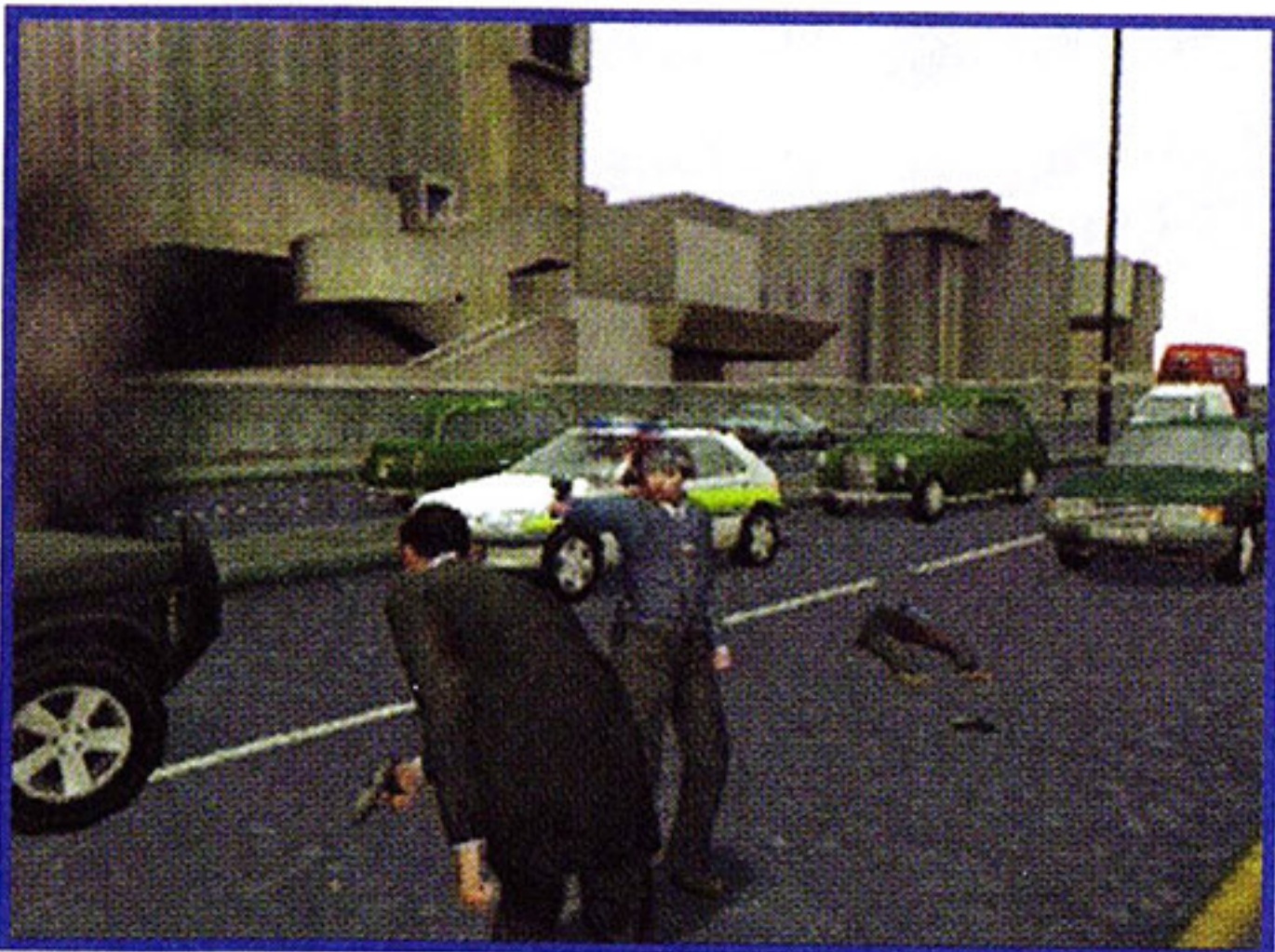
WHITEOUT

The game may not be great, but if you bought it and never play it, these codes will surely help you finish it. Give me a "Whoopdie-do!"

Automatically Win – During a race, hold Δ and press Up, Down, Left, Right.

Drivers and Sleds – Go to the Main Menu, hold R1 and L1, and then press Right, Right, Right, Right on the d-pad.

Dubois Jennings
New York, NY



THE GETAWAY

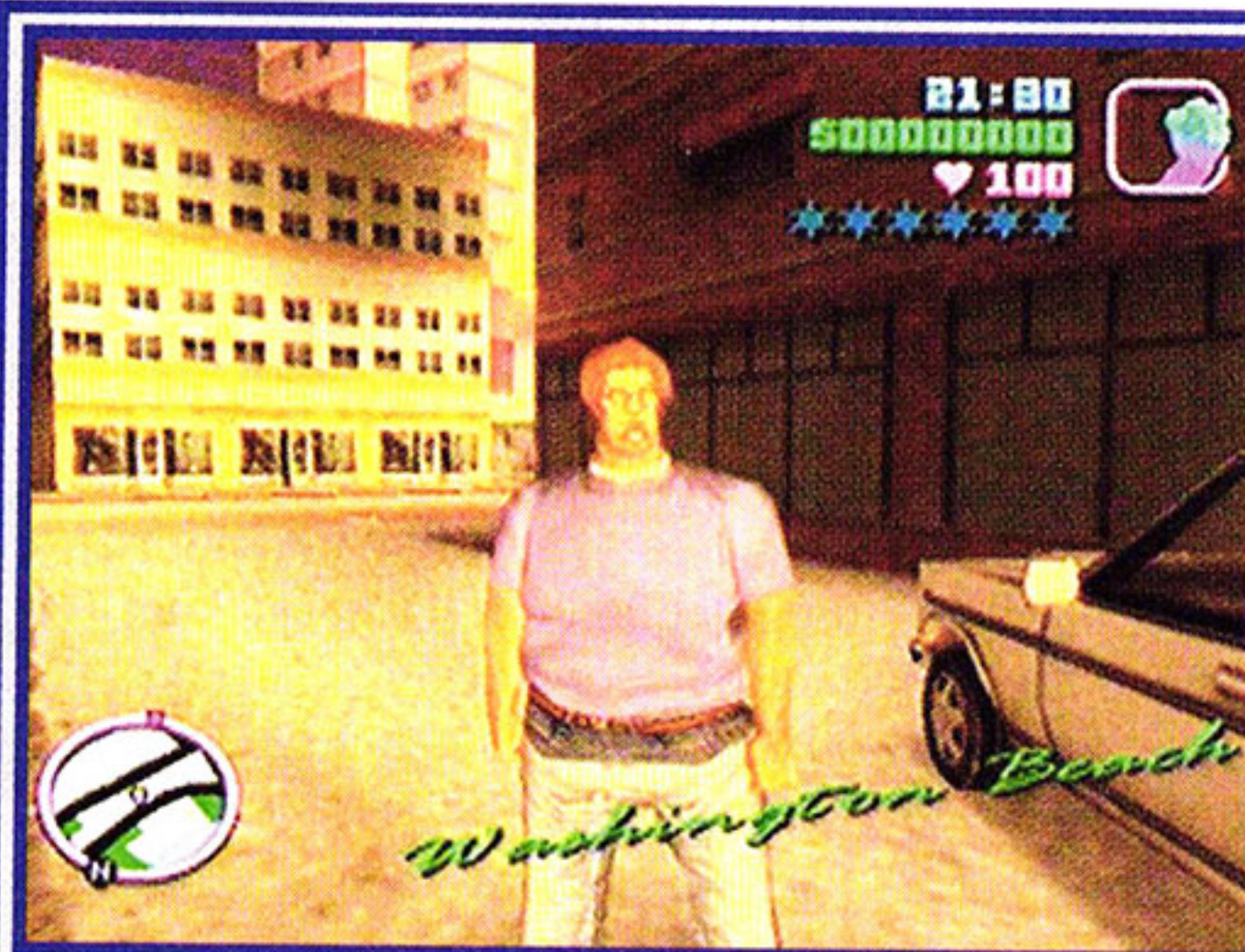
Enter both of these codes during the trippy FMV sequence that precedes the Main Menu. The sound of a woman screaming will confirm correct code entry.

Armored Car Weapon – Up, Down, Left, Right, \square , Δ , \circ
(The weapon can only be used within missions)

Double Health – Up (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), \circ (x2), Down

Skip Intermissions – Press R3 to bypass some intermission sequences. However, not all of them can be skipped.

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

Enter all of these codes at any point during gameplay. A message will confirm that the cheats have been entered correctly.

Aggressive Traffic – R2, \circ , R1, L2, Left, R1, L1, R2, L2

Alter Wheel Size – R1, \times , Δ , Right, R2, \square , Up, Down, \square

Armor – R1, R2, L1, \times , Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Black Traffic – \circ , L2, Up, R1, Left, \times , R1, L1, Left, \circ

Blooding (Version 1) – Up, Right (x2), L1, Right, Up, \square , L2

Blooding (Version 2) – Down, R1, \circ , L2 (x2), \times , R1, L1, Left (x2)

Caddy – \circ , L1, Up, R1, L2, \times , R1, L1, \circ , \times

Cars Drive On Water – Right, R2, \circ , R1, L2, \square , R1, R2

Chicks With Guns – Right, L1, \circ , L2, Left, \times , R1, L1 (x2), \times

Destroy Cars – R2, L2, R1, L1, L2, R2, \square , Δ , \circ , Δ , L2, L1

Dodo Car Physics – Right, R2, \circ , R1, L2, Down, L1, R1

Faster Cars – Right, R1, Up, L2 (x2), Left, R1, L1, R1 (x2)

Faster Gameplay – Δ , Up, Right, Down, L2, L1, \square

Faster Time – \circ (x2), L1, \square , L1, \square (x3), L1, Δ , \circ , Δ

Female Pedestrians Follow You – \circ , \times , L1 (x2), R2, \times (x2), \circ , Δ

Floating Cars – Right, R2, \circ , R1, L2, \square , R1, R2

Flying Boats – R2, \circ , Up, L1, Right, R1, Right, Up, \square , Δ

Foggy Weather – R2, \times , L1 (x2), L2 (x3), \times

Heart Attack – Right, L2, Down, R1, Left (x2), R1, L1, L2, L1

Hotring (Version 1) – R1, \circ , R2, Right, L1, L2, \times (x2), \square , R1

Hotring (Version 2) – R2, L1, \circ , Right, L1, R1, Right, Up, \circ , R2

Improve Driving Skills – Δ , R1 (x2), Left, R1, L1, R2, L1

Love Fist Limo – R2, Up, L2, Left (x2), R1, L1, \circ , Right

Lower Wanted Level – R1 (x2), \circ , R2, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down

