

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING ANNOUNCED!

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PS3!

HYPER

27

HANDS-ON
PREVIEWS

HANDS-ON PREVIEW SPECIAL!

HALO 3

Can Bungie bottle
lightning a third time?

PS3 / X360

GUITAR HERO 3

Does it rock out, or will
it take a (stage) dive?

Wii

METROID PRIME 3

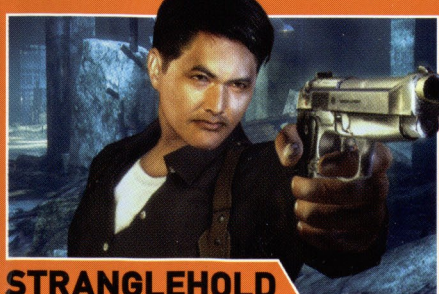
We've played it! But is Samus's new
adventure really all that prime?

PS3 / X360 / PC

CALL OF DUTY 4

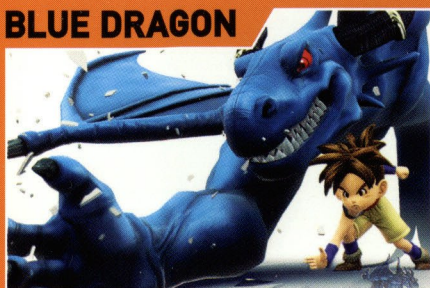
So long WWII, Modern Warfare
is the way of the future!

» THE BIGGEST GAMES REVIEWED!



STRANGLEHOLD

BLUE DRAGON



BIOSHOCK


a next MAGAZINE

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168 OCTOBER 2007
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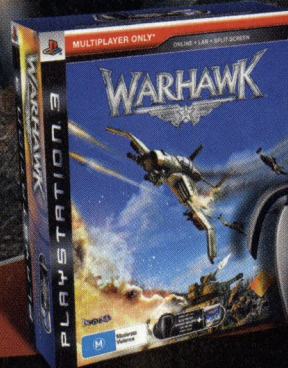
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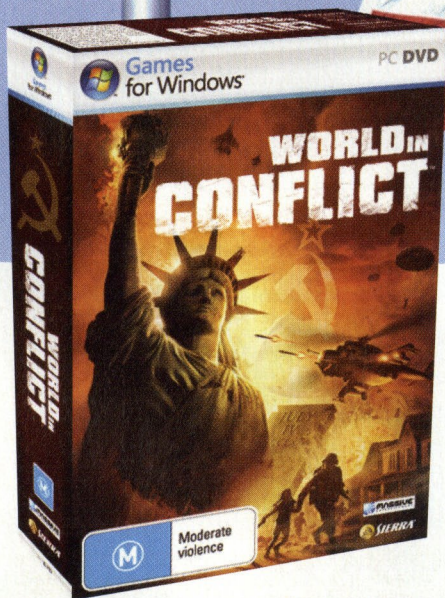
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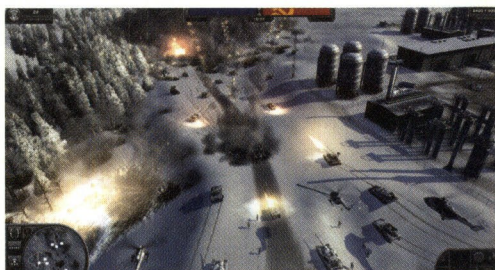


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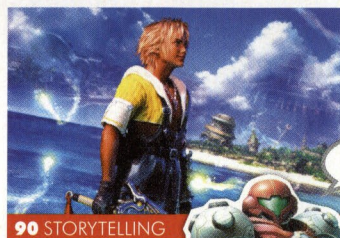
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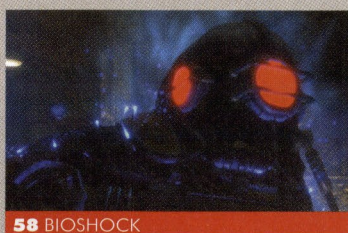
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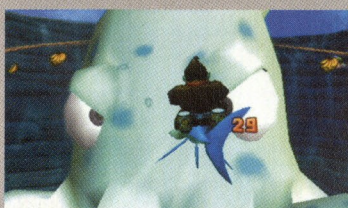
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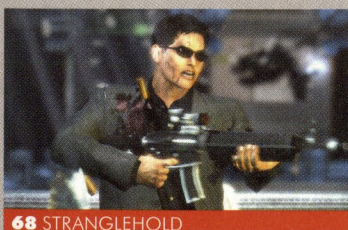
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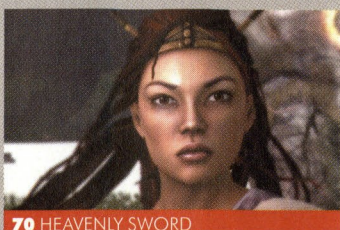
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16 HANDS-ON SPECIAL

Want to know how the year's most anticipated games play? We go hands on to get the scoop.

Editorial

»» This month has been grueling in more ways than one. It's a time consuming venture to get hands on time with all of the games we did this month but that is only one of the reasons this issue has been difficult. The real reason was BioShock. I'm not saying that I spent way too much time playing the game – which I did, by the way – it's the fact that I spent more time contemplating the score than I did actually playing the game. It took me the best part of a week to come up with the score.

With a percentile system like Hyper has, every little point counts. If I scored BioShock 98, then it would be saying, in Hyper terms, that it is the best game ever made and I'm not sure that's the case, but the game is absolutely brilliant and close to faultless. Giving it 97 puts it on par with only a handful of games but after reading their reviews they all sounded a little more glowing than my review. That of course comes down to the style of reviewer – I prefer to tell the good and bad, even if the bad is only minor, whereas some others prefer to concentrate on the good stuff.

I guess what I'm getting at is that with a rating system out of 10 there wouldn't be this problem. BioShock would score a 10, a score that means it is a masterpiece. Scoring it a perfect 100% in current Hyper parlance would make the game perfect, which it is not. So what do you think; after nearly 15 years of scoring out of 100 should we move to a score out of 10? Write us a letter, email us or let us know on the forums. We're more than a little curious to know what you think.

Daniel Wilks »» Editor

Hyper Crew MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

DANIEL – Editor

1. BioShock – Xbox 360
"Holy weeping jebus that's good"
2. Blue Dragon – Xbox 360
3. Titan Quest – PC
4. Heavenly Sword – PS3
5. Uncharted – PS3

MOE – Deputy Editor

1. Metroid Prime 2: Echoes – GCN
"The Wii's Gamecube backwards compatibility is rock!"
2. Stranglehold – Xbox 360
3. Guitar Hero 80s – PS2
4. Stuntman: Ignition – Xbox 360
5. Animal Crossing – GCN

MALCOLM – Art Director

1. Animal Crossing – DS
"Get up, water, dig, donate, coffee, plant, pay, bed."
2. Everybody's Tennis – PS2
3. Final Fantasy XII – PS2
4. Micro Machines v4 – PS2
5. Katamari – PS2

RICO SUAVEZ – Love God

1. Halo 3 – Xbox 360
"Yes, I admit, I'm a fanboy"
2. Stranglehold – Xbox 360
3. World in Conflict – PC
4. Blazing Angels 2 – Xbox 360
5. Juiced 2 – Xbox 360

HYPER»

OCTOBER 2007 ISSUE 168

WRITE TO HYPER!

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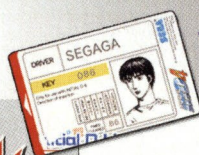
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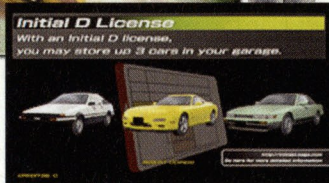
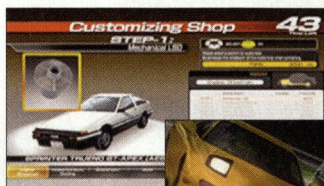
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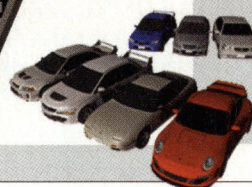


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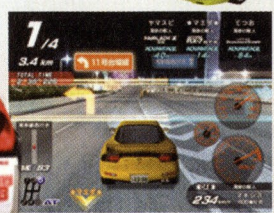
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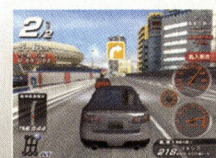


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LITIGATION!

EPIC VS SILICON KNIGHTS

Law suits, and counter suits, in ugly legal battle

Last month it came to light that developer Silicon Knights, best known for their work on the brilliant *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*, as well as the forthcoming *Too Human*, were pursuing legal action against *Gears of War* and Unreal Engine 3 creators Epic Games.

In the breach of contract suit the Canadian-based Silicon Knights allege that they had been a paying licensee of Epic's Unreal Engine 3, and that not only did Epic not provide them with a final development kit within a reasonable timeframe, but also that they did not provide adequate technical support. Epic were apparently too busy completing their own games, at the expense of their licensees.

Silicon Knights also claim that while they were waiting for Epic Games to get their act together, they had to build their own engine from scratch, at a considerable financial and time cost.

This month, Epic Games have struck back with a counter suit of their own, claiming that not only did Silicon Knights have access to the full Unreal Engine 3 development kit for nine months before they entered into a formal agreement with the developer, but that the replacement engine that Silicon Knights developed is derivative of the Unreal Engine 3, and thus, an infringement on Epic's copyright.

The exact damages that Silicon Knights are seeking from Epic Games have not yet been released to the public, although Chris Holland, Silicon Knight's attorney, has confirmed that it will be many millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, Epic's claim is for a paltry US\$650,000 (approx AU\$831,000), sparking speculation that the counter suit could just be a case of sour grapes.

* Not actually Epic and Silicon Knights

Nevertheless, this potentially ugly legal stoush is just beginning. Silicon Knights have promised that the legal action will not affect the development of *Too Human*, and likewise, we doubt any of Epic's future games will suffer because of it either, but there will no doubt be plenty more to report on this matter in the future months. Stay tuned.



Too Human: Going ahead without Unreal Engine 3

HAIR!

POISON FRONTMAN IS LEGEND OF ROCK

Bret Michaels to appear in *Guitar Hero III*

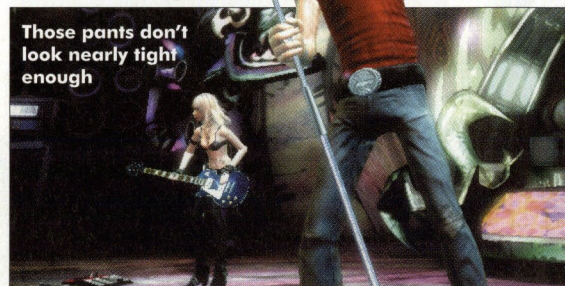
If you, like us, thought that having only one famous musician in *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*, was not quite enough legends to earn that subtitle, then this news will be of interest to you.

Joining former Guns 'n' Roses guitarist, Slash, Activision and Neversoft's rockstar simulator will now feature Bret Michaels, the former frontman of 1980s hair metal band Poison.

Michaels has been recreated in all his gaudy-eye-makeup-wearing, cowboy-hatted glory, and Neversoft have even gone to the trouble of getting him to do motion capture for his avatar's on-stage gyrations.

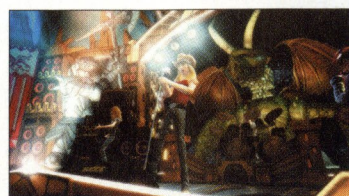
Although he obviously won't be one of the game's boss characters, since he never played guitar for Poison (wouldn't it have been smarter to get C.C. DeVille included in the game as well, then?), he will no doubt have a prominent role in

Those pants don't look nearly tight enough



the game's career mode, since *Guitar Hero III* will also include two songs that feature Michaels on vocals, Poison's "Talk Dirty To Me" and "Go That Far" by the Bret Michaels Band.

We have to wonder why Activision didn't spring a couple of extra bucks to get "Unskinny Bop" or "Nothin' But A Good Time" in the game, since the tracks they have now are going to be all but unknown to anyone who isn't already a Poison and Bret Michaels fan.



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FTW!

ACTIVISION STEAL TOP SPOT

Beats EA to become the number one third-party publisher

In more Activision-related news, this month the company has finally achieved one of its longest held goals — to overtake rival Electronic Arts and become the most profitable third-party publisher in the world.

For the first six months of 2007, Activision raked in a cool \$397.8 million, beating out Electronic Arts' meagre \$365.7 million in earnings for the first half of the year.

Activision's \$32.1 million spread over EA can reportedly be almost entirely attributed to the release

of Guitar Hero II. Apparently other games, like the latest Tony Hawk, Call of Duty, Spider-Man and Transformers games also helped Activision along, but with the Guitar Hero franchise expected to make up almost a third of the company's total revenue for the year, we can certainly see that the rhythm game is doing most of the work.

This lead may be temporary, however, since EA's activities in the first half of this year were subdued to say the least. For the next six months, EA will be



This pic needs more Inverted Flying V

releasing games like Skate, Medal of Honor: Airborne, FIFA '08 and of course — the big one — Rock Band.

It looks like this Christmas is going to be a tooth-and-nail battle between the two publishers — and we'll be reaping the gameplay rewards. Bring it on!

R.I.P!

IRRATIONAL GAMES RENAMED

But still manage to release a sweet Bioshock art book

We may be gushing over Irrational Game's latest game, Bioshock, in this month's big rubber stamp-earning game of the month review (see page 58), but it seems that we'll no longer be referring to the game's creators as Irrational.

On the eve of the release of their art-deco underwater masterpiece, Irrational Game's parent company and publisher, 2K Games (itself a subsidiary of Take 2 Interactive), have decided to change the name of the developer's American and Australian branches to better match with the company's corporate branding, and will from now on be known as 2K Boston and 2K Australia respectively.

It's a pity to see the unique individuality of Irrational Games become lost under one generic banner, something that has unsettled and angered plenty of Irrational Games' most dedicated fans.

While some are predicting that the name change will create a potential loss of identity for Irrational Games, we hope that it doesn't. As long as they keep a firm grip on their talented staff and continue to create some of the industry's most ingenious games, then we'll still be waiting with much anticipation to hear what 2K Boston/Australia have planned to follow up Bioshock.

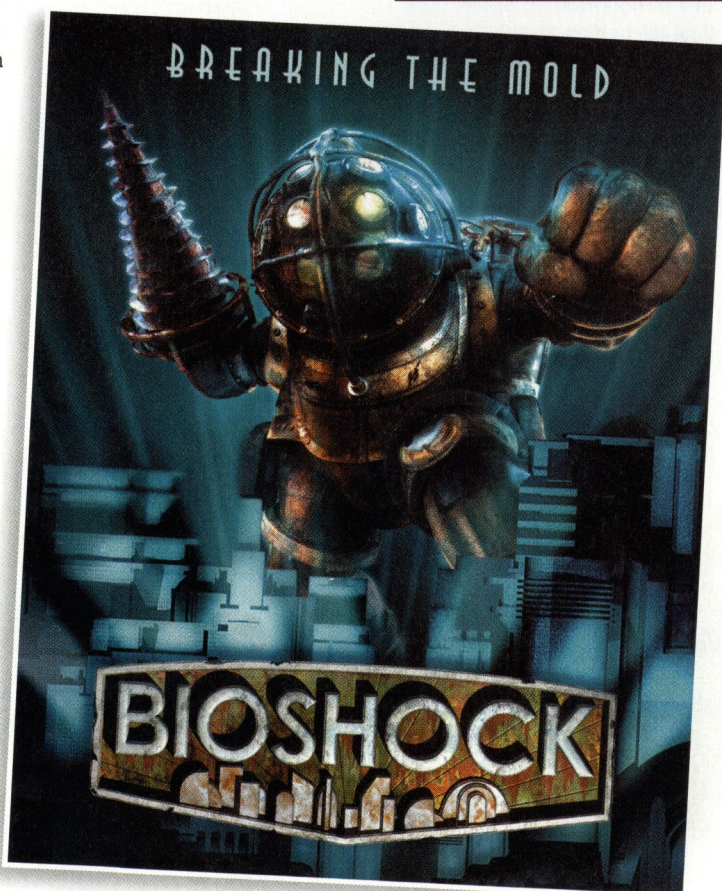
Amid the controversy of changing their names, the artists formerly known as Irrational Games did manage to give one more gift to their fans, in the form of a completely free Bioshock art book. The art book was initially meant to be

included as part of a collector's edition of the game, but when that didn't end up happening, Irrational decided to release the book as a downloadable PDF.

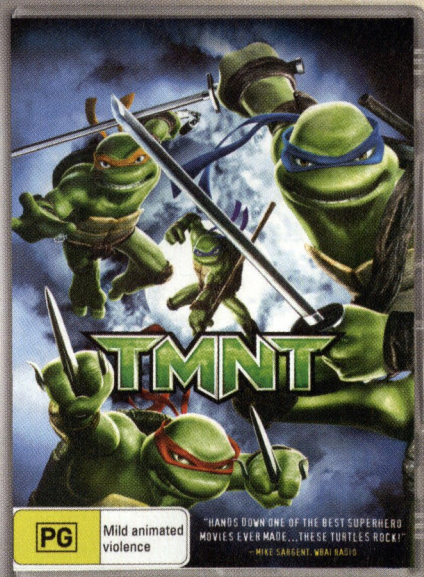
Featuring production art, concept sketches and much more, this e-book is a must see for anyone with even a vague interest in Bioshock — so get yourself over to www.cultofrapture.com to claim yours.



The cover's nice, but you should see inside!



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ARMAGEDDON IS COMING!

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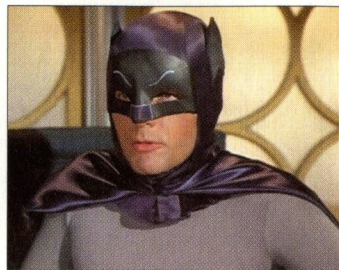
If you're a local Melbournite (or you're willing to travel) and you dig comics, animation, computer games, TV & movie stars, pro wrestling, games, sports, music and practically anything else that can be classified under the banner of "pop culture" then the Armageddon Multimedia Expo may be just the ticket for you.

Despite its rather apocalyptic title, we can assure you that there will be no fire and brimstone in sight – what will be in sight, however, will be Batman himself (and Family Guy regular) – Adam West, who will be joined by Julie Newmar, our

favourite Catwoman. Hopefully we can get them to do the Batusi.

Also appearing will be WWE superstar Rob Van Dam, Chris Rankin, who plays Percy Weasley in the Harry Potter films, as well as one of our personal favourites – Billy West, the voice of Futurama's Philip J. Fry and Doctor Zoidberg among countless others.

Armageddon will have all of this, as well as the usual expo shenanigans, shows from the Pro Wrestling Alliance, free laser tag, and bizarrely, there will even be an expo-wide pillow fight – which we predict will be won by none other



"Box, toaster, aluminum, maple syrup..."

than Adam West, should he choose to take part that is...

If any of this sounds like your scene, then be sure to leave Saturday and Sunday, October 13/14, 2007, free on your calendar and get yourself over to the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, or hit www.armageddonexpo.com for more details.

OVERFLOW

The rumour mill is grinding away furiously over Tim Schafer and Double Fine Production's latest game. Apparently the game will be called "Brutal Legend" and will star comedian/actor/musician/legend Jack Black playing the lead role, as a roadie for a rock 'n' roll band who goes to hell and has to fight his way out again.

Schafer has of course denied that all of these details are correct, but has said that some of them are true, and that he would be unveiling the game himself in good time. Whatever it is, we can't wait.

You may remember local search engine Lookle.com from a little bit of controversy they stirred up when Internet juggernaut Google threatened legal action over their vaguely similar name. Anyway, it seems that Lookle has a philanthropic streak, since in a new deal with charities, very time someone searches with Lookle, money is donated to a good cause. Searching for porn and warez while also helping those in need? Sounds like a winning combination to us!

That TV station that used to be about music, but is now about cheaply-made, all but unwatchable reality TV shows, is now about to be even less about the music. MTV Networks have announced that they will be investing US\$500 million into games development over the next two years. Rock Band (in collaboration with Harmonix and EA) will be their first big videogame project.

We've played the first two opening levels of Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, but, one thing we didn't see has just been announced by Retro Studios – and it's damn exciting. It seems that legendary Metroid villain Mother Brain is making a return. Retro have confirmed that there will be at least one Mother Brain in the game – and we can't wait to see how she fits in.

LORD OF THE RINGS BOOK TEN

Online Middle-Earth gets one update to rule them all

Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar has just been announced to be receiving a massive update in the form of Book 10: The City of the Kings.

Despite being called "Book 10", City of the Kings is actually the second major update for the Middle-Earth bound MMORPG, (the game started with the first eight books), and follows on from Book 9: The Shores of Evendim.

This update, however, is easily the biggest the game has seen yet, and not only will it continue the game's epic story, but it will also introduce an unfeasibly large amount of new gameplay features.

"Our first update significantly

expanded the world of Middle-earth with new story arcs, quests, and exciting new kinds of gameplay," announced Jeffrey Anderson, president and CEO of Turbine, Inc. "For Book 10 we continue the epic story and introduce a ton of new content, but we are also introducing legendary play, a completely new way to experience monster play that enables you to play as a powerful Ranger of the North or a terrible Troll."

Much of the update involves changes to the Ettenmoors keep system, and legendary play is one such update. Once in the Ettenmoors you will indeed be able to play as either a Ranger or Troll in

monster play, which will give wily players a strategic advantage in the ever-waging war for the keep.

Along with legendary play, there is the very weird-sounding "critter play". It's like monster play only this time, you get to control a barnyard animal – with the first animal announced being a chicken!

The update will also feature over 100 new quests, a new reputation and bartering system, and an enhanced user interface as well as hundreds of smaller tweaks and upgrades.

Lord of the Rings Online players and Hobbit fanciers alike will be able to download the update for free from August 21st.



And the trees were green and lush, the shrubberies slightly orange...



BAD COP NO DOUGHNUT

DANIEL WILKS

Sex sells (crap)

In the last month I've been to more than a few press events for various companies ranging from game developer to hardware manufacturers but there has been one common thread amongst all of them – breasts. Each of the events has had some embarrassed and bored looking spokesmodels schilling wares they have no idea about to a crowd they most probably wouldn't usually be seen dead talking to. Although a comely female is always a welcome sight, when I go to a press conference I want to get the facts, a press kit and get the hell out of there. I don't want to have to sit around and wait, as I did in at a laptop launch, for a bunch of emaciated waifs traipse up and down a catwalk holding the same two laptops, as though they were off to do a little blogging whilst in the bathroom purging the glass of water and mung bean salad they had for lunch. Sex may sell, as the old adage goes but I always feel that it shows very little faith in a product when you have to resort to flashing some hotties to get some notice at your own launch event.

Games aren't free from this style of selling either. Over the last few months two companies have been trying to sell me on features about Juiced 2 and Need For Speed Pro Street, but instead of trying to sell me the merits of both games the angle they've wanted to take is interviewing that large breasted airhead from Big Brother, Crystal and the apparently famous Ursula Mayes. Although I've been assured Ursula Mayes does in fact mod cars and is part of some ricer scene, why is it that THQ and EA feel they need to use attractive women as a draw-card for a feature rather than the game itself? Are they not good or is it the fact that big companies have no faith in consumers so seek to distract them with shiny (or jiggy in this case) things?

I don't like taking pot-shots at Australian companies but Auran, developer of the upcoming Fury has really keyed me in to this style of marketing. In an article entitled Model Set for Fury in Cyberspace by Stephen Corby, published in the Sunday Telegraph on the 5th of August this year, Corby starts his article by saying that it's every loner, dark-dwelling gamer's dream to control a bikini-clad woman, referring to Australian FHM Girl Next Door winner Siobhan Parekh who has been recreated digitally as a playable character in Fury, perpetuating the stereotype that gaming is a niche hobby populated by socially misaligned outcasts. This is annoying but not particularly bad compared to words of the CEO of Auran they mean nothing. In that self-same article, Tony Hilliam, the CEO of Auran claims that "she (Siobhan Parekh) also has the two most important attributes for a video-game character; she's beautiful and she's buxom". When the CEO of a company all but confirms that all a game character needs is a pretty face and tits he's saying to the uninformed that gaming is, in fact, a juvenile pastime rather than a legitimate form of entertainment.

My personal feeling on the matter is that the adherence to using endowed women to publicise games is something of a catch 22. Many companies cry foul that the mainstream press and the public as a whole treat gaming as a niche hobby for younger audiences but then go out of their way to utilize the simplest, crudest and juvenile of marketing techniques to get their game publicized – sticking boobs on it – making said product look niche and juvenile.



PRESS PASS

DANIEL STAINES

Be Perpetually Outraged

We all like a bit of controversy now and then. Sometimes we try to deny it, and look down our noses at the gossiping rabble, but the truth of the matter is that scandal is inherently interesting – especially when it concerns the things we care about.

Like every other branch of the media, the games press is no stranger to the notion of using controversy to generate extra revenue. It's a remarkably easy thing to do, and the rewards are considerable, particularly for an outlet struggling to make a name for itself in an ultra-competitive marketplace.

Look at the very first issue of Hyper: you think that Virtual Sex article was given a prominent spot on the cover because of its intellectual merit? Of course it bloody wasn't. It was there to stir up some hullabaloo and get people talking about the mag. And it worked. The mainstream media flew into a predictable tizzy, community groups wailed in righteous anger, and the article was publicly condemned in parliament by an MP who later became the victim of Australia's first political assassination. (Which, by the way, I'm pretty sure was totally unrelated to his views on Hyper.)

For a more recent example of the gaming media's love of controversy, consider the furore that arose following the release of the latest Resident Evil 5 trailer. Given that it depicts a muscular Aryan superman gunning down hordes of slaving negro zombies, it's not surprising that the trailer was pounced upon by people whose purpose in life is to be perpetually outraged. But what is surprising – at least to me – was the way in which the gaming press blatantly drew attention to the issue, and then reacted with sneering indignation when it became a scandal.

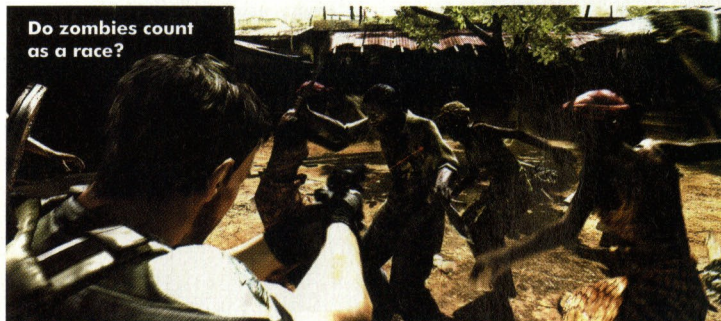
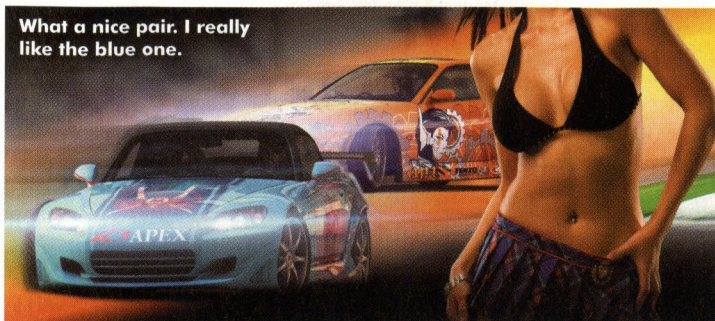
As soon as the trailer became public, bloggers and critics all over the internet were talking about how it was destined to be denounced as racist. Most of them didn't actually go so far as to call it racist themselves: they just raised the possibility in the most conspicuous way possible. And then when somebody actually had the balls to get up and point the finger, these very same bloggers and critics – the same people who raised the spectre of racism in the first place – got up on their high-horse and declared the whole thing ridiculous and just another example of anti-gaming hysteria.

You can see the problem here. And what's worse is that this isn't the first time that the gaming media has generated controversy, only to turn around a few weeks later and act as though everybody ought to know better. Remember Jack Thompson? Remember LocoRoco? These are examples of what I'm talking about. We game critics want so desperately to play an important role in videogame culture, and yet we continue to engage in scandal-mongering that would've been considered puerile back when Virtual Sex was still a hot topic.

I don't think there's anything blameworthy about confronting genuinely contentious issues, but manufacturing controversy purely for the sake of it can only end badly in the long run. The game industry already has its fair share of dirty laundry; the last thing it needs is for us to piss into the linen basket.

Until next month.

daniels@next.com.au





HANDS-ON SPECIAL

This month we went to the ends of the earth to get hands-on with all of the year's hottest games. Hold on tight readers, the future begins here!

HALO 3 CO-OP CAMPAIGN

I know I always come across as being a bit of a grouch with a negative attitude towards everything but (apparently according to type) I can't help but feel a little underwhelmed by Halo 3 so far. The reason for this is simple and it's a problem I have with a lot of games with a numeral after the title – Halo 3 feels like more of the same at the moment, quite indistinguishable from the previous two games in the way it feels and plays. This, of course, isn't a bad thing as the last two games were pretty damn good but you'd think that Bungie would want to make a slightly bigger splash with their first next-gen game.

Anyway, the game. Tsavo Highway, the level we got to play in co-op. I was immensely pumped to jump in and tool around with three other people, working as a team and taking out the heroic difficulty Covenant foolish enough to step into our way. After a few missteps (see boxout) we were in action – not exactly working as a cohesive unit but having a good deal of fun nonetheless, running simple flanking manoeuvres against dug in

Hi! My details are:

Category: **First Person Shooter**
Players: **1-multi**
Developer: **Bungie**
Due: **September 2007**



Covenant positions, focussing fire on hard targets and generally trying not to shoot each other in the back of the head. All

in all the experience was definitely enjoyable but still didn't truly get me psyched about Halo 3. When all is said and done it still looks and feels all but identical to Halo 2 (and Halo for that matter). Sure, fans of Halo will eat it up and it's a very approachable for new players but it just feels like a simple FPS. Personally I blame Irrational (or 2K Boston) – I've been so spoiled by a sublime FPS that something merely really good feels a bit too samey to get my juices flowing.

Now the camera, on the other hand, is something to get really excited about. Being able to record all of the action and play it back not only means that the interwebs will be

buzzing with some totally rad Warthog jumping videos within hours of the game's release, being able to unhook the camera from a fixed perspective will open up untold amounts of tactical viability to players. If you're in single player you can scope out difficult levels to find their trouble spots; the hidden snipers, brutes and other devious enemies can be laid bare in a fully roamable freeze-frame allowing the player to better plot a course of attack. It's essentially like a built in no-clip hack.

The ability to record has just as many perks in multi-player. Not only will players be able to make show-reels of their most improbable kills, they will be

Angelic: This brute does actually seem to have a halo.



able to record a level and (presumably, unless Bungie are planning on coding some kind of anti-voyeur measures) check out not only the level design in detail but can also scope out sniping hotspots, the locations of the power spawn points and the like.

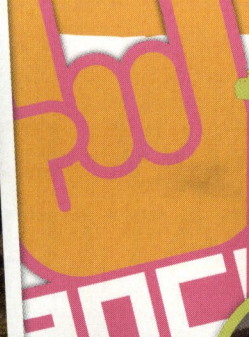
While what I've written may make it sound as though I'm quite negative to Halo 3 I'm not. It is shaping as a great Halo game but instead of the games getting better with each generation they just appear to me to be the same thing over and over again. That's not necessarily a bad thing – I'm sure the "we're giving the fans what they want" line will pop up in interviews but do fans necessarily just want a prettier (though still remarkably jaggy) version of an old game with a few more people in co-op and a great camera or do they want a more? <<

DANIEL

ANONYMITY + INTERNET =

One problem we foresee with four-player co-op is that you have to rely on other players, even more so than you have to in multi-player. If one of your four decides to be a jerk it can be very detrimental to the experience. Many of the people at the co-op demo experienced this as one or two of the players decided it would be funny to do things like blow up one of the two Warthogs at the start of the level we played, forcing people to walk the map, arriving at each combat, minutes after they had finished. Hopefully there will be voting and booting tools built into co-op similar to those in multi-player.





ALIENS AMONG US

Although we still know little about the plot, aside from the fact that this time we're fighting for Earth, one bit of information the co-op code let us in on was the fact that players will most probably be playing some levels as an Arbiter, this time a defector to the human side.

Hopefully the justification for the Arbiter in Halo 3 will be a little stronger than the inclusion of the Covenant elements in Halo 2. Fingers crossed.



One of the more verdant levels – more of this Bungie!

WWLT'S:

There are several things that we'd really like to see in Halo 3, but having great story with a real ending and actually giving us a reason to stop saying "more of the same" would be nice.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE!



For most of you Xbox 360 owners out there, or prospective Xbox 360 owners, this is inevitably the game that you've been waiting for. While the Halo 3 beta may have whet our appetites, it didn't really deliver anything we hadn't seen before, with the most exciting new feature being a dubiously-named jump pad.

What we've really wanted all along is to get our hands on Halo 3's single player game. Thanks to Bungie and Microsoft, we got our wish and then some, as not only did we get to play the game's story mode, but we also got a sneak peak at a few very interesting new features.

HIT THE TSARO HIGHWAY

Microsoft's big Halo event began with a presentation from Frank O'Connor and Lars Bakken, Bungie's lead writer and lead multiplayer designer respectively.

On a cinema screen wider than the Hyper office they booted up a heretofore unseen level, Tsaro Highway, which we were told is the third level in the game, and the first level that includes vehicles.

Before they would let us get our hands near the game they demanded that they show us one of the game's newest and most technically astounding features – "save films". While they are technically just glorified

instant replays – they were totally rad.

Everything you play in Halo 3 is recorded to your Xbox 360's HDD, and after you've finished a level you can replay, pause, take screenshots and most impressive of all, take a free-roaming camera anywhere you want around the level, high or low, to watch the unfolding chaos that you've created. This is the kind of thing hardcore players are going to eat up like popcorn – and machinima filmmakers? I can hear them crapping their pants in excitement from here.

Eventually, it was time for me to play it for myself. The Tsaro Highway starts out in an underground bunker conveniently packed with Warthogs. We were playing in four-player co-op mode, so, taking the initiative, I climbed into the drivers seat while two others climbed on with me. I burnt rubber, took us out of the bunker and into the sun of Tsavo Highway.

Graphically, the game looks impressive, although it's not without its foibles. The enemy models and their animations are the unmistakable highlight of the game, and whether they're running from you or gunning you down, they do it with plenty of character, stealing the scene at any given moment. If there's one thing I was disappointed with though, it's the environment. Many of the environments

we've seen so far are functional as battlegrounds, but aesthetically they can be sparse, almost desolate. The Tsaro Highway was meant to be set on Earth, and yet there was nothing human about it. It certainly has the stark look and atmosphere of a Halo title, but after being spoiled for beauty with games like Bioshock, Halo 3 can't help but look barren.

With too little time to soak up the sights, we were set upon by Covenant Grunts, Elites and a few Brutes for good measure. Halo's great enemy AI and tactical battle set pieces have always been its strength and Halo 3 certainly delivers everything that its predecessors did in that regard. All of the weapons from the multiplayer beta popped up throughout the level, including the sweet Brute SMG battleaxes... and something even cooler – the Brute Chopper. Looking like a giant one-wheeled motorcycle the Brute Chopper feels essentially like a re-skinned Ghost – but damn, does it look sweet tearing through the dirt, mowing down everything in its path.

For all its improvements, Halo 3 really does just feel like a prettied up Halo 2. It's not really something you can ignore when you're still using essentially the same tactics on essentially the same enemies, with essentially the same set of weapons for the third time. However, if Bungie can keep the new weapons, new vehicles and new game modes flowing in, and polish it all off with a credible story that actually has an ending this time, then Halo 3 may just have a hope in hell of living up to its hype. <<

MOE



...a cameo appearance by a Mantel Trooper from Haze.

"[WE WEREN'T] WORKING AS A COHESIVE UNIT BUT WE WERE HAVING A GOOD DEAL OF FUN"



The Tsaro Highway mission in action.

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UBISOFT

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

Hi! My details are:

Category: **First Person Shooter**

Players: **1-multi**

Developer: **Retro Studios**

Due: **October 2007**

It would be an understatement to say that the collective Hyper team are huge fans of the Metroid series. In our humble opinion the series is among the greatest of all Nintendo's achievements. On every console it has appeared, from the NES and SNES right through to the Gamecube, it has consistently been among the defining games of each console generation.

We have now, finally, had the chance to get some real hands-on time with Samus Aran's latest Space Pirate-hunting, Metroid-eradicating adventure, Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, and can genuinely say that for the most part, it looks to continue the series legacy of greatness.

The controls are better than we could have hoped for, the level design so far seems interesting and the exploring, power-up-finding gameplay looks to have remained intact. Despite all these successes, however, there are also a few worrying aspects about Retro Studios' new reinterpretation of the Metroid franchise, leaving us wondering if it is possible for a Metroid game to still be good, but not feel like a Metroid game...

THE NEW KEYBOARD AND MOUSE

Lets start with the positives, shall we? Nintendo have been quite clear about what they wanted to achieve with Metroid Prime 3: Corruption – a complete reinvention of the way we play first-person shooter games. We've played the first two "levels", so to speak, of Samus's latest adventure (about an hours worth of play time in total) and we can already confirm that they have done it.

In the past, console FPS games have

been limited by the need to use peripherals that are, by their very design, slow and imprecise. The dual thumbsticks used in modern console FPS games work well enough, but only because there's a heaping helping of auto-assisted aim, with the more accurate keyboard and mouse still proving to be the hardcore FPS fan's weapon of choice.

While previous Wii games, like Red Steel, have attempted to change this, they have failed, with skittish and imprecise controls hampering the experience. However, in the case of Metroid Prime 3 at least, the Wiimote and Nunchuk really have proven to be the new keyboard and mouse.

Looking around the world is as simple as pointing your Wiimote in the direction you want to go, and the further you point, the faster Samus turns. There's no auto-assisted aiming, because you'll never need it – aiming is as simple as point and shoot – and it really does feel like your own hand is an extension of Samus's blaster.

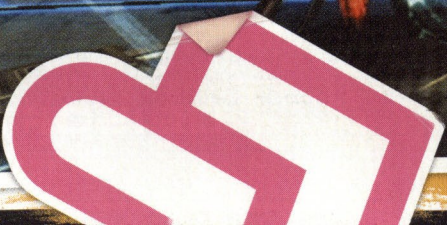
Using the Nunchuk's Z-trigger you can lock onto enemies, but this function is purely used to keep your view focused on an enemy while you strafe, and you'll still have to aim precisely with the Wiimote. There's definitely a lot more skill involved in this game than just lock and shoot.

Similarly, doors and other contraptions will now take a little extra dexterity to operate, with a variety of mini-game-like Wiimote movements required to get them working. Doors, for example, may require you to reach out your hand, grab hold of a handle, pull the handle out, twist it and then push it back in. All of these movements are made with the Wiimote, and there are plenty of other techniques

Wii!

HANDS-ON

Is Space Pirate a job description or racial designation?



Oh noes! Samus has been hit with a shrink ray... Perspective what?



The grapple in action – the motion control feels pretty rad.

as well, including pulling levers, pushing buttons or operating computers, making even the most mundane gaming activity seem not only fresh, but also physically interactive.

One last control-themed aspect of Metroid Prime 3 that really wowed us was the use of Samus's grapple beam. Eligible grapple points are clearly marked with a "G" symbol that shows up on your HUD. Once you've locked onto the object using the Z-trigger you have to cast forward the Nunchuk like you are actually throwing out the beam yourself, which will in turn attach Samus's beam in the game. Once attached, you can then whip the Nunchuk back, which will cause your grapple beam

to tear a blockage away from a door, wrench a shield out of an enemy's hands, or any number of other uses.

In short, Metroid Prime 3's controls are the shit.

RIDLEY RETURNS... AGAIN!

Unlike most Metroid games, from the very start of the code we had access to Samus's morph-ball ability, as well as some morph-ball bombs and a charge-shot, with the first missile upgrade being found very early in the game. It's a good thing too, because Samus needs everything she's got to take care of a nasty Space Pirate infestation inside a fleet of Galactic Federation battleships.

You see, it seems that a voracious software virus has infected the Galactic Federation's computer systems and the scapegoats are of course those nefarious Space Pirates. Just as Samus is called in to deal with the computer problem (because, obviously, she has mad tech-support skillz) the Space Pirates show up to once again menace the Feds, and Samus has to get to work on them with her arsenal of weapons.

There's more to the game's story than that, of course, with Retro Studios having already announced that Corruption will see the return of Dark Samus (thought to be dead after the events of

SAMUS'S NEW TOYS

There were no new weapons revealed in our hands-on time, but one of Samus's new toys in Metroid Prime 3: Corruption is the "command visor", which can be accessed by pressing the Wiimote's minus button, and choosing it from the visor select screen.

Function in the same way that the scan visor, which you can use to find out information about objects and creatures, the command visor is instead used to issue commands.

In the time we had with the game, the only command available was the ability to call Samus's spaceship to wherever she is in the galaxy, by scanning various landing zone beacons. Once scanned, the beacons will send out the call to your ship and in seconds it will land nearby, allowing you to recharge your energy tanks and to save your game.

We're yet to play with any other uses for the command visor, but reportedly the visor can also be used to instruct your ship to attack a specific target, open up previously blocked paths and also just to carry you to different areas.



The Wiimote makes even the most mundane tasks fun

"ONE ASPECT OF METROID PRIME 3 THAT REALLY WOWED US WAS THE USE OF SAMUS'S GRAPPLE BEAM..."

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

continued...

Samus has always been a closet fan of Scorpion from Mortal Kombat

Prime 2: Echoes) as the game's main antagonist, but for now we'll just stick to the basics, since during our hands-on session, it was all about laying the boot into some Space Pirate backside.

