BEHIND THE SCENES OF SONY'S EVERQUEST EMPIRE PG.50

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The Final Word On Computer & Video Games

45 MUST-READ REVIEWS
Including The Getaway For PS2

25 NEW GAMES PREVIEWED
First Look At The Titles Shaping 2003

ROCKSTAR RETURNS TO THE WORLD OF ILLEGAL STREET RACING

MIDNIGHT CLUB 2

FEAR EFFECT: INFERN
Exclusive Peek At Eidos' Naughty Next-Gen Sequel

ISSUE 118
02
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FEBRUARY 2003

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– The Source
the GetaWay
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MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Drug Reference
Strong Language
Strong Sexual Content
Violence
PlayStation 2
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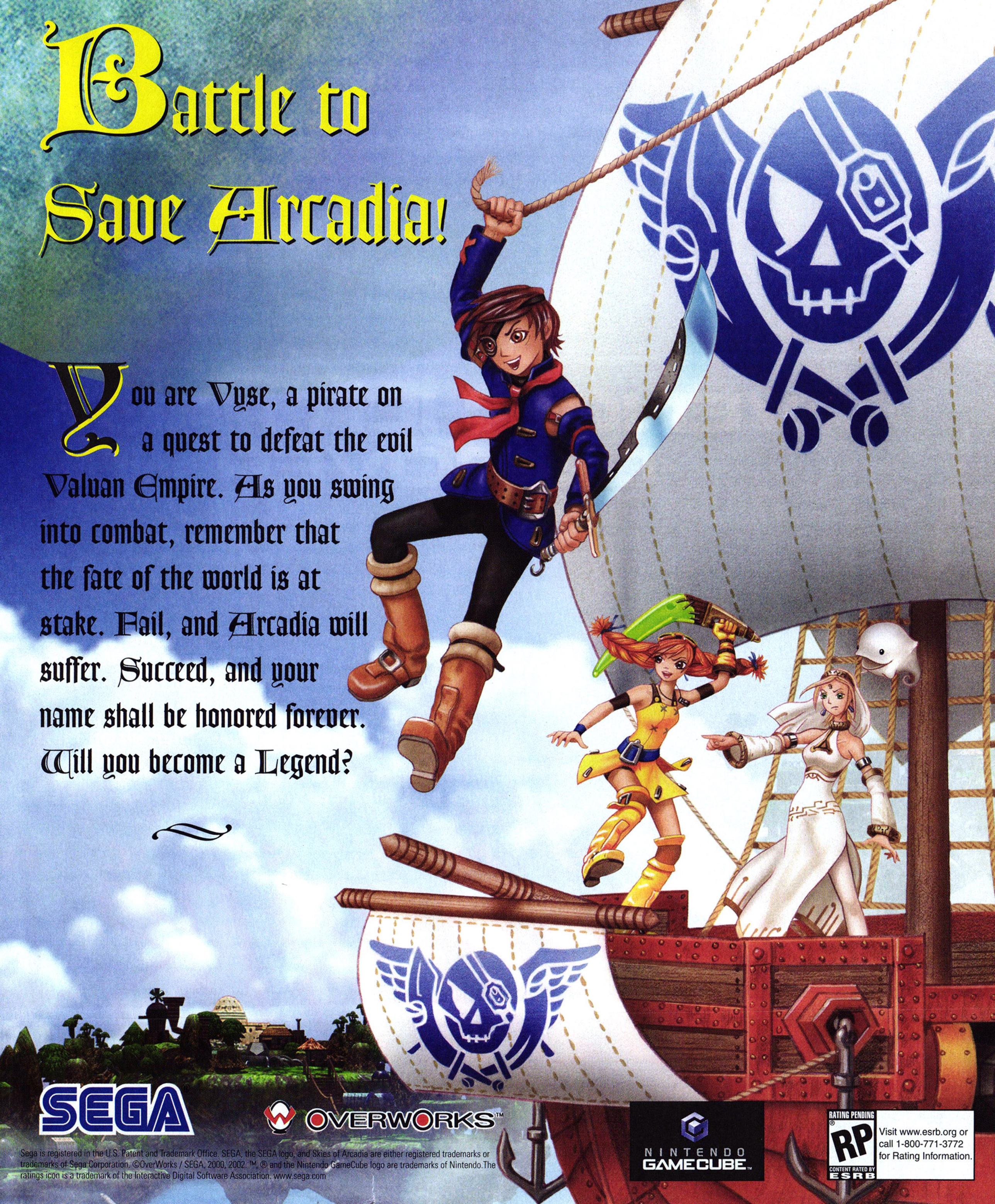

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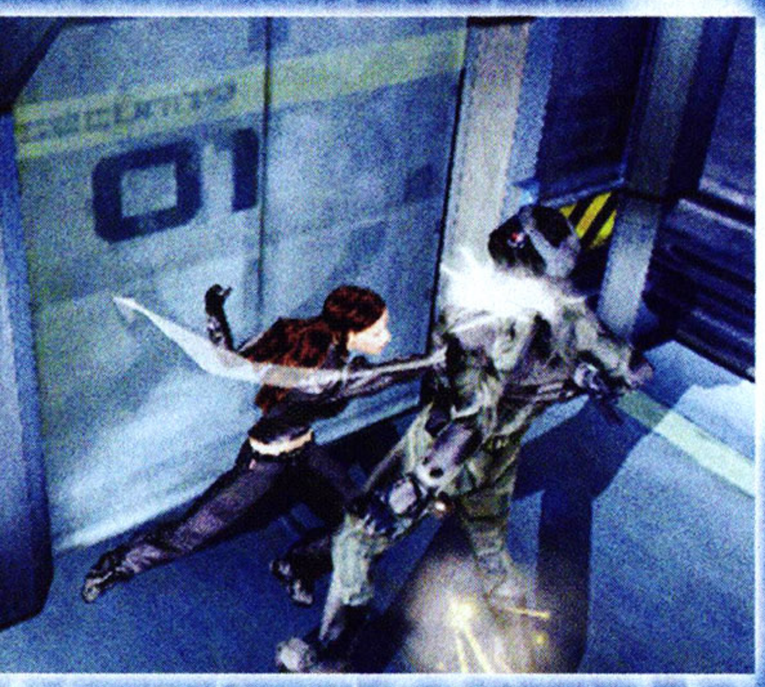

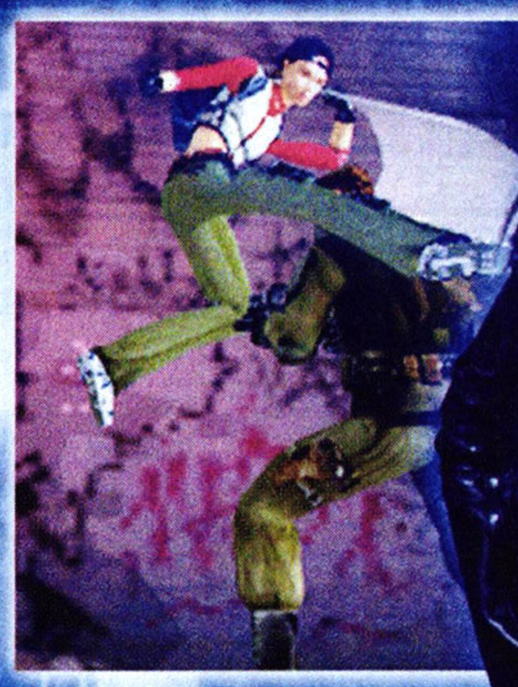

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

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a legend reawakens.

XBOX

Smilebit

DOLBY DIGITAL

TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Blood Violence

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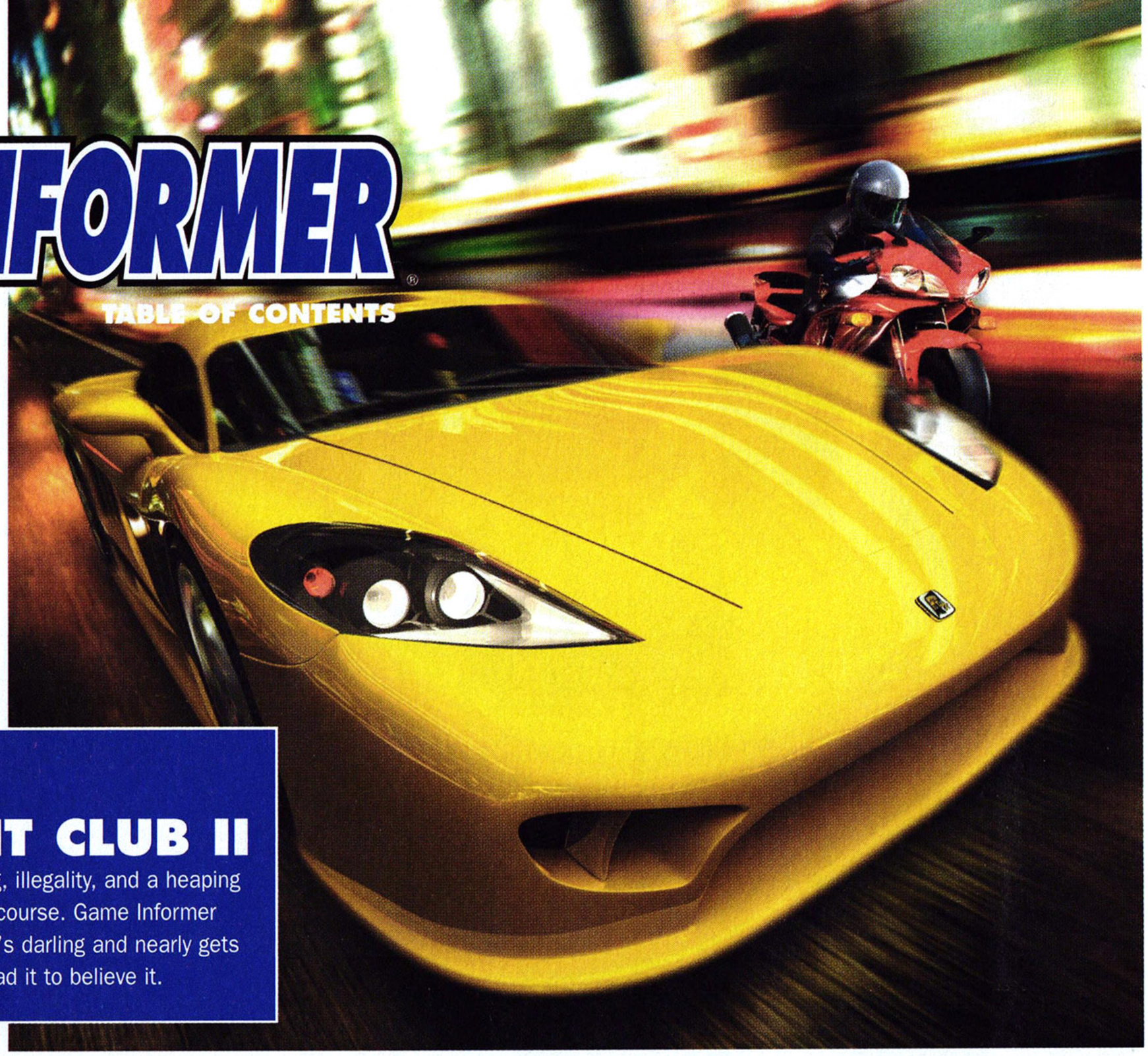
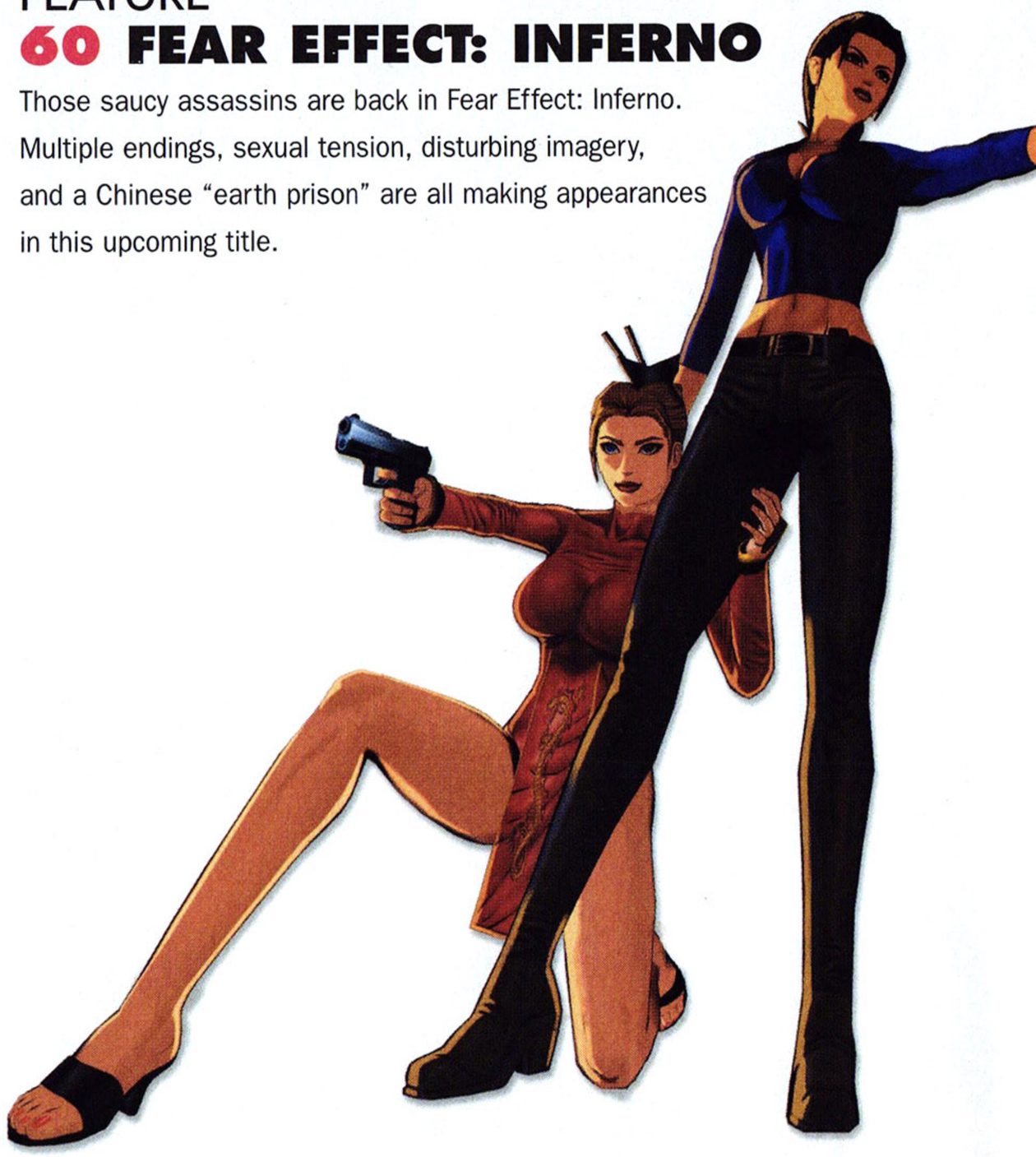


COVER STORY
40 MIDNIGHT CLUB II
What do you get when you mix racing, illegality, and a heaping helping of NOS? Midnight Club II, of course. Game Informer goes behind the scenes on Rockstar's darling and nearly gets arrested. Seriously! You'll have to read it to believe it.

FEATURE
50 SONY ONLINE
Discover the intricacies of what online play really means. Sony outlines its strategy and what has been learned in the complex world of getting people onto the information superhighway.

FEATURE
60 FEAR EFFECT: INFERNO
Those saucy assassins are back in Fear Effect: Inferno. Multiple endings, sexual tension, disturbing imagery, and a Chinese "earth prison" are all making appearances in this upcoming title.



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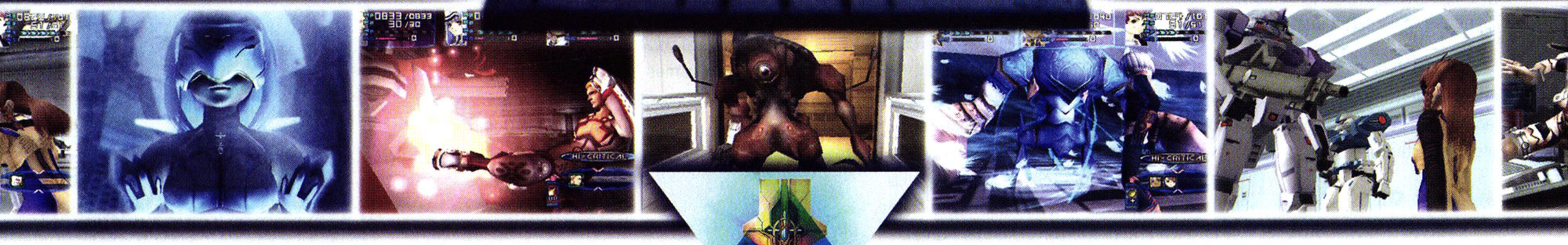

Xenosaga™

EPISODE I

Der Wille zur Macht

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

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PlayStation®2

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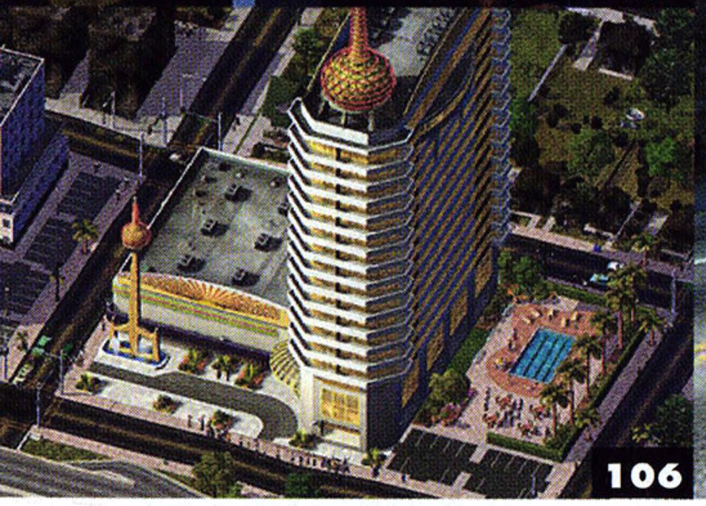

18 EDITOR'S FORUM
The editors spew asinine crap in their ridiculous blurbs, and you're going to lap up every last letter! Do you want to know why? We're geniuses, that's why! Do you think this kind of wit and humor grows on trees? NO! What's that? There's a video file circulating in the office of a monkey smelling it's poopy finger, then falling off a tree branch? Brilliant! We must see it immediately!

22 GI SPY
The Game Informer paparazzi stalks the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

24 DEAR GI
Warranty concerns, this glorious mag, and the rating system all end up in the toilet. GI staff fused? Pop idols in video games. As if! Problems with any USB keyboards and the PS2?

28 NEWS
There's new action on the Square Enix front, Koei names a Dynasty Warriors successor, and holy crap! Here come Scully and Mulder! That's right! The *X-Files* is going digital, and Take 2 confirms that there is indeed another GTA in the works. Go figure!

66 PREVIEWS
The newly expanded Previews section is a veritable cornucopia of info on Killer 7 and Tao Feng for the Xbox, Final Fantasy X-2, Dark Cloud 2, and Xenosaga for the PS2, and GameCube headliners Zelda and Resident Evil 4. Even the GBA gets in on the action with new Pokémon to fiddle with.

90 REVIEWS
The Getaway holds a preverbal scepter called "Game Of The Month." PS2 goes online again with the Sims and EverQuest Online Adventures. GameCube flexes muscle in Skies of Arcadia. Xbox holds its own through Battle Engine Aquila, and Crimson Sea. The PC gets its SimCity on, and the GBA makes a play with Phantasy Star and Altered Beast.

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118 SECRET ACCCESS
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WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI

5/15/03

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XBOX

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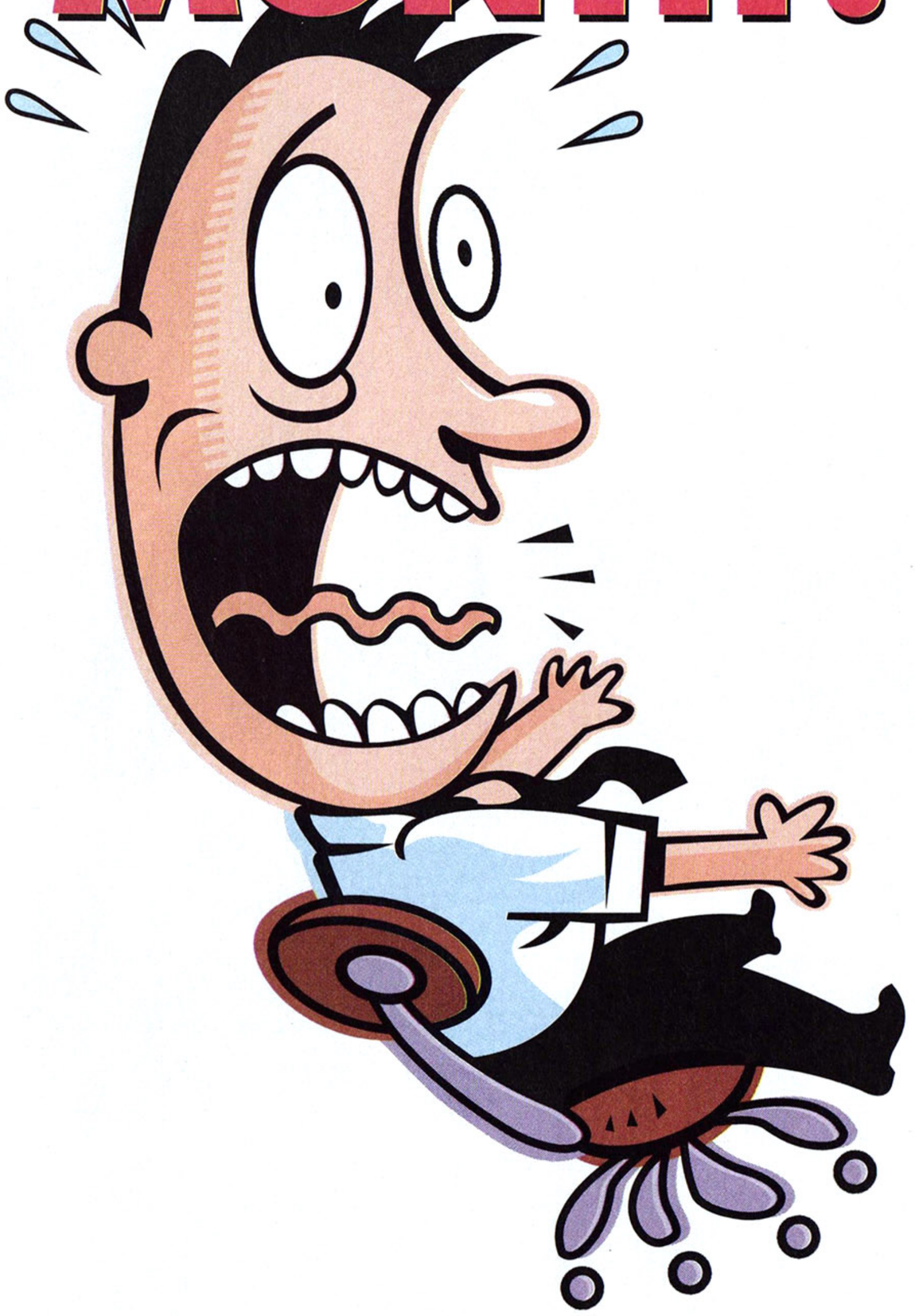

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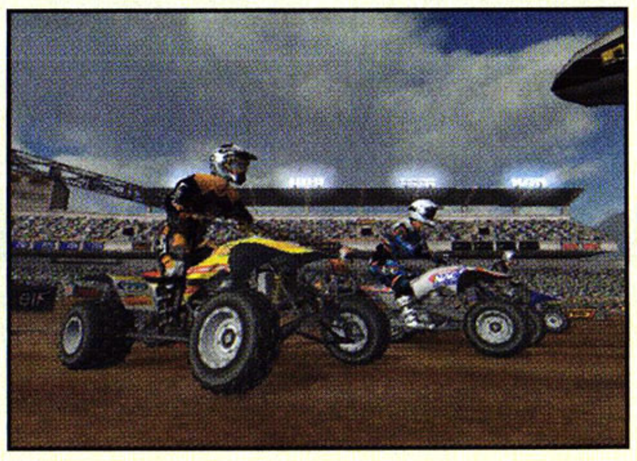

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EDITORS' FORUM

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Game Informer recently celebrated our one-millionth subscriber, and to say I'm excited about this landmark would be an understatement. However, at the same time, this means that we have to push even harder to be the best magazine you can find anywhere on the planet. From forum boards to the mass of mail that the staff and I receive everyday, we have seen many praises, but we have also heard from plenty of you who are looking for more from the magazine. To any and all that read these pages, I give you my word that Game Informer will work harder than ever in the coming year to not only meet our current high standards, but to do everything within our power to meet yours.

I hope to spend the next months looking for better ways to serve our legions of fans. This month you will notice that we put in a bigger and better previews section, and this is just the beginning of the things to come as we look for ways to improve the magazine each and every issue.

Keep the feedback coming, and we will continue to make the adjustments to insure that Game Informer stays on top. We have some amazing stuff in the works, so enjoy the issue and we'll see you here next month. Same Bat-time. Same Bat-channel.

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

1. Andy – amateur crimefighter Shaggy **2.** Reiner – rapper Snoop Dogg **3.** Matt – animated detective Bruno the Kid **4.** Kristian – *Wizard of Oz's* Scarecrow **5.** Kato – angry Brit-rocker Liam Gallagher **6.** Justin – UFC fighter Tito Ortiz **7.** Chet – *Simpsons* sickly kid Wendell **8.** Lisa – Final Fantasy X's Tidus

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER
reiner@gameinformer.com
The landscape of gaming has become increasingly hostile over the past year, and I'm not necessarily talking about the content of games. With publishing houses pumping out handfuls of titles that appear on all three systems, there really is no room for the little guy anymore. If a company doesn't have the marketing dollars to advertise its titles in a big way, there's a good chance that no one will even know they exist. This may sound alarming, but it really does seem as though the video game industry is changing into a larger, Hollywood-like entity. If anything, this transformation would definitely cut down on the garbage that currently floods the market. If a publisher doesn't have the financial backing to break into the mainstream, an underground gaming scene could emerge to facilitate noteworthy titles that may otherwise go unnoticed. Who knows, we may even see a high-profile independent games festival like film's Sundance.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER
matt@gameinformer.com
Well, we've lain another year to rest, and I'd have to say it was a pretty great one for games. Even better, we're off to a quick start with some great games like The Sims, SimCity 4, and The Getaway – awesome titles for a time of year that usually offers gamers pretty slim pickings. As the development community has finally seemed to master the intricacies of all three systems on the market, games this annum should be bigger, badder, and better looking than we could have imagined just a few years ago. In closing, I'd like to take a moment to remember the passing of a hip-hop legend, Run-DMC's Jam Master Jay. I know it's a little late, but his lasting influence on rap will never be forgotten. Rest in peace.

KRISTIAN, THE VIDEO VIKING
kristian@gameinformer.com
Have you noticed how serious everyone's become lately? It seems like I can't do funny things like cut people off in traffic or pee in public fountains without someone getting all ticked off or calling the police. Do you want something to be mad at people? How about Pepsi Blue? That crap is horrible! Don't those geniuses who do marketing over there remember Pepsi Clear? Wise up, jerky! So you see, when I'm doing something utterly hilarious like using a piece of corporate art as a toilet, it's nothing to get upset about. It's a friendly how-d'ya-do, and a tribute to our ancestors who once crossed vast distances of rugged terrain during the ice ages, and pooped outside while doing it.

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT
justin@gameinformer.com
Many people don't know what independent wrestling is, having only seen the WWE brand of entertainment. Indy wrestlers beat themselves up for the love of the sport. We tell a story with our matches, and hope the audience vibes with what we're doing. We have 10-15 minute matches and five-minute promos, rather than the other way around. You may have to do some searching, but check around for a local wrestling promotion in your area. I can't guarantee it will kick ass, but I do know there are thousands of talented wrestlers in this country who bust their butts every time out. Plus, you're encouraged to react to the action. Here's hoping you all had a safe and happy holidays.

KATO, THE GAME KATANA
kato@gameinformer.com
I don't want to seem like I'm rubbing this in your face, but I've got this huge pile of new games sitting next to my TV going unplayed, and it's starting to get to me. The guilt is starting to creep in. I should be playing Vice City, but I've got stock car gear ratios to figure out. You see, this is the one reason I haven't played Animal Crossing. Sounds like a fabulous game, but I don't want to come home from work and then get chewed out for being gone from my peeps all day. Everyone wants more good titles, well I want fewer – and with longer development cycles! Better yet, I declare that there should only be two kinds of games, football and NASCAR – that'll get rid of my guilt. Don't like it? Well I'm going to make you turn left till you puke!

CHET, THE JOYSTICK JOCKEY
chet@gameinformer.com
I came across an article this month concerning the seemingly age-old debate about whether video game violence has a negative effect on children. I know you're going to hate me for saying this, but I was finally convinced that it does. Why else do we have a rating system for games, as well as for films? The willingness to label content suitable for certain age groups is a clear admission to the fact that viewing violent acts does indeed have a negative impact upon some children. Of course, assuming you're mentally healthy, you understand the difference between reality and fantasy. However, the fact is, we don't live in a society where everyone is mentally stable! Now, I am not saying that I want the government to censor anything; I believe in free speech. I think an ENFORCED rating system is a fair solution. I just want to point out this slight contradiction that existed in my own thinking, and still exists in many others'.

LISA, LA GAME NIKITA
lisa@gameinformer.com
I've been missing the snow day lately. Were storms really worse when I was little (giving credence to the tales of elders about walking barefoot for three miles through snowdrifts to get to school)? What I want is the good, epic snowstorm of yesteryear. I want six feet of snow overnight, 60mph winds, and absolutely no possibility that I'm going to leave the house that day. Preferably, I would wile away the hours watching movies, gazing at a warm fire, and drinking some sort of mulled beverage while bathed in a gentle fire-induced, bad romance novel sort of a glow. Then again, I'd have to move to get the fireplace, and go to the store to get some mulling stuff…Oh crap, now it's work.

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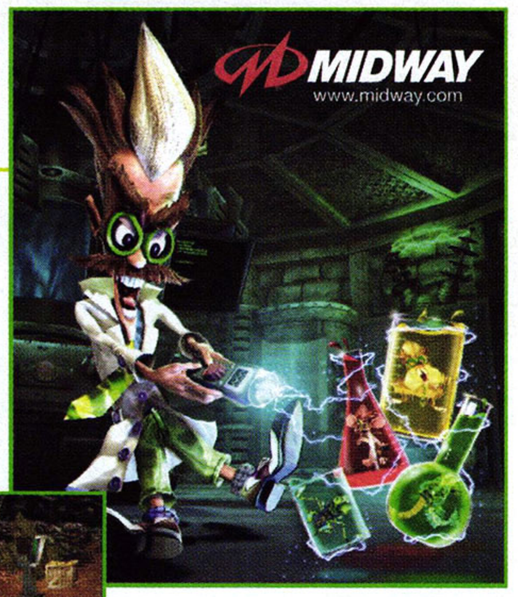
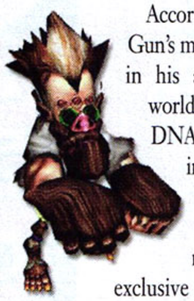
Morph into six strange creatures from a gorilla to a spider using Dr. Muto's amazing Splizz Gun

Use a wide variety of gadgets only a mad scientist could invent such as Rocket Boots and the Super Baller



Dr. Muto, the genius mad scientist whose latest experiment accidentally destroyed his home planet, has been the center of a media frenzy with the unveiling of his amazing new "Splizz Gun" technology. Muto's Splizz Gun enables him to mutate and morph with any living organism in order to accomplish tasks no human could achieve alone.



According to Muto, the Splizz Gun's morphing ability will be key in his attempts to rebuild his world. "I simply sample some DNA and 'BANG,' I morph into a mouse, spider, gorilla or any other creature I see fit to become," Muto madly muttered in an exclusive World News Watch interview. "It's not that I am a megalomaniac, I just want to play God."

Muto's technology is receiving so much attention and interest that he will begin selling the Splizz Gun through TV infomercials next month.

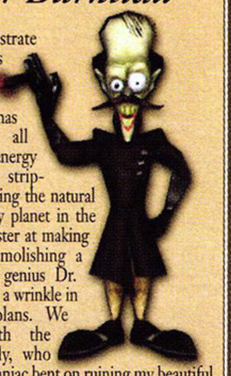
Also, leading videogame publisher Midway has entered into an exclusive deal with the doctor for the release of an action/adventure videogame based on his bizarre and intriguing life and his Splizz Gun technology. Information about Muto's videogame, simply titled, "Dr. Muto," is revealed on www.drmuto.midway.com, which is a website devoted to Muto's universe of baffling puzzles, mind-bending devices, freakish monstrosities and twisted humor.

Is Dr. Muto the 21st Century's Einstein, or just another madman? Judge for yourself this fall when "Dr. Muto" the videogame releases for next generation videogame platforms.

Defend yourself against burly Rent-a-Cops, vicious "Charks," and other henchmen of your rival, Professor Burnitall

PROFILE ON...

Professor Burnitall



As energy magistrate of the Centralis solar system, Professor Gunter Burnitall has outperformed all expectations for energy production by strip-mining and pillaging the natural resources of every planet in the system; he's a master at making energy while demolishing a society. But the genius Dr. Muto has become a wrinkle in his expansion plans. We caught up with the professor recently, who told us, "He's a maniac bent on ruining my beautiful energy empire. That ridiculous Dr. Muto believes he can build a planet from scraps of DNA and terra, then steal my energy reserves as the catalysts! PAH!" Burnitall went on to say that Muto is a renegade terrorist and, "My forces will stop at nothing to destroy the horrible little man, no matter WHAT creature he shapes himself into!"

DR. MUTO™

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

PlayStation®2
XBOX
NINTENDO GAMECUBE™
GAME BOY ADVANCE
Coming Soon

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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Suggestive Themes
Violence

Game experience may change during online play.

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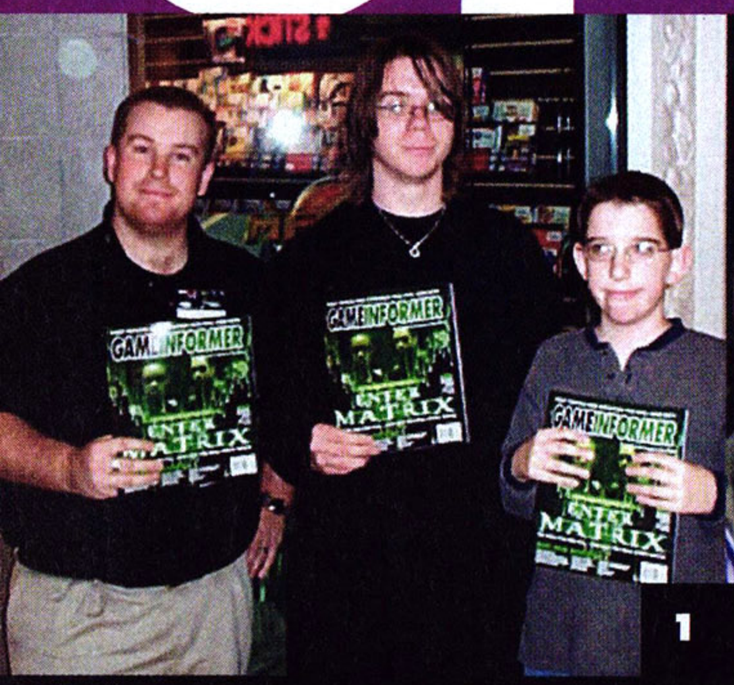
PlayStation.2

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

GI SPY



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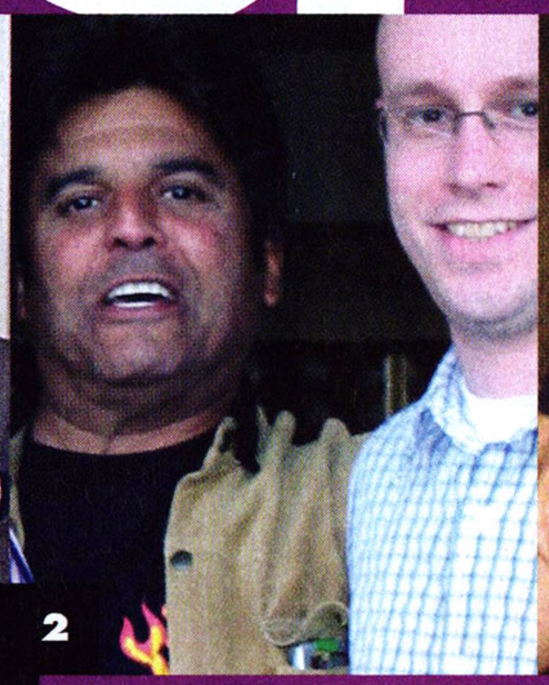

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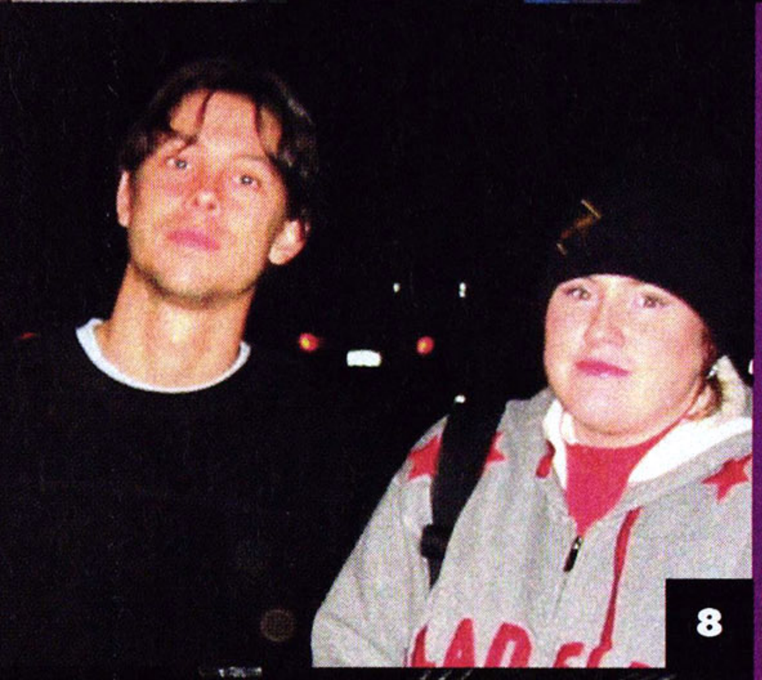

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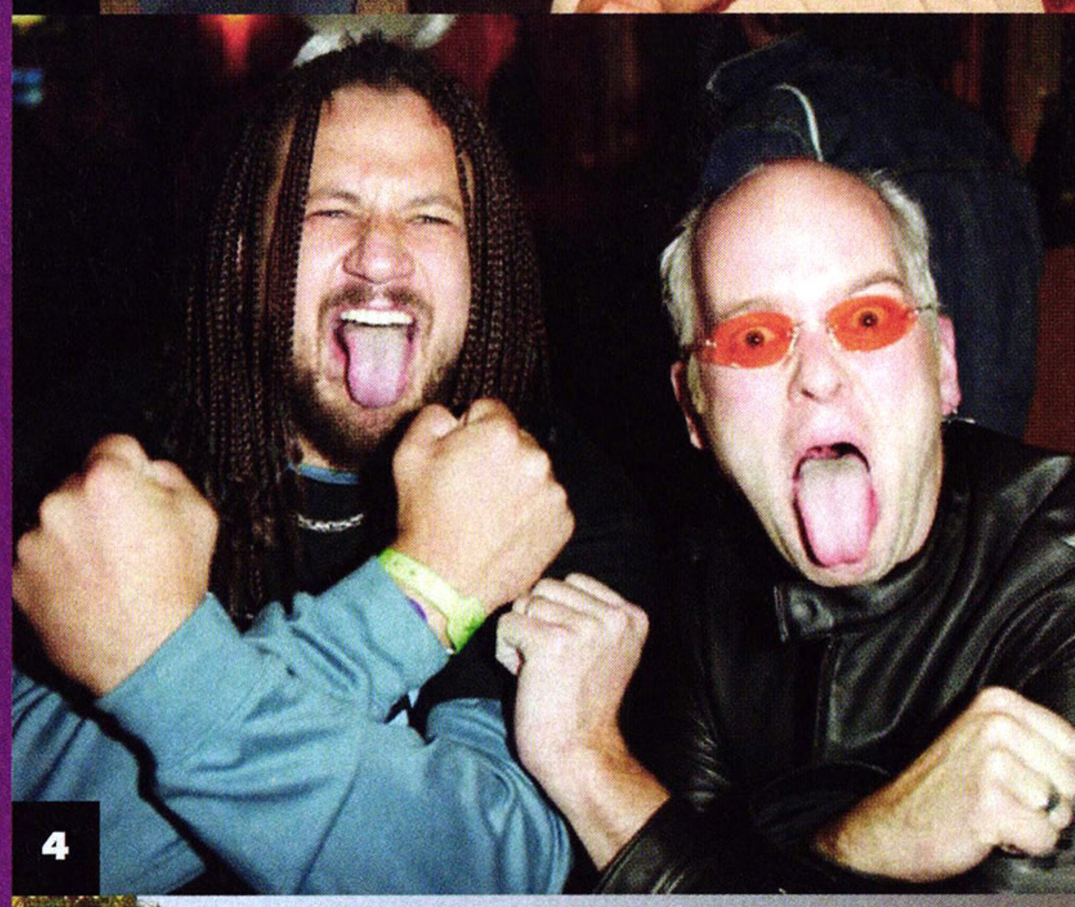

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CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 GameStop associate Aaron Arnett poses with Josh and Travis Whitaker, the Modesto, CA brothers who purchased the elusive one-millionth subscription to Game Informer. **2** Here he is: the coolest person to ever appear in *GI Spy*!! No, not Matt (he's still a dork), we're talking about Erik Estrada a.k.a. Frank "Ponch" Poncherello from *CHiPs*! **3** "See, it plays better when you hold the controller like this." Justin schools Microsoft's Carlos de Leon in the ancient art of Game-Fu. **4** Microsoft's J Allard (right) compares forearms with Joseph Reitman, a man you hate. Why do you hate him? Because he's married to *American Pie* hottie Shannon Elizabeth! D'oh! **5** Kjell Vistad (Eidos), Sandra Abe-Tsujii (Kronos), Chet, Kronos CEO Stan Liu and his son chill at the Kronos Digital headquarters in Pasadena. **6** Kristian tries to grope Reiner at Chet's birthday party. Happy 13th, Joystick Jockey! **7** MattFrary/ Lynn/Cliff Infogrames' Matt Frary and Lynn Daniel admire Unreal visionary Cliff Bleszinski's new coif. Cliff is going through a big John Lydon/Public Image Ltd. phase right now. **8** Rockstar's Corey Wade and Amy Saltzman get high from the fumes at a RaceLegal drag racing event in San Diego.

6

5

You can't fight
what you can't see.

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

OVERWORKS™

Shinobi

sega.com/shinobi

臨兵闘者皆陣烈在前臨兵闘者皆陣烈在前

PlayStation 2

SEGA®

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DEAR GI

DIESEL A DUD?

I have recently been informed that the cretin Vin Diesel is starting his own video game company. Judging on how many people saw his movies, added to the fact that how many members of the opposite sex think he is "hot," it is possible that his company just might be successful. I can't take any more quickly done, cinematic, made-just-to-push-someone's-career, third-person, Max Payne rip-offs – which is basically what he stated that he wants to do. This is the dumbest thing I've ever heard, next to Dan Quale [sic] being elected vice president of the U.S.! What are your views upon this, *GI*? And, if possible, how can I legally stop something so atrocious?

Black Syth
Via hotmail.com

Hey, buddy, we'll have you know that Vin Diesel is a close, personal friend to the entire *Game Informer* staff, so if you're looking for us to join you in your flagrant playa-hating of America's premier action star, you better look elsewhere. In fact, Vin is what you might call *Game Informer's* "big brother." Just last week, he stopped by and took us all to the zoo. Afterward, he bought us all ice cream cones at Dairy Queen. It was so fun, and you're probably just jealous that you don't get to hang out with buff, dreamy movie stars like we do!

While we share your concerns about the lack of creativity in many recent action titles, we think that it would be better if you addressed your complaints regarding Vin's video ventures with the man himself. In hopes of fostering a dialogue between the two of you, we've forwarded your name, address, phone number, and email to Vin. He told us that he looks forward to talking to you in person very soon. As for your comments regarding Dan Q-U-A-Y-L-E – if you're going to insult the man, you better be able to spell better than he can!

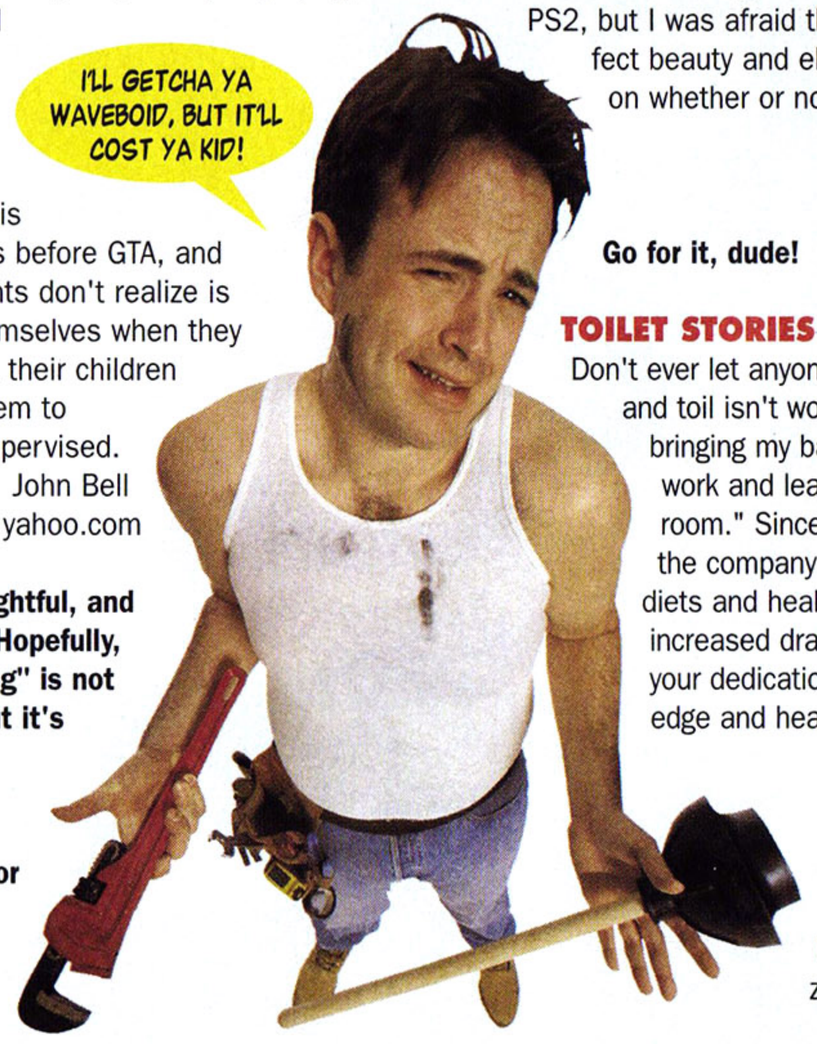
CLUELESS PARENTS?

I'm a 23-year-old assistant manager at a Babbage's in Virginia, and I've noticed a very disturbing trend during the GTA III/Vice City craze of the past several months. Children have been approaching my associates and me at our registers and attempting to purchase these two games. When I say children, I don't mean 14- or 15-year-olds, who are at that borderline age where they are beginning to come into their own and are adopting certain mature, adult traits. No, I mean children aged seven, eight, and nine years old, trying to buy this most controversial of products.

Now, I'm as liberal as they come, and I'm all for developers being allowed to stretch their creative ideas to the limit, without some right-wing senator or television personality trying to turn our country into the Partridge Family. But, I would never let my children be exposed to a game such as GTA III, and especially not Vice City, which I have come to realize is GTA III on crank. What's worse is that, when I tell these eight-year-olds they can't buy the game, they bring their parents into the store, and the parent buys the game for them! I try to deter any parent who is purchasing this game for a young child, but nothing works. It's always one of the same three situations. Number one, the parent hasn't done any research on the game – probably the same parent that would let their children carpool with Susan Smith. Number two, the parent knows the game isn't appropriate, yet exclaims, "Well, Bobby will just play it at a friend's house." In my opinion, this is lame, and shows the parent has no control, discipline, or influence over their seed. The learning process starts at home, and that is a pathetic excuse. The third scenario, possibly the worst of the bunch, the parent knows the game is inappropriate, and actually encourages his or her child to play it. I've seen it, my fiancé who works at a Circuit City has seen it, and it is disgusting.

There are certain things I think young children should learn when they are at that tender age, but the corruption of the cities glorified in the GTA series is not one of them. One thing children possess that adults do not is innocence, and that inevitable loss should not be accelerated by incompetent parenting. You know what this is going to lead to: A parent obliviously purchases this game for their child, against all my pleading, takes it home, and then gets upset at the manner of game young Bobby is playing. Then, they get up in arms, and start a letter-writing campaign to that same senator or television personality, and it's Tipper Gore all over again. I know the video game industry is already in the hot seat – it was before GTA, and it will be after GTA. What parents don't realize is that they are bringing it on themselves when they don't get educated about what their children are interested in, and allow them to romp through Liberty City unsupervised.

John Bell
Via yahoo.com



Those are certainly some insightful, and very disturbing observations. Hopefully, this kind of clueless "parenting" is not the norm in America today, but it's obvious that there are some severely under-informed – and possibly incompetent – parents out there. The behavior you describe is even more regrettable for the fact that the video game industry goes out of its way to provide parents with both age- and content-based descriptors to go along with its rating system. However, any rating in the world is completely useless if it is ignored, or worse yet, disregarded. Hopefully, your letter will encourage parents to take a more active role in their child's gaming life. So, moms and dads, the next time you see *Game Informer* sitting on the living room floor, pick it up and educate yourself on some upcoming titles. If the game on your five-year-old's want list is Death Angel II: Bordello of Destruction, about an ex-hooker-ninja-stripper looking to avenge the death of her father, you might want to think twice about buying it for them. Just a thought, folks. For more on the video game industry's rating system, go to www.esrb.com.

KEYBOARD COMPATIBILITY

I own a PS2 and the Network Adaptor, and I hate typing with the controller, so I am looking to buy a USB keyboard. Are there any that aren't compatible with PS2?

Nick
Via email

We've used our USB keyboards with our PS2, and experienced few problems. Still, while most game publishers only offer "stealth" USB compatibility (meaning that it is not advertised or tested with every possible keyboard on the market), a good number of PS2 games (especially first-person shooters like Red Faction II) do work. Proceed with caution, as you will possibly encounter bugs with some models.

A STICKY QUESTION

First of all, I want to say that *Game Informer* is the best mag out there and I'm totally loyal to it. It is like my second Bible. But anyway, I have a big problem. I have these great SpongeBob stickers and I don't know what to do with them. I thought about putting them on my PS2, but I was afraid that it would ruin its perfect beauty and elegance. Please advise me on whether or not to put them on my PS2.

Zac Hawthorne
Via ameritech.net

Go for it, dude!

TOILET STORIES

Don't ever let anyone tell you your hard work and toil isn't worth a crap. I recently began bringing my back issues of your mag to work and leaving them in the "reading room." Since then, the overall health of the company has improved. High fiber diets and healthy bowel movements have increased dramatically. Thank you for your dedication to your readers' knowledge and health.

Adam Goodell
Cleveland, OH

What's up guys? I just want to say that I've been getting your magazine for a while and it

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XBOX

PlayStation 2

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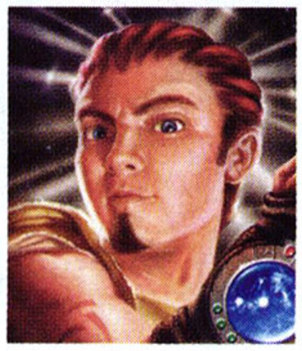
rules! However, I have a problem. I bought a WaveBird controller for my GameCube, and I was on the toilet taking a dump and playing a game – just like it showed in the ad. I put the controller on the sink while I wiped, but my elbow somehow hit the controller and it fell in the toilet with my poop! My question is: Does that void any warranty that the controller may have? I haven't bothered to check to see if it still works. Any ideas?

Eli
Via yahoo.com

Well, people have often said that our minds are in the toilet, so we're happy to find out that Game Informer has found a place in the commodes of the American people. We like to think of ourselves as Metamucil in magazine form, as well as a handy substitute for Charmin!

Now, on to the disturbing case of the WaveBird's swim in Brown Lake. Eli, not only does dropping your WaveBird in the porcelain pool break Nintendo's warranty policies; it may violate several federal laws. While we sympathize with your plight, the law of the land is, and has always been – You poop on it; you bought it. No refunds, no exchanges. Now, for the love of Pete, go wash your hands!

SEPARATED AT BIRTH REDUX



I was flipping through the December 2002 issue of *GI* today when I stumbled across what I hope is just a very eerie coincidence. Starting on page 65, there is an ad for the upcoming game Haven: Call of the King. Now, I realize that ads in magazines are supposed to draw attention and catch the reader's eye, and I believe that this ad has done this very effectively; however, what caught my eye was most likely not what was intended. It was not the screen shots. It was not the description of the game. It was the protagonist's striking resemblance to pop star pretty boy Justin Timberlake. I was drawn in by the hopefully unintentional similarity, and began to wonder; has Justin moved on to bigger and better things and offered his likeness to appear in video games? Or, is it simply a coincidence? And if so, could there be any type of lawsuit involved if Midway didn't obtain permission to use his face, or what very oddly seems to be his face? Thanks.

Benji
Via aol.com

Listen Benji, we know that you are obviously a confused young man, so we'll forget that you ever wrote this letter. There is absolutely no way that Haven is even half as cute as Justin, you jerk! Justin is so nice and cool and wears the hottest clothes and would never be caught dead sporting Haven's gross hairstyle and stupid wristbands!! Yuck! We can't believe you would even dream of comparing him to Justin! Gawd, what kind of person are you, Benji? Probably the kind that likes that tramp Britney who broke Justin's heart!!! As if she was ever even good enough for him (lol)!! She was also the one that probably ripped up all the letters we sent to him, which is why he never wrote us back. What a ho! Soon, Justin is going to realize that he needs to leave the Hollywood seen and move to Minnesota, where he can be with his true fans.

ENVELOPE ART

Taylor Nguyen
And we thought only Jedi had to wear the cheesy Padawan braids

FEBRUARY WINNER!

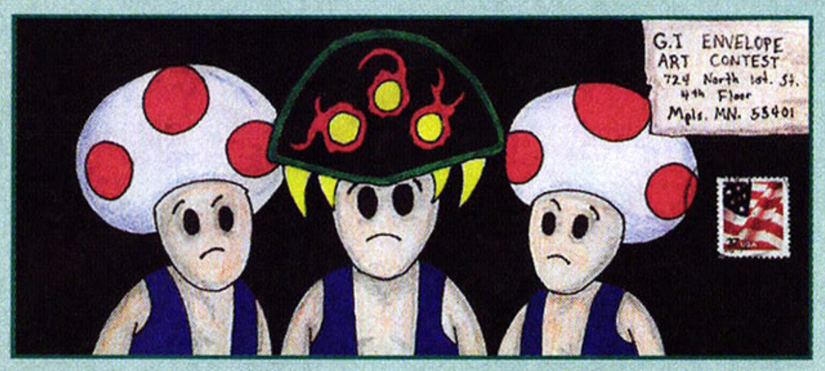
Christine Neumann
The Mona Lisa gets down with a video game masterpiece. Magnifique!!!

Eric Nash
This is funny stuff, but we all know that you don't mess with a pissed-off Italian plumber

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault. Sorry, art cannot be returned.

Send to:
Game Informer • Envelope Art Contest
724 North First St., 4th Floor • Mpls, MN 55401

Adam Bennett
Kain needs to get more fiber in his diet



Charles M. Atkins
You guys are, like, so 2002. Nobody wears polka dot turbans anymore! Life-sucking Metroids are all the rage!

Efrain Esquivias
You've seen me, Manhattan. Now, it's time to smell me!

