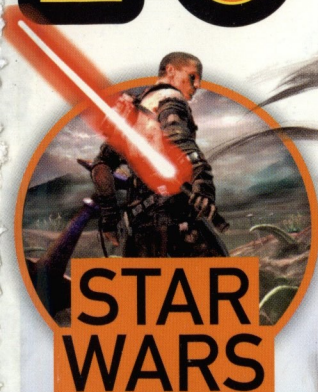


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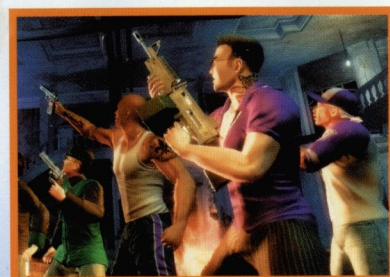
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PG

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Contents Issue 180

6 Editorial

8 News

11 Bad Cop No Doughnut

12 Street Fighter IV

We chat with Yoshinori Ono, the Producer of SFIV about the eagerly anticipated 2D fighter

14 Games of the Future

Christian Read and David Wildgoose jet across the pond to LA to check out everything E3 has to offer

44 Looking Back and Beyond – 15 Years in Gaming

We talk to some of the leading lights in the games industry to find out what they think have been the major events that have changed gaming in the last 15 years, and discover what they think will be the major events to occur over the next 15!

54 Getting into the Games Industry

Industry professionals give us some solid advice on how to pursue a career in the games industry in our exclusive round table.

62 Subscriptions

64 Reviews

82 Win Win Win

84 Tech of the Future

86 The History of Videogame Magazines

Mikolai takes us on a journey through the colourful history of gaming magazines

90 DVDA

92 Mail

94 Land of the Rising Fun

95 Collections

96 Gameboffin

97 Games Wank: An exercise in over-analysis

98 Charts



86 GAMES MAGS



38 MIRROR'S EDGE



36 DE BLOB

Reviews

66 Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

68 Geometry Wars 2

70 Too Human

72 Hellboy: Science of Evil

73 Ratchet & Clank: Quest for Booty

74 Strong Bad: Cool Game for Attractive People

76 Braid

77 Tank Universal

78 Naruto: Ultimate Ninja 3

78 Buzz: Quiz Master

78 1942



66 STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED



68 GEOMETRY WARS 2



70 TOO HUMAN



80 1942



**12 STREET
FIGHTER IV**
The greatest of all 2D
fighting games returns



Editorial

»» So the day has finally come. Hyper has turned 15 years of age. Through that time we've seen the rise and fall of over a dozen different consoles and handheld gaming devices, but throughout it all we've remained a constant. All month while working on the issue I tried to think of some things to say in my editorial. I've tried to think of some other 15 year old things that we could compare the magazine to. All month I was stumped. I didn't know what to say. I've worked on Hyper for a while now, but my time with the magazine is just a drop in the ocean.

So instead of patting myself on the back or simply talking up the magazine, I'd like to take this time to thank everyone who has ever worked on the magazine – people like the previous Editors; Stuart Clarke, Dan Toose, Eliot Fish and Cam Shea. I'd like to thank every Deputy Editor and every freelancer who has ever written an article for us. I don't have the space to name you all here, but if you've ever contributed, pat yourself on the back because without you we couldn't have kept the magazine running for the last 180 issues and however many more there are still to come.

And I'd really like to thank the incredible Malcolm Campbell. I'm not exaggerating when I say we would be doomed without his incredible eye for design, his sense of humour and his amazing ability to keep his head when everyone else is losing theirs.

I'd also like to thank all the readers. You're the reason we go to work every morning and the reason we still have jobs.

Finally, a big thanks to Luke Duggan. All month I've agonised over what to have for the editorial photo. Originally I had planned on getting a photo done of me wearing a T-Shirt a reader made for me with "World's Most Dangerous Editor" printed on the front, but when I received the picture printed above I had to rethink my decision. It sums up everything I love about Hyper and the readers. Luke has discovered that after 180 issues we are officially bigger than Weng Weng, midget Filipino star of the brilliant James Bond parody, For Your Height Only. Brilliant.

Daniel Wilks »» Editor

Hyper Crew MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

DANIEL – Editor

1. Braid – Xbox Live Arcade
"Aargh, brain asplode!"
2. Trism – iPhone
3. The Witcher – PC
4. Geometry Wars 2 – Xbox Live
5. Saints Row 2 – Xbox 360

DARREN – Deputy Editor

1. SBCG4AP - Ep1: HR – PC
"Best abbreviated title ever"
2. Elite Beat Agents – NDS
3. Geometry Wars 2 – Xbox Live
4. WarioWare: Touched! – NDS
5. Braid – Xbox Live

MALCOLM – Art Director

1. Super Street Fighter II Turbo – PS2
"Hadouken! et cetera..."
2. Team Fortress 2 – PC
3. Day of Defeat Source – PC
4. StuntMania – Mac
5. Mario Kart – Wii

TIM HENDERSON – Foreigner

1. GTA IV – PS3
"Combat that isn't broken!"
2. The Longest Journey – PC
3. NIGHTS Into Dreams – PS2
4. Phantom Hourglass – DS
5. God of War 2 – PS2

HYPER»

OCTOBER 2008 ISSUE 180

WRITE TO HYPER!

PO Box 5555
St Leonards, NSW 1590
Ph: (02) 9901 6100
Fax: (02) 9901 6116
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

EDITORIAL

Editor: **Daniel Wilks**
Deputy Editor: **Darren Wells**
Sub Editor: **Alan Moore, Daniel Findlay**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

CONTRIBUTORS

Jonti Davies, Van Hammersley, Dirk Watch, Christian Read, Christopher Taylor, Dylan Burns, Rico Suave, Eleanor Eiffe, Erin Marcon, James O'Connor, Nury Antrim, Mikolai

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager:
Jeremy Wood
E-mail: jeremyw@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9901 6337
Silvio Miceli
E-mail: silviom@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9901 6334

ARNOUL MEDIA

Sales Manager: **Kate Leslie**
E-mail: kate@arnoulmedia.com
Ph: (08) 8379 2444 Fax: (08) 8379 2555
Mobile: 0407 718 803
PO Box 549, Glenside, SA, 5065

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription Co-ordinator:
Justine Lynch
For all Subscription enquiries phone:
(02) 9901 6111
1800 227 236
Email: subscribe@mymagazines.com.au

NEXT MEDIA

Chief Executive Officer: **David Gardiner**
Commercial Director: **Bruce Duncan**

PRODUCTION

Production Co-ordinator:
Leiani Reardon
E-mail: leiani@next.com.au
Ad Production: **Dylan Fryer**
E-mail: dylanf@next.com.au
Pre-Press Manager: **Jonathon Bishop**
Pre-Press Operator: **Jason Dreggs**
IT Support: **Fahri Cantas**

Printed CTP by: **HERO PRINT**
Distribution by: **Gordon & Gotch**
Customer Service Ph: 1300 65 0666
Fax: 1300 65 0777

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Go West

Tim C. Best heads to Australia's own GO3 Expo

I'm in Perth at the second annual GO3 Electronic & Entertainment Expo. Passing the Nova Radio sumo — towering to the ceiling of the Convention Centre like some demented inflatable idol — the expo hall is mere steps away. The wave of sound is reassuring warm, hectic and full of mis-matched music and effects. Slightly-cuter than probable girl-next-doors types block traffic, handing out Nerd Shop pamphlets and setting fairly respectable games convention vibe.

The area was a reasonable size and tightly wedged with booths, some of which were right on the money including Gifts for Geeks mixing the classic Nintendo and World of Warcraft shirts, to GameTrader's stand (where I picked up next-gen Soul Calibur IV for \$75, on its launch day), and the Alienware LAN set-up which had about 20 curvy computers running several Call of Duty 4 comps each day.

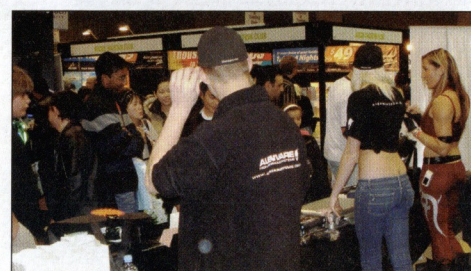
Scattered around you could get free hands-on time with a bunch of games. The most notable

was Rockstar's slamming and unreleased Midnight Club Los Angeles, being seen in Oz for only the second time. Looking around you could also find some hands-on Guitar Hero, Rockband, Wii Sports, Soul Calibur IV, miscellaneous racing games (a couple with cockpits), Dance Dance Revolution (plus some other arcade games), and one machine running Devil May Cry 4 and another with the Spore creator demo. Generally not a blisteringly new, but a decent party line-up.

On the big screen at the back, Madman seemed to be having a bit of a movie showing and I caught a decent chunk of Applesseed Ex Machina. Odd inclusions at the expo included a couple of paintball stands, a Scalextric car display, and an older gent with a model train set teasing us with the notion he was going to crash to locomotives together, before actually putting on a show of ginger braking and backing away.

The academic stands were out in force and the Perth Unis weren't afraid to show they are getting on the bandwagon. I ran into an industry vet I recognised, Josh White, who just signed onto the staff at Murdoch. With a resume stretching back to pioneering 3D games like Ultima Underworld and Descent, White instantly makes the modelling course worth watching.

The conference side also kicked it up a notch — replacing last-year's big-names and spotty delivery of practical advice — with something that turned into a real resource for local developers. International movers and shakers from the likes



No caption, we're a little distracted

of Sony Online Entertainment, Nvidia, Military Game Technology and Nokia all exposed how their companies worked day to day, and seemed excited to field probing and possibly trade secret-breaking questions. It was a nice score for attending students and developers.

For pure, high-functioning gamer types, this year's expo gets a low passing grade. The shops were fun, the hot chips crunchy, cute promo people were on hand and entry was free ... although, for the love of God, avoid Convention Centre parking if you are on a limited budget. While this year's show lacked the pageantry of Cosplay and skaters, the real buzz kill was, once again, the lack of unreleased goodness. At least Rockstar's Midnight Club LA booth illustrated that all a Sony, EA or Activision (and this Expo) needs is some preview code and a few game machines to make a splash. **Timothy C. Best**



The Drugs Don't Work

Fallout 3 gets re-tooled and re-rated

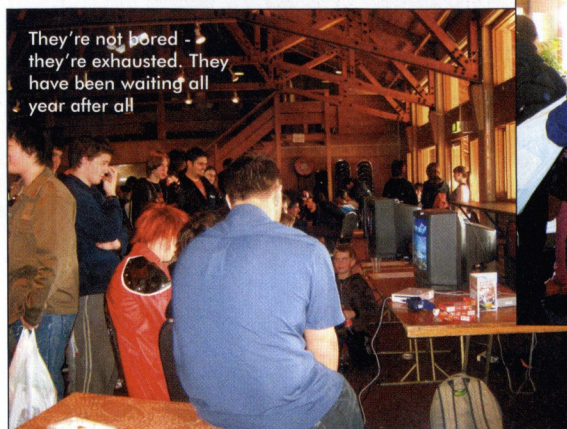
If Fallout 3 were a celebrity baby it would have stolen more column inches than Britney, Lindsay and Paris combined. Even Angelina Jolie's genetically perfect twins wouldn't get a look in. This birth, you see, has it all: drama, family feuds, sinister government figures lurking in the shadows and eight-legged space pirates with rail guns. Well, it did before the censors got to it, anyway.

The drama kicked off when the fans first learned of Bethesda's plan to do away with the isometric view of the previous two games and shift perspective to the first-person. 'ZOMG!!' they cried, "If it's first-person it must surely be a shooter!" With the battle lines drawn, the fans started taking pot shots at each other — and Bethesda. It was like a bitter divorce, with a custody battle over a baby nobody wanted.

As more information began to surface people began to calm down, if only ever so slightly. It was clear to most people that the game retained its RPG core while making the game (dare we say it) more engaging and faster-moving than its predecessors.

Arguments over whether Bethesda had sold out or not faded into insignificance for Aussie gamers at the beginning of July however, when it was announced the game had failed the classification process at the hands of the OFLC. The game contained "the option to take a variety of drugs known as chems using a device which is connected to the character's arm." The fact that you could shoot children was also rumoured to be causing some concern.

On 7th August, the OFLC posted a revised classification of the game, with a rating of MA15+. The 'chems' had been rejigged, with the "reward and incentive" of drugs use toned down sufficiently to prevent us all from wanting to shoot up, get high and attack children. The edited version of the game is now slated for release on October 17th. Thank you OFLC!



AVCon 08

A Consise Report of Adelaide's Only Event

To say I approached AVCon, Adelaide's annual anime and video game convention, with a sense of trepidation would be an understatement. Fearful that I would be out-nerded by fat women in Asuka costumes and swarms of people who thought it would be hilarious and original to dress up as the box from Metal Gear Solid, it occurred to me I may end up crushing the delicate flower of Adelaide's gaming scene under the steely boot of honest journalism. It is with immense pleasure, then, that I inform you, the reader, that I had an absolute blast.

Running over the last weekend of July at Adelaide University, AVCon 08 was an exciting place to be for a gamer, causing even the most level-headed of attendants to geek out a bit. The gaming exhibitions were spread out over two levels, with about sixty different games available for free play. I soon managed to get myself addicted to Soul Calibur 2, using Link and losing badly to the same guy over and over again, while other people got stuck into Timesplitters, Perfect Dark, Smash Bros, Guilty Gear- whatever took their fancy. Two entire rooms were devoted to Rock Band, finally giving Adelaide gamers a chance to play the damn thing without spending hundreds of dollars.

The event plays host to quite a few game tournaments, too, with a full \$6000 worth of

prizes on offer. I found myself embarrassingly captivated by the Pokemon competition, which saw my friend Neil Golding come second with his beloved Dunsparce. Aside from that Smash Bros, Street Fighter 3, Mario Kart and a bunch of other games were tourneyed, at varying degrees of competitiveness. Also running over the course of the weekend was the Ultimate Gamer Challenge, which involved gamers proving their mettle over a series of single player challenges- say, taking down a certain boss in Shadow of the Colossus or getting the medal in the first level of Lylat Wars, to name a few. Eventually a chosen few would compete for true gaming glory and some of the

there was a bizarre trend towards disturbingly sexy 'lolita' girls

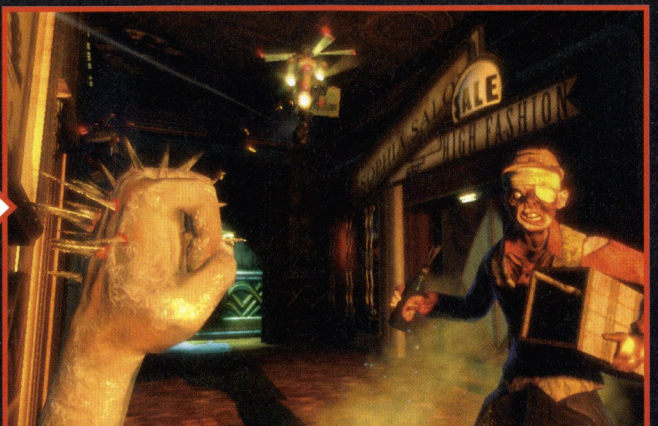
meatier prizes. I was only there for one day so I didn't get to see how it all played out, but the idea behind it was awesome.

Most interesting for any potential game developers was the Independent Games room. Representing work from Holopoint Productions, TAFESA and other minor development teams, events like this are a great way for programmers and mod developers to show off their stuff. And these are people who are getting their work noticed, too- just the day before the guys from Krome's Adelaide studio had insisted I check out Half-Life 2 mod 'Mentality', an FPS that pays heavy tribute to Eternal Darkness' sanity effects, while I was there. I'd particularly love to see this aspect of AVCon expanded upon next year.

In terms of cosplayers, there was a bizarre trend towards disturbingly sexy 'lolita' girls, because apparently that's very 'in' right now. So that's great, if you like an awkward sense of sexual attraction. Despite my skepticism, AVCon turned out to be a great way of spending a weekend, as long as you're not too scared to unleash your inner nerd (face it, you're reading Hyper, it's there). I'll be back next year, when the event will be hosted at the Adelaide Convention Center and will expand in size and scope, to lose my way through a bunch of gaming tournaments. **James O'Connor**

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Information Ahoy!

Indie dev wonders why his games are pirated – countless gamers respond

It's something that every developer faces: the scourge of piracy. Adventure games, first-person shooters, racing games, and everything in between can be found in DVD burners and the tubes of the internet as easily as it can on retail shelves, and it's a problem that has plagued the industry for years. Various forms of retaliation have emerged in the form of copy protection, DRM, and even the carrot-waving of exclusive content, yet still the pirates roam, seemingly with no end in sight.

One developer has taken note of the situation, and rather than upping the ante with rectal probe verification procedures, he's opening his digital doors with one simple question: "Why?". Indie programmer Cliff Harris put out the call on his blog for pirates to tell him with they pirate his

games, and the response was overwhelming.

"I read every one of them," Harris writes. "They were also generally very long. Few people wrote under 100 words. It seems a lot of people have waited a long time to tell a game developer the answer to this question."

Harris boils the main issues down to six. Some respondents held the belief that game concepts should be available for everyone, while most cited the high cost of games as the main turn-off ("People in Australia were especially annoyed about higher prices there," he notes). Game quality was another reason, with many choosing to download a game in lieu of having a demo available for them to play, and DRM is still a sticking point for those who choose not to

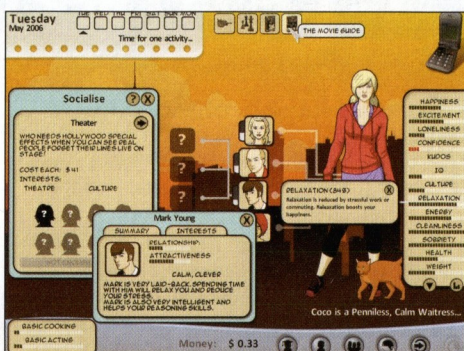


invite the overly-strict technology onto their PCs. Rounding things off was the laziness factor – it's easier to download than it is to get up and walk to a games store – while some admitted to piracy simply because they like to obtain stuff for free.

It's an interesting snippet of gamer culture, and it's information that Harris is making a concerted effort to take on board. "I've thought hard about everything people have said and I have decided to change a few things about my games," he writes, before outlining his changes to pricing structure, demo length and availability, quality, and digital rights management.

All in all, it's admirable to see a developer seeking an open discussion with an audience that others would prefer to shun altogether. Sadly, Harris doesn't see it amounting to much on a wider scale. "Doubtless there will be more FPS games requiring mainframes to run them, more games with securom, games with no demos, or games with all glitz and no gameplay. I wish this wasn't the case, and that the devs could listen more to their potential customers, and that the pirates could listen more to the devs rather than abusing them. I don't think that's going to happen."

For the full breakdown, check out www.positech.co.uk/talkingtopirates.html.



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Thank god for Xbox Live Arcade and the Playstation Network. They have kept me sane over the last month. Not so much because I'm a fan of playing games online - I'm not a big multi-player person - but because there constantly seems to be a trickle of brilliant games that manage to combine high production values with genuine innovation, making both services something of a bright spark in an otherwise fairly dark sea of overly familiar dross.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that there are no innovative big budget games being made at the moment - there are a bunch - it's just that it seems far more common to see the announcement of something horribly derivative than it is to see something new and interesting. Take the recent announcement of the EA party game *Celebrity Sports Showdown*. Everything about the game screams that it is lowest common denominator shovelware. Crappy celebrity appearances? Check. Wii mini-games? Check. I'd love to be proven wrong and find out that the game is actually a brilliant satire on the cult of celebrity and the American obsession with armchair sports, but I doubt that is going to be the case. Come on, how could anything that features the big-headed likenesses of Avril Lavigne and Fergie be anything but evil?

It's obviously a matter of budget. Downloadable games are relatively inexpensive to produce and distribute, as opposed to big-budget titles, so the logical part of me understands that it makes much more financial sense to take the safe route and make something that is a guaranteed seller, but I long for a day when that is not the case. I just did my tax and it made me think: Maybe we need (local or global) tax incentives like we had in the late 70s and early 80s that see film financiers getting up to a \$3 return for

every \$1 they contribute to a locally produced film. Can you imagine the rampant creativity we would see if the money men could make a game as a win-win situation? Sure, the vast majority of the games made under such a tax-break would be utter shit, much like the majority of film produced in Australia during the incentivised period, but there would be the occasional gem - the gaming equivalent of *Mad Max 2*, *Long Weekend*, *Road Games* or *The Man from Hong Kong*. Hell, even a gaming equivalent of *The Party*, *Stork* or *Razorback* could help the local industry. Wouldn't that make it all worthwhile?

Perhaps it would. Perhaps it would just lead to a cultural death like the fall of the original Atari. Unchecked money flowing into games development could lead to even more conservatism when it comes to design - instead of making one big conservatively designed games, it's highly conceivable that the big companies would channel the extra money into making more, smaller, easy bets. Why settle for making one guaranteed seller (as far as you can guarantee a game will sell anyway) when you can make a dozen slightly cheaper games? Somehow money has to be the answer to the problem of development stagnation, but currently I can't see how.

Still, even without tax incentives, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Just when I thought EA had sunk back to their old depths of churning out sports franchises and shovelware, they announce that they have teamed up with the Japanese master of wild innovation and off-the-wall ideas, Suda 51, and Shinji Mikami, creator of the *Resident Evil* series (and producer of *God Hand*) for an as yet unnamed horror game.

I'll try to forget about *Celebrity Sports Showdown* for the time being and set my sights on the future. It seems rosier that I initially expected.

the gaming equivalent of *Mad Max 2*, *Long Weekend*, *Road Games*





>Street Fighter 4

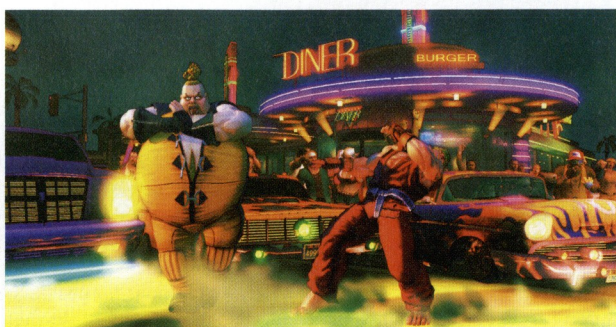
Like nearly everyone else on the planet (everyone who isn't wrong-headed, that is), we're anxiously awaiting our chance to play the long awaited sequel to one of the most beloved (and influential) fighting franchises of all time, **Street Fighter 4**.

After months of begging, bribing, a little intimidation, some threats and macho posturing Balrog style (Western Balrog that is, not the Japanese Balrog/Vega), we managed to get **Yoshinori Ono**, the Producer of SFIV to sit down and have a brief chat with us.

It's no secret or exaggeration that the arcade scene, though still thriving in Japan, is all but dead in the West. To this end, we asked Mr Yoshinori whether the development team had started working on the project with an emphasis on either arcade or home console.

"We had both options in mind to start with. As the main developing body was based in Japan and the fact what was being developed is what I call a 'Fighting Tool', it was natural that the arcade was developed first."

The general impression of Street Fighter IV has so far been generally very positive, with the arcade machines present at E3 being held by many to be one of the real highlights of the show. Of course, even the most critical of critics will never be as harsh and opinionated as the true hardcore fans of the Street Fighter franchise. So how are the franchise faithful reacting to the game in the test arcades in Japan? "I hear hardcore gamers wanting acute adjustments such as changing a character's



"The core concept of the game was not to be a hardcore gamer exclusive title"

movement frames and such, where they obviously consider this as a 'fighting tool'. Rather than sheer compliments I hear more suggestions on the micro calibration of the game balance."

While it may sound rather anal, the shaving of a few frames of animation and the minute calibrations only truly obvious to the most die-hard fans of the game can do nothing but help the end product, both in the arcades and the home console versions.

KICK THE CAR!

Super Street Fighter II: Turbo and Street Fighter III: Third Strike are getting pretty long in the tooth as far as competitively played games go, but every year hundreds of elite gamers from around the world get together to trade Spinning Bird Kicks and Shoryukens, Spinning Lariats and Hundred-Hand Slaps. With such a dedicated competitive fan-base we assumed that SFIV would be developed with

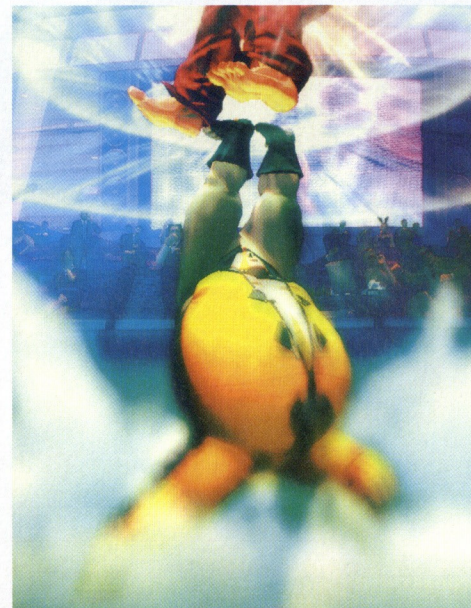


Screenshot of the year? I think we have a winner!

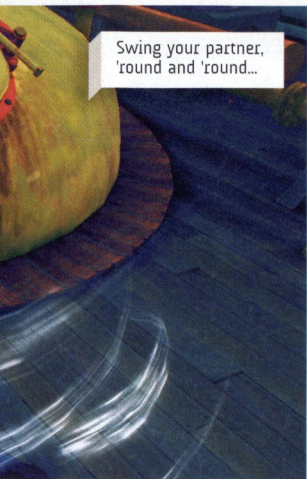
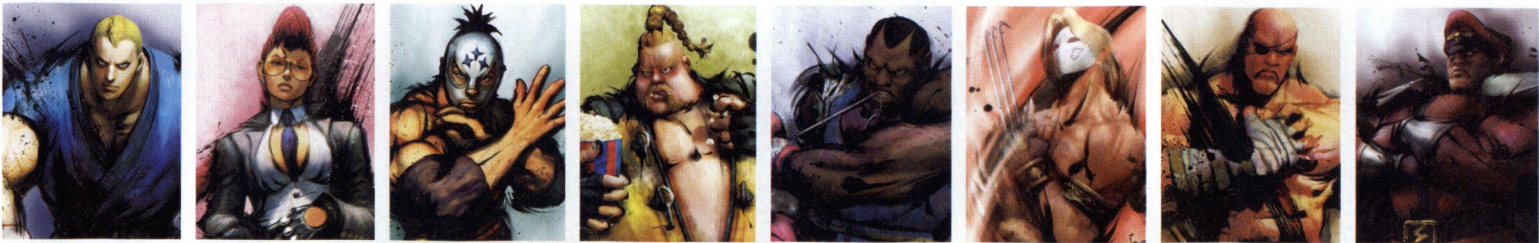
competition as one of the priorities. Mr Yoshinori put us straight on the matter, saying, "The core concept of the game was not to be a hardcore gamer exclusive title and if it happens to be so we would have some thinking to do. This release is to reintroduce the genre to those who have been away from fighting games so I am hoping it will co-exist with other fighting games that are targeted for people already playing this genre."

Over the last few months there has been a constant trickle of information as to what characters from the franchise will be making a return. Obviously series stalwarts like Ken, Ryu, Chun Li,

Chiropracting: You're doing it wrong



Genre: **Fighting** // Developer: **Capcom** // Format: **Arcade, Xbox 360, PS3** // Due: **TBA**



Swing your partner, 'round and 'round...



You should see him do children's birthday parties



Static electricity can be fun, but not at crotch level



His stomach is both good and evil. Awesome.

Blanka and Honda are making a return, joining the new additions such as Crimson Viper, Abel, El Fuerte and Rufus, but what of the lesser characters? So far we know that Dan and Fei Long will be making an appearance in the home console versions of the game and Cammy has been strongly hinted at thanks to an online poll asking fans which characters they would like to see return. While the expanded roster makes us more than happy, we have to ask, why Dan? He's a joke character – literally.

"It is always tough to please everyone, but the feedback we have received over the years shows that there are a lot of gamers who enjoy playing as Dan as he exemplifies many characteristics that go to make a classic Street Fighter character."

If those characteristics include crappy supers and a pink Gi we couldn't agree more.

Keeping on the topic of the roster, we had to wonder whether plans for the console versions of the game would include an expanded character selection via DLC. Unfortunately this does not look to be the case. "We have no plans to have characters as DLC since it could cause inconsistency in the balance of the game each player has. Because someone hasn't downloaded a character he/she shouldn't be disadvantaged by not knowing that character."

It would be hard for us to be more excited by the upcoming release of Street Fighter IV. The Street Fighter franchise (aside from the ill advised move into 3D with Street Fighter EX) is one of our most beloved (and replayed), with various SF games on nearly constant rotations on the various consoles in the office. We're excited by the new look, new mechanics and new roster, but what does Yoshinori Oni think people should be most excited about? "I really want people to feel the 'Street Fighter' in this design of the title. I have intentionally avoided using words like 'New' and 'Revolutionary'. The addition will be the sense of 'wow this is a Street Fighter game!' so to speak."

We'll bring you more details as soon as they come to light and a hands-on within the next few months when code becomes available. Stay tuned. <<



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: Makoto (with her giant man hands), Dudley, Sakura, Elena, Guy, Rose, Hugo and Q making a comeback.



>Darksiders: Wrath of War

Earth? Victim of some errant apocalypse.

Angels and demons? Still at war. Humans? Blasted, wretched things, wandering their wasted world. And you? You are War, the horseman of the Apocalypse. The only problem is, you had nothing to do with this whole goddamn mess. So your superiors strip you of nearly your entire arsenal of powers and weapons, they even take your poor horse. It's up to you to solve the question of what really triggered Armageddon and, at the same time, reclaim your heritage. Oh, and you must commit horrendous violence upon all manner of supernatural bastards.

Darksiders, based on the one level we've seen, looks bloody great. It's a game all about the action. There's no rest for the wicked, as you start out with a wide variety of weaponry; a sword, a gun, punching, just generally anything you can use to beat demon ass. A big part of Darksiders consists of finding War's truly spectacular primeval weaponry with which to terrorise demon beasts even more effectively. On top of that, players should be on the

look out for armour pickups and god knows what else. It promises to be a game of acquisition of almost Diablo levels.

GOOD LORD Y'ALL

Combat is pretty simple, yet sophisticated enough to keep you engaged. The main methods of attack are basic melee/ranged combos that fill up the "Wrath Meter", a gauge indicating War's true level of bad-arsedness. When filled, War can perform special room-clearing moves, including things like huge knives spearing out of the ground, decapitations, fire, pain, and all that good stuff. Combat is always gory and rarely about measured tactics. Either you're trying to keep your distance or rushing closer, looking for a quick kill. Flying enemies? You shoot 'em from a distance or wait for them to swoop, right? War leaps up, slashes their throats, then caroms to the next one, performing a similar execution.

The very act of finishing even the simplest enemy can only be described as pure satisfaction. You do the button mash and you're

rewarded with a spectacularly flashy move even on the most mundane of enemies. After you've done the first move, you're pretty much immediately looking around a room at the mobs trash talking. "Who's next? Who wants some of daddy?" You'll also probably get a darkly amused chuckle out of some of the death animations as well. Watching a minion try to pound life into a boss, while you confidently swagger over to execute it, is a minor delight. Is it hack and slash? Sure it is, but this isn't just leaping about mashing and hoping for a savage combo. This is something to sink your teeth into.

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

There are puzzles to be had as well. Hopefully nothing too numbing or slow to solve. - the latter Soul Reaver games ground to a halt while you were

Combat is always gory and rarely about measured tactics.

He's just mad because the Yanks spelt his name wrong



Genre: Action // Developer: Vigil Games // Format: Xbox 360, PS3 // Due: 2009



It's like every 70s metal album cover rolled into one!



This is no time to bathe!

turning knobs and lining up frigging blocks. In the E3 demo, it was simply a matter of grabbing a blindingly obviously sword to open a door, or using huge fiery rocks on enemies when they appeared.

Players who love boss battles should be right at home – there will be many and they will be impressive. Joe Mad, a comics legend behind stuff like X-Men, Battlechasers and Ultimates, really brings a design sensibility that's second to none. Not only are the trash mobs great, you can also expect quite a gruesome menagerie of bosses and mini bosses. The Jailer is a lumbering giant, a cage built into his twisted body, wielding a kind of massively violet Chakram-looking thing called a Crossblade. Players will really have to take advantage of Darksider's targeting system to not only fight off his spawned minions but locate his weaknesses as well.

"No God of War minigames?" we asked Joe Mad.

"Hell no! You've got to fight them!" he enthused.

The impressive size of some of the bosses of the bosses is on display when you're up against the Ash Crawler – a giant Dune-esque worm - that guards the travel areas, the Ashlands. Jumping ahead a bit in the demo, Mad graciously gave us a chance to ride on Ruin (War's confiscated steed) and take on the great worm. The thing is huge, quite the imposing figure. So much so that we found ourselves thinking, "How in god's name do we take that on?" Thankfully, with a speedy mount, a magical machine gun and lots of quick ranged attacks, down it goes, opening up a whole new area of the game. Ruin himself is a useful weapon



War hates giant floaty head/chain statue things

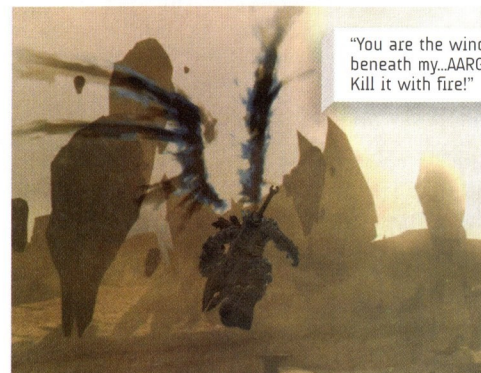
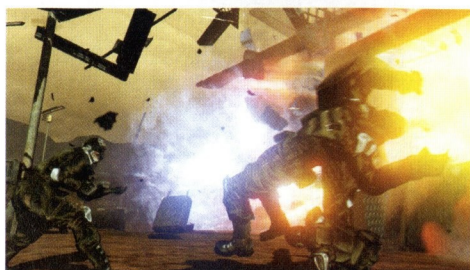
as well as time-saver, gleefully running down or body-smashing wretched humans with its body of shadow and flame.

Unlocking and exploring seems to be an important part of Darksiders. From corpse-choked cities, through to gothic and rich Cathedrals and subway stations now home to hideous tentacled monsters, War has a lot of ground to cover.

SAY IT AGAIN

So what's wrong with it? Not a lot, really. We're not exactly fans of overwhelming puzzles in balls-to-the-wall action games. We feel they can sometimes derail the momentum of a game, and if you're in the mood for righteous demon smacking and you're pulling levers, nothing will make you eject the disc in disgust quicker. We're also a little concerned that players might end up with an overly busy controller - War has a lot of options from combat-to-combat and even with an ability to reassign the buttons on the console, shifting from weapon to weapon, technique to technique might just get a tad overwhelming. And with God of War 3 out there, somewhere, it's going to be up against some stiff competition in the gigantic-monster-slaying balls-to-the-wall genre.

Nevertheless, let's pay it the compliment only a really great looking game can receive. The second they took the controller away from us, we wanted it back. We can't wait to see more. "



"You are the wind beneath my...AARGH! Kill it with fire!"

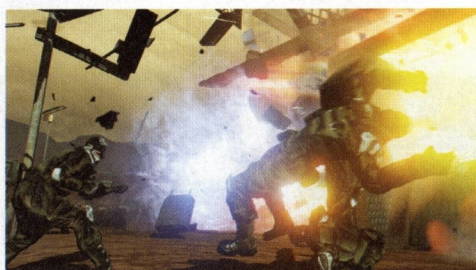
> **WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:** Joe Mad making us some unique art - we'd really like to see that.



Figure 1: Why you don't make houses from explosives



Welcome to the Martian colonies



If I had a hammer...

>Red Faction: Guerrilla

We've seen Red Faction: Guerrilla twice now and we're still not totally convinced about it. We fear that the game may be a little... dull, for reasons we're not entirely able to expound on. My, doesn't that sound wishy-washy. Anyway. Here's the rub.

We saw the same level, same demo, about three months back and it looked and felt a whole lot more polished. Let's get the good out of the way – Red Faction: Guerrilla looks amazing. When you're taking apart buildings, you'll find sheetrock, rebars underneath plaster, steel girders and other kinds of materials. The most talked about feature, this engine of destruction, is GeoMod, specialising in the oxymoronic creation of destruction. Happily, this doesn't mean that you're basically playing some crazy Next Gen version of something like Rampage. The game relies heavily on using deconstruction as a weapon and ally in your quest to free Mars.

Here's an example of what that means. During the demo level we saw, protestors are getting fired on by – boo hiss – fascist bullies. Now, you can jump in and get straight onto shooting them all you like. Or, thinking a bit laterally, you can take a sniping position and with your RPG-style weapon, take out the support structures of a bridge the baddies are hiding under.



During the demo level we saw, protestors are getting fired on by – boo hiss – fascist bullies

Thankfully, taking out huge buildings is surprisingly easy. Your trusty sledgehammer seems almost supernaturally powerful, allowing you to go through supporting trusses and foundations like fat through a duck. Another rather fine move was, on being aware that the upstairs of a building was crawling with mobs, simply knocking the top floor out and crushing them all. There's also a cheeky little meter that tallies the running costs of your vandalism as a dollar value.

Because, like pretty much every game on the assembly lines these days this is an open sandbox game, vehicles take on an extra role. Not only will you be moving from crisis to crisis, demolition derby tactics take on extra meaning. Ambushing enemy tanks, ATVs, deployment vehicles often needs to be done in a hurry and without planning. GeoMod gives this an edge of explodey fun.

Online multi-player will also make use of the destruction. Expect a Jenga style game of tower destroying, as well as various kinds of base defence, which will see you quite literally having to hold your side together.

And yet, and yet, we just don't seem to be able to get into it. It may be that the story is just sort of flat, or that having seen the same demo twice we have a dire suspicion that simply blowing up buildings might get old quickly. If the game is nothing but 'go here, smash that', not even the most arousing and unearthly destruction is going to keep us enthralled for hours. It barely kept our attention for a single level. We sincerely look forward to being proven wrong. “



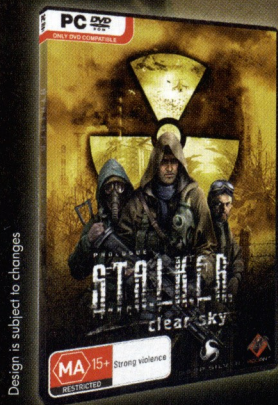
Genre: *Third Person Shooter* // Developer: *Volition* // Format: *Xbox 360, PS3, PC* // Due: *2009*

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PROLOGUE

STALKER

clear sky



NO MORE FAMILIAR ROUTES THROUGH THE ZONE,...
NO MORE RULES YOU USED TO LIVE WITH...
WHAT AWAITS YOU, S.T.A.L.K.E.R.,
IN THE ZONE THAT CHANGED?

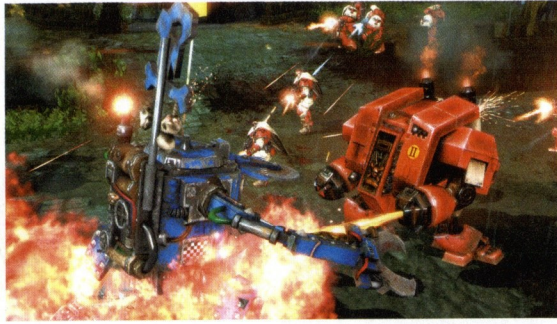
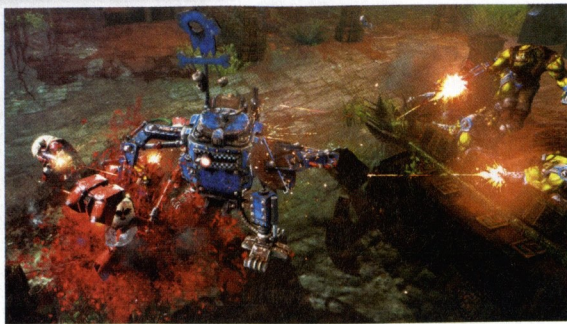
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>Dawn of War II

There's some partial bias here. I'm an enormous fan of the Warhammer 40,000 universe. There's just something about its mix of military science-fiction, draconian fascism, Lovecraftian space horror and arcane sorcery that really appeals to me. I've enjoyed nearly every game set there so far, even Fire Warrior. So obviously I was a huge fan of the original Dawn of War RTS. With a huge selection of races, brutal combat, intense animations and a design philosophy of 'forget about resources, go forth and kill!' it made fine work of both the setting and was a strong action oriented RTS.

With this in mind, I was really rather surprised at what Dawn of War II actually is. "When we sat down to consider what we would do for the sequel, we looked really hard at the original game to figure out what made it work," says Jonny Ebert, the lead

designer of the game. I'm not entirely certain that's true.

Firstly, it's very different from its predecessor, shedding both its size and scope. The new incarnation focuses on small squads, low level engagements and sudden running battles rather than the twenty unit, tank and gun emplacement-supported killfests of Dawn of War. There seems to be no base building at all. "A factory spitting out Space Marines?" asks Ebert. "That just didn't seem right to us."