Normal Weather – R2, \times , L1 (x2), L2 (x3), Down

Overcast Weather – R2, \times , L1 (x2), L2 (x3), \square

Pedestrian Riots – Down, Left, Up, Left, \times , R2, R1, L2, L1

Pedestrians Wield Weapons – R2, R1, \times , Δ , \times , Δ , Up, Down

Pink Traffic – \circ , L1, Down, L2, Left, \times , R1, L1, Right, \circ

Play as Candy Suxxx – \circ , R2, Down, R1, Left, Right, R1, L1, \times , L2

Play as Hilary King – R1, \circ , R2, L1, Right, R1, L1, \times , R2

Play as Ken Rosenberg – Right, L1, Up, L2, L1, Right, R1, L1, \times , R1

Play as Lance Vance – \circ , L2, Left, \times , R1, L1, \times , L1

Play as Love Fist (Version 1) – Down, L1, Down, L2, Left, \times , R1, L1, \times (x2)

Play as Love Fist (Version 2) – R1, L2, R2, L1, Right, R2, Left, \times , \square , L1

Play as Mercedes – R2, L1, Up, L1, Right, R1, Right, Up, \circ , Δ

Play as Pedestrian – Right (x2), Left, Up, L1, L2, Left, Up, Down, Right

Play as Phil Cassidy – Right, R1, Up, R2, L1, Right, R1, L1, Right, \circ

Play as Ricardo Diaz – L1, L2, R1, R2, Down, L1, R2, L2



Play as Sonny Forelli – \circ , L1, \circ , L2, Left, \times , R1, L1, \times (x2)

Rainy Weather – R2, \times , L1 (x2), L2 (x3), \circ

Raise Wanted Level – R1 (x2), \circ , R2, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right

Replenish Health – R1, R2, L1, \circ , Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Rhino Tank – \circ (x2), L1, \circ (x3), L1, L2, R1, Δ , \circ , Δ

Robocops – \circ , L1, Down, L2, Left, \times , R1, L1, Right, \times

Romero's Hearse – Down, R2, Down, R1, L2, Left, R1, L1, Left, Right

Sabre Turbo – Right, L2, Down, L2 (x2), \times , R1, L1, \circ , Left

Slower Gameplay – Δ , Up, Right, Down, \square , R2, R1

Sunny Weather – R2, \times , L1 (x2), L2 (x3), Δ

Trashmaster – \circ , R1, \circ , R1, Left (x2), R1, L1, \circ , Right

Weapon Assortment (Grade 1) – R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Weapon Assortment (Grade 2) – R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down (x2), Left

Weapon Assortment (Grade 3) – R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down (x3)

When Pedestrians Attack! – Down, Up (x3), \times , R2, R1, L2 (x2)

Gillian Winters
Rockford, IL

CODE OF THE MONTH



THE SIMS

At the title screen press all four shoulder buttons (R1+R2+L1+L2) to access the Cheat Menu. From there put in the following codes, except for Easy Money, which is a trick rather than cheat.

Easy Money – Enable Free Mode, buy a bunch of expensive items, and head to your house. Save and reset your game. Now start your game without entering any codes. Go sell your items for easy cash.

Free Mode – Enter FREEALL to make all objects cost 0 Simoleans. Note, however, that you still need enough money to pay for an item. This code just prevents you from losing money. Also, you can't sell items, and you might suffer problems with saved games.

Midas Mode – Enter MIDAS and start a game in Get A Life mode. Enter the hot tub with a girl, then pause the game. Select Quit and then Just Quit. You'll unlock all two-player games and all objects and skins.

Party Motel Mode – Enter PARTY M to unlock the two-player game, Party Motel.

The Sims Mode – Enter SIMS to unlock this mode instantly.

David Jefferson
Newark, NJ



NBA STARTING FIVE

Yeah, this isn't the greatest game, as you probably know if you happened to be one of the unfortunate souls that picked it up. But, at least these funky codes make the gameplay mildly amusing.

- Big Feet** – BIGFOOT
- Big Hands** – BIGHAND
- Big Heads** – BIGHEAD
- Flat Players** – PANCAKE

Justin Bartlett
Rockville, MD



STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

Enter all of these cheats at the Codes screen within the Bonuses menu.

- All Movies** – 12 PARSECS
- All Multiplayer Maps** – JORG SACUL
- Battle Droid** – TRADEFED (Geonosis Academy Multiplayer Level Only)
- Bonus Objectives Complete** – GIMME
- Developer Photo** – JEDICOUNCIL
- Padme** – NATALIE (Geonosis Academy Multiplayer Level Only)
- Unlimited Ammo** – SUPERLASER

"Man Who Eats Jelly"
Green Bay, WI

SSX TRICKY

Mallora Board – At the Title Screen, hold L1 and R1, then press X (x2), Right, O (x2), Down, Δ (x2), Left, □ (x2), Up. Release L1 and R1 and you'll hear a confirmation sound. Choose Elise as your character, then enter an event. Instead of wearing her normal garb, she'll now be dressed in blue and the Mallora Board will be fastened below her.

Play as Mix Master Mike – At the Title Screen (with Start Game and DVD Content), hold L1 and R1, then press X (x2), Right, X (x2), Down, X (x2), Left, X (x2), Up. Nothing will happen when this sequence is entered. From here, select any mode, any rider, and any course. When the game begins, Mix Master Mike will replace the character you chose.

Steve Myers
St. Paul, MN



BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

Enter these codes at the Choose Game Name screen.

- All Gallery Items** – 105770Y2
- All Stages** – !EVAH!

Lebron James
Cleveland, OH



X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION

Even if you cannot play like a master, this Master Code will certainly help – loser! Enter the code at the Main Menu.

Master Code – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, A, B, Start (x2)

Ben Dover
Back Dore, VA



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

For the first set of cheats, you must simply pause the game and hold the Left and Right buttons. For the ultimate cheats, the procedure is the same, but you need to complete the game first. A sound effect will confirm a correct entry.

Normal Cheats

- Free Experience** – A, Down (x3)
- Restore Ammo** – A, Down, Y, Up
- Restore Health** – Y, Down, A, Up
- Skill Level 2** – X, Right, X, Right
- Skill Level 4** – Y, Up, Y, Up
- Skill Level 6** – B, Left, B, Left
- Skill Level 8** – A (x2), Down (x2)

Ultimate Cheats

- Devastating Attacks** – B (x2), X (x2)
- Infinite Ammo** – B, X, A, Y
- Invincibility** – Y, B, A, X
- Slow-Mo** – Y, X, A, B
- Small Enemies** – Y (x2), A (x2)

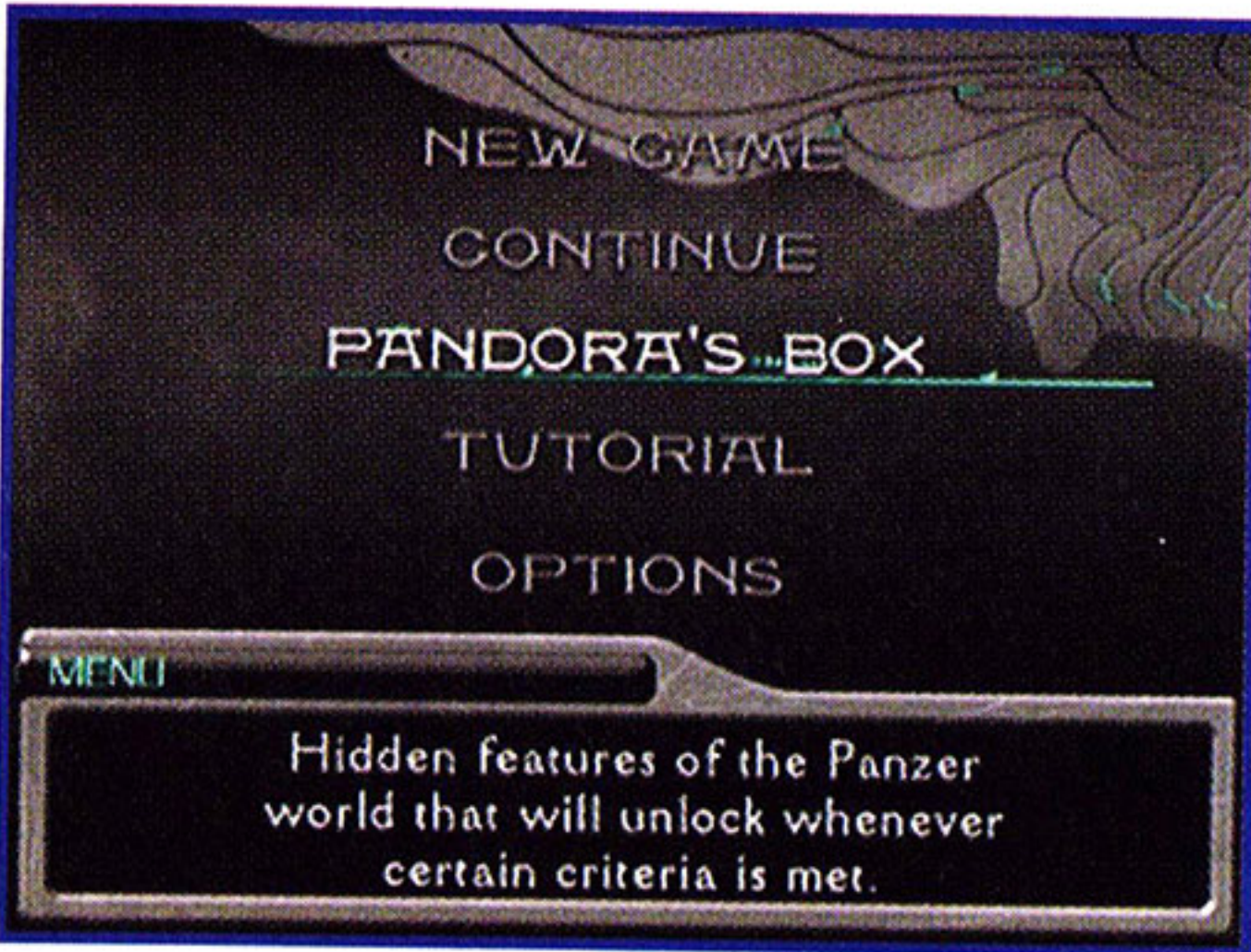
"The Armchair Quarterback"
Canton, OH



DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Easy Money – Go into the casino and play a slot machine. Take a rubber band and wrap it around the A button on your controller. Now, you can leave the game alone – read a book, make a sandwich, or go to sleep – then return to a lot more money than you started with. For best results, switch machines every hour or so.

*“The Joystick Juggalo”
E. Lansing, MI*



PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

All of the following codes apply to the original Panzer Dragoon game, which can be unlocked after beating the game or playing for five hours. When you do, go to the Appendix section of Pandora's Box to find it. All codes must be entered at the original game's Main Menu, unless otherwise indicated.

Dragon Only Mode – First, activate the Weapon Change cheat, then enter Left (x2), Right (x2), Up, Down, Up, Down, L Button, R Button

Hard Mode Congratulations – Up (x2), Down, Up, Left (x2), Right, Left, Down (x2), Up, Down, Right (x2), Left, Right

Hard Mode Extras – Up (x2), Down, Up, Right (x2), Left, Right, Down (x2), Up, Down, Left (x2), Right, Left

Invincibility – L Button (x2), R Button (x2), Up, Down, Left, Right

Rolling Mode – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left

Stage Select – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, X, Y, White

Stage Zero – Up (x3), Down (x3), Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, L Button, R Button

Weapon Change – During gameplay, press Up, X, Right, Y, Down, White, Left, Y, Up, X.

