

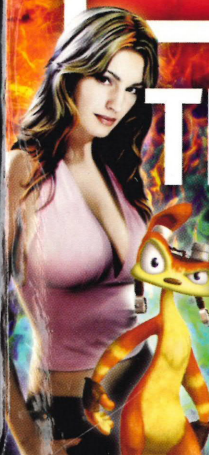
OPS2 MAGAZINE PRESENTS...

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HOT 100

THE 100 BEST
PS2 GAMES
REVIEWED!

HOT 100 THE 100 BEST PS2 GAMES REVIEWED!





“ AS PS2 GAMERS, IF WE'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES, WE'RE THINKING ABOUT WHAT GAMES WE WANT TO BUY NEXT. AND THAT'S WHERE THIS BOOK COMES IN. SO HERE WE'VE GATHERED TOGETHER REVIEWS OF THE BEST THE PS2 HAS TO OFFER. PUT SIMPLY, IF YOU'RE GOING TO BUY A GAME TODAY, IT PROBABLY SHOULD BE ONE OF THE ONES IN THIS BOOK. AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO BUY A GAME TOMORROW? THEN KEEP READING OPS2. IT'S THE FUTURE OF PS2 EVERY MONTH.

”
Stephen

Stephen Pierce Editor-In-Chief

THIS LOT DID THIS BOOK

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Media with passion

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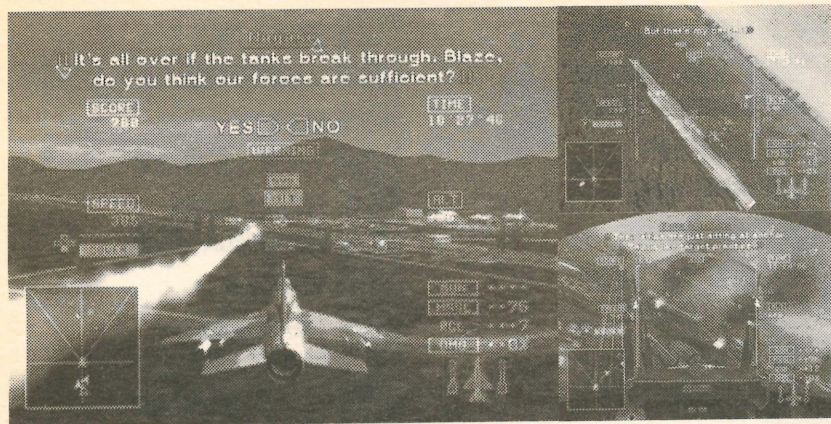
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Ace Combat: Squadron Leader



ACE COMBAT: SQUADRON LEADER

PlayStation 2

Time to fly into the danger zone

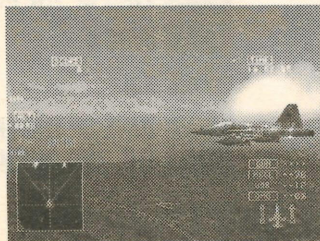


DETAILS

PUBLISHER: SONY
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PRICE: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES
ONLINE: NO

It's been a long time since we've had the chance to clamber into the cockpits of virtual fighter planes, and the return of the *Ace Combat* series is most welcome. *Squadron Leader* bears all the hallmarks of previous games in the franchise, offering action in around 50 of the world's most expensive planes, while simultaneously delivering a neat story, some excellent graphics and a surprising variety of mission types.

The enduring flyboy franchise returns with a hanger-bursting total of around 50 licensed planes to deliver dozens of missions of explosive aerial arcade action.



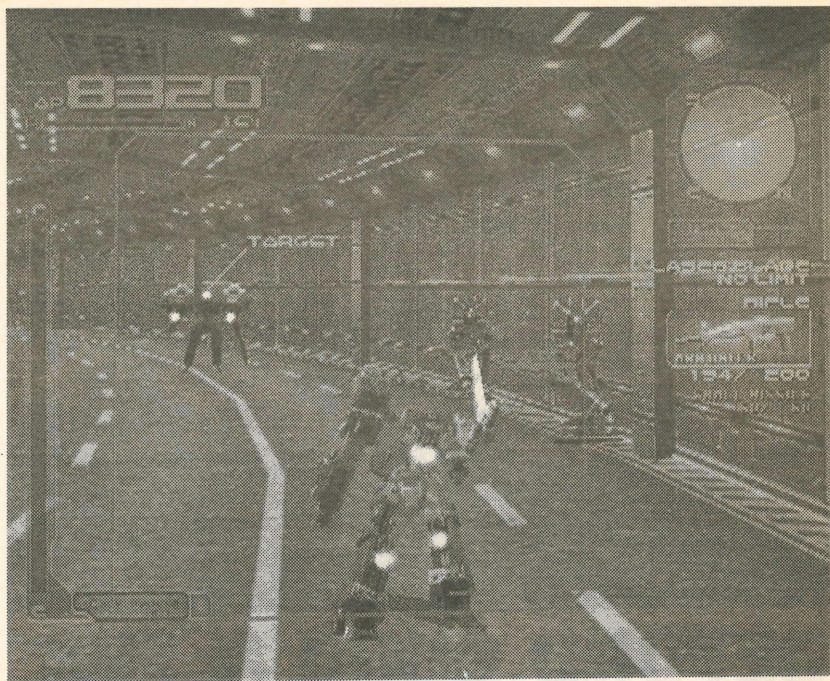
Perhaps the most significant addition to the game comes in the shapes of the FMV cut-scenes in the campaign mode. Last time around it was only arty drawings that were used to convey the story, and seeing both yourself and your buddies hanging out at the base or milling around gossiping on the runway helps immerse you into the alternate reality/future war plot. This, along with the constant radio chatter from all sides while you're in the sky, firing off a bunch of sidewinders with abandon, makes it a top choice.

It's all good stuff here, and well worth a look, whether you've played any of the previous titles or not. It's just a shame there Namco haven't included any testosterone-squeezing beach volleyball mini-games to fill up those lonely hours of solitary gaming. Roger that, eh? ■ NE

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official.magnazine.co.uk

Another sortie with the best fighter plane shooter you can buy on PS2. Okay, so it's the ONLY one you can buy, but it's still a blinder

8/10



ARMORED CORE 3

Mech haste robot fans, AC has had its yearly MOT

If you've already passed your mech driving test in the previous two *Armored Core* games, then you can skip ahead. As an experienced Raven pilot, you don't need to hear about how difficult a mechanised exoskeleton is to manoeuvre, or how erratic the targeting system can be. Yet veterans would point out that the sluggish handling lends the mechs a sense of weight and gravity. And by battling through the dimly lit textures of the Raven's playground, bombarded by the orchestral strains of the surround sound system, you're sure to, at the very least, find the atmosphere evocative.

But elsewhere, development opportunities are unfulfilled. The co-operative slant seen in previous games

has now been cemented into the consort mode, which is less a buddy system than it is a chance for the computer AI to nick your credits.

The single-player game's depth and wealth of options only highlights the flimsy multiplayer option for the wasted opportunity it is. But, having said all that, *Armored Core 3* is still a hugely rewarding experience when it comes to actually playing it. However, we can't help but wonder if From Software has satisfied the hardcore few, but left the garage door half-closed to the many. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

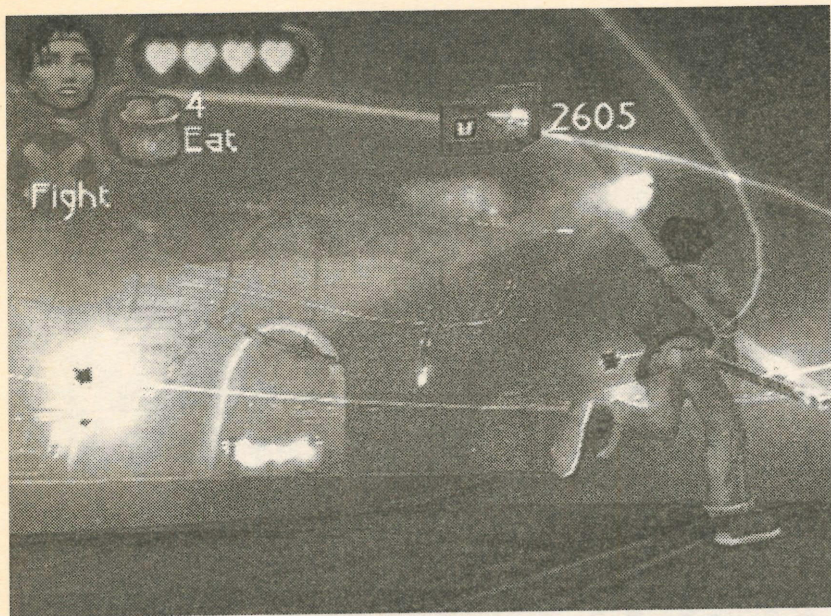
Armored Core 3 may well be bigger and better than ever, but it's still a bit too much like its predecessor for comfort

7 / 10

PlayStation 2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER METRODD
DEVELOPER FROM SOFTWARE
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GOHZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PlayStation 2

Is this the Gallic *Jak*? That'll be oui et non...



PUBLISHER UBISOFT

DEVELOPER UBISOFT

PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN YES

SURROUND SOUND NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

ONLINE NO

It's truly staggering how much weirdness we absorb, purely because a videogame tells us to. *Beyond Good & Evil* is a case in point, featuring a human heroine called Jade whose uncle is, well, a warthog. Still, this is the latest game from the creator of limb-deficient oddity *Rayman*, so that's probably as normal as this is going to get.

With its lush free-roaming environment, this is a supremely confident step towards the genre-blending, blockbusting likes of *Jak And Daxter* and *Ratchet & Clank*. The plot pitches you as photo journalist Jade, who's been hired to photograph all the different species of animal that exist in her world. You see, the planet is under attack from the alien DomZ forces, and while the allied army (the Alpha Sections) hold them at bay, your photographs will provide

a permanent record of the region's wildlife. All relatively sane so far...

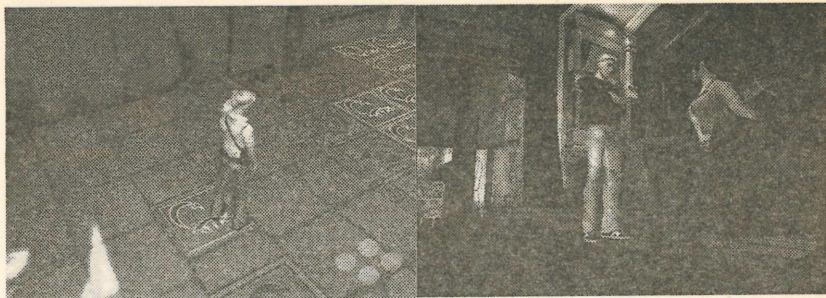
Naturally, the plot is really an invitation to race, explore, fight, puzzle, creep and generally indulge in mini-game heaven. And thanks to a simple, context-sensitive control system and one of the most inventive inventories we've ever used, there's very little to get in the way of the massive amounts of fun on offer.

The world created in *BGE* has a genuinely enjoyable internal logic to it. The game is more linear than the superlative *Jak III* and arguably a little too easy for hardcore gamers. That said, this is truly a class act and comes highly recommended. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Better than games like *Haven* - although it's still not quite a *Jak*-beater - this is still a gripping and totally engaging platformer

8/10



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

The adventure game grows up for PS2

The appeal of point-and-click adventures is not in the pointing and clicking, but in the cerebral gameplay and the compelling plot. What's more, *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* is an update of the concept behind such legendary titles as the *Monkey Island* series. This is the first fully 3D *Broken Sword* game and it's obvious developer Revolution has had fun with the new dimension of play.

The new 3D mode facilitates a rich vein of fresh puzzles – as well as the more traditional conundrum of 'fetch item A, combine with item B at point X', you now face shorter set pieces. There's a bit where you have to negotiate a section of scaffolding using your ability to jump and climb, for instance, and plenty of latterday Lara Croft-style box-pulling sections.

The writing is brilliant. A series of intriguing twists push along a superb plot, and most importantly, the dialogue is wonderfully up to scratch. An apparent reliance on stereotypes gives way to amusing interplays between the characters and some plain ridiculous moments of humour. This is an adventure game designed very much with PS2 gamers in mind, though it's doubtful that it will appeal to the trigger happy. ■ LH

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

An engrossing and quirky point-and-click adventure that will satisfy the Indiana Jones and Miss Marple in all of us

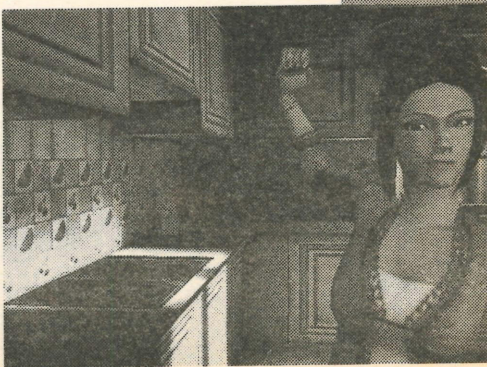
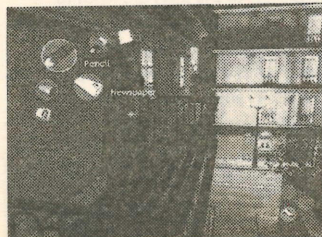
8/10

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER
REVOLUTION SOFTWARE
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
GOTHZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO





BROTHERS IN ARMS: ROAD TO HILL 30

PlayStation 2

"I miss you, Ma. And we're only on hill 12..."



DETAILS

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER GEARBOX

PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1-16



60HZ MODE NO

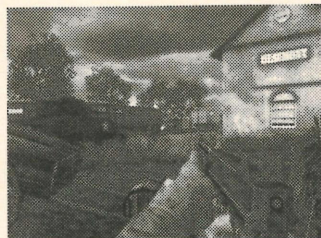
WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND NO

ONLINE YES

Jesus CHRIST sir! Whadda we do?"
Shit! I don't know. Between the stone chips and the dust that's thrown up as rounds hit the bricks, it's hard to breathe let alone think. If you want some idea of what *Brothers In Arms: Road To Hill 30* feels like, then down a gallon of coffee and follow it with an all-night session of *Band of Brothers*.

To outwit the Hun you need to exploit your surroundings. Pressing  freezes the action and pulls the camera out for a wider view of the area. Here you're free to study the positions of your men, the enemy, and scan the terrain; then press 



again to return to the action. Enemies that aren't hiding are marked with a red icon. Fire a few shots their way and it then switches to grey, showing that they've wisely decided to duck. When this happens, it's safe to break cover and run to a new position.

Hill 30 is a complete change of pace for WW2 shooters. Battles are no less brutal, but relying on the position of your men and the best use of cover produces a different dynamic to the likes of *Medal Of Honor* or *Call Of Duty*. It's a far better interpretation of warfare and one that relies on your leadership skills as much as your ability to fight. ■ LH



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine UK

Brothers In Arms is a deep, edgy shooter that will shred your nerves and test your brain power. It's very impressive indeed

8/10



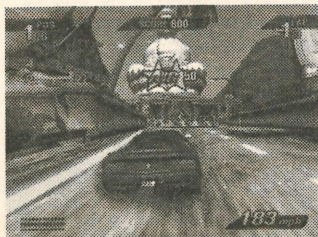
BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Giving new meaning to the words 'auto erotic'

Crashes are what *Burnout 3* is all about and it's practically impossible to win any races without them. You might run the racing line flawlessly, pile up the near misses and drift turns that provide extra boost and spend entire laps playing chicken with oncoming traffic, but if that's all you do, the opposition's going to breeze past. Though it's now possible to activate

boost at any time – instead of having to wait for the bar to fill up – the start of each race sees you only able to store enough boost for a couple of seconds of eye-watering speed. The only way to make the bar bigger is by scoring Takedowns – deliberately making other cars crash. It's fantastic stuff, as the other cars are intelligent enough to put up a fight and make winning a protracted battle a joy.

The bottom line is that only joyless racing purists and tutting moral do-gooders aren't going to love *Burnout 3*. It's simply the best driving game on PS2. ■ JS



3	EA
DETAILS	
PUBLISHER EA	
DEVELOPER CRITERION	
PRICE £19.99	
PLAYERS 1-6	
60HZ MODE YES	
WIDESCREEN YES	
SURROUND SOUND YES	
ONLINE YES	

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official.magszine.uk

Frantic enough alone and more insane with friends, *Burnout 3* is a game that'll make you fall in love with your PS2 all over again

10₁₀



CALL OF DUTY

Do we need *another* WW2 shooter? Oh yes

Call of Duty is a shooter in the *Medal of Honor* mode, but there's a whole lot more to it than that. Vehicles, for one... Driving tanks? Is this an first-person shooter or what? Oh yes. Absolutely.

Enjoyable as they obviously are, stints at the controls of *COD's* tanks make up less than a quarter of the game, and nearly always dovetail neatly into on-foot fraggery in the space of a single mission. This is, first and foremost, an instantly familiar WW2 game, with a handful of breathtaking set pieces, cascading

mission objectives (pinpointed via an on-screen compass), linear mission routes (albeit a linearity that's often well-disguised), historically accurate weaponry and endless streams of anonymous Nazi goons eager to stop you from trying it all out.

So does this mean *Call Of Duty* is just a calculated copy of a best-selling series? Actually, no. For while a lot of the basic ingredients are the same, *Call Of Duty* not only manages to combine them with a freshness that, in some peoples' opinions, *Medal Of Honor* lacked last time around, but also adds enough new elements to the mix to create a distinctive feel all of its own.

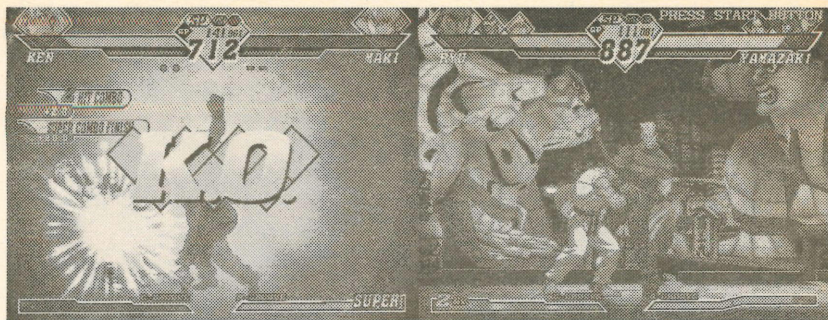
And graphically, *COD* is a treat on every level. Weapon animation is superb, particularly in the 'zoomed' sharpshooter mode that raises the weapon sight up to your eye. And all the levels look outstanding throughout. Awesome stuff. ■ PF



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Fresher, fiercer and graphically finer than *Medal Of Honor*, *Call Of Duty* suffers only slightly in the final push from a lack of heart

8/10



CAPCOM VS SNK 2

Two fighting legends square off. Again

SNK might be long gone as a videogames company, but their legacy lives on with this series, combining characters from their *King Of Fighters* games and Capcom's own *Street Fighter* ones. There are nearly 50 characters in all, each delivering six basic attacks – hard, medium and light versions of kick and punch. Each attack does something different, depending on whether the character is crouching, jumping or blocking. Then there are the Special Moves – sequences of joystick and button combos which become almost as instinctive as the jump-and-kick repetition that's the 2D fighting virgin's first recourse.

If there's a disappointment here, it's that the character graphics don't live up to what we ought to expect

on a next-generation machine. The backgrounds are stunning and fit the series perfectly, but their high-res splendour marks out the fighter sprites as clumsy. Some – Morrigan, in particular – are shockingly crude, but those who are happy to put aside pixel prejudices will find the other issues minor irritants. Perhaps there could've been a longer Story mode. Perhaps the team battle would have been better with a tag system. Either way, in two-player, playtime is endless.

At the end of the day though, what we've got here is simply a superlative fighting game. 'Nuff said. **■ SC**

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

Slick, quick and slightly rough around the edges, it's everything you'd expect from Capcom, the master of the genre

8/10

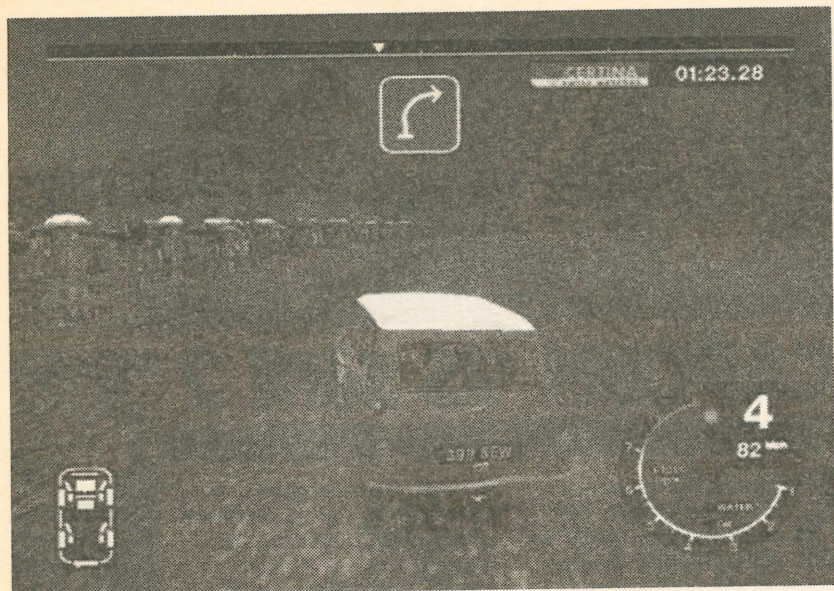
PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM EUROSOFT
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
 PRICE: £19.99
 PLAYERS: 1-2
 GORZ MODE: NO
 WIDESCREEN: NO
 SURROUND SOUND: NO
 ONLINE: NO





colin mcrae rally 2005

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005

Same bodywork, but a whole new machine

3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

PRICE: £19.99

PLAYERS: 1-8

60HZ MODE: NO

WIDESCREEN: YES

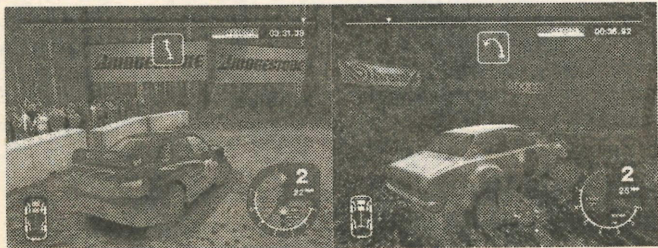
SURROUND SOUND: YES

ONLINE: YES

Driving really fast along gravel-washed country roads is hard and is likely to give you a nasty case of whiplash and a bruised arse. But the success of the *Colin McRae* series has always been down to its knack of turning something painfully difficult into a fiendishly enjoyable experience.

This is without doubt the best, most enjoyable rally game money

can buy. Focusing purely on the nuts and bolts of the game, developer Codemasters has been able to pack *CMR2005* full of enough new features to sink a small battleship. Firstly, as well as the new German courses, there are now another two stages for each of the existing locations. And there's a wider variety of cars too, with a total of eight different classes of vehicle. Getting





into a race is now a matter of choosing from a list that includes championship, challenge, career or (thankfully) online modes.

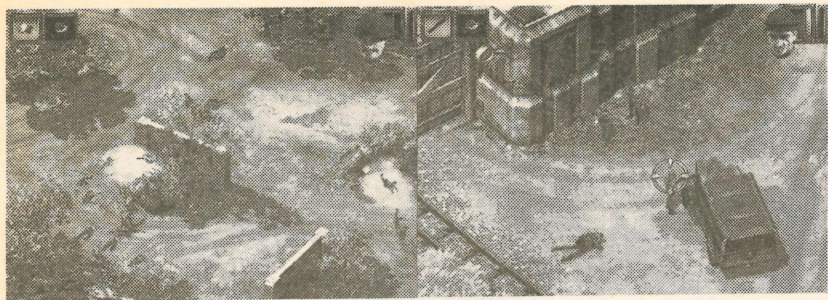
Colin McRae Rally 2005 is full of gas and firing on all pistons. Simple touches like the cheers of spectators as you pass, or major gameplay developments like the excellent multiplayer mode (including some seriously excellent online action) achieve more than any overblown visual overhaul could ever hope to. Colin McRae is back – remember to buckle up tight, won't you. ■ BR



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine UK

It might not look like much has changed, but the subtle improvements make all the difference to the final game

9 / 10



COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER PRO
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GHZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

Because not every gaming gem has to be in 3D

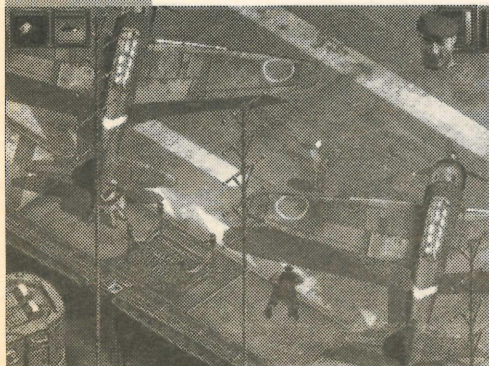
Commandos 2 is not just another strategy game. It doesn't involve resources or troop building, nor does it require lightning reactions or a mastery of pointing-and-clicking. Instead, it requires careful thought, planning and timing.

Realised in sumptuous isometric 2D, *Commandos 2* offers real-time WW2 action with an amazing attention to detail. There are nine characters to control, 17 different weapons and 28 items. Using them, you'll sneak, bomb, stab, gas and shoot your way from occupied France to the jungles of Burma. In each of



the missions, you control a number of Commandos, each with their own specialist skills and weapons. The Green Beret, for example, is a brutish grunt with deadly knife skills, while the Driver supplements his vehicular abilities with home-made weaponry, including such delights as bear traps and Molotov cocktails.

Commandos 2 is big, wonderfully complex and hugely challenging. You're never at a loss for what to do, even though you may struggle to do it. Utterly absorbing, this is a game that demands your complete attention, and is a strategy game that's beyond compare. ■ **DE**



 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE	VERDICT
<i>A daunting but rewarding strategy game experience. Commandos 2 is an isometric Metal Gear Solid set in World War 2</i>	8 /10



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II

Pick up a gun and let's party like it's 1991

Come this way and sniff the air... you can almost smell the oil fields burning. *Conflict: Desert Storm II* is another squad-based shooter – and a sequel at that – this time taking place further into Desert Storm, as Delta Force and the SAS penetrate Iraq in small stabbing raids.

You're in charge of four soldiers, making hit-and-run attacks on radar emplacements, chemical factories and Iraqi border towns. Each has his own special weapons and there are plenty more to pick up along the way. They're all based on real models, so you'll find yourself debating the relative merits of carrying an AK-47 and rat-a-tatting at the enemy in neat bursts, or using just a good old military shotgun and blasting them to their maker in noisy thumps.

Like its predecessor, gameplay combines tight group strategy (you can control any of your soldiers directly, or yell simple commands), stealth and all-out bullet spraying. It's compelling stuff. The missions are intricately crafted, making great use of rusty factories, crumbling towns and maze-like underground facilities to construct an all-too-believable war hell.

You'll probably learn more about modern conflict here than you will in the cinema. And that should keep you warm while you and your men are waiting in a pre-dawn foxhole for the signal to go loud... ■ KS

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

An extremely meaty shoot-'em-up with tricky tactical elements, that's unfortunately let down mildly by a few bugs

8/10

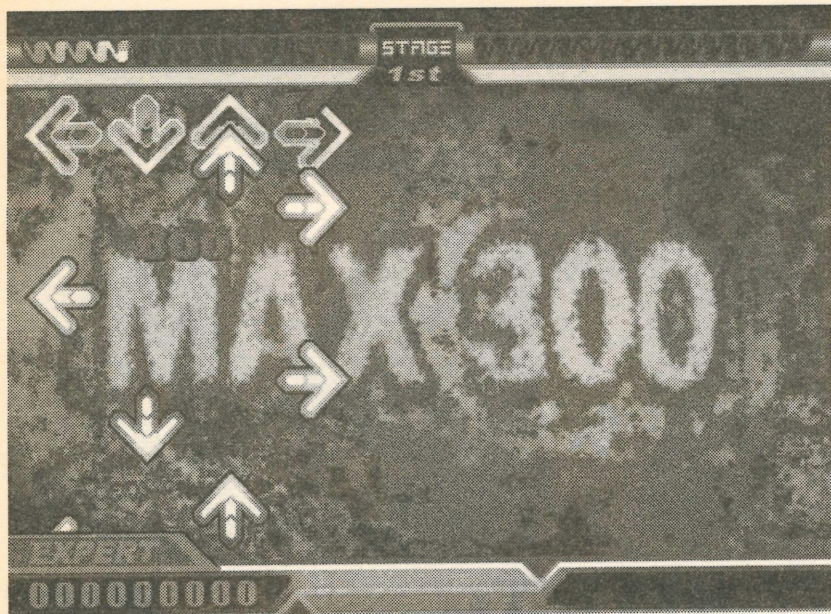
PlayStation 2

CONFlict: DESERT STORM II



DETAILS

PUBLISHER	SCI
DEVELOPER	PIVOTAL GAMES
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
GOHZ MODE	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES
ONLINE	NO



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI

DEVELOPER KONAMI

PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1-2

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND NO

ONLINE NO

DANCING STAGE MEGAMIX

Dignity? What dignity? It's all about the moves

By far the most satisfying way to play *Megamix* is freestyling – the crazed fanboy practice of knowing the moves so well that you can improvise on top of them. Busting out shapes with your arms is the easiest way, throwing in some B-boy toprock or Capoeira-style ginga is tougher, and fitting in a quick pirouette is harder still. Nailing your mat to a slab of MDF is about the only way you'll be able to do glides or moonwalk, but most other moves are still manageable. Stick the game on the unlockable endless mode and you'll be able to dance yourself to the point of collapse... should you wish to.

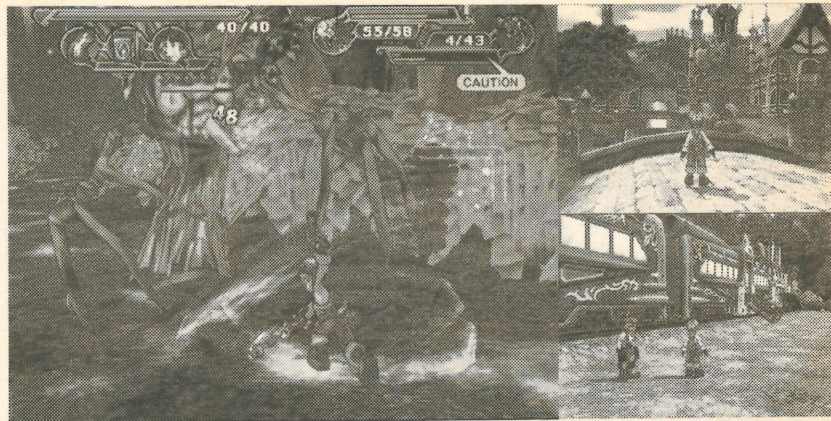
So what exactly is the point of all this? Well, it is a lot of fun. You're

unlikely to really impress anybody with your moves – pulling out a flawless handslap combo at a house party just suggests you've got way too much time on your hands and a total lack of social grace. But it's the perfect icebreaker if you have guests, and is (secretly) also loads of fun on your own, too. When developer Konami comes up with a way to generate routines for your own CD collection, it'll undoubtedly be the best social game ever created. Until then, just remember one thing: Dignity. Always dignity. ■ JS

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

Top sweaty disco fun, slightly marred by a flimsy selection of songs. Who said that you couldn't exercise playing games?

7/10



DARK CHRONICLE

Do the heavens smile on this RPG sequel?

This game is wonderful – an absolute delight to play on every level. At its heart is an RPG, and it's immersive, diverse and utterly charming. What's more, there are none of those maddening random battles. Hoorah!

It's full of things to do. There's the matter of maintaining and upgrading the weapons – do you think a standard Work Wrench is going to upgrade to a monster-mashing Smash Wrench all by itself?

