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PlayStation®2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

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DRIVER PARALLEL LINES

Classic or criminal? The only verdict

PLUS

> COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE > RESERVOIR DOGS > LARA'S VOICE REVEALED > YAKUZA
> MORTAL KOMBAT: ARMAGEDDON > WE ♥ RPGs > OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST
> PROJECT ZERO 3 > SCARFACE >> OPS2 VS SOLID SNAKE > TALKMAN > URBAN CHAOS

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION
MARCH 2006 £5.99
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PlayStation.2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
070 MARCH 2006
"BEING NAUGHTY IN THE NOUGHTIES"
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*In honour of *Driver Parallel Lines*' '70s setting, we asked what era the team would most like to visit...

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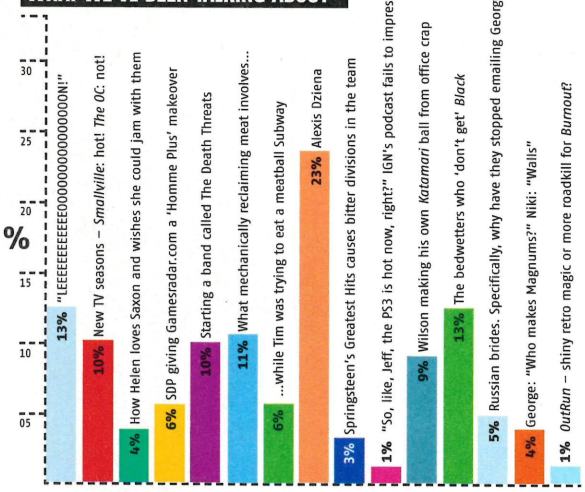
LIFE ON MARS

You don't often get a second chance in this business. (Well, that's what HR keep telling me.) So it was with some trepidation that we took delivery of this month's cover game *Driver Parallel Lines*. After the *Driv3r* debacle, nothing less than a ballsy return to form would do. Our unflinching verdict starts on page 74, but of course you can also sample the game for yourself thanks to the shiny majesty of this month's disc. For my money, *Parallel Lines* is a significant improvement on its predecessor – but the problem is that the open-world crime genre is now so competitive, that it inevitably struggles to feel truly special. For a real reinvention, perhaps we'll have to wait for PS3. Which segues us nicely into this month's 'Phoenix From The Flames' feature (p64). We drew up a list of the forgotten PSone classics we'd like to see rebirthed on next-gen. But rather than just speculating idly, we tracked down the original development teams to find out what they wanted to see. The imminent (and long overdue) release of *Dragon Quest* has also forced us to rethink our position on the stats 'n' swords scene. From page 38 we detail the most exciting RPGs heading to PS2 in what promises to be a bumper year for orc fans. Elsewhere you'll find exclusive reviews of *Commandos Strike Force* and *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*, the first ever shots of *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* and hard info on *Reservoir Dogs*. Oh, and if you simply can't wait, spin to page 22 where we reveal who's really voicing Lara in *Tomb Raider Legend*. (It's not who you think.) Exclusive review and massive demo next month. We'll call it a date, shall we?

Tim x

TIM CLARK, editor

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT



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'L'il' Louis Pattison

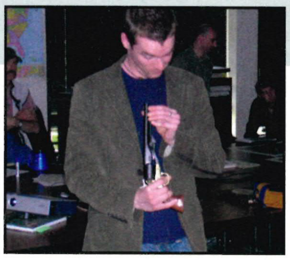
Writer, *Black* Companion

Louis flew to Romania to fool around with automatic weapons this month. "I had a great time," he says, "...in a girls and guns kind of way." We look forward to his expense receipts, inevitably handwritten by 'Kristiana'.

Paul 'Rounders' Roundell

Review, *The Plan* (p102)

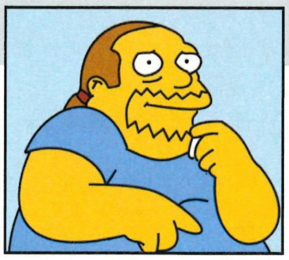
Our man up North plays through the underbelly of the PS2 release schedule so you don't have to. By day he works as a script writer on *Emmerdale*. "After playing *Resi 4* I'm trying to crowbar in an infected villagers plot," he says.



Leon Hurley 'Wurley'

Writer, RPG feature (p38)

If we had signature special moves like game characters, Leon's would be 'wearing a rucksack while dancing', his alternate costume would be 'German exchange student', and his theme tune would involve a banjo.



Ben 'Worst Issue... Ever' Wilson

Review, *Driver Parallel Lines* (p74)

Most terrifying moment this month: arriving at Ben's flatwarming to find hundreds of meticulously displayed *Simpsons* and WWE dolls. People formed a queue to ask "have you seen *The 40 Year Old Virgin*?" before leaving.

PlayStation Portable
Coming Soon

PlayStation 2

XBOX

XBOX 360
Coming Soon

PC DVD ROM

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The Godfather THE GAME

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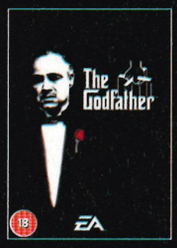

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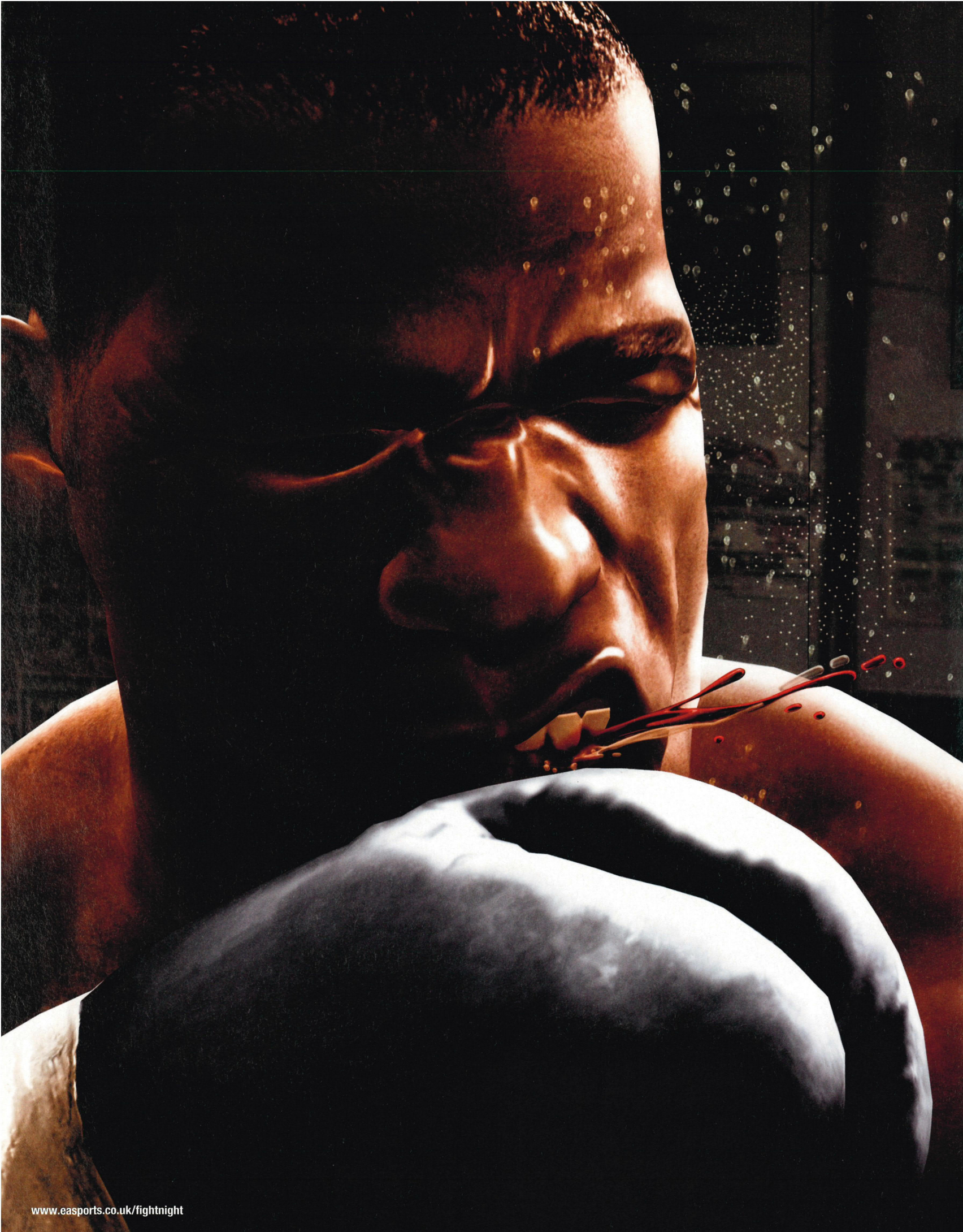

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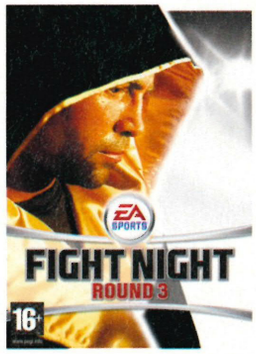
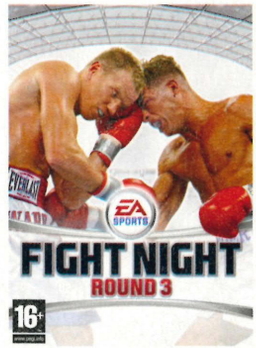
This time the punishment is real.





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PlayStation Portable

XBOX 360

PlayStation 2

XBOX

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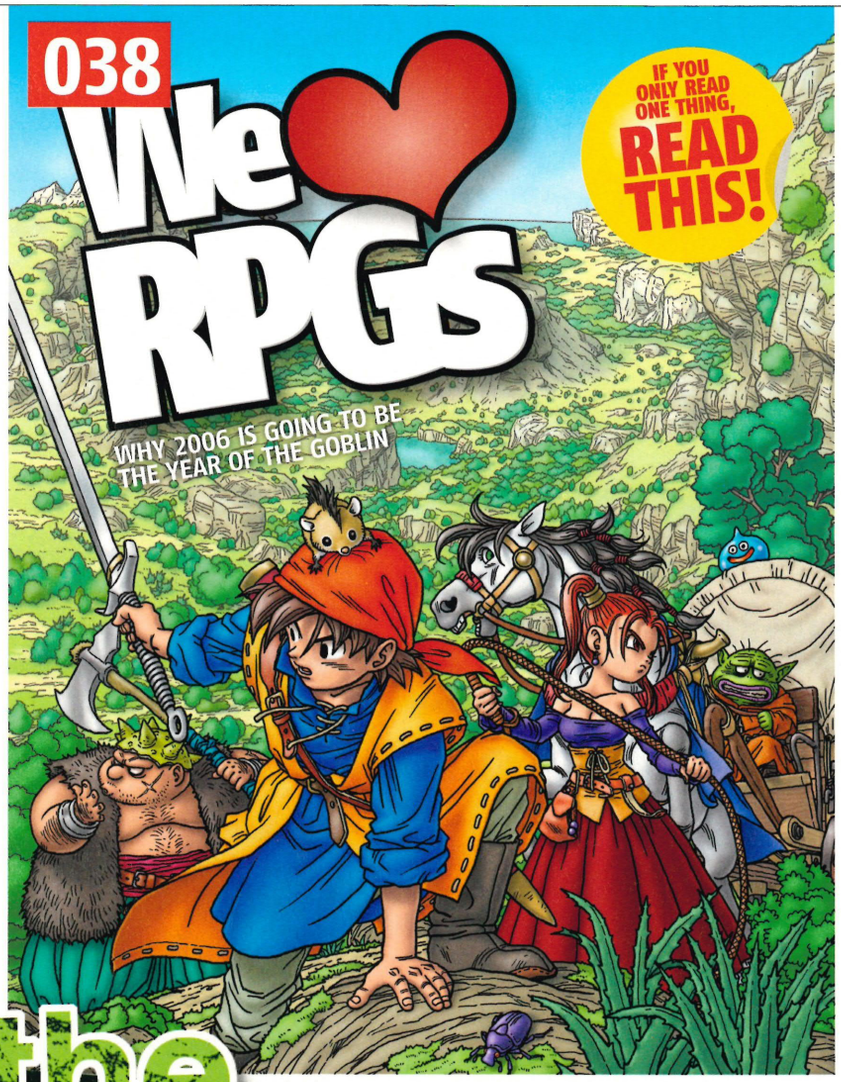

the stash.tv

Exclusive, free access to the very latest game videos as we get them. Head to our readers-only website **www.thestash.tv** and enter the password to see the white hot footage.

This month: it's an RPG blow out with *Dragon Quest VIII*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Kingdom Hearts II*, and more. Plus *MGS3: Subsistence* online

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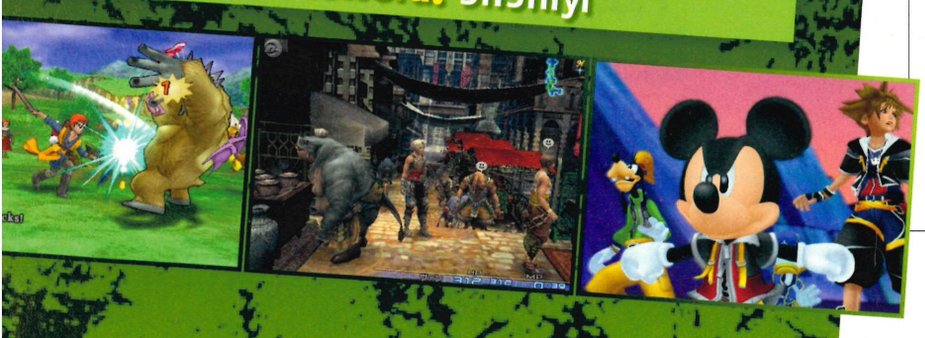

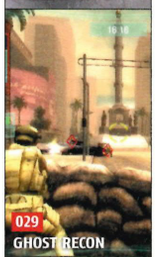

spy

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WHICH COVER HAVE YOU GOT?
WARM GLOW OF THE '70S OR COLD MODERNISM? EITHER WAY IT'S A WINNER

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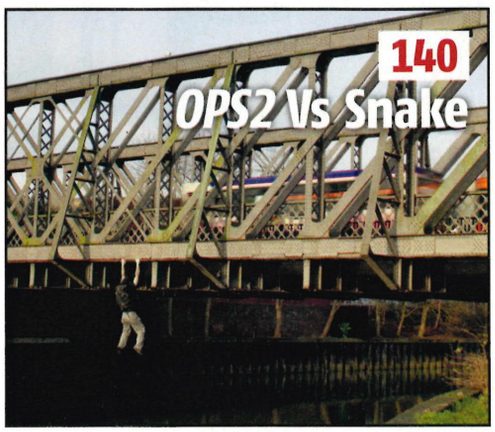

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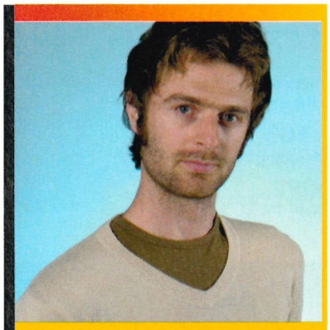
PLAY GAMES

THIS MONTH'S HOTTEST DEMOS!



Obviously, the temptation is to stick the demo of *Driver Parallel Lines* straight on, and start screeching around '70s NYC in a cherry red muscle car. But hold fire for a second while we draw your attention to *We ♥ Katamari*. We're not sure what medication its creator was on when he conceived it, but as you'll discover, it's a total headtrip and a genuine original. I know how much you lot love to know about upcoming demos, so you'll be glad to hear that the next few discs will include the new *Tomb Raider*, *Hitman* and *OutRun*. Plus a whole lot more secret stuff. Keep it *Official*, gang.

George Walter,
Disc editor

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY WON'T MY DISC WORK?

To be honest, we're not sure. But seriously, if your DVD appears not to be loading properly, first try resetting the console and loading the disc again. If that fails, we'll gladly replace it for you. Simply mail the faulty disc (no need to send the box) to *Official PS2 Magazine*, DVD Returns, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 9EF. If you have any further queries, email us at ps2disc@futurenet.co.uk

01 DRIVER PARALLEL LINES

What you get: A high-speed police chase through a cross-section of '70s New York, demonstrating the good side of *Driver*'s latest offering. Once you've succeeded in evading the long arm of the law, take a whistlestop tour of the Big Apple or (more likely) go and mow down some pedestrians to Bowie's *Suffragette City*.

02 WE ♥ KATAMARI

What you get: Four minutes to amass the biggest bundle of goodies you can in this mental-yet-essential Japanese, erm, roll-'em-up. If you think you've got it mastered, have a crack at the challenge. The winner gets our coveted *OPS2*-assembled Katamari ball.

DISC CHALLENGE

Win our Katamari ball!

CHALLENGE DETAILS

As you'll have discovered from the demo, *We ♥ Katamari* is about rolling as many objects into a ball as you can in a time limit, and this month's challenge couldn't be any simpler: simply roll as big a Katamari ball as you can in four minutes and then take a picture of the screen. The ball judged to be biggest by us wins our very own real-life equivalent. It's stacked with PS2 and PSP games (including *We ♥ Katamari*, obviously) T-shirts, an *Incredibles* clock and some cool *GTA* stuff. Tim's blue joypad with over a hundred *PES 5* victories to its name is in there, too.

Attach your MMS picture then text **CHALLENGEDISC** (then a space) followed by your name and where you live to **07921 889 345**

Only the entry that *OPS2* judges to have the biggest ball will win the Katamari ball of *OPS2* goodies. Text messages will cost you 50p including VAT per text message received, plus your usual text message cost. Please source all necessary permissions. This service is available to UK customers of T-Mobile, Orange, 3, Virgin, 02 and Vodafone. Lines are open from 23 Feb to 22 Mar inclusive. We'll not advise non-winners of the result.*

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NOW!

And there's more...

THIS MONTH'S EXCLUSIVE EXTRA DVD CONTENT

03 COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE

What you get: Two full missions from the World War 2 shooter reviewed on page 90. If you're all about the action, blaze through the Nazi defences in Norway first. Or if you want to try out the stealth features, attempt to breach enemy lines to contact an ally.

Videos

***Key Of Heaven* on PSP**

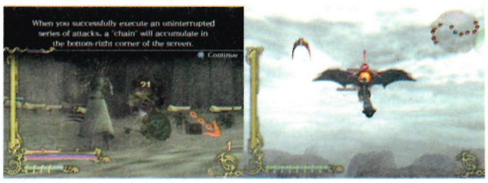
Check out Sony's new action role-player then head for the review on page 95 for our verdict.

Sly And The Gang in *Goodbye My Sweet Part 2*

The second instalment of this cartoon (the first appeared on issue 68's demo disc) starring Sly, who recently scored 9/10 for the excellent *Honour Among Thieves*.

04 CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS

What you get: An environment awash with lizardmen and flamethrowing orcs for you to hack into small slices. Two Innocent Devils helpfully guide you through the tougher sections, and there are more to be found along the way.



05 DRAKENGARD 2

What you get: A crack at two missions, and a scene-setting *Lord Of The Rings*-style video in which the lead character shouts a lot.

06 THE SWORD OF ETHERIA

What you get: A chance to play through the game's introductory tutorial and then show off your slashing skills. [No, not against a lamppost.]

postal

THIS MONTH: BROKEN PSPs, SOUP AND A DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE

Write: Postal, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, *Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Email: ps2postal@futurenet.co.uk*

WIN THIS!
This month, any letters published here will receive a lovely copy of *Black* courtesy of Gamestation.co.uk. The Star Letter also wins *24: The Game*, *We ❤ Katamari* and *TOCA Race Driver 3*. Only main Postal letters receive games. Letters will be edited for length and clarity.

gamestation

EF star letter

DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE

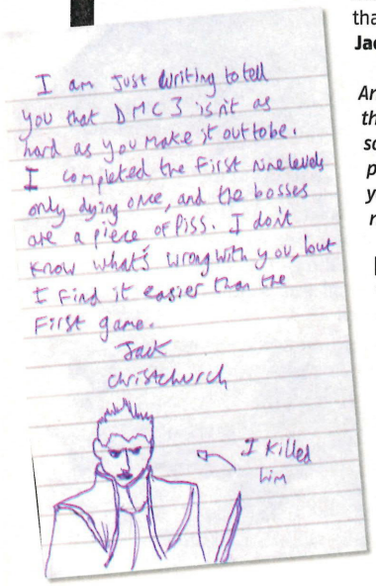
My children feel that I need help. Apparently, I am the only mother they know who plays PS2 and put *Ratchet: Gladiator* on her Xmas list, along with *Sly 3* and *Jak X*. The kids always call me to help with the difficult bits in their games. So, are there any other 40-year-old housewives prepared to confess to being closet gaming freaks?
Louise Lewis, Cornwall

Momma, we have nothing but total respect for your PS2 habit. Last Christmas, Clarky's mum walked past while he was playing PES *and said "who's on* Prem Plus *today?"*

DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE ME CRY

I am just writing to tell you that *Devil May Cry 3* isn't as hard as you make it out to be. I completed the first nine levels and only died once. And the bosses are a piece of piss. I don't know what's wrong with you, but I find it easier than the first game.
Jack, Christchurch

And we're expected to believe this because, what, you scribbled it down on a scrap paper? Send some proof of your ass-kickery. Until then, no game tough guy.



RESIDENT EVIL 24

While waiting for the next issue of your great mag I was flicking through the TV guide and noticed something unusual. In the third season of *24* there's a character called Ramon Salazar. He is a bad guy with a virus threatening the world but not, disappointingly, the Spanish midget from *Resident Evil 4*. But it did make me think that *Resi 4* and *24* mixed together would be a great idea.
Kevin Queen, Scotland

Nice spot, Kev, and we like your idea. Kim and Ashley would get kidnapped (obviously) so Jack and Leon have to go in to rescue them. The bad guys would be... erm... zombie terrorists funded by... uh... South American drug cartels. Hollywood, here we come.

MY LIFE IS RUINED

I had just got the newest edition of *OPS2* and I couldn't wait to read it. I started to feel pretty hungry so put on some soup. Then I couldn't remember where I had left the magazine. So I searched all around the house for about ten minutes but still couldn't find it. I then decided to go and check on the soup, which only takes five minutes to cook. By the time I got to it, it had splattered everywhere, including my magazine, which I had left there. The worst part was that my mum didn't give me any sympathy for the loss of pages 26-34, so I had to clean the whole mess up and pay for the ruined soup. I was very lucky though, as my PSP was rather close by and some soup landed extremely close to it. The worst thing about this dreadful story though, is that my mum took my PSP from me, blaming it for the cooking mishap. I won't get it back until I 'grow up' and I don't know when that will be.
Kevin Martin, Belfast

Oh Jesus, no! Not pages 26-34! That's where we wrote all the good stuff. Growing up normally occurs at 18. Or 16, in the case of those of you currently residing in young offenders institutes. Either way, your mum overreacted to the soup snafu. Try persuading Mrs Lewis [see star letter] to adopt you.

PSP – SMACK(ME)DOWN!

I recently took my PSP to a mate's house to play some *WipEout Pure* on WiFi. Foolishly, I left it on the floor when disaster struck – my friend's CD player, which had been left on an unstable table, fell off. To start with we were more worried about the stereo, until we found my PSP under it. At first it appeared to have only suffered a small chip on the screen but when we turned it on it was far worse: the inner screen had totally shattered. Horrible white cracks on a black background. I had owned my PSP for two weeks and I had broken it.
Josh Janvier, email

Much as we sympathise, let this serve as a cautionary tale to all those who own small,

CUT 'N' PASTE

ODD MUSINGS FRESH OUT OF YOUR MINDS AND INTO OUR POST BAG

Max Iles, email
Yo dudes! i am sendin dis frm my psp! Hav sony released a keyboard yet?

T Hird, Wiltshire
I congratulate you on training your staff to the highest degree.

Adrian Davis, email
When I was nine years old I remember playing kiss chase with my school-mates...

David Gray, Newtownabbey
He is what you would describe as a plonker or a tw*t. What do you think I should call him?

Andy Curle, Glister
Do you realise what you've done? You're going to get all the animal liberation people up in arms. Forget upsetting the lesbians.

Paul Yu, Ireland
I've begun to develop an unhealthy obsession with your magazine and no, it isn't sexual.

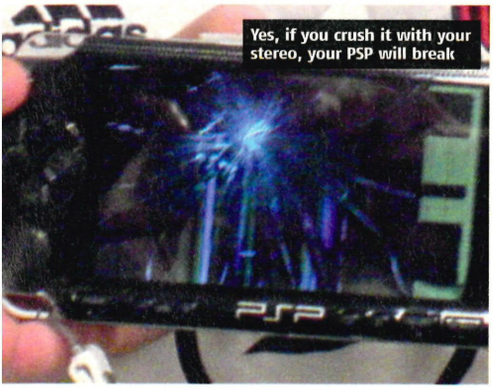
Luke Nutkins, Hants
I was appalled to find *Shadow The Hedgehog* being bought by a grown man.

DISTRESSING DELIVERY

THINGS WE WERE REALLY TROUBLED TO FIND IN OUR SACK THIS MONTH

1. Anonymous threats from a mystery Pantera fan that involve inserting the magazine somewhere rather private.

2. Musical postcards (right) that can't be turned off unless you smash them really hard on the corner of the coffee machine.



fragile electronic gadgets – don't drop stereos on them.

LITTLE GREEN MAN

After I finished *The Matrix: Path Of Neo* I found 'The Zion Archives' as a hidden level, so I decided to take a look around. I found lots of weird characters, but the weirdest of all was the strange green man hiding in the corner. So I've taken a screenshot and sent it in to you as I thought you might like to see him.
Scott Mosson, email

Don't worry, we see little green men all the time. They're always bugging us about their ideas for cold fusion, breeding an army of clones and some meteor that's due to hit the planet in June.

THE PLOT THICKENS

I was reading your Name And Shame article in issue #68 (about the constant influx of meaningless letters from an anonymous madman). The funny ZT squiggle on the bottom of the letter looks a lot like the planetary symbol for the planet Jupiter. If that is the case

THE SHORT ANSWER

Q I really want *Psychonauts* but I've heard that the release has been pushed back. Is this true?
Caoimhe McNulty, email
A It was delayed, but should be in the shops now.

Q I like to take my mag into the bath to read but the pages get wet and ruin it. Could you laminate them?
Julian, Dunoon
A No.

Q In *Metal Gear Solid*, Big Boss is bisexual, right?
Alan Murphy, Ireland
A No. You're thinking of Volgin.

Q Can you get a copy of *Tomb Raider Legend* for my mother?
Alex, Co Durham
A No.

THINK OF IT LIKE A FIGHT BUT WITH INK SPILT INSTEAD OF BLOOD
THIS MONTH: IS *GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES* COMING TO PS2 A GOOD IDEA?

NO WAY!
The news that *Liberty City Stories* will be coming to PS2 is a real kick in the teeth to those of us who bought a PSP for the exclusivity of the game. Seeing as it was originally designed for handheld gaming I'm guessing the PS2 version will have a whole host of new features that they couldn't fit on PSP, leaving the handheld looking like the inferior version. I could have saved myself £180 and waited for the better PS2 version if I'd known.
Neil Watson, Norwich

VS

HELL YEAH!
Thank God Rockstar has seen sense and decided to release *Liberty City Stories* on PS2. I can't afford a PSP and I'm a huge *GTA* fan so it's been horrible not being able to play the latest instalment. I've gone as far as promising my mate all my non-*GTA* games if I damaged his PSP while borrowing it. Even with such a bounty as insurance he still said no, so I have yet to taste the *Liberty City* multiplayer experience. I can't wait to take it online with PS2 and whup his ass when it's released.
Brian Montague, Oxford

SORRY NEIL, BUT BRIAN WINS PURELY FOR THE POTENTIAL OF AN ONLINE *GRAND THEFT AUTO* EXPERIENCE. THINK ABOUT IT, MAN!

TXT THE EDITOR

Something to say or a picture we need to see right now? Fire away...

Who need stamps or paper when you can zap us your thoughts and pictures instantly over the airwaves from your phone? We could be reading what you wrote, or looking at your pictures, before you even regret sending them. So text Tim the ed with all your thoughts and pictures. We'll publish the best ones each month. This is not a tips line though, and we can't answer any messages directly.

TXT 87103

Be sure to text 'TXTTIM', then a space, then your message. Thanks

RESI 4? OH MY GOD. I MEAN WOW WOW WOW. ANON
DO YOU THINK A GAME OF THE TV SHOW *LOST* WOULD WORK? (GOD I LOVE THAT SHOW. ESPECIALLY THAT EVANGELINE LILLY.). ANON
SORRY BUT I COULDN'T B BOTHERED TO TXT THAT OUT AGAIN! JUST PRINT THIS ANYWAY. CHEERS TIMMY!
MATTHEW, BANGOR
WHY CAN'T THESE GAME DESIGNER TYPE PEOPLE DESIGN A FUN GAME FOR CATS.
CUZ MY CAT CHEWS THE WIRES WHICH ISN'T GOOD FOR THE PLAYSTATION 2 OR MY CAT TO. ANON
DOESN'T THE *MGS4* SOLID SNAKE, COMPLETE WITH THAT 'TACHE, LOOK A LITTLE LIKE JOHN CLEESE? ANON
DEAR *OPS2*, *RESI 4* IS MINT BUT PROFESSIONAL MODE IS AN ABSOLUTE BASTARD. ANON
WHEN WILL A *TOMB RAIDER LEGEND* DEMO BE ON YOUR DVD? I THINK LARA'S NEW VOICE IS RACHEL WEISZ. ANON

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score bores

Are you disrespecting us?

I totally disagree with your score for *Need For Speed Most Wanted* in issue #67. It's an absolute corker and worth at least a 9/10.
Neil Gemmell, Huddersfield

I was appalled to find that you gave *Shadow The Hedgehog* only 4/10. Are you mad? I think it's an 8/10 or a 9/10 at least. The gameplay is good but the lifespan is really short.
Mathew Spalding, email

Looking at your reviews I thought *Without Warning* couldn't be that bad. So I spent £39.99 on it. The gameplay was rubbish, as were the graphics. A 4/10 was far too generous.
Matthew, Manchester

Only 9/10 for *TOCA Race Driver 3*? Come on, it's got to be one of the greatest driving experiences there is on PS2. Especially if you have a steering wheel. It should've got 10/10.
Terry Graves, Dorchester

8/10 for the total toss that is *50 Cent: Bulletproof*? You must have been drunk.
Gavin Reid, email

then whoever is writing to you is quite possibly not from this planet... Although I'm sure you had that much figured out for yourselves.
Kerry, Glasgow

It has been all quiet on the 'ZT' (or 'Jupiter') front recently. Either he/she got bored and moved on to stalking someone else... or there's a special surprise on the way now. Oh God...

The *GTA* Yeti or a dirty protest?

YETI-GAIN

After all the faked pictures of the *Grand Theft Auto* Yeti you had in your last issue, I bring you this picture. Proof that the Yeti does in fact exist in *San Andreas*.
EvilElf5000, email

Yes, LOL and all that. But enough with the Bigfoot now, thank you.

SHOPPING DAY

I thought you might like to know that the *Killing Day* game on PS3 is definitely set in Russia – Moscow in fact. The location is a shopping centre called GUM. Here's a photo of me in it adopting an appropriate pose. Just out of sight are the security forces approaching at high speed. Not photography fans it seems.
Iain Hingston, Moscow

You didn't happen to bump into a pretty girl called Katerina did you? The website promised delivery within 28 days and George is getting anxious.

IT'S A SIGN

In the summer I had nothing fun to do apart from anxiously anticipate your magazine. So as any sane gamer would do to show off their favourite magazine's generosity, I built a giant PS2 symbol from all the free games and demos I've received. I also went on an insane rampage, destroying everything in sight. Or was that in *Destroy All Humans*!? I don't know, my memory's hazy at best these days.
Ben Tyrer, Nuneaton

And they said we'd never amount to anything

Well, it's hardly Stonehenge, is it? What's that? Two, maybe three minutes' work? Why don't you try a house of cards-style construction? But it must be at least waist high to really impress us. Preferably illuminated, too.

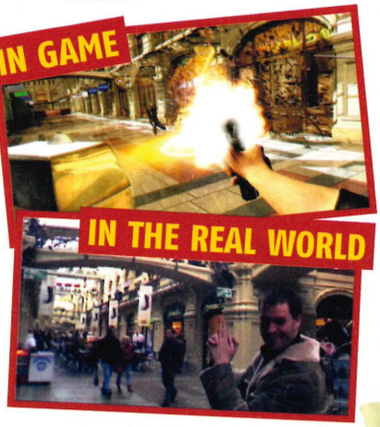
FAT CRYING BABY

NO MORE LETTERS

I can't believe you publish so much junk in the letters section of your mag. I don't pay £5.99 to read about the latest lies someone has got to say. For example, people saying they're not able to smash a broken *LEGO Star Wars* disc with bricks. Or, someone else saying that the PSP attracts girls. I like your mag but you have got to get a big bin to put the trash letters in. Lose the letters or lose your mag fans like me. Grrrr.
Ross Rowan, email

GOT A GRIEVANCE BUT SECRETLY KNOW THAT NOBODY'S TO BLAME BUT YOU? FEEL LIKE WHINING ABOUT IT ANYWAY? BE CAREFUL, YOU COULD END UP IN OUR PRAM OF SHAME.

Don't like rubbish letters? Stop writing them. [Hands up who saw that coming.]



Big Brother. In order to avoid confrontation with my other half I choose to play when my partner is out of the house or busy. Needless to say I can't really enjoy myself if I have to hide or lie about it and I'd be so much happier if I could enjoy games out in the open. Please help me to convince my boyfriend that playing games is fun.
Sandra Werner, email

Sandy, if your man doesn't know what he's got, then you're welcome here. [Pending picture approval, obviously]

BOYFRIEND WON'T PUSH MY BUTTONS

I'm writing to you because I have a problem. My partner thinks that playing videogames is a complete waste of time. This annoys me, as staring at the TV until 3am in the morning and then sleeping until noon the next day is a perfectly valid use of my time. I believe playing games can be intellectually stimulating. Certainly more so than watching something like

NAME and SHAME

This Month's Postal Pest

Name: John Chamberlain
Offence: 20-odd identical entries to our 'Greedy For Games' competition. Only one of which was actually entered, John, so you'll have the same chance of winning as everybody else.

GAMES FOR TAT!

We want stuff, you want games. The first person to send us these oddities gets the related gamery. Simple as that.

WE WANT...
An Alaskan hunting hat

YOU GET...
A copy of *Shadow Of Rome* and *Brothers In Arms: Road To Hill 30*

WE WANT...
A copy of *Alien Resurrection* on PSone

YOU GET...
A copy of *Ratchet: Gladiator*

Mark the package 'Games For Tat' and send to the usual address (include *your* address). The first one we receive gets the swag, any others will be returned.

The flames of war are ablaze once again

- Lay waste to entire armies on the ground and in the air
- Switch between 4 characters with unique weapons and abilities
- Annihilate enemies with more than 60 weapons in over 90 missions

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PlayStation 2 SQUARE ENIX UBISOFT

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GORE BLIMEY!

KREATE A KILLER

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

Classic **Kombat** is back, with a customisable fatality system, character kreation and a super-sized bucket of blood

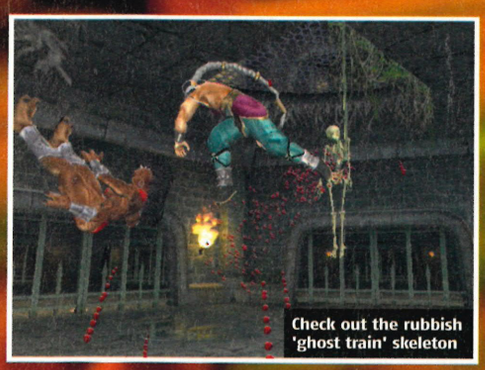
Parents and pacifists, you might want to look away now, because the world's most violent beat-'em-up is back and bloodier than ever. To be fair, calling *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon just a* 'beat-'em-up' doesn't really do it justice. But it's easier than typing 'rip-their-spine-out-and-beat-'em-to-death-with-the-sharp-end-before-hurling-the-ruined-body-into-a-shredder-'em-up'. Yup, definitely easier.

Whenever a fresh game in a long-running series gets announced, the developer is duty bound to claim it's the BIGGEST and BEST version EVER. In this instance, we're not about to argue. *Armageddon* features no less than 60 'kombatants' from the *Mortal Kombat* back katalogue. The character select screen is so utterly chock-full of vicious killing machines that it has to be rotated to reveal the entire roster. Think of it as payback for the *MK* disciples who stuck it out through the awful *Mythologies*, *Special Forces* and (sweet mother of all that's good and true) the movies. So what else is new in the Outerworld...

NEW KONQUEST MODE

Konquest is a mini-game based on the *MK: Shaolin Monks* style of play, where you can fight multiple enemies at once. Pick any of the game's 60 characters and use them to take your blood lust out into the wider *Mortal Kombat* universe.

During the new and improved Konquest mode you'll fight plenty of these faceless minions, open treasure chests and run around looking for things that can be spelled with a K instead of a C.



Check out the rubbish 'ghost train' skeleton

BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS

First off, the rusty old Fatalities system has been completely overhauled to make the most enjoyable part of the game easier to control. Instead of bashing out unnecessarily complex button sequences before watching the grizzly action unfold, you'll now be given total control over what happens in the death sequences. Each character in the game will have their own collection of finishers, which you can combine in different ways to pull off custom Fatality sequences. So you might choose to rip an arm off before burning your opponent to ash; or maybe a total dissection is called for, turning your enemy into an unrecognisable pile of meat and bone. The upshot is that, this time, the horrorshow on-screen will be dredged from the darkest recesses of your mind. Good, that's the 18 rating sorted then.

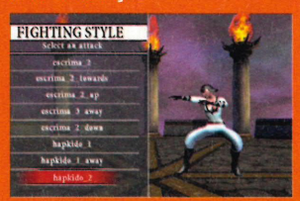
There's no word yet as to whether or not Friendship, Hara Kiri or Babality moves are due for

GET KREATIVE

60 playable fighters not enough for you? Midway has decided to include a character creation mode that lets you build your own fighter. Kool!

Choose a look. Alright, they all have an eerie undead style about them, but there's the undead-slim look, the undead-buff look, undead-gay look...

Now join the other 99% of the population who made slender lady-warriors with enormous boobs and come-to-bed eyes.

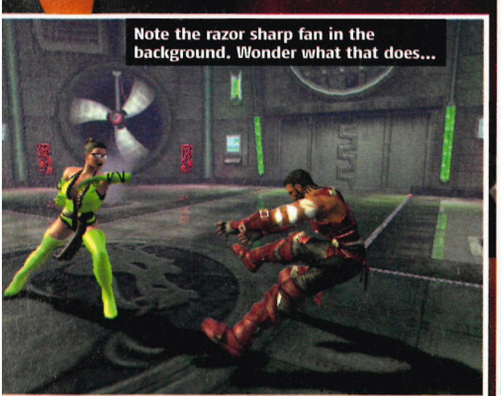


Now select a fighting style. May we suggest one that'll let you suck your opponent's kneecaps from his sockets?

How about picking a blade for those tricky situations when the fight gets seriously dirty? Mmmm, serrated...

Now all that remains is to test out the monster you've created, Doctor Frankenstein.

Special move? Drizzling lemon juice into the cut



Note the razor sharp fan in the background. Wonder what that does...

How divorces are settled in fighting game land

Literally gazing into the abyss

inclusion in *Armageddon*, but judging by the fact that the developer has totally reworked the way finishing moves are performed, it's looking unlikely that the quirkier moves will make the cut.

SURFACE TO AIR KOMBAT

Completing the full set of *Armageddon* body parts, Midway also told us that several aspects of the fighting system will be revamped to allow the blood to flow easier and quicker. Crucial to this is the Air Kombat system, which will place a much greater emphasis on mid-air combos. (Think about those moments when two fighters in a kung fu film launch jump at each other, then trade gravity-defying slaps.) It also marks a return to that staple of old *MK* games – launching an opponent into the air with a massive uppercut then unleashing a devastating (or as he'll put it, 'cheesy') combo. Another significant feature is the new precision throw system. These enable you to lob your unfortunate opponents at the numerous death traps dotted around *Armageddon*'s arenas. So the good news is that chucking your foe into a giant press, off a high cliff, or into a vat of acid has never been easier.

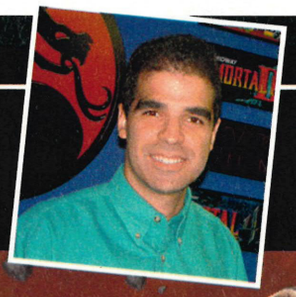
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon is bursting with fresh content (and ruptured organs) from character creation, through bespoke Fatalities to the expanded Konquest mode. Our only concern is that the visuals don't look quite as sharp as last year's excellent *Shaolin Monks*. But with a Christmas date, there's plenty of time to put that right. What's that you say? Finish it? Done. ■ AH

"Hurray, I found some gold. Do I level-up now?"

Fighting in mid-air is a major new feature

FIGHTING TALK

Mortal Kombat creator, **Ed Boon**, takes time out to give us the lowdown on *Armageddon*



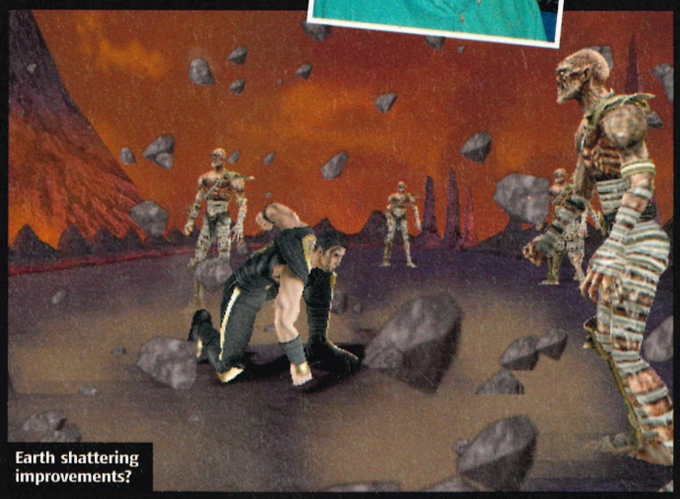
Is this a grand farewell for the *Mortal Kombat* series?
Probably not. This is going to be the last *MK* game on the current generation of consoles, but I don't think this will be the last *MK* game people will ever see.

There have been plenty of *Mortal Kombat* games, so what will make *Armageddon* stand out from the rest?
For each *MK* game we try to introduce something that no other *MK* game (or fighting game) has. For *Armageddon* we are showcasing all the *MK* characters, a brand new Konquest mode, Create-a-Fighter, Air Kombat and a brand new mode that you will hear about later.

Will the returning characters have new moves and weapons?
Some will and some won't. This has always been a challenge as we make each *MK* sequel. Players want to play their favourite character because they've invested a lot of time learning their moves. At the same time though, they want new things to learn. So if we completely change a character then some players will feel that we've 'ruined' their baby. If we keep their old moves then they get the 'been there, done that' feeling. We always search for a perfect balance in everything.

Were there any characters you wanted to include but couldn't?
Thankfully, no. We're going to be including all of the *MK* characters from previous games, so we are really excited about that.

Can you tell us exactly how the new Fatality system works?



Earth shattering improvements?

The new system is much more interactive. In the previous *MK* games, the player would have to perform a secret button combination and then watch the Fatality happen. With our new system, players will be stringing together 'mini-Fatalities' to form their own custom Fatality. Each mini-Fatality will require a faster button sequence than the previous. Really good players will be able to string together longer Fatalities and customise them as long as they are fast enough to enter the button sequence for each step.

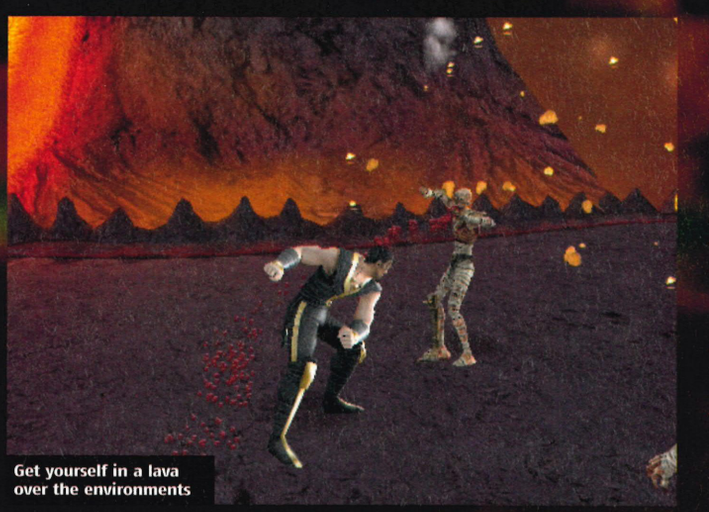
Have there been any changes to the way that the players interact with the scenery?
Interacting with *Armageddon*'s scenery is similar to the way it worked in *Deception*. Players will be able to throw their opponents into death traps or pick up and use weapons that are located in the background. However, with the addition of the new Air Kombat mode, this interaction is going to be even more useful because it will open up more opportunities to throw someone while airborne.

Has the Konquest mode changed much since the last game, especially in light of the release of *Shaolin Monks*?
The Konquest mode has dramatically improved over previous ones and we're very excited about how the new version looks and plays. The graphics are a huge improvement over *Deception*. In addition, the new Konquest mode now has its own fighting mechanic, so now you'll go into battle with multiple enemies at once. Konquest mode is much closer to being its own game now – we can't wait for you to play it.

Are there any plans to introduce more Puzzle Kombat games? If not, will anything be replacing them?
We aren't going to be bringing back Puzzle Fighter in *Armageddon* and are not at liberty to say what we will be replacing it with. But we are very excited about our new mode and are confident that you will be too.

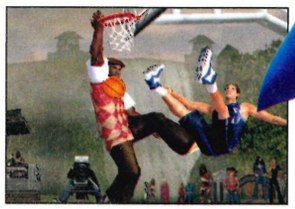
Will the game have online support?
Yes, like *Deception* on PS2, you'll be able to play *MK Armageddon* online.

Did you think about waiting for PS3?
Sure we did. But we want to give ourselves as much time as needed to create the strongest *MK* title we can for the next generation of consoles.



Get yourself in a lava over the environments

INFO NUDGE



DRIBBLE ON SONY'S SMALL SCREEN

Midway will release *NBA Ballers: Rebound* for PSP this spring. The game is already out in the US and enjoying a sales hot streak, prompting the publisher to spread the slamdunking love to these shores. The roster includes Shaq, Kobe Bryant and even the legendary Larry Bird – all duking it out with their extravagant tricks, slams and bitter legal wrangles. Okay, not the last one.

PSP AT THE WHEEL

Forget *Gran Turismo* and *TOCA*, the ultimate driving experience has arrived on PSP. Metra Electronics has invented a device for controlling an actual 1994 Honda Civic via a PSP WiFi connection. Mini cameras within the car feed back front and rear views to the portable's screen, with ⊗ controlling the accelerator pedal and ◎ the brake one. Anyone after the ultimate driving experience can expect to fork out $250,000 for the remote-controlled vehicle, and roughly the same again for the insurance...

KNIGHTS OF THE NEXT GENERATION

According to Obsidian's own website, the *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic II* developer is hiring staff to work on upcoming projects for PC, Xbox 360, and yes, PS3. The developer currently has one announced title – a sequel to the PC classic, *Neverwinter Nights* – but the advert states that the jobs are for an unannounced third-person action RPG, suggesting that *Knights Of The Old Republic* may well be feeling the force of PS3.

PS3EED

SUPER SONIC

Exclusive shots of the boss 'hog on PS3

The PS3 may be unveiling itself at a snail's pace, but Sonic's next-gen outing is developing at the blue rodent's trademark trainer-melting speed. While story details remain tightly under wraps, there are a few choice bits of info zooming out of Sega HQ.

We know that it's simply going to be called *Sonic The Hedgehog* (to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the spiky fella's debut outing in, you guessed it, *Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Mega Drive). And now, thanks to these spunky new shots, it's increasingly clear that Sonic's PS3 debut is going to look the business. Stupidly high-res – just look at the detail on the soles of his trainers – and gleaming like a disco ball, the 'hog looks mightily impressive. We think that it's also fair to say that we can expect the finished game to move faster than Thierry Henry riding a burning cheetah. You can also expect fancy physics used for the scenery and enemies, new attacks, and for Sega's notoriously devoted/deranged fans to wet their knickers long before release. ■ **LH**

MYSTERY MACHINE

First Japanese PS3 launch titles leaked?

For just one day last month Sony added six Japanese titles for the PlayStation 3 to its online release schedule. Known contenders like *Vision Gran Turismo*, *Everybody's Golf 5* and *Genji 2* were joined by the slightly more obscure *Angel Rings*, *Monster Carnival* and *The Eye Of Judgement*. Despite many online news sources getting in a lather over the latter three – *Angel Rings*, *Monster Carnival* and *The Eye Of Judgement* – they had, in fact, already been announced at the Tokyo Game Show in September last year as part of a 102-strong list of games in development for PS3. The information wasn't much of a revelation then, but the fact the page was hastily withdrawn the next day suggested there was something in there that Sony didn't want to make public *just* yet.

So far, only two PS3 titles – *Fatal Inertia* and *Mahjong Taikai* (where would we be without Mahjong?) have been officially slated for a spring release (the time period the PS3 is expected to launch in Japan). So was this information an early hint at other titles that will be part of the PS3 launch? Our guess? Well, judging by experience of previous Japanese PlayStation launches we'd forget *Gran Turismo*, *Genji 2* and *Everybody's Golf* but put money on *Mahjong* and the ones that sound like RPGs. ■ **AH**

FOOTY RIGHTS UP FOR GRABS

Can Konami compete with EA in the name game?

Football has never been bigger business. And we're not talking about the Manchester Glazerdevils. Last year, *FIFA 06* was the best-selling game on PS2, with *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* coming in third and, at time of writing, riding higher in the charts than its bitter rival. Although *Pro Evo* remains the critic's choice, it's hamstrung by its lack of an official Premier League licence, which would enable it to use accurate kits and clubs. *FIFA*, meanwhile, is licensed up the wazoo. However, *OPS2* has learnt that those rights are in re-negotiation, meaning that the situation could change if Konami was to offer a more attractive package than EA.

The ideal situation would be for both titles to have the licence. But don't hold your breath. We contacted the Premier League to find out the state of play, and its spokesman told us that throwing open the rights was "highly unlikely" because "the real value to the Premier League is in offering [the rights] as an exclusive package".

The big worry for gamers is that one publisher could try to lock the other out, as has happened in the US where EA has a five-year exclusivity deal with the NFL, granting it sole rights to the stadia, teams and players. However, a similar situation is unlikely to occur in the UK. The Premier League's spokesperson told us that any such deal here would come under scrutiny from regulatory bodies, and the Premier League tends to offer three-year contracts.

Obviously, with PS3 now looming large, both Konami and EA will be desperate to enter the next-generation as the leading football publisher. As ever, we'll keep you updated, but footy fans keen to see a level playing field should consider filling in our form and sending it to: The FA Premier League, 30 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8PL. Failing that, we could have a whip-round... or ask that nice Mr Abramovich? ■ TC

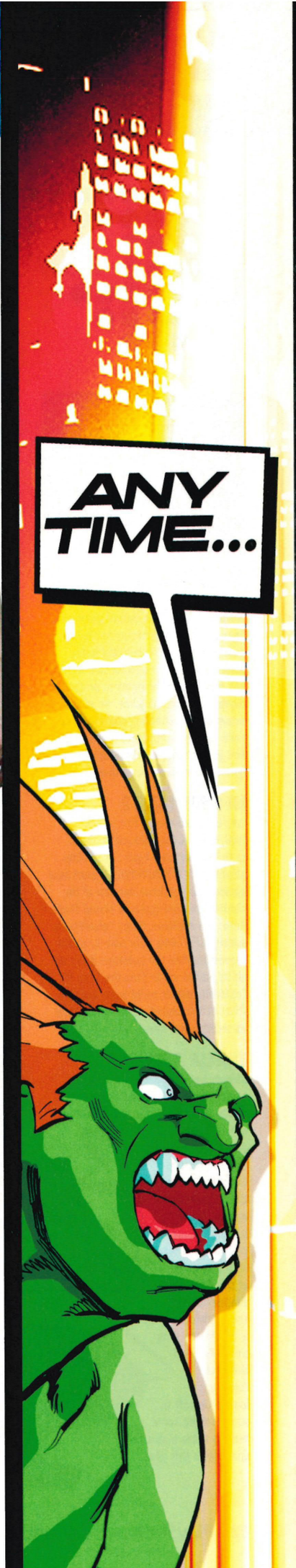
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

Dear Premier League,
As a football fan and PS2 gamer, I want to play my favourite footy game with accurate players and clubs. That's why I believe both *FIFA* and *Pro Evo* should be able to use official club names, kits, badges and stadia.

All the best,

.....

ALLSTAR



INFO NUDGE

SILVER SCREEN SIREN

The latest game to fall for the bright lights and dollar-paved streets of Tinseltown is Sony's horror franchise, *Forbidden Siren*. The second game has been given an official summer release date here in the UK, but over in the States, *Spider-Man* director Sam Raimi has snapped up the rights to produce a movie based on the game. No director, actors or solid shooting dates yet, but we'll keep you informed. (Unless Uwe Boll gets the gig, in which case we'll ignore the whole thing entirely.)

LA SUES TAKE 2

Ever been scolded by hot coffee? Well, it looks like Rockstar is about to be burned once again, as the City Attorney of LA is launching a court case against the publisher because of the hidden sex mini-game in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Rocky Delgadillo is asking for $5,000 from Take 2, and is requesting that the publisher gives up all its profits made from the State of California, which could leave Rockstar short of the cash it needs to complete its secret moon base.

TURTLE RECALL

Ubisoft has snapped up the rights to develop a title based around next year's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* movie. Despite several disastrous cinematic and interactive offerings in the past, the half-shelled heroes' brand is still popular with anyone who regularly goggles at the Fox Kids channel on Sky. The forthcoming film is looking to drag the series into the 21st Century, so expect Ubisoft to start making some serious noise about the game later this year.

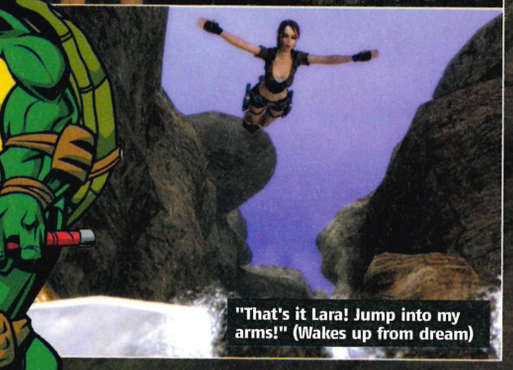
LITTLE VOICE

WE WERE RIGHT! (sort of)

Lara's real-life voice revealed – did you guess who?

Ever since we revealed that Eidos had signed a celebrity actress to voice Lara in *Tomb Raider Legend* on PS2 and PSP, hardcore Croft-watchers have been trying to guess who it could be. Having heard her in action, we drew up a shortlist of candidates and posted our secret recording on www.thestash.tv (hear it now – see page 8 for your password). Predictably, the net went ballistic. Rachel Weisz was firm favourite, but it seems she was busy being pregnant and winning Golden Globes. Lara's voice is, in fact, provided by the equally plummy (and indeed yummy) Keeley Hawes.

Keeley is best known for her work in the BBC's preposterous-but-enjoyable spy drama *Spooks*. You may also have enjoyed her performance in *Tipping The Velvet* (pictured) a groundbreaking tale of Victorian lesbianism. Yes, groundbreaking. Hawes, however, won't be the one out on the road 'bigging up' the new *Raider* game. That honour goes to a plucky young unknown, who will join the likes of Nell McAndrew, Rhona Mitra and Lucy Clarkson in the long line of Lara models. Who is this mystery model? You'll have to wait until next month to find out, when we'll be celebrating *Legend* with a feast of Croft, including a world exclusive review and demo, accompanied by a wealth of snaps showcasing the new real-life Lara. Remember though, if you see her at a promotional event, for God's sake be gentle. Tears are nature's way of saying 'stop taking pictures now'. ■ TC



"That's it Lara! Jump into my arms!" (Wakes up from dream)

Keeley Hawes (left) 'lezzing up' Victorian-style in the BBC's *Tipping The Velvet*

KEELEY AT A (LINGERING) GLANCE

POSHNESS
Like a ripe plum being gently tapped with a silver spoon.

PRETTINESS
Oh yes, in a wealthy scrummy-mummy sort of way.

FAMOUSNESS
She's a TV regular here in Blighty, but the yanks won't have heard of her. Like we care.

MARRIEDNESS
Afraid so – to her ex-*Spooks* co-star, Matthew Macfadyen. We could probably take him in a fight. And by 'fight' we mean 'game of *Pro Evo*'.

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ON PSP.™

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QSOUND

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PORTABLE GBH

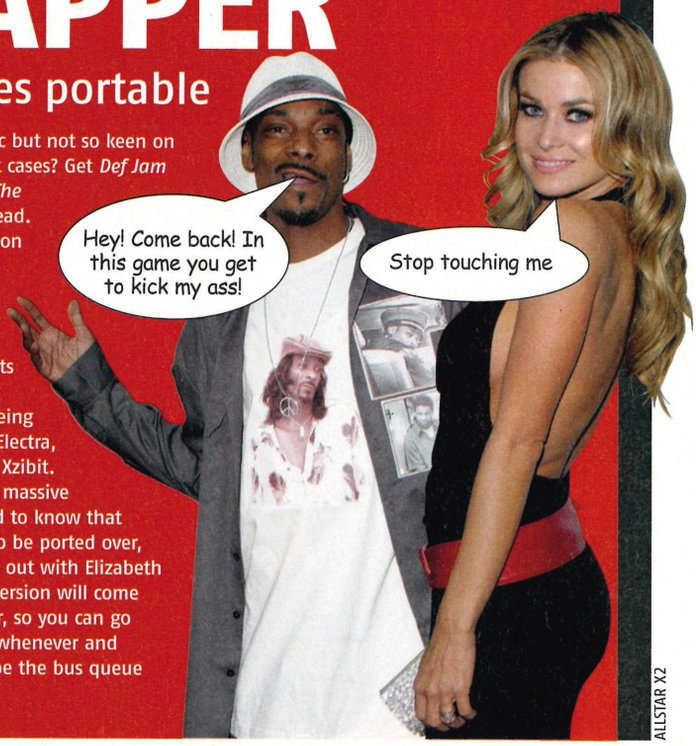
GANGSTA SCRAPPER

Get your m'f'n PSPs in the air: **Def Jam** goes portable

"Give J-Lo's tracksuit back right now"

Tre wished he'd taken kung fu instead of Cossack dancing

Like fighting in public but not so keen on buying suits for court cases? Get *Def Jam Fight For New York: The Takeover* for PSP instead. EA's hip-hop brawler will arrive on Sony's handheld this spring. The game is being billed as a ramped-up version of *Fight For New York*, with plenty of new moves, arenas and story elements thrown in for good measure. All the expected personalities are being shrunk to fit, including Carmen Electra, Snoop Dogg and *Pimp My Ride*'s Xzibit. Anyone not contented by such a massive collection of egos will be pleased to know that the player create feature will also be ported over, enabling you to kit your likeness out with Elizabeth Duke bling. Best of all, the PSP version will come decked out with WiFi multiplayer, so you can go head-to-head with your mates whenever and wherever you choose. That will be the bus queue outside Mickey D's, then. ■ **AH**



ALLSTAR X2

"Few games dare to be bold or innovate these days, yet Ecko's baby scores big on both fronts."
Official Playstation Magazine 8/10

www.gettingup.com

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mobile by blu

SEVEN OF THE BEST FOR RAINBOW SIX

Relive some classic Clancy missions with Ubisoft's latest tactical shooter **Critical Hour**

There's little doubt that over the years team Rainbow has lost a little of the killer instinct that used to keep it one headshot ahead of its enemies. *Lockdown* was a bungled operation on PS2, so now they've been sent back to HQ to learn from the master. *Rainbow Six Critical Hour* isn't so much a new game as a retelling of classic moments from Tom Clancy's flashbanging franchise. Set during the time when original anti-terrorist badass John Clark passed command of the squad to son-in-law Ding Chavez, *Critical Hour* takes a retrospective look at seven of his finest missions defending the free world.

Acting the Dad, John has decided that Ding and co might not be ready for the intense world of one-shot-kills, and so has created a training regime that re-enacts all his previous glories using the very latest in modern weaponry. This means that the scenarios in *Critical Hour* are all updated versions of fan-chosen campaigns from PC titles *Rogue Spear* and the original *Rainbow Six* – some of the most hardcore military battles ever. Ubisoft will be ordering Clancy fans back to boot camp this spring. Expect a detailed debriefing next month. ■ **AH**

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Kwik Fitz

He's rumoured up to the nines, but he's only got time to write a line

CONFIRMED: Sony will unveil an 8GB PSP memory stick this year

RUMOURED: LucasArts is working on a PS3 sequel to *Mercenaries*

CONFIRMED: Sony has bought *SOCOM* developer, Zipper Interactive

RUMOURED: Ubisoft is already working on *Splinter Cell 5*

CONFIRMED: Activision is working on a *Transformers* game to accompany next year's DreamWorks produced film

RUMOURED: Sega will release a PSP version of classic rhythm-action shooter *Rez* some time in 2006

CONFIRMED: *Sly* developer Sucker Punch is currently working on an exclusive PlayStation 3 title

CONFIRMED: Hideo Kojima is terrified of dying alone

The *Buzz* controller peripheral – remember where you put yours?

LET YOUR HAIR DOWN

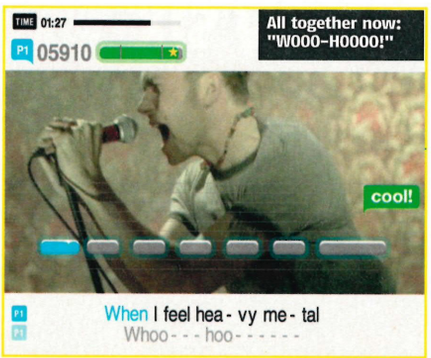
PARTY HARD

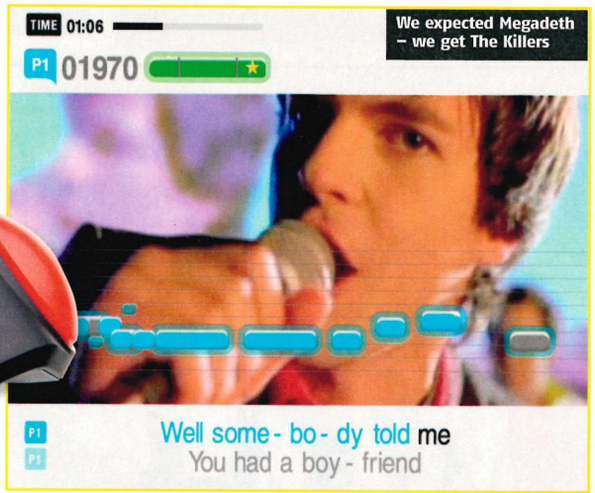
New *SingStar* + new *Buzz* = No sleep 'til dawn

Start phoning your friends now, because not one but two of Sony's best-loved party games are making another appearance this Spring. Fingers-at-the-ready gameshow *Buzz* is back, and this time it's asking you to use every scrap of general knowledge locked away in your brain with *The Big Quiz*.

So, unless you want to be embarrassed by your family, friends and possibly even pets, dust off those *Buzz* button controllers and crack out the Encyclopaedia Britannica for an all-night cramming session. The game will come complete with new characters and a fresh type of round known as Hitman, which gives you the chance to steal points from your opponents.

While you're at it, why not untangle the *SingStar* mics because, pretty soon, you could be wailing along to Franz Ferdinand, Maximo Park, Nirvana and Kasabian, plus a whole bunch of other axe-wielding acts in *Singstar Rocks*! Both of these crowd-pleasing games should hit the shelves just in time to keep those rain-ruined summer parties going long into the small hours. Please note: your dying-elephant rendition of Snow Patrol won't make girls think you're 'the sensitive type'. ■ AH





SINGSTAR ROCKS! CONFIRMED SONGS:

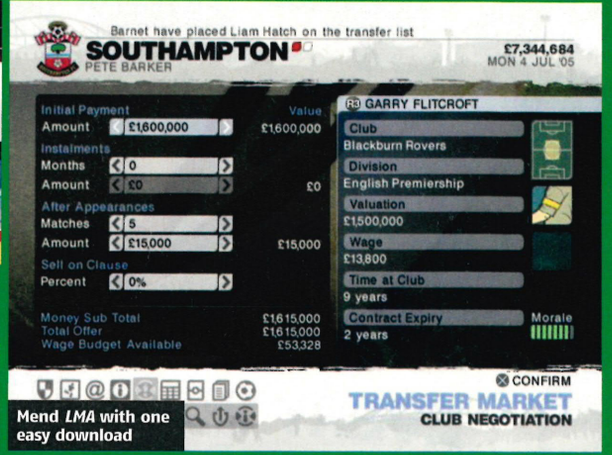
- **Maximo Park** – Apply Some Pressure
- **Hole** – Celebrity Skin
- **Stereophonics** – Dakota
- **The Killers** – Somebody Told Me
- **Snow Patrol** – Run
- **Bloc Party** – Banquet
- **Franz Ferdinand** – Do You Want To?
- **Kasabian** – Club Foot
- **Razorlight** – Somewhere Else
- **Jet** – Are You Gonna Be My Girl?
- **Rolling Stones** – Paint It Black
- **Nirvana** – Come As You Are
- **The Subways** – Rock'n'Roll Queen
- **Bowling for Soup** – 1985
- **The Bravery** – An Honest Mistake
- **Blur** – Song 2

DOWNLOAD MANAGER

LMA Manager 2006 is patched up and ready for the second half

The constantly changing face of footballing has always caused problems for the accuracy of management sims. So full marks to the makers of *LMA Manager 2006* who have addressed this via a downloadable 'patch' that updates team rosters and player stats to keep them in line with the end of January's transfer window. It's the first PS2 game of its type to offer this PC gaming-style service.

