



FIRST REVIEW:
ZELDA

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**COVER
2 OF 2**

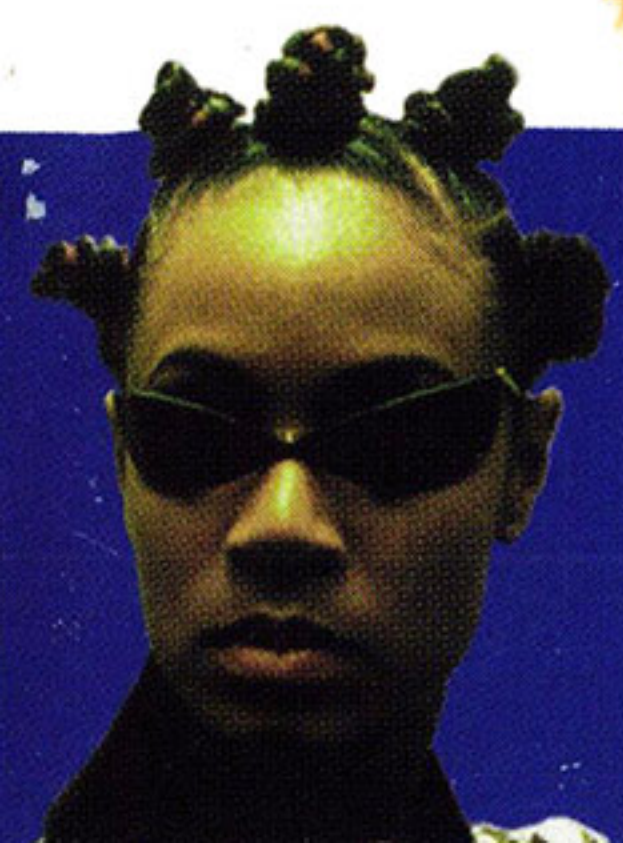
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KILLER PREVIEWS
Including Deus Ex 2, Enter The
Matrix and Project Gotham 2 pg. 56

ISSUE
120

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APRIL 2003

w h e n y o u c a n d o e v e r y t h i n g , t h e



Take the first step in the sequel to one of the most epic quests ever: Dark Cloud 2. Create weapons. Invent gadgets. Restore the future by rebuilding the past with an enhanced Georama system that puts the fate of the world in your hands. Customize homes, surroundings and towns with virtually infinite possibilities, then see how they affect the future. But beware: Every action has a consequence.

PlayStation 2



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Take it to the street and experience the rush of the first cell-shaded online racer for the PlayStation² computer entertainment system. Build the ultimate dream car and go head-to-head against eight online players in your tricked-out, world-class ride. Feel the pulse of the street as you add sonic screen effects and digital music to your own instant replay footage. Racing fans get set and **Go! Auto Modellista.**



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RACING IS NOW!

E3 2002 GAMESPOT EDITORS CHOICE WINNER
BEST AND TOP GAMES MEDALS



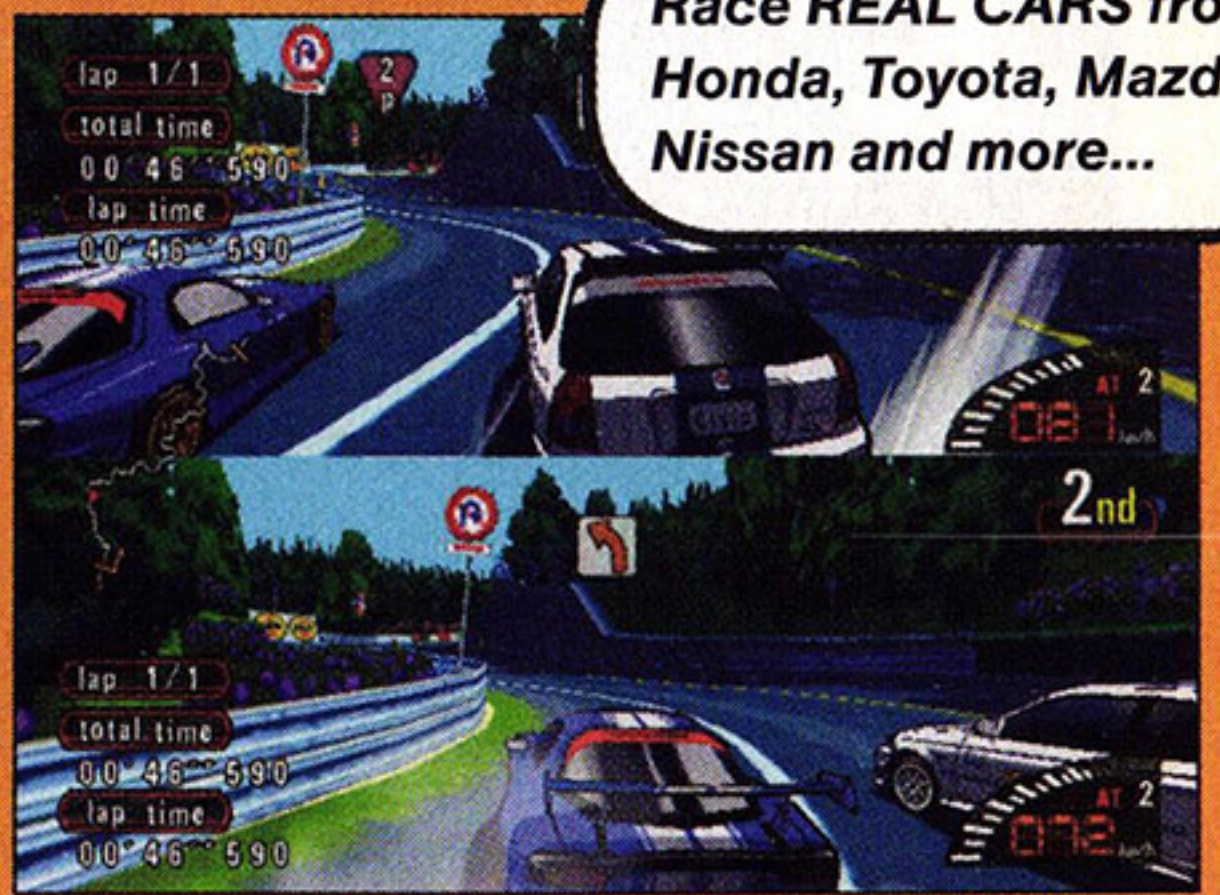
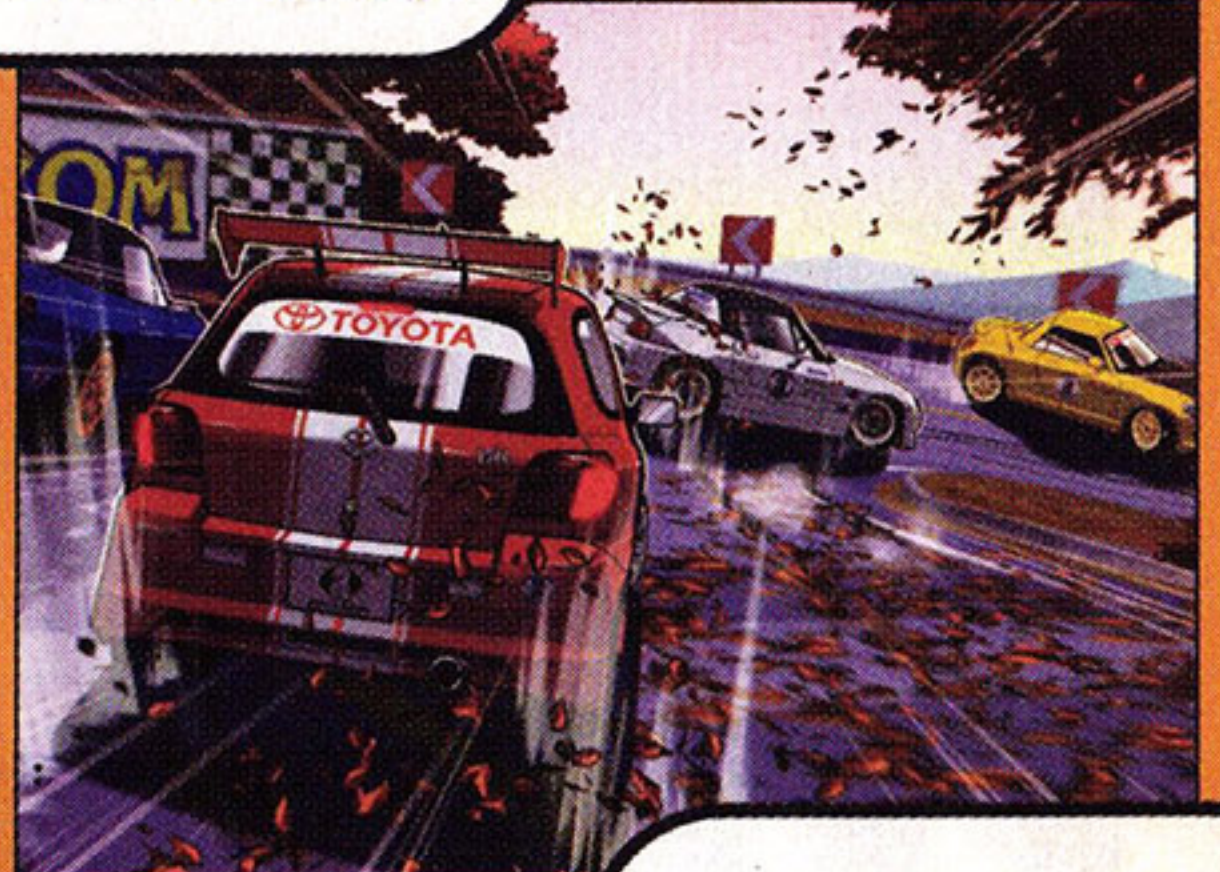
Race and chat with up to 8 OPPONENTS ONLINE with a Network Adaptor...



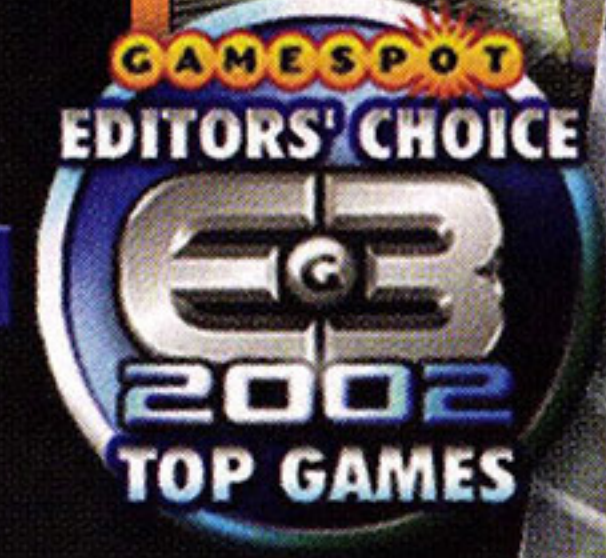
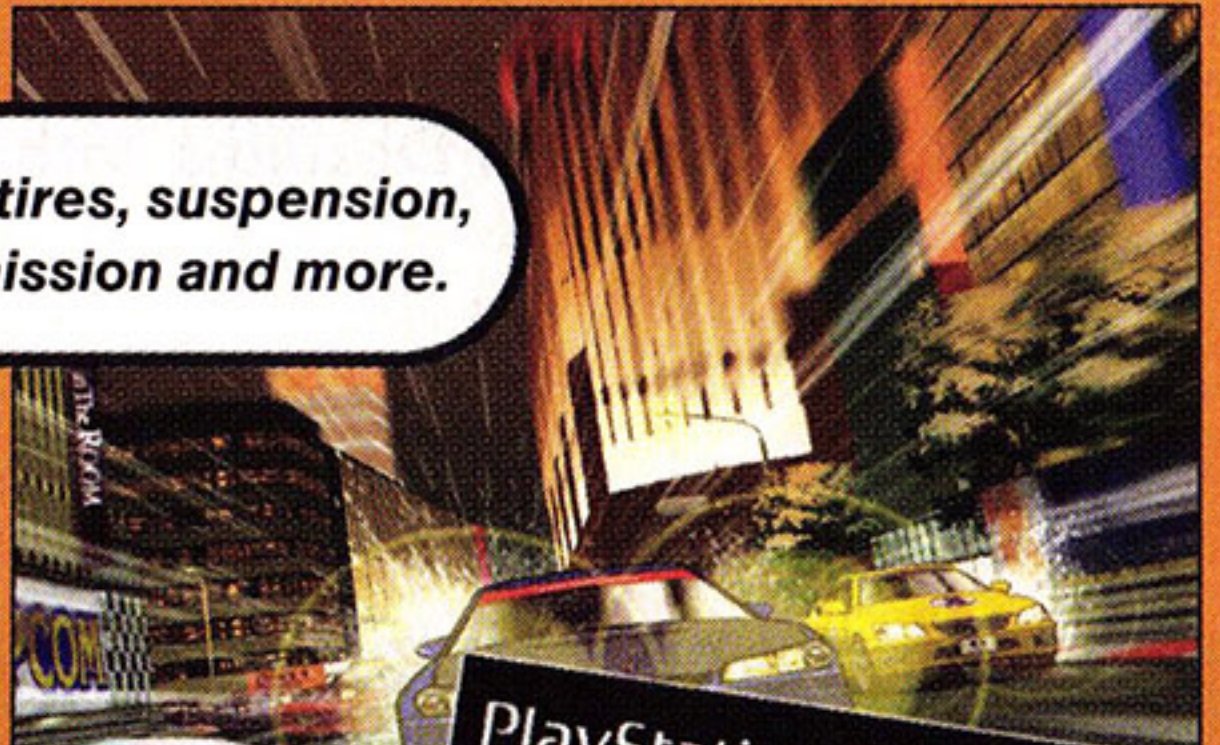
Edit your own INSTANT REPLAY Add music and screen effects...



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CUSTOMIZE your tires, suspension, turbine kit, transmission and more.



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PACKAGE

PlayStation®2





8:22 a.m. Ash arrives at the swanky Dearborn Hotel wearing a pair of wrap-around shades.

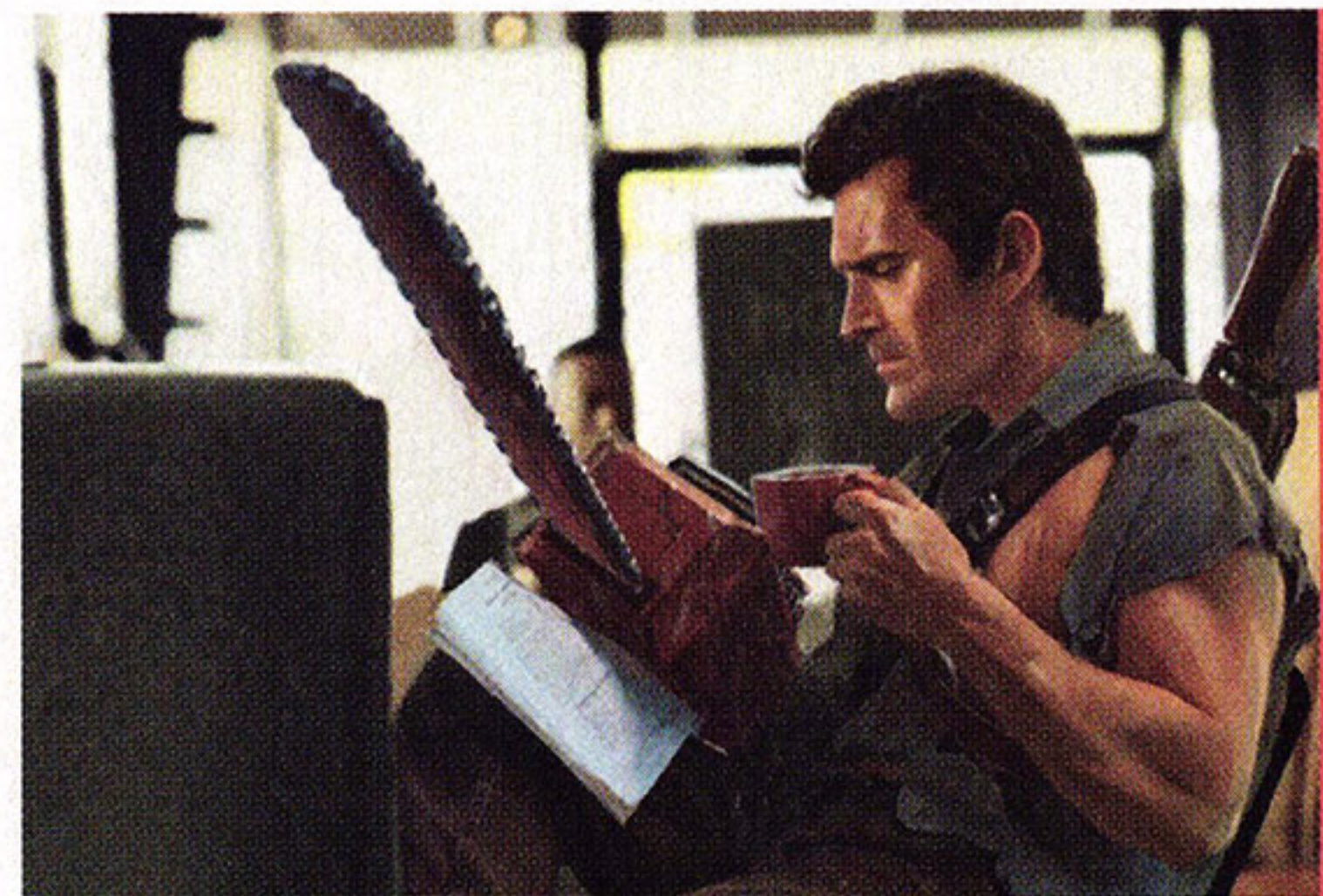


11:23 a.m. In a rush. Ash, late for a meeting with his agent, fends off Deadites with a chainsaw.

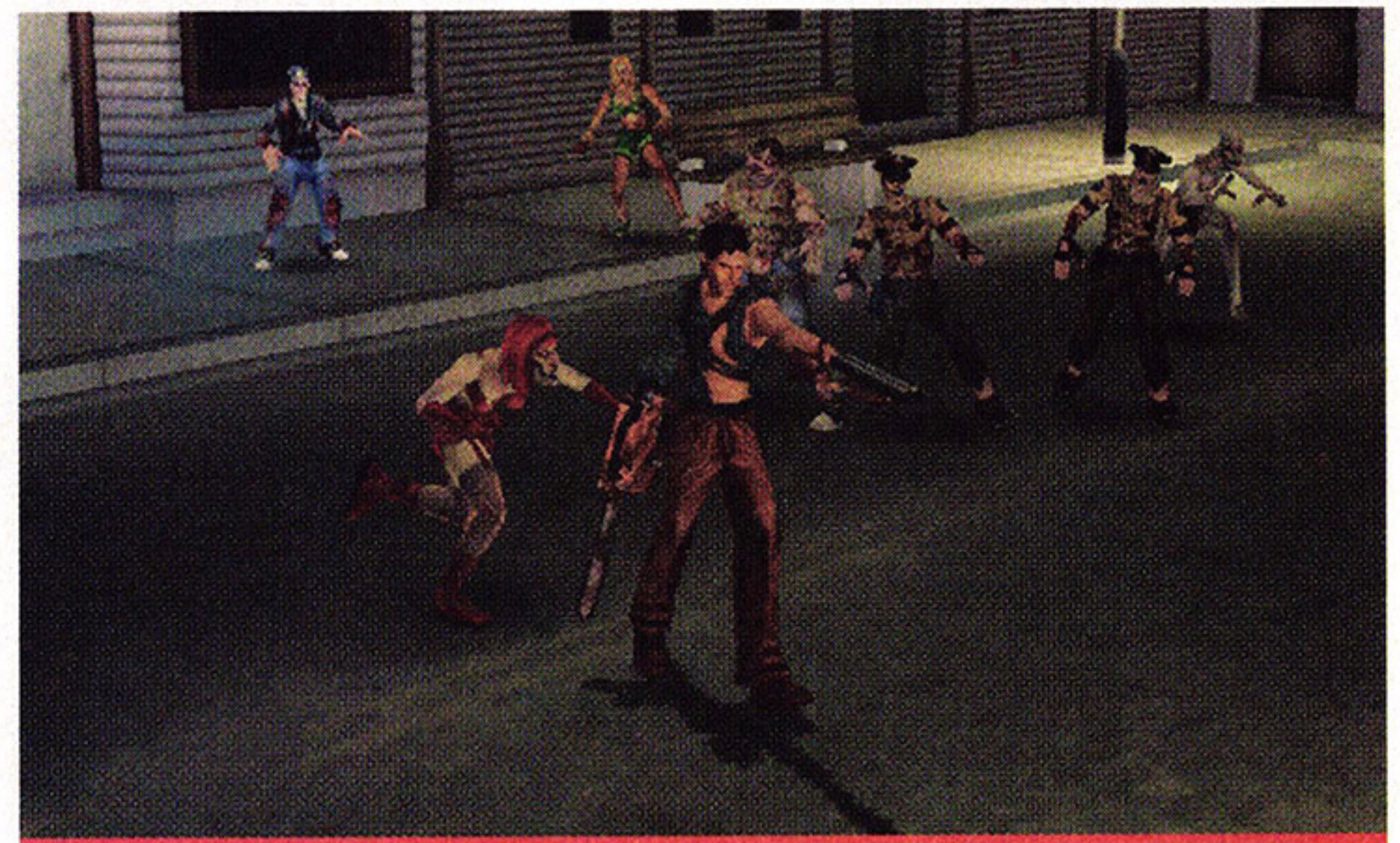
24 HOURS WITH ASH



We tracked this **ZOMBIE-KILLING MEGASTAR** on a recent stop to Dearborn, Michigan.



10:56 a.m. We caught Ash sipping a cup of Sri Lankan Chai Latte at a trendy local bistro.



12:44 p.m. Ash switches from the trusty chainsaw to a boomstick just for kicks.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Stop following me!!"

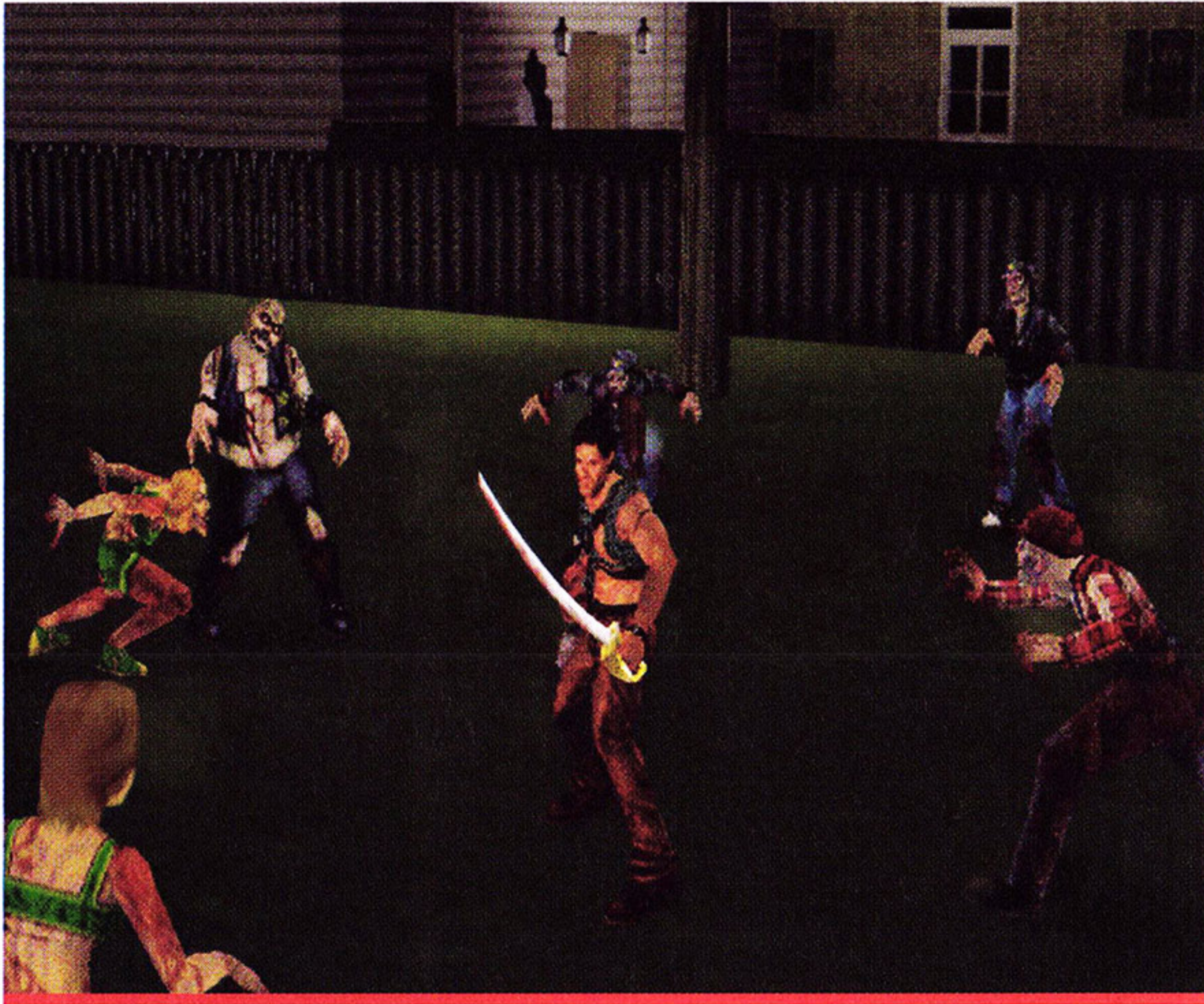
-ASH, to our photographer during an encounter in a public restroom.



Blood and Gore
Violence



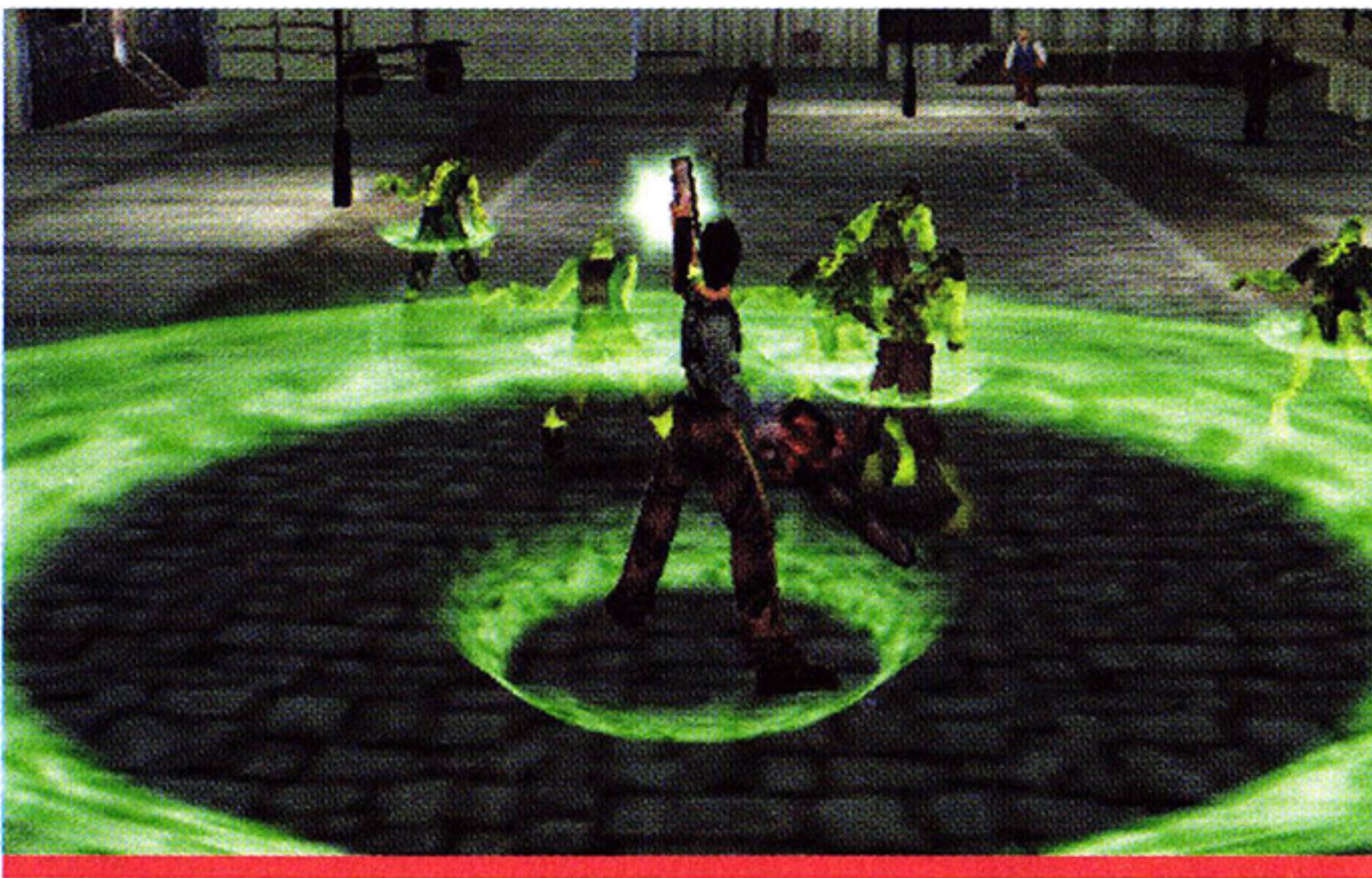
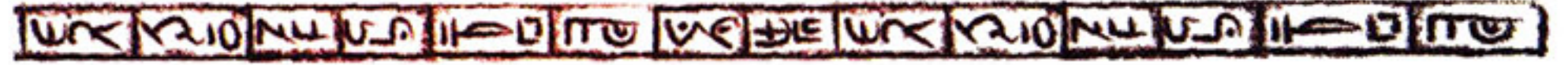
PlayStation 2



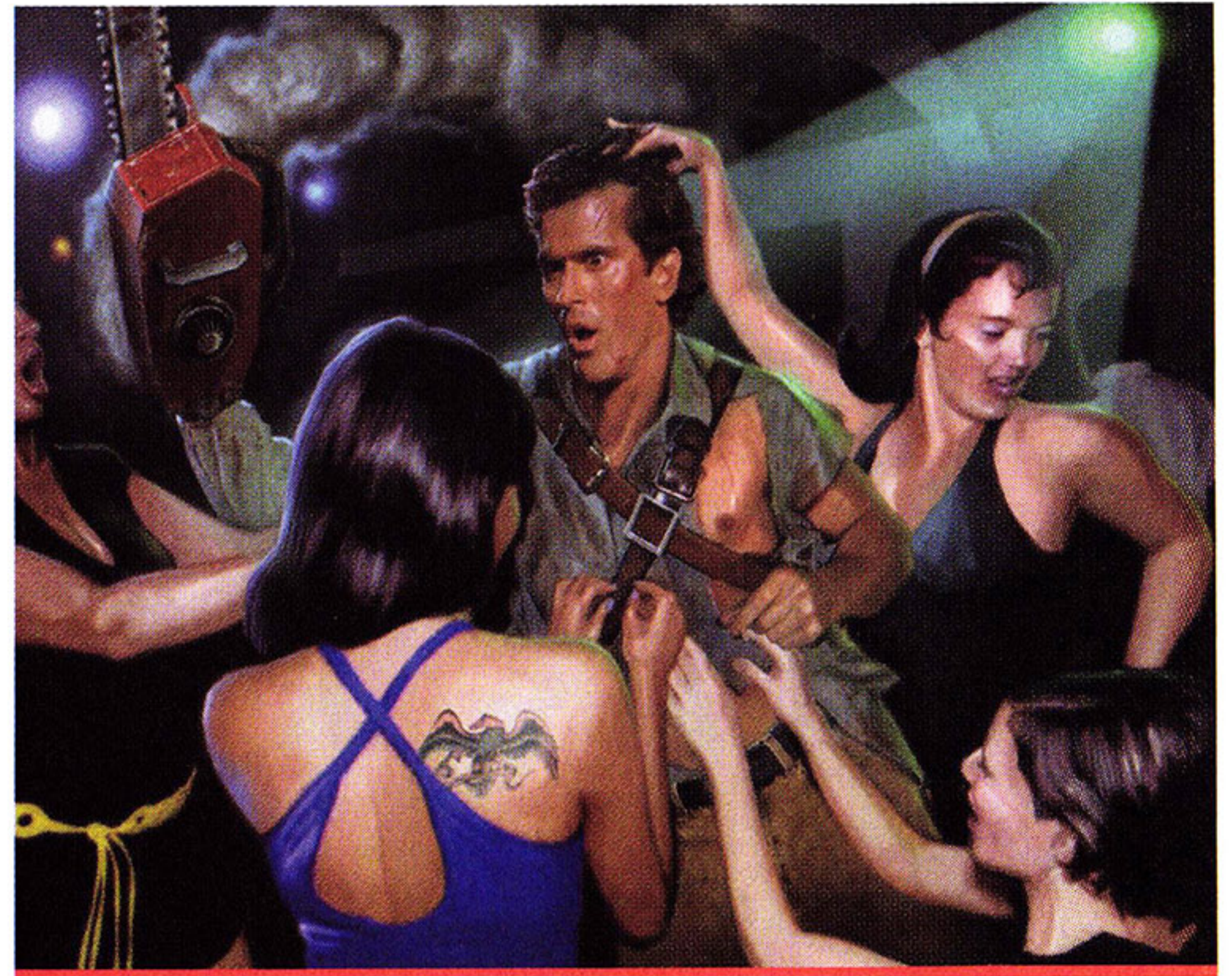
2:31 p.m. Friends in low places. An angry Ash tells a slew of pesky Deadites to stop bothering him by killing them.



5:32 p.m. Ash getting a little R&R on a friend's boat in Lake Michigan.



7:46 p.m. Presto chango! Ash throws a little magic spell on those darned Deadites.



11:34 p.m. Killing is hard work. Ash takes advantage of the Dearborn nightlife after a job well done.

EVIL DEAD

A FISTFUL OF BOOMSTICK

For more snapshots of today's featured star,
visit evildeadgame.com

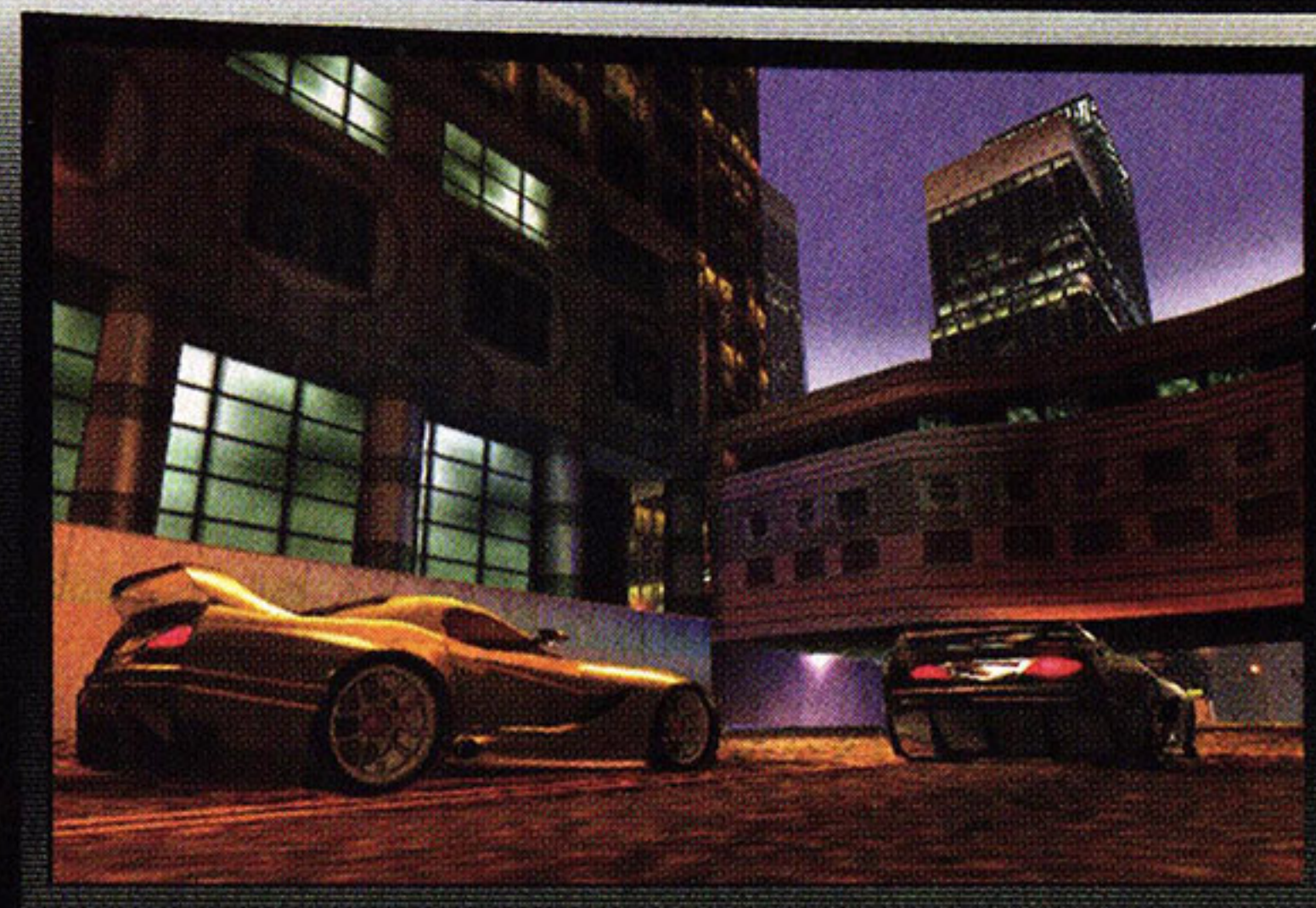




Meet the world's most notorious drivers on the streets of LA, Paris, and Tokyo.

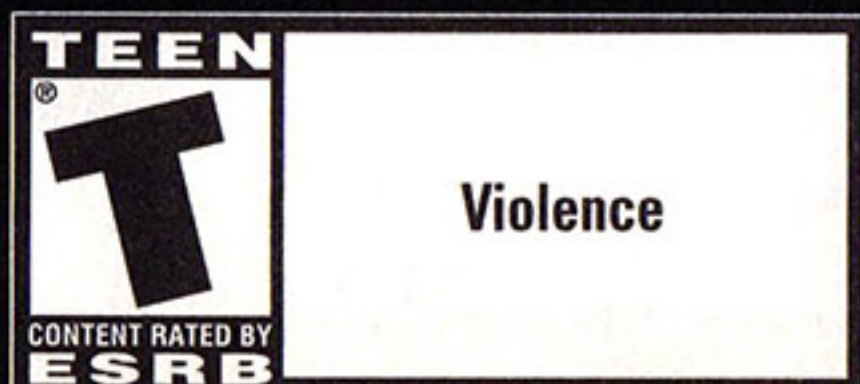


Choose from the latest performance enhanced vehicles and compete to make a name for yourself.



There are no rules - drive anywhere in the city. Find the fastest route to win.

"WE PREDICT COMPLETE ADDICTION." - IMPORT RACER MAGAZINE, MARCH 2003



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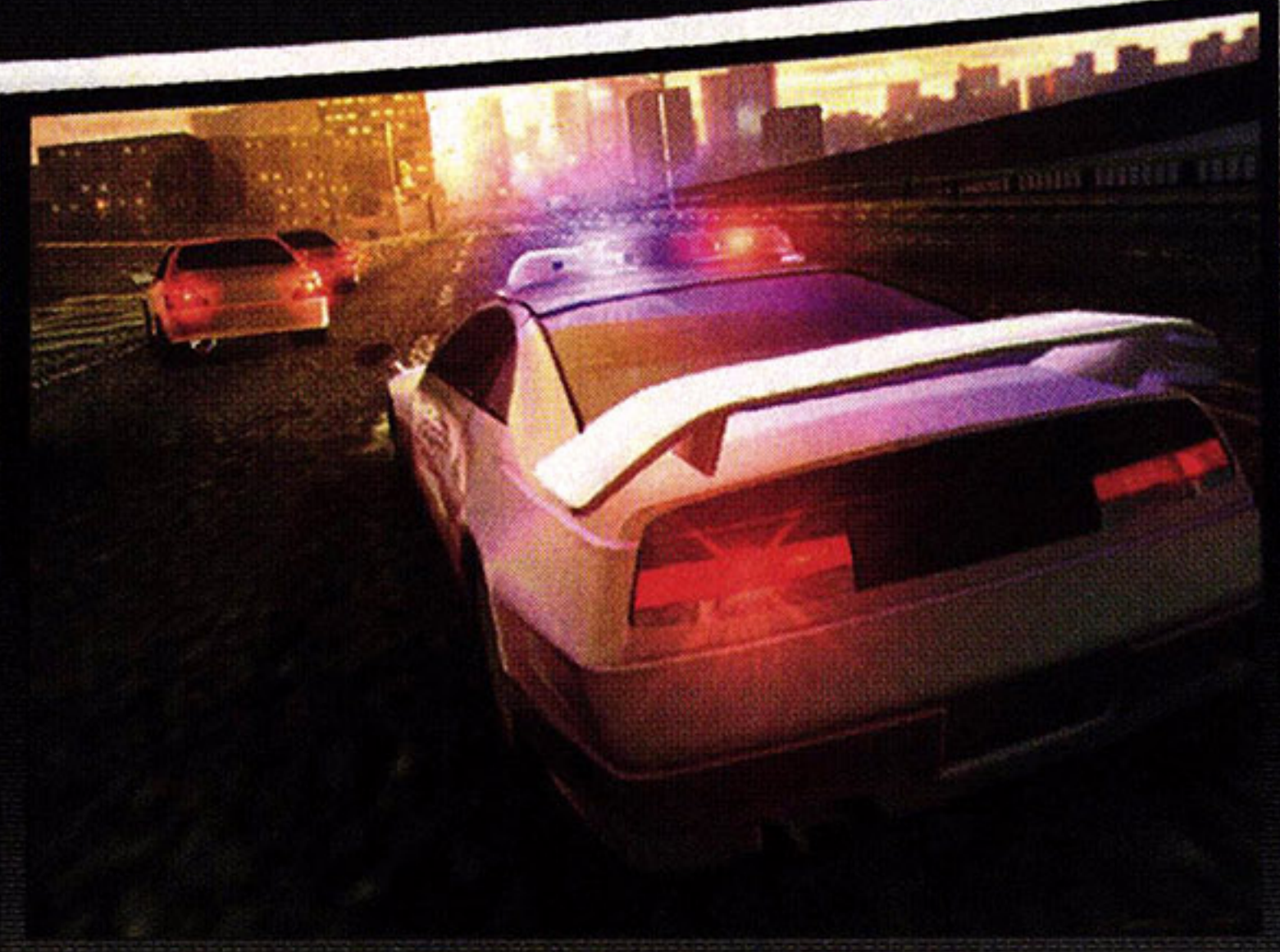
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RED FACTION II

COMMONWEALTH COUP

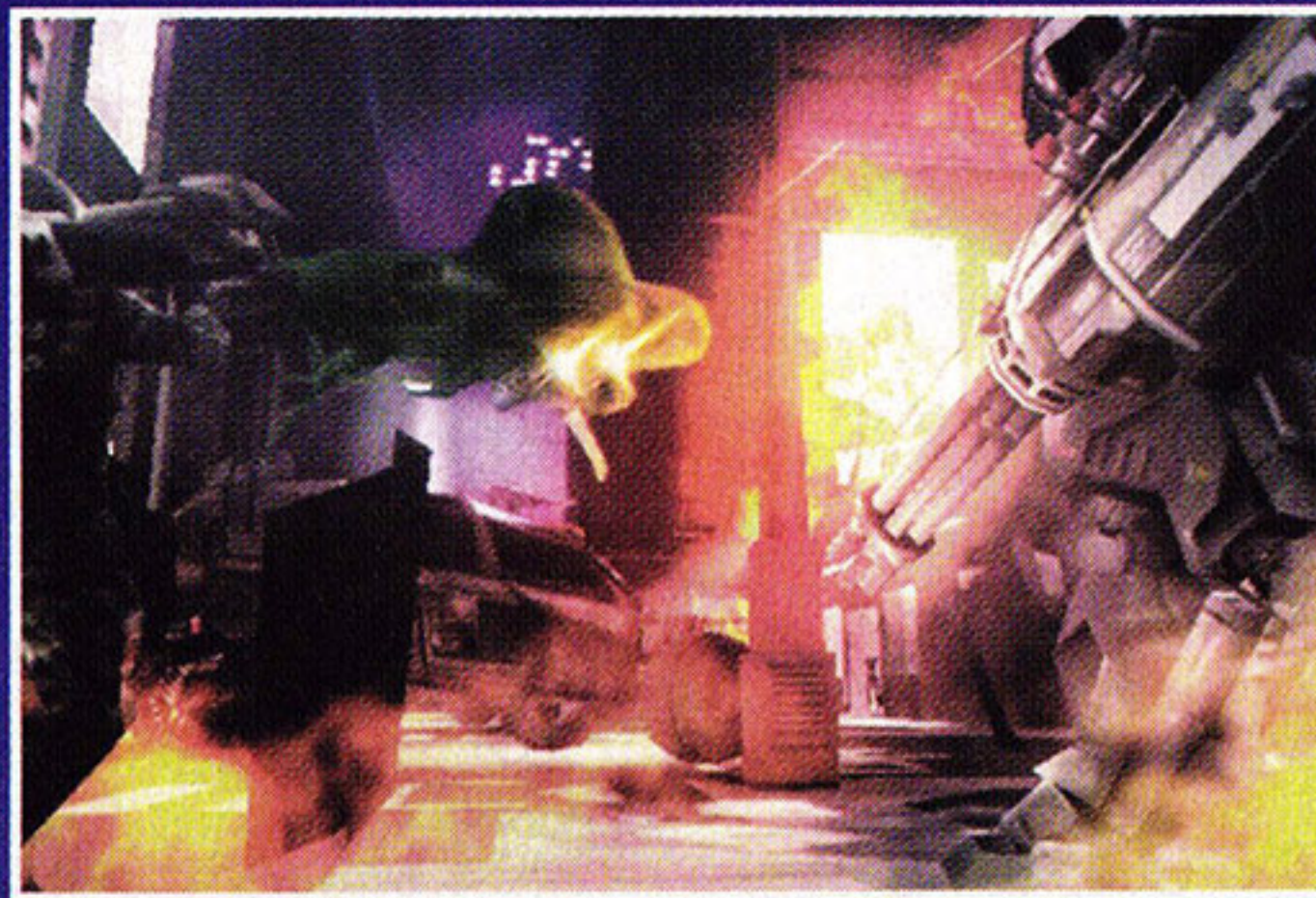
The Red Faction is using their entire arsenal in the latest attempt to



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.



NGL-8 Nanotech Grenade Launcher

THE REBELS

■ SUPER SOLDIERS

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



Demolition Charges

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

Fires metal slugs that go through just about any barrier without losing velocity. The targeting scope makes this weapon extremely accurate.



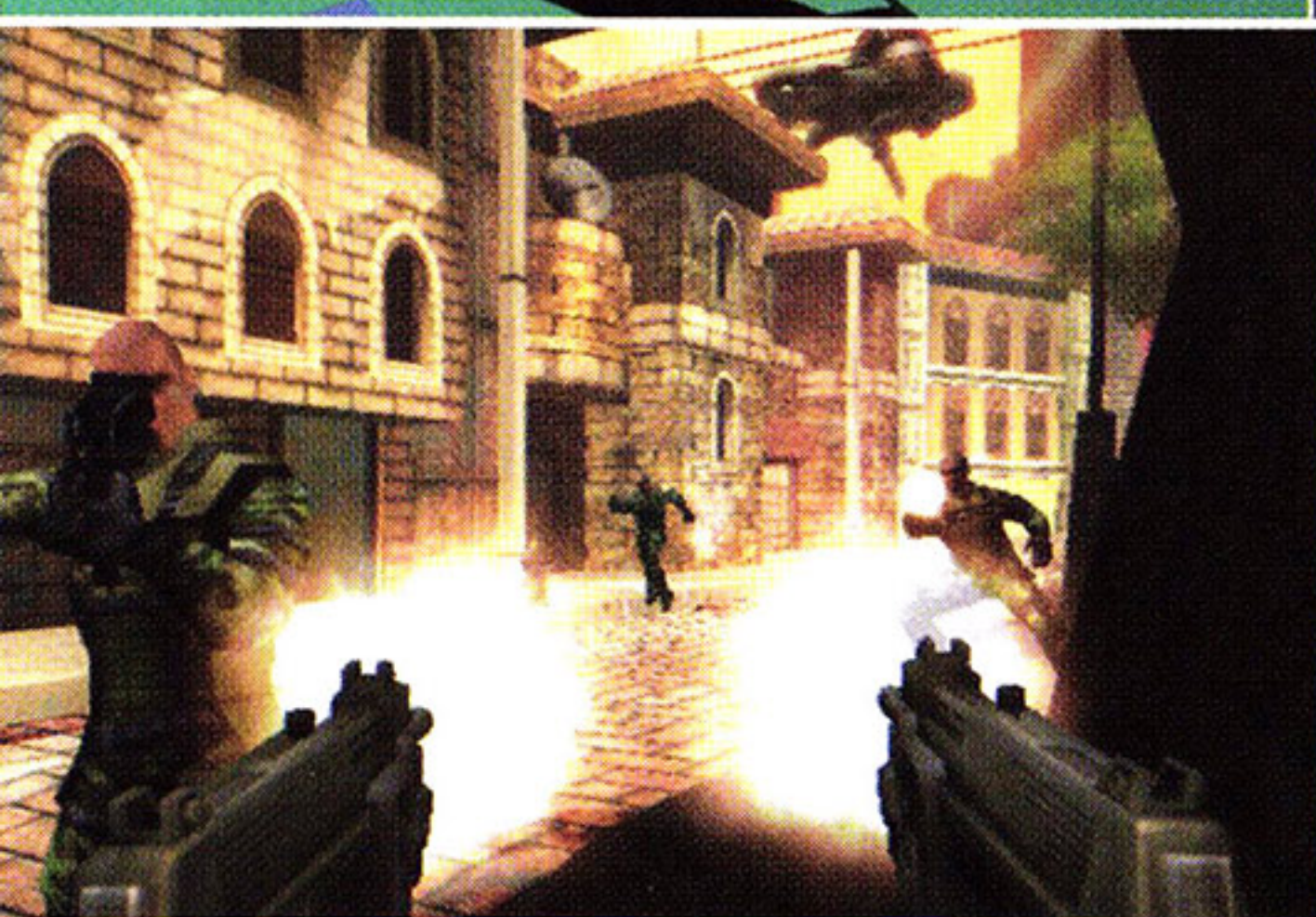
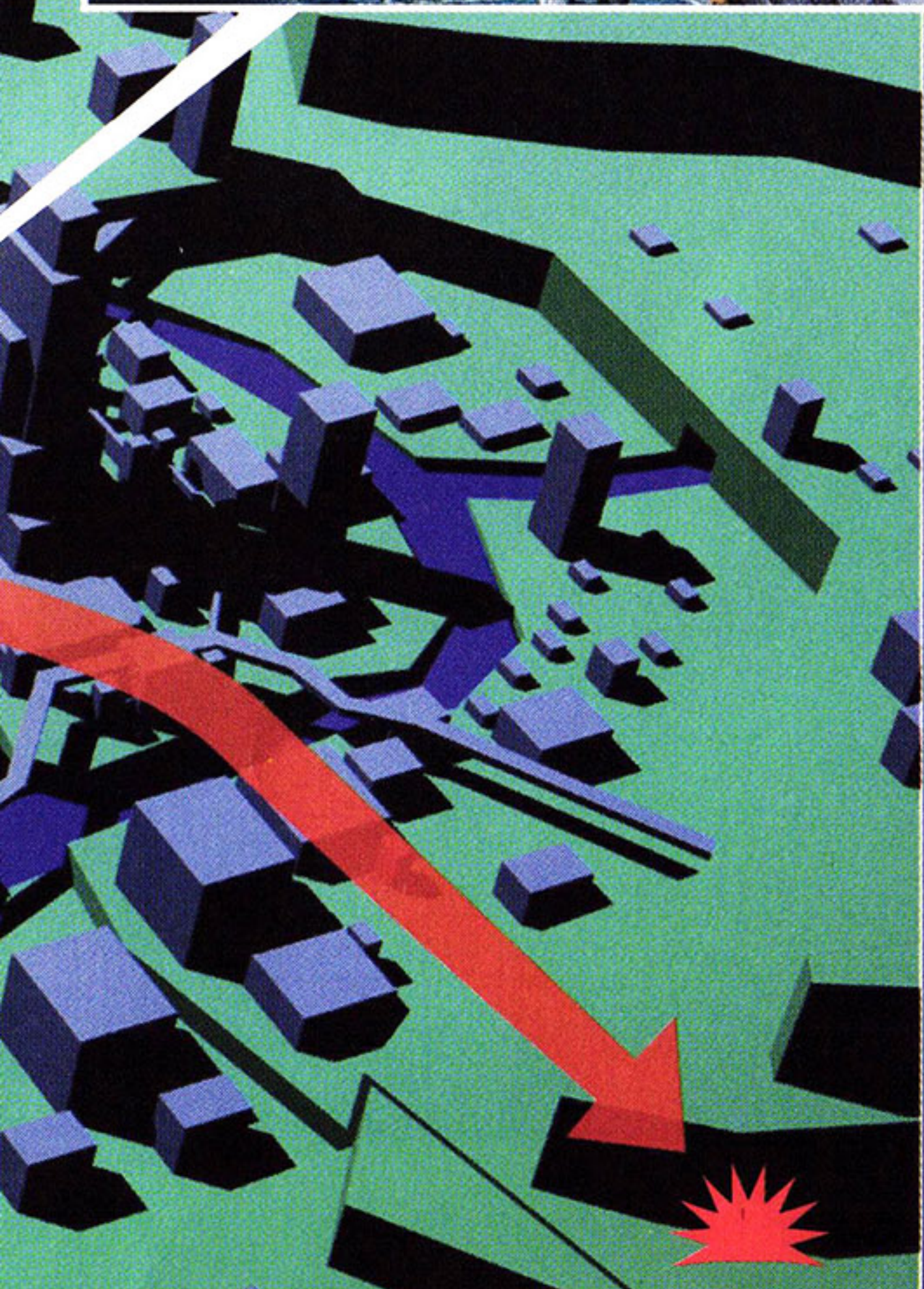
■ N.I.C.W. - NANOTECH INDIVIDUAL COMBAT WEAPON

Capable of delivering automatic armor-piercing rounds as well as launching grenades.



■ CAR-72 MILITARY ASSAULT RIFLE

A fully-automatic, high-powered rifle in a light-weight compact frame.



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

GAMEINFORMER

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What's crawling out of Syphon Filter's new sleeves? How about character creation and online play? GI is going the distance to bring you all of the new dirt on this high-profile title.

COVER STORY 2

41 **JAK II**

GI got to play with the upcoming Jak & Daxter sequel. Want to know what we think about the title being more plot-driven and less "pick up 100 coins" oriented? What about the graphics, the gameplay, and the all-important fun factor? Flip on over and find out.



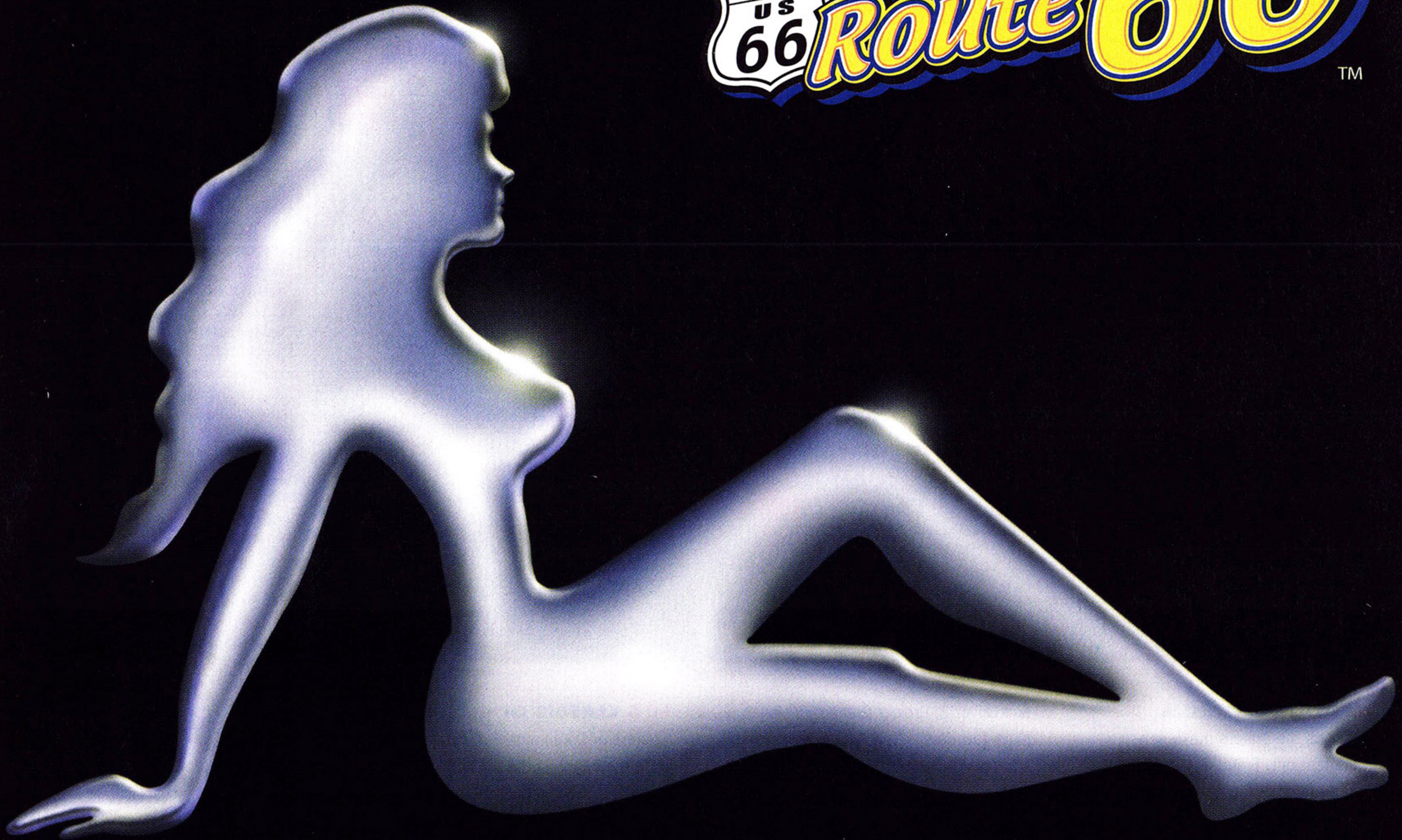
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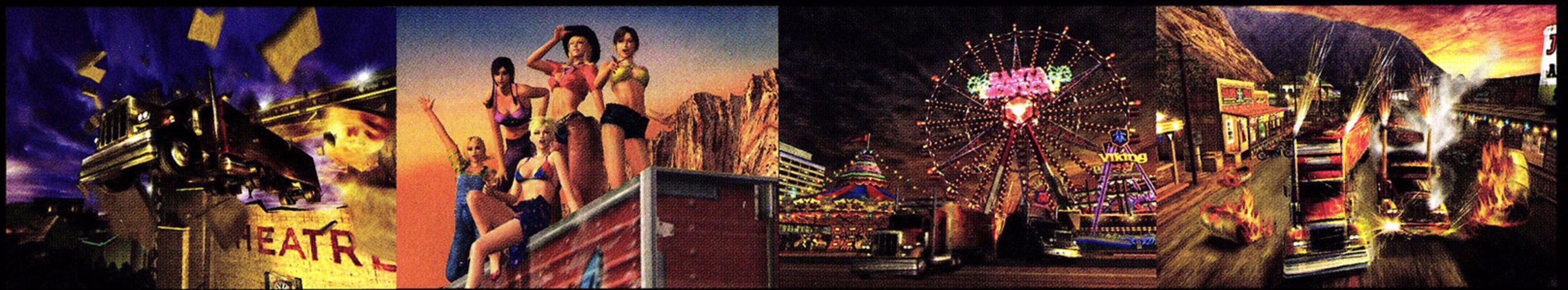
The satire and innuendo just keep on coming with this year's illustrious issue of Game Infarcer. Who will fall to the mighty wit of GI's evil twin?



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PlayStation®2



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Sometimes the editors make sense. Sometimes, only Freud would understand. Shake the dice or flip ahead to see which it is.

20 GI SPY

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

22 DEAR GI

Although we offered to send cash to anyone who would send us a semi-intelligent letter, we had to make them up *again* this month. No wonder they're so funny! HAAHAAAHA! (blarg)

26 NEWS

Game Informer gets you the inside scoop on Nokia's entry into our beloved industry, as well as a number of other juicy little tidbits. Like what? How about Sega pulling the plug on GameCube sports and new Pikmin and Kirby games? Peace out.

56 PREVIEWS

The classic Activision title Pitfall comes back to the light. Enter The Matrix on PS2, Xbox, and GameCube; along with The Hulk

and Driver 3. Project Gotham Racing 2 plays favorites with Xbox, while the system shares Men of Valor: Vietnam with your PC.

78 REVIEWS

We'll be really proud of each reader who can guess what our Game of the Month is (Hint: It stars a little elf in green tights). PlayStation 2 allies with each of the boys of summer and also puts Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven, Def Jam Vendetta, and Splinter Cell on the plate. Zelda highlights Nintendo's roundup. Pro Race Driver and Jurassic Park make a big splash on Xbox. Command & Conquer Generals headlines for the PC.

101 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.

104 SECRET ACCESS

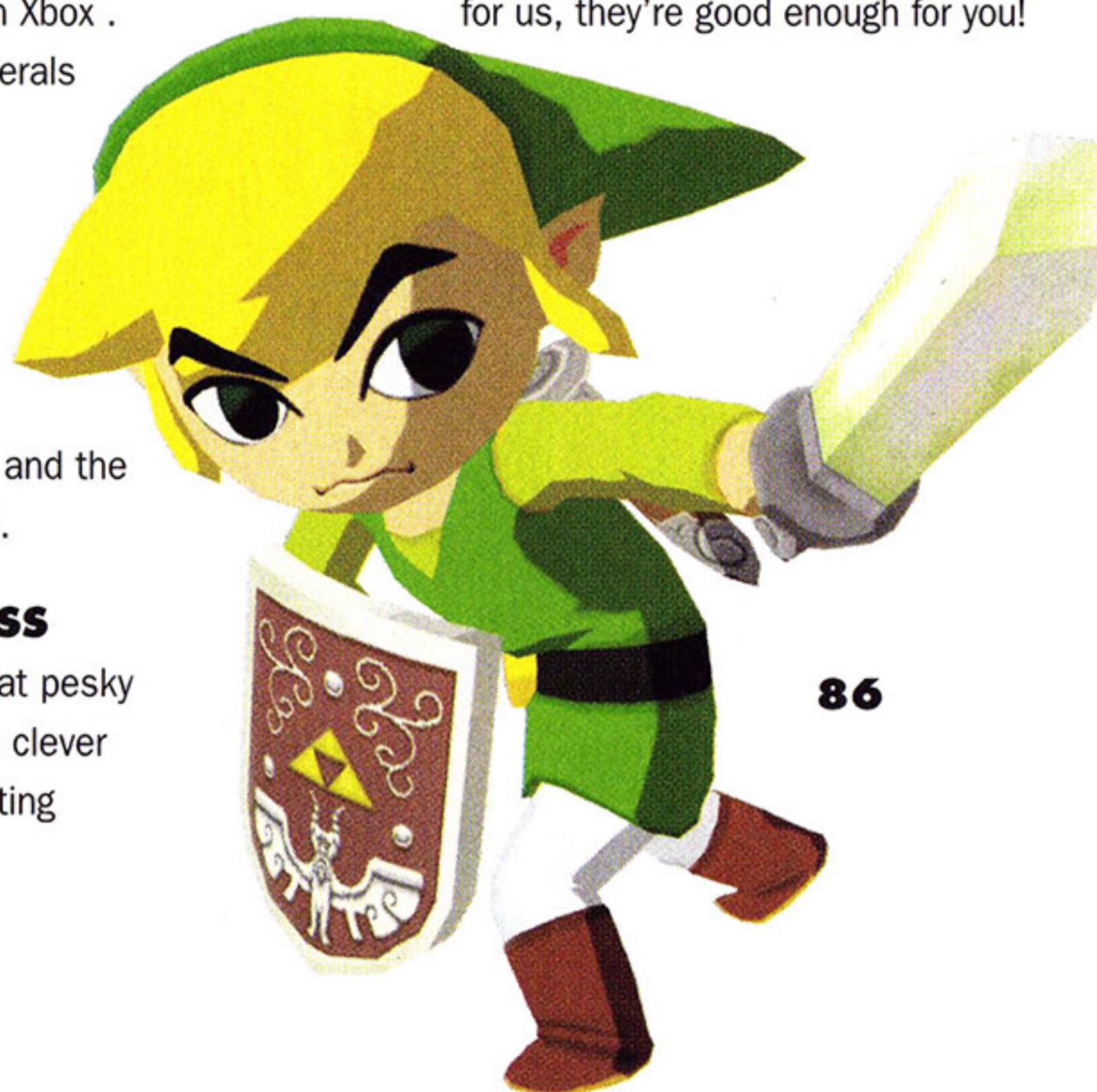
Lay the smackdown on that pesky Umbrella Corporation with clever "work-arounds," you cheating little gamers.

108 CLASSIC GI

Masters of Doom author, David Kushner, spills the beans in the Classic Feature. Oldies reviewed include a quirky Japanese game (there's a redundant statement); a seriously quotable '90s movie; one good, but overlooked, puzzler; and the origination of boob physics.

114 ETC

Which products have caught the eye of the Game Informer editors this month? Flip on over and find out – if they're good enough for us, they're good enough for you!



**"AND I THOUGHT PRISON LIFE WAS
A PAIN IN THE ASS."**

BLACK & BRUISED

WHEN LIFE BACKS YOU INTO A CORNER,
COME OUT SWINGIN'!

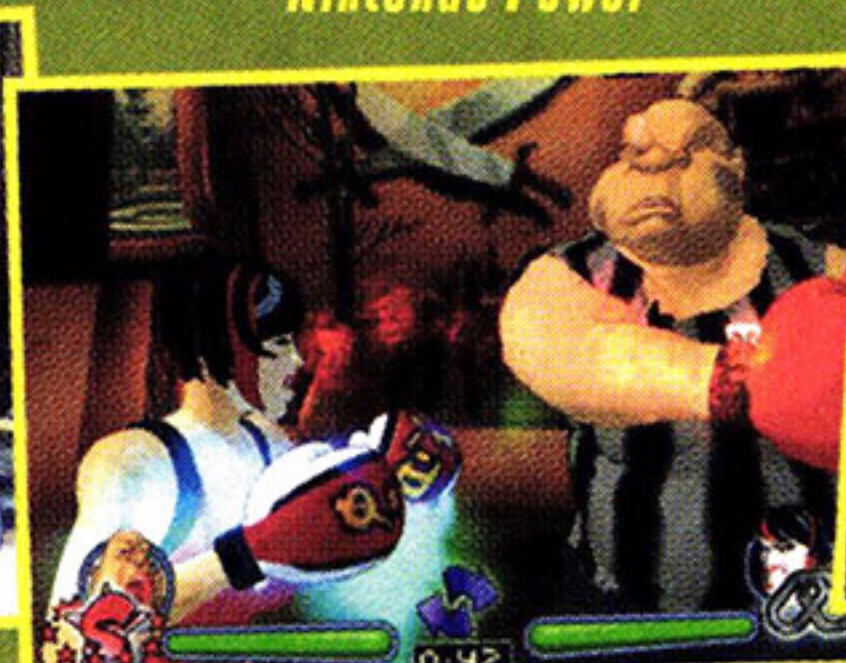
Bronto Sore finds staying out of jail is as hard as breaking out was. Join Bronto and 18 other wacky, not-so-typical boxers as their storylines intertwine from one grueling, over-the-top slugfest to the next. But beware. What happens in their life affects their performance in the ring. And vice-versa.

"Black & Bruised looks and feels like a next generation PUNCH OUT! It's about time."

-Nintendo Power



Dozens of facial expressions and insults



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PlayStation 2



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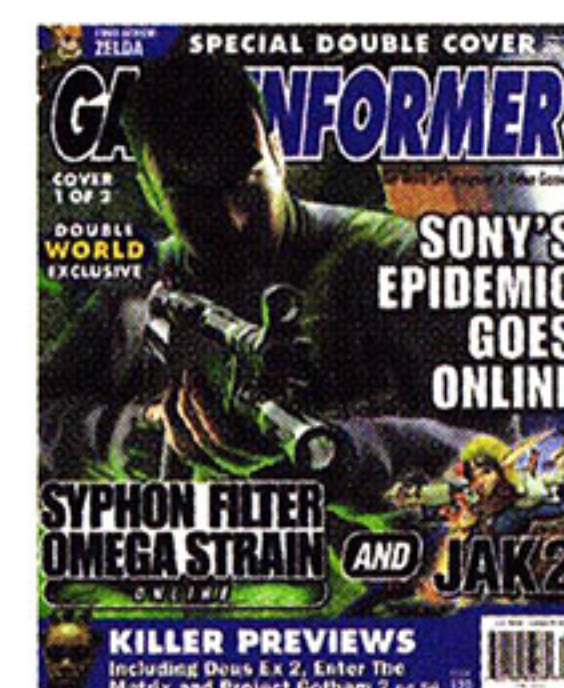
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This issue, *Game Informer* is featuring two different covers. The same number of each is being printed, and both designs feature identical content inside. Of course, the issue you're holding in your hands right now has the cooler of the two covers. However, feel free to head to your local newsstand to complete the set.



"GAME OF THE YEAR."

Xbox Game of the Year (IGN, Gamespy)

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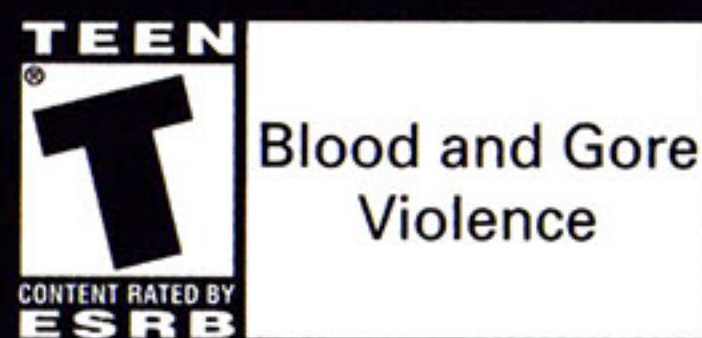
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EDITORS' FORUM

IT'S A HIT-DRIVEN WORLD!



The landscape for video games is changing before our very eyes. Consumers are getting more and more finicky; as a result, a few big hits are basically gobbling up all the gaming dollars. In a lot of ways, these changes are for the better. Killer games are what everyone

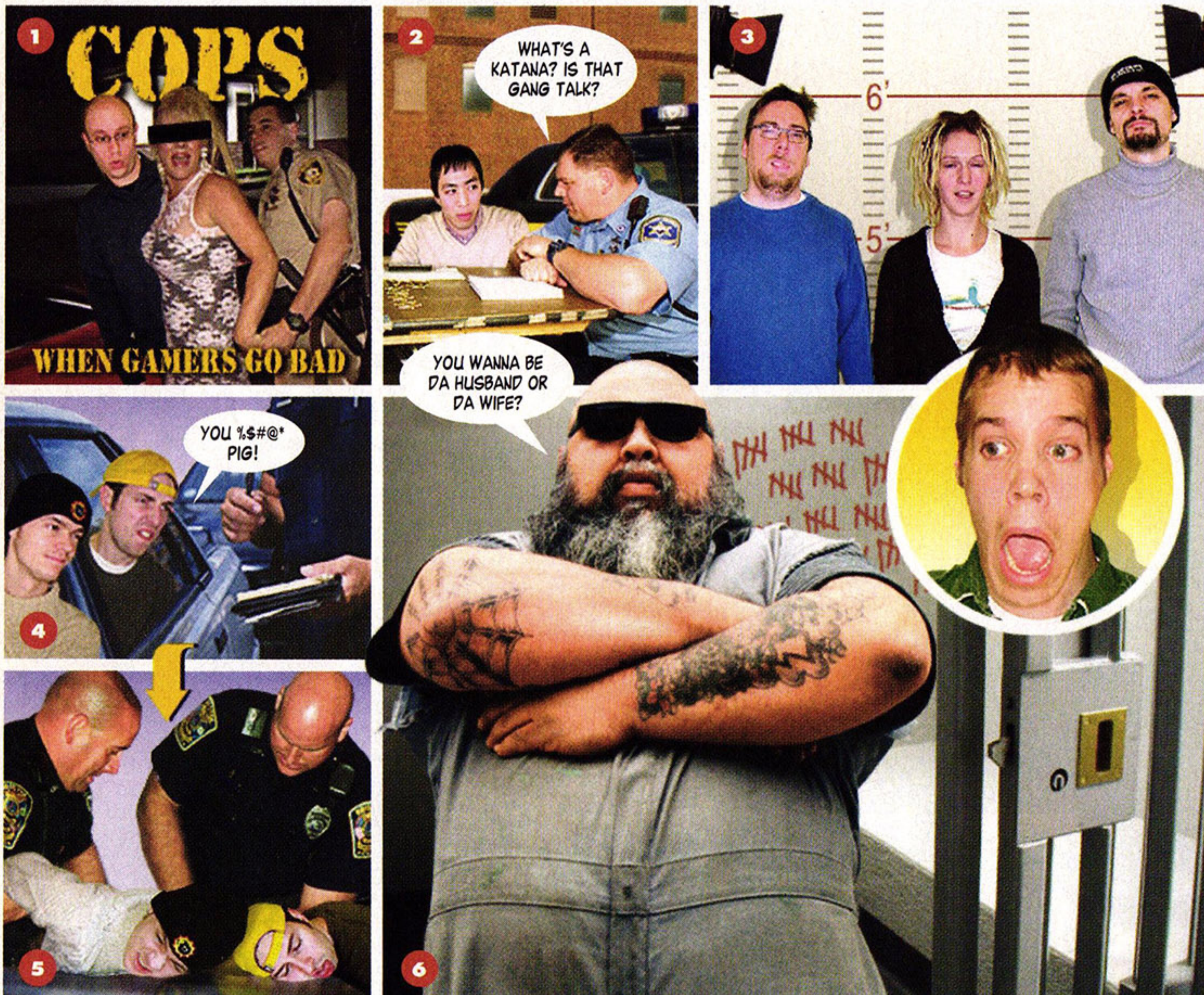
wants, but I think we are going to see a lot of companies that can't create and market super-huge, big-budget titles suffer the consequences. On the surface, it might seem like companies delivering subpar products are getting what they deserve; but in actuality, it's the hardcore gamer that will pay in the end. For example, look at a game like Panzer Dragoon Orta; it's gorgeous. For fans like myself, it's worth the fifty bucks to waste an afternoon blasting flying lizards to kingdom come. However, it's not going to make Sega a ton of money or rack up huge sales. Unless the next Panzer comes along and really pushes the envelope, I doubt this series will ever pull in the kind of big dollars video game companies need to stay afloat. Do I think gamers want

products like this? Most definitely. Are they willing to pay for it? Well, I think we all know what the answer is to that.

Gamers are renting. Gamers are playing it at a friend's house. Gamers are buying pirated software. All these things seem like an easy way to screw the Man who is keeping us down, but in the end we are the ones who are going to end up with a world of homogenized games. Companies will fear making products that don't appeal to the masses. And, if the big companies don't take risks, it's not too likely that anyone will; since the cost of creating a game in today's high-tech world has made it nearly impossible for garage developers to be a serious force in the marketplace.

Obviously, you should buy the best games you possibly can. That's what we are here to help you do. But it never hurts to support an overlooked game or genre, because the only thing that video game companies pay attention to is the almighty dollar.

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



1. Matt gets off with a warning but the transvestite hooker is arrested. 2. Kato's game handle causes suspicion. 3. The usual suspects (left to right) Andy, Lisa, and Reiner. 4. A routine traffic stop; Chet shows his license but Kristian's spontaneous remarks... 5. ...lead to an attitude readjustment. 6. Bubba. Inset: Justin's reaction to his new cellmate, Bubba.

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

As games expand in size, the bar of acceptability is continually raised. When one particular title offers a lengthy experience, one can't help but expect the next game they play to at least match it. For instance, if a consumer can put 100-plus hours of gameplay into a title like Vice City and still not see everything it has to offer, yet completely conquer a title along the lines of 007: NightFire in six measly hours, you can see where the problem lies. To avoid disappointing consumers, perhaps companies should be forced to list the projected running/play time of a game on the back of the box – much like movies do.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com

While "video game book" might sound like an oxymoron to some, there have actually been some good tomes written on the subject. If you have any interest in this industry's history, you should do yourself a favor and read Leonard Herman's *Phoenix: The Fall and Rise of Video Games*, Steven Kent's *The Ultimate History of Video Games*, and *Game Over: Press Start to Continue* by David Sheff and Andy Eddy. Also, check out our Classic GI section this month, where we interview David Kushner, the author of *Masters of Doom* – a gripping book about id Software and the birth of the FPS.

KRISTIAN, THE VIDEO VIKING

kristian@gameinformer.com

I highly, highly recommend that everyone either rent or buy *Band of Brothers* as soon as possible – especially those of you who really enjoyed Medal of Honor. Not only is it an absolutely incredible depiction of what Easy Company went through in World War II, but it's also a testament to the courage of the Greatest Generation. Additionally, it's another reason to give our senior citizens more respect. Sure, that may sound a little corny, but when you think about all they sacrificed for our sake, it's the least we can do. Here ends your Game Informer public service announcement.

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT

justin@gameinformer.com

I've played a lot of BMX XXX and DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball. I find no problem with their themes. Yet, I get email from guys who feel the need to hide these games from their significant others. Why? When you conceal or lie about something, you make it a bigger deal than if you were up front about it. This isn't like when you were 10, hiding the *National Geographic* with topless tribal gals under your mattress. As an adult, you should be able to buy, play, and enjoy these games without guilt. Respect your lady enough to be honest with her, and she should respect you.

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com

I'm sad to see the loss of Sega Sports vids on the GameCube. I don't play sports on that console, but I'm worried about developer Visual Concepts. The sports genre is hard to crack – EA owns it both because of the quality of its games and sheer name recognition. In the face of this, VC has produced some legitimate contenders that have gone unnoticed. Regardless, both gamers and EA need that competition and choice. With Sega itself going through some hard decisions across the board, I hope this isn't the start of a trend, or we'll all suffer soon enough.

CHET, THE JOYSTICK JOCKEY

chet@gameinformer.com

My local news station broadcast a report that exposed the dangers inherent in the addictiveness of online gaming. What was the proposed remedy? Placing warning labels on certain "addictive" titles designating them as hazardous to your health. This is plainly stupid. Encouraging so-called online addicts to remove games from their virtual diets will only drive them to indulge in other antisocial behavior. The problem has nothing to do with the medium. We should be asking ourselves why a large portion of our society would rather live through TV, games, and the Internet.

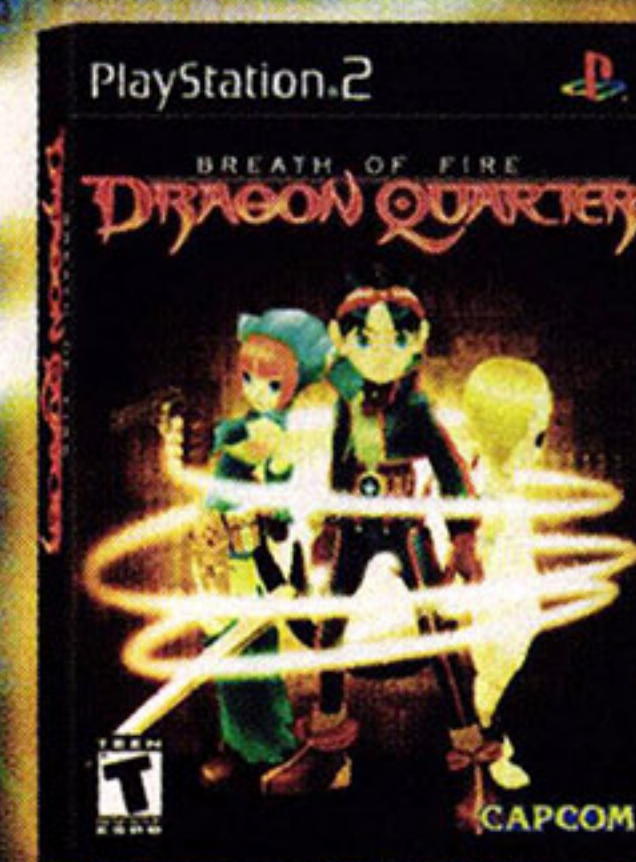
LISA, LA GAME NIKITA

lisa@gameinformer.com

I've made an epic, life-changing decision recently. My apartment needs pinball like a freakin' madman. I can already see it over in the corner of my pad – blinking and beeping quietly like a wee water fountain to drown out the subtle freeway noise. I've been looking around and realizing that pinball is still the epitome of hip living. Tony Hawk's apartment in *The Simpsons'* recent 300th episode, Wayne and Garth's loft in *Wayne's World 2*, and Joey's digs in *Friends* (okay, it's foosball, but close enough) all display the emoticon of cool decorating: the pinball machine.

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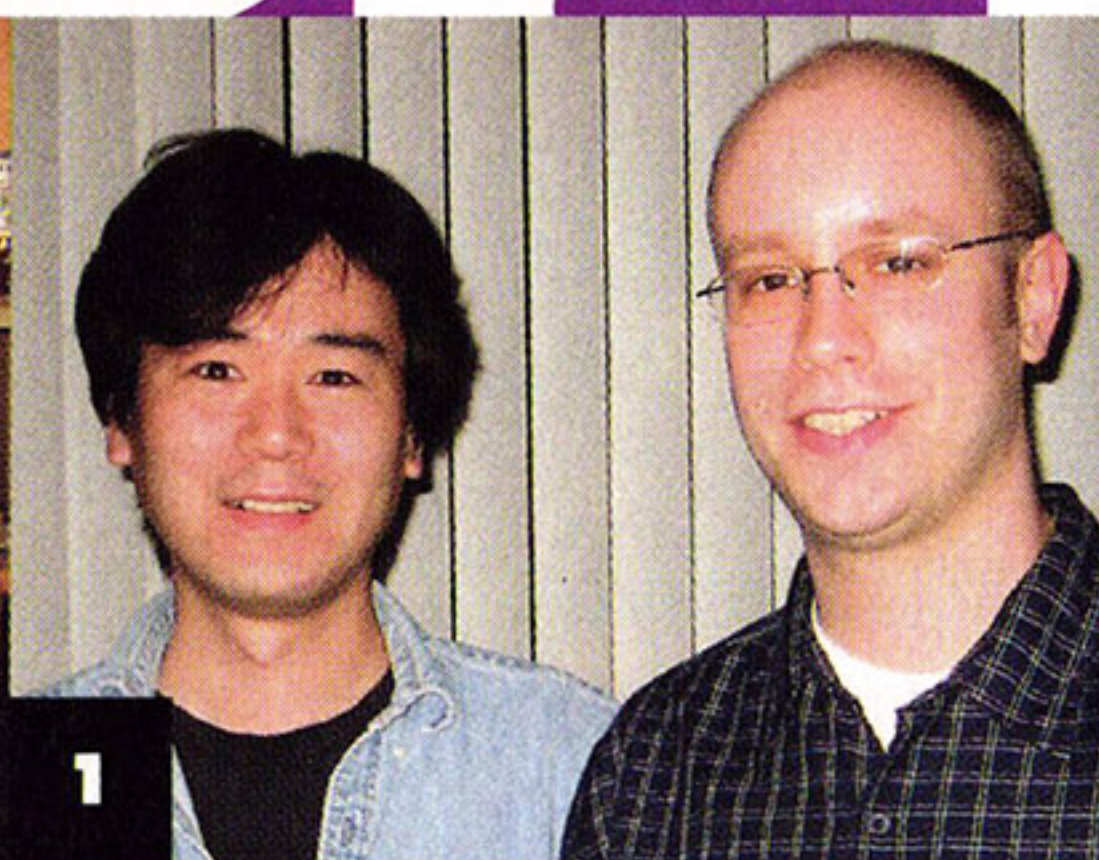
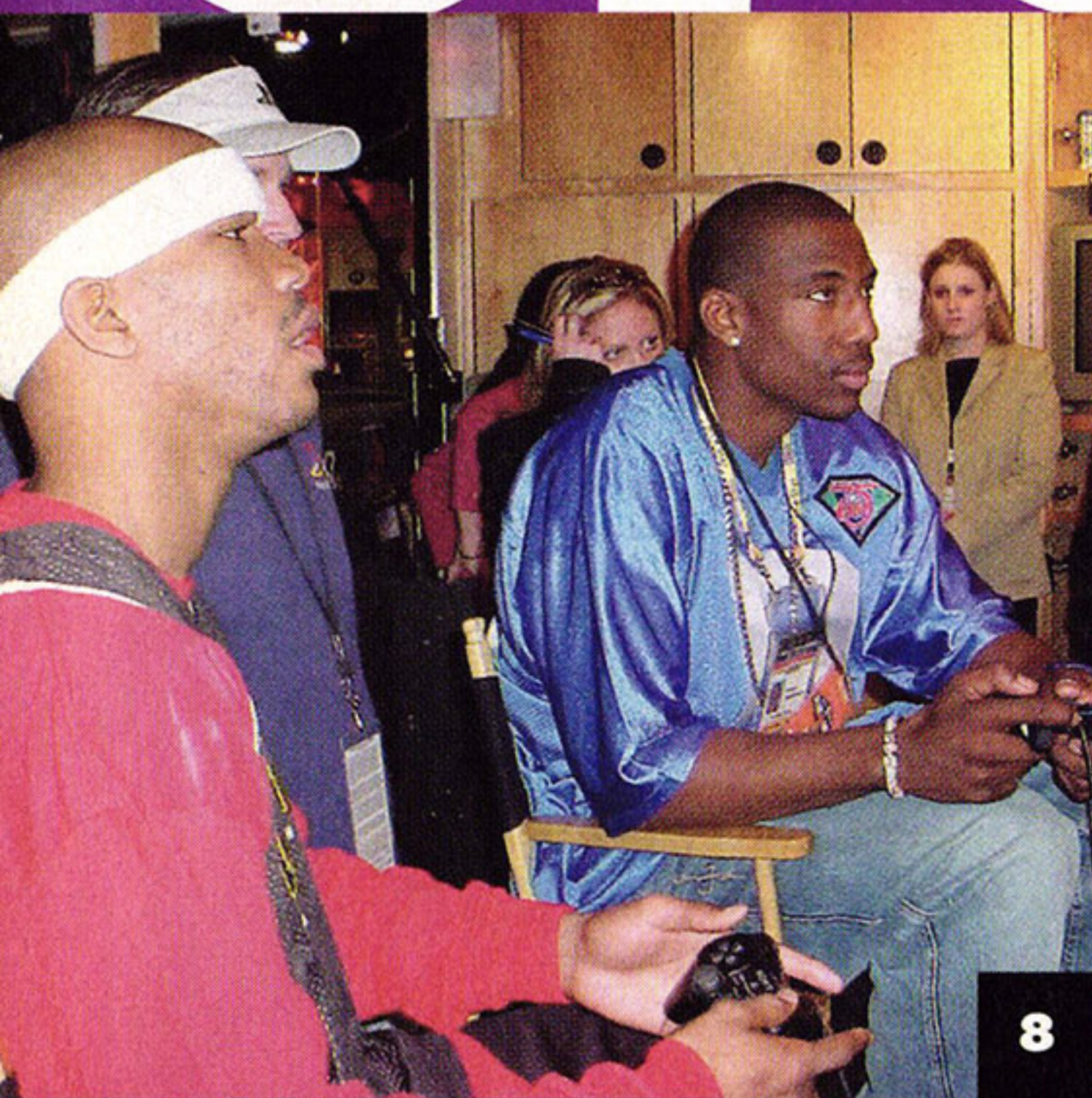
Blood
Partial Nudity
Violence

PlayStation®2

CAPCOM

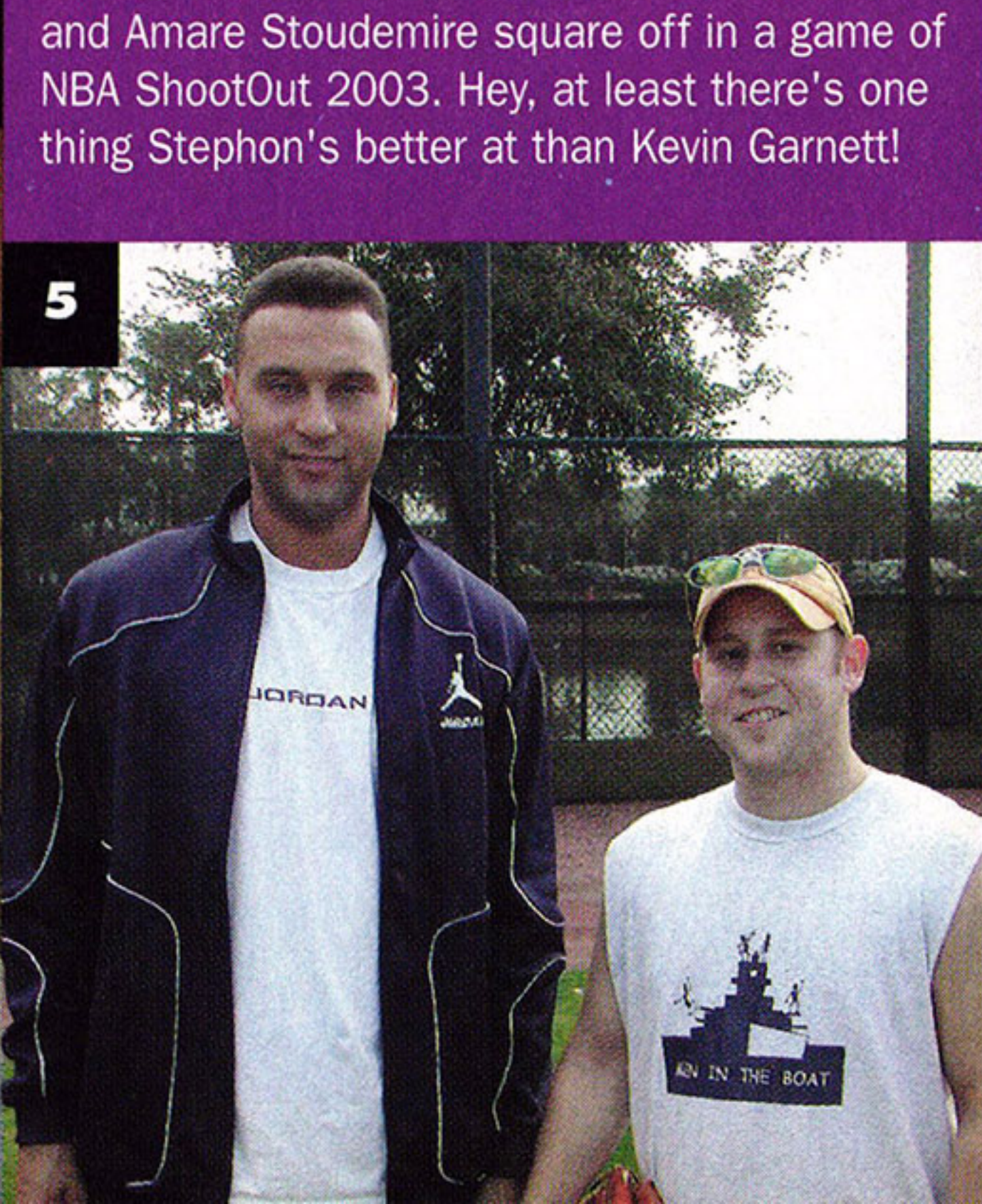
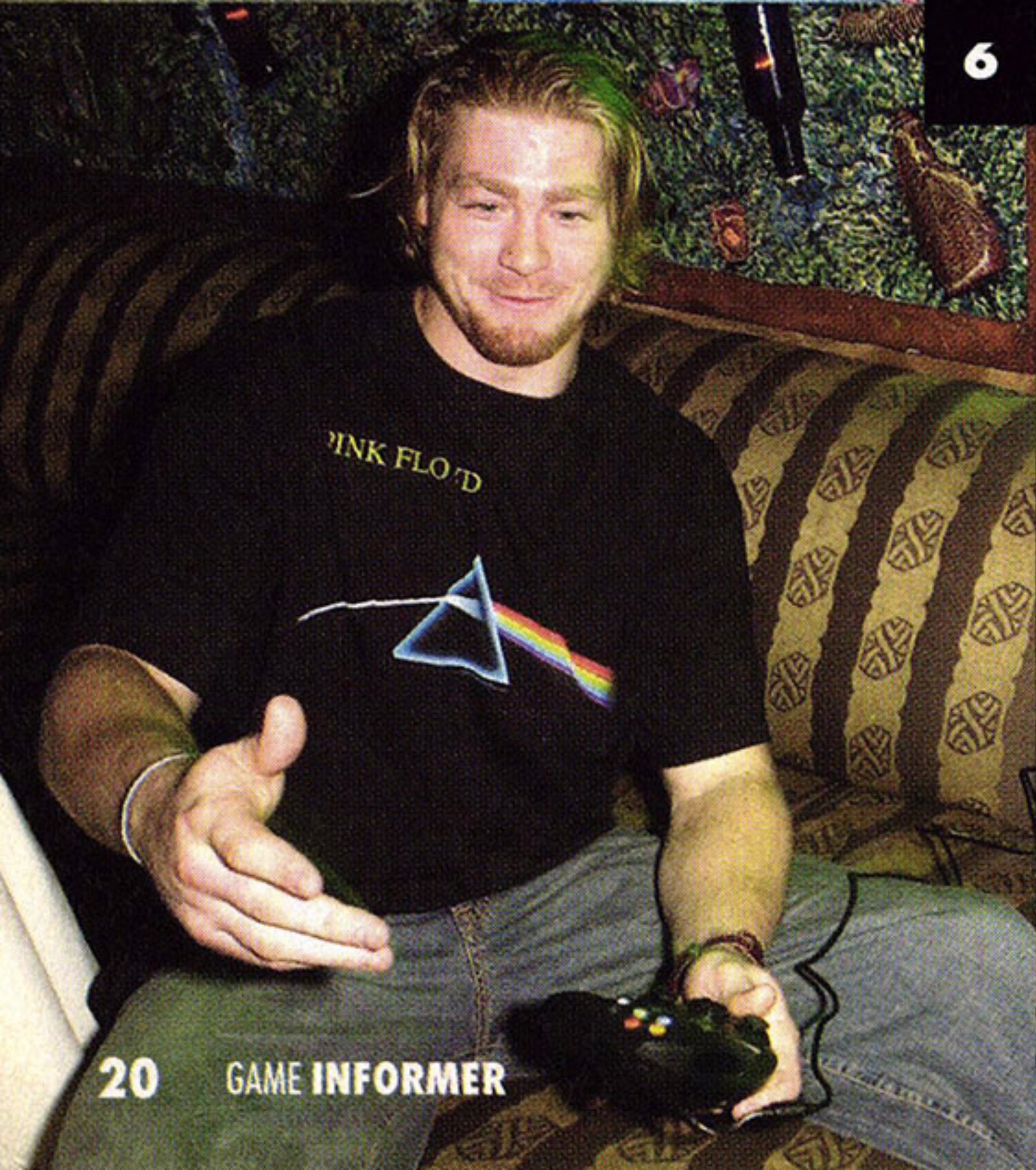


GI SPY



CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Matt meets Sonic the Hedgehog/Jak II designer Hirokazu Yasuhara at Naughty Dog's Santa Monica headquarters. **2** Sony's Darren Yager, Connie Booth, Patrick Seybold, and Alyssa Casella line up for their GI Spy mug shots at Sony Bend in Oregon. **3** Tommy Lee, seen here at the Enter The Matrix event, is as lovely as he is talented. **4** Infogrames' head honcho Bruno Bonnell (center) and Shiny Entertainment's Dave Perry (right) pose with a typically cheery Keanu Reeves. **5** To help promote All-Star Baseball 2004, Yankee superstar Derek Jeter recently announced that he's adopting Acclaim's Matthew Schlosberg. **6** The Giants' Jeremy Shockey is one happy camper! After we took this shot at the Xbox-sponsored Def Jam/Leigh Steinberg Super Bowl party, Jeremy showed what happens when you synch up *Dark Side of the Moon* with *The Wizard of Oz*. It's totally trippy, believe us. **7** "I am black and you are white/I'm the God of F—, and your rhymes are tight!" Will Smith and Marilyn Manson rehearse their new cover of "Ebony and Ivory" at Infogrames' Enter The Matrix party. **8** At the NBA All-Star Game in Atlanta, 989 Sports had the Suns' Stephon Marbury and Amare Stoudemire square off in a game of NBA ShootOut 2003. Hey, at least there's one thing Stephon's better at than Kevin Garnett!



**#1 SELLING
BASEBALL
GAME!***

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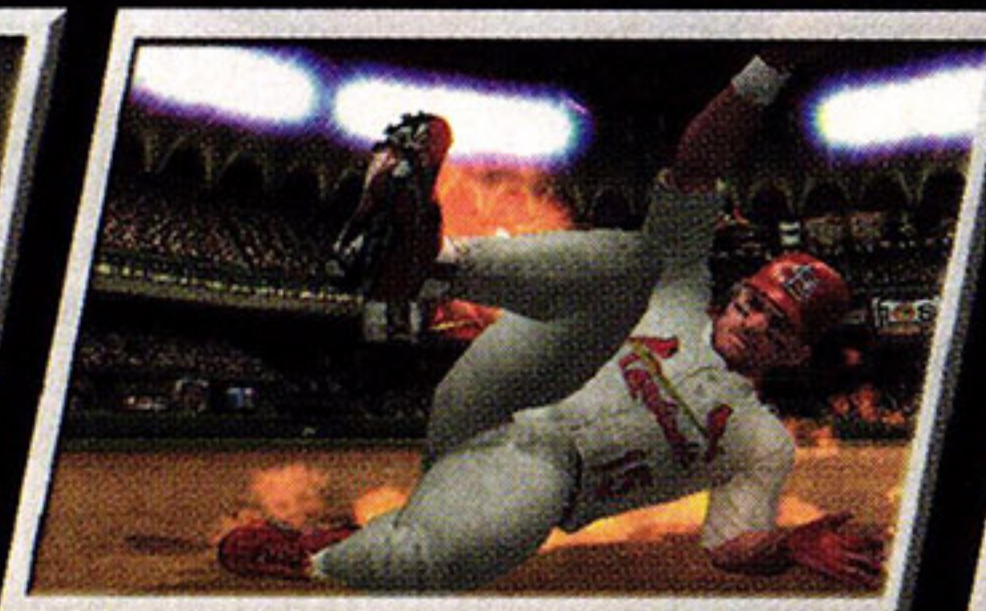
game preview at midwaysports.net



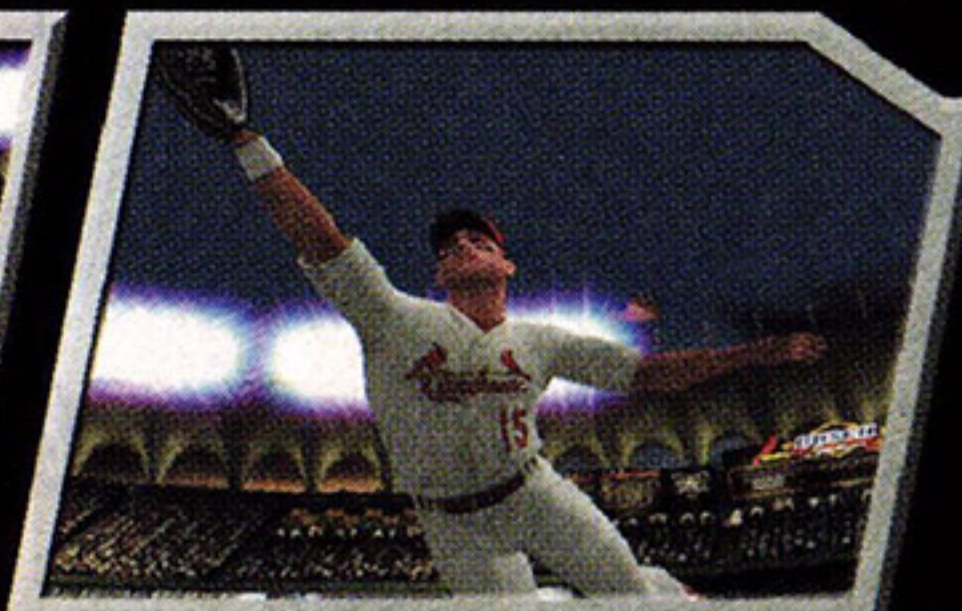
The top-selling, exclusive, adrenaline-style baseball videogame is back with a ton of new features.



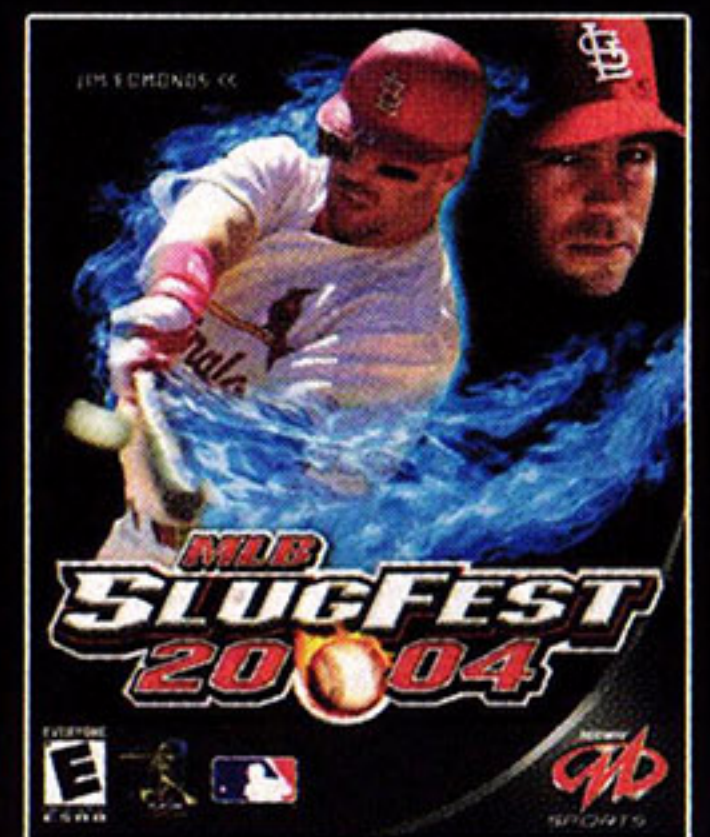
Loads of ALL-NEW features like individual MLB™ player batting stances and pitching deliveries.