And don't even get us started on the Georama, the system used to rebuild the ravaged world that our heroes inhabit. Collect this, invent that, hunt out that magical stone, plant a tree here, build a house there – no, no, put it next to the stream, not facing a rock. It's enough

to give you aneurisms. And there just isn't the space to mention the mini-golf competitions, the beguiling storyline, the time travel aspect and the host of supporting characters who flit in and out of your party. All these elements (and many more) combine to make for one of the richest, most involving and engaging games you could ask for. ■ NE

PlayStation 2 official magazine **VERDICT**

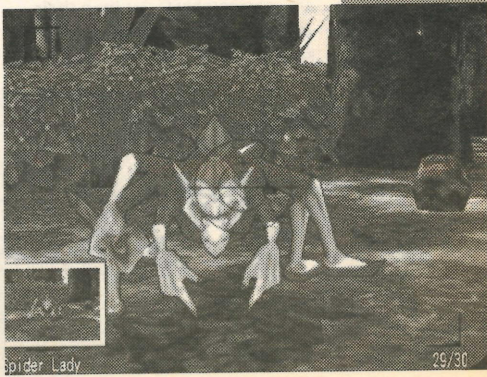
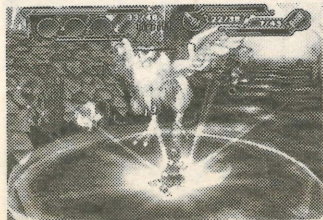
Dark chronicle is top-tier fantasy fare, and an essential purchase for any RPG fan who has completed all the Final Fantasy games

9 / 10

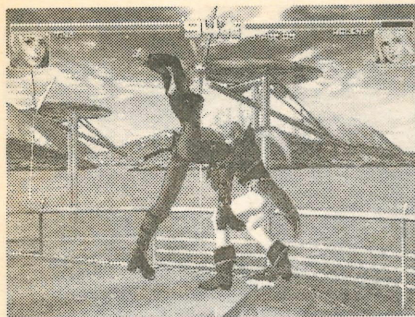
PlayStation 2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER LEVEL 5
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO



Dead Or Alive 2



DEAD OR ALIVE 2

Is Tecmo's scrapper all show and no substance?

The first, most obvious and least worthy point to make about *Dead Or Alive 2* is the mammary factor. Breasts are enlarged to stupid proportions, and bounce with ludicrous frequency and there's even a gallery of 'scintillating' snaps to ogle over – if you *really* don't have a life. This fighting game is a pantomime, no question, but it's a quality pantomime nonetheless. Whereas *Tekken* prides itself on realism, *Dead Or Alive 2* is incredibly flamboyant and happily relishes every moment of it.

But it's the speed at which such leg-bending tomfoolery takes places that is both *DOA2*'s main attraction and, oddly, its Achilles' heel. Fighters are considerably faster than their *Tekken* counterparts and make the King Of The Iron Fist Tournament look

slovenly in comparison. You can string a plethora of combos together, creating a blistering array of attacks, hurl opponents from rooftops, crash them through scenery, back-flip, scissor kick, corkscrew... you name it. But all this grandiose scrapping is easily obtainable, no matter what your competence. Without skill or training you can win and that isn't good – although some brilliant counter-move strategies *do* add depth. If only it introduced new characters and cut down on the speed then we'd be looking at a stand off of two beat-'em-up giants, but *Tekken* just wins out. ■ **BL**

PlayStation 2



PlayStation

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY

DEVELOPER TECMO

PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1-4

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND NO

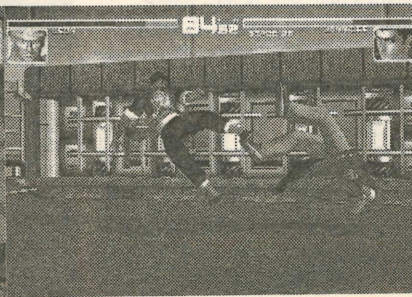
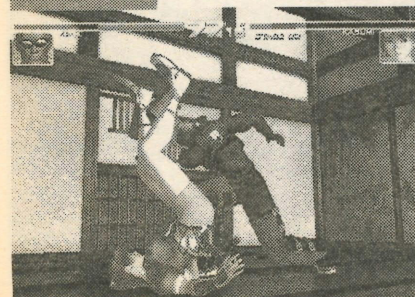
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2
Official magazine

VERDICT

Over-exuberant and alienating to the novice, but it still looks good for an early PS2 title. We just wish it was a bit more skillful

7/10



Def Jam Vendetta: Fight For New York



DEF JAM VENDETTA: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

Da hip-hop ruckus is back and in full effect

There's no denying that this game is gorgeous, but the improvements aren't limited to the visuals. The whole thing's been overhauled, re-worked and fine-tuned. The already impressive ranks of rappers on the *Def Jam* roster have swelled, most notably to include such superstars as Busta Rhymes, Ice-T, Snoop Dogg and Lil' Kim (and the non-rapping but suitably undressed Carmen Electra), although there are dozens of others that aren't so recognisable.

More importantly, it's the soul of the gameplay – the fighting – that's had the biggest revamp. While the basic controls and move system remain the same, the action's been taken to a whole new level. Bouts are no longer confined to wrestling-style rings, now taking place instead

in a range of clubs, rooftops, even subway stations. These new environments don't just add variety, but also interactivity – there's not a spot on the walls that you can't smash an opponent's head into, or a fence you can't scrape his face along.

Weapons are very much included this time, too – everything from baseball bats to iron bars are handed out by bloodthirsty crowd members – and there are five clearly defined fighting styles to master. The end result is a spot-on combination of skill, timing and precision, with wince-inducing brutality and arcade-style special moves. ■ ND

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

Fight For New York does everything right that Vendetta did wrong. It's stylish and brutal, and its faults don't mar the final product

8/10

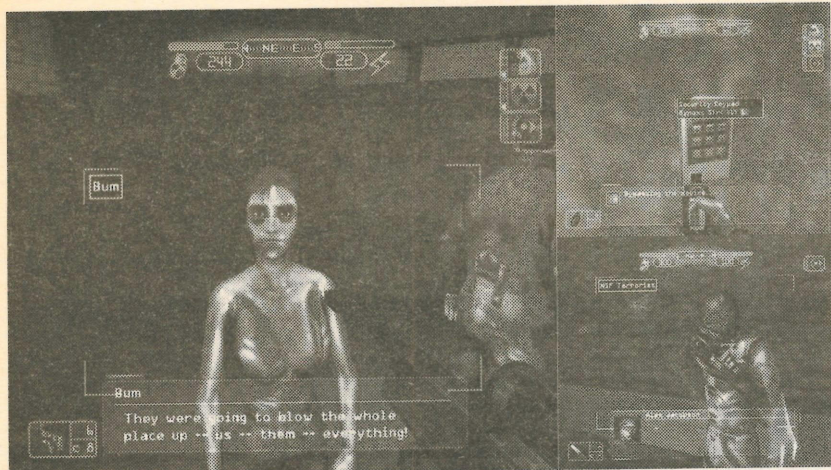
PlayStation 2

DEF JAM VENDETTA: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER AMI CORPORATION
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-4
GOTH MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO



DEUS EX

Developer finds God in Sony's small black box

Originally a PC game, *Deus Ex* has been streamlined and tweaked so brilliantly for its PS2 appearance that it's now a better game than it ever was. It's a futuristic first-person shooter, but in many ways it plays more like an RPG.

What sets *Deus Ex* apart from other first-person shooters is the freedom of choice. Each level is non-linear so you can tackle it in any manner you think is appropriate. When infiltrating a terrorist-infested

warehouse, for instance, you can go in the front door with all guns blazing, hit them from below by swimming in via the sewers, or surprise them by finding a way up onto the roof and them raining shots down from above.

Your character, anti-terrorist man-in-black JC Denton, has bundles of upgradeable skills and cybernetic implants, and you'll also face many moral choices which affect the outcome of the game and how other characters treat you.

The only real qualm is that the graphics don't match the gameplay in the innovation department. The atmosphere is supposed to be bleak, but environments can often look drab and featureless. So, to summarise: *Deus Ex* is constantly compelling, but lacks that true next-gen graphical flair. ■ **RB**



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine

A triumphant multi-genre fusion that blends styles effortlessly to create a deep and hugely enjoyable game. Buy it now!

9/10

Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening



DEVIL MAY CRY 3: DANTE'S AWAKENING

The white-haired sword-fop is back

PlayStation 2

The original *Devil May Cry* was a winking psycho of a game, with melon-sized balls, adrenaline for blood and nothing in its pretty head except an all-consuming desire to look cool. It ruled with an iron fist and we were its bitch. The second game was much like the first, but photocopied a zillion times until all sorts of things that used to be right suddenly became wrong and out of focus.

Fundamentally, *DMC* is the same as previous instalments – lots of shooting and hitting things with swords, broken up by the occasional puzzle about, um, shooting and hitting things with swords. But somehow, it's awesome.

The biggest change is the style system. At checkpoints, Dante's got the option to switch between up to six styles, each of which changes the way you shoot or hit things with swords. Trickster, for instance, is best for dodging aggressive adversaries and reaching hidden areas, with wall-runs and aerial dashes available. Swordmaster is handy for those who like to keep things pointy, and Gunslinger is best for big babies who'd prefer to stay at a distance.

Devil May Cry 3 feels a lot more sweeping and comfortable than its predecessor. The shift in design extends to enemies, too. New adversaries are as nimble as Dante, forcing feats of extraordinary thumb agility to avoid harm. It's better designed than part two, flows better than part one, and it's more than hard enough to keep you going until the inevitable fourth part, even if that doesn't happen until PS3. ■ JS

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK VERDICT

A worthy close to the trilogy, and a return to form for Dante. It also manages to heal the wounds of the second game wonderfully

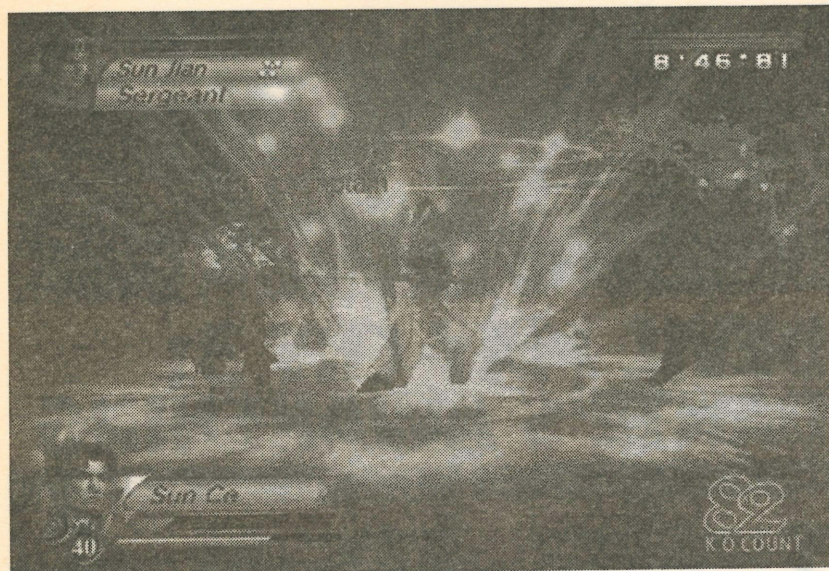
9/10

16+

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO





DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 XTREME LEGENDS

PlayStation 2

They've changed it to a flight sim! Just kidding...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER KOEI
 DEVELOPER OMEGA FORCE
 PRICE £19.99
 PLAYERS 1-2
 GOHZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO

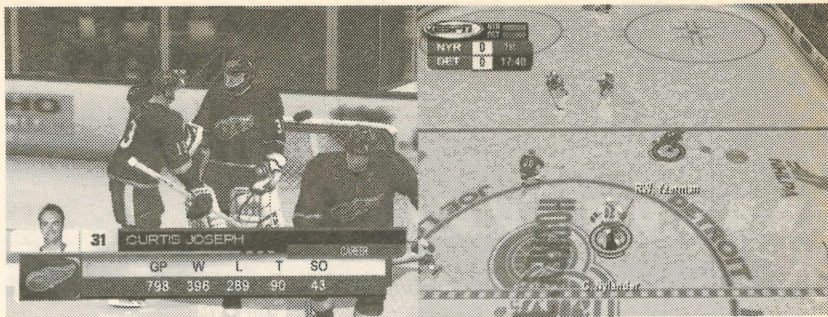
As series' go, this saga hasn't exactly been marked by dramatic stylistic shifts or innovative new features. *Xtreme Legends* has a whole dynasty of excellent modes to choose from, including Xtreme, Legends, Versus and Challenge, as well as two-player options and transferable content from the *Dynasty Warriors 4* disc. The basic style of gameplay hasn't changed, but the variety of twists and challenges devised to eke out that little bit more from the format are truly admirable.

For those who haven't played the previous instalments, you're thrown into some large battlefields with one legendary hero at your disposal – you can play on any side as anyone. Once there, you'll have a specific mission to achieve, be it killing

someone or escorting an ally to safety. Don't worry too much about any tactical nonsense – as you hit and receive hits your Musou meter builds up until you can unleash a devastating special attack. Handy.

Whatever your mission, the action is consistently fast and violent. The versus mode is meaty but, Xtreme mode aside, there's a bitty feel to the rest of the game. You'll be forever bouncing back to the menu screen, and those who don't know their Sun Ces from their Gan Nings may get confused. Don't try to work it out, just go mental for the hack-me-do action. ■ MW

	VERDICT
<small>OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK</small> This is a rush of pure gaming MSG. You'll feel full after a couple of courses, but will soon be tucking in again for seconds	7 /10



ESPN NHL 2K5

This one 'sticks' it to the competition!

Like all sports worth playing, much of ice hockey is instinct, and a couple of games is all everyone but the most lobster-handed window-lickers will need to become workably au fait with what's happening. It's simulation rather than arcade, but tuneable difficulty makes for far greater accessibility. As in *Pro Evo*, passes won't just find a man; they need directing – and as in *Pro Evo* again, it's tricky to score but all the more rewarding for it.

Deeper down, controllable one-twas and swanky backward skating defence manoeuvres add finesse to the frantic gameplay. And it's more than needed, because intelligent opponent AI makes for challenging match-ups, even on the punier skill settings. It's hugely tinkerable, with a deep management side stretching



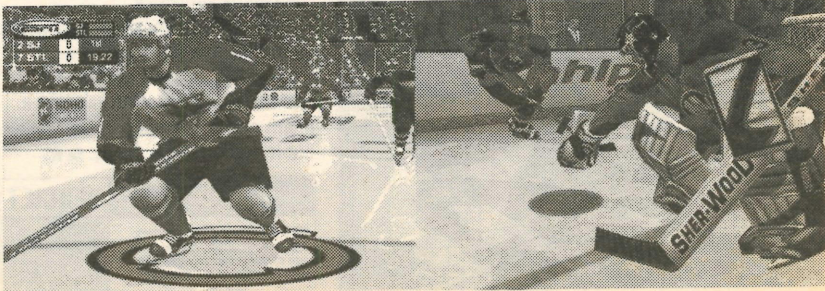
into the minor leagues, which is where some NHL knowledge is needed. With it this can stretch to eternity; without it this is 'merely' a brilliant ice hockey game that while not quite surpassing EA's effort, is certainly its equal. ■ PR

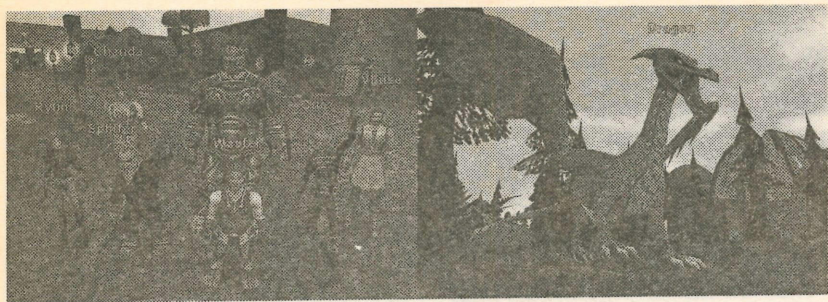
	VERDICT A deep, fairly tricky but rewarding experience that can be enjoyed almost as much by Joe Casual as by, um... Herbert Hockeyfan
	8/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER GLOBAL STAR
 DEVELOPER KUSH GAMES
 PRICE £19.99
 PLAYERS 1-2
 60HZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE YES





EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

PlayStation 2

Questing here could go on forever...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-LOADS
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE YES

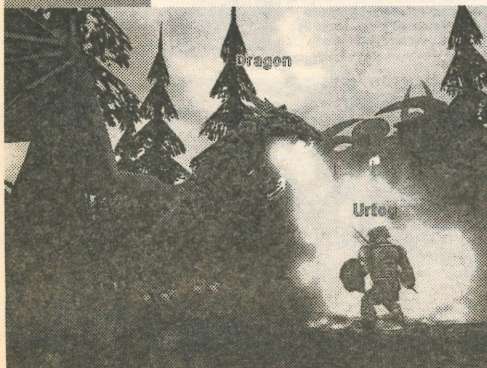
PS2's first persistent online world marks the start of something new and very exciting. A massive success on PC, its translation to PS2 had a few teething troubles when initially released in the US, but for the UK version many initial faults, bugs and broken game systems are now fixed.

At its core, *EQOA* is a fantasy role-playing game that'll be instantly familiar to anyone versed in *Final Fantasy*. Like pretty much any other RPG, you pick a character and a profession (ranger, shaman, wizard, etc.), but what makes *EQOA* different from, say, *FF*, is the persistent world



where you can play the same character forever. And it's more than likely that you will. While you can create several characters on each of the game's six servers (holding up to around 3,000 players a piece), you'll probably just stick with one because that's the character who will build a name for themselves, make friends and fall victim to *EQOA*'s remarkably compelling gameplay.

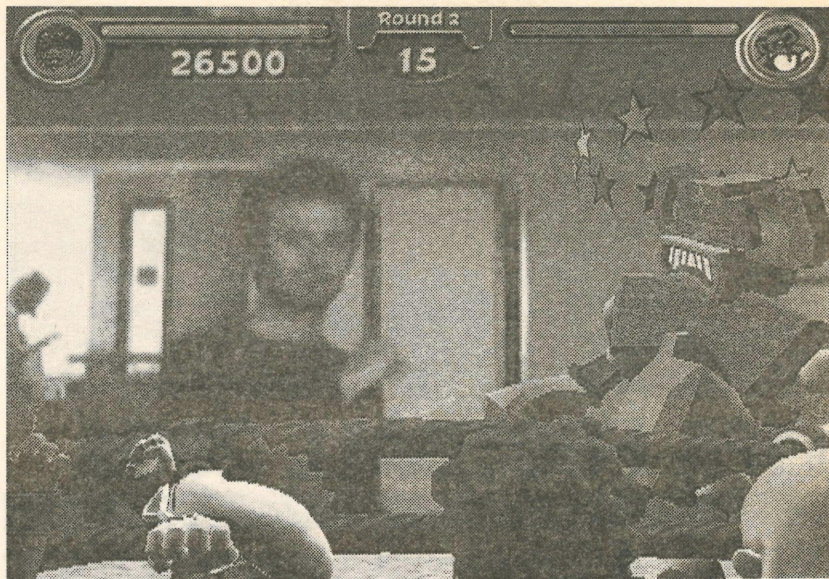
While *EQOA*'s gameplay mechanics are rudimentary hack, slash and spellcasting, this is a cracking entry into the world of online gaming. It might cost you a monthly fee to play, but it's worth every penny. ■ **RS**



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
criticalmagazine.uk

While *EQOA* might not be every gamer's pot of ale, it does offer one of the purest role-playing opportunities in PS2 gamedom

8/10



EYETOY: PLAY 2

Admit it, you love it really...

Confession time: no matter how innovative EyeToy is, no matter how popular it is (over a third of you plucky readers own one) or how many awards it's won (lots), the novelty wore off pretty quickly. Don't get us wrong, we doff our hats to the clever people at Sony London who thought it up, but most games designed for the device have just revolved around the basic principle of whacking things on screen (barring *U Move Super Sports*, which tried valiantly to spice things up a few months ago by introducing a few original touches.

As its older brother was the mould-definer, *EyeToy: Play 2* should surely be the mould-breaker – and it doesn't disappoint. While the overall mini-game vibe remains, each of the themes has been broken up into rounds and levels, adding depth and longevity. The best of the



batch are Secret Agent, Mr Chef and DIY, which give you a series of stealth/culinary/handyman chores to complete. If the first *Play*'s WishiWashi was Mr Myagi's 'wax on, wax off' training (simple and repetitive), then this lot is like training for the SAS – it's tougher, well paced and a decent challenge to boot. ■ MF

PlayStation 2 Official magazine UK **VERDICT**

We are vindicated. EyeToy: Play is better second time around and it's the best EyeToy game you'll find in the shops... for now

8/10

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY LONDON
PRICE £29.99
(£39.99 WITH EYETOY)
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO



FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

PlayStation 2

Does FIFA finally have the clout to steal the cup?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER EA
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-8
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

Ah, *FIFA*, the Chelsea of the football game world. It's got the largest lump of cash to throw around, the most clout and the biggest names signed up to play, but, somehow even slotting all that together can't guarantee the match-winning results it so desperately craves.

The good news is that *Pro Evo* stalwarts have still got plenty to despair at this year. The licensing lawyers have earned their filthy money by tapping up 18 leagues' worth of players, alongside 38 national teams. There's also a



gargantuan career mode spanning 15 years of stress and headlines, and it's impossible to pause the game or look at a menu without getting a quick blast of the chirpy Franz Ferdinand or the Scissor Sisters.

Overall, the rewards are sweet. Underneath the flashy exterior there's an engine that's swiped liberally from *Evo*, but retained enough of its own tactical devices to





make for an interesting game. It's all about right-thumbed dexterity – new 'on the ball' controls using the right analogue let any player pull off a decent imitation of *Pro Evo's* shimmy, with the other directions catering for a defender-foxing turn or a cheeky stepover.

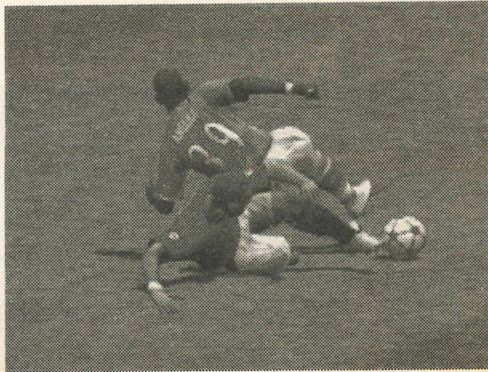
With *Pro Evo* slowing down, *2005* is breathing down its neck, and the lure of licensing might well nail a few converts. It's a beautiful game, sure, just not the one we truly love. Not yet, anyway. ■ JS



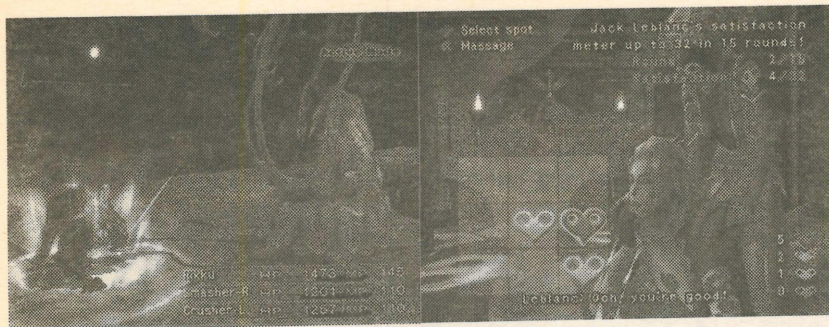
PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Acres ahead of last year's effort and full of little lashes of genius. If it wasn't for PES, this would be an essential purchase

8/10



Final Fantasy X-2



FINAL FANTASY X-2

PlayStation 2

Prepare to suspend your social life...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

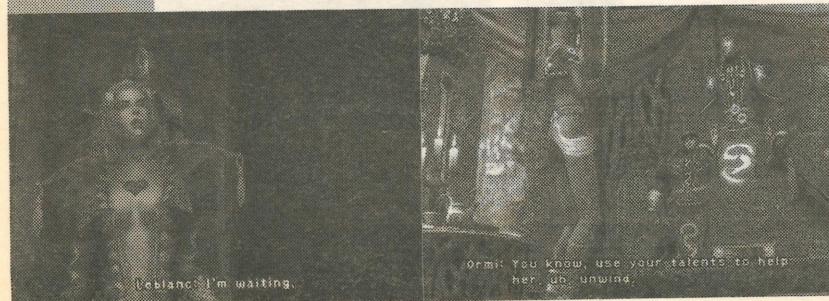
This was supposed to be the *Final Fantasy* game that made non-RPGers want to play them. *FF-meets-Charlie's Angels*, or at least a more accessible, sexier version of the best-known role-playing game series of all time. But it isn't. What it is though, is a fantastic *FF* game and one that anyone who fancies this kind of thing has to – needs to – play.

X-2 takes itself a lot less seriously than other games in the series, a fact furthered by the kooky mini-games on offer. One big difference from previous *Fantasies* is that you needn't wander across a vast world map looking for the next piece of storyline to unfold. From your airship, *The Celsius*, you can whizz immediately to any 'hotspots' – areas where missions are ready to be tackled.

In combat terms you'll find a dress-up system, in which your characters can change costume mid-combat and assume the skills and abilities commensurate with that role. However, you only ever field three characters, and the only way to get variety into your party's combat is by changing their costumes mid-fight using dresspheres, which can be found throughout the game world.

X-2 is as progressive as any *Final Fantasy* game, but it's not as sexy as we had hoped and, if we're honest, its innovations are fairly slight. Despite some minor flaws though, it's still a stonking RPG. ■ AB

PlayStation 2 <small>OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK</small>	VERDICT
Some intelligent innovation, but familiarity breeds a little discontent, even with something of this scope and magnitude	9/10



ormi: You know, use your talents to help her. Or unwind.



FORBIDDEN SIREN

Give in – you will succumb to the Siren's song...

The premise for *Forbidden Siren* is as unusual as its tense gameplay and its precise, economical styling. The place is modern day rural Japan and something has happened to the small, landlocked town of Hanyuda. Following an earthquake, a wailing siren is heard that coincides with the centre of Hanyuda sinking into a sea of blood. From this, rise the bodies of those killed in the cataclysm. Then, with the mysterious aftermath of the earthquake unfolding over three horrific days, you play the roles of ten different survivors.

Chapter objectives appear to be disarmingly simple and all but a few brief pursuit levels involve you making your way to an exit point on the current map. You often have a helpless companion who must be

led carefully through areas populated with undead villagers. But how do you know where they are before it's too late? By nudging the left analogue stick you can 'sight jack' into nearby villagers' minds. From these horrific, juddery visions you have to then try and piece together information from villagers' patterns of movement, landmarks they can see and your current position.

It's hard. Sometimes incredibly so. You will make odd noises in the back of your throat and you may even cry on occasions, but you will persevere through the game, because *Forbidden Siren* is brilliant. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Unique, ambitious, genuinely scary and brilliantly executed, this is as good as psychological horror gets on PS2

9/10

PlayStation 2

FORBIDDEN SIREN

10

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY JAPAN
PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1
GOHZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO



FREEDOM FIGHTERS



Thought the Cold War was over? Think again

Broadly speaking, *FF* falls into that sexy videogame sub-genre designated 'third-person squad-based combat'. As such, it's a distant cousin of *Conflict: Desert Storm*. Utterly unlike that game though, *Freedom Fighters* casts you as an underdog pitted against an overwhelming occupying force and makes your choices influence how well you inspire others to follow you into battle. In other words, it persuades you to care deeply about how your character develops through the missions – which isn't that bad for a gun-based action game.

So, the Russians have invaded Manhattan and you start off taking the fight to the Commies single-handed. Every time you manage to free a prisoner, obliterate a strategic

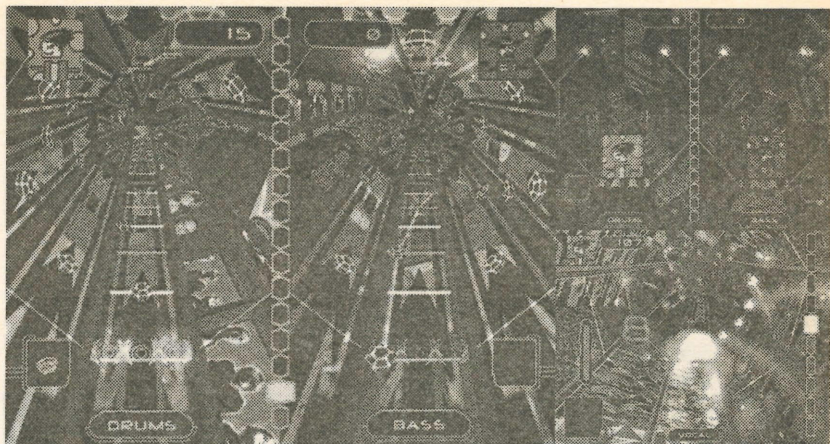
target, heal a wounded survivor with one of your health packs or raise the Stars and Stripes above a recaptured district, those valuable points will rack up and you'll earn the unwavering loyalty of yet another resistance soldier.

With its huge open environments and brooding atmosphere, there's so much to enjoy in *Freedom Fighters* that you're likely to end the game praying that the Soviets have plans to invade LA, too. Hell, they can invade Boise, Idaho for all we care. We've had a taste of *Freedom* and we love it. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

Any slight imperfections are more than swamped by an addictive and clever game experience. You must play this, and that's an order

9/10



FREQUENCY

What's the *Frequency*, Kenneth?

Frequency is an eye-blisteringly hypnotic, exquisitely beguiling rhythm action game. It blends the rhythmic button-bashing elements of most other examples of the genre with an instinctively tactical element that's more common to a puzzle game, and wraps it up with a wilfully eclectic soundtrack, producing a highly dynamic playing experience that's wholly original. In other words... it's great.

As with all the best puzzle or rhythm action titles, the concept at the heart of the game is both shockingly simple, and yet devilishly difficult to describe. Players progress through a colourful octagonal tunnel, pressing particular buttons, as indicated on-screen to build up musical tunes. Each side of the tunnel – which can be rotated by the player – represents a different part, or track, of the overall tune. For example, one side might be the drum track and another the vocals.

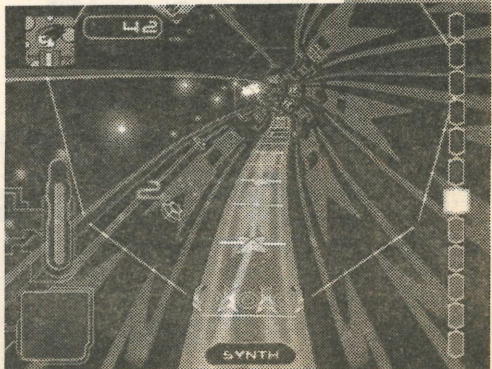
Completing two musical bars of one-track results in that track playing of its own accord for several

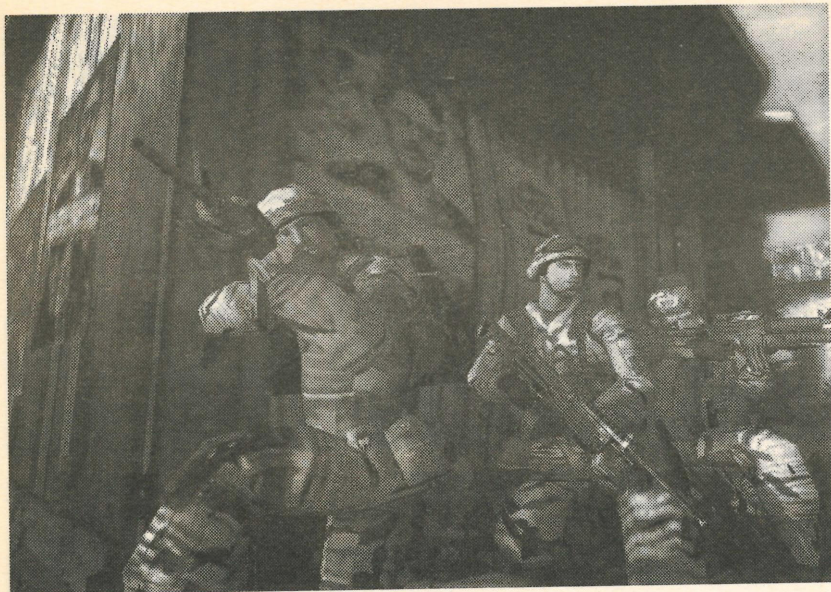
more bars, allowing the player to switch to another track. The object of the game is to reach the end of the tune without depleting an energy bar by hitting too many duff notes. In short, *Frequency* has an infectious 'one more go' appeal and induces a rush that's nothing short of mesmerising. ■ **GW**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

Frequency is still one of the most addictive and quirky titles to appear on the PS2. At this price, we recommend you buy it soon

8/10





FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

It's time for the latest in warfare gaming

DETAILS

PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER PANDEMIC/
MASS MEDIA
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GGHZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

Full Spectrum Warrior never lets you directly control its soldier characters. Instead, you play as God, or fate, or some omnipresent force of will that never tells your men exactly what to do, but keeps an eye on where they should be going and in what direction to fire.