Crouchy going through another less than purple patch? The download will update his stats to reflect this dip in form. Assuming you've already got a copy of *LMA Manager 2006*, connect the PS2 to the Internet select the online mode and for £2.99 you can enjoy endless, up-to-date stat-crunching. ■ AH

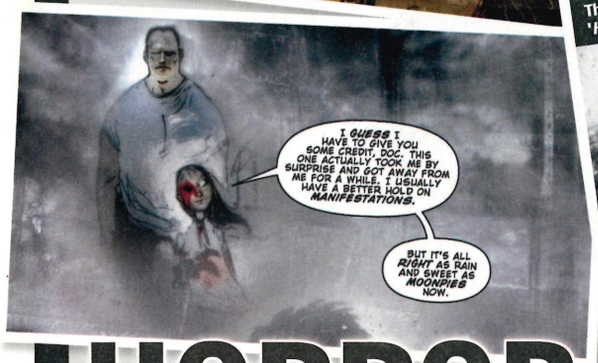


Mend *LMA* with one easy download

DIRTY BOOK

Silent Hill comic? It's not exactly *The Beano*

Script nicked from Hideo Kojima's blog



The illustrations encapsulate the 'Hill – strong horror, then

HORROR GOES HANDHELD

Konami reveals **Silent Hill** spin-off

In a bid to provide an even more chilling answer to the old 'guess what's in my pocket?' ruse, Konami has confirmed plans to bring its *Silent Hill* series to PSP. The new 'game' will be called *Silent Hill Experience* and is currently down for release in April to coincide with the forthcoming film. Game isn't quite the right word to describe it, though. As we speculated last month, you don't play *Experience* like a normal *Silent Hill* title. In fact, you barely play it at all. Instead, we're told the UMD will contain content from the four previous games (read: pictures) plus all manner of DVD-style extras (trailers, interviews and so on) relating to the making of the movie.

More interestingly, the UMD will include six animated comics set in *Silent Hill*. These will each be about 15 minutes long, mix 2D and 3D artwork and have some element of interactivity. ("Do you want to investigate the deserted hospital? Yes/Christ no.") Last and definitely least, fans of *Silent Hill*'s 'unique' soundtrack – industrial clanging, pomp guitar – will be pleased to hear that you get 20 tracks picked by the series' composer/producer, Akira Yamaoka. So then, not so much a game, more a multimedia event. Like we said, chilling... ■ TC

THE LIGHT SIDE

■ **BRING ON APRIL**
SingStar Rocks and *Guitar Hero* released in the same month? Forget the pub, we're staying in

■ **PROJECT ZERO 3: THE TORMENTED**
We haven't had this many nightmares over a game since *International Super Karts* arrived

■ **KEELEY HAWES**
She's posh like thoroughbred ponies, and 'doing Lara' in the new *Tomb Raider*

■ **SPLINTER CELL ESSENTIALS**
This is how to do PSP games – original content rather than watered down PS2 ports. More please

IN THE SABER

■ **SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT**
Two days after we see the new PS2 game in action, it's delayed from April to September. Team sheds babus tears

■ **THE FA PREMIER LEAGUE**
Set to give the exclusive Premiership license to EA again, despite *PES*'s charts domination in 2006

■ **THE NUMBER 7**
Haunting our reviews section like Hurley's 'lucky' numbers in *Lost*

■ **THE CITY OF LA**
...whose attorneys have filed a lawsuit against Rockstar for the Hot Coffee mod in *GTA: San Andreas*. Get. Over. It

THE DARK SIDE

could be a classic

Samurai action with mixing decks? Eh?

C'MON, HIP-HOP WAS *HUGE* IN FEUDAL JAPAN

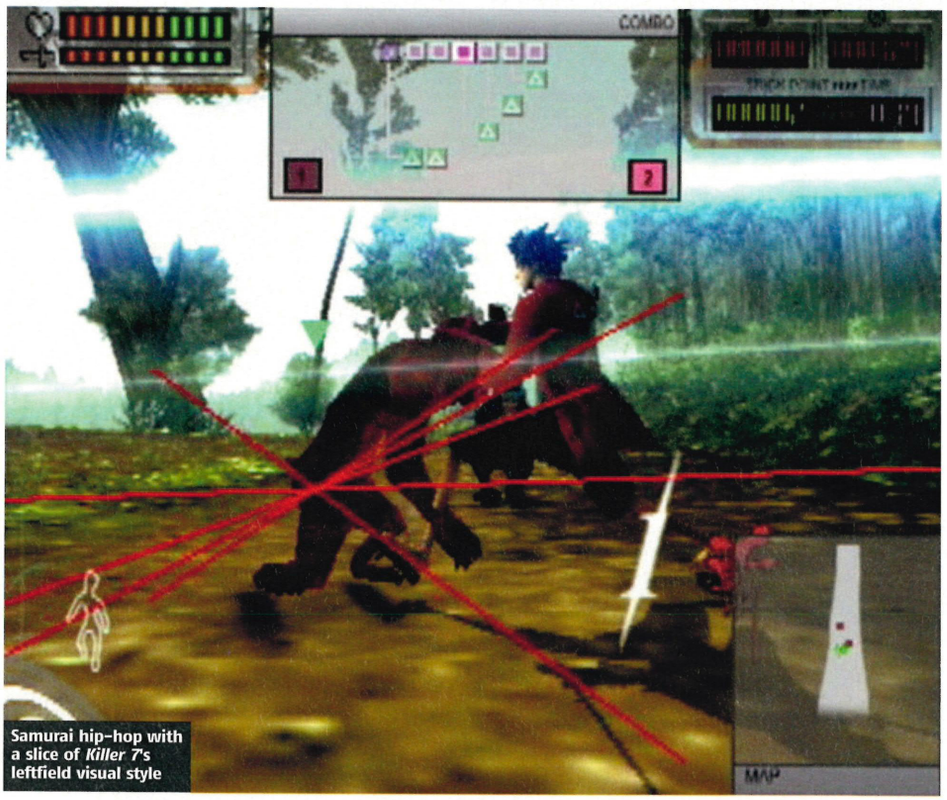
SAMURAI CHAMPLOO: SIDETRACKED

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Bandai
Release: March (Japan) TBC (UK)

WHAT WE KNOW

What happens when you mix 19th Century Japanese swordplay with hip-hop? Wait, come back. *Samurai Champloo* is that bastard child. It's based on the cult anime series of the same name, which has been thrilling American geeks for the last year or so after becoming a regular feature on the Cartoon Network's Adult Swim slot.

The PS2 version is all about mixing tried and tested gaming styles such as piling up enormous hack 'n' slash combos and shedding plenty of claret, with quirky themes from the TV show like completing weird quests that require you to find the mythical samurai who smells of sunflowers (no, really). Details of the full storyline are pretty scarce, but according to fans *Sidetracked* takes on the role of a lost episode from the first series.



Samurai hip-hop with a slice of *Killer 7*'s leftfield visual style

COULD BE A CLASSIC BECAUSE

Even though no one in the UK has actually heard of *Samurai Champloo* yet, it definitely has the right ingredients to attract a cult following, having been created by Shinichiro Watanabe, the guy behind classic manga series *Cowboy Bebop*. The game captures Watanabe's visual style and offers the chance to control samurais fluent in break-dancing kung fu techniques that require an obscene amount of finger-mangling to pull off – all soundtracked by pounding urban beats. It does seem a bit weird, but then again, people scoffed at the idea of putting monkeys in giant balls, and that worked out just fine. ■ **AH**

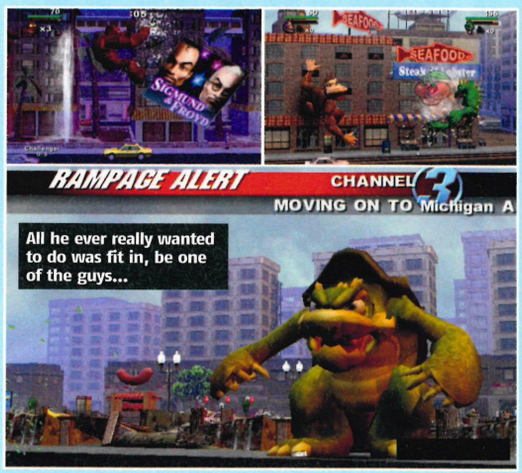
CORBIS/CONDE NAST

CUT-PRICE RETRO CARNAGE

Rampage returns with massive monsters for a tiny price

Godzilla's probably going to be pissed about his royalties, but Midway has told us that its remake of *Rampage* will hit the shelves for the bargain price of £14.99. Gamers old enough to remember the arcade original will, dementia permitting, recall that this means hours of building-demolishing, human-munching entertainment await PS2 owners when the game arrives in March.

Choosing from any one of 36 B-movie-style monsters, up to four players will be able to crash through some of the world's best loved cities in a bid to cause as much damage as possible. Climb onto skyscrapers and hammer them with your fists, stamp on cars, or swat helicopters out of the sky – whatever gives the virtual insurance companies the biggest headaches. Judging by early impressions of the game, this is all set to be one of the best multiplayer stress-busters around, and at 15 quid, it's much cheaper than incense cones, mood-lights, and CDs that play the sound of waves gently lapping against the shore. Until then, calm yourself by gazing at these exclusive screens and wait serenely for the review in our next issue. ■ **AH**



"Goddamn it, I specifically asked for a sea view"

MIRROR ЯORRIM

Save the world (again) in **Syphon Filter Dark Mirror**

Gabe Logan, chiselled hero of the *Syphon Filter* series, was kicking international terrorist ass while Sam Fisher was still shaking talc into his training technosuit. And now he's back, but this time on the PSP. A total of 23 missions see Gabe gunning it around the globe while tracking down the Dark Mirror, the code name for the latest free world-threatening super weapon. These new screens show missions in Bangkok, Bosnia, Narbonne in the South of France and Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain. And since his last PS2 outing, Logan has acquired some new kit to complement his thermal goggles in the form of a multipurpose, dart-firing flechette rifle.

Unlike *Splinter Cell*'s go-it-alone policy, Gabe has some company in the shape of regular partner Lian Xing. In one level the two of them must work together and fight through an oil rig overrun with militia, to prevent it from exploding. As well as the single-player campaign there are also online maps for some friendly multiplayer fragging, with your own custom-made agent. *Dark Mirror* will be catching the light this summer. ■ **LH**

DEFENCE BUDGET

TECHNO GRUNTS

Five reasons why **Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter** is the future of war gaming

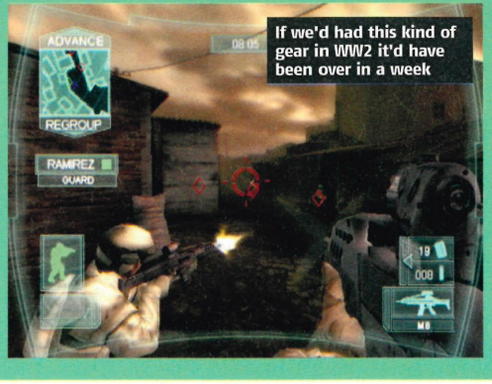
1 Forget rusty AK-47s, M-16s held together with sticking plaster and 30-year-old handguns that Granddad used to shoot squirrels with – in *Advanced Warfighter* you get bang up-to-date guns, satellite communication technology and the sort of man-killing gadgetry that makes James Bond's Q department look as advanced as bunch of hairy, flint-wielding Neanderthals.

2 Crack out the sombreros, marines, because *GRAW* is set in sunny Mexico City; a far cry from the usual axis of evil countries that gamers' virtual boots have trodden through time and time again. This means greater emphasis on tough, sniper-riddled, urban combat along with plenty of opportunities for Ubisoft to break out those fancy lighting effects its development studios are so keen on.

3 *Advanced Warfighter* will feature co-operative and deathmatch play both on and offline. *Ghost Recon* is always at the cutting edge of multiplayer technology, so expect this game to have a feast of modes, options and extras to make shooting your mates' faces off from miles away an absolute breeze.

4 The game also features a device called a Cross-Com, which appears in the top-left corner of your display. This shows the feed from a spy drone that flies around the city giving you tactical readouts of your surroundings. Use it to position your men, find enemies before they shoot you in the guts, or to locate the nearest tequila joint.

5 According to Ubisoft all the technology featured in the game is based on real designs and prototypes being tested by the US army right now. This means that years from now American soldiers could well be storming the cities of an oil-rich country near you, looking for terrorists to kill with the toys you've already played with. ■ **AH**



If we'd had this kind of gear in WW2 it'd have been over in a week

It's 2013, and what have we got for protection? Bloody sandbags

BRIMMING WITH GOODNESS

FILLING A BIG STICK

We get hold of SanDisk's mammoth **2GB PSP memory stick** and load it with tat!

With the rise of free PSP content appearing on the Internet, and ripping software making it increasingly easy to convert your favourite films and music into a PSP format, you're going to need a bigger memory stick – even bigger than the one that came with your Giga Pack. How about twice as big? That's what SanDisk's new 2GB stick will offer (£85, www.sandisk.com) – a whole 1,890MB of RAM to clutter up with music, photos and that video of a man setting his farts on fire. If you'd rather buy the official Sony option, a similar 2GB stick has been launched at approximately £115 (exact price TBC, check www.kelkoo.co.uk).

Just to give you an idea of the volume of media one of these beasts can accommodate, we filled one up with content. And here's what we managed to squeeze on: **GW**

All content obtained legally either from video.google.com, www.atomfilms.com or from legitimate CDs and DVDs.

180MB

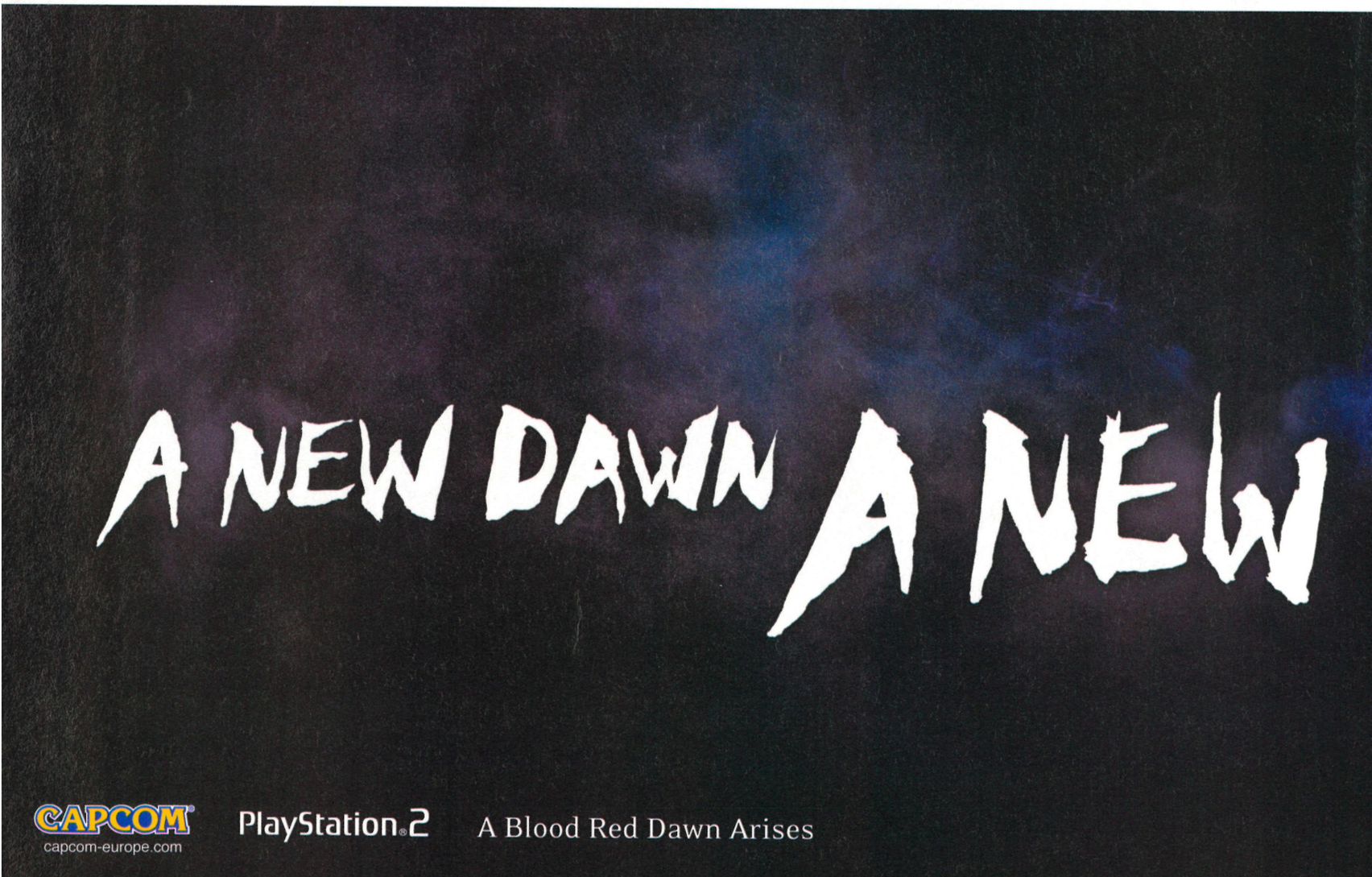
158 PHOTOS
Holiday Snaps

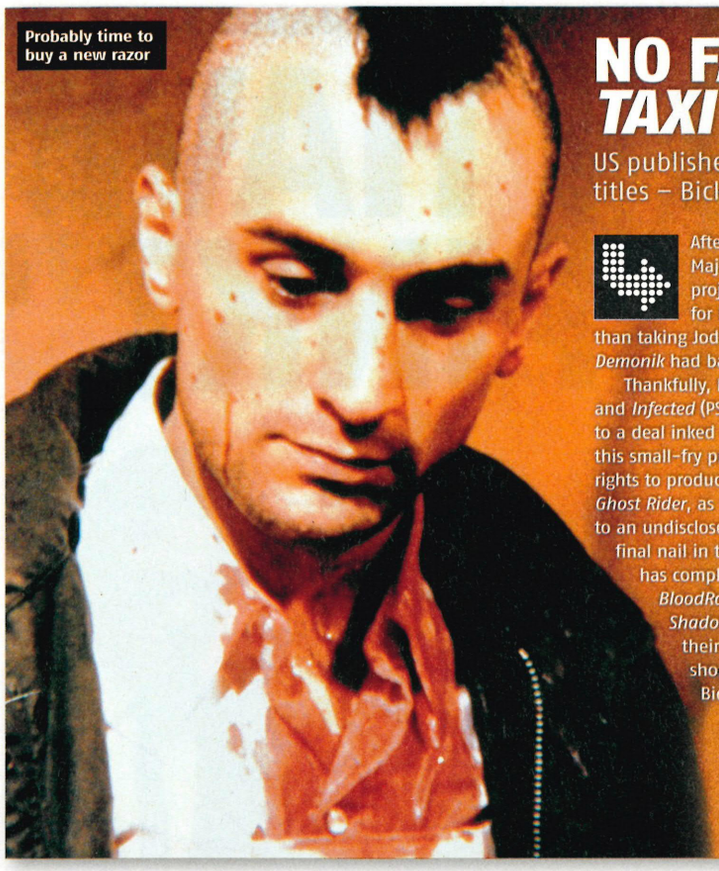
607MB

8 ALBUMS
Editors – The Backroom, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah – Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, Lindstrøm and Prins Thomas, Jose Gonzalez – Veneer, Madonna – Immaculate Collection, Primal Scream – Screamadelica, Smashing Pumpkins – Siamese Dream, Television – Marquee Moon

1.04GB

14 VIDEOS
Rockfish animated short, *In God We Trust* short film, *Ghost In The Shell* – The Movie, *Ryan Vs Dorkman* lightsaber home movie, two episodes of *The Simpsons*, *Metal Gear Solid 4* Trailer, two episodes of *Lost*, Area 51 visit video, Ronaldinho's ten best goals compilation, NWA music video, Kylie Minogue's Agent Provocateur underwear advert





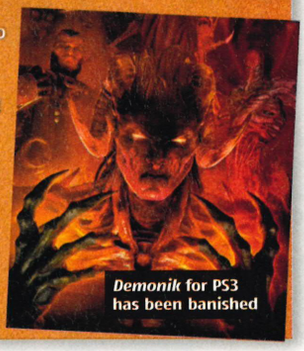
Probably time to buy a new razor

NO FARE FOR *TAXI DRIVER*

US publisher, Majesco, starts shedding titles – Bickle gets the bullet

After finding itself strapped for cash, US publisher Majesco has decided to shelve most of its forthcoming projects, including *Taxi Driver* for PS2 and *Demonik* for PS3. Whereas *Taxi Driver* was looking dodgier than taking Jodie Foster's teen hooker home to meet your mum, *Demonik* had barely been given a chance to shine.

Thankfully, Majesco's other offerings *Jaws: Unleashed* (PS2) and *Infected* (PSP) are still on track for European releases thanks to a deal inked with THQ. Beyond that the future looks bleak for this small-fry publishing company, as it has sold off the valuable rights to produce a game based on forthcoming Nic Cage flick *Ghost Rider*, as well as the next-generation title *The Darkness* to an undisclosed buyer. As a final nail in the coffin Majesco has completely canned *BloodRayne* and *Advent Shadow* on PSP leaving their 2006 line-up shorter than Travis Bickle's fuse. ■ AH



Demonik for PS3 has been banished

ALLSTAR

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HERO A NEW ENEMY

ONIMUSHA DAWN OF DREAMS™

MEN IN BLACK

"WHY DO I HAVE TO BE MR PINK?"

Take a leading role in Tarantino shoot-fest as **Reservoir Dogs** hits PS2

Don your black suit, grab a Glock and prepare for blood, bank jobs and witty observational dialogue – *Reservoir Dogs* is 'going to work' on PS2. Publisher Eidos snagged the rights last year and then handed development duties to Volatile, the new 'mature' entertainment wing of Blitz Games. The game's retelling of the classic heist-gone-mental movie blasts its way onto the street in June.

Set in the time frame between the movie's unseen diamond robbery and the moment the characters start arriving at the warehouse, *Reservoir Dogs* is a third-person bullet ballet, featuring a series of double-gun-toting escape missions. The developer has consciously avoided the crowded *GTA* clone market, delivering, instead, a taut, tightly controlled actioner. During the game, you'll control several of the gang (who famously had colour-coded aliases – Mr Blue, Pink, White, Orange, Brown and, erm, Nice Guy Eddie) as they make desperate escape bids,

RESERVOIR DOGS IS A THIRD-PERSON BULLET BALLET

blasting up various East LA locations. Expect both on-foot and driving sections – don't be surprised to find yourself enacting the movie's title sequence where Keitel ferries a blood-gushing Mr Orange to the meet-up point. Key moments from the movie have also been intricately converted into CGI cut-scenes.

As for combat, each character will have special attacks. Straight razor. Stealer's Wheel on the stereo... you know what we're saying. Talking of Mr Blonde, Volatile has secured the rights to use Michael Madsen's likeness in the game. Apparently, Eidos has also confirmed that sub-plots will be explored – like where Pink hides the gems.

Clearly, Volatile is not holding back – this is going to be a unflinching take on the hyper-violent *Dogs* universe – hence an 18 certificate. Sadly no cast members will return for voice-acting duties, but the developer *does* have the movie soundtrack, so expect plenty of MOR '70s pop. And now, like Marvin the cop, we've told you all we know about the &%$ing setup; you can torture us all you want... **KS**

BLOOD BROTHERS

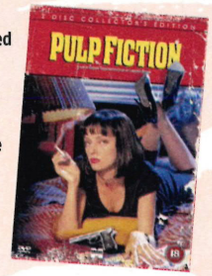
Should Tarantino's other arthouse gore-fests join the *Dogs* on a PS2 near you?

KILL BILL: VOL 1

Black Label Games licensed the exploito kung fu epic in 2002 and started on a game version, but we've since heard the project has been sliced and diced. Unfortunate, given that the House Of Blue Leaves scene is the most game-worthy moment of any Tarantino flick to date.

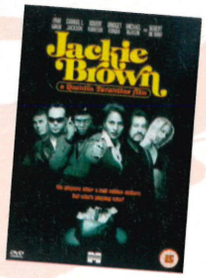
PULP FICTION

Tarantino's '90s masterpiece relied more on smart dialogue than real action to deliver its thrills, so a PS2 version is massively unlikely. Still, in a world where *Grand Theft Auto* is King, a game that lets you blow the giblets off S&M-loving hicks, clean brain fragments out of cars, and administer adrenaline to overdosing women should fly off the shelves.



JACKIE BROWN

Ever wondered what it would be like to take on the role of an empowered blaxploitation icon from the '70s? No, neither have we, so it's probably for the best that no one has snapped up the rights to make a game based on *Jackie Brown*. Stranger things have happened (we're still trying to wash away the taste of *Fight Club*) but not many.



ALLSTAR

EAR-SLASHING!
Eidos won't say for sure – but c'mon, it's bound to be in there!

CULT SOUNDTRACK
Licensed up to the hilt with the movie's iconic tunes

BE THE DOGS
You can play as several of the colour-coded crims!

MADSEN'S IN!
Mr Blonde will look spot-on – but what about the others?

TWO STYLES OF PLAY
Wheel man or shooter – see the film from two perspectives

POP CULTURE DIALOGUE
Never seen the movie? No worries, key scenes are being rendered in CGI to give the full Dogs experience

ROCK'S COOL

Monsters Of Rock

We talk axes, riders and Vaseline with the guys behind **Guitar Hero,** the next big thing on PS2

The key thing with rock phenomenons is being able to say, "*obviously*, I was into them when they were playing pubs in Grimsby." So consider this your heads-up on *Guitar Hero*. Already a massive success in the US, come April it's going to be the Arctic Monkeys of PS2 music games. For just shy of £50 you get the game and its superb guitar controller. We tracked down the heroes behind *Hero* and shouted some questions at them.

How did you decide on track list?
DANIEL: We had a few rules, but, for the most part, we put in songs we liked. We wanted to make sure we represented different genres within the world of rock – we needed some metal, some classic rock, some modern stuff, something from every decade etc. Then we made a giant list and tried to get licences. In the end, we got most of what we went after.

Do you think that playing *Guitar Hero* can help someone play a real guitar?
DANIEL: It's funny: knowing how to play guitar gives you an edge when you first walk up to *Guitar Hero*. I'm not sure if it works the other way around. There are some basic skills that you can learn (ie, controlling the pitch with your left hand and the rhythm with your right) but playing guitar is more than that. If you spent the amount of time that you spent playing videogames learning guitar instead, you'd probably be an amazing guitarist.
ERIC: It might help some people listen to songs a little differently than before and maybe appreciate and understand how guitar parts work in rock songs.

Did the guitar go through many stages of design/development?
RYAN: The body shape was a no-brainer really but the buttons went through lots of changes. Size, texture, feel, pressure, triggering mechanisms... I loved getting prototypes based on our conversations that were these crazy plastic/epoxy/hot glue contraptions. We still talk about how the guitar could be even better. There are fans out there who are 'modding' their guitars. We recently asked the *Guitar Hero* forums what kind of paint is best, and how to mod the buttons for faster response times.

So was there anything else planned that got canned... effects pedals?
GREG: We discussed including a stomp box that you could use to kick effects in and out, but decided that pedal usage was too big a burden. We also had a prototype feedback system on sustain notes which sounded awesome, but we had difficulty integrating it with gameplay, so we had to take it out. I was sad when it got taken out.
DANIEL: The thing that didn't get into the game that hurt the most was a *Spinal Tap* moment where miniature Stonehenges would descend from the rafters in the final arena.

Anything planned for the sequel?
ERIC: We can't say... but all of those ideas (and plenty more) were discussed.
GREG: We have a lot of ideas.

How about PS3 – anything currently being worked on with that in mind?
DANIEL: PS3 will allow us to add the groupie mode that was left out of *Guitar Hero* for budget reasons.
ROB: We're looking closely at next-gen consoles – for now that's all we can say.

How do you feel about the reaction the game got in the US?
RYAN: I am psyched! [Makes devil horn hand gesture.] It gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling knowing that there are still a bunch of people out there looking for some thrashingly good rock and roll.
DANIEL: There's a lot of love in *Guitar Hero*. We all worked hard on it – it was possibly the most fun I've ever had on a game. We'd have passionate arguments about little details – everybody really cared. The fact people are appreciating our work is really satisfying.
ERIC: It's hard to believe... I guess there's a wannabe rock god in all of us.

What are your hopes for the release of the game in the UK?
ROB: I want to see Jeremy Paxman picking up an axe, and letting rip! Anything less is unacceptable.
DANIEL: Europeans love metal. We'll have to add a Scorpions song. Then everyone will love it, right?

Do you know of any actual guitar heroes who play the game?
DANIEL: Rumour has it that Eddie Van Halen beat the game in a minute.
RYAN: Actually... I started that rumour.

Is it a fret board or a stairway to heaven?

What strange tips do people use to nail the notes? Vaseline on the buttons has been tried in our office...
ERIC: Yeah, people have started to mod their guitars by adjusting the throw of the fret buttons or the strum bar, or by greasing this or that. All very cool, but they must play at a higher level than I do. My main concern is how *low* I can wear the guitar.

"I GUESS THERE'S A WANNABE ROCK GOD IN ALL OF US"

Any secrets to hitting all the notes?
ROB: The advanced techniques centre on playing smart as well as fast. The action of releasing each fret button is the hidden tax that slows people down. Practice keeping the fret buttons held down until you actually need to release them instead of after each note.
ERIC: I was hoping you could tell me. Just keeping at it and learning the solo to the point where you could sing it. When you can do that, you're most of the way there to being able to play it.

If you were a real guitar hero, what would be on your rider?
RYAN: Since I am a real guitar hero, I will tell you what is on my current rider: Two bat's eyeball sandwiches with honey Dijon on a torpedo roll, one package of Oreo double stuff cookies pre-separated and then sandwiched back together making quadruple stuff Oreos, a record player with the entire Thee Hydrogen Terrors LP catalogue, four packs of pre-boiled and lubed 12 gauge guitar strings... and a towel.
ROB: Maybe I'm just missing the UK, but vinegar soaked fish 'n chips with gravy, wrapped in a naan bread, all washed down with a six pack of beer sounds great right now.
DANIEL: 12 cases of beer, a juicer with a full spread of fresh farm vegetables, 2lbs of beef jerky, and 200 firecrackers. And an inflatable swimming pool.
ERIC: Large bread.
GREG: No comment ■ **HW**

PIMP MY AXE

Fisher Price: not the look of a true cowboy from hell. To achieve a cool custom grinder, fans have started modding their guitars (check out http://forum.guitarherogame.com)

METAL GEAR MADNESS!

Crazy for the daddy of stealth games? Have we got news for you...

There was a time when *Metal Gear Solid* titles were ultra-rare, euphoric events, bridged by painfully long years of feverish anticipation and rumour-filled speculation. Kind of like The Second Coming, but with big robots and action mullets. Not any more, though. Now that Hideo Kojima, the daddy of stealth, has his own production enclave in Konami, the *MGS* empire is expanding in every conceivable direction. Here are the latest rumblings and newest additions from the house that Snake built...

Mad colour scheme, but *MGA2* really works

METAL GEAR AC!D 2

For many, the turn-based, card-shuffling strategising of the original *Metal Gear Ac!d* was a disappointment. But while we're holding out for the hotly tipped PSP remake of the classic PSone *MGS*, *Metal Gear Ac!d 2* is on its way and aims to inject more action into the sub-series' second outing. A vibrant new colour palette and edgier styling sounds wrong but looks and feels right, while more fluid ordering and the ability to move Snake around maps manually feels pleasingly dynamic after the first *Ac!d*'s frustratingly glacial pace. Other changes include a hike in command, skill and item cards (from 200 to 500+). This includes new upgrades, move-linking cards and level-specific trap cards. To round off the package, a Boss mode-style Arena game's been added along with bonus 3D movies that can be watched with a PSP screen-clamping Solid Eye peripheral. *MGA2* will be released in April.

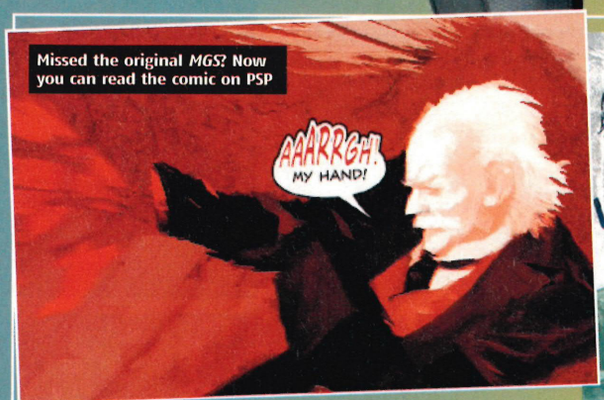
METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

10-12 May. Put it in your diary now. This is when the rumour-sparking second trailer for *MGS4* (the first *Metal Gear* on PlayStation 3), will be premiered at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in LA. In addition to the trailer, the game will also be playable behind closed doors for a very select few. *OPS2* is, of course, on the guest list

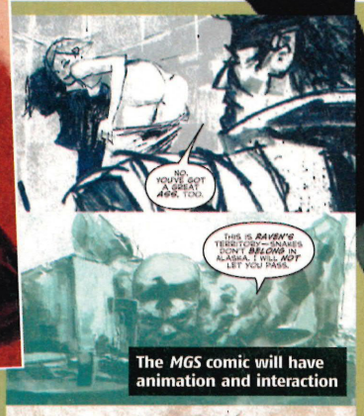
Online fraggery with girl wrestlers: Is *Subsistence* the best game ever?

METAL GEAR SAGA

Not a new game, perhaps, but this freshly produced film, documenting the genesis and history of the entire *Metal Gear Solid* has been made with serious input from series creator, Hideo Kojima. It promises to be the final word on the ultimate sneak-'em-up series. For instance, did you know that The Boss in *MGS3* originally had a snake tattoo on her norks that would appear to laugh when they jiggled in combat? Thought not. *Metal Gear Saga* will come as a bonus disc in a special platinum edition of the already exhaustive *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*.



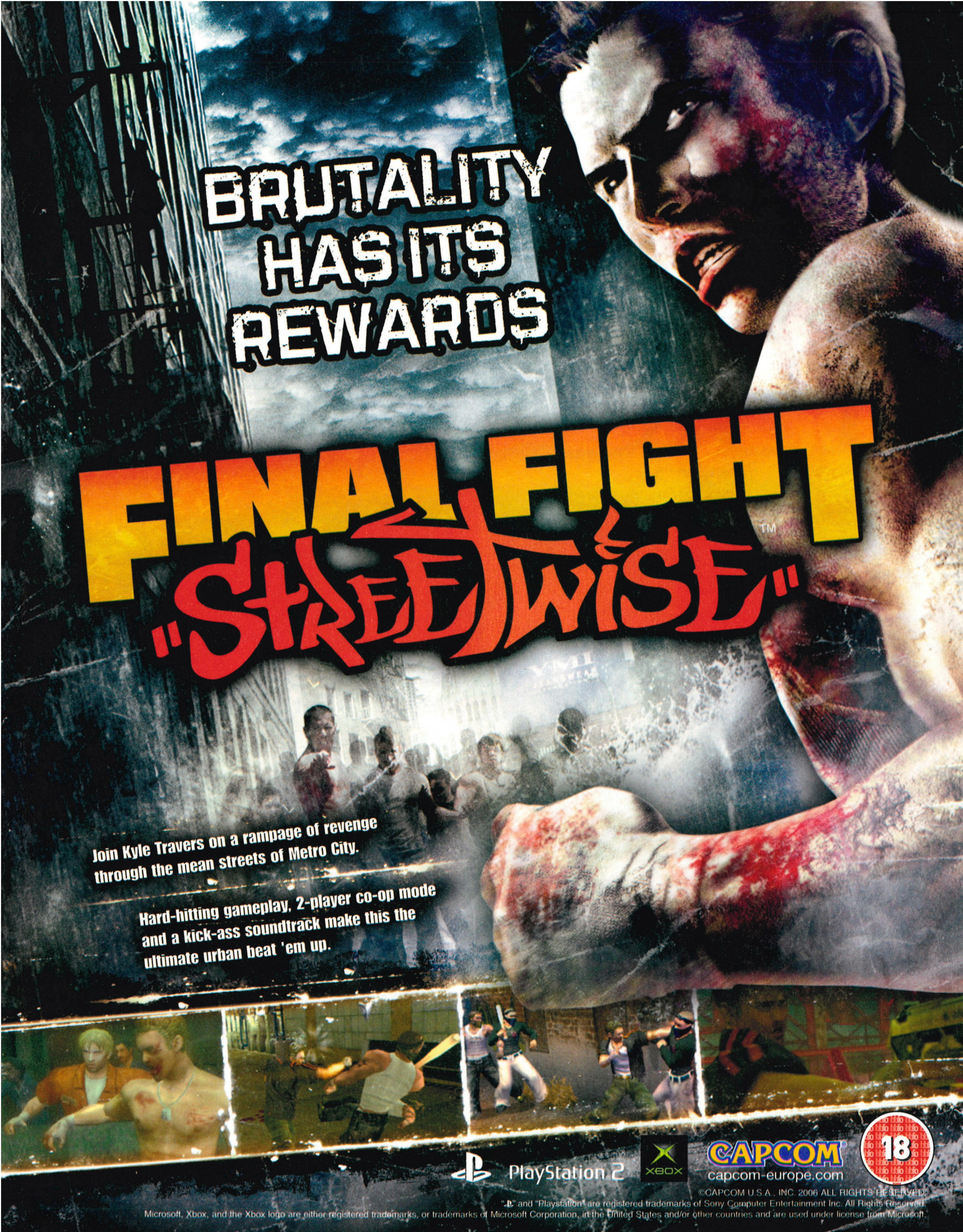
Missed the original *MGS*? Now you can read the comic on PSP



The *MGS* comic will have animation and interaction

METAL GEAR SOLID DIGITAL COMIC

The title's not confirmed, but this interactive comic for PSP is certainly on its way to a UMD near you. Based on the existing *MGS* comics, the digital version will be enhanced with sound FX, music and animations. Intriguingly, you'll also be able to zoom into panels and discover 100s of special, hidden elements that further flesh out the *Metal Gear Solid* story. No release date as yet, but we'll keep you informed. ■ PF



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We ♥ RPGs

DON'T FEAR THE GOBLIN! THAT'S THE MESSAGE WITH 2006 SET TO BE THE YEAR OF THE RPG. THINK IT'S ALL TIME-CONSUMING NONSENSE? READ ON TO FIND OUT WHY YOU *NEED* TO PLAY THESE GAMES

WORDS BY LEON HURLEY, ANDY HARTUP, TIM CLARK AND NICK ELLIS

Journey with us, to a land beyond space, time and probably sanity. A land where young boys are regularly tasked with the kind of world-saving operations taxpayers might reasonably expect the armed forces to undertake; where the unicorn is still considered a legitimate form of transport, possessing magic herbs isn't even a class C offence, and people are still polite enough to take it in turns when attempting to kill each other. Welcome to RPG land. Or, to be more specific, Japan. Over the next five pages we bring you detailed info and all-new shots of the biggest role-players en route to PS2. Okay, so you might think we've been a bit down on the whole stats 'n' swords scene in the past – but no more. The current crop of games is so impressive that even the most hardened goblin-hater should consider getting involved. So let's start with the biggest series of them all. And no, it's not *Final Fantasy*...

Dragon Quest: Journey Of The Cursed King

THE ONE THAT'S BIG IN JAPAN

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix

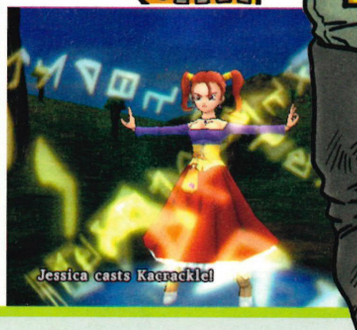
OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
Feels like a legend, and looks like Robin Hood's idea of paradise. If you ever dreamt of being the hero, killing the bad guy, and getting the girl, this is the best place to start.

Japan is a nation of *Dragon Quest* obsessives, where serious businessman book whole weeks off to play the latest instalment. Turn up to a games convention in Tokyo and you'll be surrounded by gangs of boys and girls dressed up as blobs of blue slime (the mascot monster for this epic). This is actually the eighth game in the long running, gazillion-selling franchise but the first to reach UK PS2 owners.

So, what's the big deal? Well, for a start the game never asks you to have an in-depth knowledge of the genre. All you need to know is that this is the classic tale of a noble lad defeating evil and restoring peace to the land he calls home. *Dragon Quest* takes adventure gaming back to its roots. Forget weird space-monkeys, bizarre robots, and strange plots that twist and turn; this is pure adventuring packed with epic storytelling and immersive, satisfying battles.

Then there are the jaw-dropping visuals. Each creature in the game is beautifully designed by the Manga artist behind *Dragon Ball*, giving them the sort of instant charm that most RPGs can only dream of.



Are you playing an RPG right now?

Ten telltale signs that you're off with the fairies.

1 You're playing as a man child with hitherto undiscovered powers and fate has determined that you and only you can save the universe/world/country/village.

2 One of your companions on the adventure is a surly young girl, usually an orphan, who you'll argue with to start with before realising she's your one true love.

3 Other companions include: a thick warrior; a half human and half chicken/duck/goat creature; and a rival who you think is a traitor but ends up saving your life.

4 If it's a Japanese RPG, the plot will have an anti-war/pro-environmentalist undertone that's about as a subtle as a Dwarven hammer to the plums.

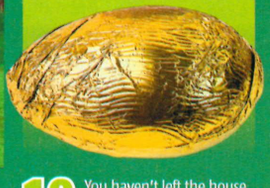
5 The only way to strengthen your character is to kill, kill and kill again. Usually starting with small easy-to-skewer animals. For some reason rats get it particularly bad.

6 You've examined more chests in an hour of playing than Ron Jeremy has come across in his entire career.

7 The world has failed to develop technology like flushing toilets and electricity, but everyone gets around in giant airships.

8 You can spend as much time mucking about with the fishing mini-games as you can completing the actual adventure.

9 Every monster you meet seems to have been designed by a madman combining everyday objects, animals and plants – seemingly at random.



10 You haven't left the house in weeks because you're still searching for the last Golden Phoenix Egg needed to unlock some ropey concept art in the bonus menu.

Radiata Stories

THE ONE THAT LETS YOU GIVE FAIRIES A KICKING

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix

OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
The human and magical folk go toe to toe after an elf dies. You're free to choose your side in a world where time marches on regardless of your efforts.

Most RPGs' arsenals peak with screen-warping magic attacks going off like a nuclear fireworks display. This game, however, is built around a good shoeing. Everything in the game can be kicked – trees, rocks, people. You might find bonuses, items or, more likely, just start a fight. When you get bored of that – about three minutes in, then – there's a huge war between humans and the fairy folk (elves, dwarves etc) where the human hero, the implausibly named Jack Russell, can choose sides. There's also a constant day/night cycle during which people plod on with their lives. So if you want a mission from a priest you better be outside the church when evening prayers end.

Kingdom Hearts II

THE ONE WHERE YOU CAN MUTATE MICKEY

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix

OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
A hardcore RPG featuring Mickey Mouse? Trust us, if you ever wanted your lady love to play games then this is a good place to start.

Donald Duck, Goofy, Mulan and some super-deformed bloke with spiky hair fighting against samurai – WTF? Don't ask us how, but combining ageing stars with oddball personalities works to great effect – a bit like the current Bolton Wanderers team, only much less boring. The most interesting feature in this sequel though has to be the new Transformation Drive. This machine allows you to combine characters from Disney's back catalogue to form new creatures. So if your weird little brain ever wondered what the kids would be like if Simba from the *Lion King* and the Carpet from *Aladdin* got together, this is your game.

How creating a freakish Chicken Little/Winnie The Pooh hybrid will make a more effective fighting machine isn't really that clear yet. But just about every property with the Walt D seal of approval is crammed in here. From *Hercules* to *Pirates Of The Caribbean*. Even cult geek film *Tron* gets a cameo in which you get to wear neon-striped helmets and race around on Light Cycles. If nothing else the presence of Daffy, Minnie and all those universally lovable characters make this a lady-friendly game. If you can swallow the fact that these guys are the heroes of the game (along with your pride) then many blissful, hassle free hours of quality together time with your other half await. Just don't tell her about your 'thing' for Belle from *Beauty And The Beast*.

Anything with a level set in the movie *Tron* gets our vote

This is what happens if the *Blue Peter* tortoise doesn't hibernate

Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga

THE ONE WHERE YOU'RE A CANNIBAL

PUBLISHER
Ghostlight

OUT
June

SUMMARY
Stylised, cell-shaded techno-sorcery. A post-apocalyptic war turns nasty when everyone gets turned into flesh-eating beasts. It's conflict with condiments.

Not many games start with you chomping down on your enemy's liver. But after a mysterious alien object infects you and your tribe, giving you the power to turn into demons, that's exactly what happens. By eating your opposition you gain their powers and skills. So, if you want to level up, you have to chow down. The story follows rival tribes in the Junkyard, a desolate wasteland, where an unknown entity has been manipulating a never-ending conflict for years. Once the inhabitants start chewing each other, however, it simply becomes survival of the fittest. Or should that be fattest?

Grandia III

THE ONE THAT'S LIKE *TOP GUN* MINUS THE VOLLEYBALL

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix

OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
Fly boy Yuki builds his a plane and takes off into a world of trouble after rescuing a god-bothering girl medium. She's looking for her brother, who's turned into a Mwa-ha-hawing bad guy since disappearing.

Flying can be a terrifying prospect at the best of times. Now imagine doing it in a plane you built yourself, out of wood and string. That's what *Grandia III*'s hero Yuki does. But he's barely opened his packet of dry-roasted before it all goes tits up. He crashes, there's a stowaway on-board, and he gets involved in tackling a world-conquering madman. It's not all bad news though, with Yuki able to hop in a plane anytime and fly all over the world. Back on terra firma standard RPG combat has been cleverly rethought by tracking attacks on a stopwatch-like wheel.

It's not an RPG without a pretty girl fighting with bubbles

Rogue Galaxy

THE ONE THAT'S LIKE *DEVIL MAY CRY*

PUBLISHER
Sony

OUT
June

SUMMARY
Be a space pirate and journey through an enormous universe as galactic war rages all around you. There's real-time combat, no loading times and an almost endless number of planets to explore.

Watch Jester, the buccaneer at the heart of this space-roaming romp, wallop the stuffing out of his enemies and you'll be reminded of a certain Son Of Sparda. Like Dante, Jester has plenty of agile fighting moves, including aerial attacks. He can mix swords and guns, string together combos, pick up his enemies to throw them around and use button-pressing mini-games to link multiple, crushing blows. Plus, he's a *space pirate*. Cool. It's almost better to think of this one as an adventure game rather than an RPG, but either way it has masses of potential.

For starters there's a colossal galaxy to explore, full of different planets. Developer, Level 5, originally wanted infinite, randomly spawning worlds but realised that was a bit much. Now it's just really big instead. All the worlds have different themes. Some planets are layered with dense jungle; others are covered in cities or populated by robots.

The main plot involves a universe torn apart by a war, actually driven by the cold and unfeeling greed of Daitron Enterprises – a weapons manufacturer selling arms to both sides. After Jester's home world is attacked, he joins local pirate Dorgengore. Once adrift in the stars you can earn status catching monsters as a bounty hunter while unearthing new materials and substances. From these you'll forge more powerful weapons and items. Best of all, galactic travel comes without a single loading screen.

And you thought regular pirates were camp...

Rouge Galaxy's gorgeous landscapes are load-free

The Land Of Goblins At Glance

Confused by or afraid of what you see? Then let our simple guide to the world of RPGs explain it all

ITEMS!

The game world you inhabit will be littered with items to collect and buy. They may or may not be useful in your quest, from mundane stuff like gold and gems to dragon crap, which, when eaten, gives you the ability to breathe fire, fly, and amass huge Abramovich-humbling gold reserves. Probably.

UPGRADES!

You start out as a weakling with salad tongs as weapons. The more you fight, though, the quicker you acquire stamina, skills and ever sharper cutlery. Ultimate aim? 29th level Orc Botherer with a Plutonium Sword Of Death +6.

COMBAT!

Enemies have HP too, and when you clobber them they'll puke numbers from their heads instead of blood. The figures represent the HP you've knocked out of them and how successful your attack was. Often monsters have specific weaknesses – fire spells are good against ice monsters for example. Real-time combat is becoming more common these days but traditionally battle is a turn-based, one-at-a-time affair. You hit them, pause, they hit you, and repeat...

OUCH!

HP, or Hit Points, represents your character's health. As you progress, your HP increases and the stronger you become. Health is usually restored by eating food, such as magical Yak's milk, or by drinking potions or casting healing spells.

FRIENDS!

You'll rarely fight alone in an RPG. As the game goes on you'll assemble a party of pals to help you out. Usually you won't see them on-screen, as you only control the hero while exploring. In battle, however, they'll appear, ready to fight alongside you and follow whatever orders you give them. 'Kill Monster' being the obvious winner.

What Big Eyes You Have

The girls of RPGs: stylised symbols of female allure or bug-eyed freaks that got dressed in the dark? You decide.

NAME
Meme
GAME
Code Age Commander
APPARENTLY DRESSED FOR
The main podium at Manumission
ACTUALLY DRESSED FOR
Techno-war as a genetically enhanced warrior
WOULD YOU?
Get a few burgers inside you love and we'll talk

NAME
Argilla
GAME
Digital Devil Saga
APPARENTLY DRESSED FOR
Art college and the stone circle at Glastonbury
ACTUALLY DRESSED FOR
Being a post-apocalyptic sniper who turns into a demon with fang-toothed breasts
WOULD YOU?
We would've up until we read the bit about the breasts

NAME
Jessica
GAME
Dragon Quest: Journey Of The Cursed King
APPARENTLY DRESSED FOR
Carry On Wenching
ACTUALLY DRESSED FOR
Learning to be a witch in a magical, medieval kingdom
WOULD YOU?
Yes but she'd have to lose the whip. Actually...

NAME
Ashe
GAME
Final Fantasy XII
APPARENTLY DRESSED FOR
The next Pussy Cat Dolls Video
ACTUALLY DRESSED FOR
Being a Princess – the next in line to the throne of the Kingdom of Dalmasca
WOULD YOU?
Hell yeah! And she's royalty so she's probably dying to express her 'rebellious' side with a commoner like us.

Phantasy Star Universe

THE *STAR TREK* MEETS *LORD OF THE RINGS* ONE

PUBLISHER
Sega
OUT
October
SUMMARY
Massive adventure beyond the stars? Check! Benchmark visuals and properly exciting combat system? Yup! Knee-high girl in pink dress? Hot diggedy dog! Over three hours of cut-scenes? Uh-oh...

Bad news for aspiring space cadets: word is that *Phantasy Star Universe* won't be beaming down until October. Sega is working to ensure that this is the most lavish role-player on PS2. Gameplay is split between a traditional offline adventure starring a typically ragtag gang of heroes, and a meaty online mode in which you can create a character from one of four races. In either case your adventure takes place in the Gurhal system, where an uneasy truce between the various civilisations is ruined by invading aliens.

As you can see, *PSU* is a looker – all tangerine lasers and girls with improbably large eyes. The action, which occurs in real-time, is set across three worlds. Parum is a machine planet inhabited by a race of cyberbots called the Casts. Created to serve humanity, they've since got a bit stroppy. Then there's Moatoob, a desert world inhabited by the Beasts, who are strong but stupid, and can transform into – wait for it – giant beasts. Neudaiz, meanwhile, is an idyllic world the elfish Newmans live. Likely to be *PSU*'s equivalent of magic users, Newman are weak physically but have strong metal powers. Finally there are the Humans who – well, you've probably heard about them already.

Dragons: still a problem in space

Suikoden V

THE ONE WHERE WOMEN RULE

PUBLISHER
Konami
OUT
September
SUMMARY
Suikoden's big claim to fame is the vast number of characters who can join your party. [Note: not an actual party.] So don't expect to see sunlight for a while if you want to get them all.

You're a man in a women's world. Farlena is a Queendom, which means that only women can rule. And you're a Prince. Bugger. The massive cast of 108 potential warriors fight traditional turn-based battles, but you can use different formations to change their effectiveness in combat. Here's a tip: don't put anyone with a short sword at the back.

This counts as 'butch' in *Suikoden V*

Code Age Commanders

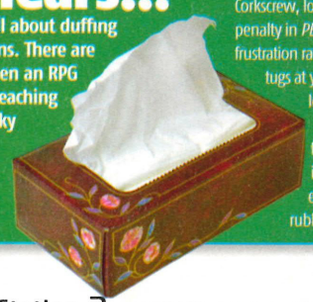
THE ONE WHERE THE WORLD CRASHES

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix
OUT
TBC 2006
SUMMARY
A space-age fight for supremacy between the survivors of an apocalypse and the new inhabitants of their world. Released with phone games and comics in Japan.

By 'crashes' we mean like your PC after you clicked on that 'nude pictures of Jessica Alba' email attachment. After the resulting 'Rebirth' the survivors return to find their home overrun by the Otello. Here's the twist though, the Otello are both the enemy *and* your weapons. Sucking them into attachments on your hands turns them into a host of offensive armaments.

It'll All End In Tears...

It's not all about duffing up dragons. There are times when an RPG has you reaching for a hanky



We can think of plenty of occasions when a game has nearly made us weep – trying to nail *Gran Turismo*'s Laguna Seca Corkscrew, losing the WEFA cup final to a dodgy last-minute penalty in *PES 5* – but these tearful moments are born of frustration rather than emotion. No, if you want a game that tugs at your heart, nine times out of ten you'll have to look to an RPG.

Throughout these adventures you'll find friendship, honour, love, sacrifice, the importance of family, war being a bit rubbish, environmental destruction also being a bit rubbish – and all of it slathered in rich melodrama. But can a videogame *really* make you cry? Oh yes.

The most obvious example is Aerith's death at the hands of Sephiroth in *Final Fantasy VII*, which still haunts us today. But on PS2 it's *Dark Chronicle* that makes our eyes leak. In the third chapter, you come across a sweet girl and her master, a Sage. Both of them are sick from a curse. So you embark on an epic quest to find the ingredients needed to make a 'Miracle Dish' that will cure them. After countless hours of searching you finally cure Lin but not before her master dies. She's distraught, you're bereft, the floodgates open and your other half asks if you're crying at a game. "No darling," you reply, "I was, erm, thinking about how much I love you."

But I Want To Make The Magic Now

Can't wait? Here are six of the best PS2 RPGs you can play today

1. DARK CHRONICLE

With *Rogue Galaxy* and *Dragon Quest VIII* to their name, Level 5 is the new darling of the Japanese RPG scene. *Dark Chronicle* is where it all began. An eclectic mix of character-driven dungeon-based scrapping, including town planning, building, photography, inventing, fishing and much more. Best PS2 RPG.

[COMPLETION TIME: 100HRS]

2. FINAL FANTASY X

Final Fantasy has ruled the RPG roost for over a decade and *FFX* is as rich an experience as you'll find. The near-endless assault of random turn-based battles peppering the main quest can test the patience of a level 20 saint but persevere and you'll find an epic tale with CGI cut-scenes to shame Hollywood.

[COMPLETION TIME: 40HRS]

3. KINGDOM HEARTS

On paper, merging Square-Enix's role-playing expertise and characters with Disney's back catalogue seems like madness. But get past the fact that your battle party might include Mickey Mouse or Daisy Duck and you've got a rock-hard RPG that'll test the best.

[COMPLETION TIME: 30HRS]

4. EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

The murky world of the MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online RPGs) is usually the preserve of the PC crowd. But *Everquest*, PS2's first foray into the genre, is an excellent adventure firmly rooted in *LOTR*-style fantasy. Where else can you get online, find some friends and hang out with angry Dwarves? Don't answer that.

[COMPLETION TIME: UNLIMITED]

5. HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE

Swap your sword and shield for a scythe and a milking stool and embark on a life as a farmer. This super-cute, unfeasibly addictive and quite brilliant oddity has you raising and tending livestock, planting and harvesting crops, cooking *and* romancing the local ladies. A refreshingly different experience.

[COMPLETION TIME: YEARS]

6. BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 2

An isometric action RPG-lite set in the *Dungeons & Dragons* universe. If you've not played an RPG before then *Baldur's Gate* is a good, console-friendly intro to the genre, not least because it's more concerned with hacking and slashing goblins than trawling through reams of menu screens.

[COMPLETION TIME: 20+HRS]

Wild Arms 4

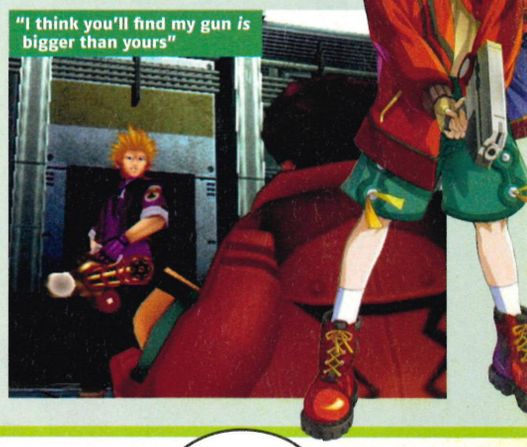
THE ONE WHERE YOU'RE A COWBOY

PUBLISHER
XSEED

OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
An RPG where all the good guys are children and all the villains are adults. Quoting the developer, the story starts when the hero "sees something he's never seen before: a girl."

The latest edition of this Wild West-themed adventure is playing down the ten-gallon hats, but there's still an unmistakable frontier feel to it all. Jude Maverick is the only child in a town called Ciel, contained within a bubble. When an army attacks, Jude is thrown into a kids vs adults battle. The novel fighting system uses a grid of cells called hexes. Several characters can occupy a cell with attacks and spells affecting anyone in inside. There's also a strong platformer feel to the exploration where Jude uses bullet-time powers to solve puzzles and dodge hazards.



Final Fantasy XII

THE ONE YOU'VE DEFINITELY HEARD OF

PUBLISHER
Square-Enix

OUT
TBC 2006

SUMMARY
The latest instalment of the biggest RPG ever. Movie-quality cut-scenes, massive levels of is-he-isn't-she androgyny and the return of the massive, chicken-like Chocobos. Just in time for bird flu.

This is the first *Final Fantasy* to have real-time combat. No standing in line or waiting your turn – if you see something you don't like then just go up and hit it. Just like the centre of town on a Saturday night. But because of this, monsters now need some brains in their head (or heads). Rather than standing around dishing it out like they used to in old turn-based battles, creatures now roam the environments and actually *think*. Not only can they detect you by sight but also by smell and sound as well. So tread lightly and lay off the Lynx. In battle, certain species might rush in to support their comrades when you start stabbing them, or even ambush you by sneaking flanking you. Some animals will even decide to run away and recover before coming back if they take too much damage. Check out these shiny new screens to see the combat in action.

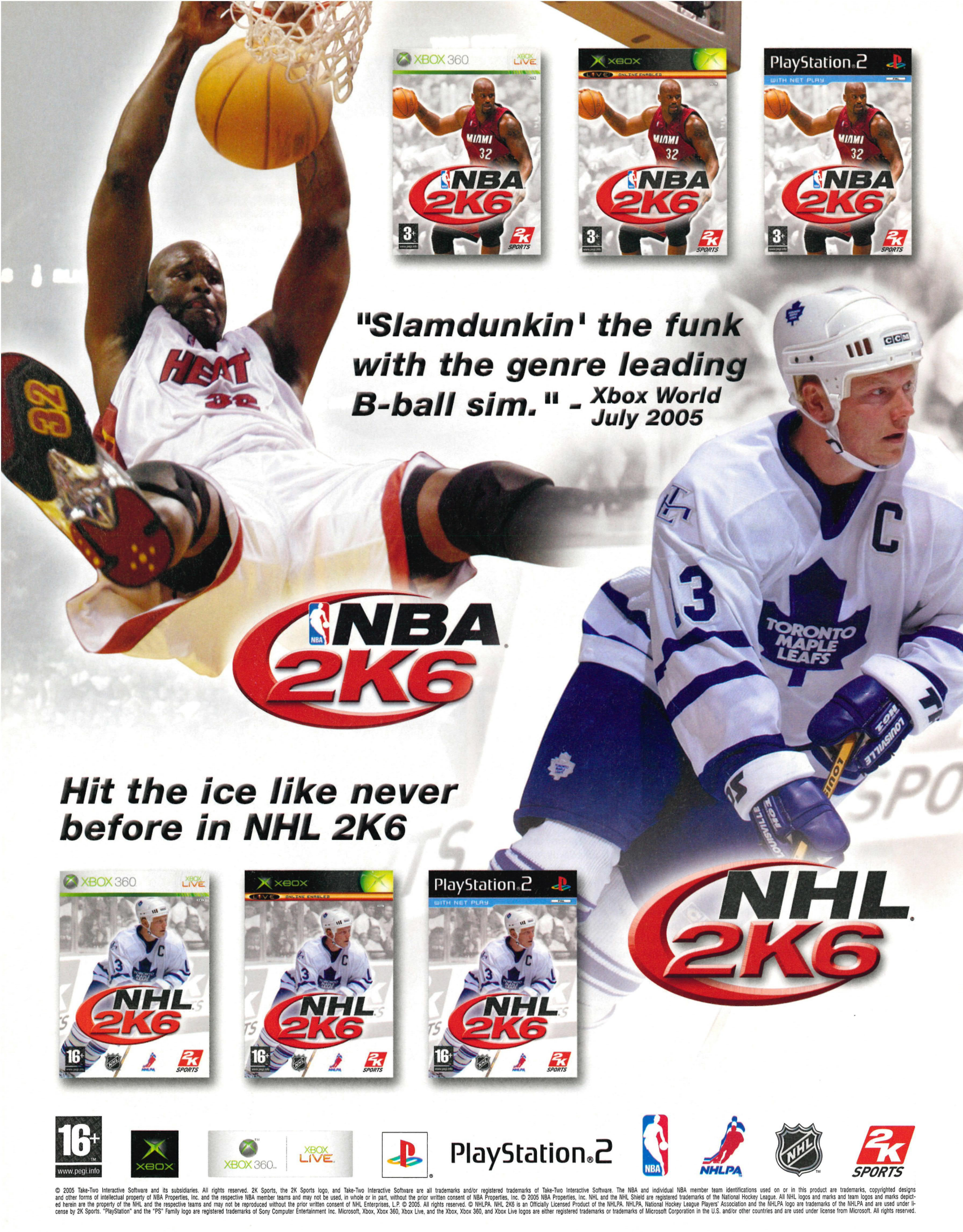
There are also a few new characters revealed recently. Like Vayne, the imposing Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen look-a-like over there. He's the Crown Prince of Arcadia and leader of the Judges, an armoured clan of law enforcers. The young chap next to those two is Vayne's younger brother Larsa. They're just part of the Arcadian Empire occupying the city of Dalmasca, which is stuck in the middle of a war between Arcadia and its rival Rosaria. It's this invasion that drives the plot as human adventurer Vaan and the deposed princess of Dalmasca, Ashe, fight to reclaim their home. ■

FFXII will have the smartest monsters *ever*

More beautiful Orcs than ever before!

Prepare to level up to the next generation

This is the future of role playing on PS3. It's called *Endless Saga*, it offers off and online adventuring and it's due next year from Korean developer Webzen. And yes, they are real.



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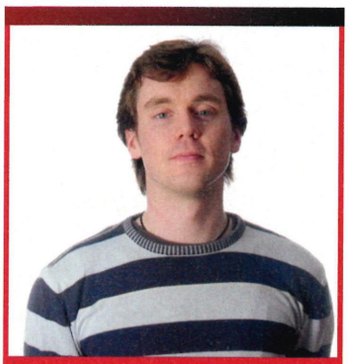
monitor

GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE ON A MONTHLY BASIS



This month is the most varied Monitor we've had in quite a while. Cast your eyes down and rightwards and you'll see strategy, stealth, dance, sports, flight, action and *translation* – that last one being a first for Playstation, unless you like selecting the wrong language option in games 'for kicks'. So next time someone pipes up about games being boring then show them this page. Oh, and if it's a pretty girl, I'd be obliged if you'd also point out my high cheekbones and winning smile.

If you're after a recommendation this month, then it's got to be *Splinter Cell Essentials*, Sam Fisher's perfectly formed mini-adventures on PSP. It's shaping up to be the best thing to hit Sony's handheld since *Liberty City Stories* – sneak over to page 52 to find out why.

Leon

Leon Hurley,
Staff writer

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

046

HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER PUNCHES HARD AND LOOKS PRETTY

048 **FIELD COMMANDER**
Big battles on a small screen – obsessive strategy action is heading your way

050 **FOOTBALL MANAGER HANDHELD**
Men 1, girlfriends 0. They've got *Footballers' Wives*, we've got this

052 **SPLINTER CELL ESSENTIALS**
Sam Fisher gets shrunk to fit. Sadly, our PSP is now wrapped in the star-spangled banner

054 **DANCE FACTORY**
Use any CD you like in this new rhythm actioner. Right, Pantera it is then

056 **TALKMAN**
"Talk to the hand... because it's holding a PSP translator and I can't understand you"

058 **PILOT ACADEMY**
Master how to fly everything from biplanes to passenger jets on PSP. Hang on, is this a good idea?