THE CHANGE OF BATTLE

In the demo that we saw, a small unit of Ultramarines had to assassinate an Ork Warboss.

The animation of the units as they rush through the thick rainforest is, of course, stunning. DOW simply excels at making the units individuals filled with tics and habits. They all look so damn cool. Strangely unremarked upon is the voice-acting. These are Space Marines, superhuman warrior monks, and they sound just like that. Crisp, deep and inspiring.

The first gun battle illustrates a strange law of creativity. Feedback occurs everywhere. DoW led to the creation of Company of Heroes, a game that emphasised small squads, cover, seizing



Eldar, pshaw! - space pansies more like it!

buildings and generally a far greater use of the environment than is traditional in RTS, where you usually just point and click. DoW II is a micro-manager's delight as individual units are given individual jobs. The heavy weapon guy opens fire on a tower. The melee specialists are rushed to the front while the ranged experts dig in and provide supporting fire. This is an even tighter version of Company of Heroes, meaning instead of being aware of what a few guys at a time are doing, you're looking out for individual soldiers.

"We were looking to recreate that really brutal, violent combat experience," says Ebert, and it's here that they wildly succeed. Assault Marines leap into the fray with an impact like a slap, leaving the ground scarred beneath their great boots. Grenades fly, leaving Ork bodies in a heap. Chainsaws and Thunder Hammers tear and smash and the whole thing is damn exhilarating.

The choice to hone in on just a few squads in combat permeates the entire game. Squads are persistent, lead by individual veterans who are all named. You'll be using these guys for the entirety of the game, even (in a totally unexpected RPG element) giving them Experience Points, looking to level them according to your needs. There's a need to carefully equip each squad and veteran with wargear according to the needs of particular missions. There's no generic suite of weapons.



This screen needs more Killer Kans



They're still space pansies...just really tough pansies



Won't somebody think of the children!



"There is no help. You're the f*ing help", says Ebert.**

Expecting mechanised assault? Choose meltabombs and rocket launchers. Thinking you'll be fighting a lot of trash? You'll want to take a lot of small arms. While there's a limited mechanic for reinforcing troops on the field, it's the early planning and tactics that will win the game rather than Zerg rushing or relying on superior tech trees. There are also loot drops but we can only hope this doesn't unbalance gameplay.

FIELD OF VIEW

It looks amazing. Again, the Company of Heroes link is there, as DoW II uses the Essence engine that powered that game. But also again, don't expect this to be a CoH game with a new skin. While Essence excelled at destructible terrain and persistent damage, DoW II integrates the Havok engine. Sure you can blow up a building, but don't be surprised if those Ork Boyz simply take cover behind its remains. Nothing is static and you'll have to be as aware of your surroundings as the goddamn Batman while battle rages around you. Shadows are dark, the lighting dynamic and exciting.

Enemy AI, a crucial aspect of a game like this, so far seems first rate. Watching carefully, you can see Orks ducking for cover as the Marines assault them. Later on, Ebert attempts to lead them into a trap. When the Orks see that their comrades have opened fire, even on an unseen opponent, their attitudes seem to change. They choose to open fire on destructible terrain, looking to blow up bridges

rather than open fire on their attackers. Frankly, it suggests that even a low level skirmish isn't something that you can just ignore.

Campaigns are quite different now. "You'll have decisions to make," says Ebert. "Do I want to defend that territory that isn't that helpful to me, or do I want to keep going up against my enemies? You can't fight every battle and you'll have to choose when and where you want to make your stands." Somewhere between the linear narrative campaign of the original campaign and the open-ended maps of Dark Crusade and Soulstorm, the Marine campaign, sees you cruising around in a Battle Barge, answering distress calls. The troops you start with are pretty much the troops you end up with. "There is no help. You're the f***ing help", says Ebert.

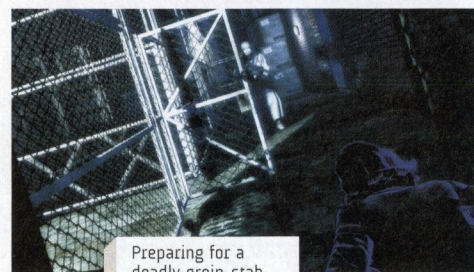
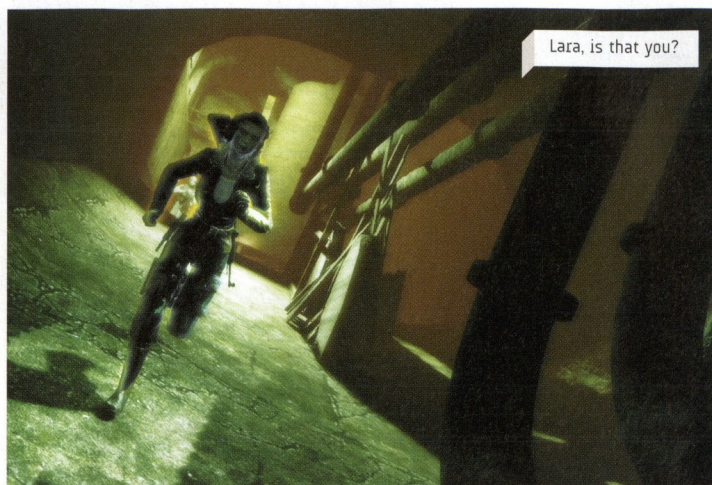
Currently there's no news on multiplayer but considering the success the first DoW enjoyed online, with considerable heated competition, it's likely to be a robust system. So far there's only three races announced - Marines, Orks and Eldar - although the recently released opening FMV hints pretty strong at the one race the original left out. Although, that's speculation.

Is II better than I? Visually, absolutely. Nevertheless, expect quite a different experience from DoW. And what promises to be an exceptional one, regardless.

Christian Read «



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: More info on the recently announced Tyranids



>Velvet Assassin

You don't often see games that are willing to break out of the mould. Oh, you see games that are technological breakthroughs all the time. You see games that change gameplay. What you don't see are games that are willing to fly in the face of conventional wisdom about storytelling.

Velvet Assassin is one of these. Set during the dark days of WWII, the game is based roughly on the life story of Violette Szabo. Type her name into the old Google and get ready to gawp. Anyways, you play Violette Summer, a British spy from the SOE behind enemy lines. In a hallucinatory sequence of flashbacks, you look back on a series of missions conducted deep behind enemy lines in Nazi occupied territory.

This isn't the kind of WWII action you'll get from Company of Heroes or Call of Duty or any of the other war-based games. This is a horrifying world of Nazi atrocity, of civilians gunned down in the streets. The demo level took place in the famous Warsaw Ghetto. Elaborately constructed from historical records, war reporting and photography, the atmosphere is oppressive, almost grim. The fact that you're on your way to hand a captured spy from your own agency a canister of cyanide just helps underlie that elegiac tone. You see, if he's tortured,

he'll talk. Everyone talks. The game doesn't really look all that spectacular graphically. It just looks real. Great. But real.

The gameplay is pretty simple to anyone who played Splinter Cell. When they say 'stealth', they mean it. You'll be sticking to shadows, where you are invisible, looking to stay hidden or reacquire shade rather than just mow Ratzis down. Shadow and darkness are vital to remaining alive, so much so that you can't even let your victim's bodies be seen. They too must be dumped in the black.

There's rather vicious contextual assassination ability at work here. You'll find yourself hiding in

Suddenly, the stark wartime visuals give away to a surreal image of a woman in a nightdress

darkness, sneaking out only to press the kill button. Demonstrated to us with a blade, with throat slicing and a particularly horrifying crotch gouge. Violette pushes her

knife up between the legs of soldiers. Slow. It's actually pretty traumatising. The moves are all contextual, randomly selected, so you'll never know what's coming. All the combat is like that. Brutal. Unrelenting. An XP system will also give you a chance to shape styles of gameplay.

Now, because you are in a dream, there's a rather excellent mechanic called Morphine. The game is all flashback, she never died in the field, so when you're in trouble, you take a dose and 'correct' the dream. This gives you a few seconds of slow-time invulnerability to take out an enemy who has the drop on you. Suddenly, the stark wartime visuals give away to a surreal image of a woman in a nightdress moving against slow motion enemies, slashing away at Nazis. It's a strangely smooth transition.

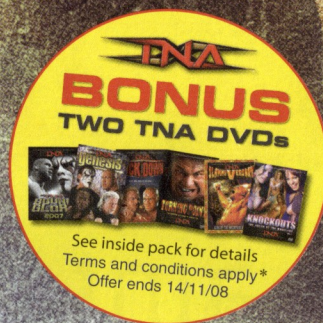
It's still a bit rough looking, needing a once over to even out frame rates. Maybe some textures to be punched up. Still, we have high hopes for the game formerly known as Sabotage. «

> Genre: *Stealth Action* // Developer: *Replay Studios* // Format: *Xbox 360, PS3, PC* // Due: *Soon*

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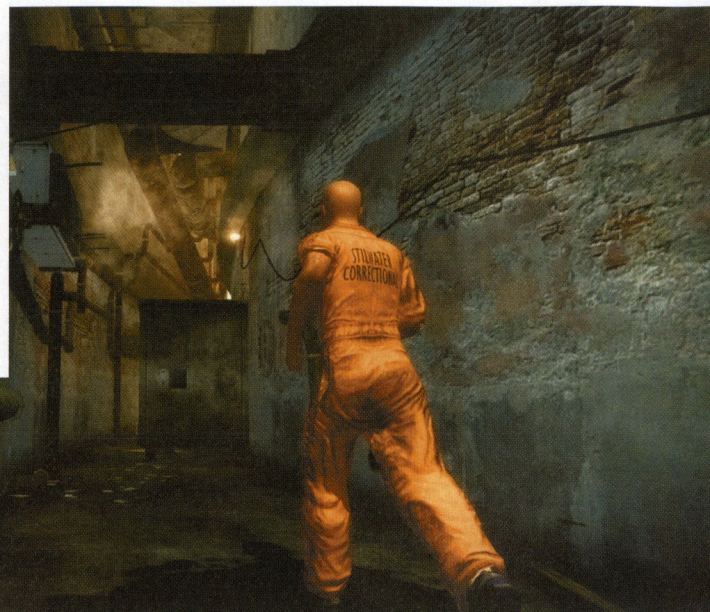
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"Orange really shows off your glutes!"



>Saints Row II

I was moments away from starting this preview when the news came through that **Saints Row 2 (Electric Boogaloo)** would be rated **MA15+**. I contacted Roje Smith, the Associate Producer of the game, and asked him: what things was Volition worried would be omitted to comply with our rather archaic ratings?

"We were confident that Saints Row 2 would be classified in its entirety as we felt that it met the criteria for an MA15+ classification. There were certainly some new elements in Saints Row 2 that we paid close attention to, such as the ability to play the game without clothes on, the new moving cover system and some of the new activities and diversions, but after a lot of preparation we felt confident that they met the requirements to be MA15+."

See what he did there? That's Clever Clogs Marketing Speech for "talk about the moving cover system." You win this time, Mr. PR talkin' guy. You can indeed take prisoners, grabbing them about the neck and letting them soak up damage. Then you can execute them contextually based upon weapons. And yes, you can indeed play nude, but with the amazing levels of customisation why would you? Feel like playing an obese woman in a hotdog suit duel-wielding two pistols? On a motorcycle? Want to play an albino black man in clown make up in an evening suit and no trousers? Not a problem. The customisation is almost overwhelming in the amount of choices you can make.

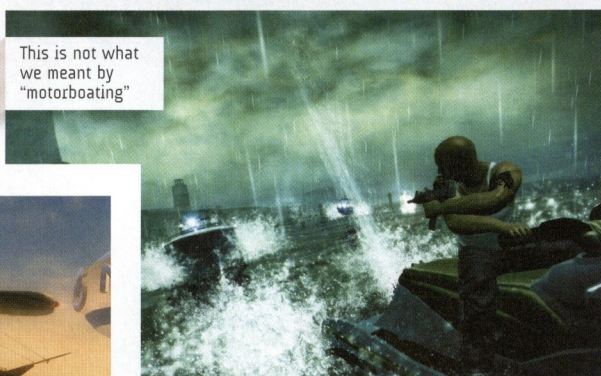


there's a sense of sly humor and the ridiculous to SR 2 that sets it apart from its major competitor

Roje continued, saying, "We're just glad that Australian gamers can play the same version of Saints Row 2 as the rest of the world and no edits had to be made. There is a huge amount of gameplay within Saints Row 2 and it gives the player an unprecedented level of freedom, so it would have been a shame if any aspect of the game had to be changed for Australia."

Saints Row 2 is remarkably violent but that's not all there is to the game. Every time anyone talks about Saint's Row, it is in the same breath as GTA. There are obvious elements they share; crime, car theft, the sandbox and all that jazz, but there's a sense of sly humor and the ridiculous to SR 2 that

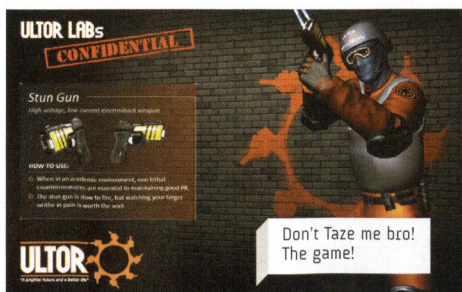
This is not what we meant by "motorboating"



sets it apart from its major competitor. Sometimes it's the silliness of playing dress ups, the gaming equivalent of a movie with funny hats. Sometimes it's gaming in-jokes. ('Company of Yeeros' is the new food franchise in town.) SR 2 looks to have shed its 'All these games developers are very seriously Caucasian' self-conscious ghetto slang for a 'I'm Gonna Git You Sucka' style parody of gangsta culture. It's a welcome move.

WHEN THUGS DIE

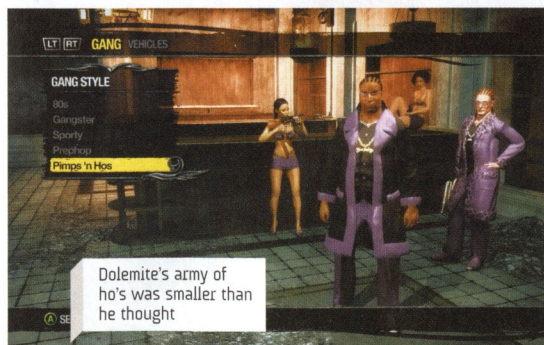
To be honest, the E3 demo we saw was a bit ordinary. It was fun, involving a prison break and a bit of the old online co-op play, but didn't highlight what Saint's Row 2 is really all about. Instead it highlighted, in the first part, the moving cover system – prison escapees need a lot of human shields, and they, of course, lead to a lot of visceral neck-snappings and 9mm dome cappings. From there, it's a straight run down to a dock, blowing away more baddies. Then you'll have to make the final getaway using a .50 cal cannon on pursuing helicopters and speedboats.



Don't Taze me bro! The game!



"Hey, everybody!
BREAKDANCE FIGHT!"



Personally, I could have gone for one of the promised activities, which include spraying down rich areas of Stilwater with poo to lower property prices. Or dressing up like a copper and beating up citizens to discredit the constabulary. Thankfully, I did get to play the Fight Club activity, which was a lot more brutal than you'd expect: three on one in a cage fight.

Melee in the first Saint's was, again, way too simple, pretty much amounting to a swing and a kick when the enemy was down. In Saint's Row 2 you get two trigger controls, blocks, and even martial arts style skills that can be learnt. Two-trigger combat means the combat is a lot smoother. Because of the new melee, which also includes shields, you'll find that there's less lying about on the ground, hoping your stupid avatar gets his ass up before you die.

Human shields are fun, but a big improvement is duel-wield weapons and a simple aiming system that brings targets closer. To be honest, the first Saint's

pretty much had you lining up a reticule, hoping no other buggger had acquired you and pressing madly. Now you can actually use cover and target in a much more effective fashion.

The new activities in the game really open up Saint's, ensuring plenty of variety. I'm just glad that we get some of the stranger and more interesting activities, of which there are a lot more than in the previous game. It would be a shame if you couldn't dress up like a copper and go about willy-nilly bashing the bejeezus out of citizens in an attempt to make the Five-Oh look like a bunch of right thuggish bastards. I'm also glad that I'm not the only one who got to see the surprisingly brutal illegal fight club activity.

Saint's Row 2 deserves that mature rating, despite its almost light-hearted and campy attitudes. If all the stuff we're being promised delivers, this is going to be the best kind of Stupid Big Fun. Can't ask for more than that, eh? **Christian Read** «



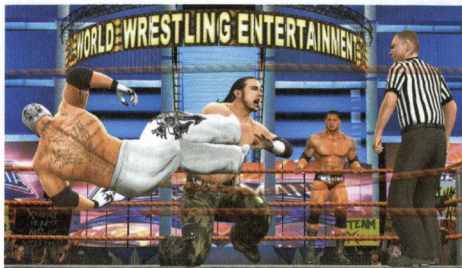
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: More games having the maturity to feature poo-spraying mini-games.../facepalm

>Smackdown Vs Raw 2009

For years the dominating wrestling game has been the WWE series. There's a reason for this. Over the time it's been around, the WWE series has acted like fossilisation. That's not to say it's boring; rather that one game comes out, followed by another, layering over the first one. Then comes another. It all builds up into some elaborate strata of moves, characters and belts that the hardcore absorb but is a bit alienating to new fans. Anecdotes from developers and publishers suggest that there exists a whole user-base for these games that consists of wrestling fans that pretty much own their consoles just to play wrestling games.

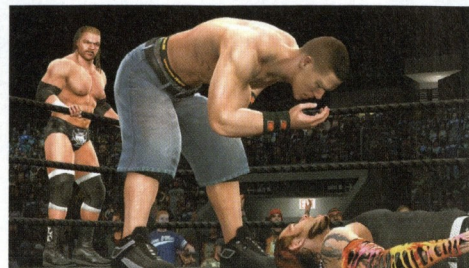
This is good news and bad news. The bad news is, if you don't like wrestling games, this is more of the same. The whole system of complex moves is here, almost assuming you've played the previous games. And, umm, that's pretty much it for the bad news.

The good news is, if you can play any fighting game, you can play this. You don't even need to be a solid wrestling fan. The combat is straightforward, really. You play a bloke who smashes up another bloke. There are lots of modes to pick from to achieve this goal. New to this 10th instalment of



the game is the Inferno Match and WWE fans will be glad to note playing one is more exciting than watching one. There are also TLC matches, ladder matches and old favourites like the Hardcore mode returning. One that strikes us as quite worth a look at is the Road to Wrestlemania, a comprehensive 'career' mode, which will integrate storylines based around which wrestler you want to take to the show.

New as well is the long-desired, long-awaited 'Create a Finisher' feature. If you've even been to a wrestling game message board, you'll know that people have been crying out for this for years. It's like the frigging Holy Grail to those cats. Thankfully,

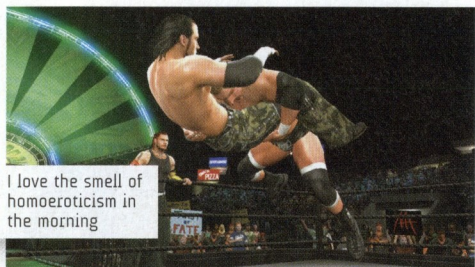


New as well is the long-desired, long-awaited 'Create a Finisher' feature

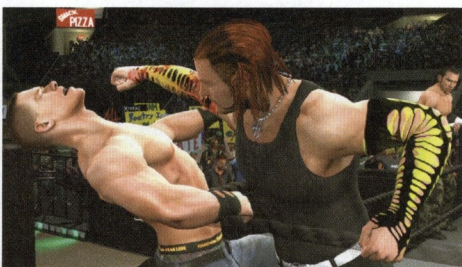
it is awesome. You pick a series of moves from one of hundreds of possible combinations, save it up and assign it to either your own created wrestler or even give it to an existing chap. Sadly, there was no hands on, so our own wrestler, El Sodomiso, could not create his famed finisher 'El Hombre de Pregnanto.'

The other big improvements take place in the tag division. Now, WWE has all but abandoned tag team wrestling (Deuce and Domino? What?) but the game hasn't. The big add is 'hot tags', that is, tagging by just touching your partner, rather than having to be tagged in voluntarily. It changes the dynamic of being on the apron, just watching. You have to be prepared at all times, looking to make the tag if your partner is in trouble.

This isn't a giant step forward for wrestling games. Rather, it's a firm step. Wrestling fans, you'll totally dig it. For those of you looking for a kick-arse multiplayer beat-em-up, don't be afraid to get in the ring.



I love the smell of homoeroticism in the morning



The "flying ball header" has the desired effect

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>Fracture

Wells: Remember Waterworld? Remember the supremely over-budgeted Kevin Costner flick that saw the polar ice caps melt and cover the entire earth with H2O, leaving survivors to tough it out by wearing rags, driving jetskis and drinking piss? Those silly duffers were only in that predicament because they didn't have access to the arsenal of Fracture, the game that saves a world threatened by melting ice by giving soldiers the ability to terraform. Aim gun at ground, fire, and voila, the earth is raised above sea level, preserving all those valuable cities, monuments and drive-thru stores.

Of course, with great power comes great opportunity for conflict, and as the water reshapes the US and physically divides it in two, all-out war between the Atlantic Alliance and the Pacificans emerges. Still armed with their terraforming weaponry, each side uses it in battle to raise and lower the terrain to their tactical advantage.

That's where we come in. We had some hands-on time with Fracture's multiplayer mode, and true to the game's pitch, we were wielding some serious land-shifting power. Throughout each mode we played – Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and Kingmaker – we turned a pristine landscape into a crater-filled mole patch, all while blasting opponents in a time-honoured third-person manner.

Wilks: As well as simply raising and lowering the level of the ground, the terrain morphing in Fracture can be used in some pretty cool ways – our favourite amongst them being a kind of earthquake-assisted double jump achieved by aiming at the ground and simultaneously hitting the jump and "terrain up" buttons. It gives the players a good, high, soaring jump that looks and feels quite exhilarating.

As well as the terrain-morphing gun that can raise and lower the ground (depending on which

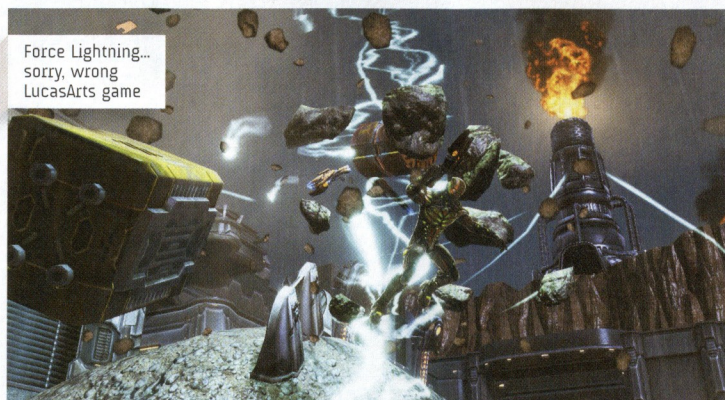


The reshaped ground actually becomes an integral part of some of the multiplayer modes

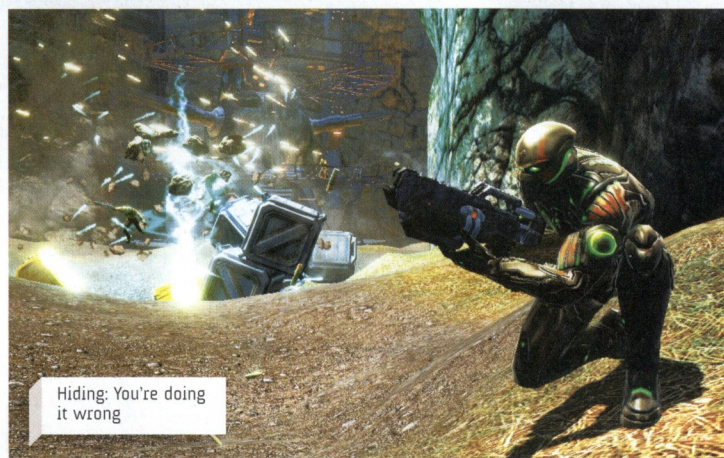
bumper the player hits), players can wield a number of weapons and grenades that also leave a lasting impact on the environment, ranging from a pretty sweet torpedo-style weapon that launched highly explosive missiles that burrow under the ground, to grenades that cause a massive stone spike to burst from the ground, giving the player access to high objectives or a good sniping platform.

Wells: The reshaped ground actually becomes an integral part of some of the multiplayer modes. After raising a stone spike in a particular area of the map, players might be tasked with defending their own spike or destroying that belonging to the enemy. A steel structure that houses the flag can have its numerous entry points blocked by raised terrain, but doing so makes the open hole in the ceiling a much more appealing target.

It's an impressive display of technology, no doubt about it. LucasArts has done well in implementing the ability to change the ground at will, and it works flawlessly. Textures stretch and adapt to the shifting

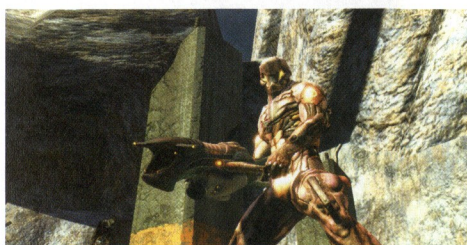


Genre: *Third Person Shooter* // Developer: *LucasArts* // Format: *Xbox 360 / PS3* // Due: *October*



ground, which at first appears parched and baked black under the gun's energy, but soon cools down to match the terrain nearby. Of course, there's only a limited range that one can raise or lower the ground within, so forget any plans about burrowing your way through to China or raising a soil steeple to rival Everest. Buildings, too, are immune to your gun's blasts, so that steel floor in the enemy's base is not going to budge.

Wilks: It's a little on the disappointing side that Fracture really limits the player in what they can manipulate – it comes across as more than a little confusing that players can raise and lower the very ground they stand on but can't blow up some concrete with a rocket (or at least they couldn't from what we played). One thing that did become abundantly clear in our multiplayer session is that Fracture is a game that is all but going to require players to use teamwork. Giving every player the ability to change the landscape makes for a rather confusing play field – entrances and exits can appear and disappear at a moment's notice and landmarks change in shape and size almost as fast. Our experience with the every-man-for-himself deathmatch was just a chaotic mess of people creating, then levelling hills whilst simultaneously trying to shoot other players doing the exact same thing.



To be honest, we're still not entirely convinced of the terrain deforming in multi-player. On paper the ability to create cover at will sounds great, but in reality, an opposing player can do away with whatever you create as fast as they can hit a button, making the ability feel a little redundant overall. That said, we didn't have a whole lot of time with the game so there may be some seriously kick-arse uses of terrain modification that we didn't have a chance to touch on. We haven't had a chance to play any of the single player modes as yet, either, so we can't say how the unique abilities work there, either.

Wells: We're also interested in seeing how Fracture can maintain interesting level design, particularly when every multiplayer map we saw consisted of the same barren brown land. Sure, not every vision of the future consists of squeaky-clean cities and hot sexbots, but throwing in a lush forest environment or a coastal battleground doesn't seem like too much of a stretch. Something – anything – that mixes up the aesthetics and breaks the monotony of brown dirt would be quite welcome.

That's why we're keen to see how the final version shapes up. There's plenty that the game has the potential to offer, and we're hopeful that, come release day, it emerges as a truly groundbreaking title.

Wilks: Heh, groundbreaking. «

>Faith and a .45

In the 30s we had Bonnie and Clyde.

In the 90s we had Mickey and Mallory. Now, in the double-zeroes – the Noughties? – we have a new duo that loves wreaking cross-country havoc almost as much as they love each other.

Meet Luke and Ruby, two enamoured outlaws wrapped up in the middle of the Great Depression. They're getting by as best as a couple can, and if that means adopting an everyone-for-themselves mentality, then so be it. Confounding things is the rise of an oil tycoon named John Mammon. He sees what's happened to the US economy, and is bent on buying up every scrap of land with a view of turning the country into his own personal piggybank. Democracy is the dream of fools, according to him, and sees much more gain to be had in capitalism. He's also looking out for number one, and will similarly let nothing get in his way.

That "nothing" includes a friend of Luke and Ruby. As fate would have it, Mammon's plans see him kidnapping her, and the destructive duo naturally won't have a bar of that. Thus begins their action-charged adventure that escalates from a simple rescue into becoming embroiled in the biggest political shake-up in US history, and the more involved they become – both in their situation and each other – the more they realise it's their duty to step up and stop it.

That's the story, or the why. Now let's get to the how. Gameplay in Faith and a .45 occurs in traditional third-person shooter manner, with shooting bad guys, finding cover and juggling between weapons all playing an important part. Since Luke and Ruby are attached at the hip, one will be accompanying the other as an NPC ally. They'll



a peck on the cheek from your significant other lets you know you've done exceptionally well

provide covering fire, or even toss weapons back and forth as the situation requires. Special co-op moves will also prove useful in combat, with a noteworthy one seeing a can of petrol tossed towards enemies by one character, and shot in mid-air by another. Co-operative explosions ahoy! What's more, the second character allows another player – either online or offline – to drop in, play, and drop out again. LEGO Star Wars was obviously on to something.

Rarely does romance become a central gameplay mechanic, but it's here in full lip-lock. In a fashion similar to Kane and Lynch's adrenalin syringes, should the player bite the big one, the other character will rush over and revive them with a

other lets you know you've done exceptionally well. Hey, it's different. Let's just hope that, by the time the OFLC checks it out, the smoochy-smoochy aspect isn't one that escalates further into the game and has the two ducking into the bushes for a bit of nookie every time they shoot someone.

Amid the shooting are a sparse number of driving sections, alternating between on-rails and traditional third-person driving, in an effort to give the game the same criminal "road movie" vibe as Bonnie & Clyde and Natural Born Killers. And in order to keep the player immersed in the story, the developers are aiming to eliminate load screens altogether.

Of course, all this assumes that we'll see the game at all. Faith and a .45 is currently without a publisher, but with an original storyline, intriguing gameplay and two characters that live by a motto of "it's good to be bad", we're hoping that someone has the stones to pick it up.



Have gun, will travel

> Genre: Action // Developer: Deadline Games // Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC // Due: TBA

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> Alpha Protocol | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? Mixing the kind of role-playing action we saw in Mass Effect with an espionage thriller setup that Jason Bourne would feel right at home in, Alpha Protocol is the next game from Obsidian, developer of KOTOR 2 and Neverwinter Nights 2. Expect third-person real-time combat with a plethora of skill-based abilities that allow you to manage your character progression according to your play style. The proprietary Dialogue Stance System functions similarly to the conversation wheel in Mass Effect, except you choose your attitude rather than an abbreviated line of dialogue. Conversation is also in real-time, so if you wait too long to make a choice it runs with the attitude you last selected. The emphasis is on making the interaction as immersive as possible.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Chris Avellone. The man is a genius. Responsible for many of the best bits of Planescape: Torment, Fallout 2 and the abovementioned KOTOR 2 and NWN 2, his imaginative and nuanced approach to character, quest and dialogue design should be a perfect match for the "shades of grey" world inhabited by hero Michael Thorton.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It's the most action-oriented game Obsidian has made, so we'll wait and see if they can handle the transition as well as BioWare did with Mass Effect. Up until the Mask of the Betrayer expansion for NWN 2, Obsidian also have a history of fairly buggy releases.



Life isn't always easy for the world's best Castro impersonator



> Project Origin | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? The followup to F.E.A.R., albeit without the F.E.A.R. name after boring legal stuff between Monolith and Vivendi. The good news is Monolith are still in charge and Project Origin is a genuine sequel set in the same world and featuring the same slow-mo FPS action and demonic little girl scares we loved the first time around. New twists on the formula include the ability to jump into a mech for some stompy-stompy, rocket-launching destruction. Which is nice.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? F.E.A.R. had some of the best shooter AI yet seen and all evidence (i.e. hands-on play) points towards Monolith delivering again. These gunfights look intense.

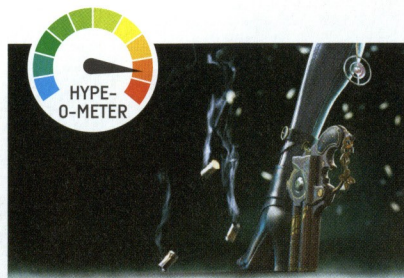
WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We're only concerned that this might get lost in the Christmas deluge. Please don't let it happen.

> Bayonetta | 360, PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? Think Devil May Cry but with more style and with a girl who has pistols for shoes and hair that transforms into bizarre special attacks.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Phenomenal doesn't quite do it justice in action. Bayonetta is a sumptuous feast for the eyes.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We'd be amazed if Platinum can sustain the pace and absurdity for the entire game. But we'd like to see them try.



Wii Music | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? We're not really sure. Perhaps the most baffling game to be revealed at E3, Wii Music appears to remove the note charts (i.e. the gameplay) from Guitar Hero/Rock Band and simply leave you content to play with pretend instruments. We gave it a go and couldn't work out a) where the game is and b) where the fun is. It was almost impossible to tell what effect our ridiculous miming was having on the music. Worse, the sound quality is horrendous – think the most horrible midi trash your internal PC speaker has ever emitted and then go even lower. This sucks Nintendo, we don't think we can love you any more.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? For as long as you care about gaming's future, you shouldn't care for this shit.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Because this is the Nintendo's new world order. And it will sell millions.



After the Break! The Extreme Makeover Grand Reveal!

"For the last time, I'm not a freaking Rancor, OK?"

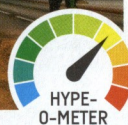
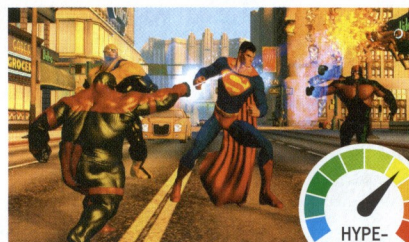


> Resistance 2 | PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? Sony wants this game to be its Halo and you can tell they're pulling out all stops to make it so: 60-player multiplayer modes, eight-player co-operative campaigns in addition to the separate solo campaigns, all filtered through a community channel that aims to rival Bungie.net. However, we've seen Resistance 2 look better than it did at E3. The campaign demo was too scripted for our liking, although the sense of scale definitely impressed. And it simply wasn't the right environment to gauge the multiplayer.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The sheer expanse of the feature set is incredible. Speaking to Insomniac, you get the feeling that Resistance: Fall of Man was a dry run; this is the real deal.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Insomniac couldn't have bitten off more than they could chew, could they?



> DC Universe Online | PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? A superhero MMO that shoehorns button-mashing combat into a persistent DC character-stocked world.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The MMO genre could do with some games that strive for accessibility.

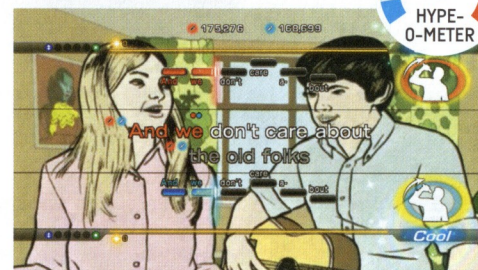
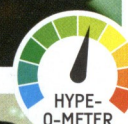
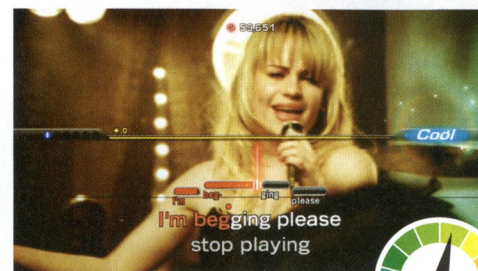
WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? These guys were responsible for the wretched Star Wars: Galaxies MMO.

> Lips | 360 |

WHAT IS IT? Singstar for the Xbox 360. It comes with two wireless microphones which are motion-sensitive so you can shake them to earn bonus points as you sing along. The most noteworthy feature is the ability to plug in your MP3 player (it supports iPod, not just Zune, thankfully) and sing along to any song you own. That's the promise any how, even if no one was willing to explain how it works, such as where they get the lyrics from.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The name opens up so much sexual innuendo, we don't even know where to begin. Oh, and the developer is iNiS of Elite Beat Agents fame, thus guaranteeing a decent rhythm game if nothing else.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? If the E3 trailer was any indication, the TV ads are going to be excruciating.



> Animal Crossing: City Folk | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? It's Animal Crossing. For the Wii. No, really, it is! Oh, okay, it's a bit more than that. For one, there's a "city" to visit – or, more accurately, you can ride a bus to a separate location that is essentially a village square with a few shops in it, many of which appear to be those found in your actual town in previous versions of the game. But still, it's something different! There's also some multiplayer shenanigans where up to four friends can putter about in the same town, fishing, catching insects and whatever other thus far unannounced activities there may be. Finally, it comes with a new peripheral called WiiSpeak, a TV mounted speaker-slash-microphone that allows voice chat with other players in your town.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Because, for all our cynicism, Animal Crossing is a lot of fun and Nintendo's attempt to add more online functionality into this edition is exactly what the series has been crying out for. (We'd still like to see more though, perhaps some competitive mini-games?) DS connectivity is also high on the agenda, including the ability to transfer data from Wild World, and we hope there's more to come on that front.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Annoyingly, the seasons will still be inverted for us southern hemisphere types, meaning when it's scorching hot outside in the Aussie summer, our virtual towns will be covered in a blanket of snow. Bah!



Disapproving skunk looking thing does not approve

> Banjo Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts | 360 |

WHAT IS IT? Best described as a reboot of the fondly remembered N64 platformer, this Banjo sidelines much of the jumpy-jumpy in favour of vehicular antics. The idea is that these vehicles not only replace many of Banjo and Kazooie's abilities from the earlier games, but extend them into crazy new directions, allowing you to pilot over land, sea and in the air. Where things get more interesting is in Banjo's garage: you can use the 100+ parts you've collected to build your own vehicles from scratch. Stick a propeller on your kart to let it traverse water; add a sticky ball to your chopper so it can carry objects; you can even tweak the engine to give more power at the expense of greater fuel consumption. Things get even more complex when you unlock "detachers" that let you split one vehicle into two.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Rare wants you to get creative and complete objectives in your own way. You can swap vehicle blueprints with your friends and compete for the best times on the LIVE leaderboards. Oh, and keep an eye out for the original Banjo appearing on Xbox LIVE Arcade sometime soon...

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The early tasks we've seen have hardly seemed taxing – collecting footballs, for example, where you can push them individually or build a cart that carries several at a time – although Rare promise they get far more involved later.



"Who is driving?
Bear is driving!"



A truly epic "yo
mamma" fight in
the making

> Dragon Age | PC |

WHAT IS IT? BioWare return home to the PC – at last – after several years questing in the console wilderness. Dragon Age is the spiritual successor to Baldur's Gate, a party-based RPG in the most classical sense. While it's perfectly possible to play from an over-the-shoulder perspective a la Mass Effect, this isn't an action game. As in BG, combat takes a real-time with pause approach, allowing you to manage a party of four and queue up actions at your leisure.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Old-school PC RPG fans just got a little bit moist down there. Freed from the Star Wars constraints, Mass Effect showed what BioWare could really do; we can expect a similar level of world creation here, now they don't have to conform to the Forgotten Realms.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? BioWare's Greg Zeschuk did mention the possibility of Dragon Age also coming to consoles. Will that affect the PC version?



> Race Pro | 360 |

WHAT IS IT? Simbin brings their unwavering commitment to realistic motorsports simulation to the Xbox 360.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? There's nothing quite as hardcore as this on console.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Race Pro will be Simbin's first foray into the console world. Do they have what it takes?

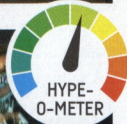
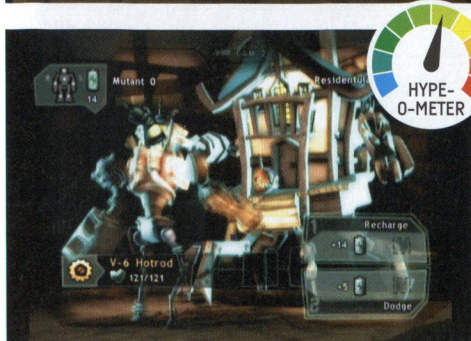
> Mega Man 9 | WiiWare, PSN, XBLA |

WHAT IS IT? In a most pleasantly surprising decision, Capcom has forgone the easy option of porting an old Mega Man game to these new-fangled digital distribution services and actually – gasp! – written a completely original game instead. Mega Man 9 eschews the usual high-def graphical upgrade in favour of replicating the gloriously blocky 8-bit visual style of yore. It will also kick your arse – repeatedly – especially you young 'uns who've been raised on far more forgiving modern games.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? This is the kind of retro-gaming we want to see more of. Give us new versions of these old classics, not crappy ports.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Get ready to be humbled by some fiendish old-skool game design.



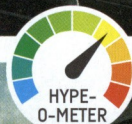


> Monster Lab | Wii, DS |

WHAT IS IT? Another unsung hero of E3, Monster Lab can perhaps be described as what you'd like Pokemon to become once you've grown out of what Pokemon actually is. It's an action/adventure where you build monsters to fight for you. Winning fights earns you more parts to create even more monsters. You can find recipes that spell out which parts make which monsters or you can experiment and combine different types to achieve varying effects. There's a real quirkiness to it that we kinda dug.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Originality is a precious commodity, and Eidos should be applauded for bringing this to Wii and DS without the backing of a licensed property.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Not sure if the secondary mini-games carry enough weight to flesh out the gameplay.