The Pirate ranks so far include the likes of ground troops, jetpack pirates and giant berserkers. Their AI at this stage seems a little underdeveloped, but overall the bulkier, smarter enemies are a lot of fun to face off against, while the lesser-developed cannon fodder, like bugs, mobile sentry guns and other nuisances are appropriately easy to kill.

The most spectacular battle came as a pleasant surprise, since it featured the return of a much-loved Metroid villain, Ridley, the giant dragon-like leader of the Space Pirates, who has made an appearance in practically every Metroid game ever made, despite being thought to have been killed by Samus in every instance. In Corruption, Ridley appears unexpectedly, attacking Samus as she is morph-ball-rolling through an outdoor morph-ball track. Ridley begins by biting down on the track, clamping Samus into a small section, where he then repeatedly attempts to bite

Charging up to deliver a world of hurt

If tech support were more like this we'd consider changing jobs

YOU'VE LOST THAT METROID FEELING

As long-time fans of the series know all too well, Metroid has always been about a solitary bounty hunter braving the wilderness of space on her lonesome — one superwoman against an army of space pirates and an even bigger army of the amoeba-like Metroid menace. The isolation of being stranded on a strange planet, faced with all manner of intergalactic adversaries and forced to subsist on the power-ups she finds while exploring an alien land, as well as a narrative that comes through experience, rather than overlong scenes of vocalised exposition, is everything that makes a game Metroid.

Unfortunately, while our hands-on time with Metroid Prime 3: Corruption showed us that the game will feature some amazing controls, plenty of Space Pirate-blasting action and some nice level design, the narrative style and overall atmosphere

her. Ridley can be easily discouraged with a few blasts from your morph-ball-bombs, but Samus's nemesis isn't done yet.

The end of the demo

once again faces Samus with Ridley, this time both are tumbling down a seemingly bottomless shaft, having at each other with everything they've got. Once the dust has settled Ridley has fallen out of view (although you can bet you haven't seen that last of him) while a helpless Samus is swept up in the arms of a friendly fellow bounty hunter and rescued to safety... wait a minute, lets backtrack a bit there, Samus is helpless and needs to be rescued? Welcome to the new Metroid people.

has us intensely worried about whether Metroid Prime 3 will really feel like a game in the true Metroid tradition.

Our worries began almost immediately. The game begins with a quite cool introduction, where you get to see the inside of Samus's spaceship and are allowed to tinker with a few of the ship's gadgets, like the communications system, the landing gear and more. After you've successfully docked Samus's ship with a Galactic Federation battleship the game then goes straight into exposition mode.

As we explored the Fed's battleship, for better or worse, it reminded us a lot of The Pillar of Autumn levels from the original Halo. Samus has to explore the ship and make small talk with the crewmembers and other military personnel... wait a minute, lets just back-pedal a bit there. Samus makes small talk?

She does indeed, and not only that, but almost everyone she talks to, from a lowly private all the way up to a decorated

SAMUS IS STACKED!

Get your mind out of the gutter, we know what you thought when you read that subhead. Seriously though, one of the biggest news to come out about Metroid Prime 3: Corruption is that instead of having many separate weapons that you have to switch between, the weapons in Corruption will be stackable.

In a similar system to that used in Super Metroid, when you collect a weapon it will simply add onto the power of the weapons you already have. So if you just got a lowly charge beam, but collect an ice beam, then they'll combine to form an ice charge beam.

This system will be a welcome addition to anyone who got tired of seeing the weapon select screen in Metroid Prime 1 and 2.

pilot, essentially tells the universe's most deadly bounty hunter to shut the hell up and go away, because they're too busy to deal with her.

To put it bluntly, the entire opening of the game doesn't feel like Metroid, and it really does feel like something more along the lines of Halo. While saying that a game feels like Halo may be a compliment for any other game, for Metroid, it just doesn't fit.

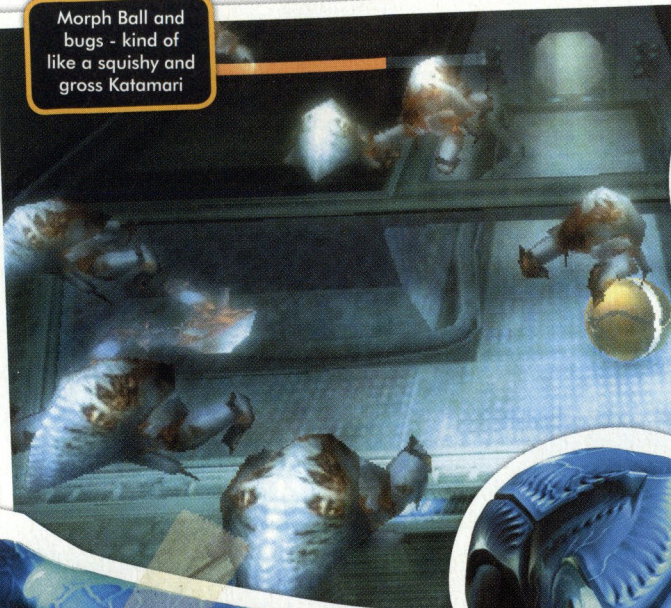
GOODBYE ISOLATION AND SOLITUDE

Eventually the game moves on from Samus being told to go away, to Samus being told what to do. In a mission briefing in The Pillar of Aut... uh, I mean the Galactic Federation battleship's war room, a stern American military type barks the game's back story of Space Pirate shenanigans and future Space Pirate-shooting mission objectives at you in a gruff voice, again recalling shades of Halo.

To combat the Space Pirates, the Federation have hired three extra bounty hunters to help Samus with the job. It's almost as if the Federation have never heard of Samus Aran, and don't know that she's single-handedly responsible for nine out of every ten Space Pirate deaths already.

Unfortunately, both visually and conceptually, the other bounty hunters also seem a poor fit for the Metroid universe. There's a Tinman-from-the-Wizard-of-Oz-looking robot who has a human brain peering out of a dome on top of his head (now, if he only had a heart), there's a bright-purple female shape-shifter and an armour-suited hunter called Rundas, who looks basically the same as Noxus from Metroid Prime: Hunters. Their designs are far removed from the imaginative character and creature designs we have come to expect from the series, and next to the near-perfection of Samus's power

Morph Ball and bugs - kind of like a squishy and gross Katamari



WWLTS:

The gameplay and controls look like their going to be fantastic, but we can't say we like the new narrative direction the game is taking. Metroid should never feel like you're playing anything other than a Metroid game, and ultimately that's what we'd really like to see.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

played about as finished as a demo can be, we don't expect everything we've seen in the opening two missions to be exactly the same by the time a retail release of the game rolls around. For this reason we don't want to cast our definitive opinions prematurely.

As it stands, all we can say is that at this stage of development Metroid Prime 3: Corruption plays fantastically, controls probably better than any other Wii game to date, perhaps even better than any console shooter ever made, and that in almost every respect it looks to be the best

BOTH VISUALLY AND CONCEPTUALLY, THE OTHER BOUNTY HUNTERS SEEM A POOR FIT FOR METROID

suit, they just end up looking silly.

These characters are part of Samus's initial briefing and they pop up intermittently throughout the first two levels of the game, either to help Samus fight - or to save her from...the invading Space Pirates.

For a series that has been all about isolation on alien worlds and the resilience of a solitary heroine for more than twenty years, the sudden introduction of superfluous characters and game design elements that would be more at home in any game series other than Metroid wasn't exactly easy for us to swallow.

PREMATURE OPINIONATION

The hour or so of gameplay contained in the demo we got our hands on is of course exactly that, a demo. While it was technically rock solid, and both the level design and narrative style looked and

game on the Wii since The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess.

However, the first looks we've had at the game's new narrative style, atmosphere and its supplementary cast of characters haven't left nearly as favourable an impression on us. As long-time fans of the Metroid series, we do have a certain emotional attachment to the things that made the Metroid games special. While the addition of elements that make the experience more like a generic first-person shooter may indeed make it more accessible to players that have, for example, played Halo, we can't say those elements fit within the Metroid universe.

While we have the utmost confidence that Metroid Prime 3: Corruption will be a brilliant game, it seems as though, in

an effort to attract a wider, more mainstream audience, Nintendo and Retro Studios have compromised one of the Metroid series' most unique assets - it's atmosphere - and we just can't shake the feeling that that the true essence of Metroid is what's really being corrupted here. Only time will tell. <<

Even Samus isn't above showing off some serious bling





CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

We weren't that keen on the last Call of Duty game. To us it felt like a developer who had run out of ideas or worse yet, didn't have an idea of what to do with the franchise to begin with. It's understandable, though – how many times can you trot out yet another story about WWII without the creative well running dry? After our hands on time with Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare we can say without a shadow of a doubt that Infinity Ward have come back to the franchise with a vengeance, creating one of the most stunning and adrenalin charged war FPS we've played in quite a while and a game that could equal the brilliance of the original Call of Duty. Although we've only had the opportunity to play two levels of the single player



Hi! My details are:

Category: **First Person Shooter**
 Players: **1+**
 Developer: **Infinity Ward**
 Due: **November 2007**



That tree is so going to get it



game, a basic intro levels and a more complex, multi-stage mission, if they're an indication of the quality of the final game it's no wonder why CoD4 was voted one of the games of the show at this year's E3.

BOAT DRINKS

The first level we tried saw the player and his spec-ops team infiltrating a ship, taking down the hostiles inside and searching for a shipment (that appeared to be some sort of biological weapon) and finally escaping from the ship as it is scuttled and starts making it's way to the bottom of the ocean. The first thing that leapt out to us whilst playing this first level was, unlike previous games in the franchise, the player was not the focus of the unit. Instead of being the one man who can get things done and give orders, the player in CoD4 is not in charge and is frequently given orders to do different tasks. The other soldiers in the unit act independently to the character – in this first level we often found ourselves coming to the small skirmishes just as they were ending, the other soldiers having dispatched the enemies while we were still navigating through the ship. Although it was a bit frustrating not to be the centre of attention if was nice to not be one man against an army for a change.

The end of the level saw us retracing our steps through the ship as it was scuttled and started making its way to the bottom of the ocean at an alarming rate. The event was timed (though no clock was visible) so a few retries were necessary before finally making it onto the deck and leaping to the safety of the awaiting helicopter. Although a



SHOOTING FRIENDS

Although we haven't had a chance to get hands on with the multi-player elements of Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare as yet, we do know that it will extend on the gameplay of Call of Duty 2 in that players will be able to build up experience to purchase equipment and unlockables and will be able to create a character class and customise gear.



Hopefully the Multi-player will live up to expectations

WE'VE ONLY SEEN TWO LEVELS, BUT WE COULDN'T BE MORE EXCITED

Pro Tip: Bipods work better when rested on something

little frustrating with the restarts (mostly thanks to the on screen compass being a little difficult to follow at times), Infinity Ward have crafted what is essentially an interactive cutscene without having to resort to the often disastrous quick-time event.

ON THE BOG

The other level we tested, rather uninspiringly called Bog_A in the level select menu was a far different affair, a multi-stage assault on an enemy-held building, destroying some enemy tanks with a shoulder-mounted missile and finally taking out an anti-aircraft gun so a friendly helicopter could deploy some mechanics to move a bogged down tank.

The first part of the assault saw us using night vision goggles and storming a half demolished building. The night-vision effect was spectacular – laser sights criss-crossed the battlefield, and muzzle flashed bloom from the green. After taking down some of the defending enemy, we were ordered to head inside the building and take the second floor. After a few short fire-fights the second floor is ours and we use a mounted MG to rake the balconies of an adjacent building, clearing them of

enemies, before heading back downstairs and into the next building. Next we had to defend the building for a short while from enemies charging through the carpark. Carefully placed shots can cause the cars to go up in flame (and eventually explode so we quickly learned to take advantage of the terrain. We also got our first taste of using a sniper rifle in this area to pick off enemy combatants on a nearby rooftop. Although it did nothing new in terms of mechanics the sniper rifle felt good and powerful with an accurate zoom.

The next part of the mission, taking out two tanks with a shoulder mounted missile let us come to grips with yet another weapon. To lock on and fire the player has to stand still, deploy iron-sights (left trigger) and hold the target in the centre of the targeting reticule for a few seconds. Once the lock-on is made the rocket is fire and forget. The final part of the level was nothing if not hugely impressive. A bogged friendly tank sits in the middle of a stretch of land surrounded on three sides by buildings. We had to first defend the tank and crew from

enemies before heading through one of the buildings to destroy an anti-aircraft gun that was stopping a friendly helicopter from sending a barrage of rockets into the enemy held buildings and dropping off some support crew to free the tank. The white knuckle intensity of the level came from the combination of the incredible visuals – dynamic shadows being cast by dynamically lit fire, vapour trails left by rockets, death and destruction on a grand scale – and the organic way the level is designed. At no point did it look like there was an obvious path towards the goal and eventually we ended up taking a different route to the anti-aircraft gun than the rest of the unit.

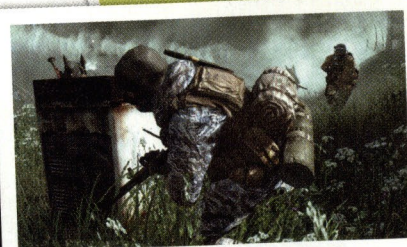
SNAP!

Snap-to-targeting is always a bit of a worry when it comes to console FPS as sometimes the snap seems far too loose, making it all too easy to mow down a horde of enemies and other seem to require the player to aim so precisely that it makes the idea of a snap redundant. The snap-to targeting in Cod 4 works brilliantly, combining basic aim with iron sights. The left trigger controls iron sights (bringing the gun up to eye level so you can sight along the barrel) – pulling the left trigger when you are roughly aimed at an enemy brings up the iron sights and snaps to centre of mass, allowing for a quick burst to the body of some more precise aiming for a head shot. The mechanic feels brilliant, helping with the often hectic and heart-pounding fire-fights without every making it seem like your hand is being held, essentially making the console controller feel as accurate and responsive as a mouse and keyboard.

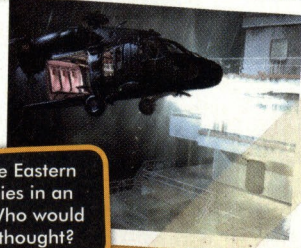
Although we've only seen those two levels so far we couldn't be more excited to see more of Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, as it seems to pack in all of the intensity of the original game whilst relying on both the scripted events that made the first game so compelling and the organic level design we have come to expect from modern games. <<



WWLTS: More of the single player and some details on multi-player. Hopefully both will live up to expectations.



Middle Eastern Enemies in an FPS? Who would have thought?



PC
XBOX
360

HANDS-ON



MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE

PS3

Hi! My details are:

Category: **First-Person Shooter**
Players: **1-multi**
Developer: **EA Los Angeles**
Due: **November 2007**

Another year, another Medal of Honor game. It's become somewhat of a tradition hasn't it? Just like Christmas or Easter, only instead of celebrating the birth of Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny (Jeebus who?) this celebration is all about giving those dastardly Nazis their comeuppance.

Medal of Honor: Airborne is the latest in the series of Nazi-comeuppance-giving simulators, and as we found out first-hand, getting airborne is pretty rad.

CHUTE, THEN SHOOT

True to its title, Medal of Honor: Airborne begins in the air, kicking off with a few leaps from an aeroplane flying high above the ground. The protagonist of Airborne is Boyd Travers, a paratrooper for the United States Army's 82nd Airborne Division, and the game's very first playable levels let us get to grips with this Medal of Honor's main differentiating feature – parachute jumps.

Starting out with a whole company of paratroopers-in-training, the game started with us having to run Boyd Travers through his first three practice paradrrops. When the lights turned red in the cabin of our plane we leaped from the open hatch along with the rest of our company, opened our chutes and were on our way down towards our landing zone.

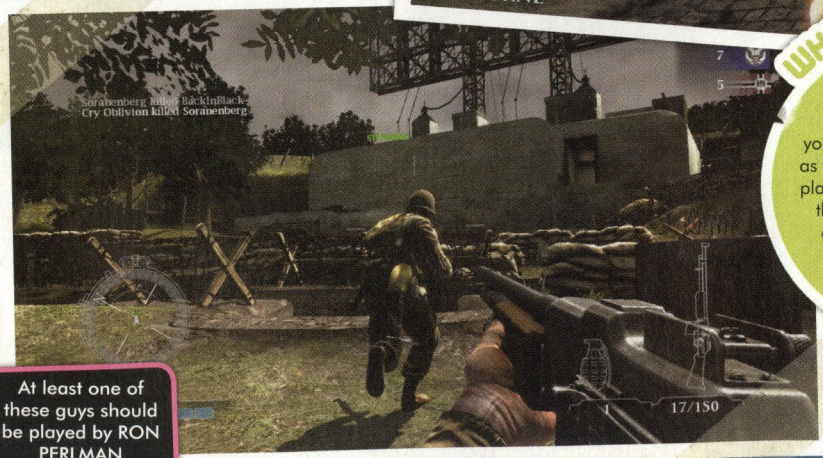
You can control your drop with the left and right sticks, and you can flare your chute with the right trigger button to slow your descent, a trick that is essential to accurately aiming your rapidly

descending soldier. We did also notice that when we successfully flared our chute just before landing (for a super-comfy touchdown) we gained an award message at the bottom of the screen, something that will no doubt come into play in the final game (see boxout).

This first look at the game's new parachuting mechanic was promising, but it wasn't until the game's first proper mission began that we really saw how good it will be in the final game.

After being briefed on our introductory mission – to destroy a set of three German anti-aircraft guns stationed in a Sicilian fortified village – we took to the skies, since the insertion point into the village battlefield was not a predetermined location, but instead wherever we chose to drop.

Boyd's attempt to cast Force Lightning ended in failure



At least one of these guys should be played by RON PERLMAN

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
WWLTS:
A few missions where you get to do some shooting as you're parachuting from a plane. In the build we played there was strictly no guns allowed while in the air.

DEAD NAZIS = AWARDS

Along with receiving a special award for successfully flaring our chutes for a super-smooth landing, we also noticed a number of other awards that Medal of Honor: Airborne was handing out. After getting a number of grisly headshots we were awarded with a "Marksman" award for our Nazi-killing prowess. The award didn't just give us bragging rights, but it also improved our accuracy stats, making us an even better shot. We're not sure how many other awards there will be in the final game, but they'll definitely be worth keeping an eye out for.



The fortified village was quite large, but a few green flares placed by our fellow soldiers clued us in to where the safest places for us to paradrop were. That didn't stop us from experimenting with drop points, however, and we certainly managed to get ourselves in a few jams (dropping right in the middle of a Nazi battalion), as well as dropping into a few more strategic locations (like onto the rooftops of a nearby building, where we could pick them off at a distance). The parachuting mechanic essentially means that you'll never need to start a level the same way twice.

TINY MOUSTACHE

Once you have dropped into a level, wherever you choose to do it, Medal of Honor: Airborne starts to feel very familiar. We started by leading Boyd, along with a crew of nearby soldiers towards our

first AA gun. The passing city was very well rendered in true Medal of Honor style, the war-ravaged Sicilian village comes complete with all of the bombed-out buildings and cars, burning fires and barricades made of sandbags that you'd expect to see in a WWII game.

The combat too looks to be firmly set in the mould of previous games in the series. Boyd is kitted out from the start with a Thompson submachine gun, an M1 Garand rifle, a pistol and three or so hand grenades, although you can still swap weapons with any dead Germans you come across in the field if you're so inclined. Making those Nazis dead, however, may be a little harder than before, since they seem to have been doing their homework since the last time we killed them.

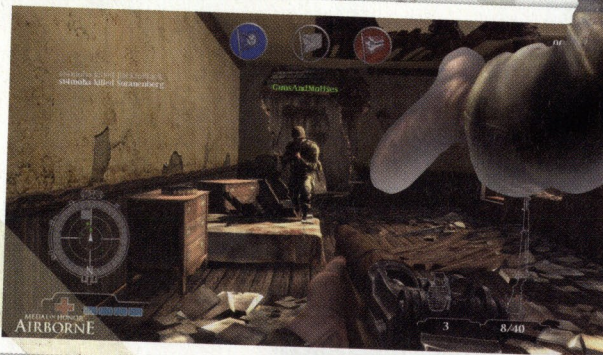
From the code that we played it seemed that the enemy AI had been significantly toughened up, with Airborne playing

more like a stop and pop game rather than run and gun. Several of our frontal assaults were cut embarrassingly short by a few million Nazi bullets, but when we took the time to find good cover (usually behind the aforementioned sandbag barricades) and gingerly pop our noses over the top to fire a few pot-shots in their direction we survived a lot longer.

Our fellow soldiers also seemed to have been gulping down the smart pills, since they actually seemed to follow our lead instead of just running from checkpoint to checkpoint. At present, our allies didn't contribute to the war effort nearly as much as we did, and it seems that Airborne hasn't completely done away with the feeling that you are one super-soldier

against the world, but still, your pals do seem to be a lot less inbred this time around.

MAKING THOSE DAMNED NAZIS DEAD IS A LITTLE HARDER THAN BEFORE



After no less than fifteen paradrops into different locations within the village, we finally managed to locate all three of the anti-air guns, all of them heavily guarded by our goose-stepping pals. With a little bit of strategy, plenty of bullets and a fistful of blind luck we managed to fit each gun with a tiny pack of explosives, making for some pretty spectacular fireworks as we made way for the allied air force, the end of the first mission and the end of our hands-on time.

From what we've played so far, Medal of Honor: Airborne looks to be more of the same WWII-themed, Nazi-blasting, khaki-wearing, American-flag-waving action that has made the series one of the industry's most popular properties, only this time it has the added bonus of parachuting in and choosing where you begin each mission. In brief, if you're a fan of the series then you can rest easy, Medal of Honor: Airborne is shaping up nicely. <<

Nazis: You can shoot them all you like without ever feeling guilty



WWE SMACKDOWN! VS. RAW 2008

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Fighting**
Players: **1-2**

Developer: (DS), Yuke's Media Creations (all other versions)
Due: November 2007

I'm not a wrestling fan. I mean, I have a soft spot for sumo. To me, sumo—the sport that sees Japanese behemoth glad in nought by jockstraps fling condiments around and charge each other like angry gods—is a reminder that man is capable of great things. But then there's that other kind of wrestling. The kind that's broadcast on pay television, the kind that involves TLAs like WWE, WCE and ECW. The kind that's not just sport, but sports entertainment. It's a flavour of wrestling I've only encountered occasionally on television at a mate's place. And so, for good or ill, I went into Smackdown vs. Raw with little to no idea of what to expect.

For those of you who do know your wrestling and are fans of past WWE games, there won't be any surprises here. Little has changed. The graphics have improved and there have been a few improvements to ideas that the developers have played with—but not fully realised—in the past.

First and foremost of these is the pinning and pummeling system. Whereas in the past one could only pin and pummel an opponent in certain "hot spots," it's now possible to do it anywhere you please. There are, however, areas of the arena—such as the stairs that lead to the ring—that will see your opponent suffer a greater amount of damage if you choose to pummel him there.

The first version of the game we looked at was the 360 one. In it—and in the PlayStation 2 and PlayStation 3 versions—the right thumb stick is all that's required

"Oooooooooooooo
oooooooooooooooo
oooooooooooooooo
ooklohoma..."

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

WWLTS:
A bit more polish. What we saw of the gameplay was fine. It's just that every so often there'd be some seriously ugly collision detection.

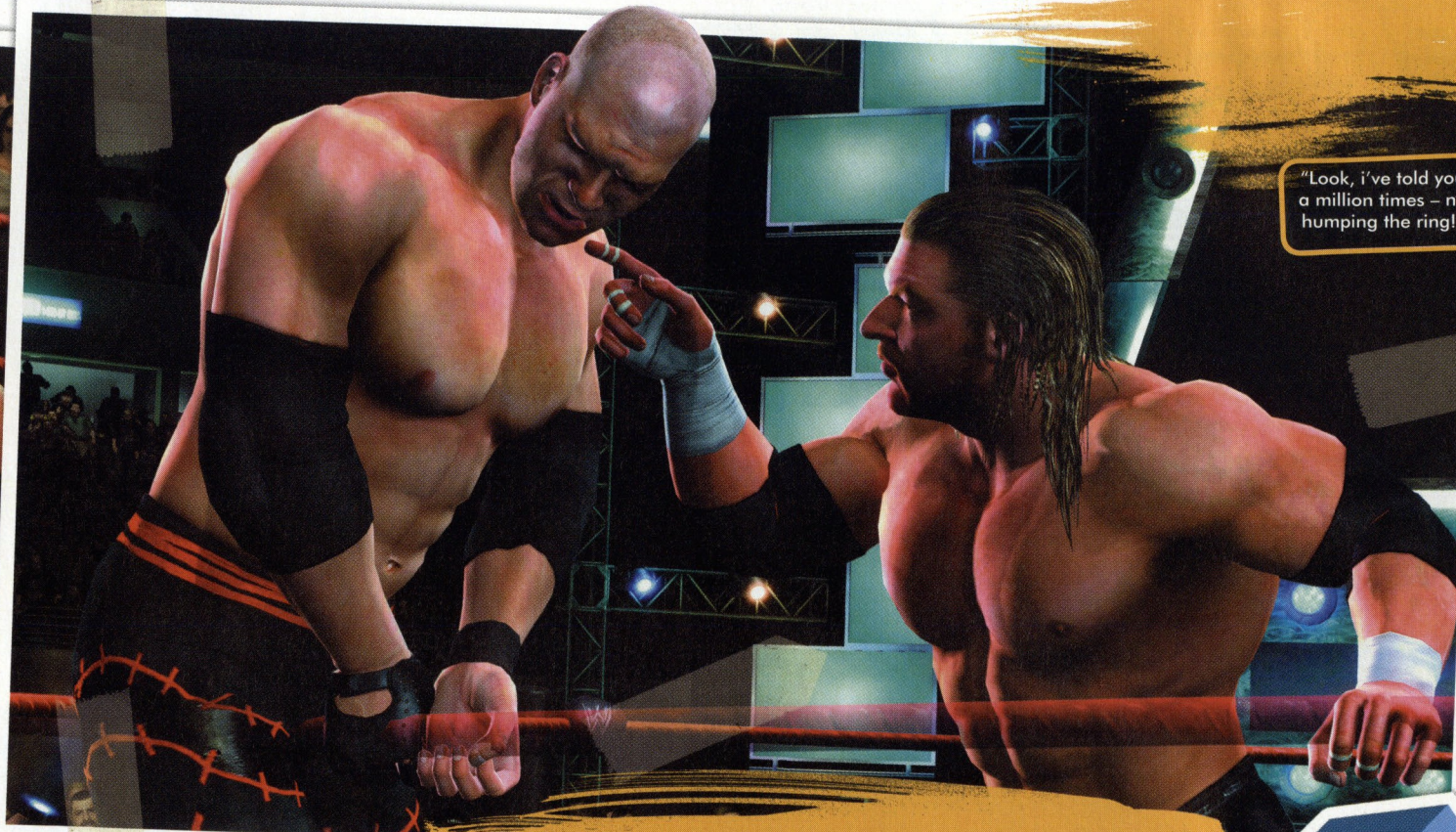
to dish out
serious damage
to an opponent you have on
the ground. If you want to slap your
foe silly, all that's required is to move the
stick to the left or the right. If you want to
be really nasty, though, and slam their
noggin against the concrete floor
until their face is "pissing blood," as
Paul Houlihan, the PR Manager at
Melbourne's THQ offices phrased it,
you just have to pull the stick back
and then flick it forwards repeatedly.
The stick is used in a similar manner
when struggling.

Houlihan explained that Yuke's intend to craft a game that, unlike past entries in the series, is more about finesse than button mashing. Hence the Fight Night-style stick usage and the way a single button manages fist work.

Smackdown vs. Raw has eight move sets—two of which are available to each character. There's the "powerhouse" move set, which is all about brute force, as well as "high flyer", "brawler", "dirty", "showman" and "hardcore"—all of which are quite self-explanatory. There's a "technical" move set too, which is the jack-of-all-trades option.

"Smackers," as Houlihan called it, will be one of the few four-player fighting titles on the market. Both Yuke's and THQ hope this will see it attract an audience of people who, like myself, don't have a particular interest in WWE. Multiplayer is

'Taker dares anyone to make some kind of gay joke. Anyone.



"Look, I've told you a million times - no humping the ring!"

certainly a focus, but singleplayer certainly hasn't been forgotten.

There's a career mode that, according to Houlihan, is soapier than *Passions*. The plot unfolds much like that of a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure novel. As well as the actual fighting, you're required to develop relationships with other wrestlers and form alliances. These relationships can, of course, be trashed if you feel it's to your advantage. It's possible to defect from *Smackdown* to *Raw* and vice versa too, I'm told.

Furthermore, there's the general manager mode. Unfortunately, this wasn't on show, but Houlihan said that while it's in many ways akin to a football management sim, it's still very much hands-on. As a manager, you'll be able to jump into the ring at any time and start helping—or, alternatively, belting the shit

ONCE YOU'VE HAD A FIGHT IN THE WII EDITION, IT'S HARD TO GO BACK TO WAGGLING STICKS

out of—your wrestler.

The career and general manager modes are clearly aimed at the established fan base. That's not to say a newcomer couldn't enjoy them, but it's the multiplayer—rather than the singleplayer—that's intended to be the most accessible and welcoming.

WAVE YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR

The Wii take on *Smackers* is almost identical to the 360's. Aside from the obvious difference in visual quality, there are only two things that make it distinct. Most noticeable is the control scheme.

Here, punching is as easy as flicking the remote. Charging—which is achieved by holding the 'punch' and 'run' buttons on 360—requires you to swing the remote a little more. Similarly, struggling and pinning demand you wave the remote about wildly. Simple, but entertaining and elegant. Well, as elegant as a game about gigantic blokes knocking each other

around with fists, furniture and sledgehammers can be, anyway.

The second difference is tied into the first. Unlike the 360 version, the Wii edition of *Smackers* doesn't feature different move sets. This may change by the time of release, but it's doubtful. *Smackdown* for Wii is intended to be about the

physical experience.

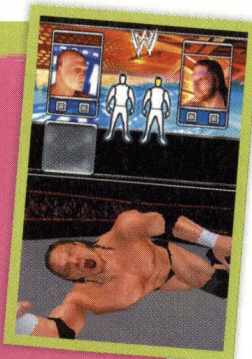
And if, like me, you don't have any interest in WWE per se and merely want a party game that's not bloody *Mario Party*, this version is probably the best. Sure, visually the 360 version is far sexier—well, as sexy as huge, half-naked sweaty, greasy men can be to this heterosexual games writer—but once you've had a decent fight in the Wii edition, it's hard to go back to wagglng thumb sticks.

Yuke's have a few issues—mostly related to collision detection—to fix before release in both versions, but so far as I'm concerned, they're well on their way to producing a brilliant party title. <<

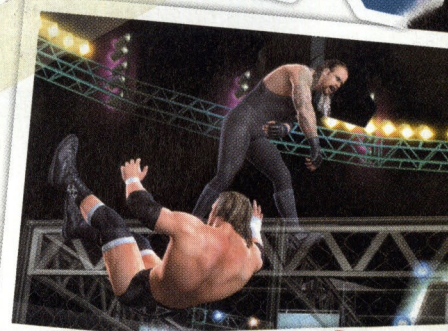
ELITE BEAT WRESTLING

And then there's the DS version—which, as you'd imagine, is quite different to its big console brothers. You see, it's entirely touch-based. During matches, prompts appear on screen. They come in yellow, orange and red varieties—each of which deal in moves varying in degrees of power and difficulty. Depending on which you choose, you'll be required to use to stylus for anything from simple strokes to complex combinations of taps and spins.

Smackers on DS is more of a rhythm game than a fighting one, similar in many ways to *Elite Beat Angels*. It's interesting, I'll give it that. Challenging, too—no question about that—but it certainly felt a little dry after spending the morning playing the 360 and Wii versions.



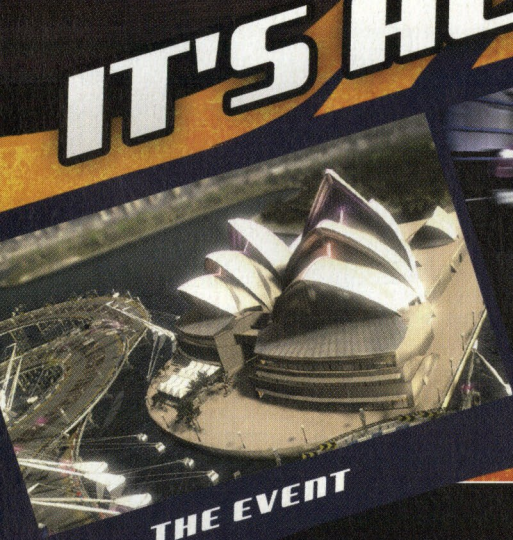
"Look dude, he's throwing me off the roof of the cage!" "Woah!"



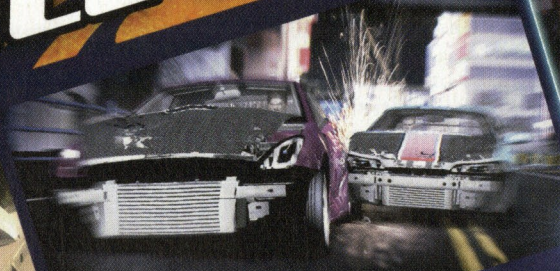
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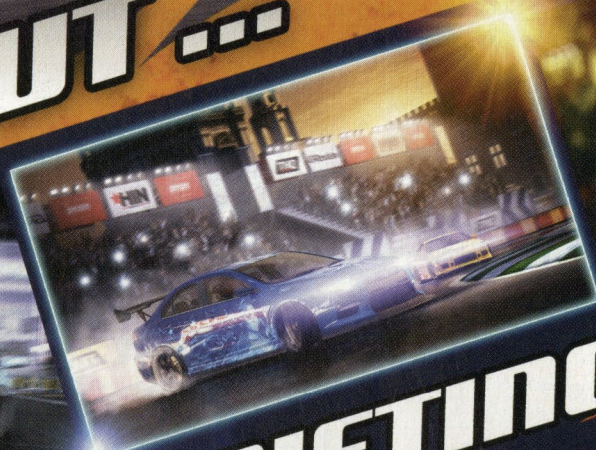
IT'S ALL ABOUT...



THE EVENT



POWER




DRIFTING

PG

Mild Gambling
References

 **XBOX 360** LIVE

 **Games for Windows** LIVE



PlayStation.2 **PSP**
PLAYSTATION 3

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RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

Ratchet & Clank have always been amongst the best Sony-exclusive platform action games, ranking well up there with the likes of Jak & Daxter and Ape Escape.

Now, after crafting perhaps the best exclusive PlayStation 3 game to date, *Resistance: Fall of Man*, developers Insomniac Games are once again turning their considerable talents to a new chapter in the ongoing adventures of the heroic Lombax named Ratchet, and his metallic sidekick named Clank.

We visited Sony this month to go hands-on with the latest in the series, *Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction*. Not only does it look like being the console's first truly great "all ages" game, it also looks like Insomniac Games may just have made the best Ratchet & Clank game yet – and that's a good thing.

Craggy Aliams

It wasn't clear whether the section of the game we got to go hands-on with was the first level of the game or not (although we suspect it is), but either way it hardly mattered. What we've seen of the game so far was more than enough to once again reassure us that Insomniac Games know their way around the insides of the PlayStation 3 perhaps better than any other developer working on it today, since in both the gameplay and graphical department, *Ratchet & Clank Future* excels.

The game started out with our furry and roboty heroes hanging out on a roof top, relaxing after a hard day's galaxy-saving no doubt, when they receive a panicked videophone call from Captain Qwark.

The Captain alerts them to an imminent alien invasion from a race called the "Cragmites" who it seems are on less than friendly terms with the Lombax species, and are quite determined to do Ratchet some harm. Before our two protagonists have time to dwell on this information however, their home city of Metropolis comes under an explosive attack from the alien menace.

From this point onwards the game was all action. Ratchet and Clank are chased from their rooftop headquarters by a Cragmite flying saucer's missiles, and out

HI! My details are:

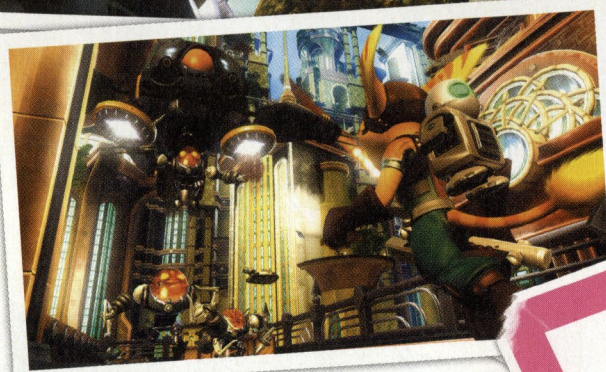
Category: Platform/Action
Players: 1
Developer: Insomniac Games
Release: Late 2007



onto the rooftops of Metropolis City, which thanks to the PS3 now looks so far better than anything we've thus far seen in the Ratchet & Clank series. The city is huge and while its design is still more colourful and cartoon-like than realistic, it still manages some beautiful-looking detail in the architecture and environments.

We were also given a perfect vantage point on the city, since at many times during our hands-on session we had the chance to run Ratchet over a jump pad that shot him high into the air, giving us an aerial view of the cityscape and lending the whole environment a real sense of scale.

Of course, we weren't here just to sightsee, we were here to kick alien arse, and we got our chance with a few of *Tools of Destruction*'s titular destructive tools. The first is an amazingly cool device called the Groovatron, which when fired creates an instant discotheque, complete with light show and disco tunes. As soon as the weapon hits a group of enemies they all break out in dance moves that went out of style with fondue, leaving them open to attack. Also available was a penguin



bomb, which when it explodes turns anything it hits into harmless penguins that you are free to wrench-whip at your leisure.

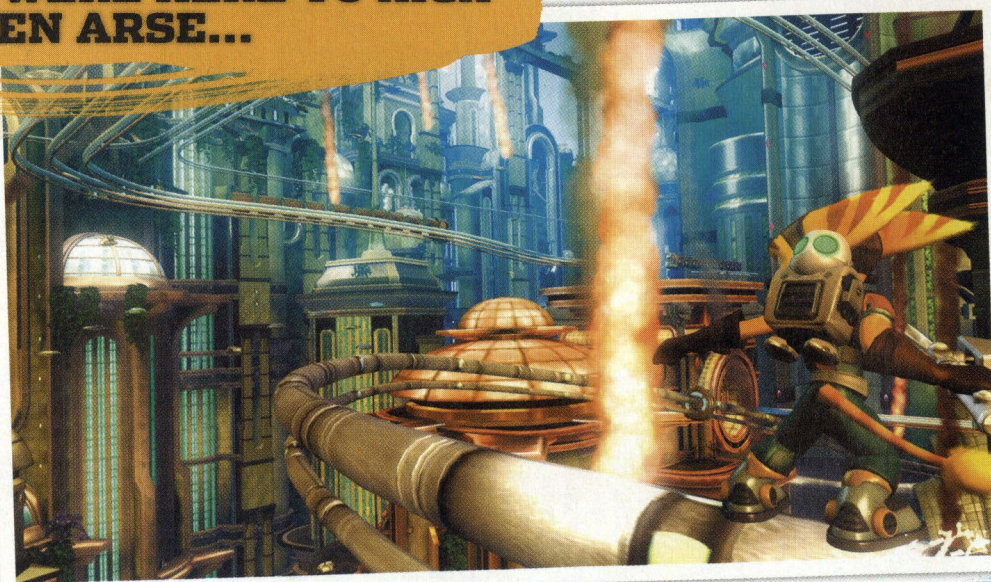
From the demo we played, however, it seemed that shooting will actually play less of a role than in the past few Ratchet games, which were increasingly shooting-based. For example, the third-person shooter style aiming method was not present in the code that we played, and instead the game had a loose lock-on feature. This doesn't mean that the third-person viewpoint won't be available in the final game, but it's still intriguing.

DESTRUCTIVE TOOLS

The shooting gameplay was a little awkward during our hands-on time with the game. There was no option to invert (once again, something

Clank admires Ratchet's newly furred ears

OF COURSE, WE WEREN'T HERE JUST TO SIGHTSEE, WE WERE HERE TO KICK ALIEN ARSE...



Every obstacle can be overcome with an application of wrench to face

that will inevitably be fixed in the final game), and apart from a few enemies that needed to be shot (like a few Cragmite saucers) we spent most of our combat time wrenching the aliens to death using Ratchet & Clank's button-mashing melee combat.

Our hands-on revealed more than just combat, however, with quite a bit of platforming gameplay coming through. There were a few sections where we had to run and jump Ratchet over slowly collapsing walkways, or rail-grind him down a set of parallel monorail tracks, jumping from track to track to avoid incoming

trains, and it seems as though Insomniac Games are attempting to make Tools of Destruction a more well-rounded Platform action game than the past couple of sequels.

Just before our hands-on demo came to a close Tools of Destruction gave us a taste of another new feature that takes advantage of the PlayStation 3 – a SixAxis motion-controlled section. After a scripted Cragmite attack leaves Ratchet and Clank without a floor to stand on, the pair is unceremoniously sent hurtling towards the pavement. When you regain control of them it is in SixAxis form, with the player having to direct Ratchet and Clank downwards through layers of airborne traffic, making sure not to hit any flying cars or busses by banking the

SixAxis forward, backwards and side to side to help the two heroes skydive safely through the crowded city airspace. This one sequence was pretty simplistic, but it controlled well, and it did at least show promise that the feature would be used imaginatively in the full game.

Just before the two heroes meet their messy fate on the pavement (although we seriously doubt that's where they'd end up) the demo came to a close, and so did our hands-on time.