As you order your teams about, you'll soon learn to love corners to

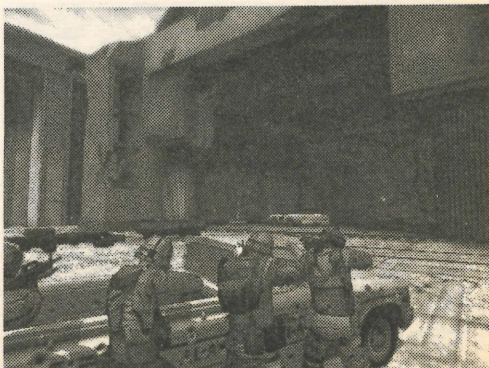
peek around and cardboard boxes to hide behind. You'll fear wandering into open spaces because sending your men to exposed areas is suicide (or at the very least, time consuming, as the walk to the mobile hospital is usually lengthy). You'll discover that it's often better to fling a grenade ahead of you – but to value your limited supply at all costs – because that's sometimes an easier way to






take out enemies than to engage them directly (or indirectly if you're hiding behind a nearby car for cover).

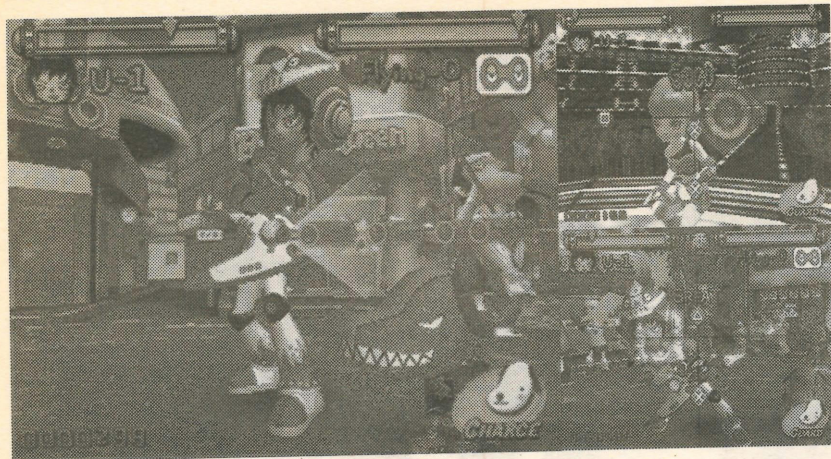
The compelling setup makes it the best tactical warfare game, making the likes of *Ghost Recon 2* look a little lame. And the online mode is one of the very best uses of multiplayer Internet functions we've seen. Buy it, but don't complete it in a hurry – you should savour each mission and play through one or two a day. ■ MF



 **PlayStation 2**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

A great and original concept that's only held up by the resulting game's slightly repetitive nature

8/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER KOEI
PRICE £34.99
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

GITAROO MAN

Don't fret, this guitar's in fine tune

One of the more curious rhythm games to have tripped through our door, *Gitaroo man* involves a key-line that twists through a dot in the centre of the screen, and it's up to you to keep track of its direction with the left analogue stick.

Parts of the line are highlighted and, as they pass through the dot, pressing and holding **○** makes U1 (your character) play his guitar. All the time you're tracking and tapping, and that two-handed dynamic suits

Gitaroo Man's axe-riffing premise perfectly. The guitar-playing sections are intercut with more traditional, multi-button *PaRappa*-style bits, which initially seem impossibly fast, but before too long fall to reactions and instinct.

The game offers a good deal of variation across its 12-song soundtrack. Level one is '80s rawk against a nappy-wearing Devil. Level two calls for techno mentalism to fend off a crowd of flying saucers. Level three is saxophone-based swamp blues, four is drum and bass escapism and five is genius moon dub. There's more, like stadium rock, church-of-noise cringe-metal, comedy acoustic romanticism, maraca-fast salsa picking; so many disparate musical genres, each with a music video backdrop that's as much of a pleasure to watch as it is to play. ■ SC



PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

Every PS2 collection should have at least one game that offers something different. There aren't many better games than this

8/10



GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK

Two of the best games on PS2 for 40 quid

This is your chance to own two exceptional games for under 40 pounds. Both offer the chance to complete missions, create anarchy or just explore the stylised cities to your heart's content.

Before *GTAIII*, no other console game had come close to creating an entire 3D city, complete with its own emergency services and industrial infrastructure. The fact that your task is to utterly corrupt and destroy this infrastructure makes it even better.

GTA: Vice City has the biggest videogame soundtrack to date, with seven radio stations belting out over 80 genuine '80s songs. The first time you burn down the neon-filled beachfront on a bike, machine pistol resting on the handle bars, wind blowing through your hair to the strains of *Billie Jean*, feels great.

The increased use of boats, helicopters and planes form extra layers of action to explore with refreshingly different gameplay. And as well as telephone missions, there are taxi, ambulance and police car challenges, and even pizza delivery missions to discover.

We were awestruck at *GTAIII*, but *Vice City* beats it hands down, launching a hugely stylish and addictive adventure. ■ MW

PlayStation 2 Official magazine UK **VERDICT**

This couldn't be screaming 'Buy Me!' any louder if it pointed a loaded gun at your head and screamed 'Buy Me!' into your ear

10/10

PlayStation 2

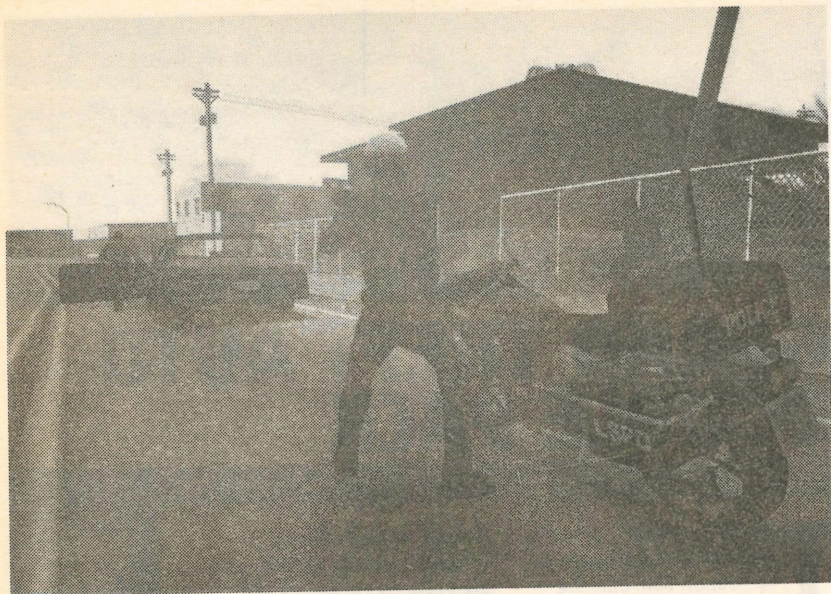
ROCKSTAR GAMES DOUBLE PACK

grand theft auto

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
PRICE: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
ONLINE: NO





GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Everything you could ever hope for from a game

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
ROCKSTAR GAMES
DEVELOPER
ROCKSTAR NORTH
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GONZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

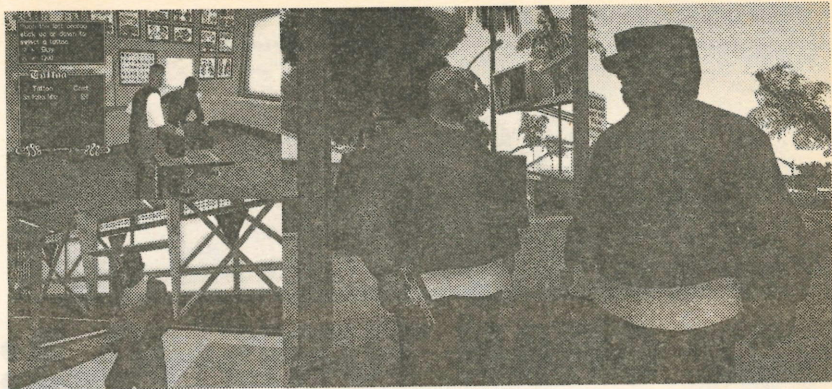
The undeniable truth? This is simply unbelievable. It's bigger, more diverse and more freeform than any other videogame to have gone before it. It gives you an instantly lovable cinematic parody of the Golden State and the ability to interact with it with seemingly endless variety. It lets you loose in every one of your favourite Hollywood movies, all at once. But saying that doesn't even begin to convey the sheer magnitude of the experience. *San Andreas* will crash its way into your life, call you a motherf***** and then make every other PS2 game in your collection seem like hollow, soulless drivel. It's that strong.

GTA: San Andreas is as much an RPG as it is a crime adventure – no,

that doesn't mean turn-based drive-bys. When you first meet CJ, your character, he's straight out of prison, he's wearing old clothes, has no money, no respect and hasn't handled a piece in five years. He's a shell of a man, but he's got potential. Your job is to make him into a major player by improving him as a person in every way, from increasing his strength and weapon



Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

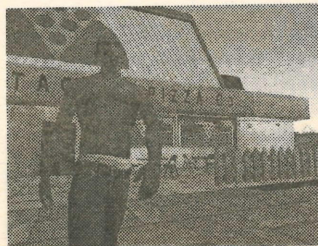


control, to expanding his lung capacity, swimming skills, muscle size and driving ability.

Don't worry if this sounds daunting, as the majority of these attributes are built up through natural progression. Running around keeps CJ muscular, which boosts his sex appeal. Finishing certain missions increases his respectometer and the more shooting and driving

you do, the faster he'll gain skills in these areas. As you slowly max out your powers, CJ becomes a more adept, multi-talented mo' fo'. And that becomes very important in the later, tougher missions.

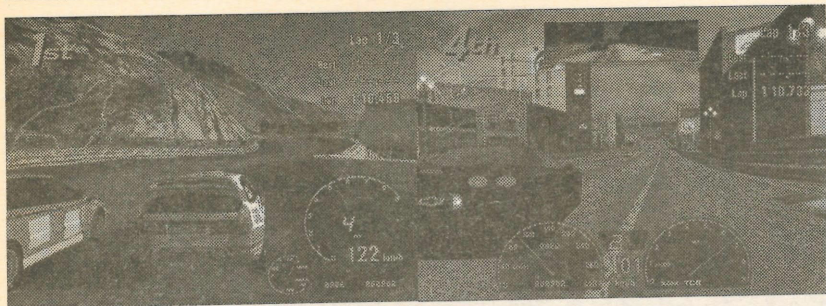
Rockstar has created a piece of entertainment so complete, so fulfilling, so satisfying, so dizzyingly exciting and consistently surprising that it makes a mockery of 90% of other PS2 titles. Finally, PS2 has its indisputable master-work. Which leads us to the somewhat worrying question: Where the hell do we go from here? ■ GW



PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

Rockstar has taken a genre-defining game and lifted it higher than we thought possible. Genius is the only word for it

10/10



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-6
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC

Is *GT3* really still worth taking for a spin?

This game rocks harder than AC/DC, drives faster than Schumacher in a bad mood and plays as sweetly as the 1970 Brazil team. If you have even the slightest interest in racing games, then you really should own this beauty – this and, of course, its even more beautiful older brother on the other page there.

As you'd expect, the most obvious distinction between *GT3* and its PSone predecessors is in its visual splendour. Without question, it's an amazing looker. Of course, all the fancy effects in the world wouldn't make any difference if *GT3* motored



like a clapped-out Robin Reliant. Thankfully, it's one of the fastest racers we've ever had the joy of playing (apart from the likes of *Burnout 3*, but the *Burnout* series is a very different driving game) and handles like a delightful dream starring Destiny's Child and a bowl of whipped cream.

The realism factor may be a big selling point, but *GT3* quite rightly favours fun over simulation and this is ultimately why it's such a joy to play. A classy racer like this (and one that's also available at a bargain price) is a deal that's impossible for any racing fan to ignore. ■ LH



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

A lengthy probe under its bonnet has left us with no doubt that *GT3* is one of the greatest driving games in the world

9/10



GRAN TURISMO 4

Not exactly what we were expecting...

Joy! Snippet of heavenly choir! It's like playing the original *GT* for the first time again. Except, of course, it's not like the first *GT* game. What's changed is the handling. Impressive before, *GT* has reached new heights of subtlety, feel and feedback. It's far more lively, more demanding, exquisitely detailed and rewards subtle movements. It's also a double-edged sword – the early vehicles are actually fun to drive, at last, but it also means the game's harder. *GT* has always been very serious about cars, despite its massive popular appeal, but now it's unrelenting. With all the traction and stability aids switched on, it's entirely useable, but with these settings switched off it's right on the cusp of needing a wheel peripheral.

But we've barely scratched the surface. *GT4* is gargantuan, but more

importantly it's passionate. In fact, it's probably more deranged than mere passion implies and counts as obsession. It's car porn. Any keen driver will find much to get excited about. You unlock cars, buy them, clean them, modify them, race them, take pictures, change their oil... Okay, visually it's still slightly 'clean,' but the cars are noticeably more aggressive-looking and as sexy as the real thing. And such incredible cars... it's porn. It really is. It's like being the richest man in the world and being able to have any classic car you desire, only without having to spend any money. It's every petrolhead's wet dream – and you're all invited to the sleepover. ■ **SW**

 PlayStation 2 <small>OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK</small>	VERDICT 
<i>This is unconditional love for cars. It's something to luxuriate in; more fun – but at the same time, more challenging</i>	

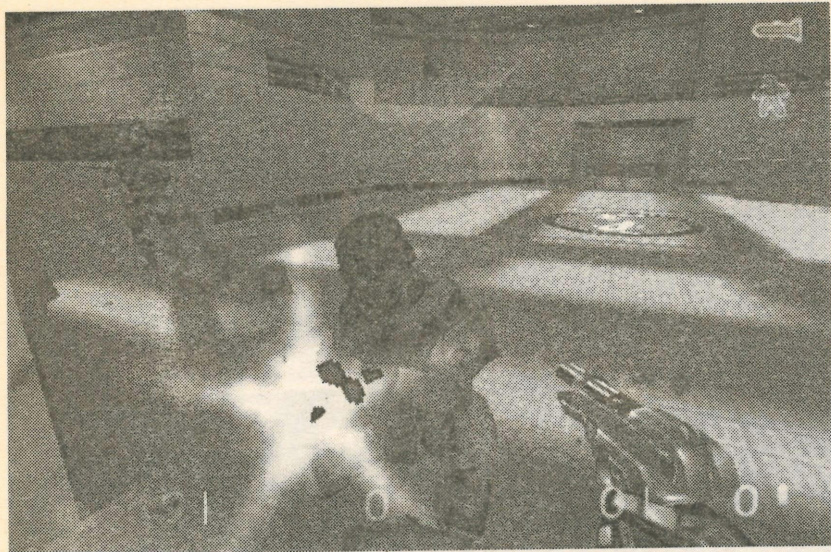
PlayStation 2

GT
GRAN TURISMO 4



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
 DEVELOPER POLYPHONY DIGITAL
 PRICE £39.99
 PLAYERS 1-6
 60HZ MODE YES
 WIDESCREEN YES
 SURROUND SOUND YES
 ONLINE NO



PlayStation 2

HALF-LIFE

It'll consume your three-score and ten...

HALF-LIFE

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
DEVELOPER
VALVE/GEARBOX
PRICE £33.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GDH2 MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

As a videogamer, you live for those rare moments when you play something so great, so imaginative and original, it redefines the whole landscape of its genre, asking the question of every title that dares to follow in its wake: "Can you ever be as good as this?" *Half-Life* is such a game.

It's a razor-sharp first-person shooter, but it's also a huge adventure, following the exploits of Gordon Freeman who has a bad day at the lab in the underground Black Mesa research facility. You know how it is – interdimensional rift spews forth aliens, and so on. It's the way that the game constantly surprises you and messes with your expectations through brilliant level design and scripting that make it such a fantastic experience.

And that's just the main game – *Half-Life* on PS2 (it was originally a PC game) also has a raft of new

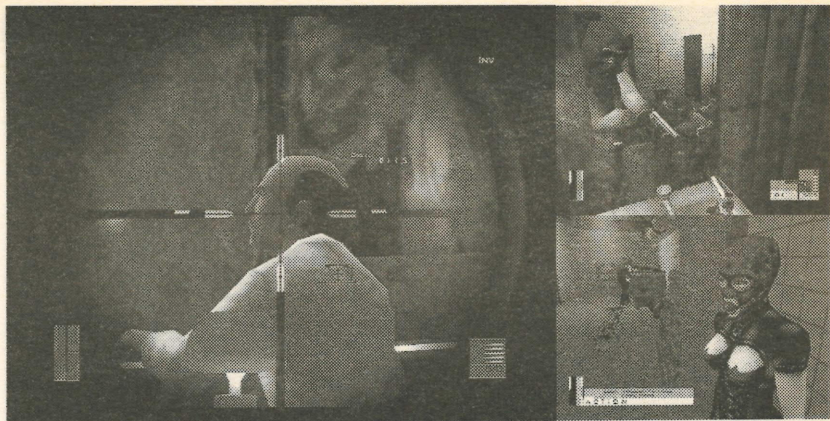


features, including an exclusive mission-based bonus game called *Decay*, set during the same time as Gordon Freeman's adventure, often crossing paths and revealing previously unseen areas of the Black Mesa complex. If you're in the lucky position of never having played *Half-Life* before, *OP2* envies you – you're in for one hell of a ride. ■ JS

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official.magsize.uk

It may be an older title, but even so, there still aren't many better single-player first-person shooters than this

9/10



HITMAN: CONTRACTS

Silent but very deadly, 47 makes a killing

Eidos' latest assassin simulation has even more choice than ever, but, oddly, there are times when it creeps close to the edge of the abyss because of it. Often you have no idea what effect your actions will have, so your decisions are arbitrary. Dress as a guard with the right rifle and try to, say, enter the submarine on the Snow Job In Siberia level and they'll shoot you. It seems guards aren't expected to go there, but how would you know that?

The levels are noticeably bigger and more populated than before, both with civilian potential witnesses and armed enemy guards. And the levels were already big. Each map is to be savoured, explored and replayed later just to achieve a smoother kill or find an alternate method. But beware: each map is a world of its own, with slightly varying behavioural 'rules'. Knowledge is power in *Hitman: Contracts*, and when you've built it up, there's tension in spades. It's just a shame it so often must be gained through failure and death.

Hitman still does its unique thing with enough flair to engage. It may well often be possible to blow a giant bleeding hole through the middle of everything – and the game may blow similar holes in your plans – but a professional kill is what it's all about. Learn it like it's a foreign language, and climb deep, deep inside. ■ **SW**

PlayStation 2 Official magazine **VERDICT**

This Hitman is exceptionally competent at its job. The AI is still perplexing at times, but the game remains endearing

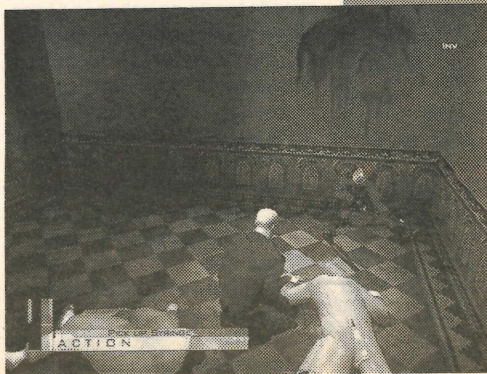
8/10

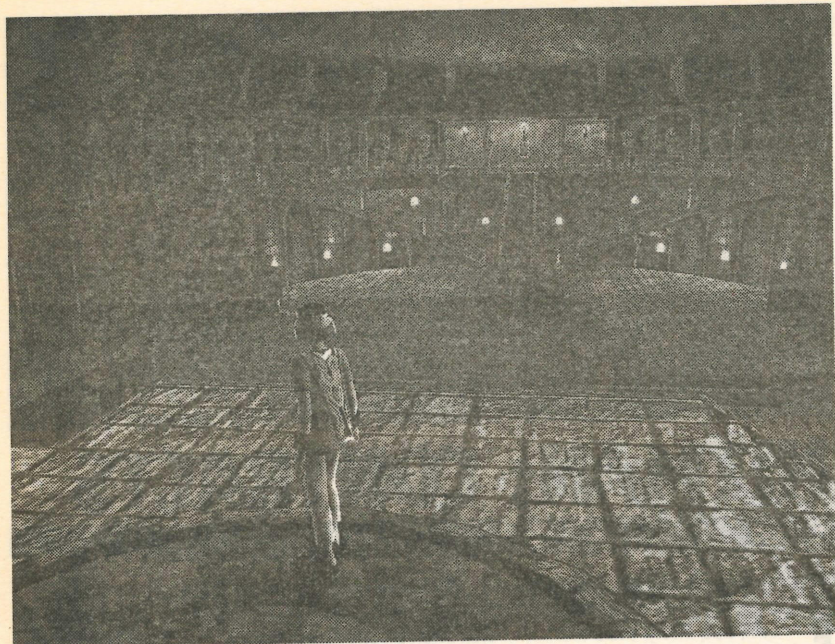
PlayStation 2

HITMAN

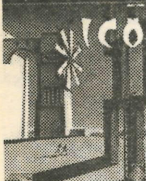
DETAILS

PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER IO INTERACTIVE
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
GOTH MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SUBGROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO





PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
 DEVELOPER SONY
 PRICE €19.99
 PLAYERS 1
 60HZ MODE YES
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO

ICO

Prepare for your heart to be beautifully broken

This game is an intensely personal experience. You'll have nightmares in which you're stuck at the top of dizzyingly high towers. You may also suffer fretful dreams in which you'll find yourself involved in a tense struggle to save an unknown person, plagued with intense sensations of loss and separation. Believe us, we've been there.

Playing as the eponymous hero, you are banished to an eerie castle because you have an unsightly set of devil horns on your head. Shortly after being entombed in the castle, you break free and find the beautiful Princess Yorda.

Progression through the castle is achieved through solving numerous puzzles and engaging in increasingly more difficult battles against your

enemy, the Shadowmen. The predominant factor in these events is Yorda. While Ico is strong enough to push levers, climb chains and ropes, traverse walls and resist attacks, your princess is almost helpless. This reliance on you for support and guidance makes for some incredibly heart-in-mouth moments.

Quite simply, *Ico* is a startlingly humanistic adventure that melts the heart and still manages to reward lateral thinking. And it's blessed with the most touching finalé you'll find in a videogame. Tears might enter the corners of your eyes. ■ **GW**

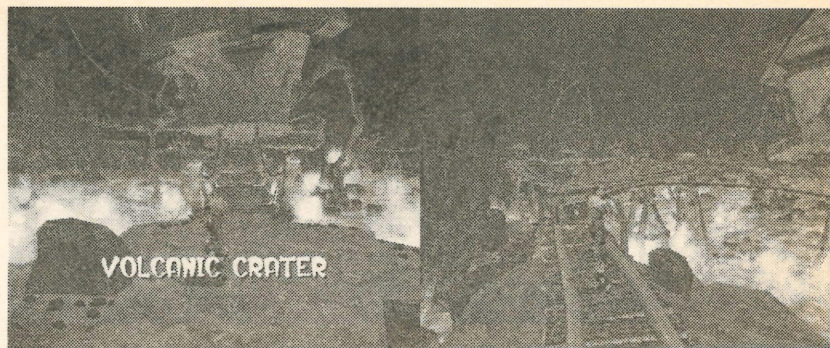
PlayStation 2
CRITICAL MAGAZINE

For those who look for something deeper in an adventure game than violent thrills, this will be a spellbinding revelation

VERDICT

9/10

Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy



JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Jak II is solid but don't overlook its older brother

So *Jak II* is bigger, darker and altogether more serious than the game that spawned it, but the original *J&D* still stands tall as a superb platformer. It's more garish, sure, and whole lot cuter, but a lot of what makes *Jak 2* so good happened in this, *The Precursor Legacy*, first.

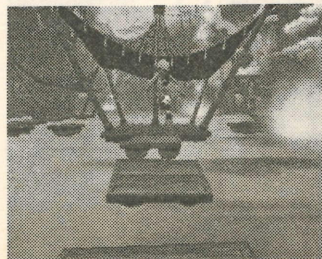
Utilising a two-character system involving both Jak and the wisecracking Daxter, you've got an immense amount of moves at your disposal, although in time-honoured fashion these are earned as you progress. But the real joy in *Jak And Daxter* comes from exploring the simply gorgeous environments on offer, and with any number of

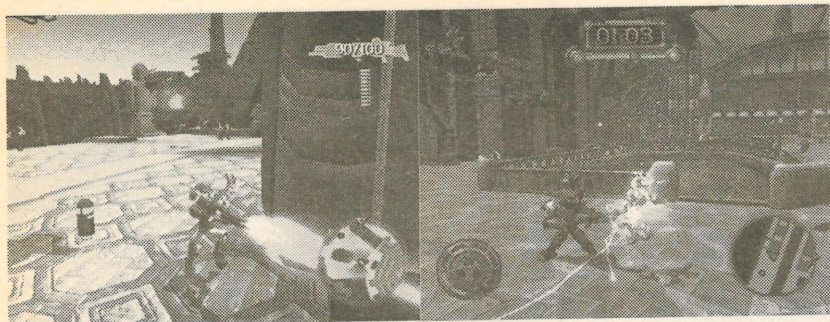
objectives to be chased up at any one point there's no time to get bored at all.

Quite simply, until *Jak II* came along, this was the PS2's premier platformer. And while it's more cartoonish and of a younger bent than the darker, more grown-up sequel, it still remains well worth checking out. ■ PF



Platform	
DETAILS	
PUBLISHER SONY	
DEVELOPER NAUGHTY DOG	
PRICE £19.99	
PLAYERS 1	
GOKZ MODE NO	
WIDESCREEN NO	
SUBROUND SOUND NO	
ONLINE NO	





PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER NAUGHTY DOG
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

JAK II: RENEGADE

The best platformer on PS2 has been reborn

Jak II is no cutesy platformer. Leaner, and with a definite suggestion of 'meaner', the game still features Dexter, the acid-tongued sidekick, but the title, like many of the new gameplay elements, is all about distancing this chapter from your preconceptions of cutesy platforming. For a start, Jak's gone all *GTA*. Forget the pastoral environments of *Jak And Daxter 1*, Haven City is a sprawling, gritty metropolis with a huge population, traffic and distinct zones.

Far from merely bolting tried and true features onto its creation regardless of relevance, there isn't a single element of *Jak II* – borrowed or brand spanking new – that hasn't been woven carefully into the experience of playing a *Jak And Daxter* game. There's quality

throughout. But quantity, too. A welcome piece of news for those who felt the original game was too easy and too brief. Short of petitioning for a 20-page review, there's little chance of conveying the full depth and variety on offer in *Jak 2*'s tasks, missions and diversions.

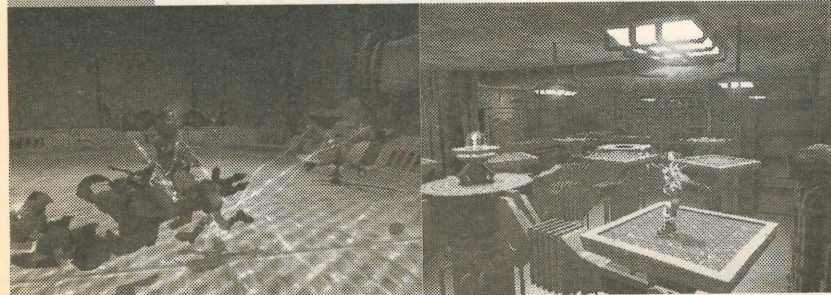
It's hard to think of a more consistently rewarding game. It's easily one of the best platformers on PS2. And if you still hold irrational disdain for platform games, consider this the killer blow to your position. *Jak II*'s not cute, it's got guns, crime, vengeance and a truly wicked sense of humour. ■ PF

PlayStation 2
Official magazine UK

VERDICT

This is an epic treat with quality that soars throughout. There's no two ways about it: you need this game

9/10



James Bond 007: Everything Or Nothing



JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

'Nobody does it better', so the song goes...

Well, they've certainly gone all out on the cash-splashing, hiring John Cleese, Judi Dench, Shannon Elizabeth, Willem Dafoe and Brosnan to do the voices that go with their perfect cyber-scanned renditions. And, this time round, you control Bond in third-person, giving you a clear view of Brosnan (or, at least, his arse).

You can lock Bond onto any target in front of him or, if he's pressed up against a corner, anyone within range. The downside is that

free-aiming is practically impossible, which can be annoying since Bond doesn't always lock on to the most threatening target.

What this game really does well though, is consistency. *EON's* good enough at everything to get away with being outrageously ambitious. Inevitably, any game that spreads itself so thin isn't going to be perfect, and even Bond can't quite keep his unflappable exterior throughout. But much like the films, *Everything Or Nothing* is essentially a massive series of brilliant set-pieces jammed together into a punter-pleasing sensory overload. As a game, this is great; as a James Bond experience though, it's an absolute classic. ■ JS



PlayStation 2



12

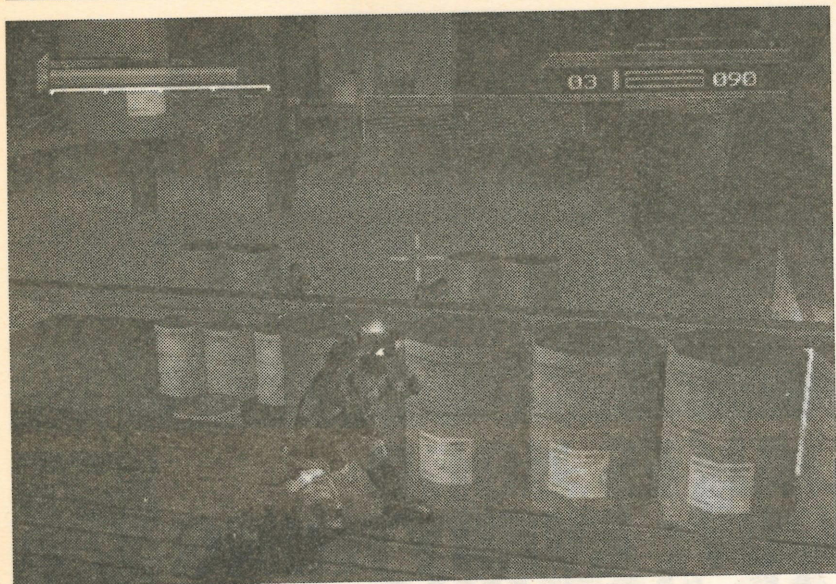
DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER EA REDWOOD SHORES
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-4
GAME MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

It won't redefine the gaming landscape, but this is an unapologetic thrill ride. Popcorn gaming at its very best

9/10



PlayStation 2

KILL SWITCH



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER NAMED
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

KILL SWITCH

Guns 'n' poses whet our appetite for destruction

There's little pretence about *Kill.switch*. It's not an adventure game rammed full of clever puzzles and key cards. There are no fancy spy cameras or night-vision goggles to fiddle with and stealth is a dirty word. Nope, it's just you, loads of guns and countless militia to battle.

