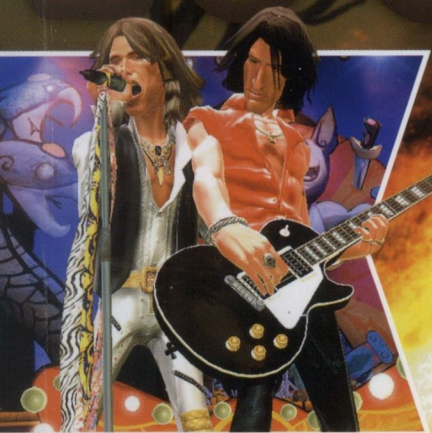


# HYPER»



## GUITAR HERO

- » Guitar Hero 4 Revealed!
- » Hands-on with GH On Tour!
- » Aerosmith!

## MARIO KART Wii

Can Mario perform another victory lap?

## Final Fantasy VII CRISIS CORE

Our full review of the fan-service prequel inside!

# FAR CRY 2

The full scoop on the highly anticipated free-roaming sequel!

## THE ART OF SEQUELS

Is there a real art to continuing a game series, or is it just a load of old number 2?

## THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU

The surprising new Square Enix RPG reviewed

## KILLZONE 2

Hands on with Sony's flagship shooter

A next MAGAZINE

77



177 JULY 2008

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Jump in.

A detailed illustration of a Ninja Gaiden character, likely Ryu Hayabusa, in a dynamic pose. He is wearing his signature silver mask and dark armor, with multiple blades visible on his forearms. The background is a misty, traditional Japanese landscape.

**GAME**

[game.com.au](http://game.com.au)

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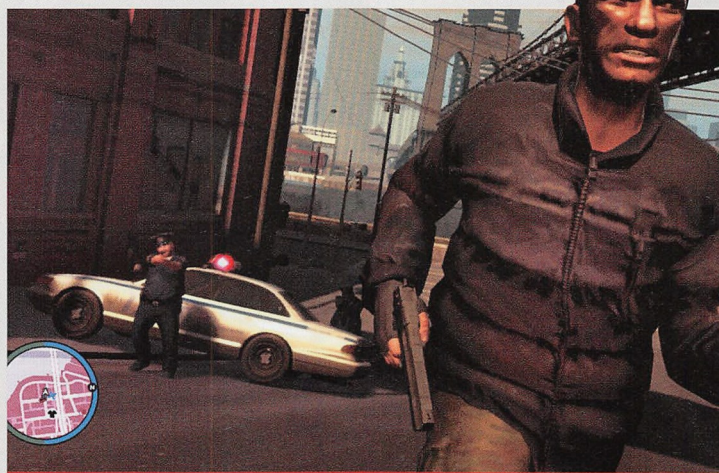
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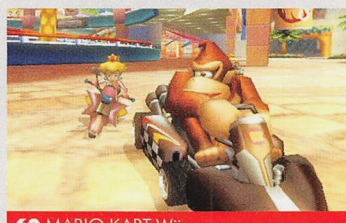
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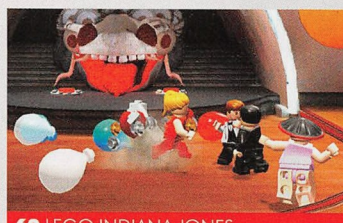
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# HYPER»



## GUITAR HERO

- » Guitar Hero 4 Revealed!
- » Hands-on with GH On Tour!
- » Aerosmith!

## FAR CRY 2

MARIO KART Wii  
Can Mario perform another victory lap?

Final Fantasy VII  
CRISIS CORE  
Our full review of the fan-service sequel inside!

The full scoop on the highly anticipated free-roaming sequel!

OF SEQUELS  
to continuing a game a load of old number 2?

## Editorial

» This month sees something of a high point in my career – the consummation of something I have wanted to so for such a long time. I've managed to have the words "Electric Boogaloo" printed in big letters in the magazine. And it's in context. I've maintained for a long time that all sequels should be subtitled "Electric Boogaloo" to all and sundry that would listen, or even pretend to listen. Take the following movie and game titles for example: Star Wars Episode 2: Attack of the Clones, Die Hard 2: Die Harder and Street Fighter 2: Hyper Fighting. No substitute their subtitles with "Electric Boogaloo". They are automatically made better for it. I was also able to make a subtle poo joke on the cover. I'm so proud.

As you've probably guessed by all my talk of sequels and the mention of so many sequels on the cover, issue 177 sees us looking at game sequels – previewing some of the most anticipated game sequels of the year, as well as speaking to the developers of some of the biggest sequels on the horizon about the role of sequels in the gaming landscape, whether they would prefer to work on their own new IPs and how much audience feedback influences the development of a sequel.

We're also drawing ever closer to issue 180 – the 15th anniversary of the longest running games mag in the country. Things are hotting up, features are being planned and long lost faces are being tracked down to give their thoughts on the last 15 years of Australian gaming. Stay tuned.

**Daniel Wilks » Editor**

## Hyper Crew MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

### DANIEL – Editor

1. Boom Blox – Wii  
*"I'ma Jenga you back into the Stone Age, Darren"*
2. The World Ends With You – DS
3. Mario Kart Wii – Wii
4. Lego Indiana Jones – Xbox 360
5. GTA IV – Xbox 360

### DARREN – Deputy Editor

1. GTA IV – 360  
*"So much to do, so little time"*
2. Boom Blox – Wii
3. Everybody's Golf 2 – PSP
4. Mario Kart – Arcade
5. Air Hockey – Arcade

### MALCOLM – Art Director

1. Team Fortress 2 – PC  
*"Goldrush rocks, but I'll never get the Übersaw :(""*
2. Mario Kart – Wii
3. One Piece – Wii
4. Endless Ocean – Wii
5. No More Heroes – Wii

### MIKOLAI – Russian Mob Dude

1. Persona 3 – PS2  
*"Suicide is painless, lalala, something, something"*
2. No More Heroes – Wii
3. Phantom Hourglass – DS
4. Puzzle Quest – PC
5. FE: The Sacred Stones – GBA

# HYPER»

JULY 2008 ISSUE 177

## WRITE TO HYPER!

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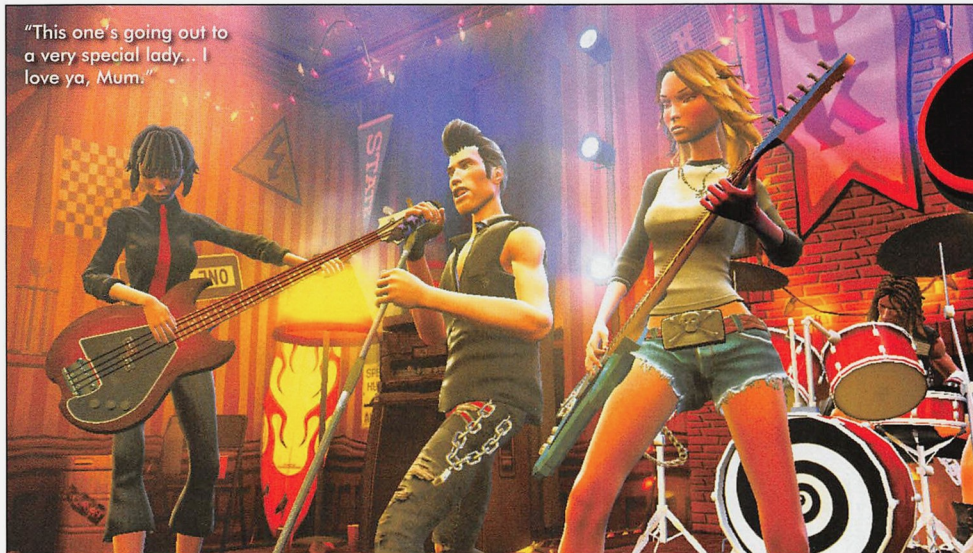
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**UBISOFT**

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## Guitar Hero 4 Revealed

It's basically Rock Band, but with an Aussie release date

**A**fter we finished contorting ourselves around Guitar Hero: On Tour (see our preview on page 39), Activision's PR dude gave us a sneak peek at the next instalment in the musical franchise, Guitar Hero 4. No prizes for guessing what other musical game it resembles.

EA's Rock Band upped the ante significantly when it comes to the tune-based rhythm genre, so perhaps it should come as no surprise to learn that Activision is keeping up with the joneses. Guitar Hero 4 offers one lead guitar, one bass guitar, one drum kit, and one microphone. Sound familiar? To say we experienced a little déjà vu as we watched the demo video is an understatement — aside from the constant name-dropping, this could have easily been lifted from EA's concept archives.

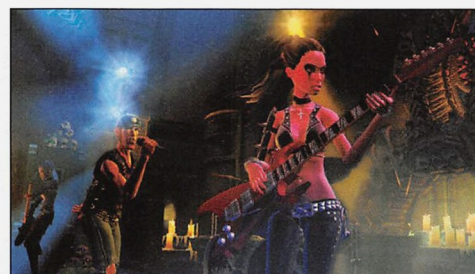
To be fair though, Activision does have a number of changes up its sleeves. The drum kit offers a bass kick pedal and three drum pads as opposed to Rock Band's four, but packs two dedicated cymbal wedges on each end. Activision also said that they hope to alleviate the plastic

clatter sound found in Rock Band's peripheral by manufacturing the device slightly differently.

There's changes in store for the guitar, too. Although coy on specific details, Activision did hint that the guitar devices will incorporate a new gameplay mechanic into the hardware. Although this is appreciated — it is time for something new in this area, after all — its impact may only be minor, as the game will still support controllers from Guitar Hero 2 and 3. Rule out the addition of a sixth note button or a keytar add-on, then.

Character customisation finally gets a chance to rear its mohawked head, with the game offering a Tony Hawk-style system that allows you to dress up your freak in wacky hair styles, emo shirts, ripped jeans, or gnarly tats. Here's hoping mainstays such as Judy Nails and Lars Umlaut will still be offered alongside player-created monstrosities.

But perhaps the biggest feature is the music creation suite. With the time and inclination, you're able to record your own tune using all of Guitar Hero 4's instruments, save for the microphone. Note by note, you lay down your track in real time, but are free to pause and tweak the position of individual notes to get everything sounding A-OK. If you want things to sound gnarlier or mellower, you can adjust the key of each note accordingly. Keep in mind that this creation tool does not extend to turning your own MP3s into note highways — you literally are recording each strum of the guitar one note at a time. Activision mentions that only a small percentage of its player base is likely to use this feature, but in the same breath mentioned that a lot of work and attention is being poured into its



creation. Hopefully not an inordinate amount — we'd still like the rest of the game to be good!

The music creation tool extends to the online world, allowing the Guitar Hero 4 player base to swap songs, play songs by others, and jostle on the high scores charts. With the game offering a wealth of options in its music creation, it will be interesting to see how Activision will handle the inevitable copycat versions of licensed songs. Will reproduced songs be embraced or taken down? What if a single note is changed? What about mash-ups? So many questions.

But we might not be kept waiting for long, as Activision is aiming to release Guitar Hero 4 by the end of this year. Keep in mind that the video we were shown was a concept only, meaning that the people jamming along to the notes on the screen weren't actually playing anything. The actual game interface and the music creation portion did seem to be working, however, so maybe more groundwork has been laid than the faux-rockers would have us believe.

Still, Activision needs to get moving if all those peripherals are to be manufactured in time. Despite the woes Rock Band has faced in hitting Australian shores, Activision seems confident that it will deliver the goods Down Under. If it does, it might just make Rock Band yesterday's hit.

For the last time... no Stairway!





A re-enactment of the  
"Internet vs BioWare"  
showdown

# Mass Effect Inspires Mass Exodus

## Gamers complain, developers rescind

**F**irst the bad news: the PC version of EA's RPG hit *Mass Effect* was revealed to contain a rather binding copy protection system. Utilising the SecuROM technology seen in the PC version of 2K's *BioShock*, the game would require internet access so it could phone home every ten days to verify its authenticity. If you don't jump online by day eleven, it's no more game for you.

Technical Producer Derek French tried to break the news gently to the BioWare forum community. "After the first activation, SecuROM requires that it re-check with the server within ten days (in case the CD Key has become public/warez'd and gets banned). Just so that the 10 day thing doesn't become abrupt, SecuROM tries its first re-check with 5 days remaining in the 10 day window. If

it can't contact the server before the 10 days are up, nothing bad happens and the game still runs. After 10 days a re-check is required before the game can run."

A game that needs a permanent internet connection, lest it be taken away from you? And not only that, but it's not returned until you jump through the call support hoops of EA? Not even Steam is that draconian, offering an Offline mode to those who, for whatever reason, are not able to go online. *BioShock*'s one-time activation was a minor but necessary hurdle, something that 2K later eased by expanding the number of computers a single copy of the game could be installed on. But this... every ten days? Seems a little harsh to us. And it seemed a little harsh



to the gamer community as a whole, with some followers of the title declaring outrage, and other going so far to state that they'd no longer be purchasing *Mass Effect*.

But then came the good news: BioWare took notice. Seems those reams of posts translated into dollar signs flying away, as a week later a revised approach was announced. Rather than forcing a connection every ten days, *Mass Effect* will now require a one-time activation, similar to *BioShock*. Again on BioWare's forums, Community Manager Jay Watamaniuk laid everything out in an FAQ post. Long story short, the game will authenticate itself once upon initial boot, and again whenever you decide to download additional content.

"BioWare has always listened very closely to its fans," Watamaniuk wrote, "and we made this decision to ensure we are delivering the best possible experience to them. To all the fans including our many friends in the armed services and internationally who expressed concerns that they would not be able re-authenticate as often as required, EA and BioWare want you to know that your feedback is important to us."

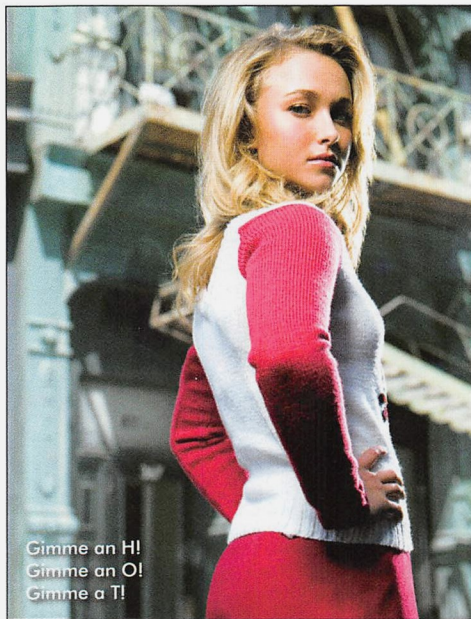
Isn't it nice to be heard? Now, whose ears do we grab to discuss high game prices, platform exclusives, and Japanese games that never materialise onto Western shores?

**CAPTION  
THIS!**

**#102**

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with **Caption This Part 102**  
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# Supanova is upon ya

## Pop culture expo goes coast to coast

**I**t's the ultimate mecca for everything related to anime, sci-fi, fantasy, comic books, videogames, action figures, memorabilia, autograph hunting... and a bunch of other stuff. Supanova 2008 is almost here, and people on each side of the country are being offered one of the biggest shows yet.

It's the place where one's inner geek can be unleashed with impunity, and where outer geeks will be welcomed without wedgies. Rare collectors items can be bought, figurines can be nabbed by the armfuls, and stars from fan-favourite television shows are on hand for a photo or two — Hayden Panettiere from *Heroes* and Morena Baccarin from

*Firefly* are among them. In short, if you can't find anything of interest here, you're probably better off going to the knitting convention next door. (Note: knitting convention yet to be announced.)

Sydneysiders get their slice from June 20 at The Dome at Sydney Showground, where a preview night kicks off the two-day event, spanning from June 21-22. A week later the show makes tracks to Perth where, after setting everything up at Robinson Pavillion in Claremont Showground, the preview night on June 27 heralds the beginnings of the show proper, going from June 28-29. Tickets for both venues are available from Ticketek or can be purchased at the door.

# BioShock on Film!

## Pirates helmer behind underwater epic

**I**t's not just superhero properties that are being courted by Hollywood; games have long been favoured fodder for a film treatment. (*Yay, alliteration!* —Ed). Sadly, recent attempts have been sullied by the hands of that punchy German, Dr Uwe Boll, meaning that mentioning the phrase "based on a videogame" to a random stranger often results in being vomited upon or slapped in the crotch.

But Mr Punchy doesn't have a single one of his hooks in 2K's *BioShock*, a game that was a best-seller and has a sequel in the works. And it's been announced by the distributor to have been green-lit for a film treatment. It's hitting the big screen! So with *The Bollenator* well and truly out of the picture, let's look at who's on board so far.

Behind the camera is Gore Verbinski, director of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy. He's set to direct and produce the movie, and in true hype-

building fashion, promises that fans of the game will not be disappointed.

Then again, there might be some real meaning behind his promise. Verbinski spent a large amount of time shooting the breeze with Ken Levine, during which the *BioShock* creator idly mentioned that he was considering making it into a film. Having played the game himself, Verbinski obviously took that comment on board, so seeing his name attached to the project above that of a non-gamer comes as a calming relief. He's got the thumbs up from 2K as well, with Christoph Hartmann, President of 2K Games, mentioning that "Gore is an avid video gamer and true fan of *BioShock*. That was extremely important to us in deciding to move forward with this project." Plus, his directorial chops aren't bad either — those *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies were pretty good.

But a film is nothing without a script, and an



Verbinski spies treasure! Sparrow spies coffee! Barbossa spies lunch!

Academy Award-nominated scribe is in talks to pen the screenplay. John Logan might not be a recognisable name, but *Gladiator*, *The Aviator* and *Sweeney Todd* all came from his pages. *BioShock* could be the next on the list. No word if Logan is already familiar with the game, but we're guessing (hoping?) he'll be giving it a look before he puts pen to paper.

And what of the game's confronting approach to violence? You know, the whole "hit little girls over the head with the wrench and drain them of their life" thing. Granted, the game stopped shy of portraying the deed on-screen, but her attempts to wriggle free of your iron-tight grasp were there, as was the implicit aftermath should you decide to "harvest" her. How's the film going to deal with that?

Verbinski's not fussed. He's gone on record as saying he'll go as far as he can with the Little Sisters, feeling that in the end gamers will appreciate the effort, rather than stamping their feet at a watered down interpretation. Not only that, but he's prepared to make the film with a United States R-rating in mind, giving it plenty of room to stretch its violent legs. That's a remarkable move, considering that many films with a pre-established fan base usually aim a little lower in order to maximise ticket sales — that valuable under-18 demographic usually brings in the money. Here's hoping the mature themes of the storyline also find their way to the mature minds in the audience.

A release date for the film has yet to be announced, and no principal cast members have been signed on. There's still a bit of work to do before we're seeing Rapture on the cinema screen, but things are going in the right direction so far. Hopefully the days of *Super Mario Bros* and *Street Fighter: The Movie* are long behind us.





## BAD COP NO DOUGHNUT

DANIEL WILKS

Spandex is a privilege, not a right

This may come as a little bit of a shock to you, but I'm something of a geek. I like most geeky things. I have a fairly encyclopaedic knowledge of cult movies, useless trivia and conspiracy theories. My shower curtain is a periodic table of elements. I have two desktop machines and three laptops (soon to be four when the new EEEPC becomes available). I also love comics. I have a big collection, and I've written a critically successful, commercially woeful mini-series myself. I love the purity of storytelling in comics – the way that the extraneous is cut away, leaving only the necessary image and dialogue. Everything left in a comic is necessary to the story – even famous over-writers, such as Brian Michael Bendis, notorious for his clever, if long winded overlapping dialogue, and Alan Moore, the incomparably brilliant, clinically insane bearded who birthed modern superhero comics with Watchmen don't pad their stories with any filler of any kind. Every word, every panel is there for a reason.

170 words in and no sign of a point as yet. Better get to it. I love superheroes. I love being able to briefly imagine myself transcending human limits to do the impossible and to be a real four-colour hero. Every time a new superhero game is announced I get that little tingle of excitement in my stomach, as I desperately try and hold onto the hope that the next game coming will be good. I should be wiser after all the years of disappointment but with all the predictability of clockwork, I found myself looking forward to the Iron Man game. I hounded Sega to send me a copy, redoubling my

efforts after I'd seen the film. I was, of course, setting myself up for some crushing disappointment. I should have known better. Experience should have taught me that superhero games are, with only a few exceptions, crap. For every Spider-Man: The Movie 2 and Hulk Ultimate Destruction there's at least one Catwoman, Superman 64 or Fantastic Four. For every game that gives the player that visceral thrill of being able to fly, leap tall buildings, smash

busses, swing on webs or partake in other superhuman actions there are a myriad of other titles that saddle the player with poor controls or stupid restrictions that remove anything vaguely superheroic from superheroism. Superman has been forced to fly through rings. The Hulk has been forced into crappy stealth action as Bruce Banner. Iron Man seems to be powered with AA batteries. Hell, why does Superman even have a health bar?

Ultimately I think the reason for all the restrictions, rushed games, terrible controls and little or no care for the

franchise comes down to what I like to call the "Uwe Boll Unified Theory of Producing Crap". The theory states that to guarantee sales, all a hack must do is purchase the rights to an existing product with a dedicated fanbase.

If that fanbase is sufficiently dedicated then whatever crappy product will sell on the name of the brand alone. Of course I could be wrong. The developers of all of the terrible superhero games may not be cynical hacks exploiting an eager market – they may simply be crap at designing games.

I don't know which option is worse.

## Superhero games are, with only a few exceptions, crap

Not even Iron Man can get away from a six-star wanted level.





**HANDS-ON**

**SYSTEM:**  
PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
FPS

**PLAYERS:**  
TBA

**DEVELOPER:**  
Guerrilla

**DUE:**  
February 2009



Tri-directional  
arrows confuse  
lost soldiers

# KILLZONE 2

Sequel Count:

**II**

Space Nazis



Shoot him in  
the but-tock!



**T**here's a worrying sense of Déjà vu here. The original Killzone for the Ps2 was pushed by Sony to no end, mistakenly hyped as the harbinger of Halo's death to the point where it found itself groaning under the weight of a legacy it didn't even have a fair chance to establish under its own terms. Preview sessions looked promising enough, but it eventually landed with something of a whimper: reviewers tended to lump it with sevens — numerical apathy, labeling it as fairly playable but hardly memorable; the buying public then managed to ensure that Master Chief didn't have much to worry about.

## HERE WE GO AGAIN

And yet here we are, at a point in the Playstation 3's life where its sales have just surpassed those of the Xbox 360 in Europe, and at a Sony event where the

main drawcard for most of the press present is actually the sequel to that game that failed to do what it was supposed to do the first time around. Sony has clung to the Killzone brand tightly for a good while now, going all the way back to that CG trailer that raised so many cynical eyebrows when their hardware was still being unveiled. Amazingly, after spending a good amount of time actually playing the game we can confidently say that, if nothing else, the eye candy has actually lived up to that impossible looking pre-rendered proclamation from 2005.

No, really. If last year's original game engine teaser suggested it, then this year's hands-on proves it: Killzone is Sony's leading poster-boy for their current generation console; evidence that its resources are still far from fully tapped. And while we're at this hands-on point, it's worth saying that seeing is no longer

enough for believing. It doesn't matter how many videos get downloaded from the Internet in whatever resolution, nothing will be able to prepare you for what it will be like to look at this game while you're controlling your Mohawked grunt with a Dual Shock 3 controller clenched tightly in your own hands. For one thing, this is far and away the single most embodied and visceral first person game we've ever played. Now, visceral is a word used far too lightly by specialist critics, but here it really is the only appropriate combination of letters that the English language has made available: Killzone 2 is a game witnessed through the eyes, and then processed throughout your entire being.

The first thing to be noticed about the graphics is that there isn't a first thing to be noticed. Every aspect of Killzone's visual appeal seeps into every other aspect, and there is never a true celebrity



Magic dust does nothing to stop bullets.

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

For all our childish jaw-dropping in regards to the visuals, we would like to see a little less generic testosterone in the main character designs themselves. We understand that the game wishes to be tough, but some of these guys are caricatures of caricatures.

feature or effect. If anything, it'll be the hulking frame of the soldier you play as that will be most appreciated, and this very possibly stands out because of the welcome and overdue return of rumble to Sony controllers. The battlefield, as ultimately linear as our preview session indicated it will remain, feels truly textured — slants and obstacles can be felt, the impact of heavy fire can shake your entire being, and we'll be damned if it doesn't actually feel like you have a body. That'd be another way saying that it's all rather, well, visceral.

Killzone 2's animation is amazing. The way the camera bobs and shakes is amazing, the way that the motion blur perfectly simulates weight and confusion rather than just being a superfluous box-ticking effect is amazing, and the way that you can feel the strain as a comrade helps lift you up to elevated ground — complete with camera shaking and motion blurring — is so satisfyingly visceral in the most simple sense that it'll be hard to play any other FPS ever again without feeling like you're just a disembodied pair of eyes and hands clutching a bobbing firearm.

## WEIGHTED CONSIDERATIONS

For all this gushing about the visuals — and they do deserve enthusiasm — there's

the fortunate by-product of gameplay. Or should that come first? Whatever — there's a lot of bleeding in Killzone when it comes to various design aspects working together, and it simply isn't possible to talk of one aspect without thinking of the other: in this case, the sense of weight that the game-engine provides is fundamentally essential to the entire way the game plays and feels. Some of these things just can't be separated from each other.

Killzone 2 makes very specific use of bloom lighting as a means of acknowledging that its colour palate

blurring the line between beautiful eye candy and physical awareness, and we've thus far only had a chance to slog our way through an introductory mission.

To call it a slog is accurate, if a little misleading: Killzone is hardly tiring from an entertainment perspective, but its gunplay doesn't lend itself well to happy-smack quick thrills. Rather, it's a calculated trudge through a suffocating landscape where even a glimpse of the polluted orange sky that hovers overhead can provide a breath of relief from an overwhelming sense of dystopian

...IT'S A CALCULATED TRUDGE THROUGH A SUFFOCATING LANDSCAPE WHERE EVEN A GLIMPSE OF THE POLLUTED ORANGE SKY THAT HOVERS OVERHEAD CAN PROVIDE A BREATH OF RELIEF FROM AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF DYSTOPIAN CLAUSTROPHOBIA.

is overflowing with grays and muted, industrial browns. Characters are typically highlighted with a not-quite-supernatural glow that helps to differentiate them from the backdrops that, it should be said, contain a sense of depth that is perhaps only comparable to Crysis running on a network of computers on loan from an advanced alien race. It's all phenomenally physical, with a palpable sense of space to everything: Beams of light highlight the dust and particles in the air as they pour through windows, and the actual explosions, especially the plumed smoke that comes with them, all have to be experienced to be fully appreciated. This is smoke that can get in your eyes, after all.

All of which means Killzone 2 does a lot more than almost every other game out there when it comes to providing a sense of actually being there, trapped in its wasteland of a setting. It's already

claustrophobia. Your character will move slowly, with sprinting reserved for when the analogue stick is clicked in; of course, when you run, you will know that you're making an effort to do so.

Although moving at a pace that could even be described as sluggish, Killzone nonetheless manages a sense of intensity. It's a testosterone-only event that could make Frank Miller proud where killing feels violent and brutal, where you won't be running so much as charging forward, and where both terrain and foe will ensure that all ground gained almost always feels hard-earned.

Environmental awareness is pivotal: early on in our session a friendly with a rocket launcher was taken out, his weapon clanking down upon the rubble where he once knelt. Taking note of this and using that rocket launcher to deal with one particular line of defense made things

♪ Did you think I would leave you diiiiie-ing... ♪



a lot easier, although a gleeful rush for the weapon would have been fatal. We stepped out cautiously, and thankfully spotted and took down an enemy unit creeping behind our rank before grabbing the device and letting loose one hell of an explosion. As a moment of exhilaration, it seemed to sum up Killzone's approach fairly well: careful and considered, each decision demands to be charged with purpose and above all, remembering that the enemy knows how to hide and use cover (and generally how to be a sneaky bastard) is just as important as using these tactics yourself.

### EXPLODING BARREL

To the surprise of absolutely no-one, environmental hazards and explosive barrels made an appearance. But, as if to prove that the animation and sense of weight was really what was setting Killzone's visuals apart, these explosive barrels (gas canisters, in this case) were just too much fun to play with to save for an opportune, strategic moment.

Get a bullet into one of these and it will puncture as expected, spewing gas from the leak and skittling all over the place before eventually becoming a hazard to limbs. It was an awesome novelty for our limited session that will hopefully lend itself well to careful planning in the longer term.

But even if it doesn't, it still goes to reinforce that one aspect of Killzone's visuals that actually benefits gameplay in a way that could eventually see the redundancy of much of the need to 'think game': Killzone's world, as dark and drab as it is, is immediately familiar because of the way that it behaves. Physics are here not just for puzzles or for show — they're here to make sure that everything acts and reacts in a way that is immediately familiar with each person's experience of the real world (or Hollywood representations of it, at the very least).

This is only let down by those moments where greater precision aiming is required, but this is as much to blame on Sony's analogue stick design as it is anything else, as the simple fact here is that Microsoft's pad is better suited to

this type of core gameplay. That aside, though, everything ran smoothly and control seemed fairly intuitive, minus one particular Sixaxis moment — Sony's jack-of-all-trades approach to their controller again causing struggle as turning a wheel to open a gate proved to be less natural than it should have been. Fortunately, some tweaking to make instructions a little clearer may eradicate this brief splinter in the game-flow, although it's a shame that it will never be so second-nature as to not need any instruction at all.

### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

If there's any cause for worry of history repeating itself at present, it's that Killzone 2 may come across as just a bit too conventional. Certainly, character design is chock full of generic man-men, complete with grunting voices and stupid haircuts. The colour palate is hardly a break from what is commonly seen in FPS games, also, although there are some wonderfully stylised elements within this — the lighting feels unique, and the way that blood splatters and spills has its own, oddly alluring sense of identity.

We've been told that there will be no secondary fire on any of the weapons,

Good kit for those chili bean parties



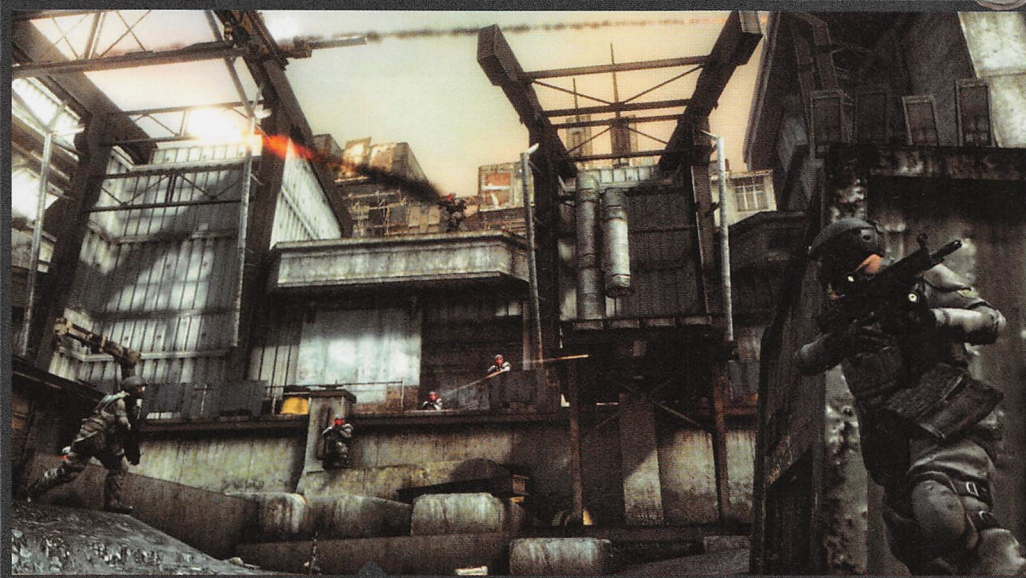
It's almost like another trailer!



### WHERE ARE MY TENTACLES?

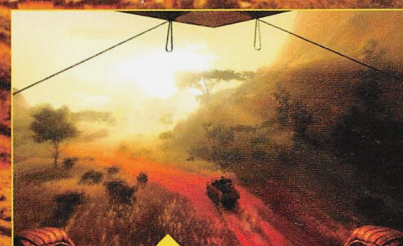
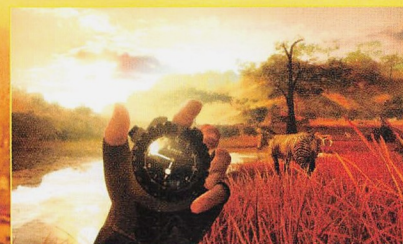
We really can't put enough emphasis on how wonderful it is to play a First Person game than actually feels this visceral. Prior to this it was only really Starbreeze (and perhaps Retro, to a lesser extent) who had made an effort, and we gawked the first time we realized that our polygonal Vin actually cast a shadow in Chronicles of Riddick. Killzone 2 is a huge leap forward, even over this benchmark, and one that may well prove that the pad is mightier than the mouse: Yes, that traditional pointing device might provide greater speed and accuracy, but when's the last time you met someone capable of spinning a full 180 degrees while holding a rocket launcher and falling two hundred feet in less than half a second?

which may actually prove to be an ironically forward-looking piece of backward thinking. Certainly, it should keep things extremely focused, and may well make things easier to balance — especially for potential multiplayer modes. As for the gameplay itself, it's hard to judge from just one mission, but the technology behind this game is in itself enough to raise an average experience to a memorable one. But we nonetheless hope with resolute, almost-religious intensity that Guerrilla manage to keep the pacing and events interesting enough to sustain the full campaign — if they can manage that then they will have a true benchmark on their hands. But even if they fail, there will still be moments enough where the tech alone will blow your mind, put a bullet through your brain, and then, without hesitation, nail it to the back wall. **Tim Henderson** «



Insert Redfern joke #83540 here

# FAR



Find your way,  
then fly there!



Mythbusters  
begs to differ,  
no doubt



## THE WORLD

Far Cry 2 runs on a proprietary Ubisoft engine called Dunia, a word that means "the world" in Swahili. Aside from delivering some truly amazing vistas, Dunia will make for a seamless, load-screen free world thanks to some advanced streaming technology. What's more, the Dunia engine will be used for numerous upcoming Ubisoft games, including the hugely anticipated Prince of Persia 4.

# FAR CRY 2

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3, PC

**CATEGORY:**  
FPS/Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1+

**DEVELOPER:**  
Ubisoft Montreal

**DUE:**  
2008

Sequel Count:

**11**  
exploding  
barrels

Since the first Far Cry game was released a few years ago, the series has been synonymous with lush jungles and free-roaming action, with a little hint of the paranormal on the side in the form of mutants. Well, at least that's what we thought. Clint Hocking, the Creative Director of Far Cry 2 thinks differently. Very differently. "The core of the Far Cry brand is neither jungle nor monsters, neither white sandy beaches nor mutants. The core of Far Cry is — and always has been — to take players to an exotic and dangerous locale that is both realistic and credible — but at the same time is someplace they never felt they would get to go in their real life. Unfortunately, the tropical islands and their white sandy beaches have become a little bit crowded in recent years with various games and television series setting up camp on these formerly exotic shores. Far Cry needs to stand alone in its exotic territory and that means it has to be the first to arrive."

## WHAT DO YOU FIGHT FOR?

Though we're not entirely sure we would call war-torn Africa exotic, Hocking believes the new setting is a perfect continuation of the themes of the game. "Africa was the perfect choice for living up to the promise of the original and expanding on it to deliver the same sense of wonder that players felt with the first title."

So aside from the title, are there any elements that carry over from the previous game? If not the setting, characters and plot, what is it that makes Far Cry 2 a sequel? Much like Korean film director Park Chan Wook's critically acclaimed "Vengeance Trilogy", Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance, Oldboy and Sympathy for Lady Vengeance, Far Cry 2 is a thematic sequel, not a story sequel. Clint Hocking explains, "As I said above — the core of Far Cry is not in its characters or story, or even its specific environment. The core of Far Cry is in its overall experience. Thematically, the original Far Cry was a tip-of-the-hat to H.G. Wells' 'Island of Doctor Moreau' — the story of a mad scientist trying to unlock man's 'animal nature' in a dark tropical environment. Far Cry 2 goes one step further and is a tip-of-the-hat itself to Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' — a similarly themed tale though much darker, realistic, and more psychological in nature. It explores human nature when confronted with its darkest aspects. Where the original Far Cry asked you to fight literal monsters, Far Cry 2 asks you to look at the metaphorical monster that is already in you and challenges you to grapple with it and to learn what it means to confront these inner monsters."

Thankfully, Far Cry 2 is shaping up to be a little more action packed than the classic Conrad novel. Someone is undoubtedly going to write in now and tell us how good Heart of Darkness is, and we agree whole-heartedly. It's a great book. It is not, however, an action packed thrill ride of danger and

daring do. Rather than an internalised struggle against the darker nature of Man whilst travelling up river, Far Cry 2 places the player in a massive 50 square kilometre area of Africa, complete with desert, jungle savannah and villages and tasks them with the mission of assassinating an arms dealer profiteering from a civil war between two groups of rebels/mercenaries, the APR and the VLL. How the player will approach and accomplish this mission is almost totally up to them. Depending on the way in which the player likes to...well...play, Far Cry 2 can be a fast paced first person shooter, a stealth action game, or any combination thereof.

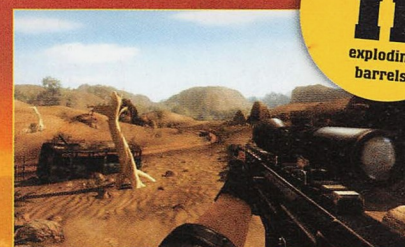
## LARGER THAN LIFE

One thing that is certain, and a huge nod of the hat to the aforementioned Heart of Darkness, is the fact that players will have to confront the nature of heroism and evil. Throughout the course of the game, players will develop a reputation depending on their actions. Approaching combat in a more methodical and brutal manner — wounding enemies to draw their companions out of hiding, setting enemies on fire, killing enemies in melee and the like — will increase the player's reputation with the two rebel forces, helping them gain respect for being something of a bad-arse or, if brutal enough,

Far Cry 2 can be a fast paced first person shooter, a stealth action game, or any combination thereof

a monster. The developers are hoping that by the end of the game players will be questioning whether they have, in fact, become far worse monsters than the man they have been sent to kill. If successful it should make for one hell of a narrative — one made even more impressive by the fact that, for the most part, the player will be leading the action, rather than being constrained within a tight, linear narrative framework.

Although Ubisoft has taken over developing responsibilities from original developers Crytek, Ubisoft Montreal don't feel at all like they have co-opted someone else's ideas and IP. "We actually don't feel that way", says Far Cry 2 producer Louis-Pierre Pharaud. "Ubisoft was the publisher of the original game and was an integral part in the development of that game. We decided to obtain the full rights on the Far Cry Franchise and now we just need to deliver a kick ass game." We haven't had any hands on time with the game as yet, but everything we've seen and heard really does point to Far Cry 2 being genuinely kick-arse. We're heading off to Paris next month to take a sneak peak at what Ubisoft has in store for us over the next 12 or so months so with any luck we should have some hands on impressions for you soon. «



## DRINK TONIC WATER

Far Cry 2 has an interesting and clever conceit for increasing the player's ability to sustain damage throughout the game. At the beginning of the adventure, the player is stricken with malaria, leaving them weak and vulnerable. As the player progresses through the game they will have to find sources of artemisinin, a malaria drug. The more anti-malaria drug the player consumes, the healthier they become, allowing them to take more damage.

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some indication as to what form multi-player will take. Ubisoft are still keeping mum on the subject.

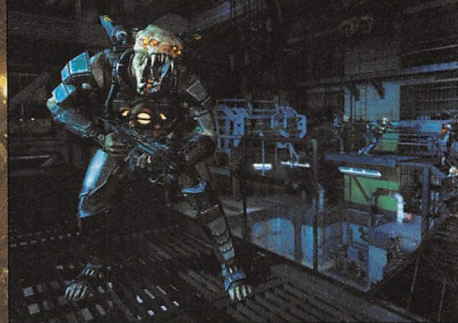


How's the serenity?  
Deadly.

Interesting  
architecture in  
this town...



"Ooh, someone  
dropped two  
dollars!"



# RESISTANCE 2

**SYSTEM:**  
PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
FPS

**PLAYERS:**  
1-60

**DEVELOPER:**  
Insomniac

**DUE:**  
November 2008

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

We want to see the singleplayer campaign, and we want it to be as impossibly epic and pretty as that brief debut trailer implies.

**R**esistance 2 will continue the story of Nathan Hale, that American marine who was tasked with the job of making the European setting of the first game seem less alienating to all those gamers in the good ol' US of A. Oh, and he had to fight some aliens, also, and it appears as if this time he's going to provide double-satisfaction by continuing on with his merry Chimera arse-thrashing all the while protecting the lovely red soil of his gun-obsessed homeland. There were some huge plot-holes in need of landfill at the end of the first Resistance, and we've been eager to find out a bit about how these loose ends may tie together.

This is something that makes a minor annoyance of the fact that you now know as much about the single player campaign as we do at this point, as our time discussing and playing the game was spent almost exclusively with the multiplayer.

#### LOTS AND LOTS AND LOTS AND...

It seems that all those claims about 60 player competitive play were entirely justifiable. We simultaneously chewed the fat with Insomniac's Community Relations Manager, James Stevenson while we ducked and wove our way around a patch of a massive American redwood forest, discovering as we did so that we were in fact playing online with players from Hale's real life homeland. The game held its own at 30fps without a single sign of lag, although our comments on how smoothly it already ran was met with what could be described as a dissatisfied shrug: "Yeah, it's locked at a solid thirty at the moment, but there's still time to work on that."

Time, of course, is something that Insomniac treat with the utmost respect. Going an extra mile to be worthy of their sleep-depraved title, they received special mention during the main keynote for their track record when it comes to meeting deadlines, and so when we are told that their game will be out in November, we are promised it will be. The questions, then, focus on what more can be accomplished within the six months that remain at the time of writing.

James is more hesitant to make equally bold promises about support for full 1080p resolution, although he is quick to point out that there will be a big visual leap forward. We're willing to believe him — even the multiplayer map we've been traipsing around at this point, designed as it is to host 60 human players, is already looking better than the original game. The lighting, for one, is a big step up and actually seems to have a proper sense of sourcing this time.

But when you're dealing with such a staggeringly high number of players, it's how you intend to manage gameplay and prevent battles from descending into a chaotic, uncontrolled hotpot of confused and angry players that is of primary concern. Insomniac's answer: epic battle, intimate experience.

This approach has seen the team work on a structure that sees multiple smaller battles all raging on simultaneously, over the same maps as each other. Or, as Insomniac's founder, Ted Price, so concisely put it, the game will feature "battles within battles."

#### INTIMACY

For want of the ability to hold back on final judgment, the way that everything has been structured sounds very promising. What hands-on time we managed with the game seems to back this up. The concept of segregating each side into several sub-teams each with their own goals and objectives (delivered dynamically of course — time will tell how well this feature holds up) may not be glistening new, but there are some neat ideas within this setup to make sure that everyone has fun, enjoys a sense of purpose, and that everything is as balanced as it can be.

It mostly comes down to two things: Rival squads and reward points. Rival squads are exactly as described — a team on the opposing side with an objective to match your own. This means that each faction will have their own faction to war with, and should help to ensure that battles are properly localized. We do, however, hold interest over the potential for strategies for benefiting from the intermingling of given objectives.

Then there are the rewards that come with success, and the perks that come with taking on those who attain this success. Expect various stat-boosts — a little extra HP here, slightly more accurate aiming there — as you go about raking up points for fragging your intimate foe to high heaven, but expect to become headhunted, also. You see, the better you do, and the more powerful you become, the more points you yourself are worth, and a multiplier will hang like a giant flashing beacon over your head as a result.

All this will take place on the setting of

» **The lighting... actually seems to have a proper sense of sourcing this time.**

some stupidly large maps. In a way, the intimacy of it all makes us wonder just how necessary having as many as sixty players will really be, but then we remember the sheer sense of scale that will inevitably lend itself to everything — that you and your team are but one aspect of overall victory in the war raging around you.