What we took away from the session was a feeling of complete confidence that Tools of Destruction was headed in the right direction to not only do the series proud; not only will the game keep the youngsters happy, but it will even leave hardened gamer types like ourselves with plenty to smile about. <<

Not Pictured:
Destruction. Tools, however, are clearly illustrated



WEAPON WITH SIX AXES

They weren't available in our hands-on demo, but there are a few cool sounding weapons that have also been announced to utilise the PlayStation 3's SixAxis controller for motion-control purposes.

The most interesting of these is the Tornado Launcher – a gun that literally launches tornados. Once your twisting whirlwind of air has been sprung upon the playing field you'll have to direct it using the SixAxis controller. If you send it in the right direction you'll be able to suck up enemies along with any other random debris and whip them around until you won't know when the alien begins and the debris starts.

The word is that SixAxis controls will be used for a lot of other things in Tools of Destruction, including solving puzzles. It's certainly good to see someone putting the controller to good use.

WWLTS:

Insomniac are heading in the right direction, now if they could only tighten up those shooting controls, and hold the rest of the game up to same quality that we got hands-on with, this game will be sweet.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:



EA
www.skate.ea.com

SKATE

The Tony Hawk franchise has more or less had a monopoly on the skateboarding subgenre of sports games since it first hit the scene in 1999. Promising challengers have come and gone, but to date none have managed to best Activision's little earner, despite a growing sentiment that series has been on the decline for a while now, and that Neversoft have lately resorted to more and more gimmicks to keep each successive instalment fresh.

Tony may finally have some competition that's worth him getting worried about though, since from what we've played of EA's new contender, Skate, it looks to deliver everything that the Tony Hawk series doesn't...

FLICK IT!

Skate's control system may at first seem complex, and perhaps even a little overwhelming, but as we can attest, once you get into the game the controls are not only completely logical and intuitive, but it

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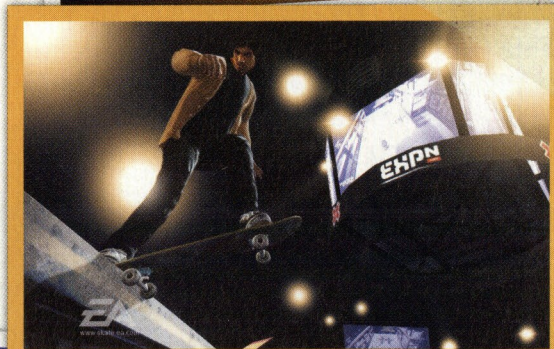
Category: **Sports**
Players: **1-multi**
Developer: **EA Black Box**
Due: **September 2007**

EA
www.skate.ea.com



EA
www.skate.ea.com

Grinding a box is fine - just don't try to grind a car or elephant



actually gives you a real feeling of control over your skater's body and board.

It works a little bit like this: Skate has buttons for each of your skater's limbs, with two face buttons being used for each of your legs, while the left and right triggers function as your left and right arms. The leg buttons are used to "push" your board - simply kicking along the ground to make yourself skate faster - and since you've got a button for each leg, you can choose on the fly whether you'd like to skate normal or mongo. The triggers are used to get you're arms involved in tricks, and are as simple to use as pulling the R trigger to get your right hand on the board, and the same for your left.

To actually get the board involved in some tricks, the game uses a "Total Punch Control"-style system, which is, without a doubt, Skate's most ingenious control addition. To do an ollie, you actually have to make the motions of performing an ollie with the right thumb stick. Pulling the thumb stick down makes your skater bend at the knees, preparing to kick the back of the board towards the ground, then, flicking the thumb stick up will set the ollie in motion. The lower you bend at the knees and the faster you flick the stick upwards, the higher the ollie, and if you want to perform a kickflip or a shove-it, it's as simple as changing the direction and method that you flick

Dennis Busenitz is not actually trying to grind the power-lines. That would be silly



Mike Carroll is a big Girl

THE FOCUS ON REALISTIC SKATING HAS US EXTREMELY EXCITED...

Vancouver and Barcelona. We started off in the CBD; an area packed with pedestrians, traffic, and of course plenty of great skating opportunities. Unlike the Tony Hawk series, Skate hasn't filled its world with quarter-pipes thinly disguised as part of an urban environment, and instead, it presents the city as-is, without any bizarrely out-of-place ramps or bowls. If you want to ride a half-pipe, you'll have to go to a skate park (of which there are many in San Vanelona), and if you want a bowl you'll have to find a suburban home with an empty swimming pool – and if you want to grind along electrical cables – then stick to Tony Hawk, because there won't be any of that here. Skate is all about real street skating, something that it looks well on its way to achieving.

The code we've played of Skate was early, but even at this stage this game is already blowing our minds and making us totally reconsider the way we've been thinking about skateboarding games for almost a decade. The control system is already brilliant, and the focus on realistic skateboarding instead of gimmicks has us extremely excited to get some more hands-on time with Skate sooner rather than later.

To put it very bluntly, at this stage of the game, it looks like Neversoft and the Tony Hawk series are really going to have to get their shit together to compete with Skate. <<

Well, it's no Great Wall of China, but it'll do.

the stick upwards (diagonally for kickflips, and in a quarter-circle for shove-its). You can even reverse the ollie (push up first, then flick down) to turn it into a nollie, and of course you can get your hands involved for grab tricks and throw in a few 360-degree rotations for good measure.

For sure, Skate requires some time to become acclimated to the new control system. There's a lot more to it than simply pressing one button to ollie and another to perform a trick, but in a way this learning curve actually makes Skate feel closer to actual skateboarding than any other game. After all, as anyone whose ever tried to skate will tell you, you don't hop on a board your first time a start busting out tricks – hell, even a simple ollie can take weeks and months to nail – and while it won't take nearly that long to grasp in Skate (more like minutes than months), there is a real feeling of achievement that goes along with every trick, and finally, even the humble ollie feels like an exciting trick to perform.

BARCELCOUVERCISCO

Once we'd come to grips with ollies, kickflips, shove-its and grabs, it was time to move on to grinds. Skate has done away with the concept of having a "grind button" as seen in Tony Hawk. Instead, initiating a grind in Skate is all about timing and positioning, and again, it manages to feel far more authentic than the competition.

Starting with a few pushes to get some speed, we crouched down a few metres from the rail, and then when we were close enough we ollied up onto the rail, twisted into a boardslide and rode the rail all the way to a perfect dismount, or at least we did the tenth or so time we tried it. Again, grinding in Skate takes more skill and practice than simply hitting a button, and after nine truly painful-looking stacks, that tenth perfect boardslide was shout-out-load satisfying.

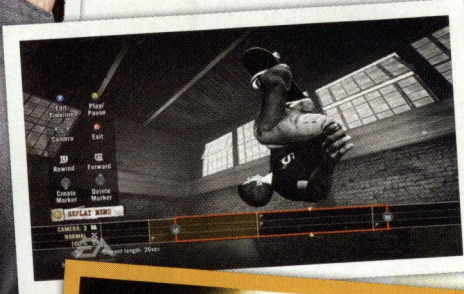
With the basics nailed, it was time to leave the skate park and head out into the wider city. Skate's location is called San Vanelona, and is a fictional city made up of a combination of elements taken from cities including San Francisco,

SOUNDS OF SKATE

From the moment we booted up Skate and heard Booker T and the M.G.s' "Green Onions" playing, we knew that things were going to be all right for Skate in the music department. Apart from the aforementioned onions, Skate will feature tracks from Devo, The Doors, Motörhead, Nirvana, Rick James, Slayer, David Bowie and plenty more. Interestingly enough the soundtrack will also feature a new recording of "Pretty Vacant" by The Sex Pistols, who reformed momentarily to rerecord the song just a few months ago.



Cheer up PJ, might never happen mate



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO

WWLTS:

We just want to get our hands on the latest code of Skate to see how much it was improved since the early build we got our hands on. We can't wait to see how good it is when all the pieces are in place.





**Honour is his code.
Vengeance is his mission.
Bloodshed is his only option.**



JOHN WOO PRESENTS
STRANGLEHOLD™

Payback Begins September 2007

www.strangleholdgame.com



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TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

After a rather dismal turn with the two Underground games we feared that the Tony Hawk franchise was destined for the budget bin but the pleasing turns for the better with American Wasteland and Project 8. It was with these thoughts in mind that we sat down to play the latest Tony Hawk game, the ninth by our count (not counting the ports, re-releases and .5 iterations), Proving Ground, a game that looks to expand on the Tony Hawk franchise by introducing not one new mechanic (as has been seen in previous Tony Hawk games) but nine. Divided into three classes, the Career Skater, Rigger and Hardcore, each of whom have three skills. The Career Skater has access to special trick skills – Nail a Trick, Nail a Manual and Nail a Grab (OK, so one of them is not new, bringing the total down to 8 new mechanics), the Rigger can set up equipment anywhere in the city to make better runs, can deform bits of terrain to open up new runs and can set up cameras to film tricks and the Hardcore skater can kick to gain extra speed, elbow people out of the way and another skill we didn't have a chance to see.

THROWING ELBOWS

Players can head down any of the career paths, unlocking new skills and mechanics but can freely swap between the careers, keeping the skills they have already learned from other careers so there's no fear of not being able to do something because you chose the wrong career. As we didn't have time to work through a career, we got some time to play around with a character with all of



Not Pictured:
Grinding on
power lines

**PROVING
GROUND
LOOKS TO BE
A STEP BACK
IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION...**

the abilities unlocked and we have to say that whilst there is a lot of good new stuff going into Proving Ground we still have a few worries about some of the skills. The hardcore skill of throwing an elbow to bowl people over just smacks of the gimmickry we so hated in the Underground games and, whilst there are a few goals to beat up some thugs to drive them away from skating areas, these missions seem tacked on to justify the mechanic more than anything else. Taking

photographs of your skater also seems to have some serious problems at the moment as there doesn't seem to be a way to make sure the camera is focussed on the precise spot you want to photograph aside from jumping in and out of the photo interface to see if the targeting ring is sitting on what you want to shoot. To compound this, players need to click in the right thumbstick to take a photo, something that is not particularly easy to do if you're also trying to do a trick. Finally, a number of the goals seem to have gone back to the timed runs that we had hoped had been phased out of the franchise.

Like Project 8, Proving Ground looks to be a step back in the right direction for the Tony Hawk franchise. The mechanics, for the most part, are tight and the level design is superior to that seen in Project 8. Now we just have to see how it stacks up against the competition – Skate. <<



Not Pictured:
Throwing elbows
at security guards
and skate thugs

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Neversoft make some decent character models – we're sick of the freaky wax-zombie things that seem to want to pass themselves off as pro-skaters.

This is what we want from a skating game, not gimmicks



XBOX 360

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Falling somewhere between Prince of Persia and Far Cry lies Uncharted: Drake's Fortune, a game about guns, a girl, pirates and a craptonne of treasure. Much like Prince of Persia, Uncharted mixes movement puzzles and combat, substituting guns for swords and a lush tropical island for ancient cities and ruins. From our time with the game, it seems as though the fighting and movement sections of the game are fairly delineated, as we spent most of our play time clearing an area of enemies before climbing or jumping to the next area.

The shooting mechanics are nice and strong, necessitating heavy use of cover and allowing players to lean out to take shots as well as shoot blind over the top of barricades. We only had a chance to play with three different guns, a 9mm, shotgun and AK47 but we've been assured that there will be more in the final code. One aspect of combat that we didn't feel worked as well as we would have liked is the hand-to-hand combat. Whilst the trailer of the game shows some really dynamic, knock-down-drag-out fist fights, the actual melee system just revolves around hitting the square button repeatedly and watching one of a few fight animations. Some ability to block or throw combos of your own would be a worthy addition.

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Action**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Naughty Dog**
Due: **November 2007**

From what we've experienced, the movement in Drake's Fortune will be a lot more realistic than that of Prince of Persia, with the bulk of the movement being climbing and jumping rather than wall running, pole swinging and the like. This realism in movement translates through to the level design – everything looks organic and natural, a fact that sometimes made it a little difficult to work out where to start.

ROGUSH CHARM

Drakes Fortune looks great with some beautifully designed character models, lush foliage and a main character with a roguishly perfect face. One little feature we noticed during our time with the code that never failed to impress without detracting from the actual gameplay was a cinematic camera angle that kicks in during some of the larger, more precarious jumps. Instead of simply remaining in a behind-the-shoulder third person view, the camera moves to a position that truly highlights

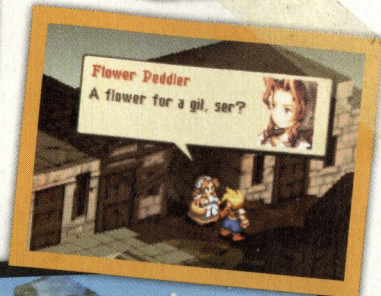
dakka, dakka,
dakka, dakka,
dakka, dakka,
dakka, dakka, etc

the stunt. The first time we saw the effect the camera moved into the gorge being jumped, showing the action from below, giving a simple button press a really impressive impact.

From what we've played so far the game needs to go through a rather serious bit of balancing before final release. At the current stage enemies are substantially tougher than they should rightfully be, taking far too many shots to put down – far more than the player at any stage. Considering that the code we player was pre-beta we're fairly certain this little problem will be ironed out. With the correct difficulty, Uncharted should be one hell of a game, mixing fast faced yet tactical "stop and pop" style shooting with some nicely complex and not always obvious movement puzzles. <<

Time for a heroic leap and even more heroic camera angle

Apparently one of his abilities is invoking amusing Po-Mo cock rock



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS: THE WAR OF THE LIONS

HI! My details are:
 Category: **Strategy**
 Players: **1-multi**
 Developer: **Invalice Alliance/ SquareEnix**
 Due: **October 2007**



The original PlayStation version of Final Fantasy Tactics, an isometric strategy game set in the land of Invalice (later used as the location for Final Fantasy XII), never did make it's way across the ocean to our sunny shores, but through its subsequent sequel on the GameBoy Advance it has established a considerable foothold in the hearts and minds of strategy-loving gamers and Final Fantasy fans alike.

Now, SquareEnix are finally bringing the original game back, in the form of an updated portable remake for Sony's PSP. Final Fantasy Tactics: The War of The Lions is it's name, and we've played it...

BURN CHOCOBOS BURN!

Rightly considered as one of the finest games of the PlayStation era, and a true classic in its own right, SquareEnix would probably be crazy if they changed too much about Final Fantasy Tactics. Dedicated fans may well riot in the streets, burning Chocobo effigies and waving protest signs if they tried, so instead War of The Lions is very much a remake of the original, with only a few sweeteners added into the mix to keep players interested.

The new cel-shaded cinematic sequences are one such sweetener. While we normally wouldn't consider cinematics alone to be a great new feature for a remake of a decade-old game, we do have to admit that Squeenix have done an amazing job bringing what were previously only 2D sprites to life in three dimensions. The characters and landscape of the Final Fantasy Tactics world have been recreated from their original concept arts, and although they are obviously rendered in 3D, Squeenix have gone to a

lot of effort to make them look hand-drawn. Not only are they cel-shaded, but they also uses some nifty filters to give the impression that the colours have been hand-painted.

The game starts with a group of knights riding Chocobo mounts through the idyllic Invalice countryside and eventually sees the introduction of the main protagonist of War of The Lions, Ramza Beovule, a high-born swordsman who must protect an imperilled Princess. From here onwards the game is more or less identical to the PlayStation original. Two opposing sides take turns in moving their soldiers around a grid-based map, attacking, using magic spells, healing items and special abilities to sustain your forces and eliminate the competition.

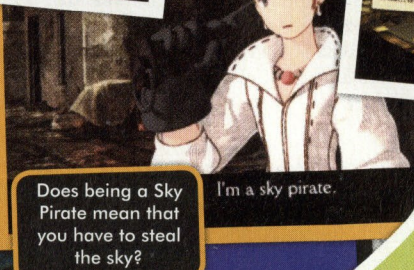
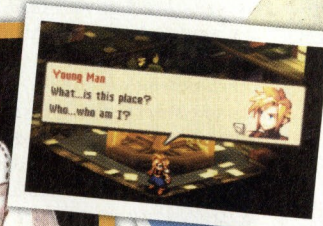
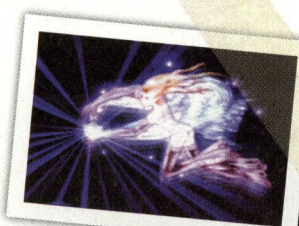
Other new features include a 16:9 presentation to take full advantage of the PSP's aspect ratio, and the textures and

Blocky isometric tactics always make us smile

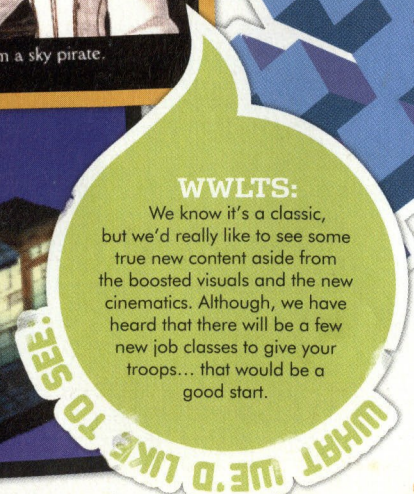


sprites also seem to be smoother and less pixelated than they were in the original. While the game definitely looks better than it ever did on the PlayStation, it isn't exactly a visually intensive game. The world is still built out of blocks, and everything has squared-off edges, looking a bit like the entire land of Invalice is made out of Lego.

Nevertheless, if you've been itching to play the original Final Fantasy Tactics since 1997, or if you just want to give it one more spin after a decade, the War Of The Lions isn't going to be anything new, but it's at the very least going to be the ultimate version of this classic game. <<



Does being a Sky Pirate mean that you have to steal the sky?



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

Hi! My name is

Category: **Sports**
Players: **1-8 (online and off)**
Developer: **KCET**
Due: **October 2007**

Did you know that "coconut reviles poor" is an anagram for Pro Evolution Soccer? I'm not sure what that means exactly, but I'm certain it's something profound. It could be a biting social observation of some kind, or maybe a Zen meditation on the nature of being as viewed from the perspective of delicious tropical fruit. Or – and this is really out there – it could be that I couldn't think of a way to introduce yet another instalment of Pro Evo, and so paid a visit to an online anagram generator. Anyway, Pro Evo 2008: it has New Things. Let's talk about them.

NEW THINGS ON THE BOX

Perhaps the most important New Thing in Pro Evo 08 is the so-called "Teamvision" AI system, which is – according to Konami's official press-release – "a sophisticated AI programming that learns and adapts according to an individual's style of play". It's the sort of thing that sports games are supposed to have had since the SNES: unpredictable, adaptive opponents who learn from their mistakes and exploit your weaknesses. Of course, no game has ever actually had AI like that, but at least in this case KCET has come within reaching distance.

Obviously, playing the computer is still nothing like playing a real person, but there's no denying that's it's a little bit sharper now – especially on higher difficulties. Whereas in previous Pro Evos, there was always a tried-and-true "bitch technique" you could use to at least get the ball in the box, this time the AI will catch onto your shenanigans and shut them down. As such, this may just be the hardest Pro Evo yet. Goodie.

Next up on the New Things list is the World Tour mode: a weird sort of all-on-one international cup in which progression is linked to specific "mission objectives" in each match. So, instead of just winning, you might need to win by two goals, or maybe just stop the other team from scoring. Given our limited time with the preview code, it's difficult to say how captivating this mode will be in the long-term. It's fun in a novel sort of way, but also a bit strange, kind of like it doesn't belong. Oh well: there's always master-league for the purists, I suppose.

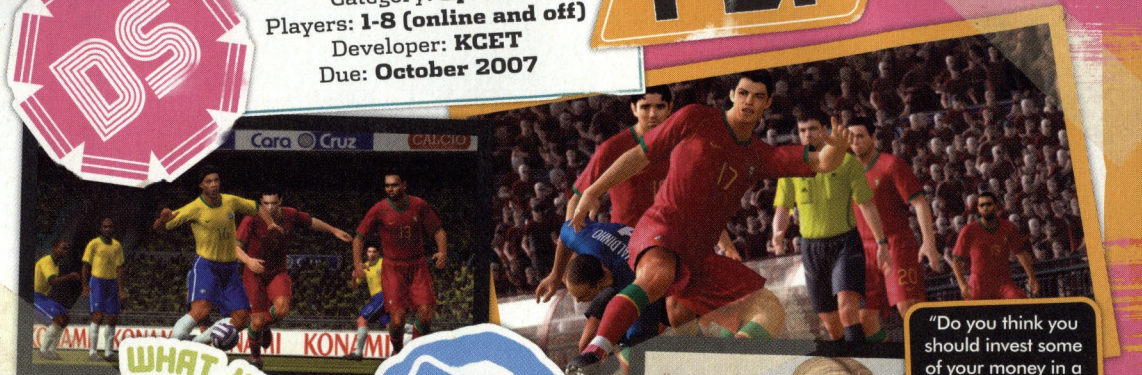
The other New Things that are worth talking about are all incremental improvements of the sort you'd expect from the latest instalment in a long-running

WWLTS:

A fully licensed English Premier League! Also, a licensed Bundesliga would be pretty sweet too.



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE



"Do you think you should invest some of your money in a hair cut?"



When this comes out we won't be able to tear Malky away from the TV

sports franchise. Dribbling has been refined, there are more set-piece options available, you can now dive and pull on other players' jerseys, and – oh, that's right! There are new commentators! Pete and Trev have been given the boot for a new dynamic duo: Jon Champion and Mark Lawrenson. Their banter and observations are predictably inane,

but they've got unfamiliar voices, so that makes them slightly less annoying than their predecessors. At least for now.

Oh, and one more thing you should know about Pro Evo 08: the preview code we had didn't have ANY English Premier League teams in it. At all. There are fully licensed French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish leagues, but NO Brit clubs – not even the ones that were in the last Pro Evo. So, yeah, hopefully they'll fix that up before the final release. <<<



HYPER 41

GUITAR HERO 3

We loves us some Guitar Hero action.

Rocking out isn't just a hobby at the Hyper bunker. It's a way of life. A way to escape from our surroundings and maybe one day make something of ourselves; one day our band will make it big, we'll get a recording contract, make a wodge of cash, get some groupies and stalkers and finally be able to leave our humble beginnings in Redfern behind us. That's the plan anyway. Anyway – Guitar Hero 3, the first game in the franchise to be made by Neversoft. How does it stack up? Well, from our hands on time with the game there is a mix of excellent and not so great. Let's start at the excellent, shall we?

The track listing released so far for Guitar Hero 3 is fantastic with a bunch of well picked, famous songs, a large number (we're assuming around half of the game if not more when the final list is released) of which are masters, not some "as made famous by" cover. What's more, Neversoft seem to have really tweaked the note placement and how the overall tracks play, evening out the difficulty curve. One thing we noticed is that the distance between Medium and Hard seems to have been reduced – not by scaling down Hard but by scaling up Medium. In a few of the songs (Cherub Rock, a master by Smashing Pumpkins being the example that springs most readily to mind) we noticed that the Medium difficulty used all five buttons but at the speed of Medium rather than Hard.

Highlights of the rocking so far include Tenacious D's, The Metal, a song essentially comprised of a single tasty lick repeated for

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Music**
Players: **1-2**
Developer: **Neversoft**
Due: **October 2007**

XBOX
360
PS3



a few minutes, Sabotage by the Beastie Boys and the aforementioned Cherub Rock. Although Activision could not fully confirm, it sounds as though Guitar Hero 3 will probably ship with around 60 songs and additional albums will be available for download as of launch. We were not able to get any confirmation on downloaded album prices from Activision but we are a little worried that they are going to be pricy – considering that a pack of 3 songs for Guitar Hero 2 sets you back around \$8, we're assuming that a full album is going to cost the same amount as a CD.

FRET BUSTING

Now on to the bad. Although some may like the idea, after getting time with the game we can't help but feel that the new Battle multi-player mode will detract from the fun of the game rather than enhance it. In Battle, instead of collecting star power as players normally would, players instead collect special attacks to use on the opponent, such as

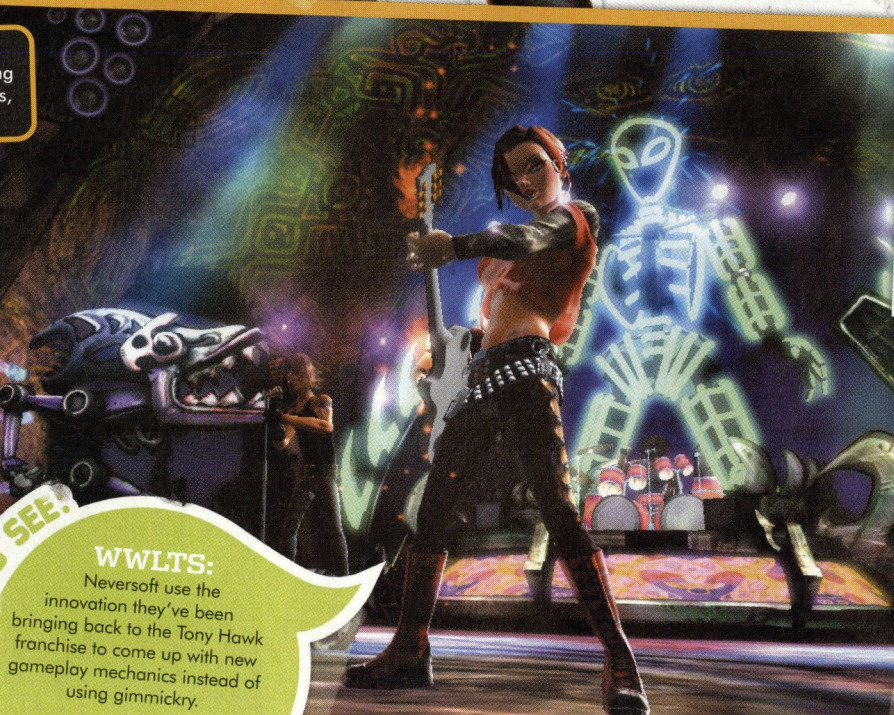
breaking strings (necessitating the player with the broken string hammed the corresponding colour until it is fixed), loosening frets (making the player waggle the whammy bar until it is back in place), reversing the order of the keys or making the screen flash epileptically. In a game where precision is the key, we find game mechanics that stop you from hitting notes whilst you do something silly detract from the game as a whole. All in all it smacks like a gimmick rather than a real gameplay mode. Unfortunately the boss battles (apparently replacing the encore) utilise this mechanic so there's no escaping it.

We haven't been able to play with one of the lovely new Les Paul guitars as yet but even so, Guitar Hero 3 is shaping up pretty nicely. The core gameplay remains excellent and the song choices are definitely the best we've seen in the series so far. It will be interesting to see how GH3 fares against Rock Band – we should be able to tell you soon. <<

Hyper favourite Lars Umlaut makes a welcome return



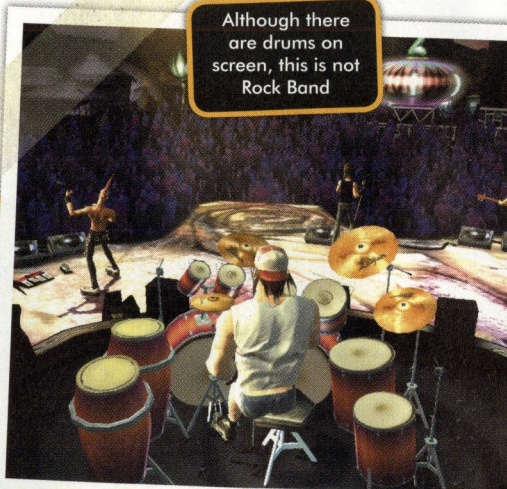
A mechanical fish-dragon thing says ROCK to us, that's for sure



WED LIKE TO SEE:

WWLTS: Neversoft use the innovation they've been bringing back to the Tony Hawk franchise to come up with new gameplay mechanics instead of using gimmicky.

Although there are drums on screen, this is not Rock Band

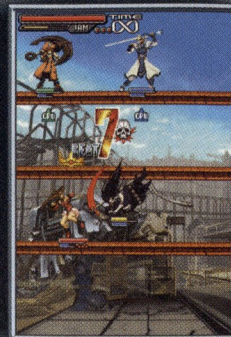
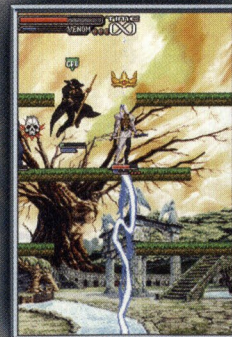
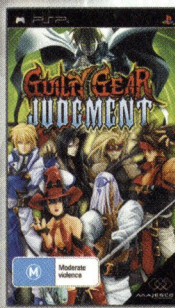


THE SONG CHOICES ARE DEFINITELY THE BEST WE'VE SEEN IN THE SERIES

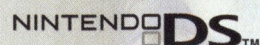
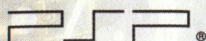
Double the Fury

GUILTY GEAR JUDGMENT

GUILTY GEAR DUST STRIKERS



Moderate
violence



LAIR

You may know Factor 5 best as the developer behind the Rogue Squadron series of Star Wars-themed flying shooters, three games (or four, if you include Star Wars: Battle for Naboo) that are possibly the most brilliant and authentic use of the Star Wars license to date.

Factor 5 have moved on however, not only from Lucasarts but from Nintendo, with their latest game, Lair, set to appear exclusively on the PlayStation 3. Rogue Squadron fans need not fret though, because we've gone hands-on with Lair and we can confirm that not only is it very promising, but that it plays essentially like a Rogue Squadron game, although instead of piloting an X-Wing and firing of laser beams, you're flying a dragon and breathing fire.

STAY ON TARGET

The premise of Lair is straightforward enough. You are a dragon rider for the Asylian Empire, and you ride dragons – fire-breathing dragons! Using your dragon you have to burninate the countryside, peasants, and the thatched-roof cottages of your sworn enemies the Mokai Empire. Oh, and the Mokai also have dragons, which you will also have to burninate.

The first big thing we noticed about Lair is that it's probably the one game that we've played so far that has actually put the PlayStation 3's SixAxis controller to good use.

All of your dragon's movements are controlled via SixAxis motion control, to fly downwards, simply angle your pad downwards, to bank to the left or right you just tilt the pad in that direction. More complex manoeuvres are performed by sharply thrusting the SixAxis in a particular

My details are:

Category: **Flying Shooter**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Factor 5**
Due: **September 2007**



direction, for example, you can perform a back-flipping 180 degree turn by flicking the controller in an upwards direction, while performing a speed-boost is as easy as thrusting the SixAxis forwards.

Instead of feeling tacked-on and gimmicky, Lair's SixAxis controls feel natural and surprisingly well weighted. Staying on target long enough to get an enemy in your crosshairs is a bit difficult using only motion controls, but there is also a lock-on button, so once you've successfully targeted an enemy you can easily keep them in your sights.

Once you've locked on, of course, there comes the fire-breathing. By tapping the Square button your giant flapping dragon spits out a rapid succession of fireballs. This are you standard long-distance weapon, although there are two other techniques we used during our hands-on including a geyser of flame that is good for short-quarters attacks that is activated by simply holding down the attack button, and a melee attack that saw us having to bash into the side of another dragon to try and knock them off course.

All of this pyrotechnic mid-air combat is certainly as spectacular to look at, as it is to play. The dragons themselves certainly



Sing it with me!
"Burninating
the countryside,
burninating the
peasents..."

do look very majestic, the wing-flapping animations in particular make them seem very credible. The rolling waves on the ocean are probably the most beautiful we've seen attempted on the PS3 so

far, while the burninating flames that shoot from your mount's dragony maw have a genuinely realistic quality to them.

All up, Lair seems to have everything the PlayStation 3 needs right now: great visuals, controls that actually use the SixAxis for good rather than evil, promising gameplay and lots of burnination. What more could we ask for? <<

**LAIR'S
SIXAXIS
CONTROLS
FEEL NATURAL
AND WELL
WEIGHTED**



"Burninating all
the people in their
THATCHED ROOF
COTTAGES!"

WWLTS:

We'd really like to see a few of the wing-a-ling dragon designs have a big beefy arm coming right out of their necks. That would look real good.



NARUTO:

RISE OF A NINJA

HI! My details are:

Category: **Action**
 Players: **1-2**
 Developer: **Ubisoft**
 Due: **October 2007**

Traditionally games based on anime series, especially anime series for younger audiences have been, well, rather crap. This looks set to change with Naruto from Ubisoft. A combination of explorative platformer, fighting game and adventure game, Naruto casts players as the titular ninja trying to raise his acceptance in his home town so he can learn new ninja skills and hopefully become the greatest ninja of them all.

Raising Naruto's social standing is done through completing quests for people around the town. The code we played was still early so we only had access to a couple of quests but they should be a good example of what to expect. The first mission we tried saw Naruto delivering ramen to customers all around the town within a time limit. Naruto's basic running speed is pretty fast but he can also be made to sprint at breakneck speed. The other basic skills include a very precise feeling double jump (yes, we know it sounds strange to enthuse about a double jump but it really does feel just right) and the ability to grab onto ledges. Running around the town to find the ramen customers made for a fun introduction to the basic mechanics, as is the purpose of the mission, but the next mission we tackled proved even more fun, not to mention funny.

The second mission we tried required Naruto to teach a young ninja the secret of his Sexy-jutsu, a technique that allows him to transform into a semi-naked blonde woman and stun enemies. The dialogue and situations in the mission had us laughing but more importantly it let us get a feel of using ninja powers. Powers are invoked by holding down a shoulder button and using both thumbsticks to mimic hand gestures, such as moving both thumbsticks up and then both outwards in opposite directions. It's an interesting mechanic that is remarkably easy to get a handle on – a good thing too because it forms the crux of the fighting game.

THE VERB, TO NINJ

Fights in Naruto are carried out in traditional 1-on-1 fighting style with players trading blows with either AI opponents or other players (the fighting will be online compatible) with a fighting

WWLTS:
 Other games based on anime come up to this level of quality – even at a beta stage Naruto is looking more polished than most of the anime games that enter the Hyper bunker.

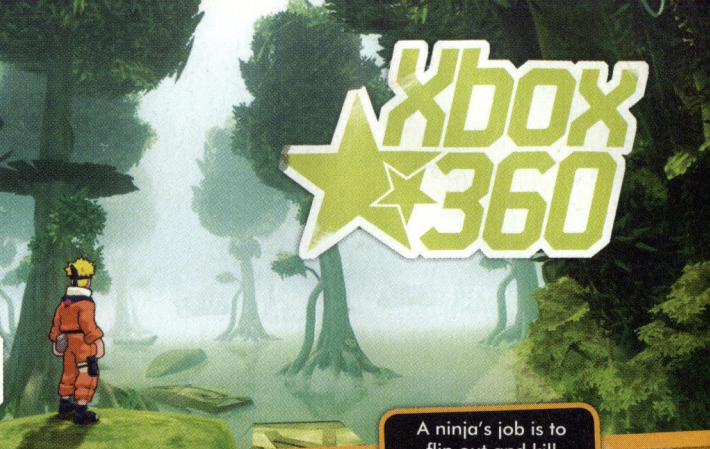
engine kind of like a stripped back Tekken or DoA. Instead of traditional special moves, the characters can use their ninja skills in much the same way they can during the action/adventure portion of the game by holding down a shoulder button and using the thumbsticks to mimic hand movements, the only difference being that the special skill grows in power the longer the player can hold the move without being attacked.

Once a move is pulled off, players must take part in a small mini-game, such as button matching or simple mashing to see how effective the attack has been. Although the AI opponents have yet to be balanced so made for an impossibly difficult fight, fighting another human opponent felt great – good enough to qualify as a stand-alone fighting game.

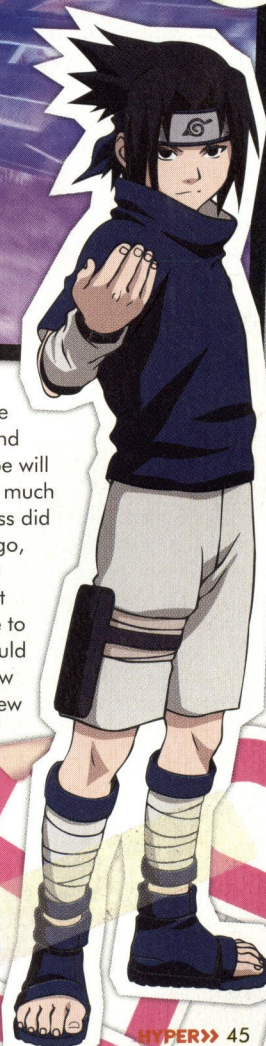
Naturo is shaping up to be a great game and one that we hope will show the world, much like The Darkness did a few months ago, that games built on licenses don't necessarily have to be bad. We should have a full review within the next few issues. <<

Xbox
360

A ninja's job is to flip out and kill people - all the time



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:





HANDS-ON

WWLTS:
James Earl Jones
providing the voice of one
of the characters. If not
him then someone powerful
enough to stand up against
RON PERLMAN, the voice
of Conan.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Action**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Nihilistic**
Due: **November 2007**

XBOX 360

PS3

CONAN

Ever since getting some hands-on time with the upcoming slash-em-up, Conan, we've been running around the office like bare-chested idiots bellowing our grievances to Crom at every chance we get. Cover doesn't get approved, CROM! Die in a game, CROM! People want to go somewhere other than the usual haunts for lunch, CROM! You get the idea. Anyway, the reason for this is simple – Conan, from developers Nihilistic is shaping up to be a seriously kick-arse hack and slash game, and a seriously gory one at that. Before actually playing the game we were a little worried about Nihilistic making the game – they were yanked off Starcraft: Ghost and Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects was rubbish but they seem to be making up for a lot of their mistakes with this game.

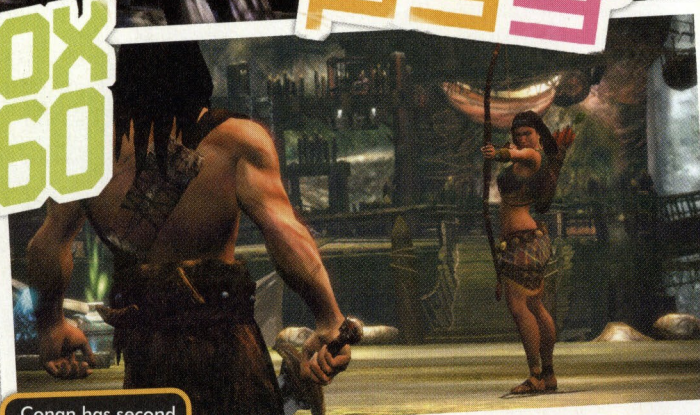
Players take the role of – you guessed it – Conan, and hack your way through pirates, undead, undead pirates and myriad others creatures foolish enough to think it a good idea to mess with the man who will one day be king. Lets cut right to the chase – although the story of Conan is being written by none other than Susan O'Connor (the woman responsible for the script of Gears of War), the real meat of the game is the fast paced and brutal combat for which the character is known. Boy-howdy is it brutal. Derivative of God of War as it may be, Conan carves its own niche in the hack and slash action genre through the sheer abundance of gleefully gory violence that makes up every combat. Starting off with a rather simple set of moves, Conan learns more skills through constant fighting, gaining XP that can be used to buy new combos and finishing moves.

MOSTLY ARMLESS

The combos, by and large should be fairly familiar to anyone who has played a game in the genre but it is in the finishing moves that things become interesting. These spectacularly brutal moves instantly kill enemies if the last move hits and become more powerful the more times the player uses them. Examples we used included the ability to chop off both of an enemy's arms, leaving them to stagger around for a few seconds before they succumb to blood loss, good old decapitations and even cutting people in half. Also fun is the ability to pick up and throw nearly anything – impaling an enemy on the other side of the screen with a sword taken from his now armless compatriot is a bit of a hoot.

Our only real worry with the game is the fact that Conan, a character well known for his hatred of magic will find himself using magic in the game. Not much, we know, but taking an established (not to mention famous) character and changing one of the core concepts of said character just doesn't sit well with us. That said, if the magic turns out to be as visceral as the swordplay there won't be a lot to complain about.

Derivative though it may be, Conan is shaping up to be quite a fun little game. We don't expect it to set the gaming world on fire by any stretch of the imagination but we do think that it should be a game that will prove that Nihilistic do know how to make a decent game. <<



Conan has second thoughts about this William Tell re-enactment

CONAN CARVES ITS OWN NICHE IN THE HACK AND SLASH ACTION GENRE

If Nicole Ritchie were a prehistoric mammoth, she'd be this one.



FOLKLORE

Folklore is a bit of a strange duck. Imaging a thoroughly Japanese RPG based on Western mythology as translated by Tim Burton and you will have some idea of the awesome strangeness the game contains. Take two characters, one a young woman drawn to a strange town by a letter sent by her supposedly dead mother and the other a reporter for an occult magazine who is a dyed in the wool cynic more interested in a Pulitzer than confirmation of the supernatural, drawn to the same town by a mysterious phone call from a woman claiming that faeries won't stop chasing her. Part murder mystery, part button mashing action, part RPG, Folklore is shaping up to be a real RPG treat.

FISHING FOR SOULS

One thing that makes Folklore stand out from the common Japanese RPG (aside from the Western trappings) is the real time, action oriented combat. Each on the four face buttons on the Sixaxis can be keyed to a captured Folk (one of the inhabitants of the fey realms), each with a different ability and elemental affiliation. We've only had a chance to experiment with three so far; one spirit that makes a simple forward attack, one that blocks and one that attacks aerial targets but these three attacks showed a surprising depth in gameplay, and one that can only get...um...deeper...when you consider that you can capture most of the Folk in the game to use as attacks, defences and skills. The other important factor of the combat mechanics is the use of Sixaxis motion control in capturing souls. When you hit one of the Folk with an attack from an element they are weak to, their essence leaps from their body (a red silhouette). When this happens, holding down R1 and pulling the Sixaxis back – much like you would land a fish – grabs the Folk's soul and pulls it away. Although it's a little cumbersome at first, the essence grabbing feels very natural after a few fights.