More impressive is the dynamic use of cover as an aid to combat. It's almost essential to do this when fighting or you can quickly kiss your ass goodbye. Although hidden, you can still line up enemies in your sights, then spray bullets madly and inaccurately without peeking out from your haven, or you can be a little more daring and poke your nose around a corner and steal a surer shot. It takes a while to hone these skills and, while there's little need to conserve ammo, it's immensely satisfying to take out a



bunch of guys with single shots to the head while they shoot off like a pomoholic at a strip joint. Sadly it's all over too soon. It only took us a few lengthy sessions to finish on the normal difficulty setting. However, despite this, the game is still well worth revisiting and offers splendid shooting fun. ■ NE

PlayStation 2

VERDICT

Brutal and brainless it may well be, but *kill.switch* is also a hugely enjoyable shooter with some tidy innovations

8/10



KILLZONE

A game that actually lived up to all the hype

Killzone is a shooter set at an indeterminate point in the future, by which time mankind has colonised other solar systems. But while everyone else is off having sex with pleasurebots on luxury planets, one grumpy bunch of outsiders decide to set off for the distant world of Helghan. It's a hellhole, basically, and so a leader emerges with a plan to take revenge on humanity at a rally that even Hitler would've considered slightly too bombastic. And before anyone can say 'look out, Poland!', the invasion is underway...

Vastly outnumbered, you're thrown into battle as Jan Templar – an ISA special forces captain and the first of four playable characters. There's a palpable sense of actually being involved in a firefight. Particularly impressive is the way the storyline gradually unfurls.

But here's the important part: *Killzone* looks and feels different to every other shooter on PS2. If, like us, you've been reared on the Casanova smoothness of *TimeSplitters 2*, *Killzone's* comparatively slow

movement speed will come as a shock. But the more considered pace is deliberate – designed to reinforce the realism created by the outstanding visuals. It becomes addictive, with a compulsive need to see what's coming next. Put simply: as a single-player shooter, this destroys the competition, and then some. ■ TC

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

Visually amazing and the gameplay rocks harder than you dare dream. This is a true modern classic

9/10

PlayStation 2

KILLZONE

10+ DETAILS

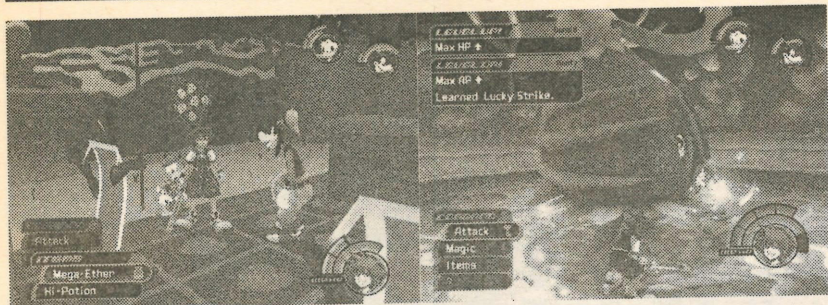
PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER GUERRILLA

PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1-16
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO



Kingdom Hearts



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SQUARE
PRICE £79.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

KINGDOM HEARTS

Royally taking the Mickey out of Disney

Like oil and water, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Square and Disney shouldn't mix. But *Kingdom Hearts* quickly banishes any doubts you may have had about Square's digital fling with the House Of Mouse. Like *Final Fantasy X* before it, the game is all-involving, and spectacularly blends RPG-style mechanics with Disney cartoon artwork to create an inspiring adventure.

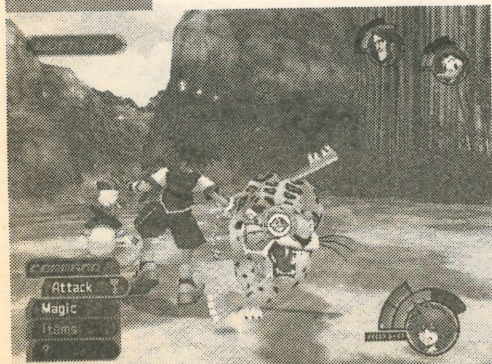
When a vortex splits Spiky-haired Sora from his friends and sucks him into another universe and he's proclaimed the 'Chosen One', he thinks things couldn't get any weirder. At which point he bumps into Donald Duck and Goofy (who are searching for the missing King



Mickey), he realises that he may well be wrong.

Plots intertwine, the three characters join forces and the quest begins across a game universe filled with cartoon worlds. The result is an action adventure that blends Square's design and narrative expertise with Disney's globally iconic characters.

Despite some fairly minor niggles, *Kingdom Hearts* is challenging, engaging and a joy to play. Brilliantly animated with pixel-perfect recreations of the Disney characters and with more than decent voice-acting, the game has the distinct feel of an animated feature-film. Allow yourself to think of this as your own private Disney movie. ■ DE

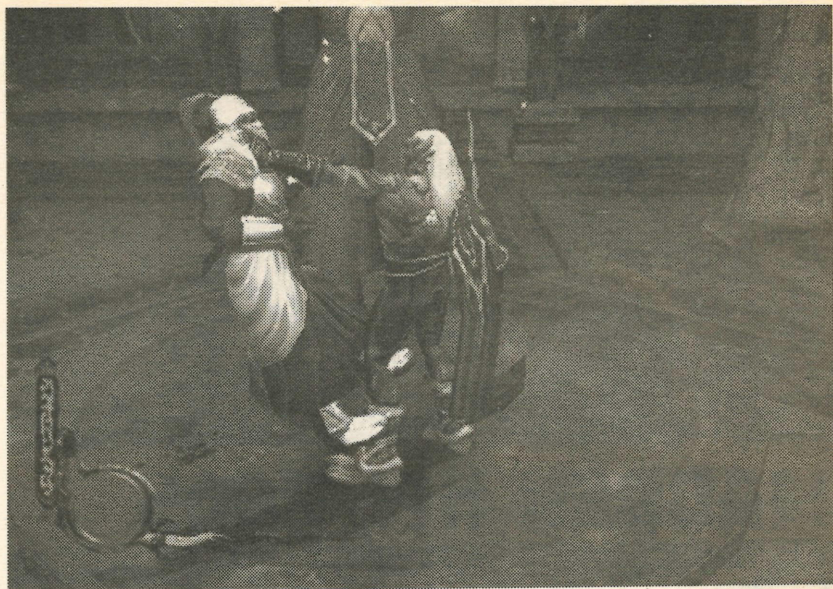


PlayStation 2

VERDICT

An enticing collaboration between Disney fantasy and Final Fantasy. It's a mix that probably shouldn't work but, somehow, does

8/10



LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

We're bats about this vampire adventure

Legacy Of Kain: Defiance is the sequel to the 1999 PSone title, *Soul Reaver*. You play the characters of Kain and Raziel, two highly-evolved gentleman vampires who exist somewhere between the material world and the spirit one. Kain and Raziel were once sworn enemies, but here, however, they've united to fight the Hylden – a force of insidious and terrible evil that threatens to take over the land of Nosgoth.

Where *Defiance* really trumps its predecessors is in the combat. Previous *Soul Reaver* titles put the onus on exploring and problem solving, but here combat is complex, fast and exciting. Now, instead of groups of enemies trundling over to twonk you one by one, you'll

experience the joys of a soldier poking you in the ass with a pitchfork while you're trying to rip his mate's throat out. And the moves themselves are more involving. Taking a leaf out of *Devil May Cry's* book of flashy fisticuffs, you can now string together punishing combos.

Legacy Of Kain: Defiance does little that hasn't been done before by the likes of *Devil May Cry*, but it looks great, sounds just as good and plays like an absolute dream. That's not enough for you? Come on now man, what more do you want... blood? ■ LP

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine UK

A powerful blend of elegant combat action and telekinesis make this an excellent choice for anyone partial to the red stuff

8/10

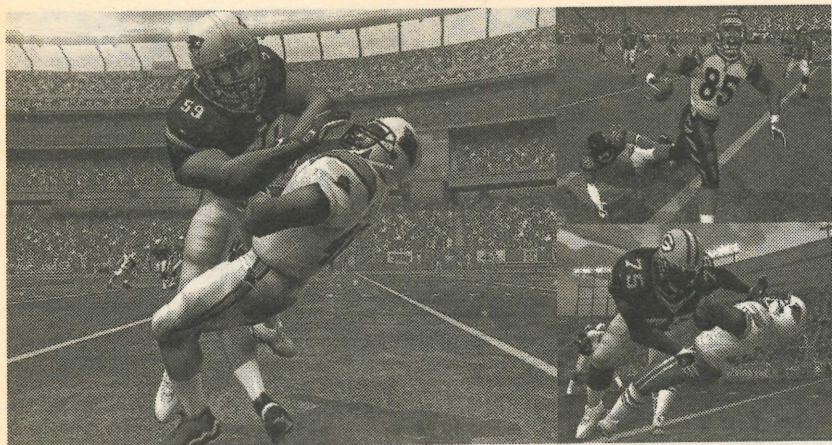
PlayStation 2

LEGACY OF KAIN

13

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
GAME MODE HD
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO



MADDEN NFL 2005

PlayStation 2

Give this a try or you'll be cheating yourself



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA SPORTS
 DEVELOPER TIBERON
 PRICE £39.99
 PLAYERS 1-8
 60HZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN YES
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO

Someone this side of the US/Euro divide must play *Madden*, or they wouldn't keep releasing it – but you try finding someone who'll confess to it. Which is a shame, because the games have been uniformly brilliant for years. As ever, the 2005 version heads over here with plenty of new and improved features, making it once again the only American football sim you'll ever need.

The only downside to *Madden* – especially in the single-player mode

– has always been having to defend half the time, as attacking is so much more fun. So defending has been tweaked to be more aggressive and easier to control. The most obvious change is the endlessly amusing Hit Stick – flick the right analogue stick to give the runner going past you a right twatting – but there's also more sense of controlling the tactical battle against the runners and quarterback.

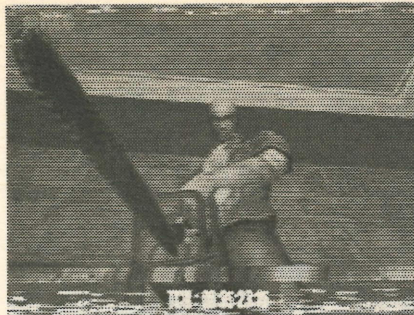
We simply don't have the space here to give you a full sense of *Madden NFL 2005's* depth of play – there's as much to do and as many gameplay hours as any *Final Fantasy* or *Grand Theft Auto* game. Whether you want to build your very own team, create players, monitor morale levels, train new draftees or just get very, very good at it, it's all here. Sports sims just don't get much better than this. ■ RK



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

The perfect US footie game just gets better and better. Give it a try – you'll be surprised by how good it actually is

9/10



MANHUNT

A pretty damn shocking game. Snuff said

James Earl Cash should know something about death, as he was one lethal injection away from experiencing it. But he didn't get to rest in peace. Instead, Cash has become the lone star of a series of snuff movies imagined by the hands of his resurrector and self-styled director, Lionel Starkweather. This is *Manhunt*. And believe us when we tell you: it's nasty.

The script is primary school simple. You're placed in the dank environs of Carcer City and Cash's role is to survive. His co-stars are a series of increasingly vicious 'hunters' that have been employed by Starkweather to kill you.

But Cash has the killer instinct. Starting with glass shards and plastic bags, he's introduced to Starkweather's film method. Cash

has to perform close-quarter kills, and the resulting death is viewed as the illustrious director sees it on his TV monitor, captured by the numerous cameras located throughout his macabre playground – think XXX-rated *Crimestoppers* CCTV footage.

Manhunt is a sick, censor-baiting fantasy, but one that you can't help but be drawn into from the moment you taste first blood. It's killing for culture, and it's doing it in the most appallingly graphic way possible. Against all our better judgements, we're enjoying it... but beware, the novelty will soon wear off. ■ **GW**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

A compelling gaming experience. Morally questionable? Certainly, but Rockstar is all about gaming on the edge

8/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
ROCKSTAR GAMES

DEVELOPER
ROCKSTAR NORTH

PRICE: £39.99

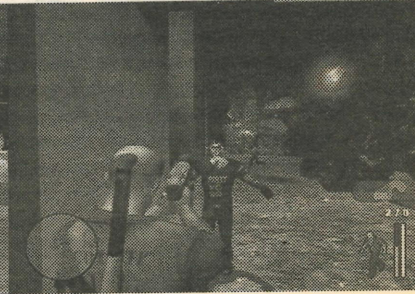
PLAYERS: 1

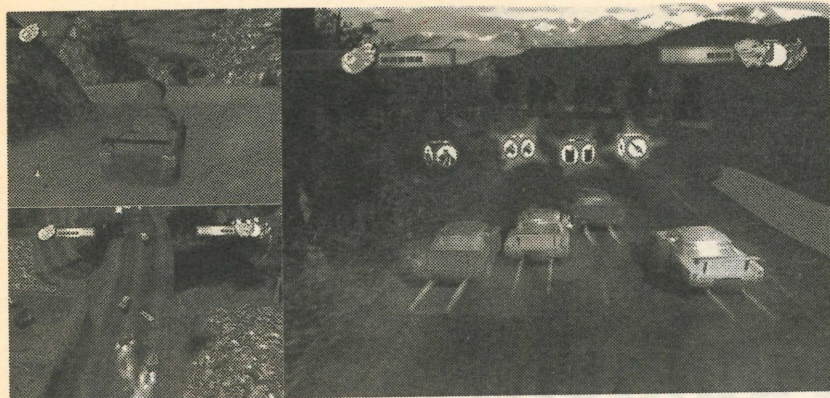
60HZ MODE: NO

WIDESCREEN: YES

SURROUND SOUND: YES

ONLINE: NO





PlayStation 2



12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EMPIRE INTERACTIVE

DEVELOPER
SUPERSONIC

PRICE
£29.99

PLAYERS
2-4

60HZ MODE
NO

WIDESCREEN
NO

SURROUND SOUND
NO

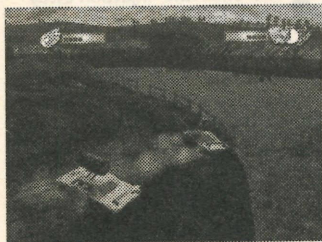
ONLINE
NO

MASHED

What do you mean you don't own a multitar?

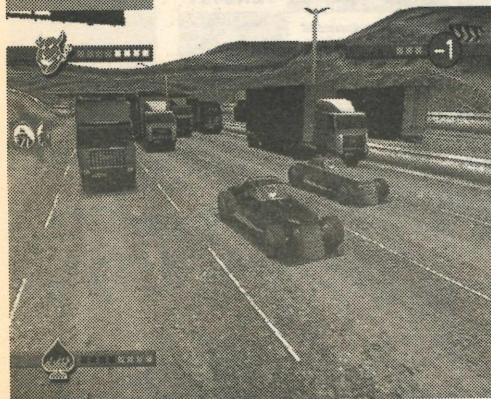
There's an uneven quality to *Mashed's* brilliance. When the game roars off, you'll wonder if the development team didn't sell their souls as a job lot in return for gameplay so addictive it makes your teeth itch. But on the flipside there are moments when the game can leave you feeling short changed. And when we say 'moments' we actually mean 'virtually an entire mode'. And when we say 'virtually an entire mode', we mean, well...

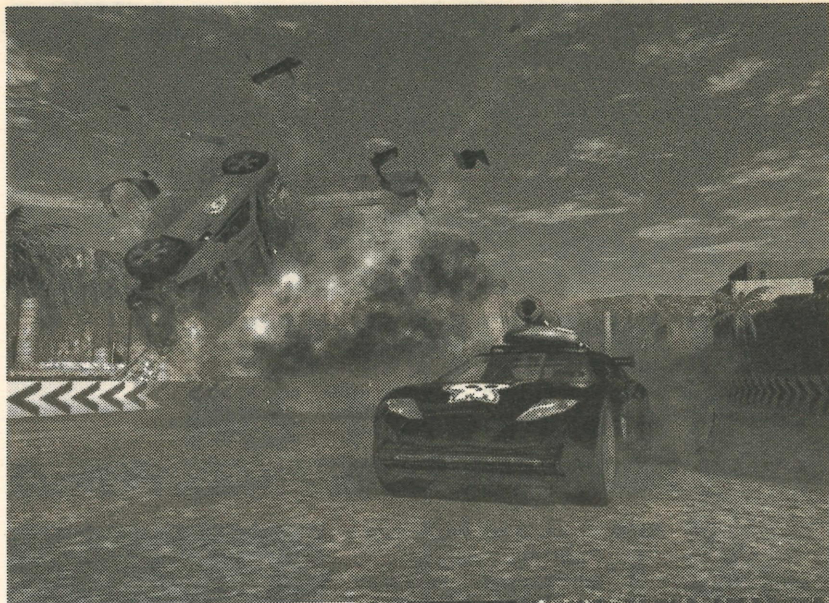
Ah, sod it. It's the single-player



game, okay? If ever a game lived for a bulging multitar and a room thick with the swearing of rutting alpha males, this is it.

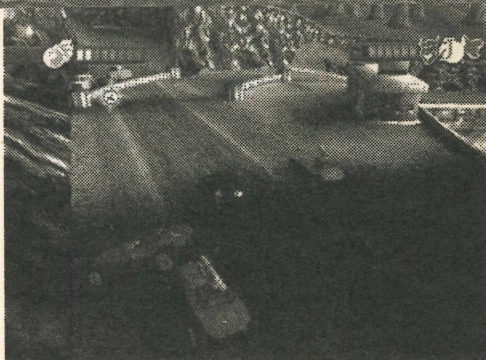
But what exactly is *Mashed*? In no-frills game-o-speak, you're looking at a top-down racing game in the mould of *Micro Machines*, except without the toy cars, and there's nary a hint of a split-screen to spoil the view. With the exception





of the rare three-lap race and special event, this is about scoring points, and you do this by outstripping the other drivers and dragging the game's faithful camera with you.

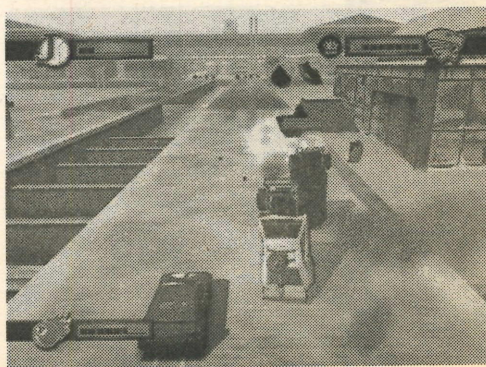
We're not even sure why they bothered with the single-player game. The multiplayer is so much fun, it's easily reason enough to make a career hermit buy a multitap, dust off the address book, shave the beard, hide the bottles of urine... you get the idea. ■ PF



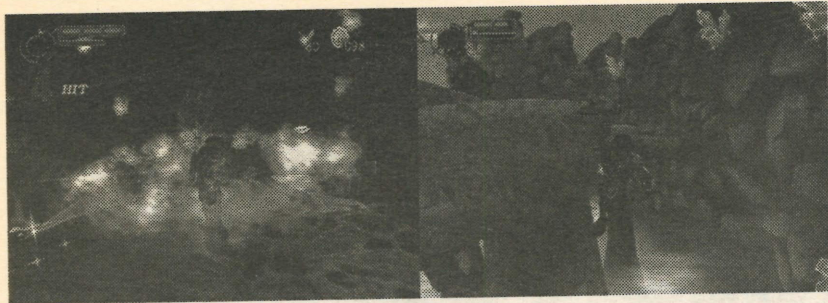
PlayStation 2 VERDICT
official.mashed.ux

Forget the dire single-player game, the true Mashed experience is really about four mates, a PS2 and a multitap. Enjoy...

9/10



Maximo Vs Army Of Zin



PlayStation 2



12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

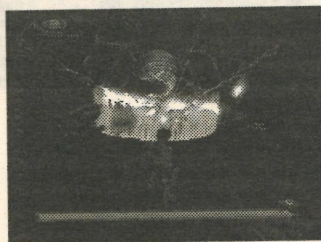
MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN

Get made up with the Max factor

This sequel sees the diminutive titular knight return for what's essentially more of the same, and that's fine by us.

Although the platforming side of things has been toned down, the combat element's been ramped up and it's certainly less tricky than the last *Maximo* game. Indeed, despite the prevalence of gold coins and the numerous gaping canyons and lava pits to traverse on wobbly rock formations, the game feels more like an adventure than a platformer.

Maximo is now equipped with around double the amount of the hitting moves that he uses to deal



with enemies, half of which have to be purchased with the treasure you're forever picking up on the journey. And once again, these moves are performed in much the same fashion as a beat-'em-up, requiring the bashing of buttons in particular combinations. It's all very simple to get the hang of but thoroughly satisfying.

Maximo Vs The Army Of Zin is a little lightweight and there's not a great deal of innovation going on here, but the action never lets up and the combat is great fun. It's certainly a lot closer to gaming Heaven than gaming Hell. ■ NE



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

A combat-heavy platformer with an excellent and engaging storyline, Army Of Zin never fails to entertain

8/10



Shotgun Ammo full

87 / 170
Dual Ingrams

MAX PAYNE

Making Rambo look like a pacifist

If there's one thing guaranteed to turn a good cop into a bitter, whiskey-soaked wreck, it's a tragic crossover of work and family life. Haunted by the apparently motiveless slaughter of his wife and child, undercover detective Max Payne becomes obsessed with tracking down those who are responsible.

The game is dark and extremely violent. Packing a variety of weapons, Max stalks around one of the dirtiest, seediest cityscapes we've seen in a videogame, leaving a trail of bullet-riddled bodies on his way through. Filthy subway stations and low-rent apartment blocks are stuffed full of bad guys, all out to prevent our kill-crazy hero from reaching the clues that

will lead him ever closer to the crime lords who set the events of the game in motion.

While there's some minor exploration to be done, switches to be flipped and various puzzles to be solved, the majority of *Max Payne* consists of bursting into rooms full of bad guys and spraying them with enough lead to make long-term environmental health hazards of their corpses.

It's high-quality, high-concept stuff, and something that still bears comparison with some of the best action games on PS2. ■ MK

	VERDICT
<i>An atmospheric shooter, with a dark storyline and heart-thumping battle scenes</i>	7 / 10

PlayStation 2 
DETAILS
PUBLISHER TAKE 2 DEVELOPER REMEDY PRICE £19.99 PLAYERS 1 60HZ MODE NO WIDESCREEN NO SURROUND SOUND NO ONLINE NO



PlayStation 2

MERCENARIES

A GAME OF DESTRUCTION



DETAILS

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION/
LUCASARTS

DEVELOPER PANDEMIC

PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1

COOP MODE NO

WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND YES

ONLINE NO

MERCENARIES

A very special blend of murder and mayhem...

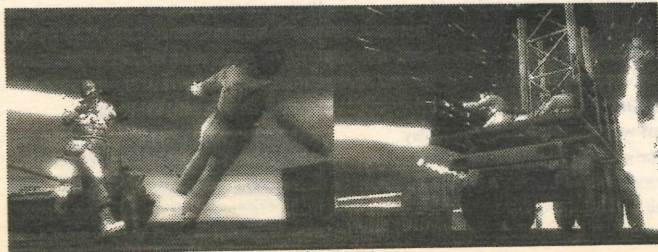
Mercenaries is built on the same free-roaming principles as *GTA: San Andreas*, but despite this, the experience is deliciously fresh.

The game takes the 'toybox' template and throws in a grenade-shaped rattle. And where *San Andreas* swaggers with criminal menace, *Mercs* has the giggle of a pyromaniac.

After only an hour you'll understand why one of the

promotional slogans is 'Playground Of Destruction'. Hijacking a civilian car, driving to snowy plains, jumping out, commandeering a tank, ordering your aerial support team to level a building then jumping in a helicopter and flying off into the sunset... outside of the obvious, no other game offers such alluringly varied thrills.

Using the familiar control system is a masterstroke, made even more notable because the on-foot action

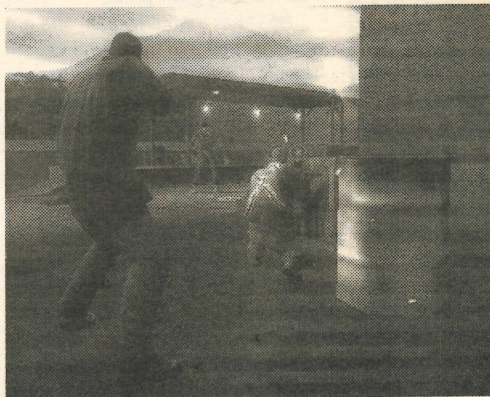




is a huge improvement over *San Andreas*. FPS-style shooting and aiming has been adapted to work elegantly with the third-person perspective. And instead of a spazzy lock-on system, the game guides your hand with auto-aim, making targeting quick and easy.

Landing in the warzone as a contracted bounty hunter, it's up to you to look for war criminals operating beyond the reach of the allied forces. Your targets are numerous – 52 in all, given code-names taken from a pack of cards – but to get them all you'll have to make contact with each of the military forces making powerplays in the area, and then all your paymasters happy through the missions you embark upon.

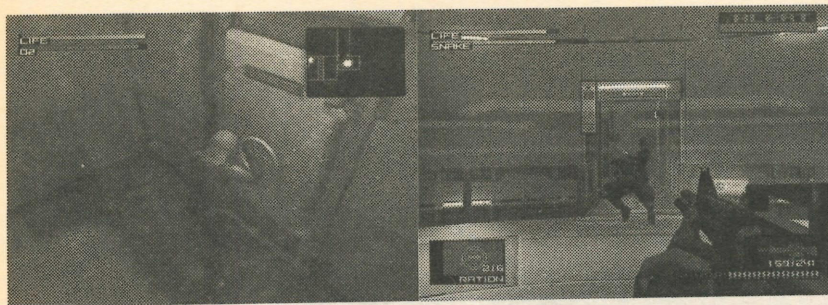
Every now and then you'll discover the odd glitch, and the trigger-happy AI occasionally extends to friendly troops who open fire and blow your cover. But these frustrations are tiny blemishes on an otherwise immaculately



presented gaming experience.

We'd often wondered where the boundaries of PS2 gaming would take us next. Who'd have known it was going to be to the Korean DMZ? May we recommend you book a flight there immediately. ■ MF

 PlayStation 2 <small>Official magazine UK</small>	VERDICT
<i>What a way to start 2005. Near-limitless in its scope and power, Mercenaries is the first brilliant game of the year – don't miss it</i>	9 / 10



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

A true classic worthy of its golden score

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI
DEVELOPER KCEJ
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

This is a seamless and utterly convincing imagined world. It is, to put it another way, a bloody great game.

MGS2 has a winding plot, and it would be unfair to those who haven't played it (anyone?) to reveal too much of what unfolds. However, there is one element that there's simply no hiding from. During *MGS2* you get to play as two characters. Solid Snake (natch), but also as a golden-tressed Foxhound rookie, known by the code-name Raiden.

There's a bewildering amount of things you can do in *MGS2*. You can pick up and drag unconscious and



recently 'neutralised' enemies out of the way of patrolling comrade – shake them and they'll drop items. Want to hide them in a locker? You can. Want to throw them over the side of a ship? Can do. How about drawing a gun on them at close quarters, entering first-person view and watching them squirm, eventually giving up ammo, rations and – yes – their precious dog tags?

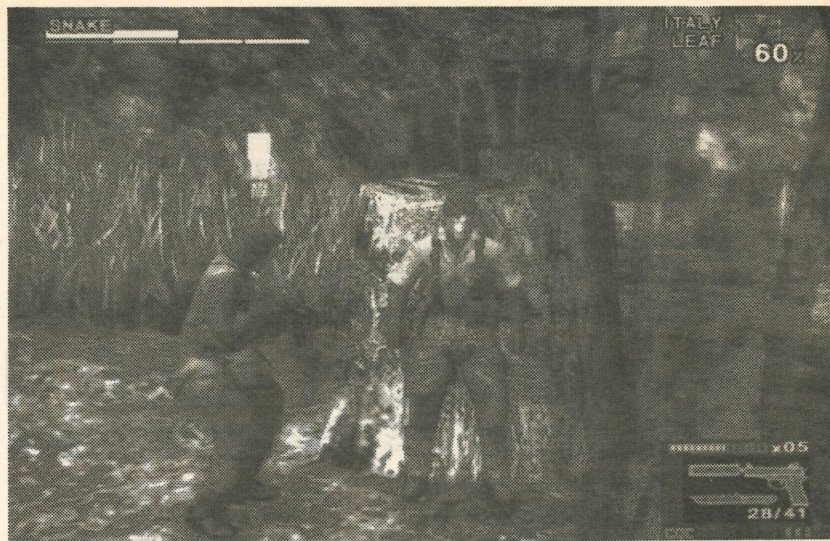
The result of all this flexibility is that whereas the core gameplay is essentially similar to that of its predecessor's, your responses to any given threat and scenario have increased exponentially. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Gaming with intelligence and soul. A rare conjunction of vision, technical virtuosity and hardware. You really should own this game

10/10





METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

This is MGS '60s style, and it's tasty stuff

PlayStation 2

Here's a tale that's as overly dramatic as it is gripping. Snake's story is about a man who becomes destroyed by his environment, physically (there's a reason why he's got an eyepatch on the box) and emotionally, treading the minefield of war and what it does to its soldiers.

The end result is an irresistible package that's tied up and carefully sealed with one of the most fast-paced and flawless showdowns you'll ever find in a videogame. The first confusing hours turn out to be all worth it for the game's final three, with on-rails shooting, a huge showdown and final moments that stretch the definition of gameplay but ask you to participate directly in the decisions that shape the future of this world and the characters within it, right up to a teary-eyed

goodbye (hold **RB** during the closing moments to see Snake well up).

And it helps that the presentation is flawless. Graphically it excels, creating an involving world that's distinctive but consistent. Detail can be found in every environment – be that objects on desks, or the wildlife hidden around (look out for the great moments when, as you duck into the tall grass for cover, a snake slithers by or a rabbit hops past).

Snake Eater may not be perfect, it may be pretentious, flabby and long-winded. But it's exciting and dynamic. It's also utterly unique, and that's what makes it one of the best action games around ■ MF

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE US

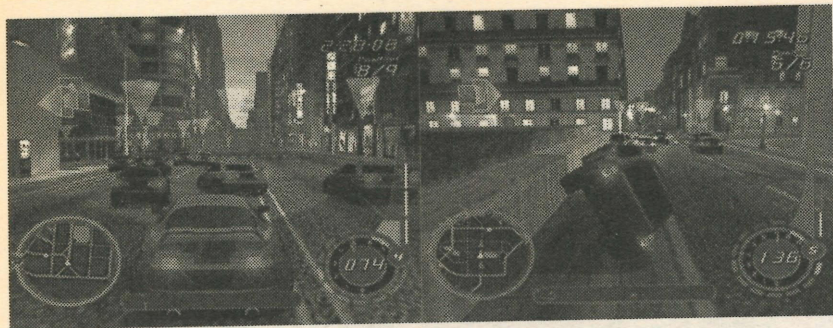
A jungle remix where the result is a symphonic adventure that gets a firm grip on you, and then swallows you whole

9/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI
DEVELOPER KONAMI
PRICE £59.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PRICE £30.99
PLAYERS 1-8
GOHIZ MODE NO.
WIDESCREEN NO.
SURROUND SOUND NO.
ONLINE YES

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

Fast, illegal and undeniably brilliant

There's nothing else out there to stroke your gearstick in quite the same way as this. It's unlike any racer that came before it – especially the first *Midnight Club*.