> Stormrise | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? The Creative Assembly attempt to make real-time strategy work on a console.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The third-person view and "flick" squad select looks like it could work.

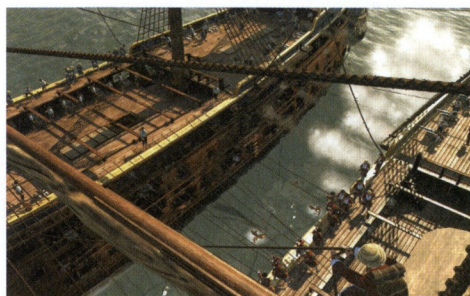
WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The HUD is a mess of coloured arrows and icons obscuring the action.

> Infamous | PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? Yet another open-world action game – surely "open world" is this year's bloom lighting. But before the cynicism kicks in, we should quickly add that Infamous is a super-hero open-world action game from Sucker Punch, the highly talented makers of Sly Cooper. You play a dude who can move like the Prince of Persia and conjure lightning using the power of his mind. It's pretty cool, kinda like a grittier Crackdown with magic.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The brief demo we saw showed much potential, particularly for those with a penchant for comic book violence.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Sucker Punch are keeping silent on everything to do with the story, the missions, and in fact much of the gameplay. Frankly, it's one big unknown.



> Empire: Total War | PC |

WHAT IS IT? Christ, what isn't it? The Creative Assembly's Total War series has consistently melded thoughtful Civilization-style strategy with the intense tactical decision-making of an RTS, and here Empire continues to plot that ambitious course with all hands on deck. So, if my nautical pun didn't give it away, the big new feature this time around is naval warfare as the game's scope now reaches beyond Europe to encompass the rest of the world. In typical Total War fashion, ship battles are presented in minute detail with authenticity governing cannon fire, damage modelling, boarding other ships, and so on. On land, there are more tactical options available in combat, as troops can now garrison buildings and even take cover when available.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? For a game of such stunning scope, it's the intricate detail that astounds. The game models the physics for every single bullet fired on the battlefield – quite a feat when there are thousands of men on screen. And in contrast to the clone armies of previous Total Wars, your troops now sport individualised outfits and asynchronous animations.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Strategy nuts should be seriously concerned about losing their life to this game. This is hardcore.



No jokes - we want this now.



"Any landing you can walk away from" my arse



> Far Cry 2 | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? A frighteningly ambitious, genuinely open-world first-person shooter set in 50km² of African wilderness, that's all. Players assume the role of one of 12 characters, the remaining 11 becoming allies you can call on and interact with over the course of the game. You've been sent into a wartorn African nation and tasked with taking down a gun-runner codenamed the Jackal. From that starting point, you're free to do as you please – the whole map is unlocked from the beginning and you can complete missions as you please. Environmental interaction is key: you can start fires that will spread across the savannah, creating distractions and causing enemies to flee from their hidey-holes. Plenty of vehicles can be commandeered for rapid transport. Guns will break if you don't take care of them. Cars, too, will need ongoing repairs. The day/night cycle will affect enemy patrols. There's just so much here.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? You can sneak into an enemy camp, slap some C4 on one of their jeeps, start shooting to get their attention, jump into a second jeep and drive off. When they commence pursuit, you can trigger the C4 and blow them away. Far Cry 2 promises to let you approach things in your own style.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? How's it all going to hang together? STALKER had to be reined in to make a coherent game; Just Cause felt empty and repetitive. How will Ubisoft Montreal avoid these same pitfalls?

> Fallout 3 | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? A deeper role-playing experience than Bethesda has yet crafted, Fallout 3 boasts robust character development, skills that genuinely matter, a combat system that surpasses Mass Effect in the tactical-action stakes, an engrossing world just ripe for exploration, and a morality matrix that shuns easy good/evil choices.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Bethesda is on track to deliver the year's great RPG. They've learned from their mistakes with Oblivion – the world doesn't level with you, for a start. And if you're a 360 or PC owner, you'll be getting downloadable content post-release.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Hopefully by the time this issue goes on sale, the OFLC will have re-classified the previously banned game with an MA15+ rating. Our drug-free fingers are firmly crossed.

A Segway as designed by Skynet

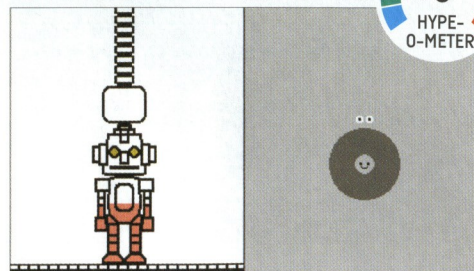
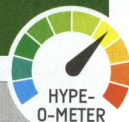
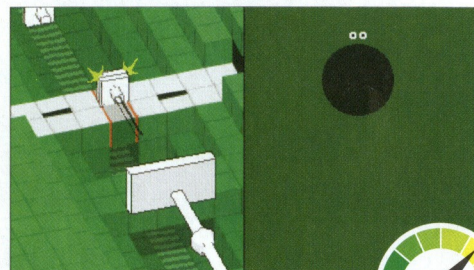
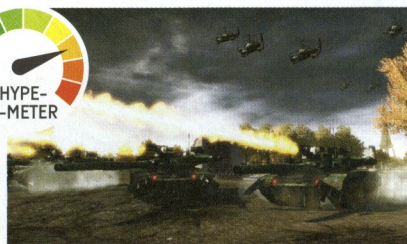


> Tom Clancy's Endwar | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? Another attempt to streamline RTS for consoles, this time with voice commands.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The feeling of being a war general is truly enhanced by the voice commands.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? In the heat of battle, will your lips keep up with your brain?



> Rhythm Heaven | DS |

WHAT IS IT? Imagine you've made WarioWare. You've expanded the repertoire with the Touched and Twisted editions, so where do you go next? Easy, you add music and turn WarioWare into a rhythm game. Genius! So you make a collection of mini-games – each of which is longer than WarioWare's "micro-games" – and base them around the player applying rhythm through using the stylus. Sometimes you're tapping; sometimes you're flicking; other times you're applying and then releasing pressure, and all to the beat of the music.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? That same deranged aesthetic so suited to WarioWare is back to make us laugh and feel disturbed in equal measure.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? This is actually the DS remake of Rhythm Tengoku, a GBA game only released in Japan. Hopefully it will feel like a proper DS title.

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> Killzone 2 | PS3 |

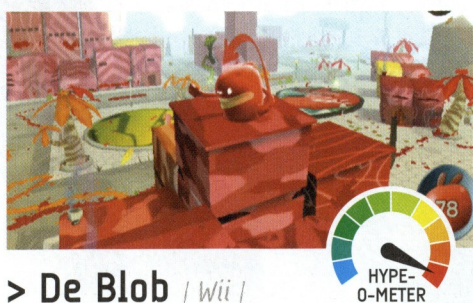
WHAT IS IT? Formerly the PS3's great hope, based on its spectacular target render trailer at E3 2005, the fortunes of Killzone 2 have dimmed somewhat through several delays but we're still hugely keen to see what all the fuss is about. Having now sampled both the solo campaign and multiplayer modes, it's clear the game is shaping up quite nicely. Think of it as in the vein of Call of Duty 4, a rollercoaster ride presented as a first-person shooter. Levels are linear in nature, each new set-piece encounter elevating the intensity and visual excess to thrilling heights. Graphically, at least, Killzone 2 demonstrates the potential of the PS3. Over in MP, there's more COD4 similarities, thanks to the experience-based character advancement, although the hope is for teamwork to play a greater role in its 32-player online battles.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Atmosphere, Killzone 2 has it. The muted palette portrays a world on the brink of destruction with indelible emotion, while splashes of colour – such as the Helghasts' eyes – are used to brilliant effect.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Frankly, the pedigree of developer Guerrilla Games. The original Killzone was average and Shellshock: 'Nam '67 was worse, while beyond that they've only a handful of cheap GBA titles to show for themselves. And if you prefer your FPS action a little more flexible, you could be disappointed.



Space Nazis! We hate those guys!



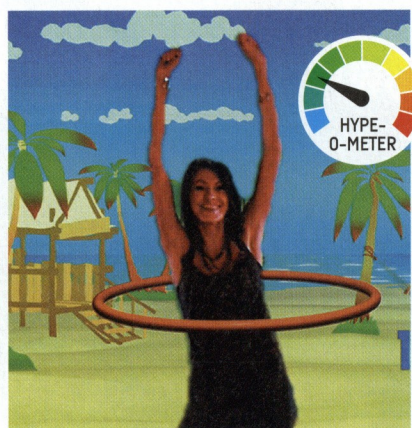
> De Blob | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? Charming us to our very core, De Blob is a deeply addictive platformer with sly nods to Katamari Damacy and even old C64 classic Wizball. You roll around town, spreading a rainbow of colours to defy the governing totalitarian regime and completing a host of zany challenges. Showing just how effective motion controls can be in the right context, you flick the Wiimote to jump as if you were splashing paint on canvas. It's a delightfully hypnotic experience, made even better by the way the soundtrack syncs up with your painting.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? There's a degree of polish and a sense of playfulness at work here that you usually associate with first-party Nintendo titles. We really think De Blob could be that good.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Don't.

36 HYPER>>



> You're In The Movies | 360 |

WHAT IS IT? Players perform silly EyeToy-esque mini-games then see themselves "green-screened" into a sillier film trailer.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It could be fun when you're drunk, we suppose.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Microsoft showed us this at E3 rather than Alan Wake.

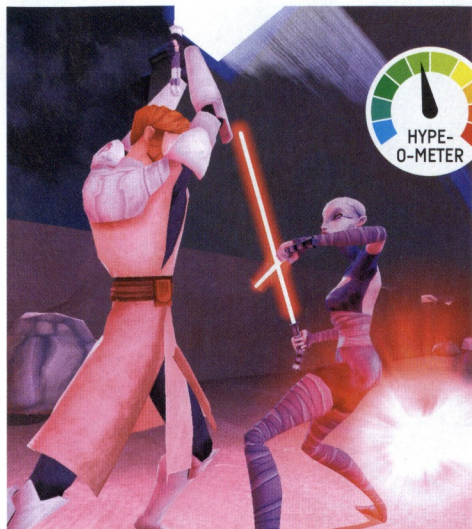
> Rise of the Argonauts | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? An action RPG based on the Greek myth of Jason and the eponymous Argonauts. Character advancement is handled cleverly: your actions are performed in the name of a particular god who, once sufficiently pleased, will reward you with additional abilities. Even dialogue works similarly, with options linked to each god. The appropriately brutal combat resembles God of War, although you'll need to aim Jason's shield in order to successfully block incoming attacks.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Appears to possess far greater depth than initial impressions might suggest, particularly in how dialogue affects the story and your levelling up.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The E3 code requires some significant graphical polish before its slated October launch. It looked kinda rough.





> Star Wars: The Clone Wars | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? When the Wii was first announced, every Star Wars fanboy immediately fantasised about using the Wiimote as a lightsaber. Well, Clone Wars is that dream come true, though perhaps not entirely as imagined. It's based on the animated series and tells that story through the medium of lightsaber duels. Thing is, this really is a kids game: the combat is a simple – sorry, we mean accessible – case of waggle to slash, thrust and parry. Occasionally sabers get locked and you waggle some more.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It's the first game to let you use a Wiimote as a lightsaber. For some people, this will be a very good thing.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It doesn't make use of the upcoming Wii Motion Plus accessory to allow for more accurate motion-control. A crying shame.



> Crisis: Warhead | PC |

WHAT IS IT? No longer an expansion pack, Warhead is now a stand-alone follow-up to Crisis – although not a proper sequel. It retells the events of the first game, but from the perspective of a different character. Crytek promise a revamped AI that should eliminate the scripted set-piece feel of the previous game, while new weapons, enemies and vehicles are de rigueur. Our E3 demo took us through a vehicle-based area that illustrated the improved enemy AI very effectively.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The Cry Engine remains at the very bleeding edge of PC tech, and Warhead paints another persuasive argument for upgrading. It also bears an inexpensive mid-range price point, as befitting its status as “not a proper sequel”.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Crytek has farmed out development to its new Budapest studio, and this is their first title. No pressure, guys.

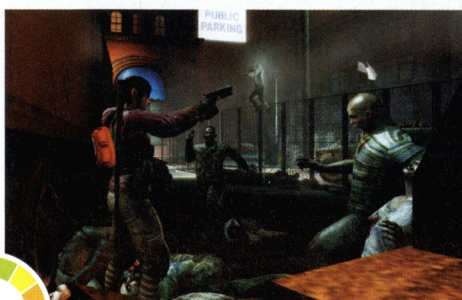
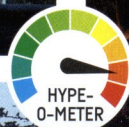


> Singularity | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? A new first-person shooter that “focus-tested really well”, as Activision's boss laughably announced at their E3 press conference.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Apparently they're doing something new with bullet-time.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It's developed by Raven, the masters of mediocrity.



> Left 4 Dead | 360, PC |

WHAT IS IT? It's all in the number “4” in the title. Left 4 Dead is a four-player co-operative shooter from the makers of Half-Life in which you and three friends team up and attempt to survive the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse. These aren't yer typical shambling Resident Evil zombies either; this breed of undead is fast and unerring and they arrive in hordes, screaming down hospital corridors, climbing over fences, smashing through walls, scaring the living shit out of you. Co-operative play is the whole point – even if you're playing on your own, you'll be fighting alongside three AI-controlled colleagues. You need to look out for and support each other to make any progress. Injured players can be healed by others during a level, while dead players will respawn if one member makes it to the next “safe room”. Competitive online play even lets another four players take on the roles of “boss zombies” and terrorise the survivors.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It's frighteningly addictive and incredibly nerve-racking. We couldn't stop playing this at E3, always wanting just one more go each time we died. And this was in a room of complete strangers, so just imagine how good it'll be with actual friends. Oh, and Valve simply don't make bad games

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The only question marks are how well the companion AI holds up when you're not playing with three other human players and the fact we've yet to see the Xbox 360 version.



Thank god one of the survivors is a hottie

> Mirror's Edge | 360, PS3, PC |

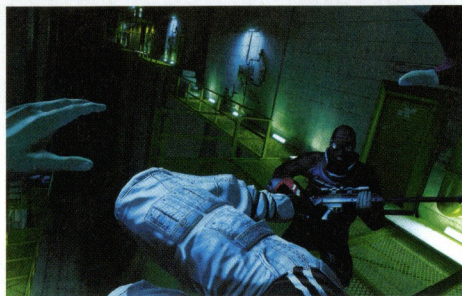
WHAT IS IT? Battlefield developers DICE reinvent the platformer as a first-person action game. You play a hot chick called Faith (although it's a first-person game so you don't really see her) who is a "runner" in an oppressive dystopian future. She runs messages across the city to circumvent the constant surveillance of all electronic communication. Rooftops are Faith's route of choice, so cue considerable leaping between skyscrapers, clambering up drainpipes and vaulting over railings. The key technique is maintaining momentum to ensure Faith succeeds in her urban acrobatics; think Assassin's Creed, if you could escape the lab and run around a clean modern city. Weapons can be collected from enemies, but the most effective way of dispatching foes is to take them by surprise with a leg-slide or kick to the face. In fact, gunplay is, er... downplayed even more by the fact you can only carry one and you automatically discard it when you deplete its small ammo clip.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It feels fresh like few other games did at E3. The art direction is breathtaking; from the stark white of the cityscape to the primary colours highlighting objects you can interact with, you'll want to explore every inch of this world.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Fine-tuning the controls will be DICE's biggest challenge. We struggled to properly time our jumps in first-person and executing the hand-to-hand combat moves never felt quite as fluid as we'd hoped. Still, there's plenty of time to get it right.



Cue Bill & Ted style screaming about a totally deep hole



OMG! Ban it before the children start copy-cat eating!

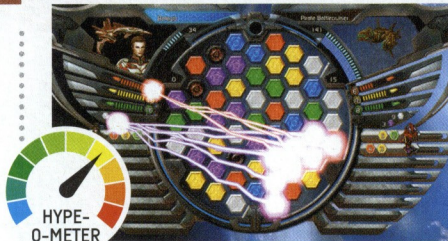


> Fat Princess | PSN |

WHAT IS IT? Hilarious, politically-incorrect, team capture-the-flag game coming to the PlayStation Network. Basically, two teams of up to sixteen medieval archetypes battle to retrieve their kidnapped princess from the other enemy castle. Swordsman hack and slash each other – to gratuitously bloody effect – while mages hurl offensive spells and priests get all spiritual on your ass. The twist is you can feed your captured princess food to fatten her up and make her more difficult for the other team to pick up and steal back.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Call us childish but this amused us no end. We giggled at the over-the-top violence, at the all-too-cute art style, and – yes – at the tubby chick in the pink dress.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We remain cautious over whether the core gameplay will prove to be too thin. Sorry.



> Puzzle Quest: Galactrix | PC |

WHAT IS IT? Quite literally Puzzle Quest in Space. Ships and tech replace mounts and spells.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The new gravity-based mechanics make it feel fresh to our tired eyes.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Let's pray there's less grinding to be done than in the original.

> Captain Rainbow | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? Nintendo takes all their most obscure game characters (presumably all the ones that failed to land a gig in SSBB) and dumps them on an island. In comes the titular Captain Rainbow, a TV star down on his luck but with a repertoire of beat 'em up moves to make Viewtiful Joe envious. He's got to help out the islanders in some surreal version of Animal Crossing and at the same time restore his career. At least, that's what we think it's about.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The madness. This is the Nintendo we love, unafraid to throw insanity at a wall and see if it sticks.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Probably the only real concern is whether it'll even get released in PAL land.



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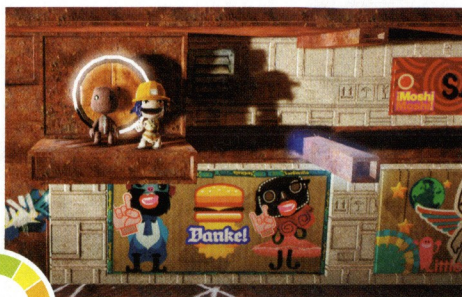
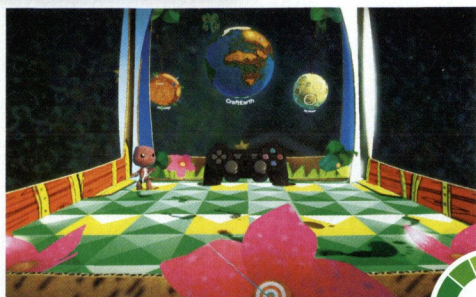


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This pic is like a loving tribute to Jim Henson

> LittleBigPlanet | PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? Dressed up as a cutesy platform game, LBP is essentially a thoroughly exhaustive game construction set. Masking such a powerful suite of editing tools behind a simple and approachable 2D game was a stroke of genius on the part of Sony and developer Media Molecule. While the retail game will ship with a bunch of pre-made levels – which you'll need to play through to unlock the full functionality of the editor, a move that will ensure you're not overwhelmed too quickly – the real star of the package is you. We had fun testing those pre-made levels at E3 and negotiating some quite clever physics puzzles along the way. But creating them yourself is what makes LBP tick. Although it quickly becomes clear that designing something genuinely playable is a venture that will entail days and perhaps weeks of your time, the crucial thing is that it's hugely entertaining just to mess around with the possibilities of the play space.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The potential, damn it, think of the potential. If the PS3 community gets behind this, LBP could end up as a gaming platform in itself for years to come.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The fear that 99% of user-created levels will be rubbish, including your own. How successfully Sony is able to filter out the wheat from the chaff will be a major factor.



> Age of Booty | XBLA, PSN, PC |

WHAT IS IT? Pirate-themed multiplayer strategy game designed by a bunch of ex-Bungie dudes. Sail your ship to capture towns to provide resources to upgrade to defeat your opponents' ship and take their towns. Whirlpools and merchant ships act like wild cards to spice things up. Also comes with a map editor and the ability to upload and share your designs with other players.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Like Carcassonne, the simplicity of control betrays the depth of strategy once you understand how all the elements interact. Ideally suited to a \$15 download-only game.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We hope it sells well enough to build a community to actually play against and trade new maps.

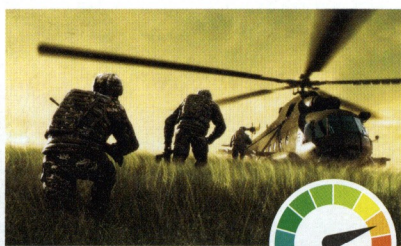


> Operation Flashpoint 2 | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? Staggeringly realistic military sim sequel that declares Call of Duty is for pussies.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? 220km2 of persistent battlefield where absolutely nothing is scripted.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The original game certainly wasn't for everyone. Codemasters promise to make this one "accessible".



> Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists of Plastic | PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? In which Sony spies an innovative PC shareware game, signs it up and proceeds to deliver a fully fleshed out PSN game with a slightly moronic subtitle. The original Rag Doll Kung Fu was a curious physics-based beat 'em up – it was fun but little more than a tech demo. Sony has added a stronger combat system with more moves, as well as weapons and other pickups. Multiplayer is in too, with support for up to four players and various modes.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Yet another promising original IP on the PlayStation Network. It's fun to play, too, although definitely at its best with three friends in tow.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It's going to need more content and unlockables to provide value for money, even at a low PSN price point.





Hey! That void isn't very dark at all!

> Dark Void | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? Our pick for a potential sleeper hit for 2009, Dark Void really impresses with its fresh take on the third-person shooter. For a start, it builds a solid foundation with large sci-fi environments (powered by the Unreal Engine 3) and a standard Gears of War style cover system. But then it proceeds to take to the sky – literally – as you jetpack up sheer vertical surfaces and even hop into a flying saucer for some aerial combat.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The jetpack is liberating, since you can use it to leap out from cover and take enemies by surprise. Much of the dev team worked on Crimson Skies, so they should know flight-combat back to front.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Bland is the term we'd apply to the setting. "Space marines versus evil robots" hardly inspires much enthusiasm these days.

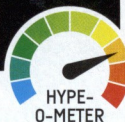


> Bioshock | PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? A port with some nifty new puzzle levels, reminiscent of Portal but with creative use of plasmids substituting for, well, portals.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? PS3 owners should care about playing one of 2007's best titles.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? PC and Xbox 360 owners should demand the new content hits their platform too.

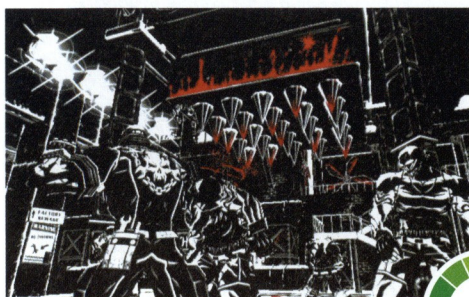


> Madworld | Wii |

WHAT IS IT? While Epic juxtaposed "destroyed beauty" for the aesthetics of Gears of War, Platinum Games offer up its own oxymoron of "light-hearted brutality" to describe Madworld's idiosyncratic gameplay. It's hilarious to rip a street sign out of the ground and then jam it into someone's skull, you see. It's a cack to use the Wiimote and Nunchuk as dual swords to split someone cleanly in two. And, oh boy, the laughs you get when you run a chainsaw across some poor sap's stomach. Sometimes we don't know whether to laugh or throw up. At times it appears as a parody of what the Japanese think of Western developed games like Manhunt or the aforementioned Gears of War. But we have faith in Platinum, key team members of which gave us the superlative Okami and equally idiosyncratic God Hand, to deliver an experience that engages with its gameplay rather than its ludicrous violence.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Because the Wii desperately needs games like this, and it needs them to be good, and it needs you to buy them if they're good. Otherwise, the release schedule is nothing but wobble mini-games and shitty shovelware as far as the eye can see. Please SEGA, give us a reason to hope!

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We can't help but wonder what the OFLC is going to make of it all. Of course, the monochrome graphics and ridiculous setting steer well clear of realism, but will it be enough to earn an MA15+?



Please, please, please let us have an R18+ rating

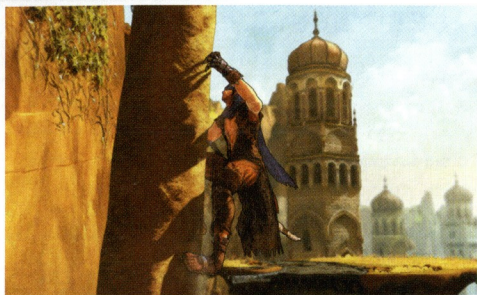


> Dead Space | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? The EA dev we spoke to at E3, the awesomely named Chuck Beaver, acknowledged the debt owed to System Shock in their upcoming space-bound survival horror 'em up. And it shows, not least in the surprisingly skill customisation that serve as RPG elements. Not forgetting the whole abandoned space station gone to hell scenario. It's awesomely violent too – a key mechanic has you blasting the limbs from mutants to slow them down.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Dead Space is a pillar of the new EA, designating where recycled sequels give way to serious investment in originality. That's the plan, anyway.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The story needs to be great to compete with the likes of BioShock. Dead Space has got the horror and the action down pat, but we've yet to see any sign of a compelling narrative.



It's so goddamn pretty we're speechless

> Prince of Persia | 360, PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? The original Prince of parkour returns to explore a massive open-world environment. The lands of Persia have been corrupted by a dark god, spreading bubbling black ooze across the world and its up to the Prince to do something about it. Except he's not alone. In fact, his female companion, Erika, has the magical powers necessary to reverse the corruption, and it's the job of the Prince to make sure she can do it. Platforming is akin to Sands of Time, as you wall-run, swing and leap in inimitable style. The areas are much bigger and you can visit them in any order – the game scales the difficulty (more corruption, tougher foes) depending on when you arrive. Once cleared of corruption, each stage is beautified and littered with collectible orbs that power your upgrades, meaning every area can be negotiated twice, albeit in different ways.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Ubisoft has learned what gamers liked and disliked from the last-gen Prince trilogy, so this time there's more acrobatic exploration and fewer enemies. What combat you do encounter will be more meaningful as each foe is its own "boss battle" requiring strategy rather than hopeful mashing. And it feels so good to play.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We haven't seen the open world area that acts like a giant hub from which each stage branches off. Ubisoft has spoken about it, but we want to play it ourselves to fully appreciate how different it feels.

> Gears of War 2 | 360 |

WHAT IS IT? More bad-ass than rectal prolapse, Marcus, Dom, Baird and Cole "Hey did you realise I'm black?" Train are back for some extra man-loving. Sir Clifford Augustus Octavius Bleszinski Esq. showed us a new single-player level where you apparently get to ride a Brumak and a new multiplayer mode called Horde where wave after wave of Locust attack while you and four friends simply hold them off for as long as possible. Both were very good.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? For all the shit we throw at Gears for its ludicrous machismo and awful dialogue, we can't deny it's a great shooter. Gears of War 2 is the same game, but better looking and more action-packed. It cannot fail.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Epic need to show us they can tell a coherent story. Not chopping out entire chapters would be a good place to start.

The enemy is in front of you, chuckles

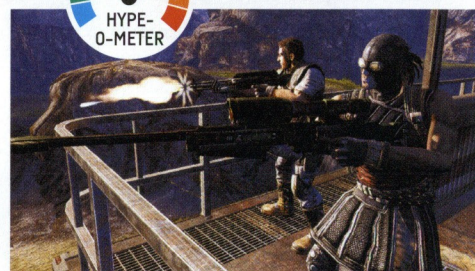
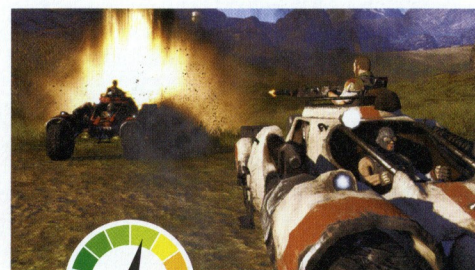
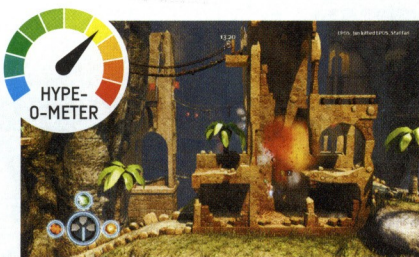


> Crash Commando | PSN |

WHAT IS IT? 2D side-scrolling shooter that works on two planes – walk through a door and the world will flip around to show you on the other side.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? A fast pace and slick controls seem perfectly equipped to accommodate all kinds of multiplayer modes.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It's online only, so it needs a community.



> Borderlands | 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? An even more action-oriented take on the Diablo formula than Too Human, Borderlands adds plentiful loot-collecting to an open-world first-person shooter. Many locations, side-quests and even weapons are randomly generated to maintain replay value and hopefully consistently new content. Co-op means up to four players can tackle the campaign, in addition to several other multiplayer-only modes.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The four-player co-op should be enormously entertaining, particularly when you throw in a heap of vehicles and several character classes. Gearbox has a solid background in the shooter genre too.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? We're unconvinced by the generic sci-fi setting and just how atmospheric the randomly generated side-quests will be.



> Powerup Forever

| XBLA, PSN |

WHAT IS IT? Although not quite as outrageous as its name suggests, this Namco-Bandai shoot 'em up looks set to continue in the tradition of Geometry Wars and Super Stardust. That is, you view the action top-down and move and shoot using the twin-analog sticks while someone vomits neon technicolour all over the screen. The scrolling playfield wraps around, you'll face boss enemies and collect powerups to evolve your ship through various stages.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? These things are always fun. Anything that reminds us of Sinistar has gotta be a good thing.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? The market's getting pretty crowded these days and Namco-Bandai won't want to be accused of playing it too safe.



> Flock | PC, PSN, XBLA |

WHAT IS IT? Decidedly quirky puzzle game all about herding sheep for their inevitable alien abduction. Oh yes.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? The Scottish development team contains a few dudes who have Lemmings on their CVs.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Is there enough substance behind the very obvious style?

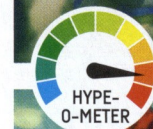
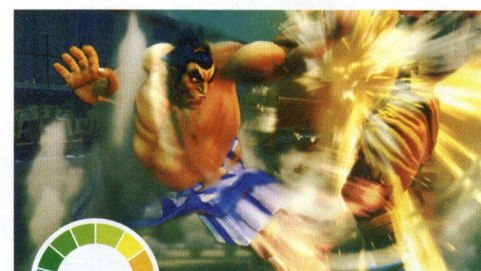
> Street Fighter 4

| 360, PS3, PC |

WHAT IS IT? The king of fighters (pun intended) returns in a sequel that Capcom pledge draws heavily from the best in the series, SFIII Turbo. Shying away from the ultra-hardcore SFIII, IV introduces a new Saving system which allows you to store damage for use in a special attack that, if successful, will immobilise your opponent. Five new characters have so far been announced, with more to come at a later date.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It's Street Fighter, you idiot. There's none of that 3D arena nonsense here; SFIV keeps it real and confined to just the X and Y axes.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? Sadly, only the arcade version was playable at E3, and Capcom remain tight-lipped about what new features will be added to the console (and PC) editions.

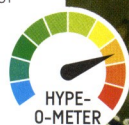


> Resident Evil 5 | 360, PS3 |

WHAT IS IT? Building on the experimental foundation of Resident Evil: Outbreak, this genuinely "next-gen" series debut (no, we don't count RE4 on Wii as "next-gen") emphasises co-operative play. Chris Redfield is joined by a female sidekick, Sheva Alomar, who will fight alongside him whether by a second player online or AI-controlled. From what we've played, the co-op element adds a few assisted moves (like Chris helping Sheva jump a gap or climb a building) and environmental puzzles, while occasionally the pair find themselves separated, which adds to the tension but doesn't really change the core gameplay in any fundamental way. The daylight, mostly outdoor setting does create an unfamiliar vibe, and to be honest we're not entirely sure what we think of it just yet.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? It's Resident Evil. It hasn't really changed, and if you're a fan, this is exactly what you want – more of the same, presented in fabulous high-def visuals and accompanied by a few new tricks here and there. It's still a visceral experience and Capcom know how to pace the peaks and troughs to maximise your chance of a heart-attack.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORRY? It's Resident Evil. It hasn't really changed, and if you're not a fan, this is unlikely to convert you. You still can't move whilst shooting. And it still swaps the look controls from one analog stick to the other when you enter aim mode, annoying us no end. Please change it, Capcom.



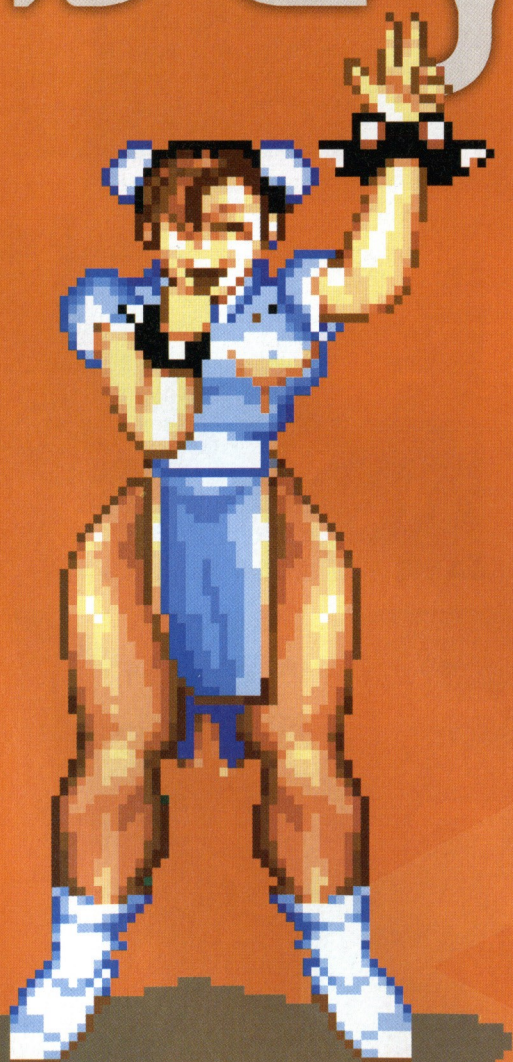
Racism has a nice arse



Looking back and beyond

>15 years in gaming

Hyper may be 15 years old and an authority in gaming, but when you're looking at the major events over the last 15 years and prophesying the major events of the next 15, don't just listen to us – listen to our panel of experts.



What do you feel have been the most important events/changes in relation to the games industry in the last 15 years?

John Passfield

Pandemic

> The original PlayStation was when I noticed a huge shift in gaming. Nintendo had a strong grip on gamers before then, but with the introduction of PSX (as it was called) a lot of new people began playing games. It was the first time gaming really became cool - from Wipeout being demoed in night clubs to Lara Croft capturing the imagination of men and women (my sister and mother of 3 kids included!). We're seeing it happen all over again with the Wii, but it was the PlayStation that pushed the boundaries.

Jeff Morris

Epic Games

> For me definitely the internet. I still remember trying to play Doom in multiplayer, where I had to find someone who wanted to play, organize a time, call their computer directly with my modem, and then 1v1 for 20 minutes or so until we got bored. These days you have a bottomless pit of opponents at all times. It's as huge a jump as going from board games to computer games were in the late 1970's. Back then the amazing epiphany was "true" fog of war. With a computer moderating the opposing side in a wargame, the human truly didn't see what he didn't see, unlike analog games where they could always see their opponent's counters. The internet has had a similar revolution on gaming. And of course that doesn't begin to talk about the impact on distribution, patches, demos, and customer/developer interaction. I remember back in the day calling Origin customer service, trying to glean some info on when Strike Commander was coming out. These days, all a customer needs to do is post on our forums.

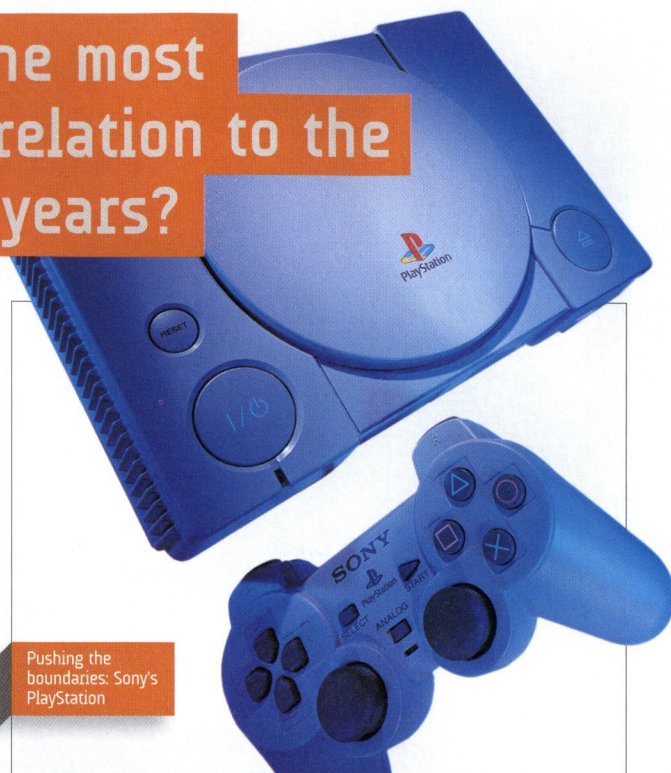
Jon Gibson

Design Director on Pure from Black Rock Studio

> In terms of individual games that have shaped the industry, I'd argue that Doom was a landmark title in terms of pioneering 3D graphics, first person gaming in general, custom expansions and more importantly networked multiplayer gaming. It's not that iD did it first as there were 3D 1st person shooters out there (namely Wolfenstein 3D) but they just did it better than anyone else. During the 90's it seemed that Doom was the benchmark ALL games were measured against.

The original Game Boy was also pretty revolutionary at the time and can largely be credited with popularising the handheld console concept. Sure you had the 'Game & Watch' and 'Microvision' single game units which had been around since the 70's, but the Game Boy was the first console to offer interchangeable cartridges. I remember when it came out, I must have been 14 or 15, I was amazed that a cartridge based system could be so small. Plus it had a massive software library, better battery life than most current handhelds and an affordable price tag. Prior to the Game Boy there was no real handheld market - Nintendo created the market and (rightfully?) continue to dominate with the DS. In fact this handheld market has been their lifeline.

The birth of PlayStation in the mid nineties was also a pretty significant benchmark. Not only were they one of the first solely disc based consoles (well the Mega CD came first but that was more of a peripheral!) but PlayStation were largely responsible for making games cool and bringing them to a larger audience. Most



Pushing the boundaries: Sony's PlayStation

"The Wii has countered concerns about couch potato kids locking themselves away in their rooms"

significantly PlayStation brought gaming to a wider adult audience.

Most recently I think we've gotta tip our hat to Nintendo once more. The Wii has been pretty revolutionary on a couple of levels. Firstly the Wiimote seems to have everyone looking at motion sensing technology (Sony 6-axis, third party Xbox motion controllers) but let's not forget they were the first to do it. Secondly they're pioneering the social gaming concept...the idea that games can actually bring people together in a positive manner. Not only has the Wii proved that games can encourage positive social bonding, but that you can actually get a workout whilst you're playing! It's pretty much countered traditional concerns about couch potato kids locking themselves away in their rooms to play video games.

The Internet. Hey, I can see my site from here!



Doom: ID1KA and IDDDQ are your friends





Second Life: first life not required. Too harsh?

Robert Murray

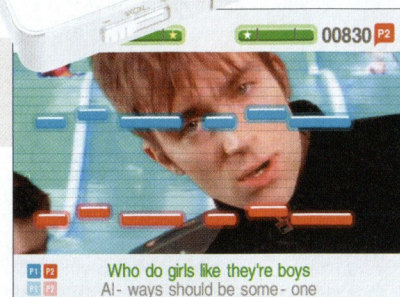
CEO of independent game development company Firemint, Board member of Film Victoria and the Game Developers Association of Australia

> Games have become much more mainstream. 15 years ago it might still have been true that most gamers were teenage boys, but that has definitely changed now. There are widely quoted statistics that nearly 80% of Australian households have a device for playing games, 41% of gamers are female and the average age is 28 – I’ve even seen a recent estimate as high as 33 from Dr Jeffrey Brand at Bond University. The recent Game On exhibition at Melbourne’s ACMI is a good example. The exhibition has been touring the world and has had over a million visitors so far, including a world record of almost 130,000 visitors in Melbourne. That puts it in the same league as the Pixar exhibition at ACMI which had about 165,000 visitors.



If only all doctors were like Mr Kawashima

Another big change is that games are becoming a much more personal and portable experience, similar to the evolution of music and films. In the same way that music moved from concert halls to HiFi and then iPods, and film is moving from cinemas to TVs to portable players, games are moving from arcades to computers and consoles, and now to portable players. There are over 70 million Nintendo DS consoles out there, which is more than Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii put together (of course, the DS is a fair bit cheaper than those, too!) The PSP seems to be the next big thing in gaming in Japan, which is traditionally a trend leader, and we’ve all seen the incredible response to the iPhone and its gaming potential.