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PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE



DEARGI

PIRATES VS. NINJA: A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

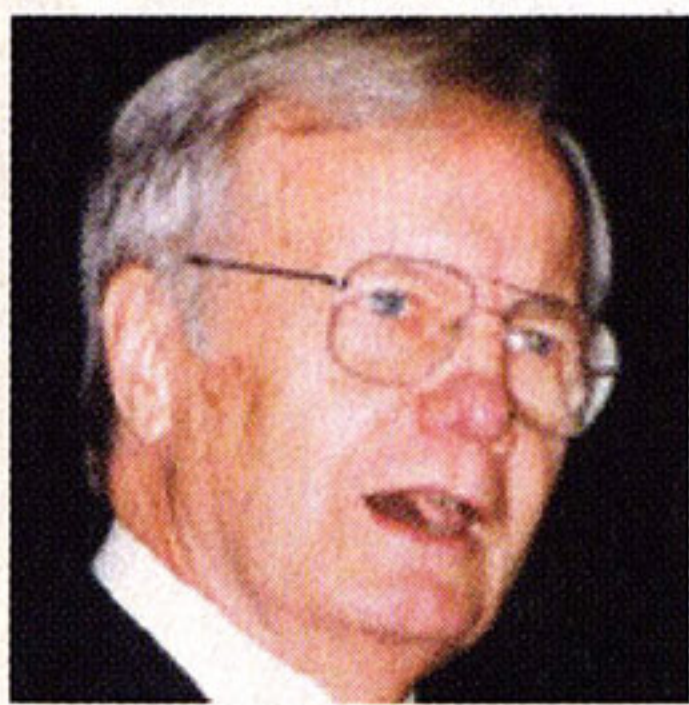
In the ongoing debate of who would emerge victorious in a battle between 100 ninja and 100 pirates, I propose that the rugged sea-faring warriors would prevail. Yes, I do believe that pirates would win this melee of the masses. They would prevail on the basis that pirates are a team – they work together to achieve victory. Plus, they have cannons and guns, as well as sword-swinging monkeys and dynamite-dropping parrots. Do you agree? You should!

Just a thought,
Castor Pollux

In this quibble I have with Mr. Pollux, I beseech you to help us end this debate. I support the shroud-wearing assassins of deadly murderous killing: the ninja. If 100 ninja and 100 pirates were to wage battle for the reason of speculation, I would guess that the ninja would prevail. Sure, pirates have guns and cannons, but the ninja have throwing stars that are thrown with unparalleled precision. The katana of a ninja can cut through the barrel of a gun, and the ninja are adept at the art of dodgery, and could thus evade the cannon balls. As for the "sword-swinging monkeys" and "dynamite-dropping parrots," the ninja possess the deadly cobra and the ominous falcon.

A counter thought,
Ted Turntable

We simply didn't feel qualified to moderate an intellectual discussion of this magnitude, so we sought the guidance of one of America's most respected television journalists (and one of *People Magazine's* 100 Hottest Bachelors) – PBS's Bill Moyers. After making us all promise to read *The Greatest Generation* by Tom Brokaw, Mr. Moyers weighed in with this historical perspective on the 100 Pirates vs. 100 Ninja Debate:



Mr. Pollux, while I admire your youthful zeal, you are clearly an ignorant biznitch! To be certain, the wayfaring pirates are a hearty tribe of bandits, but I think you underestimate the devious skullduggery of which the ninja race are capable. Faced with such advanced weaponry as muskets and cannons,

the ninja would simply avoid a frontal assault altogether and wisely opt to sneak aboard the pirate ship at night when its crew was rapt in an ale-induced alcoholic dream state. Here, the ninja would throw the pirates' precious supply of oranges and limes overboard, and patiently await their vitamin-C deprived adversaries to fall victim to the ravaging effects of scurvy. After a few weeks, they would attack the ship and cut down their weakened foes like a field of withered corn stalks. To paraphrase H. David Thoreau: The ninja would layeth the smackdown on the pirates with the fury of an angry Jehovah. In closing, I'd like to say "peace" to all my Cincinnati hoes!

WE ARE THE YOUTH GONE WILD

I've emailed you before trying to be nice and get in the magazine. Now, I must resort to being not so nice. You guys treat under-13 gamers as if we are amused by playing with our thumbs. We have brains, too! We possess some knowledge! We play M-rated games, too! We're funny! We can add! We read your magazines. When I go online, no one ever believes that I'm 12! They say, verbatim, "You are so not 12!" I have gotten used to it; I've accepted it. Now that I am in a pissy mood, I've decided to stand up. Treat us fairly; we are smarter than rats with a lobotomy!

Yours, with rage,
Andrew Adams

Although we recommend that you might want to see someone about your rage problem, you do point out our tendency for making statements along the line of "this game sucks, but kids will like it" in our reviews. Perhaps we have underestimated the gaming savvy of our younger readers. From now on, we'll remember that the elementary-school set doesn't automatically love any lousy piece of software that stars a cartoon character or a cute animal. If you're still mad about being 12, consider this: This is the last year you can eat free at Denny's, so make the most of it. Now, quit bothering us and go eat some pancakes, you little scamp!

MAC DADDIES GET DISSED?

I have had a subscription to your magazine for quite a while and am curious as to why you don't bother with games for the Macintosh? I do know that not many people use them, but some do. My PC is crappy and hates games, so please help me out and shed a little light on Mac games.

Bobby Bekante
Via yahoo.com

The Game Informer staff is certainly not anti-Apple; in fact, every single page of this magazine is written and laid out using our beloved Macs. Unfortunately, given the current number of pages we have available, we have a difficult enough time including all the games for the three major consoles, the Game Boy Advance, and

PC. Space considerations aside, most Mac games are simply ports of popular PC games that have been on the market for up to a year. At this time, we simply can't devote pages to re-reviewing games that we've already covered in our PC section. Hopefully, this situation will change in the future as Game Informer grows larger. For now,

just keep an eye on our PC coverage and hope that you'll eventually see the cream of the Windows crop ported to the world's greatest operating system, OS X.

WISDOM FROM ATOP MOUNT GI

All I want to know is what ever happened to the Mutant League series. This was and still could be a great series. Could it ever make a comeback? And if so, could you make mention of it?

Robert Kotowski
Burbank, IL

We did a little digging around, and here's what we found out. Apparently, EA made two titles based on this franchise – Mutant League Football and Mutant League Hockey. Then, when it didn't make as much money on the two games as it had hoped, EA killed the franchise. After that, there was no more Mutant League. It is possible that EA might bring the series back, but we doubt it. Hope this helps!



INTELLIGENT LETTER ALERT! (REMAIN CALM)

There was a time when the preferred style of art was realism. People strove to make images as real and lifelike as possible, and some of them were very good at

what they did. After some time, the camera was invented, and photo-realistic paintings became less novel. A movement in art occurred and things kind of switched focus. More expressive forms of art came into play. The same, I believe, will happen in video games. Titles are looking more and more impressive every year. 3D games have come a very long way, and are what the gamers seem to want right now. Maybe this is just wishful thinking, but I would like to make a prediction. As an educated gamer and artist, I believe/hope that there will be a jump from completely 3D games to expressive surrealism within the next couple of years. I will still enjoy and play realistic 3D visuals, but I would like to see some flavor and variety. I can't help but get excited about titles like Capcom's Killer 7. I hope



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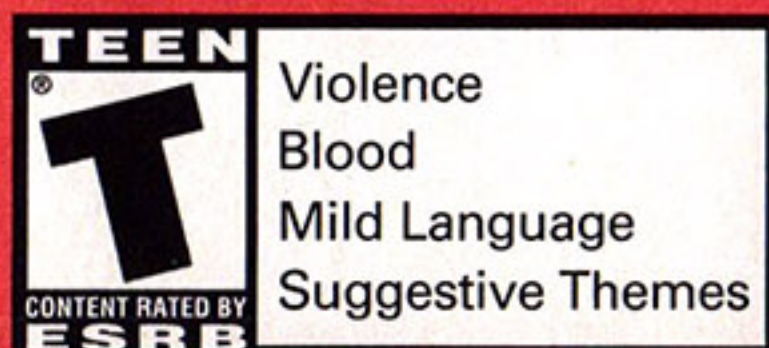
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PlayStation 2

Coming Spring 2003



this is the start of a new wave and not just a fleeting trend. Could these types of games ever be mainstream or as popular as current 3D ones?

Alan DeHaven
Via hotmail.com

Wow, a well-written letter about a thought-provoking topic – are you sure you sent this to the right magazine, Alan? Whatever the case, we certainly think that you draw some interesting parallels between the evolution of art and the craft of video games. In theory, a lot of your predictions could come true. Based on the CG special effects in films like *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* and *The Matrix: Reloaded*, it's safe to say that the era of photo-realistic video games may become a reality within the next 10 years. Once almost every title has graphics that put *Metal Gear Solid 2's* to shame, hopefully developers' focus will switch towards creating works with a genuinely unique visual presentation. *Killer 7* is likely to set a new standard in this area, along with similarly inventive titles like *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *Fear Effect: Inferno*. While we'd love to call this the wave of the future, the staggering success of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* seems to indicate that Hollywood action movies will continue to be a larger influence on the game industry than Pablo Picasso or *Princess Mononoke* in the next couple of years. Still, any trend that results in more diversity and creativity in gaming is a trend that we would welcome with open arms.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

I was reading in your mag about the Enix/Square merger, and I remembered this from a long time ago. In the original *Final Fantasy* for NES, in the Elfland town, one of the graves said "Here lies Erdrick." In the original *Dragon Warrior* (NES), you are following in the footsteps of a hero name Erdrick. See? They've been fooling us for 15 years. They've been merged the entire time!

Jason Hart
Via email



That's ridiculous. Everybody knows that Square and Enix would have never merged in the '80s, because Square was still angry at Enix for helping the U.S. to stage the moon landing. The two companies buried the hatchet only recently, when they joined forces to help Tupac Shakur fake his death. Sheesh! You are so naïve.

ENVELOPE ART

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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Envelope Art Contest
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APRIL WINNER!

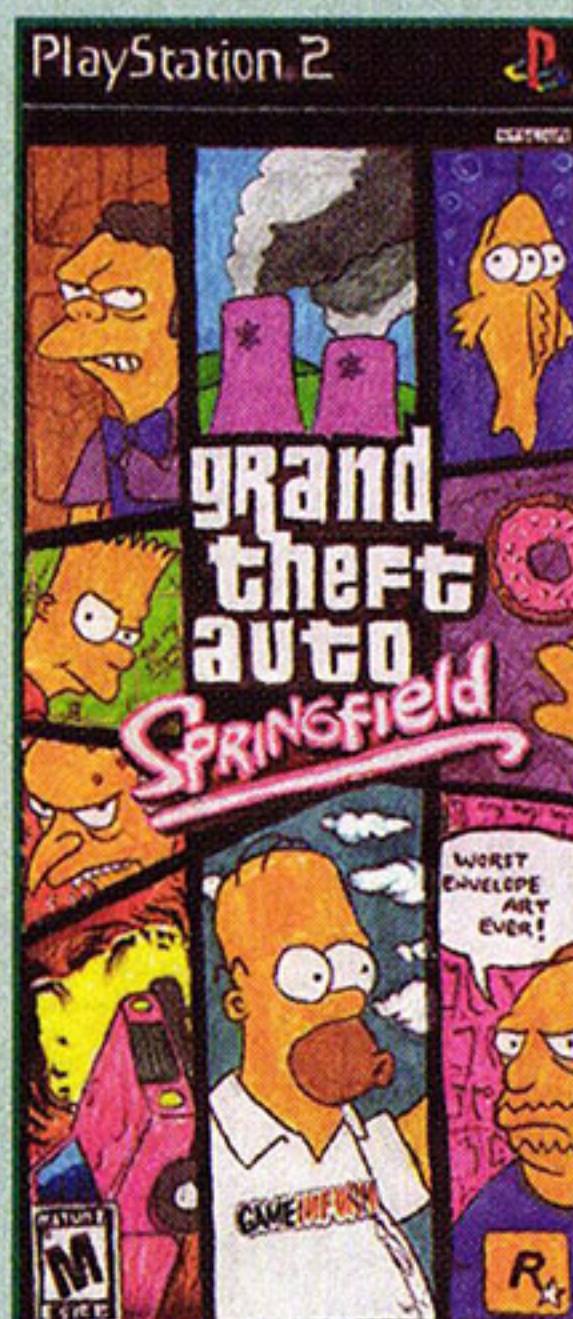
George Hinckle
The envelope art master returns!!!



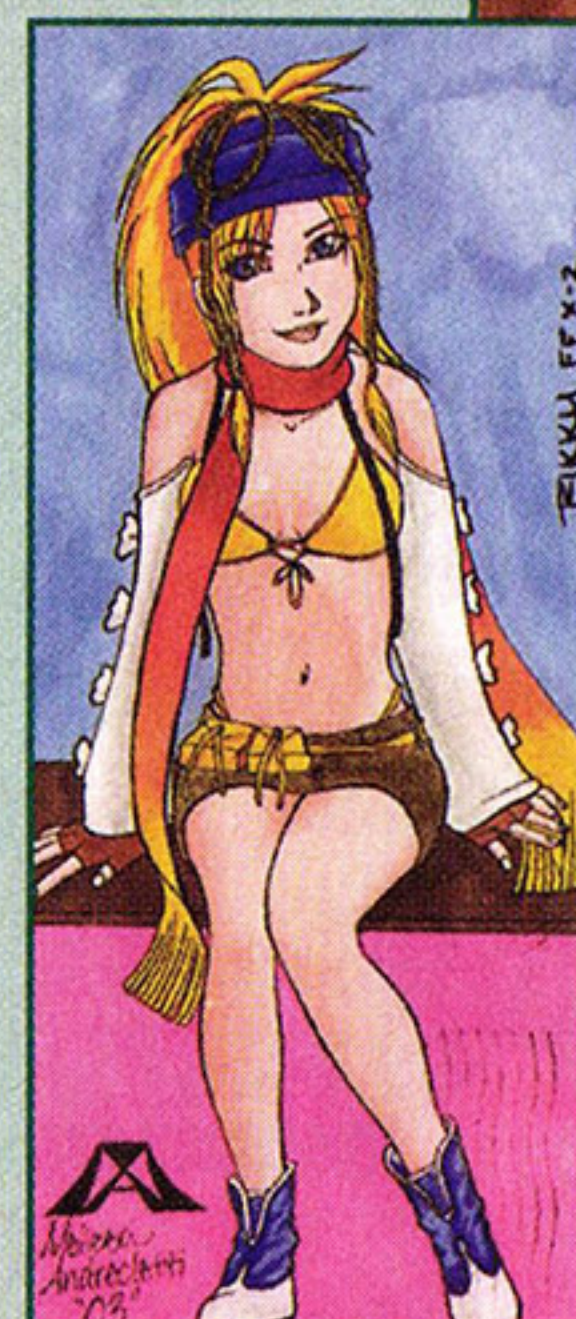
Lorenzo Ocampo
"I want to squeeze your dingleberries!!!"



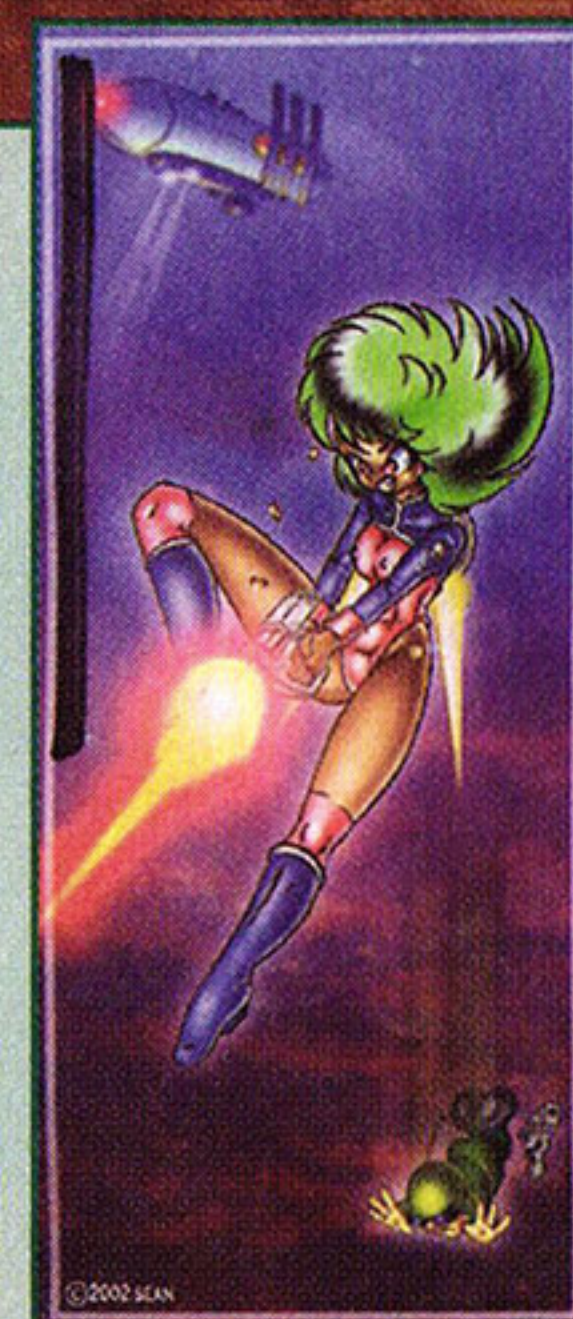
Vincent Cimino III
At least they're not trading in their souls for Kung Fu Chaos!



Louie Podlaski
So, instead of hookers, would you pick up Hans Moleman?



Melissa Androletti
Somebody has been stealing clothes from Christina Aguilera



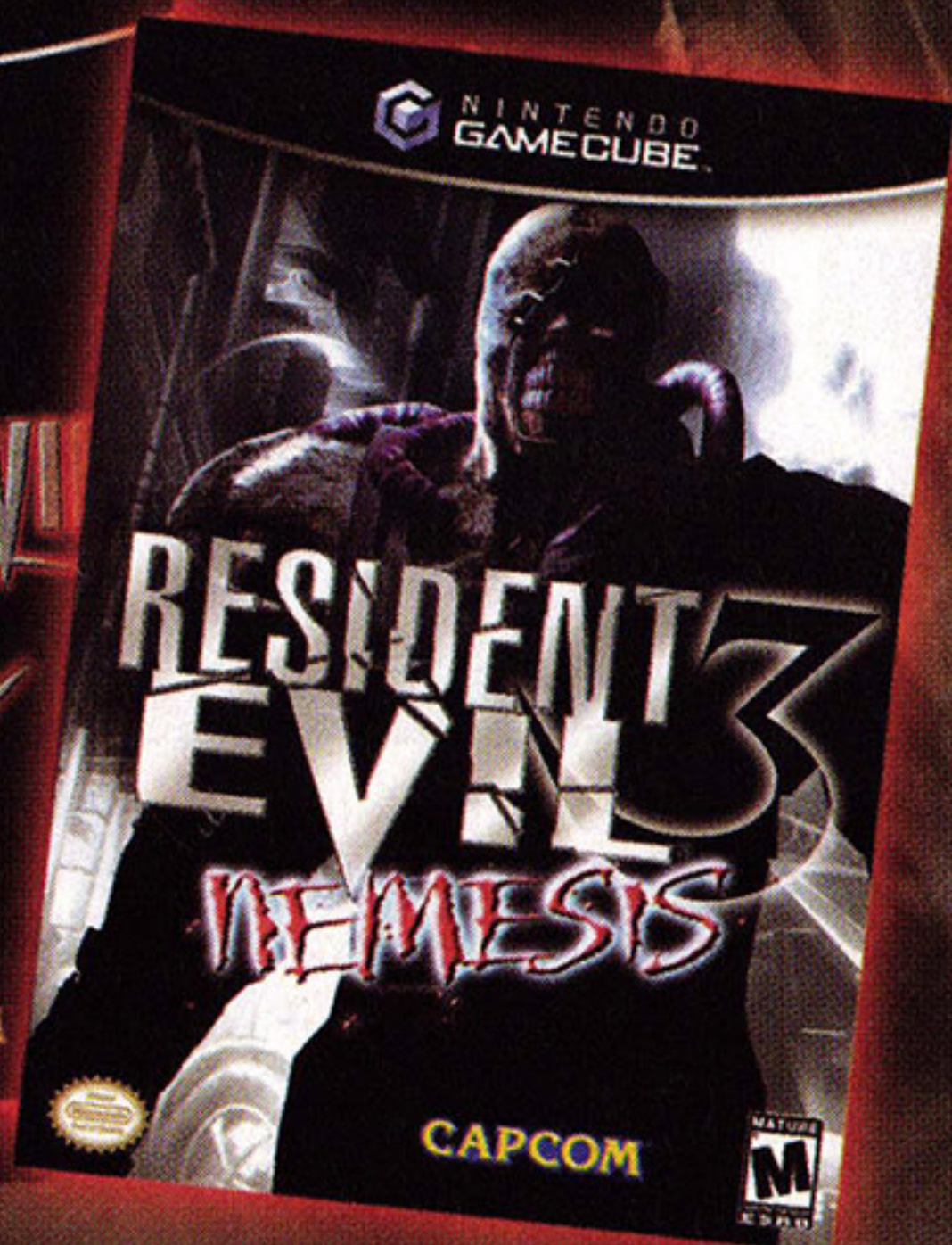
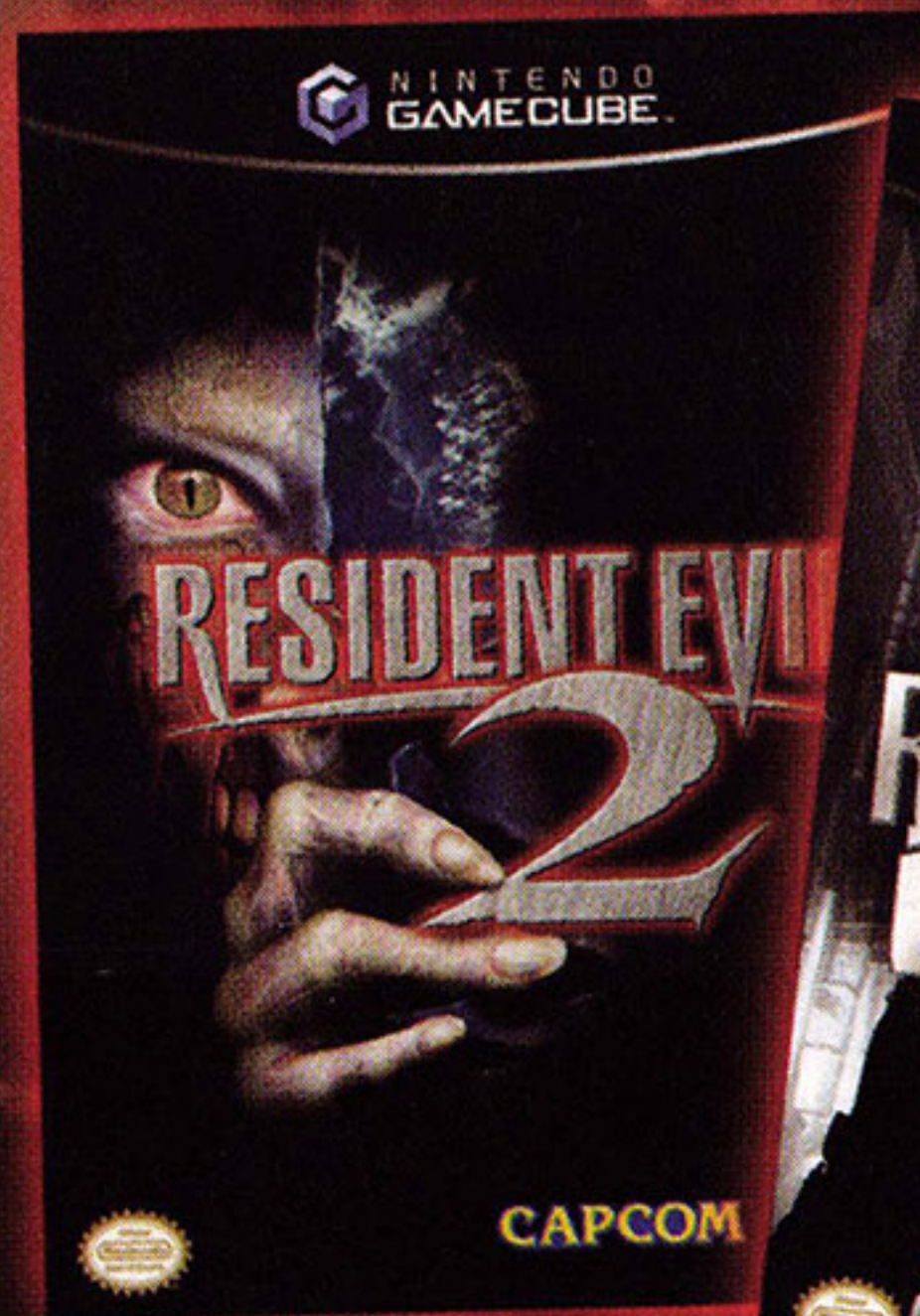
Sean Brehmer
Talk about a crotch rocket!!!

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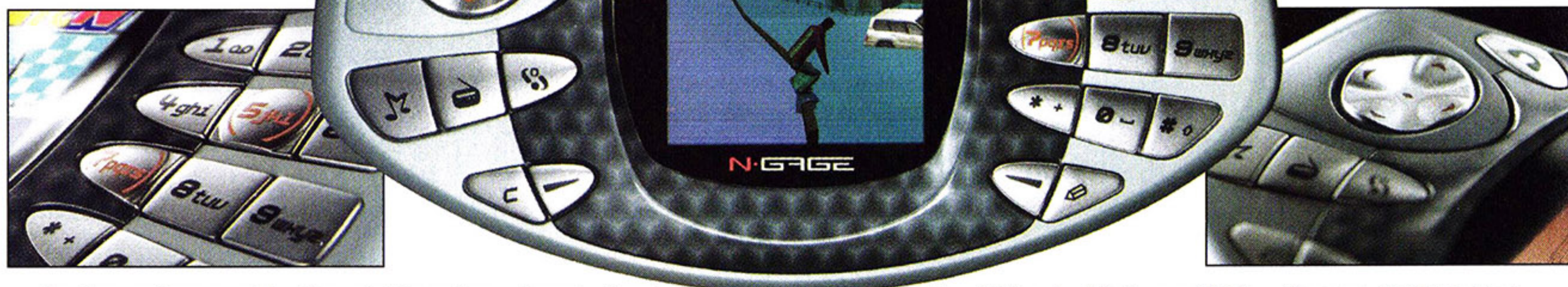
Blood and Gore
Violence

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GI NEWS

N-GAGE EXPANDS CELL PHONE GAMING

Finnish wireless giant **Nokia** unveiled a bold new piece of compact hardware in London recently. The **N-Gage** is a combination cell phone/handheld gaming unit that contains many of the best features of both devices. The company has not announced a specific release date or price point at this time, but Nokia expects the N-Gage to be on the shelves by the end of the year. Also, through a new deal with **T-Mobile**, gamers can potentially get their hands on the N-Gage through a reasonably priced service package.



On the software side, the platform has already lined up such big name publisher/developers as **Sega, Eidos Interactive, Activision,** and **THQ** to provide the N-Gage with titles via memory cartridges. Contrary to previous reports and some of Nokia's own press materials, **Electronic Arts** is not supporting the N-Gage at this time. The exact launch lineup is unknown, but **Sonic N**, Nokia's first-party games, and an unnamed Activision title have been confirmed. Nokia wants to be a strong first-party supporter of the console, and unveiled three titles – including a 3D snowboarding game. In fact, most of the cartridges for the system are expected to be three dimensional. Eidos was running **Tomb Raider** on the N-Gage and it looked very close to the **PSone** original.

Although controlling Lara required the use of several buttons (sometimes two at once) on the number keypad on the right side of the N-Gage, most of the other games only used the five and seven keys, which are highlighted and raised for easy access. The d-pad is eight-directional, and you can even take a screenshot of your game and send it to someone as a multimedia message. The N-Gage's backlit screen is vertical, not horizontal, which can interfere with side-scrolling titles like **Sonic N**. Nokia is discussing downloadable and online games for the future. Currently, the N-Gage is slated to support **Bluetooth**, a service that allows close-proximity wireless gaming between units.

Apart from being a handheld and a cell phone, N-Gage also offers many other amenities. It has a digital music player capable of playing MP3s, an FM radio, an Audio Manager (to interface with your PC), Personal Info

Management (like an address book), email/text messaging support, and more.

Can the N-Gage survive in a handheld world dominated by **Nintendo**? That company has already choked out competition such as the **Neo Geo Pocket** and the **WonderSwan**, so how is Nokia going to be different? Some believe that even with its

coterie of gadgets, the N-Gage's chances aren't good. "The Swiss Army knife notion just isn't going to fly," claims **Steven Kent**, author of

The Ultimate History of Video Games. "I think that there are a lot of issues that Nokia still has to work out, and

I'm not convinced that [it] has an understanding of the game market." Kent believes that regardless of the N-Gage's specs, everything from the number of buttons on the face to niche features not catering to your average user will doom the handheld. "The hardware is going to kill anything that the software can do. Bluetooth is wonderful as long as you have someone standing next to you that you can play against. You're not likely to run into somebody else with an N-Gage, let alone

the game you're holding."

Others in the industry, including *Game Informer's* Editor-In-Chief **Andy McNamara**, think that the platform can capture the imagination of the older demographic who typically adopt cutting-edge technology early, as well as grab a piece of Nintendo's younger market. "I think that a phone company is probably one of the few agencies that has a real chance of stopping the Game Boy machine. [Kids] are going to want to have a cell phone anyway. Why not get them something that has both together? I wouldn't want to be the one to have to go against Nintendo, but Nokia's got a lot of money, a lot of partners, and certainly has the right strategy to go after that market."

As with any other system, software will be the key to Nokia's success, and partnering with the likes of Activision and Sega is a start. "There's no way you can have a successful game system – no matter what else it can do – if you don't have quality games," says McNamara. "It always comes down to games."

GAMES OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED FOR N-GAGE

Nokia

- *Bounce* (action/platform)
- *Kart Racing*
- *Virtually Board Snowboarding 2*

Activision

Activision has confirmed its support, but has not announced any specific titles at this time

Eidos Interactive

- *Pandemonium* (32-bit action/platform title)
- *Tomb Raider* (contains three exclusive levels)

Sega

- *Sonic N*
- *Super Monkey Ball*
- *Sega Rally*
- *Virtua Tennis*
- *PuyoPuyo* (puzzle)

Taito

- *Taito Memories* (compilation of games)
- *Puzzle Bobble VS*.

THQ

- *Red Faction*
- *MotoGP*
- *Major League Baseball*

N-GAGE SPECS

- **Dimensions:** 133.7 x 69.7 x 20.2 mm
- **Weight:** 137g (with battery)
- **Screen:** 176 x 208 pixels, backlit with 4,096 colors
- **CPU:** N/A
- **Battery:** BL-5C Li-ion battery (lasts approx. 3 to 6 hours depending on the game)
- **Memory:** 3.4 MB internal w/ external memory cards of 32, 64, and 128 MB available (comes w/ 64 MB card)
- **Operating System:** Nokia Series 60 platform and Symbian OS
- **Email Support:** IMAP4, POP3, SMTP, and MIME2
- **Ring Tones:** MP3, AAC, MIDI, and WAV
- **WAP:** XHTML over GSM data, HSCSD, and GPRS
- **Release Date:** Holiday 2003
- **Suggested Retail Price:** TBA



Bounce



Sonic N



Virtually Board Snowboarding 2



FIRST LOOK AT NEW PIKMIN AND KIRBY TITLES

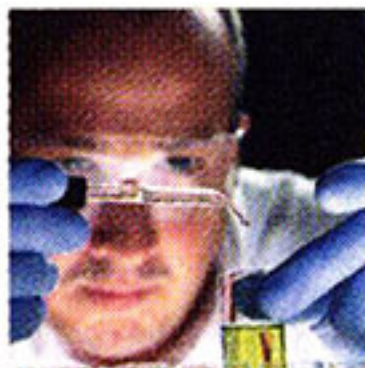
Following up last month's barrage of new **Nintendo** games, *Game Informer* is here to offer you a first look at a pair of **GameCube** titles slated to come out on dates undetermined. **Pikmin 2** and **Kirby's Air Ride** are sparkling every little bit as they should. The former has not only added a two-player split-screen mode, but also gives Captain Olimar a partner in crime. What, did that numbskull crash-land back on the planet?! He must have put that spaceship together with all the quality of a Yugoslavian sub-compact car.

Meanwhile, Kirby's game is actually a resurrected **N64** title that never saw the light of day. Looking at this screen, it appears that the original title's racing focus has been retained. Does this mean that we won't see Kirby's usual platforming aspects? Who knows; but, as it's our favorite pink puffball, we have a feeling that Air Ride won't suck.



Pikmin 2 adds a new character (pictured below) and a two-player mode to the mix





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.

MICHAEL JACKSON'S STUNTCHILD

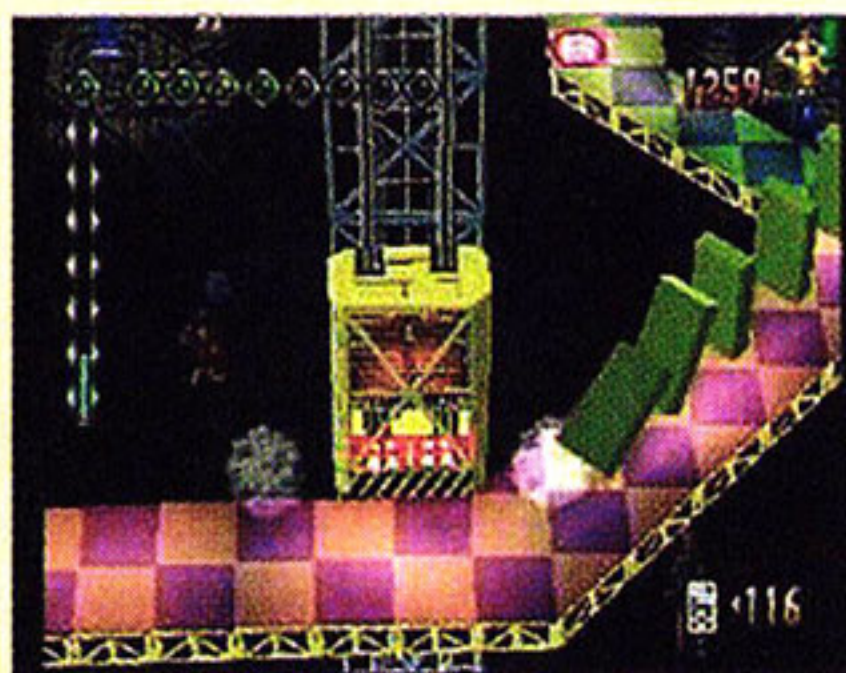


You've already seen the video footage of Michael Jackson dangling his child from a hotel balcony, but now it's time to live the adventure. In Michael Jackson's Stuntchild, players step into the shoes of the King of Pop and are asked to do

the unthinkable. The goal of the game is to make national headlines by placing his child in harm's way. Don't worry, since the tyke is wearing a towel over his head, he's completely oblivious to the actions that are unfolding around him. The gameplay is stylized much like Infogrames' Stuntman, where every second counts in completing a series of scripted events. You'll be asked to hurl the child through an open boxcar of a speeding train; rescue him before he's mauled by lions; and sneak him past the evil Child Protective Services agent. Of course, if the kid is injured in any way, the game is over. For a limited time, lucky gamers under the age of 13 who find a golden ticket in their Stuntchild game case will receive a free ferris wheel ride at Neverland Ranch!

NAME THAT GAME

Oh ArtDink, you truly slay us. As if it wasn't enough to put out Aquanaut's Holiday and Tail of the Sun, this company went on to publish this month's game for the PSone. You are a domino that leaves a trail of dominos in your wake. These must be strategically placed around the board in an effort to cause chain reactions. Insanity. Sweet, blissful insanity.



(Answer on page 32)

TOP 10 COLLECTIBLE ITEMS NOT IN DOA XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

- 10 A Kangaroo Jack commemorative incense burner
- 9 Thong lube
- 8 Olga the Hairy Ukrainian hidden character
- 7 Denver Dan's Old-Fashioned Beef Jerky
- 6 Flowbee Precision Haircutting System
- 5 A video of the lost episode of Baywatch
- 4 A massaging shower head
- 3 A Capital One no-hassle Visa Card
- 2 DOA Xtreme Beach Cricket minigame
- 1 A realistic-looking female body

DEVELOPER TOP 5

JORDAN ITKOWITZ
Designer/Writer,
Rainbow Studios



- 1 Contra – NES
- 2 Phantasy Star II – Genesis
- 3 Castlevania: Symphony of the Night – PSone
- 4 The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past – SNES
- 5 Rayman 2: The Great Escape – DC

READER TOP 5

STEPHANIE SCHMIDT
Manchester, UK



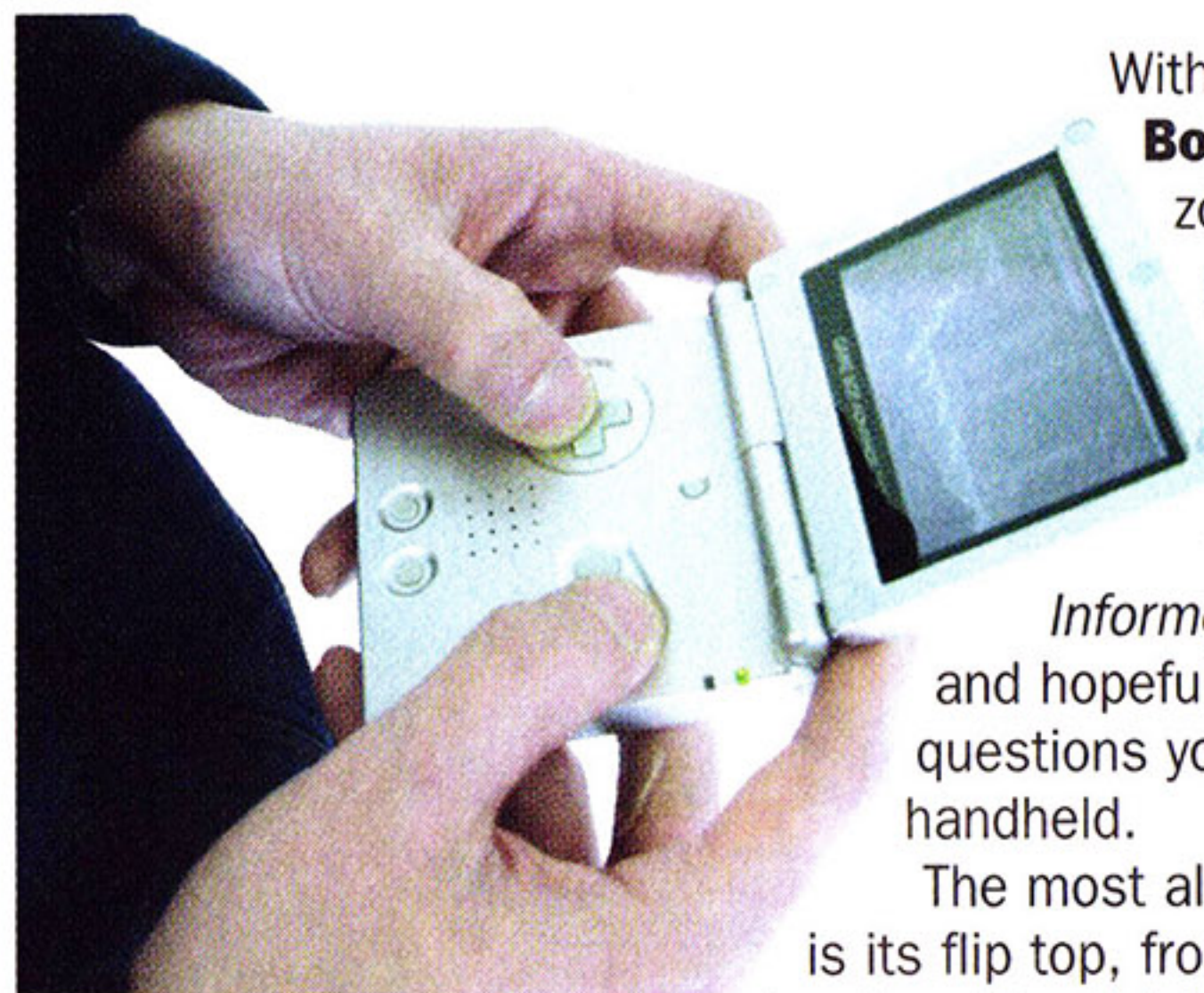
- 1 Rayman series – PSone/PS2
- 2 Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus – PS2
- 3 ToeJam & Earl III – Xbox
- 4 BurgerTime – Intellivision
- 5 The Black Cauldron – IBM PC Jr.

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!

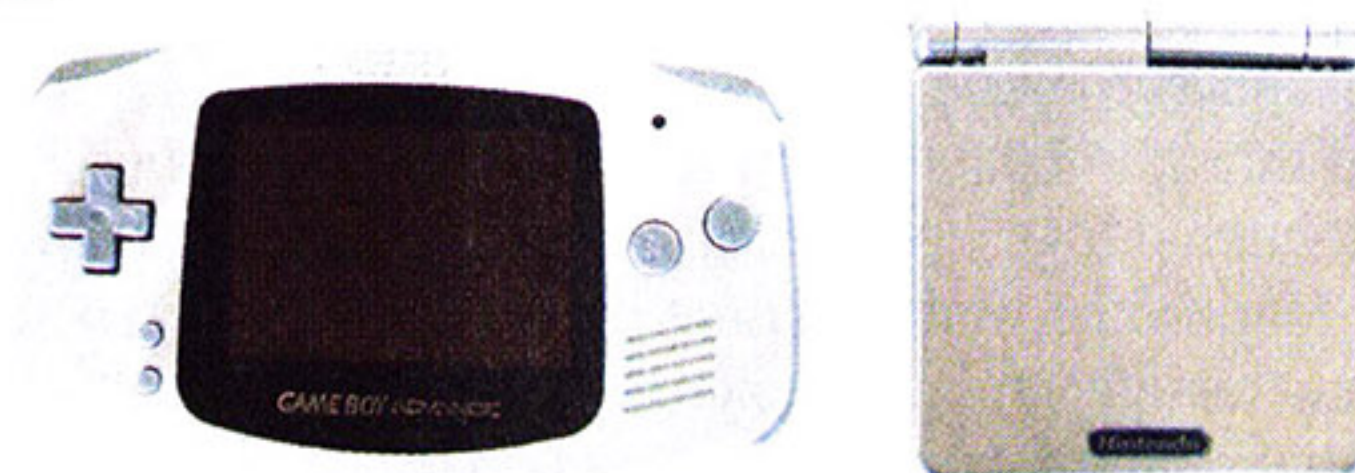
PUTTING THE NEW GBA TO THE TEST



With the release of the **Game Boy Advance SP** on the horizon, you are no doubt already pondering your priorities – paying rent or buying a sexy new GBA. While this is a no-brainer to anyone with two hands, *Game Informer* is here to join the debate and hopefully answer some of the questions you have regarding the new handheld.

The advantage of the front-lit screen is quite clear

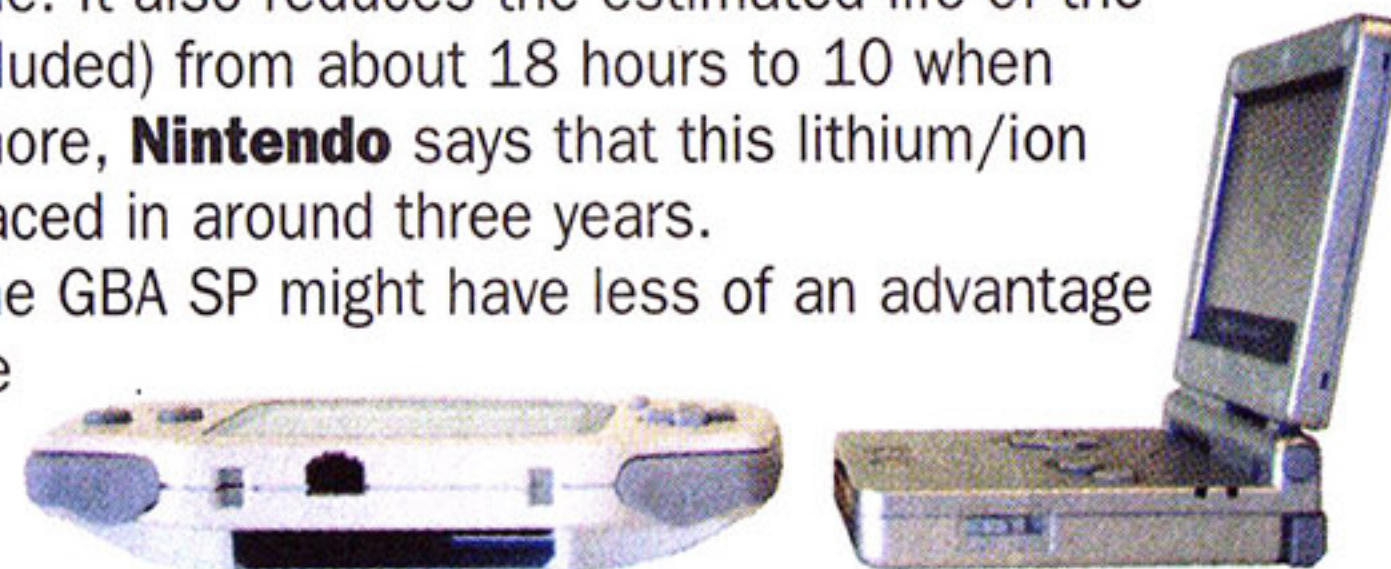
inconsistent lighting across the screen as well as glare. The Game Boy Advance SP's front lighting system bathes the screen in an even light. We played **Castlevania: Circle of the Moon** – an early GBA title that is greatly affected by the original GBA's poor screen – and the SP was like light in a world of darkness. The only downside to this is that using the light



The GBA SP is not only about half the size of the GBA...

function does wash out the graphics' colors a little. It also reduces the estimated life of the rechargeable battery (included) from about 18 hours to 10 when continuously lit. Furthermore, **Nintendo** says that this lithium/ion pack will have to be replaced in around three years.

The one area where the GBA SP might have less of an advantage is shape. While it is more compact than the GBA, it isn't as ergonomic. The SP isn't as wide or thick as the original

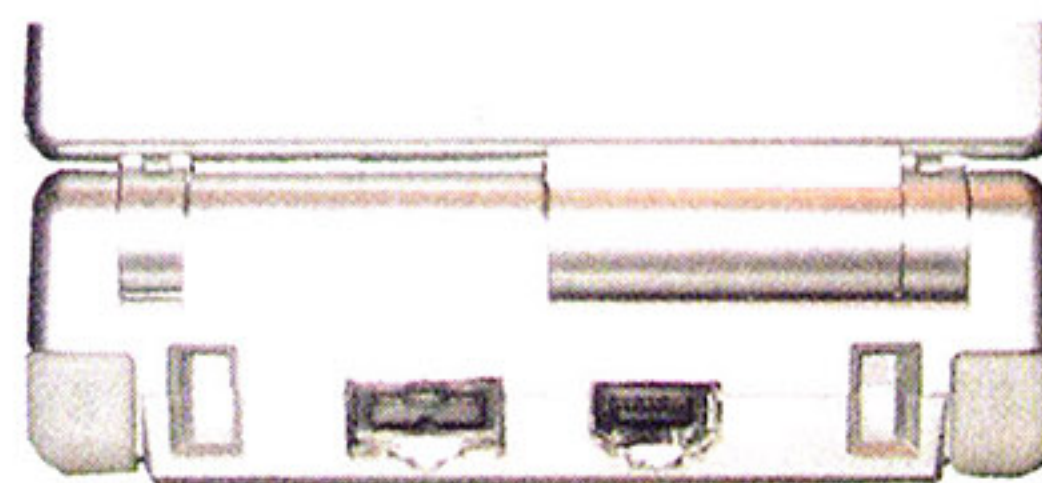


...it's also almost half as thick

(when the screen is up), and therefore it can be a tad harder to grasp. We imagine, however, that this may only be an issue for those with large hands. The GBA SP contains the same number of buttons as the GBA, but they are slightly more recessed. Those on the shoulders are considerably smaller, while the d-pad and A and B buttons aren't as raised as the GBA's. These changes didn't hinder gaming performance. The SP does lack a headphone jack for the speaker, but Nintendo will offer an adapter that is sold separately.



The headphone adapter is sold separately...



...and fits into the back of the unit. Also note the smaller shoulder buttons.

As immediately superior as the GBA SP may seem to the original Advance handheld, it also comes at a cost. The SP has a suggested retail price of \$99.99 – that's \$30 more than the regular GBA. But when you factor in, the savings you receive because you don't have to buy a crappy light peripheral, or that you'll spend less on batteries in the long run, the Game Boy Advance SP is just too good to pass up.



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE YUMMY

GOOD – Is **Andy McNamara** as sexy in person? He'll be at the **HBO** studio in New York on April 21 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. if you want to see. Oh yeah, **Andy**, **Ion Storm's Warren Spector** and others in the industry will be on hand for a roundtable discussion on video games, so nakedness is frowned upon.



BAD – **Microsoft** has recalled fighting game **Kakuto Chojin** in the U.S. and Japan because of the inclusion of a Muslim prayer, which may offend followers of Islam. It isn't just Muslims – we're all offended by that horrible game.

BAD – **Dave Mirra** is suing **Acclaim** for \$21 million, claiming the publisher harmed him with its risqué **BMX XXX** title. Mirra had already disassociated himself from the project months before its release, but according to the suit, Acclaim persisted in using his name and likeness. If it loses, maybe Acclaim can pay him the \$21 million in lap dances.

GOOD – A mix of good and bad news for **Bandai**. The company is showing strong yearly earnings but is killing off all production of the **WonderSwan** handheld. Bandai has already started making titles for its former rival, **Game Boy Advance**.

YUMMY – **McDonald's** and **Sega** are teaming up to bring kids *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Super Monkey Ball* Happy Meals. Just don't go and ask for an order of rings – that's **Burger King**.

GOOD – **Capcom's** work with **Nintendo** will continue. **Shigeru Miyamoto** recently let slip that Capcom is already developing an all-new **Legend of Zelda** title for the **Game Boy Advance**. Stay tuned for more as it develops.



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.

Although some around the office wondered what else there was to **Majesco's BloodRayne** other than cheap thrills, *Loose Talk* has heard that **BloodRayne 2** is going to take the goth chick vibe even further. Majesco apparently wants to push the envelope by sexing up Agent BloodRayne as much as possible.

Some publishers in Japan are balking at the release of **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**. Meanwhile, **The Getaway** has been accepted with open arms in Japan because Mark Hammond's mission to recover his kidnapped son is reason enough for free-form violence. What? Can't a guy start up his own business without getting hassled?

Sony's RPG, **Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits**, is set to hit Japan this spring. Even better, however, is the fact that the **PlayStation 2** title is being readied for a release Stateside this summer.

Word out of Europe is that **Vivendi Universal** may break up its various game entities, which include **Blizzard Entertainment**, **Sierra**, and **Universal Interactive**. **Microsoft** has also been rumored to be interested in purchasing Vivendi Universal as a whole.

While **Robotech** wasn't the hit that publisher **TDK** wanted, bigger things are in store for the franchise. An online component is being seriously considered, as is a different approach to the game's action in general. Meanwhile, **Aquaman** is totally lost at sea.



CIVILIZATION IS ONLY SKIN DEEP.



The battle to save the outside world starts within. As Jen Tate, a conflicted and unsuspecting hero, you'll assume a host of savage yet intelligent demon forms in order to save four distant realms – from decaying kingdoms submerged in poisoned waters to bleak netherworlds shrouded in eternal winter. You'll engage legions of enemies. Meet and, at times, be incarnated as Scree, an ancient and powerful ally. And ultimately face your own shocking secret. Inside and out, there is no sanctuary.

PRIMAL

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

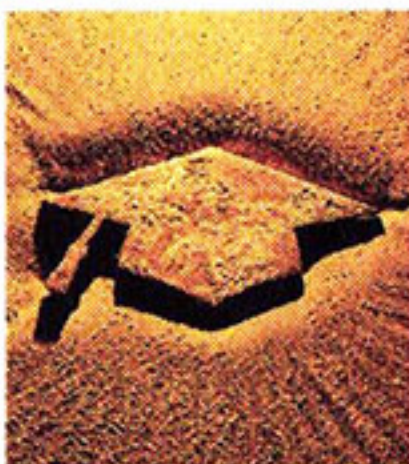
Blood
Violence



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD
PLAY IN OURS.

www.playstation.com

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VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

This month's rating system is almost a no-win situation: The number of correct answers will determine just how cool your mullet is. So, if you get 0 correct, you'll be scorned to wear one of the worst mullets ever conceived. If you get a 10, you might just be cool enough to sport Billy Ray Cyrus' classic coif.

QUESTION 1: In 1981, this system was created by a Hong Kong-based developer, Video Technology Limited (VTech, VTL). It was released in Asia and a number of European countries. Rumor has it that Sony originally headed the project, but didn't consider it viable at the last minute. What is this system's name?

- A. Odyssey 2
- B. Interton VC4000
- C. Creativision
- D. Channel F



This system looks very similar to others at the time, but never actually came to U.S. shores

QUESTION 2: Everyone knows one of the greatest shooters of all time was Blazing Lazers for the TurboGrafx-16. But, most are unaware that it had a sequel that appeared on the Super Nintendo. What was the sequel's name?

- A. Blazing Lazers 2
- B. Burning Lazers
- C. Axelay
- D. Space MegaForce

QUESTION 3: The Neo Geo was essentially a powerful arcade machine with two CPUs – a 16- and an 8-bit processor. This enabled it to display an amazing amount of colors onscreen at the time. How many could it display at once?

- A. 512
- B. 4,096
- C. 32,000
- D. 128,000

QUESTION 4: What was the first game to receive an M rating from the ESRB?

- A. Night Trap
- B. Mortal Kombat
- C. Robocop Versus Terminator
- D. Way of the Warrior

QUESTION 5: How many languages does Phantasy Star Online support to allow gamers around the world to play together?

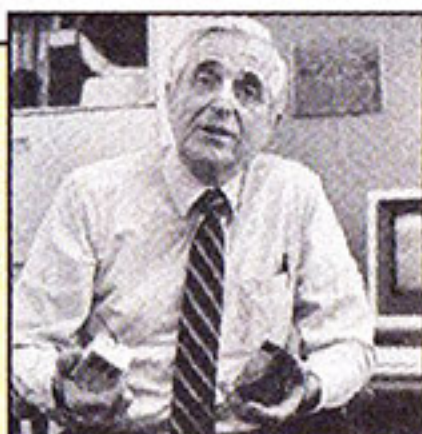
- A. 4
- B. 5
- C. 6
- D. 8

QUESTION 6: The computer mouse was invented in 1968. What is the name of the inventor?

- A. Dr. Sam Hurst
- B. Douglas Engelbart
- C. Nolan Bushnell
- D. Will Wright



All FPS nuts should thank this man and his invention!



QUESTION 7: In issue 100 of Game Informer, we composed a list of the top 100 games of all time. What game did we place as number one?

- A. Super Mario Bros.
- B. Tetris
- C. The Legend of Zelda
- D. Doom

QUESTION 8: The lead character in the title Splatterhouse, for TurboGrafx-16, looked a lot like Jason from Friday the 13th, but he actually had a name of his own. What's his name?

- A. Rick
- B. Jason
- C. West
- D. Chet

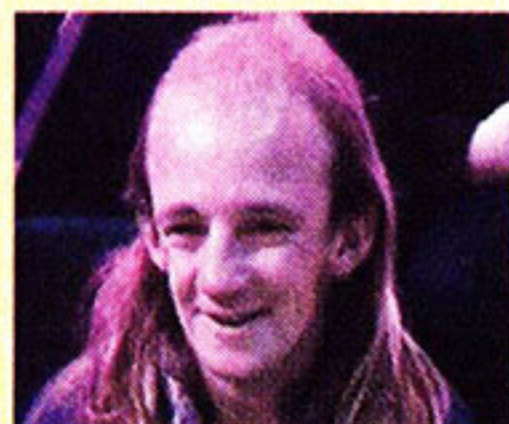
QUESTION 9: Which one of these TV licenses was never transformed into a game?

- A. Greatest American Hero
- B. Airwolf
- C. M*A*S*H
- D. Alf

QUESTION 10: Which one of these scenarios actually took place in Final Fantasy VII?

- A. Tifa and Aris compete in a wet t-shirt contest to the death
- B. Sephiroth uses Cloud's sword on Cloud
- C. Red 13 humps Sephiroth's leg
- D. Barrett gets his arm blown off

Score & Rank



0 Baldy McMullet



1-3 Femullet



4-6 Midget Mullet



7-9 "Pretty Boy" Mullet



10 Billy Ray Cyrus!

Video Game Trivia Answers:

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

GRAND THEFT AUTO ROCKS, ALL ELSE SUXX

Hijacking the hearts of gamers with its mix of drug deals, porn stars, and gun-toting lawlessness, the best-selling game of 2002 was...**Pokémon!** Just kidding. No, the people have gone for something a little stronger with **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City** for the PlayStation 2 taking top honors, followed up with a **GTA III** chaser. Smooth.

As if to show that it wasn't a totally morally bankrupt year in video games, however, **Madden NFL 2003** took the third spot. Finally! A successful title whose stars aren't murderers or involved in drugs. Wait a minute...

Industry tracker **The NPD Group**, compiled the data below, and it shows a predominance of PS2 titles. **Xbox** software appears twice, while **Super Mario Sunshine** is the **GameCube's** sole Top 20 entry.

TOP 20 U.S. VIDEO GAME TITLES IN 2002 (Ranked by total units)

RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2
2	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2
3	Madden NFL 2003	PS2
4	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA
5	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2
6	Medal of Honor: Frontline	PS2
7	Spider-Man	PS2
8	Kingdom Hearts	PS2
9	Halo	Xbox
10	Super Mario Sunshine	GC
11	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	PS2
12	Yu-Gi-Oh! Eternal Duelist Soul	GBA
13	Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku	GBA
14	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	PS2
15	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dark Duel Stories	GBC
16	Yu-Gi-Oh! Forbidden Memories	PSone
17	NCAA Football 2003	PS2
18	Sonic Advance	GBA
19	Splinter Cell	Xbox
20	SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/TRSTS



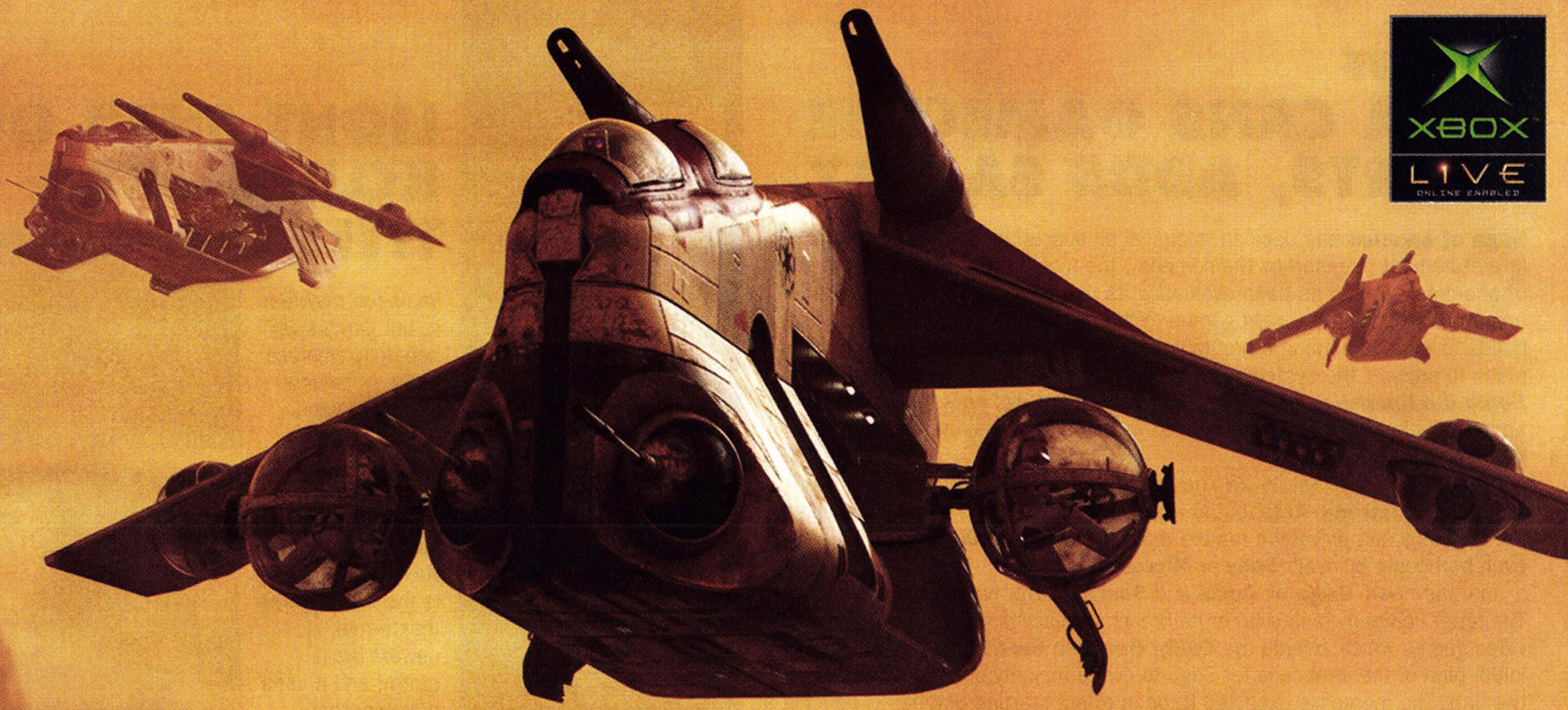
12.5% of the editor's asses were sprained this month

71% of Justin's wardrobe is now thong bikinis, as inspired by playing hours and hours of *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*. Life imitating art – blurgh!

69% of objects that come into Kristian's hands must be sniffed first before passing muster

100% of the staff had dates for Valentine's Day – a *Game Informer* first!

43% of Andy's iPod is full of MP3s and other data. His brain, meanwhile, is only running at 35% of its full capacity



LIVE FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...



Single player battles rage across six worlds.

STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS

The Clone War is up and running on Xbox Live. Wreak havoc on the ground and in the air of six different worlds. Boot up and battle it out with other troopers on Xbox Live in four multiplayer modes: Duel, Conquest, Control Zone and Academy. And see if you have what it takes to dominate the battlefields in a galaxy far, far away.

www.swclonewars.com



Multiplayer mayhem with up to 8 players.



VIOLENCE

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GI NEWS

SEGA CANS GAMECUBE SPORTS, ADDS SAMMY

Sega of America has decided to cancel all sports titles on the **GameCube**. In a statement released by the company, the move is due to a reorganization of priorities. "Sega has been evaluating its resources and product lineup to ensure it is bringing the right games to the right platforms as the company builds towards becoming a profitable publisher." Accordingly, the company plans to support the system with "entertainment" titles – franchises like **Sonic the Hedgehog** and **Super Monkey Ball**. Sega says that it intends for sports developer **Visual Concepts** to focus its attention on games for the **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox**.

Sega had hoped that its **2K** line of sports titles would at least pull even with giant **Electronic Arts**, but lower-than-expected sales have disappointed the company and prompted rumors that developer **Visual Concepts** may even be bought by rivals **Sony** or **Microsoft**.

In other news, **Sega of Japan** and **Sammy Corp.** have agreed to merge. The latter company is known for its branch of pachinko machines, as well as video games which include the **Guilty Gear** and **Galerians** franchises. The initial plan of the deal calls for Sega to own a majority percentage (54%) of the firm. The merger is expected to be in effect starting October 1, pending a shareholders meeting at the end of June.

SQUARE/ENIX MERGER MOVES FORWARD

Shareholders have approved the merger of **Square** and **Enix** and the subsequent stock swap. This has meant the shutting down of **Enix of America**. Meanwhile, Square and **Electronic Arts** will end their five-year partnership this summer (EA distributed Square products in North America). The merger will officially take place on April 1, with the formation of **Square Enix U.S.A., Inc.** Current Square head **Jun Iwasaki** will serve as president and CEO. An expansion pack for the online-only **Final Fantasy XI** title in Japan is expected to be the first product from Square Enix.

UGLIEST PS2S – EVER!

For any of you gamers out there who wish you were an interior decorator (not that there's anything wrong with that), **Sony of Japan's** got something for you. The company has just unveiled the latest color series for the **PlayStation 2**. Yes, only Chet would feel comfortable owning a baby blue or lavender system, but at least he'll admit it!

Each of these colors (including silver) has been limited to a run of 50,000 units, and retails for over \$200 (stand sold separately). Maybe if you're lucky, Sony of Japan will send it in a plainly wrapped parcel, so it won't scream, "I love **Bette Midler!**" to everyone in your neighborhood. If you're interested in a more "normal" range of colored PS2s, check out *ETC* on page 114.



DATA FILE

► Confirming the news that we've always wanted, **Konami** has announced that it is bringing **Castlevania** to the **PlayStation 2**. No other details are being offered, but rumor has it that the game will be 2D.

► The **Xbox** and **GameCube** are no home for **Midway's Haven**. The company has canned versions of the game for the consoles. If this helps stem the tide of white guys with cornrows, then we're all for it.

► **Nintendo** promises to make money in the future. How? By officially committing to **Metroid Prime 2**. No date for the game yet, but we bet it's before money starts growing on trees.

► **Yu-Gi-Oh** fans will be taking the stairway to heaven this April with **Game Boy Advance's Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel**, which includes three limited edition trading cards.

► **Xbox** fans will have to sheathe their lightsabers over **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic** for a little while. The Xbox-exclusive RPG has been delayed until May. And in a galaxy far, far away, **LucasArts** and **Sony Online** have announced that they are delaying certain features from the **PC's Star Wars Galaxies**, such as player-owned cities, drivable vehicles, Dark Jedi and more until around seven to eight months after *Galaxies'* April launch.

► Now your sims can chase their dreams of stardom in the bright lights of Studio Town. **EA** has announced the sixth **Sims PC** expansion pack entitled **The Sims: Superstar**. Become a rock star, supermodel, or a film heartthrob in glamorous Studio Town. Get your entourage going this May.

► "We could make the best racing game anyone has ever seen," says **Scott Novis**, vice president of product development for **Rainbow Studios**. The famed maker of racing titles is lending its expertise to **THQ's** new **World Supercross** franchise set to debut next year on the **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox**.

► **EA Sports** is changing its **F1** formula. The company's racing franchise is now called **F1 Career Challenge** and will, appropriately, feature an emphasis on building a rookie driver up through the ranks. This new game is expected to appear in May.

► **Sony Online's** massively-multiplayer strategy title **Sovereign** has been cancelled. Says **Scott McDaniel**, Sony Online's vice president of marketing and PR, "It never really had the magic."

Name That Game Answer:

No One Can Stop Mr. Domino

LIGHT SHED ON KOJIMA GBA TITLE

Vampires may fear it, but gamers will hopefully embrace it. We're talking about light and the new **Hideo Kojima** project

from **Konami** that utilizes it on the **Game Boy Advance**. **Boktai**

is the **Metal Gear** mastermind's newest brain-storm, and it uses a sensor that

attaches to your handheld. This device will detect light levels during important times throughout the game. **Boktai** casts you as

Django, a young boy who must eradicate vampires. The game is slated for an as-yet-unannounced U.S. release date.



ALIENS DECLARE OPEN SEASON

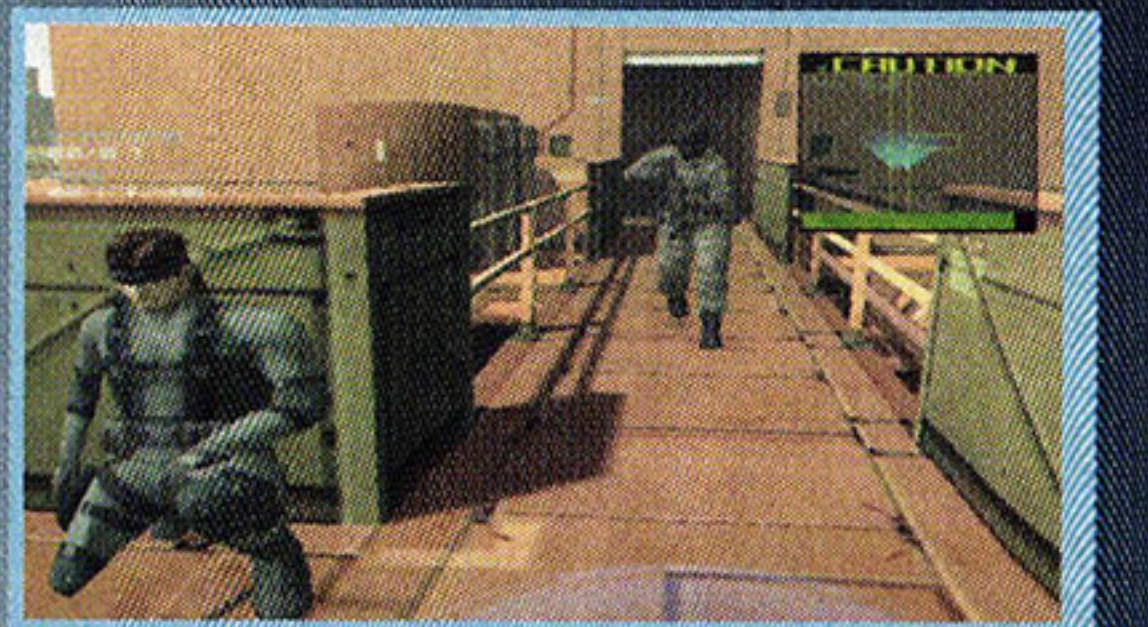
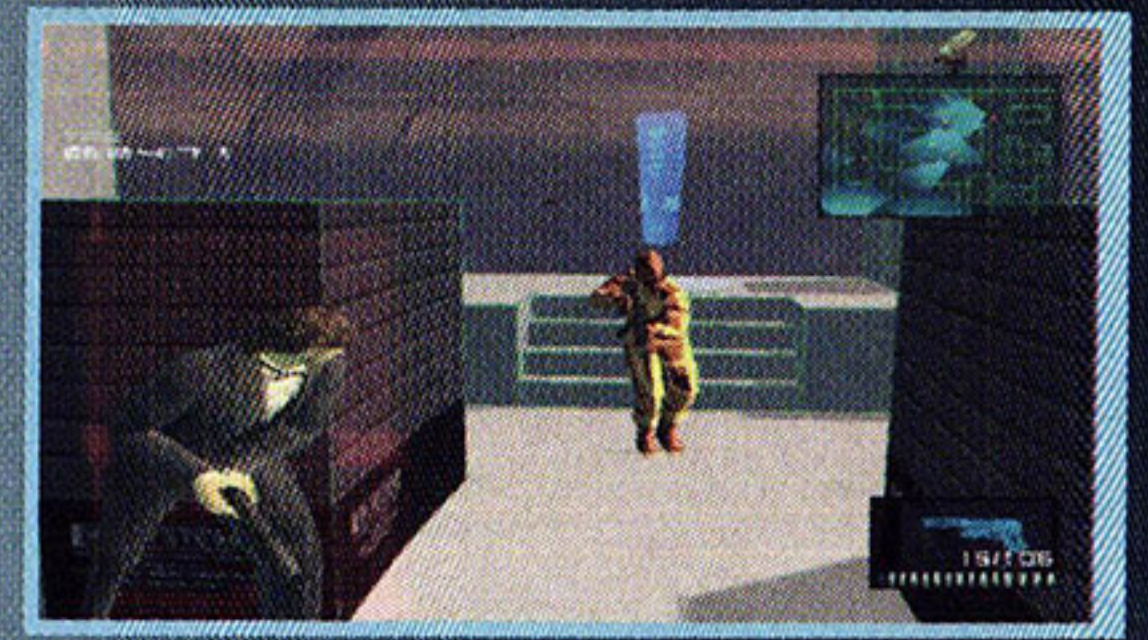
Ain't got time to bleed? Well, we think you'll make time for the bloody free-for-all that is **Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction**. The **Electronic Arts/Fox Interactive** co-published title is landing this summer on the **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox**. Take control of one of three forces – Aliens, Predators, or Colonial Marines – and outmaneuver the others for supremacy of the planet LV-742.

While all we'd need is **Carl Weathers** on our side, you'll have to make due with a customizable army replete with species-specific weapon upgrades and other advantages. The last time Matt played an *Aliens Versus Predator* game, he jumped out of his seat and screamed like a little girl. While *Extinction's* tactical-strategy bent isn't quite as scary, maybe he'll wet himself this time around anyway.





www.konami.com/usa



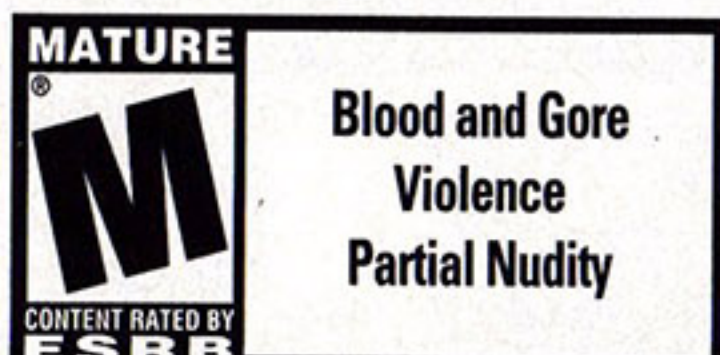
TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

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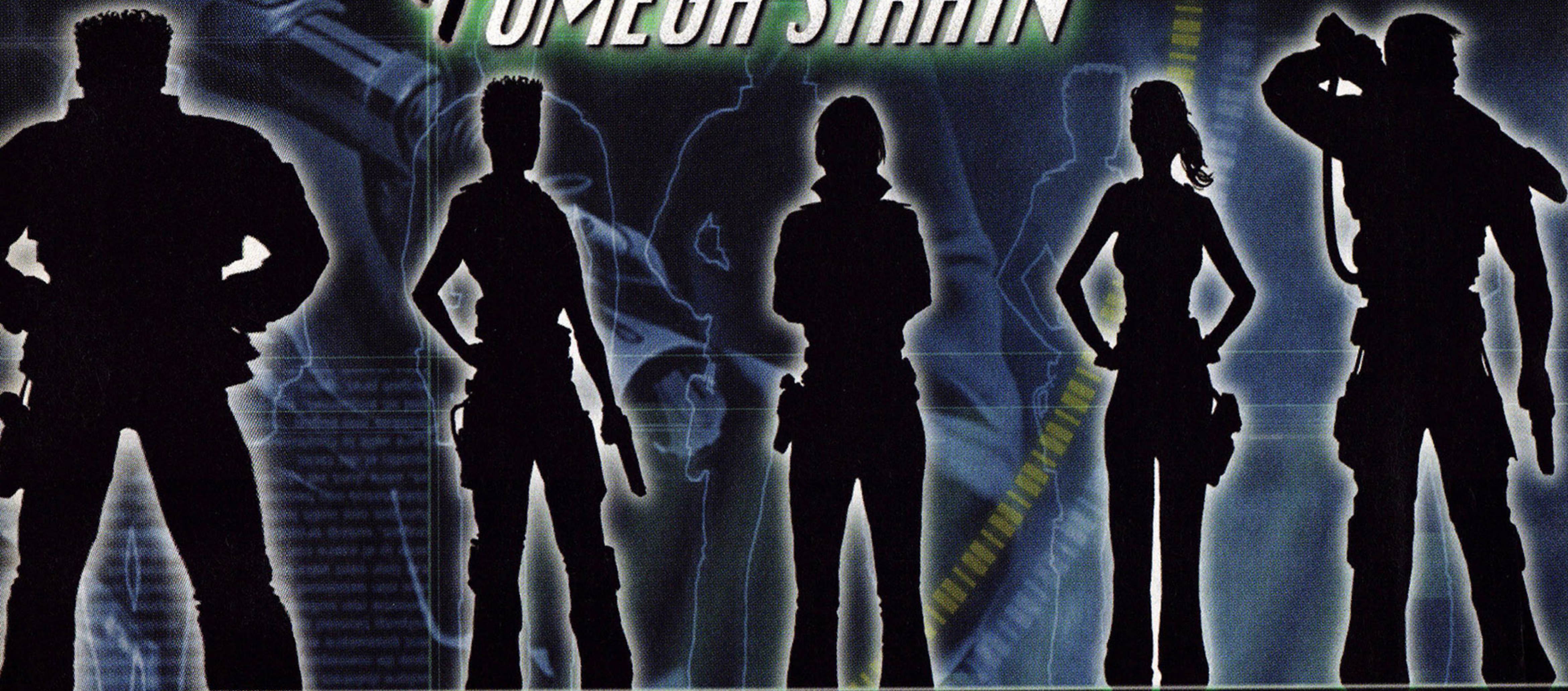


PlayStation[®] 2

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WILLIAM CRUSHER • IMANI GRAY • ALIMA HAJIYAD • GINA HUNTER • GABE LOGAN

Number Six SUPREMACY OMEGA STRAIN



Amid the cascading mountaintops and colorful scenery of Bend, Oregon resides one of video games' best kept secrets. Not only does it house the headquarters of Sony Bend (formerly Eidetic), it is the home of Mark Blank, the legendary game creator who wrote the seminal text adventure Zork for the TRS-80.

As it turns out, Blank is also the founder and studio director of Sony Bend. In spite of the fact that his contributions to gaming are immeasurable, he's managed to lead a subdued life out of the spotlight. Deserving of a seat in the video game hall of fame next to Shigeru Miyamoto and Will Wright, he's been an instrumental part of gaming since its infancy in 1979. He's one of the few people in the industry that has helped shape its future every step of the way. Much like the "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" party game that swept the nation a few years back, Blank has somehow managed to tie his name to just about everything video games have to offer – including such obscure hardware platforms as the Apple Newton, Atari 800, and Phillips CD-i.

Experienced as he may be, Blank's storied past actually pales in comparison to the promising future that he and his Sony Bend studio are currently shaping. While it seems odd that failure could actually be considered a good thing, Eidetic's fate would have been very different if the company's first game, Bubsy 3D, would have found an audience when it released in 1997. Poor sales of the title led to a complete turnaround for the company, which eventually included



LIAN XING • GARY STONEMAN • ELSA WEISSENGER • LAWRENCE MUJARI

ONLINE OUTBREAK



a partnership with Sony and the creation of one of gaming's most recognizable action franchises, Syphon Filter.

Within the span of three years, Eidetic managed to release three different Syphon Filter games for the PSone – all of which found immense success in retail and among video game critics. In spite of the fact that he's been making games for 24 years now, Blank looks no older than 35 and exhibits a youthful enthusiasm about the top-secret project that he and his team have kept under wraps for the last two years. While it comes as no surprise that Sony Bend is continuing with its popular Syphon Filter franchise, the direction that the series is taking is nothing short of shocking.

The aptly named Syphon Filter: Omega Strain is the latest iteration in the series and the first effort for the PlayStation 2. In keeping with the title, this will also be the final entry in the Syphon Filter series. Sony Bend's creative director, John Garvin, explains, "It's a continuation of the story, but this will be the final chapter. Once the game is done, we will finally know what Mara Aramov is doing, and we will know who is behind the Syphon Filter conspiracy – as it turns out it wasn't Hadden, as you might have thought after playing

Syphon Filter 3. There's been somebody from the beginning who has been driving the whole conspiracy."

While it would seem that Sony Bend is wrapping up all of the loose ends of this epic story, we have a feeling that this last hurrah for Syphon Filter is actually the beginning of something far greater for its universe and characters. Blank hinted at one of the biggest changes: "Players will no longer watch the story unfold through the eyes of Gabe Logan." Although the husky-voiced hero from the first three games is still a pivotal player in the events taking place within Omega Strain, he is no longer the main character. More shocking yet, Gabe is not even playable! In fact, no one from the previous games, such as Lian Xing and Lawrence Mujari, is available for play. This begs the question: Who is the hero that will combat the outbreak of the virus this time around? As it turns out, the answer is nobody in particular.

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (1 TO 4-PLAYER ONLINE)
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY BEND ■ **RELEASE** 4TH QUARTER



CLASSIFIED REPORT



International Presidential Consulting

Unbeknownst to the public, a new strain of the Syphon Filter virus has been linked to outbreaks in Toronto and other parts of the world. This is particularly worrisome, as all stocks of the original strain were destroyed in Australia, and the remaining specimens were sent to the ocean floor in the north Atlantic when the S.S. Lorelei was scuttled. Dr. Elsa Weissenger has secured information revealing that Hadden was only a pawn in this viral war. Elsa is convinced that there is someone else - an individual who has never been seen - behind the conspiracy at hand. The President has authorized Gabe Logan to recruit more agents to uncover a connection to this powerful person. As it turns out, the new strain of the virus is very unstable and is capable of killing within moments of exposure. As of now, there is no known treatment for this virulent disease.

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17300 PARIS FRANCE
PLACE OF BIRTH: ST. PETERSBURG USSR
DOB: 06/19/63 CAT: AB
SEX: F EYES: BLUE HT: 5'10"

ISSUED: 09/03/02
EXPIRES: 09/03/03



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In an attempt to bring gamers closer to the adventure than ever before, the player will be the one who determines who the protagonist is - right down to the very nature of their appearance. Before being thrust into the heart of the conflict at hand, you will enter a comprehensive character creator that more or less allows for every inch of a character's body to be altered to personal preference. Along with the obvious choices of defining your digital persona's gender, body size, and hair color; players will also determine the more extravagant of details like eye color, facial hair, and even the style of clothing that they wear. The number of customizable options that Sony Bend has incorporated produces a truly limitless selection of character choices.

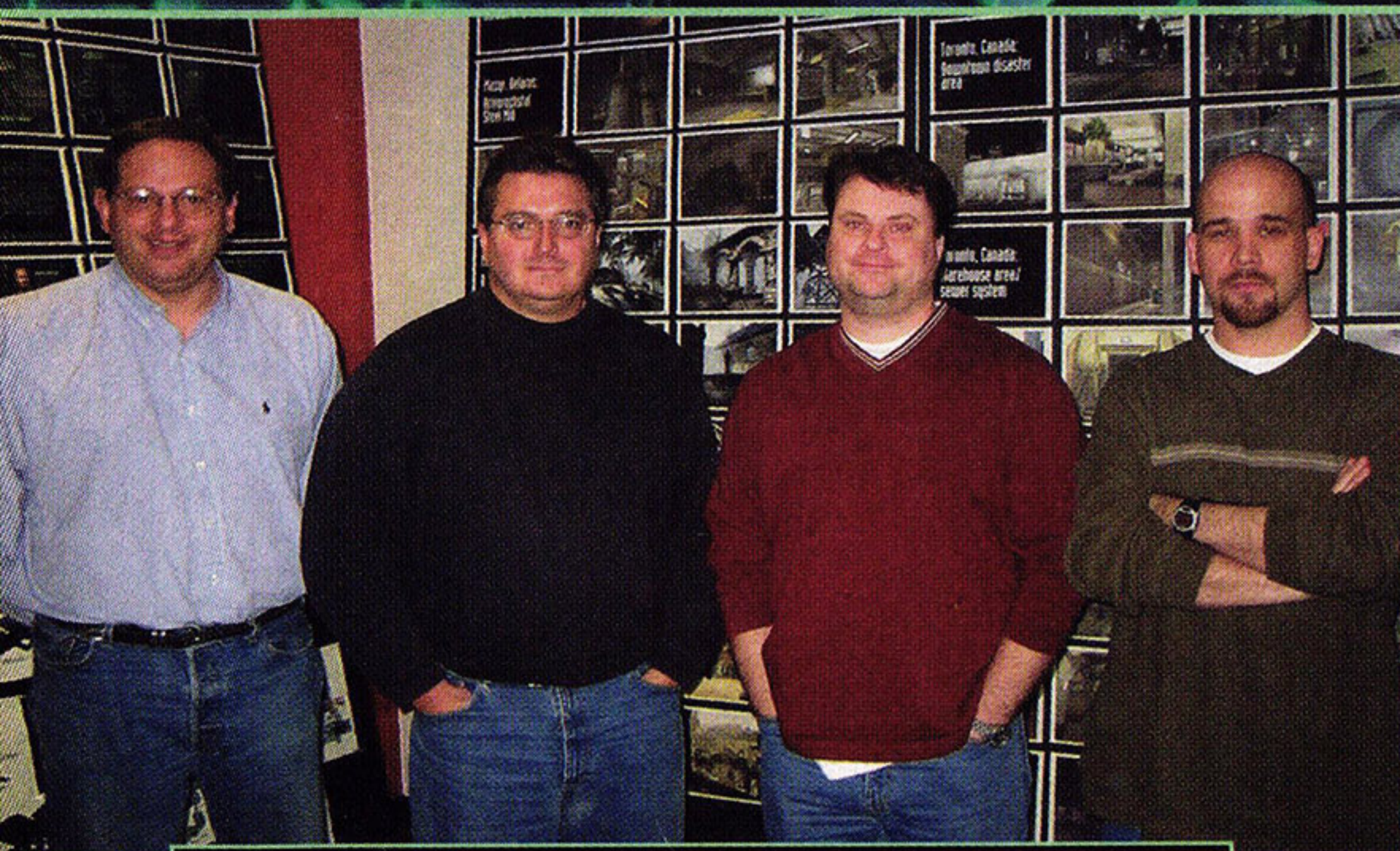
"When we began this project," Garvin recalls, "we were thinking along the lines of an RPG-style of game. So we knew it was going to involve creating characters. We also knew that it was going to be online."

As if the faceless heroics of the principal character weren't an immense enough change, the most compelling features that Sony Bend has instituted more or less alter the complexity of the game entirely. Although this series seems to be one of the most unlikely of choices for Internet compatibility, Omega Strain has just as much of an online presence as it does a strong single-player game.

While one would immediately envision the game transforming to include more deathmatch properties, much like SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs, the creative talents that be actually have something different in mind for Syphon Filter's Internet connectivity. Blank explains, "The goal was that we wanted to make the multiplayer game just as dynamic as the single-player game - designing it so that the [single-player] game has the story elements and gameplay that Syphon Filter is known for, and then transforming that material into a different experience for multiplayer. That's really been the challenge from the beginning."

While the fast-paced espionage of Syphon Filter simply screams deathmatch, and the chapters before Omega Strain dabbled in this area; the Bend contingent opted to focus on the tactics and strategies of the team dynamic, as opposed to that of people squaring off against one another within an arena. Still, the goal was never to create two separate gaming experiences. Every aspect of the single-player game has been recreated without a hitch in the online component. The environments, mission structure, and story sequences unfold through both areas in exactly the same way. So it is, in a sense, the same game. The way that you play, however, will determine how the action unfolds in each.

In many ways, the overall design of Omega Strain is reflective of Sega's runaway hit, Phantasy Star Online. You can play through the adventure by yourself and still find it to be a deeply engrossing experience; but, truth be told, you'll get a lot more out of it by playing it online with up to three additional teammates at your side.



From left to right: Mark Blank, John Garvin, Chris Reese, and Jeff Ross



Rather than stepping into the shoes of the enigmatic vet Gabe Logan, players will create their own persona



In generating a character, the number of choices is nearly limitless



The environments are teeming with scripted events that can range from a helicopter fleeing the scene to a building exploding

So, how exactly will four players cooperating with one another affect the flow of gameplay? Omega Strain's lead designer, Jeff Ross, elaborates, "It changes everything, right down to how enemies react and how missions can be completed."

The best example of this comes in one such stage where you'll come across a stairwell that has been decimated by an explosion. If you're running through the mission solo, the stairwell is just another dead end. If you are playing the game online, it becomes another route to reaching your goal.

You see, Sony Bend has taken a keen interest in teammate interaction. In the single-player game, the damage on the stairwell is too great for one person to overcome; but, with another agent nearby, it's an obstacle that can be successfully navigated. Taking a tip from Sony's innovative title, *Ico*, if two players are in the vicinity of this rundown site, one of the characters will actually drop to a knee and form a cradle with his or her hands for the other person to step onto. The character will then be hoisted to a

point where it's possible to grab the ledge and pull up. The elevated player will then have the ability to return the favor by kneeling down and lowering a hand to lift his or her teammate up. It's a beautiful gameplay mechanic and an element that adds a world of depth to Syphon Filter's online functionality.

As one might expect, missions can be completed more efficiently between two to four skilled teammates. During an assault on an enemy force, one person can use diversionary tactics while a partner flanks the opposition – whereas in single-player, you'll need to run with guns blazing and pray that you get all of them before they tag you.

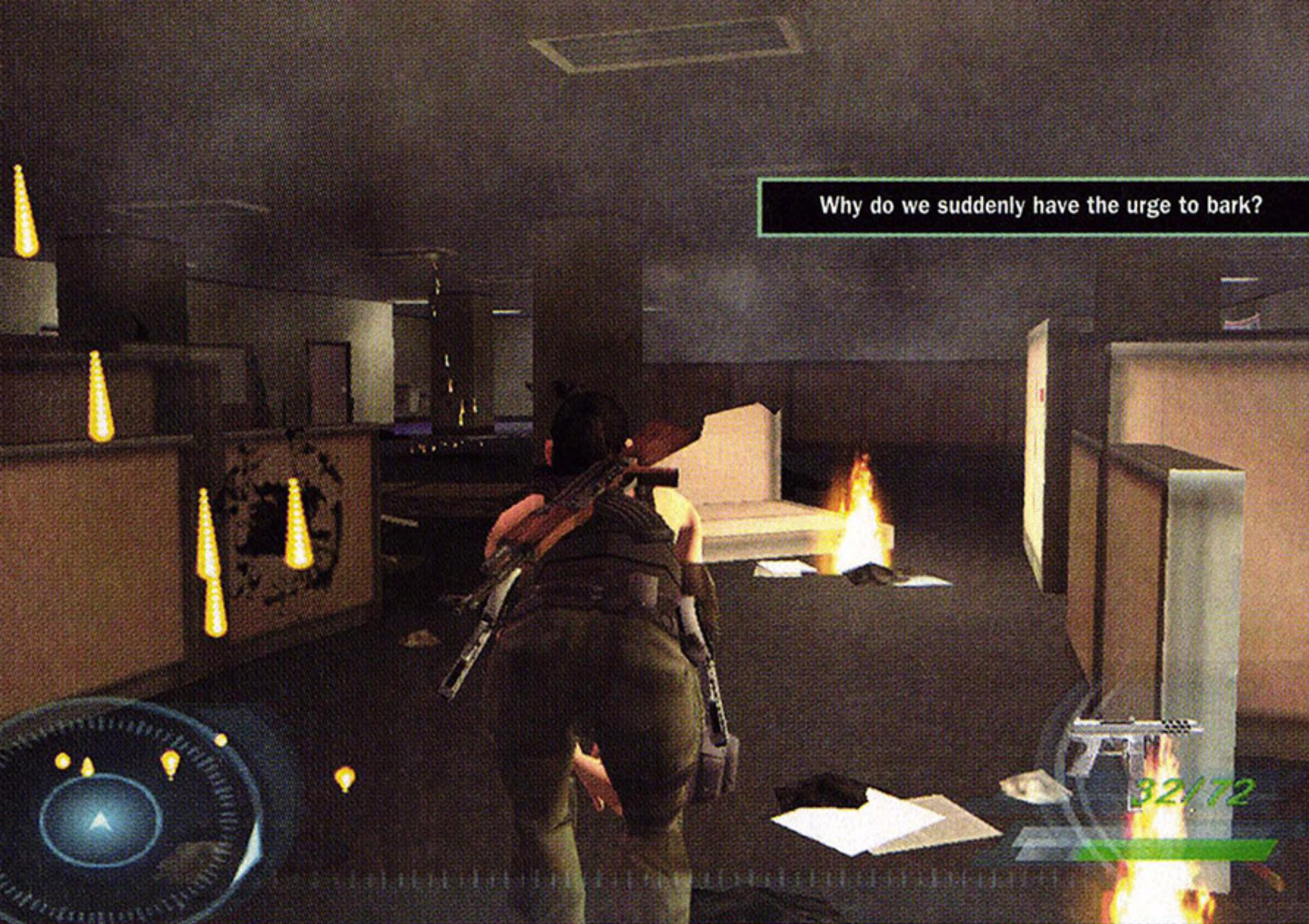
Teammates can also interact with specific objects in the world to alter the conditions within an environment in order to gain an edge over the opposition. When converging on a hotbed of well-armed adversaries, someone on the outside can locate the power source fueling the building and throw a switch to knock out the lights or shut down bothersome security cameras. One can only envision the madness that will ensue if your team is equipped

with thermal night-vision goggles when the lights go out on a batch of unsuspecting foes.

Of course, it'll be up to the players to figure out what solutions to use for specific objectives in the game – whether in single or multiplayer form. As the Syphon Filter series has exhibited in the past, goals along the lines of rescuing hostages will go much smoother with a team as opposed to running solo. Imagine how easy it will be when you and your teammates split up to save numerous civilians at the same time.

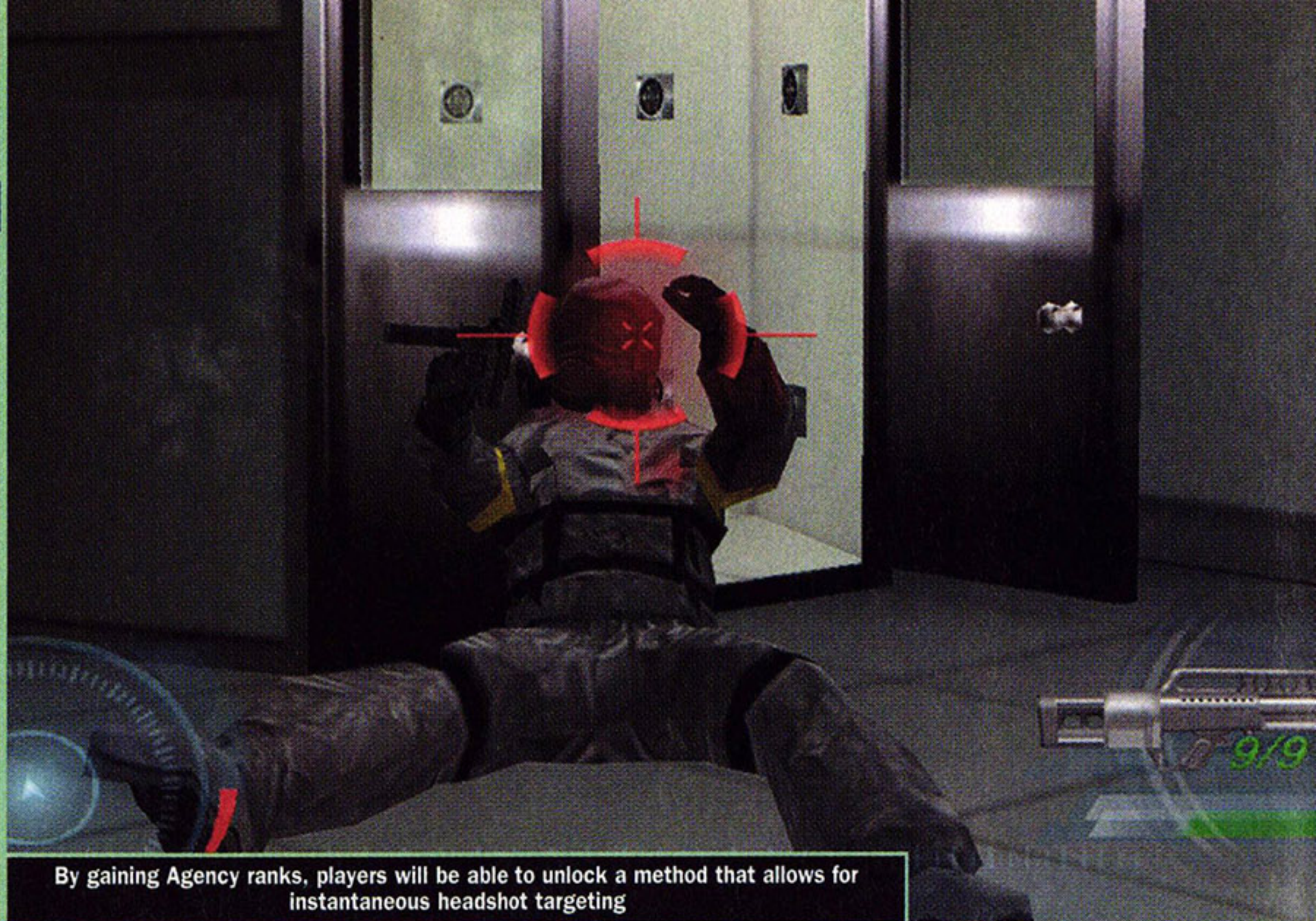
"For instances when the team is separated," comments Garvin, "players can access a real-time map system, which is going to be a very stylized 3D representation of the world. It basically allows – with the click of one button – players to bring up a wireframe overlay of the world in 3D. You'll see your point and you will also see where your teammates are. So, if they send you a chat message asking you to regroup at their point, you'll see where they are."





Why do we suddenly have the urge to bark?

32/72



By gaining Agency ranks, players will be able to unlock a method that allows for instantaneous headshot targeting



12/2

The weapons that a player possesses are always shown cosmetically on their body



26/66

In the online game, one player can cause a diversion, which will give a teammate a wide open shot

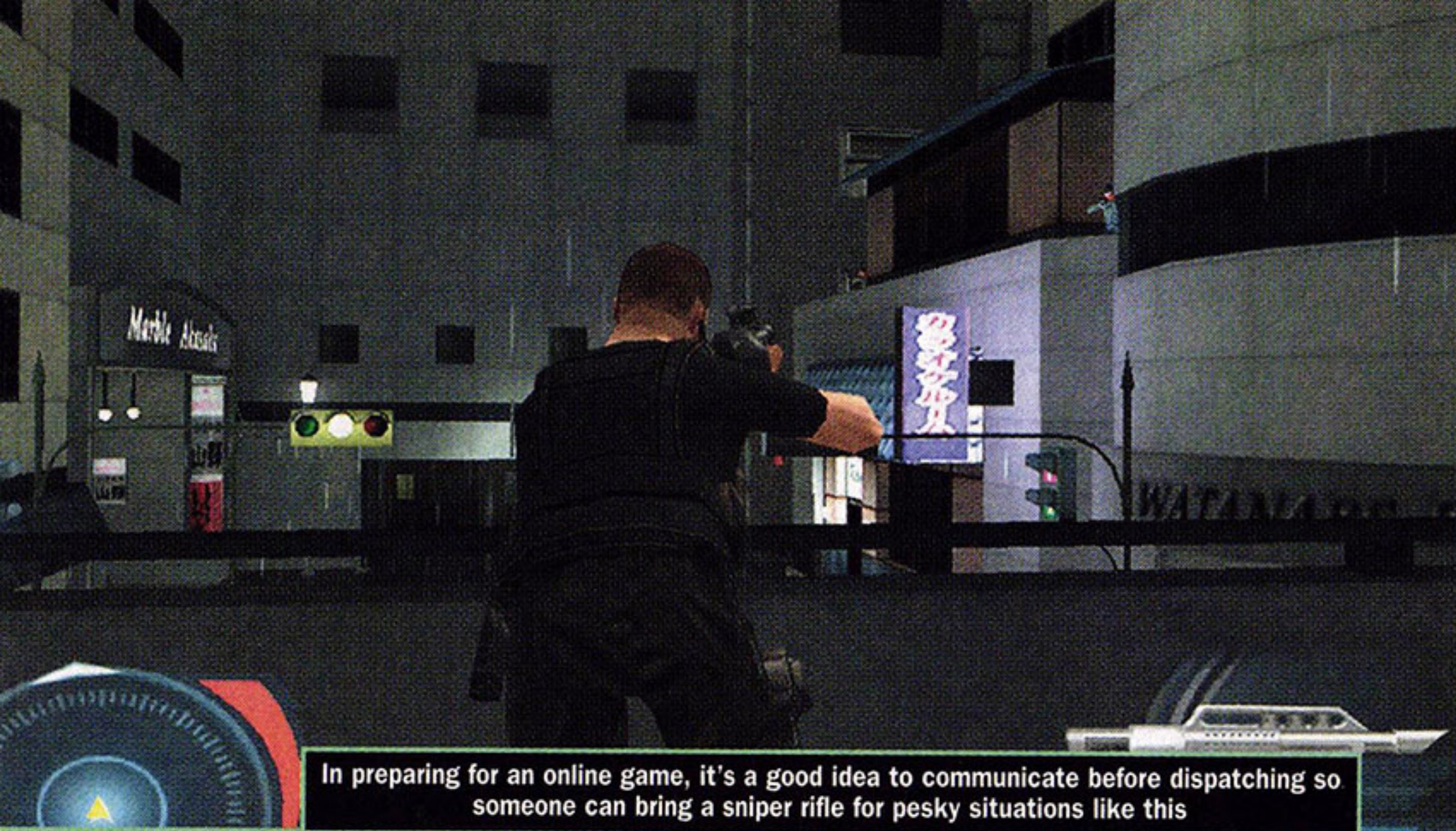
Through a dynamic entry system, players can jump online at any given time, join a game already in progress, and then leave at their leisure. They won't, however, be able to skip around from different stages in the game. You'll need to work your way through the online game just as you will the single-player experience. Sony Bend's technical director Chris Reese clarifies, "If you start on level one, you'll need to complete that particular stage and its goals before you can move on to the second level. We're still keeping the story progression in the online aspect. You start off with zero clearance level points and need to earn them to advance throughout the game."

In many ways, it's comparable to a character gaining levels in a role-playing game. Although this element is not nearly as scientific as it is in a traditional RPG, it will force players to rethink strategies, repeat stages, and strive for perfection. Completing missions efficiently, minimizing collateral damage, maintaining parameters, and going above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done will elevate your rank within the Agency.