Character design is one of the major highlights of what we have seen so far. The two main characters are beautifully detailed and move with real character and the night-time inhabitants of the mysterious town are a wonderful bunch of ghouls and ghosts, looking like a mixture of refugees from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and Jim Henson's *Creature Shop*. One thing that does disappoint us, however, is the fact that the two main character both transform into rather traditionally (read garishly) clad Japanese RPG characters when they enter the netherworld – the normal character models are so good that it seems a real shame to leave them. Another thing we find a little disappointing is the fact that the majority of the cutscenes in Folklore are the barely animated "comic-book" style cutscenes that appear to be becoming more and more commonplace. It's a shame because the animation in game is so good and the character models are so well rendered that real cutscenes would work a treat. <<

Hi! My details are:

Category: **RPG**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Game Republic**
Due: **October 2007**

"Maybe if I close my eyes the comic book cutscenes will go away..."

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Real cutscenes and more real-world outfits for the two main characters.

Sometimes, we wish Hyper were an occult magazine.

FOLKLORE IS SHAPING UP TO BE A REAL RPG TREAT...

JUICED 2

Xbox
360

PS3

PS2
PSP

DS

PC

IF YOU HAVE
THE DECAL,
PARTS FROM
THAT BRAND
ARE 5%
CHEAPER

To be honest we weren't expecting much at all when we sat down to play Juiced 2. The first Juiced 2 didn't exactly set the world on fire, coming across as a bit of an also-ran when compared to the other racing franchises, especially considering that it entered the same market as Need for Speed: Underground and Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition. The original game also didn't really seem to know what it was. When we first played preview code it was a deathly realistic driving sim, then it was an arcade racer. Then it was kind of a mix between the two. Juiced 2 suffers from no such identity crisis. It knows what it is, an arcade racing sim for the tuner crowd. And it's a pretty damn good one too.

Rather anachronistically, Juiced 2 does away with the open world format that has become popularised in games of late and opts instead to use a tried and true approach of choosing races from menus, jumping straight into the race (after an admittedly long loading time) and jumping back to the menu when you're done. Events vary from straight Circuit races through to Eliminator races (last person across the line each lap is eliminated), Perfect Laps (can't touch a barrier though jostling with other cars is OK), Drifting, and combinations of the above.

Going around corners sideways is always fun

GOING SIDWAYS FAST

The Drifting, especially, needs to be mentioned. Although pretty much every racing game in the last five years has had some kind of drift mechanics, the drifting in Juiced 2 is a little different from what we have become used to. Drift events in Juiced 2 take place on specifically designed drift courses,

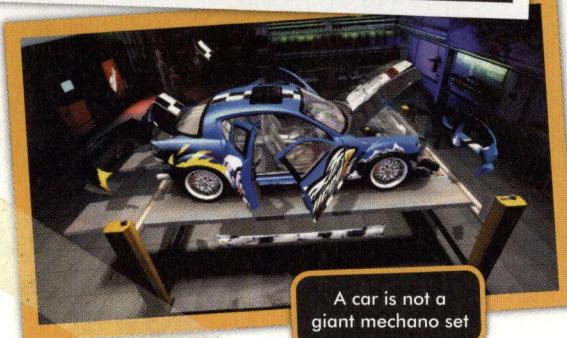
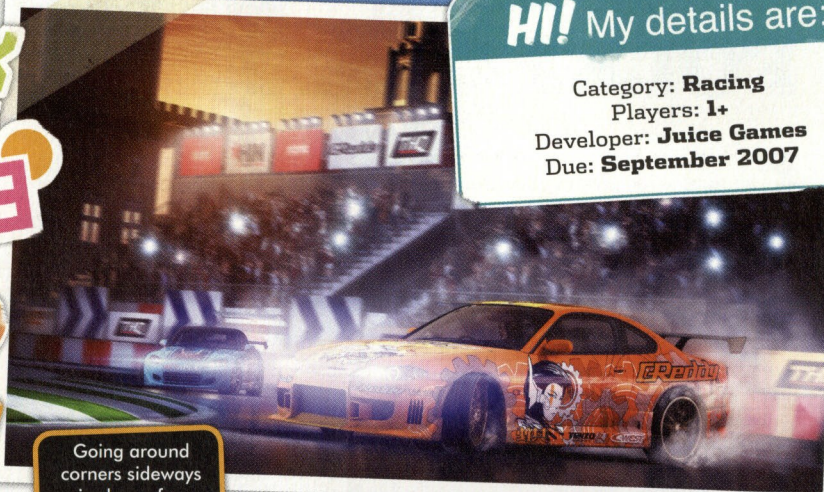
long convoluted and curved roads allowing for the maximum amount of sideways. In the standalone drift events, lap time doesn't matter, only drifting score. In multi-player events, both count. As with, well, pretty much every racing game we can think of, drifting also charges the Nitro meter;

the more you drift in a normal race the more you can boost.

As a whole the driving engine is tight and responsive – a little more responsive than we're used to, but aside from the slight control learning curve the game plays very well. There is a good sense of speed and a nice progression of difficulty as you climb the blinged out driver ranks.

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Racing**
Players: **1+**
Developer: **Juice Games**
Due: **September 2007**



A car is not a giant mechano set

Of course, tuning and modding cars play a major role in Juiced 2. Players accumulate money through winning races as well as making bets with other drivers on the outcome of races. When the final game is released it will also feature an auction-house in which players will be able to sell cars and paint jobs. Performance mods are kit affairs won through special challenges, meaning that individual parts and brands have no individual effect on the car, so you can choose parts from your favourite brands without having to worry about min-maxing performance. In a brilliant, yet very simple move, Juice Games have also given players incentive to put brand decals on their car – if you have the decal, parts from that brand are 5% cheaper in the garage.

We should have a review next issue. <<

Possibly the worst camera angle to drive from - 2nd Person

WWLTS:

A modern racing game that doesn't rely on a pretty face and some flaunted cleavage to sell units.

WHAT WE

BOBBY

ESCAPE FROM PARADISE CITY



When we previewed *Escape From Paradise City* (then known simply as "Paradise City") in *Hyper* issue #162, we said the game was looking "seriously good". Now that we've actually got our hands on early preview code of the game we can confirm that we were pretty much on the money.

The game's opening didn't exactly fill us with confidence, however, as the opening cinematic was a noticeably low-rent. However, once the game actually began, and we found ourselves smack bang in the middle of Paradise City, a nasty

metropolis packed to bursting with underworld violence and other disreputable activities, our confidence was renewed.

Our first mission objective was to take over two territories owned by rival gangs and to do that we had to get our hands dirty gunning down some street scum to get to their leader.

The combat uses the standard system that has been adopted by almost every PC RPG over the past decade; you

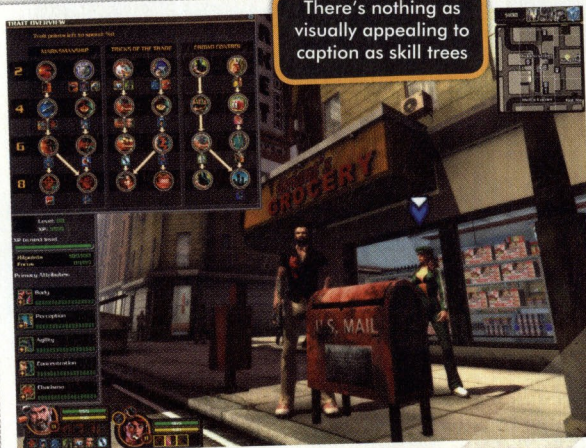
simply target your enemy with a left-click of your mouse and select an attack using the hotkeys that have been mapped to the numeric buttons. Each attack uses a little of your fatigue, and there is of course a health metre, which conveniently recharges slowly when you're not engaged in battle.

Paradise City does include one very useful feature however, in the form of skill modifiers. While waiting on an opponent with your

standard attacks you can augment them with skill like "leg shot", a crippling low blow that causes extra damage over time and "bullet dodge" which momentarily increases your defensive capabilities. There will be more in the final game, and from what we've played so far, the system works very well.

We're yet to get to grips with the deep strategy sections that developer Sirius Games have promised, but with time, we can see ourselves enjoying our stay in Paradise City. <<

There's nothing as visually appealing to caption as skill trees



Does this remind anyone else of *Syndicate*?



WWLTS:
The RPG features are solid, but we'd really like to see a bit more of the game's strategy mechanics in action.

HI! My details are

Category: **RPG/Strategy**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Sirius Games**
Due: **Late 2007**

DRAWN TO LIFE



We approached *Drawn to Life* with the practiced cynicism of games writers who've seen one too many cutesy handheld RPGs in their time. Our cynicism grew when Paul Houlihan, PR Manager at THQ, told us that drawing played an important role in the game. Mentally, we started to write the preview. "Drawn to Life: kawaii RPG with an extra helping of gimmick. Joy."

HI! My details are

Category: **RPG/Platformer/ Image editor**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Sth Cell**
Due: **September 2007**

WWLTS:

This style of character creation in more games, such as importing Miis into more than just party games.

WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Oh how the mighty fell. Life, as it turns out, is fun. The combination of RPG and platformer works well, as does the much-vaunted drawing mechanic.

The game opens with a Creation story. At key points—such as when the Creator makes the world, sun and trees—you're prompted to provide illustrations. And then things get interesting. See, you play this Creator. And, in your divine wisdom, you've decided that you're going to make a Hero. This Hero is to serve as your physical presence

As soon as we get code someone will draw a penis character, guaranteed



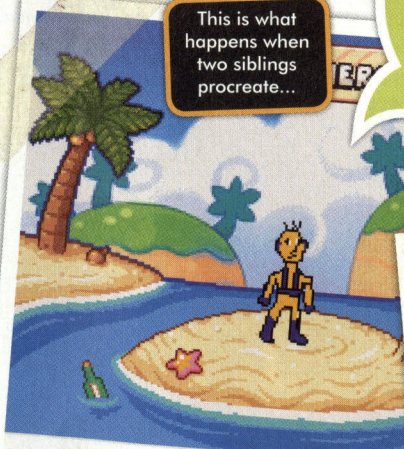
in the world and to fight the good fight against evil spirits. Something about this sounds familiar ...

The drawing interface offers per-pixel editing and a decent selection of colours. You'll be using it often—to draw the Hero, to erase evil goo and to assist your Hero in navigating the platforming segments. Say, for instance, he has to collect something

underwater. You'll be prompted to simply draw him a submarine or dive gear. At various points, you'll be asked to draw bridges, platforms and rideable whales.

We really enjoyed our time with *Drawn to Life*. The drawing component was far more engaging than we imagined it to be. The platforming and RPG segments, though, while entertaining, weren't anything new ... and this could be the game's downfall. The drawing is a gimmick and, once you've gotten over it, it'll be the platforming that'll determine whether you see the game through to the end or walk away. Here's hoping there's some longevity to the fun. <<

This is what happens when two siblings procreate...



GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

Getting hands-on with the new PSP-exclusive God of War game, Chains of Olympus, is an eye opening experience. We did have some doubts as to whether or not the diminutive handheld had the necessary muscle to be able to replicate what is possibly the PlayStation 2's most intense (both in terms of technological grunt and game design) action game series.

Our fears were well and truly put to rest after a visit to Sony Computer Entertainment Australia ended with us actually getting to sit down and play Kratos's latest mythological masterpiece. And yes, we are already referring to it as a "masterpiece".

PSP

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Action**
Players: **1**
Developer: **Ready At Dawn**
Due: **Late 2007**

The first thing we noticed about God of War on PSP is that it doesn't

look like a handheld game. While we did get the impression that Chains of Olympus's in-game visuals do utilise a few less polygons than its home-console predecessors, its detail is still unrivalled on the PSP, so we barely even noticed. Kratos himself looks and moves like only he can, and as we whipped our duel chain-linked swords about wildly, turning a variety of disposable adversaries into a fine red pulp, we knew that this God of War was every bit up to par with the high standards of quality we've come to expect from the series.

Apart from flailing the skin of a few hundred Grecian guys we also got to take down a massive warship with a giant flaming crossbow (now, how freaking cool is that?!), as well as tangle with the game's first boss (or should that be bosses) – a giant misshapen Cyclops and an even bigger, uglier, Basilisk. All up, our very brief

hands-on preview of God of War: Chains of Olympus has left us wanting more. If the entire game is as good as what we've seen so far (and we have a hunch that it will be), then this is easily going to be the PSP's best game. <<

WWLTS:

A boss battle that's as huge and impressive as the Colossus of Rhodes from God of War II running on the PSP would be just perfect.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Basilisk: How did it escape from the Chamber of Secrets...?

That's right Malky, Kratos-related violence does ROCK!

ROCK!

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET: PRESSURE PLAY

A couple of issues ago we reviewed Ricky Ponting International Cricket on console and were fairly unsurprised when we found it to be a rather boring, convoluted game that took forever to play and was ultimately not particularly fun (to put it politely). Now comes Pressure Play, the handheld descendant of Ricky Ponting International Cricket. We're pleased to say that IR Gurus has gone some of the way to simplifying the gameplay to make it more approachable but unfortunately it's still a mess of ugly graphics, multiple power gauges, slow, repetitive gameplay and frustrations, none of which seem particularly suited to the handheld format – even at 10 overs a game still takes forever.

The major differentiating factor between RPIC and Pressure Play is the addition of the new Pressure Play game mode, a mode far more applicable to the handheld format than a full game of cricket. Pressure Play comprises of five styles of game in which players are charged with

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Cricket**
Players: **1**
Developer: **IR Gurus**
Due: **September 2007**

fulfilling certain criteria within a set amount of overs, such as hitting a few slices, , performing certain types of bowls, fielding exercises and the like. While this does add a certain immediacy to the gameplay, it doesn't really add to the appeal of the game for anyone but the most ardent of cricket fans. <<

PSP

WWLTS:

We'd like to see IR Gurus add a "sledging" button, that once pressed will issue a stream of abuse and expletives from your cricketer's mouth. That would be realism!

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Can't catch, cant throw.

MISSION FAILED

YOU WERE UNABLE TO CHANGE HISTORY BY SCORING SIX RUNS FROM THE FINAL BALL TO TIE THE MATCH AGAINST AUSTRALIA.

REATTMPT THE MISSION

QUIT

NBA LIVE 2008

Xbox 360

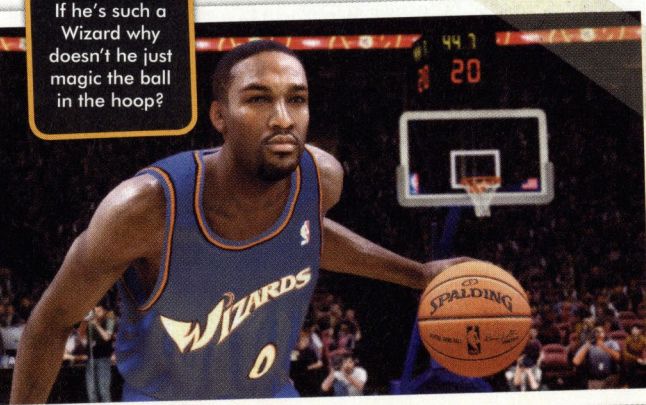
Hi! My details are.

Category: **PS3, X360**
Players: **1-multi**
Developer: **EA Canada**
Due: **October 2007**

If you've read enough issues of Hyper over the years you'd know how we usually feel about the yearly reissues of last year's sports games that have a different number tacked on at the end of the title and a slightly tweaked roster of athletes. Electronic Arts' stable of sports titles is probably the most notable examples of games that are frequently plagued with the "annual iteration disorder", otherwise known as AIDs.

While our hands-on time with NBA Live 2008 didn't completely convince us that the latest in the series would cure AIDs, it certainly showed us a couple of neat new tricks, some flashy visuals and enough spectacular dunks to keep us interested (as well as the aforementioned roster changes).

If he's such a Wizard why doesn't he just magic the ball in the hoop?



One of the biggest features we got to play with is the game's new "hot spot" technique. By tapping one of the shoulder buttons you can momentarily bring up a colourful overlay that highlights where your currently selected player is hot and cold, or in other words, where they're best at scoring from. Gimmicky? Yes. Mostly useless? Probably – but dang, at least it's a new feature.

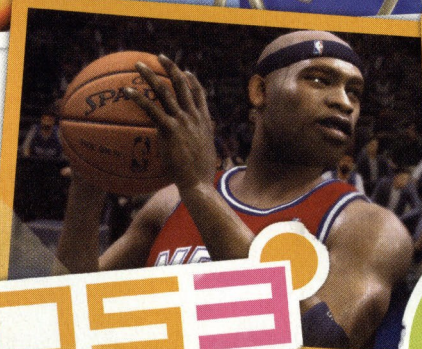
Admittedly, though, the game does look pretty damn awesome – the players are remarkably lifelike, the presentation is polished to a ridiculously high level and the court and stands are the series' best effort yet.

The controls too are as smooth as basketball games get, and running, faking,

shooting, blocking and dunking are all highly responsive and pretty gorgeously animated. The button configuration did seem a little needlessly complex at this stage of development, but with any luck that will be fine-tuned before release.

If you're a B-Ball fan, NBA Live 2008 is probably already on your most wanted list. Now that we've got to play it for ourselves, we're plenty curious to see how good the final game will be. <<

These two dudes seem to have a firm grip on their balls.



WWLTS: NBA Live 2008 looks purdy, and plays pretty wellish, so, I guess all we can really hope for is that it is good enough for us to trade in last years' model to get it.

RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS 2

Wii

Hi! My details are.

Category: **Party Game**
Players: **1-4**
Developer: **Ubisoft**
Due: **November 2007**

After getting our hands on Rayman Raving Rabbids 2 at the Ubidsays event a few months ago we were really looking forward to seeing the fun new games they would have in store for us this time around, as the games showcased at Ubidsays proved far superior to anything seen in the original game. Unfortunately this time we played the game, the mini-games on



WWLTS: More to do than the same action ad-infinitum.

show have proven to be rather simplistic and not hugely fun unless you're a fan of getting shoulder cramps from doing the same thing for too long.

This time around the games, for the most part saw us doing little but repeating the same motion again and again with some modifier to make the games different enough to feel new. One game saw us waving the wiimote about like an idiot to make out Rabbid muck around at work, stopping when the boss Rabbid appeared to check up on his employees. Whilst kind of fun in multiplayer, doing different motions with the wiimote seemed to have no effect on the actual Rabbid so the action became very repetitious. The same can be said about a swimming relay race mini-game and a clothes washing mini-game that we played.

"Alright, which one of you S.O.B.s peed in the water?!"



The only new game that shows any real spark is essential a Rabbid Guitar Hero in which the player chooses an instrument and moves the wiimote and nunchuck to on-screen cues – much like the dancing mini-game in the original Raving Rabbids. While this is an interesting idea the mini-game proved itself to be a little problematic. For a start, the mini game went for the entire song, and Smoke on the Water isn't short and during that time there was little more to do than the same sequence of moves on repeat.

We're assuming that the games we saw are from early in the single player game so do not show any of the complexity and fun we should expect from later games. Fingers crossed our next run in with Raving Rabbids is more satisfying. <<



EYE OF JUDGEMENT

My details are:

Category: **Collectible Card Game**
Players: **1-2**
Developer: **Insomniac Games**
Due: **Late 2007**

The Eye of Judgement is going to appeal to a very small niche within the gaming community – those that play both videogames and collectible trading card games. Using the new PlayStation Eye camera (the next-gen version of the EyeToy) you can play an actual Wizards of the Coast TCG against your PlayStation 3, or a willing opponent, making it somewhat of a gimmick, but as our hands-on with the title

has revealed, there still definitely something interesting about this game.

We started our two-player card battle by selecting a hand of 5 cards each, the game asked us if we wanted to “mulligan” our hands (simply, to swap our five cards for a new hand), but we were pretty happy with what we had, which included a pair of goblins and a water goddess, so the game pressed on.

These two are cards, and they need to be dealt with *groan*

The point of The Eye of Judgement is to lay down cards on a 3-by-3 grid. As you place the cards the PlayStation Eye reads each card thanks to some nifty green arrows on either side which allow the PS3 recognise and execute the appropriate in-game action that the card demands. The PS3 does take a few seconds to scan the playing mat, but once it's identified the card you've laid it will activate one of a variety of actions, including summoning monsters, performing magical attacks, healing or sacrificing cards already on the mat and many more, with the overall aim of the game being to make sure that your monsters occupy five squares on the mat first, while making sure your opponent's monsters don't live long enough to do the same.

For fans of Wizards of the Coast and TCGs in general, The Eye of Judgement may well change your life. For the rest of us, the technology is certainly interesting but we're still sceptical as to whether or not it can be much more than a gimmick. Keep your judgemental eyes on the pages of Hyper for more. <<

WWLTS:
How about a variety of different game modes? The “occupy five squares to win” is a start, but it felt a bit like a boosted naughts and crosses...

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
HANDS-ON

DE BLOB

Hi! My details are:

Category: **Vandalism sim**
Players: **1-4**
Developer: **Blue Tongue**
Due: **March 2008**

Wii!

Initially, we took De Blob for a Katamari clone—one that'd suffer from a lack of bananas, squid and schoolgirls. When we saw it in action, though—and, indeed, played it—at THQ's Melbourne office, we learned that it's something else entirely. And, if anything, it's more akin to Jet Set Radio than Takahashi's sticky balls.

Nonetheless, if you're a fan of Katamari, you'll doubtlessly get a kick out of De Blob's quirky premise. It's set in a world that's had all colour drained from it by the

evil corporation INKT. INKT troops conduct patrols, keeping an eye out for any dissenters who so much as pull out a blue biro.

Enter the Blob. Your task is to guide this unlikely hero on his quest to reintroduce colour. Although initially as drab in appearance as the world around him, the Blob can change colour by swallowing up legged cans of paint. As

the Blob comes into contact with the objects—buildings, trees, billboards—that've been rendered monochrome by INKT, he repaints them in whatever colour he is at the time. Paint cans come in red, blue and yellow, and can be mixed to get tertiary colours. Blob's pace is fast,

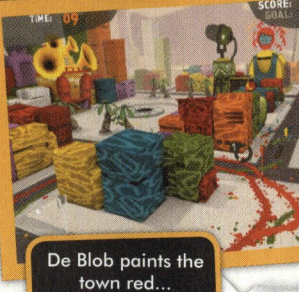
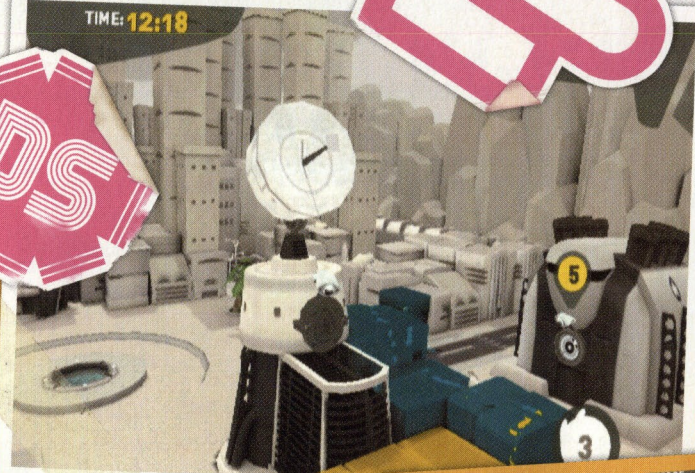
and the hero is agile. There's a certain parkour flavour to his movements.

The game works around a system of points. Points are earned accepting challenges from fellow dissenters or simply by leaving the world colourful. Points are lost if you come into contact with objects after you've been “inked” by the security forces.

What we really like, though, is the music. Performed by a 12-piece funk group, the soundtrack is determined by your performance and what colours you're redecorating this dreary world in. Although it's implemented well, we're not sure if this alone will provide De Blob with the longevity required for it to fare well in reviews. Guess we'll find out in March. <<

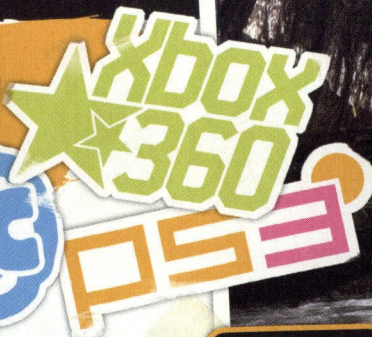


WWLTS:
Longevity is key here. If Blue Tongue can make De Blob last long enough for us to get our moneys worth, then we'll be happy.



De Blob paints the town red...

TIMESHIFT



Hi! My details are:

Category: **First Person Shooter**
Players: **1-multi**
Developer: **Saber Interactive**
Due: **October 2007**

TimeShift started life as a bright and colourful first-person shooter with a cheesy time-travelling story, complete with characters whose names were bad time-related puns, but it did have a pretty cool game mechanic working for it – the most in-depth time control mechanics ever used in a game.

The game was originally supposed to release last year, but due to a last-minute change of mind developer Saber Interactive took the game back to square one, and rebuilt it from the ground up.

This month we got our first hands-on with TimeShift since its complete redesign, and the changes made are blindingly obvious. First are the visuals, which are now gritty and realistic. The level we played took place in the bombed-out buildings and debris-strewn streets of a badly war-beaten city. We got to unleash upon a few hundred enemy troops and giant mechs with three of the game's heftiest weapons, a crossbow that fires explosive arrows, a double-barrelled shotgun and an assault rifle. The shooting action

Pfft, they're still wading in the kiddies pool!

of TimeShift has really been taken up a notch since the rebuild, and although the enemy AI in the code we played was dim-witted, it was still fantastic fun freezing time to steal their weapons from them, and then restarting time to see the look of surprise on their faces just before we shot them dead with their own weapon.

There is one problem that we have with the new-look TimeShift, however, and that is that the time-control powers have been relegated to being a mere gimmick. The powers are no longer freely usable and instead the game will suggest what power you should use. The only thing you are required to do in every situation is to press the left bumper button to activate the recommended power, completely eradicating any need for you solve puzzles, or to even turn on your brain at all. <<



WHAT WE'D

WWLTS:

The shooting gameplay is solid, but what the hell were Saber thinking when they dumbed down the time-control mechanics? If this game is going to be anything other than an average shooter, those powers have to be freely usable.

In robosexual terms, this guy would definitely be a butch



GEOMETRY WARS: GALAXIES



Hi! My details are:

Category: **Arcade Shooter**
Players: **1-2**
Developer: **Bizarre Creations**
Due: **December 2007**

Until now the amazingly addictive Geometry Wars series has been exclusive to the Xbox and Xbox 360 consoles, but with Geometry Wars: Galaxies the series is finally branching out onto Nintendo platforms.

The difference here will be that not only will Galaxies feature the most recent Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved game (as seen on the Xbox Live Arcade), but it also has an entirely new game mode, which

WWLTS:

The Xbox Live Arcade version of Geometry Wars costs 400 Microsoft points, which equates to about \$6.60. Galaxies is going to have to include some really good extra content to make it worth its retail price.

promises to throw in a progressive "career" mode of sorts, and will see you travelling to different solar systems to shooting it out on planet-specific battle grids, instead of just open space as in previous games.

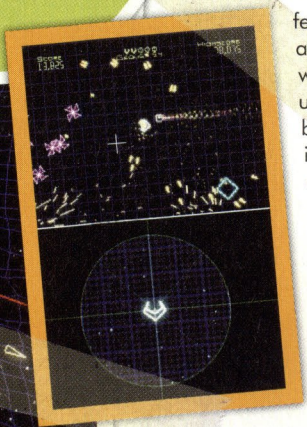
The other big new feature in Galaxies will be a new currency, the Geom, which you can collect and use to buy or upgrade bonus items. One such item is the Battle Drone, another new feature that acts as a kind of sidekick to the player. The Drone will fly alongside you during battle and aid you by performing a variety of offensive or defensive tasks. You'll

even be able to upgrade and customise your Drone by spending a few of your hard-earned Geoms.

Our hands-on time with Geometry Wars: Galaxies was all about testing the new Wii control method, and from what we've played so far it works pretty much perfectly. Using the Nunchuk/Wii remote combination, you use the analogue stick to control your tiny craft, while the Wiimote pointer is used to direct thousands of bullets in whichever direction you choose. Similarly the DS version will use the touch screen to control your angle of fire.

The action is definitely just as frantic and exciting as its XBLA predecessor, and the bonus content and new control scheme will be something unique on the Wii and DS. <<

Too... many... pews... having... a... pew... overload...



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WAR GAMES

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE

You too can Rewrite History

You know Wikipedia, right? The democratically written collaborative encyclopaedia has become somewhat of a phenomenon of the Internet age. It's just like an online version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, although instead of being written by scholars, it's written by anyone who thinks they know something, ranging from intelligent everymen to barely-literate morons.

Having said that, while the information may not always be accurate or well written, Wikipedia is certainly a supremely entertaining and occasionally educational way to waste time.

It's become so popular that corporations often take more than a passing interest in what's written on their Wikipedia pages. Corporations like Electronic Arts, for example.

Given the interactive nature of Wikipedia, however, there are also limitless opportunities for companies, should they so wish, to alter, spin or simply omit details that should, historically, be a matter of fact. Corporations like Electronic Arts, for example.

This month came the breaking news that EA had indeed taken history into their own hands, when it was revealed that they had repeatedly edited their own Wikipedia entry in an effort to expunge their company's history of not just a few criticisms and unfavourable reports of their litigious past, but also, most amazing, erase from the public record any mention of the company's original founder, entrepreneur Trip Hawkins.

With the page editor's IP address being tracked back to EA's Redwood City, California, offices Electronic Arts had no choice but to fess up - "EA sometimes updates websites with info about the company, games and employees", an EA representative told newsvendor GamesIndustry.Biz.

"Many companies routinely post updates on websites like Wikipedia to ensure accuracy of their own corporate information."

Apart from the fact that the posts in question were most certainly not in the interest of ensuring accuracy, the official EA response reveals one thing - this obviously isn't just a case of a rogue EA employee

HALP!

EA IZ ERASIN ME FROM TEH INTARWEBS!

with a vendetta against his company's founder. Instead, it seems to be a directed campaign of historical eradication executed by Electronic Arts at a company level.

But why exactly did they do it? Who knows. Perhaps it's a new attempt at turning Wikipedia into a viral marketing campaign. Perhaps Electronic Arts would rather not be associated with the creator of the doomed 3DO home console, which Hawkins also founded. Perhaps, a high-up EA exec had been snubbed by Hawkins at a trade show and vindictively set out to wipe away his name from the pages of history. Perhaps, even, EA would instead like to be thought of as being a fatherless sentient hive-mind that sprung up from the nothingness on the power of its own volition.

Whatever the reason, one thing's for sure - you just can't trust that damned Wikipedia.

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Land Fish (as seen in every Japanese RPG)



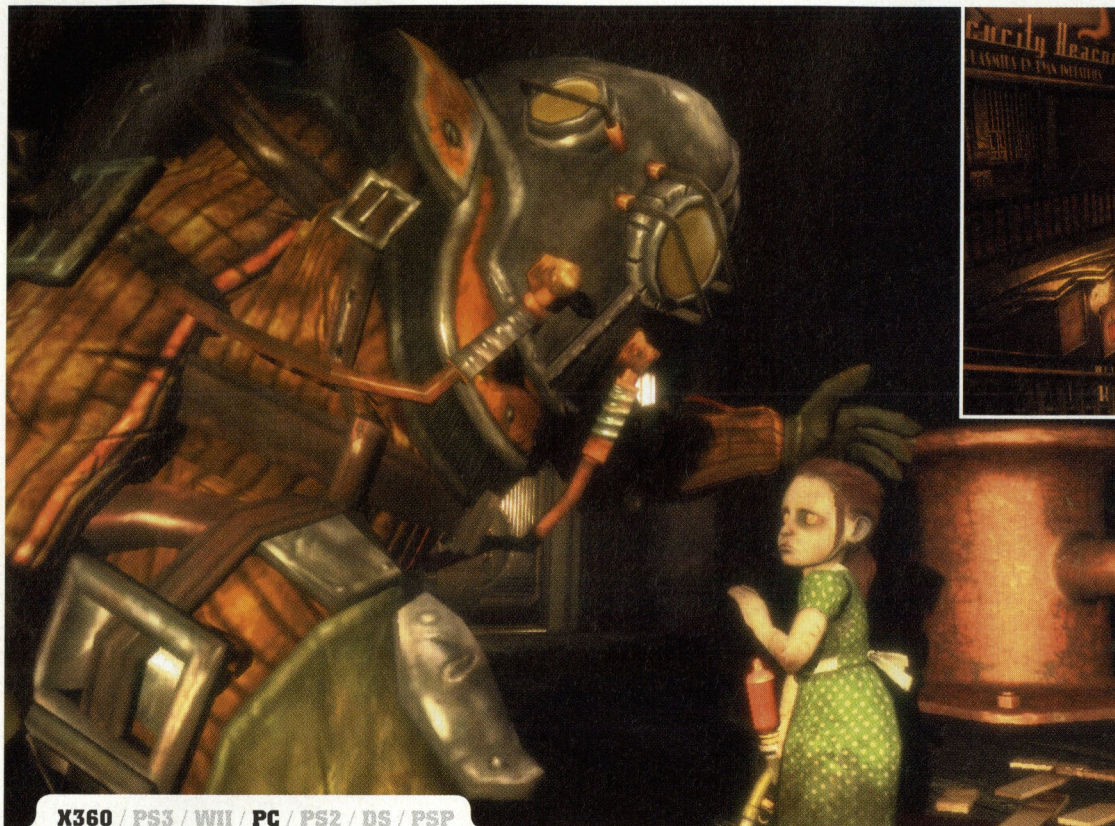


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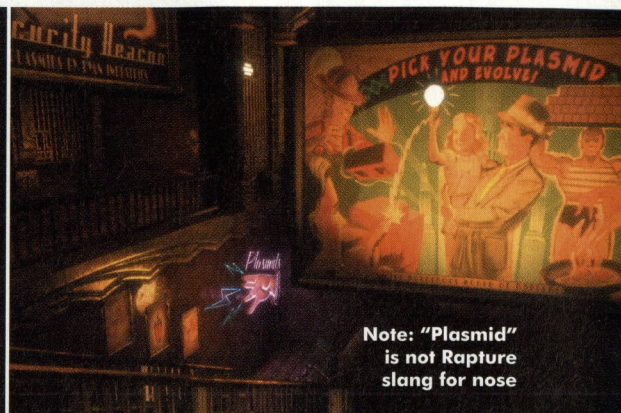
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X360 / PS3 / WII / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP



Note: "Plasmid" is not Rapture slang for nose

Bioshock

Don't call him **DANIEL WILKS**, call him Big Daddy

My hands are shaking. It's been about 15 minutes since the credits have rolled and my hands are still shaking as the closing dialogue rattles around my brain, simultaneously bringing a smile to my face and making me a little sad that it's over. Apparently I got the good ending, a gift for playing through the game like a boy scout. A boy scout with guns and powers. I haven't been affected like this in a long while. Not since Ocarina of Time, Half Life, Planescape: Torment, System Shock 2 or Deus Ex. BioShock is a game

[below] Big Daddy funks his suit up with a red light globe

that is going to stick with me for a long time. A hell of a long time.

HIGH WATER MARK

Only a few months ago, The Darkness set a benchmark for story telling in first person games, delivering the plot with such power that we couldn't help but be impressed. It's going to be hard talking about the brilliant storytelling of BioShock, the way it draws you deeper and deeper into the world and gives you a real sense of character even though the protagonist only utters a few words in the entire game but I'll give it a shot, so bear with me.

There is no subtle easing into the

world of Rapture, the underwater metropolis designed and built by Andrew Ryan, a city free of the constraints of government, church, politics, conventional morality and ultimately, sanity. A city free to pursue perfection and the ultimate market economy in which everyone profits from their own toils rather than having to share the wealth around. A city where science is king, marketing is god and the past can be put behind you. All in all a brave (and terrifying) new world. A plane crashes in the middle of the ocean and a man swims from the wreckage, finding himself near a lighthouse — the only dry land for hundreds of miles. After climbing the steps to the building the real magic of



[above] This is obviously the "hobo hunt" quest...

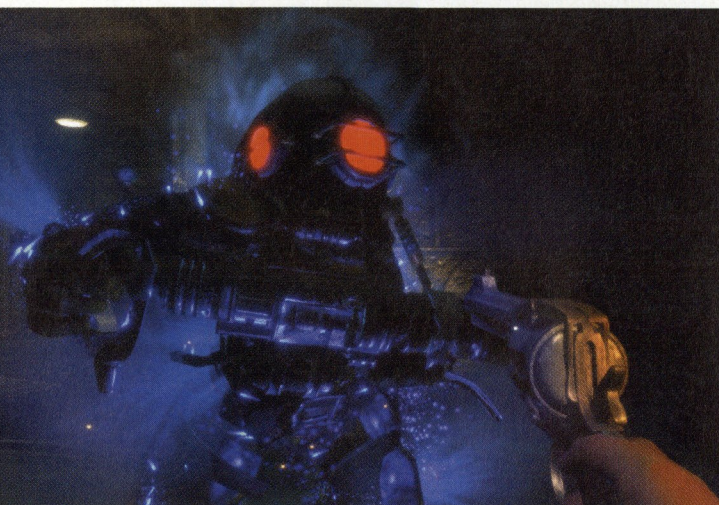
Vegas. This first glimpse is beautiful and strangely soothing but that all changes once you get inside.

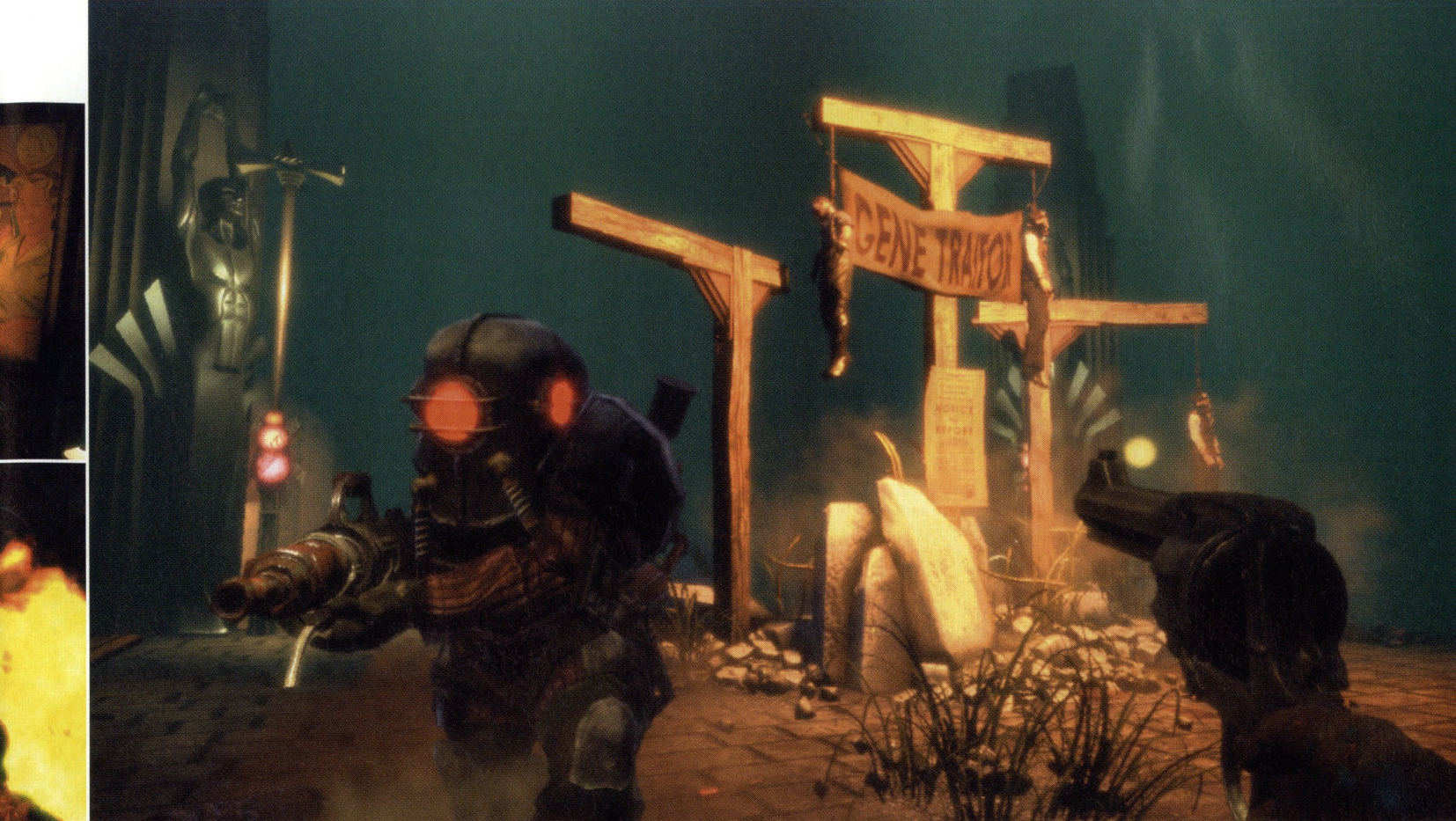
It's there you see your first Splicer, people who have evolved themselves out of humanity, those who have filled their bodies with so much ADAM to power plasmids

[Rapture is] a city free of the constraints of government, church, politics, morality and ultimately, sanity.