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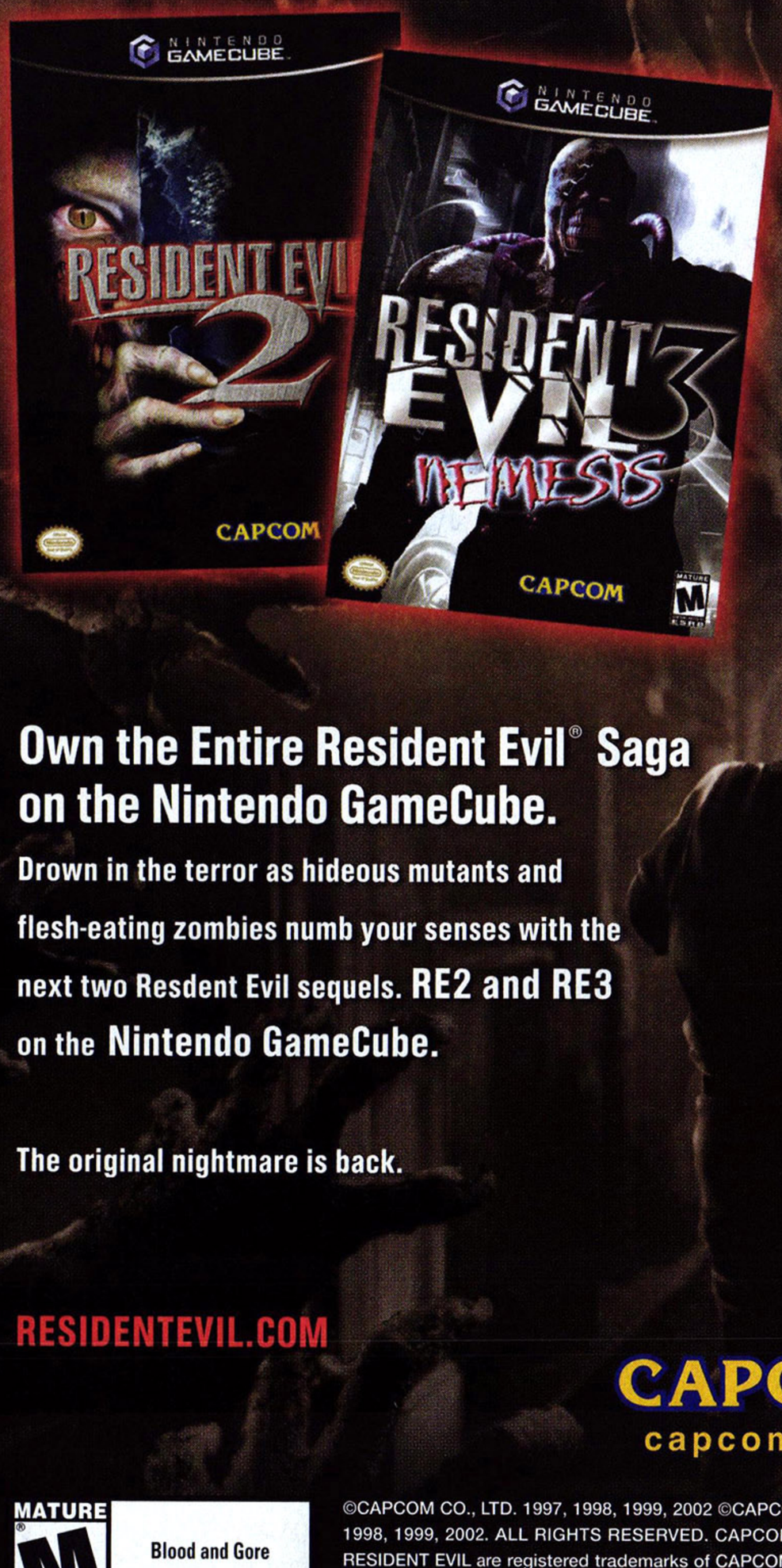

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Blood and Gore
Violence

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GI NEWS

KOEI NAMES DYNASTY SUCCESSOR

Koei continues to build its heritage of tactical brawlers with the announcement of ***Dynasty Warriors 4*** for the **PlayStation 2**. The title is expected to ship at the end of March.

Already well known for its game engine featuring hordes of onscreen enemies, things get even hairier now that *DW 4* promises "more reactive" enemy and ally AI. Smarter compatriots enable you to perform co-op attacks. The stakes of war are also made much more tantalizing with real-time siege equipment and the ***Kessen***-like one-on-one battles between rival officers. Now you can lob burning hunks of rock from catapults while your ground soldiers use the battering ram to kick down the castle doors.

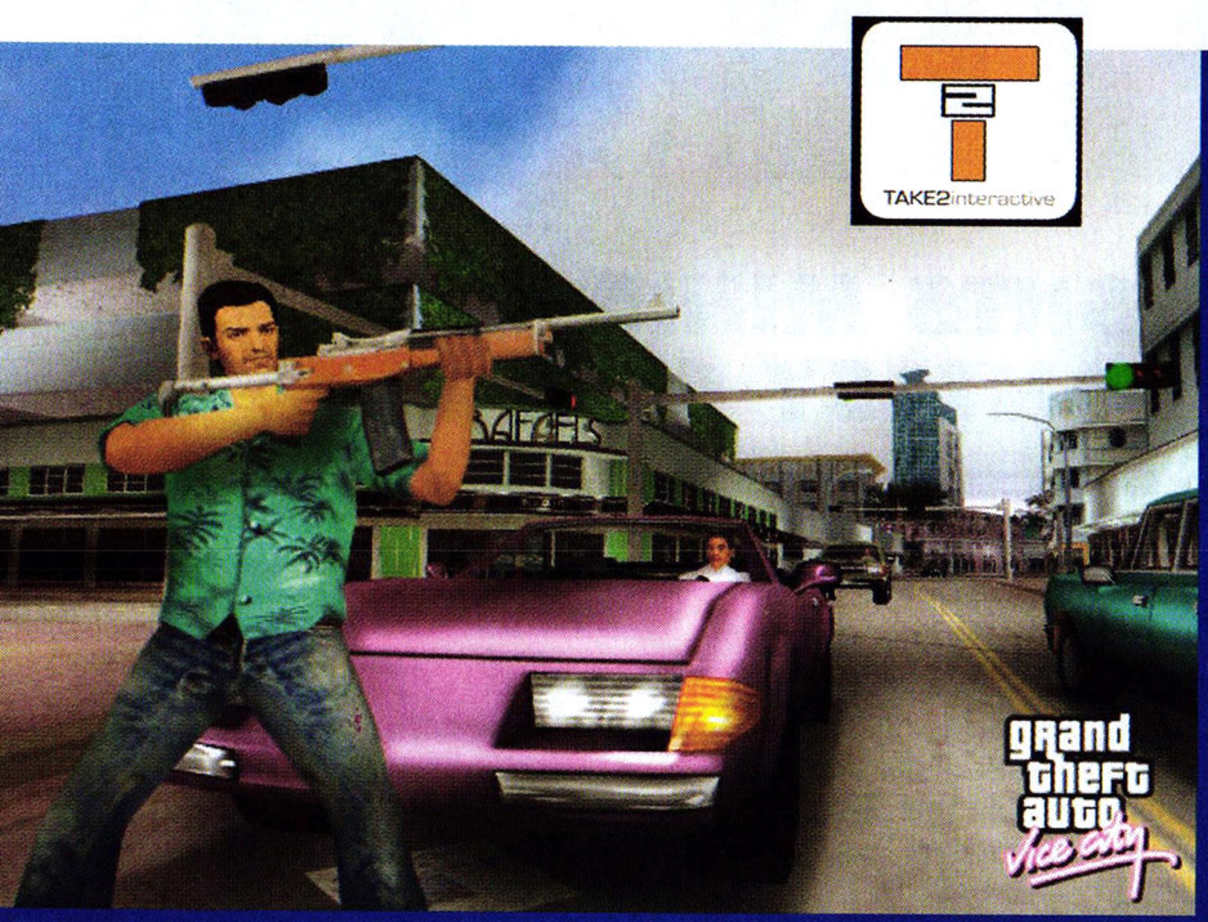
Koei tells us that *Dynasty Warriors 4* is a PlayStation 2 exclusive and will remain so, despite the fact that the last installment eventually appeared on **Xbox**.

SCULLY AND MULDER RETURN!

For those of you who think you've been abducted by aliens, don't worry. The truth is out there and help is on the way. **Sierra** has announced that it is publishing an *X-Files* game for both **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox**. ***X-Files: Resist or Serve*** will appear in stores by this summer.

Resist or Serve will be a one-player survival horror affair, but unlike most of the carbon copies that infest the genre, Sierra says that it is trying to offer something above the norm. You will control Special Agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder at different times, but both will offer unique gameplay styles.

To ensure that the game's atmosphere feels as authentic as possible, Sierra will use **David Duchovny** and **Gillian Anderson** for voice work. Other guest actors will appear in the title's original story, including Cigarette-Smoking Man. The plot of *The X-Files: Resist or Serve* will not pick up where the show left off. Stay tuned for more as it develops.



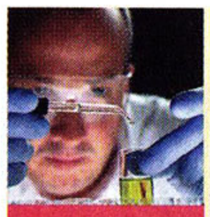
TAKE 2 TALKS NEW GRAND THEFT AUTO

In a recent earnings report, **Take 2 Interactive** discussed its future lineup of software – including a new ***Grand Theft Auto*** – as well as the recent success it's had with the series in general. According to analysts, ***Vice City*** tallied up three million units sold in its first month on shelves, while ***GTA III*** has moved eight million through the end of October. *Vice City* is expected to appear on the **PC** this fall.

Take 2 also reported that it has a new chief executive. **Jeffrey Laprin** is the former chief operating officer of **THQ** and replaces **Kelly Sumner**, who will move on to head Take 2's PC games division. Laprin will preside over the 70 games that the company currently has in development. This includes 25 from the Take 2 subsidiary, **Rockstar Games**.

Before this fall, a ***Serious Sam*** sequel, ***Railroad Tycoon III***, and ***Hidden & Dangerous 2*** are expected on the PC. ***Mafia***, ***The Great Escape***, ***Project Manhunt*** and others should appear on the **PlayStation 2** and **Xbox** before October. In 2004, Take 2 expects to ship sequels for ***Max Payne*** and ***State of Emergency***, as well as the new *Grand Theft Auto* title. The company also plans to release a video game based on the cult film ***The Warriors***.

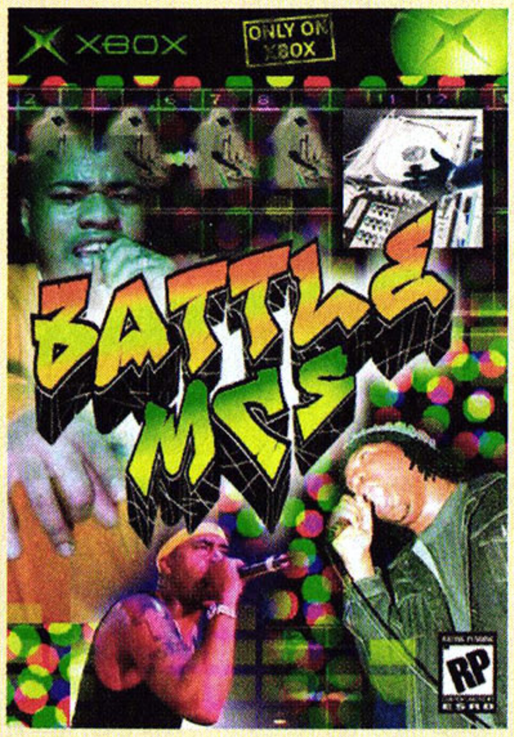
GI NEWS



R&D

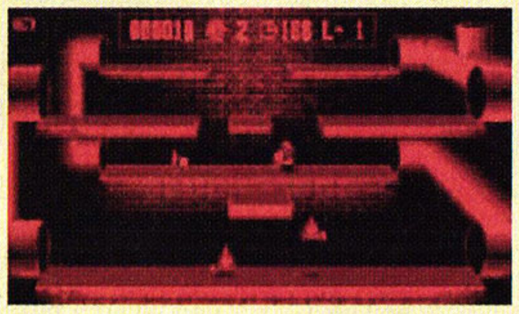
Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

BATTLE MCS



The only interaction gamers have been able to have with their onscreen alter egos is through controller manipulation. Thanks to Xbox Live's broadband speed and voice communicator, a new genre of games could emerge. Battle MCs, which would be a mix between Parappa, Street Fighter, and MTV Music Generator, pits your rhyming skills against all comers in a lyrical free-for-all! A customized character represents you onstage, as you trade lines online with a human opponent. A complex scoring engine rates based on aural compatibility between verses, but it's not the only thing that determines the winner. Gamers who aren't participating get to watch the battles go down and – like boxing judges – cast their votes for who they think is flowin', and who needs to be goin'. The analog buttons represent your character's hands and can be used to hold the mic, gesture at your opponent, or grab various parts of your anatomy. Score postings will highlight who's got the crown and who's on their way to the top. People would gather at showdowns just like real-life concerts. Who knows where the next Eminem or Snoop will come from? Dance Dance Revolution showed who could walk the walk. Battle MCs would prove, once and for all, who could talk the talk.

NAME THAT GAME



Think you know everything about Mario, huh? Well then tell us this: What is this obscure Mario game released on Nintendo's failed Virtual Boy? This vid was basically a 3D version of the arcade cabinet Mario Bros., and it allowed you to move in front of or behind the pipes. This game also gave you a blinding headache to boot!

(Answer on page 36)

TOP 10 XBOX LIVE USER NAMES

10 Linkisafairy

9 Anything with 69, 666, or 420

8 TVersetti

7 BillGatesisahunk

6 ErnestBorgnine

5 RearAdmiral

4 Ihavenogirlfriend

3 Dialupyourass

2 ReinerSuckz

1 GIrulez

DEVELOPER TOP 5

DR. GREG ZESCHUK
JOINT CEO, BIOWARE

1 Wasteland – Apple II

2 Wizardry – Apple II

3 Chrono Cross – PSone

4 Skies of Arcadia – DC

5 Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn – PC

READER TOP 5

ALEX WALENTY
MACOMB, MI

1 Final Fantasy IV – SNES

2 Shining Force CD – Sega CD

3 Dragon Warrior III – Game Boy Color

4 Super Mario Bros. 3 – NES

5 Sonic CD – Sega CD

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives and a photo of yourself to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
email: topfive@gameinformer.com
(attach digital picture)

Everyone that enters each month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

MIYAMOTO UNVEILS NEW NINTENDO GAMES

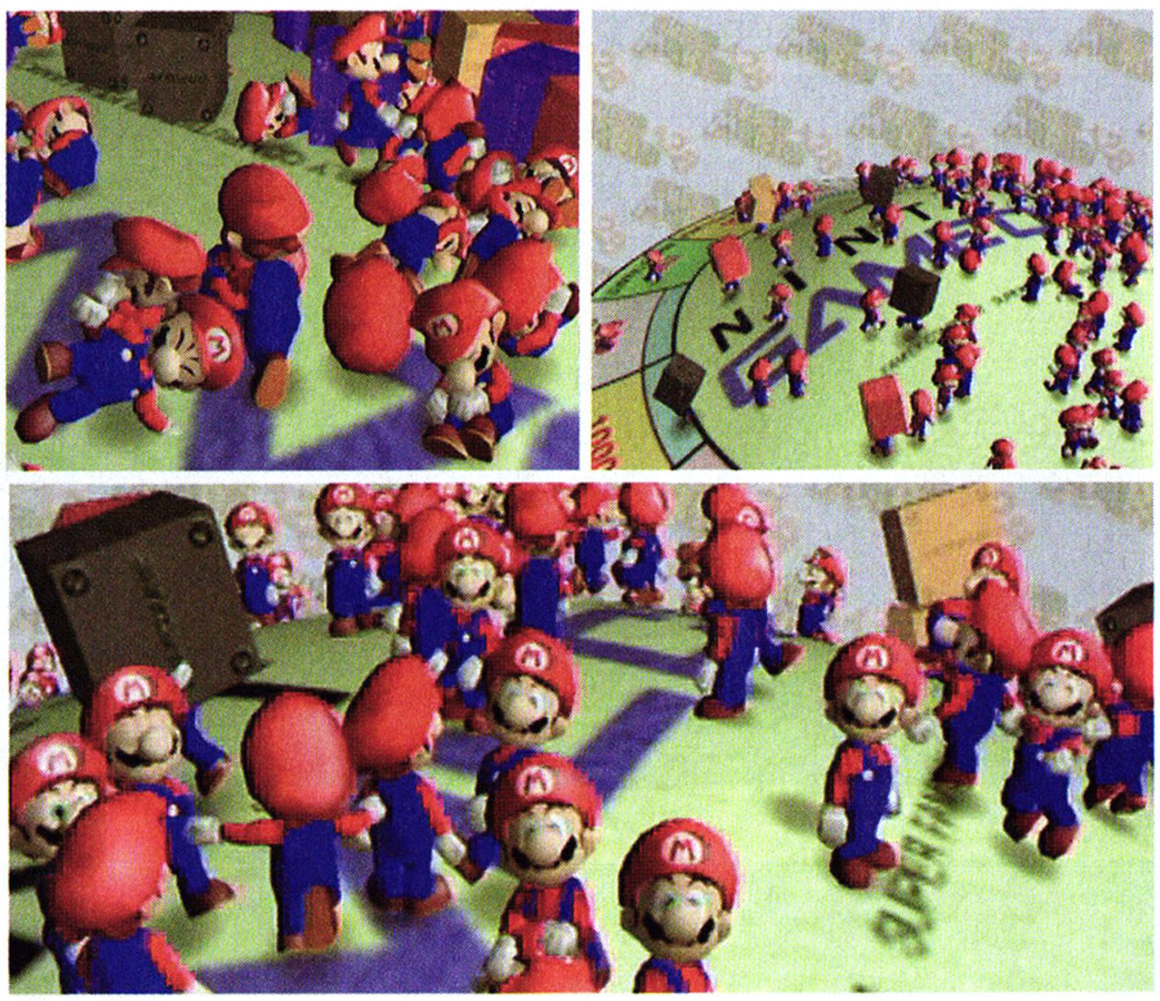
In an interview with the Japanese version of *Playboy*, **Nintendo's** mastermind **Shigeru Miyamoto** revealed that ***Mario 128*** and ***Pikmin 2*** are currently in development for the **GameCube**.

Further details are scarce at the moment, but Miyamoto did have this message for fans regarding *Mario 128*: "I believe that with this game, you'll be able to feel the 'newness' that was missing from ***Mario Sunshine***."

Pikmin

Interestingly, this title was once little more than a technology demo for the GameCube. When the platform was first debuted at Nintendo's **Space World 2000**, *Mario 128* showed just as many iterations of the plumber onscreen – each at 700 polygons per character. Whether or not this resembles the actual game itself remains to be seen.

As for *Pikmin 2*, it is unknown whether it will show the return of Captain Olimar, but we know that Kristian is just excited to find out what new colors of *Pikmin* this sequel will bring.



Mario 128

NIGHTS MINIGAME IN PHANTASY STAR

Sega Saturn's cult classic ***Nights*** is in a new...minigame. It's not quite the full-length title that fans have been clamoring for, but hey, it's something. **GameCube's *Phantasy Star Online Episodes I & II*** is featuring a downloadable *Nights* minigame.

Hunters must first complete the Dream Messenger quest and collect the lost Nights. From here, you can get the download. The game is a time-attack mission which can then be saved onto your GameCube memory card and transferred to your **Game Boy Advance** to be played at anytime.

In a world of villains, a goddess reborn
struggles to fulfill a prophecy.

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Real time party-based combat where you control a variety of characters, from spellcasters to assassins

Transform yourself into 12 powerful summons, from the Blood Juggernaut to the Blade of Sand

Complex, character-based story set in a unique world that combines sci-fi and fantasy

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence

NINTENDO GAMECUBE™

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volition

THQ®

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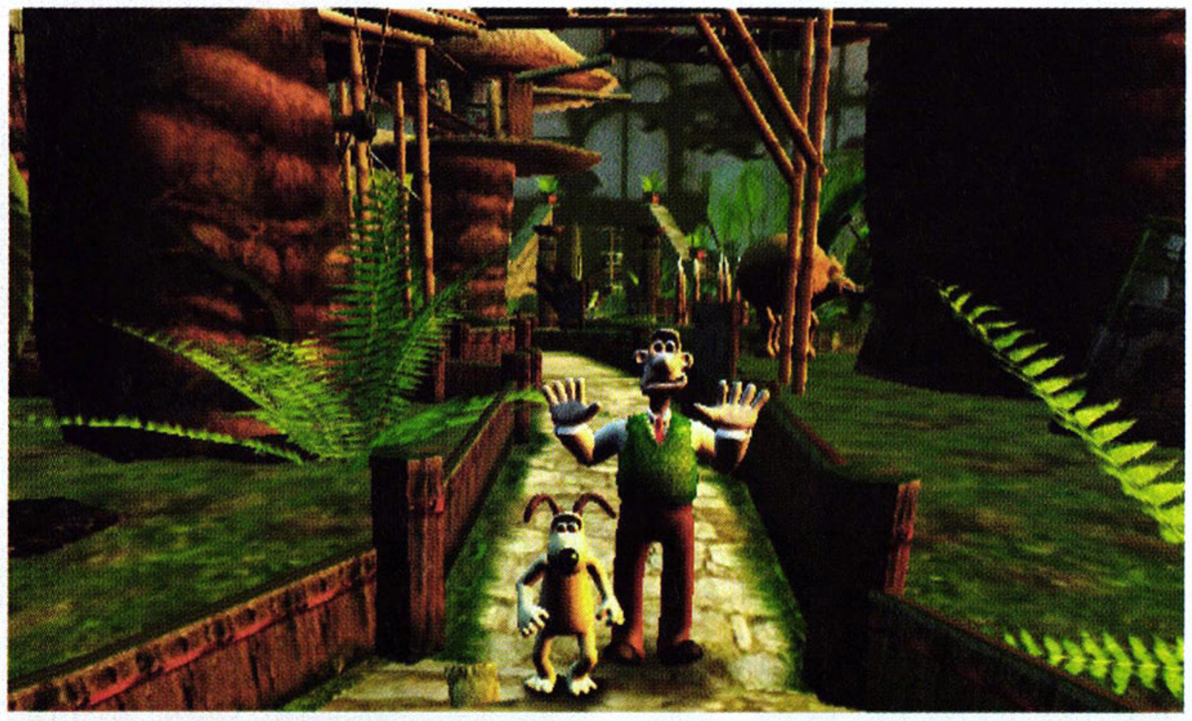
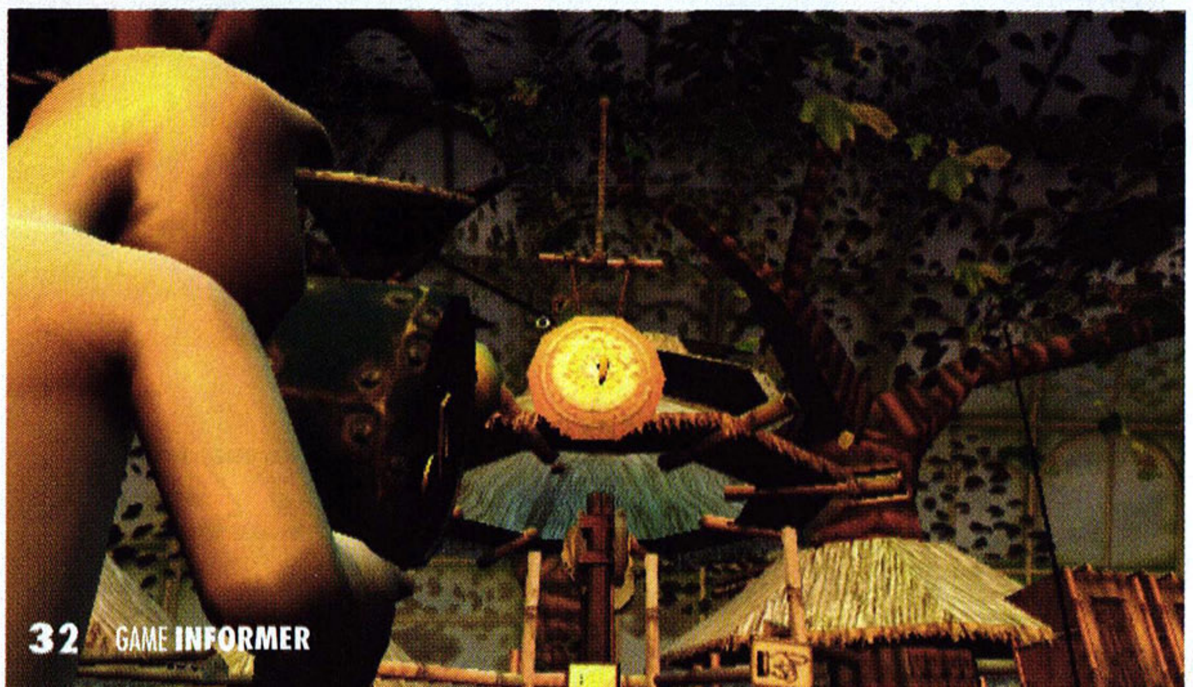
A GRAND DAY OUT FOR WALLACE & GROMIT

Bam Entertainment is bringing the loveable **Nick Park** duo of ***Wallace & Gromit*** to **Xbox**, **PlayStation 2**, and **GameCube** in the fall of this year. The title, centering on the adventures of an eccentric English inventor and his wiser canine sidekick, already looks to be a remarkable upgrade from the last Nick Park-born video game, ***Chicken Run***. In these early screenshots, it's evident that today's systems are better suited to the movie maker's dynamic claymation creations, and it has us feeling warmer than a tea cozy.

Wallace & Gromit pits this duo against the evil penguin Feathers, as he is capturing baby zoo animals in a plot to turn a fortune. The game is shaping up to be of the action/platform ilk, with various puzzles getting in the way. No doubt, we'll also be seeing some of Wallace's harebrained inventions throughout the course of the adventure, too.





THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

BAD – **Reiner** and **Kristian**. These two numbskulls raised taxes, sent industrial pollution through the roof, and made life a living hell for their citizens in ***SimCity 4***. If you ever see them in your town, grab a pitchfork and gather an angry mob at once.

GOOD – Hot on the heels of its launch, **Xbox Live** is already offering downloadable content. New mechs, maps, and multiplayer modes are rolling out for ***MechAssault***. Hey **PlayStation 2** owners, try doing that without a hard drive!

BAD – *Game Informer's* **Matt** appears as a pedestrian model in **Sony's *The Getaway***, and **Reiner** runs him down with his car every chance he gets. Matt hasn't gotten this much abuse from Reiner since he called **George Lucas** a "fat, washed-up egomaniac with no talent (and a stupid beard)."

UGLY – **Square's PlayOnline** service in Japan isn't doing well at all. Despite hosting ***Final Fantasy XI*** on both **PC** and **PlayStation 2**, the online-only game has only drawn about 180,000 subscribers. Its lack of profitability puts *Final Fantasy XI's* release in America in doubt.

GOOD – "I only play it for the text." Yeah, right. **Arush Entertainment** is putting out the first **Playboy** video game in 2004. The **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, and **PC** title will put you in the slippers of **Hugh Hefner** as you build the Playboy empire from the ground up.

LOOSE TALK

Whenever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, Game Informer experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else! In the industry and need to get back at the boss who fired you by spilling some secrets? Email us at loosetalk@gameinformer.com and we'll be your shoulder to cry on.

A source has told *Loose Talk* that **Capcom** is currently in negotiations with **Disney** to produce a video game based on the **Tim Burton** movie *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Rumor has it that one of the first projects for the newly formed **Square Enix** is going to be ***Parasite Eve: Rebirth*** for the **PlayStation 2** and **GameCube**. This won't be a new chapter, but rather, a remake of a **PSone** title. Whether it'll end up being *Parasite Eve* or a full-fledged sequel is not known at this time. The game should come out in America in 2004.

In the wake of the **Square Enix** merger, and tough economic times worldwide, word among American financial circles is that this is just the beginning. **Microsoft** taking over **Sega** has been making the rounds for a while, and now **Vivendi's** game division is joining the list of the usual suspects to be purchased.

Midway is heavily considering changing the formula for its ***NFL Blitz*** series. Where once it was an over-the-top arcade-style football game, a more sim-like approach is on the horizon. Don't worry fans, this new *Blitz* looks to integrate its deeper features (while retaining its hard-hitting spirit) just as well as ***NHL Hitz*** has.

Initial reports out of Japan are that **NEC** – the company that was responsible for the 8-bit **TurboGrafx-16** – is already at work with **Nintendo** on a processor chip for the **GameCube's** successor. Nintendo denies that the two companies have any deal at the moment for hardware.

GET ON ALL FOURS

AND MAKE 'EM BEG FOR MERCY

ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2

When the world's most talented & aggressive riders get together to kick it, the results aren't always pretty, and the ride of your life may be your last. Master a vicious arsenal of lethal punches, in-air kicks & death-defying tricks, all while punishing the competition on massive globe-spanning tracks. See you at the finish line, sucka...if you make it that far!

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Lyrics
Mild Violence

PlayStation.2

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

AKA Acclaim

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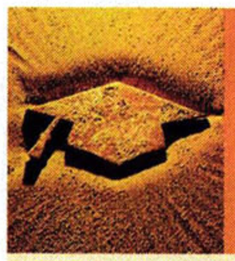


VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Nothin' says lovin' like something from the oven. Except maybe something from a high-priced jewelry store. It's a documented fact that video game knowledge has a direct correlation with what your sweetie would like for Valentine's Day. Don't believe us? Then just take this month's trivia and match your score up with our recommended February 14th gift of love. Thank us later.

Question 1: Incog, Inc., the developer behind War of the Monsters, was a successful company in a past life, making many great PSone titles. What was it formerly known as?
A. Psygnosis
B. Behaviour Interactive
C. Singletrac
D. Argonaut Software

Question 2: Jim Henson Productions was very interested in creating computerized versions of its characters. It was achieved by hooking a mechanical puppet-like device to an SGI dial box to make a moving, low-resolution, onscreen character that could be edited to perform with real puppets. What was this digitized star called?
A. Polly Gone
B. Waldo C. Graphic
C. Computey
D. Doodlez

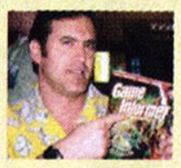
Question 3: As one of its last attempts to drive console sales, Nintendo included a second controller with its Nintendo 64 system. Rather than the bland gray one, though, it featured a wild, transparent hue. Officially, what was the color called?
A. Not-Just-For-Girls Pink
B. Red Lightning
C. Nuclear Orange
D. Atomic Purple

Question 4: The term "cyberspace" was originally used to describe a futuristic world created by networking VR systems and environments. Who coined the phrase?
A. '80s one-hit-wonder Thomas Dolby
B. Head-mounted display inventor Ivan Sutherland
C. VR pioneer Jaron Lanier
D. Sci-fi writer William Gibson

Question 5: Rhapsody is an underrated PSone RPG by Atlus, which has a very musical focus. What is the name of the young female star?
A. Cornet
B. Obee
C. Waffle
D. Whitney

Question 6: Stuntman, Atari's PS2 hit, puts you in the driver's seat, doing death defying maneuvers for six different fictional movies. Which of the following wasn't one of the films your character drove in?
A. Live Twice For Tomorrow
B. Blood Oath
C. Sleazy Ridin'
D. Conspiracy

Question 7: Cult classic icon Bruce Campbell is most famous for his role in the *Evil Dead* trilogy, but he's also done voiceovers for a good amount of video games. Which of these titles did he not do voice work for?



A. Tachyon: The Fringe
B. Broken Helix
C. Pitfall 3D
D. Loadstar: The Legend of Tully Bodine

Question 8: Grand Theft Auto: Vice City features a taxi company, which you can buy for $40,000, then earn up to $5,000 off each time you collect. It was named in honor one of the stars of the late seventies to early eighties sitcom, *Taxi*, but which one?

A. Andy Kaufman
B. Tony Danza
C. Danny DeVito
D. Christopher Lloyd

Question 9: In the '80s, motion picture companies realized that computers could be used to help craft animated movies. What was the first feature film to be aided by computer graphics?
A. *Beauty and the Beast*
B. *The Land Before Time*
C. *An American Tail*
D. *The Great Mouse Detective*

Question 10: Splashdown, widely regarded as the best waverunner video game ever, took over seven months to be ported to Xbox from PlayStation 2. Fortunately, owners of the Microsoft console got some added content for their patience, including two exclusive courses. Which of these locations was only featured in the Xbox Splashdown?
A. The Red Sea
B. Key West, FL
C. Lake Havasu, AZ
D. Great Barrier Reef

Score & Rank

0-1
The Album With "Rico Suave"

2-3
Cheap Hoover Brush-Vac

4-5
Bouquet Of Black Roses

6-7
Sour Ring Pop

8-9
Dollar Sign Medallion

10
New Storm Windows

Video Game Trivia Answers:

1.C 2.B 3.D 4.D 5.A 6.C 7.D 8.A 9.D 10.B

SEGA AIDS ONLINE DEVELOPERS

Sega.com and **Capcom** have just announced a partnership to allow the **Sega Network Application Package (SNAP)** to aid the online portion of ***Auto Modellista*** for **PlayStation 2**. This is the first deal that Sega.com has brokered for its middle-ware service. The company is offering its online gaming expertise to any PS2, **GameCube**, or **Xbox** developer.

SNAP

SNAP will effectively give studios technological and support services for the online portions of their titles. This includes everything from server use and offering low-latency playing, to things like billing, match making, quality assurance, and online support. "We make the network piece of [a game] easy and fast," says John Kuner, director of online development for Sega.com.

"Sega is very platform agnostic. We want to bring the message of online gaming love to the masses and support it," declares Kuner. Sega has been in the business of online games since the **Dreamcast**. Is offering the services of SNAP giving away its edge in this sector of gaming? "There's been discussions about that, but I think the positives definitely outweigh the negatives."

Kuner expects the middleware to grow as online gaming grows – no matter what the trend is. "Now it's voice-chat, next year maybe it's going to be force-feedback chairs, or whatever. At its core, SNAP really is a core transport mechanism." In other words, any online gameplay amenities (such as community features), present or future, will be easily accommodated by SNAP.

Currently, Capcom's *Auto Modellista* (due this spring) is the only title using Sega.com's middleware, but Kuner told us to look out for more deals involving the company's services shortly.

BREAK DOWN

63% of the staff went to see the midnight showing of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. Nobody grew the knuckle hair out on their toes – hobbit style – however

74% of the Games of the Year were chosen by a combination of blindfolds, darts, alcohol, and lots of swearing

95% of Andy's time this month was spent not blinking. He didn't want to miss a moment of *Metroid Prime* or *EverQuest: Planes of Power*

68% of the boos Reiner received this month were for his guitar playing in the *Sims*

90% of GameCube's big titles have come out in the past few months

A COLLISION OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL UNIVERSES!

Rule the arena of the world's two most powerful fighting Universes. Marvel vs. Capcom 2 is bar-none, the most insane tag-team fighting game on the planet! An unprecedented 56 playable characters raises the bar on arcade fighting with 3 on 3 tag-team battles, unbelievable control and hyper-fast animation. Pick a fight with your favorite legendary Capcom characters and Super Heroes from the Marvel Universe and watch the super combos fly.

CAPCOM
capcom.com

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood
Suggestive Themes

MARVEL PlayStation 2

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NEW GAMING EXPO FOR PUBLIC

Sick of hearing us talk about how cool **E3** is each and every year? Tired of wishing you could have been there? Well, finally someone is doing something for you – the average Joe/Jane. **Ultimate Gamers Expo** is a three day show (August 15 through 17) open to the public, allowing you to get your hands on playable sneak peeks of upcoming games.

UGE will be held at the South hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center and will also feature gaming tournaments and other sideshow attractions. *Game Informer* contacted UGE, but it was not able to officially announce what publishers and developers would be in attendance this year. However, representatives did assure us that they will go after all the big guns in the industry in order to offer you the best upcoming video games this August.

FIRST LOOK: DRAGON WARRIOR VIII AND MORE

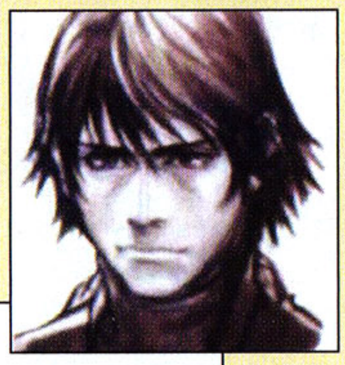
Dragon Warrior VIII

In the wake of last month's news that publisher/developers **Square** and **Enix** were going to merge, some doubt was cast as to exactly what would become of each company's respective game franchises. As far as Enix is concerned, it looks like ***Dragon Quest*** (***Dragon Warrior*** in the U.S.) is definitely here to stay. The RPG's eighth installment has already produced a screenshot – and we think you'll agree that it looks quite nice. ***Dragon Warrior VIII*** is being developed for the **PlayStation 2**, although a release date (even for Japan) is not known yet.

At the time of the merger, Enix president **Youichi Wada** said the move was being done to save on things like development costs. Interestingly however, Enix is reportedly bringing in **Level-5** to help out on *Dragon Warrior VIII*.

Drag-on Dragoon

In other Enix news, details have come out about a new game called ***Drag-on Dragoon***. The title will be a mix of dragon-based air combat as well as conventional ground battles, and will feature two playable characters. As for who is publishing it after the Square and Enix merger, a representative for the latter company told us unequivocally – "*Drag-on Dragoon* is an Enix title." They went on to say that Enix has been developing the game for a short while now. What happens after April 1, when the two gaming giants fuse, however, is unknown.



DATA FILE

➤ Despite the fanfare over the re-release of ***The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*** on **GameCube** (as well as the ***Master Quest*** expansion pack), such rehashes of **N64** titles won't be a trend for the future.

➤ As part of **Sega's** troupe of old games being re-released on next-gen consoles, it looks like **Xbox** may get the short end of the stick. Plans in Japan are to give the platform the following **Dreamcast** games: ***Illbleed***, ***Rent-a-Hero No. 1***, ***Dynamite Cop***, and ***Blue Stinger: Premium Cut***.

➤ **Bioware** is treating fans to not one, but two ***Neverwinter Nights*** **PC** expansion packs. The first comes out this spring, which is subtitled ***Shadows of Undrentide***, while the second should appear this summer. *Shadows* adds a new 40+ hour single-player quest; two tile sets; and a slew of spells, weapons, and monsters. That's some serious +20 D&D damage, folks.

➤ **Acclaim** has had to close its Salt Lake development studio in order to cut costs and consolidate. While work will continue on ***Legends of Wrestling III*** at the publisher's Austin, Texas studio, an unnamed project has been cancelled in the process.

➤ To celebrate **Mega Man's** 15th birthday this year, **Capcom** is giving gamers an avalanche of titles in the series over numerous platforms. Four are for the **Game Boy Advance**: ***Mega Man & Bass***, ***Mega Man Battle Network 3: White*** (and a ***Blue*** version, as well), and ***Mega Man Zero 2***. **GameCube** will receive ***Mega Man Transmission***, while ***Mega Man X7*** will appear on the **PlayStation 2**.

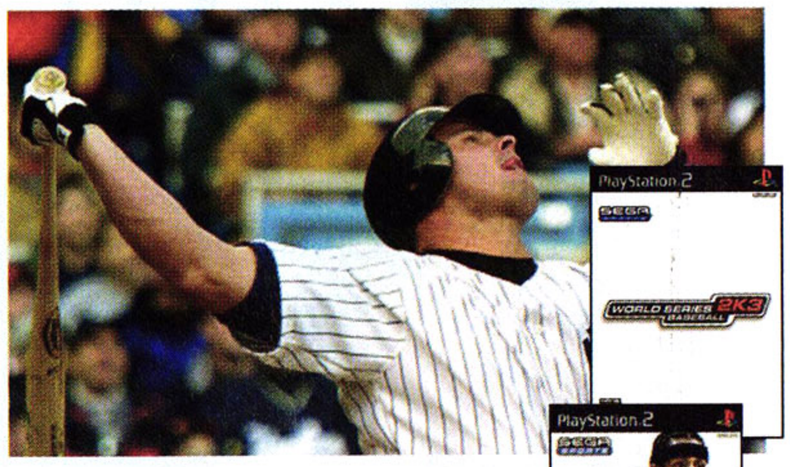
➤ **Electronic Arts** is looking to supply titles to **Nokia's** mobile phone/handheld gaming device called the **N-Gage**. Nokia hopes to compete with **Nintendo's Game Boy Advance** through the N-Gage, which also features **Bluetooth** technology (allowing close-proximity, wireless gaming), and **Sega** software. N-Gage should release before this summer.

➤ **Professor K** is coming to the **Game Boy Advance**. **THQ** will bring ***Jet Grind Radio*** to the **GBA** this spring. The title will not only bring its distinctive cel-shaded look to the platform, but it will also feature multiplayer options for up to four people.

Name That Game Answer:
Mario Clash

CONTEST

WIN AN AUTOGRAPHED JASON GIAMBI BALL!



Want to crush for size like Jason Giambi? Then enter to win Game Informer's super-sized Sega Sports extravaganza – featuring your chance to win an autographed baseball from the New York Yankee's first baseman. Developer Visual Concepts is also stepping up to the plate to deliver its entire sports lineup of games for the platform of your choice (PlayStation 2, Xbox, or GameCube). Like Giambi, these titles represent the most complete package in sports, and they just keep getting better every year.

Grand Prize (1)
- An autographed baseball from Jason Giambi of the New York Yankees
- Copies of NFL 2K3, NHL 2K3, NBA 2K3, World Series Baseball 2K3, NCAA College Basketball 2K3, and NCAA College Football 2K3 on either the PlayStation 2, Xbox, or GameCube
- A Visual Concepts sweatshirt

Second Prize (2)
- Copies of NFL 2K3, NHL 2K3, and NBA 2K3 for either PlayStation 2, Xbox, or GameCube
- A Visual Concepts sweatshirt

There Are Two Ways To Enter:

(1) Send a POSTCARD with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:

GI'S SEGA SPORTS SWEEPSTAKES
724 N. FIRST ST. 4TH FLOOR
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401

(2) Send an EMAIL with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:
segasports@gameinformer.com

Your name will be placed in a pool of valid entrants for a random drawing to be conducted on March 4, 2003.

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深夜 MIDNIGHT

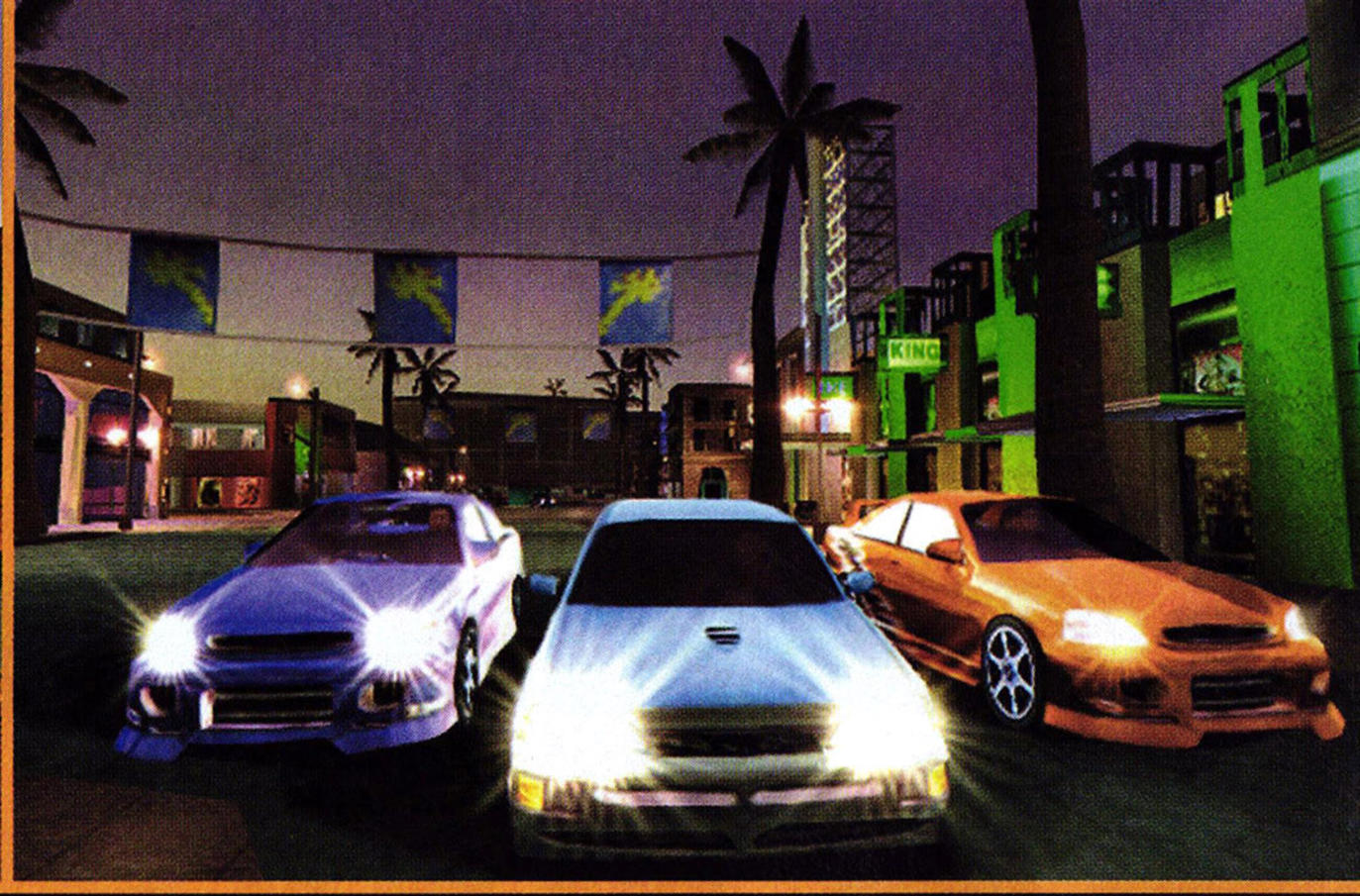
Basking in the staggering success of its blockbuster hits Max Payne, Grand Theft Auto III, and Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Rockstar Games finds itself at the peak of both commercial and critical success. With everyone speculating on what 2002's wunderkind publisher will do next, the company is once again confounding expectations by revisiting one of its first commercial breakthroughs: Midnight Club. The original Midnight Club was one of the few standouts in a lackluster PlayStation 2 launch. Its mix of adrenaline-charged, late night street racing and free-roaming, open city environments won numerous accolades, and in part helped pave the way for GTA III. Two years is a long time in the swiftly changing world of video games, and past triumphs are no guarantee of future success. Will Midnight Club II meet with a chilly reception from an increasingly jaded gaming audience? Rockstar and its newly acquired development team Rockstar San Diego (formerly Angel Studios, creators of the first Midnight Club) are betting the house that they've got the ingenuity to redefine the racing genre one more time.

GASOLINE DREAMS

CLUB II

Photographs by Wesley Allison

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER RACING (ONLINE/LAN CAPABILITY) ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES
■ **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11 (PS2), SPRING (XBOX/PC)



THE SECOND COMING

Although Midnight Club lacks the pop culture success of the vaunted Grand Theft Auto series, Rockstar believes that the game played a big role in making the company a major force in the industry. "At the time, Midnight Club and Smuggler's Run were huge risks for us," recalls Rockstar PR manager Jeff Castaneda. "Other companies had their existing titles and brands that were already in the mix. When you're at the launch of a new console, it's really risky to come out with two totally unknown games and franchises. But we felt that we'd have something special here; to come out with some nonlinear, non-track-based games. It definitely paid off, because these games went on to sell over a million copies."

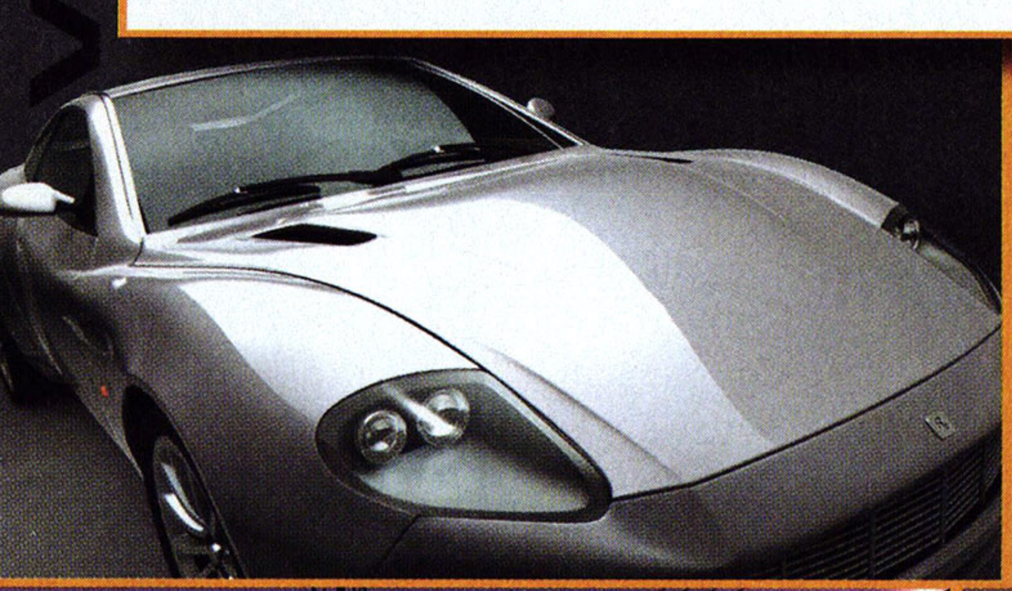
The powers-that-be at Rockstar clearly had faith in Angel Studios, the developer of Midnight Club and Smuggler's Run – a belief that prompted the company to acquire the close-knit San Diego collective as a wholly owned subsidiary. The development house has a long and interesting history, having crafted such disparate projects as early-90s CG motion picture *The Lawnmower Man*, Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest (N64), the Midtown Madness series (PC), and the Sega Saturn curio Mr. Bones.

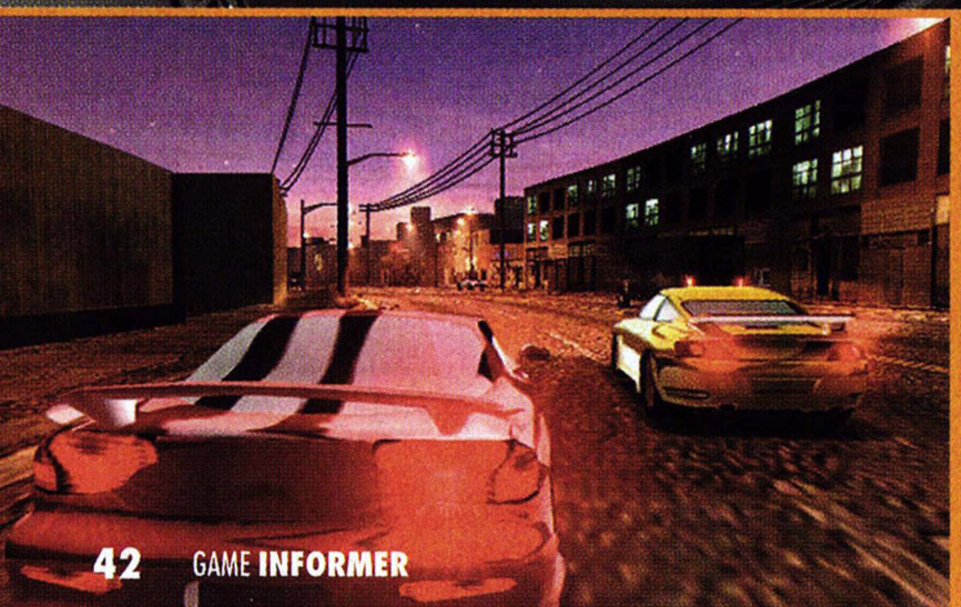
The original Midnight Club met its mark, but its sequel faces a game market considerably more competitive than it was during the early days of the PlayStation 2. Even more daunting is the fact that the game's key innovation – huge and open urban driving environments – have become an accepted part of the average consumer's daily gaming diet, due in no small part to the success of Rockstar's own GTA franchise.

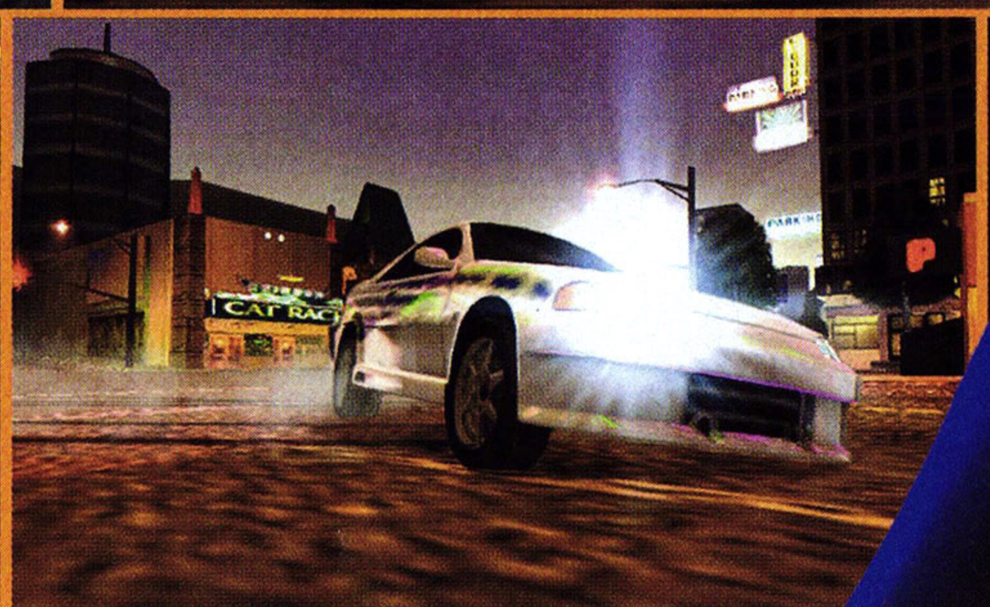
Have gamers become too blasé to take notice of a title that is unapologetic in its devotion to pure, balls-out racing? Corey Wade, Rockstar senior product manager, feels that Grand Theft Auto's success can only help Midnight Club II. "GTA III really opened everyone's mind to the idea of freedom in a city," Wade observed. "After [GTA], that freedom aspect is really what people want."

However, the Midnight Club II team is conscious of the need to compete with the best of the competition – both internal and external. Ted Carson, the game's lead programmer, said, "I think that the fact that people do expect [open environments] means that you have to concentrate more on the game. [That's] where MC II is better than the first one. We can't just put out an open city game and say, 'That's fun because you can drive anywhere.'"

With this in mind, Rockstar San Diego went back to the drawing board, looking to build upon the strengths of the past, while making significant improvements to the conceptual and technological foundation of its marquee franchise. After spending an afternoon looking under the hood and kicking the tires of Midnight Club II, it appears that the game has the horsepower to run head-to-head with any racing title on the market.







BETTER, NOT BIGGER

When your game is asking players to spend countless hours speeding down the streets of a virtual metropolis, the city in question better be one damn cool place to be. Rockstar San Diego is well aware of this reality and has spent a great deal of Midnight Club II's development cycle crafting over-the-top interpretations of not one, but three of the world's most famous cities: Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo.

Looking to create an experience that was less confusing and more conducive to compelling racing, the game's designers made a bold decision: Instead of using two years' worth of gained experience and technological acumen to construct an even larger urban wasteland, the cities in Midnight Club II are actually smaller than those in the first. In the "bigger is better" world of marketing, it's rare to hear a developer admit that anything in a sequel is smaller than in its predecessor, but this reduced size actually translates into a game that is better designed and infinitely more playable.

"This is one case in which size doesn't matter," said Alan Wasserman, executive producer. "It's easy to make 20 more generic blocks, but we didn't see the point in that."

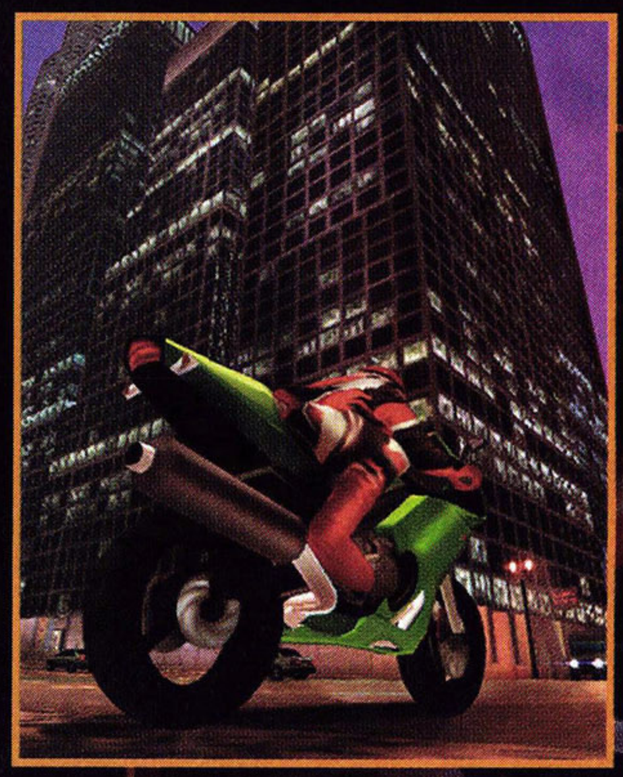
Instead of size for size's sake, the team concentrated on making sure that every inch of each city added something to the racing experience. Rather than cloning an endless parade of faceless apartment buildings, Midnight Club II showcases real architectural diversity, incorporating most of the prominent landmarks of the real-world cities. In this way, the developers have managed to capture the true essence of LA, Paris, and Tokyo, without frustrating the player with overly epic maps.

While the environments are not as large geographically, they are a good deal more detailed. The team describes this concept with the buzzword "vertical density." This basically means that, although you won't be travelling tedious distances, there are actually more usable roadways to explore. Each city has been conceived as having three distinct levels: the surface streets, a system of serpentine underground tunnels, and a host of hidden rooftop jumps and shortcuts. All in all, there are over 200 miles of virtual pathways to be driven – an impressive total by any standard. Even better, this design scheme rewards players for making good use of risky jumps, lending the game an aerial dynamic that few racers can match.

"The philosophy of design was hyper-realism," explains lead game designer Mauro Fiore. "You take aspects of real life and you make it fun. We took that approach. So, here's an open city, and people would say, 'Oh, it's a city – [it's going to have] McDonalds and 90-degree corners.' In our game, you'll be driving down the street, suddenly you'll be going up a ramp, then you're on a rooftop, and – before you know it – you're jumping over the Seine river in Paris. It's that hyper-realism that will shock people. It's not just your everyday city."

Adding to the impact of the dramatic locales will be the game's storyline, which takes players on a journey through the underworld of illegal street racing. This time around, the plot is conveyed through prerendered, CG cutscenes – a huge improvement over the static text boxes of Midnight Club. There are over 60 different scenes in which you'll meet over 20 characters; all of whom were created to represent a type of person commonly involved with the street racing scene. To add even more variety, each character will also be represented with his or her own unique musical selections. Although the final deals have not yet been inked, Rockstar promises that the score will rely heavily on licensed tracks by well-known artists. We'll have to wait to find out, but after Vice City, we're all well aware of what Rockstar can do with a game soundtrack.