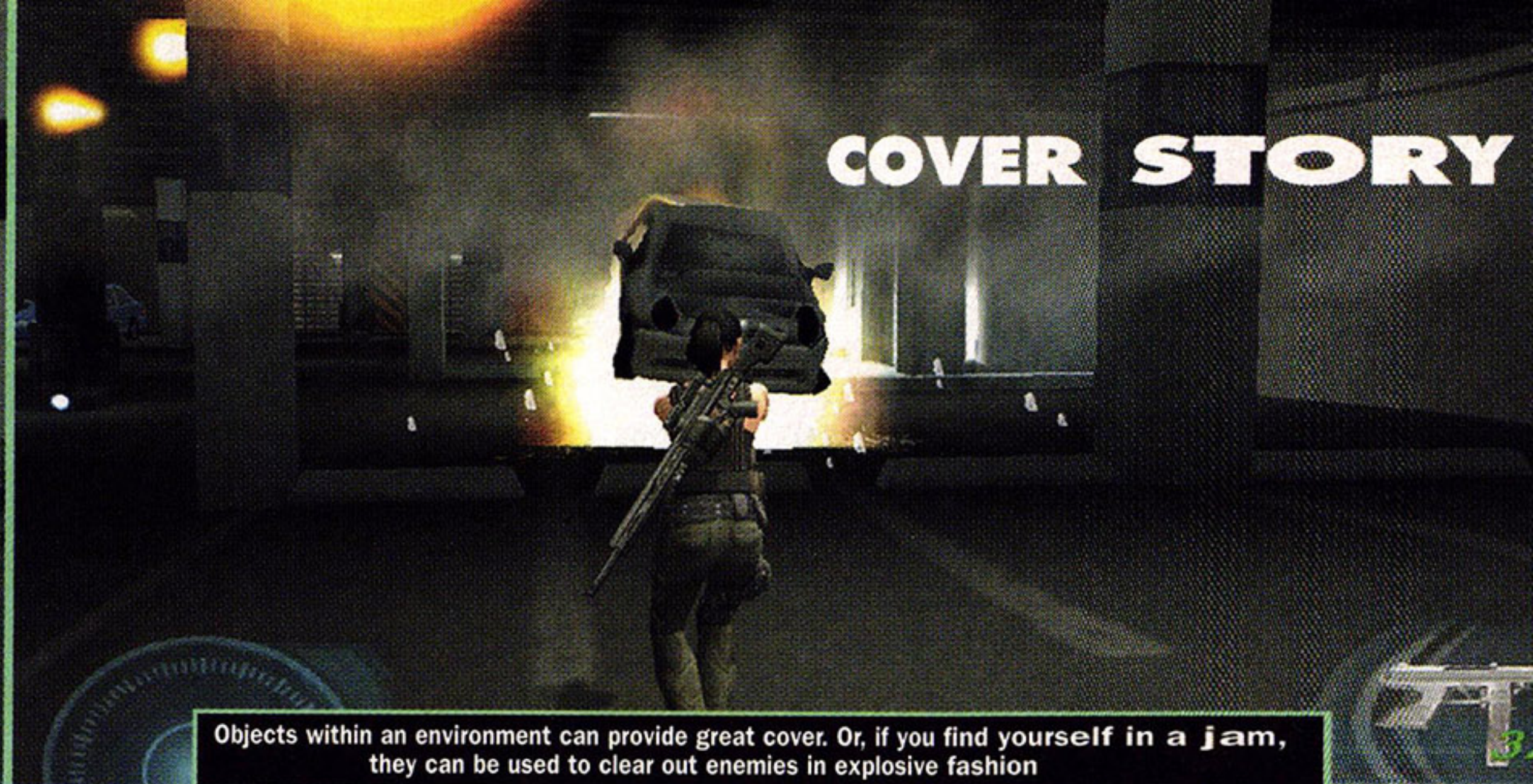
Ross injects, "Reaching the highest rank is basically like reaching level 50 in EverQuest. There are RPG-ish elements that are indicative of your accomplishments. The rank indicates where you are in relation to Gabe on a tier structure. It really forces people to go back and play, and help other people. Of course, you can also show off." By excelling in every aspect of the game, players may in fact reach Gabe's rank of the Agency's Commander-in-Chief. Getting there, however, will test your every skill. "In a nutshell, some of the design corrections we've made were to areas that were pretty unforgiving," comments Ross. "If one hostage died, it was mission over or you had to go back to the checkpoint. Conceptually, we're saying that Gabe held himself to that standard. Therefore, you have to go back and do it. So, to achieve the highest rank in this game, you absolutely cannot let any hostages die. You can't screw up at all or fail any parameters."

While it would seem that most of Syphon Filter's action takes place on the warpath, a wealth of strategy occurs well before a player or team descends into a stage. Therefore, preparation is a necessity. In creating a more realistic game, the developers decided to limit the number of firearms that you can carry. Since Omega Strain boasts over 100 different firearms – which is a staggering number for any game – balancing your arsenal before you attempt a mission is critical. Players will be asked to select their primary and secondary armaments, a melee weapon, and a sidearm. In addition to the standard arsenal, the ability to select the grade of armor, and various equipment such as grenades and extra clips is available as well. The weapons that players have at their disposal are limited at first, but as they progress through the game, new arms will be added to their stock. With the team dynamic, coordinating armaments is a sure-fire way to create the perfect balance for a particular mission.





In preparing for an online game, it's a good idea to communicate before dispatching so someone can bring a sniper rifle for pesky situations like this



Objects within an environment can provide great cover. Or, if you find yourself in a jam, they can be used to clear out enemies in explosive fashion

While almost everything about the game has evolved significantly, when it comes to the sheer nuts and bolts of gameplay, Omega Strain is still 100 percent old-school Syphon Filter. "We wanted to keep the integrity of the game firmly intact," remarks Blank. That's exactly what the team has done. Series staples – such as the running strafe, evasive roll, and patented headshot – are still in place and are just as effective as they have always been.

In transitioning from the 32-bit era to the technologically advanced PlayStation 2, Syphon Filter's graphical appeal and overall design have changed dramatically; but at its heart it is still the same game that people have grown to love over the years. Traditionally, the way the Syphon Filter titles were structured favored the tactic of running and gunning more than it did stealth, but Ross is confident that these two elements will blend better than they have in the past. "The way we've designed the game allows players to complete goals however they see fit," comments Ross.

You can, of course, take the macho avenue of storming into a room with dual pistols blazing; or, if you like, tap into the more subdued approach of tiptoeing your way past the enemy forces. The teammate aspect will even allow for both styles to be performed in unison. How the action unfolds is entirely up to the player and the way that he or she approaches the conflicts at hand.

Since the AI in the game has been ramped up significantly, the smallest of things, such as a faint

whisper, may in fact attract the attention of the opposition. This means that you'll need to be more on guard than you've ever been. Much like Splinter Cell, you'll now be able to pick up bodies, sling them over your back, and carry them into shadowed areas where they will be forever hidden. The lighting won't necessarily mask your location like it does in Splinter Cell, but it is still advantageous.

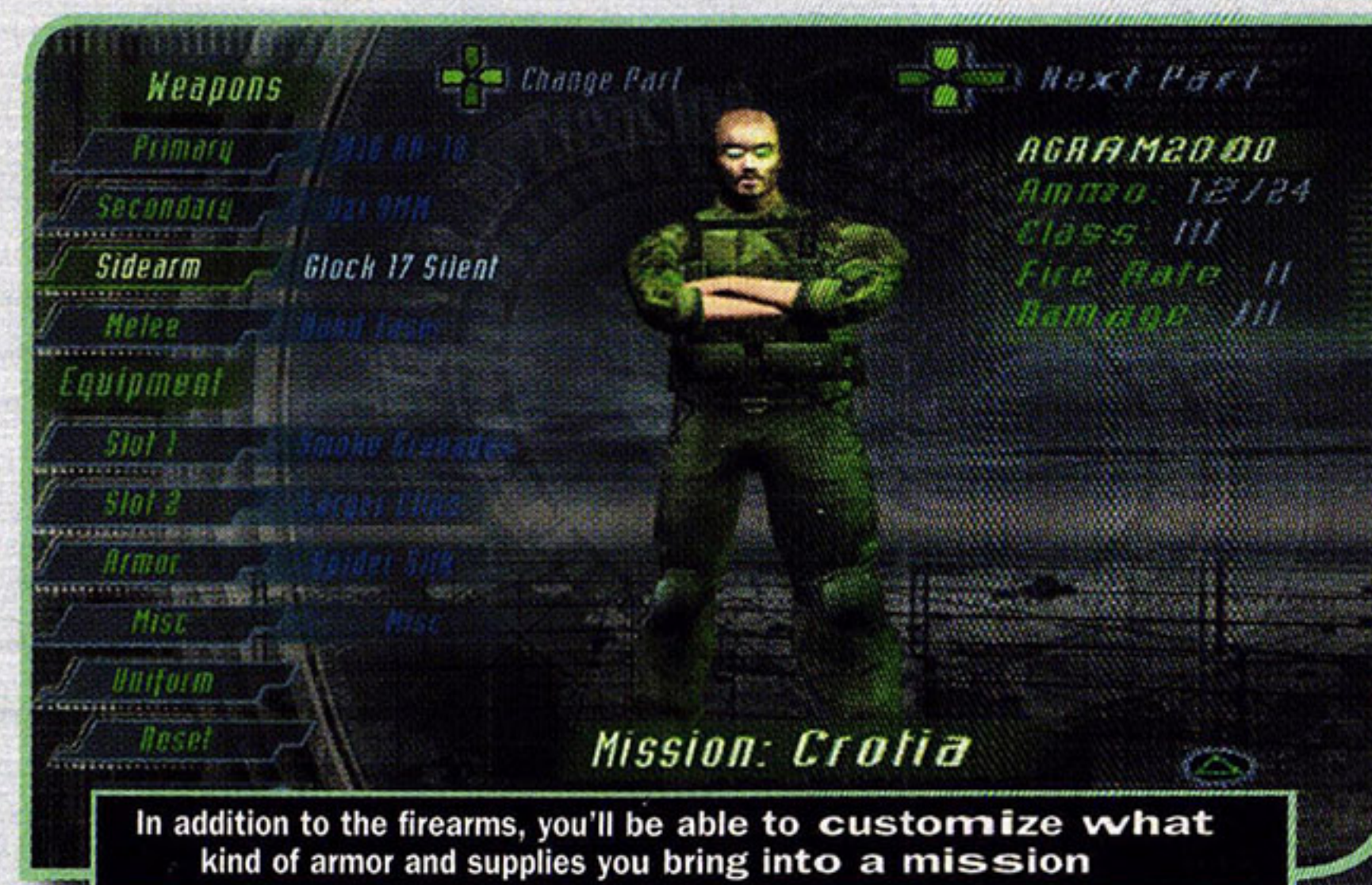
To even the playing field between the player and CPU adversaries, and also to make the entire game consistent, the AI in Omega Strain is equipped with all of the maneuvers that players can call up. Your opponents will even use the environments and the objects in them for defensive and offensive positioning. They are so determined that they can climb over walls, lean around corners, and duck beneath objects. They'll do whatever they can to fill you full of lead.

When multiple enemies converge on your location, team-based enemy AI takes effect. In such, they'll split up and search the confines individually and provide cover for one another. The advancements that have been instituted into the AI seem miniscule when stacked up to the changes that have been made to the bulk of the game, but they're among the most important and impressive facets of Omega Strain.

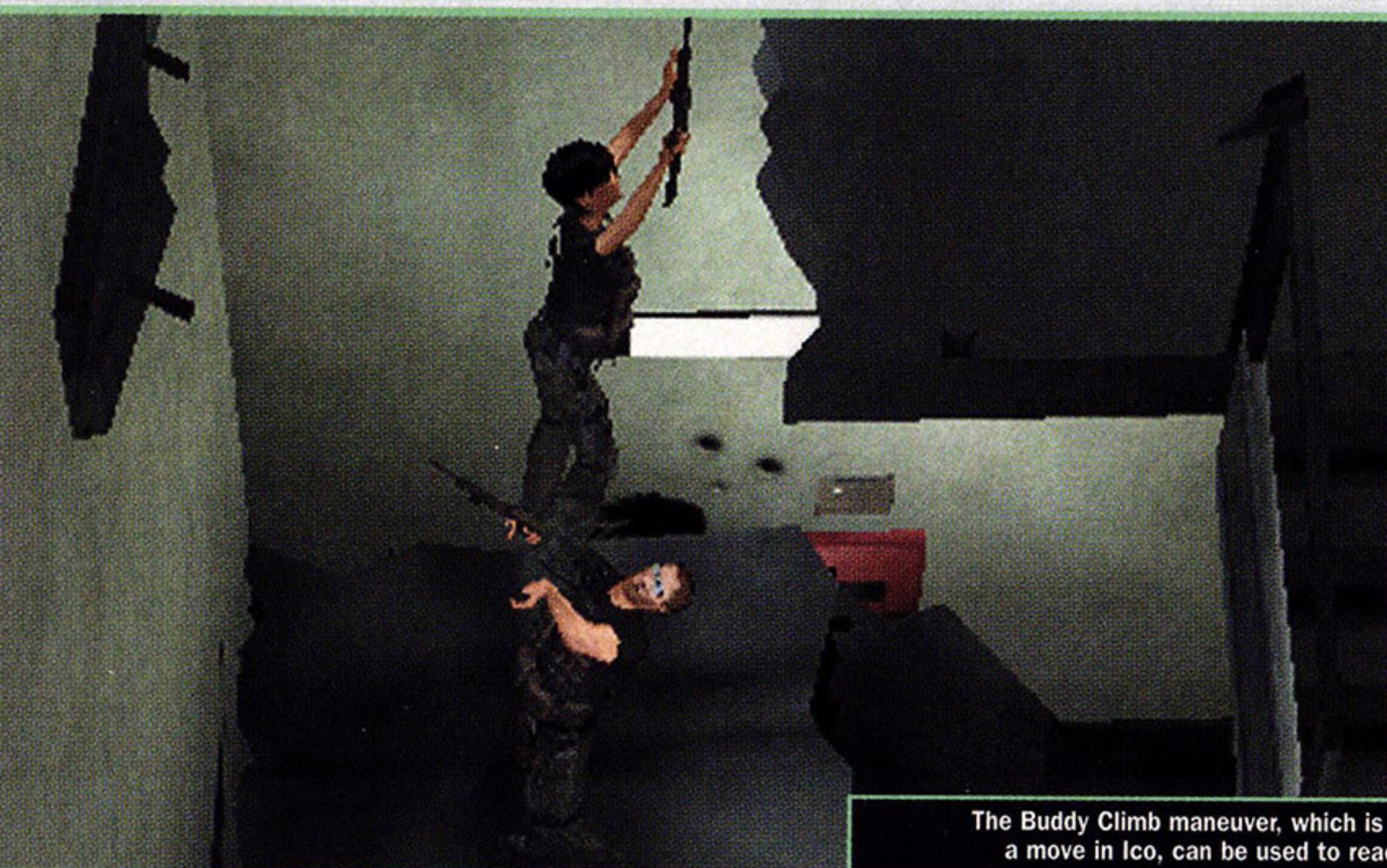
Given the fact that you can now carry a limited number of firearms, you'll also have to keep an eye on the ammo that you dispense. If you blast through your load trying to pick off a foe that proves to be extremely slippery as he quickly ducks behind objects, you'll be forced to use melee weapons until

you can pick up a stash of ammo off of a fallen enemy. Thus far, tasers and knives more or less round out the number of hand-to-hand armaments at a player's disposal; but given the unique nature of the rank system and the benefits it produces, there may be more than currently meets the eye.

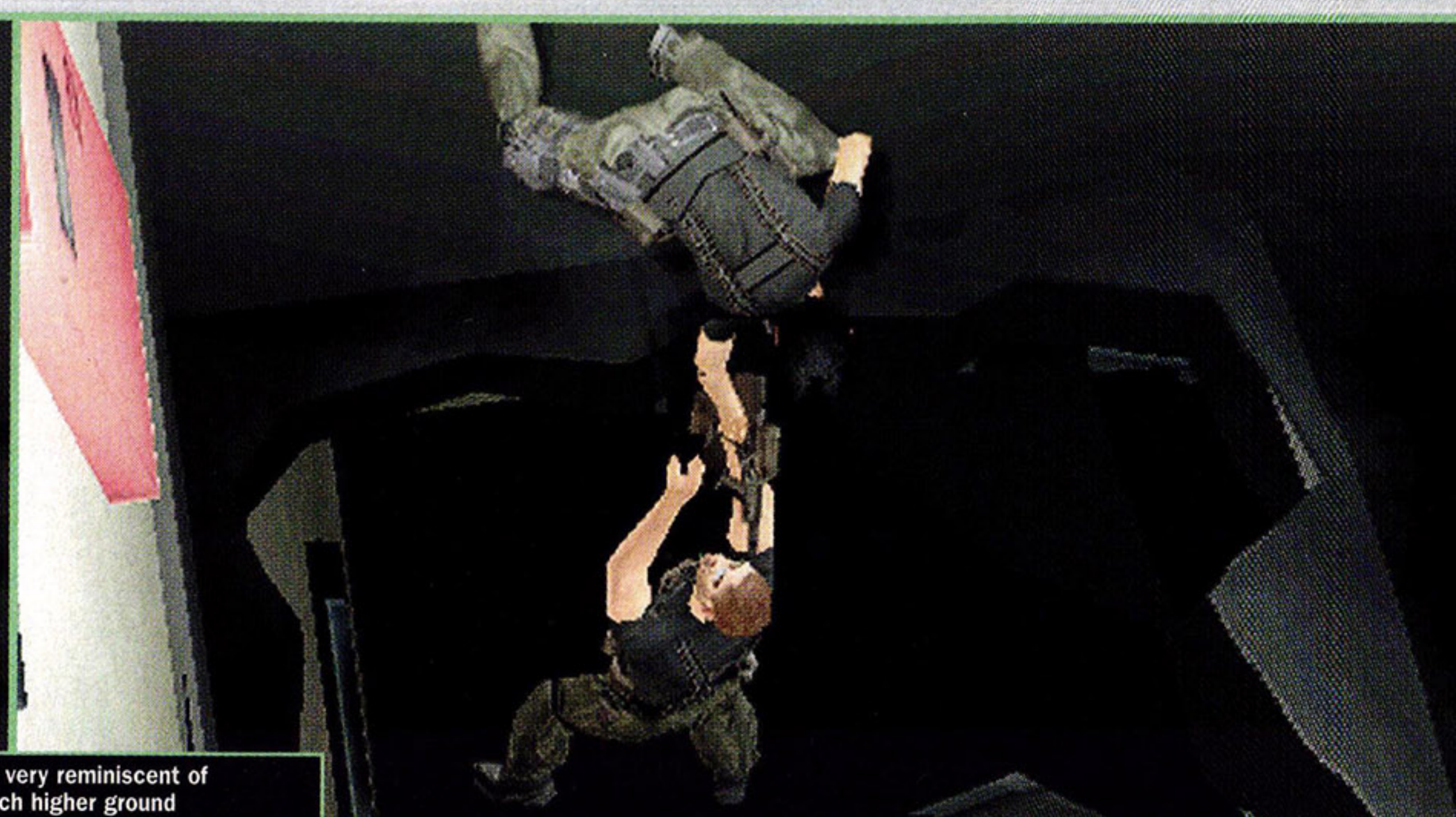
In addition to gaining rank within the Agency, players will also receive rewards for their accomplishments. Sony Bend was hesitant to spill the beans on this area of the game; but, with a devilish smile, Garvin did say, "The rewards system in Omega Strain is extremely deep." After much poking and prodding, we did learn that Gabe Logan's classic taser – the one that has unparalleled range and makes enemies spontaneously combust – is in the game and can be unlocked by achieving a high rank.

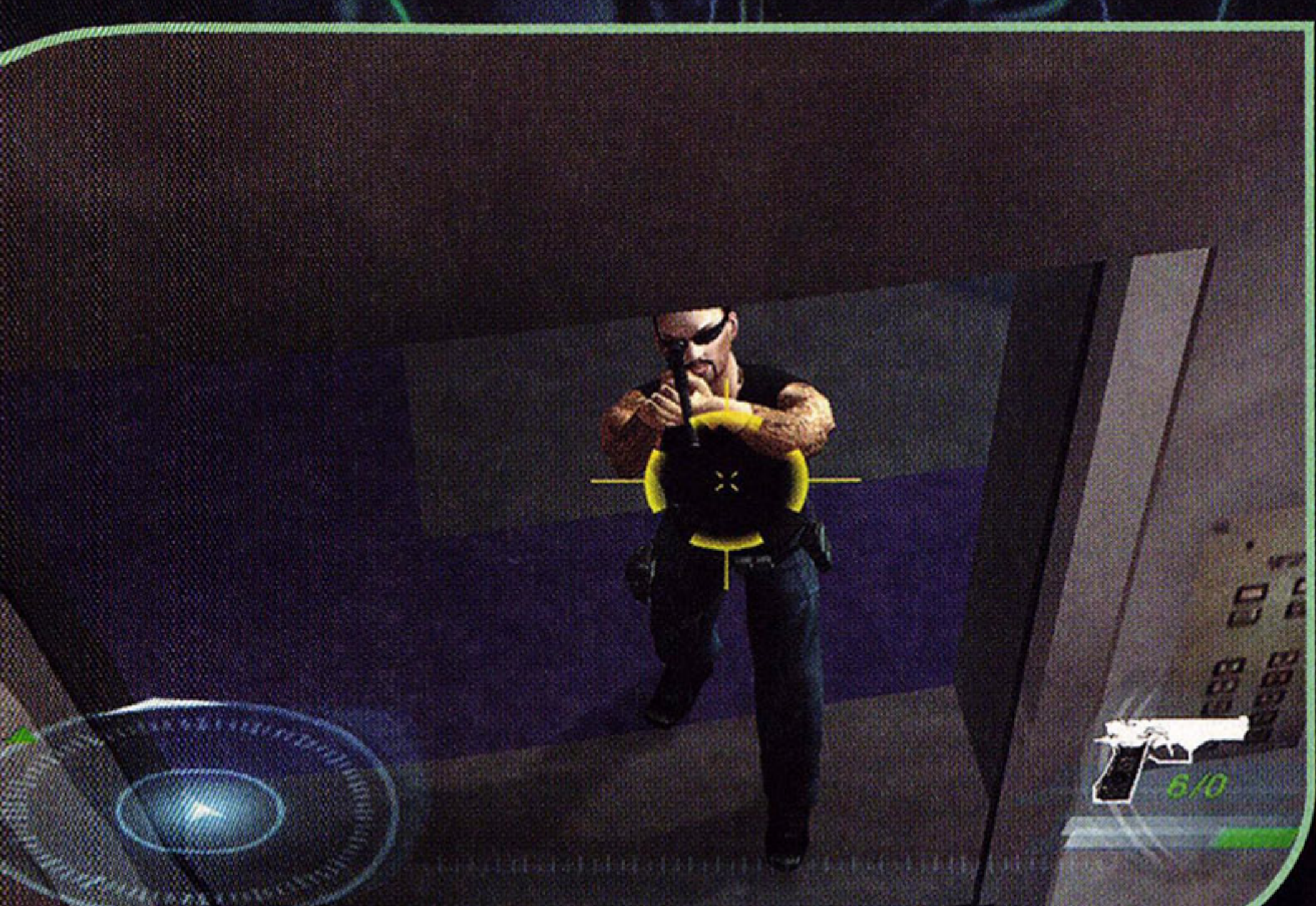
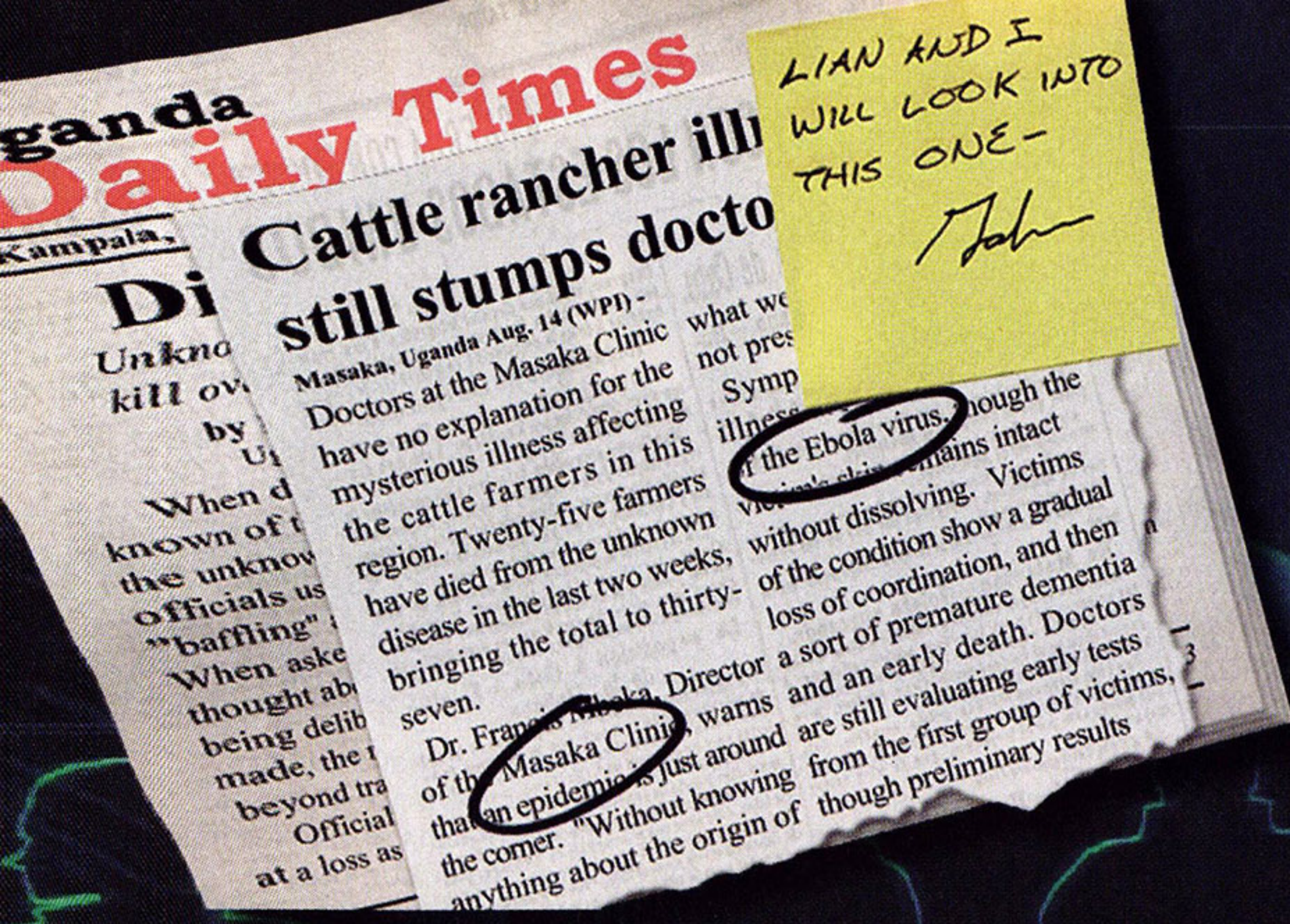


In addition to the firearms, you'll be able to customize what kind of armor and supplies you bring into a mission



The Buddy Climb maneuver, which is very reminiscent of a move in Ico, can be used to reach higher ground

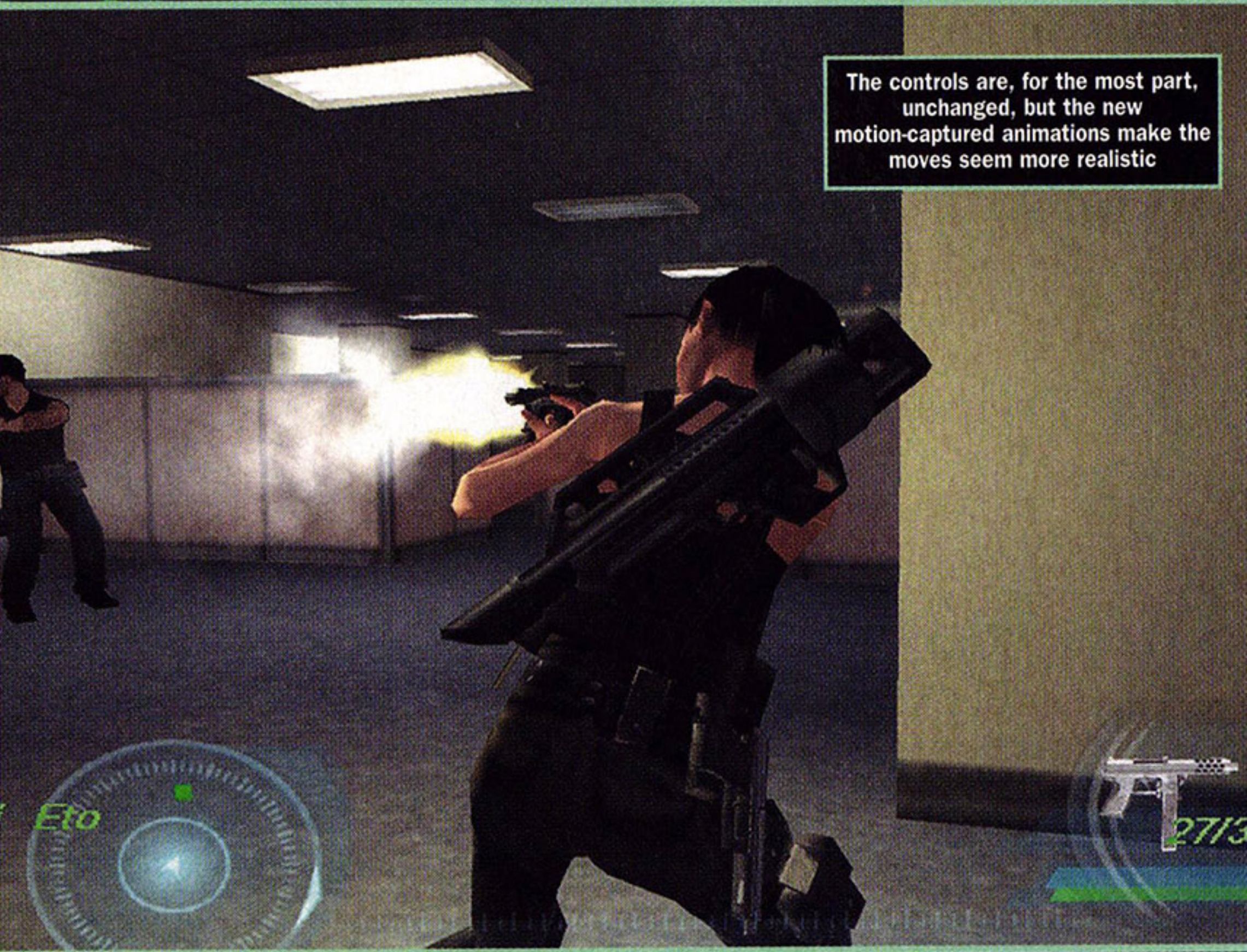
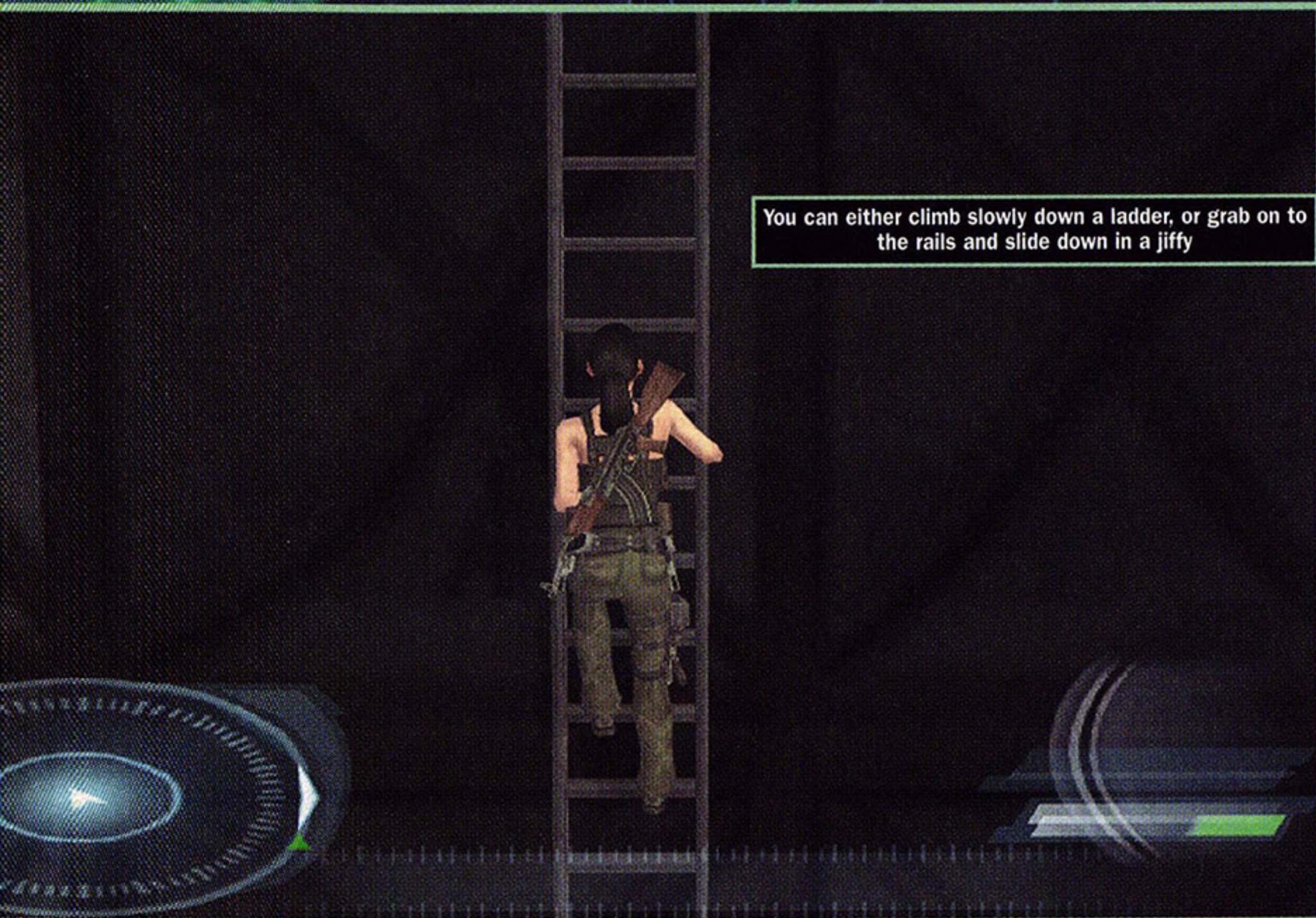




The character creator is also used to generate random enemies within a stage. This is especially interesting as you'll more than likely never see the same enemy model twice

To ensure that the online element runs smoothly for all players, the team labored long and hard to develop flexible technology. Reese explains, "It's a peer-to-peer game, so we're not going to be relying on a server base. We're not dedicating a single server to the game, which can more or less bog down the whole gameplay experience. So, if one machine goes down – which tends to happen in online games by the connection going down or someone quitting – the game won't go down. It'll keep going. That's been a key focus of ours." Since it is peer-to-peer, the online component will be free of charge to users as it avoids the expensive costs of maintaining servers. It will also be compatible with both broadband and dial-up connections. As of press time, however, Sony Bend was

unsure how many people the dial-up would be able support. As for the communication between players in the online setting, a list of basic quick action commands can be accessed during play, and messages can be typed within an external hub. Even more impressive, the game will make use of the same brilliant voice recognition displayed in SOCOM. That's right, you'll be able to verbally communicate with your teammates at any given time through the headset peripheral. Sony Bend has created two distinctly different ways that players can play through and view the conclusion of this epic story. If you don't have an Internet connection, it's Syphon Filter as usual. However, if you have the ability to jump online and team up with other users, the experience that awaits you is a bold new step for gaming as a whole.





JAK AND DAXTER

REINVENTING THE PLATFORMER



From the moment that gamers across the world first laid eyes on Super Mario Bros., the action/platformer became the driving force behind the success of the video

game industry. The genre was of such importance, in fact, that cuddly action/platform stars soon became the de facto spokesmen

(or spokes-animals) for the world's largest console manufacturers. Obviously, Mario and Sonic are synonymous with Nintendo and Sega; and Naughty Dog's Crash Bandicoot (in a series of hilarious gonzo television spots) was there – bullhorn in hand, standing outside of Nintendo's corporate headquarters – to usher in a new era of Sony dominance in the mid-nineties.

While the genre's historical importance and classic gameplay values cannot be denied, the new millennium has not proved particularly kind

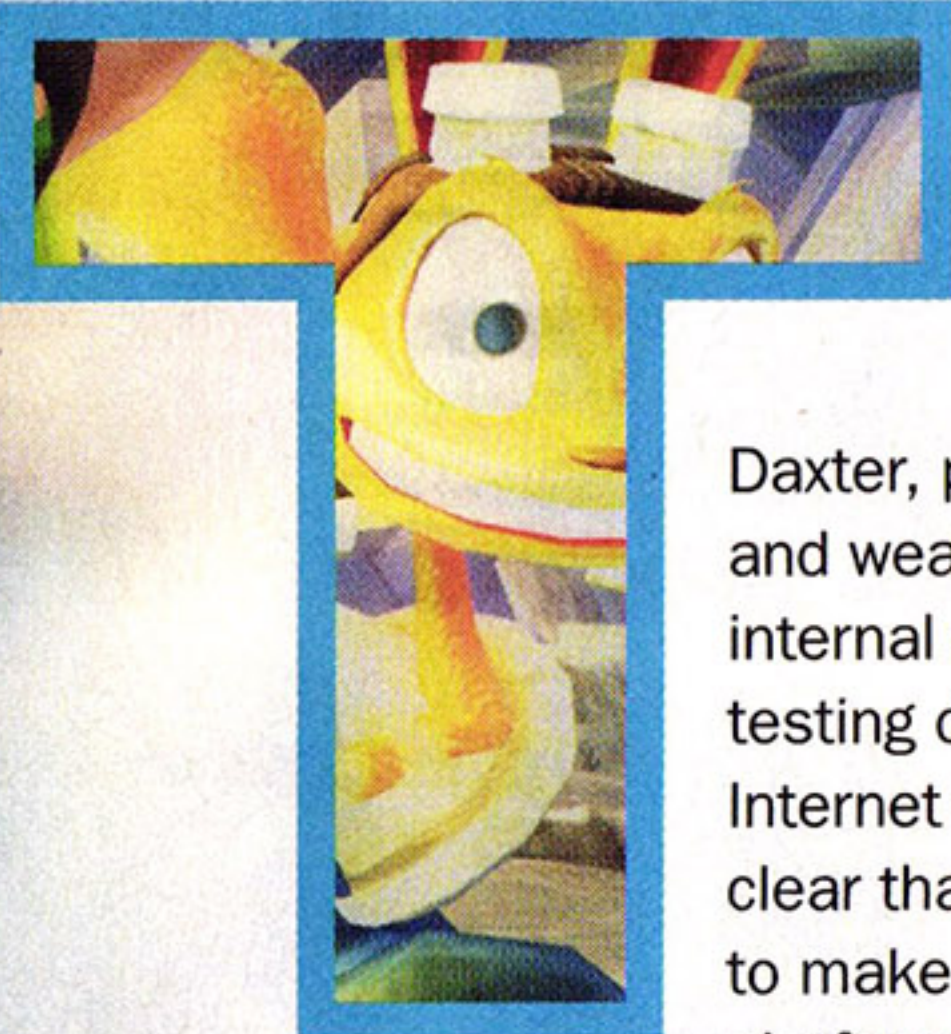
for the platformer. Recent titles like Midway's Haven, Electronic Art's Ty the Tasmanian Tiger, and Microsoft's Blinx: The Time Sweeper have performed terribly at retail. Although Nintendo has touted the success of its franchise hero's return in Super Mario Sunshine, reports have it that the title is actually one of the worst-selling Mario games ever released.

While Naughty Dog's inaugural PS2 release, Jak and Daxter, managed to buck the trend of declining platform sales by racking up over two million units sold nationwide, the team saw that the writing was on the wall for the genre they had spent a large part of their adult lives perfecting. Simply put, the platformer must evolve or die.

"The market in 1996 when we brought out the first Crash Bandicoot was, on average, younger," comments Naughty Dog co-founder Jason Rubin. "We were the older gamers back then, when we were in our early 20s. We're still there, but now we're in our 30s and late 20s. Gaming as a pastime has gotten far more advanced. We wanted to bring character action/platformers into that audience and into that market. People don't want fuzzy animals

running around with big ears screaming, 'Whoopie!' They don't want that anymore – even kids, even eight-year-olds don't want that anymore."

Jak and Daxter was certainly a success, both critically and commercially, but talking with the Naughty Dog team, one gets the impression that it wasn't the genre-busting masterpiece that they had originally envisioned. So much of the development cycle of the first title had been spent on creating a graphics engine powerful enough to render the grand, sprawling environments that some of the designer's more ambitious gameplay ideas had to be scrapped in the interest of making its scheduled release date. The end result was a game that won critical acclaim for its refined play mechanics and gorgeous vistas, but was still very much a part of the exploration and collection-based 3D formula of last-generation classics like Spyro the Dragon and Super Mario 64. While most developers would kill to release a game as accomplished in its genre as Jak and Daxter, Naughty Dog was intent on something more: changing the very nature of the action/platformer as we know it.



o accomplish this ambitious goal, Naughty Dog took an intensely critical look at the original Jak and Daxter, pinpointing its strengths and weaknesses. After analyzing internal reports along with focus testing data and feedback from Internet fan boards, it became clear that this sequel needed to make a clean break from the platform games of the past.

This realization lead Naughty Dog towards making radical changes in its level, character, and gameplay design strategies.

“We wanted to make it a broader appealing game – more mature in thought and more mature in attitude,” comments Jason Rubin. “To do that, we had to make this game plot-driven from the beginning to the end; a true adventure game – as opposed to stringing a bunch of levels together and throwing [a story] around it, which is effectively what Jak and Daxter was.”

Of course, a compelling tale must have a strong protagonist. Clearly, the mute and unexpressive Jak of the past would have to be significantly altered if he was to carry the weight of the complex story that Naughty Dog creative director Dan Arey was already beginning to write. To illustrate this focus on the lead character, the franchise has also been retitled, and is now called, simply, Jak II.

“If you played the first game, the Jak character was silent; there wasn’t a lot in terms of characterization going on,” notes Arey. “So, one of the first tasks we set out to do was to give Jak character – that was something that everybody uniformly fed back to us. The



Jak now has a voice, and has apparently gone through puberty, judging by his new soul patch

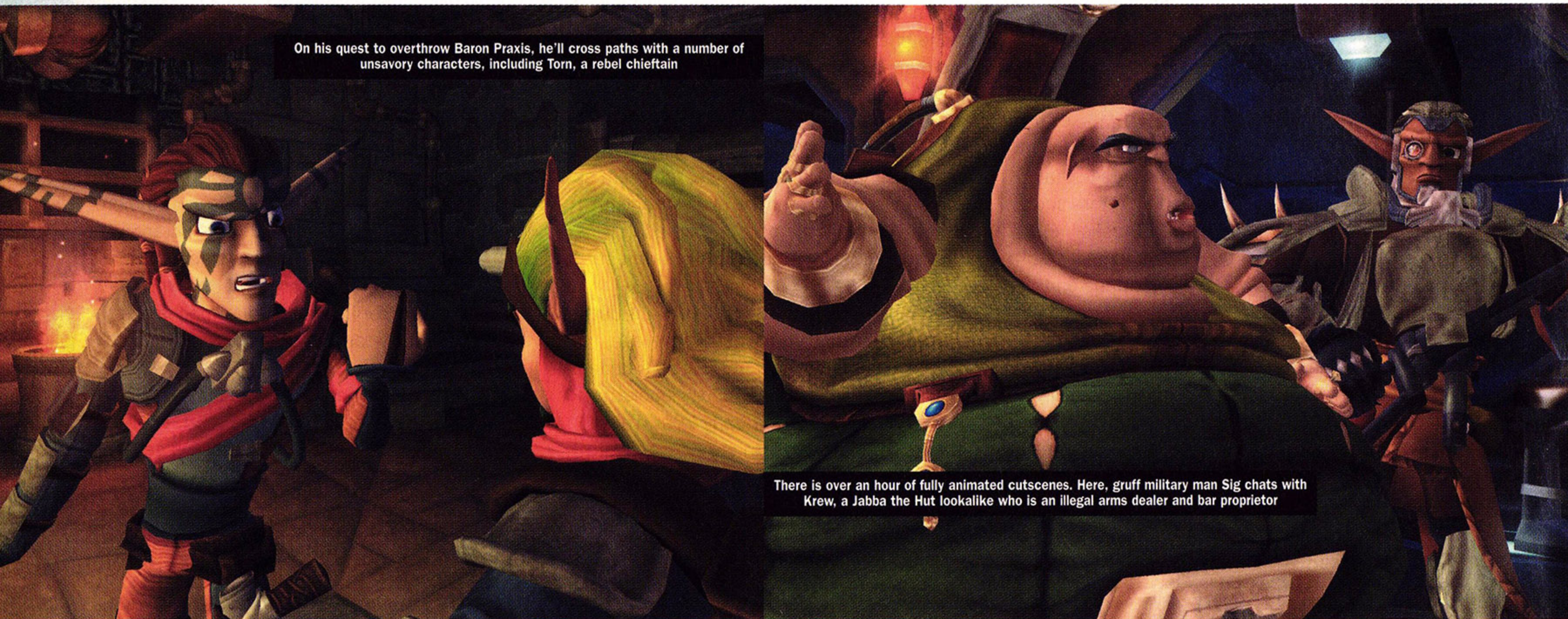
first step for us was to give Jak a voice; that started early out in the planning. We were going to have him be able to talk back to Daxter, and have them be able to interact.”

This new Jak is far from the cuddly platform stars we’ve become accustomed to, and is closer in spirit to Hayden Christensen’s troubled, impetuous portrayal of Anakin Skywalker in *Attack of the Clones* than Mario or Crash Bandicoot. On the other hand, Daxter, Jak’s wisecracking sidekick, remains largely unchanged, and is still on-hand to provide some much-needed comic relief throughout the adventure.

In order to reach 2003’s more adult audience, the tone of Jak II is considerably darker than any of Naughty Dog’s past platformers. This darkness is tied to the fate that Jak has met since the end of the first game, a bizarre sequence of events that lands our heroes over 200 years in the future. After entering

a mysterious cosmic rift, the duo is hurtled into a dystopian megalopolis ruled by the tyrannical Baron Praxis. The Baron imprisons Jak and subjects him to a series of nightmarish medical experiments. After escaping, Jak becomes obsessed with revenge, and joins forces with rebel leader Torn in an effort to overthrow Baron Praxis. In this struggle for power, both sides will try to gain control of the powerful Precursor Stone, which is buried in a hidden tomb. This crypt can only be opened by a young child, in hiding from Praxis’ minions, who is the true heir to the throne of the city. Making matters worse, Jak will also have to contend with the Metalheads, a race of mechanical creatures who are laying siege to areas directly surrounding the city walls. By the end of the saga, Naughty Dog promises that Jak II will be a dramatic yarn more akin to an epic RPG like *Final Fantasy* than a stitched-together series of humorous cutscenes.

On his quest to overthrow Baron Praxis, he’ll cross paths with a number of unsavory characters, including Torn, a rebel chieftain



There is over an hour of fully animated cutscenes. Here, gruff military man Sig chats with Krew, a Jabba the Hut lookalike who is an illegal arms dealer and bar proprietor



Tired of running through huge 3D environments? Jak II solves this problem by giving you a wide variety of vehicles to ride through the urban wasteland

“We’re trying to give you a really fleshed-out character, with an attitude and a real reason to go through the game – not just to save a random princess,” says Jason Rubin. “It’s revenge; you’re going to see him get beat up in the beginning; you’ll see the Baron hurt him. He’s not in it for anything bigger; he’s just in it for revenge at the beginning. You’ll see characters betrayed; you’ll see characters die. You don’t see that in older [platform] games – Mario doesn’t have characters that really die. There’s a lot going on there that hasn’t gone on in the past.”

To tie the story and gameplay together, the mission structure of the first Jak (which revolved around collecting orbs for completing various errands) was tossed out as well. Now, each mission has a direct effect on both the plot and the huge environments that you will explore. This is one of a couple ways in which Jak II betrays a distinct influence from the ultra-successful Grand Theft Auto series.

Jason Rubin, however, says that Rockstar’s innovative blockbuster was not Naughty Dog’s primary inspiration.

“It wasn’t looking at GTA, it was [our] frustration with the simplicity of the character action genre. We wanted every level goal and every mission to have a specific reason for being there – a reason that was integral to the plot,” said Rubin. From what we’ve seen, the game will deliver on this promise, almost entirely eschewing the collection of the various trinkets, coins, and gems that have been the stock-in-trade of platformers for as long as we can remember. Instead of arbitrary errands, the missions are now assigned to you by various characters that you meet, most notably rebel chief Torn. When you return, they’ll often reward you with new items, weapons, and abilities.

Through the completion of these tasks, you’ll gradually begin to learn your way around the enormous world that the Naughty Dog team

has created for the game. In addition to the city itself, which is nearly as large as the original Jak and Daxter, there are 16 different environments that can be entered through passageways in the city walls. Many of these levels were designed by the newest member of the Naughty Dog staff, Hirokazu Yasuhara, an industry veteran who served as the lead designer for Sonic the Hedgehog 1-4 on the Sega Genesis.

Yasuhara’s added expertise, along with a host of significant improvements to Naughty Dog’s already-stellar graphics engine, have resulted in a world that is truly striking in both design detail. If you were impressed by Jax and Daxter’s enormous landscapes, you simply won’t believe how expansive the sequel is. Equally noteworthy is the fact that this impressive feat is once again carried off without one second of in-game loading.



This shot gives you some idea of just how huge the environments are



In contrast to platform games of the past, in which gamers had to traverse the large virtual expanse on foot, vehicles (a variety of hovercrafts and bikes) serve as the main means of transportation in *Jak II*. Basically, the city environment serves as a large overland map. Mission locations, entrances to levels outside the city, and various characters are marked with icons on a map in the lefthand corner of the screen. Here again, cynics may cry, "Grand Theft Plat-

former," but we can assure you that Naughty Dog is taking the open city driving concept in fresh and exciting directions.

The hovercraft themselves are subject to a unique physics model, which means that piloting one has a distinctive feel, more so for the fact that there are actually two levels of traffic on every street. You are able to cruise through the top layer, which is roughly at the second story of the passing buildings, then hit R2 to swiftly zoom down to the surface. This vertical

dynamic adds a lot to your enjoyment of the driving portion of the game, as it's a blast to zip up and down, dodging oncoming craft while avoiding laser blasts from Baron Praxis' Crimson Guards. The various types of vehicles handle differently, and their steering will also be affected by damage caused by collisions.

Observing the detail evident on the city streets is awe-inspiring. The scores of pedestrians swarm the sidewalks and dozens of aircraft flying on two levels create the impression reminiscent of Disney's *Treasure Planet* or George Lucas' fictional Coruscant (that's the second *Star Wars* reference of the article, for those keeping track). Thanks to a system that randomizes facial features, clothing, hair color, and accessories like glasses, it's very unlikely that two of the city's denizens will look exactly the same. This diversity is also apparent in the city itself, which contains a wide array of architectural design, ranging from gritty slums to a harbor area where homes are built upon high piers. Using a beefed-up graphical architecture that the team is calling "Naughty

Dog Engine 2.0" internally, this game probably has the highest level of independent, animated objects we've ever seen onscreen in a PlayStation 2 game. That's not to mention the fact that it sports a host of new particle and lighting effects, as well as generally improved textures across the board.

Things get even more impressive when you consider that the city is only one of three huge areas contained in the game. You'll also pursue your quest through the underground city sewers, as well as an additional 16 platforming-intensive areas outside the city. To put it in perspective, these 16 levels alone are as big, if not bigger, than most similar titles on the market. Although huge, the entire city is not completely open at the outset, requiring players to gain access to new sectors by picking up a series of security badges. These mammoth levels aren't static, either; many times completing a mission will trigger a cataclysmic change in the landscape. For example, after we captured one of the Baron's banners from a high tower, the structure

totally collapsed. This means that you'll frequently return to a region you've already conquered, but travel through a previously unexplored area or newly opened path.

Jak II also makes an important alteration to the basic concept of platformer gameplay mechanics, through a concept that Naughty Dog calls "integrated gameplay."

"Usually, you give somebody a specific task, give them what they need to do the task, and then they say, 'Gee, it would be nice if I could use that elsewhere.' – but you've taken it away from them," comments Rubin. "When we give you a gun; you have the gun. When we give you a hoverboard; you have the hoverboard until the end of the game. This is very, very different from every other game we've done. We've always restricted you [in the past]."



You can switch between hand-to-hand tactics and weapons in the blink of an eye, allowing you to form a ton of cool combos



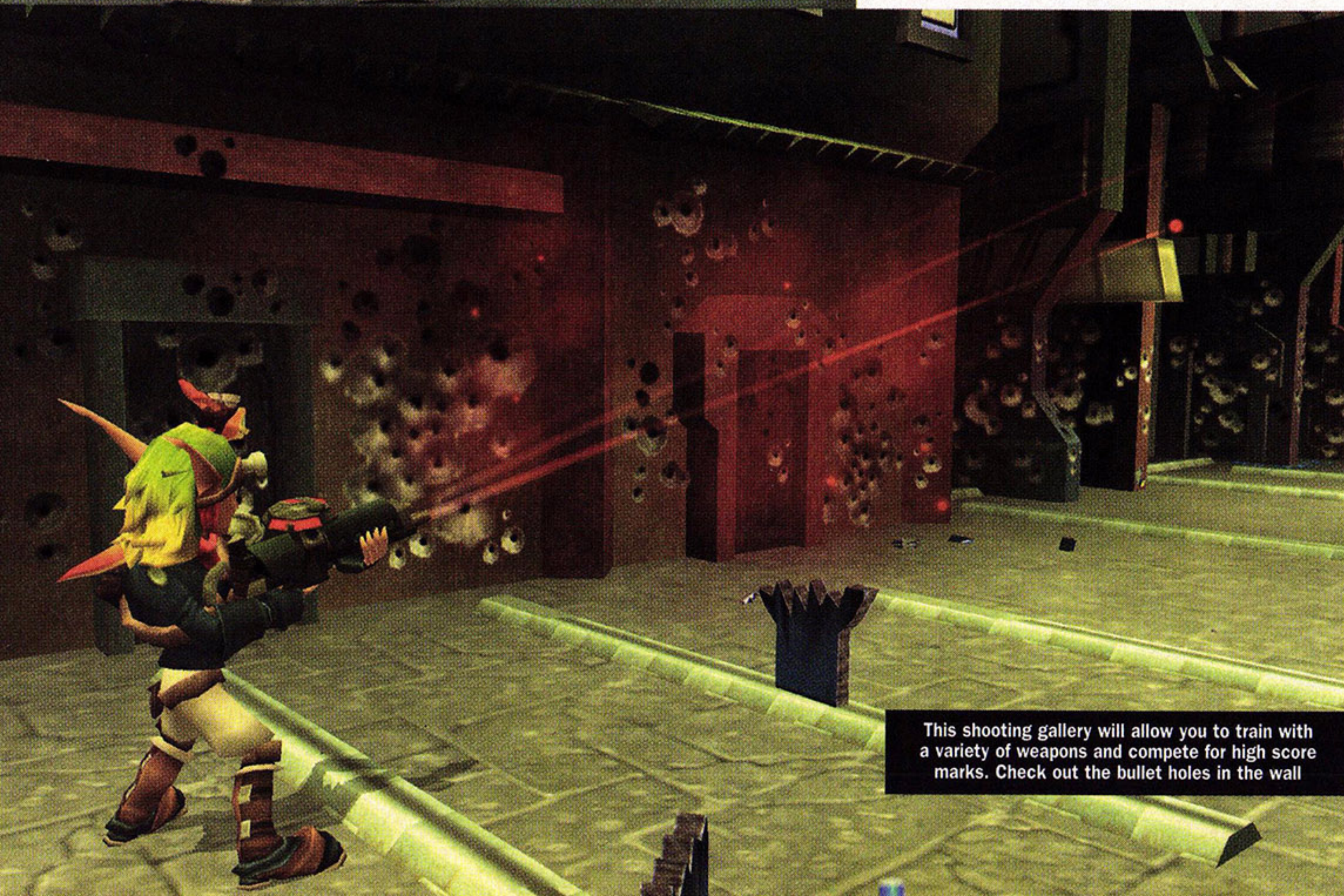
Baron Praxis' Crimson Guard will shoot at you as you cruise through the city. The good thing is, you can shoot back!

In short, this means that Jak's move set and inventory is constantly evolving for the duration of the game. The most important new addition is the inclusion of weapons, a move that Naughty Dog feels will help the game appeal to an audience that appreciates the more action-oriented, frenetic gameplay model that has powered many of PlayStation 2's biggest hits. There are four weapons: the shotgun-like Scattergun (which emits a cool distortion field with every blast à la *Minority Report*), a laser blaster, a blue plasma machine gun, and the ever-popular rocket launcher. Over time, you'll be able to outfit each

of these with a variety of upgradable parts and ammunition.

Although Insomniac – another development house that has frequently shared technology with Naughty Dog – brought the idea of weapon combat in a platforming environment to fruition with its recent *Ratchet & Clank*, Jak II will attempt to push this concept towards perfection. The game has clearly been built from the ground up with action in mind, and players will be pleased at just how refined and gripping it is to blast away at the game's cast of tenacious enemies. Even at this early stage, aiming is accurate and intuitive, aided by the use of an auto-assist AI targeting system. This helps the title avoid the usual annoyances of gun combat in an open 3D environment.

Of course, Jak's new arsenal is but one of many new tactics that you'll have at your disposal. A hoverboard (a vehicle most platformers relegate to use in brief minigames or races) is also a crucial part of the gameplay package and, like the weapons, is available for use at the press of a button. Although Sony representatives weren't ready to show us the hoverboard in action, Naughty Dog promises you will have a full complement of tricks and railslide combos, and will be able to quickly jump on and off the board at any time. Also, a stadium located in the city will host a number of competitions and races which you can revisit at any time to attempt new high scores. The possibilities for hoverboard platforming are certainly exciting, although we were a bit skeptical when we were told that – while you're on the board – it will be in constant forward motion; a design decision that could possibly lead to some rather nagging control issues.



This shooting gallery will allow you to train with a variety of weapons and compete for high score marks. Check out the bullet holes in the wall

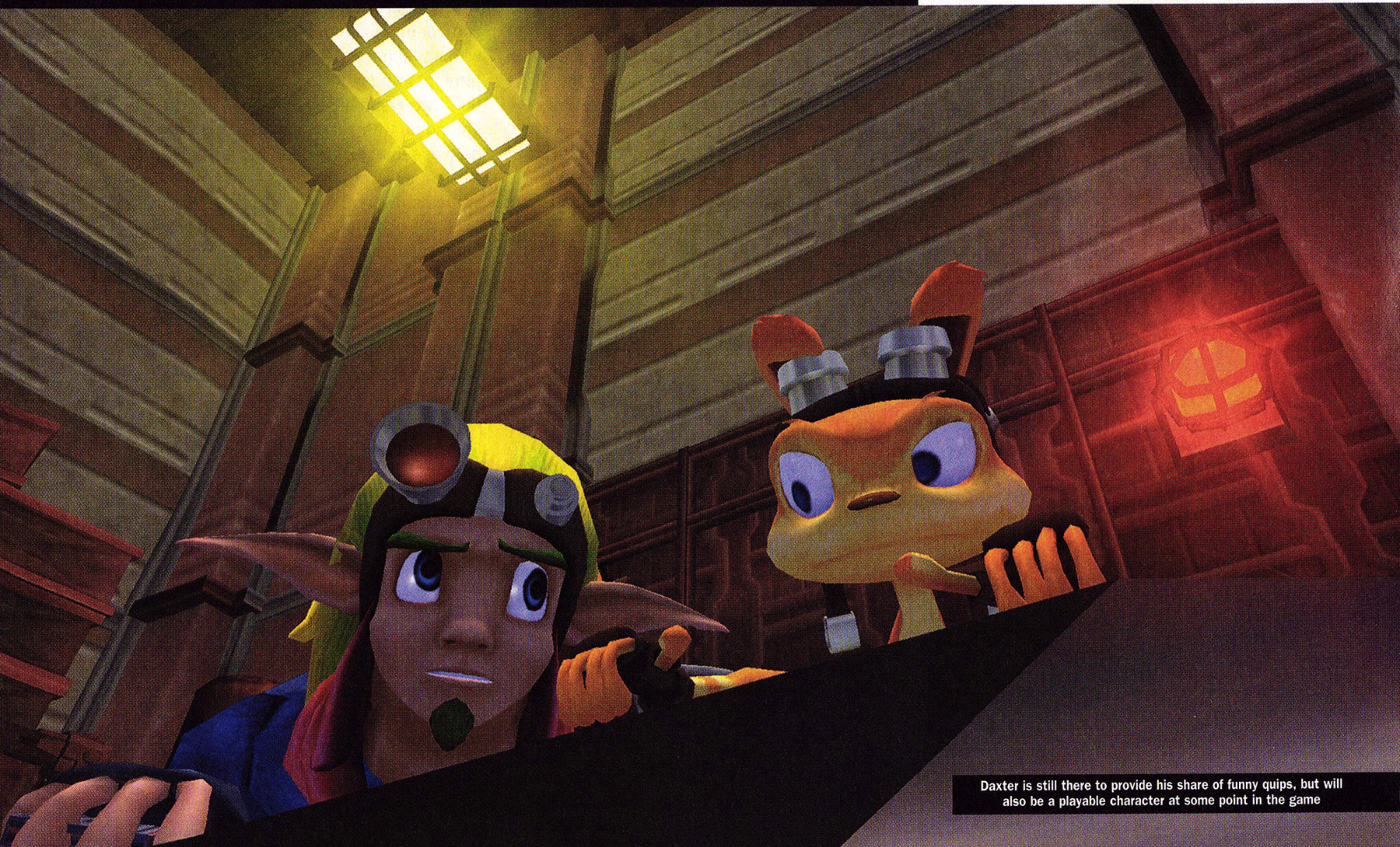


Collect 100 Dark Eco pellets and you'll transform into Dark Jak, who is invincible, and has a completely unique moves set



Naughty Dog's third, and most intriguing revelation about our new-and-improved hero is his alter-ego, Dark Jak. This volatile new incarnation comes as a result of the experimentation that Jak was subjected to at the hands of Baron Praxis – the most painful of which involved injecting him with harmful

doses of Dark Eco. This noxious substance has begun to effect Jak in ways he is only beginning to understand, giving him the ability to transform into a Hulk-like creature for longer and longer periods of time. By gathering pieces of Dark Eco strewn throughout the levels (one of the game's only collectible items), you can begin your metamorphosis by hitting the L2 and R2 buttons in conjunction. At that point, Jak transforms into a hideous, gray beast, and shoots bolts of electricity out in every direction, stunning any surrounding enemies. As Dark Jak, you're invincible and are able to perform moves like the Smart Bomb, a radial shockwave that had been a frequent tactic of platforming bosses



Daxter is still there to provide his share of funny quips, but will also be a playable character at some point in the game

in the past. Dark Jak's move set is completely different from his less savage counterpart's, and his powers can be increased through five separate ability levels throughout the game.

On their own, each one of these new facets of the title would be exciting. But it's really in the combination of all these elements (or the integration, as Naughty Dog would have it), that Jak II becomes more than the sum of its parts. In many ways, the game manages to combine the precision-tuned control and camera of a top-flight platformer with the stylish and creative combat of Capcom's Devil May Cry series. Despite the fact that he was suffering from a bad cold on the day we spoke, Jason Rubin could barely contain his excitement at the prospect of Jak's newfound versatility.

"You can be walking along and pull out your shotgun," explains Rubin. "[You] switch from that to another gun; jump on a hoverboard; ride the hoverboard for awhile; jump out and – in midair – pull your gun back out and use it, and then use the Dark Jak ability to do a Smart Bomb, which kills all the enemies around you. You can do it at your leisure – anytime you want, all the way through the game."

Given the sheer amount of offensive maneuvers that Jak has at his disposal, the team has taken major steps to make sure that players won't be able to simply skate through the game unscathed. The enemies are more numerous (a move made to ensure that you'll have plenty of cannon fodder to blast through) and fiercely intelligent, hunting in packs and pursuing in formations. Many of the platforming levels also offer more visceral twists on the usual running, jumping, and swinging gameplay formula. In one such sequence, we watched as Jak negotiated a series of moving platforms and conveyor belts while being shot at by an automated railgun and chased by a spiked steamroller.

As challenging as this may sound, you'll often have a little help in laying waste to Praxis' minions, in the form of computer-controlled characters that help escort you through certain levels. Fortunately, these compatriots are far from the polygonal nitwits that have followed us through so many squad-based third-person shooters. Thanks to Naughty Dog's sophisticated AI system, your allies (who include rough-hewn military man Sig and former Crimson Guard femme fatale Ashelin) perform their duties with aplomb – sniping enemies from afar to clear an area; or coming to your aid as you are overrun by an oncoming hoard of Metalheads. And that's not all. Although we weren't able to get a firm confirmation, we also have reason to believe that Dexter is more than a mere comic foil this time around, he will be a playable character at some point during the game.

We've seen a lot of great platformers grace this generation of consoles. Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus, Super Mario Sunshine,



Working in tandem with an NPC has its advantages...



...like when Sig snipes enemies to clear out an area for you

Ratchet & Clank, Jak and Dexter, and even Rayman 3 have all done their part to add the genre's storied history. However, as noteworthy as these releases were, gamers are still waiting for a title that rewrites the rules of platforming as Mario 64, Donkey Kong Country, and Crash Bandicoot did in the nineties.

Naughty Dog, a company that has spent years honing its skills and technology, is now in a position to not only surpass Nintendo as the world's greatest creator of platformers, but also take another huge step in the evolution of gaming as a whole. In entertainment industry circles, the word "convergence" has been a buzzword since the mid-nineties, signifying the idea that all forms of media (movies, games, television, music, and the Internet) will soon be delivered into our homes through a single piece of web-connected hardware. In the world of games, one might also note that we are starting to see what could

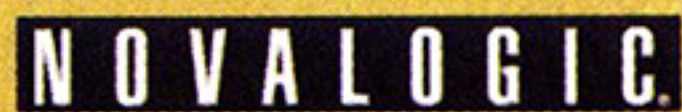
be termed a convergence of gameplay. Titles like Grand Theft Auto III and James Bond 007: NightFire combine gun combat, driving, and Hollywood production values. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater brought fighting game combos and platforming-influenced level design to the world of extreme sports. Now, Jak II is seeking to launch character action games into the new millennium by embracing RPG-caliber storytelling, third-person weapon combat, and futuristic vehicles into the traditional mix of exacting timed jumps and spin kicks. Gameplay styles that would have been stand-alone titles, or simply relegated to mere minigames, are now becoming integral parts of an incredibly diverse and versatile experience. If what we've seen so far is any indication of what Jak II has in store for us; we expect that, come September, the bar for platforming excellence will be permanently raised.

GAME LIFE

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- March 11th Panama City, FL Panama Beach - Spring Break
- March 15th Baltimore, MD White Marsh Mall
- March 16th Washington DC Tysons Corner
- March 21st Philadelphia, PA The Gallery at Market East
- March 22nd New York, NY Roosevelt Field
- March 23rd Boston, MA Natick Mall
- March 29th Los Angeles, CA Glendale Galleria
- March 30th San Francisco, CA The Hillsdale Shopping Center

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FREE STUFF INSIDE! (STUFF NOT INCLUDED)

GAME IN FARGER

The First Word On Innuendo & Misinformation



TOP 10

We Run Down
The Top 10
Top 10 Lists

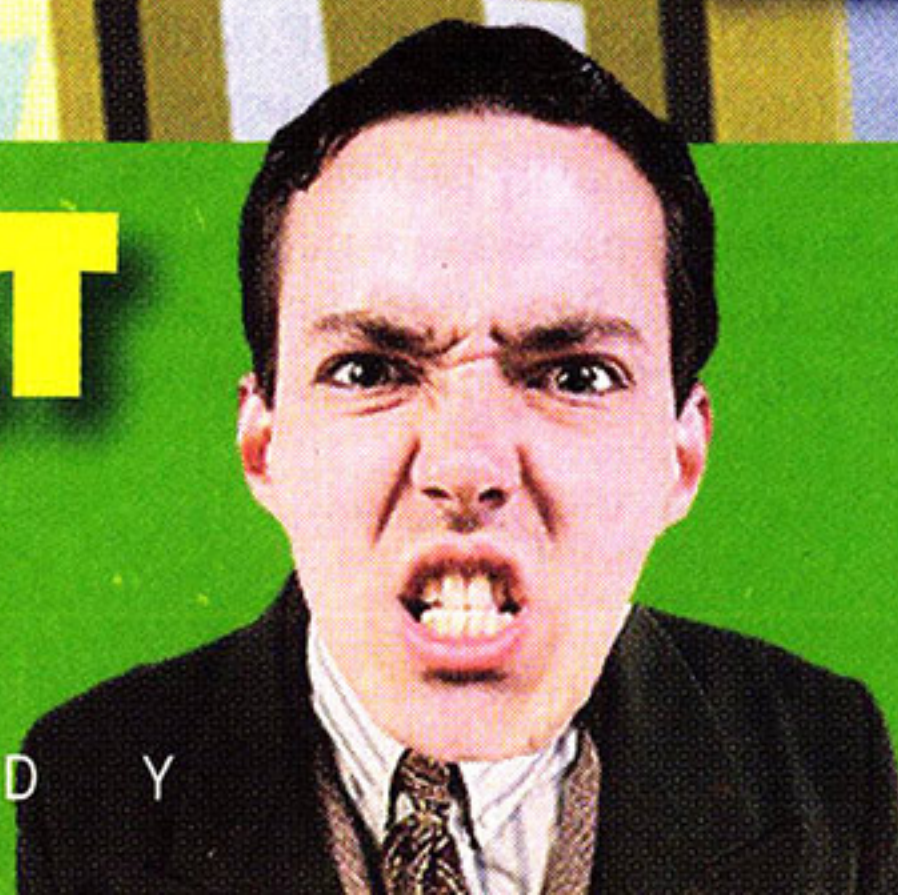
HELLO 2

Universe-Exclusive Hype!
Who Needs Facts?

THE FLYING BUTTRESS

THE NEXT BIG
COMIC-TO-GAME
CROSSOVER FLIES
ONTO CONSOLES BY THE
SEAT OF HER PANTS

MY DAD CAN BEAT UP YOUR DAD



ISSUE
4

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APRIL 2003

EDITORS' FORUM

AWESOME SEQUELS!



You play games, right? You buy everything I tell you to, because you know that I am the bestest gamer in the galaxy, right? I bet you go home after school and play *The Jims: Hot Date* and *Meteoroid Primo* all night long. Well guess what? I've already played their awesome sequels!

See, companies send me early copies of these games, along with bags full of cash delivered by a ninja, to tell them if they live up to the awesomeness of the old ones. Then I say, "Hey, Sintendo! Make this boss bigger and kick-butter! My grandma could beat him!" or "Hey MucusArts! Stop being so stingy with the Star Bores games!" Then, I like make them buy me a new car and a trained monkey to drive it for me. And they do,

because they know my opinion is stronger than Superman and smarter than Batman!

Not only that, but the companies pay me NOT to make my own video games. If I did, they would be so unbelievably awesome that nobody would buy any other games EVER! Instead, I'm in charge of the most totally awesome magazine that has ever been printed! It's hard not to tell you everything I know about these totally awesome sequels, but the companies threatened to send 15 pro wrestlers to my house with baseball bats if I do. All I can really tell you is that they will be so awesome, you'll forget the old versions even existed! You heard it here first, and that's why *Game Infarcer* is the awesomest!

Lord Garnadan

Lord Garnadan
Editor
Liege-Lord of Garnadinia



GISELE, THE SUPERMODEL GAMER

My agent, Murray – he's a sweetie – says I should date a rock star because it's good publicity. But they're all so dirty! Plus, I need a guy who appreciates me for my mind or something. I think the guy with the goatee in 4U is a hottie, but I hear he's into sword-fighting, if you know what I mean. Aren't all the cute guys that way? I'm so stressed, I think I need to go to the Pedalisto for a cucumber bath and exfoliation scrub. I was there last week, and I saw Mellissah eating a granola bar – I think it even had chocolate chips in it! She is going to blow up like a hot air balloon, I know it. That will NEVER happen to me. I'm on this new diet where you don't eat any food; you just smell freshly cut carnations when you're hungry. I hope to get rid of this pesky last one percent of body fat. Then, maybe I'll be happy. Tell me I'm pretty!



ADRAMALECH, THE OVERLORD OF ETERNAL SUFFERING

Upon being summoned from my unholy post by two fools dabbling in rituals they could not possibly comprehend, I manifested my newfound power on this simpering orb by promptly inverting my summoners' rectums. As they lay twitching and frothing at my feet, I flew into a rage at the thought of Xaphan assuming my duties during my absence. I didn't spend five millennia establishing the most feared region of the Underworld to have a mere fire demon assigning punishment incorrectly. I'll probably return to find that terrorists have been taken off the Disembowling Machine, and that Hitler is no longer being forced to pluck out his own eyeballs with white-hot needles. Woe to this pathetic planet and its flesh-bag denizens. Prepare yourselves for annihilation, worms – I am your doom. Myself, and my planar golem, Tony Little.



VITO, THE GAMEFATHER

The other day I was going downtown to the Copa Club, and when I get there, this fat mick tells me my table's been taken – so I broke his legs for him. What, you think that's funny? Am I a clown to you? I'm here to amuse you, is that it tough guy? I don't think that pudgy leprechaun finds me real funny anymore. So anyway, the owner comes out of the back and starts raising his voice about how I did this, that, and the other thing; and the next thing I know I'm slapping him around a little bit to make him see reason. I don't understand why these people insist on busting my balls. Paulie! Bring me some wine. Good. Now get back to work before I have to throw you a beating.

DEAR GI

LOVE POTION LVL. 9

I'm a big massively multiplayer online RPG fan. Recently, a certain girl in my guild has caught my attention. She's one of the best clerics in all of Norrath. She has cast numerous heal spells on me over the years.

Recently, however, she seems to have cast a different kind of spell on my heart. The way she uses cute ASCII smiley faces when she talks to me and the way she puts "... " at the end of everything she says just drives me nuts. The problem is, I don't know if she is interested in me in anything more than a monster-battling capacity. After all, I'm just a lowly level 44 beastlord in the game, and I'm also pretty fat. How do I ask her out for a moonlit stroll on the shore of Velious or even to dinner and a movie in – gasp – real life?

Graz Tigerbeat
Peoria, IL



Moving a relationship from the MMORPG realm to the real world is a tricky situation, to be sure. Your first order of business should be finding out more about this apple of your eye. Ask questions like "Where do you live?" "What's your favorite color?" and "Are you really a dude?" These will serve to gauge your compatibility level with the alleged lady in question.

To give her subtle hints of your interest, send her an online greeting card (preferably with puppies on it), telling her she's on your mind even when you're not battling the white dragon

Vitaela and are low on HP. If things evolve toward a potential real rendezvous, agree to meet in a heavily populated area. Wear a disguise in case she's got a femullet and you have to flee, or to mask a horrible skin condition of your own. Go get her, tiger!

PLAYER WANTS TO BE A PLAYA

Everyone in school calls me a geek, but I don't know why. Every chess and crêpe club needs a president, don't they? How can I change my image?

Kevin Nerdlinger
Rumson, NJ

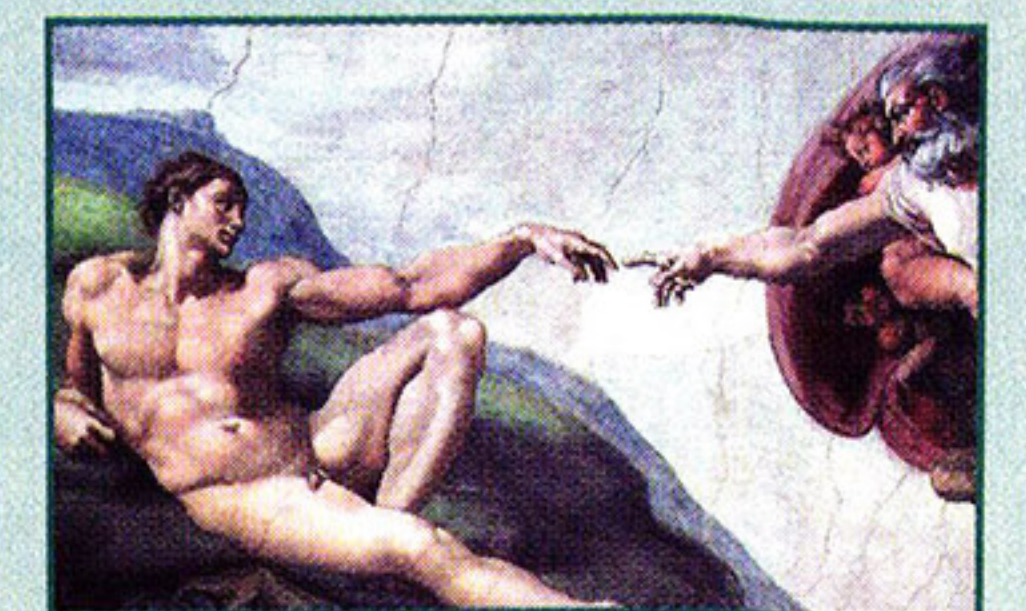
The first thing you have to do is separate yourself from the herd. Your classmates see hundreds of different cool people each day, so you have to make them see that you're special and worth paying attention to. Before you do anything else, run out this instant and buy some assless chaps. It's normal to be a little apprehensive when you wear them the first time, but once you walk into your first hour class and everyone gasps at your lovely buttocks, you'll know you did the right thing. Not only are you creating an unforgettable slice of high school history, but you're also showing off your best and (hopefully) most attractive feature. Use the seemingly uncomfortable silence to go up to the front of the room and serenade everyone with a homespun rap that you've concocted the night before. We recommend you use, "My name is Kevin, and I'm here to say, I'm majorly cool in a major way!" After accepting numerous high-fives and the general adulation of the class, head on down to the cafeteria for an ice-cold chocolate milk, and wait for the party invitations to start rolling in!

ENVELOPE ART



APRIL WINNER!

Timmy Jenkins,
Phoenix, AZ
Yeah! We rule!



Father Howard Morris
Vatican City, IO

It must be cold in this picture

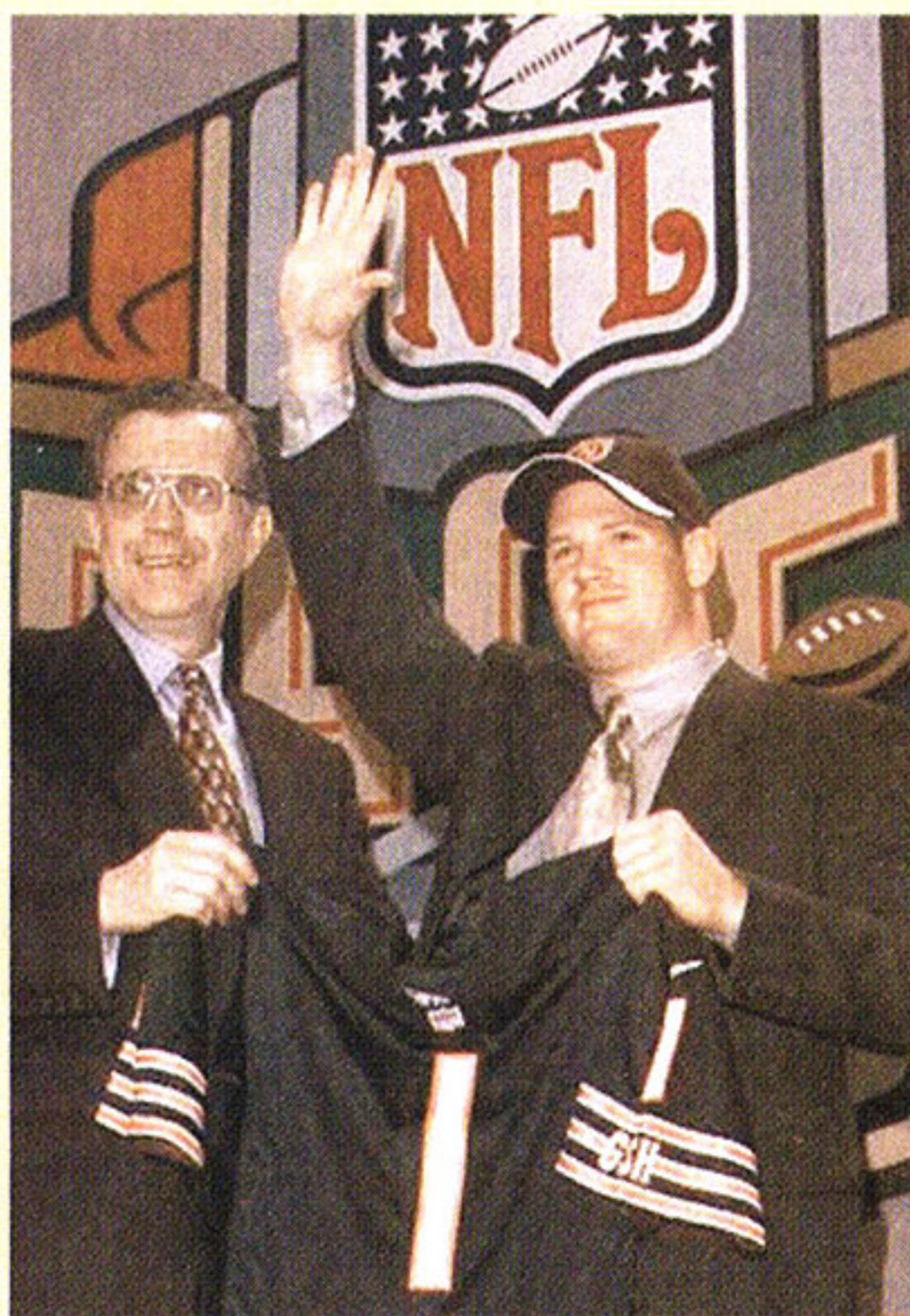
FOOTBALL SEQUEL TO GET NEW FEATURES

The next football season is several months away, but already **Electronic Farts** is boasting about its upcoming **Madmen NFL 2004**. "Last year's game sales topped the charts, but EF isn't a company to rest on its laurels," product manager **Rush Blingerson** told *Game Infarcer*. "We got three words for ya: updated rosters, BAM! That's not all, sports fans. We're adding two new end zone dances, a sit-up drill in mini-camp, and...um...a brand new shot of our spokesman, **Marshall Choke**, on the cover!"

Last year's *Madmen* looked great, but new graphical enhancements are in the works. The polygon count has gone up by a full 12 polys per player. You can now see the sweat-stains build up on the

defensive linemen's butcracks throughout the game. A new dynamic snowflake physics engine promises the harsh climate of Lambeau Field will look prettier than ever.

Blingerson wasn't finished, however. "We have a new buzzword that will make *Madmen NFL 2004* the best football game EVER," he told us. "We like to call it Hypersonic Radium AI!" When asked for an explanation of this new feature, Blingerson looked around the room nervously, jumped through a nearby window, and sped away in a waiting sedan.



SICK GAMER BLAMES GAMES FOR SALMONELLA

Avid gamer **Charles Fong** has filed a multi-million-dollar lawsuit after an event his lawyers are calling "a case of blatant misrepresentation and conspiracy by the video game industry." Emulating his favorite video game characters, Fong picked some meat off the ground and consumed it, expecting to regain some of his health. Instead, salmonella and uncontrollable vomiting ensued, landing him in the hospital for six days.

"I've been watching video game characters – cavemen, vampire hunters, and even historical Chinese leaders – eat whatever meat they find for years now, and it ain't never did nothing but good for them," claimed Fong. "It felt okay going down, but coming back up? That's a different story altogether. I feel so taken advantage of!" Fong, 24, found the rancid food product in question, a two-pound package of ground chuck, in an alley behind an office building in downtown San Diego, CA at noon on Thursday, March 8th. He proceeded to devour a large portion of it before blacking out, and woke up in an Alvarado Hospital bed several hours later.



"This unfortunate young man was just trying to cure his headache in a way that video games had taught him would solve his malady," stated Fong's attorney, Miles Inchman. "We point the finger of blame at those evil souls who created the software that led this poor boy astray and are seeking eight figures for punitive damages."

The video game industry is calling this litigation "frivolous" and "money-grubbing." There were also murmurs that included the words "moron" and "jackass," but when asked for elaboration, representatives refused to comment.

DEVELOPER
TOP 5
HIROKI PANOKI
Lead Designer,
Blood-O-Rama
series



- 1 Blood-O-Rama
- 2 Blood-O-Rama III
- 3 Blood-O-Rama IV
- 4 Blood-O-Rama II
- 5 Darby's Fashion Dreamhouse

READER
TOP 5
ORVILLE MILKTOAST
Pawtucket, RI



- 1 Finding today's medication
- 2 Going to church
- 3 Ignoring toaster when it talks to me
- 4 Meatloaf Tuesdays
- 5 Jackalope

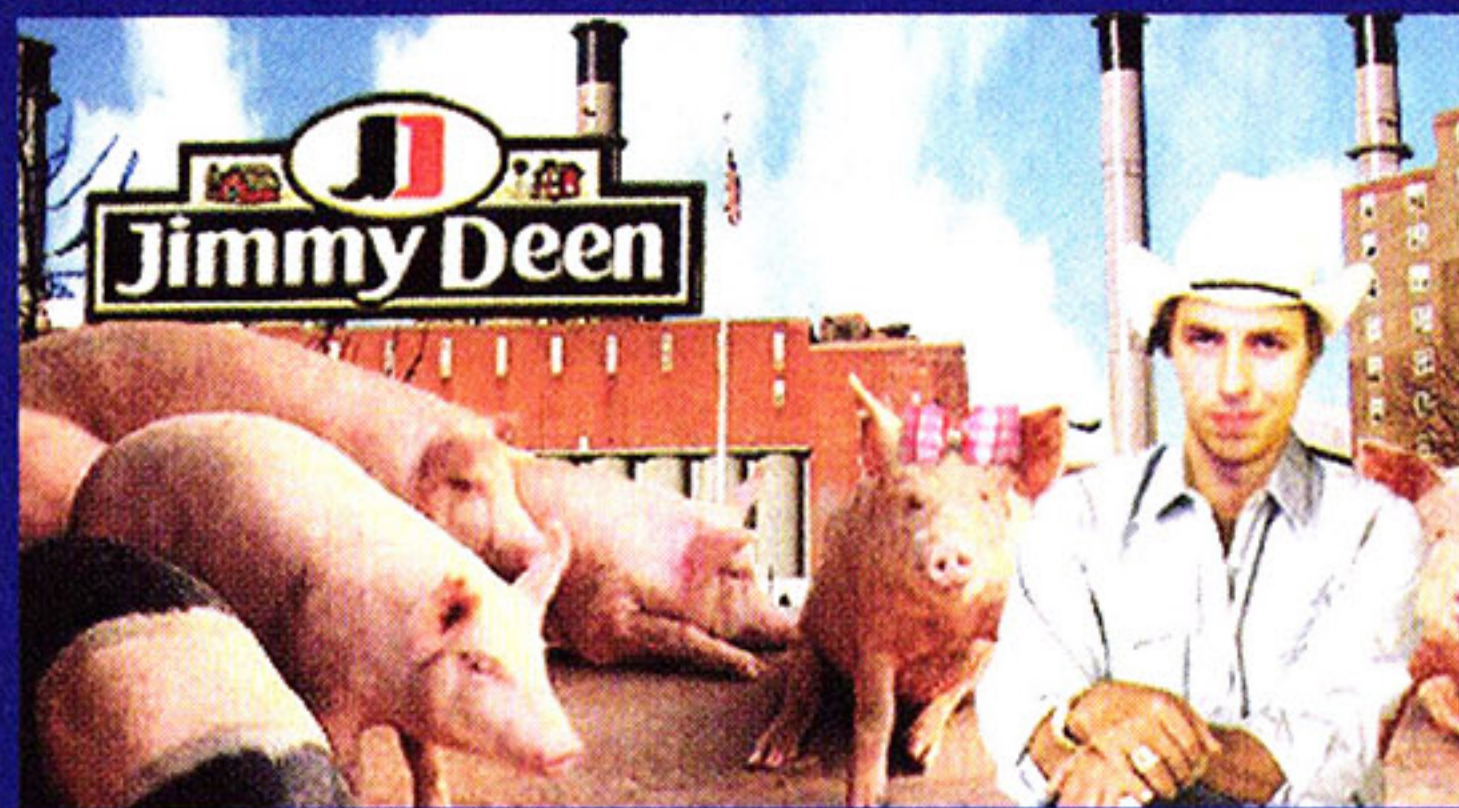


(artist's rendition)

PERIPHERAL ANNOUNCED, GAME TO COME

Seagull Accessories has announced that it will manufacture a peripheral for an undisclosed **XXXbox** game slated to release by the end of the decade. "We're really going all out on this one," says **Bryant Gumball**, Seagull's president. "It will be a full-body suit complete with every imaginable gadget you can fit on a piece of material." Included in the **CyberAnnihilator 6000** will be a fully functional, flip-down visor HUD; motion-tracking sensors in each of the appendages; an air conditioning unit; a hydraulic actuator for stability; a universal language translator; a headlamp; 50 switches and toggles on each arm; a catheter for uninterrupted play; and a two-way intercom system for interaction with other people. It will retail for \$749.95.

When asked what game would be attached to such an intricate piece of hardware, Gumball answered, "Well, we don't really know right now. Last week, I heard it might be a bass fishing game. Then again, I heard rumblings about some kind of Japanese bus-driving simulator a while back, so I have no idea. Whatever it is, I'm sure it'll put gamers into the game like never before!"



GAMESPHERE

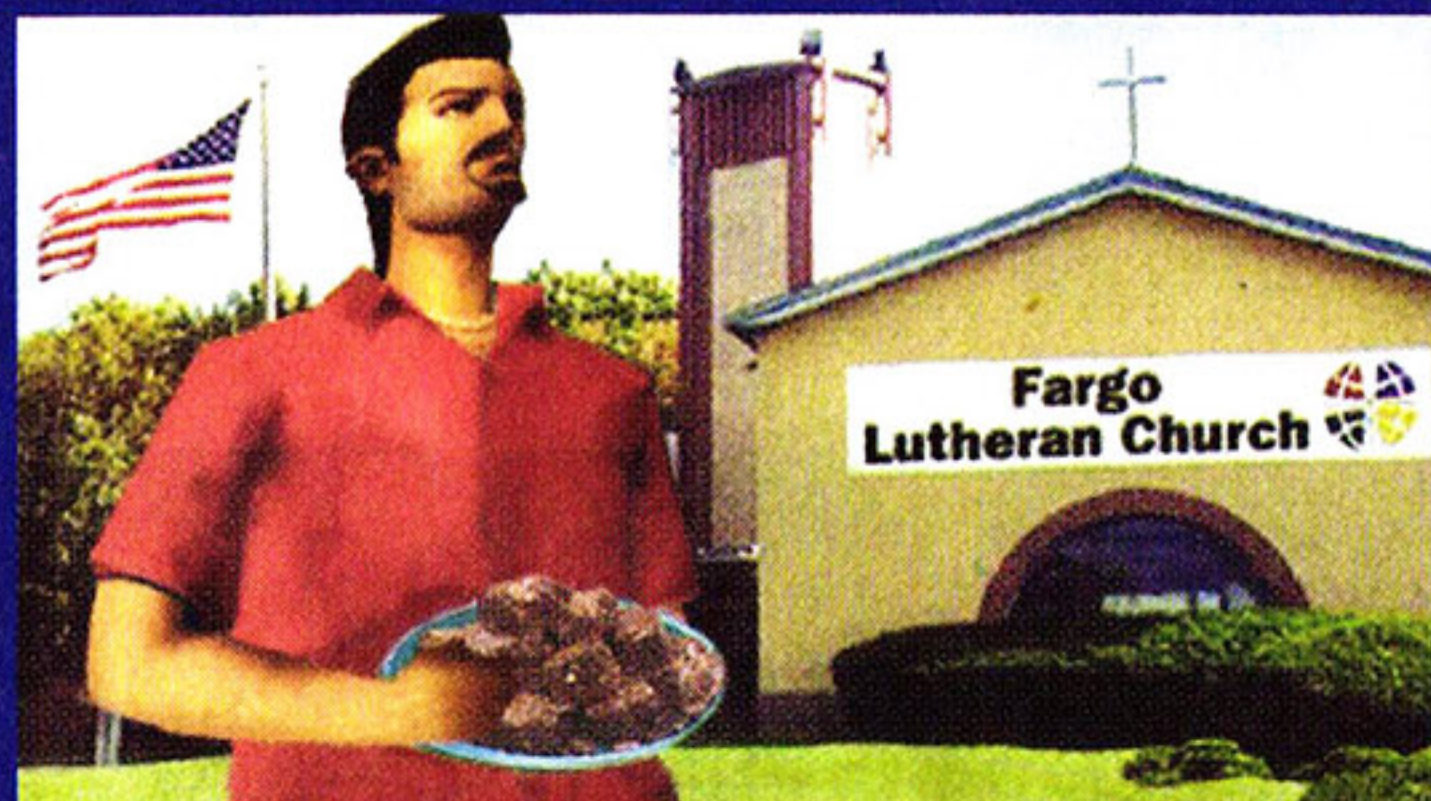
JIMMY DEEN'S SAUSAGE FACTORY

HERE, PIGGY PIGGY!

Oh no! Penelope Pig has found herself deep in the confines of the Jimmy Deen Sausage Factory! Without your help, she will be ground to bits of America's favorite premium pork sausage!

Armed with only girth and a squiggly tail, Penelope must combat the factory's conveyors, grinders, and minimum-wage-earning employees in a mad dash toward the exit. Enemies are on your tail, so you'll need your best stealth tactics to survive. Sneak up behind unsuspecting guards, bite their jugular, and get your revenge! The plot thickens when you reach the farm and find Farmer Ted none too pleased that you've come back. Time for this little piggy to kick ass!

■ **STYLE** 12 OZ. ROLL ■ **PUBLISHER** JIMMY DEEN
 ■ **DEVELOPER** MOTHER NATURE ■ **RELEASE** WHEN IT STOPS SQUEALING



PLAINSTATION 2

GRAND THEFT FARGO: NICE CITY

MEANER THAN A MISDEMEANOR

Fargo is a nice place, somewhere most folks would be happy to raise a family – until now! It's time to turn this quiet town on its ear! See how much havoc you can raise completing missions like putting too much salt in a batch of Lutheran church bake sale brownies; leaving men's magazines on the grade school lawn; flushing a five-pound sack of wood chips down the City Hall restroom; and reversing all the one-way street signs.

Sheriff Otis Fopple is on your trail, but he's 83-years-old, can't find his gun, and is prone to peeing himself during conflict. Order 14 pizzas to be delivered to his house, and he'll get the message that there's a new boss in town.

■ **STYLE** 1 PACK EGG NOODLES TO 2 CANS TUNA
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MARTHA SEWER INTERACTIVE
 ■ **DEVELOPER** A.M. RADIO ■ **RELEASE** FLAG DAY

XXXBOX

BIKINI BADMINTON

EWWWW! GIRLS!

We all know the XXXbox can make some of the awesomest graphics ever seen by mankind or any other kind of kind, and Bikini Badminton is no different. This game looks so real, I tried to jump into my TV four times! I would've done it more, but my mom yelled at me, so I had to stop.

The dudes at Team Voyeur really like to make girls. They like it so much, there aren't any guys in here. The weird thing is, the girls are all shaped kind of funny. It looks like they're always going to tip over and fall on their faces. I also don't understand why the girls always look like they're cold, even though they're at the beach. Still, they are awesome at playing badminton, and that's a hard game in real life. I was playing it once in gym class, and I missed the bird thing and got tangled in the net and started screaming. Then I didn't have to take gym class anymore.

The audio is pretty awesome, too. It sounds like they got really talented voice actresses, like the ones you see on advertisements for 900 numbers if you stay up watching TV really late. I don't get why they keep talking about a shuttlecock all the time, though. What is that?

This is a kick-butt game. I would've given it a 10, but I kind of wish they would've used these awesome graphics to make guns and dinosaurs and stuff. Who likes girls, anyway? – **GARNADAN**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER GRATUITOUS GRAPHICS DEMO ■ **PUBLISHER** BUBI SOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM VOYEUR ■ **RELEASE** NOT TILL YOU'RE 18



THE BOTTOM LINE

ADULTS ONLY
AO
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB
9.995

- **Concept:** These are the awesomest girls ever! They don't even knock down your books!
- **Graphics:** Awesome! They make me feel kinda funny, like when I climb my favorite tree
- **Sound:** My mom doesn't sound like this. They moan like they're hurt or something
- **Playability:** I don't remember actually playing this game. I bet it was wicked cool, though
- **Entertainment:** It's awesome, but only if you like girls a lot. They're okay
- **Replay Value:** Really Really High

SECOND OPINION

These chicks are fat. They're not even real! I'm much better looking than they are, right? Give me \$15,000 and I could have a chest like that. I'm serious. I'm only 75 pounds, and I look like a 10-year-old boy. My stomach is stapled, so I couldn't keep down food even if I wanted to. My life is as empty as my colon.

GISELE – 0.5

PLAINSTATION 2

ARMAGHETTO

WHACKED

The people who made this game are some kind of sick bastards. All I'm doing is walking around this city and shooting people – there's no reason behind it or nothing! When I execute some greaseball pillow-biter and his entire family for stepping on my \$600 suede shoes, there's a reason. But to walk up to a stranger and shoot him in cold blood is simply filthy and disgusting. No wonder this country is going straight down the crapper! You think I want my kids playing something like this? It's bad enough they saw me shoot their good-for-nothing uncle in the head late one night for cheating at cards (may he rest in peace) – I don't need their heads being filled with



garbage like this. I think it's about time I paid a visit to Mockstar Games' headquarters and had a little chat with whatever jerk-off clown is running things down there. He's about to start a new career as fertilizer. You don't think he'll like that idea? Don't worry, I'll make him an offer he can't refuse. – **VITO**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER BLOODBATH ■ **PUBLISHER** MOCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** EDGY-ENGLISHMEN-R-US ■ **RELEASE** NINER

THE BOTTOM LINE

BLOOD & BLOBBIES
B2
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

- **Concept:** We don't discuss business at the table
- **Graphics:** Are you lookin' at me?
- **Sound:** People usually scream louder when they're shot in the crotch
- **Playability:** Stop bothering me
- **Entertainment:** Takes all of the romance out of murder
- **Replay Value:** Don't get me started

SECOND OPINION

Ahh, this warped piece of software takes me back to happier times – like when I unleashed the Bubonic plague on the hapless fluid-bags of Europe. People coughing up organs into the streets, vermin defecating in food sources...it was brilliant. Arise, my murderous hordes! Take advantage of the second amendment I've seen fit to provide you with, and slay your neighbors with reckless abandon.

ADRAMALECH –

SECRET ACCESS

PLAINSTATION 2



NASCAR BLUNDER 2006

Smash-Up Mode – Racing around a track is all well and good, but what if you want a little more violence in your races? We have the answer! During gameplay, stop your car and turn around. Now, speed head-on into oncoming traffic, with explosive – and hilarious – results! Boy howdy, that's some fun!

*Billy-Bob Roberts
Charlotte, NC*

GAMESPHERE



THE LEGEND OF DELZA

Hidden, Playable Characters – Sintendo outdid itself with this great action/RPG. It's possible to play as many different characters from the Sintendo universe, and even some that you never thought would show up on GameSphere! When you start a game, you will be prompted to enter a name. Just enter Lario, Muigi, Blaster Sergeant, Tina Yothers, or even your own name. Your character will look the same, but everyone will call you by the name you inserted. Wow!

*Fox Baker
Outer Mongolia*

XXXBOX



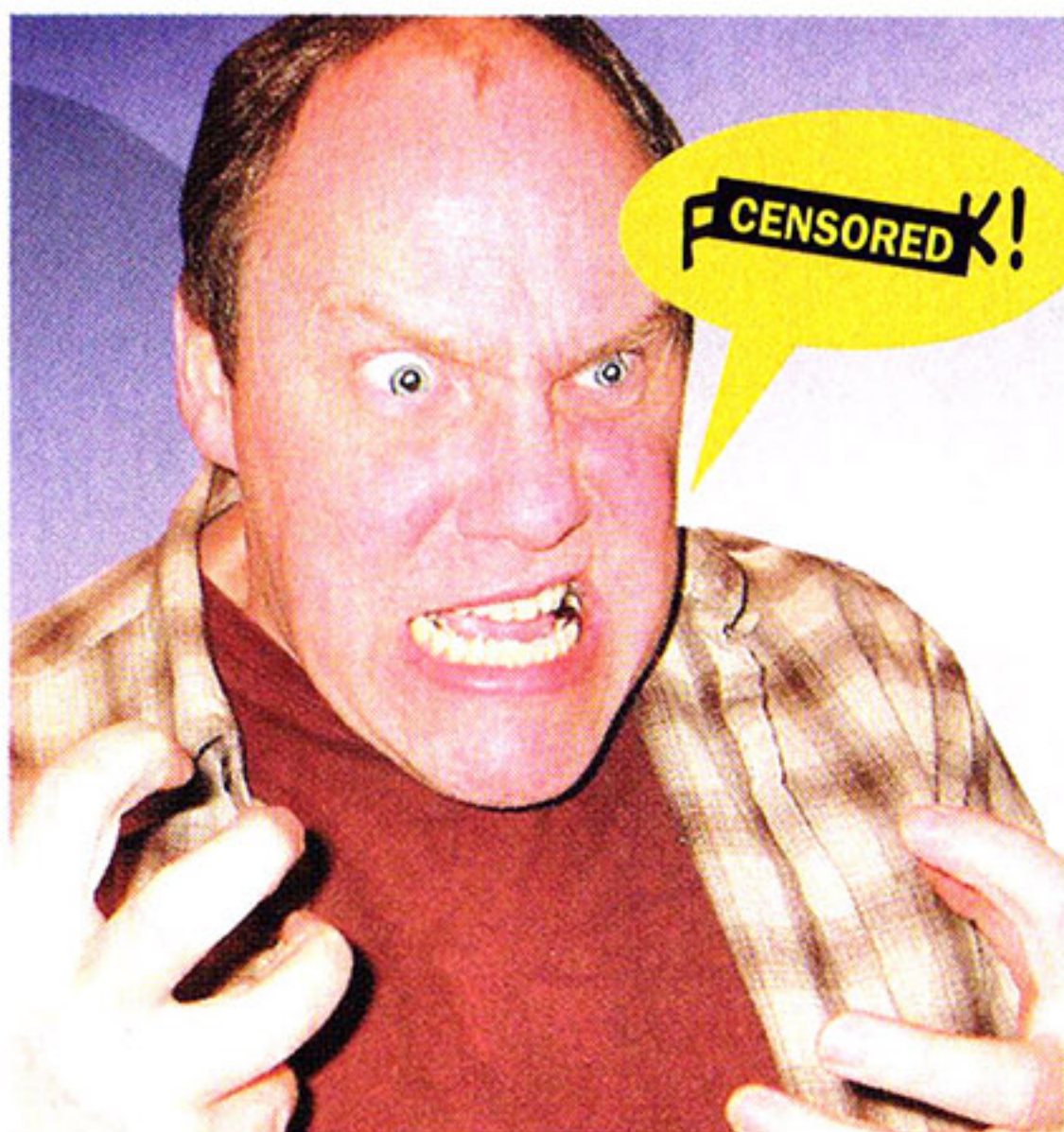
BRUCE EEL: QUEST OF THE LIZARD

More Fun – We all know this game blows, but we've found ways to increase your enjoyment. Check them out!

- Use it as a Frisbee
- Cut a pizza with it
- Take out your frustrations by hitting it with a hammer
- Use it as a handy travel mirror
- Sell it to a kid dumber than you

*CMOT Dibbler
Ankh Morpork*

ETC



SWEARING

Manufacturer: Life in general • **Website:** [www.!@#\(%\).com](http://www.!@#(%).com)

List Price: Free

You know how people like to tell you what to do and when to do it? You know how you always spring to their demands like a well-trained animal? Well, now you've got an ace up your sleeve. The next time your boss says, "Do you want to go to lunch?" you can say, "Hey, @\$+%. I work for less than minimum %#!ing wage in this \$&!+heap, and it's about time you got off your fat #(\$% and did something for your %#\$*ing self for once!" You see how you get your point across with a lot more emphasis? Of course, this new skill is applicable in a number of different scenarios. Use it at church when the offering plate comes around, or when Dad comes home from a long day at the office. Not only does it feel good, but it's sure to put a smile on the face of anyone who hears you.