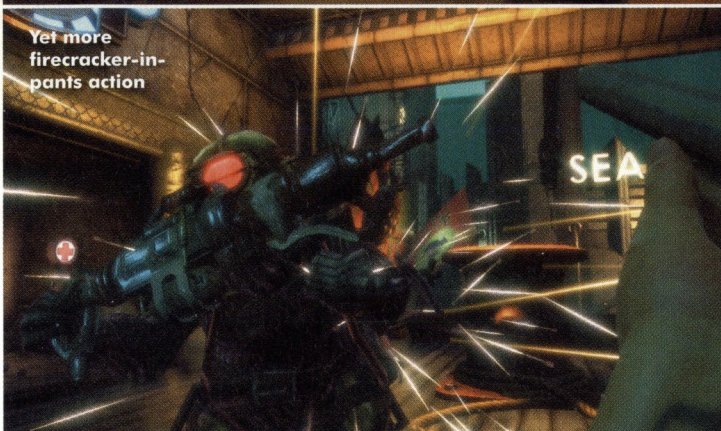
the game starts. Lights flicker and snap on, illuminating a globe extolling the virtues of man like a hubristic World's Fair centerpiece. A short walk later and you're in a bathysphere, descending into the inky dark and finally gliding through the city canyons of Rapture, from the outside a cross between "The World of Tomorrow!" as described by 50s science fiction and a slightly less depressing Las

that all they can do is hunt for more ADAM to quell their cravings. To keep the Las Vegas comparison running, the inside of Rapture is like Vegas during the day — depressing and dilapidated but with a hint of the awe-inspiring spectacle it could be. Water drips from the walls, an omnipresent reminder that you are, in fact, on the bottom of the ocean. Art Deco and neon are the order of the day,





Yet more firecracker-in-pants action



[above] Kids playing with needles? Just like Redfern!

giving the architecture a very retro-future look. It's a wondrous design scheme in the fact that it simultaneously evokes the era in which the world of Rapture was built, a time in which science was believed to be capable of any grand feat, the 50s, whilst retaining a slightly surreal quality that is more than a little unnerving.

Although at its heart BioShock is something of a horror FPS, this sense of being unnerved is the prevalent horror mechanic rather than resorting to spring-loaded-cat style scares or gore. Nearly everything you come across in game adds to this atmosphere, from gross example such as the shrill cries of Splicers looking to harvest

you for supplies ("I'll wrap you in a sheet! What does it want in our yard?") and the innocent looking Little Sisters repeatedly stabbing corpses with their giant needles and gulping down the resultant goo to the more subtle, such as the indications of Eugenics being practiced in Rapture, the hints at systematic child abuse, the fact that many of the Splicers wear masks in an attempt to hold on to some of their humanity or the merry way some of the Splicers whistle to themselves whilst hunting for victims. Creepiest of the lot is something one of the Australian writers must have come up with – Little Sisters refer to their Big Daddy guards as Mr. Bubbles. If this isn't a reference to the Mr. Bubbles child abuse case then the coincidence is all but perfect.

In an obvious nod to System Shock 2, much of the story of BioShock is told through the medium of recorded messages left by the now dead or insane inhabitants of the undersea

city. These messages range from the very pointed musings of some of the main characters players meet during the course of the game through to the memories of people of little or no import who still manage to flesh out the game world through their snippets of dialogue. Aside from colour and story, these voice messages also contain hints for the game – security codes for rooms and safes, information on where to find useful gear and the like. Although it is not necessary to pick up and listen to any of the messages, missing out on the wonderful glimpses of the world of Rapture before its downfall would be a great loss.

SCARILY BRILLIANT

I said before that BioShock is, at heart, a simple horror FPS and that is exactly what it is. Oddly enough, that is what makes the game so brilliant, the fact that it is an FPS that ties the mechanics and

H4XORS Hacking is an all but necessary skill in BioShock if you want to get into numerous safes for the goodies contained within, open locked doors, reprogram security drones or get cheaper products from vending machines. A fun little mini-game, the hacking interface brings up a grid of squares, each one of which can be flipped to show a piece of pipe or an alarm. To successfully hack players must swap around bits of pipe to make an unobstructed channel for current to pass through. The difficulty of the hack determines the number of alarm squares on the grid as well as the speed of the current. Luckily players can alter the difficulty of hacking through the use of hacking plasmids as well as create auto-hacking tools at a U-Invent station. If worst comes to worst, players can also spend money to open locks.



Bioshock
continued...



Even in Utopia,
they still make
sidewalk pizzas



storytelling together so intricately it's all but impossible to have one without the other. Early in the piece the player receives their first plasmid powers, the ability to set things on fire and telekinesis. Not only are these two powers integral to gameplay, they also intrinsically tie the player into the story as it is soon after that you learn of ADAM, the fundamental power source of plasmids and the Little Sisters, the only source of ADAM in Rapture. How you approach these little girls to get their ADAM forms a major highlight of the game.

[below] Fight fire with something else!



BIO-SHOCKING

Although there are only a few weapons available to the player, a wrench (the dialogue leading up to the wrench is delightfully self-referential when it comes to hand weapons in FPS games), revolver, Tommy-gun, shotgun, chemical thrower (a combination flame-thrower/liquid nitrogen thrower) and crossbow, each of the weapons is kept fresh and interesting throughout play via different ammunitions and weapon power-ups available from a few hidden kiosks around Rapture. With the exception of the wrench (which itself can be modified through physical combat plasmids), each weapon has three different forms of ammunition — a standard ammunition and two specialty ammunitions; as well as normal buckshot the shotgun has explosive shells and electric shells, the former being effective against unarmoured targets and the latter is effective against machines and Big Daddies.

Enemy AI is freakily brilliant and incredibly varied depending on what kind of Splicer you are facing. Simple Thuggish Splicers are usually content to charge and try to take you apart with a variety of melee weapons whereas Leadhead Splicer are much more likely to stand back, pepper you with bullets and run away if hurt. The AI also varies with the number of enemies being faced. Single Splicers are more likely to take a cautious approach but a mob may see fit to rely on weight of numbers.

Every part of me wants to illustrate points of the game with examples of brilliant moments,

anecdotal evidence of the incredible experience but to do so would be unforgivable. The way the story unfolds along side the game mechanics forms the core of the game rather than any single moment. Throughout the 20 odd hour play time players are introduced to new abilities, mechanics and skills at a wonderfully measured pace. Not once can you look at the game and think, "I have everything there is to offer". There are always more plasmid powers, more pieces of equipment to build, more enemies to photograph. Yes, photograph. Mid way through the game the

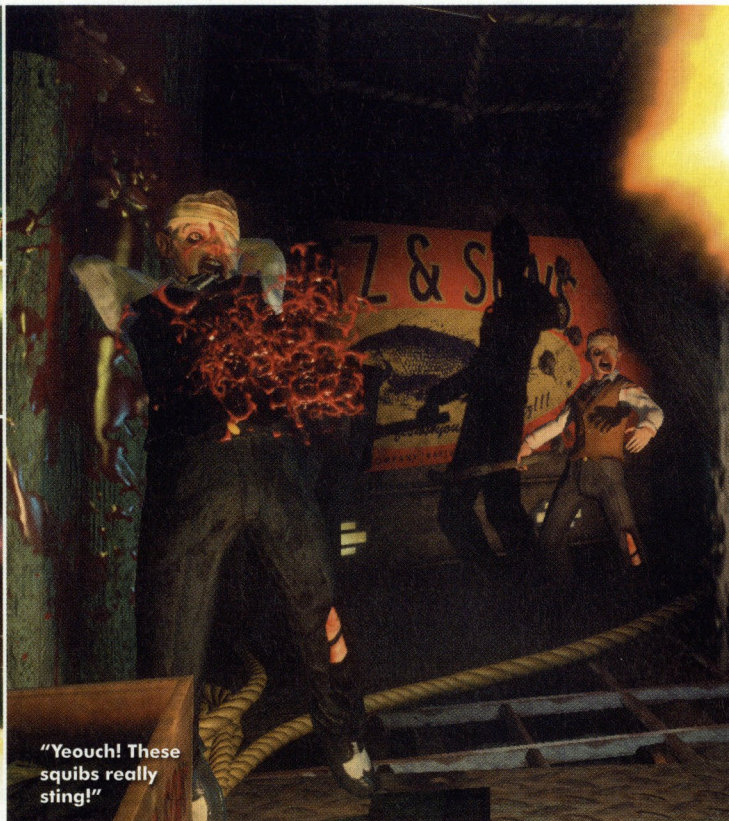
VENDORMATIC Scattered throughout the game world are numerous vending machines with different purposes.

Circus of Values machines sell basic gear such as health packs and EVE (kind of like mana) as well as some basic ammunition. Ammunition vending machines sell all different kinds of ammo. U-Invent machines allow players to take components scavenged from around Rapture to make ammunition, new gear and a few unique plasmid powers. Gatherer's Garden machines allow players to spend their accumulated ADAM to purchase new or upgraded plasmid powers and Gene Banks allow players to swap around their equipped plasmid powers. Also dotted throughout the hidden areas of Rapture are a few vending machines that allow players to upgrade their weapons with higher rates of fire, a larger clip, less kick and the like. Not only do these modification come in very handy, they look rather neat to boot, adding little retro-futuristic dials, cogs, lights and reservoirs to the weapons.





He better be able to play "Beyond the Sea"



"Yeouch! These squibs really sting!"



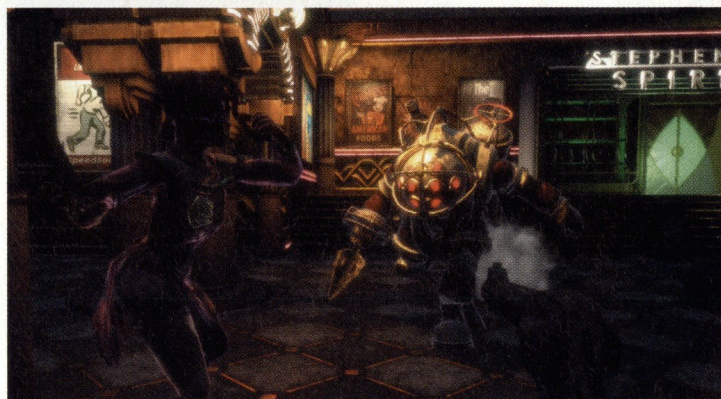
!!! There's one last bonus that Irrational Games have prepared for Bioshock fans, check our news section to find out what it is, and how you can get it for free!

player gains access to a piece of equipment that opens up so many exciting opportunities — a camera. Taking photos of enemies adds to research points, the number of points awarded for photos depends on how well the shot is framed, if it is an action shot, how many subjects are in frame, whether you have photographed the subject before and the like. Get enough research shots of the different kinds of Splicers and you're rewarded with an ability, plasmid power or bonus against that kind of Splicer. Heading out on photographic expeditions is almost as much fun as the main game.

PERPETUAL MOTION

As with all great things, there are still a couple of niggles that stop BioShock from being all but perfect. There is a noticeable and omnipresent glitch with the physics engine that rather perversely causes the extremities of character models to sway if they are left on an angle. What this means is that a good

deal of the time when you dispatch an enemy and they fall in a heap one of their extremities — hands, feet or head — will continue to bob continuously like some creepy corpse powered perpetual motion device. It's not a big problem to be sure but it is one that stands out like a sore thumb in a game that is otherwise so polished. The speed at which the player gains access to the first few plasmid powers is a little jarring as well. The other problem is more pronounced. At certain times during the game the player has control wrestled from them so they must bear witness to a certain scene or listen to a certain conversation to keep the story moving. Normally this wouldn't be much of a problem but in a game that feels as free as BioShock with a story that for the vast majority of the game's running time progresses very organically, these forced sections come across as more than a little jarring. That said, the rest of the game is so strong and

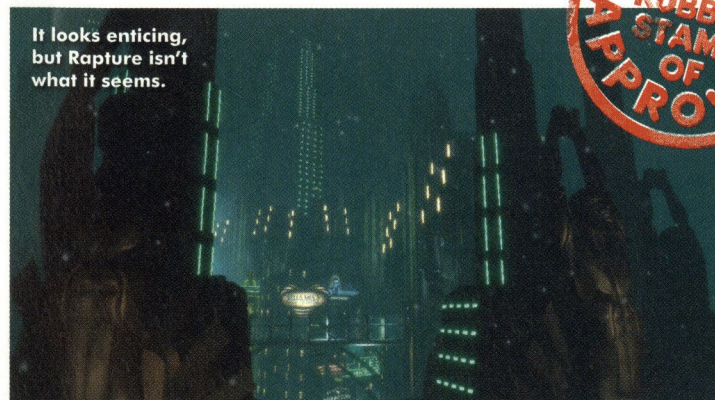


[above] Big Daddys are better than Puff Daddys

compelling that these few small grievances won't bother you enough to get some real hate boiling.

Undoubtedly there is going to be some comment made in numerous reviews to come condemning Irrational for not including any multi-player elements in BioShock but you won't hear any of those gripes from us. The dedication and focus to the single player game had paid off in spades, delivering a brilliant, heartbreaking masterpiece. BioShock is more than just a game. It's a watershed moment that sets the benchmark for games to come, offering a

compelling and brilliantly told story that rarely makes the player feel as though they have anything but absolute freedom, beautiful character design, magnificent level design and art direction and a steady progression of gameplay mechanics ensuring that players never become bored with what they can do. It's one of those games that gives us hope for the future of the medium and puts serious doubt on the recent "not art" aspersions cast by Roger Ebert. It's a game to be shown off and pimped to friends. Irrational should be proud of the beautiful lumbering beast they have created. Not let's just hope that it sells well enough to show other developers that innovation, clever design and sales aren't necessarily mutually exclusive concepts. <<



It looks enticing, but Rapture isn't what it seems.



Breathtaking design; player freedom; brilliantly written	There's no guarantee of a sequel	HYPER VERDICT
Not the best game ever made but pretty damn close.	VISUALS 96	SOUND 95
	GAMEPLAY 98	97



A robotic land fish – in the air!

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Blue Dragon

(Squish, Squish) You find **DANIEL WILKS**

There's nothing quite like a good poo joke. Sure, a poo joke can't stand up to the might of a good dick or fart joke but still. What does this have to do with Blue Dragon? Well, quite a lot really – the game has quite a lot of poo in it. A rather disturbing amount you could say. One of the first creatures you encounter is a Poo Snake, a coil of turd with a snake face and simple arms and legs. Later you encounter Poo Crabs, kind of like hermit crabs that use a big coil of poo instead of a shell to protect their soft bodies. There is even poo equipment, such as the Poo Bracelet that adds +1 to every stat and kills other poo creatures on contact but gives you the Stink status. There's a poo ring. Sometimes

[below] Just make sure you was your hands afterwards...

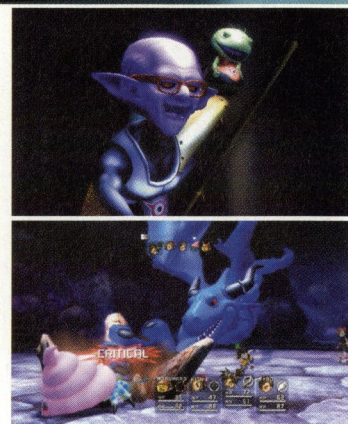
when you kill monsters they literally shit themselves. Step up to the resultant coil and you are asked if you want to search it. Blue Dragon could be a coprophile's dream. Telling the story of some scrappy kids with magical shadows, an evil villain bent on world domination, flying castles, poo monsters and never giving up, Blue Dragon could easily be mistaken for a kid's game. The vibrant design by Akira Toriyama (the man behind Dragon Ball and Dragon Quest) seem to back up this assumption but beneath the rather innocent trappings is a game of quite rich, not to mention adult storytelling, dealing with themes of loss, desire, the value of friendship and, of course, whether or not you're willing to put your hands into a pile of poo to see if there is any treasure in it.



category: **RPG**
players: **1**
developer: **Artoon**
publisher: **Microsoft**
price: **\$99.95**
rating: **M** / available: **Now**

NO MORE POO TALK

One of the major sticking points with Blue Dragon is the equipment, or real lack thereof as the case may be. As all fighting is done by the character's shadows, none of the characters have to worry about weapons and armour. Whilst this is a good thing in terms of not having to worry about inventory management, the fact that each character can only wear four (more if they level up the Generalist class) pieces of equipment the game lacks some of the moorish acquisition aspects that make combat in



fight them or avoid them depending on what players want to do. If you choose you fight you can run up close and hit the X button, leaping to attack. Attack first and you should have the initiative in battle, attack

One of the first creatures you encounter is a Poo Snake, a coil of turd with a snake face and simple arms and legs.

other RPGs so addictive. With very few exceptions you know in each combat that you are highly unlikely to get a piece of a equipment you're going to want to use.

Luckily the combat system is quite brilliant. Essentially a refined Final Fantasy turn based system – no wonder considering that the man behind Final Fantasy Hironobu Sakaguchi is at the helm – combat in Blue Dragon mixes real time action and turn based strategy in brilliant ways. For a start there are no random battles. While traversing the world map, players can see every monster within range so can

first from behind and not only will you attack first but you'll also have a free round to attack the enemy from behind. Players can also pull the right trigger, freezing the action on the world screen and highlighting any monster within the attackable radius of your party. If there is more than one group of monsters inside this circle, players can choose to fight all of them instead of picking out individual targets. Fighting a sequence of enemies rather than a single enemy has two benefits. Firstly, after each group of enemies is dispatched, the player is given a power-up from a rapidly scrolling

Marumaro says: "Yiffing is awesome!"

!!! In case you were wondering, aside from the abundance of poo, Blue Dragon does also contain a few dick and fart jokes.



[above] The massage is happy end.

list; you may have some hit points healed, magic restored, have you chance to dodge increased and the like. The more enemies you fight the more powerful the power-ups offered between rounds become. More importantly, some monsters just don't like each other - get the right groups attacking together and they'll waste their time killing each other rather than killing you.

TOY STORY 2

Blue Dragon is a triumph of visual design. Even if you're not fond of the art of Akira Toriyama it's hard not to be suckered in. The entire game looks like a bunch of meticulously painted acrylic figures come to life, like Toy Story meets DBZ. Everything has a wonderfully retro-future look to it. Robots, one of the most common enemies in the game look like something from early Astro Boy or Gigantor - big spherical bodies, spindly limbs that

don't look like they can support the weight of the body, pincer hands and curiously characterful faces. Other monsters are just a well designed and are as equally full of character, from the Poo Snakes through to the Lazy Bears (who do little but yawn and scratch themselves), the Kelodons, freaky little evil Snork things or Murals, malicious painting on walls.

The music and voice acting are both very good but the script occasionally lets the actors down. It's become a running joke in the office that we had to turn Blue Dragon into a drinking game - you need to take a shot every time Shu, the main character says, "I won't give up". By our estimate you'd be having your stomach pumped within the first 2 hours of the game. Yes, we understand that not giving up and believing in yourself are major themes in the game but having one of the character scream out the words at every given opportunity definitely begins to grate after a while.



This bird needs seven herbs and spices

ALL CLASS Rather than the actual character having classes, The Shadows, each character's fighting avatar is what has a character class. Instead of being limited to one class, players can choose which of the unlocked classes they wish to level (additional classes are unlocked as the character levels), learning new skills in the process. All learnt skills are available to the player no matter what class is being leveled at the time, although only a few can be equipped at any given time.



One specialist character class, the Generalist allows players to learn skills that let them to equip more active skills and equipment.

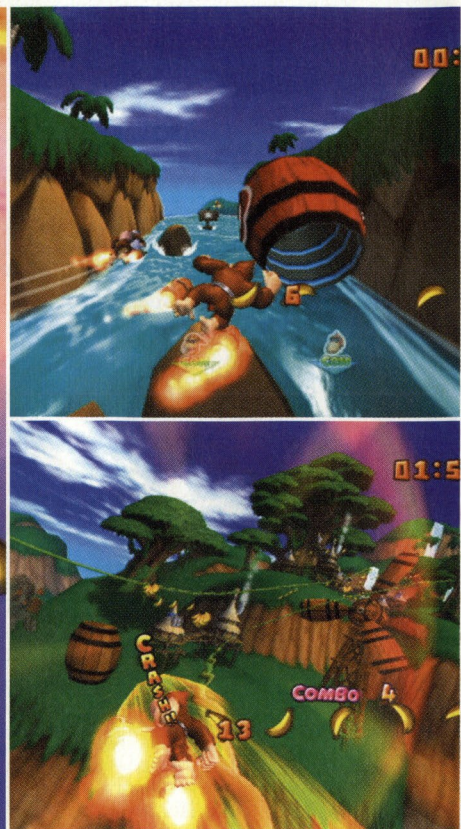
If anything, Blue Dragon is a refinement of Japanese turn based RPG conventions. There is little it does new but what it does do, it does right. The turn based combat is tight, the design is spectacular and the story is a joy to follow. Ultimately, though, Blue Dragon does feel a little derivative,

not of any single game but of every game that came before it. You can nearly point out the inspirations for everything in the game. This isn't necessarily a bad thing but we really would have liked to see something a little more unique as the first 360 exclusive Japanese RPG. <<

Beautiful design; excellent combat system; good story	Derivative	HYPER VERDICT
A wonderful condensation of old-school Japanese RPG conventions	VISUALS 95	SOUND 90
	GAMEPLAY 88	88



X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP



DK: Bongo Blast [IMPORT]

JONTI DAVIES goes ape with DK and crew.

This one has risen from the ashes — not some much like a Phoenix, but more like a chimp with TNT-packed barrels strapped to its limbs — of two GameCube games that never were: Donkey Kong Racing and DK: Bongo Blast. Of course, as you'll have noticed, this Wii release retains the moniker of that latter title. But it's changed quite radically since we first saw it running on the dear old 'Cube.

JUNGLE RE-JIGGERY

For a start, the controls have been rejigged to suit the Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk setup. And yes, both Remote and Nunchuk are essential. You'll need a Remote in

one hand and a Nunchuk in the other, and they then become virtual drumsticks. Beat the imaginary bongos in a roll to take off and accelerate. Once you've reached maximum speed, the game turns into a bizarre take on sailing/boarding: you can't get quicker than maximum speed (hey) so there's no need to keep on miming drum fills. However, you will need to beat just one imaginary bongo whenever you want to turn: shake the controller in your left hand to veer left, and vice versa. Also, if you want to jump, you'll need to

[below] A lava level?! Who said originality was dead!



[above] Mine carts — so crazy it just might work!

pull both controllers back sharply. And then there's the boost system, powered by collected bananas, in which you have to pull back on the Nunchuk's analogue stick... Really, Nintendo, we thought the

So, what about the game format? Yeah, it's formatted good. There are several Grand Prix to race through, there's a Challenge Mode that is reasonably challenging (along the lines of, 'Collect XX bananas within XX seconds'), and there are the usual Time Attack and Single Race options. Although the hardest difficulty level available is indeed pretty hard, this selection of modes would seem a bit thin were it not for the fact that you can play any part of Bongo Blast in multiplayer. There's no direct Battle Mode, alas, but if — like us — you get tremendous mileage from Mario

The line between GameCube and Wii graphics is thin, but Bongo Blast comes out on the Wii side of the equation...

idea of Wii was simpler controls?

Happily, that snide comment aside, we're ready to concede that these (seemingly complicated) controls are in practice easy to master. And there's certainly a huge dollop of novelty dough in here — it's not the kind of recipe that loses its flavour quickly, either: it has a long finish, which means you'll still be happy to flap your arms around after many hours of flapping. Because it's all for bananas and monkeys and crocodiles, you see, and because there are explosives involved.

Kart's two-player Grand Prix modes, Bongo Blast's four-player Grand Prix offers mileage like Paris-Dakar.

POLISHED COCONUTS

The line between GameCube and Wii graphics is so thin as to be almost invisible, but Bongo Blast seems to come out on the Wii side of the equation. It's surprisingly polished and, in 480p, it doesn't look too far off from Nintendo's mocked-up Donkey Kong Racing demo of a few years ago. There's some particularly good use of camera focus to display depth,





[above] The unique Egyptian theme really sets this level apart

and temporal effects such as heat haze and freezing fog add touches of glamour to the game. Most impressively, the character models here capture the essence of Rare's pre-rendered Donkey Kong Country creations.

ELASTIC SHENANIGANS

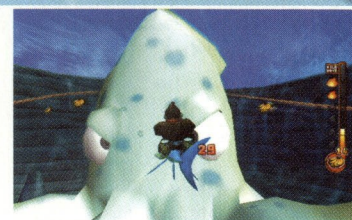
Generally, races are three laps long and each lap runs to somewhere in the region of one-and-a-half minutes. Thanks to the tenacity

of the AI-controlled racers (each race is played with a field of eight 'drivers'), you can be ahead at the end of Lap Two and then under attack from enemy missiles halfway through the Final Lap. It's not because the AI cheats — there are no Mario Kart-style 'elastic AI' shenanigans here — but simply because, on the hardest difficulty level, the AI players cannot be underestimated. There's also plenty of scope for making mistakes: barrels and other obstacles (including giant sea monsters and mammoths)

are placed on the track as hazards. Plough into a giant octopus and you won't be in pole position for much longer...

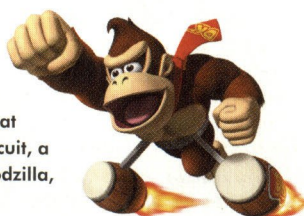
Most of the time, you're racing on banana-powered barrels and boosting when possible (pick up 20 bananas and you'll be rewarded with a single turbo), but there are also some cool short-cuts and alternative modes of transport scattered throughout each circuit. If you see a pocket-sized rhino or shark or mammoth in a cage, break that constraint and the little fella will give you a ride. And while you're riding rhinoback/sharkback/mammothback, you'll be invincible and you'll be moving at a quicker speed than even a banana boost can empower. Nifty.

There are plenty of cool little



things in Bongo Blast, like the animal riding feature and like the chance to pull moves with the Wii Remote while you're flying off the edge of cliffs. It's a novel twist on the comical racing genre. Ultimately, through a lack of variation in the circuits on offer, it doesn't have the staying power of a Mario Kart game. But still, for game-starved Wii owners this is a funky title with strong multiplayer. Play it until Mario Kart Wii gets here, anyway. <<

MECHAKONGZILLA There are seven course areas here, six of which contain three circuit variations. So, according to our limited arithmetic skills, the total number of circuits here is 19. The seventh and final main area is the single-track Cosmic Highway, which does for DK: Bongo Blast what Rainbow Road has done for Mario Kart, giving it a starlit sci-fi finale. Paon has really got into the sci-fi side of things, introducing Z Gundam-style flying DK robots that shoot lasers in random directions across the circuit, a giant Donkey Kong obstacle based on Mechagodzilla, and warp tunnels. It's got the lot.



Novel control system; interesting course design; solid power-up

Occasional slowdown; controls can be a bit sloppy in places.

HYPER VERDICT

A good effort that feels like a stopgap before the release of Mario Kart Wii

VISUALS
84

SOUND
81

GAMEPLAY
83

83



!!! A few other modes sported by Stuntman: Ignition include Quick Fix, which includes a few instantly accessible stunt scenes, and Multiclash, a surprisingly playable multiplayer mode which sees you racing against as many as 8 players, performing stunts all the way around a circuit track.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Stuntman: Ignition

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE only had to restart this review seventeen times

category: **Driving** / players: **1-8**
 developer: **Paradigm Entertainment**
 publisher: **THQ**
 price: **PS3: \$109.95, X360: \$99.95**
PS2, PSP: \$69.95
 rating: **TBC** / available: **September**

Despite its undeniably awesome premise, the original Stuntman didn't exactly set the world ablaze. The game's repetitive and ultra-frustrating gameplay combined with some of the slowest load times in living memory ensured that Stuntman's critical reception was mixed, bordering on unfavourable.

The series now has a new developer and publisher, in the form of Paradigm Entertainment and THQ, respectively, but have they finally been able to make Stuntman: Ignition more fun than frustrating?

PLAY, FAIL, RESTART, REPEAT

Stuntman: Ignition has six new movies for you to work on, including thinly veiled homage's to movies like Dukes of Hazard, Bullitt, James Bond, Batman and others. Each film has six scenes, where the director will lead you through a variety of stunts, like driving on two wheels, 180-degree whips, massive airs, and of course all the crashes, scrapes and kabooms your eggshell mind can handle. As you burn your jalopy (or jalopy-cycle) around a predetermined track the director yells his commands, giving you, at best, a few fractions of a second to react and perform the trick. Now, unless you've got some kind of precognitive powers the chances are that you won't hit every trick the first time you try a level...



[above] Does my bum look big in this?

Or the second time... Hell, you may not even hit them the tenth, twentieth or thirtieth time you try a level, since Stuntman is entirely about memorising the level's layout by a process of trial and error.

As you may have guessed, the frustration factor is still high — really high — and you almost need to have the calmness of a Buddhist monk to avoid flying off into a frustration-fuelled rage and throwing your gamepad against a wall.

Admittedly, Paradigm have gone a long way to alleviate a lot of the problems that made the original Stuntman even more infuriating. For example, there are now no load times between retries, and the

game now has a "strike" system that gives you five chances to screw up before it boots you out, making Ignition significantly more player-friendly than its predecessor. So, while it's still frustrating, it's at least less frustrating than before.

When you do eventually nail all the tricks in a scene you'll be awarded a point score, and if you manage to string together one long unbroken combo of stunts (called "stringing it") then you'll officially be the master of that scene and will unlock a variety of bonus content

including Taurus Stuntman awards, new vehicle paintjobs, and most exciting of all — props and stunts to use in your own custom-made stunt tracks, via the game's new constructor mode. The constructor mode is initially one of the most exciting new aspects of Ignition. You are given an empty arena to kit out with ramps, exploding barrels, loop-the-loops and more. Unfortunately, as much as we wanted to love the constructor mode, it just wasn't as complete as we would have hoped. We found that it wasn't really possible to set up the kind of spectacular stunts that could be achieved in the main game, and there just wasn't enough there to keep us engaged.

At times Stuntman: Ignition is brilliant fun, and at other times it is hair-pullingly frustrating. The restrictive linear structure means that creative experimentation is limited, and while the constructor was a great addition, in the end it is left underdeveloped.

Stuntman: Ignition is a good effort, but the Stuntman series still needs more rehearsal time before it's ready for its next performance. <<

The premise is still great, some genuinely spectacular stunts

Linear trial and error gameplay, frustration factor will blow your top

HYPER VERDICT

Much better than Stuntman, but still not a blockbuster.

VISUALS
80

SOUND
72

GAMEPLAY
73

73

FURY

"PVP ADDICTS, BE EXCITED"
THIS IS A GAME MADE ESPECIALLY FOR YOU."



"THIS IS PVP REBORN"
A GAME NO COMPETITIVE PLAYER
CAN AFFORD TO MISS."

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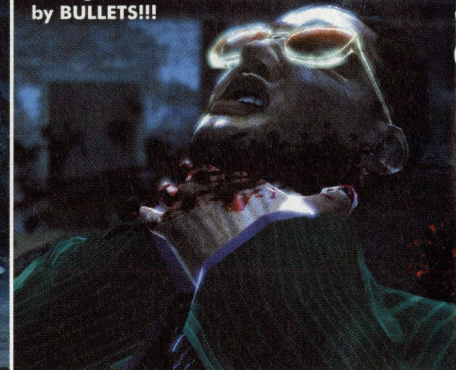




X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP



Strangled...
by BULLETS!!!



Stranglehold

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE is all about the testikills

It's been fifteen years since John Woo's *Hard Boiled* first exploded out of Hong Kong and became a cult favourite for an entire generation of action-loving cineastes. For many Westerners it was the first taste of the uniquely operatic, ultra-violent action films that would come to be classified as "heroic bloodshed".

The film must have made quite an impression on someone at Midway, since *Stranglehold*, a direct sequel to *Hard Boiled*, has pretty much every hallmark of an original John Woo film. Similarly to the original *Hard Boiled*, *Stranglehold* is all about Inspector "Tequila" Yuen (played by Chow Yun Fat, who reprises his role here) who comes up against Hong Kong's most deadly triads. Instead of guns, this time the contraband being smuggled is drugs, and we shouldn't need to tell you how not cool that is with Tequila.

[below] Obviously, Tequila isn't the king of gamblers.



The resultant gunplay is something gamers dream about, so get ready to heroically shed some blood — because *Stranglehold* is quite a ride.

TEQUILA TIME!

In many ways *Stranglehold* is like a next-generation *Max Payne* infused with the essence of one of John Woo's most famous films. Just like *Max Payne*, Tequila can shift into a slow-motion mode. It's called "tequila time", and you can activate it by simply tapping the right bumper button, causing the entire world to slow down to a crawl. Tequila time allows you to maximise your acrobatic leaps and bounds, as well as to more accurately, quickly and spectacularly dispose of any nearby hostiles.

As well as having time-control powers, Tequila is, without doubt, the hardest gaming protagonist we've encountered in a very long time. Not only is he able to survive a considerable amount of firepower, ranging from few bullet grazes to coping the full brunt of a rocket-propelled grenade in the guts, but he's also capable of withstanding a fall of several stories and landing face-first onto a concrete floor after wilfully leaping sideways over a balcony.

This is something that really makes *Stranglehold* a unique

experience. While it borrows liberally from games like *Max Payne*, there has never been a game that lets you go quite as crazy with the side-leaping, high-falling, duel-gun-wielding action as *Stranglehold*. For example, some of the acrobatics that Tequila can pull off are unbelievably cool. The left trigger is your multipurpose jumping/acrobatics button, and pressing it in a variety of situations will give very different results. Press it when you're facing a wall, and Tequila will run straight up it and then leap backwards with little to no regard for his personal safety. If your leap lands you on a slippery surface (like watermelon juice), or even on top of a wheeled trolley, the momentum of your leap will keep you sliding and/or rolling long after you've landed.

HONG KONG STANDOFF

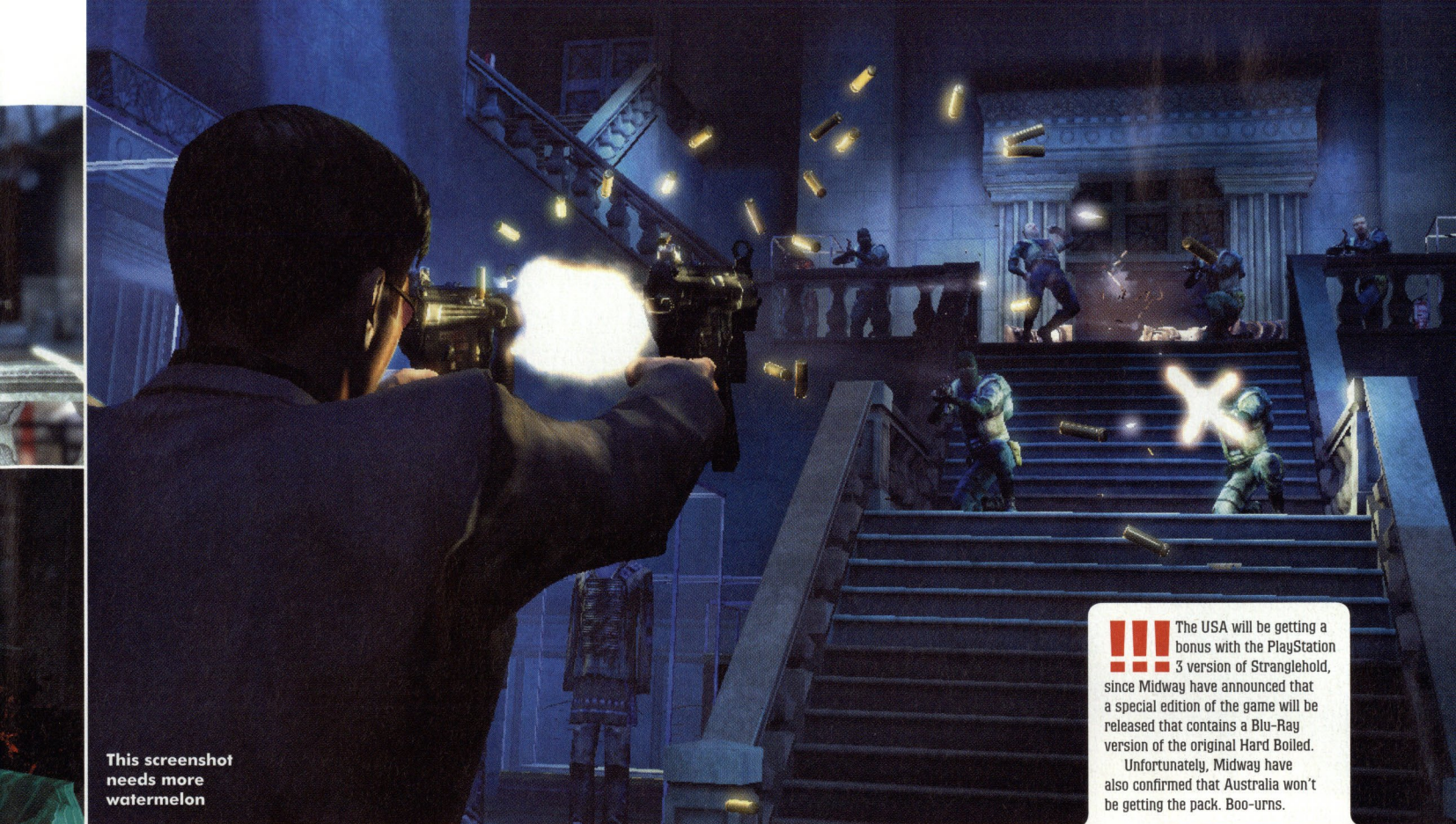
Stranglehold almost has too many features for us to tell you about, but here's just a couple more. The first is the "stand-off" mode, which pops up at least a couple of times per level. After a scripted sequence where gunmen surround Tequila, slow motion kicks in and you must dodge bullets with the right stick and aim and shoot with the left. It's almost like a quick-draw system that you may see in a Western game, and it works very well.

The second is taking cover. *Stranglehold* isn't just about leaping sideways with your double-pistols blazing, there's also a bit of stop-and-pop to be had if you so desire. Pressing your back to a wall protects you from fire, and you can pop out momentarily to pick off a few mobsters. Just don't stay in one place for too long, because *Stranglehold*'s destructible environments mean that cover doesn't usually stay in one piece for too long...



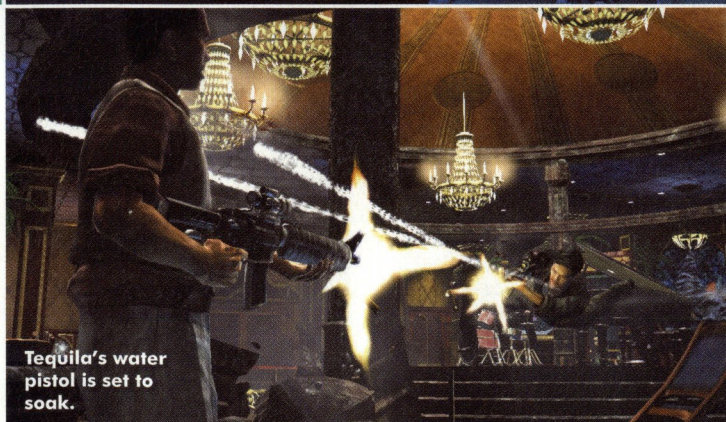
[above] Two more testikills to add to the tally





This screenshot needs more watermelon

!!! The USA will be getting a bonus with the PlayStation 3 version of Stranglehold, since Midway have announced that a special edition of the game will be released that contains a Blu-Ray version of the original Hard Boiled. Unfortunately, Midway have also confirmed that Australia won't be getting the pack. Boo-urns.



Tequila's water pistol is set to soak.



down cables and climb up the backbones of a museum dinosaur, but he can also destroy much of the world around him.

In the course of the game you will have to blast down pillars to form bridges, shoot down scaffolding to send your enemies to their doom, dislodge neon signs so that they fall on the heads of unsuspecting mobsters, and many other environment-based actions that can help you eradicate your foes and explore new areas of each level.

KILLING WITH STYLE

If all of these manoeuvres sound enticing however, brace yourselves, because we haven't even got to the really cool stuff yet. As a reward for performing all of the aforementioned stunts and kills you'll earn style points, which will, in turn, fill up your "Tequila bomb" gauge.

Once filled a variety of special moves can be unleashed by pressing a direction on the D-pad. The most basic of these is a health

boost for Tequila, but there is also a barrage mode, where Tequila loses his temper and momentarily gains the ability to continually fire his gun without reloading. There's also the "spin attack", a 360-degree bullet shower that kills everything in sight, and even includes some

Tequila is, without doubt, the hardest gaming protagonist we've encountered in a very long time...

of John Woo's signature white doves flying through the scene. Then there's our favourite — the "precision aim" move. Activating precision aiming automatically slows down time, letting you carefully choose where you want to shoot an enemy before letting the bullets fly and watching a neat cinematic of the slug flying through the air to its destination. Invariably that destination would be a groin shot, a move that has become known worldwide as the "testikill" (thank you Penny Arcade!).

Stranglehold's soundtrack is a driving orchestral action score and plays well against the mayhem on screen. There is one thing about Stranglehold's sound design that we don't really understand, however, and that is that everyone in the game (including Chow Yun

Fat) speaks American English. While we're sure that many viewers of the original Hard Boiled may have seen inferior dubbed versions, hearing Tequila, and indeed, the entire population Hong Kong speaking perfect English is a bit unbelievable.

Maybe if Midway had actually

[above] "My rental bond SO isn't going to cover this."

made it appear as though the game had been dubbed, with the characters' lips and dialogue completely out of sync, then we could have all had a laugh, but as it stands we have characters that should be speaking Cantonese perfectly lip synced to some very broad American accents — hasn't anyone at Midway heard of subtitles?