We also received confirmation that the co-op campaign will take place on the multiplayer maps, and will feature character classes that will need to support each other rather than properly developed and scripted characters. While we were told that there would be narrative, the general tone certainly indicated that this won't be the fully fleshed-out tie-in story that some may have hoped for, rather just a series of constructed missions to play with friends. Two new weapons are also being spoken about "for the moment": a chaingun and a semi-automatic, mid-range rifle. The secondary fire on the chaingun is looking particularly neat, and sees a tripod and shield set up for maximum slaughter at the cost of maneuverability.

With Killzone 2 pushed into 2009, Resistance 2 will have the pleasure of going to tonk with Gears of War 2 this Christmas season, irrespective of the differences in the design philosophies between the pair. War of the sequels? Yup, the new generation has at last become the current once again.

**Tim Henderson** «

Sequel Count:

**II**

toothy allams

"BLARGH!"



#### LITTLE BIG CHIMERA

The opening presentation for Playstation Day London featured a great little trailer for the great-looking Little Big Planet (more next issue) that itself featured a great looking little sackboy dressed up in full Killzone attire. Cute, and if what may well have been an accidental slip of the tongue is any indication, then "that footage didn't show the only cross-franchise outfits for LBP."

# Mafia II

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3, PC

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1+

**DEVELOPER:**  
2K Czech

**DUE:**  
2009

It's been six years since the release of the original, and brilliant, *Mafia*. Released just after *GTA III*, *Mafia* stood out as something of a dark twin to *GTA* — a gritty and realistic free-roaming crime game, packed with some incredible characters and an absolutely gripping story of trust, betrayal and retribution in the finest tradition of gangster fiction. It was also a truly gorgeous game, with an incredibly style and great graphics for the day. When we heard a new *Mafia* game was on the way, we couldn't have been happier. We recently had the chance to have a chat with the team from 2K Czech (formerly Illusion Softworks) about their highly anticipated sequel.

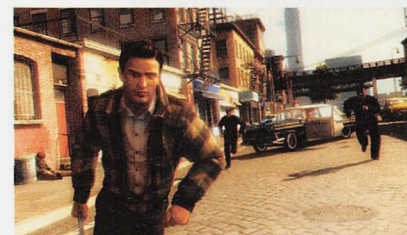
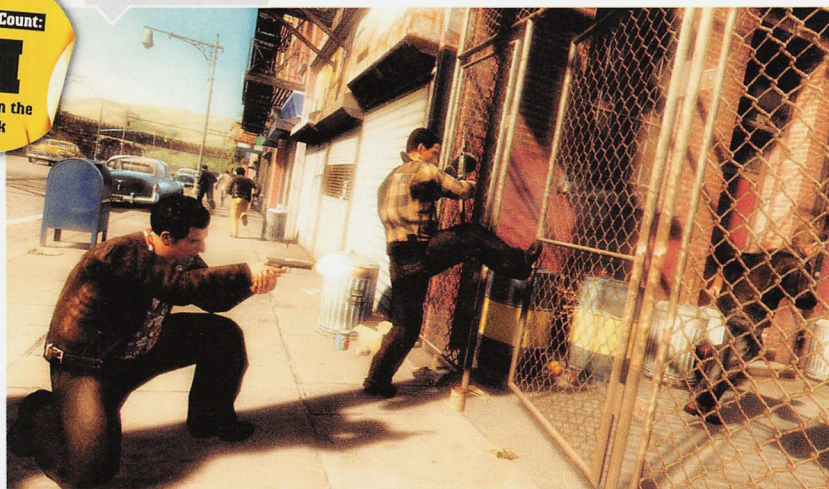
It's common to see sequels appearing a relatively short amount of time after the release of a successful game. It's far less common to see a sequel announced for release 7 years after the release of the original game. So are 2K Czech worried that the franchise may have gone stale in the last six years? "We're not worried at all", they say, "Six years have passed since the original release of the first *Mafia* game. But you know what, we have used that

time wisely, contemplating and focusing on what we wanted to achieve for the next title. Advancements in technology have changed so much since the first game we now have the chance to do things we never even thought were possible when we were developing the first game." the developers continued, saying, "It's really our chance to completely reimagining a new game for the series and make old fans fall in love with *Mafia* all over again. Still, because it's a whole new game with new characters and a new storyline, new *Mafia* fans won't feel lost at all."

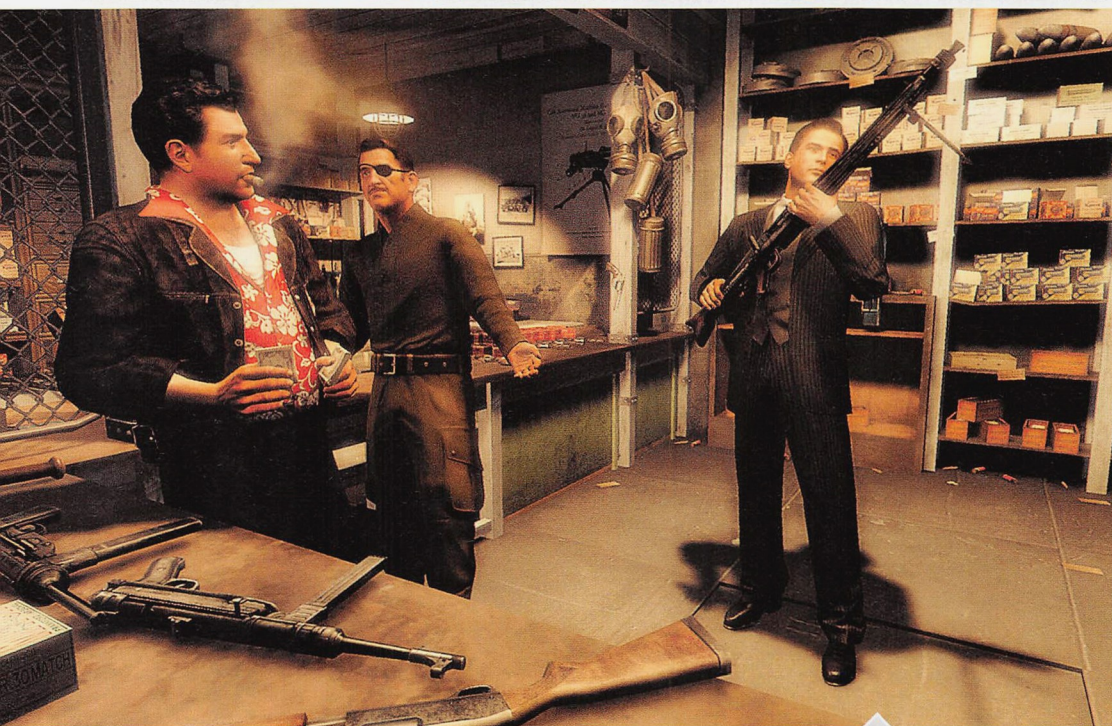
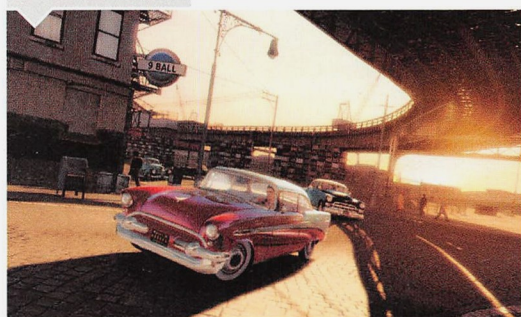
Not a lot of detail as to plot and character is available as yet for *Mafia II*. What we have been able to glean so far is the action will be set in the 40s/50s in

Do it! I've got your arse covered!

Sequel Count:  
**II**  
bodies in the trunk



Rollin' on Dubs



Empire City (a New York analogue) and will tell the story of a mob war between three crime families. It's rumoured that the game will also up the level of realism, with things such as readable newspapers, traffic signals that must be obeyed, a hunger/thirst system and buyable housing. Players will take the role of a man, Vito, returned from WWII and becoming embroiled in the violence. Apparently the sequel boasts a script some 700 pages in length and will feature around two hours of cutscenes as well.

## MAFIA SPOILER ALERT

The original game ended with one of the most fitting, and final actions — the death of the main character. This leaves us with a very serious question — how does the second game tie in with the original? "*Mafia II*'s relationship to the original game is that it is a sequel. It's about gangsters. It has similar design structure, but that's where the relationship ends. Everything is new. The story, era, characters, gameplay mechanics, physics, and even the render engine are all completely new. However, there might be some surprises for fans of the original game...but they'll have to play the game to find out" From the screens we've seen so far, the new render engine is doing one hell of a job of bringing Empire City to life. Unfortunately we're going to have to wait a while before we can sample the script.

The original *Mafia* was released hot on the heels of *GTA III*, leading to some rather unfair comparisons and criticisms. Is history going to repeat itself? Even though *Mafia II* isn't scheduled for release until 2009, *GTA IV* is currently tearing up all sales charts and records. It's highly likely a PC version of *GTA IV* will be released next year, and all but certain that there will be DLC released for consoles as well. So are 2K Czech worried that their game will be overshadowed by the Rockstar juggernaut again? The development team isn't worried, "*GTA IV* is an incredible game,

Nick Fury makes a cameo appearance

Barrels  
exploding?!  
Surely not!?



## HIDING THE BODIES

Mafia II will give players the option to upgrade cars, with new fixtures, engines, tires, paint jobs and even new, improved trunks (car boots that is). We can only assume that the upgraded carrying capacity will be used at least once during the course of a game to hide a body. On the subject of hiding the bodies, we wonder if there's going to any GTA style outcry when the game is released. Although Mafia II will arguably be as violent as GTA, we seriously doubt the whiners will even pay attention.

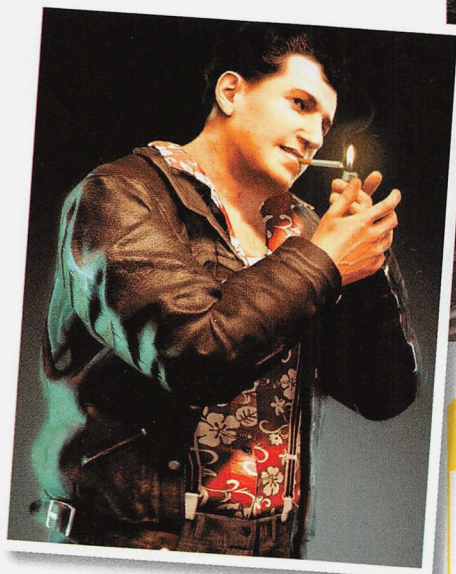
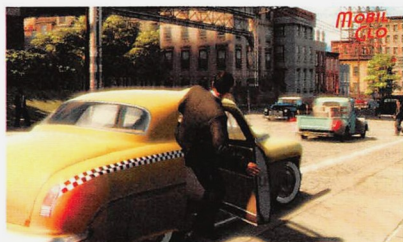
Mafia II has been designed from the ground up solely and purposely as a console title

but in our opinion Mafia II is a completely different gaming experience. Whereas GTA IV delivers an over the top, satirical view on the life of crime, Mafia II focuses more on delivering an authentic and almost movie-like experience, inspired by all the great gangster movies that have graced the "big screen".

Both fans and press alike touted the first Mafia game as one of the only games that truly delivered on the experience of being a part of a classic gangster film, Mafia II is going to be no different, only that we are turning that experience up big time."

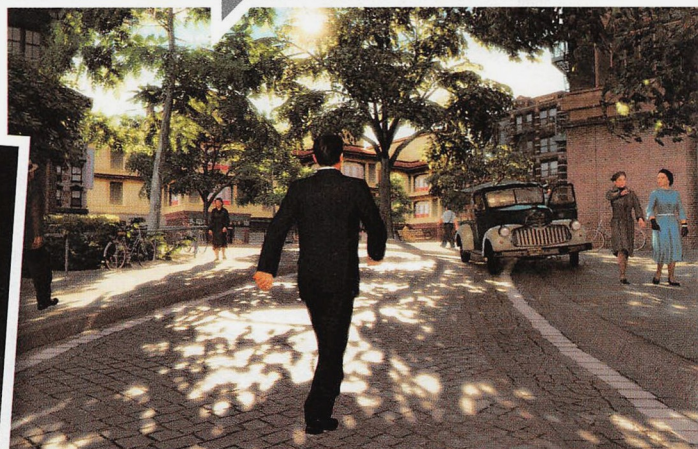
### PORTING

While the critical and fan acclaim for the PC version of the game is absolutely true, the console versions of Mafia were a different story. Saddled with shoddy ports, the Xbox and PS2 versions of the original game featured poor controls, erratic frame-rates and myriad bugs and glitches. "We are aware of the fact that the console ports of the first game were not as good as they should've been". And what exactly was the problem? "At the time, we were a small team with very little experience coding for consoles. It's unfortunate that our inexperience with consoles at the time forced us to make a lot of compromises and prevented console gamers from getting the classic gangster movie experience we had



delivered on the PC version. But, we learned from our mistakes and we can guarantee our fans and to console gamers right now, we are not going to let that happen ever again." Big words, yes, but can they back them up? The answer is yes, apparently, as the developers continue, "Mafia II has been designed from the ground up solely and purposely as a console title. Yes, there will be a PC version, but from a design standpoint, Mafia II is being developed first and foremost as a console title. We have made specific control choices tailored to make the game a smooth console gaming experience. We are not making any compromises on quality this time around." If we were more cynical we may wonder if this time around the PC gamers are going to get the short end of the stick, but we have faith that such passionate developers won't make the same mistakes again.

All of us at Hyper were big fans of



### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A hands-on build. We loved the first game and we can't wait to test drive the sequel.

Mafia, so we can't wait to see more of the upcoming sequel. If 2K Czech can inject the new game with the same magic as the first then we're in for something special. Of course, we're not the only ones excited about coming back to a fondly remembered name — 2K Czech is pretty chuffed as well. "It feels fantastic, but to be honest, although it's been a long time for fans it hasn't been that long for us. We've been thinking about Mafia II for quite awhile now..."

We'll let you in on some more of what the people of 2K Czech have been thinking about in the coming months. <<

He's sensitive  
about his bald  
patch



# Saints Row 2



## HANDS-ON

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3, PC

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1+

**DEVELOPER:**  
Volition

**DUE:**  
August 2008

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Similar gameplay taken to a fantasy, horror or science-fiction setting

**S**aints Row was a great little game that never really got a chance to shine since its big brother and competitor, GTA, has been the prettiest girl at the ball for years now. What a way to mix metaphors and genders! The good news is, Saints Row 2 might not have the lean, all attitude and beauty of the GTA franchise, but it is a worthy rival and in some ways looks even better than GTA IV.

Set a few years after the first Saints Row, you may recall that the main character took a bomb directly to the face. Unlike most people exposed to high explosives, you survived, had plastic surgery and are now out of jail, looking for payback and profit. Sadly for your profit-motivated dreams, new gangs have moved into the power vacuum of the Row and the Ultor Corporation, the sinister baddies of Red Faction, actually, are looking to mess you up.

That plastic surgery introduces one of the most interesting features of Saints Row 2 — very heavy customisation. You've got a whole host of body types, including a sliding scale of male and femaleness, every ethnicity you can think of and a host of clothing options. On top of that, you



can buy or steal any clothes you want. So yes, it's possible to have an obese Eskimo cross-dresser as the leader of the gang. Better still, you'll also have access to a staggering variety of truly obscene taunts. These range from the Mediterranean style under-chin stroke, to the evergreen raised middle digit, through to an animation known only as 'the wanker' and, of course, the ability to mimic relieving yourself in various biological fashions upon the corpses of your enemies...

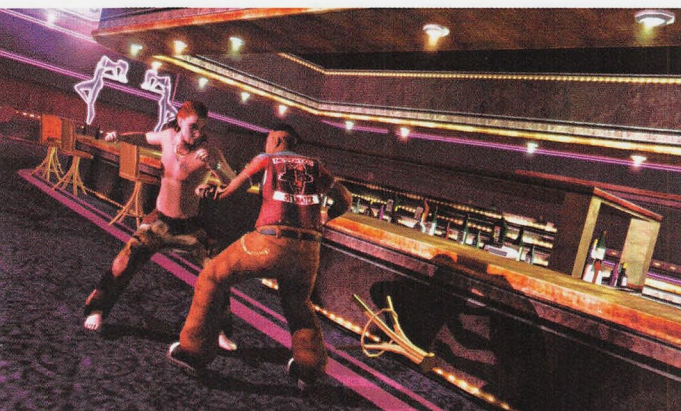
The Crib, the home base, also benefits from these upgrades. Once it was no more than a kind of save point cum garage. Now it plays an important part in keeping up your Reputation, which will affect how your gang takes orders. You can

customise it, with initial options for the look such as 'classy' and 'cheap' though it will cost money to maintain and upgrade. After maxing out cash on your stripper pole — which will be used — there's also a stereo, bed, home entertainment centre and such to attend to.

## CRYSTAL METH

The third person shooter action is vivid and fast paced. You'll be knocking off meth labs, breaking in to enemy gang bases, doing drive bys and committing robberies. Your main opponents are Rasta gang, the Sons of Samedi, the Ronin, an Asian kung-fu Tong and the Brotherhood of Stilwater, who are bikies. You'll need to take out a lot of these guys and their operations before investigating the sinister megacorp that's buying up a hell of a lot of property. Missions unfold in a non-linear fashion and have a good amount of variety to keep things from getting stale. The mission we got to play at THQ Game Day involved knocking off some rival meth labs in a trailer park. Suffice to say, there were a startling number of civilian casualties, and a large amount of police officers committed suicide by running wildly into a hail of bullets.

Adding to the violent joy is a rather spiffy new move, the human shield. It's a simple as grabbing an NPC, doing the move, then finding yourself with a struggling person you're holding in front of your body. You can then use this unlucky soul to soak up bullets or throw away as you choose. Cruel it might be but effective it is. Of course, the bad guys can do it too, so watch out. There are a lot of destructible environments, too.



Sea Partol III:  
Jet Ski Shorties

Not pictured:  
40oz being  
poured in gutter



Could this be  
the end for  
Biggles?



## 2 GUN MOJO

On top of human shields, Saints Row 2 allows dual wielding, namely pistols and submachine guns, for those Chow Yun Fat moments. A small collection of other weapons includes an automatic shotgun, a machine gun, sub machine gun, bazooka, chainsaw, flamethrower and Katana. Add this collection to the vast funfair of improvised weapons and you've got the necessary elements for a pretty good party. Then you realize you can use them in vehicles that range from cars to monster trucks, APCs, bi-planes and even, so rumour has it, a goddamned Lunar Rover. Beat that GTA.



**You'll be knocking off meth labs, breaking in to enemy gang bases, doing drive bys and committing robberies**

Barricades shatter, windows explode and all that business.

The weapons are a big part of the fun of SR2. There's a load of improvised weapons to be had. The joy of beating an innocent woman to death with a witch's hat would seem to prove all anti-game advocates completely correct. As would the startling amount of carnage you can commit with a variety of guns; but the big draw is the sticky bomb, the Satchel Charge. See, you chuck one, it sticks to people and objects alike, and then you wait and set it off. Throw it onto someone's head and they'll flail about and explode. But it also has uses more than merely comical. Throwing Charges onto cars makes for a very effective roving bomb and gives you a lot of tactical play in a game that's broadly comedic.

There's a rather ace mini-game element to be explored as well. The first game had

the Insurance Scam, which is back, bigger than ever, but the sequel includes a whole host of new vehicles, including a jet ski, which makes me want to play a river pirate. The big new ride, which lends itself to mini-game, Deathfun, is the helicopter. You jump in and fly over the city, protecting your crew from other gangs by machine gunning the life out of them from orbit. Very tasty indeed.

Saints Row 2 features a rather awesome drop-in, drop-out co-op. The game itself doesn't seem to look like it requires an amigo but having a mate will certainly make drive-bys and aerial assaults a lot more fun in the 'you drive, I'll shoot' mode. You'll have to share XP and dough but the synchronised 'wanker' seems to make it all worth while.

Not much word on the online multiplayer yet but expect the usual deathmatch style cavorting. **Christian Read** «



He fails at  
gangsta gun  
holding

# Destroy All Humans: Path of the Furon

Sequel Count:

IV

failed invasions

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360/PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1+

**DEVELOPER:**  
Sandblast

**DUE:**  
Soon

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A little more innovation in the series. Come on guys - blowing more stuff up isn't much of a change.

Well, back for yet another turnout, the fourth of the series if you include the Wii's Big Willy. Long time fans of the series will be getting more of the bum-fire, bad puns and insane weapons, while new players are in for a look at one of the strangest franchises in gaming history this side of Oddworld.

This time, Crypto the alien sworn to destroy all... yeah... is back. It's the 'funkafied' (not my word) 1970s, which means someone gets to say disco a lot and apparently everyone wears flares. Anyways, Crypto and his boss have been running a casino, which allows them a steady flow of cash as well as human DNA to experiment on. Unfortunately, Crypto has been lured away from his sacred mission to destroy all humans and must go to a kung-fu monastery to train in the ancient martial arts of his people. Cue massively racist stereotypes, chop-socky riffs and, interestingly, a new kind of alien, bent on wiping out the Furons.

Look, this is honestly more of the same from the series. You fly about with a jetpack or in a flying saucer, using a whole bunch of weapons to abduct, kill and do various funny things to people. The big draw of the game is the humour, on which your mileage may vary.

There's some jazzy new weapons, like the Tornadotron, the environment-scourging

death-ray and the pretty cool Venus Human Trap. The Furon martial arts such as Temporal Fist, allow the player to slow down time, as well as unlock other combat abilities. The four cities you'll visit all seem big and sand boxy but overall the sense of humour just doesn't seem strong enough to carry the game. Hopefully an extended bout of gameplay will prove me wrong but Path of the Furon just doesn't seem to make a successful jump to Next Gen status.

'The whole scale of the world is ramped up for Path of the Furon,' suggests Sandblast Creative Director Jon Knoles, a man who uses the phrase 'wild and crazy' in cold blood. 'Everything works vertically now. We've got skyscrapers. Fully destructible sky scrapers. We've got a lot more vertical flight in the saucers as well as air-to-air combat. Plus we've got whole new fighting styles, with the addition of weapons like the Quantum Destructor.'

And the sense of humour? 'The irreverent sense of humour, of having an alien's point of view is back! Crypto is as mean, horny and rude as ever!'

So, you know, that's a win, if you're into that. **Christian Read** ☐



## KABOOM!

In a recent interview with IGN, Grant Collier, studio head of Infinity Ward which bought us Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, takes a snipe at the new trend for destructibility and sandbox RG:G, Destroy All Humans and Saint's Row 2 are emphasizing. "total destructibility, you can really ruin the gameplay," he said. He goes on to point out the Dust map for Counter-Strike, where chokepoints are the vital area of play. "It's not fun because you can blow up everything," he claims, "it's fun because you know where the action's going to be and there's races against time to get to that action."

As for destructibility? "So I think right now it's a fad, and the fad will pass, we're not going to be bite on in it - we want the game to be fun first, and destructibility comes second"

Saucer of milk, Mr. Collier.



Pew, Pew, Pew,  
Pew, Pew, Pew



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# Red Faction: Guerrilla

Sequel Count:

III

geomod  
explosionsThat's some fine  
Aliens cosplay  
right there

## HANDS-ON

### SYSTEM:

Xbox 360, PS3, PC

### CATEGORY:

Third Person Shooter

### PLAYERS:

1+

### DEVELOPER:

Volition

### DUE:

2009

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Evidence that, unlike the previous two games, all environments will be destructible.

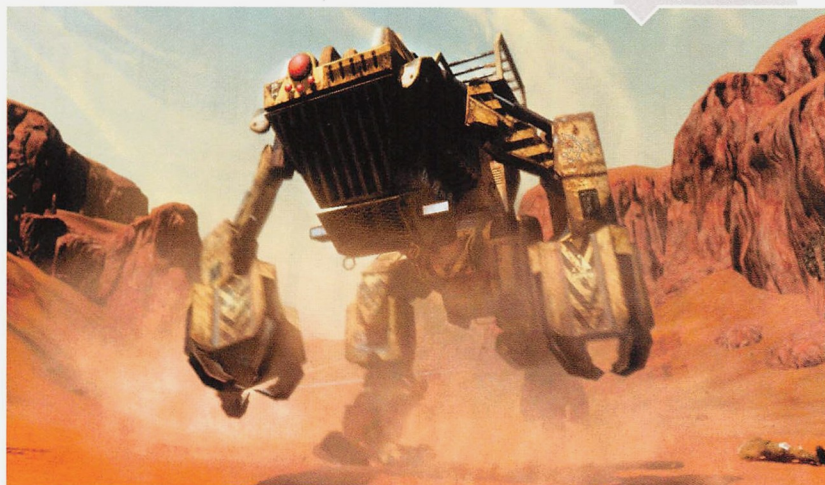
**E**volving away from the older style of games, Red Faction: Guerrilla is what they're calling an 'open-world shooter.' That is, you get to break stuff. Oh my, yes. Lots and lots of stuff. The Geo-Mod technology used in previous games was pretty good but RFG really amped up the scale, precision and scope of exactly what you can and can't beat down.

The new game abandons the old series style of FPS games and brings in an open-ended third person over the shoulder style game in a huge, open-ended environment.

### REVOLTING MARTIANS

Our hands-on dumped us right into the middle of the game, a Martian landscape in some futuristic mining facility. The story has something to do with Mars rebelling (again!) and something to do with freedom fighting and so on. Anyway, you jump in a buggy and drive around some beautifully rendered scenery. Low hills, a dusky red sky. Then, I just started drilling people with a machine gun. The car travelled fine, gripping the road and responding well. Oh yes, very fine indeed, until the damn car crashed into a wall. The perfect time to try out this so called destructibility business.

In front of a bunker, no time to waste so we switched weapons to a sledgehammer and pretty much just began to wail on the damn wall. Happily, it gave away, first cement, then barring, then pay dirt! Bricks going flying fast and loose, the dynamics of the destruction



A mech! Some sort of forklifting device in the shape of man! Jumping into it, it soon became obvious that the damn thing was pretty much indestructible

really impressive. Walking through a man-sized hole into some sort of bunker, it was time to mow down the fascist scum inside. All alone in a huge building there was only one thing to try. Landmines. Planting them all about unfortunately attracted the attention of guards, so there was no choice but to go running upstairs to find a defensible position. More killings and then, well, I had to try one final bit of random brutality – I simply beat the hell out of the floor and jumped down. Sweet as sweet, sweet candy. But not as sweet as what was to come.

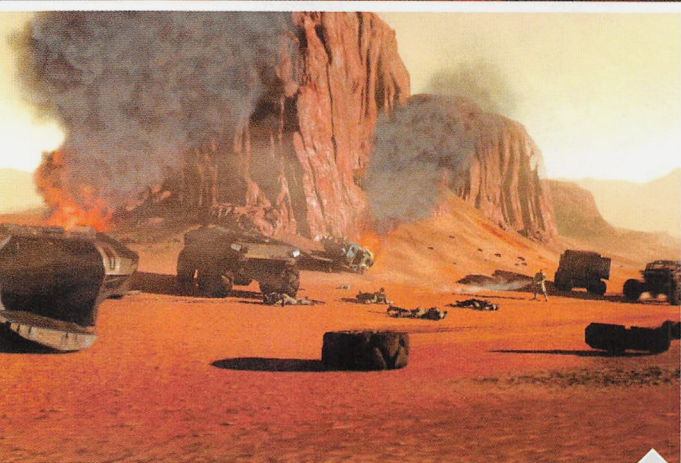
A mech! Some sort of forklifting device in the shape of man! Jumping into it, it soon became obvious that the damn thing was pretty much indestructible. You can wade through cement! Oh hells yeah!

Getting bored of simply smashing stuff up like an incredible Hulk on tranquillisers, jumping out of the slow mech, the game became a hit and run shooter. Trapped beneath a withering hail of sniper fire and looking around up and down, we finally located the source

of the attack – it turned out to be some buggie in a tower. The choice was clear: Rocket Powered Grenades. Taking time, aiming slowly, the whole damn top of the tower exploded. Mind you, it isn't as fun as chucking a sticky bomb at a passing civilian vehicle, waiting until it's near a troop transport, then setting it off, taking out enemy soldiers and vehicles alike. This game should, regardless of gender, physique or philosophy, make you feel like a big, big man.

### CRY HAVOK!

You'll have a lot of space to move around in, too. The game areas are pretty much entirely open-ended and are huge, with plenty of side missions. One of the developers claimed that the area we were in was about 12 square miles in total. 'It'd take you almost an hour to walk around some of the bigger levels.' Each area will see you having to assassinate, sabotage, rob and of course explode your way into a free Mars. As you go, you'll be looking to generate



Cleaning APCs with dynamite? Another myth busted.

It's a Bumpy Trot!

High ground?  
Check. Cover?  
Not so much.



'Resistance Points', a running tally of your successes and struck targets.

So, do you like a solid 30 FPS set of graphics and pretty much endless destruction? Of course you do! While we only got a look at one level on display, let's make a list, shall we? Killing space bastards while doing drive-bys? Check. Exploding buildings with landmines, sledgehammers and bullets? Check. Gun and run gameplay? Check.

One of the ways it achieves its awesomeness is with a heavily modded up Havok engine, which was responsible for such a variety of games as Mercenaries 2: World in Flames, Assassin's Creed and the

upcoming, highly touted Force Unleashed. That model, which makes up the majority of the game development, really shows in every step of the game. The way the vehicles handle through to the, obviously, massive explosions and kills. While there'll be no co-op multiplayer (boo) there'll be 12 and maybe 16 player modes on PlayStation Network and Xbox Live. There's also loose talk of storming and destroying bases, which is a good use of a new kind of gameplay and certainly more enticing than yet another deathmatch or capture the flag.

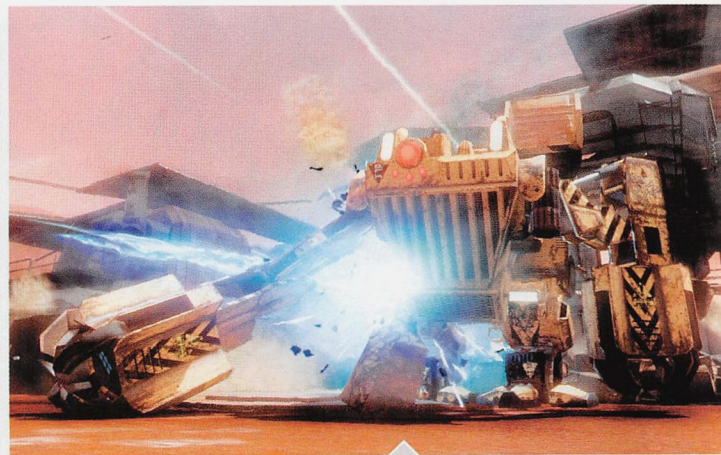
Is it absolutely the next big thing? Not quite. While there's certainly a lot to get excited about on first playing, closer examination of the details shows that it might be a while until the whole thing is ready. Enemy AI seemed a little straightforward. Jumping out of a trench and taking pot-shots at a line of enemy troops, they retaliated by just sort of aiming at me, apparently finding it too much work to storm my position. Some of the destruction looks incredible but there's still the occasional bit of oddness. That said, there's still quite a ways to go before the game goes gold, so by then we should have something pretty special.

**Christian Read** «

## THINGS GO BOOM

'What we were really looking for', says Dan Cermak, vice president of Volition, the developers of Red Faction: Guerrilla 'is true destructibility. True destructibility. Other games will cheat and simply replace one model for another. That may look good and it's worked for a long time but we had the opportunity for real destruction. See, our models aren't just "dead" version of "live" objects. The (physics engine) we've created allows for gravity to complete destruction naturally as weight and gravity do their work. It's a feeling we just don't think other games can match.'

Coming ready or not!



Driving safely -  
you're doing it wrong

"Get away from  
her you BITCH!"

# Alone in the Dark

OH&S would like a word with you

Sequel Count:  
**VI**  
Nods to  
Lovecraft



## HANDS-ON

### SYSTEM:

Xbox 360, PS3, PC

### CATEGORY:

Action

### PLAYERS:

1

### DEVELOPER:

Eden Games

### DUE:

Soon

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some real tightening of controls before the game goes gold. Fingers firmly crossed.

Like most people with access to the intertrons, over the last few months we've been enthralled by the incredibly impressive Alone in the Dark tech demos, showing off the physics, amazing lighting and mood. As a result we pestered Atari on a weekly basis for hands on code for the game so we could get a taste of the seemingly sweet survival horror confection before anyone else. Now we have the code and we've played it and, honestly, we wish we could just go back to being impressed by the tech demos. This isn't your old-school Alone in the Dark. Actually, as far as we could see, it isn't really Alone in the Dark in anything but name.

We recently had a chance to talk to Nour Polloni, a producer at Eden Games about the new Alone in the Dark. Traditionally the Alone in the Dark games have been set in a Lovecraftian 1920s but the new game is set in present day. When questioned as to why the setting has been so drastically changed, Nour said, "We want to make the game that sits in today's action entertainment milieu and is appealing to a broad audience, so we decided to bring the story to the modern day."



## IN WITH THE NEW

As well as changing the setting, the team at Eden Games has also drastically changed the action of the game, eschewing the slow-burn survival-horror aesthetics of the earlier games for a fast-paced action/adventure style. So why this new approach? "The objective is to break

the clichés of what you knew of Alone in the Dark before and innovate, so it's no longer a survival horror game, but more a pure survival experience. Yes, this is an action-packed game, but there are scenes that are played out at different paces. We've included a variety of gameplay from fast action fighting scenes, to problem solving under pressure, to free roaming of the park. The intensity of the scenes does not all come from pure action, but also from the music, the graphics, the delivery of the storyline and much more. The combination of these many elements grips the player and immerses them into the game, ensuring that we can play with their emotions."

While we like the idea of delivering different experiences during the game, our experience with the code so far has been problematic at best. In third person, Carnby shambles about slowly, forcing the player to constantly fight the fixed "cinematic" camera. At any time the player can switch to first-person, but the view mode is hampered by the fact that Carnby can only perform a limited number of actions in that mode, forcing players to either battle the camera and be able to do everything, or have a workable view point that doesn't allow the player to perform most actions.

## CLICHÉD CLICHÉS

We find it rather interesting that Nour mentioned the fact that the game seeks to get away from the "clichés" of the Alone in the Dark franchise when the new game embraces one of the hoariest old gaming clichés ever with the main character. You see, in the new game, Edward Carnby, the main character from the Alone in the Dark franchise suffers from amnesia. He has absolutely no memory of his past, who he is or any of his skills, essentially making him a blank and rather dull action hero rather than a clever and conflicted man

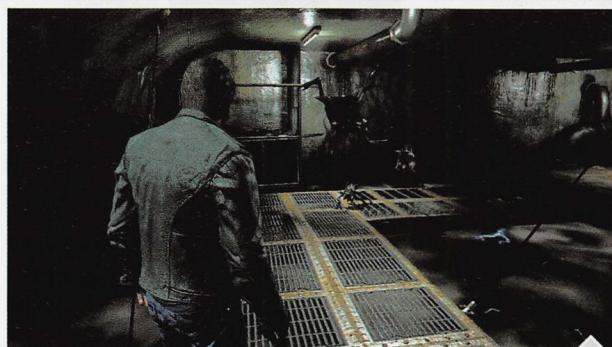
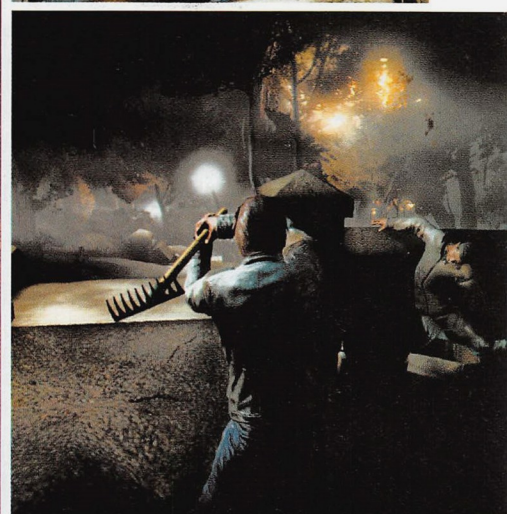


Nothing dangerous here whatsoever



Stand back. Err, light it first, mate

Going down stairs is a real drag



They're like headcrabs, except not

with knowledge of things man was not meant to know. When asked about this rather disappointing decision, Polloni replied saying, "We considered lots of different ways of re-introducing Edward Carnby into the game, but we decided that amnesia was the best solution. We wanted the player to be able to identify himself with the character of the game so that he learns the same things at the same time as the hero, and therefore becomes the hero himself. In this sense, the player creates the story of the game".

### RED IS THE NEW BLACK

The final question, then, that begs to be answered is why, after removing the familiar setting, character and mechanics from the Alone in the Dark franchise have the developers decided to call the game Alone in the Dark? "We feel that it is a strong enough game to just use Alone in the Dark as the title. As it is going in a new direction, it is easy enough to differentiate from the other games in the franchise. We didn't want to simply add a number either as this game

reinvigorating a brand that has such a strong legacy. The first Alone in the Dark had a profound impact on us as gamers and if we can have just a little of that affect on our audience then the last four years of rollercoaster highs and lows and incredibly hard work from conception to launch will be worth it."

We're hoping that Nour's enthusiasm is contagious, because our experience with the game has been less than positive. Fingers crossed that our next experience with Alone in the Dark, our review, will be more positive. <<

### DRIVING US MAD

One of the most interesting additions to Alone in the Dark is a mechanic that allows players to skip any segment of the game in which they become stuck or have too difficult a time completing. On paper we like the idea, but after playing the game for a few hours, the mechanic feels more like a copout than a legitimate help – an excuse for not balancing the game or having a real save system (instead of relying on checkpoints). One action sequence early in the game requires Carnby to outrace an evil greebly tearing up a road behind him. It sounds like fun – aside from the fact that the entire chase has to be done all but perfectly to survive. Fail at any stage and you have to go right back to the beginning of the chase and start over. We have a funny feeling that a lot of punters are going to skip that section.



Turn right or die! Do it again! Again! Again!

**We may just be speaking to our own tastes, but we find it rather easy to identify with characters that have actual character [rather than] faceless, characterless individuals**

We may just be speaking to our own tastes, but we find it rather easy to identify with characters that have actual character. There seems to be a belief in the development community that players love playing faceless, characterless individuals rather than fully fleshed out characters. We're not sure where that idea comes from, as the vast majority, if not all, of the most popular characters in gaming have strong personalities – Master Chief, Solid Snake, Altair, Duke Nukem, Link. Hell, even a silent character like Gordon Freeman has a strong character as related by his actions and the people around him. That, though, is the subject of another article.

should not be considered as a straight forward sequel in a series", says Nour, followed by the rather overtly PRish, "It is the Alone in the Dark of contemporary times, with a brand new look and feel."

Normally we can understand when a franchise is used to leverage sales of a game, but Alone in the Dark stands out as a rather interesting choice – the franchise has had a fairly spotted history in terms of critical response and sales, and the previous game was released in 2001, making the franchise somewhat stale in terms of potential audience memory. Nour sees things differently. "At Eden Games, we are very proud to be

# Tomb Raider: Underworld

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3, PS2,  
Wii, DS, PC

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1

**DEVELOPER:**  
Eidos

**DUE:**  
2008

**Y**ou can't keep a good girl down. Ever since she was created in 1996, Lara Croft has been raiding tombs and shooting goons, letting not even the threat of death or — shudder — The Angel of Darkness stand in her way. Right from the get-go she resonated with gamers for various reasons. Some liked her tenacity, strength and determination, some praised her for putting forth a strong female presence in a world filled with male main characters, and some just liked her for her boobs. She proved so popular, she was practically adopted as the PlayStation's unofficial mascot. In fact, she's got such a reputation behind her that — as has been demonstrated here — it's hard not to refer to the fictional, pixelated Lara Croft as an actual "her".

That's why the team behind the forthcoming Tomb Raider: Underworld is feeling the pressure to deliver. "Enormous pressure," affirms Eric Lindstrom, creative director of the game. "Lara Croft has about the highest recognisability and affinity of any character out there, and her fans are legion and passionate. Bringing her to the gaming community in a new adventure is a responsibility we take very seriously."

But Lindstrom's quick to deflect any notions that the character sells the game, rather than the reverse. "People like

the Tomb Raider franchise because of the strength and visibility of Lara Croft, but no one buys or plays through her games because of that. A great character makes a fun game

Lara is racist.  
Black panthers.  
Geddit?



Sequel Count:

**IX**

Ancient relics  
plundered

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

More moments like that big thumping T-Rex stomping out of the shadows. How cool was that?!

Just like  
Gladiators.



"People like the Tomb Raider franchise because of the strength and visibility of Lara Croft, but no one buys or plays through her games because of that."

that much better; it doesn't make a game fun."

That lesson was certainly learned in 2003, when Core Design rushed The Angel of Darkness onto store shelves. Hyperbole aside, it soon became known as the worst Tomb Raider game in the franchise, plagued by bugs, storyline inconsistencies, and, you know, the complete lack of any tombs. And although Crystal Dynamics has made a solid start with its re-envisioning of the original game, Tomb Raider: Legend, Lindstrom knows that they've got to look forward, not back.

"There's a lot one can say about the twists and turns and bumps on any road,

but the answer in the end is the same," he says. "If you directly take into account the relative success of your last outing, you've taken a step toward mediocrity, because if you make a great game and think that means you can relax on your sequel, it's going to fail. It doesn't matter whether the game you just released is good or bad; if you plan on making another instalment, you need to identify what makes your franchise valuable, and then create something fresh that fulfils those goals. That's what we continue to strive for."

## ANOTHER WORLD

What that means for Underworld is that, yes, there are tombs, but it's still looking to offer something new. That something is — surprise — the Underworld, a place called Xibalba that's translated from its native Mayan into "Place of fear". Spooky. Lara continues from where she left off in Legend to Southern Mexico, where she opens an ancient portal into this underworld, presumably unleashing all manner of mystical nasties. Fingers crossed this doesn't devolve into another dose of Xen, the final otherworldly levels of Half-Life that leave a bitter taste in gamers' mouths to this day.

Regardless, it's a game that's full of the details that matter in the real world. The developers are hoping to get away from overtly gamey devices such as hint prompts, while giving Lara the abilities that players expect of her, not just the ones that are deemed necessary to navigate a particular obstacle. If there's a rock that looks like it can be thrown to divert the attention of an enemy, then Lara will be able to do that. Player intuition is going to be an weapon as important as Lara's pistol.



Kneel in awe  
before the  
ruins. KNEEL!

"Yep, there's your problem. Got a big hole."



## ZOMG I WUB LARA!!1!

It really is my own fault for venturing into the realms of fan fiction. Lara Croft has over 200 stories dedicated to her on the train wreck that is fanfiction.net, which explore a multitude of bizarre combinations. Lara and Buffy, Lara and Voldemort, Lara and some guy from the Highlander universe. Sadly, Lara and decent plot, or Lara and decent spelling, are not among them. I'm on the edge of my seat in anticipation for the work that Underworld will inspire.



One foot in front of the other...



Of which, the lass has two. Her trademark firearms return and are able to be fired independently. Aiming at two targets on the run sounds like a pretty sweet deal. Not only that, but with Lara's grappling hook also a part of the mix, you'll be able to use it to pull objects closer, or yank precarious blocks off their supports and down onto any enemies below.

The environment is being designed to be as much of a character as Lara. Rather than just present a series of imposing obstacles, it will behave in ways that will impact on Lara's progress. Slippery ledges, for instance, will require a slower shimmy across, while torrential rain might affect distant vision. Of course, decent level design will also need to be part of this package, otherwise it's just a bunch of little tweaks made to no noteworthy end.