When you bust moves like wheelies or stoppies, the camera will pull back to a more dramatic angle



NEW RIDES, NEW TRICKS

A racing game is only as good as its selection of vehicles, and this is another area in which Midnight Club II is pushing the accepted boundaries of the genre. All told, there will be 28 cars, running the gamut of modern automotive technology. From rides based on entry-level Honda Civics to high-concept sports cars modeled on the Lotus Elise to vintage '70s muscle cars, the garage in MC II will be well stocked. Of course, the key words in that last sentence are "based on," because, sadly, Rockstar was not able to secure licenses from the manufacturers. Apparently, MC II's brand of vehicular chaos – and the car-mangling damage models, fires, and explosions that go with it – were a little too much for the vehicle manufacturers' marketing gurus to stomach. Still, the team has managed to create some fairly accurate approximations of some of the world's most popular racers, which look better than ever due to the completely retooled car models.

If this sounds like more of the usual, then prepare yourself for Midnight Club II's ace in the hole: motorcycles. Rockstar San Diego is confident that incorporating bikes into the mix will be the thing that really separates this game from its competition in the field of next-gen driving titles. Although Vice City beat it to the punch by a few months, this will mark the first time that a pure racing game allows players to race motorcycles side by side with cars.

"I think [motorcycles are] the biggest part of this game," said Mauro Fiore. "[It's a challenge] to get a new vehicle type, to balance it with cars, and to make it special. Then, you've got to look at every other motorcycle game. We played MotoGP a lot, because that's probably the best motorcycle game thus far. You go and you race it, and quickly you realize that all the tuning and physics that went into that game [are] designed for a track. You can't take that same physics model and throw it into a city. So, we had to design a system where you could weave through traffic, and also make tight, 90-degree turns in an open city."

Each of the game's three bikes will be able to utilize a control scheme that revolves around the use of the L1 button to balance the rider's weight. Hold L1 while pulling back, and you'll pop a wheelie and blast off with a burst of speed. More importantly, perfecting the technique of leaning into turns is crucial to survival on these mean streets. "With the bike, you've got to go to the side, see the apex of the turn, hold your weight transfer down, and dive into it," observes Fiore. "It's a different driving model. The cycles have a higher learning curve because they require more skill. But the thrill of riding a bike is like no other, because you're much faster off the line."

Bikes may well prove to be the new fan favorites, but a lot of work has gone into making sure that the car loyalists will have some new tricks to master as well. Again, the L1 button comes into play, this time allowing the player to go up on two wheels, as well as correct their pitch in the air following a jump, much like in Sony's ATV Offroad Fury.

Another exciting new tactic is the slipstream turbo, an outrageous variation on the drafting techniques utilized by NASCAR and Indy car drivers. If you've run out of your allotment of NOS turbos, you can use the slipstream to rocket back to first place. Follow closely behind an opponent, and a gauge on the right of your screen will begin to fill. When it's full, hit the turbo button and you'll experience a jarring hyper-speed boost. Of course, rival cars can slipstream off you, which means that crafty strategy will be necessary for victory.

ENGINE OVERHAUL

As is common of most games released at the outset of a new console, the original Midnight Club really shows its age in comparison to more recent titles. With this in mind, the MC II team performed a serious overhaul of the game's engine, improving its core technologies in nearly every major category. The requisite graphical improvements – including better texturing, a new vertex lighting system, and enhanced weather and reflective effects – all make for a game that is much more visually striking than the first.

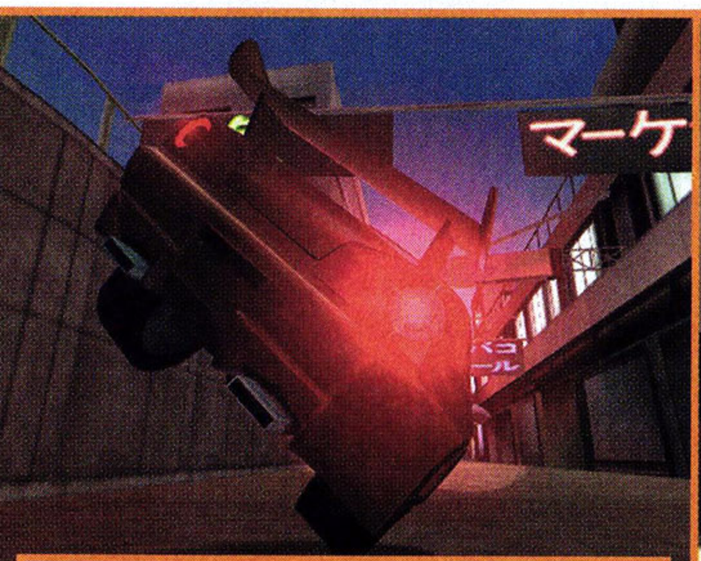
More impressive, and more integral to the game itself, is the advanced artificial intelligence system implemented for the police and computer-controlled racers. Based on a principle called "rail-branching," the AI engine ensures that no matter how long you play Midnight Club II, no race will be exactly the same as the one before it.

"Because of the open city, there are many different ways you can go, [so] it's natural that the cars are going to take different paths each time," said Ted Carson. "That's the technology we've put in this time – based on the probability that they want to take different paths, and those can branch indefinitely and there is no restriction."

This not only gives the game an infinite replay value, but also functions as an indispensable teaching tool. As you cruise the city, looking for action, you'll frequently be required to follow another racer to a predetermined start point. But, unlike in the past, the route you take to get there varies each time, allowing your guide to show you hidden paths and shortcuts. "The purpose of the follows is to teach the city in the game," adds Fiore. "While you're playing the game in those follows, you're passing landmarks, and you're driving through shortcuts [that] come into play later in races. Later, you'll say, 'Yeah, I remember him showing me that.'"

The AI also allows for any number of pulse-raising events – both random and scripted – to occur during the race. Unwitting trucks will pull out of parking ramps; police will set up roadblocks in your path or track you with helicopters; and CPU-controlled racers will get in nasty wrecks, leaving you desperately searching for a small hole to shoot through. Suffice it to say, MC II will provide you with more than a few good scares and memorable moments.

The car models are vastly improved over those in the first Midnight Club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For the first time ever, you can race bikes against cars

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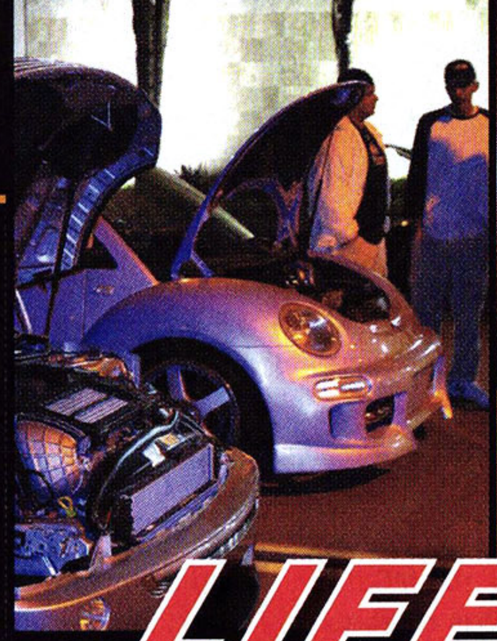


LIFE IN

After spending a few hours haunting the halls of the Rockstar San Diego campus, we thought we'd seen everything Midnight Club II had to offer. We were wrong. Towards the end of the day, Kris Roberts, MC II's game analyst and production assistant, revealed to us that the franchise was, in fact, prepared to make a bold leap into the world of online. Not only that, but we were going to be able to challenge a group from Rockstar's New York offices in a live demonstration.

As they (whoever "they" are) say, online is the future, and Midnight Club is racing towards tomorrow with one to eight-player multiplayer on PlayStation 2, Xbox, and PC. On PS2, the contests will be hosted and managed by the popular GameSpy service, which will allow players to set up their own rules, parameters, and courses, then invite others to join them in an Internet free-for-all. Every Arcade and Career mode race will be available for multiplayer, as well as two Minigames – Capture the Flag and Detonate. Capture the Flag is essentially the same as it was in Smuggler's Run, but Detonate throws players an explosive curveball. Instead of delivering a flag to a set point, you'll drop off a detonator plunger, and watch the rest of those poor chumps go boom.

There are other ways to prey on your unsuspecting foes – most notable among these is the host of new power-ups. Some are rather run-of-the-mill, like an attack which creates slippery handling for your enemy. However, others are more interesting, even diabolical. Our favorite pick-up is the one that suddenly reverses another player's controls, but a crafty *Predator*-style cloaking shield was cool as well.

After a win, you'll be able to talk smack via a USB keyboard, or by hunting and pecking with the onscreen alphabet. Surprisingly, we've been told that some of the best gamers in Rockstar's testing department are actually becoming adept enough to type and race at the same time. Xbox owners won't have to be so skilled, thankfully, as the late-spring port is slated to be compatible with Xbox Live's Communicator functions.

Talking with Ted Carson and Mauro Fiore, one can't help but get excited about the implications that online play has for racing games as a whole. "There is nothing better than racing or playing some of the battle modes against real people online," said Fiore. "Racing games are best when the competition is strong and it means something. Online is the best way to prove yourself."

"I think that online is going to be big, and how people decide to use that is going to be an [important] aspect," speculates Carson. "You can imagine a massively-multiplayer online racing game in an open city – that would be pretty wild."

"When you talk about street racing, you're talking about people that hang out together, and that's why the networking component of MC II is so important, because it's establishing community and reputation and pride and ego and all those other factors," continues Fiore. "You go massively multiplayer, and you'll see all of that. You know that, when that [car is] attached to a person in the real world, it's going to be a lot of fun. Especially, if you log in, and all your San Diego crew was there, and you actually know these people. You'd race them in the game, and then say, 'Hey, tomorrow night, let's go down to the strip and race for real.'"

The possibilities are exciting, to be sure, and may become a reality once the next generation of consoles rears its head. Given its experience in creating enormous, open-ended racing games, we wouldn't be surprised to see Rockstar San Diego become the first developer to take a chance on massively-multiplayer racing. One thing is sure: Midnight Club II is another big step in the evolution of racing games – one that should give gamers more than enough reason to put the pedal to the metal.

Midnight Club turned it into a game. *The Fast and the Furious* forged it into box office gold. But for thousands of people across America, street racing is no game, no figment of a Hollywood scriptwriter's imagination. For these speed addicts, it's a way of life – one that is attracting more and more young people every year. However, this newfound popularity may well prove to be its undoing. On a recent trip to San Diego, Game Informer learned firsthand just how real the risks are to those who dare to race under cover of darkness.

In the months since Vin Diesel sped his way to action flick stardom, street racing has become an increasingly large pop culture phenomenon. What was once a close-knit underground subculture is now a legitimate growth industry. Sales of aftermarket parts and accessories for subcompact cars (a category which includes the hugely popular Honda Civic) increased from $1.5 billion to $2.5 billion in the last year alone, and experts project that the auto parts industry as a whole will account for $30 billion in sales in the next five years.

Unfortunately, with this newfound prosperity comes a host of new problems, the most dire of which includes a spate of racing-related deaths in the last year. In San Diego alone, 16 deaths and 20 serious injuries have been attributed to street racing in the last year. Seeking to find the truth behind the hype, and to get a better perspective on the culture that bore Midnight Club II, Game Informer spent some time talking with some of San Diego's most devoted street racers.

Edgar Gomez was 11 when he started helping out at his uncle's auto shop, and thus began his lifelong love affair with cars. Now 22, Gomez works at a local auto parts store with fellow members of the Dragaholiks street racing team. Gomez remembers his first experience with street racing, "Basically, you just go up to a light, and if a car next to you starts revving – hell, it's on. I was 16, that was my first time.

THE FAST LANE

The other times I was just a passenger or watching on the sidelines. Basically, I got into it. It became a hobby, and then it became an obsession."

San Diego has been known for having one of the most thriving racing scenes in the nation, but in the past year police crackdowns have effectively killed off most of the action. "They'll do what they call raids," explains racing veteran Travis Preciado, 24. "They'll get 40 to 50 cops and block us in. They'll have two or three cops undercover, in cars like ours, in plain street clothes, watching us. They'll say, 'There's 300 or 400 cars here racing – come get them.'"

Penalties range anywhere from $10 "fix-it" tickets for illegal engine enhancements like nitrous oxide tanks, to the impounding of vehicles and fines up to $3,000. Recently, police have been given the right to issue tickets to spectators that are merely watching the races. San Diego has even assigned a special task force, called Drag-Net, to combat what one public official termed an "epidemic."

While most of the racers we talked to admit that the sport can be dangerous, Preciado attributes many of the recent deaths to inexperienced drivers. "A lot of these kids, they either have a rich mommy and daddy, or they have a good paying job and go drop 4 or 5 grand on their car, then get it going three times faster than a stock configuration. They think they can drive it the way it was when it was stock. No: It handles totally different, it brakes differently – everything is different. That's when the accidents happen, because they don't know how to turn, they freak out and hit their brakes, and crash... Then, they blame it on [the serious racers]."

Edgar Gomez knows all too well the risks that he and his fellow racers face every day. In the past year, he's lost two close friends in accidents. Wistfully, he echoes Preciado's comments about the dangers of inexperienced drivers behind the wheel of highly modified vehicles. "My friend that passed away in August, died because he was inexperienced with that car. He had it for less than three weeks; he was not familiar with the car, and he shouldn't have been out there, to tell you the truth. Everybody knows that. But, like I said, you couldn't keep him away. He was like me."

Charlie McCraken, a writer for the racing website sdstreetracing.com, laments the effect that increased police presence has had on the local racing community. "I feel bad, because the scene has really been killed. When it was good here, you'd get six or seven hundred cars [at a race]."

The future of the street scene may lie in sanctioned events like a RaceLegal drag contest we witnessed at a parking lot near Qualcomm Park. Sponsored by San Diego State University, these events offer drivers the opportunity to test their vehicles in a safe, structured environment. The night we were there, attendance was strong, which may be the best hope for the survival of the street racing scene.

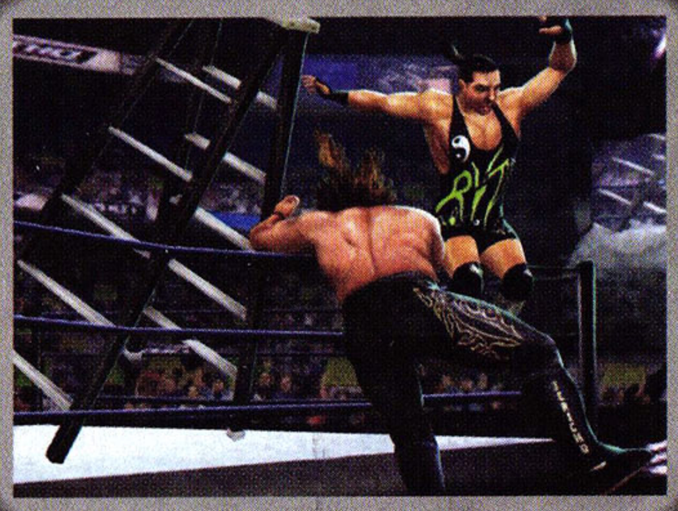
However, many enthusiasts we talked to complained about what they viewed as police harassment of street racers. In fact, we found out just how serious law enforcement is about stopping the drag culture when our photo shoot for this story was interrupted by five SDPD squad cars called by a nervous security guard in a nearby building. No racing happened that night, but apparently the sight of a dozen or so souped up cars gathered in one spot was a suitable cause for alarm.

Despite the fact that we had neglected to obtain a permit to conduct a photo shoot on city streets, we did find the San Diego Police Department to be a fairly understanding lot. Unfortunately, while Game Informer and the assorted representatives of Rockstar Games escaped with little more than a stern talking to, the officers did conduct inspections of every car that we had recruited to be a part of the shoot. Every hot rod on hand was poked, prodded, and measured, and nearly all of the drivers received at least a $10 ticket. After the police had left, many of the racers complained that these sorts of "shake-downs" of innocent gatherings were all too common. Edgar Gomez even complained of being harassed by the police at a memorial gathering for two deceased members of his team.

In fairness, the dangers of street racing are very real, and the police we encountered did seem to have a genuine interest in the safety of the racers involved. We're sure of one thing: The only street racing we'll be doing in the foreseeable future will be on our couches playing Midnight Club II, and we strongly advise you to do the same.

We expect that a lot of real-life street racers may be going online with Midnight Club II as well. Rockstar San Diego has been diligent in getting input on the game from the local racing community, attending car shows and even recruiting cars to come up to their studios to record realistic engine noises. Mauro Fiore hopes that the result is a game that remains true to the culture that inspired it, while providing the outrageous action that fans demand. "Street racers love speed, they love machines, they love style, and they love music," Fiore observes. "You have to put those elements into the game. What do street racers do? They go up to a stoplight and they drive straight, for the most part. That doesn't translate well to video games. You have to take those things that are fun about what they do."

Most of the street racers who have seen the game seem to think that it's done a good job. "What Rockstar is doing with their games is crazy, insane, and awesome," said Travis Preciado. "Midnight Club II is cool with the storyline and racing different guys. The cars are something the kids themselves can familiarize themselves with. A lot of the cars are like what a lot of kids have in their garage – a Civic, a NSX, or a Supra – things like that. I liked it, it's challenging, and very realistic in terms of how the cars and the bikes handled."



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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mature Sexual Themes
Strong Lyrics
Violence

PlayStation.2

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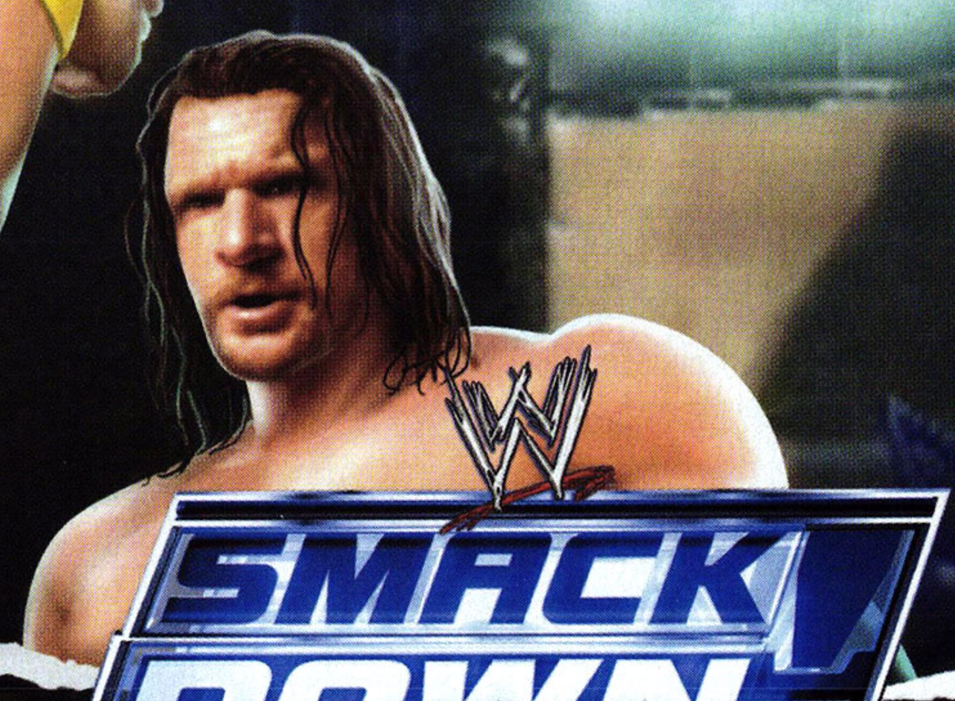

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BRAVE NEW WORLD

ONCE THERE WAS A TIME when a game was a game and that was all it could be. You bought the software, you put it in the machine, and you played it. The Internet revolution has changed all that. Players from across the world can go now go head-to-head in the latest and greatest first-person shooter, or explore giant worlds together in a massively multiplayer online game. One thing is sure: Nothing is quite as simple as it once was.

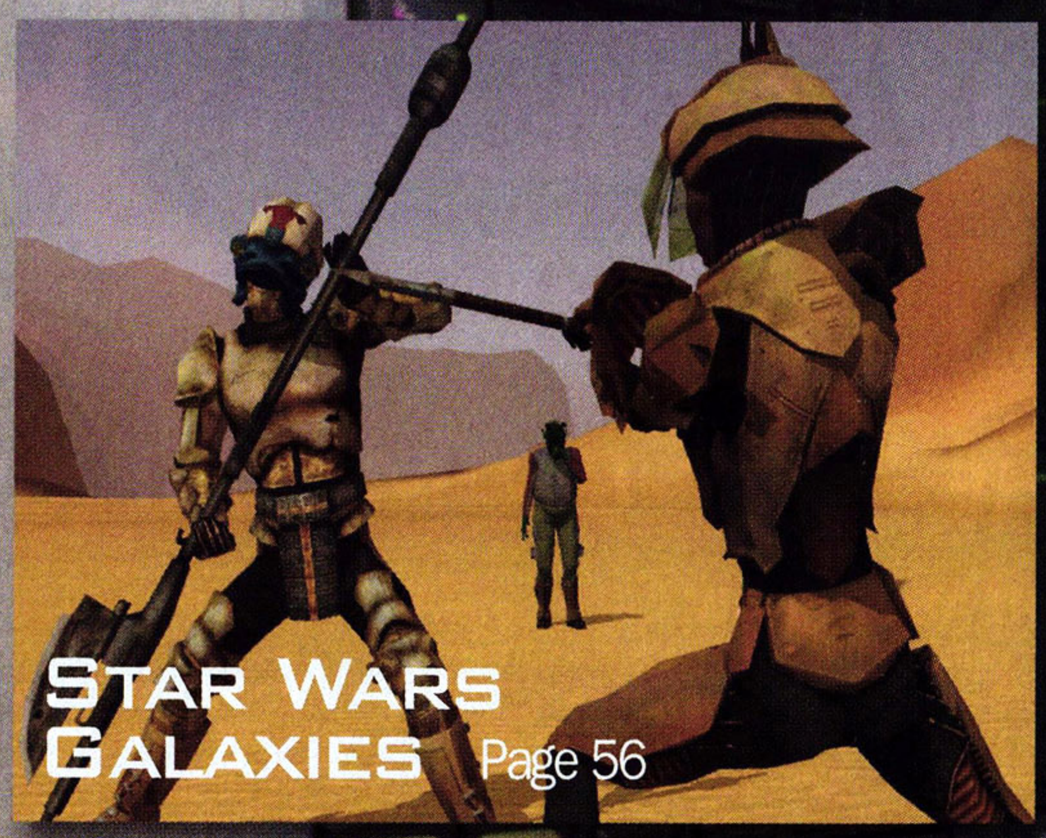
To find out what makes these persistent massively multiplayer games tick, Game Informer headed out to San Diego for a glimpse at the behind-the-scenes happenings of the United States' leading developer and publisher of massively multiplayer online games, Sony Online Entertainment.

Fat from its success with the PC title EverQuest, Sony Online Entertainment is set to unleash myriad games across a number of platforms. Is it competing with itself, cannibalizing sales of its flagship franchise? Are these really games, or just glorified chat rooms? Why do players have to pay-to-play? Most importantly, is this brave new world of gaming here to stay? In hopes of finding the answers, we went straight to the top and talked with John Smedley, president of Sony Online Entertainment to hear for ourselves why these pay-for-play games may or may not be the wave of the future.

Deep inside Sony Online Entertainment's San Diego offices lies the belly of the beast – the server room. Here, players across the world congregate and play with thousands of other gamers. Star Wars Galaxies, EverQuest, EverQuest: Online Adventures, and PlanetSide all hang their hats here; as will EverQuest II when it releases at the end of the year.

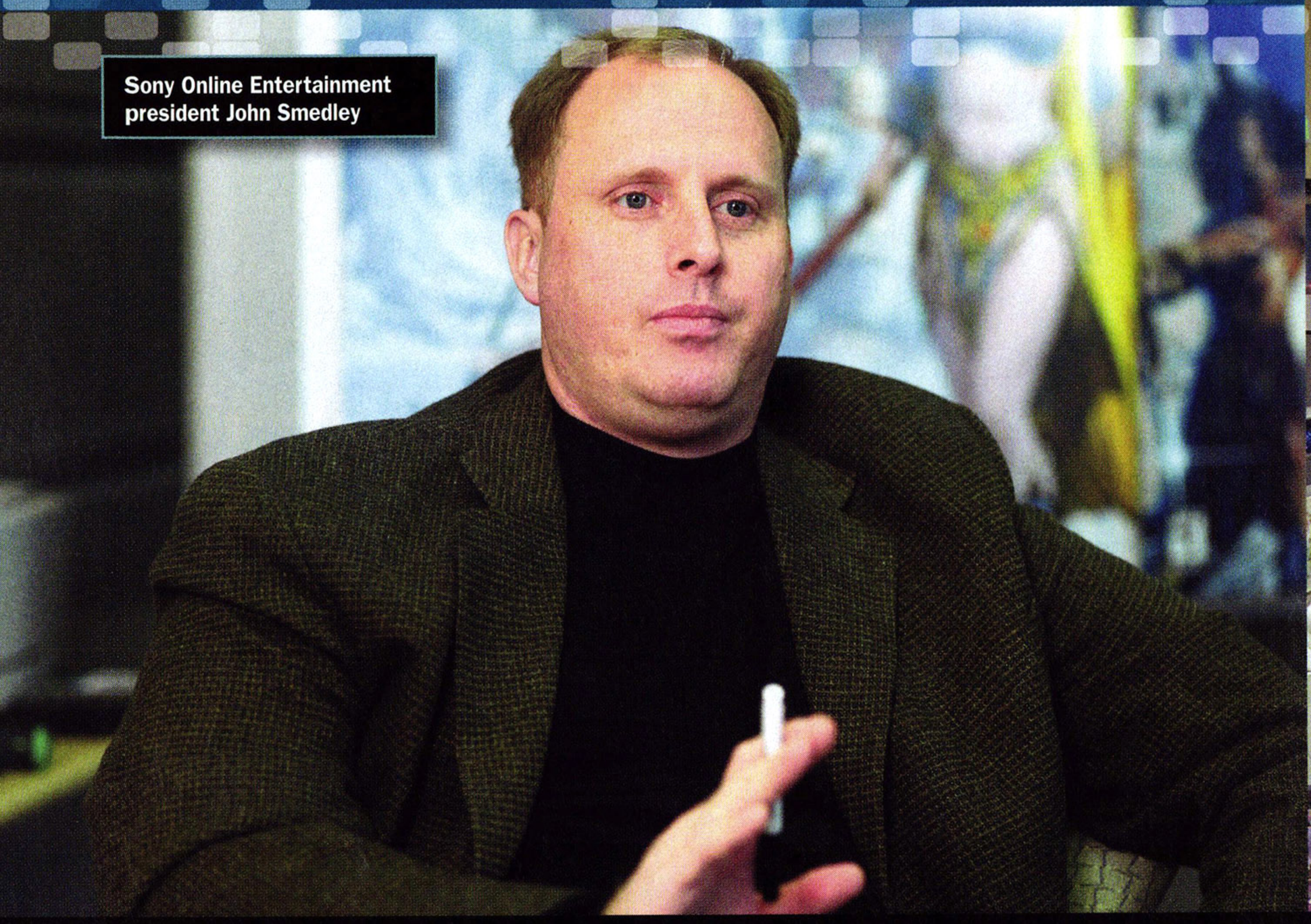
Photographs by Frank Rogozienski

EverQuest II Page 55



Star Wars Galaxies Page 56

PlanetSide Page 57



Sony Online Entertainment president John Smedley

The Art Of Massively Multiplayer Gaming

RIGHT ABOUT NOW, some of you may be asking yourselves, "What exactly is a persistent world massively multiplayer online game (or MMO for short)?" Other than being a mouthful to say, this term refers to games that are played "out of the box." What this means, is that while the player (known as the client side) has a large portion of the game's data on his machine, the world is actually run on servers housed by the title's developer (or server side). In most cases, these games are persistent, meaning that the world is forever changing. For example, new content can be added free of charge, or environments that you are currently using can be changed without notice. Additionally, the rules of the game itself can be altered for the sake of the integrity of the product. The possibilities are really quite endless.

This pay-for-play model presents a whole new set of challenges to developers and publishers. Think of it as a virtual amusement park. The games are the rides, and the publisher is the park owner that must keep them all working. As we will soon learn, there is plenty of work going on behind the scenes to maintain these enormous fantasy worlds.

For some companies, the reality of this expensive set up has been quite painful. For example, a product that doesn't reach a critical mass of players will be faced with either turning off the servers, since the costs are greater than the revenue they generate, or just biting the financial bullet to let people continue to play. One of the original MMORPGs released in 1996, Meridian 59 from 3DO, faced just such a dilemma. As the costs increased, the publisher opted to raise the subscription cost to its loyal fans so the game could stay afloat. Of course, as you may have guessed, as costs increased fewer people subscribed. In time, the game died out.

Such is the fate of an unsuccessful MMO game, and what's sadder is that at the end of the day, the game is gone forever. Unlike the classic titles of years past, you can't put the cartridge into your machine and play it again. Without the servers up and running, it simply ceases to exist. Luckily, in the case of Meridian 59, there is a happy ending. One of the title's creators bought the rights to the game from 3DO and resurrected it for the fans. The name of the publishing company is, quite appropriately, Near Death Studios.

Such are the growing pains of the massively multiplayer online gaming revolution. However, the story of MMO games is not all doom and gloom. Sony Online Entertainment's highly successful product, EverQuest, has been available for play for almost four years now, and shows no signs of slowing anytime soon. In hopes of learning the formula for online success, Game Informer decided to get the skinny

"I think interacting with other people transcends genre, and it transcends age group. It transcends many things that limit other games."

– JOHN SMEDLEY

The customer service department at SOE is simply unbelievable. Currently only supporting the EverQuest gaming community, it employs over 130 full-time employees, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Even more impressive is the fact that there is a space twice as big as this for Star Wars Galaxies, which goes live in April.

straight from the top on how SOE plans to spur on the evolution of the massively multiplayer online experience.

SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT is at the forefront of the MMO revolution, and this year will be its biggest yet. The company plans to launch five games in 2003, and all of them are quite capable of being huge hits. For many consumers, this will be their inaugural opportunity to experience MMO games firsthand.

The initial step in Sony Online's plan for MMO world domination is to expand its reach by launching its first PlayStation 2 title, EverQuest: Online Adventures. A new expansion for EverQuest on the PC, Legacy of Ykesha, will follow; and PlanetSide, a pioneering foray into the first-person shooter genre, will appear shortly thereafter. From there, SOE, and its partner LucasArts, hope to launch what many industry pundits are predicting to be one of the biggest online games ever made: Star Wars Galaxies. If that wasn't enough, the long-awaited sequel EverQuest II is due at the end of the year.

With so many games on the horizon, and so little time to play them all, one can't help but wonder if Sony Online Entertainment is competing with itself for the same market share of MMO game players. John Smedley, Sony Online's resident visionary, has a different plan.

"We are doing a number of things to [expand the market]," states Smedley, a man who carries himself with a gamer's swagger, slouching in his chair and rolling a pen through his fingers. "Number one is the platform. EverQuest: Online Adventures is going to broaden online gaming in general to a huge audience. When you think about the world of potential PS2 gamers, it's huge. Secondly, we are not going into exactly the same game. We have Star Wars, which I think is one of the best brands in the world – particularly in gaming. I think everyone knows what Star Wars is. You are going to find that EverQuest and Star Wars play very, very differently. Adventure is certainly a vast majority of [Star Wars Galaxies' gameplay], but we aren't trying to go after a much more narrow market segment like we are with EverQuest."

"We don't want to be just the 'EverQuest company.' That's not who we are," continues Smedley. Still, many believe that is exactly what Sony Online Entertainment is, and that MMO games are just glorified chat rooms that can only appeal to a very limited number of people.

Smedley believes strongly that it's much more than that. "The social element is certainly one of the key things that binds people together in these games, but I think giving them a backstory, an epic adventure, and something that they can feel they are a part of is key. But, there certainly is a reasonable amount of truth to the notion that the chatting and social interactions are what make these things [appealing]."

"It's funny. My mom plays online games. I'm not just making this story up for the press," observes Smedley, as he turns his PC monitor to show us his mother playing an online card game. "I think interacting with other people transcends genre, and it transcends age group. It transcends many things that limit other games. So, why are [people] really playing EverQuest? I think [they] are playing it to be with [their] friends doing something that [they] all enjoy. That's what it is."

Game Informer would certainly be the first to agree with Mr. Smedley, as we have experienced more than our fair share of online adventuring. It's clear that much of the future of gaming will revolve around large, player-driven environments and economies. Whether it's in a driving, shooting, or action title, interaction with other players will be the element that elevates gaming to another level. However, there is much more to a title in this brave new world than just compelling content.

The huge outlay of capital required to run an MMO game has created a demanding economic model that publishers have to fulfill if they wish to make enough money to support their current products and create new ones. In many ways, it's similar to the film industry. There will be many big-budget flops, and a smaller number of huge successes. However, Smedley is convinced that, unlike in Hollywood,

(Continued on page 54)

(Continued from page 47)

popular products can live on much longer than you might expect.

"The goal is, as long as there are people who are willing to pay us money for something, and it makes economic sense – and I think that will be true for a long time to come – we are going to keep improving [our products] in radical ways." He then uses EverQuest as an example. "We are not resting on our laurels. There will be some significant enhancements made to that game [in the near future]...[Think about] what EverQuest II looks like. Let's just put it this way: I don't want [the first EQ] to be behind the times."

Big enhancements like that would likely have helped a product like Meridian 59, but there will always be games that pay the price for pioneering. Even Sony Online Entertainment, with all its successes, is still struggling with the pay-for-play model.

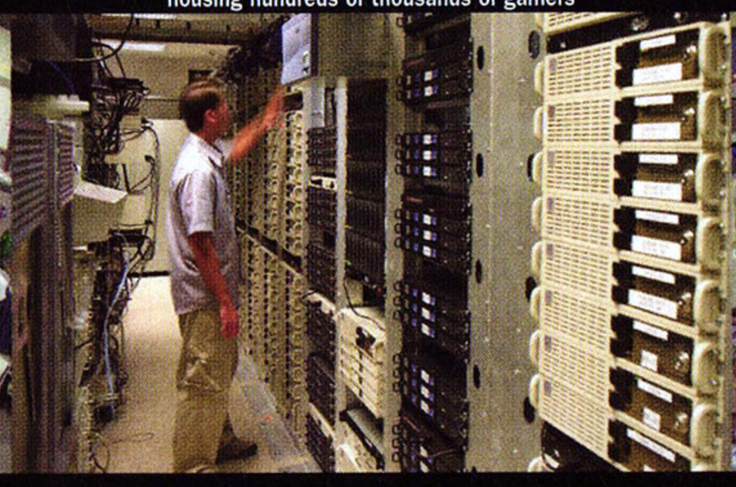
"This company is not profitable right now," laments Smedley. However, he doesn't believe that monthly fees will escalate much in the future. "We are a live service, like running Disneyland. I don't believe [the subscription fees are out of line] when you look at the price that people pay per month, and look at how many movies people go to and pay for other forms of entertainment. Look at how much going to McDonald's costs you. I don't really think it's that outrageous as long as we are giving a service, and we're modifying the game all the time."

As the popularity of MMO games grows, he even envisions giving breaks to people who subscribe to more than one game at a time. Overcoming these monetary issues is of the utmost importance, as the economic viability of massively multiplayer games depends on how they are resolved. Looking at how many new online products are entering into this arena every month, it's obvious that the implications extend far beyond the fortunes of Sony Online. From Electronic Arts with The Sims Online to Mythic's Dark Age of Camelot, there are a lot of companies betting a lot of money on the success of persistent Internet gaming.

There will be plenty of failures in the coming years, but there will be many success stories as well; and with each new innovation, we will come one step closer to a world of gaming that has no boundaries. No matter what fate lies ahead, you can rest assured that Sony Online Entertainment will be there with a title to fulfill all your online gaming fantasies.

The game masters (or GMs) are the heart of any persistent world game

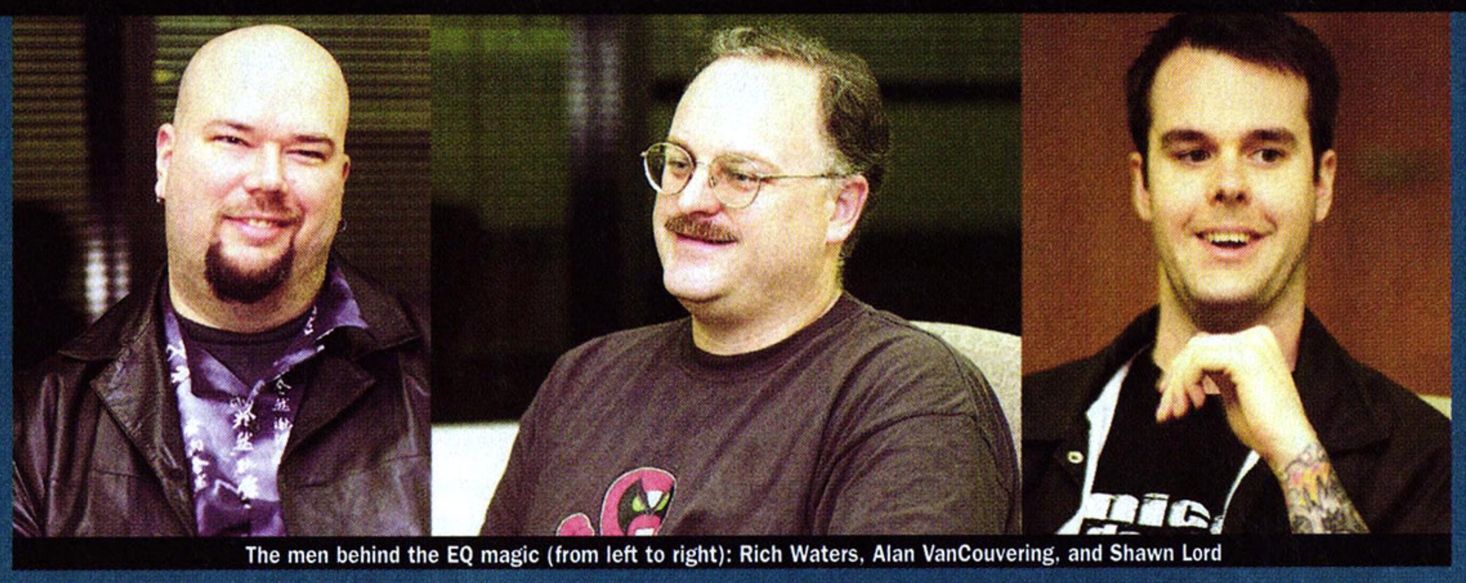
In San Diego, there are eight long rows of game servers housing hundreds of thousands of gamers



At the far end of the room there, is a listing of every server and its status to keep the GMs informed

EverQuest: Legacy of Ykesha

■ **PLATFORM** PC ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 2003



The men behind the EQ magic (from left to right): Rich Waters, Alan VanCouvering, and Shawn Lord

HOT ON THE HEELS

of the release of Planes of Power, the EverQuest team is coming back faster than you can say "Bertoxxulous" with a new expansion for the EverQuest faithful. Scheduled for release this February, Legacy of Ykesha will be Sony Online Entertainment's first expansion that will only be available for purchase as a digital download.

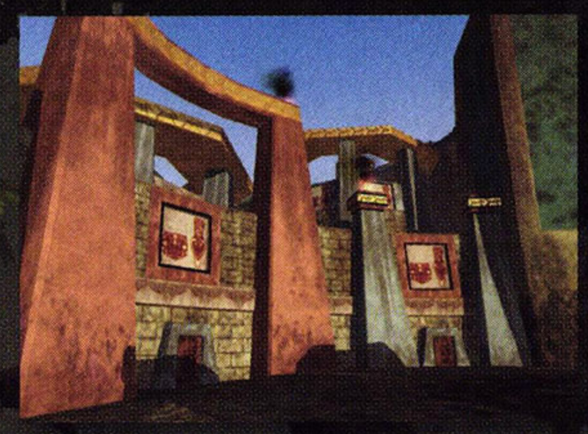
Legacy of Ykesha is not as large in size as previous expansions, only adding about six new zones. However, it does offer a number of exciting new additions to the universe that will surely please the masses. A new race, frogloks, will now be playable. A new item slot, charm; and a new skill, cartography, will also be added to the game.

The new froglok model, one that will have armor just like all races, was just being finished up during our visit, but it does look quite impressive (and yes, they still do flips when they cast). The classes available to the new race are Paladin, Warrior, Cleric, Beast Lord, Shaman, and Wizard. But even more exciting than the new race is the addition of a new item slot. The charm item, as it is currently being planned, will have the ability to enhance the statistics of multiple items in your inventory. For example, if you have a full set of Valorium armor and add a Valorium charm, your character will see further improvements.

Finally, the cartography skill will enable players to have access to maps through the user interface to help with navigation of the world.

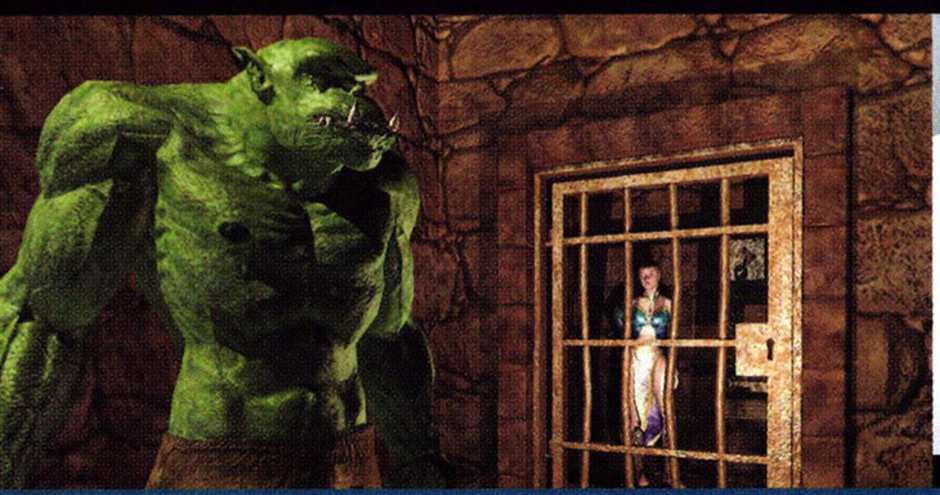
All told, there still is a lot of work ahead as the game is still early in development, but the expansion promises new content for players of all levels. Most of the zones, however, are targeted for players between levels 45 and 60.

These three animations were made using the in-game model



EVERQUEST II

■ **PLATFORM** PC ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



John Blakely, Bill Trost, Andy Sites, and Jon Davis talk about EQ II

AS YOU CAN SEE from the picture above, the graphical power of EverQuest II blows the original game out of the water. The amount of detail in each of the models is astounding, and the environments are just as breathtaking. Many EverQuest fans would likely head to this sequel based on the graphics alone, but let us assure you that there are many reasons why EQ fans should get excited about EQ II.

One of the biggest additions is the new Tradesperson class. This gives players more interested in economy than combat a way to advance in the game's proposed 100 levels of experience. This new class also introduces one of the more controversial elements of EQ II, item degradation, since Tradespeople will be responsible for the upkeep and introduction of new items to the game. However, senior producer John Blakely assures us that "for the levels that you will be effective with [using said] weapon...you won't lose it to degradation."

"We have all played games [where item upkeep is overwhelming], and it's frustrating. The concept is [that] repairs are easy," adds lead designer Bill Trost. The idea is that this element of the game will fuel the economy and limit the common practice of twinking (giving high level items to lower level characters). "The whole system is designed around the idea that, before you would lose an item to degradation, you have already found a better item."

The Tradespeople are also very key in this new game, as all the best items will be found through quests, or are player made.

Another huge addition to EverQuest II is player housing. Since there will be a fixed number of plots available for purchase, demand for these areas will be quite high, and owning a piece of EverQuest will most certainly be status symbols that most players will shoot for. Property ownership is especially significant, since each of the guild houses and homes are keyed so only people you choose will have access to your home or guildhouse. These areas can be furnished, or can simply serve as storage for items and trade equipment like a forge or pottery wheel.

So many things have been improved upon in this sequel, we just don't have the space to tell you all that we know. From new menu-driven quests to a character customization menu that is so deep that you will be able to pick out players and NPCs just by a description, EverQuest II pushes the boundaries of what you thought the world of Norrath could be. EverQuest II will also finally use what was coined as "virtual zones" in the first game, however, they are now known as private zones. Not all the content will utilize this technology, but the developers hope to use it to give guilds their own content in the top-tier dungeons in the game. Hopefully, this will alleviate some of the congestion problems that have plagued the original EverQuest.

Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided

■ **PLATFORM** PC (XBOX AND PS2 TBA) ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 15

It's hard to believe, but almost every cube features Star Wars figures

Kevin O'Hara serves as both associate producer and community relations manager

We don't know who that guy is (some trouble maker we're sure), but the art is definitely Star Wars

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that An Empire Divided is perhaps the most anticipated massively multiplayer online role-playing game that has ever hit the market, and Kevin O'Hara, head of community relations, knows it. "There are huge expectations," explains O'Hara, "and I think that, with the love that our developers have for the game, we're going to have a great game. There is no way we can live up to every single person's expectations of what they want in the Star Wars universe, but the game will be huge and bigger and better than any other game that is out there currently."

Featuring eight playable races, and countless days of content that take the player to eight different planets from across the Star Wars universe (including Tatooine, Naboo, and Yavin IV), there certainly is a lot for Star Wars fans to get excited about.

Using a skill-based advancement system that differs from many other online RPGs on the market, Star Wars Galaxies gives the player the opportunity to develop their character in many different ways. There are no levels. So, to advance in the game you must work on various skills that, in time, become your profession. From entertainer to bounty hunter, there are 30 different careers you can pursue. You also can choose to side with the Rebel Alliance, Galactic Empire, or remain neutral if you wish to avoid the Emperor's wrath. Plus, you can build and own everything from droids to property.

The game will also work to tailor the experience for different play styles, so people that only want to play for 20 minutes before dinner can get just as much enjoyment from it as someone who wants to put in eight hours a day.

All told, the excitement for Star Wars Galaxies has reached a fever pitch. In fact, the game may be difficult to come across when it launches in April for PC. "We are not going to flood the market with copies, as we don't want to put out more than we think we can initially support, " remarks O'Hara. But he does give gamers looking to play Star Wars Galaxies some advice: "I certainly don't want to start a panic with people, and have them think it's PlayStation 2 all over again, but personally I'd pre-order."

No truer words have been spoken, especially since it has been recently revealed that players can indeed become Jedi if they delve deep enough into the game. However, saying that the road to Jedi knighthood will be a difficult path would be an understatement, and keeping that rank might be even harder, as every bounty hunter in the galaxy will have you in their sights.

PLANETSIDE

■ **PLATFORM** PC ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 4

McCann and the rest of the test department take PlanetSide for a spin

McCann explains the importance of the support classes

SINCE PLANETSIDE IS a first-person shooter that features intense action and bullets flying at you from every direction, it would be easy to assume that the game lacks all the depth, strategy, and teamwork that is the hallmark of any massively multiplayer online game. That assumption would be wrong.

"The war is ongoing, twenty-four seven," claims a proud Kevin McCann, creative director of PlanetSide. "We don't reset the server. The game never stops."

Indeed, PlanetSide is no cheap gimmick, as it has all the standard bells and whistles that you would expect to find from any top-rank FPS. On top of this, the game adds a whole new dimension of large-scale war that few titles can capture.

There are three factions all fighting for real estate and glory on battlefields spread across 10 continents that can be as large as eight square virtual kilometers. Players in the same empire can then form into squads (much like parties in a MMORPG), or join up into an outfit (which would be the equivalent of a clan or guild) to orchestrate attacks on enemy installations and structures. While raw FPS skill will certainly play a large role in determining the outcome of your encounters, creating balanced characters and groups is also key to success.

While every player is a soldier at the base level, the experience you gain while playing will enable you to get certified to use more advanced weapons or vehicles, or learn various support class attributes that will make any outfit more efficient.

McCann explains, "We did a lot to make sure there are other roles available to players that don't [require] twitch gaming reflexes to be really pivotal. And not just in a 'here-and-there' role, but [as a full time position]. Medics in this game are actually invaluable. They are sort of like the clerics that you would find in a MMORPG."

Hacking is also very useful for breaking into computer systems to gain entrance to enemy strongholds. Plus, since there are many air and ground transports that will be needed if players want to have a chance at capturing an enemy's base or continent, developing a character as a pilot is also very handy.

Ambitious players can assume the role of general by orchestrating multifaceted attacks with the outfits under your command, complete with a waypoint system to make your orders easy to follow. The squads executing your plans will receive battle points, but the game also awards command experience for successful offensives.

Anyway you look at it, PlanetSide offers more depth than any first-person shooter game that we have ever experienced, and it just so happens to be available for play by you and 2,000 of your closest comrades in arms.

In the vast wasteland known as Filgaia, an epic adventure is about to begin. Four drifters seeking fame and fortune must join together in pursuit of ancient treasures. At stake, control of the mighty elemental powers of the Guardians. But their quest won't be easy. Labyrinth-like dungeons, mythical monsters and mind-numbing puzzles await them around every corner. Can they overcome their differences and work together as a team? Will they unlock the knowledge and mystical forces in time to save Filgaia from destruction?

I ♥ heal berries

My parents went to FILGAiA and all I got was this stupid T-shirt

SPECIAL

SHOPLIFTERS

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WILD ARMS 3

PlayStation 2

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PLAY IN OURS.™

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WILD ARMS 3

Clive has an "explosive" personality

Healberries can only be found or grown.

Gallows is all wet.

Don't forget to reload your weapon

See everything with R1 or L1

Boomerang hard to reach switches.

Upgrade your arms.

914

Virginia

Who are you...?!?!?!

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RP
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fear effect
INFERNO

SOMEWHERE SOUTH OF HEAVEN 陰曹地府

A Provocative Past

Sexy vixens in various suggestive situations are most likely the prominent thoughts that appear in your head upon hearing the name Fear Effect. Elated or offended, nobody can forget the saucy elevator scene with the games' heroines, Hana Tsu-Vachel and Rain Qin; or Rain's restrained encounter with a perverted bug. While Stan Liu, the president of Kronos and chief creative force, maintains an obvious interest in his story's sexually provocative material, he also points out, "I didn't create the story to get an M rating. I just want to relate the plot how I see fit." For Liu, the mature content is simply one part in the overall expression of his art. He hopes that audiences will look beyond the superficial meaning of such scenes and interpret them within the context of the overall plot.

So, if you're only vaguely familiar with the Fear Effect series, immediately vanquish the notion that Inferno is another title trying to capitalize on video games' trek into the unexplored reaches of sex. As astute gamers know, Fear Effect deals with the Triads (an Asian organized crime sect) and ancient Chinese mythology; a creepy, unique presentation and frightening situations; and intense action coupled with challenging puzzles. The first two games chronicle Hana's enslavement by the Triads to perform their dirty work. As Hana and her gang of mercenaries (Rain, Deke, and Glas) soon discover though, these Triads aren't merely involved with organized crime and drugs. Some have ties to the mythological Chinese hell, which is more accurately described as an "earth prison" in its native tongue. Fear Effect: Inferno follows the adventure of Hana and friends as they become more entrenched in the legendary mystery, and discover why the earth prison continues to beckon them.

Stan's Inferno

A few years proceeding the events of the first game (FE 2 was a prequel), Hana finally earns enough cash to purchase her contract back from the Triads. However, the Triad boss, Minkz, refuses her offer, threatening to murder Rain if she follows through on any notions of insurrection. Unable to remain attached to the dastardly gang, and too in love with Rain to betray her, Hana feels that her only means of escape is to take out Minkz. With her earnings, Hana employs her colleagues, Rain, Royce Glas, and Jacob "Deke" Decourt. Together, they work within the Triad complex to help Hana in her stealthy effort to eliminate the crime boss with one final shot – an action that will determine her destiny. Will she succeed?

The game then swiftly changes pace and puts players in an esoteric cutscene, which further hints at Hana's precarious situation. She awakes in a hospital bed, and from that point on, veterans of the series will feel right at home with the atmosphere. The rest of the events take place within those disgusting scenes of hell (the ceiling of bloody breasts being the most disturbing), full of mythical evil mutations, tough obstacles, and puzzles. The bulk of the story details Hana and her friends' exploits as they traverse the various sections of earth prison. In the end, they confront the entity that draws them there (not Satan – remember, it's a Chinese hell), where the audience will finally receive answers concerning the characters and their surprising relationships to one another.

Fortunately, the plot takes a less linear approach than its predecessors. As in FE and FE 2, players will switch perspectives and use one of the four main characters depending on the situation, but in each of these scenarios, the game prompts the audience to make various decisions. The player's answers will dictate how events unfold, and ultimately how the tale concludes. In all, Inferno will offer four entirely different endings!

What's more, players will be able to enjoy the action from yet a fifth viewpoint – that of the enemy! Although you cannot affect the outcome of events with this feature, Liu relates, "It permits players to see the characters in a different way." For example, right at the beginning, you're thrown into the role of a generic Triad guard. Without spoiling too much, players get to experience Deke's bad-ass attitude and combat skills from the point of view of an adversary!

"Immediately vanquish the notion that Inferno is another title trying to capitalize on video games' trek into the unexplored reaches of sex."

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** KRONOS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15

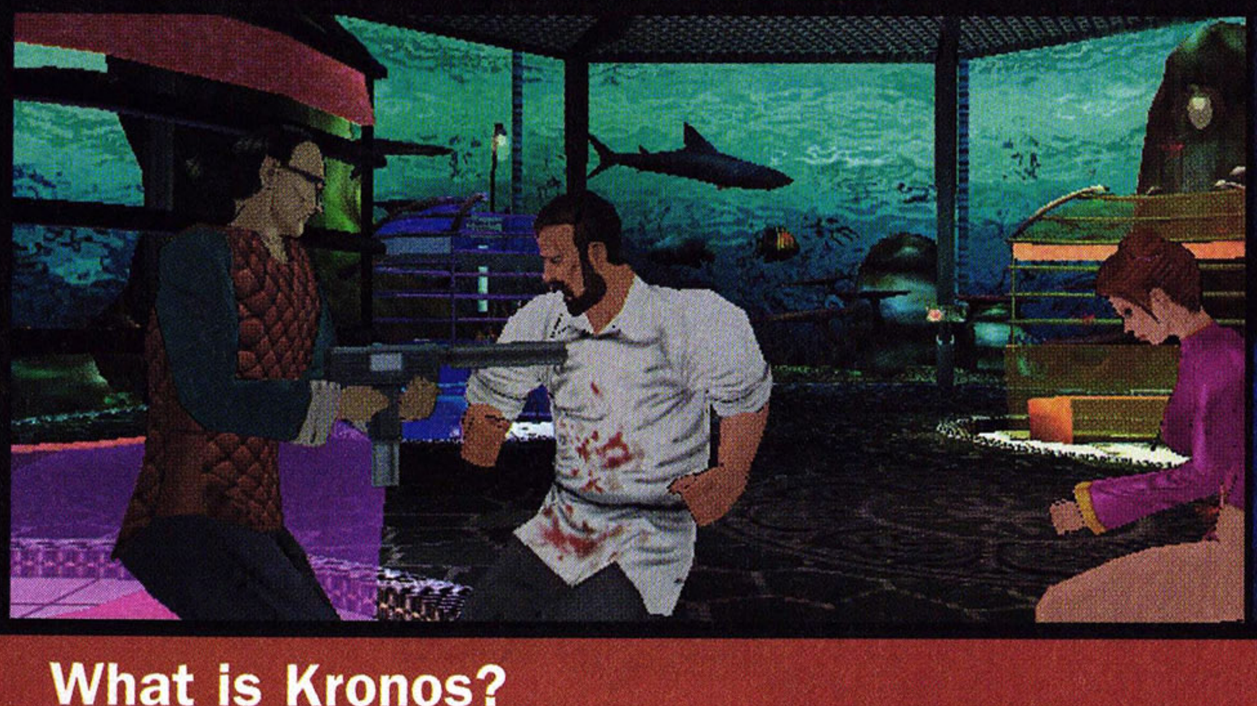
A New Look

Kronos will complement the engrossing, nearly theatrical story with a cinematic presentation that's equally compelling. First, Fear Effect: Inferno will maintain its traditional letter-boxed display of the action, eliciting the impression that you're watching a film. Second, it will continue to support cel-shaded, anime-style characters (contrary to popular belief, Fear Effect first used cel-shading, not Jet Grind Radio). Third, numerous cutscenes will feature plenty of artistic FMV and quality voice acting (Wendy Lee from *Cowboy Bebop* and *Outlaw Star* plays Hana!). Hana's flight over the infinite divide is one such example of poetry in motion, which we indeed found interesting and breathtaking. Fourth, the screen will burst forth with life and a realistic atmosphere since Kronos will continue to animate all of the 2D backgrounds – a technique recently employed by Capcom in its GameCube Resident Evil titles. And, thanks to PS2's increased capabilities and the DVD format, gone are those compressed, grainy backgrounds and low-poly models. Everything now looks lush, sharp, and well animated.

Besides the obvious increase in graphical quality, Inferno makes another significant improvement for the series: Some sections are now done in 3D. Each area uses either the old 2D approach with prerendered backgrounds, or allows the player complete movement in 3D. Initially this caused us to worry slightly, since prerendered environments often support a greater amount of detail. However, in the transitions we witnessed, the change from 2D to 3D was almost seamless.

Furthermore, the three-dimensional environments have liberated Kronos from a static camera, and many of the problems it presents. This not only grants the developers the freedom to experiment with different types of shots, but, more importantly, alleviates every players' frustrations with fighting a boss off-screen! Although Kronos hasn't entirely remedied this problem in every boss encounter thus far, it will work diligently to do so before Inferno's summer release.

These enhancements mostly concern the cosmetic aspect. However, the game will extend its exploration of 3D much farther. Fear Effect: Inferno features a very new style of gameplay.



What is Kronos?