James Tsai

Lead Designer, Volition

> The proliferation of internet connectivity, especially the penetration of broadband, has really impacted the industry in many ways. From a player’s standpoint, it’s obviously made games more social: playing is not a solitary act anymore. Competitive and cooperative multiplayer modes have evolved beyond rudimentary same-screen arcade mechanics to packet-shuffling killfests, with stuff like leaderboards and matchmaking and chat to keep people engaged. We’ve seen the rise of the MMO game in hardcore RPG contexts but also looser, freer worlds like Second Life. Online casual gaming has made big inroads with non-traditional demographics too.

But there are huge business model impacts the internet has had as well. Post-release patches to continually improve the game for players after release, and there’s a whole new licensing and distribution model where you never even have to go to the store to buy. Playable demos and well-polished trailers that can be grabbed from websites have become critical for new games trying to make an impression. Downloadable items or episodic content are available to increase the scope of a game as well. Interaction between gamers and developers is more open and intimate, and feedback gets integrated faster. Widespread, heavily trafficked reviews give gamers the information they need to make educated purchases. And of course, piracy and hacks spread that much faster. Like any other industry, there isn’t a part of gaming that going online hasn’t touched.

“Games are becoming a much more personal and portable experience”

Fred Gill

Swordfish C.T.O.

> The Internet has had a profound effect on the games industry in the last 15 years. There are too many innovations that have resulted from the Internet to list here – new business models due to website hosted Flash-based mini games, all the way through to MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft. Virtually every game has online capabilities and this is only going to increase in the future!

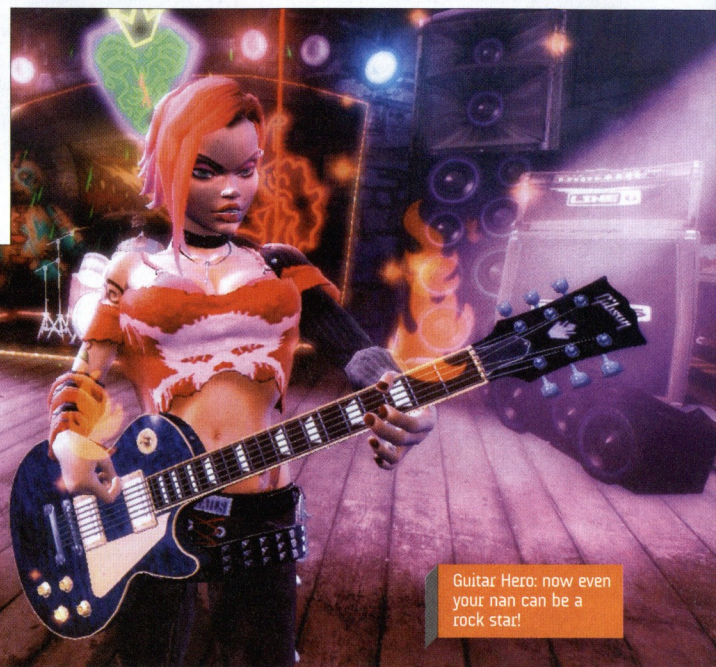
Apart from a handful of notable exceptions (SingStar, Buzz, Guitar Hero, etc.), until the introduction of the Nintendo DS and Nintendo Wii, game controls were becoming more and more complex with each new generation of consoles and each new game. DS and Wii have shown that games can appeal to a much wider audience (not just traditional hardcore gamers) if consumers feel comfortable with the controller. We have a real opportunity to expand the market for games if we continue to explore new control mechanisms.



World of Warcraft: can no MMO stop it?



Shock: gamers have friends, too!



Guitar Hero: now even your nan can be a rock star!

Jon Cartwright

THQ Studio Australia, Director of Production

> The transition from "one man band" to a professional industry has been a massive and in many ways unexpected change. The teams making games these days are much bigger, and so the budgets are bigger

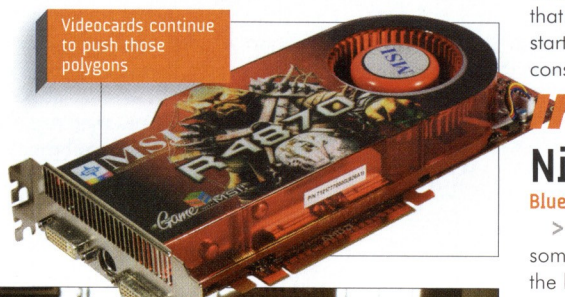
Save games on consoles are relatively new things and have made games more accessible for the casual player. Back on the old home computers and consoles you had to finish a game in one sitting; and they were ridiculously hard! Now every console has some way of saving your game so you can dip in and out – no leaving Sonic on pause overnight so you can come back to it in the morning anymore.

Brian Allgeier

Insomniac Games

> I would say 3-D technology and team sizes have been the biggest change in the games industry in the last 15 years. In 1993, I was creating small 2-D pixelated games with a team of 8 people. Now I work with teams of 75 to 150 people on 3-D games that compare to film quality visuals. The industry has learned a lot over the years in managing large teams and creating these powerful immersive experiences.

"Development is entering a golden age ... games of a quality we never thought possible are being made"



Videocards continue to push those polygons

Nigel Kershaw

Game Director for MotorStorm Pacific Rift, Evolution Studios

> Most importantly I see that games have started to move out of the geek ghetto that they have always been stuck in, and started to permeate into the mainstream consciousness.

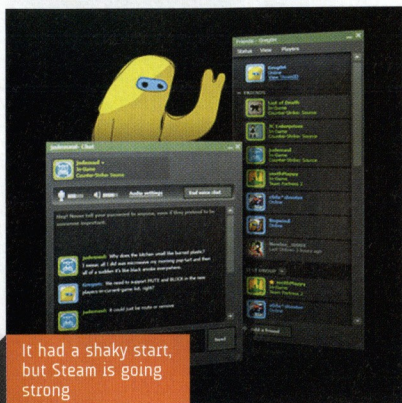
Nick Hagger

Bluetongue Entertainment

> I guess I speak from the perspective of someone who has worked in a studio for the last 11 years. I think if you asked people in different parts of the industry you would find different things stand out. For me, the succession of more powerful platforms has led to higher expectations from both publishers and the public. Which in turn has led to development culture becoming more streamlined and formalised. Importantly, this has led to studios becoming more financially accountable and more secure as a vocational choice for people. Thus, making games development an attractive destination for talented people from many different creative mediums. So for me, all the right elements are finally in place – technology, talent and resources; more studios than ever before are now capable of making the most amazing experiences. I think development is entering a golden age where games of a quality we never thought possible are being made because developers, technology and the market pace have matured in pace.



Goodbye solo programmer, hello teamwork



It had a shaky start, but Steam is going strong



James Hague

Design Director, Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition / THQ

> Technology that once looked very advanced and cutting edge is now standard across the board: physics, vehicles are now almost every type of game instead of just racing sims, skeletal character animation, advanced rendering and lighting.

Team sizes have grown from five to ten people working in a basement, to fifty or a hundred people working full time. You can make much larger experiences for players with so many people involved.

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Robin Walker

Developer, Valve

> It's hard to trim the important things down to any short list, so I'll one that's personally impacting my work a bunch right now: the Internet, and more specifically, the rise of social communities around games, and their impact on game design. We've come to believe our games are services more than just products, and that the closer the relationship with our customers we have, the happier they'll be and the more successful we'll be. This belief grew out of lessons we learned from interactions with our community, both around our products and around Steam.

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American McGee

Founder/Creative Dir., Spicy Horse

> Multiplayer games/social spaces, innovations on control schemes (Wii, Rock Band), and portable game devices. All of these innovations broke boundaries (mostly social) within the concept of "gaming" – allowing us to interact with each other, games, and game machines in radically new ways.

Crysis: making PCs sweat since 2007

Sid Meier

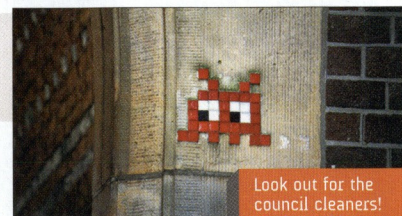
Firaxis Games

> The industry has certainly grown in size tremendously since I began making games in 1980, as have the costs of making games and the size of the development teams. However, the things that excited me about being a developer in the early days are still the same - I love to design and code games. I come to work every day and look forward to being at my keyboard writing code and iterating on whatever game we're working on at the time. It is pretty thrilling to see how many people are playing and enjoying games today. Our industry continues to come up with new ways for people to play games – new platforms, game ideas etc. that keep things exciting and interesting... and growing. I hope to be making games forever – it's the greatest job in the world.

"Our industry continues to come up with new ways for people to play games"



CDs played a large part in the gaming boom



Look out for the council cleaners! Wakka-wakka...

Junichi Nakatsuru

Composer, Namco Bandai

> I think the fact that games were recognised as a culture is the most important event/change in the games industry.

//

Dylan Fitterer

Developer, Audiosurf

> Game creators and game players have much better ways to communicate with each other now. Back in 1993 games couldn't change once shipped and players rarely know much about the game's creators. Now I can release a beta or prototype and talk to players about their experiences right away.

//

Dave Grossman

Telltale Games

> CD-ROM became a viable distribution method just about 15 years ago, and that was a leap for games in terms of scale and production values. As a result they started talking and having a lot of music and other great stuff and eventually turned into the AAA titles we know today. Then there was the rise of the internet, which allowed multi-player experiences to really blossom, and also caused something of a revolution in games journalism and other commentary. Still more recently, viable e-commerce and digital distribution, not just on PCs but on game consoles as well, is making episodic content possible, as well as enabling the success of far more casual games.

What changes do you think we'll see within the next 15 years?

John Passfield

Pandemic

> Man, it's hard to predict the next two years, let alone 15! Rather than predict technology changes (ie. direct feeds to our brains, etc.) I'll take the safe route and predict that social gaming will take off in big way. I also think we'll see a shift to "free to play" browser style gaming in the near future. I love the idea that I can use a PC anywhere in the world to continue a game that I was playing at home or work - and play it inside a browser for free. That's a compelling future I think we'll see more of soon.

Jeff Morris

Epic Games

> I have a great amount of respect for the future, too much so to delude myself into thinking I can predict anything. I think it's safe to say that as gaming consumes a larger and larger slice of the electronic entertainment pie, we'll see fewer and fewer "out there" games and lots of sequels and safe bets. What I pray will happen is that alternative distribution methods like Steam and Stardock give those niche titles a chance to see daylight.

Jon Gibson

Design Director on *Pure from Black Rock Studio*

> It's always difficult to predict the future but the most significant shift we can already see happening is the prevalence of online gaming. As the cost of broadband goes down and the availability goes up it's becoming increasingly easier to play online. There's already been a dramatic increase in online gaming over the last few years and the amount of people logging on for multiplayer games continues to rise. It seems like only yesterday that online gaming was the domain of PC gamers... now games consoles are without doubt the platforms for serious gamers and online action. But then analysts having been saying this for years so it's hardly new news. However with more people 'connected' I think we'll see some pretty significant shifts in terms of future hardware and software. Gaming systems, internet hardware, entertainment equipment, wireless access points and PCs are gradually becoming indistinguishable. Both Microsoft and Sony have been making concerted moves to ensure their consoles are more than just gaming platforms - downloadable movies, HD video playback, media PC integration, downloadable demos - that's all available now and points the direction for future gaming hardware. Consoles are well on their way to becoming internet gateways



Jetpack Brontosaurus. Rad name = win

and home entertainment servers. Software sales models are also changing; subscription based games and fully downloadable titles will become more prevalent with traditional game specific retail outlets ceasing to exist in their current form.

In terms of visuals 3D technology seems to be on the horizon. 3D games and movies have been around for a while but with HD digital media being the film industry standard and stereoscopic TVs becoming commercially available the future for 3D gaming seems to be firming up. There are obviously going to be limitations posed by consumer equipment, in other words it's going to be a while before everyone has the correct entertainment hardware capable for proper 3D gaming but then sceptics said the same about HD; that it was too much of a leap to expect people to ditch their standard definition equipment and move to HD systems. Well time has proven that the mainstream consumer shift to HD was surprisingly swift and largely driven by HD console development, so I anticipate 3D tech will be driven in the same way.

What does all this mean to the games developers? Well with continual advances in hardware technology and growing content requirements driven by increased sales costs the size of dev teams is likely to continue increasing. You're already beginning to see game development budgets akin to

HD gaming continues to gain momentum



"The increased presence of middleware is bringing development costs down"

Hollywood films - with costs increasing further publishers will be looking to safe guard a return on their development investment. This is likely make it harder for independent developers to continue running as costs will be significantly higher, plus publishers may lean more towards funding games that fit into market proven categories. So a potential reduction in truly original games, more focus on existing franchises and fewer niche titles. Having said this, the increased presence of middleware is bringing development costs down so the future isn't necessarily bleak...plus with the number of gamers increasing year on year potential sales figures could be on the rise.

So basically more online, new tech and increased development costs. Hardly crystal ball gazing but then who knows what the industry giants have up their sleeves; ultimately the future of gaming rests in their hands.

Forget the Heavy, shoot the Medic! *The Medic!*



Additional content?
Bring it on!

Firebrands

Developers of *TrackMania DS*

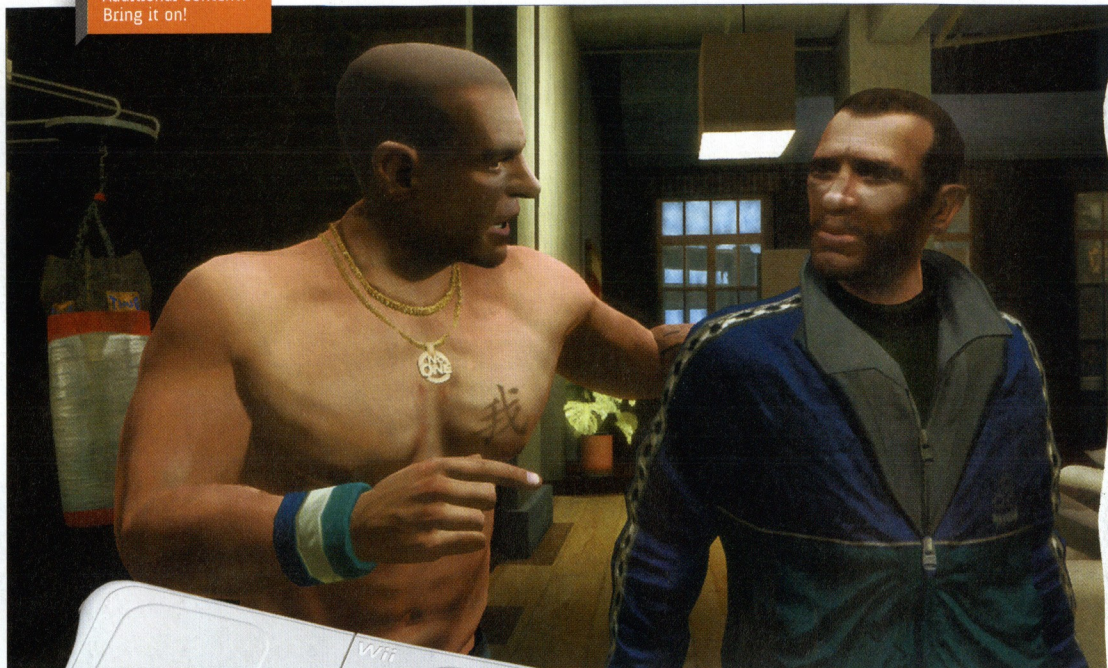
> I think that we will continue to see gaming pushed more into the mainstream of society. I saw a recent survey that suggested the average 18-25 year old now spends more time playing games than they do watching TV. The games industry, globally, is larger than the film industry in terms of gross revenue and games like *MGS4* are really pushing the production values to match the film industry too. I think that we are going to see the games industry start to be accepted as a genuine area of entertainment with cultural relevance as an art form.

I think we are going to see graphical advances that take things to the next level in terms of immersion and realism such as trees with individual leaves that grow and shed as if they were organic. Not items that you would really notice, but subconsciously help you believe what is happening in game.

Finally, I expect to see the download market grow to a level where it becomes a relevant distribution service for the mass market and downloadable additional or episodic content should grow further (we are already seeing the start of this with things like *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* tracks and additional content that is due for *GTA:IV*). I don't think it will replace retail SKU's, as shelf space will still be king when it comes to promoting and selling games, but rather offer an additional way of getting content following that first purchase and extending the revenue tail of a game for publishers.

It's an exciting time for the industry and I am excited that I am going to be a part of it and hopefully helping to steer its evolution over the next 15 years

"Games like *MGS4* are really pushing the production values to match the film industry"



Robert Murray

CEO of independent game development company *Firemint*, Board member of Film Victoria and the Game Developers Association of Australia

> I think the trend of games becoming more personal and portable will continue. People are already carrying their music and photos with them, so I see this extending to games. As wireless data rates get cheaper, content won't stay on particular devices but will be connected to people via the Internet, and they will then consume it in different ways depending on where they physically are at the moment. You might see one device – probably a mobile phone considering the functionality convergence we've already seen there – that will act as the gatekeeper for all sorts of content, which can be displayed on whatever output devices are around. The idea is not so crazy when you consider that Nvidia already has a phone chip (the GoForce 5500) that outputs 1080p video, the same resolution as you would see on a HDTV.

I also think that the convergence of social networking, web services and traditional media with games will make everything more complex and more interesting for some time to come. The lines between the different types of content will continue to blur. Games like *GTA4* and *Metal Gear Solid 4* both had amazing cinematic sequences and strong story elements, so it will be interesting to see how more and more traditional film elements are absorbed into games. Spore sounds like it will have some interesting social networking components as well as providing a great platform for players to exercise their creativity. Defining where games begin and end will also become more difficult and the WiiFit is already foreshadowing this

broadening – is it a game, a fitness gadget, or just an aspirational purchase?

Despite the shift in gamer demographics, there is still widespread misperception about who an "average gamer" is, particularly in traditional media and among non-gamers. I sincerely hope that those perceptions will catch up with reality soon and games will be taken far more seriously. In particular, it would be great to see some support from the Federal government for games as an industry and as an artistic medium, as has already happened with the Victorian state government. The games industry in Australia employs over 1400 highly skilled and talented professionals, and earns over \$100 million export revenues per year.

Fred Gill

Swordfish C.T.O.

> Internet 2.0 / Networking – in the next 15 years 10Mbit – 100Mbit will become the standard connection around the world. Not only does this allow for better online experiences, but also multiplexing different types of traffic, including video feeds. Consoles will be at the centre of home entertainment – on-demand movies, and on-demand games will be delivered in minutes. Episodic games will be delivered to fit with TV schedules – so people can play around their favourite TV series, or along with it as content providers look to exploit their synergies.

Off the back of this, Social Pervasive Gaming will be ubiquitous – people will use many devices to stay connected playing games, and keeping up to date with their friends and family at the same time.

In conjunction with the above two, user-generated content will also be very prominent – as developers we have a lot to learn about how to create user-friendly content creation tools that are intuitive to use and extremely powerful, so that users want to create and share their ideas with the rest of the community.

And we'll still be creating games aimed at our hardcore audience – providing them with a great single-player experience...

For Old Snake, every day is Movember



James Tsai

Lead Designer, Volition

> I'd like to see user created content continue to play a big part in growing what a game is. You look at what's being done with Spore, or how many custom clothes are generated for The Sims, or how many FPS levels and mods for some games completely reinterpret what the developers did and it takes your breath away. We create games for the most passionate of audiences, and seeing them take an increasing role in defining their own play experience is very cool.

I'm also sure making and buying games will continue to get more expensive, but I don't think I'm going to be lauded as a psychic for that one. Spiralling costs are probably going to generate plenty of failed studios in an increasingly competitive landscape, and inflation and greed will unfortunately push prices up for gamers too.

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Jon Cartwright

THQ Studio Australia Director of Production

> Probably a convergence of mobile/handheld gaming. Mobile phones are getting more powerful all the time and handheld consoles are trying to offer more connectivity (internet, VOIP).

More online. Not just multiplayer online games, but single player games that are delivered online. To some extent this is happening now but as our internet connections get faster and we have more and more storage capacity in our consoles it gets more practical.

Social sites like Facebook will be replaced by games/gaming "destinations" that offer similar functionality. At a very simple level the likes of Habbo Hotel does this now, and look at Sony's PS3 Home for an idea where social destinations could be heading.

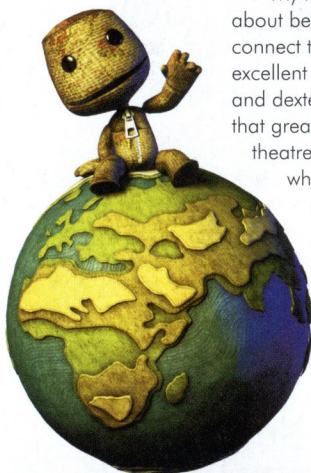


"Social sites like Facebook will be replaced by games/gaming 'destinations'"

Brian Allgeier

Insomniac Games

> My hope is that games teach us more about being human and how people connect to one another. Currently games are excellent at creating these visual, cerebral, and dexterity engaging experiences. I think that great works of film, literature, and theatre teach us more about ourselves and what it means to be human. I'd like to see games become less about the tech, the mechanical simulations, and more about the interactions between the characters and other people. Games that have a deeper emotional palette that are driven by player interactions will push this medium forward into new territory. My other big hope is for shorter and cheaper



games! I have stacks of games that I want to finish but don't have the time. Many gamers are getting older and don't have time to play games and raise a family. New gamers who grew up on iTunes, Tivo, and YouTube are becoming more comfortable with bite size chunks of entertainment. As family and other media compete for people's time, I think we'll see shorter, deeper, and cheaper games become more popular.

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Nigel Kershaw

Game Director for MotorStorm Pacific Rift, Evolution Studios

> I think this trend will continue, and it won't be long before we really start to go head to head with the likes of film and TV as the mass entertainment of choice.



Spore: from little things, big things grow



Nick Hagger

Bluetongue Entertainment

> If current trends are anything to go by, there will be more consolidation of publishing, as well as specialisation of studios. Distributed development will help to mitigate the cost of maintaining huge in-house teams, as well as shortening development cycles. New modes of distribution will allow a broader audience to engage in new and compelling experiences. I think critically, as the gaming generations raise their own children, games will gain a more mainstream acceptance, and there will be more informed critical response to games and gaming culture.

James Hague

Design Director, Red Faction: Guerrilla
Volition / THQ

> Huge gaps in world realism will be filled. The destruction in Red Faction: Guerrilla is a good example. Not only have I gotten used to arbitrarily damaging a building based on

"As the gaming generations raise their own children, games will gain more mainstream acceptance"

where my rocket hits, but the building may fully or partially collapse based on actual physics, not scripted special effects. When I go back and play a game where a rocket hits a house and does absolutely nothing, it seems so completely dated.

I also think the difficulty of making high-end games will start to decrease, because engines and tools will become much more common and easy to use. We'll see more impressive games from smaller, inspired teams, ones that are pushing creative boundaries.

Great, now let's see you rebuild it, smart guy

American McGee

> Combining the above mentioned innovations, continuing the trend of smaller, faster devices – I think we're heading towards ubiquitous human/computer interface, and much of our current reality (real world) being replaced by an online, "hosted" reality. This convergence of hardware and experience has been happening for a long time – but social, economic, and environmental pressures will likely accelerate the effect. I for one think this is how "gaming saves the world". Only time will tell...

Mark Noseworthy

Producer, Dawn of War 2

> A massive increase in digitally distributed games, even for console

More natural interfaces like touch surfaces, EyeToy 5.0, and voice controlled gaming

Gaming as part of everyday life – regular activities become MMOs tied to social networking sites. Getting exercise, doing homework or even the laundry will give you 'experience' that allows you to compete/customise/communicate in different ways online.

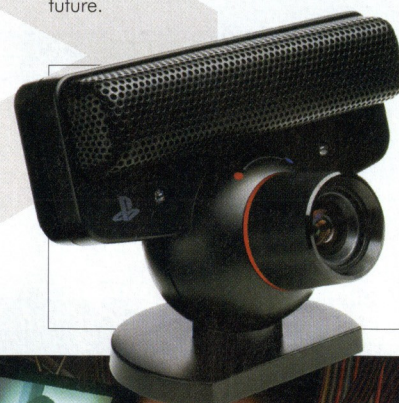
Junichi Nakatsuru

Sound Creator, Namco Bandai

> I guess that we are going to the direction which we start creating contents not only for games, but for the entire entertainment.

Sid Meier

> I think we'll continue to see more people enjoying games. There have always been hardcore gamers driving the industry, but with the rise of casual games and the popularity of the Wii, we're seeing a wide variety of people playing games all over the world, which is really exciting and will have a huge impact on the types of game experiences we see in the future.



"200 hundred channels, and nothin' but Bob"

Dave Grossman

Telltale Games

> I see the beginnings of several big changes. First, it won't be long before downloading and direct play over the web dominate games similarly to the way they do in the music world. You'll be able to carry your iPhone around and play whatever you want on it, whenever you want to. This ease of access will mean a lot more small, inexpensive games, designed as impulse buys or ad-supported freebies, and meant for short-term consumption. The smaller financial outlay for production of these games, coupled with increased competition for the interest of the audience, should stimulate innovation.

Second, games education is starting to mature beyond the stage of art-and-programming trade schools, with major universities instituting programs aimed at the serious study of games as an art form. I would expect that the wave of designers who come out of these programs is going to include a few people with some very

interesting ideas, and that we'll see radical movements in games just as we do in film and the fine arts.

Third, tools for building games are gradually becoming more powerful and more accessible to the consumer market. Somewhere between Flash, SketchUp, iMovie, Microsoft Word, and the level editor for your favorite title, there's space for an easy-to-use, flexible tool specifically aimed at making simple games. I don't know exactly what it looks like, but when it goes on sale for less than a hundred bucks (followed quickly by a community-built open source version, no doubt), all of a sudden you won't have to be a tycoon or a techno-geek to make your own game anymore, everybody's mom will be doing it before breakfast.

To sum up: More people are going to know more about games, it will be easier to make them, and it will be easier to share, buy and sell them. Sounds like a good recipe for an artistic explosion.

“With the advent of the casual gaming boom we'll see more folks playing games who may have never considered doing so before”

Heavy Rain looks to add a dose of emotion...



...and we're keen to see the final results!

The Jesus Phone:
Now with monkeys!



Cliffy B

> With the advent of the casual gaming boom we'll see more and more folks playing games who may have never considered doing so before. Many will graduate to more sophisticated titles over the years. Production values will increase drastically and some minor innovation will come from large budget titles, which will continue to refine the existing formulas, while drastic innovation will come from the more organic, independent scene.

Mark Morris

MD Introversion

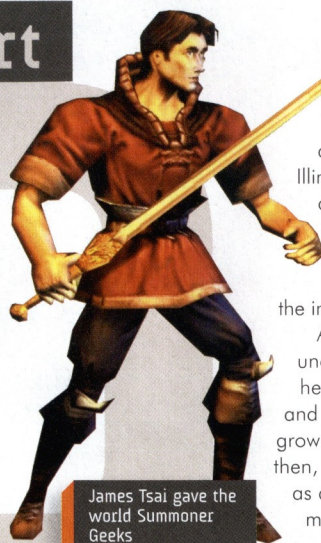
> I think that the distinction between different hardware devices will become less and less. Rather than having a computer, a Blu-ray player, a games console etc we will have single multi-function devices. This will change the conventional business models within the industry where we have a number of console owners selling customers to game developers. It is possible that Microsoft or Sony or Nintendo may in fact own these "single box" platforms, but there are also non-video game companies fighting for the space – think Apple. I think the change in the console space will really shake up the way we make and sell games and will change the face of the industry forever. “

Getting into the Games Industry

> *Round table chat*

We've had numerous requests over the last 12 or so months for a feature on how a person can get into the games industry. We could point you to education courses and industry newsletters but ultimately, who better to ask than people in the industry themselves?

How did you get your start in the games industry?



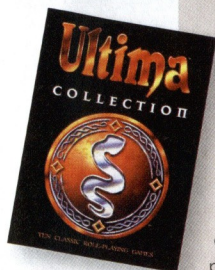
James Tsai

Lead Designer: Volition

> I fell into the industry with a fair bit of luck. I was working at a research institute at the University of Illinois and money was really tight, so I applied for a second job as a tester at Volition to try and make ends meet. I would test full time during the day and then do a graveyard shift at the institute at night.

After a couple of months, Volition unexpectedly offered me a position to head up the growing QA department and I eagerly pounced on it, having grown tired of sleep deprivation. Since then, I've gotten the opportunity to work as a producer or designer on several more games in different genres.

James Tsai gave the world Summoner Geeks



Fred Gill

Swordfish C.T.O.

> My first break was a job as Technical Manager of US Gold in Paris, France, during my University gap year when I was 23. It was real in-at-the-deep end stuff, having to answer the phones in French to irate customers who couldn't get their PC games to work out of box. I enjoyed the experience so much that as I approached graduation back in the UK I started applying for jobs in the industry – within a month I'd secured a job as a language tester at Time Warner Interactive in London where I stayed for 9 tough but fun months, after which I moved into development at Rage software in Birmingham as an Associate Producer. I've been building up from there ever since.

Jeff Morris

Producer: Epic Games

> Like a lot of folks, it was 99% luck. I was dating a woman at the time who was an art director at Broderbund. She was giving a lecture at the Computer Game Developers Conference (now just Game Developers Conference), but didn't need her badge after the talk. I was able to schmooze my way around some of the hospitality suites while she lounged by the pool, and ended up in the Origin Systems suite. They had shipped in Shiner Bock and Manga Pizza (both Austin, Texas staples) and were giving brief talks about how OSI was ready to take risks. I loitered around during the meet and greet and fanboy-ambushed a bunch of the Origin luminaries of the time like Richard Garriott, Warren Spector, Starr Long and Billy Cain. Richard eventually suggested I try out for QA, saying I was "Origin material". Well, I didn't need any encouragement beyond that! Starr was kind enough to give me a card, and I called him a few days later. He put me in touch with Marie Williams in customer service and I passed the phone interview. I flew myself out to Austin, did well during the interview, and got the job. While I was "only" in QA and CS at Origin, I feel completely blessed to have been able to work there for 3 years. Origin (and Ultima) are hugely responsible for my interest in games to begin with and being able to walk those hallowed halls felt like a pilgrimage to me.

Like a lot of folks, it was 99% luck. I was dating a woman at the time who was an art director at Broderbund



Passfield worked on a Microbee - the poor bastard

John Passfield

Creative Director: Pandemic

> I began way back in 1984. We had a Microbee computer and during the school holidays I became addicted to the arcade game Pengo, so I decided to program my own version to play at home. I wrote the game over a few weeks and sent it off to Honeysoft, a publisher based in Gosford. They loved the game and offered to publish it on cassette tape. I signed a deal and the next thing I knew I was a published game developer still in school!

I wrote Halloween Harry during the following year's school holidays. After that I studied computer science at university then worked at a telecom company for a couple of years before quitting to get back to making games. The first effort was a revamped version of Halloween Harry on PC in 1993 followed by the Flight of the Amazon Queen adventure game on PC and Amiga in 1995. And I've never looked back since.



Jon Gibson wants you to "get over here!"

Jon Gibson

Design Director on Pure: Black Rock Studio

> I started off in a company called 'Probe Entertainment' back in 1994. We were later acquired by Acclaim and worked most notably on Mortal Kombat titles for Genesis / SNES, and well as Die Hard Trilogy and Alien Trilogy on PS1. I'd decided to take a gap year before going to university and saw an ad in the local paper recruiting for video game testers. A couple of interviews later I found that I'd been short listed for the position but unfortunately didn't get the job. Oh well! However 6 months later Probe called me up and offered me a junior design position as I'd expressed an interest in the interview to pursue this career path. So really it was a lucky break but then that was so often the case in those days. The games industry was in its infancy and there weren't really any dedicated games development courses either so for many people (myself included) it was a matter of being in the right place at the right time, expressing a passion for games and also being prepared to work for peanuts as in those days there wasn't a lot of money involved!



Robin Walker is a modder made good



Cliffy B wants you to be awesomely awesome. Awesome.

Brian Allgeier

Insomniac Games

> Back in 1991, I drove out from the east coast to get a job as an animator in California. I interviewed at a place called Duck Soup that did TV cereal commercials. Rob Jenks, an animator that worked there, just so happened to be the nephew of my 5th grade home room teacher in Georgia. He was a freelance animator and recommended me to Phillips Interactive Media where I interviewed for Cliff Johnson (creator of "The Fool's Errand") who was a producer on a Hannah Barbera game. Cliff hired me based off of an art test that involved a 16-pixel tall sprite animation of Scooby-Doo.

Jon Cartwright

THQ Studio Australia Director of Production

> Well I was one of those kids that started programming games whilst I was still at school at the height of the home computer boom in the UK. To start with I taught myself how to program in BASIC and wrote simple games, and then I learnt assembly language and did stuff that was a bit better and a lot faster. I used to sell them on cassette from home and also got a few deals with some very minor publishers.

So I was making money from programming when I was 15 or so. I carried on with my studies though and got my computer science degree; I think my parents were hoping I'd get a "proper" job. In the



Brian Allgeier made cereal commercials

My dad bought an Atari 800 back in 1982, and I was completely driven to learn to write my own games for it

holiday before my final year at University I got a summer job with a local games developer (The Big Red Software Company). Would you believe that it happened to be run by the boyfriend of one of my Dad's work colleagues? So I worked there for a couple months, wrote some educational games and a brand new "Dizzy" game for Codemasters in that time. At the end of the summer I got an offer of a full-time job for when I graduated and it's all I've ever done since.

Nigel Kershaw

Game Director for MotorStorm Pacific Rift: Evolution Studios

> Joining the games industry in the eighties I guess my start is a million miles away from what you need to do to get on in today's more sensible and mature industry. I've always been a fan of games of all kinds, including video games, board games and role-playing games, and it was the latter that got me into a foot hold into the industry as a games designer, after acting as a games master for many session for friends who worked in video games, they decided that they needed a games designer, and as I was good at making stuff up, I was an ideal choice. Suffice to say I took them up on the offer, and I'm still in the industry twenty years later.

James Hague

Design Director, Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition / THQ

> My dad bought an Atari 800 back in 1982, and I was completely driven to learn to write my own games for it. There used to be these home computer magazines which included source code listings for games and other utilities. Readers had to type them in by hand! I got my start writing games for several of those magazines.

Robin Walker

Designer, Valve

> While studying Computer Science, some friends and I made a mod for Quake called Team Fortress. We worked on it for a couple of years before deciding to incorporate and work on a sequel. As we did so, we were contacted by Valve, who were an unknown studio at the time, still working on their first game. They convinced us to come over and make a version of Team Fortress for Half-Life, and to help make Half-Life a good platform for mod makers. We started at Valve in March of 1998, and I've been here ever since.

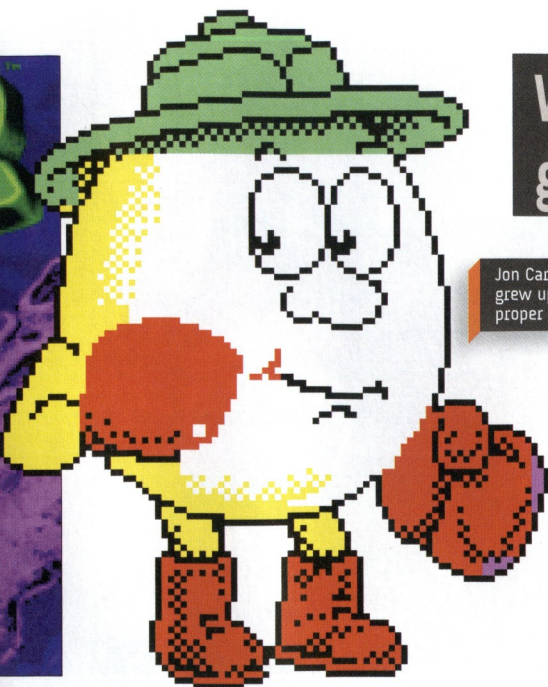
Sid Meier

> It was on a dare. Bill Stealey (my partner at Microprose) and I were working together at General Instrument in the early 1980s and while away at a conference we were playing a flight sim arcade game one night. I kept getting a higher score than Bill on the game (which frustrated him) and he wanted to know how I was doing it. I told him I could tell what the AI was going to do before it happened which gave me an advantage. I also said I thought I could make a better game in a few weeks – and he challenged me to do it. That's how Microprose was born and I've been enjoying making games ever since then.

Dave Grossman

Telltale Games

> I got started kind of accidentally in 1989 when the industry was a lot smaller and less glamorous, and consequently easier to break into. Fresh out of a stint in graduate school I joined the then LucasFilm Games group in a position which involved programming, writing, puzzle design, and a lot of opportunity to learn things from "seasoned professionals" (I think Ron Gilbert was only about 25 at the time, but he already knew a lot).



Jon Cartwright never grew up and got a proper job

What qualifications make for a good grounding in the industry?

Jeff Morris

Producer: Epic Games

> It really depends on the field these days. For art, you really need to know the analog side well. Most studios I've worked for have little trouble getting someone up to speed with the tools, but training them to have an artist's "eye" is much tougher. This is compounded by the speed at which the apps change. Knowing how to use one version of an application is great, but typically obsolete in a few years. Knowing how to compose an image is tool-agnostic and will serve the employee for the rest of their career. Code is similar, in that being a "programmer" at their core is more

mathematics and/or physics being essential; for art and animation an impressive portfolio, even out of an art or animation degree, is key; for design we'd look at a strong degree first, games development related or otherwise, and then a heartfelt passion for games and a clear sensitivity for the games design and development process; finally, for production either a degree and/or a formal project management qualification.

James Tsai

Lead Designer: Volition

> Though there are an increasing number of schools that offer curriculums in game design, the overriding attribute needed is obviously work ethic and dedication. Regardless of educational background, so much learning and training occurs on the job that you've got to have the endurance and perseverance to put in long hours and keep plugging away in the face of an ever-changing project. Being flexible and able to compromise with your teammates who may have differing opinions is vital on large projects.

Plus, you've got to have a high threshold for eating pizza. I don't know too many game developers for which pizza is not at least three of their meals a week.

Cliffy B

> As much as it sounds like a cliché it's true - I made my own video game and sold it out of my mother's house when I was in high school. I sent the follow-up title to Tim Sweeney at Epic Games, and he had Mark Rein contact me. They paired me up with Arjan Brussee, a Dutch programmer, and we created a title called Jazz Jackrabbit. The rest, as they say, is history!

Mark Morris

Introversion Software Managing Director

> Introversion was founded in 2001 - we'd all met at university, the team originally consisting of three directors, myself, Chris Delay our lead developer, and Thomas Arundel our commercial director. Chris had been working pretty much non-stop on Uplink whilst at uni; I remember coming home from nights out with Tom and we'd find Chris solidly programming away. Finally we managed to persuade him to show the game to us and we were so impressed we decided to have a go at selling it. I don't think any of us imagined that five years down the line we'd still be here making and selling computer games, especially considering our roots. Introversion was founded on about £600, we each put in an equal share, enough to buy a pallet load of CDs and some ink cartridges, and we set about making our Uplink units from home and distributing them via an online store. To our astonishment, the reviews of Uplink were excellent and we very quickly recouped our costs, found a retail distributor for Uplink and went on to sell 40,000 copies worldwide.

I don't know too many game developers for which pizza is not at least three of their meals a week.

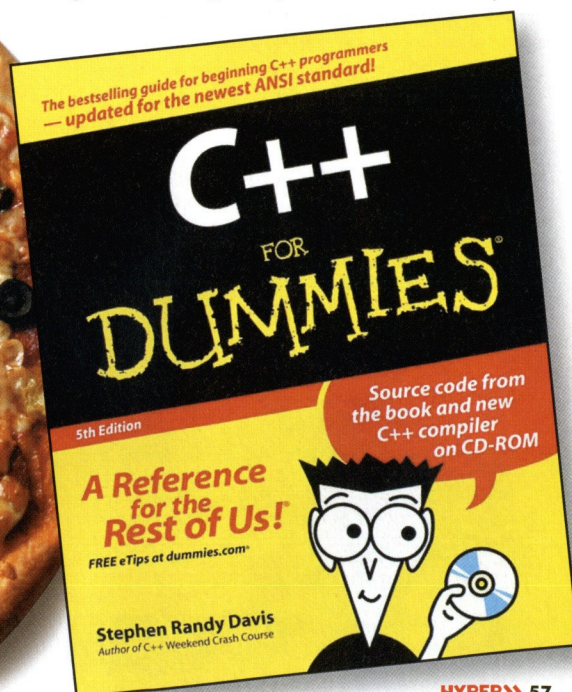
important than fluency in any one language. If you can solve problems efficiently and elegantly, there will be a demand for your programming skills no matter whether you use C++, Java, or what have you. And of course if you can't draw and can't code, there's always production :-).

Fred Gill

Swordfish C.T.O.