The first thing you'll notice is the sense of sheer velocity that the game produces. Granted, you start with an economy car, but you quickly graduate to vehicles that feel less like cars than wingless jets. They charge through the city at three-digit speeds, skidding around corners and launching over ramps, with tyre-shredding voracity.

The beautiful thing about it is the controls. They're tuned so perfectly that you can drive your vehicle at breakneck speeds – provided your reflexes can keep up. And rather than delivering single tracks, *MCII*

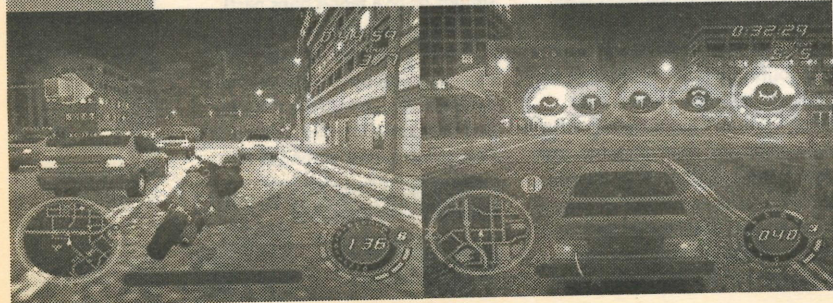
loads an entire city (first LA, then Paris, and eventually Tokyo) and then places checkpoints all over the map. It's up to you to work out the best route between these points. To start with, this is simple stuff, but later in the game, when for example you find yourself faced with 15 checkpoints that can be tagged in any order, the beauty, freedom, and impressiveness of this approach become clear.

The feeling you get from exploiting a newly found shortcut or having to speed off as the cops try to close down a race is a buzz unlike any other. **■ EB**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**

The first great online racer for PS2, with exhilarating speed, colourful attitude and tight-as-a-drum controls

8/10



Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance



MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

Kicks, katanas... and plenty of klaret...

Mortal Kombat has a long history, but not every entry into the series has been a success. The first thing that strikes you about *Deadly Alliance* is that this game is no limp revamp. From the sweep of katana to the spatter of ichor, *MK:DA* looks and sounds fabulous throughout.

It's all very well to freeze or electrocute someone, but to take down an opponent with a well-practised Aikido throw or Tae Kwon Do kick is about as close as many of us will ever get to being a tough guy. The attention of martial arts accuracy is one of the game's major strengths. Each character is endowed with three faithfully recreated fighting styles which you can toggle between at any time, and the three forms allotted to each character will take time to perfect in open combat.

However, one of the most widely anticipated aspects of any *Mortal Kombat* game is the range of Fatalities. And while there's only one per character, they don't disappoint.

You get brains being ripped out, blood being puked up, severe neck trauma and even the odd belly flop. Such a variety of ways to finish your victim – and none of them very sportsmanlike. It's another incentive, if one were needed, to totally trounce your opponent. ■ **MW**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
Official magazine list

A truly individual and spectacular-looking game, only held back by its specialist appeal and lack of depth

8/10

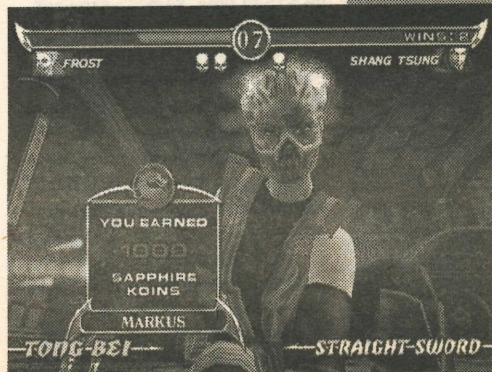
PlayStation 2

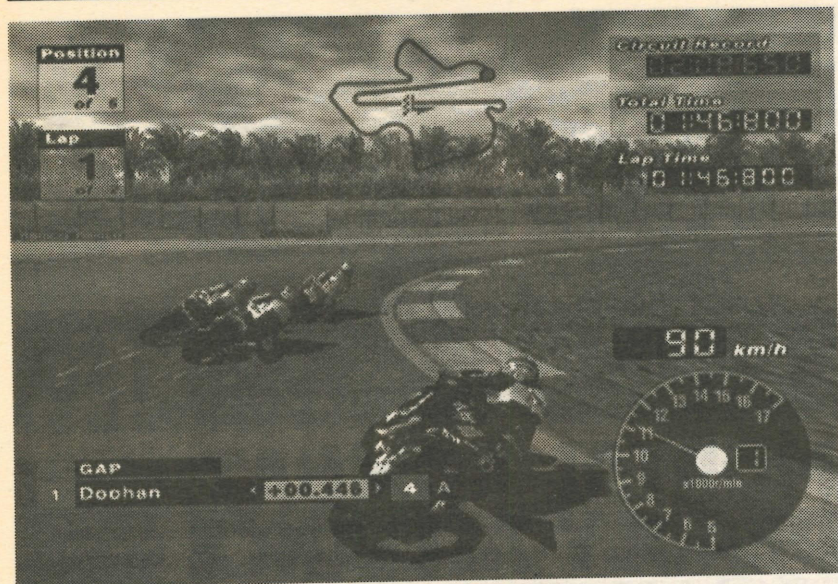


Platinum

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: MIDWAY
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY (CHICAGO)
PRICE: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-2
GRAPHIC MODE: HD
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUNDING SOUND: NO
ONLINE: NO





MOTO GP3

Man and machine united on two wheels



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER NAMCO
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-4
GAMZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

When it comes to extreme sports, superbike racing is right up there with totemo surfing and alligator wrestling in the danger stakes, and makes Tony Hawk and co look like a bunch of choir boys dressed up for a Sunday school outing. Rolling up to the starting grid for a third time, Namco's excellent bike sim delivers all the thrills and spills of the real thing, but without the need to reconstruct limbs with metal plates and pins after a horrific 200mph crash.

The number of circuits has been ramped up to 15 – Valencia, Brno, Phillip Island, Estoril and Sepang being the debutantes – meaning you can now race a full season proper – plus there are 20 unlockable 'fantasy tracks', too. The number of challenges in Challenge mode has also increased from 72 to 100. Best



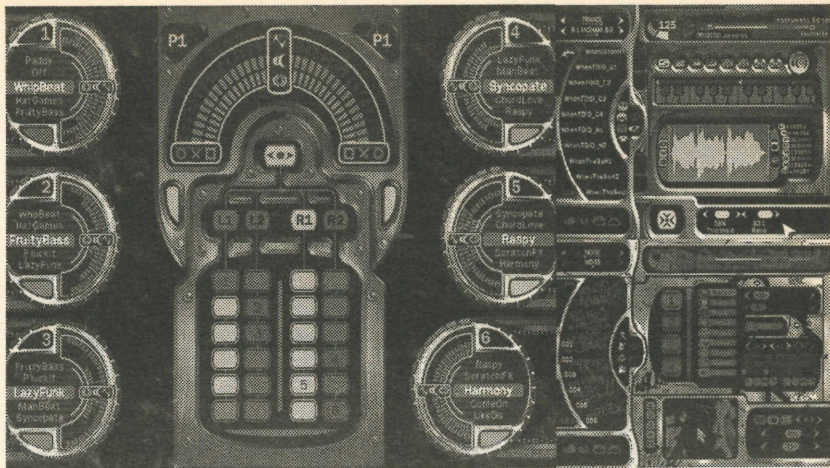
of all though, the game now supports a four-player race mode.

Call it a rehash if you want, but it's another top-notch sim of a sport that has all the right ingredients for a videogame. Buy it if you loved the others, and buy it if you love racing games. Just don't come crying to us when you fall off. ■ **NE**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine UK

By no means a revolution in any shape or form, but it's still a highly recommended and quality racer, with plenty of depth

8/10



MUSIC 3000

Your pop career starts here...

Music 3000 is all about creativity. It's addictive, universally entertaining stuff. What you get is a feature-packed sampler/sequencer that's ready-loaded with thousands of adaptable riffs for you to play with. These are split into four categories – including drums, harmonies and vocals – and then sub-divided into six genres: trance, metal, pop, garage, hip-hop and indie.

Metal is a cornucopia of meaty guitar riffs and thudding drums; garage provides enough throbbing bass to give the So Solid Crew tinnitus and pop has all those squiddy 'can't get you out of my head' beats that bug you for days after watching *Top Of The Pops*.

Putting these into a song is, as you'd expect from this series, laughably easy. You select the riff, drag it across to the 64 channel editor and drop it in. Want to listen to the tune you're working on? Simply guide the cursor to the

beginning of the song. Now simply keep adding more riffs and loops (on separate tracks, of course) until you've created your very own three-minute pop masterpiece. Every PS2 gamer with an atom of musical ambition in their DNA needs to give this a try. ■ **KS**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

A mighty authoritative music title, which works both as a fun diversion and a serious tool for making your own tracks

9/10

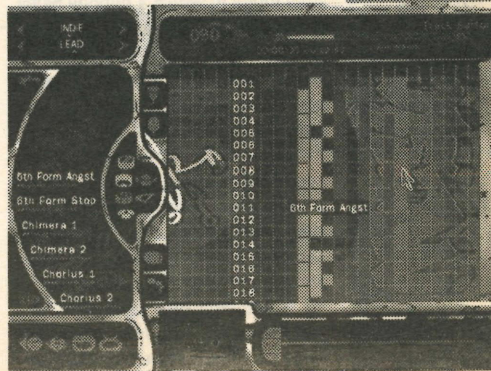
PlayStation 2

MUSIC 3000

3+ ADVISORY

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: JESTER INTERACTIVE
 DEVELOPER: JESTER INTERACTIVE
 PRICE: £29.99
 PLAYERS: 1
 GOTH MODE: NO
 WIDESCREEN: NO
 SURROUND SOUND: NO
 ONLINE: NO





PlayStation 2



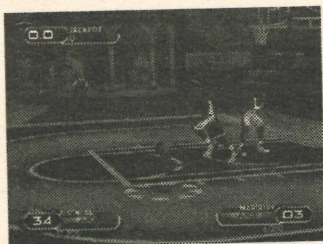
DETAILS

PUBLISHER MIDWAY
 DEVELOPER MIDWAY
 PRICE £29.99
 PLAYERS 1-7
 60HZ MODE YES
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SINGLESOUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE YES

NBA BALLERS

Draw on your preserves and pump up the Jam

This is basketball slimmed down to the bones: one-on-one action, and you share a hoop. It'll appeal to basketball greenhorns more than *NBA Live* or *ShootOut* but that doesn't mean it's limited to them; far from it. An impressive roster of NBA stars is a fan's delight. Rags-to-riches is the story mode in which a nobody baller climbs the celebrity ladder by beating all comers. TV Tournament is set up like a fighting game – beat opponents in best-of-threes to progress. In both cases, the aim is the same: dunk, slam, dribble, juke and showboat your ass off in search of victory and unlockables such as gear, more players, and even cars. A generous variety of snaztastic moves are appended to every player and it's in accomplishing these that the joy of the game lies. Juice plays the same part Turbo played in *NBA Jam*



and a 'House' meter fills as you impress the crowd.

Ballers isn't 'proper' b-ball but it isn't baby stuff either. Mastery of the moves is needed to mix it with the big boys. MC Supernatural's constant presence might get on your nerves, but it isn't enough to spoil the welter of flashy goodness. ■ PR

PlayStation 2
Official Magazine

VERDICT

This is a super-simplified yet surprisingly deep basketball experience that should easily slam dunk its way onto your PS2

8/10



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Fancy cars, high speed thrills and Kelly Brook

You start off as the new boy in town with a lowly car and the task of winning cash to improve it. But as this is open city racing, you drive from one race to the next using the map to get to the rendezvous. Which, at the start, is a little irritating because all you want to do is get to the start point and make some loot.

But the fictional city of Bayview is enormous (five times the size of *NFSU*'s tracks), which means more races. The sprint and circuit races are all set within the city, but apart from a few mini shortcuts, you can only follow the path of the set course. Drift racing has new bonus areas for extra points, but the new mode, Street X, is dull. The outrun races are the highlight – you can flit around the city, tramping all over 'Johnny Come Last' in a tangerine Corsa.



The sense of speed is superb, but the handling isn't so hot – it's too easy to get stuck with understeer. However, for the driving enthusiast there's a firm place for *NFSU2* because it does things other racers of its kind don't. The upgrading, the full city runs, the race variety and Kelly Brook on the box for starters. Only want one racing game? You'd perhaps be better off elsewhere, but if neon-soaked speed thrills are your thing, this is where it's at. ■ **RK**

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

The open racing isn't entirely successful, but as an expanded version of *NFSU*, it's an addictive, fast and hugely satisfying racer

8/10

PlayStation 2

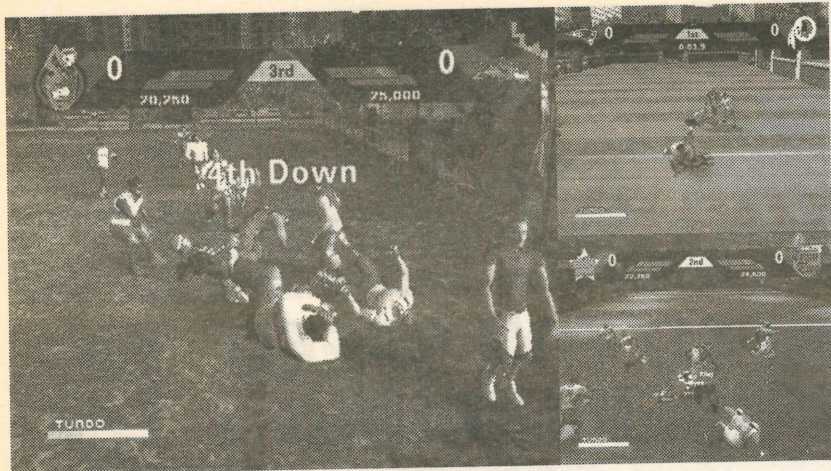


3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER EA VANGUARD
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES





PlayStation 2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
 DEVELOPER EA TIBOURN
 PRICE £39.99
 PLAYERS 1-4
 60HZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN YES
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO

NFL STREET 2

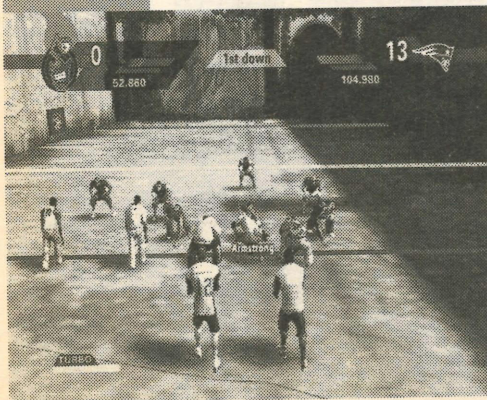
Man-grappling, and not a wrestler in sight

In England we have a full contact sport played in the street; it's called fighting and is refereed by people called The Police. In America they call it 'Football', although why they call it this is one of life's eternal mysteries. Football is football, and don't get us started on that whole 'saw-ker' thing...

It's fortunate then, that *NFL Street 2* has a comprehensive tutorial mode to explain the mysteries of the sport.

Each layer of American football's tactics is introduced one at a time and then reinforced by playing variations on the basic game. In fact, one of *Street 2*'s major strengths is its diversity. Nearly every facet of tactics or skill is covered in a mode, and it's not just for fun – points can be earned and spent enhancing character's stats.

Rather than the constant athleticism and skills of real football, the American game has all the planning of a small war, only with better sponsorship. It might be an incomprehensible affair to most, but that shouldn't stop you strapping on some pads for *NFL Street 2*. For once, hanging around the streets with a padded crotch and a pastel shirt might actually be acceptable. Now we just can't wait for '*Street Scrabble*'. Word! ■ LH



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

It won't replace PES4 as the postpub knockabout, but it does make a refreshing change for anyone willing to give it a try

8/10



OBSCURE

Steer clear of pre-marital sex to survive

Obscure takes place in a US high school littered with more firearms and fresh-faced teens than you can shake a Michael Moore documentary at. Of course, the setting is close to genius, in a head-smackingly obvious way.

Indeed, much of the game feels thoroughly modern, borrowing the best bits from other PS2 shockers – *Silent Hill's* auto-annotating map, *Ghosthunter's* sweeping torch, *Resident Evil's* dramatic entrances – and then adding touches like co-operative play and 'gathering points', which you can jump back to at any time.

Best of all are the teenagers – the expected stoners, geeks, popular girls and jocks – all straight from Slasher Central Casting, but far more

enjoyable to hang out with than the usual horror game-type stiff. Here's the thing, though: it's precisely because *Obscure* does so many things well that its flaws are thrown into sharper relief. Go back to that genius setup. Obviously you want the school's corridors to be haunted by a Myers, a Voorhees, or even a Krueger. But no, instead we get craptacular fleshbeasts shrouded in oily black smoke (they're sensitive to light, so smashing windows works in the day). And barring the odd jump when a monster crashes through a window, they're a bit of a disappointment. ■ TC

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Obscure offers a refreshing spin on horror staples, but fails to correct some of the flaws. Plenty for gore hounds to enjoy, though

7/10

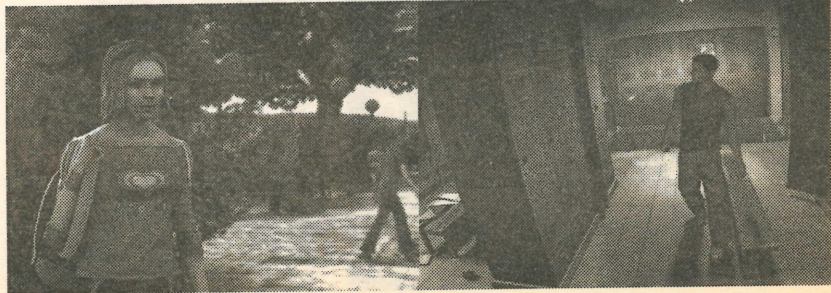
PlayStation 2

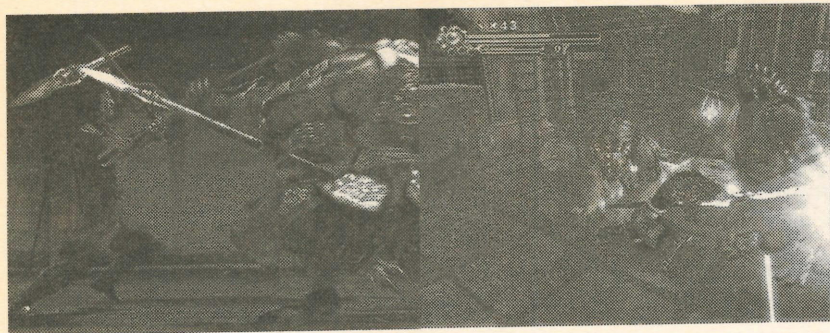


12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER HYDRAVISION
ENTERTAINMENT
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GOTHZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO





ONIMUSHA 3

Anyone know the French for 'excellent'? Oh, right...

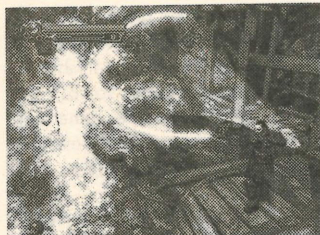
PlayStation 2



10+
DETAILS
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PRODUCTION STUDIO 2
PRICE: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1
60HZ MODE: YES
WIDESCREEN: NO
SUBBORDING SOUND: YES
ONLINE: NO

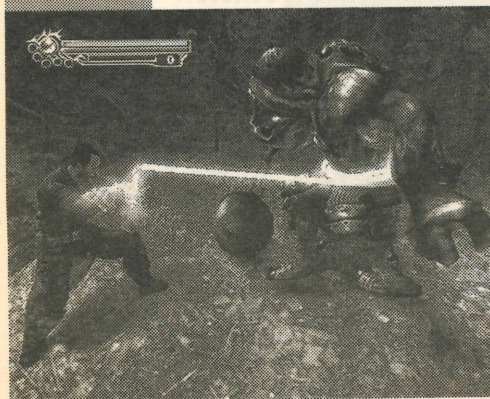
The final game in the *Onimusha* trilogy transports much of the action from feudal Japan to modern-day Paris, where Lord Nobunaga's supernatural army is on the attack. The same plot contrivance also brings the hero from the first game, a mighty samurai called Samanosuke, to the present.


The game wisely dispenses with the funnies and instead focuses on the whole demon-slaughtering angle. The Parisian setting and twin hero system are the game's boldest strokes, and both freshen the gameplay noticeably. Also successful is the shift to 3D visuals, which

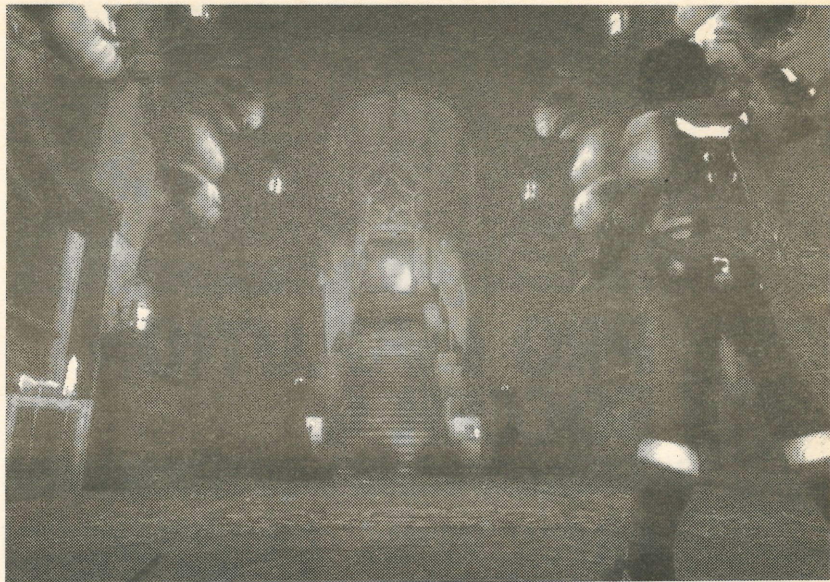


retain the eye-watering sharpness of previous instalments, while enabling a dynamic camera that stays tight on the action.

The most important improvement is in the fighting system. The key is keeping the basic moves simple but oh-so-satisfying to use, then adding layers of depth in the form of pyrotechnic special attacks, charge moves and timing-based counters that slice demons apart instantly. The trilogy signs off with an astonishingly enjoyable adventure that pushes the PS2's technical capabilities and delivers consistently high entertainment value. Book your Eurostar ticket now; Paris is where it's at. ■ TC



 PlayStation 2 <small>Official magazine</small>	VERDICT
<i>The perfect climax to a great PS2 franchise. Onimusha 3 has been lovingly crafted for newcomers and old hands alike</i>	9 /10



PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

There's definitely an acrobat in there, too...

Taking cues from the first game's time-travel theme, the prince – having cheated his fated death at the end of *Sands Of Time* – is on the run through time. He's being chased by Dahaka (a timeline guardian and Terminator-like monster who can appear almost anywhere at will) as he travels to stop the creation of the sands at – ah, how fortunate – a castle protected by antique security.

At first glance, the fleshed out sword swinging is overcomplicated and unwelcome. It seems to come with the proviso that you mustn't mind getting into lengthy scraps between each platforming section and that battles serve only to artificially lengthen the experience. But peer beyond the daunting

introduction and you'll find that the added swordplay elements are in fact hugely versatile. A visually impressive repertoire of battle moves have been introduced, along with being able to pick up temporary second weapons that double as a projectile to throw at enemies.

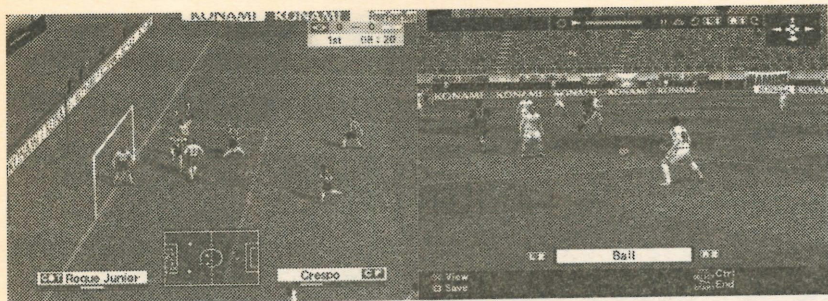
But the real buzz of playing *Warrior Within* hinges on the vertigo-inducing moments that force you to make a leap of faith, to run up walls and swing from flagpoles onto dangling ropes. The overall impact is a huge, electrifying thrill. ■ MF

 PlayStation 2 <small>OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK</small>	VERDICT
<i>The darker focus is just an OTT sheen. Beneath the surface you'll find the prince is on incredible form. It's one hell of a game</i>	9 / 10

PlayStation 2
PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN

16
DETAILS
PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER UBISOFT
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

Pro Evolution Soccer 4



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

The New Religion is nigh... Hallelujah!

PlayStation 2

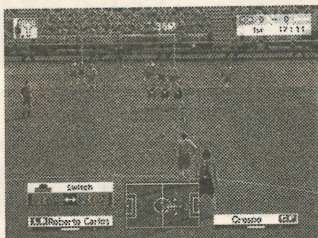
3. PS2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI
DEVELOPER KCE TOKYO
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-8
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

Where *Pro Evo 3* was a quantum leap in quality over *PES2* thanks to a complete overhaul of the animation system, *PES4* satisfies itself with refining all that was good about its predecessor. As in real football, passing is now the most important skill to master, and you really have to work to retain possession – passes are no longer magnetically drawn to the nearest team-mate; you have to pick out a man and judge the pace of the ball rather than simply letting the computer do the work.

Player AI has been taken to a new



level. Goal-poachers play off the shoulder of their marker, timing runs to perfection and slipping through the offside trap. Defenders have also tightened up their act, tracking back better and covering any unmarked players.

There are still only 56 fully licensed teams within the game's generous tally of 136 club sides, which doesn't look so good alongside *FIFA 2005*'s licence-flexing total accuracy. Next year they'll better it, somehow they always do, but who cares? *PES* is the greatest footie franchise of all time and a cast iron must-buy. ■ LH



PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Still not quite as good as actually playing football with your legs but, rather worryingly, PES is getting there. A true masterpiece

10/10



PROJECT: SNOWBLIND

It didn't leave us cold, just hankering for more

Snowblind is brilliantly fast paced and has excellent production values, but those qualities only highlight with big neon flashes that the game is so brief. In fact, this contrary nature seems to have accidentally become the template for the entire game – it wrestles with being exceptionally well made, but in much the same way a string vest could be considered well made.

Forgive the similarity to the none-more-bland *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* – the shooting in this is much more fun. Even the technology powering the game seems intent to set *Snowblind* up for greatness. The physics are wonderfully bouncy and solid – enemies collapse with a chunkiness that looks much better

than jittery, cartoony ragdoll physics, and the feel of the weapons is so satisfying, especially when triggering the secondary fire grenades in the carbine gun or the cloud of electrified marbles launched by the flechette.

But *Project: Snowblind* is intent to waver between being your best mate and a complete and utter bastard. It has some of the best gameplay on PS2, but it's a heartbreakingly short game. It's worth every note you pay for it – that's if you can find it second hand or in the sales. ■ MF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE **VERDICT**

A great shooter held up by a few flaws – the biggest being its anorexic length. Totally worth playing, but not at full price

7 /10

PlayStation 2

SNOWBLIND



DETAILS

PUBLISHER: EIDOS
 DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
 PRICE: £39.99
 PLAYERS: 1-16
 60HZ MODE: NO
 VIDEOSCREEN: YES
 SURROUND SOUND: YES
 ONLINE: YES



PlayStation 2

Project ZERO



DETAILS

PUBLISHER NAMANDO
DEVELOPER TECMO
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
GOHZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SUBSCREEN NO
ONLINE NO

PROJECT ZERO

Snap the supernatural in this photo shocker

Cinematic horror game that's made ghosts scary again". No, scrap that. This has made ghosts truly terrifying. They're the spirits of people who've been subjected to hideous ritual abuse, torture and hangings. They haunt the Himuro house – a derelict, creaking, perpetually dark hell hole.

Mafayu, an investigative journalist, visits the notorious house to uncover the secrets of its past. It's a doomed mission from the start and after nine days and Mafayu's subsequent disappearance, it's left

to Mafayu's sister Miku to search the mansion and rescue her.

Project Zero's entire arsenal consists of a single camera. Not a whistles-and-bells digital camera, complete with 007 gadgetry, you understand, but a simple Brownie point-and-click. It enables Miku to 'extinguish' evil ghosts who attack her. Each click of the shutter takes a proportion of power from the spirit, and if a shot is suitably close up, more damage is inflicted. The camera isn't just a weapon, though. It also gives you the ability to reveal hidden images in doors and walls and remove talismanic powers from certain areas.

The only problems we had with *Project Zero* were down to inferior collision detection. Another foible that might irritate less patient players is the game's slow pace. Still, it's bloody terrifying... And that goes a long way. ■ GW

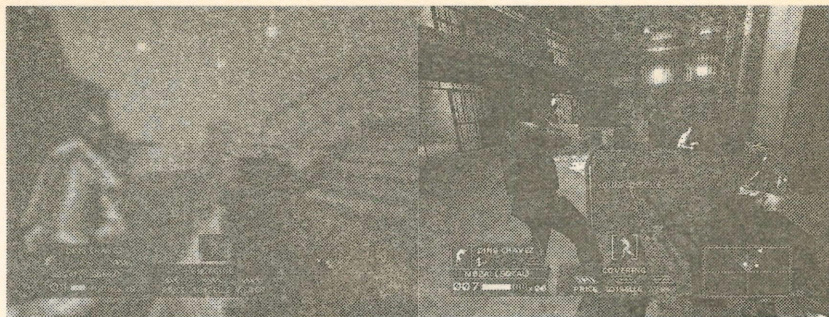


PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

Project Zero's problems will pale into the background for those who are brave enough to embrace its unnerving charms

8/10



RAINBOW SIX 3

There's no sign of Bungle or Zippy here

Most shooters involve a mad dictator and his army terrorising a fictitious realm. That or demons rampaging out of a hellmouth. Or space aliens. In *RS3*, however, you're protecting US oil interests against Venezuelan terrorists unhappy about their country supplying Uncle Sam with gas. When exactly did game designers start watching *Panorama* instead of *Buffy*?

Beyond the real-world posturing, this is just a good old tactical stealth shooter, packed with nerve-jangling shoot-outs, slow-burning sniper-fests and drop-grenade-into-room-full-of-terrorists gore parties. You play Ding Chavez (clearly going under his porn name for security reasons), the leader of Rainbow – a crack squad of operatives who go where

no one else can, then kill everyone they meet. Apart from hostages of course, of which there are many. And you must protect them, even when they crouch in the middle of a battle zone and refuse to budge.