WAR: THE COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME

Manufacturer: Boyle • **Website:** www.war-whatisitgoodfor.com

List Price: \$2.49 per pack of five cards

Collectible card games are everywhere these days, and new ones keep springing up all the time. War has some history behind it, but this is the first time it has been available in collectible form. Boyle's awesome new version is sold in retail packs containing five cards each. They have varying numbers and even feature royal characters on some of the rarer ones. You can collect all 52! The goal of the game is simple: Shuffle your deck, then flip over the top card. The person with the higher value wins the "battle." Continue on until one player's deck is depleted to nothing, and he or she loses the "war." It's nonviolent conflict resolution for the whole family! Future Boyle games include Hearts, Crazy Eights, and Go Fish. Some may ask why they shouldn't just go out and buy a regular deck of playing cards, rather than spending much more for five-card packs. The answer is simple: Shut up. You never know what cards you'll get in a pack! It's awesome!



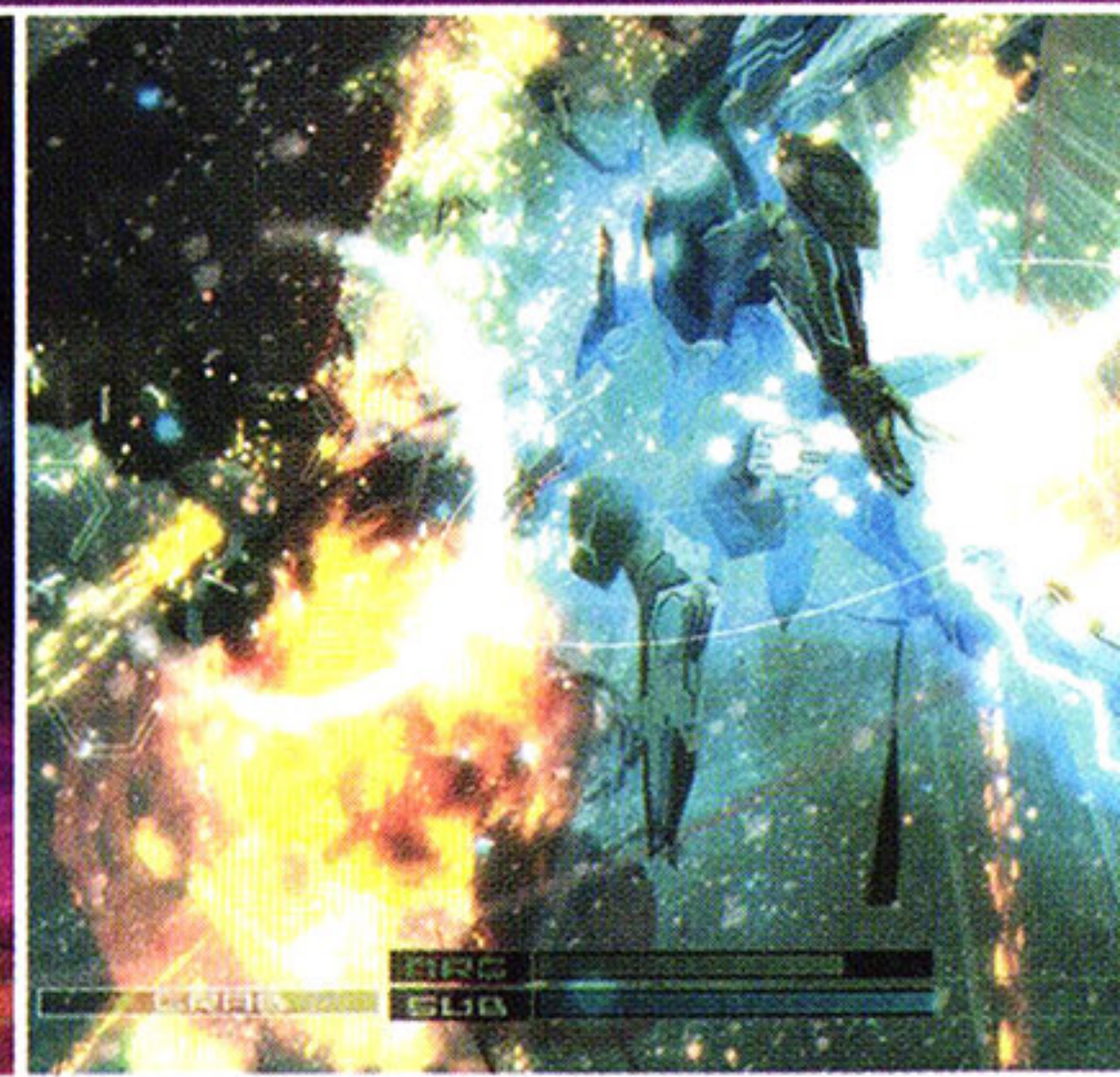
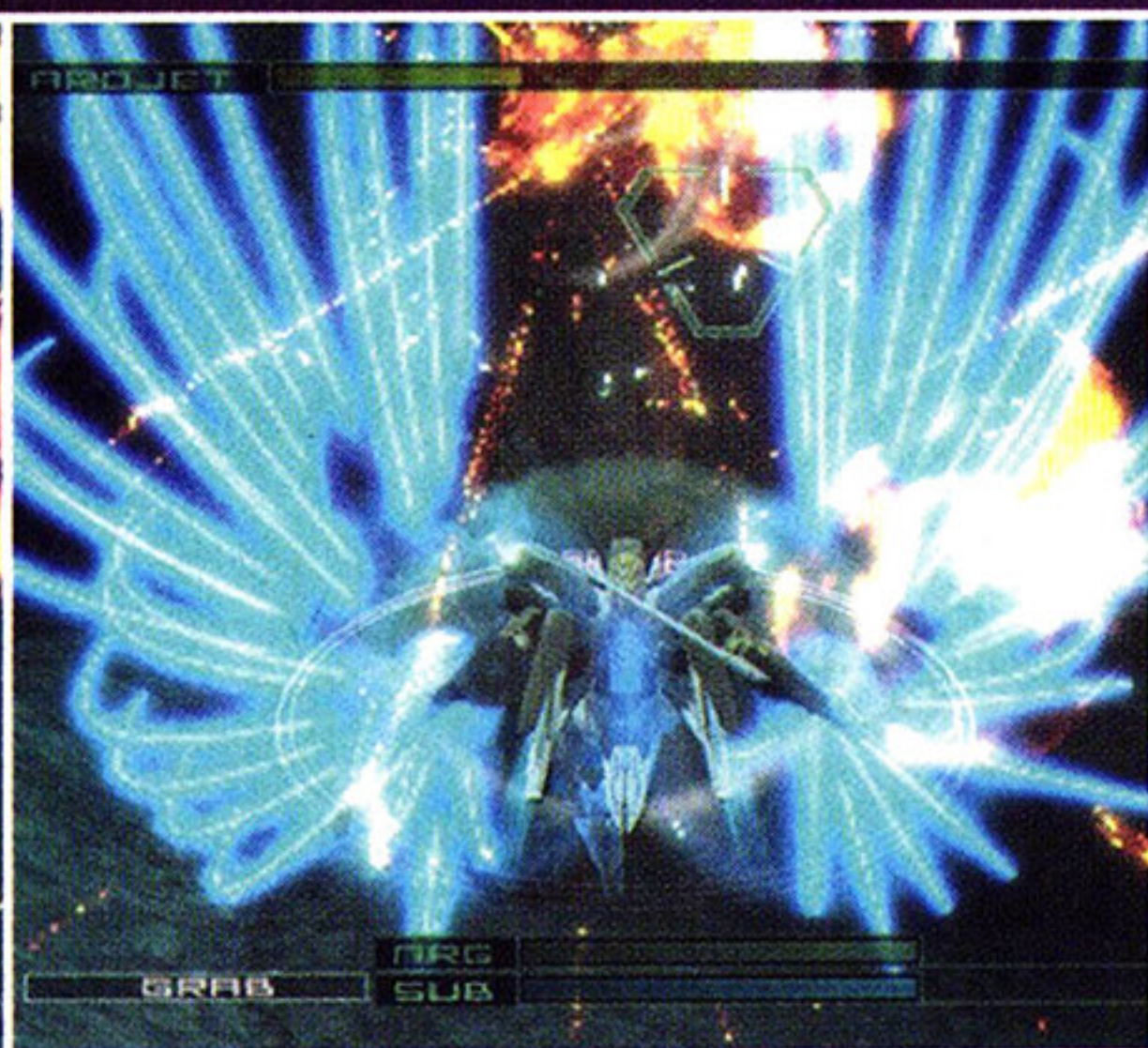
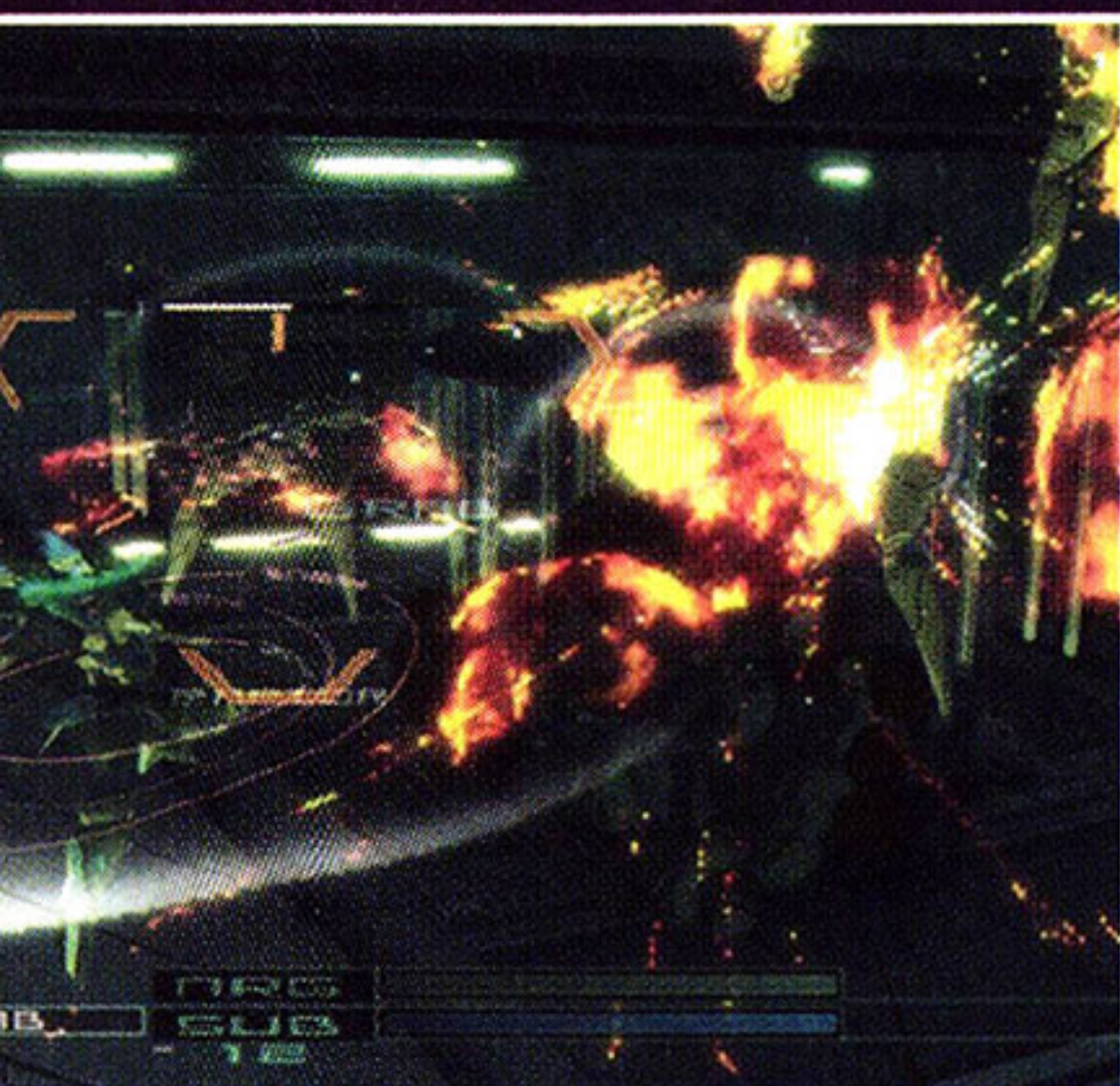
VINNIE'S CEMENT SHOES

Manufacturer: Portland Cement

Website: www.whatareyoulookingat.fu

List Price: \$2.38 per foot

Maybe some wiseguy gives you a real "reliable" tip on a pony that's supposed to win in the third at Belmont. Maybe his name is Vinnie and it turns out he's a lying rat bastard, Gone With The Wind comes in last, and you lose 30 large. That's okay; he tried to help you, now you're gonna help him. You know what you're gonna do? You're gonna pick Vinnie up at his house at 3 a.m., and give him the most comfortable and durable pair of shoes he'll ever wear in his useless, soon-to-be-cut-tragically-short life. In fact, these will be the last pair of shoes he'll ever own. Remember how he's always complaining about how his Bruno Maglis chafe? He won't have that problem no more. You're doing him a favor, for crissakes. Plus, think of the leg workout he's gonna get. He'll be the next Rocky Marciano, that jiggly moron. Then maybe you hear about how he's had a freak jetskiing accident upstate – it ain't your fault he don't know how to swim.



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



PlayStation®2

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PREVIEWS



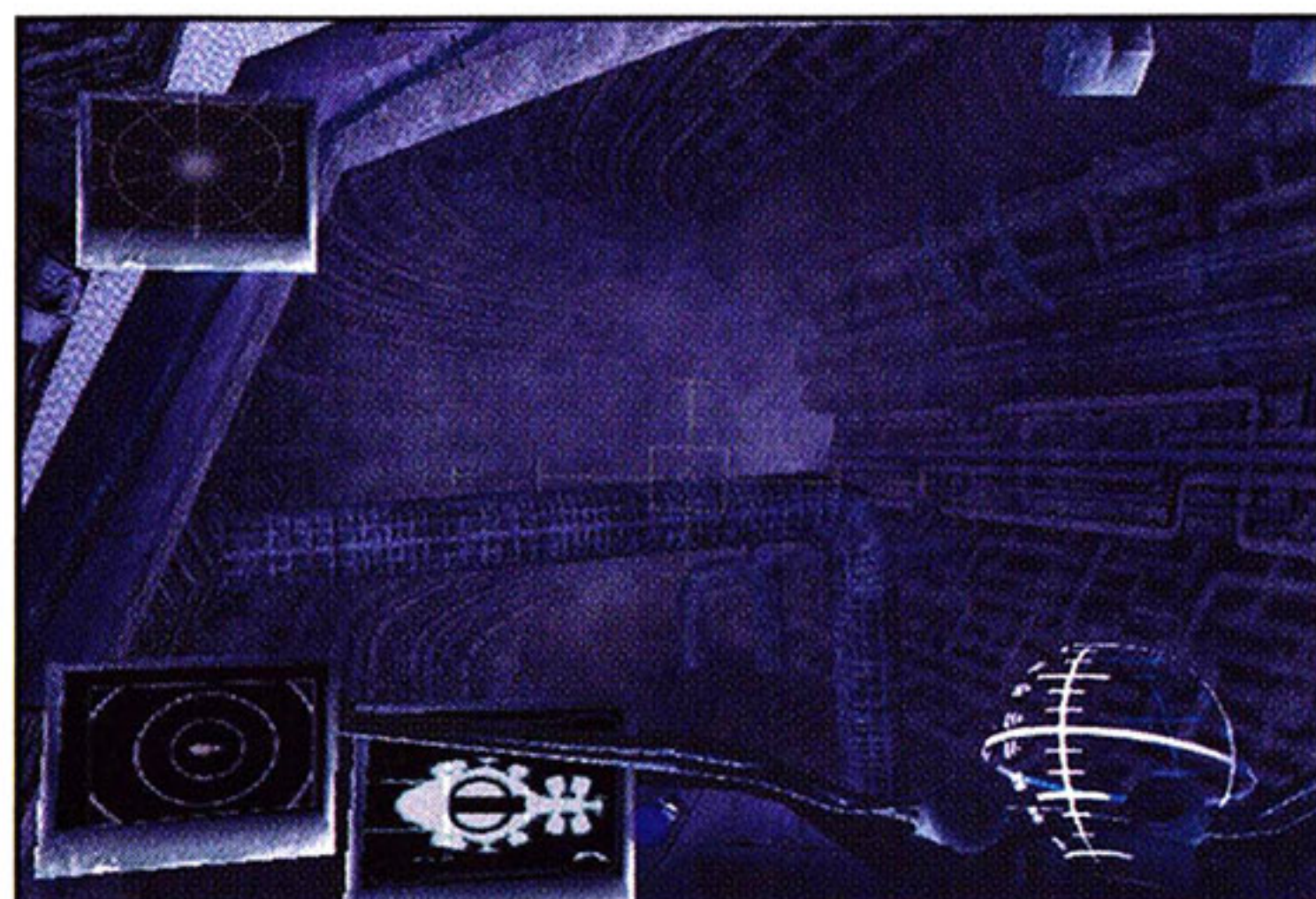
PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

ENTER THE MATRIX

HOW DEEP DOES THE RABBIT HOLE GO?

Since our cover story on Enter The Matrix in December of last year, the title has easily become the hottest video game property in the nation and has gamers waiting in anticipation for its May 15 simultaneous release with the movie, *The Matrix: Reloaded*. Since that story, we have had some hands-on time with the game, and can say with certainty that Enter The Matrix, while early, is definitely heading in the right direction.

At this point, about the only thing we can comment on is that the combat animations and the action onscreen are an amazing sight to see, and the controls seem to be developing nicely. These final few months of polish will definitely make or break this product. Many elements of the game and the story are still veiled in secrecy, but we did manage to get our hands on some smoking new screens to whet your appetite, and a few tidbits on the technology used to create the amazing visuals.



HOVERCRAFT

Hopefully by now you have had a chance to see The Animatrix short by Square Soft titled *Final Flight of the Osiris*. If not, go see it – as it's appearing before the Warner Bros. movie based on the Stephen King book called *Dreamcatcher* – then you'll realize how incredibly bad-ass a vehicle the Hovercraft can be. Here's a shot inside the Logos.



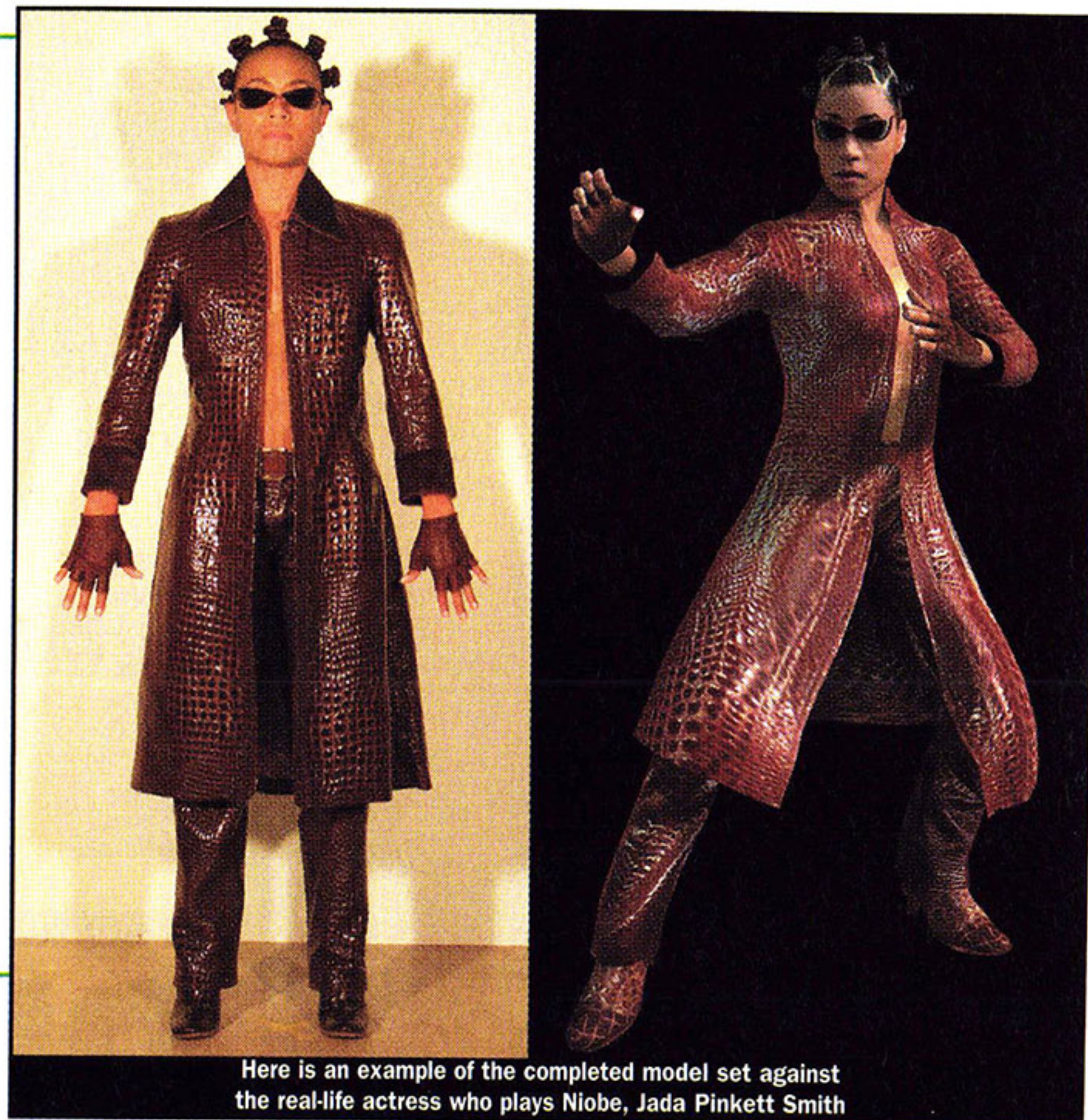
DRIVING

Like the movie, the game will feature a number of intense driving sequences. If you play Niobe, you can actually steer the vehicle; if you play the game as Ghost, you ride shotgun.

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES/ATARI ■ DEVELOPER SHINY ENTERTAINMENT ■ RELEASE MAY 15

CYBERSCAN

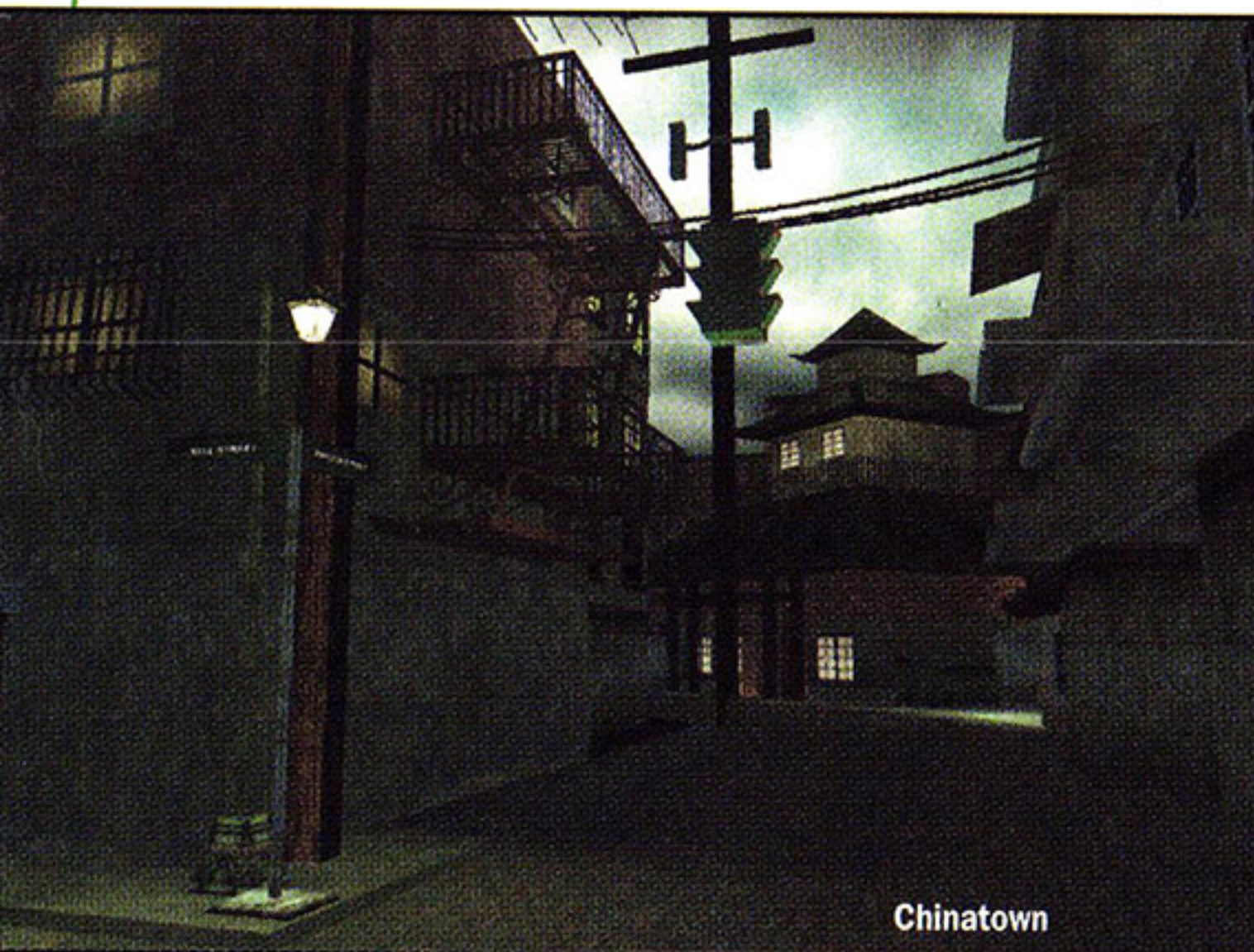
To get the actors into the game (Agent Smith shown), the developer scans an actor's face to create a wireframe. Then, Shiny can fill in the wireframe and apply textures to complete the look.



Here is an example of the completed model set against the real-life actress who plays Niobe, Jada Pinkett Smith

ENVIRONMENTS

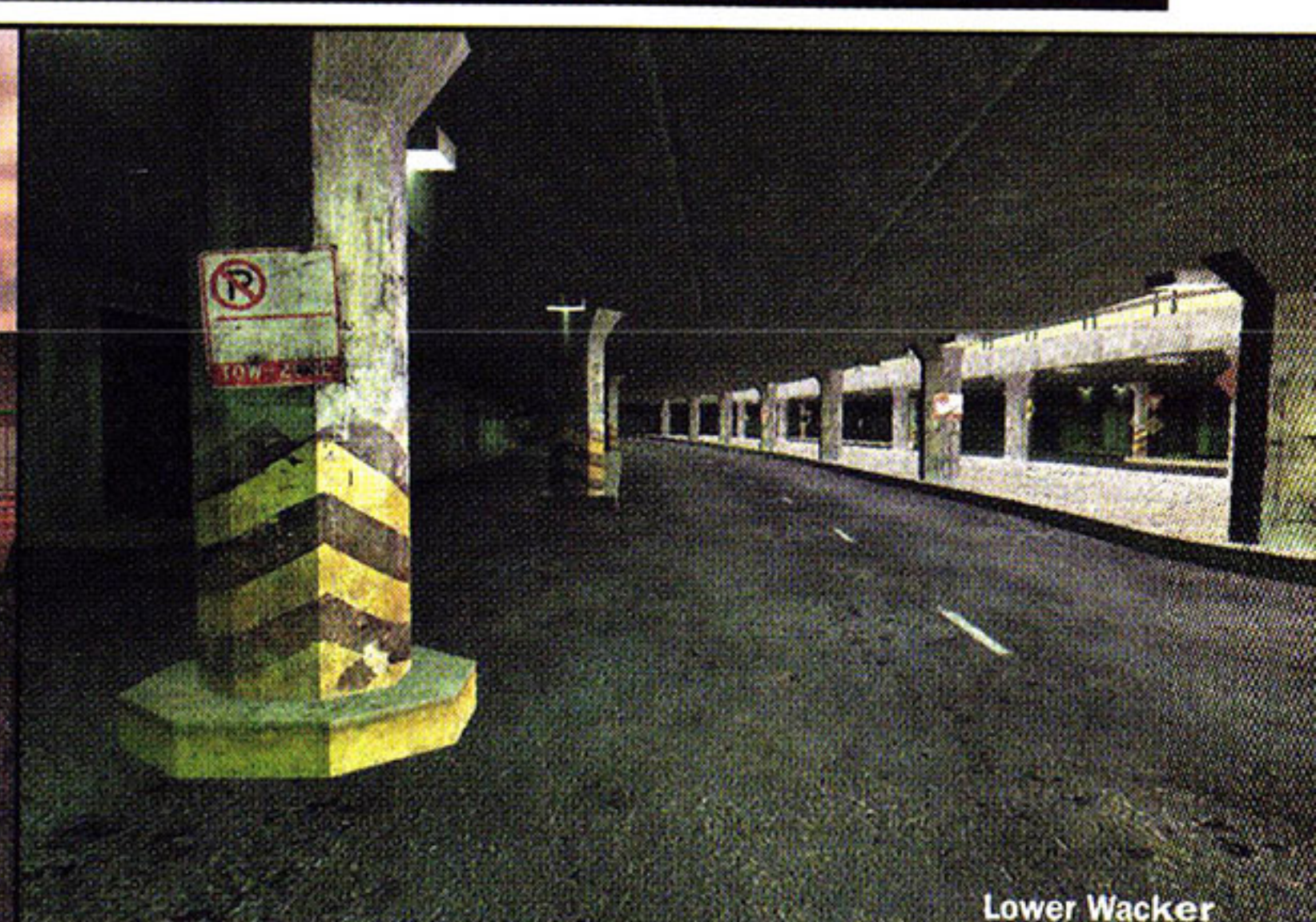
Here is a sample of different locations found in the game.



Chinatown



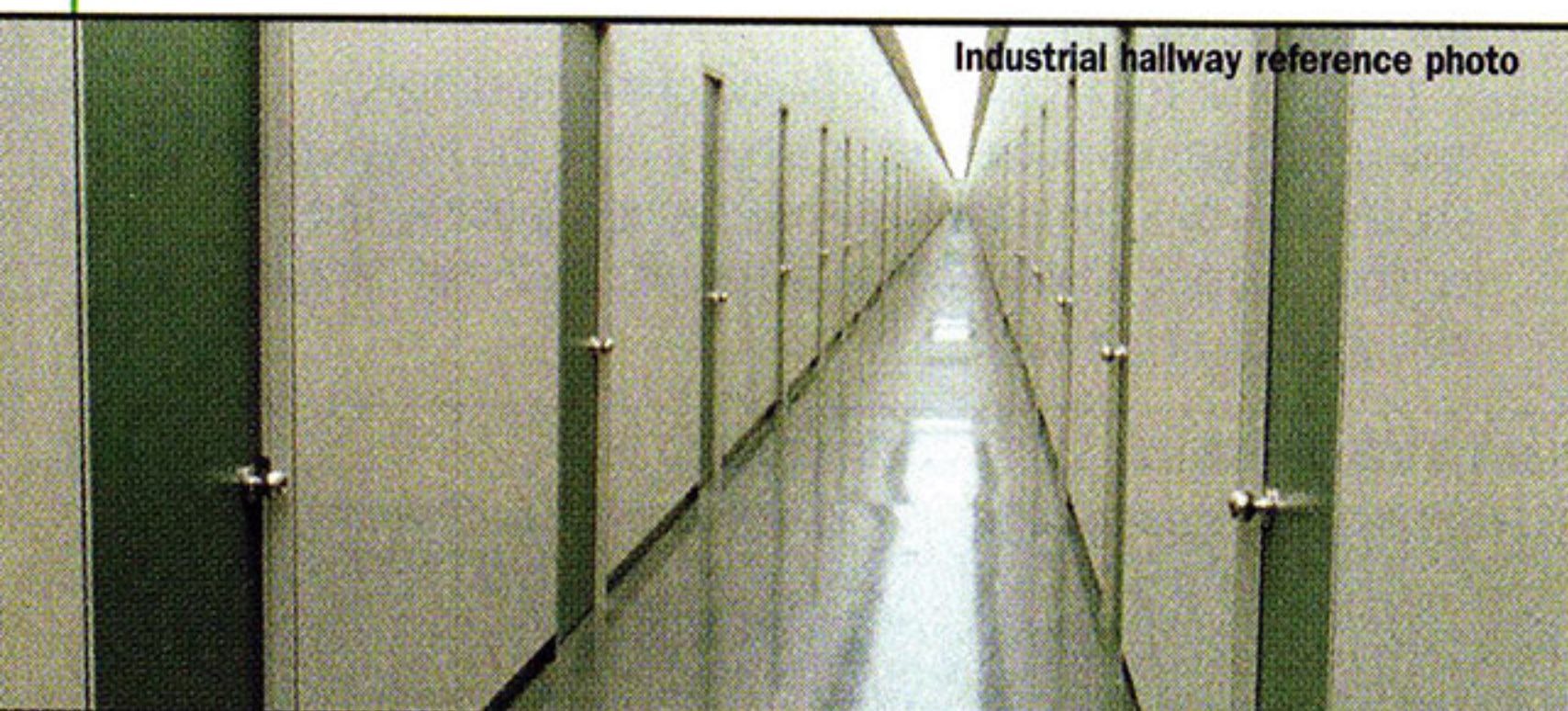
Zen garden



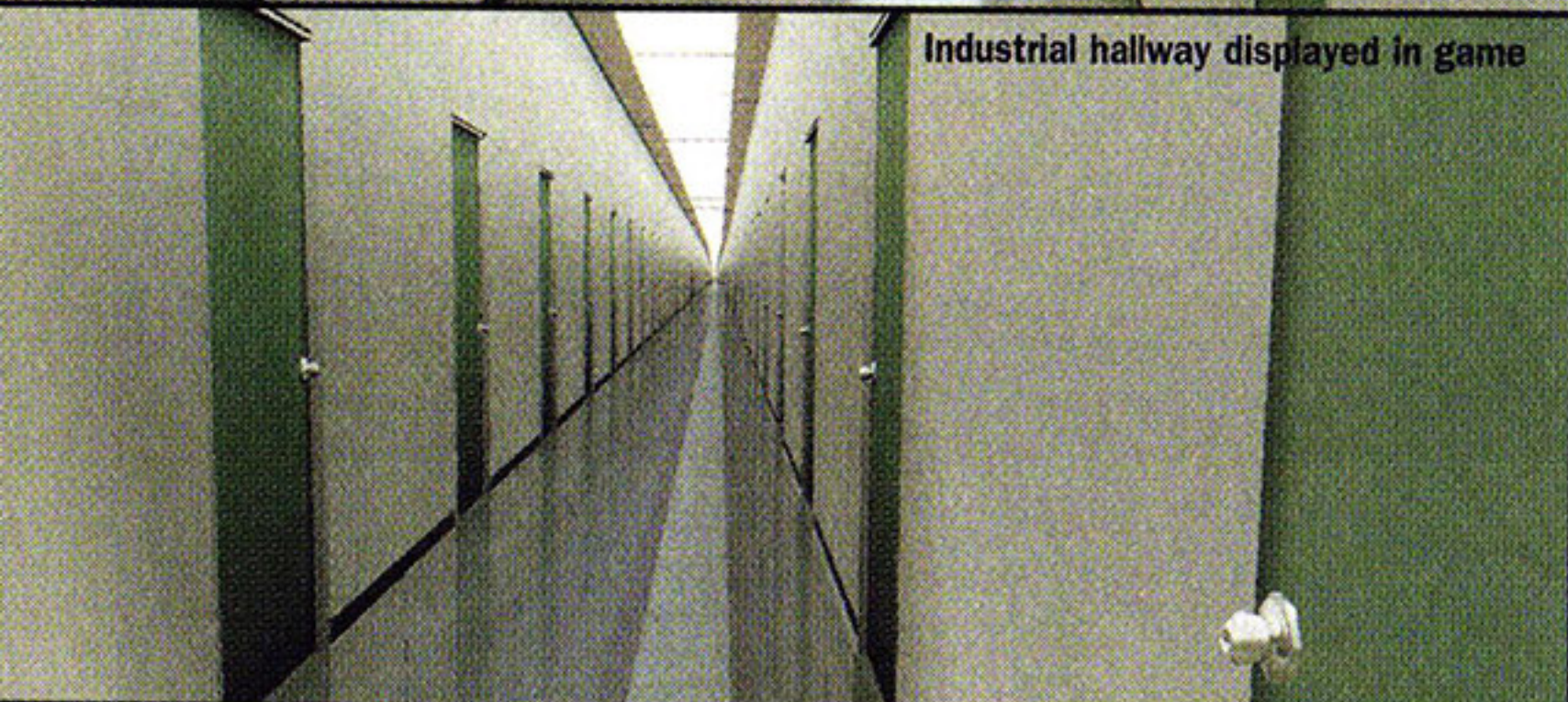
Lower Wacker

SET COMPARISONS

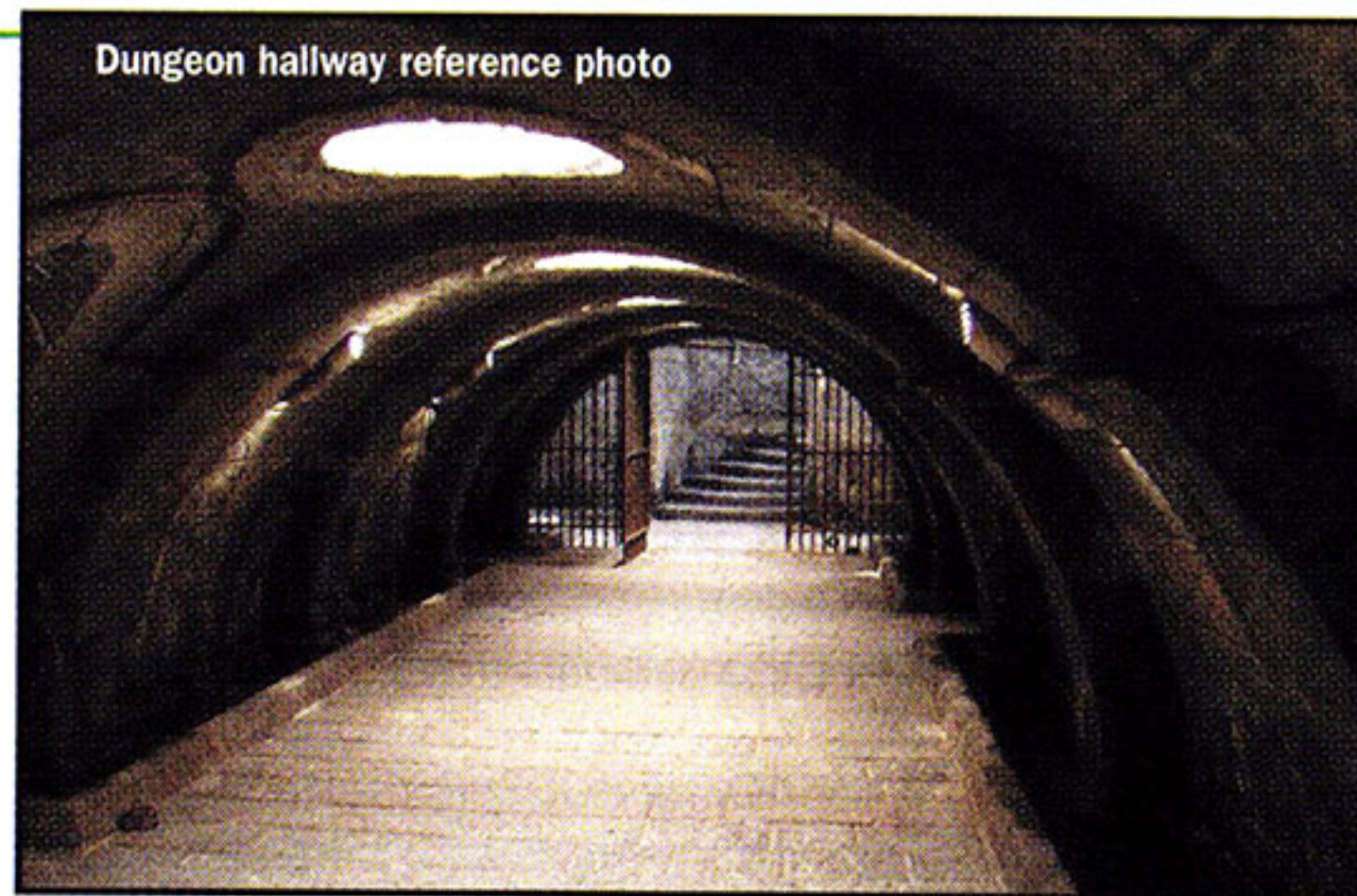
With access to all the movie assets and sets, Shiny is able to create scenes in the game that closely mimic the movie.



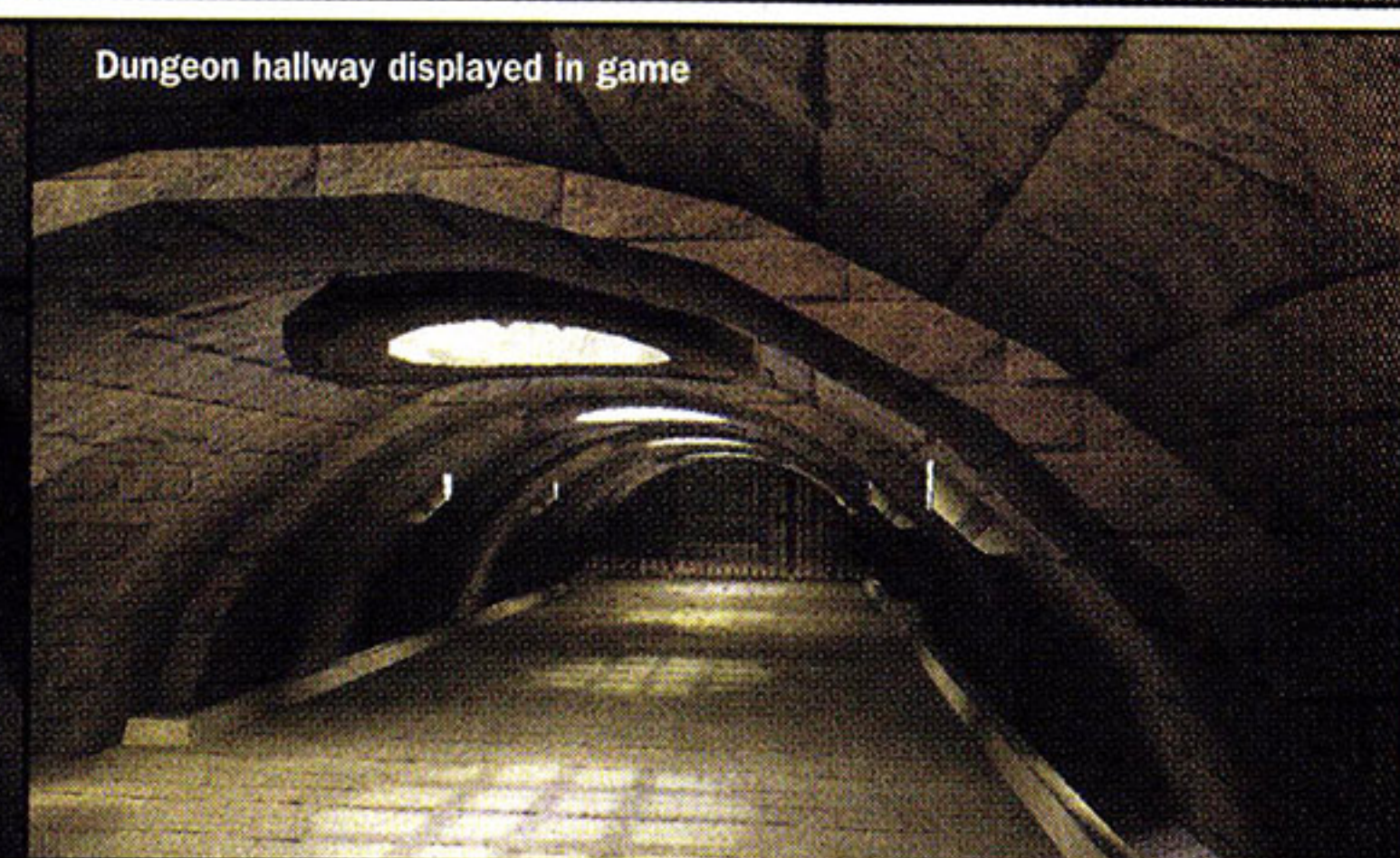
Industrial hallway reference photo



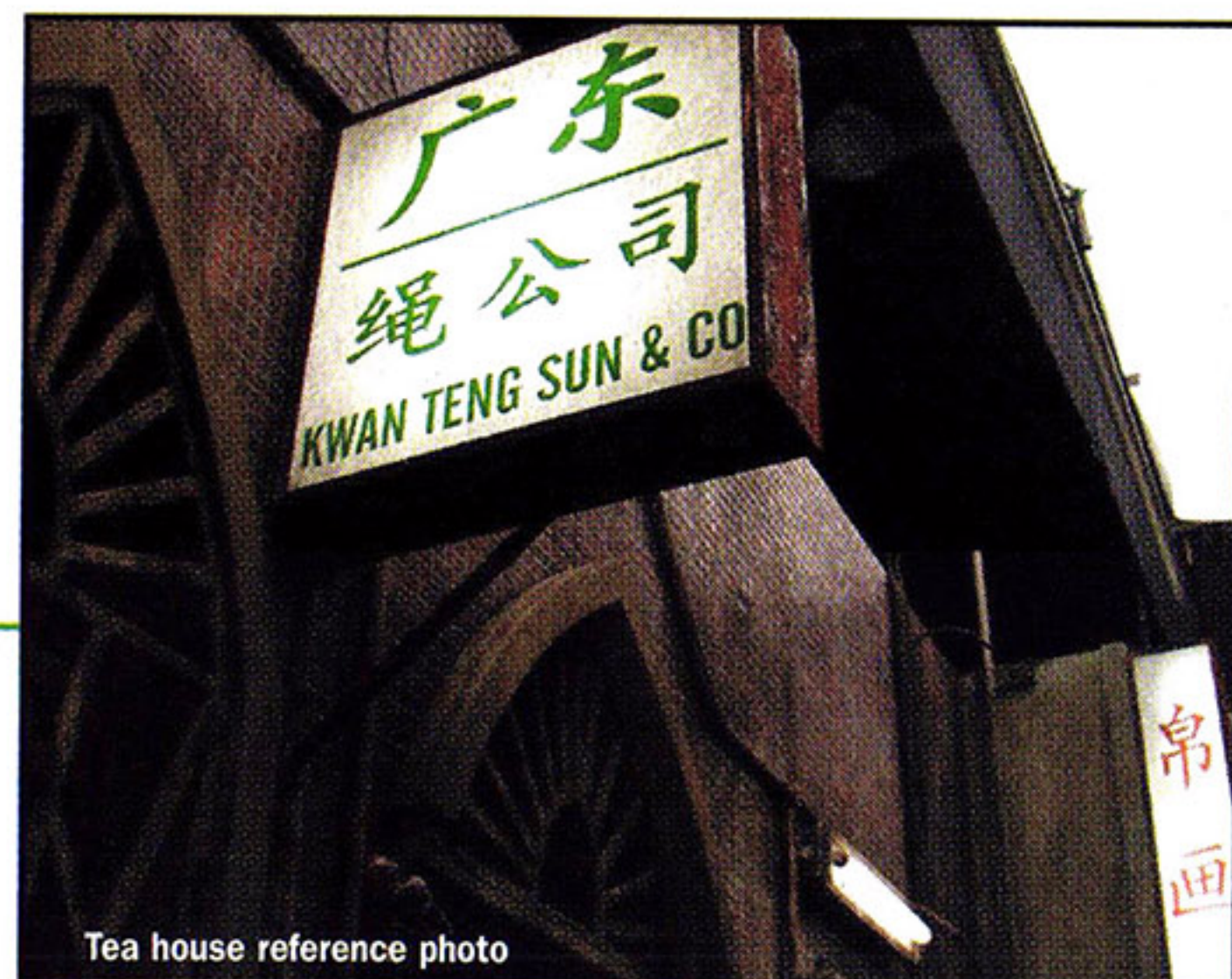
Industrial hallway displayed in game



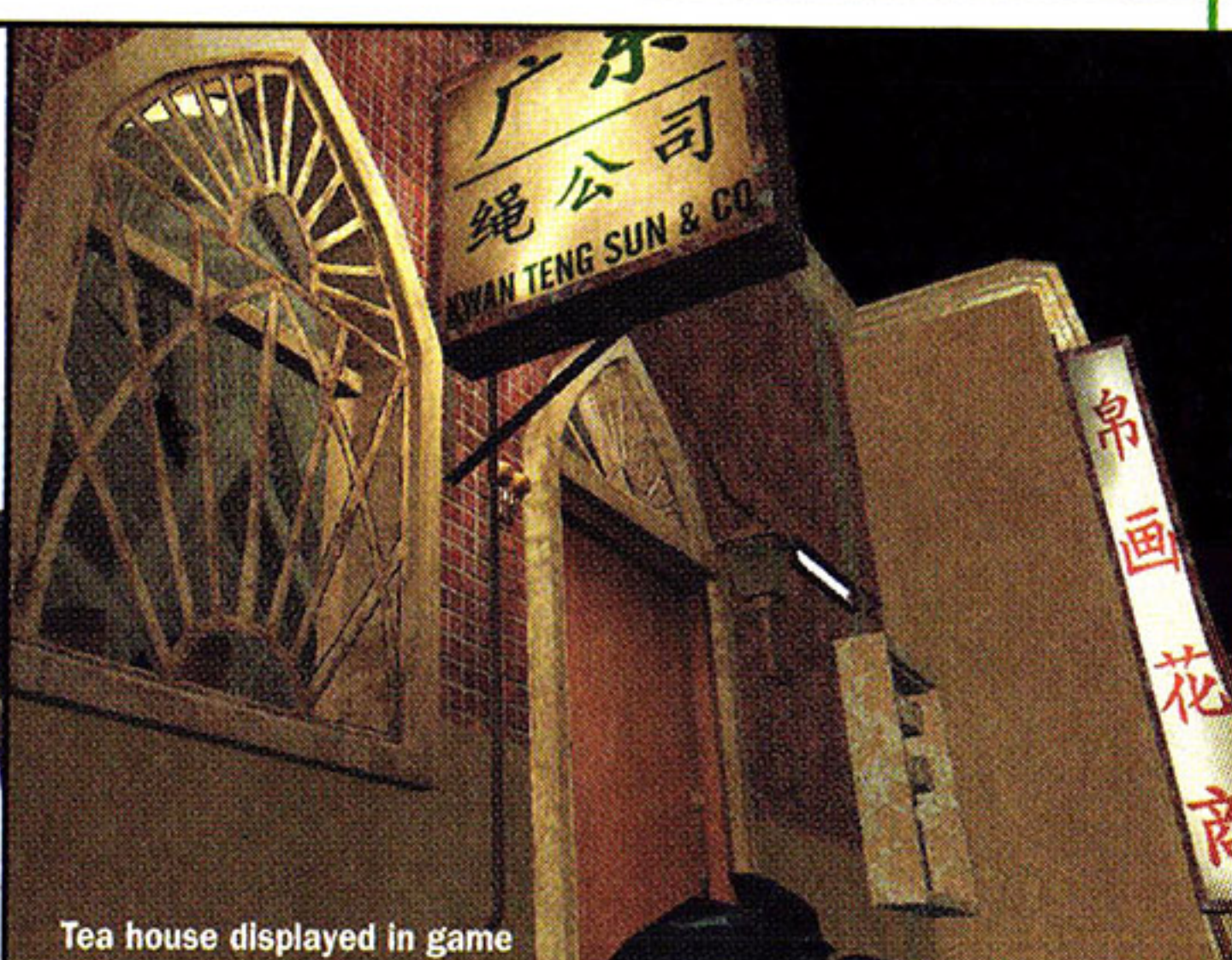
Dungeon hallway reference photo



Dungeon hallway displayed in game



Tea house reference photo



Tea house displayed in game

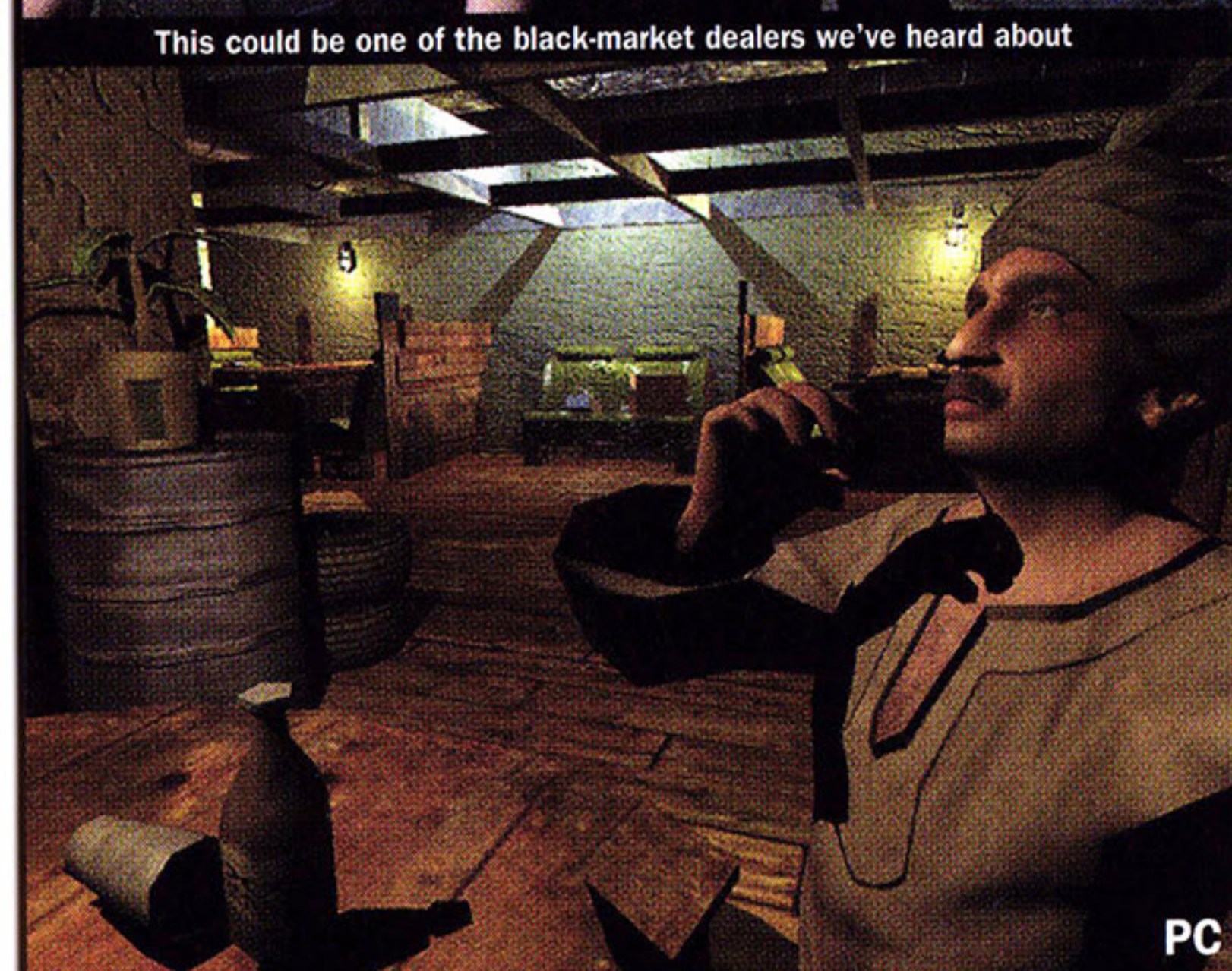


PC Xbox



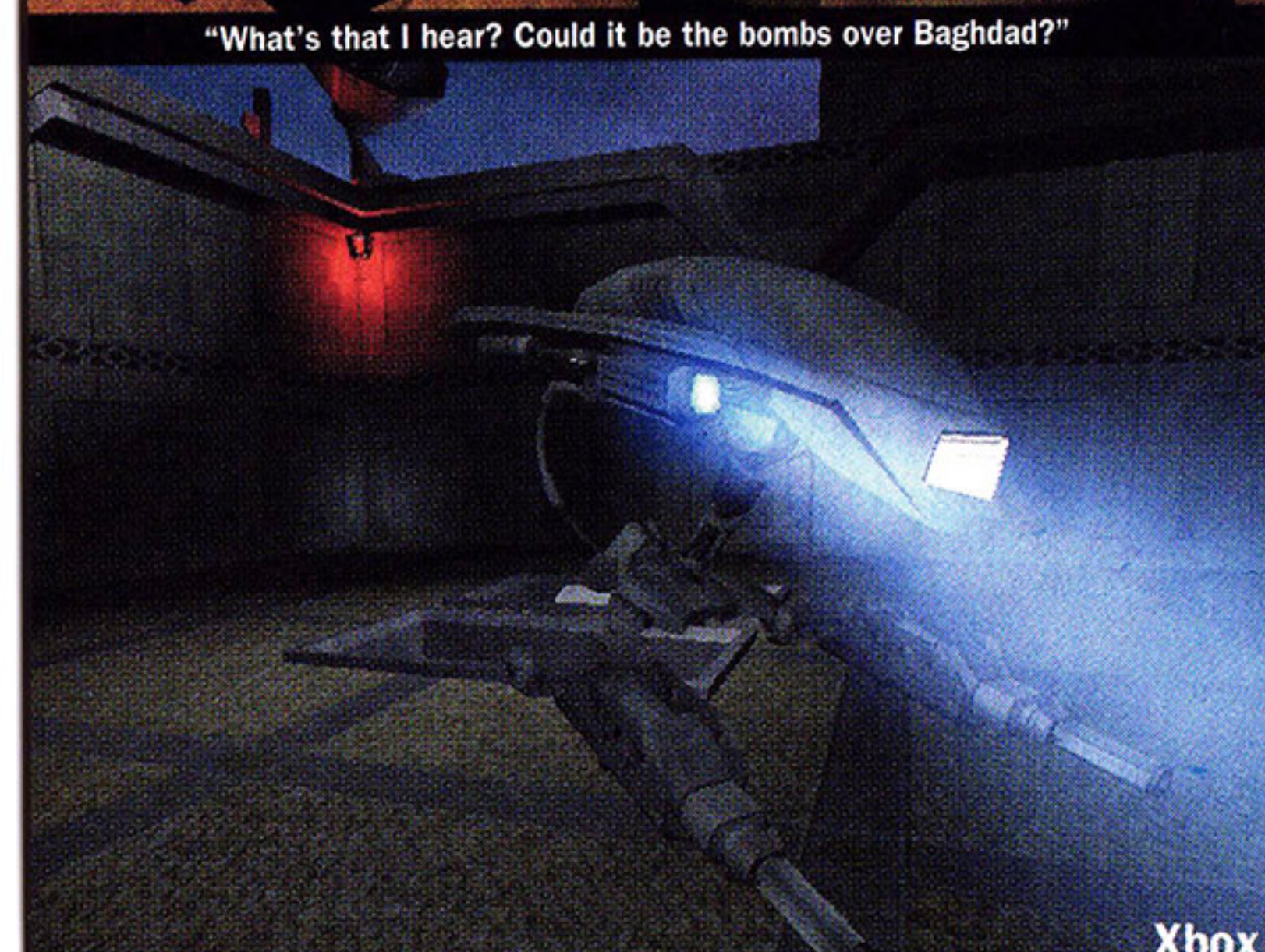
PC

This could be one of the black-market dealers we've heard about



PC

"What's that I hear? Could it be the bombs over Baghdad?"



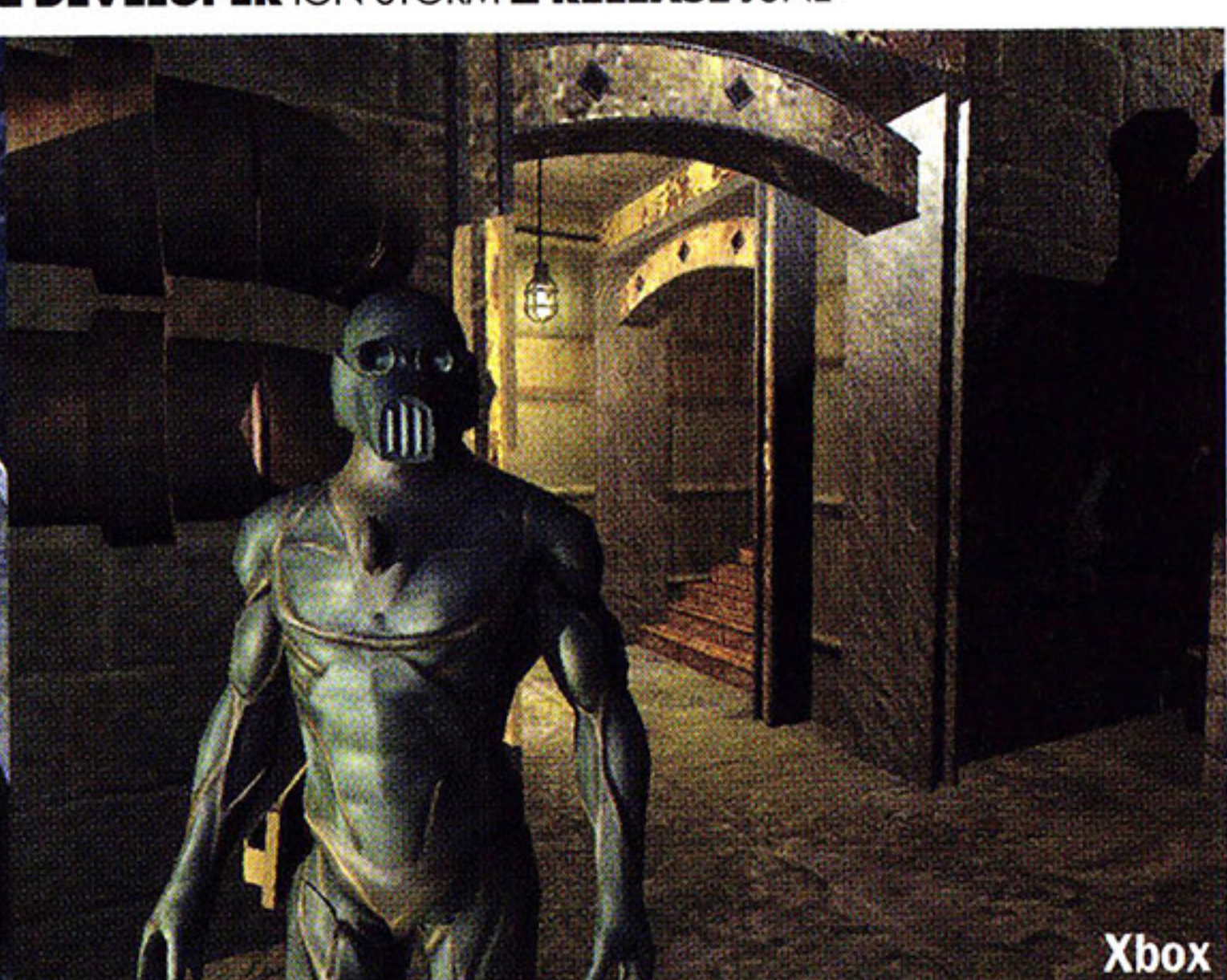
Xbox

If those blue lights spot you, it's double (barreled) trouble



Xbox

Let's hope this security bot is on our side



Xbox

This Hannibal Lecter/Ninja from Metal Gear hybrid is even freakier in the darkness

XBOX/PC

DEUS EX 2: THE INVISIBLE WAR

BIO-ENGINEERED FOR YOUR PROTECTION

In the mind-blowing Deus Ex

(released on PC in 2000, and last year on PS2), gamers thrilled as JC Denton, a bio-engineered military agent, put an end to a twisted conspiracy. In Deus Ex 2: The Invisible War, those events are now 20 years in the past, and JC's whereabouts are unknown. You are cast as Alex Denton, a clone programmed with all of the advanced abilities of your predecessor.

The ending of Deus Ex brought forth a period of worldwide confusion. Everyone with their eyes on the prize of global domination has been making bids for power. These include political figures, religious organizations, and underground brigades. You are stuck smack-dab in the middle with the chance to change everything.

This is a game that will pull the player in like never before. If the gameplay of Deus Ex could be called an open door; then DX 2 is a limitless field, wrought with possibility. Choices are made that will influence everything else in the story. Whether you kill someone or simply detain may come back to haunt you later. There are easy and difficult ways to get in and out of situations, and you can explore every aspect. The manner in which you use biotechnical enhancements to build up your character

alters the pathways available to you. Answers will come – but you need to seek them out.

Your enemies will be deadly – both human and otherwise. They'll know you're coming and have their eyes and ears open, but how you combat them is your call. Stealth is the safest bet; though possessing massive hardware may make a loud, rambunctious entrance more effective. This freedom of choice is not just a gimmick. In DX 2, you really can have it your way.

Ion Storm is taking no prisoners to ensure that The Invisible War's visual splendor paints an accurate picture of a futuristic world gone wrong. The atmosphere and environments will feature the utmost realism. The new batch of images displayed on these two pages illustrates this nicely. The aesthetic advancement is aided by a complex physics engine that makes every object react accurately, and lighting that greatly affects the stealth-enabled gameplay.

Deus Ex 2: The Invisible War is one of the most highly anticipated games of the year. It's being done the way a sequel should be – by a company that knows what it's doing. The original changed how we looked at games. DX 2 may change how we look at our world.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ DEVELOPER ION STORM ■ RELEASE JUNE



Religious zealots want their slice of the pie, too



PREVIEW

Xbox PC

Don't...look...behind...you



Bump-mapping, sweet text, and models - oh my!



PLAYSTATION 2

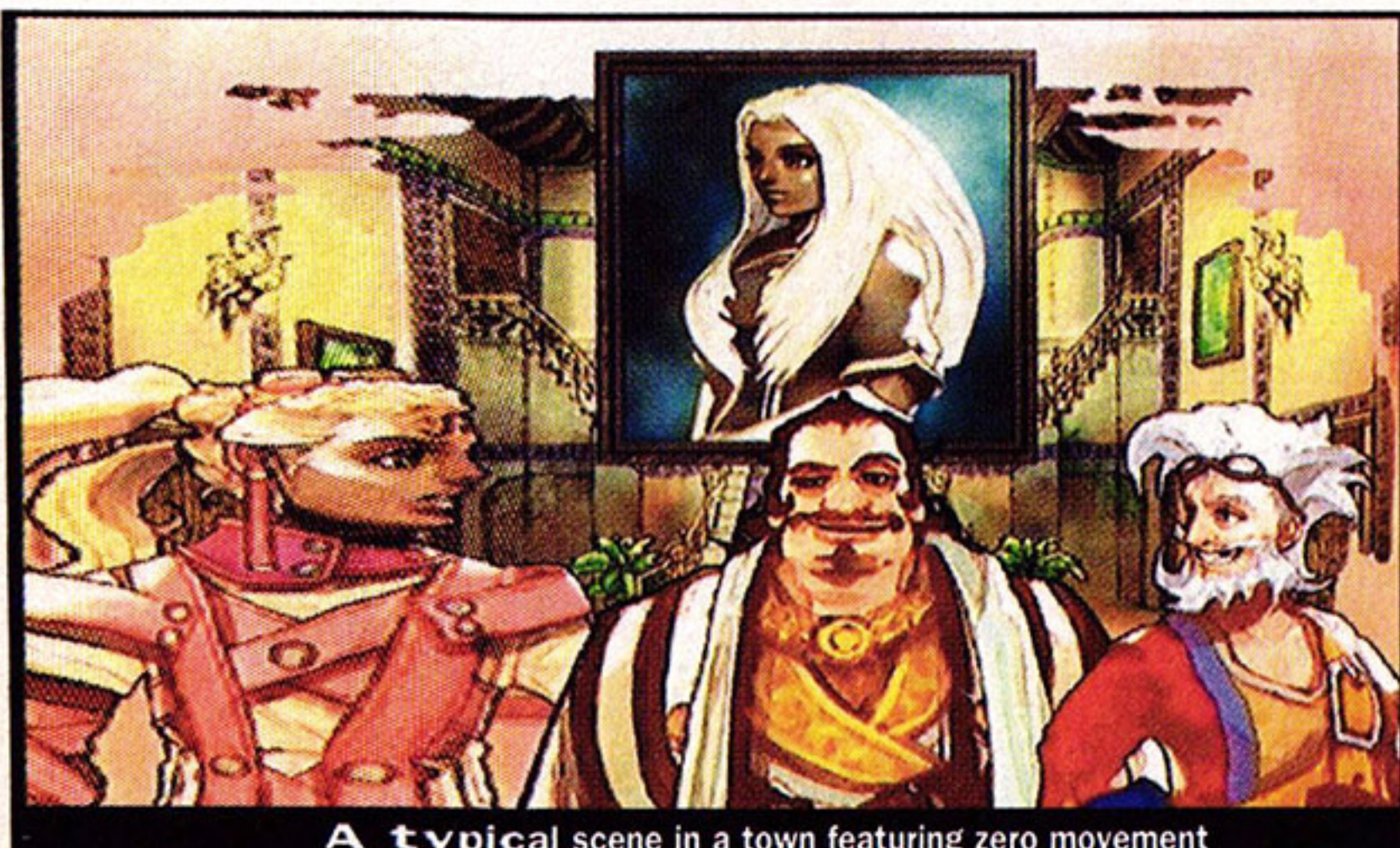
UNLIMITED SAGA

DOES SPRITE MAKE RIGHT?

GRAPHICS

Our previous coverage reported on a new type of animation technique that Square would employ to create 2D-looking sprites within a 3D environment, ultimately yielding an extremely high level of animation. Unlimited SaGa's models do indeed create the illusion of

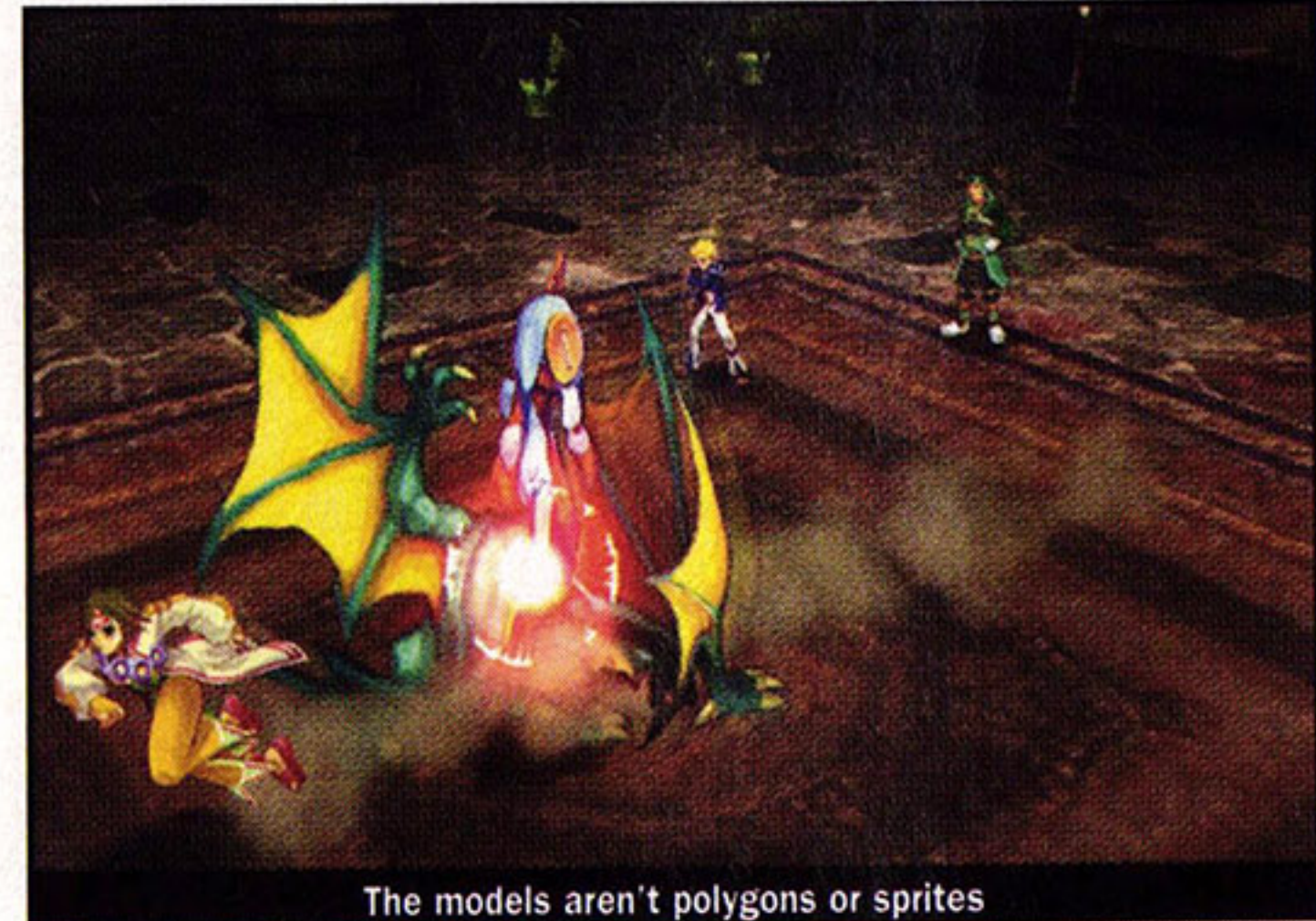
sprites much more effectively than celshading. However, the movement is lacking and the use of 3D environments is nearly non-existent. Your characters' limbs are in motion only during battles, and you can easily count the number of frames on one hand!



A typical scene in a town featuring zero movement



Some expressions may look funny, but they're action is choppy



The models aren't polygons or sprites

GAMEPLAY

Unfortunately, players never get the opportunity to walk around in 3D, really making the whole point of the snazzy graphics system moot. During battles, the camera will swivel around to provide alternate perspectives, but the rest of the adventure really remains within 2D constraints. Movement in dungeons, towns, and the overworld is similar to a board game: Direct your character's body from space to space. At times, you'll encounter an NPC or enemy, and other times you might stumble upon treasure or a trap. The mechanics

set up for traps actually require some technique. For example, if you enter an area with a ceiling of falling spikes, a slot wheel appears full of various icons. Choosing the correct one permits escape, while selecting the wrong one deals damage. Although we must admit that we didn't expect Unlimited SaGa to play in this manner, remember that each title in the series is very distinct – a commendable approach. Perhaps that concept alone helps keep it tied to the SaGa universe.



You move your character in blocks when exploring a dungeon



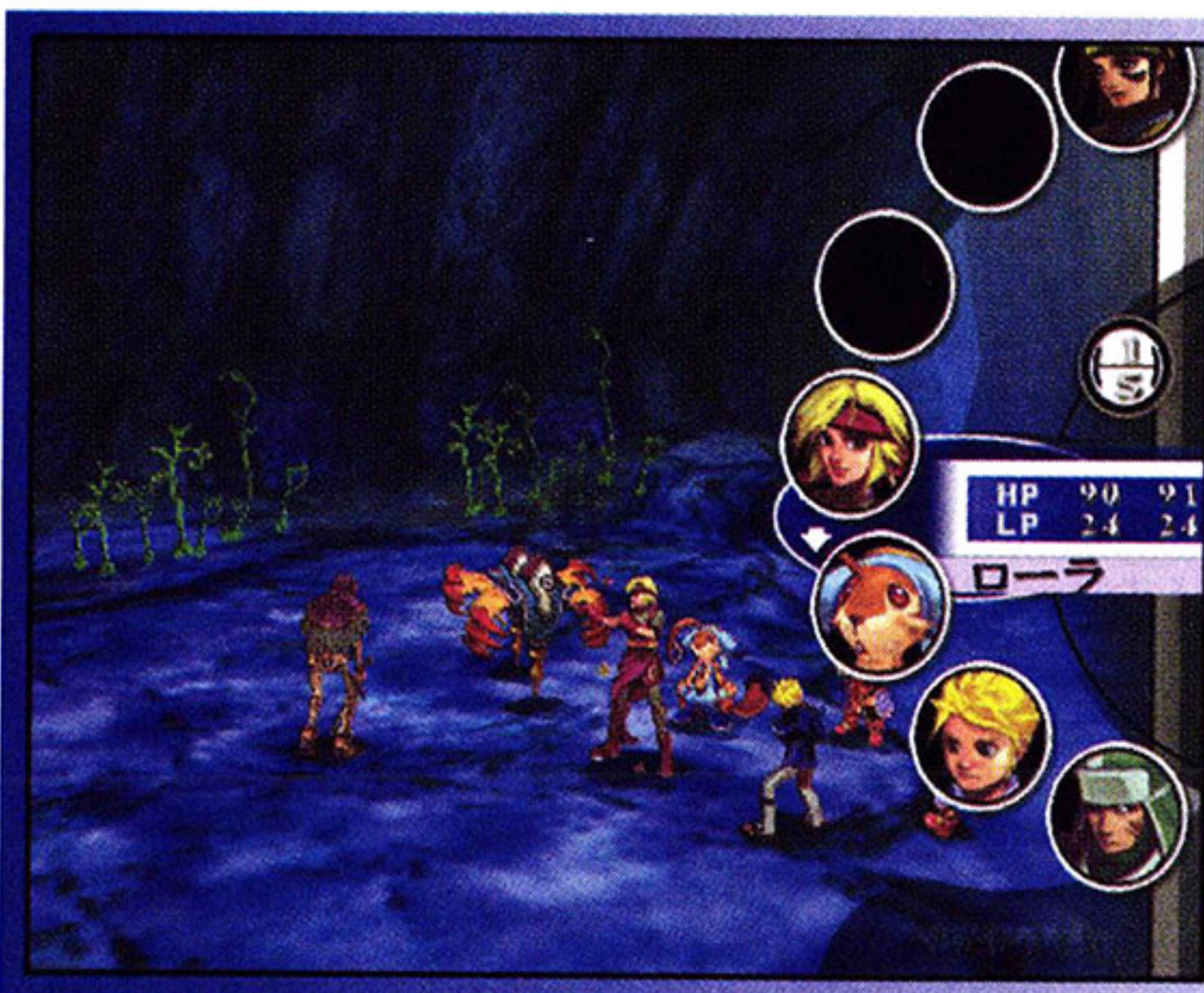
Sometimes there are spikes...



...which can be avoided if you select a circle on the reel

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER SQUARE SOFT ■ DEVELOPER SQUARE SOFT ■ RELEASE SUMMER

BATTLE: A STEP BY STEP EXPLANATION



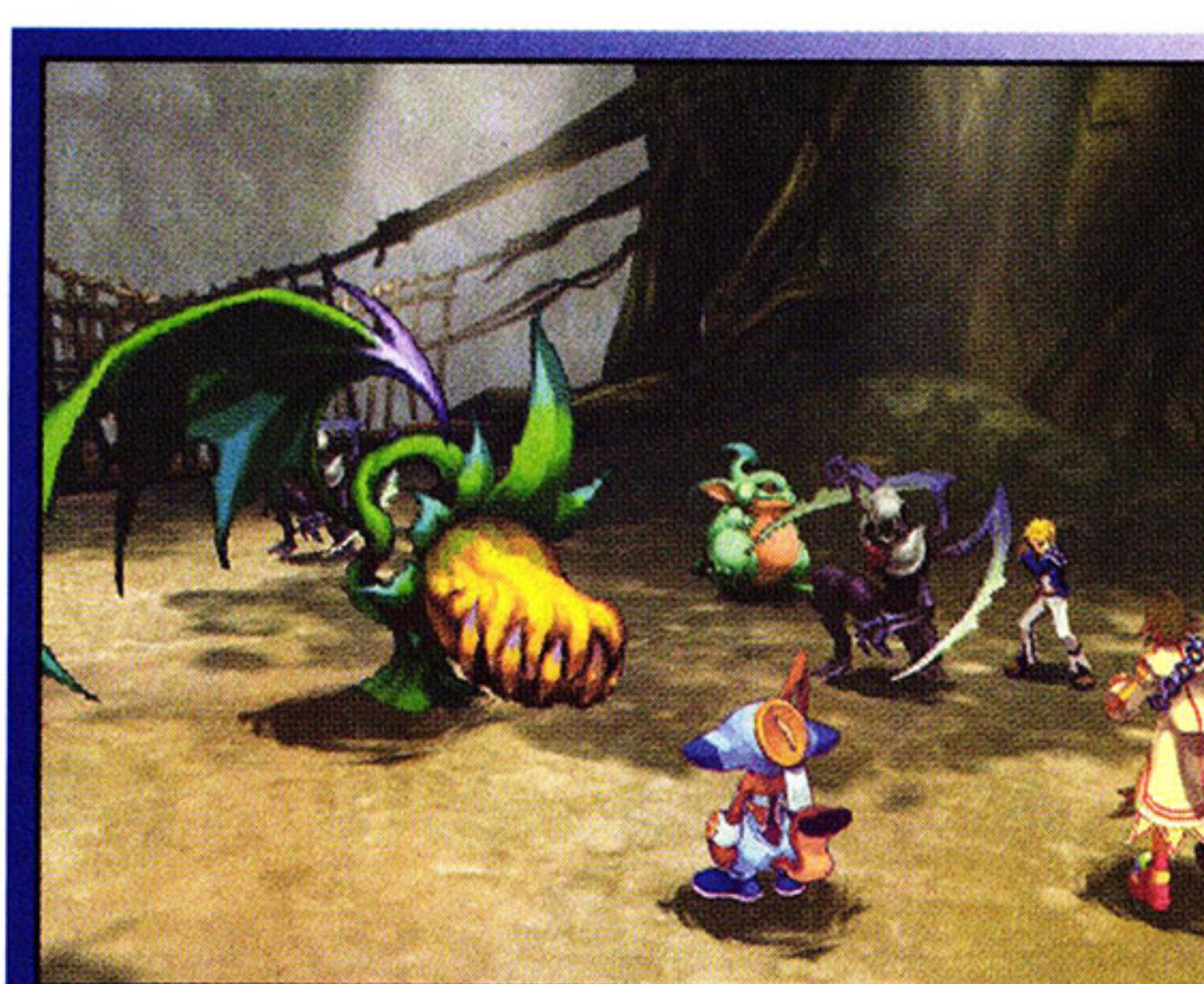
1. In combat, there are up to seven characters available. However, the rules grant you only five actions, which means that a maximum of five heroes partake in battle at once—assuming that you assign one move per character. It's possible for two members to fight; you can distribute two moves to one hero and three to another. How you divvy up the five actions (which can be magic, physical, or defensive maneuvers) is entirely up to you.



2. A slot wheel interface appears, containing icons which represent power levels. When you choose a physical attack, the majority of icons will be blue (normal), while a few are red (critical). Selecting the icon requires you to press one of two buttons; one yields a solo attack instantly, and the other puts the move on Hold status. Holding allows you to chain turns together. Since you have five moves, you have the ability to unleash a five-hit combo.



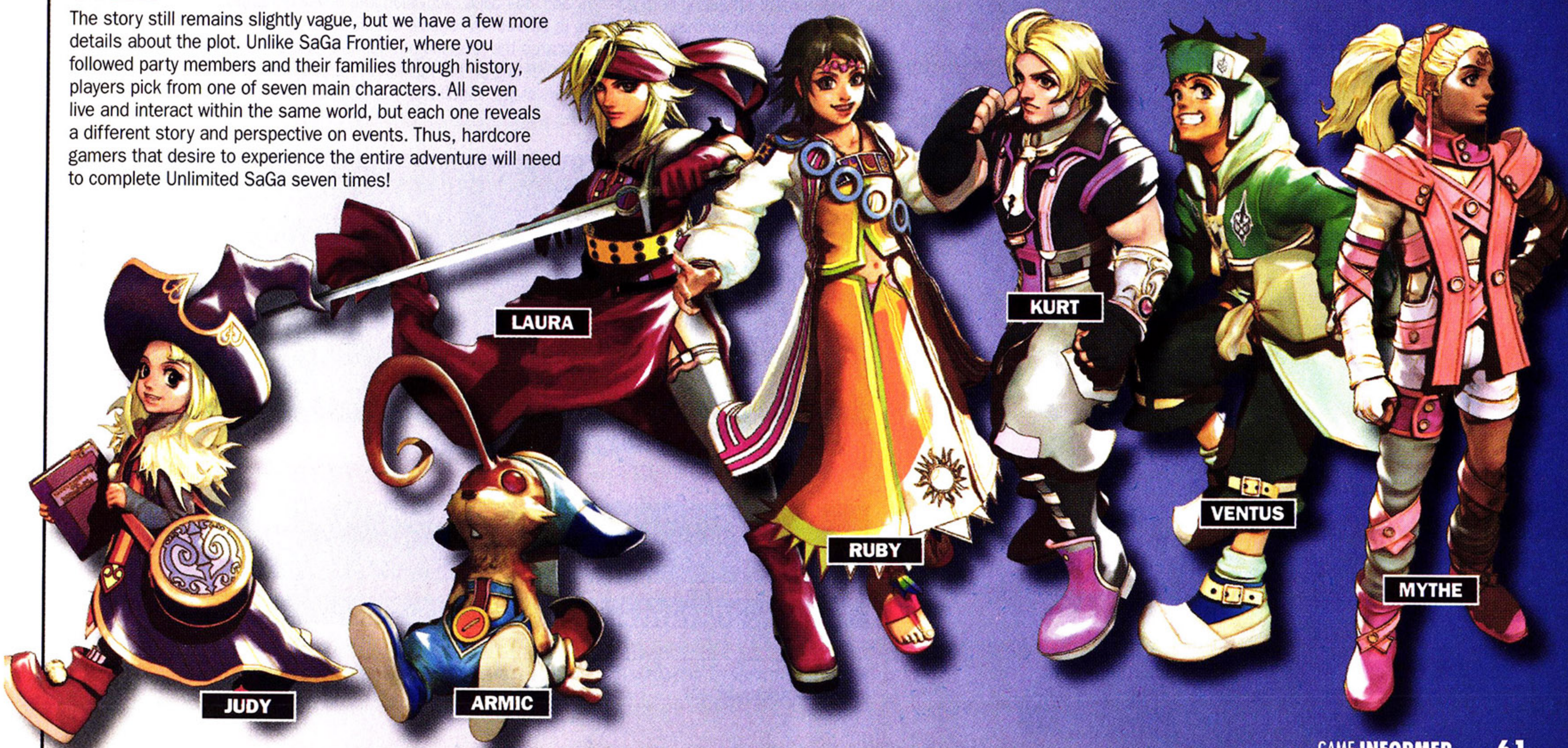
3. Next, just sit back and enjoy the show. Still, it's prudent to remain attentive, as knowing your enemy is important. For instance, if you encounter a monster and opt to combine five attacks from one character, your opponent can execute a few consecutive assaults, too. This could deal considerably more damage than necessary, especially if you merely needed to whack the creature with a few simple hits.



4. The fourth and final step marks the ending of the bout and the start of the next round—the only difference being that you have less HP (Hit Points) and LP (Life Points). Your character's HP decreases as he or she executes a special move or performs magic. The LP represents life and decreases as enemies inflict damage upon you. LP stays seemingly low throughout, but most enemies only deal a few points worth of damage.

STORY

The story still remains slightly vague, but we have a few more details about the plot. Unlike SaGa Frontier, where you followed party members and their families through history, players pick from one of seven main characters. All seven live and interact within the same world, but each one reveals a different story and perspective on events. Thus, hardcore gamers that desire to experience the entire adventure will need to complete Unlimited SaGa seven times!





CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS MAN?

If you can't, you're probably just some young little snot-nosed punk!! You kids are so dang smug, what with your fancy computers, thong underwear, and Nelly MP3s on your iPods. If you had any knowledge of life before 1990, you'd know that this is Pitfall Harry, one of the most revered video game heroes in history. In these two pages, we're going to explain not only who Pitfall Harry is, but why you should care.



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

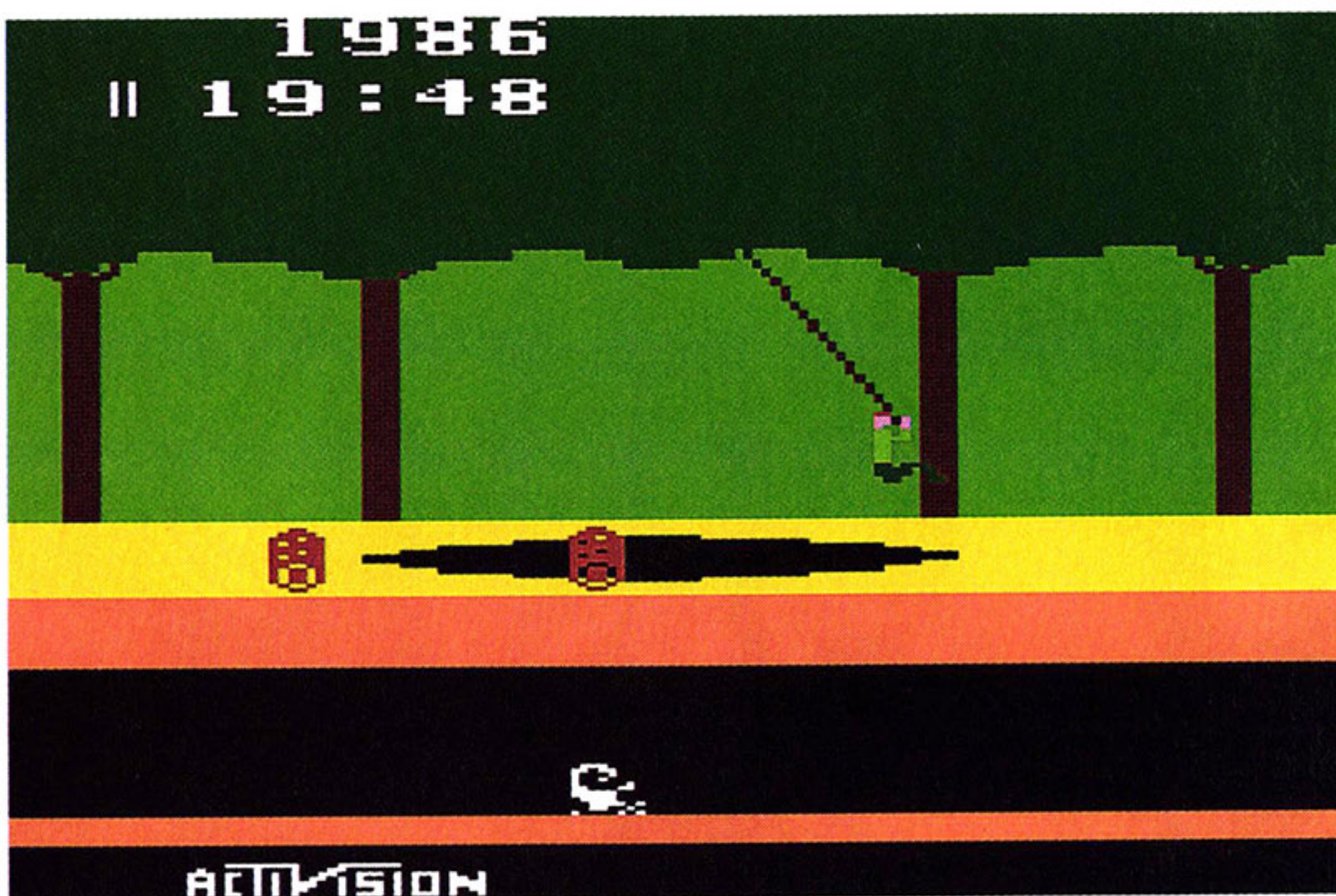
PITFALL HARRY

VERY, VERY HARRY

A TRUE ORIGINAL

Pitfall, originally released for the Atari 2600 way back in 1982, might not look like much now; but it's actually a crucial part of the evolution of gaming. Essentially, this was the first action/adventure game ever created, and featured Harry as he swung on vines; battled scorpions, crocodiles, and other jungle creatures; and uncovered ancient artifacts. Although the screen didn't scroll, the game did allow players to progress both forward and backwards through a series treacherous obstacles. In this way, its mix of exploration and action was a direct influence on both Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda.

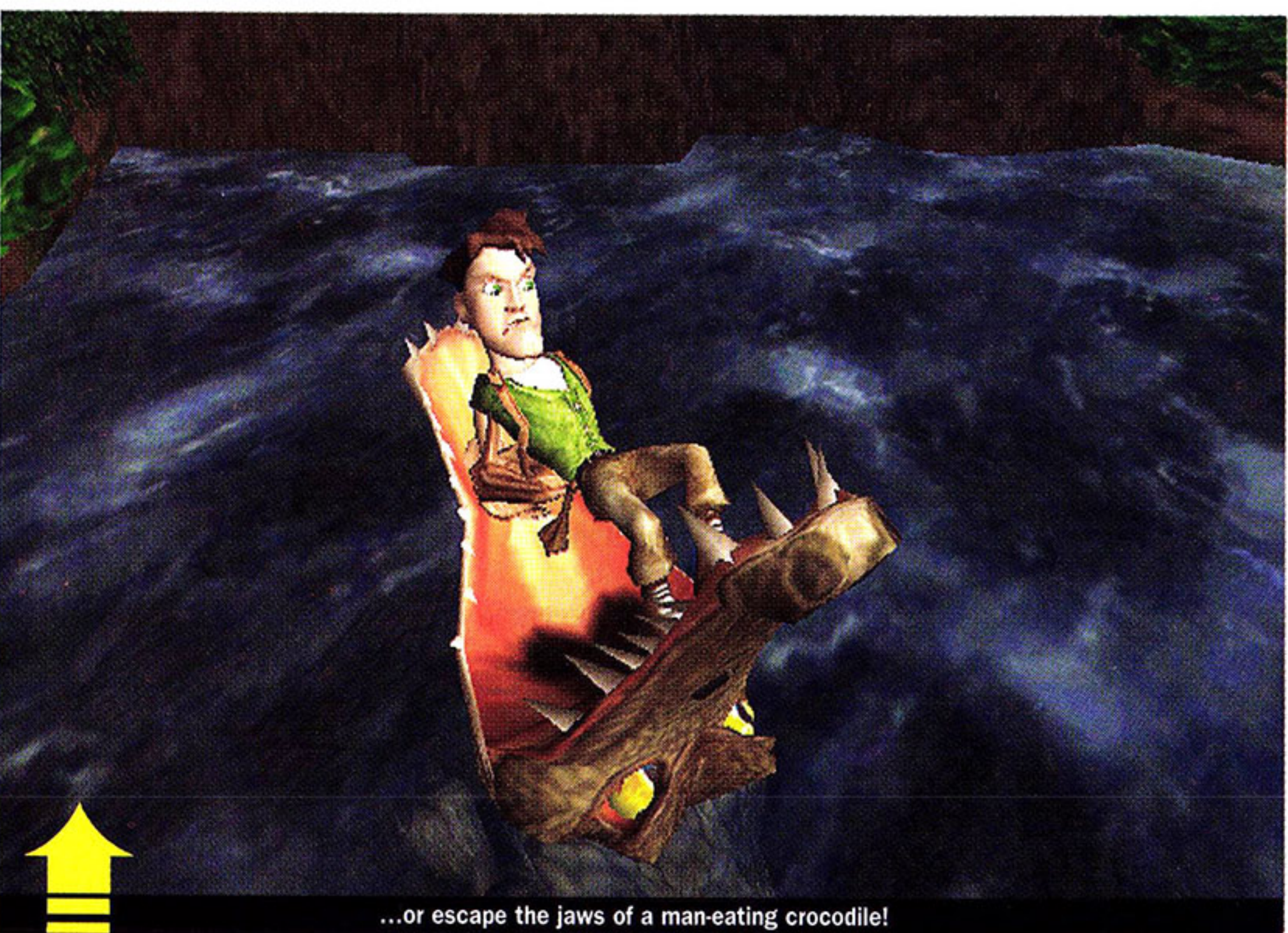
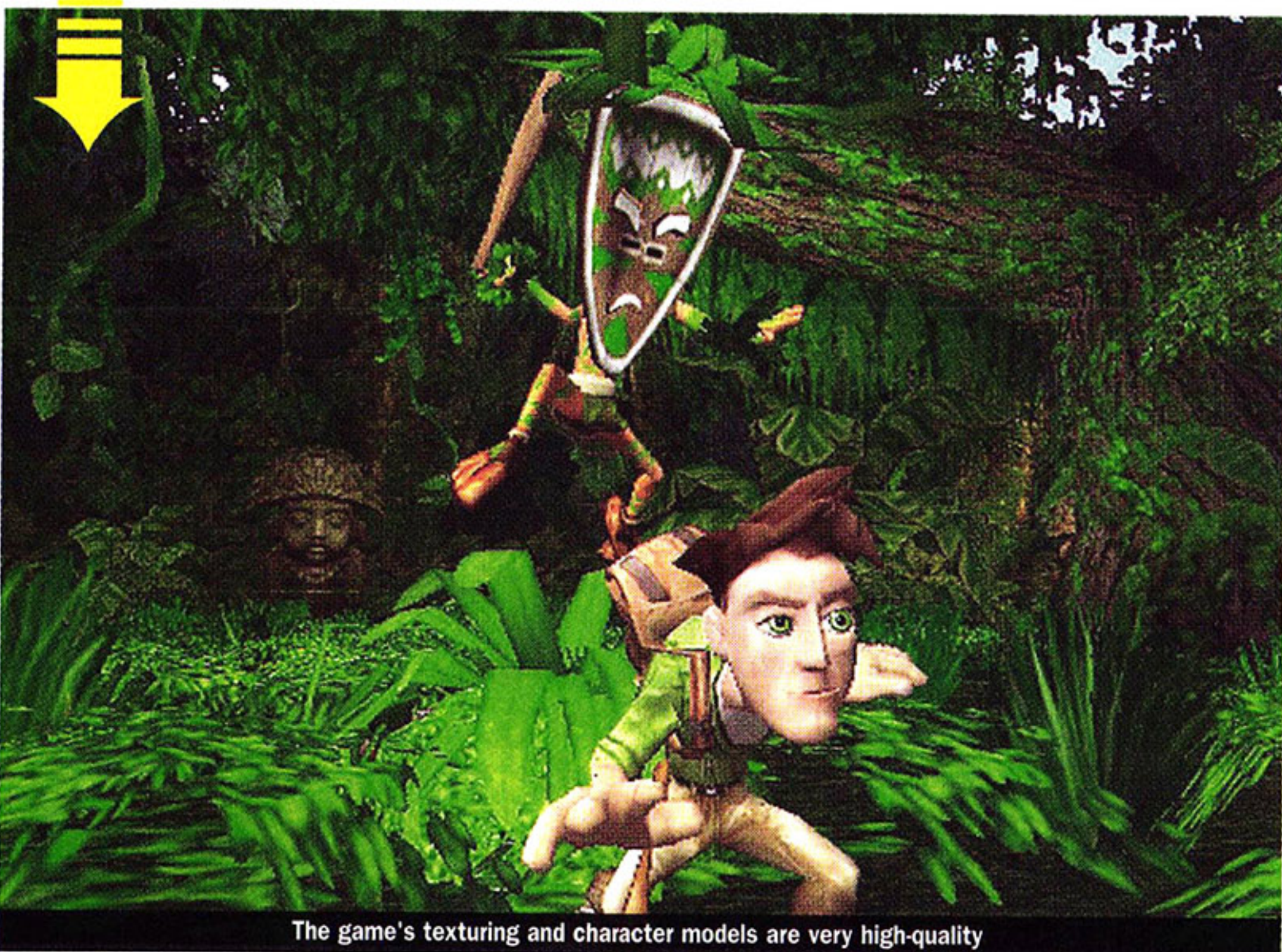
In hopes of attracting both geezers and kids alike, Activision and developer Edge of Reality (the company that aided Maxis in the recent console adaptations of the Sims) have been careful in crafting a game that captures the feel and atmosphere of the original. However, this doesn't mean that Harry is resting on his laurels. In fact, our hero has been given a dramatic facelift. Even at this early stage, Pitfall Harry exhibits a visual style that is as unique as it is breathtaking.



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** EDGE OF REALITY ■ **RELEASE** FALL

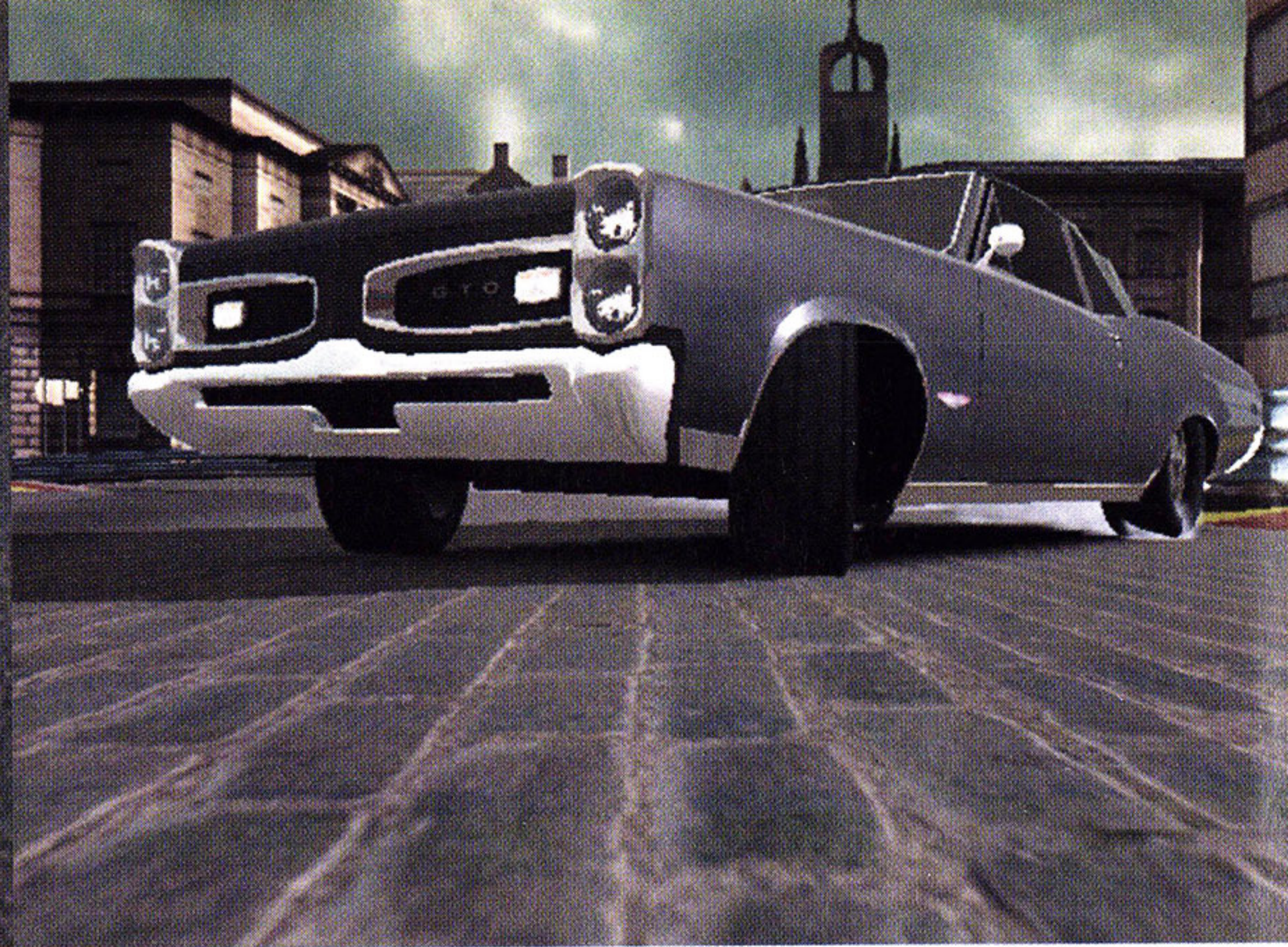
OLD-SCHOOL VIBE, NEW-SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY

As you can see, Pitfall Harry has come a long way since the early '80s, and now sports a striking new look that Activision terms a "cartoon realistic style." While the character and enemy designs are indeed outlandish, be sure to observe the level of detail and texture quality that is being realized in the game. Other cutting-edge technology being utilized in Pitfall Harry includes the Total Havok physics engine – which allows environmental objects like swinging vines and floating platforms to have a realistic weight, feel, and movement.