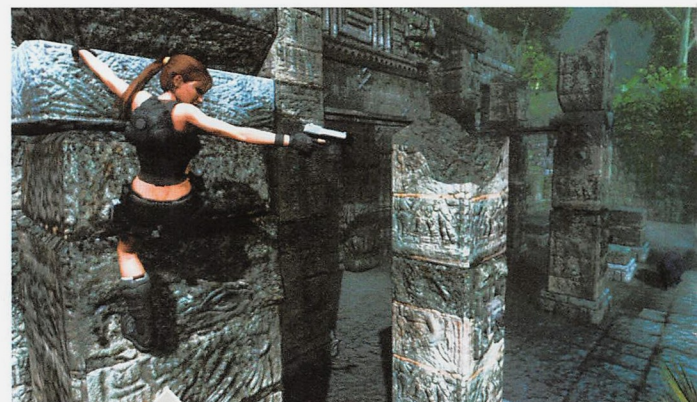
But looking back on the history of the franchise, Lindstrom is aware of how far technology has evolved, and what that evolution allows the new game to achieve, while still keeping things true to the series

"The environments that Lara Croft has explored over the years have seen many changes," he says, "but in a way we have come around again to a more exploration-based experience like that found in the original game. Lara herself and what she can do have improved a great deal, but still hold true to the original goals: discovering ancient remnants of lost civilisations, exploring them to encounter compelling threats and rewards, and solving ancient mysteries of the forgotten world known only by the myths they inspired. Timeless themes that continue to be great fun."

You know what else was fun? *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*. That game came out of nowhere and proved to be one heck of a fun title, the only one in recent years to give the Tomb Raider franchise a serious run for its money. It had it all: great script and voice acting, fantastic environments, and Drake himself proved he had the stones to carry not only that game, but a future franchise. But none of that worries Lindstrom. "Uncharted was a cool game, undoubtedly, but it's in a different sub-genre of action-adventure game," he says. "Tomb Raider: Underworld

offers a much wider range of gameplay experiences, environments, and challenges from beginning to end."

We'll hold you to that. As mentioned, Crystal Dynamics gave things a decent throw with *Legend*, but... you know... *Angel of Darkness*. If the bigger picture succeeds — if areas are well-designed, controls are tight and natural, and puzzles aren't arbitrarily thrown in for the sake of it — then we could see the rebirth of Ms Croft's heyday. The tomb raider could live again. «



"Right... any other pillars wanna argue?"

# Soul Calibur 4

Sequel Count:

IV  
burnt souls

The Soul Calibur team are a surprisingly chirpy bunch, considering that for the most part they're tuned into just one frequency — the ongoing hum of Soul Calibur development. Some of the team have been here since Namco first green-lighted the arcade version of Soul Edge (which is the origin of the series) 14 years ago. Others joined at the next stop, Soul Calibur in its coin-op and Dreamcast forms, and a few turned up once the sequel machine was properly in motion. Still, there's a definite sense of unity and brand loyalty in this meeting room at Namco Bandai's monolithic Shinagawa HQ, evidenced by eight team members who are chatting among themselves when they're not fielding questions from the assembled journo (and sometimes even when they are).

Our first question to the team isn't the cleverest, but we manage to get away with it. We ask whether the Soul Calibur IV team were unhappy to see their prized property the victim of unintended sabotage by the cheap and nasty Soul Calibur Legends Wii game. One of the senior designers owns up to having worked with the Legends development team, which triggers chuckles from junior staff, who seem to have been anticipating this question. He reckons the Legends team should be credited for "trying something different" and a Japanese Namco PR rep chimes in with a similar point, but the rest of the team seem to understand just how disappointing the game was (and we certainly do). There's definitely some hierarchy at play here — junior team members defer to senior ones — but there's also room for banter and camaraderie, which we'd imagine would make this a fun place to work. They're all dedicated to their work, but they still know how to laugh.

Near the top of the team is Masaki Hoshino, lead programmer on Soul Calibur IV. Hoshino joined Namco in time to work as a junior programmer on Soul Edge and has been with the Soul games ever since. We ask him whether developing sequels ever gets boring, but Hoshino is adamant this isn't the case: "No, I don't get bored with Soul Calibur at all. From time to time, I've done extra work within Namco on other teams' projects — a few

puzzle games and things like that — but I'll always return to Soul Calibur."

When Hoshino turned up at Namco in the early 1990s, Bandai wasn't part of the equation. But times have changed, resulting in the merger of these two companies. We ask Hoshino whether that merger affected him and his team at all, but he reckons the politics behind the move didn't really filter down to the level of internal developments. Hoshino explains: "The only major change for us was a good one: we got to move into these new headquarters."

## SOULS...BURNING

The present Namco Bandai HQ is an awesome piece of architecture — a huge, monumental triangular prism with enough headroom to house Godzilla. There are Namco arcade machines on the ground floor, welcoming visitors with readily playable examples of Namco's coin-op history stuck in 'free play' mode, against a backdrop of controlled indoor waterfalls. With surroundings like these, it's not hard to see why the team is so obviously at ease. Still, this isn't merely a cool

while Soul Edge was designed for the hardcore fraternity, Soul Calibur's international success brought the series out of cigarette-stained arcades and into the mainstream

hangout. There is a lot of work to be done and, as ever, the pressure of deadlines and development milestones keeps Namco Bandai's teams moving forward.

Even though he has worked on five Soul games in the past 13 years, Hoshino tells us his team isn't overly concerned with the future of the series. "We're not really thinking about the future," he says, "We're just focused on the now — how we can make the best possible game at this point in time." This isn't a new philosophy, either, as Hoshino goes on to relate: "Even with Soul Calibur I, II and III we never even considered how those games would be viewed five or ten years down the line — we were always fully focused on the present. I think this is the only way to make memorable games."

From what we've played of it, Soul Calibur IV is difficult to fault. (See our

preview last issue for our full impressions of the game.) It's fair to say, however, that the original Soul Calibur had a greater impact on critics and gamers alike than either of the subsequent versions, so how can Masaki Hoshino and team repeat that wow factor, other than by sticking a couple of Star Wars characters in the mix?

Part of the answer seems to be online play. "This is the first time we've been able to include online modes," Hoshino says, "and we're even thinking of running Soul Calibur IV tournaments online." For Japanese beat 'em up fans, this could be a game-making feature. Arcades are still thriving here, thanks largely to regular meets and competitions between the hardest of hardcore fighting game enthusiasts. Virtua Fighter 5 drives this subculture, but titles such as Tekken 6 and Street Fighter IV also promise to keep the scene alive. The extreme levels of dedication shown by some Japanese

players to 2D shoot 'em ups and beat 'em ups of all descriptions is a peculiar trait of the Japanese gamer's psyche, and online competition in the console entries of these genres is the only way developers can cater for competition among this community. There's also the chance that the community will expand as Soul Calibur IV moves online.

Realistically, though, while Soul Edge was designed for the hardcore fraternity, Soul Calibur's international success brought the series out of cigarette-stained arcades and into the mainstream. Hoshino acknowledges that his team now has a duty to both the game's core fans and the much broader (and more important, in economic terms) mainstream of players whose first experience of Soul Calibur could be this next game. "It is difficult to find the right balance," Hoshino admits. "We're



Does her anatomy mirror the outfit?



Mmmm! Look like Elvis you do!





looking for the best of both worlds. If you look at the basic combos in Soul Calibur compared with other fighting games, you might think Soul Calibur looks easy, but there is a lot of depth to the system. Soul Calibur IV is a very fair game, too, because the CPU is computing precisely where you are every 60th of a second. The collision detection is very advanced."

#### FUN WITH WEAPONS

Soul Calibur is different from most other Japanese beat 'em ups, though, as Hoshino is quick to remind us, and that uniqueness alone seems to have been sufficient for Soul Calibur to cross boundaries and find itself a millions-strong international audience. "Soul Calibur might look like other fighting games — we still have two characters in combat against each other — but the big difference is weapons. Because Soul Calibur's fighters are armed with weapons, the style of the gameplay is completely different from that of Street Fighter and other Japanese beat 'em ups. There's a surprising amount of strategy involved in Soul Calibur IV, as hardcore

players can learn the details of weapon use — which weapons can counter attacks from which weapons, and so on..."

Hoshino has a point (and so does new character Hildegard von Krone's pike). Although there is plenty of tactical depth retained in Soul Calibur IV, the game is also accessible and newbie-friendly. It's not exactly a button-masher, but those who do resort to random, frantic button presses aren't at quite the same disadvantage as they are in, say, Virtua Fighter. Quick reflexes are just as important as knowledge of characters' strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to perform special moves is a bonus qualification — not a prerequisite. Hoshino and team don't operate inside a bubble; they know and appreciate other companies' fighters, but they also value the originality of Soul Calibur. "We look at Street Fighter and Virtua Fighter, but we don't see much of our games reflected in them. Soul Calibur is very different to those other beat 'em ups."

Hoshino has been programming games since the age of ten, and he clearly knows what constitutes a good game (his first homebrew Famicom title was, by his own admission, "a hill-climbing simulation that wasn't very good"), so it's testament to the strengths of the Soul games that he's stuck with them for almost a decade-and-a-half. "My family aren't that impressed with my career choice, though," Hoshino confides. Perhaps, if Soul Calibur IV sends the series to another new level of international fame, Hoshino's relatives will wise up. Either way, Hoshino has no plan to retire from this team. He has Soul, alright. «

# Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

Sequel Count:

V

fightin' siblings

**SYSTEM:**  
PC, PS3, 360

**CATEGORY:**  
Shooter

**PLAYERS:**  
TBA

**DEVELOPER:**  
Gearbox Studios

**DUE:**  
TBA 2008

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Good multiplayer. COD4's level-up system will be hard to beat, but we're hoping BIA may have something squad based up its battle-hardened sleeve.

Got any marshmallows?

A current myth doing the rounds in gaming circles is that, apparently, gamers are sick of WWII games. Well, we call shenanigans, because we can't think of a decent WWII shooter since COD2. Seeing as that series has now ventured into near-future territory, we feel like we're ready for another WWII game. *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* should fit the bill nicely, sporting a brand new game engine (the ubiquitous Unreal 3 engine, of course), new squad options and a re-imagining of the game's tactical gameplay.

The *Brothers in Arms* series has always been a thinking man's WWII game, requiring strategic movement based on how suppressed the enemy is. Purist will be glad to know that *Hell's Highway* maintains this focus on suppression, with the same grey circle that turns red as you beleague the enemy. They'll also be happy to hear that the series' focus on characterisation has been maintained, with a lot of familiar faces returning from the previous games (some with promotions — exactly who would be a spoiler!) and a narrative that will focus strongly on the bond between soldiers; in particular, Sergeant Matt Baker's relationship to the troops under his command.

## NOT BAND OF BROTHERS

The best news is that *Hell's Highway* is not going to be a rehash of past games. There are a lot of new features, most of which should get both old and new fans excited. The first big change is that the tactical map is not as bland as the previous games. Upon hitting the map button,



you'll get a bird's eye view of the lay of the land. It's in full colour and makes it very easy to see surrounding buildings, fences, hay bales and vehicles — all hiding places for Nazis!

Another new feature, and one that we had the pleasure of witnessing first hand, is the inclusion of slo-mo action sequences. During the demonstration, a grenade was thrown towards a bunch of cowardly Germans hiding behind an abandoned vehicle. Seconds later, the game slowed down, zoomed in and we witnessed a bullet-time close up of the grenade exploding and, naturally, the resultant flying limbs and bits of gore. We were assured that these moments won't happen all the time, as that would soon get annoying, but if you're doing something cool, like the grenade example or a cool sniper shot, then these focus moments will take place. Awesome.

There's a new health system that does away with health kits. Instead, the screen



## ACHTUNG!

Situations can play out in many ways. One sequence we played involved a line of advancing Germans, a stone wall and a hidden sniper rifle. Four reloads later and we were still getting a kick out of tackling the situation differently each time.

turns red and blurry, with close by cover in sharp contrast as a rather large hint to seek it. Cover is now breakable, so it's possible to shoot the shit out of that fence to kill those dug-in Nazis. Also, part of the game will take place indoors, featuring house to house combat with Baker, who is all by his lonesome during these flashback sequences.

Basically, it's walking the walk, talking the talk and shooting the, uh, shoot. We just hope that *Hell's Highway* is as good as it sounds. The brief hands on we've had certainly points to the affirmative. We'll keep you posted, soldier. **Dylan Burns** «

» Another new feature, and one that we had the pleasure of witnessing first hand, is the inclusion of slo-mo action sequences



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Mild themes,  
Mild coarse  
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# Guitar Hero: On Tour



## HANDS-ON

### SYSTEM:

DS

### CATEGORY:

Rhythm

### PLAYERS:

1-2

### DEVELOPER:

Vicarious Visions

### DUE:

June 2008

**R**ocking out hurts. Forget about the pain of receiving underwear thrown by hordes of screaming women and dealing with that throbbing hangover the next morning. Guitar Hero: On Tour sure knows how to replicate that wrist-cramping feeling after a three-hour jam session — it compresses it down to fifteen minutes.

That's what we discovered after our hands-on time with the game. In an effort to bring the magic of the franchise onto Nintendo's portable console, Vicarious Visions has crafted a four-button peripheral that plugs into the DS's GBA slot. Holding the console vertically, you're strapped in with a Velcro band and your four fingers press the buttons in the usual Guitar Hero fashion — thus, the note highway has been downsized from the five tracks seen in the previous games. Strumming is performed on the touch-screen, either with your stylus or the included pick-shaped model.

You'll get a couple of songs under your belt before you notice the pain. With your wrist bent to keep the screen of the DS level, combined with the constant strain you're applying to each finger to keep them on the correct buttons and ready to press in an instant, expect a ride to Cramptown to come during the trip to stardom. It's not helped by the buttons' size — they could afford to be spaced out a teensy bit further — and the small form

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some concept sketches of failed designs of the button peripheral. Was there nothing better?

'Sif no Lars.  
'Sif no Judy.  
'Sif.

Expect a ride to Cramptown to come during the trip to stardom  
... The small form factor of the pick stylus tends to put the player in even more of a pinch, literally

Just like playing  
a real guitar!

factor of the pick stylus tends to put the player in even more of a pinch, literally.

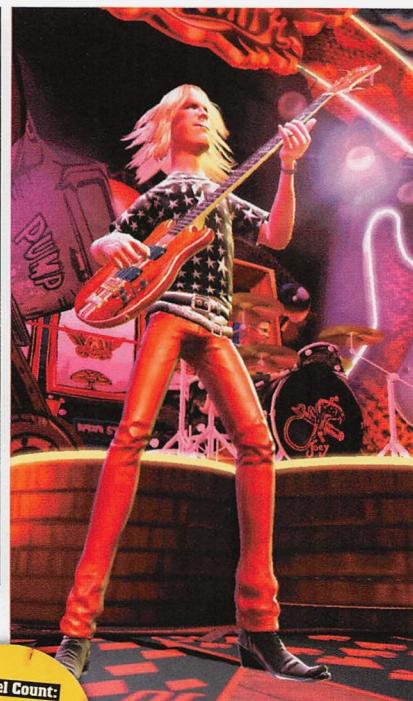
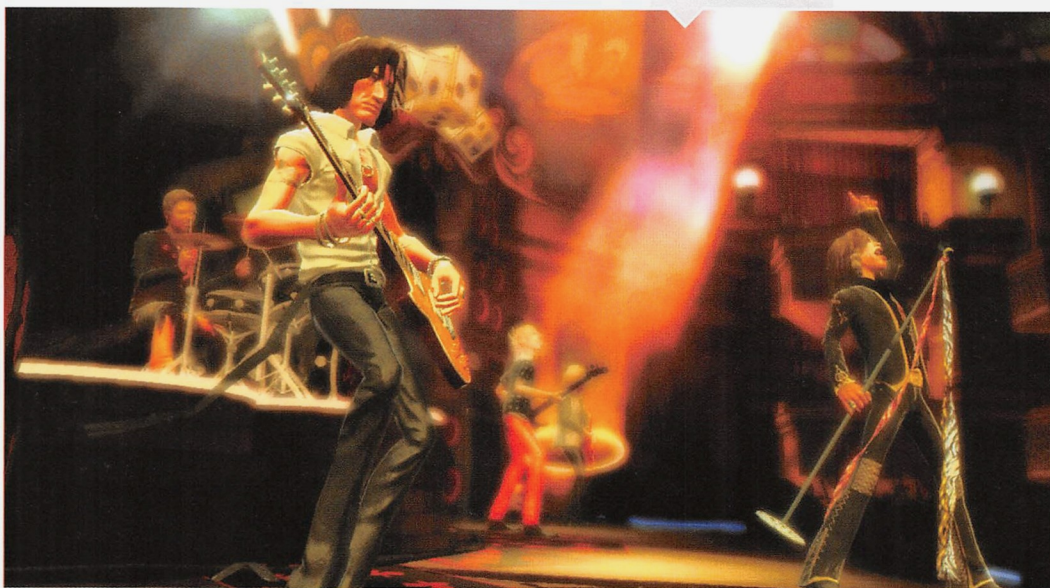
But hey, there's new songs on offer. Twenty new tracks are thrown in, including ditties by OK Go, Smashmouth, Blink-182 and Jet, while a handful of tunes featured in previous iterations will also be included. A multiplayer feature harnesses the Wi-Fi capabilities of the DS, allowing you to play with or against a friend. Be warned, however: those nefarious power ups are still in Battle Mode. This time their flavours are more annoying than ever, as some power ups saddle you with a flaming guitar that must put out by blowing in the microphone, or gushing fans asking you

to sign their T-shirts via a scribble with the stylus. That's shirts, not breasts. It is a family-friendly game, after all.

Something we found bizarre in our brief time with the game was the way in which Star Power is activated: you have to blow on the mic. That, or shout at it, but try pulling that off on a crowded bus or sitting next to your gran. With the thumb already positioned over the Right Bumper, wouldn't it make more sense to use that instead of arbitrarily employing the microphone?

Although it's unlikely the button peripheral will undergo further revisions — which is where much of our criticism here stems from — we'll reserve final judgement until our review, when we'll be able to spend more time with the product. We'd cross our fingers that it comes up trumps, but our hands are still cramped. **CC**





We want Chilly Willy!

# Guitar Hero: Aerosmith

Sequel Count:

IV

Pouty lips

**Wilks:** I'm not really a fan of Aerosmith. Sure, like most people my age, I have a soft spot for "Walk This Way" and "Love in an Elevator" but aside from that the band pretty much leaves me cold.

Because of that, Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is not at all a game for me. What it is, however, is a really interesting, and potentially great approach to upcoming Guitar Hero 3 (and eventually Guitar Hero 4) expansion packs. Guitar Hero: Aerosmith charts the entire career of the band, starting from school gigs all the way through to present day success, through a number of classic songs, venues, motion captured characters and documentary-style cutscenes showing the band talking about their careers. Aerosmith may not be my cup of tea, but if the same treatment were given to the Stones, The Clash, Muse, Pink Floyd, Hendrix or any number of groups or guitarists I do like, I'd definitely fork over my money.

**Wells:** According to Activision, the story goes that band guitarist Joe Perry spotted his kid playing Guitar Hero one day, and got a little miffed when he realised there were no Aerosmith tracks included. A few phone calls later, and the band has essentially bought their own game. This is all about Aerosmith, from the motion-captured models and tailored appearances, down to the choice and look of the stages.

As mentioned, things are focused almost exclusively on the and throughout the game's Career mode, and although there are a few non-

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3,  
PS2, Wii

**CATEGORY:**  
Music

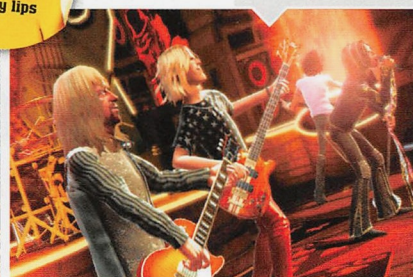
**PLAYERS:**  
1-2

**DEVELOPER:**  
Neversoft

**DUE:**  
August 6

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A full track listing so we can see what non-Aerosmith songs will be available



Aerosmith songs thrown in, this is a game that really belongs to them.

In that respect, it produces a curious result. Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is something like an interactive "Greatest Hits" album, but in doing so narrows the appeal of the product to followers of the band. Activision's PR rep confessed that they're not sure how well the game will sell, but at least it's not Guitar Hero: Country & Western. Seeing how the game is received will set an interesting precedent in what we can expect from future Guitar Hero titles, that's for sure.

**Wilks:** It will definitely be interesting to see how sales go

concerned, GH: Aerosmith plays pretty much like any other Guitar Hero game, although, to be honest, we did have quite a bit more trouble than we've had with previous games as we are none too familiar with the tracks. As usual, playing through Career mode unlocks new tracks that can be later player in Quick Play or multi-player.

**Wells:** I'm not sure I'm sold on the concept of a one-band-only game. Setting aside the stone balls of Aerosmith that requested a game be centred around them (the band, not their balls), the nature of the product narrows the scope of the track listing in such a way that it risks excluding all but the hardcore followers of the band. Having said that,

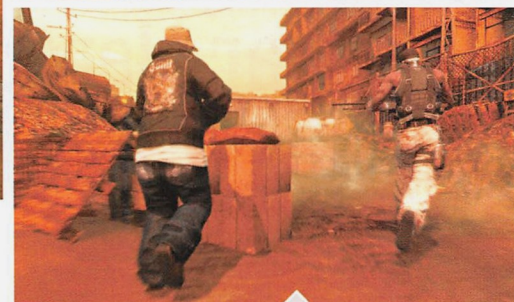
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is something like an interactive "Greatest Hits" album

when the game is released in early August. As it currently stands, I'm not willing to make a statement either way on how well the game will go over with an Australian audience. If it were Guitar Hero: AC/DC, that would be an entirely different matter. As far as gameplay is

each previous Guitar Hero game has contained a handful of niche songs that have since become familiar tunes, so it's entirely possible that Aeronooobies will be tapping their feet to "Livin' on the Edge" in no time.

However the game pans out, kudos must go to Activision for experimenting with the Guitar Hero brand. Who knows, if it's a massive hit, your favourite band's next album could see you playing it rather than just hearing it. «





# 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand

G-G-G-G-Unit!

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
Shooter

**PLAYERS:**  
1-2

**DEVELOPER:**  
Swordfish Games

**DUE:**  
2008

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Just what the hell they'll do for the next inevitable sequel.



40 HYPER&gt;&gt;

When we first heard the plot of 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand we automatically assumed it was an April Fools joke. Can you blame us? If you haven't heard the plot as yet, brace yourself — 50 Cent and his crew play a concert in some war-torn fictional Middle-Eastern country. The reward for the concert — a jewel encrusted skull. Bad guys (probably terrorists) steal the skull, forcing Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson and G-Unit into action, shooting seven shades of shit out of a bunch of swarthy types to get his jewel encrusted skull back. Let's just say that again — his jewel encrusted skull. Jewel. Encrusted. Skull. Honestly, with a premise like that, we wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that in one thrilling action set-piece (probably a quick-time event), 50 Cent will have to launch some kind of two-wheeled vehicle over a body of water containing several hungry carcharhiniformes.

The plot and pacing is being described as something along the lines of Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, so hopefully players will be swept up in the humour during the 20 odd levels of shooting action. The third-person game will feature both run and gun and stop and pop shooting gameplay, with an action oriented cover system and a combo system designed to keep the action moving by rewarding players for fast and stylish kill combos. The higher and more stylish the player's kill combos, the greater the reward — at high levels players will see their ammunition changing to more destructive ordnance, including explosive and incendiary bullets. Blood on the Sand will also feature a regenerating health system that will allow players

to heal damage by taking shelter from enemy fire for a short while. Players will be able to make their way through the entire game co-op, with the secondary player taking the role of one of the other members of G-Unit.

## PIMP TIME

In addition to his basic running and gunning skills, Fiddy is also able to brutally dispatch his enemies in hand-to-hand combat. Rather than an actual melee fighting system, however, 50 Cent: Blood on the sand will feature a button-matching combat system. Hopefully this button matching will be more like God of War and less like...well...basically every

other game that has featured quick-time events in the last three years. There's one final trick up 50 Cent's pimp-sleeve — a skill known as Gangsta Fire — better known as Bullet-Time to those of us not "street". In Gangsta Fire, Fiddy will be able to aim accurately and dodge enemy bullets. There's no word as yet as to how this ability will work in co-op but we're assuming that both combatants will simultaneously use the ability.

Fans of 50 Cent can sleep sound in the knowledge that the action of the game will be played out to a host of 50 Cent and G-Unit tracks, including some brand new, and exclusive, tracks being written and recorded specifically for the game. <<

brace yourself — 50 Cent and his crew play a concert in some war-torn fictional Middle-Eastern country. The reward for the concert — a jewel encrusted skull



Nice aim you've got there, Fiddy



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# Deadly Creatures

**SYSTEM:**  
Wii

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1+

**DEVELOPER:**  
Rainbow Studios

**DUE:**  
2008

**Y**ou know, I don't actually like the Wii very much. I feel innately silly, waving my hands about like some sort of thug auditioning for a Broadway show while a man in a beret screams out 'MORE JAZZ HANDS!' I'm not even really looking forward to the Jedi games where you get to pretend you've got a lightsaber. The whole thing just seems undignified.

That being said, I loved me some Deadly Creatures. You get to play as either a scorpion or a spider. I'm not entirely certain what the plot is but the whole damn thing is an exercise in creepiness. That's right, there's a Wii game that isn't about dancing about or limply punching. Deadly Creatures is complicated, brutal and often appallingly violent. You'll be grabbing things in your horrifying scorpion claws, snipping at them, stinging them to death. As the spider, you move with incredible speed, scuttling all over the shop looking to pull off that combo that will have your mandible inject poison into your victims' bodies.

What enemies can insects have? Well, the natural world becomes a terrifying place when you're only a few centimetres high. Crickets, pill bugs, wolf spiders, hornets, and even treacherous fellow scorpions are your enemies. Later on in the game, simple Gila monster lizards become horrifying foes and the rumour is the game climaxes against a person.

Not only is Deadly Creatures fun to play, it's perhaps the best looking Wii game to date. Everything is very sharply renders on elegant, flat geometrical planes, with real time shadows creating

ambience. The character animation is of a particularly high level, with the spider being especially... spidery, really. He's the stealth character, being less about the biff and more about the hiding on your roof over your face just before you fall asleep.

'The Wii seems to be a party game console, aimed at a more casual game experience. But this is creepy,' I said to Jordan Itkowitz of Rainbow Studios, 'Yeah, thanks!' he said with a grin. 'But it's the fun kind of creepy. Besides, we've never had this kind of game on a Wii before. Intense story, really compelling gameplay that just hasn't been done with this interface, not to mention how brutal it's going to get.' He looks up as an enemy spider eats a player's scorpion. 'Just like

that,' he says with an unsettling laugh.

It's character death that really shows up how good the game looks. Make no mistake, this is an extremely gory game that is masquerading as a fun, almost (ugh) educational experience. The death animations are disgusting. I don't know what insects have instead of blood but I should because after a few minutes of playing, I saw a hell of a lot of it. The Scorpion seems to be the big winner, with particle effects causing torrents of yellow and green stuff to come pouring out of snipped off limbs and pierced carapaces. On a strong 30 Frame Per Second, you'll be getting a good look at a whole lot of dead, mashed in bugs.

Oh and give this one full marks on creepy audio effects. Scuttling insects and arachnoids, cricket chirps, the padding of wolf spiders and other nasties, the screeching of lizards actually adds up to quite a serious horror game. It's almost Aliens Vs Predator suspense in the kind of caution you'll have to take, moving from area to area, preparing for combat at any time.

One word of criticism. It's actually quite complex to play. The scorpion requires all sorts of nunchuck moves, button pressing and timing to pull off any of his cool grab and sting combats. Looks like it's worth putting in the time, though. **Christian Read** «

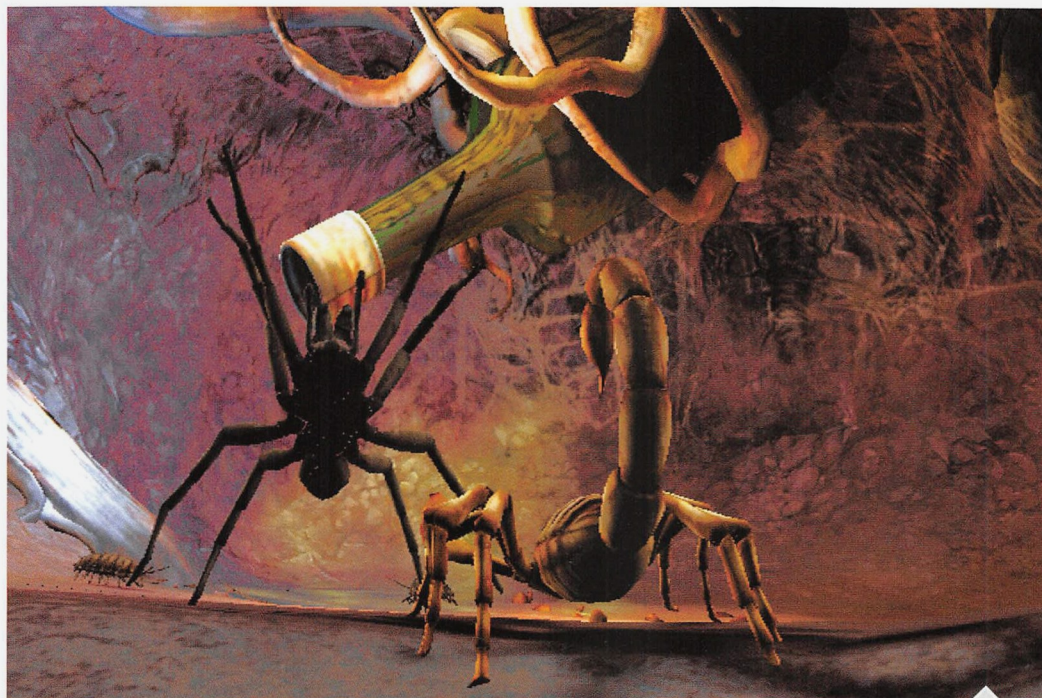
Tonight on  
Mushiking!



## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

It would be rad to see some unlockable creepy-crawlies like an Assassin Beetle, Solifugid, Centipede and butterflies. No one suspects the butterflies.

I don't know what insects have instead of blood but I should because after a few minutes of playing, I saw a hell of a lot of it



# Baja

**B**aja is the new off-road racer THQ and 2XL Games are developing. This one promises to be a little different, though, with huge open aired environments that go on for miles. This means that you'll be travelling far and wide in one of 40 vehicles, on races that can take up to four hours to finish. Really? Four hours? Can you imagine the dirty bedsores you'll be developing on that mofo? Anyway, the game focuses solely on four-wheel off-road racing. Just like the infamous race that it is named after, the Baja 1000.

The action is a little different than the average racing game. It's uglier and grittier. The designers call it 'reaction racing' and you can see why. The physics of the game are decidedly unfriendly. Racing over dirt and gravel isn't easy. You won't be doing awesome jumps and tricks; instead, you'll be struggling. We had a chance to play it in a custom designed rig, similar to an arcade setup with a Microsoft racing wheel and it was like work, really requiring effort and a fair amount of skill just to keep the vehicle on the road, let alone fang like a hoon. Taking care of the health of your car is just

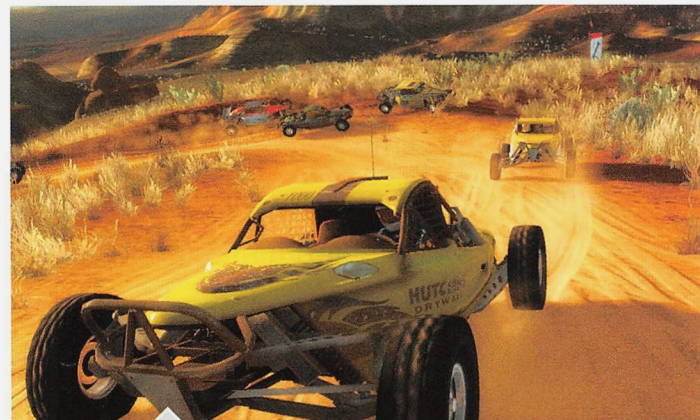
"We need some good ol' chase music."



as important as winning the race. Make no mistake; Baja isn't some fancy Colin McRae. It's almost like car racing's answer to survival horror.

So far the game looks pretty good. It isn't the finest thing we've ever seen, but given the size of the environments, that can be overlooked. The build we saw wasn't done cooking yet. Still, for the off-road enthusiast, this is one to keep an eye on.

Oh, and for those of you looking to avoid those bedsores? AI driving is available while you stretch your wasted muscles. **Christian Read** ☛



\*insert banjo tune here\*

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
Racing

**PLAYERS:**  
1-12

**DEVELOPER:**  
2XL

**DUE:**  
2008

# Smackdown Vs Raw 2009



"Is my B.O. really that bad?"

**T**he WWE can't seem to keep a hold of its star players at the moment but thankfully Smackdown 2009 makes these burly men your playthings, trapped and forced to do your will... forever.

Well, enough of our personal lives. Smackdown 2009 continues a long and hellaciously profitable series of wrestling games — but this one may just be the most 'cinematic' of all. The emphasis here is on tag-team action, multiplayer really being where the game kicks off.

Perhaps the most inventive element in 2009 is that there's plenty to do for the player not in the ring. You'll be able to distract refs, work up the crowd and you'll have to continually be ready for run-ins to do those big finisher moves. There are even cameras outside the ring to enable you to see precisely where you should

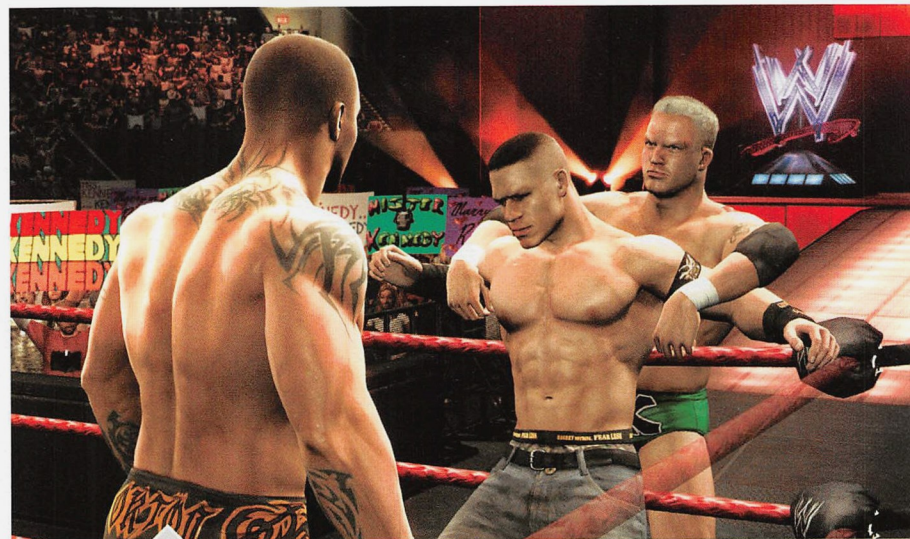
be and how you should be doing it. The camera will automatically give you the big cinematic angles for finish moves.

Get ready as well for the champion move every sneaky tag team loves to pull off, the Hot Tag. For those effeminate jabronis among you unfamiliar with wrestling slang, this is where the inactive partner touches his mate, rather than making a hand slap tag. Good for catching your opponent off-guard. Also look out for Hot Tags that emulate the slow



and aching tag when a beaten guy tags his partner who runs in to clean house. Ah, the classics never die.

You'll also be able to enter a mode to create your own finishing moves, carefully balancing out their speed and power versus time they take to execute. Expect the official Hyper finisher 'El Sodomismo' any day now. **Christian Read** ☛



"Go on, Hank. Give him the nipple cripple."

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, DS

**CATEGORY:**  
Wrestling

**PLAYERS:**  
1-4

**DEVELOPER:**  
Yuke's Media Creations

**DUE:**  
2008

# Game #2:

# Electric Boogaloo

the art of sequels

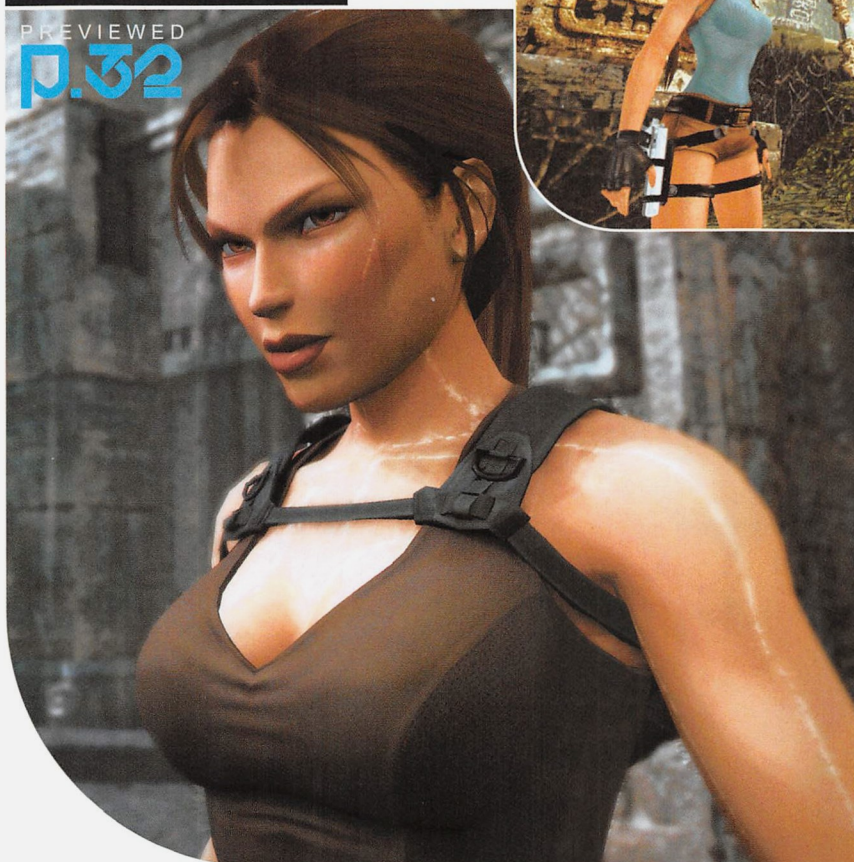
It's no secret that the current gaming landscape seems to be made up almost entirely of sequels. By now you're probably tired of reading us bitching about the number of rehashed franchises being released as opposed to new IPs. Well, the time has come for us to shut our mouths and let some actual industry professionals do the talking. As such we contacted nine high-profile developers and asked them a series of questions relating to sequels. So what's the conclusion? Is it all about the money or is there a real art to continuing a game franchise?

Read on and find out.

tomb raider  
underworld

PREVIEWED  
P.32

Previous Game:  
Tomb Raider Anniversary (2007)



## LEGEND:



### Tomb Raider: Underworld

[CRYSTAL DYNAMICS]

Eric Lindstrom: Creative Director



### Dawn of War 2

[RELIC]

Mark Noseworthy: Producer

Jonny Ebbert: Lead Designer



### Mafia 2

[2K CZECH]



### Motorstorm: Pacific Rift

[EVOLUTION STUDIOS]

Paul Hollywood: Creative Director



### Saints Row 2

[VOLITION]

Scott Phillips: Lead Designer



### Resistance: Fall of Man 2

[INSOMNIAC GAMES]

Ted Price: CEO



### 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand

[SIERRA ENTERTAINMENT]

Aaron Blean: Producer

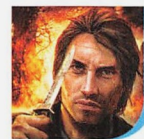


### Far Cry 2

[UBISOFT MONTREAL]

Louis-Pierre Pharand: Producer

Clint Hocking: Creative Director



### Alone in the Dark

[EDEN GAMES]

Nour Polloni: Producer

# question 1: What do you feel is the role of the sequel in today's gaming market?



'Like with other media, when you're faced with numerous choices and each one is a

significant investment – both time and money – you want to be sure that you'll be satisfied with what you buy, and despite sequels having a bad reputation, they still feel like a safer bet than a new game concept you know less about. This, ironically enough, makes sequels a riskier gamble for gamers and studios alike. When a highly anticipated sequel is great, it hits big and everyone is happy. When a sequel is just a by-the-numbers attempt to cash in on previous success, the crashing disappointment not only hurts everyone involved, it hurts other studios doing better and more original work, because the money you spent – and regretted spending – on a bad sequel is money you didn't and now can't spend on a far better game that hit the stores at the same time.'



'I think crafting a good sequel is something often taken for granted by developers and

publishers these days. Too often it's just an excuse to regurgitate the same old mechanics with some flashier graphics and add some new content to get some easy money from a captive audience. At Relic, we're never happy with the status quo and believe sequels should take the opportunity to push their respective genres forward with new mechanics, new experiences and real innovations. Save evolutionary steps for expansion packs. Sequels should be revolutionary.'



'We feel the role of a game sequel in today's market is an "opportunity".

An opportunity to evolve, upgrade, and polish the original idea.

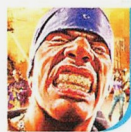
An opportunity to add stuff that you didn't have the budget, processing power, or time to implement the first time around.

An opportunity to simply create a better gaming experience all around.'



'A sequel can do many things. Not just for the developer, but also for the gamer or the publisher.

MotorStorm was a completely new name to the world of games, and so it was a risk. This new game can build upon its success now that people have an idea of what it's likely to contain. This means that we can pull out a load more stops to really amp up the fun factor, because the publisher has more trust that the game will be a success. So that's why you are going to be able to see the water, the vegetation, lava, new vehicles and all the other new features. If done properly, a sequel is definitely not just the same game with a new cover. And we strongly believe we've done this one properly, so it's literally bursting at the seams with stuff for you to try out. And we've also spent a lot of time rebalancing and tweaking some of the existing systems to make the whole gaming experience more rewarding. Some of the systems in the first game didn't quite perform as we had hoped, so with the amount of extra effort we've put in, we think people will be able to avoid the small frustrations they might have had previously.'



'Sequels have become a staple of the games industry just as they're already a staple of movies, books, and TV shows. Since fans can instantly recognize elements from the original in the sequels they more quickly jump into the universe created by the game and more easily suspend their disbelief in order to enjoy the world and the story.

Fans of video games find elements that they enjoy and want to keep seeing within new contexts, upgraded to the newest technology and improved to be even better than the original.

Sequels will continue to be a large part of the games industry going forward, especially considering the increasing cost of game development.'



'Publishers and developers invest a lot of time and money into creating original IP. So to be

a little crass, quality game sequels offer the opportunity to make some money after potentially losing money on the first game. That's why you see so many sequels. The good news for players is that, unlike sequels in the movie industry, game sequels are often better than the original.

Yet sequels often give players an enjoyable extension to the story and characters introduced in the first game. Playing a sequel can be very rewarding if you've put 15+ hours into the original game and want to see how the story will evolve. Plus, sequels are usually a known quantity if developed by the same team. If the first game was a quality game, you can pretty much count on the sequel delivering another great experience. This relieves some of the stress when you're plunking down \$60 US for a game.'



'The top selling games in our industry tend to be sequels. The content is

familiar and it is the closest thing to a "sure thing" for the consumer. Every publisher wants to reach a point where consumers are asking for more, so the role of the sequel is one of sustainability and profitability for this industry. We need the revenue from sequels to take risks on original games and keep the consumer entertained.'



Previous Game:  
Dawn of War (2004)



'They are a lot of them and think it's great as long they are not cheating the consumers.

If I get attached to a brand I want to have the ability to experience it more.

Seriously, as long the quality is there I hope to see more sequels of the great brands that are out there.'



