

THE **ULTIMATE** GUIDE TO XBOX!

Every single Xbox game detailed inside! **INCLUDING:**



Dead or Alive 3
Halo
Obi Wan
Blood Wake
Madden
WWF: Raw is War
Tony Hawk 2x
Project Gotham
NASCAR Heat
Amped

Plus
40
MORE!



Official Xbox Magazine

70
Reasons why you **HAVE** to get an Xbox

SONY and **NINTENDO** don't want you to read pg. 36

PLUS:

Win a **FREE Xbox** - inside!

A complete launch guide

At least the magazine isn't \$300

The future of football is here

November 2001
Special Preview Issue

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VIOLENCE
BLOOD AND GORE

BUNGIE *Microsoft*



★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
**THE BAD NEWS, SOLDIER, IS
 YOU'RE CORNERED,
 OVERPOWERED, AND OUTNUMBERED.
 THE GOOD NEWS IS,
 WELL, THERE ISN'T ANY GOOD NEWS.**
 ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

This is no place for subtlety. This is no place for pity. This is a place where aliens want to turn humans into a bad memory. This is a place where strategy matters indoors and out, where your weapons and vehicles are both human and alien. This is a place for carnage. This is HALO™



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THE GAME HAS ARRIVED

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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

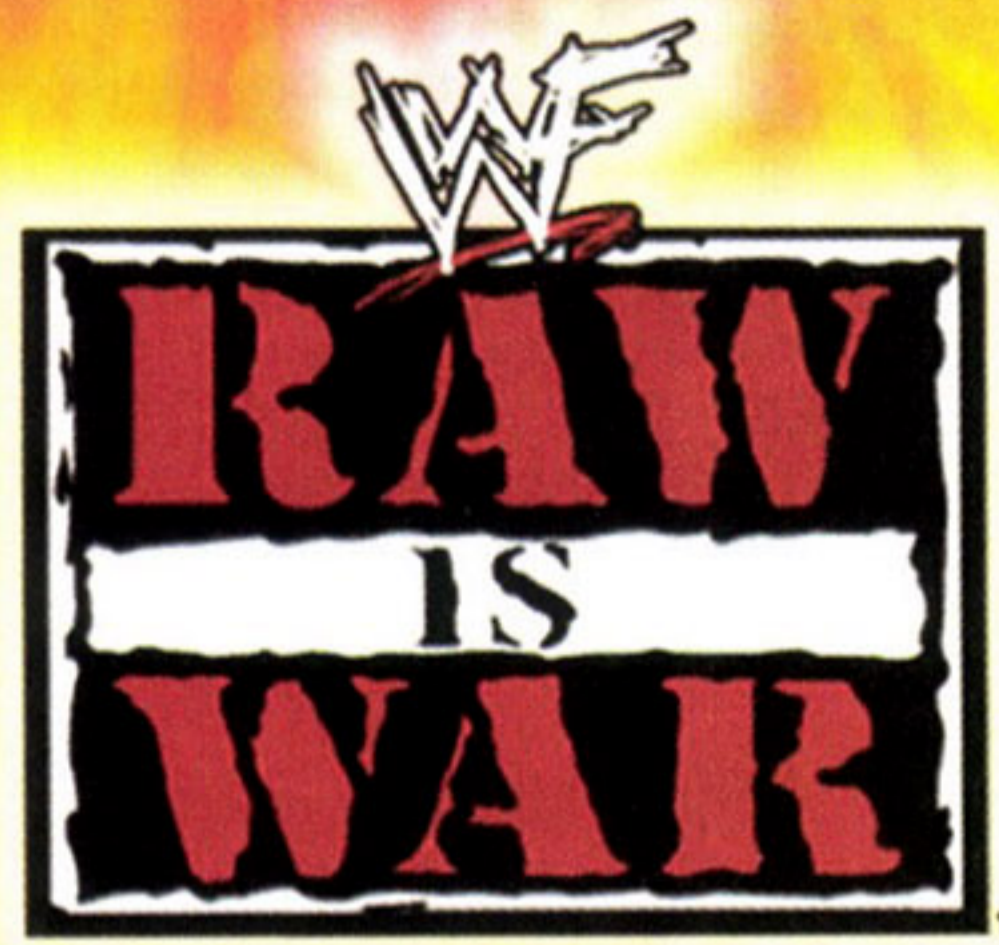
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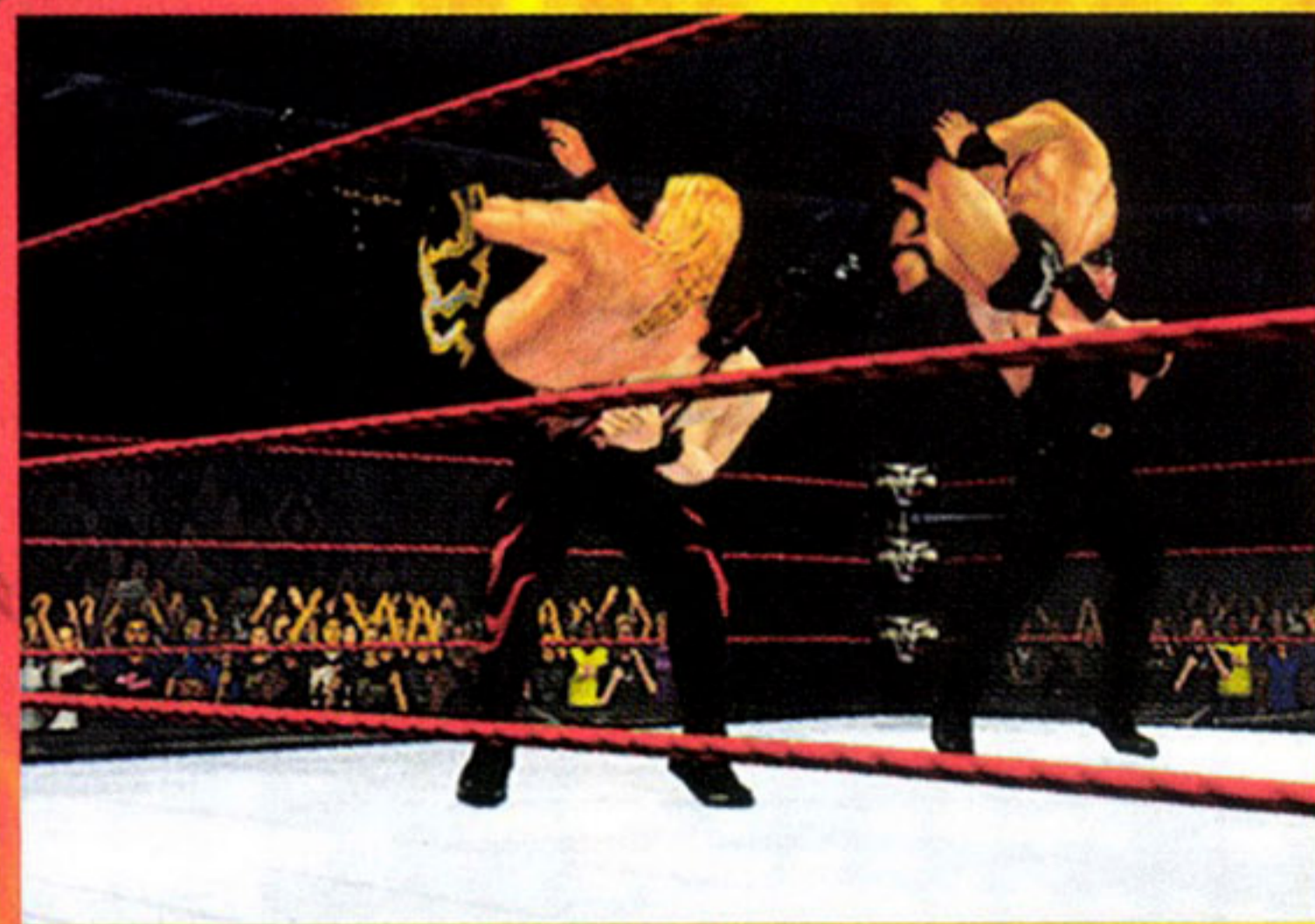
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WAGE WAR WITH TOP  SUPERSTARS MODELED IN AMAZING DETAIL



ASSAULT OPPONENTS ON
THE WAY TO THE RING



COMPETE IN A VARIETY OF MATCH TYPES



10 First Look

Every month, **Official Xbox Magazine** will bring you exclusive first looks (hence the clever name) of the hottest Xbox projects in the pipeline. That means glorious high-res images and information so new, it's been cultured from the stem cells of other games.

- 10 JSRF: JET SET RADIO FUTURE**
"Will the real Cel-shadey please stand up/ Please stand up."
- 14 THE THING**
20 years later, it lives on.

22 All Access

Welcome to your backstage pass to the world of Xbox. Get a behind-the-scenes look at the wheelings and dealings in the world of Xbox software development. Talk to the movers and shakers, take a sneak peek at new games in production, and scour the pages for tantalizing gossip and rumor.

36 Feature

70 reasons you absolutely, positively HAVE to own an Xbox

What, only 70 reasons why you absolutely, positively have to own an Xbox? We can think of literally gajillions. **Official Xbox Magazine** condenses that list for your enjoyment and gives you 70 solid gaming, technical, and aesthetic reasons to choose the almost hideously powerful new console over its puerile competitors.

52 Launch Games

CAUTION – SPOILER AHEAD: If you're wondering what the number-one reason to buy an Xbox is, then don't read this paragraph. But you've probably guessed already – the games. We've played and tested every launch game and made our predictions for their success... or failure. Read on and see for yourself what's hot and what needs some work.

Ad Index November, 2001

Looking for the perfect game ad? Want to know about some other games coming to the Xbox. Just point and... uhh... turn (sorry, haven't figured out how to "click" with magazines yet – we're working on it).

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Publisher's statement: Official Xbox Magazine (ISSN 1534-7850) is published monthly by Imagine Media, Inc., 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is pending at Brisbane CA and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues + 12 game discs): US: \$39.95; Canada \$49.95; Foreign: \$69.95. Canadian and foreign orders must be pre-paid, US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R128220688). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Official Xbox Magazine, P.O. Box 5156, Harlan, IA 51593-0656. Printed in the United States.

60 Previews

These aren't just previews, they're little magnum opuses, mini-features with maxi-info.

- 64 BLOOD WAKE**
This is what the Xbox was made for.
- 71 OBI WAN**
The force is strong with this one.
- 74 SHREK**
Making the PS2 green with envy.
- 78 UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP**
The killer-app for Xbox online play?

84 Reviews

Well, we don't have any reviews yet. Hell, the Xbox isn't even out yet. Until then, we tell you how we'll review games when we do... uhh... review games.

86 Extended Play

Hardcore Robot Monkey Porn. That's what's *not* in Extended Play, and it was easier to start with that, since practically everything else *is*. Extended Play is where you'll find in-depth game strategies, bite-sized game cheats, reader input, editor output, and impossibly exciting news about next month's debut Xbox disc.

- 86 STRATEGY**
How to get an Xbox for next-to-nothing.
- 92 READER INTERACTION**
You're a reader... this is where you interact.
- 94 CONTEST**
Skate away with an Xbox! Oh yeah.
- 96 NEXT MONTH**
This page will feature secret NASA documents regarding the existence of alien life in Earth's oceans. And, failing that, a list of goodies you can expect to see in the next issue of **Official Xbox Magazine**, but wait, you haven't even started this issue yet...



STUNNING!

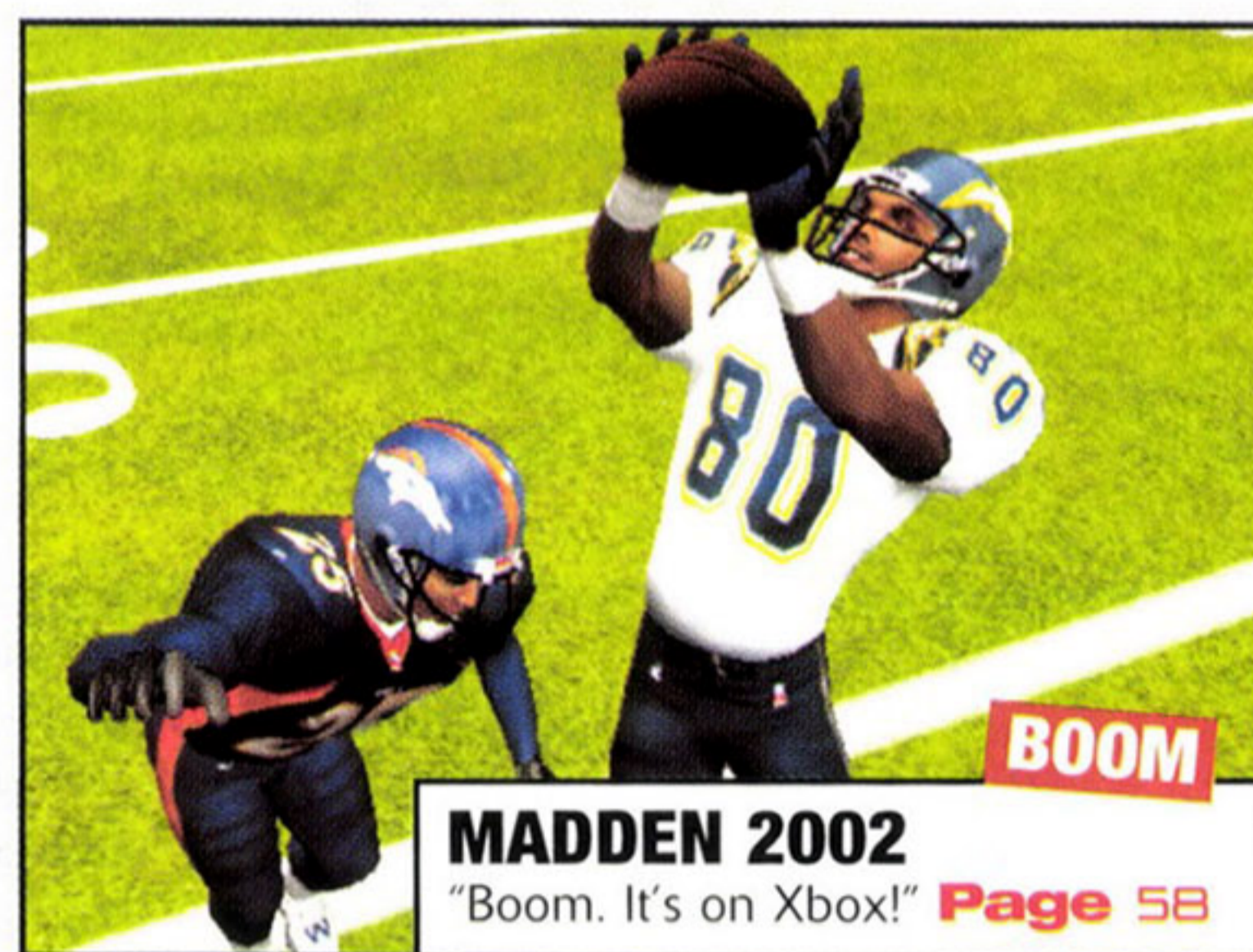
FEATURE 70 REASONS
Is the Xbox right for you? Read this and find out for sure. **Page 36**



WA-TERRIFIC

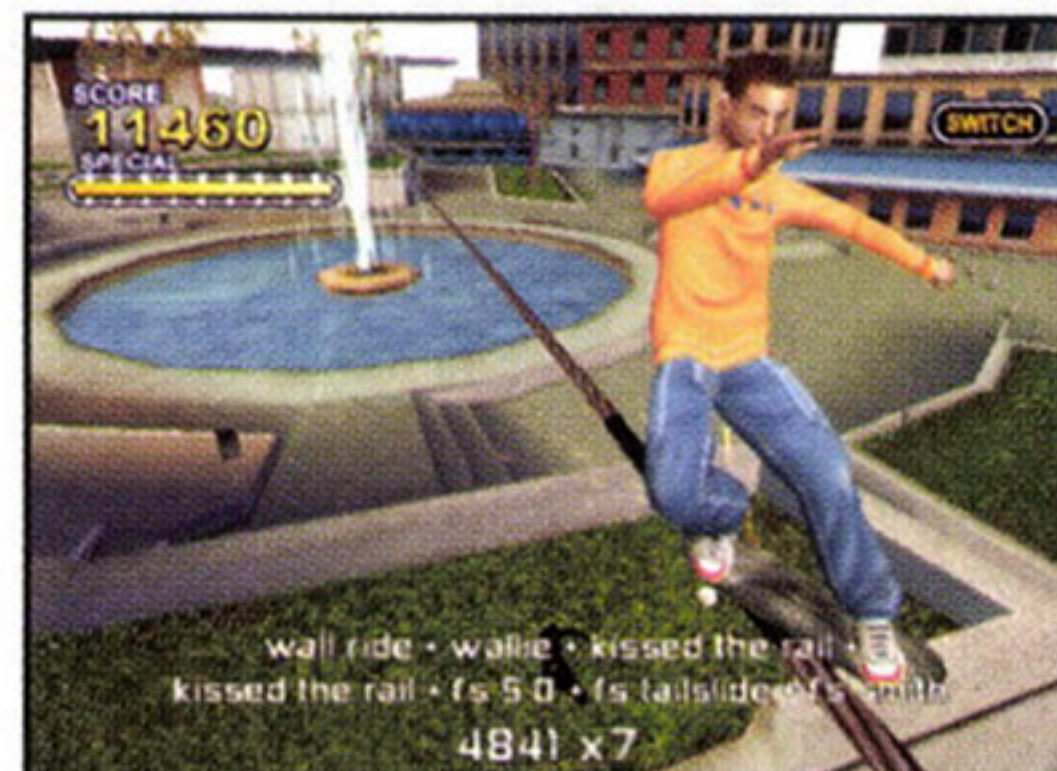
BLOOD WAKE

Splish-splash, this game is gonna make some cash. **Page 64**



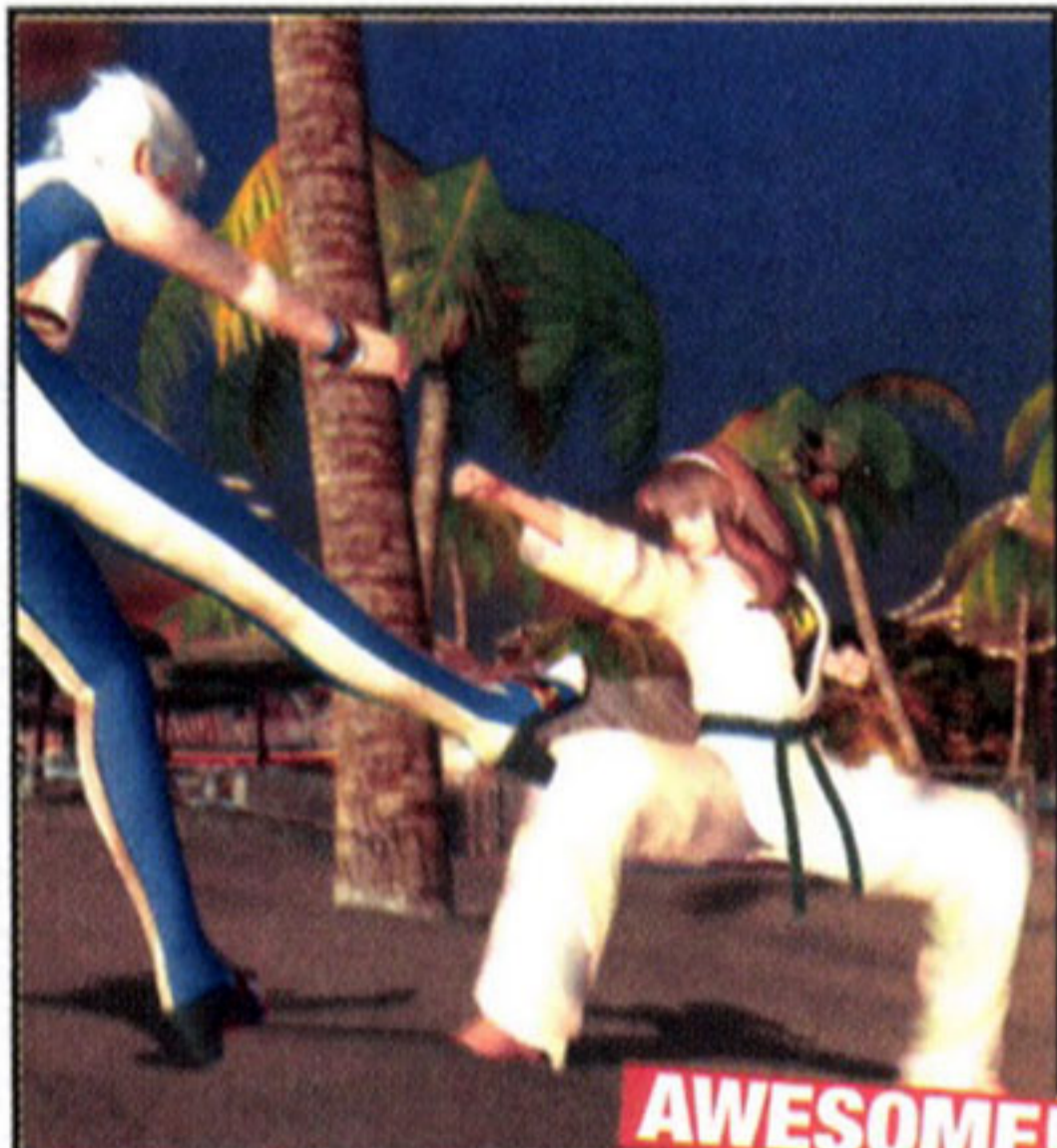
BOOM

MADDEN 2002
"Boom. It's on Xbox!" **Page 58**



GRIND IT!

TONY HAWK 2x
The best and most complete Tony Hawk ever made. **Page 57**



AWESOME!

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

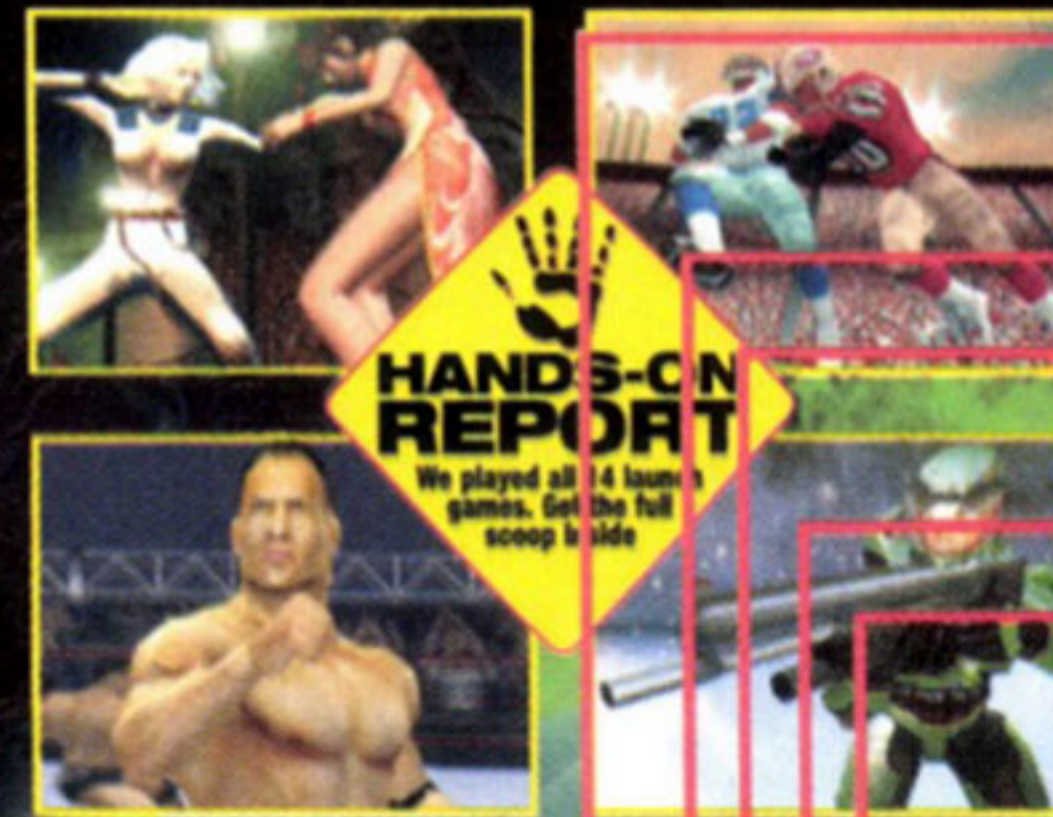
The very pinnacle of Xbox gaming has arrived. **Page 52**



Official Xbox Magazine

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO XBOX!

Every single Xbox game detailed inside! **INCLUDING:**



HANDS-ON REPORT
We played all 14 launch games. Get the full scoop inside.

- Dead or Alive 3
- Halo
- Obi Wan
- Blood Wake
- Madden
- WWF: Raw is War
- Tony Hawk 2x
- Project Gotham
- NASCAR Heat
- Amped

Plus **40 MORE!**

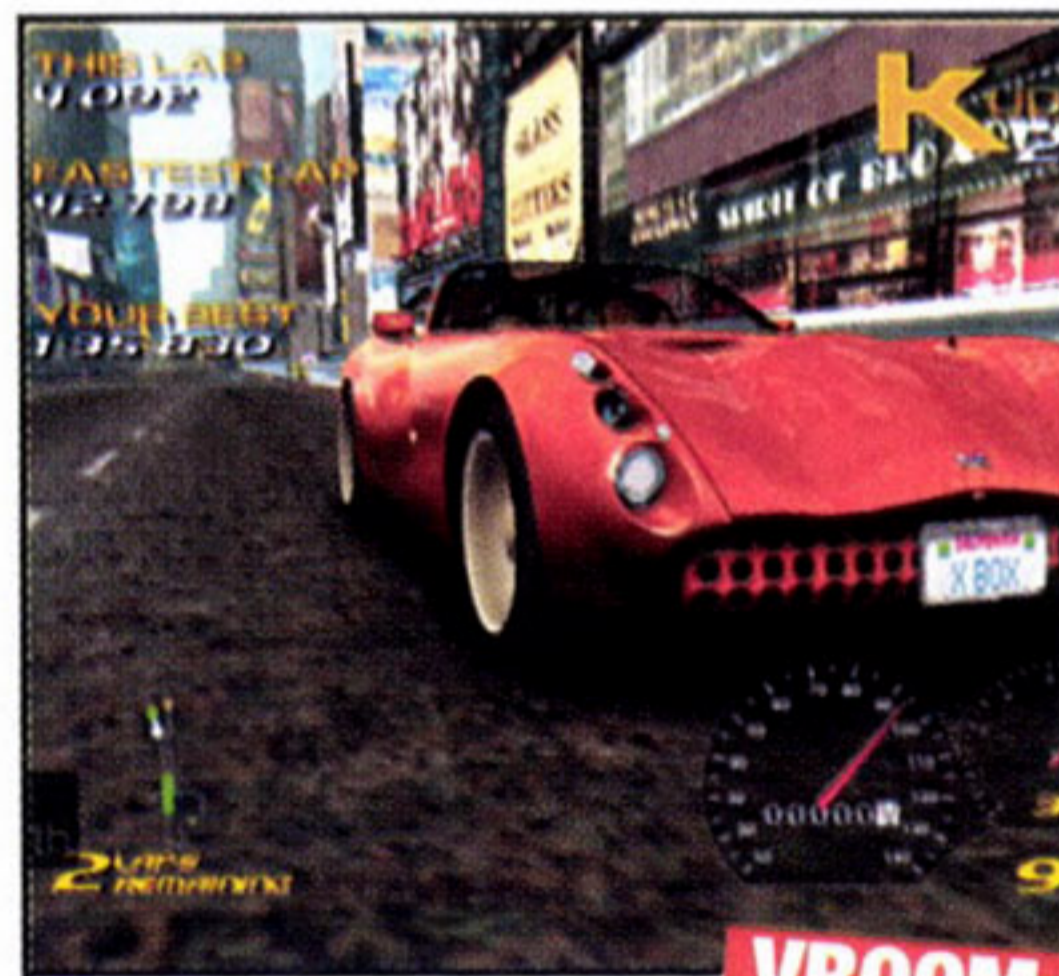
70

Reasons why you **HAVE** to get an Xbox

SONY and NINTENDO don't want you to read pg. 36

PLUS:

- Win a **FREE Xbox** - inside!
- A complete launch guide
- At least the magazine isn't \$300
- The future of football is here



VROOM

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

The fastest, slickest, most-racing-est racing game we've seen this year. **Page 59**

GameFinder

Too impatient to play by the rules? Quickly flick to your game of choice:

59	Air Force Delta Storm	26	Fuzion Frenzy	58	Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee
53	Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding	54	Halo	28	Project Ego
32	Azurik: Rise of Perathia	29	Hunter: The Reckoning	59	Project Gotham Racing
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Relax, I'll handle this.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Comic Mischief
Violence

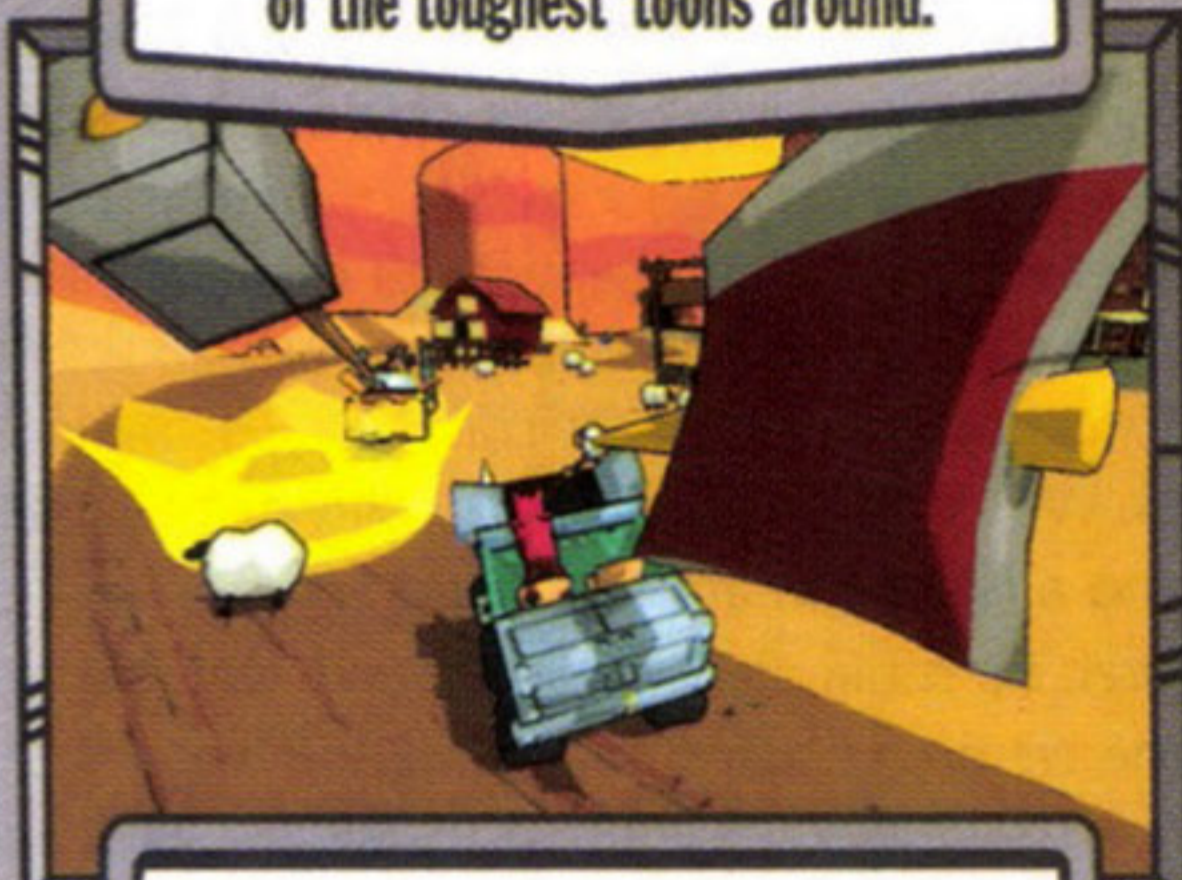
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XBOX

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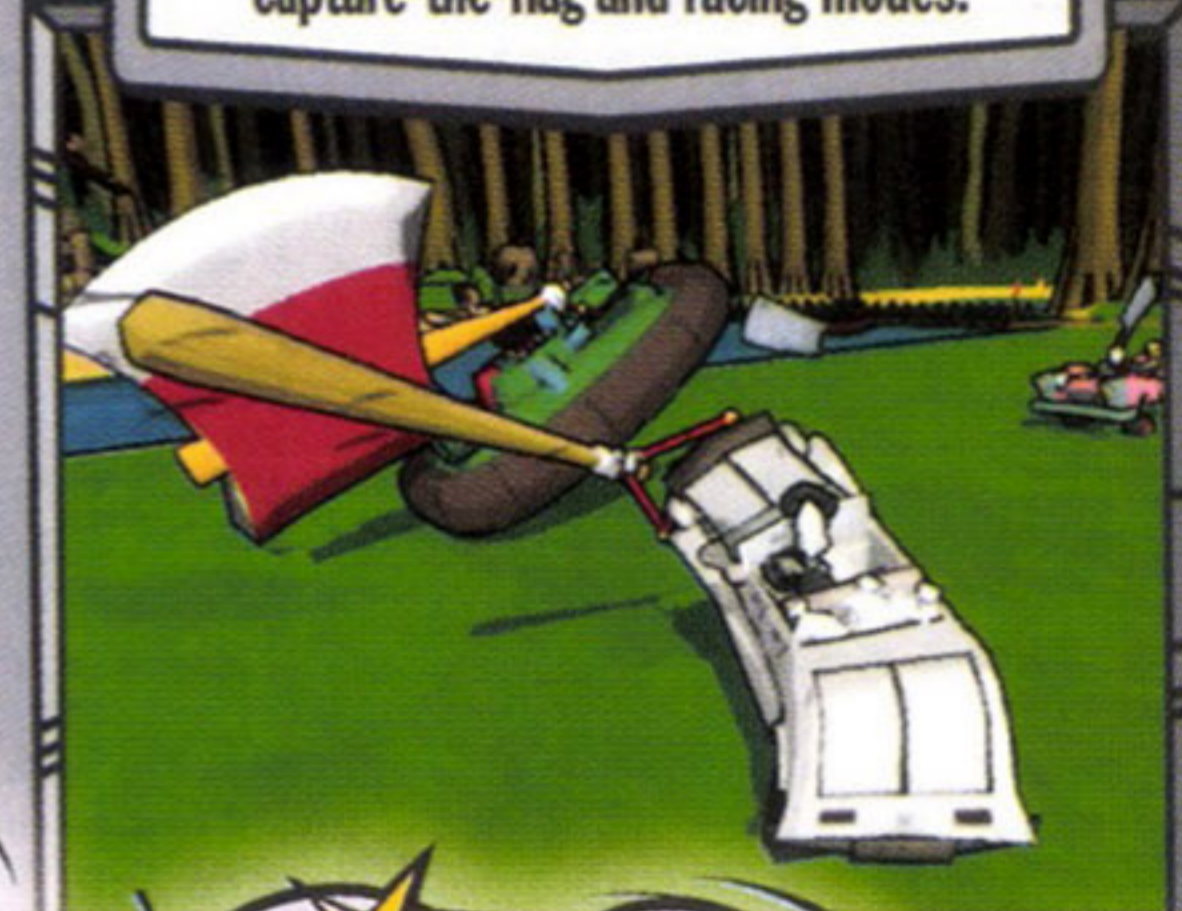
Hop into the suped-up rides of the toughest 'toons around.



Grab a chainsaw, giant axe or one of 34 other wild and wacky weapons.

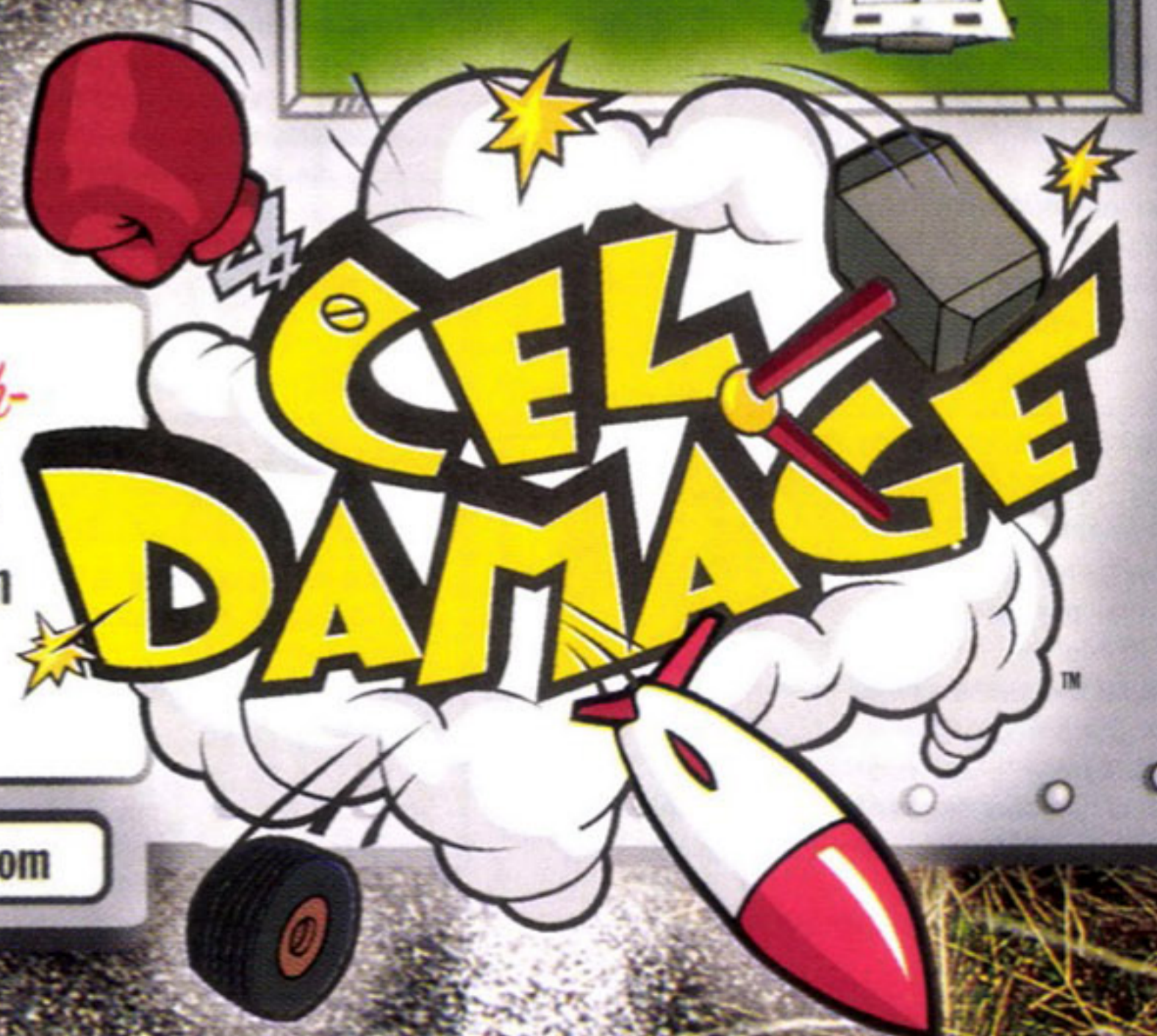


Smack your opponents silly in deathmatch, capture-the-flag and racing modes.



These *gas-powered gladiators* are ready for battle. A revolutionary '*stretch-and-squish*' engine makes Cel Damage part demolition derby, part whacked-out cartoon. You'll crash into *12 interactive environments* and smash your friends in *four-player split screen* mode. So buckle up, the 'toons rule the road.

For road conditions visit www.celdamage.ea.com or www.eagames.com



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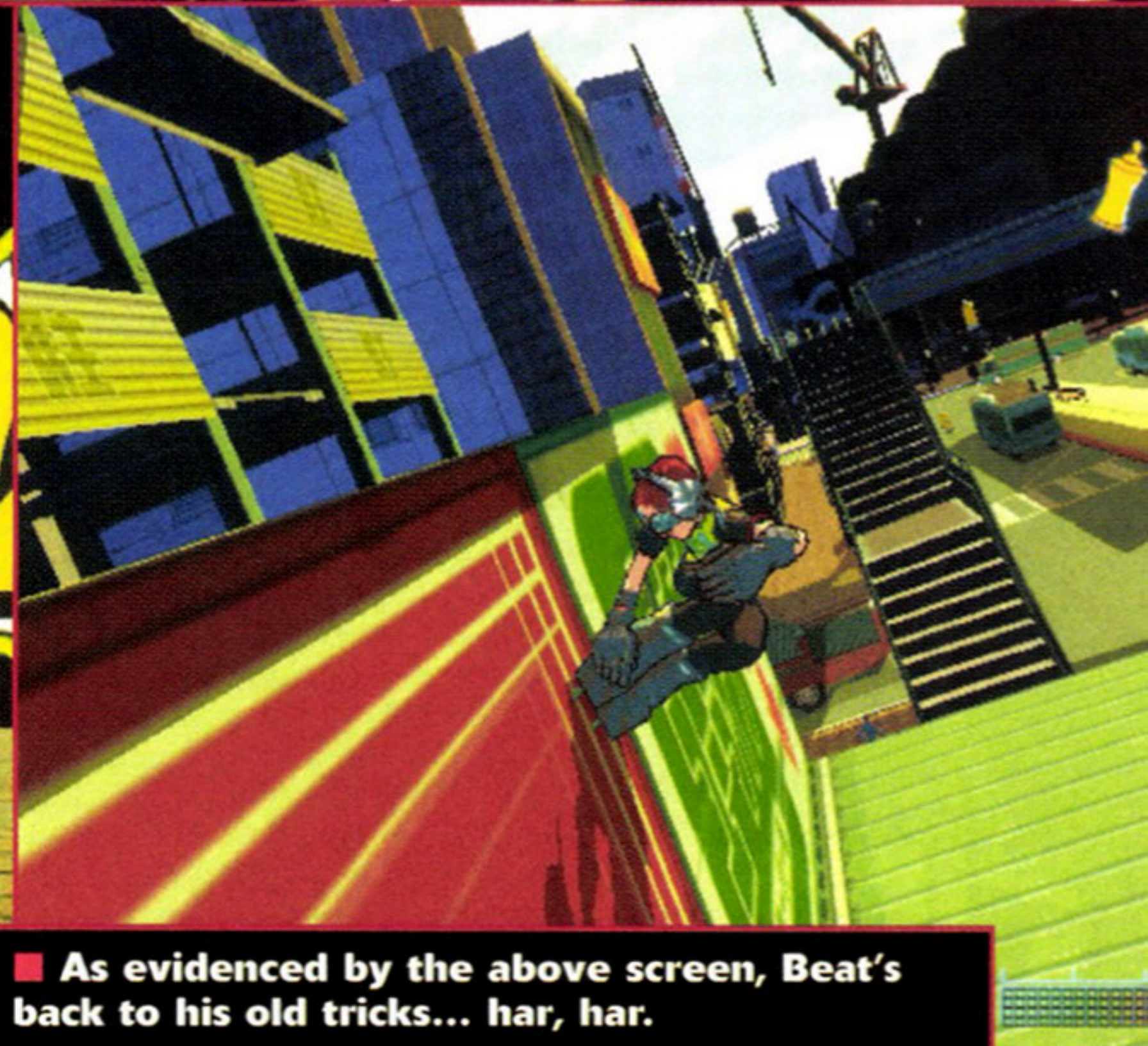
Smilebit is intent on a more "stylish" ride for JSRF tricksters. Expect plenty of big air moments.

If Smilebit had a dime...

... for every game that utilized the cel-shading technique that it had pioneered for something the team labels a "manga-like" look in *Jet Set Radio Future*, they would be very rich men, indeed. From Infogrames' *Wacky Races* to Tecmo's *Monster Rancher 3* to Sega's own WOW-developed arcade racer *Wild Riders*, the cartoony look of cel-shading has been referred to by veteran industry insiders as the new millennium's "lens flare" in gaming.



■ If you were a street punk with jet-powered skates, you'd tag walls too.



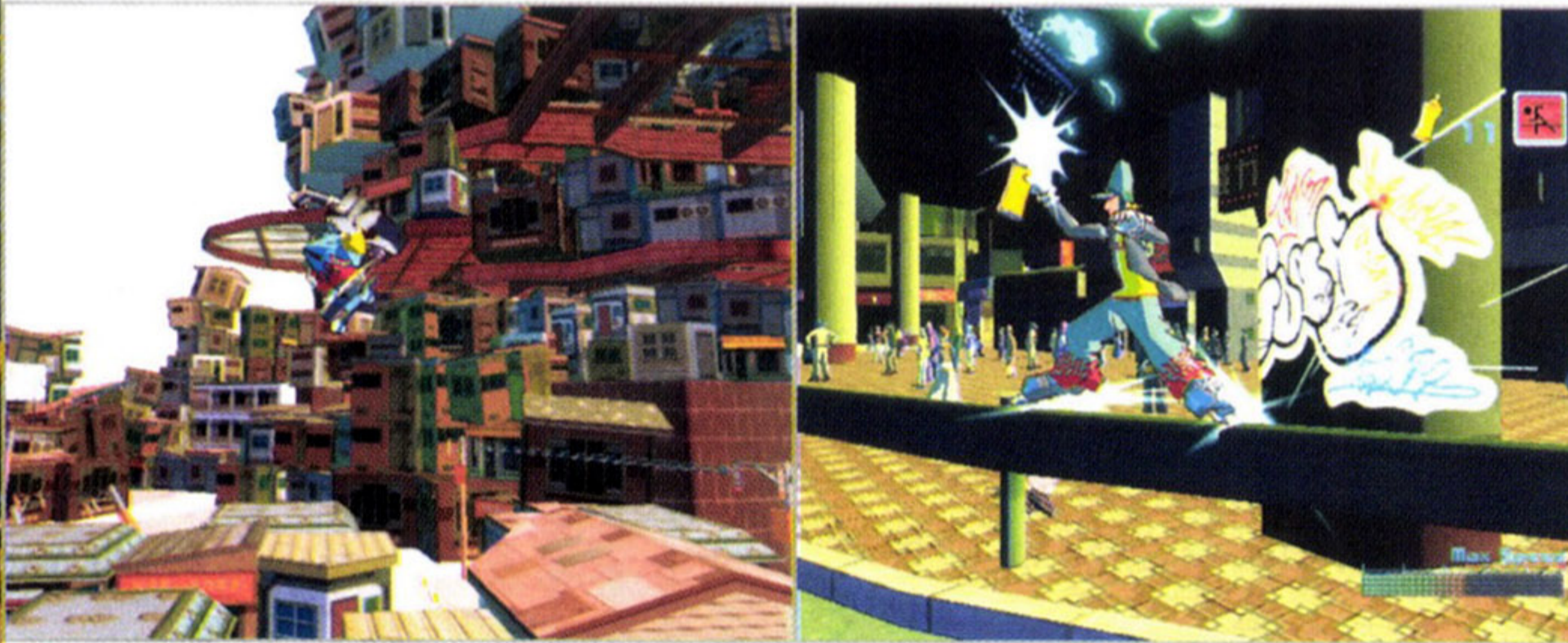
■ As evidenced by the above screen, Beat's back to his old tricks... har, har.

DEVELOPER: Smilebit

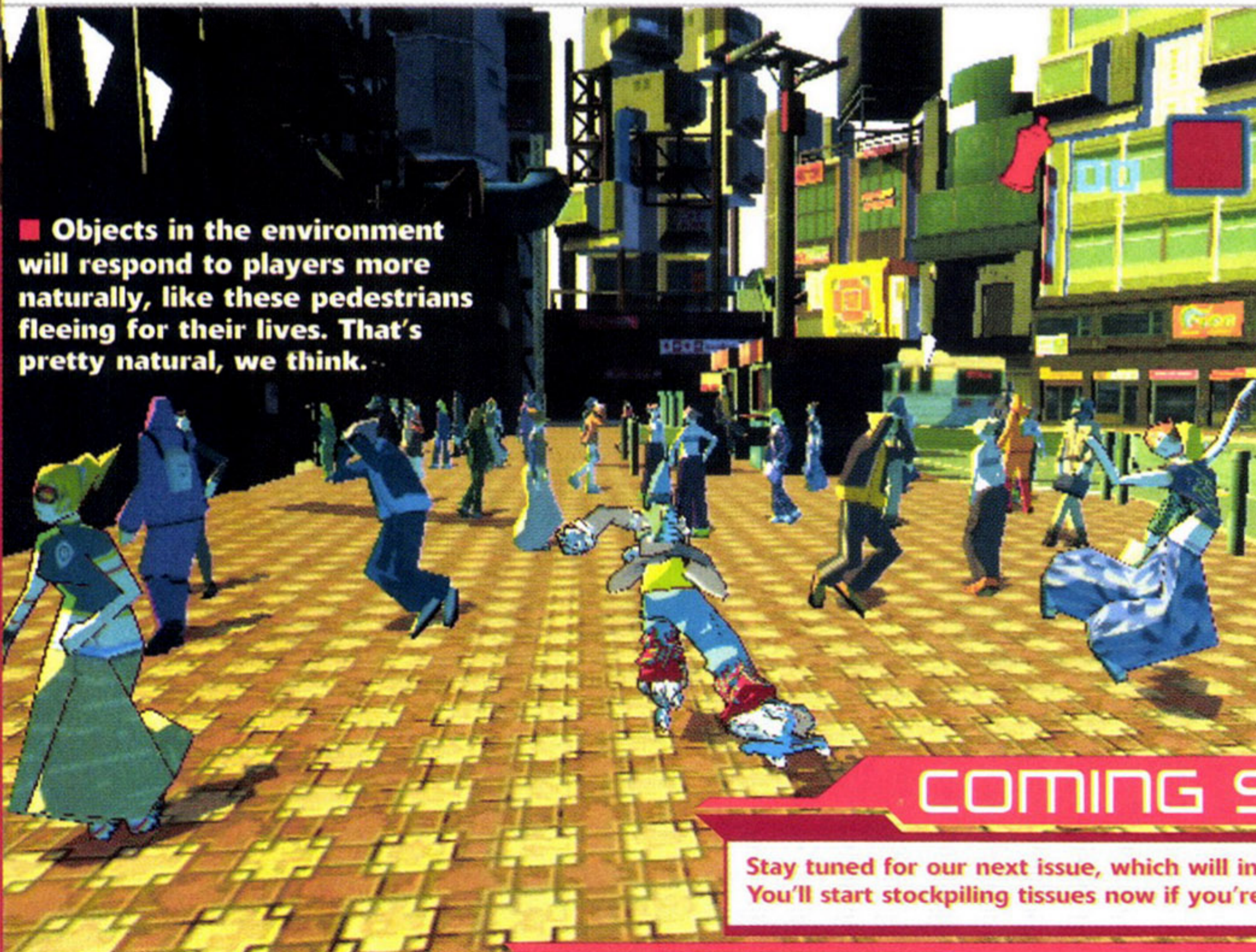
PUBLISHER: Sega RELEASE DATE: Spring 2002

JSRF: Jet Set Radio Future

Back to the Future



■ JSRF's producer, Takayuki Kawagoe, claims that the game's environments are only based on Tokyo, not a replication of it. Unless Tokyo is cel-shaded, he's right.



■ Objects in the environment will respond to players more naturally, like these pedestrians fleeing for their lives. That's pretty natural, we think.

When Microsoft announced that Sega was joining its lineup of developers on Xbox, the list of games that accompanied the announcement gave top billing to the sequel to the Dreamcast's futuristic cel-shaded graffiti skater *Jet Grind Radio* (*Jet Set Radio* in Japan). It was a bit surprising since the original was a marginal seller – but those who doubt the push behind the upcoming *Jet Set Radio Future* clearly haven't played the original.

Clever and almost too hip for its own good, *Jet Grind Radio* featured a playable set of street skaters, called the Shibuya GGs, looking to defend their turf in an alternate reality of Tokyo teeming with Gestapo-style anti-graffiti police and cyberpunk thugs. While the skating, tricking, and tagging gameplay was tightly designed and utterly addictive, it was the high-concept look and sound of the game that turned heads. *Jet Grind Radio* was arguably the best use of the then-new graphical technique of cel-shading and sparked a trend in videogame visuals that hasn't let up since (see *Cel Damage*).

"Graphics went from 2D to 3D, then the number of polygons increased and polygonal animation came next. This has been the evolutionary cycle in videogames," claims Takayuki Kawagoe, JSRF's producer. "I think *Jet Set Radio* has been able to resume the videogame evolution. This has been the main reason of its impact on the industry and our biggest reward."

Smilebit, the in-house Sega team responsible for the original, has bold plans to make this a bigger, more detailed, multiplayer affair with around 20 areas to explore within a Tokyo-inspired metropolis. But will it have any ties to the original in terms of theme or story? Will the GGs still be fighting the good – but messy – spray-paint fight against the evil Goji? Unfortunately, no. While many of the characters from the original will be returning in sleeker, hipper forms, there is no connection between the two beyond this, according to Smilebit.

Unlike its predecessor, JSRF will emphasize more exploration and more complex stunts within larger environments. You'll even be able to grind up streetlights. "It's like a theme park, actually," says Game Director Masayoshi Kikuchi. And now, lucky Xbox owners will be the happy recipients of *Jet Set Radio Future* when it releases this coming spring. **XBOX**

Clever and almost too hip for its own good

COMING SOON...

Stay tuned for our next issue, which will include an exclusive, tear-inducing trailer of the game in action. You'll start stockpiling tissues now if you're smart.

The grass is always greener...

11 • 08 • 01

DEAD OR ALIVE

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ALWAYS

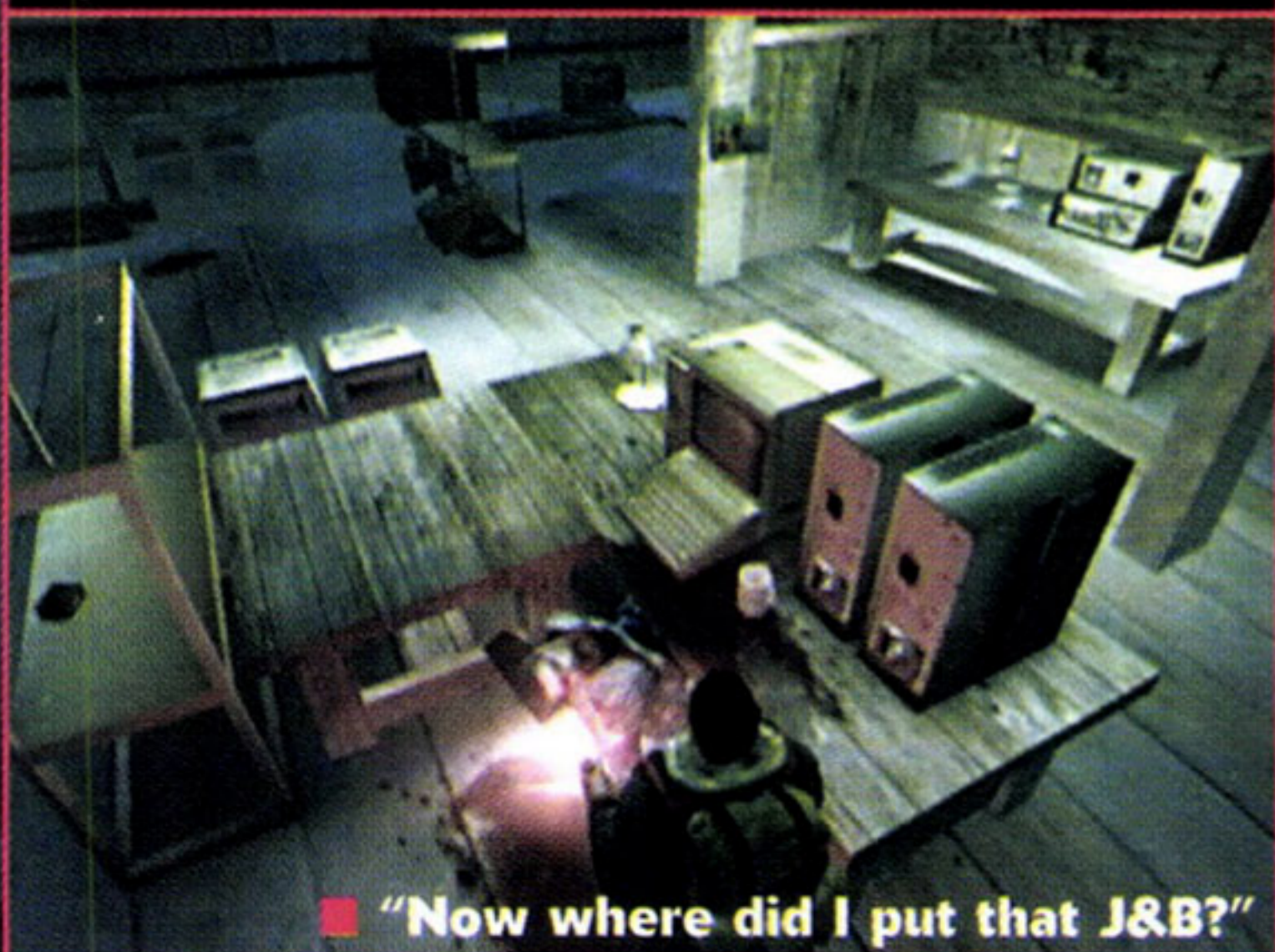
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XBOX



If you've seen the movie, you know what's going on in this picture. If you haven't, then you're in for a surprise.