Wizard Mode – L Button, R Button, L Button, R Button, Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right

*Chris P. Bacon
Boston, MA*



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

Substance is full of various little secrets and bonuses throughout the adventure. We've compiled a list of some of the cooler ones. Enjoy!

Alternate Ending Sequence – Use the M9 and stun every boss instead of killing them.

Confused Marines – Enter one of the holds with lots of marines. Sneak up on a marine at one of the corners. Press punch until he does a forward flip. This will cause your character to hit two or three other guards which will start a chain reaction. Note that this is done much more easily if you happen to have Stealth.

Control Title Screen – At the title screen, press White to hear a gunshot and see a flash. You can use the Right Analog-stick to change the background color.

Digital Camera – Complete the game, and the camera will be available when you start a new one. Alternatively, you can obtain the camera in Strut E Shell 1. Go to the bottom and find the platform with three red lights. Get in the Z.O.E. box. Climb on the conveyor when it stops. You'll be taken to a room with the item.

Ninja Raiden – Complete 50% of the VR Missions as Raiden.

Photograph Mode – Finish Bomb Disposal, Hold Up, and Eliminate modes to unlock Photograph mode in the VR Missions.

Pliskin – Finish 50% of the VR Missions as Snake.

Raiden X – Beat all of the VR Missions as Raiden.

Stealth, Bandanna, Wig – Complete the Tanker mission three times on the three difficulty settings, and obtain every Dog Tag to get Stealth and Bandanna. To get Stealth and Wig for the plant, do the same thing for the Plant section.

Tuxedo Snake – Complete the VR Missions as Pliskin.

USP Suppressor – Complete the game and save it. Start a new game with the saved data. Go to the Navigation Deck after you defeat Olga. Climb the ladder where you previously receive the Thermal Goggles. On the middle platform you should find this weapon.

Vulcan Raven Action Figure – When you reach the engine room, you'll see a tiny Vulcan Raven doll on the floor. If you shoot it, he says something repeatedly and shoots small balls all over the place.

*Tom Cruise
Boise, ID*

STEEL BATTALION

It's an impressive title with plenty to offer. You can get even more value out of the product with these groovy codes.

Jump Flight Ability – Complete mission 23 on Magnum Force. Press Start + F3 during a mission to jump higher.

Lower Mech – Complete the game on Desperado. Press Hatch + Start during gameplay to lower your mech.

Mech and Level Select (Free Mission) – At the title screen, move the tuner to the following positions in order, with a pause of about a second before moving to the next position: 1, 9, 7, 9, 0, 9, 0, 6. A sound will confirm correct code entry. Note that the 0 position is on the left and the 4 position is at the top.

Monochrome Graphics – Complete the twenty-third mission on Veteran. Press Start + Night Scope during the mission loading screen.

Pause Feature – Simply disconnect the controller during a game. Plug it back in to resume!

Quasar Mech – On mission 7 or 17, enter the second floor of the enemy base. Enter the small room on your left. Defeat the mech inside and go to the large box with a rear switch. The Quasar mech's inside.

Rapier Mech – Obtain 10 decorations to unlock the Rapier VT.

Remove HUD – Reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and press Ignition + Start during gameplay.

Voice Select – Beat it on the Veteran difficulty setting. Go to the Configuration menu to find the Voice Select option.

*Alexa Wilson
Toronto, Canada*



GHOST RECON

Complete all objectives in the single mission Dossiers. The following codes can now be enabled during gameplay. A message will confirm a correct entry. Note that for the Invincibility code, you cannot complete the game as you normally would, since maps and Dossier items cannot be unlocked.

Big Heads – Back, A, X, B, Y, A

Chicken Explosives – Back, X (x2), Y, A, B

High Pitched Voices – Back, X, A, Y, B, X

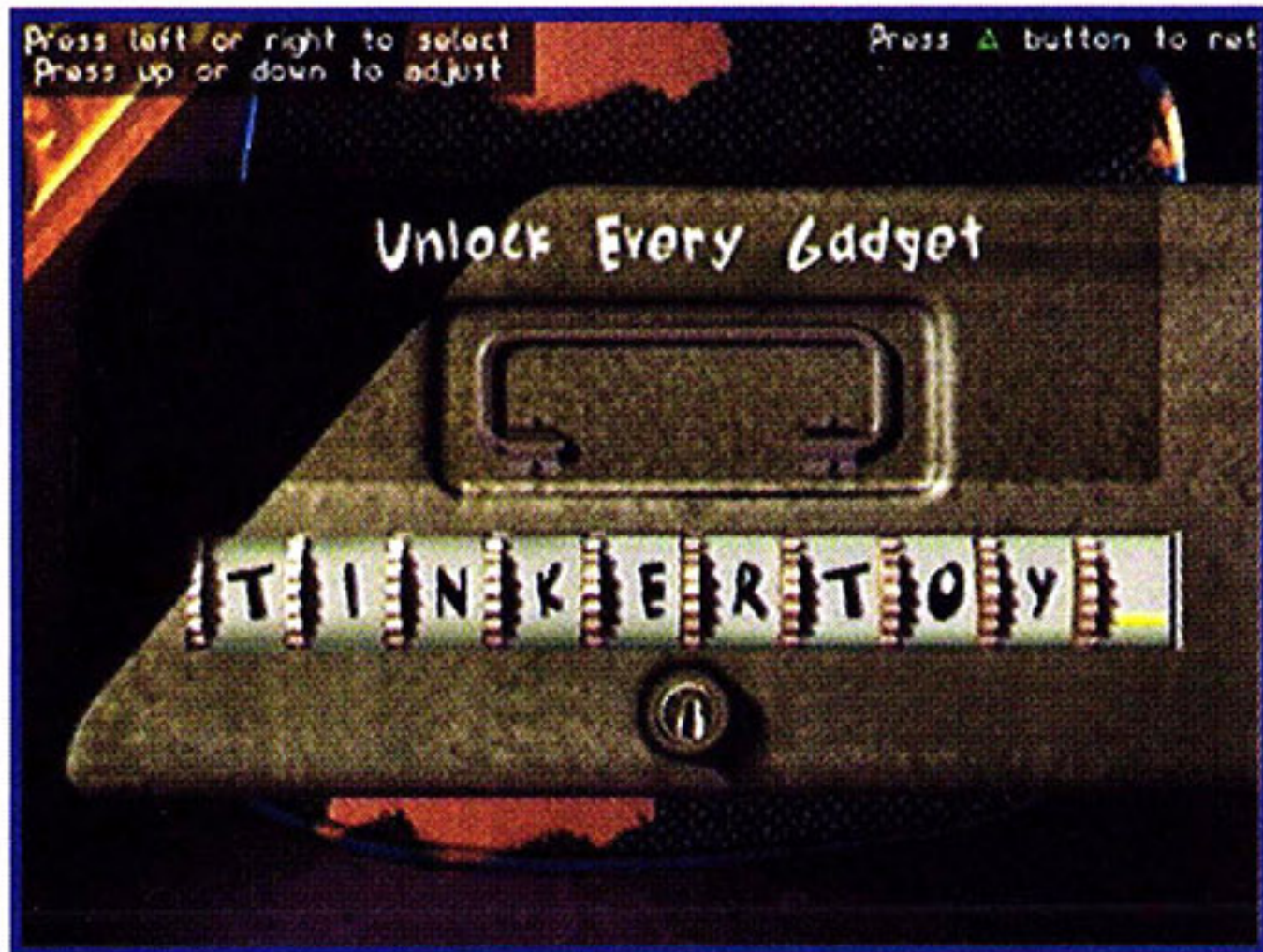
Invincibility Everyone – Back, B, A, Y (x2), B, A, X (x3)

Invincibility One-player – Back, X (x2), A, B, A

Paper Mode – Back, B, A, X, Y, A

Slow Motion – Back, Y (x2), B, X, A

*Jane Doe
Somewhere, CA*



DR. MUTO

Go to the options screen and then to the Cheats section.

- All Gadgets** – TINKERTOY
- All Morphs** – EUREKA
- Go Anywhere** – BEAMMEUP
- Invincibility** – NECROSCI
- Never Take Damage** – CHEATERBOY
- Secret Morphs** – LOGGLOGG
- Super Ending** – BUZZOFF
- View FMV Sequences** – HOTTICKET

*"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN*



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4

Go to the options menu and select Cheats. Enter all of the follow codes to unlock the corresponding cheat.

- Always Special** – doasuper
- Daisy** – (o)(o)
- Hidden Skaters (Eddie, Jango Fett, and Mike Vallely)** – homielist
- Master Code** – watch_me_xplode
- Matrix Mode** – nospoon
- Moon Physics** – superfly
- Perfect Manuals** – mullenpower
- Perfect Rail** – ssbsts

*Mike Lundgren
St. Paul, MN*



NHL 2003

To unlock the following hidden players, go to the Create a Player option and enter the first and last names. You'll receive that players ability automatically! If EA was going to include hidden characters, it could've at least offered a few unordinary players, like Mr. Burns.

Bonus Players

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Adam Hall | Jason LaBarbera |
| Alfie Michaud | Jason Zent |
| Barry Richter | Johan Withehall |
| Ben Simon | Kay Whitmore |
| Blake Bellefeuille | Larry Murphy |
| Brad Moran | Mark Fitzpatrick |
| Brian Sutherby | Marquis Mathieu |
| Chris Ferraro | Martin Brochu |
| Corey Hirsch | Matt Herr |
| Dave Morisset | Matt Higgins |
| David Nemirovsky | Michel Larocque |
| Derek Mackenzie | Raffi Torres |
| Eric Fichaud | Rene Corbet |
| Evgeny Konstantinov | Rich Parent |
| Greg Crozier | Rick Tabaracci |
| Greg Pankewicz | Sascha Goc |
| Guy Hebert | Scott Fankhouser |
| Ivan Huml | Ty Jones |
| Jakub Cutta | Xavier Delisle |

EA Employee Players

Go to the game's credit section and note the names of the various creators. Now, go to the Create a Player option and input each of the names (sorry, there are simply too many for us to write down). Be aware that a lot of them will work, but some will not. Also note that the female first names have been changed to male ones of a similar type. So, for example, Christine Staples becomes Christie Staples.

Missing Professionals

As you hardcore hockey fans probably noticed, there are a number of professionals missing, unfortunately. Go to the Create a Player section and enter the names of professional players that don't appear in the game. Although not every single one is available, more often than not, the exact profile will miraculously appear.

*"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen at Justin Lee's [A.K.A. Justin Leeper] wrestling match providing him with more than his fair share of boos)*



CONTRA ADVANCE

Feeling like a loser? Don't worry; we agree this game is tough. But if you can't take it, here's a little help.