060 **URBAN CHAOS: RIOT RESPONSE**
Square-jawed sharp-shooter wanted for no-nonsense police unit. Must be fireproof

062 **YAKUZA**
Formally known as *Ryu Ga Gotoku*, this free-roaming crime game has lost nothing in translation

PLUS

049 ONIMUSHA: DAWN OF DREAMS

057 APE ESCAPE 3

EA's Total Punch Control system puts skill and tactics back into boxing

PUBLISHER **EA SPORTS** | DEVELOPER **EA SPORTS** | WEBSITE **WWW.EASPORTS.COM/FIGHTNIGHTROUND3**

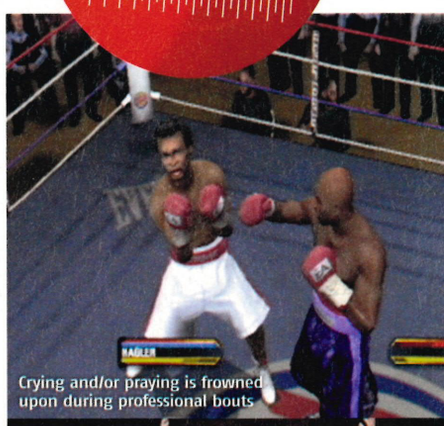
FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK hands on

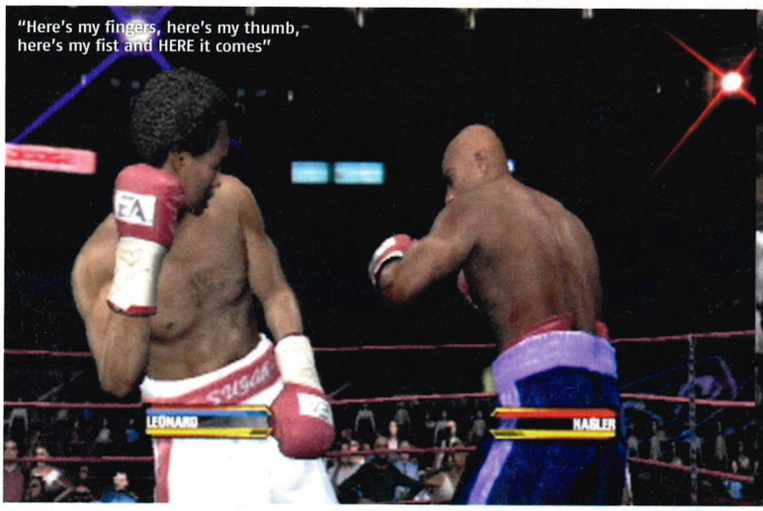
DANNY WILLIAMS AND AUDLEY HARRISON NOT INCLUDED

Bang! We take a left hook straight to the kisser. Thwack! It's followed by an uppercut that introduces our jaw to our eyebrows. On the ropes and rocking like a pensioner in a mosh pit, we get that sinking feeling as Roy Jones Jr moves in to deliver the killer blow. He cocks his right arm, winds up for a haymaker and BAM! Before he can throw it we unleash a desperate left hook that catches him wide open. Crumpled on the canvas, Roy doesn't know what day it is, never mind that the ref's just finished the ten count. It's all over. Fifth round KO. Victory snatched from the jaws of defeat. Hear that? It's the fat lady.

This is *Fight Night Round 3*. A boxing simulation that authentically captures all the power and the glory of the noble art without sacrificing the over-the-top impact and relentless punching flurries that make boxing games such a brutal joy to play. The two previous *Fight Night*s had much to recommend them and made short work of their opposition, but *Round 3* is a big step up – a heavyweight contender that will knock you flat on your unconditioned ass.

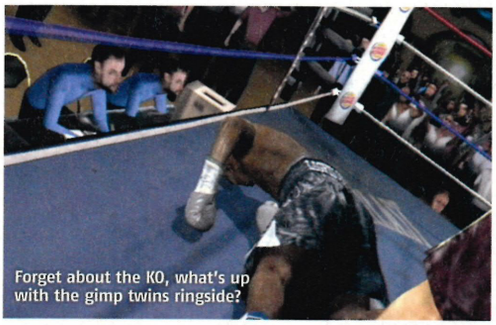


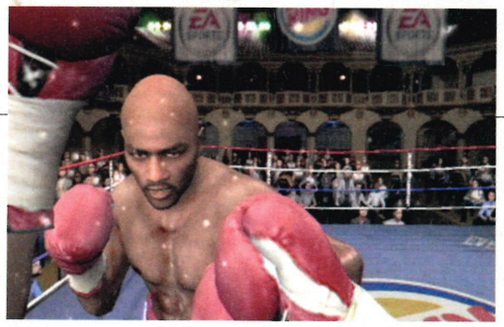
Crying and/or praying is frowned upon during professional bouts

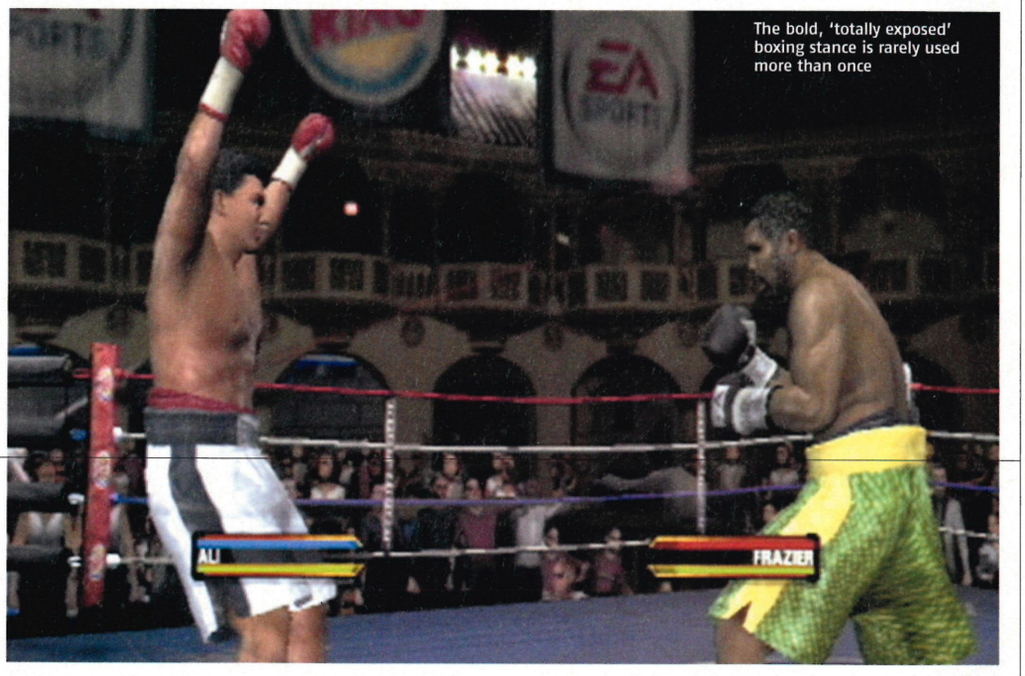


"Here's my fingers, here's my thumb, here's my fist and HERE it comes"

Bleeding from the eyes is one of those tell-tale 'stop boxing' signs


Forget about the KO, what's up with the gimp twins ringside?





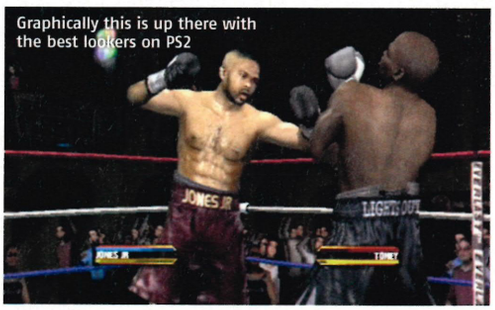
The bold, 'totally exposed' boxing stance is rarely used more than once

The first thing that strikes you (other than Roy) is the improved visuals. The boxers are ultra-realistic and responsive. You'll wince as your fighter absorbs a heavy punch – his face distorting under the weight of the juddering impact, blood spurting from his mouth in slow motion, muscles wobbling like Judy Finnegan belly dancing on a trampoline.

READY TO RUMBLE

Unlike *Fight Night Round 2*, however, you're going to have to put in some groundwork before you can unleash those pile-drivers. The previous game focused too heavily on power punching and strayed into the realm of unrealistic arcade boxing – if a fighter threw a barrage of haymakers in real-life he'd merely leave himself open to a quick counter that would knock him out of his boots. *Round 3* recognises this by putting the emphasis back on the meat and potato punches. The key to winning is wearing down your opponent with jabs and hooks, fighting tactically, and picking your punches when gaps appear in his defence. Of course, you can still go to war if that's your thing, but unless you get lucky with a big punch you're more likely to just drain your stamina and be sniffing sweaty canvas by round six.

Other fresh additions include new fighters such as


Graphically this is up there with the best lookers on PS2

Manc mauler Ricky Hatton who joins a star-studded roster that covers all the weight divisions, from current featherweight hero Marco Barrera to middleweight legends Sugar Ray Leonard and Marvin Hagler, plus The Greatest himself, Muhammad Ali. The career mode has been radically improved with a touch of good, old-fashioned rivalry. This not only adds a welcome story element but also lets you wallow in the kind of hate that fuelled the Leonard/Hagler clashes – talking trash at the press conference and even starting a brawl at the pre-fight weigh-in. It's a cracking addition and brings a real edge to the game when you finally face your opponent in the ring.

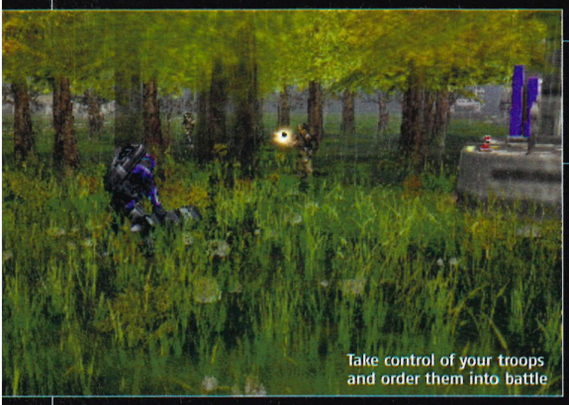
Technically, the game is superb. You can switch your stance with L1, to confuse your opponent. Bobbing and weaving, clinching and blocking are all totally instinctive. You even get a taunt and signature punch specific to each fighter. But it's the Total Punch Control system that really makes the game. Punches are thrown based on the movement of the right analogue stick – for example, to deliver a right uppercut you simply move the stick down then quickly up and to the right – which replicates the actual arm action required to throw each punch. Okay, occasionally it misreads your intentions and you'll end up delivering a left hook instead of a left jab, but we can't imagine a better system unless EA comes up with a super-advanced, motion-sensitive boxing glove controller. Expect to be wearing that for *Fight Night Round 5*. ■ LH

monitor PlayStation 2 Official Magazine UK

THE BEST BOXING GAME around has gone up a level. Superior graphics, more realistic action, a bile-spitting new rivalry mode and, as if all that isn't enough, this time it's online

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID | WARM | HOT | **BOILING** | MELTDOWN


Take control of your troops and order them into battle

PUBLISHER UBISOFT | DEVELOPER SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT | WEBSITE HTTP://FIELDCOMMANDER.STATION.SONY.COM

FIELD COMMANDER

WAR IS HELL, AND YOU'RE IN CHARGE

It's on PSP

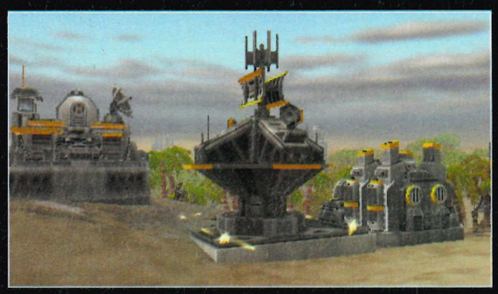
It's been a bad time for bedroom strategists, recently. Other than *Metal Gear Ac!d* there's been practically nothing new on offer for either PSP or PS2. And as *Ac!d* relied on randomly drawn cards to decide movement and attacks, it was as much about luck as it was tactics in terms of winning. *Field Commander*'s turn-based action, however, has nothing to do with chance. Directing entire armies – including infantry, armoured vehicles, planes and boats – you have to out-think and out-fight enemies across a series of grid-based war zones. Forget playing cards, this is all about the smarts.

Air units are great for fast attacks

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

The key to winning is to make good use of the environment. Mountains, forests, rivers and so on all affect the vulnerability and mobility of your troops. Cities, for example, provide a good defence against attacks, while roads let you move quickly but leave you exposed. Cities are also doubly important as a source of cash. In order for your factories to build reinforcements you need the greens, so more buildings flying your flag means more notes to spend.

Defeat the enemy and you'll get a explosive payoff



Terrain is important – bridges leave you vulnerable

Unlike most PSP titles this has some lengthy levels. One victory took us more than 40 minutes to secure, making it one for long journeys, rather than a quick hop on the bus. But it's riveting throughout. Do you secure strategically important areas and charge in for a direct fight or attack the enemies' cities, cutting off their supplies? What about a diversionary frontal attack, while a small task force sneaks into opposition territory to capture a factory, enabling you to manufacture tanks behind enemy lines? It might be heavy time-wise but it had us constantly glued to the screen, watching our ham-fisted attempts at leadership unfold. It's the amount of thought required to outwit the enemy that makes those triumphant payoffs all the sweeter. Especially when you trounce an army outnumbering you. And while it might sound a touch complicated, it's actually simple to control. Just select a unit and issue orders from drop-down menus.

"I'M HIT"

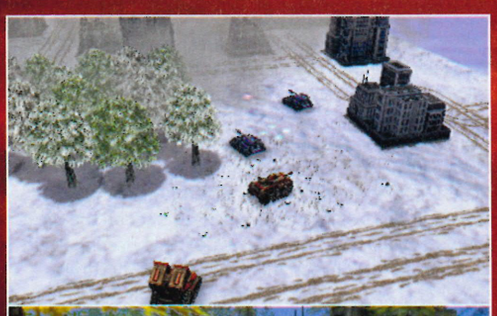
There are a few things, however, that do need sorting out. The overhead camera can stutter horribly when it zooms in for a close-up, and the AI occasionally takes its sweet time to make a decision. But to be fair, it does provide worthy opposition. One thing we definitely want to see is a clearer information display. You can only see the stats on something by selecting it, and there's no way to see the strength of all your units at once. Instead you have to check each jarhead, tank and jet individually. And examining your army one by one can make large scale campaigns difficult to plan – a brilliant strategy can be totally ballsed up because you didn't notice a crucial tank was one good kicking away from destruction. Fix the display though, and this could be strategy gold. ■ LH

monitor — PlayStation 2 Official Magazine UK

IT MIGHT SOUND like chess with tanks but this is compulsive, brainy stuff. Word is the game will miss its March release date, which should give time to fix the few niggles with the presentation

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK hands on

Each battlefield is divided into grids

Cities provide valuable cover... as long as you don't destroy them

YOU'VE GOT MAIL

The oddest multiplayer option ever?

In days of yore, before the electronic telepathy of the Internet, people used to play games like chess by post. Curiously, despite having a raft of online and WiFi options (including game sharing and the ability to download missions) *Field Commander* looks set to resurrect this trend by letting you play via email on your PSP! Just *imagine* the excitement.

ALSO 1 MONTH AWAY...

PUBLISHER CAPCOM | DEVELOPER CAPCOM
WEBSITE WWW.CAPCOM-EUROPE.COM

ONIMUSHA: DAWN OF DREAMS

DAWN OF NIGHTMARES, MORE LIKE

It looks like Capcom may have broken '*musha*

Playing this, the fourth game in Capcom's much-loved demon-battling samurai series, it's hard to see who exactly the developer is trying to appeal to. On this evidence, it's certainly not the fans. Jettisoning the previous games' fixed camera viewpoint must have felt like the right thing to do, but it's also robbed *Dawn* of the series' trademark breathtaking visuals. Worse still, with camera adjustment and attacks both on the right side of the Dual Shock, it's impossible to control them at the same time, making things much less user-friendly. Throw in uncharacteristically crashing music together with irritatingly Japano-RPG-style character design and we're growing increasingly alarmed at the direction *Onimusha*'s rebirth is taking. We hate to say it, but perhaps the game should have stuck to its guns and gone out on a high... ■ PF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK hands on

Suddenly there's too much on-screen info

We're beginning to side with the demons...

HOT OR NOT?

Onimusha reborn has thrown away the series' appeal

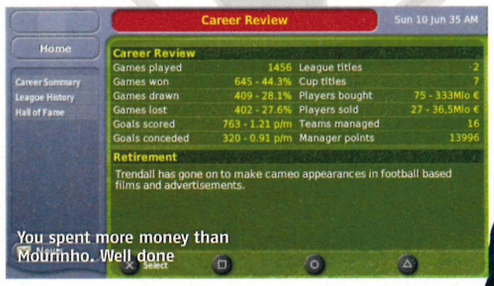
TEPID | WARM | HOT | BOILING | MELTDOWN

PUBLISHER **SEGA** | DEVELOPER **SPORTS INTERACTIVE** | WEBSITE **WWW.FOOTBALLMANAGER.CO.UK**

FOOTBALL MANAGER HANDHELD

GENIUS MANAGEMENT GAME GOES MINIATURE

PSP in one hand, meat and two veg in the other... and the fans can't tell!



Unless you've spent the last decade wearing a blindfold and pouring molten wax into your ears, you'll need no introduction to *Football Manager*. If you've no interest in footy, its endless reams of figures are as dull as an evening in with Katie Melua. But to anyone who has ever bought a replica kit or owns a mug adorned with their club's badge, it's a ticket to a dream world where you can finally prove yourself a better manager than Bryan Robson. Then again, isn't everyone?

If the PC version keeps you up all night desperately trying to discover that elusive 30-goal-a-season centre forward, then life as you know it is about to change forever. We've played *Football Manager Handheld* and it's just as addictive as its personal computer cousin. In order to cram everything that's good about this beautiful game onto a tiny UMD, only seven leagues are playable (English, Scottish, Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch and German) and there's a maximum of 32 players per squad. But you'll hardly notice once your first couple of friendlies are out of the way and your side is gearing up for the opening game of the season.

FOOTBALL FOCUS

Unlike the PC version, there's no cursor. Instead, various options are mapped to each of the face buttons, dependent on what you're doing at any given time. This feels weird for around two seconds, until you realise that it makes the game far easier to pick up and play than its mouse-jockey counterpart. Presentation is clean and crisp, despite the massive amount of text on show, so everything from arranging transfers to picking your side is easy to get involved with.

Matches themselves are reminiscent of those found in *Championship Manager* games during the late '90s. With no 2D view, it's text-based commentary all the way. This makes the individual incidents that take place over the 90 virtual minutes all the more gripping, because you don't know if a shot's gone in until it hits the net – or smacks a fan in Row Z, if you're playing the big man up top for Liverpool.

To further separate *FMH* from the realm of PC, the developers have added cheat modes that can be unlocked by winning trophies or achieving other feats. Our source tells us you might be able to unlock an Abramovich-style sugar daddy who'll pay for you to stump up the cash for the world's finest players. Which means there's still hope of Ronaldinho turning out for West Brom. ■ **BW**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK hands on

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ETA 1 month
Mar 2006

PUBLISHER **UBISOFT** | DEVELOPER **UBISOFT MONTREAL** | WEBSITE **WWW.SPLINTERCELL.COM/UK/**

SPLINTER CELL ESSENTIALS

IS FISHER'S 'MINI-ME' UP TO THE JOB?

PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK hands on

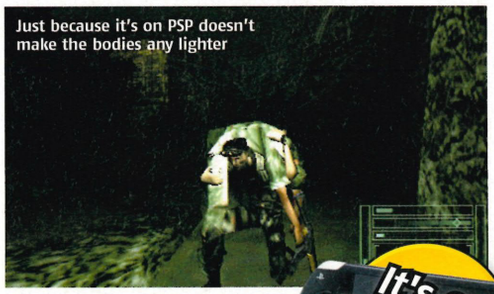
We have to admit we were worried about Sam's PSP debut. With the exception of *Liberty City Stories*, most of the established PS2 'names' haven't enjoyed the transition to handheld. But within a few minutes our doubts faded. *Essentials* seems like classic *Cell*. That's because it's been built entirely around the machine's capabilities. The controls, levels, and especially camera, have all been fine tuned to suit portable play.

For example, the episodic levels – cherry-picking choice moments from Fisher's history – mean you don't get lost in lengthy, contrived plots. You just get quick bursts of condensed *Splinter Cell* action – rescuing Shetland from Colombian Mercenaries; planting explosives on a cargo ship or spying on arms deals with a laser mic. Like Sam, the gameplay gets in, does the job and gets out. The level design is similarly well thought out, with smaller areas dropping you straight into some top class Special Ops manoeuvres. It's perfect pick-up-and-play fodder but at the same time oozes depth and atmosphere thanks to great looking visuals and sound (including a *Chaos Theory* influenced soundtrack).

LITTLE SNEAK

The biggest surprise though is the camera. It *never* moves unless you yank it around yourself using the ◎ button. At first this seems totally wrong. No matter how much you run around, the view remains steadfastly locked. But then it clicks. Sam is always focused on specific objectives – kill that guard, reach that shadow – so once you've set the camera you don't need it to move. It's an elegant solution and perfect for *Splinter Cell*'s methodical brand of stealth. It is absolutely useless, though, should you get caught. If you're not already looking the right way when hell breaks loose, you're dead. A 'target nearest person shooting my face' button would be useful, but then again, you're not meant to get caught are you? The controls have also been simplified to fit the format (each direction on the D-pad has two functions depending on whether you tap or hold it) and Sam's equipment is immediately accessible, with no menus or fuss.

Combined, these tweaks make for strong Third Echelon action. Hunting down mercenaries from the shadows or nailing perfect headshots through an open window is just as exciting at 1/8th scale. We'd like to see faster loading times and, until we play the whole game, we can't be sure how long it will last. (We're still smarting from *King Kong's* single-sitting lifespan.) But this is currently shaping up to be the next unmissable experience on PSP. ■ **LH**



It's on PSP

monitor PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

THIS IS DEEP, SATISFYING and perfectly adapted. It's so well designed it feels like it was always meant to be this small. We haven't been this excited about a PSP game since *Liberty City Stories*

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID | WARM | HOT | **BOILING** | MELTDOWN

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PUBLISHER **CODEMASTERS** | DEVELOPER **CODEMASTERS/BROADSWORD** | WEBSITE **WWW.CODEMASTERS.CO.UK/GAMES/GAMEID=1832**

DANCE FACTORY

STOP MOANING ABOUT THE MUSIC... IT'S YOURS

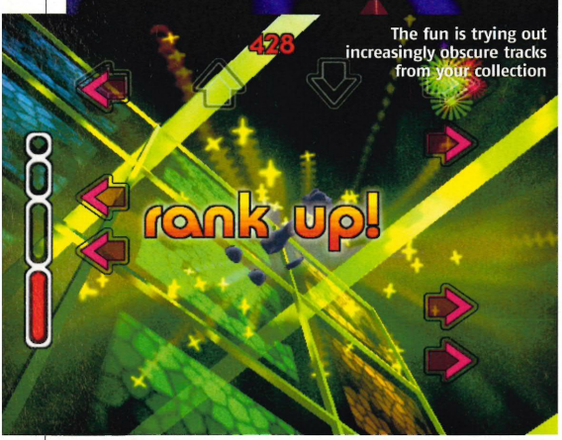
PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK left feet on

Dance Factory is one of the most ambitious games ever to get the green light for PS2. No, seriously. Other than looking like a tool as you 'throw shapes' to Girls Aloud's latest, what's the worst thing about dancemat games? Yup, the music. The track listings are limited *and* rarely achieve all-killer no-filler status. Not so here. With *Dance Factory* you can custom create unique dance challenges with *any* track from *any* of your own CDs. Want to get down to the suicidal hillbilly mumblings of Bonnie Prince Billy? You've only got yourself to blame, but go for it. Think that Cradle Of Filth has been unfairly overlooked by the rhythm action genre? Time to redress the balance. It really is entirely up to you.

THE SCIENCE BIT

So how does it work? Well, for the game to be able to make arrows float up your screen in time to a stern drum 'n' bass beat, the developers had to create a game that could be squeezed into the PS2's 32MB of internal memory (which is less than an average mobile phone) in its entirety. Once loaded, you can pop the game disc out and forget about it, while you shuttle your CD collection in and out of your PS2. And once Maximo Park is in the tray, what then? Sadly there's no Gracenote-style disc recognition deal but you do get the following: an EyeToy-assisted, full-body dance mode, a calorie-counting fitness mode, and an endurance mode in which you get progressively higher grades as you dance through an entire album. There's also the ability to record your own dance routines to a track, which you can then challenge your mates to complete. Hell, you even get a puzzle game called Cubrix to play while the software analyses your music, and a bizarre little function that 'finds' monsters that live on your CDs, and gets them to dance with you (see "Let's Try The Mars Volta Next...").

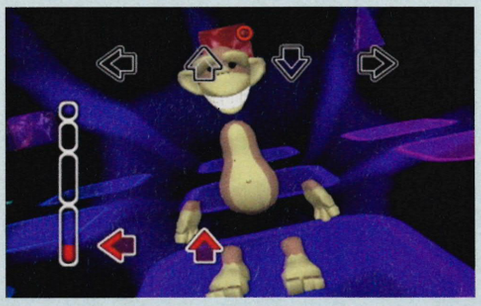
Naturally, something's got to give, and in this case it's anything approaching graphical polish. That said, we couldn't wait to give the music recognition software a thorough workout. See below for what we discovered. [Other than our own total lack of rhythm.] ■ **PF**



"LET'S TRY THE MARS VOLTA NEXT..."

Can *Dance Factory* create dance steps from anything? And what monsters will the game find on your CDs? We test the tech

ARTIST: The Prodigy
TRACK: Out Of Space
ACCURACY OF DANCE ROUTINE: A great start. Pounding rave classic sends a blizzard of beat perfect arrows up the screen. **9/10**
MUSIC MONSTER: With spooky relevance, we get a green alien that dances with a Maxim-like swagger.



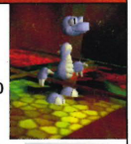
ARTIST: We Are Scientists
TRACK: Lousy Reputation
ACCURACY OF DANCE ROUTINE: Being feted by Mojo, NME and Uncut doesn't seem to impress *Dance Factory*. Dance arrows are often wildly off beat despite euphoric indie synth rock. **5/10**
MUSIC MONSTER: A listless, gurning monkey with enormous ears.

ARTIST: The Editors
TRACK: Munich
ACCURACY OF DANCE ROUTINE: Good, but some confusion as software seems to be having problems deciding whether it wants to follow the beat or the bass. **7/10**
MUSIC MONSTER: Looks like Sharleen Spiteri in a pink French maid's outfit with white stilettos. Not necessarily in a good way.

ARTIST: Teach Yourself Spanish
TRACK: Lesson Eight
ACCURACY OF DANCE ROUTINE: Predictably, *Dance Factory* es no muy bien at reconciling native Spanish conversation and the medium of dance. Still, worth a try. **2/10**
MUSIC MONSTER: A stoned-looking blue bear wearing a beret (Catalan?). Seems to be concentrating on the lesson, mind.

monitor — PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

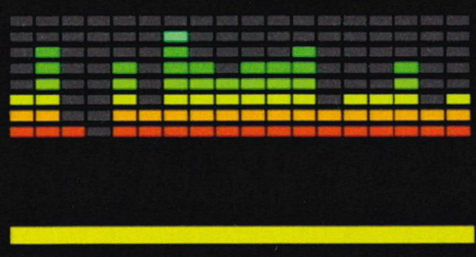
A DANCE GAME with an unlimited track listing sounds incredible. In practice, though, we fear the PS2's memory may be stretched too far. There's still a little time to perfect the recognition software though...



TEPID | WARM | HOT | BOILING | MELTDOWN

creating dance — dance factory

Back in the '80s we'd have been marvelling at these graphics unironically



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PUBLISHER SONY | DEVELOPER SONY | WEBSITE WWW.PLAYSTATION.CO.UK

TALKMAN

HOW DO YOU TEST THE WORLD'S FIRST PSP-BASED TRANSLATOR? BY GOING TO JAPAN

When we were kindly sent a Japanese edition of *Talkman*, ideas were rife about how to try out the PSP phrasebook. "Translate the *Phantasy Star* trailer," suggested one wag; "Hassle foreign students at the university," suggested another; "Wander the streets looking for people who *might* be Japanese and then try talking to them" was well out in front as an option. But then, mercifully, our dignity was spared when we were offered a trip to Japan to check out a different game. If things went wrong – as they inevitably would – at least we'd never see any of the people involved again. Perfect. We stuffed a travel plug for the battery charger in our luggage and headed off.

TEST SUBJECT ONE: ON THE PLANE

After making sure that our PSP's stewardess-upsetting WiFi settings were turned off, we decided to get straight to work. *Talkman* takes an awfully long time to load – especially if you're using it for the first time and have to input login details. So if you spot someone you'd like to chat up, sorry, chat *to*, then it's best to load it up and find the section you want in advance (there are 28, including Shopping, On The Golf Course, On The Beach and Skiing). We wisely pick On The Plane, and get a few funny looks as we say: "I'd like a coffee, please" into the bolt-on mic that comes with the game. As *Talkman* recognises keywords, this brings up several options involving the words "Please", "Like" and "Coffee" – as well as, bizarrely, "How far is it?" Fortunately, our phrase is there, so we press the button and Max, the beaky face of the game, repeats it to the friendly stewardess, who rewards us with a steaming cup of horrible black sludge. Over the next two hours, we bombard her with requests for orange juice, water and nuts, before retiring to the Game mode when she eventually starts to look annoyed. This has two settings: Listening lets you listen to four phrases and pick the one that Max repeats from a list, but Pronunciation is much more fun – it gives you a basic word or phrase like "Arigato" (thank you), then grades you on how well you pronounce it via the mic. It's absolutely amazing, if perhaps a bit irritating for the people sitting next to us.

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK hands on

TEST SUBJECT TWO: TRENDY TOKYO TYPES

On our first night out in Tokyo, we encounter *Talkman*'s first limitation: steal-ability. Though Japan's famously safe, we're really not all that confident about waving our precious, MP3-laden PSP around on the street, so the Nightlife section proves almost worthless and we have to get past a bouncer on our own. Once we're in a club though, things start to look up. We spot this couple looking at our PSP curiously, and decide to tell the man he's got nice hair. Unfortunately, *Talkman* doesn't recognise this – despite having over 3,000 phrases – and we're forced to settle for "You're very pretty", which

might give the wrong impression. It works though, and when Max shouts "Kawaii!", we remember it as "cute!" from the Listening game and we soon get chatting. Handily, *Talkman* also includes an 'Ask for reply' option that brings up a range of answers to your questions for your foreign friends to pick, that's then translated into English. This all works well, and the only bit of confusion comes when our new pals adjust the 'Change Emotional Level' option. Instead of, for instance, saying "I'd really, really like it if you had a drink," Max just says: "Would you like a drink – extremely!" and then does a little dance and throws confetti around. At the end of the evening, we put our new pals on the Friend Map – you stick a little flag into a map, input their details and create a *South Park*-style caricature of their face, then record a message from them to play back later.

TEST SUBJECT THREE: COSPLAY LUNATIC

We bump into a guy who's dressed as M Bison from *Street Fighter 2*. He's a *nutcase*. And we instantly want to get a photo of him. But this guy was so in character that he just stared at a wall in between snaps, and we honestly thought that if we showed him a talking bird on a PSP he might kill us with his hands. So, instead we went for the harder option – saying it ourselves. Picking "Can I take a photo?" from the menu, we listened and tried to copy it. The thing is, it's tougher than it sounds – although *Talkman* will repeat phrases as often as you like, it won't write them out phonetically. This is apparently to encourage learning. But it worked, we got our message across and Bison here posed for a snap. Although, given that we were holding a camera, grinning and nodding, he might have worked it out anyway.

CONCLUSIONS

Talkman's excellent at what it does, if a bit short on complimentary options. We'll have a full review of the European edition next month, which includes Spanish, Italian, French, German and, obviously, Japanese. ■ JS

monitor PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

EMBARRASSMENT FACTOR ASIDE, *Talkman*'s an amazing achievement and surprisingly fun to mess about on. It won't beat a phrasebook, but we're looking forward to having a go on the Euro version

TEPID | WARM | HOT | BOILING | MELTDOWN

It's on PSP

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WEBSITE **WWW.US.PLAYSTATION.COM/CONTENT/OGS/SCUS-97501/SITE**

APE ESCAPE 3

ARMY OF MONKEYS RESPONSIBLE FOR TV BEING RUBBISH? SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT

PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK hands on

That's one transvestite monkey that's going straight to the zoo. And for some counselling

Spectre, the evil leader of the bulb-headed apes is back. His latest attempt at world domination involves using mind-numbing TV programmes to hypnotise the world's population – normal TV, then. As a result, each level pokes fun at popular films and programmes. For example, we explored a castle where some primate *Beauty And The Beast* wannabes were dancing in the ballroom. This new twist hasn't changed the monkey catching, though. The right analogue stick still controls the net, slinging it in 360 degrees to trap your quarry. And you can also map a collection of helpful primate-trapping gadgets to the face buttons, with returning classics like stun batons and monkey-detecting radars being joined by the ability to morph into different forms. In our case, we transformed into an armoured knight with a large protective shield. The question is, will such a simple gameplay tweak keep things fresh the third time round? We have our doubts. ■ PF

New tricks include the ability to assume other forms, like this armoured knight

HOT OR NOT?

Entertaining but familiar ape-chasing action

TEPID | WARM | HOT | BOILING | MELTDOWN

PUBLISHER **RISING STAR GAMES** | DEVELOPER **KUJU** | WEBSITE **HTTP://WWW.KUJU.COM**

PILOT ACADEMY

It's on PSP

"DON'T PANIC, BUT DOES ANYONE ON THE PLANE OWN A PSP?"

Remember all that post-9/11 panic about flight sims being used to train terrorists? Well, there's no need to worry about Osama squatting in his cave playing PSP. In *Pilot Academy* the emphasis is on fun. You start off in small planes, before graduating to giant passenger aircraft. Handily, the lessons branch fairly early on into civilian and military training modes so you can continuously flip between the two, or just specialise in one field. Civilian missions take place in Pacific and European locations, while many of the military sorties are set in the Middle East, although they're being vaguely labelled as 'desert missions' for now. Each area covers a huge 64 square kilometres, so there's lots of sky to mess around in.

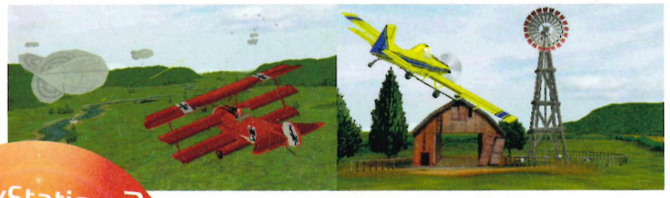
But there's no point having access to all these planes if you can't have a bit of fun with them, and here's where the missions mode comes into play. These bite-sized scenarios are the real meat of the game, and they'll really test the skills you've learnt. Tasks involve landing 747s in stormy weather (complete with Hollywood-style twisters), storming barns in Sopwith Camels, and taking out AA guns in fighter jets. An extremely simple control system – the PSP's nub stick moves the plane, while Ⓐ and ◎ control the throttle – enables you to start dumping your passengers' G&Ts in their laps with ill-advised loop-the-loops almost immediately.

PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK hands on

SKY HIGH WIFI

There's also a comprehensive multiplayer mode on offer here, and your mates don't even need to own a copy of the game to participate in the eight-player deathmatches. The emphasis is very much on fun, and we reckon communal dogfighting should be a laugh. The only real turbulence on the horizon is the game's lack of personality. We're not suggesting that you should be guided through your flying by a sexy trolley dolly wearing nothing but stockings and packets of nuts, but despite its bright looks, the game still seems a bit frosty. Much like those stewardesses on Virgin Atlantic. "No, sir *hasn't* had enough bloody marys." ■ **JH**

"Uh oh, looks like *both* pilots had the fish"



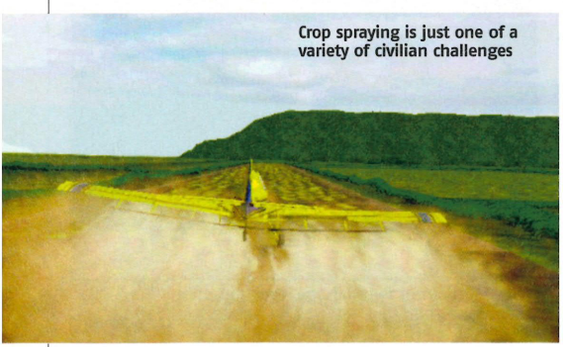
Spend bus journeys executing bombing missions in the Pacific

monitor — PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING TO SEE a new genre on PSP, and *Pilot Academy* delivers enough variety and depth to keep planespotters sated. An injection of personality wouldn't go amiss, though

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN


Crop spraying is just one of a variety of civilian challenges

COMBAT TO THE FUTURE!

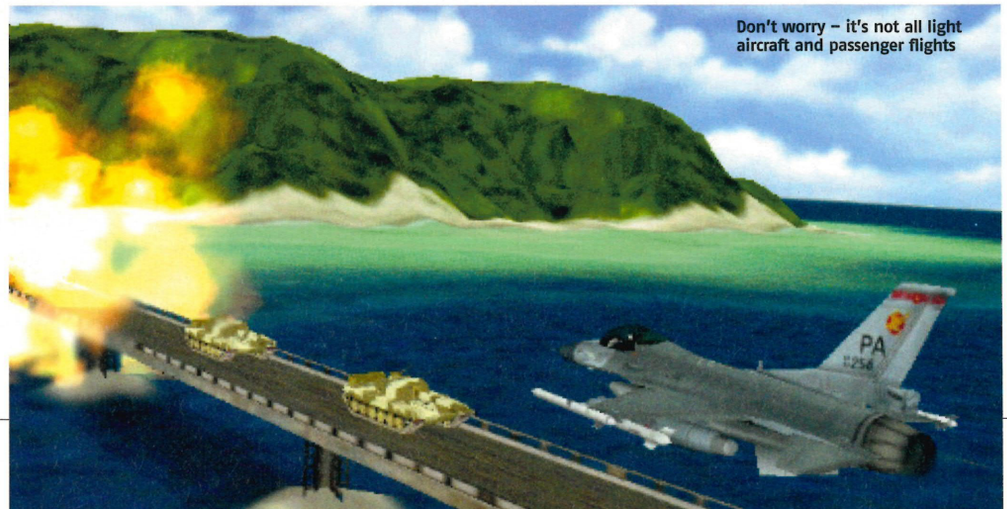
The military missions in *Pilot Academy* are divided into four eras. Feel free to choose your own homoerotic callsign

WW1
Biplanes are the order of the day as you face off against the Hun in a plane that's little more than a stunt kite with a propeller.

WW2
Clamber into a spitfire for toodle-pipping, moustache-twirling death from above. Note: pipe smoking compulsory.

COLD WAR
It's time to show Ivan who's the top gun around here. This is the era for all you budding Mavericks, as the military tech gets serious. You can be our wingman, etc.

PRESENT
These days, wars last about four hours. It's all about using stealth technology to get in, blow up the locals, and get out in time for the next episode of *Lost*.


Don't worry – it's not all light aircraft and passenger flights

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PUBLISHER **EIDOS** | DEVELOPER **ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS** | WEBSITE **WWW.EIDOSINTERACTIVE.CO.UK**

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URBAN CHAOS: RIOT RESPONSE

WE'RE NOT PREDICTING A RIOT, WE'RE ACTIVELY SEEKING ONE

The coppers in *The Bill* don't realise how good they've got it. A regular day usually presents nothing more threatening than a firm shove from a purse-snatcher, some light "Ello, ello, elloing" followed by a roasting from the guv. That lot would be dead in five minutes in this game. As the not-so-subtle name suggests, all hell has broken loose and the city's collapsing thanks to constant gang warfare. If a policeman makes a balls-up of an arrest, he's likely to be set on fire, mutilated with hatchets and then shot (just to be sure). Good job for Zero-T then, a task force whose approach to civil unrest is to charge in armed to the hilt, protected by the added bonus of a man-sized riot shield.

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

Take the intro level for example. Our police station is overrun by a gang called the Burners and we need to get in there to provide support. Trouble is, the building is surrounded so we have to crash through the blockade in the back of a riot van. Once we've skidded to a halt and the criminals stuck to the bonnet have fallen off, the doors are booted open and we come out shooting. As the bad guys start pouring over the walls, we switch from the brilliantly meaty pistol to a sawn-off shotgun. (Not standard police issue, admittedly.) Both barrels is enough to send most thugs flying – albeit occasionally with an annoyingly sluggish camera-zoom.

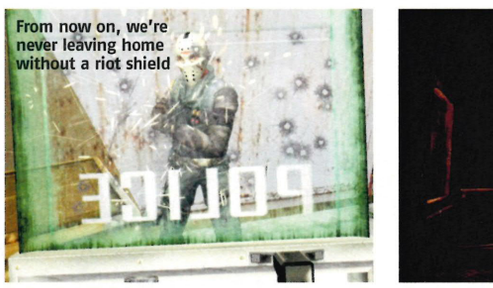
The pace is relentless, with cops yelling for back-up and covering fire. There's *lots* of shouting. In fact, it's most reminiscent of war shooters like *Brothers In Arms* or *Call Of Duty*, except the enemy are yelling in English rather than German – charming phrases like: "I'm gonna burn you *and* your family" or "I'm going to cut you, you motherf..." The BBFC examiner can expect a long day.

THE HEAT IS ON

The standout moment though, is a rescue attempt in a burning building. Moving through the smoky, blackened interior, we've only got the light from the glowing embers and our torch to guide us. While scanning for survivors, a fireman introduces us to backdrafts – which are indicated by spiralling smoke around the bottom of a closed door. The fire on the other side has used up all the oxygen, gone out and left a room full of super-heated gas, ready to explode as soon as it tastes fresh air. Open the door and it's like a jet engine going off in your face. Thankfully, our shield is also flameproof – preventing our man's face from being sizzled like fajitas.

There's loads more we could mention, like the bonus missions to earn experimental weaponry – fully automatic shotgun anyone? Or the live-action news bulletins between levels that are so realistic we had to check that no one had changed the channel on the TV while we weren't looking. Not to mention the cops vs robbers online options. Who'd have thought the collapse of law and order could be such a laugh? Oh... ■ **LH**

A quick flick of the D-pad and this lot will douse any fire you want



monitor — PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

IT MIGHT HAVE A MADE-FOR-TV feel compared to *Black*'s triple-A Hollywood sheen, but this is still shaping up to be a quality shooter. Its fast, rewarding gunplay and sharp looks mean you have the right to get excited

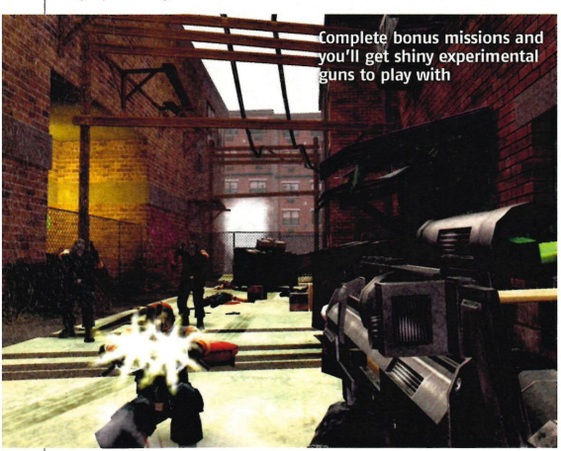
HOT OR NOT?

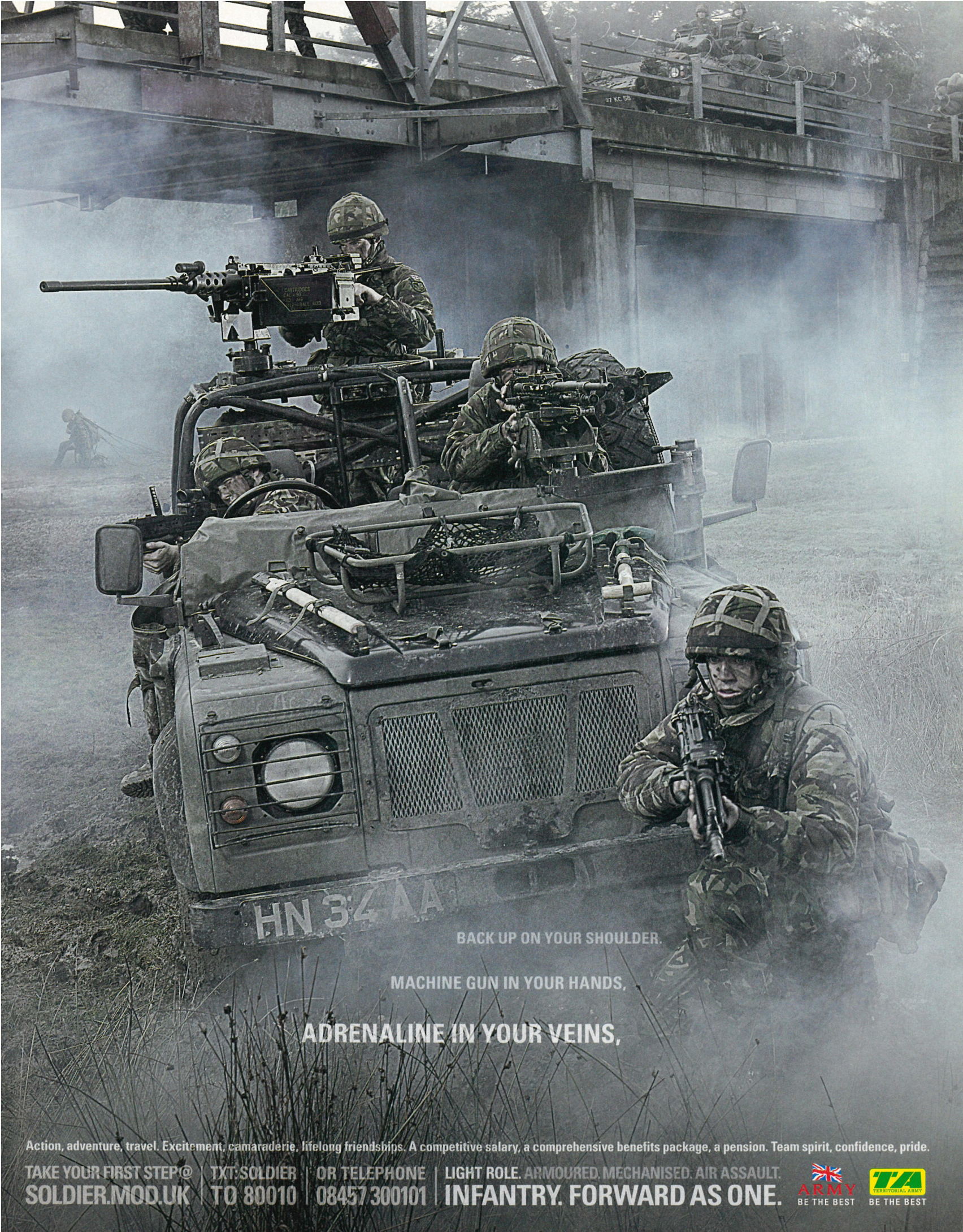
TEPID | WARM | HOT | **BOILING** | MELTDOWN

From now on, we're never leaving home without a riot shield

Indoor fireworks – surely the stupidest idea of all time. Well, before Gizmondo

Complete bonus missions and you'll get shiny experimental guns to play with





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YAKUZA

SEGA ENTERS THE DRAGON

It used to be called *Ryu Ga Gotoku*, it's made by the guys behind *Super Monkey Ball*, many see it as the spiritual successor to Dreamcast favourite *Shenmue*, and others have touted it as the Japanese *Grand Theft Auto*. So what's the real story behind Sega's hard-boiled face rearranger?

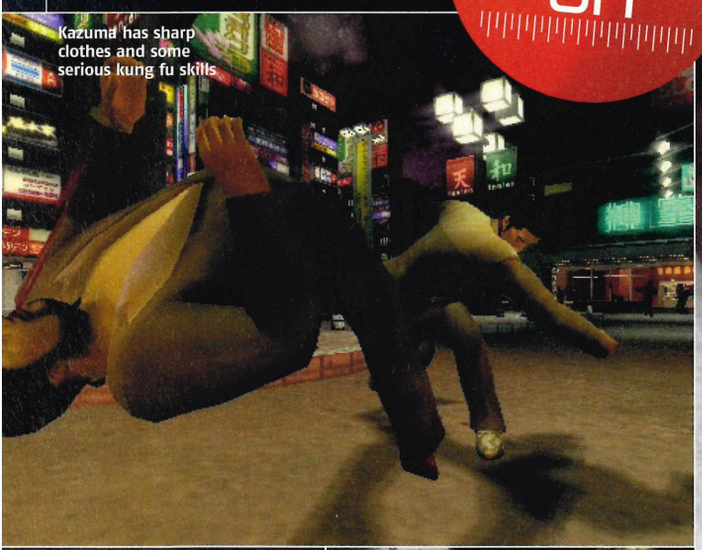
Well, having spent a potentially unhealthy amount of time with a deeply confusing Japanese version of the game, these are the facts we were able to decipher between bouts of ferocious hand-to-face combat. Your character is a Yakuza heavy – the Japanese Mafia – by the name of Kazuma Kiyuu (he'll probably be called something like Barry Fist in the English translation) who finds himself in jail having taken the rap for the murder of his boss – a crime actually committed by his girlfriend and best pal.

After a brief spell playing Mah-Jong in the penitentiary, Kazuma is released and falls back into the seedy underworld he left behind, where things have taken a turn for the worse. What's the truth behind his boss's death, and who stole the ten million yen out of the gang's safety deposit box? The answers are lurking within *Yakuza* and you'll need to crack some heads to find them.

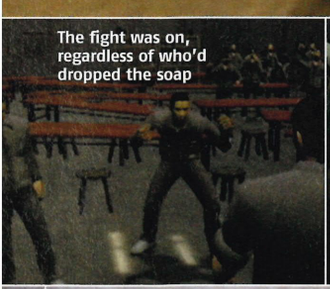
EASTERN PROMISE

Combat is the most exciting part of the game, because the fighting system is so well implemented. Unlike recent ham-fisted scrappers like *Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance* and *Crime Life*, *Yakuza* actually works as a third-person brawler because the combat is kept relatively simple. You

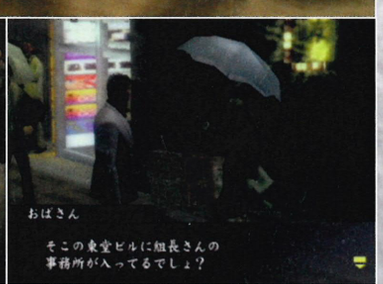
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK hands on



Kazuma has sharp clothes and some serious kung fu skills

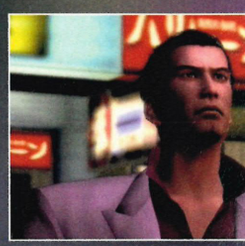


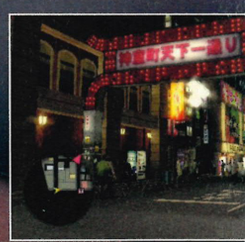
The fight was on, regardless of who'd dropped the soap

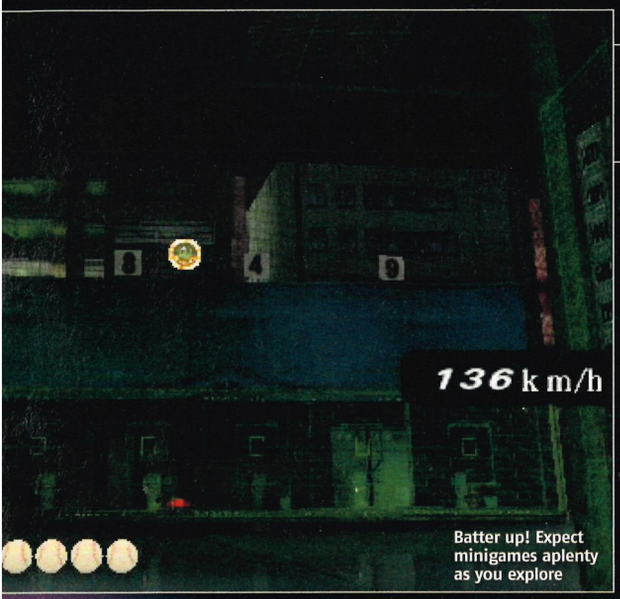


"I'll have a number 34 with fried torment and a large bag of pain, please"

Give these chumps a face full of fist and send them away sobbing

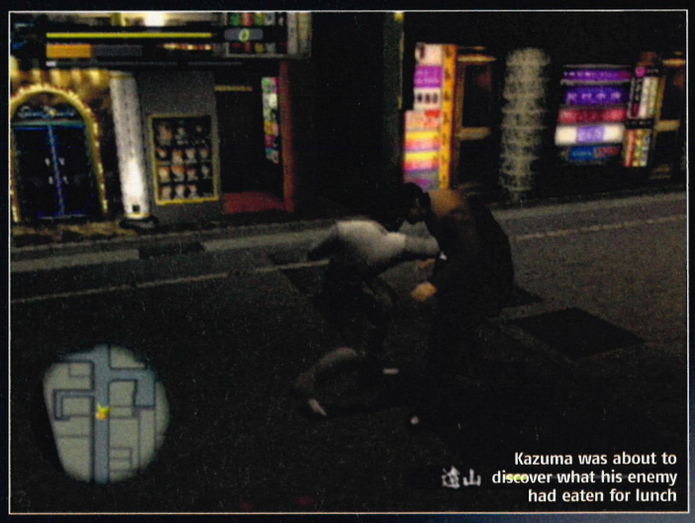






Batter up! Expect minigames aplenty as you explore

The breakdancing competition was heating up


Kazuma was about to discover what his enemy had eaten for lunch

can punch, kick and pull off combos by pressing the appropriate buttons, or you can grab your enemy and start pummelling them from close range with a flurry of headbutts and rabbit punches. Anyone looking to keep their enemy at a distance can take advantage of the various items – bottles, chairs, bins – that lay strewn around the city streets.

Special moves prove especially satisfying because they're also sensitive to the environment. (Not in the whale-saving sense.) Pull one off next to a wall and Kazuma will slam his enemy into the brickwork. If he's by a desk, he'll ram his opponent's nose into it and then shove the dazed body to the floor. It may all sound clichéd, but it works beautifully in practice and gives you an enormous sense of power.

PLEASANT DIVERSIONS

Outside the kidney tenderising and main adventuring demanded by the game's plot, there are plenty of side missions and mini-games on offer to ensure *Yakuza* never becomes dull. Our Japanese might be a little rusty, but we're pretty sure some of the ladies in the game world fell for our character's roguish charms, because they started sending saucy text messages to his mobile. Similarly, when some random guy in the street asked us to run an errand for him, we're pretty sure our answer was 'Sure, I'll stop hunting down the missing Yakuza millions and help find your cat'.

What with the chance to gamble, play arcade games, shop for curiosities and even play a few sports, it becomes obvious where the comparisons between *Yakuza* and *GTA* have come from. In fact, from the savage fights all the way through to the beautifully constructed neon environments, *Yakuza* is oozing potential. Let's hope that those translators are working overtime to deliver the game to these shores in the near future, because we're pretty tired of flicking through our copy of 'Japanese For Idiots' in a bid to keep the punches flying and the flirty texts rolling in. ■ **AH**

monitor PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

SEGA'S LATEST HAS THE LOOKS and the action to match. We're just hoping that the game doesn't lose any of its appeal in translation, because it could end up being a real corker

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN

BIG (MAN) IN JAPAN

Kicking ass and taking names on the mean streets of Tokyo

FIGHT!
Kazuma spends most of his waking hours karate chopping his rivals. No sign of one yet, but we're hoping for a finger-slicing minigame to resolve matters of honour.

ESCAPE!
Early on you're slung in the nick for a crime you didn't commit. Getting out is almost as preposterous as *Prison Break*. (Which, inevitably, we're also loving).

FLIRT!
No upwardly mobile hoodlum allows himself to be seen without a couple of impressionable girls on his arms. *Yakuza* is the stuff of our most improbable dreams.

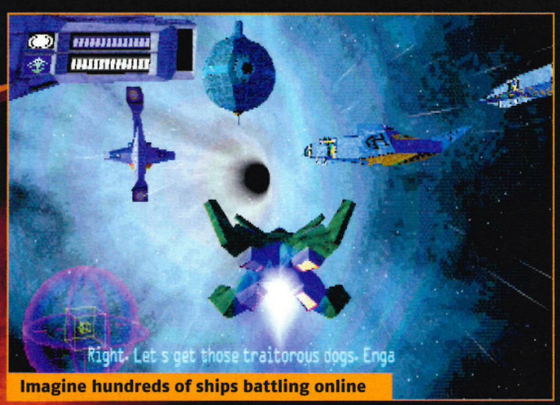
STROLL!
After conducting a particularly violent business deal, blend smoothly back into the crowd. Don't, however, start running around screaming 'what have I done?'

WIN CRAP!
Collecting little toys that come out of a Japanese vending machine may sound soft, but in Japan it's considered a macho leisure activity. That's our excuse, anyway.

PlayStation

PLAYSTATION PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES!

Sony is still 'going dark' on the PS3 launch lineup, but we started wondering whether the next-gen machine could see the return of a few PSone faves. Here, we track down sources close to the games, to find out what the chances are...



Imagine hundreds of ships battling online

Colony Wars

Publisher: Psygnosis Originally released: 1997 PSone

HISTORY: ***Colony Wars*** **(1997, PSone),** ***Colony Wars Vengeance*** **(1998, PSone),** ***Colony Wars: Red Sun*** **(2000, PSone)**

Think of the most intense, spaz-out chaotic space battles from the *Star Wars* series, remove all the other crap and you have PSone classic, *Colony Wars* – still the ultimate intergalactic blast-'em-up. A next-gen sequel is an enticing idea for the original game's lead designer, Mike Ellis. "My shopping list would include expanding confrontations from a couple of battleships and half a dozen fighters to monstrous fleet-on-fleet engagements. I'd utilise the PS3's network capabilities so players could compete and co-operate online. I'd enable them to form attack squadrons, trade caravans, pirate hordes, deep space exploration teams, construction crews, etc. I'd also introduce customisation. Players could bolt on wings, engines, weapons, etc, then add logos and paint jobs. Finally, we'd investigate various new environments that would impact how the player proceeds. Gas clouds, real asteroid fields, solar storms in space."

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 90%

Good news? We've heard strong rumours that people very high up at Sony would love to see it happen.

Fear Effect

Publisher: Eidos Originally released: 2000 PSone

HISTORY: ***Fear Effect*** **(2000, PSone),** ***Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix*** **(2001, PSone),** ***Fear Effect Inferno*** **(PS2, canned)**

Like *Blade Runner* re-imagined as a sleazy anime sex romp, the *Fear Effect* third-person adventures were a kinky, cleavage-popping sci-fi riposte to the sexless world of survival horror. And naturally we want more. According to the original game's producer, Neil Donnell, it's a distinct possibility: "As a property and concept *Fear Effect* proved extremely popular with gamers so I would say there is definitely potential for another title. PS3 should be able to realise the *Fear Effect* universe in real-time 3D. Much like *Resident Evil 4*'s move away from fixed camera angles I think the same impact could easily be achieved here. It would obviously need to include a very sophisticated and slick control interface to offer exciting gun combat." Also, we're thinking that the game's lipstick lesbo fantasy figures Hana and Rain could be transformed into, well, high-definition, photo-realistic lipstick lesbo fantasy figures.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 85%

PSone games for PSP

We want them back, but just a little bit smaller...

***Final Fantasy Tactics* (Square Soft)**

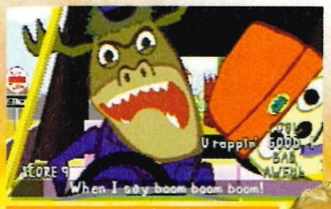
Doing away with all that boring exploration business, this classic outing for the *Final Fantasy* series concentrated solely on massive, strategic fights. Perfect brain-taxing commute-fodder.

***Metal Gear Solid* (Konami)**

Metal Gear Ac!d was a pleasant diversion, but PSP can handle a proper Snake adventure in the style of this *MGS* debut – perhaps with WiFi multiplayer VR missions. Word is it's on the way, too!

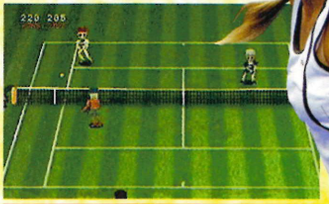
***Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* (Capcom)**

Two-player gem-stacking lunacy with unique strategy and combo elements based around the skills of the various characters. The crystal meth of puzzle gaming.



***PaRappa The Rappa* (Sony)**

Imagine bringing cartoon, rapping joy to the bus queue with this music-gaming masterwork. A PSP version could feature downloadable rap challenges for extended rhyming fun.



***Anna Kournikova's Smash Court Tennis* (Namco)**

The *Everybody's Golf* of tennis, Namco's cartoon-style sim provides perfect pick-up-and-serve action. Sharapova should star and Anna could be unlockable. Anyone for WiFi two-player?

G-Police

Publisher: Psygnosis Originally released: 1997 PSone

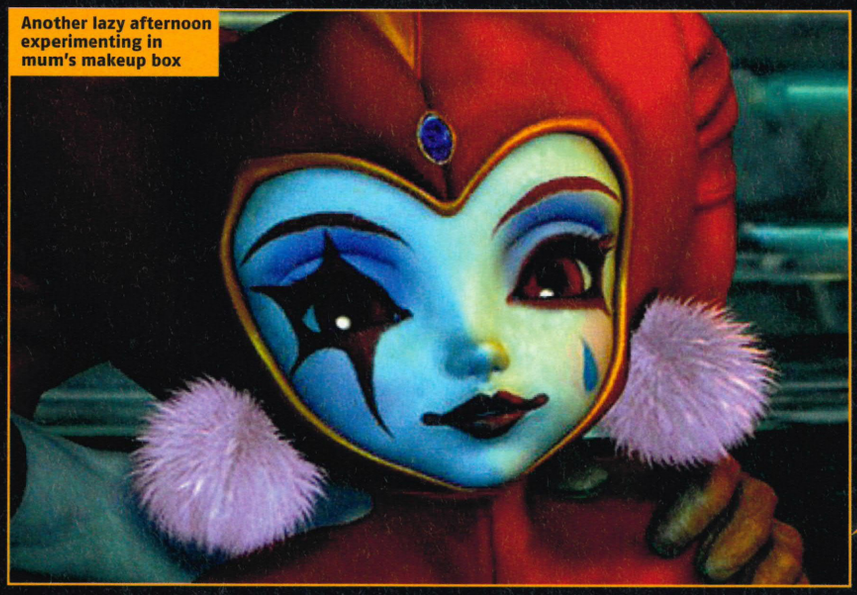
HISTORY: *G-Police* (1997, PSone), *G-Police: Weapons Of Justice* (1999, PSone)

Piloting a heavily armed police helicopter over futuristic city streets, taking potshots at killer robots, rioting civilians and anyone else who got in the way of the donut shop should have been the stuff of gaming legend. But sci-fi shooter *G-Police* demanded too much of the PSone. "Technically there's loads you could do with it on PS3," says Trevor Slater, the original Lead Artist, "No distance fogging, hundreds of reactive civilians, higher resolution screen, better AI. The real jewel would be having massively multiplayer online games though – with both the police HQ and criminal gangs populated by real people. We only touched upon the surface of the fun that can be had dog fighting in a built-up futuristic city."

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 13%

G-Police lead designer, Ross Thody, adds, "The player must be able to fly, drive and walk wherever they want. No longer would they be enclosed in the Havoc (your vehicle). They would be able to land and get involved with person-to-person policing. *G-Police* had a linear mission structure which needs to be updated by providing sandbox-style missions as well as plot-driven missions." Sadly, there's been no word of a PS3 outing for the *G-Police* – not even a rumour – and the design team has been dispersed around the industry. Looks like we'll have to look elsewhere for our futuristic heli-cop action.

From the air the city looks quiet. Too quiet...