Movie magic

While the characters and storyline will be slightly different than those in the movie version of *John Carpenter's The Thing*, the same can't be said for the game's environments and monsters. The player's adventures will weave in and out of an Antarctic research station lifted almost directly from the one found in the film. And you'll have to learn every nook and cranny of the station as the shape-shifting "thing" you're chasing will also be chasing you on numerous occasions.



■ "Now where did I put that J&B?"

DEVELOPER: Computer Artworks
PUBLISHER: Universal | RELEASE DATE: Q1 2002

The Thing

*Man is the warmest
place to hide.*

Everyone loves a good scare. Especially gamers, who hastily gobble up all things virtual horror across every platform, dating back to the text adventure days (think *Lurking Horror* from Infocom). The survival horror genre has embraced gamers' love of all things that go bump, bleed, and squoosh in the night – starting with games such as the B-movie-alike *Resident Evil* series to the genuinely creepy *Silent Hill*.

So, when a game promises to include gore, thrills, and preternatural hijinks in association with an accomplished sci-fi horror-film license, the potential is sky-high. And this is exactly what Universal Studios is aiming for with the upcoming release of *The Thing*, based on the ultra-creepy 1982 John Carpenter movie of the same generic name.

Taking off where the movie left off, players assume the guise of a military squad captain who is sent on assignment to Antarctica to sniff out clues in a multiple murder mystery. Who (or what) killed all the men on the previous US expedition to the same snowcapped location? Are the men on your crew safe from whatever caused the massacre? Can you trust them? And this is exactly what will propel much of the events in-game: trust.

British developer Computer Artworks has created and designed what is being labeled as a

“revolutionary gameplay mechanic” that will monitor the psychological states of all the characters in the game – kinda like a virtual Freud without all that creepy Oedipus stuff. This feature will allow you to determine whether or not one of your non-playable team members is willing to cooperate with you or whether he has succumbed to suspicion... or even worse. But, while the “advanced trust/fear interface” will play a major role in the game, Universal also plans on focusing quite a bit on puzzle solving and straightforward murdering.

With plenty of horrific beasts to battle, as well as highly detailed 3D environments, we have high hopes that *The Thing* will be the game to dispel any belief in the movie-licensed videogame curse proven by subpar predecessors.

XBOX

**Kinda like
a virtual
Freud
without
all that
creepy
Oedipus
stuff**

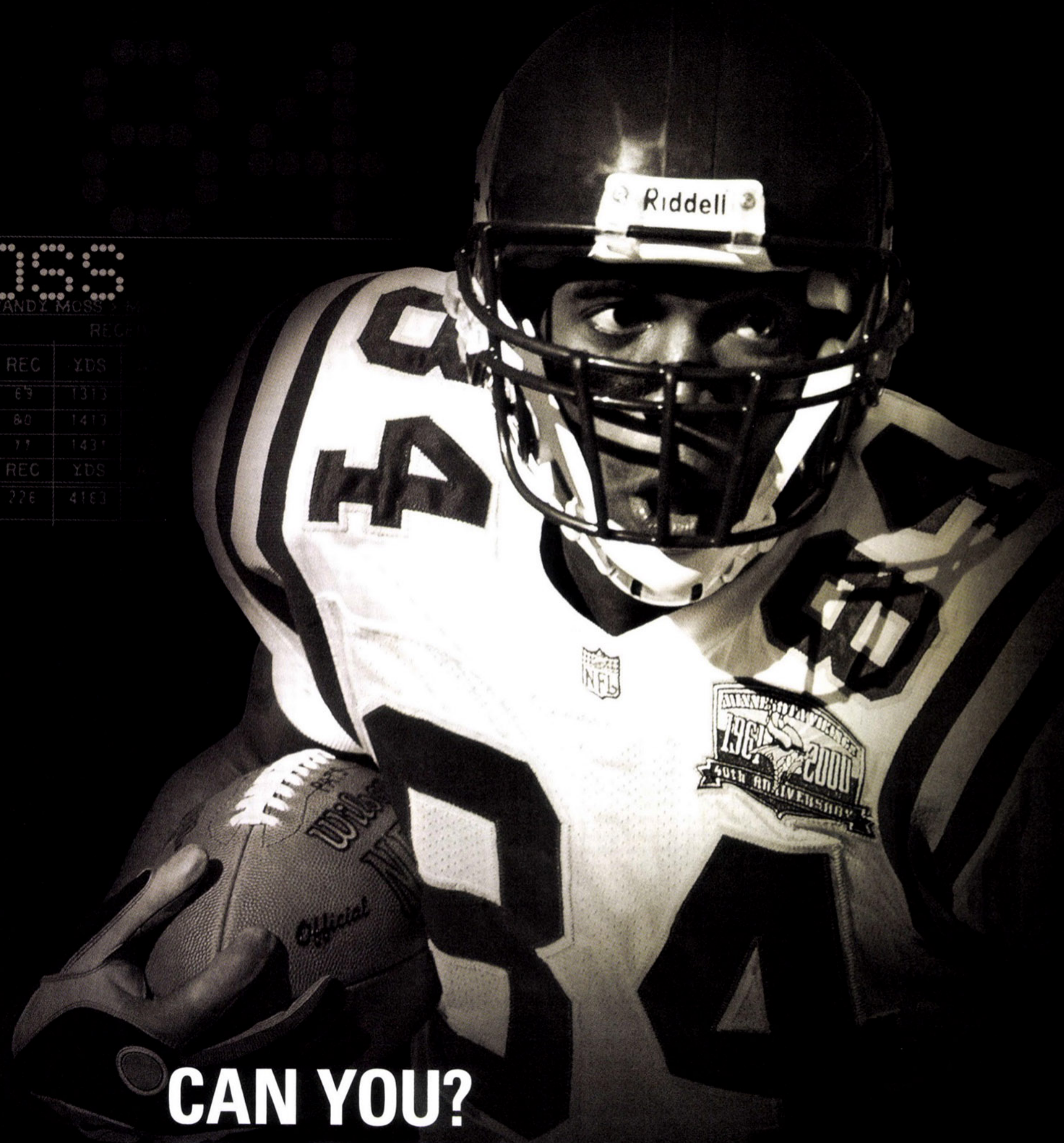
COMING SOON...

Universal is preparing a killer game trailer for this that'll rival those made in Hollywood. It's set to land on our disc next issue along with a full preview with hands-on impressions as the game nears release next year.

MOSS

RANDY MOSS > MINNESOTA
RECEIVING

GAMES	REC	YDS
16	69	1313
16	80	1413
16	77	1437
GAMES	REC	YDS
48	226	4163



CAN YOU?

DOMINATE

RANDY MOSS > MINNESOTA
RECEIVING

AVG YR	GAMES	REC	YDS	AVG
1998-2003	16	69	1313	15.0
1997-2004	16	80	1413	17.7

PEDRO



WILL YOU?
INTIMIDATE

MARTINEZ

G	GS	CG	SHO	IP	H	R	ER	HR
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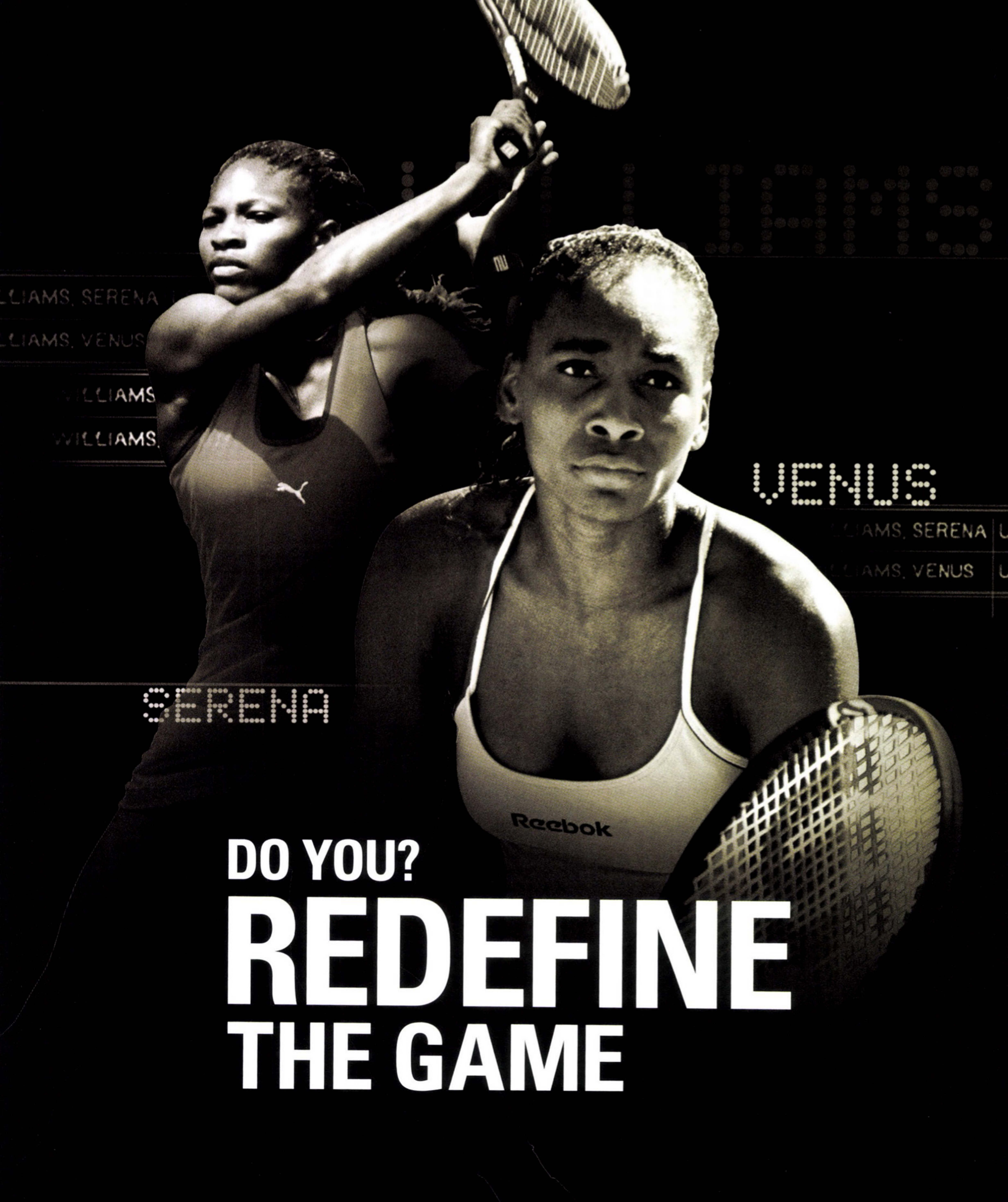
WILLIAMS, SERENA
WILLIAMS, VENUS
WILLIAMS
WILLIAMS

VENUS

WILLIAMS, SERENA U
WILLIAMS, VENUS U

SERENA

DO YOU?
REDEFINE
THE GAME



ALLEN IVERSON >G > #3

REGULAR SEASON STATISTICS

GS	MPG	FGM-A	FG%	3PM-A	3P%
71	42.0	762-1,813	.420	38-306	.32

STG	BPG	TO	PF
28	3.34	2.10	3.10

IVERSON

PLAYOFFS

PLAYOFF STATISTICS

FGM-A	FG%	3PM-A
257-661	.389	48-141

**DARE YOU?
TAKE
CONTROL**

SEGA

SPORTS™

PEDRO

DEF	TOT	APG	SPG	BPG	TO	PF	PTS
4.00	4.10	6.1	2.36	.37	2.86	2.50	



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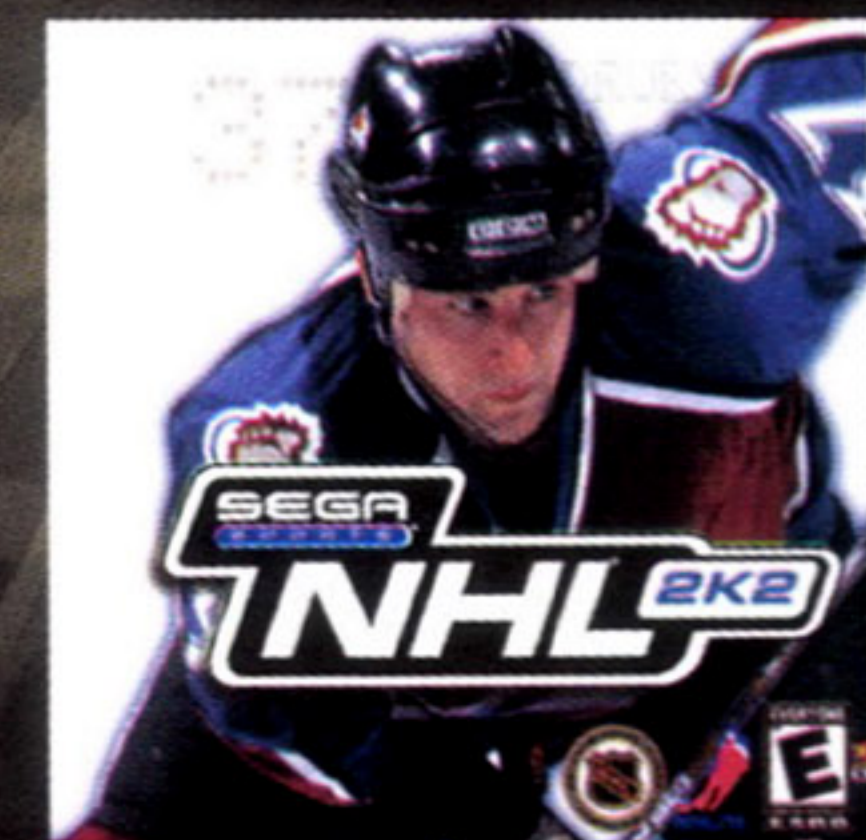
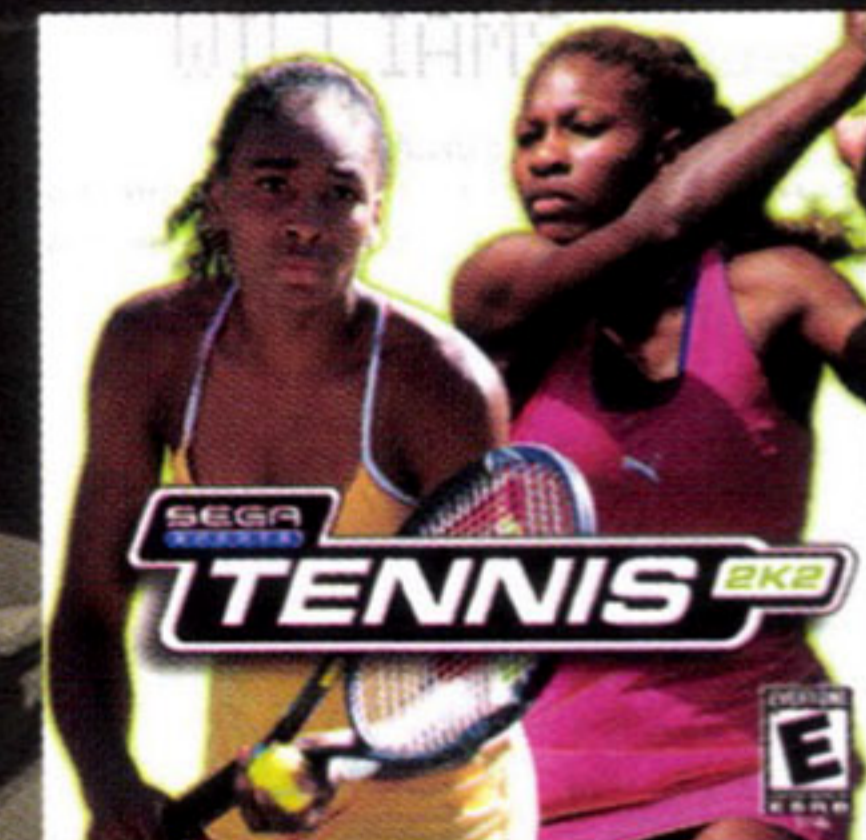
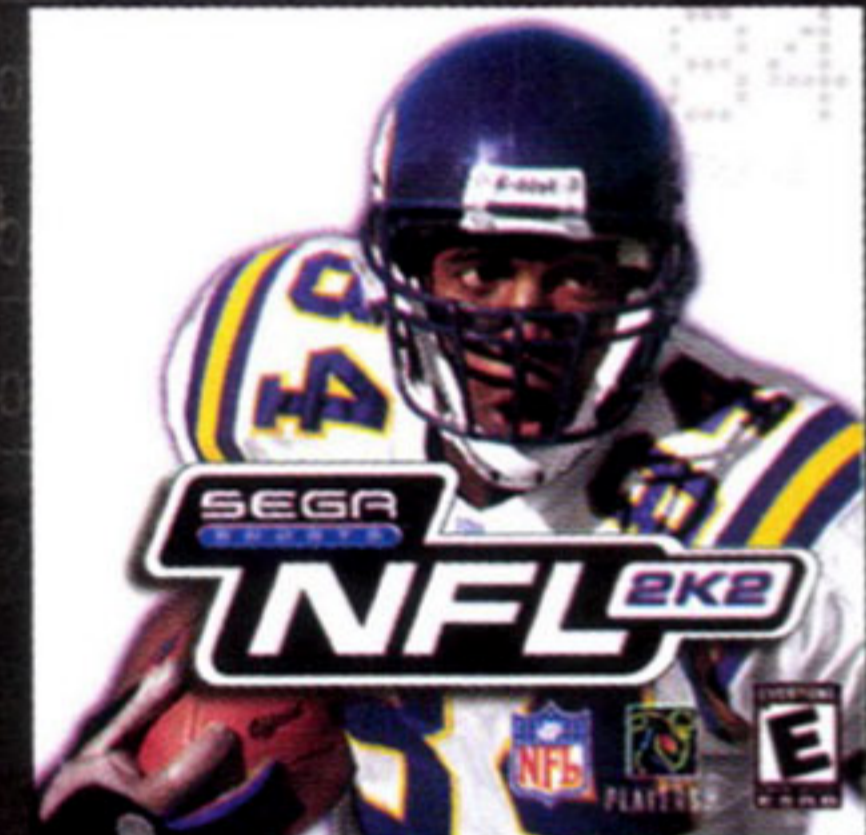
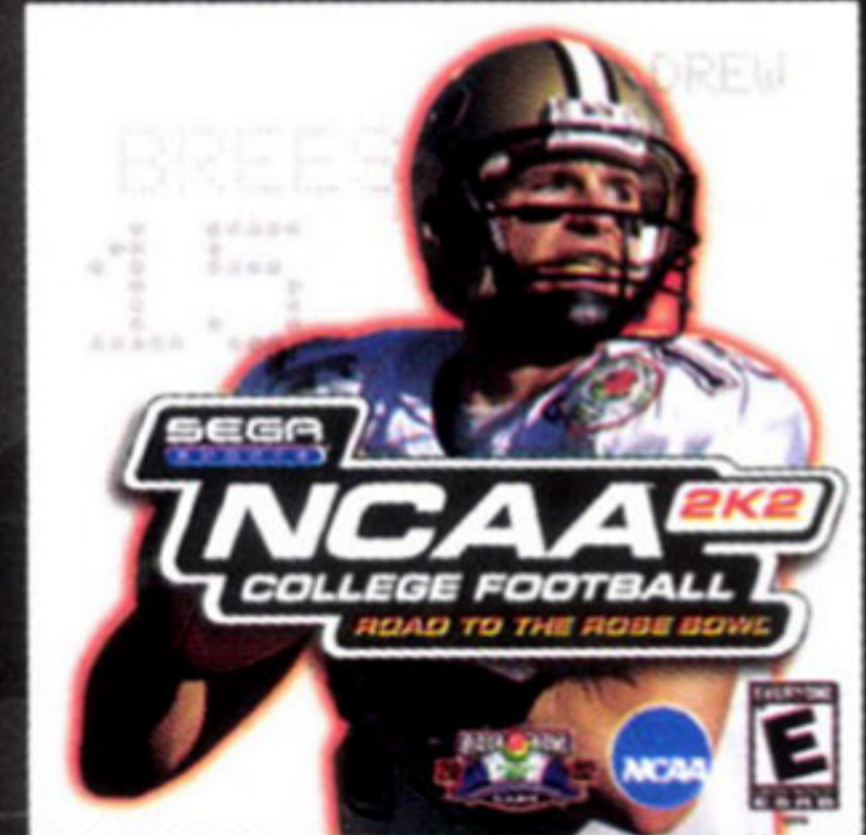
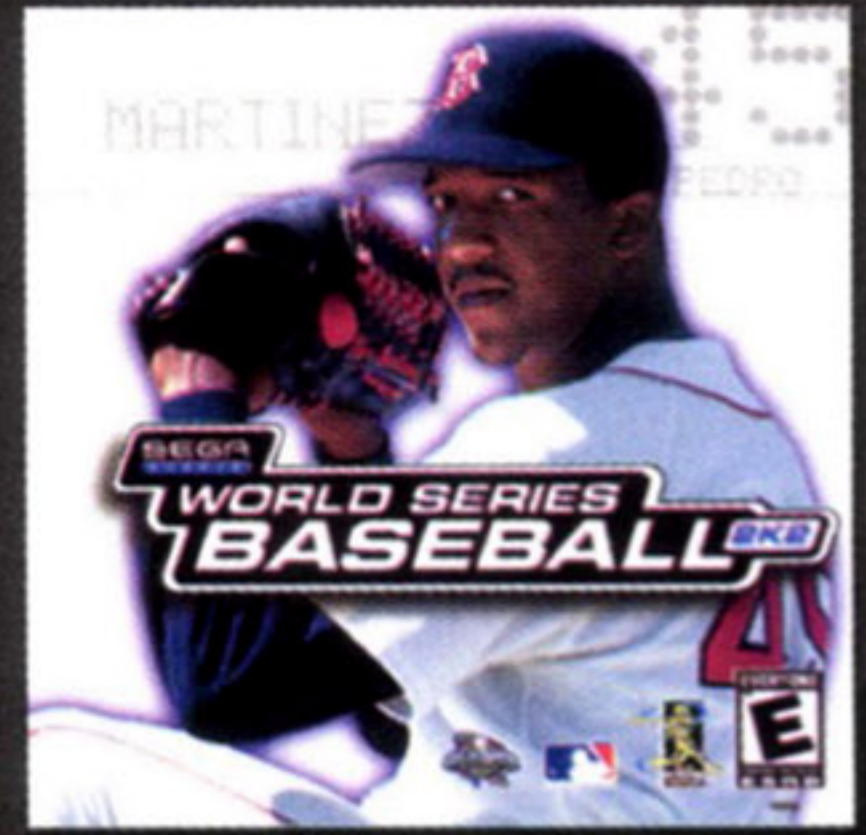
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BE READY

THE BIGGEST HEROES.
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All Access

A backstage pass to the world of Xbox



The game begins

Microsoft readies the Xbox for takeoff... will the world be ready?

The Xbox launches on November 8. In approximately one month (depending on when you're reading this) the world's most powerful videogame

console will be available in stores. And that's going to be a busy week. The oft-delayed Nintendo GameCube will now launch two weeks later – with considerably fewer games and (of course) no DVD capability.

Microsoft has promised to spend \$500 million marketing this system to a public that still needs some convincing. This kind of budget will go a long way toward doing that, but like any game system launch in history, it's all about the games.

Sony's PS2 launch a year ago was tragic at best with a weak lineup and an epic shortage in hardware, but it rode on the simple promise of better games in the pipeline, and true to form, the

Uppers and Downers

How this month's news affects the world of videogames.

Electronic Arts: There'll be *SSX Tricky*, *Madden 2002*, *Cel Damage*, and *The Simpsons Road Rage* at or soon after launch. Rumors that EA gets preferential treatment from Microsoft are surely exaggerated... surely.

Activision: *Tony Hawk 2x* kicks butt and delivers even more than it promised, 13 other Xbox games are in development, and the company has *Return to Wolfenstein* waiting in the wings – Xbox version, please!

Microsoft: A controller we love to hate, a huge investment, and lots of work yet to do – but there's no denying the console has extreme potential.

Sega: Bruised and battered from the Dreamcast nightmare, Sega staggers back to its corner and prepares to rake in a fortune as a third party.

Nuon Continues to dominate gaming, only in total secrecy.

Japanese Games: Support from Japanese developers has been a bit slow for Xbox, but with the recent announcements from Namco, Capcom, and possibly even Square, things could definitely turn around for Xbox in Japan.

Nintendo, Sony: No DVD capability, no launch variety, and another delay for the GameCube – and no bump-mapping, no real-time pixel shading, nor progressive scan for PS2. Eat it!

company delivered, with titles like *Gran Turismo 3* currently available, and *Metal Gear Solid 2* in the works. Nintendo seems doomed to repeat history, launching with a tiny selection of games, and only one (so far) revealed killer app – curiously, from a third party, in the shape of LucasArts' *Rogue Leader*. *Luigi's Mansion* looks cute, but it's no *Mario 64*. And Nintendo has made hardware mistakes in the past – Virtual Boy, anyone?

Mistakes by competitors aside, Microsoft still has a lot to do, but an initial launch selection of approximately 14 games, including *Halo*, *Dead or Alive 3*, and *Madden 2002* should, at the very least, provide variety. The system's inclusion of DVD capabilities, an incredibly flexible hard-drive, and – most importantly – broadband capability out of the box cannot be underestimated. Come November, these juggernauts will be fighting tooth and nail for your attention and their market share.

We know that Nintendo's GameCube will be priced at a competitive \$199 against Xbox's \$299, and rumors are already circulating that PlayStation2 will see a price drop shortly before either of these new systems launches. And then Sony has the tricky proposition of launching a broadband adapter and hard-drive combo to a somewhat bemused public (console hardware upgrades have historically bombed: 32X, 64DD, Sega CD, et al). Could it be that Sony is more worried than it's letting on? We'll find out soon enough.

Will the Xbox come out on time?



YES

"Xbox is absolutely on track for our Nov. 8 release date here in North America, just as we announced at Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). We're still anticipating an allocation on that day of 600,000 to 800,000 units and 1 million to 1.5 million by the end of the year."

David Hufford, Group PR Manager, Xbox

Official Xbox Magazine analysis

Rumors of a possible Xbox delay seem to have been greatly exaggerated. In fact, the only delay that has happened so far is to Nintendo's "the GameCube will definitely launch on schedule" GameCube. Only a month after his bragging quote in *Famitsu*, Peter Main and Nintendo announced a two-week delay. The question is no longer whether the Xbox will be delayed, but whether the GameCube will be delayed yet again. This time they promise it will be out on November 18 – of course they "promised" last time, too.

"Microsoft has announced November 8th as their launch date, but I don't think that's final. The GameCube will definitely launch on schedule though, and it will be a strong contender during the Christmas season. We're lining up games now, so it's just a matter of doing what we do best. Even if Microsoft manages to launch on schedule, they're targeting a different audience."

Peter Main, Executive Vice President, Nintendo (excerpt from *Famitsu Magazine* interview)



NO

Launch Rater

A quick, and mostly unbiased, look at the Xbox launch versus other console launches.

The five keys to a successful console launch

1. THE GAMES

The Xbox will launch with a surprisingly strong lineup of games. More importantly, the lineup is spread out through most of the important game genres, including racing, sports, fighting, adventure, and action.



2. THE RETAIL PRESENCE

Thanks to previous retail experience with a little software program you might know as Windows, Microsoft has the know-how and relationships to make a launch work. No console has ever spent more money on retail presence than Microsoft.



4. THE TIMING

In some ways, now is both a good and bad time for a launch. On the good side, the videogame industry is picking up steam after a dismal year for everyone. On the bad side, GameCube is launching just 10 days after the Xbox.



3. THE POTENTIAL

No one disputes that the Xbox is the most powerful console in creation, which bodes well for the future. Many developers feel that in the coming years, the Xbox will begin to distinguish itself more and more from the GameCube and the PS2 in terms of graphics. On the down side, some third-party developers are taking a wait-and-see approach toward the Xbox and will only start on second-generation titles for the system if their early titles sell strongly.



5. THE PRICE

In 1993, 3DO tried to launch a mass-market videogame console for \$699. Needless to say, that didn't go over so well. Nintendo has launched several successful consoles at \$199 – and Sony has proven that gamers are more than willing to fork out \$299 for a console that they really want. Microsoft hopes to build a similar demand for its \$299 console with a massive Xbox advertising blitz and an impressive combination of processing power and exclusive games.



Late-breaking!

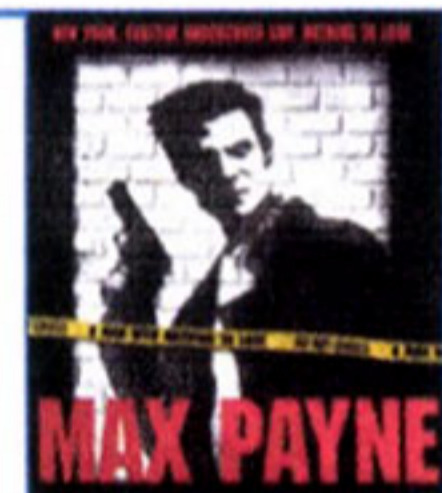
Xbox: Powered by Namco

Just as we went to press on this issue, we got the word we'd all been waiting for. Namco will produce at least four games for Xbox, including (yoinks!) *Soul Calibur 2*, a new *Ridge Racer* title, and the hotly anticipated action title *Dead to Rights*. The fourth game is at this point unknown, but we expect either *Tekken 4* or *Mr Driller X*...



A bit of the old this and that

If it's important to the Xbox, we've got it here:



Max Payne for the Xbox

The news: Take Two Interactive has announced that it's moving its popular third-person shooter to the Xbox. The game wowed critics on the PC with its cinematic gameplay and stylistic slow-motion shootouts. The Xbox version will be in stores this fall.

Why it's important: *Max Payne* seems more at home on a console than it does on the PC. Plus, no console on earth can render it prettier than the Xbox.

Official Xbox Mag's take on it: This is just another head-to-head opportunity for the Xbox to show that it's the most powerful console on earth.

Malice finds a home

The news: One of the first games ever shown for the Xbox has finally found a publisher. *Malice*, a platform game starring a girl and her trusty mallet, is being developed by Argonaut – and has been in limbo without a publisher since the console was first announced to the press. Vivendi Universal snagged the game and plans to have it on the Xbox by 2002 and then follow it up with PS2 and GameCube versions later on.

Why it is important: *Malice* showcases many of the best Xbox special features such as bump-mapping, realtime shadows, and high-resolution textures. The game will even use the Xbox Communicator headset and voice-recognition tools.

Official Xbox Mag's take on it: We've been waiting for this game since it first appeared. It's about time they got the deal sealed.



Nvidia stock soars thanks to Xbox

The news: Nvidia's stock price has soared thanks in great part to its relationship with the Microsoft. Nvidia produces the proprietary graphics processing unit for the Xbox, and the company is scheduled to pull in as much as \$80 for every console sold. The company is forecasting revenue to increase more than 50 percent this year.

Why it is important: The financial types are starting to believe in the Xbox.

Official Xbox Mag's take on it: We don't care about stocks and share prices, we just care about games... but it's still good to know that the suits are excited too.

MadCatz peripheral shocker!

The news: This new peripheral for the Xbox actually zaps players with real-life electrical shocks – some strong enough to make gamers actually drop the controller.

Why it is important: There hasn't been much innovation in controller design since the advent of force feedback.

Official Xbox Mag's take on it: C'mon, admit it. You want to try this thing too.



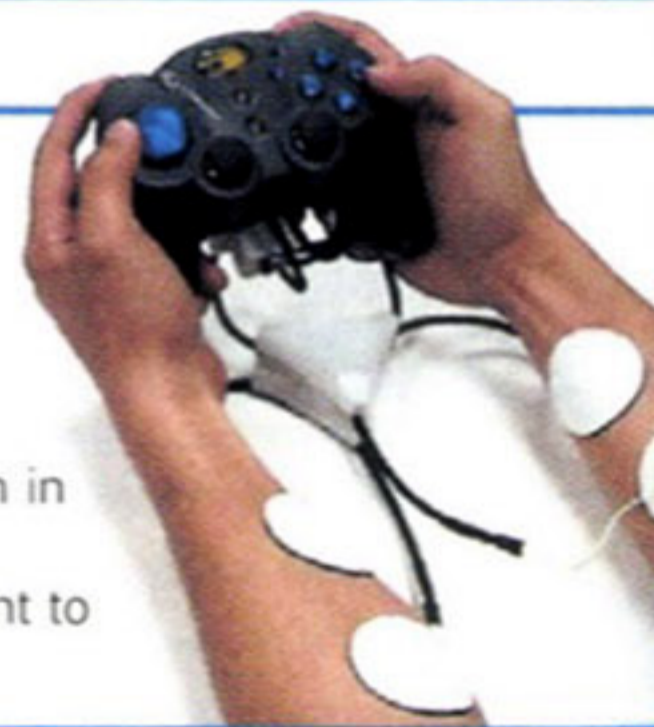
Devil May Cry for Xbox?

The News: In the recent issue of *Next Generation*, *Devil May Cry's* Hideki Kamiya commented about Capcom's upcoming PS2 title and its chances on the Xbox or GameCube. While we've heard rumors about *Devil May Cry* coming to the Xbox, no one close to the project has yet to confirm anything. Here's Kamiya's response when asked if the title is in the works for the Xbox or GameCube:

"I haven't been able to study other hardware, so I can't say specifically. I would say the game would look prettier on Xbox. As for GameCube, I have a feeling it isn't the right kind of game for this platform."

Why it is important: The Xbox needs support from Japanese developers, and it seems that developers are finally starting to recognize the capabilities of Microsoft's console.

Official Xbox Mag's take on it: Once Japanese developers realize that their games will look best on Xbox, it won't be long before more games follow.



Robot/Monkey Apocalypse Tracker



Beginning in this, the Preview issue of *Official Xbox Magazine*, we'll be tracking the obvious signs of the impending Robot/Monkey Apocalypse. News agencies are reporting more and more instances of death, horror, and suffering instigated by robots and/or monkeys. Only the truly blinkered can afford to ignore stories like...

Monkeyman panic continues in India

"Large colonies in New Delhi were gripped by fear of attacks after dozens of people reported they were bitten or clawed by the nocturnal 'monkey man.' At least three people panicked and fell to their deaths from buildings during the two-week saga because they were convinced the attacker – described variously as a monkey-like creature with metallic claws and a cat with tawny, glowing eyes – was pursuing them." – CNN.com

■ Monkey count: 1 ■ Robot count: 1 ■ Death/injuries: 3+

Apocalypse Factor: 5+

Hoax caller was cheeky chimp

"For two consecutive nights, three employees of the Blair Drummond Safari Park in Stirling, Scotland, received dozens of calls from an anonymous caller between 6 p.m. and 4 a.m. They heard nothing but heavy breathing and the occasional sniff." – ABCNews.com

■ Monkey count: 1 ■ Robot count: 0 ■ Death/injuries: 0

Apocalypse Factor: 3

Robot technology moves forward

"U.S. government agencies began funding humanoid robot researchers like Mataric, whose robot Adonis is learning to dance the Macarena." – Reuters

■ Monkey count: 0 ■ Robot count: 1 ■ Death/injuries: 0

Apocalypse Factor: 3

Monkey brain controls robot

"It was an amazing sight to see the robot in my lab move, knowing that it was being driven by signals from a monkey brain at Duke," said Mandayam Srinivasan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "It was as if the monkey had a 600-mile-long virtual arm." – Reuters

■ Monkey count: 1 ■ Robot count: 1 ■ Death/injuries: None yet

Apocalypse Factor: 4



GameWatch

Twelve games to keep at least one of your eyes on...



Enclave

Projected release: 2002

The good stuff: *Enclave* is a hard-boiled *Team Fortress*-style action game set in a beautiful fantasy world. You choose between a number of character classes and then update your minions throughout the game with new armor, weapons, and powers. The graphics are some of the best we've seen.

The scary stuff: When you see one of *Enclave's* ogres in full battle armor ready to fight... you'll know scary.



The Simpsons Road Rage

Projected release: 2002

The good stuff: *Road Rage* plunges the quick-fix gameplay of *Crazy Taxi* into a fully realized 3D *Simpsons* environment. Unlike previous *Simpsons* games, this one actually captures the feel, humor, and attention to detail that makes the series an all-time geek favorite.

The scary stuff: Previous *Simpsons* games have ranged in quality from captacular to horrific.



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Under the Radar

The best Xbox games you've never heard of

New game, you say? So what's it called?

Dreadnoughts.

Who's making it?

A small development house out of Portland, Oregon, called Xenopi Studios.

What's the game about?

Like *Halo*, *Dreadnoughts* is a squad-oriented first-person shooter. The action is focused around cooperative teamplay that blends together the best elements of games such as *Unreal*, *Tribes*, and *Team Fortress*. It is planned to support online play and Game Commander as well.

Why should we care?

Like other teamplay shooters, the gameplay follows modified Capture the Flag rules, but in this case, the flags are massive, heavily armed capital ships that must be destroyed by the other team. Learning how to protect these ships while harnessing their awesome weaponry is the key to the game.

Why haven't we heard of it yet?

Xenopi is still looking for a publisher for *Dreadnoughts*. When the company secures a deal, you'll definitely hear more about this title.

■ **SCM seeks RPP: Enjoys teamplay, massive capital ships, and long walks on beachheads.**



Xbox M.A.M.E.



■ **Monkeys... we like 'em.**

If you're familiar at all with the world of arcade emulation, then you already know about M.A.M.E. (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator). If you aren't familiar with emulation, all you need to know is that this amazing piece of software can emulate the arcade hardware for more than 1,500 classic arcade games from the '70s, '80s, and '90s. It has a strong following on the PC – and may someday have a similar following on the Xbox.

A programmer has successfully ported the arcade emulator over to an Xbox development kit and has the program up and running for almost all of the games supported by the PC version of M.A.M.E. This version will support both analog sticks and even uses the Xbox's four controller ports to facilitate multiplayer games such as *Gauntlet*.

Unfortunately, Microsoft will most likely never let anyone distribute the Xbox version of M.A.M.E. because of massive legal issues. Of course that won't stop us from trying to get a pre-release version for the office... for research.

THE IT THING

Volumetric grass

As seen in: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X*

The old way:

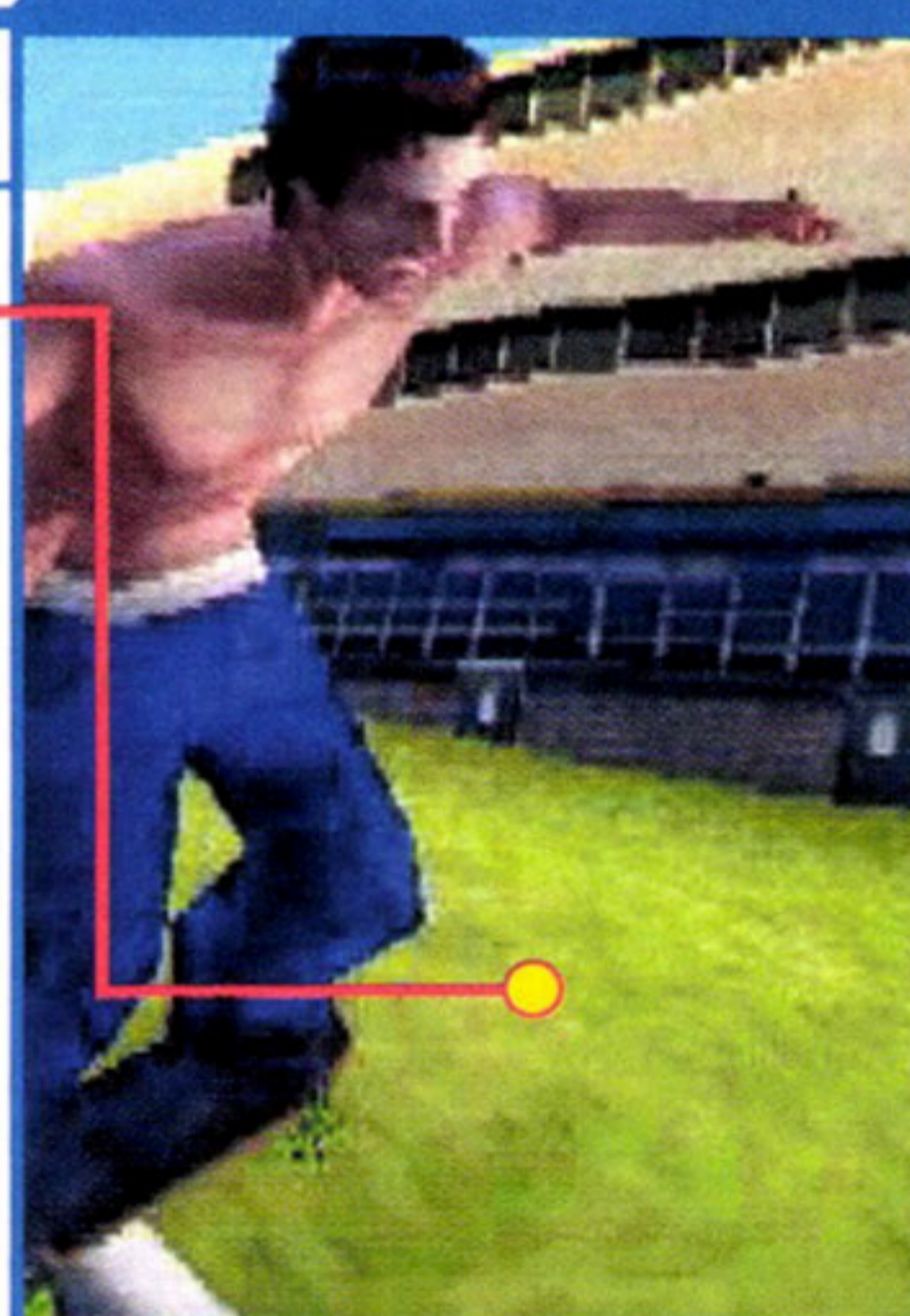
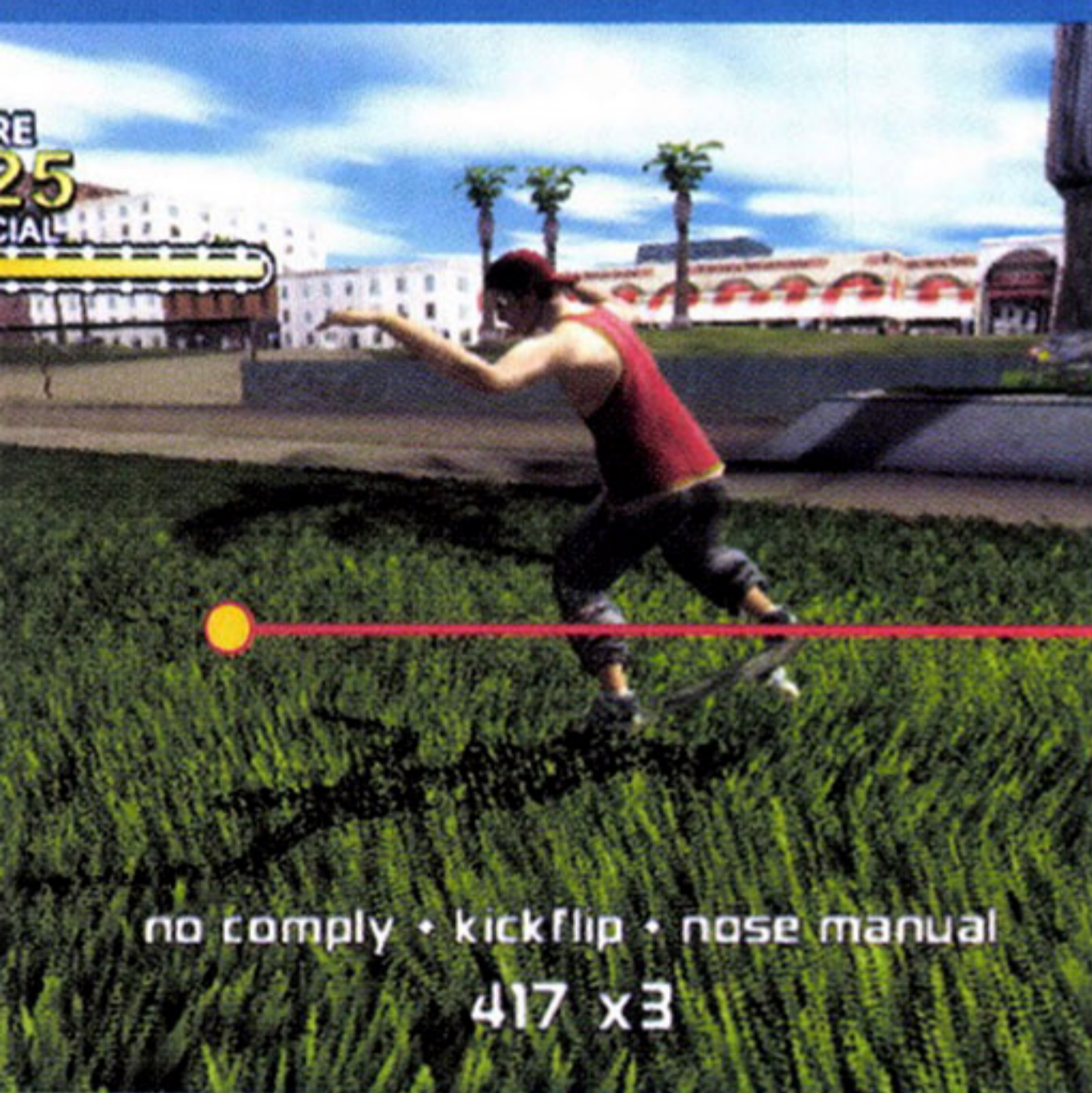
One of the worst things about console graphics in the past is that the grass never looked like... well... grass. Football players competed on big green slabs of concrete, role-playing characters trekked across brave new worlds carpeted with Astroturf, and even the stuff that snowboarding game characters smoke doesn't look real (until after you've smoked it – we hear).

The Xbox way:

Using PIXEL SHADERS (a technology that can add visual effects such as shading, coloring, and lighting on more than two million pixels simultaneously at 60 frames per second), the Xbox can render insane amounts of data... including a field full of individually rendered blades of grass.

Where else can we find "it":

Keep your eyes peeled, this stuff will pop up everywhere next year.

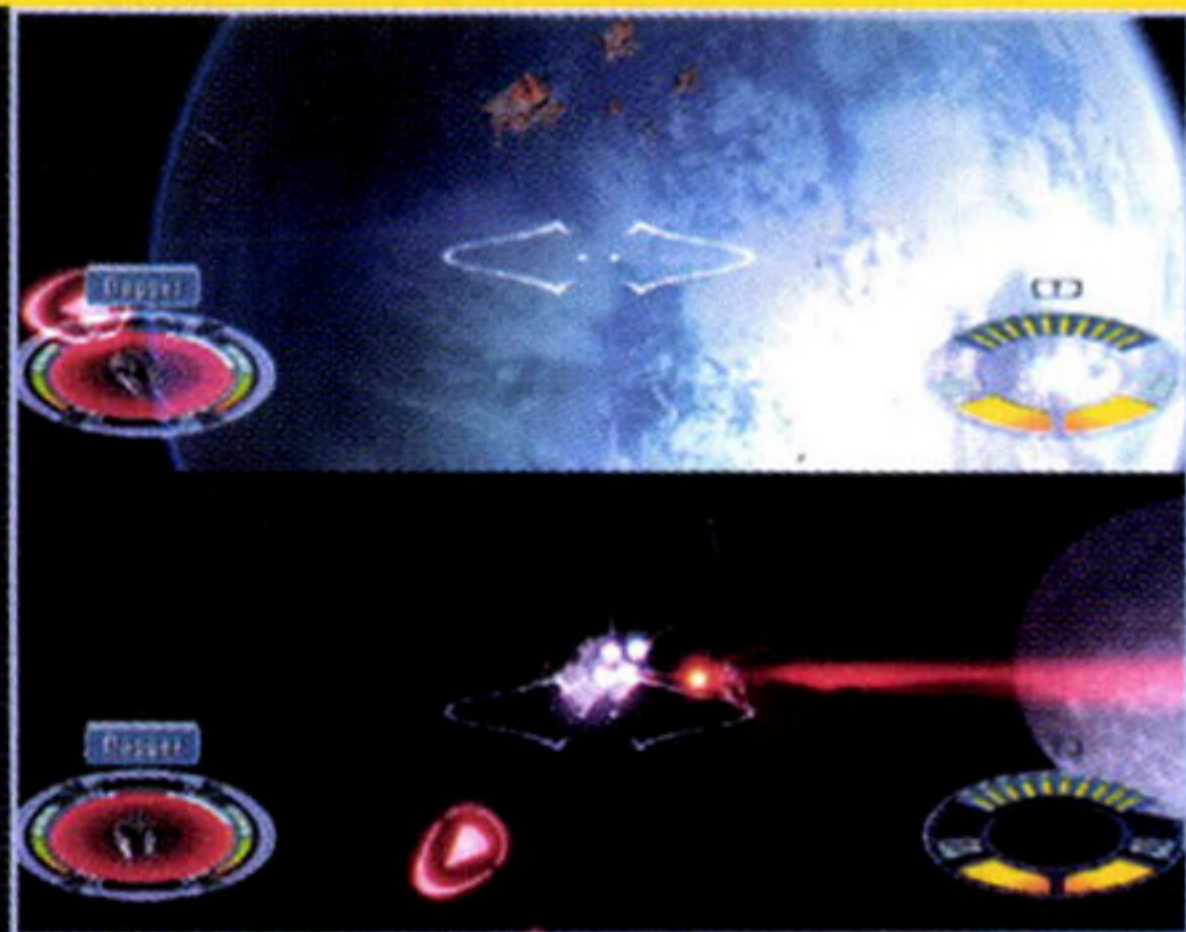


no comply • kickflip • nose manual

417 x3

GameWatch

Other games on the way: *Fellowship of the Rings* (Sierra) -



Star Wars Episode I: Starfighter Special Edition

Projected release: November 2001

The good stuff: *Starfighter Special Edition* is a massive update both technologically and in terms of gameplay – with special attention lavished on two-player modes. Five new bonus missions have been bolted on, and tons of secret goodies, including Darth Maul's Infiltrator craft, make the Xbox version the best-looking yet.

The scary stuff: Smells like a port. A good one, but still a port.



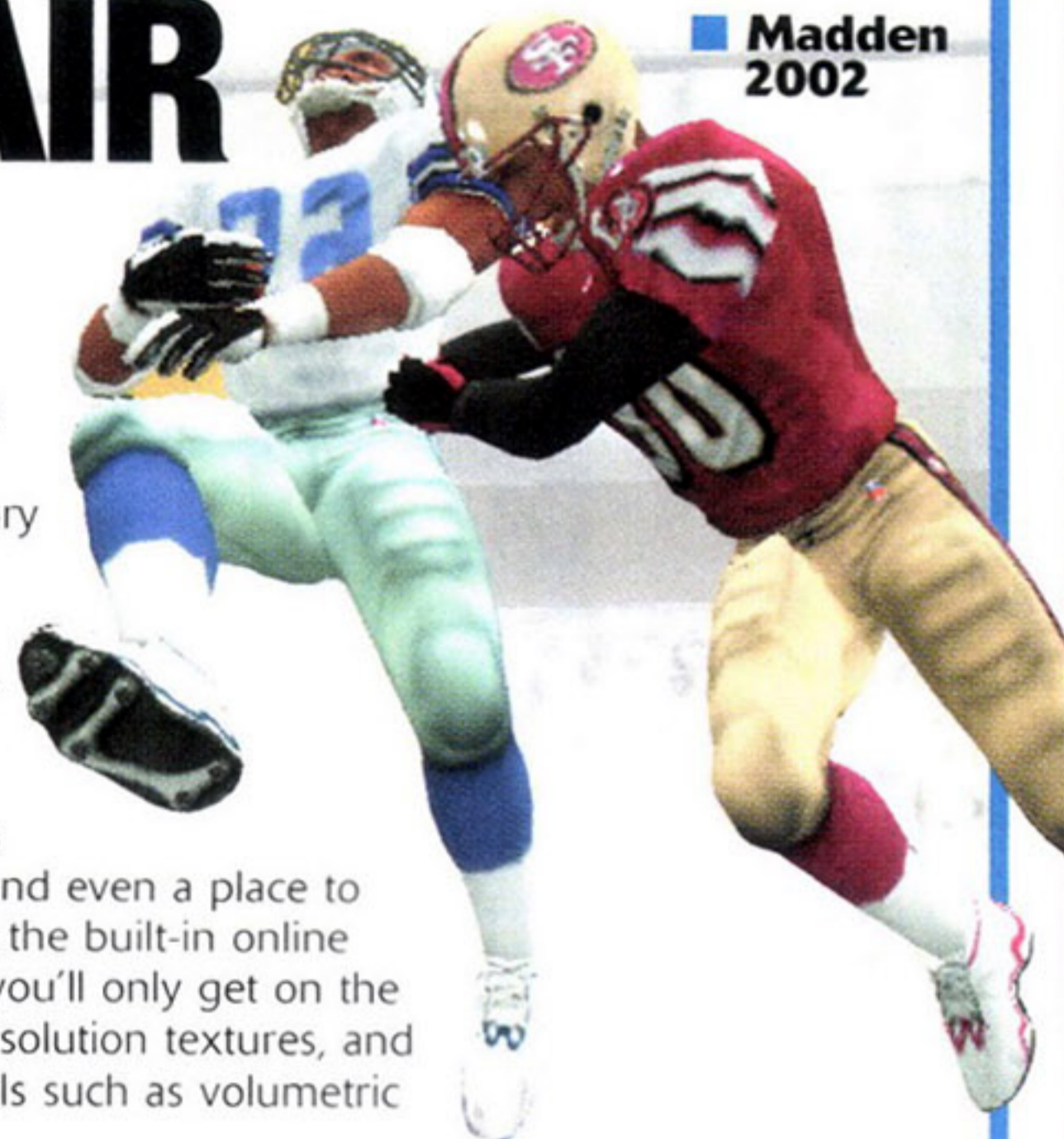
Fuzion Frenzy

Projected release: November 2001

The good stuff: *Fuzion Frenzy* has all the great four-player party-game fun that you want on a console without the embarrassment that comes along with those ultra-geeky *Mario Party* titles. Plus, these mini-games are a little more challenging for those of us over the age of six.

The scary stuff: Why do game developers always feel the need to replace the letter *s* with a *z* in game names?

ARMCHAIR GAMER



Madden 2002

You can't have a discussion about console sports without talking about football. Ever since the glory days of *Madden* on the Sega Genesis, football has led the charge for console sports. On the Xbox, this is no different.

The built-in hard-drive will enable football developers to offer more detailed stat tracking, storage for replays (including post-game highlight shows), and even a place to hold roster updates. And let's not forget the built-in online support and the graphical goodies that you'll only get on the Xbox, including bump-mapping, high-resolution textures, and pixel shaders that help render cool details such as volumetric grass (see opposite page).

The battle for supremacy on the Xbox starts now, and here are the main competitors:



MADDEN 2002

Developer: Tiburon
Publisher: Electronic Arts
What's good: This is currently the world's premier football franchise, and all the goodies that made the PS2 version of *Madden 2002* so phenomenal have made it over to the Xbox.
What's bad: We wish that the Xbox version didn't have to follow in the footsteps of the less-powerful PS2 version.
Secret weapon: *Madden 2002* has more depth than any football game in recent or even extended memory.
NFL equivalent: Baltimore Ravens – a proven winner with a troubled past, they are the champions until someone steps up and takes it away.



NFL2K2

Developer: Visual Concepts
Publisher: Sega
What's good: Visual Concepts proved in the last few years that EA could be challenged and even beaten at its own game – and now the developer isn't held back by an underpowered machine.
What's bad: It won't be in stores until the football season is more than half-finished.
Secret weapon: Visual Concepts is already familiar with online play from its Dreamcast days, and Xbox online gaming is just around the corner.
NFL equivalent: Minnesota Vikings – always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Seemingly destined to be one stupidly-called play away from the big prize (thanks Dennis Green).



NFL FEVER 2002

Developer: Microsoft
Publisher: Microsoft
What's good: Microsoft wants a piece of the football pie, and it's willing to do whatever it takes to break in. So far, the jury is still out on this game, but one thing is for sure... up close, no football game looks better.
What's bad: Football games aren't played up close.
Secret weapon: Microsoft is developing this title exclusively for the Xbox, so it will be optimized for that platform.
NFL equivalent: Washington Redskins – meddling owner's fat checkbook has made plenty of players rich, but has yet to make any of them winners (just whiners).

Sega GT (Sega) - 4x4 Evolution (Take Two Interactive)



TransWorld Surf

Projected release: Endless Summer
The good stuff: Ridiculously detailed water is an Xbox specialty, and this game pulls you in for a closer look. With 13 real-world surfers, a unique Karma system, and a shark's mouth full of special moves, this might just be the first decent surfing game ever.
The scary stuff: A mag license for a game? Apparently the world is fresh out of crap movie licenses. Oh joy.

TITO ORTIZ

"THE HUNTINGTON BEACH 'BAD BOY'"

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X-Wing Controller

Manufacturer: Pelican

The difference: Most akin to the MadCatz Pro Pad, Pelican's entry into the Xbox controller race features rubberized hand grips as well as eight programmable buttons. Set to be available in black/gray and translucent green/black, the X-Wing Controller is stylish and light.