HARRY'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG

Although the gameplay is inspired by the classic Pitfall, Harry's repertoire of moves has been upgraded to 2003 standards through a system called "direct control." In short, this means that all of Harry's combat and acrobatic tactics are controlled with analog sticks. You'll be able to swing to and fro on a vine, wind up your sling weapon, and frantically jiggle the stick to escape the jaws of a crocodile. In the rivers, players will even use an inner tube that functions much like the arcade game Toobin', or use pickaxes to traverse icy cliffs in a tribute to Crazy Climber. Overall, the gameplay and missions (which incorporate arcade action, exploration, and puzzle solving) do a good job of adding sophistication to the original Pitfall formula.



XBOX

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

DOES IT HAVE THAT NEW CAR SMELL?



This smoking turn...



...and slide...



...will definitely earn you some Kudos

When the Xbox released it had gamers entranced over its specs and possibilities. What better ornament to go with Microsoft's new ride than Project Gotham Racing? With its assortment of slick automobiles, detailed environments, and pick-up-and-play attitude, Project Gotham was just the kind of title that Microsoft needed to enthrall the masses. It worked. Apart from Halo, Gotham was one of the few launch titles for the console that was solid. It's now sequel time for the series. The platform's landscape has changed, however. A distant second in the system wars, Microsoft is in dire need of quality software. Will Project Gotham Racing 2 come to the rescue?

First off, what's immediately reassuring about the game is that developer Bizarre Creations simply has more time and

resources to devote to the project. The team has grown to 34 members, and they are rebuilding the game's graphics and physics engines from scratch. One tangible effect of this effort is that there will be even more detail embedded within Gotham's locations, which include three new cities: Moscow, Edinburgh, and Hong Kong. Furthermore, Bizarre Creations feels that the game's balance needs to be adjusted to better blur the line between being too easy and too difficult.

Another notable change revamps the Kudos system. There will be more ways to earn points through stylish driving, and it also sounds like the developer wants to make it so compiling Kudos isn't the only way to progress in the game. Hopefully, these new tricks will involve the environments more (how

about some stunts or shortcuts?) or stretch the envelope a bit. While the original's locations were good looking, tracks were often short, and your interaction with them was minimal. Of course, Gotham is about racing cars, but Bizarre Creations itself acknowledges that it needs to go above and beyond merely adding vehicles and tracks to the original to make this sequel compelling.

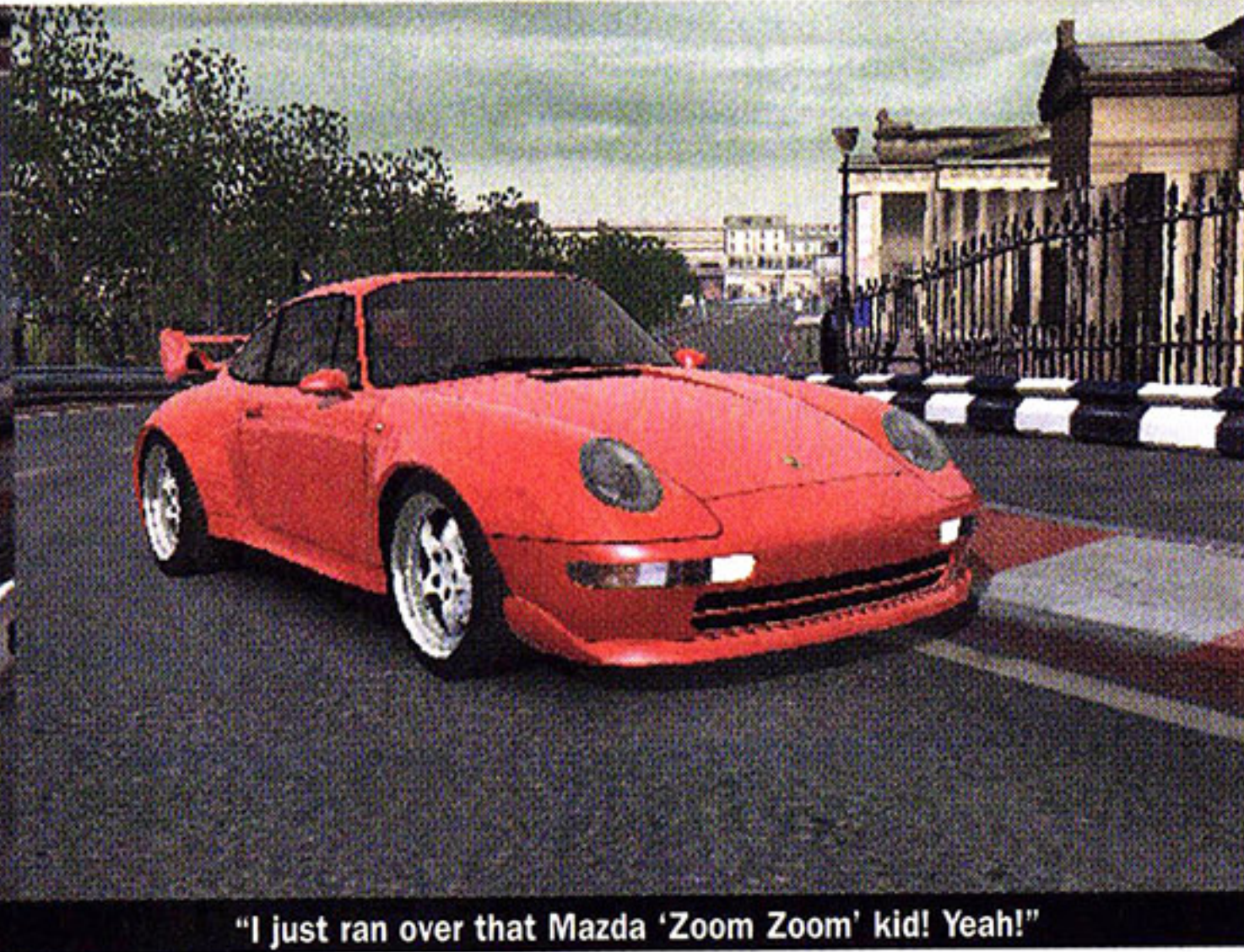
Microsoft is hoping that Xbox Live will enhance PGR 2 considerably. However, as it stands, this game is going to have to do more than just flick the online switch for it to help the console as much as its predecessor did. Luckily, with a targeted release date of early 2004, there is still plenty of time to tinker under Gotham's hood.



"Me blue car. Me like Mobil 1 on the rocks."



Old autos like this GTO have put the game's car count at over 50



"I just ran over that Mazda 'Zoom Zoom' kid! Yeah!"



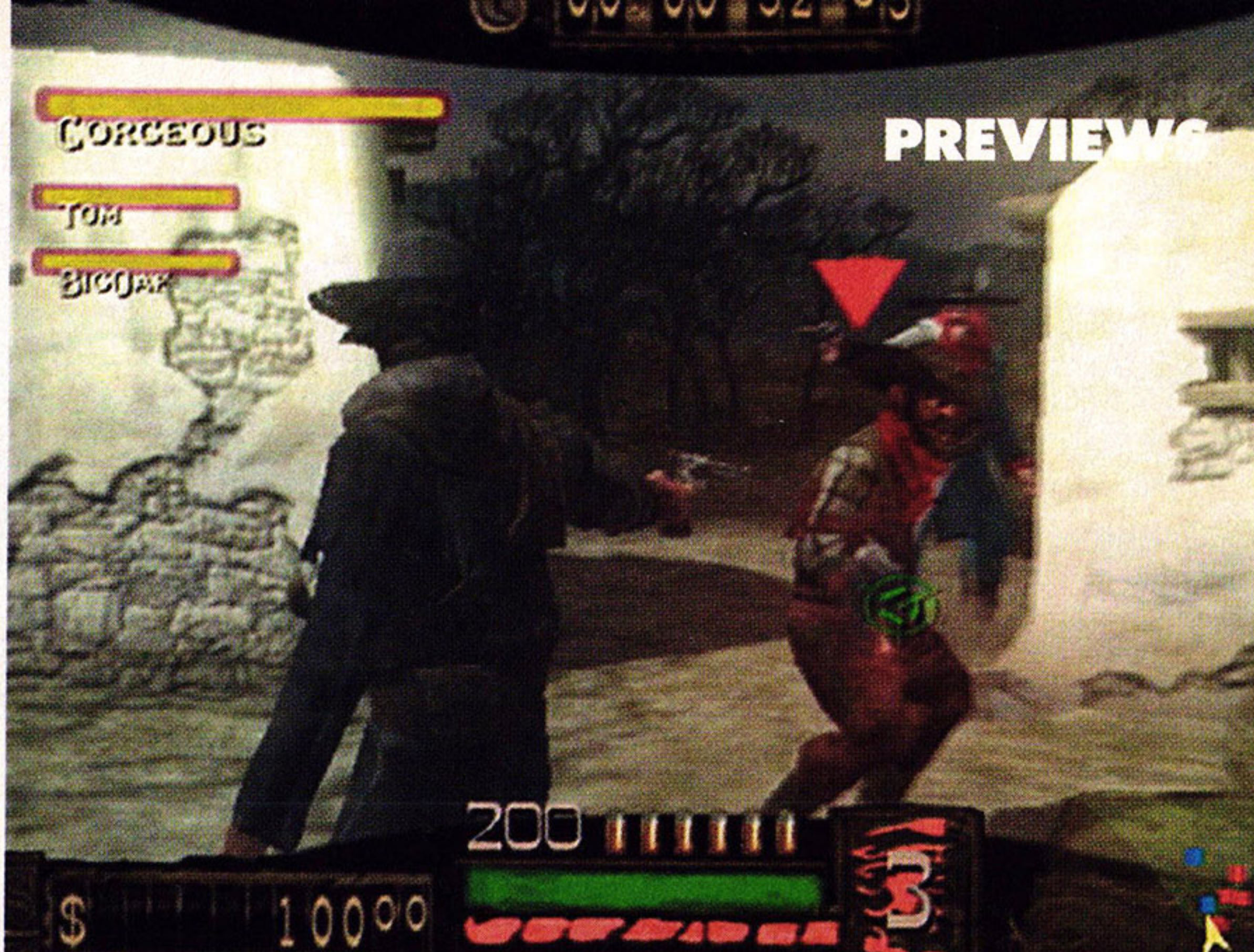
Developer Bizarre Creations wants to include even more detail



Let's hope Porsche doesn't put the kibosh on vehicle damage



There aren't many old guys who'd do this to their Mercedes



PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2

RED DEAD REVOLVER

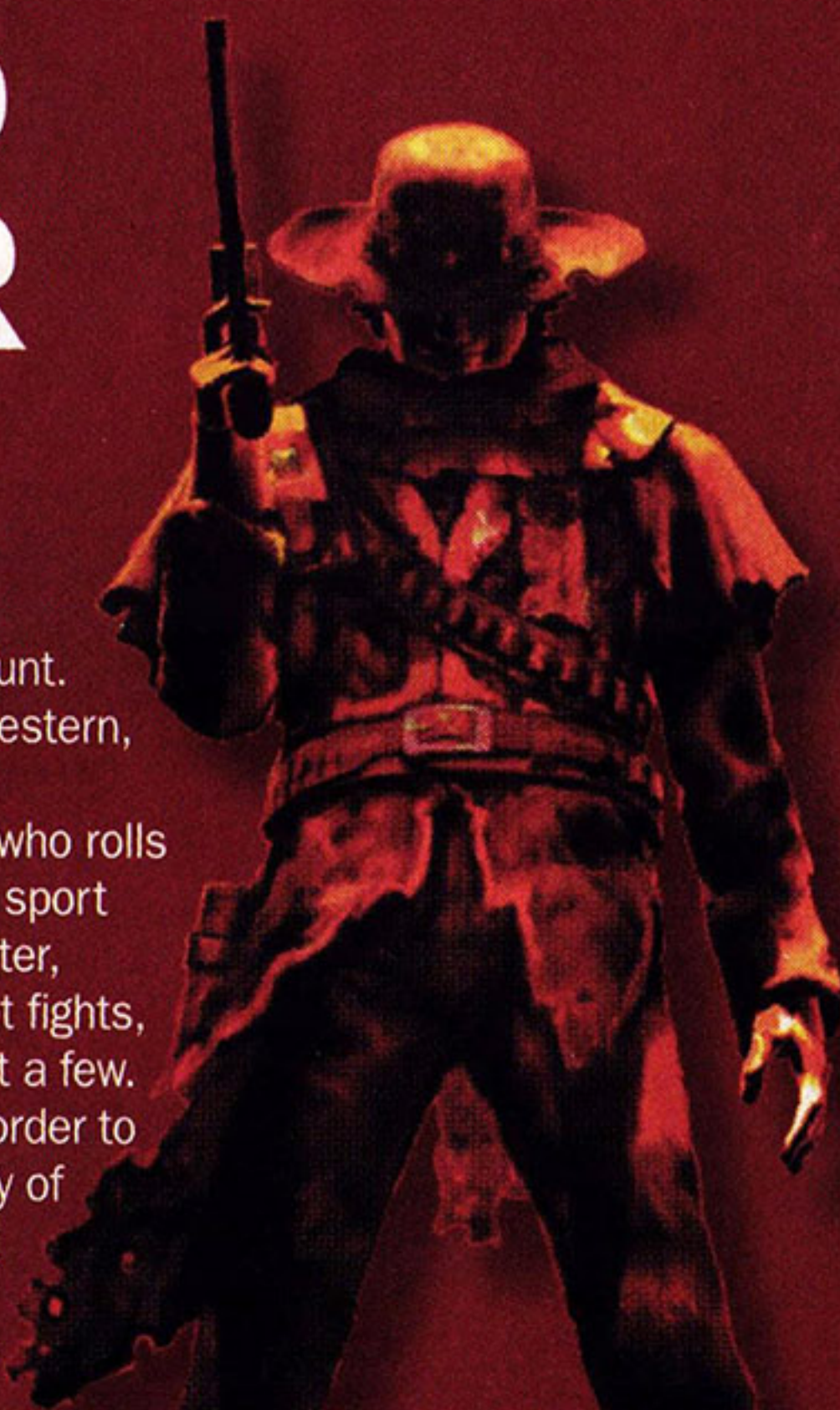
HI HO RED!

Although westerns pervade the Hollywood scene, they've been few and far between in the video game industry; and no, *Rising Zan* doesn't count. Capcom hopes to start a new trend with its spaghetti western, *Red Dead Revolver*.

The game stars a mysterious gunslinger named Red, who rolls into Tombstone one day ready to rid the town of all who sport those nefarious black hats. As a law-abiding bounty hunter, players will be thrust into a number of scenarios – street fights, train robberies, stand-offs, and horseback riding are just a few.

The gameplay incorporates a variety of mechanics in order to fulfill the needs of the unique scenarios, but the majority of the game is built around one idea: Red blasting away at his enemies. While doing that, he can target any body part, which means you can go for the kill or have mercy on an enemy by disabling his arms. If you spare the right people, you can recruit them to help you in your quest. Red is also capable of unleashing a super attack, which players earn by defeating bosses. In one such move, Red quickly rattles off multiple bullets on a target, turning him into a bloody pulp!

Other interesting features include numerous weapons, melee attacks, a deathmatch mode, and music composed by Ennio Morricone – famed creator of scores for such classics as *A Fistfull of Dollars* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.



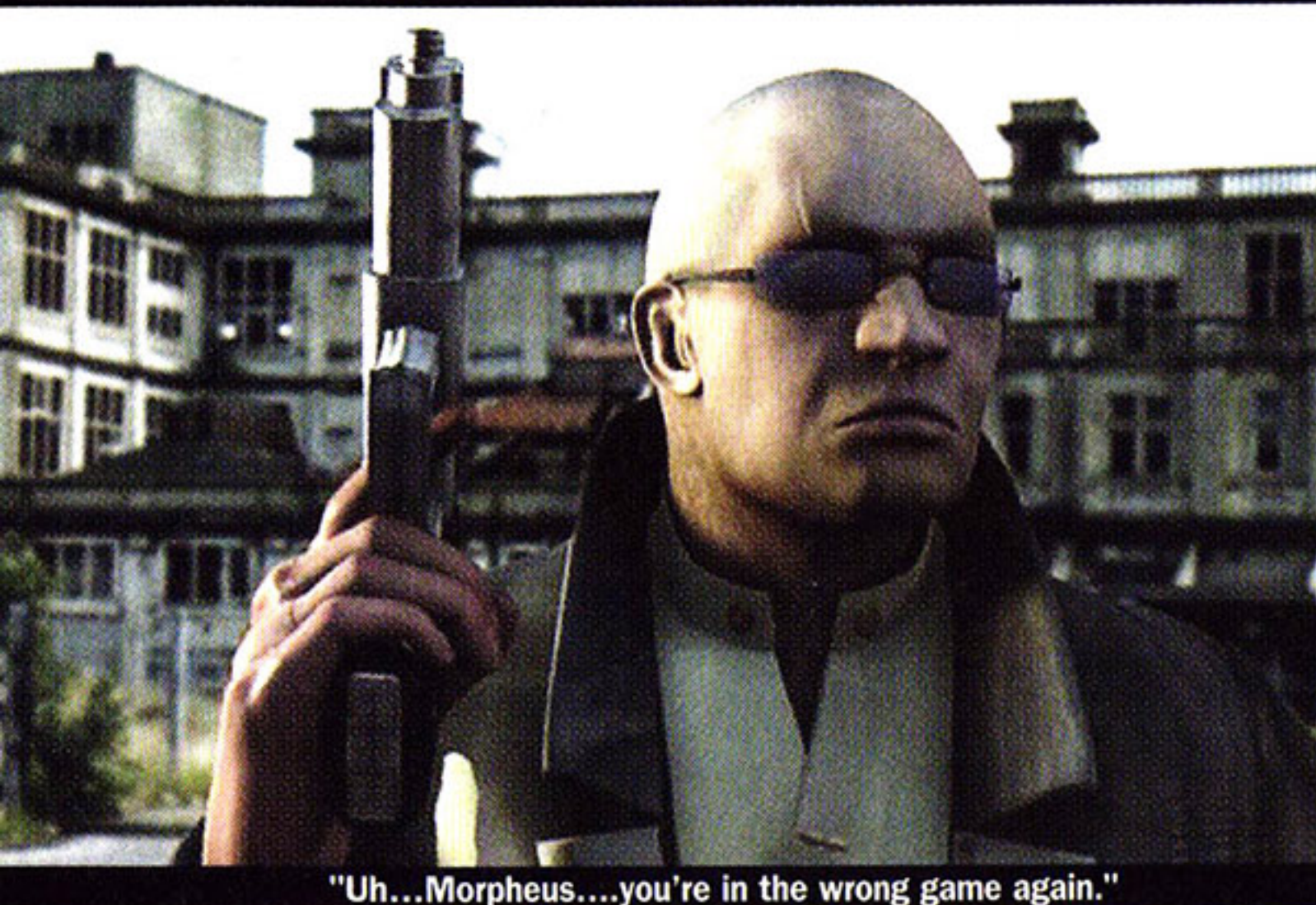
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM/ANGEL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** SUMMER 2003



One can only dream of the level of damage that can be exacted by a public bus



"Watermelons suck!"



"Uh...Morpheus....you're in the wrong game again."

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

DRIVER 3

GRAND THEFT NOT-O

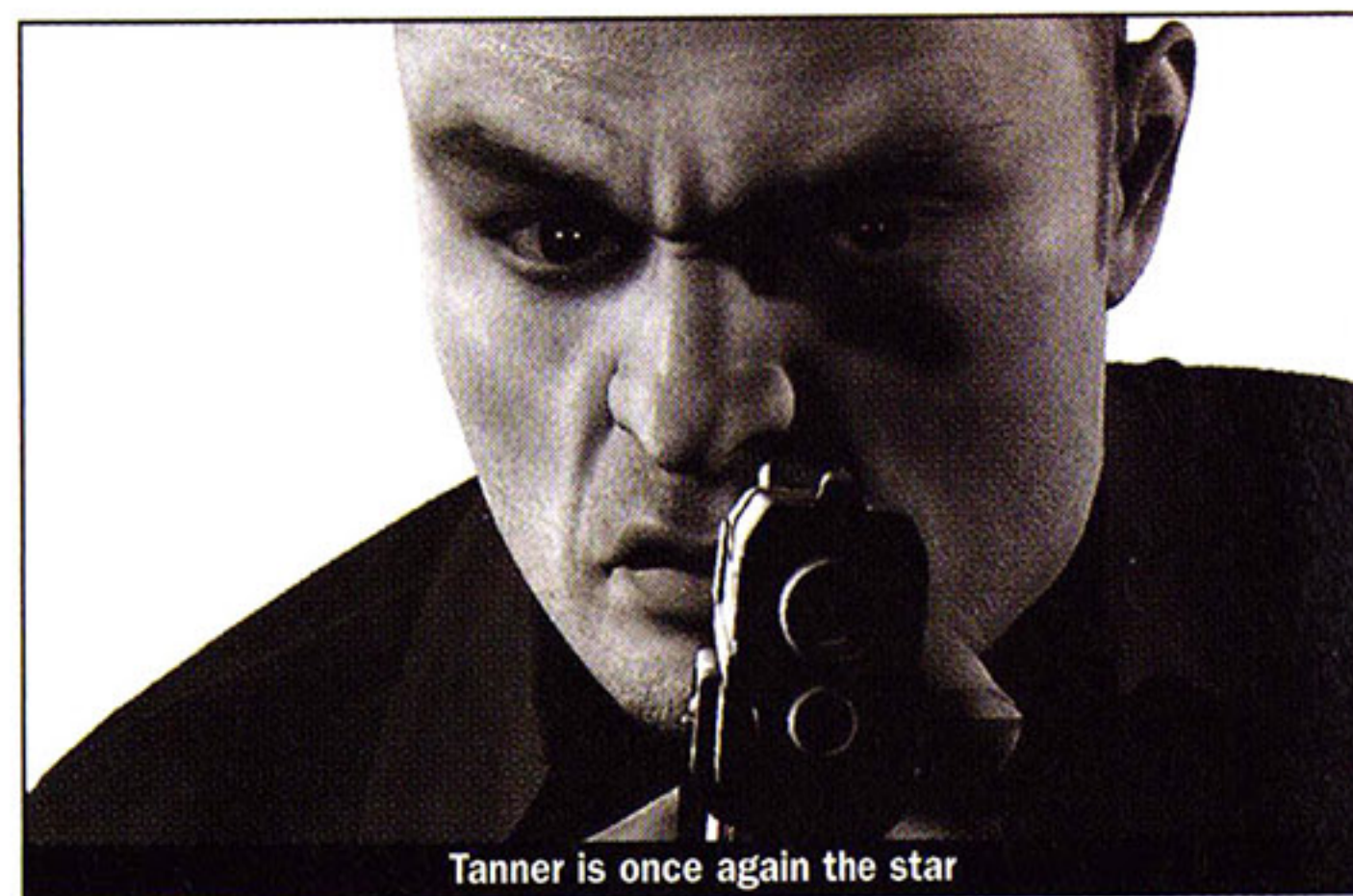
Rather than copying the Grand Theft Auto formula as one might expect, developer Reflections is sticking to the traditional Driver formula – where high-speed chases through urban sprawls predominately outweigh foot-oriented action. That's not to say that running and gunning won't play a significant role. In Driver 2, Tanner's interaction with the world around him was extremely limited. This time around, players will run headlong into complex missions created solely around this gameplay element. Tanner will be able to enter buildings, mow down countless adversaries, and complete numerous missions without having to be behind the wheel. We have yet to see this firsthand, however.

Of course, the amount of time that you spend on foot is dwarfed by the time you spend in cars. As the name of the game implies, Reflections has gone out of its way to ensure that the driving element is second to none. The realism that is included in this area goes well beyond anything seen in a game. Trucks can jackknife; baskets of

fruit can be showered upon onlookers; and yes, pedestrians can finally be run down and sent sailing into the air. Players will even stumble upon missions that require the jacking of boats.

Instead of granting players freedom to tool around the

environments and wreak havoc upon the populace, Driver 3's mission structure is designed in a linear fashion – much like Sony's The Getaway. Once a mission is completed, you'll instantaneously move onto the next one. While this seems like a poor choice on Reflections' part, the game will prove to be exceptionally long as the adventure spans across photo-realistic



Tanner is once again the star

recreations of Miami; Istanbul, Turkey; and Nice, France.

In a world obsessed with Grand Theft Auto, Driver 3 will definitely be on the tip of everyone's tongue, and will surely be under the microscope when it releases this November for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, and PC. We'll simply have to wait to see if it has the horsepower to dethrone Rockstar's king.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES ■ DEVELOPER REFLECTIONS ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER



The environments are filled with narrow, garbage-strewn alleyways



The game will take place in three distinctly different cities



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

SPLASHDOWN 2

MORE THAN A SPLASH OF BRILLIANCE

With the original Splashdown, Rainbow Studios showed just how realistic a watercraft racing game could be. For the sequel, the company is blowing out this premise to massive proportions. From courses to modes to secrets, this title looks to possess the skills and thrills to please any gamer's tastes.

There are more modes in here than a plumber's got pliers. The one that will get the bulk of attention – and for good reason – is the huge outdoor courses. These stages are chock-full of interaction and cinematic sequences. "That's really where we're pouring our creativity into," said Jordan Itkowitz, Splashdown 2's co-designer and writer. He went on to describe one such level, called Blackwater Castle. Its landscape features a grimy village, haunted mansion, forest, and cemetery. In the first lap, you bust through a stained glass window in the mansion, which unleashes a horde of ghosts that wreak havoc on the village's citizens. In lap two, the mob marches through the forest, wielding pitchforks and torches on their way to setting the mansion ablaze – which occurs in the third lap. Flaming timbers threaten to crush you as you traverse through the castle. This type of narrative progression will occur in each of the stages. Triggered events can alter your path, open up new areas, and just give you something cool to watch as you speed by.

Other modes include a 12-track, air-grabbing indoor circuit; a Freestyle mode where you get your trick on; an expanded version of the Countdown balloon-popping mode; and Technical

Time Trials, which does away with stunts and the performance meter and gives you short, tight courses to test your skill. Itkowitz explains, "We really are trying to present experiences for basically every type of racing fan down the line."

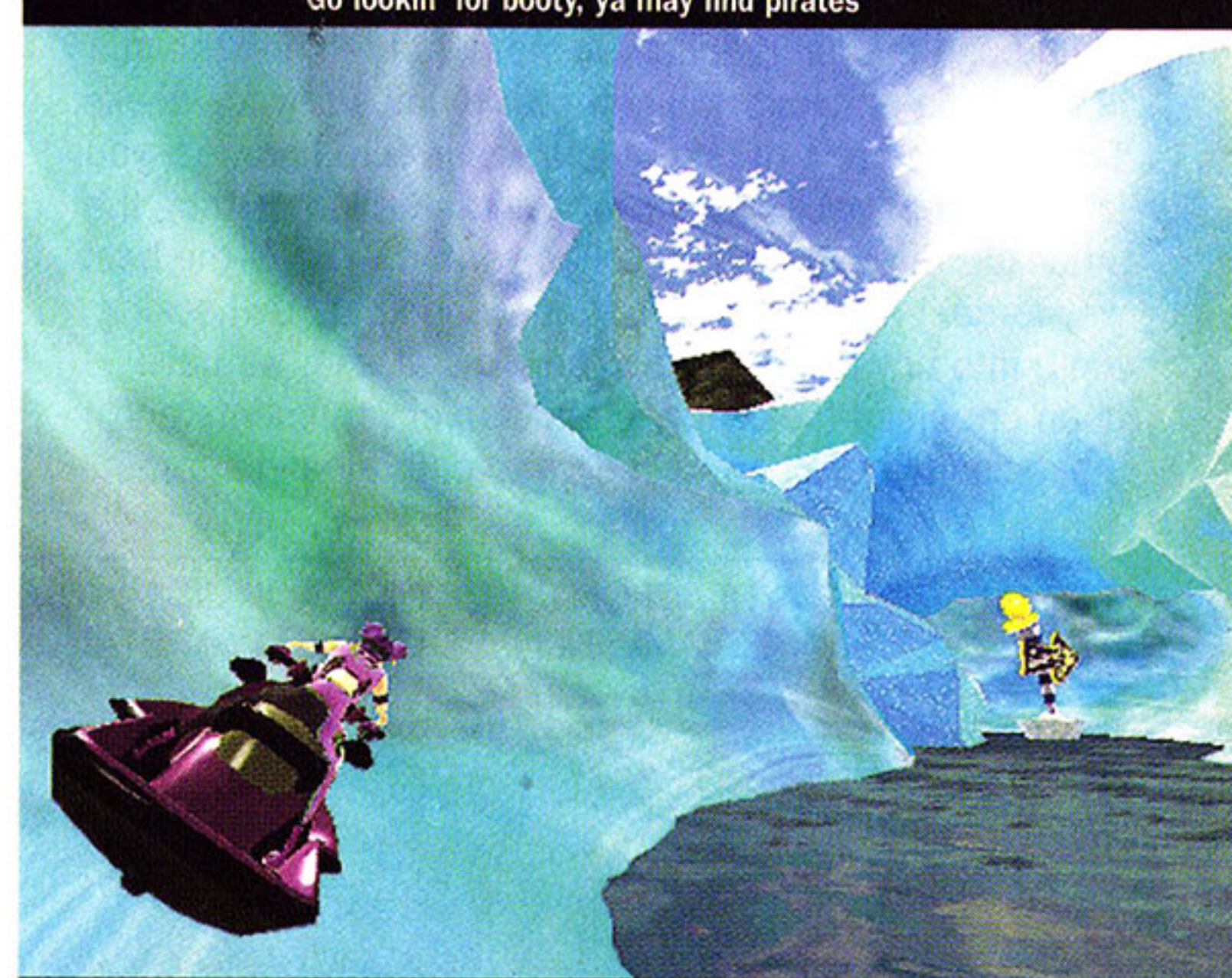
The trick system has been heavily expanded since the original Splashdown. There are three times the stunts (75 as opposed to 25), separated into tier one, tier two, and tier three classes. These can be linked together or combined with new physics-based, vehicle tricks such as barrel rolls and inverts. Putting things into perspective, Itkowitz says, "If the first game's tricks were on steroids, these are on crack!"

Splashdown 2's art style has changed quite drastically, which complements the over-the-top tone that Rainbow is shooting for. Featuring a lush color palette and exaggerated shapes, it sometimes resembles an action/platformer more than a realistic racer. Don't let this fact make you think this game will be a cakewalk, however. "When you play the courses and see the experience that we're presenting, I don't think it's going to be construed as kid-like," remarks Itkowitz.

We haven't even begun to tell you about the larger waves, creative rider personalities, licensed music, or sea of unlockables. There's just not enough room to go into how incredibly deep this game will be. Itkowitz says Rainbow's goal is to "give people their \$50's worth." If these lofty enhancements come to fruition, Rainbow and THQ are going to be getting that \$50 from a lot of gamers this summer.

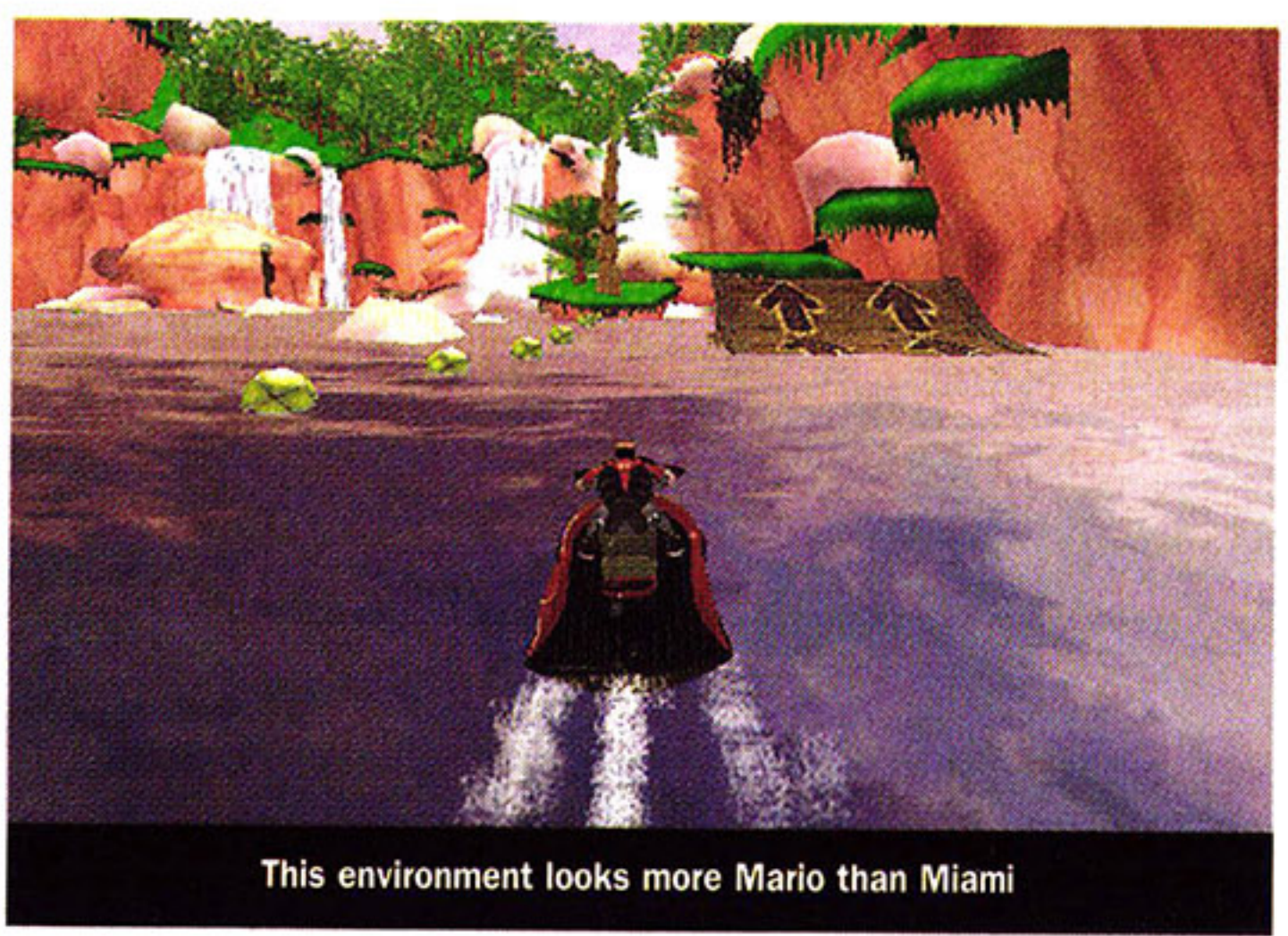


Go lookin' for booty, ya may find pirates

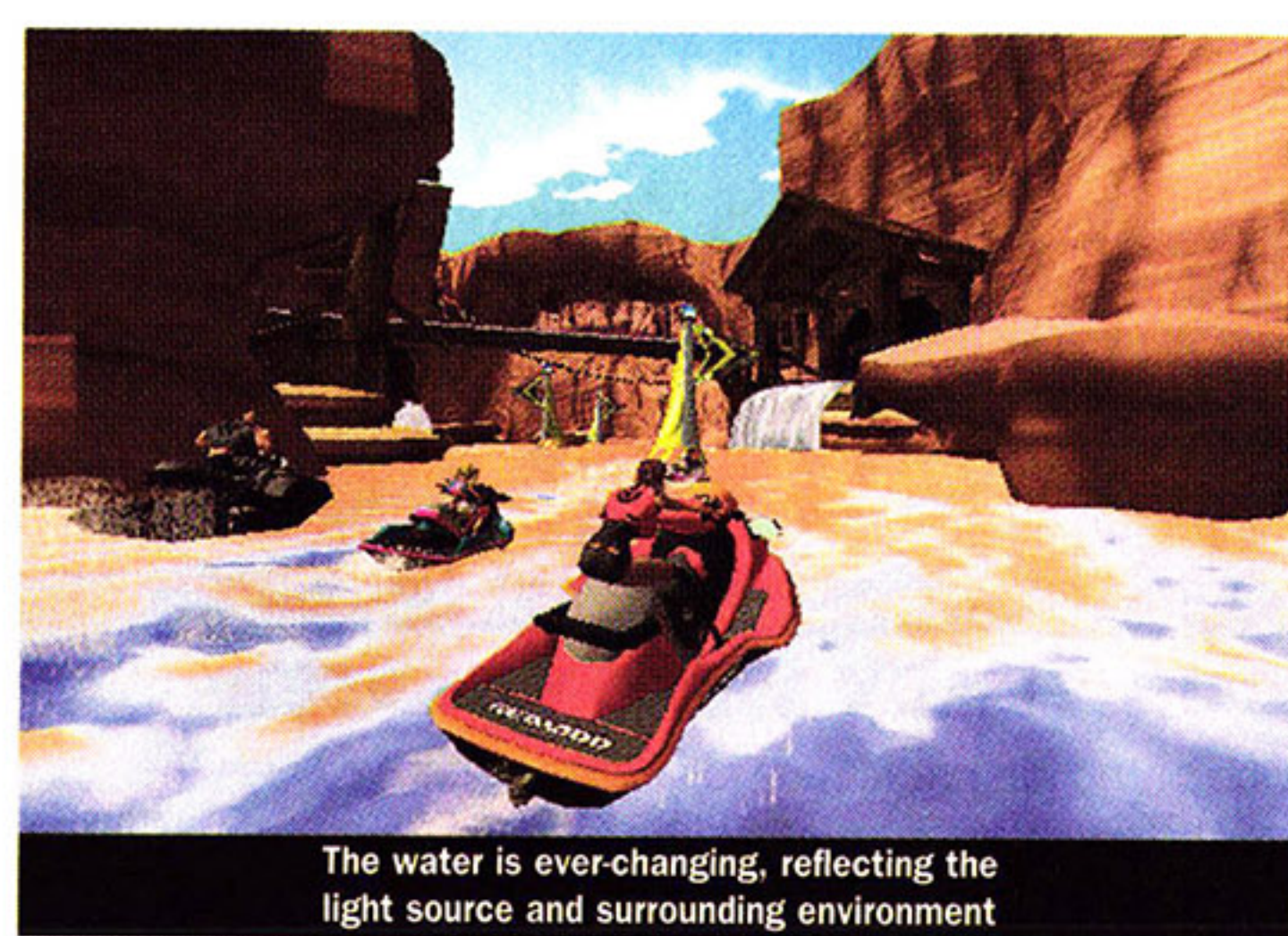


You can actually ride up on these icy borders

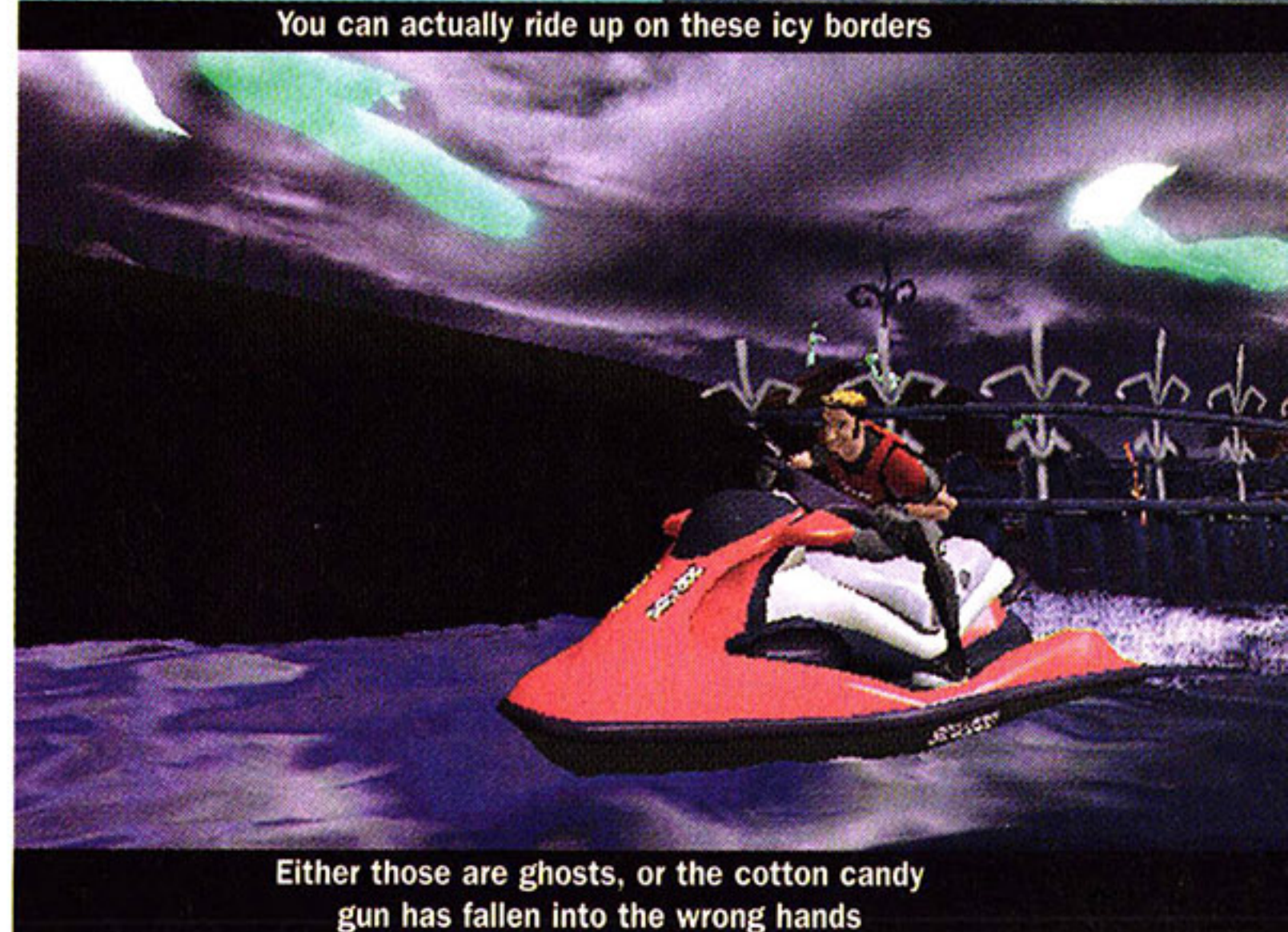
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** RAINBOW STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE



This environment looks more Mario than Miami



The water is ever-changing, reflecting the light source and surrounding environment



Either those are ghosts, or the cotton candy gun has fallen into the wrong hands



BARLTOK
PREVIEWS



AKIO

SYNZIA

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HEROES

I WISH I WAS A BRAWLER

If something ain't broke, don't fix it. Seeing the success Snowblind Studios had with its isometric D&D brawler, Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, Infogrames is poised to release a variation on that theme. Dubbed Dungeons & Dragons Heroes, all of the things you loved about Dark Alliance are in Heroes, as well as a number of additions and improvements.

Although the game resembles others of its ilk, the story is intriguing and sure to keep your thumbs raw for weeks. Taking on the role of one of four resurrected heroes, your job is to beat back an ancient evil, as well as putting the smackdown on recently hatched vermin. What's the best way to deal with enemies both new and old? By hacking them into tiny pieces, of course. To that end, we have been promised that the game's lush environments and pulse-pounding action will serve to enthrall and interest.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES
■ **DEVELOPER** INFOGRAMES HUNT VALLEY ■ **RELEASE** FALL



Treading where mortals dare not, and looking good doing it



This player's Magic Missile spell seems to have been leveled a couple of times



You'll know when you've successfully used a feat

THE RULES RULE

Every Dungeons & Dragons geek knows that the rules make the game. Infogrames has stated that the skills, feats, and character building system is "inspired by the 3rd Edition rule set." With that in mind, the developers have crafted a unique upgrade system for your weapons that uses a toggle-based Planar Gem gimmick for adding enhancements

to your instrument of choice; as well as a permanent Rune Stone system that will improve your base weapon directly. Additionally, players will be able to map common actions such as attacks, feats, skills, and spells to controller buttons for smoother play and easier kills.



"Everyone ready? It's smashin' time!"

DON'T PLAY WITH YOURSELF

One of the best features Dark Alliance enjoyed was the ability to play with a friend simultaneously. The Hunt Valley team knows this is something that people are looking for, and you're not going to be disappointed. You and three



Working together will ensure that everyone survives dangerous encounters

of the people you pay every week to be your friends can get together and play at the same time, all with different characters. Not too shabby.



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

I, GLADIATOR

JOEY, DO YOU LIKE GAMES ABOUT GLADIATORS?

Gladiators are among the most enigmatic of the great heroes of ancient times. For example, ponder this paradox: Gladiators wear short skirts, yet are masculine as can be. What's more, they wear sandals and smell bad, but are not hippies. Quite perplexing, to say the least. A few years ago, following disagreeable Aussie Russell Crowe's acclaimed performance in *Gladiator*, the Roman empire was suddenly the toast of American pop culture. Unfortunately for video game fans, all the media hype got us was *Circus Maximus* – a mediocre chariot racing title that passed through stores without much notice.

Acclaim Studios Manchester, a newly formed unit created from the ashes of defunct English development house Software Creations, is here to set things right with *I, Gladiator* – a graphically stunning epic that should capture all the savage majesty of the Roman era. The game tells the tale of Invictus Thrax. This noble gladiator seeks to bring order to the streets of Rome, which have been devastated by the evil Emperor Aruntius, a villain who has seized power after the tragic death of the popular Emperor Trajan.

Steve Perry, the game's executive producer, says the team is attempting to bring the historical time period to life. "The attraction [for us] is including both the historical reality and the mythological aspects of the time. [The heroes and villains] are based on real characters of the period, as is the

mythology, and a part of the game is set in the streets of ancient Rome and the Coliseum. Many of the other human enemies in the game are also based on real participants in the Gladiatorial Games. A representation of the Siege of Troy is included, as well as missions set in mythological environments, which the Romans believed were real."

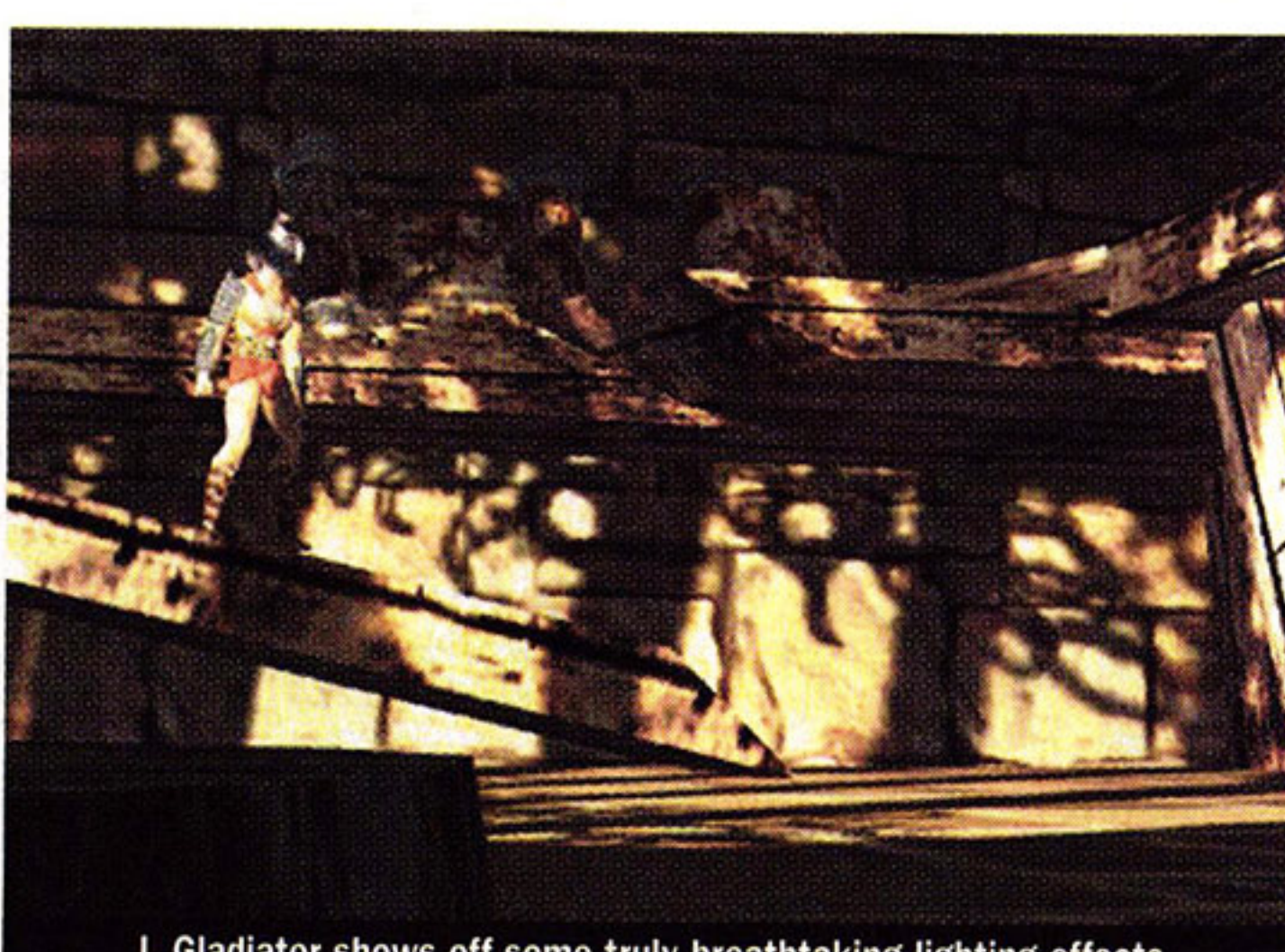
Upon entering the game, players will come into a large Roman environment that functions as a hub of sorts. From here, you'll partake in all manner of activities; from trekking through caverns and mythical environments to smiting all comers with a variety of wicked implements. Perry says that, while the game is primarily combat-oriented, approximately 30 percent of the experience will involve exploration, puzzle solving, and other tasks. Also, there are a number of boss battles which are promised to be quite amazing.

We'll have to wait to see how it plays, but these screenshots show off a game that has the graphical power it takes to be a real contender. Especially noteworthy are the lighting effects, which are the result of several new software tools that have allowed the team to implement a striking, cinematic look. The camera system has also been given special attention, as it's going to have to keep up with a fighting engine that will allow players to take on multiple opponents at one time.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS MANCHESTER
 ■ **RELEASE** FALL



"Bow before my shapely thighs!!"



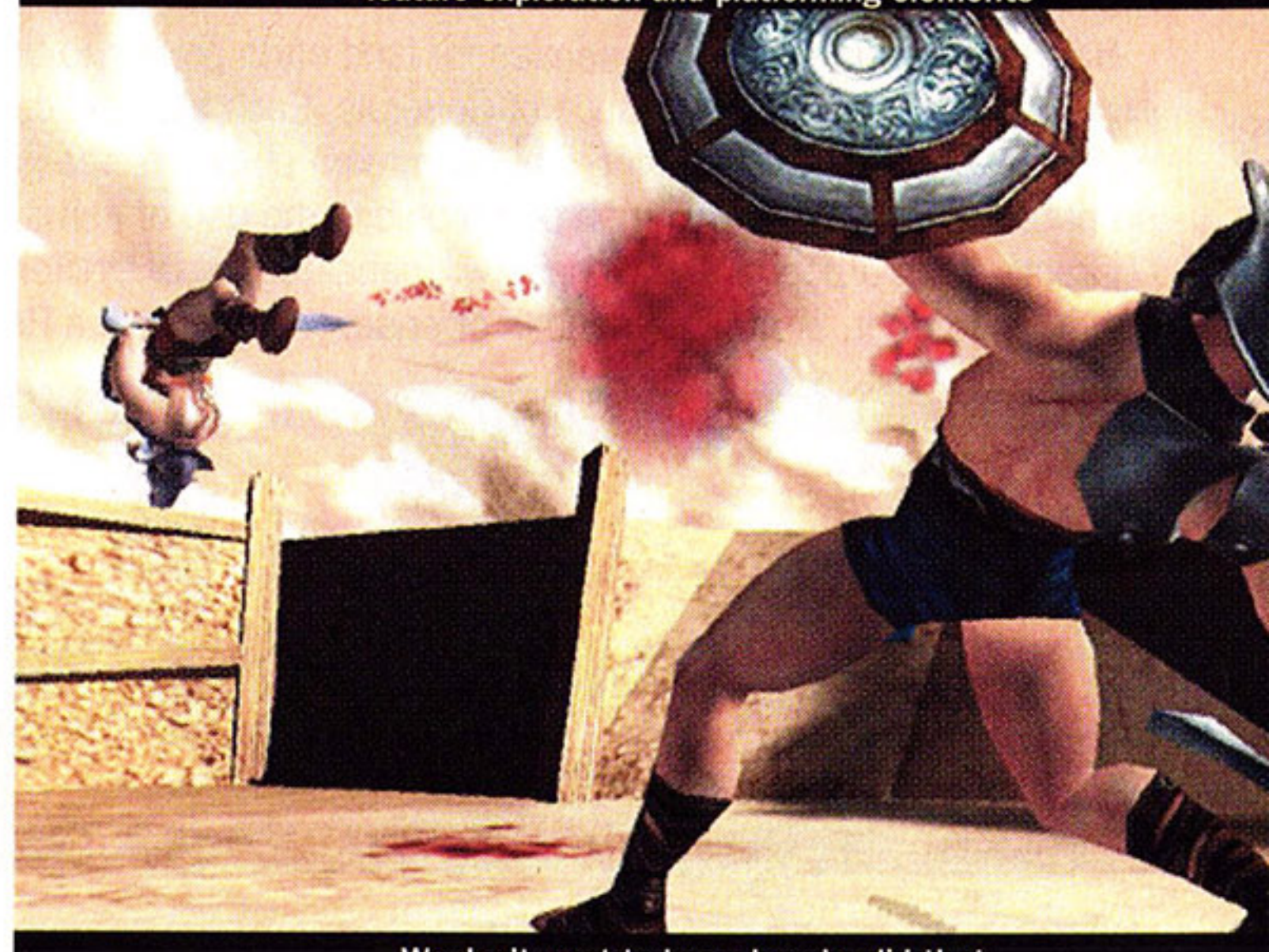
I, Gladiator shows off some truly breathtaking lighting effects



You'll be able to use a wide array of Roman weapons during battles

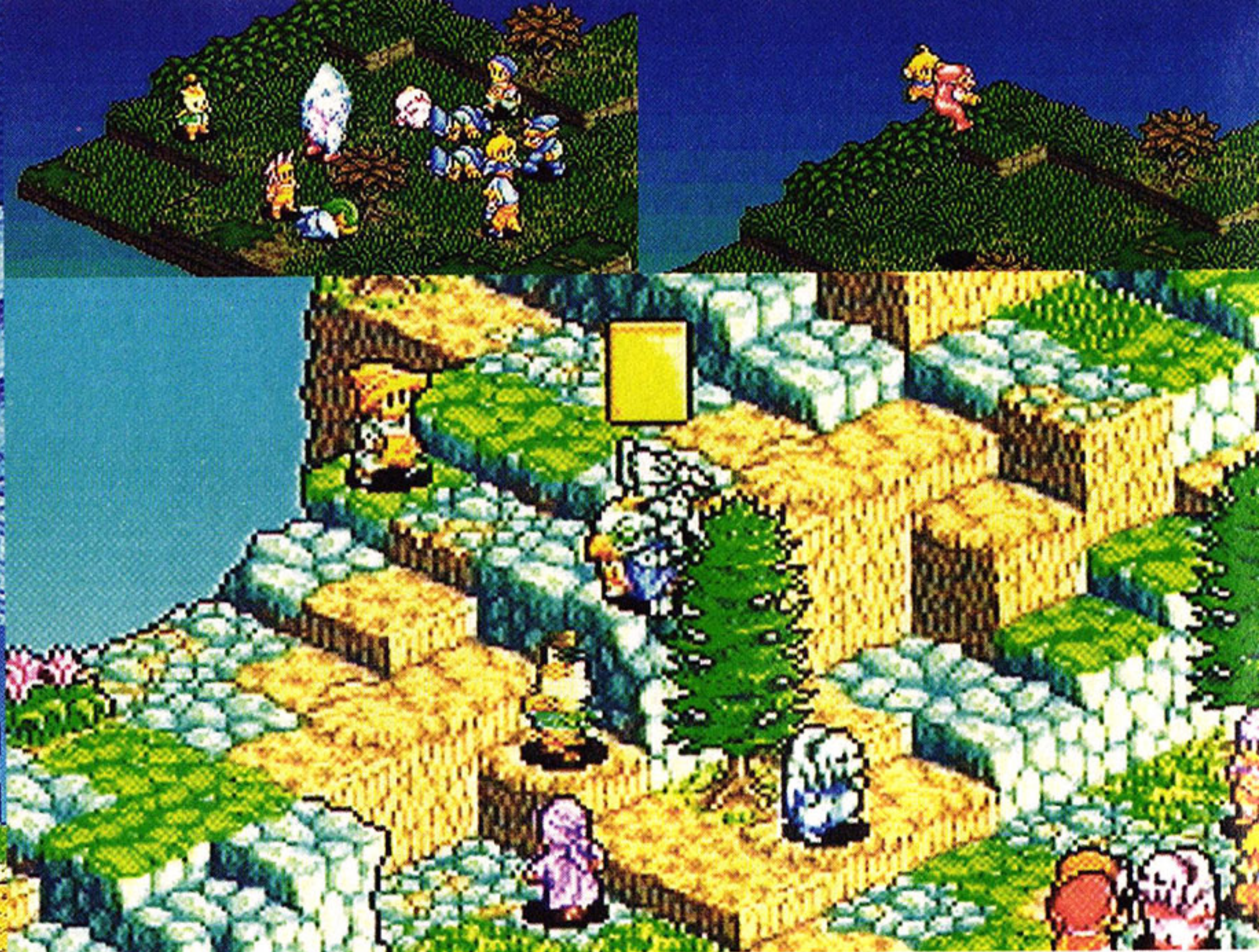


In addition to the action in the coliseums, some levels feature exploration and platforming elements



We don't want to know how he did that

PREVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

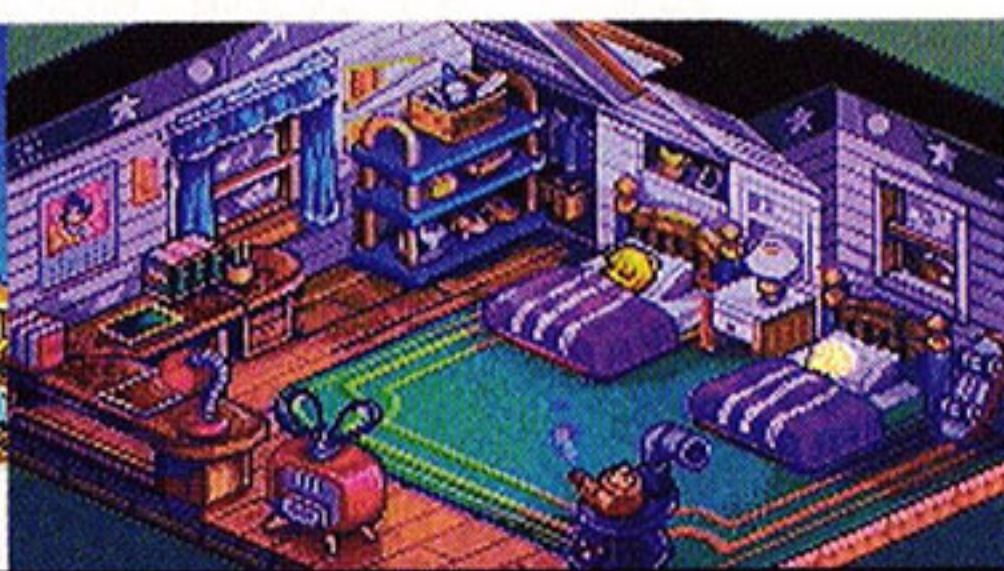
LAST-GEN TACTICS?

A NEVER-ENDING PLOT

The most successful strategy game of last generation will finally get a well-deserved sequel. Although its GBA designation might disappoint fans expecting a next-gen console upgrade, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance sports the same addictive gameplay design, but with a few noteworthy changes. Foremost, the plot is significantly more light-hearted and far less epic. Players assume the role of a boy named Marche Radiuju. One night during a deep slumber, Marche's home transforms from a sleepy rural town to a fantasy world full of weird creatures (see the trio of

pictures at upper-right). As a fan of the Final Fantasy series, Marche quickly recognizes that this new environment resembles the universe of his favorite heroes – Locke, Cloud, Tidus, etc. Now, he must discover the exact cause of this catastrophic event and return his town to normal.

FFTA might not appear to take itself seriously, but don't be too hasty to judge. The plot could very well adopt the literary style of films like *NeverEnding Story*, which would certainly inject a little originality into the series.



The third picture displays the pub manager, who you receive all of your objectives from

GOT TACTICS?

The gameplay structure adopts a new approach, too. Players can freely take on quests that range from finding specific items to defeating evil factions. Completing a quest opens new adventures and, more importantly, yields a piece of land which you must use to rebuild Marche's former world.

Battling various nefarious enemies for land often proves to be quite an undertaking, especially with the new presence of Generals. Each playfield comes with a General who moderates the match ensuring that each team abides by the game's rules. The parameters sometimes vary, but a common one prohibits the use of items. So, for example, if you heal your character with a potion, the General will penalize that character with a Yellow Card. If you continue to do it, or make a serious offense, you'll receive a Red Card and get sent to prison!

The addition of the Prison and a Monster Bank are two gameplay components whose functions we still don't understand, unfortunately. Going to prison probably prevents a character from partaking in a certain number of battles, or it requires you to pay a fine of sorts. The Monster Bank could be anything from a glorified collection minigame to a deep gameplay enhancement that allows the player to capture monsters, train them, and then employ them in battle.

Tactics Advance features a few more minor changes, but the core component of the gameplay seems to remain soundly in place. Ultimately, the extent of the character classes, the quality of the playfields, and the challenge of the battles will determine whether Tactics Advance is a worthy sequel. So far, it certainly shows promise.



The Prison and Monster Bank are now available, but how they function is still unknown



PC

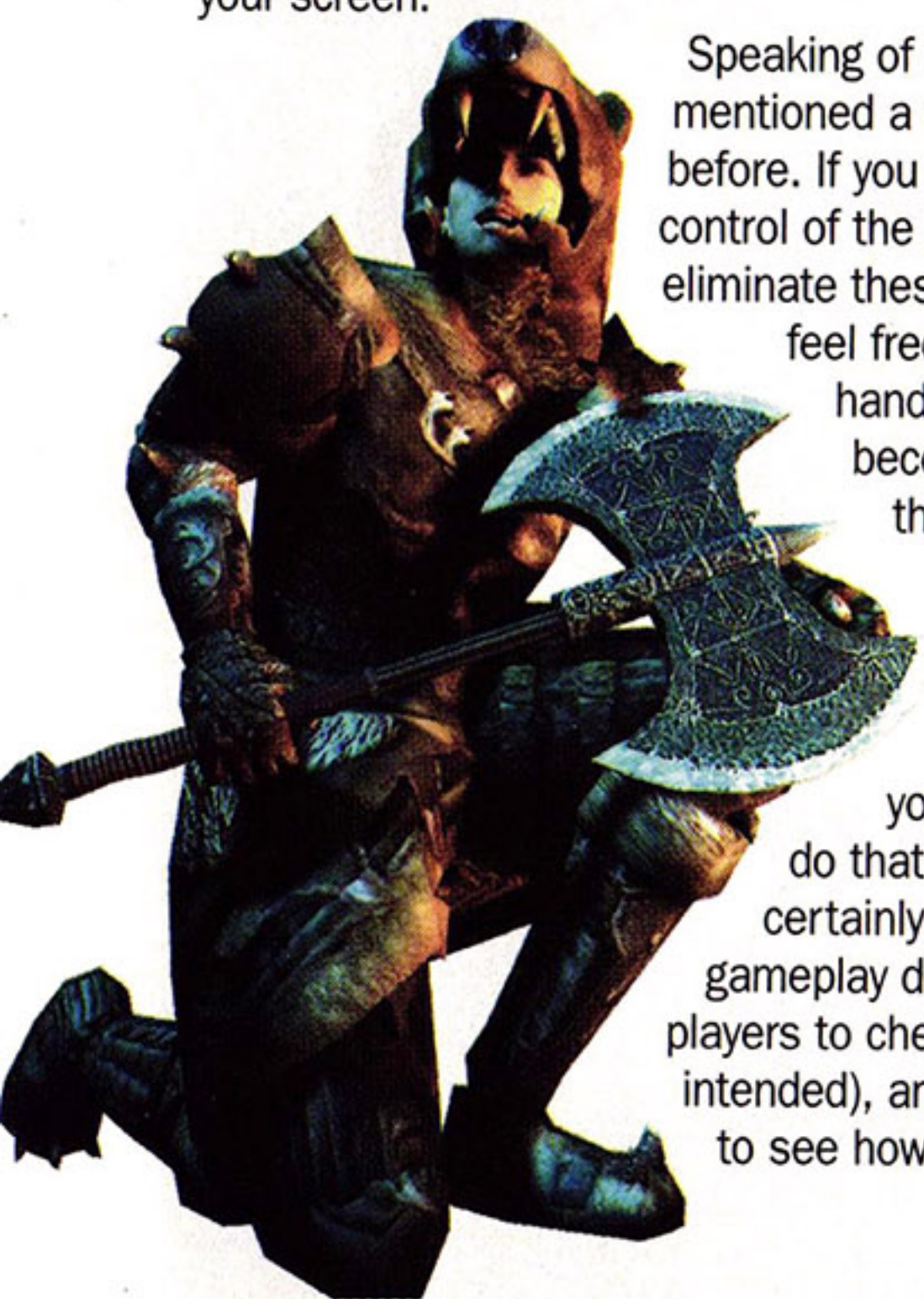
THE ELDER SCROLLS III: BLOODMOON

LOOPY FOR LUPUS

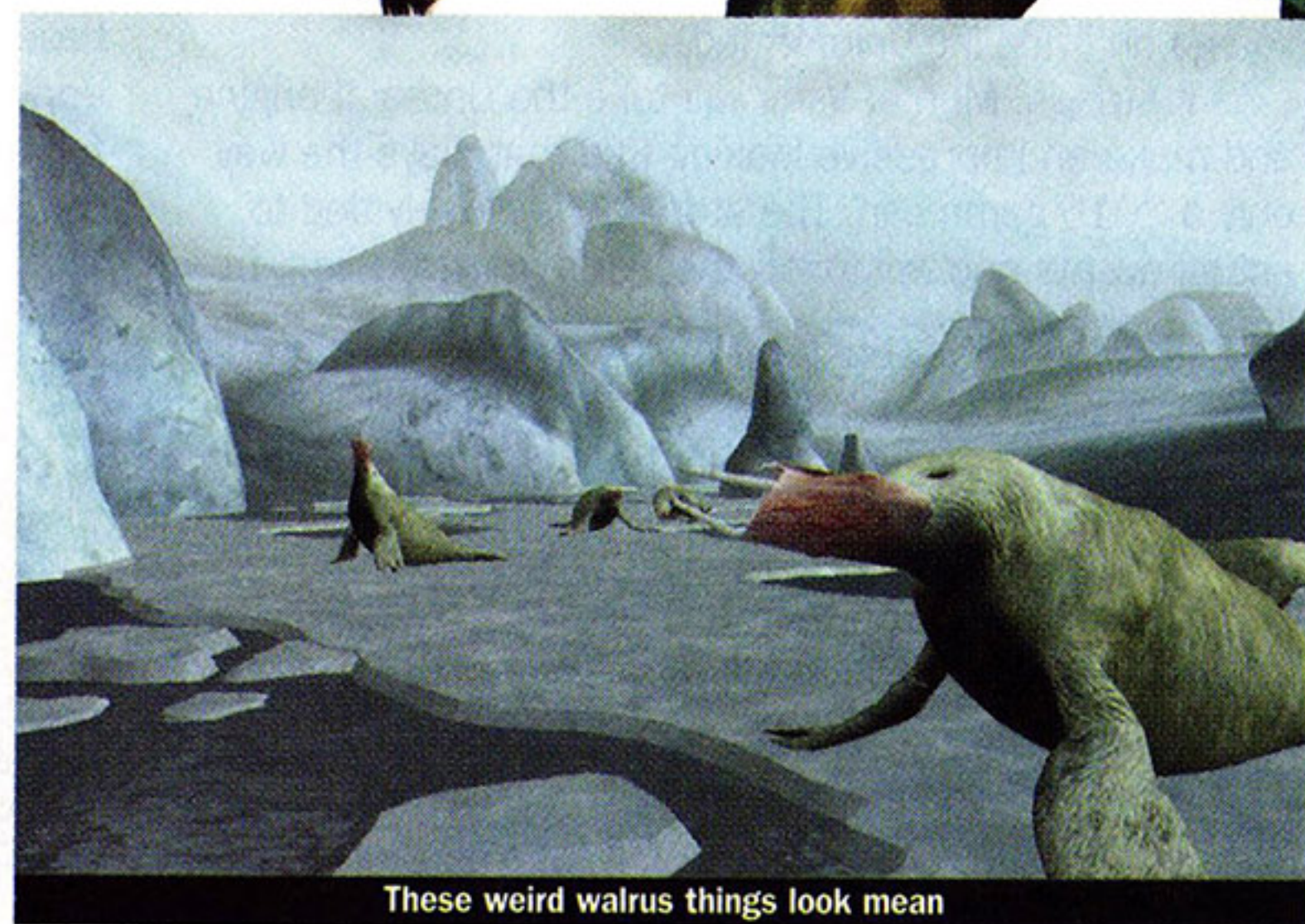
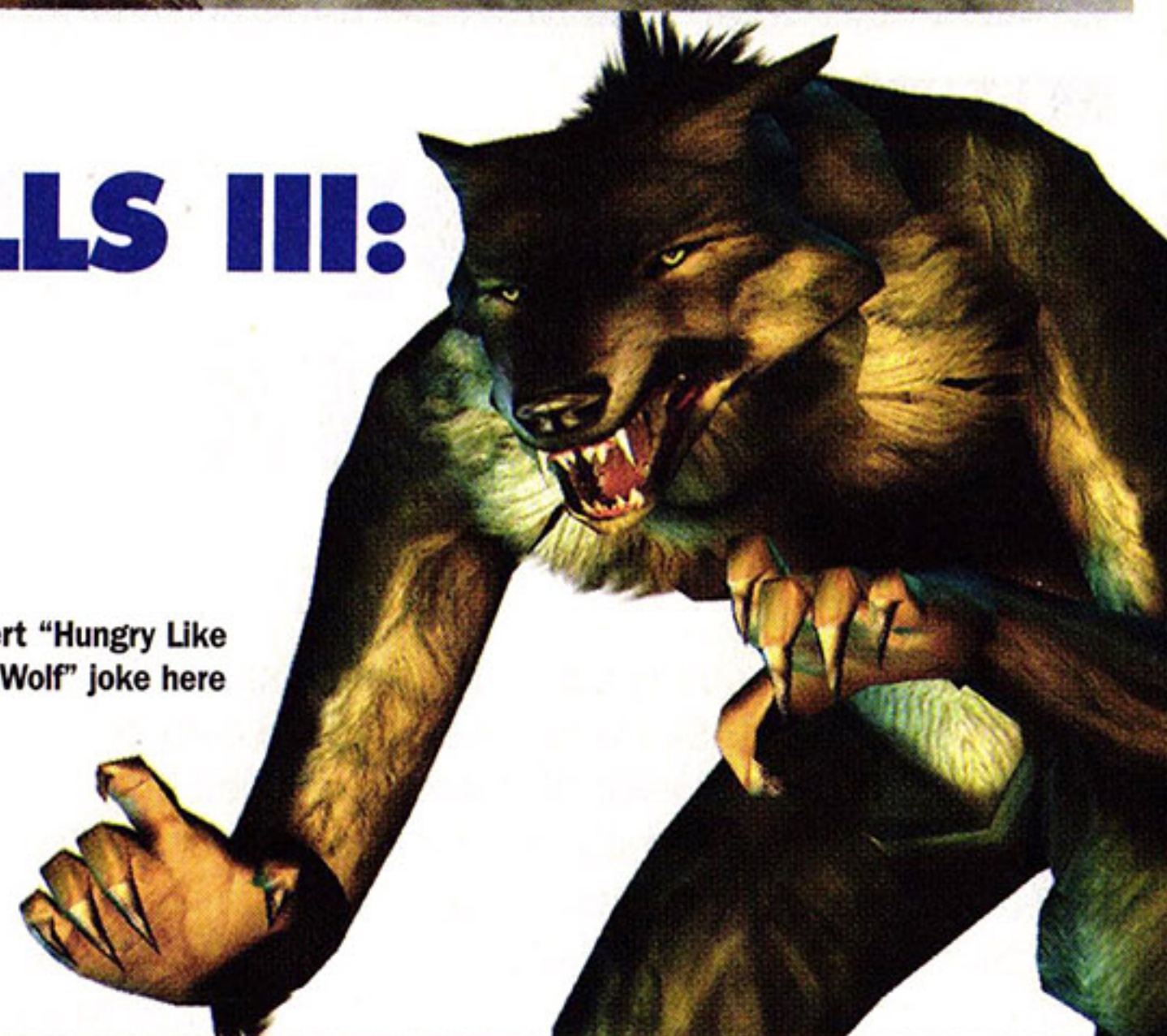
Yet another addition to Bethesda's brightest jewel is coming your way this May. Although the core title (*Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*) that *Bloodmoon* is building upon is already loaded with literally hundreds of hours of gameplay, the developers have seen fit to give gamers a completely different look and feel with this expansion pack.

On the frozen island of Solstheim, the empire is in the process of establishing a new mining colony. Although this might seem like a lucrative venture, a pesky prophecy of the Bloodmoon and rumors of werewolves have caused the citizens of the island to fear for their lives and livelihood. As you decide which course you'll take in the game itself, you'll see new and crazy things in the environments. Raging blizzards, gentle snow showers, new creatures (frost trolls and ice minions, among others), and eye-popping visuals will all make their way onto your screen.

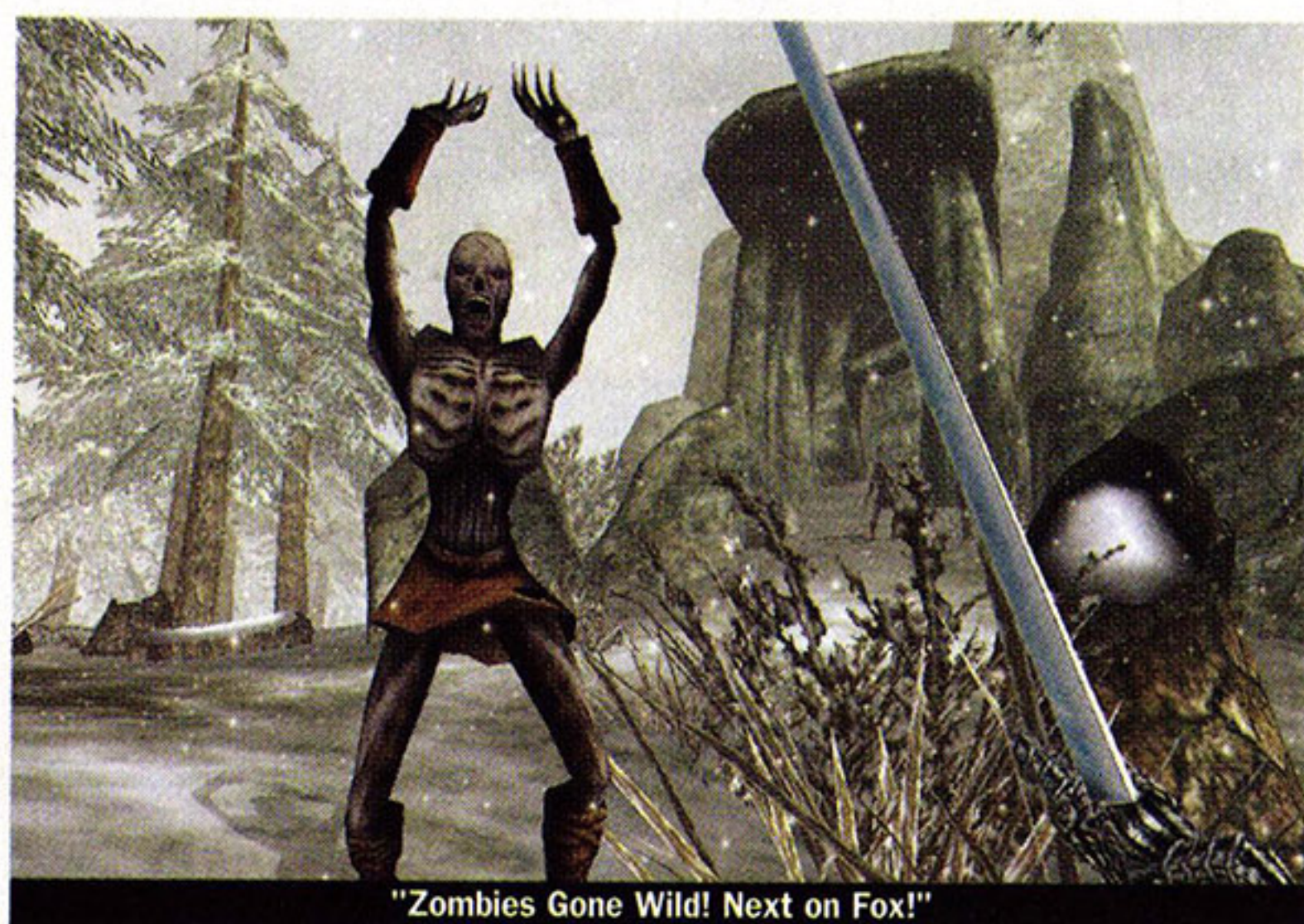
Speaking of eye-popping, we mentioned a werewolf threat before. If you want to take control of the colony and eliminate these foul beasts, feel free. On the other hand, if you want to become one of them and terrorize the denizens of this pathetic little burg, you'll be able to do that, too. This will certainly be an exciting gameplay decision for players to chew on (no pun intended), and we're excited to see how it turns out.



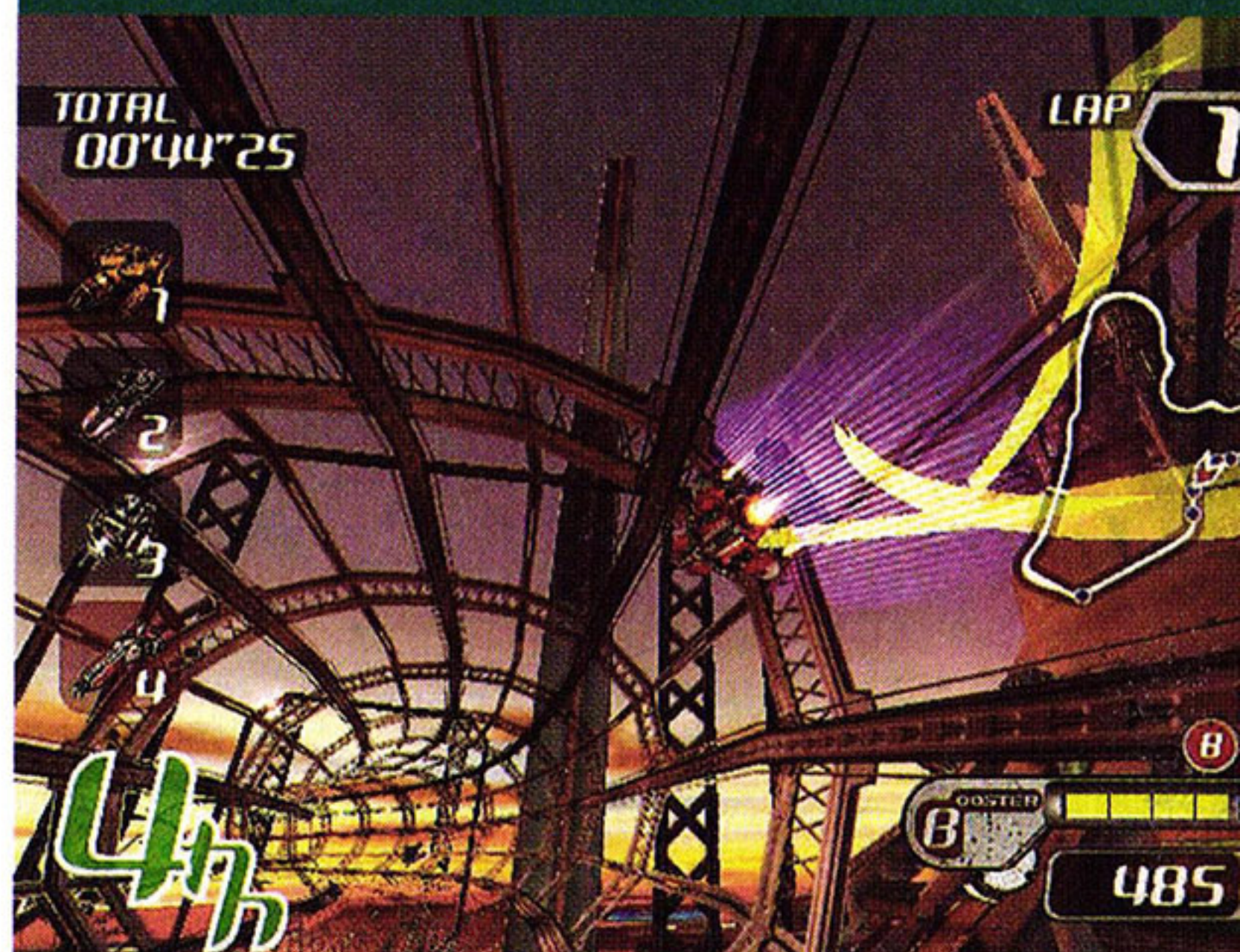
Insert "Hungry Like the Wolf" joke here



These weird walrus things look mean



"Zombies Gone Wild! Next on Fox!"



GAMECUBE

TUBE SLIDER

SLIDING BACK INTO GAMES

Don't readily dismiss *Tube Slider* as another generic futuristic racer. The newly reestablished NEC has composed a team with quite an impressive resume. Check this out: Studio 4° C, the art house that crafted the anime classic *Akira*, is designing the vehicles. Also, the actual development team, NdCube, did the GBA's *F-Zero: Maximum Velocity*. Finally, the executive producer, Masayuki Akahori, previously worked at Capcom, where he produced hits such as *Resident Evil*, *Street Fighter II*, and *Final Fight*.

The gameplay seems very reminiscent of the *F-Zero* series, but with some notable differences. Players race inside tubes, which means that you can maneuver within a 360-degree range of motion. Second, although weapons won't be present, each vehicle can lock onto and absorb another's energy.

Effectively conveying *Tube Slider's* sense of speed is being taken seriously by lead designer Kazushi Maeta. Through a combination of camera work and visual and audio effects, Maeta hopes to convince players that they're actually experiencing a 1,000 mph rush. But, he warns those without a solid constitution that this game is not for them. Maeta cautions, "*Tube Slider* is definitely not a game for those who easily get motion sickness, have heart conditions, or are in an advanced stage of pregnancy." Guess that rules out Andy (he's knocked-up with Reiner's baby!).



Up to four friends can play along with you

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NEC INTERCHANNEL ■ **DEVELOPER** NDCUBE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

PREVIEWS



GAMECUBE

LOST KINGDOMS II

STILL LOST IN OBSCURITY

Lost Kingdoms debuted last year with hardly any sales to back up its largely positive reviews. Granted, a title that adopts the premise behind card games like Yu-Gi-Oh and places it within the shell of an action/RPG is bound to be niche. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the end product supplied an experience worthy of any RPG fan's collection.

In a game that should improve upon the original, players collect cards as they adventure through various lands, dealing out up to four cards at once in real-time combat. From Software plans to include 100 additional cards, 25 new lands, a cast of original enemies, and one significant change to the gameplay formula: the ability to transform into a number of fearsome beasts. Once the heroine, Tara, obtains a transform card, she can morph into a creature to aid in fighting, overcoming obstacles, and solving puzzles.

Most often, transforming is used to open new areas in the large environments. For example, you can become a Golem to break through a barrier, or change into a flying creature to find items on a high ledge. Fans will also be pleased to know that you can now break off combat at any time without losing a card.



This could be a party member or another card



Versus mode returns. Let's hope it is better

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** FROM SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** SPRING 2003



XBOX/PC

MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM

HURRY UP!

In the "if you're going to do something, do it right" school of reasoning, Sierra definitely has the correct approach with Men of Valor: Vietnam. Captained by legendary FPS developer 2015 (who gave us a little title called Medal of Honor: Allied Assault), this is a property with class written all over it. Although its eventual release is a long, long time from now, we're just too excited to let you go on living life uninformed.

As it stands, Men of Valor will take the Unreal II engine and make an impressive looking title that plays the way only a 2015 game can. The storyline is closely tied to actual events and will follow the war's major battles, from

the Tet offensive to the counterattack on Hue. Furthermore, if history is any indicator, the audio in this title should be incredible. For Allied Assault, the sound technicians took actual period armaments out to a range and shot them near distance-staggered microphones, which produced one of the most incredible aural displays in all of video games. We expect no less with this offering, and we also expect it to have a formidable multiplayer aspect as well. It's still quite early, but it looks like players will be able to face off as forces from the North Vietnamese Army, Vietcong, or U.S. Armed Forces. Don't you worry, we'll keep you updated on this exciting new title.



This grunt squeezes off a round at an unseen foe

A Vietcong operative lays in wait



Keeping one's weapon clean and dry wasn't easy in Vietnam

NVA troops move into position

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (EXACT MULTIPLAYER NUMBERS TBA) ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA ■ **DEVELOPER** 2015 ■ **RELEASE** 2004



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

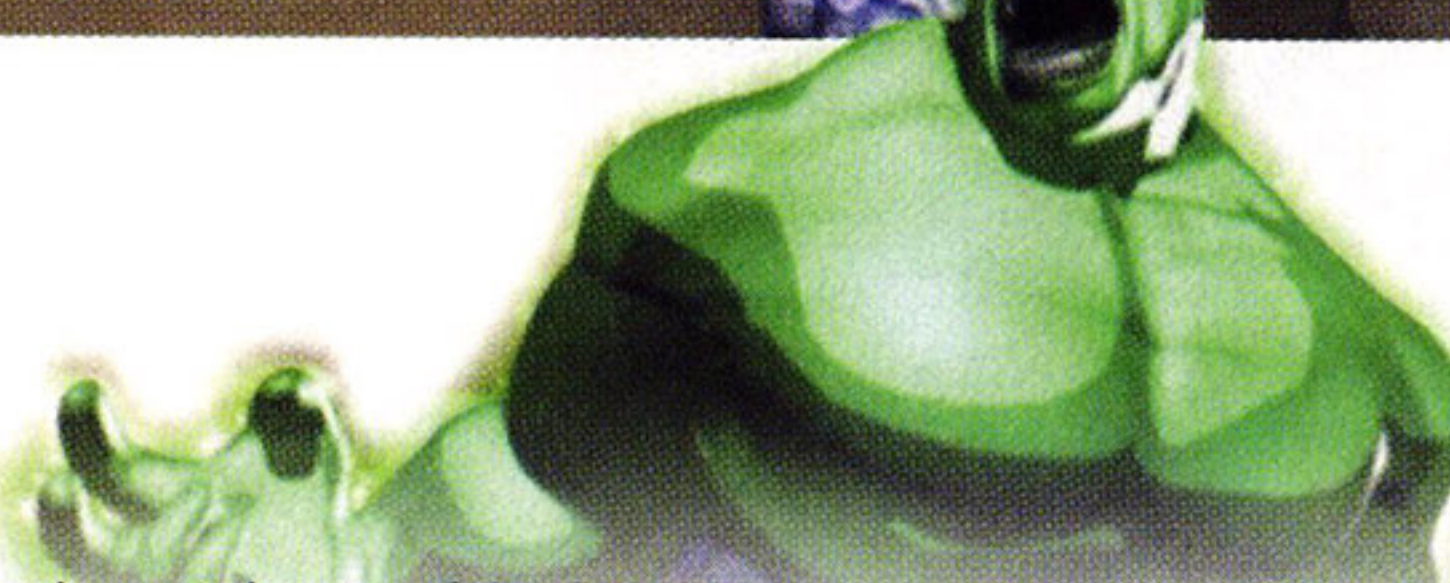
THE HULK

PAINT THE TOWN GREEN

The video game adaptation of *The Hulk* is currently slated to ship a few weeks before the motion picture arrives in theaters, which is quite odd since the events in the game actually take place one year after the ending of the film.

The story is a gripping one that sees a troubled Bruce Banner coming to terms with his menacing alter ego. In a startling turn of events, Bruce is betrayed by a longtime colleague, and forced to release the essence of the Hulk into the...well, we don't want to ruin the surprise for you. Just know that there is a very interesting fate in store for our big, green hero.

As it turns out, the Leader, a familiar gamma villain from the comic series, is somehow tied to the events at hand and is intent on world domination. He's even assembled an army of gamma creatures to secure his



place at the top of the food chain. To combat this force, players will be asked to play the game in two distinct ways. You'll need to use the brawn and rage of the Hulk, as well as the brains and sneaking abilities of Bruce Banner.

The action unfolds through 30 different stages – some of which are taken straight from the movie. Since the Hulk can plow through concrete, everything in the environments is destructible – buildings, signs, trucks, floors, and whatever else you can wrap your green mitts around. The Hulk can tap into more than 25 different attacks, including the Gamma Slam and Sonic Clap.

Universal has even secured the voice talent of film cast members, including the main man himself, Eric Bana. As one would hope, the primary focus of this game is nonstop carnage. We can't wait to see how it shapes up in the end.



The lengths the Hulk goes through to get his Slim Jims boggle the mind

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY



PLAYSTATION 2

STARSKY & HUTCH

WHAT'S THE HAPS, HUGGY BEAR?

Empire's Starsky & Hutch, based on the classically campy '70s cop drama of the same name, has been on our radar for a couple of years. Now, we're beginning to get the inside skinny on the game, which is looking more interesting than you may have guessed.

In the spirit of the series' running and gunning car chases, Mind's Eye Productions has taken a unique approach to this vehicular combat game. In an unprecedented move, the developers have made Starsky & Hutch compatible with most PS2 driving wheels and Namco's GunCon 2. While this may sound strange, it's actually shaping up to be quite cool; allowing players to steer with one hand while bustin' caps on suckers with the other. Also, a two-player cooperative mode lets you take the wheel while a friend takes care of the shooting. Trust us, you'll have to experience it to believe it.

Graphically, the game evokes memories of seventies-era cartoons with a quasi-2D look that is somewhere between GTA III and Crazy Taxi. Adding a little pimped-out flair to the soundtrack is Antonio Fargas, the blaxploitation icon who played Huggy Bear on the television show. Hot damn! We'll be very interested to see if Mind's Eye can translate this ambitious concept into a solid game.



The men, the myth, the white-guy afros

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EMPIRE INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** MIND'S EYE PRODUCTIONS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 3

PHOTOPHILE

GAMECUBE

MEGA MAN NETWORK TRANSMISSIONS



Capcom is set to drop the most content and gameplay-rich series (Battle Network) in the entire Mega Man franchise into the malnourished mouth of GameCube. Thus far, Transmissions looks impressive – from the crisp, cel-shaded graphics to the gameplay. The premise remains similar to previous Mega Man offerings: Move around within reality to collect items while destroying viruses in cyberspace. Capcom promises to fill in the plot holes that occurred in the story between the first and second games. However, one significant alteration may alienate some followers: It plays like a 2D side-scroller instead of an RPG. We'll have to wait until the release this spring to see if the new gameplay does justice to the series' roots.

GAMECUBE

ARMY MEN: SARGE'S WAR



Sarge and his green comrades-in-arms have had a pretty bad run, but company founder and CEO Trip Hawkins has been pounding the pavement as of late, promising a revitalized and refocused 3D. To this end, Sarge's War ditches most of the childhood ambience of past titles, emphasizing the violent, militaristic third-person combat that today's gamers crave. While we applaud the new direction, a preview build of the game was still very rough around the edges. We're not ready to rule this one out yet; but, like Burt Reynolds and Jerry Reed in *Smokey and the Bandit*, Sarge's War (set to release in spring) has a long way to go and a short time to get there.

XBOX

HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER



What kind of title is that? It sounds like one of those jokers who has two first names like David John or Steve Bruce. If you already think that you're seeing double, try this on for size: While the PlayStation 2 version to your right has this and that, the Xbox will offer something different. It has exclusive Xbox Live downloadable content and double the amount of people available for multiplayer. Yup, that means four Hunters going all battle axe on the ass of over 20 types of monsters in the World of Darkness. Redeemer also features single-player melee action and will appear, like Wayward, before the year is over.

PLAYSTATION 2

HUNTER: THE RECKONING WAYWARD



Details remain vague, but publisher Vivendi promises this Gauntlet-style sequel will offer a new story, gameplay features, weapons, and enemies. Wayward takes place in the same town, Ashcroft, but two years after the original outbreak of evil. When the four original characters receive a request from a mysterious new Hunter to help re-extinguish the resurgence of zombies, it's ass-kicking time all over again. Although the game takes place in many of the same locations as the Xbox and GameCube versions, the environment is quite different. Furthermore, the action runs more smoothly; the graphics have improved; and each character has new weapons, moves, and combos.

XBOX

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

Attack
Defend
Regroup



Rather than just porting the existing Clone Wars code to the Xbox, LucasArts has enhanced the game significantly. The most exciting addition is Xbox Live compatibility. Up to eight players will be able to wage war against one another over the Internet and communicate through the headset. The online function will even track player performances, where ranks and medals can be earned. On the single-player side, improved graphics and exclusive new weapons and commands for Conquest mode round out the changes. The Clone Wars is slated to ship this spring.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

FREESTYLE METALX



If there's anything that whines more than a supercross bike, it's us writers complaining about how the games in the genre never change. Well, Midway is thankfully showing up with Freestyle MetalX this June for all three systems. The title takes a Tony Hawk-esque approach in that gameplay isn't so much about racing, as it is about busting tricks. MetalX's levels offer an abundance of scenery to pull stunts off of (including the chance to perform specific tasks to open up Daredevil events), and they even link together at the end for one final, mad ride. Now that Midway's taken care of that complaint for us, perhaps it could find a way to get us cable TV for free.

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER



Who wants to be King of the Streets? You do? Awesome! All you have to do is wait for Acclaim to release Urban Freestyle Soccer this May, and get crackin'. This ain't your daddy's soccer game, junior. In UFS, you create your team out of over 50 players, and take them to the pavement for bragging rights and bloodletting. Complete with power-ups, a skill upgrade system, and eight crazy modes, this is sure to be a huge game in Europe.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

XGRA



First off, XGRA is an acronym for Extreme Gravity Racing Association. We'll cut right to the chase - this is going to be another futuristic racer in the Extreme-G lineage. Although Acclaim plans on using things like destructible scenery, real-time commentary, Pro Logic 2 sound, and new bike models, it'll have to be pretty exceptional to hold gamers' interest this summer when it releases. The Extreme-G series is decent (at best), so we're interested to see what Acclaim has in store for us.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

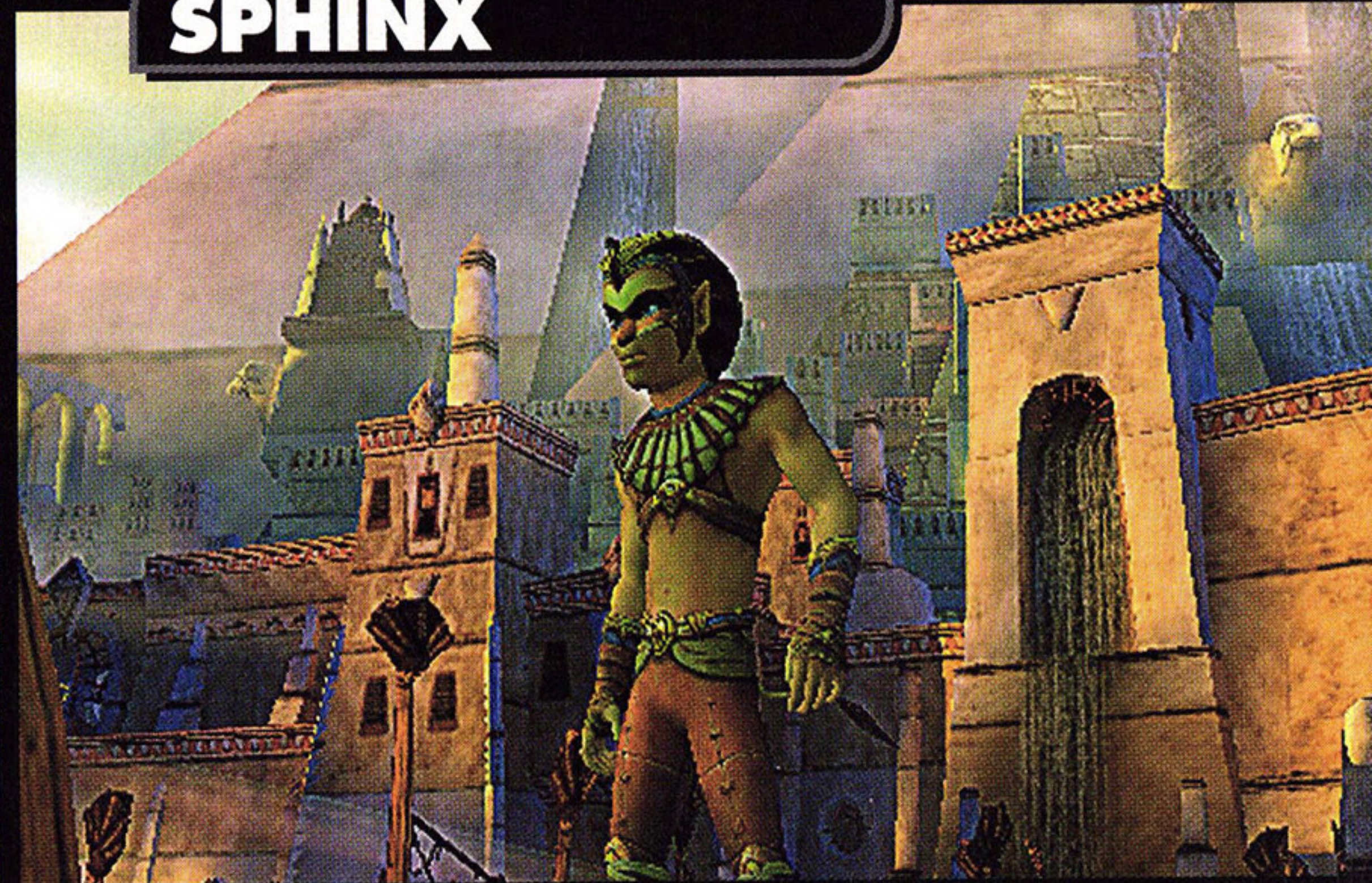
SPEED KINGS



In what is being billed as "full-on adrenaline rush of street motorcycle racing" by Acclaim, Speed Kings promises to bring the fun back to arcade-style motorcycle racing. While we may be extremely skeptical at this point, we'll reserve our judgments until the game's eventual release in May. Does a Burnout/Road Rash hybrid have what it takes to contend?

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE

SPHINX



THQ is throwing its action/platformer hat into the ring this fall with Sphinx; a title being developed by Eurocom, a British firm which worked on Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex and Disney's Tarzan, among others. Taking control of the main character, Sphinx, a young demi-god tasked with unraveling an evil scheme woven by Set, players will experience a vibrant world based closely on ancient Egypt. The typical third-person view will be used as Sphinx will run, jump, climb, swim, and fight his way towards destiny. It's unclear at this point whether dung beetles will play a role in the game.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

BACKYARD WRESTLING



And you thought backyards were just for naked sunbathing! Eidos and Paradox (of X-Men fighting game fame) will deliver this hardcore wrestling title to PS2 and Xbox this summer. Both the untrained "athletes" and the suburban environments will get utterly destroyed during matches, as light bulbs, thumbtacks, and lawn chairs are used with extreme prejudice. Even the Insane Clown Posse gets in on this action!