Another lazy afternoon experimenting in mum's makeup box

Chrono Cross

Publisher: Square Soft Originally released: 1999 (Japan) 2000 (US) PSone (no UK release)

HISTORY: *Chrono Trigger* (1995, SNES), *Radical Dreamers* (1996, SNES Satellaview), *Chrono Cross* (1999, PSone)

This follow-up to the legendary SNES game *Chrono Trigger*, may look like a cobweb-ridden traditional RPG, but with its ambitious pan-dimensional storyline, uniquely accessible combat system and complete lack of random monster encounters (hurrah!) it was truly an RPG for all-comers. Square-Enix refused to comment on the likelihood of a PS3 resurrection, although the company has never ruled out continuing the series. Indeed, the name 'Chrono Brake' was registered as a trademark in 2001. However, most of the staff involved with the *Chrono* games have since moved into new positions – some went to Monolith Soft, famed for the *Xenosaga* series, while Square legend, Hironobu Sakaguchi (*Trigger* supervisor and founder of the *Final Fantasy* series) formed Mistwalker and is currently working on two Xbox 360 RPGs. Judas.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 18%

REX FEATURES

Doom

Publisher: Activision
Originally released: 1993 (PC), 1995 (PSone)

HISTORY: *Doom* (1993, PC), *Doom II* (1994, PC), *Doom 3* (2004, PC), multiple conversions to other platforms including *Doom* (1995, PSone)

This battle-scarred god of shooters has been liquidising the minds of gamers since 1993, and the latest PC version – *Doom 3* – does things with lighting and surround sound effects that could qualify as psychological torture. If ever there was a series to showcase PS3's bleeding-edge visuals, physics, audio and multiplayer capabilities, *Doom* is it. A PS3 version is a definite possibility, according to the game's creator John Carmack, with an an enhanced version of *Doom 3* looking most likely.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 89%

WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE

The Torture Garden dance mat game deserves a sequel

Thrill Kill

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Originally released: N/A (canned in 1998)

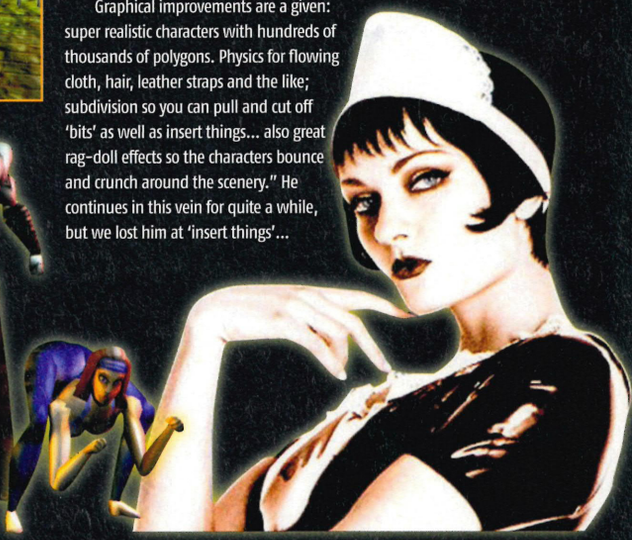
HISTORY: No sequel

LIKELIHOOD RATING: -5%

Created by Paradox Developments for Virgin Interactive, this quite stunningly nasty four-player beat-'em-up – based loosely on an ancient Mayan sport – was canned when Virgin Interactive folded in 1998. Electronic Arts bought the rights to the company's games, but strangely decided against releasing this ultra-violent sci-fi gorefest featuring special movies like the Bitch Slap, Body Split and Botched Facelift. So any chance of a change of heart from the family-friendly publisher? Joss Ellis, then development Director at Virgin, doubts it: "EA own the Intellectual Property to *Thrill Kill* and I'm certain that Paradox are explicitly 'banned' from making a sequel, prequel or other 'derivative product.'"

Luckily that doesn't stop him fantasising about a PS3 version. "Firstly, I'd go for six-controller support, plus Internet play for huge, totally chaotic brawls. I'd be tempted to make a big world to fight in... so you can pick your fights, join gangs, explore the world, pile into bars for 'Oi, did you spill my pint?' moments. More characters with downloadable and unlockable content. Maybe odd things like rottweilers and other fun pets.

Graphical improvements are a given: super realistic characters with hundreds of thousands of polygons. Physics for flowing cloth, hair, leather straps and the like; subdivision so you can pull and cut off 'bits' as well as insert things... also great rag-doll effects so the characters bounce and crunch around the scenery." He continues in this vein for quite a while, but we lost him at 'insert things'...



Duke Nukem

Publisher: Take Two Originally released: 1993 (PC)

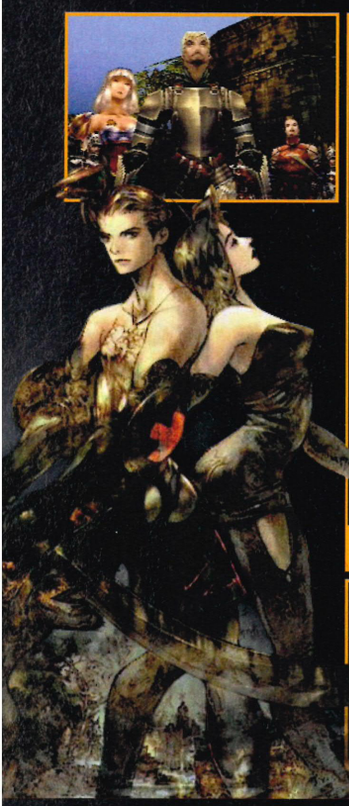
HISTORY: *Duke Nukem* (1993, PC), multiple conversions to other platforms, including *Duke Nukem* (1997, PSone), *Duke Nukem: Land Of The Babes* (2000, PSone), *Duke Nukem: Time To Kill* (1998, PSone)

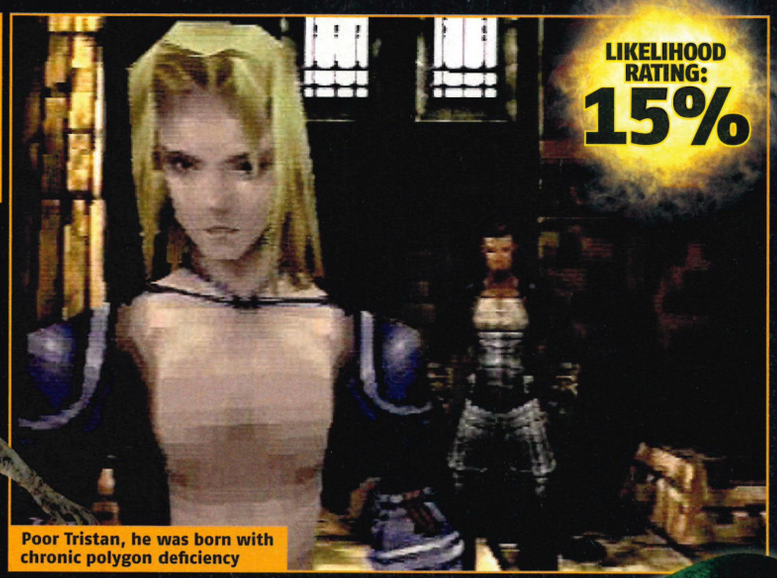
The *Duke Nukem* series is where the blood-slathered action of *Doom* hops into bed with the dirty street sleaze of *GTA*. Blasting alien invaders (and the odd stripper) into viscera-smeared oblivion is only part of the story – the ceaseless wisecracks and satirical swipes at other games and movies make *Duke* the perfect fit for PS3: post-modern, media-literate adult entertainment. Enticingly, the latest title in the series, *Duke Nukem Forever*, is in development for PC, and 3D Realms head honcho George Broussard all but confirmed a console conversion to us: "*Duke Nukem Forever* is fairly bleeding edge on the PC, so I expect it will scale to the power of next-gen consoles very well. We're also starting to look at doing original *Duke* games that focus on consoles, and I'm certain we'll move in that direction in the near future."

Sadly, he was more circumspect when asked what a PS3 version of *Nukem* would look like, preferring to talk generally. "Game design will continue to evolve and polish, but what's going to attract people to next-gen consoles will be the graphics. Games will move from blocky, rough approximations of the real world and really get close to something like a real-time *Jurassic Park*, and by doing so they will become that much more compelling and interesting."

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 82%

WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE





LIKELIHOOD RATING: 15%

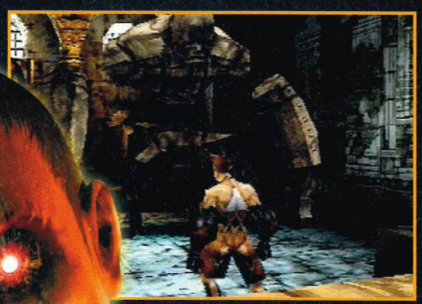
Poor Tristan, he was born with chronic polygon deficiency

Vagrant Story

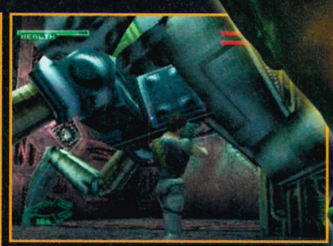
Publisher: Square Soft **Originally released:** 2000 (PSone)

HISTORY: No sequel

Despite its title, this critically idolised RPG doesn't involve staggering about in piss-streaked combat trousers, swigging Special Brew and yelling slurred threats at invisible mental demons. Instead, it's a tale of warring factions in a dark medieval realm, a triumph of adventure gaming, heavily compared with *Metal Gear Solid* for sheer yarn-spinning, plot-twisting genius. On PS3 the cinematic ambition would be beautifully re-imagined with astonishingly detailed landscapes. The wonderful character designs could be intricately re-drawn too. Rumours of a sequel have haunted games sites for years, especially as Square allegedly suggested that if US sales reached 500,000 they'd think about it. However, the figures fell short and most of the team was moved on to other projects, most notably creator Yasumi Matsuno, now in charge of *Final Fantasy XII*.



"Can't we talk about this like men. Well, cyborgs..."



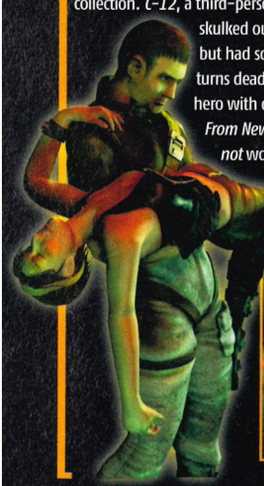
C-12: Final Resistance

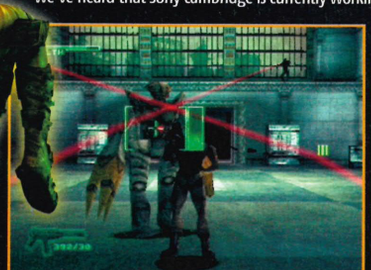
Publisher: Sony Cambridge **Originally released:** 2001 (PSone)

HISTORY: No sequels

Want a dark horse in the 'update-to-PS3' stakes? This one's blacker than a goth's nail varnish collection. *C-12*, a third-person action adventure set on a post-apocalyptic Earth, skulked out rather apologetically at the arse-end of the PSone era, but had some great ideas, including an alien invasion force that turns dead human resistance fighters into evil cyber-zombies and a hero with cool bionic powers. How could a combination of *Escape From New York*, *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* and *Resident Evil* not work on PS3? Maybe *C-12* is the, as yet, unannounced PS3 title we've heard that Sony Cambridge is currently working on.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 10%





Bushido Blade

Publisher: Square Soft Originally released: 1998 (PSone) UK (1997 US and Japan)

HISTORY: ***Bushido Blade*** **(1998, PSone),** ***Bushido Blade 2*** **(1998, PSone)**

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 19%

Energy bars are for sissies. In this ultra-authentic samurai adventure, one well-placed slash of a katana could see your character collapsing dead into a pool of his own steaming intestines. The unique fighting system also allowed you to wound and incapacitate your enemies during a bout. PS3 needs demanding, ultra-stylish experiences like this and, really, *Bushido Blade* always needed PS3.

The game's use of just one massive free-roaming level (a stupidly large ruined castle and its grounds) was far too ambitious for PSone, but could be rendered with real atmosphere – and minuscule loading times – on the new hardware. Plus, the pinpoint combat style screams out for modern analogue controls. Square-Enix is as tight-lipped as a samurai master on a remake, but the developer of the *Blade* titles, Light Weight, has moved on, squeezing out the similar *Kengo Master Of Bushido* titles for Genki as well as the god-awful *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*.

Nightmare Creatures

Publisher: Activision (Now Ubisoft) Originally released: 1998 (PSone)

HISTORY: ***Nightmare Creatures*** **(1998, PSone),** ***Nightmare Creatures II*** **(2000, PSone),** ***Nightmare Creatures 3: Angel Of Darkness*** **(as yet unreleased)**

In 1998, French developer Kalisto went all gothic with this chilling horror adventure, set in a 19th Century London of thick fog, giant rats and a virus that turns cockneys into monsters. After completing a sequel, Kalisto closed down, but founder Nicolas Gaume would love to have produced a PS3 version. "One thing we wanted to offer was more epic and involving fights, so the player could slay hordes of creatures," he says. "We could introduce innocent NPCs (impossible in *NC1* and *2* because of the PSone's lack of power) who could become infected. Also, special moves would let you catch creatures and use them to enhance your strike (perhaps by attaching a bomb to them and throwing them back into the crowd of enemies...) or feed on them to recover some health.

Special potions would let you create chain reactions among the groups of creatures, a viral infection, perhaps, that liquefies monsters after five seconds. And of course there would be a huge variety of scary creatures, very polished and dangerous... not to mention amazing bosses."

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 78%

At the moment, *NC3* is in development limbo. Ubisoft bought the brand four years ago and then took over development duties when Kalisto closed. The game was later quietly removed from Ubisoft's schedule, but rumours persist that development has been transferred to next-gen consoles.

Ten games that should never come back

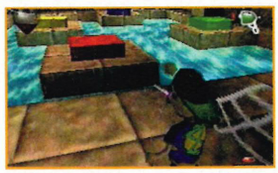
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This At Home **(Eidos Interactive)**
Ridiculous redneck beat-'em-up series – ironically from the makers of the never released *Thrill Kill*.

Army Men **(3DO)**
This idiotic military/toy series was a seemingly endless stream of effluence. Has now been blindfolded and shot in a desolate, windswept field.

BMX XXX **(Acclaim)**
Exploitative mix of extreme sports and topless videos. Shameful like those 'continental' DVDs in that sports bag at the back of your wardrobe.

The Bouncer **(Square Soft)**
Square might have the Midas touch when it comes to RPGs but their skills when it comes to beat-'em-ups are non-existent judging by this overhyped PS2 launch effort. On PS3 over our dead bodies.

Big Mutha Truckas **(Empire)**
For crimes against punning, the makers should be strapped to the biggest truck available and driven into something as subtle as the game title – a brick wall perhaps.



Rascal **(Psygnosis)**
Sloppy like a case of Delhi Belly, this platform adventure provided the death knell for UK publisher, Psygnosis before its transformation into Sony Liverpool. It was no way to go out...

This Is Football **(Sony)**
Behind *FIFA* and *PES* this series is about as relevant as a third choice goalkeeper. Fortunately, seems to have gone into 'early retirement'.

GoDai Elemental Force **(3DO)**
This sword-swinging steal-'em-up was one of the most profoundly incompetent examples of games programming ever foisted upon the public.

World Destruction League **(3DO)**
Utterly miserable vehicle combat series that managed to wheeze to two instalments before collapsing in an asthmatic heap of third-hand ideas.

Frogger **(Various)**
The dead body of this amphibian arcade classic has just been re-animated (see page 99). If Konami confirms it for PS3 we're going to start sending them frogs in the post.

The Power of '2 Too

While we're on the subject of breathing new life into neglected PSone classics, it'd be criminal to ignore the darker recesses of the PS2's swollen back catalogue. PS3 developers? Take note and get that pitch ready.

Freedom Fighters

Publisher: Electronic Arts Originally released: 2003 (PS2)

HISTORY: No sequels

The Russians-invade-New York premise may have been a relic of mid-'80s commie paranoia, but the block-rocking guerilla action was certainly fresh in this squad-based shooter. And Patrick O'Luanaigh, Design Director at Eidos, owner of developer IO, is optimistic about a PS3 sequel: "It is certainly a real possibility, and could make an excellent next-generation title." So what would *FF* look like on PS3? "I think it'd be possible to build on the superb squad control, enabling the player to lead a large mass of fighters into huge epic battles while retaining the simplicity. Fully destructible cities would help the feeling of being in a war-torn battleground, and we could do some great things online. Personally, I'd quite fancy having specialist enemy units hunting you down, and adding more depth and emotion to the storyline."

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 90%

It's *Gangs Of New York* with automatic weaponry

Manhunt

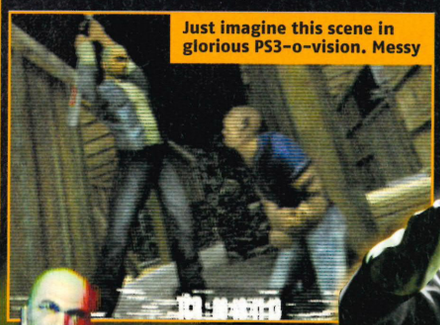
Publisher: Rockstar Originally released: 2003 (PS2)

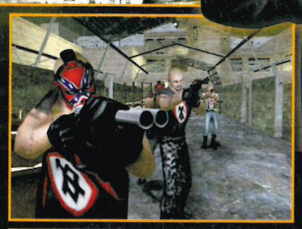
HISTORY: No sequels

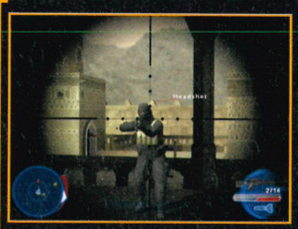
Clearly bored of producing wholesome family entertainment (*Grand Theft Auto*) Rockstar delved into the cack-stained recesses of its darkest nightmares to produce this tabloid-enraging snuff-'em-out. If you thought that carrying out gruesome murders for a voyeuristic psycho was horrific on PS2, picture it on PS3. Here, Rockstar could utilise the latest, intelligent real-time animation systems to create seamless physical reactions – bodies staggering, crumpling, and bouncing down staircases... Plus, it's not inconceivable that character models could boast anatomically correct insides – whack some chump with a nail-studded baseball bat and he'll be shedding kidneys as well as blood.

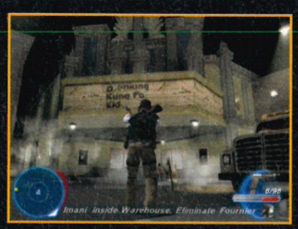
Ironically, it's the superior visual capabilities of PS3 that will likely scupper any hope of an uber-graphic *Manhunt* revival.

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 25%


Just imagine this scene in glorious PS3-o-vision. Messy







Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain

Publisher: Sony Originally released: 2004 (PS2)

HISTORY: *Syphon Filter* (1999, PSone), *Syphon Filter 2* (2000, PSone), *Syphon Filter 3* (2001, PSone), *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain* (2004, PS2), *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* (PSP, due 2006)

Following anti-terror agent Gabe Logan, the *Syphon Filter* series operates in an entertaining niche between the cinematic pretence of *MGS* and the shadowy gadget fetishism of *Splinter Cell*. The game's twin obsessions – fast-paced action and varied missions – could be perfectly realised on PS3, the Nvidia RSX graphics hardware and Cell CPU bringing a breathtaking sheen to the diverse environments while maintaining a slick framerate during shootouts. Another enjoyable *Syphon Filter* element from *Omega Strain* – shooting at specific body parts to incapacitate enemies – would benefit from more detailed character models. After all, you're not a real secret agent until you've taken off a terror chief's kneecap from 750 yards.

So, will Gabe get a PS3 mission? The game's developer – the fantastically named Sony Bend – works on nothing but *Syphon* titles so it's almost inevitable. The forthcoming PSP outing, *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* is probably just a practice run...

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 93%

Smuggler's Run

Publisher: Rockstar Originally released: 2000 (PS2)

HISTORY: *Smuggler's Run* (PS2, 2000), *Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory* (2001, PS2), *Smuggler's Run Warzones* (2002, Gamecube)

We still have fond memories of this cross-country smuggle-'em-up, so we asked ex-Angel Studios director Clinton Keith to imagine a PS3 outing for this *GTA3* precursor. "A PS3 version of *Smuggler's Run* should take greater advantage of the huge open terrain that was delivered on the PS2. Although the vistas were amazing, we didn't have enough horsepower to really fill it up with interesting things that would affect the player. The PS3 version, with higher computing power and high definition video output could present the player with much more visible information. The promise of the game would have been fully delivered on the PS3..."

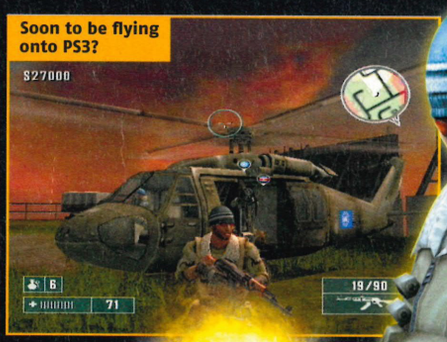
LIKELIHOOD RATING: 31%

Mercenaries

Publisher: Activision/Lucas Arts
Originally released: 2005 (PS2)

HISTORY: No sequels

More destructive than a 15-lane bypass through a National Trust park, Pandemic's free-roaming battler matched the open-ended gameplay of *GTA* with the military missions of a *Conflict* title then packed them off to North Korea. The game made stunning use of the Havok physics engine to create gut-busting crashes and explosions. Handily, the latest version of Havok is included in the PS3 developer's kit. PS3 is also capable of creating whole cityscapes 'on the fly' from complex algorithms rather than laboriously reading graphics data stored on the game disc. Not only does this allow for larger environments, it also means *totally* destructible architecture. Reports from the US say it's already in development. See: we always end on a song.



Soon to be flying onto PS3?

LIKELIHOOD RATING: 97%

THANK YOU: NICK HARPER, CLAIRE GARVIE, ALISON BEASLEY

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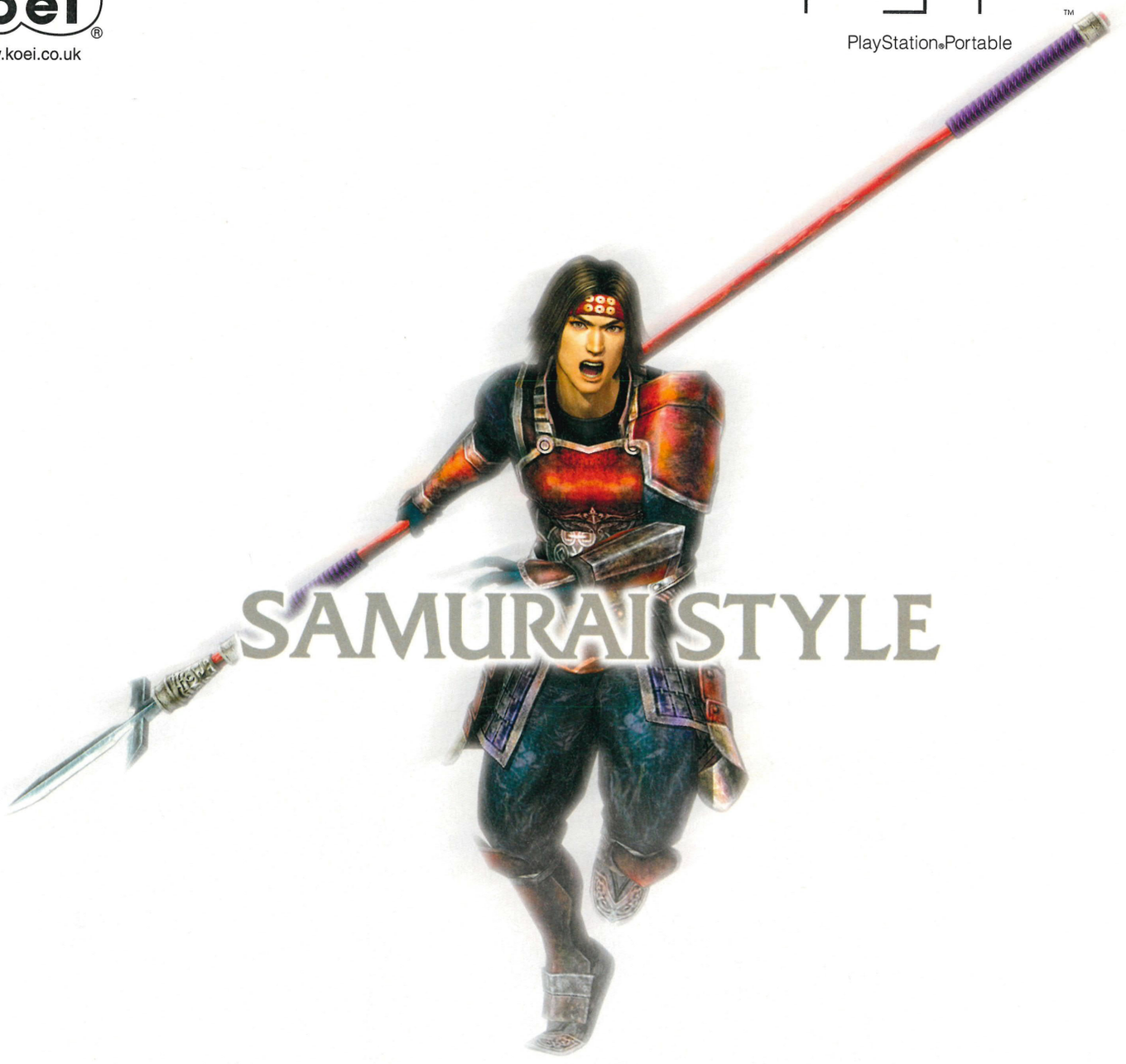

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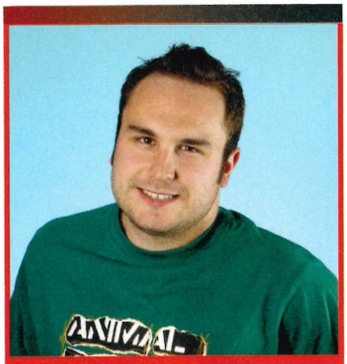
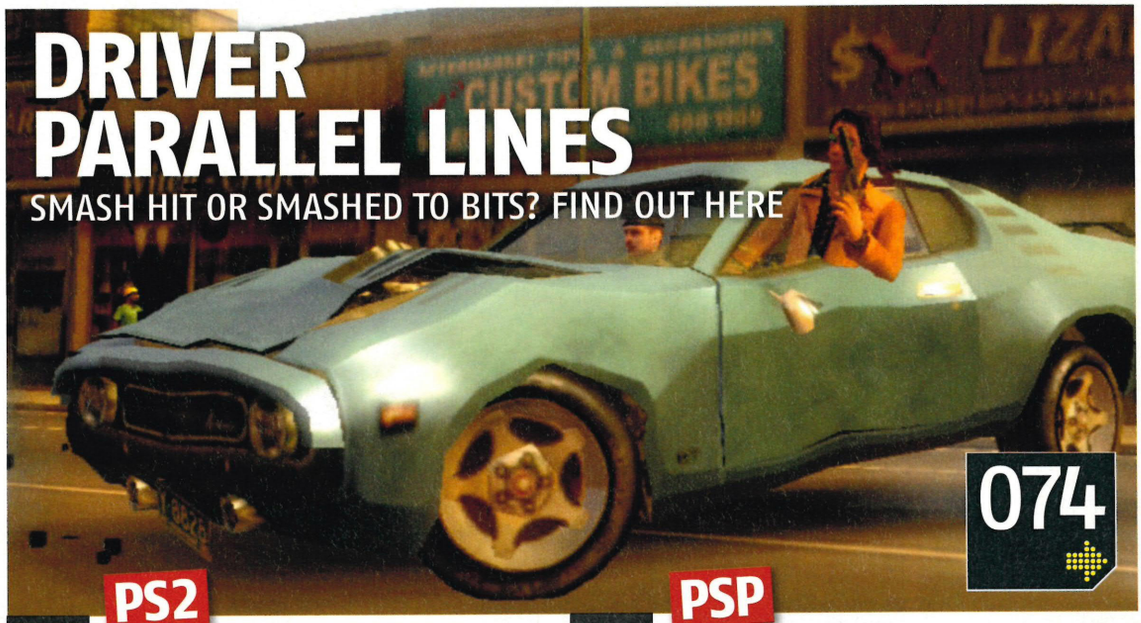
review

THE ONLY REVIEWS SECTION YOU CAN TRUST – AND THAT'S OFFICIAL



Some people out there complain that they hate surprises. Not us. We'd love to arrive at work one morning and discover Jessica Simpson spreadeagled across the art desk. Or tune into this summer's World Cup final to see Peter Crouch nab the winner and be heralded as the next Ronaldinho. In the meantime, we settle for the smaller surprises that slot nicely into our games machines every so often. Like the very sexy *OutRun 2006*, exclusively reviewed this month and better than we'd dared hope. Or *Street Fighter*'s latest, greatest comeback – the first must-have fighting game for PSP. Discover why both are so good in this month's reviews section. And, naturally, prepare for some more surprises along the way.

Ben Wilson,
Games editor



DRIVER PARALLEL LINES

SMASH HIT OR SMASHED TO BITS? FIND OUT HERE

074

PS2

080 **OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST**
Updated arcade racing set against a backdrop of blue sky Segascapes

086 **SEGA CLASSICS COLLECTION**
Virtua Racing and *Golden Axe* get some surgery. But are they more Pete Burns than Pamela Anderson?

089 **KARAOKE STAGE 2**
Invite mates round. Overdo the vino. Humiliate self with rendition of *Crazy In Love*. Repeat to fade

090 **COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE**
Smartly conceived combat sim starring *Spaced*'s Simon Pegg. But is it a World War 2 shooter too far?

098 **FIFA STREET 2**
YES MATE! New players, teams and venues! Entertainment? Not so much

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We get Crazy Frog, the Japanese get an army of puzzle-solving helper droids. Hardly seems fair, does it?

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Ryu, Chun-Li and Ken get shrunk – yet pack as much power as they did during the early '90s heyday

089 **EXIT**
Help members of the public escape from burning buildings in this stylish platform-puzzler. (Platzzler?)

094 **LEMMINGS**
Numpty creatures follow orders badly. Birmingham City fans might feel like they've seen it all before

095 **KEY OF HEAVEN**
Use swordsmanship to avenge your clan's decimation. In other words: slash stuff until you get bored

100 **FIFA STREET 2**
Where the biggest problem for the developers was fitting Crouchy's entire giraffe body on to a PSP screen

PLUS

086 MEGA MAN MAVERICK HUNTER X
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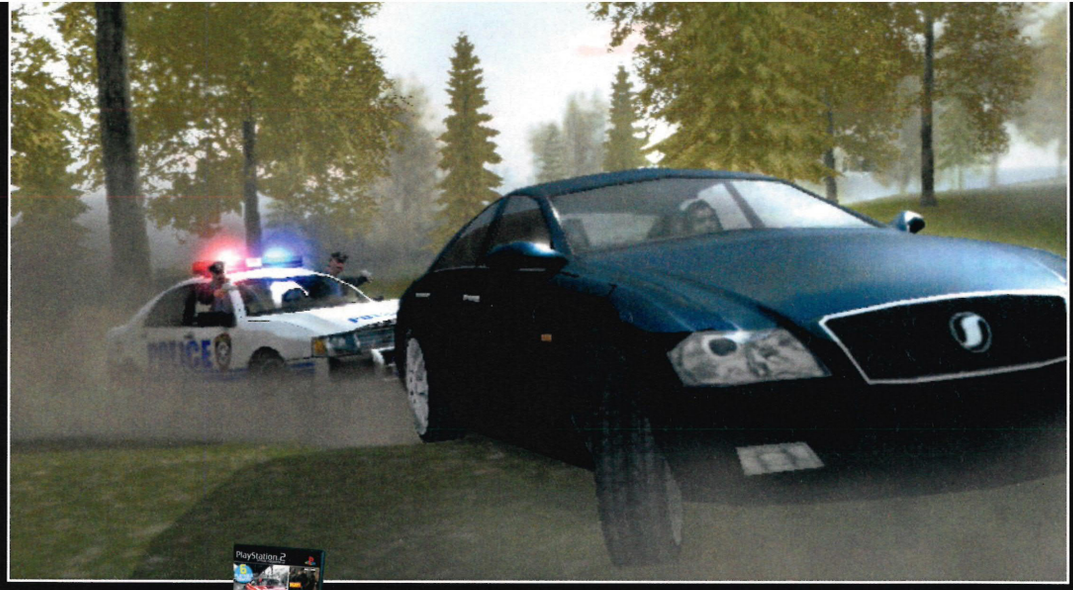
Murder by moonlight is the modern way



Sirens, guns, jam donut on the dashboard: that'll be the police, then

ON THE DVD

DRIVER PARALLEL LINES

'3' was not the magic number, so how does '4' fare?

PlayStation 2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER ATARI
DEVELOPER REFLECTIONS
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT 24 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.ATARI.COM/DRIVER
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

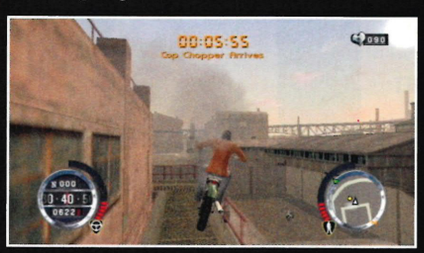
AT A GLANCE

It's New York in the late '70s and you're all about making some underhand cash without getting busted by the cops. Until a huge twist in the storyline changes everything...

If you're the type of person who gets all emotional over the annual Christmas death in *Eastenders*, then you won't want to be reminded of *Driv3r*. The original *Driver* was stroked, loved and cherished by millions – it was a landmark title that showcased the PSone at its most glorious. In contrast, the third instalment in the series – and its PS2 debut – was a complete shambles, wrecked by laughable on-foot missions, punishingly unfair mission design and more bugs than London Zoo's insect house. Will Smith's flashy pen from *Men In Black* couldn't have done a better job of instantly erasing the original from memory.

The good news is, *Driver Parallel Lines* is a very different experience to its shabby predecessor. Much of what was wrong with *Driv3r* has been stripped away and left in the scrapheap. The storyline actually makes sense; there's no more cruising around half-hearted imitations of Istanbul, Nice or Miami; and there's significantly less on-foot madness. Instead, it's back to the basics that made *Driver* so good in its heyday: motoring around carrying out missions in a variety of sumptuous vehicles.

Forget the New York seen in the movies and countless *Friends* episodes, though. This is the Big Apple, '70s style. Your character, the Kid, is a pencil-thin, flimsy-haired weedling who makes Shaggy from *Scooby-Doo!* look hard. But he's no mug, and *Parallel Lines* is about turning him from laughing stock wheel man to criminal

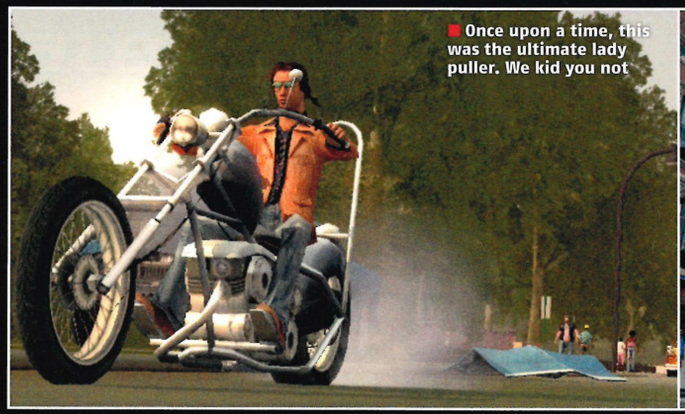


mastermind by committing crimes while evading the cops. Okay, so other than playing a crook instead of an undercover cop, it's nothing new... that is, until you reach the incredible twist halfway through.

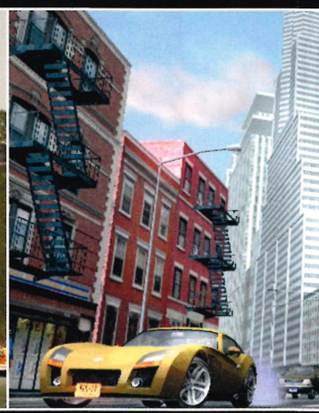
The early stages of *Parallel Lines* are frustrating. As is now standard, the first few missions introduce you to the storyline while demonstrating the game's new features. Problematically, there's little in the way of a learning curve. After a number of easy tasks – some cash collection here, a race or two there – you have to hijack a paddy wagon surrounded by patrol cars. It's enjoyable to begin with as you work out ways to distract the cops and hijack the vehicle, but after failing with a dozen different strategies your temper will be sorely tested. Each time you fail, a quick tap of SELECT takes you straight back to the start. It's a neat addition, sure, but it's also a crutch used to prop up some poor mission design early on.

If you're patient, have plenty of time on your hands, or liked *Stuntman* (also from Reflections, also harsh) then you might relish such a challenge. But if you like to breeze through, learning as you go, you'll get little joy

DRIVER PARALLEL LINES IS A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE TO ITS PREDECESSOR. MUCH OF WHAT WAS WRONG WITH DRIV3R HAS BEEN STRIPPED AWAY



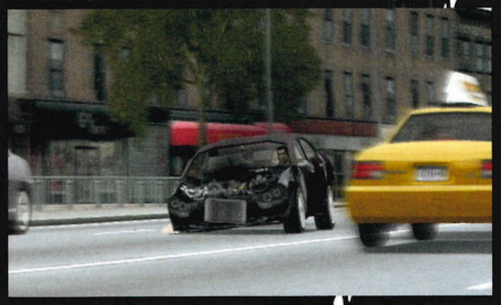
Once upon a time, this was the ultimate lady puller. We kid you not



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK

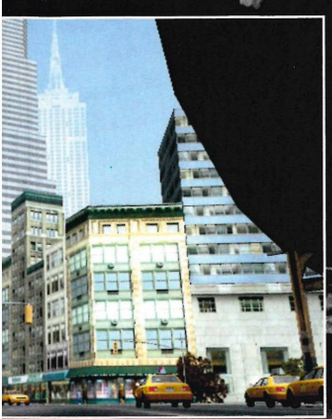
WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



Driv3r's Film Director mode has been ditched for *Parallel Lines*. However, budding Friedkins will enjoy the Cinematic View where the camera pans around to show you sauntering along in slow-motion. To activate it just tap ↓ on the D-pad. It's totally impractical and more often than not results in you careering into oncoming traffic, but at the same time provides a chuckle when you realise how badly you've mashed up your current motor.

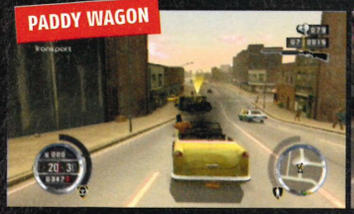
■ The Kid's sausage fingers wrestle with the safety switch



MISSIONS IMPOSSIBLE

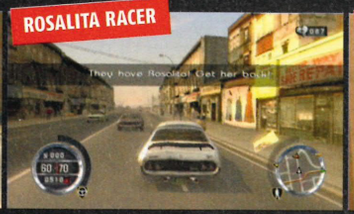
Some of the required tasks in *Parallel Lines* are a one-way ticket to Migraine County, so stock up on the paracetamol before you attempt these buggers...

PADDY WAGON



Breach a police convoy and kidnap a paddy wagon without getting shot up. Note that the guards inside the wagon are heavily armed and take great joy in raining bullets on your skull.
Minutes it took us to complete: 152
Retries: 37
Headache rating: 5/5

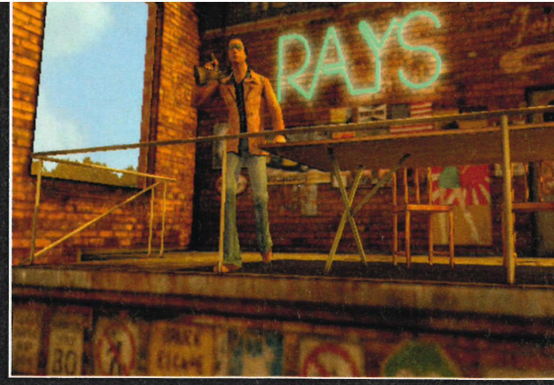
ROSALITA RACER

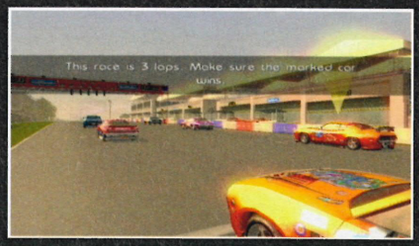


Rescue a damsel in distress while three rival cars and a horde of police hail you and your ride with a massive amount of bullets. If she dies, you fail. This happens often, so get used to it.
Minutes it took us to complete: 82
Retries: 24
Headache rating: 4/5

AIR MAIL

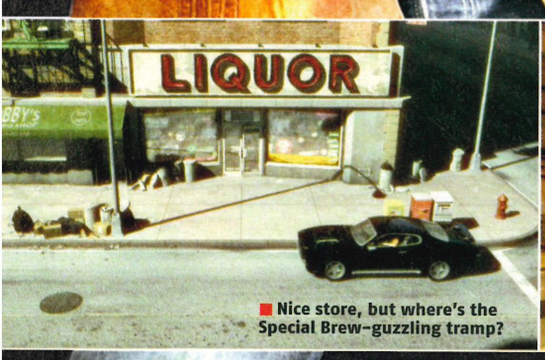
Use a motorbike to follow the helicopter and pick up various packages before the police manage to get them. Or just curse loudly at the terrible route and flaky handling.
Minutes it took us to complete: 63
Retries: 18
Headache rating: 4/5



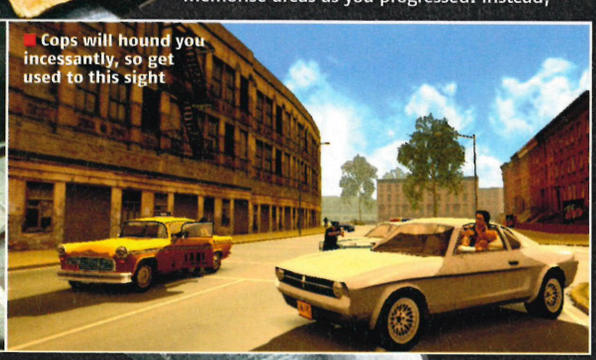


■ The bikes handle erratically but look great

because it's not only the missions that require patience. Diving between them can take an age as New York is both mammoth and jammed full of traffic. Sure, it's realistic, but A-B busywork isn't fun. Even the in-game map is disorientating unless you spend a good couple of hours in real-time driving round and taking mental notes of the city's most memorable landmarks. Had the opening missions been dispersed a little more cleverly then this wouldn't be a problem, and you'd be able to memorise areas as you progressed. Instead, they're randomly strewn around the city, forcing you to pause the game and get your bearings every 30 seconds.



■ Nice store, but where's the Special Brew-guzzling tramp?



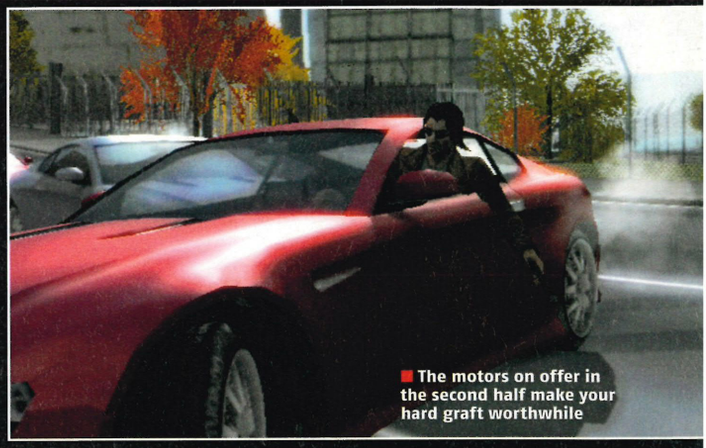
■ Cops will hound you incessantly, so get used to this sight

HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'

It's far from all bad, though. When it all gets too frustrating, there are a number of mini-games dotted around NYC for you to muck around with. The '70s look ace, too. From afro hairstyles and handlebar 'taches to terrible tweed jackets and dodgy flares, icons of the era are everywhere. The Twin Towers are still in place, too. The attention to detail is equally eye-catching, right down to the way streetlights glow in the morning dusk and sunlight reflects off car windows. And you can't fail to be wowed by the soundtrack featuring a superbly varied mix of styles – Bowie rock, Blondie pop, Charles Wright funk, and so on.

Also worthy of praise is the new vehicle felony rating. Obviously the more badass stuff you get up to, the more attention you attract from the law; but you can now commit crimes in one particular motor and still get away scot-free. Mow down pedestrians or drive dangerously and the cops will look out for that

Stealth: officially more upsetting than the new Alicia Keys record

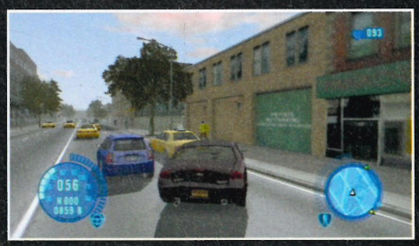

The motors on offer in the second half make your hard graft worthwhile

"I told you we shouldn't have let Marc Ecko decorate"

individual car – so if you then ditch it without being seen you'll receive no heat at all. On the other hand, if they spot you getting out of the car then your the felonies are instantly associated with your soon to be bullet-riddled face. Obviously, any naughtiness committed on-foot raises your felony rating further – until you take refuge by jumping into a 'clean' vehicle. It adds an element of strategy where in previous games your only option was to head for the hills any time the police approached.

Felonies can also be wiped with a stop-off at your local branch of Ray's Autos. These garages provide a roof over your head, and you can relocate from one to another in an instant; especially handy if you want to get from north-east to south-west without 15 minutes of real-time driving. It's also here that you pimp your ride. New modding options include bulletproof tyres and glass, which really come in handy on the eye-wateringly tough missions.

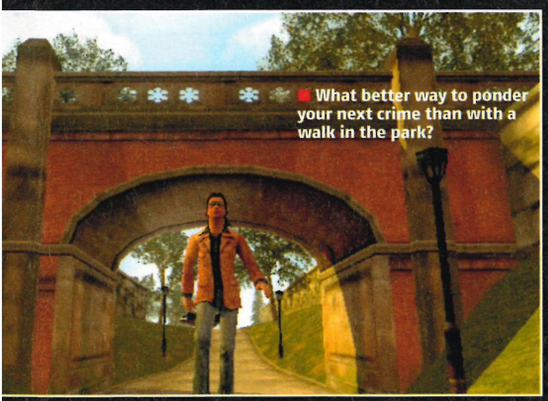
For every good thing you discover in the first

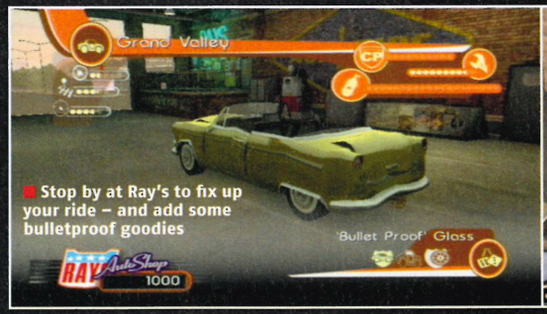


half of the game, there's a baffling one to offset it. The ability to fire at cars and pedestrians while driving is a welcome addition, but the auto-targeting is hit and miss. Literally. The Kid moves pretty swiftly on-foot for a man-twiglet, yet he can't jump. At all. Why not? Even the new felony system we praised seconds ago is flawed in that just skipping a red light has the cops weaving through traffic to catch you. Again, it might be realistic, but having to shake them off for a tiny misdemeanour after you've just spent ten laborious minutes driving towards a mission is all kinds of annoying.

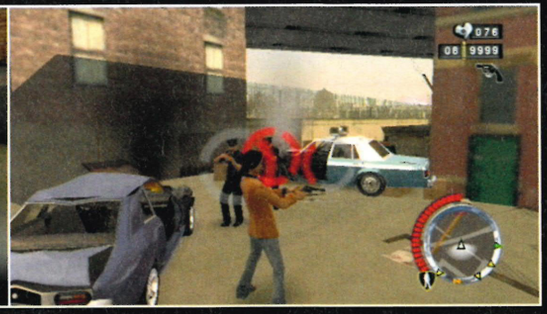
LET'S DO THE TWIST

The much-publicised twist in the tale is what


What better way to ponder your next crime than with a walk in the park?



Stop by at Ray's to fix up your ride – and add some bulletproof goodies



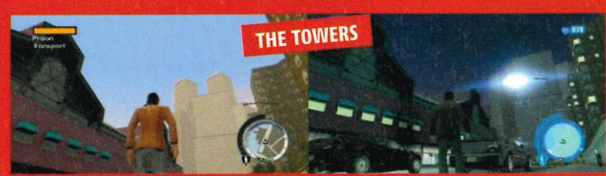
1970s VS 2000s

Our main man emerges into a different world after his stint as a jailbird. Here are some changes to look out for...

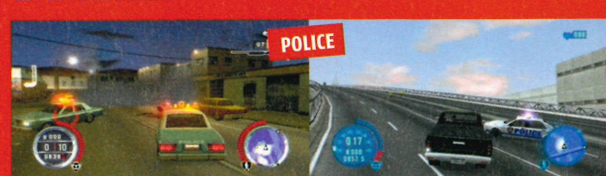
1978: CLUNKY DIGITS — 2006: ELECTRO-BLUE

1978: DRAWING PIN — 2006: MOUSE CURSOR

1978: HIPPY SHAKE — 2006: CRUSTY BAKE



1978: FLYING HIGH — 2006: EMPTY SPACE



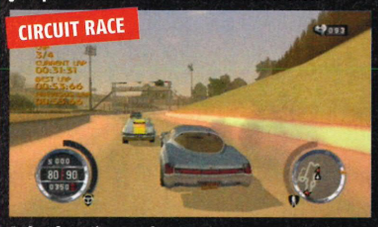
1978: THE MAN — 2006: THE MAN (IN NEW CARS)

Our hero introduces a local bobby to his 'little friend'

A BIT ON THE SIDE

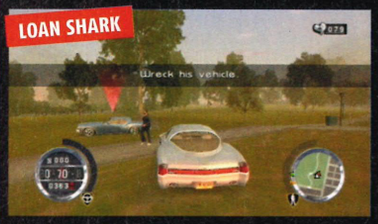
Dotted around NYC are mini-games to help you pass the time – and earn extra cash

CIRCUIT RACE



Defeat five other cars for some tasty wonga. Put that gun away though, or you'll be disqualified.

LOAN SHARK



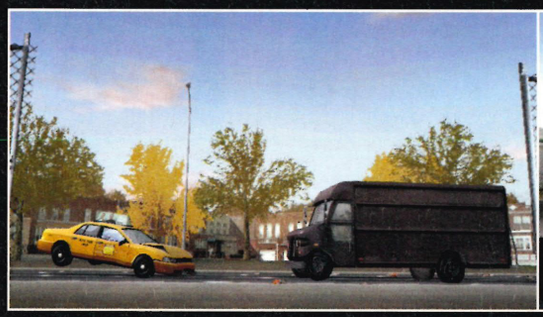
Chase down a money-oweing vagrant and scare him into paying his debts – then take a cut for yourself.

CHECKPOINT RACE

Usually found in parks so grab a bike before you begin. Hit all the checkpoints before the time runs out.

POLICE CHASE

Activate this mode by ramming into any roadside donut stand. Then put your foot down and drive!

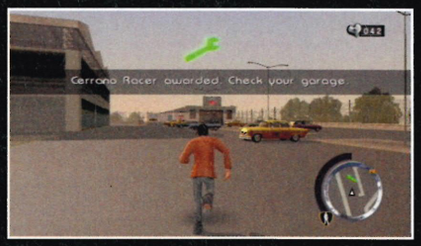


The gameplay might be ropey at times but NYC *always* looks beautiful

IT'S A SHAME YOU HAVE TO WADE THROUGH SO MUCH RUBBISH TO GET TO THE GOOD STUFF

saves *Parallel Lines* from the same gruesome fate as *Driv3r*. If you haven't twigged yet from the screenshots and still don't want to know, then now is the time to flick to the verdict box and then get outta here. Go on – scram!

The Kid is framed for a kidnapping halfway through the game. After spending 28 years festering in prison, he emerges to a very different New York. Cars are faster, cops more intelligent, technology more advanced. A trip to Ray's sees him trying to work out how to work remote controls for the widescreen TV and DVD player. Even if it takes you hour after painstaking hour – and it will – to reach this point, it's more than worthwhile. Suddenly, everything connects. The storyline shifts into fifth gear as you begin to seek revenge on those crims who conspired to put you behind bars. Completing one mission has you desperate to get to the next one just to see how it pans out. And the tasks themselves all have a specific point to them, rather than feeling as though they've been dropped into the game to pass the time. The officious police and random targeting



are still there, but you forget them because everything else is so engrossing.

THE BOTTOM LINE

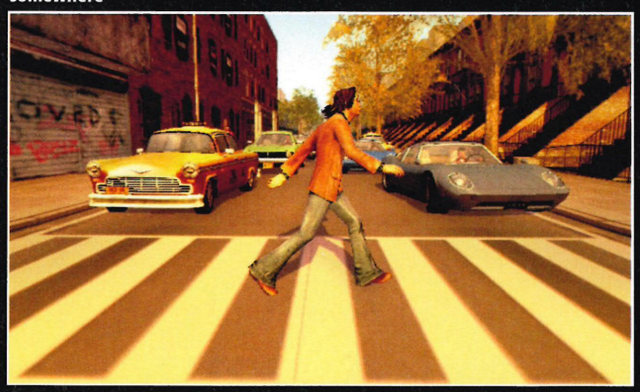
It's a shame you have to wade through so much rubbish to reach the good stuff, but the second half of *Parallel Lines* is a blast. It proves *Driver* can still ride with the big boys. It's no match for the mighty *GTA*, but it's a decent mesh of cars and guns, which improves markedly after the big twist. Certainly a return to form, then, but not the classic we hoped for. Remember how the original *Driver* felt special? *Parallel Lines* feels functional. But after *Driv3r*, that's still an improvement. **Ben Wilson**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK	VERDICT	
Graphics	08	Beautifully atmospheric with little pop-up
Sound	09	The '70s selection couldn't be better
Gameplay	06	Early missions might stop you playing...
Lifespan	08	...but it's worth it in the end

Improves on its predecessor, but still marred by frustrating design. A strong second half showing prevents it from being a write-off

7/10

"I know that Lennon dude is around here somewhere"



Wacky races, '70s style: taxi vs Lamborghini

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Apart from Bird Flu and *X-Factor* it could be 1986 all over again...

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST

bronze
PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK

PlayStation 2 Official Magazine-UK
WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

Sega's classic coin-op gets a makeover, but can it out run *Burnout*?

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SEGA
DEVELOPER SUMO DIGITAL
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1 (1-6 ONLINE)
OUT 31 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.SEGA-EUROPE.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE YES

AT A GLANCE

Back in 1986 *OutRun* was the ultimate in stylish, bleeding edge arcade racing. *Coast 2 Coast* is an amalgam of Sega's two recent coin-op remakes – *OutRun 2* and *OutRun 2 SP*.

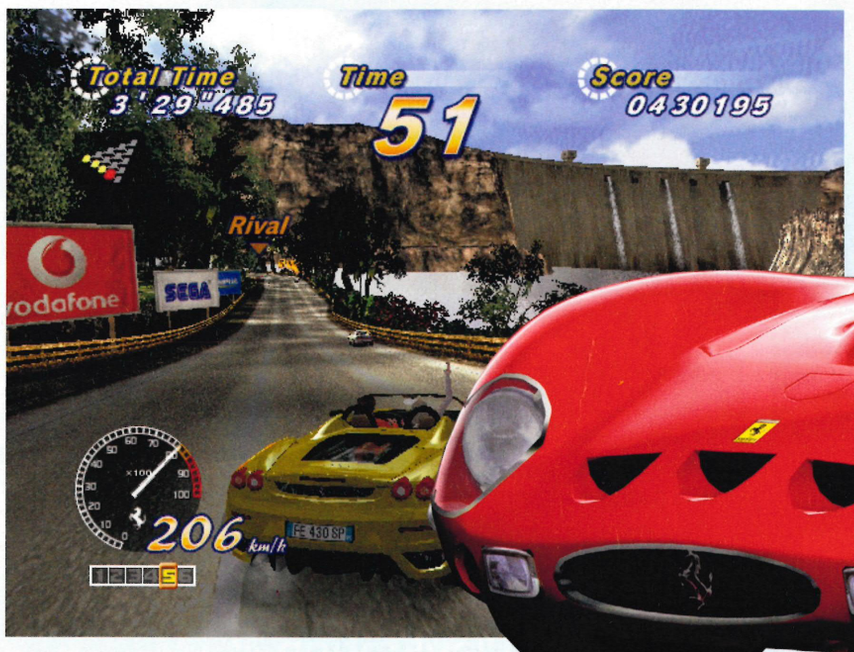
We've all been there. You're having fun with your girl and she indicates she's ready to step things up a gear. With the shiny tip of your scarlet beast visible in front of you both, you don't need to be asked twice. In no time at all you're bouncing up and down like a runaway rollercoaster, massaging leisurely left to right and back again in perfect harmony. And she's clearly loving it, squealing with excitement at every turn. You feel exhilarated – on top of the world. You've hit a groove and – no, what's happening? You've messed up your timing and with your goal in sight it all grinds to a humiliating halt. The squeals have turned into entirely the wrong kind of moans and to cap it all your girl's taken it upon herself to rate your performance. 'D'? 'D'!? Ouch. That felt like a 'B' from where we were sitting. Or at least a 'C'...

No doubt about it, playing *OutRun 2006* can put a strain on the best of relationships. Hmm, *OutRun*. That sounds familiar, right? Well, if you know your game hall of famers it should. 20 years ago this year, back when girls wore fat belts and saggy-topped boots, and the boys got down to synth-powered alternarock, and experimented with the unshaven look – kind of like today – the original *OutRun* was a breath of palm tree-whipped fresh air, blowing through stale arcades. In light of everything that followed, it can be hard to appreciate just how groundbreaking Sega's coin-op racer was. It *looked* amazing. It was an early game to nail the 3D look before the hardware made it a reality. It was fast too, like nothing else – bleeding sun-drenched colour as gamers in their hundreds of thousands took mental vacations in a fat-gilled Ferrari Testarossa look-alike, with an adoring honey in the passenger seat. The game's structure was uniquely addictive too. 15 exotically realised stages – Easter Island heads, cities, giant redwood forests, Dutch tulip fields – fanned out from the first stage like bowling pins or balls in a snooker frame. With the miserly clock ticking down you'd floor it, weaving in and out of slow-moving traffic, and at the end of each stage the road would split into two. The areas you passed through depended on your choices at the end of each stage. The freedom! Hey, stop sniggering. This was 1986, remember...

You'll spend most of *OutRun* driving sideways. Got a steady nerve?

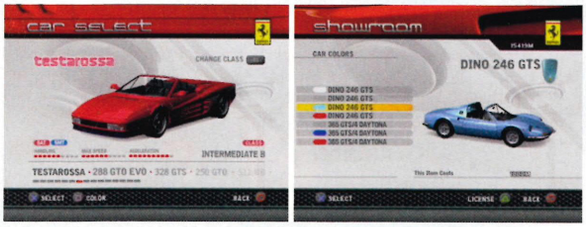
TIME WAITS FOR *OUTRUN*

By now, even the slow ones among you are probably wondering why we're going all



OUTRUNNING OUT AND ABOUT

PSP and PS2 *OutRun 2006* are the perfect companions



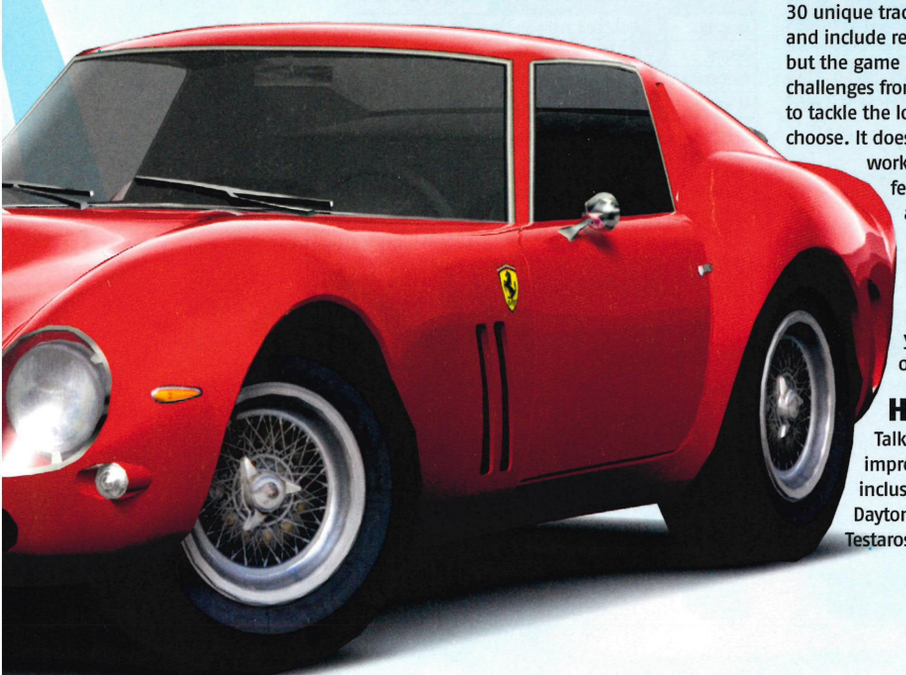
Once you've created your unique *OutRun* driving licence, all your *Outrun* miles are collected on it, enabling you to transfer your data between PS2 and PSP versions of the game. Start at home on PS2, clock some wins on the way to work on PSP, get a few hours in when the boss isn't looking, and spend the miles on PS2 when you get back home.

googly-eyed over a museum piece when there's a ball-achingly fresh remake to be had. Enough with the nostalgia. Time waits for no game, and *Burnout Revenge* is the current state of the ultra-fast, ultra-exaggerated racing art. As for Sega, the developer's had two whole decades to evolve *OutRun* into a mind-blowing arcade experience that'll bury it and all-comers.

So why the history lesson? Simple, because, in many ways, it's taken Sega 20 years to release exactly the same game. *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* looks pretty much the same, has the same structure and gives off the same heady scent of

ONE OF THE MAIN IMPROVEMENTS TO *OUTRUN 2006* IS THE INCLUSION OF LICENSED FERRARIS

cold sweat and Hawaiian Tropic suntan lotion. It's the reason why *Coast 2 Coast* is such a curious mix – brilliant but limited, taut but oddly underambitious. Time for some hard details, perhaps.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

So what is *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*? It's a unique blend of Sega's two recent coin-op remakes of *OutRun* (*OutRun 2* and its overhauled retread *OutRun 2 SP*) plus an all-new single-player mission mode, online racing for up to six players, PSP connectivity and new cars and music. The operative word when strapping in for *Coast 2 Coast* is 'flexibility'. True, the two games' 15 stages only provide 30 unique tracks (60 if you're a Sega diehard and include reversals) plus a slender 15 cars, but the game manages to spin scores of challenges from this setup, and encourages you to tackle the lot in pretty much any order you choose. It does this with *OutRun* miles. They work like air miles. Fancy tackling a few stages of *SP* in Time Attack? Go ahead. You can then spend the miles you earned there to unlock troublesome goals in other modes, open new music or perhaps buy a faster car to help you beat the intermediate stages of the *Coast 2 Coast* game.

HORSES FOR COURSES

Talking of cars, one of the main improvements to *OutRun 2006* is the inclusion of licensed Ferraris. From the Daytona through the *Miami Vice*-era Testarossa to the frankly scary looking

"YOU @*&^ING DRIVE THEN!"

Think your girlfriend's demanding? Try *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*'s Heart Attack missions

1. You race against the clock with your girlfriend by your side. But is she impressed by the ride? Is she hell.

2. She keeps demanding you complete challenges. Simple stuff at first like passing cars and not crashing.

3. But that's not good enough for her. Pretty soon she's all "don't drive into the gigantic meteors on the road"...

4. ...And before you know it she's refusing to kiss you if you get her abducted by aliens. *And* you still have to beat the clock as well. Women.

OutRun ain't subtle – the castle stage is wall-to-wall turrets for 20 miles

STAGE SCHOOL

***Coast 2 Coast*'s stages *appear* very varied, but are they really?**

PALM BEACH

The opening stage in *Coast 2 Coast* is a smooth beachside freeway complete with swaying palms, crystal oceans and pricy seafront real estate.

Notable features: A few cool swoops, a couple of tight corners and a chicane or two.

BIG FOREST

Hurtling through the hollowed-out trunks of the mighty redwood trees, this should be good for some unique racing thrills, right?

Notable features: Um, no, not really. There are, however, a few cool swoops, a couple of tight corners and a chicane or two.

MILKY WAY

The track skirts a gigantic shuttle launch pad. No doubt there'll be bits of falling fuel tanks to dodge on this one...

Notable features: Sorry, nope. It's not all bad though – you do get a few cool swoops, a couple of tight corners and a chicane or two.

GIANT STATUES

Easter Island statues; the mythology of a forgotten people.

Notable features: A gigantic Easter Island god chases you, breathing flames and throwing tree trunks! No, wait, our mistake – you get a few cool swoops, a couple of tight corners and a chicane or two.

Dribbling a giant beach ball in a Ferrari. Girls lap this kind of thing up

Having a licence from Ferrari really adds to *OutRun*'s appeal

Enzo, every hunk of metal here is a bone fide work of art. Belissimo.

When it comes to handling though, *OutRun 2006* reasserts its arcade heritage with a vengeance. There are subtle differences in grip between them, but on the whole, the cars feel very similar to one another. Unreal grip is a defining characteristic; retina-detaching acceleration is another. But *Coast 2 Coast*'s unique gift to gaming (and a vast improvement on *OutRun '86*) is its insane drifting. Controllable like no car on Earth, it's perfectly possible to tip an F430 Spider sideways at 275kmph, coasting around a 20-25 second-long turn before straightening up again. And without losing *any* speed (see Get The Drift?). It takes a while to get used to this abuse of real world physics, but it's insanely enjoyable to unleash once you do.

Favourite modes? The single-player mission mode has wisely incorporated opponent drivers – all of them Ferrari owners – forcing you to move up a 12-strong pack before the chequered flag drops, as a change of pace from merely having to beat the clock. But for our money the Heart Attack missions are by far the best part of the game (see "You @*&^ing drive then!"). Combining breakneck driving skills plus on-the-fly problem solving, these romantic drives are a blast. Pleasing your girlfriend has never been such uncomplicated fun.