What we think: Its standard shape and size make the X-Wing worth a second look merely for its added features, which include what Pelican calls "quick response joysticks."



Advanced Control Pad Pro

Manufacturer: MadCatz

The difference: The Advanced Control Pad Pro appears to be solid, rugged, and versatile with fully programmable buttons (for one-touch combos and all the other usual features), side grips, and various translucent shells in black or green.

What we think: Rugged and durable-feeling, the Pad Pro should be a good choice for those who don't quibble over the size of the standard controller, but simply want more features. This may suit some people very well.

Control Freaks

It's no secret that there've been some rumblings among the development community and gaming fans regarding the Microsoft Xbox controller. With its plenitude of features, including the dual analog sticks, a digital D-pad, and six face buttons, there's a whole lot to house on the face of it – and this has led to complaints about the controller being too large, poorly laid out, and downright unwieldy. Lucky for those unhappy with the size and feel of the standard Xbox Controller, quite a few third-party peripheral manufacturers have stepped up to the plate to deliver a wide range of choices for how gamers will be able to control their games right at launch.



PowerPad

Manufacturer: Interact

The difference: People like to add a little color to their consoles. PowerPad adds two extra colors to the Xbox all-black palette with blue and green translucent.

What we think: As far as offering a simple alternative to the standard controller, the PowerPad seems right on the mark, but for extra features, look elsewhere.



Upad

Manufacturer: Thrustmaster

The difference: Thrustmaster has stepped up to the plate to deliver a strange but promising gamepad alternative. Shaped like a "U" and slightly shifting the placement of the buttons and sticks, the Upad is aimed directly at those who can't get used to the standard controller.

What we think: As weird as it looks, it's basically the same thing as the standard controller without the massive, freaky Xbox jewel in the center. It might benefit from being lighter and easier to maneuver because of this.

Vortex Controller

Manufacturer: Gamester

The difference: Let's face it – the Xbox is not a toy, and according to Gamester, the Xbox controller shouldn't be a toy, either. The Vortex Controller puts a classy spin on the usual plastic peripherals for Xbox by replacing them with sleek, shiny steel on the controller's face. Add to this a dimpled D-pad to replace the curved one found on the competition.

What we think: Vive la différence! The Vortex Controller looks sleek, sophisticated, and HEAVY! Of course, since we haven't had a chance to test it yet, we don't know how much it will weigh overall, but it sure looks nice.



GameWatch

Soul Calibur 2 (Namco) - Soul Reaver 2 (Eidos) - COPS (Fox) -

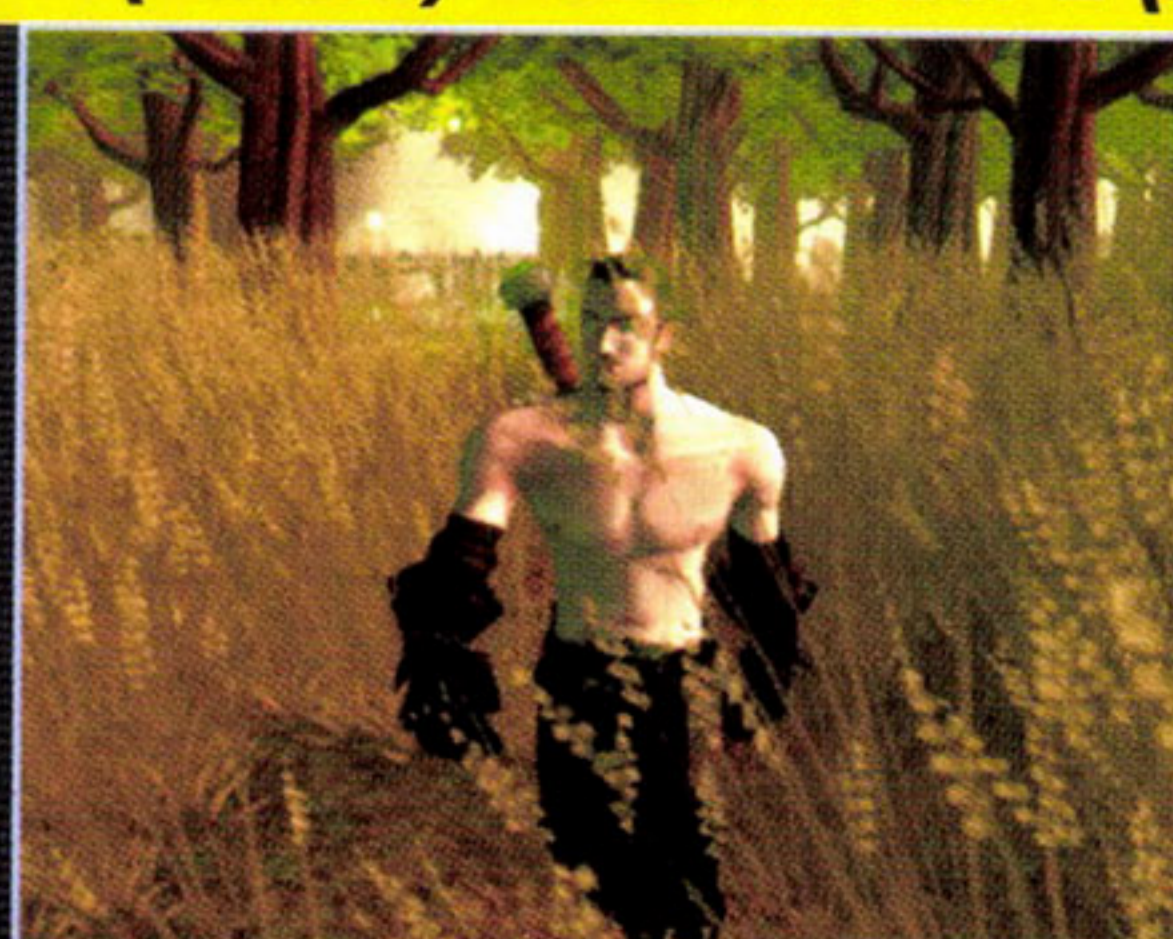


NASCAR Heat

Projected release: November 2001

The good stuff: The future of Xbox gaming is definitely online, and *NASCAR Heat* is one of the first steps in that direction. Although the game only supports LAN (Local Area Network) multiplayer, you can link between 2 and 16 players in a single networked race.

The scary stuff: Play this too often and you might wear out your Xbox pad unevenly. Would it hurt NASCAR to throw in a right turn once in a while?



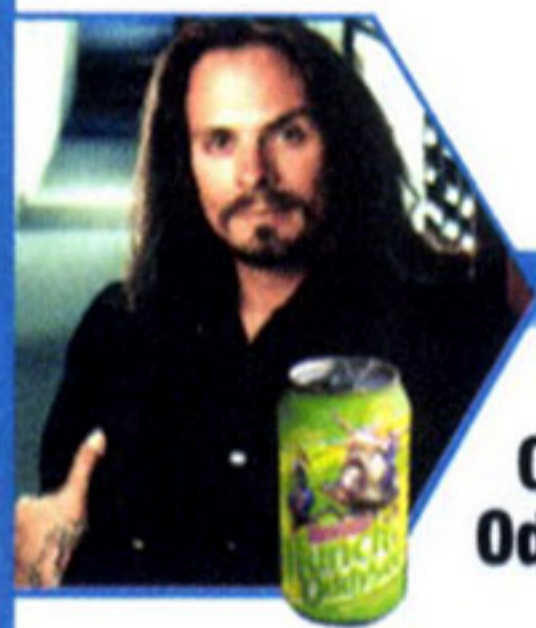
Project Ego

Projected release: Sometime after the apocalypse

The good stuff: Most easily labeled an RPG, *Project Ego* is much more like a simulation of life. Characters learn, get old, and you can see all of this visually in the game. An epic that will define a generation of games to come.

The scary stuff: Peter Molyneux is notoriously late with games and will likely just tease us with morsels of information until he finally finishes the game in 2004.

10 Ridiculously Tough Questions



This month, we put Lorne Lanning, the creator of the Oddworld series and the Xbox launch title Munch's Oddysee, to the test. And no, we don't grade on a curve.

1) True or False: The Xbox can do things the PS2 simply can't.

T. It can save to an onboard hard-disk, and it can store a lot more texture maps in RAM. (Okay, so I'm playing it safe :-))

Score: 6 The answer is right, but you forgot all the other goodies like pixel shaders, vertex shaders, and easy-to-implement anti-aliasing.

2) True or False: Munch's Oddysee will ship at launch.

T. Then we check ourselves into rehab.

Score: 8 Correct, but there's no time for rehab.

3) The concept behind the 3D gameplay in Munch's Oddysee was in development since:

- A. Right after Abe's Oddysee
- B. During the creation of Abe's Exoddus
- C. After Abe's Exoddus
- A. Three publishers, three platforms, two medical operations, and one nervous breakdown later...

Score: 9 Hmm. That means that the idea for the Xbox2 incarnation of Abe is rattling around in your head already...

4) True or False: You pay the guy who does the voices for Abe too much money.

F. Actually, that poor bastard is drastically underpaid. We were hoping you might take up a fundraiser to help compensate his measly salary!

Score: 3 (Abe and Munch are both voiced by Lorne Lanning.)

5) True or False: San Luis Obispo is the perfect home for a development studio.

F. It's tougher on the talent search.

Score: 4 Not so good... you forgot to mention that there are three Taco Bells within three miles of your office.

6) What is the best thing about the Xbox for a developer, answered in exactly five words:

It Doesn't Drive You Insane!

Score: 4 He already mentioned rehab and mental breakdown.

7) Best way to beat a videogame bad guy is:

- A. Jump on its head
- B. Spin attack
- C. Other

C. Munch wanted to answer this one. "I like to Free a bunch of caged Fuzzles with my basic headport zap. Then I gamespeak command them ('getem!') to chew on some big meanies groin area. As he's screaming and trying to fight off my fuzzle friends... I suck down some ZAP from a nearby vendo and then shock him senseless till he knocks back into a landmine."

Score: 10 We don't understand the answer, but the facts check out.

8) True or False: In videogames, story doesn't matter.

F. Even Asteroids had a story. "You're a spaceship and there are hundreds of space rocks coming at you. Survive!" Simple but necessary.

Score: 8 You forgot about the love story in Dig Dug.

9) In its first full year of launch, the Xbox will sell how many units:

- A. Less than one million
- B. Between one and five million
- C. More than five million

B.

Score: 9 You are correct... we hope.

10) Essay: In 25 words or fewer, why should we be excited about Munch's Oddysee?

It's guaranteed to make young ladies giggle themselves senseless. Buy this game and you'll finally get laid!

Score: 10 But that's a huge promise.

Final Grade: 71/100

C-. It's our all-time high score... then again, it's the first time we've done this.

CHUCK LIDDELL "THE ICEMAN"

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XBOX

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ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP
TAPOUT™

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Lotus Challenge (Kuju) - The Matrix (Interplay) -



Hunter: The Reckoning

Projected release: March 2002

The good stuff: A unique and impressive world fraught with horror, blood, and nonstop action. Stunning graphics bring this Dawn of the Dead-type world to life in awe-inspiring fashion.

The scary stuff: There is a giant mutated teddy bear planned as an enemy. Giant teddy bears are scary.

Coming soon: A deeper look at the game and some scary screenshots.

The XBOX Calendar



We've already marked our calendars for the Xbox launch on November 8, but in case you haven't, we've included this simple appointment calendar that you can cut out and stick to your refrigerator. You could even enter it into your Palm Pilot if you're a really sad individual.



Thursday, November 1	To do: Invite your friends over for a PS2 farewell party.
Friday, November 2	3:00 PM Play <i>GT3</i> 5:00 PM Play <i>Metal Gear Solid 2</i> 7:00 PM Play <i>SSX</i> 9:00 PM Play <i>Madden</i> 11:00 PM Realize there's nothing good left to play on the PS2 12:00 AM Watch cooking shows until you fall asleep
Saturday, November 3	To do: Trade in PS2 and collection of disappointing games for store credit on an Xbox preorder
Sunday, November 4	11:00 AM Sell blood for Xbox game money 1:00 PM Sell more blood 5:00 PM Sell remaining blood 7:00 PM Visit ER, and let your insurance buy back your blood
Monday, November 5	To do: Rent a GameCube from Blockbuster To do: Play entire GameCube launch lineup To do: After you play all three games, watch movie
Tuesday, November 6	To do: Return GameCube To do: While you're at EB (or Babbage's, or wherever) buy next issue of Official Xbox Magazine To do: Oh hell, buy two. Who knows when you'll need a spare To do: Mark calendar for next year. (Two more GameCube games should be ready by then)
Wednesday, November 7	To do: Read Official Xbox Magazine cover-to-cover – subscribe To do: Say goodbye to loved ones, have conjugal visits, water plants, and change underwear (not necessarily in that order)
Thursday, November 8	6:00 AM Get in line for Xbox 7:00 AM Scuffle with line-cutters 8:00 AM Remember that you left your credit card at home 8:30 AM Return to line, scuffle with anti-line-cutters 9:00 AM Enter store, get Xbox and games 9:30 AM Return home to play games
Friday, November 9 ...and rest of month	To do: Call in sick with rickets or hysterical pregnancy To do: Play Xbox nonstop until you notice a strange odor To do: Play Xbox nonstop until you no longer notice the odor To do: At this point stop, shower and start again

The Heavy Issue



One of the biggest questions about the Xbox is: *How much does it weigh?* After all, we've heard reports from "Internet sources" that the Xbox could crush small children. The truth is that the Xbox weighs considerably less than rumored, but Microsoft won't give any hard numbers. However, our inside sources were able to narrow down the official weight without giving a final answer. Here are the results:

Pound for pound, the best console around!

THE XBOX IS HEAVIER THAN	BUT NOT AS HEAVY AS
\$300 in one-dollar bills	\$300 in quarters
The PS2 plus all the PS2 games with high-res textures	The PS2 plus all the PS2 games with jaggies
GameCube and its entire launch lineup	GameCube and Nintendo's target GameCube owner, aged 8
Calista Flockhart	Callisto, Jupiter's outermost moon
Aaron Spelling's brain	Tori Spelling's plastic surgery bills
Robert Downey Jr.'s Emmy	The current Vegas over/under for how much cocaine he'll get caught with next

GameWatch *Silent Hill 2 (Konami) - New Legends (THQ) - Nightcaster (Microsoft)*



UFC Tapout
Projected release: November 2002
The good stuff: An impossibly brutal rendition of an inappropriately violent martial-arts spectacle. *UFC Tapout* is a graphically splendid fighting game, with realistic musculature and convincing motion capture from Dream Factory, the people who brought you *Tobal* and *The Bouncer*.
The scary stuff: "Realistic" models even include bulges. A little too real if you ask us.



Dark Summit
Projected release: November 2002
The good stuff: *Dark Summit's* cool mix of plot and snowboarding stunt action is both innovative and engrossing. The graphics, complete with Xbox-specific features like bump-mapping and pixel-shader effects, make it look every bit as good as the growing batch of snow sports on Xbox.
The scary stuff: Snowboarding doesn't need a plot.

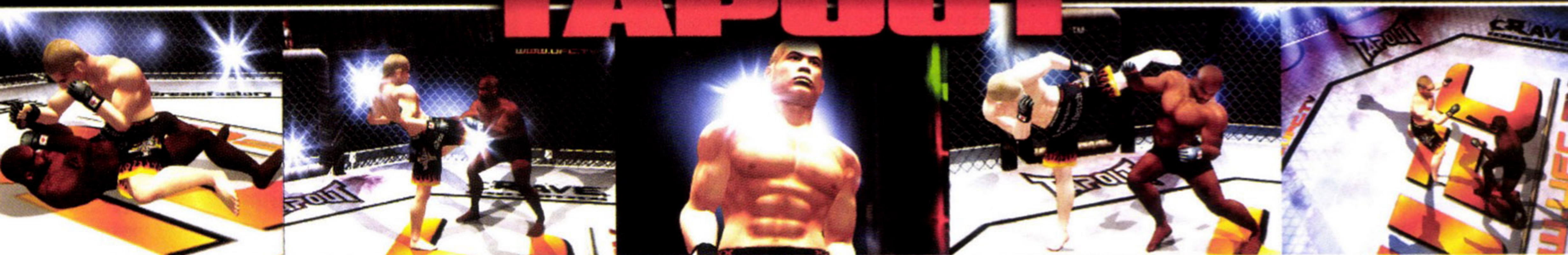
REAL FIGHTERS. REAL FIGHTING.™



UFC

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

TAPOUT™



Capture every detail of the fight from battle scars to beads of sweat with over 10,000 polygon 3D photo-mapped fighters.

Master a huge arsenal of strikes, counters and combos before they are used against you.

Customize your own fighter with true UFC styles including boxing, wrestling, jiu-jitsu, submission, and kickboxing.

PICK A PLAYER, PICK A STYLE AND GET READY TO PICK A FIGHT.

THE COMPETITION IS TOUGH AND THE FIGHTS ARE REAL.

IF YOU ENTER THESE AUTHENTIC UFC BOUTS

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN TO FIGHT YOUR WAY OUT.

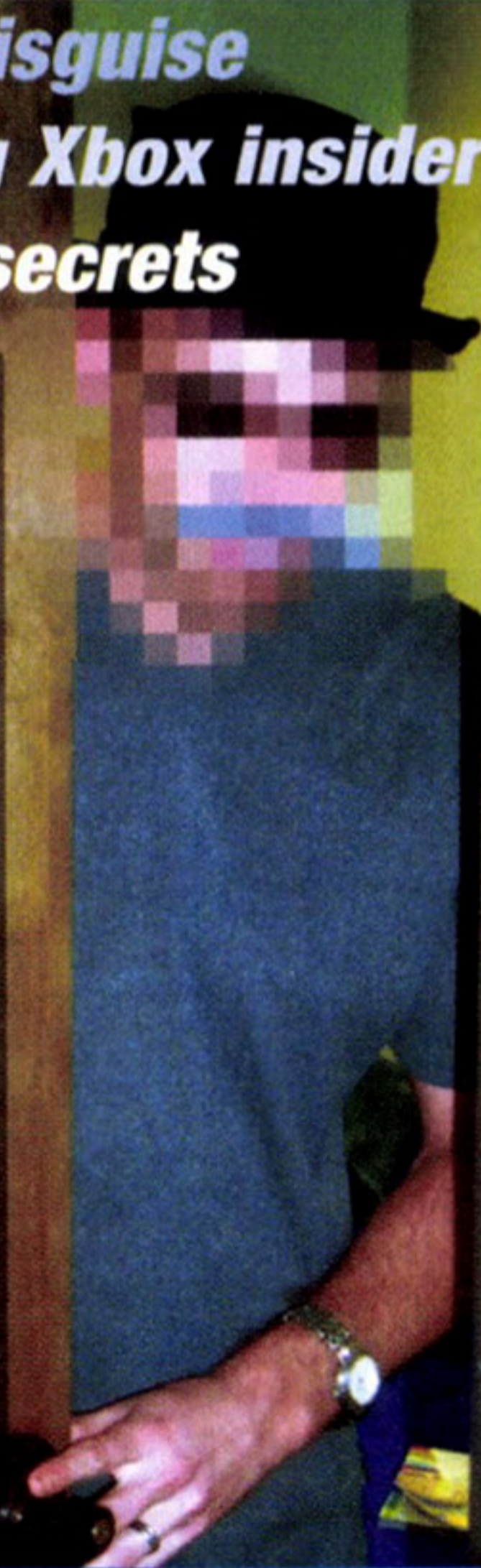


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The Rumor Mole

Master of disguise
All-knowing Xbox insider
Blabber of secrets

Mole here. I plan on being your monthly source for the dirtiest secrets in the Xbox biz. The keys to this gig are simple – never reveal your sources, and never, ever, let your true identity be known. I've been hanging around the Microsoft campus for the past year, enjoying delicious cafeteria food and gathering some tasty rumors. If it happens in the world of Xbox, then you can bet I know about it first.



Ya ain't seen nothing yet

Many developers didn't get final Xbox hardware until late August (a good three months late), but they still managed to put out an impressive launch line-up. I've been hearing many developer types complaining about the short development time and bragging about the next crop of games. Apparently the early stuff is barely even scratching the surface. A certain Japanese development house went as far as to say, "When our game comes out, it'll make the first generation of Xbox games look like absolute crap." Of course, that was supposed to be off the record.

Bring out your dead

Word has it that Sega is ready to unleash some thought-to-be-dead classics on the Xbox as early as next summer. The list might include: *Streets of Rage*, *Outrun 2*, *Shenmue 2*, and *Skies of Arcadia*. Let's just hope they leave *Mr. Bones* in the closet for good.

Online on the way

Many industry pundits believe that the Xbox won't be doing much in the way of online games until late next year – as usual, they are dead wrong. Mole has seen some diagrams, charts, and dates around the MS campus that suggest you'll be able to take your Xbox online as early as Q1. The only thing missing is the killer app – but there are several candidates "squared" up for this one.

Red-headed step-child

A little bird told me that the Xbox TV ads had a prominent placement of the Microsoft logo, but after lawyer types got a peek at the Xbox 'tude they wanted to keep the big MS a little farther away from the project. No worries, though, Microsoft is still putting all of its corporate power to work for Xbox.

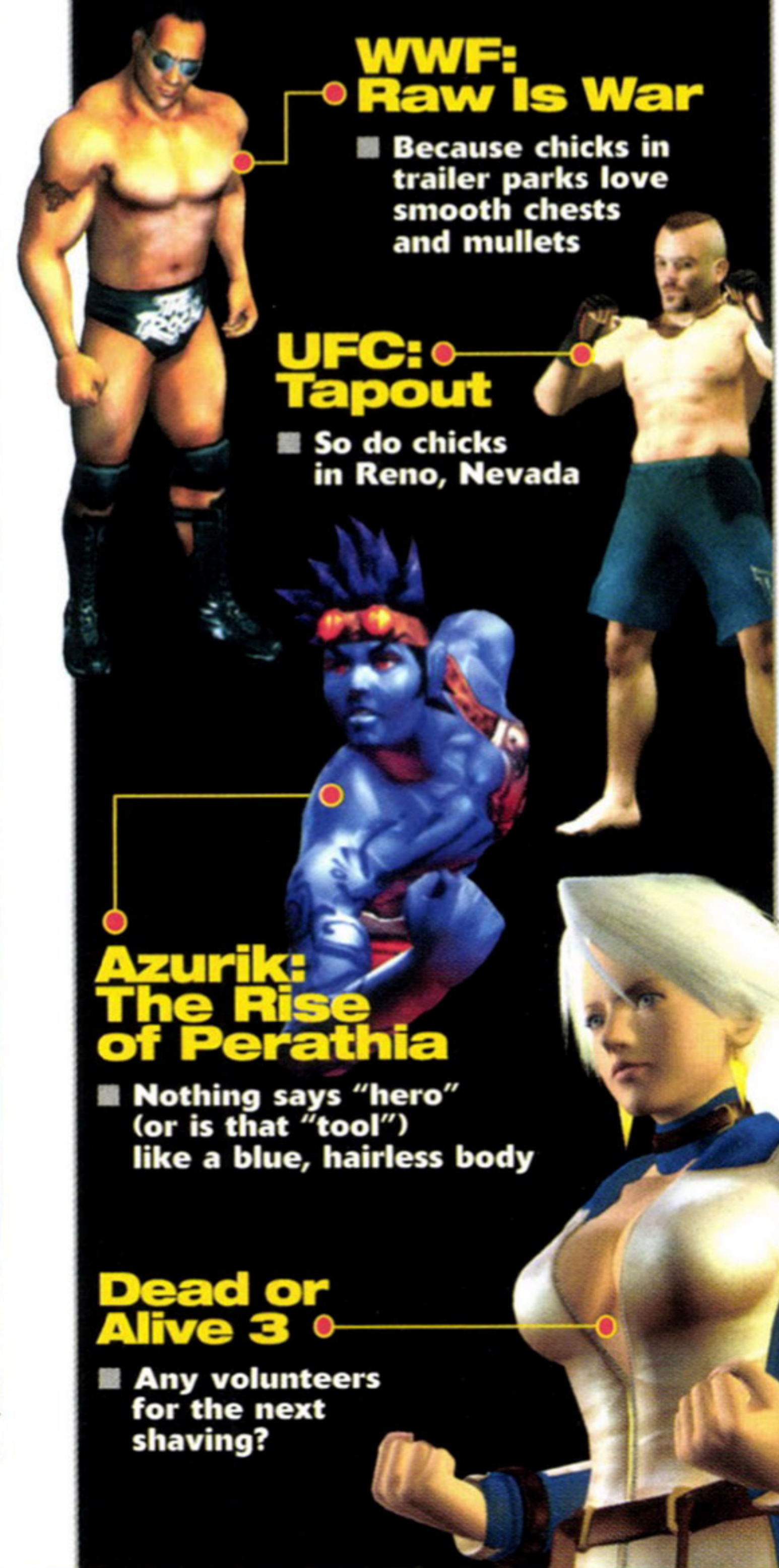
EA 1, Rest of industry 0

Several third-party publishers have been griping about the unfair treatment given to software giant EA. I even heard that *NFL2K2* (from Sega) was going to be ready at launch until the big EA allegedly laid down the law. Rumor has it that Sega isn't allowed to release their football game on Xbox until EA has had enough time to win the battle again. Who says it ain't easy being big.

Trendspotter

Each month we take a look at the cutting-edge trends inside Xbox games. For better or worse, these are the undercurrents that define the cultural state of the Xbox.

In an inordinate number of launch and near-launch titles, we've noticed a disturbing number of **shaved, hairless chests**. Historically, videogame chests have been rendered hairless out of necessity, but as we all know, the Xbox is very capable of rendering believable chest hair at a near-Tom-Selleck level. Knowing this, we must conclude that the only reason that Xbox game characters have smooth, hairless chests is because they... like it that way. And no, we're not buying the story that it makes them more aerodynamic either.



WWF: Raw Is War

Because chicks in trailer parks love smooth chests and mullets

UFC: Tapout

So do chicks in Reno, Nevada

Azurik: The Rise of Perathia

Nothing says "hero" (or is that "tool") like a blue, hairless body

Dead or Alive 3

Any volunteers for the next shaving?

GameWatch

NBA2K2 (Sega) - Ghost Recon (Infogrames) - Bruce Lee (Microsoft)



Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Projected release: Sometime in 2002
The good stuff: Videogame Buffy looks almost exactly like the real Buffy, and that's a good thing. If the game can also transfer the show's quirky humor and dark storylines, it'll pull in a lot of people who aren't your typical hardcore gamer.
The scary stuff: The game may look great, but we're still unsure of how it will play. Kicking the undead can only be satisfying for so long.



Double S.T.E.A.L.
Projected release: November 2001
The good stuff: It looks like the most incredible driving/vandalism game ever conceived. The early graphic demos are replete with particle effects, convincing car physics, and simply amazing backdrops. Watch a monster truck smash its way through a mall to avoid police and you'll be hooked. A graphical tour de force.
The scary stuff: We simply don't know much about the gameplay, or Bunkasha, the game's developer.

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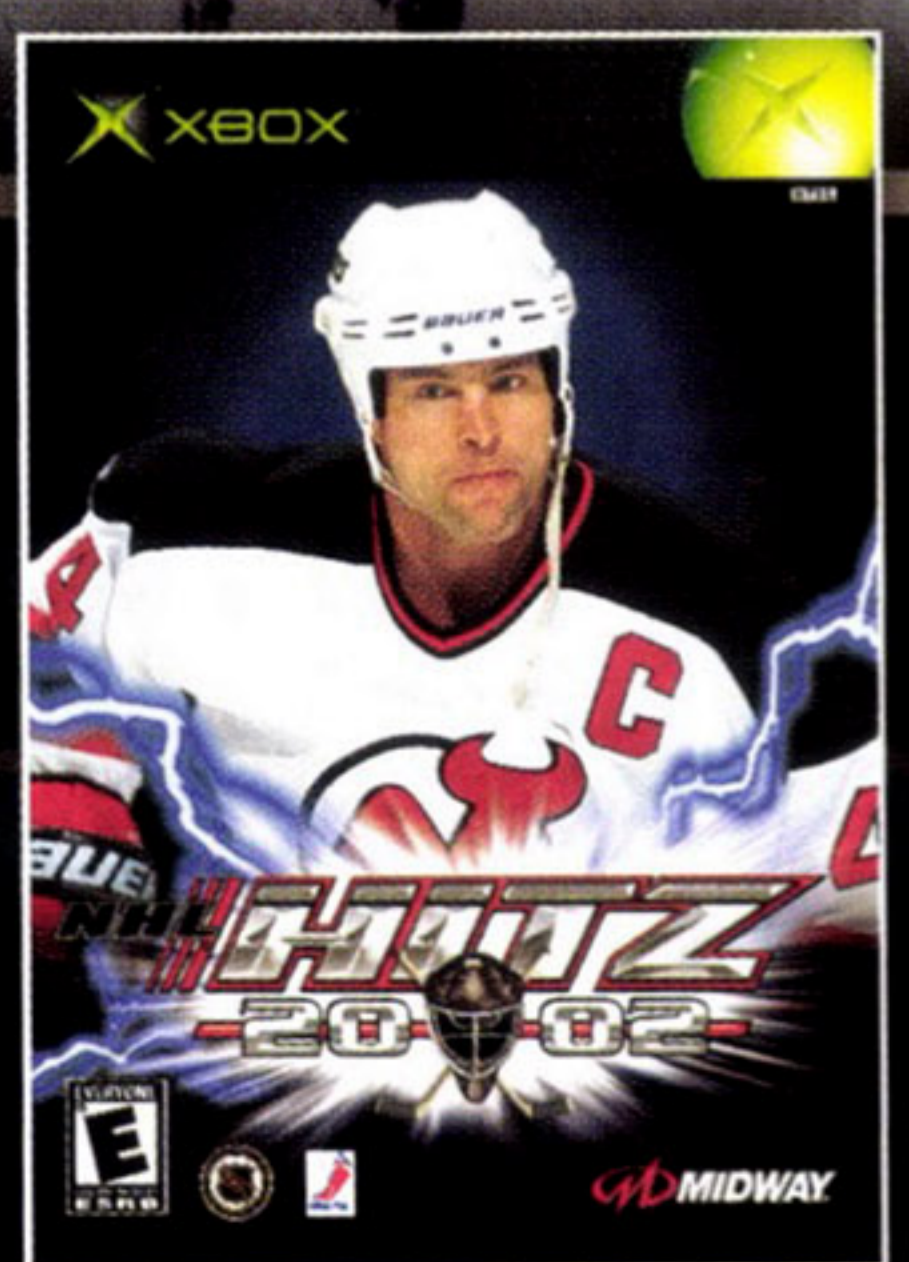


WE KNOW HITZ.



Heads Up. The first adrenaline-style hockey game is here. Only NHL Hitz 20-02 delivers intense action from the NHL's experts of impact. Feel the crushing checks and super-sonic slapshots as eye-popping next-generation graphics bring teams, super-charged players and fantasy arenas to unparalleled brilliance. With hits this hard, you won't need a ref to get ejected from the ice.

GAME PREVIEW AT WWW.NHLHITZ.MIDWAY.COM



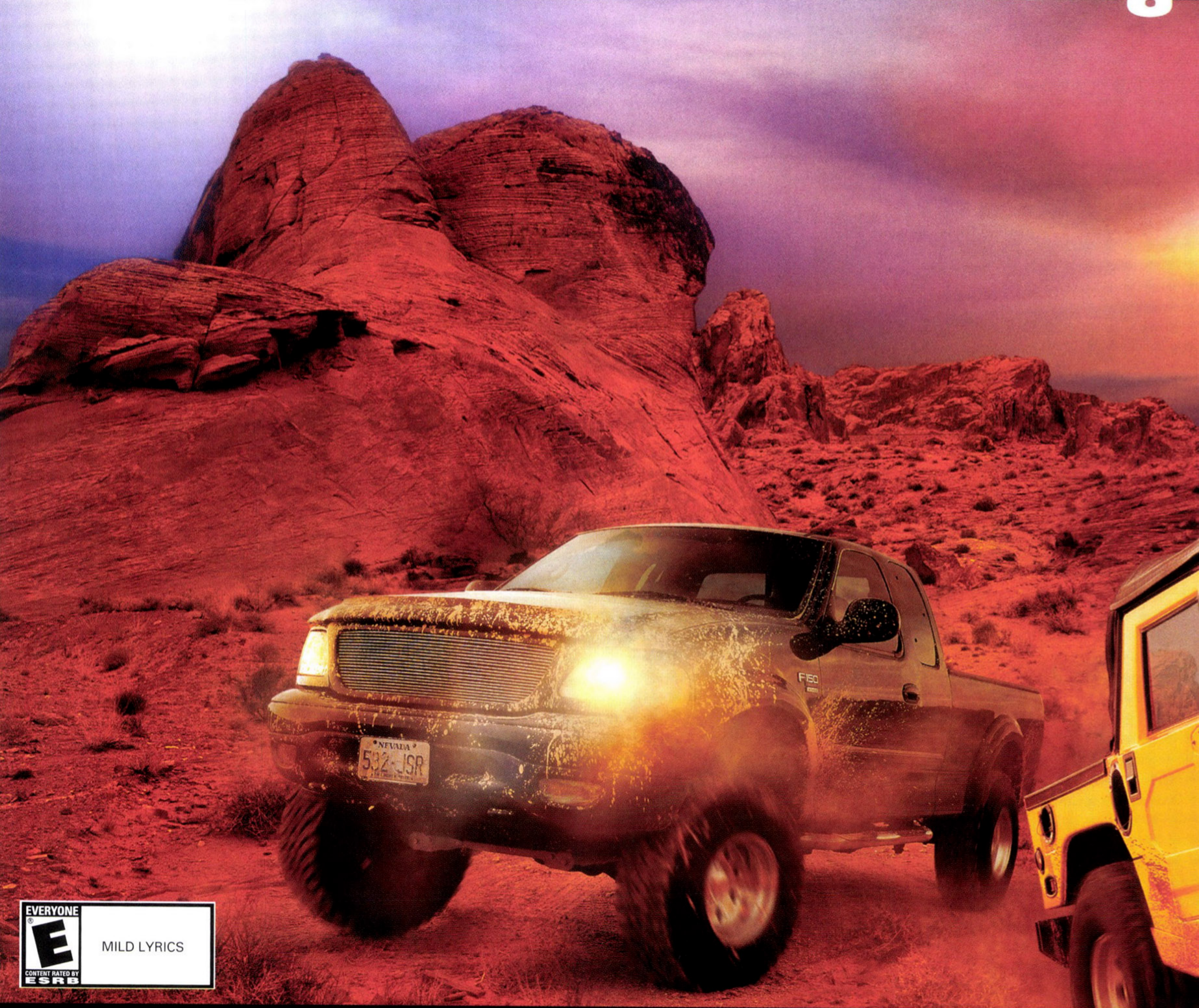
PlayStation 2



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ESRB

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racer for the PlayStation®2 and Xbox™

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TEST DRIVE

PlayStation 2

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ONLINE

The future of console gaming is online. Even the Xbox's competitors know that. But while they promise online support via costly add-ons, this console's got it built in.

PAGE: 46

AV

The Xbox is built for today, but also for tomorrow. It supports all important video and audio outputs, and has room to expand for the technologies of the future.

PAGE: 40

THE LAUNCH GAMES

Aren't launch games supposed to be lousy? So how do you explain the amazing lineup scheduled for the Xbox launch?

PAGE: 52

THE XBOX CONTROLLER

While some may complain about the Xbox gamepad's size, it's got features and advantages the other guys never dreamt of.

PAGE: 38



THE HARD-DRIVE

The Xbox has it and no one else does. This not-so secret weapon will make Xbox games look and play unlike any others. It's just a matter of time.

PAGE: 45

70 reasons why you absolutely, positively have to own an Xbox

THE GRAPHICAL CAPABILITIES

Put simply, the Xbox has more graphics power than any other console in this galaxy. We can't guarantee the rest of the universe.

PAGE: 48

Witness the many and wondrous powers of Xbox

You know, \$299 is a lot of money. It's enough cold hard cash to buy 7,176 Oreo cookies, 199 sticks of Brut Deodorant, 129.5 Fruit of the Loom cotton briefs, or almost any combination of the three. It's also enough to purchase one of the three next-generation game consoles – the Sony PlayStation2, the Nintendo GameCube, or Microsoft's own Xbox.

Here at the **Official Xbox Magazine**, we understand the value of your hard-earned money – especially the kind of money that can buy that much Brut. That's why we wouldn't champion our own favorite console if it wasn't worth the cash.

So, we put our heads together to think up 20 good reasons to buy an Xbox. Within minutes it grew to 30, then 50, then 70. And if we hadn't run out of pages, we could have come up with a matching reason for each pair of Fruit of the Looms briefs that you'd have to sacrifice to buy an Xbox. But as it stands, we think you'll discover in the next 16 pages that the Xbox is the one next-generation console worth going commando for.

70 IT'S EASY TO SPELL

PlayStasion? PlayStation Too? GameQube? Let's just stick with four easy letters.



65 NO PINK, PURPLE, OR CANARY-YELLOW VERSION

Come to think of it, no silly handle, either.

64 Trigger Buttons

Why it's important: They're analog, they feel solid, and they've got just the right amount of play. We can't wait to use them in racing games, sports titles, and every other game that needs them.



63 Memory Card Two per controller

Why it's important: Three things really stand out when you talk about the Xbox memory cards. 1) It's cool that the console supports them even though it already has a hard-drive. 2) Two memory cards can fit in each controller, which facilitates easy file swapping. 3) The memory cards can be safely stowed in the controller so they're not easily misplaced.

69 Rock-Solid Controller

Why it's important: The first thing that you'll notice when you pick up the Xbox Game Controller is that it has a solid, heavy feel – of course, some may call it "bulky."

Define bulky: Some detractors have commented that using the Xbox Game Controller is like playing games with two potatoes. We haven't thought of a snappy comeback yet.

68 BLACK AND WHITE BUTTONS

Why it's important: If you are using the Game Commander, the black and white buttons will have the same uses in almost every game. Push one and you'll be able to talk directly to your team. Push the other and you can broadcast to everyone in the game.

Tossed out in design: Taupe, mauve, and chartreuse buttons.

67 EXTRA-LONG CABLES

Why it's important: The TV never seems close enough to the sofa... especially when you're trying to play a videogame. With the Xbox – and its 9.5-foot-long cord – that won't be a problem.

Grandma loves the Xbox: Now she doesn't have to warn you about the super-deadly effects of sitting too close to the TV.

66 BREAKAWAY CONTROLLER

Why it's important: That little pod near the end of the Xbox cord isn't a tumor or even a fuse box for particularly electrifying games – it's a breakaway node that will protect both you and your Xbox when your little brother or drunken roommate stumbles through the living room.

The competition: The PlayStation2 seems kinda dangerous because Sony actually encourages users to set their console on its edge. One false step could equal disaster. And there's nothing to protect GameCube owners from ugly, purple, falling cubes.

Life without breakaway controllers:

Guy on the street: "Hey, how'd you break your spine, man?"

You: "An Xbox fell on it."

Everyone: "Ha ha."

62 GAME COMMANDER

Why it's important: The Game Commander looks to be one of the coolest standard peripherals around. Microsoft wants this add-on to be a major part of its broadband Internet strategy. The idea is that almost every online game would include support for the Game Commander so that players can communicate as if they're in the same room. If you've ever played on a network LAN with others within earshot, you'll know how cool this is.

The competition: Nintendo will most likely introduce a headset... for talking to Pikachu.

The coolest thing ever: Microsoft is seriously considering supporting voice modulation that would enable you to change your voice in realtime. With some clever programming, you could taunt your enemies with the menacing tone of Darth Vader or the high-pitched shouts of Screech.



61 VERBAL COMMANDS

Why it's important: Now that voice-recognition software has advanced to the point that it can be used in games, don't be surprised if you find yourself shouting at a future Xbox title – only to have it obey your command.

Best use for this technology: Imagine what it would be like to command your teammates in games like *Rainbow Six* or *Halo* by simply talking. Rather than sort through complex menus under enemy fire, you'd only need shout "cover me" or "flank right" and your minions would do your bidding.

60 The X-Dash Look

Why it's important: Its green, it's lightning-fast, and it's flat-out cooler than any other user interface on a console. In times past, a console's user interface was not all that important, but as consoles begin to offer more uses, the interface becomes a much more crucial feature.

Blue screen of death: Relax, folks, this isn't Windows. You'll never see this:

A Fatal Exception 0E Has Occurred at 0028:C02A0201 on your Xbox.

59 MUSIC MANAGER

Why it's important: Digital music is not dead. The Xbox will enable you to create music mixes for different styles of games. You could listen to one-hit wonder Tom Cochrane's *Life is a Highway* while playing a racing game or Carl Douglas' *Kung Fu Fighting* while facing off in the latest beat-'em-up.

Because we have lawyers: Microsoft has made sure that the Xbox will not be enabled in any way to provoke Lars and his sharksuit-wearing army of legal goons.



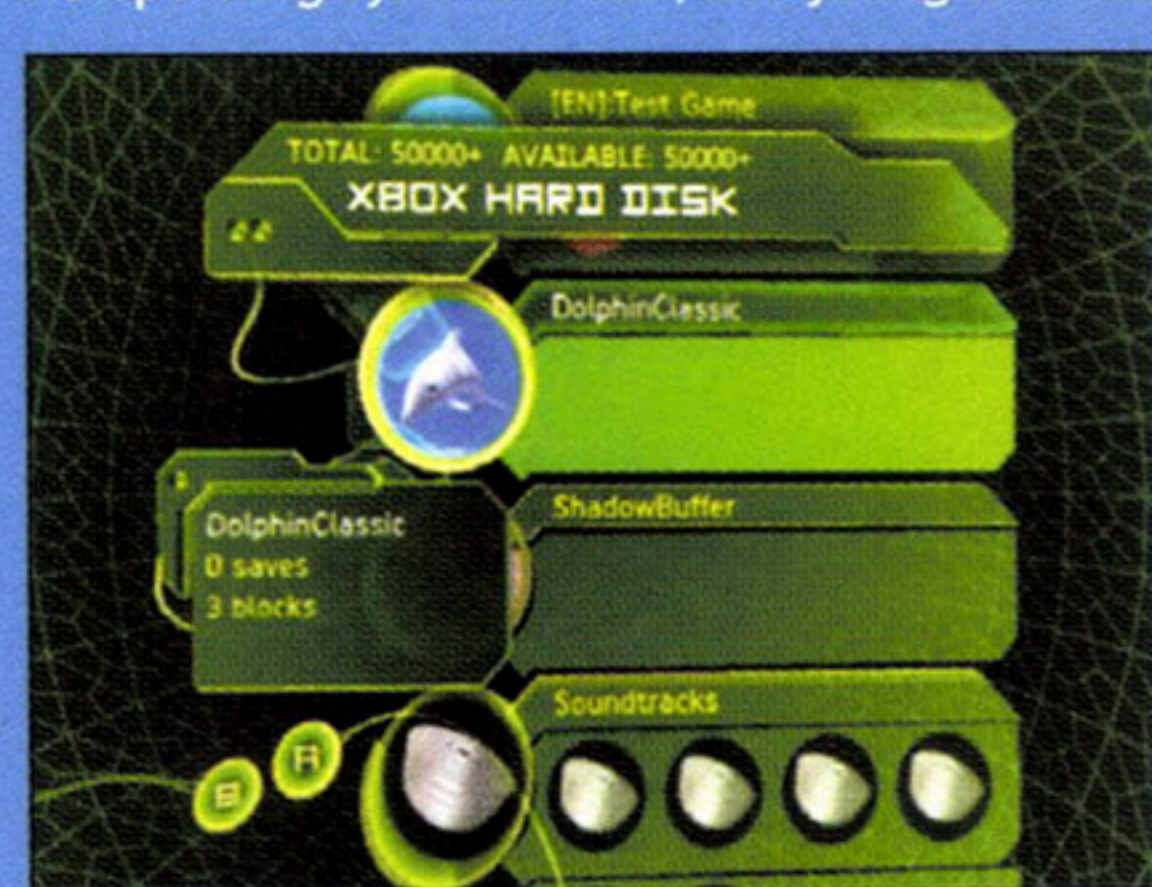
58 PARENTAL CONTROL - NO, REALLY, IT'S A GOOD THING

Why it's important: While we were originally a little uncomfortable with the parental control lockout on the Xbox, we've warmed to the idea. At first it seemed sure to stifle the creativity of game makers, but now it looks like it may actually open up new options for developers who want to explore more mature themes than the moral implications of breaking open other people's crates. Now Microsoft doesn't have to police what kind of games can be on Xbox - it is up to the user (or more likely, the user's parents).

The competition: Sony and Nintendo have no lockout built into their consoles, so much of the pressure to protect young gamers is on the people who make the games. Because Microsoft took a stand on this issue, Xbox developers will be free to create more mature games knowing that parents have the tools to keep objectionable material away from young eyes.

57 HARD-DRIVE INTERFACE

Why it's important: The Xbox was intelligently designed to make use of the hard-drive, and just because it's a Microsoft product doesn't mean that it has to be as confusing as your garden-variety PC operating system. In fact, everything is broken down into



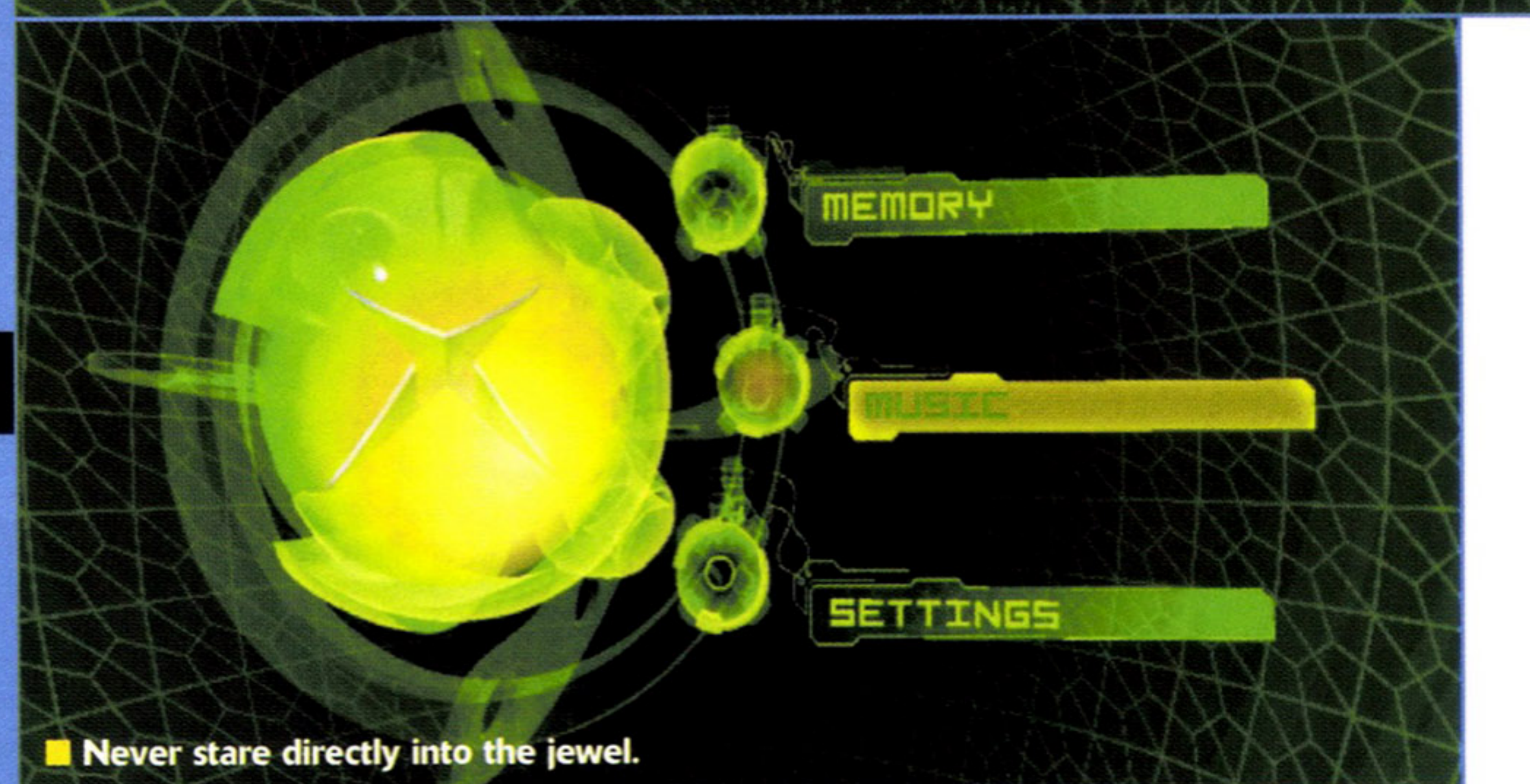
"blocks" rather than bytes, and it's so straightforward that your same nephew who tried to stuff an English muffin into the disc drive will be able to load up your latest *Munch's Oddysee* save file. **How's it look:** Greenish.



56 THE SUPER-CREEPY SATANIC RUMBLINGS

Why it's important: If you leave the X-Dash alone long enough, it won't exactly sit quietly. Before long, the über-console will start to utter unintelligible bits of dialogue. We have no idea what it's saying, and it's downright creepy at times. But like your crazy old uncle you keep locked in the basement, you'll grow to love it, too.

The competition: The only thing that emanates from an idle PlayStation2 or GameCube are lethal gamma rays... we're serious, they'll give you spleen cancer, really... we know this guy named Bruce that it happened to.



55 HDTV SUPPORT

Why it's important: One of the key values that shaped the development of the Xbox was a look to the future of HDTV. Right out of the box, the Xbox is ready to support the HDTV format. It may take several years for this to become an important feature for the average developer, but it's good to know that it's there. And your Xbox will support a wide range of HDTV modes, including 720 and 1080i progressive scan.

When will this matter: As soon as you buy an HDTV. There is nothing worse than laying out big bucks for a super high-tech piece of entertainment kit only to find out none of your other stuff (stereo, game machine, etc) can even work with it. Not a problem with the Xbox.

54 PROGRESSIVE SCAN DVD

Why it's important: The Xbox is the only console that supports progressive scan DVD playback. What does this mean? It means the Xbox actually improves the output of the DVD medium by using the extra resolution afforded by HDTV sets. The results are stunning on a suitable screen, and this makes the Xbox a serious piece of home entertainment hardware.

Did we mention we have an HDTV in the office: There is nothing better than seeing Xbox games and DVD movies on our beautiful RCA HDTV.

53 MAX RESOLUTION

Why it's important: After seeing how good high-resolution PC games look, it's clear that this is where console games need to go as well. As HDTVs become less expensive and more prevalent, the Xbox maximum resolution of 1920x1080 is a glimpse of the future. Xbox graphic features like bump-mapping and full scene anti-aliasing look truly incredible at those resolutions.

The resolution factor: One of the key problems with the PlayStation2 architecture is memory issues. Because of this, it is extremely difficult for developers to use high-resolution textures in their PlayStation2 games. Even if the PS2 could match the Xbox's highest resolutions (which it can't), the textures would still look dark and grainy.

52 Remote control

Why it's important: Although some will complain about the need to purchase a remote control to play DVD movies on the Xbox, this may actually be the best possible arrangement.

The "date factor": It's your choice, but if you invite a date over to watch a romantic DVD, would you rather have an actual remote at your disposal or a PS2 pad? "Ooh, that was a killer scene, let's see it again... um, press square, then circle, then triangle while holding L2... no, that's L1. Uh, did I mention I was captain of the backgammon club?"



51 AV PACKS

Why it's important: Little details make all the difference. For instance, although the Xbox comes with a standard RCA AV cable, just look at the elegant simplicity of the Xbox AV Packs. Each of these little black boxes comes with about six inches of free cable that ends in a cluster of connection ports that will satisfy even the techie of tech-heads while being simple enough for those of us with small brains.

50 HIGH-QUALITY TV OUT

Why it's important: This costs less than a dollar more per console and it makes the same signal sent from PS2, GameCube, and Xbox look better on the Xbox.

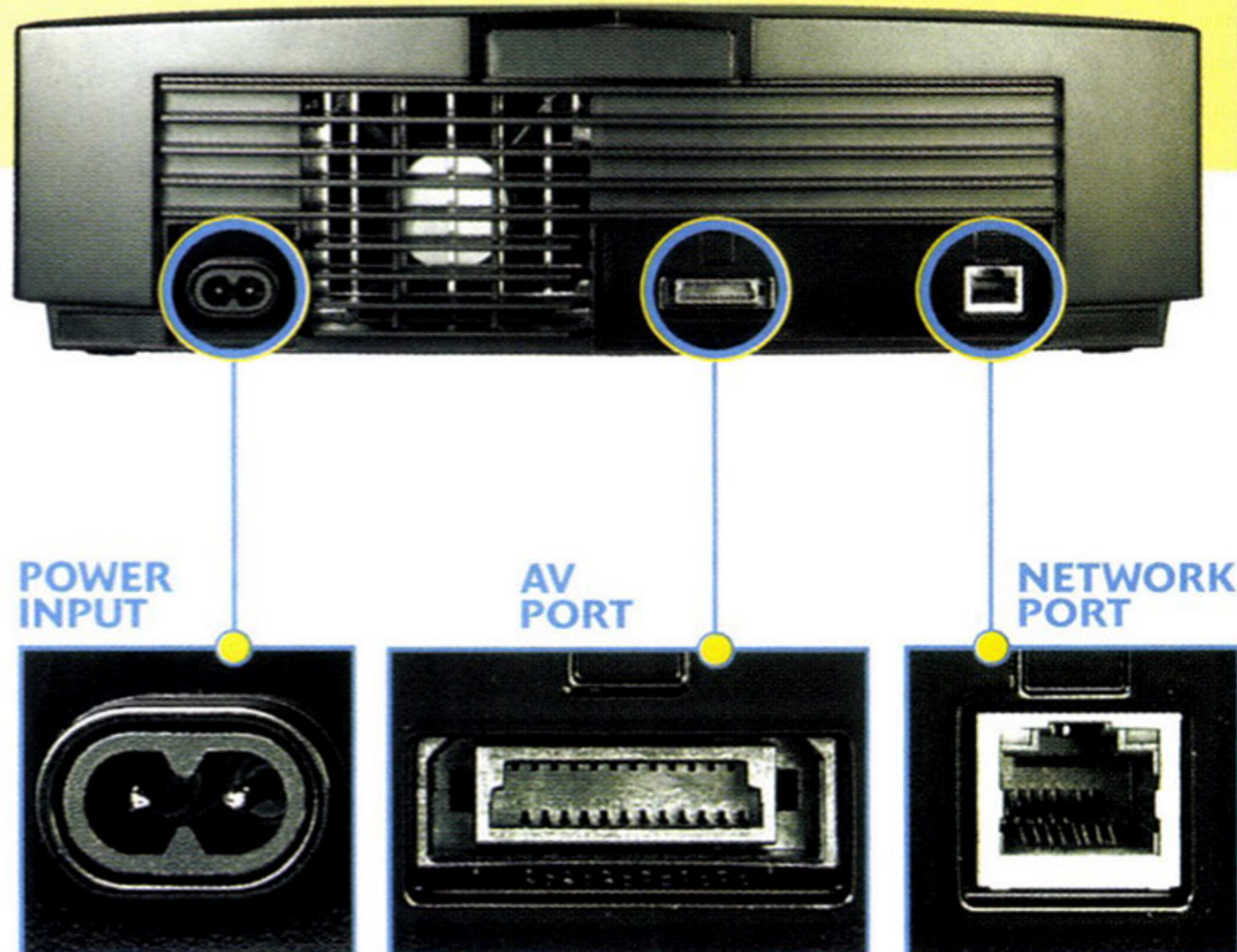
49 OUT OPTIONS

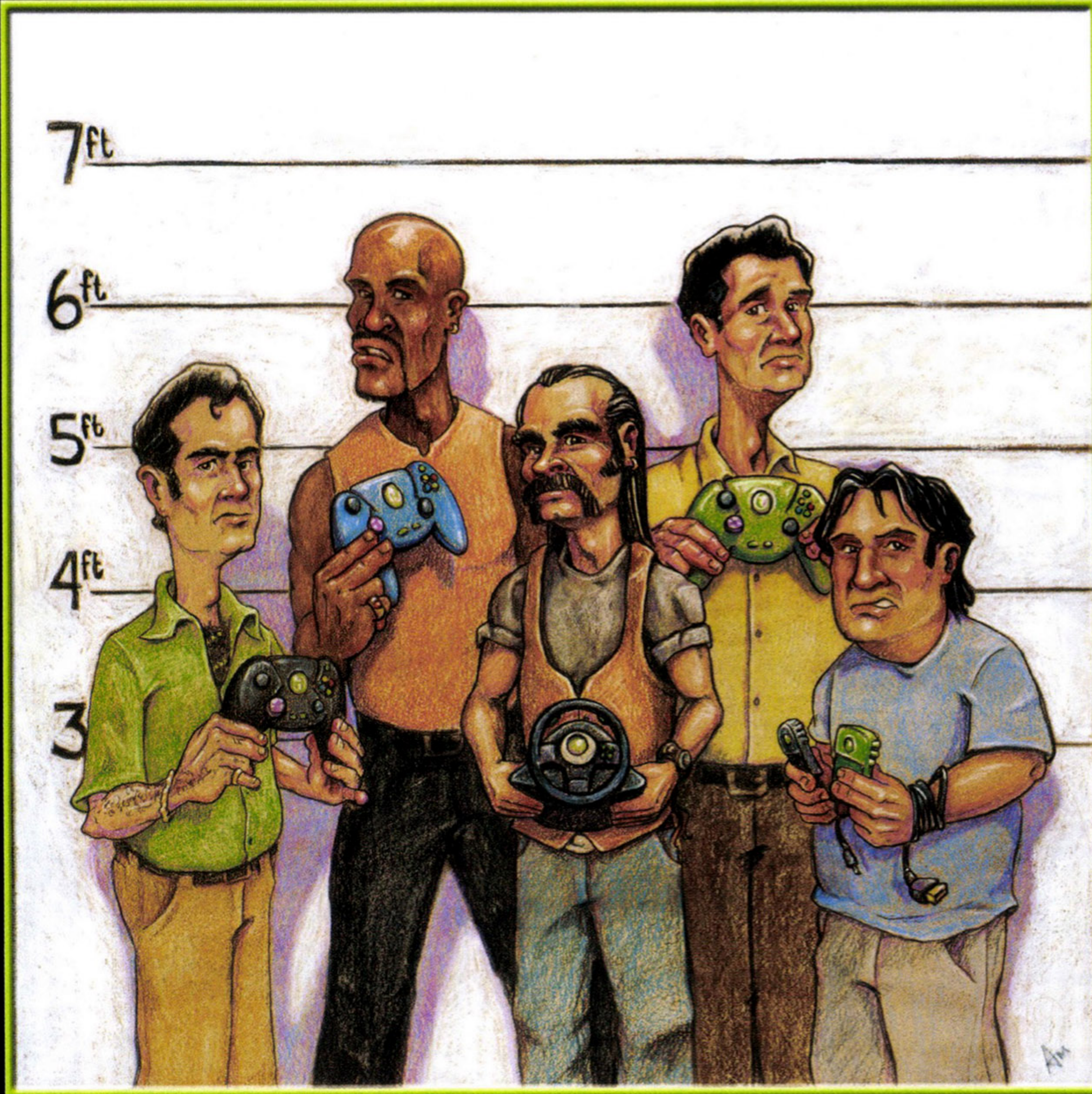
Why it's important: As TV technology progresses, a console will need to support a wide variety of video and audio outputs. Thankfully, this console already does support a wide variety of outputs, including RFU, S-Video, RCA, component video, and even optical digital audio.