Kronos actually started out making computer graphic sequences for other developers. Its first project involved creating the opening scene of King's Quest VI by Sierra On-Line. Sierra enjoyed Kronos' work enough to hire Liu and his partner to do similar work for the title Phantasmagoria. Eventually, word got around, and Sony approached Liu to create a fighter based on Spawn. Much to Kronos' surprise, while in the process of development, Sony, canned the project at the last minute. It gave the rights to Psygnosis, who subsequently went out of business – oh, the irony! Feeling a little disappointed (but not defeated), Liu decided to change the product around enough to avoid licensing issues, and then pitched it to Vic Tokai, who gladly published it under the name Criticom. Given its solid sales, Vic Tokai commissioned Kronos to develop Dark Rift (another fighter) for Nintendo 64. Craving a piece of the pie, Sony contracted Liu and his team again, but this time to create a fighting game with an original story and cast of characters. Sometime after finishing Cardinal Syn for Sony, Kronos finally found its bread and butter – Fear Effect. The company's history is actually far less interesting than the meaning of its name. In ancient Greece, Kronos was the most powerful titan, born of Ouranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth). Since it was prophesied that his child would one day overthrow him, he got into a nasty habit of eating his newborns – the deities of Greek mythology (Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Demeter, Hera, etc.). Fearful and upset, Kronos' wife Rhea pleaded to Gaia and Ouranus for help when she birthed Zeus. They hid Zeus in a cave, and gave Kronos a rock carefully wrapped in a leaf. This caused Kronos to vomit up the deities, whom Zeus eventually led to topple Kronos and the other titans. While the name bears an interesting piece of ancient history, your guess is as good as ours as to how this relates to Liu, his work, or the video game industry.

Gameplay Breakdown

Although Inferno once again consists of a blend of action and puzzles, Liu states, "The story lends itself to a much more action-oriented experience. So, the game is about 80 percent action and 20 percent puzzles." This may concern some gamers, considering the fact that the combat element of previous installments would be too shallow and insufficient to create a deep, well-rounded gameplay experience. However, Kronos realizes this, and has decided to expand upon the fighting system, enhancing it enough to compete with the likes of Devil May Cry! In fact, Kronos may propel its creation past the competition, since it will include a few other types of play mechanics. In this section we'll break down all aspects of the gameplay: what's new, what's different, and what's enhanced.

The Art of Combo

Due to Kronos' experience with the fighting genre, each protagonist has the ability to string together a unique stream of combos, which actually change throughout the game depending on what outfit she or he wears. So, for example, Hana in her tight get-up inside the Triad complex will sport different combos than Hana dressed in the hospital gown. Most of the combos are constructed with a series of punches and kicks, as you might see in a session of Tekken or Virtua Fighter – nothing new, right? Well, it gets better. Once you manage to execute a combo, players can knock their enemy into the air and then perform a juggle, either by letting loose with your character's gun, or continuing with a second offensive melee. Some will immediately draw comparisons to Devil May Cry. However, we must insist that Inferno really has a feel all its own.

Finishing Moves

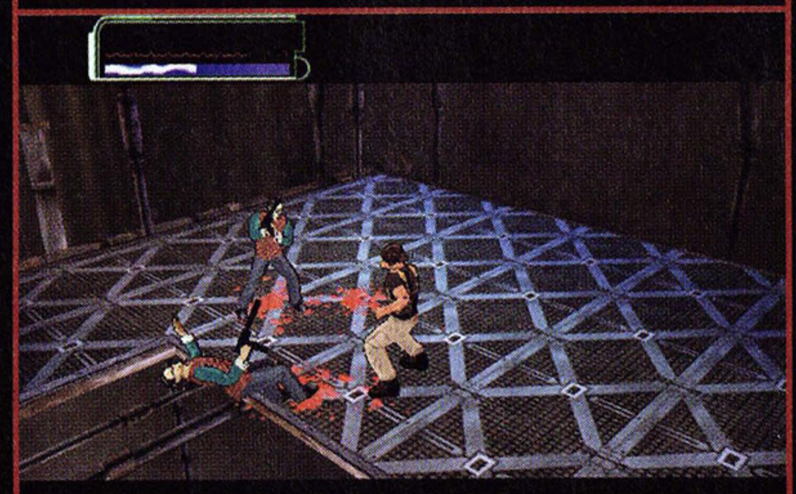
Mortal Kombat devised and popularized this idea in our industry, and in many cases, games adopted its simple cosmetic functionality. Initially, this seems to be the case with Inferno, but the player soon discovers that executing a death move actually makes life easier. Usually, eliminating a foe requires a fair amount of effort. But, if you merely knock someone down and position yourself over the body, you can deliver a fatal blow, thereby more efficiently ridding yourself of the opposition.

Gun Play

Hana, Rain, Deke, and Glas are fairly adept when it comes to handling their pistols. They each possess their own weapons, and an accompanying set of impressive shooting maneuvers. For example, depending on the situation, Hana will sometimes duck, start spinning around, and drill surrounding guards. Other times, when enemies attack her from either side, she'll aim her guns at them in opposite directions. This "Gun Play," as it's called by the team, depends upon three invisible zones around your character: front, left, and right. The position of the hero or heroine in relation to the target determines which type of move will be performed. Players can also execute cool-looking attacks manually. For example, if Hana happens to be shooting, and then you immediately dodge left, she will dive to the left while firing in midair.

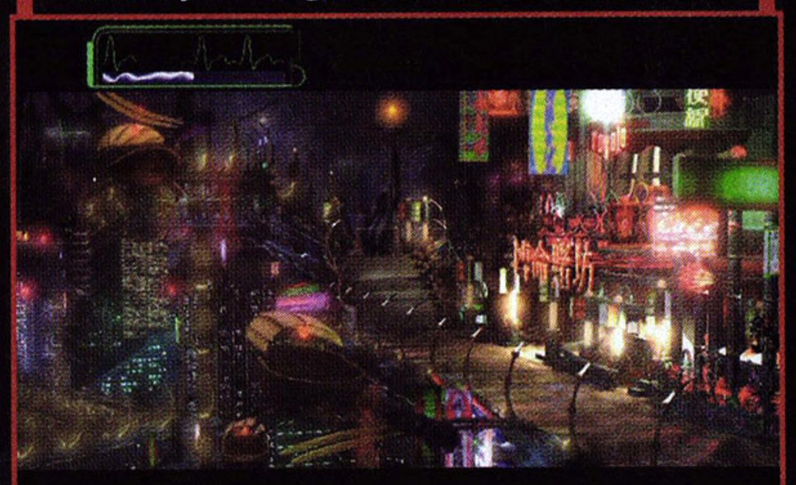
Grappling

Our conversation with Liu gravitated towards Tobal's famous grappling techniques once this topic arose. Perhaps his interest in Square's Tobal series is the reason Inferno also features a similar system. Although it's not quite as deep as Tobal 2, players certainly have the freedom to perform various maneuvers from a lock-up position. You can hold enemies and pummel them with punches, toss them, drop them over a ledge, or push them into hazards such as fire for a painful ignition!



Minigames

Interestingly, Kronos even integrated the idea behind these supplements with ancient Chinese mythology. In one section, players encounter the City of the Dead. In Chinese myth, souls waiting for reincarnation convene here for their resurrection. However, this waiting period often takes an entire lifetime. So, to help alleviate this exasperating delay, the Chinese have a tradition of burning paper replicas of real-life objects, such as cars, clothes, and even houses. Once someone burns this replica, the actual object is delivered to the intended receiver. In Inferno, players partake in a minigame to win money, with which they can purchase certain paper objects. When you burn an object, you'll unlock whatever secret it is that it represents. We agree; it sounds intriguing, and fairly confusing. However this system of unlocking bonuses is carried out, it certainly will heighten Inferno's replay value.



Effects of Fear

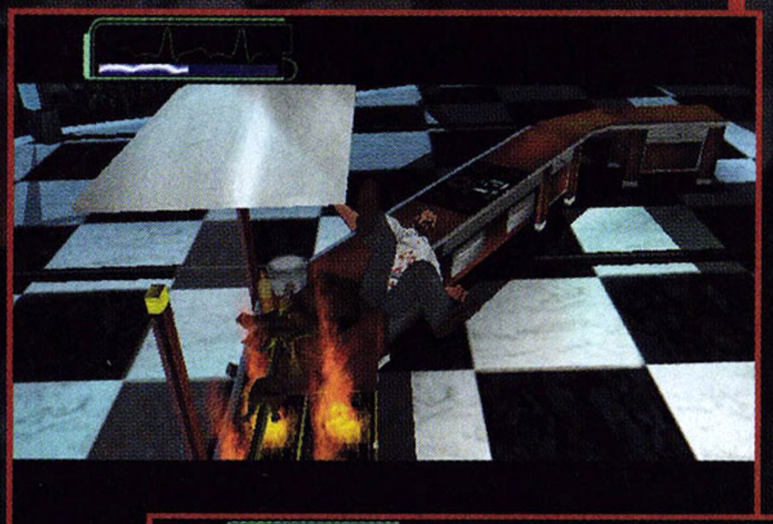
In Fear Effect and its sequel, the Fear meter was the health bar, which depleted not only because of attacks, but also by frightening enemies or situations. This time around, Kronos will change the meter's function since there will be more enemy encounters, and therefore more opportunities to be afraid. Now, players have a standard health bar in addition to the Fear meter, which has two purposes. First, players can use it as a spider sense, roughly gauging the oncoming level of danger. Second, it will act like a fighting game's rage meter. When it's high, your character is more susceptible to death. However, if you perform well and efficiently against the opposition, you'll receive some sort of reward, perhaps money or health. Apparently, Kronos debates the subtleties of the meter's exact functionality daily, so it could change in the final product.

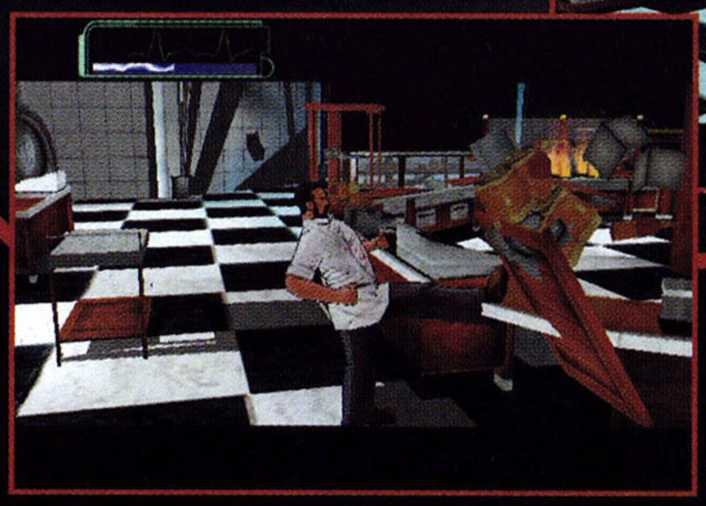
Puzzles

As previously stated, puzzles will have a less significant role than before. Don't worry, though, some are present, and they're far less nonsensical and abstract. Liu readily admits that a few of the former mind-benders probably seemed random and out-of-place (anyone who remembers the circuit puzzle from FE 2 will certainly agree with you, Stan). However, he attributes this problem to unfortunate, but necessary, last-minute cuts. Because the FE games have always been typically large, some material had to be removed in order to fit the product on the four discs. Some of this missing material included clues that made the puzzles more discernable. While Inferno will also come close to exceeding DVD memory constraints, Stan assures us that they're diligently working to ensure that puzzles provide a relaxing cerebral break to all of the heart-thumping action. The puzzle pictured above makes creative use of Inferno's increased graphic quality. Players must ultimately reach an exit down a long hospital corridor by setting clocks to the appropriate time. If done incorrectly, and the player attempts to pass through the corridor, the camera begins to shift in clockwise and counterclockwise motion, creating a dizzying psychedelic effect.

Hot Spots

The development team has yet to resolve just how this mechanic works, but you can bet your bottom dollar that Liu's promised "Hot Spots" will appear in one form or another. Hot Spots are special areas within a 3D environment that allow you to initiate a special attack or move. In one scenario, you encounter a guard who stands alone in front of his cronies. If done properly, you can sneak up to him and use his body to shield yourself from fire. Another, more original Hot Spot occurs in a kitchen, where you can position an enemy's head inside a refrigerator and proceed to bash it in with the door! Other types of minor Hot Spots include rolling over a table or hopping a railing. Keep in mind, however, that some of these examples are still tentative. Nevertheless, we hope that Kronos devises a practical way to include this exciting gameplay addition in all its glory.





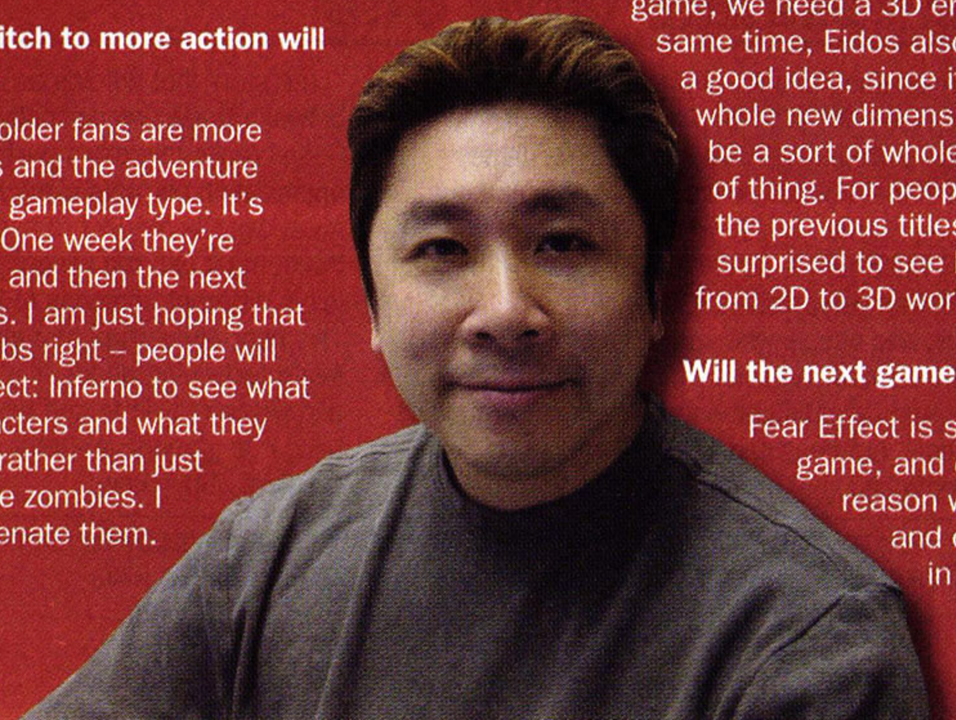
Interview with President Stan Liu

With a more twitchy, action-oriented design approach, do you think there's less opportunity to instill fear?

This time around, Fear Effect is not as much about psychological fear, or fear instilled by hidden zombies. It's a fear that tests your ability to deal with a tough situation and how to resolve it. In the last couple [of games] we tried to be a little more psychological, and there are a few areas we're certainly trying to do that in Inferno. However, I really want more of an intense, heart-pounding experience rather than a quick jump or two.

Do you think the switch to more action will alienate older fans?

I am hoping that the older fans are more tied to the characters and the adventure rather than a specific gameplay type. It's like watching *X-Files*. One week they're hunting for vampires, and then the next they're chasing aliens. I am just hoping that – if we've done our jobs right – people will want to play Fear Effect: Inferno to see what happens to the characters and what they get themselves into, rather than just wanting to shoot more zombies. I don't think we will alienate them.



Why the switch to 3D backgrounds?

There are a few reasons. Originally, when we set off to do Fear Effect: Inferno, we planned to keep it pretty much like the first games, with all prerendered backgrounds. However, that type of gameplay doesn't lend itself to a whole lot of action. When you don't have the freedom to move the camera, and the player doesn't have the ability to maneuver around within 3D, you can't get that heart-pounding action experience we're striving for. During the design process, the story presented itself as more action-oriented. At that point we realized that if we're going to make an action game, we need a 3D environment. At the same time, Eidos also thought it would be a good idea, since it would literally add a whole new dimension to Fear Effect – to be a sort of whole new generation type of thing. For people who played through the previous titles, I think they'll be surprised to see how well the transition from 2D to 3D works.

Will the next game be all 3D?

Fear Effect is such an art-oriented game, and cinematic as well. The reason we didn't go ahead and do this game entirely in 3D is because with the current generation of platforms, we're getting very close to getting a prerendered look in 3D, but we're not quite there yet. Some of the levels we have now are impossible to do in 3D – they're just too detailed. In our case, I think we have the best of both worlds: the lush prerendered backgrounds without any artistic limitations, with some impressive 3D backgrounds that allow freedom of movement. We think these two complement each other very well. Hopefully, with the next generation of platforms, we can go entirely 3D!

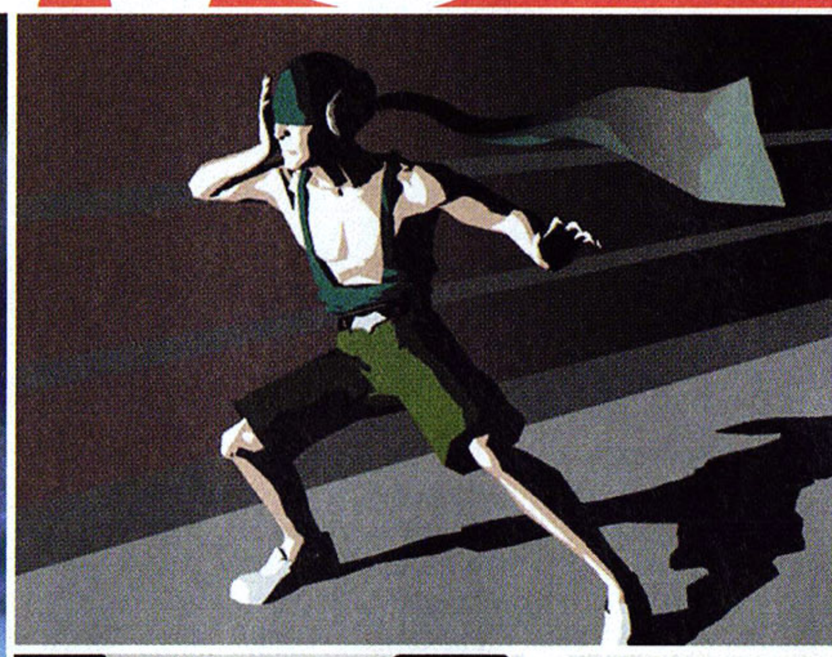
What is the main objective that you're trying to accomplish with the plot and characters?

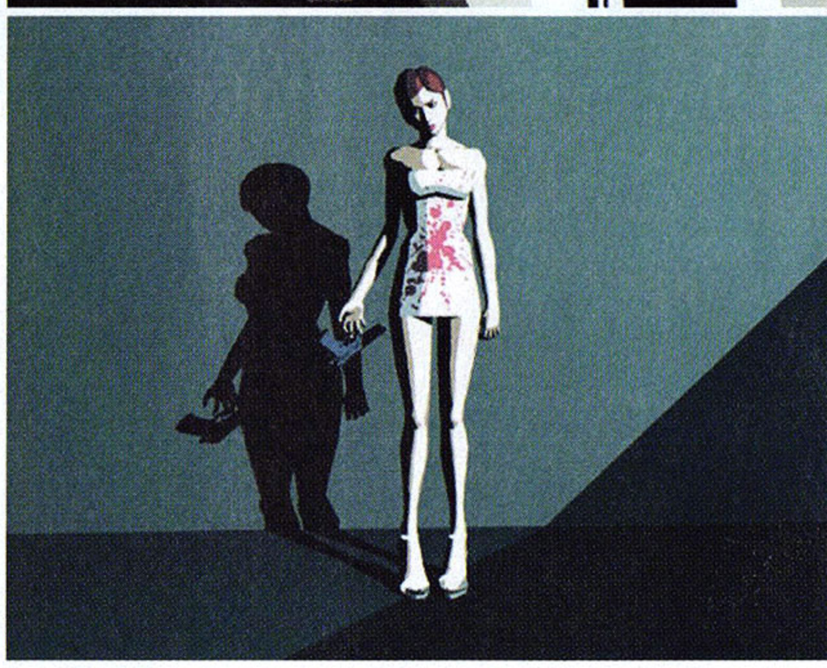
The story is mostly about the decisions people have to make in their lives and how it affects them in the future. It is also about regrets, doing the right thing, and things of that nature. This time around, I also focused more on the relationship and interaction between Glas, Rain, and Hana.

Anything else you want to tell fans of the series?

The approach to Inferno is very different than the last two. We're still trying to keep it as cinematic as possible, but this time around we just want to focus more on the action. We were a little concerned initially about alienating our fans. Although we believe they'll enjoy it, we're still curious to see what they think.

PREVIEWS





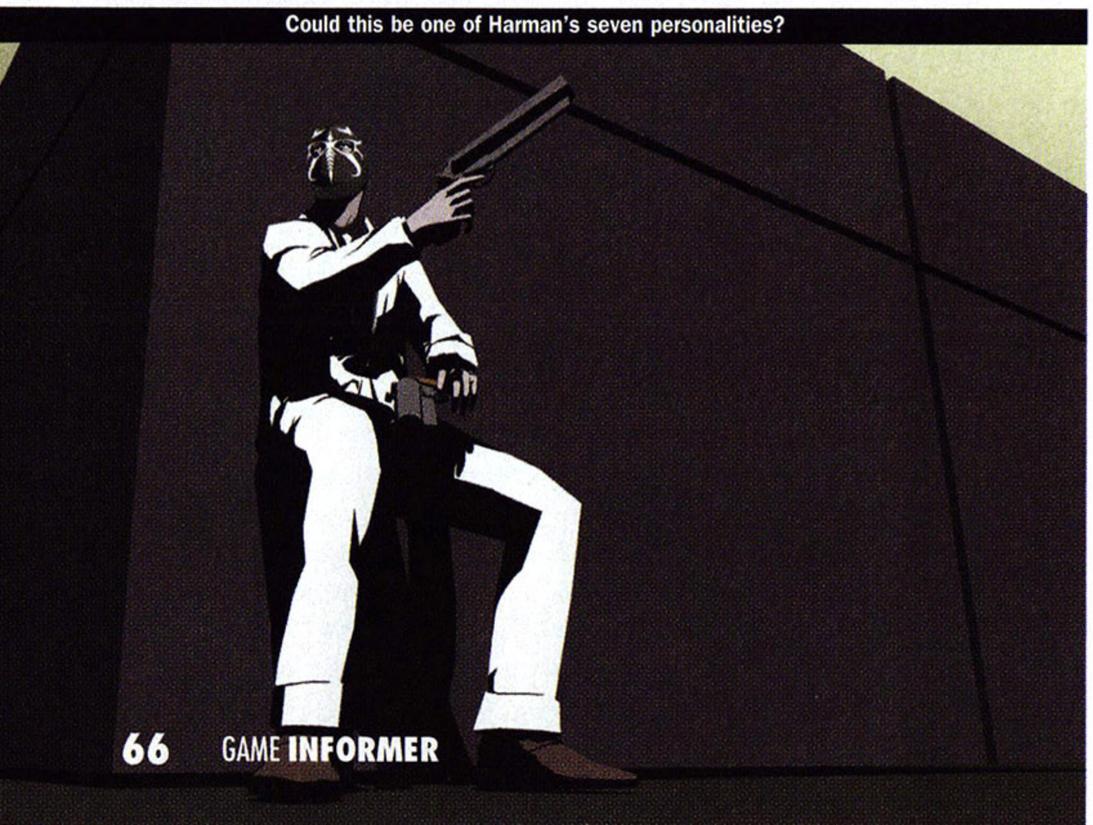
GAMECUBE

KILLER 7

THE EMBODIMENT OF SIN

With a unique cel-shaded look that appears to be torn from the pages of a 1950s comic book or fashioned after a painting by Andy Warhol, this is undoubtedly the most exciting title in Capcom's explosive GameCube lineup. From what we've seen thus far, Killer 7's disturbing cinematic flair appears to be the handiwork of Capcom's heavy hitter, Shinji Mikami. True enough, Mikami is the producer of the product...but oddly, he's not the visionary behind this extraordinary game. It turns out that the director of this graphic murder mystery is actually someone new to the Capcom stable of developers. His name is Gouichi Suda. He made his video game debut through the critically acclaimed game, Super Fire Pro Wrestling Special from Human Creative. He then went on to form Grasshopper Manufacturer Inc, where he wrote and directed such games as The Silver and Flower, Sun, and Rain.

We'd love to tell you what exactly Suda has in store for us, but much like his partner on this project, his lips are sealed and he won't dispense any details regarding gameplay until the winter release date draws closer.



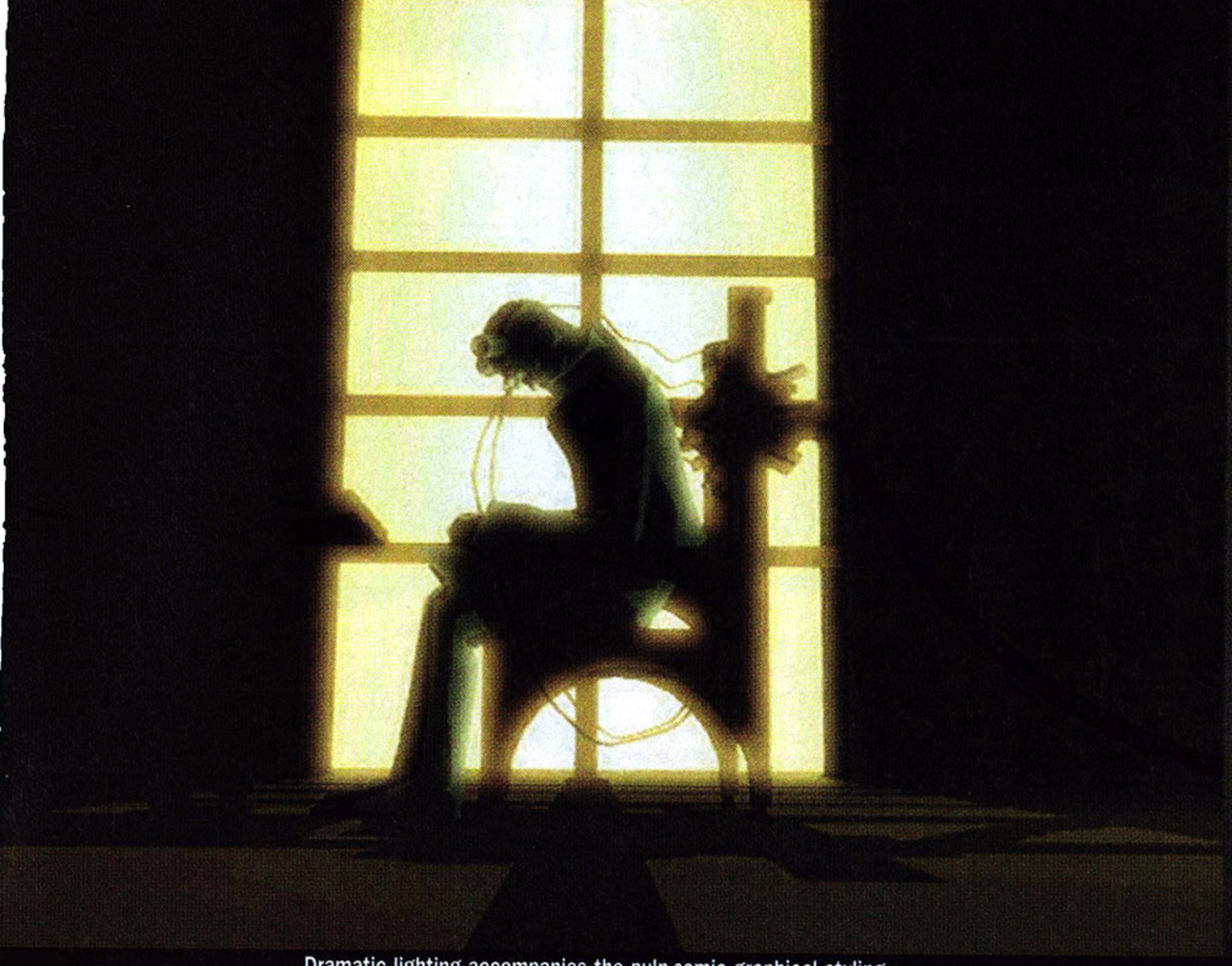
Could this be one of Harman's seven personalities?

A HANDSHAKE WITH GOD

While hard-pressed to offer any gameplay details, Mr. Suda was nice enough to drop a few tidbits of information surrounding Killer 7's plot. The game actually centers around two characters. The first is a man named Harman Smith. His name may not sound like much, but Smith is actually an assassin with seven different personalities. Oddly, he's in a wheelchair, and people who know him call him "God Killer." The second character that the story fixates on is named Kun Lan. His persona isn't nearly as puzzling as Harman's, but he is capable of overthrowing governments and goes by the alias, "God Hands."

The story that unfolds actually depicts the rivalry between these two distinctly unique people. Gouchi Suda breaks this down perfectly. "Kun Lan's criminal organization corrupts every American street. Accepting the request to assassinate his adversary, Smith must use the various special powers that dwell in his different personas to hunt down Kun Lan." This hunt will unravel through five stories set within four intertwining worlds. It's a fascinating premise, and we can't wait to see how Mikami and Suda will bring it to gamers. We'll have more for you as it develops. Stay tuned!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM PRODUCTION STUDIO 4/GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURER ■ **RELEASE** WINTER (JAPAN), TBA (U.S.)

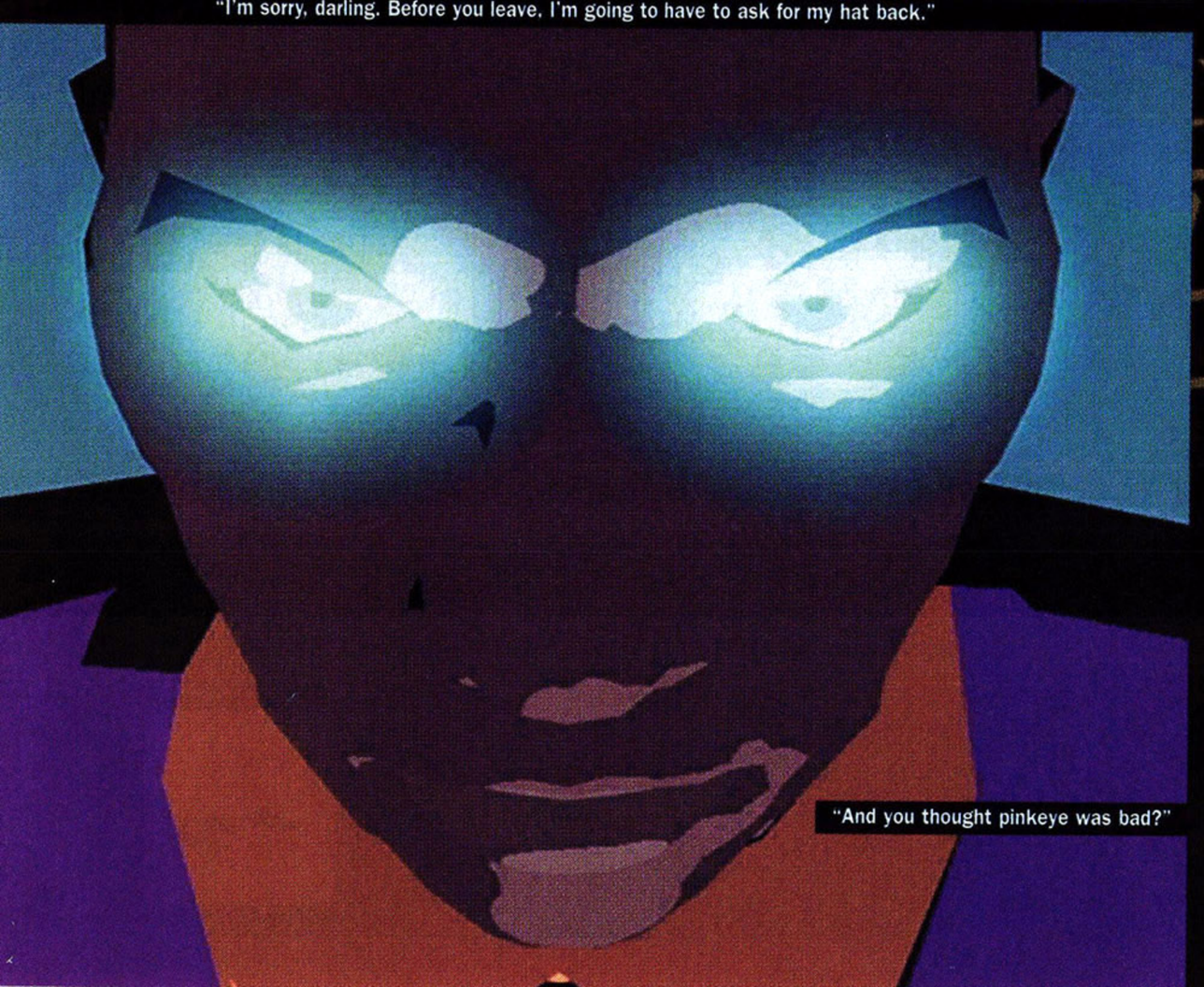


Dramatic lighting accompanies the pulp-comic graphical styling

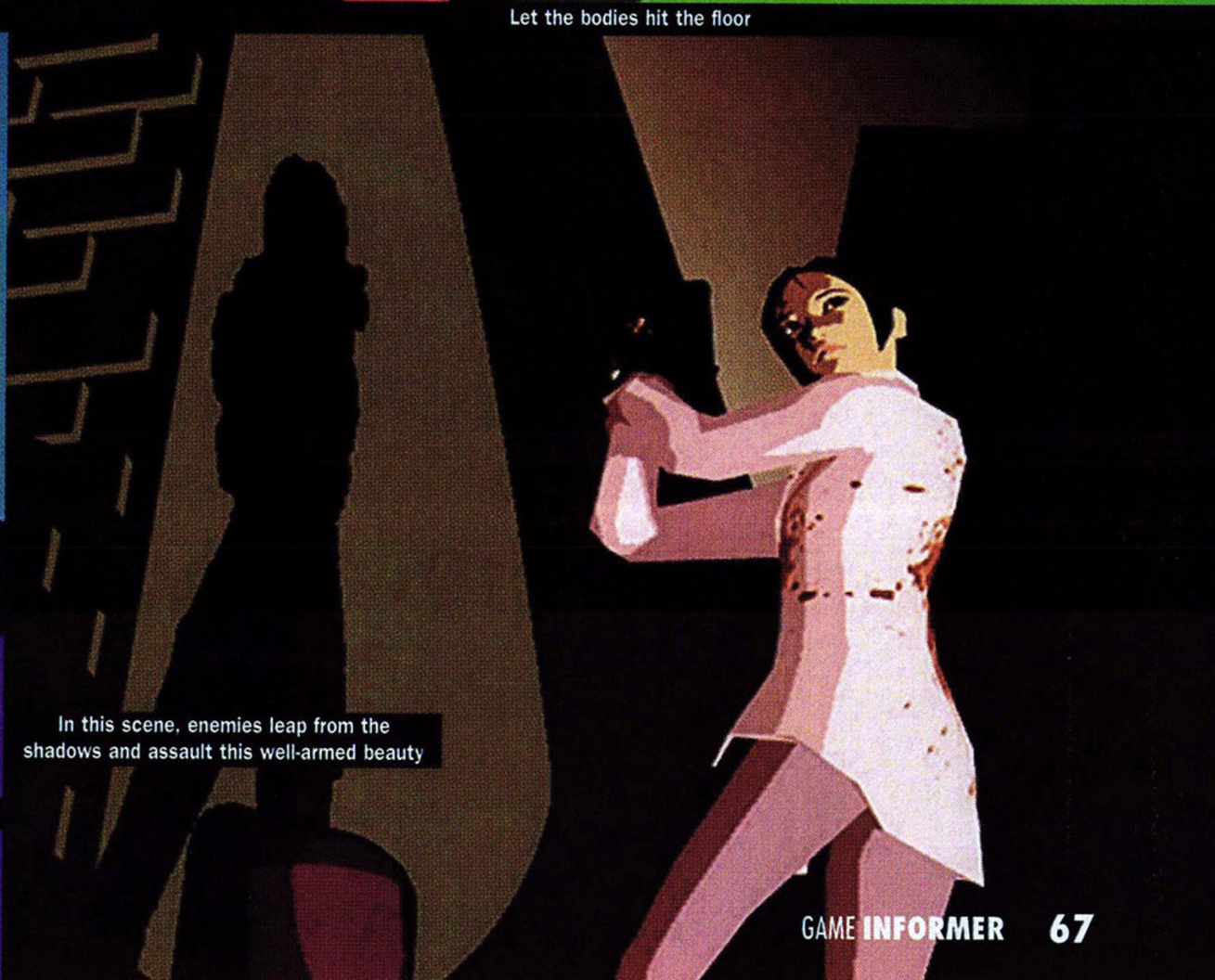
Dick Tracy finally got a new jacket

"I'm sorry, darling. Before you leave, I'm going to have to ask for my hat back."

Let the bodies hit the floor



"And you thought pinkeye was bad?"



In this scene, enemies leap from the shadows and assault this well-armed beauty

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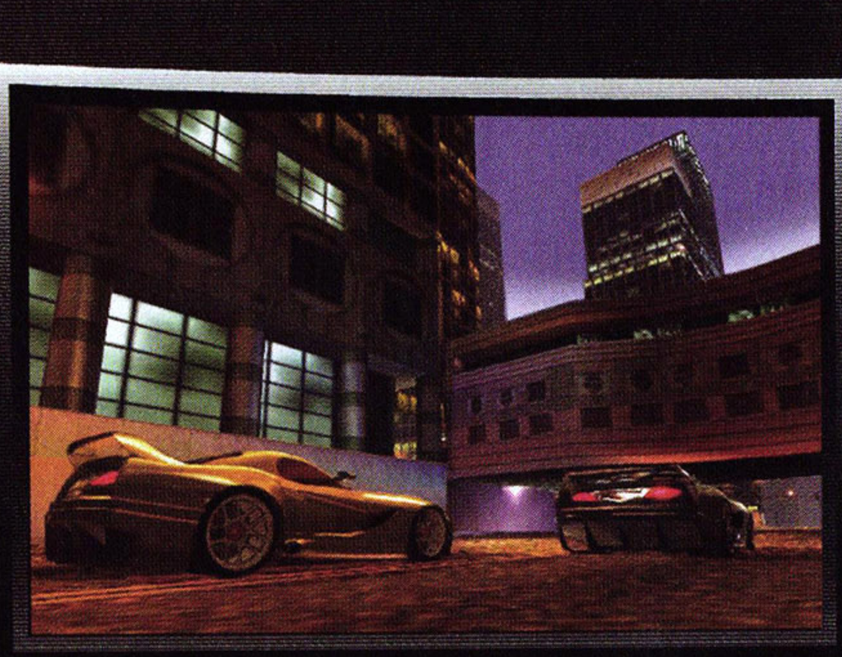

There are no rules - drive anywhere in the city. Find the fastest route to win.

"(An) insane urban racing experience... it's ultra-illegal stuff that you've dreamed of doing."

- PSM DECEMBER 2002

TEEN

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

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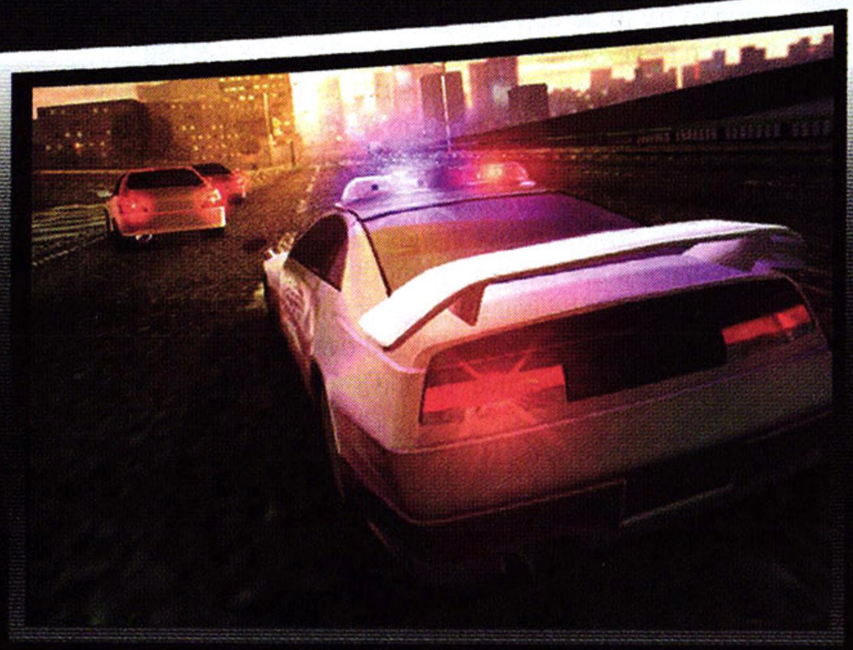

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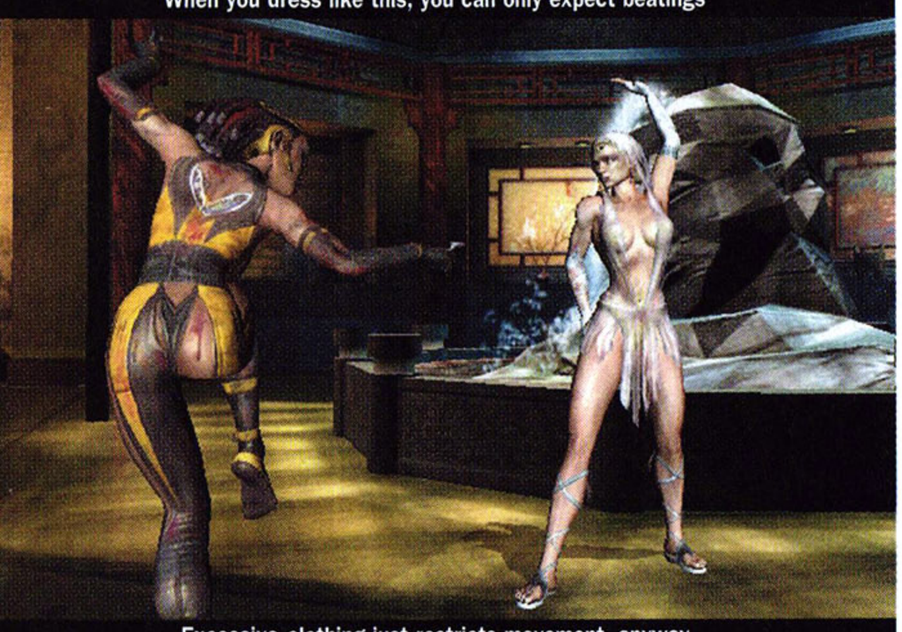


Excessive clothing just restricts movement, anyway

XBOX

TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS

SAY "CHI!"

This is a new franchise from a new developer, but that doesn't mean there isn't a lot of experience behind Tao Feng. John Tobias, who was one of the driving forces behind earlier Mortal Kombat titles, is at the helm of this project. We had the chance to talk to him about this stunning Xbox fighter, and the genre as a whole.

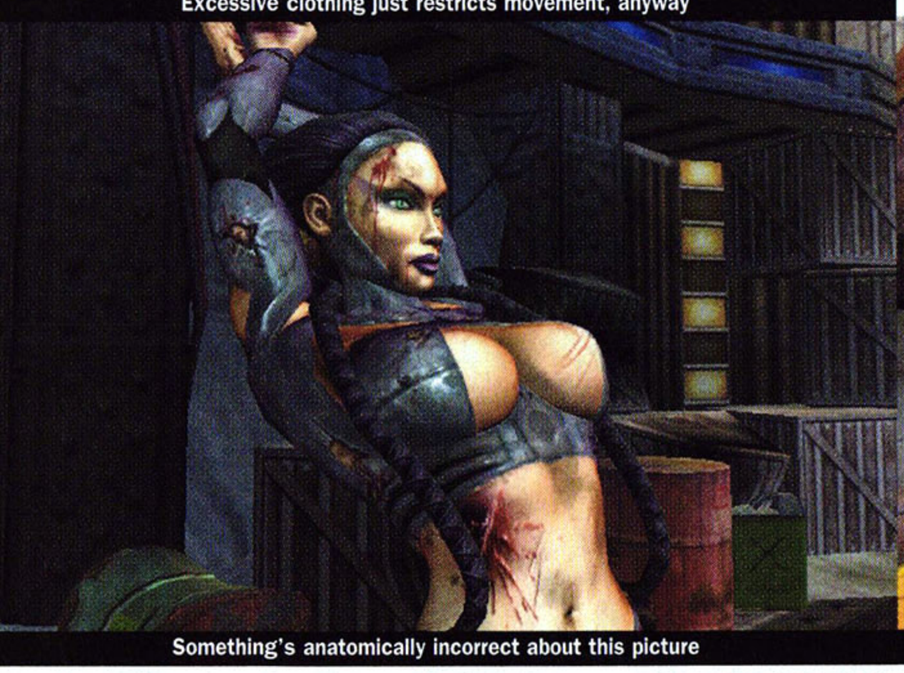
Tao Feng does something that few fighting games do: It attempts new things. "I think that fighting games in general need to try to do something different," says Tobias. However, he also realizes that seasoned players have certain expectations, and admits, "It's difficult to break some of those rules, but I think it has to be done if we're going to attract new players." What Tao Feng brings to the table are highly detailed fighter damage models and some of the most interactive environments the genre has ever seen.

Characters are broken up into two factions: Pale Lotus and Black Mantis. Can you guess which is good and which is evil? Each model is comprised of over 10,000 polygons. To put that into perspective, Dead Or Alive 3, which we awarded Best Graphics last year, has closer to 3,000 polygons per character. Tobias pays homage to the power of Xbox, saying, "When you look at the quality of the graphics in Tao Feng, they're attributable to the fact that we don't have to concern ourselves with translating the game to another console that isn't necessarily as powerful or capable of doing all the nice things that Xbox is."

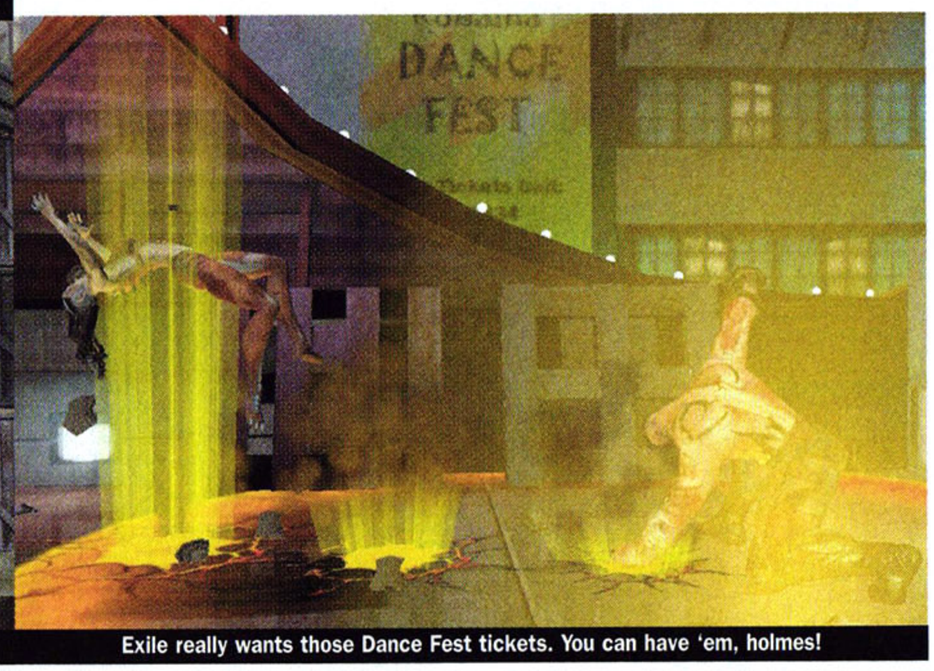
Tao Feng doesn't just keep the cast looking pretty, though. They get beat the hell up. Scars form and grow. Cuts and lesions appear and bleed. You can even target specific limbs, and damage them to the point where they lose effectiveness. If someone uses a punch that keeps nailing you, mess up their arm so they can no longer throw it. Hurting the legs even hinders mobility. This adds a strategy element previously untapped in fighting games. As Tobias proclaims, "We break the monotony of combo-counter, combo-counter."

Backgrounds are often overlooked, but they can really enhance the experience. You're able to slam your foes into everything in Tao Feng. The level designs take full advantage of this mechanic. An arcade stage features dozens of coin-ops that can be destroyed upon impact. A museum has countless priceless pieces to reduce to dust. The objects aren't just for breaking, though. Swing around a pole to smack your opponent from behind. Make your competition pay for backing you against a wall by flipping off of it to hit him with a devastating attack.

When your Chi power meter builds up, you can unleash some sweet (or painful, depending which side you're on) special moves. It can also heal your fighter. We've seen some innovative combos that flow smoothly, and a few bone-crushing throws. Tobias tells us he enjoyed Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance, and states, "If anything is proving tough to us, it's living up to the expectations of the better fighters out there." Tao Feng may just have the skills to hang with the big boys.



Something's anatomically incorrect about this picture



Exile really wants those Dance Fest tickets. You can have 'em, holmes!

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** STUDIO GIGANTE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing. Shoo-wop, shoo-wop!

The Fatalist uses one of his Chi attacks. Yes, that's his name: The Fatalist. Tee hee!

"Which one of you wankers ripped off my nipple ring?"

PLAYSTATION 2

FINAL FANTASY X-2

THE SEARCH FOR TIDUS

In January 2002, Square Soft answered the cries of role-playing fanatics in Japan by ushering in a special edition re-release of the North American Final Fantasy X. Titled "International," this enhanced version came packaged with a bonus disc that featured interviews with the English and Japanese voice cast, an assortment of promotional movies, previews of upcoming Square products, a music video of the theme song, and a special 12-minute scene that takes place shortly after the ending of Final Fantasy X. This story led people to believe that the FF X saga wasn't quite over. These suspicions proved to be true, as Square Soft has now confirmed that it's anything but finished.

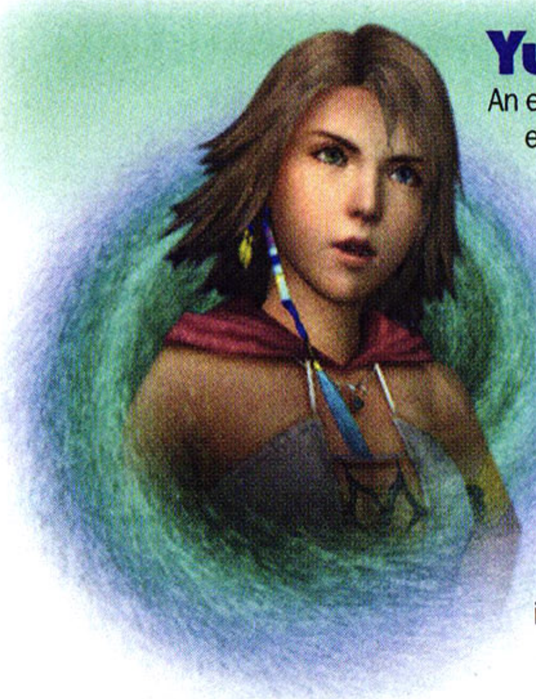
Final Fantasy X-2 picks up right where this bonus movie (which we're almost certain will have to be included in some fashion in the stateside release) left off. The game takes place two years after Yuna defeated Sin. The land of Spira has undergone many changes and has entered an age of "Eternal Calm." Interestingly, the teachings of Yevon are now frowned upon, Wakka and Lulu are married, and the world now revolves around the Al Bhed and machina. The people of Spira refer to this transformation as the "Machina Revolution." As the world prospers, Yuna is but a shadow of her former self. Still struggling with the loss of her beloved Blitzball player, she's had trouble moving on. That is, until Rikku stumbles across a magical sphere that shows visions of Tidus' possible existence. Whether he's alive or not, Yuna is determined to find out, and so the journey begins.

Uno and Sano are the henchmen of the mysterious LeBlanc

Even though this is a true sequel to Final Fantasy X, it feels like a different game altogether. This may sound like a joke, but it almost has an atmosphere of Charlie's Angels: The RPG. Why would we make a blasphemous statement like this? Well, the entire cast of playable characters is female. It's also more action-packed, allowing players to jump across pits and climb up on ledges. If you're worried about the game moving away from the RPG genre, never fear. Square Soft has loaded it with interesting additions, including the Job Wheel class system from Final Fantasy Tactics. Better yet, the Job Wheel works in unison with the Sphere Grid. This basically means that players will be able to switch classes on the fly, and yes, this function will be available during battle as well. You'll even run headlong into several new job types including Mascot, Gunner, Gambler, and Pop Star. From what we hear, your costumes will change to reflect the job you choose.

If anything, Final Fantasy X-2 sounds just as deep and riveting as the chapter before it. Square Soft hasn't set a U.S. release date just yet, but the title is expected in Japan on March 19.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 19 (JAPAN), TBA (U.S.)

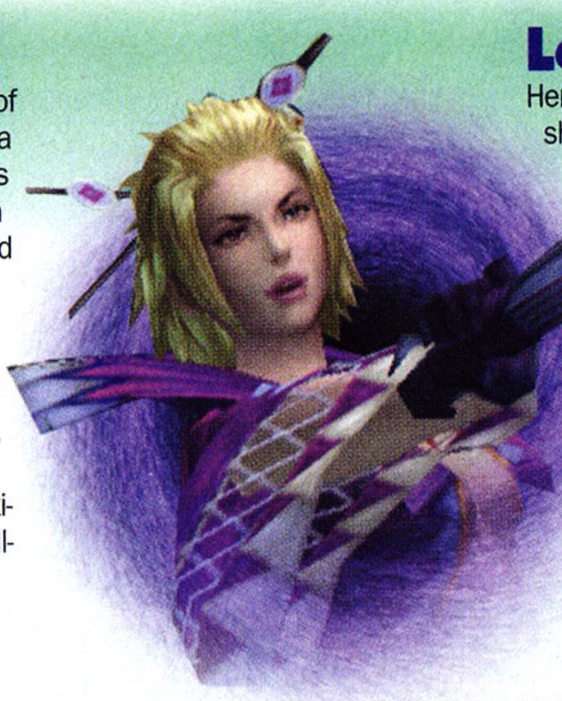


Yuna

An emptiness has entered this Summoner's heart, but the unfolding of recent events has inspired hope. Is Tidus alive? Will he remember who she is? She's determined to find out no matter what suffering she will endure in revealing the answers.

Rikku

This former Guardian of Yuna has unearthed a vision which reveals that Tidus may, in fact, be alive and well. Of course, this imagery is cryptic and riddled with contradictions. Nonetheless, it's worth investigating for the well-being of Yuna and her peace of mind.



LeBlanc

Her true intentions are shrouded in mystery, but it is known that LeBlanc is a Sphere Hunter, and she may have details that can steer Yuna and Rikku in the right direction. Conversely, she may be in this for herself and could turn on them to get what she wants. She cannot be trusted.

©2003 SQUARE MAIN CHARACTER DESIGN: TETSUYA NOMURA; ILLUSTRATION: TETSU TSUKAMOTO

This little critter is named Master. Although he may look a bit like Jar Jar, he's actually quite cool. He resides in the Celsius and will lend aid for a number of tasks

A vision of things to come...

This revealing shot of Rikku actually tells us quite a bit. If you look closely, you can see the first image of the third playable character, Paine

"I just wish I could find a guy who can truly turn on my heart light."

The airship in this installment is called the Celsius and is used from the beginning to the end of the quest

This sequel upgrades the drab dungeons in the original to go along with its more stylized and sharp graphics

Check out the gatling gun saddlebags sitting on your Ride Pod. Like with all its weapons, Dark Cloud 2 offers lots of customization

The world-building Georama feature returns, but it is now done with much more detail in the already beautiful environments

PLAYSTATION 2

DARK CLOUD 2

BORN ON A DIFFERENT CLOUD

"I'm learning things every day that are new in this game," says Torin, Dark Cloud 2's associate producer. Such discoveries are what this title is all about. Gamers found the first Dark Cloud a more than pleasant surprise. From what we've seen, this sequel will not only appease fans, but should draw even more into its charming world. "When people realize how much there is in this game, they are going to get it," explains Torin.

The basic premise of Dark Cloud 2 is actually a stew of many ideas. It's not just an RPG with a deep weapons system complete with an incredible amount of customization. Or a rich-looking cel-shaded title wrapped in an intriguing story. How about Legend of Zelda-esque real-time combat? Dark Cloud 2 doesn't even stop there. The original's Georama feature (where you battle in dungeons for items you can use to create landscapes) returns, and is better than ever. Says Torin, "The idea of Georama, and what they tried to get across in the first one, is that Georama is how you build your town and its part of the story. Unfortunately in the first one, you had to build your town a certain way, and you were very limited.... In the second one, you have a bit more to work with, and there's a lot more detail in that." In fact, as the hero Max, you'll not only fight evil to shape the look of the land; you'll be changing history with every step.

HIS NAME IS STEVE

To alter the course of the future, you'll enlist all sorts of help, and none cooler than your mechanical transportation/partner (called a Ride Pod) named Steve (he's dubbed so after Xiao's talking slingshot in the first Dark Cloud). His inclusion represents another evolution of Dark Cloud's already deep weapons system. This sequel brings back such gameplay features as Status Breaks, Spectrumization, weapon building/repairing, and more. Now, Steve makes you a mobile fighting force that, of course, can be upgraded to bigger and badder forms. He basically acts as another playable character (there are three others each with their own special playable extras) that you can switch in and out of. He also helps add spice to the game's dungeon levels. While a little tedious in the first Dark Cloud, these locations have been made more exciting thanks to the sequel's upgraded look.