Choose the red Testarossa to get the purest *OutRun* experience

Perversely, the problem with *Coast 2 Coast* is the same thing that makes it feel fresh next to the likes of *Burnout*, and that's its dogged pursuit of the coin-op vibe. Fast and addictive as it is, for all its reworking of the arcade stages, *OutRun 2006*'s gameplay is as deep as a door. What's more, the game's graphics are bright and fun, but there is pop-up, and not once does the varied scenery translate to variety *on* the track. Where there was an opportunity to innovate with shortcuts and hazards, the developers have stuck rigidly with the arcade template. If it weren't for this stubbornness, *Coast 2 Coast* could've looked and played even better. As it is though, this reworking of vintage thrill racing is hard to ignore and even harder to put down. ■ **Paul Fitzpatrick**

PlayStation.2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK	VERDICT	
Graphics	07	As good as the arcade game, but no better
Sound	07	Classic *OutRun* tunes plus decent remixes
Gameplay	08	Stubbornly old-skool racing, in a good way
Lifespan	08	Repetitive, but you'll want to finish

A handsome looking and crazily addictive arcade racer remake that's only limited by its overly faithful take on the '80s original

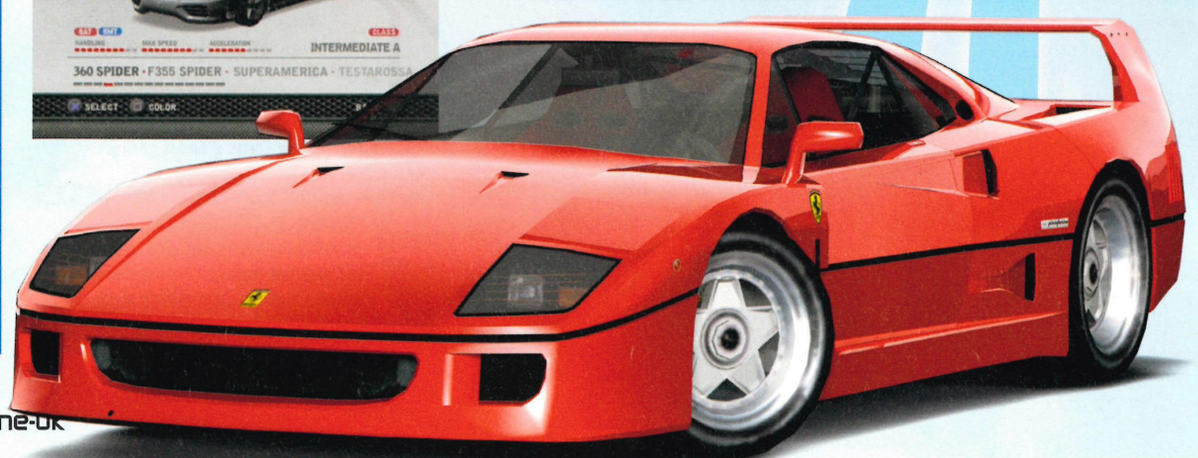
8/10

GET THE DRIFT

If your bonnet's pointing forwards, you're doing it all wrong

Real outrunners do it sideways. Drifting is an indispensable skill in *Coast 2 Coast*. Not only can you comfortably ride a powerslide for upwards of 20 seconds, but, with a deft flick of the wrist, you can flip the drift and take another corner without batting an eyelid.

NB: Not recommended when you're racing with one of the two bonnet views – they're only good for watching the scenery and the terrified faces of drivers you pass.



Don't insert coin!

Just play!

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No Tokobots were harmed in the making of this screenshot

The whip-cracking vertical formation is your best means of attack

PS2

TOKOBOT

Little robots go wild on little PlayStation

7+

TECMO

DETAILS

PUBLISHER TECMO
DEVELOPER TECMO
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT 31 MARCH
WIFI MULTIPLAYER NO
DOWNLOADS NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACK NO

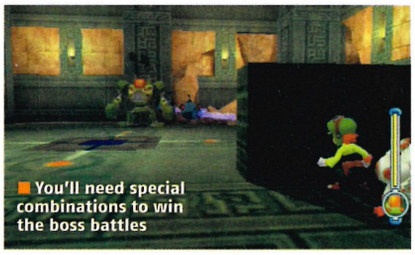
AT A GLANCE
A platform game with a difference – exploring the game world and attacking enemies is all achieved through clever manipulation of your cute, pint-sized robot allies, the Tokobots.

We've suspected this for many years and *Tokobot* has finally confirmed it: life *really would* be easier if we had a group of tiny robots joining together to help us traverse chasms, defeat enemies and fix drinks. But where are all the little helper droids that *Tomorrow's World* has been promising since episode one? Helping out a lucky sod called Bolt, that's where. A young adventurer exploring the just-discovered ruins of an ancient civilisation, Bolt finds the Tokobots and soon realises that these miniature marvels are the key to uncovering its secrets.

A platform game with a strong emphasis on solving puzzles, you can forget about double-jumps and all the other moves you've come to expect from the genre. Here everything is achieved through manipulation of the Tokobots. Pressing △ switches the formation of your 'bots, enabling you to use them for different tasks. A vertical formation, along with a quick press of the right trigger to join the Tokobots together, turns the droids into a trailing line which can be used as a ladder to reach ledges, a bridge to cross platforms or a whip to smash into enemies. Press △ again and you'll change to a horizontal, arms-out formation that's ideal for spinning the Tokobots like a roundabout and battering into bad guys. Finally, the circle formation is used to butt-bash enemies or trigger switches.

PAIN IN THE 'BOT

All this formation business is very clever and relying on your tiny allies to move around and attack brings a new dimension to platform gaming. Unfortunately, innovation often brings its own set of problems. Having to link the Tokobots before they can act is a really daft idea. If you're being attacked from all sides on a crowded platform there often isn't time to hit the required button combination and you just end up getting leathered.


You'll need special combinations to win the boss battles

The Tokobots' AI also feels underdeveloped. The little guys regularly get snagged on ledges and left behind, and although they eventually respawn, it's not much consolation when you're stood twiddling your thumbs while a Humpty Dumpty-esque enemy repeatedly nuts you. As for the Tokobot's ladder move, we lost count of the number of times we plummeted to doom because the little buggers had hit some invisible barrier and failed to attach themselves to the target platform.

Niggles aside, *Tokobot* is a quirky, original and often extremely charming take on platforming. The basic premise is hugely appealing and if Tecmo can iron out a few control issues and provide a bigger and better array of tasks for your mini-bot army (some multiplayer modes wouldn't go amiss either) the sequel could be something special. Think of this as a work in progress. **Lee Hart**

Genius. Hide between the 'bot-bird's legs then spin it into oblivion

How to avoid the classic rolling boulder trap? Erm, stand to the side

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK	VERDICT	
Graphics	07	Cute, colourful and appealing game world
Sound	06	A jaunty, jazzy score propels you along
Gameplay	06	A clever but flawed riff on platform gaming
Lifespan	04	Where are the multiplayer options?

It's good to see developers trying something new but this is more of a solid template for a sequel than a top game in its own right

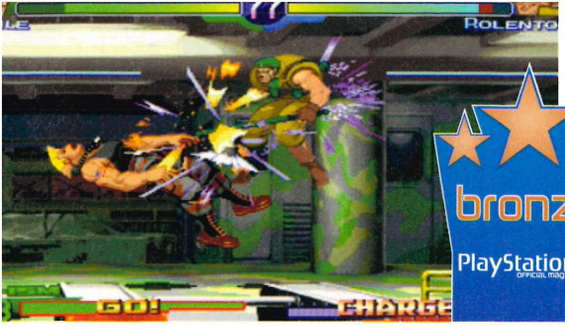
6/10

COMMITTING KARAKURI

Besides the basic formations you'll also find some special 'Karakuri Combinations' as you progress...

CRANE-O-MATIC
Your Tokobots form a one-armed crane for a mini-game puzzle where you must drop the correct blocks into the relevant holes to create a door-opening floor pattern. Later, you get to transform into a tank, propeller and more.

SAMURAI HOVER
The sword-swishing Samurai Hover is a must to deliver the chops in the game's first boss battle. Like all Karakuri Combinations it only works for a limited time, so hover away from attacks and aim true with your own lunges.



bronze
PlayStation.2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3 MAX

Dragon-punching its way back to top form

If you're too young to remember the early '90s (or hibernated through them to avoid the era of the shell suit), you'll have missed the whole *Street Fighter II* phenomenon. Back then it was considered the greatest game on Earth, but the arrival of PlayStation saw it deposed by 3D fighters like *Tekken*.

The comeback begins here. *Alpha* forsakes tridimensional visuals for 'classic' 2D environments with few frills. The gameplay is equally uncomplicated, with the PSP's layout perfect for *Street Fighter*'s traditional six-button control system. The D-pad or nub are used for both movement and combos – 15 years on, Ken's trademark Hadoken fireball is still actioned by hitting ↓, ↘, → and a punch button in quick succession.

The new Variable Battle mode enables you to play with a tag team partner, while four new faces exclusive to PSP, like Britain's own Eagle from *Capcom vs SNK2*, are also included.

They're welcome additions to a game that's ideal for handheld. Fights are brisk so you can dip in and out in ten-minute bursts or batter your way through the entire arcade mode without getting bored. With a mass of different modes and speeds to conquer, there's plenty to keep you coming back, too. Time to fall in love with Chun-Li all over again. ■ **Ben Wilson**

PlayStation.2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

Graphics	08	Bright chromes and colourful moves
Sound	06	Traditionally cheesy music and move calls
Gameplay	08	Swift bouts are well suited to handheld
Lifespan	08	You'll keep returning for a bout or six

Swamped with characters and modes, Alpha is a fine example of how good golden oldies can be when revived in miniature **8/10**

PSP

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £29.99
OUT 24 FEBRUARY
WIFI MULTIPLAYER YES
DOWNLOADS NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS NO

■ **The more recent characters don't have quite the same allure as old favourites like Blanka**

■ **Zangief's spinning piledriver is still a killer**

■ **Death is a blessing when it comes**

ZATHURA

Lost in space and bored to tears

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: 2K GAMES
DEVELOPER: HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE
PRICE: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.2KGAMES.COM/ZATHURA
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
ONLINE: NO

A kind of sequel to magical-board-game movie *Jumanji*, *Zathura* nixes old hairy-hands Robin Williams in favour of two kids who are sucked into an intergalactic adventure after playing mysterious space game Zathura. With the film having recently opened in cinemas (it's rubbish), the videogame version's here, and if you're thinking it's bound to be a mediocre platform romp aimed squarely at the under-12s then you are very much correct.

The game sees Danny and elder brother Walter embark on a planet-hopping adventure to get back home after their bizarre trip to the cosmos. A decent premise, then, but as it turns out *Zathura* is completely bereft of ideas or entertainment. You run around sparse environments, occasionally jumping across platforms to reach a button and unlock a door. Every now and then you'll come across a trap that has to be crawled under or jumped over and more often than not you'll encounter a group of robots that need to be blasted. Except that enemy AI is so comically wonky that they lose interest and wander off after a few seconds' pursuit, enabling you to run straight past them. And even if you do get zapped, the amount of health power-ups lying around means there's very little threat of coming a cropper.

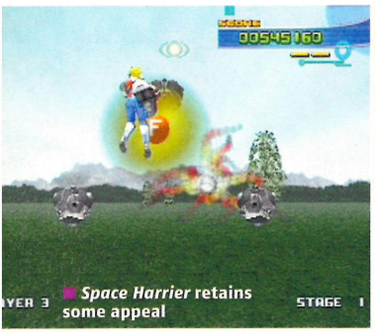
And yes, we *know* it's for kids – but that's no excuse for this kind of depressing tedium. Those in search of family-friendly thrills should pick up the last *Sly* game instead. ■ **Lee Hart**

PlayStation.2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

Graphics	04	Blocky, grey and totally sub-par
Sound	05	Decent voices and score from the movie
Gameplay	03	Old ideas done blandly
Lifespan	03	Takes about five hours to finish... tops

A charmless adventure that'll make little Jimmy feel more violent than a 20-hour San Andreas session. Avoid like Truth Or Dare with the in-laws **3/10**

■ **Who'd have guessed that space was this dull?**



■ *Space Harrier* retains some appeal

■ *Golden Axe* has suffered a tragic Pete Burns-style makeover

SEGA CLASSICS COLLECTION

The moral: let sleeping games lie

This bunch of dated Mega Drive, Master System and arcade titles again hammers home the point that retro games don't age well – even when they've been 'remastered'. Take *Virtua Racing*: in its day considered a groundbreaking driver with graphics well ahead of its time, it now looks like a fire in Sega's experimental polygon factory that quickly spiralled out of control. Still, its cars handle reasonably well. Time has been even harsher to fellow arcade racers *OutRun* and *Monaco GP* – which offer little other than a brief, five-minute retro kick before fading.

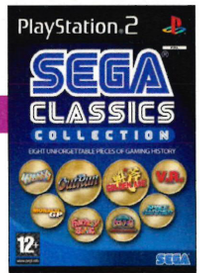
All nine games in the *Collection* have been given a spruce up in an attempt to modernise them. This was an idiotic decision. *Golden Axe* is worst affected. Originally a side-scrolling 2D beat-em-up, it's now been given a 3D makeover by the Sega equivalent of Trinny and Susannah. Much like their tedious transformations ("You barely look 14 stone now, Tracey!") the end result is messy – lacking either the iconic allure of the original or shiny appeal of modern contemporaries like *The Warriors* or *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*.

Just when it seems all hope is lost, *Columns* delivers the kiss of life. A little bit *Bust-A-Move*, a little bit *Tetris*, it's an extraordinarily basic yet addictive puzzler where you score points for arranging blocks of gems that descend from the top of the screen into rows of the same colour. It's the one title on offer that lives up to the 'classic' billing and will have you coming back for more time and time again. ■ **Ben Wilson**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK	VERDICT
Graphics	03 Dusty old games means dusty old visuals
Sound	03 True to the originals. Which isn't good
Gameplay	05 Practically all filler and no killer
Lifespan	07 Only 'cos you'll be hooked on *Columns*

***A shoddy selection of oldies that could have been so much better. It's only rescued by* Space Harrier *and the still-superb* Columns**

5/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SEGA
DEVELOPER SEGA/3D AGES
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.SEGA-EUROPE.COM/EN/GAME/211.HTM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

■ Games: the one place where retro *always* sucks

■ At least the 3D visuals look pretty

MEGA MAN MAVERICK HUNTER X

Platform gaming's 'nearly man' misses out again

There's no reason why this retro-remake of the original SNES game shouldn't work. It ought to be a lighting-fast side-scrolling shooter, testing your reflexes as your thumbs dance across the PSP's buttons, avoiding bullets and blasting enemies. But it's not. Instead it's a slog, hauling your unwieldy hero left to right while repeatedly blasting anything that staggers into view.

The problem is, for a rogue-robot policing superhero, Mega Man is ill-equipped for the job. He's slow, can't duck, and only shoots in the direction he's facing. Trying to hit anything that doesn't walk in front of your gun involves all sorts of arsing about as you run away, turn around to shoot, then run away some more. There's no real skill or finesse to it. Each linear level simply involves bludgeoning your way past repetitively spawning robo-bats that hover frustratingly out of range and attack at angles you can't avoid.

The game's one redeeming feature is that it looks great. The crisp, new 3D makeover contains some imaginative end-of-level bosses and vibrant backgrounds. It's just a shame that the action hasn't been given a modern update as well. ■ **Leon Hurley**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK	VERDICT
Graphics	08 Sharp, detailed and inventive
Sound	06 Cheesy acting and chuggu-chugga rawk
Gameplay	04 Retro gameplay feels painful
Lifespan	04 Unlockables, but short, tedious levels

Mega Man's slow, limited range of movement and attacks make this a frustrating play that never comes close to being fun

4/10

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WIFI MULTIPLAYER NO
DOWNLOADS NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS NO

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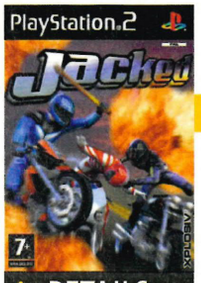
Like 16-bit classic *Road Rash*, but a lot less classic

Make your opponent eat dirt with a cheeky leap onto his hog

JACKED

No need to cancel that *Tourist Trophy* pre-order



DETAILS

PUBLISHER XPLOSIV
DEVELOPER SPROING
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.XPLOSIV.NET
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

At last, scientific proof that time travel is possible. How do you fancy going back to 1998? All it takes is approximately three minutes playing *Jacked*, which feels and looks distinctly like a PSone game. Your objective is to knock opponents off their bikes using weapons like bats or grenades, or by forcing them into traffic. And while the latter element may make it sound like *Burnout* on two wheels, it doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as Criterion's ballsy racer.

The bikes handle dreadfully, so instead of injuring your on-screen opponents you're more likely to give yourself a real-life hernia constantly battling to keep it under control. If that wasn't annoying enough, these supposed mean machines actually sound like a saucepan with a bee trapped inside. There's a predictable selection of race, time attack and elimination modes – but ploughing through them feels like mindless busywork, with little in the way of genuine thrills to get the heart pumping.

The one feature that proves reasonably satisfying is 'jacking', where your rider leaps onto another bike and leaves its previous owner closely inspecting the Tarmac. The accompanying slow motion effect looks decent, too. But one reasonably-implemented feature does not an entertaining game make – and it leaves you racking your brains as to why more time wasn't spent making the handling less crude and the AI riders more competitive. *Jacked* is devoid of exhilaration. Developers, if you're going to make a racer make sure the player feels like he's being strapped to a Hellfire missile and shot at the sun. Otherwise your game will be. **Antony Hersey**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK	VERDICT
Graphics	05 1998 just called and it wants them back
Sound	04 Are these motorbikes or mopeds?
Gameplay	05 Restrictive handling is a big problem...
Lifespan	04 ...and means you won't be coming back

The fact it's a budget title doesn't excuse Jacked's dated graphics and tired gameplay. Motorbikes shouldn't feel this tame **4/10**

Breath Of Fire? More like halitosis

The first boss creature you fight isn't too tough

BREATH OF FIRE III

Unlikely to set your world alight

Where did the hours go? That's probably the first question you'll be asking yourself after a few sessions with Capcom's turn-based RPG – a PS2 translation of the original PSone version. There's nothing particularly memorable about *Breath Of Fire III*, and mercifully the game doesn't require an encyclopaedic knowledge of the previous titles to understand what the hell's going on, but even so it's as addictive as fags and therefore ideal PSP fodder – providing you're not put off by the formulaic gameplay.

"Gandalf? I could take him."

With the same turn-based combat system that digital adventurers have grown to know and tolerate over the past decade or so, the game feels familiar and instantly playable. The plot ticks all the fantasy gaming cliché boxes – there are strangely named monsters, heroes with purple hair, villagers who need to be saved and so on. Throw in some magic items, the ability to level-up plus long-winded dialogue sequences and you'll be convinced that Capcom has resurrected one of the most bog-standard RPGs ever made. But a few hours in and you'll realise that, despite everything, this thing has you gripped – even though the only new feature is the fishing mode where you sit around angling with other PSP owners. Not the coolest gaming session to invite your mates round for.

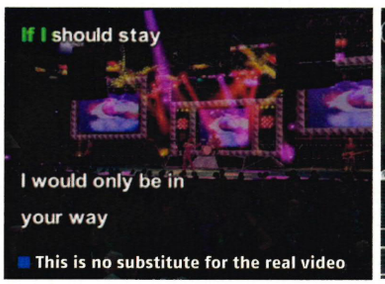
In terms of pounds per hour, it's one of the best handheld investments you can make – but we think a cutting edge gadget like the PSP should play host to entirely new games that have been designed to take advantage of its strengths. RPG fans, meanwhile, deserve more than a fishing mini game. **Andy Hartup**

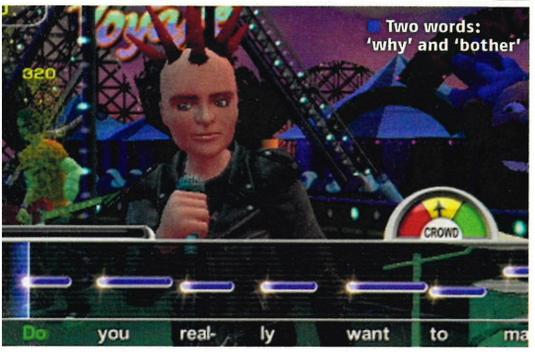
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK	VERDICT
Graphics	06 Typical PSone fodder
Sound	04 'Classic' RPG muzak with poor FX
Gameplay	07 Turn-based action done well
Lifespan	09 Large and tough to put down

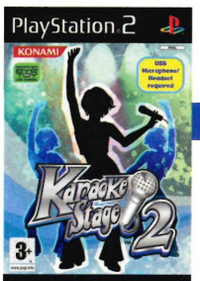
An archaic yet charming RPG, Breath Of Fire III is the sort of gaming popcorn that tastes plain but keeps you munching anyway **6/10**

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WIFI MULTIPLAYER YES
DOWNLOADS NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS NO







KARAOKE STAGE 2

Sing and dance? We have enough trouble holding a pad...

DETAILS

- **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER** HARMONIX
- **PRICE** £29.99
- **PLAYERS** 1-8
- **OUT** MARCH
- **WEBSITE** UK.GS.KONAMI-EUROPE.COM
- **60HZ** NO
- **WIDESCREEN** NO
- **SURROUND SOUND** YES
- **ONLINE** NO

If you're after a game that makes you look like an idiot, *Karaoke Stage 2* ought to be top of your shopping list. For a start, it's the first game to take the logical step of combining singing and dancing via a fiendish mat/mic combo – and it's only when you start trying to combine heel taps with high notes that you realise exactly why most girl bands mime. For another thing, it's got some cringeworthy numbers in its 50 song playlist, from *Fame* to *Everybody Wants To Rule The World*.

There's something a bit bargain bin about *Karaoke Stage 2*. Partly it's the lack of a sturdy, *SingStar*-style default mic. Partly it's the fact that there aren't any proper videos – just polygonal characters jiggling about. Mainly though, it's that all the songs are sound-alikes, and the ones from distinctive singers (*Crazy In Love*, *Material Girl*, *That's Amore*) sound like they're being done by *Stars In Their Eyes* wannabes.

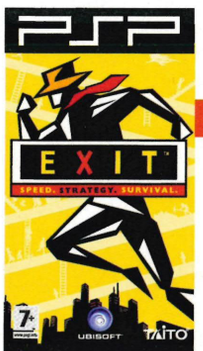
There's even something a bit questionable about the way the lyrics are displayed – constantly scrolling along the bottom of the screen instead of coming up in chunks like *SingStar* – that, to be honest, makes you feel a bit ill if you're drunk. And since we suspect that's how many people will play it, we'd suggest looking elsewhere. Unless, of course, you *want* to look an idiot. ■ **Joel Snape**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine UK VERDICT

Graphics	05	Ropey, and no proper videos
Sound	07	*We* sound more like Jay-Z than they do
Gameplay	06	The scrolling lyrics need a rethink
Lifespan	07	A commendable pile of songs

You can probably pick up a couple of SingStars for the same price, and they let you ogle Beyonce when you're hungover

6/10



EXIT

Pint-sized puzzler shows boredom the door

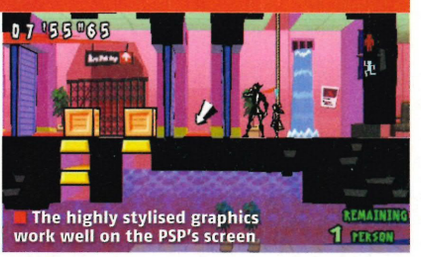
DETAILS

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** TAITO
- **PRICE** £34.99
- **PLAYERS** 1
- **OUT** 24 FEBRUARY
- **WIFI MULTIPLAYER** NO
- **DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT** YES
- **CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS** NO

The idea behind this clever action puzzler is to guide your escapologist – called Mr Esc – to the exit door in over 100 side-on, scrolling levels. One idea, but the obstacles in your way are many and varied. Fire, electricity, smoke, deadly drops, unstable flooring, conveyor belts, timed locks, and so on.

Brilliantly, levels also contain people that you have to rescue and lead to safety, and they can be ordered to stay put, follow you or fetch items and use them. However, the bulky adults can't climb, children will need to be lifted and some people are injured and need carrying.

Reconciling these environmental and human factors is what makes *Exit* cool. Simple but stylish graphics and extra downloadable levels don't hurt either. In fact, if it weren't for inevitable repetition and occasionally heavy controls – not good in a timed game – the score would have been higher. ■ **Paul Fitzpatrick**

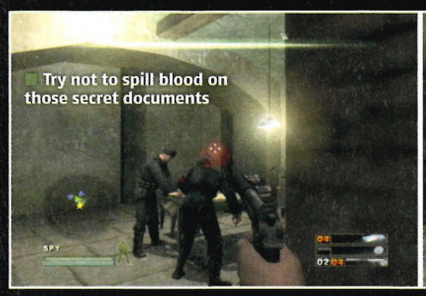


PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine UK VERDICT

Graphics	07	Simple, stylised and very clear. Good stuff
Sound	07	Energetic music and dialogue
Gameplay	07	Compact puzzles with lots of variety
Lifespan	07	100+ stages plus downloadable levels

A stylish puzzler, whose slightly unwieldy control system and inevitable repetition are the only minor spanners in the works

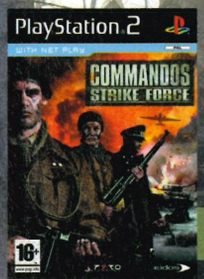
7/10


Try not to spill blood on those secret documents

COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE

ON THE DVD

An elite fighting unit or just a strike farce?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER PYRO
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1 (1-8 ONLINE)
OUT 17 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.COMMANDOSSTRIKEFORCE.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE YES

AT A GLANCE

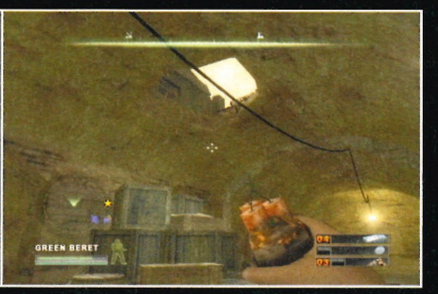
Once the reserve of PC nerds, the top-down *Commandos* has gone first-person for its PS2 debut. You must use the skills of three character classes to punish Herman.

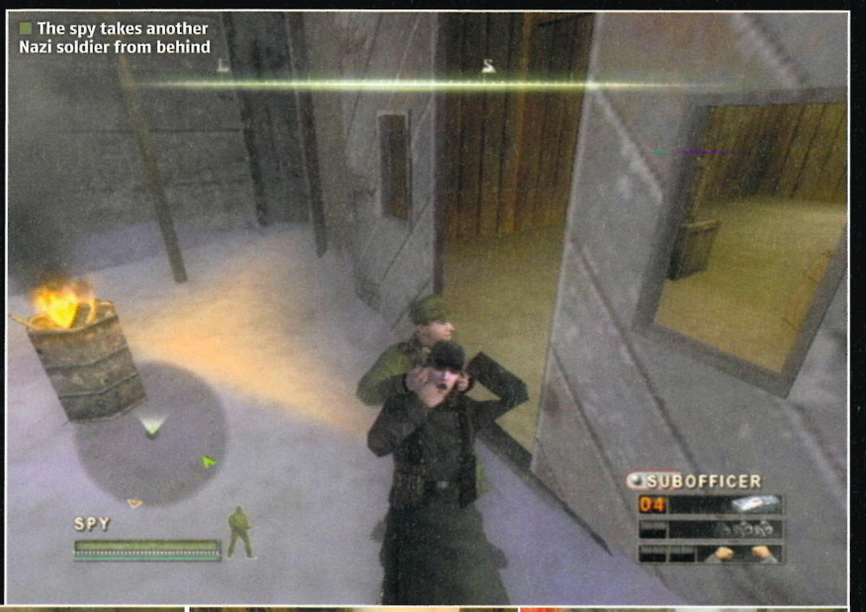
Fun and games at the Nazi party's annual BBQ

World War 2 is an obsession for game developers. They're drawn to it like moths to a blood-red lightbulb. These days, there's a seemingly endless line of new first-person shooters eager to fight for Queen and country, most of which are destined for unmarked war graves. And by 'graves' we mean 'bargain bins'. *Commandos* used to be genuinely different, though. It was a third-person strategy game that was as frustrating as it was addictive, but now developer Pyro has leapt onto the FPS warwagon and created *Strike Force*.

The hook here is that you can take control of not one but three soldiers – each with unique fighting abilities, enabling you to choose whatever approach to combat appeals the most. On paper it seems like a great idea, but in reality the game doesn't deliver the level of freedom it promises.

The main problem is that there's no point in the game where *Commandos* actually enables you to choose between all three of the character classes on the fly. During most (but certainly not all) levels a quick tap of Ⓐ will swap you between two characters, but it always seems like you're being urged to play the game





The spy takes another Nazi soldier from behind

SNIPER OF THE DEAD

And the latest celeb to jump onto the videogame voicing gravy train is...

PHOTO: JOBY SESSIONS

It's Simon Pegg of *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Spaced* fame. That's right: one of Britain's top comedy figures has signed up to supply the Bob Hoskins-gone-wrong cockney accent of *Commandos*' elite sniper. Whether or not this will entice anyone to buy the game is unclear, as Pegg isn't usually anyone's first choice for the role of a grizzled Nazi-killer. Still, he delivers the dialogue pretty well. Shame the script he had to work with was hammy like the deli counter at Tescos.

Hold still, Heinz, your label's sticking out of your coat

CHARACTER SWAPPING IS A GOOD IDEA, BUT IT FEELS UNDERCOOKED

in a pre-defined, scripted way. Want to fight through a certain stage as the Sniper? Well tough tits, son, because the game says you'll be spending the next hour or so sneaking around bland corridors as the emotionally dead Spy. Perhaps the Green Beret's all-out action approach is more your style? Too bad, it's time to shoot enemies from a distance and stab them in the back with a knife. Take away this unique selling point and all that's left is an average WW2 shooter, clucthing a stolen Luger in its shaking hands.

WAR IS HELL

Commandos' most obvious, and damaging, problem is that the actual shooting simply isn't up to scratch. Aiming is slow and jerky, like your elite commandos are suffering the after effects of too much plundered French wine. This is balanced out by the fact that your crosshairs only have to be vaguely near an enemy for your bullets to take him down. Now that may be great in a real war, but it removes the skill and therefore also the satisfaction. Standing next to the highly polished, precision shooters *Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One* and the truly mighty *Black*, *Commandos* is going to have a tough time convincing punters that it's really doing anything remarkable at all. Which is a real shame, because some of the details have been implemented with real finesse.

The spy in particular has some tasty tricks hidden under his great coat – his ability to throw coins as a distraction (or gas grenades for

The ground textures whiff of PSone

Dying this close to a medipack is like a hot bullet to the balls

Real men kill from long range

Hurray! That was our one millionth gaming Nazi kill

a more deadly solution), for example, is an interesting and worthwhile feature. Similarly, the sniper can focus and briefly slow time to line up his shots, and it's truly satisfying to see several enemies explode in a red cloud as a result. The Green Beret is the least innovative of the characters – *Medal of Honor* nuts should feel at home with the man's direct approach to combat, but anyone hankering after a little variety will probably savour the Sniper and Spy sections. Character swapping is a strong idea, but it feels undercooked. The game should've focused on creating truly freeform levels, encouraging you to exploit all three of your characters' skills in original ways.

TAKE A LOOK AROUND

There are other nice touches, though. One problem that often hobbles World War 2 games is the fact that they take place in bland settings. Most war zones in Europe are 'designed' with samey rubble and fire-charred buildings, but in *Commandos* the developer has chosen its environments carefully. The missions set in Norway and France are genuinely enjoyable to roam around because they offer war-weary eyes something fresh to look at while scanning the horizon for Fritz.

Up close the objects and textures look washed out, but there are enough goons trying to shoot your face off to distract you from scrutinising the environments for long. Having said that, it's quite clear that *Commandos Strike Force*'s enemies aren't the pick of the bunch when it comes to using the grey matter – they frequently appear to be confused by simple choices, such as how to open a door, when to take cover, or even who to shoot at. Fighting against stupid enemies simply isn't what we signed up for, and its the sort of insubordination that's likely to see this game facing the firing squad.

Serving in the same unit as *Brothers In Arms* and *Call Of Duty*, *Strike Force* just doesn't make the grade. Given a tighter shooting system and the ability to choose between all three character classes at any time, the game would have had a chest full of medals. Sadly, it feels like *Commandos* has been left holding the grenade after throwing the pin... **Andy Hartup**

FIGHTING AGAINST STUPID ENEMIES ISN'T WHAT WE SIGNED UP FOR

IRON CROSS-DRESSING

Surviving as the Spy requires cunning, guile, and the ability to look good in any uniform

Strolling into a camp filled with angry Nazis can be a little tricky for a chap from Blighty dressed head to toe in British military garb, so you'll have to improvise to crack certain levels. Kill a guard with your cheese-wire and you'll be able to steal his uniform and goose-step around in disguise. The only problem is that your cover will be blown if any enemy of a higher rank spots you, so working your way up from grunt all the way to general or even Gestapo secret police is the easiest way to progress. Alternatively, you could just whip out the light machine gun and start dishing out the 'good news' to the Hun. Just don't expect to live too long when they get stroppy and shoot back.

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

Graphics	07	Decent overall, but bland up close
Sound	06	Second-rate sound effects
Gameplay	06	Good ideas let down by loose shooting
Lifespan	07	Online mode expands the experience

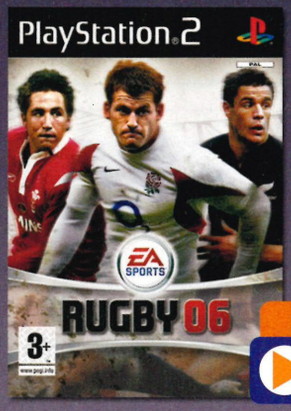
***Commandos** has greatness in its sights, but it can't overcome the strong opposition offered by* **Call Of Duty 2** *and* **Black**

7/10

MORE GAMES to the GALLON

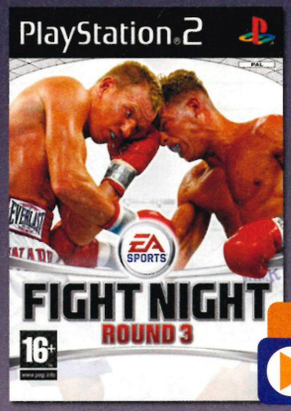
Commandos: Strike Force

SAVE £10 £29.99 RRP £39.99



Rugby 06

SAVE £10 £29.99 RRP £39.99



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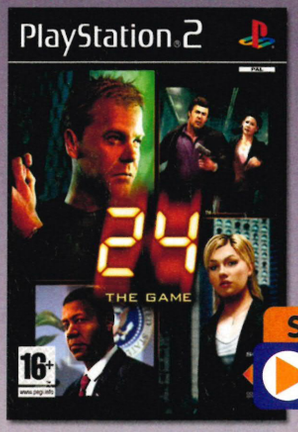

24: The Game

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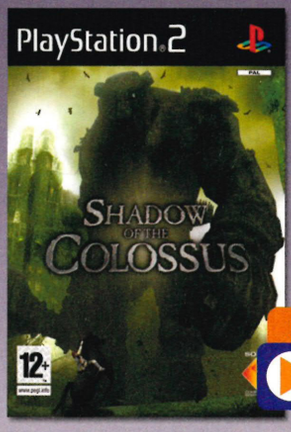

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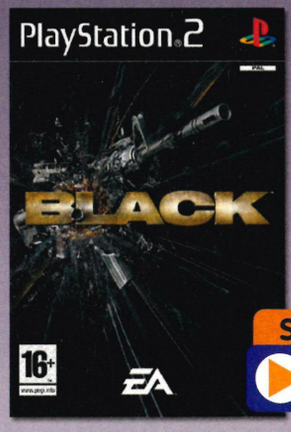

Black

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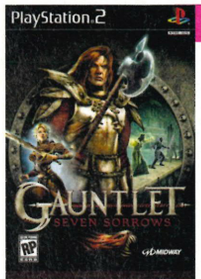
It's like everyone in the game *wants* to die

GAUNTLET: SEVEN SORROWS

Sword? Check. Sorcery? Check. New ideas? Uh...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER MIDWAY
DEVELOPER MIDWAY
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1-4
OUT 24 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.GAUNTLETSEVENSORROWS.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

Red Valkyrie needs food, badly," announces the Jeremy Irons sound-alike voiceover as your fighter's health bar recedes to a sliver and she starts to totter like a frail old lady in a blizzard. And well she may need a snack; but she could also do with a new modus operandi because this hack 'n' slash RPG-lite thing is getting old.

This is traditional, old-skool '80s-style *Gauntlet* – a relentless hackfest featuring screen after screen of swarming, noisy enemies, all seemingly desperate to be put to the sword in a flurry of colourful effects. It's crude, yet hard not to like.

Forget the story though, it's rubbish. Let's talk instead about the four playable characters who take the screen together in the co-op mode and clutter it so that after an initial few minutes of novelty value, it becomes a chore to play. Single-player, where one character takes the fight to the evil hordes, is much less messy. The four action buttons have roughly the same effect regardless of who you play as and stats soon rack up at the end of each level.

Seven Sorrows is not a difficult game – despite a camera that sometimes feels like it's stuck – and it does become repetitive, with the only occasional break from melee combat provided by a lever to pull or switch to trigger. Even so, this is unpretentious, straight-laced arcade action from a time gone by that just about holds its own.

Paul Roundell

Multiplayer is a bit of a mess; solo's better

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Graphics	08	Varied levels and good FX
Sound	07	Satisfyingly meaty war cries
Gameplay	06	Basic and a bit hackneyed
Lifespan	05	Needs cranking to 'hard' for longevity

Enjoyably frantic, brief and basic. Gauntlet is showing its age but still offers a decent few hours of mindless maiming

6/10

DRAKENGARD 2

Simply more of the flame

DETAILS

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER CAVIA
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT 3 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.SQUARE-ENIX.CO.JP/GAMES/PS2/DOD2
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

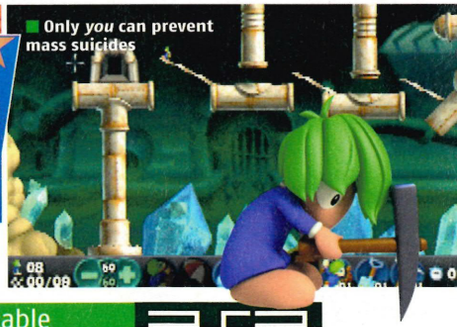
What? Another *Drakengard*? We'd assumed that after the faceless original left the UK cold, there probably wouldn't be another numbingly mediocre instalment travelling over on the slow boat from Japan. Heartbreakingly, we were wrong.

As hack 'n' slash action, *Drakengard 2* manages to be unoriginal and uninspiring in a whole new way. Mashing ⊡ here is slightly more tedious than in *Dynasty Warriors* because there are fewer enemies concealed in the dirty, fog-filled environments. The dragon sections seem like a flying mini-game pasted in at the last minute to fill space on the disc, and the cut-scenes are so chock full of the usual poorly translated Japan-o-drivel that you'll swear you've played this game before. The CG sequences are fairly impressive, but this isn't enough to save *Drakengard 2* from extinction. **Andy Hartup**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

Repetitive and just plain boring, this is the gaming equivalent of writing your weekly shopping list. Put us down for some dragon burgers please...

4/10


Only *you* can prevent mass suicides

LEMMINGS

The legendary puzzler goes portable

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER TEAM 17
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT 3 MARCH
WIFI MULTIPLAYER NO
DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT YES
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS NO

For suicidal critters, the *Lemmings* are masters of survival. Now they're on PSP and the game rocks.

Crucially, the series' classic gameplay hasn't changed since the original *Lemmings* back in 1990. The aim of the game is to guide your lemmings from the level entrance to the exit, ensuring that enough of them survive to progress. Without your intervention the lemmings will wander off and get killed, so you must assign tasks to limited numbers of specialists – digging trenches, building bridges and, most importantly, blocking their fellow lemmings until the work has been completed and a safe passage to the exit is available.

A throwback to the days when pure and simple game design reigned supreme, *Lemmings* is one of the most instantly playable and addictive games that will ever grace your PSP. Superb handheld puzzling. **Lee Hart**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

A puzzle game that ranks alongside* Bust-A-Move *and* Tetris, *Lemmings is ideal for PSP play. One reservation? It's an old game and should really be a budget title

8/10

"Alright, one last grope but then I've got to nip down the battlefield"

Six hits, but all by pressing the same button

DEVIL KINGS

And you will know us by the trail of dead

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.CAPCOM-EUROPE.COM/GAMESHEET.ASPX?GAME=DEVILKINGS
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

Anyone familiar with the *Dynasty* or *Samurai Warriors* series will instantly recognise this. Like KOEI's historical war games, *Devil Kings* is all about single-handedly laying to waste entire armies across huge levels that last upwards of half an hour.

And that's it. Pick a character, enter a battlefield and then hit ⓞ repeatedly until everyone's dead or crippling pain spreads slowly up your forearm. The brutality initially proves satisfying thanks to the chunky, smoothly animated attacks, and whirling through crowds of enemies, leaving piles of bodies behind you, does look the business. Problem is, it goes on *forever*. Every level is a single, unchanging note in the key of 'relentless slaughter', and there's a lack of any real objectives. Whoever you control and whatever messages flash on screen, each war is won by killing every red dot on the map.

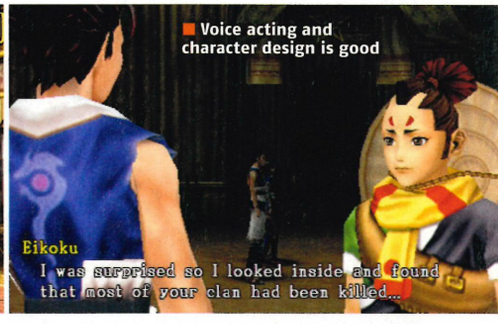
Technically, it's pretty woeful. The camera needs constant adjustment while buildings and bad guys pop up inches in front of your face without warning. And when they aren't wandering off aimlessly, your troops might as well be attacking with rolled up newspapers. They're basically just decoration, leaving all the work to you. A variety of playable characters, extra moves and a *Risk*-style campaign map do little to hide the fact that there's little more on offer here than an endless swarm of identi-soldiers to hammer. ■ **Leon Hurley**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine UK	VERDICT
Graphics	06 Terrible pop-up, bland environments
Sound	05 Genero-sword clashes, forgettable music
Gameplay	05 Just use the same attack, over and over...
Lifespan	06 Some cool moves but no diversity

A poor man's* Dynasty Warriors. *The hacking and slashing remains the same from the first minute in and never introduces any real variety

5/10

"That's not an axe... *this* is an axe"



Voice acting and character design is good

"Screw the quest, let's just order in and watch TV"

KEY OF HEAVEN

Working title: Key To Lindsay Lohan's Bedroom

Playing *Key Of Heaven* is a little like repeatedly thrusting your arm into a lucky dip filled with equal numbers of gold nuggets and emperor scorpions. There's no doubting that there's treasure to be had, but you're unlikely to be too enthusiastic about trying to find it.

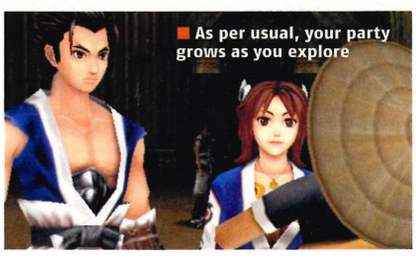
First the good news: *KOH* is a fresh PSP RPG (as opposed to a PSone retread). Better yet, it jettisons squished character design and isometric perspective in favour of normal-looking heroes and a slick 3D camera. The combat's all unleashed in real time too, and based on a compelling system of collectible attack elements that slot together to make personalised combos. You can even trade your unique moves via WiFi *and* download exclusive combo elements.

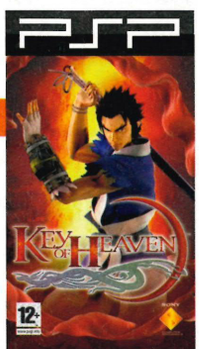
Sadly, the good news peters out after that. Navigating the poorly signposted world is a chore, the spells your hero can learn are too powerful, and the blocking system is infuriatingly slow and unreliable. Worst of all, no matter how clever your custom combo is, it only uses a single button to activate – which totally removes any skill. Lucky dip anyone? ■ **Paul Fitzpatrick**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine UK	VERDICT
Graphics	07 Effort has been taken, and it shows
Sound	06 Good music and decent voice acting
Gameplay	04 Plenty of action but little variety
Lifespan	04 You'll run out of patience before game

Key Of Heaven ***is an action RPG with a couple of genuinely good ideas, but they're lost in a flurry of game-hobbling annoyances***

5/10


As per usual, your party grows as you explore



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY
PRICE £34.99
OUT NOW
WIFI YES
DOWNLOADS YES
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS NO

TRAPT

Conclusive proof that Goth girls are violent mentalists

DETAILS

PUBLISHER TAKE TWO
DEVELOPER TECMO
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.TECMOGAMES.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

AT A GLANCE

The first ever 'entrap-'em-up' *Trapt* puts you in the Gothic bodice of Allura, a young princess possessed by a demon and forced to murder anyone who enters her creepy mansion using a variety of diabolical traps.

This game is weird. As if the idea of lurking in a castle and impaling visitors with a range of fiendish traps isn't odd enough, in practice it's nothing like you might expect. There's no stealth. There's no tense hiding in shadows waiting for enemies to trigger that vicious swinging pendulum. Instead, you run around like Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*, encouraging your adversaries to pursue you and then setting off traps as they pass by them. It's totally unsubtle, suspiciously haphazard and verges on slapstick. In short, *Trapt* is among the strangest games on PS2.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP

The story is that Princess Allura has been falsely accused of the murder of her father, King Olaf. On the run, Allura seeks sanctuary in a creepy old mansion. Bad move: she's immediately possessed by a 'fiend' that dwells in the house and is forced to kill anyone who enters so that the evil spirit can feast on their trapped souls. Pressing ◎ brings up a map of the room you're in, complete with a grid overlay to help you plan the trap positions. You can equip nine traps in total, three from each category of ceiling, wall and floor. Once they're active, coloured icons indicate their position in the room and you then need to lure enemies within range before pressing the relevant action button to spike/burn/crush your unfortunate guest.

Defeating intruders is basically a case of running around the room and setting off traps until their life force has run out. Sometimes a couple of big hits will kill them quickly. Other times your traps will keep missing, they'll keep chasing you and you'll keep running for what seems like an eternity. At one point, shortly after the 'Mega Rock' had missed its target for the fifth consecutive time, we wondered if the game was even real or just a symptom of madness induced by excessive PS2 exposure. Just as we reached for the reset switch, the target jogged back into view and so, reflexively, we started running again. Maybe this time he'd be obliterated by the 'Blast Bomb'. Or maybe we'll just keep running forever. Like Bruce Springsteen. The problem with *Trapt* is that its randomness means you don't really feel satisfied when a masterplan pays off. That sound? It could be another adventurer being hit by a pan. But it's just as likely to be you head butting the wall with frustration. ■ **Lee Hart**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

Graphics	04	Dark (well, dull) Gothic scenery
Sound	03	Japanese voices with garbled subtitles
Gameplay	05	Run, look behind you, set off traps. Weird
Lifespan	04	Short story mode but it seems to last forever

A kinky maiden luring unsuspecting men into her vicious trap? It's exactly what mother warned us about, and wisely avoided

4/10

■ **Welcome to another Freudian nightmare**

■ **Crushed by her own trap. There's a lesson there somewhere**

■ **Allura pouts as the Blast Bomb claims another victim**

■ **Coax him in, press the relevant button and let the suffering commence**

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

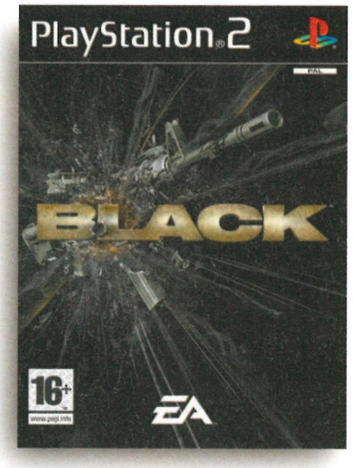
Pull off multiple traps at once and you'll get a bonus that can be spent on sexy new devices

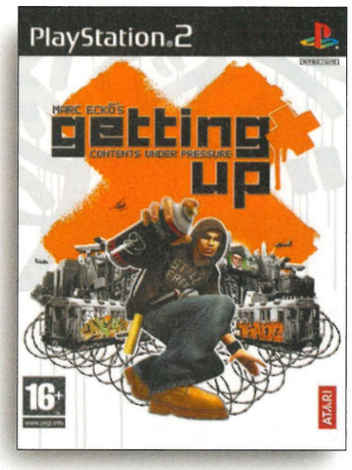
Start off by planning where to place your traps and how best to use them in unison to deliver a large dose of pain.

Here we've lured a hapless enemy onto a spring floor trap that sends him hurtling through the air...

... And impales him on a big candlestick which immediately sets the fool ablaze. We love it when a plan comes together.

Available from
24th February





Available from
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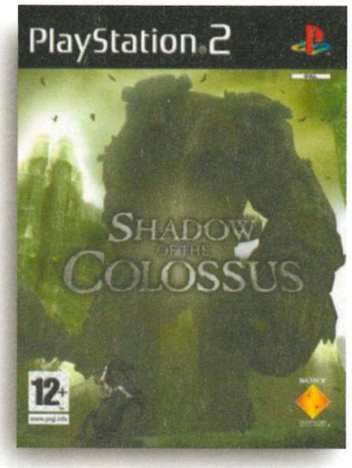

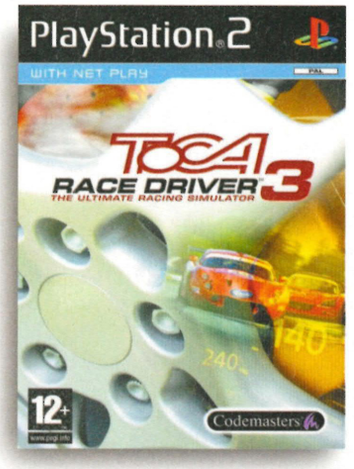

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PlayStation 2

FIFA STREET 2

Sexy football with a drum 'n' bass soundtrack

DETAILS

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER EA CANADA
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-4
OUT 3 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.FIFASTREET2.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

AT A GLANCE
The cream of the world's footballers (and Peter Crouch) band together to show off their talents in fantasy football tournaments. PSP version reviewed on page 100.

Unlike *Pro Evolution Soccer*, which we play most days, *FIFA Street* has only ever been brought out for a kickaround on the days we let the girls in the office have a go on some games. "Let's play *FIFA Street*," they said. "You know, the one that's advertised on TV!" So we did. And to our dismay, we got beaten – over and over again. "How are you doing that?" we asked. "Just pressing all the buttons!" they said. So that's what it's come to? Pressing all the buttons?

In *FIFA Street 2* there's a lot of buttons to be pressed. There's one for taunting, one for keepy-ups, two for passing, one for strafing and the right analogue stick initiates special tricks. Press them all at once and footballing magic happens. Motion-captured Adrianos and Rooneys perform a football quickstep that would normally take an afternoon of practise and a huge amount of talent. Breakdancing round the ball, a flick up on to the chest, a bit of juggling and then a sweetly struck volley that bends cinematically into the top corner. The whole thing feels like that ridiculous blade-running adidas advert made real.

We understand what *FIFA Street 2* is trying to achieve, and why the last game was so popular. It takes those rare moments of genius that normally happen once a season and lets you do them every 20 seconds in a pared down four-on-four street football match with well-known stars dressed in beach wear. Where *PES 5* can make people feel like they're playing for a Sunday league team on a sloping pitch, *FIFA Street 2* is like showboating for the Brazil All-stars team against Andorra.

The close-in view offers the best look at the skills

NO CONTROL

For all its flamboyance though, the football isn't particularly fluid, as it suffers from a gravity defying balloon of a ball and little sense of direct control over it. As most of your button presses trigger lengthy animations, the action is stop-start and you'll find yourself dispossessed because you can't disengage a move halfway through. The Trick Stick move takes this lack of precise command to another extreme. These piss-take skill moves flick the ball over an opponent or slip it through their legs – the humiliated player is frozen to the spot and then stumbles to the floor unless they counter it with a Trick Stick challenge. In practise, it's just irritating. Players clown around and instead of lunging in and stealing the ball, you roll over on your ass.

The Gamebreaker, a staple of the *NBA Street* games, disrupts play further. It's a kind of powered-up super move, it renders the opposing team helpless when unleashed. A player runs over a marked area and everything goes slow and orange, and if you shoot you're guaranteed a goal. The gyp is that this also causes the opposing team to *lose* a goal. We can see why they've done it, but they happen too often and become the cheesy player's equivalent of the 'grown-up' *FIFA*'s sweet spot.

With its combos, special moves and mini-games, *FIFA Street 2* is the result of a beat-'em-up transposed on top of a football game. Only it's a slightly unresponsive, mash-the-buttons-and-anyone-can-win type beat-'em-up. What makes it even more odious is the persistent desire to urbanify, with Zane Lowe providing a radio voiceover and an unholy combination of drum 'n' bass and rock for the frenetic, nagging soundtrack. Honestly, is this *really* the best use of the FIFA licence? **George Walter**

No, not a Communist Russia pitch, that's the Gamebreaker icon

The Legends team features old-skool trick merchants

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

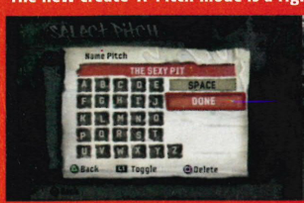
Graphics	07	Cute animation, decent player likenesses
Sound	06	An iPod Shuffle's worth of alternative pop
Gameplay	05	Flashy moves but less than fluid control
Lifespan	08	With mates, this'll run and run

You can produce flashier football in PES and FIFA without having to hit ten buttons. Think about that before buying **Street 2**

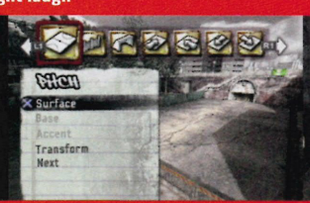
6/10

DESIGN YOUR OWN NOUCAMP

The new Create-A-Pitch mode is a right laugh

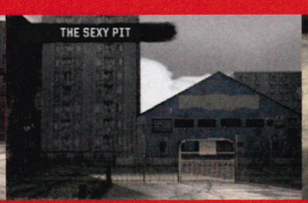


1. First, give your pitch a suitable name.



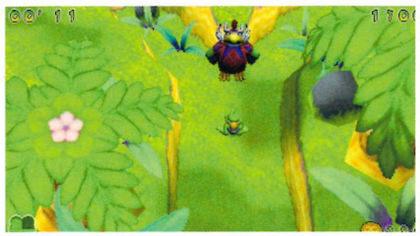
2. Choose a colour for the pitch and add highlights.

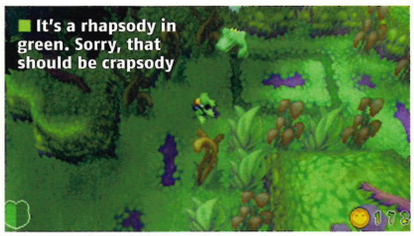
3. Make the goal posts – sadly without a 'jumpers for' option.

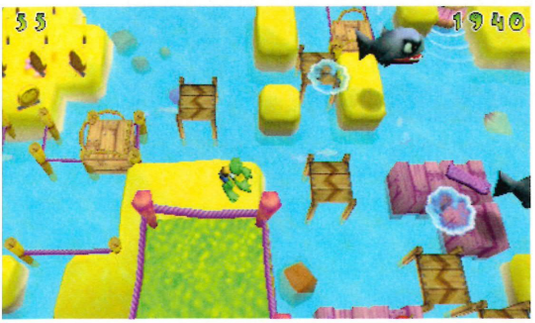


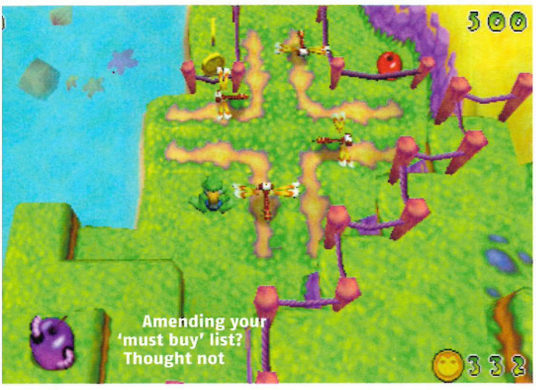
4. Then choose the surrounding buildings. They all look like a bit like Swindon.

5. Finally, christen it by falling on your face and bleeding over the jagged concrete surface.

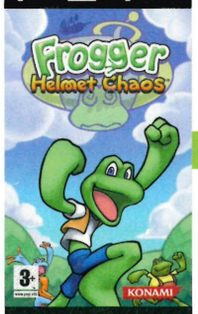








PS2



FROGGER: HELMET CHAOS

'Helmet chaos'? Sounds nasty...

DETAILS

PUBLISHER	KONAMI
DEVELOPER	KONAMI HWI
PRICE	£29.99
PLAYERS	1-4
OUT	NOW
WIFI MULTIPLAYER	YES
DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT	NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS	NO

If there's one thing a puzzle-platformer needs it's an intuitive, instant-reaction control scheme. Unfortunately, getting Frogger through his grid-based and danger-laced environment is about as snappy as email chess. The problem is that hitting the D-pad only makes the amphibian hop a single square in any given direction. Moving requires constant tapping and you can't travel diagonally at all. It's complicated further because turning means rotating the amphibian separately with the shoulder buttons.

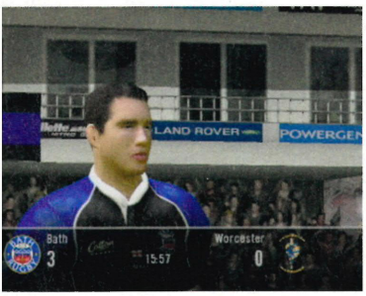
It's the obsessive/compulsive precision required to propel the little snot-ball forwards that causes the problems. Frogger's world is full of danger, like water (frogs can drown?) ferocious animals, and collapsing platforms. Getting through all this requires nimble finger-work but speed is impossible. Rather than flying through levels on instinct and reflexes you're left tapping buttons with the mechanical accuracy of a frequently dialled phone number. Some of the multiplayer games are fun – four-player variations on Tag and Capture The Flag for example – but the single-player mode is lifeless. The awkward camera and poorly placed checkpoints do nothing to help. ■ **Leon Hurley**

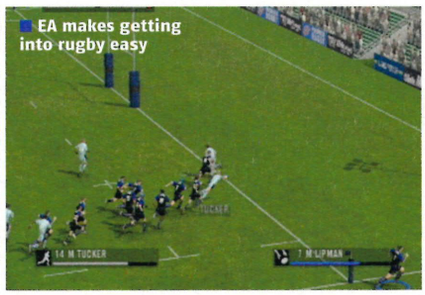
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Graphics	05	Sharp but featureless and dull
Sound	06	The noises inside mad people's heads
Gameplay	05	Inflexible controls ruin everything
Lifespan	07	Enjoyable mini-games and WiFi sharing

A frustrating, repetitive adventure. The unforgiving controls are the only reason the simple action is any challenge at all

5/10





RUGBY 06

Where oval balls aren't a medical mystery...

DETAILS

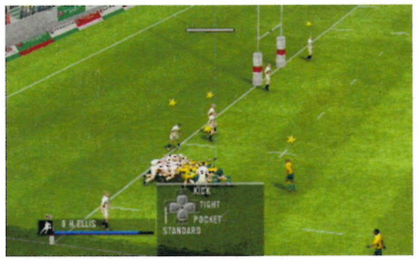
PUBLISHER	EA SPORTS
DEVELOPER	EA SPORTS
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-4
OUT	NOW
WEBSITE	WWW.EASPORTS.CO.UK/RUGBY06
60HZ	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
ONLINE	NO

Unlike *FIFA*, *Madden*, *NHL* and the rest of EA's licence-waving sporting franchises, *Rugby* hasn't been around for all that long. This is the publisher's fourth crack at it on PS2 and, given that *FIFA* still isn't quite right after nearly 15 years of trying, you'd be forgiven for fearing the worst.

You'd also be wrong. *Rugby 06* is a hugely enjoyable – if simplified – take on the sport. It's not different enough from last year's version to justify owning both editions, but it is the best rugby game yet seen on PS2. And unlike the real thing, it won't leave you with smashed fruit for ears after prolonged play.

The initial tutorial mode is a godsend, enabling even the clumsiest of novices to learn both the sport and the videogame from scratch. New set-pieces and impact players – those stars of the sport given individual AI to play like they do in real life – slot in nicely, and every imaginable team, kit, ground and blade of grass looks authentic.

Aficionados will spot occasional holes in the gameplay – it's too easy to grubber kick your way through the opposition, and we'd like to see all the players given individual AI, rather than just the great ones – but even so, this is both easy to pick up and play, and rewarding every time you come back to it. ■ **Ben Wilson**



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Graphics	07	Good, but faces have an odd vinyl sheen
Sound	06	Adequate, but nothing special
Gameplay	08	Simple but engagingly solid
Lifespan	07	The major cups and tournaments await

Don't bother if you own the last edition of Rugby, *but give it a try if you don't – you'll be scrumming like a pro in no time at all*

7/10

Speed is the essence throughout

TAK: THE GREAT JUJU CHALLENGE

Worth Tak-ing a chance on?

Throw a cursory glance at the picture on the cover of the game box there and you'd be forgiven for thinking that this has been done a million times before. And you'd be right. It's got lush greenery. It's got a two-player mode. It's got timed challenges and collectable items. It's a *lot* like other PS2 platformers.

Dig deeper though and you'll find a depth that lifts this third *Tak* adventure higher than expected. The clue is the 'Challenge' in the title. The game is split into a series of stages, which you race through for glory, points and bonuses, competing against three other computer-controlled teams. *The Great Juju Challenge* is never going to be the love of your gaming life, but it's a reasonably attractive bit on the side. ■ **DM**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK **VERDICT**

This platformer should be applauded for trying something original. There's plenty of crossover with previous Taks, and enough new features to keep the series fresh

7/10

DETAILS

PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1-2
OUT 3 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.TAKGAME.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

Dora realised a stint in rehab was long overdue

DORA THE EXPLORER: JOURNEY TO THE PURPLE PLANET

Less than a-Dora-ble

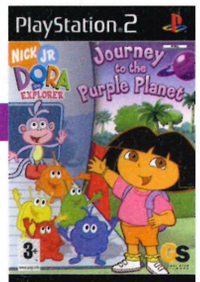
One day, we're going to get tricked into writing about a non-existent game because we're getting so used to platformers with ever more ludicrous names. Turns out *Dora The Explorer* is a kids' cartoon, and this, the PS2 tie-in, is surprisingly serviceable. It offers simple one-button controls for a mixture of basic platforming, reflex and memory tests. The presentation retains the colourful flair of the show, including *the campest talking map ever*, and there's enough variety to entertain the kind of manchild layabouts who presumably also comprise the show's audience.

Unfortunately there are moments where it's likely to baffle younger ones, with occasionally unfriendly design, glitches, under-explained nuances and little real meat to the game. And there's an unfortunate lack of autosave, leaving Dora a blemished curiosity at best. ■ **CB**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK **VERDICT**

Its flaws prevent it from being anything special, but Dora's inoffensiveness and general charm means Mum can pick a copy for a couple of hours' peace

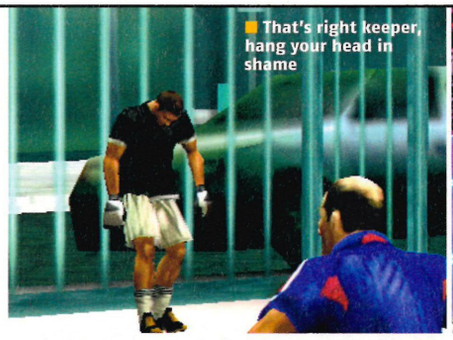
5/10



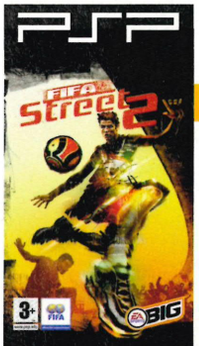
DETAILS

PUBLISHER GLOBAL STAR GAMES/TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER MONKEY BAR GAMES
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.TAKE2GAMES.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

FIFA Street's four-a-side pitch format fits the PSP screen perfectly


That's right keeper, hang your head in shame

PSP



FIFA STREET 2

Carpark football works on PSP!

If the truth be told, there still isn't a decent football game on PSP. *PES 5* operates at way below its potential, while *FIFA* and *World Tour Soccer* both suffer from muddy controls and poor visuals. So, given that the full PS2 version of *FIFA Street 2* received a less than Premier League score elsewhere in this issue (see page 98), you're probably expecting this version to rack up fairly close to the bottom of this list of PSP football games.

You'd be wrong, though. Quite unexpectedly, the quick burst combo-based approach to show-off football you get in *Street 2* is perfectly suited to the handheld format. This is due in part to the simplified control system. Ditching the Trick Stick, ball skills are assigned to ⓐ. Holding the L shoulder for close control and then bashing said button means making clowns of your opponents is now a breeze. Once you've built up five in a row, the ubiquitous 'Street' Gamebreaker is initiated, and rather than the screen going a muddy red colour (like the PS2 version), a short multi-angle cinematic plays out as you smash home a wondergoal – which is a far neater and less obtrusive mechanism.