The main point: If your TV can accept a type of video or audio input, it's all but certain that the Xbox will support it.

48 KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID

Why it's important: Another simple yet elegant design element on the Xbox is the fact that there are only three ports on the back of the box: the power input, the network port, and the AV port. Everything else is handled using the AV packs. It's designed the way a console should be.





Check out our lineup...



for XBox™



PowerPad



Flash Memory Cards



Cables



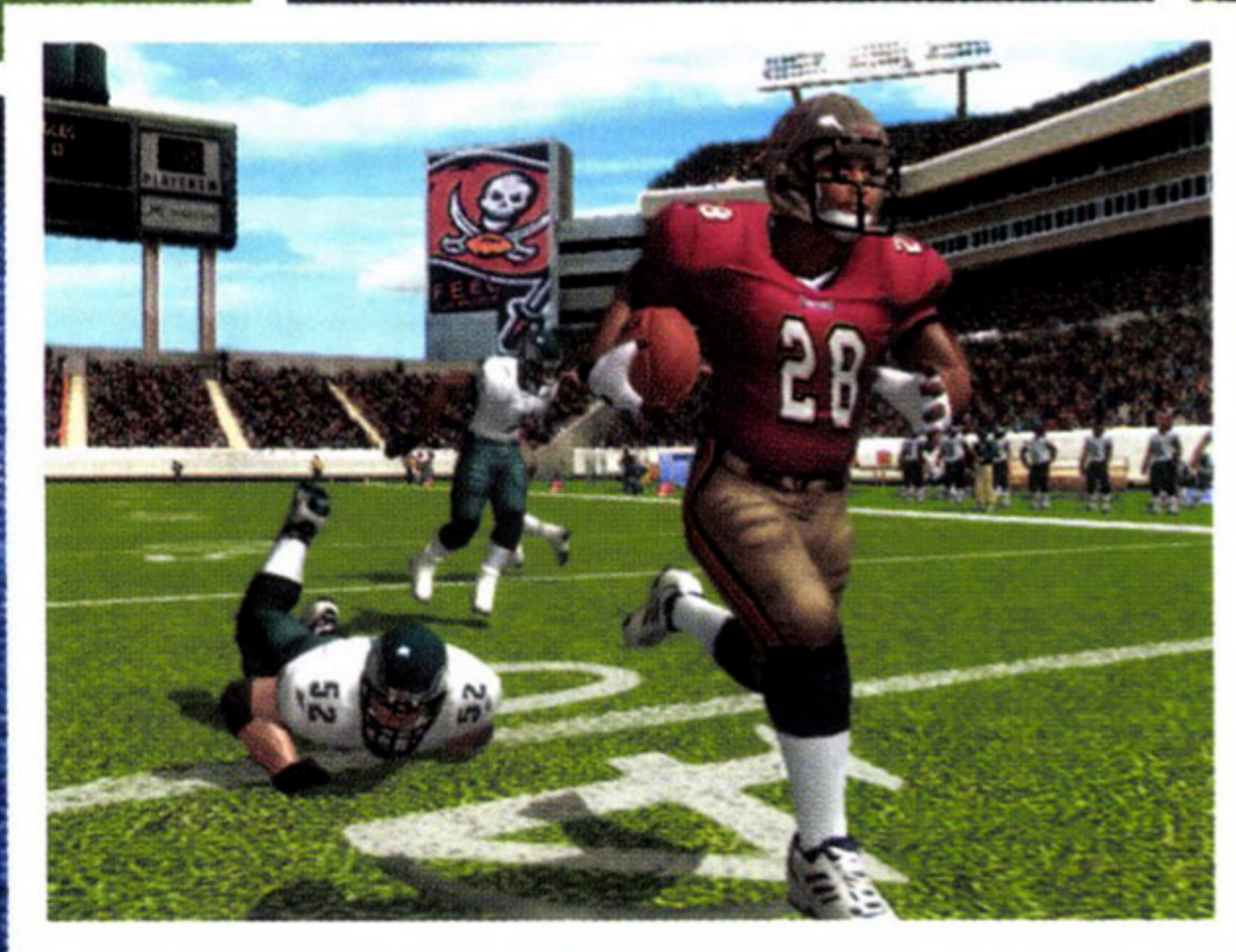
**Black Thunder™
Racing Wheel
coming soon!**

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So Manning's like, "Get in the freakin' end zone!" So very calmly, I said, "Peyton, if you want me to listen, you'll speak to me like a human being." Am I wrong here?





This is your day: You get up, you go to work, someone makes fun of your momma, you tear an ACL, you hear trade rumors, you go home. This isn't playing the NFL — this is playing in the NFL. The graphics, the camera angles, the intensity, the trophy case. Have a good night, Mr. Manning. See you tomorrow.

nflfever2002.com

Microsoft



PLAYERS

NFL **NFL** 2002
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It's a living

ONLY ON XBOX

47 Graphical Prowess

Why it's important: There is no mass-market graphics processor on the face of this planet that's more powerful than Nvidia's NV2A GPU. In terms of pure polygon power, special effects, and ease of use, nothing comes close in the console world.

The competition: The PS2 *does* have an impressive graphics-processing architecture, but even it doesn't match up with the NV2A. The GameCube's "Flipper" chipset lags behind as well.

The numbers:



Xbox GPU speed:
233 MHz

PS2 GPU Speed:
147.456 MHz

GameCube
GPU Speed:
202.5 MHz

46 IT'S GOT A BUILT-IN DRINK HOLDER

Just remove the jewel and your drink will never again be far away.



45 IT FEELS LIKE \$300 WORTH OF GOOD STUFF

Who wants to pay big money for a console that feels like it's made of Styrofoam?

44 DVD DRIVE

Why it's important: Thank heavens Microsoft didn't follow Nintendo's typically wacky hardware plans and make its own proprietary disc format. As it stands, we can listen to *The Matrix* soundtrack, watch the DVD, and play the Xbox-exclusive *Matrix* game from Shiny all on one system. You can theoretically also check out non-*Matrix* related material if you are so inclined.

The competition: Nintendo has decided to create its own smaller-sized disc because it "cough" fits in the palm of a child's hand. (Or maybe, just maybe, it's because Nintendo controls the expensive production.)

The catch: To watch DVDs, you'll have to purchase an extra remote control. But maybe that's not so bad (see reason 52).

43 733 MHZ PROCESSOR

Why it's important: With the most powerful CPU of any console in existence, the Xbox is ready to tackle almost anything that game developers can throw at it. And when the powerful Nvidia GPU takes the graphics off its hands, this mighty processor is free to tackle a world of new number-crunching possibilities.

The competition: The PS2 features a 294.912 MHz central CPU while Nintendo's GameCube is powered by a slightly more powerful (when compared to the PS2) 405 MHz PowerPC.

The new reality: For years, developers have used advancements in hardware to improve graphics. The Xbox now gives them a powerful tool to handle graphics (the NV2A GPU), while freeing up a workhorse CPU that can be used to make physics, AI, and player interaction more realistic than ever before.

42 THE JEWEL

Why it's important: Don't laugh: every console has its distinguishing characteristic, and as far as those go, the jewel isn't half-bad. Sure, it doesn't light up, make sounds, or emit radiation in a remarkable fashion, but it's impossible to miss and you'll never forget what console you're playing when it's nearby.

The competition: The PS2's blue LED is mesmerizing, but it's old news, and let's not even talk about the GameCube's Barney purse-handle.

The original plan: In early Xbox designs, the jewel would hypnotically glow with green light.

41 THE HARD-DRIVE

Why it's important: For the first time in videogame history, a major console will ship with a built-in hard-drive, which, as time will tell, should become the most valuable asset in the Xbox arsenal. It's something no other console of this generation can offer. Already the hard-drive is being used to create huge gaming worlds not possible on other systems – and with no load times. As time goes on, there will be a variety of uses for the hard-drive that will really take gaming to the next level.

The competition: The only option for the PS2 is an expensive add-on hard-drive that developers won't fully support (even the most popular peripherals are lucky to reach more than 10 percent of the market). Nintendo got burned on the 64DD and doesn't look too eager to support a GameCube hard-drive.

More info: For more on the multi-faceted hard-drive, take a gander at page 46.

40 FOUR CONTROLLER SLOTS

Why it's important: The heart of console competition is head-to-head play. It's hard to beat the experience of a couple of friends crowded on a sofa within range of personal insults and cheating-induced fistfights. That's why it's so important that the Xbox has four controller ports built in: because of that, developers will be far more likely to support four players in their games.

The competition: Sony still expects you to pay \$35 for a multitap if you want to play against more than one friend – and while Nintendo offers four-player action, it inevitably involves one player getting stuck with a fluffy pink character.

Split-screen mayhem: Right off the bat, Microsoft is supporting four-player Xbox action. Games like *Fuzion Frenzy*, *Halo*, *Cel Damage*, *Tony Hawk 2X*, and *Mad Dash* all take advantage of the built-in ports – and they're just the first wave.

39 SOUND CARD

Why it's important: It is often overlooked because of the other impressive technological components of the Xbox, but don't forget that the Xbox has the best sound chip of any console in history. The Xbox sound card features 256 voices as compared to 48 for the PlayStation2 and 64 for the GameCube.

How many voices can you hear: If you're playing a game, and the answer is greater than 64, you either have an Xbox or you need to get back on your medication.

38 DOLBY DIGITAL 5.1 IN-GAME

Why it's important: In a console first, the Xbox supports complete Dolby Digital 5.1 sound in gameplay. This means that developers can create games that have sounds that can be pinpointed in real 3D space. So, for instance, you might be playing *Unreal Championship* and hear someone sneaking up behind you to the left long before you ever see them.

The competition: The PS2 proudly trumpets the fact that it supports Dolby Digital 5.1 sound, but what it doesn't say is that it only supports it during DVD movies and FMV sequences – not during gameplay. Nor does the GameCube support Dolby Digital 5.1 in gameplay.

37 SURROUND SOUND WITH JUST TWO SPEAKERS

Why it's important: The Xbox development tools help developers make games that can "fake" surround sound using only two speakers. This enables those of us without the huge home-theater sound-system to experience 3D game sounds.

Is this as good as Dolby Digital 5.1: In short, no. But if a full home-theater system is too costly, it will do nicely.

36 DYNAMIC MUSIC AND SOUNDS

Why it's important: Thanks to the Direct Sound tools, Xbox developers are able to easily insert dynamic music and sound into games.

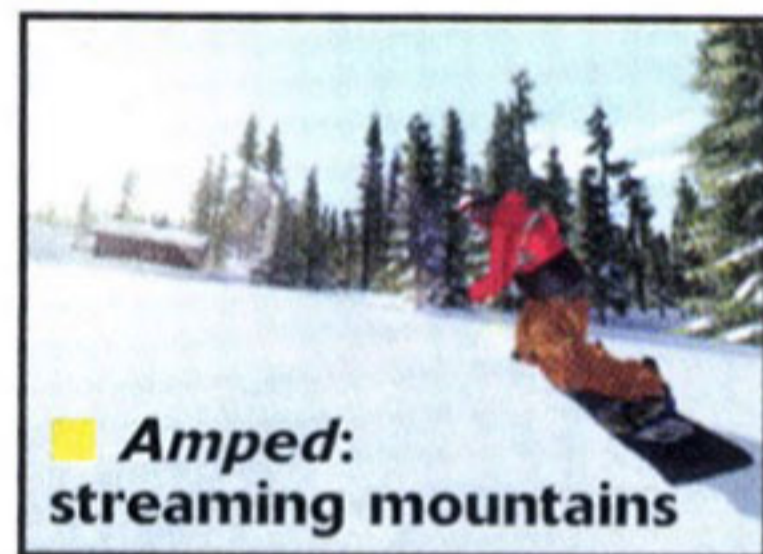
When dynamic sound matters: When a game increases the intensity of its soundtrack to match the most dramatic moments of gameplay, the player is fiercely drawn into the game experience.

35 Hard-Drive Built-In

Why it's important: It may be impossible to properly appreciate the benefits of having a hard-drive built into a console from day one. Because of this, developers can program every single game with an eye toward the hard-drive. That means shorter load times, more detailed persistent worlds, and unbelievably massive levels that spool off the hard-drive.

The competition: Who's going to program games to support an expensive add-on that will be extremely lucky to reach a tiny percentage of console owners?

32 MASSIVE STREAMING WORLDS



Amped: streaming mountains

Why it's important: Typically, the size of a game level is determined by two things – game design and memory space. It takes time to spool level information off a disc – in fact, games are often broken down into levels to allow for loading times. Because information spools off the hard-drive more quickly, developers will be able to create Xbox games with worlds that are much larger than anything we've ever seen before.

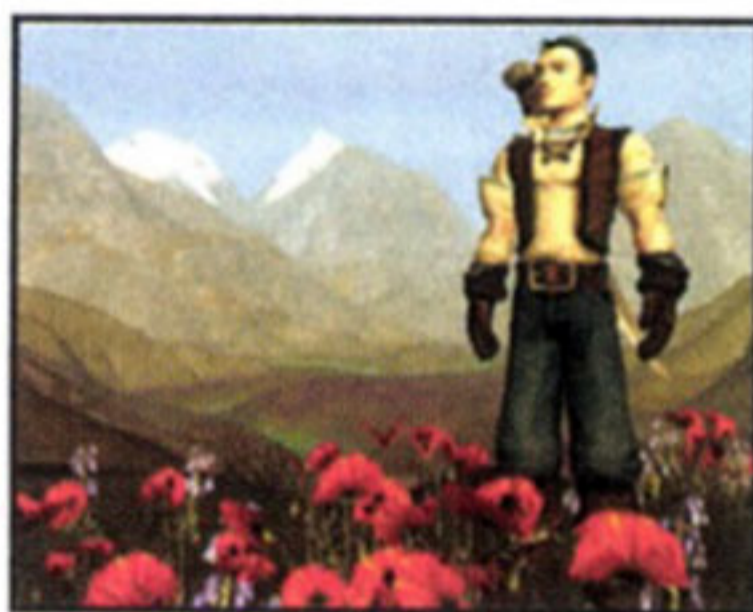
The possibilities: Imagine a racing game with a track the same size and scale as the state of New Jersey, *EverQuest* without load zones, or a platformer the size of *Super Mario 64* without any load times at all.

31 PERSISTENT, DYNAMIC WORLDS

Why it's important: Essentially this is when worlds change according to your actions – in some cases, they are changed by the actions of others. For instance, if you were to chop down a small tree when you are a young character in a game, you would be able to return to the forest years later (in game time) to find that the tree's fellow saplings have grown into a forest but all that's left of your sapling is a stump.

The competition: Forget about it. You've got to have a hard-drive to store all the information needed to make a persistent world feel real.

The standard bearer: Peter Molyneux's *Project Ego* promises to break this concept wide open. This RPG follows a character from childhood into old age, and everything that happens in the present affects the future.



Project Ego

30 MMORPGS

Why it's important: If you've ever played the hopelessly addictive *EverQuest*, then you know how much fun Massively Multiplayer Online RPGs have to offer. And because the Xbox is the only console that comes with both a hard-drive and a network connection, it's the first console that's perfect for this burgeoning game genre.

The Big One: At this stage, the ultimate MMORPG – *Star Wars Galaxies* – seems destined to hit the PC, but we're hopeful that an Xbox version will follow closely behind.

26 NO HORIZONTAL STAND NECESSARY

Our PS2 keeps tipping over unless we use its horizontal stand. Umm, we mean our "friend's" PS2. We certainly wouldn't own a PS2 – would we?

24 Upgrades/Additional Content

Why it's important: Now, before you get all worried, let's make this perfectly clear – we're not talking about patches because console games should be completely finished when they launch. What we are saying, however, is that developers will now be able to upgrade their games after the release. Whether this means new levels, episodic content, or up-to-date sports rosters, the Xbox hard-drive can store all the goodies you'd ever want.

Where can you get this stuff: Check out the Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc once it is available. You won't find more Xbox game goodies anywhere in creation.



34 HARD-DRIVE SPACE

Why it's important: The big ol' hard-drive means we won't be forced to worry about erasing old game files whenever we want to save some new ones.

33 SHORT LOADING TIMES

Why it's important: Because developers know that every single Xbox comes fully equipped with a 10 GB hard-drive, they know that they can use this tool to shorten (and in many cases almost eliminate) load times. Information can be sent from the game disc to the hard-drive before it is needed and then sent to the screen without long waits for data to download and process.

29 LEVEL EDITORS

Why it's important: One of the greatest things about PC games is that many are shipped with level editors. These handy development tools enable you to create levels out of your own imagination using the same programs that the game makers used. Without the hard-drive, there would be severe limits to what the level editors could do. With the hard-drive, the possibilities are virtually limitless.

Get a job: Many of the level designers in the videogame industry got their start making their own levels and distributing them on the Internet.

28 BROADBAND ADAPTER

Why it's important: By adopting a broadband strategy, Microsoft has freed up developers to focus on the best-performing multiplayer action possible without having to reverse-engineer their games to work on dial-up modems that are already too slow for hardcore action gaming.

The competition: Both Sony and Nintendo are supporting broadband and narrowband modems. Look for developers to program for the lowest common denominator, and be prepared for high ping.

The strategy of synergy: Because Microsoft is supporting broadband connections only, developers can freely support the Game Commander headset. There'll be plenty of bandwidth left over for a little bit of taunting.

27 ...AND IT'S BUILT-IN

Why it's important: This means that developers know that every single Xbox comes standard with a broadband adapter, and it also means that they'll be much more likely to include support for it in their games.

The competition: Since developers know that the vast majority of gamers won't buy add-ons, why should they waste time supporting it at all?

Build it and they will come: Until DSL, cable, or better services reach small-town America, broadband-supported games will be few and far between.

25 X-LINK

Why it's important: The Xbox's broadband adapter can also be used to create a LAN (local area network) set-up. This means that if you have an Xbox and a TV in one room, you can simply extend a long LAN cable to another room with an Xbox set-up. Imagine what college dorms could look like in just a few years.

The competition: Except for Sony's widely ignored iLink connection, you'll have to go online to play the guy in the next room. The GameCube connects to Game Boy Advance handhelds, but that's not even the same thing.

23 INTERNET DOWNLOADS

Why it's important: Of course this is a while off, but as soon as there is a solid, working infrastructure for broadband Internet, our Xbox units will be ready to plug in and download stuff off the Internet such as roster updates, new levels, and even demos. Without the hard-drive, the size and usefulness of Internet downloads would be greatly diminished.



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22 Most Powerful Console Graphics Chip in Existence

Why it's important: Well, this one is simple. Even though the competition will point to certain games or certain graphics tricks, absolutely no one will argue that their graphics processor is more powerful than the Xbox NV2A GPU. If you want to own "the most powerful console on earth," then the choice is easy.

The competition: They know the score.

Where you'll see it: When you notice that your Xbox game looks much better than all the other console versions.

21 IT BURNS CALORIES

Moving the Xbox from the bedroom to the den consumes approximately 3,600 calories.

20 PIXEL SHADERS

Why it's important: A pixel shader is a graphics function that calculates visual effects on a surface one pixel at a time. This means that the graphics processor must render, light, shade, and color millions of pixels for each frame, at 60 frames per second. For most graphics processors this is too much of a load, but it's not too much for the Xbox. Pixel shaders are important because they help developers turn the typical, flat surfaces we're familiar with in videogames into textured, organic, and realistically bumpy-looking surfaces.

The competition: Remember how we mentioned how pixel shaders were too complex for "most graphics processors"? Well, the PS2 and GameCube can officially be considered part of that group.

Where you'll see it: When you see characters with stubble on their faces, you'll know you're seeing pixel shaders in action.

19 VERTEX SHADERS

Why it's important: Vertex-shading effects were once so complex that they could only be handled by advanced graphics workstations. What they do is warp, shade, and otherwise deform full surfaces, and the Xbox can do this in realtime. Vertex shaders make it simple to create moving, rippling water surfaces; to fashion character skin that moves realistically; and render fabrics, fogs, and other cool effects in real time.

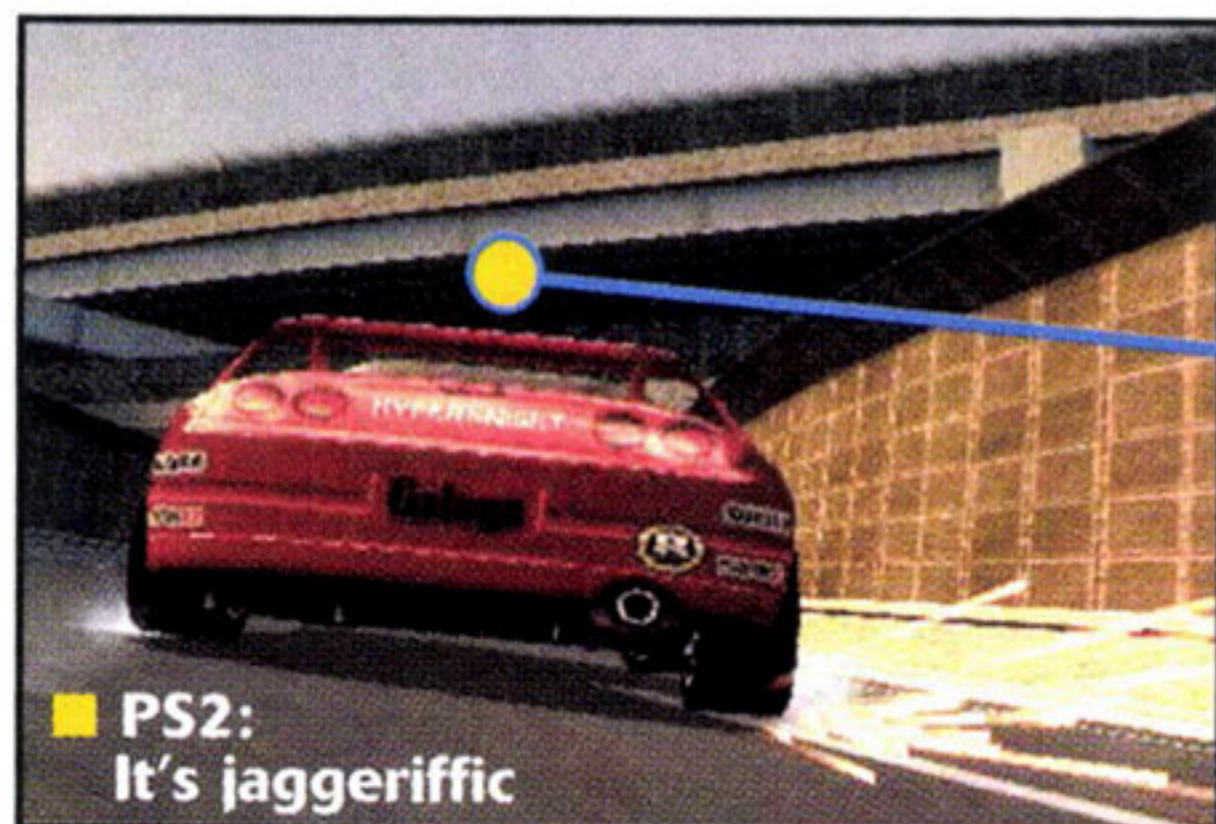
Where you'll see it: The Xbox will have the prettiest videogame water on earth.

18 HIGH-RESOLUTION ANTI-ALIASING

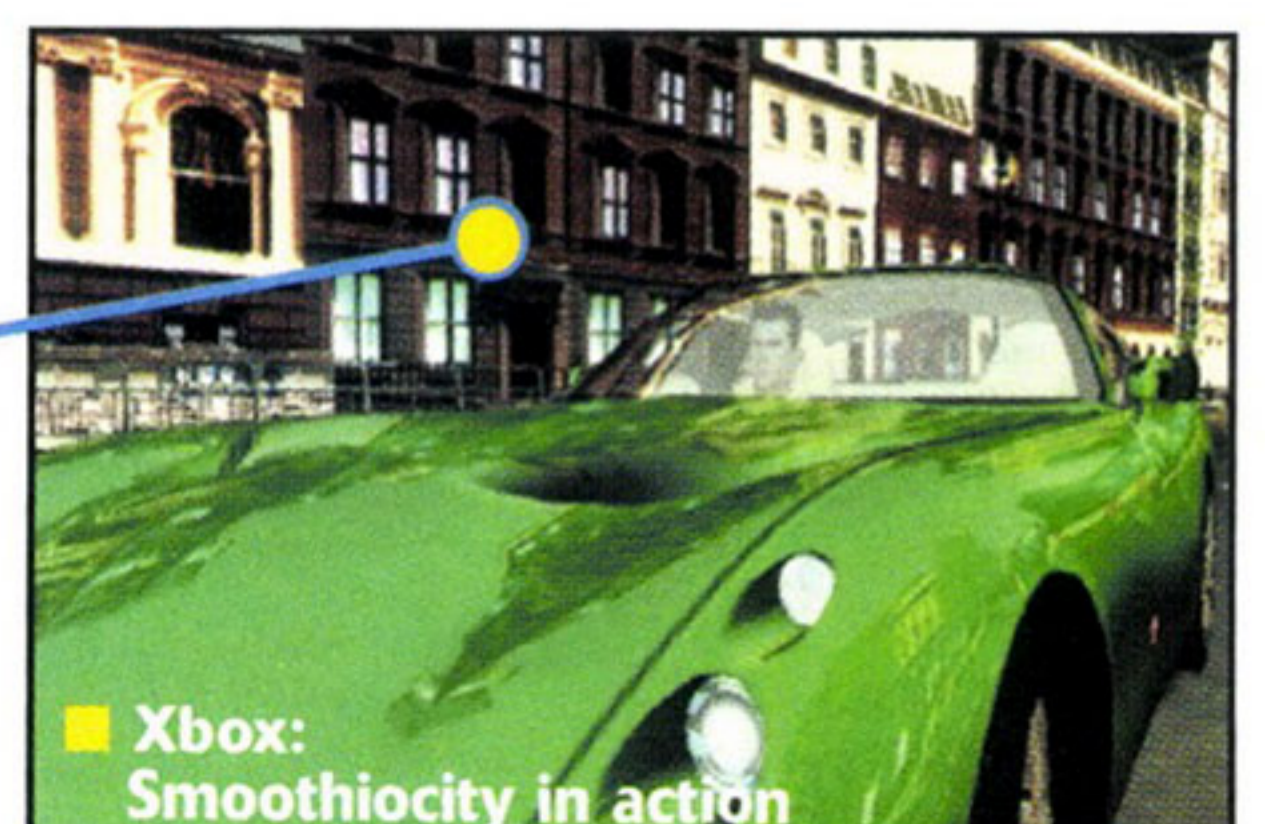
Why it's important: One of the distinguishing flaws of 3D gaming is stair-step jaggies. The best possible way to get rid of these is using a technique called anti-aliasing, which blends the color of the pixels closest to the stair steps so that they are less noticeable. The Xbox uses a technique known as multisampling that creates the blended pixels inside the GPU without slowing down the graphics processing.

The competition: The PlayStation2 is known for its jaggies, and any anti-aliasing solutions must come from the game makers, which steals development time and often hurts the framerate.

Where you'll see it: Look for fences and other objects that are created out of many straight lines. If those lines look smooth (especially diagonal lines) you're seeing quality anti-aliasing in action.



PS2:
It's jaggeriffic



Xbox:
Smoothiocity in action



17 POLYGON THROUGHPUT

Why it's important: They're just numbers, but the Xbox can push 125 million polygons per second (almost twice as many as the PS2).

The competition: Even the PS2's staunchest supporters grudgingly admit the Xbox can crank out more polys. As for the GameCube, Nintendo keeps saying that polygon counts aren't important... we would, too, if our console was so outpowered by its competitors.

Where you'll see it: Look at the environments, the characters, and the objects in the game. The more polygons a console can push, the better these things look.

16 SHADOWS

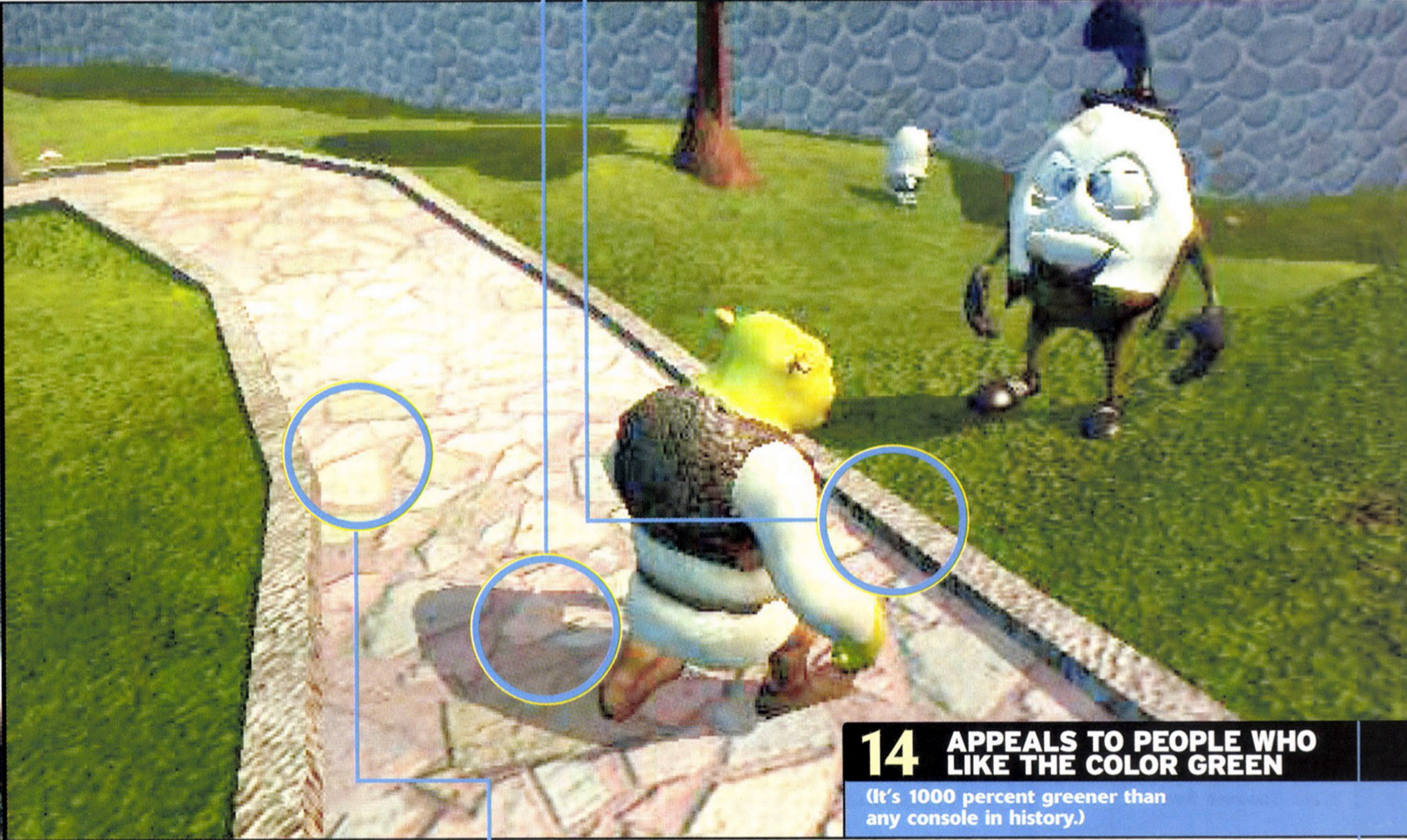
Why it's important: When done correctly, shadows are an absolutely essential part of a realistic-looking videogame. That's why it's so exciting to see how easily the Xbox GPU can render shadows on the fly.

Where you'll see it: In games like *Shrek*, you'll see realtime shadows everywhere and you'll begin to understand how much depth and realism they add to videogame environments.

15 BUMP-MAPPING

Why it's important: Until now, there has been no real mass-market area for bump-mapping to be fully utilized. The technique gives the appearance of depth and texture grain to otherwise flat surfaces by playing with shadows. When used properly, it can add a sense of reality to a game environment that's beyond anything you'll see anywhere.

Where you'll see it: When you zoom in on a bump-mapped character, you may see the fine texturing on their clothing. It's amazing, and it could become one of the defining visual effects of the Xbox.



14 APPEALS TO PEOPLE WHO LIKE THE COLOR GREEN

(It's 1000 percent greener than any console in history.)

13 TEXTURE COMPRESSION

Why it's important: Texture compression is another massive advantage that the Xbox has over the PS2. If you haven't noticed by now, the textures in PS2 games sometimes look as grainy and drab as the textures in PSOne games. The Xbox, on the other hand, uses a form of texture compression that shrinks the size of textures in memory down to as little as one-sixth of their original size. This allows game makers to create massively high-quality textures in their games that look realistic even up close.

Where you'll see it: In awesome ground textures, in signs in the game that can be clearly read, and in highly detailed background textures. Better textures just make the game look better overall, and they can also reduce the need for high-polygon models, saving them for other uses in the game.

12 SIMULTANEOUS TEXTURES

Why it's important: The Xbox can run a rendering path over the same texture up to four times each frame on the screen. This means that it can first render a texture, then light it, then add a bump-mapping effect, and still have time to run another colored lighting pass. And this happens every single frame, up to 60 frames a second.

Where you'll see it: When your character runs through an area with different colored lighting, you'll see that lighting affect your character, even on top of bump-mapped textures. It makes you feel like the characters are truly inside a living, breathing game world.

11 REFLECTION MAPPING

Why it's important: Another cool effect that you'll see more often on the Xbox than the competition is reflection mapping. In fact, the Xbox can easily merge reflected textures with bump-mapped textures to create unbelievably realistic visuals.

Where you'll see it: Everywhere. Developers have embraced reflection mapping for their Xbox titles. EA, for instance, shows off much better reflection mapping in the Xbox version of *NHL 2002* than it does in the PS2 version.

10 ...And It's Programmable

Why it's important: That means that developers can program new effects onto the GPU as they are created. So, if Nvidia develops a way to render see-through, light-emitting, reflective, bump-mapped textures that animate in a pre-determined fashion, developers can add that program onto their GPU and use it in their games. In other words, the chip will basically evolve as time progresses.

Where you'll see it: As Nvidia develops cool new graphics techniques, you'll see them quickly hand off the new ideas to developers, and they'll show up in games right away.

9 THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

Why it's important: One of the first things you'll notice about the Xbox – or should we say one of the first things you *won't* notice about the Xbox – is the machine's quiet sound. In comparison to previous consoles (most notably the Dreamcast) that were so loud they overshadowed the game sounds at times, the Xbox is as quiet as a giraffe at a prison rodeo. **The explanation:** Giraffes have no vocal cords to speak of, and prison rodeos... well, they're just scary.

7 EASY TO DEVELOP FOR

Why it's important: The Xbox is a console that was originally designed by game developers for game developers. And because of that, it has been created from the ground up to help developers make great games. It's got a ton of tested development tools, it's familiar for those used to developing on the PC platform, and it doesn't require developers to reinvent the wheel every time they want to include a cool new feature. **The history:** Seamus Blackley, the Xbox Technology Director, was himself a developer who felt frustrated with needlessly complex videogame consoles.

5 DEVELOPER SUPPORT

Why it's important: Developers in the US and Europe have embraced the Xbox, and at this time, we know of more than 200 titles in development. This is an amazing feat, especially when you realize that Microsoft just stepped into the console market. No other new console manufacturer (including Sony when it introduced the PlayStation) has been so warmly welcomed throughout the world.

4 YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET ONE

Why it's important: Sony promised the world – and then failed to deliver enough units when it introduced the PlayStation2. Many gamers had to wait on a list for up to five months just to get one. Microsoft has definitely learned from Sony's mistakes and is already making sure that it will have enough units in stores to meet demand come launch time. **Nothing's guaranteed:** Although Microsoft has a solid battle plan for launch that seems on schedule, anything can happen. It's not our fault if something bad happens, however. We're just the magazine – we only take credit for the good stuff that happens.

8 MICROSOFT AIN'T GOING AWAY ANYTIME SOON

Why it's important: When we first heard financial projections that Microsoft could possibly lose as much as \$2 billion in the first two years of launch, we were understandably nervous. But then we remembered that the company has billions – in cash – in the bank – and more on the way each second. In fact, another analyst estimated that the company's cash holdings grow about \$1 billion each month. **Bottom line:** Microsoft isn't going to follow in Sega's footsteps.

6 MASSIVE MARKETING BUDGET

Why it's important: Let's face it, part of the fun of buying a console is having friends who do the same so you can share games and experiences. Microsoft is spending half a billion dollars to make sure that you'll have plenty of friends with their own Xbox in the near future.

Other ideas: With \$500 million dollars in marketing cash, Microsoft could buy an NFL franchise and name it after the Xbox, give away 2 million units for free, or fund five huge summer blockbuster movies about the Xbox.

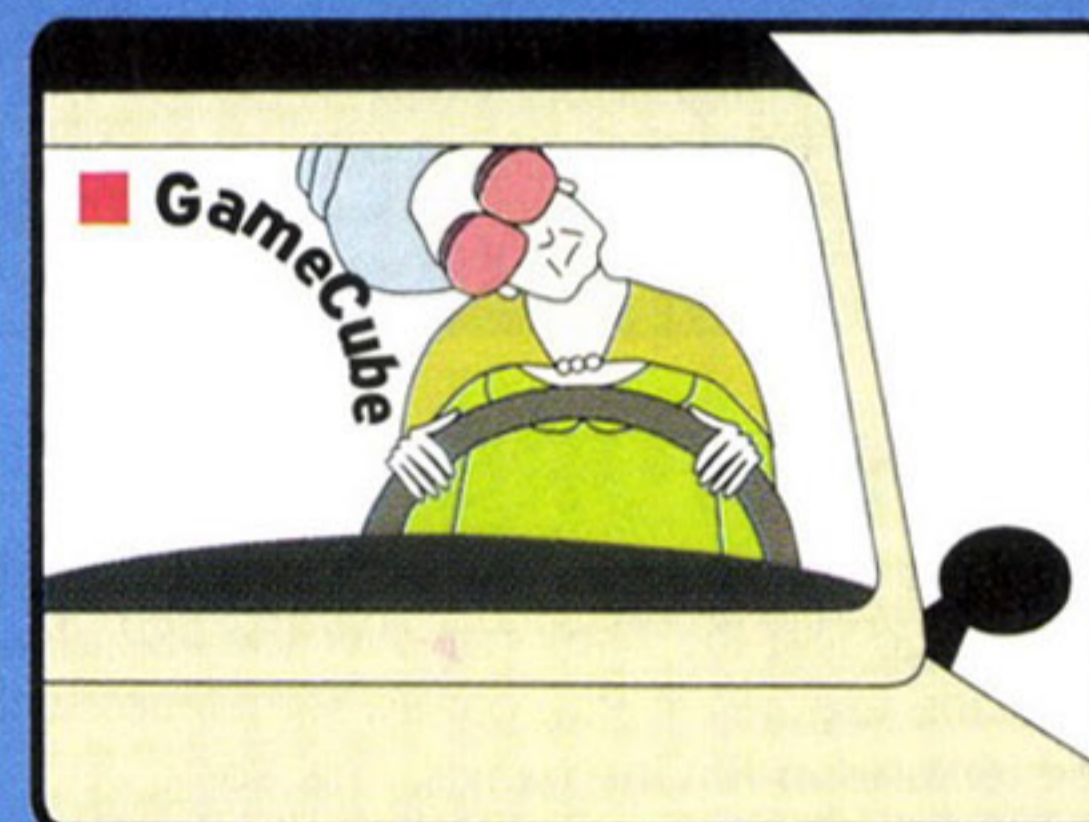
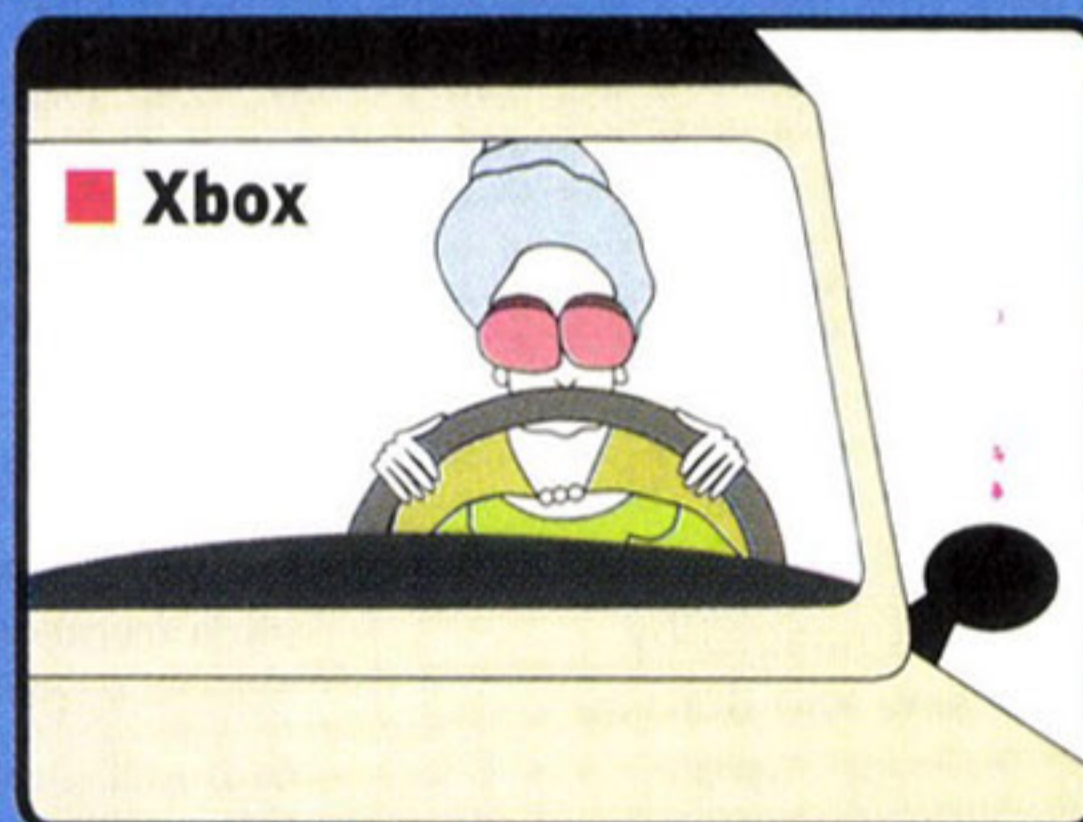
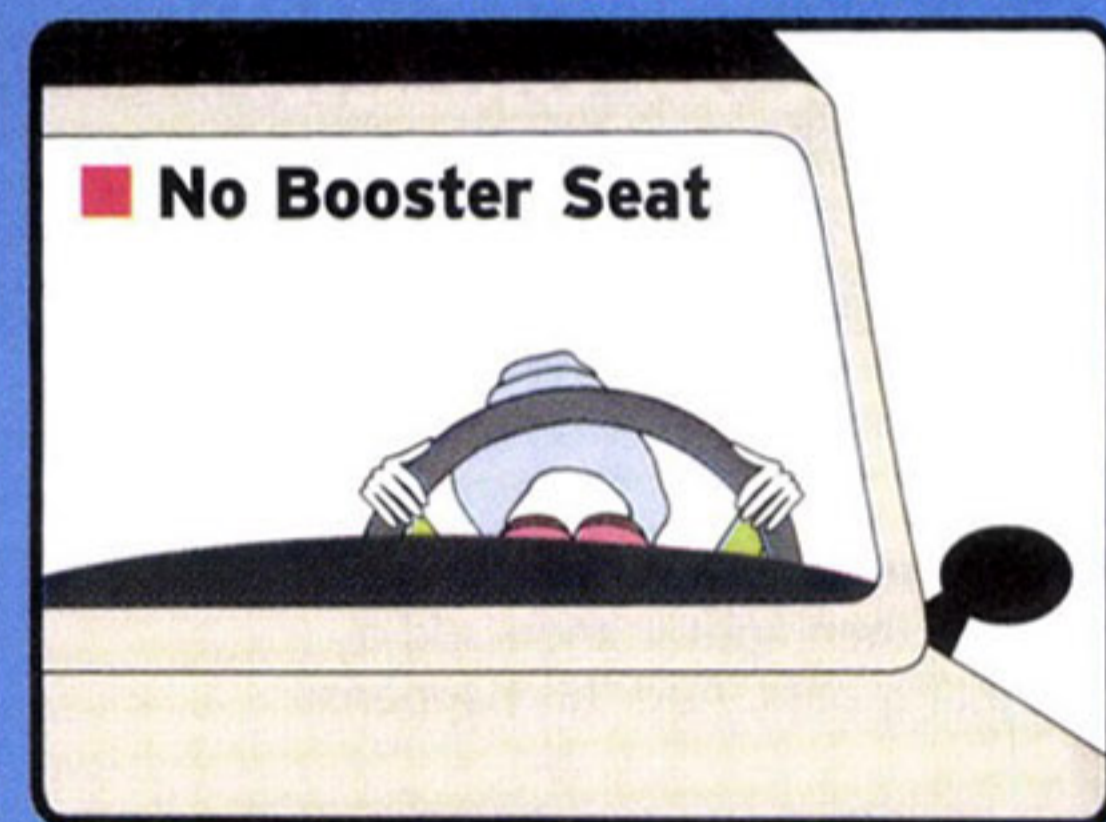


3 THE FUTURE

Why it's important: The best days of the Xbox are certainly ahead of us. The first wave of Xbox games will only give us a glimpse of what's on the way, and developers are just now starting to grasp the amazing power of this system. In a couple of years, the games that hit the Xbox will absolutely blow away the titles we're so excited about now. **The ideal situation:** If Xbox games continue to show improvement from one generation to the next, they could begin to look far better than the competition's games.

2 BOOSTER SEAT FOR GRANDMA

In recent scientific tests, researchers discovered that the Xbox has many uses beyond playing videogames. In this case, they discovered that the Xbox can help solve one of the most dangerous traffic problems in the world – old ladies who can't see over the steering wheel.



CONCLUSION: When your grandma needs a little help getting her slumping old body high enough to see over the steering wheel, nothing but the world's most powerful videogame console will do. Plus nothing feels better on grandma-butt than the cold, smooth plastic casing of the Xbox.

1 The Games!

Let's face it, despite the Xbox's many strengths, if it didn't have the games, it wouldn't be worth your time. Thankfully, developers have embraced the Xbox, and it has one of the strongest and most diverse launches in console history.

It's too early to review the launch games (many are still unfinished as this is being written), but as the **Official Xbox Magazine**, we had the opportunity to play them all and here is our hands-on report of each of the launch games and what to expect from them.

Dead or Alive 3	page 52
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Air Force Delta Storm	page 59
Project Gotham Racing	page 59
Cel Damage	page 60
WWF: Raw is War	page 60
NFL Fever	page 60

Note: As of press time, these are the 14 titles scheduled for launch. Things may change before the Xbox actually hits stores, but most likely these will be the games that you see.

THE XBOX™ ERA BEGINS AT *TACO BELL*®, 10.18.01



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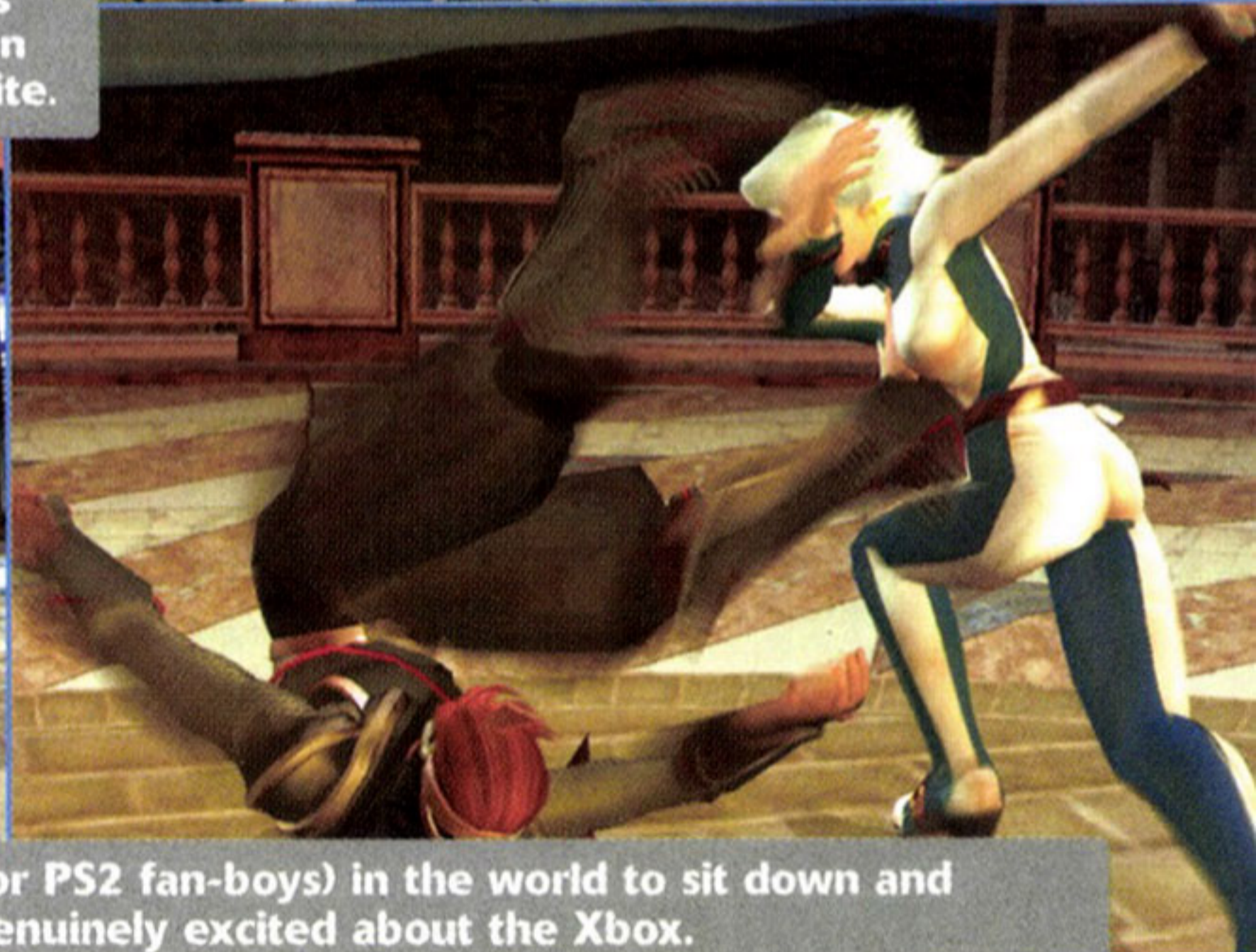


HANDS-ON REPORT

Not to brag, but we've been playing Xbox games... and boy are you in for a treat. Here's a quick glimpse of what you can expect.



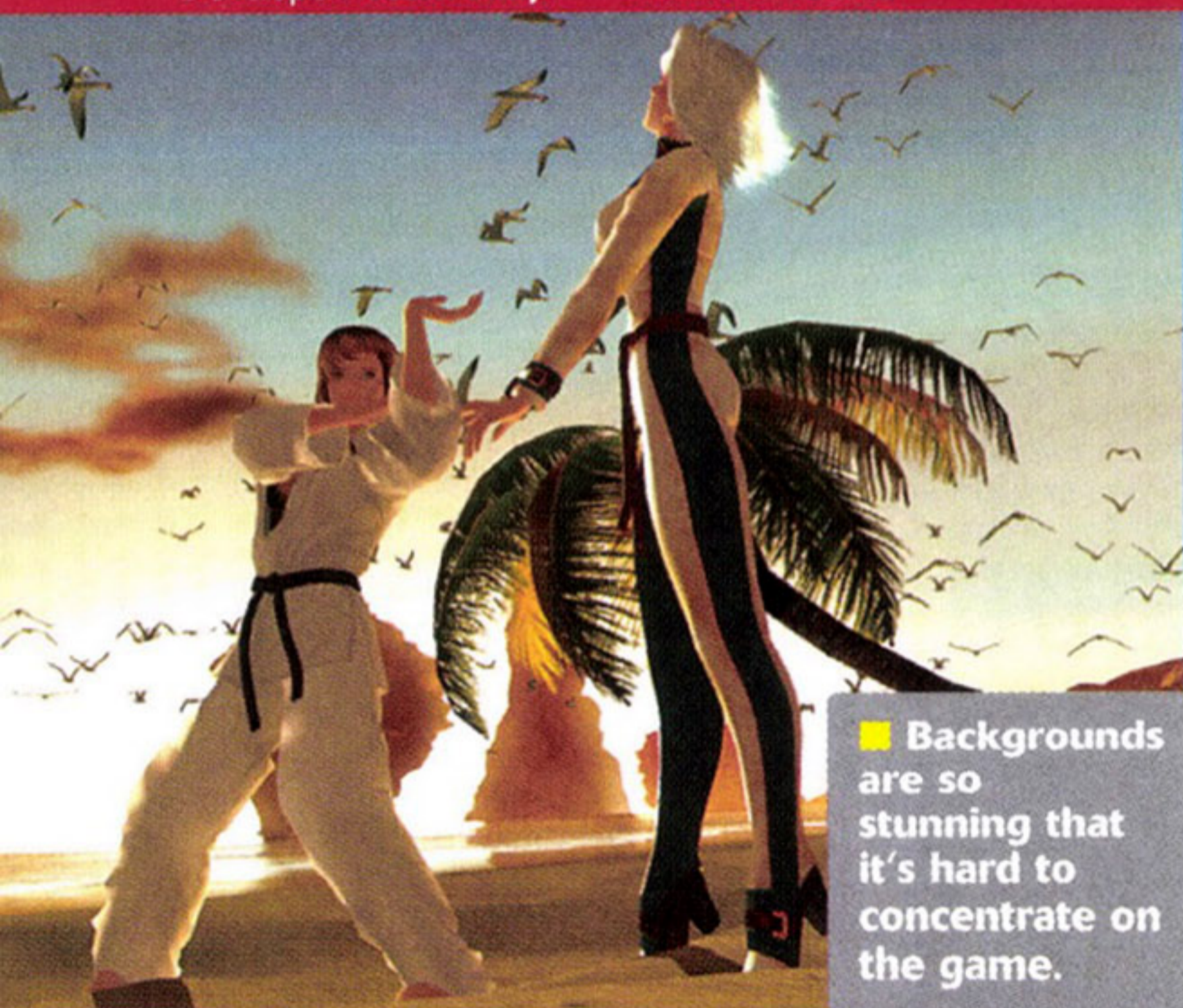
■ Christy is the new badass in *DoA3*, and with moves like "heel to face" and "pimp-slap," she is definitely an early favorite.



■ We triple-dog-dare any Xbox detractors (or PS2 fan-boys) in the world to sit down and play *DoA3* for twenty minutes and not be genuinely excited about the Xbox.

Dead or Alive 3

Developer: Team Ninja Publisher: Tecmo



■ Backgrounds are so stunning that it's hard to concentrate on the game.

The hands-on experience:

Dead or Alive 3 is fast becoming the system-seller for the Xbox. It not only challenges other 3D fighters, like *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter*, but in the graphics department, it punches their heads off and steals their girlfriends. It is a work of videogame art. From a dreamy Vermont forest, to a cataclysmically interactive ice cavern, the background graphics amaze and stun. And Tecmo didn't rest on its abundantly successful laurels – since then, the gameplay has been tuned, improved, and tweaked, and a host of new characters have been added to sweeten the pot. The gameplay is the same mixture of fast action combos and careful, defensive movement that *DoA* has always featured, but the new characters are more fluid, more responsive, and certainly have more moves at their disposal. And best news of all? This game really shows off the Xbox controller, which as it turns out, seems perfectly suited to fighting games. Simply put, this is the kind of experience that will define the Xbox.