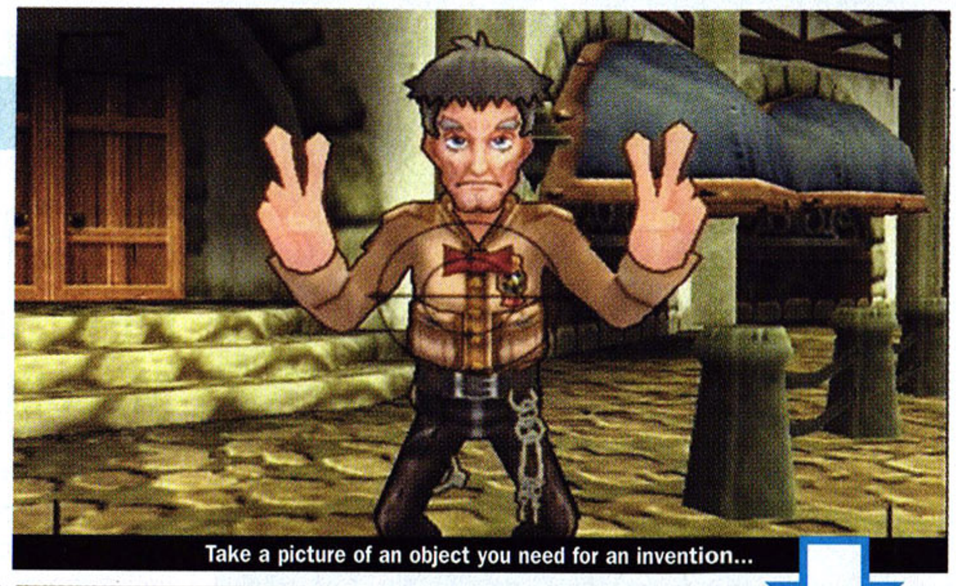
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** LEVEL-5
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 10

Not only can you play as three other characters, but each one has Ride Pods and other playable forms

Dark Cloud 2's real-time combat puts a premium on strategic offense and well-timed defense

A PICTURE IS WORTH 400+ INVENTIONS

The original Dark Cloud's Georama feature was an extremely fun element that really separated the game from the rest of the pack. Now, the sequel has totally upped the ante with its inventions. These must be built by finding and taking pictures of the constituent objects that make up that creation. For instance, an energy pack consists of some milk jugs, metal piping, and a belt (shown right). You'll come across ideas for all sorts of inventions, so when you're in the overworld, you must always be on the look out for any potentially useful objects. Torin even hinted that if you mix and match items, you could come up with some pretty cool surprises. All told, Dark Cloud 2 contains over 400 different inventions.

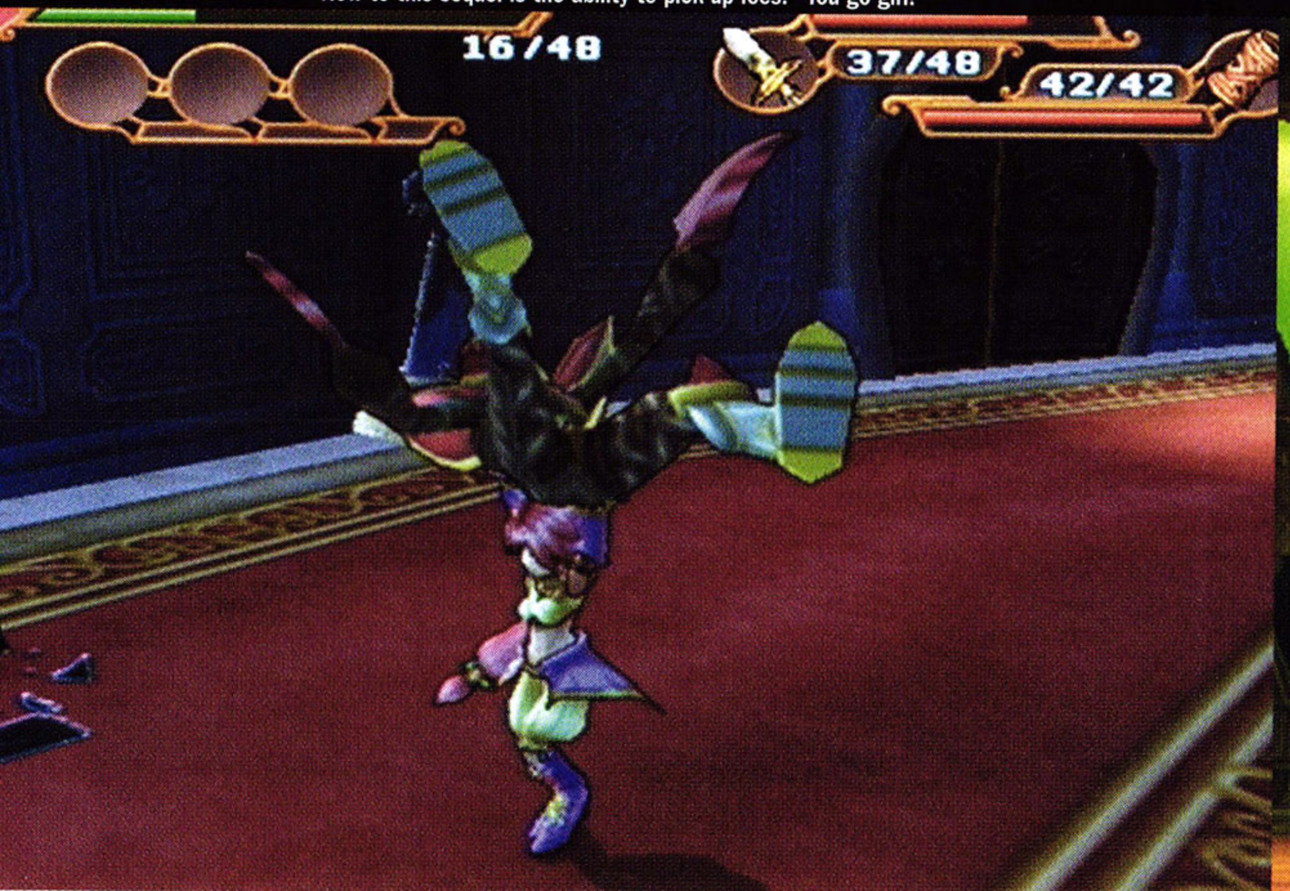


Take a picture of an object you need for an invention...

...and viola! You have your invention

...then choose from your inventory of shots...

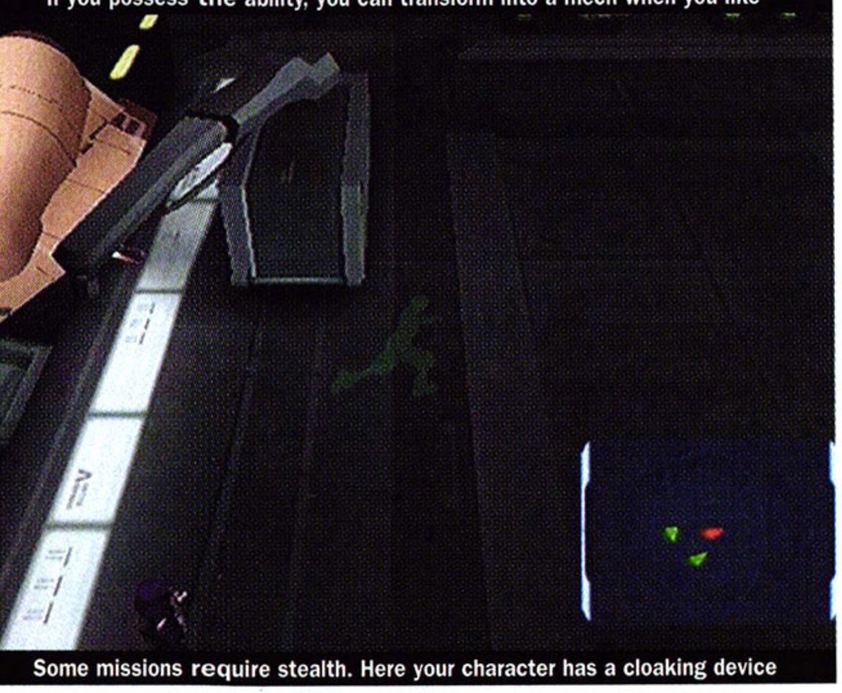
New to this sequel is the ability to pick up foes. "You go girl!"



Hey, some men feel liberated when they wear women's underwear. That's cool

Chaos has special psychic powers to destroy Gnosis

If you possess the ability, you can transform into a mech when you like



Some missions require stealth. Here your character has a cloaking device

PLAYSTATION 2

XENOSAGA EPISODE 1: DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

DER SPIEL IST GUT

Monolith, the creators of the wonderful Xenogears, has caused many gamers serious pain in taking such an exorbitant amount of time to release the follow-up, Xenosaga. But this long development period isn't without good reason. Namco estimates that Episode 1 contains roughly 30 hours of cutscenes (complete with spoken dialogue), in addition to the 50-plus hours of gameplay.

Based on the playable build we recently enjoyed, we can safely confirm that roughly 40 percent of the game consists of story segments. Fortunately, the plot thus far is as grandiose and compelling as the best Final Fantasy has to offer.

The story focuses on Shion and Kos-Mos, and more importantly, the dichotomy of what these two represent. Shion is a lead engineer for a large corporation that creates a race of androids known as Regalians. They aid humans in combating the Gnosis, aliens that are impervious to conventional human weapons. As a result, Shion is charged to create Kos-Mos, a special android that's capable of eliminating the Gnosis. Of course, along the way, the pair will encounter various allies, with the most important being Chaos – a strange young man who possesses psychic powers capable of killing the Gnosis.

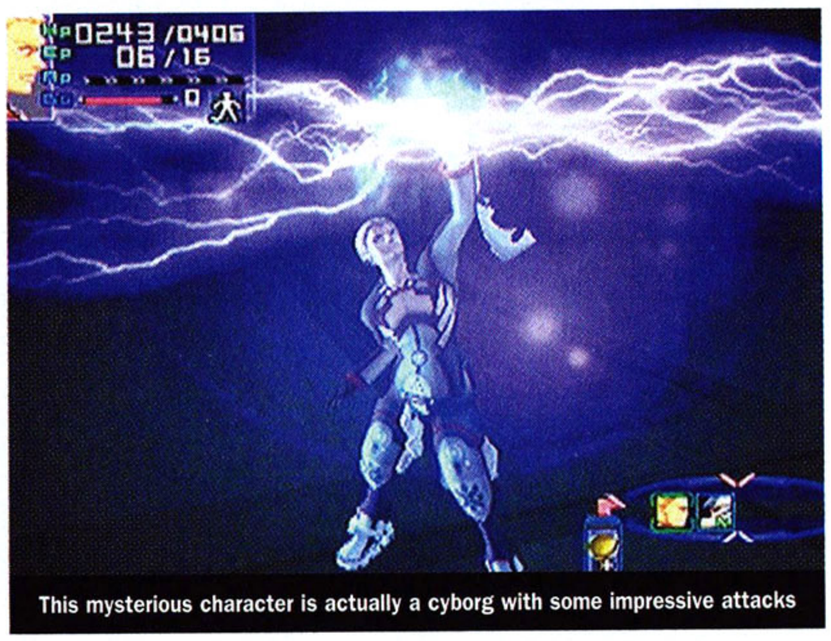
Metaphorically, the plot uses the humans versus androids theme to comment on humanity's tendency to impose its will upon "lesser beings," and brings into question a few other traditional forms of thinking. Although we cannot yet comment on how well this theme is carried out, we do find it intriguing that Monolith uses the interactive medium to allow players to take control of both humans and androids/cyborgs to better understand each camp's perspective.

The game's storytelling, and even its appearance, are very reminiscent of Final Fantasy X (a good thing); but the combat and gameplay, in general, remain unique to the Xeno universe. Basically, just like Xenogears, players can perform special techniques and regular combo attacks. The mech combat is also present, but bears a few striking differences. First, only certain characters can operate the AGWS (mechs), and these are brought into play during a battle on the fly. Second, the story explains that in order to better combat the Gnosis, the AGWS had to be more streamlined. So now, instead of piloting robots 10 stories high, each mech stands at about 20 feet.

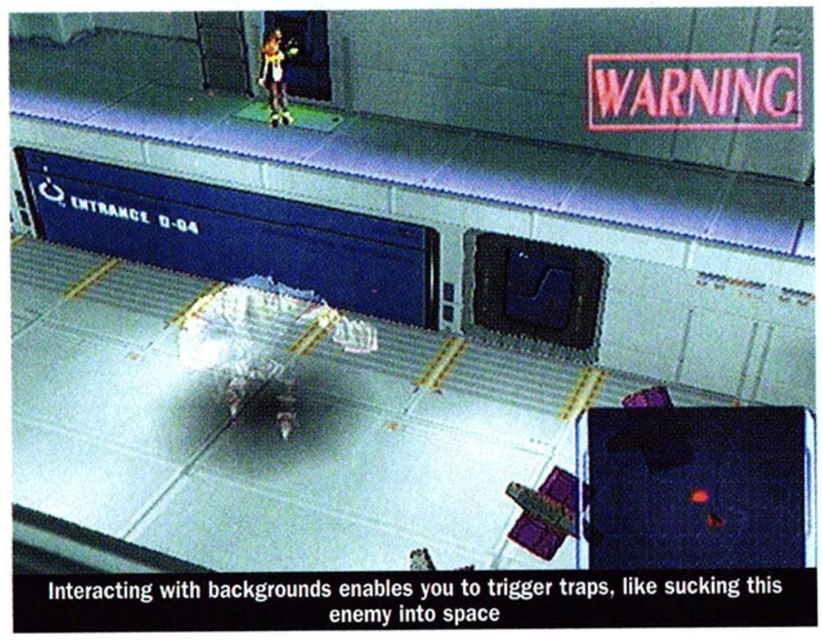
Xenosaga also supports another noteworthy alteration. Random battles do not occur – thank Buddha! You can see every enemy onscreen, which grants players the ability to avoid encounters by sneaking around foes or luring them into traps. This latter attribute is now possible thanks to increased background interaction.

Fortunately, Episode 1 is only the tip of the iceberg in this series, as there are six other games planned for release over the next decade or so. Next issue, we'll have a complete review, so we'll finally see how this epic saga's beginning fares.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** MONOLITH SOFT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 25



This mysterious character is actually a cyborg with some impressive attacks



Interacting with backgrounds enables you to trigger traps, like sucking this enemy into space

Boost (bottom-right corner) allows you to score an extra hit

The icon labeled "Up" in the bottom-right corner changes each turn allowing for different bonuses

This is Junior. We know little about him, but he does indeed fight with two guns

Chaos is a bit of an enigma. His psychic abilities make him formidable

Shion is Kos-Mos' creator and a force to be reckoned with. She is able to operate mechs

Momo is an android, we think. She is somehow connected to a very prominent politician

Kos-Mos is the resident android ass-kicker. She represents the possibility of victory against the Gnosis for the human race

Here are just a few of the AGWS (Anti-Gnosis Weapon System)

We don't know who this guy is, but he looks bad-ass

The cutscenes are elaborate and are accompanied by a great story

GAMECUBE

P.N.03

DEVIL MAY CRY...IN SPACE!!!

When Shinji Mikami joined Capcom in 1990, the first three projects he was assigned to revolved around the Disney universe. After doing his time with the Mickey Mouse club, he finally got his chance to break free and make the game he had be yearning to create for years. The outcome was Resident Evil. The game garnered such praise that Mikami became the video game horror king overnight, and everyone turned to him to see what terrifying new project he would unleash next.

Although his role has changed dramatically over the years (he's currently the general manager of Capcom's Production Studio 4), he still directs and produces a number of products, including such staples as the continuation of the Resident Evil series, and new entries like the recently announced P.N. 03. Before you start scratching your head, the P.N. actually stands for Product Number. For better or worse, this game really does look like a science-fiction version of Devil May Cry. In such, the action that unfolds blends acrobatic maneuvers with explosive gunplay. You'll find yourself flipping off of walls, spinning over the top of an enemy, and rolling across doorways – all while unloading countless rounds of lead.

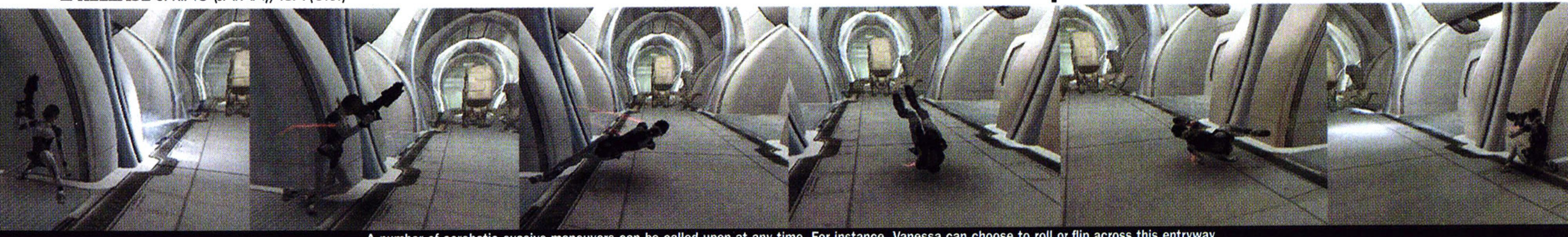
The story takes place within a colonial settlement that has recently transformed into a warzone thanks to a faulty CAMS (Computer Arms Management System). The main character in the game, Vanessa, is called in to clean up the mess and restore peace. Of course, CAMS is intent on stopping her in any way possible, and will even summon the aid of transforming mechs and automated sand-rovers.

P.N.03 looks fantastic at this point, and is expected to release in Japan this spring. The U.S. conversion is expected shortly after.

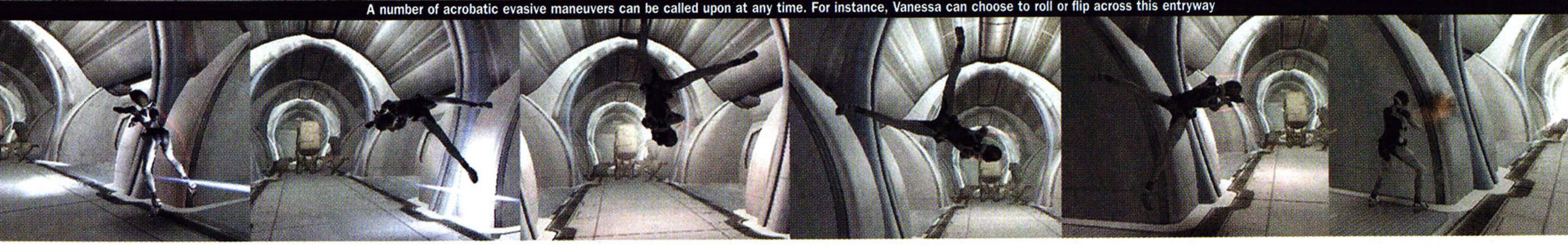
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM PRODUCTION STUDIO 4
■ **RELEASE** SPRING (JAPAN), TBA (U.S.)

VANESSA Z. SCHNEIDER

Ellen Ripley from *Alien* will forever be the queen of sci-fi style – after all, tight white panties coupled with a flame-thrower are an unbeatable ensemble – but Capcom's newest action hero, Vanessa Z. Schneider, does give the world's favorite extraterrestrial hunter a run for her money. The sleek latex armor, sexy shades, and hefty laser rifle have proven to be more than enough to pique our interest. Vanessa has a dark past that is haunted by demons, but her future looks fairly promising. She's a freelance mercenary with a gun for hire and curves that kill. While her intentions are purely for profit, her latest hit may land a little too close to home.



A number of acrobatic evasive maneuvers can be called upon at any time. For instance, Vanessa can choose to roll or flip across this entryway



Vanessa flips over this transforming mech and takes aim

"Whoever said 'size doesn't matter' is a liar."

One sequence takes place on the planet's surface during a sandstorm

GAMECUBE

VIEWTIFUL JOE

THE BEAUTY OF 2D

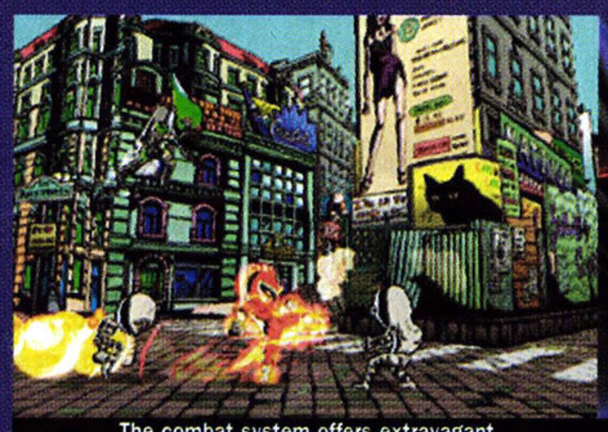
Two of Capcom's elite gaming talents have joined forces to bring this oddly named title to life. Hideki Kamiya (Resident Evil 2, Devil May Cry) takes the reins as director and Atsushi Inaba (Steel Battalion) is overseeing the intricacies of production as producer. Currently slated for a spring release in Japan, Viewtiful Joe mixes gaming's latest technological graphical advancements with classic side-scrolling gameplay. Hideki Kamiya summed it up best, "A superhero must not only be brave and strong, but he must fight his foe with beautiful style."

"You'll never fight beautifully! You're fat, stupid, and blue looks horrible on you!"

From a first glance, Viewtiful Joe would seem to be nothing more than an old-school brawler. While the name of the game is to annihilate every evildoer that crosses your path, the arsenal you'll have at your disposal is comparable to that within a fighting game. You can chain together deadly combos, unleash special attacks, slow the game speed down *Matrix*-style and knock an opponent into the stratosphere, or zoom in on action which will transform the simplest of attacks into a fatal blow.

"Doesn't it sound crazy?" questions Kamiya. "No, I should say Viewtiful!"

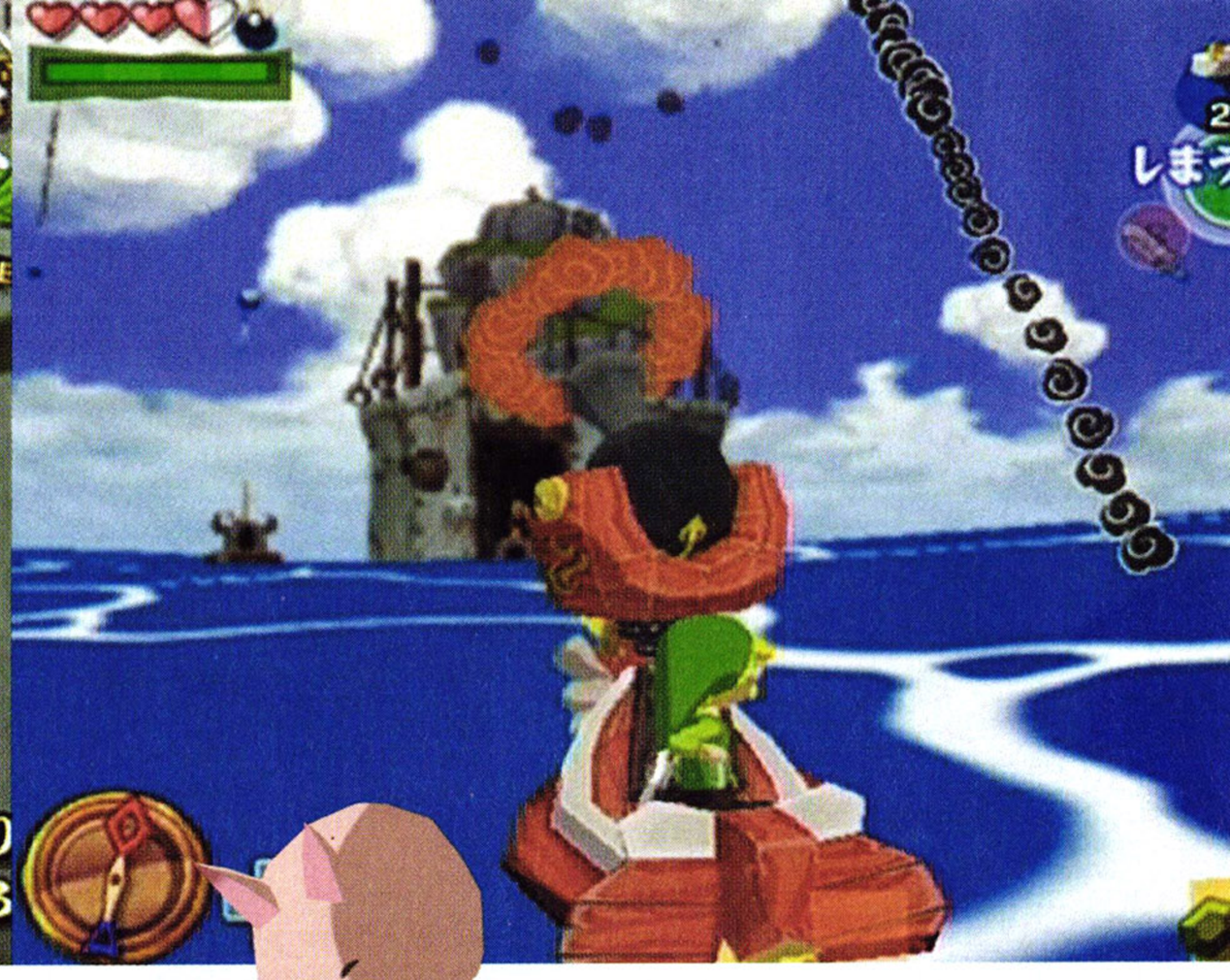
Although the environments are 3D, the action is tracked to traditional side-scrolling 2D



The combat system offers extravagant combos and special attacks

By tapping into a power that will slow time, Joe can dodge attacks just like Neo evades bullets in *The Matrix*

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM PRODUCTION STUDIO 4 ■ **RELEASE** SPRING (JAPAN), TBA (U.S.)



GAMECUBE

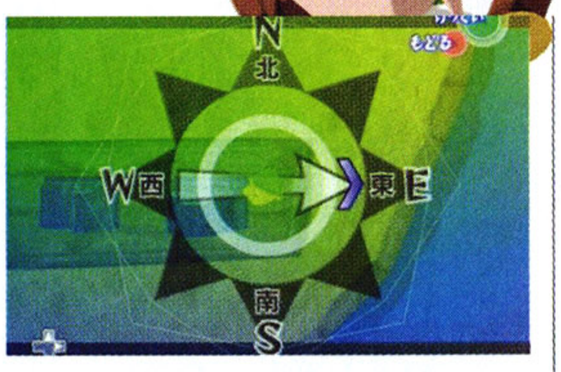
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

We spent a good week's worth of sleepless nights with Link's latest adventure and have unearthed a wealth of new information within the umpteen hours we've vested. Although this game is set in a completely different time than the previous entries in the series, it does make reference to Majora's Mask. Additionally, throughout the entire quest Link is being stalked by a mysterious, yet familiar adversary.

THE WAND OF POWER

Instead of blowing air through a shell, Link now waves a magical wand. To cast a spell, our hero must first perform a song by moving the wand in sequence to a tempo gauge that appears at the top of the screen. You'll learn more songs as the game goes on. All of the spells tie into wind in some shape or form. You'll even be able to change the direction that the wind blows. You can only imagine what kind of puzzles stem from this unique ability.



At the beginning of the game, we confront a humbled Link who has given up exploring and his traditional lawn gnome-like garb.

SAILING THE SEAS

The world is now dispersed across a large body of water. Instead of hopping onto the back of Epona, Link sails on a living vessel. A handy compass prevents you from getting lost, and in true Zelda fashion, the seas hold many secrets and minigames. Your boat can also transform into a cannonball-firing machine for combat purposes.

COMBAT

Wind Waker's combat system is based on an evolved version of the Z-targeting technology produced for Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask. Link can perform a number of new moves including longer combos and quick rolls. He also has the ability to wield any weapon that an enemy may drop upon death. This aspect produces a number of interesting twists and strategies that can help you eliminate your foes faster.

"I'll save the world tomorrow, Tingle. Beating Metroid Fusion comes first."

STEALTHY MANEUVERS

The most impressive gameplay alterations lie within Link's ability to sneak. He can now hug walls and lean around corners to see if any guards are patrolling in the nearby vicinity. Furthermore, much like Sony's Sly Cooper, Link can pick up a barrel, hide beneath it, then quietly shuffle past guards who have their backs turned. In previous Zelda titles, stealth was sparsely used, but you'll frequently rely on this ability in Wind Waker. If you're low on health, you can even use it to slip by enemies and find hearts.

A good majority of the puzzles and items are recycled from the Nintendo 64 games. For instance, the always-exciting bomb plants make an explosive return.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 24

THREE FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Starting on February 16, if you run out to your local game retailer and place a deposit for The Wind Waker, you'll receive a limited edition disc featuring The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and the never-before released The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time Master Quest absolutely free. Mark this date on your calendar, folks. In Japan, Nintendo limited the quantity of this bonus disc to only 100,000, and we can only imagine that supplies will be scarce for the U.S. deal as well. If you feel as though your suggestions to Nintendo fall on deaf ears, think again. The day the Japanese promotion started, nearly 500 consumers called Nintendo's North American branch pleading that this program come stateside. Nintendo's executive vice president of sales and marketing, Peter MacDougall, explains. "We were surprised consumers tracked the program in Japan and were begging us to do it here. We decided it was a great idea and one we know consumers really want."

BONUS GAME 1

OCARINA OF TIME

This unforgettable classic originally released on the Nintendo 64 in 1998. Despite its obvious graphical drawbacks, one can't help becoming completely engrossed with the quest at hand. The bland texturing will assuredly make you grimace, but the game is more pleasing to the eye thanks to the improved resolution. You'll mainly notice that the definition of the character models and objects in the environments is now very crisp. The high-resolution polish even runs in progressive scan 480p for HDTV and DTV units.

A number of changes have been made to the control schematic as well, but the gameplay is just as precise and easy to manipulate. Directional movements on the C-stick replace the C-button functionality, and auto-targeting is now performed on the L-button as opposed to the Z trigger. To zoom into first-person, you'll simply need to press Up on the C-Stick.

If you haven't played Ocarina before, this is the perfect opportunity to jump on the bandwagon and experience one of gaming's most highly touted and rewarding adventures.

While the graphics haven't improved on a texture or model basis, the resolution has improved greatly. This can clearly be seen in Link's collar in these comparison shots

BONUS GAME 2

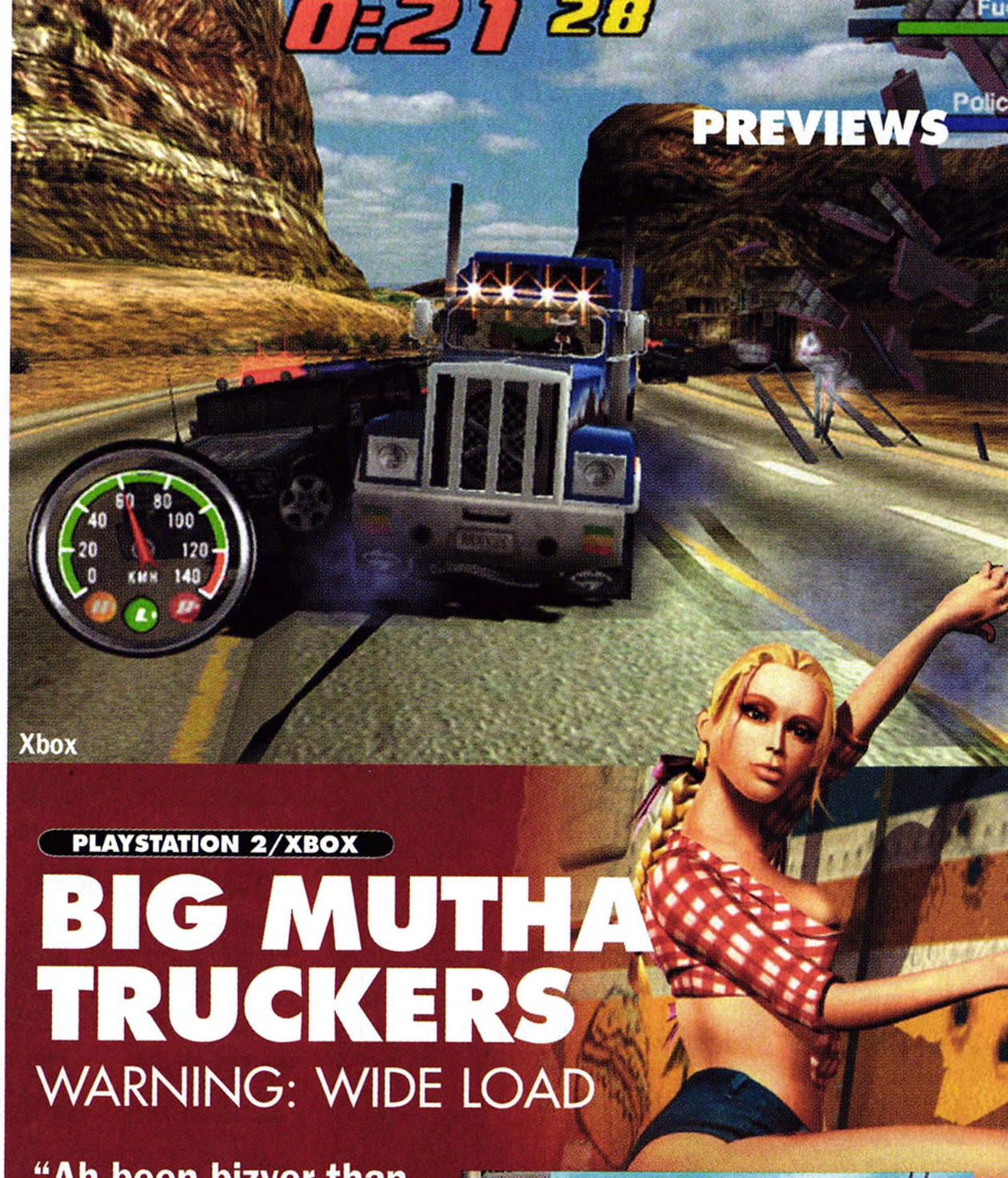
MASTER QUEST

As you can clearly see, the makeover of the puzzles is much different. In this particular room, you simply had to hit an underwater switch to solve the puzzle in Ocarina. In Master Quest, this puzzle has become incredibly complex

This game never made its way stateside, never found its way onto Japanese retail shelves, and to cut to the chase, never made its way off of the development floor. On the Japanese bonus disc, it's called Ura Zelda. For some strange reason, though, the American branch of Nintendo decided to give it the incredibly lengthy and highly cheesy title of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time Master Quest for the stateside release.

Seeing that it's basically a remix of Ocarina justifies this obnoxious title, but not the lack of creativity that went into it. Regardless, fans of the series will definitely want to take a look at this version of the game. The biggest changes that have been made occur in the dungeons. A good majority of the puzzles have been altered significantly, and new, more lethal enemies (which are usually just variations of existing creatures) appear from time to time to give this rehash a boost in difficulty.

We haven't worked our way through the entire game yet, but from what we've seen thus far, the story, characters, and worlds haven't changed in the slightest. However, when the game was originally in the development clutches of the ill-fated Nintendo 64DD system, series creator Shigeru Miyamoto commented that Ura Zelda would feature new minigames and characters. We've yet to see them in this incarnation, but we have a feeling that there has to be more to it other than a few puzzle and enemy tweaks.

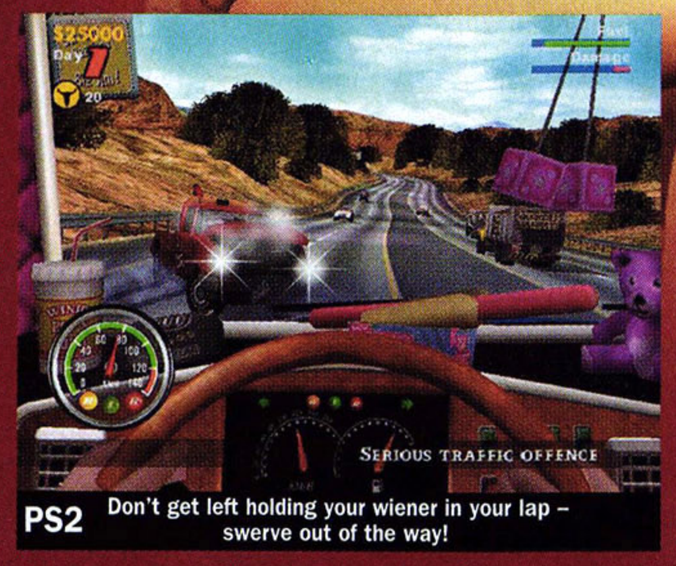


PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

WARNING: WIDE LOAD

"Ah been bizyer than a three-legged cat burying crap on marble and ah still ain't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it outta!" So says Earl. He and his two brothers and one sister have 60 days to see who can come up with the most money hauling stuff. The winner will inherit Ma Jackson's trucking company – Big Mutha Truckers. It's "trial by trucking," as they say.



PS2 Don't get left holding your wiener in your lap – swerve out of the way!

While this sounds like Crazy Taxi with trucks, nothing could be further from the truth. BMT is much more deep and involved than that. Developer Eutechnyx has come up with a complex economics model that drives the game. For example, you'll get missions and pick up cargo in 5 different towns through Hick State County. You won't just get a flat price for the goods you deliver though. The game constantly changes the supply and demand, so you'll always have to keep an eye out for locations where you can buy low and sell high.

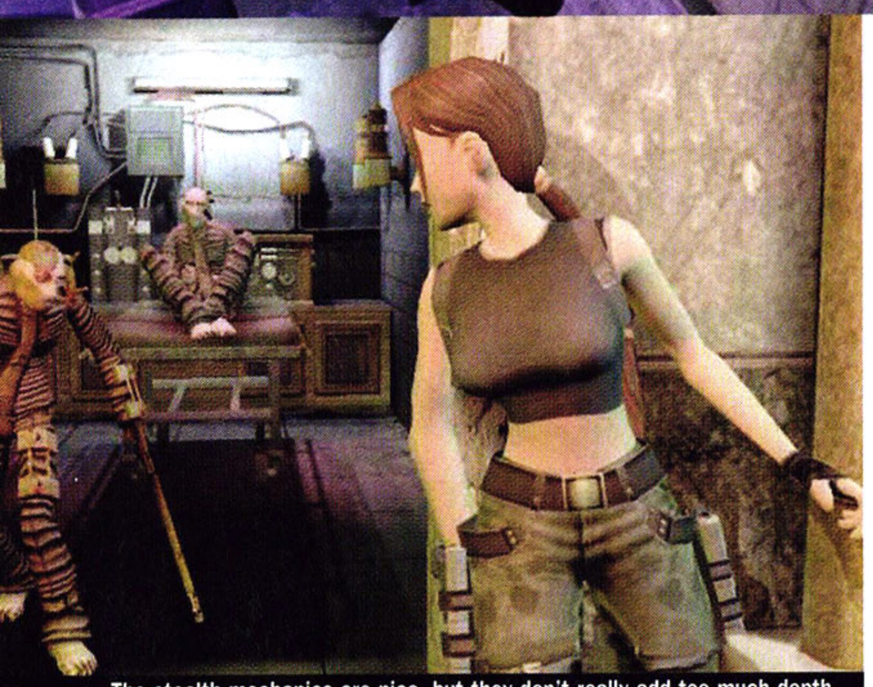
Even getting your load there isn't easy. Apart from the driving challenges, timed missions, and other feats, you'll have to watch your reputation. Fall on the wrong side of either the police or the biker gangs, and you could get ticketed or truck jacked, resulting in a whole lot of nothing at the end of the line.

At the moment, the only thing keeping Big Mutha Truckers from getting a whole head of steam going is its gameplay speed. However, Eutechnyx has promised that it'll be slicker than snot on a glass eye when Truckers releases this spring.

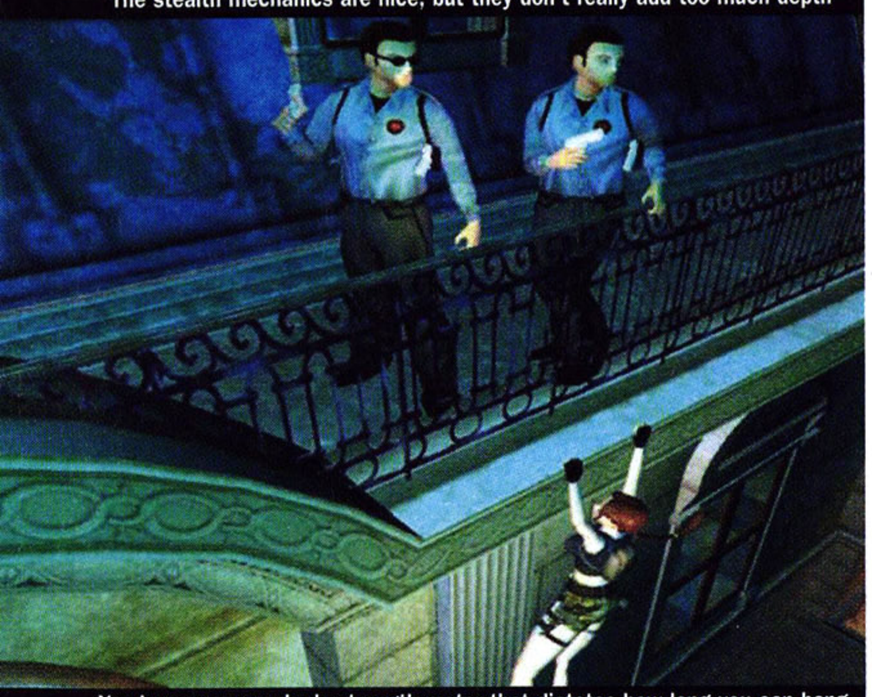
Eutechnyx had the game's complex economics system figured out by a university economist. This isn't him.

Start seeing motorcycles. Run afoul with the bikers and they'll try to hijack your load

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
■ **DEVELOPER** EUTECHNYX ■ **RELEASE** SPRING



The stealth mechanics are nice, but they don't really add too much depth



You have an upper body strength meter that dictates how long you can hang

Controlling Lara still feels a bit clunky, but most are probably used to it

PLAYSTATION 2

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

HANDS ON LARA

Yes, we finally got an opportunity to play the latest adventure starring video games' original busty action babe. With roughly two months before release, the action runs smoothly, and Core promises to lock the framerate at a fluid 60 frames per second, which will be impressive considering the size and texture quality of the levels.

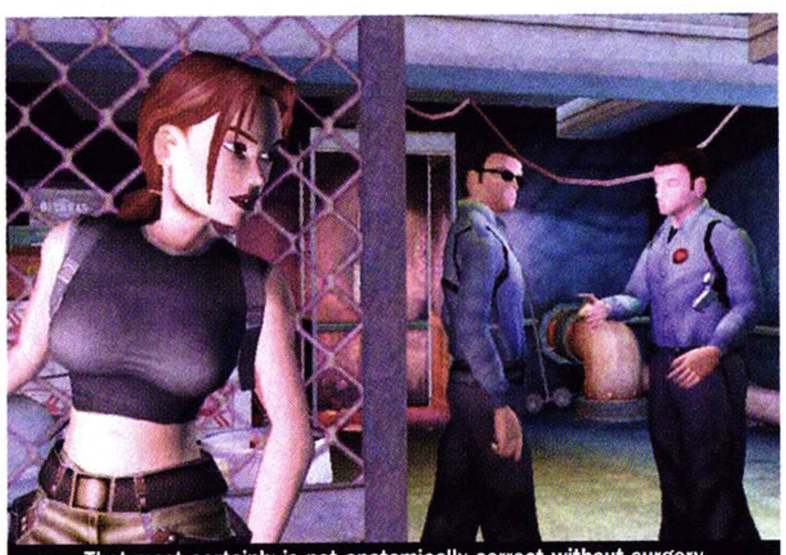
However, our most interesting discovery concerns the change in the game's design. Core has constructed each level with a more open-ended approach; that is, each stage has two or three different manners in which players can complete them. For example, right at the outset, Lara is stuck in an alley hiding from police. To free herself from this predicament, the player can either scale one of the buildings, hopping rooftops and shimmying ledges; or take the more furtive route, and carefully try to sneak past officers on the streets of the city.

Angel of Darkness' replay value will also get a boost thanks to the ability to improve Lara's upper and lower body strength. To do so, you must find the strength icons that are sprinkled throughout each stage. If a diligent player manages to find them all, he or she will be able to reach certain hidden sections containing bonuses that are otherwise unattainable.

Unfortunately, the positive news ends here, as Angel of Darkness appears to be less of a deviation from the Tomb Raider formula than we previously expected. Foremost, the added character, Curtis, only becomes accessible in one level towards the end of the game. While we appreciate that he offers a more action-oriented play style, we hoped that he would have a more significant role. Second, the gameplay mechanics essentially remain the same. Although the first section of the game places Lara in Paris fleeing from police, her stealth maneuvers aren't nearly as deep as Metal Gear's or Splinter Cell's. Plus, this level had Lara performing typical Tomb Raider actions, just in an urban environment. Finally, the control scheme remains nearly untouched, which means Lara's movements are still clunky and imprecise. While this news will hardly bug serious fans of Tomb Raider; deserters, haters, and newbies of the series will perhaps stay turned off because of this fact.

Core has a few more months to resolve some of these issues. Since we hear that the company is adamant about doing things right, we'll reserve our judgement until its eventual release – hopefully sometime in March.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** CORE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25



That most certainly is not anatomically correct without surgery

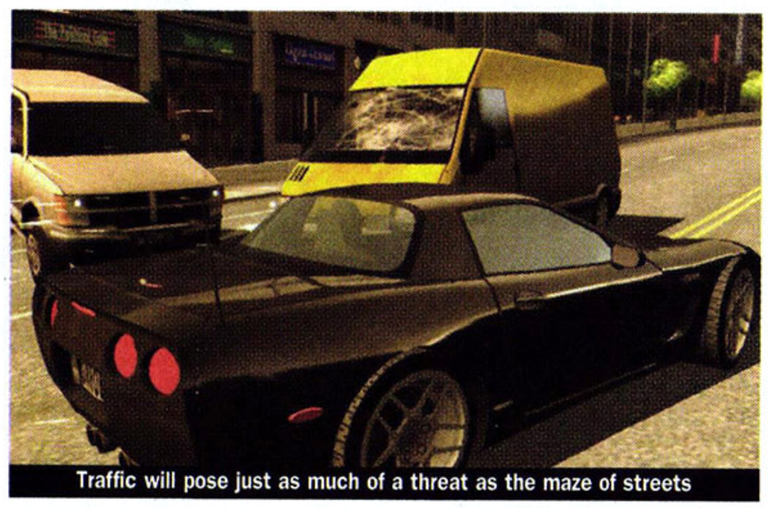
In addition to human foes, Angel of Darkness will contain monsters

XBOX

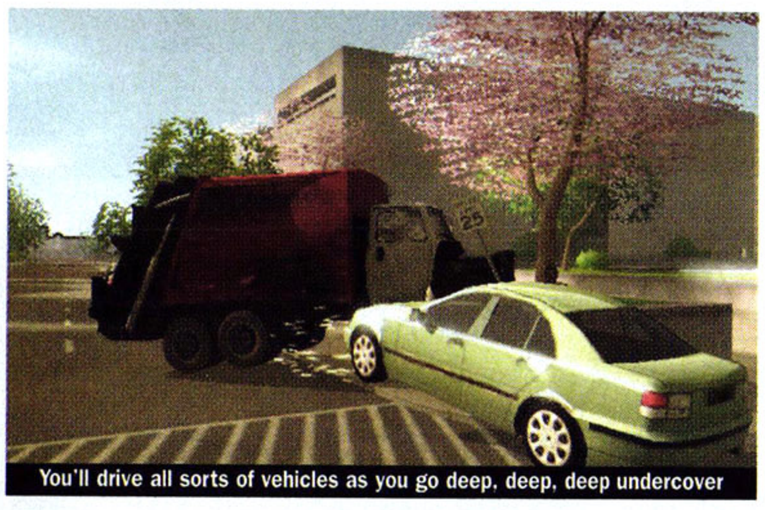
MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

MEAN STREETS

It's a lovely morning in Paris. You know, one of those where you wouldn't feel guilty about wasting the day away sitting in a café. Suddenly, the calm is destroyed by the scattering of tables and the screams of pedestrians as a car barrels through an intersection and plows through everything in its path. Now that's more like it. During this chaos, Raja Subramoni, Midtown Madness 3's product manager, nonchalantly explains that this is a normal morning – at least in the game's version of Paris. "The thing to keep in mind is Midtown is very much about being very over the top. Think of it like a Jackie Chan movie: lots of action, hyper-realism, and a little tongue in cheek in the humor – that type of thing."



Traffic will pose just as much of a threat as the maze of streets

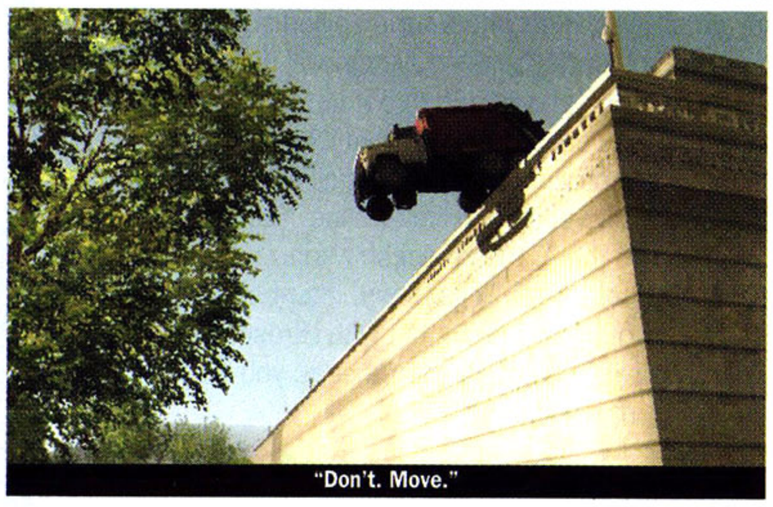


You'll drive all sorts of vehicles as you go deep, deep, deep undercover

REALISTIC – DANGEROUSLY REALISTIC

How realistic is the mapping of Washington D.C. and Paris? "It is exact," says Subramoni. "Everything is there." So while you're in Undercover mode competing in the title's 20 Checkpoint races, or in the free ride Cruise mode, you'll encounter all the real landmarks and street flavor of each city. Swedish developer Digital Illusions CE went to such extremes it got them in trouble, explained Subramoni. "They were by the White House and they were taking just tons of pictures from every possible angle. They got approached by Secret Service, taken aside, [then] taken to this out of the way office a couple of miles away and interrogated..."

That's right, dump that garbage all over the tower – we don't care



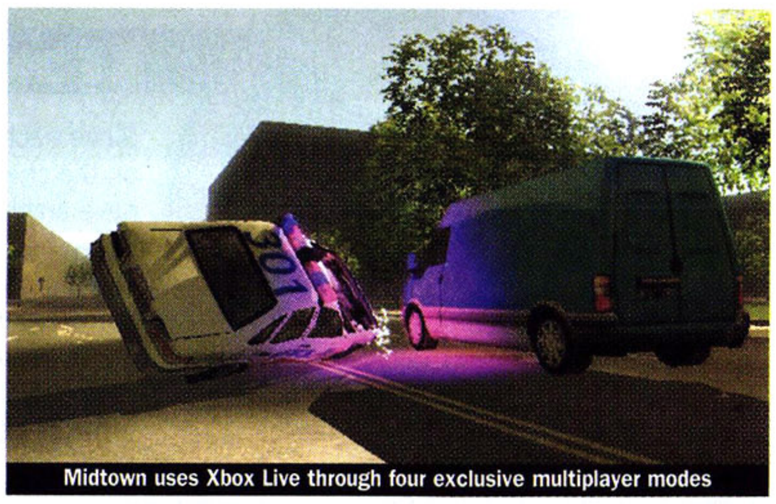
"Don't. Move."

A SPY FOR HIRE

Midtown Madness 3 isn't just a checkpoint race. "The thing about Midtown 3 that makes it stand out over other Midtowns is the Work Undercover mode," Subramoni explains. As a spy sent to infiltrate assorted organizations in Washington D.C. and Paris, you must go undercover by participating in 14 different careers and 54 missions. Sometimes you'll have to act as chauffeur, a paramedic, and even a stuntman – complete with death-defying jumps among the rooftops.

COME ALONG FOR THE LIVE RIDE

Apart from the Work Undercover mode, Midtown Madness 3 is also breaking new ground. It was delayed previously so it could be made Xbox Live compatible. Nice. Four of the game's six multiplayer modes are exclusive to the broadband service, and the Communicator makes things even better. In the capture the flag-esque Capture the Gold mode (known in previous Midtowns as Cops and Robbers) you and your three other team members can talk to each other without being heard by your opponents. Thus, you can set up ambushes where a friend can sneak ahead and cut off the gold carrier in a spectacular intersection collision.



Midtown uses Xbox Live through four exclusive multiplayer modes

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYERS RACING (VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE ■ **RELEASE** APRIL

GAMECUBE

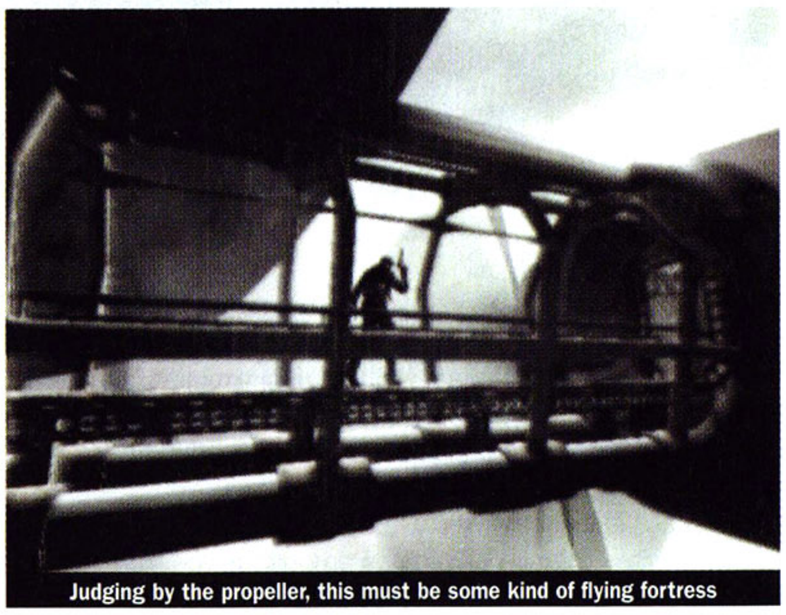
RESIDENT EVIL 4

FROM MUTATION TO EVOLUTION

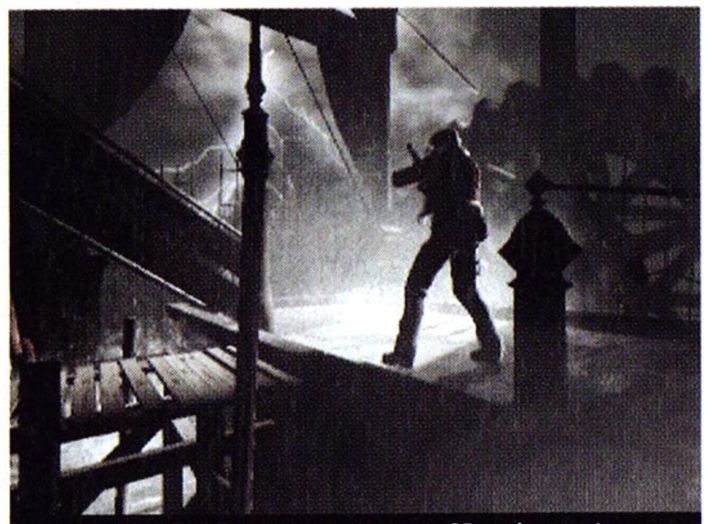
As entertaining as this series is, it has always stressed the importance of graphical detail over the finesse of gameplay. Some people complain about the awkward control scheme, others have gripes with the set camera perspectives. In developing Resident Evil 4, it would appear that Capcom is at long last alleviating both of these problems. Much like the Dreamcast incarnation, Code: Veronica, this game will render the environments on the fly, as opposed to utilizing the series' traditional pre-rendered backdrops. Because of this, the graphics won't be nearly as detailed as those in Resident Evil 0 and the remake, but it may very well open the door to enabling on-demand camera management. We actually witnessed a sequence where the camera flashes from a dramatic isometric perspective to Leon's first-person view. The camera even shook realistically with each step he took. This could just be a pre-scripted sequence, but it represents the evolutionary change that the series so desperately needs.

On the gameplay end, Capcom hasn't revealed any details yet, but rumors have spilled out of Japan suggesting that the combat system will be much more acrobatic and fast-paced than before.

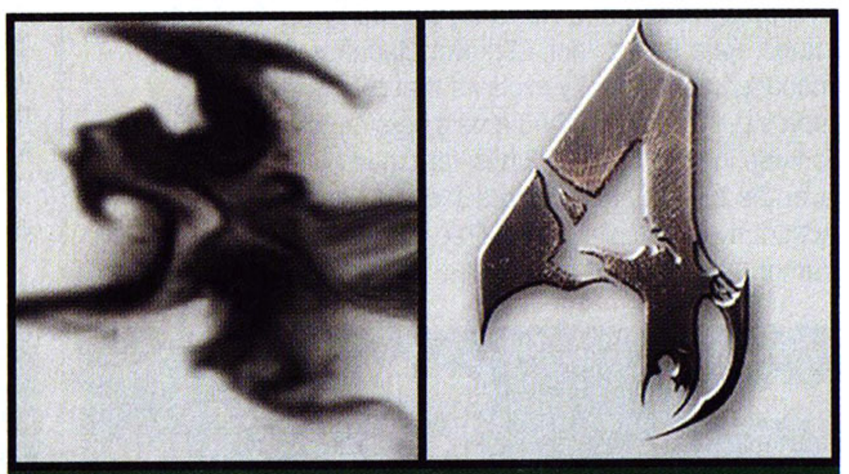
As for the release date, Capcom jokingly states that it will come out in "200X." Shinji Mikami added that the X will probably be below nine. The truth of the matter is that Capcom doesn't know if it will make 2003 or 2004. Regardless, it's at least a year off. Don't hold your breath, but with Hiroshi Shibata (Resident Evil 3) in the director's seat, you can't help but shake in anticipation.