> Although it depends on which discipline you're planning on heading into, the reality is that any good University degree is worth its weight in gold and in many companies is an essential ticket to entry. For programming and tech related disciplines we generally pull people from either single or joint honours computer science degrees with strong

Write a book on Pizza for Dummies... or something



want to be an artist then you also need experience in your relevant field, be that 3D modelling, 2D work, concept art or animation. The role of an artist is quite diverse but there are numerous courses available focussing on all these different roles. It's often more difficult to determine what makes a good designer and it's not as cut and dry as the other roles. The role of designer varies from company to company and includes jobs such as environment modelling, gameplay mapping, AI scripting, game design documentation and audio scripting to name but a few. However there's one thing that's essential for a designer to possess and that's passion. Passion for games in general, passion for the industry. It's important for designers to understand game mechanics and have a knowledge of the competitive landscape so they really need to be gamers and they need to have been playing games for a number of years. Same goes for QA, these guys are generally die hard gamers who've been at it for years.

// Brian Allgeier

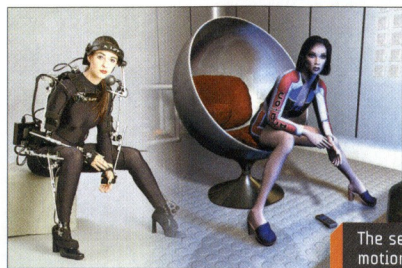
Insomniac Games

> Developing video games is a very collaborative effort and requires many different disciplines. Practically every part of the game needs to be developed or tweaked by an artist, designer, audio engineer, or programmer. I think it's very important to be proficient in one area of expertise yet have a good understanding of what other people do. For example, if you're a designer you need to know what makes the game fun and how all the elements fit together to create a compelling experience. It's very easy to suggest an idea that may sound simple on paper yet can cause havoc for the project. Being able to communicate, develop ideas, and work with the team to execute a plan requires strong collaboration skills and knowledge of what others need to do their jobs in order to make a game great.

// Firebrands

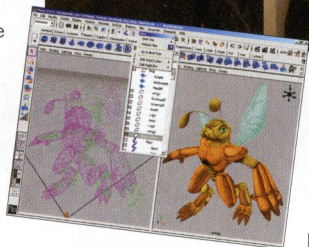
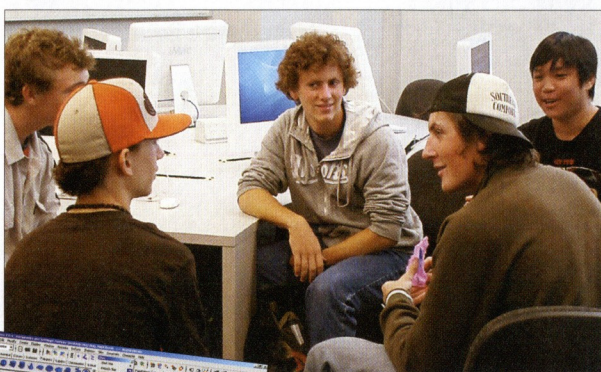
Developers of TrackMania DS

> That really depends on what you want to do in the industry. I have a BSc Honours degree in Behavioural and Environmental Biology and I got a job in the industry! If you know what you want to do whilst you are in school then target your qualifications with where you wish to target your career. Also, do it in your spare time. If you are an artist then practice on developing your art at home as well as at school. Some art and code packages can be expensive but there are often trial periods or personal software



The sexy side of motion capture

There's a lot of learning going on in this room



Don't worry, we don't know who they are either

equivalents so make use of those whilst you are learning

There are plenty of higher education courses targeted at the games industry nowadays if you know what you want to do. I would, however, advocate that you do your research into which courses are good and relevant. Look for courses that teach the basics and theories behind your field. For coding it is important to have a strong background in Logic and Mathematics; if you want a course to teach you the language make sure it is teaching C++; if you want to be a 3D artist make sure that you will be taught the concepts of 3D art like using triangles and different materials. If you are going to use a course that also teaches you the tools try to make sure that the tools the university uses are used within the industry; for art, look for Maya and 3D Max. If you want to be a producer within the

I have a BSc Honours degree in Behavioural and Environmental Biology and I got a job in the industry!

games industry the standard way of doing this is to try and get a role in QA and work your way up the ladder. Whilst this is a great way to do it (as we really like experience of working for developers on your CV) also spend time looking into project methodologies. There is plenty of information out there for free on the internet. Books like 'The Game Producer's Handbook' by Dan Irish also give a nice top to bottom

view of the role and responsibilities that a Producer has. As budgets get bigger, companies get more risk averse so someone with a good understanding of project and risk management will be more and more valuable.

// Nigel Kershaw

Game Director for MotorStorm Pacific Rift: Evolution Studios

> A good degree is always useful, although controversially I'd question the merits of some courses that have game design elements in them. It's important to look at any degree you may decide to take and ask yourself how relevant it is, especially if later down the line you decide you don't want to or cannot get a job in games. Passion for games, creativity and an eye for what makes games tick is just as important, of not more important, than what your degree is about. We've got guys working here at evolution with degrees in computer science, games design, but also science degrees, geography, and even a classics graduate.

// Nick Hagger

Bluetongue Entertainment

> It's a complex recipe. As a minimum, you need a degree of technical aptitude in your chosen discipline, coupled with an analytical mindset and a process-driven, work methodology. Being creative and loving games is essential. If you can build part of a game, and explain how you built it and what you intended it to do, then you're on the right track.

// James Hague

Design Director, Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition / THQ

> You need to be very analytical. Don't look at a game at face value, the way players see them, but pick them apart and figure out how they work. Why am I compelled to always go a specific direction in this level? What's the logic behind how

ammo pick-ups are placed? There's no way that a city of one million people is actually being simulated, so why am I fooled into thinking it is?

//

Robin Walker

Designer: Valve

> There are many useful qualifications, but overall I'd say there are a couple of key ones worth mentioning, no matter what discipline you're aiming for. Problem solving ability is very important, because the constant evolution of games forces you to deal with new technology and design problems in every product you make. Critical analysis is similarly important, because to improve on anything you need to be able to understand it fully, determine what changes are needed, and figure out how to implement them within your constraints.

//

American McGee

> For me personally, I think my background in tinkering, mechanics, and electronics/computers contributed a lot to my early success. I enjoy experimentation with technology, game concepts, and narrative – all of which go into the creation of interesting games. In general, anyone who can bring a variety of interests or disciplines to the development process will likely have something interesting to add.

//

Sid Meier

> You certainly need to love playing and making games. Along with that, getting a good well rounded education, along with developing a strong skill set like programming or creating art, will best prepare you to bring new talent, creativity and ideas to the games industry.

//

Dave Grossman

Telltale Games

> Games more than most other endeavors call for a balance between logical thinking and creative thinking. Some level of programming ability is extremely helpful. So is a certain generalism with storytelling, film, theater, music, and/or pretty much any entertainment media you'd care to name. And naturally, it helps to play a fair number of different kinds of games.

//

Mark Morris

Introversion Software Managing Director

> Degrees in maths, physics and programming are a great grounding to the games industry – you can't get away from the need for programming as a hard skill. I'm personally less in favour of the sorts of game design courses you see nowadays – design skills are something you can learn and develop on the job easily if you have natural capability, it's a lot harder to learn programming skills on the job.

What advice can you give someone interested in joining the games industry?

Jeff Morris

Producer: Epic Games

> To crib a line from our design director: make cool shit. If you want to be a level designer, make insanely fun levels with jaw dropping visuals that run at 30 fps. All you need is a copy of Unreal Tournament 3. If you're an artist, focus on one aspect and become hyper proficient at it, whether it's mechanical, organic, UI, etc. Finishing and following through with these projects are the best simulation of what it's like to work professionally in games. If you excel here, it's very likely you'll excel in a related career.

If you don't have any programming skills then use a 3rd party editor to make mods for other games

//

John Passfield

Creative Director: Pandemic

> Learn as much as you can and make demos! If you don't have any programming skills then use a 3rd party editor to make mods for other games. This shows you are serious about your craft – and the more you do, the better you get. It also demonstrates you can start something and see it through to the end. So keep making stuff for your portfolio!

//

James Tsai

Lead Designer: Volition

> It goes without saying that someone looking to become a designer needs to

be passionate about games. Not just passionate about playing them, but really appreciating the science behind all the rules and balancing, as well as their increasing power as an entertainment and storytelling medium. Not every game needs to have an epic plot or a complex control scheme to be effective, but understanding the broad range of what's out there and analyzing design choices in games is key to building up your instincts and knowledge. Take something away from every video game you play and everything else as well: board games, pen and paper role playing games, sports, card games. Make your own games out of anything you can, write often, build levels, and make sure you are constantly creating in as many mediums as possible.

//

Jon Gibson

Design Director on Pure:
Black Rock Studio

> Pick the role you can see yourself doing. Programmer, artist, designer, QA (testing) or production management. There are now courses available to train people for all of these roles, many of which are affiliated with developers who offer graduate or intern positions / programs. That's probably the safest way in but you need to make sure that the course you choose is the right one for you and that you're gonna be trained in the right areas. What I mean by that is that there are a lot of 'games development' courses out there but the course curriculum's vary – if you wanna be an artist for example make sure you pick a course which is primarily art focussed rather than something more generalised.

Make mods and demos to get your name out





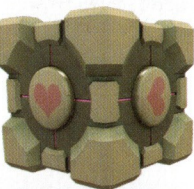
Brian Allgeier

Insomniac Games

> After having reviewed countless resumes and interview design candidates over the years, I recommend getting involved with a project with a team of people and producing something that you can show. This could be anything from a flash game to a level mod. It's a great way to demonstrate creativity and competency at making games. While it's tempting to make a demo or game that features popular video game elements like industrial complexes, zombies, pirates, and grizzled marines, it's important that you add your own creative twist to separate your work from all the generic stuff that employers receive.

Another benefit to working on a small project with a team is the invaluable experience of collaboration and understanding everyone's role. Learning how to speak the different languages of artists, programmers, and designers will round out your skill set and prepare you for working on larger games. Finally, one of the most critical things to do is have a great website! There's no use doing great work if no one sees it. The first thing I do after skimming a resume is go to the website and look at their work. A good website can exhibit your sparkling personality, ability to put together an intuitive interactive experience, and demonstrate all the hard work you've done!

Be proactive and make something to show off



Jon Cartwright

THQ Studio Australia Director of Production

> If you can make a game or a mod with a bunch of friends before trying to get a job then do it; if you can show something relevant as an example of your work it'll help you enormously. And it'll give you vital experience of working in a team. It's all about teams these days; not like when I started and there was one programmer per game who did all the coding, design and art.

It's important to have realistic expectations when you start out too; you're going to start on the bottom rung of the ladder so you're not going to get to do everything you want to straight away. But you will learn by doing the tasks that juniors do, and it's a fantastic opportunity to see how games are really made – it's probably very different to what you imagined! Look out for intern positions, temporary QA positions. If you can get your foot in the door it will be a big help; over the years I've employed lots of folks who initially came in as interns or temps.

If you can make a game or a mod with a bunch of friends before trying to get a job then do it



Firebrands

Developers of TrackMania DS

> Be persistent! The games industry is relatively small and as such can be difficult to break into. You will get a lot of people ignoring your applications and a lot of people who say no to you. Don't let it faze you or put you off achieving your goal!

Target your CV, cover letter and portfolio for the types of job you are applying for. Read the information in the job adverts; employers don't put skills and attributes on there for no reason – it is what they are looking for! Highlight your experience in relation to this and it should help you make it through the first cut and get you an interview. Once you are offered an interview, follow some simple

rules – be smart, be on time and be positive. Answer questions as fully as possible and try to take every opportunity offered to highlight why you would be the best person for the job.

Finally, remember, it only takes one person to offer you a job within the industry. If 100 people say no to you, it still only takes one person to have faith in your ability to do the job



Nigel Kershaw

Game Director for MotorStorm Pacific Rift: Evolution Studios

> It is important to be able to look deeper into games that what you would do as a regular punter. One question I always ask when interviewing potential games designers is 'what is your favourite game' which is easy, but then I follow it up with 'why', which quite often stumps people. Answers like 'because it's good' or 'because it's got nice graphics' tend not to get people jobs



Nick Hagger

Bluetongue Entertainment

> Focus on an aspect of games that you believe you are good at and work hard to improve yourself. Listen to what experienced people can tell you and never assume you know everything there is to know about making games. Making the mental leap from being a hobbyist to being a professional is one of the biggest challenges in becoming a developer. You may not be making the game you want to make initially, but if you work hard enough, you will eventually get there. Always think critically about the games you play, but never stop enjoying them for what they are.



James Hague

Design Director, Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition / THQ

> You'll have a big advantage if you take things into your own hands and start right now. Pick a popular PC game with a level editor and free development kit and start making mods. Don't just talk about it—do it! Nothing is more useful than getting your hands dirty with experience.



Robin Walker

Designer: Valve

> Start making games. One of the great things about the games industry is that it isn't like medicine, or law, which are disciplines requiring you to spend years on them long before you find out if you like them. If you've got a PC, you can be in the game industry tomorrow by making a game and releasing it. There are many ways to do it, from the vibrant indie community to flash game portals to AAA-game mods. Any of them will give you a bunch of experience if you make it all the way to shipping something, and in the process you'll learn what it is you like about making games, which is extremely useful to find out before you commit years of your life to something.



Narbacular Drop later morphed into the brilliant Portal

American McGee

> My advice has always been “prove yourself”. Ours is still an industry where a kid with a pirate 3D program or a free level editor can train, advance, and eventually build something spectacular enough that the industry will take notice. It’s how I got my start in the industry – and a legacy I’ve continued to this day by giving opportunities to talented people, despite their lack of direct experience in making games. So far, it’s worked great for me and those who now work for me.

Mark Noseworthy

Producer: *Dawn of War 2*

> Let your passion for games shine through in the application and interview process. You would be surprised how many people forget to let their interest show and miss out on opportunities because they didn’t seem very engaged or interested in the industry.

Sid Meier

> The best way to get your foot in the door as a game designer is to make a game. It may not have all of the bells and whistles of a top tier title, but it’s the best way to show off the skills and creativity that you have.

Dylan Fitterer

Developer: *Audiosurf*

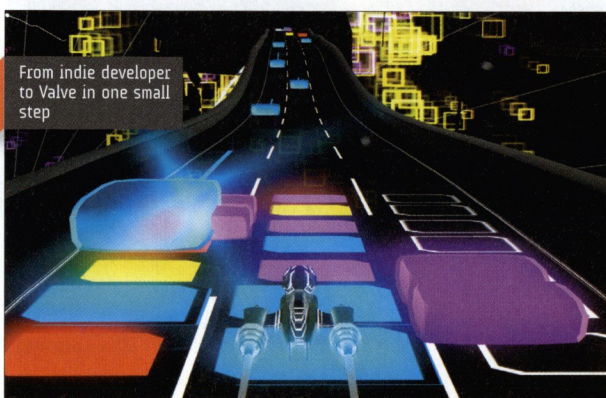
> Make games. If programming doesn’t click with you then make paper games. Whether you want to go indie or become part of a studio nothing gives you a better start than simply making games.

Whether you want to go indie or become part of a studio nothing gives you a better start than simply making games

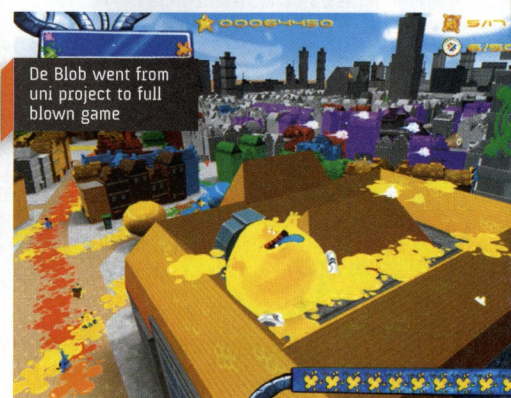
Prove yourself with a mod or garage game



From indie developer to Valve in one small step



De Blob went from uni project to full blown game



Dave Grossman

Telltale Games

> Study a broad variety of things. Seriously, I wish I’d taken more history classes. Be analytical while you’re playing games and try to figure out what the underlying factors are that do and do not cause fun to happen in your brain. And figure out what useful role you’re going to be able to play at a game company that’s going to land you that first job. Being able to program and being able to make art in three dimensions are still the two easiest ways to get a foot in the door.

Cliffy B

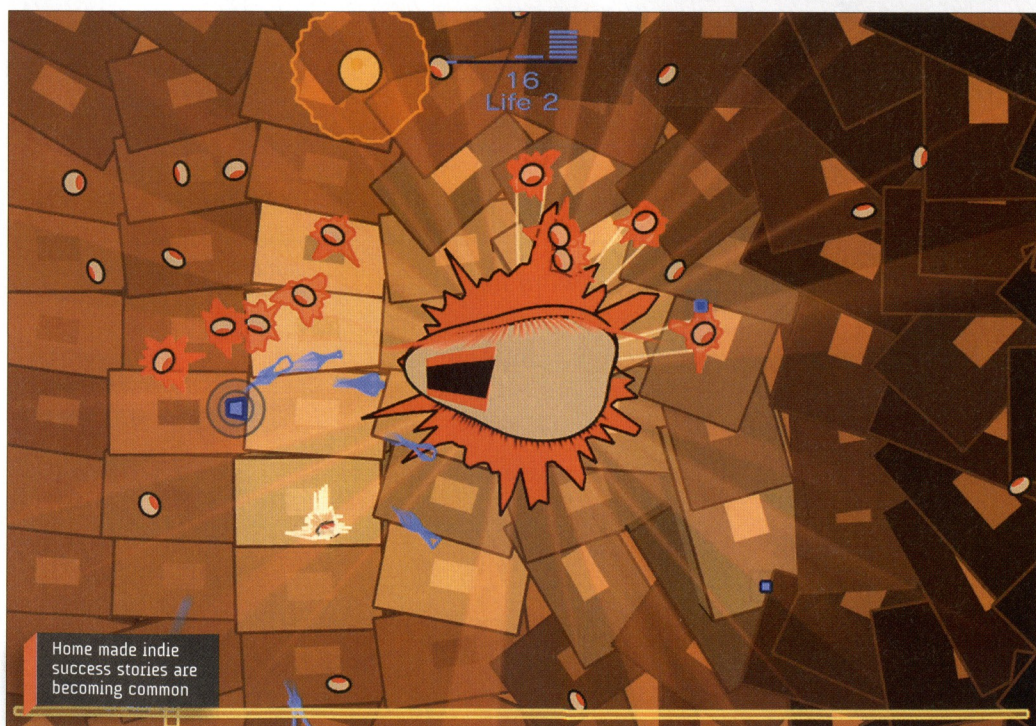
> Work hard and dream often. Evangelize yourself and your own work and make sure you network, not only online but also in person at conferences whenever possible.

Mark Morris

Introversion Software Managing Director

> It’s good to have a strong portfolio so writing your own games is a great way of showcasing your talent. Try to get some experience by getting some internships – take the longer vision and don’t necessarily turn down working for free if it will build your CV in the long run.

Home made indie success stories are becoming common





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Reviews Issue 180



- 66** Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
- 68** Geometry Wars 2
- 70** Too Human
- 72** Hellboy: Science of Evil
- 73** Ratchet & Clank: Quest for Booty
- 74** Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People Ep 1
- 76** Braid
- 77** Tank Universal
- 78** Naruto: Ultimate Ninja 3
- 79** Buzz: Quiz Master
- 79** 1942



REALITY BYTES

DARREN WELLS

United we stand, divided we game

"Hey, come over here," said Wilks, turning in his chair. "Let's play some Too Human co-op."

I scooted over to the Xbox and picked up a controller while he explored the main menu. "Let's see... singleplayer... multiplayer... ah, online only." Tumbleweed silence ensued, and just as quickly as I picked it up, I put that controller down again.

It's a familiar situation: the favouring of online multiplayer over the old-school "same room" variety. With the Internet a central part of modern society, gaming technology has evolved accordingly and uses it to deliver firmware updates, downloadable games, and multiplayer fragfests. The world of the wires puts us within reach of our next door neighbour or some random guy in Poland, expanding the player pool from one's circle of friends into the entire planet.

Even a game with four players can be fun. But four players in the same room? Tell them to go home. Without dedicated consoles and an Internet connection, most games cut players off at the menu screen by prompting them to jump online.

Is this the way of the future? Are games shifting away from the chips-and-couch scene and heading towards a culture that brings players together by splitting them apart?

Ask the developers and distributors, and the answer seems to be "yes, because we need to." It's a no-brainer that developers would prefer to sell four copies of their game rather than one, and online multiplayer allows them to do that. Get your mates over to your place for a night of gaming and you're only using the one disc in the one console, but play via the Internet and each participant needs their own copy. Bang, extra revenue, more copies get sold, and the game climbs higher on the sales charts.

Then there's the Big Brother aspect. Thanks to online multiplayer and the reams of data that race through each server, developers have the ability to analyse how the community plays their game. The number of players, how long you play for, your most-played map... you don't think that kind of data goes unmined,

do you? Stuff like that gets graphed, charted, put onto spreadsheets and beamed into conference rooms, and goes towards working out how a newly-released game will be maintained and supported, as well as towards the planning of future titles.

Contrast this with the approach of Nintendo, a company that's more than happy to pump out multiplayer games designed to foster the traditional party atmosphere. Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario Kart Wii are the obvious examples, but even a largely singleplayer game like Super Mario Galaxy allows a second player to jump in and assist in gathering star bits. There's online features available in Nintendo's games, but by the same token the company seems happier than Microsoft or Sony to throw a bunch of controllers at a game and let a single room enjoy it.

Of course there are exceptions. Perfect Dark Zero recreated the timeless GoldenEye vibe by offering two-player co-op and four-player deathmatch, while Top Spin 3 allows four-player doubles

matches. But look at the rest – or to put it bluntly, look at the *successful* games. Gears of War, Call of Duty 4, Grand Theft Auto 4 and others had no trouble raking in the cash, but were hesitant to let any more than two people share the one console. Perhaps the technological abilities of the hardware play a role here – the machine needs to pump out four polygon-filled screens at once – but if games as recent as Mario Kart Wii can use the quad-split-screen approach, there's little justification for others that toss it on the scrap heap.

Much ballyhoo is made about the clichéd gamer stereotype: the one that spends all their time inside, alone, on their console. With much of today's multiplayer geared around the Internet rather than a big couch and some beanbags, is it any wonder why we're still bunkering down solo? It's from lack of opportunity rather than interest, and as long as games are designed with the developer's interests in mind rather than the consumers', this is the future we face.

Are games shifting away from the chips-and-couch scene?

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM: What's It All About?



0-49

Marzipan

50-59

Coach Z

60-69

Bubs

70-79

The Poopsmith

80-89

Senor Cardgame

90+

Trogdor




70 TOO HUMAN 360



72 HELLBOY 360



74 STRONG BAD'S COOL GAME FOR ATTRACTIVE PEOPLE EP 1 PC

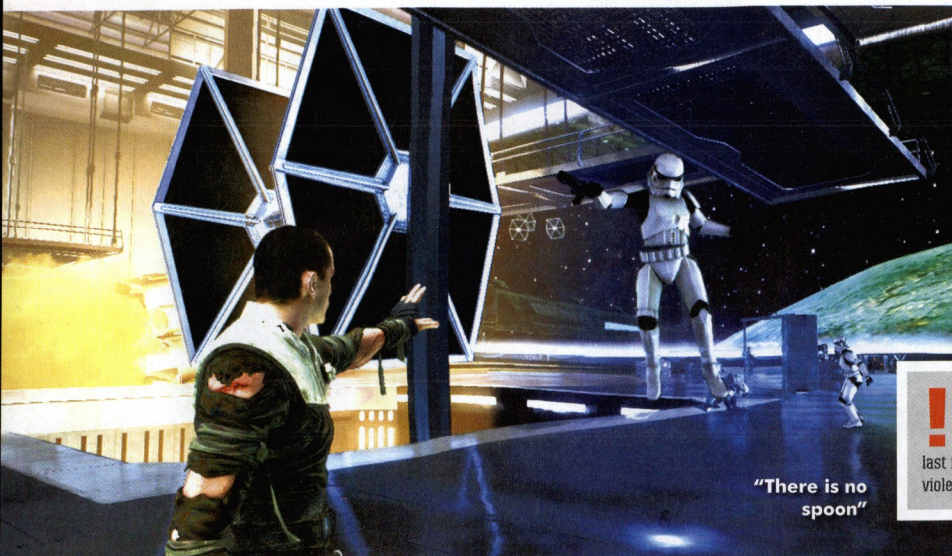


66 STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

LucasArts kicks some serious Jedi arse

Retraction:

Last month we mistakenly reviewed FaceBreaker from early code. We apologise to EA and the readers for this oversight. When final code becomes available we will re-review the game and give you our definitive opinion.



"There is no spoon"



!!! Didn't see what they did there? "Starkiller" was to be Luke Skywalker's last name, but was deemed too violent for a blonde farm boy.



"Take that, potential new action figure!"



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

DARREN WELLS doesn't need to see your identification

Being a jerk is fun. You're free to kick small animals as hard and as far as you like, you can cut into any queue you want, and taking candy from a baby is as easy as taking candy from... well, you know.

Being a jerk is fun, but being a jerk in the Star Wars universe... now that's something else. With the powers of the Force at your disposal, potential for jerkiness goes way off the charts, and The Force Unleashed demonstrates precisely this. With little more than an extended arm you're able to push over hapless stormtroopers, destroy property, fling debris through the air and crush windpipes to your heart's content. It's very much a game that takes the mystical Force and couples it with an asshat simulator.

Of course, there's more to it than just throwing around stuff, with the storyline plugging a few gaps between the third and fourth Star Wars movies. During Darth Vader's galaxy-wide purging of Jedi, he



stumbles upon a youngling with serious Force-wielding potential. This much occurs during the first level, where the game casts you as Mr Vader as he storms through Kashyyyk, and during this time you have the full Force gamut at your disposal. You have all the power, all the moves, and all the abilities, and in a manner similar to the opening moments of Assassin's Creed, it gives you a decent taste of what's to

[above] Not Pictured: All the burn scars on his back

come before you're shunted a few rungs down the ladder.

That shunting comes when Vader finds Little Junior, and rather than cleaving him in twain with a saber swing, he trains him as his secret apprentice — the character you play as thereafter. Codenamed "Starkiller" (see what they did

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

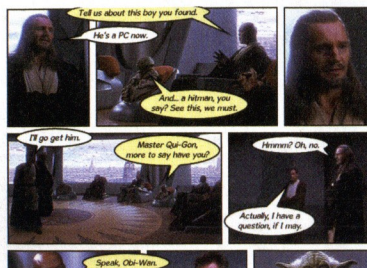
category: **Action** / players: **1**
developer: **LucasArts**
publisher: **Activision**
price: **\$99.95** rating: **M**
available: **Now**



there?), he hops from planet to planet following Vader's Jedi-killing orders, with the requisite sexy female pilot and a comic relief droid in tow.

FEEL THE FORCE

That's the backdrop, so how about the game? Well, it's certainly not lacking technical prowess, that's for sure. The Force Unleashed threads together a range of impressive code horses, including Havok physics, Digital Molecular Matter (DMM) and the Euphoria engine. We've all seen Havok in dozens of games, so if you're still scratching your head, go and throw a few barrels around in Half-Life 2. DMM is applied to any destructible object, meaning that they bend, break or shatter in the way they do in real life, not according to any pre-programmed



I PUT ON MY ROBE AND LIGHTSABER Ever wondered what The Phantom Menace would be like if it were a tabletop D&D game? Neither had we, but it was a question that some Internet bods thought deserved an answer. Thus, we have Darths and Droids (www.darthsanddroids.net), a comic that turns every moment of Episode 1 into a scene from a role-playing game, complete with a DM and one of the player's kid sisters jumping into the role of Jar Jar Binks. Episode 137 is priceless. View or view not, there is no "might".



!!! The Force Unleashed is coming to every platform in existence (sans PC), but our review reflects the experience offered by the Xbox 360 version.



"You're Fired! Geddit? I'm The Apprentice! Ah, forget it."



rules or around pre-fabricated fault lines. Euphoria gives all those tumbling bodies a sense of inertia and weight, and you'll see it at work plenty of times as you send countless opponents to their doom. Together the tech goes towards presenting some thoroughly enjoyable action (Occasional framerate stutters will interrupt it, but when you've got

[above] "I'm taking your mother on a date!"

rest. Oh, and don't forget about Force Lightning, saber throws and exploding domes of Force energy. Yeah, the freedom to be a jackass in The Force Unleashed is there in spades, and the entire game is built around its potential. You're never

the freedom to be a jackass in The Force Unleashed is there in spades, and the entire game is built around its potential

three CPU-intensive engines at work there's bound to be some hiccups). You're able to lift a heavy crate with the Force, send it blasting through a barricade and into a gaggle of stormtroopers who'll tumble over like armour-clad ninepins. You can pick up a lone soldier and fling him into the rest of his buddies. You can push baddies off the edge of a ravine. You can raise a heavy boulder above enemies' heads, drop it and let gravity do the

short of a handy crate to hurl at the enemy, never far away from an imposing chasm to drop them from, and never a few steps from an energy barrier to fry them on. Throwing a lightsaber into that mix should be instant win, right? Yes, "should be". Sadly, it's easy to see which of the two disciplines — Force powers and saber combat — drew the shorter straw, as wielding the iconic Star Wars weapon quickly emerges as the paler option.

(INSERT LIGHTSABER NOISE HERE)

It's clumsy, for one. There's very little grace and skill involved in lightsaber battles, and although Starkiller's moves do look cool, little control is required beyond a repetitive mash of the X button. What's more, the canned animations of the main character also hamper the experience: once Starkiller is sent on his arse by the opposition, it takes an agonisingly long time for him to get back up. He spends a Bahama holiday on his back before deciding to get to his feet, and of course during this time an enemy has more than enough time to recharge its attack or get in a better position. It soon becomes clear that combat is often best handled from a remote location — i.e.: through the use of Force powers —

rather than charging in to handle things up close and personal, and it inadvertently stymies tactical freedom amid game mechanics that are designed to cultivate it.

Still, there's ways in which to craft your own Starkiller, with the game offering plenty of abilities and Force powers to unlock. Changing your lightsaber's crystal will gear it with particular powers, and costume changes will, uhh, pimp out your Sith. Do be aware that swapping clothes will send you back to your last save point, so perhaps it's best to step away from the wardrobe if it's been a while between drinks.

Oh sure, there are other nits to pick, such as the occasional hand-holding throughout puzzles and the Vader sound-alike that does anything but sound alike, but you know what? Flinging a stormtrooper against a wall kind of makes up for it. The Force Unleashed is perhaps the best game to date that depicts the real power of the Force, and although it comes with niggles, it also comes with a heck of a lot of fun. ☐

Primal Force freedom, detailed levels, decent story

Framerate chugs, second-rate saber combat, misc niggles

HYPER VERDICT

Get it for the Force rather than the lightsabers, and you're in for a fun ride.

VISUALS

90

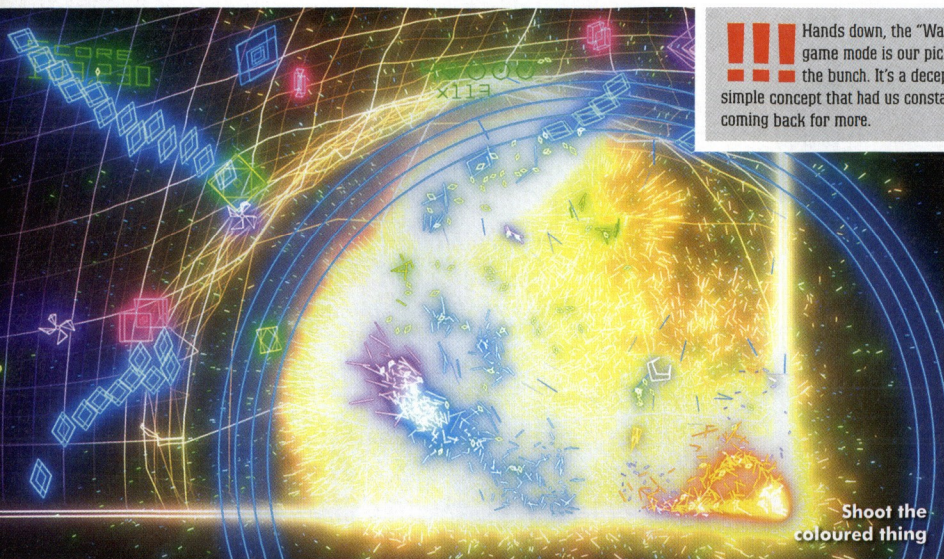
SOUND

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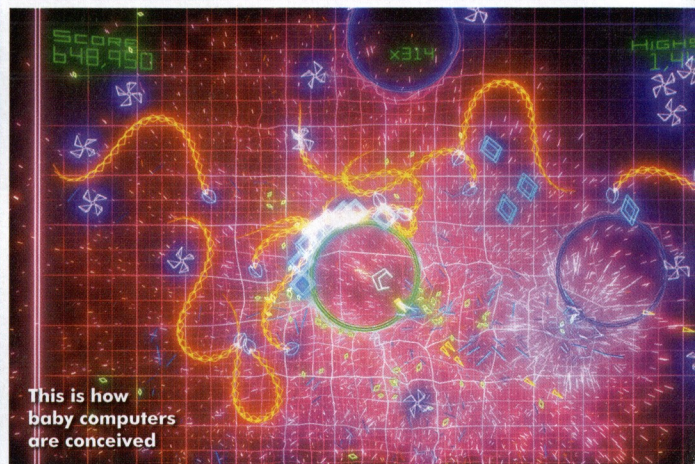
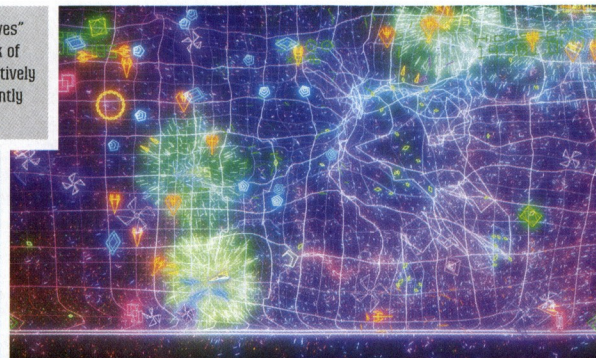
GAMEPLAY

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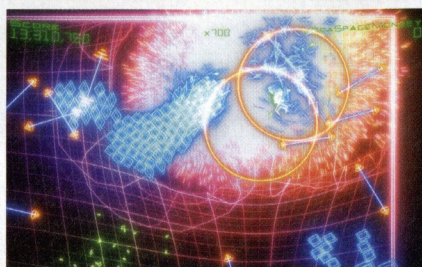
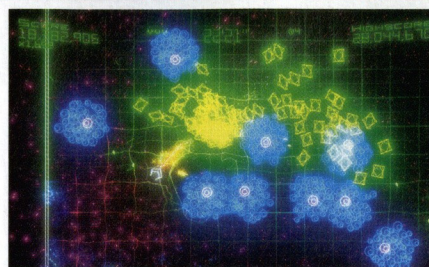
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Hands down, the "Waves" game mode is our pick of the bunch. It's a deceptively simple concept that had us constantly coming back for more.



This is how baby computers are conceived



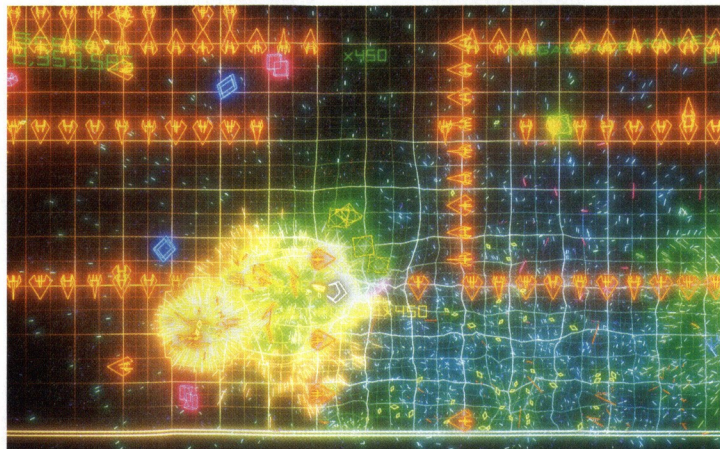
Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2

00110101 **DARREN WELLS** 10010011

This must be the videogame that videogame characters play. Geometry Wars 2, like its predecessor, looks like it was ripped fresh from the bowels of a CPU of the 80s, flying in the face of today's textured polygons. Comparisons to TRON are obvious: neon lines and techno music are the game's primary ingredients, and they go towards crafting a supremely fun shoot 'em up.

Forget about story, this is all about shooting anything that moves and surviving long enough to see the next wave of opponents that want you dead, all to the tune of synthesised music that wouldn't be out of place in a retro sci-fi film montage.

[below] Waves - so nasty, so much fun



IT'S ALL IN THE STICKS

Both thumbsticks are used to control and fire your ship: left stick to move, right stick to fire. Thankfully blasts can be aimed independent of the ship's movement direction (kind of like a tank turret), which prevents the game from merely being Asteroids: Colour Edition. Most of the game's modes arm you with a simple blaster and a limited number of bombs, the latter causing instant death to every on-field opponent. A quick squeeze of either trigger button sets it off, and it comes in mighty handy during instances that positively fill the screen with foes — boom, the screen is wiped clear, and the points roll in.

With each defeated enemy leaving a teensy yellow spark — a geom — in

its wake, collection of these is key to climbing the multiplier ladder. Often you'll scoop up bundles of these at once, and just as quickly another wave of baddies appears and hunts you down. Swift elimination of them coupled with your multiplier sees your score climb ever higher, and a quick glance at the XBLA Leaderboards reveals thousands that seem to have it down to a fine art. We're talking scores in the tens of millions. In a game that throws a screen of enemies your way every few seconds.

MODE SELECT

But it's not just about blasting your way up the ladder, as the different game modes sufficiently mix things up. "Evolved" is the most traditional — simply score as many points as you can — and "Deadline" is similar, but gives you a three minute time limit. "King" not only presents you with a single life and deprives you of bombs, but only allows you to shoot within designated circles which slowly dissipate. "Pacifism" is even more brutal: one life, no guns, and special gates to fly through that blow up nearby enemies. "Waves"

X360 PS3 Wii PC PS2 DS PSP

category: **Shoot 'em up** / players: **1-2**
developer: **Bizarre Creations**
publisher: **Activision**
price: **800 MS POINTS** / rating: **G**
available: **Now**

puts baddies in rigid line formations that fly up, down and across the screen, and "Sequence" throws you through twenty formations of enemies and gives you a 30 second time limit for each.

Each of them are hectic, and the game's visuals sometimes make it even more so. The sheer amount of colour and neon explosions on screen has a habit of sometimes masking incoming enemies, and even though there's little in the way of powerups, sometimes baddies look enticingly like a bonus item, causing initial confusion for the newbie player.

Sticking with it, however, reveals Geometry Wars 2 to be a tight and satisfying download, despite not being a huge leap beyond the original game. It's still more than enough to engage first-timers and old hats, making it stand as one of today's finest shooters. **«**

Great retro look, satisfying gameplay, diverse game modes

Sometimes overwhelming visuals, often unforgiving swarms

HYPER VERDICT

Like colour? Like shooting things? Like retro? Like this!

VISUALS
88

SOUND
89

GAMEPLAY
91

89

STAR WARS™

MINIATURES

Unlock the Secret Power of the Force

The Clone Wars are over, and the Empire is rising. In this dark time, Darth Vader secretly takes on a Sith Apprentice of his own to assist in the hunt for the Galaxy's remaining Jedi. Together, they will unleash the Force like never before, and determine the course of an Empire!

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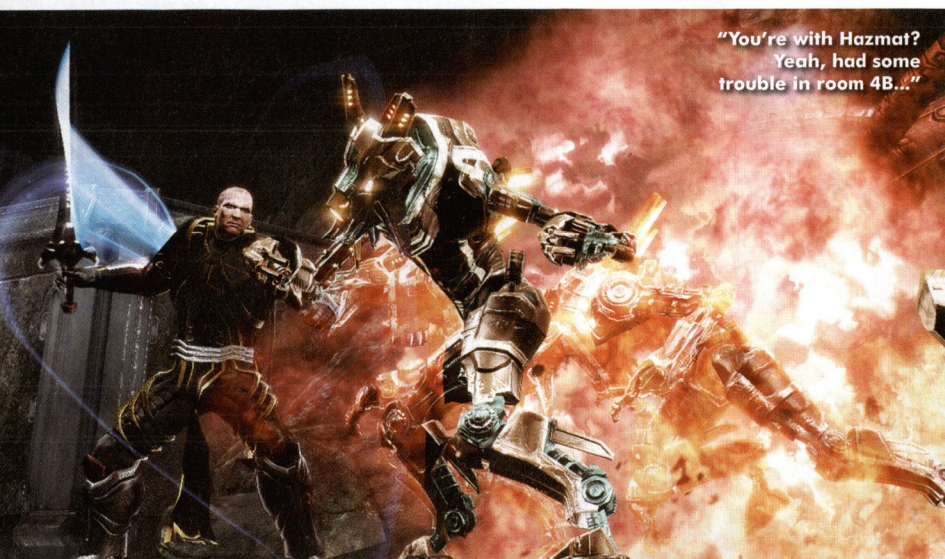
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STAR WARS
THE FORCE
UNLEASHED



TOYS R US®



Too Human

Some say **DANIEL WILKS** isn't human enough...