The Human Anatomy

as deconstructed by Tao Feng



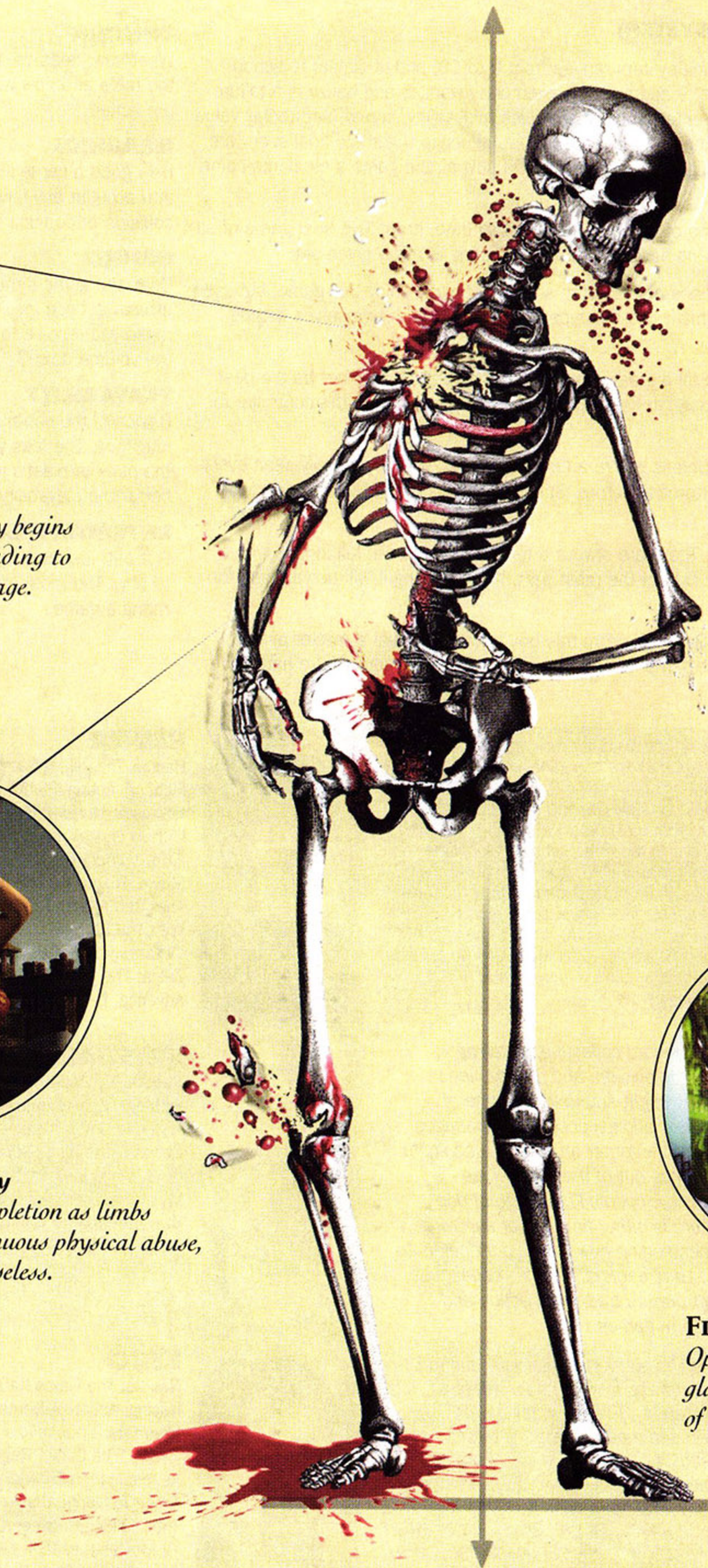
FIG. 1. – Considerable Pain
The process of deconstructing the anatomy begins with bruising at the point of contact, leading to bloody contusions and cerebral hemorrhage.



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.



TAO FENG
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XBOX

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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:** Vegas!, Timberwolves Basketball, NASCAR, iPod, GBA SP **Dislikes:** Losing Money, The Stock Market, Dentists, Typos **Current Favorite Games:** The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Def Jam Vendetta, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance

Now retired from the rock scene, Andy spends endless hours locked in his home office; enjoying the benefits of high definition television and surround sound far away from those scary things he has often heard referred to as people. 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:** Morgawr By Terry Brooks, The Return Of Kurt Busiek's Astro City, The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen Comic Books And Movie, Frozen Gummi Bears **Dislikes:** The Fact That Ben Affleck Really Isn't Blind, Traveling With The Stomach Flu, Any Form Of Reality TV **Current Favorite Games:** The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Dark Cloud 2

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 634 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:** Pretty Girls Make Graves, Ted Leo & The Pharmacists, Masters Of Doom By David Kushner, AAA (My Heroes!), Stern Men By Elizabeth Gilbert **Dislikes:** Sub-Zero Weather, Drunks That Crash Into Parked Cars In Front Of My House, People That Don't Have Car Insurance (But Have A Car) **Current Favorite Games:** Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis, Red Faction II, Summoner: A Goddess Reborn

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:** Band Of Brothers, Fish And Chips, Twisted Tea, Pepper Jack Cheese, The Minnesota Vikings **Dislikes:** Old Cars, Being Lied To, Leftover Pizza, Spam, Myanmar (Burma), Istanbul (Constantinople) **Current Favorite Games:** Madden NFL 2003 (Xbox), Advance Wars, SimCity 4

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:** The Wacky Exploits Of Chet's Car, Pro 42 Bars, Reading, Projectors, The Blues Brothers **Dislikes:** Injured Shoulders, A Sink Full Of Dirty Dishes, Rancid Mayo, Typos **Current Favorite Games:** Tenchu: Wrath Of Heaven, Def Jam Vendetta, Splashdown 2, Fire Pro Wrestling 2, DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWAR slave and moonlights as wrestler Justin "Violent" 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:** Chappelle's Show, Jungle Fever, "The Claw," Regular Exercise, JFC, Assassination Enthusiasts, Ryan Newman Going To Dodge **Dislikes:** Arena Football, EA Trax, Talking Between Commercials On Cable TV Movies (i.e. TBS' Dinner & A Movie), Ford Cars **Current Favorite Games:** Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis, Winning Eleven 6, Dark Cloud 2, Colin McRae Rally 3, MVP Baseball 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, Buddhist Thought, Japan, Peace, Kruder And Dorfmeister **Dislikes:** Things I Can't Say, iPod's Crappy Battery, Taco Bell, SUVs **Current Favorite Games:** Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Final Fantasy Origins, MVP Baseball 2003, Castlevania III, Mega Man 2, Street Fighter II: Turbo, Mortal Kombat II, Samurai Shodown II

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:** iPod, Crop Circles, Thai Fried Noodles, Mashed Potato Pizza, Israel Kamakawiwo'ole (A Hawaiian Musician) **Dislikes:** Mediocre Enchiladas, Snow Emergency Parking, Action Figures Of Female Characters That Make Them Look Like Men **Current Favorite Games:** The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis, Hot Shots Golf

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

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

loaf – Bad (i.e. that Chick-fil-A sandwich combo was loaf!)

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

PSone – 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

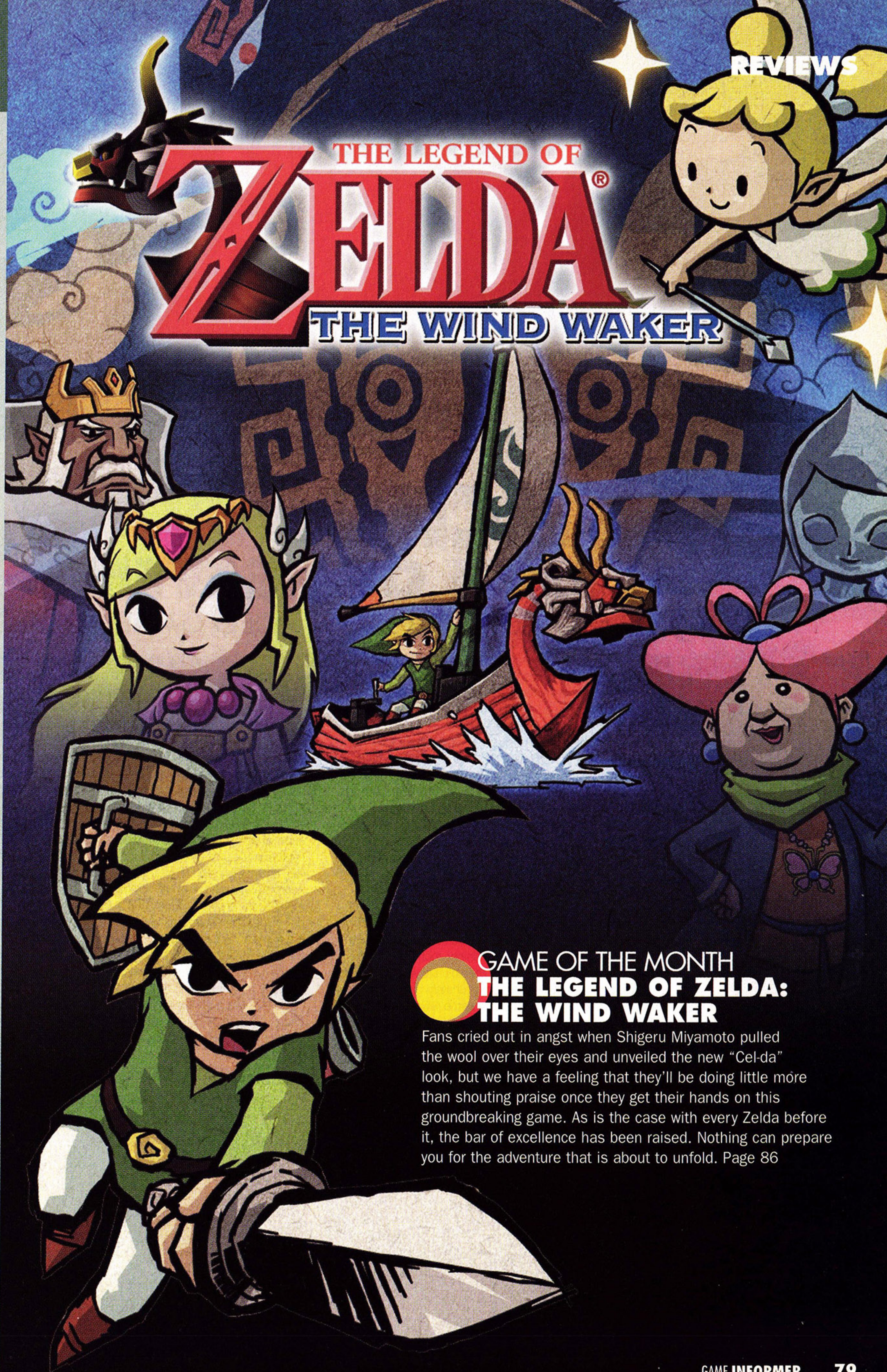
SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

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

REVIEWS



GAME OF THE MONTH THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

Fans cried out in angst when Shigeru Miyamoto pulled the wool over their eyes and unveiled the new "Cel-da" look, but we have a feeling that they'll be doing little more than shouting praise once they get their hands on this groundbreaking game. As is the case with every Zelda before it, the bar of excellence has been raised. Nothing can prepare you for the adventure that is about to unfold. Page 86



PLAYSTATION 2

TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN

THE CLOSEST THING TO A VIDEO GAME NINJA

"Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven is the ninja game the world has been waiting for."

Tenchu: Stealth Assassins is one of my favorites from the 32-bit age. It was a bit raw, but its depiction of ninja sneakiness kicked butt. With Wrath of Heaven, new developer K2 has honed the series' skills and brings forth what may be the best ninja game to date.

Stealth kills are like two turntables and a microphone – they're where it's at. You'll be doing a whole lot more of them in Wrath of Heaven, thanks to the clever level designs. Patience is a virtue. It takes time to find the right moment to strike, but it's well worth it. Characters have their own fatal moves, which include decapitations, snapping necks, and lunging your blade through someone's skull. These rank up there with Mortal Kombat's Fatalities and Dead to Rights' disarms as some of the most satisfying (and violent) gaming moments.

Tenchu isn't just a one-trick pony. Dozens of items can be used, including a deadly blowgun, a sticky bomb, and an enemy-yanking attachment to your grappling hook. Stealth kill a set number of enemies, and you unlock a maneuver such as mind control, ceiling clinging, or sniper zooming. Grip the ceiling, wait for the right moment, then plunge your sword into a foe's torso on the way down. Unfortunately, a few of the later moves aren't as useful, but I'll take some reward over nothing. Regular combat is overhauled with sweet combos, and the control is right where it should be. The auto-targeting, while subtle, is a sweet addition.

The main things holding back the first two Tenchus were ugly graphics and a bad camera. Truth be told, I was expecting Wrath of Heaven to be an underachiever in these aspects, too. I was a fool; this game looks great. Ayame, Rikimaru, and the supporting cast are well animated and nicely designed. Particle effects and ambient scenery add realism. Tenchu doesn't quite make it to the peak of next-gen visuals (I'd like to see more incorporation of shadows and lighting), but it's still impressive – especially when you note its roots. The camera is easily adjusted for your comfort, just like a sturdy athletic supporter.

This game gives you your money's worth. Though it seems short at first (it takes about 10 hours to beat with one ninja), each principal has a unique storyline, and you must finish with both Ayame and Rikimaru to unlock the secret character. Additionally, each stage has three layouts, and you'll want to replay them to stock up on items or improve your grade. On the downside, some missions are pretty darn long, which makes me wish for mid-level saves. Frustration builds when you're forced to do a stage over simply because you fell in a trap and died a half-hour in. At least the new Rebirth item allows you to continue if you're killed in combat.

Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven is the ninja game the world has been waiting for. It fights with honor, but still handily slays the competition. If you dig stealth, get off your grasshopper and pick this one up. – **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** K2 INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 5



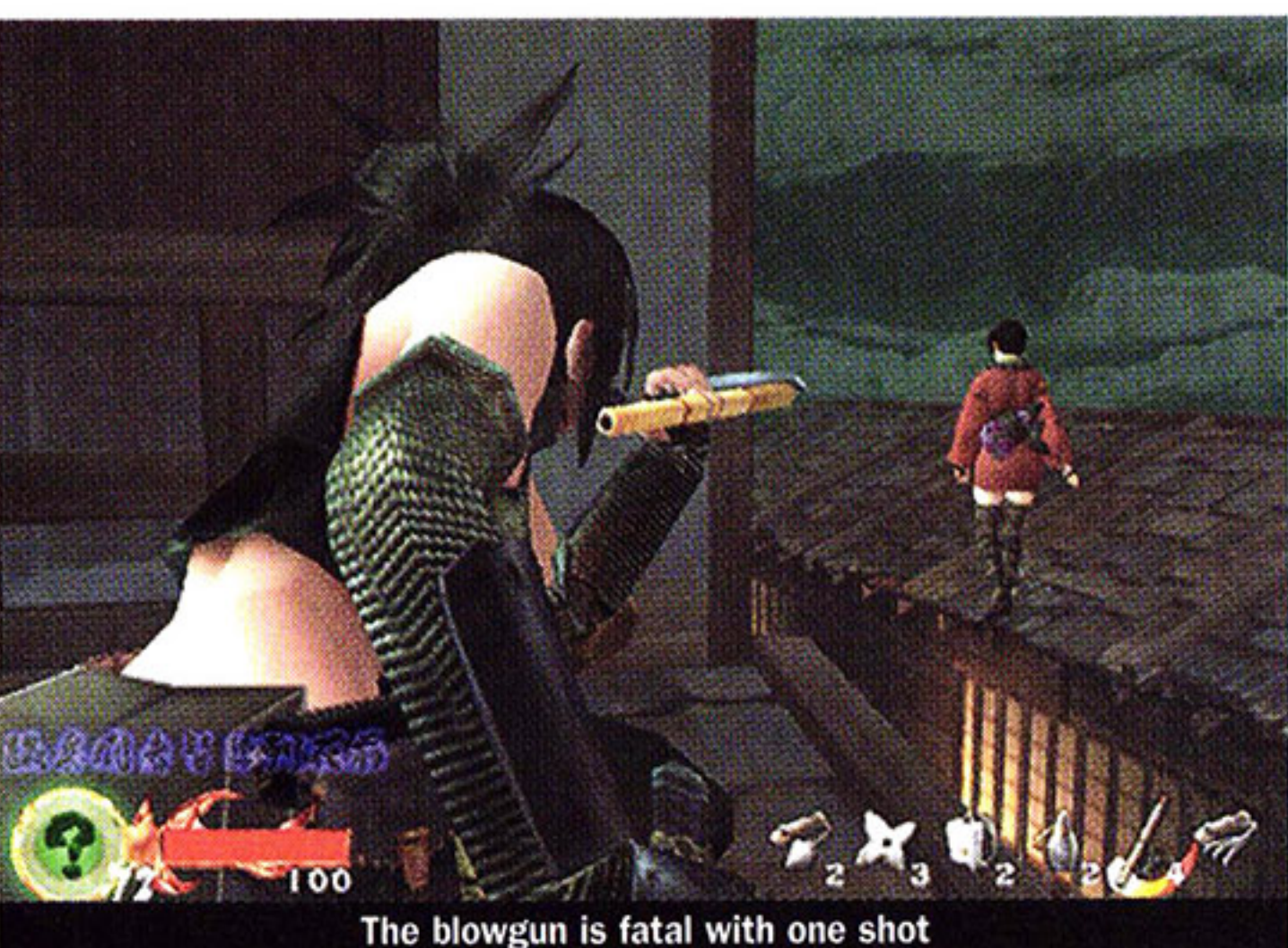
Co-op mode throws the lone-wolf theory out the window



"Master, can you teach me special neck-stretching technique? Uh, Master?"



This grizzly bear is tough to take down if you don't stealth kill him



The blowgun is fatal with one shot



"Hey, dude, there's something caught in your throat – my sword!"

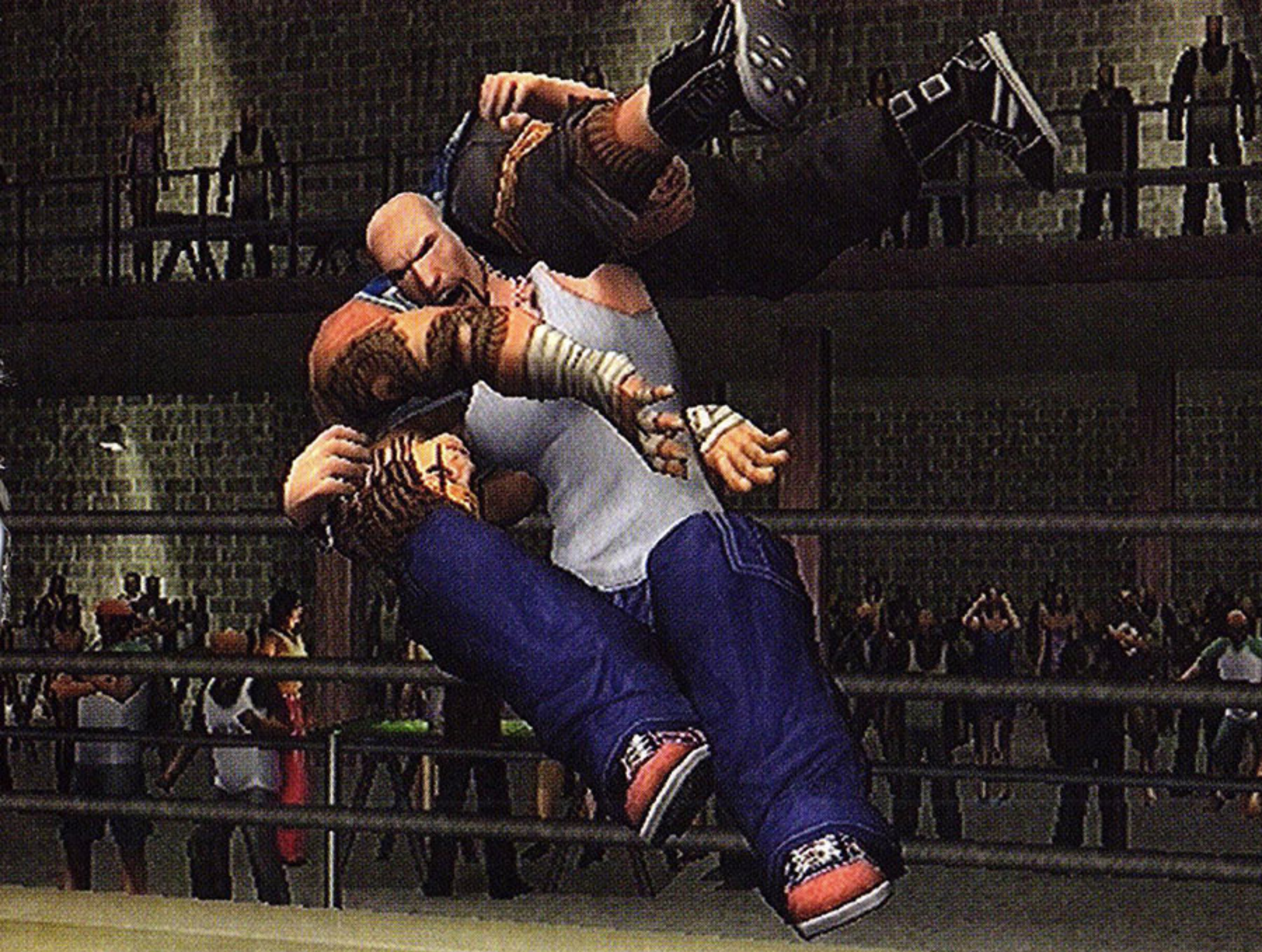


- **Concept:**
Reinvent the game that reinvented ninja games with a next-gen twist
- **Graphics:**
Bucking the series' tradition, Wrath of Heaven is stunning
- **Sound:**
I love the score, and the voiceovers are well done, too. "Nice night."
- **Playability:**
These ninja have a lot of maneuvers, but the control lets you execute them all accurately
- **Entertainment:**
Worth playing for the stealth kills alone, but the level design, items, and special moves make it a must-buy
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven makes huge improvements in a number of areas where the series traditionally fell short. The graphics and animations are finally on par with other games on the market, and the control (while still not perfect) is much more forgiving. Unfortunately, the developers forgot to fix one major flaw, as this title still doesn't let you save anywhere. While that doesn't seem like such a big deal, this single drawback will stop the series from being the mega-hit that it most likely deserves to be. For purists, the lack of a save feature will mean nothing. For me, two or three deaths at the end of a 40-minute run through a level meant frustration. It's a shame really, as the killing and stealth in Tenchu are extremely well done. Heck, even the canned story is perfect for a ninja game. But until Activision fixes the save problem, Tenchu will only be loved by hardcore gamers. I like this game a lot, but the lack of some kind of mid-level save really ruined an otherwise amazing experience.

ANDY – 8.25



"Vendetta's engine is tight, and it's the game's best asset."

PLAYSTATION 2

DEF JAM VENDETTA

SQUARED CIRCLE MEETS STREET CRED

AKI is to wrestling games as Miyamoto is to platformers. That may be extremely high praise, but it's true. After the Yuke's WWE titles lulled everyone into thinking gameplay should be secondary to flash and storylines, EA BIG has brought the showstopper back to the forefront to develop this game.

Vendetta's engine is tight, and it's the game's best asset. It's easy to grasp, while being relatively deep at the same time. I've always liked the hard/soft concept, which lets you launch more devastating offense when you hold down a button longer. Defense involves trying to decide whether the computer is going to try a strike or grapple, and hitting the corresponding counter button.

The moves are creative with stunning animations. They remind me a lot of the tricks in the Pro Skater series – based on fact, but stretched to fantasy. Finishers look especially brutal, and regular attacks are easily linked together. Emulating NBA Street, you're given style points for combos – which is an added incentive to get in the flow. Submission holds bring up a bar that reveals the strength of a certain body part (arm, leg, etc.). Unfortunately, the size of the wrestlers – while being a focal point of Vendetta's great graphics – makes rope breaks happen too often, forcing you to release your hold or pin

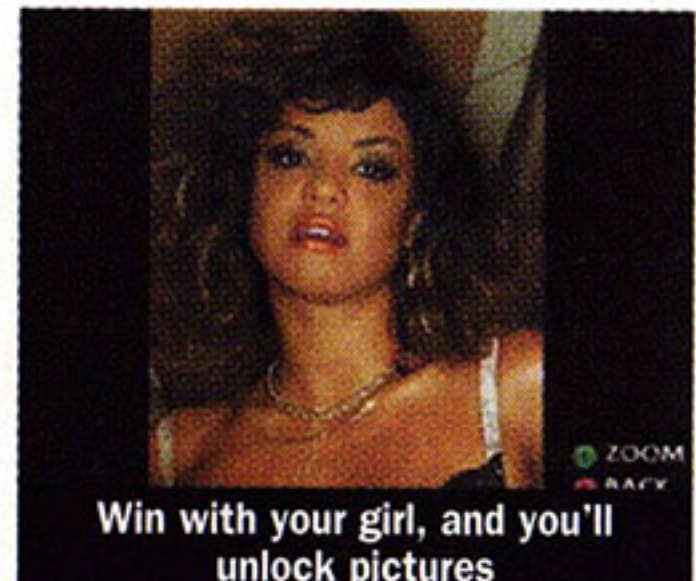
attempt. Most matches end in KOs, which shows that EA BIG didn't set out to make a straight-up wrestling game.

Even without Kurt Angle or RVD, Vendetta's cast is full of talent and personality. Each wrestler's got a unique look, style, and selection of exclusive moves. Having the 12 Def Jam-signed rappers shouldn't deter wrestling fans, as they're just characters like everyone else. Other EA BIG personalities make cameos, but again, they're regular grapplers first. Maybe it's the chauvinist pig in me, but I like the side fights between gorgeous women vying for my affection.

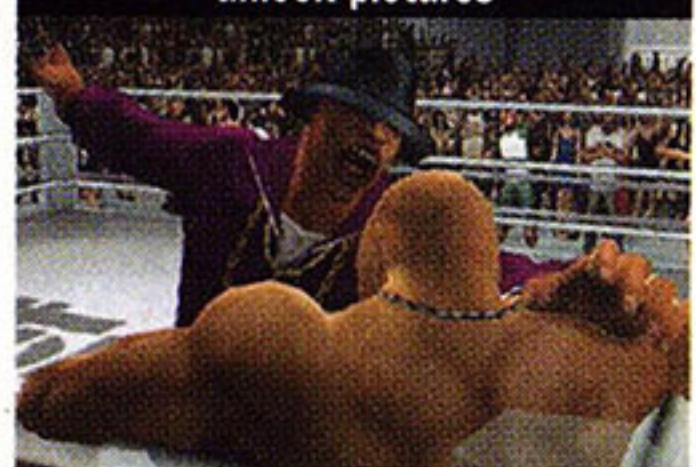
I do take slight issue with some of the cheapness in the more important bouts. In a score-based game like NBA Street, when the CPU gets an unfair advantage, they may take the lead. In a fighting/wrestling game like this, however, it can be much more costly.

I imagine the idea behind Vendetta was to make a great wrestling game for non-wrestling fans. While I wish EA had omitted the non-wrestling part of the mantra, I have to admit this game fulfills its goal. It doesn't give you wrestling staples like table matches or a wrestler creator, sadly, but it does give you what most next-gen WWE titles can't: stellar gameplay. – **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **DEVELOPER** AKI ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



Win with your girl, and you'll unlock pictures



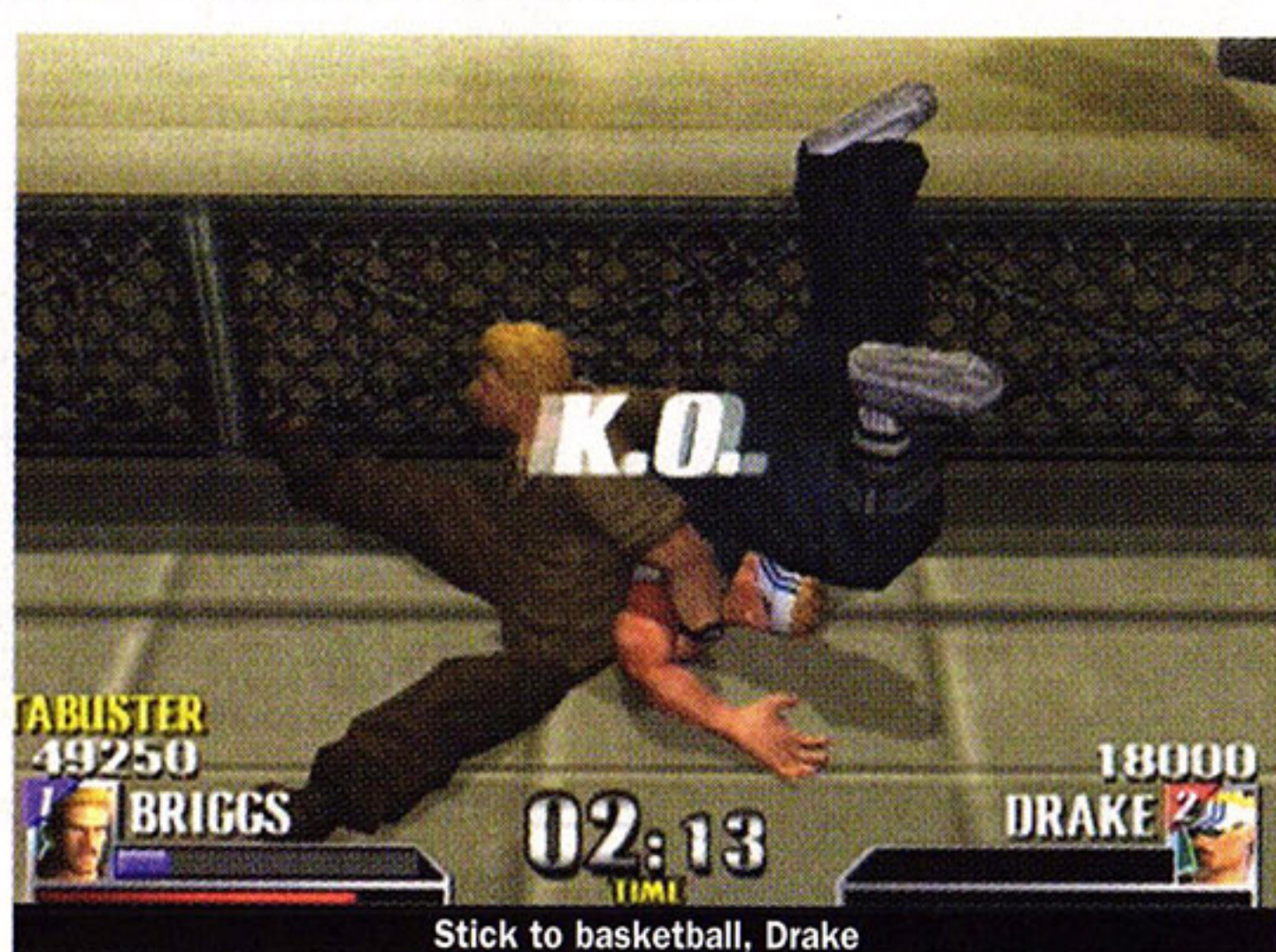
That hat makes this a handicap blindfold match



Has Street Fighter's Sagat joined the pro wrestling set?



The girls don't always fight fair



Stick to basketball, Drake

THE BOTTOM LINE
T 8.5
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
The un-wrestling game
- **Graphics:**
I'm pleased with the look – models, animation, environments – it all suits the mood
- **Sound:**
For a rap-themed game, there are some weak tracks. The overall sound quality is high, though
- **Playability:**
If all you've ever played is SmackDown, you're in for a pleasant surprise. However, it's not quite as deep as some of AKI's previous efforts
- **Entertainment:**
This is the best-playing next-gen wrestling game yet. A good story mode complements the engine nicely
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION
 All I have to say is that it's about damn time. I was beginning to believe that no game was ever going to top 1998's WCW/NWO Revenge as the best wrestling game ever made, but Def Jam Vendetta has finally usurped the long-time champ. Not surprisingly, it's from the same developer, AKI Corporation. In fact, you can even feel Revenge in Vendetta's controls. With Def Jam, the whole package is taken to a new level with smoother animations; detailed character models; and tighter, more intuitive play control. Even better, Vendetta does away with the steroid-filled men in tights and gives us rap's greatest thugs, pimps, and players to control. Wrestling games will never replace fighting games as king in my book, but Def Jam Vendetta is certainly the most compelling wrestler I've seen in almost half a decade. It's got the attitude, the play, and most definitely the rhymes to get my vote as the greatest wrestling game to date.
ANDY – 8.5

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

LIVE KINGLY, DIE NASTY

If there ever was a game that stretches the definition of a sequel, this is it – and I don't necessarily mean that in a positive way. I'm amazed at the lack of innovation and improvement Dynasty Warriors 4 brings. That doesn't make it a bad game by any means, but it does make it a questionable investment for people who know the series.

The few new things here are pretty cool. One-on-one duels between officers have some drama, and having to deal with environmental obstacles like rolling boulders and overpowering wind makes for some interesting scenarios. The AI is somewhat improved. Now, instead of being barely-moving mannequins, they only seem like they're asleep. You can switch characters between stages, but I think this detracts from the storylines. Where's a compass, deeper combat, or better defense? These are the things DW 4 should've delivered.

I do like this series as a sword-swinging tension reliever, and the battles take some thought to complete successfully. Dynasty Warriors 4 expands on this, if only ever so slightly. The modes and characters give it some replay, but I think that's a double-edged blade. If you're new to Dynasty Warriors, four is your lucky number; but with such a small list of additions, there's not much reason to pick this up if you've already invested in the previous games. – JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI ■ **DEVELOPER** KOEI ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25

THE BOTTOM LINE



7

■ **Concept:**

If it's not too broken, don't fix it

■ **Graphics:**

Better looking environments, but it's identical in most other respects

■ **Sound:**

I found myself nodding my head to the score. It's really well done, if a little hair-metal at times

■ **Playability:**

This game really couldn't control much easier. Defense is still flawed, however

■ **Entertainment:**

A decent offering, but it's not any better than previous Dynasty entries

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I found this Dynasty Warriors to be the most enjoyable of them all due to this year's changes, but the series still has some way to go. Duels, castle sieges, and weapon development all get the nod; while the poor camera, landscapes, AI, and repetitive combos still need work. By this rate, the next good Warriors title shouldn't hit the shelves until 2006.

KATO – 7.25



PLAYSTATION 2

SPLINTER CELL

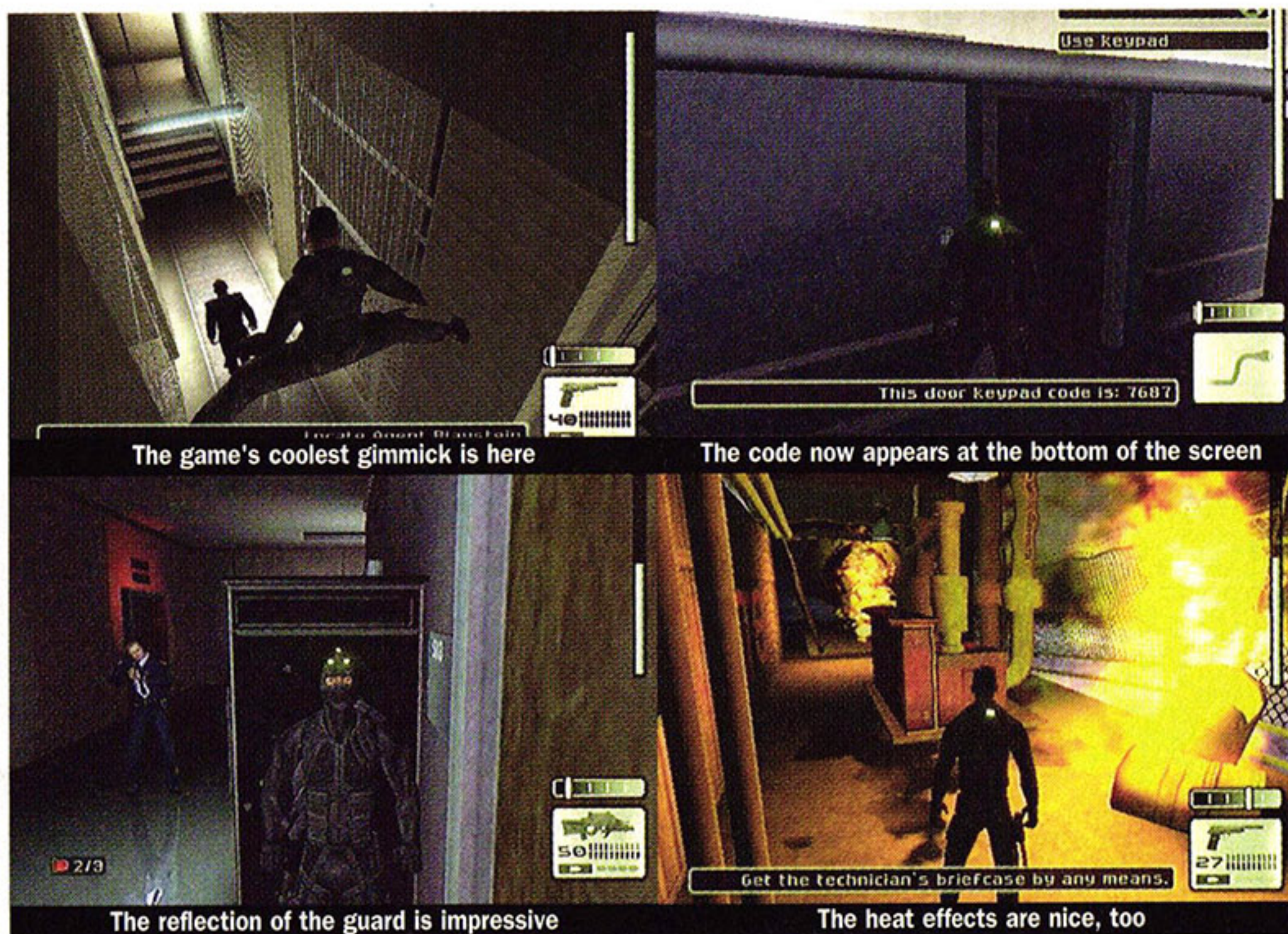
OPERATION: COMPENSATION

For some reason, Ubi removed large chunks of material from the original Xbox version. Assuming it did so simply because of technical inadequacies of the PS2, I initially laughed and teased the PS2 – rudely playing the role of crony for big bully Xbox. Shortly thereafter, PS2 proceeded to sucker-punch me, showing me the error of my ways. I am now inclined to think that perhaps the game was changed simply for variety's sake.

Whatever the case may be, the end result is all that matters. Ubi compensates by including new sections and reworking stage design which, in some cases, makes levels more interesting and balanced. Furthermore, Sam comes clad in a special new get-up for an exclusive level!

The improvements don't stop there, either. The graphics, while inferior overall compared to the Xbox version, benefit from added effects such as enhanced heat distortion, reflective surfaces, and focus blurring. Also, the collision detection is more precise, especially on the security cameras.

Unfortunately, many of the game's problems have been faithfully reproduced, most of which contribute to Splinter Cell's main fault: required trial and error. Completing a mission should depend more on skill. – CHET



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

THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

■ **Concept:**

A fine experience with a story based on spying and espionage

■ **Graphics:**

They're slightly inferior to the Xbox version; but this one features new effects!

■ **Sound:**

The quality is good, but nothing mind-blowing

■ **Playability:**

Accessing menus and items is a tad more comfortable

■ **Entertainment:**

A fun game of stealth with a solid story; but there's still too much trial and error involved

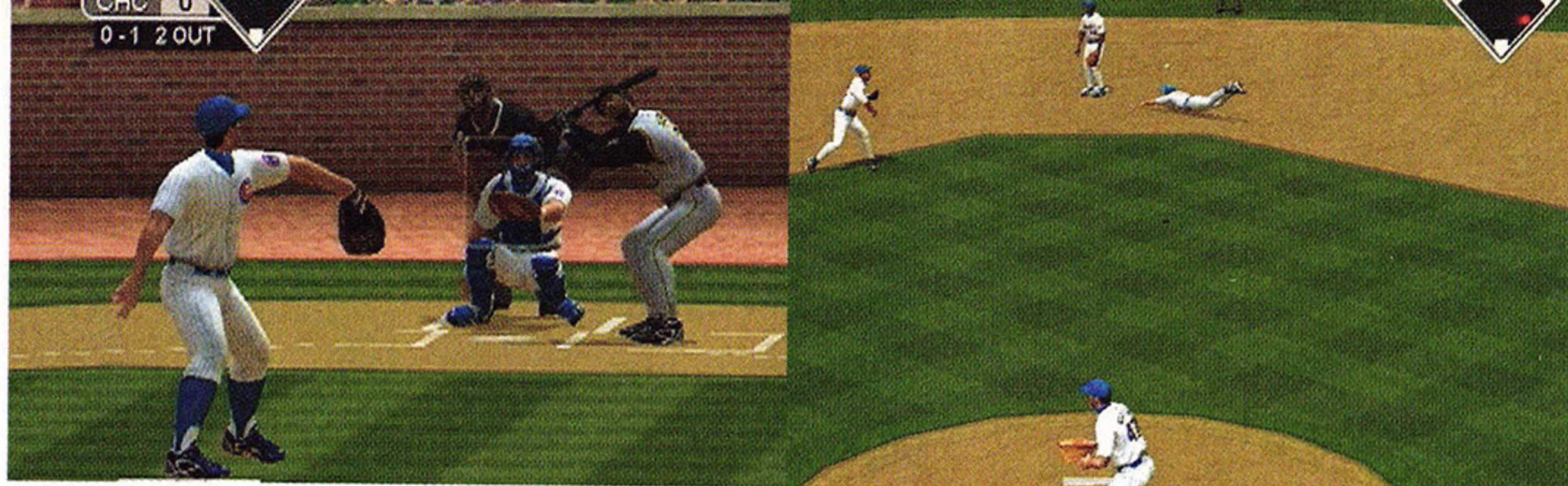
■ **Replay Value:**

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

What was fun on the Xbox is still a blast on the PS2, but the visual punch has been subdued due to the PS2's inferior graphics processor. The controls and action are definitely still there, so the Sony faithful will have plenty to explore during their time with Ubi's baby. What I want to know is whether they will like it as much as their beloved MGS 2. I think they will, but Splinter Cell's feel is quite different, so it'll take a bit of getting used to. Some minor improvements to flow and story structure have been made; but if you're stuck somewhere and you don't know how to proceed, trial and error will be your best friend. Going slow and examining each situation is recommended for the best results, but even that will fail you every now and again. Annoyingly, a lot of the Xbox shooting bugs make a reappearance (capping someone in the head at point-blank range ≠ death). Worth buying if you're into this type of game, though.

KRISTIAN – 8.5



PLAYSTATION 2

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3

BY THE NUMBERS

World Series Baseball's success is found solely within the numbers. In such, it's a better statistical simulator than it is a game. The fundamentals of gameplay are definitely in place, but rather than dazzling players, its on-field functionality is adequate at best. While the fielding proves to be very precise and true to the nature of the sport, the batting and pitching interface are of a different quality altogether. With repulsive swinging animations, non-existent contact points, and slow-as-molasses ball physics, one can't help becoming disinterested with the gameplay.

World Series does excel in the front office. In fact, nothing even comes close to touching its encyclopedic approach toward statistics. Almost every number is tracked for players, teams, and management. It even logs day-to-day happenings like hit streaks, milestones, and minor league activity. In this regard, it has the fantasy angle covered. So if your interest lies in playing, look elsewhere. However, if you simply want digits, World Series has them in spades. — **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Do yourself a huge favor and steer well clear of World Series Baseball 2K3. Sure, it has good stat tracking, but who cares? Am I playing a baseball game, or looking at a spreadsheet simulator? It's tantamount to building a car with great looking wheels, but no engine: Yeah, there are some nice features, but it becomes basically worthless when used.

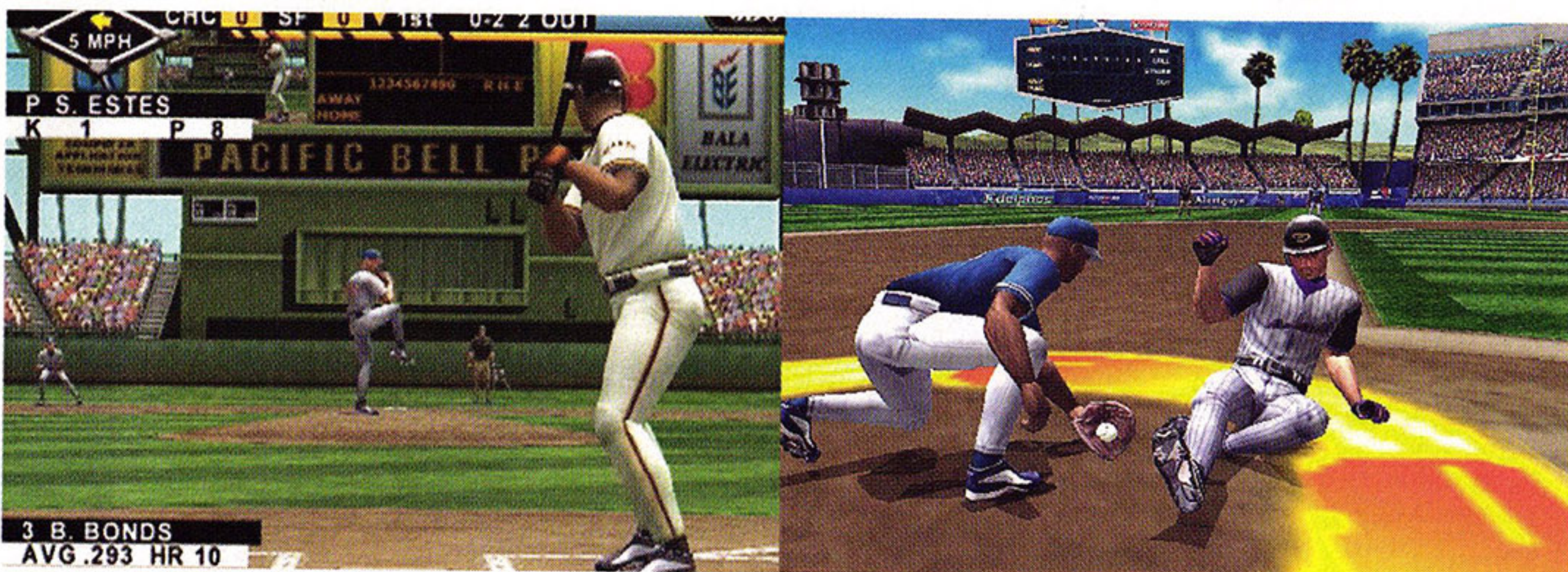
KRISTIAN - 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 6.75
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Processes statistics better than anyone, but the gameplay is fairly bland
- **Graphics:** Nice player models, but the animations — mainly swings — are a little rough
- **Sound:** Decent commentary and hilarious stadium sounds that include fans taunting well-known players
- **Playability:** The batting/pitching interface is generic, although the finesse of fielding is decent
- **Entertainment:** Simply put, the gameplay needs work
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** BLUE SHIFT/VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



PLAYSTATION 2

HIGH HEAT 2004

CHASING THE 2002 PENNANT

As irony would have it, the most improved baseball game of the year just happens to be the one that is in dire need of enhancement. The changes that 3DO has implemented are commendable, and the game has made significant strides forward in visual presentation and fantasy options; but the bar of excellence has been raised to a staggering new height, and High Heat doesn't even come close to touching it.

As the competition continues to push the boundaries of the genre, 3DO would appear to be content with simply matching last year's batch of games. It's still an incredibly accurate simulation, but in comparison to other games on the market, the batting/pitching interface is now old and clunky, the fantasy options are merely adequate, and the player models look like wax museum dummies. Basically, wherever High Heat succeeds, it's eclipsed by another game on the market. A decent game, but when competing against EA and Acclaim, it's too little, too late. — **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Outside of the extremely floaty ball physics, the gameplay is solid. However, a sometimes lazy camera, poor graphics, minor glitches, and a standard frontend keep High Heat out of the top again this year.

CHET - 7.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 7
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Despite drastic improvements, High Heat still falls short of the current benchmark
- **Graphics:** Although the animations are much smoother, the player models are still hideous
- **Sound:** Other than reiterating the pertinent in-game happenings, the commentary is dry
- **Playability:** The most accurate simulator on the market, but the gameplay shows its age
- **Entertainment:** Solid, but lacks the bells and whistles of the competition
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** 3DO
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 20



PLAYSTATION 2

MVP BASEBALL 2003

THE NAME SAYS IT ALL

From worst to first, EA dumped its struggling Triple Play franchise in favor of an upstart game that just happens to live up to its namesake as the most valuable baseball game of the year. With an innovative pitching interface that solves the age-old dilemma of every pitcher having sniper-like accuracy, and graphics that showcase authenticity in both player movement and TV-style broadcasting, nothing comes close to touching MVP's brilliant graphical flourishes and savvy gameplay mechanics. The fielding and base-running AI are particularly impressive as they both harness the truest of realism, yet still offer incredible gameplay functionality. With precise collision fields, the ball never magically jumps into a player's mitt. Players react realistically to every little hop. For instance, on a slow grounder in front of second, the player won't spin around to turn a double play — he'll lob it backhanded on the run. Authenticity along these lines cannot be found in any other baseball game.

The only area where MVP comes up a little short is in fantasy options. It doesn't record career statistics; CPU logic toward free agents is non-existent; sim statistics are a little outrageous; and it doesn't offer team creation.

Other than these small hiccups, MVP reigns as this season's baseball champion. — **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 9.25
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** EA's rookie franchise lives up to its name and takes baseball to the next level
- **Graphics:** Fluid, lifelike animations; detailed player models and stadiums; accurate collision fields; gorgeous out-of-play sequences
- **Sound:** Brilliant two-man commentary and perhaps the most realistic crowd noises in all of video game sports
- **Playability:** Fairly deep fantasy options and the most sophisticated fielding and pitching interfaces on the market
- **Entertainment:** Lacks the features of All-Star, but crushes the competition in graphics and gameplay
- **Replay Value:** High

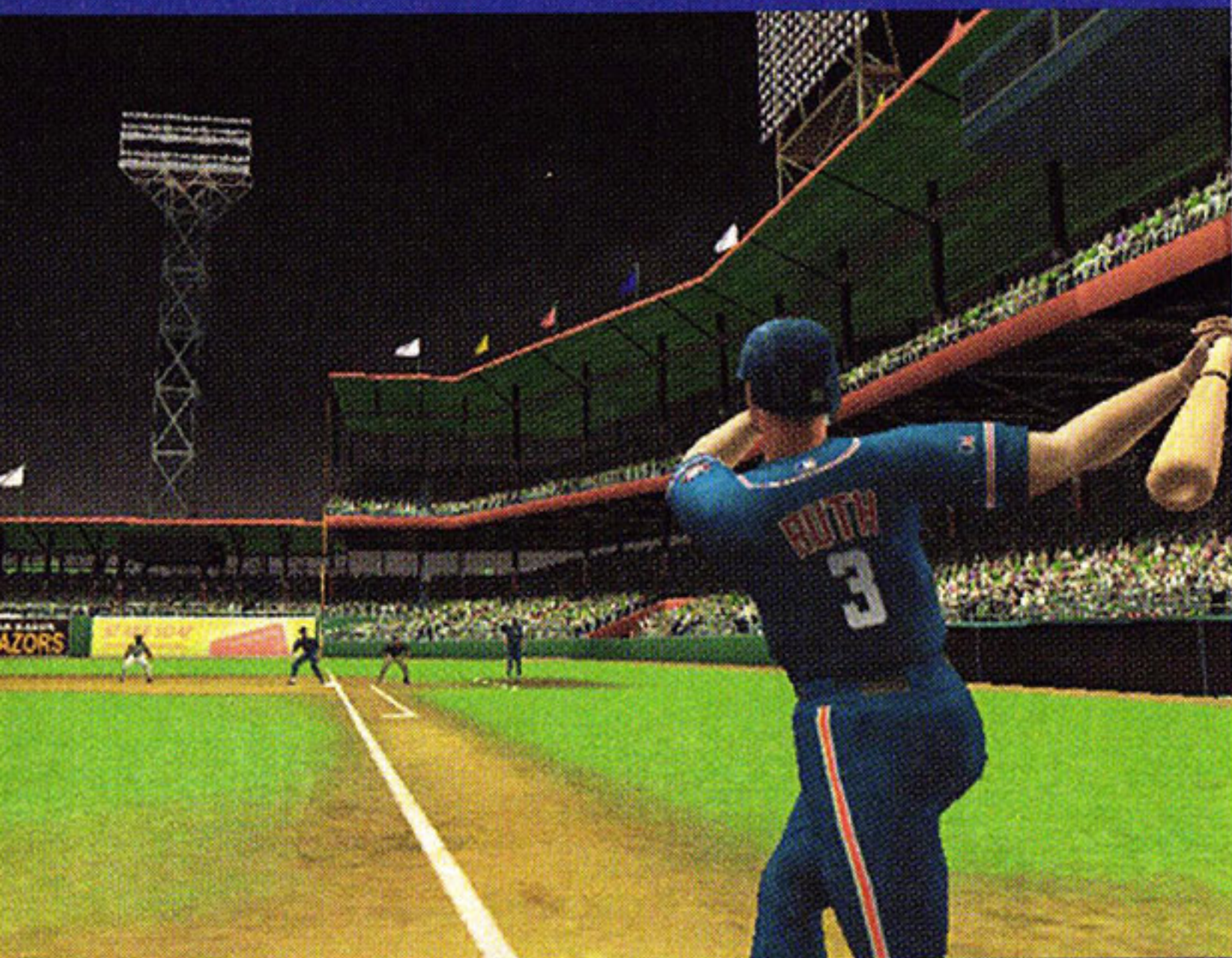
SECOND OPINION

Although it doesn't have a ridiculously extensive frontend like All-Star, the gameplay exceeds any baseball title to date! Furthermore, besides replicating the sim component with little error, the innovations to the pitching and battling interfaces keep games exciting and interesting from the first pitch to the last.

CHET - 9.5

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004

SAME GAME...NEW FEATURES

After being heralded as the best baseball game of 2002, All-Star Baseball has grown fat and complacent in the off-season. The fantasy options now boast immeasurable girth, but rather than beefing up the gameplay in a similar way, very little has changed on the field.

Instead of nailing down the aspects that count, Acclaim focused on the diversions that keep players away from the game itself. You can now tour stadiums and learn about their historical significance; unlock tons of videos and jerseys; and flashback to yesteryear with the legendary players that have been included. The online component that Acclaim was hoping to include was actually butchered at the last second and no longer includes online play – just downloadable rosters.

The gameplay itself is basically a recreation of last year's game with a few minor changes and additions. Fielders still make phantom catches, the CPU AI is buggy, replays are choppy, and the TV-style presentation hasn't changed a bit. It's not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination, but you can't help turning your head and wishing you were playing EA's MVP instead.

All-Star still has the best assortment of options and historical material, which will probably attract diehard enthusiasts, but if you just want a game that is fun to play, turn to EA. – **REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25



■ **Concept:**
 The frontend is overflowing with options, but little has been done to fix or enhance the gameplay

■ **Graphics:**
 Decent player modeling, beautiful stadium and crowd details, classy menus, lackluster TV-style camerawork and replays

■ **Sound:**
 Best soundtrack ever! I got goose bumps whenever I heard the theme song from *The Natural*

■ **Playability:**
 The managing options couldn't get much deeper, but the gameplay remains the same – complex, yet buggy

■ **Entertainment:**
 The bonus features are more engrossing than the actual gameplay

■ **Replay Value:**
 High

SECOND OPINION

The frontend smashes the competitors without a doubt. Not only will the extensiveness of the Career and other sim modes impress, players will be elated to see the numerous extras such as the trivia game and stadium tours. However, Acclaim seemingly took a vacation when it came time to update the gameplay and fix some annoying bugs.

CHET – 8.5



PLAYSTATION 2

MLB SLUGFEST 2004

FIELD OF SEAMS

The Minnesota Twins were one of the biggest stories in baseball last year. They went from contraction contenders to American League Central Division Champions. They were four, count 'em, four games away from the World Series, and yet they get no respect – at least from Midway. Doug Mientkiewicz (*min-kay-vitch*), the Twins' first baseman, *still* has his name mispronounced when he comes up to the plate. It was only annoying last year, but this year it's indicative of the overall level of Slugfest's quality.

Not only are old mistakes revisited in 2004, but the batting and fielding controls seem to have gotten worse. The hitting interface has become a high-end guessing game, with strikes and balls called in almost random fashion, and fielding is difficult even in the best of circumstances. Sure, hearing Jimmy Shorts make funny comments is entertaining, but the baseball that comes along with it is poor enough that I don't think it's worth suffering through. I know it's supposed to be an arcade game, but you've got to meet us halfway, fellas. Slugfest is a good game for people who want to either A) play a violent sports game for 20 minutes, or B) blow off some baseball-related steam. Next. – **KRISTIAN**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 17



PLAYSTATION 2

MLB 2004

THE UNDERACHIEVING UNDERDOG

If there is a word that best sums up my feelings for MLB 2004, it's "surprising." I wouldn't necessarily use it in the context of how bad it is, but rather how close it came to not being this year's worst baseball sim. It just doesn't have enough to pull itself out of the cellar that 989 Sports loves to dwell in. I do feel that the gameplay is better than Sega's World Series Baseball, as the batting interface is engaging and fielding is comprehensive. Despite what you may think, MLB actually has a thick coat of polish. The gameplay is incredibly smooth, the graphics are just a grade below MVP, and the frontend is loaded with unique options and modes.

Unfortunately, the game's pace is dreadfully slow. Even with the Fast Play option in full effect, you find yourself waiting for extended amounts of time between each pitch. To make matters worse, the statistics need balancing. My created player managed to shatter Bonds' single season home run mark in his rookie year by bashing 82 dingers. MLB's not a bad game by any stretch of the imagination; it's just that there are a handful of titles that are better. – **REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** 989 SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** 989 SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11

SECOND OPINION

Midway's attempt to spice up baseball comes at the cost of defense. Talk about catching on fire – you'll get torched by the bad fielding and basemen who don't tag runners out at the bag. Interestingly enough, I still don't think that the pace or excitement of the sport has improved with Midway's treatment.

KATO – 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

6

- **Concept:**
 Another arcadey baseball game from Midway
- **Graphics:**
 Funny animations for the players, but not much else
- **Sound:**
 The commentary is as entertaining as always
- **Playability:**
 Both the batting and fielding controls are mediocre at best
- **Entertainment:**
 A great game for people who don't like baseball
- **Replay Value:**
 Moderate

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

6.5

- **Concept:**
 MLB's next-generation debut has what it takes to compete, but not nearly enough to make it to the top
- **Graphics:**
 Transition animations are a little jerky; but, as a whole, the visuals are detailed
- **Sound:**
 The commentary is repetitive and the soundtrack blows
- **Playability:**
 A little slow, but the gameplay dynamics are commendable
- **Entertainment:**
 It still needs more in terms of gameplay and depth
- **Replay Value:**
 Moderate

WINNING ELEVEN 6

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11



EA. Sony. Thanks for keeping the throne warm, but the king is here. Winning Eleven 6 is the standard for how to make a great soccer title. WE 6 treats the players and the ball as separate entities. This allows for more realistic

headers and movements for players, and it lets the natural beauty and fluidity of the sport shine through. No more magnet soccer. Although it lacks real club teams, great depth is found in the franchise mode – which has promotion, relegation, transfers, and training. There's even a teamwork rating. Why just play soccer when you can play the "Beautiful Game?" – **KATO**

E 9

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 4



As convoluted as Hideo Kojima's story for MGS 2 was, I miss his input here. While you can certainly play Sons of Liberty with this title, I don't believe the extra material itself is worth a purchase if you've already

played the main game. Yes, the action is still exhilarating at times, but without Kojima's story and cinematics, I found Snake's Tales to be rather dry. If the extras alone have you thinking of a purchase, I suggest you rent it to be satiated. – **KATO**

M 8.5

VEXX

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



Vexx tries hard to be Mario's evil twin by duplicating many of the platforming superstar's gameplay elements and environments. Due to bad enemy pop-up, a lousy camera, and an abundance of crummy underwater

levels, it's bad in a different way than intended. Good luck collecting 100 coin-type items, as the counter is reset far too easily. I respect all the ambition that went into Vexx's minigames, power-ups and tasks; but, poor execution keeps this game from competing with Ratchet & Clank or Jak and Daxter. – **JUSTIN**

T 6.75

MOTOGP 3

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



A true career mode is needed to help flesh this collection of tracks out. The Simulation feature turns the physics dial past "hardcore," but anything less is too easy. Also, the AI is a pushover, while the collision lets you

smash into fellow riders with no effect. Finally, if this series would map its gas/brake onto the right analog stick, it could give you that smooth feeling as you dip into the curves. Until these changes are made, MotoGP will never give gamers that crotch rocket they are looking for. – **KATO**

E 7

JURASSIC PARK: OPERATION GENESIS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26



This is such an obvious use of the Jurassic Park license; it's too bad we had to sit through 10 years of crappy dino-blasting action games before Operation

Genesis. Simple in concept (Jurassic Park meets Sim Theme Park) and superb in execution, this is one of the best console business sims I've ever played. On top of the usual tasks (sanitation, food stands, etc.), Operation Genesis allows you to buy and sell fossils, send archeologists out on digs, research new amusements and dinosaur vaccines, take photos on a safari ride, or even shoot rampaging carnivores with sedative darts from a helicopter. Operation Genesis offers gamers a staggering amount of content to explore, and should keep you busy until well into the next ice age. – **MATT**

T 8.75

YU-GI-OH! THE DUELISTS OF THE ROSES

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



With over 850 unique cards, battle sequences that showcase Final Fantasy-like qualities, a deep story arc, and intelligent CPU adversaries, The Duelists of the

Roses is a bona fide hit and an absolute necessity for Yu-Gi-Oh enthusiasts. For those of you who know nothing about this property, you'll probably write this release off as yet another card game adaptation. If you have no interest in a title along these lines, by all means, flee while you still can. On the other hand, if a small portion of you has always wondered what a game like this is all about, this is the best card game that money can buy. – **REINER**

E 8

THE KING OF ROUTE 66

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



There is something inherently appealing about running roughshod over unsuspecting buildings and hapless motorists in an 18-wheeler, and therein lies the main appeal of King

of Route 66. Unfortunately, the fundamental flaw in a game like this is the fact that racing big rigs grows old quickly, due to the lumbering and slow nature of the vehicles. Where does that leave King of Route 66? Right smack dab in the middle of the road. The main career mode is a series of point-to-point and timed races, none of which are particularly memorable, but I did like the challenges and the Queen of Route 66 gem-collection modes. All in all, King of Route 66 is an entertaining, but ultimately disposable, driving title. – **MATT**

E 7



Goblin 3

Foree 110/
 Zombie 98/
 Dario 73/
 Fulcci 60/

PSONE

FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS

THE BIRTH OF...CID!

With the release of Final Fantasy Origins (FF I and FF II), U.S. gamers will finally have the opportunity to enjoy the entire series – Final Fantasy II for NES only appeared in Japan. If that reason alone isn't enough to convince you, Square will offer numerous other incentives that all connoisseurs of old-school gaming can appreciate.

Origins' presentation benefits from improved graphics and sound, as well as Square's beautiful CG sequences. Both titles approach SNES graphical standards, which is actually quite an overhaul considering their birthplace. The sound is excellent and the music consists of lovely tunes typical of the series.

The story and gameplay remain intact and feature only slight modifications. If you happened to play either title previously, you might notice that certain plot points are fleshed out and the combat has been tweaked.

If you still couldn't care less about Origins and only continue to read in order to gather ammo to slam us for being fan boys, then here you go: The package includes myriad secrets and unlockable junk (a gallery of Yoshitaka Amano's rendered illustrations is just one), and it all comes at a damn fine price point – thirty bucks! – **CHET**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT
 ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 8

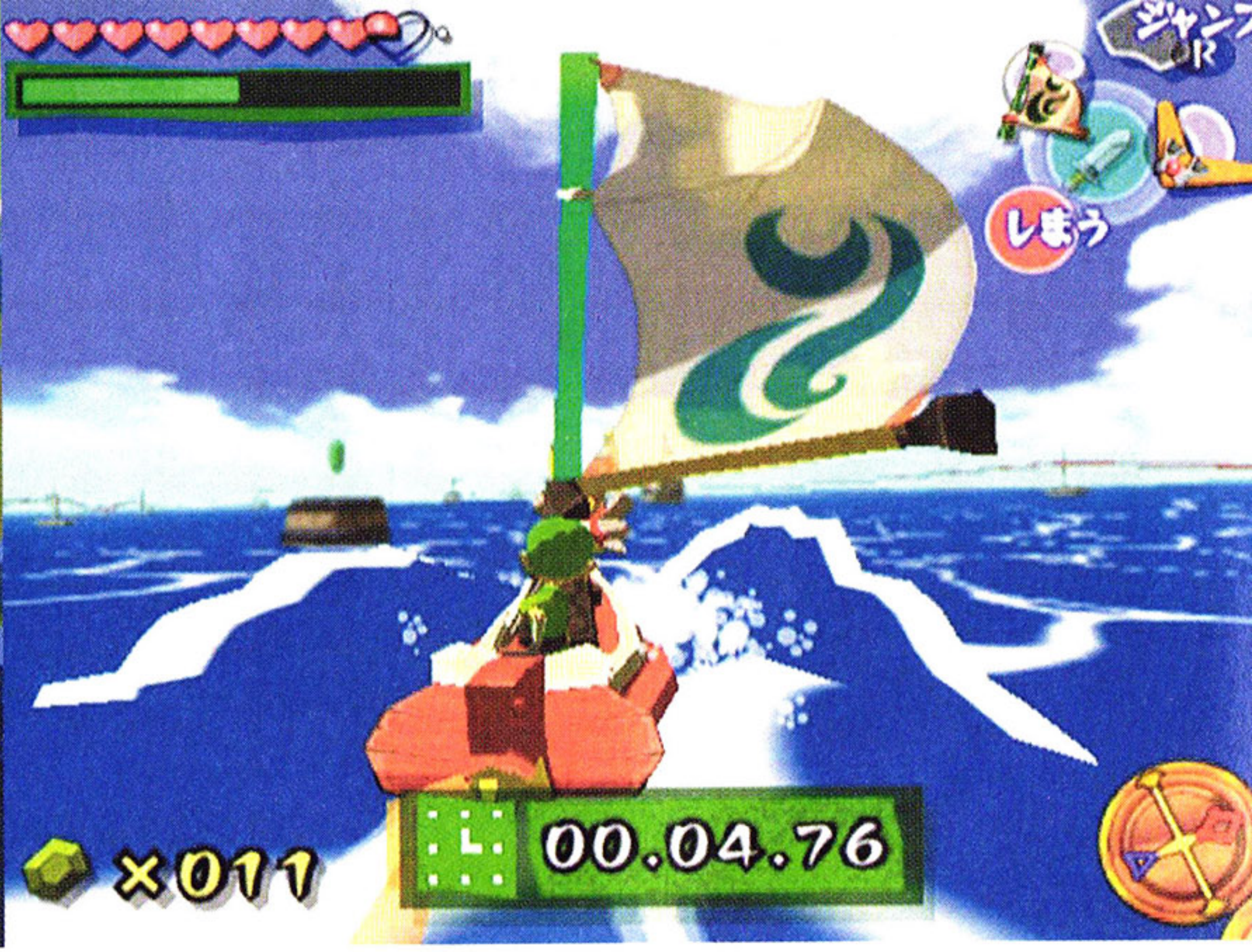
THE BOTTOM LINE
T 9.25

- **Concept:** Take the first two games in the series, improve the presentation, and offer some secrets
- **Graphics:** Not bad since they were originally NES titles
- **Sound:** The sound and music are wonderful, and of CD quality
- **Playability:** The added button maps make things convenient, but being forced to use the d-pad is annoying
- **Entertainment:** Both titles were fun to begin with, but the added material (graphics, story elements, and secrets) makes it more than worth a purchase
- **Replay Value:** High

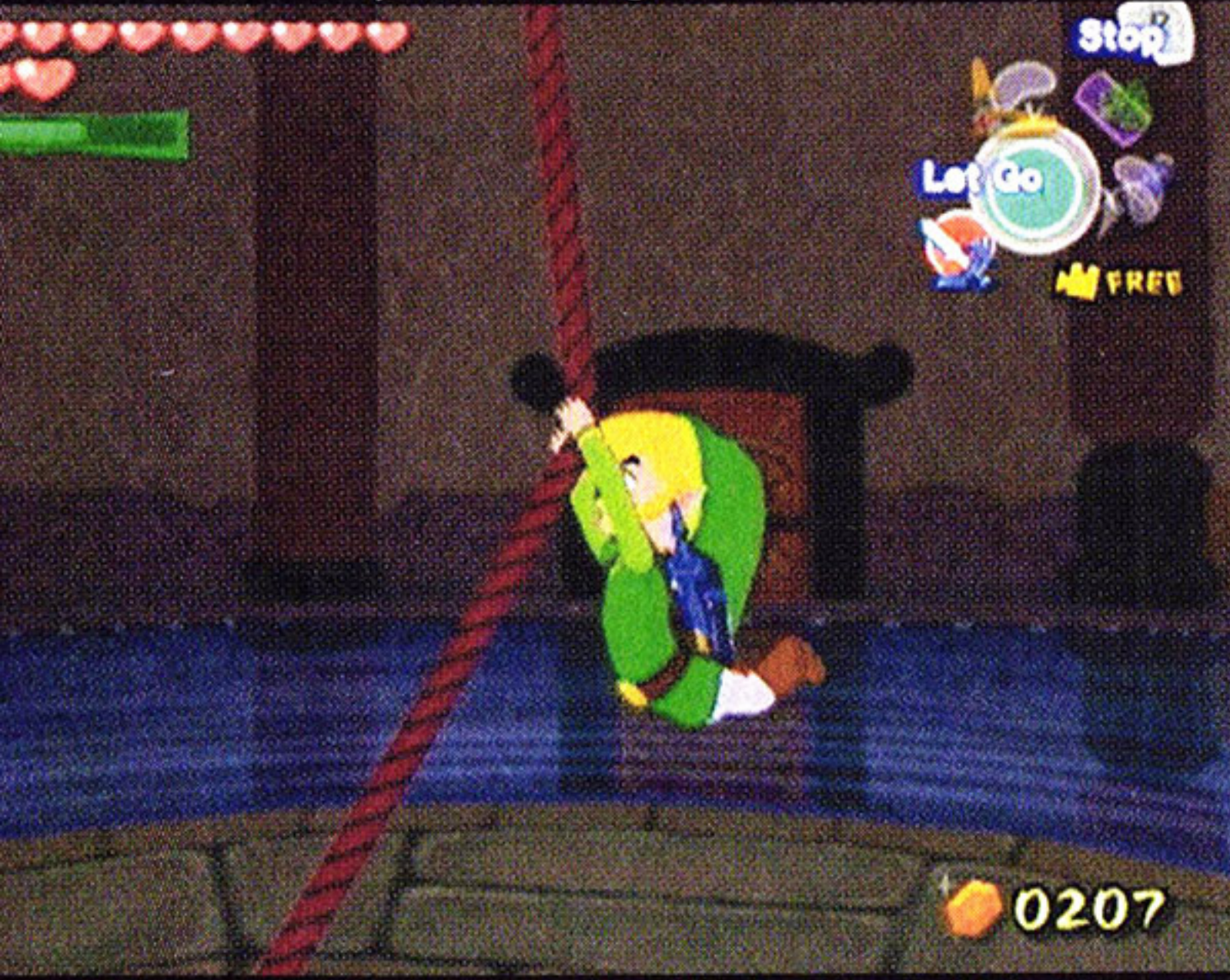
SECOND OPINION

These games would've been better served as a GBA compilation. I can't see spending dozens of hours playing them on a console when even previous Square collections (Anthology, Chronicles) put them to shame. Not enough was done to improve FF I's graphics or pacing. FF II's lack of obvious experience levels and easy deaths bothered me. For hardcore FF freaks only.

JUSTIN - 6.5



Activities on the seas include intense cannon fights with pirates and trolling for treasure



Link can now swing on ropes, and yes, this element is physics-based



This tornado attack is fast and effective, but it will leave Link dizzy afterwards

GAMECUBE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

LEAGUES ABOVE THE REST

I wouldn't necessarily call Shigeru Miyamoto obsessive, but it's obvious that this legendary game creator is infatuated with the world's most abundant substance. Recently, Mario got wet and wild in *Super Mario Sunshine*. Now, Link is abandoning the land of Hyrule in favor of the high seas. While it may seem like video games' most respected visionary has fallen off his rocker into a dirty puddle, the results produced from the inclusion of this element throughout this game are concrete proof of his astute judgement and unrivaled creative genius.

In taking *Zelda* to the next level, Miyamoto stuck with gameplay basics that have worked in the past and added a gimmick. In many respects, this game is essentially *The Ocarina of Time* meets Kevin Costner's *Waterworld*. That may sound atrocious; but, in actuality, it's the perfect wedlock of gameplay and design. Like *Super Mario Sunshine*, this *Zelda* is built upon its 64-bit lineage. While the gameplay still fits like a glove, the quest itself unfolds quite differently and feels completely foreign at times. Rather than returning to the familiar confines of a small kingdom, this adventure takes place on an ever-expanding ocean. The islands and dungeons that you'll traverse are but pebbles in this enormous body of water. In such, a good portion of the game revolves around Link navigating the seas in his boat.

Not only will you have the ability to unearth sunken treasures by sending your grapple to the seafloor; your bombs double as cannonballs, and you can map out the endless ocean on a nautical chart. While deep and overflowing with variety, you almost spend too much time getting your sea legs. As with every *Zelda* before it, *Wind Waker's* body and soul resides in its trademark dungeon exploring, combat, and puzzles. It's a nice complement; but, while you're at sea, you're thinking about what the next stretch of the game will be like. This aspect is great for building suspense, but it can be viewed as the way Nintendo chose to drag out the quest and keep people playing for eons. Believe me when I say that you'll be lost at sea for ages if you wish to uncover every secret.

Outside of this trivial complaint, *Wind Waker* is nothing short of flawless. I love the Nintendo 64 games, but the muddy texturing was unacceptable. This time, Link's world unfolds with the beauty of an animated Disney film. Some people

may still be bitter at Miyamoto for axing the mature, realistic look in favor of the new cel-shading; but, once you see it in action, it's impossible to complain. My jaw was on the floor for a good portion of the quest. I think you'll agree that the look of the game harnesses the essence of the 16-bit classic *A Link to the Past*; and elaborates upon it with silky smooth animations, incredibly detailed character models, and lush living landscapes. It's one of the best – if not the best – looking game on the market.

I won't ruin too many of the surprises, but I will say that the story is fairly puzzling. It's still a variation on the clichéd "boy saves girl" theme, but the way that it's presented is quite different and a nice change of pace for the series. Since *Majora's Mask* was basically a side story along the lines of *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wind Waker* is developed as a sequel to *Ocarina of Time*. You can only imagine what kind of twists and turns are in store.

I wanted to save the best for last, and if you've played a *Zelda* game before, you know exactly what's coming. I didn't think the gameplay could get any better than in *A Link to the Past*, but I was proven wrong when *Ocarina of Time* hit the market. The same goes for *The Wind Waker*. The gameplay dynamic hasn't changed much between generations, but it's grown into something far greater, deeper, and more complex than one can fathom. New solutions to puzzles, uses for items and gadgets, and rip-roaring sword combat run rampant throughout this game. Link can now counter enemy moves by leaping over their heads or rolling around to their backside. The dungeons are the best the series has seen, and are ripe with newfangled ideas and the most menacing of bosses. However, since the core mechanics are 64-bit, some of the puzzles and boss strategies are recycled to a certain degree. But, as the *Zelda* games do so well, just when you feel comfortable and at ease with your environment and gameplay; it rears up and hits you smack dab in the face with an innovative and completely mind-blowing new idea.

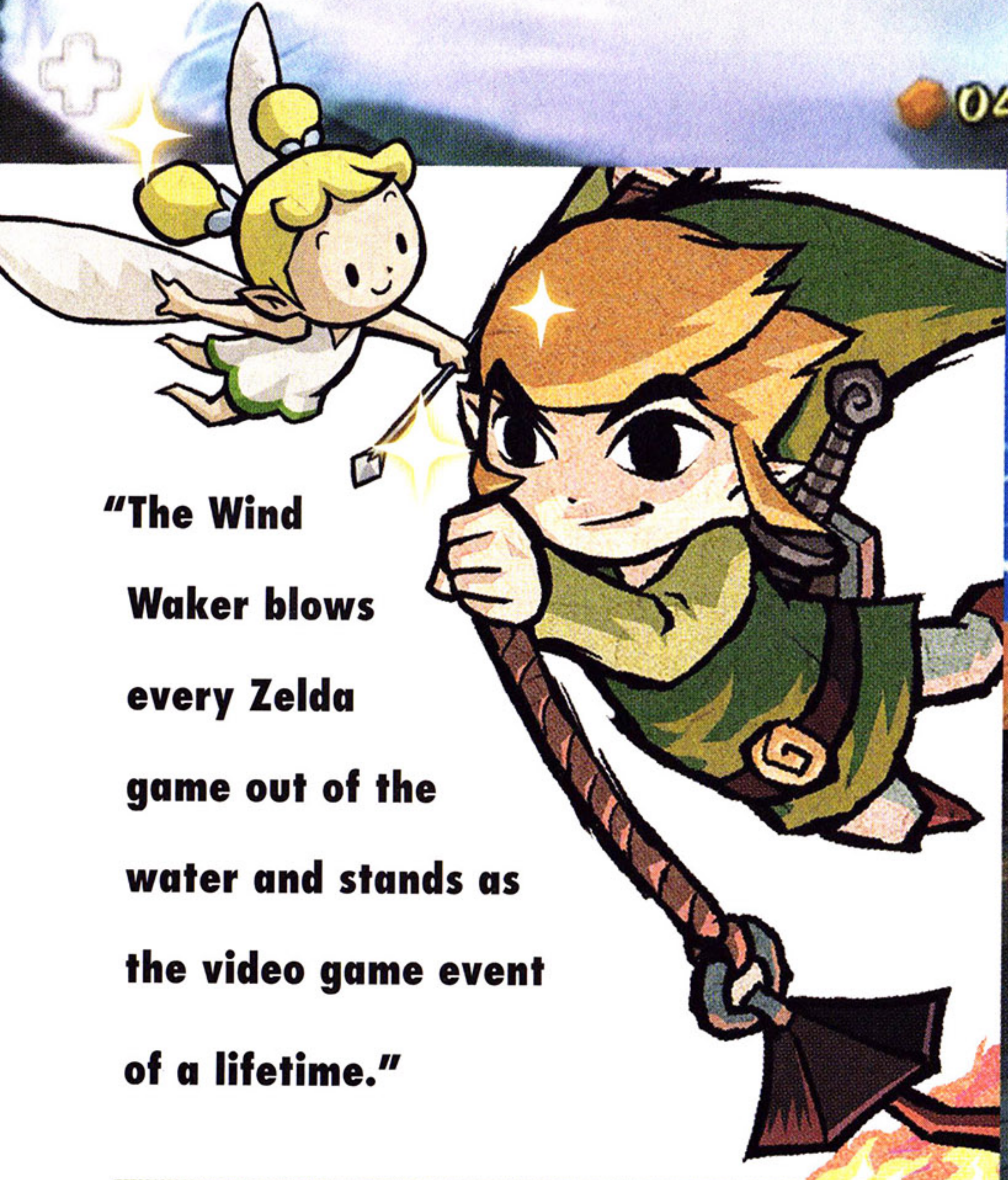
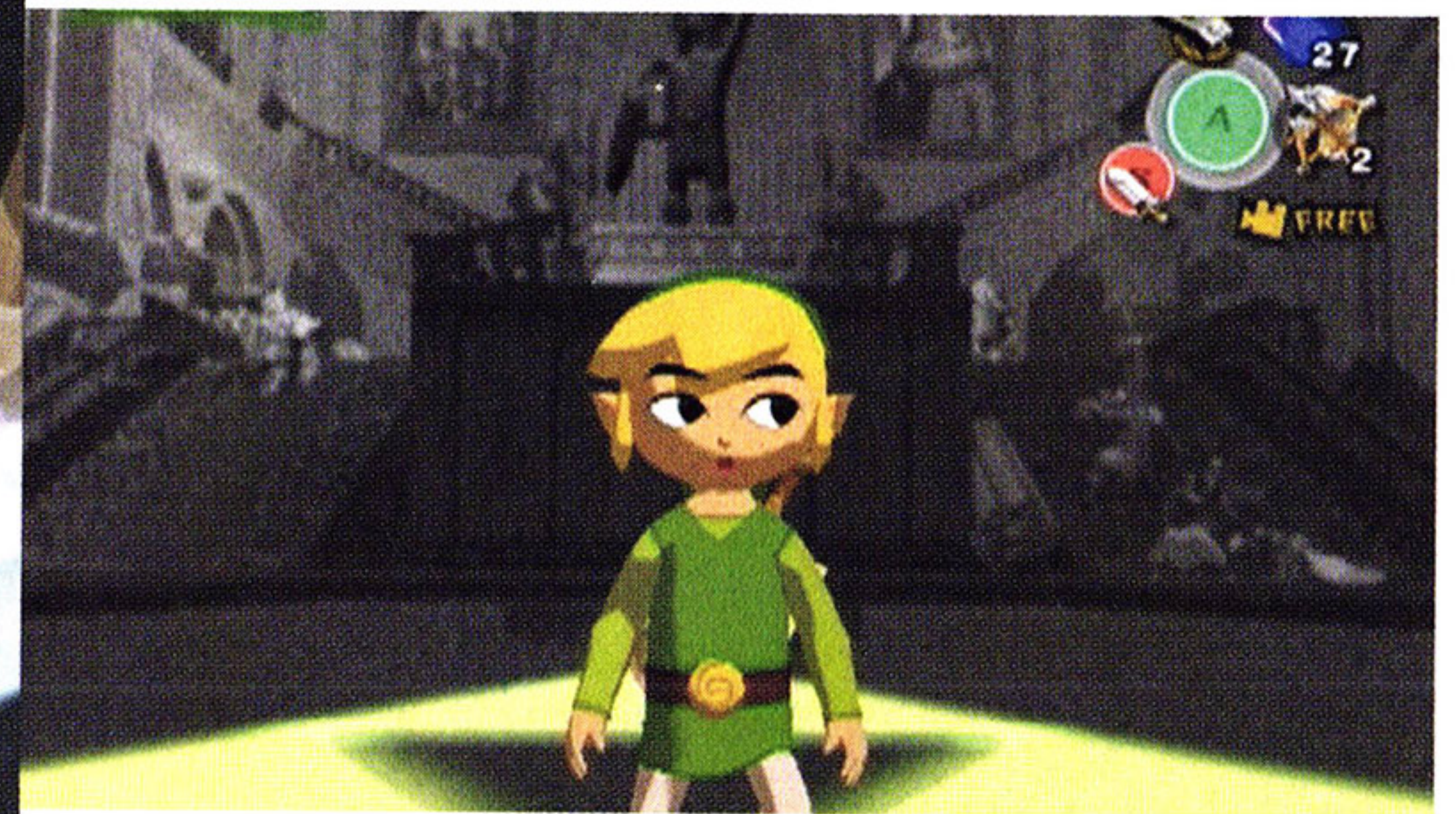
The Wind Waker blows every *Zelda* game out of the water and stands as the video game event of a lifetime. It's an absolute necessity for anyone who considers themselves a gamer. — REINER

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER NINTENDO ■ RELEASE MARCH 24

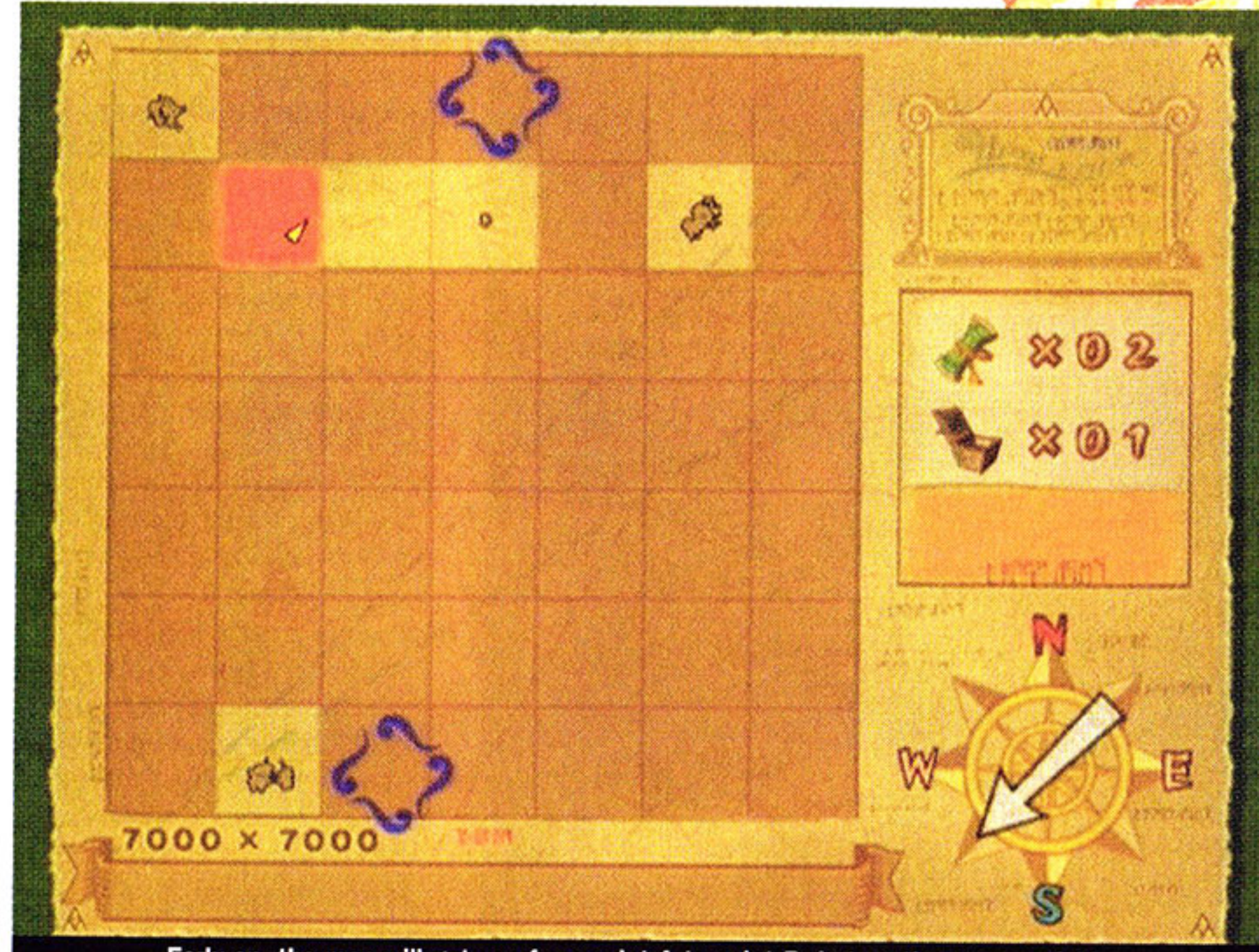


GAME OF THE MONTH

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER



"The Wind Waker blows every Zelda game out of the water and stands as the video game event of a lifetime."



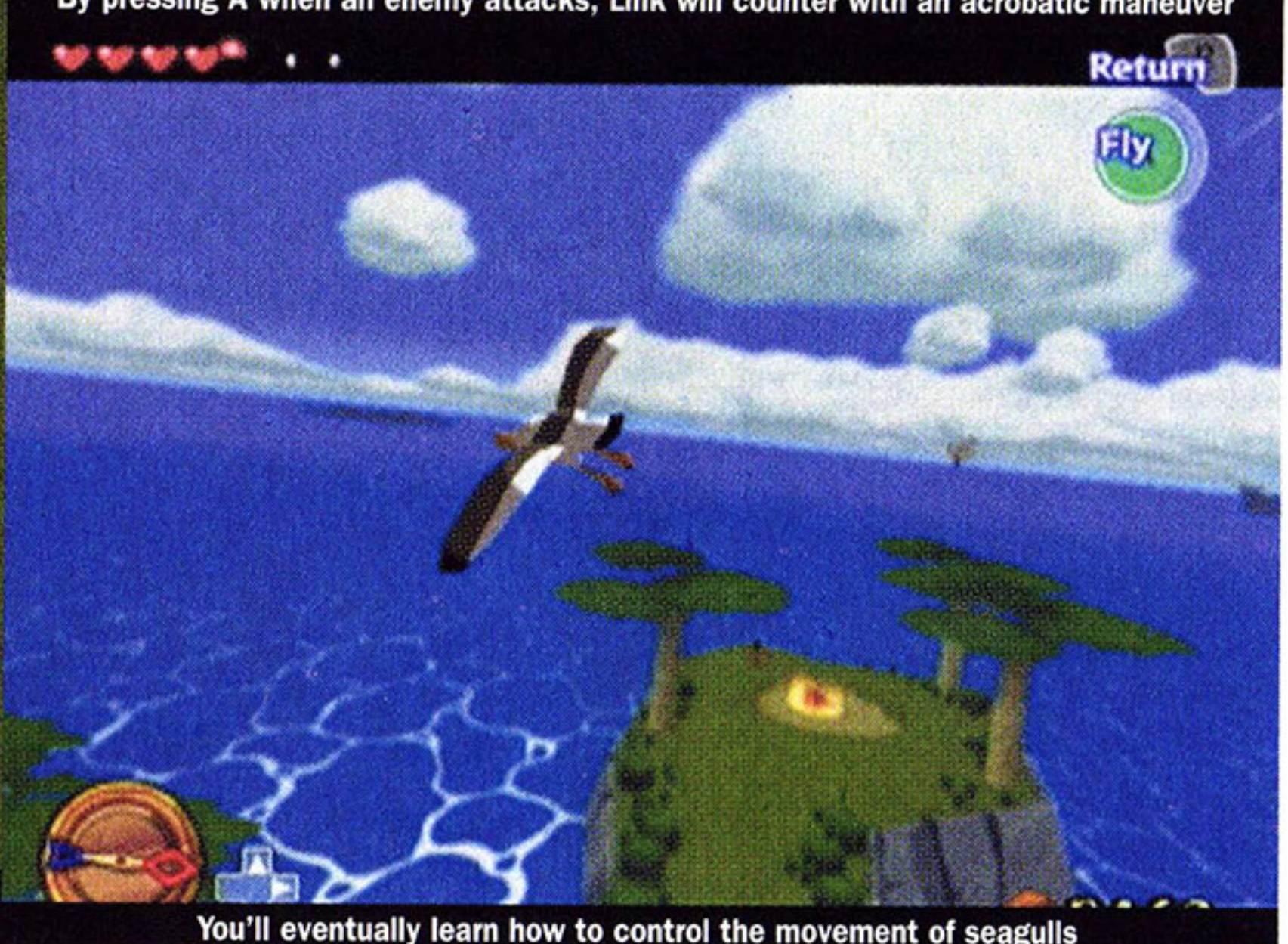
Early on, the map will get you from point A to point B, but as the game unfolds, it will show you the locations of hidden treasures and more



Minigames are scattered all across the land



By pressing A when an enemy attacks, Link will counter with an acrobatic maneuver



You'll eventually learn how to control the movement of seagulls

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

10

- **Concept:**
Zelda meets *Waterworld* in this brilliantly conceived sequel to *Ocarina of Time*
- **Graphics:**
From the fluid animations to the colorful backdrops, this is the closest a game has come to mimicking a cartoon
- **Sound:**
Sticks to the familiar melodies and sound effects. Even though the graphics have evolved, the game still lacks spoken dialogue
- **Playability:**
Incredibly deep, ingenious, and an absolute blast to play
- **Entertainment:**
It's lengthy, nothing short of addictive, and easily the most engrossing and finely polished GameCube title yet
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Like about a million other gamers out there, I was upset with the unveiling of "Cel-da," and made more than my fair share of smart comments about the new art direction Miyamoto was taking with one of my most beloved franchises. However, once you sit down and start playing the game, all references to the "I want to be a dentist" elf in *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* fly out the window; and you find yourself lost in this masterpiece. Big portions of the game are very similar to *Ocarina of Time*, but there are a number of new additions – like the sailing and tag-teaming in dungeons – that push the gameplay and this adventure to the top of the modern-era Zeldas. There are a couple of times when the sailing really bogs this title down, but that's the only knock I have against *The Wind Waker*. Otherwise, it's perfect.

ANDY – 9.75

REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

SUMMONER: A GODDESS REBORN

SUMMON THE RPG

I'll be the first to admit that Summoner has a few problems; but, for whatever reason, I am utterly mesmerized by it. Each time I sit down for a session, it gets more difficult to stop playing – and this is my second time through!

The root of Summoner's pleasure is how it balances a wide variety of gameplay without ever feeling too overwhelming. Players take on the role of Maia, the queen of a land called Halassar, who must battle numerous enemies and bosses in a seemingly typical RPG manner. Along the way, you'll have to maintain the happiness of your kingdom, pass judgement on civilian petitions, and complete myriad sidequests.

The combat itself is real-time with three members to a party. While the AI for your allies is more than adequate, players can switch to any team member on the fly. Since each protagonist sports a number of unique special techniques and magic spells, players have access to an abundance of combat tactics.

Summoner's problems aren't insignificant (clunky animation, a slightly spastic camera, and occasional pauses in combat), but they don't seriously detract from the overall experience. If you missed Summoner 2 for the PS2, this is a must-buy for fans of RPGs and dungeon crawlers. – **CHET**



Concept:

This a great dungeon crawler with an epic story and a unique cast of characters

Graphics:

The graphics are decent, and actually look a tad better than the PS2 version

Sound:

The effects and music are good, and even sound slightly richer than Summoner 2

Playability:

The controls are precise and the button maps comfortable, although manipulating the camera is sometimes a pain

Entertainment:

A long RPG with variety and tons to explore

Replay Value:

High

SECOND OPINION

After the first battle, I was ready to write Summoner off as just another stilted hack n' slash bore. However, I stuck it out and slowly began to realize just how complex this game really is. Volition definitely places an emphasis on the RPG side of this action/RPG, and you'll be astounded at the degree of depth there is in the multifaceted skill system, party combat dynamics, and seemingly endless sidequests. If only the camera wasn't so damn annoying!

MATT – 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **DEVELOPER** CRANKY PANTS GAMES/VOLITION
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4



GAMECUBE

DEF JAM VENDETTA

EA'S BRICK CITY MASHIN'

Def Jam Vendetta is just as rambunctious as NBA Street, yet shies away from the arcade element just enough to be considered comparable to WWF No Mercy. In a sense, it combines the best from both worlds to create a commanding gameplay package.

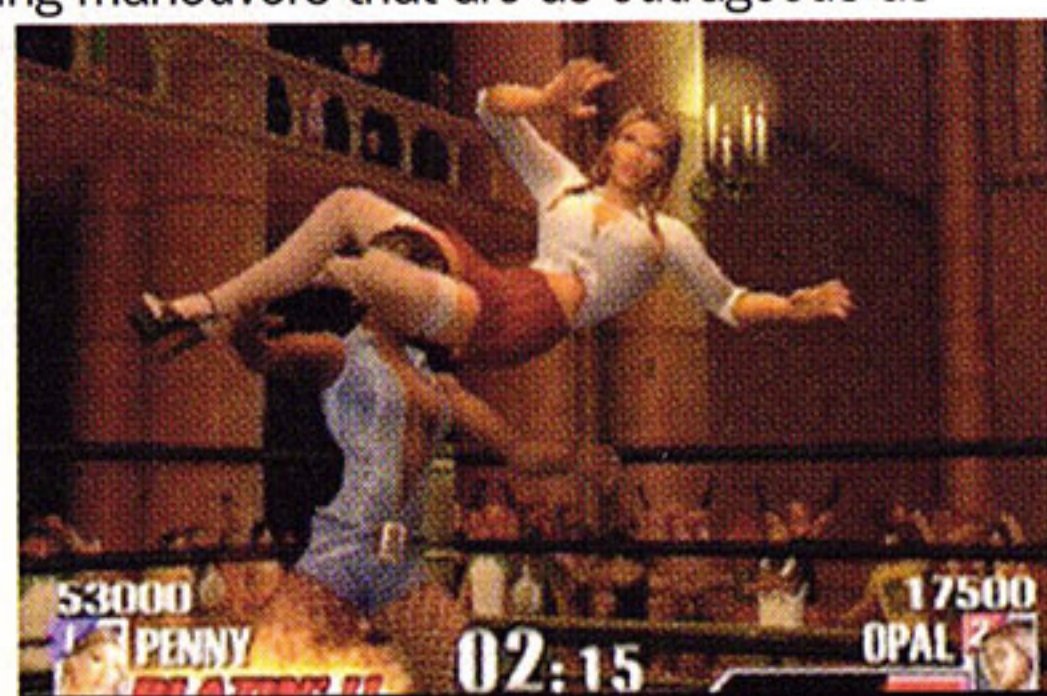
Honestly, I had my reservations about this game at first. The idea of stepping into the shoes of a rapper rather than a recognizable wrestler didn't exactly come across as an idea that any sane person would endorse. I quickly learned, however, that I couldn't care less about the characters – it just had to play well.

AKI has always developed the highest quality wrestling games, and Def Jam falls right in line with the company's previous successes. It may not have the depth that wrestling fans expect – such as character creation, gimmick matches, or the largest assortment of moves – but the fundamentals of play are of a much higher quality than any other game in the genre. The character movements are quick, the collision fields are precise, and the play mechanics are concise.

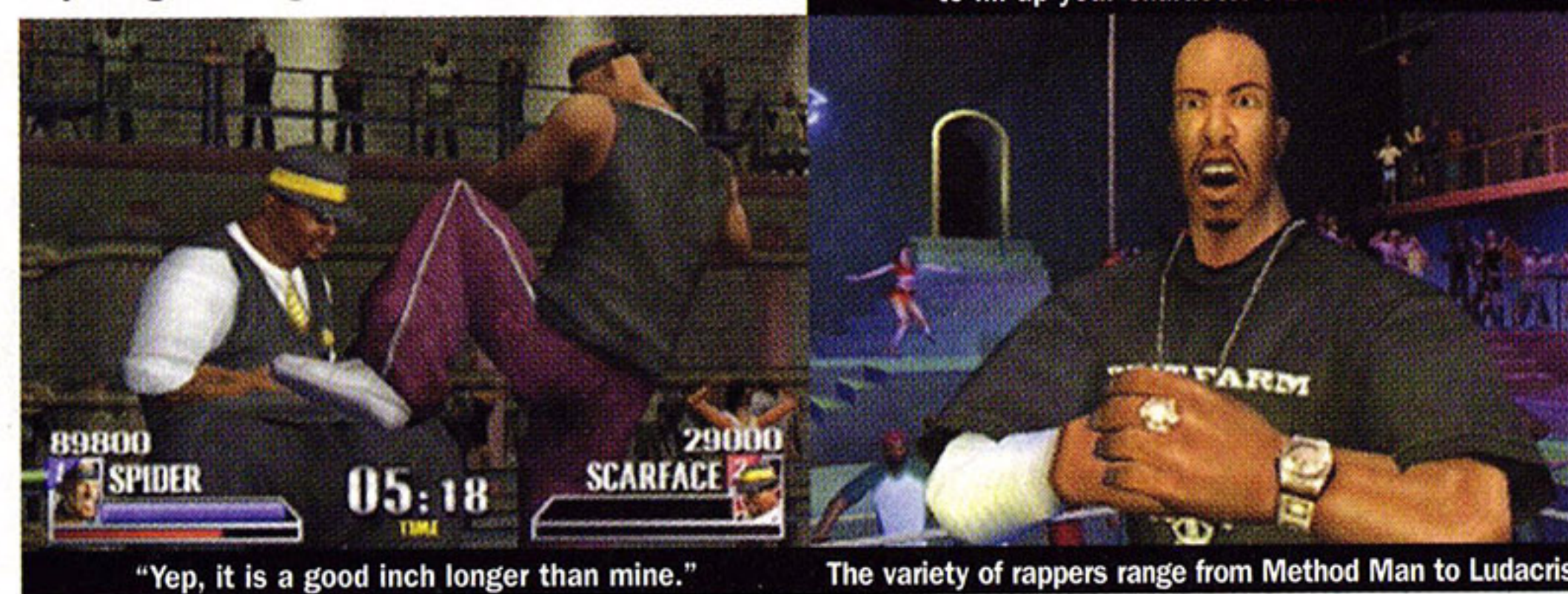
If I had to compare it to another game or series, I'd have to say that Def Jam is essentially the heir apparent to AKI's Nintendo 64 work. The engine seems very much one in the same. To coincide with EA BIG's over-the-top angle, AKI exaggerated upon some of the moves (primarily the finishers) to create bone-crunching maneuvers that are as outrageous as Mortal Kombat's Fatalities.

While the selection of modes is quite slim, Def Jam excels in delivering intriguing plot twists within its Story mode. Of all things, players even have the ability to pick their wrestler's girlfriend. As you defeat foes, you'll earn cash that can be used to improve your character's attribute points – or better yet – to buy sultry pictures of your lovely lady.

It may not have Vince McMahon's seal of approval, but it lays the smackdown on anything bearing the WWE name. – **REINER**



To perform a devastating finisher like this headscissors, you'll first need to fill up your character's Blazin' meter



"Yep, it is a good inch longer than mine."

The variety of rappers range from Method Man to Ludacris

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **DEVELOPER** AKI CORPORATION
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 24

THE BOTTOM LINE



Concept:

Even without the WWE license, Def Jam sets a new standard for the wrestling genre

Graphics:

It's almost frightening how detailed the character models are. The animations and collision are also outstanding

Sound:

The soundtrack is brimming with classic rap, and the spoken dialogue is amusing

Playability:

Trademark AKI – incredible finishing moves, linkable combos, and comprehensive controls

Entertainment:

Lacking in modes, but the gameplay soars above any other wrestling game

Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Since the only other wrestling games for GC up to this point have been pitiful, calling Def Jam Vendetta the best grappler on the console means virtually nothing. While it's missing some of the more popular features in the genre (gimmick matches, create-a-wrestler), its gameplay is captivating enough to entertain. The AKI wrestling engine, while simplified a bit here, still shows its superiority over anything Yuke's has done. I like where the Story mode takes me, and my fear of the rappers ruining Vendetta's credibility wasn't justified. They're just like any other game's bosses. I like how NBA Street's style of character-building and trick points have been incorporated, and extras like catfights are welcome diversions. It doesn't stack up to Street in terms of overall fun and addiction, but it is a damn good fighting game.

JUSTIN – 8.5



GAMECUBE

RED FACTION II

BETTER OFF RED

I've heard that Red Faction II was a sales disappointment on PlayStation 2, and I can't for the life of me understand why. It's definitely one of the best console first-person shooters on any system; packed to the hilt with blistering gunplay; a great selection of weapons; and Volition's signature Geo-Mod engine, which allows you to blow up whole sections of the environment.