The graphics in motion:

DoA3 is quite simply the best-looking fighting game ever made, and that's an objective measure, not an opinion. The game has higher poly counts, more special effects, and more convincing backdrops than any other beat-'em-up. When you watch a character fall face-first into a puddle from a slope, and see the limp body follow the curves of the terrain perfectly, you'll understand what we mean. And when you see the autumn forest level, you'll redefine your expectations of how games should look.

The multiplayer aspects:

The single-player game will feature the usual Arcade, Story, and Battle modes, and Tecmo promises a ton of options for two-player games as well.

What we liked best:

After about an hour of gawking slack-jawed at the incredible graphics, we realized that not only was this a fun game in its own right, but a brilliant update of the already-slick *DoA* fighting system.

The potential pitfalls:

Unless they cut it off at the three playable characters in the build we last played, this is destined for greatness. The fighting system, the system-selling graphics, and the approachable nature of the gameplay make it the safest bet on the roster.



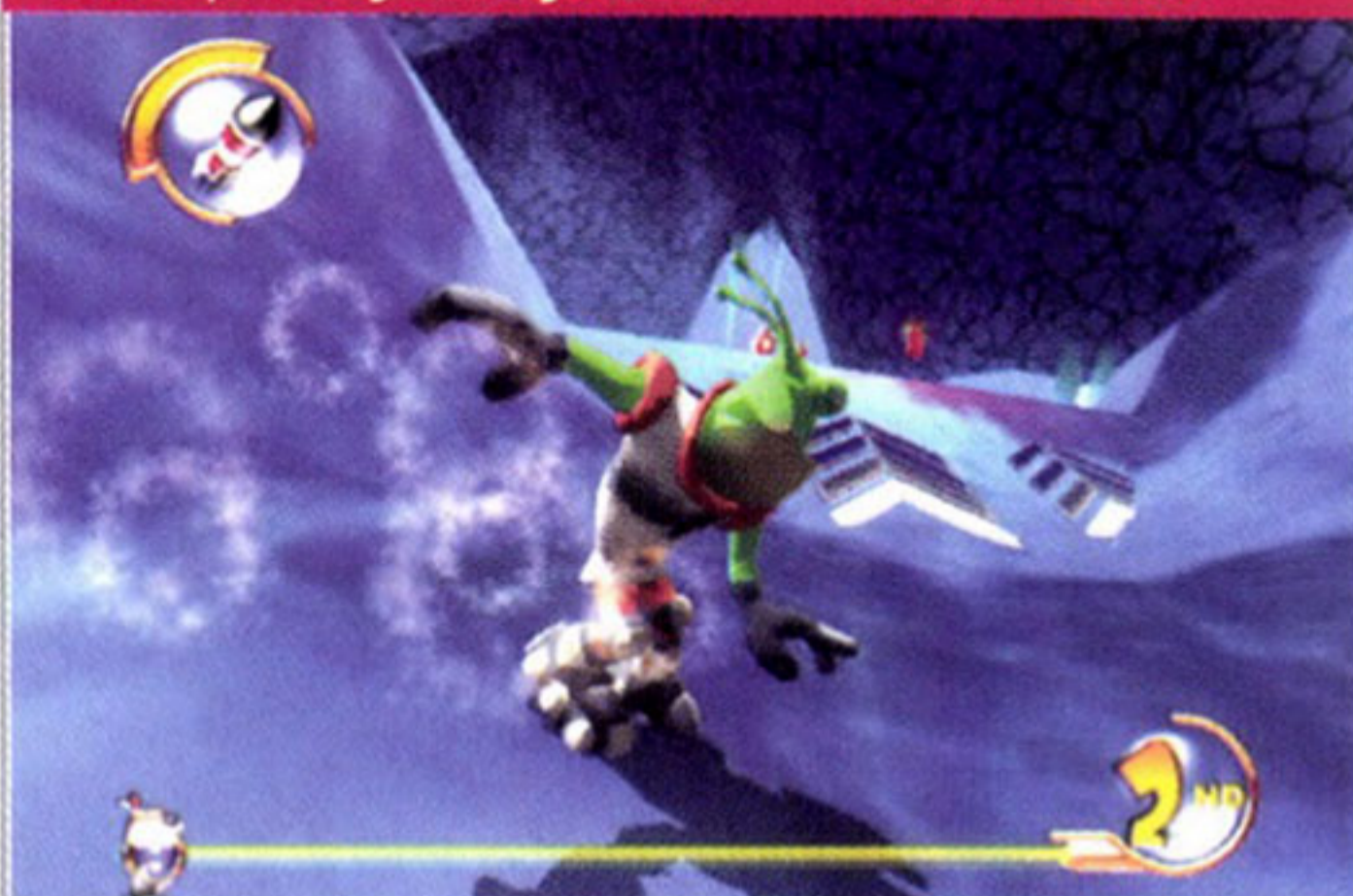
■ Everyone loves a cat-fight, and the girls of *DoA3* are the purr-fect combo of lethal and hot.



* As of press time, this is our best guess of launch games. Due to various reasons beyond our limited control, this list could change radically. If it does, then it's not our fault. Thank you.

Mad Dash Racing

Developer: **Crystal Dynamics** Publisher: **Eidos**



■ These guys have so much "attitude" they don't need go karts... take that Mario.

The hands-on experience:

Although *Mad Dash* is being marketed as a kart-style racing game, it actually plays more like an old-fashioned platform game. While not quite as fast as *Sonic Adventure*, *Mad Dash* plays much faster than it looks, and unlike Sega's push forward-and-go platformer, you're actually in control. The characters are broken down into bashers, dashers, and gliders. Each track includes short cuts for each class. So far, the short cuts have been easy to find, but we're willing to bet that there are some cool ones hidden.

The graphics in motion:

Unlike similar games on competing platforms (*cough* PS2) the framerate stays crispy even during split-screen multiplayer matches and you can see forever in this game's huge, colorful worlds.

The multiplayer aspects:

The two- and four-player split-screen gameplay is quite fun. These kinds of games are made to be played while sitting around a TV with friends. We would have liked a little more player interaction, however.

The cool innovation:

The three unique styles of racers add a twist to the typical kart-racing gameplay.

What we liked best:

Since the advent of 3D gaming, it almost seems like game makers have forgotten about bright, vivid colors. *Mad Dash* is one of the most vibrantly colored games we've played in quite a while.

The potential pitfalls:

Kart-racing fans are familiar with kart-racing physics – animals running may feel a little weird.

Interest Gauge



■ We promised not to mention the game *Running Wild* in this preview. We failed.

Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding

Developer: **Microsoft** Publisher: **Microsoft**

The hands-on experience:

As with every snowboarding game, and especially in *Amped*, gameplay and mastering the slopes is all about performing tricks. The coolest thing about *Amped* at this point in its development is that Microsoft has gone out of its way to make this an accessible romp through the snowboarding trick list – with one analog stick to control movement and the other to dictate which trick you perform. No messy, overly complicated button mashing in this snowboarder. While graphically, *Amped* still needs a little work, and the framerate leaves something to be desired, these problems will hopefully be ironed out by launch. But with a load of mountains, courses, and quirks already in place, Microsoft certainly has most of this snowy mountain covered.



■ Is it our eyes, or does that board actually flex when you grind rails?



■ The character detail is such that you can see individual fingers on a boarder's glove.

The graphics in motion:

At times breathtaking, at other times stuttering and weirdly smacking of PSOne, *Amped* is a wild card, but hopefully will make up for it in gameplay.

The multiplayer aspects:

We haven't seen them yet.

The cool innovation:

Big slopes and an emphasis on freestyling provide a breath of fresh air to a genre that's already getting a little crowded on consoles.

What we liked best:

The sheer freedom of boarding all over a wide-open mountain slope is a sensation that cannot be beaten by rigid, stick-to-the-course tracks found in strict snowboarding racers. Add to this the fluid controls and this might be a good ride.

The potential pitfalls:

Going head-to-head against *SSX* is not going to be easy – especially if *Amped* can't get up to speed in the graphics department.

Interest Gauge

The staff takes some wild guesses

Here at the Official Xbox Magazine, we like to think of ourselves as skilled prognosticators. So when we saw the list of Xbox launch titles, we decided to have a try at guessing each game's final scores. Granted, we haven't played any of the games long enough for an actual review, but that can't stop us from making a few stabs in the dark.

NOTE: THESE ARE NOT SCORES OF GAMES. THEY ARE MERELY WILD, EDUCATED GUESSES BY WILD, UNEDUCATED EDITORS. THANK YOU.

	FRAN	MIKE	DAVE	FRANK	DAN	AVERAGE
Air Force Delta Storm	7.5	6.7	8.0	7.0	6.5	7.1
WWF: Raw is War	7.2	6.4	6.5	6.0	8.5	6.9
Mad Dash	7.9	6.1	6.5	7.0	6.0	6.7
Cel Damage	7.6	7.3	7.0	8.1	8.3	7.7
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	6.9	5.1	5.5	6.8	7.4	6.3
Halo	8.7	9.1	8.5	10.0	9.7	9.2
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X	8.2	8.1	8.0	9.1	8.5	8.4
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee	8.3	6.4	8.9	8.5	9.5	8.3
NFL Fever	5.0	6.3	7.2	6.8	7.1	6.5
Madden 2002	7.6	8.9	9.0	8.1	9.8	8.7
Dead or Alive 3	9.9	11.0	10.0	9.5	9.7	10.1
NHL Hitz	6.8	5.4	6.8	5.5	6.5	6.2
Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding	6.0	8.9	7.3	8.3	8.6	7.8
Project Gotham	8.9	9.4	9.0	9.5	9.8	9.3
AVERAGE	7.6	7.5	7.7	7.9	8.3	7.8

NHL Hitz

Developer: Midway Publisher: Midway



■ There is nothing more embarrassing than getting beaten down by a snowman.

The hands-on experience:

NHL Hitz played exactly like you'd expect a Midway arcade sports game to play. It was fast, over-the-top, and a guy was yelling in the background the whole time. It's a simple strategy that delivers exciting, playable fun for those of us who don't need our sports to be as serious as a *Star Trek* fan trying to explain why Kirk is a sexier space captain than Scott Bakula.

The graphics in motion:

Although you'll have to look carefully, the Xbox version of *NHL Hitz* does look better than the PS2 version. The graphics can best be described as cleaner or maybe even sharper than the PS2 counterpart, but most importantly the character models look smooth, the special effects are cool, and the game moves along nicely.

The multiplayer aspects:

This game was built for multiplayer gaming. Not that intense, serious head-to-head multiplayer gaming, but rather the "jump off your couch, point at your opponent, do a little victory dance, then throw your gamepad" kind of gameplay that started with *NBA Jam*.

The cool innovation:

Traditional hockey games have limited fighting because the NHL wants to portray a happy, non-violent image to parents. However, in this game, the gloves are off.

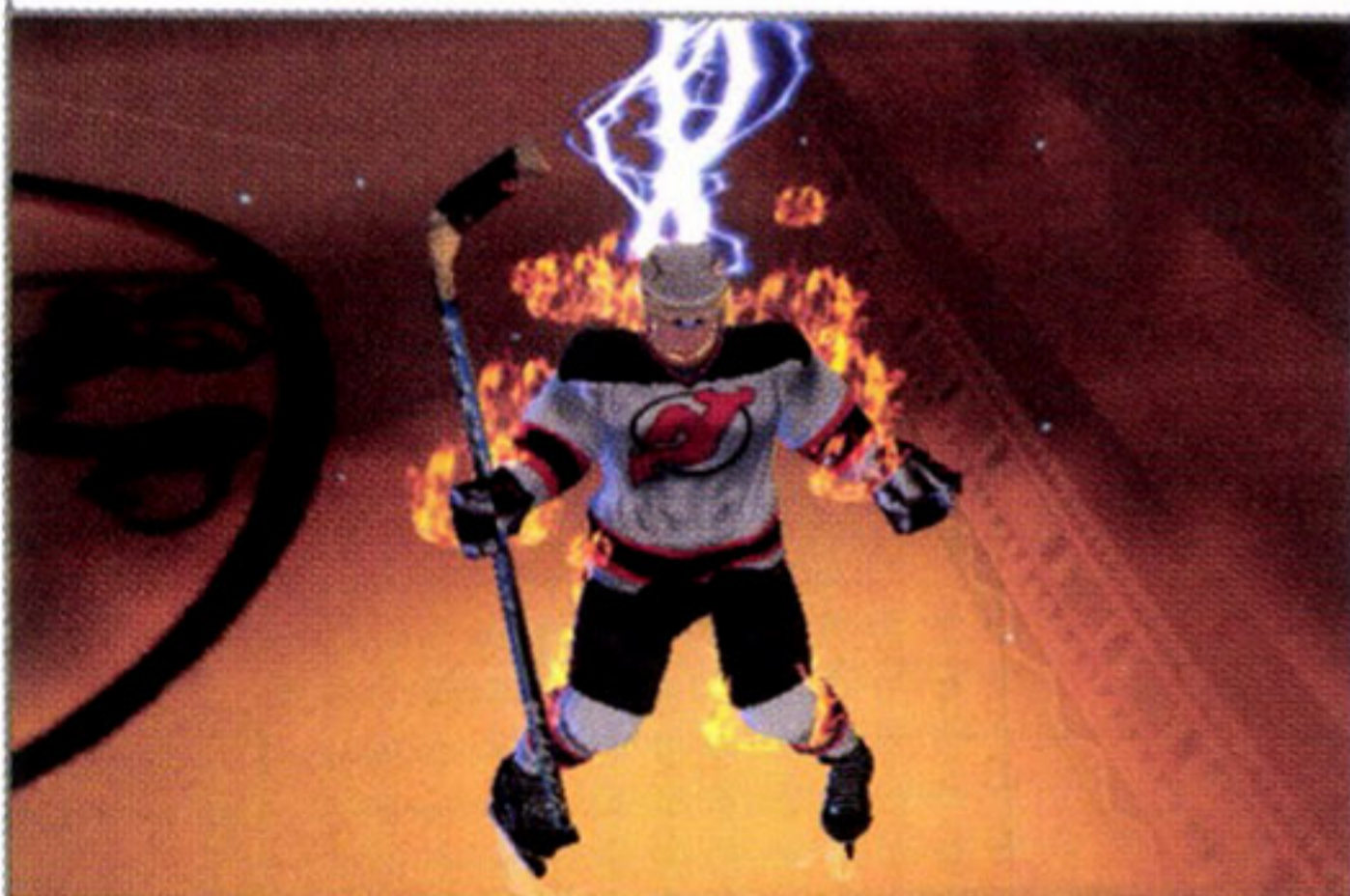
What we liked best:

It's exactly what you'd expect from Midway arcade sports, but it's almost guaranteed fun.

The potential pitfalls:

Haven't we played this game before? Like in 1993 and every year after.

Interest Gauge



■ Apparently the NHL has decided to replace "penalty box" with "burning in hell."

Halo

Developer: Bungie Software Publisher: Microsoft



■ You and 5 AI partners can hop in this tank and cause mass destruction. Cool.



■ The flame effects in *Halo* are so real that your fireplace is likely to get jealous.

The hands-on experience:

Admittedly, the control scheme takes a bit of getting used to (especially for PC first-person shooter vets), but once you get the hang of using the dual analog sticks it really becomes intuitive. What really impressed us about our time with *Halo* was how alive, different, and packed the worlds are. You really aren't alone, as a band of Marines intelligently support you without the pain of having to micromanage them. In other words, you do your thing and they just follow along doing what any good Marine partner would do – taking bullets for you.

The alien horde and their intelligent fighting is astounding. There are several moments in the game where you really feel like you are in the middle of a massive battle. Quite honestly, this game looks to have everything in place to be the best console first-person shooter since *GoldenEye*.

The graphics in motion:

Mind-boggling. The graphics in *Halo* are a visual tribute to the supreme power of the Xbox. Every pixel onscreen is bump-mapped, reflection-mapped, and lit in realtime. The end result is a world so beautiful and so real that it's almost a shame you have to run through it and mess it with alien blood.

The multiplayer aspects:

Four-player split-screen – and up to 16 players with four different set-ups linked – makes *Halo* a great party game. The split-screen really minimizes the graphic detail, and we haven't seen the killer multiplayer game yet, but it certainly has potential.

The cool innovation:

AI partners and vehicular combat working together in one game has never been done right – when it's working perfectly, it's amazing.

What we liked best:

There isn't much we *didn't* like about *Halo*. The gameplay, the graphics, and even the story.

The potential pitfalls:

The AI partners seem pretty on the ball, but we worry that the odds of them being annoying or stupid at some point are pretty high. We're also a little concerned about the balance between frantic action and a compelling game experience. Just shooting everything in sight doesn't equal fun. Hopefully these areas will be addressed and *Halo* can actually live up to the hype.

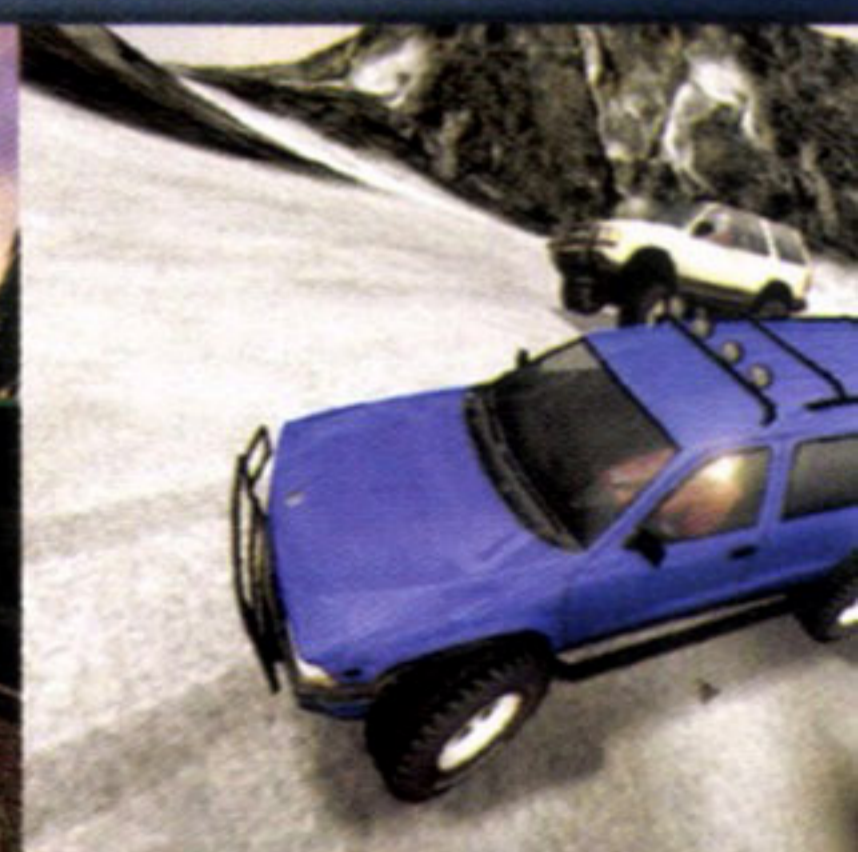
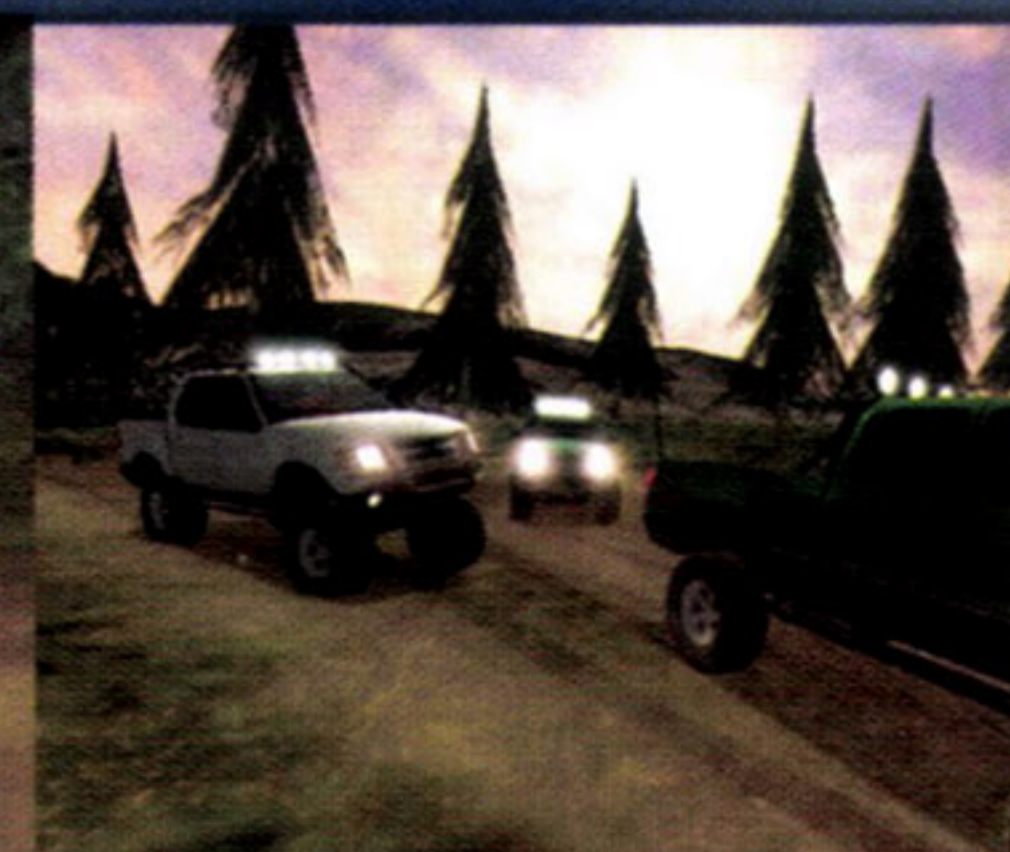
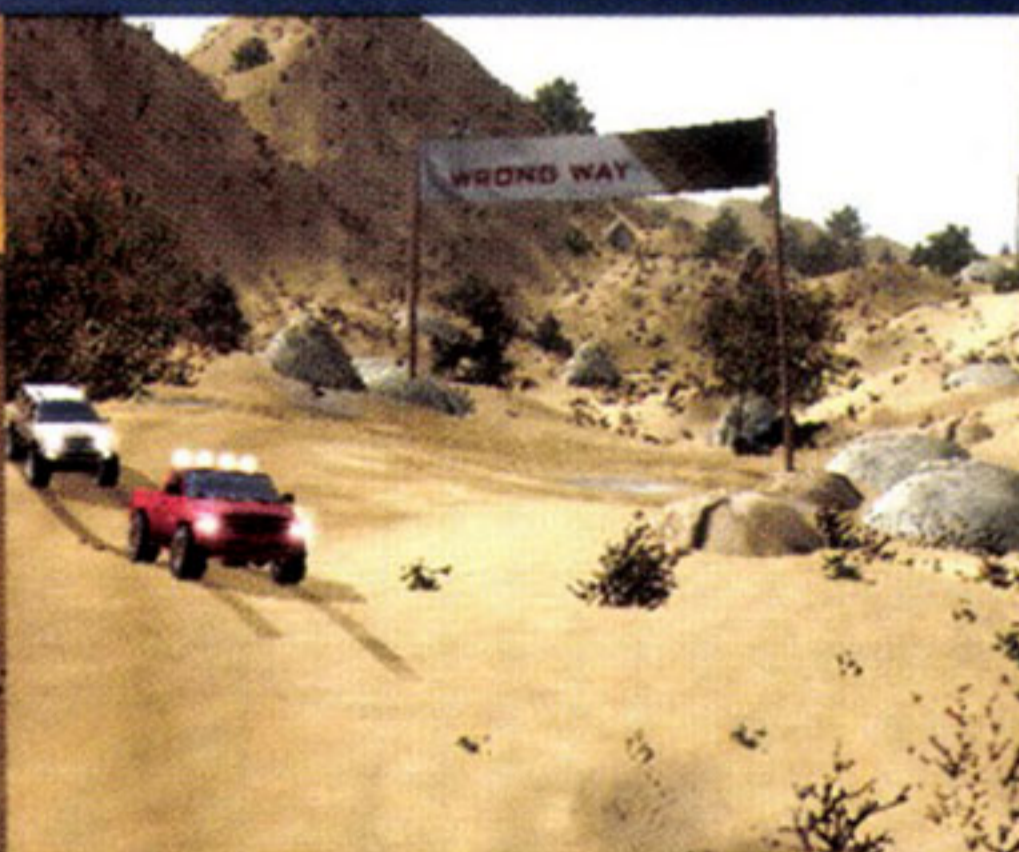
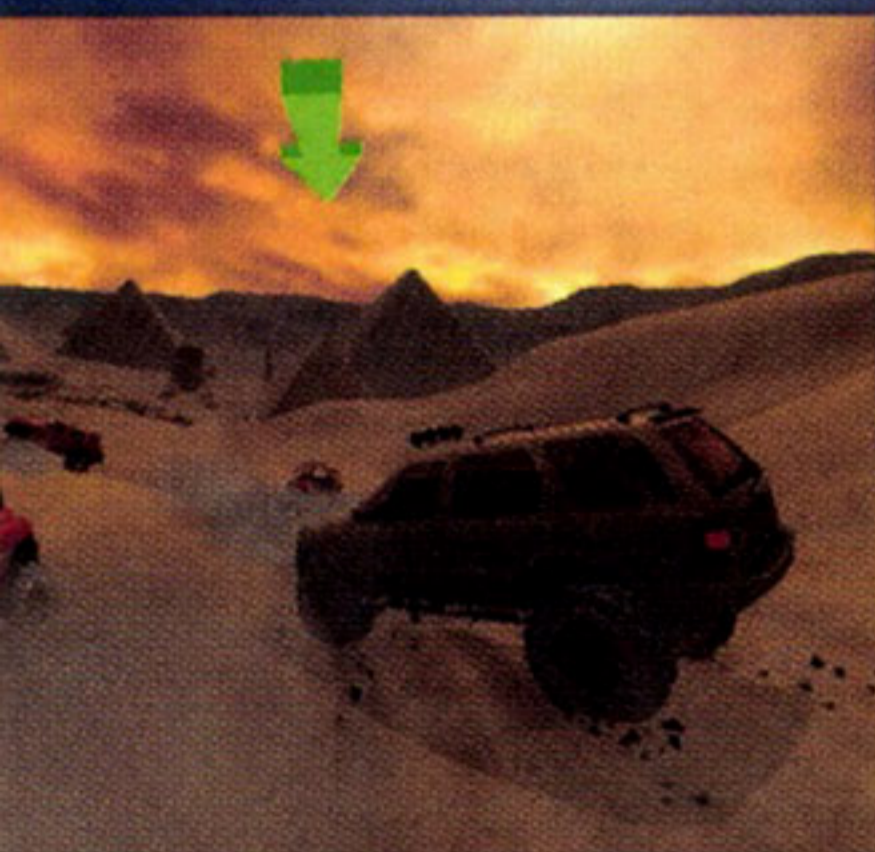


■ See an alien weapon you like? Just kill the alien and it's all yours.

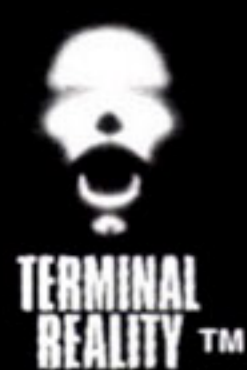
Interest Gauge

4x4 Evo 2

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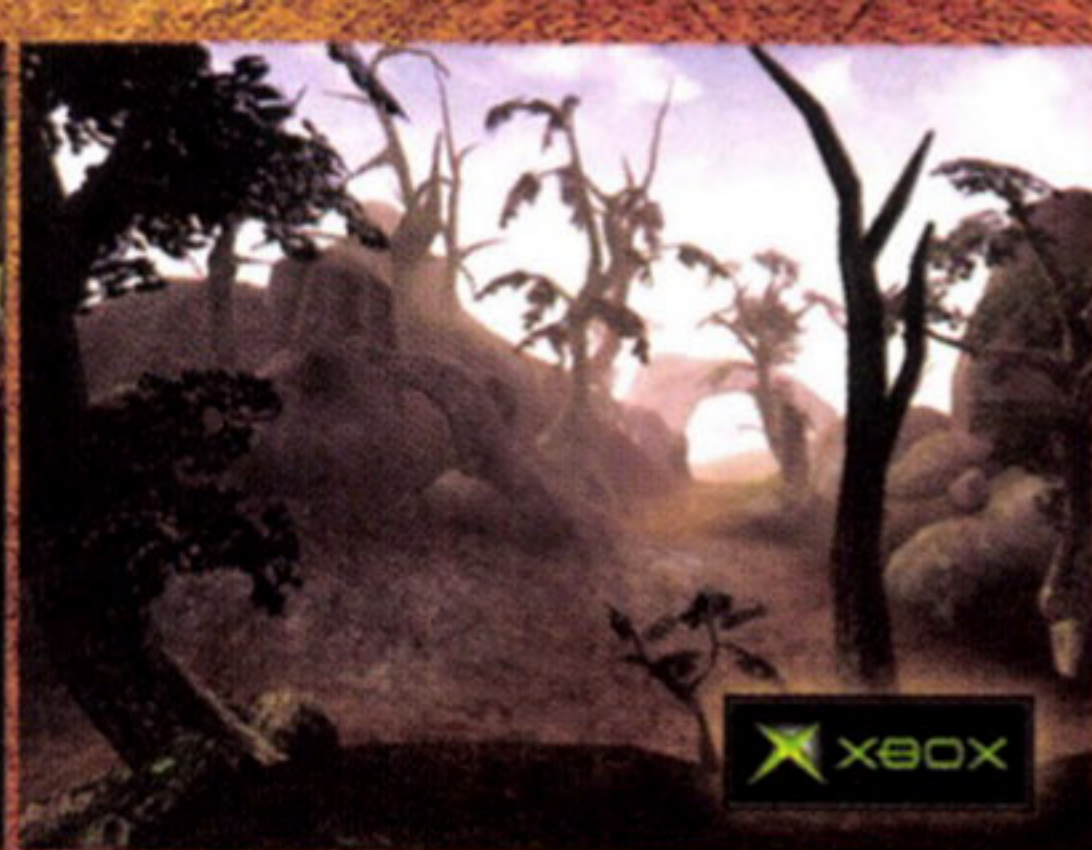
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Dave Mirra BMX 2

Developer: **Z-Axis** Publisher: **Acclaim**



■ Dave Mirra says he can kick Matt Hoffman's ass – umm, or maybe he didn't.

The hands-on experience:

In most games, especially those based in sport, art imitates life – however, on some very rare occasions, life actually imitates art. The first *Dave Mirra BMX* for the PSOne did just that. The unique create-your-own-trick functionality of the game led to some amazing moves that many BMX purists actually complained “weren't realistic.” But once the BMX community got ahold of the game they started attempting – and pulling off – the moves. With this unique accomplishment under their belts, the developers at Z-Axis are ready to up the ante once more. The game will release first on the PS2, but the Xbox version will feature two completely new parks, new items for the park creator, and vastly improved graphics.

The graphics in motion:

The animations and realtime tricks are smooth, but the graphics in *Dave Mirra* aren't there yet.

The multiplayer aspects:

The real fun starts with a game of *BMX Horse*.

The cool innovation:

While it is commonplace for PC games to let you create your own levels, it is a real rarity on a console. The simple-to-use and fun-to-play-with function really is what makes *Mirra 2* stand out.

What we liked best:

Playability. The game doesn't look great, but the depth is exceptional.

The potential pitfalls:

The graphics are sub-par, the sound (while not done) is just annoying, and there is plenty of competition coming from the same folks who make *Tony Hawk*.

Interest Gauge



■ An improper landing on this trick = no little Dave Mirras.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X

Developer: **Treyarch/Neversoft** Publisher: **Activision**



■ *Tony 2X* features never-before-seen levels, including the disco arena, complete with lights that actually sync to the soundtrack.

boneless • fs tailslide • fs hurricane
2737 x3

The hands-on experience:

Clearly one of the best games available at launch for the Xbox, and quite simply the premier version of *Tony Hawk*, period. The gameplay is the classic *Tony Hawk* style – not too much in the way of realism – and why should there be, when there's so much fun to be had? Tony floats, leaps, and spins on Xbox exactly as he did on PlayStation and more recently Dreamcast – only with more moves, options, levels, and tricks. The gameplay is well suited to the Xbox's responsive controller, and the addition of new areas in old levels makes everything feel fresh and new. Like clean undies.

The graphics in motion:

If you're expecting a simple rehash of the PlayStation assets, you're in for a pleasant surprise. *Tony Hawk* on Xbox is a quantum leap in performance – from character design to backdrops to textures. Everything has been redesigned to take advantage of the Xbox.

The multiplayer aspects:

Split-screen for the regular folks, and LAN support for the plutocrats. Every type of Xbox gamer is catered to here.

The cool innovation:

The inclusion of LAN support for head-to-head gaming makes for some stunningly addictive gameplay.

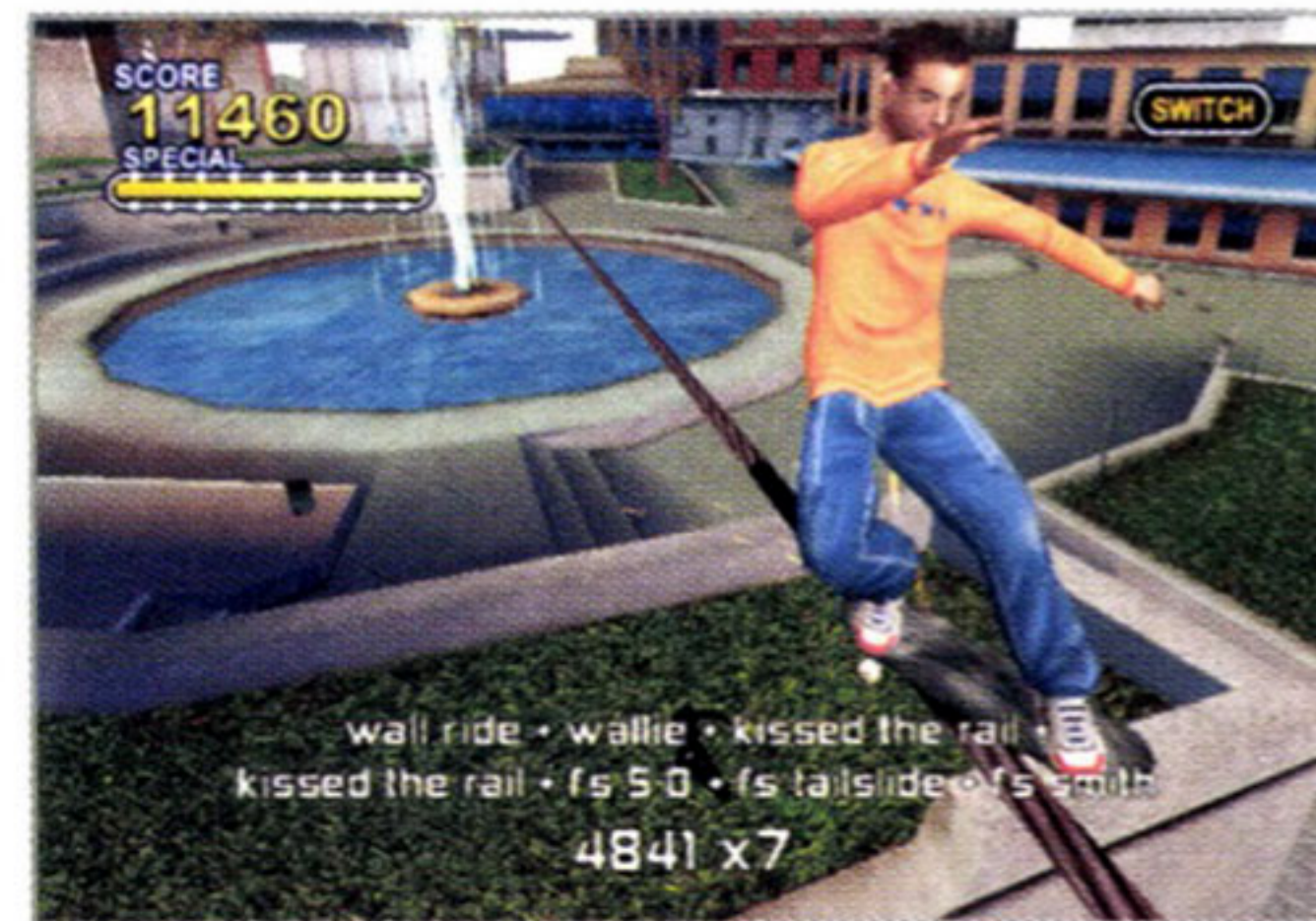
What we liked best:

The bundling of *Tony Hawk 1* and *2* is a dream come true – and the addition of new moves, tunes, skaters, and levels is a bonus beyond compare.

The potential pitfalls:

The fact that *Tony Hawk 3* is on the horizon may cast a small shadow over this otherwise perfect picnic.

Interest Gauge



■ Check out the grass in this picture – that can only be done on Xbox.



■ Looks kind of like the Xbox party at E3, minus the drunken, dancing editors.

Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

Developer: **Oddworld Inhabitants** Publisher: **Microsoft**



■ Look at how many characters are onscreen at one time – and no slow-down.

The hands-on experience:

It was a superb 2D experience on PSOne and PC – now the *Oddworld* series is bringing its patented brand of strange humor to the 3D realm, with promising results.

Fast-paced and detailed, the adventure moves from the dreary confines of Glukkon factories to the lush outdoors populated by free Mudokens. You'll be able to switch between the machine-controlling Munch and the spirit-possessing Abe with one button while navigating puzzles that force you to use your action skills *and* your brain.

Environments are huge affairs which push the exploration envelope more than any previous *Oddworld* adventure. The game is fast-paced, while the control scheme is incredibly accessible with one-button commands emphasized.

The graphics in motion:

Smooth, detailed but still a little flat, *Munch's* combines the best aspects of 3D gaming with the power that next-generation consoles afford.

The multiplayer aspects:

Just one-player here.

The cool innovation:

The multiple outcomes of your journey, as well as how much your actions influence the ecology of Munch's (odd) world really have great gameplay impact.

What we liked best:

There's so much to see, do, and conquer, it's instantly intoxicating.

The potential pitfalls:

The series is all about details, and with the game in 3D, will it lose some of its charm?

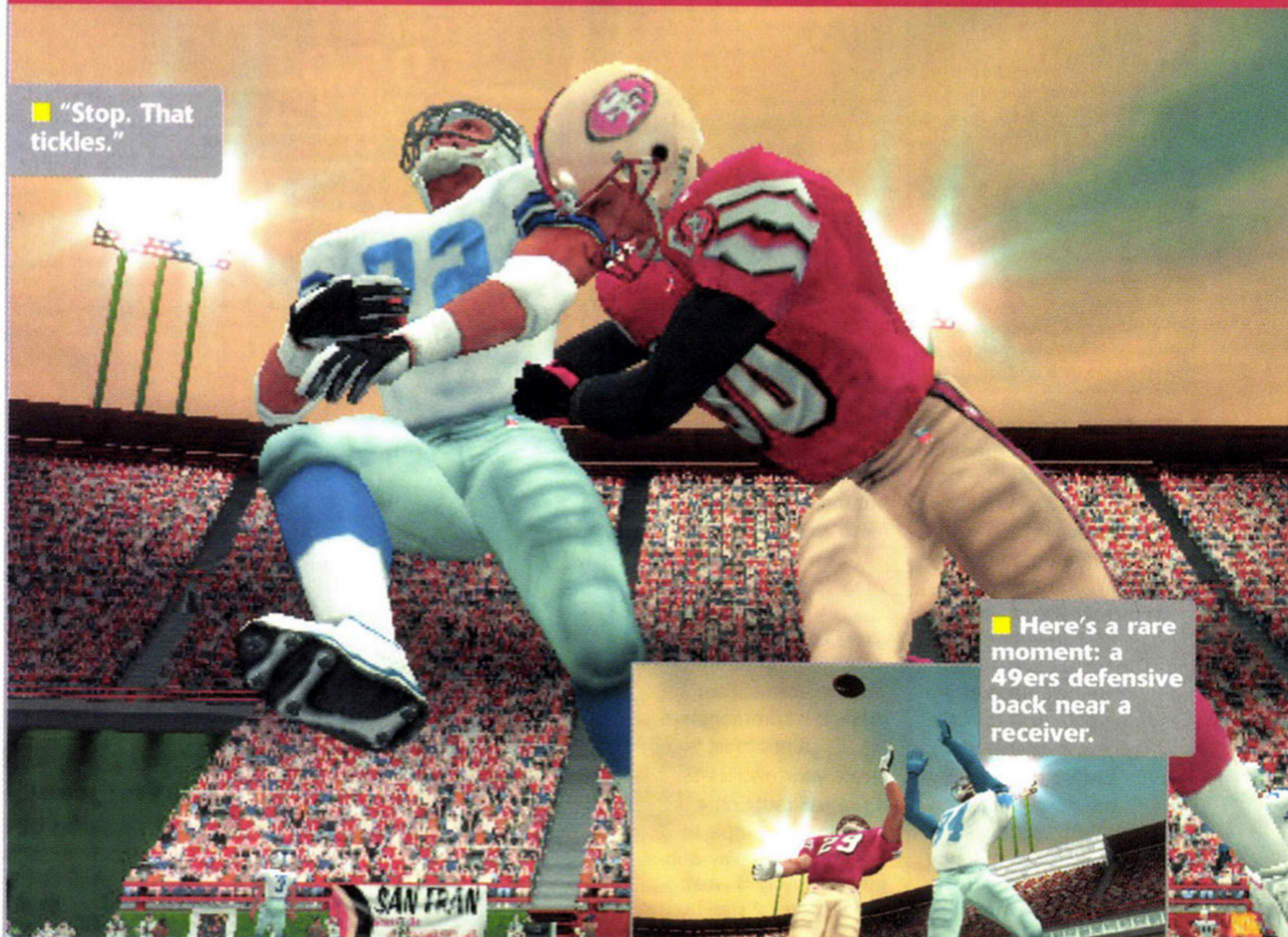
Interest Gauge



■ The variety and originality in *Munch* is what dazzles and occasionally confuses.

Madden 2002

Developer: **Tiburon** Publisher: **Electronic Arts**



■ "Stop. That tickles."

■ Here's a rare moment: a 49ers defensive back near a receiver.



The hands-on experience:

Madden 2002 is nothing short of the deepest football game we've ever played. In addition to the series' own Madden Cards and über-deep Franchise mode that together give countless hours of gameplay, this latest addition to *Madden* has been bolstered with a brilliant Two Minute Drill and an awesome training mode. The Two Minute Drill tests your skills during crunch time. You're graded after every play on how well you execute and how well you manage the clock. In the short time we played, we were already starting to pick up the Joe Montana Zen-like state of perfection.

Even though we're hardcore football fans, we still learned new pointers from the training mode as it showed us how to run every single play and then graded us.

The graphics in motion:

Madden for the Xbox looks phenomenal, but not that different from the PS2 version. The working build that we played looked a little less rounded than its PS2 brother, but we were told that by the time it shipped they would be almost indistinguishable – and the Xbox version may actually look a little better.

The multiplayer aspects:

Plans for online play have been shelved until Microsoft goes forward with its Xbox online strategy. However, the game does support four-player action; and because it's the Xbox, you won't need a multitap to play with friends.

What we liked best:

It's easy to overlook the simple gameplay at the base of this game because there are so many bells and whistles attached to this series. However, if the gameplay wasn't there, none of the cool additions would even matter.

The potential pitfalls:

Let's hope that EA doesn't continue to treat the Xbox like a port machine. After all, the console is powerful enough to render the most beautiful *Madden* ever imagined. All it needs is a little time and attention.

Interest Gauge



■ Graphics so real you can almost smell the linemen's breath.

Air Force Delta Storm

Developer: Konami Publisher: Konami



■ "That's right, Ice [grit teeth] man. I am dangerous."

The hands-on experience:

Thanks to years of negative conditioning from bland PC flight simulators, our first thoughts about most flight combat games begin with a slow lazy brain yawn. Luckily, that's why we play the games. Owing far more to arcade action games than banal flight sims, *Air Force Delta 2* makes darn sure that no one's yawning... inside their brain or not.

The action and control is simple and the gameplay is as straightforward as one might hope. If something shows up on your targeting computer – blast it into atomic dust.

The graphics in motion:

The planes look absolutely stunning. The lighting on each individual aircraft is so good, you start to think you're looking at a model.

The multiplayer aspects:

Sadly, we were not able to get a hands-on test of the multiplayer aspects in this game.

Cool innovation:

When you see the lighting effects on the planes in this game (including awesome self-shadowing effects) you'll start to understand why you should be excited about the Xbox.

What we liked best:

We loved how the flaps, thrusters, and other objects on the aircraft actually responded to commands. The replay mode is a great arcade-like addition to the genre as well.

The potential pitfalls:

The "heavy metal" Muzak soundtrack became annoying quickly. (We figure there's always the mute button.)

Interest Gauge



■ "Your mouth's writing checks that your body can't cash."

Project Gotham Racing

Developer: Bizarre Creations Publisher: Microsoft



■ Until Giuliani and his meddling ways, there were three porn stores and a strip club on this block. So sad.

The hands-on experience:

In short, awesome. Anyone who played the Dreamcast classic *MSR* will be well aware that the guys at Bizarre Creations know how to make a racing game compelling. Forget the tight handling and incredible physics – what really makes *Gotham* special in the gameplay department is the structure of the "missions" the game is split into. You can play this as a straight-up racer, or enter a far more compelling single-player game with rewards for both winning races (and more importantly, doing it in style), thanks to the innovative "kudos" rating system. Add to that a four-player split-screen mode and you can add racing games to the list of Xbox strengths.

The graphics in motion:

You've all seen how the amazing reflective car surfaces look in the dozens of night-time shots already revealed, but the good news is that both cars and backdrops look even more spectacular in the light of day. And yes, that does mean better than *Gran Turismo*. More impressive yet is the use of cool particle and pixel-shading effects, like the (probably volumetric) steam rising from the subway grates that billows convincingly around speeding vehicles.

The multiplayer aspects:

Project Gotham is at this point for one to four players only (no online racing!), but as with most racing games, that's more than enough.

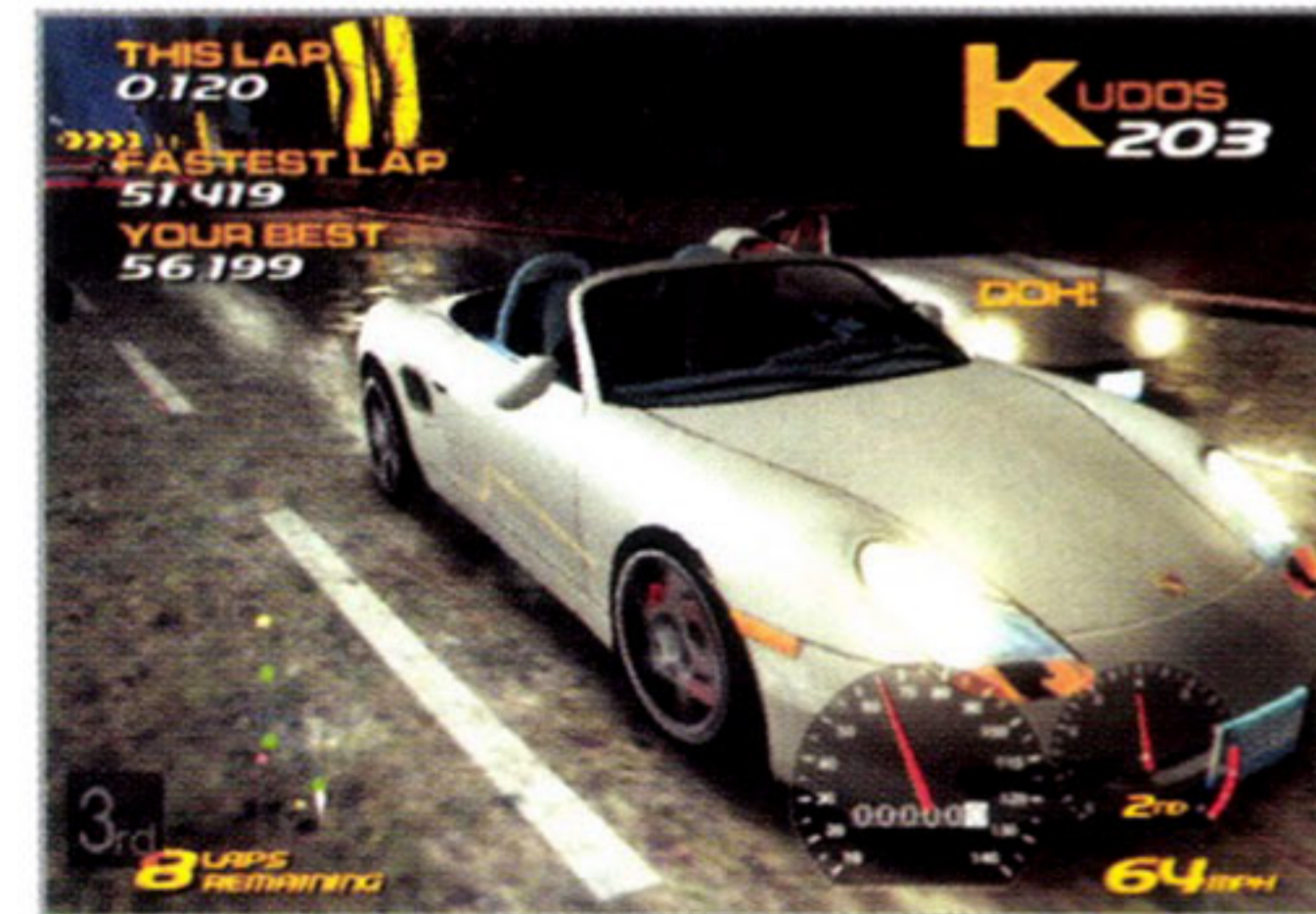
Interest Gauge

What we liked best:

We were amazed by the graphics, and stunned by the deforming car models, but what really drew our gasps of awe and wonder were the manifold missions and gameplay options. This isn't deep in the way that certain other repetitive simulations are, but rather dense with features and gameplay. We were also excited to find that there are four massive cities to race in, each with a variety of possible routes (more than 300 possible routes in total).

The potential pitfalls:

Too few cars. There's no finished car list, but these days players expect an absurd, sprawling selection of vehicles to race. This title's relative paucity (20+) of auto choices may hamstring it in the view of hardcore race fanatics.



■ Now try telling us that this doesn't look 10 times better than *GT3*.

Cel Damage

Developer: Pseudo Interactive Publisher: EA



■ Giant chainguns – now this is our kind of cartoon.

The hands-on experience:

Toon-shaded games have evolved quickly in the last few years, and *Cel Damage* is already one of the best. Merging the cutthroat world of car combat with the out-and-out wackiness of cartoon physics, the game forgoes realism for good old-fashioned fun. Two major things stood out as we played the game. The first is how fast the game plays in every respect. The framerate is exceptionally fast, the control is very responsive, and the speed of the overall game can best be described as hyper-frenetic. Weapons such as spinning saw blades, boxing gloves on a stick, shrink rays, freeze rays, and other wacky items kept the action interesting from start to finish.

The graphics in motion:

These were by far the cleanest toon-shaded graphics we've ever encountered. At times it would have been easy to believe that this was a real, animated cartoon.

The multiplayer aspects:

This game was exactly the kind of multiplayer experience we love. It was fast, well defined, exciting, and it included plenty of "wow" moments to share with your opponents.

The cool innovation:

Even *Jet Grind Radio* didn't look this clean on the Dreamcast.

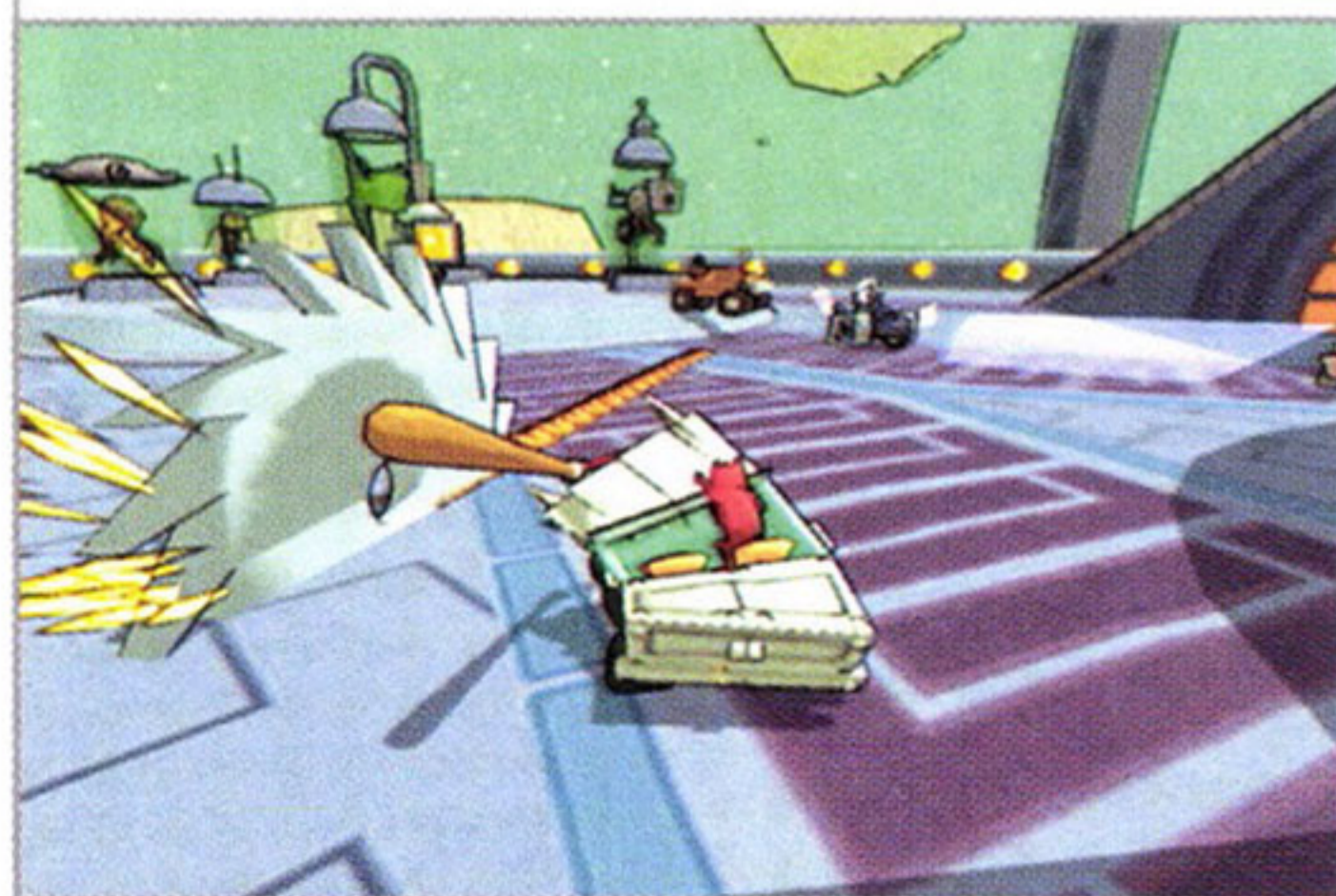
What we liked best:

The character design was hilarious. Our favorite was an angry red cow with a desire for vengeance.

The potential pitfalls:

Could have used an official cartoon license.

Interest Gauge



■ The game is super-fast and there seem to be plenty of "wacky" hi-jinx as well.

WWF: Raw is War

Developer: Anchor Publisher: THQ



■ "This is definitely going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you."

The hands-on experience:

The first time that you see *WWF: Raw is War* on the Xbox, you'll wonder if you're watching a real wrestling match, but once you grab the controller you'll realize you're only playing a game... a gorgeous and highly playable game. This game plays like the N64 *Wrestlemania* games with their complex but intuitive grapple system. After just a few minutes, we were breaking spines with the best of them and pulling out the biggest moves in our character's arsenal.

The graphics in motion:

The character models are so good, they're spooky, and better yet, they move almost exactly like their real-life counterparts do. The movements are so believable that you could easily recognize The Rock even if he was wearing a crazy wrestling mask.

The multiplayer aspects:

Whether it's straight-up one-on-one matches, tag team duels, or other showdowns, these kinds of games are always better against a friend.

The cool innovation:

It features an enhanced Create-a-Wrestler mode that lets you customize a wrestler any way you like.

What we liked best:

The blood. THQ will likely tone this down some, but when we saw it, the blood was rendered as thousands of individual particles that flew through the air and stained the wrestling mat. It was over the top, but it made us wince every time.

The potential pitfalls:

The clipping wasn't fully worked out when we saw it, which made the game look like... well, a game from time to time.

Interest Gauge



■ Seems to us that this engine would be perfect for a dwarf-tossing game.

NFL Fever

Developer: Microsoft Publisher: Microsoft



■ Ten bucks says this pass is intended for Marvin Harrison.