- Level 2** – 11111N TYLH1Z FCS5H1 (Novice)
Y4HC1B L5P212 34ZWF1 (Normal)
- Level 3** – 111113 TYLH1W BHZXZ1 (Novice)
WXJD1Z JHSJ1Q KKNKY1 (Normal)
- Level 4** – 11111B TYLH1T XLGHSB (Novice)
ZWJF1J MGSL1B GP3LQB (Normal)
- Level 5** – G3421N TDN51N C3BV2C (Novice)
- Level 6** – W3MJ1S J4VP1N YY24BD (Novice)

*Mihoko Chida
Los Angeles, CA*

DOOM 2

As a Space Marine, no one can hear you scream. Either that, or they follow your voice and try to eat you. Pause, hold L+R, then enter the following codes.

- All Weapons, Items, Keys** – A, B (x2), A (x5)
- Berserk** – B, A, B, A (x5)
- Computer Map** – B, A (x7)
- Disable God Mode** – A (x2), B, A, B (x4)
- God Mode** – A (x2), B, A (x5)
- Invincibility** – B (x3), A (x5)
- Radiation Suit** – B (x2), A (x6)

*"Captain Howdy"
Georgetown*

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

Chet defines himself by this game: When he's happy he's Sakura; when he's sad, he's Chun Li; when he's angry, he's Zangief...this is just weird. Use these codes at the title screen for some help. You'll hear Ken or Ryu shout "hadouken" to confirm the entry.

- All Fighters** – Left, Right, Down, Right, L Button (x2), A, L Button (x2), B, R Button, A, Up
- All ISMs and Modes** – A, Up, A, L Button, R Button, Right, L Button, Right, A, Down, Right
- All Modes and Handicaps** – L Button, Right, A, R Button, Up, L Button, Right, B, A, Up, Right, Down, Right

*"The Game Molester"
Washington, D.C.*

SEGA SMASH PACK

Ecco The Dolphin

Cheat Menu – Keep turning Ecco to the left and right, and pause when Ecco faces you. Now input the following code: Right, B, R, B, R, Down, R, Up.

*John Doe
Nowhere, MN*

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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CLASSIC GI

THE BEST OF THE TURBOGRAFX

TOP 10 TURBOGRAFX GAMES



NEC's TurboGrafx 16 and its CD peripheral were great consoles doomed by bad timing. Things started out strong with a hard-hitting first-party lineup, a budding mascot in Bonk, and some pretty graphics. However, the more powerful 16-bit platforms soon grabbed the glory and the third-party licenses, ending this

machine's run much too soon. To pay our respects to the console's legacy, we give you our list of the Top 10 TurboGrafx Games, followed by a brief history of the platform in all its incarnations.

10 NINJA SPIRIT

One of the best ninja games released, Spirit is filled with high-adrenaline action, loads of weapons, and a great gimmick: Shadowy ninja ghosts follow you around, duplicating your moves. Mowing down countless enemies then battling a gigantic boss is what it's all about – just like in IREM's other TG-16 hit, R-Type. It's just too bad we won't see a next-gen update to Ninja Spirit, as we have with Shinobi and Ninja Gaiden.



9 NEUTOPIA

This may be a Zelda rip-off, but it's one of the best. Neutopia gives you four massive worlds and a devastating flame attack that grows larger as you progress. Its bright, vivid graphics, varied environments, and tight gameplay make it an addictive duplication of one of video gaming's brightest gems. If you like old-school Zelda (and who doesn't?), then Neutopia is a must-play.



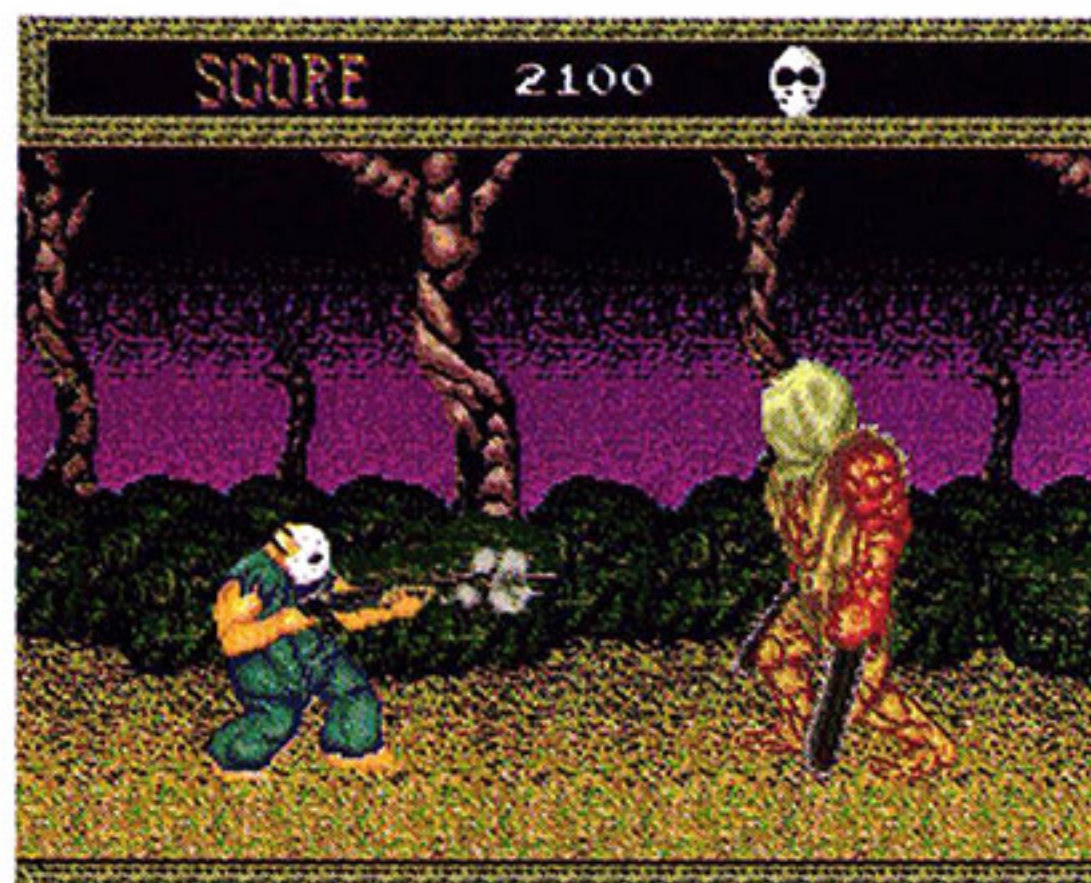
8 THE LEGENDARY AXE

This game isn't your typical hack n' slasher. Okay, it actually is, but it's done to perfection. The pace is frenzied, as our hero chops down foes left and right. The bosses are colossal in size and require expert control. The backdrops for all this violence are equally admirable, ranging from steamy lava to ice-topped mountains to vegetation-filled jungles. Sadly, its sequel couldn't do justice to this legendary release.



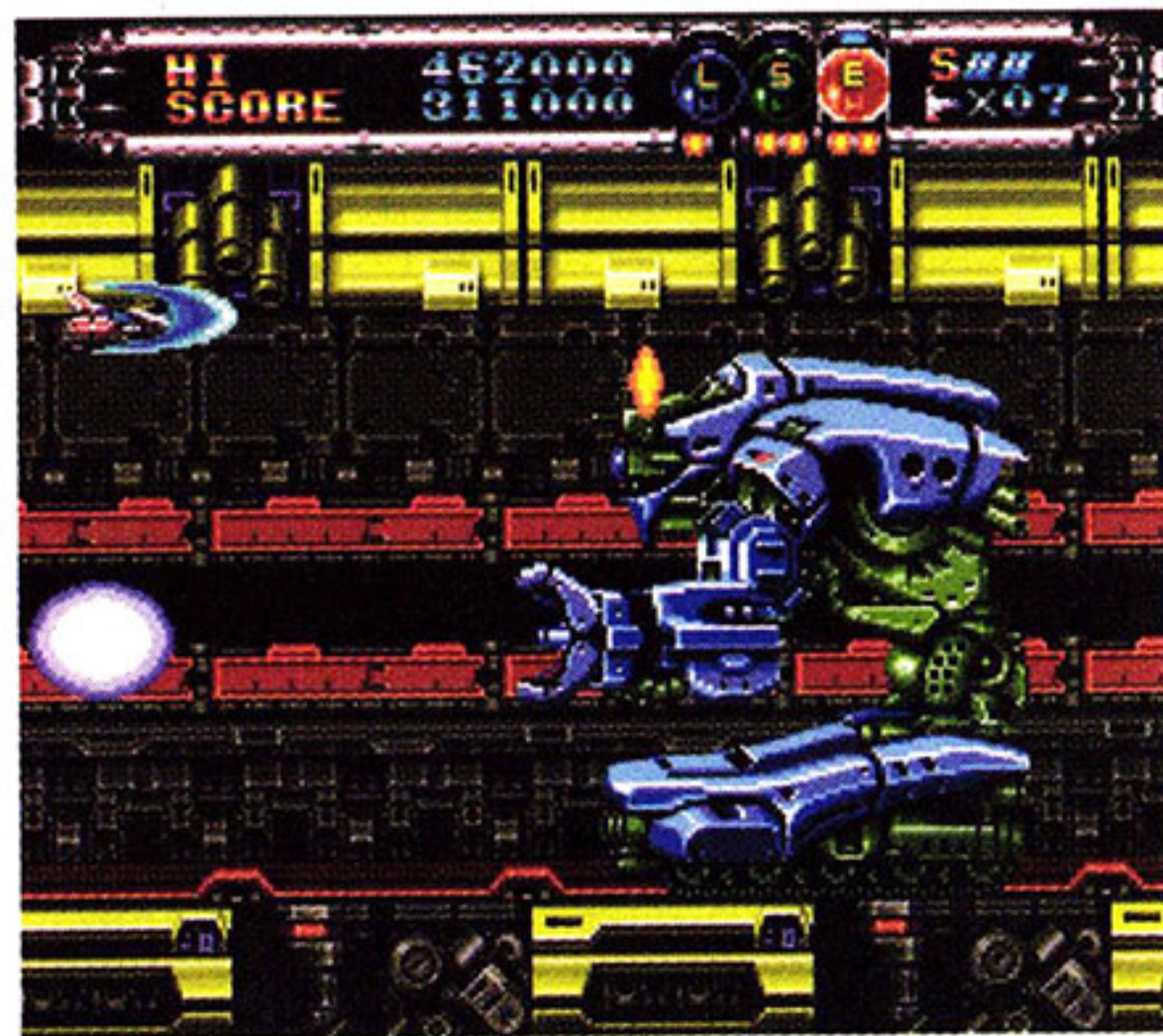
7 SPLATTERHOUSE

This may stand as the first survival horror game. As a facemask-wearing hero, you're forced to grab 2x4s, chainsaws, and shotguns to make your way through a nightmarish mansion and rescue your girlfriend. Namco put the gore factor on high, and designed some freakish creatures to tangle with. Surprises are around every corner; so, while you may have a whole chair, you will only need the edge.