The "let's stop an oppressive military government in the future" plotline isn't particularly compelling, but the same could be said for about 90 percent of all games. Put it this way – it gives you enough reason to go kill a bunch of evil soldiers in a multitude of cool ways. Good enough? In terms of gameplay, Red Faction II shines, and I was really pleased by the intelligent way in which the enemies retreat and take cover. My only complaints are the too-frequent mid-level loading times; and the fact that the Geo-Mod engine isn't really used to its full potential, as there are only a few arbitrary places where you can use it in each level. Despite these minor concerns, Red Faction II will be a relief for Nintendo fans suffering from a case of Halo envy. – **MATT**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** CRANKY PANTS/OUTRAGE GAMES/VOLITION ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26

SECOND OPINION

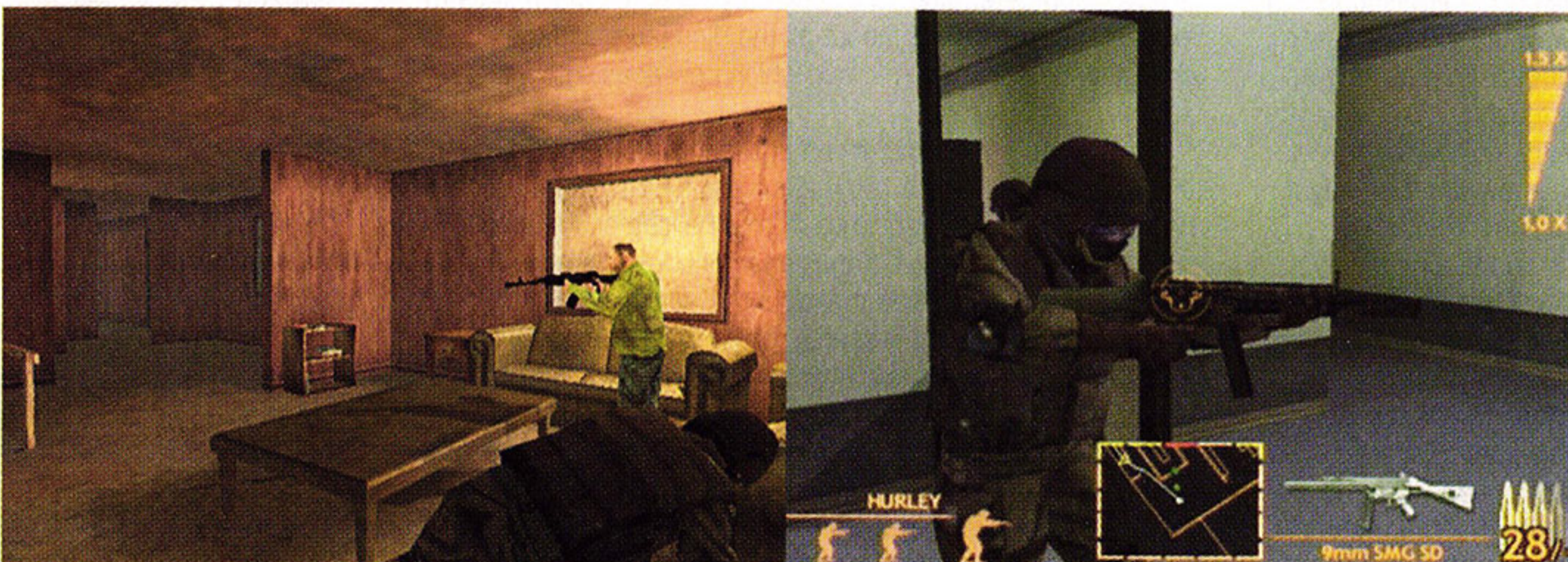
Red Faction II and its Geo-Mod engine rock on GC. The graphics are much improved and even the controls feel a bit tighter. Unfortunately, unlike the Xbox version, the GC didn't get any additional maps or player models for the multiplayer component. Still, if you're done with Medal of Honor, Red Faction II should be next on your list.

CHET – 8.75

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
8.75

- **Concept:**
A kick-ass addition to the GameCube's thin library of first-person shooters
- **Graphics:**
Improved textures and lighting mean RF 2 looks even better on the 'Cube
- **Sound:**
Predictably stilted dialogue and functional music
- **Playability:**
Features accurate control and customizable button mapping. For some reason, climbing ladders is a pain
- **Entertainment:**
The "three Vs" (variety, violence, and Volition) make for one hell of a ride
- **Replay Value:**
High



GAMECUBE

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

CASHING IN

There's nothing wrong with squeezing a license a little bit; but when that squeezing has absolutely nothing to do with the original premise, there's a problem. The Sum of All Fears is basically just a rehashed Ghost Recon. The allusions to the movie's plot are few and far between, and there's basically no correlation with the book (which is fabulous, by the way). There's a bad cutscene depicting the Super Bowl bomb, but other than that, you're basically put in a bunch of cookie-cutter situations (infiltrate the base, rescue the hostages, etc.) and set loose.

How you finish the assorted missions given to you can be fun if you're in a stealthy mood, but make no mistake – this is not a high-end game. The sounds, graphics, and controls are all painfully ported from the PC, and all of them are worse for wear. I do like the hyper-realism that only a Clancy title can bring, but the GameCube version of this game seems to have all of the wind taken out of its sails by a weak processor and a preoccupied developer. SoAF is a great example of a big fat no-no. – **KRISTIAN**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 15

SECOND OPINION

Never before have I wondered if my game was broken or bugged-out more than I have with the Sum of All Fears. Just moving without the framerate dropping rapidly is a rare occurrence. On top of this, the controls are very sluggish, the texturing is as bland as can be, and your teammate AI exhibits the intelligence of a dead goldfish. Avoid it like you would a rubber glove strip search.

REINER – 2

THE BOTTOM LINE

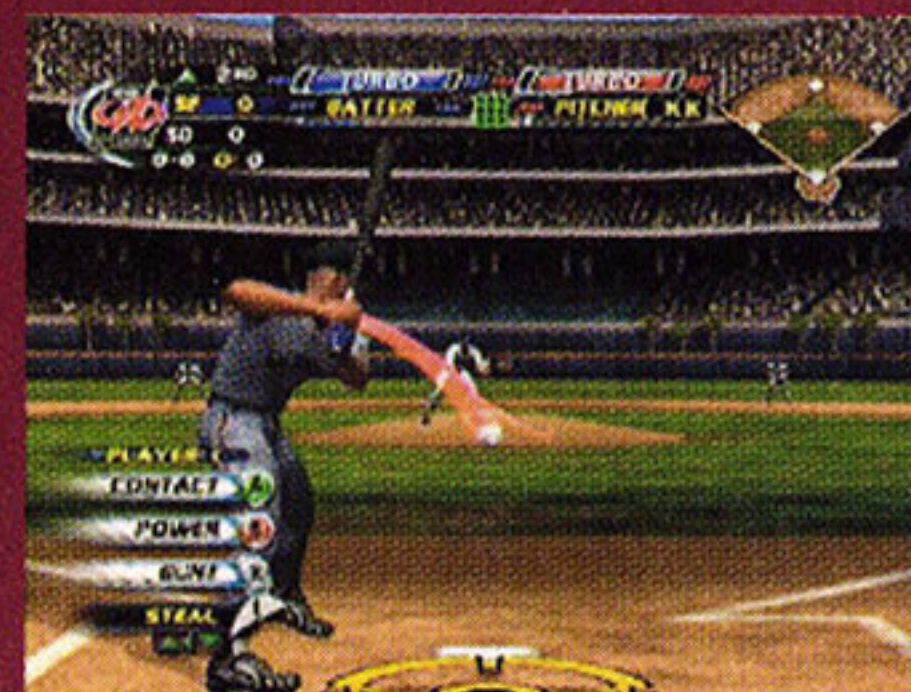
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
5.5

- **Concept:**
Shoot terrorists in blocky environments that have nothing to do with the movie
- **Graphics:**
See above
- **Sound:**
Some decent ballistics sounds, but everything else is pretty rudimentary
- **Playability:**
The controls have definitely been dumbed down from the PC version
- **Entertainment:**
You'll have much more fun waiting for Splinter Cell than you will playing this title
- **Replay Value:**
Low

GAMECUBE

MLB SLUGFEST 2004

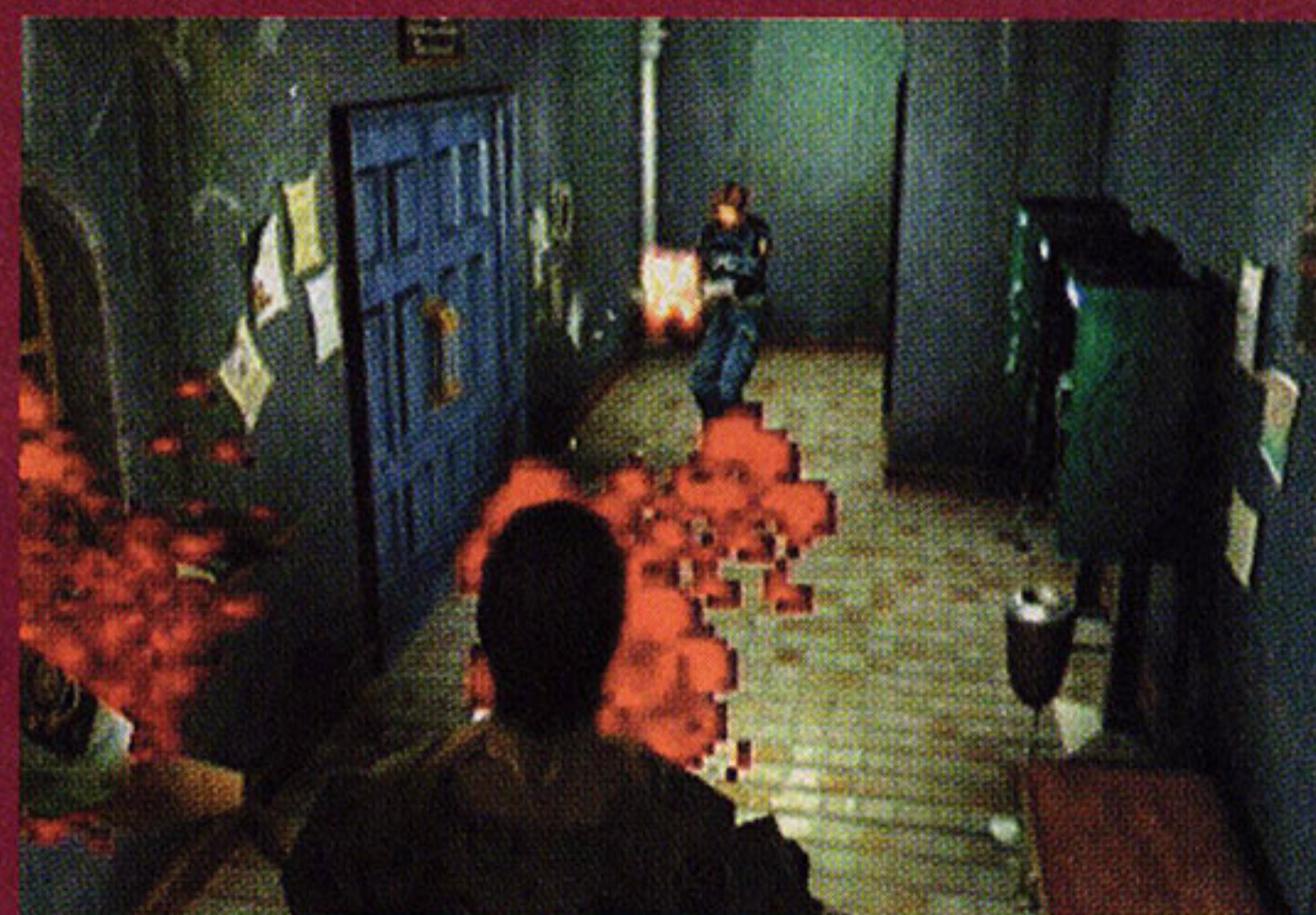
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 17



The arcade approach will certainly appeal to fans who cannot bear the sport's pace. The solid controls, outrageous presentation, and simple interface make it perfect for dorm room antics.

However, pitching lacks hardly any skill or technique; Slugfest unmodestly violates basic rules; and it has an extremely poor frontend. If you're looking for something more impressive, you'd be better off keeping your hopes up for Crushed Baseball. – **CHET**

MATURE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
6.75



GAMECUBE

RESIDENT EVIL 2

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 16

I'm about to lay one giant egg of a cliché: If you've never played RE 2 before, the GameCube version is worth a purchase. If, on the other hand, you peed yourself with the PSone iteration, feel free to skip this port without guilt. Even though the game is five years old – and hasn't changed – the graphics (outside of cinemas and particle effects) hold up surprisingly well. Of course, the other things that make a survival horror game good still hold true: sound, suspense, storyline, and action make RE 2 a classic on any platform. – **LISA**

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
8

GAMECUBE

RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 16



Although certainly not revered for epic plot development, this direct port delivers suspense that can scare anyone into palpitations. Comparatively, the graphics and

controls are slightly better than RE 2; but Nemesis just doesn't hold as much classic appeal as its predecessors. Worth owning if you're an RE freak or new to the series, but everyone else can rest easy knowing this isn't a must-have. – **LISA**

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
7.75



"Sacrificing a baby herbivore for the purposes of carnivore feasting, spectator delight, and your subsequent profits is your first quandary."

XBOX

JURASSIC PARK: OPERATION GENESIS

SMOTE THE GOAT!

I know you. You used to tear the legs off of grasshoppers to watch them flounder and die. How would you like to see goats ripped apart by prehistoric teeth? Hey, as long as you pay, what do I care what your sick fetish is? Did I peg you wrong? Maybe authenticity is what you're looking for in your replicated dinosaur environment. I can show you that – right down to the ecosystem. Such is the fun and freedom of Jurassic Park. I'd say that as mundane as the sim genre usually seems, in its own way, Operation Genesis grapples with, and captures, the essential core of the movie better than any previous effort.

For example, there are ethical questions to ponder. Do you satiate the thrill-seeking park goers who want to see a tyrannosaurus rex rip flesh from the bone of an edmontosaurus? Or would you rather cater to "Dino Nerds" through nonviolent authenticity? Sacrificing a baby herbivore for the purposes of carnivore feasting, spectator delight, and your subsequent profits is your first quandary. Isn't it authentic to let a carnivore hunt its natural prey? If it doesn't, you'll have to live with it going on a destructive rampage when its stress levels get too high. Of course, you could raise a prairie of grazing herbivores, but the money's not as good. Either way, this game gives you many opportunities to construct the Jurassic Park that you want – even if this idea changes and

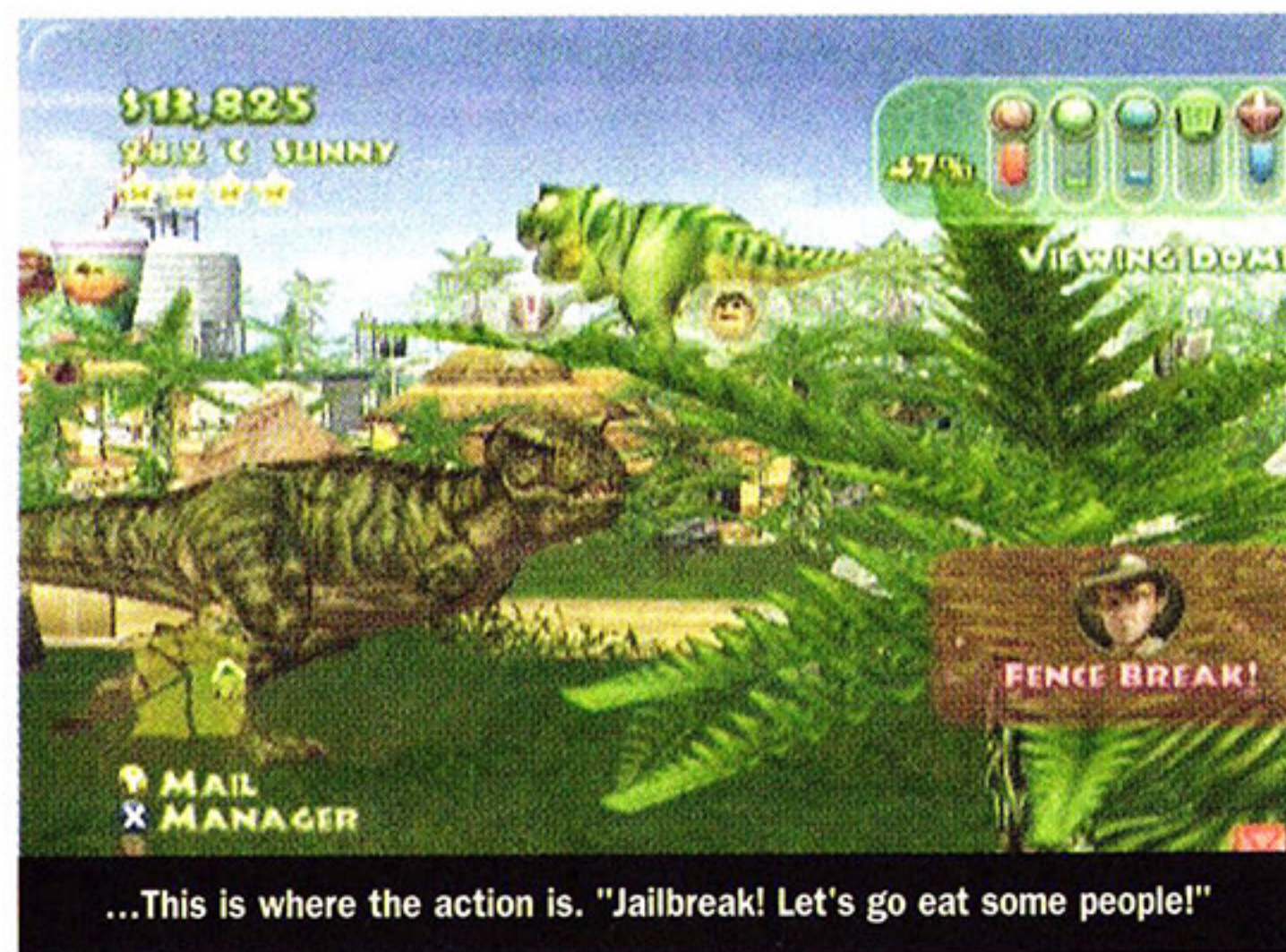
evolves. You determine your course by selecting which sites to excavate. I like studying about all the dinosaurs and then changing the ecosystem to suit which new beasts I want to add.

If you're looking for the action of the movie, there's some of that here, too. Dinosaur jailbreaks must be handled through a first-person shooting sequence from a helicopter. Personally, I wish the game had more hands-on interludes similar to this, but I was busy enough on the ground. Keeping an eye on customers, performing research, building new attractions, and maintaining the health and number of the dinosaurs in my park keeps a smile on my face.

In comparison to most titles in the genre, Operation Genesis has many of the standard features. There is a good amount of information to digest, and a wide degree of control to be had. A variable game speed would benefit the sometimes slow pacing, however. Also, the AI is lacking at times. Dinosaurs will ignore prey or an open invitation to run free from their pen. Customers will stand in line and complain at a restroom, instead of going over to a newly built one right next door.

Jurassic Park may not have the challenge of a SimCity, nor is it as groundbreaking. Instead, it succeeds through its intoxicating fluidity and the way it turns the dream of the movie into your own reality. – KATO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** BLUE TONGUE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

8.25

- **Concept:** Get closer to the feel of the movies than some lame action title could
- **Graphics:** Contains bland parts, but also has fine detail in the grass and ambient life
- **Sound:** Hearing the dinosaurs squawk and roar is – dare I say – cute. The symphonic soundtrack is also a treat
- **Playability:** Contains most of the functions and freedoms of the genre
- **Entertainment:** Believe it or not, this is the most fun you could have with Jurassic Park; and it's no slouch as a sim title, either
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

While other flavors of the franchise definitely shouldn't have been made, I'm glad that someone finally found a way to make the Jurassic Park fantasy palatable in polygonal form. Obviously, the goal is to make a park that people are willing to throw a small trust fund at to simply gain admittance. More obviously, the corporation has a vested interest in you and sends quarterly status reports across your desk. Trust my experience – they will fire your falling ass if profits aren't up to par. The best part is watching your dinos interact with each other. Some of the species butt heads like big-horned sheep, and all of the carnivores love a little live mammal to catch. Also, the sound is excellent and the simulation aspects are well developed. The only real problem I have is some animation lags when zooming in to look at the breadwinners.

LISA – 8



"Pro Race Driver has the variety of Gran Turismo, but does a better job of channeling your interest through the trials and tribulations of Ryan McKane."

XBOX

PRO RACE DRIVER

FIND YOUR LEAD FOOT

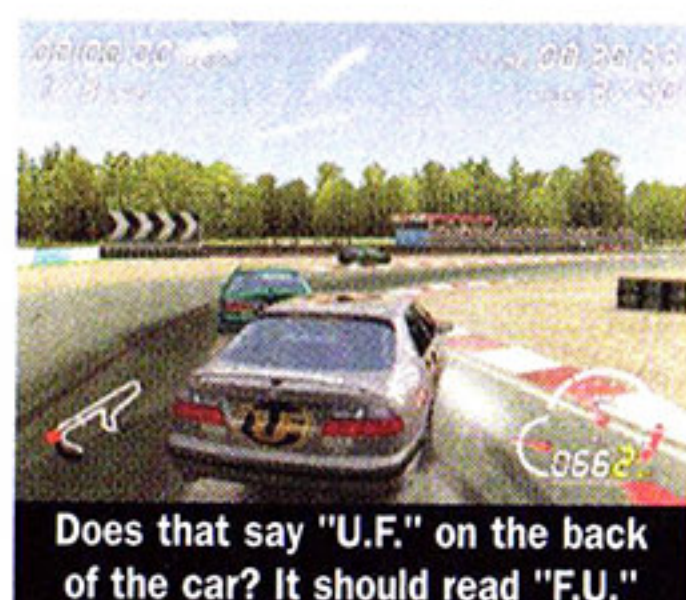
How's this for an intro: This is a racing game from Europe. Anyone still awake? I hope so. While those words may be death for most titles, causing the public to develop instant narcolepsy, Pro Race Driver more than manages to steer clear of the tag "just another racing game." Think for a second: What's about the only console racer that can garner mass acceptance? Gran Turismo. Pro Race Driver has the variety of Gran Turismo, but does a better job of channeling your interest through the trials and tribulations of Ryan McKane.

Pro Race Driver features an abundance of races, some requiring different styles of driving. Unlike Gran Turismo 3, however, you won't choke on the game's format like a dry, crusty brake pad. Sure, Ryan McKane's story is laughable, but it yields a mixture of freedom and structure that I like. If I wasn't testing out different manufacturers' wares, I was putting some hotshot in their place (and stealing their car in the process) for thinking they could actually race and beat "Octane McKane." Also, unlike the menu hell that is Gran Turismo, the game's championships kept me riveted – giving me much more of an emotional stake in things. I race for pride, not parts.

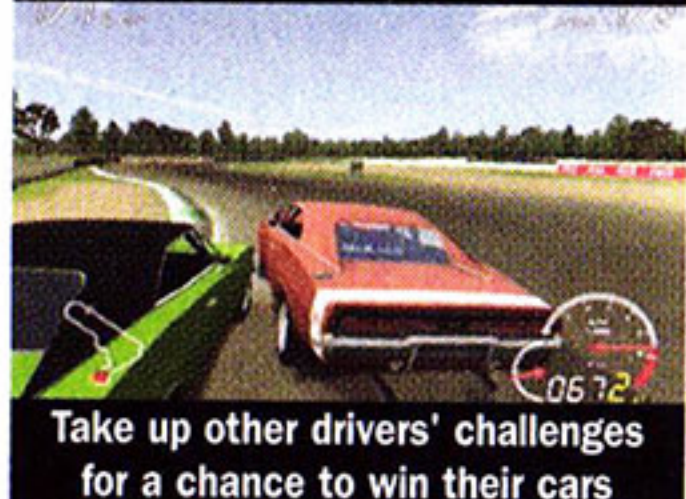
In terms of racing physics, Pro Racer holds its end up pretty well. Between the cars' handling and the AI (which will even create its own accidents ahead of you), you'll have to know your tracks and how to manage your gas and brake. While it's easy to damage your car; I found that, unfortunately, you have to work pretty hard for it to actually affect the way your ride drives. Still, shattering your front windshield and crumpling your fenders is pretty cool, and can lead to scattered debris all over the track. While this graphical feature isn't unique to the Xbox, the game definitely belongs on this system. Just about everything you see – including the extra number of cars in the field to race against – has been improved from the PS2, and it really makes a difference.

My criticisms of PRD are relatively small. I would have liked a true rearview mirror, the chance to qualify for the pole position, and less repetition of tracks. Furthermore, the stock car series of races gives a pretty poor representation of the sport and is the game's weak link. Nevertheless, Pro Race Driver does a lot of things right in its ambitious attempt to elevate the genre for everyone. You may laugh at him, but stepping into Ryan McKane's shoes may be just the thing you need to get your own motor started. – **KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** CODEMASTERS ■ **DEVELOPER** JUICE STUDIO ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



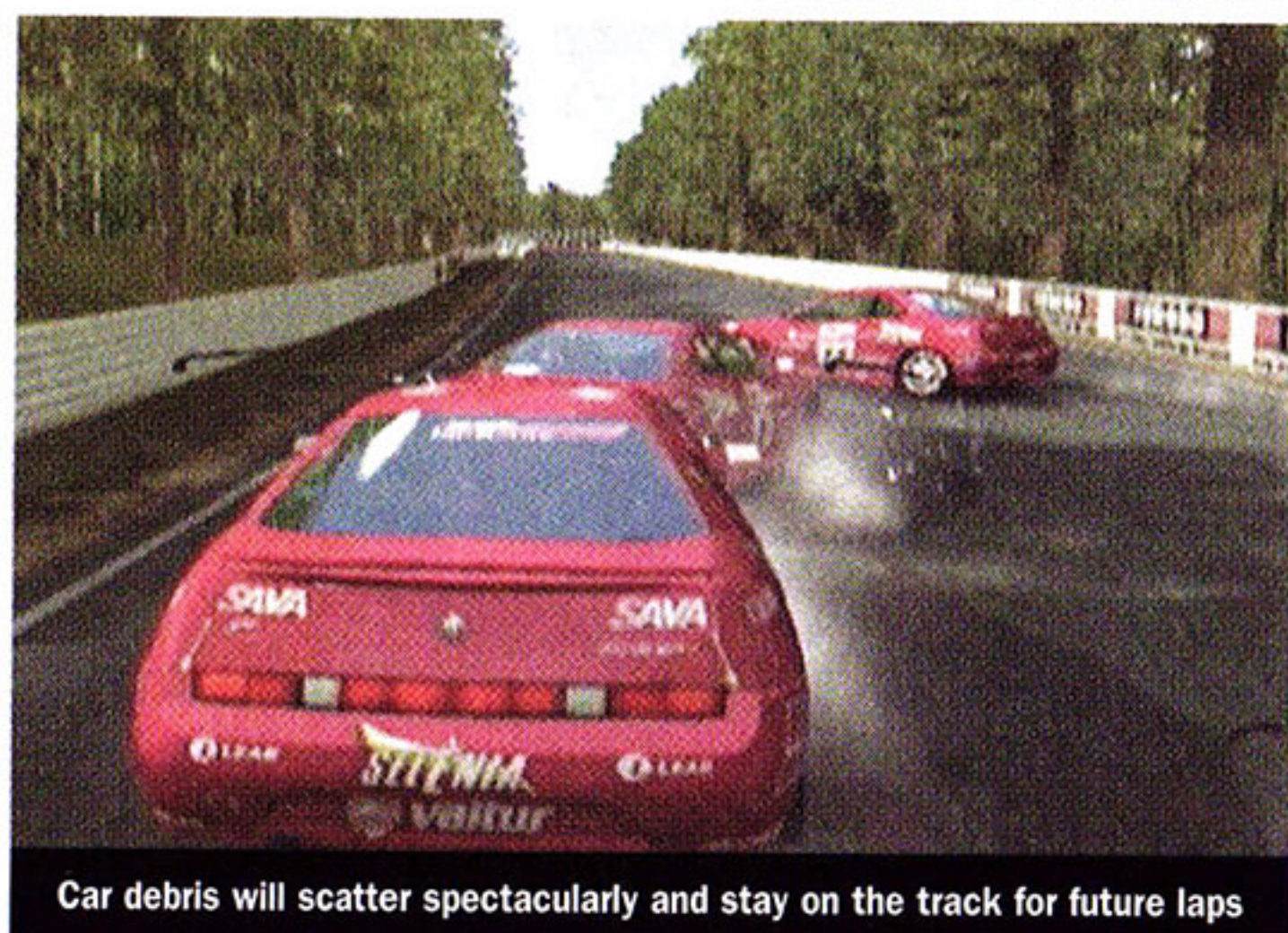
Does that say "U.F." on the back of the car? It should read "F.U."



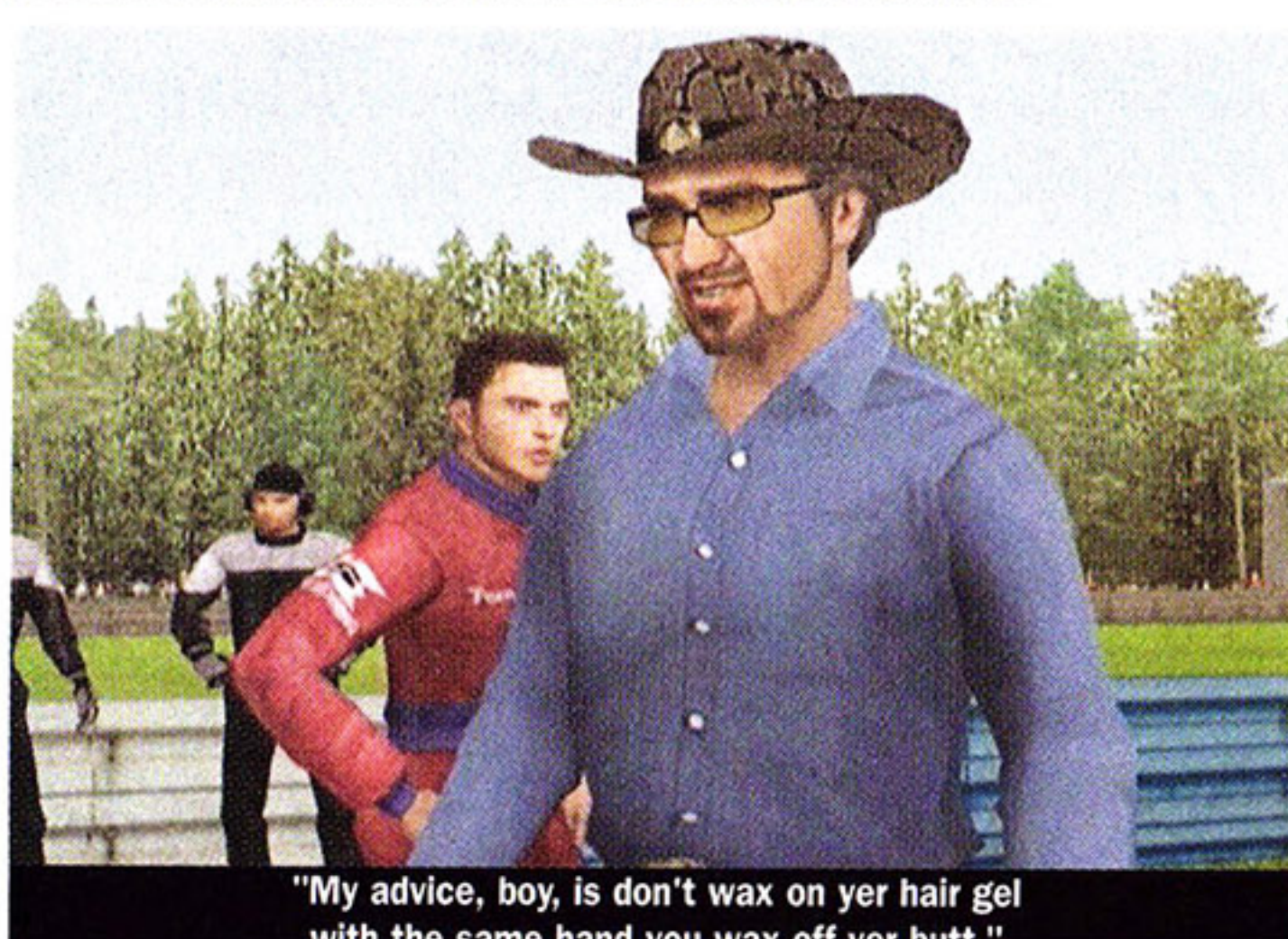
Take up other drivers' challenges for a chance to win their cars



Would you trust an English developer with stock car racing?



Car debris will scatter spectacularly and stay on the track for future laps



"My advice, boy, is don't wax on yer hair gel with the same hand you wax off yer butt."

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** This game attempts to span racing genres and video game ones as well
- **Graphics:** The difference between the Xbox and the PS2 is huge
- **Sound:** There are some great engine sounds, and this even comes in handy, too
- **Playability:** Despite some missing amenities, it's a pretty smooth ride
- **Entertainment:** This game offers scope like Gran Turismo, but keeps things focused via Ryan McKane
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I love the PS2 version of Pro Race Driver, but its Xbox counterpart is better in every way. It's easy to see which one got more development time, and the superior processing power of the Xbox is not to be denied. As a whole, PRD stands as perhaps my favorite racing game of all time. I don't claim to be a racing expert, but it gives me everything I want in the driving genre. The gameplay is spot-on, the story elements are a good addition, the vehicle damage is satisfying, and the tweaking is perfect for mechanically illiterate saps and gearheads alike. It gives you many different racing scenarios – touring, NASCAR, and one-on-one just to name a few – and they all have a unique feel and flavor. It may not be as sim-ish as some racers out there, but it requires the ideal blend of speed and strategy to keep me playing. All that's needed is Xbox Live compatibility for perfection.

JUSTIN – 9.5



"[Tao Feng] is a good example of the 'graphics first' mentality that results in disappointing next-gen games."

XBOX

TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS

NOT IN FULL BLOOM

Microsoft already boasts that it expects Tao Feng to be a flagship franchise. In actuality, it is a good example of the "graphics first" mentality that results in disappointing next-gen games. This title's visual siren song tries to mask what is a middle-of-the-road fighter in almost all other respects.

Let me start by paying tribute to Tao Feng's visual splendor. Indeed, it looks phenomenal. What's even more impressive than the detailed character models is the way they get marked up during a fight. Clothes tear, blood flows, and bruises form. The environments are large and feature great interaction. This ranges from destroying birdcages on the roof to taking chunks out of walls and columns in a tribute to the government building gunfight in *The Matrix*. In this way, Tao Feng is a benchmark.

The gameplay itself is ambitious, but average. There are definitely some cool things going on. Sadly, the execution of them is flawed. Team Gigante tries to tread the fine line between button-masher and strategic combo memorization, but it doesn't do it as well as *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*. The inputting of combos feels slightly unnatural, and lessens your feeling of connection to your onscreen character. Sidestepping and jumping are too easily mixed up, and you'll often do one when you were meaning to do the other. In addition, the AI is cheap rather than

smart (overriding your attack with a throw or inexplicably countering your special Chi attack), but I do like the difficulty curve in general.

The main selling points of Tao Feng are the ability to use the environment to your advantage and limb damage. Neither really blew me away. Swinging on poles and bouncing off walls is nice in theory, but the control is too inconsistent – I'd say I do it successfully about 15 percent of the time. The limb damage is inconsequential, in my opinion. It's a gimmick, nothing more.

If TF's graphics are candy, then the camera is like drinking a 2-liter of battery acid. Whoever designed it should be given the mother of all wedgies. In the heat of battle – and for reasons unknown – it will shift directions. This means left becomes right and vice versa. It's disorienting and unforgivable. Another deficiency is the lack of modes or unlockables to keep you playing for any length of time. Sorry, but making you beat the game with six characters for a real ending doesn't count.

I don't want to give the impression that Tao Feng is horrendous – it's far from *Kabuki Warriors* bad. However, its failure to live up to its hype and pedigree is a shame. Hopefully, if Microsoft intends to stick with it, many of my complaints will see repair in a sequel. – **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** STUDIO GIGANTE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 18



THE BOTTOM LINE
MATURE
M 7.25
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Make something that looks like it can compete, even if it can't
- **Graphics:** The best aspect of this game. Ranks right up there with *DOA 3*
- **Sound:** Bland music, decent ambient sound, and forgettable voice-overs. This is why Xbox games need more custom soundtrack support
- **Playability:** Doing combos isn't as smooth as it should be, and many other actions don't feel right
- **Entertainment:** A potentially great game that is kept down by inconsistent controls and unexciting modes
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

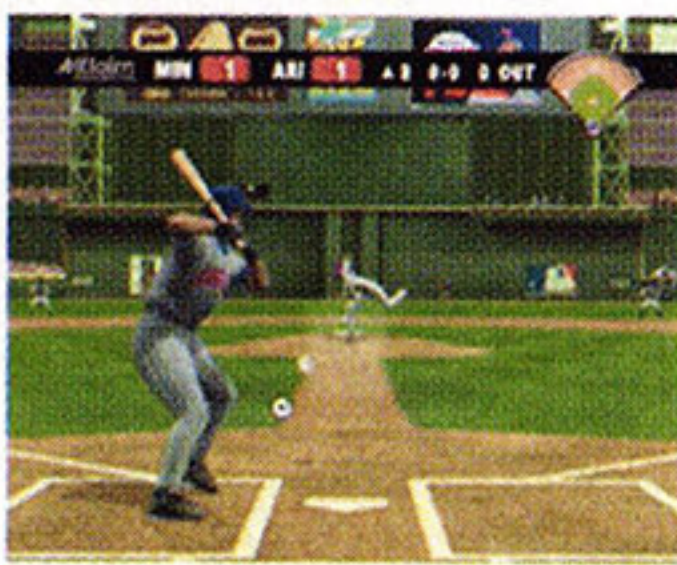
SECOND OPINION

Tao Feng deserves a tad of adulation simply because of its ambition. Former *MK* designer John Tobias has managed to create an extremely deep fighting engine that actually incorporates background interaction. Characters can execute maneuvers off walls or grab onto poles and then launch off to perform an attack. Other high points include stellar graphics, expansive arenas, and intuitive controls. However, TF has a few serious problems. First, the character balance is way off. Second, the action moves a little sluggishly, which makes learning combos and defending tough at times. Third, the camera sometimes switches perspectives so abruptly that you're temporarily unable to decipher forward and backward (a block button would've helped here). If there's a sequel and Tobias can add some polish and a decent single-player mode, he could propel this series to the top.

CHET – 7.25

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25



While still excellent, All-Star 2004 does nothing to put itself on top of the virtual baseball heap. Sure, it has an incredibly deep extras section with unlockable video footage of notable baseball personnel, stadium

tours, card sets, and an amazing management system; but the gameplay still needs attention. The fielder AI is laughable at times, and the batting interface needs work. It's still an exceptional baseball game, but I was expecting improvement where it really matters – the gameplay. – **KRISTIAN**

E 8

HIGH HEAT 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 18



High Heat enjoys some nice gameplay mechanics, but the unbelievably floaty ball physics are beyond my understanding. Unless you own 3DO stock or something like that, you can rest assured that High

Heat sits neatly in the middle of this year's baseball pack, and spending your money elsewhere is a good decision. I would certainly buy it before Sega's World Series, but EA and Acclaim put High Heat to shame. Good, but not good enough. – **KRISTIAN**

E 7.25

RED FACTION II

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 26



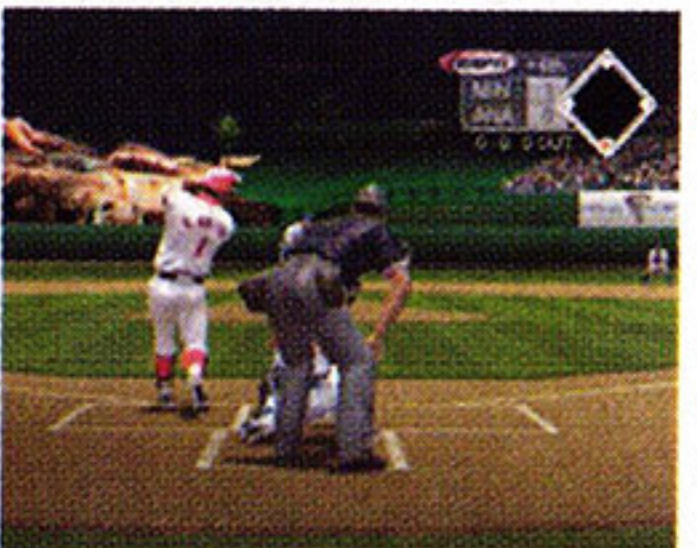
Other than a slight increase in texture resolution, the only new additions to the Xbox version are exclusive multiplayer maps and character models. If you've never played this game before, the thrills it delivers

are of the highest level, and the unique Geo-Mod technology creates a number of interesting gameplay strategies. Alas, the excitement this game generates comes and goes in a flash as the single-player experience is fairly short. The multiplayer offering is quite significant, but the game as a whole – while enjoyable – lags behind Halo and Medal of Honor. – **REINER**

M 8.25

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11



Surprisingly, the Xbox version of World Series is noticeably better than the PS2 offering. With better and smoother animations, improved lighting, and the same excellent stat tracking, 2K3 seems much more at

home on Microsoft's machine. The problems that plagued its sister title are still present, however. Terrible batting collision and awkward fielding control are just a couple of things keeping Sega's hardball title from getting into the majors. – **KRISTIAN**

E 7

MVP BASEBALL 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 11



EA has one sport left to conquer – hockey. I'm not sure how it did it, but after canning the laughable Triple Play franchise, EA has promptly released the best baseball

game of the season. The pitching interface is visionary and intriguing, the batting and fielding are tight as a drum, and the ball collision is impeccable. The only thing missing from this title is a robust fantasy/expansion system for those of us who like to build something from nothing. I suppose it helps when you have a fistful of money to throw at a project, but EA has definitely hit this one out of the park. – **KRISTIAN**

E 9.25

ATV: QUAD POWER RACING 2

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 23



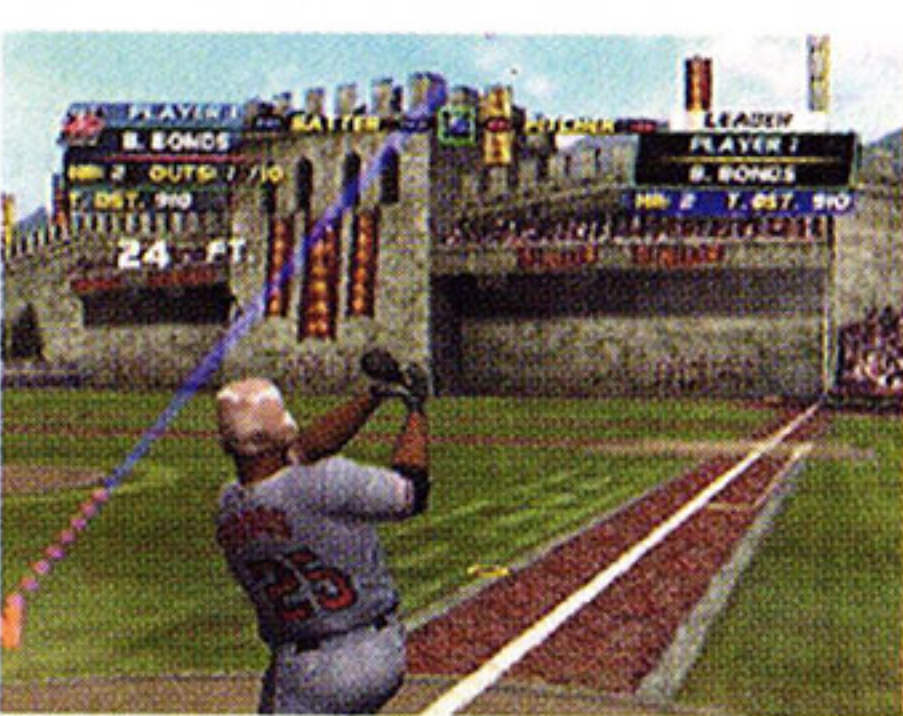
I need an ATV about as much as I need an Elvis commemorative plate, but once I got on this ride, it was nothing but fun. And, like that gold-rimmed china of the King, this

game may go up in value as time goes on. It has a good sense of speed and physics, and the tracks accentuate these qualities quite well. Tricks are a mixed bag, as pulling them off is inconsistent and poorly mapped. Still, I like how they are a necessity in how well you place and not merely superfluous. Skill challenges round out this package and solidify ATV as a fun, competitive racer that may not be your prized possession, but will give you a little smile. – **KATO**

E 7.5

MLB SLUGFEST 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 17



Midway has opened up the gameplay by allowing pitchers to heat up and hurl outrageous specialty pitches, but outside of this much-needed element, the

enhancements incorporated into this year's version are fairly minor. The rosters have been expanded to 20 players, signature stances accompany top-rate talent, and pitcher stamina is affected by fatigue. There's nothing here that really adds depth to the experience. If anything, it's an attractive, hyperactive exaggeration of the sport that specializes in short-lived thrills. Basically, it's a great game for head-to-head bouts with friends. – **REINER**

E 6.75



XBOX

THE SIMS

SIM-ILAR

Some seem to think of the Sims as a sick sort of social experiment, but I'm certainly hoping that no one's keeping score. How many times did my mohawked character pee on the floor? I can't even manage someone's bladder!

The new console versions (and this Xbox iteration in particular) do have an excellent control scheme that allows both newbies and Sim experts to have massive control at the tips of their fingers. Every menu is accessible from a quick, single-button press (this includes the status bars and goal lists).

Xbox Sims is a direct duplication of the PS2 version and holds the same problems and advantages. The graphics are nice, but not particularly mind-blowing – there's definitely a bit of jagginess. Granted, with the sheer amount of information required onscreen at any given time, some compromises need to be made.

The mission-based format is a nice way to give such an open-ended game some structure. The two-player features and the inclusion of many of the items from the PC games makes the Sims on Xbox a time-intensive project for any completest out there, or a quick little jaunt for casual gamers who want to try the Sims on for size. – **LISA**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS/EDGE OF REALITY ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 24

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 8.75
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

- **Concept:**
Sims on the Xbox... Boy howdy!
- **Graphics:**
Not the height of clarity, but the expanded camera movement and the interactivity of environments make up for some jaggies
- **Sound:**
Usual beeps and blurps from the peanut gallery that are your friends and family
- **Playability:**
The controller interface is easy to get the hang of
- **Entertainment:**
A nice switch from the open-ended play of the PC version, and exactly the same as the PS2 edition
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Although the Sims has already achieved classic status on PC, it just so happens that the console port has been upgraded and expanded upon to such a degree that it essentially feels new. Through polygonal graphics, tons of new items, and hilarious level-based play, I can honestly say that the the Sims has never looked or played better.

REINER - 9



"Generals will serve to entertain you for months on end..."

PC
COMMAND & CONQUER GENERALS
 PUTS THE WAR IN SCHWARZKOPF

Before anything else, I'd like to bid the legendary Westwood Studios staff a fond farewell as they ride off into the sunset. They've given us some incredible games during their run, and I'm sure we'll be seeing quite a few EA Pacific titles with familiar names on them. Although *Generals* could be considered the last hurrah for Westwood, it can also be seen as the beginning of a beautiful new chapter for a company steeped in RTS experience. Exhibit A of this idea is the fact that *Generals* has rejected the familiar full-motion video mission cutscenes of previous C&C titles in favor of more gameplay and less cheese. Exhibit B is the fact that there is no longer one all-powerful character that can determine the outcome of an entire war. Now, it's up to you to build your forces the best way you know how and hope you know what you're doing. It may not seem like much, but these changes serve to set *Generals* in a class all by itself.

Although I'm reticent to label this C&C iteration's gameplay as "nearly perfect," I would be willing to say that it is the best yet evidenced in this long and finely tuned series. Apart from the mandatory grouping and hot key functionality, a new camera hot key has been introduced on the F1-F10 buttons to facilitate quick movement between conflict zones and your base (at least that's what I use it for), or any other areas of interest you want to keep a close

eye on. That – along with the brilliantly balanced units and superweapons – make this C&C a game to be reckoned with from a technical perspective.

In terms of novelty, this is a title with a lot of new features for fans to wrap their minds around. I love the unit-specific upgrades, and the experience system for your troops is as well-oiled as ever. In an interesting twist, if an experienced unit is destroyed and the pilot is lucky enough to eject safely, you're then able to insert him into a newbie unit – thereby transferring his experience into a healthy vehicle. Not too shabby, eh? Just make sure you have a few extra troops around to cover him until he can remount.

Visually, I wasn't exactly unimpressed; but, excellent explosion effects aside, I was hoping that the units would look a little less blocky and that the scale would be a bit more on the realistic side (not to be nitpicky, but a C-130 and a B-52 are not even close to being the same size). My visual quibbles are probably more anal military-buff ramblings than they are problems that will detract from your enjoyment, but they bear mentioning nonetheless. On the upside, *Generals* will serve to entertain you for months on end, what with its robust multiplayer segment that adequately supplements the game's addictive single-player portion. Enjoy. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
T 9.25
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
A lateral step for the C&C franchise that focuses on the action instead of the characters
- **Graphics:**
Excellent explosion effects and decent unit models complement the sharp environments
- **Sound:**
I really like the radio battle chatter and ambient audio, but the nu-metal soundtrack I could do without
- **Playability:**
Aside from a few new tricks of the trade, the same C&C functionality you know and love is back
- **Entertainment:**
Great for single or multiplayer sessions – this is a workhorse of a game
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Command & Conquer Generals makes a couple of very nice steps forward for the series, but at the same time also takes a couple of steps back. The improvements are rather obvious. The game just looks great; while the factions, and the way they are played, are perfectly executed. GLA suicide bombers are absolutely frightening, the Chinese ability to produce propaganda is brilliant, and the USA war ensemble runs like a well-oiled machine. Plus, with the nation standing toe-to-toe with Iraq in real-life, there is something sadly therapeutic about playing *Generals* (but also terribly scary, as the game is very realistic). I am disappointed that it really doesn't offer much in terms of story development anymore. Sure, all the online components are great, but I do miss the cheesy live-action cutscenes that were the hallmark of the original. Also, the single-player game is a little short. A great release, but one that could have been better.

ANDY – 8.75

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA PACIFIC
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



The GLA puts the smackdown on China



Niiiiice environment, dude



The Particle Cannon is an effective way to surprise your opponent



Before...



...and after

[RESPOND WITH / OFFER] THE FOLLOWING:

Pronouncements

Threat
Impose Sanctions
Impose Embargo
Declare War

Treaties

Non-Aggression Pact

Trade Agreements

TA: Economic
TA: Research

Exchanges

Gift
Demand
Exchange Items

EMPHASIS FOR THIS ACTION:

State

RACE: Ecladi

EMPIRE: Rialio

CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU: Diplomatic Channels

MILITARY STRENGTH: 14

NO. OF WORLDS: 9

RETURN TO PREVIOUS

SEND OFFER

TECHNOLOGY

FINANCE

EMPIRE

PERSONNEL

FOREIGN OFFICE

PLANETS

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

E

8

PC

MASTER OF ORION III

THE THIRD STAR IN THE BELT

I can't begin to impress upon you the importance of patience when playing this game. If you're new to the series, or relatively unfamiliar with strategy games in general, the impulse to throw up your hands in exasperation will be nearly irrepressible. The Orion series' bread and butter is based on the notion that you're going to enjoy tweaking every little nuance of your planets' operations. There is a lot of AI help available, but if you want to get really anal, you can turn it off. I tried that, and was overwhelmed within a couple of turns.

Sure, the gameplay is incredibly deep, but I wanted more emphasis on the military aspects of the game. The ship-building section is great, but figuring out which ships are the best in a certain situation is hard to get a handle on, and the deployment of your fleet is clumsy and often frustrating. When I wanted to see each vessel's individual stats, I couldn't; and when I wanted to mix and match different parts of my fleet, I was handcuffed by an awkward grouping system. Many fans of the Orion series have been salivating for years as this title neared release, and they won't be disappointed – but this certainly isn't a game for the uninitiated. – KRISTIAN



This screen gives a detailed account of your planets' activities



Building an army is a complicated process



Your star maps will become larger as the game goes on



■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES
■ DEVELOPER QUICKSILVER ■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 25

■ **Concept:**
Build an empire and rule the galaxy

■ **Graphics:**
Nothing special, but they don't need to be

■ **Sound:**
I can appreciate that the developers tried to inject some interesting audio here, but it wasn't worth it

■ **Playability:**
Get ready for a very, very long learning curve

■ **Entertainment:**
For the select few of you out there who really love this series, you're going to love it even more

■ **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

When you take into consideration that you'll spend a significant amount of time intricately dissecting extraterrestrial harvesting patterns; I think it's safe to say that Master of Orion III has just enough geek credibility to turn the heads of the most loyal of Star Trek fans and scare off anyone who doesn't get weak in the knees when they hear a woman speaking in Klingon. Seriously people, if you don't have your head buried in long-lost *Dr. Who* scripts for at least three hours of your day, most of the material in this game will leave you petrified with fear. Not fear as in, "Oh, my God! It's scary!", but more along the lines of, "Oh, my God! I had no idea that geeks could, like, be this geeky!" It's a towering accomplishment in terms of the wealth of information and options, but also a sign that man has gone way too far.

REINER – 7

PC

1503 A.D.: THE NEW WORLD

■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY
■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ RELEASE MARCH 4



The combat should have been left out of this title from the get-go, though I understand why it's there. The economic side of this game is robust enough to carry things separately, but

there are a surprising amount of bugs that detract from the experience. This is doubly concerning since EA is usually so good about making sure their products are suitably polished before they go out the door. If you're in the market for an interesting little economic city-builder, you could do worse. – KRISTIAN

E 7.5

PC

IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE

■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION
■ PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS
■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 25



It took me a while to get into IGI 2 (no pun intended), but for one mission, I really enjoyed myself. The rest of them are pretty standard fare, interspersed with substandard AI, predictable mission

structures, and a handful of cool stealth moments. I like the idea that you have an objective and it's your job to find a way to accomplish it without causing a stir, but the save system is absolutely ridiculous (you're given a limited number of them), and the graphics are decidedly middle-of-the-road. If you're really in the market for a stealth shooter, there are plenty better out there. – KRISTIAN

M 7.25

PC

HIGHLAND WARRIORS

■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY
■ PUBLISHER DATA BECKER
■ RELEASE FEBRUARY 1



I have been fooled. I thought Data Becker was going to release an under-the-radar hit; but instead, Highland Warriors is a bona fide under-the-radar stinker. The unit models look good, but problems begin

the instant you get into combat for the first time. The only battle audio I could discern was the same clang repeated over and over again. It wasn't even numerous clangs playing over each other – it was the same sound peeling over my speakers once per second. How sad. That, combined with the fact that the story and mediocre presentation could have been done much better, makes Highland Warriors as forgettable as that time I backed into a parked car and immediately drove away. – KRISTIAN

T 6.5

REVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

LUFIA: THE RUINS OF LORE

ROLE-PLAYING'S MOST POPULAR LINE: "..."

This new, original chapter in the classic Lufia series blends some new ideas with old-school charm. The end result is an RPG that fans of the genre will quickly get into and enjoy.

Ruins of Lore borrows heavily from some very popular series. For example, there is monster capturing and fighting, à la Pokémon. Each character can be assigned a specific job to gain new skills, much like Final Fantasy Tactics. My favorite aspect of the game is the way strategy affects enemy encounters. No battle is random, and the placement of both you and your opposition weigh heavily into who has the advantage when the fighting starts.

The battles themselves aren't very spectacular, but their visuals – and the graphical package as a whole – deserves mention. It takes a while to hit your stride with magic, monster companions, and other nuances of combat. I'm not very fond of the lack of explanation for the items you collect. Figuring out what most of them do is a matter of trial and error.

Atlus could have easily ported one of the SNES Lufias, and it would have been well received. Instead, it crafted a unique new chapter that stands as one of the better original GBA role-playing games. – **JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS ■ **DEVELOPER** TAITO
 ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 28

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 7.75
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Build on a cult-classic, 16-bit RPG series with an advanced GBA sequel
- **Graphics:** Even though the main character is goofy looking, the overall graphical quality is high
- **Sound:** Nothing worth keeping the volume turned on for
- **Playability:** Combat isn't too mind-blowing, but there's plenty to do in the overworld
- **Entertainment:** You can't really go wrong with this game, though I put Golden Sun and Breath of Fire II a notch higher
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Maybe you haven't heard of the Lufia series, but there are plenty of gameplay elements here you'll recognize – from Pokémon to Final Fantasy. The only fault I find is that Atlus' otherwise solid RPG (with good-looking graphics) lacks its own compelling reason for being. Just another RPG village? Well, at least the townies are friendly.

KATO – 7.75



GAME BOY ADVANCE

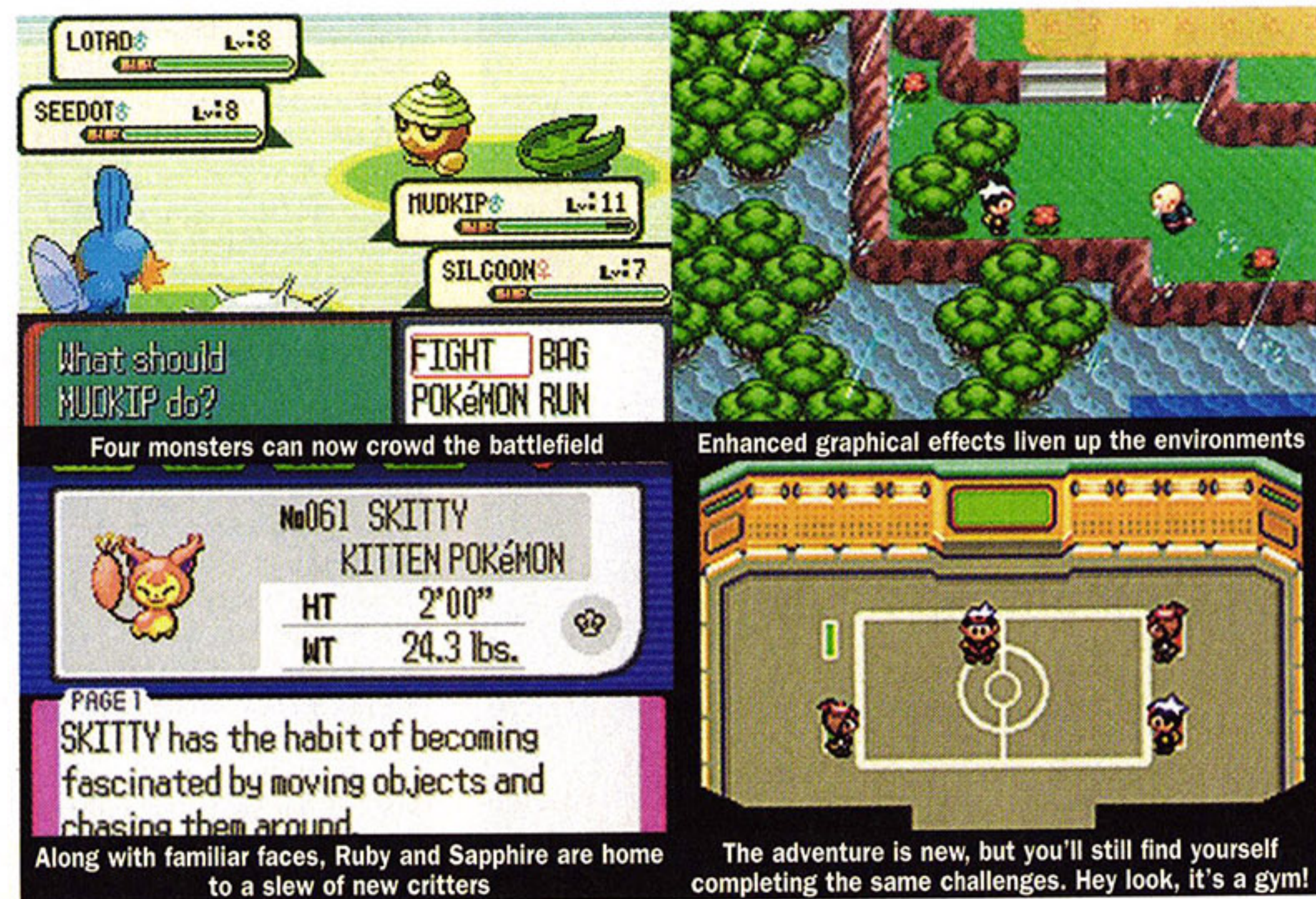
POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL...AGAIN

Who says video games can't be educational? As the latest endeavor into the world of Pokémon so colorfully illustrates, Nintendo wishes to teach kids the importance of the cash cow, and the extent to which it can be thoroughly milked. While it's easy to conjure up innovations that could accompany a next-generation Pokémon, it becomes quickly apparent that Nintendo has no desire to alter the formula that this series has been built on. Rather than ushering in something new, Pokémon's first foray on the Game Boy Advance is just another rehash with flashy new graphics.

Diehard fanatics, who live and breathe nothing but Pokémon, will most certainly froth at the mouth and drool uncontrollably over the various enhancements that have been implemented. While there are differences here and there; the bulk of gameplay has, in fact, changed very little. The new two-on-two battles and ever-handy sprint maneuver are welcome additions, but let's not fool ourselves here – neither of these elements really expand upon the experience. There's simply another monster onscreen and your character moves a little faster. While the colors in the environments are more vibrant and defined, not a single animation accompanies combat. Everything else, unfortunately, falls right in line with the material in previous versions.

The series simply hasn't evolved enough for people who have already experienced their fair share of Pokémon. Ruby and Sapphire are great games that will keep players occupied for months on end; but only for those of you who are new to the Pokémon scene or raring to relive the adventure for a second, third, fourth, or fifth time. – **REINER**



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO/CREATURES/GAME FREAK ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 17

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 7.25
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** Pokémon's GBA debut showcases new colors but the same gameplay
- **Graphics:** Vibrant effects – like reflections and swaying grass – liven up the environments, but the combat is once again limited to still-frame monster images
- **Sound:** Orchestrated role-playing beats in the Final Fantasy vein
- **Playability:** New two-on-two battles and...um...hmm...new two-on-two battles!!!
- **Entertainment:** Red, Blue, Yellow, Silver, Gold, Crystal, Ruby, Sapphire...do the math
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

In the beginning, Nintendo created Pokémon Blue and Red. And it was good. For Silver and Gold, Nintendo said, "Let there be an internal clock, even more monsters, and colorful graphics." And it too was good. Now, a year-and-a-half after GBA was released, Nintendo is giving us Ruby and Sapphire. And it is...disappointing. The graphics are underwhelming (still no animation during fights); the new monsters are, for the most part, generic (oh look, a bird!); and the new "features" are a joke. At its core, Ruby/Sapphire is still a decent RPG; but the laziness of development here is inexcusable and will do nothing to help Pokémon overtake the new fad on the block, Yu-Gi-Oh. Older Pokémon fans like myself will still enjoy catching new creatures and levelling them up. The problem is, we've been doing the same freakin' thing for the last five years. I guess you can't go home again, Pikachu.

JUSTIN – 7.5

MEGAMAN KICKS OFF HIS 15th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Join Mega Man and Bass's fight for humankind as you face off with the newest menace in town, Robot King. He's captured all of the data plans for Dr. Wily's creations in order to crush and dominate all humans. Mega Man and Bass set out separately to stop him, but only one may succeed!



Play as Either Mega Man or Bass



Unique Battle Moves & Weapons: Double Jumps & Charge-Up Buster



Defeat Robot Masters to Open More Paths



VIOLENCE

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

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REVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



Super Puzzle Fighter II's Puyo-style gameplay might be derivative and simple, but the overall quality is second to none. SPF II's lasting appeal relies not

only on its addictive quality, but on its diversity of modes and two-player action. Players get three game types to enjoy and a Versus option that allows you to compete via link cable (ideal), or with just one GBA! Even if you only mildly enjoy puzzle games, you'll certainly have a blast with the GBA's best. — **CHET**



GAME BOY ADVANCE

YU-GI-OH! DUNGEON DICE MONSTERS

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11

Konami has added more depth to the gameplay by increasing the strategic component. Although it might not be able to compete with the likes of Advanced Wars, it's definitely one of the best Yu-Gi-Oh games to date. The downsides are few, but significant. The AI acts a little dense on occasion, making Dungeon Dice's difficulty a tad easy. Also, I know Konami is capable of creating better graphics and sound. Finally, there's still no interesting story mode. — **CHET**



GAME BOY ADVANCE

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 30



This is a game of good intentions. Unfortunately, you can't have fun with good intentions, and ASB's terrible fielding and baserunning are enough to turn me

off from the rest of the game. The animations are nice, and the graphics are good for a handheld title, but the nuts and bolts of the gameplay are decidedly lacking. I guess it's okay if you absolutely must have a GBA baseball game, but if you're in the market for All-Star, you'll have more fun with a console version. — **KRISTIAN**



GAME BOY ADVANCE

GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE

MORE OF THE SAME

The Lost Age begins where Golden Sun ends, with Isaac and Jenna at the final battle to stop the Venus lighthouse from being lit. To help those who didn't finish the original or only vaguely remember it, the opening sequence gives an extensive recap of the events in Golden Sun. Sadly, even this detailed account doesn't really lessen the confusion you will experience for a good portion of the game, whether you played the first title or not.

Felix, not Isaac, is the hero of this adventure and the game quickly gets you into the thick of things, which is simultaneously good and bad. It's nice to get straight into some of the action, but it also leaves you without much direction as to what to do or where to go. Also, The Lost Age features almost no improvements to the original game's engine, save for a new story, Djinni, harder puzzles, and Psynergy powers. Since the original was so well done, I wouldn't say that this is necessarily a disaster, but it would have been nice to see some new innovations, especially in the gameplay department.

For those who played the first title, The Lost Age is a welcome treat. You even have the option of transferring data from your original game to this one for added fun. Overall, I feel Golden Sun: The Lost Age is a slight disappointment. It's still a solid choice for anyone mildly interested in RPGs, but without at least some new content, fans of the series will walk away a little too underwhelmed. — **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE



8

- **Concept:** Continue the Golden Sun saga with only minor upgrades to the game engine
- **Graphics:** Exactly the same as the original, but that's a good thing
- **Sound:** A soundtrack that doesn't stand out for being exceptionally good or bad
- **Playability:** Simple action sequences coupled with classic RPG battles
- **Entertainment:** If you played the first game, The Lost Age delivers a nice extension to the story
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Although Lost Age certainly maintains a high level of quality in many respects, outside of the story, the design and play mechanics resemble the original's far too closely. Furthermore, the game begins *in medias res* (look it up); which, on a positive note, breaks the traditional banal beginning found in almost every other RPG. But to its detriment, this approach comes at the sacrifice of continuity, making it difficult to understand the plot and — more importantly — your objectives for the first three or four hours. Players who missed the original title will especially feel confused. One major problem Camelot did manage to remedy (thank goodness) is combat frequency. Now you won't waste countless hours unnecessarily fighting every two or three steps!

CHET — 8.5



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** CAMELOT ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 14

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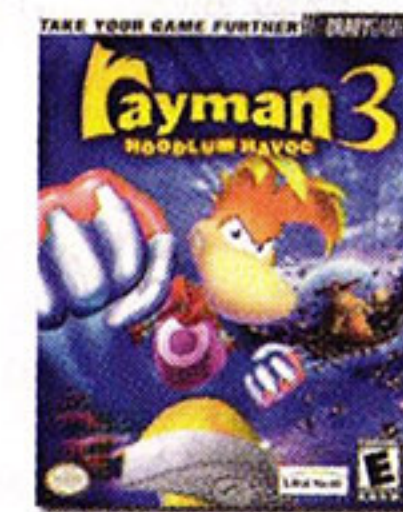
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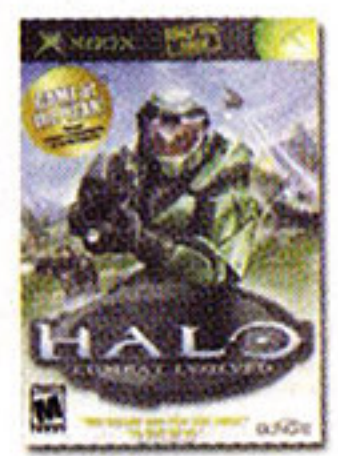


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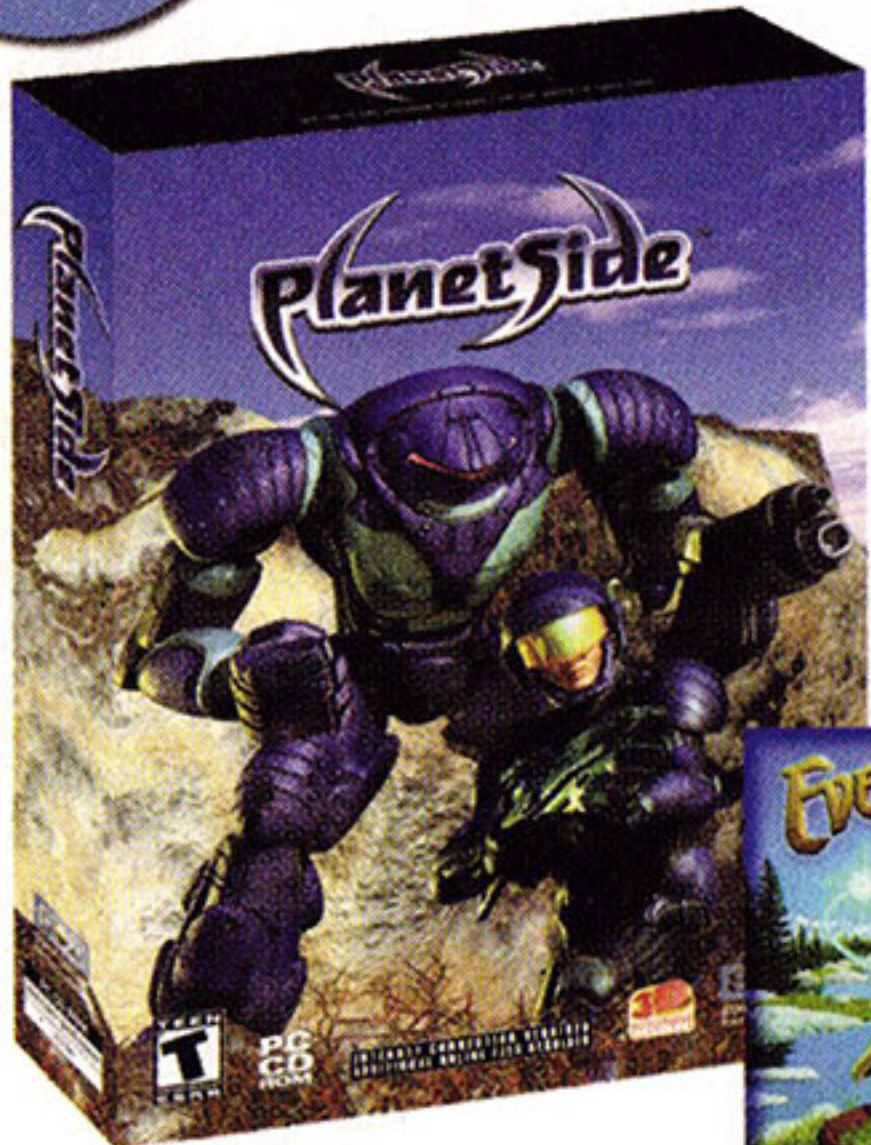
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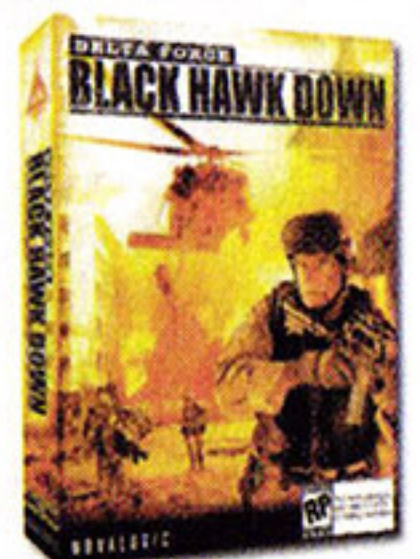
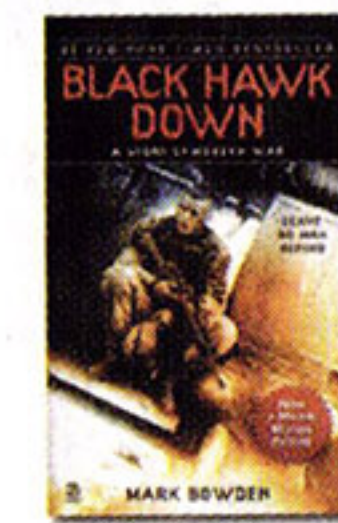
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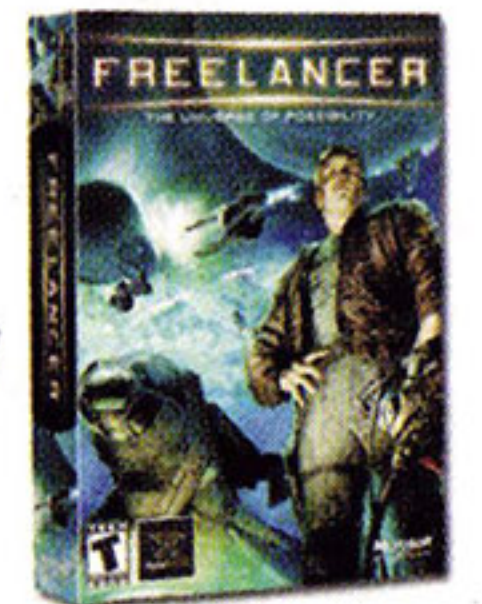


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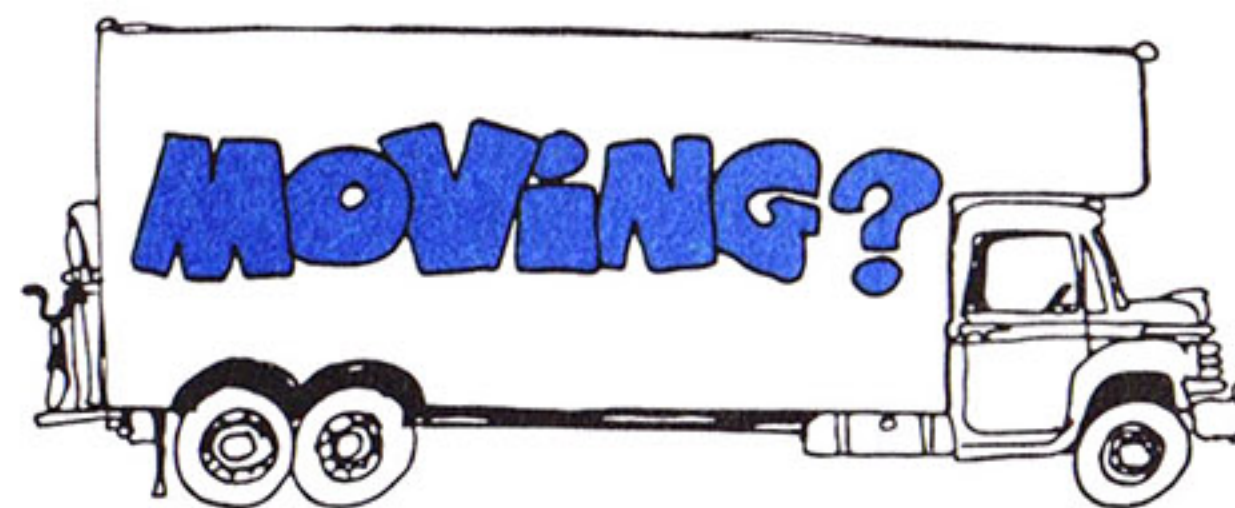
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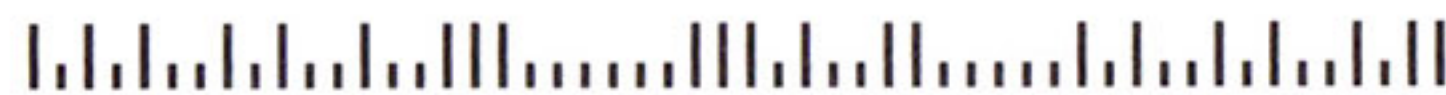
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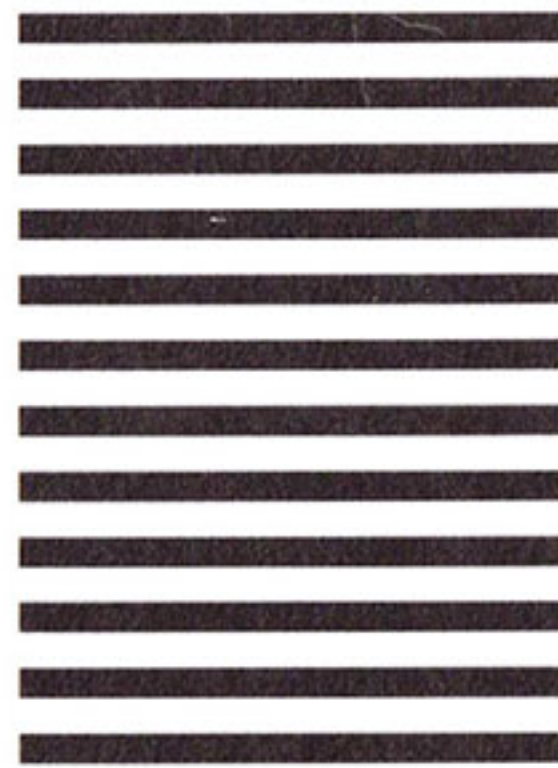
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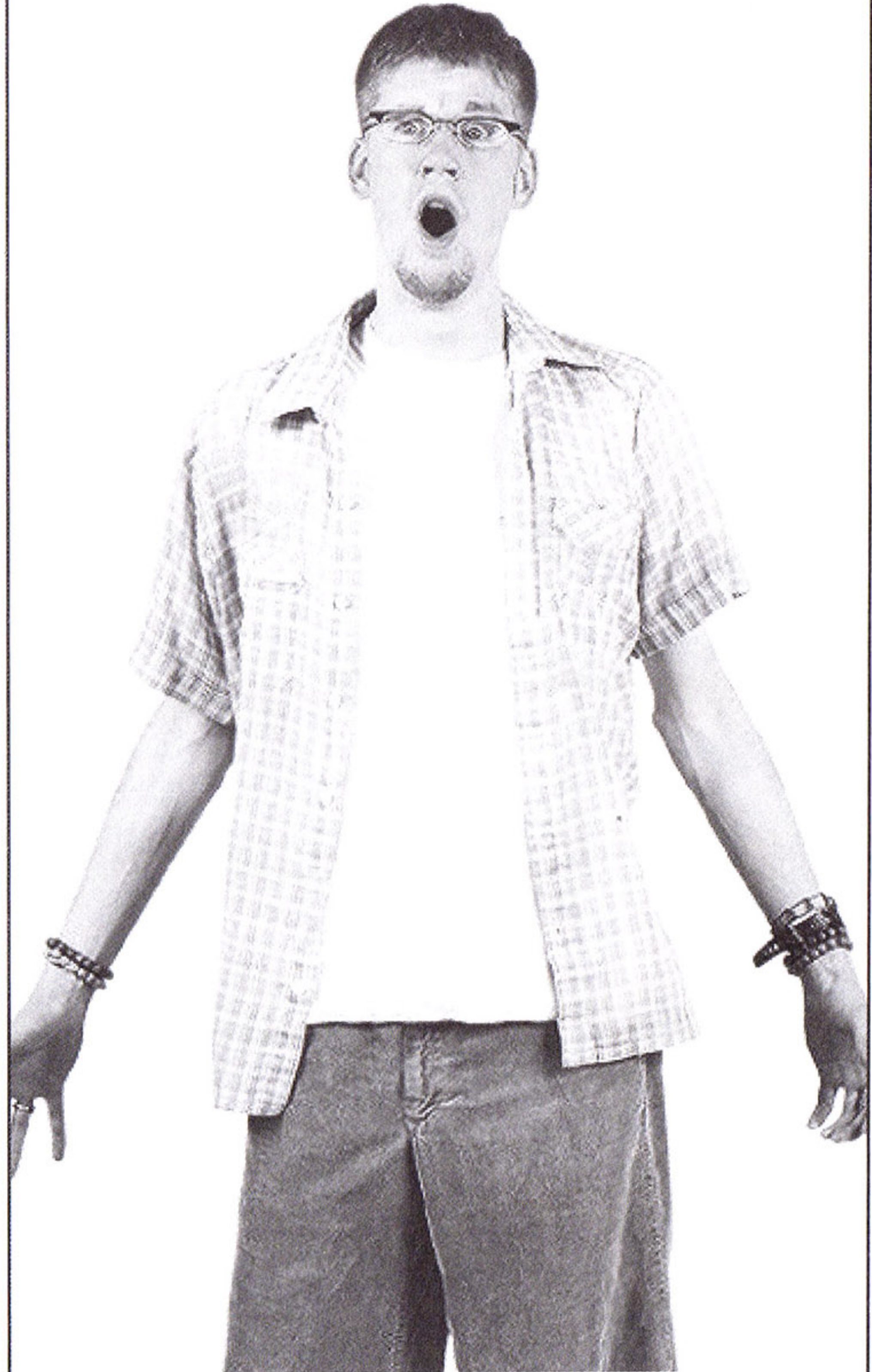
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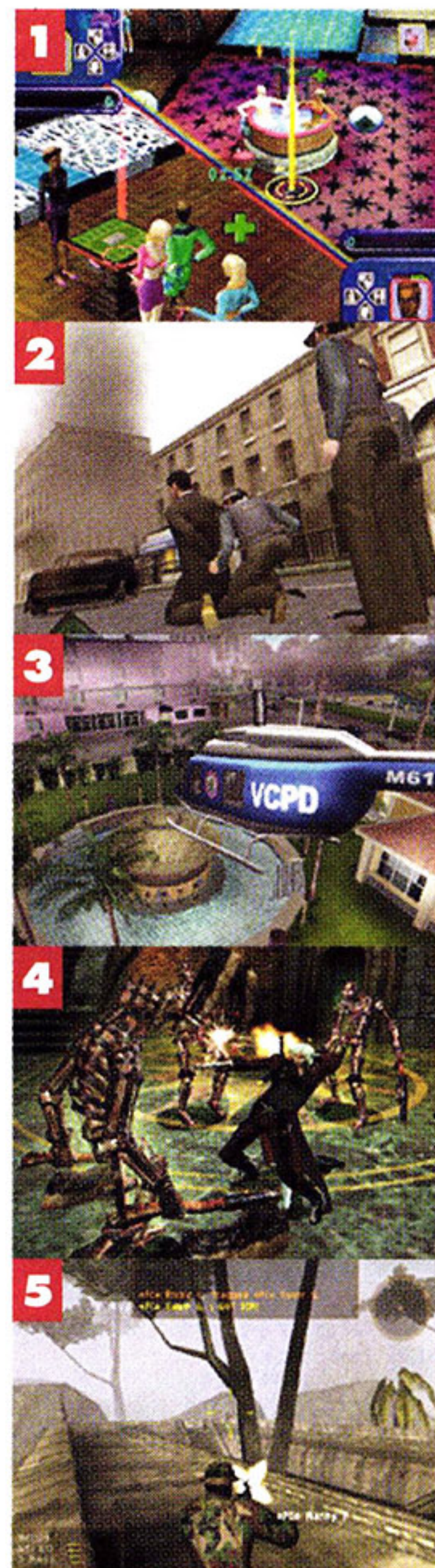
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CHARTS

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 January 2003 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	The Sims	PS2	9	Jan-03	\$49

The Sims is the type of game anybody can get into, which reflects in its sales. Your mom will like decorating the house to her liking. People who can't get dates (i.e. gamers) will enjoy meeting up with the opposite sex without breaking out into hives. Those of you who are afraid primates will one day reclaim their spot as Earth's leaders will enjoy pushing around the monkey butler. Everybody wins!

2	N/A	The Getaway	PS2	9	Jan-03	\$40
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It's a movie! It's a game! Whichever it is, The Getaway on PS2 is a heck of a lot better than that crappy Lenny Kravitz song. Yeah, we want to get away too, Lenny – get away from lame radio ditties with more repetitive lyrics than the Teletubbies, that is. You peaked at "Are Ya Gonna Go My Way," and it's only a matter of time before you're headlining the Waukesha County Fair.

3	1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2	10	Oct-02	\$50
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Has the inevitable happened already? Does every PS2 owner in the world now have a copy of Vice City? Aside from those poor minors counting the days until they're old enough to buy M-rated games, we don't see how this title can stay on the charts. Maybe people will like it enough to buy a second copy. It could happen!

4	N/A	Devil May Cry 2	PS2	7	Jan-03	\$49
---	-----	------------------------	-----	---	--------	------

This is the most disappointing sequel since *Police Academy 6*, but it's still getting some good early sales numbers from people who didn't read our review. Aren't you glad you're not one of those people? Also, aren't you glad you're not Steve Guttenberg or the guy who made the funny noises? The last time we saw ol' Steve, he was in the 1997 straight-to-video flick, *Casper: A Spirited Beginning*.

5	18	SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$60
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Where in the world did this resurgence come from? Is it a nod to patriotism, online gaming, or the fact that people come home from their jobs at the McDonald's drive-thru and want to wear the same cool-looking headset while they play games? Do you want fries with that chest wound, terrorist pig-dog???

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	2	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	PS2	7.25	Dec-02	\$49
7	3	Madden NFL 2003	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$49
8	12	ATV Offroad Fury 2	PS2	9	Nov-02	\$40
9	7	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Eternal Duelist Story	GBA	N/A	Oct-02	\$30
10	N/A	Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Xbox	7.5	Jan-03	\$50
11	10	Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	PS2	9.5	Nov-02	\$49
12	4	Splinter Cell	Xbox	8.75	Nov-02	\$49
13	N/A	Ghost Recon	PS2	N/A	Dec-02	\$49
14	N/A	Ghost Recon	Xbox	8.5	Nov-02	\$49
15	6	The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	GBA	9.25	Dec-02	\$31
16	N/A	Max Payne	PS2	7.75	Dec-01	\$20
17	5	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	PS2	9.25	Oct-02	\$49
18	17	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$20
19	N/A	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Xbox	9.25	Dec-02	\$49
20	11	Kingdom Hearts	PS2	9.5	Sep-02	\$50

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	N/A	Devil May Cry 2	PS2
2	N/A	Exciting Pro Wrestling 4	PS2
3	1	Pokémon Sapphire	GBA
4	2	Pokémon Ruby	GBA
5	N/A	Nintendo Puzzle Collection	GC
6	N/A	Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	PS2
7	N/A	James Bond 007: NightFire	PS2
8	N/A	PowerPro Pocket 5	GBA
9	N/A	Operator's Side	PS2
10	N/A	Armored Core 3: Silent Line	PS2



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	GC
2	1	Xenosaga Episode 1	PS2
3	2	The Sims	PS2
4	4	The Getaway	PS2
5	6	Dark Cloud 2	PS2
6	N/A	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2
7	3	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2
8	N/A	MVP Baseball 2003	Xbox
9	5	Metroid Prime	GC
10	N/A	Def Jam Vendetta	GC



PC TOP 10

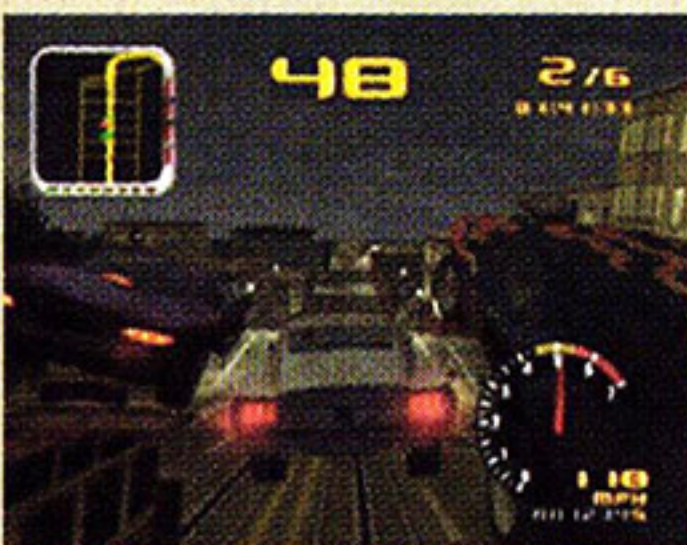
Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	SimCity 4	Jan-03	\$49
2	1	The Sims Deluxe	Sep-02	\$42
3	2	The Sims: Unleashed	Sep-02	\$28
4	5	Zoo Tycoon	Oct-01	\$27
5	3	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Nov-02	\$28
6	4	RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	Oct-02	\$28
7	7	Age of Mythology	Nov-02	\$43
8	N/A	SpongeBob Squarepants: Operation Krabby Patty	Sep-01	\$17
9	N/A	RollerCoaster Tycoon	May-99	\$16
10	10	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	Jul-02	\$43



TEST DRIVE

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI/INFOGRAMES ■ **REVIEWED** JUL-02



Test Drive's statistics are fairly straightforward. There are 45 missions in the story mode that will take you to four different cities: San Francisco, Tokyo, London, and Monte Carlo. Most of the races are linear runs through

the cities, but there are also circuits and even drag races where you can go mano-a-mano with some of the game's various characters. Like any good racing title, there is a nice selection of exotic and classic cars to choose from – 23 of them in fact. The Test Drive franchise has proven to be a worthy addition to any library over the years, and this most recent incarnation doesn't fail to entertain. – **ANDY**



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
Black & Bruised	7.5	Mar-03
Blade II	6	Nov-02
BloodRayne	8	Nov-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	8	Mar-03
Britney's Dance Beat	7.75	Jul-02
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	8	Nov-02
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	7	Mar-03
Contra: Shattered Soldier	8.25	Dec-02
Dark Cloud 2	9.25	Mar-03
DDR Max	7.5	Dec-02
Dead to Rights	9.25	Jan-03
Defender	7.75	Nov-02
Devil May Cry 2	7	Mar-03
Dino Stalker	7.25	Oct-02
Disaster Report	8	Mar-03
Disney Golf	7.75	Oct-02
Dot Hack Vol. 1: Infection	8.25	Mar-03
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
Everblue 2	8.75	Mar-03
EverQuest: Online Adventures	9	Feb-03
Evolution Skateboarding	5	Dec-02
F1 2002	7	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
Fisherman's Challenge	7.5	Mar-03
FreeStyle	8.5	Jul-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
Guilty Gear X2	8.75	Mar-03
Gungrave	7	Oct-02
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	6	Jan-03
Haven: Call of the King	8.25	Jan-03
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	6	Feb-03
Hypersonic Extreme	7.25	Mar-03
Island Xtreme 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
Legia 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
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
P.T.O. IV	7.75	Mar-03
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	8	Dec-02
Ratchet & Clank Online Version I & II	8.75	Dec-02
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	8.5	Mar-03
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
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
Simpsons Skateboarding	1	Dec-02
Sims, The	9	Feb-03
Sky Gunner	6.5	Jul-02
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	9.25	Nov-02
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	9.5	Sep-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
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
World Tour Soccer 2003	8.5	Feb-03
Wreckless	7.75	Dec-02

WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth	7.5	Dec-02
Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille Zur Macht	9.75	Mar-03
X-Men Next Dimension	7.75	Dec-02

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4X4 Evo 2	8	Oct-02
Aggressive Inline	8.75	Sep-02
Animal Crossing	9.5	Oct-02
ATV: Quad Power Racing 2	8	Mar-03
Beach Spikers	5	Sep-02
Big Air Freestyle	6	Nov-02
Black & Bruised	7.5	Mar-03
Blood Omen 2	7.5	Jan-03
BloodRayne	7	Dec-02
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Egg Mania	7.75	Nov-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 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
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Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	4.75	Jan-03
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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
Vexx	8.25	Mar-03
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

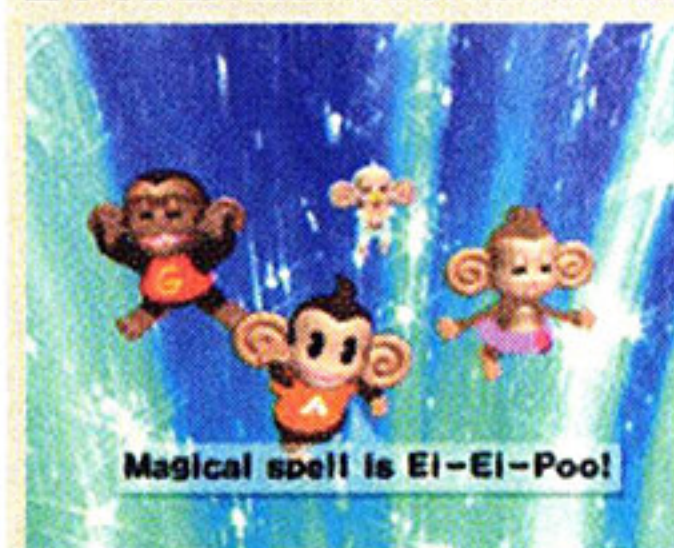
Aggressive Inline	9.25	Sep-02
Antz Extreme Racing	5.5	Dec-02
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	8.5	Dec-02
Barbarian	7.25	Nov-02
Battle Engine Aquila	7	Feb-03
Black Stone: Magic & Steel	3	Feb-03
Blade II	6	Nov-02
Blinx: Time Sweeper	7.75	Nov-02
BloodRayne	7.75	Dec-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon	1	Sep-02
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	9	Oct-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 or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	7.5	Mar-03
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
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	8.5	Mar-03
James Bond 007: NightFire	7.75	Jan-03
Kakuto Chojin	6.25	Jan-03
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	8.5	Oct-02
Kung Fu Chaos	6.5	Mar-03
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
Murakumo	5.75	Mar-03
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Nov-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
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
Seablade	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
Splashdown	9.25	Aug-02
Splinter Cell	8.75	Jan-03
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	9	Dec-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

Airforce Delta Storm	6.75	Dec-02
All-Star Baseball 2003	8	Jul-02
Altered Beast: Guardian of the Realms	7.5	Feb-03
ATV: Quad Power Racing	6	Dec-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
Daredevil	5	Mar-03
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 3	8.25	Mar-03
Defender	2	Feb-03
Desert Strike Advance	7.5	Jul-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
Dungeons & Dragons: Eye of the Beholder	5.5	Mar-03
Earthworm Jim 2	6.5	Sep-02
Egg Mania	8	Oct-02
Fire Pro Wrestling 2	9	Mar-03
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	7.75	Dec-02
Game & Watch: Gallery 4	3	Feb-03
GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing	7.25	Mar-03

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

■ **FORMAT** GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **REVIEWED** OCT-02



So, why am I scoring Super Monkey Ball 2 lower than the first? Frustration – plain and simple. While some of you will definitely have fun with this, you're also going to experience some serious

NEW RELEASES ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL YOUR LOCAL RETAILER FOR MORE DETAILS

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
PLAYSTATION 2		
3/25/03	Auto Modellista	Capcom
4/14/03	BattleBots	THQ
6/25/03	Charlie's Angels	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Chopliker: Search and Rescue	Xicat Interactive
6/2/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Clock Tower 3	Capcom
4/22/03	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
3/18/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts
4/1/03	Dragon's Lair 3D	Encore Software
6/17/03	Dungeons & Dragons Heroes	Infogrames
3/25/03	Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
4/7/03	Evil Dead: Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
5/5/03	Finding Nemo	THQ
6/2/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway

ENTER THE MATRIX

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15



We knew Shiny was working on a Matrix game, but we had no idea how big of a project it truly was. With a team of roughly 80 people, full support from the Wachowskis, and one of the most highly revered gaming figures conducting this operation, it seems likely that Enter The Matrix will eclipse the success of the motion picture universe that it extends from. We have yet to see choreographed kung-fu sequences like the subway fight in the first film, but Shiny has included a comprehensive combat system that is brimming with dozens of combos. As it stands now, the fighting engine is terribly complex.

6/2/03	Freestyle MetalX	Midway
7/15/03	Fugitive Hunter	Infogrames
3/25/03	Galloper 3	Tecmo
7/22/03	Great Escape	Take 2
4/1/03	Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder	Encore Software
6/2/03	Gunfighter 2: Return of Jesse James	Ubi Soft
5/27/03	Hulk, The	Vivendi Universal
5/15/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
3/25/03	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi Universal
6/2/03	Kengo 2	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	King of Route 66, The	Sega
6/10/03	Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal
4/8/03	Midnight Club II	Take 2
6/2/03	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Infogrames
3/17/03	MLB Slugfest 2004	Midway
3/18/03	MotoGP 3	Namco
3/18/03	MVP Baseball 2003	Electronic Arts
5/6/03	NBA Street Vol 2	Electronic Arts
3/25/03	Primal	Sony
3/18/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
5/6/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Operation Resurrection	Activision
6/2/03	RPG Maker 2	Tommo
5/15/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
5/1/03	Smash Cars	Metro3D
6/2/03	Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK Mediactive
3/25/03	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
4/29/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
6/3/03	Transformers Tatakai	Infogrames
6/3/03	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision
3/18/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
3/18/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
4/15/03	X2 Wolverine's Revenge	Activision

PSONE		
3/18/03	Big Strike Bowling	Take 2
3/25/03	Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22	Infogrames
4/8/03	Final Fantasy Origins	Square/Electronic Arts
7/1/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
4/29/03	MLB 2004	Sony
6/17/03	Motocross Mania 2	Take 2
6/17/03	SUV Mania	Take 2

GAMECUBE		
3/25/03	Army Men: Sarge's War	3DO
4/8/03	Backyard Baseball	Infogrames
3/18/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
4/14/03	BattleBots	THQ
6/2/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
4/22/03	Conflict: Desert Storm	Take 2
6/24/03	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft
3/19/03	Cubix Robots for Everyone: Showdown	3DO
3/24/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts
8/26/03	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	Infogrames
6/17/03	Dungeons & Dragons Heroes	Infogrames
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
6/23/03	FZero	Nintendo
5/5/03	Finding Nemo	THQ
6/2/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway
4/1/03	Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder	Encore Software
4/15/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
5/27/03	Hulk, The	Vivendi Universal
4/15/03	Ikaruga	Infogrames
3/24/03	Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, The	Nintendo
5/6/03	NBA Street Vol 2	Electronic Arts
4/1/03	Rally Championship	Encore Software
7/29/03	Red Faction II	THQ
5/15/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
3/24/03	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
8/19/03	Soul Calibur II	Namco
6/2/03	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
5/26/03	Wario World	Nintendo
3/18/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
4/15/03	X2 Wolverine's Revenge	Activision

XBOX		
3/18/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
4/22/03	Brute Force	Microsoft
6/2/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
6/6/03	Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge	Microsoft
6/17/03	Deus Ex 2: Invisible War	Eidos
6/2/03	Dronerz	Metro3D
6/17/03	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
4/7/03	Evil Dead: Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
5/27/03	Fila Tennis Champions	Capcom
5/5/03	Finding Nemo	THQ
6/2/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway
6/2/03	Freestyle MetalX	Midway
4/15/03	Godzilla: Destroy all Monsters Melee	Infogrames
7/22/03	Great Escape	Take 2
4/1/03	Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder	Encore Software
5/27/03	Hulk, The	Vivendi Universal
3/25/03	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi Universal
3/18/03	Lamborghini	Majesco
6/2/03	Loose Cannon	Ubi Soft
6/10/03	Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal
5/6/03	Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom
5/26/03	Midnight Club II	Take 2
3/25/03	Midtown Madness 3	Microsoft
7/1/03	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Infogrames
5/30/03	MLB Inside Pitch 2003	Microsoft
3/17/03	MLB Slugfest 2004	Midway
3/18/03	MVP Baseball 2003	Electronic Arts
5/6/03	NBA Street Vol 2	Electronic Arts
6/17/03	Operation Flashpoint	Infogrames
6/10/03	Outlaw Volleyball	Vivendi Universal
3/25/03	Pro Race Driver	Infogrames
3/18/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Red Faction II	THQ
5/6/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	Activision
3/26/03	Robocop	Titus
3/18/03	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Infogrames
4/8/03	Run Like Hell	Vivendi Universal
4/8/03	Sea Dogs II	Bethesda Softworks
7/1/03	Shayde	Metro3D
3/24/03	Sims, The	Electronic Arts
3/26/03	Stake: Fortune Fighters	Metro3D
5/1/03	Star Wars: Knights of Old Republic	LucasArts
3/24/03	Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts
3/25/03	State of Emergency	Take 2
5/6/03	Top Angler	Capcom
3/20/03	UFC: Tapout 2	TDK Mediactive
5/23/03	Unseen, The	Microsoft
3/25/03	V-Rally 3	Infogrames
6/3/03	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision
5/12/03	WWE Raw 2	THQ
4/15/03	X2 Wolverine's Revenge	Activision

PC		
5/20/03	Airline CEO	Infogrames
4/10/03	Aquanox 2: Revelation	JoWood
3/24/03	Bandits: Phoenix Rising	Tri-Synergy
3/25/03	BloodRayne	Majesco
3/18/03	BMX: Team DK	Infogrames
6/16/03	Call of Cthulhu	Fishtank Interactive
6/2/03	Celebrity Deathmatch	Take 2
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
5/22/03	Cold Zero	JoWood
6/2/03	Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Vivendi Universal
5/6/03	Crusaders Kings	Strategy First
3/25/03	CSI	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Dark Age Of Camelot: Gold Edition	Vivendi Universal

MALICE

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA/VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 1



Hey, remember Malice? You know – the game that Microsoft was so high on that it used it in their early Xbox press conferences, then decided not to publish? Well, the last thing we remember hearing about this game is that No Doubt's

Gwen Stefani was going to do voice-overs for the game's heroine, which gave us all a chubby, except Lisa, for obvious reasons (she's from North Dakota; people don't get chubbies there because it's too cold!). It's now being published by everyone's favorite French utility company/entertainment behemoth Vivendi Universal and – guess what? – isn't even an Xbox exclusive anymore! The game is now releasing for the PlayStation 2 as well! Holy crap!!

6/16/03	Dark Khan	Take 2
3/24/03	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Electronic Arts
6/30/03	Deus Ex 2: Invisible War	Eidos
5/25/03	Devastation	Hip Interactive
7/15/03	Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	Digital Leisure
6/2/03	Duke Nukem Forever	Take 2
3/18/03	Empire Earth Gold	Vivendi Universal
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix Special Edition	Infogrames
7/29/03	Epic Chess	Vivendi Universal
4/8/03	Etherlords II	LucasArts
3/25/03	Eve Online	Strategy First
6/2/03	Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicle	Vivendi Universal
5/20/03	Fire Department	Ubi Soft

Release Date	Title	Publisher/Distributor
3/18/03	Galactic Civilizations	Strategy First
4/17/03	Gothic II	JoWood
7/1/03	Half-Life 2	Vivendi Universal
7/1/03	Halo	Microsoft
4/7/03	Harpoon IV	Ubi Soft
7/1/03	Homeworld 2	Vivendi Universal
5/27/03	Hulk, The	Vivendi Universal
4/8/03	Humvee Assault	Infogrames
3/17/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
3/25/03	Inquisition	Strategy First
4/15/03	Lion Heart	Vivendi Universal
6/25/03	Lock On Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft
6/3/03	MotoGP 2	THQ
4/15/03	MS Rise of Nations	Microsoft
4/15/03	MVP Baseball 2003	Electronic Arts
3/25/03	Neverwinter Nights: The Shadows of Undrentide	Infogrames
3/18/03	New World Order	Strategy First
4/15/03	Planetside Online	Verant Interactive/989 Studios

DOOM III

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 3



If there was one game that everyone was talking about at last year's E3, it was Doom III... and rightfully so. For the legions of fanatical id troopers out there, this title will most likely send you into a state of glossy-eyed orgasmic paralysis. We're not sure how to put this, but Doom III will most likely usher in a wave of the most incredible looking interactive software titles the world has ever seen. Featuring stunning visual effects and true-to-life animations, id's new baby is something this magazine is incredibly impressed by. Let's hope this one makes its October 3rd release date; but, like any id Software game, it will come out "when it's done."