The hands-on experience:

Rather than worrying about the limitations of the various systems, the developers really focused on exploiting the power of the Xbox. Unfortunately, when we played the game it was still missing much of the AI and playability. What we were able to play was a decent football game with the potential to be great. The blocking and tackling has moments where it amazes and others where it just doesn't work. One of the big problems with the version of *NFL Fever* we played was the control. On offense everything seemed to be in order, but on defense it left us with a feeling that we were just watching the game, not playing it. There weren't any problems with *Fever* that couldn't be solved by the time it is ready to go.

The graphics in motion:

If nothing else, *NFL Fever* is easily one of the best-looking football games.

The multiplayer aspects:

If the developers can manage to give more control over the lovely animations, then it will definitely be a game that gets plenty of play.

The cool innovation:

The dynamic player system allows you to take a player and improve his skills on the field.

What we liked best:

The realistic blocking animations really opened up holes for the running game.

The potential pitfalls:

Can the developers manage to deliver a game in one year that can measure up to the playability of *Madden's* ten-year legacy? We'll see.

Interest Gauge



■ Autumn in New York without Winona Ryder and a ridiculously sappy plot.

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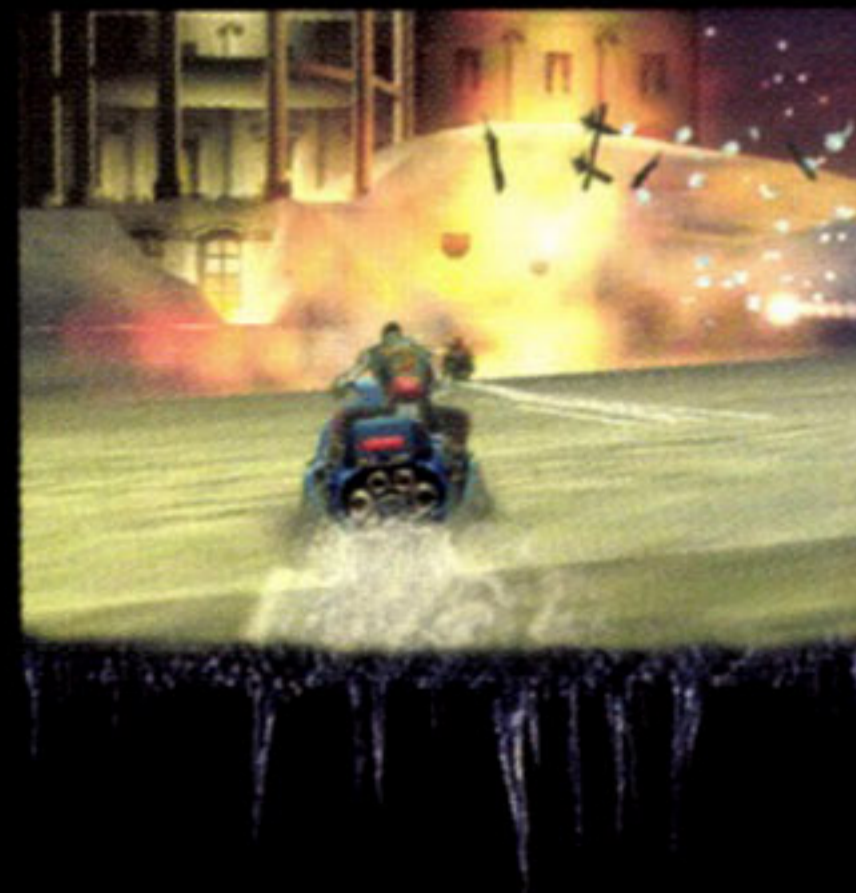
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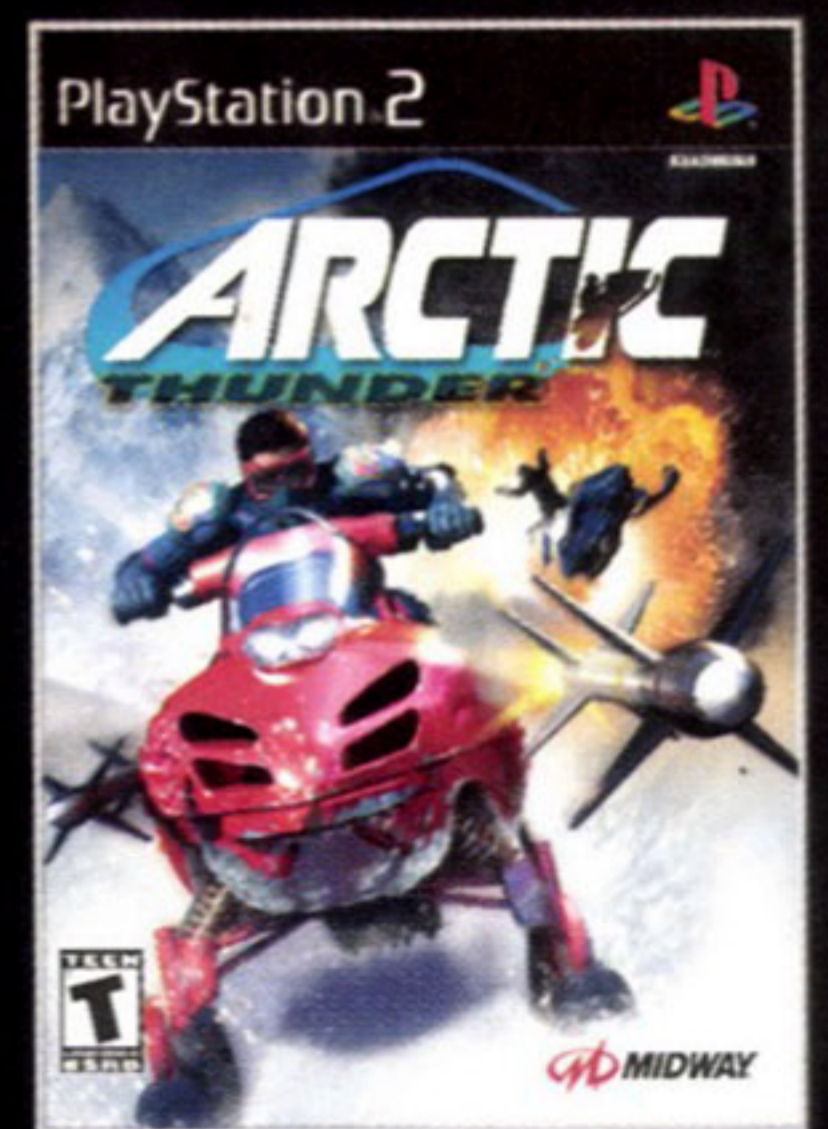
Throttle the competition with hard-core hand-to-hand combat.



Hyper-realistic racing velocity and major air give new meaning to "breakneck speed."



Make 'em feel you with combat weapons like snow bombs, missiles, and The Atomic Snowball.



Sneak Preview @ www.arcticthunder.midway.com

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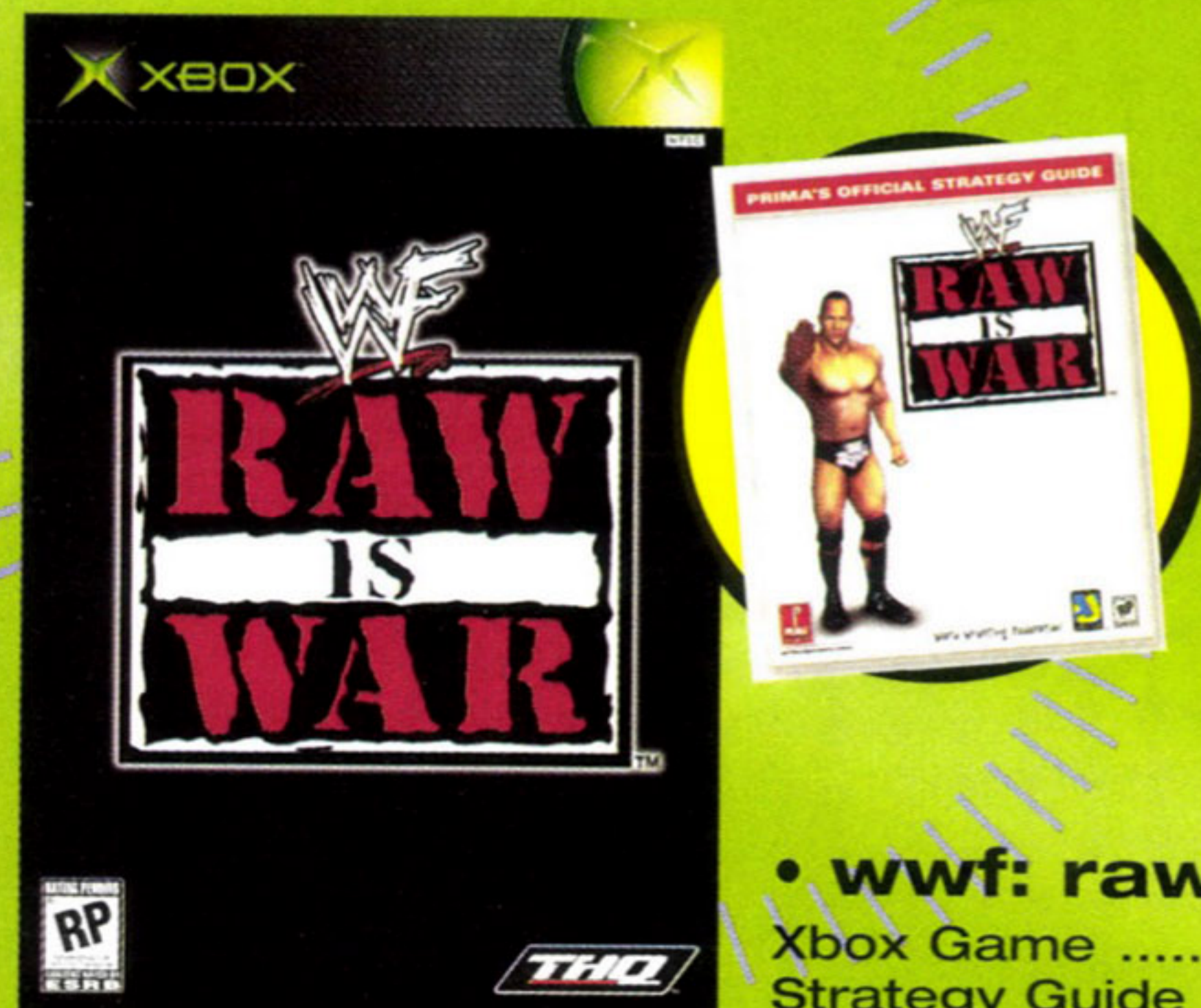
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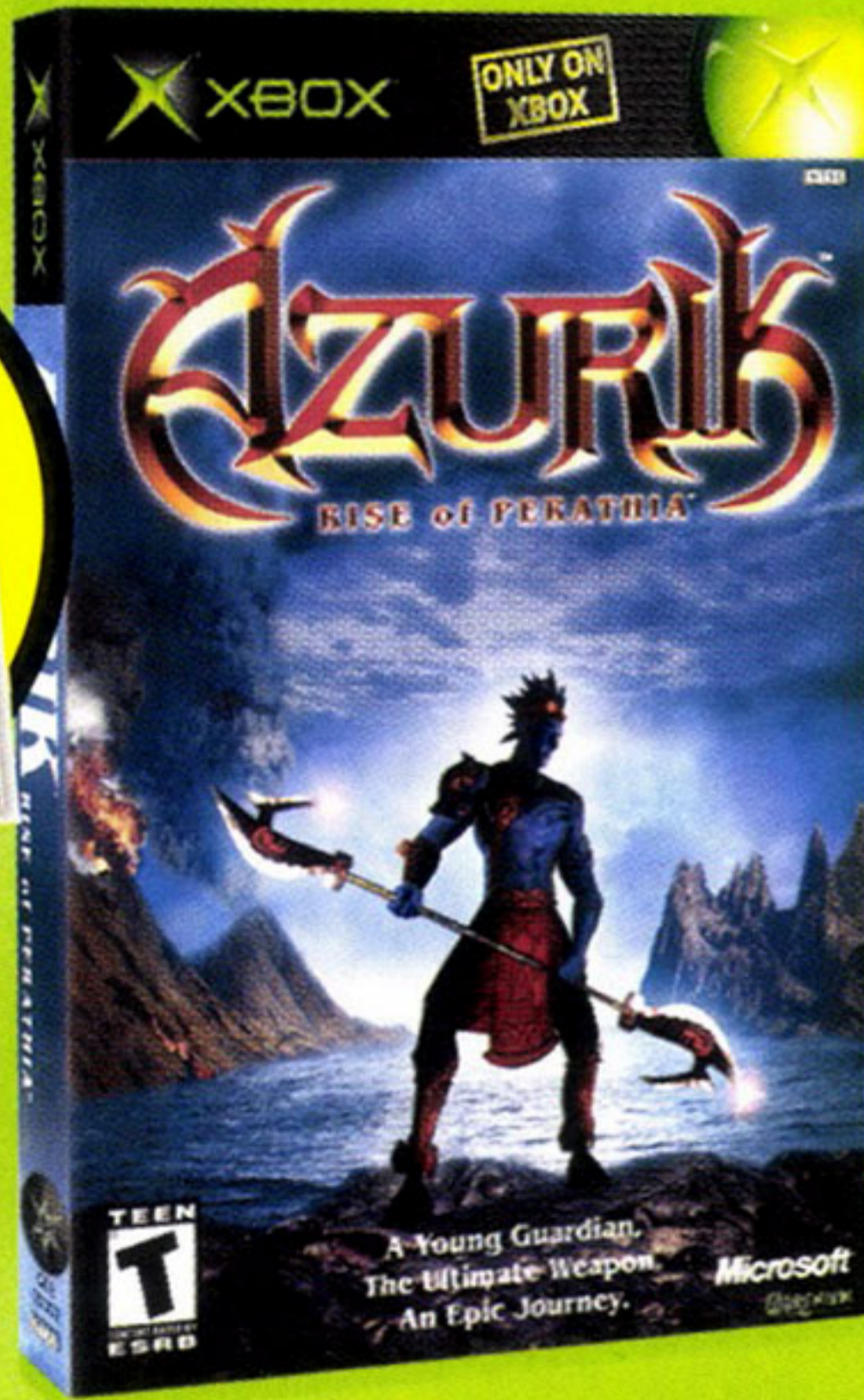


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Previews

In-depth looks at the next wave of games

Pirates of note

Blood Wake features pirates. We like thinking about pirates.



BLACKBEARD

Also known as: Edward Teach

Known for: Raping and pillaging

Place in videogame history: The basis for every buccaneer villain ever made



SOFTWARE PIRATES

Also known as: Bill Gates

Known for: Pillaging

Place in videogame history: The multi-billionaire behind the most powerful console in the world



LONG JOHN SILVER

Also known as: Fish King

Known for: Deep fried "fish" and those crispy things

Place in videogame history: Our undernourished bellies



PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Also known as: Fancy lads

Known for: Singing and dancing

Place in videogame history: None known



PITTSBURGH PIRATES

Also known as: An easy win
Known for: Losing games and any player with any kind of talent

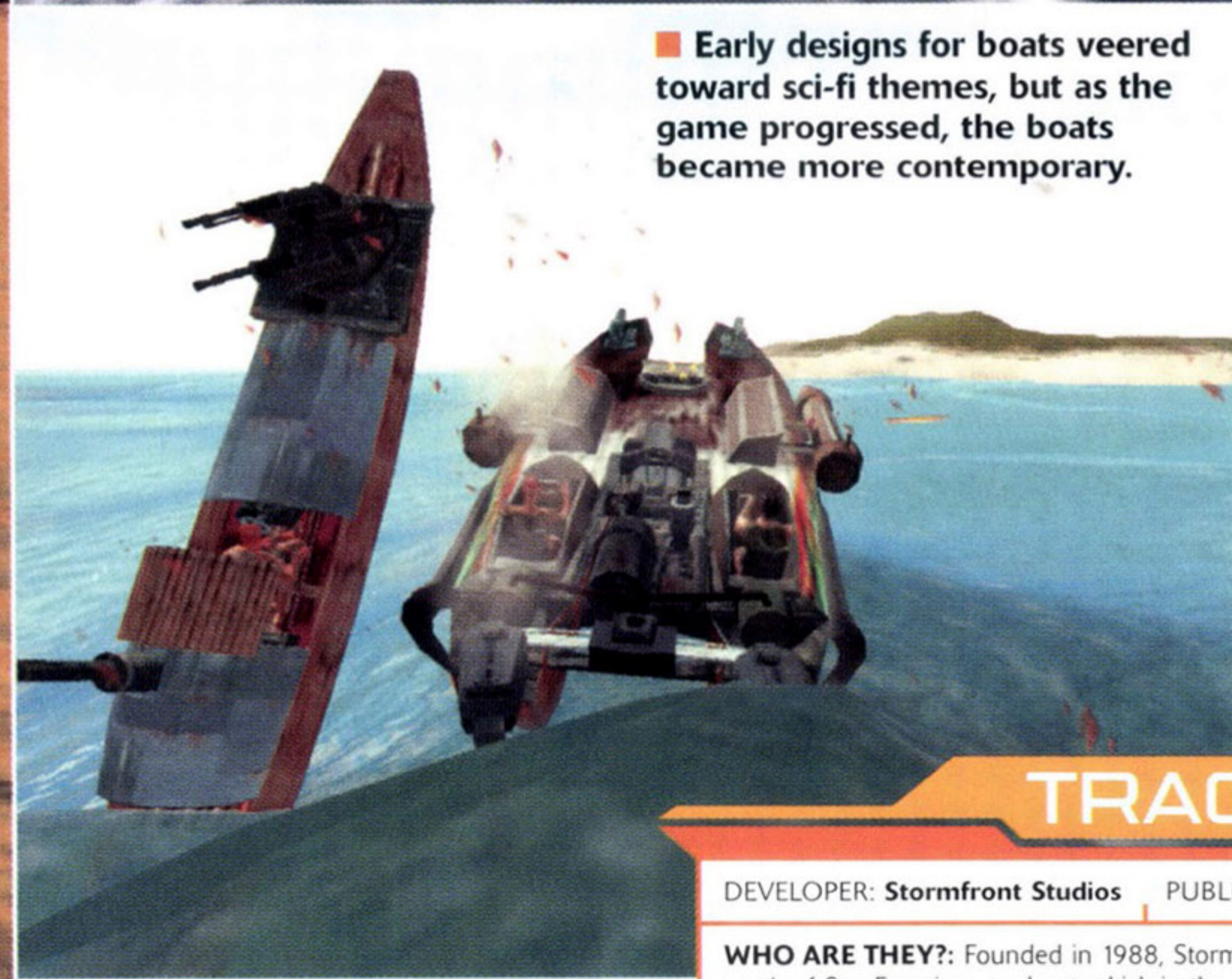
Place in videogame history: Nobody ever picks the Pirates in videogame baseball

■ Although this screenshot looks simple enough at first glance – albeit with the prettiest water ever – you'll notice that the boat is exploding and leaving behind a health pick-up as well as an explosion-related wake and a bunch of debris.



■ The game is set in a fictional Asian backwater inhabited by junks, weird palaces, and amazing seascapes.

■ Early designs for boats veered toward sci-fi themes, but as the game progressed, the boats became more contemporary.



TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Stormfront Studios PUBLISHER: Microsoft RELEASE DATE: Dec. 2001

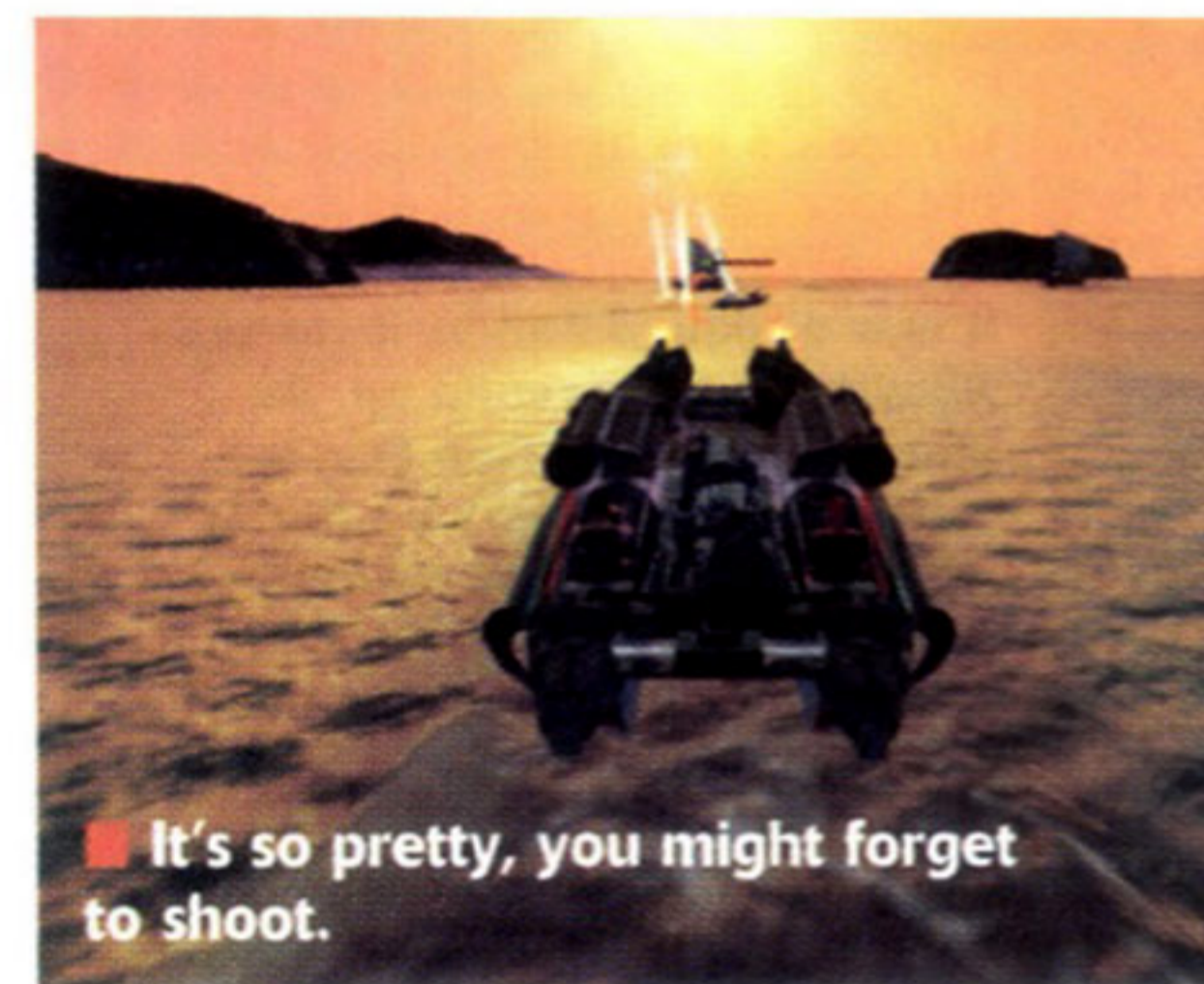
WHO ARE THEY?: Founded in 1988, Stormfront Studios is based in beautiful Marin County, just north of San Francisco, and not a kick in the arse away from LucasArts. The company has a long history of race games on console and PC, and has converted titles like *NASCAR*, *Andretti Racing*, and *Madden* for EA. The company has switched its focus to Xbox and PS2 development.

Blood Wake

Oh hear us when we cry to thee, for those in peril on the sea...

The first thing anyone's going to do when they see *Blood Wake* is make the inevitable comparison to *Wave Race*. Which is, of course, both redundant and pointless since the games couldn't be any more different. *Wave Race* is an all-out racing game that takes place on short loops, while *Blood Wake* is an altogether more ambitious creature – a vast, sprawling vehicle-combat game that just happens to be set on the most realistic water you've seen since you last showered (only the water is *much* cleaner).

The combat aspect of the game is paramount. You choose between at least 10 different types of heavily-



■ It's so pretty, you might forget to shoot.

armed gunboats. These vary in style fairly widely, from relatively elegant catamarans to much more unwieldy torpedo boats. Naturally the weaponry ranges wildly between boats, but their biggest difference is in handling. It's a classic case of maneuverability and speed versus sheer smashing power. You'll have to decide through trial and error which boat suits you best, but remember that different missions will call for different tactics.

The game actually has a plot that's spread out evenly over 25 single-



Don Daglow,
president and CEO of Stormfront Studios, answers our pressing *Blood Wake*-related questions:

Us: Are you guys sick of being compared to *Wave Race*?

Him: *Wave Race* was a great game, so it's actually kind of cool to be compared to it, but *Blood Wake* takes water-based action a whole lot farther. For one thing,

we're doing things graphically on the Xbox that no one has ever done on any console, with physics-based water that both looks and acts like the real thing.

Unlike any prior title, *Blood Wake* is a fast-paced and challenging fighting game, with a storyline supporting 25+ single-player missions. You'll bomb around in a bunch of wild boats while firing an arsenal of heavy weapons, jump off of surging wakes in smooth inlets and choppy bays, and send hordes of enemies to a watery grave. There's nothing else like it out there, on any platform.

Us: What kind of improvements have you made to the water physics since

the game was seen at E3?

Him: The water model we had going at E3 was already highly accurate, but we have been able to add lots of cool embellishments to both the physics and graphics. We have shadows on the water now, which really help to visually marry the boats with the water. Our wakes, whitecaps, and shoreline effects have all improved a lot, and will get better still before we ship.

We've been able to take the time on the art side to polish up the lighting and environmental settings, which includes special processing of the water for things like dawn, dusk, night, storms, etc. And since we never saw an idea that we thought

was too over-the-top, we created a fantasy weapon that uses exaggerated water physics for its primary effect – this thing is wild, especially in multiplayer modes!

Us: Describe, if you can, what effect the physics have on various gameplay modes.

Him: Combat on water isn't anything like air-combat or road-combat games. Because the boat is in constant motion, we developed a really sweet aim-assist AI that does a great job of counteracting the rocking of the boat while still requiring a skillful touch from the player. Wave and wake effects affect the way you approach

Preview

Now we're really awake...

Gun placements make going near the land very treacherous.

This is an abandoned boat where down-on-their-luck pirates sleep off the rum.

Up here there is a dainty princess in need of rescue... uh, we think.

This guy here is about to sleep with the fishes.



Xbox Destiny

Where do we begin? This is one of those games that simply couldn't be replicated on another system. It was designed and built for the Xbox from the ground up. As Stormfront's CEO Don Daglow explains, *Blood Wake* on the Xbox was fated to happen; "When we showed Microsoft the demo, it turned out that they were already looking for a water-based combat game for Xbox. Many of their ideas paralleled ours to an almost psychic degree, so we all determined that this project was 'Meant to Be' and that we should work together."

■ Like *Twisted Metal*, for example, *Blood Wake* automatically highlights targeted opponents for ease of murdering.

player missions. And rather than simply scoot around on the ocean blasting ships, you'll have to employ some modicum of strategy, since the missions include assault sorties, recon missions, and even escort duties. In that respect, the structure is vaguely similar to LucasArts' *Starfighter*. The variety makes the one-player mode much more attractive.

The multiplayer mode isn't exactly skimpy, though, since it encompasses Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and

targeting and maneuvering for the best attack, but also offer unique opportunities for disrupting the enemy's aim and evading his fire. If you think hitting a moving target is fun in an air-combat game, try dogfighting in fast gunboats on rough seas!

If you're on a wave peak and the other guy is in the wave trough, he's going to be harder to hit. The wakes created by boats create another challenge, especially in a chase scenario where the pursuer needs to find a way to keep its aim from being thrown off by its quarry's wake. Each weapon rewards its own special tactics. Mines are great for discouraging pursuit;

There are waves that jounce your craft like the poorly restrained contents of an ill-fitting brassiere.

Free for All modes, and will most likely have Capture the Flag, too. The split-screen mode hardly detracts from the massive impact of the graphics, and the developers are working to retain

rockets follow an arcing path through the air and can nail that guy who's trying to hide behind a wave. Different weapons inflict different kinds of damage, and boats are affected accurately with simulated recoil, impact, [and] explosive and concussive effects. For example, the torpedoes travel in a straight course on the surface and will hit on the waterline. This can literally blow the enemy boat out of the water, where (if it isn't obliterated by the first blast) it presents an excellent target for your rocket launcher!

Just for the sheer fun of it, we've relaxed the laws of physics slightly when it comes to boats jumping off the water, the

a full 60 frames per second multi-player experience. And if you want to hone your deathmatching skills, there is a wide range of computer-controlled "bot" missions to practice on.

terrain, or each other. Terrains such as reefs and sand shoals act more like ramps, providing great opportunities for catching air. Boat speeds are very high, and combined with the water environment and the intense combat, it's an incredible experience that no one's ever done in a game before.

Us: The game has an amazing sense of "place" thanks in large part to convincing weather and water – gray, brooding skies and all that. What materials or experiences did you use to get the right feel?

Deep (water) thoughts

Here's a list of the Official Xbox Magazine staff's favorite videogame iterations of the briny deep. *Wave Race* was excluded because it was too obvious.

😊 **Mike Salmon:** "Virtua Fighter 3 – I liked the way the waves lapped at your feet."

😊 **Dave Rees:** "The first time I saw the water in *Unreal*, I was like, dude, that's totally unreal."

😞 **Juliann Brown:** "Ecco the Dolphin on Dreamcast was amazing, but I couldn't find that whale baby's mom."

😞 **Mike Wilmoth:** "I only like desert levels."

😊 **Fran Reyes:** "In *Skies of Arcadia*, there was a village with water. Good water."

😊 **Sarah Ellerman:** "Super Mario 64 – when you drained the water level, you could splash around in the puddles like Paddington Bear."

😊 **Dan Egger:** "I agree with Sarah; the water even refreshes your energy."

Him: Well, living in the San Francisco Bay Area, we had no shortage of inspiration each morning for the gray, brooding skies and foggy weather. For the clear skies, spectacular sunsets, and blue and emerald tropical waters, we relied more heavily on research materials – because unfortunately the artists on the team never got clearance for that research trip to Tahiti!

Actually, we've spent a lot of time since E3 concentrating on water and weather graphics, adding orange sunset and purple twilight environments, storms with rain and lightning, and a ton of other stuff. We received a lot of positive press about the



■ Just like real life, power-ups are scattered across the ocean.



■ Blood Wake takes place at various times of day, depending on your mission, as is clearly illustrated in this spectacular moonlit shot.

WIRED

StormFront has a rather frightening site at www.stormfrontstudios.com, and if you stare at it long enough you'll go completely mad.

By this point in our little preview, you're probably wondering why we haven't mentioned the amazing, stunning, jaw-dropping, pant-filling graphics. Well, let's take care of that right now. If you think you've seen cool water on a videogame system, go back to your closet, find that game system and smash it to bits, because now it's basically defunct. The water effects in *Blood Wake* are as real as

anything we've seen – not only in the near-perfect visual representation, but in the brilliantly conceived physics – there are wakes that affect your passage across the waves, and waves that jounce your craft like the poorly restrained contents of an ill-fitting brassiere.

The effects aren't just limited to the water's surface. The perfect fluid can be leaped off of, dove into, and generally enjoyed in the way that Herman Melville envisioned – without the whales. There's also cool use of pixel-shading in the sea spray and spume, and the awesome weather effects. The brooding sense of cold

and isolation as you skim atop a rain-spattered and stormy ocean has to be felt to be believed. And feel it you will, since the game has a very carefully-

planned-out use of rumble, rolling and bumping with the swell of tide and wave. We officially can't wait.

— Frank O'Connor

GAME POTENTIAL

LOOKS GOOD

- Best water ever.
- A cool twist on existing genres.
- Stunning graphic design.
- A wealth of multiplayer options.

NEEDS WORK

- Weirdly, the dry land doesn't look so good.
- Some of the more busy missions can look pretty confusing.

ODDS ARE...

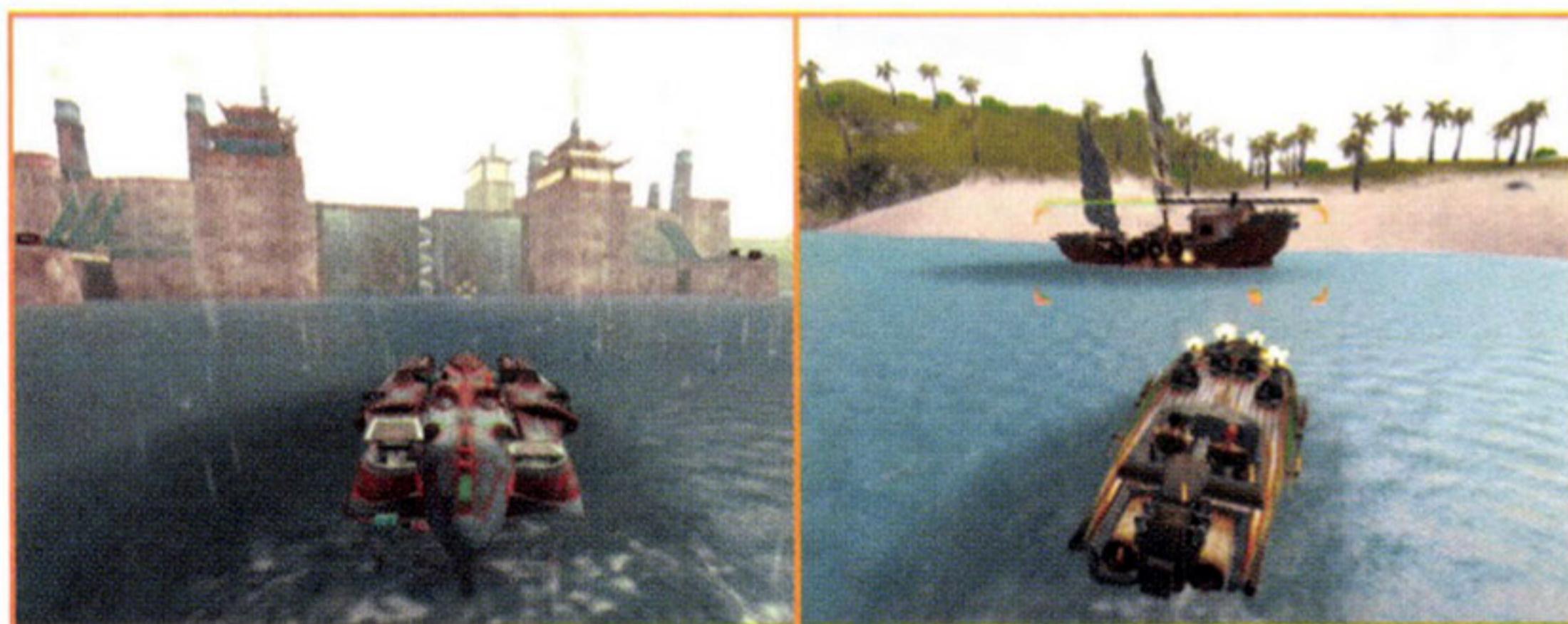
Blood Wake will go from unsung hero to must-have killer app. Ground-breaking graphics and genre-spanning innovation make it a delectable choice for the Xbox gourmand. It's also one of the more exciting multiplayer games on the horizon, thanks to the impressive split-screen combat modes.

HYPE

It seemed at first that Microsoft didn't know what a treasure it had in *Blood Wake*, but the press reaction at and since E3 has been incredible, and the company finally seems to have figured it out. *Blood Wake* will be pushed as a must-have on the Xbox and a game for other console owners to envy.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Although first impressions are amazing, the game's long-term appeal has yet to be put to the test. If this ends up being an engrossing one-player experience, the very nature of the game should ensure two-player longevity. As console games get more and more realistic, the emphasis on re-creating environments becomes more prevalent. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the stormy waters of *Blood Wake*.



■ Your opponents, both in single and multiplayer modes, vary pretty wildly. Here are two extremes: A massive fortress and a flimsy junk.

way our water looked at E3, but the work that's going into the game these days blows away everything we showed before.

Us: *Blood Wake* has incredible water, of course – could you tell us more about the vehicles and the attention that has been lavished on them?

Him: The evolution of the vehicle design for *Blood Wake* is a very interesting story. One of our original concepts had a more sci-fi feel – boats with enclosed cockpits, more modern hull forms and propulsion

systems, and so on. Once we started writing the game's story, however, the setting we ultimately chose dictated a very different environment.

Inspiration came from early 20th-century torpedo boats and armed motor launches, combined with the sampans and junks you'd expect in an Asian setting. Later on, we got an opportunity to add in fantastic new forms, including some wild boss boats. Somehow it all came together into a completely original look that we think is really funky and cool.

Of course, there are strengths and weaknesses to all of the boats. By mixing

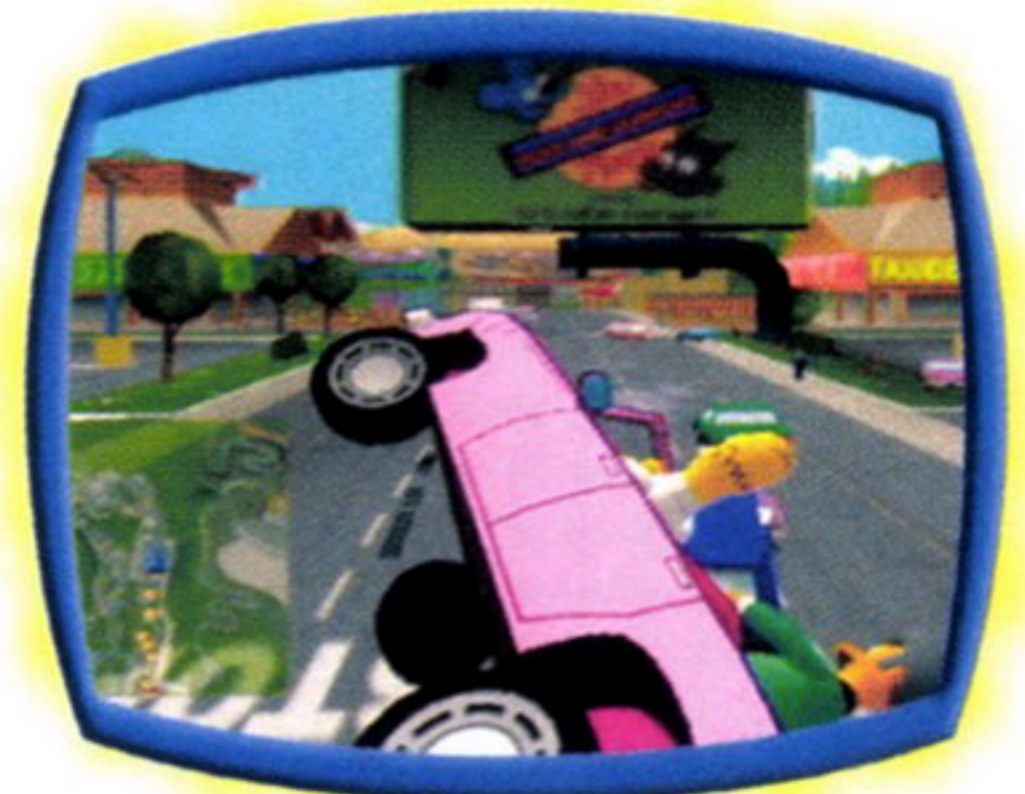
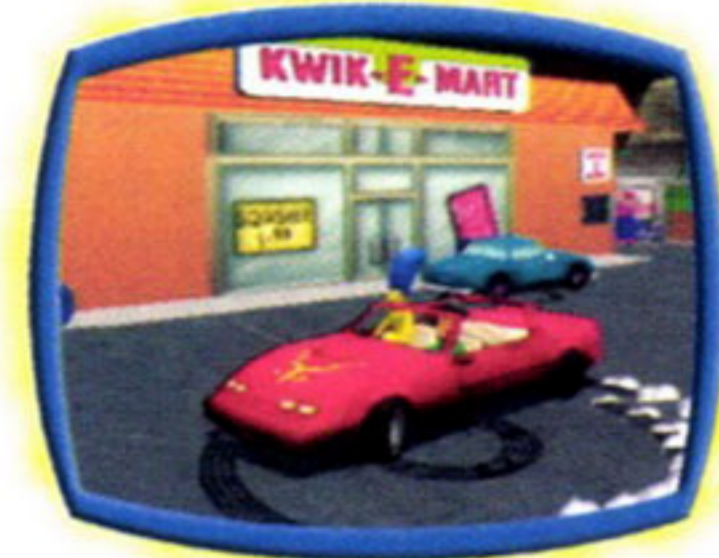
and matching different armament configurations and tuning the speed and survivability ratings, we've created a terrific variety of boats, which in turn lets us create a wide spectrum of combat scenarios. One of the coolest things about the boats are the animations associated with the engines, weapons, and crew.

These all provide instant feedback on how fast you're going, and which weapon is hot and ready to fire. The crew animations include your first mate pointing out threats, or offering navigation clues... even shaking off the water out of his eyes and hair when you've taken a dunk!

Us: Xbox for the first time makes immersion in convincing environments possible – do you think this will lure in new types of gamers?

Him: Every few years we get a completely new way to entertain people, and with that new hardware we see new kinds of game players. The next-gen systems enable us to develop in-game environments that can match the quality and depth people are used to seeing in special-effects movies. That makes our fictional worlds more realistic, and it definitely makes them a lot more fun to interact with and explore.





Mr. Burns' nuclear-powered fleet of critical mass transit is making Springfieldians catch "ride-share fever"! Help buy the bus system back by driving fares through rush-hour traffic, suicide shortcuts and unsuspecting buildings. Take the fastest possible route. Or just use the roads.



thesimpsonsroadrage.com



PlayStation®2



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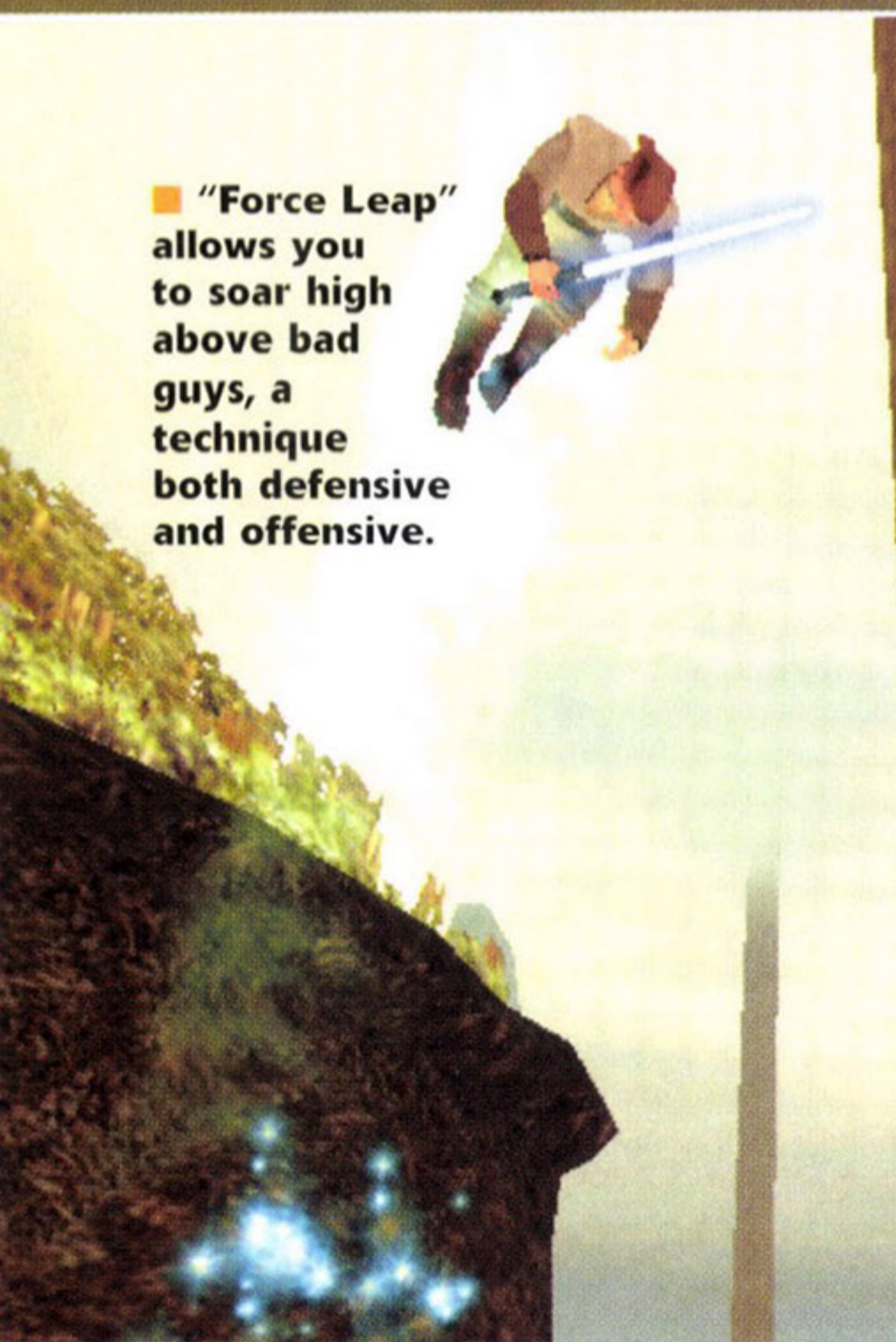


■ Droids are stupid. And they're really bad shots.

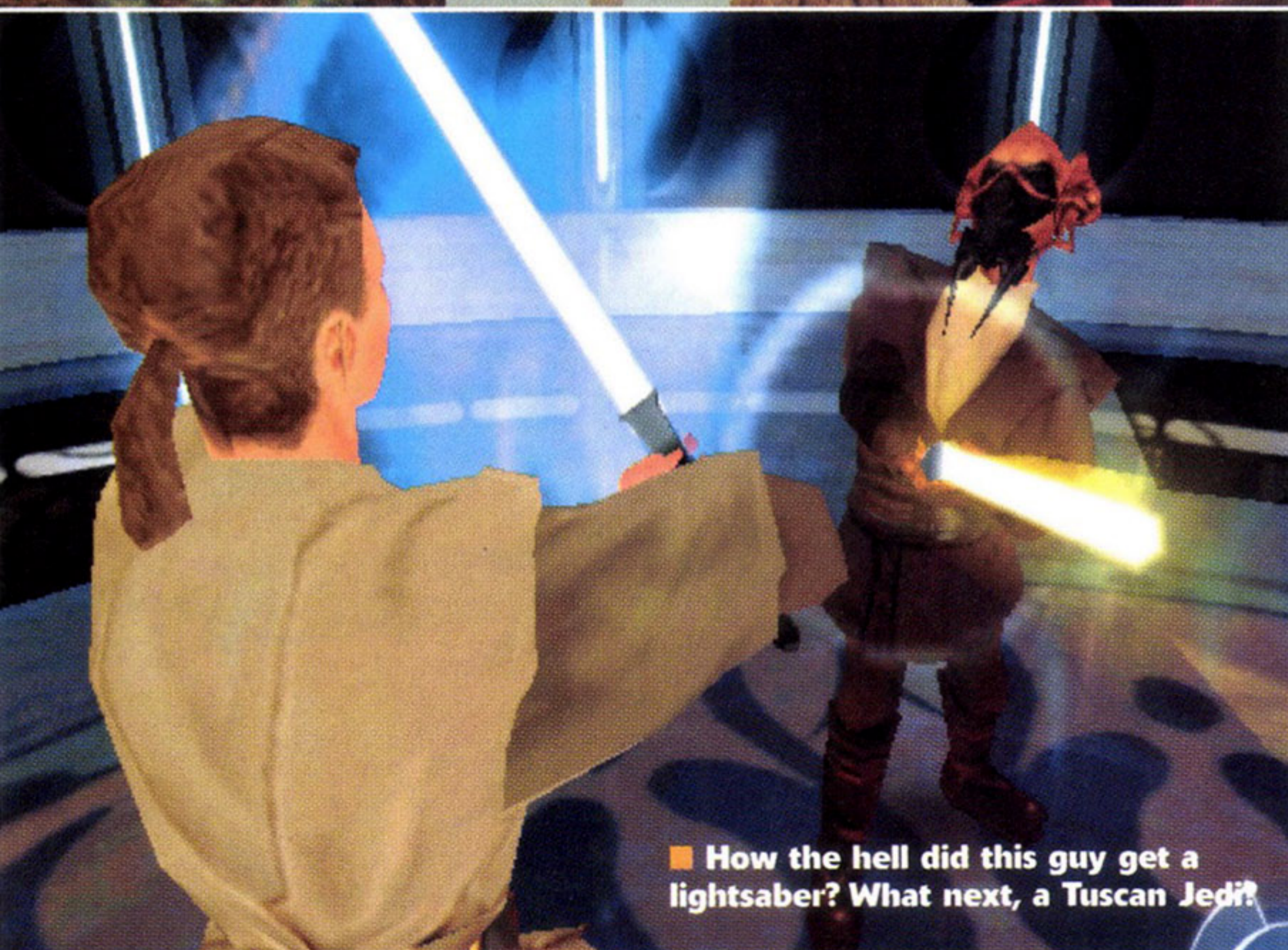


Only on Xbox

Eat it, PC. Chew on it, PS2. *Obi Wan*, for reasons too complex to relate, will only appear on Xbox. And we like it that way.



■ "Force Leap" allows you to soar high above bad guys, a technique both defensive and offensive.



■ How the hell did this guy get a lightsaber? What next, a Tuscan Jedi?

Obi Wan

Or, what happens when Star Wars meets Tomb Raider...

Perhaps the most ambitious thing about *Obi Wan* on Xbox is its brilliant attempt to weave new elements into a plot you're already familiar with. You see, the game is set during events you've already witnessed during *Phantom Menace*. Layered in between events you already saw is a detailed and clever plot regarding events you didn't see. For example, did you wonder what Obi Wan was doing while Qui Gon was off failing to free young Anakin's mom from slavery? Well, wonder no more. He was fighting Tusken raiders (the ornery rednecks of the *Star Wars* universe). And now you can, too.

This patented Expando-Plot™ finds our heroes investigating illicit activities in and around the already pesky Trade Federation. Although it at first smells like a Teamster-style labor dispute, they soon realize that it's a whole can

of worms, with a group of mercenary thugs called the Jinn Ha and a sect known as The Black Heth. And yes, that does rhyme with Black Death.

Obi Wan, as you might guess from the somewhat telling title, follows the adventures of the Padwan (trainee Jedi if you've been living in a cave, not studying the ways of the Force) as he tries to perfect his physical and mental skills, with the handy bonus of losing his rat-tail mullet into the bargain. Clearly this hairstyle is added as an embarrassing incentive to learn. Like tonsorial training wheels.

His range of skills is pretty impressive for a so-called trainee. He can run, jump, and slash with his sword in any direction thanks to the innovative use of the second analog stick. It is in every way, analogous to the use of a real sword. Tap forward – he thrusts. Swing left – he swipes the saber to the left. Using the lightsaber

TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: LucasArts PUBLISHER: LucasArts RELEASE DATE: Nov. 2001

WHO ARE THEY?: LucasArts started life as LucasFilm Games, and is a rare beast in that it was spawned not by a marketing department's lust for expansion, but rather by the actual vision of George Lucas himself. The early LucasFilm games included classics like *Rescue on Fractalus*, *Koronis Rift*, and *Maniac Mansion*, and its emphasis on adventure eventually led to epics like *Monkey Island*. Nowadays, the company is of course best known for *Star Wars*-related stuff, but it continues to innovate and surprise with original content like *Grim Fandango*.

GAME:	SYSTEM:	SCORE:
<i>Episode I: POD Racer</i>	PC	6/10
<i>Star Wars Episode I: Starfighter</i>	PS2	8/10
<i>Return to Monkey Island</i>	PC	6/10
AVERAGE:		7/10

is about half the game, and blocking and parrying soon become second nature. Layers of control are included here, and subtle moves, circular motions, and double-taps reveal special attacks.

Our hero isn't averse to learning new tricks either, and just as in real life, you can find new Jedi skills just lying around on the floor, in the form of glowing orbs. These can be "earned" by dispatching bad guys, or achieving other similarly lofty goals.

And you're not limited to using the saber. Mastery of the Force will allow you to pick up objects with your mind, hurl them at bad guys, or somersault out of danger. You can use "Force Pull" to snatch a blaster from an enemy's hands, or "Force Push" to knock a droid into a wall. Context-sensitive damage means that smashing a droid into a wall will inflict more harm, but not as much as tossing him off a precipice. Our favorite Force power is the Saber Throw – letting you hurl your spinning saber and control its arc of lasery death, and deciding when you want it to return to your hand, like an especially obedient and lethal boomerang.

Although the bulk of the game requires *Tomb Raider*-like exploration, puzzle, and platform elements, it's the constant reliance on combat skills that makes this different from games that have gone before. Lightsaber battles aren't just a matter of thrashing the

WIRED

Forget www.lucasarts.com, they'll just try to sell you games. Instead, go check out www.asciimation.co.nz to see *Star Wars* re-created in ASCII form.

Bullet time



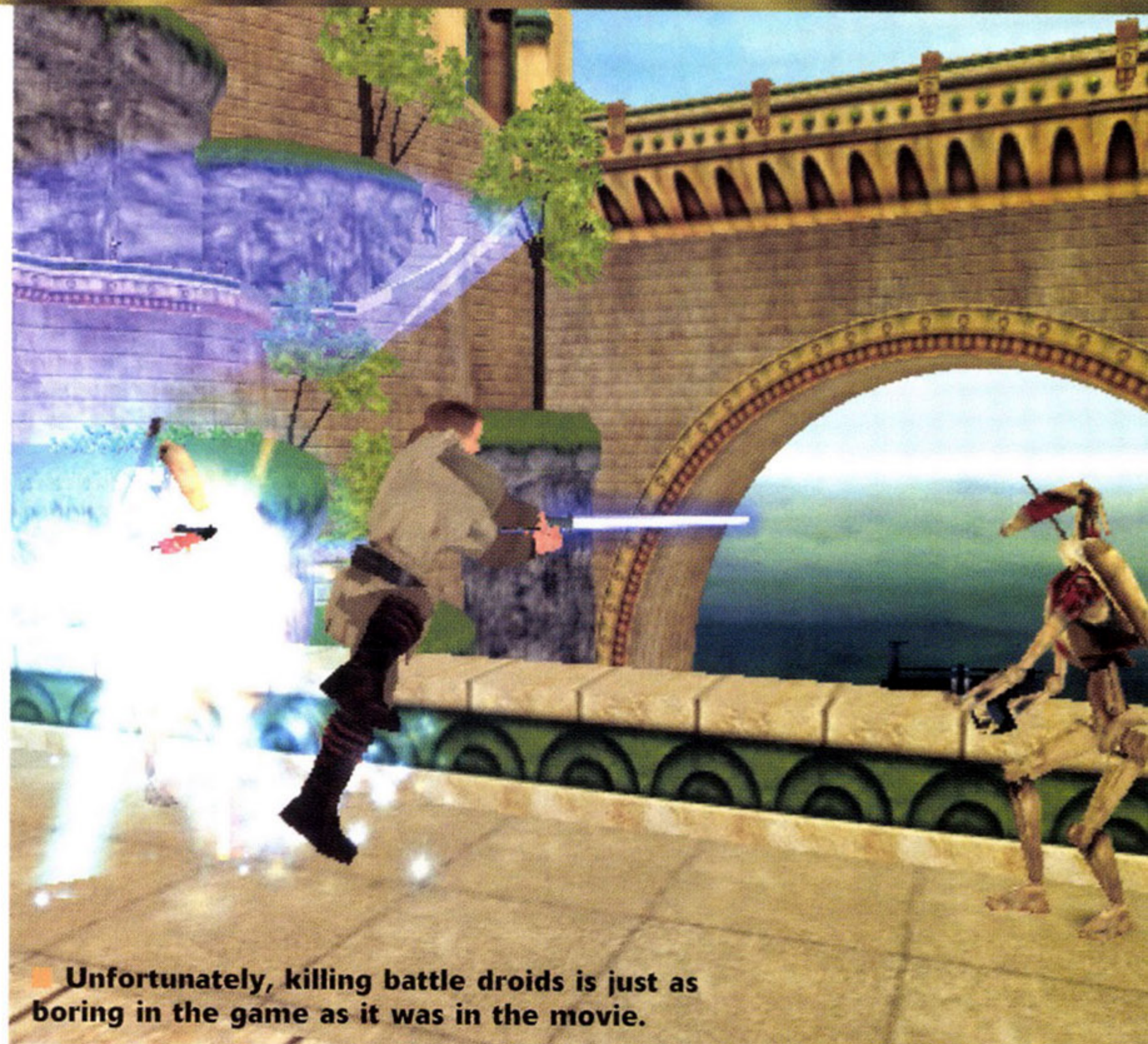
One of the features the designers are currently toying with is the implementation of player-activated slo-mo. The feature was working in the early version we played, and was activated simply by pressing a button. Obi Wan's normally lightning-fast moves are slowed using an effect similar to "bullet time" – the oft-ripped-off camera technique first seen in *The Matrix*. The problem is – when should it be activated? When the player feels like it? When Obi Wan performs a particularly stunning maneuver? The designers want the feature in there (and so do we, since it looks cool) and are currently experimenting with modes of implementation.



■ It's no X-Wing in a swamp, sure, but Obi Wan is levitating his enemy using the exact same principles.

"A" button when you encounter bad guys, they're an actual test of skill and occasionally patience – the AI on the opponents can be surprisingly grueling. This means that defensive blocking is easily as important as attacking, and in some respects it feels a little like Namco's *Soul Calibur*, and that's certainly no bad thing.

– Ryan Michaels



■ Unfortunately, killing battle droids is just as boring in the game as it was in the movie.