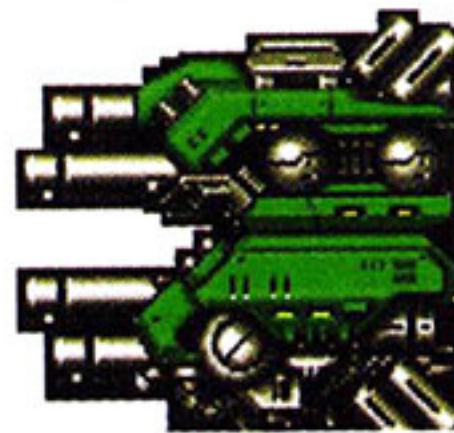


6 GATE OF THUNDER

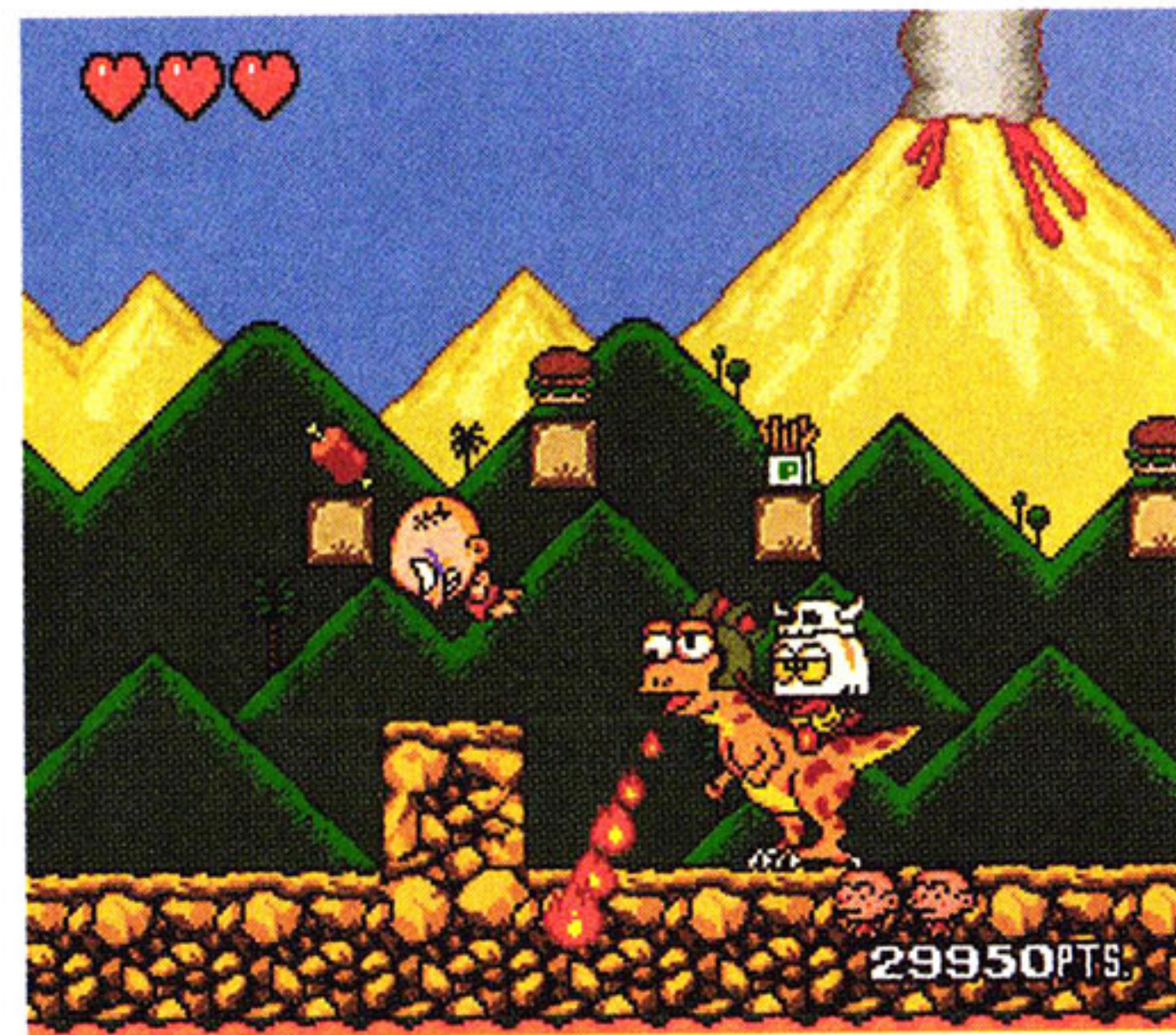
Though it doesn't have much to do with gameplay, we have to admit presentation counts. As a showcase to the TurboGrafx CD's abilities, Gate of Thunder featured



some unbelievable graphics – especially when you consider the Turbo's limitations. Pseudo-3D effects dazzled like nothing had before, and the bosses nearly filled the screen. Also of merit was the audio, which took full advantage of the CD medium. In terms of gameplay, Gate of Thunder sits among shooter icons like R-Type and Thunder Force.



5 BONK II: BONK'S REVENGE



NEC's head-banging cave-man mascot, Bonk, had all the makings of a platform superstar. The original Bonk's Adventure set the scene; but, like Sonic the Hedgehog, he hit his stride in the sequel. Bonk uses his teeth to scale cliffs, whacks enemies with his head, and eats chunks of meat for power-ups. The colorful levels are loaded with alternate routes and hidden items, and the bosses are massive, detailed entities that take your breath away.

4 ALIEN CRUSH

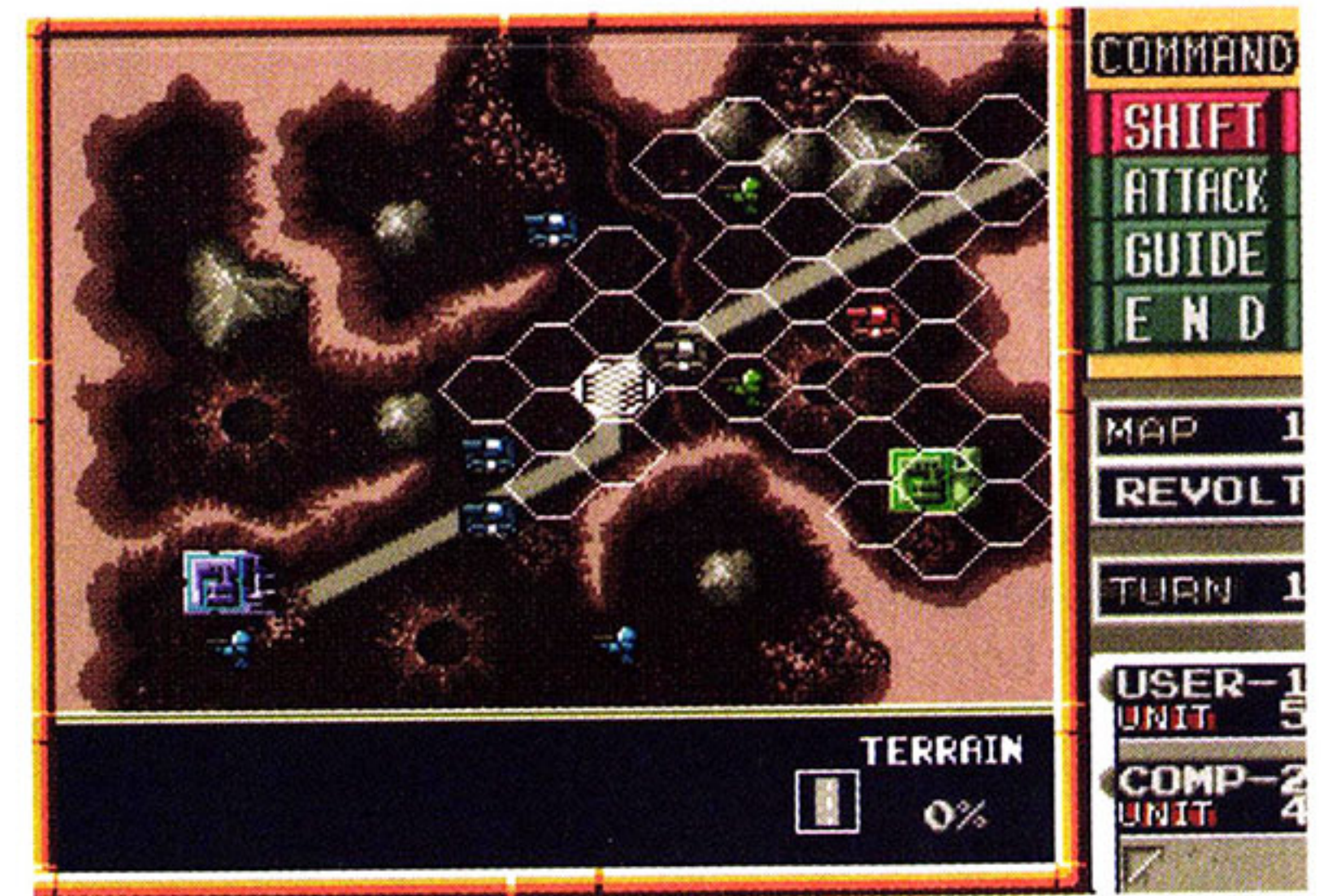
The TurboGrafx is responsible for perhaps the best pinball video games of all time. Alien Crush is the original, and launched with the console. Its music and graphics blew everything else away, and the ball physics are still superior to anything on the market.

The two-screen table is filled with interaction, and several bonus mini-games can be revealed. The sequel, Devil's Crush, expanded the board and the enemies to blast, but we must give props to the originator.



3 MILITARY MADNESS

Widely regarded as one of the best strategy RPGs of all time, Military Madness gave gamers a vast selection of military craft and a hexagonal grid-lined battleground to wage war upon. Dozens of levels exist, each with its own arsenal of ground troops, tanks, and aircraft. Every unit had specifications as to how good its offense and defense were, and even how it responded to different terrain types.



Military Madness is still addictive to this day and its influence lives on in other great titles like Advance Wars.