'In general, I feel that the role of game sequels in the market today is to continue the experience

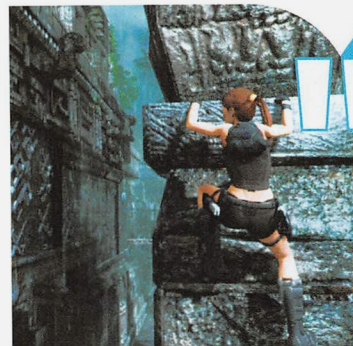
provided with the first game of the brand, while offering sufficient new elements to make the brand evolve with time. This can be a really exciting process as new technology opens up new gameplay possibilities and new ideas are introduced and existing ideas are increasingly well executed.'

dawn of  
war 2

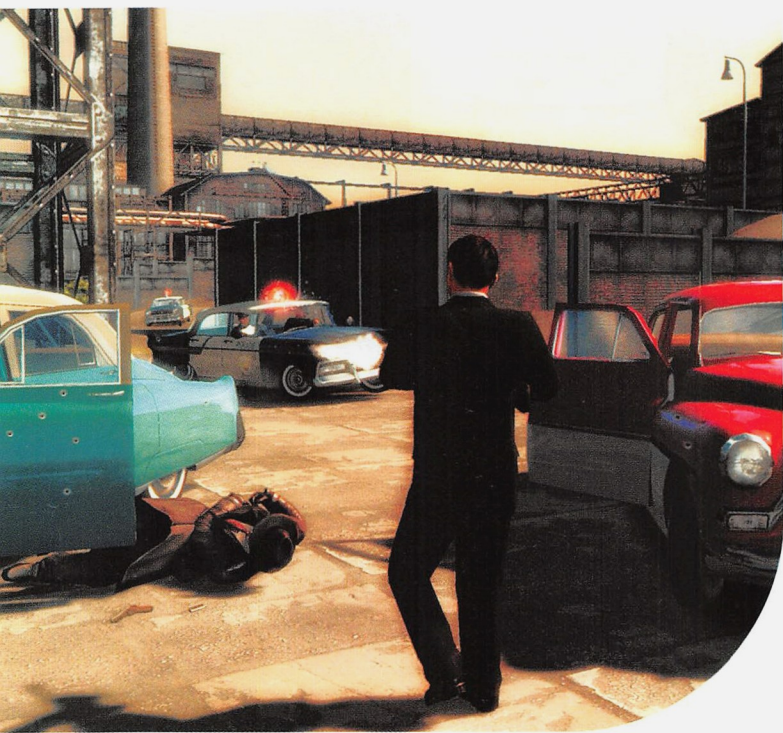


TO BE A LITTLE CRASS,  
QUALITY GAME SEQUELS  
OFFER THE OPPORTUNITY  
TO MAKE SOME MONEY

-Ted Price



## question 2: Is there any extra pressure when working on a sequel due to fan expectations?



'Enormous pressure. For any sequel, but especially Tomb Raider. Lara Croft has about the highest recognisability and affinity of any character out there, and her fans are legion and passionate. Bringing her to the gaming community in a new adventure is a responsibility we take very seriously.'



'There is no more added pressure due to fan expectations when developing a sequel than the actual pressure we put on ourselves to reach the high bar we set for ourselves.'

We know the fans always expect more. That's pretty much a given and true no matter what the subject matter. But when it comes to Mafia II, we can safely say that no matter what our fans' expectations are, our expectations as a team on what we want to deliver are 1,000 times more demanding.

Our internal goal is to have Mafia II deliver on all aspects of the game: graphics, artistic direction, AI, gameplay, storyline, scriptwriting, voice acting, animation, physics, driving, etc. Each team member has been tasked with delivering the highest quality possible in relation to their set of responsibilities.

We as a team love the pressure we put on ourselves as it pushes us individually to attain the highest possible levels of quality we can. Ultimately when all the pieces come together, Mafia II will be an incredibly memorable gaming experience.



'There is definitely more pressure, but it's not just from fans. We also drive ourselves harder

because we know that this game is going to be seen as even more of a flagship than the first one. It's great that we actually have fans! Without the feedback we've received since MotorStorm, we wouldn't necessarily have made the same decisions that we have this time around.'



'There is no art-form or any form of creativity where those building upon an existing foundation

aren't under pressure to both maintain the positives and remove the negatives of the original. At the same time, those creators must bring enough newness and creativity to the sequel to make it worthwhile for existing fans and to entice new fans to play.

We've definitely felt this on Saints Row 2 and I think we've navigated those waters very effectively and improved upon everything good in Saints Row and added our own new flavours to the game.'



'Absolutely. We know fans want something that's bigger and better than the original. But so do

we. In fact I know we end up putting more pressure on ourselves than the fans do.'

Previous Game:  
Mafia (2002)



ANYTHING LESS WOULD PROBABLY FORCE US TO COMMIT RITUAL SUICIDE

-Mark Noseworthy



'Well when you're following up with a highly successful game like Bulletproof, we definitely have

to create a good enough game that will meet or exceed fan expectations and hopefully impress gamers along the way. So far we've demoed the game to many hardcore gaming press and they've overwhelmingly lent their support and believe that we are well on our way to a critical and commercial success this time around.'



of the game.'



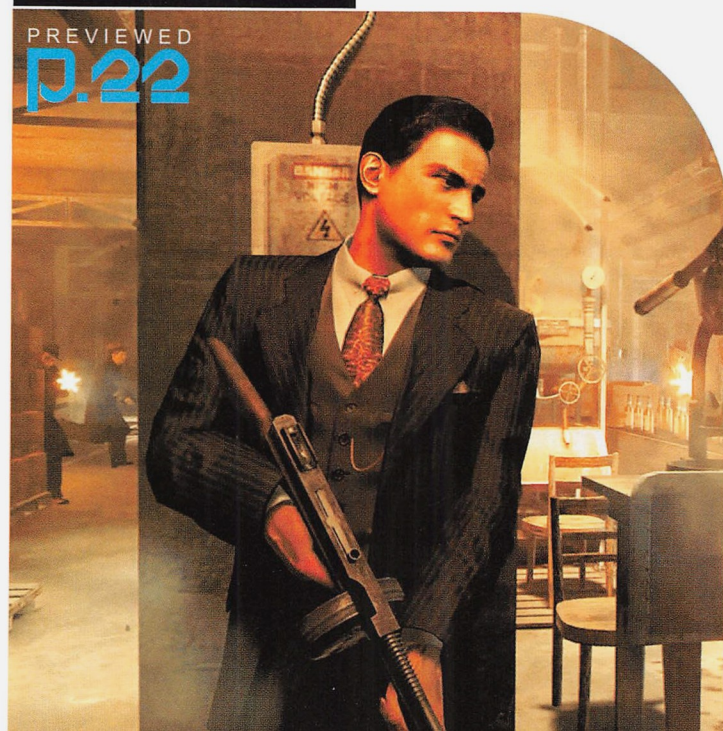
'We feel privileged to work on a sequel to such a legendary brand and it's great to already have a

fan base for the game. Of course expectations are high from fans but we feel that it's a welcome challenge for us at Eden Games.

We are huge fans of the original Alone in the Dark also so we totally empathise with all the fans out there and we want to make a great game that is taking a new direction whilst also staying true to the spirit of Alone in the Dark. However, we also want to approach a wider audience with a new perception of video games as entertainment media, and you don't have to have played the other games in the series to fully enjoy this new instalment.'

mafia 2

PREVIEWED  
P.22



# question 3: How do you balance faithfulness to a franchise while still evolving the series?



'It's about identifying what makes the franchise valuable to the audience and crafting a new experience that satisfies those values in new ways that don't violate what invested fans are looking for.'



'In any journey, before you move forward, you have to know where your starting point is.'

When we looked at what the first game did well and what truly was the heart and soul of the first game, we found through the feedback from the fans and press it was the fact that the first game really made gamers feel as if they were taking part in a classic gangster movie. Much more so than any of the other gangster titles at the time. We're really proud of that, because that's what we set out to do. And for the community and press to acknowledge that...well that made everything we put into the first game worth it and it gave us our starting point on how to remain faithful to the franchise.

So for Mafia II we feel the core value that we strive to remain faithful to is to deliver an experience that makes gamers feel as though they are taking part in their favorite gangster movie. But this time we evolve the series by improving every single element of the game from graphics to game play.

The end result is, we know gamers will feel as if they are once again playing in a classic gangster movie. They'll feel a connection to the player characters in the game. But they will also feel the all the improvements we have made in every single aspect of the game.'



'The MotorStorm brand isn't about racing in a desert. It's about the fun, the attitude, the different

vehicles and the sheer amount of brutal chaos that we throw around the place. Understanding this is how we're able to take the first game and build upon it like we have, rather than just re-hashing it. The new game still sits perfectly within the MotorStorm universe, even though there's so much new stuff in it. Of course we do have to make sure that anything new does fit with the game world. But that's not hard because everything we add has to have an effect anyway, so we weave that into the fabric of the game. It all sits together really nicely.'



'We listened to all the feedback we could find as well as running playtests on the original Saints

Row in order to hear as many varied opinions as possible before starting on the design. Once we had the feedback from outside sources we combined that with our own feedback to create what we felt would be the most interesting and rewarding direction to take the franchise.

With Saints Row 2 we've done this by following up on our cliff-hanger ending, improving the already great combat mechanics, and punching up every other element in between.'



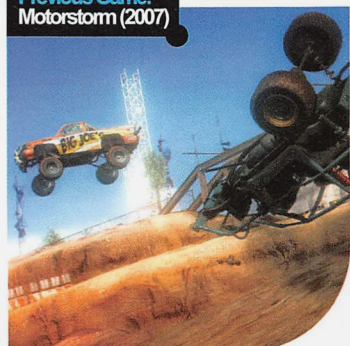
'I suppose it's different for every franchise. Traditionally it's been pretty important to keep the main

character and backstory consistent. For example, we probably wouldn't develop a Ratchet & Clank game without Ratchet. And so far, Hale is central to Resistance. But some franchises like Final Fantasy and Grand Theft Auto switch characters and stories all of the time.

Thus it seems like today's audiences are extremely forgiving as long as you maintain the basic mechanics and the basic world. And heck, you can even change the basic mechanics - look at franchises like Killzone that can succeed as both a first person shooter on the PS2 and a third person shooter on the PSP. I guess what's great is that there really aren't any rules for remaining faithful to a franchise. Designers today have more flexibility than ever when it comes to changing things up without alienating audiences.'



Previous Game: Motorstorm (2007)



'You must keep gamers guessing, without jumping off the rails with the franchise. Taking 50

Cent out of the city and putting him into an environment that is unfamiliar keeps the franchise fresh and makes gamers ask, "how did 50 end up there?"'



'There's no balance to it. Dawn of War has always been about pushing the genre into the future, and Dawn of War II is going to be another leap forward.'



'You need to know precisely what the brand values of your series are so you stay true to it. We knew

that for Far Cry, gamers want to go into an exotic environment. Is the tropical island exotic today? No We've been there so many times with other games, TV series, movies etc. We decided that for the sequel we needed to have a renewal of the setting and Africa was the clear cut winner.'



'We have used the original Alone in the Dark as the only source of inspiration from the series and

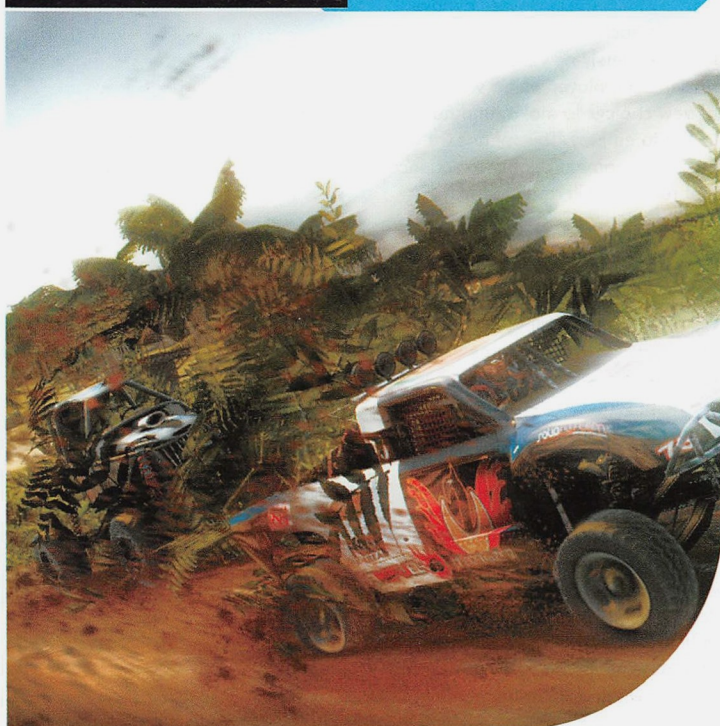
we have kept Edward Carnby as the main character in homage to this original game. There are also some references that appear in this game from the first one.'

But the first Alone in the Dark game came out in 1992, so there's been a great lapse of time before coming out with this new instalment. Many aspects of gaming have evolved: the technology, the rendering, but also the audience. This is why we've been influenced by action-packed movies such as Die Hard for the story of one man battling to survive against all odds, and TV drama series such as Lost or 24 for the more appropriate story telling style in episodes whilst making this recent instalment.

**YOU NEED TO KNOW PRECISELY WHAT THE BRAND VALUES OF YOUR SERIES ARE**

-Clint Hocking

**motorstorm  
pacific drift**



# question 4: What are the disadvantages of working on a sequel?



'When an audience loves an experience and are drawn to its sequel, they usually want one of two

impossible things. They want to relive that original experience – which would require them to forget having it in the first place – or they want that experience to continue because it left them wanting more – but if you continued it until they had enough, they'd end up bored. The biggest disadvantage is trying to satisfy an audience that wants the impossible, and you succeed by crafting a new experience that holds true to the values of the original.'



'There are not many disadvantages working on a sequel. In fact there are more advantages

than disadvantages where Mafia II is concerned. We started with a "brand new slate" and set out to improve on the first game in every possible way.'



'There are potential features that just don't sit with the MotorStorm attitude, so in a small way we

are limited. But the advantages so easily outweigh the disadvantages. We can address everything that we might not have had enough time or resource to do in the first game. We can polish things, tune them and generally make the whole thing better. We've added, for example, the monster truck class to shake up the way the vehicle classes behave towards each other. We've taken it to a completely new location that presents the player with a whole suite of new choices to make, and new tactics to employ. This means we've made the game a deeper experience that rewards skill and ingenuity as well as good vehicle control.'



'Coming up with a way to keep both existing fans and at the same time entice new fans is

the biggest hurdle to overcome with sequel creation. We try to maintain consistency with the original while at the same time extending the franchise, this is not easy.

On Saints Row 2 we had a great advantage in that we started on design a few months before the original Saints Row shipped. This meant we were able to look at the areas where things should be improved as well as to start on our own design for the game at the same time.'



'Expectations are far higher than with the original and as a result hype can spiral out of control.

And controlling the scope of the design can become a problem when we assume that the transition from production on the first game to production on the second will be easy (it never is). We have to be smart about what we're including in the design so that we can offer plenty of new features but still have time to ensure all of those features are fun and polished.'



'There are few disadvantages, but the challenge is an interesting one – the business of 50 Cent

(the videogame) is different now than it was. At first we were unsure if there was a market to take one of the world's most popular music artists and cast him in a video game. The first game was a huge commercial success, but the quality suffered for the timeline of development. This time, we know there is a market, so now our challenge is creating a good enough game to expand the market and want to impress a few critical gamers along the way.'



'The incredible expectations of existing fans! On one hand, the fans want innovation and new

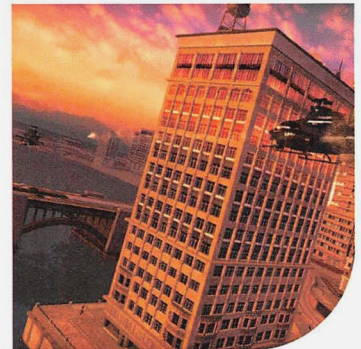
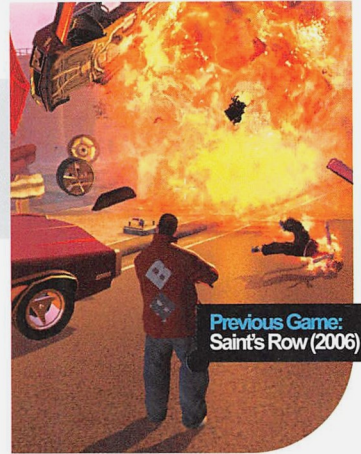
features while on the other hand they don't want anything they liked about the original franchise to change.

Those two goals are often at odds with one another. Creating something new and fresh while remaining faithful to the original is an ongoing challenge. Some of our most heated debates as a team involve this very dilemma. But let's be honest - it's the existing fans that make sequels successful; their expectations are weights I'd gladly carry any day.'



'Some fans just want an updated version of the original game which I think is basic nostalgia. We can

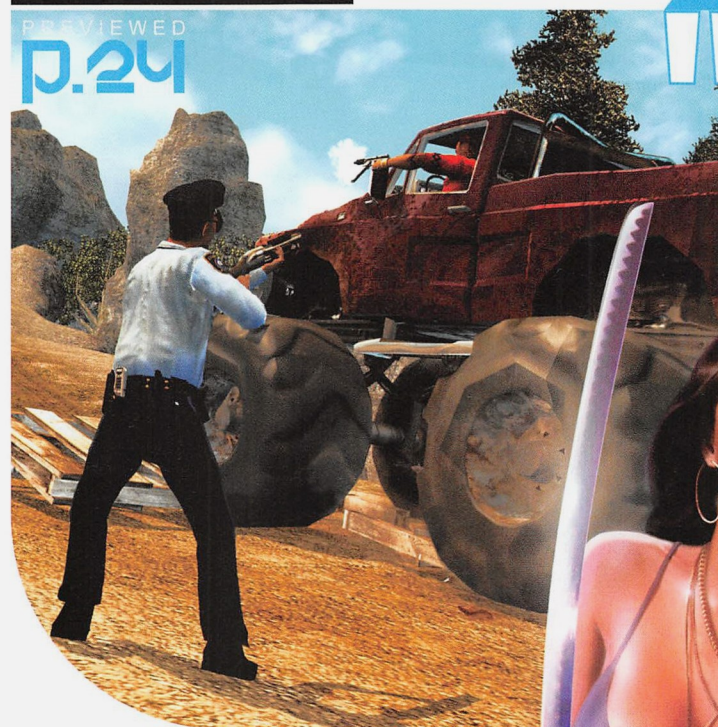
and we will offer so much more that those fans will be extremely pleased.'



'In relation to Alone in the Dark, we are not making a straight forward sequel or attempting

to simply reboot the series. We want to do something completely different. It's more of a spiritual sequel to the very first game and a reinvention of the series.

Expectations are high, but I consider this to be a welcome challenge as opposed to a disadvantage.'



WE ARE NOT MAKING A STRAIGHT FORWARD SEQUEL  
-Nour Polloni

# question 5: What are the constraints of working on an existing IP rather than developing an all new IP?



'One can look at the existing framework of a franchise as constraining, but it's also liberating.

When you invent something from scratch, every aspect is a gamble, and you need to convince everyone of everything. With Tomb Raider, gamers already believe Lara Croft is a compelling character, so we can focus that much more energy on making her adventure something people will never forget.'



'We don't feel constrained at all, since after all, Mafia is an IP that we created ourselves.

Because we created the IP, we have the freedom to reinvent it all over again and deliver a brand new experience. The game is literally brand new, built from the ground up with all new characters, all new storyline, all new setting, all new everything. Even the render engine is completely new, built from the ground up specifically for Mafia II.'



'Bearing in mind that MotorStorm was our own creation, we've had the benefit of shaping

the IP into something really strong. Long before the first game was even in development, we had gone through the whole MotorStorm attitude, appearance and lifestyle in a thorough concept stage. The new game simply takes it further. There are boundaries that we won't take the MotorStorm brand out of, but since these are boundaries that we put in place, it's really not a feeling of constraint to work within them. Prior to MotorStorm we did work on licensed IP sequels, and although there are legal and brand restraints, they are balanced by a lot of other positive opportunities.'

Previous Game:  
50 Cent: Bulletproof (2005)



'No matter what type of game we're making, be it a sequel to our own IP, a brand new IP, or even a licensed IP there are always limitations.

When starting the sequel to Saints Row we had a good idea of what was going to be popular from playing the game during development. After doing gameplay testing, fan feedback, and seeing reviews we learned what everyone else loved about Saints Row. Using all of that data we created Saints Row 2.

To some degree working on a sequel is easier because we had a solid base to start from, a lot of core technology already built, and many of the basic direction decisions already made. It's actually kind of freeing to have such a solid foundation to start from. It allowed us to really polish every element of the game as well as to improve other areas with new features.'



'Well, since we were the ones who created Resistance, no. And because we don't have to worry about creating the world from scratch again we have more room to get creative with the game design.'



'From my experience there are pros and cons when you're working on existing and new IP's.

Throughout the development of 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand creatively we were very fortunate to not have many constraints. This is due to having great partnership with 50 Cent and having him involved throughout the development process. When we were brainstorming for the sequel, he came to us with ideas and features he wanted to see in the game and challenged us to come up with a compelling setting. This gave Vivendi/Swordfish the flexibility to create higher quality game.'



'It's actually liberating because we get to spend our time figuring out how to bring Warhammer

40,000 to life in amazing ways instead of starting from scratch. Creating a world as detailed and expansive as Warhammer 40,000 isn't an easy task, nor is creating a game as deep and layered as Dawn of War II. By leveraging the existing IP, we get to spend a lot more of our design time on making incredible art and addictive gameplay mechanics. Games Workshop also gives us a lot of leeway to expand the IP where necessary for gameplay, so we often enjoy the best of both worlds.'



50 cent:  
blood on  
the sand



'So far I've not had the privilege of working on a brand new IP. That being said it's a blast

working on a great one and making the sequel to a great game. We were also privileged of having the mandate to re-invent the brand so in a way we have the best of both worlds.'



'To be quite honest, it's great to be able to do both, but yes it is good to work on an existing IP, especially one that has such a great legacy as Alone in the Dark. We haven't found it constricting at all because we're taking this game in a new direction, and in fact it was really a dream project for us and one we initiated. The fact that the creative direction for the game in terms of the innovations and the ambition for the game was driven by the team at Eden, we've benefited from the support of Atari and had more freedom than perhaps we might have with creating a new IP.'

HE (50 CENT)  
CAME TO US  
WITH IDEAS AND  
FEATURES

-Aaron Blean



## question 6: What takes precedence – the needs and wants of the designer and market or audience feedback?



'Developing Tomb Raider: Underworld is all about crafting a gaming experience that people will enjoy,

not what we on the team might find professionally interesting without regard to audience reactions. It can be a powerful design methodology to produce a game that the designers enjoy playing without worrying about whether anyone outside the building will like it, but not for existing franchises. To ignore the fans of Lara Croft in designing her next great adventure would be a betrayal to them and to her.'



'As designers it's our job to be the advocates for the audience when it comes to game

design so hopefully there's no question of precedence, we all want the same things: a great game.

Designers take input from all sources in order to have the most information about every decision we make. We need to be confident that the decisions we make are the right decisions so having more info is always a good thing.

We always want to hear what fans and even non-fans of the game think, no matter what the feedback is it will help us to improve the game.'



'We don't feel one takes precedence over the other. That probably sounds like a middle of the road

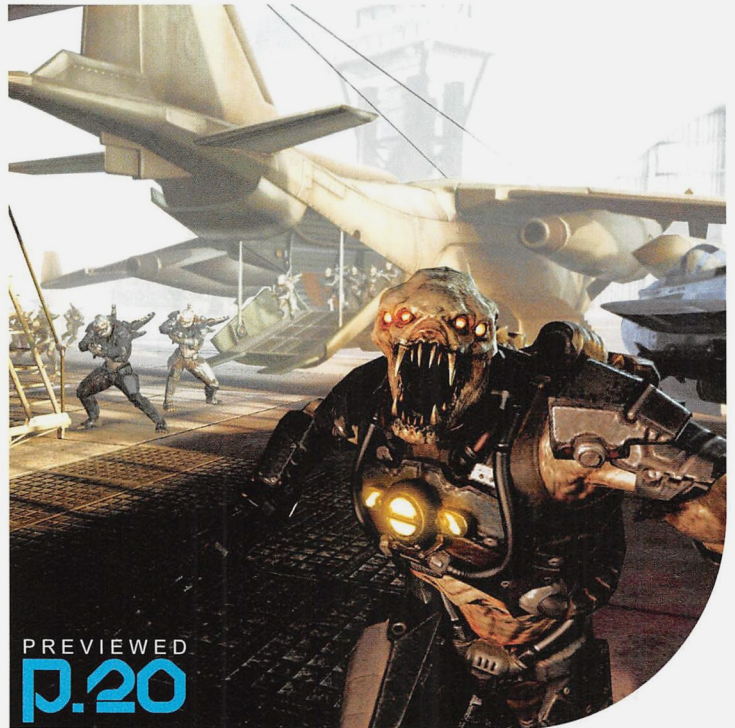
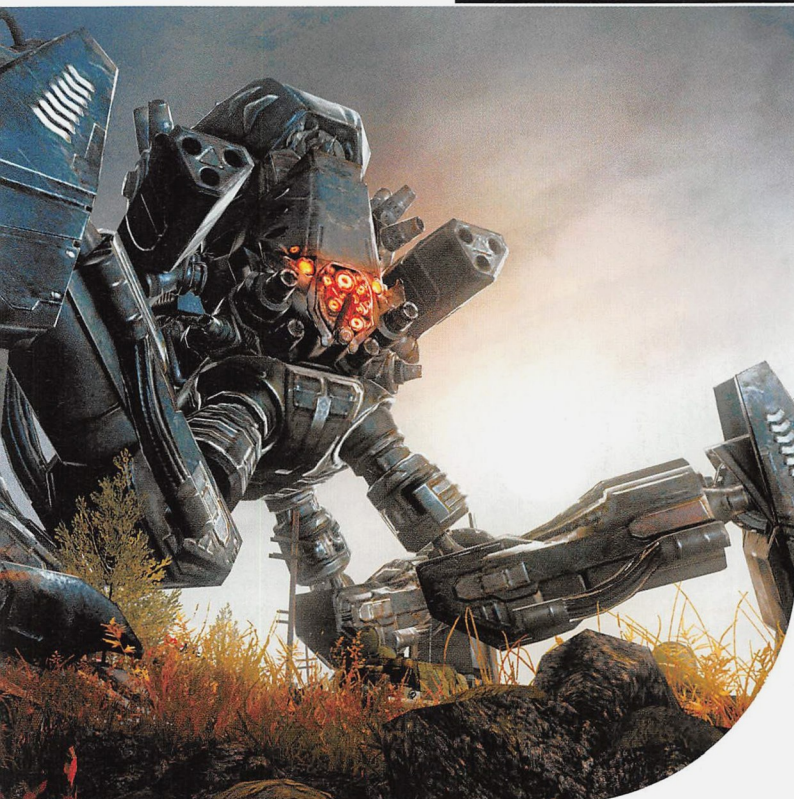
answer but let me explain.

As a developer we feel a need to make sure our fans are happy. After all, a franchise isn't going anywhere if the fans aren't happy and aren't playing our game. And yet, the majority of the feedback we received from the first game was things we already knew and just weren't able to do in the first game due to a number of mostly technical limitations.

With that said our job as a developer is to always keep improving, keep moving forward, keep innovating. In order to make a bigger and better game, we literally have to brainstorm and create more "wants" than what our fan base has yet to even think of. So at the end of the day, it's a balance. We have to decide if the "wants" of our fans are synergistic with our new design goals for the sequel.

Where Mafia II is concerned we can confidently say that we've listened to all the feedback, kept everything everyone loved about the first game and set out to surpass the "wants" of our fans.'

resistance 2



'Our primary audience for Bulletproof was 50's fans. For the most part his fans loved the

fact that they got to play their favorite rapper. Fans also wanted a co-op experience that would allow their friends to join as a member of G-Unit and fight along with 50 Cent. We didn't have in the first game, however, our developer Swordfish has licensed the Unreal Tech and they're doing an incredible job of developing a quality game by implementing over-the-top arcade shooter with driving and flying missions, drop-in/drop-out anytime online coop gameplay that gives the player the opportunity to play their favorite G-Unit member (Tony Yayo, Lloyd Banks, and DJ Whoo Kid), interactive counter-kill system and deeper combat mechanics to make this a very memorable 50 Cent experience.'



'Both. We're constantly combing the forums to find out what excited the fans about the original, and what they're dying to see in the sequel. We also have to bring new ideas of our own to the table and raise the intensity of the game.'

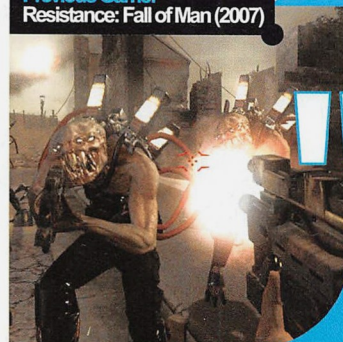


'For us there often isn't much of a difference from what audiences want and what we want. Since

we're gamers too we see the same problems and opportunities the fans do. For example on Resistance we're painfully aware that the first game started too slowly - players were certainly vocal about it. From a design perspective, fixing that problem for Resistance 2 makes a lot of sense.

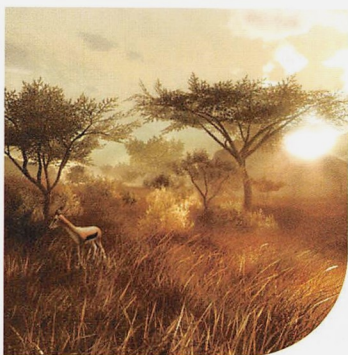
Another example is our inclusion of 8 player online co-op in Resistance 2. Fans wanted it and we think it will be a great addition to the game.'

Previous Game:  
Resistance: Fall of Man (2007)



WE CAN  
CONFIDENTLY  
SAY THAT WE'VE  
LISTENED TO ALL  
THE FEEDBACK

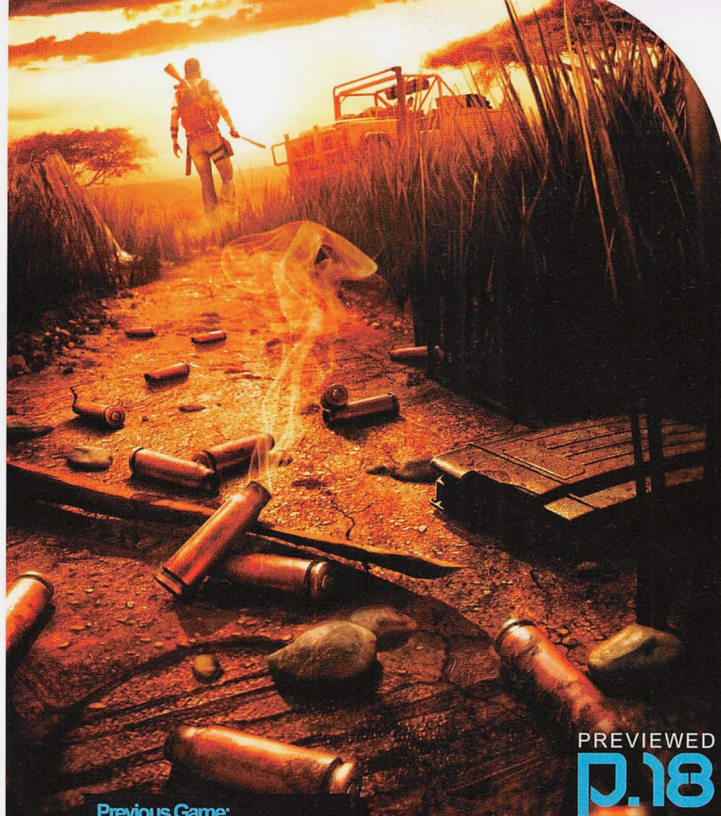
-2K Czech



'This game is in a way made by us and by the fans. Their requests have shaped the game in numerous ways and we use them to validate the decisions we make here. We have to make those decisions of course, but we can now make them with more knowledge of what people have previously enjoyed. Having said that, we don't just want to make the same game with a slightly different feature set, we always set out to make a game that takes the audience in a new direction. This time that direction is towards a greater variety of racing experiences, greater interaction with the location and a more community-friendly online side.'



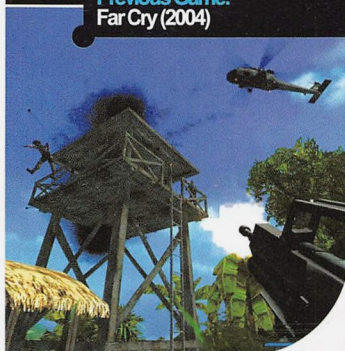
'It always depends on the quality of the feedback and data we get from gamers. Once we have that we decided with the design team what is worth investigating. As an example, it was clear from the original Far Cry that gamers loved the first part of the game where you fight mercenaries. But they did not like the trigenes [mutants] that much. We integrated that into our concept making sure we have a more realistic experience.'



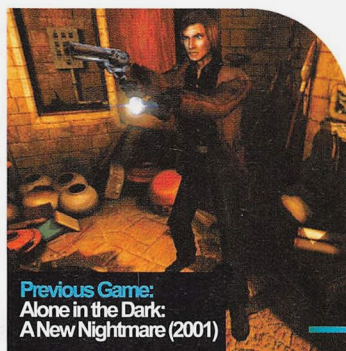
Previous Game:  
Far Cry (2004)

PREVIEWED  
**P.18**

**far cry 2**



**alone in the dark**



Previous Game:  
Alone in the Dark:  
A New Nightmare (2001)

PREVIEWED  
**P.30**

## CONCLUSION

Sequels will always be a part of the gaming landscape. New IPs often run at a loss (or minor gain), due to the fact that audiences have no real brand recognition to fall back on, no matter how powerful the pre-release hype-train may be. After a brand has established itself, a sequel based on an existing engine or gameplay mechanics can generate revenue. Revenue that is often pumped back into the creation of new IPs designed to kick-start a new franchise.

No matter how much we rail against seeing the same franchises surfacing again and again, sequels ultimately play an important role in



'We made this game with the vision we had for Alone in the Dark, while keeping the current public

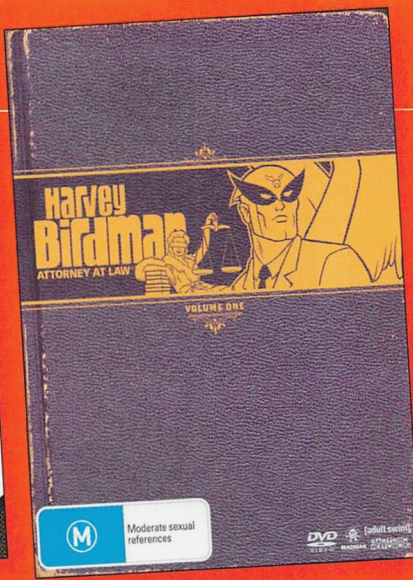
in mind, replying to their gaming tastes, and also approaching a wider audience.

To reach this audience, we're telling the story in a different way and offering a new level of accessibility. We took inspiration from the recent wave of US TV drama series to tell the story in a more intense and gripping way which is more adapted to the length of video games, with episodes presented in a season format. Allied to this, we implemented a DVD chapter select menu which gives the player the freedom to move on if they get stuck, making Alone in the Dark the first video game that everyone can finish.

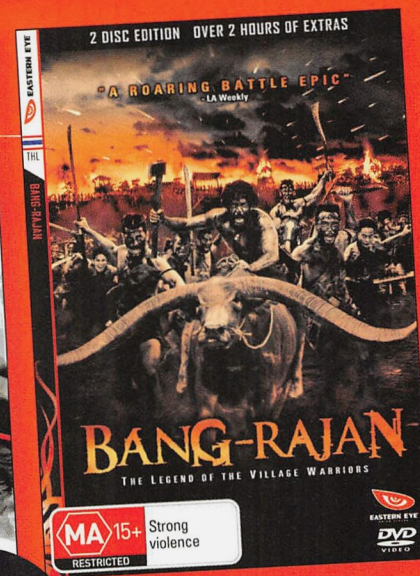
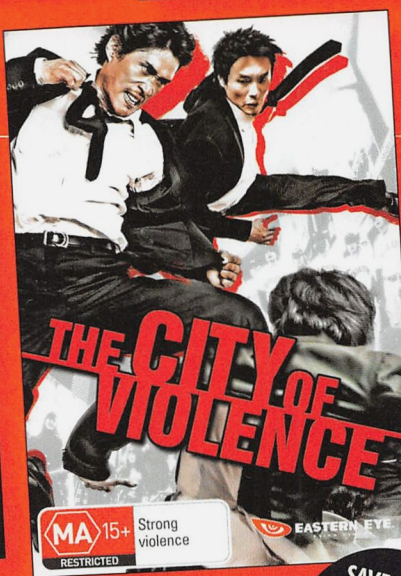
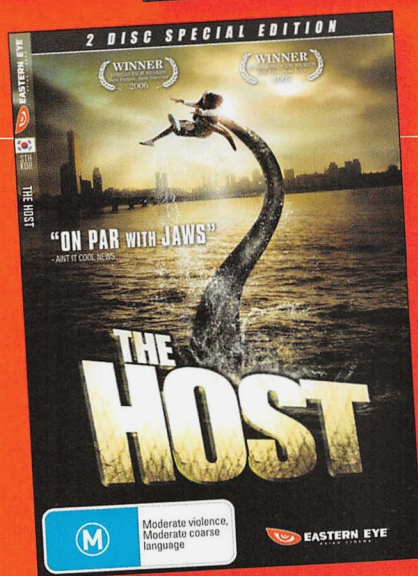
We also want to change the way that people think about video games by basing the survival aspect of the game in an environment based on real world rules. This means that the player will be able to react instinctively to situations instead of following game world rules.

Through all these things players familiar with the original Alone in the Dark will find the spirit of innovation of the first game very much alive and well, as well as some references to that game we think they'll enjoy.'





[adult swim]  
CARTOON  
NETWORK



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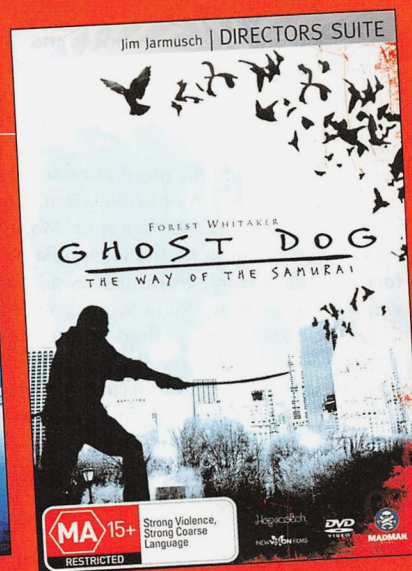
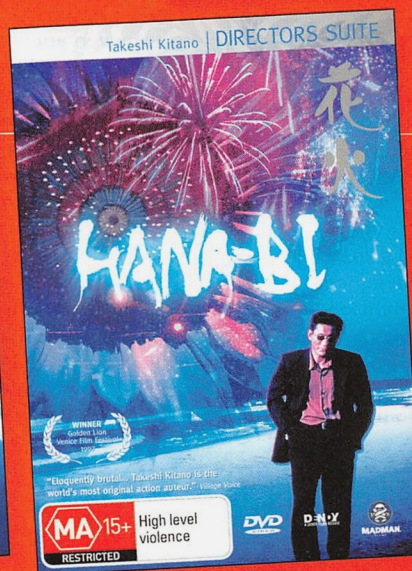
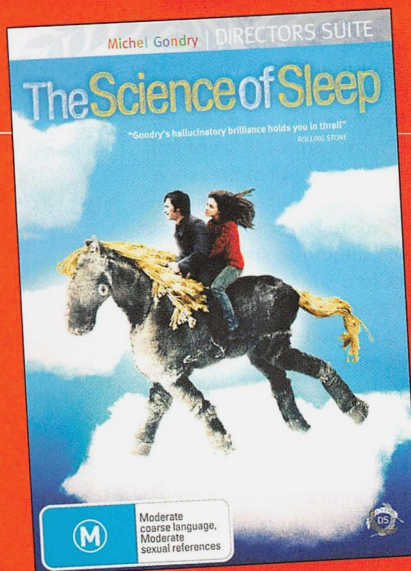
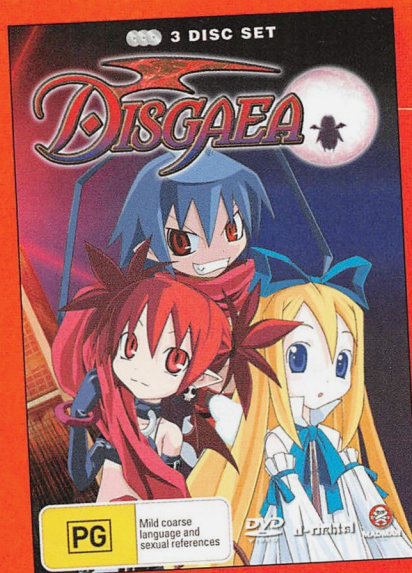
The Science of Sleep  
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# » Reviews



## REALITY BYTES

DARREN WELLS

### When Push Comes to Shove

To be honest, I'm not convinced that motion-sensitive controls are a good idea. Yes, I can see the reason behind their existence, but no, I'm not sure that their existence is wholly benefiting today's games.

Looking through this month's review list, it won't take a rocket surgeon or brain scientist to work out what game spurred this here rant. Mario Kart Wii was always going to be the inevitable next step for Nintendo's iconic franchise: aside from gamers wanting to use their Wiimotes as pretend lightsabers, the demand was always there to use them as Mario's steering wheel. But given the prominent marketing push that the wheel peripheral has received, it's surprising that no-one stopped to question the why when they questioned the how.

Why allow a racing game to be controlled this way? "Because we can" doesn't cut it when factors that hamper the experience are overlooked.

I'm talking about the lack of full tactile feedback. As it stands, there's no sensation of really interacting with a game's environment when using Nintendo's wiggle stick or Sony's SIXAXIS controller. Things feel too flimsy, for lack of a better word. There's no weight, no spatial relationship, and no sensory response beyond what we make happen on-screen. Right now, motion-sensitive controls are like a digital game of Charades, making us mimic moves that vaguely look like familiar motions – something which, in turn, keeps us at arm's distance.

Go to your nearest arcade and play the Mario Kart game (yep, there's an arcade version!). Matter of fact, play any racing game. As soon as you put your hands on the wheel, you notice its physical presence and fixed position. You know its limits. You know where it sits in front of you, and when you turn it left and right you're aware of its steering range. All this gives you an idea of how far you can turn and how much you need to turn in order to race.

Now go home. Sit on your couch in front of the TV and hold your wheel-shaped plastic in front of you.

What's its movement arc? In the heat of a race it's hard to tell. Go ahead, keep turning until your arms intertwine like ribbon liquorice. It's all the same.

Playing the game with the wheel, while possible, doesn't induce a feeling of total control. It's not felt until a control scheme with fuller physical presence is used, such as the Wiimote and nunchuck combo, or the classic gamepad. A simple look at their layout will tell you the range of the analogue stick or D-pad. And when one reverts back to a simpler technology rather than sticking with the new one that's touted as the most ideal, then what's the point?

But things aren't all bad, as games like No More Heroes have shown. In a curious inversion to the Wiimote's original concept, movements

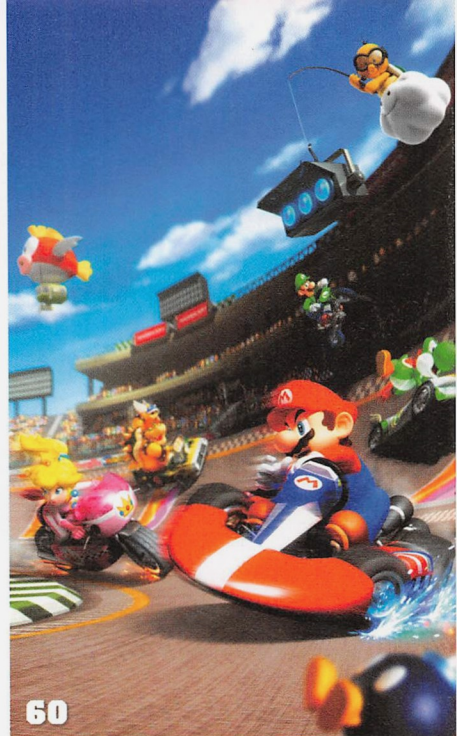
are just another control technique rather than a literal interpretation. You don't swing the Wiimote to swing Travis's beam katana, but with a tilt upwards and mash of the A button, you make him perform high attacks. It flies in the

face of Nintendo's Wii philosophy, but it works a lot better. Time will tell whether LucasArts' Star Wars title, The Force Unleashed, will change that.