Judging by the propeller, this must be some kind of flying fortress



The new engine produces gorgeous 3D environments



THE BLACK SWARM

This black smear may look like a psychiatrist's inkblot test, but it's actually a new species that appears to play a vital role in Resident Evil 4. From the little we've seen of this game in action, this black cloud-like swarm is actually chasing Leon. It eventually catches up to him and...well...we'd love to tell you what happens next, but that's all Capcom was willing to show. If the game pans out as we predict, this swarm will only be present at the beginning of the game. We have a feeling that this mysterious entity is actually a symbiotic life form that will infest and use Leon's body as a host – much like the comic book character Venom. If this is so, Leon will more than likely look a lot less human, and may even be able to morph between forms. The texture and design of the four logos Capcom has provided may in fact hint at Leon's new appearance. On the contrary, the swarm could be a progenitor of the T-virus that infects Leon. The entire game may become a race to find a cure. We like the idea of becoming an alien-like being more than the latter, but both have exciting possibilities. Again, this is all conjecture on our part, but it does seem that Capcom has mischievously left a breadcrumb trail for us to follow and piece together. We can't wait to find out how close to the mark we are. If you have any thoughts, let us know!

LEON S. KENNEDY

Since each chapter of the Resident Evil saga focuses heavily on the characters, there's a good chance that a sequel may not have anything in common with the game before it. From what we gather, Resident Evil 4 is actually more a sequel to Resident Evil 2 than 3. The game will focus on Leon Kennedy's continuing battle against Umbrella Corporation. When we last saw Leon, he lended a hand in the containment of the T-virus outbreak in Raccoon City. Now he's heading overseas to confront the scourge head-on.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM PRODUCTION STUDIO 4
■ **RELEASE** TBA

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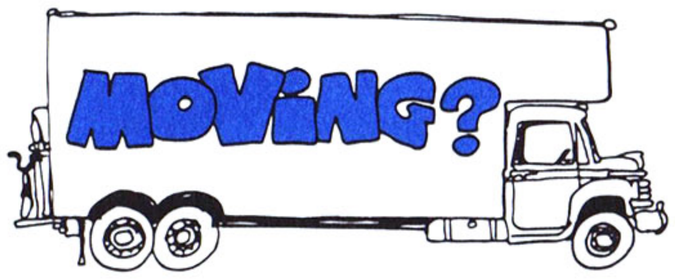

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

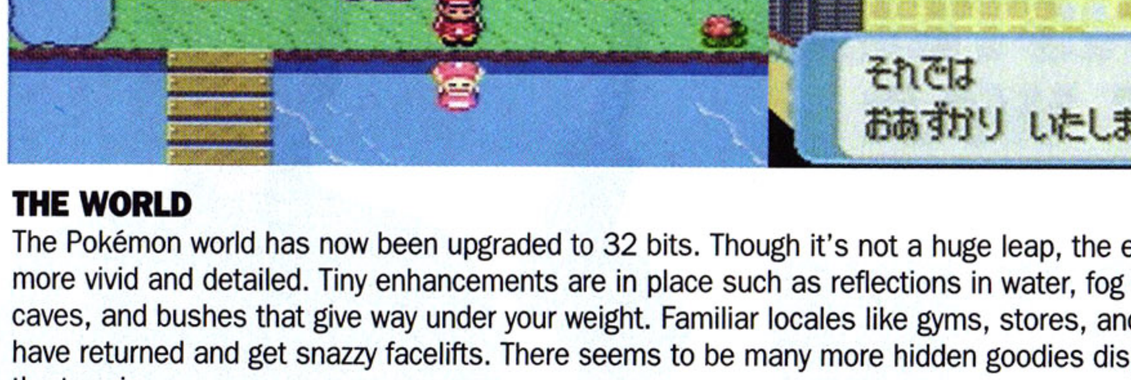
KEEP ON CATCHIN'

THE WORLD

The Pokémon world has now been upgraded to 32 bits. Though it's not a huge leap, the environments are more vivid and detailed. Tiny enhancements are in place such as reflections in water, fog drooping heavily in caves, and bushes that give way under your weight. Familiar locales like gyms, stores, and the Poké Center have returned and get snazzy facelifts. There seems to be many more hidden goodies dispersed throughout the terrain.

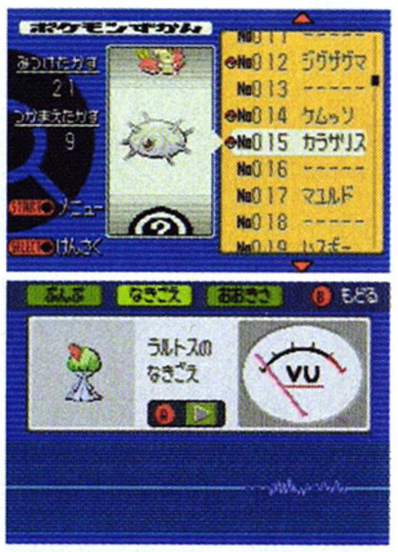
POKÉMON

It can't be easy coming up with even more creatures to inhabit the Pokémon universe. The new monsters we've seen range from everyday Earth-dwelling animals like robins and seagulls, to abstract Pokémon whose inspiration is known only to the designers. Of course, the cute factor still remains high, and many of the new Pokémon will have you cooing "Ahhhh..." just like Pikachu and Jigglypuff.



COMBAT

The combat remains the same, with each monster getting up to four moves. The much-hyped two-on-two battles are actually relatively simple, with the only differences being that you pick your target and each Pokémon's attack. Evolution is shown through a nice cutscene of the metamorphosis. When changing creatures mid-battle, each one has its own little picture, rather than the class-specific representations of old. Team Rocket has been replaced by a more serious, threatening group as well.



EQUIPMENT

Your main character (pick between a boy or a girl) has a whole lot of equipment at their disposal. You carry a handy backpack, filled with pockets to keep all your items. This includes strange seeds, possibly to feed Pokémon. The Pokédex is chock full of valuable information, including a detailed map of monster locations, a sample of their distinct noises, and a size comparison to a human.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO/CREATURES/GAME FREAK ■ **RELEASE** MAY

PLAYSTATION 2

AMPLITUDE

FREQUENCY MODULATIONS

This year's version of music rhythm game Frequency is a whole new beast. It's so new, in fact, that Sony has actually changed its name. Fans, however, will still be glued to the series' rolling beats. Amplitude features around 25 songs, and this time they are from a mix of genres – not just electronica. Thus, you'll find David Bowie, Blink 182, or Weezer snuggling right up alongside DJ Q-Bert or remixes from Executioners and Run-DMC.

While the gameplay is the same, the environments have been improved with a more open, non-tunnel feel – even complete with video clips from the artists. One new feature you'll notice is that Amplitude has power-ups. While in Frequency, you might switch to a freestyle axe, now that has to be earned, along with other aids like slow motion. Amplitude has five arenas, each with certain songs. Make your way through the first four, and you'll encounter a boss level to finish out that stage.

One major change for the game is that it's now playable online. Not only can you offer up your remixes, but you can compete in Duel Mode. Here you'll throwdown your best stuff and see if the other player can copy your riffs and keep up. Set those faders to stun!

Amplitude now utilizes video images to spice up the environments

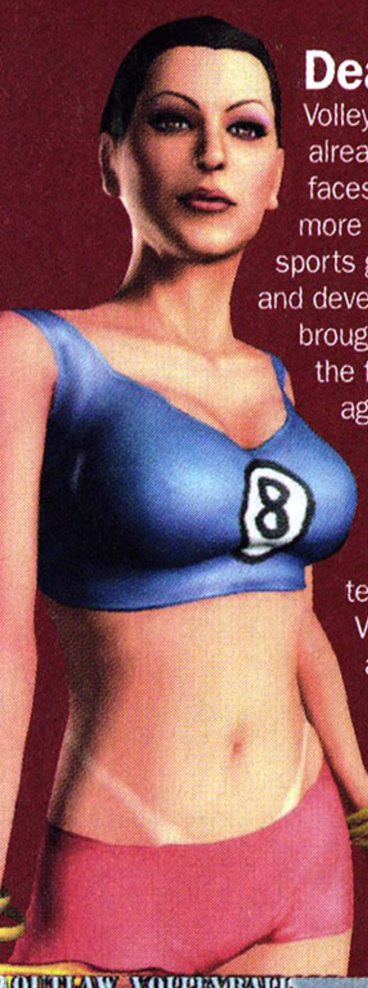
This game of multiplayer H.O.R.S.E. is fast, furious, and only recommended for anyone with triple-jointed fingers

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** HARMONIX MUSIC SYSTEMS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 25

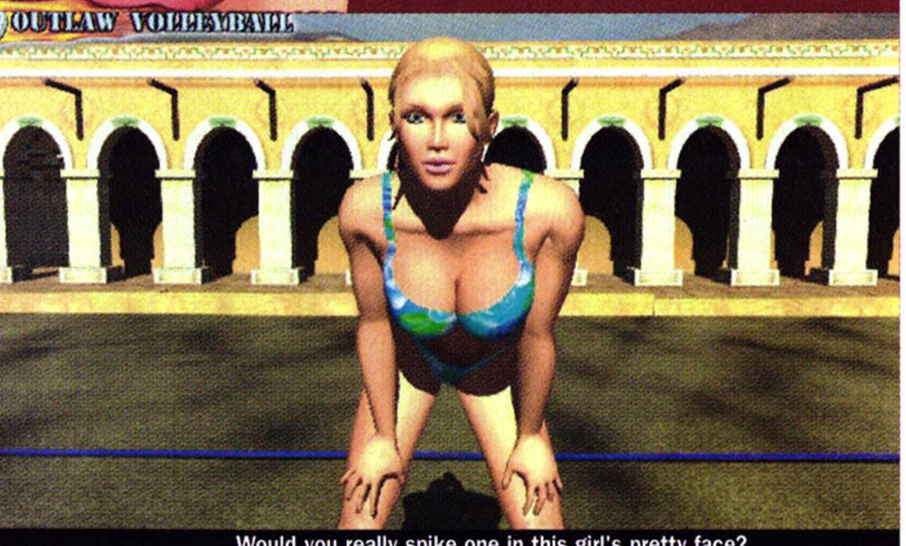
XBOX

OUTLAW VOLLEYBALL: SPIKE OR DIE

MORE BOUNCE ON THE BEACH

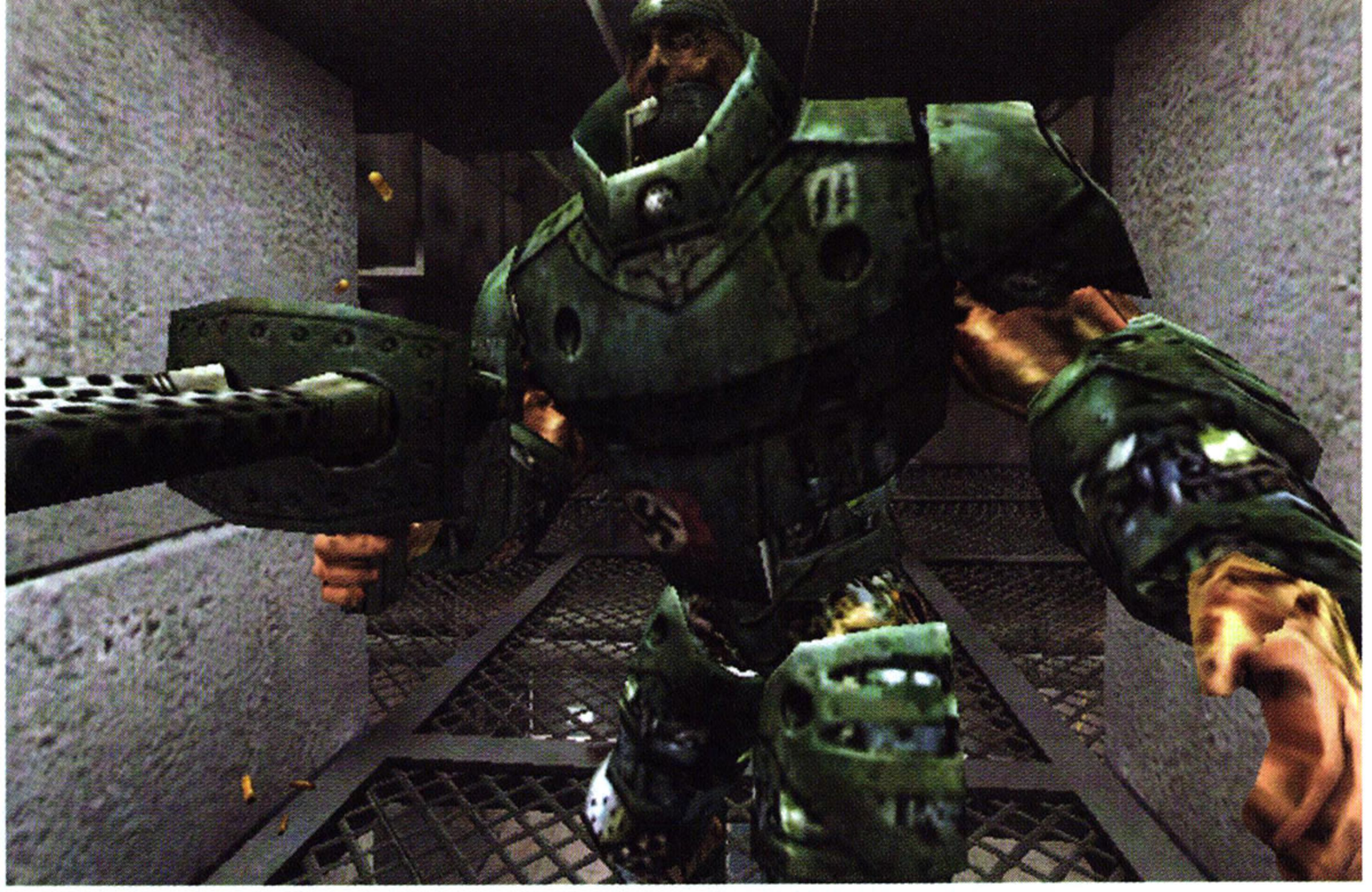


Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball hasn't even arrived yet, and already the copycats have shown their faces. However, no other companies have more of a right to attack the outrageous sports genre than publisher Simon & Schuster and developer Hypnotix. The people who brought you Outlaw Golf are kicking sand in the face of conventional ball games yet again. Over a dozen competitors volley for victory. Don't expect the ladies to stay sugary sweet, though; these girls can get catty and hold grudges if you point out their tan lines or use the term "butt floss." Like Outlaw Golf, Volleyball will feature manic humor in its attitudes and commentary. Is the Xbox big enough to contain two games featuring beach babes bashing balls? We think it is.



Would you really spike one in this girl's pretty face?

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SIMON & SCHUSTER ■ **DEVELOPER** HYPNOTIX ■ **RELEASE** JUNE



XBOX

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR

IT TAKES ONE...

Clearing out a building in multiplayer

"No mask will help you now, my little Nazi"

Zombies: Scary since 1943

Where Nazi zombies lurk in the shadows, there's always going to be one man who stands up to all of them – BJ Blaskowics. That's right, you're about to get all the BJ you can handle in Activision's follow-up console release of Return to Castle Wolfenstein. Dubbed Tides of War, the Xbox iteration follows Agent Blaskowics in the events leading up to the PC title that released last year. Himmler and Hitler have been nosing around with the supernatural, and if you can't thwart their efforts, a tide of undead, swastika-sporting zombies are going to take over the world. Okay, so the plot isn't the most subtle thing ever put to code, but you won't care as you take your Reich-whoopin' online with Xbox Live, and its real-time voice communication system.

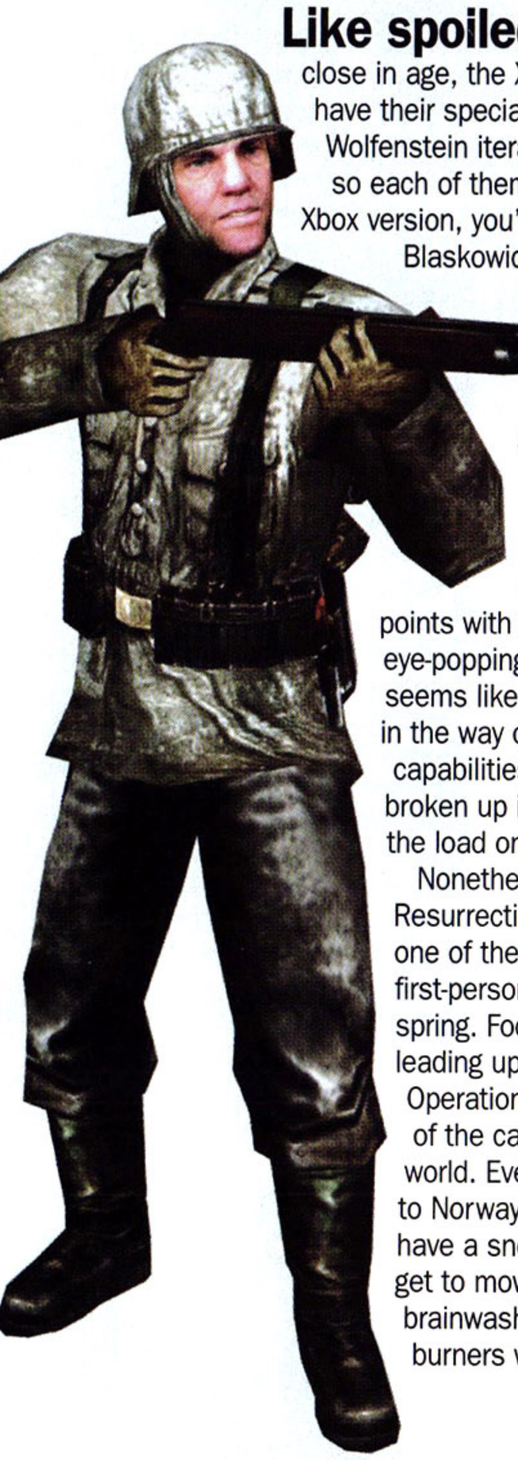
Speaking of multiplayer, there will not only be 16 different multiplayer maps, but there will also be system link capability, as well as the tried and true split-screen action. Play cooperatively like you did in Halo, or have a good old-fashioned fragfest with a buddy. The single-player portion is not to be denied if you're feeling violent. A handful of new weapons (shotguns!) and levels are sure to keep your interest well past the witching hour for weeks on end.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** NERVE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

PLAYSTATION 2

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: OPERATION RESURRECTION

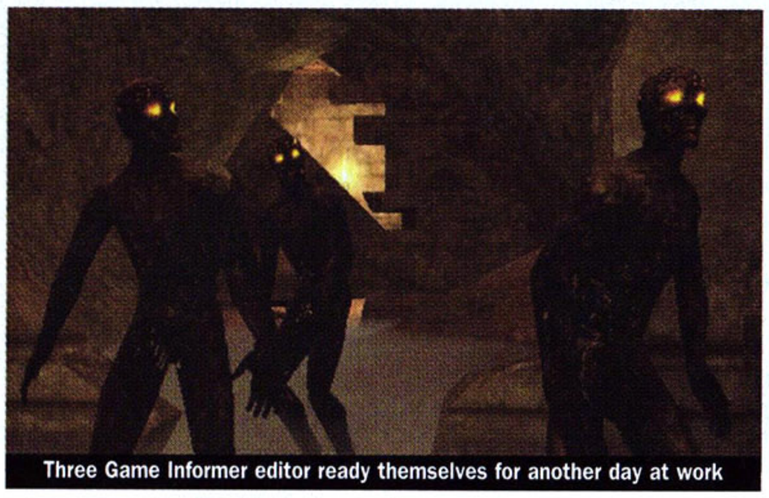
...TO KNOW ONE



Like spoiled children who are close in age, the Xbox and the PlayStation 2 have their special Return to Castle Wolfenstein iterations with different names, so each of them feels special. As in the Xbox version, you'll take the role of Agent BJ Blaskowics as you save the world from deformed zombie Nazis.

Although, if you think about it, have you ever seen well-formed zombies? In any event, the PS2 version of this title looks to be hitting all of the high points with blistering gameplay and eye-popping spectacle. At present, it seems like this version will have less in the way of online multiplayer capabilities, and the levels will be broken up into smaller chunks to ease the load on the aging PS2 processor.

Nonetheless, Operation Resurrection cannot be overlooked as one of the major contenders in the first-person shooter market this spring. Focusing on the events leading up to the recent PC release, Operation Resurrection will get out of the castle, and show you the world. Everywhere from North Africa to Norway will be visited, and we have a sneaking suspicion that you'll get to mow down a vast array of brainwashed, goose-stepping, book burners with reckless abandon.

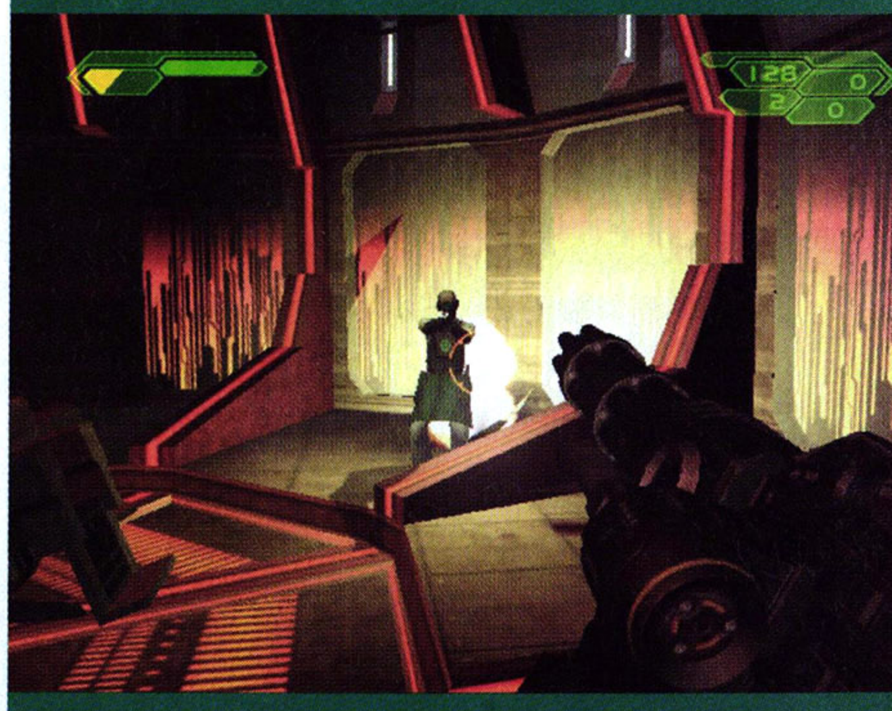


Three Game Informer editor ready themselves for another day at work

"Quit shooting at me! I'm trying to get my groove on over here!"

Nice urban camo there, Fritz

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** RASTER PRODUCTIONS ■ **RELEASE** MARCH



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

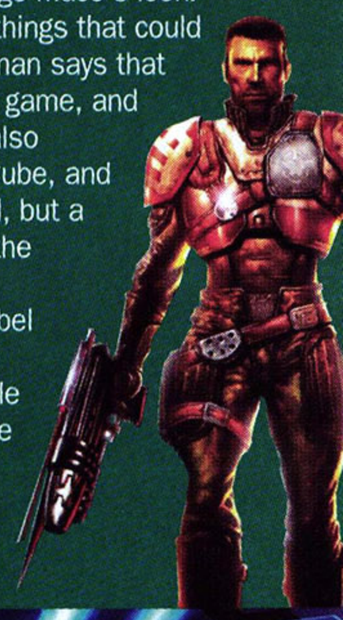
MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER

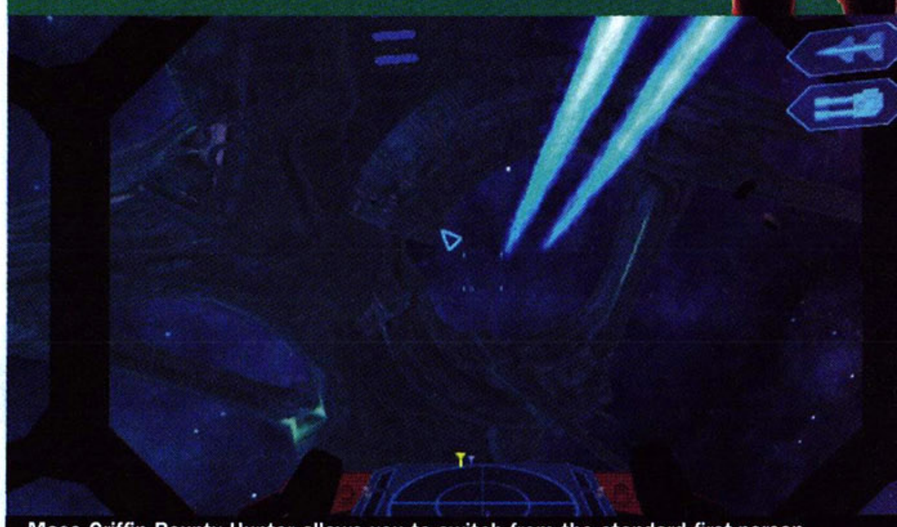
HUNTER SEEKER AND DESTROYER

It's been a while since we checked in with Mace Griffin, but despite a change in character design and a new publisher, this space bad ass is still out for revenge. As a framed ex-Ranger fresh out of jail and searching for conspiracy clues, you'll traverse through large environments which seamlessly merge the first-person and space combat genres – without load times. You can't be staring at the load screen when you're supposed to be hot on the trail of Mace's ever-evolving story.

"I was sort of sad, initially, to see the cape and the hat go," says Paul Chapman, the title's producer at developer Warthog, regarding the decision to change Mace's look. "On the other hand, there were certain things that could have been open to ridicule." Still, Chapman says that Black Label hasn't "micromanaged" the game, and that the future is bright: Mace will now also appear on the PlayStation 2 and GameCube, and not only is a sequel being kicked around, but a TV series or maybe a movie may be on the horizon.

Are the folks at Warthog and Black Label getting ahead of themselves? When you realize the inherent freedom of being able to shoot foes in space and then continue the beat down on foot with a gun, you'll see that Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter could be the start of something very special.





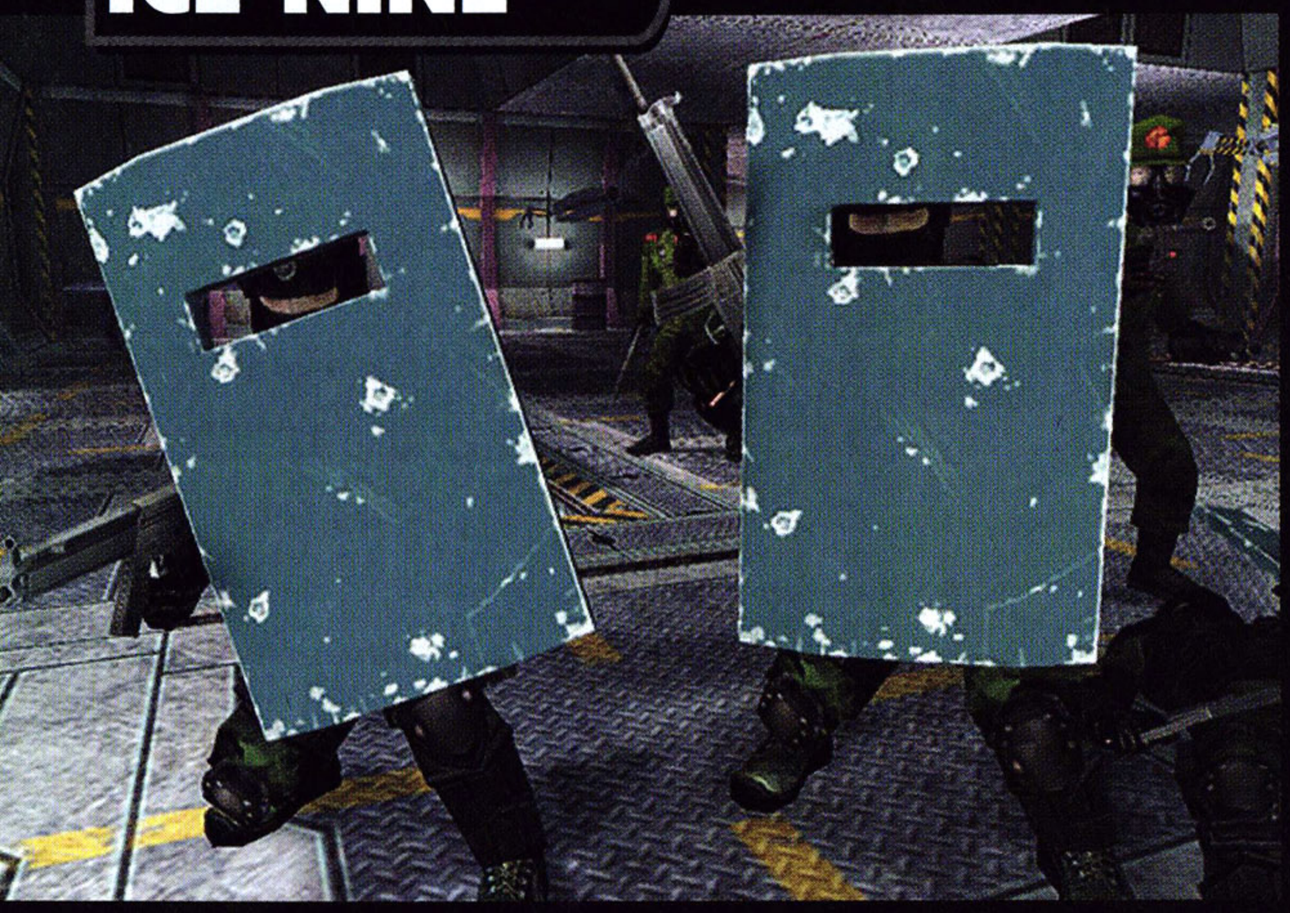
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter allows you to switch from the standard first-person view into space vehicle dogfights without skipping a beat

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** BLACK LABEL GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** WARTHOG ■ **RELEASE** LATE SPRING

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2

ICE NINE



Bam Entertainment is bringing the tentatively titled Ice Nine to the PS2 this summer, and with it, a new way to look at tactical shooters. The choices you make during the course of the game will decide the ultimate ending. As a CIA operative, it's your mission to uncover a conspiracy that reaches all the way to the top of the agency. Do you play the dutiful agent and become a high-ranking official, or do you delve into the sinister, but far more lucrative, double-agent role? It'll be interesting to see how Ice Nine pans out – we'll have more for you soon.

XBOX

ROBOCOP

True or false: Your number one memory of 1987 is seeing *Robocop* on the big screen for the first time. Answer: False. The correct answer would be watching Kent Hrbek pull Ron Gant off first base in Game 2 of the 1987 World Series. If you answered in favor of *Robocop*, you're about to be a happy camper. Your favorite motorized law enforcer is coming to the Xbox this spring to lay down the hurt courtesy of Virgin Interactive. This first-person shooter will have all the action and mayhem that made the first movie such a hit, as well as a healthy injection of the humor ("I'd buy that for a dollar!"). You have five seconds to comply...

XBOX/GAMECUBE

RED FACTION II

What was good for the PS2 will be good for the Xbox and GameCube. Featuring an enhanced version of the Geo-Mod engine, players will be able to rip their environments to pieces more than ever before. The Xbox and GameCube versions will feature improved character animations but the 'box version is sure to look a touch better because of its obvious technology advantages. Each version also supports four-player split screen action, as well as the huge arsenal of weapons and gadgets from the PS2 version. Look for RF II this March.

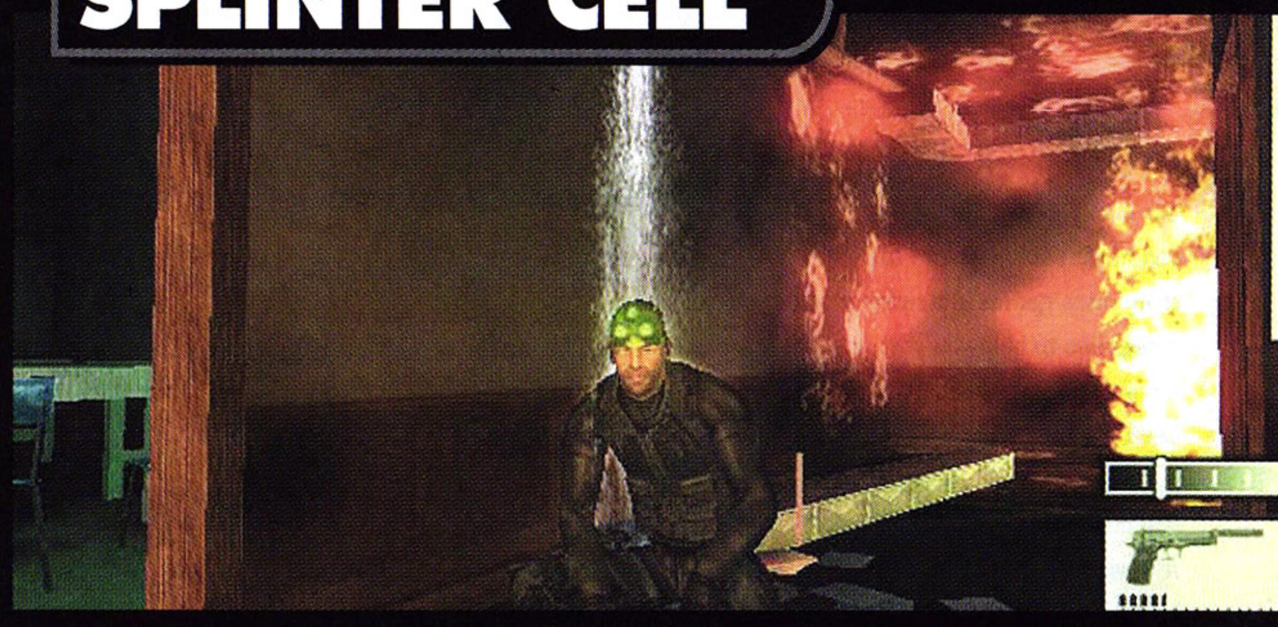
GAMECUBE

SUMMONER: A GODDESS REBORN

THQ is betting on the fact that you're going to want a port of Summoner 2 if you're a GameCube owner. Here's the skinny so far: You are the Queen of Halassar, people want you dead, and you have to save the world. Why can't everyone work together to save the world for once? With 30 different locales, 3D environments, and a real-time battle system, this Summoner release is likely to give the RPG section of the GameCube library a healthy shot in the arm very soon.

PLAYSTATION 2

SPLINTER CELL



PlayStation 2 owners, it's time to get stealthy (again). Your favorite National Security Agency operative is coming your way at the end of March. Ubi Soft is spreading the love, see – Xboxers aren't the only ones who will do the old "sneak, sneak, snipe." It looks like that excellent graphical flare we all know and love will be making an encore appearance.

GAMECUBE

DEAD PHOENIX

Leave it to Capcom to come up with crazy action-adventure titles. The GameCube will be the happy recipient of this flying title, as gamers take on the role of Phoenix, a member of the vaunted Winged Clan. Dead Phoenix is being billed as one of the most open flying-type releases to hit shelves in recent memory. Although details are sparse at this point, we do know that DP should be making a Japanese debut in the summer, but plans for a U.S. showing are not yet confirmed. We'll have more for you in the coming months.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

JACKED

3DO is finally crawling out of its Army Men shell in favor of...a motocycle combat game? That's right, this summer we'll see Jacked appearing on next-gen consoles. Be skeptical if you want to, BUT REMEMBER THIS: No one thought *Battlefield Earth* was going to be good, and it rocked the kasbah, duder! What's better than riding around on a motorcycle beating people up? Don't answer that.

PLAYSTATION 2

TINY TOON ADVENTURES: DEFENDERS OF THE UNIVERSE

In this zany party game, kids of all ages will learn the fun of the Tiny Toon universe, and defend it at the same time. A multiplayer competitive mode allows you to rule the roost, while the like-numbered cooperative game will tickle your funny bone with your character's hilarious antics. You can play Defenders of the Universe alone, but where would the fun in that be? Look for Conspiracy Entertainment to release Treasure's latest gem this spring.

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 – Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 – Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 – Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 – Limited appeal. There are always a few people who will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW – Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT
What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS
How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND
Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY
Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT
Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE
The longevity of the title.

- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.

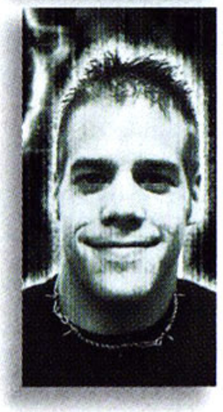
EARLY CHILDHOOD eC ESRB	Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.	MATURE M ESRB	Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.
EVERYONE E ESRB	Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.	ADULTS ONLY AO ESRB	Content suitable only for adults.
TEEN T ESRB	Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.	RATING PENDING RP ESRB	Product is awaiting final rating.

ANDY
Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Racing, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Forum Trolls, HDTV, Football Playoffs **Dislikes:** Unhappy Fanboys Who Would Rather Kill Than Listen To An Opinion That Doesn't Match Their Own, Spam **Current Favorite Games:** EverQuest: Online Adventures, Metroid Prime, Kingdom Hearts

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

MATT
Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure, Action/Sports **Interests:** The GZA, *Gangs of New York*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Getting A Puppy, McDonald's **Dislikes:** The NFL's Horribly Incompetent Referees, Football Announcers Who Fawn Over Brett Favre, Benzino, Mall Punk **Current Favorite Games:** The Getaway, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Medal of Honor: Frontline (Xbox), Super Monkey Ball Jr., The Sims

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.



JUSTIN
Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Sports, Action/Adventure, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Giving, Protein, Becoming MIW Cruiserweight Champion, Unseasonably Warm Weather, N.E.R.D. **Dislikes:** Littering, Finding Dog Food In My Couch Cushions (I Don't Have A Dog), Temporarily Losing My Cell Phone, Party Games **Current Favorite Games:** Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Stuntman, Burnout 2, Pokémon Snap

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He's a former GWAR slave and moonlights as wrestler Justin Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Justin's gaming tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.

CHET
Handle: The Joystick Jockey **Expertise:** Fighting, Action, RPGs, First-Person Shooters, Shooter, Platform, Strategy **Interests:** Reading Books, Co-Ops, Scary Movies, The Environment, Buddhist Thought **Dislikes:** WTO, Gap, Fast Food, Whining, Laziness, Greed, SUVs **Current Favorite Games:** Metroid Fusion, Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance, Street Fighter Alpha 3, King of Fighters '98

Chet considers gaming to be a lifestyle, which means that he spends a ridiculous amount of time with his games. When he's not in an intense session of UT, or relaxing with one of his consoles, he's hopelessly seeking out arcades where fighting games still rule. Although he places all other activities at a distant second, he realizes the importance of society. Unfortunately, mimicking the motions for Dragon Punches and Fireballs only confuses and scares most people.

REINER
Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Home Movie Theaters (MTV Cribs Here I Come!), Capcom's Amazing GameCube Lineup, *The Matrix* Sequels, Pretending That I'm A Hobbit **Dislikes:** People Who Don't Use Their Blinkers, Girl Scouts (Somebody Has To Hate Them), Pompous PC Players, Square And Enix Merging **Current Favorite Games:** The Sims, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Metroid Fusion, Metroid Prime

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 622 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.

KRISTIAN
Handle: The Video Viking **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Pat Bergin, Craig Oberg, Grilled Cheese Sandwiches With Pastrami, *The Return of the King* (The Book) **Dislikes:** Bureaucracy, Frozen Dirt, Lack Of Outside Outlets On My House, Pepsi Blue **Current Favorite Games:** Europa 1400: The Guild, SimCity 4, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003, Madden NFL 2003

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop–ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.

KATO
Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Racing, Action/Adventure, Action/Platform **Interests:** *The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers*, *Snoop's* Phrase: "Paid Tha Cost To Be Da Boss" **Dislikes:** The Lack Of Shelob, Cable TV Punditry, Pre-Recorded Telemarketing Messages Clogging Up Your Answering Machine (Don't I Have Real Friends?) **Current Favorite Games:** Dark Cloud 2, NHL 2K3, SimCity 4, Europa 1400: The Guild

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out as a reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.

LISA
Handle: La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform, Action/Adventure **Interests:** *The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers*, Soap Making, Setting Up Yuletide, Mittens **Dislikes:** Time Warner Cable, Sleet, Award Shows (Except The Oscars And The Golden Globes, Which I'm Shamefully Addicted To) **Current Favorite Games:** Resident Evil 0, Animal Crossing, Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance, Fatal Frame

Barring a brief and ill advised "I want to be popular, so I'll stop playing games" phase in late junior high, Lisa has been subjecting her friends to drawn out boss battles since age 8. She has been known to wax philosophically about why Jigglypuff is desperately under-appreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less pretty.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party

bump-mapping – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures

cel shading– A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels

CG – Computer-Generated graphics

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, & Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like StarCraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

jaggies – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

motion blur – Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

NPC – Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans

peaces – The new slang Chet recently used instead of saying "peace out," his usual parting remark

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PS-X – Sony PlayStation

particle effects – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time

PKer – Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter-Strike

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – A term we use for games like Madden NFL

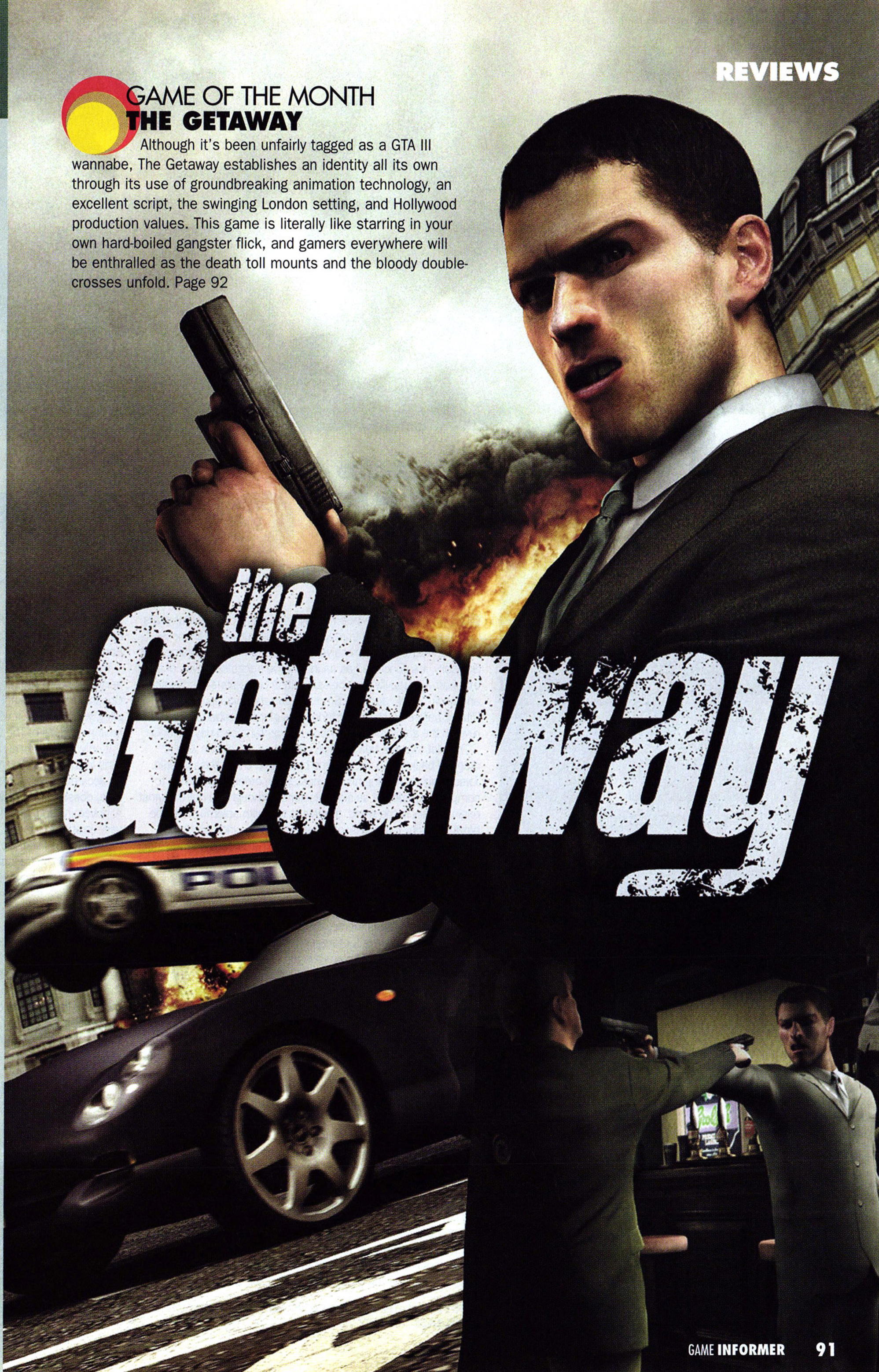
strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer

Unnun – to defrock a nun

GAME OF THE MONTH
THE GETAWAY

Although it's been unfairly tagged as a GTA III wannabe, The Getaway establishes an identity all its own through its use of groundbreaking animation technology, an excellent script, the swinging London setting, and Hollywood production values. This game is literally like starring in your own hard-boiled gangster flick, and gamers everywhere will be enthralled as the death toll mounts and the bloody double-crosses unfold. Page 92



"I'm sorry dear, but at your age, I just don't think it's going to get any bigger."

High-speed chases through London traffic are harrowing

"Check the guest list again, wanker!"

PLAYSTATION 2

THE GETAWAY

KICK THE BOTTLES AND STOPPERS IN THE COBBLERS!

The Getaway has been in development for nearly four years, and I'm pleased to report that this long-overdue epic is an extremely impressive, incredibly daring video game. Basically, it's conceived as an interactive gangster movie, one that borrows heavily from classic British crime films like *Snatch*, and *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*. If you loved Guy Ritchie before he became Madonna's glorified cabana boy, you'll revel in the game's bloody action and profane cockney dialogue.

The plot tells the tale of Mark Hammond, an ex-con who is dragged back into a life of crime by London crime boss Charlie Jolson, who is holding his son hostage in order to force him to complete a series of suicide missions. Although it's not the most original story in the world, the tale is told with aplomb. You'll be blown away by the quality of the voice acting, cinematography, and character animations. It's definitely the closest video games have ever come to capturing the essence of a kick-ass action flick. What's more, there's a unique Tarantino-style plot twist thrown your way halfway through the game, but we won't ruin that for you.

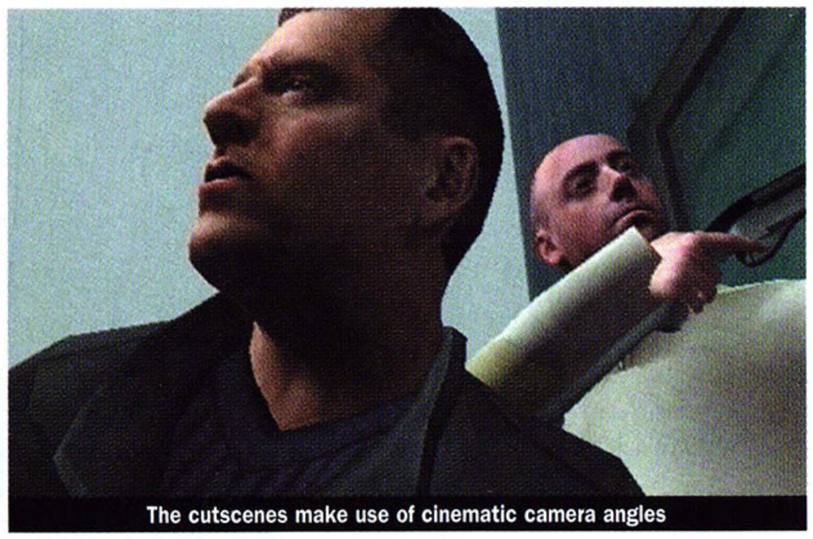
In keeping with this theme, the game eschews the use of any onscreen displays for targeting, health, or inventory. As in real life, you'll never know your gun is empty until it runs out of rounds, and aiming is done by lining up the end of your barrel with an enemy. Your character's health is displayed by a bloodstain on the back of his jacket, as well as through his walking animations. If you're starting to stagger, you don't have to search for medi packs, though – just take a breather by leaning against a wall and the stain will begin to shrink, restoring your stamina.

This realism carries over to the driving sequences of the game, which offer a brilliant alternative to the traditional onscreen map used in titles like Driver and Grand Theft Auto III. Instead of following a street grid, your car's blinker will simply indicate whether you should take a right or left turn. This sounds like a small thing, but it's actually quite important in the fact that it really allows you to see all the work that has gone into creating a virtual simulation of modern-day London. This is good, because the city itself is one of the most amazing things I've ever seen in a game. Nearly everything you'll see while walking the streets of London, you'll see in The Getaway, from small shops to landmarks like Big Ben. Almost every building is unique as well; the developers virtually never rely on the recycling of generic structures to fill out the landscape. This detail extends to the cars, which are real, licensed makes and models common in Europe.

The serpentine streets of the city and the dense traffic all serve to add a great degree of drama to the racing sequences. Once you take a 90mph trip the wrong way down a narrow, busy alley, you'll know just what I'm talking about. Put simply, the driving sections of The Getaway are as exciting as games get.

If only the out-of-the-car action was as polished. Your character runs in a rather awkward manner, the auto-targeting is not nearly as accurate as it should be, and the camera (which is not adjustable) doesn't always give you the ideal viewing angle. Also, the AI governing both enemies and your criminal companions can be very erratic.

As much as I like The Getaway, I doubt that it will become a phenomenon on the scale of Grand Theft Auto III. This is mostly due to the very linear nature of the adventure. Most missions are essentially the same thing: Drive somewhere while avoiding the cops, then get out and kill somebody in a building. For all the work that went into recreating London, there simply isn't any reason (or time) to explore the city. The repetitive nature of the gameplay, coupled with the aforementioned gameplay flaws, keep this one from entering the ranks of the classics. Thankfully, these shortcomings do not detract from the highly entertaining nature of the game as a whole. Once you become a part of the cutthroat world of The Getaway, I guarantee that you won't be able to stop until you get to the bloody climax. – **MATT**

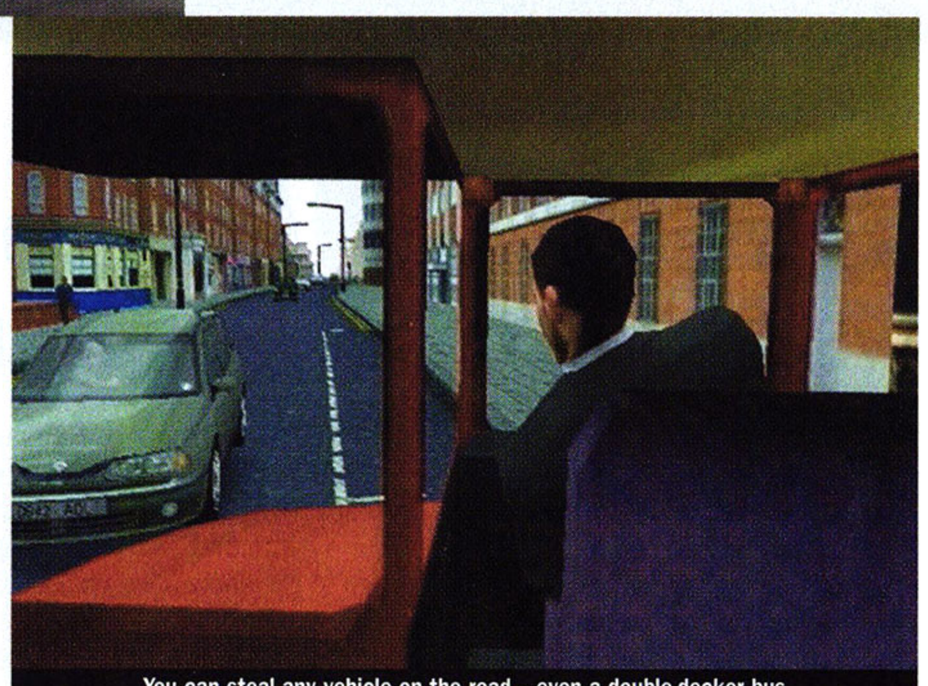


The cutscenes make use of cinematic camera angles

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM SOHO
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 22

THE GETAWAY

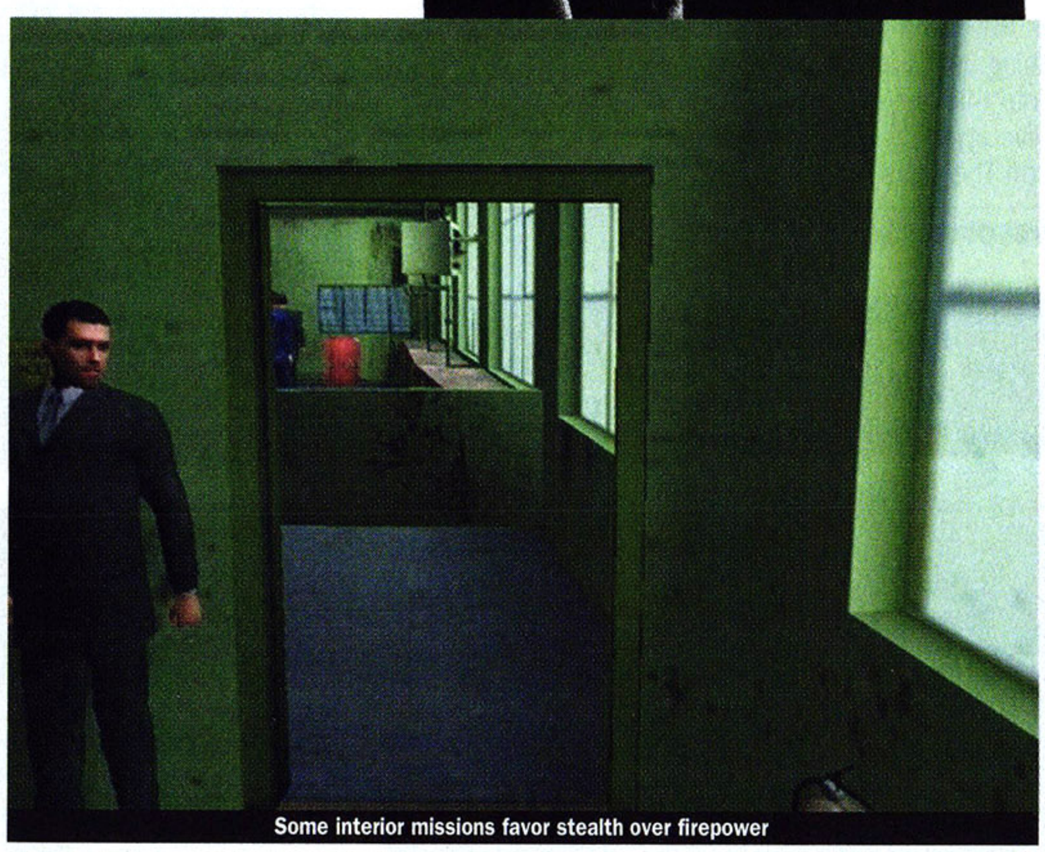
"...the closest video games have ever come to capturing the essence of a kick-ass action flick."



You can steal any vehicle on the road – even a double-decker bus

"You said you wanted the walls repainted."

Collisions or bullets will shatter your rear windshield



Some interior missions favor stealth over firepower

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

- **Concept:** In order to save his kidnapped son, an ex-con must pull off a series of suicide missions for a London crime lord. Lots of bloodshed and swearing ensues
- **Graphics:** Awkward character animations aside, The Getaway is absolutely gorgeous. Visually, this is one of the most impressive PS2 games to date
- **Sound:** The voice acting, score, and ambient sound effects are all pitch-perfect
- **Playability:** Here's where the problems lie: Gun combat can be pretty tricky at times
- **Entertainment:** Despite some gameplay flaws, The Getaway is an unforgettable experience
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

The Getaway captures the gritty, hard-boiled brilliance of a Guy Ritchie film; and catapults video game cinematography to the next level with Hollywood-caliber production values, unforgettable plot twists, taut action sequences, and dialogue that you'll quote until the day you die. The gameplay is fairly exhilarating as well, but lacks the polish of its story sequences. In this sense, it's a much better movie than it is a game. While this is a major deterrent, this criminal caper remains an absolute necessity. Much like Grand Theft Auto, it splices high-speed car chases with bloody run-and-gun shootouts. GTA focuses on open-ended freedom, whereas The Getaway concentrates on linear progression. In my opinion, this is where the game loses its luster. It becomes repetitive and predictable. The gameplay is by no means perfect, but it's respectable, and good enough to keep you playing until the end.

REINER – 9

"...The Sims has never looked or played better."

PLAYSTATION 2

THE SIMS

WELCOME TO YOUR DIGITAL LIFE

Borrowing an introspective thought from *Seinfeld*, The Sims is a simulator about nothing. If anything it's an exaggeration on life and a means to escape reality. For better or worse, it's life outside of life. For a game that seemingly has no purpose, people can't seem to get enough of it. The Sims became an overnight sensation, topping the charts as the best-selling PC franchise of all time. For the first time since its inception three years ago, this highly sought-after series is finally heading to the PlayStation 2.

As joyous of an occasion as this may be, most PC conversions don't fare well on consoles. If the gameplay interface doesn't get watered down, then there's usually a graphical technicality that greatly degrades the experience. Rather than porting the existing PC code and dealing with the PS2's constraints, EA enlisted the talents of developer Edge of Reality to start from scratch and create an entirely new game based on the original property.

Through this development approach, this game of old now sparkles with harmonious PlayStation 2 luster. In many ways, The Sims has never looked or played better. Scoff if you will – it's true. On the PC, it uses 2D sprites. On the PlayStation 2, it has evolved to 3D. The resolution may not be as razor-sharp, but one can't question the detail of the polygonal graphics, the ability to rotate the environment on the fly, or the small things like the way that light careens off of windows.

If you've played The Sims on PC, then you know that it's an open-ended game that goes on forever. The PlayStation 2 version still harnesses this trait, but it also has an ending. Much like Bullfrog's Theme line of titles, this Sims features objective-based levels. The game starts with your character (whom you customized) taking a nap on his mom's couch. A list of goals appears and you soon learn that you must complete these challenges to move out. You'll need to repair the TV, take out the trash, clean the house, and get a job. Each stage brings with it different objectives and themes. You'll be asked to throw a party at a frat house, get promoted at work, hook up with a loved one, start a family, and at the end, live happily ever after. With goals and parameters in place, the gameplay quickly transforms into something a bit different, yet just as seductive and relentlessly addictive.