In the futuristic world of Midgard, Baldur, the son of Odin, is widely thought of as the best of the Norse gods but, in this futuristic take on the Norse pantheon, he's considered by the other gods to be too human due to his preference for natural living and empathy with humans rather than relying solely on the genetic and cybernetic augmentation that gives the Norse gods their power. It is the twilight of the gods and the self-replicating robotic enemies of the Aesir, created by the long dead Ymir, have laid waste to the world of Midgard — only one city remains and from it the remaining gods wage endless war to regain control of the planet and to protect the humans in their charge.

This isn't your typical take on Norse mythology (the recent Viking from Sega takes a far more literal approach to the mythology) but much of the transposition of myth from canon to a futuristic setting is quite clever — Yggdrasil, the world tree is transformed from a



giant tree that supports the world to a supercomputer that keeps it functioning, and within it reside the NORNs (Non Organic Rational Nanosystems), AI witches who manipulate and influence the flow of virtual magic and information. Nidhogg, the dragon that gnaws the roots of the world tree is a virus. Elsewhere the transposition becomes a little more ham-handed — all of the robotic enemies in the first two

thirds of the game are referred to as Goblins, Trolls and Dark Elves — after smacking your hundredth robot it just comes across as a little silly. The limited number of different enemy types also begins to grate after a few hours.

MYTHTAKES

To say that there are some pretty big expectations for Too Human is something of a colossal

X360 PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP
category: **Action RPG** / players: **1-2**
developer: **Silicon Knights**
publisher: **Microsoft**
price: **\$99.95** rating: **M**
available: **Now**



understatement. In various forms, the game has been in development for ten years. In some ways Too Human lives up to some of the expectations placed upon it. The Norse mythology is interesting and can make for a great hook into the proposed trilogy, and the next generation graphics are sometimes impressive, but playing through the first installment of Too Human leaves the impression that the game, rather paradoxically, has been released a little too early, as many of the mechanics in the game are either archaic in design or a little undercooked.

Although players are fixed in the role of Baldur, players are free to choose his character class from a list of five; Champions are all round warriors with no weaknesses, Berserkers specialise in melee attacks



ONCE THERE WERE FOUR... Throughout most of the production cycle of the Xbox 360 iteration of Too Human, four-player co-op was touted as one of the major selling points of the game. Unfortunately, some way into development, four player was cut down to two-player co-op, enabling players to bash their way through the campaign over Xbox Live. In addition to online co-op, Silicon Knights says that there will be additional Xbox Live goodies, including downloadable suits of armour and weapons, and DLC content that will enable players to continue after the campaign has been finished.



!!! We haven't had a chance to test out online play as yet but we'll let you know what we think in an upcoming issue.

!!! Is it just us or do the Goblins look just like the Geth from Mass Effect?



at the expense of armour and ranged attacks, Defenders specialise in shields and health, Commandos are skilled with ranged attacks at the expense of their melee skills and Bio-Engineers can regenerate health. Each character class features three interlinked skill trees enabling the player to spec the character how they want as they increase in level.

RISE TO ROBOTRON

Melee and ranged combat feel like a cross between Rise to Honor and Robotron — players control Baldur with the left thumbstick and attack by angling towards the enemy with the right. Holding down the right trigger switches from melee attacks to ranged attacks, allowing players to seamlessly intermingle sword and gun play. When it works, the combat works very well — Baldur can dash from one enemy to another, pinballing between them laying down an unholy amount of pain — but unfortunately there are times that the combat system just bogs down gameplay. Due to the rather unfriendly AI camera, aiming for specific targets in crowds is often all but impossible, and the melee system is too imprecise when surrounded by a group of enemies. In addition to the basic melee attacks there are numerous

special moves keyed to specific thumbstick movements — such as being able to unleash damaging killing blows, ranged melee attacks or juggles — but from our playing we found that the controls lacked the sensitivity to distinguish one input from another a lot of the time, making pulling off a specific move something of a crap-shoot.

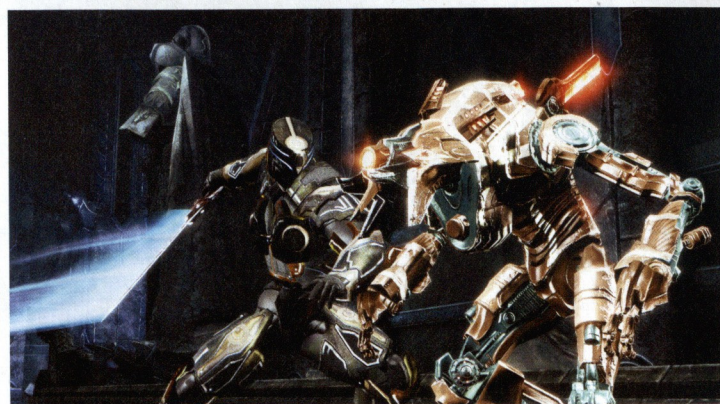
The end result of killing hordes of enemies is loot, and when it comes to acquiring new items, Too Human is an absolute winner. A prefix/suffix item randomisation system (much like Diablo) keeps the items flowing, giving the player a steady upgrade curve and sense of achievement. The randomised items are also a good source of laughs — not only are some of the multi-barreled names patently silly, but the randomised colours of some of the armour make for some hilariously garish and ugly ensembles.

ANGELS OF DEATH

And then we get onto the topic of death. It sounds a little like the whine of a bad player to list dying in a game as one of the major problems with gameplay, but hear me out. Every time Baldur dies in game, the player is treated to a lengthy, inescapable cutscene of a Valkyrie flying down from



"Yeah, my face veins are instant ice breakers when I'm meeting ladies..."



The randomised colours of some of the armour make for some hilariously garish and ugly ensembles

the heavens, picking up Baldur's body, carrying him away and then depositing him again either in the battle or at some other point in the level (seemingly at random). These lengthy cutscenes wouldn't be so bad if they were infrequent, but death is a constant companion while playing Too Human. Of the five available character classes, only one has the ability to self-heal — all others must rely on random health drops from monsters, a mechanic which is both hideously outdated and muddle-headed. The difficulty level also veers wildly from too easy to near impossible, as one encounter may see Baldur facing a horde of melee mobs that can be killed within a hit or two but the next may pit him against a dozen tough critters with ranged attacks and melee shields, making it all but impossible to escape unscathed.

The production values range from superb — there are a couple of brilliant cutscenes and some of the level design is truly impressive — to quite average — there is a definite lack of different enemy types to keep players interested. Generally the voice acting, effects and soundtrack are very good, but Too Human is saddled with some of the worst incidental dialogue ever.

This is not to say that Too Human isn't a fun game. There is a fair amount of enjoyment to be had from smacking the crap out of robots and collecting loot, but it is a little disappointing to see, after all these years in development and with all the ambition shown in the setting, that Too Human is rather unpolished and feels outdated. Hopefully the planned sequel will go ahead and will clear up the problems of the first in the franchise. «

» Ambitious and clever transposition of a classic mythological pantheon

» Enemies lack variety; death animations; feels unfinished

HYPER VERDICT

It's been cooking for a decade, but Too Human feels oddly underdone

VISUALS

86

SOUND

88

GAMEPLAY

80

78



!!! Hellboy features a co-op mode in which Player 2 can play as either Liz Sherman or Abe Sapien. Each character is voiced by their respective movie actors (Selma Blair and Doug Jones) but when compared to Hellboy, both feel underpowered.



"Okay... who farted? Seriously, was it you?"



No, no... put yor hip into it. And point harder!

Hellboy: Science of Evil

DANIEL WILKS is an evil scientist

We've been looking forward to Hellboy: Science of Evil for a number of reasons. We have a soft spot for any game that involves RON PERLMAN in any capacity — yes, we even have a very small soft spot for Turok for that very reason — but more importantly, we love the Hellboy franchise. We've been waiting for a Hellboy game to wipe the foul taste of the truly atrocious Hellboy PC title of 2000 from our mouths, and thankfully Hellboy: Science of Evil is a darn

sight better. Unfortunately it's all a matter of degrees — truth is, it's still not a very good game overall.

The main, and most crippling problem with Science of Evil is that there just isn't any real content to the six levels of the game. Here's a basic rundown of almost every level: Hellboy runs into an area, which is promptly blocked by Devil May Cry style impassable ghost-walls, and then has to hit X repeatedly to kill every enemy that spawns, occasionally grappling a black and

white flashing monster to perform a finishing move and thus regain some health or holding down Y for a charged attack. After all of the enemies in the area are defeated, the ghost walls drop, enabling Big Red to move on to the next area to, more often than not, repeat the entire process. Sometimes Hellboy's path will be blocked by a door or a fallen log, but much like combat, pretty much any obstacle can be overcome by repeatedly hammering on the X button. As in the comics (and movies), Hellboy carries his trusty revolver, Samaritan, but although it is a fantastic sounding weapon — both in name and effect — the gun is more useful in solving puzzles than it is in combat.

CRAP!

To be fair there are the occasional boss battles and puzzles that have to be solved and some of these are quite fun — we definitely have a soft spot for the surgically modified gorilla with flail hands — but on the whole, the lack of imagination in the combat mechanics just turns the vast majority of encounters into a rather mundane mashfest.

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

category: **Action** / players: **1-2**
developer: **Krome Studios**
publisher: **Konami**
price: **\$109.95** / rating: **M**
available: **Now**

The story is also a little underwhelming, skipping almost at random between present day events and flashbacks to earlier adventures and relegating the vast majority of the storytelling to cutscenes. The comic book look of Hellboy translates well into digital form and RON PERLMAN puts in a decent performance as the Nazi-hunting demon but the production design is hampered by some seriously low-res textures, an unstable framerate, some clipping issues and incidental dialogue that seems to consist of only three or four phrases repeated ad-infinitum.

There's nothing overtly bad about Hellboy: Science of Evil — there are no truly broken mechanics or concepts — but the final game comes across as being either lazy or rushed, neither of which is a particularly glowing accolade. ☹



RON PERLMAN; better than the 2000 PC game

Repetitive; unstable framerate; dull

HYPER VERDICT

Someone needs to make a game that does Big Red justice

VISUALS
80

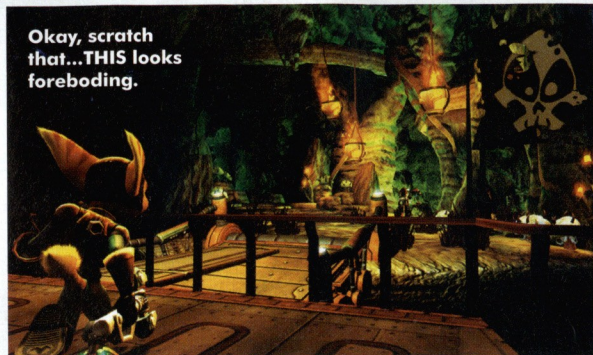
SOUND
78

GAMEPLAY
55

53



A metal skull thing? Looks foreboding.



Okay, scratch that...THIS looks foreboding.

Dead robot head on a stick + slightly gay first-mate dedication = funny



Ratchet & Clank: Quest for Booty

DIRK WATCH likes double entendres

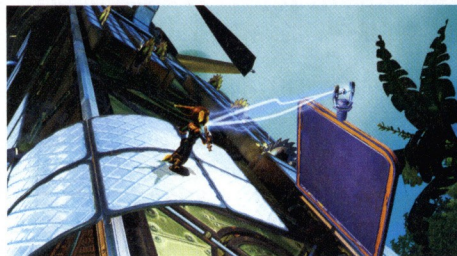
If you're a fan of the Ratchet & Clank franchise but have yet to play Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction, you may want to wait to read this review, as Quest for Booty, a PlayStation Network exclusive R&C episode begins right where the previous game left off — namely with Clank disappearing, seemingly kidnapped by the diminutive dimension traveling Zoni. Of course, Ratchet jets off to the rescue, with Talwyn and space Pirate Rusty Pete in tow.

As the oh-so subtle name suggests, Quest for Booty is a pirate themed adventure, with Ratchet having to track down a space pirate by the name of Darkwater to find a map leading to the magic widget that will pinpoint Clank's location. It's all very typical R&C story and gameplay — a very impressive

feat considering that Quest for Booty is a 3-4 hour long download game. No compromises have been made to the quality of Quest for Booty to fit it into a conveniently downloadable size. It's as lovely to look at as Tools of Destruction (Ratchet still has the fuzziest ears in gamedom), the script is tight and funny and the level design is great. Hell, the developers have even managed to fit in some new gameplay mechanics to keep the franchise fresh.

TOOL IT!

Ratchet's wrench has always been one of the staple elements of the R&C franchise. Previously



the wrench has only been used to bash the heck out of enemies and to tighten bolts, but Quest for Booty introduces the ability to pick up and throw explosives/light sources with the wrench and a kind of electric grapple that allows Ratchet to remotely manipulate specifically marked objects, allowing him to perform various tasks such as dragging platforms and bridges to new locations, flip the angle of platforms and crank down giant springs enabling the furry-eared Lombax to launch himself to incredible heights. Fans of the rail sliding sections of previous games will be pleased to know that they make a welcome return in Quest for Booty and they control as well as ever.

X360 PS3 Wii PC PS2 DS PSP

category: **Action/Platformer** / players: **1**
developer: **Insomniac Games**
publisher: **Sony**
price: **STBA** / rating: **PG**
available: **Now**

There are a few niggles that hold Quest for Booty back — chief amongst them being the fact that after the opening level in which Ratchet fights his way through a pirate horde, Ratchet loses all of his weapons aside from the wrench. While the level design is based around only having the wrench, it is still disappointing to be given all the fun toys to play with at the beginning of the game, only to have them cruelly taken away soon after.

That said, Ratchet & Clank: Quest for Booty is nearly everything we could have asked for as a downloadable episode in an already established franchise — it's polished, makes no compromises when it comes to quality and due to the spot on pacing and length, leaves the player not frustrated but instead hungry for more. Fingers crossed we see more episodic content like this in the future — for a variety of IPs. «



Geddit? "Booty"?
Geddit? Ah, you're no fun.

No compromise on quality; new mechanics; great level design

Takes away toys after the first level

HYPER VERDICT

A great new addition to the franchise.

VISUALS

92

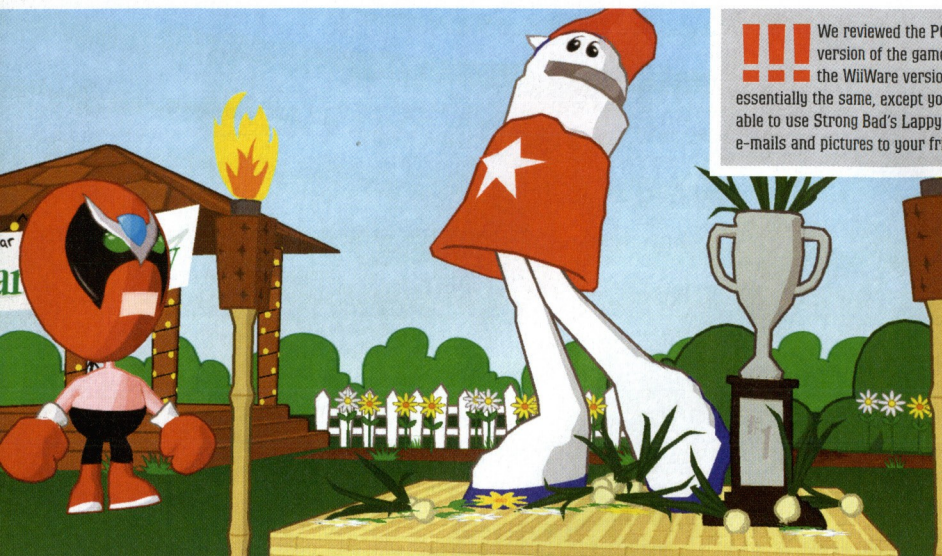
SOUND

89

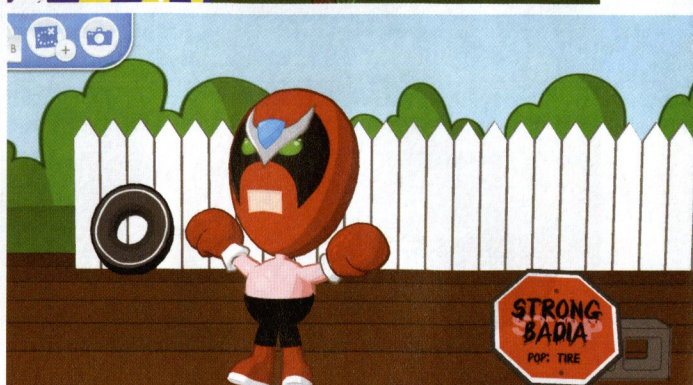
GAMEPLAY

90

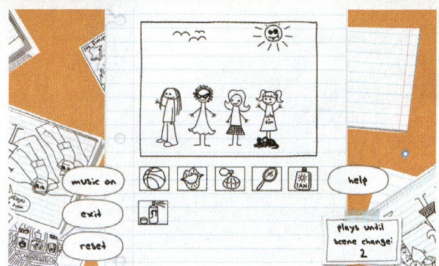
89



!!! We reviewed the PC version of the game, and the WiiWare version is essentially the same, except you're able to use Strong Bad's Lappy to send e-mails and pictures to your friends.



Unsurprisingly, Tire holds the majority vote in Strong Badia



Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People – Episode 1: Homestar Ruiner

DARREN WELLS checka-checka-checks his e-mail

The online world is a perilous one, where even a simple cup or bathtub can be used in all manner of mentally scarring ways. Amid the horrors Homestar Runner stands as one of the Internet's last bastions of family-friendly content, appealing to kids and adults alike. Chances are you're well and truly familiar with the site — cartoons, games, marshmallows, yada yada — so let's skip the needless background filler and go straight to this, the first game in a series of forthcoming episodic offerings.

"Homestar Ruiner" throws Strong Bad and the crew into a point-and-click adventure game that plays out like an extended cartoon. After receiving an e-mail that asks why Homestar has not been on the receiving end of a pummeling, Strong Bad sets out to make it happen and, naturally, wackiness ensues. All the main characters

are there for the ride, and familiar locations such as Strongbadia and The Stick are all present and accounted for. Yes, it's all presented in 3D, but despite Strong Bad and the crew being made with polygons rather than sprite-based shapes, the colourful cartoony look is well and truly intact. It looks and feels exactly like the source material.

FHQWHGADS?

The humour also comes across flawlessly. Simple, quirky, and grin-inducing without needing to resort to expletives or fart jokes, it's never short of a zingy one-liner or non-sequitur. "I gave it to Pom Pom to read on the train," says Homestar of Strong Bad's missing videogame manual, before adding in a hush-hush tone, "and by train, I mean toilet." Every clickable object will elicit some kind of response from our Mexican wrestler friend, and conversations carry on in a manner befitting the original site.

In fact, that's an element in SBCG4AP that represents the biggest departure from the adventure game mould. Engage Strong Bad in a conversation with another character, and rather than offering word-for-word options, simple icons that represent topics of discussion appear in a speech bubble. Other times you might be presented with an angel or devil icon that lets you respond in a kindly or not so kindly manner. It's a clever way of indicating the direction your choice will lead, and it also preserves the humour that would otherwise be spoiled if a text-based presentation was used.

Other aspects stick to the formula, in part because it's best to, and because the game chooses to. Given that the foundations of the adventure genre have long relied on some truly weird solutions ("Use hat with fishing rod? Use moustache with piggy bank?"), the Homestar Runner universe is a natural home for such craziness, and it's perhaps because of

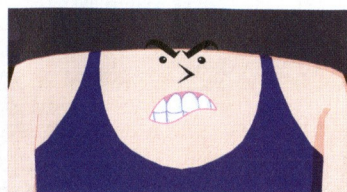
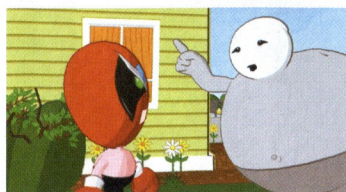
PS3 | PS2 | PS1 | PC | Wii | DS | PSP

category: **Adventure** / players: **1**
developer: **Telltale Games**
publisher: **Telltale Games**
price: **\$9.95** / rating: **G**
available: **Now**

this that the puzzle design feels surreally logical. When Strong Bad needs to swing an obstacle course his way, pouring a crate of jelly into a water hazard makes sense. The game is fully aware of the prerequisites and pitfalls of its genre — much of the tutorial is spent making fun of the formula — and since crazy situations require crazy solutions, the game makes no bones about presenting both.

Despite a few weird bugs nudging their way into the game (subtitles occasionally kicking in uninvited, characters' eyes sometimes disappearing), it's an enjoyable romp enough romp, although it's unlikely to do anything for non-fans. For the rest of us, it's a great introduction to a series that we're keen to see more of. **C**

[below] The rivalry between Limozeeen and Sloshy continues



Remains true to the website, great presentation

No Senor Cardgache, contains a few bugs, may be too simple for some

HYPER VERDICT

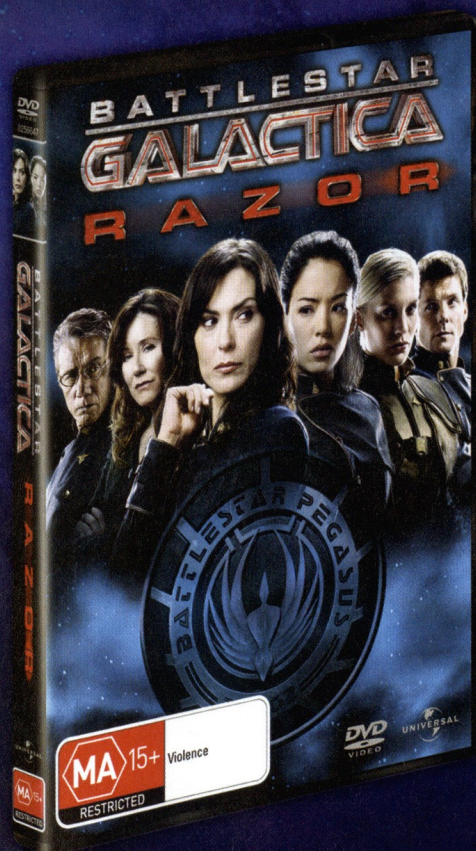
Not the most hard-core adventure game, but a great one for HR fans

VISUALS **89** SOUND **88** GAMEPLAY **81**

79

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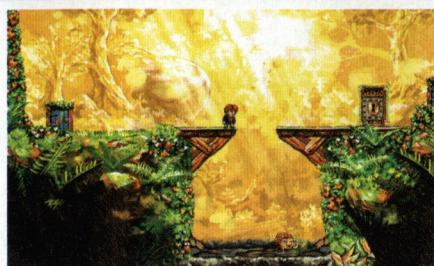
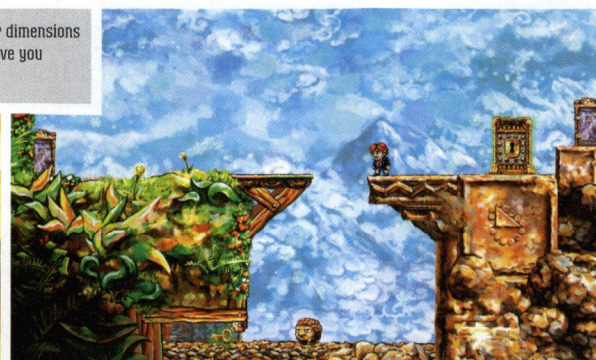
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!!! Thinking in four dimensions can seriously give you brain strain.



Braid

DANIEL WILKS wishes the world were different

The innocent, painterly, almost child-like look of Braid is a mask behind which hides one of the most diabolically frustrating and difficult games in recent memory. It's also one of the cleverest and most strangely touching, as the story, told via storybooks at the beginning of each world, details a journey of loss, redemption, bittersweet love, longing and loss. As Tim, a stout, black-suited, red bowtie wearing hero, players must make their way through six dreamlike, fairytale worlds to rescue his princess, kidnapped by a terrible monster because, as we are told early in the game, "Tim made a mistake".

A seemingly simple side-scrolling platform/puzzle game, Braid is

not really like anything you have played before. Sure, the gimmick of rewinding time has been used in games before but never has it been so integral to gameplay. Rather than simply being a method by which the player can circumnavigate death, the control of time is the single most important ability in the game. Each world is made up of a number of individual levels, each of which contains one or more jigsaw puzzle pieces. It isn't entirely necessary to collect all the pieces to progress to the next world, as players who are into the whole brevity thing can simply run from one level to the next without solving the majority of puzzles, though doing so negates the entire point of the game.



X360 PS3 | Wii | **PC** | PS2 | DS | PSP
category: **Puzzle/Platformer** / players: **1**
developer: **Number None Inc.**
publisher: **Number None Inc.**
price: **1200 Microsoft Points** / rating: **G**
available: **Now**

The puzzles range from simple timed jumps through to full four-dimensional reasoning as each new world introduces another time manipulation concept to the game. The first world sees players simply using the time control powers to avoid death and rewind some actions, but once those levels are cleared players soon find themselves having to contend with items that operate outside the time-stream — they continue to move in the prescribed patterns even when time is being rewound — and later even solve puzzles by using time to create a rewind doppelganger of Tim. It's a very heady, very clever and very, very difficult challenge, but this makes solving challenges and finding puzzle pieces all the more satisfying.



Braid is only a short game — wily players can complete the game in a few hours — and aside from speed running the levels there is little reason to play through the game again once it has been beaten, but that shouldn't stop anyone with an interest in puzzle games and an Xbox Live account from downloading this gem. Like the brilliant Portal before it, Braid is exceptional on nearly every level, from the painstakingly hand-painted backdrops through to the intensely clever puzzle design. At 1200 Microsoft Points it's a little more expensive than most games, but it's 15 odd dollars well spent. We've all got our fingers firmly crossed that there will be a sequel some time in the future — this is definitely a game that deserves one. «



Brilliant puzzle design; deceptively emotional story	Deeply frustrating; little replay value	HYPER VERDICT	
It might not be as impressive as Portal, but Braid is just as good.	VISUALS 88	SOUND 85	GAMEPLAY 95
94			

A screen from the upcoming blockbuster TRON 2

Our review copy of the game only ran in a 4:3 aspect ratio, although we were promised that widescreen will eventually be incorporated. The screenshots we received definitely seem to indicate that native widescreen is real

Tanks for the memor- (Snip! You're fired - Ed)

Tank Universal

TIM HENDERSON can destroy tanks with his fists.

The Indie scene seldom touches upon the FPS genre, and for good reason. While creativity, talent and dedication can do amazing things with finite resources, some genres have ballooned to require the sort of scope that only multi-million dollar budgets can produce. Last year alone saw the release of Bioshock, Halo 3, The Darkness, continuation of the Half-Life saga, as well as numerous lesser games that wouldn't have been decapitated by the bar had it not been raised so damn high. So,

[below] You believe in the Users?

just how does an Indie go about going to war with the steamrolling juggernaut that is Call of Duty 4? The simple answer is that it doesn't.

RED AND BLUE

Just like it says on the metaphorical tin, Tank Universal is a game that has you in the cockpit of said war machine. Only you're really just wearing a headset, and as such the game is actually a representation of somebody else's VR experiences, and so Tank Universal finds its first shortcut to looking acceptable without needing the latest Unreal graphics engine — it bases its look on Tron rather than an actual battlefield.

The game actually looks pretty good for its part, with striking blues and reds that clear away any territory confusion, and smoke and weapon effects that benefit from being stark, sharp and pixilated. Strangely, the game also contains an optional grain effect that goes a long way in softening the image and adding a layer of analogue discontinuity.

In the end though, the graphics are mostly just serviceable, which is something that could be said of much of Tank Universal in general. Focusing upon the role of a new recruit in a rebel tank squad, the action tries not to draw comparison to the current crop of FPS blockbusters by emphasizing that this is tank combat. A peppering of (extremely simplified) RTS-influenced resource management and team building helps differentiate things further, but while this is a nice bit of inventiveness, the end results still suffer one painful truth: no firefight ever becomes terribly exciting or tactically intricate. Battles are broken out over a series of scenarios that

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP
category: **FPS** / players: **1**
developer: **Dialogue Design**
publisher: **Meridian4**
price: **US \$17.95** / rating: **N/A**
available: **Now**

often play out like more elaborate desktop games presented in 3D, which would be an ingenious way to make a confronting genre more comforting to casual players were these scenarios not so bloody long.

There are other niggling issues such as the audio largely being background noise that does little to provide sound cues to aid awareness of the world around you. But perhaps this is a little harsh: Tank Universal is a big achievement that has had the simple misfortune of having chosen to swim in a pool full of Olympic athletes. It does certainly entertain at times, and for such an undertaking it's surprisingly glitch free. We want to love it more than we do, and while there's not really enough here to satisfy the more experienced gamer, we nonetheless hope that it finds itself a willing audience somewhere. «

Nice RTS influence; decent alternative to common fps

... that doesn't quite match up to some of the better fps experiences

HYPER VERDICT

Tank Universal wants your love but can't quite hold it.

VISUALS

70

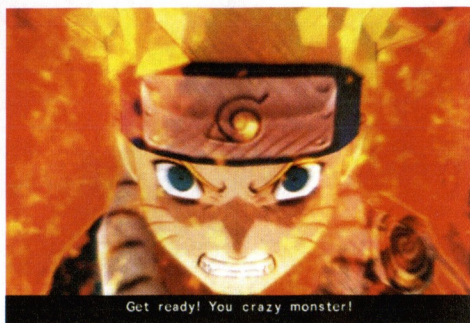
SOUND

60

GAMEPLAY

66

68



Naruto: Ultimate Ninja 3

PS2

category: **Action** / players: **1-2**
 developer: **Cyber Connect 2** / publisher: **Namco Bandai**
 price: **\$69.95** / rating: **PG** / available: **September 15**

It's a little unfortunate that *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja 3* was released in the West after the Ubisoft Xbox 360 game *Naruto: Path of the Ninja*. Even though the Namco Bandai title was released in Japan before *Path of the Ninja*, the late Western release of *Ultimate Ninja 3* leaves it feeling a little stale when compared to Ubisoft's first attempt at a *Naruto* game.

Ultimate Ninja 3 keeps the simple, combo based fighting of the first two games, tweaks the mechanics a bit and adds a new game mode called *Ultimate Contest*, in which players must fight other Ninjas to see who is the most powerful in Leaf Village. In between actual bouts, *Naruto* must explore Leaf Village and the surroundings, doing missions for the various inhabitants, thus earning XP, leveling up the character and making him better equipped to fight the next battle. Overall the *Ultimate Battle* mode feels like a watered down version of the gameplay from *Path of the Ninja* but does make for a fun few hours.

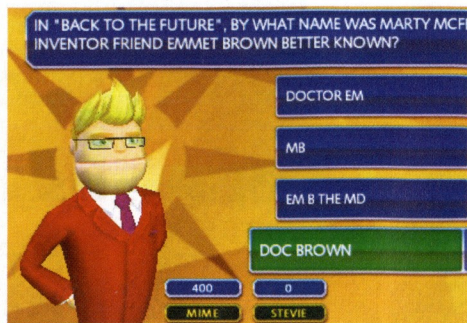
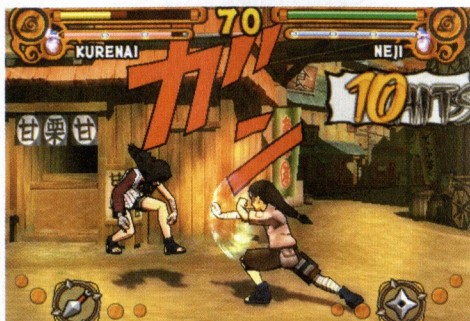
The fighting system remains fairly unchanged from previous games, with X for jump, Triangle for special attacks and Jutsu techniques, Circle for attack and Square to throw things, but to keep things fresh, each character (and there are some 41 to unlock and play in the Vs mode) can now enter "Summon Mode", in which they become an enormous, half-screen-filling demonic beastie for a short while. It makes a nice change from the stick-twirling finishers from the previous game but really doesn't add that much to the game.

If you're a fan of *Naruto* then you'll probably be a fan of *Ultimate Ninja 3*. If you have no idea who the mouthy ninja in the orange jumpsuit is, there's nothing here that will really draw you in.

RICO SUAVEZ

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS 80 SOUND 82 GAMEPLAY 78 **76**



Buzz: Master Quiz

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

category: **Quiz** / players: **1-6**
 developer: **Relentless** / publisher: **Sony**
 price: **\$69.95** / rating: **G** / available: **Now**

For two hundred points, Buzz on PSP is:

- a) *Kinda fun.*
- b) *Trivial.*
- c) *Pretty much the same as Buzz on every other platform.*
- d) *All of the above.*

If you went for D, congratulations! *Buzz: Master Quiz* is vaguely fun, definitely trivial and but for one major consideration, very similar to every other iteration of the *Buzz* series. Unfortunately its central premise is also its fatal flaw.

Buzz creates frantic buzzer beating party moments with groups of friends and offers bragging rights as to who is the biggest repository of trivial information. Great, but it goes without saying that *Master Quiz* played alone, with headphones, in the grim surrounds of public transport, doesn't offer quite the same, err... buzz.

Master Quiz isn't without charm though. The single player structure, while overly simple, does offer a challenge, particularly on the "Virus" rounds where players desperately race against a steadily diminishing score card. Multiplayer comes closest to recreating the *Buzz* party atmosphere with several ways to play including wirelessly with multiple PSP's and a pass-around format that allows more of the cut-throat tactical play that make the console versions so enjoyable.

Buzz: Master Quiz isn't a bad game and for true *Buzz* trivia addicts, there's only one way to get your fix outside of the lounge room. The PSP handles *Master Quiz* with ease, and video and photo components look as fetching as we've come to expect from Sony's handheld. What *Master Quiz* has unfortunately highlighted, though, is that party games are best played with a party.

DANIEL FINDLAY

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS 78 SOUND 65 GAMEPLAY 72 **70**



1942: Joint Strike

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

category: **Arcade** / players: **1-2**
 developer: **Backbone Entertainment** / publisher: **Capcom**
 price: **800 MS Points** / rating: **PG** / available: **Now**

How do they do it? These guys, right, these crazy guys who live and breathe top-down shooters, they play the things with pixel-perfect precision. The screen might be swarming with projectiles and bullets and laser beams and explosions, yet they'll weave in and out of it as casually as you like. Remarkable. Tremendous. And scary.

1942: Joint Strike is by no means the most frantic top-down shooter you'll play, but it's certainly no slouch. A coming together of elements utilised throughout the original series from the 80s, the game soon ramps up from the occasional plane and tank to throwing a sheer barrage of opponents your way. It's very much an old-school arcade game, requiring little more than a repeatedly tap-tap-tappy thumb and Malcolm-like dodging reflexes (seriously, you should see Malky play, he's rad).

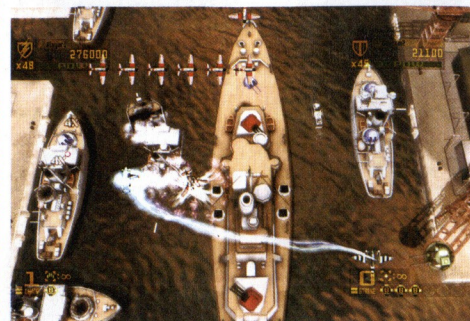
Gameplay is as you'd expect in such a title, but the presentation less so. Occasionally the game removes control from you to swoop the camera in low to the ground, achieving little more besides showing that, yes, we are in 3D Land now. The aesthetics consist of naught but brown and grey, which don't go towards particularly interesting visuals. Thankfully, a wad of weapon powerups and a variety of enemy formations means that the action quota is there in spades, and the two-player mode is a treat.

Yet it's not a particularly deep game, nor it is overly spectacular. It packs brown/grey visuals and a multitude of enemies, but it doesn't craft much of a lasting impression. While you're in the zone it provides a decent slice of old-school entertainment, but overall it presents little besides some interactive reminiscing.

DARREN WELLS

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS 66 SOUND 61 GAMEPLAY 74 **69**



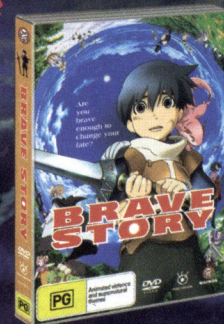


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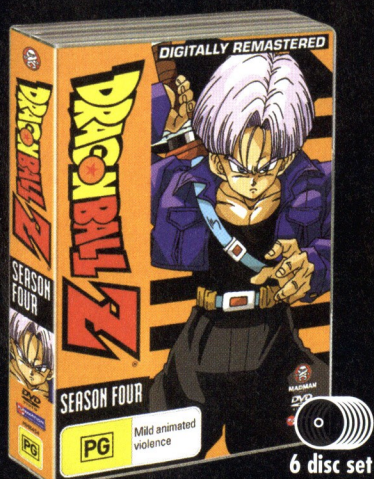
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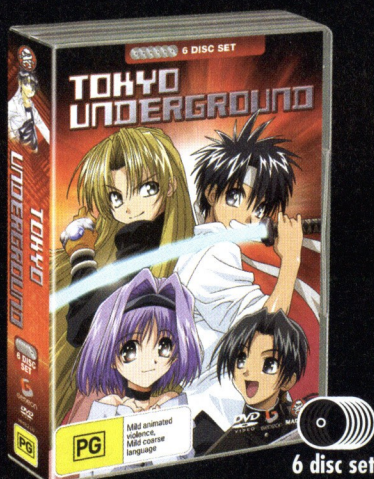
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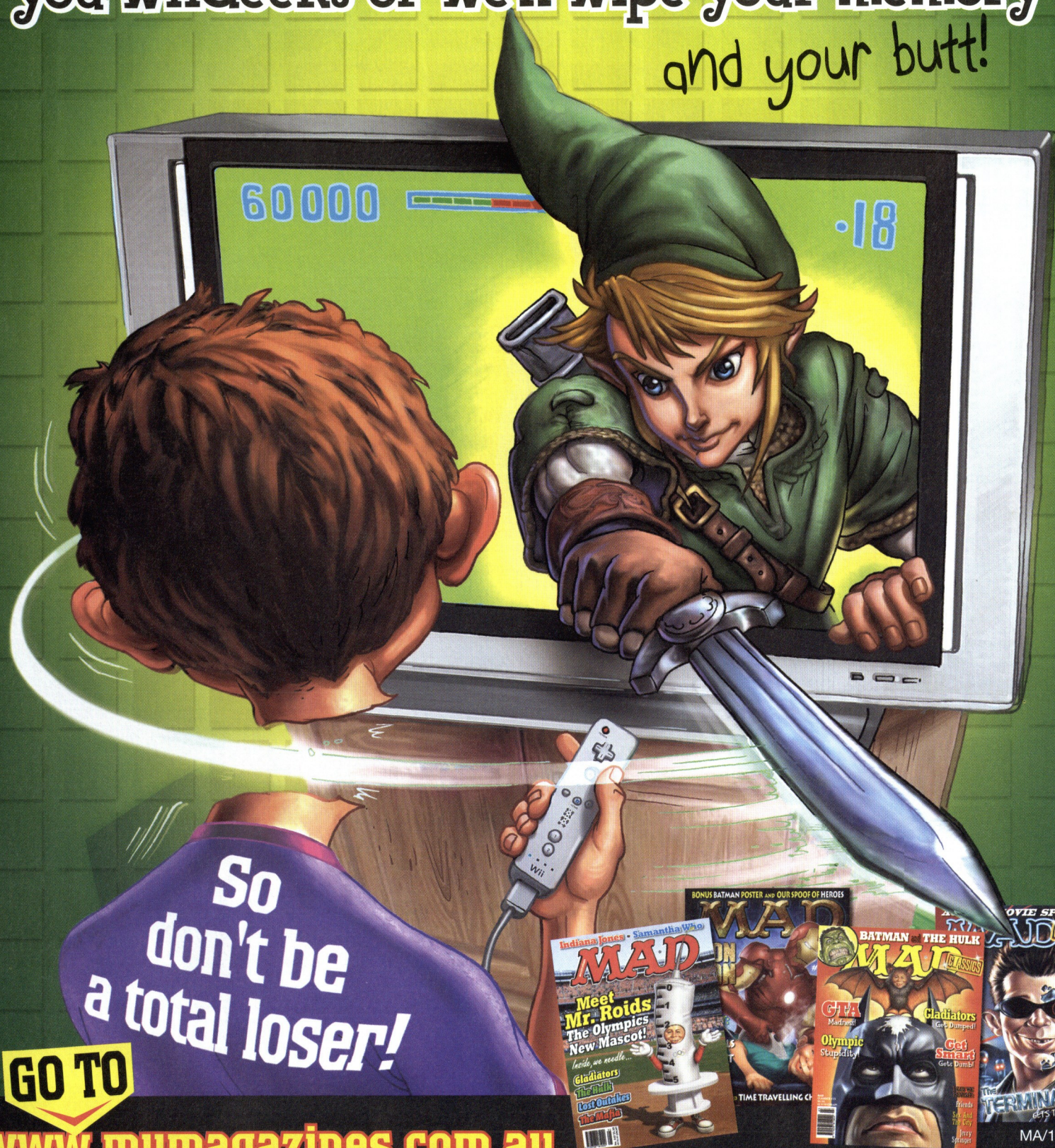


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» As Greek legend would have it, after the Titan Prometheus stole fire from the gods of Olympus and gifted it to human beings, the gods decided to offer a gift in kind in the shape of Pandora, a woman they moulded out of clay to be their harbinger of doom, a "Beautiful Evil" who would, through her actions and those of her descendants, curse the lives of Man.