Regardless of what language it's in though, Stranglehold definitely spells fun. If you want out-of-control action, violent gunplay, plenty of slow-motion leaps, falls and acrobatics, with the flavour of a John Woo movie, then Stranglehold is your game. <<

Packed full of crazy action, heaps of moves, Tequila!

No map, camera is a bit wild, should have been subbed, not dubbed.

HYPER VERDICT

That's some damn good Tequila!

VISUALS 85 SOUND 81 GAMEPLAY 89 **89**



X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Heavenly Sword

DANIEL WILKS performs his own motion capture

The production values in Heavenly Sword are simply amazing. It is an unbelievably beautiful game with a huge amount of attention paid to fine, even extraneous detail (one level features a waterfall you can only see properly if you run into the corner of an out of the way area), and categorically the most impressive facial animations we've ever seen in a game, courtesy of motion capture and motion acting directed by none other than Andy Serkis, the man who played both Gollum and King Kong. The facial animations are so good that they make everything else look a little shoddy by comparison. Unfortunately they're not good enough to completely gloss over the fundamental flaws of the game itself, although they do help.

The problem with Heavenly Sword is that, rather than feeling like a finished game, Ninja Theory have managed to produce a beautiful but frustrating proof of concept, clearing showing the amazing leaps they have made with motion capture and lip-synching whilst not really focusing on the game itself. As a result, Heavenly Sword feels both derivative and mismatched.

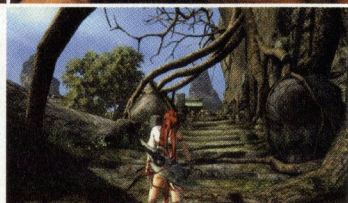
LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, UP, SQUARE, CRAP!

God of War has a hell of a lot to answer for. Sure, it's a brilliant game backed up with a, equally brilliant sequel and a PSP spin-off that's shaping up to be one of the highlights of the platform but it has committed a crime for which there is no forgiveness – convincing other developers that quick-time events

are the way of the future. Once again, yes, the quick-time event boss battles worked fantastically in God of War, giving a nice complex challenge whilst remaining fun and not particularly frustrating. This is not the case with Heavenly Sword. Instead of being easily approachable and fun like the events in God of War, Heavenly Sword events move at a break-neck pace and punish the player if they get a move wrong. In the first two boss battles we fought, against Flying Fox (a camp Andy Serkis) and Whiptail, failing to win a quick-time event resulted in the bosses being healed between 1/3 and 2/3 their life. Bizarrely, the next boss battles do away with this punishing style of quick-time event and instead use real interactive cutscenes that restart immediately if you fail, almost as if Ninja Theory had second thoughts about their game design but didn't



"I can has cheese burger?"



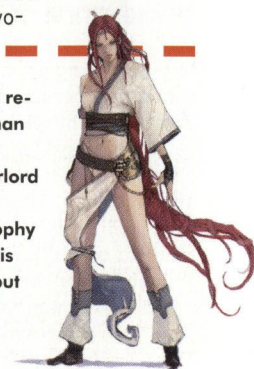
[above] Looks like a recipe for rope-burn to me...

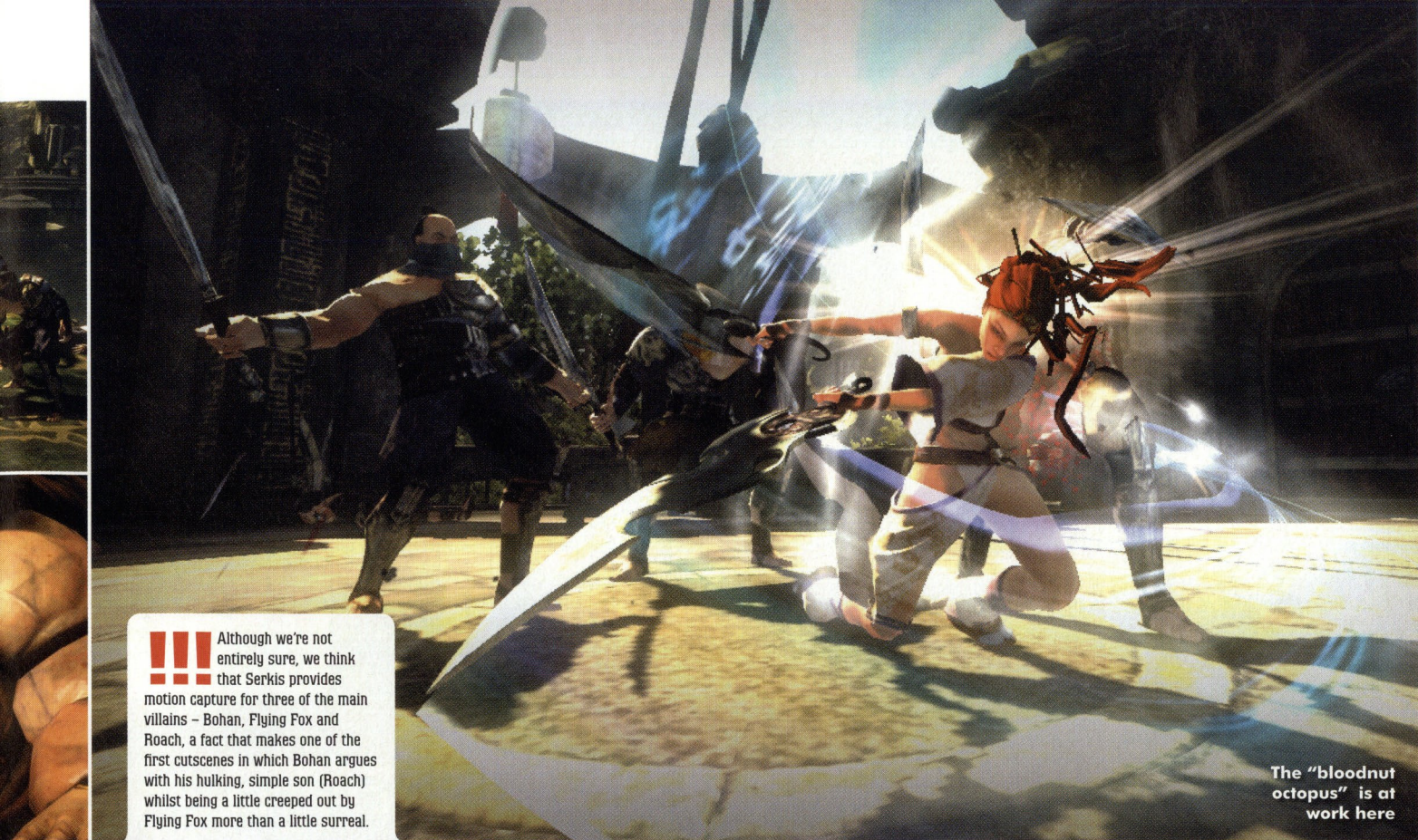
have time to go back and fix it.

The combat, using the button mashing style perfected by the aforementioned GoW franchise, gives players access to three different versions of the Heavenly Sword by holding down either the L1 or R1 buttons; a normal version for fast, fairly weak attacks, a ranged version much like Kratos' blades that do little damage but knock enemies back and a strong, slow, two-



THE STORY SO FAR The story of Heavenly Sword revolves around a red-haired warrior named Nariko, a woman charged with the safekeeping of a weapon known as the Heavenly Sword. An evil, not to mention rather insane warlord by the name of Bohan is slowly conquering the world and wants the sword for himself – not as a weapon but as a trophy of conquest. After most of her clan is killed and her father is captured by Bohan, Nariko takes up the Heavenly Sword but there is one small problem – the sword is meant for a god and consumes the life-force of any mortal wielding it. Can Nariko get to Bohan in time? What do you think?





Although we're not entirely sure, we think that Serkis provides motion capture for three of the main villains – Bohan, Flying Fox and Roach, a fact that makes one of the first cutscenes in which Bohan argues with his hulking, simple son (Roach) whilst being a little creeped out by Flying Fox more than a little surreal.

The "bloodnut octopus" is at work here



Nariko is pretty much a hotter, boobier Kratos



handed version. Whilst the fighting feels good and the animations are superb, many of the encounters give that "proof of concept" impression, with the developers being more interested in showing how many characters they can show on screen rather than making the battles as fun as they should be. As a result many of the battles felt rather cramped and ended up feeling very samey after the third or fourth iteration of being locked in a small arena-like area and having to fight off hordes of identical looking enemies who can block or dodge most of your attacks making you rely on a combination of lightning reflexes to pull off the impressive looking counters and luck.

YOU'VE GOT THE TOUCH!

One of the fighting mechanics that does work well, despite the cramped fighting quarters is the ability to throw (or shoot in some stages) objects and control them with aftertouch with the Sixaxis motion sensing, steering them in

slow motion to the target. A few of the puzzles feature the use of the aftertouch control but the Sixaxis comes into its own when playing as Kai, a strange, enigmatic and rather insane young girl who likes to play "Twing Twang" with her large and rather deadly crossbow.

The developers [are] more interested in how many characters they can show on screen than making the battles fun...

The first level you play as Kai sees the player defending Shen (Nariko's father) as he crosses a bridge, using aftertouch to pick off every enemy guard chasing him. It's a fun level and a good change of pace from the button mashing of Nariko's combat but if anything the level goes on far too long. Kai's other levels are much more fun and varied, however.

This problem of levels seeming far too long spans the entire game – a strange thing since you could comfortably beat Heavenly Sword in under 10 hours. Many of the

stages feature several repeated riffs – run forward, get locked into an area, kill all the enemies that come, run into the next area, rinse and repeat. Although this may have been a conscious design decision by Ninja Theory it comes across more as a way of extending

the gameplay time instead of an integral part of the game.

It's a pity that the later parts of the game lead to far more frustration than they do to fun because the visuals and cutscenes are so well produced that you'll find yourself slogging through

[above] "I shouldn't have put firecrackers in my pants!"

just to see what comes next. It is, however, quite a chore to get there. At any rate, with the exception of the bizarre "bloodnut octopus" as we have dubbed the crazy hair that writhes around Nariko's head, Heavenly Sword is one of the best looking games we've ever seen. The voice acting is superb as well, the skilled direction of Andy Serkis delivering some fantastically nuanced (no to mention surreal) characters. Now that Ninja Theory have proven their concept of using facial motion capture and showing hundreds of fighters on the screen at once, they can sit down and try to make a game as fun as it is immaculately designed. <<

Amazing facial animations; beautiful; great voice acting

Repetitive; short; frustrating

HYPER VERDICT

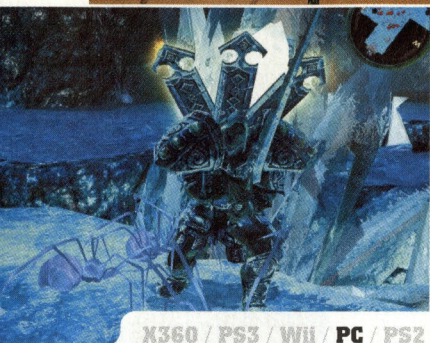
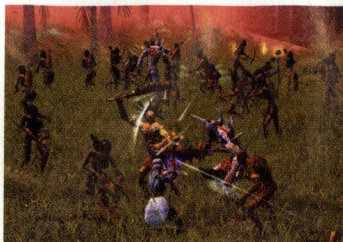
Outstandingly attractive but more frustrating than fun.

VISUALS
97

SOUND
95

GAMEPLAY
80

78



X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP



!!! Go out and pick up Titan Quest if you need an action RPG fix (and don't own the game already) – it's a far superior offering.

Loki

DIRK WATCH must have failed geography

Riddle me this: if I'm playing a Greek character running around in Greece, why do all of the monsters seem to drop Norse, Aztec and Egyptian gear? Did the Greeks, fed up with their own monsters that looked like they were put together using the free trial version of Poser, decide to import the same monsters from around the globe to add that touch of ethnic flair? Why is it also, that a Greek character (or Norse, Aztec or Egyptian for that matter) can't actually wear clothing or wield weapons from one of the other cultures? Is the gear in and of itself racist, refusing to work for individuals they deem to be descended from a lesser race. Or is it a peer pressure problem? DO members of each culture go out of their way to make fun of people why dress differently and is this long held fear so deeply ingrained in the culture that individuals can no longer even fathom the idea of using something made by an outsider? Enquiring minds want to know.

Remember, if you can, Diablo. Not Diablo 2 with all of its subtleties and brilliance, but Diablo, the game that popularized the action RPG. Now strip away the epic storytelling, the interesting characters, tight controls and interest and you have Loki, one of the poorest Diablo clones we've

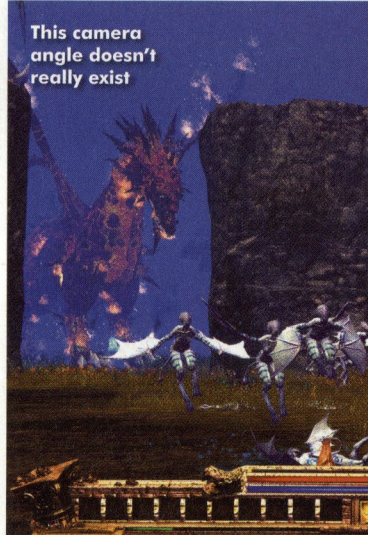
ever had the misfortune of seeing, a mish-mash of poorly researched world mythology, Poser graphics, poor texturing, inexplicable slowdown, boring character classes and woefully unbalanced combat.

Players have the choice between four characters, a Norse warrior, a Greek warrior, Egyptian caster and Aztec caster. Due to an innovative but ultimately flawed XP system that allows players to choose which god they wish to worship (each player has three gods and each god has a skill tree) progression of skills takes an inordinately long time, making both of the casters and warriors play almost identically for half of the game.

LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT

Combat is a dull affair punctuated by moments of extreme annoyance. As it takes so long to get any particularly decent skills for any of the characters for the most part you'll find yourself using only two attacks – normal weapon attack on the left mouse button and a more powerful attack on a 3-5 second cool down on the right. Alternate clicks, rinse and repeat. To make the problem even worse, Every area in Loki appears to be populated with about as many monsters as the developers could fit, meaning the player is swamped with hit-point-whittling, frame-rate-chewing almost

category: **Action RPG**
players: **1-multi**
developer: **Cyanide Studios**
publisher: **QV**
price: **\$69.95** / rating: **M**
available: **Now**



This camera angle doesn't really exist

constantly making combat far more of a chore than it should be.

You have to shake your head and wonder what Cyanide Studios were thinking when they made Loki. It's an amateur mess that seems to take its inspiration from Diablo, a game 11 years old, rather than any of the brilliant games that have come after it, such as Diablo II or the similarly themed Titan

Quest. The character and monster models look like they were put together by the work experience kid using Poser, the sound effects are almost non-existent, the voice acting is atrocious, the controls are unresponsive and the underlying experience mechanics, whilst interesting, make leveling skills a very time consuming and ultimately unrewarding process. <<<

Interesting experience system; decent inventory system

Chuggy; boring combat; posier models

HYPER VERDICT

A Diablo clone 11 years too late.

VISUALS 60 SOUND 62 GAMEPLAY 35 **34**



Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII also includes Sixaxis control in the PS3 version, and surprisingly, it actually works quite well.

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII

DIRK WATCH biffs the bosh and hammers the hun

Blazing Angels 2 is a very pretty game. Incredibly pretty, in fact, full of some rather staggering terrain detail, impressive looking dogfights and wonderfully rendered planes. Even the sky looks fantastic – a good thing considering you’ll spend most of your time looking at it. As far as combat flight games go, we can’t think of a game that looks better than Blazing Angels 2. So, why all this talk of how good the game looks? Basically that’s the most impressive feature of the game – the gameplay still leaves a little something to be desired.

There’s nothing wrong with the gameplay in Blazing Angels 2, per-se, it’s just that the game is a little too exacting in its demands to be truly satisfying. The opening

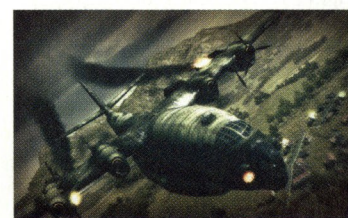
mission in the game is the first example of this. The game opens with the player taking part in an air-show, years after the war has ended. During the air-show players have to hit 10 stunt-points in a nice and cleverly themed training mission. Hitting these stunt-points is not as easy as you may think, however, as instead of simply having to fly close to these points (some of which are crammed into impossibly small areas), you have to fly right through them, leading to more than one crash and expletive. A later mission requires the player to fly low over a moving train long enough so a spy can jump onto the train. Any slight deviation from the line requires you to do the mission again, as does moving too fast or too slow. This exacting

precision required for certain quests really bogs down what could otherwise be a fantastic game.

Of course, the first mission also shows just how creatively designed the game is. After completing the stunts, the game fades to black and white and seamlessly segues into a furious air battle from WWII waged over the same stretch of land and sea as the air-show. It’s a fantastic introduction to combat. Controls are tight and easy to learn; the left thumbstick controls the direction whilst the right controls the throttle and roll of the plane, left trigger locks the camera on the target and right trigger fires. The right bumper controls the alt weapons, such as cannons, rockets and more “experimental” fare that appears later in the game.

Although we spent the first paragraph wildly talking up how good Blazing Angels 2 looks, not all is rosy in the visuals department. The cutscenes are, to be blunt, awful, utilising the lazy comic-book panel style that has been cropping up more and more often in games. To make matters worse, the cutscenes are made up of

category: **Combat Flight Sim**
players: **1-16**
developer: **Ubisoft**
publisher: **Ubisoft**
price: **\$119.95**
rating: **M** / available: **Now**



photographs that look as though they have been passed through the “paint” filter of Photoshop. Sure, Max Payne and the sequel did a similar thing in their games but it worked with the oh-so gritty narration and noirish themes of the game – in Blazing Angels 2 it just looks cheap and nasty.

Although Blazing Angels 2 is a big step in front of the original game in terms of looks and gameplay there is still a ways to go for the franchise. Hopefully the inevitable next game in the series will balance all of the elements in the game instead of having terrific combat and frustrating exercises in pinpoint accuracy. <<



Looks great; tight controls; fantastic detail

Precision missions; horrible cutscenes

HYPER VERDICT

A definite step in the right direction for the franchise.

VISUALS

91

SOUND

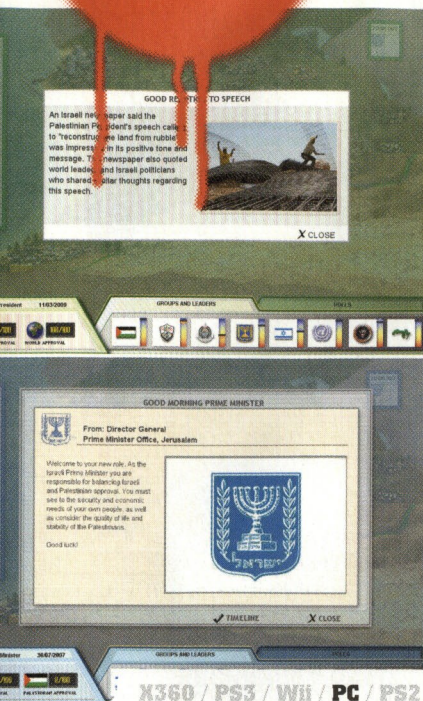
82

GAMEPLAY

82

80

INDIE GAME REVIEW



!!! When Peace Maker speaks of real events it's not lying. It will even throw video footage at you, although you will annoyingly have to have Quicktime installed first.

Peace Maker

TIM HENDERSON should never, ever be in charge

Perhaps Games Critics have it too easy. Our checklist is too conveniently pointed, always reaching a sort of harmony at the top of a pyramid where all factors must contribute to a single conclusion: was the game enjoyable?

Film and other Critics have to consider other factors such as message, poignancy and — to a greater degree, perhaps — craftsmanship. Games can also work on a variety of factors, ranging from unadulterated

joy, ecstatic fantasy or gradual immersion, but when the pot simmers down we're always basing the final analysis on fun. So what the hell do you do when a game comes along, presents actual, rife tension between Israel and Palestine, and then tells you to fix it?

A SERIES OF MENUS, THEN

As far as being well intentioned can be a factor, Peace Maker scores perfect points. It strips down fictional fantasy, bases its events on real occurrences, and presents a situation that does matter in a world beyond the ones

and zeros buzzing around your hard drive. It's an intimidating, ideological beast at first glance, pitting players as the leader of one of the two nations and then thrusting them into a screen full of icons and statistics; asking them to make sense of it all and bring about peace and understanding.

All of this overwhelming complexity is largely illusion, however, and a gentle (re: stagnant if you want it to be) pace of play mixes with a forgiving save system to allow the learning curve to soften the appearance of the options presented until, ironically, it becomes apparent that the game's biggest fault may actually be that it's a mite too simple.

Peace Maker is an entirely turn based game, and the structure quickly comes down to looking at a variety of statistics representing your approval rating with your populace, other political movements, world groups et al, taking some kind of action (police, construction, making speeches etc...), seeing how this action has affected your statistics, and then making new actions based

on these outcomes. Occasionally random events will prop up to further influence your means of achieving your goal. This results in an entirely customizable speed of play, but at the same time the total lack of truly forced deadlines prevents proceedings from becoming truly involving.

Eventually, Peace Maker drowns itself in repetition. Actions inevitably bring about the same comments after a while, and the more random events also begin looping. To it's credit, though, Peace Maker does exercise enough control over the gameplay to present a sense of evolution and genuine narrative progress, even if many of the options presented remain arbitrary in description. Flawed but promising, Peace Maker could easily pave the way for some truly amazing games if the team at Impact Games can mould their ideals around some more emergent gameplay — a truly dynamic crisis situation that would be both more compulsive and more thought-provoking at the same time. <<

category: **Strategy**
players: **1**
developer: **Impact Games**
publisher: **Impact Games**
price: **US\$19.95** / rating: **N/A**
available: **Now**

[below] Caption: Not Applicable



Ideologically agreeable and surprisingly accessible

Options and progress could be more detailed

HYPER VERDICT

An admirable premise that could be incredible if properly refined upon.

VISUALS

N/A

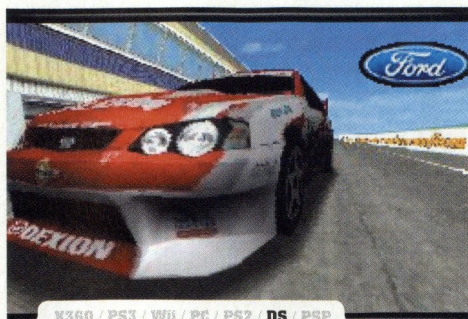
SOUND

N/A

GAMEPLAY

70

70



V8 Supercars 3: Create and Race

We definitely like the fact that, unlike some other DS racing games, V8 Supercars 3: create & Race doesn't feature any steering options utilizing the touch screen, instead opting to go with the tried and true (not to mention functional and user-friendly) d-pad. Gameplay wise, Create & Race will be familiar to anyone who has played any of the previous V8 games, as the driving engine feels very similar, if a little simplified. Damage modeling has been done away with in the hand-held game, so instead of visual cues, the bottom screen tell you the status of damage. Detail on the tracks is a bit sparse but the cars are nicely detailed and the game runs at a solid 60 frames as a result. By far the most impressive feature in Create & Race is the ability to create tracks with a nice, intuitive track editor and share them with friends, vastly adding to the 32 tracks that come bundled with the game. Ultimately though, V8 Supercars 3: Create & Race has neither the immediate playability and fun of the more arcade oriented racers such as the Mario Kart series, not the true depth of a racing sim like V8 Supercars on console, leaving the track editor as the only real selling point for the game and even that feature will only really appeal to those interested enough to want to build V8 Supercar tracks.

RICO SUAVEZ

category: **Racing**
players: **1-4**
developer: **Codemasters**
publisher: **Atari**
price: **\$69.95**
rating: **G**
available: **October 5**



Tales of the World: Radiant Mythology

Namco's "Tales of..." series have been an often overlooked gem amongst the Japanese RPG rubble since Tales of Phantasia first released in the SNES era. There have been ten direct sequels since then, although local releases have been few and far between.

The majority of Radiant Mythology will definitely be lost on most local gamers, since it is a kind of "best of" for the Tales series. Characters from the other Tales games reappear, much of the dialogue is referential and the humour is mostly in-jokes drawn from other games in the series.

You may be getting the impression that Radiant Mythology isn't the best place to start if you're a Tales noob, and you'd be right, but that doesn't stop it being a fairly decent portable RPG.

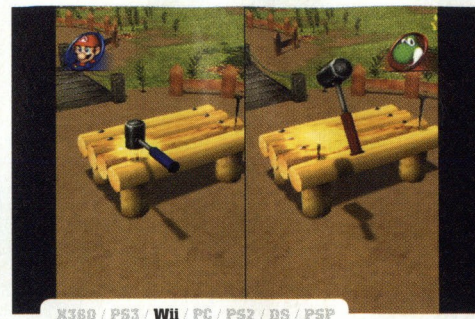
After rolling your own hero you embark on the usual world-saving quest. The game takes a sort of MMORPG structure, although obviously, there will be no online multiplayer here. Instead, you simply get quests from your guild and other NPCs around the world. Much like most MMO's the quests are typically pretty uninspired, and generally involve either killing something or collecting something... or both.

You'll spend a lot of time battling incidental monsters and/or rodents for the seemingly endless supply of kill quests you're tasked with. The battle mode is sort of a hark back to Tales of Phantasia, in that you can only dodge and attack on a straight-line, despite having some rather colourful and charming 3D graphics.

The quests may occasionally get a little dullish, and you may need some "Tales of..." experience to get the most out of it, but overall Radiant Mythology ain't that bad at all.

FRANK DRY

category: **RPG**
players: **1**
developer: **Namco**
publisher: **Bandai**
price: **\$69.95**
rating: **TBA**
available: **August**



Mario Party 8

What is left to say about the Mario Party series that hasn't been said at least seven times before? It's a series that, while dire to play in single player, is a riot in multiplayer, with hundreds of short but sweet mini-games combined with a simple board-game design.

Unfortunately, the fun little mini-games were the last thing on our minds when we booted up Mario Party 8. Instead we were confronted with the sad realisation that developer Hudson Soft really hadn't put any effort into the game's presentation.

The game looks like a Gamecube title, and not a particularly attractive one at that, but that is something we can overlook given the Wii's relative lack of visual muscle. The thing that really burns us is that Hudson haven't even bothered to give the game a 16:9 aspect ratio — and it doesn't even stretch the image to fit our widescreen TV. Instead, Mario Party 8 runs in a small 4:3 letterboxed square in the middle of the screen. As a result, it looks rubbish.

Apart from its poor presentation, however, Mario Party 8 isn't a bad little party game. In a similar style to WarioWare Smooth Moves, the mini-games use every trick the Wiimote has, from balancing, to shooting, steering, whipping, throwing and more.

Also included are a variety of mini-games (like bowling, racing and puzzle games) that you can play as your Miis instead of the Mario characters — so our Hitler and Stalin Miis can finally get some gameplay!

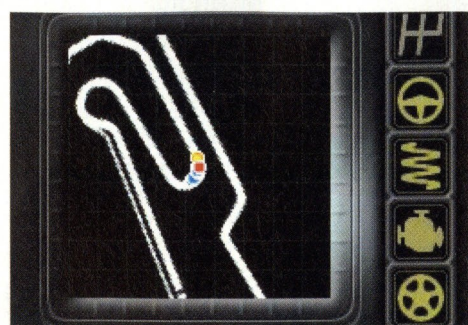
Once again, the game is deathly boring if you've got no friends, but invite some pals around and you'll be laughing. Just don't try and run it on a decent television.

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE

category: **Party**
players: **1-4**
developer: **Hudson Soft**
publisher: **Nintendo**
price: **\$99.95**
rating: **G**
available: **Now**

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
76	79	78	75



HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
77	65	73	73



HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
50	50	79	65

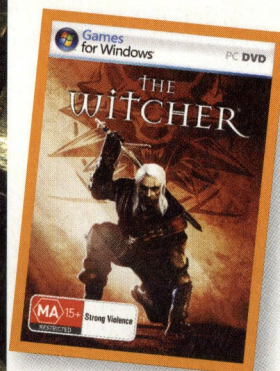




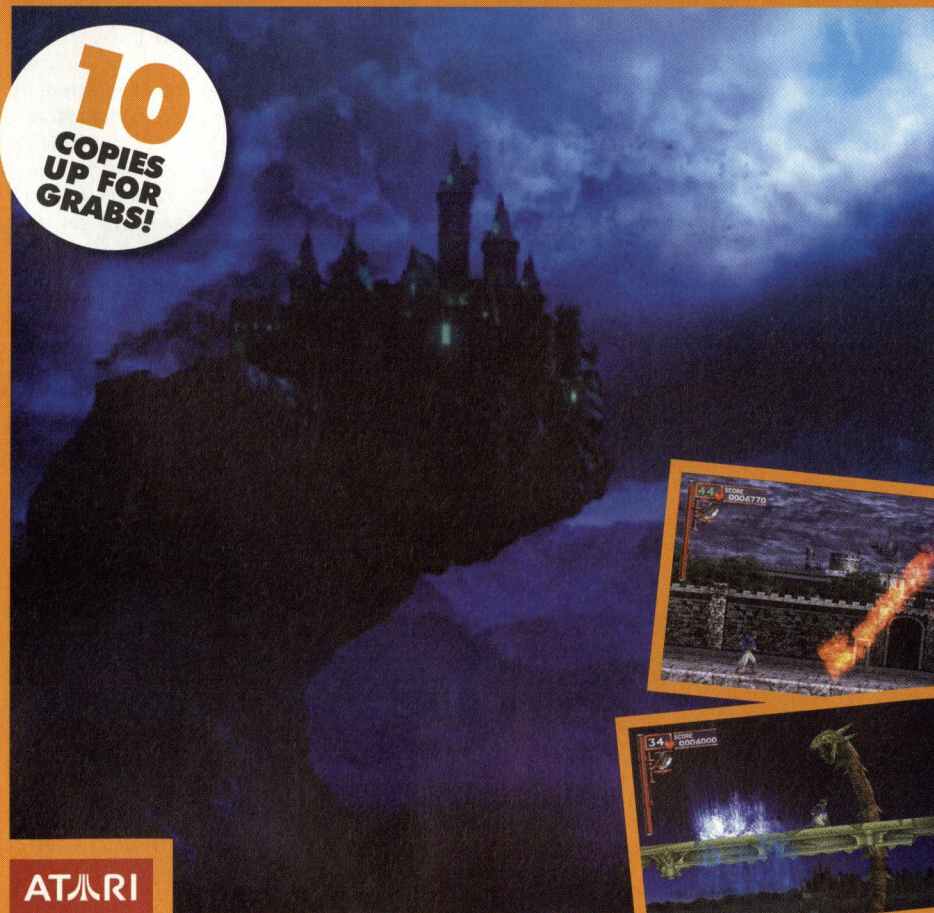
ATARI

WIN THE WITCHER FOR PC!

»» Some big things have come out of Poland in the past, things like Zurek, a fantastic "sour" soup made from leftover ingredients simmered in a vegetable stock flavoured with fermented rye flour to give a slightly sour taste (it's far better than it sounds), brilliant (if often depressing) director Krzysztof Kieslowski and the popeingest of recent Popes, PJP II Himself, Pope John Paul the Second but these all pale in comparison The Witcher, an epic RPG based on the most popular fantasy novels in Poland. Those kind people over at Atari have been good enough to give us ten copies of this highly anticipated free-roaming RPG to give away. All you need to do for a chance to win a copy of this awesome game is **name 5 awesome things that have come out of Poland.**



Send your answers, with your name and address to: **Mmm Zurek, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to hypercomps@next.com.au with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.



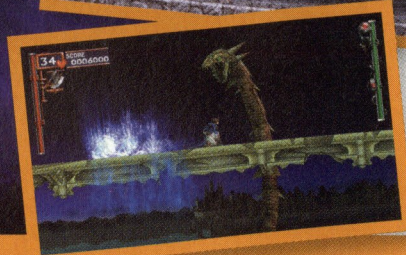
ATARI

WIN CASTLEVANIA: DRACULA X CHRONICLES FOR PSP!

»» Castlevania — the very name conjures up images of castles and...umm...vanias, and the subtitle Dracula X Chronicles makes us think about Jason X and how the entire idea of a cyborg Jason Voorhees (a name which Microsoft word seems to accept without a fuss, whereas Wilks and Branscombe are obviously spelling errors) is much cooler than actually seeing him on screen, although that scene where he kills the holodeck teens is comedy gold. Anyway, disappointments with film franchises that should have died out years ago aside, Castlevania: Dracula X Chronicles is shaping up to be totally rad and you have a

chance to win a copy courtesy of Atari. All you need to do for a chance to win one of 10 copies of the game is answer the following question in 50 words or less: **Which horror icon would you turn into a cyborg and why?**

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



WIN 24 SEASON 6 AND SOME AWESOME 24 STUFF!

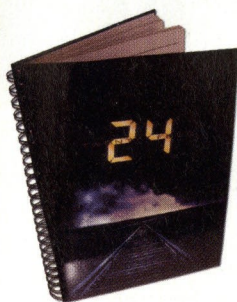
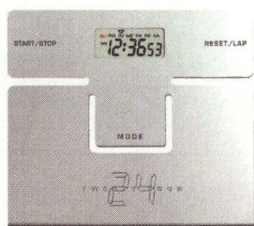
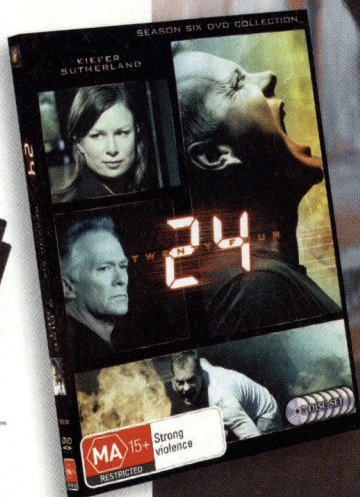
» Jack Bauer is the hardest man on TV. It's in undisputable fact. Over the course of the first five seasons he's been shot, stabbed, poisoned, shot some more, brutally tortured, killed, revived, killed again, hooked on horse, shot a little bit more, hit by a car on a few occasions, watched most of his loved one get murdered, murdered a lot of loved ones in return and cut the head off a known paedophile with a hacksaw. He's also been burnt by acid, electrocuted, beaten, clubbed, thrown out of nearly every moving vehicle there is, glassed, burnt, defenestrated and fallen in love. All in the space of five days. There's nothing harder than that.

To celebrate the release of 24 Season 6, Fox have been kind enough to give us 5 prize packs to give away, consisting of a copy of the Season 6 Boxed Set, a 24 Coffee Table Book, a 24 Notebook and 24 Clock.

All you need to do for a chance to win one of these awesome prize packs is answer the following question in 50 words or less: **What has been the longest day in your life?**

Send your answer, with your name and address to: **86400, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to hypercomps@next.com.au with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.

5
PRIZE PACKS
UP FOR
GRABS!



Terms & Conditions: 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am September 4, 2007 and entries close at 6pm September 12, 2007. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am October 10, 2007 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the October issue of Hyper on sale November 7, 2007. 9) 10 Winners will receive a copy of The Witcher on PC (RRP: \$89.95). Total competition value \$899.50. 10 winners will each receive one copy of Castlemania: Dracula X Chronicles on PSP (RRP: \$79.95). Total value of the competition is \$799.50. 5 winners will receive a 24 Season 6 Prize Pack (RRP: \$200). Total value of the competition is: \$1000.00. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

Devilman

MADMAN, MA 15+

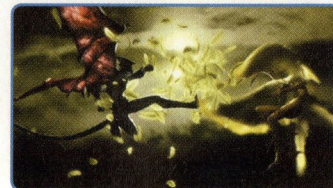
Go Nagai is a bit of a genius when it comes to anime and manga, writing clever, yet simple stories full of good natured T&A, gore, slapstick and even a little political commentary. The original Devilman anime series, starting in 1972 was a cheerfully gory horror/action title about a boy named Akira possessed by a demon yet still in control of his faculties, making him able to transform into Devilman, a superhumanly powerful demon/superhero, capable of battling the demons trying to take over the Earth. It wasn't subtle but it was

Demonic possession: May cause skin irritation.

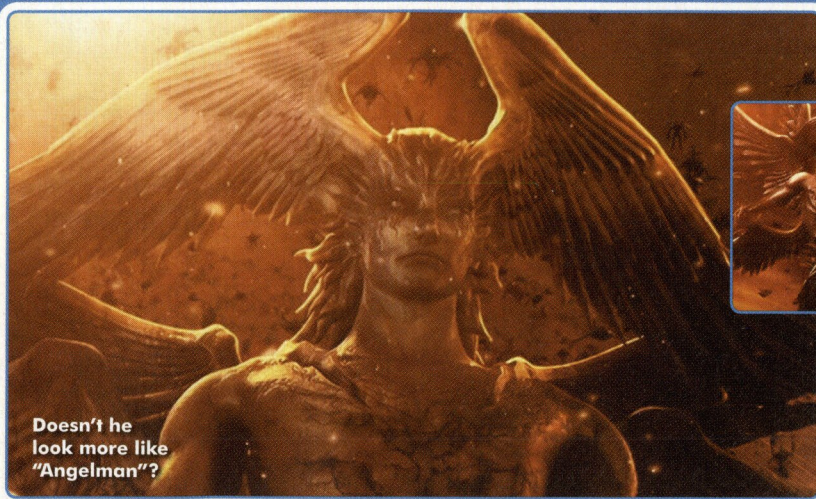


fun. Devilman, the 2004 live action film is not, proving once again that it seems all but impossible to construct a great film based on an anime series. It's a vaguely unpleasant, incoherent bore, more concerned with scenes of Akira whining about life than it is kicking

demon arse. The basic plot sees Akira and his psychotic best friend Ryo (played by twin brothers Hisato and Yusuke Izaki of the Japanese boy-band Flame) are possessed when demons discovered by Ryo's father, an archaeologist



working in Antarctica, escape. Instead of transforming into a full demon, Akira instead becomes the Devilman, but instead of fighting other demons he just whines about stuff for 90 minutes. Instead of actually presenting the overarching plot of a global war breaking out because of the demon infestation and secret police rounding up anyone accused of being a demon, the majority of exposition is



Doesn't he look more like "Angelman"?



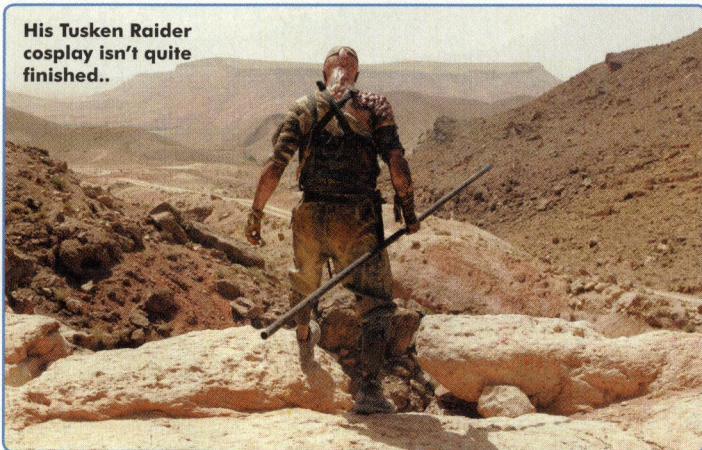
delivered through a defacto Greek Chorus, a news reader played, improbably by ex-NFL star and Japanese cultural icon, Bob Sapp. Although apparently

Devilman benefited from one of the highest budgets ever in Japan it's hard to see where the money went; the cast of pop-culture icons, models and boy-band members is terrible and the special effects, of which there are few — there are only maybe a half dozen brief fights in the film — are only occasionally anything better than laughable.

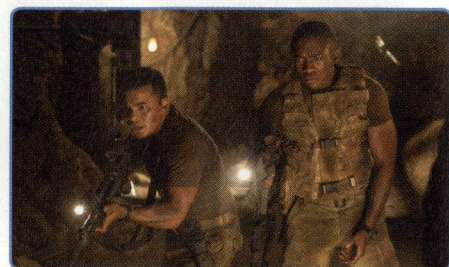
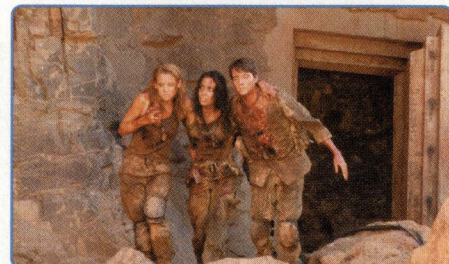
FILM: 5 / FEATURES: 3



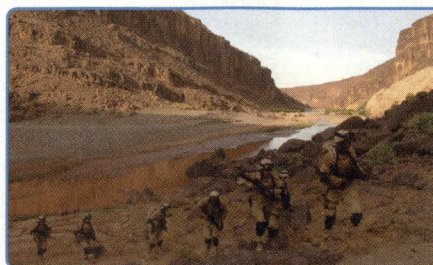
His Tusken Raider cosplay isn't quite finished..



of The Hills Have Eyes and instead plays like a fairly mundane stalk and slash film, albeit one with some quite good gore and some nice cinematography. The new mutant family, instead of being a near mythical force of nature named after gods (as in the Craven original and Aja remake), is simply a bunch of inbred morons with terrible (as in poorly constructed) deformities and names that make them sound like sideshow oddities rather than terrifying killers. Admittedly the gore effects are quite



Pod Racing had to be called off due to water on the track



well done but the near total lack of anything resembling suspense fails to tie the action together in any satisfying way. Although The Hills Have Eyes 2 (the original sequel) is widely considered a blight on Wes Craven's resume, at least it had the distinction of containing an incredibly strange dog flashback — this sequel has no such calling card.