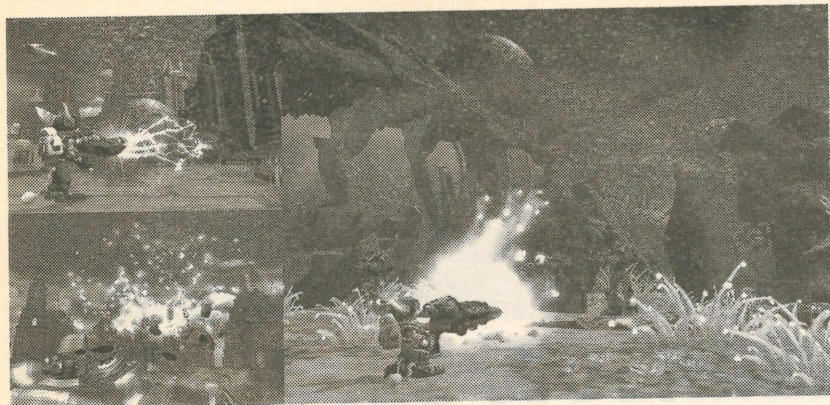
As for multiplayer action, you're spoilt for choice. For those lacking broadband, there's a split-screen co-op mode, which enables you to finish the single-player campaigns with a mate. With *Rainbow Six 3*, Ubisoft has demonstrated that it knows its squad-based shooters better than most and is capable of cooking up a tense and thoroughly gripping experience. ■ **KS**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

Squad-based shooting on PS2 is rife, but RS3 works the tried and tested formula brilliantly. This doesn't disappoint

8/10





RATCHET & CLANK 3

PlayStation 2

Set your phasers to fun, we're in love

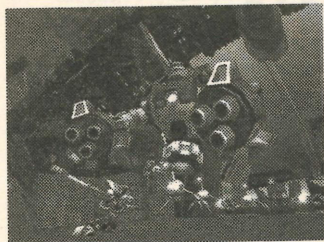


DETAILS

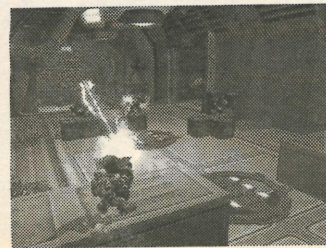
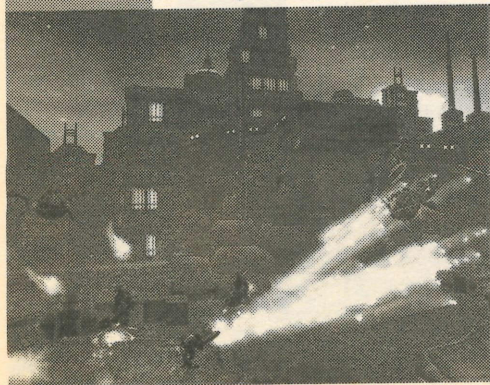
PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER INSOMNIAC
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

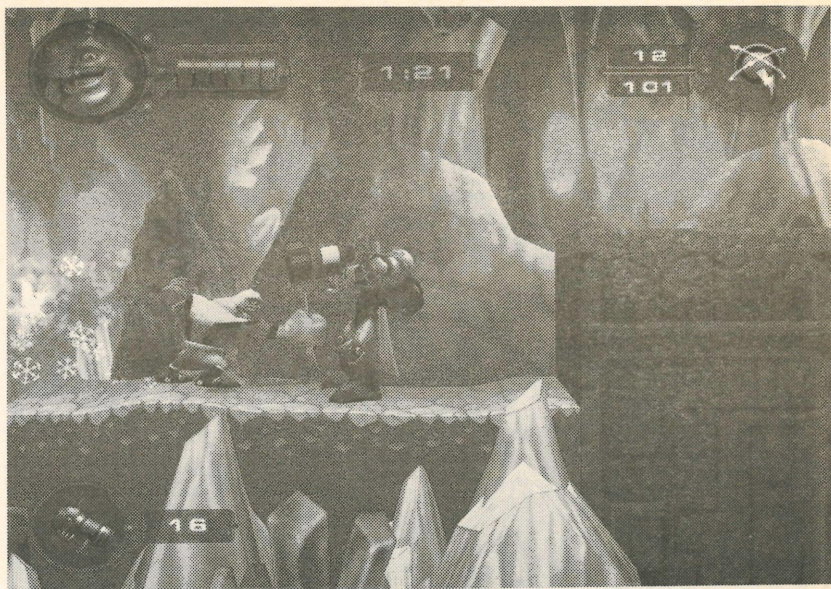
Ratchet & Clank 3 poses a bit of a problem for us. It's not that we don't like the game, or that we don't have anything to say about it. The problem is pinpointing the happy spot in our brain that the game caresses and expressing the resultant joy on paper without a) spoiling the fun for you or b) over-cooking it.

ReC3 throws you headlong into the action, doesn't patronise you with a silly training level, keeps the action and laughs coming and never bores. Levels are neither too short or too long and only occasionally



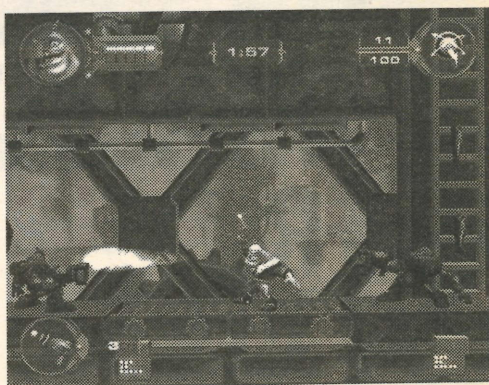
knocked off kilter by moments where the difficulty level skyrockets the minute you go around a corner, only to dip back to baby-talk levels seconds later. The pace is almost perfectly balanced – there's always something new to do next, be it completing side quests at locations such as the deathmatch TV show, Annihilation Nation, to topping up your cash or forging on with the





game's plot, which details the life-threatening designs of psychotic robot, Dr Nefarious.

You're taken on a tour of not only the game's intergalactic setting but also a mix of genres, as it cherry-picks styles for incidental mini-moments that include smoothly skydiving into levels, taking control of vehicles (handled with just as much aplomb as *GTA*) or paying homage to retro games (a security system needs hacking via a *Tempest*-like shooting game, while Captain Quark's adventures are immortalised as a jokey side-scrolling platformer). The rest of the game's action is your usual platforming and shooting fare, but it is presented with such style and grace that it's impossible not to love it. **MF**



PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

A love-bullet to the brain, this is filled with an incredible amount of detail. Clearly put together with proper care and attention

9/10



Red Dead Revolver



RED DEAD REVOLVER

PlayStation 2

Once upon a time on a PlayStation 2...



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
ROCKSTAR GAMES

DEVELOPER
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO

PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1-4

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN YES

SURROUND SOUND YES

ONLINE NO

Red Dead Revolver is a sun-parched love letter to Sergio Leone. Nobody expected *Red Dead* to be anything other than a functional shooter with a novelty setting, but against the odds Rockstar San Diego has nailed the Spaghetti Western with its first shot. Make a mental list of what you would want from a Western game and the chances are it would include quick-draw duels, stagecoach ambushes, whores with hearts, saloon brawls, bean-induced farting, buffalo stampedes and an enormous freakish manchild with dynamite strapped to his stomach. Okay, the last one doesn't work so well, but almost everything else does.

Red Dead Revolver differs from its cinematic inspiration in one crucial respect: rhythmically, Spaghetti

Westerns use long build-ups, punctuated by sudden bursts of violence. But *Red Dead* is a relentless barrage of action. Obviously this is a good thing. Particularly because, despite the near-constant gunplay, it rarely lapses into repetition. Each level offers new twists on the basic dynamic, and many of the setups use obvious filmic references. The only criticism of any significance is that it's over too soon. Oh, and there isn't a mini-game where you have to knock a horse out with a punch. Well, they had to leave out something interesting for the sequel, didn't they? Here's hoping... ■ TC

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL TOP GROSSING

VERDICT

Although it may be occasionally rough around the edges, this first homage to the Spaghetti Western remains enormous fun throughout

9/10



RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

Evil? Not exactly. Bloody terrifying? Oh yes...

Close the curtains, turn off the lights and tell the neighbours not to worry if they hear skin-crawling screams in the night, as stepping into the creepy world of *Resident Evil* is guaranteed to be a gaming experience like no other.

With more hours of gameplay than all its predecessors put together, for the first time in a *Resi* game you can feel both the size and the quality. Add drastically improved visuals and sound to the mix, plus a superior narrative that truly draws the player into its chilling embrace, and we're looking at a landmark game in the fairly young life of the survival horror gaming genre.

The format of the adventure remains in the tradition of *Resident Evil* titles: monster-blasting and cryptic puzzle-solving supply the

action, while numerous creepy cut-scenes help to unveil the story. Evolution rather than revolution it may be, but considering this familiar structure has easily monopolised the imagination of gamers worldwide for nearly ten years, Capcom can't be blamed for not tinkering too much with a successful formula. *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X* is *The Shining* of the survival horror genre and still an essential purchase. ■ PF

PlayStation 2
by capcom magazine uk

This is a fine example of the genre we like to call 'Survival Horror'. Get the game, get the shotgun and get incredibly messy

VERDICT

9/10

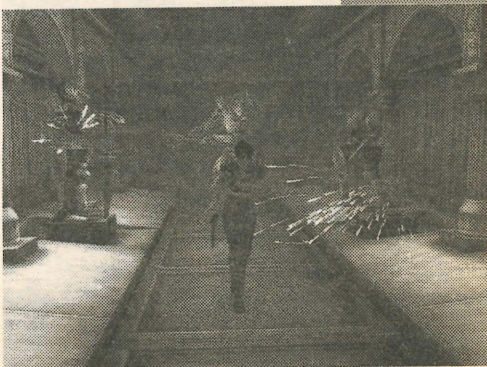
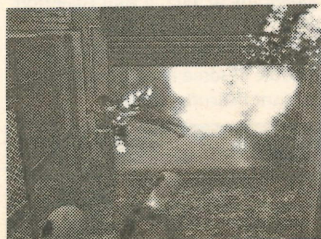
PlayStation 2



Platinum

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
CAPCOM EUROSOFT
DEVELOPER
CAPCOM
PRICE
£19.99
PLAYERS
1
60HZ MODE
YES
WIDESCREEN
NO
SURROUND SOUND
NO
ONLINE
NO





PlayStation 2

ROCKY

ROCKY

Virtual brain damage? Yep, send it our way

Games based on films rarely do their licence justice, but *Rocky* is an excellent movie-to-game adaptation. It also works independently as a quality boxing sim, with a main Movie mode where Rocky fights opponents in the order of the films, as well as extra Exhibition (single) and Sparring (practice) modes – where you get to try out your range of moves before slugging it with the big boys.

Training is part of the Movie mode, with tasks like sit-ups and bag work. Improving your timing increases Rocky's stats, but you can Auto Train if you'd rather get straight to the action. There's a variety of fighters, and although some may seem obscure, they're all from the films.

Rocky is set at just the right level for gamers and film fans alike, and there's plenty of fun to be had fighting your way through the plot, although the game's good looks come at the expense of fairly long load times, which may nag some players. But even if you're not a boxing fan, or are too young to remember the films, this still has something to offer. If your collection lacks a boxing game, this is a real contender, and also more than capable of some brutal, bloody and brilliant fisticuffs. ■ MW

DETAILS

PUBLISHER RAGE

DEVELOPER RAGE

PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1-2

GGHZ MODE YES

WIDESCREEN YES

SURROUND SOUND YES

ONLINE NO



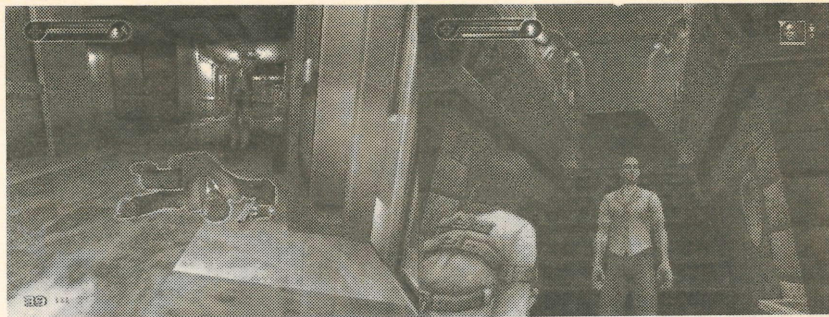
PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

If boxing's your thing, you really shouldn't be without this. It also has the added bonus of being an entertaining film adaptation

8/10



SECOND SIGHT

It's like foresight, but with much more violence

A third-person action game it may be, but in *Second Sight*, you alternate between two timelines – split by six months – and the condition of your character in each is very different. He's the same guy, John Vattic, but circumstances mean the playing styles diverge considerably, at least at first. In the opening level you're weak and unarmed, attempting to escape a predictably mysterious 'facility', with only your growing psychic powers to help you. The alternating time, six months earlier, sees Vattic as a nerdish, bespectacled and entirely healthy civilian, roped into a military mission in Siberia in an 'advisory' role – but how did he get from one state to the other?

Your psychic abilities and occasional route variety mean choice,

which is always a good thing. Goons in the corridor? Jump out and blow them away, then hide from the alarms. Or stay hidden, use Telekinesis to pick up one man, knock the other down with the flailing body and, having finally appeared, silently tranquillise both. Or Psi Blast one and punch the other to death. Or astrally project, possess one guard, make him kill the other and then walk off a large drop.

Second Sight is a great story told with class, style and beautiful looks. And that's the thing with beauty – you will always forgive it the odd tantrum or two. ■ **SW**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
Official magazine UK

Second Sight has a lot of style, though still manages to fall into some familiar gaming traps. But we still recommend you play it

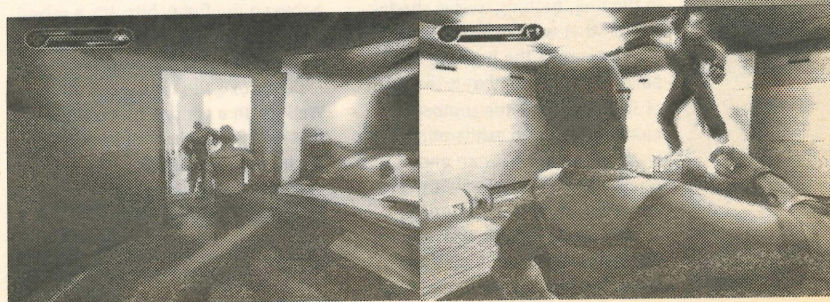
8/10

PlayStation 2

10 Best Action Game Best Adventure

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS
 DEVELOPER FREE RADICAL
 PRICE £39.99
 PLAYERS 1
 60HZ MODE YES
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND YES
 ONLINE NO



Shadow Of Rome



SHADOW OF ROME

They made their own entertainment back in those days

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1
GOTH MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

Agrippa, the first of *SoR*'s two playable characters, is a gladiator. The starting levels of the game see him fighting giant hairy men in the grim black forests of Germania as a centurion, but due to a nasty set-up – in which his father is framed for the murder of Julius Caesar – he's soon in the ring, bashing twelve shades out of other weapon-wielders for the pleasure of the howling hoi-polloi. And this combat is the heart of *SoR*'s appeal – the combat is blood-crazed and exhilarating, with loads of combos to learn and weapons to get to grips with, and somehow, it never gets boring.

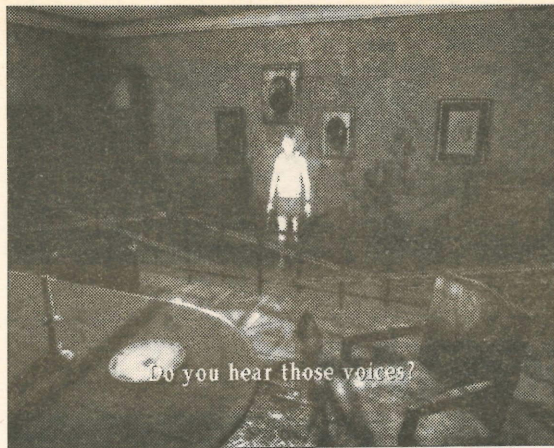
And while Agrippa has a mace. Octavianus (your other playable character) has... a wardrobe. With

the disguises he steals, he stealths his way around the city, trying not to get grabbed by the centurions – which is sure to be painful – as he works to clear Agrippa's good name. And while Octavianus' levels are nowhere near as enjoyable and visceral as Agrippa's, they provide a pleasing counterpoint and interlude between the fighty bits. It's a mixed bag at times, but on the whole, *Shadow of Rome* provides an experience quite unlike any other. Well worth a goosey, especially if you like hitting people with impossibly large hammers. ■ SW

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
Official magazine UK

Occasionally frustrating but mostly fantastic. The battles are brilliant, the stealth bits passable and the overall effect stunning

8/10



SILENT HILL 3

Only those with nerves of steel need apply...

Silent Hill 3 is a game designed with a single purpose in mind: raw terror. And sweet baby Jesus, it doesn't disappoint. This is entertainment at its most bleak, claustrophobic and weepingly depressing. And in survival horror country, that's good news. Want more? It's also one of the most technically accomplished titles on PS2, bursting with complex lighting techniques and pin-sharp textures. Konami has spawned a world where every single pixel is infused with pure evil. A place infested by monsters that pulsate like rump steak left in the sun. It's s**t-the-bed-scary, and we're about to go and thank them for it.

So what makes this different to the usual item-ferrying, cadaver-stomping frightmongery? Well, there's no slow-burn build-up for starters. You're simply dumped in a derelict amusement park crawling with biology-defying monstrosities, and left to get on with it. The action element in *Silent Hill 3* has been amped-up to artery-popping levels,

and while puzzles still play a part, it's typical combine-this-item-with-that stuff. Near the end, things do get trickier, with a couple of brain-muddling riddles to crack, but the emphasis is very much on sticking the boot into slaving monsters. Can things really get much sicker than this? They can, and they did. ■ TC

PlayStation 2 official magazine UK **VERDICT**

If you're thinking about buying this, it's probably the wrong time to quit the medication. It's a nasty game and we dare you to play it

9/10

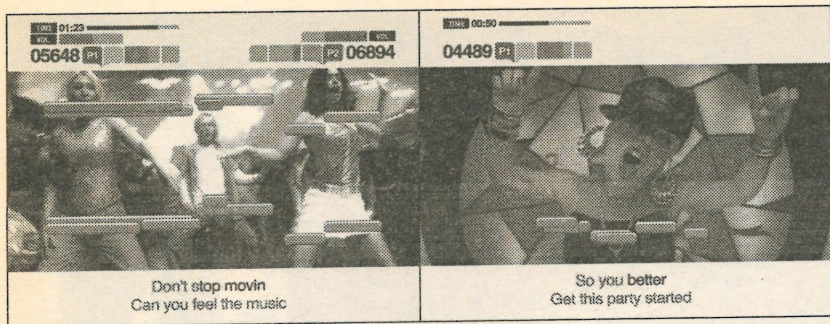


PlayStation 2

SILENT HILL 3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI
 DEVELOPER KONAMI TYO
 PRICE £19.99
 PLAYERS 1
 60HZ MODE YES
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO



PlayStation 2

3

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY
PRICE £39.99 (INCLUDES TWO MICROPHONES)
PLAYERS 1-8
60HZ MODE HD
WIDESCREEN HD
SURROUND SOUND HD
ONLINE NO

SINGSTAR

And you thought EyeToy was embarrassing...

Some people just won't ever play games. Sad, but true. Get the wrong flatmate/girlfriend/gran and you've got more chance of them picking up the Hoover than a joypad. Enter *SingStar*, a wham-bam, pop-tastic party-stopper that'll upset your neighbours and ruin your throat.

SingStar is better than any pub karaoke you've ever seen, and that's because it grades your singing. The mic picks up your pitch, tone and timing and tells you how good you are, based on one of three difficulty levels. This seemingly tiny thing means that even the shyest amateur can get a sense of when they're improving – crucial for getting wallflowers to join in.

There's a swathe of multiplayer modes for teams of players, which

range from forgiving (the bland one-at-a-time battle mode) to brutal (the miss-a-note-and-you're-out pass the mic option).

It brings out that competitive edge that makes for some truly spectacular singing – we've practically passed out trying to hold the unhumanly high notes in a Darkness falsetto. Ultimately though, as it's only 40 quid with two robust and sensitive mics, you can hardly afford not to buy *SingStar* – it's arguably the best party game ever. Sing, and the world sings with you. Play *Pro Evo*, and you might end up playing alone. ■ JS

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

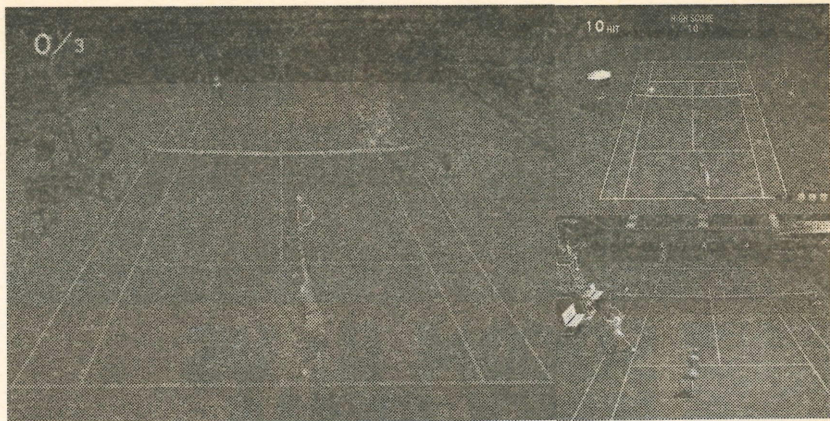
VERDICT

We've played this so much it's genuinely improved our singing – or at least that's what we claim. Fame and fortune, here we come!

9/10



Smash Court Pro Tennis Tournament 2



SMASH COURT PRO TENNIS TOURNAMENT 2

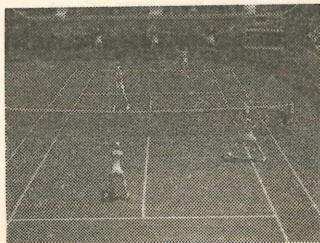
Developer Namco serves up another ace

The idea behind this sequel to the excellent *Smash Court Tennis* is that you'll have more fun winning Wimbledon as yourself, rather than making Tim Henman's dream come true. Hence Namco has built its new game around an overhauled Pro Tour career mode that encourages you to play God and mould a future Hewitt or Henin-Hardenne rather than simply adopt a pro.

Each time your prodigy plays a game, he or she accrues experience points that you distribute between

specific skills, stamina and power. Want to forge a powerful baseline player? Then choose brute strength and serving skills over drop shots and volleys. However, choose your skills carefully, as enhanced ability in certain areas of the game will compromise your skills in another – it's not as complicated as it sounds.

Of course, being a *Smash Court* game you still get the series' infinitely rewarding and organic control system, enabling skilled players to slice, lob, volley and smash their way around the court with pinpoint accuracy. With two to four-player games on tap for anyone with like-minded mates, *Smash Court 2* delivers its final, match-winning ace. ■ PF



PlayStation 2



3+
ESRB RATING
DETAILS

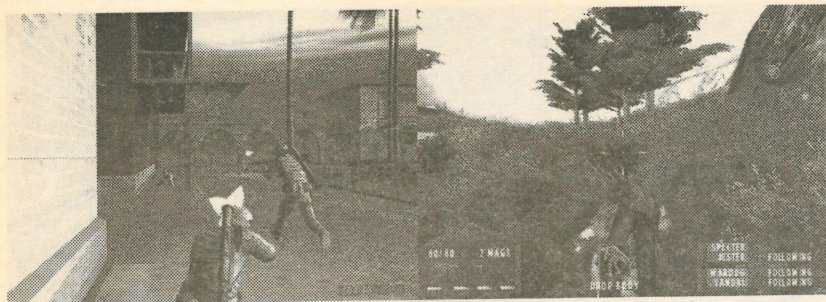
PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER NAMCO
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2
official magazine
VERDICT

A supreme tennis sim that builds significantly on its predecessor with brilliant multiplayer fun and a killer career mode

8/10

SOCOM II: US Navy SEALs



PlayStation 2



16+ DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
PRICE £29.99
PLAYERS 1-16
GRAPHICS MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALs

This time the war against terror gets sneaky

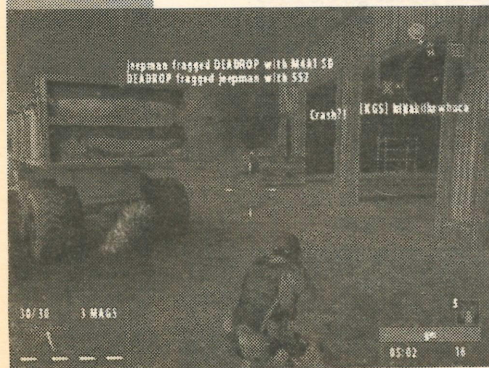
SOCOM II is a damn good strategy shooter. Originally released soon after the first *SOCOM*, you won't be surprised to discover that this is more like an expansion pack than a true sequel. But considering it irons out all its predecessor's flaws, improves the visuals considerably and chucks in a load of new features, anyone who enjoyed the first game would be well advised to invest in the sequel.

Once again, the emphasis is firmly on stealth as you lead a squad of four SEALs into enemy territory, attempting to fulfil your mission objectives without being spotted or,



more importantly, splattered. Those with a gung-ho bent might as well stick to *TimeSplitters*, because you won't last five minutes here. Even more so than the likes of *MGS2* and *Splinter Cell*, it's imperative to be silent and deadly in *SOCOM II*.

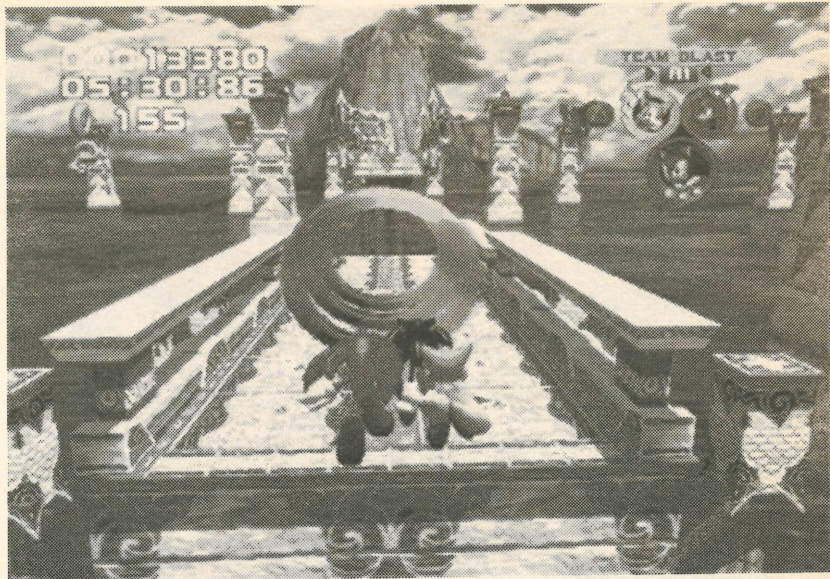
Totally absorbing, especially if you team up with like-minded gamers, *SOCOM II* represents one of the best online games PS2 has to offer. As an entertaining but flawed single-player experience, it's no massive improvement on the original, but take it online and this immediately turns into a co-op multiplayer classic. ■ LH



PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

Great single-player, and one of the finest and most popular online games for the PS2. Got a network adaptor? Then get this

8/10



SONIC HEROES

Sonic's back, but is he up to speed?

It certainly doesn't take long for *Sonic* veterans to feel right at home with this. That cheesy '80s rawk soundtrack, the lovely kerching noise when you run through a line of rings, the trampoline springs that send you hurtling into who knows where. Oh yes, this is classic stuff. Just as you remembered it – but, y'know, kinda different, too.

Of course, this isn't just *Sonic* in 3D. There are now four teams to choose from, each containing three characters – a fast one, a powerful

one and a flying one. You can swap between them, enabling you to exploit their differing abilities on the fly. It works like a squad-based shooter, but with dopey cats and camp rabbits replacing snipers and heavy infantry. It's a varied, challenging setup, providing an array of options at every juncture.

As a game, *Sonic Heroes* is mightily compelling. No other game series manages to test your reflexes, to confuse, bewilder and beguile you like this one. And the combination of a tight structure with multiple paths and highly memorable playable characters means that every time you play, you get something completely new out of the experience. ■ KS



PlayStation 2



3

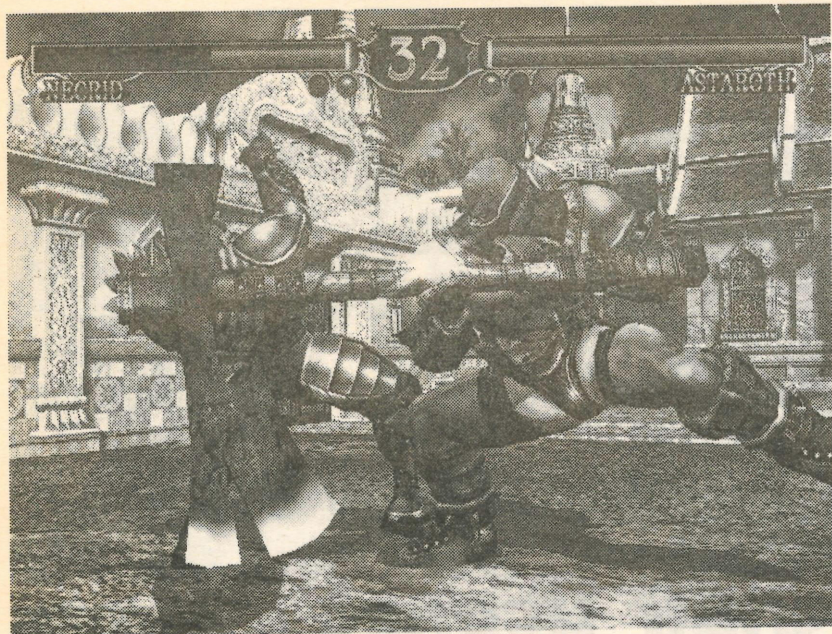
DETAILS

PUBLISHER SEGA
DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM
PRICE £39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GOHZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

A turbo-charged gem that simply refuses to go down the fashionable 'platform adventure' avenue, in favour of slick gameplay

8/10



PlayStation 2

SOUL CALIBUR II

Is this the greatest fighting game of all time?

Namco's sequel operates on an entirely different plane to its peers – a dazzling maelstrom of flashing blades and graceful pirouettes, after which everything else seems hopelessly flat-footed. The game's fighting system has been designed around the eight-way-run feature. Using the analogue stick you can circle smoothly around opponents, stepping in to administer dazzling combos and ducking out to avoid counter-attacks. It's complete 3D freedom of movement – something no other one-on-one fighting game had managed to nail at the time.

Stringing together combination attacks is a blend of careful timing and accurate positioning. Which sounds frighteningly hardcore, but could hardly be more intuitive. Even

the most visually resplendent attacks are relatively simple to perform – at most requiring a directional input plus a couple of button presses. The trick is to learn both how and when each technique is most effective.

But all you need to know is that it's a jumbo-sized syringe loaded with adrenaline. Our only qualm is that the gameplay is so ferocious (most bouts are over in seconds) that you're often left with an excess of nervous energy long after the PS2 has been put to bed. Which makes it a bit like snorting freeze-dried coffee. But this is a small price to pay. You need this in your life. ■ TC



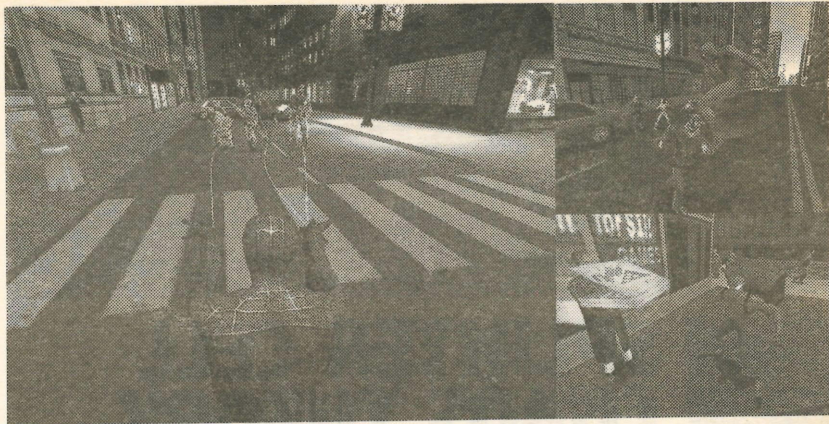
DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER NAMCO
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

This is an utterly essential purchase for fight fans and is capable of converting non-believers like Jesus on a good hair day

10/10



SPIDER-MAN 2

Spins a web, any size. Catches pubes, in his flies

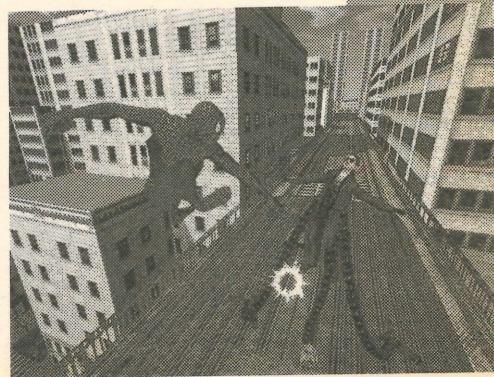
San Andreas aside, it's unlikely you'll find a game to match the sheer scale and ambition of *Spider-Man 2*. The biggest achievement is the vast model of Manhattan that provides the playground for your superheroics. Its enormity is driven home early on when, operating as the lowly Peter Parker, the Daily Bugle orders you to take an aerial photograph of the city. Change into Spidey's spandex, scramble up the tallest skyscraper, look down and – Christ! – it's impossible not to be thoroughly impressed by what's been created.