Freeze-frame >>>>

USE THE FORCE, LUKE, I MEAN, OBI

DEFINITION: It surrounds us, binds us, and is possibly some type of germ.

Thanks to your high midi-chlorian count, you can use your amazing psychic skills to defeat evil.

1 Robots are dumb and especially easy to kill – the real challenge is deciding exactly how to kill.



2 Use your "Force Push" to smash a robot into a wall, and he'll take more damage. This technique works throughout the game, regardless of which Imperial scum you're fighting.

3 The light-saber is controlled using analog stick two, a superb design choice that gives the player an amazing level of control over his attacks.

Stupid Episode I DVD

Remember the trailer for *Star Wars: Episode I*? It was all Darth Maul running around, and the Emperor saying stuff, and the spaceships and the endless somersaults? Remember how it looked like the best thing ever? And so when you went to the theater and it wasn't that good, you swore never to trust another trailer ever again? Well, they've gone and done it again. The *Star Wars Episode I* DVD trailer is out and it's got stuff in it that made us fill our pants with excitement-cake. Seven completely new scenes? Not even scenes that were edited out of the original footage, but rather bits that were completed specifically for the DVD release, complete with all-new special effects. Full-length commentary that really does explain what the hell he was thinking (or perhaps smoking) when he came up with Jar-Jar. Full-length documentaries. Two DVDs. More than six hours of stuff. OK, you had us at "Star Wars."



■ Obi Wan Retton, indeed.



■ Polygonal rat tail – gee, thanks.

GAME POTENTIAL

LOOKS GOOD

- Gorgeous bump-mapped textures.
- Lots of particle-style effects to illustrate Force-iness.
- Fast-paced platform and action/adventure elements.
- Constant 60 fps.

NEEDS WORK

- The placement of objects and villains was being honed when we saw this version.
- As was the light-mapping.
- Graphics lack character and don't yet have that polished Xbox graphical wow.

ODDS ARE...

The combination of the gravy-like *Star Wars* license and the massive hype surrounding the launch of the *Episode I* DVD will ensure a steady place for *Obi* on the Xbox chart. The fact that Obi Wan will feature even more heavily as a character in the next movie won't hurt the chances of an *Obi Wan* sequel either.

HYPE

The fact that this wasn't good enough for the PC is a bad start, but the substantial changes in engine and gameplay could revive the game. Since it's an exclusive Xbox title featuring *Star Wars* characters, our guess is that it will recover from its inauspicious beginnings just fine.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This did not look great when it was first unveiled at E3, but the fact is that now it looks nothing like that early version. Vastly improved graphics and well-implemented gameplay features are making this more attractive by the day. Obi Wan's gymnastic skills add a lot to this normally slow and soupy genre.

Shrek

It's got farting, big Scottish freaks and unbelievable works of fiction. Is it Shrek or our office...?

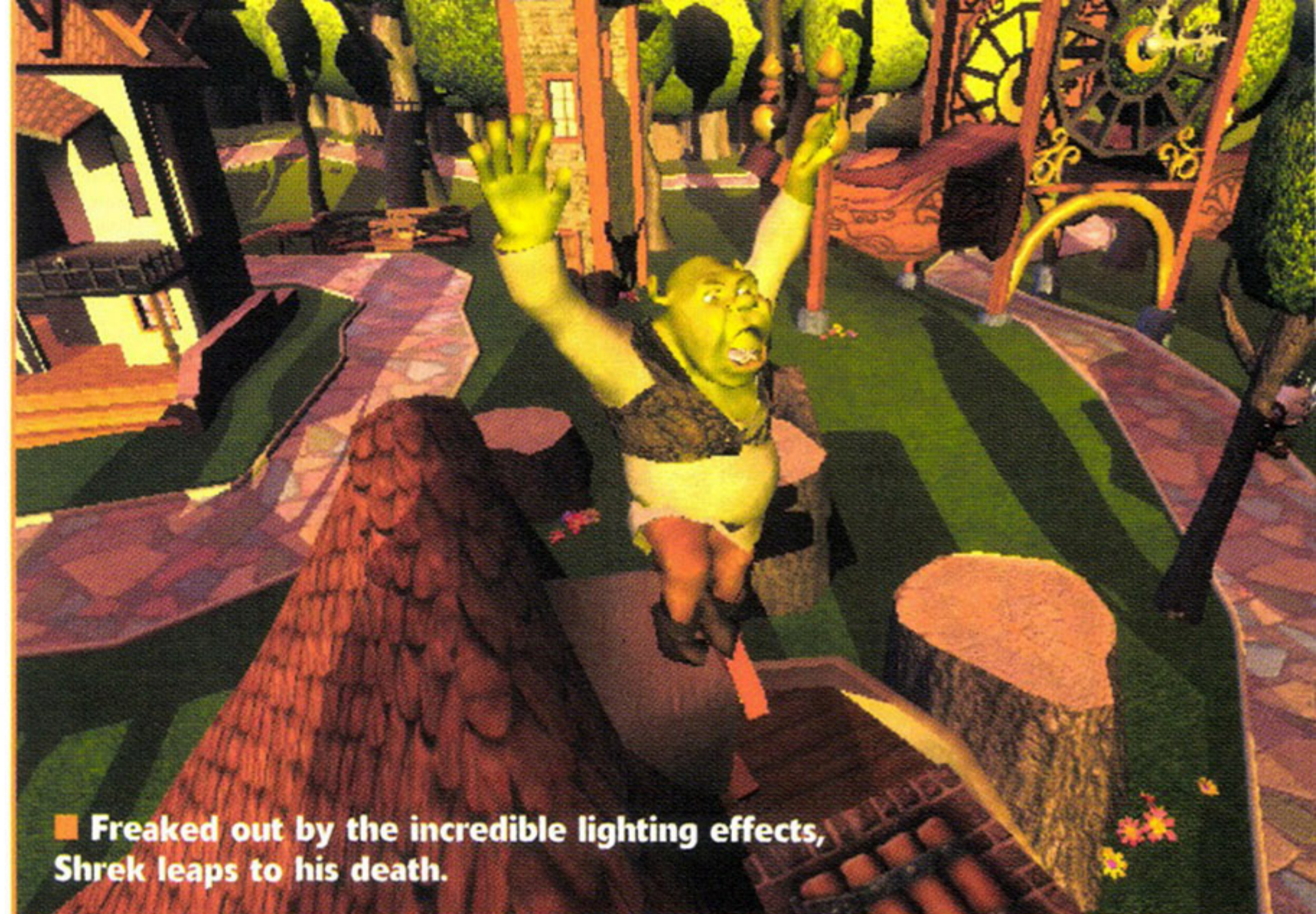
Mike Myers has made a lot of money from that one Scottish accent. The only person to make more money off the same thing is Sean Connery (of course, he actually *is* Scottish). The unexpected and unprecedented success of *Shrek* caught everyone – especially Disney – off guard. It handily crushed *Atlantis* at the box office. TDK Mediactive was lucky (and smart) enough to pick up the game license before it became a box-office smash. And now it's an Xbox-exclusive game.

The gameplay initially reminds one of *Super Mario 64* (sans plumber). *Shrek* runs at a similar speed, and the early camera work bears a resemblance to the Nintendo classic. That initial similarity is about as far as it goes, however, since the fundamental play mechanics are pretty different. For one thing, Shrek can kick bad guys, punch miscreants, and pick up and throw opponents at will. If that doesn't suit your style, let off a volumetric fart that will in turn destroy the volumetric corn, creating a nifty, if sparse, crop circle. Mystery solved!

Although only 50 percent complete when we saw it, it was already apparent that the game's platform roots were more than just superficial. Shrek has a handy double-jump that allows him to heave his not-inconsiderable bulk over some unlikely obstacles. The jump works in a now-classic style – jump at, say, a wall, then hit jump again to kick off and gain further elevation. Clever jumpers can scale dizzying heights using this technique.

The buildings you'll be scaling will be familiar to those who've seen the film. The cool look of the movie graphics (rendered by Pixar rival PDI) has been re-created on the Xbox, occasionally using actual graphic assets from the movie production. And the only thing better than the architecture is the atmosphere. Wonderful use of real-time lighting and projected geometry for shadows give the game an unusual sense of place. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than when Shrek turns away from the sun and his detailed (and somewhat horrific) facial features are cast into shade.

This cool use of light, shadow, and contrast gives the mostly cartoonish aspect of *Shrek* a weirdly photo-realistic look. That look is also applied to the game's cursory characters – many of which have been invented solely for the game. Naturally, they tend to come from fairy tales, and include Mother Goose, the Big Bad Wolf, and a host of others. Each of these new characters will have a specific purpose in the game. For example, one level begins with a sobbing Cow-Who-Jumped-Over-The-Moon. Bizarrely, his lunar leap has caused night and day to become frozen – so you have to go



■ **Freaked out by the incredible lighting effects, Shrek leaps to his death.**



■ **Even Shrek himself is distracted by the amazing self-shadowing.**

The unexpected and unprecedented success of *Shrek* caught everyone, especially Disney, off guard.

unstuck time. Naturally, this involves hurling animals at a giant clock. It's all very logical, really. Well, more logical than, say, *Myst*, anyway. The challenge for *Shrek* is to deliver a compelling gameplay experience. At the time

we played the game, all of the pieces were there, they just weren't put together right. With enough time for playtesting, *Shrek* may just surprise everyone all over again.

– Frank O'Connor

TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Digital Illusions** PUBLISHER: **TDK Mediactive** RELEASE DATE: **Near launch**

WHO ARE THEY?: Digital Illusions, formerly known as Sandbox Studios, is a Canadian game-development house that has worked on a ton of games in the past, including about 40 or 50 PC pinball titles. TDK Mediactive, on the other hand, is a relative newcomer to the videogame scene, and yes – it's a division of the same TDK that makes audiotapes.



Only on Xbox

It's an Xbox exclusive, designed from the ground up for your favorite system. And that means that all the textures, even ones that are supposed to be glassy smooth, will be bump-mapped. Seriously though, this isn't coming to any other console any time soon, and the license was picked up for a song, since nobody suspected the movie was going to be this big. And we heard that a certain *other* giant software company passed on it...

■ Every time we hear Shrek talk it reminds us of Fat Bastard from *Austin Powers 2: The Spy Who Shagged Me* – then we giggle.



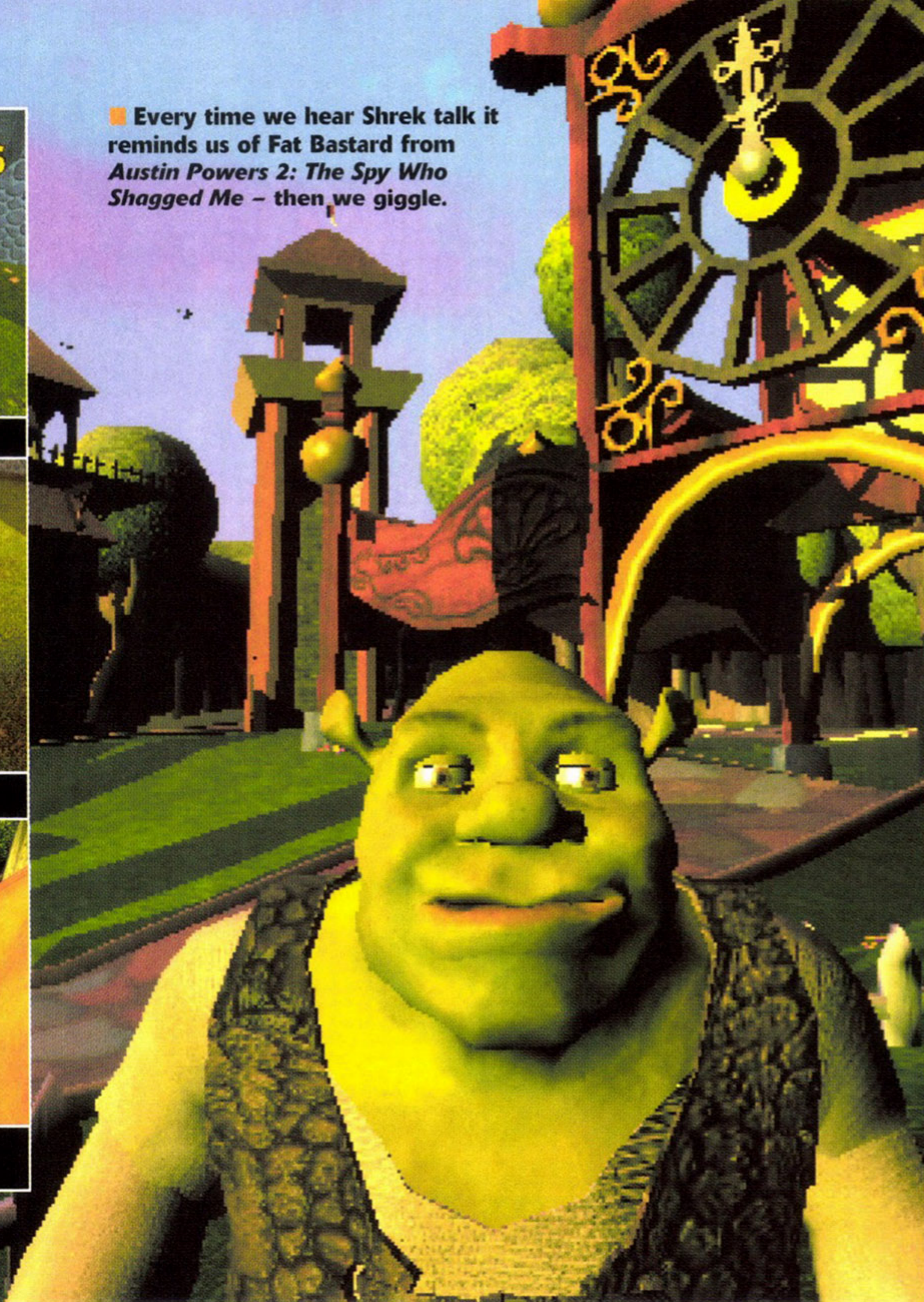
■ Gameplay is pretty varied...



■ ...from herding sheep...

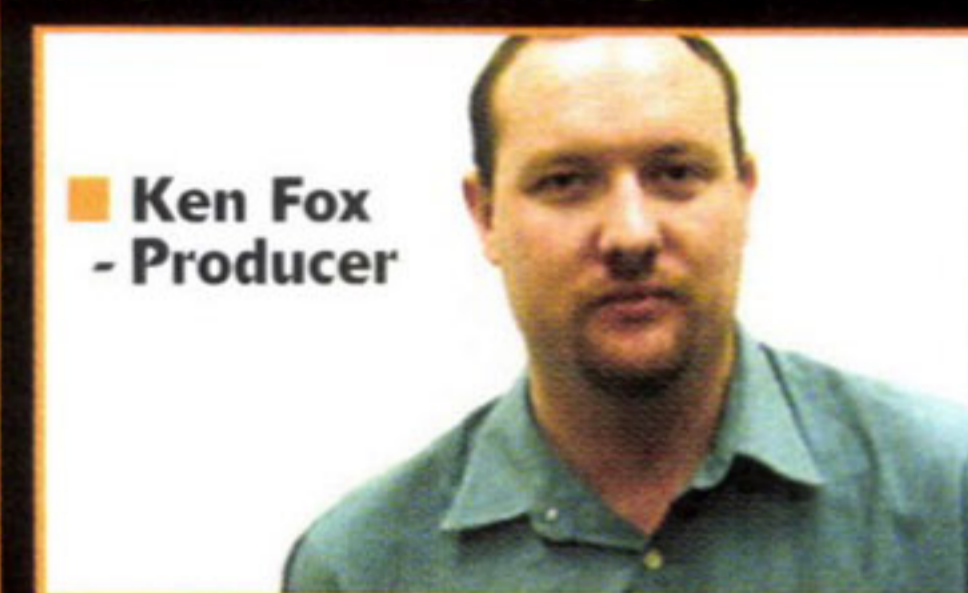


■ ...to repairing the Hickory Dickory clock.



Developer Speak

Ken Fox, producer of *Shrek* for the Xbox, answered a few of our more urgent, pressing questions about the things we felt like asking him:



■ Ken Fox
- Producer

Us: Can you describe how the working relationship is between you, PDI, and DreamWorks?

Him: The working relationship we have had with DreamWorks and PDI has been nothing short of amazing. We have unprecedented access to the *Shrek* team, including a large number of the original models from the film. Although the models were not directly useable in the game, they were invaluable as reference material. We also received design feedback from the director, script feedback from some of the original writers, and have had several meetings with the creators of the visual look of the film.

Us: What goals have you set yourselves in terms of expanding the *Shrek* universe?

Him: The idea for us is to take Shrek himself and turn him into the classic videogame character that he begs to be. We didn't want to retell the story that everyone has seen in the movie. We were interested in creating new and interesting stories and places that fit into and extend the *Shrek* universe.

Us: What's your favorite fairytale, and why?

Him: I don't know if it qualifies as a fairytale, but as a kid, I was always a huge fan of [the] "Frog and Toad" series of children's books. Of course nowadays, my favorite fractured fairytale is *Shrek*!

Us: What technological opportunities does the Xbox afford you, and what are its limitations?

Him: Xbox has been a fantastic opportunity for us. We have been able to do everything from real time bump-mapping to real per-pixel lighting and shadows. We also have an amazing number of polys per scene. Over all, Xbox has given us the opportunity to create one of the most seamless transitions from film experience to game experience ever.

Movie madness

The *Shrek* movie opened a whole can of worms for the graphic artists at PDI. One of the weirder problems they encountered was in the relatively realistic appearance of Princess Fiona (played by Cameron Diaz). Although the animators originally gave her the sweeping, dramatic walk and mannerisms of a Disney-style princess, the results looked weird. Apparently Fiona looked like she was over-acting terribly. To de-ham her performance, they gave her slightly clunkier, clumsier movements. More like a real person, in fact.

WIRED

You can visit TDK's game site at www.tdk-mediactive.com and not at www.tdkmediactive.com, where presumably a sad URL squatter is vainly waiting for TDK to cough up some cash.

GAME POTENTIAL

LOOKS GOOD

- Amazing textures, all bump-mapped.
- Wonderful lighting and shadows.
- Tons and tons of levels – each with distinct challenges.
- Simple, easy-to-learn game mechanics.

NEEDS WORK

- Hard-edged look doesn't quite match the softer shades of the movie.
- Work needed on incorporating some character into the characters.
- Gameplay seems a bit simplistic at this point.

ODDS ARE...

Shrek will have a fairly broad appeal to fans of the movie as well as *Mario*-style platform games. And although *Shrek* is very much aimed at teens and adults, the characters and locales will have pretty broad appeal for younger kids.

HYPE

Shrek's amazing box-office success will no doubt have a huge effect on the game's sales, and it comes out at the same time as the DVD – and we even hear that some game-related secrets will be featured on the movie disc.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Shrek's unexpected success took the box office by surprise. The movie is now a thundering rollercoaster that the game has to live up to. The graphics are already startlingly good, and if the team at TDK and Digital Illusions can put as much talent into the gameplay, then things should be fine.

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A game for the truly dedicated.



RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org
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for more info.





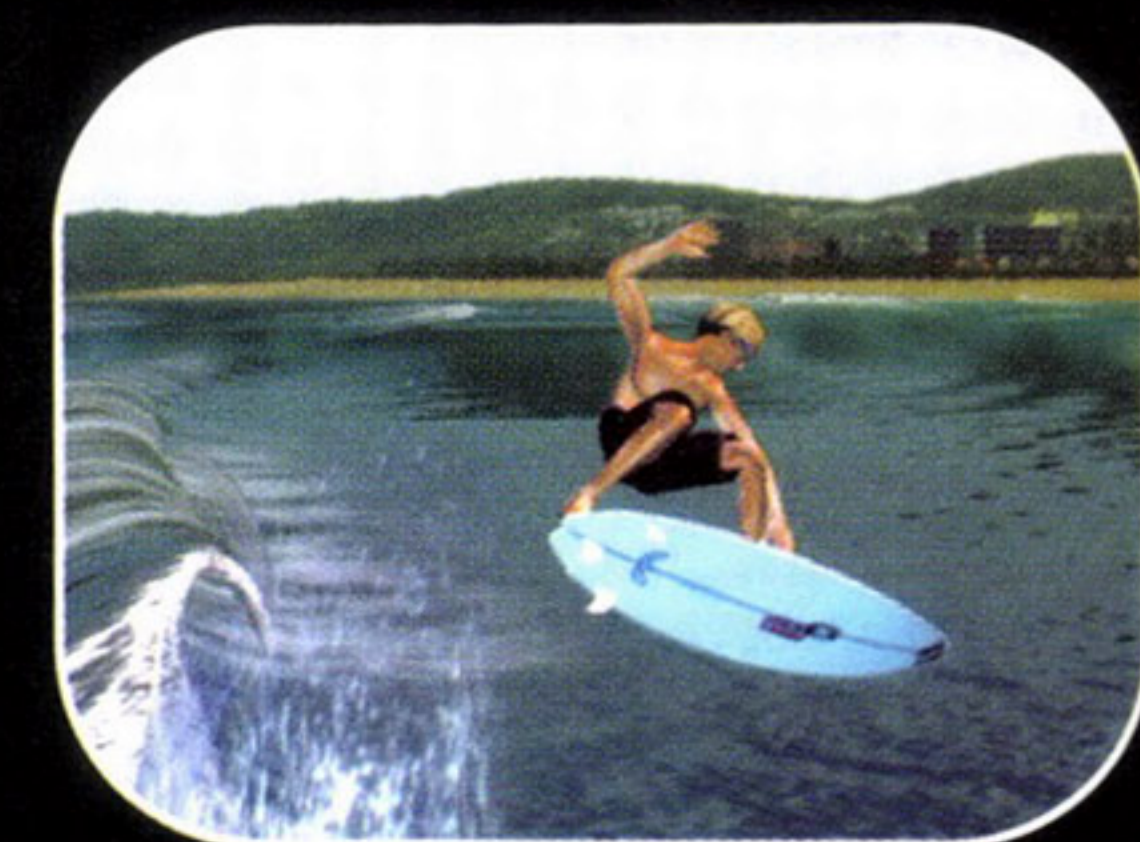
Teahupoo. Pipeline. Huntington. Witches Rock. Kirra Point. Drop into 20 of the world's sweetest breaks with 13 of the world's top surfers. Use the moves that made guys like Taj Burrows, Andy Irons and Shane Dorian famous to pull off dark-slides, fingerflips and other mind-numbing tricks. Immerse yourself in an endless set



TRANSWORLD SURF™

of waves that look and feel like the real thing. Keep an eye on your karma meter. Hitch a ride with the Reef Girls. Watch out for hungry sharks. And remember to save your best moves for the photographers who just may put you on the cover of Transworld Surf. If you've got the chops.

www.transworldgames.com



Unreal Championship

Just when you thought that future sports would be all about motorbikes and rollerskates...

At E3 2001, which seems like a thousand years ago now, the Xbox version of *Unreal Championship* was revealed, and it not only showed us that the *Unreal* franchise was progressing nicely, but that it seems to have been rethought entirely. The plot, what there is of it, could have been scribbled on the back of an Arby's napkin. The list of new features, however, would require something a lot bigger and more absorbent.

For one thing, the weapons selection has been completely rethought. Although many of the old-school guns are still here, we do have to shed a tear for the dearly departed Redeemer. This makes us sad, because the nuclear-tipped guided missile was like a brother to us. A high-yield, explosive, and ultimately cheap brother – but a brother nonetheless. In its place is an arsenal of new and equally impressive devices, including

a triple-barreled rocket launcher and a few deadly surprises. There will be 11 in all, each with the standard *Unreal* double firing modes.

We won't be short-changed on characters, either – new races, types, and species have been added to the mix, from predictable half-naked hotties to the equally predictable overly-armored robo-freaks. But armor is more than skin-deep – *Unreal Championship* introduces a concept *Street Fighter* players will be quite familiar with – ducking and blocking. Although you'll still take damage, for the first time adopting a cowardly defensive stance won't simply make you an easy target, but rather a strategically dangerous foe.

One other freaky arcade-style addition (you can tell this is a console game) is the double-jump – a physically impossible jump seen in games like *Ghouls N' Ghosts*, *Jumping Flash*, and more obscurely, *Xain D'*



■ **Going back to its roots, the game once again features sprawling outdoor environs.**

For the first time, adopting a cowardly defensive stance won't simply make you an easy target.

TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: **Digital Extremes** PUBLISHER: **Infogrames** RELEASE DATE: **Spring 2002**

WHO ARE THEY?: Digital Extremes was founded by James Schmalz, ostensibly to create pinball games. With the success of *Extreme Pinball*, the company morphed into a 3D shooter company with a little game we like to call *Unreal*. Although Digital Extremes is relatively unknown, it was in fact responsible for all the gameplay in *Unreal* and *Unreal Tournament*.



Only on Xbox

Yup – this game is being created exclusively for Xbox and players will be treated to locked-in, full-on 60fps – a statistic that will get boring soon after players realize that's the Xbox norm.



The skeletal models are far more impressive than those in *Unreal Tournament*. The result is a much more convincing assortment of opponents. It's almost tempting to walk up and look at people before blowing their heads off... almost.



■ Though this is designed primarily as a multiplayer game, Xbox bots provide a challenge.

Freeze-frame >>>>

LAN PLAY: FULFILLING THE XBOX PROMISE

WHAT IS IT?: The ability to connect multiple Xbox units together using Ethernet.

Xbox games will often feature a split screen, but with an Ethernet LAN, you get the screen all to yourself.

1 Detailed character models feature better animation and can actually block, *Street Fighter*-style.

3 Particle effects aren't simply a layer of gloss; they interact with the game, and players can disturb the pretty smoke trails.

2 Terrain textures are gloriously high-resolution. They will feature bump-mapping, but only where it's appropriate, we're reliably informed.



This makes us sad, because the nuclear-tipped guided missile was like a brother to us.

Sleena (seriously). All these weird little touches may seem at first like cute extras – but actually they represent a radical rethink of the first-person shooter, showing that the developers are taking concepts like the joy pad very seriously indeed.

Graphical changes aren't simply cosmetic, either – one of the main reasons the game looks so different from its previous incarnations is that its outdoor locations are agoraphobically vast. And we're not simply talking about the rolling hills of *Tribes*. We're talking dense and swampy forests, desolate cities, and lots more.

A huge number of cool gameplay modes are here, from a tournament-

style ranking ladder to the Capture the Flag style of cooperative play. The developers also promise a number of unique modes suited to console play.

Unreal Championship will also support split-screen and peer-to-peer LAN gaming, so the title will not ship until Xbox's online facility is implemented. Which means you'll be blasting away with up to 15 other heavily armed lunatics sometime in 2002. We don't know if we can wait that long.

— Dan Egger

WIRED

Read all about the unsung history of Digital Extremes at the aptly named www.digitalextremes.com website.

Smoke on the water



The engine hasn't just been added to, it's had a swimming pool put in the backyard, turrets on every corner, and a brand new gazebo put in the garden. *Unreal* fans will hardly recognize it. Features like bump-mapping and enhanced frame rates are a given, but the really cool stuff is the smoke and water effects seen even in the game's early stages. For example, blasting a rocket through a plume of mist or smoke actually causes whirling disturbances in the cloud. These types of physics will be liberally applied throughout the game.





■ What's a shooter without big-ass guns?

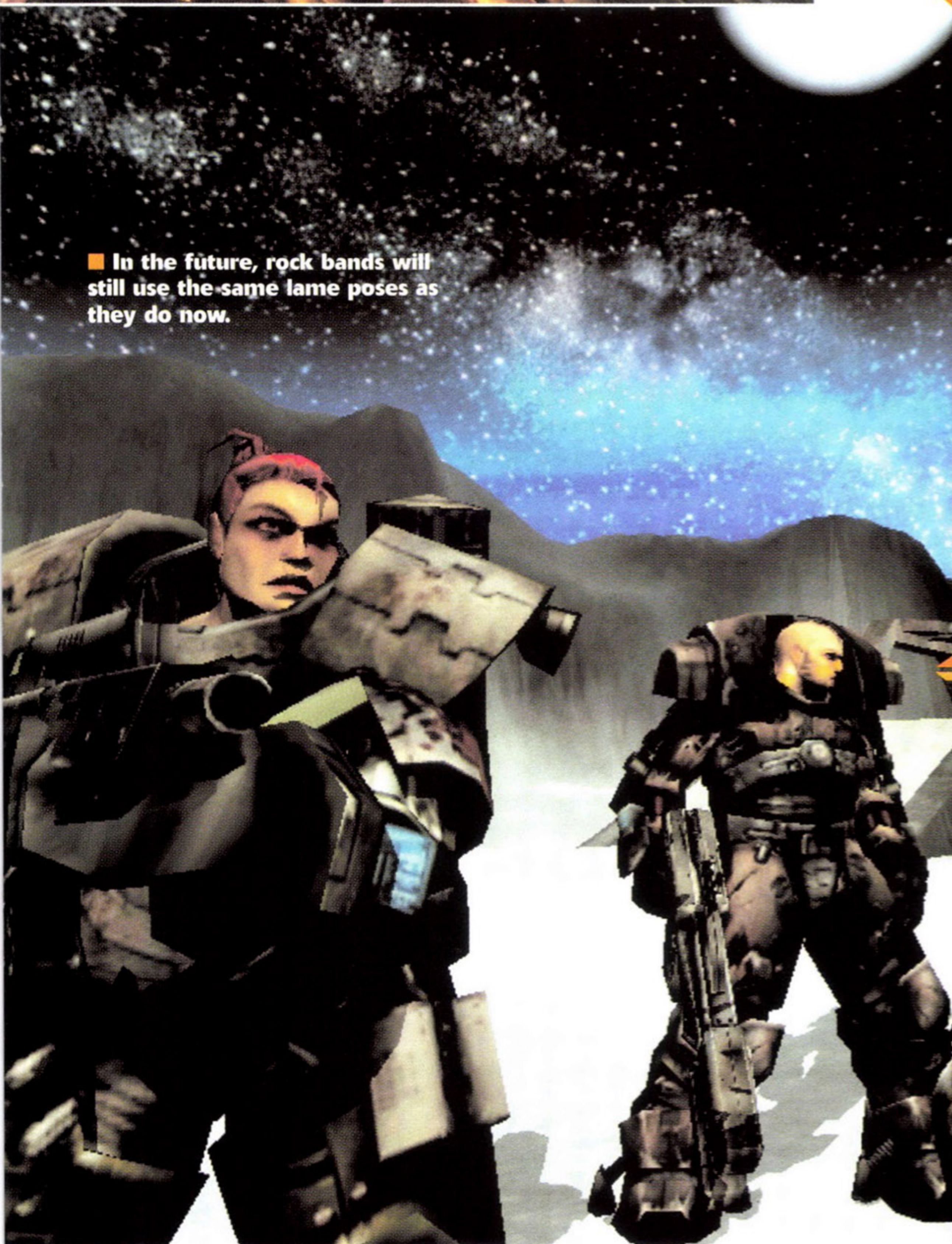
Vee-hickles



■ Floaty-bike thingamajig



Along with *Unreal Championship's* much bigger locales comes a much more ambitious mode of transportation. In previous *Unreal* games you were forced to hoof it, with the occasional break for a swim (usually through toxic, fiend-infested waters). *Unreal Championship* is the first game in the series to feature land, sea, and air vehicles, for teams and individuals. Although these have yet to be fully revealed (we *have* seen a Jedi-style speeder bike), it's expected they'll be on a par with the similar conveyances featured in games like *Halo* and *Tribes 2* – used both for combat and transport. In other words, expect machine guns to be mounted on 'em.



■ In the future, rock bands will still use the same lame poses as they do now.

GAME POTENTIAL

LOOKS GOOD

- Smoke so real, you'll think your Xbox is overheating.
- Huge, vast, sprawling landscapes.
- New weapons, gameplay modes, and characters.
- Vehicles – get in your car and drive!

ODDS ARE...

The momentum of the *Unreal* franchise will make this the star of the series until the long-awaited *Unreal 2* shows up.

NEEDS WORK

- Too early to complain, but the characters have always been pretty bland.
- Single-player game? Can Digital Extremes make the bots smart enough and the gameplay compelling enough without the online functionality of the PC game?

HYPE

It's self-generating. *Unreal* and *Unreal Tournament* are classics with a huge following. Fans of the series will be preparing to dump their PCs right now...

FINAL THOUGHTS

Lots of things could go wrong between now and the game's release. They could fire the programming staff and replace them with bug testers from the Windows 95 launch team. They could get rid of the level designers and generate dungeons randomly on the fly. Frankly, though, the only thing that could really screw things up is the launch schedule for online play – without it, this would simply be a cool FPS. With it, this could become a new, better way of life.

THE POWER OF COMING

STAR WARS[®] STARFIGHTER[™] SPECIAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 2001



For more information on this product's rating, call 1-800-771-3772 or visit the ESRB web site <http://www.esrb.org>.

THE FORCE IS
TO XBOX

STAR WARS®
OBI-WAN™

DECEMBER 2001





Reviews

The definitive source for Xbox reviews

From one gamer to another

At the Official Xbox Magazine, we realize the importance of reviews. As gamers who have spent ludicrous amounts of cash on games (bad *and* good), we know the value of uncompromising reviews – reviews that aren't afraid to tell the absolute, unconditional truth. We don't really care who we piss off: our number-one priority is you, our lovely reader, and we'll do whatever it takes to make sure we arm you with the knowledge you need to make the right buying decisions.

What does this mean? Well, it means we aren't going to sugar-coat our reviews to please advertisers, Microsoft, or even our own mothers. If a game is a heaping pile of crap, we'll say it, in plain English. Why? Because it is our duty to protect you (and your Xbox) from the occasional travesty.

We'd love nothing more than to give every Xbox game a great score and bask in the glow of gaming nirvana. However, back on Earth, we realize that projects go wrong. And we're here to make sure that those projects never make their way into your Xbox. Hell, put a sticker on your Xbox right now that says, "If you aren't this good, you can't ride this ride," and we'll make sure you keep this promise to your Xbox and thoroughly enjoy every penny you spend on Xbox games.

— Mike Salmon

Official Xbox magazine charter

Four simple rules we stick to – always!

1 **100% Official.**
100% Independent. Our involvement with Microsoft allows us exclusive access to the world of Xbox, but it ends when we have a finished game in our grubby little hands. We review games based on their quality and whether they are any fun. We don't care who publishes the games, only who is going to play them.

2 **The right opinion.** Different gamers have different tastes. We understand this, and it is our promise that we will always match a gamer's expertise to the game they're reviewing, ensuring all the opinions you read are grounded in a thorough knowledge of the genre. We'll never weasel out and use meaningless statements like "If you like this sort of thing, you'll like this."

3 **Gamers first.** At Official Xbox Magazine, we love games (good ones) and want to do whatever is in our power to make all Xbox games great. Part of this process is picking out games that don't get it right and telling them what we, the gamers, really want. We won't just whine about bad games – we'll actually try to make them better.

4 **The complete story.** We will never give the Official Xbox Magazine Award for Excellence to any game until we've played it from opening screen to final boss. If you see the award in the magazine, you can be certain that the game in question is superb from beginning to end. We guarantee it.



How our reviews work

Any game that scores 8.5 or more will be awarded the Official Xbox Magazine Award for Excellence. If you see this stamp on game packaging, advertisements, or in our magazine, then you can be sure that it represents the very best the Xbox has to offer. Buy it and let the fun begin.

10 to 8.5
Only the very best games are awarded a score in this range, and they can be unequivocally recommended to everyone with an Xbox. What's more, any game that ranks a 9.1 or above is guaranteed to set a new standard for what we expect in the future.

8.4 to 7.0
A score range for extremely entertaining games that fall just shy of greatness. Anything scoring in this range is of exceptional quality, and the mediocre can't even dream of reaching this level.

6.9 to 5.0
Games falling into this range are still capable of entertaining some Xbox gamers, but somehow they fail to get the whole package right. Mediocre games that do nothing to inspire but still manage to entertain can find a home here.

4.9 to 2.0
Any game that scores this poorly has serious flaws that prohibit any sort of sustained fun. These are the types of games we'd rather not have on our Xbox – they're often rush jobs, poorly done ports, or just born of a bad concept.

1.9 to 0.0
Total crap. Any game that manages to reach this depth has no right even being called a "game." If you see these games in a store, move them away from other Xbox games immediately, so their disease of ineptitude doesn't spread.

Body text

Carefully crafted prose that will compel you to continue reading page after page of our beautiful magazine. This is the meat of our review sandwich (err... tofu for vegetarians) and will serve to give you an idea of what the particular game is all about. Hey, you might even laugh.

It's all in the details

At Official Xbox Magazine, we aim to bring games to life on these pages, and we have several methods to reach this goal. We'll use pictures and words cleverly put together to try and give you an idea of what it is like to play the game we're reviewing.

Review
Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding

All the info on the game that re-writes the snowboarding rules

Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding

DEVELOPER XXXXXXXXXXXX PUBLISHER XXXXXXXX MULTIPLAYER XXXXXXXX
WEBSITE XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX EXTRAS XXXXXXXX

ON THE GAME DISC
Takes you to a full demo of the game...
Includes a demo of the game...
Includes a demo of the game...

Only on Xbox

Why not...

The Verdict

Graphics The Xbox is capable of producing stunning graphics that fill the screen with visual splendor. Does the game live up to these expectations?	Immersion Does the game take you to a better place or leave you wanting to come back home? This is crucial in delivering a truly great game.
Sound Have the designers used sound in a way that enhances the game? Have they maximized the 256-voice capability? Does the sound add to the overall game experience or simply serve as a background?	Design Did the creators have a vision that was executed flawlessly in the final product? More than anything else, game design governs how much fun you're going to have with a title.

GOOD (+), BAD (-), PERPLEXING (?)

+ A quick note about a positive point of the game. These can range from graphical touches to stunning moments to intuitive interfaces and everything in between.

- Sadly, even the best games have their share of misses, something the developers didn't get right. We'll point these out as well.

? Occasionally, games confuse us. When they do, we'll let you know why.

Official Xbox Magazine Verdict 10.0

November 2001 Official Xbox Magazine

The disc is coming... honest

Did we mention that every single issue (after this one) of Official Xbox Magazine comes with a shiny disc? Well, it does, and it will be loaded with playable demos, extras, cheats, and more. In order to give you a better idea of how good (or bad) a game is, we'll point you to the disc for a deeper look.

ON THE GAME DISC

demo

In this area we'll direct you to the appropriate related material on our disc. What does this mean to you? Well, it means you need to read this magazine near an Xbox in order to maximize the synergistic efforts of the magazine/disc combo.



Scorebox

We give our verdict on each Xbox title in the four most important areas of game design: graphics, sound, immersion, and design. However, our overall score will always be based on how much fun we derive from a game - and as a result how worthy we feel it is of your

hard-earned cash. We refuse to use a contrived "average" of individual category scores because we know that the only thing that is important is how entertaining a game is.

Graphics

The Xbox is capable of producing stunning graphics that fill the screen with visual splendor. Does the game live up to these expectations?

Sound

Have the designers used sound in a way that enhances the game? Have they maximized the 256-voice capability? Does the sound add to the overall game experience or simply serve as a background?

Immersion

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Design

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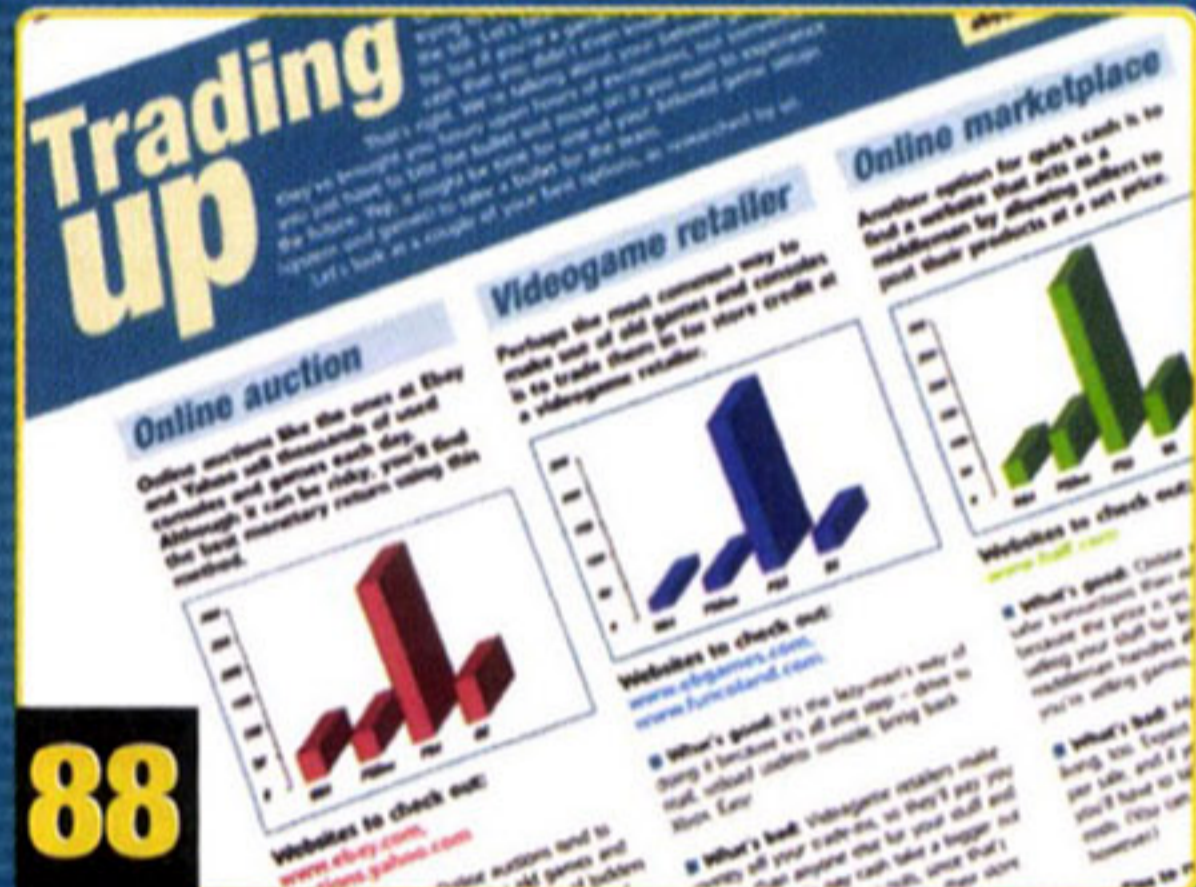
Official Xbox magazine verdict 10.0



Extended Play

Strategy ■ Reader Interaction ■ The Disc

Beat 'em, berate 'em, and play 'em.



88

Strategy

Get an Xbox without having to open your wallet.



94

Free = good

Win an Xbox and a Tony Hawk-inspired prize package – aww yeah.



96

The End

The disc, sympathy cards, and a look at the next issue.

Strategy

How to get an Xbox for next to nothing

or "How I survived launch day with my life savings intact"

If you're scratching your head, wondering why, instead of an extensive walkthrough detailing every tip and trick to be found while playing *Munch's Oddysee*, we chose to create an extensive walkthrough detailing every tip and trick to be found for preordering and buying an Xbox – well, the explanation is simple. There aren't any games available yet and giving you a strategy on one would be just about as useful as eating healthy at the Krusty Burger. This means no reviews and no strategies.

But this isn't to say that we won't have comprehensive strategies for all the biggest Xbox games in future issues. In fact, we have some incredibly cool things planned for those of you who may need the occasional helping hand beating a boss or finding your way through a complicated maze or uncovering that super-secret item. You'll not only find these helpful hints within the pages of the **Official Xbox**

Magazine, but you'll also be able to discover cool strategy-related goodies on the game disc, as well as online at www.officialxboxmagazine.com. For now, though, give our prototype strategy section a good run-through and don't be surprised if you find yourself the most well-equipped and knowledge-savvy Xbox launch buyer amongst your peers.



Leveling up your inventory



Controllers \$25-\$35

For party games like *Fuzion Frenzy* or sports titles like *Madden*, you'll need to make sure you have plenty of controllers for when others dare to challenge your throne. Only one controller will come packed with the system. The rest are, as they say, "sold separately."

Memory card \$20-\$35

The Xbox internal 10GB HD has plenty of space to save your games, but just in case you'd like to take your saves on the road or over to a friend's house, then you'll need a memory card to do your bidding.

Games \$49-\$55

Well, you have to buy at least one with your system, we assume. The only problem is that with every new system, the games will always start off at the mighty high price of \$50 at most retailers. So pick and choose wisely, grasshopper.

The extras

For those of you not afraid to wield a hefty wallet come launch time, there are a few other goodies that should come in handy to help complete your impending Xbox experience.



DVD remote \$29.99

Microsoft will release its own DVD remote that will allow Xbox owners to access and utilize DVD-Roms on the system. With the DVD remote, you're able to play Xbox games *and* touching romantic comedies like *The Wedding Planner*.

S-Video-capable switch box \$20 and up

Serious gamers need serious gear – and nothing is more essential for the multiple-console otaku than an AV switch box that allows you to hook up all your systems to the television at once. Pelican offers an affordable, but excellent, switch box for the reasonable price of \$19.99.

All sorts of cables \$9.99-\$49.99

If your home setup is more advanced (or in the case you've been banished to the drafty basement with only your Great Aunt Edna's "super modern Technicolor dial" TV), then you can choose a host of other cables from MadCatz, Interact, and possibly even Monster Cable.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF!



The Xbox is on me!

Thanks to our clueless leader and his massive (and if you believe many, irresponsible) \$1.35 trillion tax cut, you too can own an Xbox. Before you cash that nifty rebate check and spend it on frivolities like diapers, food, or toothpaste, consider this:

SINGLE: If you are a single (and qualifying) tax-payer, you've received a check from Uncle Sam for about \$300. Is it just a coincidence that this is the same price as an Xbox? We think not – take that check straight to your local software retailer and say, "W's getting me an Xbox!"

SINGLE PARENT: You are really in luck if you're a single parent (except for that whole "scumbag leaving you with a child to raise on your own" thing), for you receive the maximum \$500 rebate check. Trust us when we say that your child would much rather have an Xbox, three games, and a DVD remote than a dad anyway.

MARRIED (FILING JOINTLY): The lucky few who have devoted their life (or at least a couple of years) to another could get up to \$600 to spend on an Xbox, three extra controllers, and four games – you'd still have some cash left over to get your loved one a Grande Raspberry Chip Frappuccino.

MAKING MONEY THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY

Some idiotic ideas for securing some extra cash

MOWING LAWN

Earnings: \$20 a week
Pros: Free workout.
Cons: Grass clippings in underpants



INTERSTATE RECYCLING

Earnings: \$30 a week
Pros: Cool bonus pick-up stuff like hubcaps, damaged 8-track tapes, and medical waste
Cons: Hit and run



SELLING PLASMA

Earnings: \$35 a week (\$60 if you've already been vaccinated for Hepatitis B)
Pros: Cookies and orange juice
Cons: Nausea and dizziness



SMUGGLING PRODUCE ACROSS STATE LINES

Earnings: Varies
Pros: North Dakotans are willing to pay top dollar to avoid scurvy
Cons: Seven to ten years if caught



WHAT?! ANOTHER \$300?

Launching in the US on Thursday, November 8, Microsoft's debut into the console market is set at a competitive (but still not chump change) \$299. Sure, sure, Sony's PS2 also launched at the same price – and so has virtually every console in the history of mankind. Add extra controllers, a couple of games, and some nifty peripherals to the purchase and you have a total price that rivals a full semester at The Learning Annex. This is the cost of entry into the wondrous world of gaming. We've come to accept it as the norm, but we *do* have a few ideas on how to ease the burden.

So, what's a gamer to do when that rare animal called a savings account is actually drawing on your checking account for the monthly fee? Don't despair! There are plenty of ways to scrounge up the money and the know-how to get your paws on an Xbox this November!

PRE-ORDERS

Pre-orders are the way of the next-generation console future – and from what we experienced during Sony's PS2 launch, preorders may be the only way to get a system at or near launch. Preorders themselves can range from putting a

fraction of the console's price down as a deposit to paying for the entire bill in full to simply cashing in games for store credit to be used toward your Xbox purchase. Any way you look at it, this is the top way to ensure that you'll be shooting alien scum in *Halo* or kicking much butt in *Dead or Alive 3* come November 8... instead of sitting around, waiting for months, like the poor, unfortunate souls who weren't wise enough to read our fine magazine.

So, where can you sign up for a preorder? If you check with your local Funcoland or Electronics Boutique, it's more than likely they'll accept anything

from a simple name and number to a cash deposit in order to secure your preorder for an Xbox. Funcoland will accept up to \$50 cash deposit, or you can trade in some of your used videogames to compensate. Other chains, like Electronics Boutique and Software Etc., may also offer limited-supply preorders. But after the PS2 shortages last year, some retailers are more than a bit skittish when it comes to committing to a huge list of preorders for customers. Make sure to check with your local pimply-faced mall retailer to find out what programs they offer as the launch date inches closer.

Trading Up

One of the most important issues you'll face when trying to buy an Xbox is the unpleasant matter of... the bill. Let's face it, \$299 isn't always easy to come by, but if you're a gamer, you probably have access to cash that you didn't even know about.

That's right. We're talking about your beloved games. Sure, they've brought you hours upon hours of excitement, but sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and move on if you want to experience the future. Yep, it might be time for one of your beloved game setups (system *and* games) to take a bullet for the team.

Let's look at a couple of your best options, as researched by us.

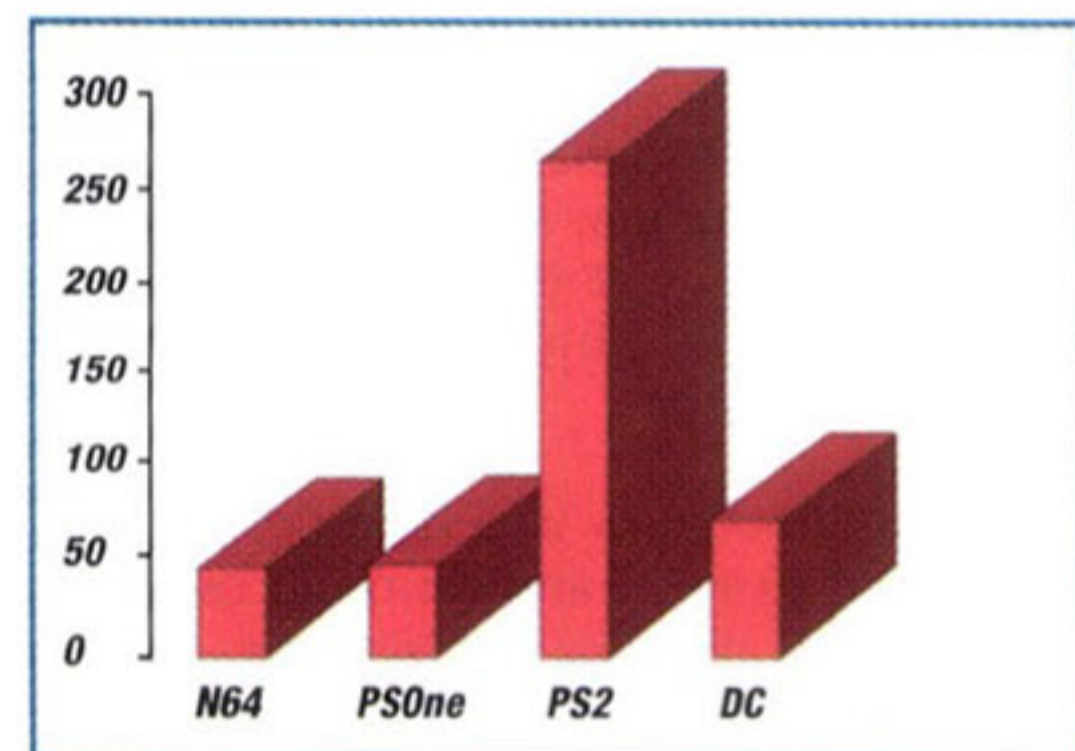
TRADE IN

The best way to make money quickly is to trade in a used videogame console or games. Consoles (especially recent ones) keep a good resale value, and because hardware manufacturers often drop the price of their console, you may be able to repurchase your old system at a better price in the future. Games, on the other hand, follow their own set of rules, which we'll talk about later.

Now, here are our favorite ways in which you can go about trading in your old videogame equipment:

Online auction

Online auctions like the ones at Ebay and Yahoo sell thousands of used consoles and games each day. Although it can be risky, you'll find the best monetary return using this method.



Websites to check out:
www.ebay.com,
auctions.yahoo.com

■ **What's good:** Online auctions tend to bring the highest prices for old games and hardware. The competitive nature of bidders will often push the selling point of a used console to a price that is much better than anything you'd get anywhere else.

■ **What's bad:** When you sell something in an online auction, you become the retailer and you take a lot of responsibility upon yourself. Duties such as shipping, handling, and more importantly – getting paid – all fall on you.

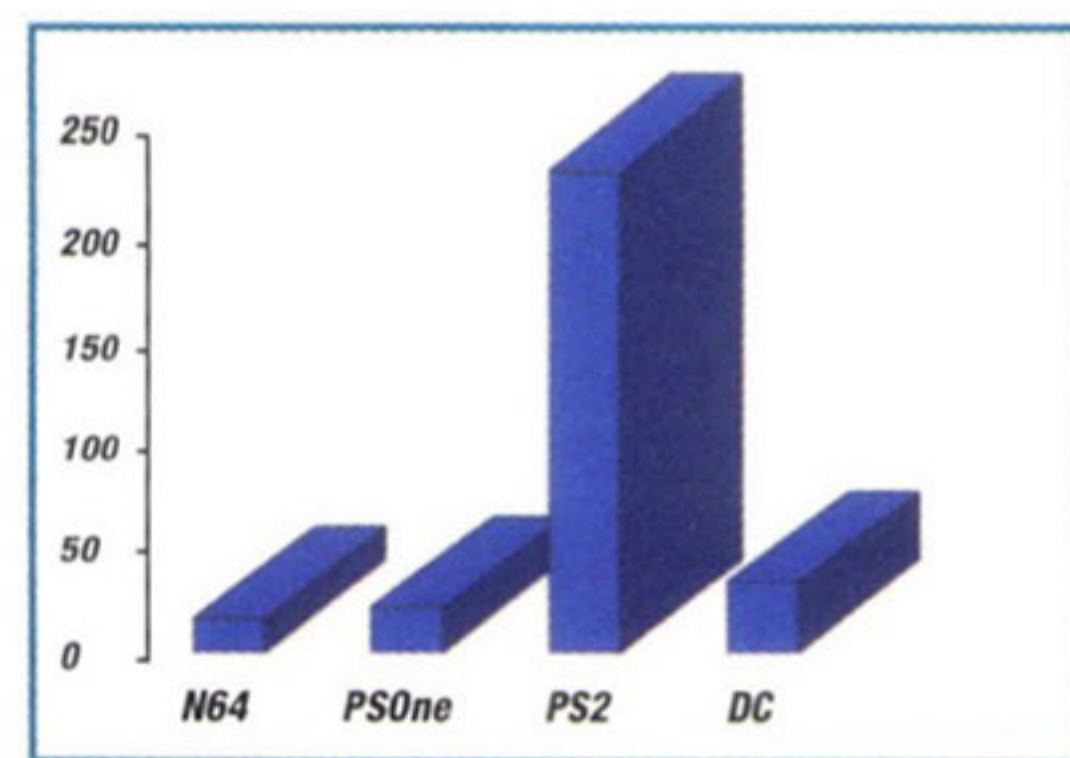
■ **Tips to remember:** Don't trust buyers that don't have a good history. Use a pay service such as PayPal rather than trusting that they'll send a check or money order. Think like marketing scum.

Here's a quick look at translation from reality to sales pitch.

Reality	The Spin
Old	"Classic"
Scratched up	"Play-tested"
Crappy game	"A cult favorite"
Broken controller	"System was actually played by rock 'n' roll legends The Who"
No cords	"No strings attached!"

Videogame retailer

Perhaps the most common way to make use of old games and consoles is to trade them in for store credit at a videogame retailer.



Websites to check out:
www.ebgames.com,
www.funcoland.com

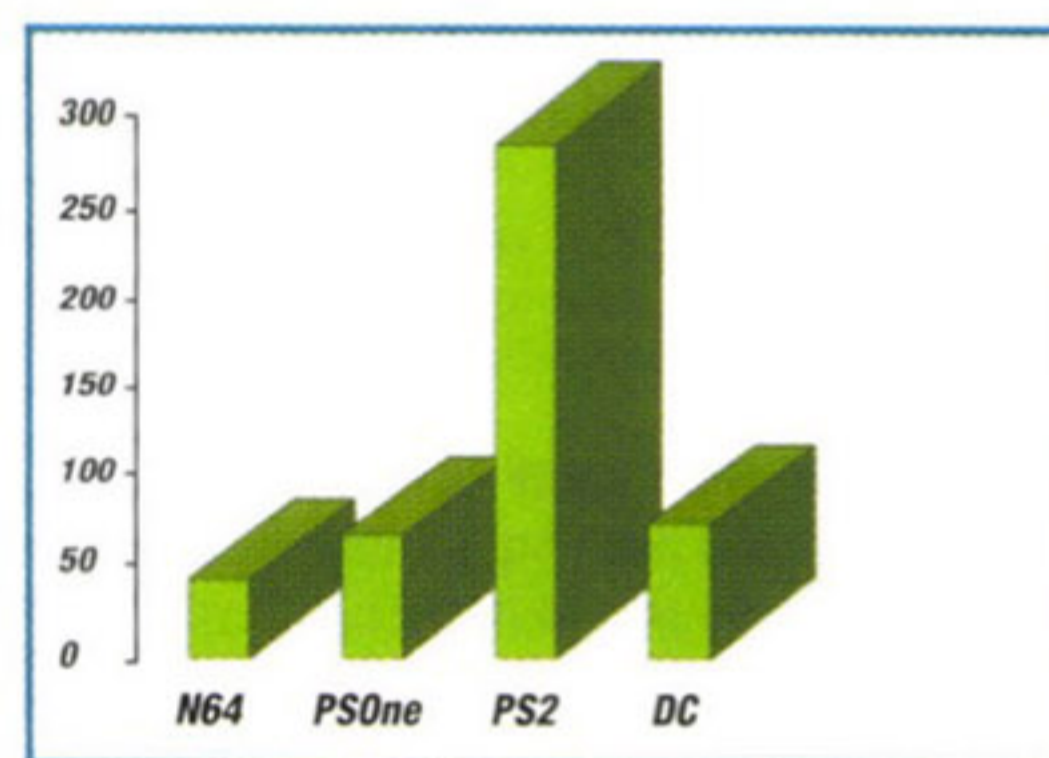
■ **What's good:** It's the lazy-man's way of doing it because it's all one step – drive to mall, unload useless console, bring back Xbox. Easy.