FILM: 4 / FEATURES: TBA

The Hills Have Eyes 2

FOX, R 18+

The original Hills Have Eyes (and even the remake for that matter) had a certain sense of grandeur to them; the dry, barren desert, the harsh lighting, the perverse reminiscence of a "better" time gone by and even the names of the murderous mutants gave the grim proceedings a rather epic feel. The Hills Have Eyes 2, on the other hand feels like a sequel. A sequel made to cash in on the success of the remake, whilst

not actually being a remake of the 1985 sequel to the original film. While the setup is good; a group of screw-up recruits training to go to Iraq flub an exercise and are punished by making them deliver a truckload of equipment to a research base established at the sight of the massacre in the first film, the sequel lacks any of the cleverness or subtlety

28 Weeks Later

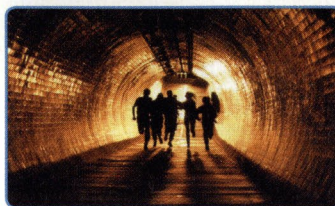
FOX, MA 15+

28 Weeks Later continues this month's run of disappointing sequels. Though not as thoroughly disappointing as *The Hills Have Eyes 2*, *28 Weeks Later* fails to live up to the high benchmark set by the original film due to a combination of unlikable characters, inappropriate gags and the telegraphing of most plot points. The story starts on a powerful note full of potential; 28 weeks after the Rage Virus decimates England, the last of

the Rage zombies has died of starvation and the surviving populace is slowly being moved back in to a quarantine zone on the Isle of Dogs, surrounded at all times by a cordon of armed and vigilant American troops. Enter Don, a recently widowed father (after having left his wife to die at the hands of Rage victims), eager to be reunited with his children, luckily spared from the carnage as they were on a field trip in Spain during the first outbreak. Unfortunately what could be a fantastic story of survivor guilt



28 Years Later is no doubt already being planned.



The zombies are obviously carrying orange flashlights!

and family secrets very soon turns into a fairly routine zombie movie. The Rage Virus comes back (in an event telegraphed from near the beginning of the movie) and everything devolves into a few well-executed gore scenes (though the helicopter gag towards the end

of the film is far more reminiscent of *Dawn of the Dead* than *28 Days Later*), a lot of running, screaming and bad decisions. Although director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo does a good job emulating the look and pacing of Danny Boyle's original film he lacks the subtlety of his predecessor. Case in point — Fresnadillo tries to comment on American foreign policy with the American troops stationed on the Isle of Dogs but the cardboard cutout characters and general ham-fisted approach mutes any impact their nationality might have.

FILM: 6 / FEATURES: TBA

No Mercy for the Rude

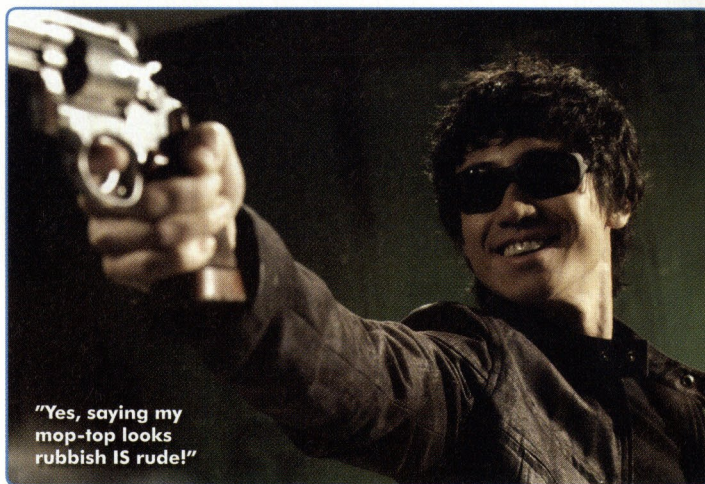
MADMAN, MA 15+

The appropriately named Killa is a hitman, specialising in knife-work and dedicated to wiping out only the rude people in society to earn enough money to afford an operation to correct his shortened tongue that leaves him with a speech impediment that renders him too ashamed to speak. Did you get all that? *No Mercy for the Rude* is almost the very definition of what is now being classified a "Post-Tarantino" film; as such it's full of gory violence, quirky characters, bizarre situations, pop-culture references and oodles of dark humour, often punctuated with a little more violence. Although it could

"I can't do PE. today sir, I've got a note..."



easily devolve into a freakshow about a mute hitman, *No Mercy* instead treads a path more akin to a character study; through his actions, murders, motives, voice-overs and relationships with a Bargirl (once again appropriately named She) and a young boy, viewers are able to warm to this otherwise rather unapproachable character. Although stylistically similar to Park Chan Wook's masterpiece, *Oldboy*, in terms of quirky characters, narration, shot composition and pacing, if



"Yes, saying my mop-top looks rubbish IS rude!"



anything, writer/director Park Chul Hee's first film is even more cynical and nihilistic than Park Chan Wook's *Vengeance* trilogy.

Dark though it may be, Chul Hee mines the subject matter and quirky characters for some great comedy and keeps the pacing nice and fast throughout, making for a highly enjoyable and Western audience friendly two or so hours.

FILM: 9 / FEATURES: 8

The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya

PRODUCTION: KYOTO ANIMATION
GENRE: COMEDY, SCI-FI

Amazing, intriguing, hilarious and sexy are just a few of the superlatives that I could use to describe The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya — since it is positively one of the most enjoyable anime series I've laid eyes on for quite some time.

A strange blend of comedy, romance, science-fiction and unashamed fan service as well as a sizable portion of random weirdness, this series focuses on the life of Kyon, a high school student who finds himself inexplicably

Funnily enough, this happens a lot in this anime



drawn to Haruhi Suzumiya, a beautiful but eccentric girl, who has a history of peculiar and occasionally illegal activities.

Despite the anime's title, there is nothing melancholic about Haruhi Suzumiya. Instead she is an irrepressible nutcase, who is obsessed with aliens, time-travellers and espers (people with telepathic powers) and who is determined to set up a club to track down and hang out with said supernatural entities (yes, she just wants to hang out with them).

Along with Kyon, Haruhi recruits Yuki Nagato, a quiet bookworm, and Mikuru Asahina, who Haruhi forcibly recruits into here club because she has large breasts, and as everyone knows, every club needs to have one member who has sex appeal.

Together they form the S.O.S. Brigade,

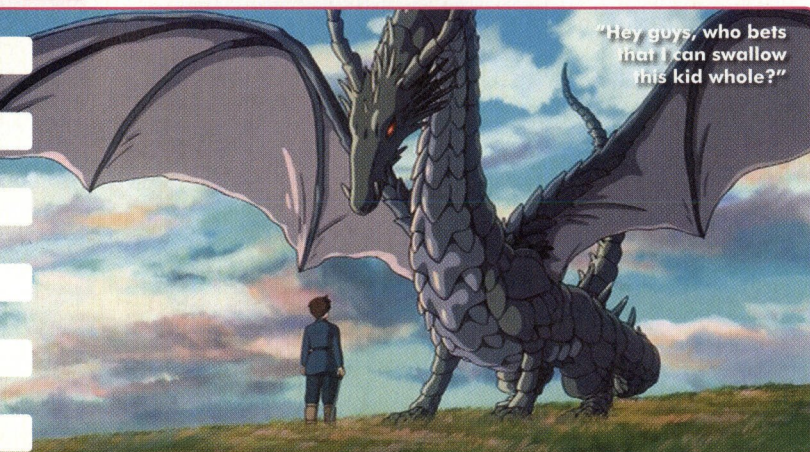
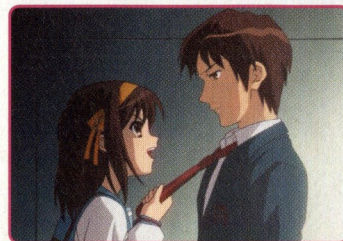
otherwise known as the "Spreading Excitement All Over the World with Haruki Suzumiya Brigade" — and they proceed to have a seemingly endless succession of zany adventures, all the while slowly unveiling even more bizarre secrets about each of the characters.

The animation is gorgeous, the story compelling, the gags laugh-out-loud funny and each of the characters are endearing in their own way... particularly Mikuru...

If you dig anime, The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya should be considered essential viewing. Get it.

ANIMATION: 8 / **STORY:** 9
EXTRAS: 5 / **OVERALL:** 9

Nothing about this picture says "melancholy"



"Hey guys, who bets that I can swallow this kid whole?"

Tales From Earthsea

PRODUCTION: STUDIO GHIBLI
GENRE: FANTASY

Based very loosely on the works of fantasy author Usula Le Guin, Tales From Earthsea is an directed by Goro Miyazaki, the son of Hayao Miyazaki, the co-founder of Studio Ghibli and famed director of award-winning films like Spirited Away. This was Goro's first feature film, and in that respect is quite a good effort from a first-time director.

The film follows the adventures of Arren, a young prince with a

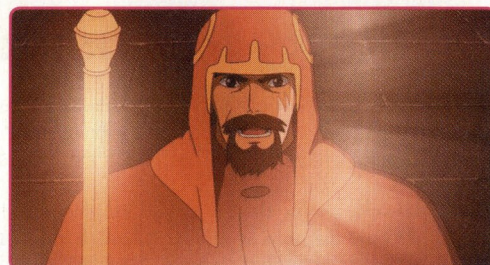
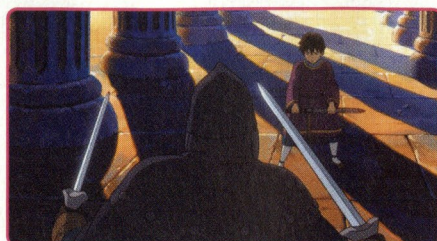
dark side, and Shadowhawk, Earthsea's most powerful wizard. The film begins with Arren murdering his father, and escaping, only to be rescued by Shadowhawk, who sees the good in him. Together embark on an aimless wandering quest, until they meet a girl, Therru, who has hidden powers. They then journey to a far off castle to engage in a final battle with an

evil wizard from Shadowhawk's past.

Coming from Studio Ghibli, the animation is predicably brilliant, and it is a pleasure to watch. The scenes of dragons fighting in the sky, the magic effects and a particularly impressive final battle sequence all make Tales of Earthsea worth watching. The English dubbing too has been done really well, with the voices of Timothy Dalton, Willem Dafoe and Cheech Marin in key roles, however, the plotting and pacing of the story is, for the most part, one of Studio Ghibli's dullest works to date.

It seems much less an epic

"I'll trade you these two swords for that one."



adventure and far more a collection of unconnected and coincidental events with very little overarching story to prop them up. This leads to Tales of Earthsea's story feeling incomplete, and leaves all but the most spectacular fight scenes falling flat.

Goro Miyazaki has done well on his first attempt, but he has a way to go before he can match his father's films.

ANIMATION: 9 / **STORY:** 6
EXTRAS: TBA / **OVERALL:** 7

Tsubasa Chronicles VOLUME 1

PRODUCTION: BEE TRAIN/CLAMP
GENRE: FANTASY

Part romance, part fantasy, Tsubasa Chronicles tells the story of a young archaeologist, Syaoran and his best friend Sakura, the princess of a land called Clow. When some ruins being excavated mysteriously activate, disaster ensues and Sakura is nearly killed, her memories scattered across multiple alternate realms. In order to save Sakura's life, Syaoran seeks out the dimensional witch Yuuko and, with a band of adventurers, Fey, a laid-back yet

very knowledgeable mage and Kurogane, a brash, hot headed and rather rude warrior, both either seeking some prize or escaping a past, travel across numerous alternate dimensions to gather all of the scattered pieces of Sakura's memories. Of course every journey has a price, and as such to save the life of his best friend (and love), Syaoran must sacrifice Sakura's memories of him and her feelings for him. It's all very touching and sounds remarkably mushy but, in fact, Tsubasa Chronicles is one

Upskirt opportunity!



Whatever's going on here – it requires headgear

of the most enjoyable fantasy series we've seen in a while, playing something like a straight-laced Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi as our heroes hop from one dimension to the next often encountering familiar characters in a totally new context. Character design is kept simple but the animation is mostly excellent, though occasionally the detail falters a little in action scenes. Individual character designs are full of character, a fact thankfully backed up with a more than competent English voice cast.

Although based around a romantic ideal, don't feel as though Tsubasa Chronicles is anything other than a basic, enjoyable and fairly action packed fantasy series.

ANIMATION: 8 / **STORY:** 7
EXTRAS: 7 / **OVERALL:** 8



Courage The Cowardly Dog SEASON 1

PRODUCTION: CARTOON NETWORK
GENRE: COMEDY

Despite trying for all it's worth to look like a John Kricfalusi animation, or any other similarly-styled Nickelodeon shows like Angry Beavers or Rocko's Modern Life, Courage The Cowardly Dog just isn't.

Following the misadventures of a dog named Courage, we discover within the first thirty seconds that despite his name, this mutt is scared of practically anything that moves,

whether it's actually frightening or not – and from that point on there's almost no reason to watch anymore.

Practically every joke is a spin on Courage getting the fleas scared off of him by a succession of things that aren't particularly menacing. When the novelty of that wears off, he starts to get frightened by things that actually are scary, like dog-eating spiders, dog-eating foxes and other dog-eating

Come to think of it, even we'd be scared by this guy...

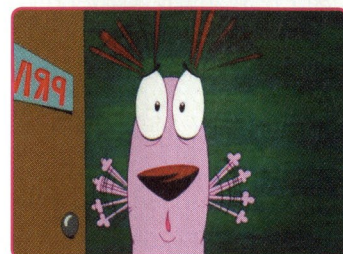
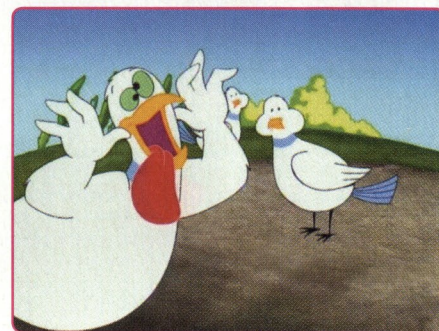
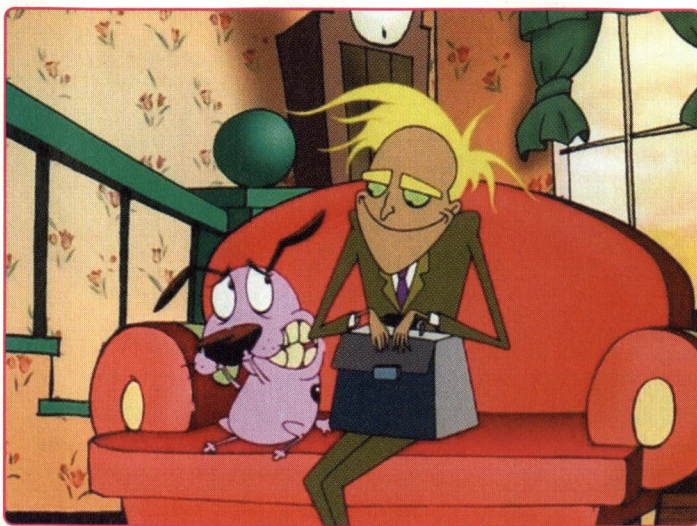
monsters, dog-eating demons, dog-eating aliens and other natural (or unnatural) dog-eating disasters.

Although there are a few genuinely funny and just plain weird moments, the formula wears thin quickly, and when it does, Courage the Cowardly Dog just isn't any fun anymore.

This isn't to say that I think that the series' creator and director, John R. Dilworth, is a hack – because he isn't. I have thoroughly enjoyed his other short animations, particularly The Dirty Birdy, which I have very fond memories of seeing played on SBS countless times throughout the mid-to-late nineties.

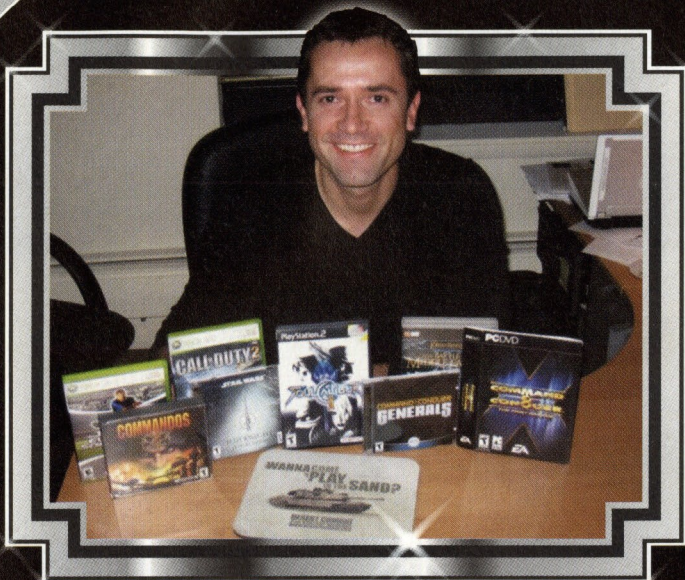
Dilworth is a capable artist, and an equally talented humorist, but Courage The Cowardly Dog isn't his best work. Ultimately, Courage is the kind of programme a child will enjoy, but unlike numerous other Cartoon Network shows, adults won't find it nearly as entertaining.

ANIMATION: 5 / **STORY:** 5
EXTRAS: TBA / **OVERALL:** 5



COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON



Franklin D. Roosevelt, upon considering the carnage and suffering wrought by human conflict famously opined "I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded... I have seen the dead in the mud... I hate war."

Kaos Studios will be hoping that very few gamers base their purchases on the ramblings of deceased US presidents as they prepare 'Frontlines: Fuel of War', one of the most anticipated titles of 2007. Design Director David Votypka kindly agreed to be the subject of this month's 'Collections'.

We ask Votypka to tell us about some of the titles in his collection that have informed his work on 'Frontlines: Fuel

of War'. "Commandos inspired me with its non-linear approach to level design in a war game. You have a small group of men with a set of specialised tools and abilities, and it's up to you on how you want to infiltrate the enemy camp and complete your mission."

A sense of immersion is critical to Votypka. He is impressed by the 'hellish' ambience presented in the 'Call of Duty' series while titles such as 'Halo' and 'Half-Life' drive him to create deep and compelling scenarios. The futuristic weapons of 'Command and Conquer: Generals' also spark his imagination.

Unsurprisingly he also references a series with which he is intimately

familiar. Votypka contributed to the development of 'Battlefield 2' and he credits the series for combining land, sea and air elements in an accessible fashion.

"Making a fast paced, large scale war game is now what we do for a living," he says.

First person wargames definitely hold a special place in Votypka's heart. "The immersion factor is probably the first element that attracts me to first person shooters," he says.

If a column of enemy tanks were advancing upon his home, what game would Votypka stuff into his knapsack before he fled? What is the

most treasured title

in his collection?

Votypka selects the first two titles in the 'Commandos' series. A keen student of WWII history, he believes that these titles offer "an authentic feel of being in the midst of the war against Germany... and for me that is the keystone to game development: creating worlds and experiences that intrigue people enough to make them want to escape to that world, and immerse themselves in it."

Hyper would like to thank David Votypka for participating in this month's column. Join us next month as we delve into the collection of Neversoft's Brian Bright.

Cataloguing the classics

A quick search of Votypka's collection uncovers games ranging from the 8-bit era to the modern age. Here's a small sample.

1. C&C: Red Alert II

This 2000 release from Westwood was actually the fourth PC game in this increasingly convoluted (but undeniably engaging) RTS series.

2. Commandos

This 1998 release from Eidos charged PC strategists with guiding a squad of six soldiers through a series of death defying WWII scenarios.

3. Gears of War

In 2006, Epic Games provided the Xbox 360 with its biggest drawcard yet. Votypka describes it as "supremely polished, satisfying and well balanced."

4. Lords of the Realm II

As a college student, PC enthusiast Votypka was known to pull 'all-nighters' with Sierra's 1997 medieval war-game before stumbling bleary eyed to class.

5. Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle Earth

EA unleashed this one back in 2003. Votypka, a man for whom too much RTS action is barely enough, couldn't resist Tolkien's epic conflicts.

6. Super Mario Bros 3

Nintendo shifted more than 17 million units of this 1990 family favourite, confirming the high demand for platformers featuring grown men dressed as racoons.

7. Solomon's Key

Released in 1987, Temco's fantasy-themed fusion of puzzles and platforms is considered among the most challenging NES titles available.

8. Soul Calibur II

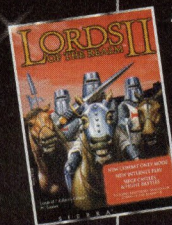
Namco's weapons-based brawler was released to much acclaim in 2003. The PS2 edition favoured by Votypka featured a guest appearance by 'Tekken's' Heihachi.

9. Jedi Knight - Jedi Academy

Raven Software's PC title overcame an awkward moniker and desperately uninteresting box art to impress force fanatics back in 2003.

10. Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007

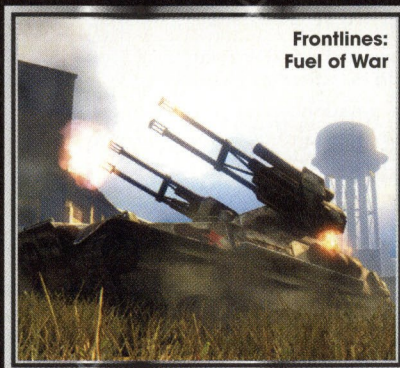
This Xbox 360 version may have been Votypka's first encounter with Konami's revered series, but he was instantly impressed by 'Pro-Evo's' realism and nuance.



Meet David Votypka

Prior to assuming the role of Design Director at Kaos Studios, David Votypka pursued a somewhat different ambition. "About 10 years ago the goal for me was to use virtual reality technology to create the most immersive gaming experiences possible", he says.

Although this project was stymied by hardware limitations, Votypka's interest in gaming remained strong. He contributed to 'Rubies of Eventide' and 'Battlefield 2' before finally settling at Kaos Studios. He is currently working on the company's highly anticipated shooter 'Frontlines: Fuel of War'.



Frontlines:
Fuel of War



TAME YOUR FEROCIOUS HUNGER



The WOW Chronicles

No, no no!



JackTheGrin

Blizzard has just announced a new expansion for World of Warcraft. Wrath of the Lich King. Are you excited? Are you?!

Because I hate you if you are. You don't know how terrible this is. I'm not just talking about

the music on the trailer, either. It sounds like Braveheart torturing Enya to death.

Here I am, barely able to get into a goddamned Karazhan raid, grinding like a crystal meth addicted monkey, trying to get a good flying mount, trying to make a bunch of cash and... and... BANG! GAME OVER, JACK!

It's an existentialist crisis, you see. When Burning Crusade was released, we all danced with glee at the gigantic sums of cash and cool loot. Levelling up a new character, you realised how sad and pointless it was to be in Azeroth. Dungeon and Tier sets where reduced to children's toys, baubles, junk. Levels and abilities seemed fit only for little girls with ribbons in their hair. Anything below 70 was weak sauce, brother. Weak.

Now, everything I do seems futile. New weapons, new armour, I know it will be superseded and made redundant. Hells bells! You can't even use a flying mount in the new expansion until 75! I've been doing those goddamn daily bombing

raids for nothing! Nothing!

God I'm so depressed about this. I need a holiday. I wish LotR online wasn't so wimpy.

Then again though, the Death Knight Hero class could be pretty ace, even if it seems like an emo magnet. Anti-Paladins, baby! Fighting the Lich King will be pretty sweet. And all the monsters in the Northrend campaign were gruesome and looked good. Gotta love them Old Gods and Faceless Ones. Plus being able to customise the character seems pretty damn great as I would pay cash to change the stupid Blood Elf dance. Also, destructible buildings and siege engines for PvP. See, now that's what I'm talking about. PvP needs some spicing up and no damn mistake. It needs drama or it's just 'who can button mash quicker?'

Still...I'm worried. When you kill Arthas, there's only one villain left in the Warcraft Universe to fight and that's the evil Titan whose name I can't spell. Is the end in sight? Will we have to fight bloody Diablo! Kerrigan! What the f&*k, man!?

Curse you Blizzard. Curse your black heart.

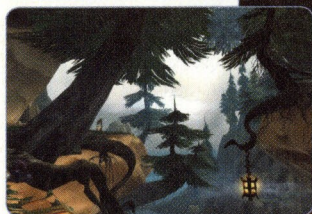
Wait, its going to be months and months before all this happens? Well, in that case, I'll man up and get on with it!

Oh and Jack's been doing nothing special but my Guild nearly has Kara down. Damn, they hated that Rogue boss.

Sketchy
McSketchguy
is emo magnet.



DEATH KNIGHT
©BLIZZARD '07.



[top to bottom]
Westguard Keep,
Howling Fjord,
Nifflevar cliffs

Utgarde Keep:
Lava level?
How original!



Next month – More complaining

HYPER Game Retailer Offers

	STORE NAME	LOCATION	OFFER
	True Gamer www.truegamer.com.au	Online Retailer	Buy Enemy Territory Quake Wars on PC now for the ridiculous price of \$71.12 . Enter coupon code; FREEFORME , at checkout to receive free express shipping on any order valued at \$60.00 or over.
	Games Warehouse www.gameswarehouse.com.au	Online Retailer Ph 02 96485656 and Warehouse pickup Silverwater, NSW.	Pre-order Enemy Territory: Quake Wars with bonus pre-order pack pay \$10 get \$10 off RRP .
	Quikshop www.quikshop.com.au	Online Retailer: Games, Movies, Mobile Phones, Digital Cameras, Video Cameras PH: 1300786151	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONSOLES FOR COST! • Wii MEGA bundle, wii + extra controller + 3 games + FREE shipping only \$579 • Save up to 50% store wide on mobile phones and cameras. • Order 4+ games/dvd's and receive FREE shipping..
	DVD Crave www.dvdcrave.com	Ph: 08 83955088 Email: service@dvdcrave.com Mail: DVD Crave Pty Ltd, PO Box 18, Highbury, SA, 5089	PRE ORDER SPECIALS: XBOX 360 Halo 3 \$79.00 Nintendo Wii Super Paper Mario \$79.00
	Game www.game.com.au	Online retailer, 32 Stores Located in NSW, VIC, ACT, SA and WA. PH: 13GAME	Pay an extra \$10 to secure a limited edition skate board! Total price for skate board and game is only \$109.95. Hurry! There are only 500 available! This offer is exclusive to GAME!



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NEO•GEO: The 100 Meg Shock

Seventeen years since its release, the Neo Geo remains one of the most desirable pieces of videogame hardware available. A mythical console when it was first launched in 1990, time has done little to dampen the Neo Geo's appeal, exorbitant price and hardcore credentials.

Anyone who set foot in an arcade during the 90s would be familiar with the old Neo Geo cabinets. Known as Multi Videogame Systems (MVS), these upright coin-ops revolutionised the arcade industry. Developed by Japan's SNK Corporation, they allowed up to six different games to be housed within a single unit. Traditionally, arcade operators had to replace entire cabinets or rip out internal boards when they wanted to introduce new games. The MVS changed all that, taking inspiration from home consoles, they allowed games to be changed with the switch of a cartridge.

With space in Japanese arcades at a premium, the Neo Geo MVS proved remarkably popular with both arcade operators and the general public (who could flick through multiple games with the press of a button). The pennies started flying thick and fast and SNK made a lot of money very quickly. Flushed with success, the company undertook an engineering miracle; they crammed the Neo Geo MVS into a reworked



home format, the AES (Advanced Entertainment System).

Housed in a sleek black casing, the AES was an arcade system that could fit in the smallest of Japanese apartments. Initially, the idea was to rent the systems out to people. Unfortunately, they proved so popular, people 'forgot' to return them. Within two months SNK was forced to scrap its rental system and set about launching the Neo Geo AES as a proper home console.

I'VE GOT MONEY, MONEY I'VE GOT

Naturally, that kinda bleeding edge technology doesn't come cheap. Back in the early 90s, an AES with two controllers and a copy of either *Magician Lord* or *Nam 1975* would set you back about \$600 (U.S.) — which is about the same as truck full of PS3s in today's money.

While that was almost affordable, the retail price of games all but crippled the system from the outset. Compared to the \$40 (U.S.) consumers were used to paying for their Megadrive and SNES games, the \$200 + price of Neo Geo titles was almost a cruel joke. Yes, you were getting a proper arcade titles for your money, but

only the most reckless, drug addled parents would throw around that sort of money on videogames.

The reason Neo Geo cartridges were so hideously expensive came down to their huge memory requirements. At a time when Megadrive and SNES games were coming in at 4-8 Megs in size, Neo Geo titles were hitting 100 Megs without breaking a sweat. Problem being, memory was expensive. This wasn't really an issue in the arcades where an operator could purchase a new Neo Geo title for \$500 - \$1000 (still significantly less than a standalone cabinet) and stand to make a good profit. But since the home cartridges were identical to their arcade counterparts (aside from the outer casing), the cost of the memory chips inside drove prices to astronomical heights.

While it was never going to enjoy the mass-market appeal of Nintendo's home consoles, the Neo Geo AES slowly went about winning over hardcore fans in Japan. The early to mid 90s was a golden age of fighting games and SNK went head to head with Capcom's *Street Fighter 2* series and Midway's *Mortal Kombat*. A crucial factor in all this was SNK's earlier poaching

By **MIKOLAI**



LANDMARK TITLES

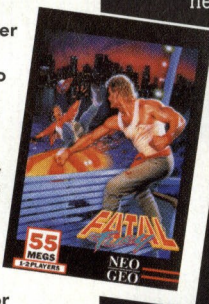
METAL SLUG (1996):

Released late in the system's lifespan, Metal Slug would become one of SNK's most popular franchises. It's not exactly complicated – run right and shoot anything that moves – but 2D graphics have rarely looked better. Depending on which version you pick up, expect to pay anywhere between \$60 and \$3000.



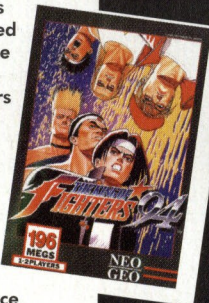
FATAL FURY (1991):

Released the same year as Street Fighter 2, this showed the potential of the Neo Geo. Although it lacked the depth of Capcom's seminal one-on-one fighter, it would develop its own style and fan base over the next ten incarnations. Earlier versions can be picked up for under \$100.



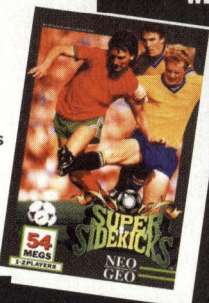
KING OF FIGHTERS (1994):

The King of Fighters series was developed to bring together the different fighting styles and characters from SNK's various brawlers. The original had characters imported from Fatal Fury, Art of Fighting, Ikari Warriors and Psycho Soldiers. Since then it's become one of the companies most popular series and has been ported to various other consoles. Earlier titles can be picked up for under \$100.



SUPER SIDEKICKS (1992):

A perennial arcade favourite, this was probably the most popular soccer title around until EA introduced FIFA. While early versions are quite cheap, a PAL version of Super Sidekicks 4 will set you back a couple of grand.



of Takashi Nishiyama – a Capcom employee who worked on the original Street Fighter game.

Left to his own devices, Takashi set about creating a catalogue of fighting games. World Heroes and Fatal Fury were released the same year as Street Fighter 2 and proved popular arcade titles that showed the systems potential. These were followed by the groundbreaking Samurai Showdown, Art of Fighting, and, eventually, the King of Fighters series. This focus on fighting titles helped establish the system in Japan where dedicated players would practice their moves at home on the AES before showcasing those same moves at the local arcade on the MVS. This synergy between arcade and home titles was fostered by SNK's pioneering use of memory cards. These interchangeable cards allowed players to take game data saved at home on the AES and plug it directly into the Neo Geo MVS at the local arcade.

While this focus on fighting games helped give the system a foothold in the Japanese market, the same success couldn't be replicated in the U.S. or Europe. Without the dedicated arcade market to back it up and justify the purchase, the Neo Geo AES was resigned to a small niche market. This wasn't helped by the reported tensions between SNK's Japanese office and the systems U.S. distributor. From all accounts, the entities barely spoke to each other and the U.S. office often resorted to importing games just to see what was on the release schedule.

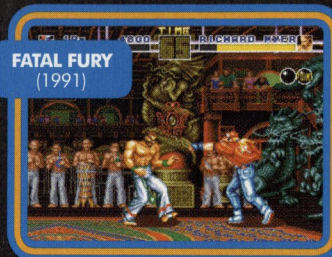
WE HEART LOADING TIMES

Having priced themselves out of the mainstream market with the original system, SNK set about work on CD based home system in the early 90s. As management saw it, the greatest problem with the original AES system was the exorbitant cost of game cartridges. CDs, with their massive storage capacity and cheap production cost, would allow games to be priced more in line with the competition. SNK would then sell a billion units. Huzzah!

The Neo Geo CD system was



METAL SLUG (1996)



FATAL FURY (1991)

introduced in 1994 and revealed its fatal flaw in about 30 seconds – or the time it would take to load a new stage in one of the company's many fighting franchises. Lumbered with a single speed CD drive, the Neo Geo CD had load times that could make your brain bleed. For a generation raised on cartridges and instant loading, 30 seconds seemed like a lifetime.

Despite this obvious problem, SNK set about converting their most popular arcade titles to CD. A number of original titles were also developed for the CD system including a Samurai Showdown RPG. Eventually, the CDZ (featuring a double speed CD Drive) was released in Japan. It did little to help with the loading times. Or sales.

In any case, it was all too little, too late. 3D graphics and the Playstation were looming on the horizon by 1994. While the Neo Geo may have been a graphical powerhouse more than capable of

holding its own when it came to 2D graphics, it was totally incapable of displaying 3D graphics. Or, in the style of writing favoured by games journalists at the time – a shambling mockery of a 3D parody.

Meanwhile, the 2D fighting genre that had helped keep the Neo Geo in the spotlight had fallen out of favour with the mainstream media. Instead, a new generation of 3D titles like Virtua Fighters and Tekken had emerged. The culminating effect of all this was that the Neo Geo went from overpriced and overpowered to obsolete within the space of a few years.

IN YOUR ARCADE, STEALING ALL YOUR PENNIES

While the home system faded into obscurity in the mid 90s, the MVS remained popular in Asia and SNK continued to churn out new titles. Ironically, many of the systems most popular franchises were developed around this time. While the rest of the world fumbled with 3D graphics, SNK delivered 2D masterpieces like King of Fighters (1994) and Metal Slug (1996). The





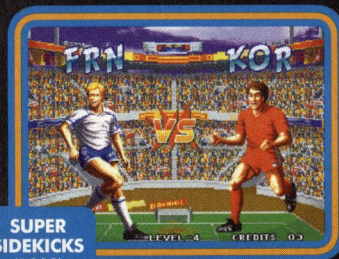
KING OF FIGHTERS
(1994)

hardware may have been obsolete, but few developers knew their way around a 2D playfield like SNK.

Given that their arcade titles and home releases were all but identical, SNK continued to support the AES with small-scale production runs throughout the 90s. While numbers varied, a European AES title might see 1000 copies made available. In Japan, this was considerably higher. Because of this discrepancy, certain PAL releases have become extremely rare and expensive in recent years, i.e. Kizuna Encounter and its wallet busting \$12,000+ price tag.

Although the Neo Geo managed to retain its cult following in the face of 3D graphics and new hardware formats, internally, things were falling apart at SNK. The arcade industry was faltering internationally by the mid 90s and with it, a large portion of the company's profits. The AES, meanwhile, for all its appeal and hardcore fanbase, only sold one million units during its lifespan - a commercial failure, however you look at it.

SNK stopped production of the Neo Geo AES in 1997 and the company filed for bankruptcy in 2000. Directors attributed the collapse to the waning arcade market, piracy of MVS games and failure of the Neo Geo Pocket (handheld) to sell. The 'misguided' attempt to launch a 3D system in 1997 (the Hyper 64) was the final nail in the coffin. Not that it was entirely unexpected. SNK was never known for its



SUPER SIDEKICKS
(1992)

managerial foresight and some of company's marketing blunders would make even Sega blush.

But despite SNK's collapse, the Neo Geo refused to die. In fact, games continued to be released for the MVS and AES even as the millennium ticked over and the rest of the world went out and bought a PS2. By the time the Neo Geo was given its official swansong - Samurai Spirits Zero Special, released in 2004 - the console had been on the market for 14 years. Making it the second longest supported console in history (only eclipsed by the Atari 2600 which saw releases between 1977 and 1992).



GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES
(1999)

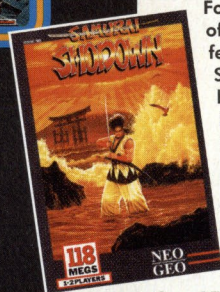
WE'D LIKE TO PERFORM ONE LAST TUNE

But that's not the end of the story. Even today, there's a serious online community for the Neo Geo and homebrew titles continue to see the light of day. Last Resort, a German developed shmup, was given a limited release in 2006. Meanwhile, the collectors market for the Neo Geo AES has also grown significantly in recent years and given the system a new lease on life, albeit, an expensive and slightly intimidating one.

But that's the Neo Geo. Seventeen years since its initial release, it remains one of the most exclusive clubs in videogames. A console that has managed to survive three generations of hardware by steadfastly walking to the beat of its own 24bit drum. Massively powerful, incredibly expensive, there's never likely to be another system like it. <<<

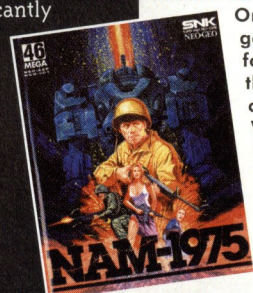
SAMURAI SHODOWN (1993):

Focusing on the use of weapons and set in feudal Japan, Samurai Showdown went on to be one of the system's best sellers. It has since been ported to virtually every console released - everything from Gameboy and Game Gear to PS2. The original Neo Geo AES version shouldn't cost you more than \$60-80.



NAM 1975 (1990):

One of the first games released for the Neo Geo, this was a Cabal clone given a Vietnam theme. For the time, it featured great graphics, sound, and was lots of fun to play.



KIZUNA ENCOUNTER (1996):

Worth including here simply because the European PAL release is one of the rarest videogames around. No more than a few copies have been confirmed to exist and the last time one changed hands it cost someone around \$12,000.



PICKING UP A NEO-GEO TODAY



As long as you've got the money to burn, picking up a Neo Geo isn't particularly difficult. Numerous Ebay stores sell second-hand consoles and depending on the condition you can expect to pay between \$200-\$400 for an AES. Shipping to Australia from Asia will be run you between \$50-\$100. Due to the difference in voltage between countries you will need to buy a step-down converter for the console - these are available from most electronic specialists stores, i.e. Tandy, Dick Smith.

As for the games, many of the older titles for the Neo Geo are available online for bargain prices. Samurai Showdown and early Fatal Fury titles shouldn't be more than \$50. Of course this can rise into the thousands for more obscure titles. A full price list for games can be found online at www.neo-geo.com

~ HYPER'S TOP TEN ~

Story Telling Moments

You know the moments. They may add almost nothing to the core gameplay of a game, and sometimes they're not even interactive, but damn it if they aren't cool. Everything from cutscenes, to music cues to plot twists and more can all go into making a game's storytelling moments brilliant, and here's ten of them that we think are the best we've ever seen.



PREY (*Don't Fear*) *The Reaper*

Human Head Entertainment's Native American-themed FPS, *Prey*, may have been mostly action, but it has one of the most jaw-dropping opening sequences we've seen.

Tommy, the game's protagonist, starts out in a bar trying to convince his girlfriend to leave their reservation and move to the city. Cue the sounds of Blue Öyster Cult's "(Don't Fear) the Reaper", minus the cowbell, playing on the bar's jukebox.

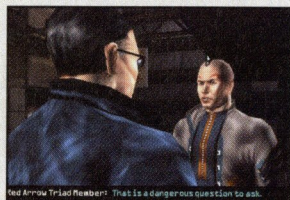
The BÖC rock away while alien saucers tear the roof off the bar, shine in their green tractor beams, and abduct everyone in sight. Very creepy and very cool.



DEUS EX *JC's Choice*

As one of the most brilliant examples of interactive narrative, Warren Spector and Ion Storm's *Deus Ex* has plenty of memorable storytelling moments, but the ending has to be the best.

Giving the player three choices, you could either make the games protagonist, JC Denton, merge with an omnipotent AI being known as Helios, to become the world's benevolent dictator. You could choose to allow the Illuminati, a secret society, to take over the world, or you could choose to destroy all the technology on Earth, plunging the world into a new dark age. Each choice would result in a very different ending, and what's not to like about that?

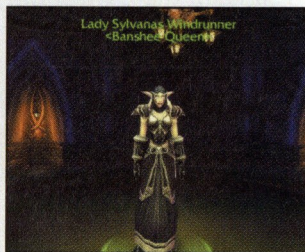


PLANESCAPE: TORMENT *The Revelation*

The Nameless One is an enigma – a heavily scarred and tattooed man who wakes in a mortuary with no memory of his past, aside from the fact that he now has a talking skull as a friend and was most probably dead none too long ago.