Challenging players who try to go round you is also simplified. Whereas in the PS2 game this involved the Trick Stick, here a button flashes up which you need to hit at the right time. In fact, the short and fast style of *Street* is a sensible approach to football 'on the go' when compared to its more serious 'sim' cousins. A quick game of headers and volleys in the park with mates or a 90-minute slog on a Sunday morning? We'll go with the *Street* option. ■ **George Walter**

DETAILS

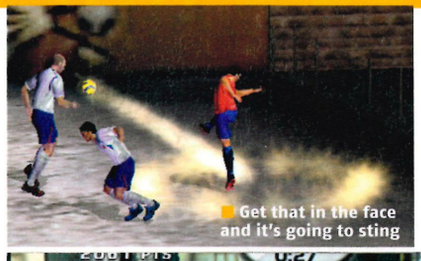
PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER EA CANADA
PRICE £34.99
OUT 3 MARCH
WIFI YES
DOWNLOADS NO
CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS YES

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine UK **VERDICT**

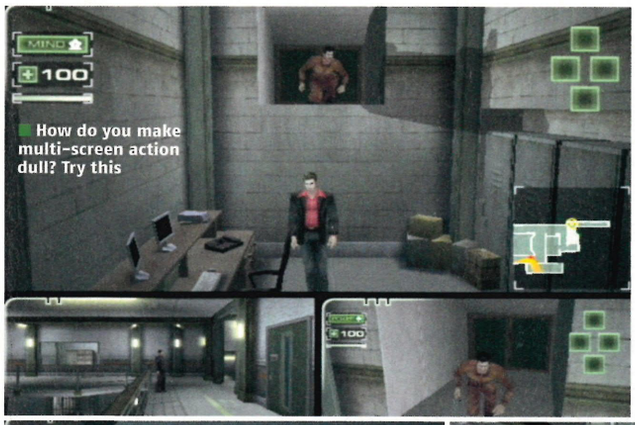
Graphics	08	Chunky, colourful and well animated
Sound	07	Like listening to a trendy bloke's iPod
Gameplay	07	Simplified, but all the better for it
Lifespan	08	Tournaments ramp this up

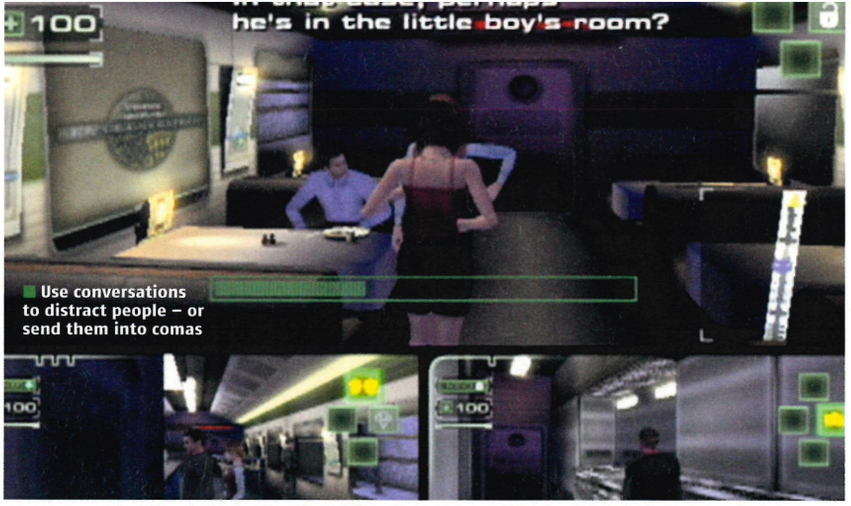
If you're looking for a new football game on PSP, then Street is the friendliest option. Cane it past the urban stylings, and it's a blast

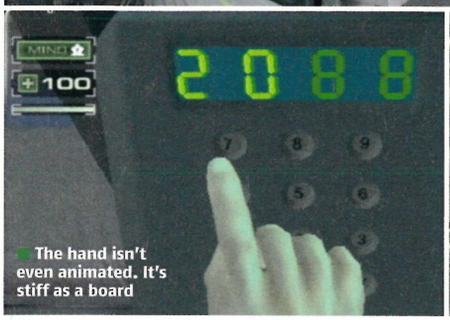
7/10

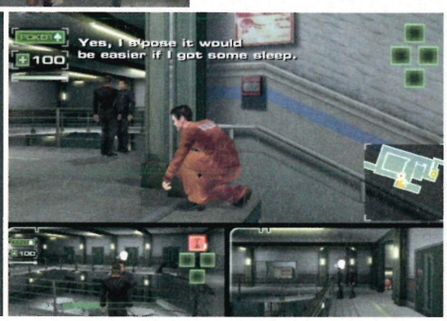

Get that in the face and it's going to sting

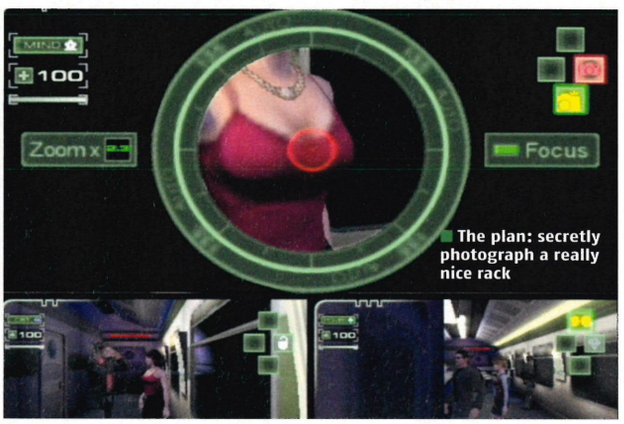
From the creators of
ICO
"NO OTHER GAME CAN MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE THIS."
9/10 - Official PlayStation®2 Magazine
"IT'S GORGEOUS, IT'S UNIQUE BUT, ABOVE ALL ELSE, SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS IS A SUPERB GAME."
93% - Play











PlayStation 2

THE PLAN

...unfortunately, not one for making a good game

DETAILS

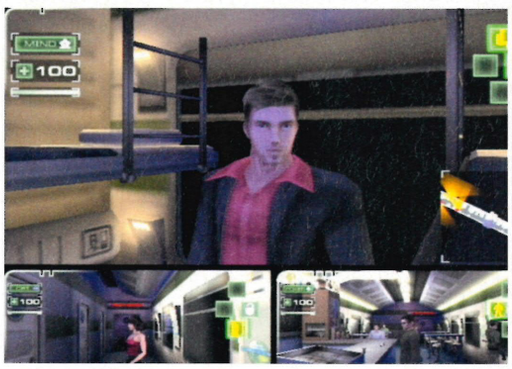
PUBLISHER MONTE CRISTO
DEVELOPER EKO SOFTWARE
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-3
OUT 8 APRIL
WEBSITE WWW.EKOSYSTEM.COM/THEPLAN/THEPLAN.HTM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

AT A GLANCE

Unusual split-screen stealth-action for up to three players simultaneously in which expert thieves join forces to pull off the ultimate heist. Flit between characters and combine skills to win the day.

Check this for a novel concept: Five years ago, master criminal Robert Taylor – that's you – was double-crossed by partner-in-crime Stephen Foster for the sake of a couple of famous paintings. Now it's time to put yourself back on top of the criminal world the only way you know how: by doing nasty things for purely personal gain. This involves breaking into places, breaking out of places, documenting secrets, stealing stuff, and so on. It's all part of Taylor's *plan* (see what they've done there?) for redemption. And always with a generous serving of stealth. All things considered, it's a genuinely intriguing and exciting concept. Sadly, though, the end result feels like arriving at a sumptuous restaurant only to discover the key ingredient in the Lobster Bisque is the chef's piss.

The in-game presentation is certainly innovative. The screen is usually split three ways with each window focusing on a different member of your heist team. In single-player you must carry out a series of tasks, using the various characters, in order to progress. Grab a couple of mates and you each get to control one of the crew. Great idea, but, in practice, you're still forced to carry out tasks piece-by-piece rather than simultaneously. It ends up with two players watching another do his thing and quickly becomes tiresome. There's more satisfaction in playing alone, switching between characters and staying in the thick of the action.



FAILING STEALTH

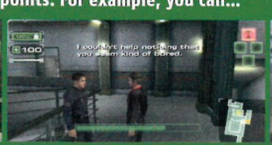
It's not all terrible though. A clever early touch is learning the need to crouch as you sneak around a stairwell and past a guard. You're usually safe while his attention is diverted, but if your shadow crosses his path the game is up. By crouching down you shorten your shadow and give yourself more chance of evading the law: nice. Except that one of your cohorts is female and for some unexplained reason can't move when crouching. It's a typical example of *The Plan*'s 'one step forward, two steps back' design.

Potentially this game could have rivalled the stealth genre's big guns, were it not so haphazardly made. The most infuriating flaw is that while these crims are more than able to tiptoe around carrying out dastardly deeds, they also have a strange addiction to getting stuck in the scenery. Literally. The only way out is to restart. Wide-ranging locations were an opportunity for eye candy to cover the gameplay cracks, but it all looks so dull and dreary that it might as well be set in a basement. A moronic script and pitiful voice acting complete the Poundland feel. For all the good ideas here, this plan is fatally flawed. ■ **Paul Roundell**

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

***The Plan* is not without its good points. For example, you can...**

Play the pickpocket game and make some cash to spend on something you might actually enjoy.



Use the same tired lines again and again and not worry about being boring because nobody notices!

Seek solace in the glitchy arms of a badly realised stranger. Come here you big ape.

Thank your lucky stars you have free will and can turn your PS2 off whenever you like.

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

Graphics	04	Flat-pack scenery and dull characters
Sound	03	Bad voices and worse effects
Gameplay	06	Good ideas badly realised
Lifespan	05	No incentive to finish it

A half-hearted approach, crap graphics, terrible speech and soul-destroying repetition sully what should have been a quality game

4/10

12+
www.pegi.info

Courage can move mountains.

The creators of ICO™ confront you with the biggest adventure of your life. Your task is this: in a distant land, alone but for your horse and armed with only a sword and a bow, you must conquer monstrous creatures, each the size of a mountain. Fail, and your hopes and dreams will be lost forever. Are you brave enough to accept the challenge?

www.shadowofthecolossus.com

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PlayStation 2

PROJECT ZERO 3: THE TORMENTED

Like *Ghostbusters* but with pretty Japanese girls and lot fewer laughs

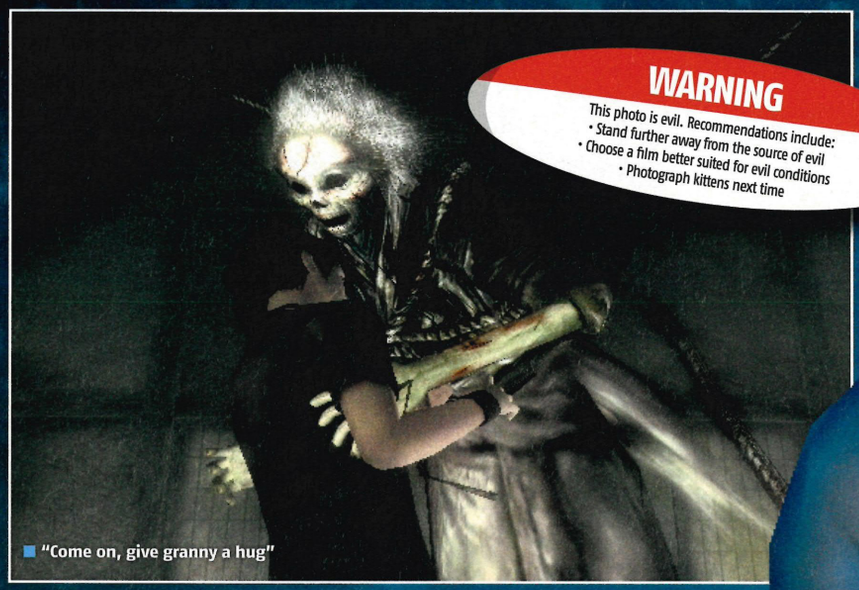
DETAILS

PUBLISHER TAKE TWO
DEVELOPER TECMO
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.TECMOINC.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

AT A GLANCE
Creepy horror where the ghost of a young girl's dead boyfriend leads her into a house of evil. With only a camera for a weapon she must survive the nightmare and save her soul.

Pop quiz: a ghostly child rises up through the floor and tries to stab you in the legs with an iron spike. Do you: A) run B) shut your eyes and scream "the power of Christ compels you", or C) grab your camera and go for an 'action' shot?

Most of us would choose option A, but that's not the way it rolls in *Project Zero*'s world. This is the series where photography is your only weapon. Not as comforting as a length of lead pipe or a handgun and a box of hollow points, but it works. The better the pictures you take, the more energy you drain from evil spirits; get several choice shots and it's good night Caspar. You can even save pictures in a special photo album so when it's all over you can show everyone. "...and here's the delightful undead couple who tried to claw my face off."

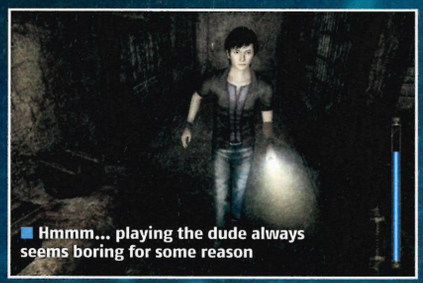


"Come on, give granny a hug"

IT'S BEHIND YOU

This is classic, old-skool survival horror. Forget *Resident Evil 4*'s reinvention of the genre, *PZ3* deals in fixed camera angles, puzzles, keys, limited ammo (well, film in this case) scratching noises under the floorboards and did-I-just see-something-in-the-mirror double takes. There are no monstrous ogres, or pitchfork-waving crowds to rescue jail bait teenagers from. Instead you have creepy children's lullabies; wailing, anguished spirits and a central character's journey through loss, guilt and modern urban mythology.

It begins with Rei, a young photographer dealing with the recent death of her boyfriend Yuu. After her deceased squeeze appears in a picture, she suffers recurring nightmares about a dilapidated manor house. Later as the story – ahem – *develops*, Rei's flatmate Miku (star of the original *Project Zero*) and journalist Kei (related to the twins in *Project Zero 2*) also enter the haunted house. At first they're helpless against the attacking spooks but this is soon changed by the discovery of the Camera Obscura, an occult instrument able to record images of the dead, and in doing so, wound them. This spiritual Cybershot is a clever way of keeping you scared and not just because you feel relatively *exposed*. Keeping a ghost in frame longer does more damage so you're forced to confront attackers head-on. Hold the shot and you risk the spook disappearing but click the shutter too soon and you won't injure them at all. There's also the 'Fatal Frame'. Taking a last-chance picture inflicts maximum damage on a ghoul, driving them back and enabling you to string together combos. The trouble is it's usually just before your attacker's icy fingers close around your throat, so miss the chance and you'll be sorry.



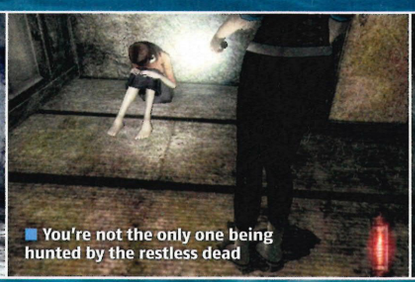
Hmmm... playing the dude always seems boring for some reason

This is one of the 'Tormented': a lost soul consumed by grief

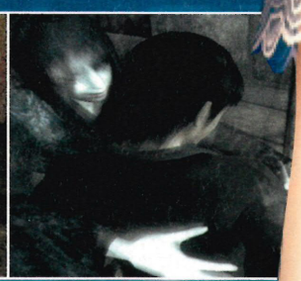
THE GENUINELY MENACING ATMOSPHERE ALLOWS YOU TO FORGIVE THE IRRITATIONS

KILL THE BIRDIE

Early encounters with spectres require some serious cunning. Waiting for the perfect moment and the blinding flash before your captured image is revealed will test your nerves, but in an exhilarating way. Unfortunately the later spirits are a total pain. They're fast moving and the fixed camera angles make it murderously hard to see where they are. Often you'll be running between viewpoints trying to find them and then wrestling with the spongy controls to grab your shot in time. It doesn't help that this tends to happen in narrow corridors and small rooms,

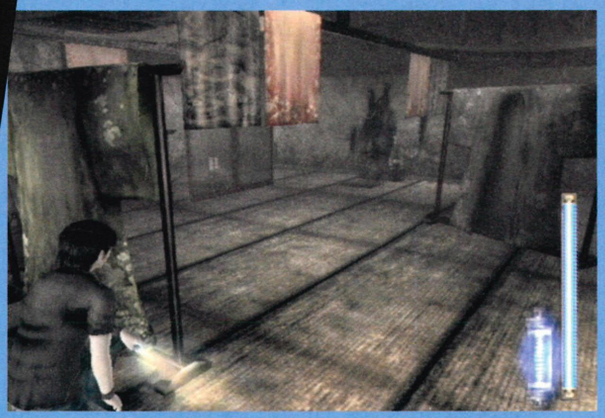


You're not the only one being hunted by the restless dead

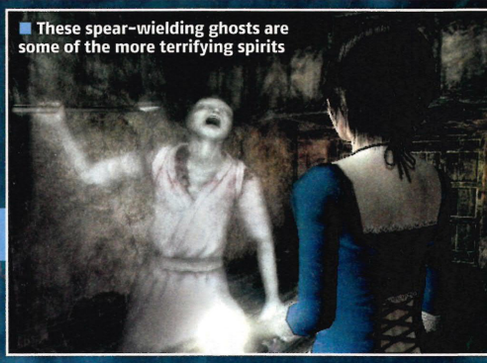


"I CAN SEE (THROUGH) YOU"

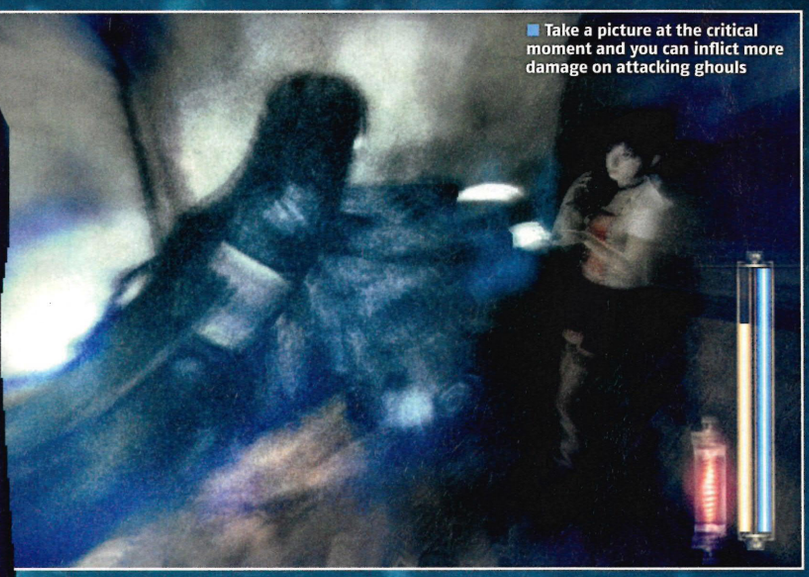
Hiding from ghosts? Why has no one thought of it before? Oh



For some bizarre reason the *Project Zero 3* people have decided to use the third instalment to introduce stealth. While playing as Kei you can tap ◎ near obvious-looking room dividers to crouch behind them. Thanks to the restrictive camera angles and the fact that ghosts can go through walls and so move anywhere, it's marginally less effective than putting a lampshade on your head and standing in the corner. Useless, not least because you can usually out-run spirits *anyway*.



These spear-wielding ghosts are some of the more terrifying spirits



Take a picture at the critical moment and you can inflict more damage on attacking ghouls

with little room to manoeuvre. The ghosts on the other hand can pass through walls and so merrily fly all over the place.

Where *Project Zero 3* succeeds is through sheer creep factor and story. Barely audible voices whisper, shadowy figures flicker in doorways. In places it's genuinely terrifying (wait 'till you find what's in the loft of Rei's flat). The genuinely menacing atmosphere allows you to forgive most of the irritations. But only just. The controls really are terrible and not just during combat. Walking in a straight line is an achievement as ever-changing viewpoints constantly vary where 'forwards' is on the joypad. You'll wander into a lot of walls. And it's all realised with lifeless, repetitive animation – something that extends to the cut-scenes that tell the story. Hospital workers speak of 'lost' patients – survivors of accidents consumed by guilt, marked by mysterious tattoos and who suddenly disappear leaving nothing but ash. *We're* interested, but all the characters talk like they're concussed. At one point, having just survived an attack by a screaming, hatchet-wielding priest, Rei talks to her flatmate Miki about the weather. Apparently it rains a lot now. Does it? Does it really? Well what about the EVIL UNDEAD WOMAN WHO JUST TRIED TO HACK ME A NEW ONE?!

But, like the controls, this monotone banter is tolerable for a reason. As the trio explore the haunted manor they uncover illuminating diaries, notes, press clippings and interviews. Piecing together this information and gradually shedding light on the evil house's history is gripping. Focus on the plot and terrifying atmosphere, and there's a brilliant, if old-fashioned ghost story to be had. ■ **Leon Hurley**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK		VERDICT
Graphics	06	Repetitive environments, poor animation
Sound	07	Unsettling sounds, weak voicing
Gameplay	07	Atmospheric, if not always intuitive
Lifespan	07	Plenty of hours but could use more variety

It's not perfect but it is creepy. The mix of investigation and scares easily outweighs the clunky controls and occasional lulls in the action

7/10

THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2003

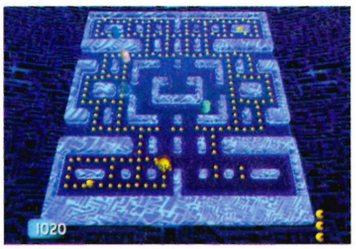
The *King* is dead... and not too soon

At a time when even prime-meat beat-'em-ups are a tough sell, you have to ask what the point is in releasing this three-year-old fighter. The series admittedly has a small hardcore fanbase, but for most of us it's nothing more than a pointless throwback. The 2D fighting system has been souped-up with a new tagging option. Handled via [B1], this adds a touch of strategy, enabling you to bring a new fighter into the fray to deliver an extra dose of ass-whupping. But no matter how many new features they throw at it, there's little doubt that *KOF* is ready for the knacker's yard. ■ **Lee Hart**

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SNK PLAYMORE
DEVELOPER SNK PLAYMORE
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
OUT NOW
WEBSITE WWW.SNKPLAYMORE.JP/OFFICIAL/KOF2003/ENGLISH
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK	VERDICT
Up against the likes of Soul Calibur III *and* Tekken 5, KOF 2003 *is like a pensioner furiously waving a walking stick, telling you to get away from his bins*	4/10

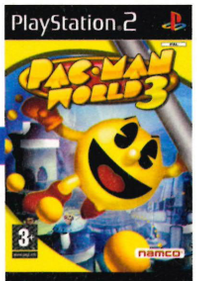


■ **The best bits are the maze tribute levels**

PAC-MAN WORLD 3

26 years old and still hooked on the pills

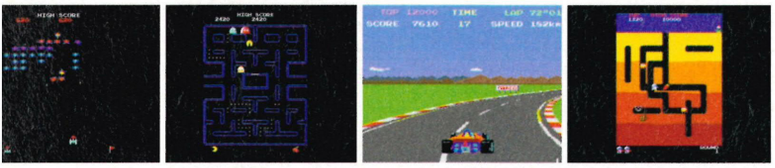
The pill-popping yellow blob returns for another 3D adventure that's barely distinguishable from his last. You know the score: run around gobbling fruit, bashing monsters and leaping across platforms, continue through 15 levels then sit back and marvel at how this is less compelling than an ancient game called *Pac-Man*. To be fair, *Pac-Man World 3* is a polished product that's occasionally entertains – particularly if you're still at primary school. Or had an accident with a hammer a few years ago. Truth is, this is platforming by the numbers. The real highlight is the maze levels which replicate the arcade original. And that tells you all you need to know about the rest of this game. ■ **Lee Hart**



DETAILS

PUBLISHER NAMCO
DEVELOPER BLITZ GAMES
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1
OUT 10 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.NAMCO.COM
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

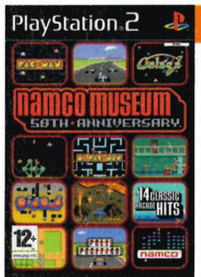
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK	VERDICT
Not an awful game by any means, but one totally devoid of anything to recommend it. You'd have more fun with the super-addictive original Pac-romp	4/10



NAMCO MUSEUM 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Arcade 'legends' dodge the grave

Celebrating 50 years 'in the biz', Namco has dusted the cobwebs off another bundle of arcade games from its illustrious history. There are 14 in total, all with obtusely compelling names like *Rolling Thunder*, *Dig Dug*, and *Xevious*, and while this package is unlikely to get anyone under the age of 25 hot and bothered, retro gamers looking for an oldies package could do a lot worse. Considering they were developed in the '70s and '80s it's no surprise that these games are showing their age. Still, unlike many other retro packages, there's some real nostalgia here if, say, you once spent a fortnight at Center Parcs pumping coins into *Rolling Thunder*. Fact is, you can't argue with classic design – and when it comes to the likes of *Pac-Man*, *Galaga* and *Space Invaders* clone *Galaxian*, the 'just-one-more-go' factor is as intense as it ever was. ■ **Lee Hart**



DETAILS

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER NAMCO
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1-2
OUT 10 MARCH
WEBSITE WWW.ELECTRONICARTS.CO.UK/PRODUCTS.VIEW.ASP?ID=7998
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK	VERDICT
A decent retro package for folks who like that sort of thing. 14 games is a bit stingy but at least six of them remain extremely playable, especially the timeless Pac-Man	5/10

FORD STREET RACING

A cheapo racer with va-va-voom

DETAILS

PUBLISHER XPLOSIV
DEVELOPER RAZORWORKS
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
OUT 24 FEBRUARY
WEBSITE WWW.XPLOSIV.NET
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

For a budget racer this isn't bad at all and certainly takes the honours as the best game in the *Ford* series so far (faint praise, admittedly). As its name implies, *Ford Street Racing* leaves the racetrack behind for high-speed contests set around the various districts of LA. There are 18 cars to choose from and while the new Shelby GT 500 is the best motor available, there's an undeniable retro thrill in getting behind the wheel of the Ford Torino, Capri and Mustang – even if the classic car handling does have a touch of the 'milk float' about it.

There's a varied range of racing options, the standout being the team racing mode that lets you switch between your squad's three cars on the fly to gain a tactical advantage. Fast and competitive, *Ford Street Racing* may be cheap but it's no clapped-out Cortina. ■ **Lee Hart**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK	VERDICT
One of the best budget driving games available, offering comprehensive options and quality racing. You're still better off with a second-hand Burnout, *mind*	6/10

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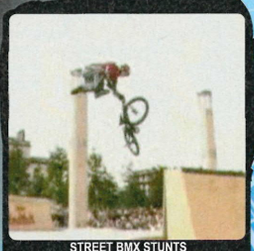
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CRAZY SNOWBOARD
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TRICK BMX STUNTS
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MAD SNOWBOARDER
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MEGA BMX TRICKS
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EXTREME BIKE STUNTS
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AWESOME BASE JUMPER
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"FIRST YOU GET THE MONEY, THEN YOU GET THE POWER, THEN YOU GET THE WOMEN (AND THE CHAINSAW)"

RIP? Tony Montana doesn't know how. After a year in hiding,* Scarface *and its blazing Cuban anti-hero come back to reclaim what's rightfully theirs: the world, chico, and everything in it

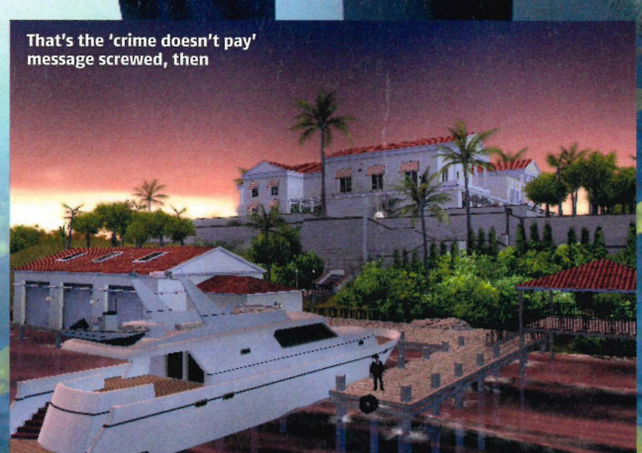
WORDS: NATHAN DITUM

You probably remember our first run of coverage on the *Scarface* game: an excited rumour-rumbling news piece; a dizzyingly glitzy announcement two-pager; and a full-on, neon-soaked feature, packed with lavish shots of Tony Montana chomping Havanas and shooting up Miami, which also revealed the first details of the drug-running, turf-war gameplay. We were pumped. Sure, there were concerns too – that the boys at developer Radical would struggle to deliver on a potentially amazing licence, and that the storyline in which Montana miraculously survives the film's climactic mansion massacre was, well, lame – but mostly we were pumped. Being handed the controls of a bug-eyed, vengeful Montana back from certain death and hell-bent on retaking his cocaine empire? It felt like the Christmas '05 release date would never arrive.

Of course, if you were paying attention, you'll know it never did. Even though everything looked to be progressing smoothly, word spread last summer that *Scarface* would be hitting the streets a full year later than initially suggested. So as the game prepares to enter the pre-release spotlight for a second time, we find ourselves wondering what the cause of the delay was, and how the game has changed during its hibernation?

LOOK AT YOU NOW

Last time we saw the game, the story and basic gameplay were already in place. You'd start as Montana, coked to the heavens and under siege



That's the 'crime doesn't pay' message screwed, then

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK

EXCLUSIVE!

SCARFACE

Tony Montana had a keen eye for interior redesign

5 BEST *SCARFACE* MOMENTS

Never seen the movie? We've cut it down to size. With a chainsaw

1. Recepción a América! Tony arrives in Miami, barely keeping his kerb-biting rage concealed during a confrontational interview with customs officials.

2. Our man gets acquainted with a chainsaw as a coke deal goes south in a major way – easily the film's most infamous moment.

3. With his boss Frank's corpse still smouldering, Tony assumes control of the yeyo operation and steals Frank's girl before gazing into the sky and seeing the image that defines the movie: the Pan Am blimp. 'The World Is Yours'...

4. Now at the top, the only way for Tony is down. Narcotic-paranoid and fuelled by morbid impulses he kills his best friend, Manny, for getting it on with his sister.

5. Alone, coked to the tits and besieged by dozens of armed assassins, the end is near for Tone. He's not having a bit of it though; "Come on! I take your f***ing bullet! You think you kill me with bullets?" Erm, yes?

Regaining a cocaine empire is a hands-on business

in his palatial Miami mansion – only this time, with you controlling him, he'd survive. Heavily wounded you'd slide off to a remote island to regain your health and plot your return to the big time. When we arrive at Radical HQ, we track down the man in the know, producer Cam Weber, and ask him if any of this has changed since we last saw the game. "What we had back then was an underlying core of technology," he says, referring to the basic engine and game mechanics. That's a no, then. "What we've done over the last six months is really focus on the look of the game, to make it really pop off the screen and give it more flair – just make it more exciting to look at." A six-month makeover, essentially, is what's been going down. We'll admit to being a little surprised at the lack of major gameplay alterations, but then again, this is a game based on a movie dripping with visual excess. A film that provided a cultural touchstone for an entire generation of image-obsessed gangster rappers. As shallow as it seems, appearances are absolutely key.

So what exactly did this extended touch-up entail? Among the techno-babble we managed to decipher, we figured out that there had been modifications to 'render effects', 'ambient elements', 'detailed

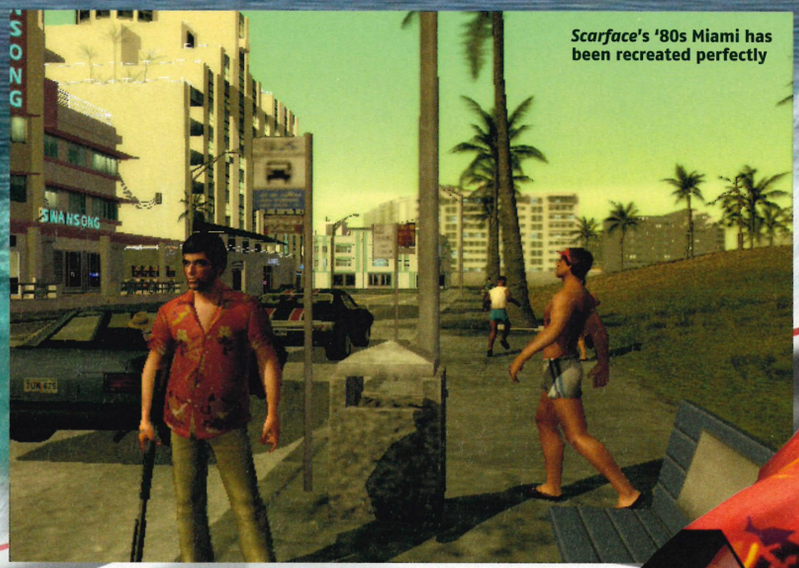
"NOWHERE DOES THE NEW MONTANA SHINE MORE THAN IN COMBAT"

geometry' and all manner of other visual show-offery. The bottom line, though, is that the six months were not wasted; *Scarface* looks lush. The colours are suitably lurid, but with a depth and richness that does the Miami dusk all kinds of justice, while the world itself – cars, buildings, pedestrians – looks packed, solid and detailed. And as for our man Montana – he's pixel perfect. We noted last time out that Radical was making a particular effort to nail Montana's appearance and mannerisms – a believable Tony being central to the project's success – and, thankfully, they've aced it, capturing everything from his distinctive swagger to his proud, jutting lower jaw dead-on.

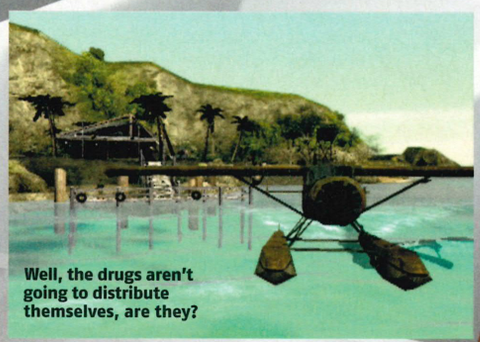
"WHO PUT THIS THING TOGETHER? ME, THAT'S WHO!"

Nowhere does the new Montana shine more than in combat. Draped in his classic red Hawaiian shirt, clasping a fully automatic rifle, Radical has captured something utterly crucial to the character in his bravura handling of the weapon, with his body slightly tilted, muzzle held at a casual angle. But this is just the gloss on what we're promised is a deep shooting mechanism. Radical has identified combat as an area in which open world crime games often struggle to impress, and have worked hard on it as a result. So as well as a simple auto-lock feature, *Scarface* allows for quick readjustments using the right analogue stick. Manually aiming like this means you can target specific body parts on your enemies – arms, legs and head, and even left or right nut – which will then explode in a shower of decidedly not-for-kids gore.

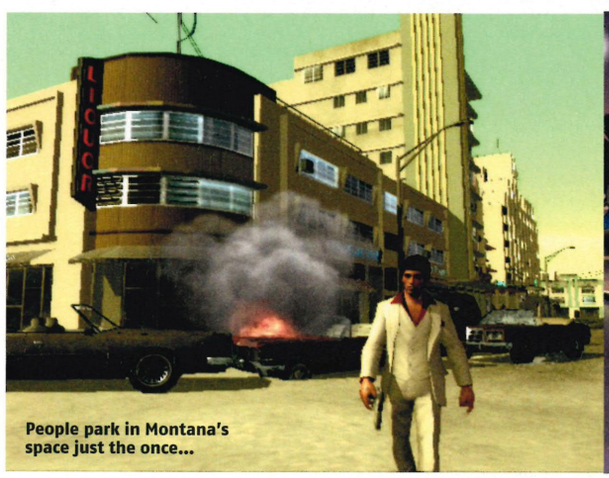
The melee and hand-to-hand combat is mostly place holder at the moment, though from what we've seen Tony will have several combos and moves at his disposal. Up close and personal, you also have the option to grapple with opponents, beating them down or pulling them in close for a quick execution. Better yet, as Tony progresses through the game he gains access to an ever increasing range of ballistic and hand-to-hand weapons. Which means, yes, eventually you get hold of a chainsaw so you can recreate *that* classic scene, only this time Tony won't be on the receiving end...



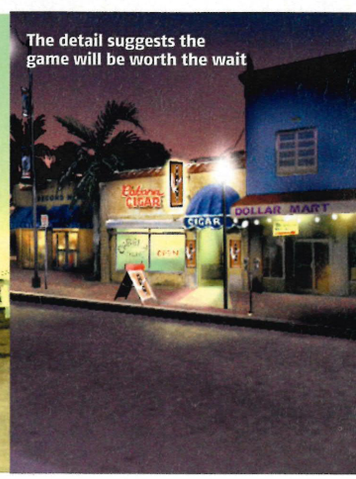
Scarface's '80s Miami has been recreated perfectly



Well, the drugs aren't going to distribute themselves, are they?



People park in Montana's space just the once...



The detail suggests the game will be worth the wait

SCARFACE

GRAND THEFT SCARFACE?

So just how influential is *Scarface*? If you're the makers of *GTA: Vice City*, very. Check out http://www.gamechronicles.com/features/gtascarface/body.htm to see how Montana made his mark on GTA

TONY GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Pacino's voice may be out, but *Scarface* still has plenty of big names lined up. Here's a rundown of who is and isn't

AL PACINO – OUT
Pacino's aging, croaky voice prevents the original Montana from reprising his role.

STEVEN BAUER – IN
Tony's best friend, Manolo, from the film returns to play a new business associate, Sandman.

ROBERT LOGGIA – IN
Loggia played Tony's one-time boss Frank Lopez in the movie – no word yet on his role in the game.

JAMES WOODS – IN
Gangster movie veteran Woods is perfect for the role of Tony's dodgy lawyer, Sheffield.

MICHAEL YORK – IN

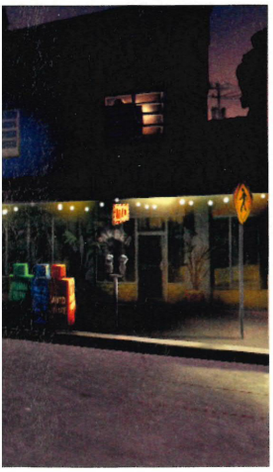
CHEECH MARIN – IN

RICKY GERVAIS – IN

MICHAEL RAPAPORT – IN

MICHELLE PFEIFFER – OUT
Pfeiffer's character Elvira will be absent on PS2 – the actress didn't want to be associated with the game in any way. She will be replaced by an as yet unnamed Hollywood starlet.

ALISTAR X3



"I'M TONY MONTANA! YOU F*** WITH ME, YOU'RE F***ING WITH THE BEST"

Good as he looks or fights, though, there's more to Tony than cleverly rendered algorithms and an Uzi. The soul of Montana came courtesy of Al Pacino's searing, unhinged performance, and one of the game's biggest potential disappointments is that, although his 'likeness' will be present, Pacino's voice will not. "The movie was back in '83, so it's 23 years ago," explains producer Cam Weber. "Al's voice has changed quite a bit. The sheer volume of dialogue that's in this game – we've got over 35,000 lines of it – meant the amount of time in the studio it would've taken to have Al do the voice just didn't make sense." Pacino did hand-pick his own replacement, though, from over 70 different hopefuls, and the choice is something of a revelation – if you didn't know, you'd swear it was the man himself.

The effort put into recreating Tony – looks, sounds, attitude – give some indication of how important Radical believes him, or rather his essence, to be to the success of its game. As such, they've based the central game mechanics on two of his more iconic speeches from the film.

The shirt may be loud, but the Uzi's a *lot* louder

See, the game comprises two integrated but distinct ways to advance – one open-ended and the other linear and story-based. When Tony returns to Miami at the start of the game he finds his old empire divided into several territories occupied by rival drug runners (in a nice touch these are all characters mentioned in the film – Gaspar Gomez, the Diaz Brothers and Nacho Petreras). He gets himself back on his feet by hooking up with some old contacts and starting a new drugs operation, a potentially endless smuggling and dealing 'meta-game' which Radical calls the Drug Wars, and which runs alongside the

"TONY GRADUALLY RECAPTURES THE CITY FROM HIS ENEMIES"

main story arc. At the same time, as his business grows, Tony takes over store fronts and warehouses in a series of mapped out narrative missions, gradually recapturing the city, block by block, from his enemies and preparing to face his nemesis, Sosa.

"THE ONLY THING IN THIS WORLD THAT GIVES ORDERS IS BALLS"

Tying into this dual game system are Tony's most memorable speeches. Remember when he boldly proclaimed to Sosa that 'All I have in this world is my balls and my word, and I don't break them for no one'? Radical's expanded on the sentiment and created an entire 'balls/word' mechanism to accompany the Drug Wars section. Honestly – the first time we heard this, it sounded mental, especially since the Radical boys had an alarmingly casual way of dropping it into conversation born of a hundred development meetings ('taunting opponents gets you balls', 'you lose balls if pedestrians insult you'). But really it's just another label for your reputation or standing within the game. When you earn 'balls' – by demonstrating some kind of skill, be it flashy driving or a headshot – not only does your 'balls meter' (seriously – you have a balls meter) start to fill up, eventually resulting in a 'Blind Rage' killing spree, but your 'word' is more likely to have an effect on enemies and bystanders thanks to your increasing reputation in the city.

The second key speech is Tony's infamous interpretation of the American dream, as told to Manolo at the Coconut Club; "In this country, you gotta make the money first. Then when you get the money, you get the power. Then when you get the power, then you get the women." This has been very directly woven into the fabric of the story missions. Early on your road to recovery you hijack an armoured car filled with cash – now you have the money. You use the money to open a bank account, and are given access to an 'exotics catalogue' full of both extravagant and useful purchases – now you have the power. Naturally, from here on in, scoring chicks is a cinch.

Tony was running late for the *Saturday Night Fever* audition

Montana couldn't find the new Journey South album

IN CONVERSATION WITH TONY MONTANA

Scarface **will feature 35,000 lines of dialogue and allow Tony to interact with everyone he meets. Here's just one of the many conversations to look forward to...**

Tony: "Oh, ey, you're lookin' very special today, baby."

Girl: "Thank you, I know."

Tony: "Oh, you know. Hokay, so I guess you know 'bout the chit stuck in your teeth, eh?"

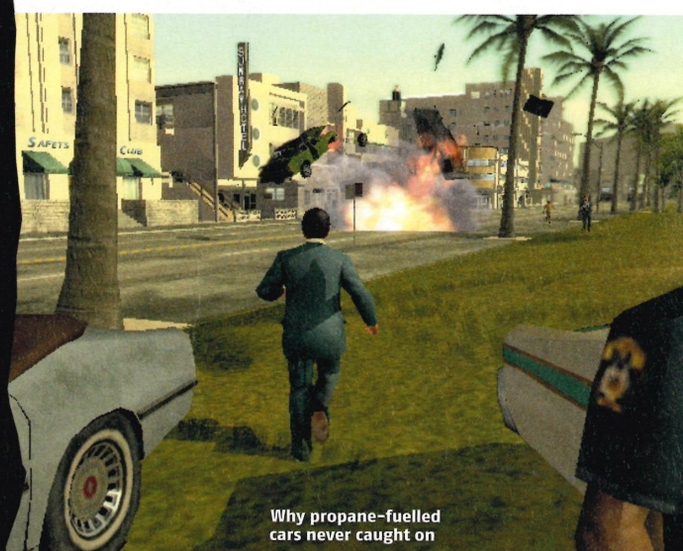
Girl: "What?! Not possible. I was just at a photoshoot, and my agent polished my teeth"

Tony: "I bet he did..."

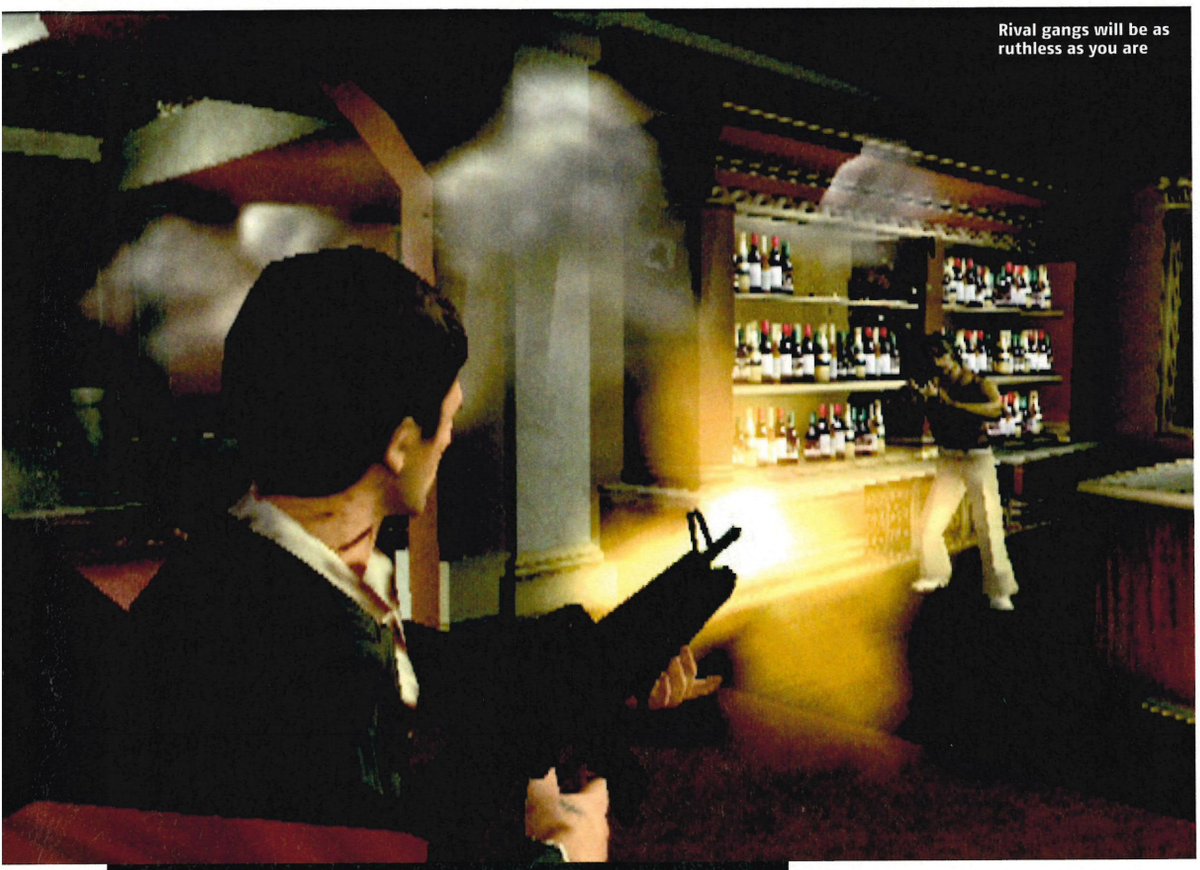
Girl: "Kiss my million dollar ass."

Tony: "The going rate for ass on the street, baby, is only 50 bucks, you know?"

Girl: "F*** off."


Why propane-fuelled cars never caught on

SCARFACE

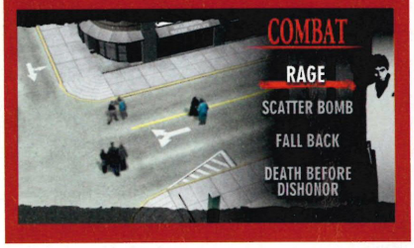


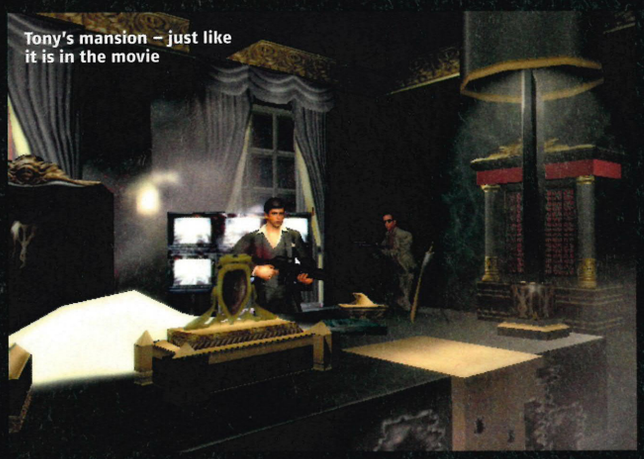
Rival gangs will be as ruthless as you are

SCARFACE ON PSP!

Stripped-down Drug Wars to hit handheld

Radical has confirmed that a version of *Scarface* focused primarily on the game's territorial Drug Wars element will be released for PSP alongside the PS2 version at the end the of the year. Although ditching most of the story missions means we're not sure what the single-player mode will deliver – there's driving and shooting, but we don't know how much – we do know that an intriguing four-player wireless mode is planned. Four-way strategic territorial battles and coke-empire building? Count us in.





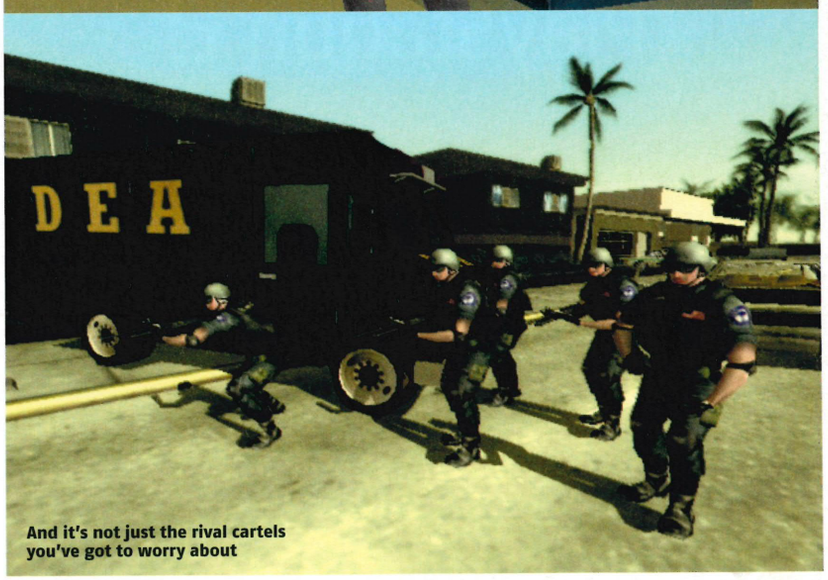
Tony's mansion – just like it is in the movie

"I ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH. EVEN WHEN I LIE"

The 'exotics catalogue' is also crucial to the game's attempt to make money and power meaningful in the gameplay. Basically, on top of all the regular millionaire egomaniac merchandise available – tigers, Jacuzzis, bronze statues of yourself – the catalogue also enables you to purchase 'shortcuts' within the game which are consistent with the story and your affluence. These range from staff, each of whom offer a particular service – drivers to deliver your car, assassins to take out rivals or even personal trainers to improve your physique – to vehicles enabling instant access to areas of the game – a limo to transport you anywhere in Miami, or a plane for trips to the Caribbean. There's even an investments portfolio of business interests, some of which play out like diverting mini-games – sponsor a sports team, say, and turn a profit if they're successful – while others ease your criminal passage through the narrative – buy into a law firm, for instance, and it becomes easier to pay off judges and police.

It's the promise of such perfectly *Scarface*-styled moments, as much as seeing a digital Montana strutting and cursing with spot-on menace, that gives us hope for *Scarface*. Radical has clearly made a wise choice in taking its sweet time in development – the visual improvement is truly impressive – but what's clear after our recent visit is that the touches that'll make you feel – not just look and sound – like Tony Montana, were there all along. This is the real deal – if Sosa tries to kill him, he'll refuse to die. If Diaz and Gomez take over his turf, he'll bury them like cockroaches. And if the cops try to break up his operation, he'll buy them outright. This is Tony Montana we're talking about, the world's premier capitalist, and he is headed to PS2 at the end of 2006. This is paradise, we're telling you, and this game is like a great big – hell, you know the rest. ■

It's not all charlie – you'll own other businesses too



And it's not just the rival cartels you've got to worry about

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ATV Offroad Fury Blazin' Trails

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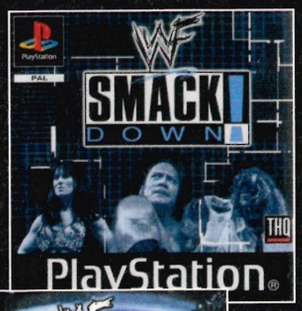
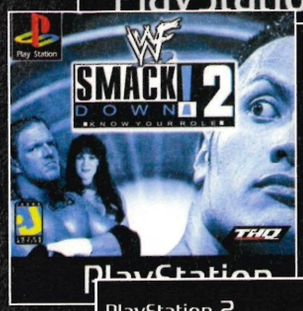
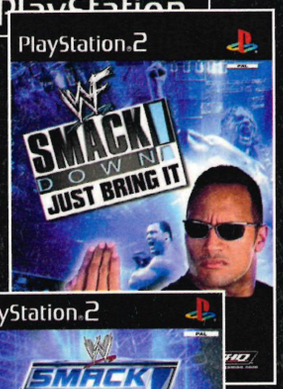
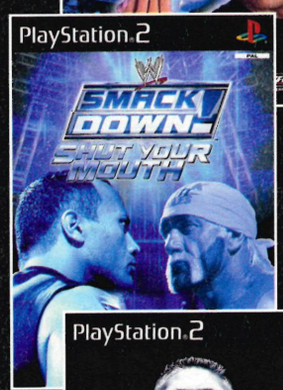
SOUTHPEAK INTERACTIVE

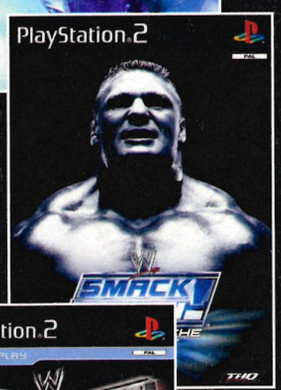
PlayStation®

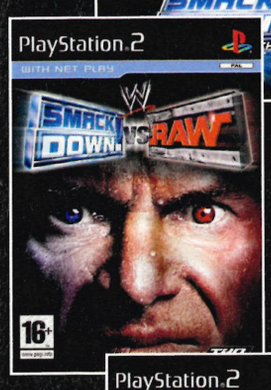


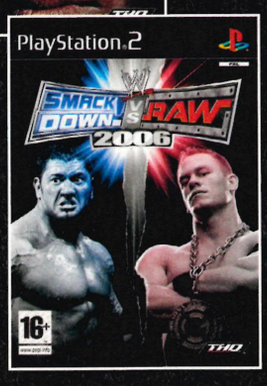


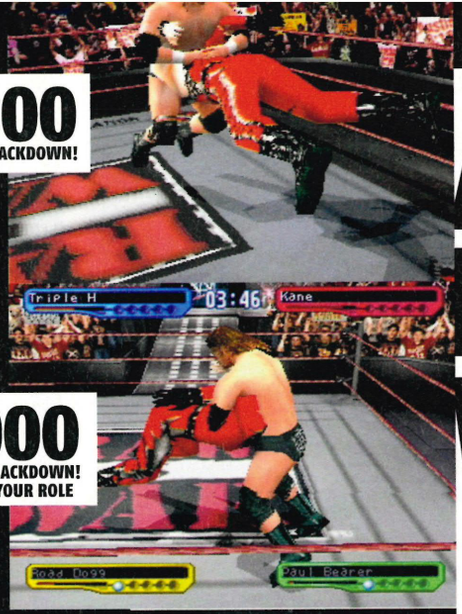




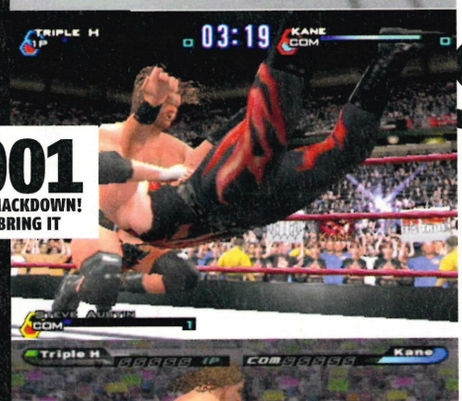






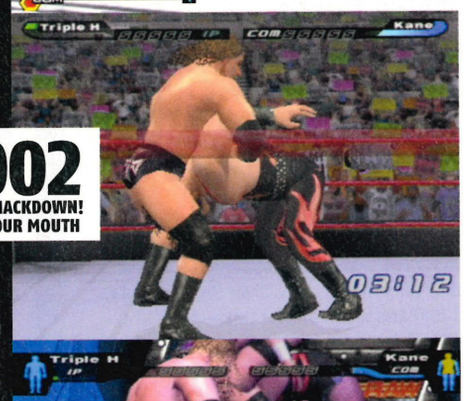


2000
WWF SMACKDOWN!



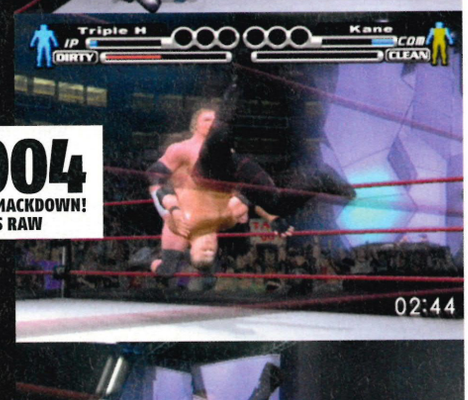
2000
WWF SMACKDOWN!
KNOW YOUR ROLE

2001
WWF SMACKDOWN!
JUST BRING IT



2002
WWE SMACKDOWN!
SHUT YOUR MOUTH

2003
WWE SMACKDOWN!
HERE COMES THE PAIN



2004
WWE SMACKDOWN!
VS RAW

2005
WWE SMACKDOWN!
VS RAW 2006

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WWE SMACKDOWN!

WORDS: BEN WILSON

THQ's heavyweight champion is now considered to be one of the essential PS2 games, but it wasn't always that way. Here we present the full story of 'sports entertainment's' success...

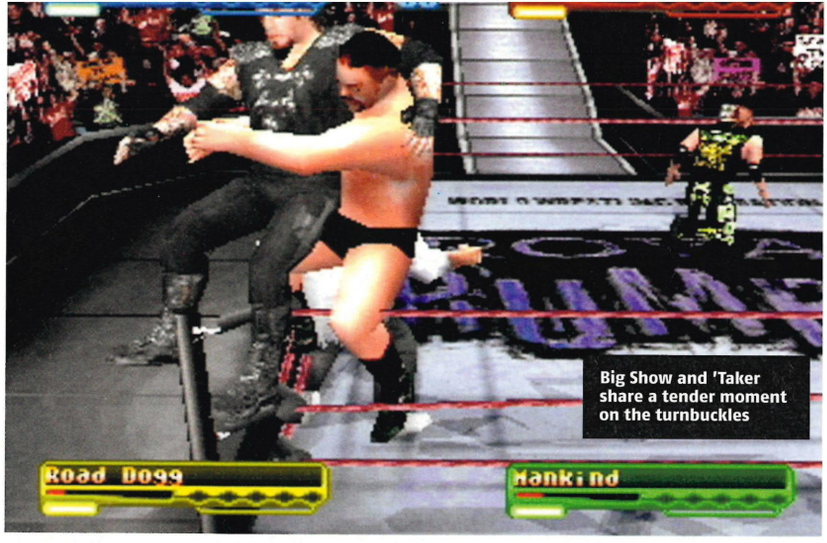
Some things in life are born to go together: Ben and Jerry, Ant and Dec, Bergkamp and Henry, Pete Doherty and prison. A decade ago, you could have added Acclaim and the World Wrestling Federation to that list. The then-legendary publisher had been synonymous with grapple games since the late '80s, so it was a huge shock when WWF and Acclaim parted ways in 1999 and THQ – who until that point had been publishing games for the Federation's rival, WCW – stepped in to grab the big licence. At the time it was a major surprise, and wrestlefans looked to the future nervously.

If only they'd known then what we do now, as over the last seven years, THQ has changed the face of wrestling games completely. The improved graphics offered by the PS2 helped, but even the PSone *SmackDown!* titles were a substantial improvement on Acclaim's *Warzone* and *Attitude* games. Over the years we've seen the introduction of submission moves, sleeper systems, six-player matches and other innovations, peaking with the recently released *SmackDown! Vs Raw 2006* – the finest instalment so far. With major innovations planned for this year's model, here we take the chance to step back and examine the series' progress so far – starting in 2000, when The Rock and Stone Cold were the big stars, and the likes of John Cena and Batista were probably still flipping burgers.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WWE SMACKDOWN!

ENOUGH OF THAT ATTITUDE

Take a look at the screenshot above. It wasn't taken from an ancient Spectrum game, nor is it an *OPS2* team member's latest work of art. It's actually a Royal Rumble match taking place in *WWF Attitude*, the final wrestling game created by Acclaim. Looking back, it's not hard to see why Vinny Mac switched to THQ and the *SmackDown!* series was born – in addition to some rocky animations, matches in *Attitude* were achingly slow and every move required a combination of button presses to pull off. Remembering every combo for each of the 40 characters was a heavy chore, so you'd invariably learn a couple off by heart and forget the rest. There was one feature present we'd love to see in *SmackDown!* though: Every single character in the game had four different ring attires.



Big Show and 'Taker share a tender moment on the turnbuckles

WWF SMACKDOWN!

RELEASE March 2000 **PLAYERS** 1-4
FORMAT PSone

Rather than revive its relationship with Inland Productions – the development team behind its *WCW Nitro* games – THQ signed up Japanese grap experts Yuke's to make *SmackDown!* using its highly regarded *All Japan Pro Wrestling* engine. This proved a masterstroke. Ditching *WWF Attitude*'s complex combos, every attack was actioned by a press of the D-pad and a face button, while finishers simply required a tap of the L1 button. The lack of weight recognition was a bit wacky – flimsy dame Debra could suplex The Big Show without flinching – but the simplified control system was a sizeable advance for wrestling games.

One of the revolutionary features on offer was a league system for the wrestlers, which ranked them on performances in exhibition matches and season mode. It meant that only a select few grapplers (the top five) could challenge for the WWF Championship, whereas anyone in the top 20 could fight for the European or Hardcore title.

LOOKING GOOD?

It was considered groundbreaking at the time. There were no facial expressions, but the way grapplers contorted their bodies in pain after a big move was a huge contrast to *WWF Attitude*, where the combatants would play dead every time they were hit.

ROSTER

36 superstars were included in the inaugural *SmackDown!*, headed up by Stone Cold Steve Austin. You also got three Divas (Debra, Chyna, and Tori) and one manager (Undertaker's flubber-faced sidekick Paul Bearer).

SEASON MODE

In the lead-up to release, the season mode had been touted as the game's defining feature, but in the end it was pretty dull. You simply waded through match after match, watching cut-scenes in-between. Which doesn't sound too offensive, but each cut-scene featured one line of text to explain what was going on and was obviously written by a Yuke's programmer who'd only recently had his first English lesson. Brilliantly compounding the misery, these scenes had no impact on your progress.

SAMPLE COMMENTARY

None. While *WWF Attitude* featured bitty play-by-play from Shane McMahon and Jerry 'The King' Lawler, THQ instead opted for a heavy diet of grunge rock.

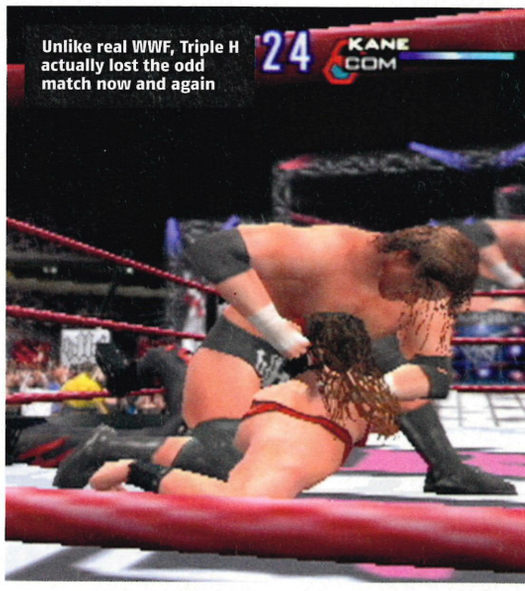
You had to love the backstage areas – and the weapons found in them

WWF SMACKDOWN! KNOW YOUR ROLE

RELEASE November 2000 **PLAYERS** 1-4
FORMAT PSone

They say the more things change, the more they stay the same. We've no idea who 'they' are, but these mystical philosophers must have been looking at *SmackDown! 2* when they coined the phrase. This instalment saw masses of new match types added – including TLC (Tables, Ladders and Chairs) and Undertaker speciality The Casket Match – the gameplay itself was almost identical to its predecessor. Improved backstage areas included a car park where passing vehicles would occasionally plough into you.

The original game's likeable ranking system returned with an extra twist: wrestlers were now ordered as contenders to one particular belt, and you could mix and match them between mini-leagues as you pleased. If you had a strange desire to see long-time loser Al Snow reach the pinnacle of pro 'rassling, you could now enter him into the WWF Championship chase and guide him all



Unlike real WWF, Triple H actually lost the odd match now and again

UNDERTAKER THROUGH THE AGES

From Dead Man to Biker to American Bad Ass and back to Dead Man, Mark 'Undertaker' Callaway has used several gimmicks. And *SmackDown!* has been there every step of the way...

WWF SMACKDOWN!