Manhattan is stuffed with things to do – from race challenges and pizza deliveries to the missions you pick up from distressed citizens, which include catching burglars that couldn't be more obvious if they tried, rescuing trapped construction workers and returning lost balloons to children – all of which demand excellent web-spinning skills – all learnt in the excellent tutorial.

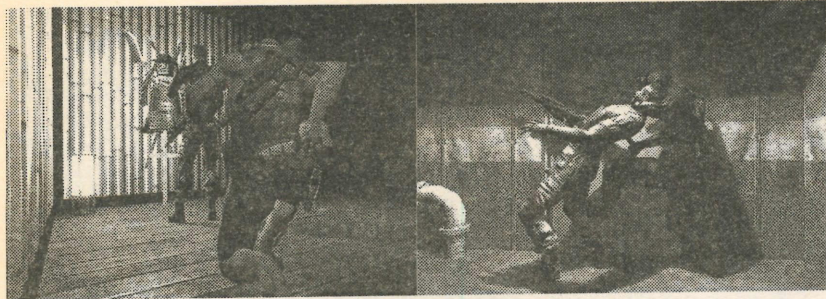
Spider-Man 2 is almost unique in that it not only does justice to the original source material – Tobey

Maguire's spot-on voice acting is a massive help here – but also stands as an enjoyable gameplay experience in its own right. The design is ambitious enough to give most games a nosebleed, but *Spider-Man 2* doesn't buckle – and, despite some off-key moments, fully delivers on its brilliant premise. The city's waiting for you, superhero. ■ **TC**

 PlayStation 2 <small>official magazine UK</small>	VERDICT 
<i>Sets a new standard for movie crossovers, delivering a thrilling experience that is marred only by the occasional uneven mission</i>	



PlayStation 2 
DETAILS PUBLISHER ACTIVISION DEVELOPER TREYARCH PRICE £19.99 PLAYERS 1 GOHZ MODE NO WIDESCREEN NO SURROUND SOUND YES ONLINE NO



PlayStation 2

FROM HUNTER
SPLINTER CELL
CHAOS THEORY

16+

DETAILS

PUBLISHER UBISOFT

DEVELOPER UBISOFT

PRICE £39.99

PLAYERS 1-2 (1-4 ONLINE)

GOXZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN YES

SURROUND SOUND YES

ONLINE YES

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

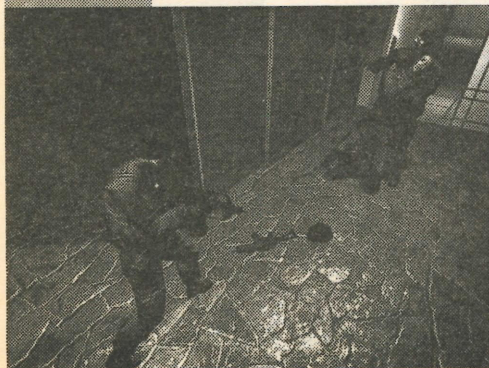
We only do it with the lights off, too

Confidence in your tech is a gratifying theme that runs (quietly) through *Chaos Theory*, and coming along for the ride is enormous flexibility. The stand-alone OCP device that temporarily fritzed out cameras in *Pandora Tomorrow* is now an infinitely more accessible alternate function of the standard silenced pistol. What's more, it can now silently disrupt light bulbs (even a silenced round makes a noise when it smashes a light) and even remotely hack servers. Used in conjunction with the new EEC-equipped goggles (these detect all electrical devices,

even those embedded in walls) the OCP pistol reveals a whole new challenging layer of obstacles to circumvent or neutralise that exist beyond the visible spectrum.

And if Sam Fisher's skills and gizmos help to create a deeper, more satisfying *Splinter Cell* experience, then the map design completes the picture by adding choice and complexity to the game. Variety, too. While you won't find the innovation of the jungle missions found in *Pandora Tomorrow*, *Chaos Theory*'s ten meaty levels play to the series' strengths with refreshing contrasts between brushed metal, high security office interiors military industrial and leftfield locations.

Sam Fisher is where the juice is. Without a doubt, if you love your games with any sort of passion, you should really own this game. And as far as *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* – or any other stealth game for that matter – is concerned, there really is no bigger compliment than that. ■ PF

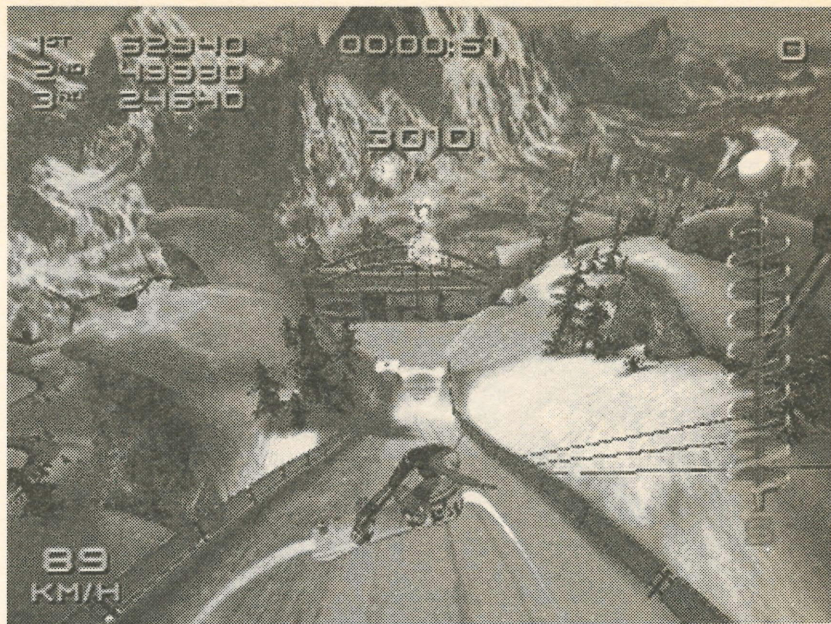


PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

A darker sneaking experience than MGS3, *Chaos Theory* is everything that was good about the last *Splinter Cell*, plus so much more

9/10



SSX 3

Let's talk about SSX, baby...

Where previous *SSX* games were merely huge, this is godlike. The big deal is in having various courses smoothed faultlessly together in one giant, multi-tracked mountain. The addition of heli-plane 'transport' cut-scenes masks loading times as 'travelling up' the mountain. And once you're deposited in the area, event choices are made by following signposts through powdery lanes. It brings a feeling of freedom and immersion that being dumped at the start of a three-second countdown can't compete with.

Course design is inspired, though the ante has been upped so far a giraffe could wear it as a hat. Roaring Avalanches shake the screen, chasms open in front of you, ice ceilings collapse, trees topple onto the course

and the race organisers have blown their lunch money on tons of glorious pastel fireworks. Meanwhile, the higher passes are indisputably more hostile, less landscaped and somehow even steeper.

Trying to accurately describe all this in action is like trying to describe a sunset. It's much better if you just see it for yourself. While one could easily argue that not all the new content is totally successful, don't let that put you off giving it a try. And while this huge game occasionally slides off to the wrong side of challenging and annoying, it always makes it back alive. ■ **SW**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
Official magazine

It's not 100% successful but with such massive style and verve, this is a game that any self-respecting PS2 games collection should have

9/10

PlayStation 2

7-11

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER EA CANADA
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE NO



STARKSKY & HUTCH

PlayStation 2

What's the word on the street, Huggy?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER
MIND'S EYE
PRICE
£19.99
PLAYERS
1-2
GRAPHIC MODE
HD
WIDESCREEN
NO
SURROUND SOUND
NO
ONLINE
NO

Just about any episode of the *Starsky And Hutch* you care to mention relied heavily on that car doing flashy stunts, sliding around corners and smashing through cardboard boxes. Throw in a comedy scene with pimp-daddy informer Huggy Bear and that was about it. Roll credits, see you next week. It was a winning formula then and it works surprisingly well now. Knitting a healthy thread of post modernism into Starsky's cardie, the game is divided TV-style into three 'seasons' of six episodes each.

There's also a trio of specials to unlock. Smarter still, the level of your success is measured by your VR (or viewer rating) points. Let the VR counter drop to zero through cackhanded driving and the show is cancelled before you get the bad

guy. This is an original touch we like and immeasurably adds to the fun.

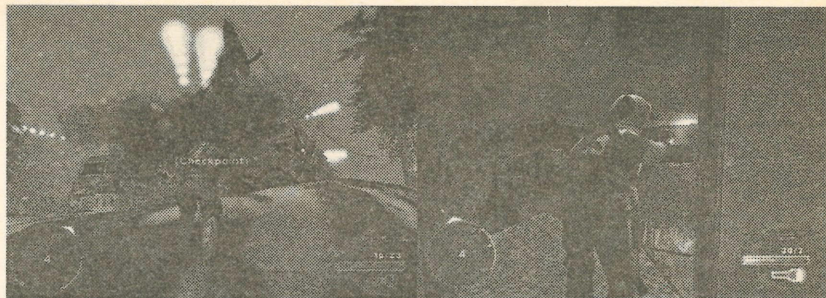
Get a mate in to join you for two-player action, and *Starsky And Hutch* comes into its own. With one doing a 'Starsky at the wheel' and the other 'going Hutch' with a free aim and tons of ammo, there's endless fun on offer. And if you've got access to either a G-Con 2/ controller or G-Con 2/steering wheel split, you and your 'partner' will be cajoling and laughing your way through even the toughest missions.

It's not perfect, but it is a solid action game that suits the mood of the original series perfectly. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

This cop caper shouldn't be as consistently enjoyable as it is. We guarantee that you'll keep coming back for just one more go

7/10



SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

Spy action with an online cast of thousands

Welcome to the world of *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain*, the fourth game in a previously stellar PSone series which, if historical precedent counts for anything, means it should be a half-baked piece of crap. Only it's not. A large amount of the hour-devouring goodwill that it generates is down to its canny blending of the single-player offline and multiplayer online modes.

The game's opening mission kicks off at the scene of an outbreak of a mysterious illness in Michigan, while a shipment of contaminated beef heading for Chechnya winds up causing a secondary outbreak in Italy. Fans of the series will recognise the premise, as they will the basic gameplay pattern that develops. Flexible, fluid action featuring

mucho gunplay, cascading objectives and wonderfully complex level maps that reward exploration.

It's a classy and accessible actioner that doesn't leave broadband-challenged gamers frustrated that they're missing a third of their game, while giving server jockeys a brilliant opportunity to take their skills online and experience familiar missions with a new twist. All in all, a pretty infectious mix. ■ **PF**

PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
official magazine UK

Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain offers a compelling reason to fork out for a Network Adapter, and is a great single-player game, too

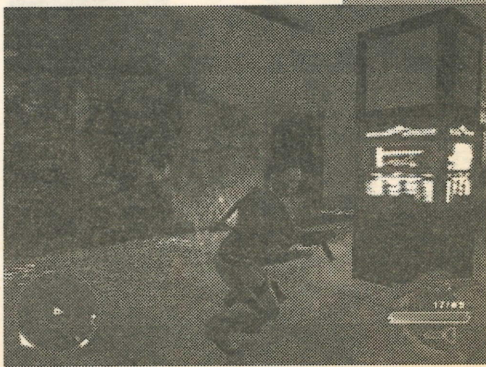
8/10

PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SONY
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE YES





TEKKEN 4

Tekken beckons again, but is the magic fading?

Heihachi Mishima is so old he's farting dust, and now the senile dementia has kicked in to such an extent that he's hosting his fourth King Of Iron Fist tournament, decked out in what can only be described as a giant, Elvis-style nappy. Welcome back to the insane world of *Tekken*.

Long gone are the 'back-step to infinity' open-plan arenas. In their place are finely detailed locations with pronounced boundaries and inanimate objects for you to slam your opponents into. Okay, so other

games have featured similar playing areas, but rather than being mere tools to heighten the visual impact, they put a whole new strategic spin on the game. By pinning your opponent against a wall, the force of your blows is doubled due to your opponent recoiling and fracturing their skull on the barrier behind. Likewise, other objects litter the playing field, such as parked cars, pillars and even people. And, by forcing your opponent against them, you'll inflict extra damage in the time it takes for the object to shatter, crumble or fall over.

All good additions and changes, then. But *Tekken 4* just doesn't show a lot of initiative. It's a solid fighting game that will ensnare hardcore fighting freaks, but if you're hoping for a titanic leap forward for the beat-'em-up genre, you're in for a bit of a disappointment. This is no *Soul Calibur II*. ■ RB

PlayStation 2

PlayStation 2

Platinum

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: SONY
 DEVELOPER: NAMCO
 PRICE: £19.99
 PLAYERS: 1-2
 60HZ MODE: YES
 WIDESCREEN: NO
 SURROUND SOUND: NO
 ONLINE: NO



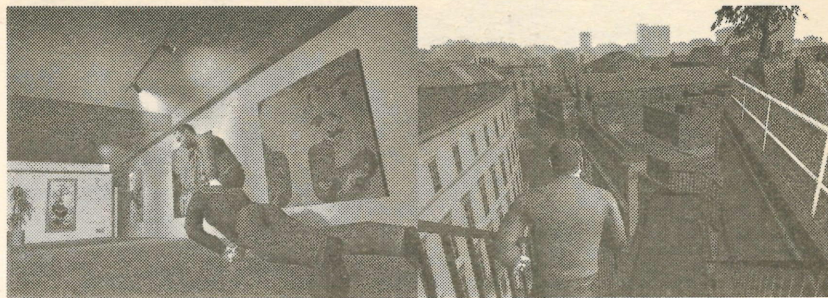
PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

You can't knock the quality of Tekken, but after the halfway house of Tekken Tag, we expected a little more from Tekken 4

7 /10

The Getaway: Black Monday



THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

Geezers, tasty motors and shooters everywhere

Black Monday is definitely its predecessor's equal, and more besides. The grimy sprawl of London that was scarcely credible as a feat of programming first time around is there in all its glory once again but what else rings a Bow Bell or two? You've got a capital city full of real motors to 'alf inch. You also get the familiar lack of any on-screen furniture during play. And on a 'best till last' tip, you've got the return of the cinematic cut-scenes, which are packed to the gills with *Long Good Friday*-strength cockney dialogue.

The driving sections are as enjoyable as we'd hoped. Despite congestion charging, London's streets are busier than ever and, as you'd expect, a variety of new models are in circulation. Of course, anything

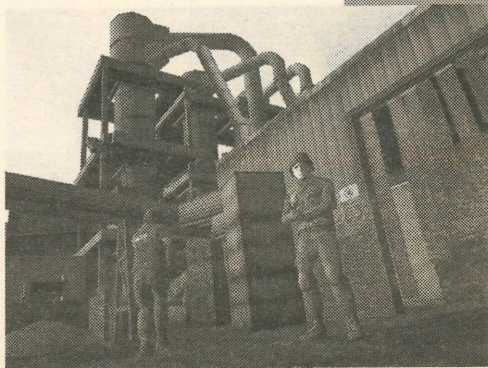
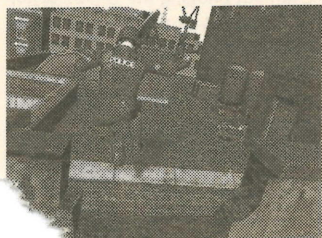
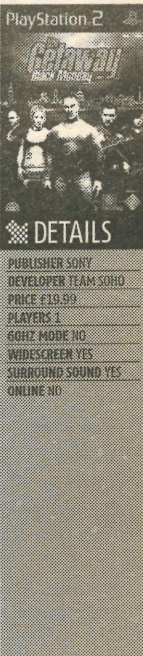
from a Smart For Two or Vauxhall VX Monaro to a double decker bus can be jacked, driven and destroyed with a pleasing level of realism.

Often incorporating roof-top chases, and occasionally stealth, the shooter missions tend to flow from exterior to interior and out again with clear paths getting complicated and rerouted mid-mission. And the downsides? Fiddly controls, and a big similarity to the original. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK VERDICT

Black Monday feels too similar to its predecessor to land classic status. It's stylish and gritty, but there's no evolution here

8/10





TLOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING

PlayStation 2



12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA

DEVELOPER STORMFRONT STUDIOS

PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1-2

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND YES

ONLINE NO

A spot of Orc murdering? Has a nice ring to it

What is it people love about *The Lord Of The Rings*? The fighting. Epic, bloody clashes that are frankly astonishing in scope and execution. And so the order of the day in this game of the film is third-person hack 'n' hew fighting with all your favourite characters.

There's the option of three paths through the game and a total of eight playable characters, including all of the Hobbits. Each level can be taken on alone or, brilliantly, co-operatively with a friend. The first time you try each route you'll be restricted to playing Gandalf on The



Wizard's Path, Aragorn, Legolas or Gimli on The King's Path or Sam on The Hobbits' Path. Each storyline follows the movie's plot through tumultuous battlefields, ramparts and finally all the way to the charmingly titled Crack Of Doom, where there's the small matter of finally getting shot of the ring.

Return Of The King may suffer with the same problems as *The Two Towers*, in that it's a little short and linear, but bridging the gap between the films is no easy feat – and *Return Of The King* manages it with a large amount of style and cracking swordplay. It's precious. ■ MW

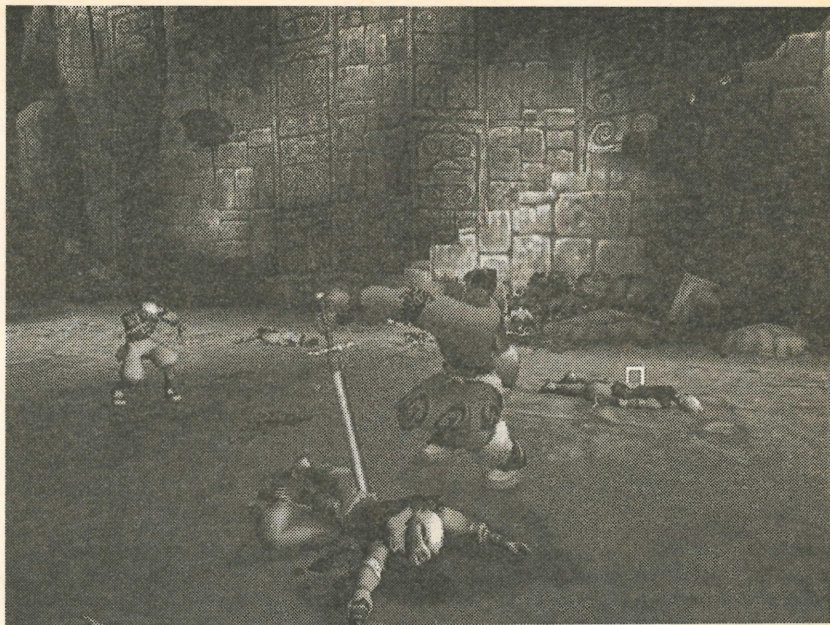


PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

Rings in few great changes over the previous game, but with such slick looks and swordplay we've got few complaints

8



THE MARK OF KRI

Looks can be deceiving. Mark our words...

This is a mystifying meld of comic-strip looks and X-rated carnage. You begin as a barbarian, holed up in a tavern and you've got a sword but nothing to do. The barman tells you about a group of woodland thieves who need a good spanking. So off you go, sword in hand, for some cartoon carnage. Stealth is vital – you can sidle up behind enemies and perform a kill. These mini-animations are fairly disgusting and range from repeatedly slamming an opponent's bonce on rocks to neatly skewering a baddie to a wall with a sword through the neck. Nice.

This hack-heavy human butcher's shop is stapled to a plot which is actually rather riveting, involving stopping an old codger collecting the Kri of the title, which will raise the

dead and kill everyone. Cue some escapades to stop the evil OAP.

This beautiful-looking game is screaming out to be highly recommended, but it is hamstrung by its inadequate length and some minor design flaws. The soundtrack is inspiringly atmospheric – we particularly like the Turkish-style wailing – while the AI of your adversaries is a far kri (sorry) from the worst we've seen. And the grotesquely macabre baby thieves near the end of the game have got to rank as the most joyously irritating enemies ever, but we simply can't justify a higher score. ■ SP

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK **VERDICT**

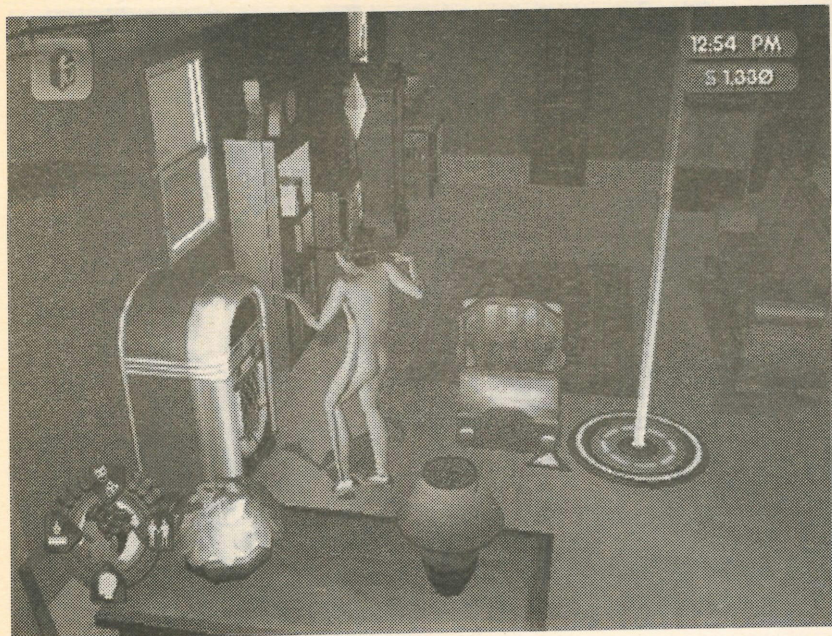
The 'looks nice, plays nasty' dynamic is inspired. The Mark Of Kri is a gaming dark horse – and not one you'll be sorry to ride

7 /10

PlayStation 2

DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
 DEVELOPER SONY
 PRICE £19.99
 PLAYERS 1
 GPHZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN YES
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE NO



THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

PlayStation 2



Platinum

DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER MAXIS
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
GOKZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SUBROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

Thrilling and frustrating – much like real life...

The idea of creating a virtual person and living their life on PS2 may appeal to you. Then again, it may not. But take something from us; give it time and even when keeping your creation happy, well-adjusted and free from urine-soaked trollies occasionally slips into will-sapping tedium, you'll stay completely hooked because, much like the real thing, however bad the individual moments may be, life is good. Overall.

Alongside the balancing act you have to maintain between your character's physical and social needs, there are character traits that you can develop by using the items around you. For example, practice speaking in front of the mirror and you'll enhance your basic charisma. That boring old chess set in the living

room and the easel behind the sofa? Make use of those and you'll develop your logic and creativity respectively. So it goes, and it's somehow a lot more interesting than a review of this size can possibly convey.

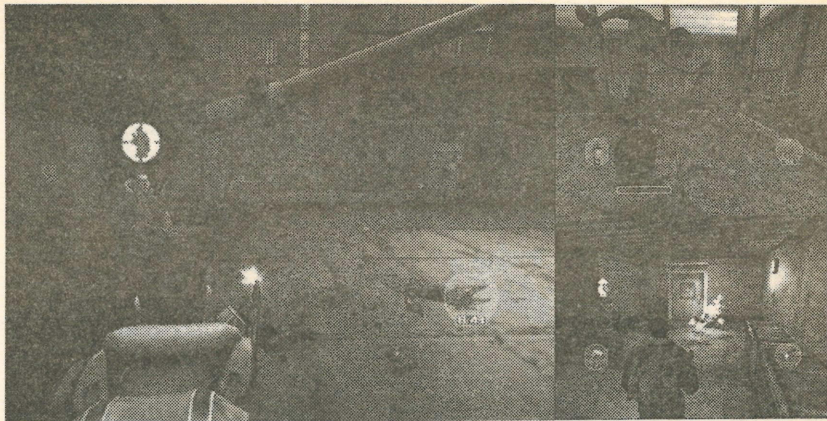
Inevitably, capitalism plays its part in all of this. Your sim has bills to pay, and he wouldn't be a very cutting-edge guy if he didn't have a decent spread of mod-cons in his crib. So you need to get your virtual fella some serious green, and that means finding a job.

Overall, *Bustin' Out* proves itself to be an extremely accomplished variation on the *Sims* theme. ■ PF

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
Official magazine UK

Bustin' Out builds on the first *Sims* game with a broader range of options, which gives the game a lot more overall depth

8/10



THE THING

Turns out that PS2 is the warmest place to hide

Having dispatched a shape-shifting alien monster and torched their only means of shelter, the two surviving characters from *The Thing* (the film), MacReady and Childs, settled down in the Antarctic snow as they waited to succumb to the sub-zero temperature. But nothing is over till it's over, and *The Thing* for PS2 picks up the story where the film left it all those years ago...

You play Captain Blake, the leader of an expedition sent to investigate the smouldering ruins. By the time various members of your team start bursting from their clothing and developing an insatiable appetite for blood, you know there's plenty of life left in the story.

The game's innovation is its trust/fear system. When you're surrounded by Things, you need your confident marksmen to take them down so you can finish them off with the flame-thrower. But you can't do it all yourself, and soldiers who suspect you might be less than human won't respond to your commands. You have to earn trust and keep an eye

on anybody who looks like he might start spraying everyone else with bullets. And it's tough.

The graphics are uncommonly good, it's imaginatively designed, surprisingly well scripted and the locations are entirely in keeping with the movie's visual style. Top-class survival horror meets one of the best sci-fi movies of all time. **■ MK**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

If classic horror is your 'thing', you'll love this excellent movie translation. And even if it's not, there's still plenty to like

9/10



PlayStation 2

THE THING

DETAILS

PUBLISHER: EVGENDI
DEVELOPER: COMPUTER ARKWORKS
PRICE: £19.99
PLAYERS: 1-2
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES
ONLINE: NO



PlayStation 2



3+ DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER EA REDWOOD SHORES
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-4
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN YES
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

We love the Tiger. Let's count the reasons why

- 1.** It looks pretty.
2. The new Legends mode. There are five greats: Seve Ballesteros, Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan, Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus. The idea is to beat them on their hand-picked courses. First though, you have to take on a load of challenges (play-off holes, shots from the rough, etc.) against a range of AI players.
3. Tiger Proofing. Finding the game too easy? Then unlock stuff to make it harder, like no fairways, extra bunkers or less clubs.
4. The 'swing the analogue stick like a club' control system. Okay, it's three versions in and no longer counts as an innovation, but it's still great. It still makes it feel like you're actually hitting the ball yourself. Well, as close as you're gonna get

with a little plastic paddle anyway.
5. It feels *right*. It's not just the analogue control, having the right kit, the right players, the right courses... well it is all that, but not just that. It's all so well thought through this year, it's like they've thrown every good idea they ever had into the mix.

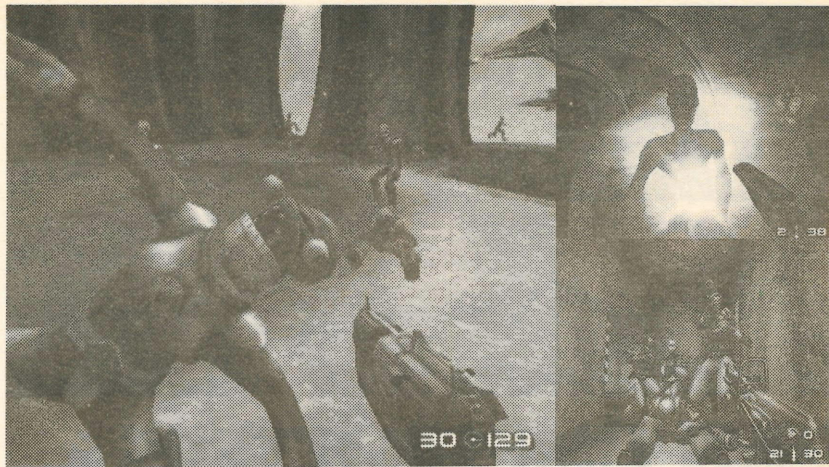
ON THE OTHER HAND...

- 1.** It's fundamentally the same game. Sorry, but it is. Same controls, same looks (pretty much), same commentary, same tutorial mode. But those new extras redeem it and make it an essential purchase. ■ RK

PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

It's the same game we saw last year, but with enough improved features and custom stuff to still make it a must-buy

9/10



TIMESPLITTERS 2

Time has been very kind to 'Splitters 2

This game will make you cry. It's quite simply astonishing. It might sound glib, but *TS2* feels like the game that developers Free Radical always wanted to make. Nothing prepared us for this. It's overflowing with ideas and influences, yet it's remarkable how succinctly it plays. It's a joyous B-movie pastiche, taking in hammer horror, spaghetti westerns and cult sci-fi. But whether you're playing as a Spandex-suited spaceman or a moustachioed super spy, the hand-drawn animation and cartoon characters ensure this first-person shooter retains its uniquely stylised look throughout.

Some of you may prefer *Medal Of Honor's* gritty authenticity to this candy-coloured feast, but there's no denying that the almost inexhaustible entertainment provided by the Story, arcade, challenge, multiplayer and mapmaker modes means this is an irresistible package. This is a game well worthy of comparison with such benchmark titles as *Gran Turismo 3*,

Metal Gear Solid 2 and *Grand Theft Auto III*. Free Radical Design has succeeded in creating a digital toybox that players will keep on coming back to, simply because the individual pieces are all so brilliantly crafted. Utter magic and one of the best Platinum titles around. ■ TC

PlayStation 2
Official magazine UK

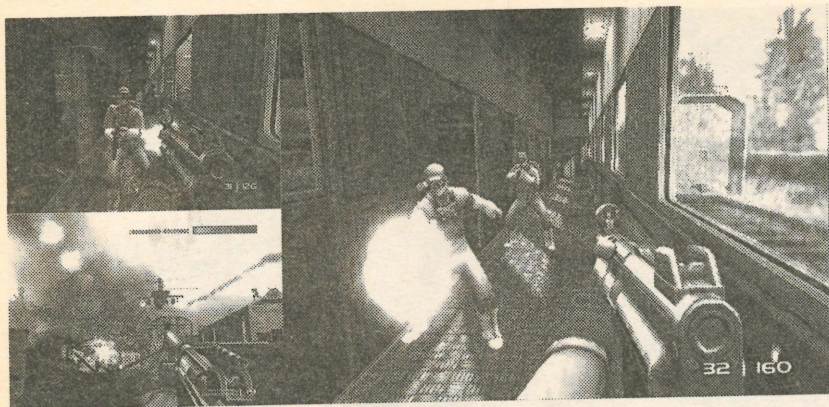
Expensive in every sense, this is an essential purchase for anyone in possession of a PlayStation 2 and a central nervous system

VERDICT

10/10



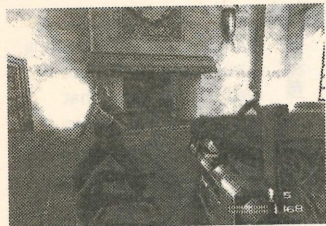
TimeSplitters Future Perfect



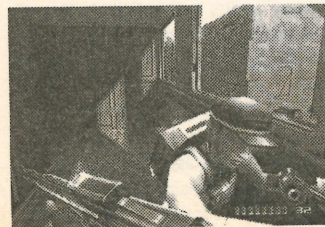
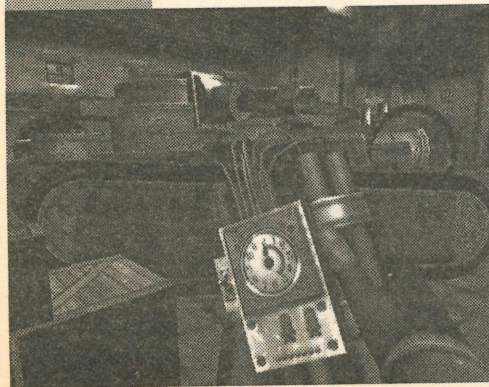
TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

Where a cult classic becomes a blockbuster

Future Perfect's digital artistry manages to easily outshine each and every one of its first-person shooter rivals. Seriously, if you need proof that the five-year-old PS2 can still pull off surprises, this is the game to do it. Where else have you seen fire, electricity, weapon flare, shadows, exploding scenery and multiple enemies on screen all at once without the game looking like it wanted to curl up and die under the pressure?