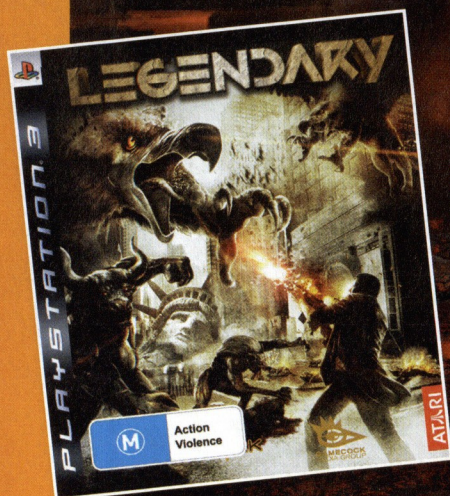
Once fully formed, Pandora was sent to Earth, where she found and opened a vessel containing all the evil in the world – greed, vanity, slander, anger, cruelty and more – fastening the lid when only hope remained inside.

In Atari's upcoming *Legendary*, a thief by the name of Charles Deckard opens the box, unleashing all of the evils contained within upon New York City leaving him with no choice but to pick up a gun and shoot the crap

out of many and varied creatures from Greek mythology. While we're not sure the epic poet Hesiod would approve on this modern take on the classic myth (and subject of his most enduring poem), but we think it sounds like a cracking good excuse to shoot some monsters.

All you need to do for a chance to win a copy of *Legend* is tell us, in 50 words or less, *Why did anyone think it was a good idea to keep all the bad things in the world in an easily found and opened box in the first place?*

Send your answers, with your name and address to: **Very Long Question, Hyper, PO Box 5555, St Leonards, NSW 1590** or email your entry to hypercomps@next.com.au with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.



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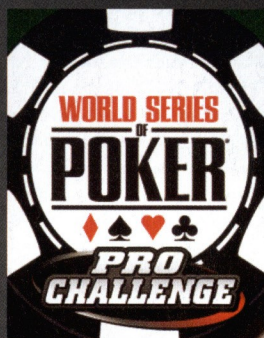
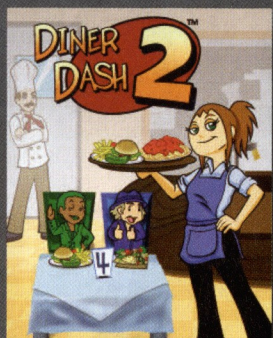
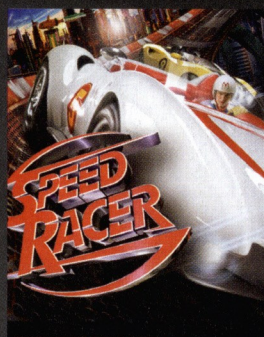
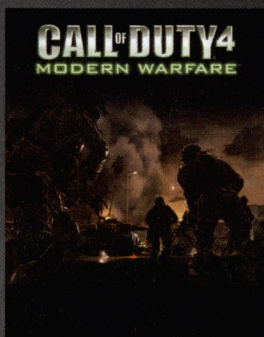
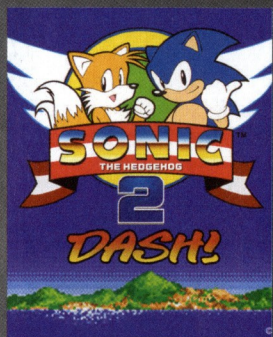


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Tech of the Future

Oh, the future. You want to know about the future? Well, let me tell you. Geminis will experience severe misfortune after an accident involving a shortbread tin, Libras can expect severe repercussions once they sell Uncle Jerry's liver on the black market, and as for you poor Taurus dwellers, well, let's just say it's best to avoid water for the next few years.

Thankfully, when it comes to gadgets and technology, the future is not only sounding more concrete, but more positive. There's plenty of exciting prospects on the horizon, and as Hyper's 15th birthday examines the important developments of years past, we're checking out what we can look forward to in the years to come. It might not involve flying cars and Jetsons-style toaster beds, but the things you'll have in your future home are pretty darned nifty.

> Microsoft Surface | 1 |

Picture a 30-inch touch screen on a table. That's Microsoft Surface, and although it's not yet aimed at the consumer market (we've got to wait until around 2010, when the cost comes down to Average Joe level), it's open to all manner of uses in the business world.

Imagine paying for your meal at a restaurant simply by putting your credit card on the table. Or when choosing your next mobile phone, dragging a handset over to an area on the table and have it bring up all the relevant technical information and pricing plans. Then there's the timeless finger-painting feature, guaranteed to keep your future kids occupied at daycare with none of the painty mess.

Aside from the table's multi-touch ability, it contains a network of infrared cameras that can read specially designed tags that operate in much the same way as traditional barcodes, and all the usual Bluetooth and Ethernet features that one would expect. The possibilities for tabletop gaming are obvious, and eagerly awaited!

> Toshiba Qosmio G50 | 2 |

With the Toshiba Qosmio G50, the future is quite literally happening right now. The laptop's Quad Core HD Processor presents the user with two neat features: video indexing and hand gesture control. Run your favourite movie or a pre-recorded TV show through the included software, and it'll identify each person's face and generating a thumbnail image of each time they appear. It's then a simple matter of clicking on the desired image and bang, you jump to that scene. Audio output is also scanned and presented as a graph, so whether you're looking for a scene

containing lots of guns and explosions, or a more subdued moment, it's never more than a click away.

With hand gesture control, remote controls and dead AAA batteries are thing of the past. Simply give your computer the thumbs up and it'll fast forward your movie, while holding your palm up in a hot-cop "Sergeant Says No" manner makes it pause dead in its tracks. No word on what happens when you give it the finger, but we hope it results in the laptop flinging your DVD from its drive like a Frisbee and severing your rude gesture at its base knuckle.

> CamSpace | 3 |

We briefly examined the CamSpace software in issue 178, and its potential continues to amaze. This piece of software takes your computer's webcam and whatever household item you wish, and turns them into a game controller. Hold a ruler, a drink bottle or even the game box itself up to the camera, and the software locks on to it and translates your movements into in-game commands.

The implications here are big. Rather than being tied to a particular design and layout, people can use whatever control method they're most comfortable with. Forget about memorising reams of input combos and contorting your hand around a behemoth button-filled monster – just pick up a pizza box and use that instead. It's an important step in making gaming appear more accessible, with the sheer button-laden nature of modern controllers playing a large part in daunting newcomers, so we're keen to see where CamSpace takes us.

> Johnny Chung Lee's Wiimote hacks | 4 |

You've probably seen this guy on YouTube, along with the talking cat and that guy that has a tennis ball machine aimed at his crotch. He's taking Nintendo's Wii controller to heights that the company (probably) never thought of, and his tinkering demonstrates just what we may see in future games.

Among the most interesting prospects is head tracking. After positioning a Wiimote beneath a television and pointing it at the player, Lee kits a simple pair of protective goggles with light-reflective tape. He fires up a homebrew application and the result is an instant 3D effect that uses the player's location in the room to adjust the on-screen perspective. It impressed the developers of EA's Boom Blox so much, that a head-tracking Easter Egg was going to be included in the game, but was pulled at the last minute. Darn it.

Lee's also made the Wiimote work as a digital whiteboard by outfitting an expired marker with a snippet of light-reflective tape, giving humanity a new way in which to draw boobies. About time, says us.

> Nintendo MotionPlus | 5 |

Okay, so it might not be on the same scale as the other items featured here, but Nintendo's MotionPlus addon for the Wii controller gives it that extra edge. Back when the console first came to light we were all promised a fantastic range of possibilities with the motion-sensitive Wiimote, and while it made an important step in game history, niggles were nonetheless present. Its limited range and sensitivity levels meant we weren't able to control that baseball bat with the finesse that we wanted, but hey, at least we weren't mashing A to swing – we were actually swinging.

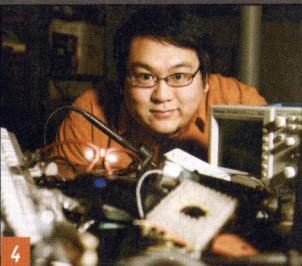
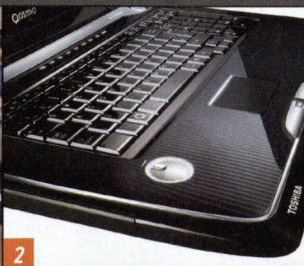
If the MotionPlus device can serve its purpose, the Wiimote will offer unparalleled control. It slots in Lego-style to the port where the Nunchuck plugs in, and enhances the motion-sensitive capabilities of the controller. That's a vital step on the path of gaming: if it makes a game easier to control and easier to the uninitiated to come to terms with, that's something that will permeate throughout the future of game design as developers seek to draw new in new audiences.

There's no doubt that motion-sensitive controllers are here to stay, so any advances that can be made towards their design will be considered welcome.

THE FUTURE THAT NEVER WAS

There's a humbling side-effect that comes with predicting future trends, and it's seeing what happens when you're wrong. Many brave souls have put their words and their dollars behind the Next Big Thing, and time either reveals them as remarkable successes or remarkable flops. Nintendo has a string of each to its name, with the latter camp including the likes of the Power Glove, R.O.B., and the Virtual Boy. While it's easy to laugh at the Big N for such foibles, it at least presents them as a company that's willing to take risks and delve into the technological unknown.

Still, we're yet to see a decent implementation of Virtual Reality, something that numerous Hollywood movies have presented as the future of technology. In its past and present forms it just doesn't work. Will tomorrow make it happen? Sure... when cars fly and we're eating Soylent Green on the moon.



by Darren Wells and Alan Moore

> VisionAire | 6 |

This is the kind of tech that helped Tom Cruise get to the position of fame he now enjoys, but don't let that put you off.

Obscura Digital, specialists in interactive media, have taken their multi-touch software and teamed it with the Musion Eyeliner Hologram Projection System to create one of the most awesome looking presentation tools ever seen. Admittedly it's not a true multi-touch system, seeing as it all takes place in mid-air, but there's no need to get bogged down in semantics with tech like this.

The VisionAire lets you (and multiple presentation-buddies) shrink, zoom and rotate images with a simple flick of the wrist. We're just at a loss why this isn't being used to track down murders before they happen instead of being used to promote the latest pharmaceutical wonders. Maybe they haven't found a reliable manufacturer of wooden balls yet. Still, it beats PowerPoint – and that can only be a good thing.

> Emotiv EPOC | 7 |

At first glance, you would be forgiven for thinking this was a sporty version of those weird spidery head-massagers that places like Hot Dollar like to promote so heavily.

I'm not entirely sure if it feels as sinister as those coppery coil things, but it's certainly a whole lot more awesome. Billed as the 'ultimate interface for the next-generation of human-machine interaction' the EPOC takes conscious and non-conscious inputs directly from your mind.

Best of all, you don't need an expensive neck port to plug the device straight into your brain stem. Using non-invasive electroencephalography (EEG), sets of sensors tune into electric impulses produced by your brain to detect thoughts, feelings and expressions. Connecting wirelessly to your gaming rig/console the EPOC makes it possible for you to control games with nothing more than the overwhelming power of your mind. You'll be like Professor Xavier, but with more hair and less mobility issues. Win!

> Unlimited Detail | 8 |

All this fancy pants hardware you've seen is a way off yet. But why wait for the future tomorrow when you can have it today? Bruce Dell has developed a new process for rendering graphics that promises to shave 15 years of development from truly photorealistic games.

His solution is based vaguely on voxels (although he prefers to talk about 'point cloud data') – a technology

some of you may remember from Comanche: Maximum Overkill back in '92. Critics argue voxels are a dead end, but we've seen a demo render a terabyte's worth of individual objects on a single core laptop. In real time. That's impressive by any metric.

Practically speaking, Dell expects the process to be most useful for rendering backgrounds. This frees up huge amounts of polygons for more complex foreground objects and removes draw limits on distant object, making photorealism a distinct possibility. If Unlimited Detail finds a sugar daddy, this would put Australia firmly at the front of a new graphics revolution.

> Quantum Computing | 9 |

The first computer, ENIAC, weighed 30 tonnes and took up 63m². It had processing power roughly equivalent to a sock full of batteries. Today's computer is about the size of two beagles and has the processing power of a whole floor of hosiery packed to the gills with batteries. Pretty impressive, right? Well, yes. But just like flares were impressive in the '70s, in years to come we will look back and laugh at the ridiculously archaic rigs we're so proud of today.

Based on technology involving dead (or alive) cats and an awesome old school platform game (no, that was Q*bert, you're thinking of Qubits, noob), quantum computing promises to take processing power to a whole new level of crazy wild, taking your computer up from the land of GigaFLOPS to mince around in the territory of 10 TeraFLOPS. It's kind of like going from a floppy drive straight to Blu-ray.

> Carbon Nanotubes | 10 |

Wags have called these little baddies the 'Clark Kent of microelectronics.' We like to think they're more like the little man on a tricycle that used to make R2-D2 look so awesome. Small, in this case, is definitely better – and at 1/100,000 the thickness of a human hair, these are pretty dang small.

Nanotubes exhibit some distinctly unusual properties. They are perfectly capable of acting as a wire or a transistor, for example, making them incredibly useful in chip manufacture.

Ultimately, we could see the nanotubes replacing the copper wires and silicon transistors that run the show today. A microprocessor made of nanotubes would be far smaller and far faster than anything we have today. The technology is still in development, but it can't come too soon for Silicon which has 10-20 years left before it can't get any smaller. Just in time for quantum computing! ☞

REVIEW



Apple iPhone 3G

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If you've somehow managed to avoid the hypetastical tricknology that is the iPhone then shame on you. Don't got the internets at your Amish colony? Jeez.

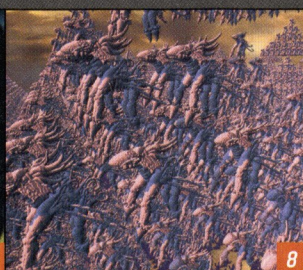
For the rest of you, you've probably read pretty much all you're going to read about it. For the record - yes, the battery life is risible. Strangely, it seems to be getting better over time. Still, if you're reading this, chances are you have a computer of some sort, so won't have too much trouble keeping your phone plugged into the USB for most of the time.

Apart from all the technical wizardry (touch screen, smart wifi/3g switching etc.), what really sets the iPhone apart is the app store. A month after release and there are already a bajillion apps for pretty much any occasion. There's Rotary Dialer for that old school vibe, PhoneSaber for ticking the RealGeek box and Dice Bag if you ever find yourself short of a 20 sided dice. My personal favourite is ClickWheel, which provides access to a whole heap of comics, from 2000AD to Brain Fist, all at the touch of a button - pretty handy for the daily commute. I just can't figure out why it's called ClickWheel...

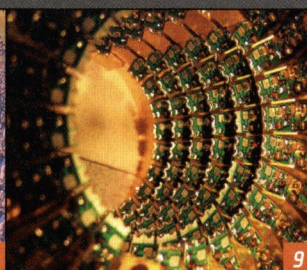
★★★★★



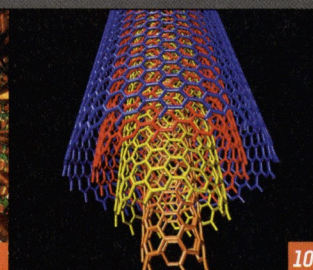
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The History of Videogame Magazines

Before the Internet we had magazines to rot our brains

By Mikolai

Before the Internet came about, people had to rely on other media for their news and information. For videogame fans in the '80s and '90s, that meant specialist magazines. Back in the day, these publications were the only real link between videogame fans and the industry. As such, the arrival of a new issue was a highly anticipated event. It was a month's worth of news, previews, reviews and tips in one package; like getting all your web trawling in one condensed hit.

Hyper has now been going for 15 years and is one of the longest running videogame magazines in the world. While the industry has seen countless changes in that time, one thing has remained steadfast; that feeling you get opening a new issue and turning to your favourite section.

STARTING AT THE START

The first computer and videogame magazines started appearing on newsstands in the early '80s. One of the most successful, and longest running, was the UK's C&VG (Computer & Video Games).

It was launched in November 1981 and covered the then fledgling 8bit computers. The ones you could assemble yourself if you had an advanced degree in beards, i.e. the early Spectrum ZX80 and some other glorified calculators.

As the British computer industry began to develop, a number of seminal magazines popped up. Zzap!64 and Crash covered the Commodore 64 and Spectrum (respectively). Both titles were published by the same company and featured the distinctive, airbrushed artwork of Oli Frey on their covers. They were also staffed by people whose only real qualifications were their high scores down the local arcade.

The UK may have released the first regular games magazines, but the US computer market was considerably more advanced. Rather than Spectrums and Dragons and Acorns, the US was all about the Apple II, Tandy computers and the newly arrived XT and AT PC compatibles. These systems were profiled in publications like Compute magazine. Compute began life in 1978 and ran until

1994. It started off covering systems like the Commodore Pet and Atari 8bit computers - offering type in programs that people could enter in BASIC. As the years rolled on the focus changed to PC clones, Commodore 64s and Amiga 500s. For a while Compute was one of the best selling and most reputable magazines in the industry - the mid to late 80s being a particularly profitable period.

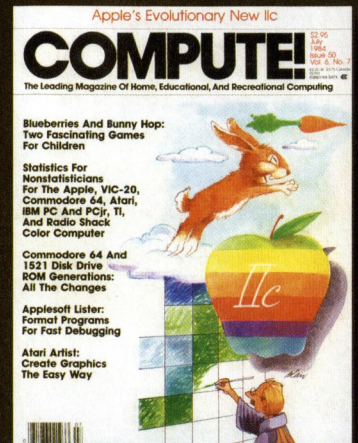
While these early publications set the industry in motion, by the mid 80s an increasing number of international magazines had emerged. None would prove as

Famitsu became an unofficial preview of where the Japanese videogame industry was heading

influential and prophetic as Japan's Famitsu. Launched in 1986 to cover Nintendo's Famicom [NES to us], the magazine enjoyed huge domestic success - thanks largely to the popularity of Nintendo's Famicom and the lack of any real competition. At the same time, Famitsu became an unofficial preview of where the Japanese videogame industry was heading; something that would become increasingly relevant as the 80s came to a close.

NINTENDO VS. SEGA

The rise of Nintendo's 8bit system (and the new home consoles that followed), fundamentally changed both the games industry and the publications that covered it. The videogame crash of the early '80s had seen home consoles sidelined in favour of home computers. This was the case throughout the mid '80s and the magazines on newsstands reflected this computer bias. The success of the NES (initially in a Japan and later the rest of the world) turned the market on its head. All of a sudden, PC compatibles and C64 games didn't look so hot. Not when you compared them to the likes

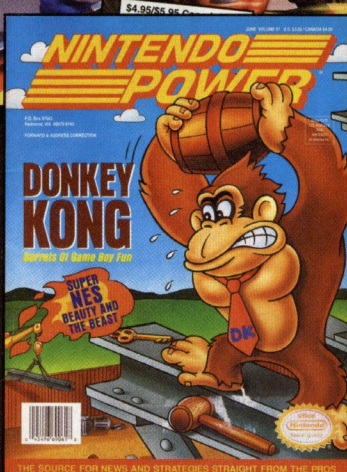


[top] Compute remembers when there were actually games on an Apple machine

[above] Famitsu covers the iconic Necky the fox on even-numbered weeks, and a generic j-idol on others.







[above] EGM hates Guile too [left] Nintendo Power - sweet custom DK art [right] Mean Machines highlights the last time the Sonic franchise was any good

of Super Mario Bros or Mega Man. By the late '80s the NES had single handedly resurrected the videogame market and reintroduced the home console. Naturally, publishers wanted a piece of the action.

Electronic Gaming Monthly (EGM) was launched in the US in 1989 to take advantage of this videogame boom and soon became the country's flagship games publication. It was founded by high school dropout Steve Harris — a member of the US National Video Game Team. He initially started a publication called Electronic Game Player in 1986 but it hit the wall after four issues. A small Chicago magazine distributor though the magazine had promise and offered Harris \$70,000 to start another publication in exchange for the distribution rights. Within the space of a year the magazine was being sold in over 50,000 US locations.

Although EGM was the first multi-format publication in the US with proper distribution, Nintendo's in-house publication had debuted a year earlier. Nintendo Power began life as a newsletter for members of the 'Nintendo Fun Club'. This was revamped into a full magazine in

Nintendo Power began life as a newsletter for members of the 'Nintendo Fun Club'

1988 and 3.6 million copies of the launch issue were sent out free to members. Approximately 1/3 of these took up the subscription offer. Still around today, Nintendo Power is best known for its Dragon Quest [Dragon Warrior] promo in the late 80s - all subscribers were given a free copy of Enix's Dragon Warrior game. Despite being a blockbuster in Japan, the game hadn't sold as well as expected in the US and Nintendo figured the promo was a good way to dump their excess inventory and introduce JRPGs to the US.

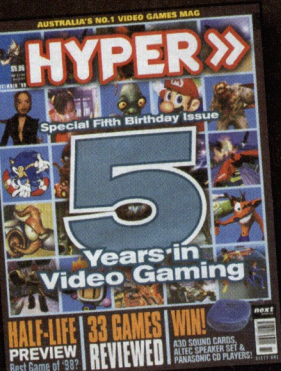
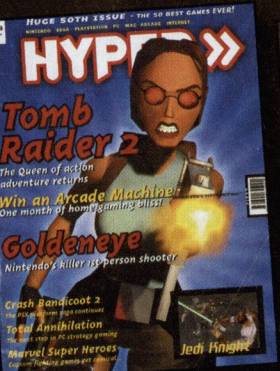
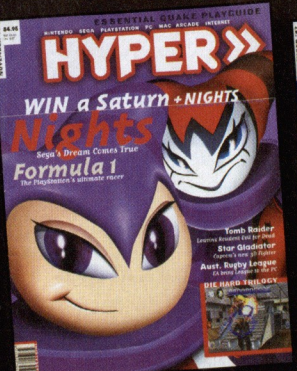
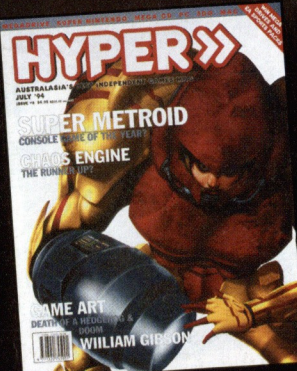
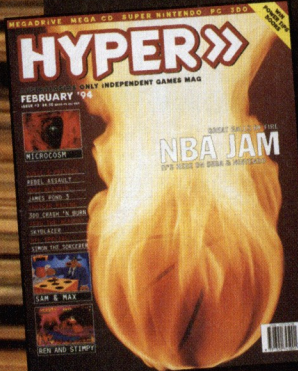
While the arrival of the NES in the US saw a number of new magazines launched to support it, the UK (initially anyway) adopted a different strategy — incorporating coverage into its existing multi-format games magazines. C&VG was the largest circulating publication at the time and former Zzap!64 writer Julian Rignall had resurfaced there as a writer and eventual editor. With Rignall's backing a new sub-section was introduced in C&VG dedicated to the latest Japanese imports. Known as Mean Machines, it first ran in 1987, showcasing

import titles for the NES, Master System and PC Engine. Within three years the UK's console market had grown so rapidly that the decision was made to launch Mean Machines as a stand alone publication. The first couple of issues covered the NES, Master System, Megadrive and Amstrad GX4000. This was quickly changed to a Sega and Nintendo focus as it became apparent that the Amstrad was 'fail' wrapped in grey plastic. Although it only lasted in its original incarnation for two years, Mean Machines made a huge impact on the publishing industry. The magazine's irreverent tone, editorial honesty and the way it included readers in the opening editorial pages helped it build a loyal fan base. By 1992 the magazine was so popular the publishers decided to split it into two separate entities (Mean Machines Sega and Nintendo Magazine System) in a bid to increase sales and revenue. It worked. But neither magazine was as good as the original.

HARDCORE JRPG GIRL GAMER MONTHLY

Mean Machines showed that there was a market for UK videogame magazines and numerous competing titles soon entered the fray. These new publications were usually aligned with either Sega or Nintendo and ranged from the good (Megatech), to the shambolic (Sega Pro). One of the most notable UK magazines to emerge around this time was the Super Nintendo dedicated Super Play. Launched in 1992, Super Play distinguished itself from the competition by focusing heavily on import RPGs, Japanese games and anime. Super Play was basically hardcore Otaku before people knew what that term meant. This obsession with all things Japanese and import extended to the anime themed covers and the layout as much as it did the articles and features.

While the videogame industry and associated magazines were chugging along very nicely in the early '90s, the focus was still very much on teenage boys in the bedrooms. This was reflected by the writing and smutty jokes found in



many of the publications. With a new generation of consoles on the horizon (3DO, Atari Jaguar, Sega's Project Mars and Nintendo's CD add-on), it became apparent that there was a gap in the market for an altogether different magazine. A serious, industry based publication aimed at an older demographic. Something like Edge.

Announced in 1993 with advertisements claiming it 'wasn't for everyone', the first issue of Edge came bound in black plastic — forcing people to buy it if they wanted to see what all the fuss was about. Anyway, the magazine came along at just the right time and quickly built up a modest, but hardcore following. It became synonymous for its in-depth looks at the industry, uncompromising review stance and anonymous, third person writing style. Perhaps more than any other magazine, Edge adopted a feature heavy look at the industry from the word go. Incidentally, an Australian version of Edge was briefly launched in 2004. It was sub-edited by a blind person and lasted all of six issues.

SHINY DISCS, HYPER AND SOLID SNAKE

Around the same time Edge was being launched in the UK, the magazine you're currently holding in your hands debuted on newsagent shelves. Stuart Clark was the first editor of Hyper and we figured we'd let him explain how the whole thing came about in his own words

"In the days Before Hyper, I edited a games magazine called Megazone, which was supposedly multi-format and independent but as Sega Ozisoft (at the time, by far Australia's largest games distributor) published it, it really wasn't. It was almost entirely previews and reviews of Sega games and Ozisoft PC titles, but as the Mega Drive was the current hot console and Ozisoft had most of the good PC games, it did well anyway. In fact, it did so well that Ozisoft sold it off to a professional magazine publisher."

Shortly after Megazone was sold off and he jumped ship, Clark received a call from Next Media (Hyper's old publisher). Next wanted to launch a new multi-

format videogame magazine and wanted Clark to head the publication. Taking inspiration from UK titles like C&VG and Mean Machines, the debut issue of Hyper went on sale two months later, October 1993. Meanwhile, Megazone went bust within the year. It was a sign of things to come.

As the 16bit era came to a close in the mid '90s and a new generation of consoles arrived, the publishing industry saw widespread magazine closures and consolidations. While multi-format titles (ECM, C&VG, Edge, Hyper) survived and prospered, the format specific publications were either re-launched or gradually killed off. That left a lot of people out of a job. Luckily, Sony's Playstation was there to pick up the slack. As the console began to redefine the videogame market, a host of new publications sprung up in support.

Official Playstation Magazine (OPM) was launched in the UK in 1995 and quickly became the biggest Playstation magazine around. By 1997 it was selling over 150,000 copies a month, a figure helped considerably by the cover mounted demo discs that accompanied each issue. While said discs cost very little to manufacture, the demos and previews they contained became a major selling point. In fact, the February 1999 issue of OPM sold a staggering 453,000 copies in the UK. You can attribute that to the Metal Gear Solid cover and the attached demo disc. As for all those 10/10 ratings the magazine liked to throw around to cover exclusives — well, we won't comment on that ;)

IT'S THE INTERNETZ!

While cover mounted demo discs were revolutionising magazine marketing, behind the scenes something far more interesting was taking place. By 1996, the Internet was a proper 'thing' and people were beginning to understand the opportunities it presented. For magazine publishers, that meant a

reappraisal of their whole business model, i.e. they weren't just pushing hardcopy previews and reviews in a magazine — they were selling information. And they way they did that was about to change forever.

Although videogame websites can be traced back to the early 90s, they were little more than text based newsletters. The first contemporary sites started to go up around 1996 and were spurred on by the arrival of 56k modems and affordable download plans. IGN was one of the first commercial websites to spring up and it went live in 1998. Its origins, however, can be traced back to 1996 when the publishers of the US based Next Generation magazine decided they wanted to get a foot in the online world. They set up former magazine editor Doug Perry in a small office with some computers and internet connections and told him to get busy. Over the next two years Perry helped group a loose collection of websites (N64.com, PSX Power and Saturn World) under the

[below] Some weird Aussie mag called Hyper. Apparently they've been around for a while.



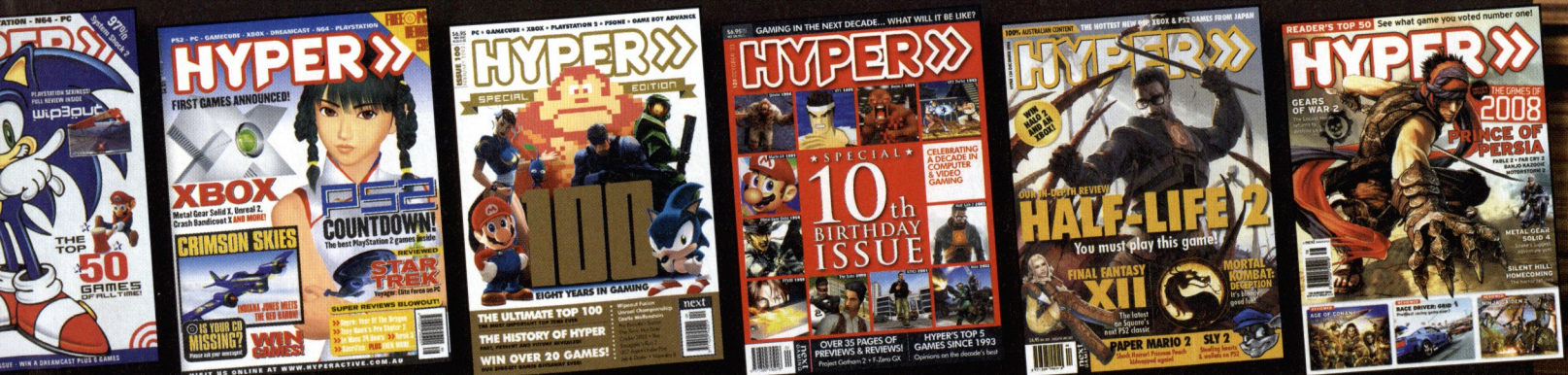
[above left] Super Play has a really awesome name
[left] OPSM knows the market
[above] Edge has the best covers in the industry

IGN banner. Let's hope he was well paid because News Corp bought the entire IGN network for \$650 million eight years later.

While IGN and Gamespot were two of the first videogame websites to emerge in the late 90s, they're since been joined by countless web forums, blogs, and competing sites. Not to mention a million rabid fanboys with their finger hovering over the Caps Lock key. All this online action has of course had a significant impact on print media.

Regardless, hardcopy magazines have survived. And they'll continue to survive. While they can't offer the same 24 hour news cycle (and outraged fan diatribes), they can provide more in-depth analysis. Once the dust has settled, it's usually the monthly periodicals that are putting the information in context and providing an overview of the wider industry.

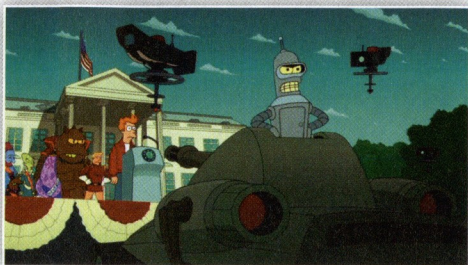
Besides, there's nothing quite like opening a new magazine, fresh from the printers, and turning to your favourite section. That was the case in 1981 when C&VG launched and it still holds true today; 17 years later, with the 15th anniversary issue of Hyper. "



Futurama: The Beast With a Billion Backs

FOX, PG

Hurrah, Futurama is back, everyone rejoice, and so on. Now that the hullabaloo surrounding its resurrection has had time to simmer down — and let's not take anything away from that; the fact that it's back is awesome — the movie-length features can focus on working as stand-alone products, while receiving a bigger beam of analytical spotlight. The first, Bender's Big Score, was packed with references to the



series, with the overall storyline expanding on events and situations that were hinted at throughout the show's four seasons. It wasn't a bad movie, either.

The Beast With A Billion Backs springboards off that film's cliffhanger and seemingly feels satisfied that enough fan-winks were delivered — save for a few instances, there's nary a nudge to events past. That pretty much forces it to deliver a self-contained plot, wherein a rip in the universe leads to an interdimensional multi-tentacle being having neck sex with everyone on Earth. Fry becomes the pope of a new religion when he's not being hassled by his polygamist girlfriend, Bender becomes the leader of the League of Robots, the Professor learns to work alongside his lifelong rival Wernstrom, and Hermes... well, Hermes doesn't do much at all.

Amid all that, there should be plenty of fodder for the writers to cultivate zingy humour, but sadly the laughs are fairly thin on the ground. Oh sure, there are chuckles, but nothing on par



Tug Boat Leela

with a decent episode, and certainly none of the heart that was present in the likes of Luck of the Fryish or Jurassic Bark. Things aren't remedied when Yivo (aka: Tentacle Planet, aka David Cross) is introduced mid-way, which precedes some bizarre moments that see everyone on the planet date, dump, and marry it. There's an inspired moment where Leela makes a knowing gesture by pointing to her eye, but leaves the Professor confused ("Are you blinking or winking?"), but it's a moment that merely hints at the brilliance that could have been.

Here's hoping the writers haven't exhausted their tanks after only two movies — we've still got two more to go. The Beast With A Billion Backs will no doubt form part of a Futurama fan's complete collection, but if you're looking to recruit new followers or want a belly laugh-filled night on the couch, other options await.

FILM: 6 / EXTRAS: 7

L: Change The World

MADMAN, MA

He's the eccentric genius with an uncomfortable slouch, a penchant for sweets and a first name consisting of a single letter. Death Note's enigmatic L also happens to be a master detective, and in L: Change the World we see him at work on a case that runs parallel to his fight against Kira.

After beating his foe to the punch by writing his own name in the lethal book, L has 23 days to live. During this time he becomes entangled in



a plot to wipe out humanity with an engineered virus, while juggling the company of a small boy who is seemingly immune to its effects, and the daughter of a scientist who aimed to find a cure. It's very much a Hollywood-type storyline, and casts aside the quiet "battle of wits" aspect that L is noted for in favour of having him run around outdoors and jump aboard a moving plane. Whether this goes against his character or adds more dimension to it is a contentious issue, but for our money it's nice to see what L can do when the situation requires it.

Despite L's name in the Death Note giving the plot a race against time element, there's never a real sense of suspense. A lot of things become stacked up against L, but the script wades through them almost dismissively: at one point, plot advancement quite literally arrives on L's doorstep. Still, the movie remembers to depict him as the master sleuth he is, with one scene in particular seeing L steam through a backlog of cases, offering help in numerous languages and



It's not tea, it's Dilmah

digesting information with ease.

Although the performances are a mixed bag (some are just too rehearsed and unnatural), the knowledge that L is heading towards his own fate makes watching him in Change the World a bittersweet affair. The idea of preventing man-made death while accepting that from the Shinigami is an interesting one, and while the film might not have explored all the possibilities within, it succeeds in giving L one last spotlight.

FILM: 7 / EXTRAS: 5



Black Belt

MADMAN, M

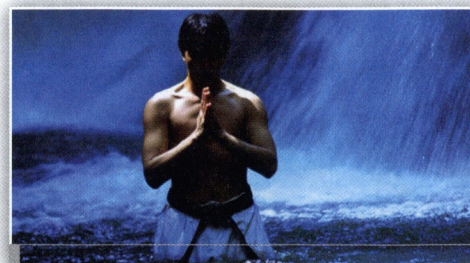
Although *Black Belt* (Kuro-Obi) is ostensibly a martial arts film, audiences shouldn't expect an action packed spectacle of flying fists and feet. Instead, if you approach the film from a more philosophical mindset you'll find low key gem or men trying to find their place in an increasingly militaristic world. Anyone familiar with samurai films will see a lot of genre similarities in *Black Belt*. Rather than focusing on the action, the crux of the film is the philosophical underpinnings of three black belt Karatekas who are forced to leave their dojo by the military police, who are keen to shut down all martial arts skills to use the locations as training facilities for the army. With no set path before them, the three students, Giryu, Taikan and Choei take different routes to self knowledge. Giryu, dedicated to

The victors of the bloody "Shirts Vs. Skins" conflict



"Please don't pull a coin from my ear"

maintaining his late master's edict of only using his skills for self-defense become a pacifist and something of a coward, whereas Taikan becomes more and more interested in challenging strong opponents, eventually stooping to working for the Military Police to evict other karate schools from their respective dojos. Naturally the two former companions are destined to meet again and fight, but the confrontation, and lessons learned by both combatants never feels artificial or forced. The subdued, grayed out tones used to frame the final fight are magic, even if they only



truly make sense after the fight is over.

While the philosophy of the martial arts is the core of the film, there are some outstanding action scenes. The karate shown in *Black Belt* is about as real as you can get — all of the combatants are real black belts and there is no use of wires or stunt doubles. The fights are both brutal and brief. When people get hit they stay hit — many of the fights only last a single blow.

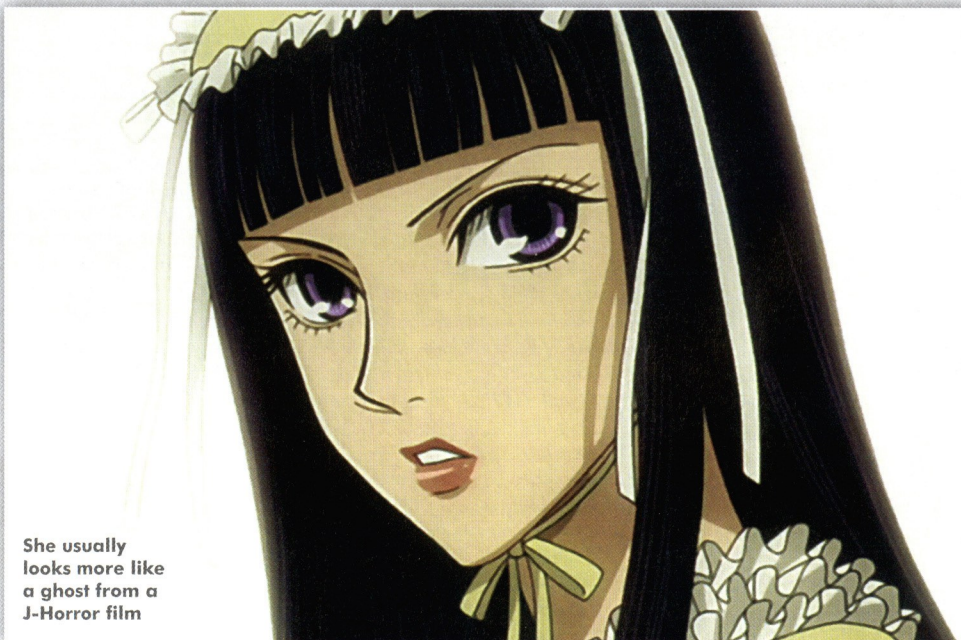
Too often martial arts films only focus on the martial spectacle. *Black Belt* has a focus aimed firmly at the art and is all the more enjoyable for it.

FILM: 9 / EXTRAS: N/A

The Wallflower

MADMAN, M

The idea behind *The Wallflower* is quite a nice inversion of the anime staple of a young man living with a number of women. In stead of the conventional arrangement, the plot revolves around four beautiful young boys, Takenaga Oda, Yukinojo Toyama, Ranmaru Morii, and Kyohei Takano, living in a boarding house given a challenge by their jetsetting, super glamorous landlord. The boys must transform the landlord's niece into a lady by the time the landlord (Auntie) returns from an around the world trip looking for love. If the boys succeed they'll be able to live on in the boarding house rent free in perpetuity. If they fail they'll have to pay triple rent. The boys begin to regret their decision when they meet the object of their challenge, Sunako, a socially inept, unkempt, creepy young goth girl obsessed with death and darkness, convinced that she is evil and ugly. She is also convinced that the boys (and anyone else who is pretty) is a "creature of light".



She usually looks more like a ghost from a J-Horror film

Sunako is literally blinded by the boy's beauty and begins to obsess about killing the object of her desire, Takenaga — in between socially awkward situations, embarrassment, violent rampages and otaku style jetting nosebleeds.

There isn't a lot to *The Wallflower* — it is pretty much a one joke show, but the writers milk their premise for all it's worth and create a laugh-out-loud funny spectacle for the most part. Sometimes the jokes wear a little thin but then there's a corker of a scene, such as Sunako rescuing Takenaga from a host club dressed as

a demure lady in a kimono, only to whip off her outfit to reveal a Nazi-esque military uniform and a whirling chainsaw.

A knowledge of horror based pop-culture will definitely help with some of the jokes in *The Wallflower* (obscure films such as *Pin* are referenced alongside *Friday the 13th* and *Halloween*), but if you want a good and fairly consistent laugh you should look no further.