WWF SMACKDOWN! KNOW YOUR ROLE

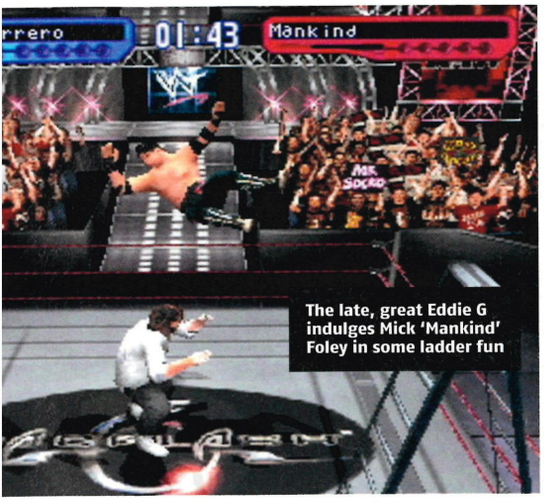
WWF SMACKDOWN! JUST BRING IT

WWE SMACKDOWN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH

WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006



The late, great Eddie G indulges Mick 'Mankind' Foley in some ladder fun

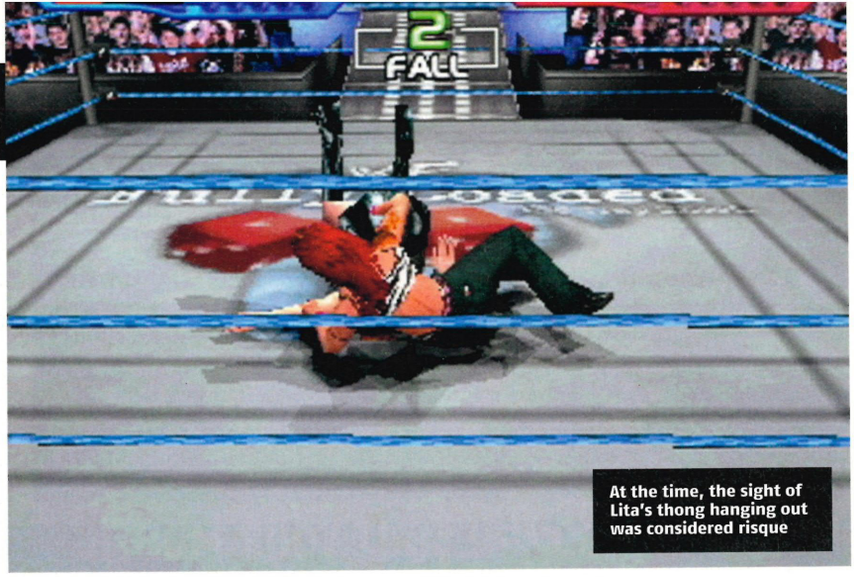
the way to the top of the pile.

LOOKING GOOD?

Better again, but Yuke's was really pushing the PSone by now, and so the tweaks were all relatively minor. The grapplers' faces were given a little more shape, with the arenas also spruced up to make them feel less claustrophobic. Given that this instalment featured nearly twice as many wrestlers as the original, there were few complaints from the fans about the game looking almost identical.

ROSTER

With 56 regular characters and 12 hidden ones, *Know Your Role* was nothing if not completist.



At the time, the sight of Lita's thong hanging out was considered risque

With Stone Cold on hiatus (but unlockable later on), The Rock, Mankind and Undertaker were the big draws. Eight of the Federation's lovely ladies squeezed themselves into the game – including current hotties Lita and Trish Stratus. Chris Benoit, Kurt Angle, and the late great Eddie Guerrero were among the notable debutants who still remain popular today.

SEASON MODE

A weird one this. Rather than allowing you to skip CPU vs CPU matches, you were taken to a screen where a photo of each competing wrestler appeared above an energy bar. You then had to watch the energy bars gradually decrease until only one ran out and the match was declared over. With eight matches on every card, only one of which would feature your grapman, this rapidly became infuriating. Factor in more pointless backstage segments that again had no bearing on anything, and this was little more than another randomly assembled mess.

COMMENTARY

Nada. Rather than feature any of Jim Ross or Jerry Lawler's trademark ramblings, our ears were again blasted into oblivion with another round of bombastic guitar abuse.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WWE SMACKDOWN!

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

With *SmackDown! Vs Raw 2006* offering almost every feature your Triple H T-shirt-wearing wrestlephile could wish for, it's tough to imagine the developers making another set of sweeping changes by the time the 2007 version rolls around. That's a good thing, as the series doesn't need a huge overhaul. Still, we know Yuke's is working hard to include even more legends: Owen Hart, Sting and Demolition were among those on offer when the developers recently polled a bunch of Internet wrestling fans about who they'd like to see in next year's game. A slightly bigger main roster would be a treat, particularly after this year's swathe of new characters like The Boogeyman, Paul Burchill, Lashley and Ken Kennedy. The top sports games don't omit certain players for no apparent reason, and for the series to be on a par with the best, it obviously needs to be comprehensive – from main eventers right down to opening acts like the Heart Throbs and the Dicks.

WWF SMACKDOWN! JUST BRING IT

RELEASE November 2001 **PLAYERS** 1-4
FORMAT PS2

SmackDown!'s PS2 debut wasn't only notable for its improved graphics and 'enhanced story mode', as matches now featured up to eight stars, (four controlled by players and four controlled by the PS2), new Street Fight and Ultimate Submission matches and a load more backstage areas.

Once more, matches relied on the tried-and-trusted D-pad plus ◎ or ⊗ method of pulling off moves, although there was one hilarious innovation we can't gloss over: you could climb into the crowd and wrestle, and the animation that accompanied this was hilarious. As you hopped over the barrier by hitting △, the watching masses would smoothly disperse in a perfect arc, as though being pulled away by some off-screen magnet. It's worth digging out your copy of the game just to laugh and point at it one more time.

LOOKING GOOD?

The wrestlers lacked muscle definition and were on the small side, but moves worked smoother than ever. And the arenas looked fantastic. Also, for the first time in a *SmackDown!* game, wrestlers were shown making their way down the aisle and into the ring, but the blocky close-ups that accompanied these entrances weren't kind. Hair looked worse than ever, magically morphing through opponents, ring ropes, and anything else that happened to be nearby.

ROSTER

Once again you had 36 wrestlers to begin with, eight more becoming available later on. The most curious inclusion was Fred Durst – with The Undertaker using *Rollin'* as his entrance music at the time, the Limp Bizkit frontman was made a playable character. There were only four Divas this time (Ivory, Lita, Molly, Trish). Surreally, Tazz was in as both wrestler and commentator, and would commentate on his own matches without any acknowledgement that he was doing so.

SEASON MODE

After two false starts, THQ ditched the idea of playing an entire season and included a watered down story mode in its place. This involved participating in a couple of backstage skits and no more than a handful of matches. If you selected a title holder to play story mode with, it lasted all of one championship defence – there was no long-term playability at all, especially as the popular Create-A-Pay Per View mode and wrestler rankings were both sacrificed in exchange for this rancid stinker.

COMMENTARY

Accompanying grap talk was provided by Michael Cole and Tazz, but to say their words lacked inspiration is like observing that The Big Show likes the occasional pie.

Michael Cole: "This... singles match... will be an important match."

Tazz: "Oh baby."

Just Bring It remains the only game with eight guys in the ring at once

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WWE SMACKDOWN!

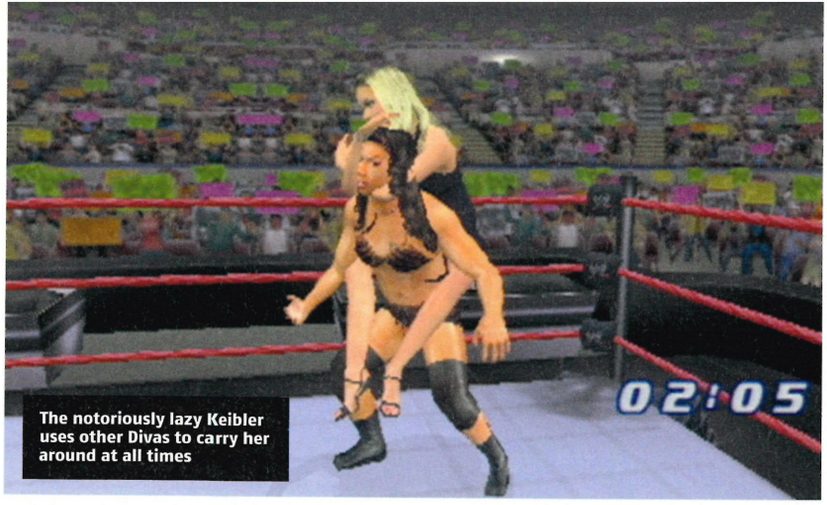
TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Got some old instalments of *SmackDown!* gathering dust? Have a go at these tricks you might have missed the first time around...

SMACKDOWN! KNOW YOUR ROLE (PSONE)
Hidden shower room area: During a match, go to the locker room and Irish Whip your opponent into the right wall. This will create a large hole that leads to the shower room. What you get up to in there is your own business.

SMACKDOWN! JUST BRING IT (PS2)
Unlock Fred Durst: Play a Slobber Knocker match with The Undertaker. If you manage to defeat more than 15 wrestlers in the ten-minute time limit, you'll unlock the Limp Bizkit singer as a playable character.

SMACKDOWN! JUST BRING IT (PS2)
Play as The Scorpion King: In Create-A-Superstar mode, select 'Appearance' then 'New'. Now choose 'Sample' and answer 'Yes' to the question that appears. Choose 'Sample #1' and you can play as The Rock's character from *The Mummy* films.



The notoriously lazy Keibler uses other Divas to carry her around at all times

WWE SMACKDOWN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH

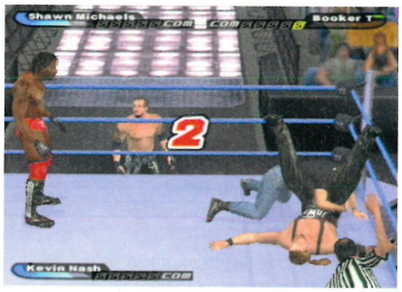
RELEASE November 2002 **PLAYERS** 1-6
FORMAT PS2

With the World Wrestling Federation now renamed World Wrestling Entertainment to put an end to squabbles with the panda-loving charity, it was time for *SmackDown!* to take a change of direction. The basic control system was tweaked to make reversals more realistic. In previous games, a simple tap of the ⊡ button would reverse most moves. Now you had to match your opponent's D-press to counter – so if his grapple was actioned by tapping ↑ and ◎, you had to hit ↑ and ⊡ at the same time to reverse it.

Eight-wrestler matches were dropped, but now every wrestler could be player-controlled in a six-man match. Entrances were improved no end, with legendary ring announcer Howard Finkel providing voiceovers as the stars hit the ring. While that aspect of the presentation was improved, the menu screens took a turn for the worse. Some bright spark thought it would be a clever idea to use a font with letters that shook every time you highlighted any option or match type. If there's ever been a faster way to induce a migraine, we're yet to find it.

LOOKING GOOD?

To be honest, *Shut Your Mouth* wasn't exactly a handsome game. Muscle definition had been improved in the year since *Just Bring It*, yet all the wrestlers looked like they needed a decent fry-up. The overall feel of the game was too cartoony – anyone who's played *Brian Lara International Cricket 2005* will be more than familiar with this syndrome.



ROSTER

This was the first game released after WWE boss Vince McMahon purchased rival company WCW, and so featured an influx of new faces like Booker T, Kevin Nash, and Diamond Dallas Page. It was also Hulk Hogan's debut appearance in a *SmackDown!* game. The gorgeous Stacy Keibler headed up the eight Divas on offer, all of whom masqueraded as totally unsexy stick women.

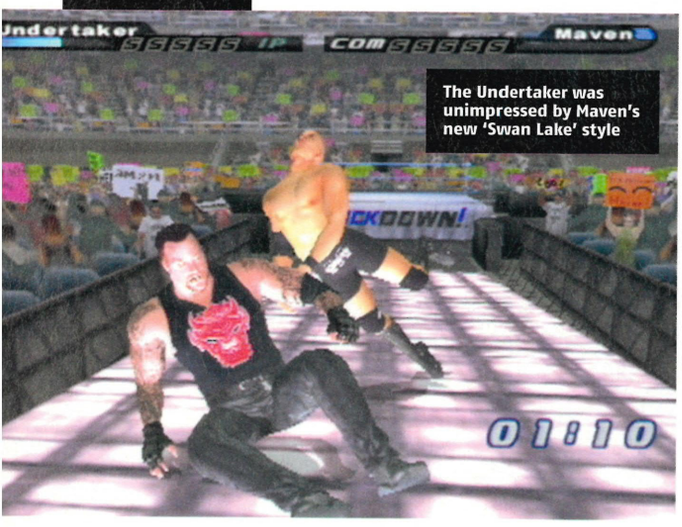
SEASON MODE

Combining the few parts that did work in *Know Your Role* with the ill-fated story mode from *Just Bring It*, *Shut Your Mouth* finally offered a reasonably convincing season of wrestling. Riffing on the WWE's brand split (where Raw and SmackDown! each formed separate rosters), it began with a draft where you could choose the other wrestlers on your half of the company. Before any match, you could walk around backstage and talk trash with other wrestlers or demand a title shot from your general manager. Storylines progressed logically over the year, and you actually felt that winning matches made a difference.

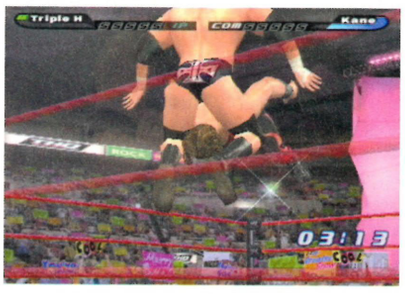
COMMENTARY

Out with *SmackDown!* duo Cole and Tazz and in with Raw stalwarts Ross and Lawler, whose random interjections contained just one piece of 'amusing' conversation in the entire game:

Lawler: "I'm very, very impressed."
Ross: "By this match?"
Lawler: "No, by Stacy Keibler."



The Undertaker was unimpressed by Maven's new 'Swan Lake' style



WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN

RELEASE November 2003 **PLAYERS** 1-6
FORMAT PS2

Still considered by some to be the best in the series, *Here Comes The Pain* had loads going for it: it was speedy yet you could still follow what was going on, had an array of big names, an incredible new match type in the Elimination Chamber, and was the first *SmackDown!* game to feature legends from the '80s and '90s.

A new limb-specific damage model enabled you to focus your attacks on a particular part of your opponent's body, and then force him to submit with a well-timed leglock or armbar. And in the first step away from arcade button-bashing, each wrestler was rated in five categories: Strength, Submission, Stamina, Technique and Speed.

LOOKING GOOD?

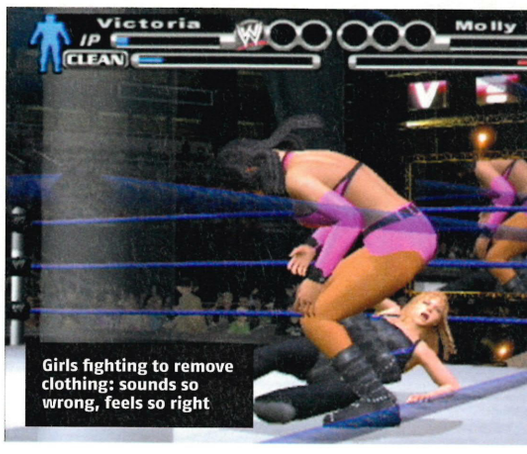
Everything from wrestlers to arenas to entrances got a makeover. The Divas still looked completely unnatural, but each wrestler finally had proper muscle tone and felt chunky like a 22-stone man should.

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW

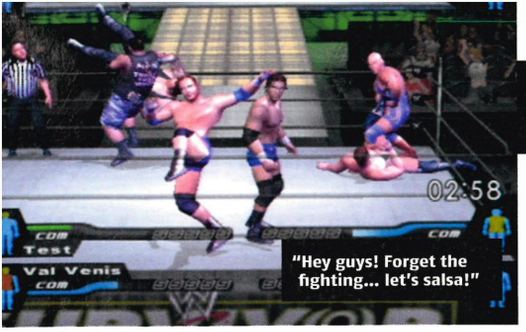
RELEASE November 2004
PLAYERS 1-6 (1-2 online) **FORMAT** PS2

The sixth *SmackDown!* was all about online, or at least it should've been. It was the first in the series to feature net play, but its execution was half-hearted and limited to two-player matches and just two modes – a standard Single bout or Bra And Panties match.

While it was disappointing online, there *were* improvements. You could now choose to fight clean or dirty, which meant winning matches by playing to the crowd or carrying



Girls fighting to remove clothing: sounds so wrong, feels so right



ROSTER

The legends who did make the cut included Legion Of Doom, Million Dollar Man Ted DiBiase, and Rowdy Roddy Piper, bringing the final tally of stars to a massive 65 – including eight ladies. John Cena and Rey Mysterio were among the first-timers.

SEASON MODE

Penned by WWE writers, much of this year's season mode was based on TV storylines from the previous 12 months, such as Steve Austin hijacking a milk truck and Kurt Angle losing a 'hair vs hair' match to Edge. To make feuds more logical, the two rosters were split between good and bad guys at the beginning of the year, while much of your progress was dependent on your backstage relationships with non-wrestlers like Jim Ross and Eric Bischoff. Even though there have been two *SmackDown!* games since this one, *HCTP*'s season mode remains the best of the bunch.

COMMENTARY

None at all. Ross and Lawler were dumped, along with ring announcer Howard Finkel and the Surround Sound option. Want to take a guess at what replaced them? Yep, more thrash metal. Mother, the horse tranquillisers!

Someone will be for it when that ref wakes up. Hopefully Cena

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006

RELEASE November 2005
PLAYERS 1-6 (1-4 online) **FORMAT** PS2

At the time we called it 'as close to the perfect wrestling game as you'll get' and it remains so – a beautifully balanced mix of simulation and arcade action. A clever momentum system replaced the finisher gauges present in previous games, and this gave every match a back-and-forth feel, rather than being a straight race to earn a finisher and pick up the win.

Also added was a new stamina meter, which meant that sprinting around the ring and pulling off big moves tired your wrestler out, and you had to pick the right moments to recover. Combine that with other new bits like power Irish whips, sleeper holds and chain wrestling, and you really felt like you were participating in a WWE match as seen on TV. Hugely deep and infinitely satisfying, it remains the finest grap game out there.

LOOKING GOOD?

Given the incredible array of new gameplay features on show, we'd have forgiven THQ if they decided to retain the aesthetics of the previous game, but they didn't. Wrestler's facial expressions were frighteningly lifelike, and even tiny things like the veins threatening to burst out of Batista's biceps were absolutely spot-on.

ROSTER

49 regular stars this time around, with a great set of legends on offer, too. As well as faves from previous games like Hart, Stone Cold, Rock and Mankind, there were first appearances for British Bulldog, Jake The Snake, Junkyard Dog and Jimmy Hart.

SEASON MODE

Still linear in places, this was a mixture of the good, the bad and the Snitsky. The voice acting was an improvement on last year's game and the storylines were interesting, but you had to keep playing through the same threads if you didn't unlock certain items first time around.

COMMENTARY

Much better, with all four commentators returning and the terrible backing music given the heave-ho. There were still some decidedly dodgy moments, though...

Michael Cole, accompanied by a deathly silence: "I honestly can't imagine a more electric atmosphere than the one in this arena right now..." ■

out a number of heinous acts involving steel chairs and sledgehammers – the latter being miles more fun. Each bout began with one of five randomly selected mini-games, enabling you to score the upper hand by getting the first chop in or winning a test of strength. And, at last, Create-A-Pay Per View mode returned.

LOOKING GOOD?

Yes. This time there were no wholesale changes, but the decision to implement the brand split across the game – even down to the menus – was a nice touch. When you switched on your machine you were asked to choose your favourite brand, and the menu screens would be tailored to your selection. If you chose SmackDown! you'd get blue screens accompanied by Sable and Torrie Wilson, while a red backdrop adorned with Lita or Stacy Keibler awaited if you picked Raw.

ROSTER

It might sound picky to call 41 wrestlers (supplemented by 11 legends) disappointing, but the bar had been set so high with *Here Comes The Pain* that you were left feeling short changed. There was a surprise inclusion among the legends in Bret Hart – a man who hadn't spoken to Vince McMahon since 1997, after the boss changed the ending to his final match in the WWF without telling him.

SEASON MODE

A step down from last year, with both sets of tag team belts needlessly omitted. Also taken out was the option to customise and update the two rosters, meaning you were stuck with the default line-ups permanently. These changes wouldn't have been so upsetting had the season mode been improved elsewhere, but it felt much more linear than *Here Comes The Pain*, with the same old storylines repeating no matter which character you started with.

COMMENTARY

All change once again. This time around, SmackDown! duo Cole and Tazz *and* the Raw double act of Ross and Lawler were included, but their comments were still backed with another guitar bombardment. The tide was slowly turning, though – a couple of the featured bands could actually hold a tune.

Snitsky and JBL warm up for the piggyback race on *WWE Crush Hour II*

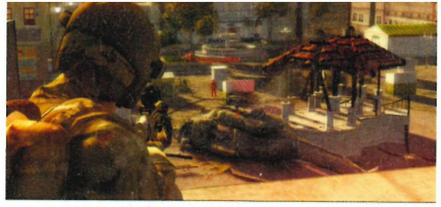
A BRIEF HISTORY OF WWE SMACKDOWN!

MORE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

SMACKDOWN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH (PS2)
Climb onto the *SmackDown!* entrance fist: Start any match in the *SmackDown!* arena and run to the entrance. Position yourself in front of the crack in the wall just to the left of the ramp, then run towards it. Your wrestler will now automatically climb onto the *SmackDown!* fist.

SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN (PS2)
Super Eric: You'll need a game save with everything unlocked to try this. Play a First Blood Match with Eric Bischoff as your wrestler, wearing his leather jacket (only available later in the game). When wearing this, Eric can't bleed, no matter how many times he's hit. Just think: this is the closest you'll ever get to being invincible, so make the most of it.

SMACKDOWN! VS RAW (PS2)
Play as Paul Heyman: The former ECW boss is a hidden character in the game. To use him, select a 'Single With Manager' match and set 1P as the manager. When you come to choosing which character you want to control, Paul Heyman will appear just above A-Train. He'll come out alongside the CPU wrestler and has a full set of moves for you to toy with, including a bear hug finisher.



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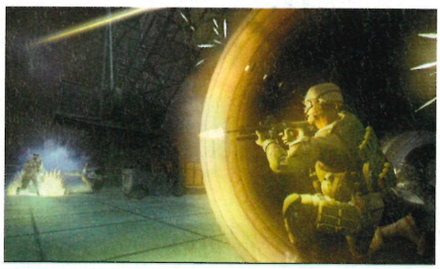
Brand new game modes where a team's chances depend on its ability to craft a tactical battle plan



MULTIPLAYER CO-OP MODE*
Play with friends through a campaign that takes the team from the unrest in Mexico to civil war in Nicaragua

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* Co-op Campaign not available for PlayStation®2

TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST RECON
ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
UBISOFT

Only in PlayStation®2 OFFICIAL magazine-UK

next month

WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW AND PLAYABLE DEMO

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER LEGEND

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DESTINED TO BE BIGGER THAN JESUS?

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- Mark Ecko's Getting Up
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ON SALE 23 MARCH

Contents subject to change. Fingers crossed, though.

replay

MAKING EVERY GAMING BULLET COUNT

It's been a voyage of discovery on the good ship *Official* this month. Thanks to a PS2, a broadband connection and a copy of *Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One*, we've finally been able to lock bayonets with the Hun over the net. Tell mother I hope to be home in time for Christmas. Meanwhile, my hopes and dreams of someday becoming a professional racing driver have been shattered – something that will become pretty clear to anyone trying to beat my times in this month's *TOCA 3* challenge. I know you can't win 'em all, but to be honest, I would be overjoyed with just one... Still, it's probably better to find these things out in advance before getting strapped into an F1 car, or even worse, finding myself in the middle of a war zone. Next month: more of life's little mysteries cleared up through the medium of games.

Andy

Andy Hartup,
News editor

124

DUTY CALLS

***Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One* explodes online.**
Not literally you understand, but still exciting...

124 **CHALLENGES**
Leave the competition stalled on the grid and you could bag some superb *TOCA 3* swag

124 **ONLINE**
Call Of Duty 2 steps into the firing line, while *Ratchet: Gladiator* cranks it up a notch

126 **CHARTS**
PS2 flavours of the month plus laugh (or at the very least smile wryly) at our resident cartoon

128 **CHEATS**
Can't crack *Kong*? Puzzled by the *Prince*? Don't panic, we've got the codes you need

130 **HOT 100**
Memorise this indispensable guide to the best games on PS2, then destroy it. No reason why

challenges

BURN RUBBER AND WIN SOME SWAG

TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

CHALLENGE 1

Select the GT series in Time Trial mode, and hop into any of the vehicles. Race over to the Silverstone track and leave our single lap time of 51.40 eating dust.
Best time gets... A *TOCA Race Driver 3* T-shirt and a Logitech steering wheel.

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

CHALLENGE 2

Select a quick race from the main menu and start yourself on a Speedtrap challenge at Diamond And State. Using the Golf GTi, try and beat our ticket-filled total of 588mph.
Best speed gets... A *TOCA Race Driver 3* T-shirt, a Sony joypad and a memory card.

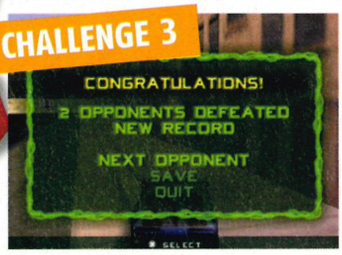
HOW TO ENTER

Beat our record and take a picture with your phone for proof. Then text **CHALLENGE1** or **CHALLENGE2** or **CHALLENGE3** (then a space) followed by your name and full address to **07921 889 345**

Only the winner *OPS2* judges to have the best score/time wins a prize. Only winners will be notified. Text messages will cost you 50p including VAT per text received, plus your usual text message cost. Please source all necessary permissions. This service is available to UK customers of T-mobile, Orange, 3, Virgin, and Vodafone. Lines are open from 23 February to 22 March inclusive.*

TWISTED METAL: HEAD ON

CHALLENGE 3



Select a single-player challenge and then choose the Survival mode. Try and take down as many opponents as you can on the Paris stage, and put our measly two-win streak to shame.
Best score gets... A *TOCA Race Driver 3* T-shirt, a Sony joypad and a memory card.

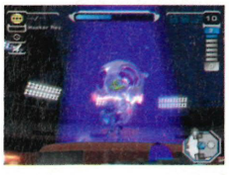
online

IS IT WORTH GETTING BROADBAND FOR THESE GAMES?

CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

What you get: The chace to give Jerry a kick in the bratwurst. This is frantic 16-player online action with four multiplayer game modes – including some old favourites like Capture The Flag and Deathmatch – played over 12 maps.
What it's like: If ever there was a reason to finally make that jump into the world of net play, then *Call Of Duty 2* is most definitely it. Simple connection, easy-to-use options, and plenty of packed-out sessions make *Big Red One* one a real winner. Even when there were between 12 and 16 players in a match, there wasn't even the slightest hint of slowdown or the sort of lag that restricts precision shooting, making the whole experience refreshingly addictive. Even the load times before each battle are kept to a minimum, meaning you're never out of the play long enough to even think about getting bored. The only issue we had was the fact that there were only four game modes to play in, but when they're as solid as these are, it's a very minor gripe.

SHOULD I GET BROADBAND FOR THIS? ✓



RATCHET: GLADIATOR

What you get: Up to eight players can scrap it out online in any of the five modes available, which include fan favourites Conquest and Juggernaut.
What it's like: *Ratchet* flows pretty well online (once you're past the awkward interface), although finding a session may be tricky during quiet periods, as it's not the most popular multiplayer game.

SHOULD I GET BROADBAND FOR THIS? ✓

PSP WIFI TEST

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

What you get: Four-player multiplayer with five game modes to choose from.
What it's like: *Battlefront II* is a multiplayer game at heart, so make sure you share this one. The wealth of modes will keep you busy for hours, and the chance to change most in-game options makes for some tense, varied sessions.

SHOULD I GET MY MATES ROUND FOR THIS? ✓

FANCY A GOOD FRAGGING?

We're setting up our own multiplayer games over the forthcoming weeks. Get online with the right game between 5pm and 6pm on the following Fridays and look for the 'OPS2Online' match.

3 March	Pro Evolution Soccer 5
10 March	Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One
17 March	Ratchet: Gladiator

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charts

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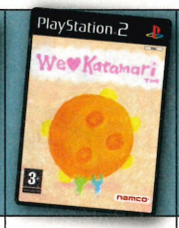
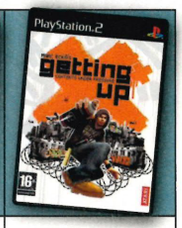




PSM2	NO REVIEW*	NO REVIEW*	"...as crazy as it is addictive" 82%	NO REVIEW*
PSW	"*24 The Game* is an unqualified success" 7/10	"...brilliant racing for amateurs or pros" 9/10	"...a joy to play" 9/10	"The most original game on PS2" 8/10
PLAY	NO REVIEW*	NO REVIEW*	"...a curious bringer of joy..." 88%	NO REVIEW*
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT	"...a quality recreation of the show... lots of fun" 8/10	"A huge game with virtually limitless appeal" 9/10	"A genius piece of eccentric gaming" 8/10	"A bat in the face to anyone who says original games are dead" 8/10

*Review not available at time of going to press

THE TOP 20 ChartTrack

ELSPA Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association

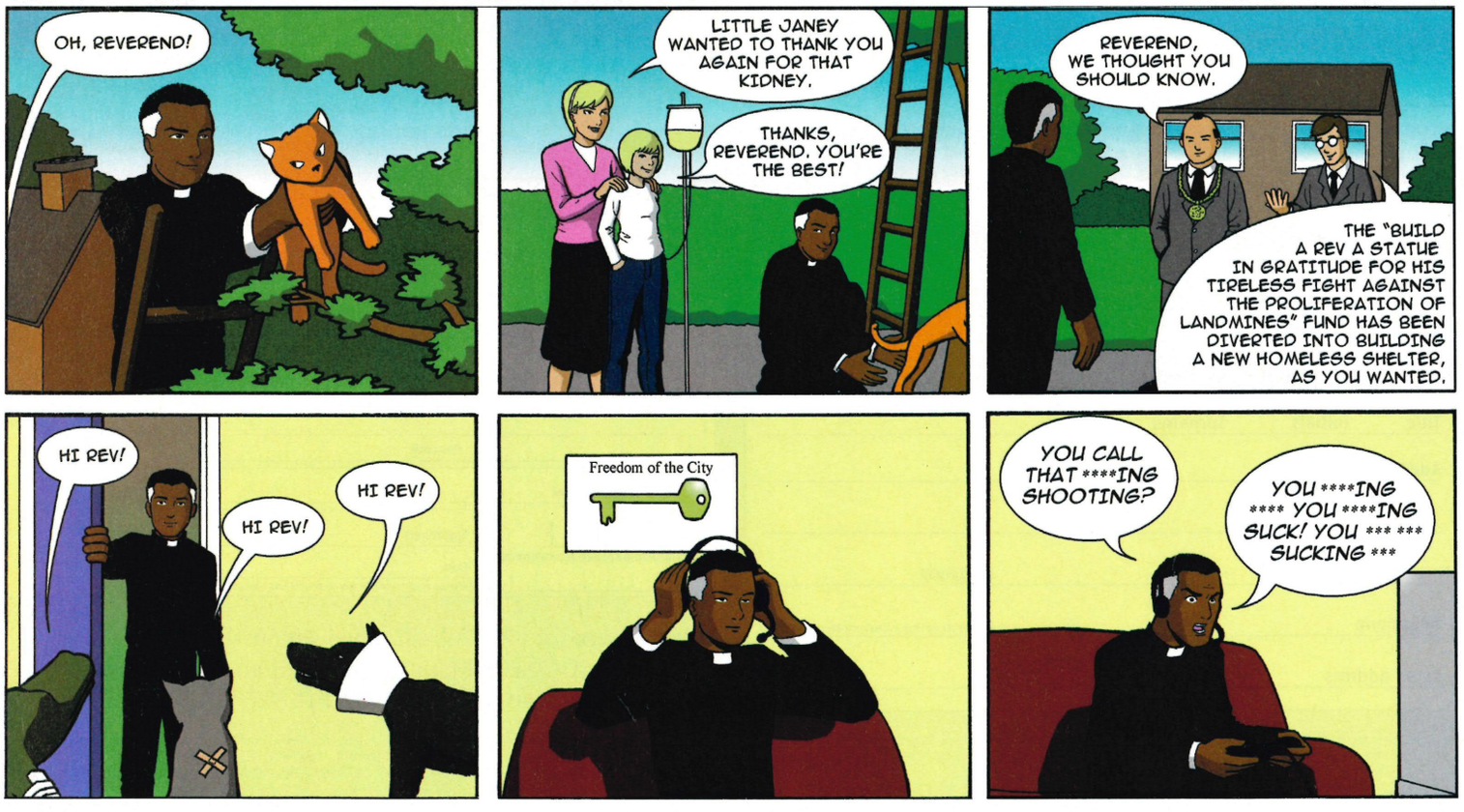
	Game Name	Publisher	Score
1	NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED	EA	8/10
2	KING KONG: THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE	UBISOFT	9/10
3	NARNIA: THE LION THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE	BUENA VISTA	6/10
4	BUZZ! THE MUSIC QUIZ	SONY	7/10
5	PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5	KONAMI	10/10
6	WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006	THQ	9/10
7	FIFA 06	EA	7/10
8	STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II	LUCASARTS	8/10
9	TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY	ACTIVISION	7/10
10	GUN	ACTIVISION	9/10
11	PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES	UBISOFT	9/10
12	50 CENT: BULLETPROOF	VIVENDI	8/10
13	CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE	ACTIVISION	9/10
14	THE SIMS 2	EA	8/10
15	TORINO 2006	TAKE TWO	5/10
16	LMA MANAGER 2006	CODEMASTERS	8/10
17	TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND	ACTIVISION	7/10
18	RESIDENT EVIL 4	CAPCOM	10/10
19	EYETOY PLAY 3	SONY	7/10
20	THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO	ATARI	7/10

COLD FREEZE
Hard to believe but *Torino 2006* is the only *new* game to enter the charts. Is there anyone left who *doesn't* own *Need For Speed Most Wanted*?

EVIL RISES
The best game of 2005 continues to sell like dead pigeons. This month *Resi 4* managed to rise one whole place. *Buzz!* went up seven – where's the justice?

SAVE POINT TAKING THE LESS TRAVELLED ROUTE TO GAMING WISDOM

WORDS: KIERON GILLEN ART: JAMIE MCKELVIE



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Everybody's Golf
Ghost in the Shell: S.A.C.
Grand Theft Auto: L.C.S.
Hot Shots Golf*
Lumines
Marvel Nemesis: R.O.T.I.*
Me and My Katamari*
Medievil Resurrection
Mega Man Legends
Mercury
Metal Gear Acid
Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.
MLB*
Need 4 Speed: M.W.510
NFL Street 2: Unleashed
NFS Underground: Rivals
Rengoku: T. of Purgatory
Ridge Racers
Spider-Man: The Movie 2
Star Wars: Battlefront 2
Tenchu: Shinobi Taizen*
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06*
Tony Hawk's Und. 2 Remix
Virtua Tennis: World Tour
Wipeout Pure
World Tour Soccer: Ch. Ed.
WWE Smackdown v Raw'06
X-Men Legends 2: R.O.A.
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A = 0 1
Ace Combat 5: Sq. Leader
Aeon Flux
Age of Empires 2
Aliens vs Predator: Extinct.
Alter Echo
America's 10 Most Wanted
Area 51
B = 0 2
Batman Begins
Battlefield 2: Mod. Combat
Big Mutha Truckers
Black Monday (Getaway 2)
Bond 007: Agent Und. Fire
Broken Sword 3: S. Dragon
Brothers in Arms: E.I.Blood
Buffy 2: Chaos Bleeds
Bulletproof (50 Cent)
Burnout 3: Takedown
Burnout Revenge
C = 0 3
Call of Duty 2 B. Red One
Call of Duty: Finest Hour
Catwoman
Chronicles of Narnia
Cold Winter
Colin McRae Rally 4
Conflict: Global Storm
Constantine
Crash B'coot: Wr. of Cortex
Crash Tag-Team Racing
Crash Twinsanity
D = 0 4
Darkwatch
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX2
Def Jam: Fight for NY
Destroy All Humans
Devil May Cry
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai T.
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas
Drakengard
DRIV3R
E = 0 5
Enter the Matrix
Escape from Monkey Island
Evil Dead: Fist.of Boomstick
Eye Toy: Play
F = 0 6
Fahrenheit
FIFA 2004
FIFA 2006
FIFA Football 2005
Fifty Cent: Bulletproof
Fight Night 2004
Final Fantasy X
Final Fantasy X-2
Finding Nemo
G = 0 7
Genji: Dawn of Samurai
Getaway 2: Black Monday
Ghost Hunter
Ghost Recon 2
God of War
Goldeneye: Rogue Agent
Gran Turismo 3
Gran Turismo 4
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: San A.
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
Gun
H = 0 8
H.Potter & Pris. of Azkaban
Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire
Haunted Mansion

PLAYSTATION 2

Headhunter
Headhunter: Redemption
Heroes of the Pacific
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Hitman 3: Contracts
I = 0 9
Incr. Hulk: Ult. Destruction
Indiana Jones: Emp. Tomb
J = 1 0
Jak 2: Renegade
Jak 3
Juiced
K = 1 1
Killzone
King Kong (Peter Jackson's)
Kingdom Hearts
L = 1 2
L.A. Rush
Largo Winch
Lego Star Wars
LMA Manager 2004
LMA Manager 2005
Lord of the Rings: 3rd Age
Lord of the Rings: R.of King
Lord of the Rings: T.Towers
M = 1 3
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter
Manhunt
Matrix, Enter the
Matrix: Path of Neo
Max Payne
Max Payne 2
Maximo
Medal of Honor Frontline
Medal of Honor: Euro. Ass.
Mercenaries: Pof Destruct.
Metal Gear Solid 2
Metal Gear Solid 3 S.Eater
Metal Gear Solid 3: Sub.*
Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.
Midway Arcade Treasures 2
Mike Tyson Boxing
Monkey Island, Esc. from
Mortal Kombat: Deception
Mortal Kombat: Shaolin M.
MX vs ATV Unleashed
N = 1 4
Naval Op:Warship Gunner
Need for Speed M. Want.
Need for Speed: Undergr.2
O = 1 5
Onimusha: Warlords
P = 1 6
Paris-Dakar Rally 2
Path of Neo (The Matrix)
Peter Jackson's King Kong
Playboy: The Mansion
Predator: Concrete Jungle
Premier Manager 2002
Pr. of Persia: 2 Thrones
Prince of Persia: S. of Time
Prince of Persia: W.Within
Pro Evolution Soccer 5
Project Zero 2
Punisher
R = 1 8
Ratchet & Clank 2
Ratchet & Clank 3
Raw vs Smackdown 2006
Red Faction
Res. Evil: Code Veronica X
Resident Evil 4
Resident Evil: Outbreak
Ret. to Castle Wolfenstein
Rocky
Rumble Roses
S = 1 9
San Andreas, GTA
Shadow of Rome
Shadow of the Colossus
Silent Hill 2
Silent Hill 3
Silent Hill 4: The Room
Simpsons: Road Rage
Sims
Sims 2
Sims in the City
Smackdown vs Raw
Smackdown vs Raw 2006
Soul Calibur 3
Soul Reaver 2
Spartan: Total Warrior
Spider-Man: Ultimate
Splinter Cell 2: Pandora T.
Splinter Cell 3: C. Theory
Spongebob Squarepants
Spyro: A Hero's Tail
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly
SSX On Tour
Star Ocean: End of Time
Star Wars Episode III
Star Wars: Battlefront
Star Wars: Battlefront 2
Star Wars: Lego Star Wars
Stolen
Suffering: Ties That Bind
Summoner 2
T = 2 0
Tekken 5
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows
Terminator 3 R.of Machines
The Getaway 2 B.M.
The Matrix: P.of Neo
The Simpsons H.& R.
The Sims
The Sims 2
The Sims: Bustin Out
The Thing
The Warriors
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
TimeSplitters Future Perfect
Tom Clancy's R6: Lockdown
Tomb Raider: Angel of Drk.
Tony Hawk's Undergr. 2
Tony Hawk's Underground
Tony Hawk's: Amer.Waste.
Total Overdose
True Crime: NYC
TT Superbikes
U = 2 1
Ultimate Spider-Man
Underworld: Eternal War
W = 2 3
Warriors
World Ch. Snooker '04
World Rally Champ. 4
World Snooker Champ. '05
Worms 4: Mayhem
WWE Smackdown v Raw'06
X = 2 4
X-Files: Resist or Serve
X-Men Legends
X-Men Legends 2: R.O.A.
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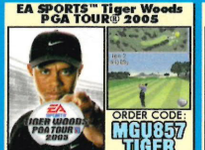
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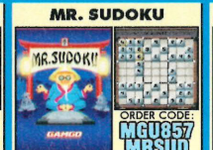
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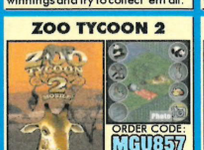
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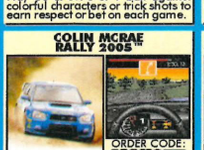
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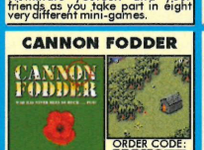
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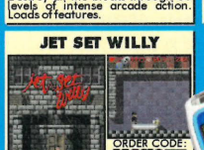
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cheats

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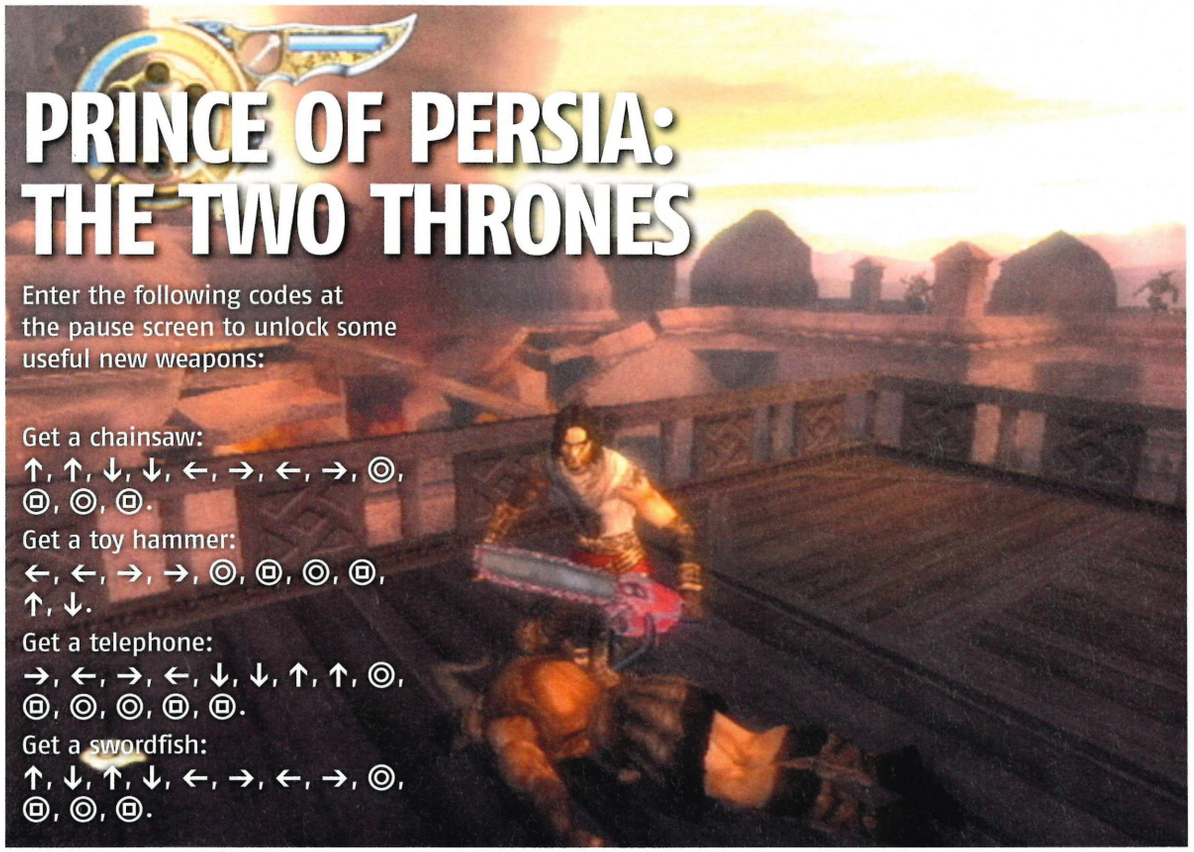


PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Enter the following codes at the pause screen to unlock some useful new weapons:

Get a chainsaw:
↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ◎, ▣, ◎, ▣.

Get a toy hammer:
←, ←, →, →, ◎, ▣, ◎, ▣, ↑, ↓.

Get a telephone:
→, ←, →, ←, ↓, ↓, ↑, ↑, ◎, ▣, ◎, ◎, ▣, ▣.

Get a swordfish:
↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ◎, ▣, ◎, ▣.

50 CENT: BULLETPROOF

With the game paused, select Menu Options, then Cheats, and enter the following:
#1stunna – Perfect shots.
workout – Empty n' clips counter kill.
yayoshome – Tony Yayo *So Seductive* video.
killa1 – *So Seductive* song.
sayhellotomylittlefriend – Unlocks the *My Buddy* video.
the hub is broken – More powerful guns.
ny'sfinestyo – Unlimited health.

BATTLEFIELD II: MODERN COMBAT

While playing the game, hold R2 and L2 and then press →, →, ↓, ↑, ←, ← to unlock all weapons.

BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005

Go to Cheats in the options menu and enter these codes:
Unlock classic players: **GONEFORADUCK**
Unlock classic matches: **BOWLEDHIM**
Unlock trophies: **DOLLY**
Unlock all teams: **GOODLENGTH**
Unlock classic XI challenge: **STUMPED**

CONFLICT: GLOBAL STORM

While on the main menu, press L1, R1, L1, R1, ◎, ◎, ◎, ◎ to unlock a new and highly desirable cheat menu.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

Pause the game and hold down L2 while entering the following codes:
Reset alert meter: R2, →, R2, R1, ▣, →.
Invulnerability: ▣, ◎, ←, ←, ◎, ▣.
Infinite ammo: ←, ◎, R2, →, R1, ▣.
Infinite mind power: R1, R2, ◎, →, L1, ◎.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

Enter the following codes in the Extras section of the main menu. Note: For these cheats to work, you must create a new profile.
Big head mode: **NICKWEST**
Unlimited ammo: **MERCENARIES**
Authentic mode: **SWEDISH ARMY**

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Enter these cheats while playing:
Get jetpack: ←, →, L1, L2, R1, R2, ↑, ↓, ←, →.
Super punch (destroys everything): L1, L2, L2, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↑, R1, R2, R2.
Full health, armour and $250,000: R1, R2, L1, ⊗, ←, ↓, →, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑.

MADDEN NFL 06

On the main menu, select My Madden, and then pick Madden Cards. Now select Madden Codes and enter these cheats:
Unlock all stadia: **555128**
Unlock Classic teams: **614897**

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

Select Cheats in the options menu and enter these codes:
Solora swimsuit model card: **REIKO**
Elektra swimsuit model card: **THEHAND**
Storm swimsuit model card: **MONROE**
Unlock *Fantastic Four* comics: **SAVAGELAND**
Unlock *Tomorrow People* comics: **NZONE**

MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT

Pause the game, then hold L1+R1 and press ◎, ◎, ←, △, ◎, ⊗.
Now input one of the following:
Full adrenaline: L1, R2, R1, ↑, △, ◎.
Infinite ammo: L2, L1, ▣, L2, L1, R1.
Infinite health: ▣, L2, L1, △, △, L2.

MERCENARIES

After collecting 20 National Treasures, enter the following codes on the Factions page of your PDA:
Play as Indiana Jones: ←, ←, →, →, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓.
Play as Han Solo: ←, ←, →, →, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↑.
Infinite health: ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →.

NBA LIVE 06

Enter the respective codes in My NBA Live to unlock these items:
Black TMan 5 trainers: **258SHQW95B**
White TMac 5 trainers: **HGS83KP234P**
A3 Garnett 3 trainers: **DRI239CZ49**
S Carter III LE trainers: **JZ3SCARTVY**
Boston Celtics 05-06 Alternate Jersey: **193KSHU88J**
Cleveland Cavaliers 05-06 Alternate Jersey: **9922NVDKVT**
Denver Nuggets 05-06 Alternate Jersey: **XWETJK72FC**
Detroit Pistons 05-06 Alternate Jersey: **JANTWIKBS6**
Indiana Pacers 05-06 Home Jersey: **SDF786WSHW**
Indiana Pacers 05-06 Away Jersey: **PSDF90PPJN**

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

On the Press Start screen, input: ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, → to unlock the Burger King challenge race.

KING KONG

At the main menu, hold L1 and R1 and press ↓, ○, ↑, □, ↓, ↓, ↑, ↑ to activate the cheats menu, where you can then enter these codes:

Unlock all levels: KKst0ry
999 ammo: KK 999 mun
Unlock all bonuses: KKmuseum
God mode: 8wonder
Start with a machine gun: KKcapone
Start with a revolver: KKtigun
Start with a shotgun: KKsh0tgun
Start with a sniper rifle: KKsn1per
Have infinite spears: lance 1nf
Get one-hit kills: GrosBras

←, →, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↓ to unlock the Ford GT Castrol SYNTEC car.
↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓ to unlock an extra marker to use in the One Stop Shop backroom.

NHL 2K6

Enter the options menu and select Manage Profiles. Press R1, then select Create New Profile. Enter **Turco813** as your name. A message will confirm that you have unlocked everything in the game.

SLY 3: HONOR AMONG THIEVES

While flying the plane pause the game and enter R1, R1, →, ↓, ↓, →. Unpause the game and you'll now be flying the Toonami Plane.

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

To unlock all levels and arenas in the Single Mission Replay mode, highlight Extras on the main menu and do the following: Press ← 11 times, → seven times and then press □.

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

To get all the co-op missions, enter Solo or Co-op mode and hold R1 + R2 + L1 + L2 then press □, □, □, □, □, ○, ○, ○, ○, ○.

SSX ON TOUR

Select Cheats from the extras menu and enter the following:
FLYTHREADS to unlock all clothing.
ZOOMJUICE for infinite boost.
THEBIGPICTURE to unlock all movies.
FOURSOME to unlock the Ski Patrol Character.
MOREFUNTHANONE to unlock Mitch Koobski.
BIGPARTYTIME to unlock Conrad The Viking.
THREEISACROWD to unlock Nigel.
LETSPARTY for a snowball fight.
POWERPLAY to boost your stats.
ROADIEROUNDUP to unlock more characters.
JACKALOPESTLYE for monster tricks.

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

During battle, hold L2 and R2 and input the following codes:
Alternate soldiers: ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑, ↑, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, ↑, ↑, ↑, ←.
Alternate sounds: ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, ↑, ↓, ↑, ↑, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →.
Infinite ammo: ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, →.
Invincibility: ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, →.
No HUD: ↑, ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, ↑, ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ↑, ↑, ←, →.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

While on the wardrobe, hold L1 and enter the following to unlock all levels:
↑, ↑, →, →, ↑, →, ↓.
While on the bonus draw, hold L1 and enter the following code to unlock all extras:
↓, ↓, →, →, ↓, →, ↑.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Enter these codes at the Extras menu, in the Code Entry selection:
British flag shorts: **FSHNCHP**
Smash Point bonus: **SMASH15**
Collectables worth double: **BRINGIT**

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

Pause the game at any point and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2. Then input the following codes:
Give Aragorn all special abilities: ↓, ○, △, △.
Give Gandalf all special abilities: ↑, ↓, △, ○.
Give Legolas all special abilities: △, ○, ×, ○.

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

While playing the game, hold down R1 + L1 + × and enter the following codes:
Maximum evil: ←, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, R2.
Psychedelic mode: ←, ←, R2, →, →, R2, ↑, ↑, R2, ↓, ↓, R2.
All weapons: ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, R2, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑, →, ↓, ←, R2, ↓, ↓, ↓, R2, R2.
Full health: ←, R2, R2, R2, →, ←, →, ←, ↑, R2, R2, R2 ,↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, R2.
Invincibility: ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑.

THE WARRIORS

While playing, enter the following:
L1, SELECT, □, ↓, L2, → to instantly make 100% completion.
↑, △, L3, SELECT, ×, L2 for unlimited health.
□, ○, △, SELECT, ×, ← for unlimited rage.
↓, □, ←, ×, L1, SELECT for unlimited spirit.
R2, ○, SELECT, ↑, L1, → to get a pipe.
L1, ×, R1, R1, SELECT, R2 to get a machete.
↓, ↓, SELECT, ↑, ↑, L3 to get a knife.
↑, SELECT, ×, △, △, □ to get out of jail.
↓, □, ×, SELECT, L1, ← to instantly complete the level.

When playing the Armies Of The Night mini-game, enter ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, → to get 99 credits.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

Go to Options, then Password, and type in the following codes:
CLUB11 to unlock all clubs.
WOOGLIN to unlock all golfers.
ITSINTHEHOLE to unlock all courses.
GOLDENAGE to get Tiger in a hat.
TECHNICOLOR for Tiger playing in striped trousers.
THROWBACK for Tiger playing in a retro outfit.
JUSTDOIT to unlock all Nike items.

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

Go into the Options menu and select Cheat Codes to unlock these:
Mat Hoffman – **the_condor**
Jason Ellis – **Sirius-DJ**
Perfect grind balance – **grindXpert**
Perfect manual balance – **2wheels!**
Perfect skitch balance – **h!tchar!de**

TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY

Bring up the map screen, and input the following codes while holding R1 and L1:
Double damage: ×, ×, □, ×, ×, ×.
Unlimited ammo: ○, □, ×, □, □, △.
Millionaire: □, □, △, □, △, □.
Redman Gone Wild mini-game: △, ×, ×, ○, △, □.
Super Cop: △, ×, △, ×, △, △.

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Go to Controller Setup in the options menu and enter these codes:
Unlock all characters: →, ↓, →, ↓, ←, ↑, ←, →.
Unlock all comics: ←, ←, →, ←, ↑, ←, ←, ↓.
Unlock all artwork: ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, ←.
Unlock all landmarks: ↑, →, ↓, ←, ↓, ↑, →, ←.

PS2 CHEATS

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

Enter these codes while playing:
Full health: L1, R1, ×, L1, R1, □, L1, R1.
Full armour: L1, R1, ○, L1, R1, ×, L1, R1.
Weapons (1): ↑, □, □, ↓, ←, □, □, →.
Weapons (2): ↑, ○, ○, ↓, ←, ○, ○, →.
Weapons (3): ↑, ×, ×, ↓, ←, ×, ×, →.
Clear Wanted Level: L1, L1, △, R1, R1, ×, □, ○.

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

Enter **!bacon** as your profile name to being the game with $100,000.
Enter **!get-set** as your profile name to unlock all the cop cars in Tuner Takedown mode.

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II

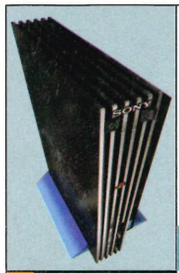
Pause, and press ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, ↑, ↑, ↑, ←, → for invulnerability.
Pause the game and input ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ←, ↓, ↓, ↓, ←, → to make your ammo refill to the max every time you reload.

VIRTUA TENNIS

Enter these on the main menu, holding the left shoulder button:
All racquets and clothing: →, ←, →, →, ↑, ↑, ↑.
Begin World Tour with $1m: ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, △, △, △.

CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

Enter the following code in the chapter select menu to unlock all levels:
Hold R1 and L1 and then press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, ←, →, →, □, →, □, →, □.

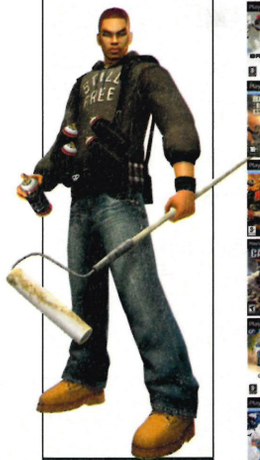


the hot 100

HERE ARE THE 100 PS2 GAMES THAT MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING

THIS MONTH

The keen-eyed among you will quickly spot that there are five new games ushered into the ranks of the great and good. Best of all though, only one of them is an update (*TOCA Race Driver 3*) and there's also only one film/TV tie-in (*24: The Game*). The fact that strong original games like *Black*, *Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure* and *We ❤ Katamari* are all out now proves that PS2 gaming is still as fresh as ever.



YOUR KEY TO THE TOP 100

GOLD
Reserved exclusively for games that scored the elusive 10/10

SILVER
Only awarded to games that scored a mighty 9/10

BRONZE
Lovingly given to games that scored an impressive 8/10

DVD#70
Want to try before you buy? Here's the issue where we ran a playable demo

24: THE GAME — BRONZE — NEW ENTRY
The hit TV show arrives on PS2 in fine style.
REVIEWED *OPS2#69* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#69**

50 CENT: BULLETPROOF — BRONZE
Violent vanity project enlivened by a huge suite of musical extras.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 08

ACE COMBAT: SQUADRON LEADER — BRONZE
Top flight sim that will take your breath away.
REVIEWED *OPS2#56* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#56**

AMPLITUDE — SILVER
Music/rhythm game with loads of top artists and online options.
REVIEWED *OPS2#38* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#38/#62**

AREA 51 — SILVER
Guns, aliens and conspiracies make for a top-notch shooter.
REVIEWED *OPS2#60* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#58**

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT — SILVER
Genius body-swapping war shooter full of challenges and action.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 09

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL — BRONZE
Not quite *Jak II* but still an engaging platformer.
REVIEWED *OPS2#40* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#39**

BLACK — GOLD — NEW ENTRY
Hollywood-style gun porn – by far the best shooter on PS2.
REVIEWED *OPS2#69* / **OVERALL** 10 / **DVD#69**

BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005 — BRONZE
Quite simply the best cricket game yet.
REVIEWED *OPS2#62* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#63**

BROTHERS IN ARMS: ROAD TO HILL 30 — BRONZE
An addictive take on both WW2 and squad-based shooters.
REVIEWED *OPS2#58* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#60/#62**

BURNOUT REVENGE — GOLD
Faster-than-light and the best racer in existence.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 10 / **DVD#64**

CALL OF DUTY: BIG RED ONE — SILVER
Stunning looking WW2 shooter with atmosphere to spare.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 09

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005 — SILVER
Looks great, and the new career mode makes for massive fun.
REVIEWED *OPS2#51* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#51**

CONFLICT: GLOBAL STORM — BRONZE
Easy to grasp, action-packed squad-based shootery.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#64**

DARKWATCH — BRONZE
Atmospheric, vein-ripping vampires vs cowboys shooter.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#65**

DEF JAM VENDETTA: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK — BRONZE
Gorgeous like Carmen Electra, must-have rap-scrap mayhem.
REVIEWED *OPS2#52* / **OVERALL** 08

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! — SILVER
Alien invasion B-movie style as you zap, crush and fry mankind.
REVIEWED *OPS2#61* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#61/#62**

DEVIL MAY CRY 3: DANTE'S AWAKENING — SILVER
Combat-heavy adventure with shooters and swords.
REVIEWED *OPS2#58* / **OVERALL** 09

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 XTREME LEGENDS
Samurai strategy gaming, with the greatest depth and detail yet.
REVIEWED *OPS2#43* / **OVERALL** 07

ESPN NHL 2K5 — BRONZE
More fun and less broken bones than real ice hockey.
REVIEWED *OPS2#56* / **OVERALL** 08

EVERYBODY'S GOLF — BRONZE
Addictive cartoon golf that laughs in the face of realism.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#64**

EYETOY: ANTIGRAV
Unique use-your-body-as-the-controller jet-board racing game.
REVIEWED *OPS2#58* / **OVERALL** 07

EYETOY: PLAY 2 — BRONZE
This more creative follow-up shows off the EyeToy to full effect.
REVIEWED *OPS2#53* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#54**

FAHRENHEIT — SILVER
Stylish, cinematic reinvention of the point and click adventure.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#64/#69**

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005 — BRONZE
More licences, tighter play and the brilliant new First Touch system.
REVIEWED *OPS2#52* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#42**

FINAL FANTASY X-2 — SILVER
FF meets *Charlie's Angels* for a narcotic dose of the familiar RPG.
REVIEWED *OPS2#43* / **OVERALL** 09

FREEDOM FIGHTERS — SILVER
Tactical battling in Russkie New York. Insanely addictive.
REVIEWED *OPS2#37* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#38**

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE — BRONZE
This is the finest Bond game on PS2.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#67**

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
Tactical army shooter where you issue orders but don't fire a shot.
REVIEWED *OPS2#58* / **OVERALL** 07 / **DVD#59**

GOD OF WAR — SILVER
Heart-in-mouth joy from this frantic and bloody hack fest.
REVIEWED *OPS2#60* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#62/#63**

GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK — GOLD
Two superb games in the same box for just £40!
REVIEWED *OPS2#41* / **OVERALL** 10

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS — GOLD
Massively expansive, even over *Vice City*. The biggest game ever.
REVIEWED *OPS2#54* / **OVERALL** 10

GRAN TURISMO 4 — SILVER
Unsurpassed, automotive beauty. The best driving game on PS2.
REVIEWED *OPS2#57* / **OVERALL** 09

GUN — SILVER
This *GTA*-inspired Wild West shooter is mighty fine, if a little short.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 09

HITMAN: CONTRACTS — BRONZE
Deeper, darker and bigger than its predecessor.
REVIEWED *OPS2#46* / **OVERALL** 08

ICO — SILVER
Beautiful, inventive... *Ico* is an adventure unlike any other.
REVIEWED *OPS2#18 & #69* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#19/#35/#69**

JAK 3 — BRONZE
Sublime platform adventure and oodles of varied gameplay.
REVIEWED *OPS2#53* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#53/#58**

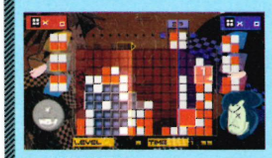
JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING — SILVER
Bond finally gets the game he deserves. SPECTRE-tacular stuff.
REVIEWED *OPS2#43* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#40/#44**

THE PSP TOP FIVE

Got a PSP? Then you need these

1 GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES 9/10
Rockstar goes back to Liberty City where new missions and multiplayer make for an explosive package.

2 RIDGE RACER 9/10
Utterly addictive. Not only is the single-player game brilliant, but the silky-smooth multiplayer action is fantastic with a few mates.



3 LUMINES 9/10
A simplistic mix of block puzzler and music mixer that will suck up hours of your life and never give them back. An absolute classic.

4 VIRTUA TENNIS 8/10
Accessible *and* comprehensive. Career modes, multiplayer and loads of mini-games provide plenty of fun for everyone.

5 PURSUIT FORCE 8/10
Hijack cars by bouncing from vehicle to vehicle during gloriously daft car chases. It's hard not to wear a cheesy grin as you land on a car, shoot the villains inside and nick it.