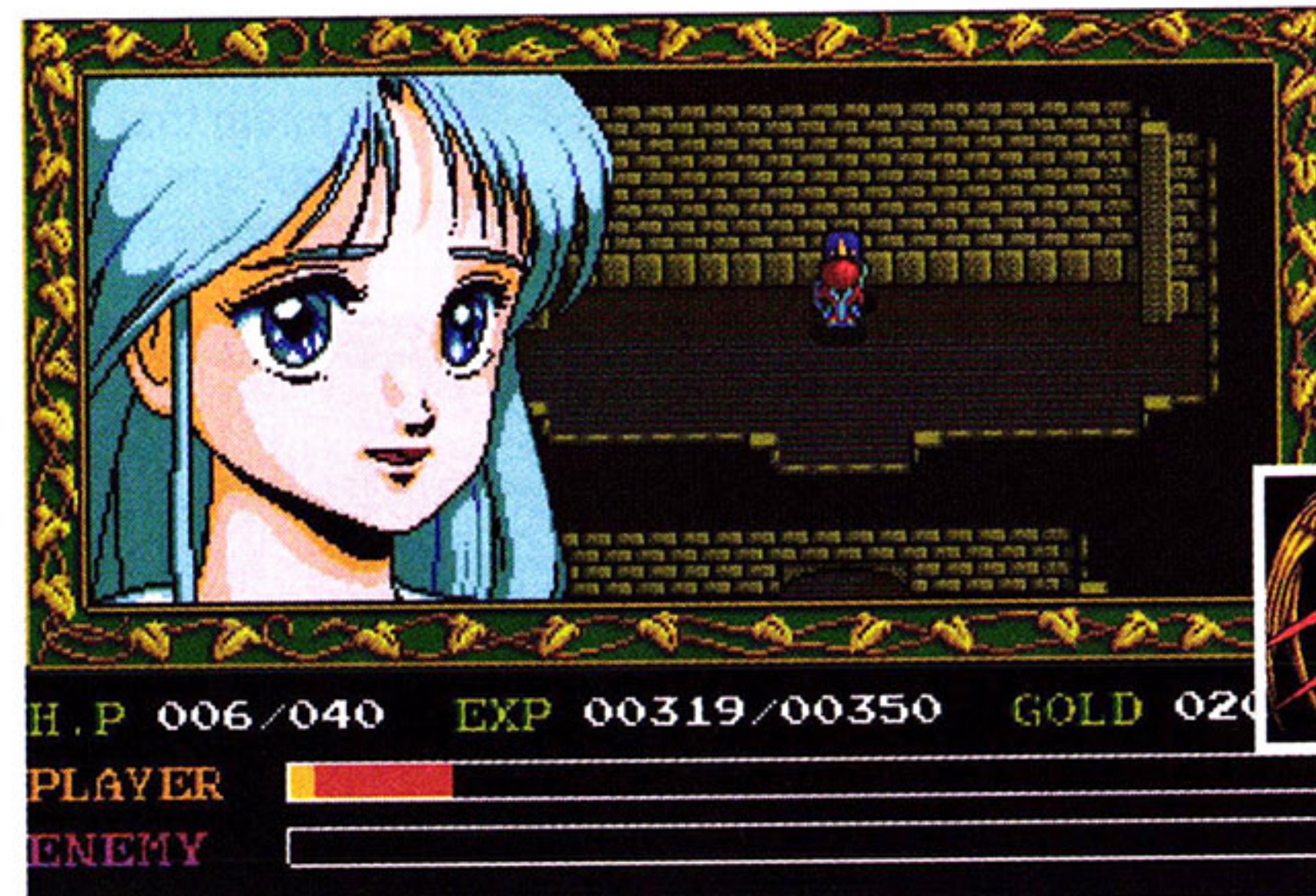
2 BLAZING LAZERS

A stellar shooter is one that combines nonstop enemies, creative weapons, and a Zen-like relationship between the gamer and his onscreen alter ego. Blazing Lasers hits all of these criteria, heaping stunning graphics, speedy gameplay, and tremendous bosses on top of it. Both primary and secondary weapons could be upgraded to put a whole lot of firepower at your fingertips – with nine long, vertically-scrolling levels, you're going to need all the help you can get. This game guns its way to the top of the shooter heap.



1 Y'S BOOK I & II

Few games have influenced this industry like Y's. As the first console CD-ROM RPG, it brought forth revolutionary concepts that are now considered commonplace. FMV anime sequences? Started here. Professional voiceovers? Sure enough. Epic music? You got it. The story tears at your heartstrings and continues on through two quests (or books) in one package. The combat never got tedious, though it is slightly odd that you don't see your hero swing his sword.



Y's Book I & II changed gaming forever; and, for that, we make it the #1 TurboGrafx Game.



CLASSIC GI

START YOUR PC ENGINE!

The TurboGrafx started where most video games do – in Japan. NEC was widely known as a computer manufacturer, and its PC Engine was extremely popular there. In 1989, it was brought to the U.S. under the name TurboGrafx 16. While using an 8-bit main processor, Turbo's 16-bit graphics processor put the NES to shame. The color palette and sprite size were leagues ahead, giving it a distinct advantage.

TurboDuo



As Sega was bringing out its own CD system, the TurboDuo launched in limited supply. This unit combined the TurboGrafx and its CD player into one cohesive unit. It was sleeker and more "modernized," and was upgraded to have quadruple the memory of the original Turbo CD. At the same time, NEC and prime developer Hudson Soft joined together to form Turbo Technologies, Inc.

HUCARD OR CREDIT CARD?

TurboGrafx games were contained in HuCards, which were the about the size of credit cards, though a little thicker. Like CDs, they came packaged in jewel cases.



SEE THE CD

The Turbo-Grafx CD add-on, which came out at the same time, was the first video game console to play CD-ROMs. Compact discs can hold 550 megabytes of data, which was 2,000 times more than the largest cartridge. All of this space could be used for things like full-motion video (first used in Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective) and high-quality audio. However, software was slow in coming; and, after a year, there were only a handful of titles released.



Fighting Street, the first CD game, was a console version of Capcom's Street Fighter

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Turbo Technologies, Inc. announced it was giving up the ghost in early 1994; but, by then, few people were listening. So, what happened?

Nintendo had a massive stranglehold on the market, and few people were looking for a new console. Also, right off, the Genesis was a more powerful system (16-bit in most respects). While NEC could compete nose-to-nose in first-party software, Sega had countless third-party publishers like EA, Renovation, and Data East making top-selling titles. When the Super Nintendo came out in 1991, TurboGrafx was immediately pushed far to the back of the class as a distant third. The high price point of the CD and Turbo Express kept them a non-factor.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER & TAKING IT WITH YOU

The console parade didn't stop there. To compete with other portables, NEC crafted the Turbo Express, which played the library of existing TurboGrafx games (CD-ROMs excluded). Coming out in 1990, its design looked like the original Game Boy, but its screen resembled Atari's Lynx: full-color and in high resolution. Turbo Express had an optional TV Tuner, which could turn it into a miniature color television. The high cost (\$300) and limited release of the unit kept sales low, however. Remarkably, this little-known handheld makes an appearance in the blockbuster film, *Enemy of the State*.

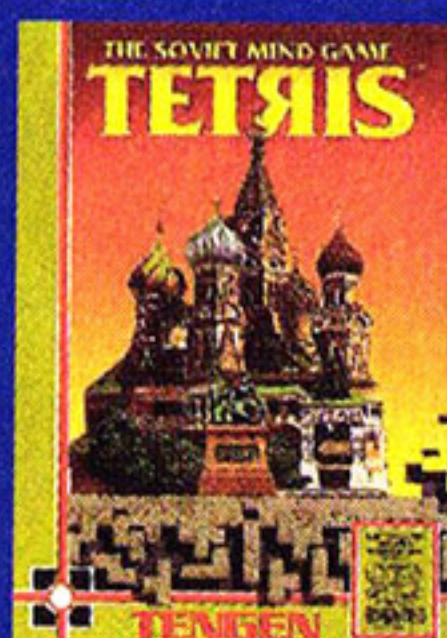


Turbo Express

As you saw from our list, there are many great Turbo games to reminisce over. Other must-play titles that come to mind include Bomberman '93, Cadash, J.B. Harold Murder Club, and Devil's Crush. A system that doesn't sell well and dies is not without value, and the TurboGrafx 16 is testament to this.

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

In March of 1989, Nintendo purchases the rights to the puzzle game Tetris from Russian company ELORG (Electronorgtechinca). It then tries to prevent Mirrorsoft – which licensed the rights to Atari and Bullet-Proof for the arcade and Japanese NES (Famicom) versions, respectively, and released a PC version on its own – from using the property any longer. A legal battle ensues. Even so, Atari released an unlicensed NES version in the U.S., using the Tengen label. It's taken off of shelves soon after, as Nintendo wins an injunction. Despite this victory, Tengen's version of Tetris is still considered to be superior to Nintendo's and is quite collectible.



Tengen's Tetris

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Mark Baynai

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



GOLDENEYE 007

■ **FORMAT** NINTENDO 64
 ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO

For me, the greatest game of all time is GoldenEye 007 for the Nintendo 64. It should be the basis for every first-person shooter. Games have been made that come close to its standard – some have done even better in some areas – but GoldenEye is still superior.

The gameplay is perfect, with a tremendous amount of weapons to choose from and lots of enemies to take down. It's got plenty of challenge and replay value: See how fast you can get through a mission, or how many guards you can eliminate. The difficulty level is very good, with each stage being a little harder than the last. Fortunately, it has an easy learning curve. Multiplayer mode, which is even more fun than playing solo, is where this title really excels. There are over 10 levels to choose from and many characters to unlock.

The game's sound is terrific. You can hear bullets from all directions and explosions from far away. Of course, each level comes with the 007 theme music, which makes you feel like you're playing in an actual Bond movie.

The graphics for GoldenEye were ahead of their time, really showing off what the Nintendo 64 can do. The character models are nice; James Bond looks particularly spectacular. Each level design faithfully matches the locations from the movie. I can't forget the great explosions and entertaining hit detection.

Even today, with so many games that will one day be considered classics (the incredible graphics of Halo, the spectacular multiplayer of TimeSplitters 2, and the amazing realism of Medal of Honor: Frontline), I still find myself pulling out the old cartridge and dusting off my Nintendo 64, so I can play GoldenEye, a true classic.