Planescape: Torment is one of the greatest CRPGs ever made, boasting brilliant design and a script apparently 800,000 words long. Although packed with brilliant storytelling moments and incredible characters of surprising depth, *Torment* delivers a true storytelling sucker-punch when the truth about The Nameless One's predicament is revealed. Rather than being the unwitting insomniac

we've seen in countless games, The Nameless One voluntarily had his mortality and memory ripped away to spare himself his just punishment for all of the evil deeds he had performed in his previous incarnation. This revelation changes the perspective of all the events leading up to that moment and sets players up for a staggeringly good finale.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT: Burning Crusade *Sylvanas Sings*

Although MMOs are full of story, it's hard to have a truly personal storytelling moment in an MMO due to the communal nature of the genre. If you're lucky enough to create a Blood Elf character, level to 15 and

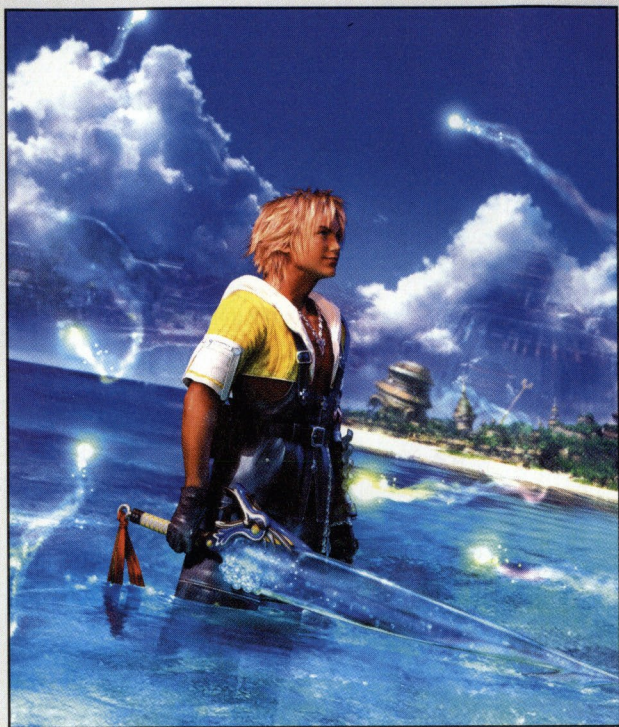
find a dropped item called "The Lady's Necklace" then you have the luck of witnessing a great moment of character in a game that is otherwise quite unchanging. After talking to a few NPCs, the player is told to deliver the necklace to Lady Sylvanas Windrunner in the Undercity. After throwing down the necklace, Sylvanas casts a glamour, calling some Highbourne spirits and with their help sings a rather haunting song called "Lament of the Highbourne", showing that beneath the remorseless exterior remains the heart of a fallen elf.

METAL GEAR SOLID *Psycho Mantis Boss Battle*

The original *Metal Gear Solid* has an almost inexhaustible list of super-cool storytelling moments, but there's one that's more amazing than the rest. When facing Psycho Mantis, a gasmask-wearing, leather-clad villain with psychokinetic powers the player not only has their mind read, but they also get to physically see Mantis's power.

Psycho Mantis checks the contents of any memory cards you may have plugged into your console, and makes assumptions about your personality based on the games you've played and the number of times you've saved your game. Not only that, but he asks you to put your control pad on the floor, and makes it move with the power of his mind...





FINAL FANTASY X *Tidus... He's so dreamy.*

We're sure that some of you would rather see the death of Aeris in Final Fantasy VII as the representative scene from the FF series, but we beg to differ.

In our opinions the coolest segment of narrative in a FF game has to be the revelation that the effeminate Blitzball champ is a whole lot less than he seems.

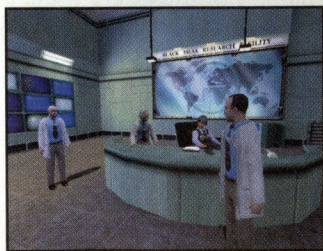
Avoid the next few sentences if you haven't finished the game yet... but finding out that Tidus was the dream of a dead city, and was summoned to life by the restless hallucinations of a million ghosts was somewhat of a shock.

Even more of a shock was finding out that the only way to defeat FFX's big bad, a monster called Sin, was to destroy the dreaming city, killing Tidus in the process... Okay, you can read again now.

HALF-LIFE *Welcome to Black Mesa*

Half-Life is recognised as one of the best narrative first-person shooters in the genre, and not without good reason, since the game almost single-handedly popularised the concept of telling a game's story entirely from the perspective of the protagonist.

The introduction to the game in particular was unlike anything we'd ever seen before. Gordon Freeman's rail-car tour of the top secret Black Mesa scientific facility, which gave you a glimpse of areas that you'd later get to explore at ground level was a masterful touch by Valve Software, and from that moment, we were hooked.

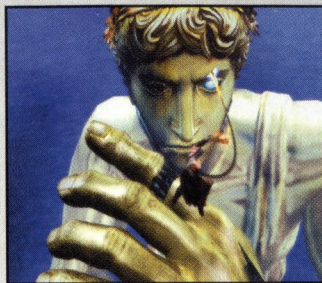


SPOILER-RIFIC STORY MOMENTS

The games featured on this list are old enough that we don't have to worry about spoilers, but there were a whole bunch of newer games that we wanted to include in the list but chose not to, due to their coolest storytelling moments being horribly spoiler-rific.

For example, we really wanted to include Starbreeze Studio's very recent story-driven first-person shooter, *The Darkness*. In a bit we can't describe, involving characters we dare not name, something unutterable happens. Now let us never speak of it again.

GOD OF WAR II *The Colossus of Rhodes*



While we're on the topic of intros, it's doubtful that this next game's introduction will be bested for quite some time.

When the gods tire of Kratos's constant warmongering, Zeus steals much of his powers and then uses that power to bring one of the ancient world's seven wonders to

life, The Colossus of Rhodes. The massive statue towers over the tiny Kratos, who is about the size of one of the Colossuses fingers, and yet, you must lead everyone's favourite Grecian god of war to victory against the monstrous statue.

For an introductory battle, this fight is bigger and better than most games can manage for their final boss, making the Colossus one of the very best game introductions.

GRIM FANDANGO *"My name's Manny Calavera, I'm your new Travel Agent"*

It would be irresponsible of us not to mention at least one of Lucasarts' classic adventure games in an article about storytelling, since they were all about story.

The best of the bunch though was Grim Fandango. The game's intro alone had enough humour and stylish visual flourishes to make it a classic.

Looking like a 1940's film noir, you see the inside of Manny Calavera's Venetian-blinded office. Entering in a grim reaper's outfit, complete with scythe. He breaks the news to a client that they're dead, and that they have to buy a travel package from him to make their way from the land of the dead to the land of eternal rest.

After selling a bottom-of-the-line package to the penniless client, Manny resolves to get hold of richer, saintlier clients in the future, perfectly setting the scene for one of the best adventure games ever made.



HALO 2 *Giving the Covenant back their bomb*

While the actual ending, or lack thereof, of Halo 2 may have left most gamers wanting more, there was one scene that definitely left us completely satisfied.

After the Covenant invade a human battle cruiser, only to leave a massive bomb on and then flee, the Master Chief has the think fast.



Perhaps recalling that one scene from Dr Strangelove, the Chief opens the airlock, pushes the giant bomb out of the hatch and rides the bomb into space, steering towards a Covenant assault carrier.

Just before hitting down and blowing up, the Chief kicks the bomb into its target, destroying the Covenant ship, and then floats off into space.



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SON OF CONSOLE WAR

The letters page lately has been a rather interesting read. Flipping hastily past the sexy phone sex ads to the even sexier TXT section known as the humble 'letter pages' reveals varied and often kooky letters from wily readers both intelligent and savvy. (Savvy means people who save often, right?)

Take for example the letters asking about who will win the current or next gen console war? Will it be Gametrionics Megasytem 3? Perhaps Gizz-Revolution Flavor-Station X will take the cake in the next war. But let's not forget the unlikely contender; Awesome-Sauce's Nofriendo Turbo Deluxe. Sure to be a hit with both amoral super-villain's and casual gamers alike.

Of course, no matter how many times HYPER answers these "who will win the console war" type questions with "we don't know, they're all good, just wait and see monkey boy" some gimp (or friend of said gimp) will inevitably write in again, with the exact same question as last time, perhaps in an effort to further erode their credibility as an intelligent individual and demonstrate that their A.I. isn't up to scratch.

At what point the consoles started their own war is debatable, but surely we will soon see FPS's set in console-war-ridden countries and numerous spin-offs such as "Son of Console War", "U.R.B.A.N. Console WAR" and "Advanced Ghosts of Console War: Tactical SWAT Recon".

Reading further, other letters openly and flagrantly discuss the nature of games, along with the way in which we interact / play with them is changing. Some say



HYPER 167 FEEDBACK

Welcome back to your feedback Hyper readers! Apart from a temporary wang intrusion onto the Hyperactive forums this month, the focus has been squarely on our Games of the Future coverage, as well as a few other topics besides.

Koroshiya_Keefu

Picked the new issue up today. Once again, the best designed issue thus far. I'm loving how the Hyper crew are taking note on critiques and really caring about how the mag looks inside. Mad props to Malcolm Campbell. Also, has there been a new printing process implemented?

Camb3h

Great issue! I was surprised to see the Penny Arcade Feature. I think my body is reacting to when hyper comes now. Whenever I get it in the mail the first thing I need to do is go to the toilet and simply sit there and read it for 30 minutes.

Heres to hyper - Controlling my bowels 100 issues strong!

conan/obrien

Really this was a good issue. I enjoyed the 'Games of the Future' and 'We Want You' features.

The design of this issue is very clean. Malcolm designs are always improving which makes Hyper look modern. Hyper doesn't seem to age like other magazines.

Antwandemarco

Great issue. I was especially pleased reading the Bioshock preview to see Joe McDonagh, the senior designer fellow talk so passionately about concentrating on a single player experience. I was chatting to a mate about it just the other day. Take a recent game like "The Darkness", great

single player but forgettable multi. I don't think I've seen a single person on my friends list play it online. They could have squeezed that extra time and dosh on perhaps extending the single player or tightening up those hellish sections. Don't get me wrong, I still loved it.

Oh yeah, also dug the 25 To Life review. Love a page devoted to a crappy game.

Mr_M

I read the hot seats in full and they were fantastic. Especially the Juiced one, we gave the guy both barrels and he appeared to relish the challenge. Judging by his responses, it sounds like Juiced Games have a lot of belief and confidence in the new direction they've taken the series, and I actually might keep an eye out for that game.

Thraxas

Another great issue. I enjoyed the 'We Want You' article and Beowulf sounds fantastic. Pan's Labyrinth is indeed an awesome movie, although for some reason I had thought it was kid's movie. Needless to say after the scene with the wine bottle I didn't think that anymore!

ireadtabloids

Great issue guys. Just promise you won't make that joke about emo grass again. It is very nasty.

sc0z

I am astounded how little there was at E3. There were some good titles in there, but come on, they're not exactly killer apps. Well, maybe Assassin's Creed, but I'll believe that when I see it. Oh, and both Guitar Hero 3 and Rock Band for december? The peripheral war just got interesting...

Ryan Hayward

I disagree, many of those games looked awesome and made me excited!

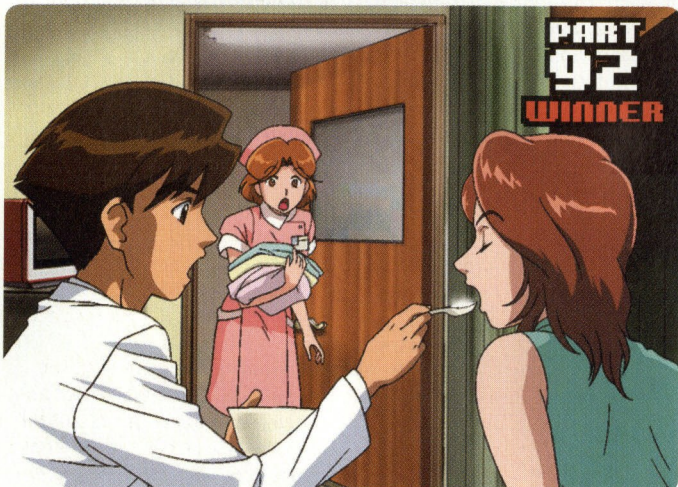
Mass Effect, Little Big Planet, Folklore, World in Conflict, HellGate London, Crysis and hell, even Killzone 2 looks like it may be the shit this time 'round.

NiB

Only one small problem. Can we stop with all the eastern eye movies in the review section. Sure there are a lot of good foreign language/martial arts films out there that don't get the coverage they deserve. But I don't want to read about them over 4 pages every months in my games mag.

CAPTION THIS!

It seems a lot of you had the same idea about this caption... **Jacob Paint's** was one of the few clean enough to print!



Dr Derek got 20yrs for "self dispensing" his so-called wonder drug E-JAC-UL8 to young female patients.

the industry itself is growing up even. (Or perhaps its public image is catching up, reflecting our gaming society more accurately?) Stimulating other readers to 'think' about their hobby, these kinds of letters are powder kegs sure to cause rampant 'thinking' sessions that may take the place of precious 'gaming' time. Or at least make you pause next time before loftily loading up "Granny Basher: UNCUT!" to contemplate how society benefits from such an altruistic and socially acceptable game.

Yes, for those keen on wagging their control sticks in a public arena; there is no place quite like the letter pages of HYPER for tooting their own horn, sharing their opinions, to the amusement of their glossy periodical reading brethren.

In summary, if you're going to write a letter to HYPER - have something to say or at least have the courtesy to be a combination of: (a) extremely bizarre, (b) ramblingly incoherent and (c) make wild unjustified statements. Thus providing letter readers with mild information & entertainment [infotainment] with high chances of laughter.

From the Desk of A. Ninja,
Yours Oddly,
Australian Ninja

Well, while we really believe that the Gizz-Revolution Flavor-Station X, Gametronics Megasytem 3 and Awesome-Sauce's Nofriendo Turbo Deluxe are all amazing pieces of technology, we'd have to go for Gizz-Revolution's effort. It seems to have the most flavour...

As for your letter itself, it seems to have met your own criteria for being a good one, so please accept our letter of the month award!

Incidentally, we really wanted to follow this letter up with another asking us who would win the console war, but strangely enough we didn't receive any this month... odd.

WII DROUGHT, STILL DRY

Hey Guys and girls I've just dropped in a line to say how the Wii drought is starting to get a little long for my liking. While Metroid 3 and Mario Galaxy are getting close I'm still worried about the absence of stellar games. Even to the point where eBay prices are going up and even with cube games there starting to move.

I probably should just finish my current games and stop whinging shouldn't I...

Cheers,

Bulkerking...

P.S. What's the chances of

Castlevania coming out on Wii. That and Cabal on the VC would make me a happy camper.

It's getting a little long for our liking too. Truth be told, there's been very little to get excited about on the Wii since Excite Truck. Super Paper Mario was cool, although that doesn't come out in Australia until at least next month, and then there was Trauma Center: Second Opinion, and that didn't come out here at all!

Metroid Prime 3 and Super Mario Galaxy look to be the two biggest releases for the foreseeable future, but after they've come and gone, we sincerely hope that Nintendo and their third parties put on a better effort.

As for seeing a new Castlevania on Wii, nothing has even been rumoured yet, but if the Wii keeps on selling like crazy Konami are going to find bringing their vampire-slaying series to the Wii an irresistible prospect.

Cabal on the other hand is a longshot. There was a NES port of Cabal, though, so it's certainly still a possibility!

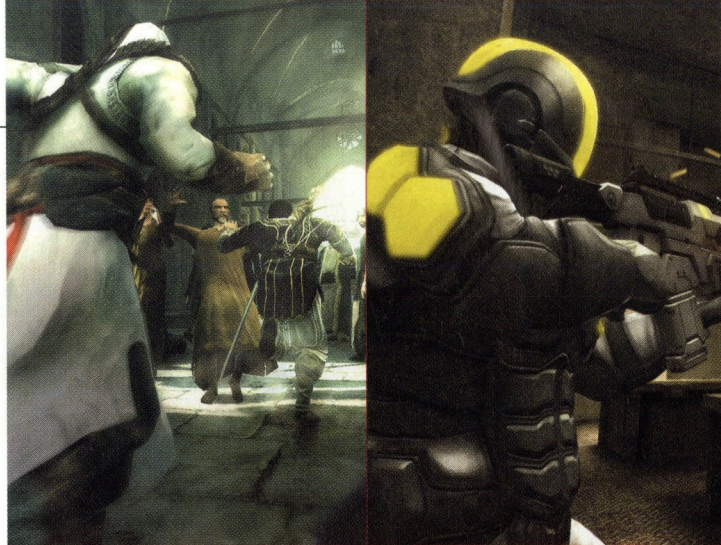
HYPER FORUM

I think it would be great if you guys would bring back the 'Hyper Forum' monthly question into the mag. Each month there used to be a question, people would submit answers and you guys (or Cam and Eliot back then) would pick the best results. I know you have brought in the 'Forum Talk' and 'Hyper Feedback' etc. But the thing that made the original 'Hyperforum' section of the magazine interesting was that people would send in detailed, well thought out responses giving in depth views and opinions. This is very rare to see in the Hyperactive Forums especially when there are many dicks that completely tear apart your opinions just because they don't agree 100%. If you where to bring back the original 'Hyper Forum' question each month people who are not part of Hyperactive can take part in this. Also I don't think any other magazines are doing this, meaning you guys will still be the only ones.

Your biggest, most awesome fan,
Plain Clothesman

It's been quite some time since we last ran the "Hyper Forum" section, but we all have fond memories of it, as do many of our readers.

We don't want to say that the Hyper Forum will never return, but at the moment we're trying something new, that we think is just as interesting - the Hot Seat



hotseat

It's that time of the month again, time for you to ask the hard questions of the developers. This month in the Hot Seat sits the collective arses of Ubisoft Montreal and Free Radical, developers of Assassin's Creed and Haze respectively. So get to writing in your questions - we'll collate the top 10-15 and send them off to the developers. Answers will be printed in a future issue of Hyper.

Questions can be sent to: hotseat@next.com.au

Questions can be posted in the Hot Seat area of the Hyperactive forums
<http://forums.hyperactive.com.au/>

interviews. So far the reaction to our Hot Seat section has been excellent, and from the feedback we're getting from readers, we can tell that they really dig getting the opportunity to ask the people who develop the games their own questions.

Plus, we have also integrated the Hyperactive forums more with the magazine. While there may be a few troublemakers on Hyperactive (as there is with any public forum), there are hundreds of dedicated and intelligent posters in the community who enjoy having their posts quoted in Hyper every month.

So while the Hyper Forum section may not be coming back anytime soon, we feel like we've got something even better.

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

Great piece u wrote with "Let me Entertain You". Seriously you really are on the money with how gamers have grown up.

When I came back from living in Japan for many years I had to go through all my stuff that I had packed away in boxes at my parents place and sorted out what I really needed for my move to the big smoke of Melbourne [I'm from Shepparton, nice country city], mate guess what I stumbled on! All my old Zzap, CVG and Super Play magazines [the same mags u

mentioned in the article], not many but at least a dozen or so. Well I kinda felt embarrassed that I read this kind of stuff as it really was fluff reading! So threw them all out!

Anyway to my point is back then you really didn't pay more than \$6 dollars for a magazine, now u pay around \$8 - \$23 depending if it has a disc mounted on the cover. I think spending that much every month the magazines really need good feature articles, opinion pieces, etcetera.

I really think Hyper and PC Powerplay have got the balance down pat. As for the reviews, I think they are pretty good, informative and worth reading even if you have read other reviews on the internet. Keeping them short is better as it leaves for more surprises when you actually play the game.

But on the flip side I probably spend more time reading the magazine than playing my favourite games. So maybe having some fun and fluffing it up could be the way to go? Just don't drop those retro/flashback articles - man I'm loving them.

I'm sure you guys will point Hyper in the right direction, the magazine industry might not be so good now but I guess you have a core audience, so the key is to keep them as they grow up and hope those mags lying around the

kitchen table will be picked up by our kids and a new generation of readers can carry the torch.

Lets hope those interactive newspapers and 3D Internets are a way off yet?

Cheers,
Cameron.

Interactive newspapers and 3D Internets indeed! Although admittedly, when interactive newspapers become a possibility, there's a good chance that magazines will follow down the same path. Keep an eye out for the interactive smart-paper version of Hyper Magazine sometime in the next century!

Seriously though, while it's true that the print publishing industry at large is experiencing a downturn, it doesn't necessarily mean that gaming magazines like Hyper are an endangered species, since magazines still have a lot to offer

Online news providers may have immediacy as their defining feature, but magazines still have the advantage of time. We've got time to work up the best feature articles and developer interviews possible, not to mention the fact that we're not under any pressure to post our reviews before "Site X", so if we want to take a full month to actually finish a game before we deliver our definitive review - then we can do that. That's why Hyper will always remain relevant, even amid the rising popularity of the Internet.

We think it's working, and it seems that our readers agree, since in the past few months Hyper's readership has actually increased while most other magazines are in decline. That's a pretty good vindication right there.

GHOST IN THE XBOX

Hey guys. No arse kissing, this is my second letter, and it's the second time I'm writing in with Xbox 360-related issues.

I had been given relatively four weeks off work and I knew there was no better way to kill the time given to me then to start a new file on Oblivion. So I loaded up the game ready to modify my Argonian when I was greeted with a slap in the face - the game's music had stopped working! All the other sound effects were fine but the music had stopped playing; after going through the game options I realised the settings hadn't been tweaked so I figured there was something wrong with the game, and to test the theory I loaded Perfect Dark. Sadly its music wouldn't play either. I consulted the trouble-shooting info in the

Winners!

HYPER 166

SCARFACE WII + DVD

"I have a scar on my face after receiving a papercut from a botched attempt at sending a letter to Hyper to enter this competition."

Seb Brown, Norwood, TAS

"I'd have gotten my scar from play fighting with a kitten... but I'd tell everyone it's from fighting off a mugger."

- Rob Scurrah, Ellenbrook, WA

- Alexander Borinoff, Panania, NSW

- Zak Ahchay, Ferny Hills, QLD

- Matthew Lanyon, West Wyalong, NSW

THE DARKNESS

"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles! Maybe Corey Feldman could even reprise his role as Donatello from the 1990 film? Lord knows he could use the work..."

- Nathan Campbell, Richmond, VIC

"I think it would make sense for Starbreeze, hot on the heels of The Darkness, to attempt Top Cow's vastly superior title, Witchblade."

- Andrew Bodsworth, Cheltenham, VIC

- Anthony McKeown, Hilbank, SA

- Tommy Faith, Frenchs Forest, NSW

- Ben Hughes, Monash University, VIC

TRANSFORMERS

"I'd transform into the DeLorean from Back to the Future. That way I could use my flux capacitor to be part of any Transformers generation!"

- Max Gibson, Brisbane, QLD



set up booklet (which in new consoles shipped should probably be extended to a couple hundred pages) and followed the advice to check the system settings. The sound settings had been changed from Digital Stereo to Dolby Digital 5.1, which I knew was the source of the problem so I changed the settings back again and once more

the music worked perfectly. So I turned the console off and stared at it in disgust.

"pause for dramatic effect"

Yes, that's what I did. I didn't go back to playing Oblivion like I'd planned; I stopped using the system altogether. I no longer trusted it. Why? "Ghost in the machine". The system had changed the settings itself. I wouldn't have; I knew that Dolby Digital was incompatible with my set up, and no one else had been in my room the whole day and earlier it had been working fine. It was the only option left.

So I knew it was time - I decided to trade the console in. I hadn't bought the Wii like I had originally planned to do (and at time of writing this I still haven't, but I'll get to that). By this point in time I had amassed a collection of eight games, an additional controller, the official steering wheel controller and a play and charge kit. In total purchases for the 360 I'd spent over a thousand. I thought that this would be worth about \$500 on trade in, particularly when the trade in value for the 360 alone was \$330, so I bundled it altogether and went to my local GAME store - the place where

it all started - hoping to leave with a Wii and Zelda: Twilight Princess, and, if I was lucky, Resident Evil 4.

Instead, I left with what I'd gone in with, upset. I'd felt like they were trying to short-change me. Despite my games purchases being worth about \$300 brand new (I'd bought most on special), and about that second hand at their own prices, they'd offered me only \$60 for all of them. That worked out to less than ten bucks a game!

But that wasn't the real sting. No, the hard part was when I had to swallow the news that a steering wheel controller I had paid \$200 for was worth NOTHING.

"But you're only \$10 short from the Wii". This after offering them everything I had. And none of it was scratched! The sales assistant had even made point of saying so! My 360, 8 games and peripherals wasn't even worth the Wii alone, and yet I knew they would've sold it all for between \$200 and \$400 more than what they gave me.

I ended up striking a deal with my best friend to sell him my games for \$240 (and he refused two of the games). When I take this with the 360 to trade in on its own I'll finally be able to afford what I went there for, games included.

But over the last couple of weeks I've noticed ads in EB brochures and the like saying "Do you know we still accept these as trade ins?"

- then listing things like original Playstation, and Gameboy Advance. My main question is why the hell is something one or two generations old still accepted as a trade in but an official peripheral for a current system is not? Are they honestly going to say that with both the Playstation 2 and 3 on the shelves that customers are going to run out to buy an original Playstation? That people would be more inclined to buy a GBA when the DS

has been out now for a couple of years? Call me stupid but that sounds ridiculous.

But maybe it speaks for the 360. I mean, to use an obvious example, take a look at Guitar Hero 2. It's been out for a while now on the 360 and the gripes with its controller are well publicised. I know you guys have mentioned it a couple of times (eg. issue 164). So what does Activision do? They invest money into a new wireless controller - for the PS2 version!! What?? That had a perfectly fine working controller! And the 360's supposed to be a wireless system! Is it just me or does that say something?

Until next time,
Fluffy Bunny.

Hi Fluffy, we had to edit your letter down a bit (man, that was one long letter), but we think you make a couple of good points, so here goes.

We haven't heard many reports of haunted Xbox 360s, so we're a bit puzzled as to how your console could have decided one its own that it wanted to output sound at an inaudible setting. Had you recently updated your console's dashboard? Because that's the only thing we can think of that could produce such an occurrence - and even that would be a long shot.

Then again, maybe it really is haunted... you'd best have it exorcised just in case.

As for trading in your old consoles and games for new ones, we do remember a time when the larger videogame chain stores offered some genuinely good deals for your traded games, but from the sounds of it, those times are well and truly gone. Having said that though, if there weren't people out there willing to pay those prices or cop those low trade-in values, then we doubt they'd stay that way for long.

SYNTHESIZED REALITY

It continuously amazes me how things can go from bad to worse so very quickly and how badly promises are forgotten with the announcement by Sony that they intend to cease CELL processor production in house and are planning to replace it with the

FORUM TALK

Bronze

So when is METROID not really METROID?

I'm not too excited about Prime 3 post-E3.

The thing that made Metroid Prime 2 one of my favourite GCN games was the amazing dual game world, and the freedom given to explore and unlock all its secrets. Combat didn't seem all that important, more of a necessity to keep the exploration from getting tedious and the means to acquire better items to propel you deeper into the game.

Hunters... well... I really disliked it. So much that I actually traded it in for something else. That wasn't what I'd call a Metroid game. That was more like Unreal: Metroid Edition, a stale husk of squandered potential.

Shadow Knight

So when is METROID not really METROID?

Halo's an amazing game, but under no circumstances should Metroid ever 'feel' like Halo. Not ever, yo.

I'm actually anticipating Halo 3 more than Corruption. I dunno, i haven't ever been impressed by MP3, it's always seemed like a

giant misstep to me. (And i LOVED the first two).

Oh and another 2D Metroid plz.

Mr Incredible

Killzone 2

I just witnessed a second reason to buy a PS3... The lighting, shadowing, animation, art, sound, dialogue, characters...basically everything is very impressive.

VindaiLiu

Killzone 2

It reminded me of the opening of Rainbow Six Vegas...

Looks impressive and is certainly adequate fuel for the Sony fanboys to attack the Xbox fanboys with cause lets be honest... it does look fancier. Nice use of effects and smoke/fire... but a little dull in the use of colour.

lothar1

Bioshock

The demo is up on [the Xbox Live] Marketplace - 1.35 gig.

JC Henderson

Bioshock

Excellent, now I just have to work out how to turn on and download on my Xbox telepathically from work.

HyperBlau

Bioshock

Just finished the demo, and i can confirm Bioshock is gonna rock. So much atmosphere, set pieces are amazing, big daddys are even better than i was expecting. Awesome is the only word for it, once you first see rapture, you will wet yourself.

Manny M

Bioshock

I left it to download overnight, and gave it a run through this morning before work (I'm a government employee... flexibility is a marvellous thing).

I loved it! I'm not really a fan of those creepy FPS', but something about Rapture is just so compelling that I found myself playing just so I could find out what the hell happened to the place in such a brief space of time, and also who the hell I was...

HiredMan

Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

Well, Phantom Hourglass got 97 in the latest Hyper, which, if I can remember correctly, equals the best scores they have ever given for any game. Looks like its time to buy a DS.

glorious feature allows games to be purchased from anywhere on Earth. I can't even remember the last time I purchased a Region 4 copy of a game - why wait the usual two to six months for the Australian release when you can order from overseas.

Every gamer knows about region free games, but it seems that some game retailers are lagging well behind in taking advantage of this feature. I have no idea what it's like in the Eastern States but I live in Perth, and 99% of game stores don't stock imported games. When I ask for a game that is yet to be released in Australia, I'm met with a blank stare. When I try to trade in my used games they inform me that they can't accept them. Why not?

They work on any console, they're in English (unfortunately, I learned French, not Japanese, in school so I have to order from the US) and there is usually no difference whatsoever between the US and Australian versions.

There is one lone beacon of hope in Perth, one store that will sell games from anywhere and take trade ins from any region. I love buying from there because you get the game at the point of sale (as opposed to a three to seven day wait for internet orders) and you can physically see the product that you are buying. Unfortunately for me, the store is a 90 minute round trip from home. If some of these game retailers woke up and realised the benefits of selling games from other regions it would give gamers a much wider choice and earn the stores some dollars in the process (c'mon, every business likes dollars). Until then, I guess I'll have to turn to the Internet or \$1.30 a litre petrol to get my gaming goodness.

Trevor

Well, actually, the current generation of consoles are only partly region-free.

The PS3 and the Nintendo DS are both perfect examples of completely region-free consoles. However, the Wii is locked tight, and while the Xbox 360 does have numerous region free games, its library is far from being 100% import friendly.

We do agree with you though, region-free consoles open up a whole new world of gaming goodness. Not only can you play games earlier (and usually at a cheaper price), but you can also get your hands on games that will never be released here.

We wish you could have told us the name of your favourite import shop though. Next time we visit Perth, we'd have loved to shop there ourselves!

hyperactive.com.au

RSX 'Reality Synthesizer' graphics processing unit which is a graphics chip design co-developed by NVIDIA and Sony in an effort to further scale down production cost.

Worse still is having Sony say that the new chipset

I know that Sony is hoping to reduce costs by moving to 45-nanometre circuitry, as opposed to the 90 and 65 nanometre chips currently manufactured, but their silence on whether the new RSX will perform to the same standard has me grievously worried with rumours circulating on the net that the official word is "...that the RSX will act more as an emulator much in the same way that the replacement software handles PS2 and PS1 games."

Considering that they can't even iron the bugs out of that ill thought of concept leaves myself to ponder on if they know what they are doing or if they are just making it up as they go along.

I mean, they can't even get PS1 games like Metal Gear Solid and FF7 to work and their software updates

have mostly been cosmetic tweaks up to this point.

So tell me, is it a fading dream or will I wake one day to suddenly find the promised land?

Regards

The runmaster

We're not quite sure where you got your information from runmaster, but if this rumour is actually floating around out there in Internet land, then we'd better step in and clear a few things up.

For starters, Sony are most definitely not planning on replacing the Cell processor with the NVIDIA-designed RSX 'Reality Synthesizer'. Do you want to know why this couldn't possibly happen? It's because the PS3 already has the RSX inside it, and it is in fact the console's GPU.

What you may have heard was that Sony are thinking about ceasing "in-house" production of the Cell processor to lower the console's cost of production. This would simply mean that they'd stop making the chips in their own

factories and instead contract the job to other companies who could manufacture them for less. This would actually be a beneficial move for Sony, as not only would it slow their recent financial haemorrhaging, but it may even allow for a real price drop for the console (especially in the regions that need it - us!).

Sony are also looking into shrinking the cell processor to 65nm, just as their competition, Microsoft, are doing. This too would be a good move, as it would not only save money, but it would make the processor run cooler and use less electricity - all good outcomes.

As for ironing the bugs out of their software backwards compatibility, we have a feeling that once the Emotionless 80GB PS3 establishes a foothold in the USA, Sony will have no choice but to put more effort in.

REGION FREE

Every gamer knows that the current generation of consoles are region-free. Every gamer knows that this

The Passion of the Gamer

WHEN MORE IS LESS

By Dylan Burns

By all accounts the gaming industry is steaming ahead, gaining ground each year and now worth billions of dollars. Every Tom, Dick, Harry and their grandparents are gamers, with a niche title just waiting to grab you no matter your age or ostensible interest in games. Got a mobile phone? There are games for that. Like to play while on the train or even on the porcelain throne? No problem, portable consoles baby! And if you're not really that into games but have a passing interest in watching mini avatars piss themselves and then cry about it, then let me introduce you to a little series called *The Sims*. Just make sure you've got plenty of shelf space for all those expansion boxes.

Some of you may remember last month's sojourn into the world of *Clamydial*, with our intrepid hero Dippy bravely facing an awfully constructed gaming world. The point of Dippy's misfortune was that some games simply throw too much at the player, and this can often hurt the whole experience. The culprit in that case was a bloated fictional RPG with a stat system that did more to hem you in than give you any sense of freedom.

Now I love RPGs, I love shooters and sandbox games; hell, I pretty much play everything that gets released. It's just that lately I've been finding that some games, not all, are just too darn big for their own good. It certainly seems strange to whinge about a game being too big or long, so let's examine the dilemma more closely.

Of late, the trend in many games seems to be to give the player a huge open city environment, with lots of random crimes, races, hidden things, and just heaps of stuff in the game world (*Spiderman 3*, *Transformers*, *Scarface*, *Saints Row*). For someone hiring the game, or even as a purchase, the illusion of depth – using the sheer amount of things as an excuse to eschew any attempt at quality story telling – can be both daunting and frustrating, which results in player dislocation and a devaluing of the city/game-space itself. Why covet a particular area or tall building when you've already climbed up it, sky-dived from the top and zipped to safety right at the last minute? What's the point in killing goons when they've all got the same body and face models and the same idiotic AI that's as predictable as a heavily robed man entering an adult bookstore?

Not only does the game get incredibly repetitive, but the environment quickly becomes dull and uninspiring, which in turn leads to you falling out of immersion (if you ever had it to begin with). A second consequence of having this huge game space open at the start of a game is that the player ultimately feels that there is little to work towards. Apart from the dubious pleasure of exploring the 'world' for twenty odd hours, there's no feeling of reward in terms of new areas or anything to look forward to. It's all splattered on your plate from the very beginning; no hope of an entrée, main meal and then, if you're good enough, some sweet extra goodies.

This kind of game design displays an attitude of 'give the player more, more, more and they won't realise that we've left out anything meaningful'. I for one am not impressed. We're told that games now cost millions of dollars to make and require teams of hundreds; surely within that staffing structure somebody could put their hand up and suggest a coherent storyline for starters.

We're also constantly bombarded with the term 'next-gen' but it's yet to give itself a recognisable form so that we can move on and just say 'current-gen'. The term itself is a non-reachable end state, with no hope of being shaken for the simple fact that there's no agreeable reference



*Behold! The entrance to the Azerindule Dungeons!
Another 60 hours of gameplay awaits! (if you can be arsed)*

point apart from the existence of a new wave of consoles. Developers just seem to take it for granted that if they're pumping out PS3 and 360 games the public will lap it up as next-gen.

So is it possible for more to come off as less in games? I certainly think that it is. Even my bestest, most favourite game *Oblivion* suffers from bloated repetition – there are only so many darn cave systems I can handle. Similarly, and as I've alluded to previously, the idea of the 'extra' or 'secret' has been taken to absurdity in many 360 games, for the simple fact that they represent a piss-easy way out for achievement points allocation. And now, with the PC integration of Live, will we see PC gamers fall into the dark pit of gamerscore whoring as well? God knows those cave dwellers are the most competitive and vindictive type of gamer.

The recent flaming of *The Darkness* for its short length is, I think, a sign of sickness in the gaming community. Here we have a fantastic game that tells a story wonderfully, yet it's devalued because of its length. Gamers have come to expect 40+ hours for their money, with little or no attention given to how we can even quantify quality time. Are ten awesome hours worth more than thirty average ones? Is a game that artificially elongates its length through the cheap use of repetition or insane difficulty acceptable?

The answer, of course, lies within you. After all, these games keep getting bought, so there must be some poor soul out there who enjoys web-swinging for six hours and then declares it to be the most awesome game ever because it had so many things to do in it and took "heaps long, man". Your level of acceptance will differ to mine, but when it comes to how much stuff is in a game I'll gladly take a shorter, more intense narrative over a bloated, ill-conceived cash-cow title any day.

Of course, my ramblings are like smoke in the wind. The gaming industry is going to keep punching out turds, and people are going to keep buying them. But is it not worth sitting back for just one minute and considering whether you may actually be accepting less for your money when the media frenzy and PR machine is telling you that you're getting so much more?

Sir Gameboffin's Gamerscore: 26, 144
gameboffin@hotmail.com

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP
10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$30

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ★ Singstar 90S (Sw Only) Family
- 2 ★ Singstar 90S Bundle Family
- 3 ▼ Guitar Hero Encore 80's Family
- 4 ▲ Robin Hoods Quest Adventure
- 5 ▼ Sing Star Pop Hits (S/W Only) Family
- 6 ▼ Transformers (Act) Action
- 7 ▲ AFL Premiership 2007 Sports
- 8 ▲ Buzz: The Mega Quiz Bundle Family
- 9 ▼ Rugby 2008 Sports
- 10 ▲ V8 Supercars 3 Ptm Racing

TOP
10

Nintendo DS Games Over \$30

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Pokémon Diamond Nds RPG
- 2 ▲ Pokémon Pearl Nds RPG
- 3 ▲ Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Action
- 4 ◆ More Brain Training Family
- 5 ▼ Dr Kawashima's Brain Train Family
- 6 ▲ Petz Hotel Strategy
- 7 ▲ Crash Boom Bang Family
- 8 ▲ Horsez Family
- 9 ▲ Transformers Autobots Action
- 10 ▲ Dogz 2006 Simulator

TOP
10

Nintendo Wii Games Over \$50

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Mario Party 8 Family
- 2 ▲ Driver Parallel Lines Action
- 3 ▲ Transformers Action
- 4 ◆ Zelda Twilight Princess RPG
- 5 ▼ Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition Action
- 6 ▲ Blazing Angels Simulator
- 7 ▲ Prince Of Persia Rival Swords Adventure
- 8 ▲ Cooking Mama Family
- 9 ▼ WarioWare Smooth Moves Family
- 10 ▲ Harry Potter Order/Phoenix Adventure

TOP
10

Playstation 3 Games Over \$60

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ▲ Transformers Action
- 2 ◆ Formula One Champ Edition Racing
- 3 ▲ The Darkness Action
- 4 ▲ Rainbow Six Vegas Action
- 5 ▲ Need For Speed Carbon Racing
- 6 ▲ Fight Night Round 3 Action
- 7 ▲ Ninja Gaiden Sigma Action
- 8 ▲ Elder Scrolls IV Oblivion Rpg
- 9 ▲ Virtua Tennis 3 Sports
- 10 ▲ Sonic The Hedgehog Action

TOP
10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ World Of Warcraft RPG
- 2 ◆ WoW: Burning Crusade RPG
- 3 ▲ The Sims 2 Strategy
- 4 ▲ The Sims 2: Pets Strategy
- 5 ▼ C & C 3: Tiberium Wars Strategy
- 6 ▲ The Sims 2: Open/Business Strategy
- 7 ▼ Battlefield 2142 Action
- 8 ▲ The Sims 2: Nightlife Strategy
- 9 ▼ The Sims 2: Seasons Strategy
- 10 ▼ Age Of Empires III Strategy

TOP
10

Xbox 360 Games Over \$50

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Gears Of War Action
- 2 ◆ Forza Motorsport 2 Racing
- 3 ▲ Rainbow Six Vegas Action
- 4 ▼ Transformers Action
- 5 ◆ Colin Mcrae Dirt Racing
- 6 ▼ Flatout Ultimate Carnage Racing
- 7 ◆ Guitar Hero 2 Bundle Family
- 8 ▲ FIFA 2007 Sports
- 9 ▼ Elder Scrolls IV Oblivion RPG
- 10 ▼ Fight Night Round 3 Sports

TOP
10

All Format Games Over \$50

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ★ Singstar 90S (S/W Only) PlayStation 2
- 2 ▼ Mario Party 8 Nintendo Wii
- 3 ▲ Pokémon Diamond Nintendo DS
- 4 ★ Singstar 90S Bundle PlayStation 2
- 5 ▼ Guitar Hero Encore 80's PlayStation 2
- 6 ▲ Robin Hoods Quest PlayStation 2
- 7 ▲ Sing Star Pop Hits (S/W Only) PlayStation 2
- 8 ▼ Pokémon Pearl Nintendo DS
- 9 ▲ Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Nintendo DS
- 10 ▼ Transformers (Act) PlayStation 2

TOP
10

PlayStation Portable Games Over \$40

W/E 12th August
2007 RETAIL SALES

- 1 ◆ Transformers Adventure
- 2 ◆ Ratchet & Clank Size Matters Adventure
- 3 ◆ Harry Potter Order/Phoenix Adventure
- 4 ▲ GTA: Liberty City Stories Ptm Adventure
- 5 ▲ Need For Speed Carbon Racing
- 6 ▼ WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 07 Sports
- 7 ▲ Lego Star Wars 2 Ptm Adventure
- 8 ▼ Socom 2 Us Navy Seals 2 Action
- 9 ▼ Call Of Duty Road To Victory Action
- 10 ▼ Pimp My Ride Racing

- ★ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



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Next Issue:

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M

Moderate
violence

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