NEED A BACK ISSUE OF *OPS2* TO CHECK OUT THE FULL REVIEW? THEN CALL:
UK: 0870 837 4773
OVERSEAS: +44 1858 438 795

replay

KILLER 7 — BRONZE
Insane shooter with exploding zombies and schizophrenic killers.
REVIEWED *OPS2#61* / **OVERALL** 08

KILLZONE — SILVER
Visually amazing FPS that'll rock your game world every time.
REVIEWED *OPS2#51* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#52/#55/#59**

KINGDOM HEARTS — BRONZE
Disney partners with Square for the ultra-cute RPG crossover.
REVIEWED *OPS2#27* / **OVERALL** 08

LEGO STAR WARS — BRONZE
One of the best *Star Wars* games yet, despite the cutesy looks.
REVIEWED *OPS2#59* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#59/#62**

MADDEN NFL 06 — SILVER
Deep and technically flawless recreation of American football.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 09

MANHUNT — SILVER
A dirty, grisly, filthy but *brilliant* game experience.
REVIEWED *OPS2#42* / **OVERALL** 09

MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE — BRONZE — NEW ENTRY
Graffiti game created by a fashion designer. Original and good.
REVIEWED *OPS2#69* / **OVERALL** 08

MASHED — SILVER
Got friends? Get the brilliant party racer *Mashed*. No excuses.
REVIEWED *OPS2#48* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#48/#49/#55**

MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN — BRONZE
A welcome second helping of sword-wielding platform antics.
REVIEWED *OPS2#43* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#43**

MERCENARIES — SILVER
Enjoy all the fun of free-roaming warfare. And get paid for it!
REVIEWED *OPS2#55* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#55**

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY — GOLD
A must-own, state-of-the-art tactical espionage stealth-a-thon.
REVIEWED *OPS2#17* / **OVERALL** 10 / **DVD#17/#37**

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER — SILVER
Cinematic stealth adventure that devours the competition.
REVIEWED *OPS2#57* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#57**

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION — BRONZE
Super-bling street racer. Earn cash to splash on your motor.
REVIEWED *OPS2#59* / **OVERALL** 08

MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS — BRONZE
The classic beat-'em-up gets a spectacular adventure makeover.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08

MOTO GP4 — BRONZE
The fastest, prettiest and bestest motorbike racing money can buy.
REVIEWED *OPS2#60* / **OVERALL** 08

MUSIC 3000 — SILVER
A virtual recording studio for £30? Can anyone say no to that?
REVIEWED *OPS2#33* / **OVERALL** 09

NBA STREET V3 — SILVER
The definitive basketball game. Shoot hoops to build your rep.
REVIEWED *OPS2#57* / **OVERALL** 09

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED — BRONZE
Throwing cops into the mix gives the *NFS* series a turbo boost.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 08

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2 — BRONZE
Vast racer with tons of mod-tastic freedom of expression.
REVIEWED *OPS2#53* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#53**

OBSCURE
Entry into this school of survival horror won't disappoint chillseekers.
REVIEWED *OPS2#52* / **OVERALL** 07 / **DVD#52**

ONIMUSHA 3 — SILVER
Saving the best till last, this is near faultless adventure gaming.
REVIEWED *OPS2#48* / **OVERALL** 09

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG — SILVER
The best movie tie-in on PS2. An awesome adventure.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#66**

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES — SILVER
Only slight tweaks to the formula, but it's the best *POP* so far.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 09

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5 — GOLD
Like playing real football, but with your hands. Utterly beautiful.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 10 / **DVD#65**

PROJECT ZERO — BRONZE
Genuinely disturbing survival horror, dripping with menace.
REVIEWED *OPS2#24* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#23**

RAINBOW SIX 3 — BRONZE
Squad-based shooter with a realistic edge and online missions.
REVIEWED *OPS2#45* / **OVERALL** 08

RATCHET & CLANK 3 — SILVER
Weapons and flash gun-centric play make this the series' best.
REVIEWED *OPS2#53* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#51/#58**

RED DEAD REVOLVER — SILVER
Wild West shooter that's like a cool breeze in Death Valley. Yeehaw!
REVIEWED *OPS2#47* / **OVERALL** 09

RESIDENT EVIL 4 — GOLD
Simply one of the greatest games ever made. Buy it. Now.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 10

REZ — SILVER
Psychedelic, music-based rhythmic shoot-'em-up. Hypnotic stuff.
REVIEWED *OPS2#16* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#17**

SECOND SIGHT — BRONZE
Slick thriller touched with psychic powers from the *'Splitters* boys.
REVIEWED *OPS2#50* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#50**

SHADOW OF ROME — BRONZE
A historic blend of bloody action and stealth set in Roman times.
REVIEWED *OPS2#56* / **OVERALL** 08

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS — SILVER
Original, beautiful and haunting – nothing else feels like this.
REVIEWED *OPS2#68* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#69**

SILENT HILL 3 — SILVER
Wet-the-bed scary survival horror. We dare you to play it.
REVIEWED *OPS2#33* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#34**

SINGSTAR POPWORLD — BRONZE
Party fun of the highest order, whether you can sing or not.
REVIEWED *OPS2#59* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#60**

SLY 3: HONOUR AMONG THIEVES — SILVER
Clever, inventive and funny, this is the best platformer around.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#66**

SMASH COURT PRO TENNIS TOURNAMENT 2 — BRONZE
A new career mode makes the top tennis seed even better.
REVIEWED *OPS2#47* / **OVERALL** 08

SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS — BRONZE
Move in for the commander-in-chief of online tactical shooters.
REVIEWED *OPS2#43* / **OVERALL** 08

SOUL CALIBUR III — SILVER
Better than ever, this is the greatest fighting game ever made.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#65**

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR — SILVER
Mythological hack and slash epic.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#66**

SPIDER-MAN 2 — BRONZE
Free-roaming, superhero adventure fun with loads to see and do.
REVIEWED *OPS2#49* / **OVERALL** 08

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY — SILVER
Top stealth adventure, travelling the world to surprise terrorists.
REVIEWED *OPS2#58* / **OVERALL** 09

SSX 3 — SILVER
Super-long, fast races make this an essential PS2 purchase.
REVIEWED *OPS2#40* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#43**

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II — BRONZE
Fantastic set-pieces and brilliant space battles. Buy it.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 08

SUPER MONKEY BALL DELUXE — BRONZE
Steer monkeys in Perspex balls around courses in this arcade oddity.
REVIEWED *OPS2#59* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#60**

TEKKEN 5 — BRONZE
The original PlayStation fighter beats its way back to top form.
REVIEWED *OPS2#61* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#61/#63**

TLOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING — BRONZE
Well-crafted version of the film, with huge battles and great extras.
REVIEWED *OPS2#40* / **OVERALL** 08

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND — BRONZE
Hardcore, ultra-bloody action-survival horror.
REVIEWED *OPS2#64* / **OVERALL** 08

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006 — BRONZE
Like the man himself, this year's edition is on fine form.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08

TIMESPLITTERS 2 — GOLD
As vital to PS2 as your central nervous system is to your brain.
REVIEWED *OPS2#25* / **OVERALL** 10 / **DVD#25/#31**

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT — SILVER
Shooter with enough guns to satisfy the most trigger-happy soul.
REVIEWED *OPS2#57* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#56**

TOCA RACE DRIVER 3 — SILVER
Tones down the story mode and ups the red-hot driving experience.
REVIEWED *OPS2#69* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#68** — NEW ENTRY

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND
Tony's looking tired, but this is still a great place to start.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 07

TOTAL OVERDOSE — BRONZE
Comedy Tex-Mex shoot-a-thon with entertaining special attacks.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08

TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY
A good game with some great ideas, but not quite a classic.
REVIEWED *OPS2#67* / **OVERALL** 07

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 — BRONZE
Cartoon-style action adventure with great fighting controls.
REVIEWED *OPS2#57* / **OVERALL** 08

WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT — BRONZE
For once, a kid's game that doesn't treat you like a child.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#65**

WE ❤ KATAMARI — BRONZE
Deeply odd and very Japanese but also hugely enjoyable.
REVIEWED *OPS2#69* / **OVERALL** 08 — ON THE DVD — NEW ENTRY

WRC RALLY EVOLVED — SILVER
Fantastic tracks with random events to test your skill.
REVIEWED *OPS2#65* / **OVERALL** 09 / **DVD#65**

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW 2006 — SILVER
With better online play and new match types, this is essential.
REVIEWED *OPS2#66* / **OVERALL** 09

XIII — BRONZE
Gorgeous PS2 version of the comic-book hero. Play this now.
REVIEWED *OPS2#40* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#42**

ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER — BRONZE
The strikingly impressive robo scrapper returns. Awesome.
REVIEWED *OPS2#38* / **OVERALL** 08 / **DVD#38**

!!
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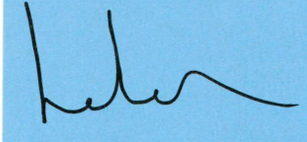
comedown

THE REST OF YOUR PS2 AND PSP LIFE IN ONE HANDY SECTION

Making this month's Comedown has been the best fun we've had round here since we discovered we could get 40p chocolate out of the vending machine for just four pence. Concerned that maybe we needed to get out a bit more, we did just that. Check out page 140 for our gaming-related real-world misadventures. Whose idea was it to find a bloke mad enough to let us hang him from a bridge, force him to change clothes with a pretend corpse in Sainsbury's car park, and eat seven pizzas in one sitting? I think it might've been a message from Jesus (or Disc Ed, George – they look similar). Either way, it got us out the office and enabled us to prove conclusively that *OPS2*'s finest are indeed harder than Solid Snake. Time well spent, you'll agree.



Helen Woodey,
Operations editor

film

music

incoming

feature

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9am Monday, and team *OPS2* deploys for another week at the best games mag in the galaxy

134 **FILM REVIEWS**
Quality filmic entertainment on DVD and UMD – crisp verdicts on *Serenity*, *Lord Of War*, *Red Eye* and, um, *Bewitched*

135 **HOW TO GET MOVIES ON YOUR PSP**
Our essential, jargon-free guide to getting treasured video files out of your PC and into your PSP. Successfully tested on technophobes

135 **THIS MONTH'S WEIRDEST PSP THINGS**
Don't waste precious time probing the sticky crevices of the Internet for ripe weirdness. We've got you covered right here

136 **MUSIC REVIEWS**
Mogwai assault your lobes with their latest, plus, there's new stuff from Liars, Tiga, and the terminally fey Belle And Sebastian

136 **PSP KIT REVIEW**
A gut-disintegrating music system, a Bluetooth music dongle and a five-in-one card reader – all for your beloved PlayStation Portable

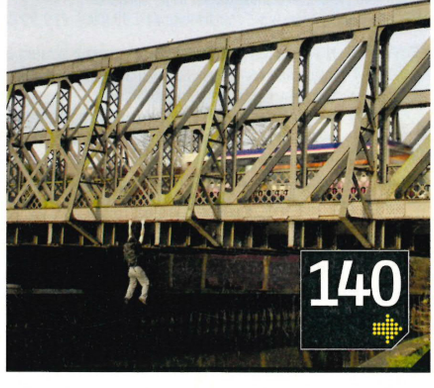
137 **HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN GAME FAN SITE**
Become a blogger and get your own insane ramblings on the Web

138 **INCOMING**
Tons of games are heading your way! (You knew that, yes?) Find out what and when right here

140 ***OPS2* VS SOLID SNAKE**
We always suspected Solid Snake was a bit of a puff. Here's how we went about proving it. And by 'we', we mean Joel

Mogwai – as featured in the 2006 Littlewoods catalogue

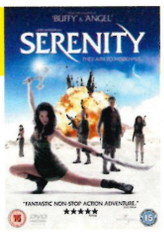
136



140

SERENITY

EVERYTHING *REVENGE OF THE SITH* SHOULD HAVE BEEN AND MORE



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Joss Whedon
STARRING
Nathan Fillion, Alan Tudyk, Chiwetel Ejiofor
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27 February
PRICE
£19.99 (DVD)
£19.99 (UMD)

FILM: Chances are you missed *Serenity* at the cinema – the big-screen follow-up to cancelled TV series *Firefly* struggled to 'find an audience' – but here's your chance to make it up to yourself. Because *Serenity* is tremendous. Tremendous if you missed the TV show, and somehow even more so if you've been in from the beginning. It's so tremendous, in fact, that we'd happily argue that it's at least, ooh, four times better than any *Star Wars* prequel you choose to mention.

Not that *Serenity* doesn't owe a certain something to Lucas' space saga; there's more than a little of Han Solo and the Millennium Falcon in *Serenity*'s tale of charming smuggler Mal Reynolds and his ragtag crew, constantly on the run from the Alliance government. But these finely crafted and likeable characters are set within a different world – a future Wild West where newly terraformed planets double for frontier towns, and cannibalistic Reavers take the place of native Americans. The end result is so unexpectedly successful – so enchanting, funny and downright kick-ass – that you simply must see it. **9/10**

EXTRAS: Director intro, commentary, deleted scenes, outtakes, making of, featurettes. **10/10**

VERDICT: Coming out of nowhere, and with a cast of unknowns, *Serenity* is an old-fashioned adventure that's up there with the best sci-fi in living memory. Aces. **ND**

Also out on UMD

The pick of this month's releases

FROM 20 FEBRUARY:
- *Into The Blue*
- *Batman*
- *Training Day*

FROM 27 FEBRUARY:
- *Phantom Of The Opera*
- *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*
- *Cellular*

FROM 3 MARCH:
- *The Godfather*

FROM 6 MARCH:
- *The Sixth Sense*
- *Time Bandits*

FROM 13 MARCH:
- *The Goonies*

- *Labyrinth*

FROM 20 MARCH:
- *The Transporter 2*

LORD OF WAR

Director *Andrew Niccol* / Starring *Nicolas Cage, Jared Leto*
Distributor *Momentum* / Out *6 March* / Price *£19.99 (DVD), £19.99 (UMD)*

FILM: Uneven and bordering-on-vacuous account of fictionalised American-Ukranian international arms dealer Yuri Orlov (Cage), who ascends from lowly Brooklyn roots to build a global gun-running empire. At times sharp and stylish, at its best *Lord Of War* comes on like an embittered anti-war, anti-profiteering satire; a *Fight Club*-tinged *Catch 22*. At its worst, though, it meanders and loses its way, never fully developing Yuri's relationships with his friends and family, and visually revelling in the very fetishistic weapon-love it sets out to criticise. Because of this it fails to deliver a coherent message, and suffers badly for it. **6/10**

EXTRAS: Commentary, making of, deleted scenes, weapons gallery. **8/10**

VERDICT: Cage is perfect as the laconic master capitalist, but the tacked-on end-credit political statements merely act to underline a lack of substance throughout the preceding couple of hours. Shame. **ND**

RED EYE

Director *Wes Craven* / Starring *Rachel McAdams, Gillian Murphy* Distributor *DreamWorks* / Out *Now* / Price *£17.99 (DVD), £17.99 (UMD)*

FILM: This is short and really good fun. Which is no coincidence. See, the plot is pretty far-fetched – fancy hotel customer support lady Lisa (McAdams) boards a plane with seemingly nice man Jack (Murphy) only for him to inform her once they're in the air that his associates will knock off her dad unless she calls work and moves a high-powered politician type to a specific suite so Jack's evil associates can do him in. Plenty of tension is skilfully wrung out of the precarious setup by veteran horror-helmer Craven, and the whole thing's done before you can get bored or question the canyon-size plot holes. Bargain. **8/10**

EXTRAS: Commentary, making of, featurettes. **8/10**

VERDICT: Tight, sharp and well-paced, *Red Eye* is a proper, straight-up thriller and all the better for it. We only wish more movies were brave enough to be this short... **ND**

BEWITCHED

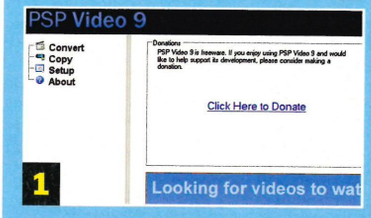
Director *Nora Ephron* / Starring *Will Ferrell, Nicole Kidman* / Distributor *Columbia Pictures* / Out *Now* / Price *£19.99 (DVD), £19.99 (UMD)*

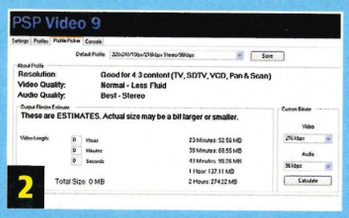
FILM: Weird, self-referential remake-cum-utter-balls-up of a sometime popular sitcom about a man who accidentally marries a witch. Except, you see, this time they're remaking that sitcom in the film (ooh, clever!) as a vehicle for struggling actor Jack Wyatt (Ferrell) who finds his perfect on-screen-pretend-witch-wife-lady in Isabel (Kidman) who, it brilliantly turns out, really is a witch! In the film, we mean. It's just as messy as it sounds, with the resulting pulpy, sentimental hash even managing to stop Ferrell being funny for most of the movie. Boo. Hiss. **4/10**

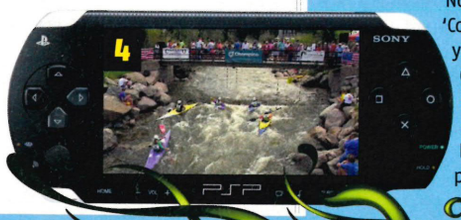
EXTRAS: Commentary, deleted scenes, facts and trivia (UMD and DVD). **7/10**

VERDICT: Tries to side-step criticism of classic TV remakes with a frankly idiotic plot, and is consequently rubbish. Decidedly un-magical. **ND**

Step by step guide to... getting movies on your PSP







Got video files you want to watch on the go? Follow our guide...

PSP only plays certain types of video file – MP4, AVC – so you need to convert your movie file first. The easiest way to do this is by using a program like *PSP Video 9* 1 available at www.pspvideo9.com. It's free and easy to use, and transfers the finished files to PSP automatically.

Download the program and choose your video settings in the 'Setup' tab 2. Tinker with the resolution, framerate and so on until you've found the balance between video quality and file size that suits you (you may want to use the 'Profile Picker' with automatic settings and descriptions of the quality level).

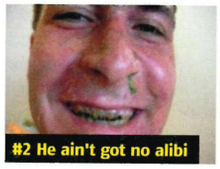
Now click the 'Convert' tab, select 'Convert New Video' and find the file you want to copy from the menu. Once converted, *PSP Video 9* automatically prepares the file so that your PSP can find it 3. Plug your PSP into your PC's USB port, click the 'Copy' tab and you're away 4.

THE WEIRDEST THINGS WE'VE SEEN ON PSP THIS MONTH

WE'VE TRAWLED THE WEB TO FIND THE THREE FREAKIEST VIDS ON PSP

#3 STAR WARS COMMERCIAL

Home brew advertisement for a geek-intensive movie site which wilfully rips off both *Star Wars* and those droning Jack Davenport MasterCard ads to rather cool effect. Also good for reminding us how much we liked the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Download from **http://savefile.com/files.php?fid=5348647**


#2 He ain't got no alibi

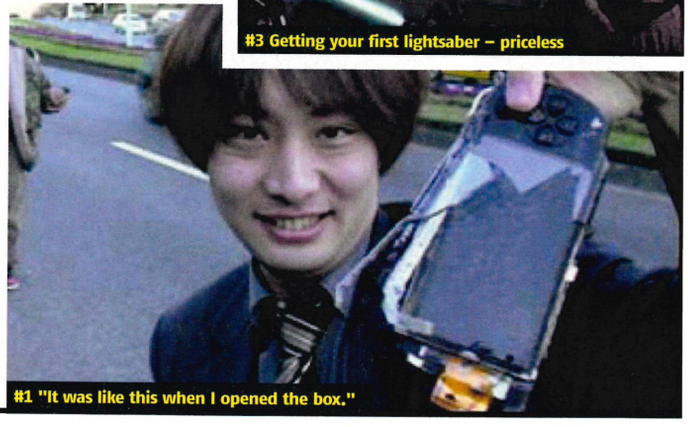
#2 THE MAKE-UNDER PROJECT

A dangerously ginger man named Brian Booker finds unsuspecting beautiful people on the street and makes them look ugly in the name of equality. Weird in itself, but especially effective thanks to the quality of the make-up artists employed. Available from **http://www.goodiebag.tv/videos.htm**

#3 Getting your first lightsaber – priceless

#1 DESTROYED PSP

Amateur but inventive movie of two men destroying a working PSP. Clearly they're disturbed, or at least rich enough not to care. First they use a hammer, then drag the thing, Wild West-style, from a car, before stuffing it with firecrackers. Available from **http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8356543138757212107&q=psp**


#1 "It was like this when I opened the box."

trailer park

Download bits of upcoming films. Be very excited

SILENT HILL

The full trailer for you this month, complete with foggy opening, pyramid head, and rasping industrial ambience. Find it at http://www.sonypictures.com/movies/silenthill/site/?dl=trailer

MIAMI VICE

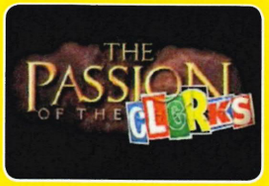
Michael Mann's update of his own 1980s-defining TV show. Looks like *Heat* crossed with, er, *Miami Vice*. We can't wait. From www.29hdnetwork.com/pspdirect/miami.html

APOCALYPTO

Mel Gibson's pre-colonisation South American film which, like *The Passion Of The Christ*, has an authentic, non-English script. From www.29hdnetwork.com/pspdirect/apocalypto.html

THE NEW WORLD

Birth of America tale in which Colin Farrell and Christian Bale have beards and stroll about Newfoundland and important stuff happens. From www.29hdnetwork.com/pspdirect/new.html



THE PASSION OF THE CLERKS

We're looking forward to this indie sequel, but only really included it in the absence of a PSP-friendly trailer for the *Dead Or Alive* movie. www.pspdrive.com/psp/vidfeatures.php?eid=355

music THE TUNES CURRENTLY ROCKING OUR WORLD

Mogwai MR BEAST (MATADOR RECORDS)

WHO? Epic atmos-rockers, back to crush you, Godzilla-style, underfoot with a fifth studio album.

HIGHLIGHTS: *Glasgow Mega Snake* rocks with a vicious bastard fervour this lot haven't achieved in some time, while the piano-driven *Friend Of The Night* highlights the 'gwai's 'sensitive side'.

LOWLIGHTS: *We're No Here* threatens to go nuclear, then bottles it, and there aren't any quarter of an hour long *Like Herod*-style feedback epics.

VERDICT: The brooding Scotsmen show no sign of losing it anytime soon. Mr Beast veers between pretty and punishing to dramatic effect. **8/10**

TIGA
SEXOR
PIAS

WHO? Canadian retro-techno prince with Soulwax and Scissor Sisters on his speed dial.

HIGHLIGHTS: The perky *You Gonna Want Me*, featuring Scissor Sisters' front man, Jake Shears.

LOWLIGHTS: Opening skit *Welcome To Planet Sexor*. Oh no! Rubbish concept!

VERDICT: This year's Mylo? Well, they say *Sexor* sells. **7/10**

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN
THE LIFE PURSUIT
Rough Trade

WHO? Corduroy-clad students turned skilful, classic-tinged pop songsmiths.

HIGHLIGHTS: The stomping, glammed-up *White Collar Boy*.

LOWLIGHTS: *Funny Little Frog* suggests last vestiges of nauseating twee still linger.

VERDICT: These wee Scotsmen have hardened up their game. **7/10**

LIARS
DRUM'S NOT DEAD
(Mute)

WHO? Spooked New York post-punks, presently in their Berlin (read 'really weird') period.

HIGHLIGHTS: The party-round-a-Ouija-board vibes of '*It Fit When I Was A Kid*'.

LOWLIGHTS: The opening '*Be Quiet Mt Heart Attack*' is a non-starter.

VERDICT: A must-have. If you like strange man-chanting. We do. **7/10**

ALSO RELEASED THIS MONTH
Caliban The Undying Darkness (Roadrunner)/**Acid Casuals** Omni (Placid Casual)/ **Euros Childs** Chops (Wichita)/ **Chasing Time** James Blunt (Atlantic)

ON THE *OPS2* STEREO
Lindstrom & Prins Thomas Lindstrom & Prins Thomas (Eskimo)/**Broken Social Scene** Broken Social Scene (City Slang)/ **Bruce Springsteen** Greatest Hits (Columbia)

PSP tunes
Cool music downloads for your handheld

Franz Ferdinand
WALK AWAY (Live At Alexandra Palace) (Domino)
Foppish pop megastars get swoony, live
Buy from www.playlouder.com

Clearlake
GOOD CLEAN FUN (Domino)
Skinny ties and '50s sensibilities from Sussex indie-popsters
Buy from www.playlouder.com

Arctic Monkeys
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN (Domino)
Rambunctious new single from literate Sheffield scallies
Buy from www.playlouder.com

Sway
LITTLE DEREK (D'Cypha/All City)
Fresh beats from MOBO-scooping UK hip-hopper
Buy from www.playlouder.com

Jose Gonzalez
HEARTBEATS (Peacefrog)
Otherwise known as 'That song off the Sony ad with all the bouncing balls'
Buy from www.bleep.com

Arab Strap
DREAM SEQUENCE (Chemikal Underground)
Tanked-up Scots drift off in a pool of their own vomit. Sounds good though
Buy from www.bleep.com

Mystery Jets
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME DENNIS (Straight Bat Version) (679 Recordings)
Indie-popsters from a place called Eel Pie Island
Download for free from www.mysteryjets.com

Various Artists
TRANSGRESSIVE RECORDS PODCAST (Transgressive)
Cool London indie label show you their wares
Download for free from www.transgressiverecords.co.uk

Swearing At Motorists
NORTHERN LINE (Secretly Canadian)
Blue-collar chug from hairy US rock duo
Download for free from www.secretlycanadian.com

Jackson And His Computer Band
SMASH UP MEGAMIX 1.0 (Warp)
Electronica wunderkind mashes up his recent LP
Download for free from www.bleep.com

PSP KIT REVIEW

THE BEST BITS 'N' BOBS FOR YOUR PSP

There's no denying that the Aego speaker system (£99.95 from www.acoustic-energy.co.uk) gives good bass, but it's also a bit boy racer – big, brash and boomy. The level can be adjusted, but we find it odd plugging something that's supposed to be portable into this kind of rig. But it's hard to argue with the raw power pumped out during *Liberty City Stories*' shootier moments.

Although we're not convinced that Bluetooth, WiFi and all other invisible things aren't witchcraft, we're pretty sure that the Ever-e Bluetooth PSP dongle (more info at www.ever-e.com) is one of the sexiest, most useful things we've seen for ages. Moulded to fit your handheld, the dongle jacks into the headphone socket and beams its signal to a compatible listening device within ten metres. It also comes with a rechargeable battery that lasts five hours, which *is* magical.

Elsewhere we're intrigued by the Neo5in1 (£56 from www.Lik-Sang.com) which, as its name suggests, aims to do five different things to/with your PSP. Those five things refer to the device's ability to read different memory cards – compact flash cards, SD and MMC cards, flash drives – with the PSP. Hang on, that's still just three. Oh, yeah, it comes in the shape of a big white pad, which looks a little chunky but may prove useful for gamers with massive hands, and it also acts as a USB card reader with home computers. All in all, a bit like a big, white, electronic Swiss Army knife, but without the useless scissors.

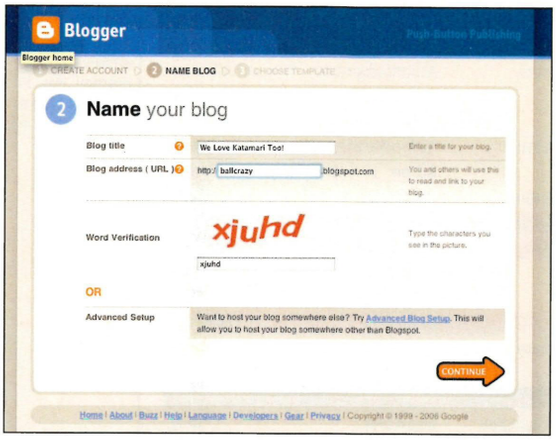
1 The Aego music system
2 The Ever-e Bluetooth PSP dongle
3 The Neo5in1

HOW TO...

MAKE YOUR OWN GAME FANSITE

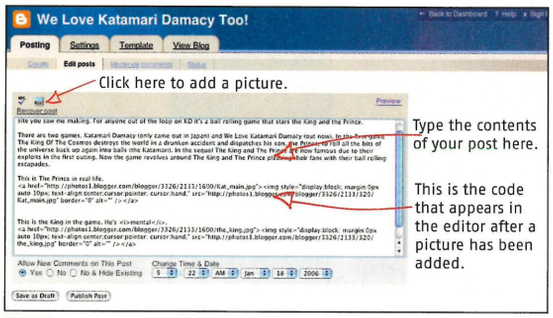
WANT TO SOUND OFF ABOUT GAMES? GET INTO THE WORLD OF BLOGGING...

Before the Internet was invented, the only way you could make a publication about your favourite game was using a typewriter, glue, scissors and the school library photocopier. Even after all of your hard work, the chances are you'd only have enough dosh to print five copies out, and then that was all your pocket money gone. Thankfully we now have the Internet and blogging, which makes spreading the word a breeze. Here's a five-step guide to getting your fansite up and running...

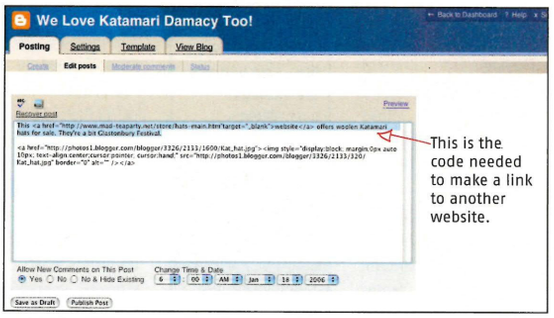


1 Get online and head to a blog publisher. We've opted for www.blogger.com because it's free and easy to use. You could also try www.typepad.com or www.blogmaker.com. The first thing to do is register a username and password that lets you access the editing software necessary to make a website. Here you can choose the name of your site – we've decided to make a *We ❤ Katamari* fansite. The address is to be ballcrazy.blogger.com, because we're funny like that.

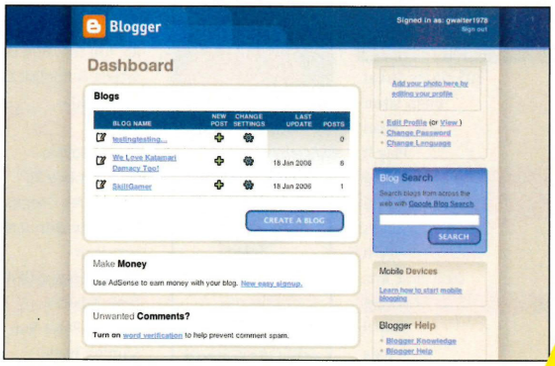
2 Next you'll have to choose a template from the selection. We've gone for the pink one, because it echoes the pastel palette used in *Katamari*. And because we like pink. Click the continue arrow and your blog is created. Now click on the Start Posting arrow.



3 The screen that meets you has a text entry field. Any text you type into here will appear on your site. It's a good idea to introduce what your blog is about in the first post – like we have here. If you want to add artwork or screenshots, just click the picture tab and follow the simple instructions.



4 If you want to add links to your post, you'll need to include a piece of code in your words as follows: **the word that will become the link**
So an example might look like this: **Have a look at the Games Radar website for more info and screenshots.**



5 Once you've finished, hit the 'publish post' button and then click 'view blog'. Whenever you want to update your blog, just login to the site and, at the 'dashboard' (blogger's 'homepage'), click on the 'new post' icon that's next to the name of your blog.

LOOK WHAT WE MADE!

To see the 'We Love *Katamari* Too!' website we created head over to http://ballcrazy.blogspot.com. Feel free to post comments, but for God's sake be gentle.

WIN SIGNED KATAMARI ARTWORK!

We've got a signed *Katamari* print plus a copy of the game for the five readers who create the best blogs. The site must be PS2 related. To enter, email us your link at ps2compos@futurenet.co.uk before 22 March. Good luck bloggers!*

*KATAMARI COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS By entering this competition you are agreeing to receive details of future offers from Future Publishing Ltd. Only UK residents may enter. All entries must be received before the closing date of 22 March. *OPS2*'s choice of prize is final and the winner will be notified within 28 days. No employees of Future Publishing Ltd or any company associated with this competition or any member of their close family may enter. Prizes are as stated and no alternatives cash or otherwise are available. Future Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury caused by any prizes won except by its negligence. Publicity may be given to any competition winners and/or entrants and their names and/or photographs printed in *OPS2*. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. No purchase necessary. A list of winners is available by written request from *OPS2*, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

incoming

Our guide to what's coming your way

APRIL	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Championship Manager 2006	Manager Sim	Eidos
Dance Factory	Dance	Codemasters
Daxter	Action/Adventure	Sony
Dragon Quest VIII: Journey Of The Cursed King	RPG	Square-Enix
Family Boardgames	Board Games	Liquid
From Russia With Love	Action	Electronic Arts
Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter	Shooter	Ubisoft
GI Jockey 4	Horse Racing	KOEI
Guitar Hero	Music	Red0ctane
Hitman: Blood Money	Action	Eidos
James Pond Codename Robocod	Platformer	Play It
Jaws Unleashed	Action	Majesco
Monster Hunter Freedom	Adventure	Capcom
NBA Ballers Rebound	Sports	Midway
Panzer Elite Action	Shooter	JoWood
PES Management	Manager Sim	Konami
Pilot Academy	Flight Sim	Rising Star
Rampage	Retro	Midway
SingStar Rocks!	Music	Sony
SOCOM 3: US Navy SEALs	Action	Sega
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo	Action	Sega
Spinout	Racing	Play It
Splinter Cell Essentials	Stealth	Ubisoft
State Of Emergency 2	Action	Playlogic Entertainment
Street Supremacy	Racing	Konami
Stunt Car Crash	Racing	Midas
The Con	Fighter	South Peak
The Ultimate World Cup Quiz	Quiz	Oxygen
Tomb Raider Legend	Adventure	Eidos
Tomb Raider Legend	Adventure	Eidos
Wild Water Adrenaline	Sports	Nobilis
Winx Club	Adventure	Konami
World War II: Tank Battles	Shooter	Midas

MAY	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Ape Escape 3	Platformer	Sony
Ape Escape P	Platformer	Sony
Football Generation	Sports	Midas
Rogue Trooper	Action/Adventure	Eidos
Talkman	Translator	Sony
The Da Vinci Code	Adventure	2K Games
Urban Chaos: Riot Response	FPS	Eidos

JUNE	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Armored Core - Nine Breaker	Action	505 Game Street
D.1.R.T.	Action	Deep Silver
Evolution GT	Racing	Black Bean
Impossible Mission	Adventure	Play it
Loco Roco	Action	Sony
Pocket Racers	Racing	Konami
Sensible Soccer	Football	Codemasters
Summer Games	Sports	Play It
Superman Returns	Action	Electronic Arts
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	Beat-'em-up	Capcom
Winter Games	Sports	Play It
Yakuza	Action	Sega

SUMMER 2006	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Arthur And The Minimoys	Adventure	Atari
Arthur And The Minimoys	Adventure	Atari
Battlestations Midway	Strategy	Eidos
Bounty Hounds	Shooter	Namco

RADAR

Only the big games bleep really loudly

OUT NOW

BLACK
Thrilling FPS that looks and plays like no other PS2 game. Absolutely essential.

OUT SOON

GUITAR HERO
Air guitar comes to life – and becomes the ultimate party game.

MILES OFF

MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE
It's going to be ace, but won't launch until its PS3 counterpart is ready. Bugger.

Tim (ed) wants...
SENSIBLE SOCCER
"I painstakingly edited all the players on Megadrive *Sensi* about 10 years ago. Girls? No, not so much – why do you ask?"

Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	Retro	Capcom
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Shooter	Deep Silver
Final Fantasy VII: Dirge of Cerberus	Action	Square-Enix
Hellboy	Action	Konami
Infected	Shooter	Majesco
Juiced: Eliminator	Racing	THQ
Just Cause	Action	Eidos
Kingdom Hearts II	RPG	Square-Enix
Me & My Katamari	Adventure	Electronic Arts
Metal Gear Ac!d 2	Action	Konami
Pay Out Poker And Casino	Poker	Namco
Poker Face	Poker	Play Technologies
Radiata Stories	RPG	Square-Enix
Reservoir Dogs	Action	Eidos
Rogue Galaxy	RPG	Sony
Rule Of Rose	Horror	Sony
Scarface: The World Is Yours	Action/Adventure	Vivendi Universal
Sega Rally	Racing	Sega
Forbidden Siren 2	Horror	Sony
Spy Hunter: Nowhere To Run	Action/Racing	Midway
StarCraft: Ghost	Action	Blizzard Entertainment
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	Platformer	Sega
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	Platformer	Sega
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	Action	Sony
Tales Of Legendia	RPG	Namco
Totally Spies	Adventure	Atari
World Poker Tour	Poker	2KSports
World War II: Air Supremacy	Shooter	Midas

LATE 2006	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War	Flight Sim	Sony
Chess Battle	Chess	Konami
Gangsters Ride	Action	GMX
Killzone: Liberation	Shooter	Sony
Legend Of The Dragon	Action/Adventure	The Game Factory
Medal Of Honor: Airborne	Action	Electronic Arts
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	Beat-'em-up	Midway
Phantasy Star Universe	RPG	Sega
Splinter Cell Double Agent	Stealth	Ubisoft
Steel Horizons	Strategy	Konami
Street Fighter Alpha Anthology	Retro	Capcom
Suikoden V	RPG	Konami

TBC	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER
Arc The Lad: End Of Darkness	RPG	Namco
Asterix & Obelisk XXL 2	Platform	Atari
Beatmania	Music	Konami
Bully	Adventure	Rockstar
Casino Royale	Action	Electronic Arts
Final Fantasy XII	RPG	Square-Enix
Happy Tree Friends	Action	TBC
Interview With A Made Man	Action	TBC
Iron Man	Action	Activision
Justice League Of America	RPG	TBC
Open Season	Action/Adventure	Ubisoft
Shining Force Neo	RPG	Sega
Shining Tears	RPG	Sega
SOS: The Final Escape 2	Action/Adventure	TBC
Spec Ops	Action	Rockstar
Stacked With Daniel Negreanu	Poker	TBC
Stacked With Daniel Negreanu	Poker	TBC
Surf's Up	Action/Adventure	Ubisoft
The Movies	Sim	Activision

KEY

PS2 GAMES

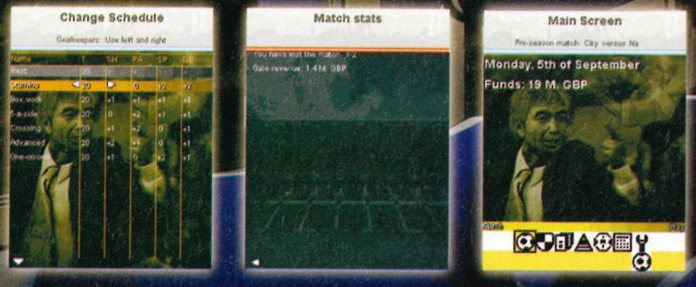
PSP GAMES

George (disc ed) wants...
RESERVOIR DOGS
"I've always fancied myself as Britain's answer to Steve Buscemi. Now I'll get the chance to demonstrate why."

Ben (games ed) wants...
BULLY
"You know that thing about bullys being cowards deep down? Not true. Oh, and spiders aren't 'more scared of you' either."

"I'VE TOLD THE PLAYERS WE NEED TO WIN SO THAT I CAN HAVE THE CASH TO BUY SOME NEW ONES"

CHRIS TURNER



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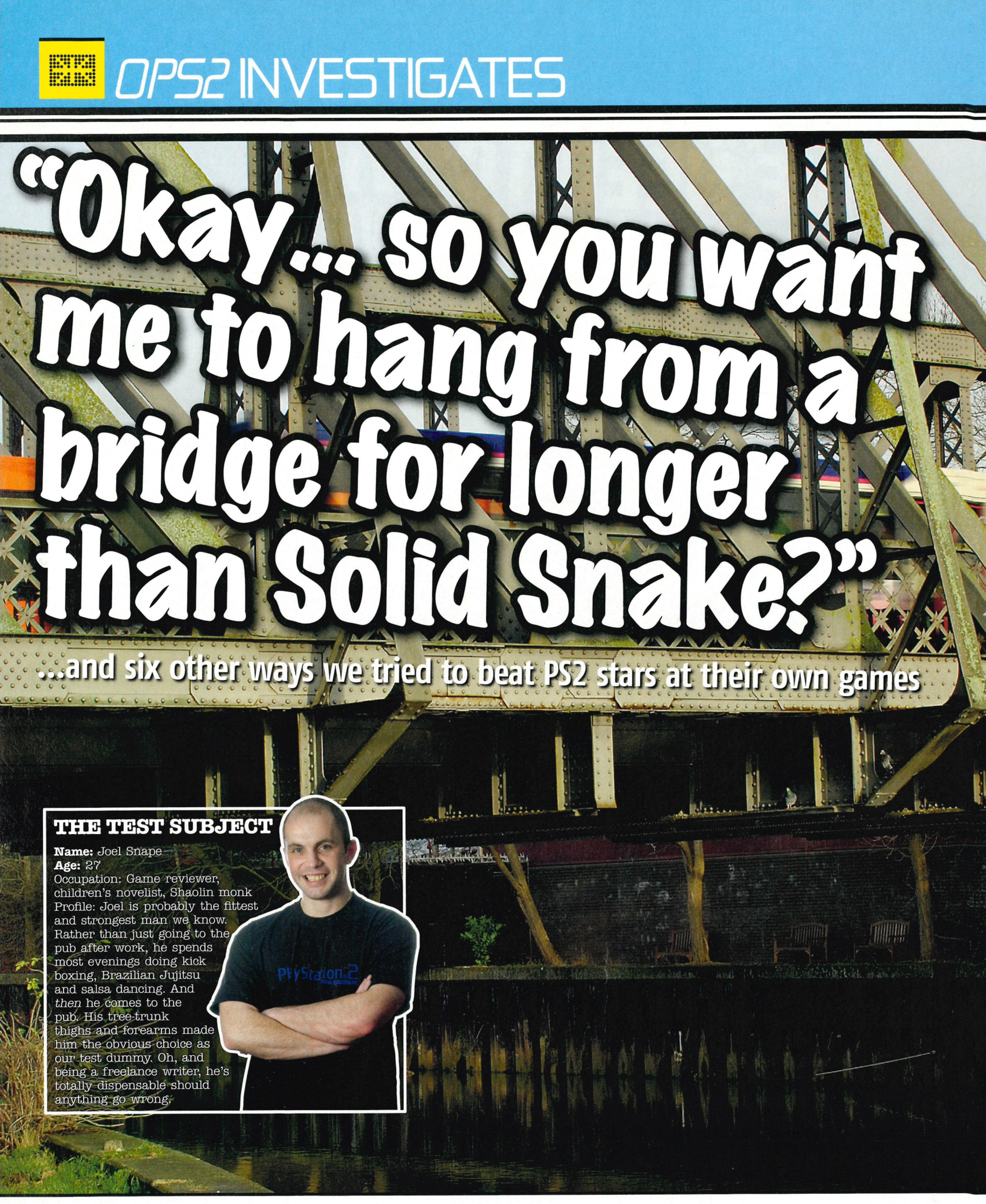
THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

"Okay... so you want me to hang from a bridge for longer than Solid Snake?"

...and six other ways we tried to beat PS2 stars at their own games



THE TEST SUBJECT

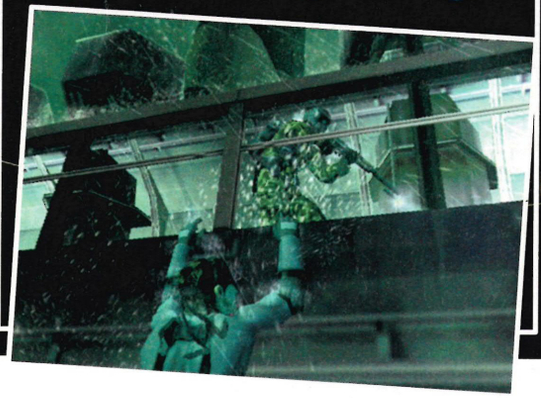
Name: Joel Snape
Age: 27
Occupation: Game reviewer, children's novelist, Shaolin monk
Profile: Joel is probably the fittest and strongest man we know. Rather than just going to the pub after work, he spends most evenings doing kick boxing, Brazilian Jujitsu and salsa dancing. And *then* he comes to the pub. His tree-trunk thighs and forearms made him the obvious choice as our test dummy. Oh, and being a freelance writer, he's totally dispensable should anything go wrong.

These stunts were performed under strict safety supervision. Under no circumstances should you attempt to copy them

1 LEDGE DANGLING

THE GAME: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*
THE TARGET: Press-ups are for ladies – what really matters to a stealth commando is fingertip strength. When evading guards, Snake can happily hang on to a wall for 27 seconds, though he is able to improve his grip strength by doing pull-ups (L2 + ⊗) during the game.
THE TEST: Amazingly, Joel actually managed it. Dangling from a bridge with just his fingertips, he clung on for an excruciating 33 seconds before asking to be pulled up because his arms 'felt like they were on fire' – and survived with little more than pigeon mess on his fingers. Shame – we were sort of hoping he'd fall in the river.

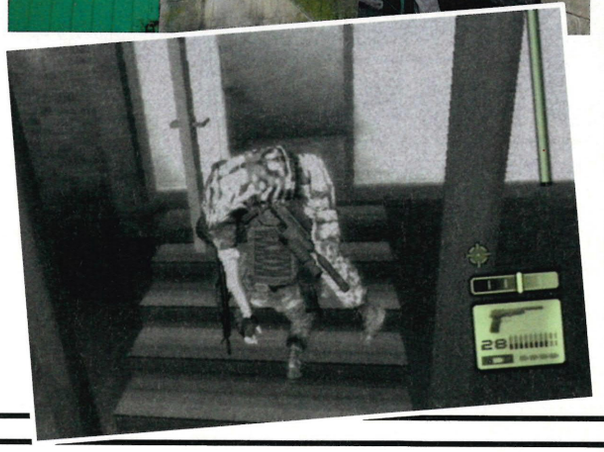
GAME CHARACTERS 0 JOEL 1



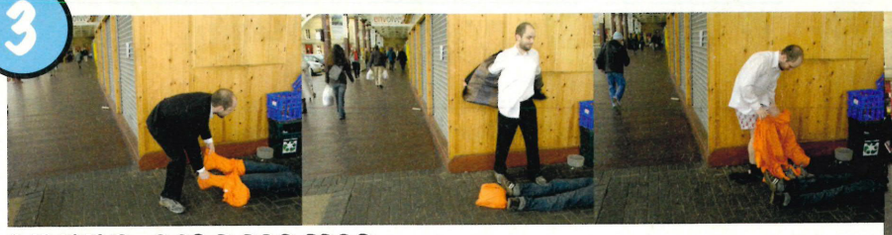
2 BODY CARRYING

THE GAME: *Splinter Cell*
THE TARGET: Although he's fairly sprightly for a middle-aged man, Sam Fisher slows to a crawl when he's weighed down with a body. With the elder statesman of stealth staggering under the weight of a freshly tranq'd guard, we decided to make this one a challenge by beating his time up a set of steps. Based on the Bank level from *Chaos Theory*, Fisher manages one every 1.9 seconds.
THE TEST: Another easy one. Carrying an average-weight volunteer, Joel cleared the 47 steps up to the top of Bath's multi-storey car-park in a breezy 45 seconds, averaging a healthy 0.95 seconds per step. The dead weight of an actual corpse might give Fisher a slight disadvantage – but then, he didn't have to contend with his load squealing "Don't bang my head on the railings!" every five seconds.

GAME CHARACTERS 0 JOEL 2



3 SPEED CHANGING



THE GAME: *Hitman: Contracts*
THE TARGET: Expertise with a sniper rifle aside, 47's key asset is obviously his ability to get in and out of a bespoke suit in less time than it takes your average mook to, say, patrol a corridor. So, could Joel strip a corpse of his overalls and change into them quicker than the world's premier death-artiste?
THE TEST: No, obviously. In a test conducted in Sainsbury's carpark – to mimic the stressful conditions of a real-life 'job' – it took Joel nearly 30 seconds to divest the corpse of its orange boiler suit, and nearly another minute to put it on himself, coming nowhere near 47's two-second average. Conclusions: if your 'hit' relies on taking your trousers off fast, consider fitting some sort of Velcro fasteners.

GAME CHARACTERS 1 JOEL 2

4 WALL RUNNING

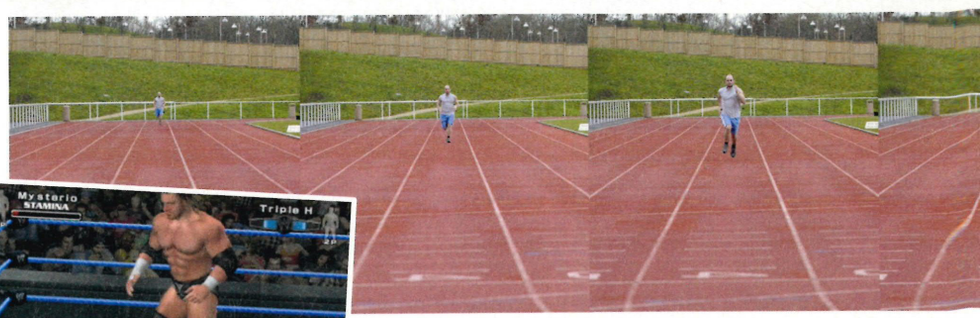
THE GAME: *Prince Of Persia: The Two Thrones*
THE TARGET: At the first sniff of a spiky pit or spinny blade, the Prince thinks nothing of dashing up to ten feet along a vertical wall. Hmm.
THE TEST: Because this test was, technically, impossible – you can't fight gravity – we picked a curved wall with a fair bit of grip... and still scuffed it. Despite blaming his poor performance on everything from 'bad shoes', 'mud' and 'moss' to 'the photographer putting me off', Joel only managed a pitiful three steps before nearly falling onto a broken bottle that some tramps had left in the grass. Running along a wall is actually much harder than it looks.

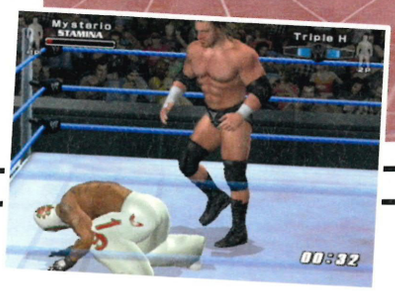
GAME CHARACTERS 2 JOEL 2

5 RING RUNNING

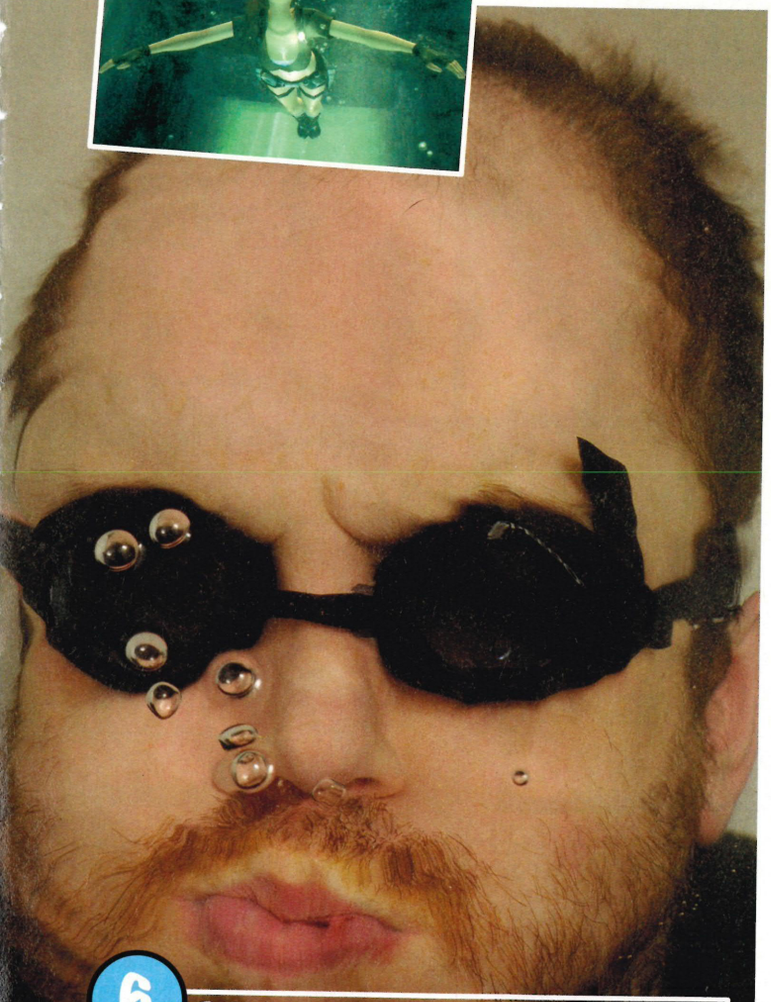
THE GAME: *SmackDown! Vs Raw 2006*
THE TARGET: Thanks to *SVR 2006*'s stamina system, even Rey Mysterio – the 'fittest' wrestler – can only run across the ring a piffling 12 times before he's wheezing like a pensioner. Could Joel run the equivalent 120 metres quicker than the 34 seconds it takes Rey-Rey? Almost certainly.
THE TEST: Easy. On a proper Olympic-sized running track, Joel managed the required distance in only 19.9 seconds, and wasn't even out of breath afterwards. We can happily conclude that wrestlers are babies.

GAME CHARACTERS 2 JOEL 3





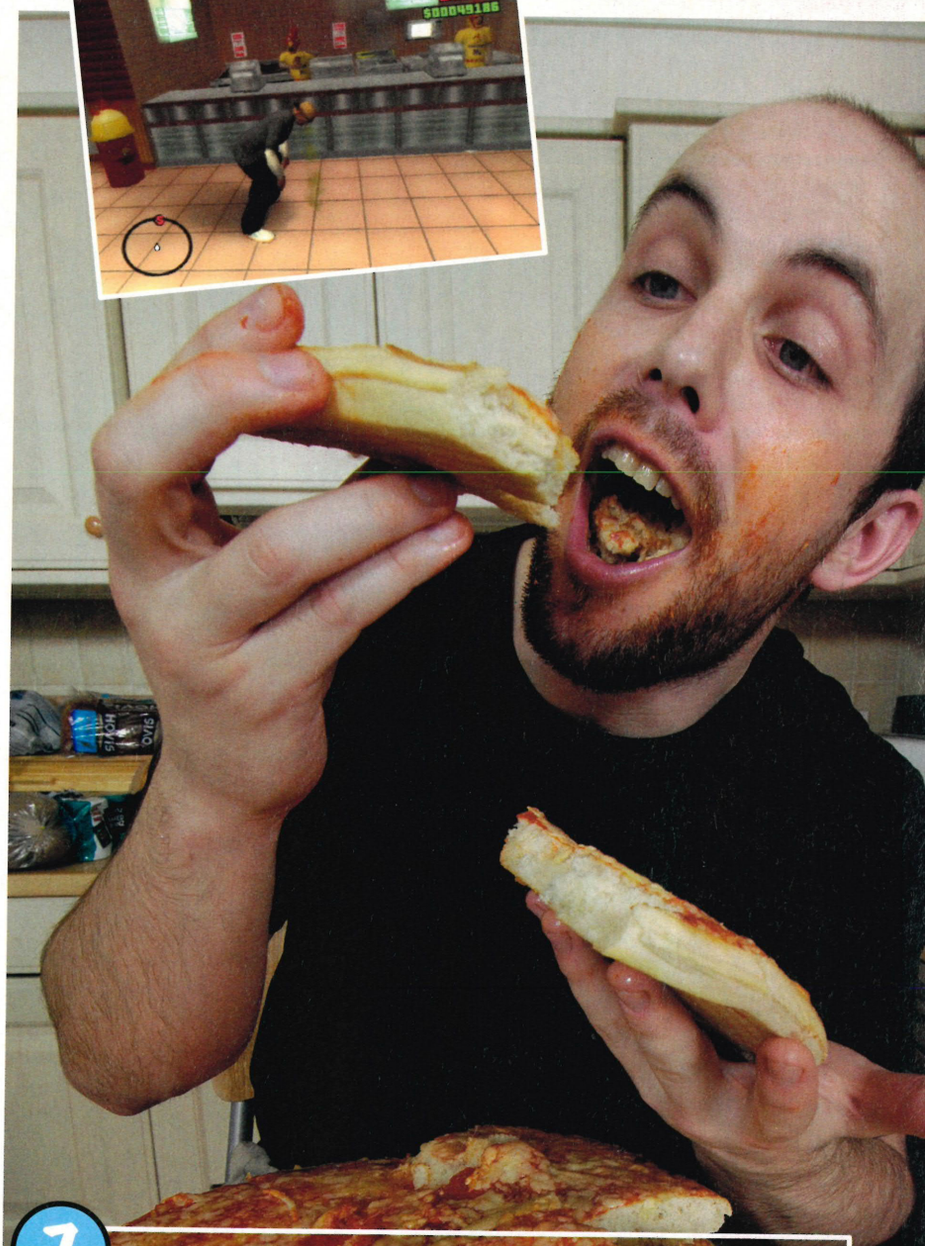
comedown



6 BREATH HOLDING

THE GAME: *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness*
THE TARGET: With our test subject nosing ahead, this proved to be decisive. Lara Croft, uber-femme of games, can survive an implausible 54 seconds underwater before she starts losing health and twitching like a fish in a light socket.
THE TEST: He went red, he almost hyperventilated and he got a *lot* of water up his nose – but he did it. After spending a minute or so getting ready, Joel spent a full one minute, 34 seconds underwater, motionless (Ms Croft often has to fight sharks and pull levers) in a large glass tank (Ms Croft does this sort of thing in a whirlpool).

GAME CHARACTERS 2 JOEL 4



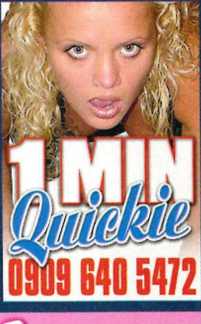
7 SPEED EATING

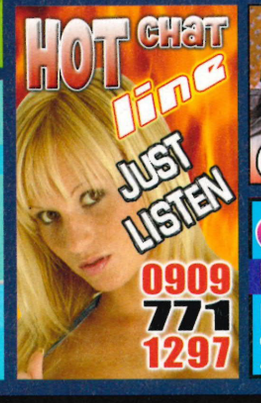
THE GAME: *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*
THE TARGET: High metabolism? All that running? Boa-constrictor-like digestive tract? Whatever the reason, CJ's ability to put away food defies belief. At his default weight (middling), he can stuff an incredible seven pizzas down his neck before being sick on the floor.
THE TEST: Amazingly, this was the toughest of the lot. Although he started confidently, tearing through an entire 'value' pizza in slightly less than five minutes, Joel started complaining of stomach pains midway through the second one and claimed he'd "done that thing where you're a little bit sick in your mouth and then swallow it" after a single slice from the third. From there on, the experiment was abandoned on the grounds of decency.

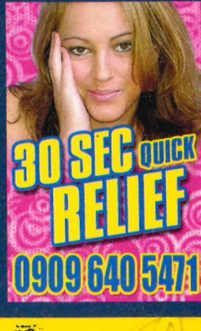
GAME CHARACTERS 3 JOEL 4

OPS2 WINS!

On the basis of these seven tests we conclude that *OPS2* is better than game characters. Of course, the test is a little skewed by the fact we chose tests we could feasibly win. Had we shot Joel with an AK-47 and then got him to try and heal himself with a pot of antiseptic cream and a bandage (like Solid Snake can) we're guessing he might have failed







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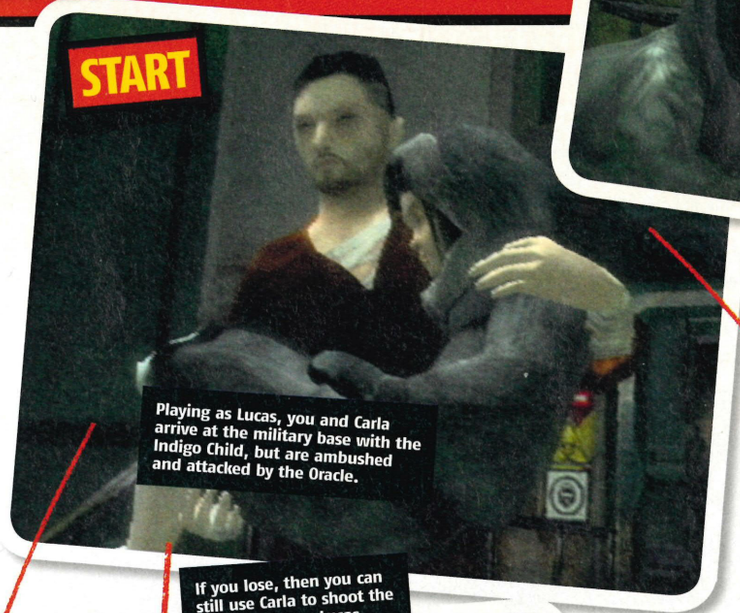
ENDGAME

FINISHING GAMES SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO. THIS MONTH: FAHRENHEIT

From start to finish, the plot in *Fahrenheit* jumps around like a frog in a frying pan. The game begins with an occult-style killing and mysteriously cold weather – but, by the end, Lucas (our hero) has battled huge insect monsters, developed *Matrix*-style superpowers and died and been reanimated by artificial intelligence machines intent on world domination. He also managed to sleep with Carla – the policewoman chasing him for murder – while he was technically dead. Still with us? It's all because two clans (one led by a man called the Oracle and the other led by the AI machines) are fighting over a girl called the 'Indigo Child', who holds 'the answer to all questions'. And whoever extracts this information (which is done by performing a special ritual) will be able to control the world.

The climax takes place in an abandoned military base as Lucas and the rival clans clash. There are three different endings available, depending on events. So grab a pen, because you might want to take notes...

START

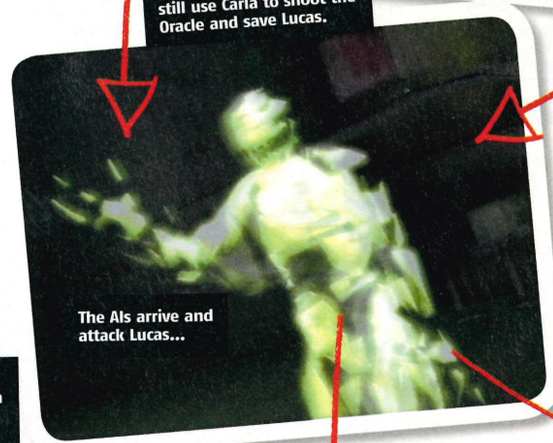


Playing as Lucas, you and Carla arrive at the military base with the Indigo Child, but are ambushed and attacked by the Oracle.

Defeat the Oracle and then you'll be attacked by his guards.

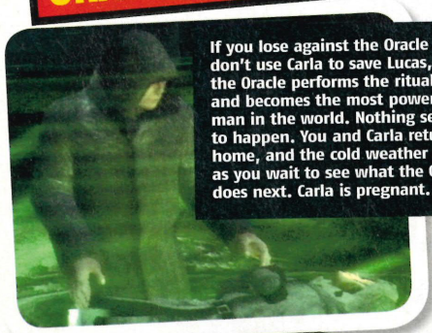
You then move on to here, regardless of whether you win or lose.

If you lose, then you can still use Carla to shoot the Oracle and save Lucas.



The AIs arrive and attack Lucas...

ORACLE'S ENDING

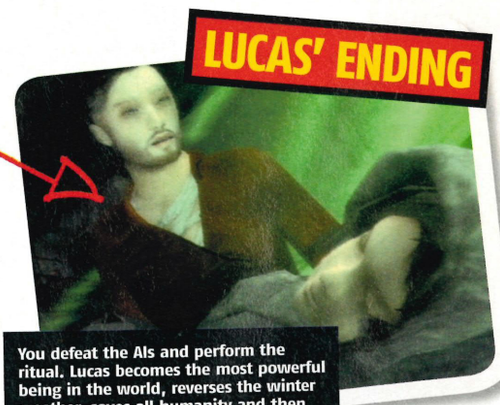


If you lose against the Oracle and don't use Carla to save Lucas, then the Oracle performs the ritual and becomes the most powerful man in the world. Nothing seems to happen. You and Carla return home, and the cold weather stops as you wait to see what the Oracle does next. Carla is pregnant.

AI's ENDING

The AIs defeat Lucas, perform the ritual and take over the world. Mankind is all but wiped out as winter turns into an Ice Age and machines hunt all the humans down. A handful of survivors retreat underground. Carla is pregnant.

LUCAS' ENDING



You defeat the AIs and perform the ritual. Lucas becomes the most powerful being in the world, reverses the winter weather, saves all humanity and then sits under a tree trying to deal with omnipotency. Carla is pregnant.

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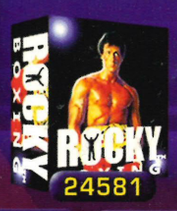

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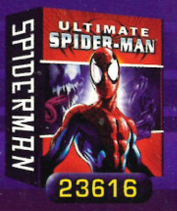

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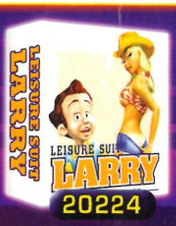

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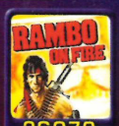

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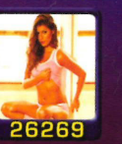
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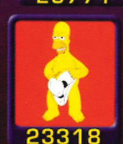
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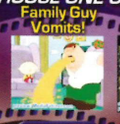

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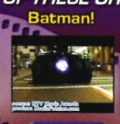

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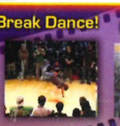

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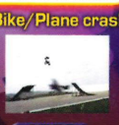

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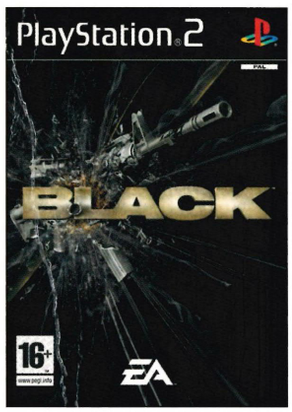

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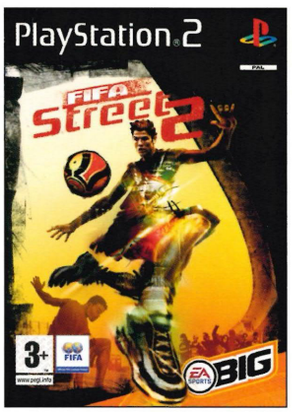

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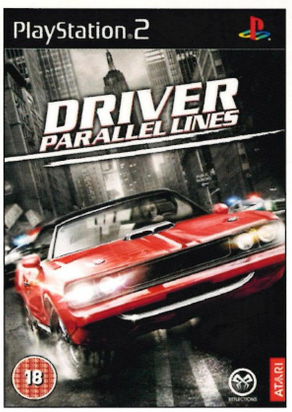

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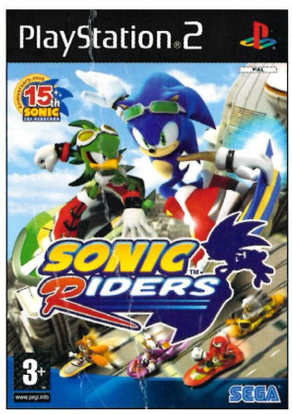

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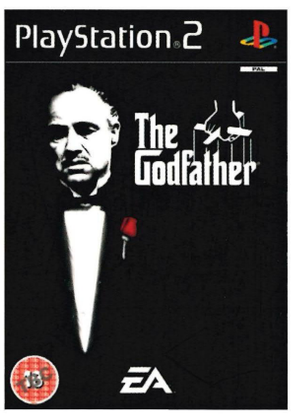

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