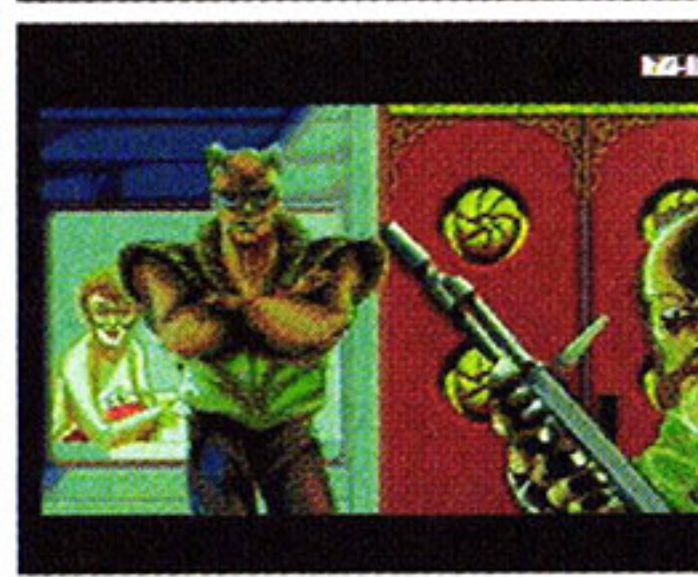
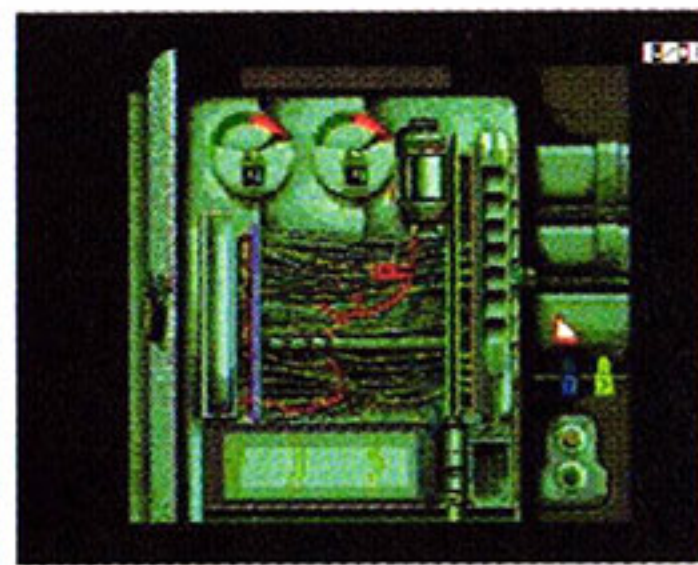
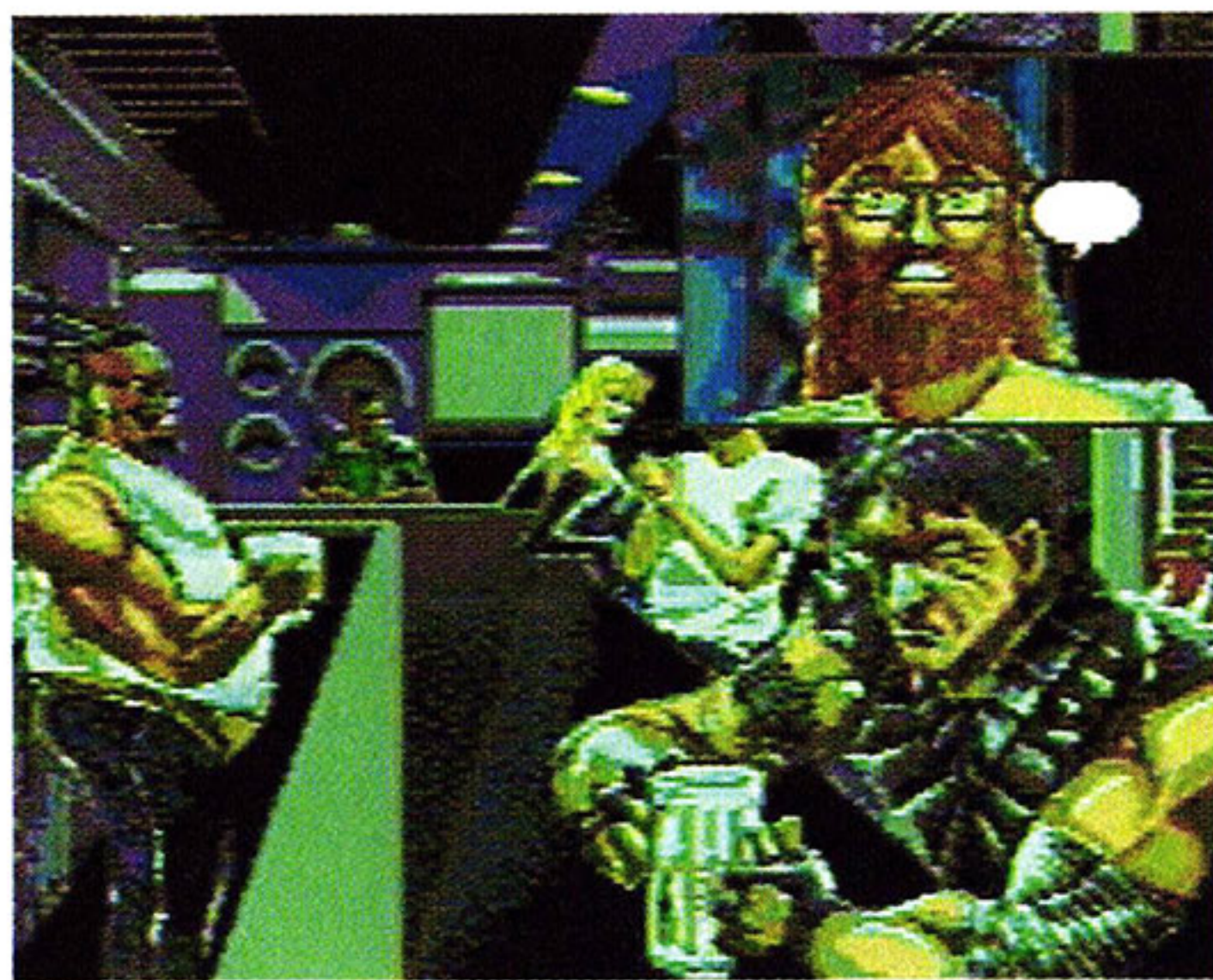


SEGA CD

RISE OF THE DRAGON



RETRO RATING
7.75



Best described as a poor man's Snatcher, Rise of the Dragon features a gritty, hard-nosed cop in a dirty, post-apocalyptic America. Drugs, violence, and some potty language give this an M rating as Dynamix attempts to duplicate motion picture drama. It does a pretty good job at it, too. A new drug is killing everyone who takes it, and prophesy tells that the dreaded Bahumat is returning to bring a dark reign upon the world. The main character, Blade Hunter, is our planet's only hope. The point-and-click interface is a little slow without a mouse, but it's accompanied by tons of voice acting. The main purpose is to click around until you find what you're looking for, then go into the next area and do the same. The storyline usually keeps this from getting overly repetitive, and a timer keeps you on your toes. There are a few frustrating scenes, however – like when you have to tap a videophone. The side-scrolling, arcade sequences are a low point as well. If you can get past these unpleasanties, though, you're left with an entertaining adventure.

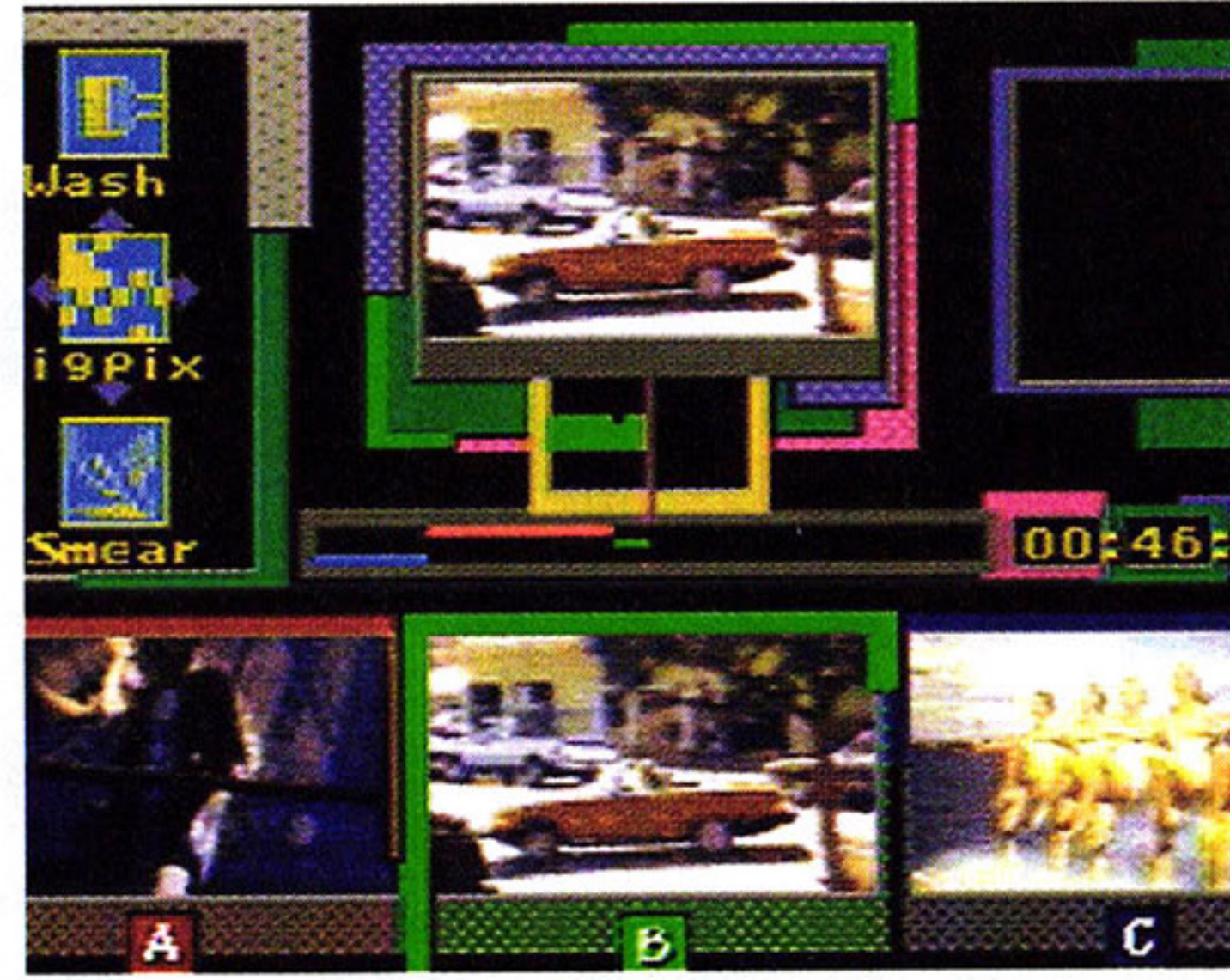
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA ON-LINE ■ **DEVELOPER** DYNAMIX
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

SEGA CD

MARKY MARK AND THE FUNKY BUNCH: MAKE MY VIDEO



RETRO RATING
0



Undoubtedly, the Make My Video series of "games" did more to sink the Sega CD than that iceberg did to the Titanic. In this installment, Dirk Diggler...er, Marky Mark, is the featured artist, with the Funky Bunch in tow. A pair of siblings – a sister who thinks Marky's "too sexy for a shirt" and a brother who looks up to his tough, street attitude – argue over what kind of video you should make. Follow their demands, as well as requests from other characters, and craft a video to please them. This consists of picking which of three grainy stock footage clips to put on the screen, and then activating lame effects to alter them. You do this through the entire song, after which you have to watch it all over again, viewing your masterpiece. It hurts. It hurts bad. There is no fun in it, and can only be compared to a baby being forced to sit around in a chunky diaper. No so-called game in the history of gamedom is this atrocious, except for maybe the Kriss Kross, C&C Music Factory, or INXS Make My Video releases.