■ **What's bad:** Videogame retailers make money off your trade-ins, so they'll pay you far less than anyone else for your stuff and the few that do pay cash take a bigger cut off the top of cash pay-outs, since that's money you may not spend in their store.

■ **Tips to remember:** Prices vary between stores, so you might check around before you make the trade. Keep your console intact. Missing cords, beer stains, and other imperfections hurt the value.

Online marketplace

Another option for quick cash is to find a website that acts as a middleman by allowing sellers to post their products at a set price.



Websites to check out:
www.half.com

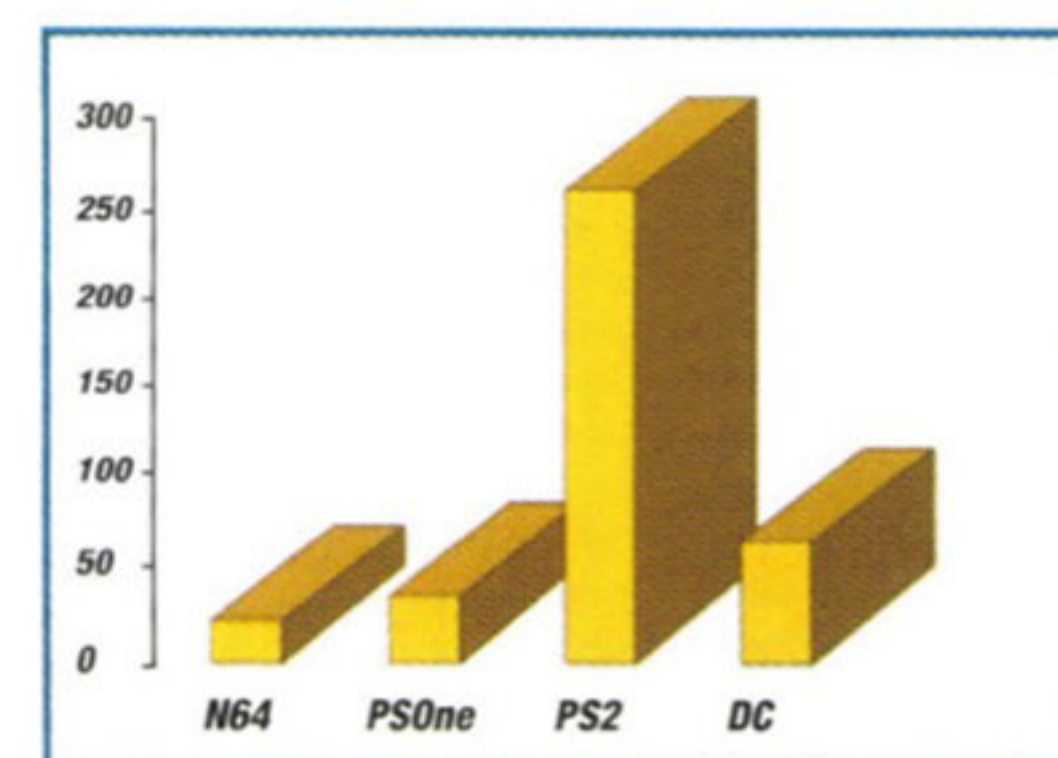
■ **What's good:** Online marketplaces offer safer transactions than online auctions – and because the price is set, there's no risk of selling your stuff for less than it's worth. The middleman handles all payments and, if you're selling games, all shipping fees.

■ **What's bad:** Middlemen need to make a living, too. Expect to pay around 15 percent per sale, and if you're selling a console, you'll have to take care of the shipping costs. (You can include it in the price, however.)

■ **Tips to remember:** Factor in the 15 percent overhead price. Call around to find the lowest shipping costs.

Local newspaper

Remember that black-and-white paper thing that shows up on your lawn every morning? You can sell stuff in it.



Websites to check out:
classifieds.yahoo.com

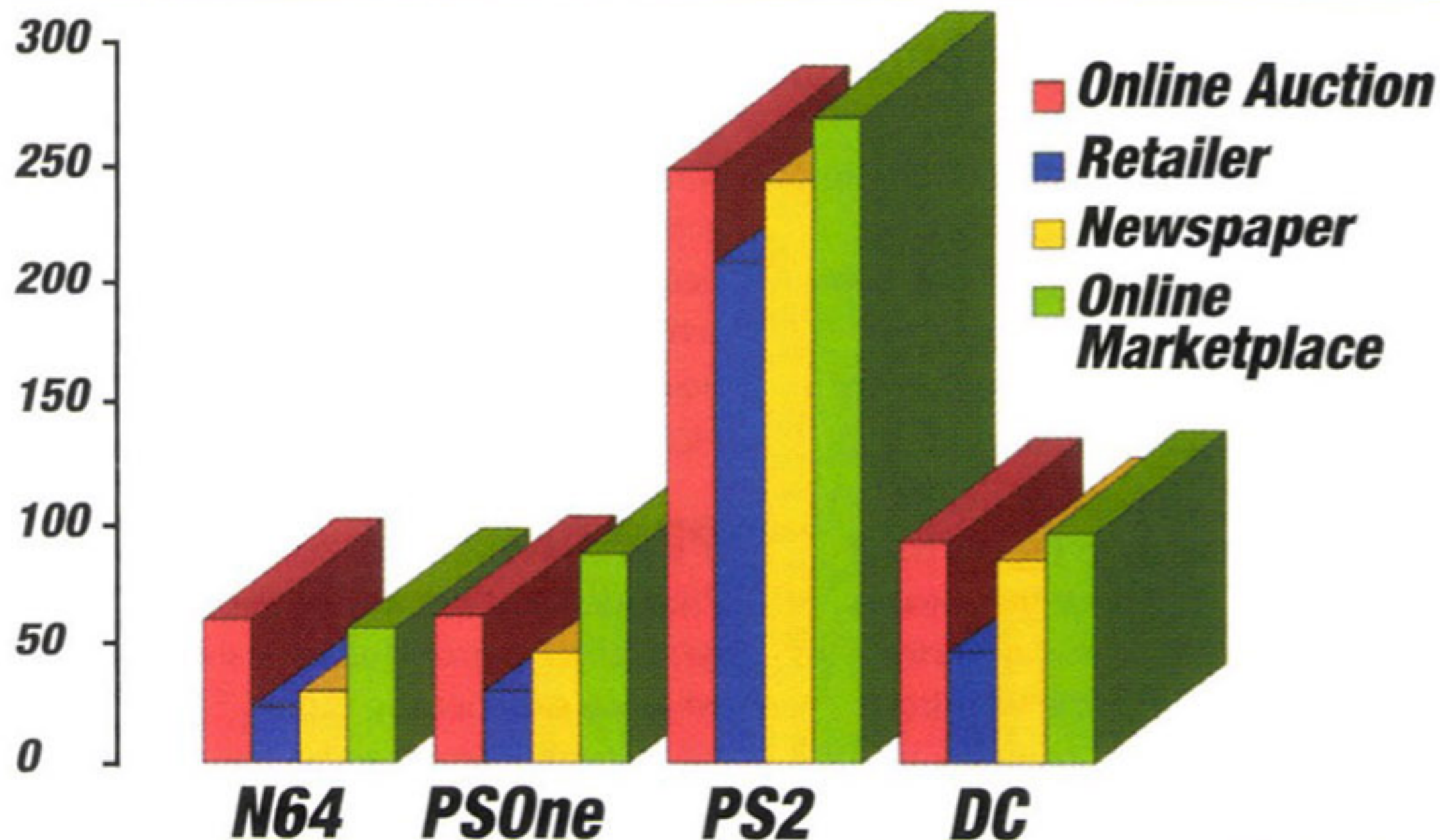
■ **What's good:** It's local, it's cheap, and you don't have to worry about shipping costs. The buyers come right to your door.

■ **What's bad:** The buyers come right to your door... and have you seen some of the people who read newspaper classified ads? Plus, it's hard to get full value for you videogame equipment while only fishing in a small pond.

■ **Tips to remember:** Describe your stuff with elaborate terms. It's worth the few extra bucks it will cost to publish a tantalizing description of your console. Insist on cash or money order. Sell your console with some of your least valuable games. You'll get more money out of the set.

The Big Picture

In case you haven't noticed, we just love graphs. Aren't they pretty? In an effort to give you a bright and colorful picture of the trading-in marketplace we've put together the coup de grace of all graphs. Cut it out and put it on your fridge – you'll be the envy of all your uncool friends.



Coming
November 2001

SHREK™



Easily the most impressive aspect about the game is its graphical prowess.

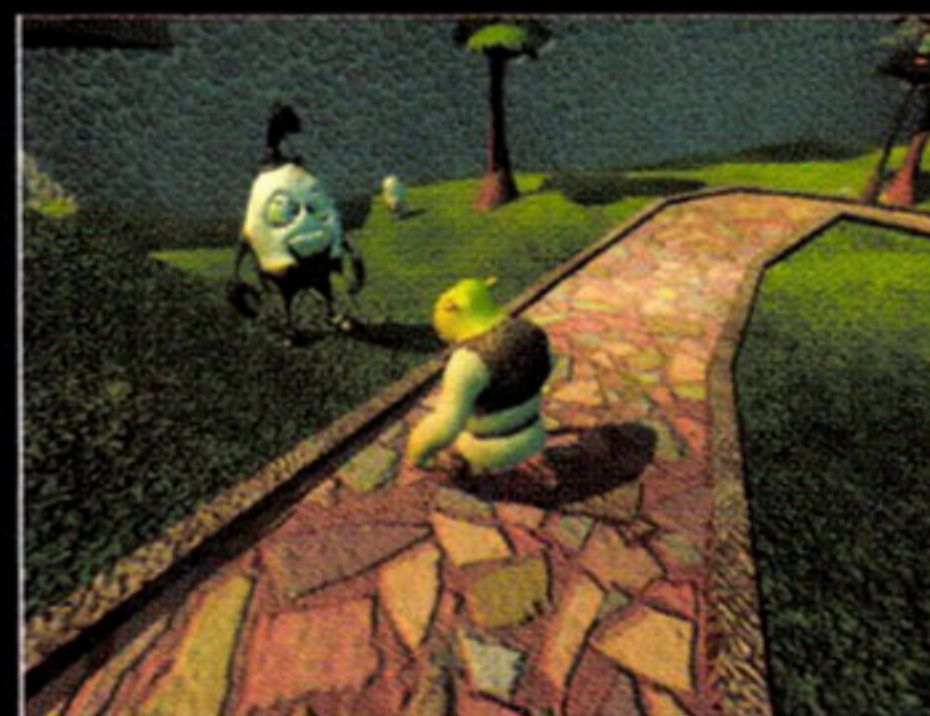
— **GameSpot** July 2001

Shrek looks gorgeous and its attention to detail is astounding...

— **Expert Gamer** September 2001

The production values are movie-like...They'll wonder if you are playing the game 'Shrek', or watching the movie *Shrek*. And people will get hooked.

— **cnn.com** May 2001



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RP
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www.shrekgame.com



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WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?

NO
BOARDING
ALLOWED



DARK SUMMIT

IT'S NOT WHAT IT SEEMS.

www.darksummit.net

COMING THIS FALL...

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Visit www.esrb.org
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for more info.



What software trades best?

All games aren't created equal, and all games don't retain value as well as others. So how do you know which of your favorite games are worth trading in? Well, it's simple... in fact, the price of your trade-in game is affected most by five factors.

1. Console

We took a random sampling of 300 games for each console from Ebay auctions, Funcoland price lists, and other used-game sales lists. PlayStation2 software was by far the most valuable in terms of trade-in and resell value. The PSOne came in second, powered mostly by the huge resale value for a few rare RPGs and strategy games. Nintendo 64 titles managed to keep a good value, while Dreamcast software prices continue to plummet. But that might change once the DC becomes completely defunct. After all, collectors are always after rare or discontinued items and you can't get more rare or discontinued than this. Hold onto your DC software and hardware... we guarantee that the prices will go up in several months.

2. Genre

RPG games are king when it comes to resale value, and you can usually expect that they'll bring in more money than the average game. The older the RPG, the more money you'll net, usually. But most RPG buyers like their collections to be "complete," so if you have titles that are still in the box with instructions, you're sitting on a mini-goldmine - spiky-haired youths included.

Sports titles also do well (especially on the PS2, where they average \$32). However, old sports games have little value, so sell them quickly or not at all. The more current your

sports games are, the higher value they have. In other words, don't try to pawn off your *NCAA Final Four '98*, kiddo.

Fighting games, flight sims, and anything with robots in them also sell well. Action games, platform games, and racing games fall below average.

3. Rarity

Games that sell well don't always resell well. But rare games generally keep a good value. Little-known PlayStation titles such as *Poy Poy*, *Rhapsody*, *Theme Hospital*, and *Ogre Battle* are worth more than double the value of games such as *Metal Gear Solid*. Also, games that have had limited runs, such as *Thousand Arms* (Atlus/PlayStation) or *Ogre Battle 64* (Atlus/N64) are guaranteed to resell well.

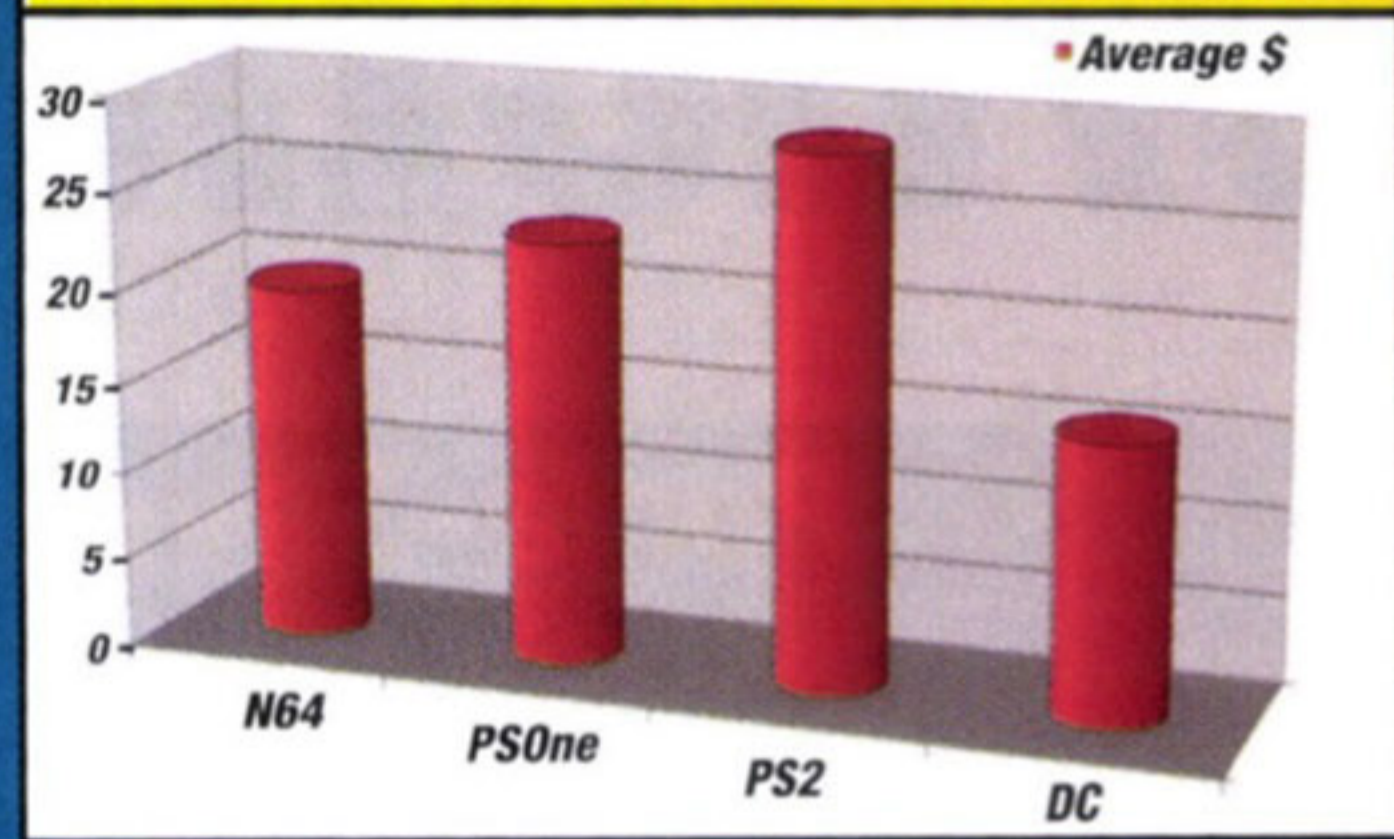
4. Quality

Good games maintain good value. So be forewarned, the games that you treasure the most will most likely bring the most value in trade or resale. If you can't wait to get a game off your hands... it probably isn't worth much.

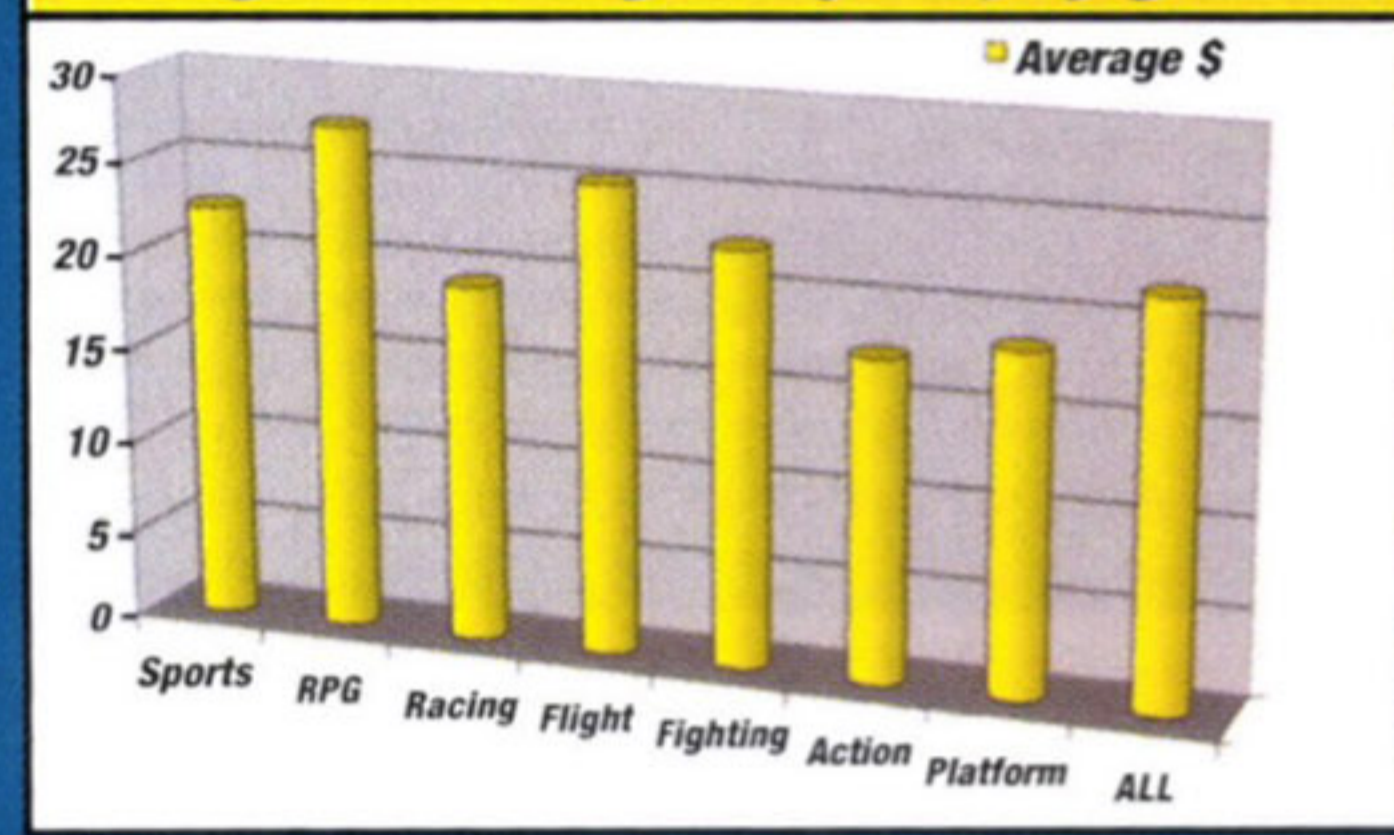
5. Timeliness

For all but the rarest of games, the resale value is best during the first year after release. This is most true with sports games. However, RPGs and a few other genres hold their value regardless of time.

Average trade-in game price, by console



Average trade-in game price, by genre



PRO TIPS for the launch buyer

If you're brazen enough to brave the launch-day lines at your local Toys 'R' Us rather than opting for the relative safety of a preorder, then make sure to pay attention to a few simple tips.

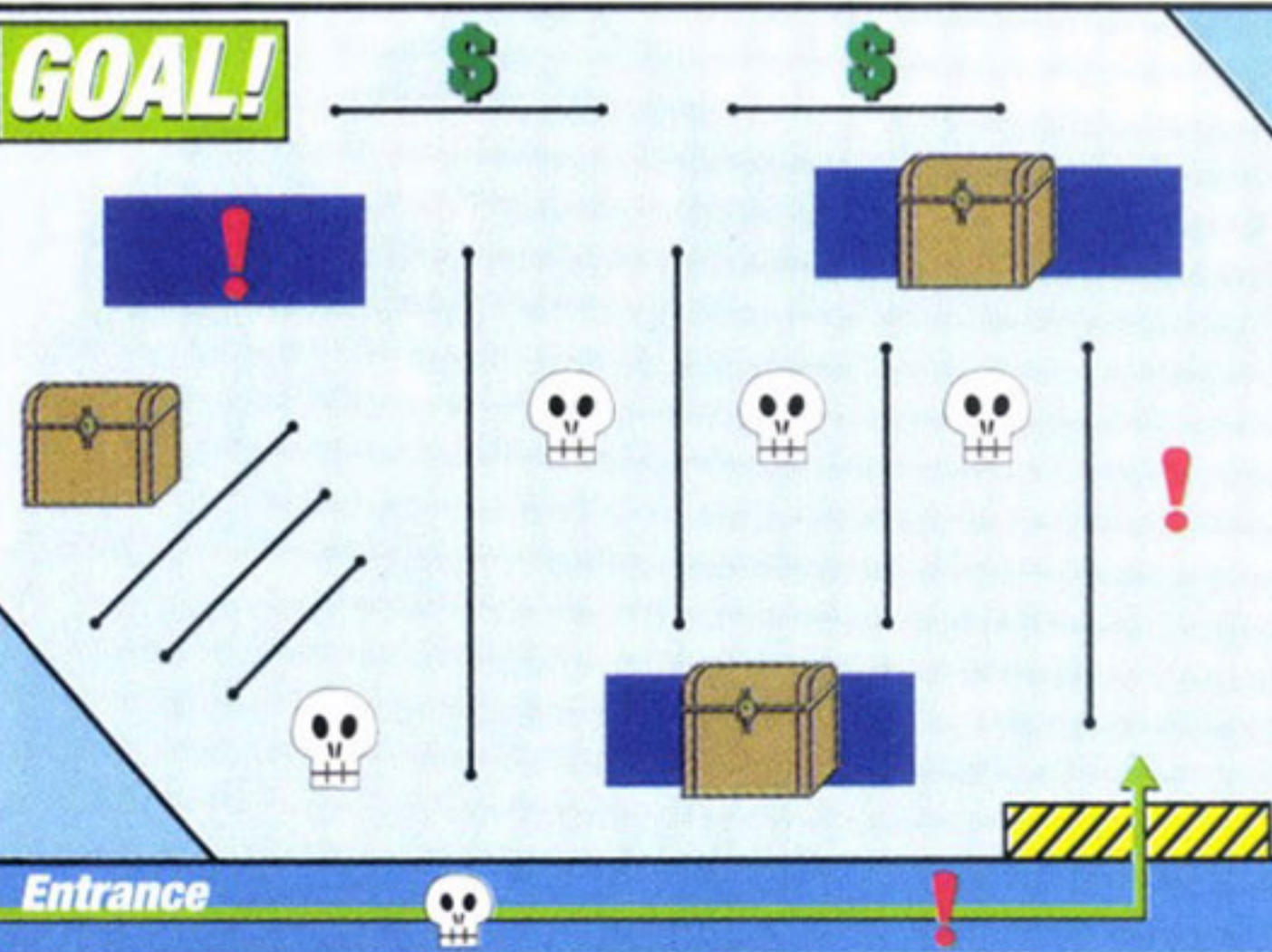
Some videogame retail chains will not allow customers to wait outside their store for more than 10 hours. Keep this in mind before you drag your tent and cooler to the curb outside the local Kmart by checking what your neighborhood retailer's policies are.

Don't wait alone. If you're faced with a 10-hour wait outside a store at night, you don't want to lose your place in line when nature calls or you get the inevitable 3 a.m. curly fry craving.

Pick a store before launch day and check for lines outside periodically the day before. Most lines will start forming after the store closes or early in the morning the day of. If a store opens up at 9 a.m., you can count on a line starting by 6 a.m. at the latest.

Don't cut in line. Unless you're bigger than they are. In which case, cut away.

Electronics Boutique, Floor 1, Level 2



Come launch day, you'll need all the help you can get to outwit the competition (i.e., like-minded Xbox buyers armed with cash) and make it to the end goal (i.e., store counter) while avoiding the tempting pitfalls (i.e., other consoles, other consoles' games, bad Xbox games) that abound. Yes, folks, it's our excuse for showing you what a strategy map will look like in future issues.

Playable characters

While playing Xbox, you'll come across a bevy of different characters, both good and allegedly bad. Some will help you enjoy your Xbox gaming experience, while others may hinder it. Get to know some of them now.



Munch
Munch's Oddysee

Bio: With his ability to manipulate machinery and other electrical gadgets, Munch is the perfect anti-hero for Gen Xers tired of ridiculously well-armed commando hero archetypes.

Console Marine and/or Amphibian Nemeses: Frogger, Croc, and Ecco.



Kasumi
Dead or Alive 3

Bio: A redhead with a difference - she can take on all comers. And if *DoA3* has the "bounce on/off" option, we guarantee that she'll definitely have a lot of comers.

Console Female Fighter Nemeses: Sarah Bryant (*VF* series), Nina Williams (*Tekken* series), Chun Li (*Street Fighter* series).



Gum
Jet Set Radio Future

Bio: The taggin', jet skatin' Shibuya GG femme fatale has much more street cred than her other Xbox cohorts and she's ready to spray paint the lights fantastic in Sega's sequel to the Dreamcast original.

Console Graffiti Chick Nemeses: Absolutely none.



Solid Snake
Metal Gear Solid X

Bio: Mullet aside, Solid Snake has aged pretty darn well. After weathering numerous incarnations across multiple platforms, he still has gamers lined up around the block to play his latest.

Console Action Hero Nemeses: Duke Nukem, Lara Croft, Claire/Chris Redfield.

Reader Interaction



We want to hear what you have to say about Xbox and all things gaming. No, really, we do. Don't let your Xbox-related questions go unanswered! Write us, *now*. Those of you who still write with pen and paper can address your letters to: **Official Xbox Magazine, c/o Imagine Media, 150 N. Hill Drive, Brisbane,**

CA 94005 (we'll likely toss these immediately – but feel free). Alternatively, you can choose to join us in the new millennium by sending us what we really prefer: an electronic missive at xboxmagazine@imaginemedia.com. Intelligent, well-written letters will be addressed in our next issue. Others will be harshly ridiculed. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, clarity, and at our whim.



■ *MGS2* won't come to Xbox, but *MGSX* will.

Porta-Saves

I have been very interested in the Xbox system ever since I heard of it at E3. I have been going to your website and reading the "State of the Xbox" section. I have also been getting the online newsletter. I just heard about the Official Xbox Magazine, which I am, again, also very excited about! I have a question for you, though. Sony's PS2 and PSOne both use memory cards that you can take out and use on another machine, like over at a friend's house. Can you unscrew the Xbox, remove the hard-drive, and take it to a friend's house to attach onto their system, or

do you have to bring over the whole box?

And one more question. Is *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* going to be on Xbox? Will there be a *Metal Gear Solid X*? Please let me know! I am very eager to hear your answer, as well for November 8 to come!

Clark Guy, via email

We say: Clark, Xbox will have two ways for you to save your games: directly onto the internal hard-drive or onto external memory cards. The internal hard-drive comes with Xbox, while the

memory cards (as with the PS2 and PSOne) are sold separately. Unfortunately, to transport your save, you'll need to do it on a memory card – not the internal hard-drive. Why? Hint: The key word is "internal."

As for *Metal Gear Solid X*, the answer is a happy "yes." In regards to *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, the answer is an unhappy "no." While we're not sure what *Metal Gear Solid X* will include (rumor has it that it will include elements from both games), we're pretty sure it'll include bits of *MGS2*, mullets and all.

Power play

I've read about the "flowing grass" that will be used in *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x*, and the leaves, fur, etc. But what if there is a scene of 20 men in a jungle, with trees and weeds all around – will the intense graphics rendering cause slower framerates?

That's all I have, and I hope I make the magazine, so I can boast to all those people who spend all their time boasting... I feel like one of them already. Shame on me.

The Almighty Tree God, via email

We say: Technically speaking, Almighty Tree God, we're not sure what the "limit" is for Xbox. To be more precise, the limit is whatever the developers choose to make it, at this point. Just compare some of the early games on systems like PSOne or SNES to the marvels that appeared later on in their lifetimes. Xbox is no different, except for the amount of pure power lurking underneath the hood.

It's no PS2

I keep trying to reserve the Xbox at my local Babbage's, but they say they aren't taking preorders. I was wondering if the Xbox is going to have the same problem as PS2?

Tim, via email

We say: No worries, Tim. Microsoft has made sure that it will not shortchange the early adopters and folks eager to buy up consoles on the first day. The company plans on shipping out between 600,000 and 800,000 units by launch day and approximately a cool one million systems shipped by the end of the year.

Nice Pack-age

There is a High Definition AV Pack and an Advanced AV Pack. What is the difference?

Jill Romas, via email

We say: The Advanced AV Pack that's being sold by Microsoft will feature composite, S-Video, and digital outputs that can then be hooked into your television. And there's also a headphone jack with volume controls on the Advanced AV Pack box. While it's not completely confirmed by Microsoft what will be included for the High Definition AV Pack, we figure that it will include all of the connections in the Advanced AV Pack, without the composite out, which will be replaced by the component out to connect to your HD-capable TV.

Once bitten, twice shy

Hello! My name is Adriano Burgo and I am a huge fan of Xbox. I have been a gamer all my life and I'm glad to see that there's finally a console that's worth buying! I am concerned, though, about the future of Xbox. You see, long ago I was turned away from the console world because the last system I bought died a horrible death.

Adriano Burgo, via email

We say: Microsoft plans on sticking by Xbox. Microsoft is throwing 100% of its muscle behind Xbox for the long run and plans on making a lot of its future earnings off the system. While we can't guarantee Xbox's success (that'll be up to the consumers), we can tell you that you needn't worry for a long time.

Performance anxiety

Hi, I was wondering about something. The Xbox has a hard drive, just like a PC, right? Well, if you download stuff on a PC and it keeps occupying space on the hard drive, its performance will be affected. Will the same thing happen to Xbox's performance?

Charles, Puerto Rico

We say: Definitely, no, Charles. The Xbox is partitioned, and it's also designed in such a way as to never compromise performance, no matter how much is stored on the HD. It's not like a PC in this aspect whatsoever.

CD versus DVD

I was wondering, are the actual game discs going to be CDs or DVDs on Xbox? Or will it be like PS2, which has a few DVDs, but mostly just CDs? I look forward to reading your articles in the new magazine and will anticipate your answer.

Luke Merrell, via email

We say: Not only will all Xbox game discs be DVD format, they will all be DVD-9 (nearly twice the capacity of normal DVDs). No CDs here, bub.

Sweet sixteen

I've got the ultimate question. And it doesn't have to do with the "bounce" feature in *Dead or Alive 3*, either. I wanted to know whether or not *Halo* will have online playability when it releases during the Xbox launch.

Godfrey Bakuli, via email

We say: Hate to be the bearer of bad news, Godfrey (but with a name like Godfrey you're probably quite used to bad news), but *Halo* will not ship at launch with online compatibility. It will have an option for four-player, as well as 16-player (by linking together four Xbox consoles), but the online function for the game isn't set to arrive until Microsoft puts its Internet plans into action next year.





Taking the "suck" out of "success"

When we posted to xbox.com with our challenge to you to come up with ideas to make Xbox a success, we were overwhelmed with responses – everything from suggested advertising campaigns to shameless pleas for self-promotion have poured into our email box. Though the bulk of emails we got on the topic were amazingly clever, only one could snag the prize: an Xbox DVD kit. Congratulations to **Tyrone Turner!** Your prize is in the mail.

Special topic winner!

Remember the anticipation surrounding PlayStation2? The first PlayStation was such an evolutionary leap over its predecessors that we all salivated at the potential when the word got out that its successor, PS2, was in the works. The absence of actual game footage (Playstation9?) in the marketing campaign fed the vivid imaginations of hopeful enthusiasts. But the reality, sadly, paled in comparison. Not that the new system was bad, by any means; it was just underwhelming enough to keep most of us from letting go of those three Benjamins so easily. Better to wait and see how this new Microsoft console shapes up. Microsoft needs to realize and utilize what had better be their advantage: the ability to deliver the goods. Blitz the airwaves starting now and don't let up 'til Christmas. Forget

cleverly paced teasers filled with ethereal logos and teenage fantasies. Start and finish with the big green X, with nothing but actual game footage and audio in between. One game featured per commercial, the best two or three in each genre represented. Every teenage boy in America should be staking out his TV just waiting for *his* ad to run, to feed his anticipation. Give them what they want and they will want it more. Leave the cartoon mascots for Nintendo.

Speaking of which, Microsoft needs to hit fast, hard, and real, because if kids aren't sold on the product itself, they'll just hold on to their \$300 and wait to see how much better the \$200 GameCube will be before committing. Give them refreshingly clear and honest advertising in this hyped-up propaganda-saturated market, and it'll knock 'em off their feet and win their hearts. I guarantee it.

Tyrone "Harley-Davidson" Turner.
via email

...and the losers:

Not everybody can win, but some of these losers had some interesting ideas.

Brian Gorbett, North Royalton, OH, says:

■ Give me a million of the \$500 million and I will stand outside Best Buys and Circuit Cities in the Cleveland area in my underwear lobbying for Xbox.

■ Have enough units at launch.

■ HYPE! Start now! With a slightly less-than-stellar showing at E3, Bill and his boys need to start early and start hard. I have not seen one television commercial for Xbox yet. Commercials like me standing in my underwear outside Best Buy in anticipation of purchasing one for myself would be a good start.

■ Get some major celebrities to start touting Xbox. Everyone wants to be

like Mike. I would prefer a slew of half-naked women, but I have issues.
■ Replace the X logo with a picture of me as an angel.

Rexfelis69, via email: ...print the Xbox logo and other info on the big toilet paper rolls that they use in malls, movie theaters, etc. Then the customers have nothing else to do but read about the Xbox.

Jason S., Tucson, AZ: ...One thing that has been bothering a lot of people ever since the dawn of "next generation" gaming is the lack of a pack-in game, as well as the proper accessories needed in order to start playing as soon as they open up a new console.

Sean Casilli: If you want a successful launch of the Xbox, you need great four-player games.

HEY!!! Do you need some

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Skate away with an Xbox

Need we say more?

Everyone knows that things are simply better when they're "free." Well, at least we think so. So, while nothing in life is really "free," we thought we'd try to get things as close to "free" as we can. As such, we are giving each and every **Official Xbox Magazine** reader the opportunity – if you have the necessary time, ambition, and talent – to win an Xbox console, two copies of the stunning *Tony Hawk 2x*, a brand new skateboard, an **Official Xbox Magazine** T-shirt, and dinner with Tony's mom (okay, that last one was a lie).

So, if you want the goods (and believe us – you WANT these goods), you're gonna have to jump through a few hoops. In order to be considered, you'll need to send us your concept/view of the ideal "Xbox." You can draw it in crayon, you can render it in 3D, you can whip up a fancy Photoshop CG of it, or you can simply build one from the ground up and take a picture of it. Any way you slice it, we want to see what you would want the Xbox console to look like if you were designing it. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, get to it. Somebody has to win, why not you?



A BACKSTAGE PASS TO TONY HAWK 2x

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL ON XBOX!

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2x

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x for the Xbox just made skateboarding even better. With pumped-up graphics and sound, four-player split screen and 8-player system link play, THPS2x takes full advantage of the Xbox. THPS2x lets you skate all the levels from THPS 1 & 2 enhanced specially for Xbox, and GRANTS YOU ALL ACCESS TO FIVE NEW AND EXCLUSIVE LEVELS.

WHAT YOU GET

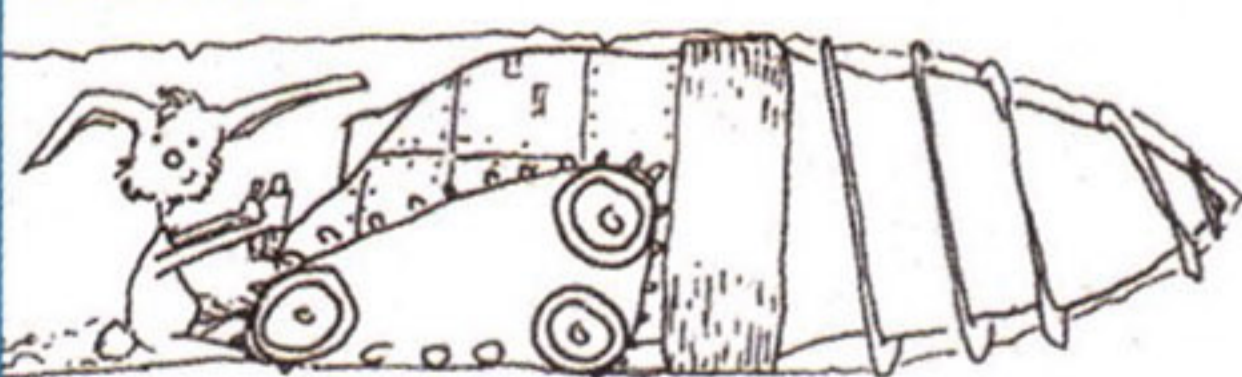
- A brand new skateboard
- Two copies of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x
- An Official Xbox Magazine T-shirt
- A hat of some kind

NOTE: Skateboarding skills not included.

Like this, only better

The cretins at **Official Xbox Magazine** spent countless minutes crafting these fine replicas of what the Xbox should look like – if you can't do better than this crap, then don't even bother.

DAN:



FRANK:



FRAN:



MIKE:



SARAH:



DAVE:



HOW TO ENTER

Skate away with an Xbox
c/o Xbox Team @ Imagine Media
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Brisbane, CA 94005

Email:
xboxmagazine@imaginemediacom
Subject Header:
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Legal Stuff

The winner will be determined by the vote of three judges, each of whom (a) is an Imagine employee assigned to our Xbox Magazine team, and (b) will be chosen by the President of Imagine. These three judges, whose decision is final, will base their decision on the following criteria: Originality, approach to product design/concept, and artistic/technical production skills. After you have prepared your design/submission, make sure to make a copy of your art for your own files, as we cannot and most definitely will not return any submission. Also, all submissions sent by U.S. Mail or overnight delivery must be no larger than a regular 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. All non-conforming oversized submissions will be discarded, immediately without so much as a thought to how much hard work you put into it. So, no big poster sized entries, please. Submissions sent electronically should not exceed 5MB (yes, oversized electronic submissions will also be discarded, immediately). All entries must be received no later than November 1, 2001. We'll notify the winner by phone or email no later than November 16, 2001. We will publish facts about the winning entry in the February 2002 issue of **Official Xbox Magazine**. Only one entry allowed for each individual entrant. Each of the three judging criteria noted above will be weighted equally at 33%. By entering this contest, you agree that Imagine Media shall have the right to use your name, likeness, the submission, and/or other information about you for promotional purposes and without further payment. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to their parents or legal guardians. Imagine Media is not responsible for damages or expenses that the winners might incur as a result of the Contest or the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. A list of winners may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Xbox Prize Team, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Lastly, while no purchase is necessary to enter, this contest is limited to residents of the United States, excepting in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, where it is void, and where ever else it might also be prohibited by law.



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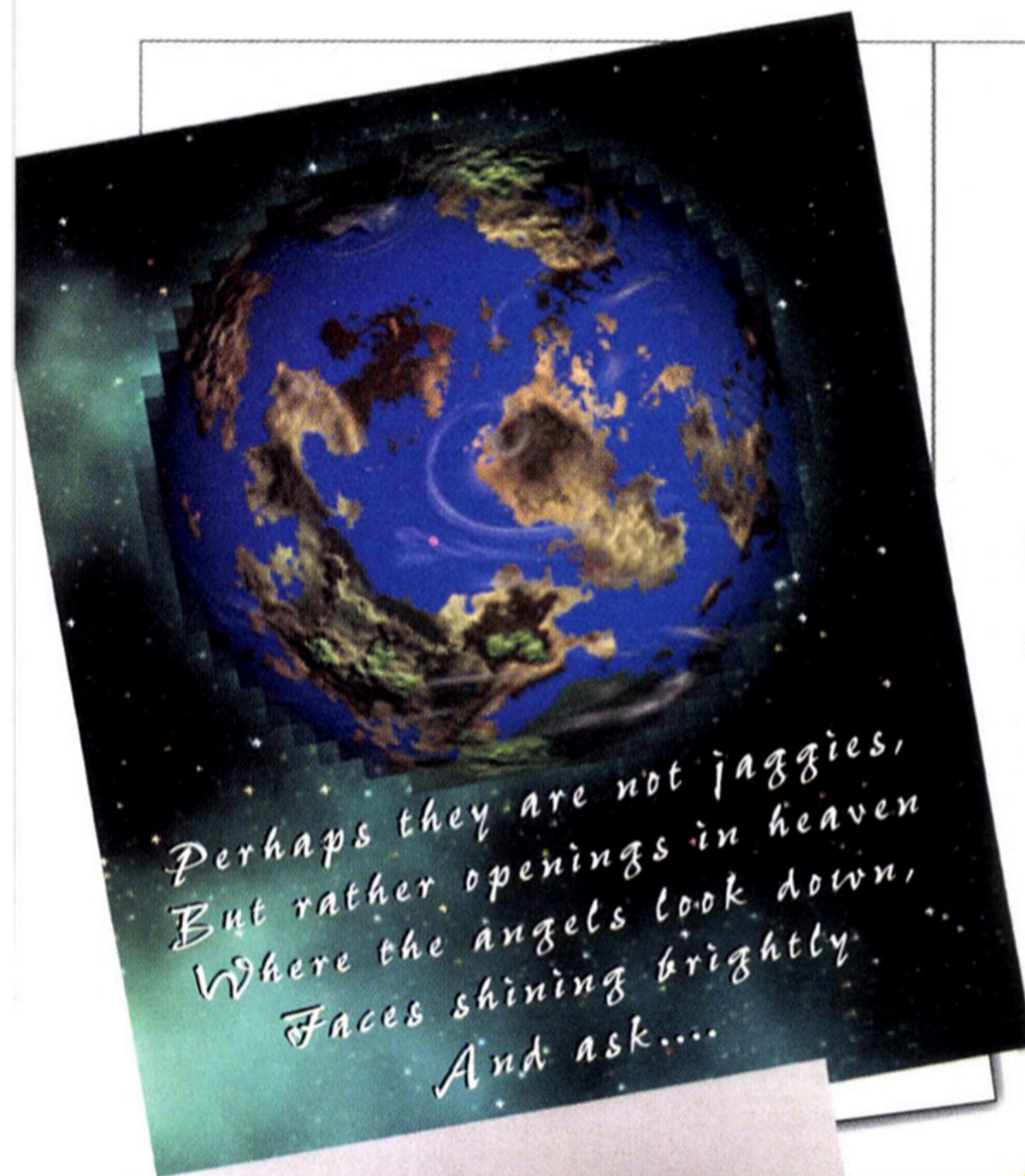
www.informative.com/officialxboxmag.html

What, that's it?

Our thoughts are with you...

We've got nothing against people who've chosen to buy a PlayStation2 or GameCube. In fact, many people on the staff of **Official Xbox Magazine** have several consoles of their own, and we love games on both systems. However, it would be an utter shame for anyone to buy another console without getting an Xbox first.

You've bought this magazine, so you're obviously smart and quite possibly witty. Your friends, on the other hand, may be complete idiots. The classy way to inform them of their ineptitude is with a sympathy card. Here are a couple of suggestions.

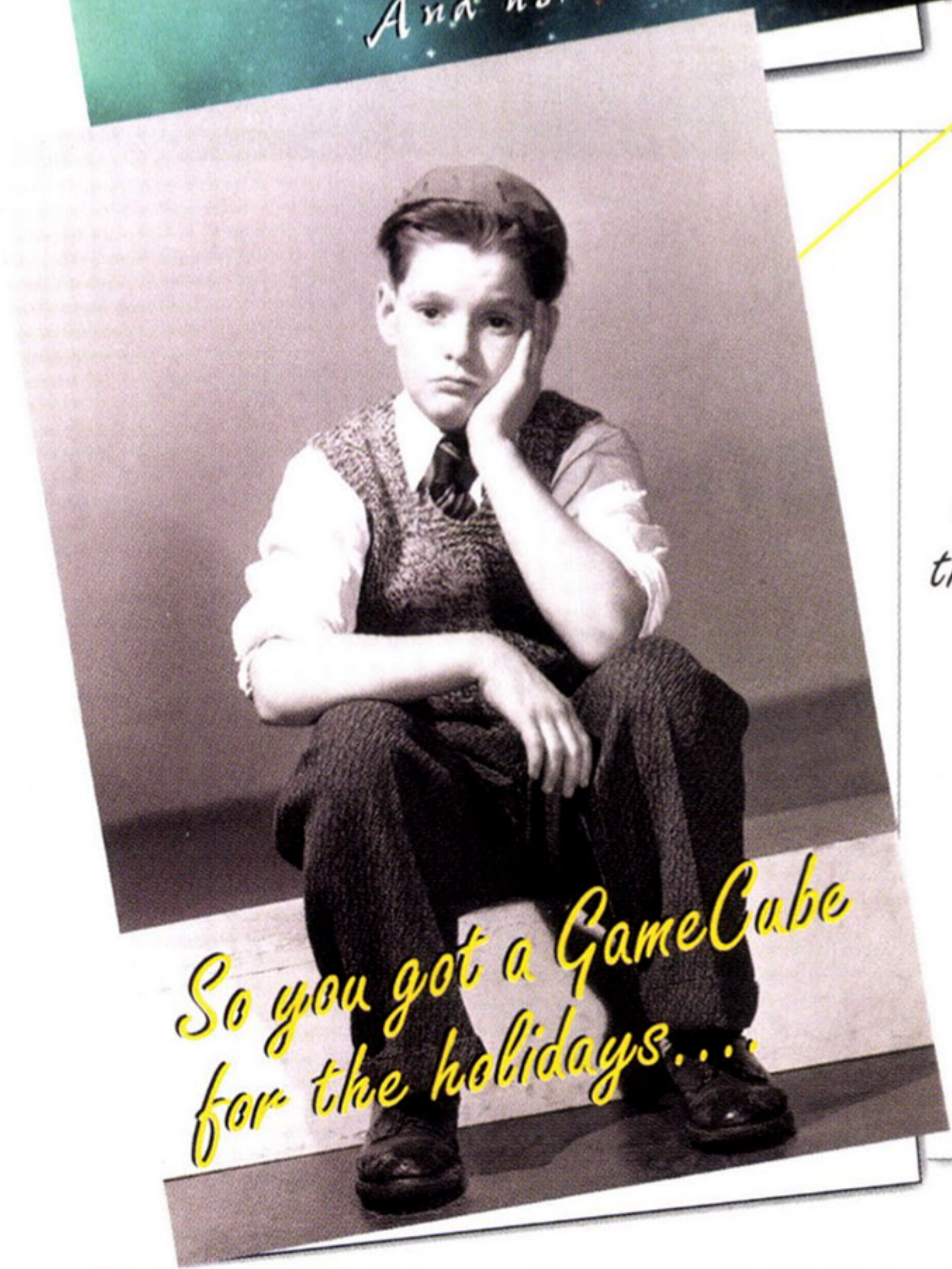


What Kind of Idiot would buy a PS2?

With sympathy,

inside card

- Our first card suggestion
- Our second card suggestion



If your parents really loved you, they would have gotten you an Xbox.

inside card

Next month

The all Dead or Alive issue:

We guarantee that everything in the next issue will be either dead or alive.

World-exclusive DoA3 review!!!

Our editors travel all the way to Japan to be the first people in the entire free world to play a finished copy of *Dead or Alive 3*. Is it the greatest fighting game in history? You'll find out here first.

The very first DoA3 strategy in the universe

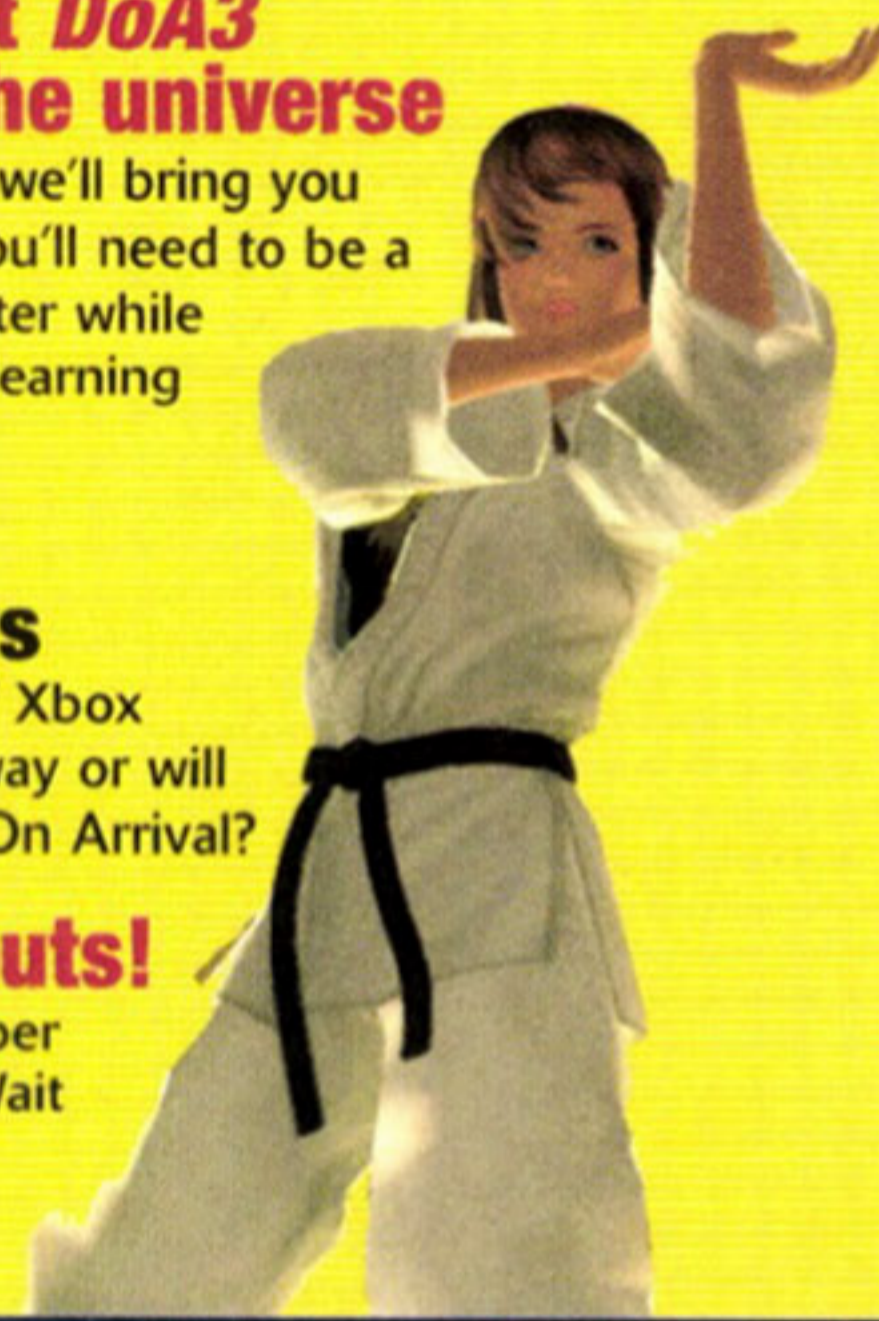
From the front lines, we'll bring you all the information you'll need to be a *Dead or Alive 3* master while your friends are still learning the ropes.

The launch game reviews

Will the first batch of Xbox games blow us all away or will they show up Dead On Arrival?

The Disc debuts!

Seeing games on paper isn't good enough. Wait until you see these babies in motion.



The Game Disc

An Xbox interface for the Xbox gamer:

No more boring, flat interfaces! We've taken full advantage of the Xbox hardware and created a mesmerizing 3D interface that's just as easy to use as it is fun to play with. There'll be secrets, video interviews, strategies, and other surprises we just can't possibly tell you about yet.



■ Look, it's green!

PLUS!!! Some stuff about that thing that we saw the other day.



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YOUR FINAL STRIKE WINS THE BATTLE.

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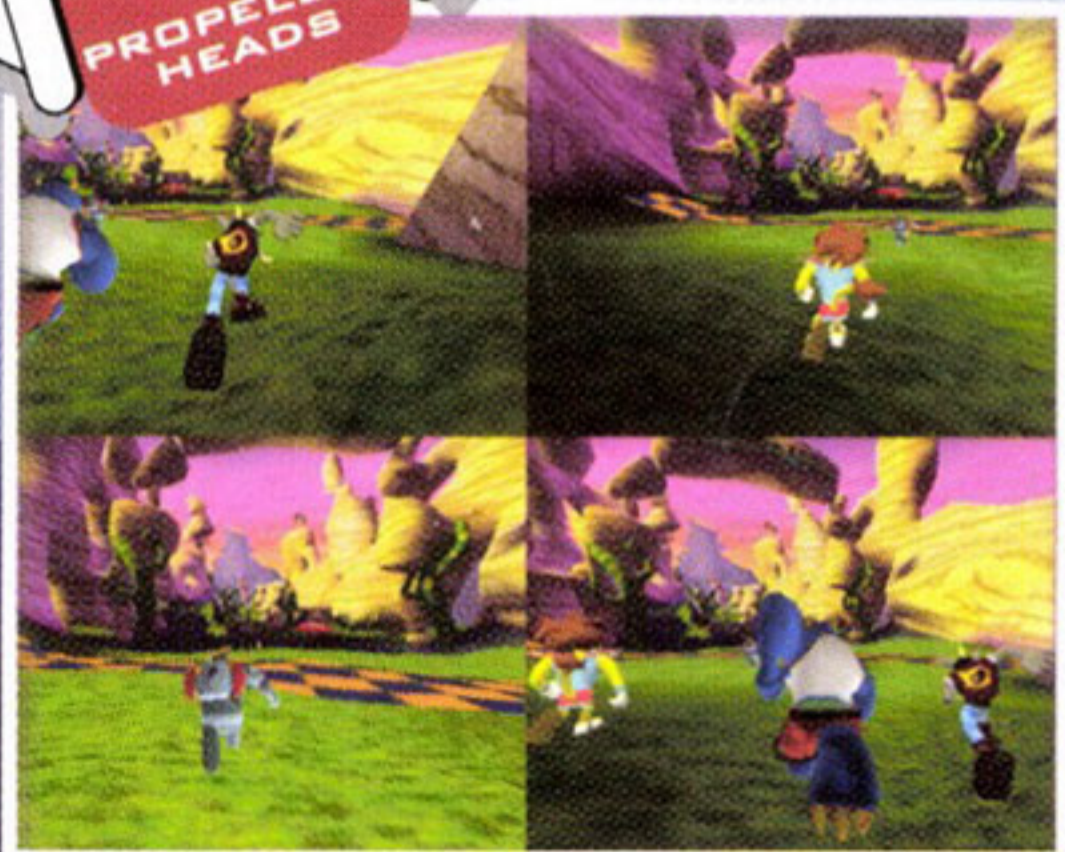
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