Nintendo's controls aren't perfect, but they're a good first step in creating a bigger picture. In its current form, perhaps the answer lies in implementing some kind of rumble response whenever the player is turning beyond the wheel's limits. In the future, perhaps some kind of opposing poles magnet system can be used that make a controller physically harder to move. Or make it emit radio signals that tell the central nervous system to restrict muscle movement in that direction. Or something. Anything that prevents us from flailing willy-nilly in a game where we barely feel in control.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not nay saying motion-sensitive controls because they're the weird new thing. "New" does not mean "better", is all. Still, I look forward to seeing if future iterations of the technology will remedy the problems, or wither because of them.

## Nintendo's controls aren't perfect, but they're a good first step



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



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\$500 million in the first week alone - GTA4 is definitely the next big thing

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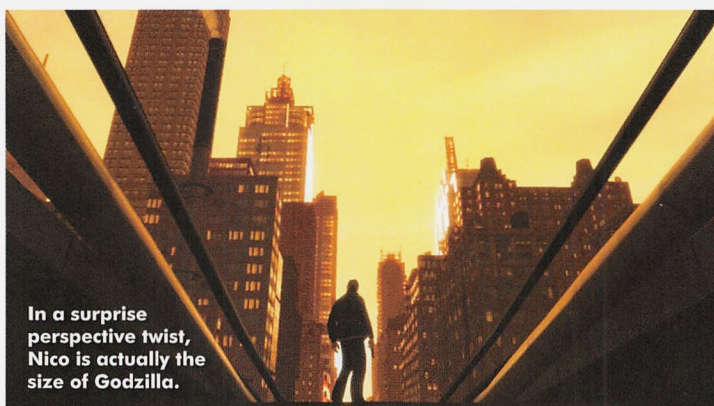
# Grand Theft Auto IV

All of a sudden, **DARREN WELLS** feels like some hot coffee

Writer's block is something that every wordsmith fears, and at the beginning of this issue it happened to me. The first week of the production cycle saw me staring vacantly at my computer monitor, the document blank and the flashing cursor unrepentant. I tried to put words on the page, but it wasn't writing. Not in the real sense. I was just pushing around peas on my plate in lieu of actually feeling hungry.

Then Grand Theft Auto IV arrived. Thank goodness it did. Time spent with that game unearths a wealth of features that, once experienced, deserve to be examined in full, and doing so reveals them as elements that are not only necessary to the GTA series, but important to the future of gaming. To see them at work is to wonder why no other game decided to implement them before. The revamped gunplay, the mobile phone, the euphoria engine, the friend system, the taxi network, the level of detail packed into the city. Writing drought? More like a deluge.

But where to begin? Not only are there so many points jostling for coverage, but all of them are likely to already be familiar to you, the savvy gamer. I mean, as if a title like GTA IV wasn't already on your radar. It's the game that needs no introduction, in turn making it the game that so many of you have



already played. So let's cut out the fluff and examine the game you know, and look at why it's the game that others — gamers and developers alike — need to experience.

## TWO BACK, FIVE FORWARD

The GTA series has always been a hit in gaming circles. The play area is massive, the storyline is there if you want it, and the subversive pleasure that comes with carjacking and machine gunning is second to none. From its sprite-based top down origins to the recent third-person 3D outings, each game has emerged a winner, and each subsequent title has upped the ante progressively further.

GTA IV earns its sequel number over the likes of Vice City and San Andreas, despite taking a few steps backwards. Things are confined

to a single city as opposed to an entire state, there's less RPG leanings such as eating and weightlifting, and there's no jets or behemoth aircraft to hijack. The eating and weightlifting, we can live without. Call the lack of that in GTA IV the learning from past mistakes. But the downsizing of play area and vehicle range is an interesting pickle, although, then again, it's perhaps an inevitable one. Surely things could not be allowed to grow inexorably. What next, span the game over the entire planet and allow players to hijack space shuttles?

So, then, it's understandable why some aspects have turned the dials back a few notches. However, in doing so, Rockstar has been able to go crazy in a number of other areas, adding detail to where there was little before, and implementing

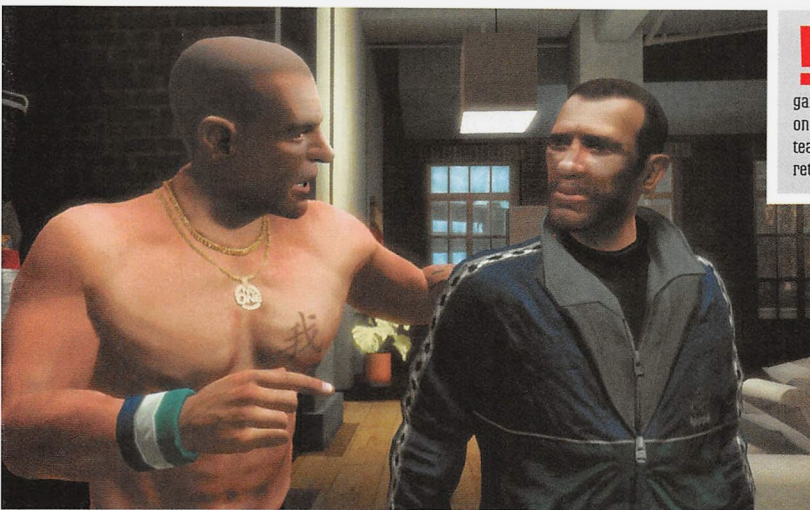
**X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP**

category: **Action** / players: **1-16**  
 developer: **Rockstar Games**  
 publisher: **Rockstar Games**  
 price: **\$109.95** / rating: **MA15+**  
 available: **Now**

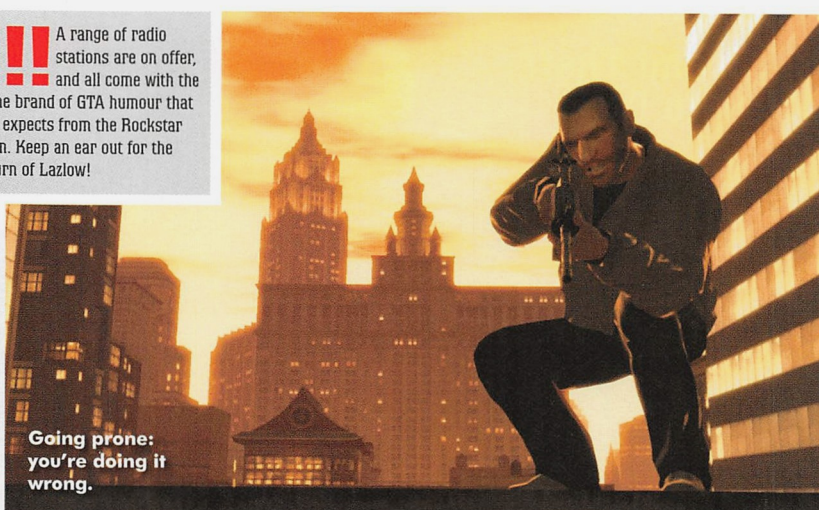


newer features that add extra depth to the world. Purely from a visual standpoint, the more intimate arena allows the developers to concentrate on detailing every single little aspect of it.

Yes, I'm talking about the graphics. Hindsight affords 20/20 vision, and it's not until the visuals of GTA IV are seen that one realises how simplistic the previous games looked in comparison. Sure, the technology was older, and it allowed the series to hide behind the defense of "it's stylised cartoonish violence, Your Honour!", but no longer. Visuals in this game come with an extraordinary level of detail, allowing the camera to hover high above the city skyline, or peer right in to a newspaper vendor on the street and check out the headlines. This is the level of detail that the GTA



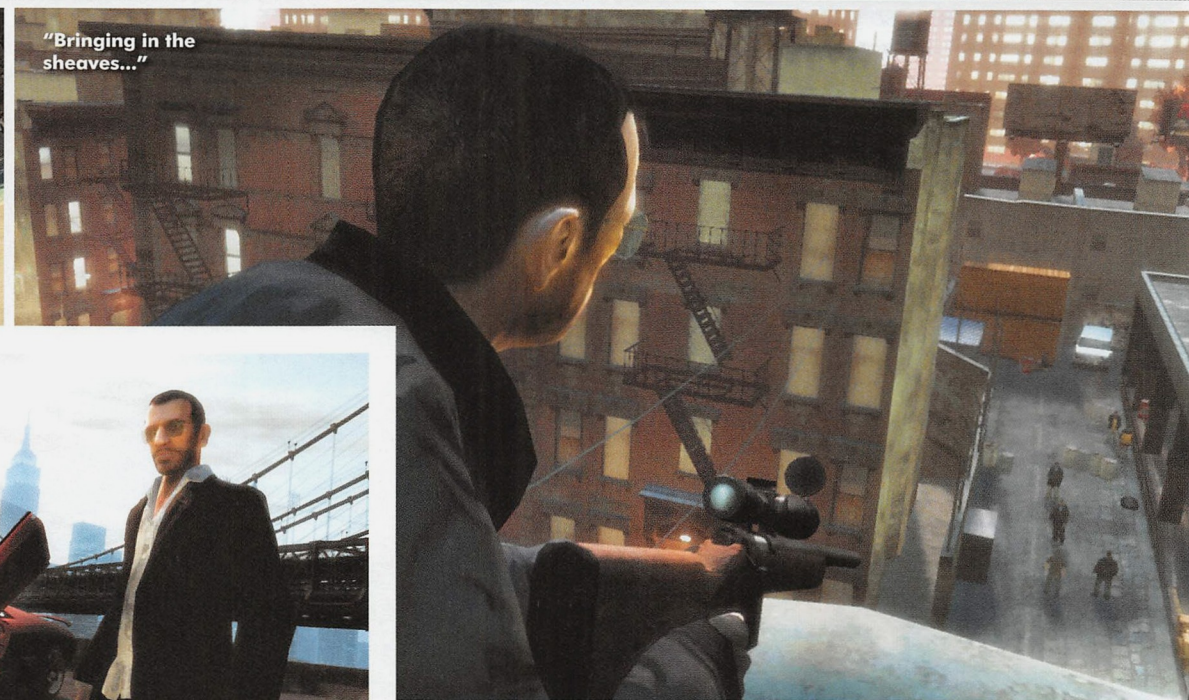
!!! A range of radio stations are on offer, and all come with the game brand of GTA humour that one expects from the Rockstar team. Keep an ear out for the return of Lazlow!



Going prone: you're doing it wrong.



"Bringing in the sheaves..."



"Wanna see a box of puppies?"



**This is the level of detail that the GTA series has always demanded, and its appearance in GTA IV is a welcome one**

series has always demanded, and its appearance in GTA IV is a welcome one indeed.

The detail expands to the populace of Liberty City. Their actions, their exclamations, their appearance... all of it comes with a wider range of variety than previous games have allowed. Pedestrians roam the streets. Crooks will hoof it away from a pursuing officer. Hookers stand on the occasional corner. It all adds immeasurable life to the city, turning it from a digital environment into a plausible world.

With the weather and the location comes even more opportunities for change. Watch the skies turn from sunny to overcast to rain, and people will pull out umbrellas or shield themselves with a newspaper or magazine. Driving from the ghetto to the glitzy cities sees

the look of the populace change accordingly, with fewer bums and more businessmen. And the dialogue. Chances are you'll hear but a sliver of it during your first playthrough. These people have so much to say — some of it sensible, but much of it bordering on random insanity — it's a wonder the game disc managed to pack in graphics at all among the wealth of audio.

What's even more amazing is the fact that much of the audio is specific to just one situation. The game doesn't take the cheap way out by incorporating generic, wishy-washy phrases that can be used multiple times. As Nico Bellic you'll roam from location to location, mission to mission, and occasionally your cell phone (more on this later) will ring. Answer it, and it could be your cousin Roman, your juiced up

fitness freak Brucie, your occasional girl Michelle, or any one of Liberty City's many colourful characters. Nico will respond to them with surprising accuracy. "Sorry, I can't come drinking with you Roman, I'm in a van that has a bomb on the back. One bump and ka-boom." It's scripted, but it's only upon later reflection that it becomes obvious.

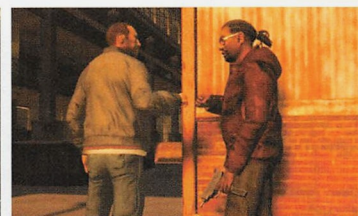
Or not. One mission saw us stalk a drug-pushing perp down a dark alley, following him to his supplier. A call from Roman ended that plan, however, as our mark heard the phone ring and got spooked, running away from our gaze. A mission restart saw us back at the same position, and just as we were preparing ourselves for that same scripted call... it never happened. The stealth continued.

It's touches like that which deflect the doldrums of "here we go again" when missions are replayed, not to mention instilling a sense of unpredictability into the game world, turning it into something that better resembles reality.

#### TAKE THIS

Of course, it's not a mirror image of society. Things are very deliberately played up, made fun of, turned into something larger than life, and offered back to us in a manner that helps one to see beyond the glossy veneer. The fact that Liberty's Statue of Happiness holds aloft a cup of Starbucks-esque coffee instead of a torch sets the tone of things to come. Nothing is sacred, and everything is fair game.

That includes the series' own



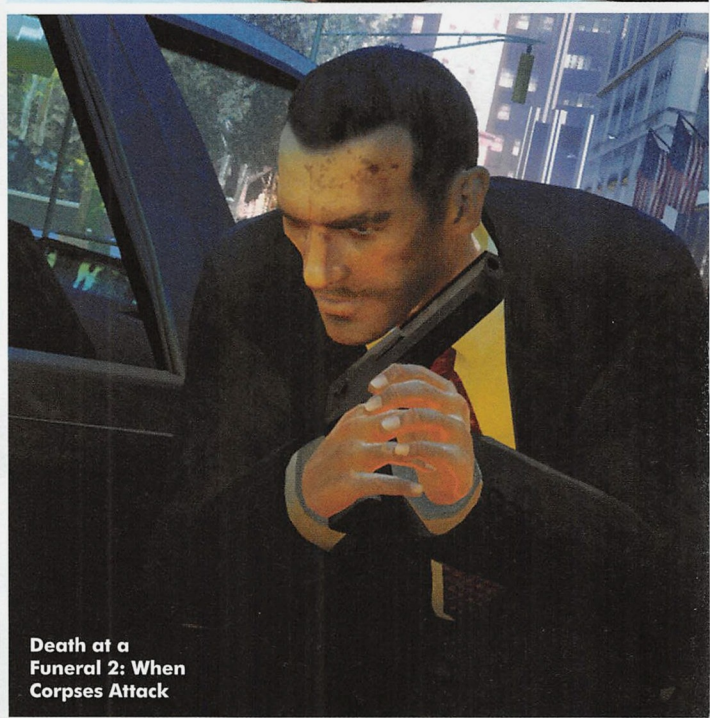
# Grand Theft Auto IV continued...



!!! The redesigned cover system is a welcome one, and allows for better control during gunplay. You're able to pop up, send out a couple of shots, and pop back before your enemy realises he's bleeding. The lock-on also comes in handy here, ensuring you never lose sight of your target.



Drive-thru rage just got taken to a whole new level.



Death at a Funeral 2: When Corpses Attack

critics, and that's portrayed best via Nico's shack-ups with his lady friends. Some background first: female acquaintances will notice changes in your appearance and your choice of vehicle, and comment on them according to her tastes. "I liked your old car better," she'll say before moving on to your attire. "Is that a new jacket? Very nice!" She'll even comment on where you're taking her for your date. "Places like this remind me of where I grew up," she might say, and when the time comes to take her home, you have the option of waving goodbye from the seat of your car or asking if you might come up for some, ahem, "hot coffee".

The tongue-in-cheek way in which this is handled is also the safest. It's clear that Rockstar is taking no chances — in Australia,

## A fair amount of flesh and gyrating can be seen in Liberty City's strip clubs ... there's little left to the imagination

at least — with its portrayal of Nico's boudoir activities, but at the same time it comes loaded with a distinct two-fingered salute to any conservative critics of the previous games. If Michelle lets you accompany her upstairs, the camera stays put outside, gently panning across the roof of her house to view the buildings on the horizon. You see nothing of their actions. And as for her moans of passion? "Oh Nico, you're so interesting! Tell me more!" It's as if Rockstar have crossed their arms defiantly and said, "Go on, try and pick on that. We dare you."

However, there are moments

where they let their guard down. Naturally, a fair amount of flesh and gyrating can be seen in Liberty City's strip clubs, and although the naughty bits are covered, there's little left to the imagination. The private dances also offer a range of pervey opportunities, with multiple camera angles and routines that escalate in raunchiness each time you return. There's also liberal use of bad language and jokes that delve into the schoolyard humour barrel, but that much has become par for the course with the GTA series. Suffice to say that they're still willing to poke the bear, even if they have put away a couple of sticks.

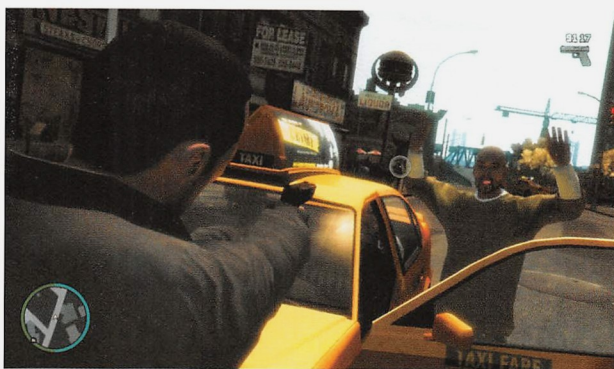
Which explains why one of the GTA staples is offered intact once again. The opportunity to engage in police chases remains, as does the choice to open fire upon Liberty's finest and liberate their vehicles. A number of notable design changes have been made

here, most importantly the display of the "Wanted" star level on the game HUD. Here, they're no longer a permanent fixture — they only appear when you earn the ire of the fuzz. It's as though Rockstar is aiming to divert attention away from the cop-killing aspect, making it not necessarily an advocated activity, but merely a possible one.

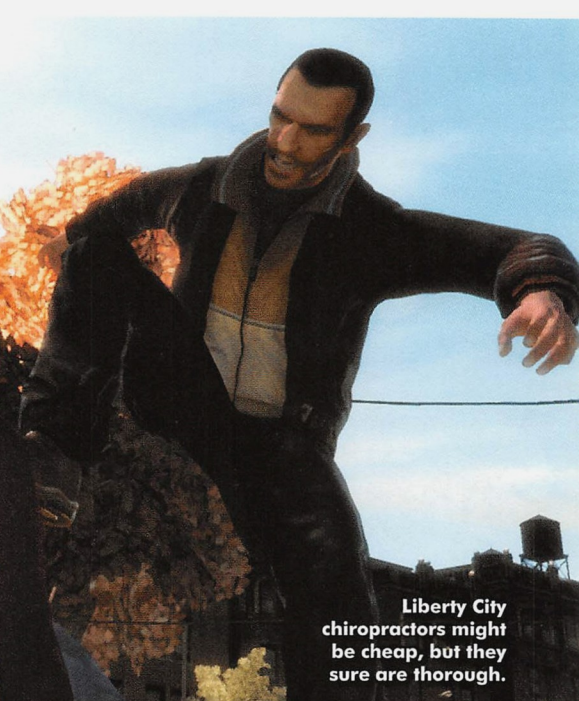
The process required for a smooth getaway has also been addressed. On the lowest Wanted level police will engage in pursuit, but are easier to evade and will not open fire unless you do so first. On the highest level, it's out with the cops and in with the army. Police units now have a radius of patrol around them, meaning if you can escape the immediate area where your crime occurred and have no police chasing your tail, you're away scott free. That becomes a little harder the higher up the wanted scale you go, as more cop cars will chase you and police helicopters will be called in.

Should you get away and find time for a breather, you'll find that a tap of the Left Bumper will open up a police car's computer, allowing you to partake in vigilante missions, chase down the most wanted suspects, or upload a photo from your phone and use the image recognition software to track down his whereabouts.





!!! In a move away from overtly "gamey" devices, you won't find any health icons dotted around Liberty City. In order to heal yourself, you've got to buy some food, but in a thankful move away from San Andreas, you don't need to constantly stuff your face in order to stave off death.



Liberty City chiropractors might be cheap, but they sure are thorough.



"No, seriously, it's THIS big!" "You're right, that is a fine fish you caught."

Ah yes, the phone. The device that looks so small and simple, but lends so much to the game. Simply put, it's your portal to Liberty City, allowing you to acquire missions from contacts, organise a To Do list, build up friendships with acquaintances, or phone in a snippet of a song from the radio and receive a return SMS that identifies the name and artist. Heck, if you positively absolutely need a police car right now, you can call 911 and have dispatch send one to your location.

That's not all. Get friendly enough with Roman by treating him to a few nights on the turps, and he'll grant you the ability to call for one of his cabs and ride it for free. Tolerate Brucie's hyperactivity for

long enough, and he'll be on call with a helicopter. Get Little Jacob on your side and he'll become your personal armory. There's so much to do beyond the daisy chain of storyline missions that you'll be engrossed with this one for months rather than weeks.

#### MOVING AND SHAKING

Which is a good thing, because exploring the world as a whole reveals more depth than focusing only on the storyline could ever allow. By and large, the story isn't the magnum opus that others have claimed — it's still a clichéd tale of guns and crooks — but there are moments

of inspiration sprinkled throughout. There's a nice pre-mission scene when Nico enters the apartment of Dwayne, a fellow fresh out of the clink and reintegrating himself into society. He's found that the strip club he used to own is now under new management and wishes it was his again... but then sighs in resignation. "What's the point?" he asks. But Nico's keen to spur him back to life. "Hey, don't be like that. We can get it back. I'll go right now." The fact that not all characters race to offer a violent mission speaks volumes, as does the fact that Nico races to offer a violent solution.

But moments like this highlight one bugbear with the game: Cut-scenes are filled with characters that move with over-exaggerated gestures. They emphasise sentences with dramatic arm movements, or spring wildly to life when it's their turn to speak, and occasionally it detracts from the effect of the scene. This has

always been the case with the GTA games, but one can only guess why it's still present here. It's hardly due to technology's inability to allow characters to act with subtle facial nuances — Half-Life 2 saw Alyx and company emote with a raised eyebrow or a curled lip. Granted, GTA IV is a step up from the previous games, which were often little more than mime shows with audio backing, but there's still room for improvement.

And so here we are, approaching the end of four pages when four more would have been welcome. There's still so much about GTA IV that we haven't touched on, but what's the sum total of the aspects we have addressed? A game that demands to be played by every self-respecting 360 owner in the country. This is the most important GTA game yet, and it does a lot of things that future games will no doubt copy for themselves. So much the better — if this is the sign of things to come, then gaming has a very bright future indeed. «



Prompt: Nico hates slowns.



Detailed world, plenty to do, clever missions, great audio

Over-acting in cutscenes, chuggy framerate

**HYPER VERDICT**

An explosive game in its own right and the best GTA ever created.

VISUALS 90 SOUND 92 GAMEPLAY 97

**95**



# Mario Kart Wii

**DARREN WELLS** and **DANIEL WILKS** fear the blue shell

**Wilks:** The coming of a new Mario Kart is always something we look forward to at Hyper. We loves us some Karting fun. Hell, if you bought the last issue (and if you didn't, shame on you!) you would have seen that Mario Kart DS is our pick for the second best handheld game of all time. So to say that we jumped around a bit and did a little dance of joy when the game arrived at the office would be something of an understatement. Saying that Darren took off his clothes and started singing "The Ketchup Song" would be an overstatement. What really happened was somewhere in the middle, involving singing and dancing but, lamentably, no nudity.

Unfortunately the songs died fairly quickly as we realised that Mario Kart Wii did very little new and has more than its fair share of problems, one of the major ones being that the signature control system being used to drive (pun intended) advertising interest in the game is by far the worst. The motion control and, by extension, the wheel are just not accurate enough to be much fun.

**Wells:** Back up there, Señor Wilks. You lament the lack of musical Darren nudity? Well, you're only human I guess. But if it made the Mario Kart Wii experience great rather than merely good, then these clothes would be off quicker than you could say "Friday night, it's party time."

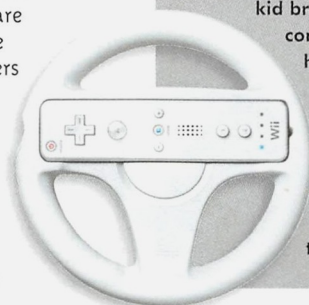


Yes, we love the DS version of Mario Kart, and have lost many hours to its addictive gameplay here in the office. Ever the optimists, we were looking at Nintendo's wobble-wobble console in the hopes that it would offer a similar result, but unfortunately it was not to be. Call it weathered by the previous games or call it the lack of ambition from Nintendo, but the grind in this game is noticeable. Old tracks are offered once again. The same stable of characters return. The same power-ups. The same first-place gankings and the last-place bullet dashes. The sprinklings of new features are few and far between, and while

it's nice to slip into each race like a pair of well-worn shoes, it's disappointing that Nintendo didn't aim to get more out of its revolutionary console. Sure, there's the motion-sensitive controls, but...

## ARE YOU IN CONTROL?

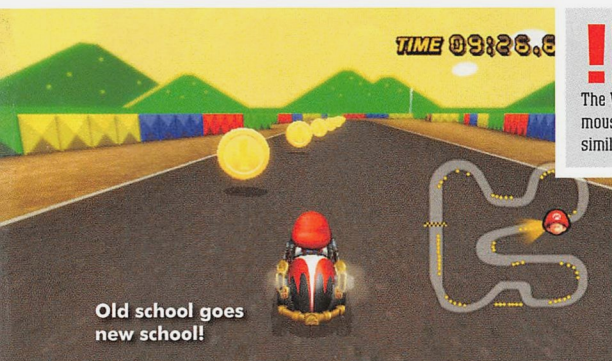
There's a range of options available in Mario Kart Wii's control department. The game comes with a plastic wheel with a space to house one Wiimote, allowing you steer in mid-air in a fashion that looks slightly less ridiculous than doing it with your kid brother's Sesame Street Driver's Dashboard. You can also control the game in a similar fashion without the wheel, holding the Wiimote horizontally. If, like us, you prefer more control in your controls, then you can steer with the analogue stick of the nunchuck and, holding the Wiimote vertically in your other hand, accelerate with the A button. Finally, if you want to take things old-school, the classic controller is also compatible. Sadly, using the Wiimote like a traditional controller is not an option – if that's all you have, it's motion-sensitive or nothing.



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

category: **Racing** / players: **1-12**  
 developer: **Nintendo**  
 publisher: **Nintendo**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **G**  
 available: **Now**

**Wilks:** Some people are going to criticise me for saying this, assuming that I'm being overly hard on the game because it didn't live up to my expectations, but the problem I have with Mario Kart Wii is that for the most part it plays things very safe, but in a lot of the areas where it doesn't play things safe and essentially ape the previous games, it gets things quite wrong – notably the increase to 12 racers and added emphasis placed on pick-ups. As a number of competitors to race against, 11 is a good number, but the

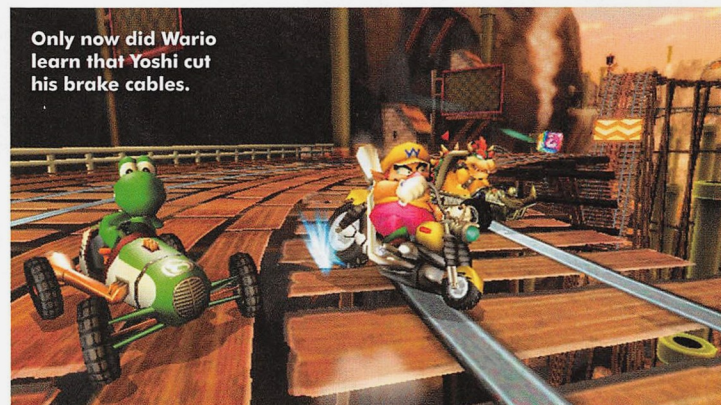


Old school goes new school!

!!! Is it just us, or does Waluigi look like Dick Dastardly from The Wacky Racers? That crazy moustache and evil laugh are so similar, they could be twins!



Mario sez: "Don't-a drive angry!"



Only now did Wario learn that Yoshi cut his brake cables.



increase in racers means a concurrent increase in the number of powerups and weapons flying around the track, often turning a race into a chaotic mess of explosions and ganking rather than real racing. The dynamic powerup system gives more powerful items to players further back in the pack so it's not at all rare to be hit by multiple red, green and blue shells, POWs and squid in the space of a few seconds if you're in the lead. It's frustrating and not all that fun when playing against the AI.

**Wells:** Similarly, if you spend much of the race in front, you'll pick up little more than banana peels, which in some respects is fair enough, but in others it highlights the artificial nature of the race, which tries to keep things on an even keel a little too much. It's easy to see why this was implemented, but in practice it's not handled entirely well.

But amid all we've said thus far, there's still things to like about Mario Kart Wii. The new tracks — on the rare chances that they do appear

— are well designed, and feature all manner of ramps, twists, turns and obstacles. The cross-generation appeal is still there, making this a game that can be enjoyed by kids, adults, grandparents and albatrosses alike.

**Wilks:** Some of the new tracks are indeed great — DK Snowboard Cross is fantastic, and the revamped, Mario Galaxy scented Rainbow Road is probably the best iteration of the track we've seen yet. No matter how good some of the tracks are though, you still have to put up with the horror of the Blue Shell, Bullet Bill, the POW block and even a new Lightning power-up that is only available to racers in the front of the pack, giving them a short speed boost before shrinking them. The Time Trial mode does allow players to race against the clock solo, but is it too much to ask for a best of both worlds approach with balanced normal races as well? As with previous games, the three difficulty (CC) levels are wildly



unbalanced, with 50 and 100CC being all too easy and 150CC being a punishing chore.

Back to the good points, though, the addition of bikes does add a little certain something to the game. For the most part the bikes handle much like karts, aside from the fact that they can't get a full boost from sliding but can do wheel stands for speed boost on straits. Online racing as well is a lot of fun as opponent players, amazingly, don't seem to be nearly as cheap as the AI. Friend Codes, however, are still a pain in the arse.

**Wells:** Mario Kart Wii is enjoyable, but damnit, this should have been the game that we'd step over our own mothers to play. It should have been the game that all previous Mario Kart titles cower in the presence of. Too many backwards steps are taken and too many areas are played safe, and instead of the killer kart game it deserved to be, it's a stopgap in lieu of future ambition. **«**

**Mario Kart Wii is enjoyable, but damnit, this should have been the game that we'd step over our own mothers to play**



 Some great new tracks; online multi-player; Rainbow Road	 Weak motion controls; Blue shells; unbalanced	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>		
Can't quite pull far enough ahead of the pack	VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	<b>82</b>
	<b>83</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>84</b>	

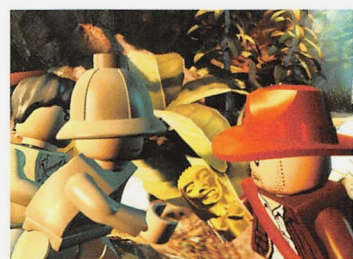


Not shown: Lego dysentery.

# Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures

**DIRK WATCH** shall now be known as "Big Round"

We find it quite amusing that the moments we were most looking forward to playing in Lego Indiana Jones - Lego Short Round, Lego Mine Carts Chase, Lego Monkey Brains - all came from what is arguably the worst of the original Indiana Jones movies. Much like the Lego Star Wars games, Lego Indiana Jones retells the three films of the classic trilogy via the medium of broad comedy and small plastic building blocks,



allowing players to make their way through the adventures as Indy and co or any number of unlockable characters in free play mode.

Each of the three films is broken into six discrete chapters, each containing an iconic scene from the film. The first level of Temple of Doom, for example, sees Willie and Indiana being attacked in a Shanghai nightclub. Rather than spearing evildoers with giant shish kabobs (as in the film), the first level sees Indy poisoned and weak, unable to jump, being defended by Willie, the nightclub singer/love interest, while she simultaneously tries to coax an antidote from a number of henchmen by throwing them duplicate vials. Once Indy is healed, action heads out onto the street, where they meet up with Short Round, the only character in the



movies with the dubious honour of being almost as annoying as Willie.

## HE NOT NUTS! HE CRAZY!

Each of the characters has access to a skill unique to that style of character. Indy has his bullwhip, which can be used to pick up items from a distance or to swing across gaps. All female characters can jump higher than male characters. Certain characters, like Marcus Brody and Elsa can decrypt hieroglyphics to activate Simon Says style mini-games to unlock secret areas. Small characters like Short Round can crawl into small areas to access secret or restricted rooms. Switching between characters (or playing in drop-in, drop-out co-op) forms the crux of the puzzle solving.

For the most part, Lego Indiana

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

category: **Action** / players: **1-2**  
developer: **Travelers Tales**  
publisher: **Activision**  
price: **\$89.95** / rating: **PG**  
available: **Now**

Jones is a great fun game that captures the spirit of fun of the movies, but there are a few problems with the game that will have you pulling your hair out. The vehicle sections, and there are many, are quite woeful, with each vehicle handling in a strange and twitchy manner that seems at odds with the locked camera angle, making it all too easy to get vehicles stuck on the environment, drive them off the edge of bridges and the like. We also notices quite a few recursive death loops in the game - characters falling off the edge of jumping puzzles only to be respawned on the lip of the puzzle and sliding off again before the player can do anything about it. Neither of the problems are particularly game killing but they do mount up a fair level of frustration and hint towards the game being rushed to release alongside the movie. "

Lego Indy: Lego Short Round; charming fun	Dodgy vehicle controls; death loops; less memorable characters	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>
Indiana Jones has a timeless appeal	VISUALS <b>82</b>	SOUND <b>80</b>
	GAMEPLAY <b>83</b>	<b>81</b>

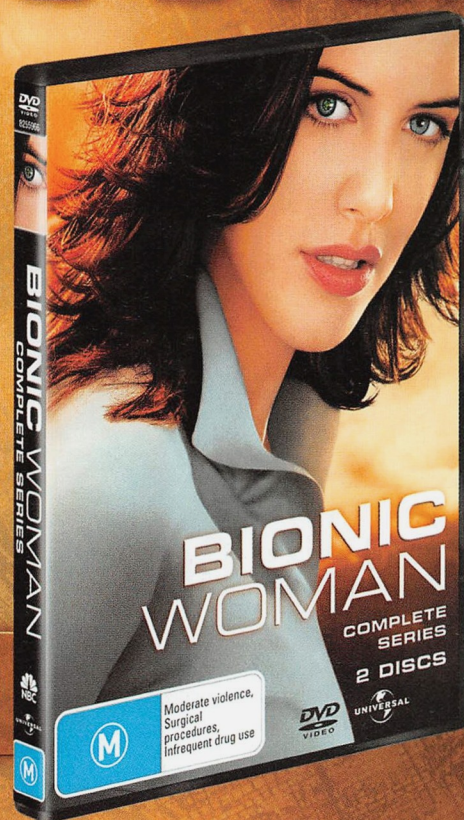
STRONGER...  
BETTER...  
FASTER...

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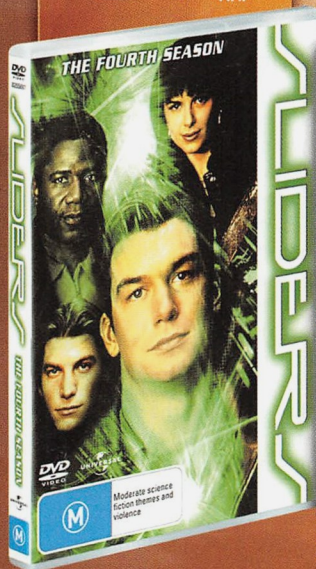
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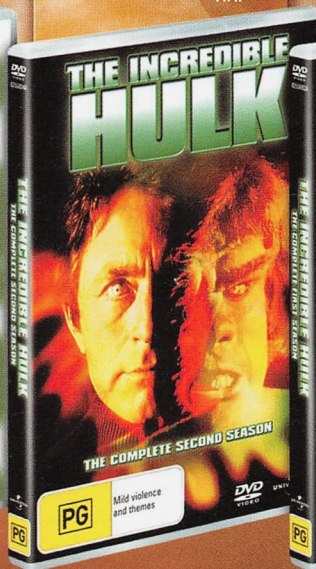
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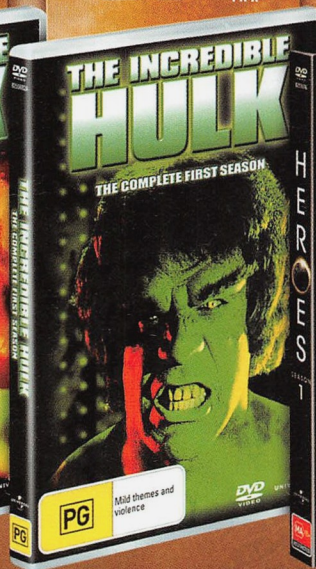
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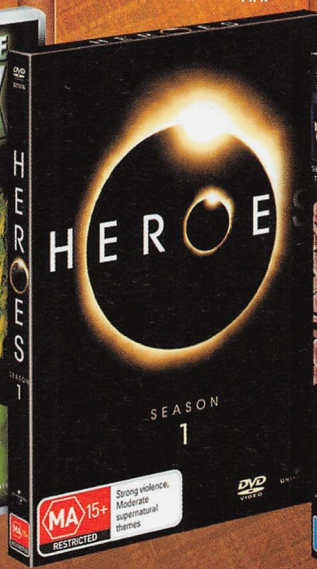
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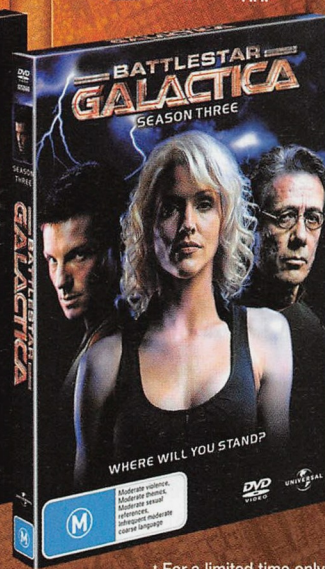
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"Stop fighting boys  
- you both have  
lovely hair"



It's nice to see she  
coordinates her  
decolletage with  
her eyes



# Crisis Core: Final Fantasy 7

**TIM HENDERSON** has girly hair and was born August 19. True Story.

It's hard not to be cynical when it comes to Final Fantasy 7. A landmark game in Japan, to say nothing of the West, it came and conquered critics and paying consumers alike. Then, as is always the case, an after-effect ripple saw a mixed wave of backlash and fanboyism; it became a thing of passion — of love or of hate. It introduced amateurish cinematic extravagance to a genre largely accustomed to large blocks of text, popularized angst, and sold like free sex to a prison full of horny teenagers. There's a greater likelihood of cows raining from the moon than there is of Crisis Core not making Square-Enix enough yen to laminate their entire head office in gold.

## TALE OF A COUNTRY BOY

While it is true that some Square staff would probably benefit from some coursework in film theory — "cough" Advent Children "splutter" —, Final Fantasy 7 somehow managed to deliver one of the most exquisitely pitched FMV intros in gaming. The swirly stars swirled just long enough to build atmosphere and anticipation, Aerith broke this with an aura of frailty that was quickly smothered in macho modernity as the camera pulled back. Midgar shimmered in all its glory as intercut scenes of a train speeding to a halt



[above] "How can i get  
more air in my hair?"

began to invade the shot. The camera followed the train in and then there you were, right there, thrown headfirst into the action.

Crisis Core pays homage to this — the fanservice couldn't be more palpable as a familiar train speeds through a barricade. And then the lead character, Zack, leaps from a helicopter and makes an impossibly showy run across it, cutting foes left and right, jumping stupidly high, looking cool and... boy, this is taking rather a while. I'm almost

at my own station, and it's not like I'm using the world's leading train service. Okay, I think it's going to let me play now.

Although a very specific moment, the above paragraph does a lot to sum up most of what is wrong with Crisis Core. Not only does it forsake the functional nature of FF7's cutscenes (perhaps a fortunate side-effect of rendering restrictions

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

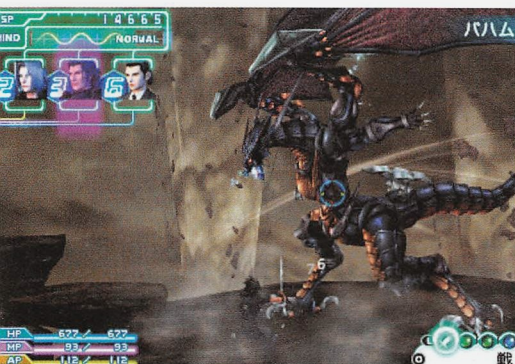
category: **Action RPG** / players: **1**  
developer: **Square-Enix**  
publisher: **Ubisoft**  
price: **STBA** / rating: **TBA**  
available: **June**

rather than true artistic merit) by adopting the later games' tendency to showboat them, but it also frequently forgets that it's tied to a handheld console.

## CRIPPLE FIGHT!

Fortunately, as crippling as this issue is, it is also pretty much all that is wrong with the game. Crisis Core does a lot right. It wants to elicit old memories and create new ones, it wants to push the PSP hardware, it wants to tell its story with a sense of dramatic urgency, and it wants to impress. The good news is that it does on all counts.

Crisis Core is strikingly pretty and, alongside Chains of Olympus, proof that while not the handheld Ps2 that Sony made it out to be, the PSP is nonetheless more capable kit than first impressions suggested. Backgrounds do suffer from a lack of detail and particularly blurry textures, but character modeling and animation is consistently first class, and faces express genuine emotion. Even more impressive still is a soundtrack that lifts several favourite motifs from the original game, layers them with a greater



!!! Shops can be accessed from Zack's mobile phone, and feature magical, instantaneous delivery. It's a logical inclusion for the world, and while some may argue that it dumbs things down, it's still better than being stuck with less than enough potions.



## You will only be playing as Zack, and as such a degree of the strategy that comes with party customization is lost

particular further consideration comes from the missions, which can be accessed from any of the (mostly plentiful) save points. The sudden transportation to various locations does fragment the continuity of both narrative and setting, but it's nonetheless an agreeable way to segregate grind from the main game, and unlike the main game they can be enjoyed in public-transport friendly bursts.

**STRUCTURALLY UNSOUND**  
But still, the overall structure of Crisis Core keeps getting in the way. It knows how to impress with spectacle and fanservice, but comes across as being so chuffed with itself that it neglects to allow the player any actual interaction. Damaging to the point where it would hurt not just a handheld, but also a home console game,

Crisis Core runs exposition into the ground, frequently denying not just the opportunity to save, but to do anything at all. There are few things worse than long, unskippable sequences that come prior to a boss you may not manage to defeat on the first attempt.

Yet, for all the significance of its central flaw, Crisis Core remains a hard game to dislike. Even the overt pretty-emo character design manages to work, and when fleshed into the world that it is, so full of familiar faces, it's easier to forgive the over-long narration and repetitious Point A to Point B mission structure. However, when a game's highlight comes in the form of the revisiting of something you played a good 11 years ago, questions have to be raised of its ability to stand on its own feet without the help of its older brother. «

The musical score is astounding. Fleshes out the FF7 story

Often feels like running from one outscene to another.

**HYPER VERDICT**

COMPETENCE	VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	TOTAL
Competent game. Mind-blowing fanservice.	90	92	80	<b>80</b>

dash of instrumental girth, infuses them with a sprinkle of its own musical identity, and ultimately comes across as superior to its predecessor. Punch acceptable voice acting into your calculator and you'll be as giddy as an 11-year-old who has just figured out that numbers can spell boobs.