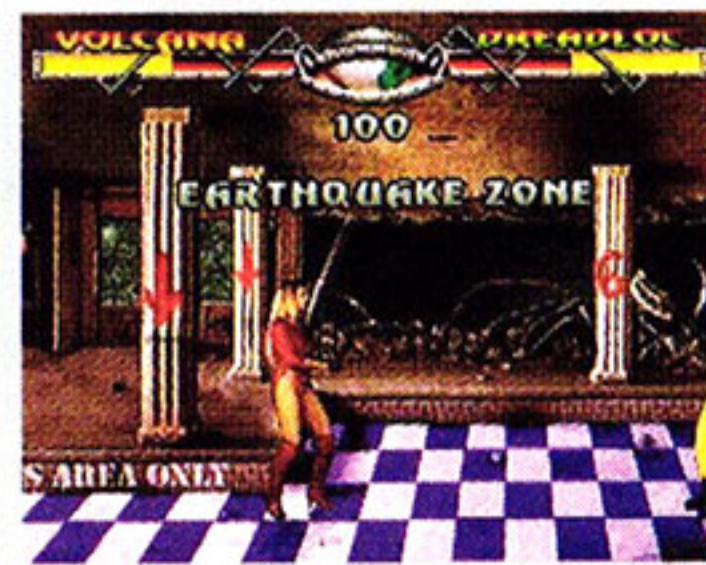
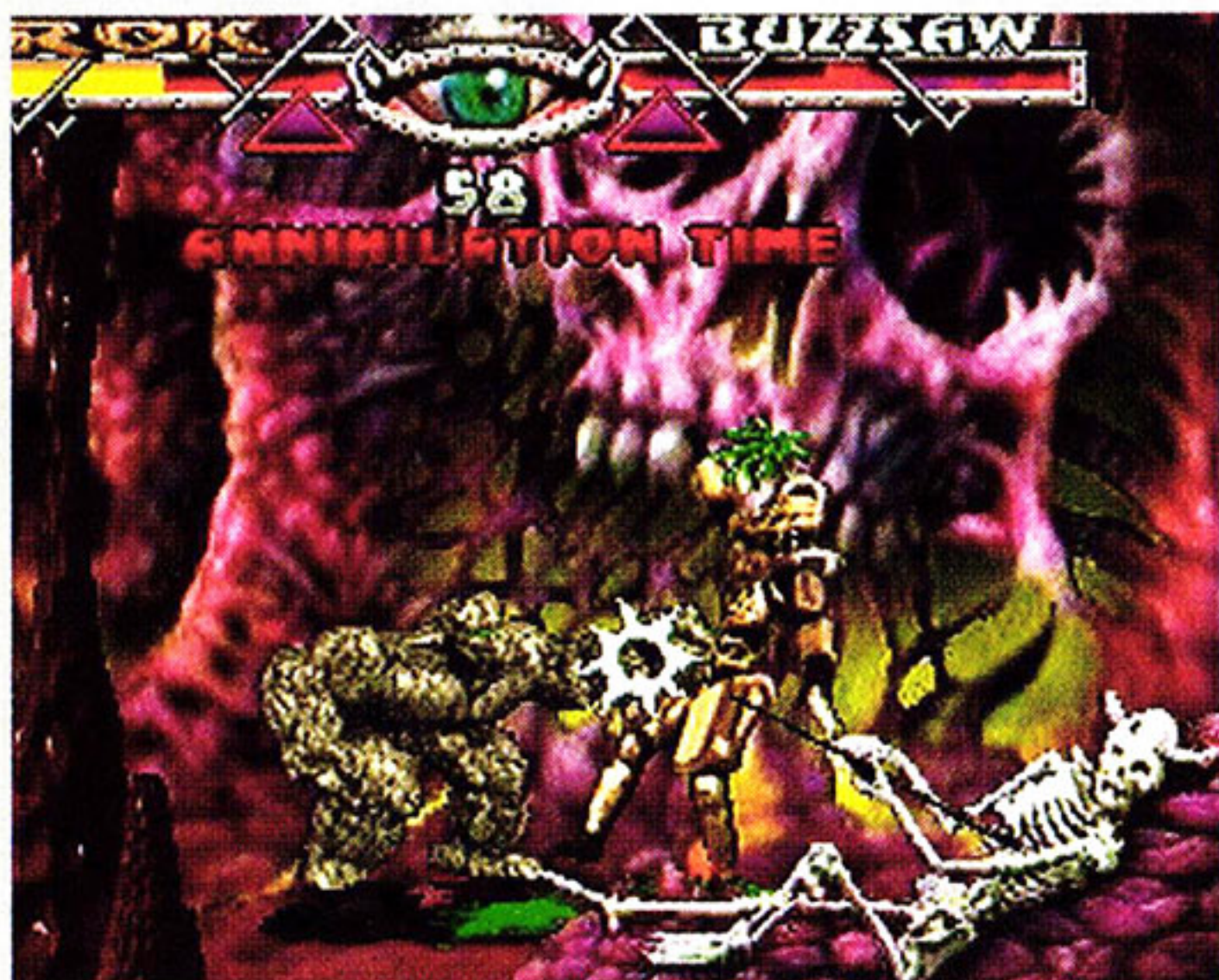
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL PICTURES
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1992

JAGUAR

ULTRA VORTEK



RETRO RATING
.5



The "k" at the end of the title baffles us. We always thought this game was titled Ultra Vortex, which would be appropriate considering each fight you win helps to construct a sort of vortex. But after a mere five minutes of button mashing, we quickly discovered that the stupid name actually suits the stupid premise and the awful gameplay. Riding on the hype of Mortal Kombat, UV offers players a host of lame digitized characters and the ability to perform an uninspired fatality to finish the match. Unfortunately, controlling your fighter and executing special moves are a headache. Also, the lack of a combo system and any strategy means that every battle consists of frantically bashing the kick and punch buttons. Perhaps if the game's cosmetic appeal went even slightly beyond that of fecal matter, we could have at least enjoyed the undoubtedly hilarious designs of such characters as Dreadloc. Fortunately, since UV received little press at the time and released close to the Jaguar's death, most gamers were spared this agonizing reminder of how poor Atari's self-proclaimed 64-bit system was.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** BEYOND GAMES
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

JAGUAR

KASUMI NINJA



RETRO RATING
1



Torture to a fighting game fanatic: Condemn him or her to a lifetime of playing only Jaguar titles. We guarantee that said person would rather live in gaming celibacy than be subjected to the likes of Fight for Life, Ultra Vortek, and Kasumi Ninja. Although Kasumi Ninja's superior graphics and laughably cheesy character designs elevate it above Ultra Vortek, its gameplay is equally as horrible. You won't find any hints of strategy, a combo system, or decent control; instead, Atari subjects you to stage after stage of mindless button mashing and silly looking, albeit gory, finishing moves. Seriously, the closest thing to technique available is the old two-in-one jump kick to sweep – except the sweep only connects when the enemy AI acts really foolish! If you still feel compelled to own a Jaguar fighter for nostalgia's sake, Kasumi Ninja is certainly the lesser of the three fighting game evils. Just don't say we didn't warn you.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** ATARI
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

LOGITECH NETPLAY CONTROLLER

Manufacturer: Logitech
Website: www.logitech.com
List Price: \$69.99

Holy multiple personalities, Batman! Now typing in taunts while playing games like SOCOM or EverQuest Online Adventures is as easy as slaying an elf or thwarting a terrorist attack. This seemingly bulky and awkward keyboard/controller hybrid plays quite well for the amount of hardware incorporated into it, but does take a bit of getting used to. All of the Dual Shock functionality has been ported over in a surprisingly ergonomic shell, and the keyboard has everything you'll need to get those phonetically spelled cuss words spilling across the screen in no time. Okay, we're going AFK - BRB! ROFL!



CLASSIC FOOTBALL 2/ CLASSIC BASEBALL

Manufacturer: Mattel • **Website:** www.mattel.com
List Price: \$12.99

Those classic handheld games whose memory you've drunkenly reveled in with your fellow Gen X'ers are back in a big way. We've got both of them, and while they're painfully primitive in their play and look, that's actually part of the charm. The great "bleeps" and "bloops" still stream through the little speaker, and yes, it's still easy to lose a number of hours per sitting on each game. More importantly, it's fun to turn on a game that can take you back to a time when the economy was being ground into the toilet, the unemployment rate was up, and we were on the brink of war with a Middle Eastern country. Hey, wait a second...



GAME INFORMER EDITOR STANDEES

Manufacturer: Pathetic Loser Enterprises
Website: www.chick-phil-a.com • **List Price:** Negotiable

Need a way to use the carpool lane in your city without actually having to suffer the company of another human? Need a date to the prom? How about a shoulder to cry on, or an eyeball to poke out? With the GI Editor standees, your life is about to take a turn for the better. Through our exhaustive focus group testing, we've found that each standee is flammable, effortlessly torn to shreds, and capable of being squeezed into a small compact cube for easy transport to your garbage can. Put boxing gloves on your standee and stage a reenactment of the Holyfield-Tyson fight, or take a bath with it. If you're anything like us, you'll probably use them as life-size rage receptacles, and reduce them to charred, twisted filth that smells like urine. Now, if you'll excuse us, we're late for an appointment with our therapist.



AMERICAN MCGEE'S OZ FIGURINES

Manufacturer: Workshop Toys
Website: www.workshoptoys.com
List Price: \$10-12

So there you are in your bedroom without a thing to do but play with yourself. That's where the action figures come in, genius! Okay, they're not really action figures per se, they're figurines; and they're meticulously painted and sculpted. Based on characters in a game scheduled to release next year (Oz), McGee has decided to embrace the "chicken before the egg" mentality, and start the merchandizing blitz early. From the look of these figures, the game has every opportunity to be as strange as Alice was, but time will tell. We'll keep you updated on McGee's newest baby as we hear it.

PM300 PYROMAT GAME CHAIR

Manufacturer: Pyromat • **Website:** www.pyromat.com • **List Price:** \$150.00

Here's a new take on an old idea: your one-stop gaming chair. Pyromat has melded the best of many worlds to bring you this comfy yet powerful piece of interactive furniture. Unlike PM Dawn, the PM300 is sure to calm your nerves, and never initiate your gag reflex. Unless you try to eat it - please don't do that. With a three speaker sound system and a four-inch woofer injecting 50 watts worth of hard-hitting bass into your lumbar region, you're sure to liquefy your bowels in no time. If you're between games, use it for a relaxing home stereo solution, or a huge, very expensive pillow. Compatible with the big three next-gen consoles, DVD, CD, and MP3 players, receivers, and TVs, this is a chair for the ADD patient in all of us.



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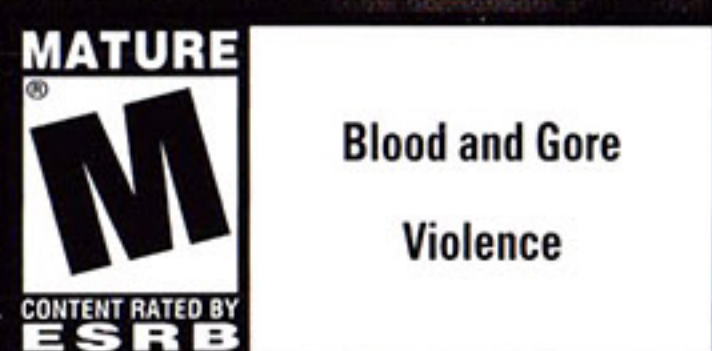
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