Using time travel, our new-found hero Cortez has to travel backwards and forwards through time, killing people, monsters, robots, insects and chefs, while in hot pursuit of some magical time crystals. And if that sounds kinda familiar, then get this: *Future Perfect* is the first 'mainstream' *TimeSplitters*. The introduction of a more involving



TimeSplitters Future Perfect



storyline is part and parcel of this. As is the addition of more dialogue, more cut-scenes, and Cortez, the self-styled 'face of *TimeSplitters*'.

And it's big. Even when you've conquered Story mode, there's more. The multiplayer, with all-new maps, is still legendary. The individual mini-game 'challenges' are truly inventive, plentiful and entire cult hits in themselves. Even the arcade mode with co-operative assaults and team games has been carefully expanded and updated. It ticks all the boxes, charts your progress, politely suggests you test out an obscure arcade mode during the loading screen and has loads of cut-scenes – it's even got an online mode. Welcome to *Future Perfect*, your new favourite shooter. ■ GW

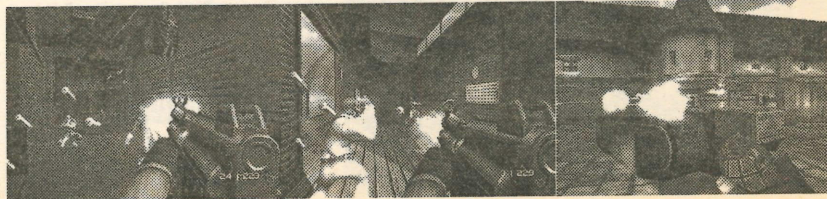


PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

VERDICT

Future Perfect is the best PS2 shooter available. Maybe it's lost some of its hardcore roots, but it's far more accessible because of it

9 / 10



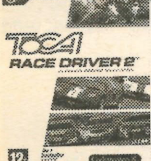
TOCA Race Driver 2



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

PlayStation 2

Got what it takes to be the leader of the pack?



12
ESRB
RATED
MATURE
17+

PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS
DEVELOPER CODEMASTERS

PRICE \$39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND YES
ONLINE YES

How do you pick a winning game from a traffic jam of non-starters? Easy answer: choose the one with everything. Like its predecessor, *TOCA Race Driver 2* melds watertight handling with a surprisingly involving storyline.

You're an up-and-coming driver on the semi-professional racing circuit. You need to develop your contacts and perform on the track if you want to keep driving and attract the attention of the heavyweight teams. The branching, plot-driven

approach is out of the ordinary, but it really works. Clearly there's a lot of *Days Of Thunder*-style melodrama going on here, which might not sound so great, but this is better scripted and nowhere near as dumb.

Away from the waffle and back in the car, the handling is so good it feels as if the car knows what you want it to do even before you do it. And just when you start thinking that it all feels so-so, you enter the next race and find yourself at the wheel of a different machine – you'll never forget your first perfect chicane in the cab of an articulated lorry.

We hardly need to mention the fact that the game looks sweet – every car is achingly detailed – or that there's no slowdown, even when you have 20 cars racing against you. All you need to know is that playing *TOCA Race Driver 2* is just how a game should be – rewarding, accessible and a lot of fun. ■ BR



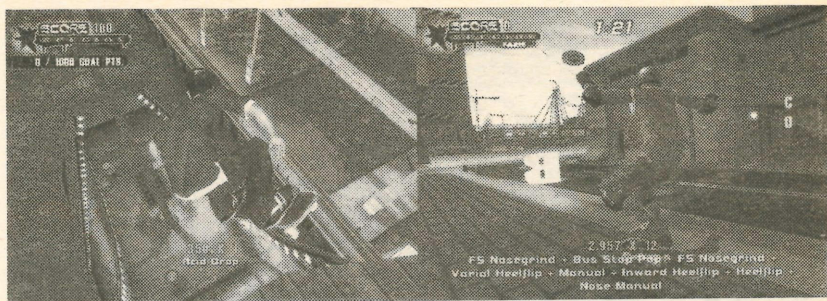
PlayStation 2
Official magazine UK

VERDICT

A racing game in a class of its own, TOCA 2's inviting storyline and racing will draw in even the most casual of drivers

8/10

Tony Hawk's Underground 2



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

If it could talk, *THUG2* would say "Pull my finger"

Hello butt-nugget!" That's the first thing Tony Hawk's new co-star Bam Magera says to you as you embark on their 'world destruction tour'. And this phrase sums up the game: verbal abuse, faecal mumblings and below-the-belt anatomical discussions. It'll all come clear when you see pro-skater Bob Burnquist catch a tennis ball in the squeakers.

Continuing in the vein of its predecessor, *THUG2* deals with street-level competition rather than international tournaments, taking you to cities around the world as you skate off against another team to decide who foots the bill for the tour. Pro-skaters such as Hawk and Rodney Mullen put in a welcome appearance, but the focus is mainly on you, a gifted young skater who's

learning the ropes and improving your stats as you pull off the game's ever-more-saucy range of tricks.

As ever, the one thing *THUG2* really excels at is the deft twinning of fear and exhilaration as you tie together umpteen tricks and try not to bottle it as you go for more. But it's hard to shake the feeling that you've done it all before, and that's really because you have. Minus the fart jokes, of course. ■ **AB**

PlayStation 2 Official Magazine UK **VERDICT**

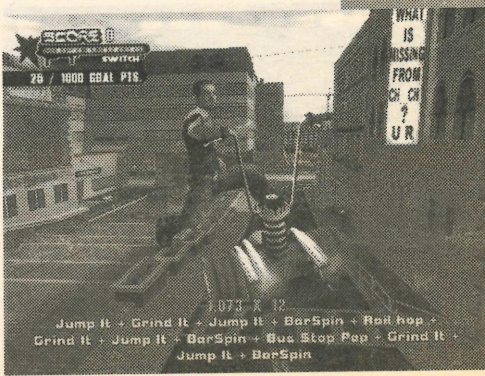
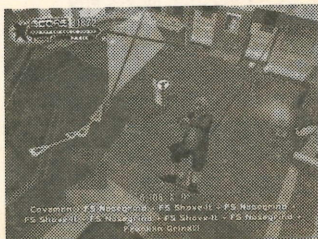
Precise, sharp and ultimately enjoyable; another class effort. Prepare to feel the odd spot of déjà vu, though

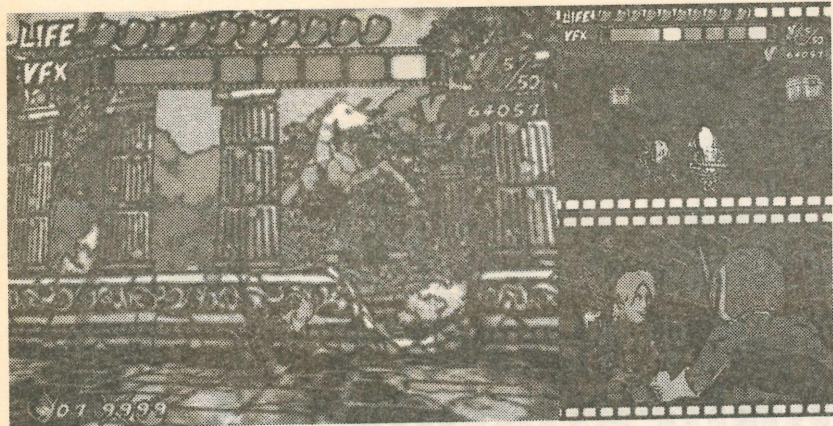
8/10



DETAILS

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
 DEVELOPER NEVERSOF
 PRICE £39.99
 PLAYERS 1-2
 GONZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN YES
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE YES





PlayStation 2



12+
DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CLOVER STUDIOS
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1
60HZ MODE NO.
WIDESCREEN NO.
SURROUND SOUND NO.
ONLINE NO.

VIEWTIFUL JOE

Don't hate me because I'm *Viewtiful*...

This is a visual treat that tickles the eyeballs with terrific animation and graphical effects. And the gameplay is also just as smooth, turning what could've been an average superhero-styled scrolling beat-'em-up into a spectacular mix of fighting and tactics.

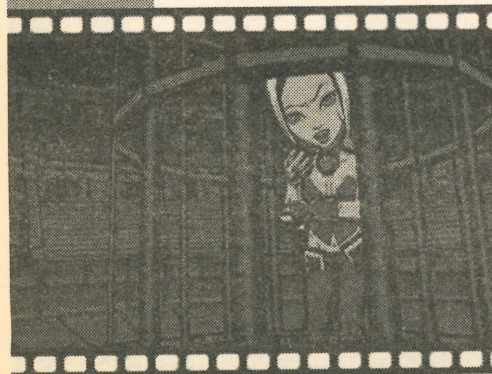
The game tells the story of cinema fan Joe, who's transported into one of his favourite movies and imbued with celluloid superpowers that let him control the speed of time. Coupled with a zoom power that lets Joe perform cartwheels and

spinning kicks, the combat system features an array of moves that are great to control and to watch.

However, the pretty graphics and rewarding combat do come at a cost. Murderously difficult, the game is extremely punishing. There are moments where Joe gets smacked around like a punch bag because you haven't spent long enough mastering your skills. But this isn't a criticism, as once you get to grips with *VJ*'s way of thinking, it becomes more than just a scrolling fighting game and turns into a tactical brawl.

Side-by-side with the sequel, both are worthy of their position in the Hot 100. *Viewtiful Joe 2* may be the better game, but at 20 notes, the original is not to be missed either.

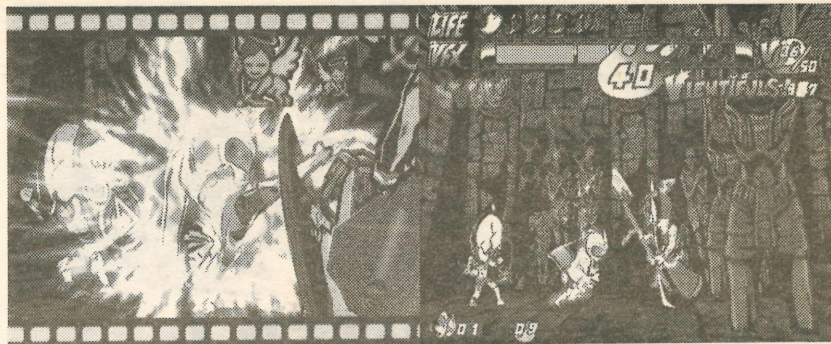
It's wonderful, kinetic and frenetic fun. True, it forces you to adapt to its system, but punch through that barrier and we promise you won't be disappointed. ■ MF



PlayStation 2 VERDICT
Official magazine UK

Never disappointing - although sometimes discriminatingly tough - *VJ* is a brilliant game, especially at its bargain price

8/10



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

WLTM athletic couple. Must love tight outfits...

Joe is a young cinema fan who was sucked into a movie and blessed with superhero powers and devastating fighting skills (as explained in more detail on the left), aided by slowing time (with a squeeze of **□**) or speeding it up (by holding **□**). His first adventure was a fun, if a little tough, trawl through the film on a rescue mission to save his girlfriend from the villain of the piece.

In the sequel, few things have changed. The other half, Sylvia, is now a playable hero in her own right, toting a 'special gun' and an action replay move that triples the power of attacks. Handy, that.

Still using the same eye-catching design – it's a game that always gets commented on when played in the

office – the plot means film-styled levels come thick and fast. In *VJ2*, Joe and Sylvia must rescue Movie World from alien invasion and a coterie of stampeding cartoon nutjobs by collecting a set of Oscar statues. Their journey is littered with punchbag enemies and puzzles that require a bit of logical thought.

Few games are able to spawn a sequel like *Viewtiful Joe 2*. It's almost identical to its predecessor, but it's a photocopy that's had its few sketchy parts smoothed out. We would have settled for more of the same, but we got a little extra, too. ■ MF

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

Rather than a full-on sequel, this is more like Viewtiful Joe Version 1.5. But that doesn't mean it's any less brilliant

8/10

PlayStation 2



12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER CAPCOM

DEVELOPER CLOVER STUDIOS

PRICE £39.99

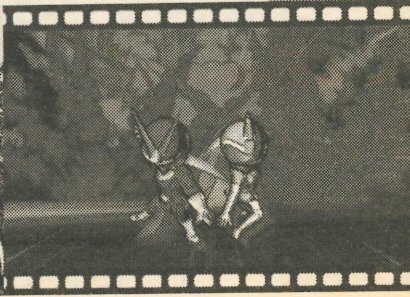
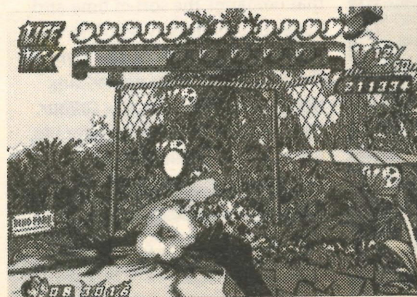
PLAYERS 1

60HZ MODE YES

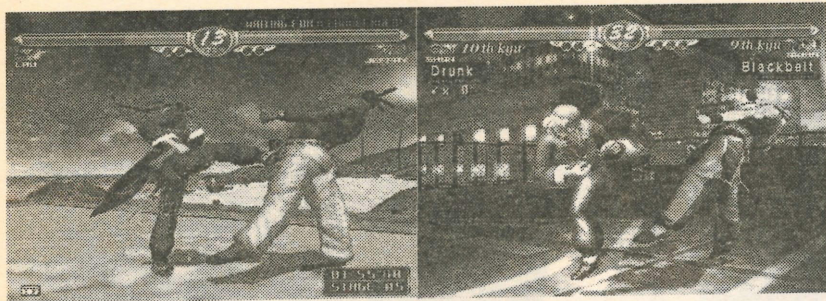
WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND NO

ONLINE NO



Virtua Fighter 4



VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

PlayStation 2

Fought the students? Why not try the master

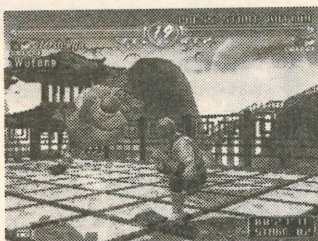


DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER SEGA AM2
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
CDHZ MODE YES
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

Nothing this beautiful could ever be described as simple. In fact, it's complex. No, scratch that – 'mind-bendingly complex' hits the nail just about on the head. *Virtua Fighter 4* will govern you with a firm hand until you are either a broken mess or a Tenth Dan fighting god. This is no button-bashing beat-'em-up.

It also isn't a game for casual post-pub pugilists to bother about. Its really impressive moves aren't accessible from one or two button presses, they come from strings of six or seven combined D-pad directions and kicks and punches and guards. Learning this stuff takes time and you're likely to suffer a fair amount of pain in the process, as your fingers



struggle to perform movements of such dexterity (you could probably become a lock-picker or professional porn star by the end of it). Timing is also a vital factor – the three-stage move sequence in *VF* (execution, hit, recovery) is actually timed in frames – each stage may only take 20 frames of animation – and that's only a third of a second.

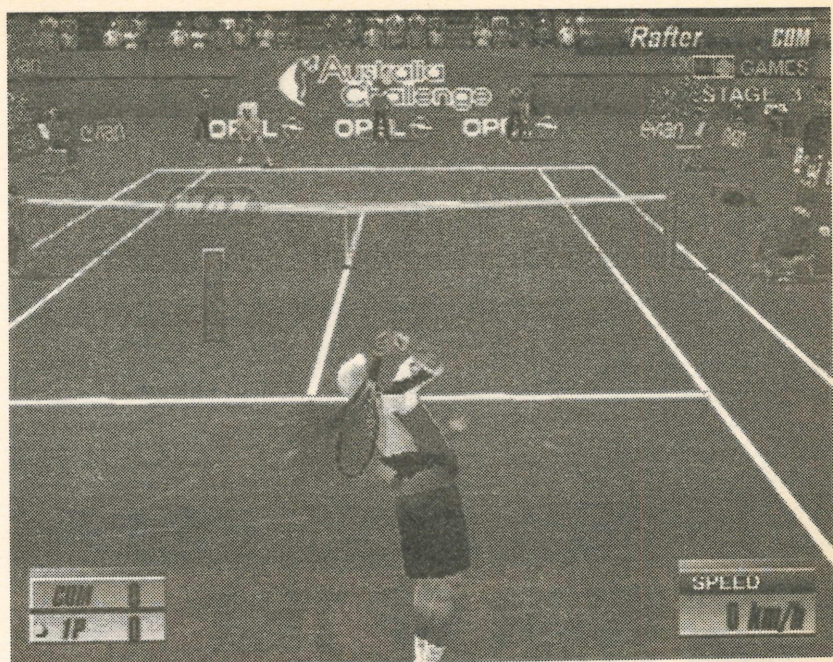
The question you have to ask yourself is: do you have room in your life for a very complex fighting game that demands the sort of time and patience usually only required by a small child? Because *Virtua Fighter 4* is substantially more demanding than either *Tekken* or *Soul Calibur*. Remember kids: kung-fu is for life, not just for Christmas. ■ KS



PlayStation 2 VERDICT
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

A fine example of its creed and really the only proper choice for gamers who want a long-lasting single-player challenge

8/10



VIRTUA TENNIS 2

It finally reaches PS2, but will it be a love match?

Virtua Tennis 2 faces stiff competition in the form of *Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2*. Both are truly great games, but have very different approaches. Sega's clever offering immediately strikes you as being much more forgiving. The main difference is that you can get away with much more in terms of positioning. Just tap the stroke button in the general vicinity of the ball and your on-screen tennis star will stretch or dive to get it over the net, which means positioning isn't vital in terms of continuing a rally. But here's the really clever bit... positioning is vital to *winning* a rally. The more time your player has to set themselves up, the sweeter and more accurate the shot will be.

Basically, it plays brilliantly, and there's also a selection of mini-games which are used to improve your stats. From simple target practice to ten-pin tennis, these bizarre challenges extend the lifespan of what could have been a stunted one-player experience. However, where this game really comes to life is in the multiplayer modes. The singles matches are polite fun, but if you really want the fur to fly, grabbing a multitap and three other willing mates is essential. All in all, *Virtua Tennis 2* is simply a great sports game. ■ DH

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

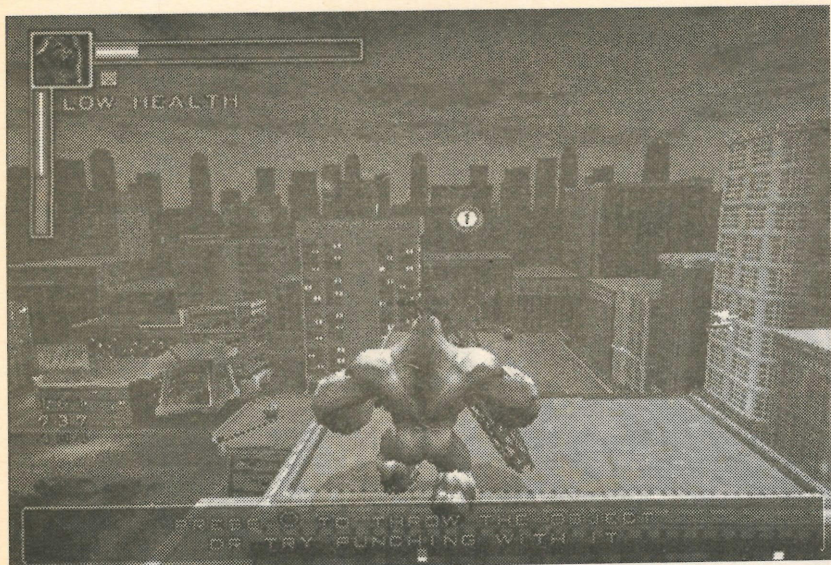
VERDICT

This is not only an outstanding tennis game for the single player, it's also an essential multiplayer experience as well. Love-all...

8/10



DETAILS	
PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
DEVELOPER	SEGA HITMAKER
PRICE	£19.99
PLAYERS	1-4
60HZ MODE	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
ONLINE	NO



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER SONY
DEVELOPER INCOG INC
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

WAR OF THE MONSTERS

We're doing the mash, the monster mash...

Imagine if, back in the '50s, the creators of cheapo monster films of the East and West got together to work out which B-Movie behemoth would kick the others' giant arses in a brutal battle to the death. The result might not have been box office plutonium, but it would've looked a lot like this game. If you're looking for classic monsters, then you'll find that all of the most memorable ones are here: giant lizards, giant robots, giant insects and – of course – giant eyeballs with bodies made out of electricity.

The arenas are, for the most part, enclosed within high-rise cities filled with screaming crowds to stomp and buildings to knock to smithereens, with the resulting debris creating plenty of ammo to lob around. Playing is a hectic experience full of

exciting moments – you'll often find yourself flying through the air into a skyscraper or being belted straight into the ocean. In drawn-out battles you can literally lay waste to a whole section of a city, leaving you and your opponent standing in a dramatic wasteland that's full of smouldering foundations. If that's difficult to imagine, think of Swindon, but with far less roundabouts.

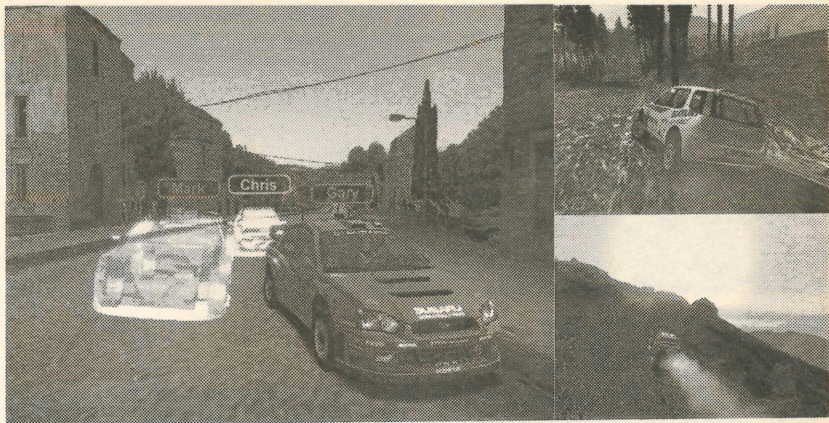
This game is a simple concept that, thanks to its imagination, becomes a singularly satisfying experience. It's a little lacking as a single-player game, but is a monster barrel of fun in multiplayer. ■ MW

PlayStation 2
SCEA.COM/MAGAZINE.UK

VERDICT

Colossal cartoon creatures
brawling like drunken Dads
fighting at a school sports day.
And yes, it is just as fun

8/10



WRC 4

Buy this slick filth, you tart!

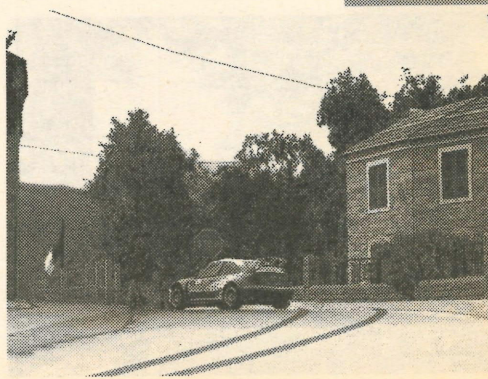
WRC 4 is lush. Gorgeous. Smooth. If it was a girl, she'd ignore us, but we'd pine for years, only to meet up with her again 15 years later and wonder what all the fuss was about. But here we're dealing with the immediate and it's she looks utterly stunning. The series has always looked good, but detail and draw distances have spiked towards the moon. Some of that extra stuff is dynamic, too – more flying mud and gravel, more billowing dust, more collapsing scenery and sparks. Oh, and more helicopters – it's a driving game, it's got to have stuff in the sky and helicopters are the new hot air balloons. Fact.

What impresses most is the motion of the car body; the slam and drop of the wheels. It's almost uncannily real. The angle, grip and motion of all four wheels matter now, and it requires far greater control from you than previous WRC games. With the pad it's a little hard to achieve full finesse (though not hard to drive), but with a wheel it's fantastic. It's testing but not absurd

– a little like the average *Richard Burns Rally*, but a lot more fun.

Naturally, every country and car of the WRC is available – though there are Group N, Super 1600 and some outrageous prototypes to fondle as well. And they're even better with a steering wheel, so if you don't own one, go and get one right now. That's *right* now... ■ **SW**

 PlayStation 2 <small>Official Magazine UK</small>	VERDICT 
<i>Genuinely different from WRC 3 – it's way more realistic but still accessible – and great fun with a decent steering wheel. Quality</i>	



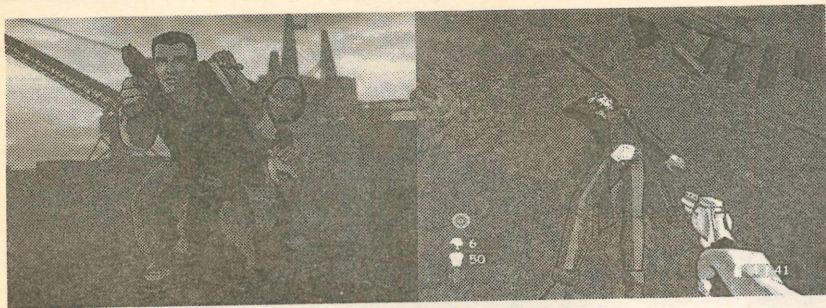
PlayStation 2

WRC 4



DETAILS

PUBLISHER: SONY
 DEVELOPER: EVOLUTION STUDIOS
 PRICE: £39.99
 PLAYERS: 1-16
 GDMX MODE: NO
 WIDESCREEN: YES
 SURROUND SOUND: NO
 ONLINE: YES



PlayStation 2


DETAILS

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
 DEVELOPER UBISOFT
 PRICE £19.99
 PLAYERS 1-2 (OFFLINE)
 1-8 (ONLINE)
 60HZ MODE NO
 WIDESCREEN NO
 SURROUND SOUND NO
 ONLINE YES

XIII

Looks and personality? It's our lucky day...

XIII is nothing less than a comic in videogame form. The game begins like a Faliraki morning – you regain consciousness on a beach with 'XIII' tattooed on your chest and not a jot of remembrance in your mind muscle. All you know is that you don't know anything, and before you can say 'how inconvenient' you're on the receiving end of some gun action. Turns out you're as adept at handling firearms as a disgruntled US postal worker and, after gunning down a few would-be assailants, you're soon on your way to Winslow Bank to follow the only lead you have to your identity... As you can probably guess, the storyline is a



real Jessica Fletcher jamboree of mystery, intrigue and conspiracy that neatly unravels like a blood-spattered carpet the further you venture into the game.

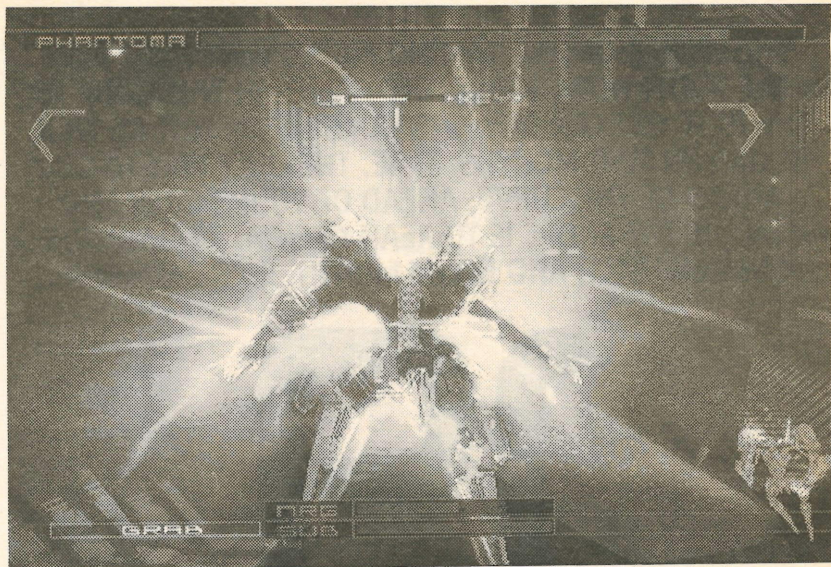
So, it spins a yarn like a comic, but does it look like a comic? Yup, and with butt-naked cherries on top, too. XIII is optical boogaloo and guaranteed to quench the thirstiest eyeballs. Its sublimely stylised aesthetic and delightful comic-book characteristics make it more than worthy of attention alone, but it's the imaginative idiosyncrasies that make it such a compelling and enjoyable videogame ruckus. And we all know that when something looks good, it's easy to turn a blind eye to the odd blotch of imperfection. ■ MC



PlayStation 2 **VERDICT**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE UK

An inspired comic-book conversion that's full of fresh ideas and looks gorgeous. It's not perfect, but its flaws are eminently forgivable

8/10



ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER

Strap on yer size 500s and get ready to rock...

Konami's gone to town on the visuals of this gorgeous robot battler sequel, as *2nd Runner's* sweeter than a Mars bar wrapped in candyfloss and then sprayed with Coke. The mechs are brilliantly detailed and the anime styling is slicker than Schumacher's tyres. Cut-scenes sew the action together perfectly, cel-shaded peripheral details blend brilliantly with the angular detail of the robots and the explosions and weapons effects are dazzling throughout.

Combat is still highly intuitive and enjoyable, and new combo moves add to your repertoire. After three successive hits you can toss an enemy mech up or down – which is a devastatingly powerful blow if impact is made with the environment. There's now a total of 14 sub-weapons

in the game – with some notable new inclusions like the awesome Vector Cannon – and learning when best to use each of them is key to making it through in one piece.

The fact is, while *2nd Runner* is a great game – a definite improvement on *ZOE* – and unarguably a visual extravaganza, it's still not all it could be. How about a branching storyline? Customisation options? Some real exploration? A definitive camera? It's a case of thrill circuits engaged, intelligence chip short-circuited. So to conclude, it's good, without a shadow of a doubt, but time for a servicing, we reckon. **AL**

PlayStation 2 OFFICIAL MAGAZINE VERDICT

A visually stunning title that's got some great new additions. A few improvements would have made it a killer title, though

8/10

PlayStation 2



12

DETAILS

PUBLISHER KONAMI
DEVELOPER KONAMI
PRICE £19.99
PLAYERS 1-2
60HZ MODE NO
WIDESCREEN NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
ONLINE NO

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