Combat is a huge step forward. You will only be playing as Zack, and as such a degree of the strategy that comes with party customization is lost, but the sheer surging pace and superficial thrill manages to compensate. Battles are random, but they spring to life in the

immediate environment and action kicks off instantly. The mechanics somehow manage to blur the line between action and turn-based RPG: Commands are still lined up in advance, with the shoulder buttons cycling between various abilities and items while the X button is mashed with enough ferocity to satisfy even the most trigger-happy crackhead. When it all ends, the camera takes a chance to reposition itself to where it was originally facing while Zack swings his blade above his head before sheathing it, a small touch that does a lot to prevent disorientation.

All of which is great on its own, but on the PSP it comes across as genuinely thought-out design. A

[below] "... "..." "..." "..." "..." "..." "..." "Ha Ha, you blinked"





!!! Rather than spend time playing this game, why not take up the sport of extreme ironing?



The Dude no longer abides



Even Iron Man wants you to refrain from buying the game

# Iron Man

**DARREN WELLS** and **DANIEL WILLS** are part of a complete breakfast

**Wells:** Go and see Iron Man while it's in the cinemas. It's a great movie. Robert Downey Jr. puts in an inspired performance, the direction is solid without pandering to token money shots, and all in all it's an enjoyable romp.

Why am I starting this review by mentioning the movie? Because it's the exact opposite of the game.

By now we've come to expect that the videogame cash-in of a superhero movie will be a limp affair, and Iron Man does nothing to turn that tide. It's a lazy concept that was predictably rushed to store shelves to coincide with the movie, and there it waits, hoping that unsuspecting gamers fresh from the cinema purchase it on their euphoric high.

Don't. Please don't. Not unless you want a game in which flying is overpowered by confusion, missiles

outnumber enemies, and "controls" give you anything but, you know, actual control.

**Wills:** Playing the game goes a little something like this: jump into a mission in which you have to destroy a huge number of enemies in a prohibitively short amount of time, then spend the next 10 minutes fighting with the flight controls and swearing at Darren.

Why are they so bad? Well, because they mix both analogue and binary controls in a manner seemingly designed to piss people off. The left trigger causes Iron Man to move upwards — hovering is achieved by holding the trigger half way down. That's fine until you realise there is no way to have a controlled descent. Players just have to drop and feather the trigger to lose

speed. Flight, controlled by LI, is absolutely binary — you're either stationary or screaming along at maximum speed, overshooting targets and caroming off obstacles. And swearing at Darren.

**Wells:** Shooting things isn't much fun, either. The Right trigger buttons are tied to your energy blasts, and come in two flavours: small and big. The smaller, rapid fire blasts are fine, but are let down by the woeful lock-on system which occasionally loses focus of your target should another one stray into the frame. The bigger blast, unleashed from Iron Man's radioactive pacemaker, sure is big, but sure is useless since it doesn't actually lock on, and requires a few seconds to charge by holding down the button. Of course, your enemy is free to wander away during this time, and should you be on the receiving end of a missile (and trust us, you will), the charge dissipates and you're forced to start over.

**Wills:** The Iron Man model looks fairly good — aside from the fact that it's strangely hazy, washed out and sometimes becomes a strange

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

category: **Action** / players: **1**  
developer: **Criware**  
publisher: **Sega**  
price: **\$89.95** / rating: **M**  
available: **Now**

hollow shell if you look at it from the wrong angle. Cuts scene character models for the most part look like something from the beginning of the Marvel Zombies series. Oh yeah, the framerate hits slide show levels if there are too many enemies/explosions on screen. Yay!

**Wells:** Although Terrance Howard seems thankful he has the work, Downey Jr deadpans every line with contractual obligation. Gwyneth Paltrow and Jeff Bridges clomp through their lines with as much effort as one could bring to such tired dialogue.

Is there anything good about this game? Well, you don't fly through any hoops... not until you're taking down a nuclear reactor. Really, this one's best left to collect rust. Go spend your money on some cool Iron Man toys instead. «



Bring on Iron Man 2! The movie, not the game

Blasting things, flying around (but only for a few minutes)

Crap controls, crap flying, crap game

**HYPER VERDICT**

Tony deserves a better game. May his digital zombie rest in peace.

VISUALS **69** SOUND **64** GAMEPLAY **49** **41**

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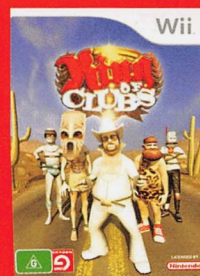


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# Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles

**DARREN WELLS** or bowerbird? Right now he's not entirely sure

Assassins' Creed on the DS? Why? Actually, the why is pretty easily answered — money is great, after all — but still... why? Why take the idea of the original game and shoehorn it onto a platform that could not hope to do it justice? As awesome as the DS is, its strengths do not lie in offering 3D open arenas, and when sacrifices are made to a game in which the concept is required, the result is not Assassin's Creed.

Instead, we get this, a linear hack and slash romp throughout narrow levels splattered with guards who prefer to stab first and ask questions later. There's none of the layered intrigue that made up the original game, and no impetus to keep a

low profile among the populace. It's arguably more action-oriented than its bigger brother, and in that respect makes it feel something more like Price of Persia. That wouldn't automatically be a bad thing, but too many baffling factors get in the way of the experience, preventing it from succeeding even as an alternate take on the Assassin's Creed concept.

Left to right. That's the direction in which you'll be walking throughout each level, with disappointingly little of the three dimensions used. What's more, you don't need to worry about how you'll traverse each section, as a convenient trail of sparkles will guide you along your path. Stray from it and your ever-present direction arrow will guide you back. With the freedom of the original game thrown out the window, Altair is now reduced to a hooded chap that follows a line of shiny things. The sense of effortless — and improvised — free running is a thing of the past; here, you'll go where you're directed, thank you very much.

Combat isn't much better, squished down to a mash-fest more than anything else. Wake any guards from their robot-like patrol paths and you'll engage them with a few swings of your sword, again placing action in the fore rather than haystack hidings — something that



doesn't serve much use when on the receiving end of multiple guards in a confined area.

However, it's the touchscreen that warrants the most discussion, simply due to its bizarre incorporation into the gameplay. It's always nice when developers realise its potential rather than tacking it on or ignoring it completely, but here things are less than straightforward. During the bulk of the gameplay it serves as your minimap, but considering the tight leash the sparkle trail keeps you on it vary rarely serves any useful purpose. Navigating the level? Forget about it. Spotting the one unique face icon amongst a sea of guards is about the only time you'll look down.

Until you get to the mini-games.

X360 | PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP  
category: **Action** / players: **1**  
developer: **Ubisoft**  
publisher: **Ubisoft**  
price: **\$69.95** / rating: **PG**  
available: **Now**

Gimicky to the last, they'll require you to gingerly drag an item out of a suspect's bag or — and here's where it gets bizarre — torturing them for information by playing Elite Beat Agents. We're not kidding: the interface and technique is exactly the same, requiring you to tap on points (pressure points, apparently) as the closing ring gets ever smaller. Then you drag up a circle in an arc in time with the surrounding ring. Then you stop and wonder why you're not doing it to the tune of YMCA.

As a standalone game it's an underwhelming product, but as an expansion to the proper game (yes, we're calling the original version the proper one), it at least adds a bit of backstory to Altair's capers. For this reason, it's for dedicated fans only, but even then we'd advise extreme caution before laying down the dosh. «



Light action fare, adds backstory to previous game	Nothing really "Assassin's Creed", bizarre touchscreen games	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>
Unnecessary adaptation, demonstrated by its many shortcomings	VISUALS <b>59</b>	SOUND <b>42</b>
	GAMEPLAY <b>53</b>	<b>52</b>



# The World Ends With You

Life begins with **DANIEL WILKS**

Square Enix's new RPG, developed by the team responsible for Kingdom Hearts, was originally called It's a Wonderful World when it was released in Japan. Due to copyright fears, the name was changed for the release in the West, and thank God it has — the new name is far more descriptive of the events of the game and it doesn't sound nearly so generic. Although The World Ends With You may look, at first glance, nothing like a Square Enix title, the game does contain a number of elements familiar to fans of previous Square Enix games, such as the hugely successful Final Fantasy series.

Players take the role of a rather socially maladjusted, floppy haired teen by the name of Neku who wakes up in the middle of modern day Shibuya with no idea why he is there or even who he is. Soon after waking, the boy receives a text message from the mysterious Reapers informing him that he is part of "The Game" — a strange



competition he must participate in and win or else be erased forever. Neku cannot talk to or interact with any of the normal people in Shibuya, but he is not alone; the streets teem with ghostly monsters called "noise", the embodiment of stress and the alienation of modern life. Throughout the course of The World Ends With You, Neku and his companions must battle their way through the missions presented them by The Reapers. It all sounds rather deep, and not a little bit wanky, but it actually makes for a brilliant game world.

TWEWY features a tremendously accomplished battle system that combines quick thinking, tactical

placement and even a little rhythm action. Utilising the D-Pad and the touch screen, the combat system sees the player controlling both Neku and his active partner simultaneously, performing D-pad combos with the partner and using the stylus to move and unleash Neku's psychic powers (available from pins found throughout the game world), all the while trying to rack up huge combos. There are also real time bonus games, such as card matching and roulette to unleash incredibly powerful special attacks. There is an option to automate the top-screen character, leaving the player free to concentrate solely on the touch screen but the combat is far less enjoyable without the pressure of juggling both screens.

## FASHION VICTIM

Aside from combat, TWEWY features an innovative fashion system that not only causes characters to wear the best clothing for statistic boosts, but also prompts players to follow the fashion trends of the areas they visit, as the right combination of clothing and pin can drastically

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

category: **RPG** / players: **1-4**  
 developer: **Team Jupiter**  
 publisher: **Square Enix**  
 price: **\$69.95** / rating: **PG**  
 available: **Now**

increase combat effectiveness. Players can also eat food for stat boosts, which come into effect only after the food has been digested. Colourful and sharp anime style design brings the game world to life, as does the superb soundtrack. Rather disappointingly there is little in the way of actual voice acting in the game, but that is a small gripe when everything is taken into consideration.

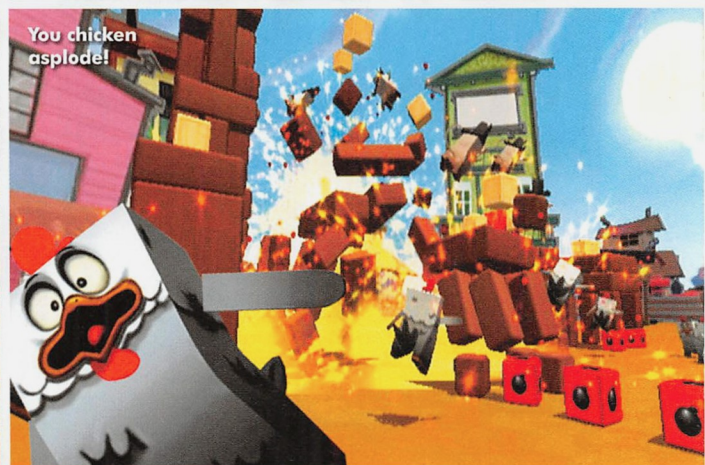
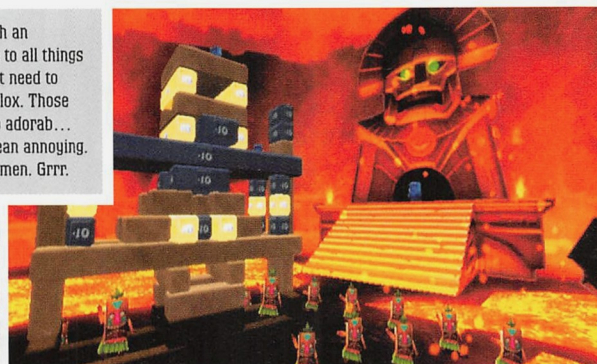
Make no mistake — The World Ends With You is not a mass-market game. There is no easy pick up and play making it suitable for any but the hard-core. It's not a game for anyone not willing to put in a few hours learning the intricacies of the hectic D-pad/Stylus dual screen combat, but if you're willing invest the time and effort you'll discover one of the most original, interesting and downright brilliant games available on the DS. **«**



Fantastic visual design; brilliant soundtrack; unique combat	Lacks voice acting; daunting	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>
One of the most unique and satisfying games on the DS	VISUALS	SOUND
	91	95
		90
		<b>90</b>



!!! Those with an aversion to all things cute might need to steer clear of Boom Blox. Those blocky animals are so adorab... uhh, annoying. We mean annoying. Because we're manly men. Grrr.



# Boom Blox

**DARREN WELLS** liked it when the buildings fell down

As much fun as it is to build impressive structures out of blocks, it's much more fun to knock them down. Watching that precarious tower slowly topple over into a mess of colour is something that just about every kid has fond memories of. It was definitely part of Steven Spielberg's childhood, as he's headed to EA to make Boom Blox, and in doing so has fulfilled his public desire to create a game that his kids could enjoy.

Things are definitely family friendly here, but that doesn't prevent old-timers from getting in on the action. While the initial concept sounds threadbare — player take Wiimote, player knock things over, player win — it soon becomes obvious that there's a lot more to Boom Blox than that, and heck, even us oldies like seeing a good tower go crash now and then.

There's something so innately primal about watching a carefully-designed structure brought to the ground. The only thing that compares is causing that destruction yourself. Things are presented at a nice and satisfying pace, allowing the player to throw a ball at a

pile of blocks from the first minute of gameplay. From there it escalates into a clever mix of physics-based puzzle solving and wanton destruction, and the results are engaging, to say the least.

Some levels contain blue gems built amid standard brown blocks. Knock down the wall and you'll score a point for each gem that touches the ground. What's the wall's weakest point? Can you do it in only one throw? There're explosive blocks, disappearing blocks, blocks that you can drag around on a string, and blocks that carry different point value. The design of each structure will change the way in which you approach your challenge, as some objectives will require you to leave part of it intact rather than bust the whole place up. This is especially true in some

of the later challenges, which incorporate a wandering gorilla in search of her babies on the other side. How will you knock those blocks out of the way without destroying the bridge?

The throwing mechanic of the game could not be simpler. Aim your crosshair at where

you wish to throw, and hold the A button on the Wiimote. Then make a throwing motion, releasing A at the end. Holding B and moving the Wiimote will move the camera, which becomes essential in choosing your angle of attack. The physics of the blocks themselves are rock solid, and finally eliminate the long-standing jiggle quirk that happens when two physics-based objects are positioned on top of one another. In this game, if an object is rested on another, it stays there, rather than doing the jitterbug. Our only complaint here comes with the molasses-like pace of the falling blocks. It's understandable that the Wii requires the time to calculate the movement of all those blocks, and the slightly slower action allows the player to fully take in their destruction, but there are times where more impact would be gained with a more action-charged result.

Still, there's no faulting the variety: it's as though every conceivable puzzle that incorporates blocks has been implemented. One noteworthy game presents you with a hollow structure, and two bombs to throw at it. Each bomb will delete one

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

category: **Block sim?** / players: **1-4**  
developer: **EA**  
publisher: **EA**  
price: **\$79.95** / rating: **G**  
available: **Now**

block, and after that, you're given a small number of bouncy balls. Throw the ball inside the structure and for each block it hits and rebounds off, you'll score a point. How many can you hit with your limited ammo supply? Another presents things in a traditional light gun scenario, but your aim is to shoot out the structures the baddies are standing on, thereby taking a number of them out at once.

It's a fun game by one's self, but it gets even better with a friend. Multiplayer lets you play with or against other players in specially crafted games that range from a variant on curling to the tried-and-true Jenga. The latter proved the Hyper favourite, with Wilks pulling off moves that no mere mortal should have permission to perform.

Great for kids and adults, alone or at parties, Boom Blox is a smashing good game, and one that is right at home on the Wii. **W**



Satisfying gameplay, clever puzzles, Jenga!

Occasionally sloooow physics

**HYPER VERDICT**

Simple concept, hours of fun for all. A surprise hit.

VISUALS  
**81**

SOUND  
**79**

GAMEPLAY  
**90**

**87**



!!! Some of the boss monsters, such as a giant toy robot are rather inspired.



Aim for the crotch!  
The crotch!



Funny how cute can also equate to deadly, isn't it?



# Death Jr: Root of Evil

**YURI SPADEFACE** has a child's skeleton buried in his yard

To say that we were expecting very little when we popped Death Jr: Root of Evil into our Wii is a bit of an understatement. The last game in the Death Jr. franchise, the DS title Science Fair of Doom was atrocious, with poorly designed levels, cruel placement of saves and a general lack of anything resembling fun. We really just expected the same experience on the Wii, except with far more arm waving. Imagine how surprised we were then, discovering that not only is Death Jr: Root of Evil quite a bit of fun, it's also a rather funny game to boot.

As the title suggests, players take the role of Death's son, a scythe

swinging, skeletal chip off the old block who, while searching for a larvae for a school science project, unleashes an evil on the world. Said evil promptly captures Death Sr., the Grim Reaper, leaving Jr. and his band of freakish friends to save the day.

For the most part, Death Jr. is a fairly straightforward action/platformer, with the bony hero scything and jumping his way through a series of well-constructed levels that wouldn't be out of place in a Tim Burton film. The Toy Cemetery, for example is constructed of old and broken toys and populated by zombified dolls, teddy bears and the like. The game

utilises both analogue and motion controls. Jr. is controlled via the Nunchuck thumbstick, with the A and B buttons handling jumping and attacking respectively and the Wiimote D-Pad controlling the camera. Quickly swinging the Wiimote in a direction unleashes a special attack. In addition to the scythe, Death Jr. also has access to a number of ranged weapons including a flaming toilet-paper launcher, that require the player to use the Wiimote like a pointer.

## DEATH = FUNNY

What really sets Death Jr. apart from a slew of other similar games is the pleasantly clever, sardonic sense of humour. Death Jr. himself is a bit of a wet blanket in terms of the laughs but Pandora, the Wednesday Adams-ish apple of his eye (and secondary playable character) is a hoot. All of Jr's friends are a laugh, especially Dead Guppy, a dead guppy in an electric helmet. The villain's reason for being evil is priceless as well — she decides take up the offer of online evil enlargement after spam mail keeps telling her that her evil just isn't big enough to satisfy.

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

category: **Action/Platformer** / players: **1-2**  
developer: **Backbone Entertainment**  
publisher: **Atari**  
price: **\$99.95** / rating: **M**  
available: **June 5**



[above] "Liar, liar, pants on fire!"



Optimus Prime's brother, Roy.  
Welcome to Hicktown.

⬆ Morbid sense of humour; good level design; solid controls

⬇ Forgettable

**HYPER VERDICT**

There should be more dead fish in games

VISUALS  
**85**

SOUND  
**87**

GAMEPLAY  
**80**

**76**



# Everybody's Golf 2

Golf golf golf **DARREN WELLS** golf golf golf

We barely had enough time to come down from our Everybody's Golf high from last month before a new game landed on our desks: Everybody's Golf 2. Three years after the PSP got its first taste of the catchy 'n' crazy golf series, here's round two, and don't be surprised to learn that it's more of the same. But is it one for owners of the previous game, or just those who missed out?

That's a tricky one. Players of the first Everybody's Golf will recognise some of the courses, utilised here once again. They're interspersed among the newer additions, but when things kick off on familiar ground, it's hard to see the game as little more than a rehash. After all, it offers the same unlockables, the same three-press swing technique, and the same random videos that

thank you for playing at the end of a round.

But in keeping things the same, the game succeeds in offering an enjoyable and accessible time on the links. To change things too much would be to remove the elements that make Everybody's Golf what it is. Granted, we would have liked to have seen signs of the PS3 version, World Tour, filter down to the PSP, such as the alternate stroke method and the presence of the caddy alongside the player (the game does go to some lengths to remedy the latter, displaying an image of said caddy when their disembodied voice speaks).

As far as the gameplay goes, it's — wait for it — par for the course. Traditional Everybody's Golf tropes are used, and stats such as the longest drive and putt are tracked

in an effort to constantly spur the player to beat their personal bests. It all works, and when you do manage to hit half a meter further than your previous record, the cheers and whistles hammer it home well. Feats like chip-in birdies and eagles are also shown off with flair, and when you score your first hole in one, it's presented in a manner that makes you feel like you're the only one who has.

The main change to the formula is in the match structure. Previous games allowed you to select from a range of tournaments, each one laid out in front of you. Here, you're initially presented with three, and it's not until you complete one that the one behind it is made available. This layered approach removes some of the freedom in match selection, but is also tied into unlocking character abilities as well as extra items to dress them up in.

From left to right, each tournament selection in the menu is tied to Control, Power and Spin. Completing a game tied to that particular power will give you a number of cards — get five cards to upgrade that power. It's good to be able to focus on

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

category: **Sport** / players: **1-4**  
developer: **Clap Hanz**  
publisher: **Sony**  
price: **\$49.95** / rating: **G**  
available: **Now**

improving a particular power, but progress in the later tournaments is nigh on impossible without juggling between all three of them.

Unlockables sweeten the deal throughout each tournament, though goodness knows why the manual recording feature is among them. It means that if you get an awesome shot — like the Hole in One that I swear I got — you can't save it unless the game does it automatically. Some items are hidden on the course itself, which force you to stray from the ideal line to unearth hidden goodies.

But back to the question posed at the beginning of this review. Who is this game for? In a way, it's for both: previous players will appreciate the extra courses and find a new challenge in the revised menu structure, and newcomers will finally experience the fun that Everybody's Golf has to offer. **«**



Great gameplay, engaging charm, satisfying and rewarding	Feels a lot like the previous game, layered menu structure	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>
Second verse, same as the first. But still a lot of fun.	VISUALS <b>82</b>	SOUND <b>79</b>
	GAMEPLAY <b>88</b>	<b>84</b>



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!!! In a move that we hope won't further the chances of Sam & Max getting rung out like a yearly sports franchise, a date in early April that wasn't the 1st saw Telltale confirm that the duo are now Wii-bound.

Max! Get out of there!



It should have been me in Hellboy, not RON PERLMAN



## Sam and Max: Season 2 – WHAT'S NEW, BEELZEBUB?

**TIM HENDERSON** gets his soul appraised.

It seems that someone at Telltale had an ear to the ground, or at least one spare eye on the public discussion forums that concern what has fast become their cornerstone product. When we last troubled ourselves with reviewing an installment of this latest Sam & Max season – Episode 202 – we were quick to discern a set of trends that we were sure would become regular fixtures. We were correct for the most part, but those few inaccuracies

that hindsight has since uncovered may well prove one of the reasons for the championing of episodic delivery – dynamic feedback.

### &!\* (YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Arcade segments have been a fixture of mixed reception for almost as long as Adventure games have existed, swaying between being either an agreeable temporary change of pace or an unwanted dilution of the genre's purity. With Episode 205 the one moment of 'forced' arcade gameplay that had at grafted itself to the franchise is so brief, and so neatly intertwined with one of the puzzles that it honestly feels as

though the game's driving sections have been transformed into an entirely optional diversion. Finally.

More immediately obvious is the actuality that, despite the warning signs and predictions, Sybil and Bosco have become much more rounded characters, both driven by storylines that have reached fitting conclusions, and that manage to steer clear of the gimmicky re-fitting of the same gags that plagued Season 1. Thank you, random forum poster 216.

As for the rest of the story, What's New, Beelzebub? Wraps up a lot of strands with the help of an equally numerous reunion of characters (but not so tightly as to remove signs of a third season), bringing about an evil revelation that will amuse and annoy in equal measure. Relevance for that foreseen apocalyptic trouble that opened the season has also been found, although it appears that an adequate job was done of solving that dilemma back in 201, and so it passes by as little more than a cosmetic narrative wink.

And the gameplay? Well, it's as tight and pure as it could be. As has gradually become another trend, the

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

category: **Adventure** / players: **1**  
developer: **Telltale Games**  
publisher: **Telltale Games**  
price: **US \$8.95** / rating: **N/A**  
available: **Now**

episode is broken down into a couple of smaller episodes that themselves present a series of dilemmas that can be tackled largely in the player's preferred sequence. The inventory does become a little cluttered thanks to the array of items that litter the impressively rendered new and old locations, but it never gets confusing. In fact, the puzzle logic never once oversteps fair deduction, and the only real fault – if it can objectively be called that – is that they feel like they're veering towards being too easy... again.

That much we can forgive. What's New, Beelzebub? is not only a fitting conclusion with plenty of service for stalwart players, but also a thoroughly enjoyably paced romp by its own merits. Few games are so tightly written as to make the enjoyment of both the game content and the script itself quite this harmonious. «



Above:  
Nipple rings  
Below:  
Incredulity



Great character development; persistently logical puzzles

It's hard to see this going any further without breaking the genre

**HYPER VERDICT**

A pleasantly workable hodgepodge of a conclusion.

VISUALS  
**84**

SOUND  
**85**

GAMEPLAY  
**86**

**86**



## Naruto: Clash of Ninja

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

category: **Fighting** / players: **1-4**  
 developer: **Eighting** / publisher: **D3**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **PG** / available: **Now**

**N**aruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution, like the previous Clash of Ninja games, presents Naruto fans with some fast paced fighting action, a huge roster of Naruto characters and some rather attractive Naruto graphic. For people not familiar with Naruto, it offers some confusion, fast paced but ultimately rather hollow fighting action and some attractive but rather generic looking anime-style ninja characters, many of whom bare a rather startling resemblance to each other.

Although Clash of Ninja Revolution features Wiimote and Nunchuck controls, to really enjoy the fighting engine players really need to have access to a GCN controller or, failing that, a Classic Controller, as the motion controls the player is saddled with — light attacks are triggered by swinging the Wiimote — make trying to pull off combos very inaccurate.

It's a pity, because the fighting engine does have quite a bit to offer to the casual fighting game fan. Rather than complex joystick/button moves to pull off attacks, Clash of Ninja works on a simple direction/button system, with the attack buttons pulling off different attacks depending on the positioning of the stick. Side stepping and avoiding plays a larger role in combat than simply blocking, adding a nice, if somewhat basic level of strategy to the proceedings. Ultimately, though, Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution is a game that won't have a lot of appeal outside the core demographic. If you think you're part of that group, add another 10 or so to the score.

**VAN HAMMERSLEY**



## Ninja Reflex

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

category: **Mini-Games** / players: **1-4**  
 developer: **Sanzaru Games** / publisher: **EA**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **PG** / available: **Now**

**W**ho would have thought of putting a mini-game compilation on the Wii? EA, that's who! The amazingly innovative Ninja Reflex presents players with six styles of mini-games to play and quickly grow bored with. And ninjas. The basic conceit of the game seems to be that, like Brain Training and other games of that ilk are meant to increase your mental acuity, playing Ninja Reflex will somehow improve your reflexes.

How does Ninja Reflex seek to improve your reaction times? By getting players to catch flies with chopsticks like Ralph Macchio. Or throw shuriken at cardboard ninjas. Or defend yourself with a katana, catch fish with your bare hands, watch fireflies or hit things with nunchuck. That's it. Six mini-games, each with a few levels of difficulty to play through.

If the lack of variation doesn't get you, the rather arbitrary controls may. The fish and fly catching mini-game control fine, with players tracking their quarry with the Wiimote and grabbing with the A button, but the other mini-games don't control nearly as well. Hotaru, the firefly watching mini-game simply requires the player to hit the A button whenever they see a firefly, making it both easy and dull. Katana simply sees the player tilting the Wiimote left, right or up to defend against incoming attacks and then making a simple slashing movement and Nunchuck only requires the player follow a figure of eight pattern and flick in the direction of oncoming objects. Shuriken is a simple target game. Give it a miss.

**YURI SPADEFACE**



## Time Crisis 4

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

category: **Light Gun** / players: **1-2**  
 developer: **Namco** / publisher: **Sony**  
 price: **\$139.95** / rating: **M** / available: **Now**

**T**he Guncon 3 is something of a nightmare to set up and get working properly. It sports two chunky sensors that perch on the upper corners of your screen and generally fail to be sensitive enough to allow for decent accuracy on a large LCD, and almost zero ability to aim at the corners of the screen. It's also an ugly, cheap looking monstrosity that sports far too many buttons to be practical, a side grip and two flimsy feeling thumbsticks.

The plot, what little there is, is vintage Time Crisis. Two hilariously macho/camp male models masquerading as special agents must chase down a biological weapon and put a stop to the threat...or something like that. What it amounts to is a bunch of on-rails shooting, some gratuitous bug blasting (the biological weapons are apparently hungry swarms of bugs) and some interesting siege-style encounters in which the player must constantly change facing to defend a fixed position from encroaching attackers.

Aside from the Arcade mode, Time Crisis 4 features Mission Complete — a light-gun style FPS in which the player controls all character movement via the Guncon thumbsticks. It's distracting for a short time but overall a rather dull experience that brings little new to the genre aside from the fact that aiming is accomplished via the Guncon rather than the thumbsticks.

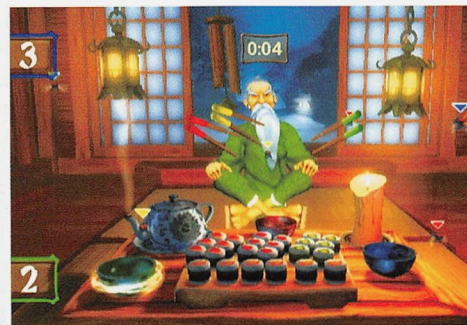
If you're a fan of light-gun games, you may get a kick out of Time Crisis 4, but for our money it just plays like a poorly ported version of an arcade genre that stagnated years ago.

**DIRK WATCH**

HYPER VERDICT			
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
84	76	78	<b>76</b>



HYPER VERDICT			
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
80	67	61	<b>44</b>



HYPER VERDICT			
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
80	75	62	<b>56</b>



# » Win Win Win



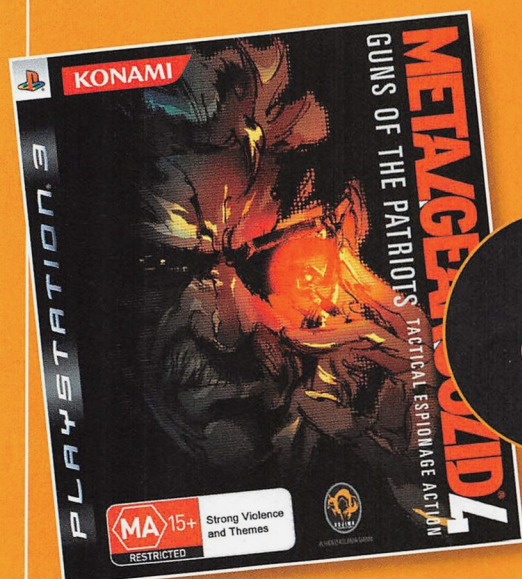
## WIN METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS!

» SNAKE? SNAKE! SNAAAAAAKE! Metal Gear Solid 4 is almost here, and we in the Hyper bunker can't get it here fast enough. We're talking Malcolm and Darren having the codec sound as their phone ring-tone, and Daniel dressing up like Meryl after everyone else has left the office. It's destined to be one of the PS3's most important titles, and one that every owner of the Sony fun box should have in their collections.

To that end, we've got ten copies of the game to give away. Forget about standing in line on launch day and forking over a bunch of your hard earned — Metal Gear Solid 4 can be yours for nothing!

All you need to do is **describe to us, in 50 words or less, one of Solid Snake's weapons that got cut from the final game.** Research the internets or make it up, it's all good!

Send your answers, with your name and address to: **My Gun Goes Bang, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.



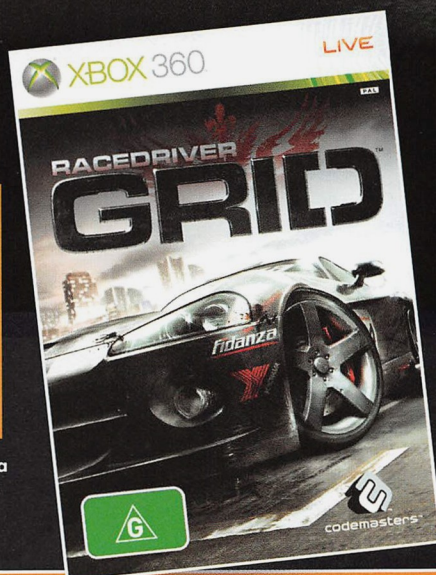
**10  
COPIES  
UP FOR  
GRABS!**

# »» Win Win Win

**5**  
PRIZE PACKS  
TO BE WON!



Each winner will receive a copy of Race Driver: Grid on Xbox 360 and a Race Driver: Grid T-shirt



## WIN RACE DRIVER: GRID!

»» DIRT was a rad game — one of the truly great rally games. Of that there is no doubt, and Race Driver: Grid, the latest racing game from Codemasters looks like it's shaping up to be every bit as good as its off-road predecessor. If you dream of screaming around city streets in beautifully rendered cars (with damage modelling), or drifting around corners sideways, Grid is the game for you. Thanks to the good people at Atari we have 5 copies of the game to give away and 5 very fashionable t-shirts as well.

All you need to do for a chance to win one of these Race Driver: Grid prize packs is **tell us, in 50 words or less, why Too Fast, Too Furious sucked so hard?**

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

**Terms & Conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am June 3, 2008 and entries close at 6pm July 9, 2008. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am July 10, 2008 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the September issue of Hyper on sale August 6, 2008. 9) 10 Winners will receive Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots (RRP: \$119.95). Total competition value \$1199.50. 5 winners will receive a copy of Race Driver: Grid on Xbox 360 and a Race Driver: Grid T-shirt (RRP: \$129.95). Total value of the competition is \$649.75. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

# AGE OF CONAN

**W**e've played Age of Conan for about 20 hours now and we love it — but it's a strange kind of love. It's not an unconditional love reserved for those things pure and perfect — it's more the love of the strange, the different and the ambitious. It's the love that allows you to look at something fall on its face and still smile, safe in the knowledge that somewhere down the track the object of your desire will impress you again... and then fall promptly on its face. In short, Age of Conan is a mass of strange ideas and seemingly silly concepts that sometimes fail but more often than not come together in a rather magical mess.

The core motive behind the strangeness seems to be trying to combat one of the major problems that has faced MMOs since year dot — how do you go about creating a compelling and personal story in a game world that is by necessity homogenous, with every player going through the same sequence of quests and revelations. The answer, or at least the answer that Funcom has hit upon is to make a good portion of the early game a single player experience with a massive and clever instances quest chain that sees the solo hero escaping all but naked from a slave ship, entering the rather unappealing port town of Tortage, remembering past skills (yes, there is an element of everyone's favourite mental illness — amnesia — involved), discovering that you've been marked by an evil witch, join up with the local politically inspired rebellious underground and perform a number of missions that don't conform to the "go here and kill 20 of X creature and collect 10 of their rare drop Y while you're at it. Instead players take part in what is essentially a standalone RPG



product, escorting characters, rescuing companions from perilous situations, investigating and spying — all the while learning the ins and outs of the Age of Conan mechanics. It's all very clever, if somewhat disorienting.

At any point in the early stages of play, players can visit the main inn in Tortage and change the time of the day — at night solo adventuring is key but during the day the game is a standard MMO, complete with grinding, grouping and camping rare spawn spots.

## NO ELVES

Although many of the basic tenets of MMO gameplay remain familiar in Age of Conan, the world is anything but another cookie cutter high-fantasy Tolkienesque melange of elves and dwarves. No, the world of Hyboria is dark low-fantasy at its finest. Things aren't shiny and happy at all, and benign entities don't look down from on high and grant followers blessings. Hyboria is a nasty and bleak place. It's a world in which the making of steel is the height of technology and magic means selling your soul (and most probably the souls of



## HANDS-ON

**SYSTEM:**  
PC

**CATEGORY:**  
MMORPG

**PLAYERS:**  
1-lots

**DEVELOPER:**  
Funcom

**DUE:**  
Now

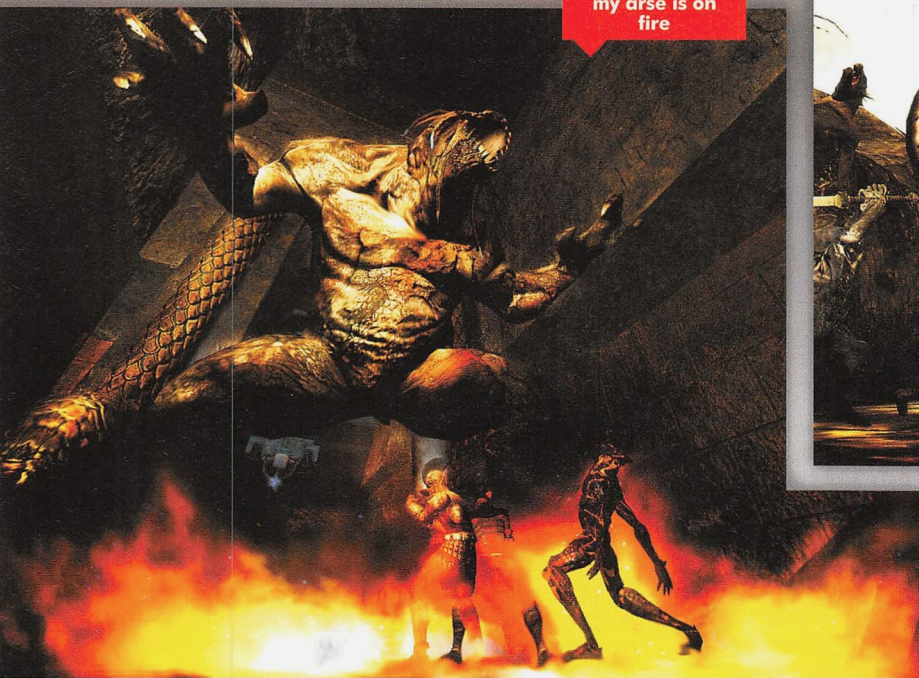
many others) to the denizens of the many hells rather than reading fancy words in fancier books.

Character creation truly echoes this dark, low-fantasy aesthetic. There are no non-human races to choose from. Instead, players have the choice of three human civilisations; the Aquilonians, civilised people roughly on par with the Roman Empire, if a little more prone to watching blood-sports and sacrifice, the Cimmerians (Conan's people), stout, reckless but noble barbarians from the Northern wastes and the Stygians, the remnants of a decadent and fallen civilisation who worshipped the serpent-god Set and still practise the dark arts of necromancy and diabolism. Players have access to a huge range of character customisation tools at time of character creation so you won't have to worry about running into a carbon copy of your character too often, if at all.

**Of the 12 classes, the only one that could be classified in any way as noble are the Priests of Mitra**

There are 12 character classes to choose from, each of which once again highlights the darkness of Hyboria. Of the 12 classes, the only one that could be classified in any way as noble are the Priests of Mitra, followers of the god of justice that can heal wounds and resurrect the dead. The other 11 classes all have varying degrees of darkness in them — Assassins are fairly self explanatory, Barbarians are dual

It's not funny,  
my arse is on  
fire



wielding killing machines, Bear Shaman are warrior druids, Conquerors are heavily armoured killing machines, Dark Templars sell their souls to the underworld for combat abilities, Demonologists summon and control hellish minions. Guardians use heavy armour to soak damage but can dish out massive charge damage, Heralds of Xoti are essentially combat mages with heavy melee weapons and close range fire spells, Necromancers summon and control the dead, Rangers are hunters and snipers and Tempests of Set control the power of lightning and the serpent-god. They're not exactly the happiest mob around.

#### PARRY, RIPOSTE

Combat is another area in which Age of Conan really stands out from the pack. As with all MMOs, in the non-single-player segments, combat can sometimes devolve into grinding the same spots for the same drops for rather vast stretches of time, but the nature of the combat system actually manages to keep players

involved through a mixture of direction based weapon attacks and combo-based special moves. Instead of just having a simple unchanging auto attack, a-la World of Warcraft, Age of Conan instead features a melee combat system based around three directional attacks — left, right and overhead — and the potential of powerful combos after successfully executing a number of attacks. Melee characters gain special "stamina" powered special moves that not only feature special effects, such as the ability to vampiracally heal by doing damage in the case of the Dark Templars, these special moves also segue into a specific

#### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

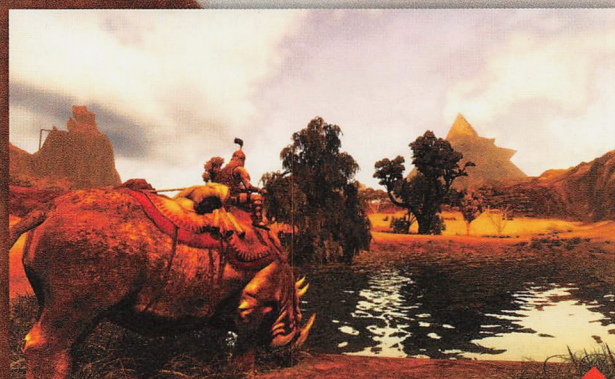
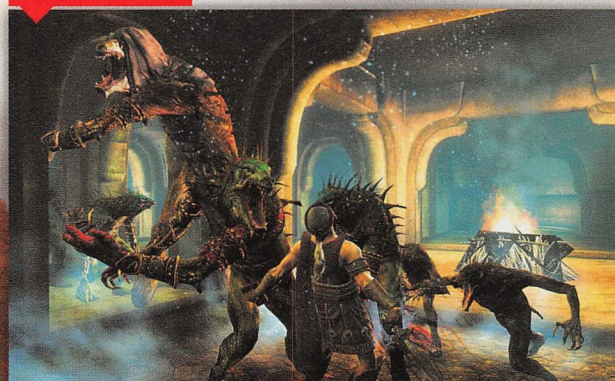
We haven't had a chance to get stuck into any PVP yet but we think it should be pretty solid considering the combat mechanics.

directional attack for extra damage.

Players worried that combat may devolve into a simple mashfest of hitting three directional buttons should not fear — enemies aren't simply passive chunk of meat ready to be cut down. During combat, enemies actively block attacks, making it harder for the player to do damage. This blocking ability is shown on screen by one to three bars to the left, right or above the enemy. The more bars, the harder it is to hit an enemy from that direction, so players are encouraged to fight cleverly and mix up the direction of their attacks.