I had my doubts as to how the controls would fit, but to my astonishment, the gameplay works just as well on the Dual Shock analogs as it does a mouse. This version also boasts a number of new items for your house, and for the first time ever, simultaneous multiplayer. As exciting as this feature sounds, the awkward view and confusion created by two players on the same play surface makes it more of a novelty than anything, but it is worth a few laughs.

I went into this review with the impression that this version wouldn't live up to its PC counterpart, but I actually enjoyed this take on The Sims more than the original. – **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

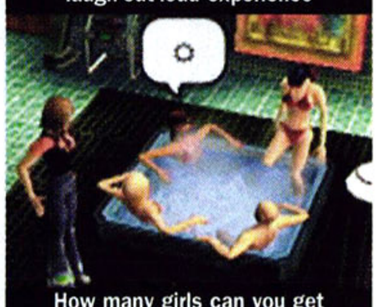
- **Concept:** A console twist on the PC phenomenon
- **Graphics:** The resolution is not as sharp as the original PC game, but the new 3D graphics bring about a vibrant new look
- **Sound:** Absolutely hysterical. If the character voices don't make you laugh, then nothing will
- **Playability:** The house-building interface is easy to manage; the new mission-based levels are incredibly challenging; and the items are a welcome addition
- **Entertainment:** One of the most additive games around. It'll suck your life away if you're not careful
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

The console version of the Sims is nothing if not unique. Not only does it separate itself from its PC brethren by offering mission-based play and three-dimensional graphics, but it also allows for competitive and cooperative multiplayer sections. True, the diagonal split-screen is a bit on the odd side, but the core play shines through and offers a decent time once you've found your bearings. The mission and free modes are good, but beware the lack of replayability. You're only going to be playing through the missions once, and the traditional mode doesn't have a lot of the items and situations that made the PC series so good. Then again, if you've always been a console gamer, experiencing the Sims for the first time is always sure to please. This version won't disappoint, but it may tire quicker than you'd like.

KRISTIAN – 8.75

Watching your character learn how to play guitar is a laugh-out-loud experience



How many girls can you get into the hot tub?

One of your goals is to throw a wild bash at a frat house

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS/EDGE OF REALITY
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 14

The console version is loaded to the hilt with exclusive content, including outrageous two-player split-screen!

If the mission-based levels are too hectic for your blood, you can always relax and design your own house in the more traditional, open-ended Sims world

PLAYSTATION 2

EVERQUEST: ONLINE ADVENTURES

THE QUINTESSENTIAL ONLINE RPG

"You can make friends and enemies. You can head off on a new quest, or perhaps join a guild. It's never the same game twice."

EverQuest: Online Adventures is perhaps the ugliest game in history to get a nine rating. From the triangular trees to the bad player models, this title couldn't find its graphical ass with a 10,000 candle-power searchlight. However, EverQuest: Online Adventures isn't about the graphics, or sound for that matter (which, by the way, stinks as well). It's about camaraderie and adventuring in a world where the human element makes everything unpredictable and fluid.

I'm sure you Phantasy Star Online players are thinking you've been there and done that, but I can tell you right now that playing with over two thousand people on the same server is a completely different experience. Players of massively multiplayer online (MMO) PC games have a good idea what to expect here, but console players are definitely in for a surprise once they get a chance to be involved with the community that will pop up around this game. This single element is easily the most compelling part of EverQuest, as you never know what to expect when you log on. You can make friends and enemies. You can head off on a new quest, or perhaps join a guild. It's never the same game twice.

On the gameplay front, EverQuest: Online Adventures keeps everything fairly straightforward. Compared to the PC version, this release is somewhat more action-oriented. For example, there is no auto attack. During combat, you must constantly input commands. Plus, all character actions (like magic for a caster or an uppercut for a fighter) are limited by a power meter, so there is a certain amount of strategy to it.

For chat, Sony Online Entertainment did a good job trying to make it somewhat manageable without a keyboard by putting in shortcuts for useful phrases and emotes, but I found the game to be almost unplayable without a keyboard. Whenever someone said something to me, and I tried to use the onscreen keyboard, most people had moved on before I was able to input any type of answer. So, if you plan on checking this game out, make sure you invest in a USB keyboard – you won't regret it.

In the end, I find Online Adventures to be an entertaining game that does a good job of delivering a more-than-competent MMORPG on the consoles. PC players may want to steer clear of this adventure, as it doesn't quite stack up against playing on a computer, but console gamers are most certainly in for a treat. – **ANDY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

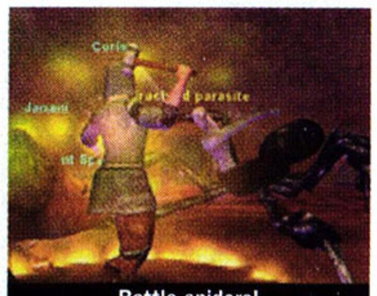
9

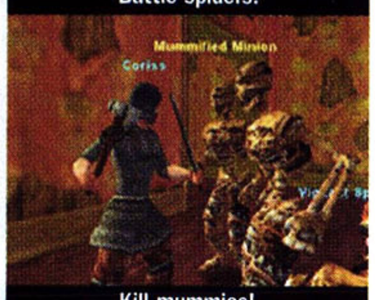
- **Concept:** Bring the world of MMORPGs to the PS2 with a prequel to the PC smash hit
- **Graphics:** If you can't say something nice...
- **Sound:** My advice is to turn off the sound and listen to your favorite CDs
- **Playability:** The controls are complex, but with time (and a keyboard) it is manageable
- **Entertainment:** If you give it enough time, this game will hook you like no other
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

As an EverQuest neophyte, I've purposely kept my distance from the series. After putting in some time with the PS2 version, it's easy to see what all the fuss is about. EQ is quite addictive, and the sense of community is strong. The game, however, has a negative factor to counteract every positive. Pro: The streaming world is huge. Con: There are long periods of commuting or being lost. Pro: There are hundreds of human players to interact with. Con: Some of them are dumber than burnt toast. Pro: You could play this game for countless hours on end. Con: That doesn't necessarily make it good, with its strategy-void combat, crummy graphics, etc. The main draw here is that EQ is something a person can invest the time to get good at, then be looked up to by players who are less experienced. It's an ego boost for those who spend the time to get high levels and great weapons. It's fun, no doubt, but it's also too overbearing for my tastes.

JUSTIN – 7.5

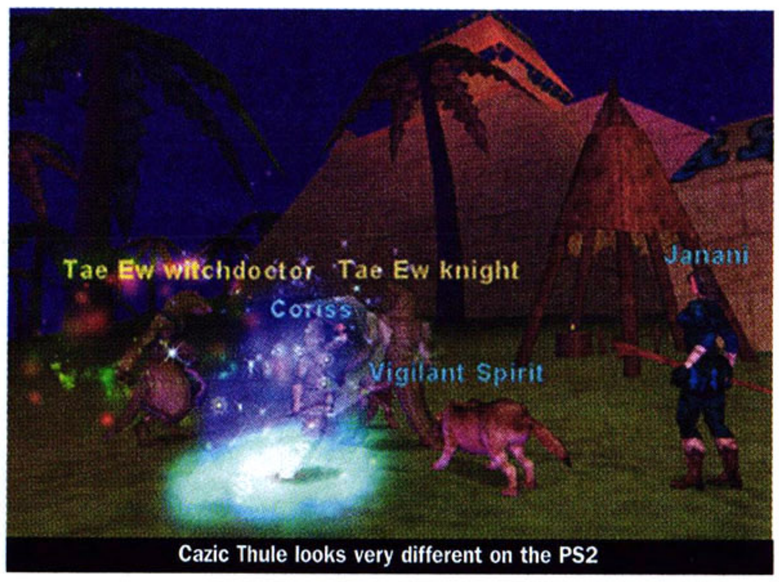

Battle spiders!



Kill mummies!

Eradicate gnolls!

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
■ **DEVELOPER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11



Cazic Thule looks very different on the PS2

Here is just a taste of the challenges that await you

PLAYSTATION 2

WAR OF THE MONSTERS

FAILED AMBITION

"The root of the problem is gameplay balance and enemy AI."

Destroy All Monsters Melee revived my childhood interest in Godzilla and his silly, destructive escapades through Tokyo, but its mediocrity instantly relegated it to the status of appetizer in comparison to the more sumptuous-looking War of the Monsters. Unfortunately, War of the Monsters is more about appearance than substance, and lacks almost any satisfying taste.

The root of the problem is gameplay balance and enemy AI. Foremost, the unblockable attacks are just downright unfair. Trying to dodge powerful projectiles and disarm enemies with certain weapons lacks clear precision, which renders the impractical art of button mashing too necessary, too often. Furthermore, the lazy camera produces numerous blind spots throughout a battle; enough so that you constantly come to except unavoidable attacks from out of nowhere! I particularly dislike getting thrown across the city by an enemy only to be pummeled by his projectile attack simply because the camera won't turn quickly enough.

In one-on-one bouts, the AI routines are manageable once you learn the subtleties of the fighting mechanics. However, in matches that consist of two or more monsters, the combat becomes a frustrating test of endurance. Even though these matches are constructed as free-for-alls, the enemy monsters usually gang up on your character, rather than actually fighting each other. The incessant amount of dying that ensues sucks out almost any of the fun this title has to offer, nearly ruining the entire experience.

War of the Monsters' only redeeming qualities are its scale and multiplayer mode. Unlike Destroy All Monsters Melee and the old-school King of the Monsters, War of the Monsters actually sets the scale of the cities versus the monsters realistically. Since the creatures are only around seven stories high, players have the ability to climb buildings and jump from rooftop to rooftop. This is a seemingly simple new dynamic, but nevertheless, welcome and fun – especially in fights against another human opponent. Although the multiplayer component would further benefit from four-player or online action, going against bots in splitscreen, as well as duking it out in some of the minigames, proves to be fun; if only slightly.

For most gamers, War of the Monsters will come as a bit of a disappointment, hardly worth anything more than a rental. However, if you really love Destroy All Monsters Melee, you'll probably enjoy this title's ambition – just don't expect it to be more enjoyable. – **CHET**

Each monster has long range attacks, but they do little damage

Multiplayer action is what this game does best

Everything in the environment is destructible, so hitting an enemy into a building will destroy the building!

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** INCOG INC. ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 14

Ganging up on characters is fun, but cheap if you're on the receiving end

Another unfair attack is the Impale, which cannot be blocked

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6

- **Concept:** A bunch of Godzilla-inspired characters destroying cities and each other
- **Graphics:** They aren't anything special, but are adequate enough considering the size of the cities
- **Sound:** The roars and sounds of destruction set the mood
- **Playability:** The poor camera and imprecise control take you out of the experience
- **Entertainment:** Camera problems and gameplay balance render the single-player mode unappealing. But, multiplayer can be fun
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Cheapness, how do I hate thee? Let me count the ways. Well, there's the way that every attack you take hurts you five times more than the same attack if given to your opponent. Then there's the way you can't tell how much health the other monsters have. How could I forget all of the miscellaneous things besides your beastly competition that kick the crap out of you? This game gets the award for the biggest smile-to-frown turnaround in history. I'd like to see every gamer's face who plays it. First, you're having fun, destroying every building and car in sight. Then, you wonder if the deck is stacked against you. Finally, you holler how the gods have forsaken you, and you reach in the silverware drawer for a fork to dig your eyes out with. Even multiplayer is tainted with a simple, lame Versus mode. How this could've come from the team behind Twisted Metal: Black is almost unfathomable. Stick to cars, boys.

JUSTIN – 6.25

PLAYSTATION 2

PRIDE FC

WHO SHOWS MORE PRIDE THAN SWEATY MEN EMBRACING?

As far as mixed martial arts games go, Pride represents the best of times, and the worst of times. Developer Anchor made all the UFC games (except on PSone), so Pride has a lot of experience behind it. Gameplay-wise, it is probably the company's best effort. Where it fails is replay.

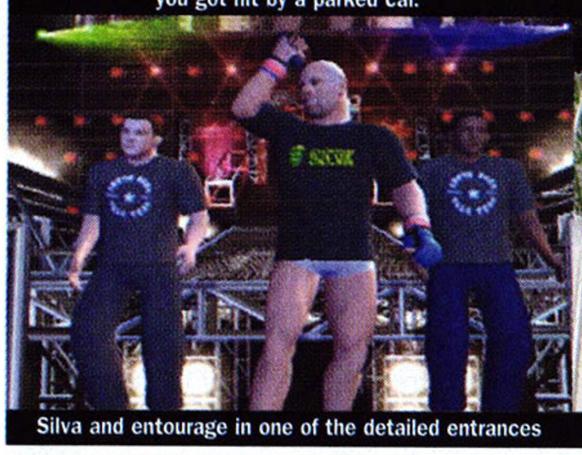
Fights here are much better replications of the real thing. Battles are rarely won from a standing position. There are more counters and holds in nearly every situation. Things like clenching and staying on your back while the other fighter is up add depth and strategy. Also, the creator lets you customize combos for days.

Much like this month's wrestling game, Legends of Wrestling 2, Pride has an unbeatable roster of brawlers; from the Gracies and Sakuraba, to Ken Shamrock and the 7-foot Semmy Schilt. Unfortunately, the only way to do battle is in Tournament, Single Match, or Survival mode. There is no career mode, which is a big disappointment – especially when UFC Throwdown has a great one. When in a tournament, you're allowed continues to your heart's content, ensuring your character victory.

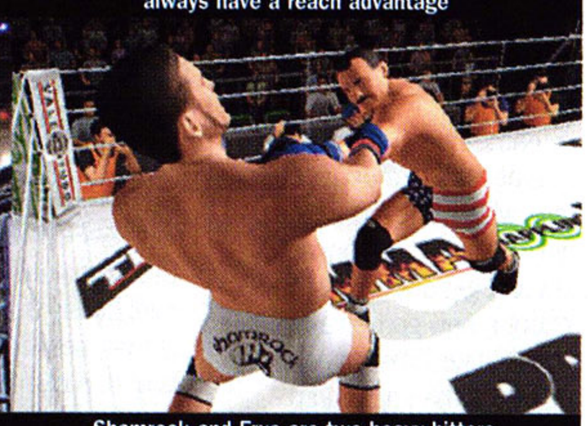
Pride looks great, capturing the essence of the events. It blows away Throwdown visually. As I said, the control is much deeper. Sadly, the game doesn't give me too many reasons to play it for more than a few days, unless I'm going at it with a human opponent. More mode depth, and this game will reign. – **JUSTIN**

"I'm sorry I said you're so stupid that you got hit by a parked car."

When you're 6'11" like Semmy, you always have a reach advantage



Silva and entourage in one of the detailed entrances



Shamrock and Frye are two heavy hitters

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** ANCHOR
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

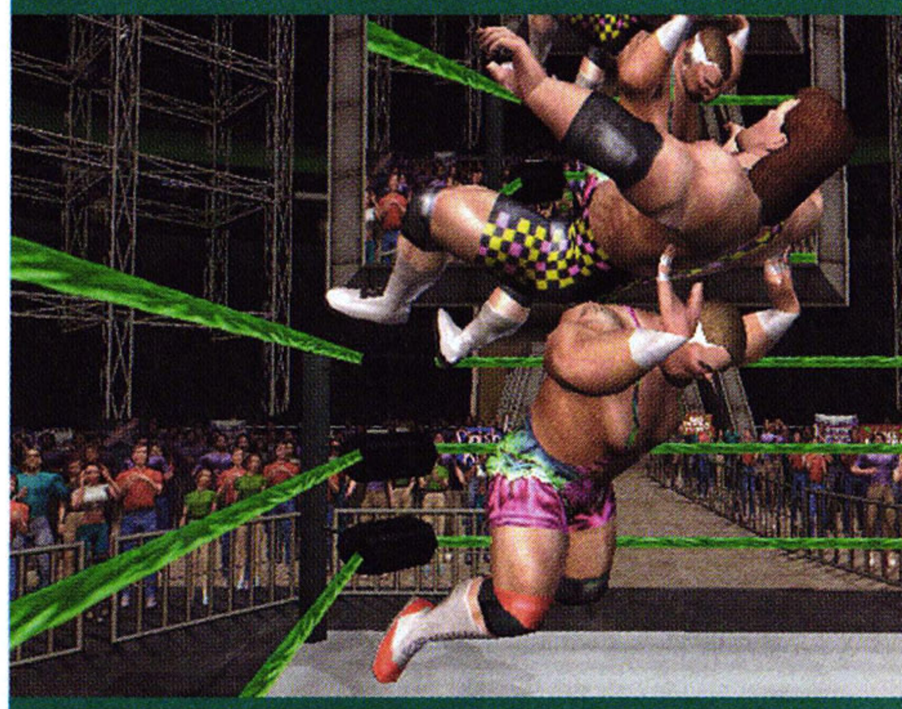
8

- **Concept:** Pride is UFC's superior, so THQ and Anchor set out to make a superior game
- **Graphics:** Player models are realistic and well animated. The arenas themselves are filled with detail
- **Sound:** I like the thwack of the hits and the snap of bones. Is that wrong?
- **Playability:** There are more ways to brutalize a foe than I've ever seen
- **Entertainment:** Pride's Achilles heel is its lack of a career mode. It's stellar in every other way, however, and really shines in multiplayer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

At one point in my Game Informer career I moonlighted as a UFC fighter. As my first match approached, I was ready to lay down punishment the way the Gracie family taught me in the primeval jungles of Brazil. Unfortunately, as I was climbing into the ring I slipped on a radish (why it was there, I'll never know), and suffered a career-ending elbow scrape. Now, I get to take out my aggression in a less painful manner with Anchor's Pride FC. Bristling with moves and customization, FC is an excellent choice for fans of this activity. However, the lack of replay value holds back the overall appeal, and therefore could probably be rented to quench your fighting thirst. Multiplayer fun is another category altogether – if you know you're going to be playing with your buddies a lot, the customization options will keep you battling long into the night.

KRISTIAN – 7.75



PLAYSTATION 2

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING 2

ARE YOU HARDCORE, TOUGH GUY? HOOOOOOOO!

Legends 2's goal is clear: If they're well known, and aren't under WWE contract, bring 'em in. The roster is a wrestling fan's dream: Baron, Abdullah, Owen, Sid, Piper, etc. Each has four costumes, so both Big Poppa Pump and the old-school Scott Steiner are here. Unfortunately, they all share a common move set. Like the ECW games, you'll even squash no-name jobbers.

This engine grew on me last year, but little has changed. The combo system is clever, but it's slow, and I feel stifled by the lack of moves. Career mode is slightly better, with multiple, albeit subtle, storylines. You earn wrestlers, arenas, and cheats via an odd gambling minigame. I would've rather been awarded points through gameplay.

My favorite part is the interviews. Around 20 legends talk about the business. I loved hearing the secret behind George Steele's green tongue, stories of Bruno Sammartino and Ivan Koloff at MSG, and Hacksaw Jim Duggan telling prospective wrestlers to take up golf instead.

Because of the nostalgia, Legends 2 will be close to die-hard wrestling fans' hearts. People who think Steve Austin is an old-timer may want to stick with SmackDown, which has a superior Career mode. SmackDown takes two out of three falls, but I suggest you play them both. – **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

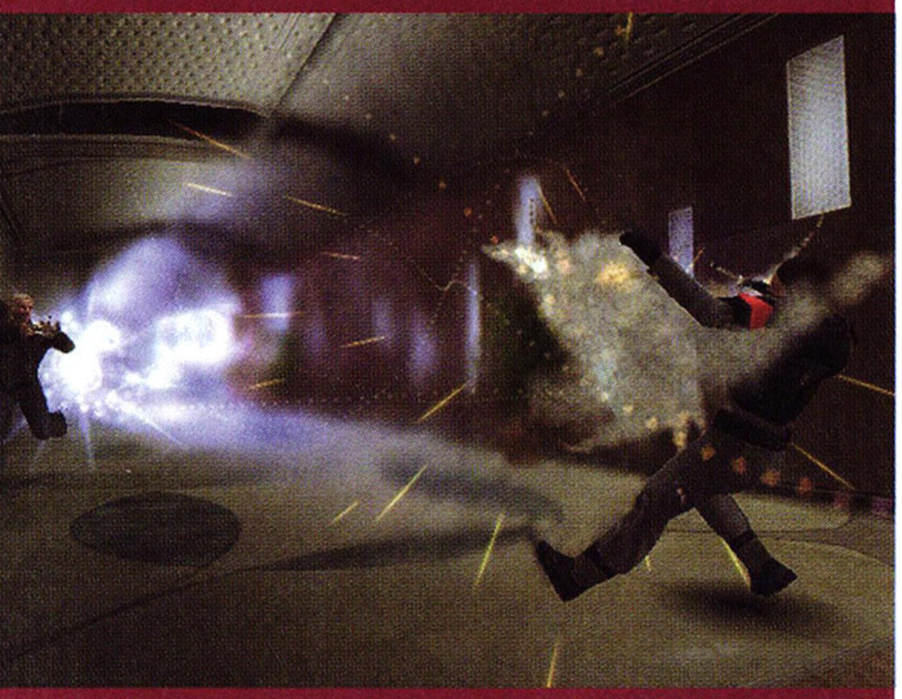
- **Concept:** An interactive wrestling history lesson
- **Graphics:** Crowds and stadiums look better, and the models have a nice, exaggerated style
- **Sound:** I don't like the music, especially mid-match, no matter how famous the acts are
- **Playability:** Not much has been done to change last year's engine, which does the job fairly well
- **Entertainment:** Tons of wrestlers, extras, and a better Career mode add up to a nice package. It's definitely geared for more hardcore fans
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Legends of Wrestling's gameplay, while improved, is incredibly shallow and short on moves. The only aspect that truly stands out as noteworthy is how much material it has to offer. With over 65 wrestlers, many of whom showcase amusing interviews and variant costumes, it's worth looking at if wrestling history is appealing, but it's still mediocre at best.

REINER – 6.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26



PLAYSTATION 2

MINORITY REPORT: EVERYBODY RUNS

PRE-CRIME DOESN'T PAY

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **6.75**

Majority Report's pre-crime squad has the ability to predict when and where a murder is going to take place. So, with that in mind, I question how this game can exist at all. It revolves around a straightforward brawler premise where you cruise (pun intended, because this game's stench has even affected my writing) around slaying guys from level to level. Therefore, how can I be killed by any of my enemies (or, in turn, kill them) if, as a member of the pre-crime squad, I'd know exactly when and where it would happen? How can I die?

Well, who knows, but this much is certain: Activision, at a minimum, is going to inflict some pain on whoever plays Majority Report. Its boring, unimaginative combat lays shame to the fact that Philip K. Dick (whose short story the movie is based on) came up with a pretty original idea to write about. While you can do things like fly around with a jetpack, it simply doesn't improve the experience. In fact, I'd say that the attempt to add some plat-forming elements is a disaster due to the game's poor camera. There are only two things that are redeeming about this game: The physics that make your enemies flop around when you hit them and the Black Market upgrades. Still, combat is unsophisticated, and has me wishing that Activision had invested more time in a solid action/adventure game instead of this bore.

Although I'm a pre-crime officer, I couldn't stop Activision from creating this sin of a video game, but I can warn you that if you buy this title, you'll be violating the very laws of good taste. – **KATO**

- **Concept:** It's another day at the office for Activision, so yes, playing this game will seem like work for you, too
- **Graphics:** Apart from the kill animations, it's hopelessly drab
- **Sound:** The movie's gun effect is what I'd imagine potato launchers to sound like
- **Playability:** The platforming, which is a bad idea to begin with, is made worse by the camera
- **Entertainment:** Maybe you'll get lost on the way to the store to buy this. Now that would be fun!
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

Minority Report is a game that really doesn't have a soul. It does, however, sport a number of neat graphical touches like a sea of particle effects and a neat "rag doll" physics model that lets you kick (very realistically, I might add) bad guys down the street and cackle with glee. Sadly, I found this (and the movie) more entertaining than the game itself.

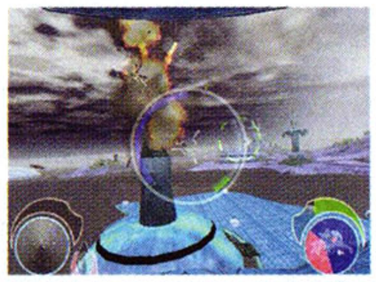
ANDY – 4

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
■ **DEVELOPER** TREYARCH ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 20

PLAYSTATION 2 QUICKIES

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 21



I like the overall idea of Aquila, but eventually the gameplay comes off as silly and a little contrived. The ability to morph from jet to land walker is interesting to a point, as I like being able to take to the air at a moment's notice. The energy meter that your flight form consumes seems to deplete much too quickly though, and the missions have a way of becoming predictable and mundane. Still, there are some great explosion effects and the graphics – while not the most amazing thing ever – are certainly good enough not to be laughed at. This is an excellent game to rent before biting the bullet. – **KRISTIAN**

TEEN T **7**

WORLD TOUR SOCCER 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 10

While EA continues to tinker with its gameplay, I think footie fans will enjoy World Tour's more traditional and consistent controls. This includes special moves for everyone as well as the give-and-go. While WTS 2003 lacks the visual punch (and all-around swagger) of EA's FIFA, and the shooting could be better, I like Sony's product the best. It's an all-around solid game, and the depth at the club level is mind-boggling. You can be relegated to the second division, start a career at a school, or play a Mexican or Japanese team (among many others). – **KATO**

EVERYONE E **8.5**

HOT WHEELS: VELOCITY X

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 13

This title is like a burrito stuffed with dirt, topped with soap shavings, and wrapped in a warm leather shell. In other words, Velocity's gameplay components don't get any more appetizing, whether they are by themselves or mixed together. The tricks are cumbersome, the driving isn't smooth, and the car combat comes close to threatening the word "average," but that's about it. Younger gamers will surely like to drive up the sides of walls for items, like I did, but you know kids – they've got a short attention span. I doubt this will hold it for very long. – **KATO**

EVERYONE E **6**

NINJA ASSAULT

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 27

This game gives you many levels of various modes, but guess what? They're all about ninja with guns – a concept I just can't get onboard with. Without a new gameplay gimmick (like Time Crisis), this falls in the same tired heap as Vampire Night and House of the Dead III. Gun games are just going to keep getting these crappy scores until they show us something new, and it sure doesn't have anything to do with ninja. – **JUSTIN**

TEEN T **6.25**

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

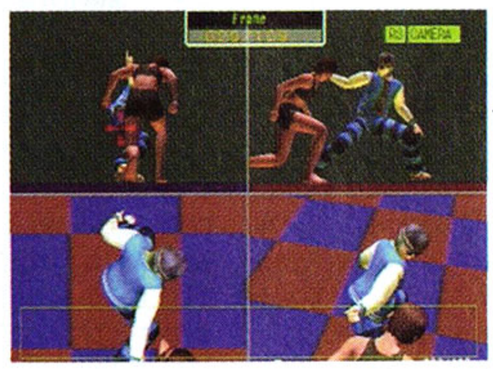
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 11

Throughout the course of the game, players will pilot a fighter tank, Republic gunship, speeder bike, maru, and assault walker. This diversification in gameplay styles prevents the action from becoming stagnant, but also produces mixed results on the gameplay front. It becomes apparent rather quickly which elements received the most attention during development. The gunship and tank handle exceptionally well, while the speeder bike and brief segments on-foot are so poorly contrived that they appear to have eluded playtesting entirely. The majority of gameplay is actually quite good, but these slivers of misery that are interspersed throughout the levels create frustration and disgust. The PS2 incarnation actually suffers a little more than the GameCube version. The framerate chugs more frequently and the visuals lack a number of the flashy effects. It's decent, but there's better Star Wars action to be had. – **REINER**

TEEN T **7.75**

FIGHTER MAKER 2

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTER
■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 19

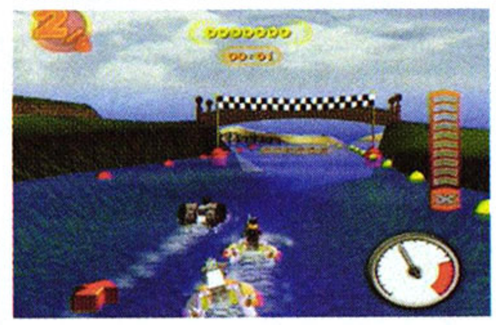


Fighter Maker 2 will allow your creative juices to flow, but at the same time, it can be taxing on your nerves and one of the most time consuming projects you'll ever take on. While savvy in its animation interface and overall approach, it ultimately comes up short in its character designing options. There really isn't much to work with. If anything, this area should have been just as robust as the create-a-wrestler modes that populate today's wrestling titles. As it stands now, stick figure drawings have more detail and personality than the characters in this game. This annoyance led to me growing disinterested with the product fairly quickly. If it has always been your lifelong dream to create a fighting game, this is your only option. Just be warned that your artists are on permanent vacation. – **REINER**

TEEN T **6.5**

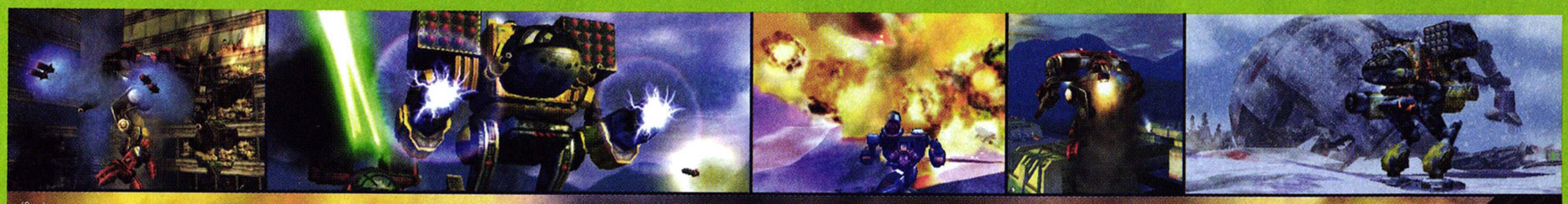
ISLAND EXTREME STUNTS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS/LEGO INTERACTIVE
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 22



What a strange little game. The basic premise is similar to a kiddie Stuntman, in which you perform in various film shoots for a Lego version of Steven Spielberg. Unfortunately, these sequences are just simple racing minigames that require little skill or strategy. The weird part is that, between races, you explore an Animal Crossing-esque island, conversing with the inhabitants, performing various tasks and puzzles, and shooting pizzas at ornery robots (?!). It's an interesting concept; too bad the real meat of the game (the racing) is as dry and tasteless as the roast beef at Old Country Buffet. – **MATT**

EVERYONE E **6**



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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Violence Blood

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"The fact that the gameplay and graphics are still impressive by today's standards shows just how under-appreciated this game was."

GAMECUBE

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

NO LONGER JUST A DREAM

One of the best-kept secrets in video games is now getting the mainstream attention that it truly deserves. Released just as the Dreamcast blinked out of existence, Skies of Arcadia was a victim of bad timing. As unfortunate as it is that gamers didn't get a chance to experience this epic journey, it's also a blessing in disguise. Japanese developer Overworks didn't feel that the Dreamcast version was the completed work. Thus, an enhanced version was forged. So, for those of you who missed out on this remarkable journey the first time around, its resurrected form is all the more impressive.

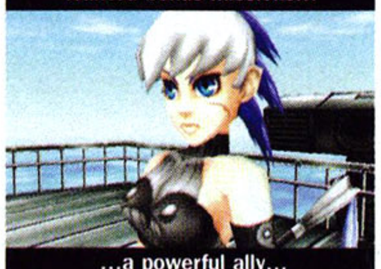
The fact that the gameplay and graphics are still impressive by today's standards shows just how under-appreciated this game was. While subtle enhancements have been made to the character models and battle effects, the overall visual presence doesn't suggest that it was originally constructed two years ago. The true beauty of the game, however, isn't of the cosmetic ilk, but rather how unique its story and setting are. It veers so far away from the traditional RPG premise, with a tale of rogue pirates on flying boats, that it emerges as something refreshing and different. Overworks even went out of its way to create a unique gameplay experience. Of course, leveling up, item usage, and boss battles are still the order of the day, but the general complexity of combat hones in on elemental properties more than any game before it. Players can change the elemental basis of their weapons on the fly to exploit their enemies' specific weaknesses. Another interesting alteration occurs in magic usage. Rather than allowing players to unleash the most devastating of spells early in battle, you'll actually have to build up a meter. The characters basically have to focus their energy to fully tap into their powers.

Since a good portion of your time is spent sailing through clouds, the game also features vessel-versus-vessel battles. You'll be asked to fire cannons, shoot harpoons, and move strategically through the air. You can even customize your boat to add new weapons, upgrade the hull, and choose who is on your crew. As cool as these segments sound and look, they're actually too drawn out, typically uneventful, and slow in execution. Thankfully, they don't occur too often.

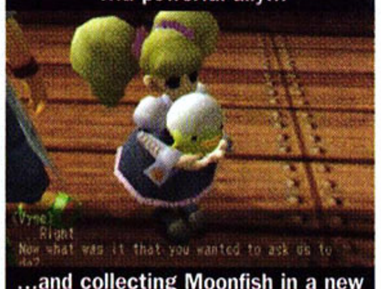
For those of you who have already completed this game on Dreamcast, Overworks included over 10 hours of new content, including interesting back-stories, a new playable character, Wanted missions (hunt down and capture a felon), and a host of minigames. Additionally, players can now fast-forward through the longwinded spell effects with a push of a button.

Age usually doesn't help games, but nothing could be further from the truth for Skies of Arcadia. It's matured into a much better title. Whether you're an RPG fan or not, this is one of the most entertaining quests on the market. You'd be a fool to pass it by for a second time. – **REINER**

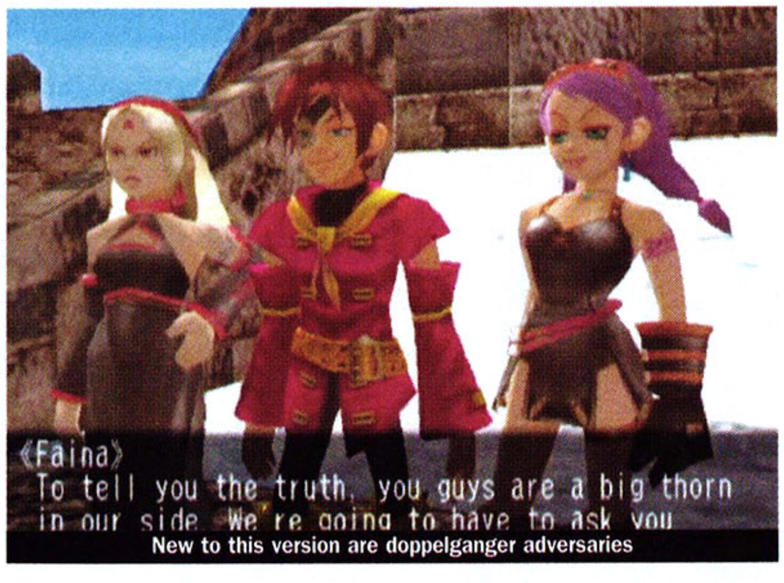
The new content includes Wanted bonus missions...



...a powerful ally...



...and collecting Moonfish in a new minigame for this cute little girl



New to this version are doppelganger adversaries

The magic system seems fairly simple until you realize that you have to tap into two different meters to cast one spell

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** OVERWORKS ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 28

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

- **Concept:** One of Sega's finest RPGs returns in an enhanced state
- **Graphics:** Some of the characters' facial texturing is appalling, but the models still look fantastic, and the animation is topnotch
- **Sound:** A decent score, but unfortunately there's no spoken dialogue
- **Playability:** Uniquely crafted combat mechanics, amusing minigames, and exceptional airborne overworld exploration
- **Entertainment:** It was great to begin with, and the new material only makes it all the more irresistible
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

At a glance, Skies of Arcadia looks relatively mundane for an RPG. The graphics (by today's standards) are only solid; the dialogue is convincing, but nothing spectacular; and combat appears somewhat slow. However, Skies of Arcadia's gameplay and story shine bright. Once you understand the battle system, its depth and balance become readily apparent. Plus, players will be treated to a few cool minigames and a good amount of exploration. Although one could argue that the story's a bit shallow, I find it to be involving and well composed – hardly ever presenting any inappropriate material that removes me from the experience. Other than some little nuisances, I don't really have any serious complaints of Skies. If you're a fan of the genre who missed this on Dreamcast, definitely snag a copy. You won't be disappointed.

CHET – 9

GAMECUBE QUICKIES

MINORITY REPORT: EVERYBODY RUNS

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26

Minority Report is a mundane action title that screams mediocrity in almost every way. However, it does feature a few gimmicks that will please fans of the genre and the movie alike, the coolest of which is the rag doll physics engine. When you manhandle an enemy, he'll usually fly and tumble about the screen like (you guessed it!) a rag doll. It's a decent rental that won't ruin your weekend, but that's about it. – **CHET**

6.75

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 5

I can't be mad at the company that brought me my beloved X-Wing series for PC, but releasing Bounty Hunter is tantamount to being held down while someone farts in your face. I can definitely see where the developers were going with this game, but I'll be danged if they even begin to scratch the surface of the Fett family's potential. The camera is awful, the action is unevenly paced; the level design is frustrating; and, worst of all, the controls are terrible. This isn't the game you're looking for...you can go about your business. Move along! – **KRISTIAN**

5

DISNEY SPORTS SOCCER

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
- **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 13

If you like soccer, you owe it to yourself to buy this game. I know, it's Disney, but if you're like me and don't like the company, consider this: It's a lot of fun to slide cleats-first into Mickey's toothpick legs. Yup, this game has just about all the moves you find in any "real" soccer game, and for the kids, it throws a bunch of magic shoes that give you special abilities. The only major complaint I have is that while using the c-stick to aim your shots is cool, adjusting its height can be tricky. I don't care what age you are; you're going to have a lot of fun with this title. – **KATO**

8

DR. MUTO

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE
- **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 9

Dr. Muto on GameCube offers few major changes from its brethren on the other consoles. I felt like the graphics are better on the 'Cube and have less jaggies. The nagging difference is that the good doctor turns corners like he's skating around an ice arena. I can't, in good conscience, suggest that Dr. Muto live on your GameCube when the system has superior gems to offer. – **LISA**

7

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING 2

- **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING
- **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26

Legends 2 features a whole lot of wrestlers – Ricky Steamboat, Eddie G., The Nasty Boys, etc. – but far fewer moves. I'm still not sold on the saggy engine, but the new Career mode storylines help to keep me playing. What is painfully distressing on the GameCube version is that the interview segments have been removed. Curse you, tiny discs! I just hope THQ's next GameCube wrestling game squashes all previous entries. – **JUSTIN**

6.75

SUPER BUBBLE POP

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
- **PUBLISHER** JALECO ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 15

Puzzles have been around for millennia, and the best ones are the originals. Super Bubble Pop isn't reinventing the wheel, but it really is a solid 3D Othello, tic-tac-toe kind of a game. The puzzle is simple: Line up three bubbles of the same color (horizontally or vertically) to make them pop. Couple that with multiple players and a decent soundtrack, and you've got a nice little party game to wile away some free time with. – **LISA**

8

BMX XXX

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
- **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 23

After playing this game on Xbox and PlayStation 2, I've already seen all the dirty tricks that it has to offer, and trying it again on GameCube only confirms my belief that BMX XXX is not nearly as good as it should have been. Nagging issues with the unpolished gameplay and the irritating missions still detract from my enjoyment, and stripped of the novelty factor, it's just another mediocre pretender to the crown. Bottom line: I just didn't want to keep playing. In contrast, you can throw me in front of any Tony Hawk game on any system, and I'll still be hooked like it was my first time. BMX XXX is amusing, but not essential. – **MATT**

7.75

GAMECUBE

DRAGON'S LAIR 3D

THE RETURN OF DIRK, THE BRAVE DORK

Despite having different publishers, this version and the Xbox incarnation play and look exactly the same – which is actually a slight disappointment. I had hoped that Dragonstone would've used the extra time to make some needed improvements.

The camera and Dirk's movements are a little spastic and imprecise, rendering certain parts of obstacles unnecessarily difficult. Also, the combat comes off as a mere afterthought to the adventuring and puzzle elements. Simply put, outside of the boss battles, fighting is boring and often times sloppy.

Fortunately, Dragon's Lair 3D shines in the adventuring department. Overcoming the various traps and figuring out the myriad puzzles always proves to be exciting and interesting. As players proceed through the game, Dirk will obtain weapons like a crossbow and learn a number of techniques such as levitation. And since Dirk must employ these newly acquired items and skills in the challenges, the adventure remains fresh throughout.

If you enjoy platforming titles and solving puzzles, or simply loved Dirk back in the day, I recommend dishing out the dough. Even if you have no particular attraction towards the series, a rental wouldn't hurt. – **CHET**

THE BOTTOM LINE

7.75

- **Concept:** Inspired by the arcade classic, this introduces a new type of gameplay similar to Tomb Raider
- **Graphics:** The cel shading is nice and does justice to its predecessor's cartoon look
- **Sound:** The music is appropriate and the sound effects are entirely nostalgic
- **Playability:** The camera and control aren't awful, but they will take some getting used to
- **Entertainment:** DL 3D is a fun action/adventure game that does justice to the original. Although the action is a bit weak, players will undoubtedly enjoy the adventure
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

This next-gen update evokes whimsical memories of the original. It's puzzle-riffic, with plenty of rooms that will have you confused, and then slightly frustrated, before your inevitable triumph. Daphne's voice is nails on a chalkboard, and the camera messes you up during some tough spots, but the rest of Dragon's Lair 3D is an enjoyable experience. Old-school's back in session.

JUSTIN – 7.5

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
- **PUBLISHER** ENCORE ■ **DEVELOPER** DRAGONSTONE
- **RELEASE** DECEMBER 30

"...it'll give you enough entertainment that you won't start a letter writing campaign to your congressperson trying to get your money back."

XBOX

BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA

MEDIOCRE MAYHEM

To say that I was bored while playing this game would be accurate, but not for the reasons you might think – okay, yes it is for those reasons. Battle Engine Aquila is the quintessential throw-away game. You'll get it, play it for a little while, forget it's there, then throw it out along with your sister's collection of Justin Timberlake bobblehead dolls. However, for those two or three weeks that you're trying to convince yourself that it was totally worth spending $50 to bring this one home, it'll give you enough entertainment that you won't start a letter writing campaign to your congressperson trying to get your money back.

Aquila's major downfall is its poor production quality. All of the components of an interesting title are present: A gimmick (the transforming robot), a semi-interesting plot (save X and Y from Z), and some cool explosion effects. Unfortunately, all of these things are done in a way that isn't exactly sloppy, but they're definitely not top of the line. Take the environments for example – sure, they look okay, but I don't want to lay down a chunk of change for something that looks "okay." If I did, I would go out and buy a suit from JC Penny's. I want to look at the screen and be dazzled. Instead, I looked at BEA's presentation and was soon thinking about what I would have for lunch that day – a House of Tsang bowl or a Marie Callendar's frozen entrée.

On the plus side, the controls are tight and responsive. When I wanted to make a long, controlled drop from the sky to the ground, I did it with the confident knowledge that I would land pretty much where I expected. There aren't any weird tweaks to learn that will force your battle engine to perform the way you want it. Rather, you'll need to use the controls given to you in the best possible manner – your game performance will be based almost exclusively on your BEA skills.

Furthermore, the explosions are nice, and the action is intense to say the least. If you're playing this game and thinking that it needs more activity, you should definitely see a doctor for a possible attention-deficit situation. I really like swooping up into the air, battling with bombers, fighters, and other airborne enemies, then returning to the ground to dole out punishment on the dirt-pushers. However, I don't like doing it in the same way mission after mission, and a little customization would be nice in terms of your machine's look and load-out. If you're in desperate need to play this, try it out somewhere before buying it. – **KRISTIAN**

Nothing says "you're dead" like a nice big explosion

A view of the field can help you root out hidden enemies

Tanks stand little chance if they're not travelling together in large numbers

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** LOST TOYS ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 21

Destruction galore!

A sea fight is a dangerous proposition – your battle engine explodes if it hits water

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

- **Concept:** Fly like a bird and scramble like a squirrel – all while blowing stuff up in a gameplay shell that's decidedly been-there-done-that
- **Graphics:** If you're going to have cutscenes that suck this bad, why do them at all?
- **Sound:** I don't think you'd be hindered in the least if you turned off the volume completely
- **Playability:** The control is easy to grasp, and you'll be a transforming fool before you know it
- **Entertainment:** Only the few of you out there who are really into mindless action will dig this
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I appreciate what Battle Engine Aquila is shooting for here with ground and flight-based gameplay, but I can't say that it's entertaining. The controls are solid, using the typical scheme you would find in any first-person shooter, but the missions and the story lack the punch to make them anything above adequate. I will give the game credit for being quite sharp with its overall presentation, but there really is nothing here to keep you coming back. I especially got annoyed by the fact that you only have a limited amount of energy for flight, so constant landings to recharge get to be an annoying side-product of the game. First-person shooter fanatics with a hankering for some flight might just find some redeeming elements to this one, but I was less than impressed.

ANDY – 6.75

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.75

XBOX

CRIMSON SEA

SURFING THE CRIMSON WAVE

"Crimson Sea differs from Dynasty Warriors in that it simply kicks more ass."

You probably know publisher Koei for either its Dynasty Warriors brawlers or the tactical intricacies of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms series. Crimson Sea is an obvious attempt to expand the company's horizons into more traditional gameplay directions, and it succeeds – but with mixed results. The admitted focus of this title from the start was to utilize Koei's remarkable ability to design game engines that can feature hundreds of animated units onscreen at once. I thought that Crimson Sea was, therefore, going to be Dynasty Warriors set in space. Luckily, I'm only half right.

While Koei has always been able to tell a story, they are usually historically bogged down snooze-fests involving long-dead Chinese people with confusing names. Crimson Sea, however, tells a rich tale complete with more archetypal characters. Thus, it's simply easier to care about. This just isn't story-telling by the numbers, however, as the dialogue does enough to enrich the events that unfold, and the characters show more than enough personality to keep you interested. All told, things move along despite the dry beat-level-get-grade formula.

Combat is an area where this game scores a draw. Crimson Sea differs from Dynasty Warriors in that it simply kicks more ass. It features swarms of enemies at once without a hint of slowdown (not to mention there's no graphical degradation on the character models or environments), and the targeting system gets you in the killing groove like an old-school shooter. Unfortunately, the game's combos are of the simpler sort – like Dynasty Warriors. You do get a nice change of pace, however, through the different close-range swords and guns available. Neo-Psionics are magic-like attacks that always seem to come in handy when you've got about thirty or more bugs crawling in your face. Furthermore, Crimson diversifies itself with missions that range from protection jobs to rail levels or time-based endeavors. I also applaud the inclusion of a dodge move, but the fact that the quick turn action is also mapped onto this button can be frustrating.

I appreciate Koei's efforts – and they're not in vain – but I got the feeling that more could have been done to truly make this a title that turns heads. For instance, the environments are stylized and amazing – but there's never any real exploration. Thus, Crimson Sea works effectively enough to take DW fans to the next level, but misses the chance to create the truly broad kind of experience that everyone would enjoy. – **KATO**

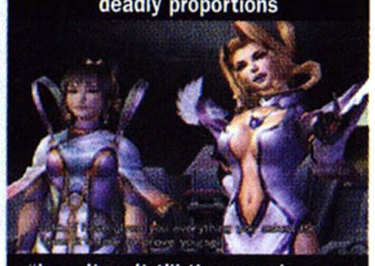
- **Concept:** Koei takes a turn from the Dynasty Warriors formula and makes some progress
- **Graphics:** Unlike its other titles, Koei has made this game look fabulous without sacrificing any of its speed
- **Sound:** The orchestrated score is a great touch, and the voice actors are good
- **Playability:** Crimson has slightly less combat sophistication than other action titles. This makes it more of a shooter sometimes
- **Entertainment:** Falls just far enough from the Dynasty Warriors tree to be worth a look
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Koei has taken the basic idea behind Dynasty Warriors (slash everything mindlessly) and applied a more concentrated, more mission-based gameplay style. While there's something to be said about being able to battle against hundreds of enemies at once, players will also be treated to myriad levels with actual objectives. Some require you to defeat a boss at the end, while others involve collecting items and solving simple puzzles. The gameplay receives an additional dose of depth thanks to a few RPG elements, like battling with a party and buying weapon parts to upgrade your pistol/sword. My only serious complaint involves the camera/control interface. The sluggish camera simply cannot maintain pace with all of the twitchy, fast-paced action. Although you get used to it, I often grew frustrated during heated confrontations.

CHET – 8

Retina scan security has evolved to deadly proportions


"I can't wait till the game's over, and I can go back to wearing my t-shirt and sweat pants."

Take care of your party members, and they will take care of you

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION **■ PUBLISHER** KOEI **■ DEVELOPER** KOEI **■ RELEASE** DECEMBER 23

Neo-Psionic attacks are always useful in a pinch

You'll have to keep your cool when you're in the eye of the storm

XBOX

BLACK STONE: MAGIC & STEEL

IT'S LIKE GAUNTLET, BUT BAD

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

3

It's obvious that the developers of Black Stone: Magic & Steel have a lot of respect for the action gem Gauntlet, as it mimics Midway's classic on many levels. However, this imitation does more to hurt this gameplay style than help it.

All the Gauntlet elements are here. You can play four-player simultaneous with your buddies. There are coins to collect that you can use between levels to buy items. There are keys and potions to find that both unlock chests and unleash huge barrages of damage on large groups of enemies. Unfortunately, unlike Gauntlet, Black Stone is so poorly executed, that it is absolutely no fun to play.

The game moves at a snail's pace, and the combos and hit detection on the enemies are annoying to the nth degree. It just doesn't flow. If you start a combo, you must watch your character complete his pathetic failing before you can target another enemy. Sure, you could call this a strategy element, but let's get real here people: This style of game is about mashing the buttons and killing lots of bad guys, not strategy.

I can't recommend staying away from this game enough. It's not even worth a rental. Just move on to another game, and forgot you ever heard of...ummm...what was it called again? – **ANDY**

- **Concept:** Rip off Gauntlet, but use Japanese anime characters
- **Graphics:** The textures aren't too bad, but the animations and models are just a shade above awful
- **Sound:** I never thought I'd see a system with the power of Xbox put out such anorexic tunes
- **Playability:** The control is clunky at best, with horrible hit detection
- **Entertainment:** The most fun I had with this game was trying to convince my co-workers to play multiplayer with me
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

To say this game is basically a Dreamcast title would be mean. Then to say that it couldn't haul ass with a bucket would be rubbing its face in its slow, mediocre gameplay. No, none of this is true, because this brawler is worse than just being a slow DC title. The first Gauntlet showed more sophistication over a decade ago. The number of character classes is nice, but what's the use of being a thief in a brawler?

KATO – 5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** XICAT INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** XPEC ENTERTAINMENT/IDEA FACTORY ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 28

XBOX

METAL DUNGEON

CHARACTER BUILDER

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6

If Xbox owners are looking for something to fill their gnawing pit of hunger that can only be satiated with a high-class RPG experience, they will starve for the foreseeable future. Metal Dungeon does have a few things going for it, though. First, the initial character generation is pretty deep, allowing you to specify name, sex, class (Fencer, Striker, Analyzer, Caster, or Broader), face type, gear color, and general weight and height. Second, the dungeon layouts generate randomly each time you enter.

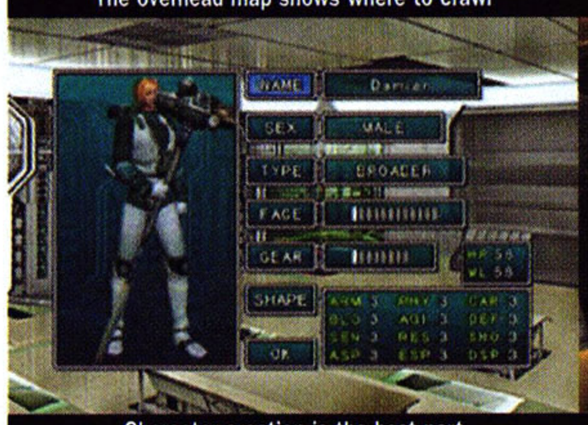
Things begin to unravel when it comes to the details of gameplay, however. I can't for the life of me understand why my casters aren't able to regenerate magic anywhere but in the overworld. Furthermore, what's the deal with the blander-than-bland texturing? If I wanted to be lulled to sleep, I would read a selection from Minnesota's penal code.

While the battling in Metal Dungeon is turn-based, it is also in real-time. To speed the process along, each character is given a default action based on their class. As you change their action, the rest of the battle is going on in real-time. The problem is that it doesn't have the robust system of an RPG, nor the combo-laden combat of a Phantasy Star.

Metal Dungeon is a game that goes nearly nowhere over a long period of time with very little story to drive you forward. What plot there is can only be defined as lackluster, or completely forgettable. The game as a whole just doesn't have the personality or technical gameplay presence to make it even remotely compelling. – **LISA**

The overhead map shows where to crawl

Darn bats and their purple attack cones!



Character creation is the best part

Ohhh...so that's combat

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** XICAT INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** PANTHER SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 17

- **Concept:** Crawl through randomly generated dungeons to save mankind. Use magic and cyborgs to battle the forces of evil
- **Graphics:** Repetitive texture maps, but the monster design is pretty good
- **Sound:** It has sound, but it is neither enthralling nor annoying
- **Playability:** The only action that the player *always* controls is running through dungeons, which isn't half-bad
- **Entertainment:** It's Phantasy Star without the fighting and Final Fantasy without the story or strategy
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Metal Dungeon takes one step forward, and one step back as the first Final Fantasy-esque clone to hit the Xbox. I use that term loosely, by the way – I'm not about to say that Metal Dungeon begins to hold a candle to the vaunted FF series, but they are similar in some ways. The real-time combat system is nice, if a little haphazard, and the items screen is cool (it gives you a close-up of anything you select), but the character animations and audio are terrible, and the plot is laughably bad. You can't use the term, "Monster Weapons" as the main thrust of your story and expect people to take you seriously. I really dug creating my own characters and throwing them into battle right off the bat, but the overall presentation needs some major attention. When will the must-have RPG for Xbox finally hit the market? I have no idea, but Metal Dungeon sure as shootin' ain't it.

KRISTIAN – 7

DEFENDER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 5

This modernization of the arcade classic retains the essence of the original game, yet succeeds more through its delivery of new content than it does clinging to a nostalgic vibe. While you will see similarities, like being able to pick up troops on the wings of your vessel, the variety in missions, weapon upgrade system, smoothness of control, and vivid story presentation are the most interesting and finely polished aspects. As a whole, it feels more like a next-generation Colony Wars than Defender. This, of course, is the highest of compliments and a step in the right direction for the series. It's worth looking into. – **REINER**

8.25

TOXIC GRIND

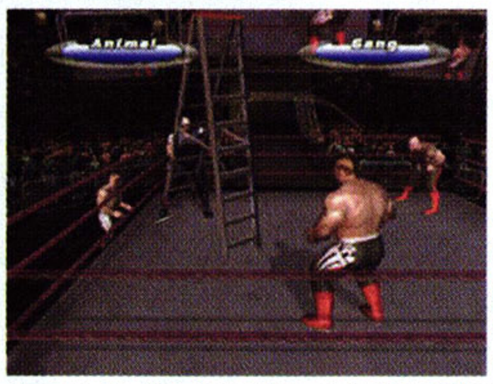
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 2

It's nice to see that Toxic Grind brings a new idea to the action/sports genre. It's not so nice, however, to play it. The story aspects and art style are unique, but the seemingly slow-motion gameplay is not. It feels very choppy and rough. For a game to succeed, it needs more than just a refreshing concept; it needs efficient execution – something which Toxic Grind lacks. It's a shame to think that, over one year later, Mirra 2 is far above any other BMX game out there. – **JUSTIN**

6.25

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26



With a stable of more than 65 wrestlers, this sequel plays out like a who's who of wrestling history. Of all people, Andy Kaufman is a part of this incredible roster. On the gameplay end, it's still a little shallow in the moves department, but it's tighter on the whole, and the new combo/reversal meter gives it a unique and user-friendly touch. The Career mode has also been revamped with multiple story arcs and features a secret system stylized much like that within Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance. There's more than enough content here for hardcore wrestling fanatics, but the gameplay still needs an overhaul before it will appeal to the masses. – **REINER**

6.75

MINORITY REPORT: EVERYBODY RUNS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 26

This title's biggest problem is its lack of ambition. Outside of a few gimmicks (like the jet pack and the rag doll physics engine), and the license, you won't find anything that elevates Minority Report beyond being a typical action game. If you like the movie or the genre, you'll certainly manage to squeeze some fun out of it; otherwise, I recommend passing it up in favor of Dead to Rights or Splinter Cell. – **CHET**

6.75

PULSE RACER

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACER
■ **PUBLISHER** JALECO
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 10

I've just checked my notes and am disgusted to report that Pulse Racer is officially the worst Xbox game I've ever played. Why does it get this dubious honor? Because in a futuristic racing genre that's usually devoid of much that's new, this game manages to lower already shallow expectations. The tracks are boring, the power-ups aren't much better, and the racing makes soap in a bathtub look like fun. Play this title only if you don't have Dr. Kevorkian's number handy. – **KATO**

3

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 30

I thought Kato was just a sucker for the license, but Two Towers really is a tremendous game. The combat is such that you never have to worry about hitting the wrong Orc, but it doesn't baby you, either. The graphics are outstanding, and the seamless integration between real-time and FMV cutscenes will take your breath away. The three progressing characters immensely increase the replay. EA, which also gave Xbox gamers Buffy, has done it again with a quality, licensed beat 'em up. – **JUSTIN**

9.25

XBOX

NIGHTCASTER II: EQUINOX

I CAST THEE OUT!

THE BOTTOM LINE

5.75

Do you know what I love? Sequels to games I gave bad scores to. The original Nightcaster was baby poopy, so why the good people at Jaleco decided to take this ball and run with it is anyone's guess. But run with it they did, and they actually improved upon the original 'Caster – not that that's saying much.