3/17/03	Praetorians	Eidos
3/18/03	Pro Race Driver	Codemasters
3/24/03	Purge	Tri-Synergy
3/25/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction II	THQ
3/17/03	Restaurant Empire	Activision
5/15/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory	Activision
5/6/03	RollerCoaster Tycoon II: Wacky World	Infogrames
6/9/03	Savage	iGames Publishing
4/1/03	Serious Sam Gold	Global Star Software
3/25/03	Shadowbane Online	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Sims: Blueprint Pro Expansion, The	Abacus
7/15/03	Space Ace	Digital Leisure
5/20/03	Star Trek Elite Force 2	Activision
4/15/03	Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided	LucasArts
4/15/03	Star Wars Galaxies Collector's Edition	LucasArts
5/1/03	Starsky & Hutch	Vivendi Universal
6/2/03	State Of Emergency	Take 2
6/2/03	SWAT: Urban Justice	Vivendi Universal
6/2/03	Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms	Vivendi Universal
3/25/03	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Gold Pack	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
4/1/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
5/15/03	Tron 2.0	Monolith
4/17/03	Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	Take 2
3/18/03	Vietcong	Take 2
6/24/03	Warcraft III: Frozen Throne Expansion Pack	Vivendi Universal
7/15/03	Who Shot Johnny Rock?	Digital Leisure
3/18/03	Will Rock	Ubi Soft

GAME BOY ADVANCE

6/23/03	Advance Wars 2	Nintendo
7/1/03	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Electro Source
5/6/03	Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow	Konami
3/24/03	Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride	THQ
4/1/03	Creatures	SVG
6/3/03	Crushed Baseball 2004	Bam Entertainment
3/24/03	Disney Princess	THQ
6/9/03	Donkey Kong Country	Nintendo
6/24/03	Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku II	Infogrames
3/25/03	Ed, Edd n' Eddy	Bam Entertainment
5/5/03	Finding Nemo	THQ
4/14/03	Golden Sun: 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
5/27/03	Hulk, The	Vivendi Universal
6/10/03	Ice Nine	Bam Entertainment
3/18/03	James Bond 007: NightFire	Electronic Arts
4/14/03	Jet Grind Radio	THQ
3/25/03	Lost Vikings, The	Vivendi Universal
3/18/03	Lufia: The Ruins of Lore	Atlus
4/1/03	Medabots: Metabee-Gold	Natsume
4/1/03	Medabots: Rokusho-Silver	Natsume
3/17/03	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo
3/17/03	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo
3/25/03	Samurai Jack: The Amulet of Ti	Bam Entertainment
7/1/03	Sega Arcade Gallery	THQ
5/27/03	Space Channel 5: Ulala Cosmic Attack	THQ
7/15/03	Spy Kids 3	Disney Interactive
3/25/03	Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom
4/1/03	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
6/30/03	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/24/03	Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames
5/26/03	Wario Ware, Inc: Mega Microgames	Nintendo
6/2/03	Wizardry: The Summoning	Natsume
3/25/03	Woody Woodpecker: Crazy Castle 5	Kemco
6/2/03	Worms Blast	Ubi Soft
4/15/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! Stairway to the Destined Duel	Konami

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



WAR OF THE MONSTERS

Each character needs a Red Dot in order to perform these combo moves. If you also have a special move available, you'll deal even more damage.

Agamo – Press □ (x2), △, □ (x2), △, then Tiki Head (△ + ○), and beat them with the Tiki Head until it explodes.

Congar – Press □ (x3), △, □, △, □, △, □, and △. Then use the Sonic Roar (△ + ○) before the opponent gets back up.

Kineticlops – Press □ (x3), □ + Down, □ + Down, and △ + Up. Then perform an Electric Bolt (△ + ○) before the opponent gets back up.

Magmo – Press □ (x3), △, □, △, □, and △. Then do the Eruption (△ + ○) when the opponent's temporary invulnerability is halfway complete.

Preytor – Perform the Parasite (△ + ○). Now, press □ (x2), △, □, △, □, and △ (x2).

Raptros – Press □ (x3), △ (x3), and then use the Flame-thrower (△ + ○) before the opponent gets back up.

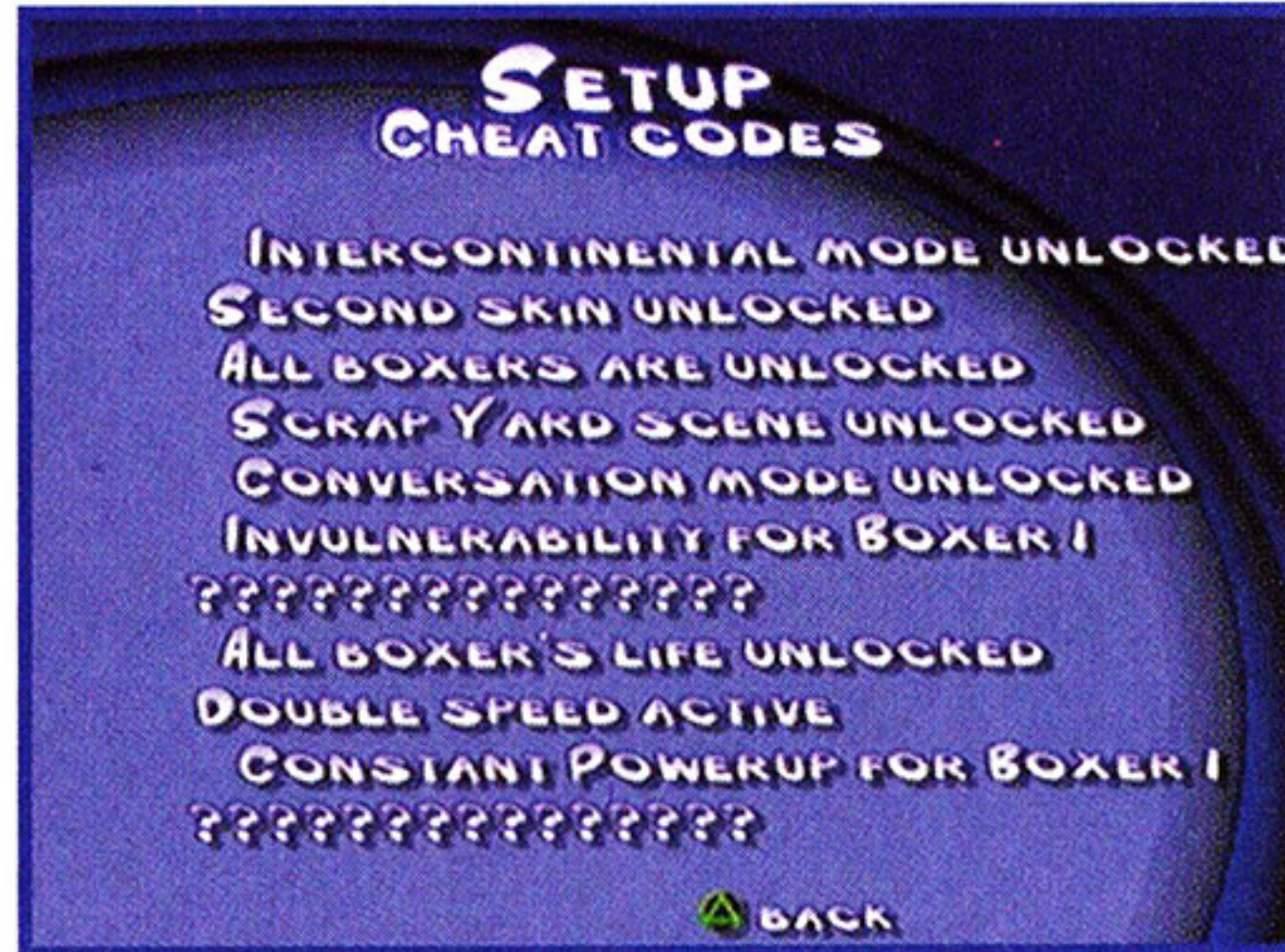
Robo-47 – Press △ (x2), □, △ (x2), □ (x2), and then lock on (hold L1 + R1) and perform the Atomic Rocket (△ + ○) before the opponent gets back up.

Togera – Press □ (x3), △, □, and △ (x2). Then perform the Acid Breath (△ + ○) before the opponent gets back up.

Ultra-V – Use the Grappling Hook (△ + ○), and then press □ (x3), △, □, △, □, △.

Zorgulon – Perform the Alien Ambush (△ + ○), and then press □ (x5).

Larry Underwood
Los Angeles, CA



BLACK AND BRUISED

Go to the Cheat Codes option under the Setup menu. Enter the following codes.

All Boxers – Start, X, O, □ (x2), R1 (x2), □, O, X, Start

All Boxers' Life – Start, X, □, O, R1, X, □, O, R1, Start

Constant Power-up – Start, X, O, X, O, X, O, □ (x3), Start

Note: You can enable this code for player two by entering it with the second controller.

Conversation Mode – Start, R1, X, O, □, R1 (x3), Start

Double Speed – Start, R1 (x10), Start

Intercontinental Mode – Start, X (x3), O (x3), □ (x3), Start

Invulnerability – Start, X (x2), O (x2), R1 (x2), □ (x2), Start

Note: You can enable this code for player two by entering it with the second controller.

Scrap Yard Scene – Start, O, R1, O, R1, X (x2), Start

Second Skin – Start, X, R1, O, □, Start

Randal Flagg
Las Vegas, NV

GUILTY GEAR X2

They're nothing special, but we'll take what we can get.

Alternate Victory Pose – Hold Punch, Kick, or Slash as soon as you beat your opponent. Be aware that not every character has a full set of poses.

Dialogue Select – Hold Punch, Kick, or Slash as soon as the versus screen disappears, but before the actual stage loads.

Faster Credits – Hold Punch, Kick, or Slash during the credits sequence.

Nick Andros
Boulder, CO

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004

Safe on Pick-off

If you're playing the computer and you steal on a pick-off, turn back to the previous base just as the fielder gets the ball. He'll throw it to the base ahead of you even if you're close to the previous bag.

"Captain Howdy"
Georgetown



DEVIL MAY CRY 2

It may not be the sequel you were hoping for, but there are at least some hidden goodies packed into it. Follow our instructions.

Alternate Costumes (Dante) – Beat the game on the Normal difficulty setting to unlock extra gear, and then complete the adventure on Dante Must Die to get his original clothes.

Alternate Costumes (Lucia) – Finish the game on the Normal, Hard, and Lucia Must Die settings to unlock two alternate costumes and her Arius Bodyguard gear.

Dante Must Die and Lucia Must Die Settings – Finish the game on the Hard setting with both characters.

Hard Setting – Finish the game with Dante and Lucia on the Normal setting.

Level Select – Simply finish the adventure with either character on any difficulty setting.

Play as Trish – Beat it with Dante on Hard. Trish will possess Dante's stats and items and starts with the Sparda.

Secret Level – Go into the large doors to the right of the pillar where the flying harpies appear in the first mission. Proceed through the stage until you encounter a wall with a face. If you hit circle, you can access a secret room.

Slow Motion Amulet – When you reach the arena with an eye in the center, go towards the periphery and you'll find a sack on the ground. Break it open to find an amulet. Apply it.

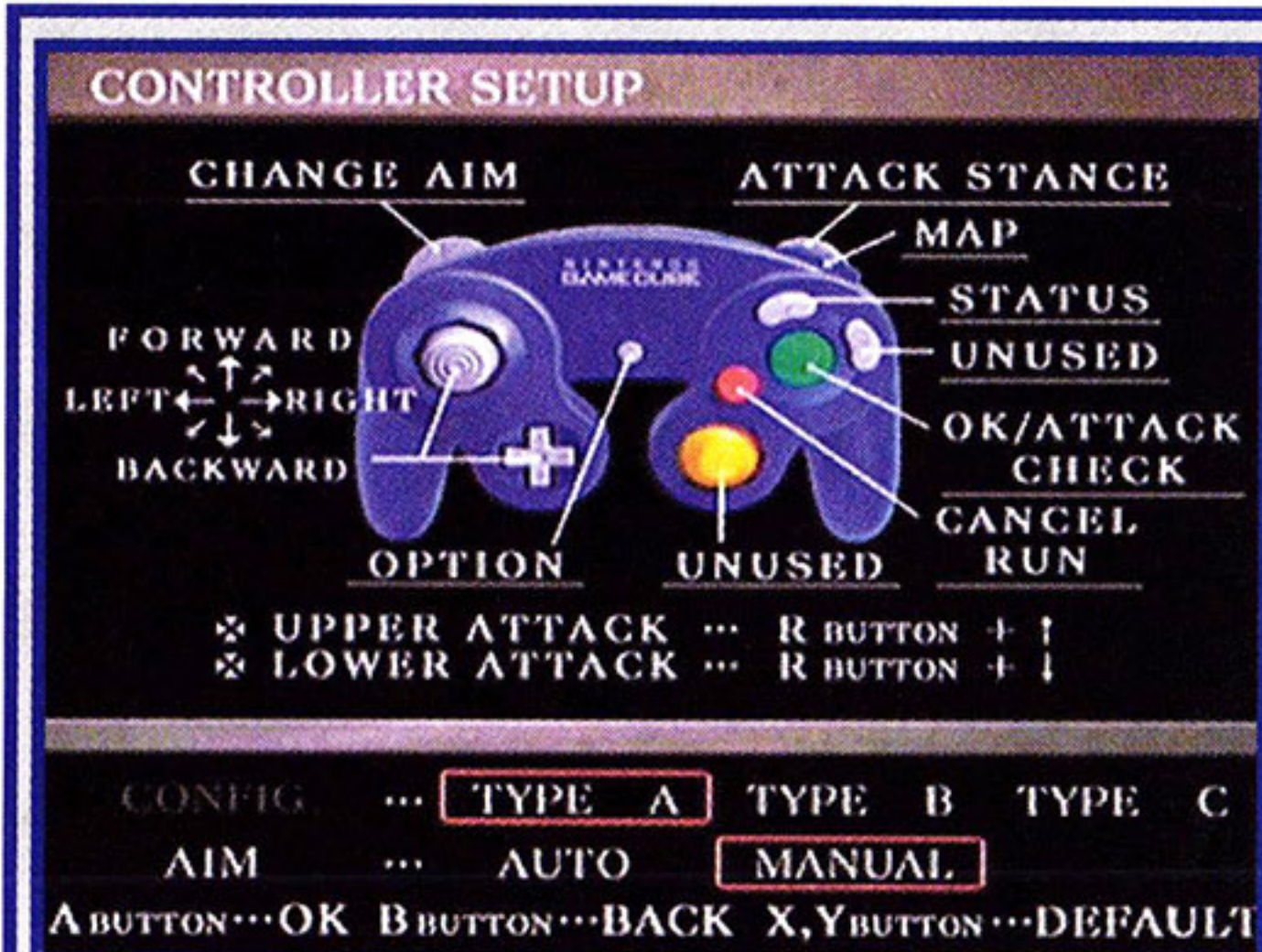
"The Joystick Juggalo"
E. Lansing, MI

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

Be aware that if you set the Trooper Level to Full, one hit will remove half your energy. Use this cheat with a little caution.

Cheat Mode – Press □ (x2), O (x2), L1 (x2), R1 (x2), L2 (x2), R2 (x2) at the Main Menu. You won't receive a confirmation message, but start a game anyway, pause, and enter the options screen. The cheats option will now be available.

Stu Redman
Arnette, TX



RESIDENT EVIL 2

If you bought the game thinking it would be as cool as the Resident Evil remake, you thought wrong. But, there are a few added treats to make the purchase less bitter!

Alternate Uniforms – Start a game with Leon, and make sure that you set the blood color to Red and the game's difficulty to Normal. Do not pick up any items and avoid using handgun bullets. You only need to use your gun on zombies in the bus and the zombie with the key. Once you reach the police station gate, go to the lower level stairwell. Outside you will run into Brad Vickers From RE 1 and 3; he's now a zombie. Kill him. If he's still standing, enter the police station and grab the bullets on the desk near the computer. Return to Brad and finish him off. Check his body and you'll discover a special key. Go to the Dark Room and you will be able to change your clothes.

Alternative Uniforms 2 – Finish either character's scenarios in under three hours. A zombie in a uniform will appear to confirm that you did indeed accomplish

this task. Load your saved game and progress to the police station without grabbing any items. Quickly pass the zombie that you encounter in the alley near the station. Get the shotgun and go kill that zombie. Remove the special key from him and head to the lockers. It will open a lock that has three uniforms: one belongs to Claire and two are Leon's.

Extreme Battle Mode – Finish the game using either character with an A rank. Go to the Special option and you'll find that Extreme Battle Mode is unlocked.

Play as Ada Wong (Extreme Battle Mode) – Beat Extreme Battle Mode level 1 with any character.

Play as Chris Redfield (Extreme Battle Mode) – Beat Extreme Battle Mode level 2 with any character.

Play as Hunk – Finish the game with an A ranking as either character.

Play as Tofu – Finish the game using Hunk.

Ranking System

S – Complete the game in an hour and thirty minutes to get an S on the first mission. Use only one herb, don't save, and use the knife and handgun. Also, you can use the Shotgun and Bowgun. However, if you pick them up, you cannot pick up the Magnum and Grenade launcher, and vice versa. Finally, you cannot upgrade any weapons throughout.

A – Finish the game in under three hours without using any First Aid sprays, but you can use herbs. Note that if you use any special weapons, your rank will be lowered by one grade.

B – Beat the game in under three hours.

C – Beat it within five to seven hours.

Rebecca Chambers Photo – Enter the S.T.A.R.S. office and head to the desk in the back of the room. Click on it and you'll get a message: "This desk is trashed someone must of searched it." If you search the desk 50 times, a photo of Rebecca as a basketball player will emerge.

Shooting The Screen

1. As Leon, head to the roof where the helicopter crashed. Stand near the door that leads inside, and be sure that the close-up view of Leon appears. Now, aim the Unlimited Ammunition Shotgun at the screen and let loose. Note that this trick can be done at any location where Leon can aim at the screen.

2. As Claire in the first scenario, go to the hall where the S.T.A.R.S. room is located (the place where you get the fax) You can shoot the screen while in this hallway.

3. Play as Hunk, and go to the green crow hall where you fight the second Tyrant. Go around the second corner and enter the room. As you shoot at Tyrant with a shotgun, you will also shoot the screen.

Unlimited Ammunition – Begin a game. Press Start and head to the options screen. Select Button Config, highlight Aim, hold R and press Z (x10). The white boxes around Config and Aim should change to red to confirm a correct code entry.

Unlimited Weapons – Beat either character's first scenario with an A or B ranking in less than two and a half hours to receive the special Rocket Launcher. Beat either character's second scenario with an A or B ranking in less than two and a half hours to receive the special Gatling Gun and special Machine gun. These items will be available in the next game after you open the first chest.

*Dario Argento
Rome, Italy*



BLACK AND BRUISED

Go to the Setup option and select the Cheat option. Enter the following codes.

All Boxers – Start, A, Y, X (x2), Z (x2), X, Y, A, Start

All Boxers' Life – Start, A, X, Y, Z, A, X, Y, Z, Start

Constant Power-ups – Start, A, Y, A, Y, A, Y, X (x3), Start. Note: You can enable this code for player two by entering it on the second controller.

Conversation Mode – Start, Z, A, Y, X, Z (x3), Start

Double Speed – Start, Z (x10), Start

Intercontinental Mode – Start, A (x3), Y (x3), X (x3), Start

Invulnerability – Start, A (x2), Y (x2), Z (x2), X (x2), Start. Note: You can enable this code for player two by entering it on the second controller.

Scrap Yard Scene – Start, Y, Z, Y, Z, A (x2), Start

Second Skin – Start, A, Z, Y, X, Start

*Jen Newman
Minneapolis, MN*



DISNEY SPORTS SOCCER

It's not even a bad soccer game, but you can certainly make things more than a little unblanced with this code.

Unlimited Magic Shoe Use – At the title screen, press Y (x5), B, A, Y. A sound will confirm correct code entry.

*Glen Bateman
New York, NY*

RED FACTION II

Go to the extras option and then head to the cheats area. Input the following codes to get the desired effect, cheater! If you happen to own Red Faction II for PS2 and missed the codes from our previous issue, just use this formula we discovered to convert the GameCube codes into PS2 ones: X for A, Y for B, Z for Y, and W for X.

Directors Cut – Y, A, X, B, X, A, Y, B

Extra Chunky – X (x4), B, A, X (x2)

Gibby Ammo – A (x4), Y, X, A (x2)

Gibby Explosions – B, X, A, Y, B, X, A, Y

Infinite Ammunition – Y, B, A, X, Y, X, A, B

Infinite Grenades – X, A, X, Y, A, X, A, X

Level Select – X, Y, A, B, Y, X, A (x2)

Master Code – B (x2), A (x2), Y, X, Y, X

Rain of Fire – Y (x8)

Rapid Rails – X, Y, X, Y, A (x2), B (x2)

Super Health – A (x2), Y, B, Y, B, X

Walking Dead – A (x8)

Wacky Deaths – B (x8)

*"The Game Molester"
Washington D.C.*

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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PHANTASY STAR ONLINE VERSION I & II

These aren't really cheats, so we won't condemn you for using them. However, as we've said before, real gamers don't need to cheat, or just don't get caught!

Cheap Kills – If enemies in a particular room are giving you trouble, run out of the room and return. Some monsters will enter a dormant state. This will permit you to get a couple whacks in before they can retaliate.

Control Loading Screen – Simply move the C-stick around to move the light. When you're entering an area, the Analog Stick will turn the tunnel and the C-stick will control the tunnel's speed. When leaving an area, you can change the little light's color by pressing A.

Dressing Room – Finish every area and quest under the normal difficulty setting. If you have 10,000 meseta when you load your character, you can enter the dressing room to change certain aspects of your character.

Easy Meseta – First, get a second controller and make sure that you have an empty file on your memory card. Create a second character. Return to the player screen and select Multiplayer. Now with the new person, drop his or her items, and then have your character pick them up. Repeat this process as much as you like.

Gain Levels Quickly

1. Defeat the Caves 3 boss. With a hunter, attack the boss with an effective sword or Partisan by hitting all of his parts. Afterwards, talk to the Principle and head to Mines 1. You can deal a serious amount of damage on these enemies now. The only monsters you should keep an eye on are Sinow Gold, Sinow Bat, and Granas. Mines 2 will give you lots of experience too, but by the time you get there, you should've gained plenty of levels.

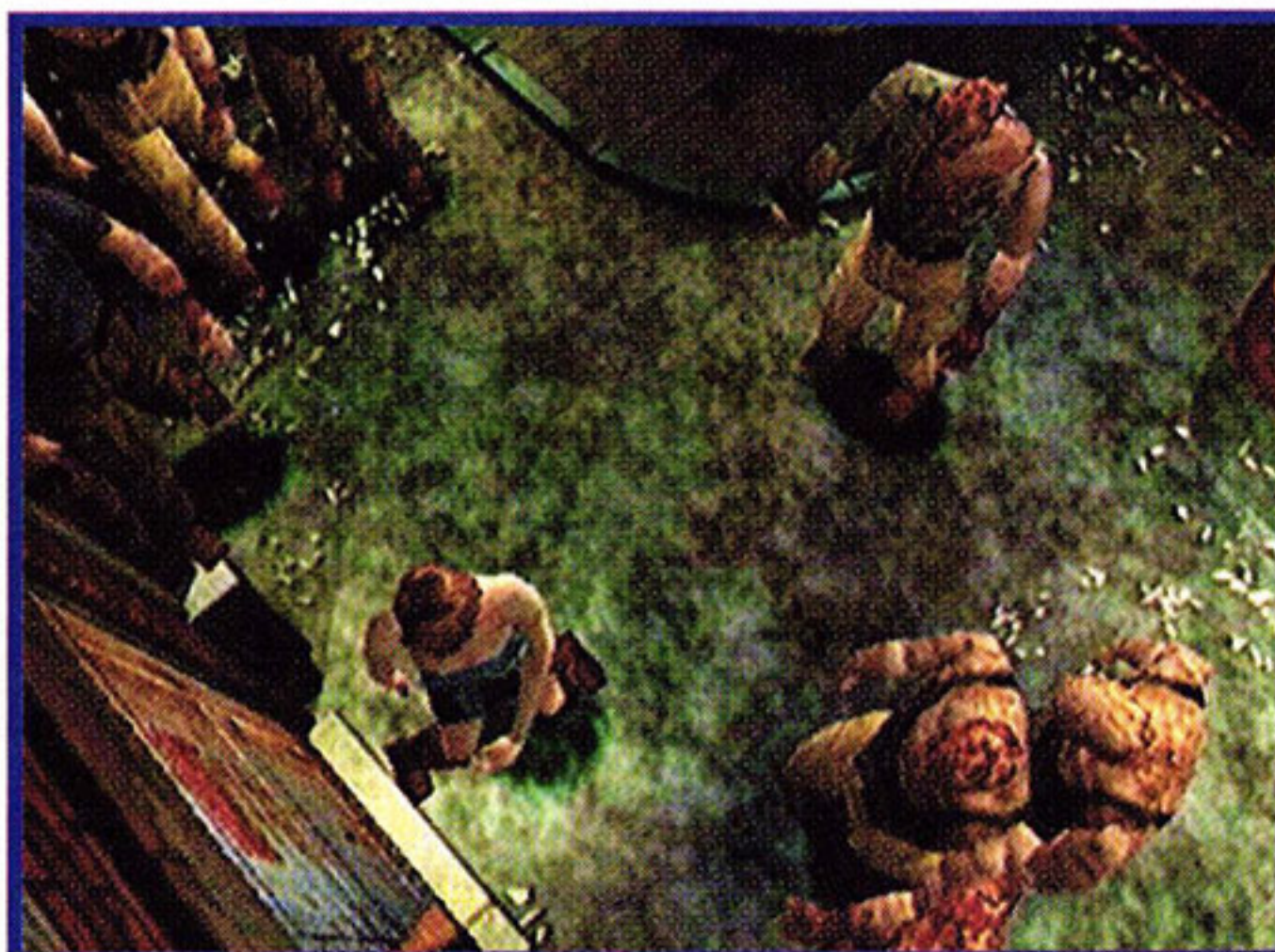
2. Enter the Forest area on the Hard, Very Hard, or Ultimate settings. Go into a room that has a Monest (a.k.a. Mothvist on Ultimate) and peace out all of the Mosquitoes without destroying the nest. When it is void of any more Mosquitoes, head back to the town via Telepipe or Ryuker. If you return to the nest, more Mosquitoes will appear.

3. When you encounter a Pofuilly Slime, use Barta or another Ice technique on it. This will cause it to duplicate. Then you can make a copy of the copy, but you can only copy the original once. Do this until you have six Pofuilly Slime on the screen. The copies will give you double the experience of the original one.

Ultimate Difficulty – Beat either episode on Very Hard. If you wish to unlock this setting on the online mode, you must reach level 80.

Weapons From Monsters – Get the G-Assassins Arms or Bomma's Right Arm, and then head to the Unsealed Door mission. If you speak with the person standing to the right of the portal after all the missions are complete, he will turn your item into a weapon.

*"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN*



RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

The third time isn't always a charm. In this case, the first time was. Use codes, have fun.

Barry Burton Ending – First, you must unlock ending B. To do this, jump off the bridge when fighting Nemesis Type B. After you jump, the last area of the game will be a bit different. You will have to fight Nicholai or negotiate with him. We suggest that you at least bring the Magnum and Grenade launcher to this fight.

Barry Burton Ending 2 – Jump from the bridge. When you reach the room with the radar tracker, grab it and exit through the door you entered. Nicholai will call you. After killing him, Carlos will come. Leave the room after speaking with him; do not use the hatch to the Rail Cannon. Turn around and go into the radar device room once more.

Enhanced Weapons And Ammo – In order to do this trick, you must be playing on Hard. Use the reloading tool and mix the ammo of the same type eight times. On the eighth mixture, the game will prompt you to create enhanced ammo. Once you load the ammo into a weapon, your weapon will become enhanced, too. You can only do this trick with the 9mm and shotgun.

Epilogues – If you can finish the game on Hard, you can unlock Epilogues. These are short descriptions on each character in the entire series. The better the ranking that you receive, the more epilogues you'll unlock. There are a total of eight.

Jill's Diary – To obtain this item (a file, actually), get all thirty files in the game in order. This will cause the first file to become Jill's Diary.

Large Reward (Mercenary Mode) – Get to the area near the goal just after the dimly lit hallway near the intersection with more than four minutes remaining. Two more S.T.A.R.S. members will be killing Nemesis. This trick will yield a bigger reward from the big boss.

Mercenary Mode – Finish the game once. Save the Next Game file, start a new game, choose your saved game, and select Mercenary Mode.

Unlimited Money And Time (Mercenary Mode) – Reach the alley that contains three dogs and a crate. Kill two of the dogs on the crate. Now, dodge the remaining canine to receive a time and money bonus.

*Stephen Neale
Rockville, MD*



TOXIC GRIND

Input the codes All Bikes, All Characters, and Level Select at the Main Menu. Input the rest during gameplay. Hold the L and R Buttons and enter the following sequence.

All Bikes – Down, Up, Right (x6), click Left Analog Stick

All Characters – Left, Up, Down, Right, Up, Down, Up, Right, click Left Analog Stick

Anti-Gravity – Up (x2), Left, Right, Up (x4), click Left Analog Stick

Level Select – Down, Up, Left (x2), Up, Right (x3), click Left Analog Stick

Magnet Pegs – Y, Up, Y, Up, Y, Down, Y, Down, click Left Analog Stick

Shield – Left, Right, X, B, Y, A, Up, Down, click Left Analog Stick

Super Spin – Left, Up, Right, Down (x2), Right, Up, Left, click Left Analog Stick

"GI Droid"

(location unknown – last seen hiding weapons in Iraq)



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

War sucks, but if you need to get it out of your system, take a little dose of Conflict: Desert Storm. It's cathartic; we promise.

Cheat Mode

At the Main Menu enter the following code: X (x2), Y (x2), click Left Analog Stick (x2), Right Analog Stick (x2), press L Button (x2), R Button (x2). Although you won't hear any confirmation sound, the code should work. Start a game and then pause it. If you go to the options screen, Cheats will now be available. Be aware that if you set the Trooper option to full, one bullet will remove half of your health.

*"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH*

CODE OF THE MONTH

DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

AUDIO SETTINGS



Bonus Music Tracks – Simply play through the 15 day period once and you'll unlock "How Crazy Are You" by Meja and "Is This Love" by Bob Marley.

Ending Bonus – Finish the game. When you begin another game, you can advance to the end immediately. Just select Leave Tomorrow at the hotel or pool menu.

Ending Sequence – Go all the way through the credits to see an extra FMV sequence starring Zack and the remains of his island.

Easy Money

1. First, you need Dead or Alive 3. Choose a character that also appears in Xtreme Beach Volleyball's Survival mode. The more wins you garner in DOA 3's Survival mode, the more money you will begin with Xtreme Beach Volleyball.

2. Start a new game. When Lisa offers to show you around the island, select Yes. Now, play the hopping game until you reach your first match. Play it knowing that the less points the opposition has, and the more blocks and spikes you time well, the more money you will receive. Once you win, wait until the next day at the hotel. Select Leave Tomorrow and start the game again with the same character. If you repeat these steps, you will earn 80,000 to 149,000 credits each time. If you can manage to win a game seven to nothing, you will get 150,000 credits.

3. Select a character with a decent amount of power. Play volleyball in Story mode and let your partner set you up for a spike. When the ball is directly above your head, aim straight for an opponent and spike it (an opponent that is the farthest away is preferable). If you manage to make that opponent struggle, your partner will award you with 1,000 credits.

Extra Items – Give one character a lot of gifts and then finish the game. Begin another one on that saved file and choose the character you lavished gifts upon. You will start with all of those items in your inventory.

Force Replay – Hold L Button immediately after a point is scored.

Keeping On Good Terms – Give your partner her favorite items (a couple should suffice), obviously taking into consideration her favorite color, hobby, and nationality.

When you awake the next day, notice the music notes around her head. If there's only one, you're not doing well. If there's two, her enthusiasm is fairly high. If she has three, then you two are almost soul mates!

Likes And Dislikes

Ayane – Hates Kasumi, Zack, Origami
Christie – Likes Lisa
Helena – Likes Christie; hates Meat Buns
Hitomi – Likes Tina; hates Zack, Guitars, Scholarly Books, Tomatoes, Tarot Cards, Guns
Kasumi – Hates Ayane
Leifang – Likes everyone
Lisa – Likes Tina
Tina – Likes Lisa and Hitomi

Lock View – When watching a "Gravure" movie or another camera-controlled angle, click the Right Analog Stick to set the angle, and then click the Left Analog Stick to lock the view. Zoom to a desired magnification and press X to lock the camera.

Moving Your Partner – You can position your partner somewhere else if you don't like her current one. Simply do this with the Right Analog Stick.

Preferred Gifts

Ayane – Marrons Glaces, anything purple, Grape Juice, Peridot, Shurikens, any brooch
Christie – Tomato Juice, Driving, Knives, Guitars, Guns, Steering Wheel, Turquoise, Union Jack
Helena – Blanc Manger, Blue Conch, Candles, Dolphins, French Bread, Garnet, Perfume, all Murex
Hitomi – Chocolate Cake, Emerald, Frying Pan, Hourglass, Cooking Appliances, Music Boxes, Milk, all recipes, Sachertorte, Silver Place Settings
Kasumi – Anything strawberry, Millefeuille, Amethyst, Balloons, Origami, Cushions, Crystal Balls, Tarot Cards, Brooch
Leifang – Chinese Deserts, Fans, Diamond, Nunchaku, Orange Juice, Teddy Bears
Lisa – Cactus, Cherry Pie, Doughnuts, Pens, Lavender, Lilies, Pineapples, Ruby, Salad, any books
Tina – Seafood, Cycling, Video Games, Blue and/or Red Guitars, Brooch, Pistols and Guns, Xbox, Turquoise, Ukulele

Selecting A Partner – Partner with women that have power such as Tina or Hitomi. When you receive the ball during a game, try to position one of these women so that they hit it first. This will allow them to perform a spike, which will often knock down opponents even if they're blocking.

Soundtrack Change – You can switch the music anytime by pressing the Black and White Buttons. Black advances to the next track and White will go backwards.

Swimsuits In Exhibition Mode – Earn or buy swimsuits in story mode (Zack's Island). The swimsuits that you acquire in that mode will also be available in exhibition mode.

Trevor Blearing
Anoka, MN

UNREAL II

Press ~ during gameplay to display the console window. Enter BeMyMonkey. Now enter one of the following codes. If you wish to disable the cheat, simply type BeMyMonkey again. The codes that require a 0 or 1 are boolean. The 0 turns the code off; the 1 turns it on.

- All Weapons** – Loaded
- Ammunition** – AllAmmo
- Animation Servos** – ToggleServos
- Behind View** – BehindView (0 or 1)
- Change Game Difficulty** – Difficulty (number)
- Damage All Visible Pawns** – ManCannon (number)
- Double Speed** – ToggleSpeed
- Enemy Fears You** – FearMe
- Flight Mode** – Fly
- Free Camera Movement** – FreeCamera (0 or 1)
- Free Orders** – EnableFreeOrders(0 or 1)
- Freeze View** – ToggleFreezeView
- Ghost Mode** – Ghost
- Gib NPC Under Crosshair** – GibHitNPC
- God Mode** – God
- God Mode For Selected Actor** – GodEx (actor)
- Go To Actor Location** – GotoActor (actor)
- Harm Player A Specific Amount** – HurtMe (number)
- HUD** – ToggleHUD
- Impacts** – ToggleImpacts
- Invisibility** – Invisible (0 or 1)
- Kill Actor Under Crosshair** – KillHitActor
- Kill All Active NPCs** – KillActiveNPCs
- Kill All Dormant NPCs** – KillDormantNPCs
- Kill Indicated Actor** – KillActor (actor)
- Kill NPC Under Crosshair** – KillHitNPC
- Level Skip** – NextLevel
- List All Actors** – Actors
- Map Select** – Open (map name)
- Normal Walking Mode** – Walk
- Phoenix Powersuit** – Phoenix
- Players Only** – PO
- Rmode** – ToggleRMode
- Scoreboard** – ToggleScoreBoard
- See View From Indicated Actor** – CheatView (actor)
- Set Camera Distance** – SetCameraDist (number)
- Set Jump Height** – SetJumpZ (number)
- Set Particle Density** – SetParticleDensity (number)
- Set Player Eye Height** – SetEyeHeight
- Set Player Health** – SetMyHealth (number)
- Set Player Size** – ChangeSize (number)
- Set Player Speed** – SetSpeed (number)
- Show All Hidden Actors** – ToggleShowAll
- Show All Keypoints** – ToggleShowKPs
- Show All Navigation Points** – ToggleShowNPs
- Show Player Teams** – ShowTeams
- Slow Motion** – SloMo (number)
- Spawn Indicated Item** – Sum (item name)
- Specify Damage To NPCs** – DamageNPCs (number)
- Specify Damage To Target** – Damage (number, target)
- Specify Health To Target** – SetHealth (number, target)
- Summon Array Of Goodies** – Goodies (number, number)
- Target Camera On Player** – ViewSelf
- Teleport To Location Looked At** – Teleport
- Time Demo** – ToggleTimeDemo
- Toggle Invisibility** – ToggleInvisibility
- Toggle Reloads** – ToggleReloads
- Underwater Mode** – Amphibious
- Unlimited Ammunition** – ToggleInfiniteAmmo
- Weapon Firing** – SetWeaponFire (0 or 1)
- Weapon Tick Code** – SetWeaponTick (0 or 1)

Hideyuki Sagawa
Tokyo, Japan

CLASSIC GI

MASTERS OF DOOM

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID KUSHNER

David Kushner's new book, *Masters of Doom*, is an intensely personal, elegantly-written account of id Software's legendary first-person shooter, *Doom*, and the lives of its creators, John Carmack and John Romero. Written in a novelistic style, the book traces Romero's and Carmack's childhoods, their meteoric rise to success, and the clash of egos that led to their much-publicized split. After conducting hundreds of hours of interviews with all the people involved in the birth of id and its seminal FPS, Kushner manages to capture not only the emotional battles that were waged behind the scenes at id, but also the birth of an emerging online gaming culture. It's a fascinating book and is a must-read for everyone from *Doom* fanatics to the most casual of gamers.



David Kushner lives in New York and writes for many major publications, including *The New York Times*, *Wired*, *Spin*, and *Rolling Stone*

How did this book begin? What prompted you to write it about Carmack, Romero, and *Doom*?

A lot of this came from my own experience. I was a gamer and I knew about this subculture. Back in 1996, I was writing a piece about Quake clans, and that's what led me to this story. There's a part in the book where there is a match between the two top Quake clans of the time – Ruthless Bastards and Impulse 9. Stevie Case [a former Ion Storm employee, pin-up model, and Romero's future wife] was a part of Impulse 9 in Kansas. The moment I walked into that student house and saw this snarled mess of cables and the red-eyed gamers that had been playing for 72 hours nonstop...it just knocked me out. That stuck with me, and I thought that something about this world would be a great topic for a book. But I'd grown up reading books like *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson and all

the new journalists. I'd always wanted to write a book like that. So, I said, "Let me find one story and just tell that."

For me, the reason that it is Carmack and Romero is because I think that, if you're going to find any story to carry an entire book, it's got to be compelling and it's got to have good characters. These two guys are amazing complements to each other. It was a real rags to riches story and it had three acts: They met, they achieved all this success, and they split up. They'd experienced a lot of controversy. They really had a lot of influence.

Obviously, people know about the *Doom* phenomenon, but there is so much to the story – and things that I discovered while researching it – that were amazing in regard to the business, marketing, and [the idea of] friendship in general.

Tell us how you went about researching and conducting interviews for the book. Were all the principals pretty open to talking to you?

I had interviewed both of them before and had actually just done a big story about Ion Storm. I knew Romero really well, and I had talked to Carmack a few times. Honestly, I didn't really know how they would [feel about the idea]. But I ran the idea by them and they seemed amenable to it. It became apparent that if I was going to be able to talk to these guys as much as I wanted to, I needed to move to Dallas. So, I did. I was there for about four months.

These guys were totally gracious, and they didn't have to do this. [Carmack and Romero] were really cooperative. I really just wanted to let them tell their story, and I guess they recognized that opportunity.

Basically, I would just show up and hang out, get lunch when we could, talk when we could, and go out to dinner. I'd go ride in Carmack's Ferrari and shoot off rockets and go to Romero's house. It was a full-time job.

I wanted to write the kind of book where you feel like you were there. This story had all the ingredients of a great novel about an American dream, and that's how I wrote it. To do that, I interviewed absolutely everybody that I could, down to the guy at the University of Wisconsin who helped upload *Doom* [onto the Internet], Dave Data. I tracked down all these people, because everybody had their own perspective. Sometimes those points of view are conflicting, obviously Carmack and Romero didn't see eye to eye all the time. I tried to give you both views, and let the reader draw their own conclusions about everything.

Carmack and Romero are obviously pretty unique individuals. What are some of your personal impressions of them?

I think a lot of people are afraid of [Carmack] – maybe afraid is not a good word – *intimidated* by him. He's obviously smart, and he's not the most social guy, [so] people don't know how to approach him. So, when you read interviews with him, they're very technical. When I started this book I really didn't know what to expect; you don't know what to make of a guy like that. It's funny, but [at] my first major interview with him, we sat down and talked for five hours without a bathroom break. He was really dedicated to answering my questions, and he was as thoughtful about this story as he was about his code.

He'll often say that he's not a person to look back; he's not nostalgic. Like I say in the book, this is a guy who doesn't keep anything. The earliest games he made I had to track down over the Internet from people that had them because he doesn't even have a copy of a game that he worked on for years in high school. But, I found that when I would ask the right questions he would get into detail.

After the break-up of their partnership, Romero experienced a lot of failure with Ion Storm and *Daikatana*. Do you think Romero has learned from his past mistakes and hubris?

I think his actions speak to that. Right now, he's programming games himself for the first time since

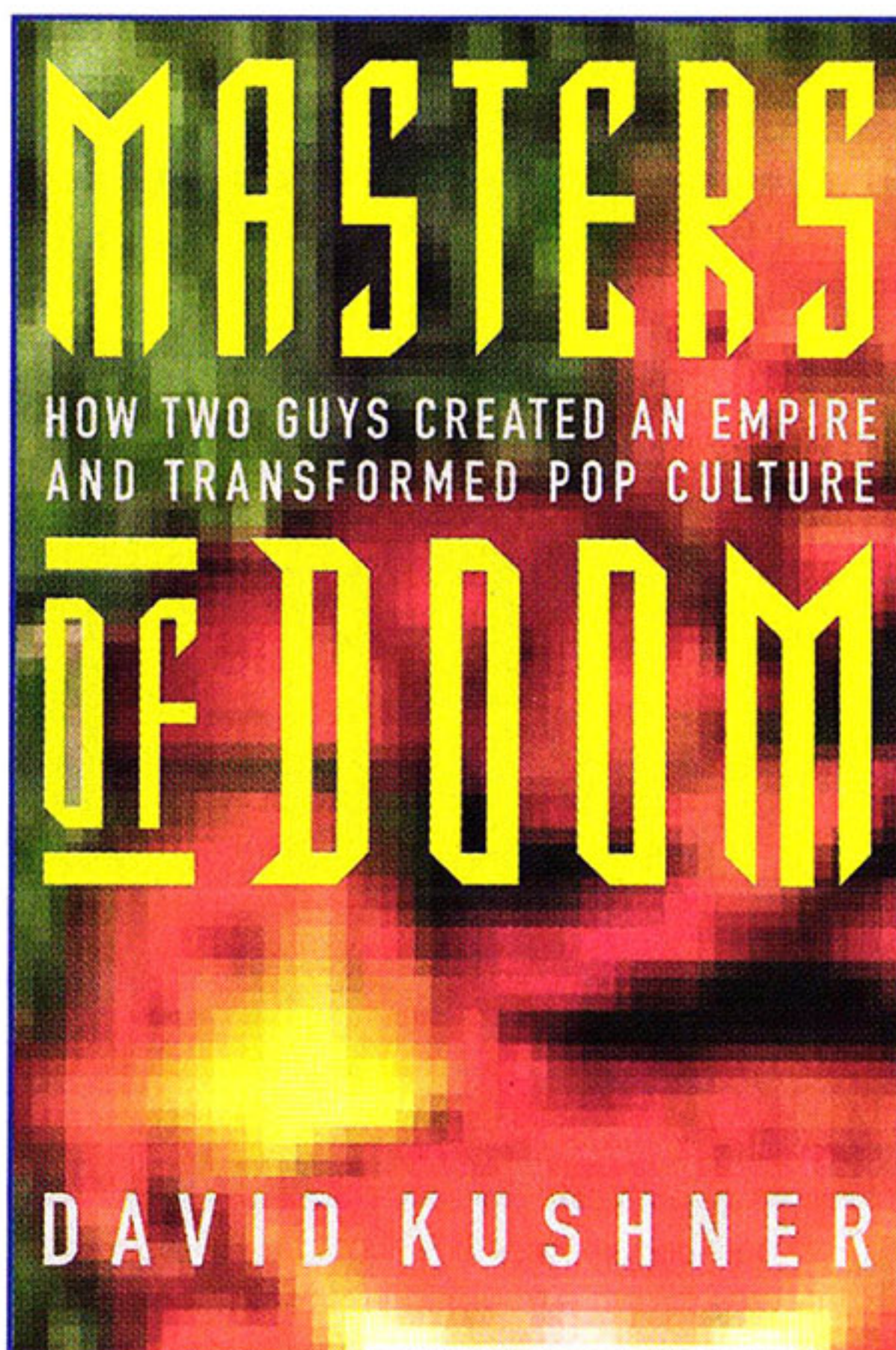
years and years ago. It's full circle, him going back to a small company and making small games. You can just look to what he's doing now [to see how he's changed].

There's one point in the book where I talk about when things start getting out of control at Ion Storm, and Romero is sitting alone in his office thinking to himself, "I wish we weren't business people anymore. I wish we were just gamers." So, I think he knows that his ambitions got really big. He felt stifled for a number of reasons and couldn't do exactly what he wanted. Then, he got the chance to do it and just went ballistic in achieving that, and it got the better of him. It's not easy to run a huge company, and that's what he found himself in. I think there are a lot of lessons in the book, in terms of how much you risk to achieve your dreams.

You could make the argument that neither of them has made the same quality of games apart from each other that they made together. Carmack's technology is never in question, but they seemed to complement each other so well that the games since haven't captured the zeitgeist the way that Doom and Quake did.

That's what always struck me, and it revealed itself as the book progressed. It's just like any great band. Ultimately, it's like a *Behind the Music* story. These guys were the Metallica of their industry. A great band usually has a couple of people that are really dynamic and in a lot of ways are diametrically opposed. That's a cliché, but it's that tension and those differences that produce great art. I think that's the story of these guys.

When you've got that intense, kinetic chemistry it's hard to sustain – especially when there's so much money and so much recognition. They were also pretty young when they started. They were in their early 20s, and by the time you go from your early 20s to 30, you're going



Masters of Doom will be released on May 2nd and is available for pre-order on most major online retail sites

through a lot of changes, and I think they just arrived in different places.

How do you feel about the Doom/Columbine connection, and how did you address that in the book?

Carmack and Romero never really spoke out when that was all happening, so I think that this book is the first opportunity to really get a much more personal and intimate look at what was going on and going through their minds, and how they were affected by it. I was surprised to hear about some of the threats against the people at id.

I wanted to let people see how Carmack and Romero grew up, and see the manifestations of violence in their own lives. I think that creates a

better understanding of where the violence in their games comes from. Also, really what it serves – the games, for them, were absolutely an outlet, just like any kind of art is an outlet for the person making it.

Have Carmack and Romero read the book? Are they happy with it? Some of the things they do in the book come off as pretty negative.

After they read the book for the first time, they actually got in touch with each other. They kind of touched base and said, "Did you read the book?" and I think there was an exchange of words between them saying, "Wow, that was a cool ride." I think that it took somebody else to show them that. To sit down and read your life story like that would be pretty intense, and I think that they appreciate what they achieved together and a little bit of what they miss.

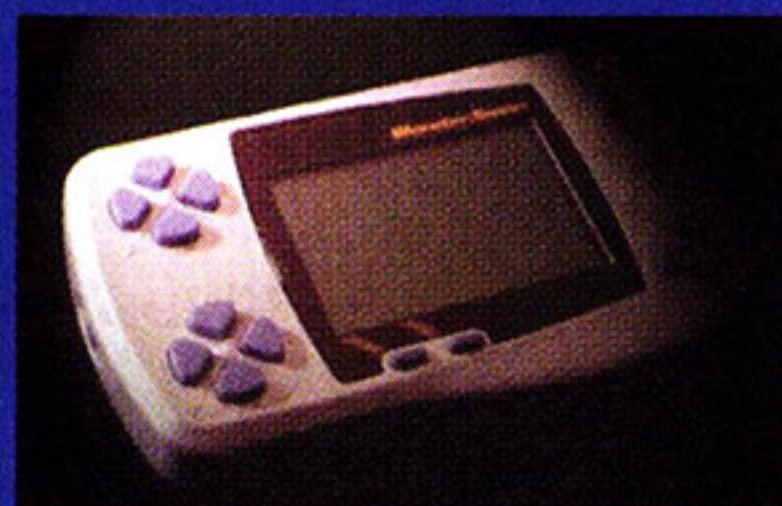
I think they respected the fact that I told it like it was. It was all taken from the interviews. There are things they do that some people aren't going to like, and there's things that people are going to admire, but they're human beings. They've got their flaws.



Doom was the title that made first-person shooters a major part of the game industry

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

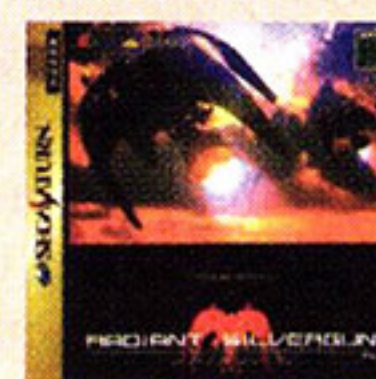
This month in 1999, the Bandai Corporation released the WonderSwan in Japan. A black and white handheld console that was created with the help of the creator of Nintendo's Game Boy, Gunpei Yokoi, the WonderSwan had a 2.5 inch monochrome screen that allowed for graphics and even full-motion video that was well above the capabilities of Nintendo's handheld phenomenon. Although the unit was successful in Japan, it really never took off in America. Later, the company also created the updated WonderSwan Color system.



GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By James Szivos

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



RADIANT SILVERGUN

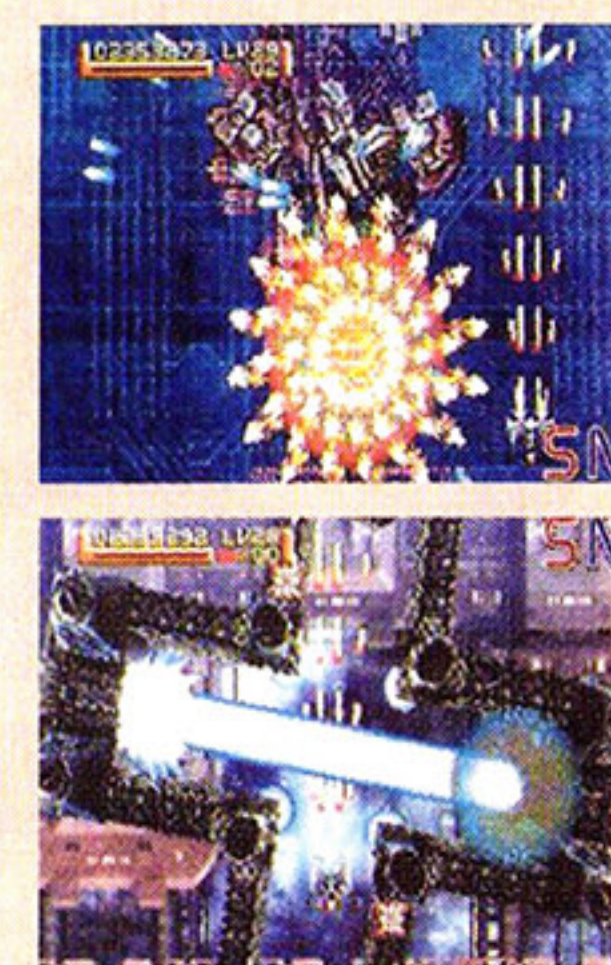
■ **FORMAT** SEGA SATURN
■ **PUBLISHER** TREASURE

The best game ever made is Radiant Silvergun. This Treasure creation was released in 1998 and only in Japan, much like the majority of the company's games. Radiant Silvergun is a complex, two-dimensional shooter with awe-inspiring level development and bosses. The controls are very simple, yet you have a choice between six attacks – excluding the special attack and your sword (yes, a sword in a shooter).

This title graphically exceeds most Saturn games with the use of sprites. Treasure has an excellent ability to simulate explosions that make your jaw drop. Also, Radiant Silvergun has a superb soundtrack that convinced some to purchase the music alone for \$40. The sound effects from the guns and explosions are amazing as well. The voices are crystal clear, but are in Japanese.

This game has an extremely high replay value because before you can defeat the first level, you need to upgrade your weapons. After you die, you retain upgraded weapons, and once you learn a level well enough and have strong enough weapons, you can defeat it and move on to the next level.

Don't be scared away from this game because it's in Japanese. The menu and navigation of the game is very simple. If you don't own Radiant Silvergun and consider yourself a great video game collector, then go on eBay and purchase yourself a Japanese Sega Saturn and Radiant Silvergun. If you don't do this now, then you are a worthless soul and must be eliminated by the hierarchy of video game collectors.

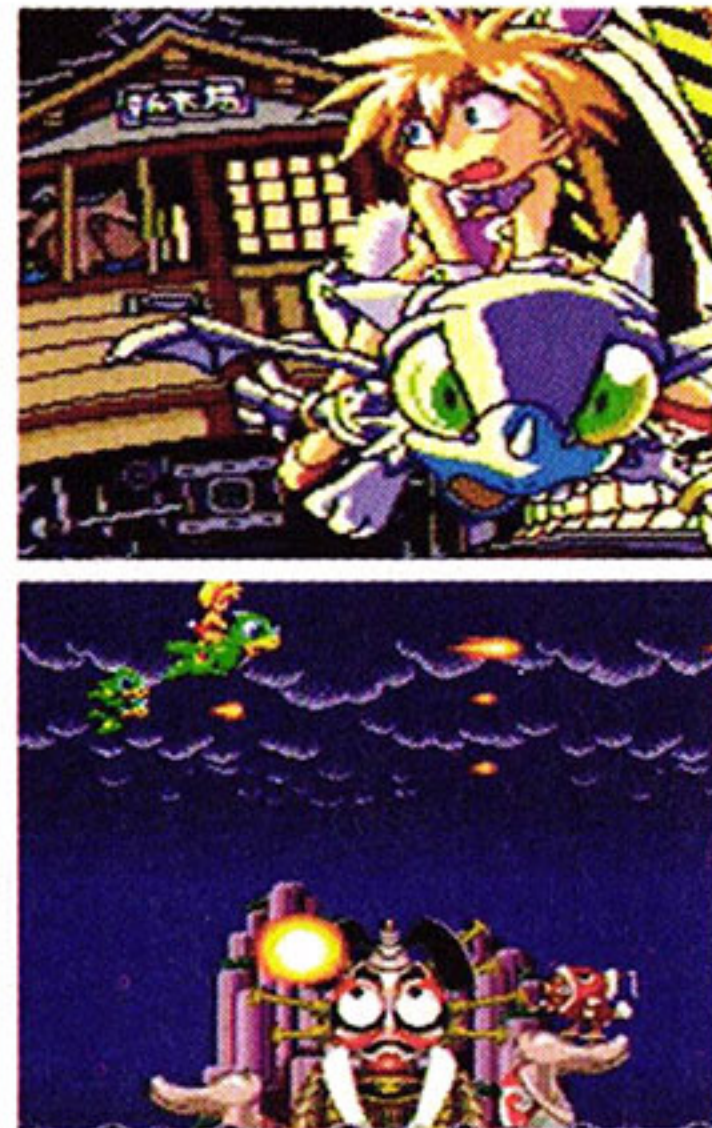


SEGA CD

KEIO FLYING SQUADRON



RETRO RATING
8.5

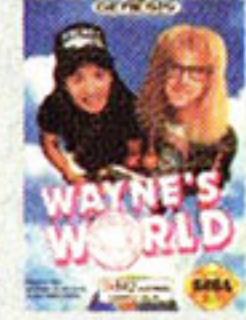


Happy, quirky Japanese titles have always maintained a significant following, as any hardcore gamer knows. Keio Flying Squadron perfectly represents this cult genre. Its premise makes no sense, it lacks a comprehensible story, features cheesy dialogue, and places just about every cute animal imaginable onscreen doing something outrageously weird. Dogs on flying carpets, fluttering kitties, and cheery chicken heads are just a few examples. However, many titles of this ilk often miss the mark when it comes to the gameplay. Fortunately, in overall quality, Keio resides just outside the bull's eye's center. Hardcore shooter fans will appreciate the nonstop action, myriad enemy types, freakish bosses, and weapon variety. Unless you loathe eccentricity, Keio is an experience that deserves a fair share of nostalgia.

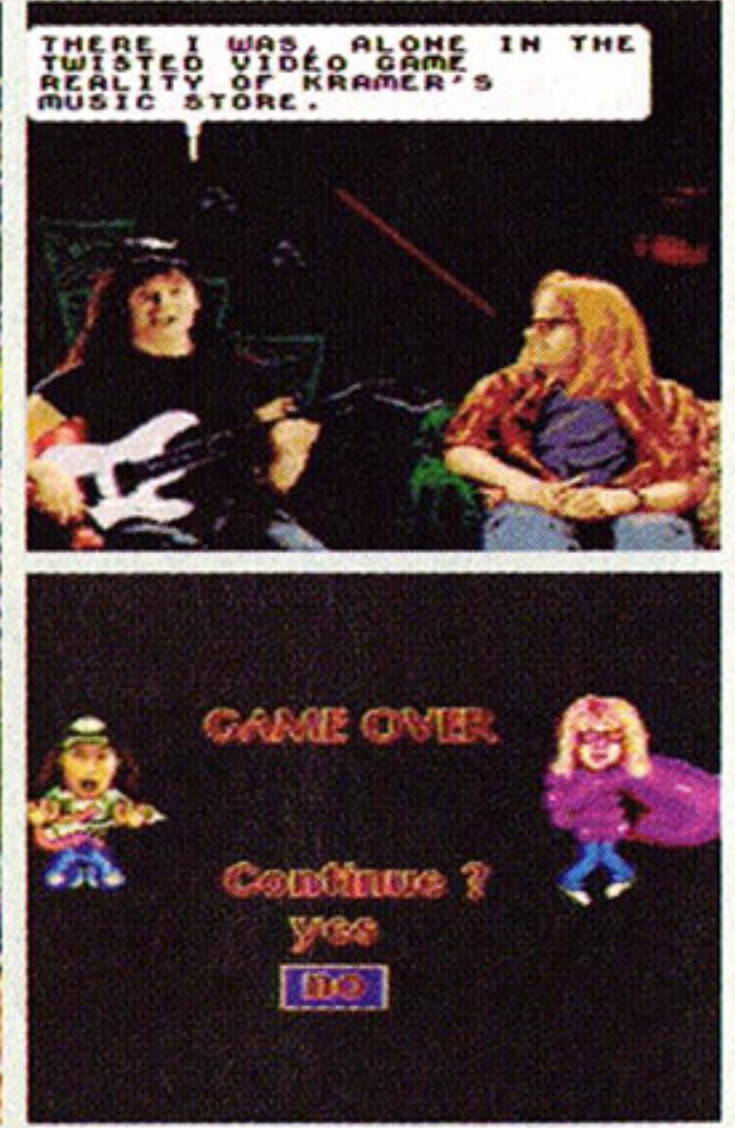
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** JVC ■ **DEVELOPER** JVC
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

SEGA GENESIS

WAYNE'S WORLD



RETRO RATING
1



Oh, how boring Classic GI would be if everything we reviewed was good. We need games like this to remind us that the past was wrought with crappy software. Wayne's World follows a tried-and-true formula to a tee: Get a potentially popular license and put little to no effort into its game. Wayne is stuck in a dream sequence at the music store. He's being attacked by bagpipes, cymbals, and faulty wiring. Luckily, his guitar fires lethal blasts to destroy enemies. In a game where all you do is jump and shoot, it would help if the jump worked right. But alas, it does not, and you take more unavoidable hits than a punching bag. It's also nearly impossible to tell how much health is left, or what the power-ups do. With music as the theme, one may hope it would at least sound good, but this has the worst excuse for music since Leonard Nimoy's debut album. Wayne's World isn't even worth playing to laugh at – despite the cheesy dialogue and fashionable mullet. It sucks that bad. No way!? Way!

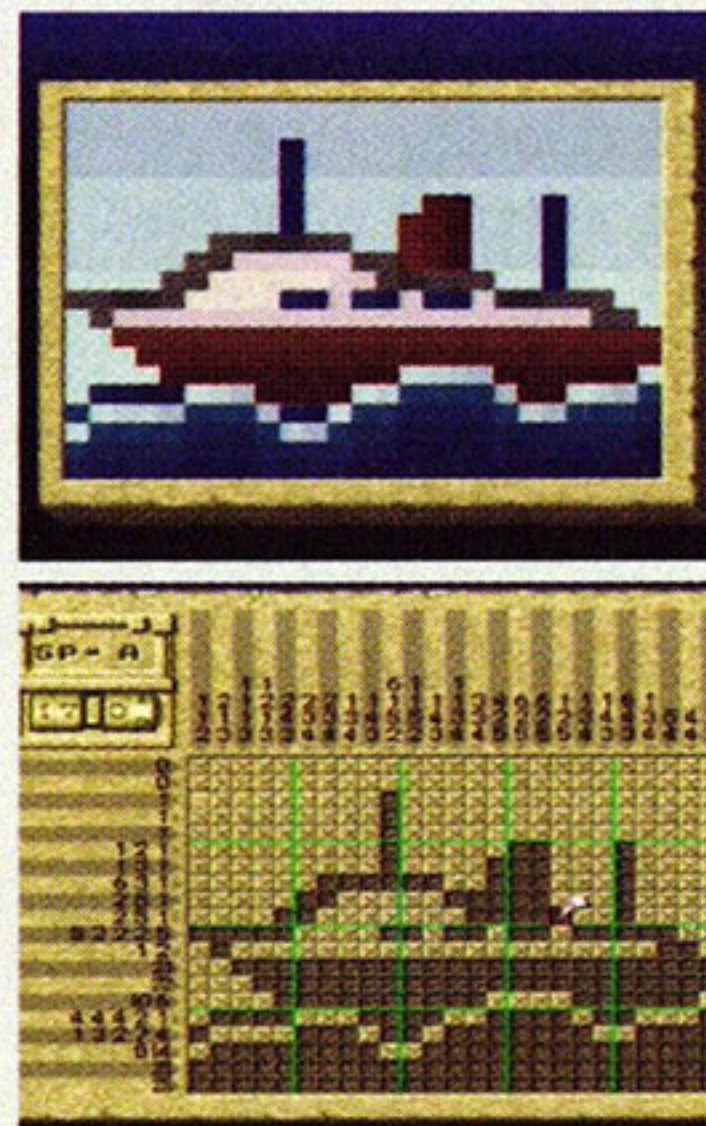
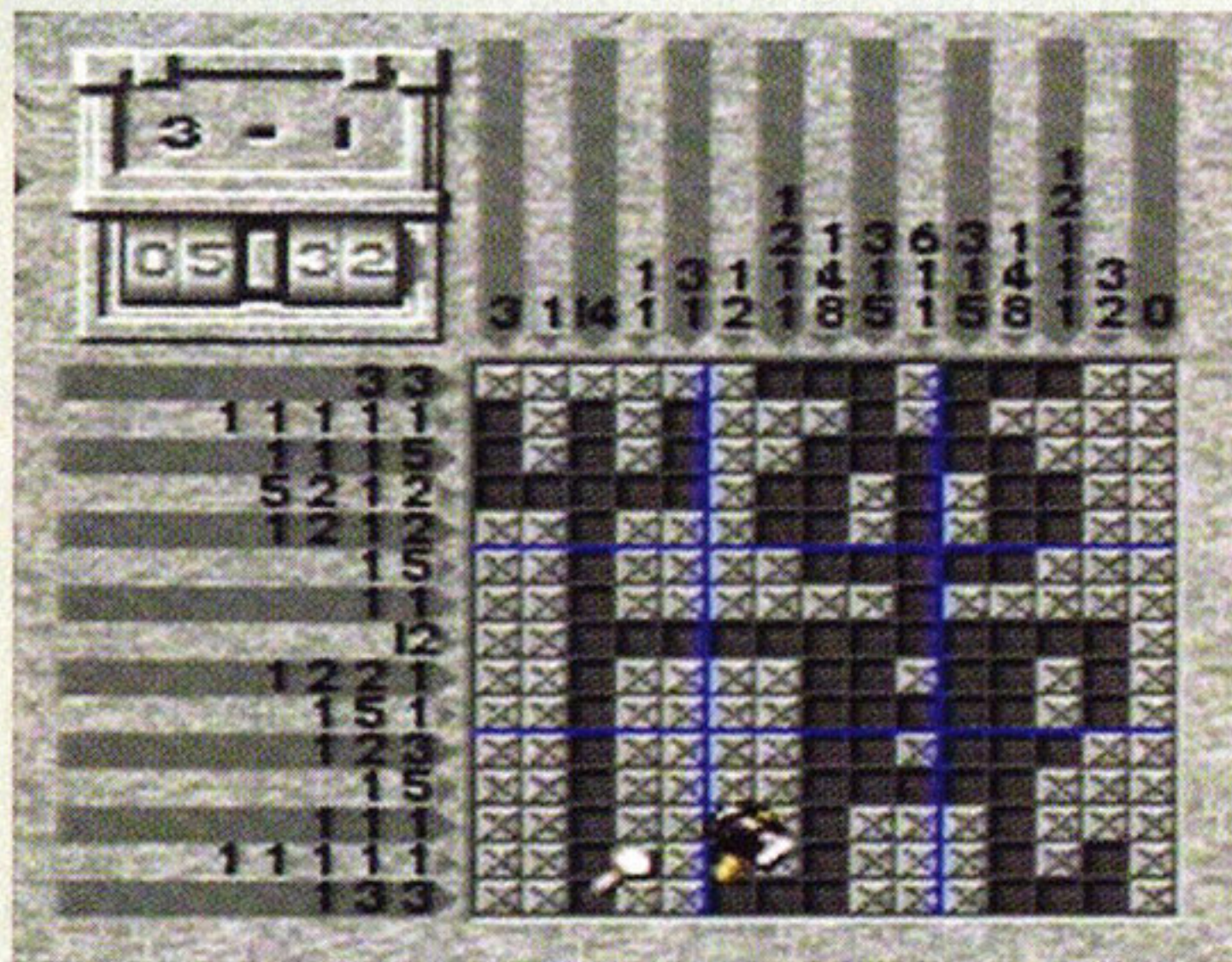
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** GRAY MATTER
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1993

SNES

MARIO'S SUPER PICROSS



RETRO RATING
9.25



Look up "cult classic" in the dictionary, and you'll see a picture of Mario's Picross on Game Boy. Okay, you won't – but you should. It's a terrific title that was painfully overlooked in the U.S. In Japan, however, its popularity was enough to warrant a sequel on the Super Nintendo (Super Famicom over there). For newbies, the goal of Picross is to punch in squares on a grid, following the numbers above and below it. If done correctly, you get a picture. Using the power of the SNES, Picross is now a larger animal, with grids 20 squares tall and 25 long. The game gives you over 132 regular puzzles. On top of this, there are just as many Wario stages, which are even harder. In these, you're given no hint and unlimited time. The kicker? The game doesn't alert you if you punch the wrong square, and it doesn't stop until you get the whole puzzle right. Darn that Wario! Mario's Picross on Game Boy is an amazing puzzle game, and this SNES sequel only makes the series better.

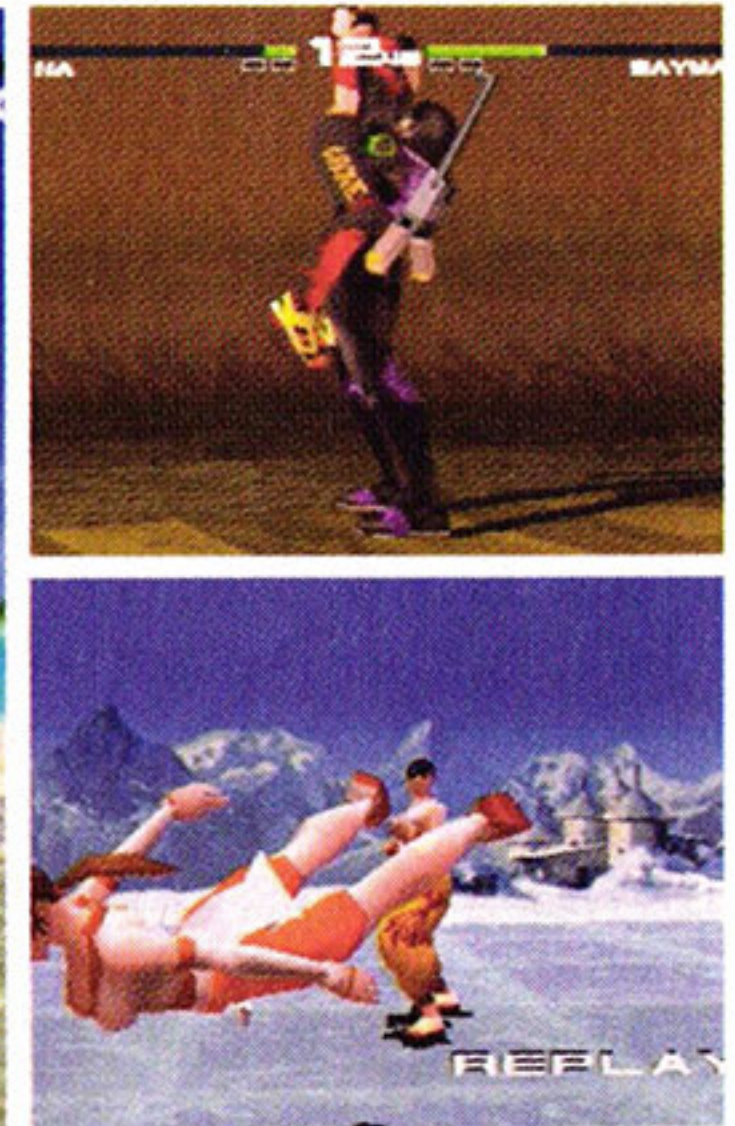
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER PUZZLE ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** APE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995 (JAPAN ONLY)

PSONE

DEAD OR ALIVE



RETRO RATING
8



Amid the 32-bit fighting revolution, Dead or Alive sprang up surprisingly like a ninja. It introduced many concepts embraced by the top fighters, and still stands up well today – even though gravity has caused it to sag and droop a bit. DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball's obvious attention to female anatomy started here, with the "jiggle" displayed by the three female characters. The rest of the animation is a little more realistic, and you can tell Tecmo's designers were pro wrestling fans by the devastating arsenal of throws. DOA's graphics are somewhere between Virtua Fighter 2 and Tekken, and the character selection is somewhat generic. The counter button is a major factor in strategy and makes defense more than just holding away on the d-pad. Dead or Alive is worthy of being considered bosom buddies with the best 32-bit fighting games released.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO ■ **DEVELOPER** TECMO
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1996



NES

ADVENTURES OF LOLO



Floor 1



Room 1: Grab the first heart, use it to hit the monster and push him out of the way. Get the second heart, open the door by opening the chest, and go.



Room 2: Pick up all the hearts, and the monsters will wake up. Avoid the fireballs and touch the chest.



Room 3: Shoot the baddie in your path twice, then wait in an open area for the other enemy to fall asleep next to you. Now you can collect the remaining hearts in peace.



Room 4: Collect the right-side hearts. Push the solitary green boxes to block in the top and bottom of the three green boxes left, and shove the middle one up or down. Kill the skull, grab the last three hearts, then get the chest before he respawns.



Room 5: Use the green boxes to your advantage. Start with the lower-left heart; then go clockwise, pushing blocks in front of you when possible.

Floor 2



Room 1: Bait the monster into one of the lower corners, then shut him in with the boxes. If you can't do that, just run like a madman.



Room 2: Push the green boxes so the middle heart has one on each side and there is one directly below each Medusa monster. Only collect the top hearts by going through the area where the middle heart is.



Room 3: Push the green boxes one space left and right of the chest, respectively, then up to block the knife-tossing bad guy. You can even push them together, so he can't move at all. However, don't absent-mindedly walk above him, or you'll get nailed.

Room 4: Cautiously collect the outside hearts. When the remaining ones flash, get the highest up, then blast the rock for the next one. You now have two shots to kill the green guy and get the last heart.



Room 5: Grab the lower-left heart (the enemy can't touch the grass, so be patient). Now, grab one of the open hearts. Blast the middle guy once and push him up two spaces to block the two enemies. Get heart number three, and use your power to change the arrow. Push two green boxes in front of the other skeletons and finish your duty.



Floor 3

Room 1: Grab the heart above you, and push the green guy in front of the lower Medusa.



Collect the four middle hearts to get the bridge ability. Cross below the riverside shrubs, so you can position all green boxes to fully block the Medusas. Leave the lower-right heart for last, or the skulls will get you.

Room 2: After getting heart number one, let the running bad guy come near you. Blast him and push him



(in egg form) in the water, where he'll act as a bridge. Get the island heart, then jump on the egg and ride it to the heart near the skull. Follow the trail to finish the hearts, then dodge the other skeleton on your way to the chest.



Room 3: Just make sure the enemies fall asleep in an area that won't hinder your progress, and collect away!



Room 4: First, push the highest box to the right, then all the way down. Now, position the other green boxes as shown, and leave the heart closest to the door for last. Push the box below it down a bit, so you can head right to the chest.



Room 5: Position the box above the lower-right pink guy, and save the heart one space above that for last. *Voila!*



Floor 4



Room 1: Again, this is all about blocking foes into corners. Be wary of every direction, however, because you can easily get snookered by faraway enemies that you aren't paying close attention to.



Room 2: Collect the easy hearts, then blast the upper-left enemy. Push him in the water and ride him between the grassy islands. Make sure to get off quickly and cross over to get both hearts, then hitch a ride to the final heart. Blast the enemy below you two times to get to the chest.



Room 3: A picture is worth a thousand words, so just follow our lead with the green box placement. Be careful which path you take to the door – the one left of it is the only way to go without screwing yourself.

Room 4: Take your time, using the green box as a shield from the scaling monster up top. Get the lower right-hand heart, then push the box up to the higher one. Now, trap the moving baddie. Get the heart on the left, and make a bridge down to the last one. Blast the pink guy, and push him right so you can reach the chest before the skulls chomp you up.



Room 5: Grab the upper-right heart by pushing the inside box up to block the enemy's sight. Use the two blasts it gives you to push green monsters to block both the Medusa and the pink goblin from below so you can get the middle heart, then the left-hand one (make sure to push the inside box up again).



Floor 5

Room 1: Push boxes above and below the one next to a heart, then move the one next to it up or down to retrieve the heart. Follow this process to the chest, and push boxes between each pink guy and the chest. When they disappear, push the rightmost box up, then shove the top one in the column next to it to the left so you can reach the door.



Room 2: Work around, grabbing the hearts you can, always keeping a rock between you and Medusa. When you get the arrow power, use it above. Now, shove the box above and left of the lower heart all the way down, and push the one next to the arrow left. Now, move the lowest one over so you can get the three bottom hearts. Bring one box above Medusa, and the one next to the arrow to the right of it.



Room 3: The first order of business is working down the left side,

blasting each enemy and snagging the heart. Then, push the box to the right, and grab that one. Now, blast the middle green guys, but only take the higher heart. Position a box in front of Medusa, and gather those two hearts. Now, blast the middle green worm again and take the final heart.

Room 4: Get the two easy hearts, then the one by the green



guys. Blast the dude above the heart below them, then bridge to it and run to the middle (don't move the box). Hit the skull to the left of the heart, then go by the top pinkie and bridge to the hearts. Before collecting the last heart, push a green box to ensure the pinkies' blasts won't hit you as you run to the chest. Use two boxes to keep the skeletons from reaching you.

Room 5: The Medusa and arrows add up to a lot of legwork for lil' Lolo. Take the right path



down to end up on the other side of Medusa. Push the far right box down to get the first heart. Push the nearby box up – to the right of the Medusa – then backtrack to the bottom-left heart. Push a box so the three lower-left arrows are pointing to it, then shove another one up by the upper-right hearts. Tread carefully, and you'll collect the last one by the chest. Whew!

Floor 6



Room 1: New floor, same objective: Block off

Medusas. They can't shoot through hearts, so use this to your advantage. Push the left and right boxes to cover up the lower two Medusas, then take care of the furthest left and right. Make sure that, when maneuvering the rows of three green boxes, you push the middle one toward the outside, so you can then shove them down to allow you to collect all the hearts. The one above the chest can go in front of the heart below the chest, and you're set.



Room 2: It's almost like cheating, but there's only one way to

beat this stage. First, push the rightmost of the two lower boxes all the way down, then grab the three hearts. Now, move the box next to the one you pushed up, then back down, so you can position it to the right, BETWEEN the two Medusa. You're blocking two birds with one stone here. The only other tricks are A) blasting a green guy and putting him above the lone Medusa so you can grab all the top hearts, and B) pushing the top box right then down to let you snag the final heart.



Room 3: The green box goes to the right of the lower Medusa. Release the green guy, and sprint to the grass directly underneath the gap between the heart and the other Medusa. Mr. Green will fall asleep there, allowing you to collect said heart. Now, the above box goes to the left of the lower Medusa, and you're in like Flynn.

Room 4: As always, take care of the risk-free hearts first. Push the egg-encased worm in the water, then wait for him to float by the box on the Medusa island. Push said box to the left, then use the egg to get to the top heart. Now you have a bridge ability, which you can use by the chest to grab the final heart.



Room 5: Egg the worm, and ride him to the right green box. Push it below Medusa, then move the other box to the right of her. Now, cross to the other hearts on the egg as it floats by, and make it back before the egg moves past. It'll take you right to the chest.



Floor 7

Room 1: The first heart gives you the ability to blast the nearby pink guy. Hit him once, then move him left and down one space, so you can collect all but one of the remaining hearts. How do you get this final, elusive one? Push the two boxes above and below the left-hand enemy, then use your final shot on him and scoot him out of the way. Before grabbing the last heart though, block each enemy off so it can't blast you.



Room 2: Use the boxes diagonal to you to stick the vertically-scrolling bad guys in the lower corners. Now, push the box below and to the left of the left Medusa half a space right to block it and the top pink guy. Then, shove the block below that Medusa right; up against the middle Medusa. Lastly, the green box above you should be pushed up one space to give you a clear path.



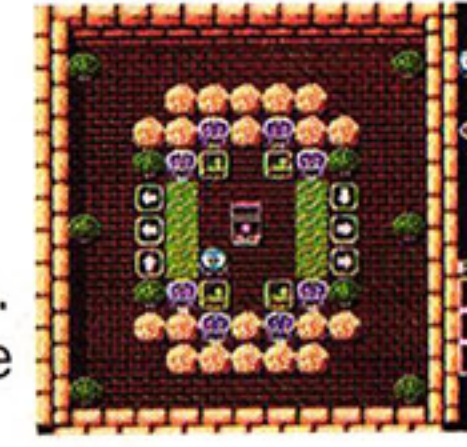
Room 3: Each of the two lower hearts gives you two shots. Use one on each of the lower pink guys, pushing their egg forms next to their respective Medusas. Use the other two shots to egg the higher pinkies, so you can grab the chest freely (but quickly).

Room 4: Get the heart above you. Use the lower up arrow, and grab the easy heart there.



Get the one to the left of it, and use your power on the up-facing arrow to grab that heart. Now, get the two on the far right and the one closest to the green guy. Next, use your power to the left so you can snag those by the skeleton, and finally snatch the remaining one. Work to the bottom, then right, then the top portion to reach the chest.

Room 5: You only want three of the four easy hearts. Now, change one of the arrows that isn't in the middle, and collect the interior four hearts. Push the two green boxes from that side, so they block two skeletons each (remember, they can't walk on grass). Now, do the same with your arrow power and the boxes on the opposite side, then nab the last heart.



Floor 8



Room 1: A green box goes below the pink enemy. When pushing the boxes up to reach the upper-right heart, move the lower-right one, then the upper-left. Use your hammer ability on the stone one space below and two spaces to the right of Medusa, then shove a box in the way to give you a clear path to the chest.



Room 2: Push the boxes on the top and second from the bottom to the right, on the row of four near you. Cart the one below the chest between the Medusas. Position it and another box next to the Medusas to put them out of commission. The lowest pair of boxes actually goes next to the pink guys. Take the remaining two moveable boxes, and bring them down to either side of the lowest heart. Bling bling!



Room 3: Block the right side of the bottom two Medusas. Take the remaining pushable box and put it between the top two Medusas, but shoved half a space left. Push the high box so the bottom Medusa can't shoot up at you, then clean up.



Room 4:

Use the four green boxes to surround the Medusa. You'll have to be slightly tricky with the arrows; avoiding most hearts until the deed is done, but it's not too tough. Save the leftmost heart for last, so the skeleton doesn't have time to waste you.



Room 5:

You'll need to use every box here, but it's not as tough as it sounds. Use the above path around most of the arrows, then push a box down. Make sure to stay out of one pink guy's sights as you bring it against the opposite wall. Do the same with another box, then force each pink dude into the corner. You can be trapped up top, so be careful. For the others, just keep funneling boxes through the down arrow, but don't let them get up to the top wall, or you'll have to start again. It helps to know you can push a box down onto an up arrow.



Floor 9



Room 1: Use the multiple path sections to your advantage, because they are your only advantage. When he goes left, you go right – or vice versa.



Room 3: When the green guys are away from the heart, grab it. Now, bait one to falling asleep by the Medusa entrance, and another in front of the top pink guy. Try to keep the others out of the way. Get the heart by the chest next. Now, blast the pink guy by the chest twice, and sprint to the heart, then back to the chest.

Room 2: This one's difficult to explain. Start from the right side, and push every box you can up. Go back to the right side again, and this time, bring each box one space right, then slide the one above it up; grab the hearts. Next, start from the right once more, and move every row of three's top box right one space. Grab each heart before shoving the next row's box. This should leave the upper end hearts. Move one box over so you can get to the screen's top half, and collect the remaining hearts. You'll have shots now; use them on the bottom two pink guys, and book to the chest.



Room 4: Get the top three hearts, and make sure you can push the bottom of the three boxes. It goes in above the lower right pinkie. Bridge over in the obvious spot, then blast the green guy twice. DO NOT grab the heart until the greenie respawns! When he does, shoot him once and push him into the pink guy. Now, blast the top pinkie once, then run around to the chest.



Room 5: Take the safe heart. Push the nearby box a half-space right, then up one-and-a-half spaces. The lower-left box goes up a half-space away from the boulder. There should be three boxes touching now. Slide the middle one up a space so you can move the rightmost box one right, and one-and-a-half up. Now, with the two boxes remaining, push one so it's blocking the bottom half of the left Medusa. The last one goes up to blocking the upper half of the right Medusa. Lolo can now just make it through.

Floor 10



Room 1: Grab the upper-right heart first. Push the middle box on the left side down two spaces and carefully take the hearts. Use your first blast on the highest green worm, and push him down to line up with the row of boulders above the sand. Now, get a green box next to the lower worm. Blast that worm, and move him all the way down. Shove this box all the way left. Bring another box below the trapped pinkie, and one more to get in the way of the pink dragon's blasts. Finally, put a box right next to the upper green guy to prevent the skeletons from getting you.



Room 2: The easy heart up top is your first target (push the box up). With the worms, egg them; then push them into the cells. When the sleepers come out, run up to the grass, or just have them stop in the middle of the bottom section. Before you take the final heart, egg the second pinkie and move him from the left up and over to the other one, so they'll face when the egg cracks. For the leftmost dragon, though, you'll need to bait him into firing, then egg him before he does it again.



Room 3: The first heart awards you two shots. Use each one to nail a worm. Toss him in the water, run across opposite the box, so you push it on the mainland. Put each box above the Medusas, then wait for the worms to respawn. Egg 'em again, and position them to the side of the Medusas to grab the last two hearts. Kill one before the egg hatches, so it respawns in the original location. When the scrolling pinkie's on his way up, smash the rock below him, then take cover behind the worm. Now, egg it and push it to block the pinkie below, so you can stroll to the chest.



Room 4: The boxes will block the Medusas, and you can get the middle-left heart, too. Egg the green guy, push him in front of the top Medusa, get the heart there, then kill the worm. When he respawns, do the same on the right side, but make sure that when you kill it, you escape the pink guy's wrath. With your final two shots, trap the pinkie between the eggged worm and the rock, and blast one of the skulls. Shove the egg over and collect your booty.



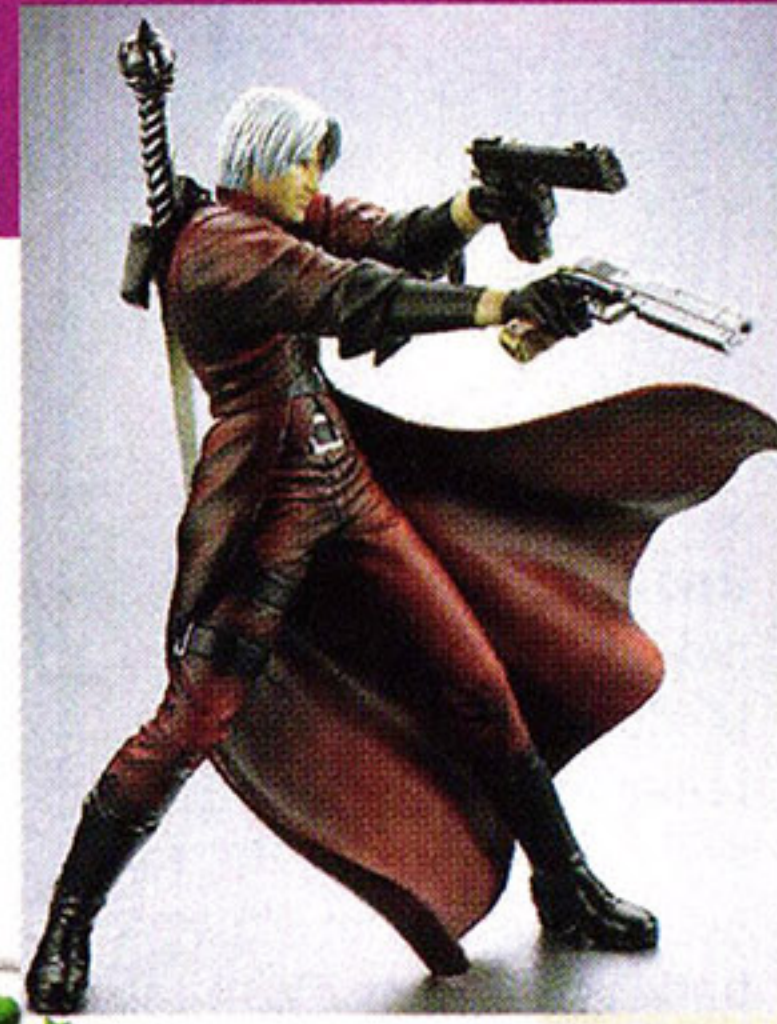
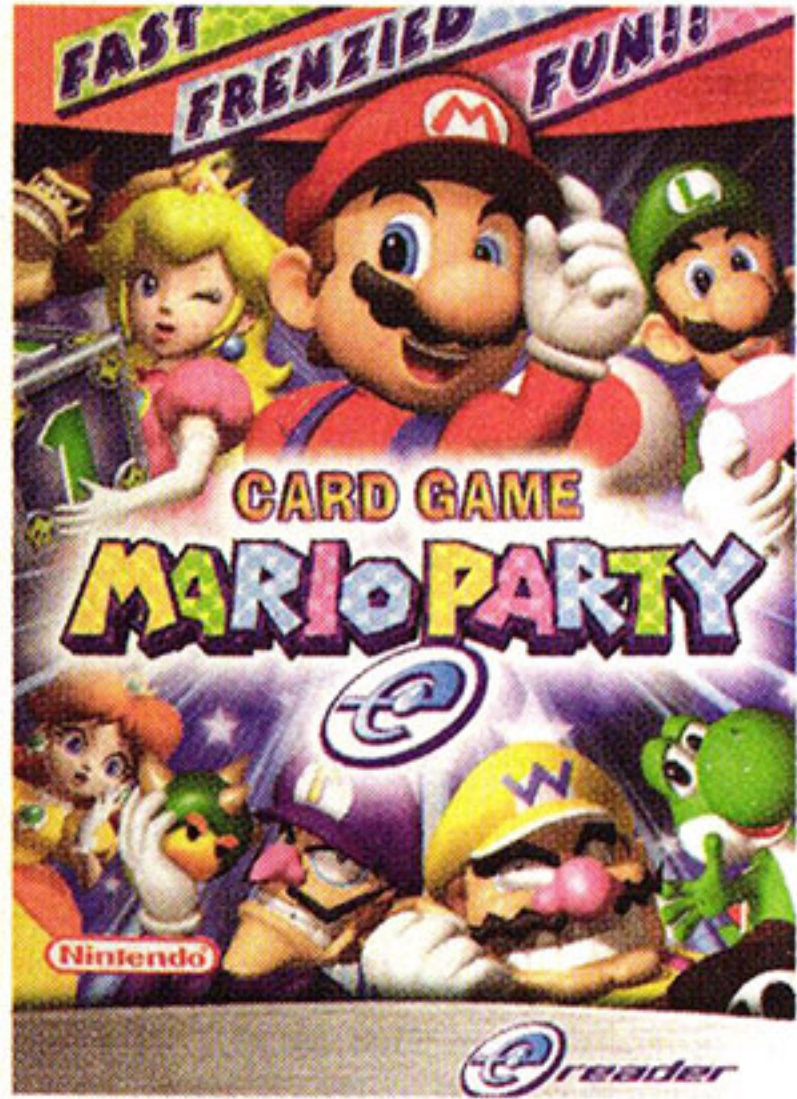
Room 5: The heart is easy; it's getting to the chest that's tough. Egg the upper-left pink guy, then his right-hand counterpart. Push the right egg right one space, then down in front of the Medusa. Now, if you stand in the middle of the bridge and run downward, you'll reach the chest and live to tell about it.



MARIO PARTY-e

Manufacturer: Nintendo • **Website:** www.nintendo.com • **List Price:** \$9.99

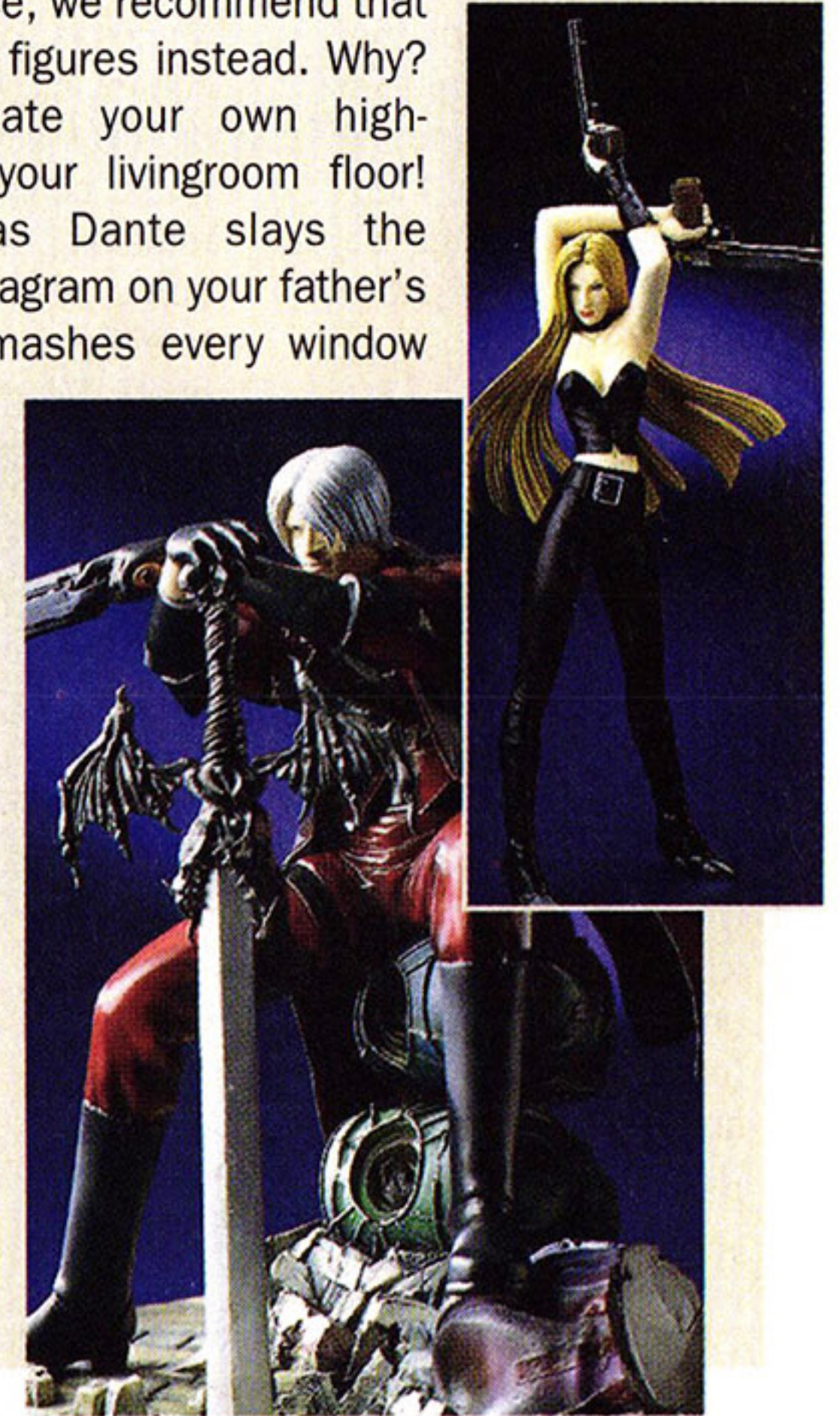
Mario Party-e is a stand-alone card game modeled after the wildly popular Nintendo 64 and GameCube series. In addition to a fairly basic board game, players can swipe, scan, and download 11 different minigames onto their Game Boy Advance e-Reader peripheral. In true Mario Party fashion, however, playing these games is as painful as passing a kidney stone. At a low price point of \$9.99, Mario Party-e is a nice little game for toddlers, but be warned: If you've outgrown your rubber sheets, you're too old for this game as well.



DEVIL MAY CRY FIGURES & RESIN STATUE

Manufacturer: Toycom • **Website:** www.toycom.net
List Price: \$9.99 (Figures), TBA (Resin Statue)

Dante's latest adventure is being heralded as one of the biggest disappointments in the history of video games. Rather than spending your hard-earned cash to confirm that this hard-boiled hero has indeed fallen from grace, we recommend that you purchase the action figures instead. Why? So that you can create your own high-flying sequel right on your livingroom floor! You'll jump for joy as Dante slays the family pet, carves a pentagram on your father's chest as he sleeps, smashes every window in the house, and hides in your sister's party drawer. The first series of figures – which includes Dante, Trish, and the devilish Marionettes – will ship in May with a suggested retail price of \$9.99 per figure. A more detailed resin statue of Dante taking a breather is expected to ship shortly thereafter.



FINAL FANTASY X-2 TINY BEE CONTROLLERS

Manufacturer: Hori/Square Soft • **Website:** www.playonline.com
List Price: Roughly \$100



In the next Final Fantasy game, main character Yuna wields a pair of powerful pistols called Tiny Bees. Japanese peripheral manufacturer Hori has replicated these weapons perfectly and has actually transformed them into controllers that work with Final Fantasy X-2. You see, the left gun handles the functionality of the left half of the Dual Shock 2, and the right gun is essentially the right half. It's a weird accessory, but it does allow players to fire the gun when Yuna attacks a creature. This nifty little accessory probably won't make its way to the States, but it makes you wonder how different playing Final Fantasy X-2 would be with two guns rather than the standard controller.

PLAYSTATION 2 COLORS

Manufacturer: Sony • **Website:** www.playstation.com • **List Price:** \$315

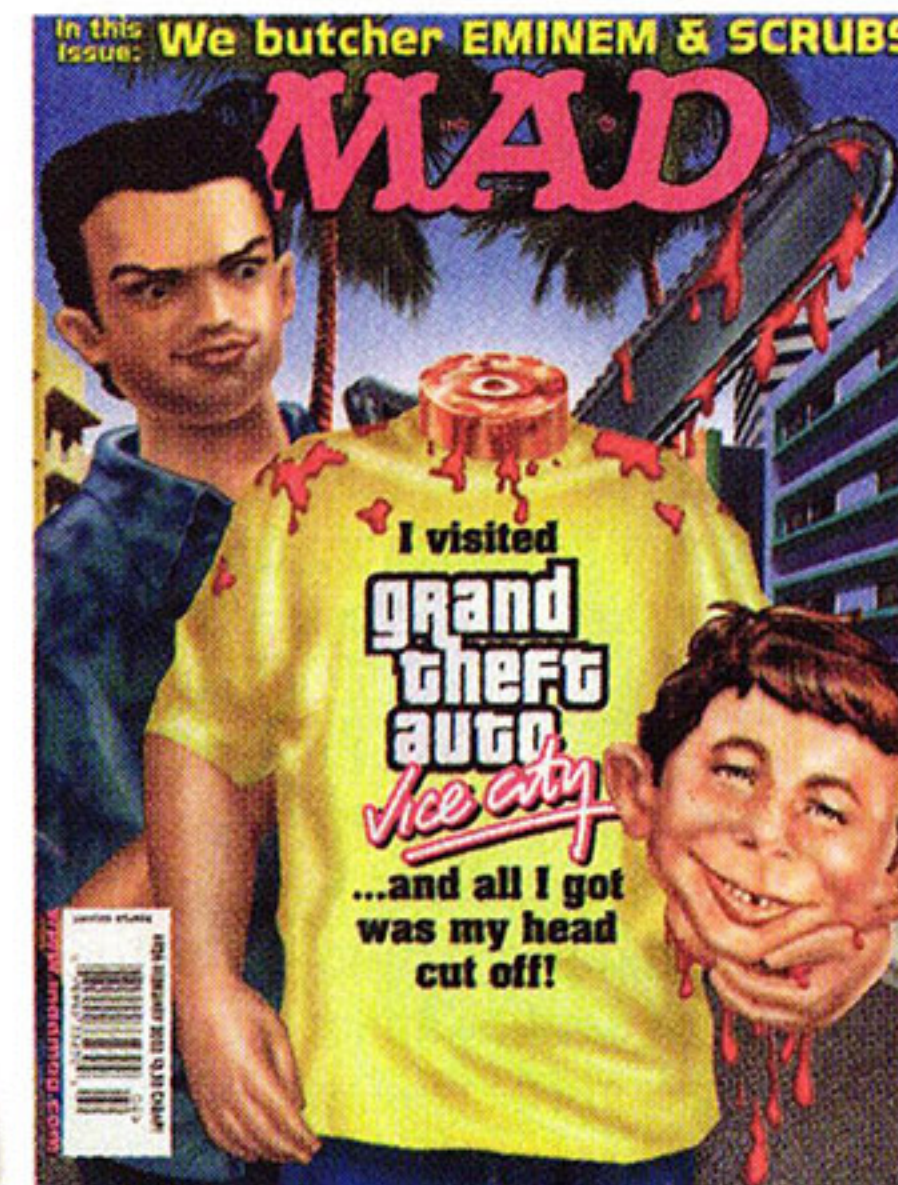
Remember that kid who told you he'd paint your PlayStation 2 red? Well, you haven't seen him, your money, or your beloved system since! There is an easier way to get the PS2 in a fanciful new color. For a limited time only, PlayStation.com is offering the PS2 in your choice of Astral Blue, Metallic Silver, Light Yellow, Snow White, and Super Red. Being stylish, of course, doesn't come cheap, as these special platforms are on sale for \$315 (stand and controller included). Now you'll have to excuse us, as we've got a pile of PS2s we've promised kids we'd paint.



MAD MAGAZINE #426

Manufacturer: E.C. Publications
Website: www.madmag.com • **List Price:** \$3.50 (Cheap!)

As you may or may not know, *Mad Magazine* is notorious for parodying the best entertainment has to offer. It just so happens that February's edition of this amusing periodical is taking a shot at Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. As they say in Hollywood, "You haven't made it big until you've been defaced in the pages of *Mad*." Whether you're a collector of anything bearing the GTA name, or are simply curious as to *Mad*'s take on video game humor, this issue is well worth tracking down. Who knows, 20 years from now it may be the rarest, most sought-after GTA item in the marketplace. It could make you millions.



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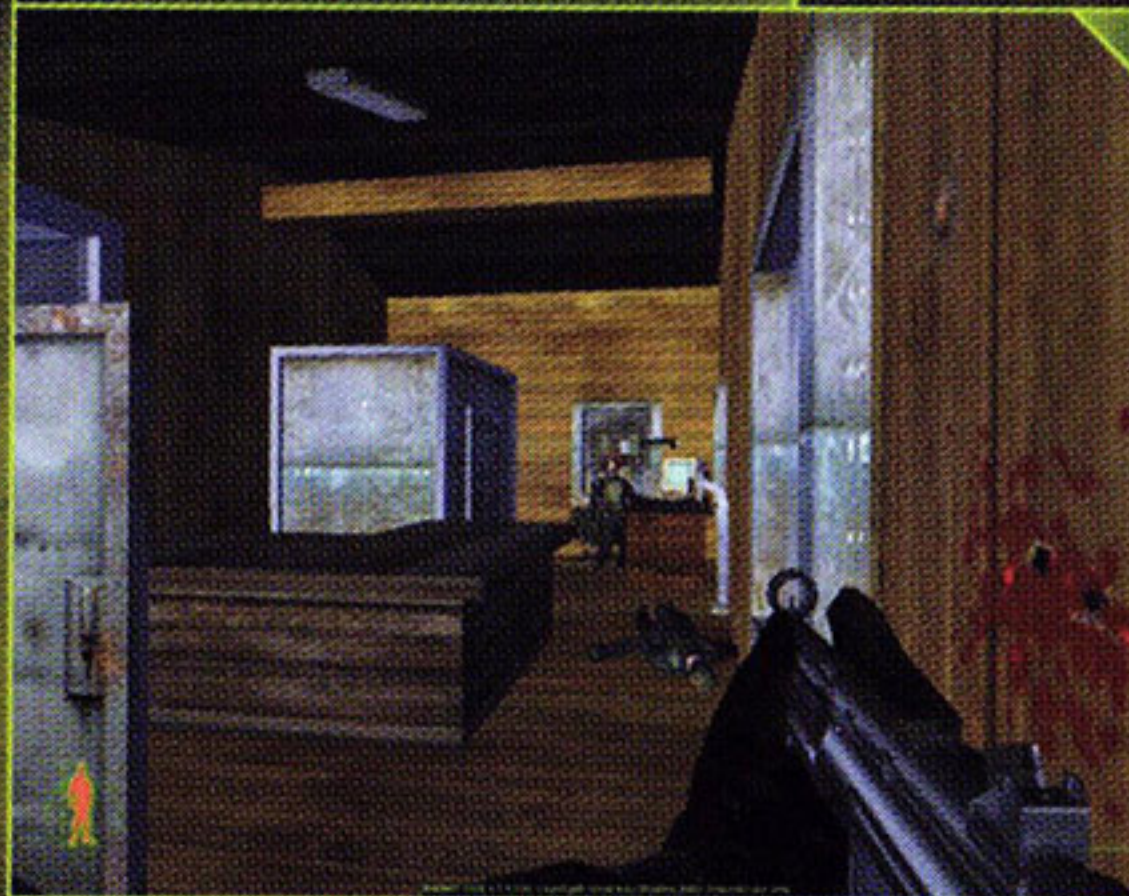
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