By the time you read this Age of Conan will be available in stores and we will have put some more hours into the game — stand by for our full review next issue. «

#### The "Scaly Man's Choir" belts out their latest hit



Refuelling the  
Hyborean SUV

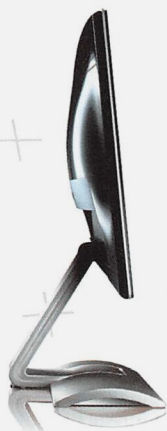
# BenQ V2400W 24" Widescreen Monitor

**PRICE:** \$699

**DISTRIBUTOR:**

BenQ – [www.BenQ.com.au](http://www.BenQ.com.au)

**RATING:**



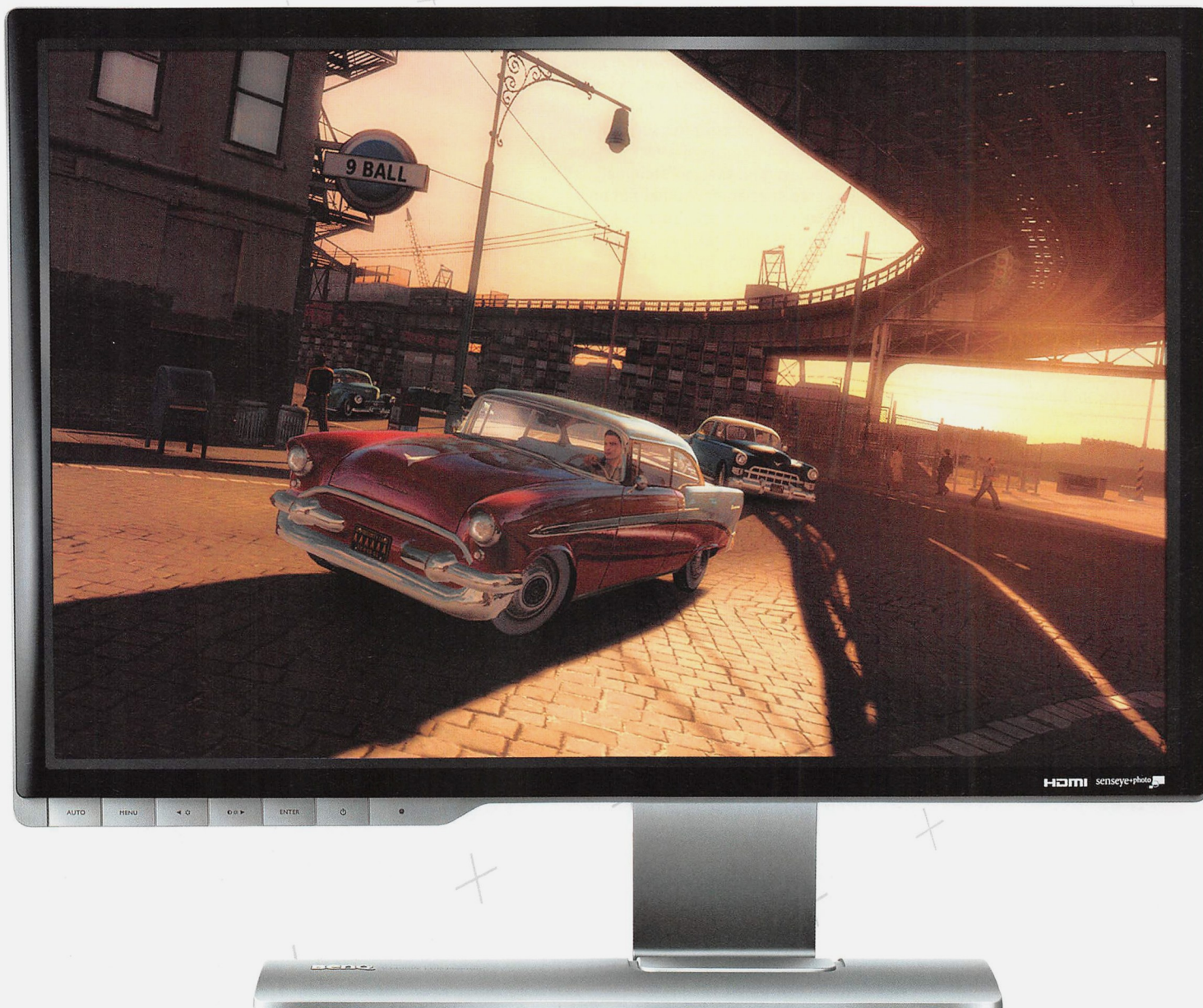
**F**or the longest time, we here at Hyper have harped on about the fact that we do, and always will, value gameplay over graphics. Likewise, we value function over form when it comes to technology. We like things that work the way they are meant to, do the job they are designed for and get everything done with the minimum of fuss. Of course, the combination of graphics and gameplay, or form and function is what gets us really excited. Games such as Assassin's Creed, Bioshock and GTA IV are examples of this coming together of graphics and gameplay, and the BenQ V2400W is a fine example of a piece of tech that superbly blends form and function.

It really is a beautiful bit of kit. Supposedly modelled on stealth aircraft, the V2400W is currently the world's thinnest 24" widescreen monitor, but the impressive industrial design doesn't simply stop at a narrow waist. The most interesting part of the industrial design is the rather unique offset base that quite handily fools your mind into thinking the monitor is bigger than it actually is as you subconsciously try to add symmetry to the profile. The tough sensitive controls on the bottom left of the unit make

a quite elegant contrast to the shiny frame as well.

"Enough about looks already", we hear you cry, "how well does the bloody thing work?" The answer, is very well...with a few small reservations. The monitor is capable of displaying resolutions up to 1920 x 1200, making it excellent for both gaming and watching high-definition media and a fast 2ms (GTG) response time means that you don't have to put up with any blurring during the action. On the whole the light bleed levels are very good, as is the colour reproduction, though we would recommend you turn off the dynamic contrast ratio, as we have found that the monitor will quite frequently brighten and dim the image during games or movies, making for a quite annoying distraction. An HDMI port also makes the BenQ V2400W a good choice for a good high definition console display on a budget. It's an impressive package, made all the more so by the fact that the unit only costs just under \$700. Shopping around online you can even find them for just shy of \$600. That's a definite bargain.

If you're after a good HD gaming monitor, look no further. This is a great bit of kit.



# SEXY ANIMATIONS



HX70308



HX70782



HX70388



HX70911



HX70666



HX70654

# BLING!

## BABE CENTRAL

Natalie Pic  
HZ56975

Sophie Pic  
HZ60220  
Rude Sophie Vid  
HZ76519

Kayleigh Vid  
HZ79421

Kayleigh Pic  
HZ59499

## COOL WALLS



HX56443



HX61447



HX56254



HX56565



HX56921



HX56922



HX61430



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Paris home vid

HZ78904

Lindsay Lohan

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Dirty Sophie

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Bedroom mischief

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Suspender

HZ76363

Lara Croft

HZ79427

Wet babes

HZ77271

Massive bust

HZ76235

Off it comes

HZ79397

Anna Adventure

HZ78031

Feels so good

HZ76232

Stripper

HZ78022

Danni dress up

## MOBILE GAMES



HX86241



HX86268  
RUGBY 2008



HX86240



HX86204



HX86291



HX86255



HX86269

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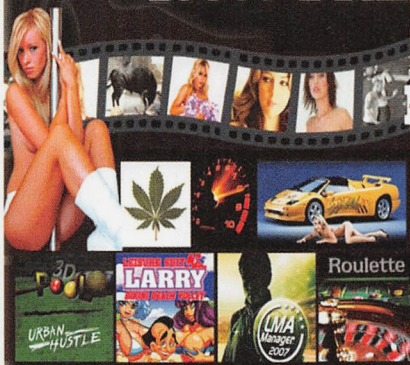
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# The Invincible Iron Man

SONY, M

All aboard the superhero train! This animated movie of the Man of Iron comes at a curious time indeed, just as Robert Downey Jr. is taking things for a spin on the big screen. Coincidence? Hardly. But which one's the better flick?

The answer is easy once the end credits of *The Invincible Iron Man* are rolling. Followers of the series will emerge with an arm-long list of all the liberties taken with the story canon, while

newcomers will be confused should they decide to delve deeper. Too many chops and changes are made, and although the behind-the-scenes featurette goes some way to rationalising them, they're hard to accept.

The film rewrites the origin story, placing Tony's life-changing surgery in the excavation site of a buried Chinese city, where Stark's work awakens four mystical beings in pursuit of ancient elemental rings which, when united, will resurrect The Mandarin, now a mystical force. So



"No, you may not stare at my chest. You won't let me stare at yours!"

like Captain Planet, only meaner.

From there the story globe trots along with Stark — after he builds that fateful Mk I suit — as he tackles each foe in predictable extreme environments such as a volcano and the deep sea. But the fact that Stark's initial suit is far too polished for a scrap job is just the tip of the iceberg: turns out that Stark's been involved in a secret exoskeleton project for years. He's already got a secret lair full of various mechanical suits, all built for different purposes. It not only undermines his resourcefulness when in a pinch, but it feels like a cheap cop out to see his stash presented in a "here's some I prepared earlier" manner.

The animation, although patchy in places, serves the story adequately, but goes to no lengths to excel. Which kind of sums up the entire movie: at best it stands as an alternate take on the Iron Man mythos, and should probably be viewed as such if one hopes to enjoy it.

ANIMATION: 7 / STORY: 6.5 / OVERALL: 6.5

## Mongol

IN CINEMAS JUNE 19

HOPSCOTCH, TBC

*Mongol* should be taught as a master-class on how to make epic movies. Charting the early years on Temudgin, the man who would later on unite the disparate Mongol clans and become Genghis Khan, *Mongol* not only proves to be a rousing adventure, but also a very balanced

look at a man who has, at various times, been portrayed as a bloodthirsty monster, a noble hero and a child of the gods.

Russian director Sergei Bodrov delivers a rich bio-pic, starting the tale right at the beginning of Temudgin's life, introducing the audience to the future warlord of warlords as a boy, heading off with his father, a Khan in his own right, to pick a bride for the young heir from the Merkit clan, hopefully making a mends for the fact that Temudgin's father, Etsugai stole his wife, Temudgin's mother from the Merkit Clan leader.



"Look, it's that prat from Big Brother! Get him!"



"Just short back and sides, please."

Stopping at a friendly village, Temudgin chooses the fiery Borte to be his bride, ending chances of peace with the Merkit. On the way home, Etsugai, Temudgin's father is poisoned by enemies. Then things, to put it mildly, turn bad for the young man. Over the course of the movie, Temudgin is enslaved multiple times, escapes multiple times, goes to war to save Borte and more. It's an amazing life story, made even more so considering the fact that the events of the film only lead to the uniting of the clans and don't include the conquest of the known world.

Japanese actor Tadanobu Asano excels as the adult Temudgin, bringing a humanity and groundedness to a character that could very easily become far larger than life. The few action scenes are excellent and brutal but you shouldn't approach *Mongol* expecting an action-packed experience. Fingers crossed the film is successful enough to green light the other two films in the proposed trilogy.

FILM: 9 / FEATURES: N/A

# Frisky Dingo

ADULT SWIM, MA

Adult Swim has hit the proverbial ball right out of the park with the tightly scripted, hilariously fun Frisky Dingo. The 11 minute episodes revolve around Killface, a skull-faced, cloven footed super-villain and Awesome X/Xander Crews, an arrogant and probably quite stupid superhero cum billionaire playboy avenging the untimely death of his beloved parents. Unfortunately for both parties, grandiose plans require money, so rather than actively fighting each other and achieving their aims, Frisky Dingo instead charts each side's marketing strategies, income streams, employment procedures and action items. It's Justice League

"Waddaya mean I should be in A Scanner Darkly?"



meets The Office, with lightning fast, alarmingly clever dialogue in the Tarantino mould.

As with most of the Adult Swim titles, the animation is very simple, but serves to highlight the humour. Slapstick gore abounds, with Killface being none too precious about killing off his minions — in the first episode he murders identical twin filmmakers he has kidnapped to aid him in his scheme to publicise his plan to fly the Earth into the sun using a machine he calls the Annihilatrix. After blowing one of the brothers in half with a handgun, Killface

even goes so far as to use the mangled body as ventriloquist's dummy, running through some of the oldest vaudeville gags around, including the old chestnut of the dummy going to a doctor and finding out he has a terminal disease — termites.

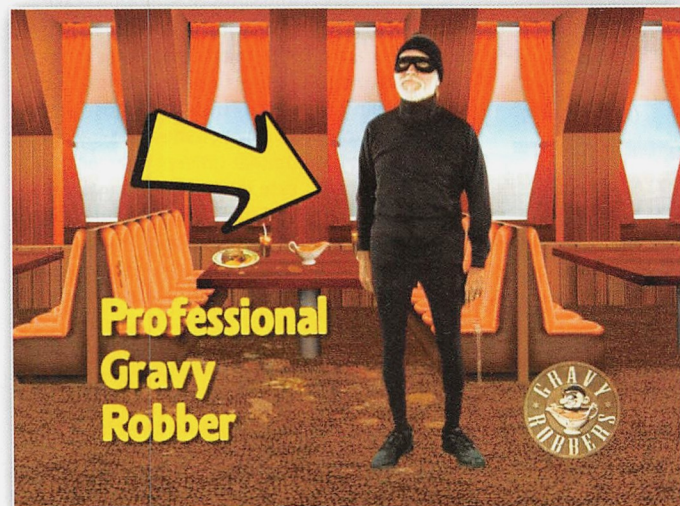
If clever, awkward humour and brilliant dialogue appeals to you, Frisky Dingo (we have absolutely no idea what the name has to do with the show) should be right up your alley.

FILM: 8 / FEATURES: N/A

## Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job! SEASON 1

ADULT SWIM, M

It's hard to describe Tim & Eric. It's a surreal show, depending as much, if not more on forced awkwardness and audience discomfort as it does actual humorous content, casting the two comedians (Tim & Eric, the creators of Tom Goes to the Mayor) as the hosts of a community TV style variety/comedy show. Kind of. The show (Tim & Eric — not the cable show) is made up of a number of skits, ranging from strange songs, painfully awkward running gags, some rather cliché comedy material

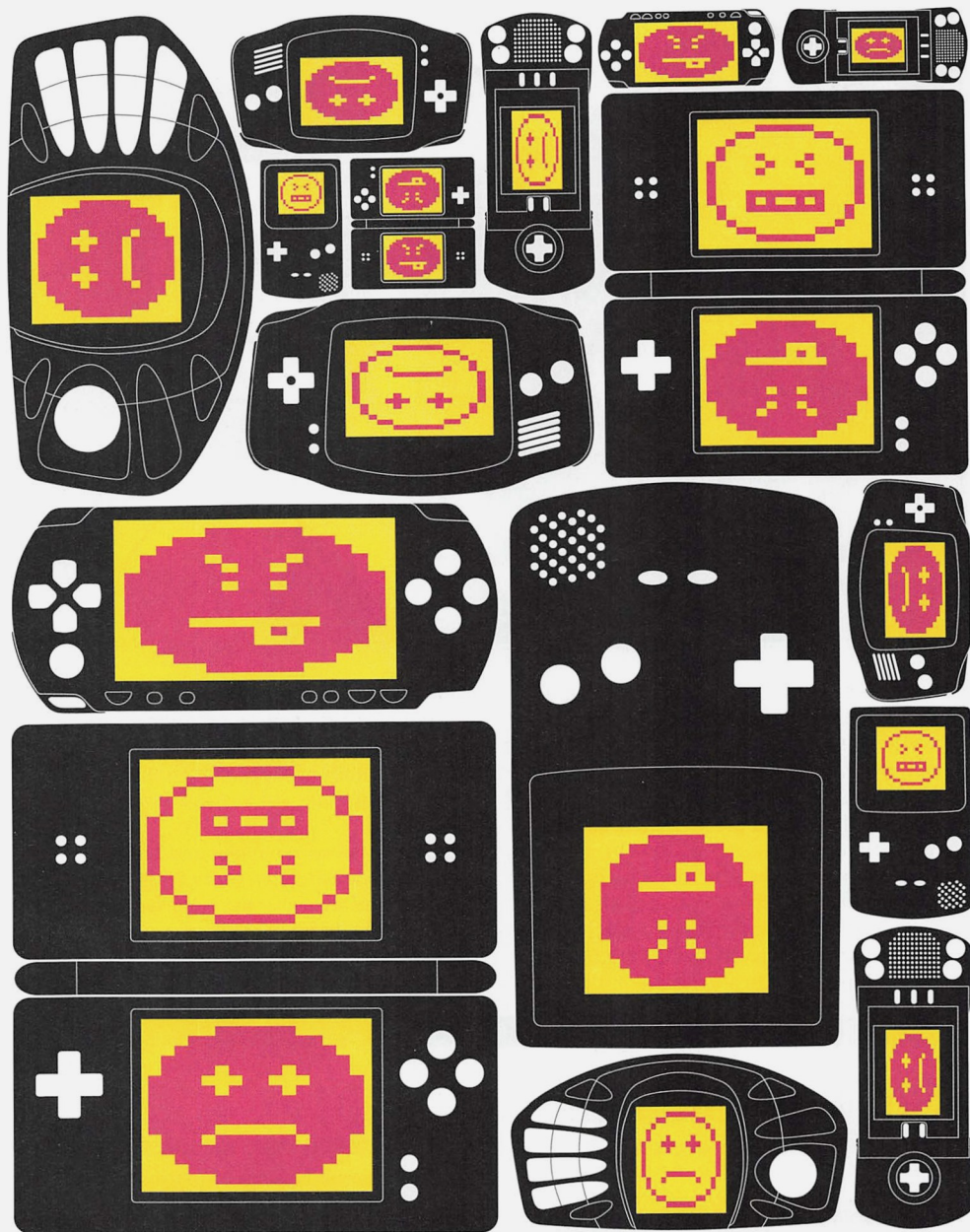


and some special guest appearances. Take the second episode as an example. It starts off with a man being punched in the balls by a midget and then transforms into an advertisement for ball insurance. From there it goes to an uncomfortably long shot of Tim and Eric sitting and standing, sometimes smiling like they're about to say something. Then there's a kids dance instruction video that gets more personal as the dance steps progress. Then a

Aww, why couldn't I caption the gravy robber image instead?

sketch about a disease called "limplip". Then John C. Reilly makes a cameo as a slurring Dr. Brule on a news show hosted by a married couple, Wayne and Jan Skylar. As a joke, the couple convince Brule that Wayne has been killed in a terrible car accident and watch as the doctor breaks down on air. That's only the first third of the episode. It gets progressively stranger, with a friendship hotdog, Chippy, the hairy baby and a bunch of people with uncooked hotdogs in their mouths. It's all very deliberate in its awkwardness and very clever if you can look past the surrealism, but Tim & Eric definitely isn't a show for everyone.

FILM: 7 / FEATURES: 7

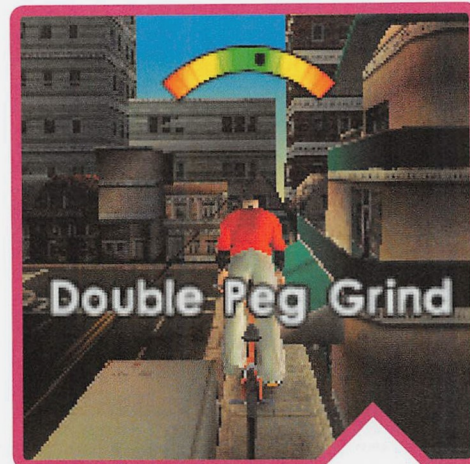
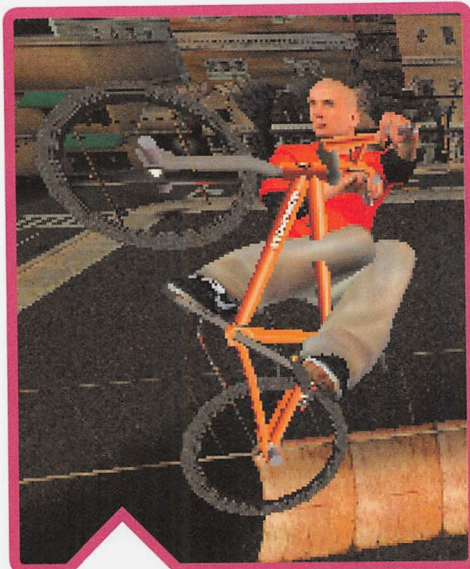


# A Pocket of PAIN

»Darren Wells

## THE WORST HANDHELD GAMES EVER

The advent of handheld gaming has given us some great titles over the years, but for every Tetris and Mario Kart, there's at least a dozen games that ire rather than awe. We've gone back through the Hyper archives – as well as the histories of each handheld console – and plucked out ten of the absolute worst portable games in history, with the two-pronged intent of shaming them here and inspiring you to avoid them. Should you ever find yourself in the unfortunate possession of any of these, at least be thankful you're playing them on a portable system – it can be transformed from console to projectile in a matter of seconds.



### PSP Dave Mirra BMX Challenge

2006  
» When the Tony Hawk franchise proved a runaway success on the consoles, every man and his extreme sport wanted in on the action. BMX racing was a natural contender, and thus we got Dave Mirra's Freestyle BMX on the PlayStation. It was okay. Fast-forward through the years and the consoles, and here we have the PSP version, BMX Challenge. It is not okay. It is a deeply flawed mess of a game that screams of a rushed development cycle and sloppy production values.

No aspect shows any signs of attention. Take what should be a cornerstone feature for such a game: the tracks. Far from catering to the game mechanics and providing a ripe environment for performing tricks, they instead confuse and bewilder. Layouts will often change mid-race, casting a deft hand to that time-proven technique of "learn the track, race the track" and making things much more muddled. A lack of directional arrows results in a lot of missed corners and tedious backtracking, although the laughable AI hardly puts up a fight, so it hardly matters much.

We kid: it matters a lot. This isn't so much a "game" as a by-the-numbers exercise in slapping a familiar name onto a butchery of bytes. Dave Mirra BMX Challenge is the lowest of the low, comparable only to going out on an actual bike and face-planting into a concrete barrier.

**WORST  
BMX  
action  
EVER!**

## N-GAGE Puzzle Bobble VS

2003

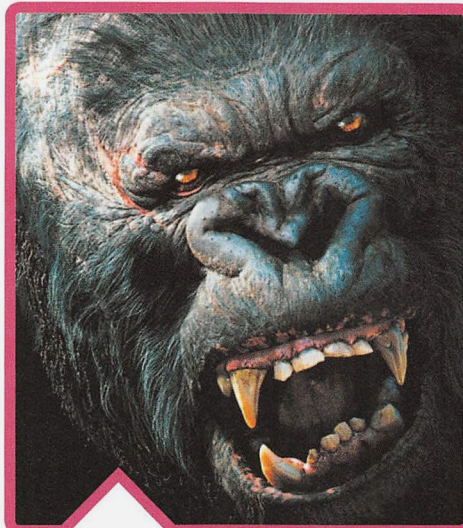
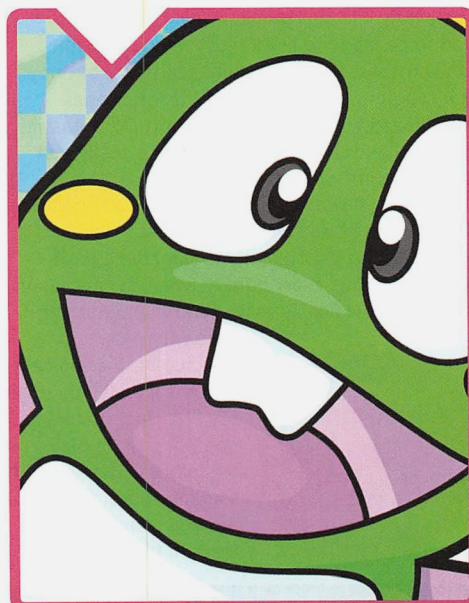
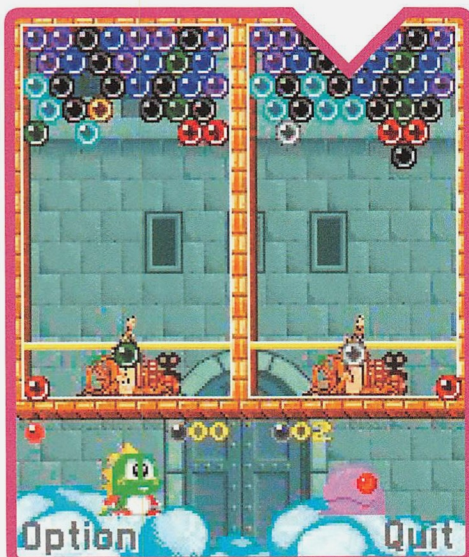
» You know the concept: fire coloured balls at the arrangement at the top of the screen, and matching coloured balls it touches will disappear. Simple enough for a handheld, right? Well, sure, as long as it's not the N-Gage, where its blurry screen and crippled colour palette turn it all to custard.

The simple fact is that some colours are almost indistinguishable from one another. Blue looks like black, black looks like purple, purple looks like dark green, and dark green looks like the vomit you'll be projecting after five minutes of play. We've all played less than stellar games at Hyper HQ over the years, but when a game is functionally broken due to the shortcomings of the hardware, it's hard to look for silver linings.

Besides, the game doesn't give us much hope. Sound? Sparse and tinny. Pace? Slow as a drunken garden snail. Presentation? Well, the case is plastic and could be used as a coaster, or perhaps as a

small lunch tray. Really, there are no redeeming qualities of any sort to be found, and if your friends were mocking you for buying a phone taco in 2003, showing them this game will ensure wedgies for life.

**WORST  
misuse of  
colour  
EVER!**



## DS Peter Jackson's King Kong

2005

» A thumping big ape stomps around and fights dinosaurs? Turn this into a game, stat! And so it was: a game adaptation of Peter Jackson's King Kong remake appeared on every platform available, and depending on what version you played, your thoughts of it will vary. The 360 and PC versions were pretty good, the PSP version was average at best, but when it comes to the DS version... hoo, boy.

It looks terrible, that much is obvious. Murky fog hides anything that isn't nose-close, in a lame attempt to disguise the pitiful draw distance. Bright seams are visible between adjacent polygons. Characters look like someone threw a pile of boxes together and called the result Jack Black and Naomi Watts. Of course there are hardware limitations to consider, but seeing the DS result of a game concept intended for higher-powered consoles demonstrates that sometimes just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

Throughout your polygonal jungle journey you'll come across plenty more reasons to toss this one to the savages. Your character's movement is woefully slow, the touch-screen is not utilised in any meaningful manner, and don't be surprised to find enemies (or yourself) falling through the world and into digital limbo. Oh, and you know the key moment in the story when Kong is taken to New York, runs amok, climbs the Empire State Building, fights some planes, and dies? Yeah, none of that happens in the game. That's the end credits sequence that you'll only see after beating 17 scant levels of poo-brown jungle, but please, don't do that to yourself. You have too much to live for.

**WORST  
appearance  
of a giant ape  
in a game  
EVER!**

## GBC Extreme Sports with the Berenstain Bears

2000

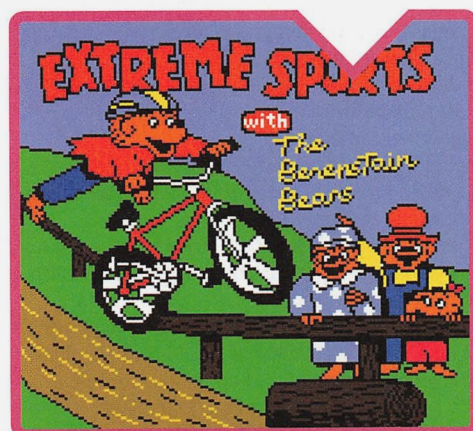
» Extreme sports. Berenstain Bears. Extreme sports. Berenstain Bears. Extreme sports. Berenstain Bears. Nope, sorry, but it just doesn't fit. And yet here it is, on the Game Boy Color. It actually exists. It was on store shelves for a time in 2000, so perhaps that Y2K bug wasn't so harmless after all.

Think we're being too harsh? Let us count the ways. This totally way rad and totally way extreme game features six — count 'em! — race events, such as dirt biking, freestyle kayaking, and sledding. Though on reflection, six is kind of a stretch, as the similarities between many of them are numerous, smacking of palette swapping and simply replacing "sled" with "kayak". Game difficulty is far beyond the target audience, let alone grizzled game reviewers, with arbitrarily-placed logs and slicks screwing up your downhill slide in an eyeblink. And with each course littered with the things, it's never a fun challenge and always a frustrating one.

The controls certainly don't make the game (and we use the term loosely) any better. Just try playing it for five minutes before wondering if you'd be able to better steer a wheat thresher with lacrosse paddles. As for the audio, well, don't worry about that, because there isn't any! Events contain no music whatsoever, with the eardrums only getting a tickle when you brush up against a river wall or run into a log.

Then again, this game is one of a very select group, as it does allow one to play as an anthropomorphised bear in a dress cutting sick on a skateboard. And if that sort of thing appeals to you, permit us to back away slowly.

**WORST  
"extreme"  
sports game  
EVER!**





## DS Godzill: Unleashed Double Smash

2007

» "Alright, so Godzilla is awesome. 'Unleashed' sounds awesome. And if smashing something once is awesome, then a double smash will naturally be twice as awesome! I'm going to be rich! Hey honey, put us down for two of those gold-plated rocket cars. No, wait, let's get three!"

Famous last words for the guy who gave this one the go-ahead. Godzill: Unleashed Double Smash isn't only an awkward title, it's also an awful game. A side-scrolling smasher starring everyone's favourite radioactive lizard should result in at least a sliver of enjoyment, but no, that's too simple. It'd be much more interesting if the player had to contend with crappy collision detection, woeful graphics, and who-the-hell-cares sound.

How crappy? Half the time you don't even need to connect with the enemy to send it flying back like a Z-grade stunt man. How woeful? Graphics come in "horribly angular", "terribly coloured", or sometimes both. How who-the-hell-cares? The bosses don't come with any sound. Not a peep. It's like beating up a deaf mute — come on, do you really want to stoop to that level?

As if an admission of crap, the game's story mode is very short, allowing you to get in, experience the terror, then get out. Yeah, this is one Godzilla game that's so bad, you'd think Roland Emmerich was involved.

**WORST**  
lizard  
fightin' game  
**EVER!**

## GBA NBA Jam 2002

2002

» Behold, the single worst-scoring game in Hyper history. NBA Jam 2002, reviewed in issue #105, received a pitiful 7 — yes, S-E-V-E-N — and when you remember that that's out of 100, things are getting off to a dire start indeed.

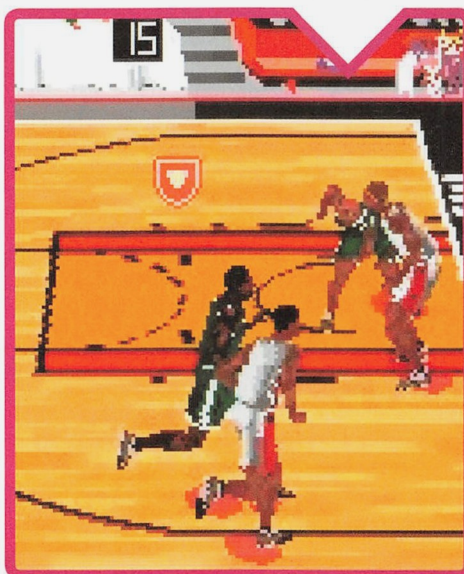
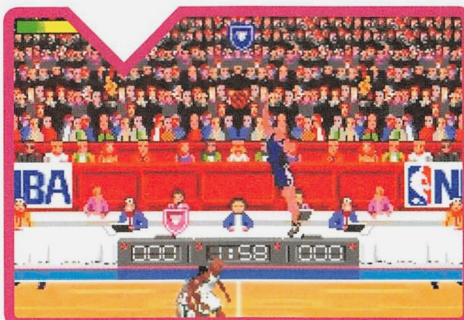
Back in the 16-bit day, NBA Jam was a force to be reckoned with. It provided a lightning fast interpretation of two-on-two basketball, complete with over-the-top dunks and a shedload of speech samples from an excitable announcer. It was entertaining, it was speedy, it was fun. The GBA version, arriving some eight years after the success of the original, is none of these things.

The jaggies. The oversaturated colours. The repetitive calls from the announcer. The floating ball that's supposedly being "held" by the player. The fact that a ball that's on fire by one team will continue to be on fire when it's stolen by the opposing team. Shall we go on?

Assuming you said "yes", there's the insane ease with which full-court three-point shots can be scored, as well as the turbo meters that drain too quickly and fill too slowly. Assuming you said "no", we apologise to subjecting you to more brutality.

We'll say it again: this game scored seven out of one hundred. There has not been a game in Hyper's pages that has been worse than NBA Jam 2002. If you see this one anywhere near you, then please, for the sake of yourself and those you love, notify the authorities. We'd say notify us and let Hyper team handle it, but after playing the thing, we have no desire to go anywhere near it again.

**WORST**  
game reviewed  
by Hyper  
**EVER!**



## GBA Mortal Kombat Advance

2002

» Or, to put it more accurately, Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 Advance, since this is a port of Midway's revised version of Mortal Kombat 3. A handful of extras were added — characters, backgrounds, special moves — but in order to squeeze them in, some features were removed. The GBA version seems to be the hardest hit, due in part to the hardware limitations of the console, but also due to members of the design team apparently running high on Wizz-Fizz or leaving the office early to go bowling. We're talking serious oversights and omissions. Like, you know, blood.

Mortal Kombat is a series known for its lashings of the red stuff, and while Mortal Kombat Advance does have the occasional spray, it's significantly toned down compared to the other console versions of the time. Likewise, the Fatality factor has been reduced, with characters only sporting one Fatality and one Friendship each.

But it's the control scheme and combo system that really kills this game. Of course sacrifices had to be made to fit all those moves into four face buttons and two shoulder buttons, but boy, is it tough to pull off some of the fancy ones. You'll need fingers that can contort like a Russian gymnast and the speed of... uhh... a really fast Russian gymnast to get ahead.

That's if you can even get past the first fight. The AI scales are tipped all the way over to "too hard", and adjusting the difficulty to something more forgiving allows every fight to won in a handful of seconds. Ridiculously easy or brutally punishing?

Take your pick.

Actually, the choice is pretty easy. All you do is say "Neither, thank you. I do not wish to play this game." Then should someone insist that you do, you simply kneel them in the crotch.

**WORST**  
pared-down  
port  
**EVER!**

GBA

## Gremlins: Stripe Versus Gizmo

2002

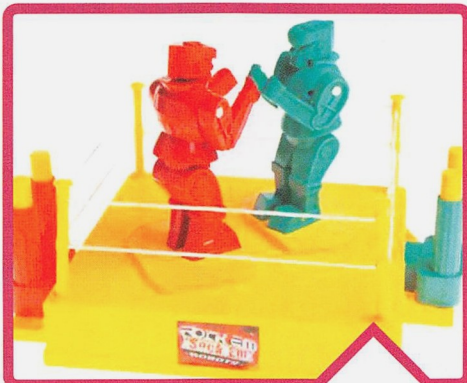
» Remember Gremlins?

Those cute and cuddly critters that you're not allowed to expose to sunlight, get wet, or feed after midnight? They're the stars of this twelve-years-too-late GBA game — or, more accurately, Stripe and Gizmo are. Which makes no sense, because Stripe was killed at the end of the first movie and Gizmo has done nothing except replace Garfield as the supreme suction cup car toy.

But whatever. This side-scrolling platformer lets you play as the goodie (save Christmas from the gremlins) or the baddie (ruin it) in an adventure that couldn't be more family friendly if it tried. As Gizmo you must rescue stolen Christmas presents and return them to their rightful owners, while as Stripe you must destroy them and turn other mogwai by throwing cream pies at them. No stabbing gremlins with the kitchen knife or exploding them in the microwave here, no sir. It's like Uncle Scrooge meets the Three Stooges. Oh, but don't worry about which one you pick, as you'll finish the game in around half an hour. It's ridiculously short. There is the option to play it in either a timed or untimed mode, but why bother when it's basically the same thing.

Feel free to expose this game to sunlight — by way of a magnifying glass before moving on to frying ant hills. Feel free to immerse it in water, hopefully shorting out the game cartridge. And by all means, please do feed it after midnight. Yes, feed it to a rabid dog by putting it in his bowl of Pal, and be secure in the knowledge that the end product will be more welcome than the original game was.

**WORST  
saccharine  
platformer  
EVER!**



## Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots

GBA 2006

» You know that toy that has two plastic robots in a boxing ring, and if you hit the other robot enough times his head will pop up? Yeah, it's a GBA game. Those hours of entertainment have now been distilled

to PURE DIGITAL FORM, allowing you to take the fun of Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots with you in the car, on the bus, or in your nearest padded cell.

Button mashing is the order of the day. Mash, mash, mash, mash, mash. Mash that A button and you can pummel your opponent in a matter of seconds. Mash those L and R buttons to finish him completely. Mash your head against the wall when you realise you paid good money for such a crap game, and then mash your crap game into the ground in disgust, whereby it will surely taint the soil for future generations.

Oh, but there are pallet-swapped characters. That pads out the cast! Let's not forget those different environments — your robots can fight in space and in construction sites! The opponent AI is nice enough to not bother to put up a decent fight, and don't worry, there are no pesky training modes or multiplayer functions to get in the way of the core gameplay.

If all that sounds like a great game, then please check your brain in to the nearest donor clinic. You won't be needing it anymore, now that you have Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em Robots.

**WORST  
idea  
EVER!**



LYNX

## Krazy Ace Miniature Golf

1993

» Miniature golf is the sport of kings. Or is it bowling? I forget. Anyway, for when 18 holes is too many, nine holes is too weird, and four holes is too random, allow us to present Krazy Ace Miniature Golf.

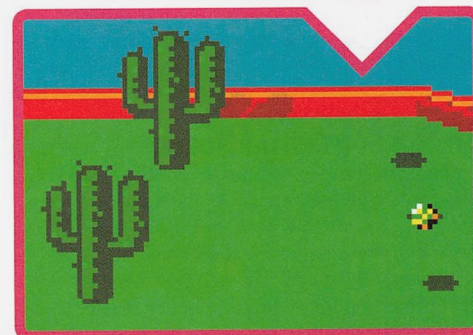
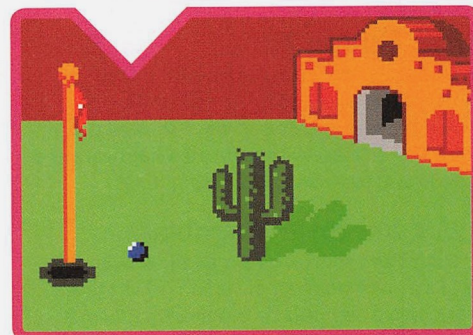
Because big people's golf is beyond the reaches of mere videogame fantasy, this game brings to life the wonders of windmills, loops and that big novelty cow that stood on its hind legs to make you putt through the resulting arch. It's miniature golf, baby, but before you get too excited about those advertised nine holes on the back of the box, be aware that you only get seven. Yeah, seven. Holes 8 and 9 are just holes 1 and 2 repeated. Developer laziness or diminutive cartridge? Take your pick.

It's perhaps naïve to expect semi-realistic ball physics in a game that is, by its own admission, crazy, but things are just plain stupid. Walls seem to be made of rubber, and bounce the ball off to all sorts of angles that don't match the angle it was approached from. Then there's the brain-killing music that you can't turn off, the fact that landing in a water hazard forces you to

start the hole again.

We could go on, but the game speaks for itself. Now excuse us while we head out the back to put this one on the tee and practice our drive shots.

**WORST  
gimped  
golf game  
EVER!**



# GETTING PAID

»Mikolaj

## Ghost in the 303: How electronic and videogames came together in a mid 90s basement party.

**E**lectronic music and videogames have been joined at the hip since the days of the Commodore 64 and its SID music chip. It may have been primitive technology, but in the right hands you could crank out some suitably jaunty tunes to accompany your 8-bit adventures.

Since those early days, electronic music and videogames have enjoyed a unique relationship; borrowing from each other and overlapping to create new forms of gameplay and entertainment.

Indeed. If we had the space, time and inclination we could write a thesis about the concurrent rise of Acid House and cheap home computers in the late 80s. About the resulting collision of technology and pop culture and how Sony appropriated all of this in the mid 90s to flog the original Playstation.

Alternatively, we could give you the A.D.D., super abridged version. It goes a little something like this: late 80s, Acid House, Amiga 500 & Atari ST, burgeoning demo scene, videogame soundtracks, Sony, 'Chemical Generation', WipeOut, Rez, Synesthesia.

### 1982 onwards: SID C64 Music

■ Back in the day, the three channel synthesised music pumping out of the Commodore 64's SID chip was considered massively progressive. More recently, producer Timbaland found himself embroiled in Phoenix Wright style court drama after allegedly 'sampling' a SID track someone had posted online without bothering to get permission.

### 1986: Outrun 2

■ One of the most famous soundtracks in videogame history, Magical Sound Shower, Passing Breeze and Splash Wave showed just what was possible with dedicated hardware and a penchant for weird, jazz-fusion tunes.

### 1989: Xenon 2: Megablast

■ Long story short: Tim Simenon (AKA Bomb the Bass, AKA one half of Nation 12) wrote a track called Megablast (Hip Hop on Precinct 13) and released it as a 12". He then reworked it for this vertical shooter and the developers were so chuffed they subtitled the game after said tune.

### Late 80s onwards: Amiga 500 Demo Scene

■ Bedroom coders and hackers competed to see who could get the most out of fixed hardware and coax 'impossible' feats out of the system. Naturally, these demos needed music to accompany them and many composers got their start providing the obligatory house music to go with the pretty images.

### Early 90s: Nation 12

■ Nation 12 consisted of Tim Simenon (Bomb the Bass) and failed 'new romantic' John Foxx. They did a bunch of music for legendary British developer Bitmap Brothers - most of it on a druggy, house music tip. They also worked on a commercial dance music release but got drunk and lost all the tapes for 15 years.

### 1992: Gate of Thunder

■ NEC was the first console manufacturer to take advantage of CD technology, releasing a CD add-on for the PC Engine / TurboGrafx16 back in 1989. While the extra storage space didn't improve gameplay or graphics, it did allow for proper CD soundtracks and lots of anime cutscenes. Gate of Thunder was released as a pack-in title for the system in the U.S. and its mix of horizontal shooter action and music score is still fondly remembered to this day.

### 1992: Streets of Rage 2

■ Renowned composer Yuzo Koshiro was heavily 'inspired' by a bunch of early 90s club tracks and reworked them for this Megadrive showcase title. Given the constraints of the soundchip, Koshiro managed to bang out some great house music - even if a number of tracks sounded suspiciously like Blackbox.

### 1995: Wipe out

■ The granddaddy of dance music soundtracks. When Wipeout was released in 1995, the inclusion of licensed tracks from Daft Punk, Chemical Brothers, Orbital, Leftfield, etc, was revolutionary. In fact, two separate CD soundtracks were released to coincide with the game. The game personified Sony's marketing efforts in the mid 90s and the company's attempts to 'grow' the videogame user base. Much like Nintendo is currently doing with the Wii, actually.

### 1997: Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike

■ A curious mix of club tracks, pop and rap, the soundtrack to Third Strike is almost a throwback to the 'Belgium Beat' sound of Technotronic. Do people still remember Technotronic? Anyway, while that sounds terrible, it's actually crazy catchy and ranks up their alongside the best videogame soundtracks.

### Late 90s onwards: Gameboy Glitch Music

■ Malcolm McLaren was introduced to the underground Gameboy music scene in 2003 and became so excited he wrote an article for Wired about how it was "the new punk." Or 8-bit punk as it became known. The scene - comprised of angry European nerds in their

bedrooms - was not impressed with McLaren or his attempts to popularise their work. Besides, Alec Empire already crashed that party four years earlier, releasing an album under the alias Nintendo Teenage Robots in 1999.

### 1999: Vib Ribbon

■ Yeah, everyone knows about how you could insert any CD into the PSone and the game would generate levels in synch with what was being played. While that was certainly revolutionary / neat, the original game music was also pretty special. Composed by Japanese pop group Laugh and Peace, it was a deranged mix of J-Pop, wild thrashy bits and electronic. Laugh and Peace have released several albums and you can visit them online at [www.myspace.com/laughandpeacejapan](http://www.myspace.com/laughandpeacejapan)

### 2001: Rez

■ Famously, this was named after the Underworld track - designer Tetsuya Mizuguchi was a fan. A classic example of synesthesia, the music (Adam Freeland, Ken Ishii, Coldcut, etc) melds with the visuals as the player makes their way through a computer AI (matrix style). The gameplay may be basic, but Rez helped redefine the relationship between visuals, music and player input.

### 2001: Grand Theft Auto 3

■ Remember how this had a dedicated drum n bass radio station? Remember how people used to give a shit about drum n bass? Anyway, it was all very impressive back when it was originally released.

### 2001: Modern Groove: Ministry of Sound

■ Ferry Corsten, Tall Paul, Krafty Kuts and others provide five hours of premixed trance, hard house and garage. Your drug addled brain attempts to meld some pretty images to go with the music while everyone else back at the recovery huffs nitrous bulbs and argues over who is more wasted. Not so much a game as a lightshow for those with non existent attention spans.

### 2001: Amplitude

■ The precursor to Guitar Hero, Amplitude utilised the same 'notes scrolling down the screen' display. The object was to construct songs by correctly playing a sequence of notes and 'locking in' that particular part of the track. More interesting was the games remix mode, where the individual elements where on different planes and you could add and subtract them as you saw fit - remixing music from Paul Oakenfold, Orbital, Q\*Bert and more in the process. «



They also worked on a commercial dance music release but got drunk and lost all the tapes for 15 years

# UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

## THEME PARKS ADVENTURE

»James O'Connor

Gamecube • 2001 • Developed and published by Kemco

The back of the case for Universal Studios promises the gamer "a VIP ticket to theme park adventu". Now, we here at Hyper are no strangers to typos, but when your game is based on such a phenomenally bad concept you've got your work cut out for you in writing a convincing blurb. And yet, someone somewhere saw this packaging and still bought the game, as their second-hand copy sits in my Wii as I write this. Could it be that someone else tried to write this article, but killed themselves in the process of playing the game, only to have their possessions sold off and passed onto the next unsuspecting victim like some kind of cursed object from a Japanese horror film? Turn back to the editorial and make sure there's no obituary for me before continuing. I wanted to see if Universal Studios was as bad as everyone said it was. It's actually much, much worse.