FILM: 7 / EXTRAS: 3



MAIL HYPER!

POSTAL:

PO Box 5555
St Leonards, 1590

EMAIL:

freakscene@next.com.au

TEH BEWBS!

I've never much enjoyed the intense of over-sexualisation of game (read: female) characters. I can understand it's usually a cheap marketing ploy to expand the horizons of a game, but it's this element of the newest Soul Calibur (none of that single-word crap Namco seem intent on pushing on us) has been a little disconcerting for me. I am certainly no prude, and heck, I came to expect the prominent bust and resonant jiggle with characters like Ivy, Taki and Tira.

But in looking at the new artwork for Setsuka, the charming Geisha

an established franchise, not some quick cash-in shovelware piece that could conceivably have a reason for such gratuitous boobery.

Personally, I don't play with Setsuka; her style doesn't really fit with my (terrible) skills. Hopefully next time we won't be facing something that impacts on the actual gameplay. This, at least, was but an aesthetic edit. In any case, that's something to take comfort in.

Cheers,

Adam Moussa

Indeed. Imagine if Setsuka's next iteration, complete with an even larger rack, affected her sense of balance and made overly her top-heavy but absorbed a percentage of damage from incoming attacks. Hmm, we'd better not make such flippant suggestions so freely, lest the wall ears lead to Namco HQ...

It's no secret that most female game characters are designed to be the most buxom and beautiful creatures they can be. The reason seems simple: the majority of gamers are male, the majority of male gamers like attractive females, therefore they'll appreciate bountiful amounts of tits and totty. If that's really the train of thought in the ivory towers of game development and marketing, then it's an ignorant one. We're not all slobbering, mindless freaks who can't wait to beat one out over the next attractive game character, and we're not all immediate fans of a game that has a good-looking girl

"from stately geisha to low-rent hooker in a single instalment. Namco may have outdone themselves"

introduced in the series' third iteration and star of Hyper #140's cover, her design seems to have been fleshed out ('flesh' being the operative word here) a bit far for me. As I said, at first she was charming, and a little mysterious, with her flowing kimono, bright parasol and her splendid legs on display. That was nice; it was characteristic.

Only one game later, and we find her heaving bosom barely contained within what looks like a boob tube and her black hair now turned blonde, lending her a slightly nasty appearance. Well, from stately geisha to low-rent hooker in a single instalment. Namco may have outdone themselves.

There's nothing I hate more than sounding preachy, but when this sort of tits-first mentality seeps so far into the character creation process, it's a little disappointing. Even worse is the incredible lack of faith the company seem to have in their own product. After all, we're dealing with a quality game from

on the cover. Besides, there's a very real risk of such character design alienating female gamers - can you really blame them if they're turned away by stereotypically large breasts and mindless dialogue? It's also a little disappointing that marketing can't let a game's qualities speak for themselves, but whether we like it or not, sex sells, and putting a hot bod front and center is par for the course in any entertainment medium - just look at any music video or Hollywood movie.

Then again, past games have shown that a compromise can be reached when it comes to a character with aesthetic appeal and substance. Half-Life 2's Alyx and Beyond Good & Evil's Jade were no slouches in the looks department, but they certainly weren't stacked with mammary overkill, and their characters were actually meaningful and interesting. They had more things to say beyond "Oh no, the monster tore off my clothes!" - they spoke to us as



Feedback

Adios: The RPG article is excellent. Shame you couldn't get any Japanese developers to give some comments, although I can't imagine them giving good responses considering how they answer questions so cryptically.

Australian Ninja: Another cracking issue. Fun to see a bit of SNK love in this issue, but sadly it just reminds me of how pathetic the company is and how they just keep churning out the same old crap (for the record, KOF is my fav fighting game series). I wish SNK Playmore would actually release some of their BEST games over here on a console instead of the shitty compilations and "updates" that pass for sequels to games like KOF and Samurai Showdown.

grimace06: Hehe, I just found two typos within a sentence of each other.

I didn't know Unreal Tournament has one major "flay" which is caused by vehicles being controlled by a "sing thumbstick" (sounds like a flamethrower attachment for your thumb)

Mr_M: I checked to see what BOTB was today. I almost had a heart attack when I saw the word 'Bussy'. I thought Jickle had sold out and was bagging the very game he wrote a whole article on. Then I opened the mag up a bit and saw the '3D'. Checked the screenshots and this 'Bussy 3D' did indeed look crap. Carry on then.

Kefka: Have read over the mobile gaming article, and to be honest I found it someone uninformative and inane. Much of it seemed to be chunks of marketing spiel from someone who has an obvious aim of making mobile gaming sound like the Next Big Thing.

intelligent minds rather than supermodel-shaped expositrons. A similar feat may be somewhat more difficult to achieve in a fighting game such as Soul Calibur IV, but it's by no means impossible.

The fact remains that in order for games to tell interesting and meaningful stories, a variety of character types must be used. Nothing will be achieved if every character - male or female - looks as if they stepped out of a Versace catalogue, and nothing will be achieved if the same stereotypes are used time and again. What say you, game developers? Sell us sex, or sell us substance?

HARPY BIRFDAY!

Having turned 21 this year, I have to say that 15 years is quite a milestone for any magazine, let alone one charting such treacherous waters as the Australian gaming scene. Not only is it nearly three quarters of my life, but it's also seen astronomical leaps forward in the games, culture and technology that Hyper covers.

In fact, it's hard to believe now that such a world even existed as the one of 1993. The internet was unheard of by common people, mobile phones were chunky black novelties reserved for the rich or trendy, and with 3D graphics in their embryonic youth, PlayStation was just a glint in the eye of Sony's R&D department, let alone Xbox.

I haven't been around to witness every episode in Hyper history. Even my first issue of #69 seems buried in the distant past now. You were talking about the Episode I: Battle for Naboo game back then. Even so, I'm glad to have seen as much as I have and I've certainly seen a lot.

There's no shortage of folks lining up to pour scorn on Cam Shea's editorship for its in-joke overload, or on Wilks' for ongoing typography problems (or whatever daft complaint occurs to them at the time). I for one have loved all the editors equally for their varied approaches.

Cam imbued the mag with a sense of fun and rogueish mischief that was thoroughly welcome in what is, after all, meant to be an entertaining read about a leisure activity.

I also respect Dan greatly for having the balls to stand up to the enormous commercial marketing apparatus of the modern games industry and say what needs to be said, time after time. It's just the kind of honest opinion I want and know I can rely on. Besides, typos just add character. In fact, they're positively 'thilling'. Yes, I did have to go there.

Elliot Fish, well what can I say? He was just plain good at what he did, and I still enjoying seeing his name

in print on the odd review. Speaking of which, I've come to know and love the works of many of Hyper's contributors.

The likes of Dylan "Gameboffin" Burns, Nathan 'El Presidente' Cocks, Darren Wells and of course Jickle have consistently provided lively and character filled insights into the hobby we love. I personally would take their frank, gamer-to-gamer style over the legions of anonymous internet reviewers any day of the week.

In short, Hyper was, is and hopefully will continue to be the epitome of all things awesome. To have been a part of it, even a really small part that only two people noticed (probably the only two people who even remember my letters, incidentally) makes me proud. Happy Anniversary and all my best for the future.

Ian 'ENKC' Casey

Cheers for the kind words. It's not every day that a videogames magazine turns 15 - heck, with the abundance of online media, it's not every day that a mag sticks around to hit double digits. We're proud to be Australia's longest-running independent games mag, and we're proud to have had so many talented names within our pages. We hope to continue providing info, entertainment, and infotainment, education, edutainment and any other version of a 'tainment word you can think of for many more years to come, and we hope our loyal readers will be there every step of the way. Onward!

REBEL AGAINST ROCK!

"One nugget of info we're still waiting on is pricing, which gives Rock Band 2 a potential ace up it's sleeve if it decides to head Down Under at a cost that undercuts Activision's game."

Well, so much for that possibility. With the revelation of the Rock Band pricing point EA is, once again, laughing at/insulting/pissing on Australian gamers. Seriously, we get treated like 3rd-class citizens by all of the gaming companies. - Massive delays on consoles and games plus much higher prices = ripoff for the Australian consumer. And they only get away with it because we tolerate it.

I have actually asked representatives of both MicroSoft and Nintendo Australia why there is such a disparity between NTSC pricing and PAL pricing and have received the weak excuse that it's "because of import costs". I invite you all to treat that as the contemptible lie that it is. I know how much it costs to bring a shipping container here from

Forum Talk

TOPIC: Cheese!

clarky: What's your favourite cheese? I hope Hyper's tastes are diverse enough to appreciate something more diverse than cheddar or that yellow thing that comes in your Big Macs.

SOX: Margaret River Dairy Company Port Cheese is the nicest cheese I've tasted.

**** I love cheese!

Oh yeah deep fried camembert is awesome also.

heatzor: Pecorino on my pastas, Mozzarella on my pizzas, Bocconcini in my sammiches, Cream cheese and chives in my dips, Haloumi in my griller, Fetta in my salads.

Sir_Psycho: Bocconcini, to-mato, salami and some green veggies, all on a fresh bread roll? Excellent sandwich. Also, I lived on brie, cambembert, crackers and olives for a couple of days once.

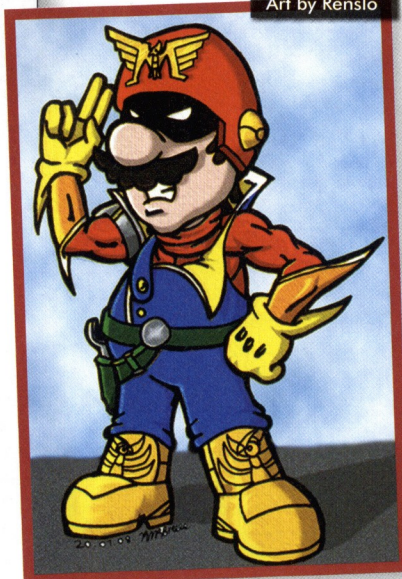
Gnomey_g: Feta. My local chip shop fries the stuff in batter, it's heavenly _

And my local pizzeria does a pizza which consists of mozzarella, sundried and regular tomatoes, basil and a liberal spread of chunks of feta. It's AWESOME!

FrozenSoul80: I enjoy trying new cheeses. In fact, I've gone to parties just to sample the cheese and crackers on the nibbles table. I couldn't pick a favourite, because I change my preferred tastes all the time.

Currently craving Brie.

Bellamut: Eh, mozzarella will do. Any cheese that goes on pizza is good.



CAPTION THIS!

Jared Smith gave us a few deviant chuckles this month with his rather saucy take on Hobbes sexual chemistry.



"For the last time, I'm not going to ring your f##king bell!"

China and I also know that one can fit tens of thousands of games into a container, which means transport costs are few cents for each game.

Admittedly, I don't know what tariffs are applicable (if any) but even so, nothing can justify us being charged an RRP of \$100+ for a game that retails in the US for \$49, at a time when the exchange rate is so close.

I wouldn't even mind the pricing difference so much if it wasn't for the constant delays in game/

they had no news to report. That's not a typical "no comment" fobbing off of our request: they literally had no news that had come through the pipes from MTV Games, Rock Band's US publisher. Rumours are currently doing the rounds that retailers are refusing to even consider stocking Rock Band locally, as the release of Rock Band 2 is so close. We're not sure about the validity of these claims, but the general lack of news we're getting from EA prompts us to believe they

"Trust me, guys, if you refuse to be screwed by them, they will lower their prices"

console releases. Fine, charge me twice what the Americans pay but don't make me wait six months longer for it, to boot!

Please, Hyper Crew, put Sony, MS and Nintendo on the spot about this issue. I am active on a couple of gaming forums and have found that this is an issue that keeps coming up. - Aussie gamers are sick of the shoddy treatment we receive but no-one in the media ever seems to want to investigate it. Help us, Hyper, you're our only hope...

P.S. Fellow Gamers: I call on you all to boycott Rock Band until EA comes up with a more realistic price. Trust me, guys, if you refuse to be screwed by them, they will lower their prices. After all, they make money by selling games and they need you, the consumer, in order to do that.

Rainbow7

We gave EA a call and asked for a fresh Rock Band update, but

may be true.

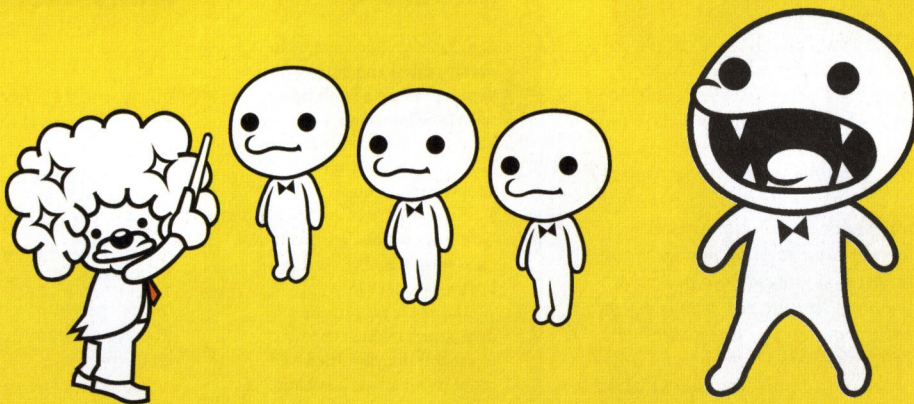
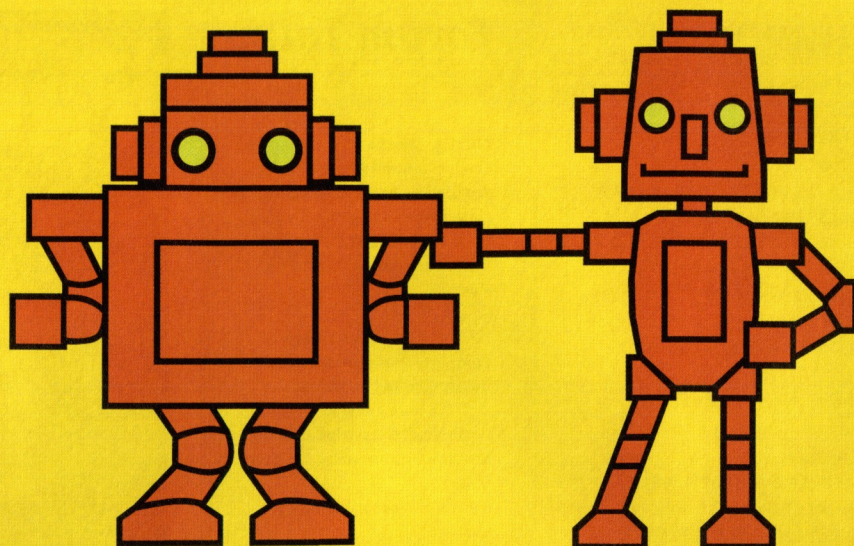
Australians are receiving a veritable shun when it comes to this much sought-after game, and we're still shaking our heads as to why. Harmonix essentially rebuilt the music rhythm genre with Guitar Hero, turning it into an instant success and moneymaker. The team then shackled up with EA to create Rock Band, offering more of the same magic but adding more instruments. It should be a no-brainer to bring that magic to as many territories as possible, yet here we are, still tapping our feet impatiently without so much as a kick peddle. Not even the imminent release of Guitar Hero 4 is enough to light a fire under EA, with their spokesperson telling us it "doesn't change a thing." The way things are going, Australian consumers won't ever have a local release of Rock Band to boycott.

Ball's in your court, Activision. Let's see that Guitar Hero 4!



LAND OF THE RISING FUN

Jonti Davies on games and life in Japan.



It had to happen at some point. With way more than 20 million DS Lite owners and a few million owners of the original hardware version, Japan seems at last to have largely satisfied its appetite for Nintendo's all-conquering handheld. Of course the system is still selling at a strong rate, but things have calmed down significantly since last year. The DS Lite no longer manages to shift 110,000+ units each week; these days it's ticking over at around 55,000 units on a weekly basis. In short, it's probably quite close to reaching saturation point here. Virtually every Japanese person I know already has a DS Lite. It's not going to stop selling completely but, like the

Rhythm Tengoku Gold is an awesome new DS title. It might land in Australia under the Rhythm Heaven title. If it does, get it. If it doesn't, import the Japanese version.



similarly successful PS2, it has already started to plod along at a gradually slowing pace.

With such a broad user base to sell to, at least the potential for massive DS software sales in Japan is still here. There's no sign of a slowdown on the DS games front. Last month around 700,000 people bought the DS remake of Dragon Quest V during its first week on the shelves. The following week Band Brothers DX did the business to get near the top of the Japanese all-formats chart. Then it was the turn of Rhythm Tengoku Gold, the fine sequel to the brilliant GBA classic (which remains an import-only gem but is well worth searching for), whose shelf space was looking pretty bare when I picked up my copy last week. And then there's Fire Emblem DS, another killer title, which will be on sale here in a few days' time. In spite of the fact that we're in the summer up here in Japan, DS/DS Lite owners are experiencing no games drought.

Meanwhile another handheld is on the ascendancy, and has been pretty much since DS hardware sales began to slow down. The PSP is currently at the top of the game in Japan, having begun to accelerate gently after its re-release (and hardware revision) last September and then finding another gear in 2008. With a user base of 'only' around 10 million in Japan, there are still plenty of people here who don't own PSPs, which partly explains why it's been able to grow so impressively over the past 12 months. And then there are PSP games, which constitute nowhere near as great a range as the DS Lite's software library but do feature plenty of



Square Enix' recent DS remake of Dragon Quest V sold amazingly well for a remake.

high-quality releases focused on appealing principally to Japanese gamers. Last week Phantasy Star Portable appeared; the week before that there was Gundam Battle Universe. These are quintessentially Japanese games that appeal to the PSP audience. Surprisingly, Sony seems to know what it's doing with the PSP in Japan. Of course, by this time next year Nintendo could launch another "market disrupting" piece of handheld hardware and the landscape might change significantly again, but for now Sony is in control...

COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON

This month, we dipped into the collection of Jon Cartwright of THQ Studio Australia. When asked to identify a title that influenced his own approach to development, he nominated a game based on a cartoon license. Surprising? Only if you don't know that Cartwright is himself a licensed game specialist. "Back when I was a kid, licensed games were really awful, and often had almost nothing to do with the brand," he said.

The Simpsons: Hit and Run was a notable exception to the rule. "For me it was the first Simpsons game that it was okay to admit owning. It was a fun game for anyone and it had lots in it for the Simpsons fans too. The locations felt true to the show, the characters were where you expected them to be, and it really did feel like you were driving around Springfield."

Cartwright approaches his own work in the same manner. "When I've worked on brands, I've taken a lot of care to get to know the license and the licensor. Years ago when I did the first Fairly OddParents game we built Timmy Turners' house as the level select hub and Butch Hartman, the show creator, was just totally blown away to see it there in 3D and be able to run around it. That was such a big pat on the back for the team."

We asked Cartwright to tell us about the games that dominate his collection. "It's maybe a bit old school now, but I do love platform games," he said.

"It's kinda what I grew up with. I remember looking at Manic Miner and being totally awestruck by it. At the time it was totally revolutionary and had so many levels, so many different enemies, and so many interactions – it was streets ahead of anything else at the time."

Midtown Madness is another favourite. "We used to play it



networked when I worked at Blitz and it got kinda heated. One night the boss came in and thought there was a massive fight going on because of all the shouting."

One genre seriously underrepresented in his collection: first person shooters. "I don't play games on my PC anymore and I've seldom enjoyed them on console," he said.

"To a lot of people this is going to sound like heresy, but I never enjoyed Goldeneye 007. Sorry! Bizarrely I did enjoy Exhumed on the Saturn. It was set in Egypt and had a bit of a Stargate vibe about it. I also really enjoyed XIII on the GameCube; the story and style really sucked me in."

Cartwright is currently focused on delivering platform specific content.

"Quite often we work on games that are on multiple platforms," he said.

"That's understandable from a business point of view but more often than not one of the versions is just a port and doesn't take full advantage of the capabilities of the console."

Referencing a pair of titles, Cartwright illustrated his philosophy. "Whilst Wii Sports isn't the most sophisticated game in the world," he said, "it's great fun and you could only really do that game on Wii. It's the same with Kirby Canvas Curse (on DS)."

You can bet that he will be applying these principles to his next project. "We wanted to make a Wii game, not a game on a Wii, if you get my drift. So everything we talked about from our initial brainstorming was about how we could use the Wii Remote in a way that made it an essential part of the game play, not an afterthought."

Cataloguing the Classics
Let's take a look at a random assortment of the titles Cartwright has picked up over the years.

1. Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg

SEGA released this chicken-themed 3D platformer for the GameCube back in 2003.

2. Burning Rangers

This 1998 action title from Sonic Team challenged Saturn owners to battle deadly infernos in the far flung future.

3. Chu Chu Rocket

Quite literally a game of cat-and-mouse, this Dreamcast hit arrived in 1999. As a European subscriber to SEGA's online service, Cartwright scored a free copy.

4. Flood

Bullfrog's 1990 platformer for the Atari ST required players to submerge themselves in sewerage. "The game mechanic of the water flooding the levels was really clever," Cartwright assured us.

5. Kirby Canvas Curse

Among Cartwright's favourite DS titles, this innovative 2005 platformer from Hal Laboratory made extensive use of the stylus.

6. Klonoa: Empire of Dreams

During an era in which when every publisher boasted an anthropomorphic mascot, Klonoa filled the role for Namco. This 2001 platformer was the little guy's GBA debut.



7. NiGHTS into Dreams

Sonic Team's beloved airborne adventure arrived in 1996. "This totally blew me away," Cartwright said. "The premise and imagery were both sublime."

8. Rakuga Kids

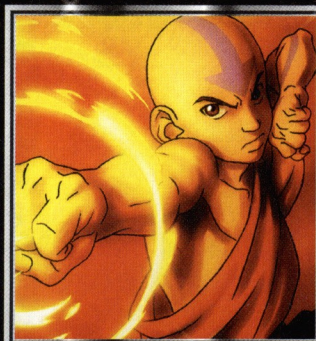
"The assistant in the game store tried to persuade me not to buy this because he thought it was rubbish," Cartwright recalled. He was not to be denied, though, thoroughly enjoying the wacky gameplay of Konami's 1998 N64 brawler.

9. The Secret of Monkey Island

The first in a series of four Monkey Island adventures, this 1990 point-and-click PC classic quickly attained cult status.

10. TrackMania

This 2003 PC racer from Nadeo enabled players to generate their own (often spectacularly complex) tracks. "It's awesome fun both as a racer and as a puzzle game," Cartwright said.



Meet Jon Cartwright

A 22 year industry veteran, Jon Cartwright has developed for everything from the ZX Spectrum to the Nintendo Wii. Currently serving as Director of Production at THQ Studio Australia, his next project will be Avatar: Into the Inferno, a game inspired by the wildly popular Nickelodeon animated series. "We've built this one from the ground up for Wii," Cartwright said, "so that's been really exciting." He also has a second project in the works, this time for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. "It's a world away from Nickelodeon, way more mature in content, and something Hyper readers are going to be very excited about."



THE PASSION OF THE GAMER

DYLAN BURNS

Recommended Rip-off Price

I'm not usually one for curse words (okay, that's a lie – I actually sound like I'm reading from a Deadwood script in real life, but it seemed a nice way to start the sentence so roll with it please), but of late I've found myself uttering, nay saying with full emphatic force, the f-word whilst browsing the shelves of my nearest gaming boutique.

This urge to shout a guttural f-bomb comes not from the fact that the smarmy, obsequious staff members who run the place have not an iota of gaming knowledge between the three brain cells their collective minds share. It comes not from the pungent smell emanating from the large, heavy-breathing man standing next to me. Nor does it come from seeing before me an entire table stacked some thirty games high and knowing that somewhere in that jungle of titles is the game I'm looking for.

No, dear reader and fellow passionate gamer, this primal need to push an expletive from my lips comes from the pure frustration felt the moment I lay eyes on a title that is being sold for it's recommended rip-off price, or RRP.

My ire is raised on a number of levels. First of all, the use of the word 'recommended' is completely and utterly misleading, fallacious even. If it were truly only recommended, then why does every flipping store in the country slap that number on the product? If we all did things that were recommended I'd already have a lifetime supply of Viagra and be helping that nice man from Nigeria to launder money.

I also believe that there are hidden costs to the recommended rip-off price. You see, not only is that price there to catch suckers with bulging wallets and who are beleaguered with a coterie of kids dead-set on getting the latest DS cooking title, it's there to make you trudge to every bloody store to see where you can get the best price-match from.

Who pays for the fact that I've actually had to expend energy? Who pays for the wear on my shoes, the snack I bought in the middle of my pricing pentathlon and, more importantly, the lost hours of game time that all my fluffing around has cost me? Sure, I save a few bucks on the actual game, but sometimes you've got to wonder if it's worth it. Hence, as you can see, my propensity to just say "f**k" when I see the rip-off price in the first place!

An additional observation that serves to make the blood boil is the increasingly disparate pricing between gaming platforms. Sometimes a game can see simultaneous release on all platforms yet have a retail difference of up to \$40. This is understandable when you look at PC versus console releases, as they target a different type of audience; if you're a PC enthusiast you can usually get your game on for a fair bit less than your console counterparts. However, I recently spied a title that serves to illustrate the large difference that can occur in pricing between the two 'next-gen' players.

Let's call the game SpiritCowbell IV, from producer Ninpo... In any case, the 360 version of the game sells for \$79 whereas the PS3 version has a recommended rip-off price of \$109. Admittedly, with a little bit of shopping smarts you can get the PS3 version for a lot cheaper, but you shouldn't have to. What gamer in their

right mind is going to be ripped off by thirty big ones just because Sony decided to force Blu-Ray on consumers? Obviously there are gremlins at work here that we cannot possibly be privy to, but surely it's in a publisher's best interests to present a unified pricing structure for its lead platforms. Without any actual knowledge about how retail games are produced, I'd be surprised if it costs \$30 more to make the PS3 version, despite the ostensibly higher production cost of Blu-Ray.

Things like this make being a passionate gamer difficult. In this particular instance, with SpiritCowbell IV being a fighter, it's the PS3 version that is more strongly desired because of the console's superior d-pad.

Then, of course, there is Rock Band. Not only are we being completely and utterly bottom raped when it comes to the game not even being released in Australia, but rumours of a \$400 pricing scheme are enough to elicit a maniacal, unbelieving laugh from even the most cashed-up gamer. Sadly, this price is likely more than just a rumour, and our laughter will soon be transformed into pain-racked sobs. It represents the ugly face of publisher greed. There's no way that the USD\$169.99 pricing translates to such a hefty mark-up, not even taking into consideration the fact that they need to hire specially-bred dolphins to transport the thing to our shores. Rock Band is a great game, but it's hardly worth worrying about now that the sequel is on the way. Once again, Australia is treated like a homeless man standing on the street wearing a cardboard sign that reads 'Will pay extra for games from last two years'.

Of course, all this whining comes from my own position as a poor gamer. After all, when you make playing games your life's passion, there is certainly no concordant income rolling in to actually maintain that level of passion for long. Like a drug addict spending it all on one big hit, a new game for a passionate gamer represents a very real investment, so any saving on the recommended rip-off price is something that must be pursued with vigour.

Tell us that a game is going to cost \$400 and you can quite politely shove it up your anal passage Mr. Publisher. No amount of store comparing, snack buying, and price matching effort is going to make that look enticing. That's four whole games you could buy, a month's worth of interactive euphoria.

So in closing, do not stand for the recommended rip-off price. I know not the answer to our woes, but at the rate people are popping kids out in this country I'm sure that within, oh, twenty years or so we should exhibit enough buying force to actually make publishers think twice about trying to screw us over. Stay strong, find those price-match bargains and most of all don't buy bloody Rock Band – it's cheaper to book a bulk flight to Yanky land and grab the stock ourselves.

Australia is treated like a homeless man standing on the street





GAMES WANK: AN EXERCISE IN OVER-ANALYSIS

ELEANOR EIFFE

The Mechanics of Frustration

It can manifest as a barrage of profanity, grumbled death threats against the developers, or a control pad being hurled against the wall. Of all modern forms of entertainment, electronic gaming has a unique ability to reduce its participants to quivering blobs of rage. If we play games for fun, then why do they make us so mad?

It's not just the content of today's depraved murder simulators that brings out the seething rage monster within. A 2007 study examined levels of aggression in people who had been playing a violent (007: Nightfire) or non-violent game (Tetris) under conditions of high or low frustration (defined in the study as difficulty). While the violent game players were slightly more aggressive than the non-violent group under conditions of low frustration, that difference disappeared when the difficulty was cranked up. It's not just blood and gore the censors should be worried about – it's those goddamn zigzag blocks.

Psychologically speaking, frustration is what happens when we're prevented from reaching our goals. Hang on a minute: obstacles between you and a goal – isn't that more or less what a video game is? If games are frustrating almost by definition, why on earth do we find this activity so appealing? A little frustration can be a good thing. The more maddening the problem, the more satisfying it is to overcome. If a game never really stretches your abilities, you're going to come out of the experience feeling somewhat unfulfilled. But well-crafted, challenging gameplay isn't what sends controllers flying. Games are at their most frustrating when they are difficult for the wrong reasons.

Take, for example, the escort mission – perhaps the most frustrating type of gameplay ever devised. There's nothing wrong with them, in theory. Everyone likes to play the hero, and what's more heroic than protecting the innocent? Plus, it makes a change from just slaughtering everything that moves. So why are escort missions so terrible in practice? Because the "escortee" invariably harbours a death wish, or simply fails to recognise that bullets, swords or ravenous zombies are things best avoided. Nothing makes a player mad like failing a mission – repeatedly – through no fault of her own. The degree to which we experience frustration is related to our expectations about goal attainment. Sources of frustration may be internal (lack of skill or knowledge on the part of the player) or external (terrible AI). When playing a game, we expect to have to overcome internal sources of frustration. You practice, you get better. We're cool with that. There is an underlying assumption that we will always be in control of our avatar's fate. When the small child in your care decides to introduce himself



to an axe-wielding goblin, you are powerless to stop them. Your success or failure no longer depends on your skill as a player – it all comes down to luck. There is a simple way to make escort missions less frustrating, as demonstrated in Resident Evil 4: press A to tell the president's daughter to hide in a dumpster. Give the player an option to get the NPC out of the way. Give them back some control.

Sometimes games frustrate us not by making it difficult to reach our goals, but by making it difficult to determine what those goals actually are. Again, there's a good kind of difficult and bad kind. Exploration is an important part of what makes games so appealing. It's very satisfying to use cues from the virtual

environment to figure out what you're supposed to do next. When Samus picks up the ice-beam, you figure it's time to see what's behind the white doors. It's not satisfying to be so badly stuck you're driven to a FAQ, only to discover that you can't access the next part of the story because you haven't spoken to Townsperson #23 who, despite not previously having anything more useful to tell you than "Hello, Adventurer. Lovely weather we're having!" suddenly knows exactly what the bad guys are up to. We get frustrated because we expect that our surroundings will offer some clue as how to progress. We don't expect to have to master the designers' arse-backwards moon logic, or be forced to endure a near eternity of trial and error. Once again, we don't like to feel as though we're relying on luck. We like to be in control. We don't like to feel as though we're wasting our time.

Perhaps that's it. That's why we get so angry when we're forced to repeat a failed mission or spend hours aimlessly hoping to find the way forward. Free time is a limited resource. When we spend time on a game, we want a good return on our investment. We don't want to squander our leisure time not having fun. The sooner those making the games recognise this, the better.

fails to recognise that bullets, swords or ravenous zombies are things best avoided

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP
10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$30

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith (S/W Only) | Family |
| 2 | ▲ | Smackdown Vs Raw 08 Ptm | Fighting |
| 3 | ▲ | Guitar Hero 3 Bundle | Family |
| 4 | ▼ | Singstar Party Hits Bundle | Family |
| 5 | ▼ | Buzz Hollywood Bundle | Family |
| 6 | ▲ | GH 2 Guitar Double Pack | Family |
| 7 | ▲ | Kung Fu Panda | Adventure |
| 8 | ▲ | Lego Indiana Jones: Original | Adventure |
| 9 | ▲ | Singstar Party Hits (S/W) | Family |
| 10 | ▲ | Need For Speed Pro Street | Racing |

TOP
10

Nintendo DS Games Over \$30

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Mario & Sonic At Olympics | Sports |
| 2 | ◆ | Brain Training | Family |
| 3 | ◆ | More Brain Training | Family |
| 4 | ▲ | Guitar Hero: On Tour Bundle | Family |
| 5 | ▲ | Mario Kart | Racing |
| 6 | ▼ | Cooking Guide Can't Decide | Family |
| 7 | ▲ | New Super Mario Bros | Action |
| 8 | ▲ | Pokémon Diamond | Role-Playing |
| 9 | ▲ | Pokemon Mystery: Time | Role-Playing |
| 10 | ▲ | Pokemon Mystery: Darkness | Role-Playing |

TOP
10

Nintendo Wii Games Over \$50

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Wii Fit Wii | Family |
| 2 | ◆ | Wii Play W/ Remote | Family |
| 3 | ▲ | Mario & Sonic At Olympics | Sports |
| 4 | ▼ | Mario Kart W/ Wheel | Racing |
| 5 | ◆ | Super Smash Bros Brawl | Fighting |
| 6 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith Bundle | Family |
| 7 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith (S/W Only) | Family |
| 8 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith Bundle | Family |
| 9 | ▼ | Guitar Hero 3 Bundle | Family |
| 10 | ▼ | Super Mario Galaxy | Action |

TOP
10

Playstation 3 Games Over \$60

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Soul Calibur Iv | Fighting |
| 2 | ◆ | Grand Theft Auto Iv | Action |
| 3 | ▲ | Beijing Olympics 2008 | Sports |
| 4 | ▲ | Buzz Quiz Tv Bundle | Family |
| 5 | ▼ | Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns | Action |
| 6 | ◆ | Gran Turismo 5 Prologue | Racing |
| 7 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith Bundle | Family |
| 8 | ▲ | Ratchet & Clank: Tools | Action |
| 9 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith (S/W Only) | Family |
| 10 | ◆ | Race Driver Grid | Racing |

TOP
10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | ▲ | World Of Warcraft | Role-Playing |
| 2 | ▲ | WOW Burning Crusade | Role-Playing |
| 3 | ▲ | Call Of Duty 4: Modern | Shooter |
| 4 | ▲ | WOW Battlechest | Role-Playing |
| 5 | ▲ | The Sims 2 Ikea Stuff | Simulation |
| 6 | ▼ | The Sims 2 | Simulation |
| 7 | ▲ | The Sims 2 Free Time | Simulation |
| 8 | ▼ | The Sims 2: Bon Voyage | Simulation |
| 9 | ▲ | Age Of Empires III | Strategy |
| 10 | ▼ | The Sims 2: Seasons | Simulation |

TOP
10

Xbox 360 Games Over \$50

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Soul Calibur Iv | Fighting |
| 2 | ▲ | Beijing Olympics 2008 | Sports Games |
| 3 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith(S/W) | Family |
| 4 | ⬆ | GH Aerosmith Bundle | Family |
| 5 | ▼ | Grand Theft Auto Iv | Action |
| 6 | ▼ | Battlefield Bad Company | Shooter |
| 7 | ▼ | Halo 3 | Shooter |
| 8 | ▼ | Guitar Hero 3 Rock Bundle | Family |
| 9 | ▼ | Race Driver Grid | Racing |
| 10 | ▼ | Assassins Creed | Action |

TOP
10

All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Wii Fit | Nintendo Wii |
| 2 | ◆ | Wii Play W/ Remote | Nintendo Wii |
| 3 | ▲ | Mario & Sonic At Olympics | Nintendo Wii |
| 4 | ▼ | Mario Kart W/ Wheel | Nintendo Wii |
| 5 | ▲ | Super Smash Bros Brawl | Nintendo Wii |
| 6 | ▼ | Mario & Sonic At Olympics | Nintendo DS |
| 7 | ▲ | Brain Training | Nintendo DS |
| 8 | ◆ | Soul Calibur Iv | PlayStation 3 |
| 9 | ▲ | Grand Theft Auto Iv | PlayStation 3 |
| 10 | ▲ | Beijing Olympics 2008 | PlayStation 3 |

TOP
10

PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 10th August
2008 RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Secret Agent Clank | Adventure |
| 2 | ▲ | Buzz Master Quiz | Family |
| 3 | ▲ | Final Fantasy VII Crisis Core | Role-Playing |
| 4 | ▲ | Smackdown V Raw 08 Ptm | Fighting |
| 5 | ▲ | God Of War: Chains | Action |
| 6 | ▲ | Gta: Liberty City Stories Ptm | Action |
| 7 | ▼ | Need For Speed Pro Street | Racing |
| 8 | ▲ | Echochrome | Family |
| 9 | ▼ | The Simpsons Game | Adventure |
| 10 | ▲ | Lego Indiana Jones: Original | Adventure |

- ★ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



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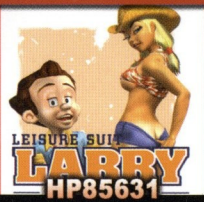
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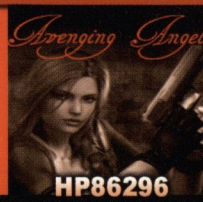
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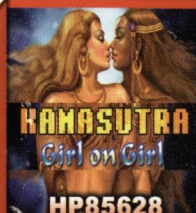
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HY60896

HY79909
Jessica Alba Video

COOL WALLS



HP85628



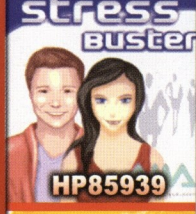
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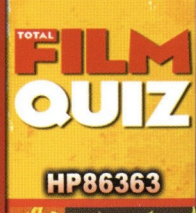
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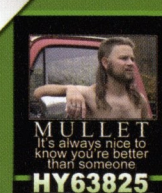
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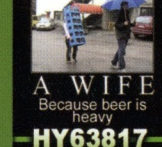
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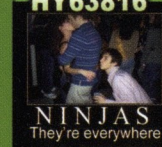
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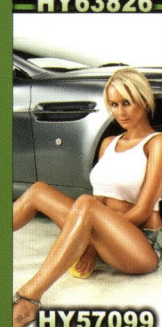
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HY63816



HY63826



HY57099



HY78912



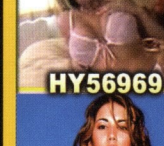
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HY76420



HY56969



HY77303



HY59484



HY57333



HY53506



HY57751



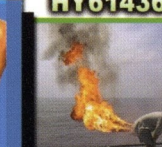
HY58352



HY56829



HY61436



HY56856



HY60017



HY63765



HY53564



HY53564



HY64475



HY63333



HY80867



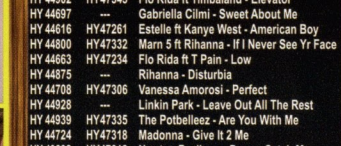
HY75962



HY77280



HY75984



HY57923



HY59506



HY59484



HY59484



HY59484



HY59484



HY57923



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506



HY59506

Full-Length Tracks	Artist / Title
HY 44871	Katy Perry - I Kissed A Girl
HY 44874	Pussy Cat Dolls - When I Grow Up
HY 44874	Metro Station - Shake It
HY 44823	Sam Sparro - Black and Gold
HY 44604	Jordin Sparks ft Chris Brown - No Air
HY 44509	--- Miley Cyrus - See You Again
HY 44468	Chris Brown - Forever
HY 44694	Kid Rock - All Summer Long
HY 44915	Rihanna - Take A Bow
HY 44667	Neyo - Closer
HY 44785	Coldplay - Viva La Vida
HY 44723	Sara Bareilles - Love Song
HY 44341	Flo Rida ft Timbaland - Elevator
HY 44902	Gabriella Cilmi - Sweet About Me
HY 44697	--- Estelle ft Kanye West - American Boy
HY 44616	HY 44800
HY 44800	Marn 5 ft Rihanna - If I Never See Yr Face
HY 44663	Flo Rida ft T Pain - Low
HY 44724	Rihanna - Disturbia
HY 44875	Vanessa Amorosi - Perfect
HY 44706	HY 447306
HY 44928	--- Linkin Park - Leave Out All The Rest
HY 44939	HY 447335
HY 44735	The Potbelleez - Are You With Me
HY 44734	Madonna - Give It 2 Me
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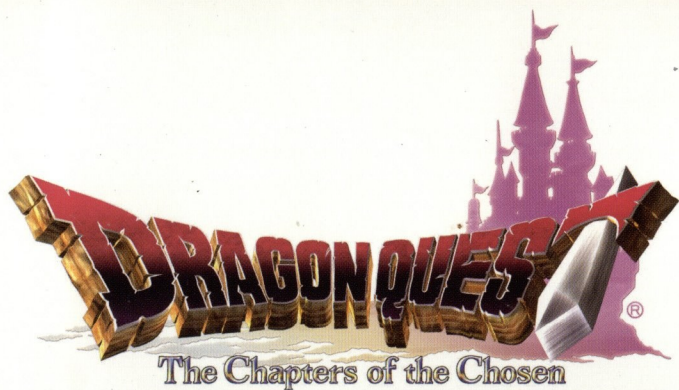
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