### 'BIGGER BOAT' PUN GOES HERE

This is a game where you wander around Universal Studios, complete with horribly positioned fixed camera angles, trying to earn enough points to unlock all the rides while NPCs try desperately to convince you that you're visiting the most fun amusement park in the world. You can do this by picking up trash, finding the hidden 'UNIVERSAL STUDIOS' letters around the park, and shaking hands with the mascots you run into. The highlight of this mode is when you run into the the guy in a Knothead costume (Woody's nephew, apparently), whose handshake animation looks so much like a handjob, complete with controller rumble, that it can't possibly be a mistake. At the time of release the game was infamous as 'that game where you pick up trash for points', but honestly this isn't the worst part. There are six minigames here, but only the E.T. ride is unlockable at the start. Please remember that as you read this- I actually had to play the game for a few solid hours to unlock and play everything. And I did it all for you.

**E.T.** - Nothing to phone home about (unlike the joke I've just made). It's like Paperboy, in that you're riding a bicycle, only without paper, and significantly worse in every way

imaginable. It doesn't control well, the jumps are slow and awkward to land, and...well, it's a game where you slowly cycle through uninteresting landscapes from an isometric viewpoint.

**BACK TO THE FUTURE** - The Back to the Future ride answers the question that has plagued mankind since the 80s - what would you have to do to ruin one of the most likeable movie trilogies of all time? In this game you chase after Biff, who has stolen the DeLorean, in another time traveling DeLorean, trying to bump into his car enough times to stop him. Although you do travel through time periods, including the future, the ice age and some kind of historically accurate Lava Period, the car never feels like it's even approaching 88m/ph, nor does it have power steering. The Back to the Future achievement in Project Gotham Racing 4 wipes the floor with this abysmal effort.



The back of the case for Universal Studios promises the gamer "a VIP ticket to theme park adventu"

**THE WILD WILD WEST** - Based on a theme park stunt show rather than a movie, this game is devoid of any of the wacky hijinks you generally associated with that sort of thing. This is basically a much worse version of the shooting gallery from Wii Play, shooting at cans, targets and balloons, where aim is a bit off and the reload mechanic feels arbitrary. And you just know that somewhere, offstage, there's a Deadwood style, whiskey-motivated bar-fight happening, but you're too busy destroying someone's antique can collection to take part. I hate this game.

**JAWS** - If you take the two and a half minutes or so it takes to play this game, something shocking becomes evident - there's about twelve seconds of enjoyment in here. In this game, you pick up and throw barrels at Jaws as he approaches the boat you're on, watching him circle and then approach on the radar. It's almost tense for a bit! But Kemco have outdone

themselves by purposely putting in that little extra effort to ruin the game - your character inexplicably develops a severe case of arthritis, moving with the lethargy and awkwardness of a wounded, tired zombie with a steel hip and severe depression.

**JURASSIC PARK** - Somehow, Kemco has managed to ruin maybe the best idea for a mini-game ever - 'Rez, but with dinosaurs'. Except there's no music and the same f\*\*\*ing dinosaur appears over and over and over again. So there's a lot of holding down the A button, floating the cursor over dinosaurs, and then swearing as half of them leap all over your car and damage it anyway. Non-lock on shots are horribly inaccurate, and the 'quick-time' events give you about three hours time to react and as such are a bit redundant. Also, the game's manual claims that you're using tranquilizers, not actually hurting the dinosaurs. The manual is lying, kids - the dinosaurs explode in a shower of lasers.

**BACKDRAFT** - Saving the worst until last was a mistake. Right when I could see the light at the end of the tunnel, Backdraft comes along and knocks me on my arse.

Easily the most loathsome of the mini-games on offer, Backdraft is all about coming to grips with some of the worst controls ever. The control stick works differently every time the camera changes, and never for a second feel right. This game involves aiming jets of water at fire, pressing the 'guard' button to dodge explosions, walking through people to somehow 'save' them from the burning building and, best of all, declaring "f\*\*\* this" four minutes in and snapping the disc in half.

### (NOT SO) GREAT SCOTT!

The game uses a real time day/night system, so the sky is a different colour depending on what time of the day you play the game. I love crap like that! Aside from that, Universal Studios may well be the reason the Gamecube failed. My local playground is a more accurate representation of an amusement park than this game, even though I'm too tall for the monkey bars and the whole place smells of pot. ☹





# 'Q: WHY ARE YOU STILL PLAYING?'

The quiz segment of this game is especially horrific. The questions often require ridiculously specific knowledge about certain movies, and if you've never seen *Waterworld* or *Dragonheart* you're screwed. The game also assumes you've done some pretty extensive research on Universal's history, asking about the order parks opened in and how many hectares Universal Studios Japan covers. Despite the complete lack of effort put into the rest of the game, the developers have clearly spent a lot of time coming up with questions - I didn't get a single repeat during my hair-tearing half hour session of this shit, and my best score was a 9 (you need 10 to pass). Worst of all, every time you fail, quizmaster Winnie Woodpecker squawks in her most condescending tone 'you need to watch more movies!'. Last year I watched 130 movies. Winnie, I hate you more than anything ever.





## MAIL HYPER!

### POSTAL:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW  
2016 Australia

### EMAIL:

freakscene@next.com.au

### SOFT

My praise for you people is demonstrated by purchasing a glossy tome every first Wednesday. Not by blowing smoke up your butts in a letter. Bam! I'm half way through writing a paper for uni and as I had a coffee break I read your Ninja Gaiden 2 preview. I have one word for you guys. SOFT. Ohh, yeah that hurt didn't it? So you said you found that having to manually manipulate the camera was too hard and then you complained about the game giving you bad camera angles. Well sorry, but this means you just need more practice at controlling the camera. This was a strength in the first game and it should be a strength in the next one. Next is your big huzzah for the inclusion of regenerative health and full-health checkpoints, inferring

like the game due to the punishing levels of difficulty. Why does adding some elements (much needed in our opinion) that will make Ninja Gaiden 2 appeal to a wider range of players angry up your blood so much? Why must everybody play the game in the manner you want to play it? Itagaki has recently said that NG2 is the swansong and pinnacle of the NG franchise. Is he soft too?

### RRP = RIPOFF

It occurred to me the other night while watching the late news on Ten (hello Sandra) that Australian video game consumers are being ripped off by a substantial amount. The current USD/AUD exchange rate is somewhere between 92-94 cents, and for normal priced console game we are paying double what the Americans are. Who decides what the RRP of a product is in Australia? Surely the cost of shipping and localising the product to the Australian market cannot cost this much. Something needs to be done about this, or more and more Australians are just going to start importing games. I have a number of Wii owning friends who have freeloader and import US games, but I don't do that (yet) because it's just too much of a hassle, and I tend to worry that my package will be lost somewhere over the Pacific Ocean.

My friends that import spend about AUD\$65 when you factor in shipping and handling per game, while I'm stuck spending 100 of my

## Who decides what the RRP of a product is in Australia?

that the lack of this option in NG1 might be a weakness. ITS NOT EASY TO BE A GODDAMN NINJA! SOFT!! So that's really all I wanted to say, and I hope there is one day an online deathmatch mode for NG so I can take down your whole team on my own, with no goddamn checkpoints!

Di\_avo

Congratulations on being a HARD bastard. Totally HARD. So HARD we could probably use your chiselled abs and RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION to cut diamonds. Team Ninja making a bad camera does not make us soft. The camera flipping around like an epileptic gymnast as it tries to follow the action does not make it one of the strengths of the game. The camera, at least in the build we played, was broken. We were not. You like Ninja Gaiden. We get that. You like how hard it is. We get that too. What you seem to fail to understand is that there are a lot of people out there who did not

hard earned dollars. Something has to be done about this (I can't afford to live!), who do I complain to?

Jack Monaghan

If only we knew. The sad reality is that despite gamers like us recognising Australia's high software prices as outright price gouging compared to the rest of the world, there isn't really anyone in a position of power who will address our concerns. Distributors will respond with a hasty "no comment, for instance.

However, gamers aren't without options, and often it comes down to two: piracy and importing. We're obviously against the first one, since piracy ultimately deprives developers of the cash they're entitled to which, in turn, goes towards making future games. Take away the incentive to create and the money to finance it, and you take away new games.

Importing is something that more



## Feedback

**860Z:** Just read the MGO article, the evil typo monster attacks again... I had no idea that there was a GTA5 prologue... oh, and I could have sworn that MGS4 was called guns of the patriots. The mobile sex ads are still there, and they plonked one right next to the indie review which made me skim through as not to feel dirty. Jickle brilliance + a return of Jickle's MS paint fun!

**Steve:** Bought the mag, read Jickle's article and loved it. Also loved his picture in the letters section (it's funny cos it's true). Flicked through some of the rest of it until my boss gave me the "Why aren't you working?" glare.

Also noticed that in your Top 50 Handheld list, GTA Liberty City Stories is "Set three years after the revolutionary GTA III" when it is in fact a prequel. I demand that the writer of that list be stripped naked and paraded through the streets and poked with sticks.

PS I am not a crackpot.

**the\_watchers\_eye:** I find it strange that there is no mention in the forum section of my Daniel Wilks / Darren Wells / DW conspiracy. Massive cover up? I wouldn't be surprised - it seems Wilks is trying to buy me off by putting two of my posts in the mag, but I will not be silenced so easily! Only free things will silence me! (hint hint)

Also, anyone else think that Snake's suit on the cover looks a lot like the Crysis suit?

**BrokenBenjamin2000:** Loved the issue, but your No More Heroes review didn't really point out many of the games flaws (let's get this straight, I loved the game, but not many other people will), but it was still a good review, some people who tried the game may not totally agree with you though, as the review is somewhat misleading.

and more Aussie gamers are looking towards, as online stores such as Play-Asia.com offer titles at prices that put even the discounted local stores to shame. Why are we forced to pay \$120 for Grand Theft Auto IV when we can import it for around \$70 including shipping? Region differences do make the process a little muddier, but as you mention, an increasing amount of gamers are getting around it with freeloader, chipped consoles and all manner of workarounds. It seems the extra effort is worth it if games can be had for less money.

Will increased importing see distributors lower local prices? Not likely. Chances are they'll increase them in an effort to recoup lost cash. But somehow or other, the message needs to be made clear that Australian gamers are getting shafted. Lead by example, distributors. Who of you will be the first to release new triple-A titles at less than \$100?

### TONGUE LASHING

Ahh Hyper, I vaguely remember me as a 9 year old kid not having the 6 dollars required for your first issue at the local milk bar (green cover, with sonic cd on the front?).

Anyway, I recently looked through my games collection and realise I have a serious problem... I buy way too many games, many which I never play or play once. Am I alone here? I have several consoles and around 70 original xbox and dozens of N64 games. Anything rare I have to have, hoping someday it'll be worth something or that it'll actually play it. Any suggestions?

Also, I feel that in your reviews of mediocre games, you look for too many positives and often don't give a game the tongue lashing it deserves. What do you think?

mbecirevic

*Incognito emails kind of make it hard to attribute a person's name to their message, so you'll understand why we hacked the domain off your e-mail address and used that instead. May we call you mbecirevic? No? How about Snugglecakes?*

Anyway, Angel Pie, we can sympathise with your situation when it comes to owning way too many games. We've been in the biz for years, and over that time we've accumulated hundreds of the things. But when it comes to your reasons, perhaps you've got to ask yourself why you buy. Is it because it's a title you're genuinely interested in playing, or because it'll be worth something down the track when you decide to sell it? Purchasing for the former reason rather than the latter will ensure you actually get enjoyment out of

your hobby, rather than being part of it for future financial gain.

As for our reviews of mediocre games, we like to highlight the positive aspects of any game, no matter how faint or fleeting. Call it looking for the silver lining, but if we can find at least one positive among a sea of negatives, the pain is numbed just a little, and we can get through our day easier. Having said that, we'll still pull no punches if a game truly warrants a drumming.

## U R MR FUNNY

Hi guys,

I just want to say this. If there's one thing about Hyper that makes it unique (probably amongst many) it is its unfailing sense of the absurd, whether it's features on wacky and bizarre video games, your 'Bottom of the Barrel' segment, the whole WTHIWWJP phenomenon, or the ability to review games in all seriousness unless they're so bad that they warrant an unmerciful tongue lashing. (I think I enjoy these reviews the most). I will forever associate Hyper and writers such as Mr. Wilks with comedy gold moments such as "The road to hell is not paved with good intentions, it is paved with copies of this game".

So thank you Hyper for keeping me informed and for all those good time, laugh out loud moments. You write with intelligence and without self-consciousness, and it is a monthly breath of fresh air.

Dave

What are the odds that we'd receive two letters in a month that both contain the phrase "tongue lashing"? Pretty slim, we'd say. But thanks for the kind words Dave, we please to aim.

## SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM

Good (insert time of day here)

Now, being somewhat of an impressionable 20something gamer, I've been sitting at my beastly unit (aptly named Pute Pute) pondering many wonderful things of life such as how many times will that bloody fly slam his head into the light before his tiny brain is turned into an even finer pulp. As I had

## Forum Talk

**TOPIC: 'The games someone has to experience before they die' thread!**

**Eldarion Greenleaf:** Pretty self explanatory;

- Ocarina Of Time - Legend Of Zelda
- Halo 2
- Mario 64
- Goldeneye 007
- GTA San Andreas
- FF VII-XII
- Ghost Recon
- Guitar Hero 3 - Legends Of Rock

**JubeiSactome:**

- Resident Evil 4
- Metal Gear Solid 3
- Final Fantasy VI
- Secret of Mana
- Half-Life 2
- Audio Surf
- Rock Band

**Clockwork:** Halo 2 and Guitar Hero 3... WTF is wrong with you, man? Just so this isn't a wasted post, my picks are:

- LoZ: Link's Awakening on Game Boy
- CTA IV
- Trackmania United Forever
- Team Fortress 2
- Crysis
- Oh and Beyond Good & Evil.

**Saxby:** Games people haven't mentioned -

- System Shock 2
- Day Of The Tentacle
- Starcraft
- Monkey Island
- Super Smash Bro's Melee

**grimace06:**

- Freedom Fighters
- Chrono Trigger
- The Darkness
- Bioshock
- Chronicles of Riddick: EFTB
- Goldeneye
- Rez
- Resident Evil 4
- Red Faction Multiplayer (seriously)

**immol8:** If I was dying I'd do something a little more profound than play games. Unless you're not being serious, in which case I'd add The Neverhood.

## CAPTION THIS!

Fart jokes. Fart jokes. Fart jokes. Chun-Li's crotch. Fart jokes. Chun-Li's crotch. It was a month of similar captions all round, so we just covered our eyes and chose this one from Tristan Fox.



Poor Guido could not believe his eyes, that someone so beautiful could unleash the Fatality Flaming Fart of Death.

all but reached a point of boredom approaching Riggertmortis the inner workings of my head came to a grinding halt as a brain fuse popped over the surge of this intellectual paradox.

As previously mentioned (see: THE FIRST LINE) I consider myself to be a rather impressionable gamer and human being alike. Though many people may see this as world ending realisation I tend to view it as a good thing. I mean, thanks to games I now know how to load and fire a large variety of weapons - NO! BADBOSEY! What I meant to say that due to my aforementioned impressionable tendencies I've received many messages from games that are slightly more than "games are fun! \*claps hands stupidly"

I myself, right over here, yes, me, Boosey, have many a time come away from a good long gaming session having seen or experienced something in a game's story, or perhaps even from another of my kind in a multiplayer game, that I feel wiser, more understanding and even a better person for having seen or done, said... thing... I guess.

A good example of this phenomenon could be sighted in The Darkness whereby you get an achievement for staying with your girlfriend even though the option to leave is open for quite some time. Though this example is as obvious as

a punch in the face by Mr Sentiment the whole experience still leaves us with a positive broken nose.

There have been instances in games where perhaps the developers themselves had not intended a meaningful message to be portrayed behind their blanket of pixels and occasionally terrible dialogue, however with an open mind something truly great can occur.

Such is the case if say... a man and a chimp loved each other very much and had a baby. That baby whose very existence is truly a crime against nature, could do something great if given a chance and received with an open mind. This chimp-man could one day saaaaay... become the president of the United States. Well ok maybe not such a great example but you see where I'm going with this. Unintentionally our beloved media/ past time of choice possess the power to change perspectives for the better, even without meaning to.

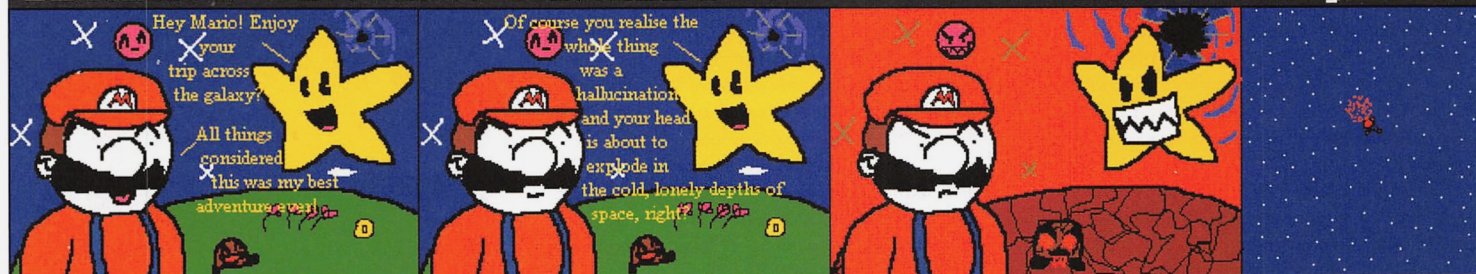
Even something as stupidly entertaining ... (enough already... SNIP! -Ed)

Boosey

Oy, that was an ordeal. Dude, no offence, but you're weird, and we had to cut short your "letter" lest the crazy it contained seeped through the paper and oozed out the bottom. We just hope it hasn't already.

## JICKLE'S MS-PAINT FUNNIES

by Jickle





# LAND OF THE RISING FUN

Jonti Davies on games and life in Japan.



**T**his column is supposed to be centred on Japan, but it's clear that China is rapidly becoming a crucial part of the videogame world, so bear with me this time. From where I'm sitting, on a sofa in Japan – a country whose relevance in the videogame market had never been questioned until the turn of the century, but which now looks to be more disposable than ever – changes across the Sea of Japan/Sea of China (delete according to political preference) only reinforce the notion that Japan could one day find itself in the embarrassing position of second-most important Asian videogame nation.

Over the past few years a significant number of publishers have established development studios in China, and not all of those investors in Chinese expansion come from the West. Big Japanese players have also set up shop in China, with some impressive results so far – SEGA's Shanghai team, for example, did an excellent job on the recent PS2 conversion of *NiGHTS Into Dreams*. Clearly there's some excellent development talent coming through in China, and it may take the input of foreign console-oriented publishers to properly tap this potential.

Gaming in China (like Korea) is still intertwined with PC ownership and online competition, but gradually things are beginning to change. According to a study published recently, sales of

game consoles in China rose by 75% during 2007 – and that's in spite of their sale being outlawed by the Chinese authorities since 2000. Apparently there's a thriving grey-market trade pushing console sales on the Chinese mainland, with 2.48 million units of console hardware passing from not-fully-legit shops to the nation's hardcore gamers and nouveau riche last year.

Of course 2.48 million consoles isn't a phenomenal volume of hardware compared with the amounts shifted in Japan and other more established videogame territories, but it's surely only going to increase from here on out. It's also worth noting that the machines covered by that statistic are the Wii, Xbox 360, PS3 and PS2. So although the widely ridiculed "Vii" console (which appeared in China last year as a blatant but pathetic and inadequate attempt by one manufacturer to mimic Nintendo's machine) may have found its way into some homes in China, there is a considerable number of discerning consumers who prefer genuine imported console hardware from Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo. Which is surely a good sign, as far as those companies are concerned.

More time is needed for the country to open up and permit Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo to officially launch their consoles in China, but as and when that happens, the potential of this new market will obviously be massive.



(above) This is the ugly side of Chinese console gaming: the fake Chinese Wii known as the "Vii"...

(main) Some Wii-inspired promotion for the Vii. Oh dear.

(below) ...and this is the pretty new face of Chinese development: SEGA Shanghai's stunning PS2 conversion of *NiGHTS Into Dreams*.



# COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON

Ubisoft's Jerome Basile certainly isn't the most forthcoming interview subject we've ever encountered. Not for Basile the long winded anecdote or droll observation. His responses are as economical as they are direct. Though he may be a man of few words, he is certainly not a man of few games. His library of 400+ titles, including scores of classics, is the product of 16 years of collecting.

As you can see from the grainy photograph that he provided to us via email, the poor man has become trapped behind a wall of gaming paraphernalia. He hasn't seen daylight in years. How has he avoided becoming a Howard Hughes style eccentric? Through the magic of games, of course. We ask him to tell us a little about a few of his faves.

The first title to come up? The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening. While many interviewed for this column have identified the universally revered Zelda franchise as a key influence, Basile is unique in singling out the 1993 Game Boy iteration. Featuring a mix of top-down and side-scrolling sequences, Link's Awakening was a major hit for Nintendo. "I love the story and I try to make the walkthrough faster each time I play," Basile says.

Capcom's Street Fighter Alpha 3 is another of his favourites. The 1998 arcade hit was swiftly ported to a plethora of home consoles and handhelds. Basile still breaks out the Dreamcast version from time to time. "This is one

of the best fighting games," he says, expressing a particular fondness for the game's multiplayer mode.

The final entrant in his addictive triumvirate is another of Capcom's hits of yesteryear. Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo is a fast paced, challenging and (in Basile's words) "very funny" variation on the Tetris archetype. A remake was recently released under the title Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo HD Remix, as if the original moniker weren't enough of a mouthful.

**Sadly, Kid became something of a shut-in after the House Party movies stopped being popular**

Despite the aforementioned, Basile surprises us by denoting the RPG as the dominant genre in his collection. The Final Fantasy series is a particular influence. What attracts him to this type of game? "The story, the graphics, the gameplay, the game mechanics," he says.

We would like to thank Jerome Basile for participating in this month's column



**Cataloguing the Classics**  
Let's examine a random assortment from Basile's collection. Check out all those imports.

## 1. Chrono Trigger

Though a blockbuster in its native Japan, Square's time-spanning RPG for the SNES performed poorly in international markets.

## 2. Demon Castle Dracula X: Rondo of Blood

Arguably the most sought-after of all PC-Engine titles, this Castlevania sequel from Konami featured a villain named Shaft (can you dig it?). Fans were rewarded with a PSP remake in 2007.

## 3. Neon Genesis Evangelion

Bandai delivered this N64 brawler exclusively to Japanese audiences in 1999. Featuring a cut-scene to gameplay ratio of roughly 500-1, this was a game aimed squarely at the multitudes already obsessed with the anime.

## 4. Final Fantasy III

Don't be deceived by the US branding. This 1994 SNES epic from Square was most assuredly not the third game in series. It was the sixth.

## 5. Hanjuku Hero: Aa, Sekaiyo Hanjukuhero

The second of four Hanjuku Hero titles, this strategic RPG was another of Square's Japanese exclusives.

## 6. Macross Plus

Featuring some of the most visually arresting 3D aerial combat available for the original PlayStation, this Shoelisha title arrived on shelves in 2000.

## 7. Seiken Densetsu III

Square risked a violent uprising from SNES fans in 1995 when it decided against releasing the third title in the internationally renowned Mana series outside Japan.

## 8. Street Fighter Alpha 2

Not to be confused with any of a dozen of more similarly titled games, this popular Capcom fighter made its way to the SNES back in 1996.

## 9. Valkyrie Profile

Inspired by Norse mythology, this sprawling RPG for the original PlayStation emerged from Enix in 1999. It spawned a PSP remake and PS3 sequel, both of which were released in 2006.

## 10. Xenogears

This 1998 PlayStation smash featured that most overplayed yet compelling staple of heroic fiction, an amnesiac protagonist.

## Meet Jerome Basile

As a platform and menu specialist with Ubisoft, Jerome Basile ensures that developers understand the constraints of a specified console and maximise its potential. He then verifies that the menu and in-game contents are bug free. In recent years he has contributed to the success of titles such as Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2 and the Wii launch title Red Steel.



# The Passion of the Gamer

## BREAKING THE CYCLE Pt. 1

By Dylan Burns

When does gaming stop being fun and start to become work? When you're playing just for achievements. Welcome to Passion of the Gamer, a clinic where you can come in from the rain-slicked street, wrap your hands around a warm beverage and talk about your addiction without fear of prejudice. I understand what it's like, because I'm a reformed Gamerscore whore myself. And this is my story...

It all started when I bought an Xbox 360. On that sun-shiny day, I unpacked my next-gen purchase with something resembling barely-muted hysteria – thrusting the console's connections into my AV equipment like Flash Gordon pleasuring six women simultaneously. What followed was an orgy of gaming, with my Gamerscore reaching dizzying heights within the first few months. Thus hooked, it continued its limitless climb to the heavens for no foreseeable reward, other than my own satisfaction at being awesome. After so much blood, sweat and tears, my Gamerscore now hovers close to 40k (but that's the last time you'll hear me brag about it).

Nary a day would go by that I wouldn't sit before my 360, hunched over the controller like Bowser driving a Kart, with the sole intention of unlocking more points – to hear that sweet 'pop' of an achievement being set free and then utter a soft giggle as I checked to see how many achievements I had left in each game.

Hours would pass in this way, with me popping away, checking my progress – perhaps even comparing my own score with those of my so-called friends. You see, Microsoft calls it your Friends List, but what they really mean is People You Must Crush List. It's ostensibly a friendly environment where you can prance through the gaming fields holding hands and blowing totally non-gay kisses at each other whilst reveling in your shared love for games... but the dark side of your Friends List is that every unlocked achievement that you do not have when comparing yourself to IaMbEiTTerhAn-U-biTch76 is a blow to the ego, a mocking reminder of how worthless you are and how you should just give up and never play games again.

And of course, that is the even larger hook; you pull up your sleeves, spit out some spit, rearrange your privates and set to beating every f\*\*king achievement you can. Then, when you're done, you send nice brag messages to all of the People You Must Crush: "Oh, I see you haven't unlocked Mr. Giganto's fire-fisting move yet. Too bad because it's f\*\*king awesome bitch! Go play Pony Friends you nooooooob!"

As you can see, it's when you've reached this point that you seem beyond help, so deeply embroiled are you in the machinations of the Gamerscore juggernaut that no amount of self-reflection will allow you to see what you've really become.

I thankfully managed to take hold of my addiction and have had a hard look at what achievement points mean in my life. I came to realise

that almost half of the games I bought were in some way influenced by how easy the achievement points could be earned. And if I didn't have the berries for a new game, I'd haunt my local video shop, uttering the name of a game I knew had easy achievements in a very husky manner until the owner ordered it just to shut me the hell up.

I'd become a gaming bum. Shopkeepers would roll their eyes whenever I entered their store because they knew that I'd inevitably brag about my Gamerscore in some way: "Hey that, uh, new toothpaste looks nice. You know, it reminds me of my Gamerscore, which is now 32 456. Pretty impressive huh?"

Or when I took my girlfriend out for dinner: "Hmmm, if I managed to headshot that waiter from where I'm sitting, I'd probably get twenty points...if this was a game."

Or even just taking the garbage out: "Oi, garbage man. How many bins do you need to do before you get the fifty point achievement? What, am I crazy? No, I'm considering applying for a job, but only if the points are forthcoming..."

In the end I had to admit that I had a problem, and I took steps to cure it. Looking back, it's quite ironic that the very thing that cured me was in fact video games. You see, in an act that was akin to tearing off my own skin with a pair of pliers, I forced myself to only play games on other consoles – no more 360 and its evil achievements. So I fired up the old PS2 and discovered that they're still making games for this thing, some pretty cool ones actually. I played my Wii, enjoying titles that

I'd left stranded because they were cheap whores who would not cough up any achievement points.

Understandably, my soul craved the pure beauty of the newest games, so I started to buy cross-platform titles for my PS3, which I'm certain is now in love with me because it's actually getting used. I came to enjoy the simple act of playing a game with no concurrent undertones ruining the process; no niggling voice in my ear saying "Check your points. See what you need to do to unlock the next achievement. Write a message to all your friends calling them pansies. Crush them!"

It was like going back to a simpler time, back to the base act of getting your hands dirty with a game; none of this new-fangled blade menu with the ability to sign into Messenger. Once I passed a game that was it, I wasn't indentured for a further six weeks running the marathon of minutiae required for the full 1000 points...

There is more to my story of remission, but alas the bottom of the page draws near. I shall continue this issue in the next parchment, where I explore the pure joy of playing a big-name game without once getting, or worrying about, achievements – and how this one big step can help to relieve you of your Gamerscore whoring anxiety. Stay strong.



"BEHOLD! IT IS A SIGN..."

*That my Gamerscore is now 40,000! BrTCH3S!!ELEVEN!"*

gameboffin@hotmail.com

# DEVELOPMENT

I'm gonna tell you a story. Bear with me. It will pay off.

In 1918, a series of gruesome murders started up in New Orleans. Axemen. They were vicious. The Axeman, as he was called, snuck into bedrooms, even killed people in alleys. They would, of course, escalate in viciousness as your average creepy fan of CSI: Miami would predict. No one was safe.

The city was in a panic. When the night fell, no one could tell where the Axeman would strike next. Things got even worse. He started writing into papers, where he'd call himself a 'dark angel'. Eventually, he would take even a pregnant woman and a child as victims.

Then came his last letter to the newspapers:

*I am not a human being, but a spirit and a fell demon from the hottest hell. I am what you Orleanians and your foolish police call the Axeman.*

*Next Tuesday night, I am going to visit*

where people revved up the gramophone and listened to that crazy music. That night, the Axeman took no victims. Indeed, he only killed twice more, then, just like that... he was gone.

Currently, the games industry is like New Orleans, and Jazz is money. Stop making those gigantic megasales and the Axeman will kill you. GTA 4 is smashing all sales records as I write this and doubtless, all the suits and stockholders are licking their lips. Can we expect a horde of cookie cutter 'steal the car' games? Should I be sending out resumes detailing how street I am? Should I learn how to drive and wear a bandana, to desperately get involved in GTA knock-offs? Is the games industry going to go the way of the film and become a creativity-dead hole, seeking profit over all?

No. Despite the fact that I'm going nowhere in this attempt to get a job, I keep seeing what's coming down the pipeline and I see exciting, new stuff.

**Currently, the games industry is like New Orleans, and Jazz is money. Stop making those gigantic megasales and the Axeman will kill you**

New Orleans again. In my infinite mercy, I am going to make a proposition to you people. Here it is:

*I am very fond of jazz music, and I swear by all the devils in the nether regions that every person shall be spared in whose home a jazz band is in full swing at the time I have mentioned. If everyone has a jazz band going, well, then, so much the better for you people. One thing is certain and that is that some of those people who do not jazz it on Tuesday night (if there be any) will get the axe.*

*Well, as I am cold and crave the warmth of my native Tartarus, and as it is about time that I leave your earthly home, I will cease my discourse. Hoping that thou wilt publish this, and that it may go well with thee, I have been, am and will be the worst spirit that ever existed either in fact or realm of fantasy. - The Axeman*

On that night, the people of New Orleans flocked to dance halls and honky tonks. Bands played in the street and there were block, street and house parties

De Blob, Fable 2, Prince of Persia 4, Dawn of War 2, Dead Space. These are games that really look to be pushing, going their own ways. Doing something new or refining and polishing. Risking the solid return by pushing things new directions. I won't say they're leaders of the pack or even particularly new and innovative but when I look at these games, I remember how exciting gaming can be. How much I want to tell these kinds of stories and invent these kinds of images. And I want to dance the Axeman's Jazz

NEXT TIME - Another Job Interview?

**Dead Space - boldly going in a new direction. Space. With monsters. Or aliens. Or something.**



BY CHRISTIAN READ

# THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

**TOP 10**

## PlayStation 2 Games Over \$30

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Guitar Hero 3 Bundle Family
- 2 ▲ Crash Of The Titans Action
- 3 ▲ Iron Man Action
- 4 ▲ Singstar 90S Bundle Family
- 5 ▼ Singstar Pop Hits Bundle Family
- 6 ▼ Ratchet & Clank Size Action
- 7 ★ Sonic Riders 2 Zero Gravity Racing
- 8 ▼ Singstar 80S (S/W Only) Family
- 9 ▼ Smackdown V Raw 2008 Fighting
- 10 ★ Spyro Eternal Night Adventure

**TOP 10**

## Nintendo DS Games Over \$30

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ▲ More Brain Training Family
- 2 ▼ Brain Training Family
- 3 ◆ Sight Training Family
- 4 ◆ Mario & Sonic At Olympics Sports
- 5 ▲ Hanna Montana Adventure
- 6 ◆ Kageyamas Maths Training Family
- 7 ▲ New Super Mario Bros Action
- 8 ▲ Mario Kart Racing
- 9 ▲ Nintendogs Labrador Family
- 10 ▲ Zoo Tycoon Simulation

**TOP 10**

## Nintendo Wii Games Over \$50

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ★ Wii Fit Sports
- 2 ◆ Wii Play W/ Remote Family
- 3 ▼ Mario Kart W/ Wheel Racing
- 4 ▼ Mario & Sonic At Olympics Sports
- 5 ▼ Super Mario Galaxy Action
- 6 ▼ Guitar Hero 3 Bundle Family
- 7 ◆ Mario Party 8 Family
- 8 ▲ The Simpsons Game Adventure
- 9 ▲ Zelda Twilight Princess Role-Playing
- 10 ▼ WarioWare Smooth Moves Family

**TOP 10**

## Playstation 3 Games Over \$60

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Grand Theft Auto IV Action
- 2 ◆ Time Crisis 4 Bundle Shooter
- 3 ◆ Gran Turismo 5 Prologue Racing
- 4 ◆ Call Of Duty 4: Modern Shooter
- 5 ◆ Assassins Creed Action
- 6 ▲ Iron Man Action
- 7 ▼ Guitar Hero 3 Bundle Family
- 8 ◆ Singstar Bundle Family
- 9 ▲ Fifa 2008 Sports
- 10 ▼ Rainbow Six Vegas 2 Shooter

**TOP 10**

## PC Games Over \$20

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ The Sims 2 Kitchen & Bath Simulation
- 2 ▲ World Of Warcraft Role-Playing
- 3 ▼ WOW Burning Crusade Role-Playing
- 4 ▲ Call Of Duty 4: Modern Shooter
- 5 ▼ The Sims 2 Free Time Simulation
- 6 ◆ Sins Of A Solar Empire Strategy
- 7 ▲ Enemy Territory Quake Wars Shooter
- 8 ◆ Assassins Creed Action
- 9 ▲ Command & Conquer Kanes Strategy
- 10 ▲ Warhammer 40K Soul Storm Strategy

**TOP 10**

## Xbox 360 Games Over \$50

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Grand Theft Auto IV Action
- 2 ◆ Halo 3 Shooter
- 3 ◆ Guitar Hero 3 Rock Bundle Family
- 4 ▲ Iron Man Action
- 5 ▼ Rainbow Six Vegas 2 Shooter
- 6 ▼ Assassins Creed Action
- 7 ◆ Call Of Duty 4: Modern Shooter
- 8 ▲ Call Of Duty 4 Modern Goty Shooter
- 9 ▲ Viking: Battle For Asgard Action
- 10 ◆ Soldier Of Fortune Payback Shooter

**TOP 10**

## All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ★ Wii Fit Nintendo Wii
- 2 ▼ Grand Theft Auto IV Xbox 360
- 3 ▼ Grand Theft Auto IV PlayStation 3
- 4 ◆ Wii Play W/ Remote Nintendo Wii
- 5 ▼ Mario Kart W/ Wheel Nintendo Wii
- 6 ▲ More Brain Training Nintendo DS
- 7 ◆ Brain Training Nintendo DS
- 8 ▼ Time Crisis 4 Bundle PlayStation 3
- 9 ◆ Mario & Sonic At Olympics Nintendo Wii
- 10 ▼ Gran Turismo 5 Prologue PlayStation 3

**TOP 10**

## PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 11th May  
2008 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ God Of War: Chains Action
- 2 ◆ The Simpsons Game Adventure
- 3 ◆ Need For Speed Pro Street Racing
- 4 ▲ Crash Of The Titans Action
- 5 ▲ Jackass: The Game Action
- 6 ▼ Mx Vs Atv Untamed Racing
- 7 ▲ Smackdown V Raw 2008 Fighting
- 8 ▲ Metal Gear Solid: Portable Action
- 9 ▲ Ben 10 Psp Adventure
- 10 ▲ Syphon Filter Logans Shooter

- ★ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



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**NEXT ISSUE: GEARS OF WAR 2!**

Fable 2, Motorstorm 2, Metal Gear Solid 4 reviewed! Reader's Top 50, Wrath of the Lich King

**HYPER 178** ON SALE JULY 2



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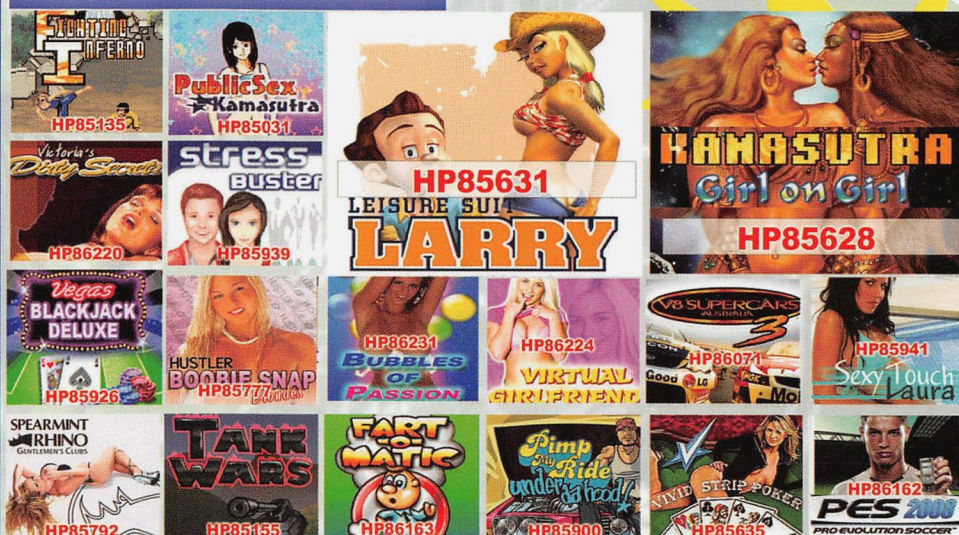
**New Tunes!**

Full-Length Ringtones	Tracks	Artist / Title
HY44215	HY47234	Flo Rida feat T Pain - Low
HY44332	HY47187	Rihanna - Dont Stop The Music
HY44261	HY47156	Soulja Boy Tell'em - Crank That (Soulja Boy)
HY44052	HY47086	Leona Lewis - Bleeding Love
HY44216	—	Jordin Sparks - Tattoo
HY44405	HY47207	Kelly Rowland - Work
HY44404	—	The Last Goodnight - Pictures Of You
HY44183	HY47129	Britney Spears - Piece Of Me
HY44393	HY47209	Chris Brown - With You
HY44593	—	Axle Whitehead - I Dont Do Surprises
HY44336	HY47193	The Veronicas - Untouched
HY44053	HY47087	Chris Brown - Kiss Kiss
HY43608	HY47012	Newton Faulkner - Dream Catch Me
HY44489	HY47223	One Republic - Stop and Stare
HY44419	—	M. Jackson/Akon - Wanna Be Startin Somethin 2008
HY43994	HY47069	Timbaland Pts Onerepublic - Apologize
HY44518	—	The Presets - My People
HY44226	—	The Polbellez - Dont Hold Back
HY44481	HY47232	Timbaland/Keri Hilson/N. Scherzinger - Scream

**RINGTONES, POLYS, MOVIE TONES  
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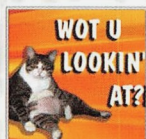
\*RINGTONES ARE SOUND-A-LIKES OF NAMED ARTIST

## Mobile Java Games



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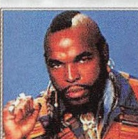
HY56677



HY53506



HY57751



HY60017



HY58352



HY56216



HY56856



HY61436

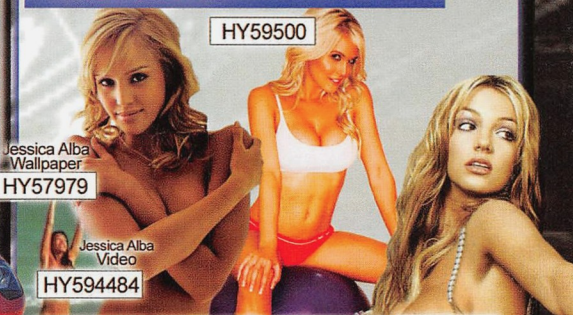


HY56225

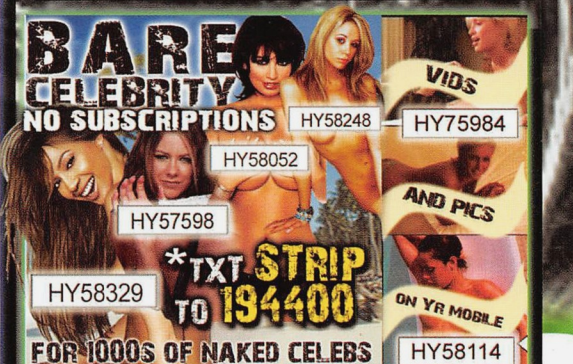
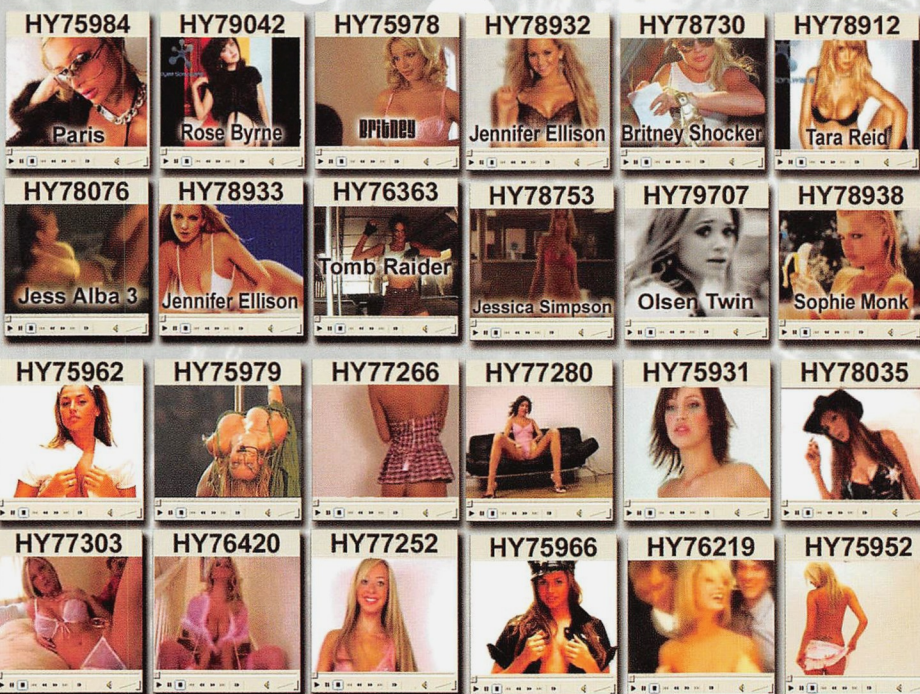


HY56829

## Babes



**Dirty vids**



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**PG**

Mild Violence

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PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360