Nightcaster II is very different from its predecessor. If I had to make a comparison, I'd call it a poor man's Baldur's Gate. Wait, make that a homeless man living under a highway overpass' Baldur's Gate. Its gameplay favors magic over melee. Look at your map, locate the exit, then sprint to it. Along the way, you'll run away from bad guys while at the same time trying to cap them with your blasts.

The same button that picks up potions is the same that uses them. This leads to many deaths, especially since your survival depends on them. You can respawn endlessly, but you'll never level up that way. I must admit I got a tinge of enjoyment out of this title, though. Once you get cooking in the dungeons, you may forget its shortcomings for a spell. A spell...get it?

Is anyone going to buy this game over Splinter Cell? Is it even worth renting over a good movie? Most likely not. Then who will play Nightcaster II? Ya got me. There are a lot of crazies out there, though. – **JUSTIN**

■ **Concept:** If you can't think of a name for your game, license one that nobody remembers, even if it's nothing like your game

■ **Graphics:** Nice lighting and reflection effects are about the only positive I see here

■ **Sound:** A guy and his Casio keyboard can do a lot of things. The voice actors shouldn't quit their day jobs at McDonald's

■ **Playability:** Using the right analog for spell aiming works well, but some of the button placement decisions are questionable

■ **Entertainment:** If you go nuts for Baldur's Gate or other isometric RPGs, you may not hate this

■ **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

If the Dreamcast really was "thinking" as the advertisements cleverly proposed, then the Xbox must be plotting out the deaths of those hapless souls who make the mistake of playing detest-able games like Nightcaster II. Do yourself a favor and steer clear of this one or there's a good chance that your Xbox will come to life, beat you to a bloody pulp, and steal all of your valued possessions.

REINER – 2.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** JALECO ■ **DEVELOPER** JALECO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 10

"It would be unwise to attempt to measure the amount of time you'll spend playing this game in hours..."

PC

SIMCITY 4

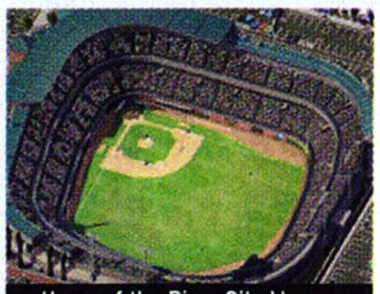
GIMME SHELTER

The game that redefined what a video game can be – SimCity – is back, and has been blown out in spectacular fashion. It would be unwise to attempt to measure the amount of time you'll spend playing this game in hours; rather, it should be measured in days or weeks. For every zoning and city-improvement decision you make, there are an untold number of consequences and advantages. Sure, building a street capable of higher traffic density will ease the congestion in a certain neighborhood, but what about the increased noise nearby residents will experience? What about escalating upkeep cost? Would building a highway be better? Herein lies the beauty of SimCity...endless choices followed by immediate effect.

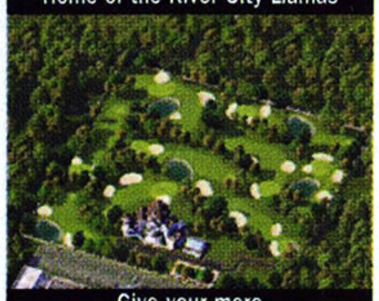
There are numerous improvements made over this title's last release – indeed the sheer number of them is far too large to be dutifully reprinted in this small space. Therefore, the highlights are as follows: There is now a region mode by which players can connect one city to another. This allows for Reiner to start his game as he normally would by building residential, commercial, and industrial centers. Then, I start my own city in a region adjacent to his. Because he has an industrial park and has built a road connecting his area to mine, I can build a quiet little suburb and watch my citizens commute to the big city for work. Oh yeah, there's a morning and evening rush hour, so I need to build a road that's big enough to keep traffic bearable.

Hundreds of other little things keep SimCity 4 from getting boring, and let me tell you, the graphics aren't hard on the eyes, either. A small office building will not only have randomly lit windows at night as your hard-working sims slave through the graveyard shift, but you'll also be able to see the heating and ventilation systems on the roof. As your city grows, so will the buildings, and if you play your cards right, you'll be seeing skyscrapers and other impressive structures rise from the earth as the city you've coddled into existence flexes its population muscles. As in other SimCity iterations, however, there's an almost constant need of funding. This means that you might need a water treatment plant, but if you buy it, it'll put your finances in the red. It's that constant give and take that makes these games so intriguing and puzzling – even to the point of frustration.

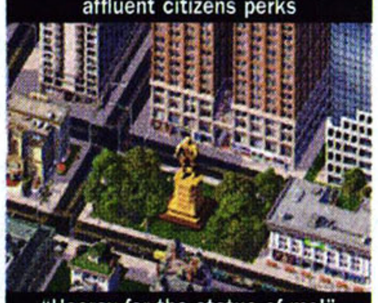
So here it is again: a masterpiece of a game that doesn't promote violence, and doesn't go out of its way to shock you with racy images or situations. SimCity 4 is the best kind of entertainment: You know you're learning something, but you're so invested and addicted to what's going on in your city, you won't notice until you go outside and start seeing your neighborhood as a residential district with a transportation grid that's good, but could be better. Couple all of this with the deep online play components, and the ability to incorporate your Sims characters into your town, and baby, it just doesn't get much better than this. – **KRISTIAN**



Home of the River City Llamas



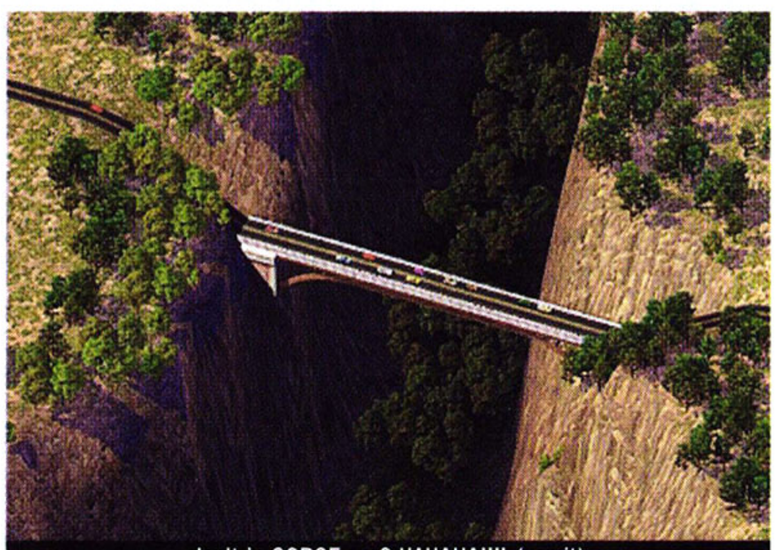
Give your more affluent citizens perks



"Hooray for the statue of me!"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 14

When robots attack – next, on Fox



Isn't in GORGE-ous? HAHAHA!!!! *(vomit)*

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.75

- **Concept:** Keep your citizenry happy and make some money in the process
- **Graphics:** The zoom level is incredible – you can get in close enough to see your peeps strolling down the sidewalks
- **Sound:** The traffic noise is excellent, and the music is okay, but having a radio on isn't going to hinder your experience
- **Playability:** There's a lot to keep track of, and it's easy to fall into a money pit
- **Entertainment:** That addictive SimCity charm has been taken to new heights
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Whether you find yourself marveling at the sophisticated, feature-dense micromanaging options; gazing in bewilderment at the detailed visuals, or laughing hysterically at a disaster that wipes out half of your populace; there's no denying SimCity 4's brilliant design and entertaining gameplay presence. The core mechanics haven't changed since the last installment, but Maxis has gone out of its way to expand upon the experience with variety. This became quite clear when I found myself contemplating where I wanted wildlife to graze. If you always felt that the gameplay was too confining, you can connect your city to neighboring towns for resource sharing and population shifting. You can even import your Sims characters to live in your town. SimCity has always been the most sophisticated simulator, but this entry dwarfs everything on the market, putting it into a league of its own.

REINER – 9.75

PC

ASHERON'S CALL 2: FALLEN KINGS

IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?

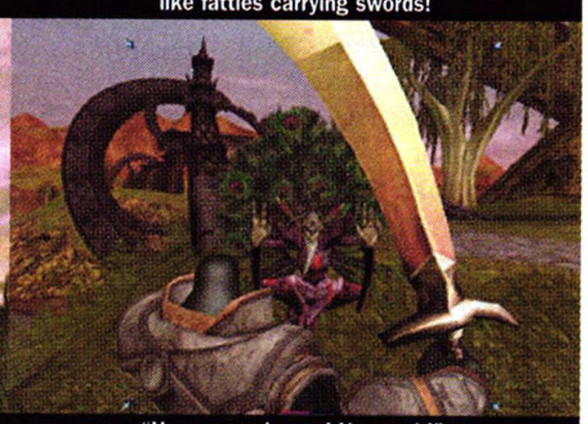
Maybe this game just hasn't caught on yet, but usually I find that when I get into an MMORPG world, each server is completely glutted with people trying to get in. Asheron's Call 2 is presently devoid of this problem, which is both a curse and a boon. Having the ability to amble along a road on the way to a dungeon, make your way through its entire length, and not see a soul is nice – it kind of feels like you're part of something bigger than the level-increase dog and pony show a lot of these games turn into. Then again, as the game gets more populated, it'll be that much easier to meet people of your skill level and team up for some monster whuppin'.

Speaking of the beat down, the combat animations and audio are good, but the severe lack of cities with NPCs to barter and interact with is a shame. I wanted to do more buying and selling, but with so few opportunities to do that, gold became less of a tool than it traditionally is. On the other hand, the skill development is adequate, but a bigger ability tree would have been nice to see. All told, AC 2 is a more than adequate virtual fantasy world, and could act as the perfect substitution for those who have grown weary of the hustle and bustle of EverQuest and Ultima Online. Plus, this game looks fantastic – just make sure your PC can handle the payload before you blast off. – **KRISTIAN**

A perfect opportunity to use the "Groin Punch" skill

Strange things happen on full moons – like fatties carrying swords!

This bug may look weak, but it'll put up a good fight



"Hey peacock man! You suck!"

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** TURBINE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 25

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:** Travel around enormous environments searching for something to do
- **Graphics:** If your machine has the cojones to run things optimally, the results are fantastic
- **Sound:** The music can be annoying at times, but spoken battle audio is a welcome addition
- **Playability:** Switching between an FPS control scheme and the traditional MMO set is easy and intuitive
- **Entertainment:** Make sure to play with a couple buddies – things can get boring in a hurry
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Overall, I'm pretty disappointed in Asheron's Call 2, mostly because the game doesn't play as well as it looks. Admittedly, I'm not a fan of third-person perspective massively multiplayer role-playing games, but AC 2's interface does a pretty good job of using hotkeys to alleviate my typical complaints. However, the game isn't as smooth as its graphics suggest, and movement is clumsy overall. This is especially true when you are forced by the game's unpredictable collision problems to use the jump command to climb up inclines and work around various obstacles. The skill tree does offer a number of nice options, but only three playable races is unacceptable when compared to the other games available on the market. I enjoyed my time with Asheron's Call 2, but it doesn't offer enough to make me want to dedicate the kind of time a game like this needs to enjoy it.

ANDY – 7

PC

EUROPA 1400: THE GUILD

A GAME YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

If you know about Europa 1400, I am extremely impressed. This is a title for those of us who love to get lost in an open-ended strategy game that pushes the boundaries of what fun can be. To say that I was skeptical when I booted this up for the first time would be an understatement. The in-game graphics are so dated, I would be willing to guess that you could have seen something comparable 10 years ago. The gameplay, however, is devilishly clever in its use of politics, economics, and social standing to keep your butt planted, and your attention riveted.

As the game opens, you decide which town to start your dynasty in, you choose your parents (this dictates which attributes you'll start with), then you pick the goal for the game you're about to play. After starting your business, you tend to its budget carefully, earn some money, upgrade your house and workplace, then enter the realm of politics after the city's officials decide you've gathered enough respectability. At this point, the game really takes off, as you feud with rival dynasties, court spouses, spy on competitors, and oust people from public office. There are some glaring gameplay woes that hold it back (buggy control and poor AI being a couple), but for the most part, this is a great game that looks like ass. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

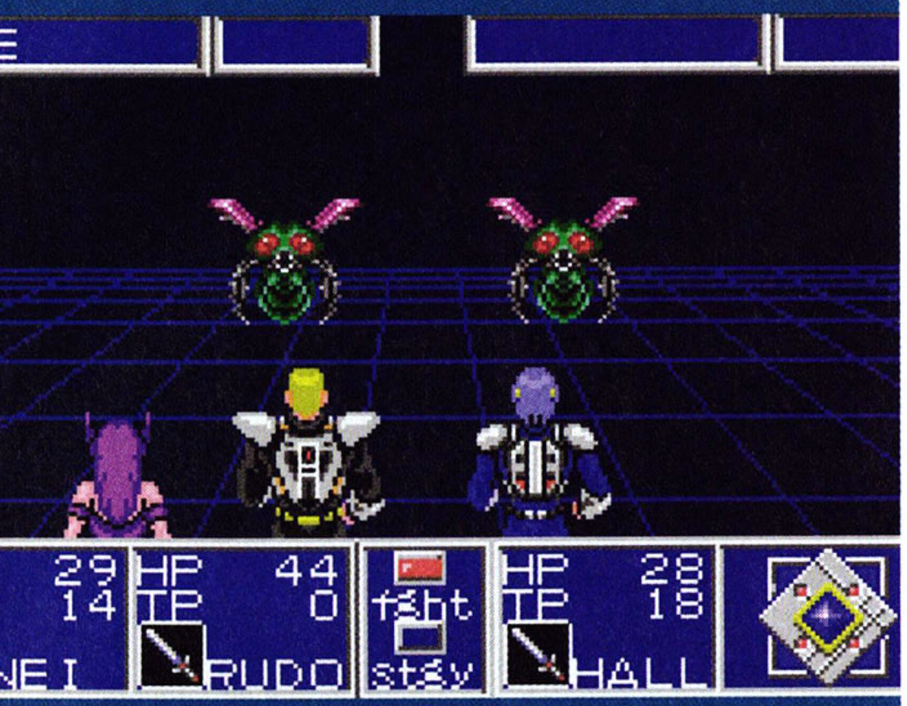
- **Concept:** Build an economic and political dynasty in the heart of medieval Europe
- **Graphics:** Awful, but it doesn't really hinder the gameplay at all
- **Sound:** The narrator is actually pretty good at making you feel involved with what's going on
- **Playability:** A steep learning curve will keep your kid brother from hogging the game if you share a PC
- **Entertainment:** It may not look or sound particularly good, but I'll be danged if it isn't a good time
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

This game should be subtitled: "How to Make Friends and Bribe People." You won't be roped in by this title's ordinary resource management; instead it'll be the ability to rise up the social ladder through spies, bribes, torture, and even the "accidental" burning down of your rivals' houses. Political intrigue never felt so good, although it certainly could look better. Build your own dynasty without the inbreeding and hemophilia!

KATO – 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** JOWOOD PRODUCTIONS ■ **DEVELOPER** 4HEAD STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 1



GAME BOY ADVANCE

PHANTASY STAR COLLECTION

ROLE-PLAYING LORE

This is an extraordinary retro compilation. Not only does it anthologize three of the greatest role-playing games of yesteryear, it does so on the least likely of platforms. As obscure of a choice as the Game Boy Advance may seem, it's actually the perfect vehicle to bring this collection to the masses. For those of you who game on the go, Phantasy Star Collection is the perfect companion. Much like Tetris, this game has unrivaled depth. Just getting through all of them will consume hundreds of hours.

Surprisingly, all three games are exact recreations of their original counterparts. The Sega Master System classic, Phantasy Star – which I herald as the greatest 8-bit RPG of all time – shows just how far ahead of its time it was, and is still a fairly good game to boot. The Genesis sequels, Phantasy Star II and Phantasy Star III: Generations of Doom, also prove to be enjoyable looks back at the ancestry of Sega's RPGs. This genre has evolved significantly, and you may want to invest in Golden Sun if you simply desire a new RPG that is up to today's standards. Alternatively though, if you want a taste of nostalgia, this collection gives you three amazing choices. – **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

- **Concept:** A retro compilation featuring the Master System classic, plus two of the three Genesis games
- **Graphics:** In the visual sense, these games were always one step ahead of the competition, and they still look fantastic
- **Sound:** Appropriate for the quests, but the scores and sound effects do wear on you after awhile
- **Playability:** For how complicated these games were back in the day, it's almost laughable how shallow they are by today's standards
- **Entertainment:** An amusing flashback, but you really must be a hardcore role-player to truly get into these old-school quests
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

This is a lot like the PSone Arc the Lad Collection. It's a great compilation for old-school gamers, though newbies may thirst for more modern thrills. I personally love it, especially since it contains the very rare original Phantasy Star. PS II is my favorite Genesis RPG. It's obviously a great value, making it ideal for people on a budget. I give it the nod.

JUSTIN – 8.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA/DIGITAL ECLIPSE
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 23

GAME BOY ADVANCE

LUNAR LEGEND

A BRONZE STAR STORY

My love for the Lunar series is mostly rooted in nostalgia; I'll admit that. Appearing initially on Sega CD as Lunar: The Silver Star, it was one of the first classic RPGs that featured animated cutscenes with voice dialogue. Even the gameplay competed with the best titles in the genre at the time.

Lunar Legend is a solid port of Silver Star with competent gameplay and a few enhancements such as better coloring, larger characters, more animation, and added battle cutscenes. Unfortunately, the plot has taken a bit of a hit. Ubi obviously had to remove the voices and animated segments, but in doing so, it also sacrificed the story. Furthermore, part of the original title's charm was the funny dialogue and zany characters which these animated scenes brought out.

Although it's not on par with the likes of Zelda or Golden Sun, Legends will easily appeal to any nostalgic fan, or a gamer needing another dose of old-school RPG action. – **CHET**

SECOND OPINION

Much like the recent PSone re-release of The Silver Star, this handheld incarnation features a bevy of changes. Unfortunately, not all of them are welcome. The story has been butchered, and without voiceovers, it's just not the same game. The new battle and character graphics are nice, but it was a lot more entertaining on the Sega CD and PSone.

REINER – 7

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

7.5

- **Concept:** The original Silver Star with a couple enhancements and missing story segments
- **Graphics:** They're a bit better than the original Sega CD version, but nothing spectacular
- **Sound:** The sound is a good rendition of the obviously superior original
- **Playability:** No problems here
- **Entertainment:** Legend has a decent story, minus some plot points, and more than adequate gameplay.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** GAME ARTS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 10

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER MONKEY BALL JR.

THE BEST BALLS IN YOUR POCKET

Monkey Ball Jr. is an amazingly ambitious and well done attempt to bring the vexing, addicting, and flat-out fun aspects of Monkey Ball to GBA. While not a total success, it does enough for me to highly recommend it.

Most of the problems I had were because I was overly critical in comparing this to the GameCube Monkey Balls. The physics and control (digital instead of analog) are a tad off. For being packed in a cartridge, however, the overall quality is high. There are 60 well-designed stages, broken up into three difficulty categories. A zany story mode is sadly absent. The four minigames can be unlocked in about two hours, but don't have loads of replay value. I do like Monkey Bowling a ton, though.

The GBA continues to amaze me with its power, and Monkey Ball Jr. proves its mettle in polygonal graphics. Everything flows smoothly, and there's plenty of scaling and rotating platforms to boot. Jr. doesn't hook me as hopelessly as its bigger brothers, but it's still a damn fine handheld game. Get rollin'. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

Monkey Ball's old-school arcade vibe makes it perfect for the handheld market, and I'm really amazed at how closely this GBA port mimics the look of its big brother. The GBA's tiny d-pad isn't quite as accurate as an analog stick, but I actually like the course designs (which are based on the first GC title) better than the ones in Super Monkey Ball 2.

MATT – 8.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

- **Concept:** Shrink down those cute little monkeys for GBA, but keep just about everything else
- **Graphics:** Anyone who doubts the poly-pushing power of Game Boy Advance, witness this!
- **Sound:** Great music and speech really enhance the package
- **Playability:** The physics are nearly as accurate as on GameCube, but I do miss the analog control
- **Entertainment:** It tries to be everything the GameCube installments were, and comes pretty darn close
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 21

"STARE AT 'EM SWEETIE-
MAKES YOU EASIER TO HIT."

BLACK & BRUISED

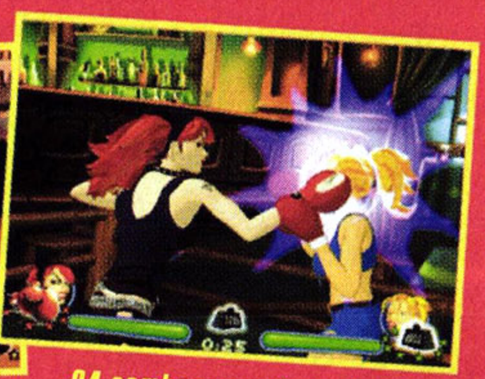
WHEN LIFE KACKS YOU INTO A CORNER,
COME OUT SWINGIN'.

Knuckles Nadine just wants to be a country music star. But the road to stardom's a bit bumpy. Join Nadine and 18 other wacky, not-so-typical boxers as their storylines intertwine from one grueling, over-the-top slugfest to the next. But beware. What happens in their life affects their performance in the ring. And vice-versa.

"Black & Bruised looks and feels like a next generation PUNCH OUT! It's about time."
-Nintendo Power

Dozens of facial expressions and insults

Strategize using 18 different power-ups



24 combos per character

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PlayStation.2

digital fiction™

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

ALTERED BEAST: GUARDIAN OF THE REALMS

WELCOME TO YOUR DOOM

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

Few gamers will ever forget the line, "Rise from your grave," if they played or saw the original Altered Beast. It's just one of those unforgettable moments, because, at the time, it was just one of things you rarely saw...umm...heard a game do. However, we all have to be honest with ourselves: The original Altered Beast is average, at best.

However, its place in gaming history is set, and this new edition to the Altered Beast universe gives gamers a nice tribute to play on Game Boy Advance. Overall, the layout of the title is the same: battle your way with all the punches and kicks you can unleash while you collect power-ups so that you can transform into a powerful beast just in time to face the level's final boss. There are over 10 different beasts you can transform into as you make your way through Guardian of the Realms' 15 levels of play. As an added bonus for the hardcores, you can even link up to play the game co-operatively with a friend, or get four copies together for an all-out brawl.

In the end, it still is what it is, but that's not a bad thing. The battle system is unexciting overall, but there is some mysterious draw to seeing all the different beast forms that keeps you playing. Players looking to relive memories from the Silver Age of gaming could do a lot worse than this. – **ANDY**

- **Concept:** Revisit a Sega Genesis classic for fun and profit
- **Graphics:** The character animations are stiff, but the overall look is much improved
- **Sound:** The one-liners from the original are still etched in the brains of gamers everywhere
- **Playability:** Punch, kick, and jump, but not necessarily in that order
- **Entertainment:** The combat is rather one-dimensional, but it still offers some fun
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

This isn't a case of a franchise that has aged poorly; it's a franchise that wasn't that good to begin with. The thrill of playing Altered Beast on the Genesis was largely due to the game's visuals, which were amazing for its time. Now, it's old news, and the new features that have been added to this sequel don't make up for the fact that its simplistic brawling formula just isn't that interesting.

MATT – 6

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (2-PLAYER CO-OPERATIVE STORY & UP TO 4-PLAYER BRAWL MODE)
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **DEVELOPER** WOW ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 14

GAME BOY ADVANCE QUICKIES

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

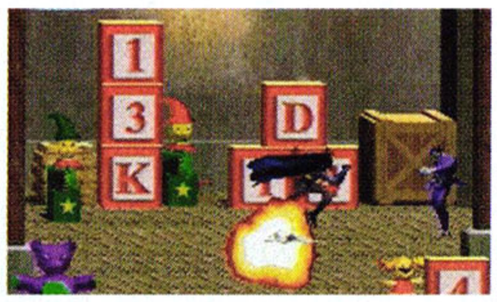
- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 14

It's a shame that Shinobi uses a password save, because I really would have dug this game if it wasn't for this blunder. The levels aren't terribly deep, but there are lots of things to collect and the fighting takes good timing if you hope to make it through. However, since The Revenge of Shinobi doesn't save your progress, you will find yourself either (A) repeating a lot of levels over and over, or (B) writing down tons of 16-letter passwords and spending more time entering them than playing. Not bad, but it could have been much better. – **ANDY**

EVERYONE E **6**

JUSTICE LEAGUE: INJUSTICE FOR ALL

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 18



Not even the world's mightiest of heroes can save this train wreck of a game from crashing and burning. Following the lead of most ill-fated licensed Game Boy Advance products, Justice League's gameplay is as monotonous as it is mindless. Sadly, it's yet another poorly executed side-scrolling brawler. Being able to step into the shoes of Batman, Wonder Woman, Superman, Hawkgirl, Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter, and The Flash brings about momentary thrills. However the tedious challenges and lack of vision in the overall design prevent it from being anything more than a waste of time and effort for you, and the development team responsible for this superhero-sized fiasco. – **REINER**

EVERYONE E **4.25**

STAR WARS: THE NEW DROID ARMY

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** THQ
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 9

The New Droid Army is actually a fairly ambitious project. The worlds are teeming with ambient life, the graphics are fairly respectable, and great attention was given to the fluidity of storytelling. The plot actually takes place shortly after the events in Episode II, with Anakin seeking revenge against the devious Count Dooku. My interest was definitely piqued, but sadly, I quickly grew disinterested with this title due to its problematic gameplay. The hack n' slash combat is decent, but your enemies' projectiles are impossible to evade, and you'll be forced into standing around for a good minute to let your health rejuvenate. It has potential, but doesn't deliver the gameplay necessities to warrant a purchase. – **REINER**

EVERYONE E **6**

GAME & WATCH: GALLERY 4

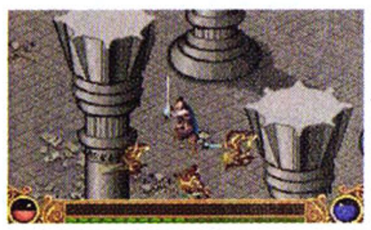
- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **RELEASE** OCTOBER 28

You get two versions of six old LCD Game & Watch titles on one cart – the original and an update with okay graphics. However, I really couldn't care less. These games might have been fun portables 20 years ago, but now they're too simple and boring. Only collectors and old-school gamers will find this interesting, but I'd imagine there's more value and nostalgia in owning the original Game & Watch units. – **CHET**

EVERYONE E **3**

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
- **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 12



Apart from some impressive movie footage, this dungeon crawler benefits little from its license. The magic and item systems are very cool, but the combat is not. I didn't expect it to be as complex as its bigger console brethren, but an extra attack button would be nice. Besides, I hate having to pull switches in Moria – it makes it more Tomb Raider than Tolkien. – **KATO**

TEEN T **6.75**

SAMURAI JACK: THE AMULET OF TIME

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE
- **PUBLISHER** BAM ENTERTAINMENT
- **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 11

I'm giving bonus points here. Samurai Jack: The Amulet of Time is a game based on an excellent cartoon that doesn't disappoint. If that wouldn't garner a bonus point, what would? While I have to quibble about the jumping controls being clunky; the action is well-paced, the graphics match the cartoon in lively colors and interesting layout, the story is respectable, and the sound is a nice touch. Jack isn't the ultimate, but it's still mighty good. – **LISA**

EVERYONE E **8**

DEFENDER

- **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER
- **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
- **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 5

Classic gamers, this package of Defenders is not for you. The new entry, XGP is slow on the draw and an absolute blight on the series. Worse yet, the original Defender contained here is made thoroughly joyless by obscure and counter-intuitive controls. The best of the bunch is the XG mode – which takes the classic game and adds updated backgrounds. The arcade died years ago, but this is surely an uncalled-for goober spit on its grave. – **KATO**

EVERYONE E **2**

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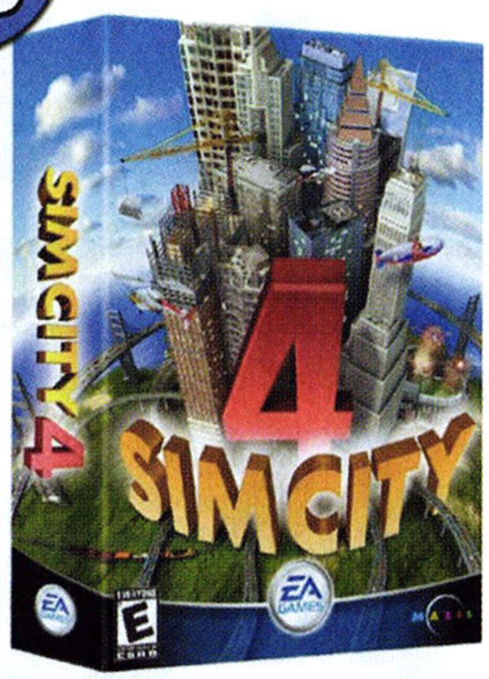

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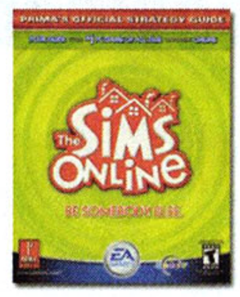

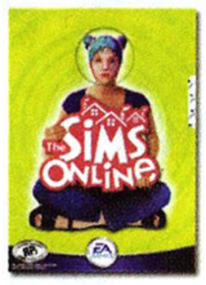

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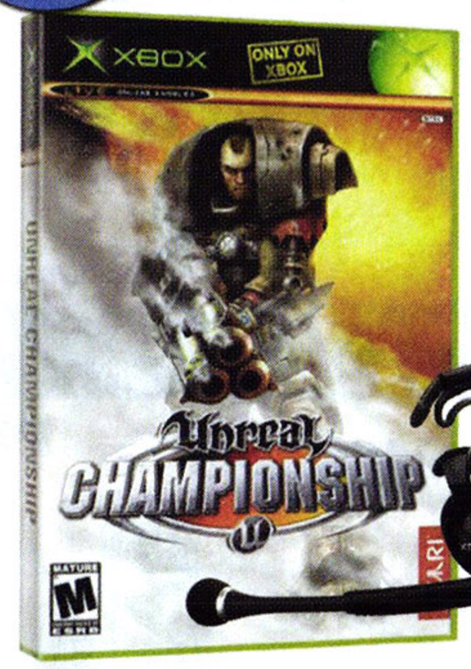

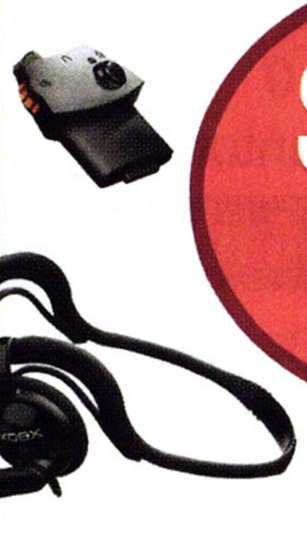

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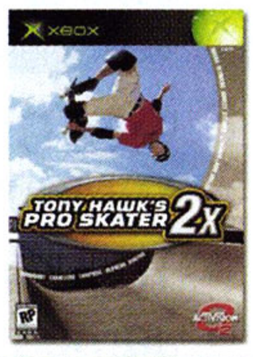

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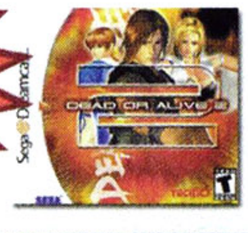

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- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- Dragon Ball Z: Budokai
- SOCOM: US Navy Seals
- Madden NFL 2003
- Rocky

Best Selling Nintendo GameCube Games

- Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker with Bonus CD
- Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
- Metroid Prime
- Resident Evil 0
- Star Fox Adventures

Best Selling Microsoft Xbox Games

- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
- Mech Assault
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
- James Bond 007: Nightfire
- Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Best Selling PC Games

- Dark Age of Camelo: Shrouded Isles
- The Sims Online
- Ultima Online: Age of Shadows
- Sim City 4
- Shadowbane with Bonus

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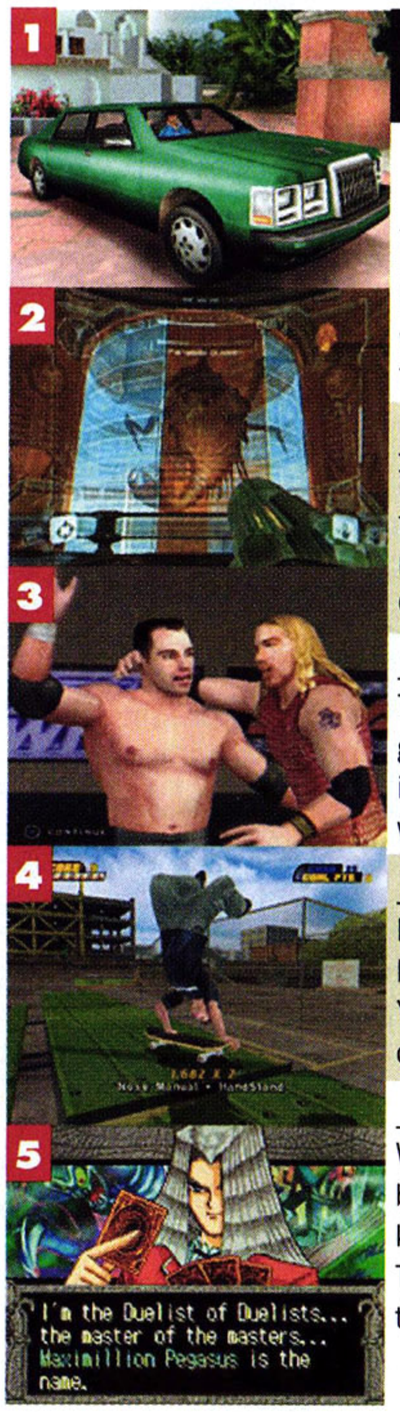
CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For November 2002 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	**Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**	PS2	10	Oct-02	$48

Did we overhype this game? Are twin 10s more than it deserves? Look at the figures, baby. This game is ranked number one for two months in a row, and we guess this trend will keep up until at least summertime. You can't see it, but we're doing the "Ha Ha, We Told You So" dance as we speak. Owwww!!! There goes that hip...

2	N/A	**Metroid Prime**	GC	9.5	Nov-02	$49

There's no denying that the GameCube's Metroid keeps the classic series in the forefront of gamers' minds. We've all checked out the vast world, with its breathtaking surroundings and odd wildlife. When you're done with that, though, why not explore a book? Or that dirty heckhole you call a bedroom? Sorry; your mom paid us to say that.

3	N/A	**WWE SmackDown: Shut Your Mouth**	PS2	7.5	Oct-02	$50

This year's SmackDown may not play differently from the three other titles, but the graphics and storylines push it above any other next-gen wrestling game out there. This is probably also the only place to see Rock or Stone Cold in the foreseeable future. So, whatcha gonna do, brother, when our 12-inch grass snakes run wild on you?

4	7	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4**	PS2	9.25	Oct-02	$48

Here he comes. Here comes Pro Skater. He's a demon on wheels. He's a demon and he's gonna be chasin' after someone. He's gaining on you so you better do more tricks. You better pull more 900s and kickflips. And when the odds are against you and there's dangerous jerks. You bet your life Pro Skater will skate on through. Go, Pro Skater! Go!

5	6	**Yu-Gi-Oh! The Eternal Dualist Soul**	GBA	N/A	Oct-02	$29

We've watched Yu-Gi-Oh's popularity soar, but even we're surprised to see its GBA game break into the top five. Is this destined to be the next Pokémon? It's in the cards. Every kid can relate to the identity crisis of Yugi and his no-nonsense alter-ego, Yami Yugi. That's the main reason we're lobbying for the U.S. government to start putting Prozac into the drinking water. Bottoms up!

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	4	**Madden NFL 2003**	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	$49
7	N/A	**Splinter Cell**	Xbox	8.75	Nov-02	$50
8	8	**The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers**	PS2	9.25	Oct-02	$49
9	N/A	**Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance**	PS2	9.5	Nov-02	$49
10	N/A	**Metroid Fusion**	GBA	10	Nov-02	$28
11	N/A	**Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**	GBA	N/A	Nov-02	$30
12	3	**Kingdom Hearts**	PS2	9.5	Sep-02	$49
13	11	**Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island**	GBA	8.75	Sep-02	$28
14	14	**Mario Party 4**	GC	3	Oct-02	$50
15	N/A	**Frogger Advance: Temple of the Frog**	GBA	N/A	Nov-01	$11
16	N/A	**Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**	PS2	6	Nov-02	$49
17	N/A	**ATV Offroad Fury 2**	PS2	9	Nov-02	$40
18	2	**NBA Live 2003**	PS2	8.75	Oct-02	$49
19	N/A	**James Bond 007: NightFire**	PS2	7.75	Nov-02	$49
20	N/A	**Super Mario Sunshine**	GC	9.75	Aug-02	$49

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

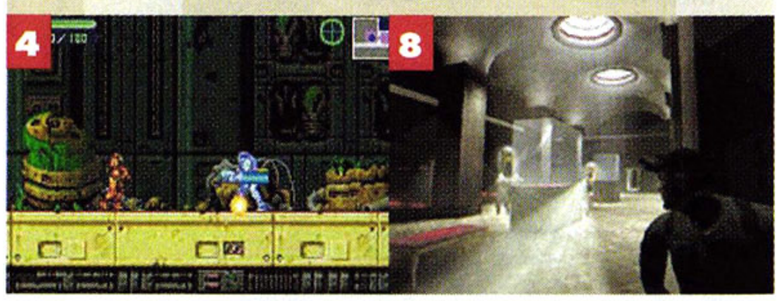
Source: Game Japan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Tales of Destiny 2**	PS2
2	N/A	**Pokémon Sapphire**	GBA
3	N/A	**SD Gundam G Generation-Neo**	PS2
4	N/A	**Rupan Sansei**	PS2
5	N/A	**Dark Cloud 2**	PS2
6	N/A	**Resident Evil 0**	GC
7	N/A	**Mask Rider: Dragon Rider**	PS
8	N/A	**Mario Party 4**	GC
9	N/A	**Taiko Friends Master**	PS2
10	N/A	**K-1 World Grand Prix 2002**	PS2

GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

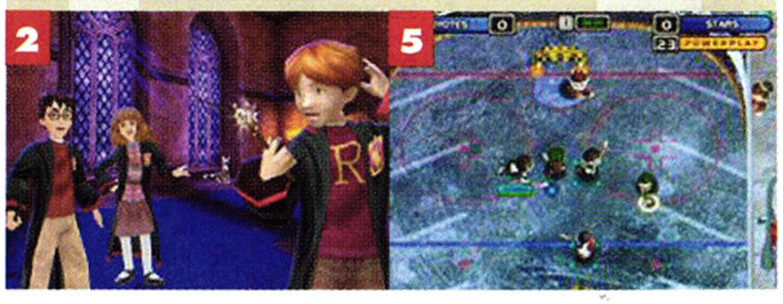
POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**The Getaway**	PS2
2	2	**Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**	PS2
3	4	**Metroid Prime**	GC
4	1	**Metroid Fusion**	GBA
5	N/A	**SimCity 4**	PC
6	N/A	**The Sims**	PS2
7	7	**Animal Crossing**	GC
8	N/A	**Splinter Cell**	Xbox
9	5	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4**	PS2
10	9	**The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers**	Xbox



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Sevice Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	1	**The Sims: Unleashed**	Sep-02	$29
2	N/A	**Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**	Nov-02	$28
3	4	**The Sims Deluxe**	Sep-02	$41
4	3	**RollerCoaster Tycoon 2**	Oct-02	$26
5	N/A	**Backyard Hockey**	Sep-02	$17
6	N/A	**Age of Mythology**	Nov-02	$42
7	N/A	**Zoo Tycoon**	Oct-01	$26
8	N/A	**Medal of Honor: Spearhead**	Nov-02	$31
9	N/A	**The Sims: Vacation**	Mar-02	$26
10	N/A	**Zoo Tycoon: Marine Mania**	Oct-02	$28



REVIEWS ARCHIVE FEBRUARY 2003

SMUGGLER'S RUN: WARZONES

■ **FORMAT** GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **REVIEWED** SEP-02

Warzones is essentially an enhanced version of Smuggler's Run 2, and most of the single-player missions are slightly tweaked versions of the ones from that PS2 title. Fortunately, the framerate has been bumped up to a full 60 fps, and some of the new countermeasures (like Acid Drop and Vertical Boost) add a new dimension to some of the vehicles. There's only one thing that prevents Smuggler's Run from joining the ranks of the elite – the lack of mission variety. Compared to the intense and demanding levels in Stuntman, it's a bit thin. However, accept Warzones for what it is and you'll have a fine time. – **MATT**

7.75

PLAYSTATION 2

Aggressive Inline	9.25	Jul-02
Armored Core 3	8	Sep-02
Army Men: RTS	6	May-02
ATV Offroad Fury 2	9	Jan-03
Barbarian	6	Aug-02
Blade II	6	Nov-02
Blood Omen 2	8	May-02
BloodRayne	8	Nov-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Britney's Dance Beat	7.75	Jul-02
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	8	Nov-02
Contra: Shattered Soldier	8.25	Dec-02
DDR Max	7.5	Dec-02
Dead to Rights	9.25	Jan-03
Defender	7.75	Nov-02
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	9	May-02
Dino Stalker	7.25	Oct-02
Disney Golf	7.75	Oct-02
Downforce	7	Jul-02
Dr. Muto	7.75	Dec-02
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	7.25	Jan-03
Drome Racers	7	Jan-03
Dropship: United Peace Force	7.5	Aug-02
Dual Hearts	8.5	Oct-02
Dynasty Tactics	8	Nov-02
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	6.75	Jan-03
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	5.5	May-02
Endgame	8.5	Jul-02
Evolution Skateboarding	5	Dec-02
F1 2002	8	Aug-02
FIFA 2003	8	Dec-02
Ferrari F355 Challenge	7	Nov-02
Fireblade	7.5	Jul-02
Freekstyle	8.5	Jul-02
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	7.75	Jun-02
Grandia Xtreme	7.5	Nov-02
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	10	Dec-02
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	2	Sep-02
GTC Africa	6.5	Sep-02
Gungrave	7	Oct-02
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	6	Jan-03
Haven: Call of the King	8.25	Jan-03
Headhunter	8	Jun-02
James Bond 007: NightFire	7.75	Jan-03
James Cameron's Dark Angel	5.25	Jan-03
Jet X20	7.5	Dec-02
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	7	Oct-02
Kingdom Hearts	9.5	Oct-02
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	7.5	Oct-02
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	5	Jul-02
Lego Soccer Mania	7	Sep-02
Lethal Skies	6	Jul-02
Looney Tunes Space Race	7	Aug-02
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The	3	Dec-02
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	9.25	Dec-02
Madden NFL 2003	9.5	Sep-02
Mark of Kri, The	9	Aug-02
Marvel Vs. Capcom 2	8.5	Dec-02
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	7.25	Sep-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	9	Jun-02
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	7.5	Sep-02
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	6.75	Jul-02
MLB Slugfest 2003	7.75	Aug-02
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation Vs. Zeon	8	Oct-02
Monster Jam: Maximum Destruction	6.5	Sep-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9.5	Jan-03
MX Superfly	7.25	Aug-02
Myst III: Exile	7.5	Oct-02
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	8.75	Nov-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Oct-02
NBA 2K3	9.25	Nov-02
NBA Live 2003	8.75	Nov-02
NBA Shootout 2003	6.75	Nov-02
NBA Starting Five	6.25	Dec-02
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	5.75	Jan-03
NCAA Final Four	1.25	Jan-03
NCAA March Madness 2003	8	Jan-03
Need For Speed Hot Pursuit 2	8.75	Oct-02
NFL 2K3	9.5	Sep-02
NFL Blitz 2003	5.25	Oct-02
NFL GameDay 2003	7.5	Sep-02
NHL 2003	7.75	Nov-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	8.75	Sep-02
Pac-Man Fever	7.5	Aug-02
Pro Race Driver	9.25	Nov-02
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	8	Dec-02
Ratchet & Clank	8.75	Dec-02
Rayman Arena	6.5	Nov-02
RedCard 2003	8	May-02
Red Faction II	8.75	Dec-02
Reign of Fire	6.25	Dec-02
Robotic Alchemic Drive	7.75	Dec-02
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	7	Aug-02
Run Like Hell	8	Nov-02
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	9	Dec-02
Savage Skies	5.5	Jun-02
Scooby Doo: Night of 100 Frights	6.5	Aug-02
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	7	May-02
Shifters	6.75	Jul-02
Shinobi	8	Dec-02
Shox	7.25	Nov-02
Silent Scope 3	7.75	Nov-02
Simpons Skateboarding	1	Dec-02
Sky Gunner	6.5	Jul-02
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	9.25	Nov-02
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	9.5	Sep-02
Spider-Man	7.75	Jun-02
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	5.75	Jan-03
Stitch: Experiment 626	6	Aug-02
Street Hoops	5.5	Sep-02
Stuntman	9.25	Jul-02
Sub Rebellion	7.5	Jan-03
Suikoden III	9.5	Dec-02
Summoner 2	9	Nov-02
Super Bust-A-Move 2	7.5	Dec-02
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	7	Nov-02
Tekken 4	9	Oct-02
Tennis 2K2	9.25	Sep-02
Terminator: Dawn of Fate, The	6	Oct-02
Test Drive	8.5	Jul-02
Thing, The	8.25	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.25	Dec-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9.25	Dec-02
Top Angler	7.5	May-02
Treasure Planet	7.75	Jan-03
Tribes: Aerial Assault	8	Nov-02
Turok: Evolution	7.5	Oct-02
Twisted Metal: Black Online	8.75	Sep-02
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	7.75	Nov-02
UFC Throwdown	8.25	Jun-02
V-Rally 3	8.75	Jan-03
Virtua Fighter 4	9.75	May-02
Way of the Samurai	7.5	Jul-02
Wild Arms 3	7.75	Nov-02
Wipeout Fusion	6.5	Jun-02
World Rally Championship	7.5	Jun-02
Wreckless	7.75	Dec-02
WTA Tour Tennis	5	Jun-02
WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth	7.5	Dec-02
X-Men Next Dimension	7.75	Dec-02

GAMECUBE

4X4 Evo 2	8	Oct-02
Aggressive Inline	8.75	Sep-02
Animal Crossing	9.5	Oct-02
Beach Spikers	5	Sep-02
Big Air Freestyle	6	Nov-02
Blood Omen 2	7.5	Jan-03
BloodRayne	7	Dec-02
Bomberman Generations	8	Aug-02
Burnout	7.75	Jun-02
Capcom Vs. SNK 2 EO	7.5	Nov-02
Cubivore	7.5	Nov-02
Darkened Skye	6.75	Dec-02
Dark Summit	7	May-02
Dead to Rights	8.75	Jan-03
Die Hard: Vendetta	6	Jan-03
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7	Jun-02
Egg Mania	7.75	Nov-02
ESPN MLS Extratime 2002	7.25	Jun-02
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	9.5	Aug-02
Evolution Worlds	7	Dec-02
FIFA 2003	8	Jan-03
Freekstyle	8.75	Sep-02
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	7.25	May-02
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	8	Nov-02
Home Run King	5	May-02
James Bond 007 In... Agent Under Fire	9.25	May-02
James Bond 007: NightFire	8	Jan-03
Knockout Kings 2003	7.5	Nov-02
Legends of Wrestling	7	Aug-02
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The	9.25	Jan-03
Lost Kingdoms	8	Jul-02
Madden NFL 2003	9.25	Sep-02
Mario Pary 4	3	Dec-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	8.75	Dec-02
Metroid Prime	9.5	Jan-03
Monsters, Inc. Scream Arena	5	Dec-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9	Jan-03
MX Superfly	7	Sep-02
Mystic Heroes	7.75	Oct-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Oct-02
NBA 2K2	9	May-02
NBA Street	9.25	May-02
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	7.5	Nov-02
NFL 2K3	9	Sep-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Outlaw Golf	7.75	Dec-02
Pac-Man Fever	7.25	Nov-02
Pac-Man World 2	5.5	Apr-02
Phantasy Star Online Version I & II	8	Jan-03
Rayman Arena	7	Nov-02
Resident Evil	9.25	Jun-02
Resident Evil 0	9.25	Dec-02
Robotech: Battlecry	8.5	Dec-02
Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian, The	3	Oct-02
Shrek: Extra Large	3	Jan-03
Smashing Drive	7	Apr-02
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	7.75	Sep-02
Soccer Slam	7.5	Apr-02
Sonic Mega Collection	8.75	Dec-02
Spider-Man	8	Jun-02
Spy Hunter	7.5	May-02
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	4.75	Jan-03
Star Fox Adventures	8.75	Nov-02
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	8.75	Jan-03
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	8.25	Dec-02
Super Mario Sunshine	9.75	Sep-02
Super Monkey Ball 2	7.75	Oct-02
Swingerz Golf	7.75	Jan-03
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	8	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.5	Dec-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9	Dec-02
Top Gun: Combat Zones	6.75	Nov-02
Turok: Evolution	7.75	Nov-02
Virtua Striker 2002	6.75	Jun-02
Whirl Tour	7.5	Nov-02
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	7.75	Jan-03
WWE Wrestlemania X8	6.5	Aug-02
X-Men: Next Dimension	7.75	Jan-03
Zapper: One Wicked Cricket	8.75	Dec-02
Zoocube	8.75	Aug-02

XBOX

2002 FIFA World Cup	8	Jun-02
Aggressive Inline	9.25	Sep-02
All-Star Baseball 2003	9	Apr-02
Antz Extreme Racing	5.5	Dec-02
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	8.5	Dec-02
Barbarian	7.25	Nov-02
Blade II	6	Nov-02
Blinx: Time Sweeper	7.75	Nov-02
Blood Omen 2	8.25	May-02
BloodRayne	7.75	Dec-02
BMX XXX	7.75	Jan-03
Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon	1	Sep-02
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	9	Oct-02
Burnout	7.75	Jun-02
Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO	8.5	Jan-03
Chase: Hollywood Stunt Driver	7	Oct-02
Circus Maximus	6	Apr-02
Colin McRae Rally 3	8.75	Dec-02
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	6	Nov-02
Conflict: Desert Storm	6	Nov-02
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex	7.25	May-02
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller	8.5	Aug-02
David Beckham Soccer	5.5	Aug-02
Dead to Rights	9.25	Sep-02
Deathrow	5	Jan-03
Dr. Muto	8	Dec-02
Dragon's Lair 3D	7.75	Jan-03
Dynasty Warriors 3	7.25	Oct-02
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, The	7.5	Jul-02
Enclave	7.5	Aug-02
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	6.75	Apr-02
Fatal Frame	9	Jan-03
Ghost Recon	8.5	Dec-02
Gun Metal	6	Oct-02
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	8.5	Dec-02
House of the Dead III, The	6.5	Nov-02
Hunter: The Reckoning	8	Jul-02
James Bond 007: NightFire	7.75	Jan-03
James Bond 007 In... Agent Under Fire	9.25	May-02
Kakuto Chojin	6.25	Jan-03
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	8.5	Oct-02
Knockout Kings 2002	8.75	Apr-02
Legends of Wrestling	7	Jul-02
Madden NFL 2003	9.5	Sep-02
MechAssault	8.75	Dec-02
Medal of Honor: Frontline	8.75	Dec-02
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	9.25	Jan-03
Monopoly Party	4	Dec-02
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	9.5	Jan-03
MotoGP	8	Jul-02
NASCAR Thunder 2003	9	Nov-02
NBA 2Night 2002	6.25	Jun-02
NBA Inside Drive 2002	8.25	Apr-02
NBA Inside Drive 2003	7.5	Nov-02
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	8.5	Nov-02
New Legends	7	Apr-02
NFL 2K3	9.5	Sep-02
NFL Blitz 2002	5	May-02
NFL Fever 2003	7	Sep-02
NHL 2003	7.75	Nov-02
NHL 2K3	9.25	Dec-02
NHL Hitz 2003	8.75	Nov-02
Outlaw Golf	7.75	Jul-02
Panzer Dragoon Orta	8.25	Jan-03
Phantom Crash	7.5	Jan-03
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	7.5	Jun-02
Prisoner of War	7	Nov-02
Quantum Redshift	6	Nov-02
RalliSport Challenge	8	Apr-02
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	8	Jan-03
Robotech: Battlecry	8.5	Nov-02
Rocky	7	Dec-02
Seablade	4	Jan-03
Sega GT 2002	8.25	Oct-02
Serious Sam	9	Dec-02
Shenmue II	8	Jan-03
Shrek: Super Party	3.25	Jan-03
Smashing Drive	6.5	May-02
Soccer Slam	7.25	Sep-02
Spider-Man	8.25	Jun-02
Splashdown	9.25	Aug-02
Splinter Cell	8.75	Jan-03
Spy Hunter	7.75	May-02
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	9	Dec-02
Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter	8.5	Jun-02
Steel Battalion	9.5	Dec-02
Street Hoops	5.5	Sep-02
Superman: The Man of Steel	4.75	Jan-03
Terminator: Dawn of Fate, The	6	Oct-02
Test Drive	8.5	Jul-02
Thing, The	8.25	Nov-02
TimeSplitters 2	8.5	Dec-02
ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth	6	Nov-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	9.75	Apr-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	9	Dec-02
Totaled	4	Jul-02
Total Immersion Racing	6.5	Jan-03
Transworld Snowboarding	6.5	Jan-03
Triple Play 2002	4	Apr-02
Turok: Evolution	7.5	Oct-02
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	6.5	Nov-02
Unreal Championship	8.75	Jan-03
Whacked	2	Dec-02
Whiteout	6.25	Dec-02
World Series Baseball	8	Jul-02
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	7	Apr-02

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

■ **FORMAT** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **REVIEWED** JUN-02

While I applaud EA for giving us such mid-year advancements, the game has also taken a step back. Even on the fastest speed (which I recommend right away), the title is sluggish at times and can exhibit questionable AI – particularly around the goal. Also, headers aren't as easy as in FIFA 2002, even if sweet new juggling moves have been added. This FIFA adds and subtracts its plus and minuses in a shell game that has me slightly confused on whether to buy it or not (since I already have the other one). Will the U.S.'s success in June push me over the edge? – **KATO**

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PC

Age of Mythology	9.5	Jan-03
Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne	8.5	Aug-02
Aliens Versus Predator 2: Primal Hunt	8	Oct-02
Austerlitz: Napoleon's Greatest Victory	7.25	Sep-02
Battlefield 1942	9	Nov-02
Celtic Kings: Rage of War	7	Nov-02
Command & Conquer: Renegade	8.25	Apr-02
Cultures 2: Gates of Asgard	7.75	Nov-02
Dark Planet: Battle for Natrolis	7.5	May-02
Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza	8	May-02
Divine Divinity	7.75	Dec-02
Dungeon Siege	9.25	Jun-02
Earth & Beyond	9.25	Dec-02
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, The	9	Jun-02
Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom	9.25	Sep-02
EverQuest: The Planes of Power	9.5	Jan-03
Freedom Force	8.75	May-02
Global Operations	8	May-02
Grand Theft Auto III	9.5	Aug-02
Heroes of Might and Magic IV	8.75	Jun-02
Icewind Dale II	9.5	Oct-02
Mafia	9.25	Nov-02
MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries	9.5	Jan-03
Medal of Honor: Spearhead	8.25	Jan-03
Medieval: Total War	9.25	Oct-02
Neverwinter Nights	8.75	Aug-02
No One Lives Forever 2: A Spy In H.A.R.M.'s Way	9	Dec-02
RollerCoaster Tycoon 2	8.5	Dec-02
Sims: Vacation, The	8	Jun-02
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	7	Jul-02
Spring Break	7.5	Nov-02
Star Trek: Bridge Commander	7	Apr-02
Star Trek: Starfleet Command II	9.25	Jan-03
Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	9.5	May-02
Stronghold: Crusader	8.75	Dec-02
Sum of All Fears, The	7.5	Jul-02
Syberia	6.75	Nov-02
Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror	5	Jul-02
Tropico: Paradise Island	7.5	Apr-02
Unreal Tournament	9.5	Dec-02
Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	9.5	Sep-02
Warlords: Battlecry II	7.75	May-02

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Aero the Acrobat	9.25	Sep-02
Aggressive Inline	7.75	Dec-02
Airforce Delta Storm	6.75	Dec-02
All-Star Baseball 2003	8	Jul-02
Arcade Advanced	7.5	Jun-02
Atari Anniversary Advance	7	Jun-02
ATV: Quad Power Racing	6	Dec-02
Blender Brothers	7.5	Jun-02
Bomberman Max 2: Red & Blue Advance	8	Aug-02
Breath of Fire II	8.75	Apr-02
Britney's Dance Beat	8	Jul-02
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	9.5	Oct-02
Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX	6.75	Dec-02
Crash Bandicoot: The Huge Adventure	8.5	Apr-02
Crash Bandicoot 2: N-Tranced	7.5	Jan-03
Dark Arena	7	Apr-02
Desert Strike Advance	7.5	Jul-02
Dinotopia: The Timestone Pirates	6	Jun-02
Disney's Lilo & Stitch	8	Aug-02
Doom II	8.5	Dec-02
Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy Of Goku	7.5	May-02
Driver 2 Advance	7.75	Nov-02
Duke Nukem Advance	8.5	Oct-02
Earthworm Jim 2	6.5	Sep-02
Egg Mania	8	Oct-02
Frogger: The Great Quest	5.5	Jun-02
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	7.75	Dec-02
Guilty Gear X: Advance Edition	8	Aug-02
High Heat Major League Baseball 2003	7.25	Apr-02
Ice Age	6	May-02
Kirby: Nightmare in Dreamland	8.75	Jan-03
Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, The	9.25	Jan-03
Lego Bionicle: Matoran Adventures	7.75	Nov-02
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The	5	Dec-02
Masters of the Universe: He-Man - Power of Grayskull	3.75	Jan-03
Mega Man Battle Network 2	8.75	Jun-02
Mega Man Zero	8.25	Aug-02
Metroid Fusion	10	Jan-03
Mike Tyson Boxing	5	May-02
Monster Jam: Maximum Destruction	6	Apr-02
Monster Rancher Advance 2	8.5	Jan-03
Motocross Maniacs Advance	8.25	Apr-02
MotoGP	5	Jun-02
NASCAR Heat 2002	7.5	Jul-02
NBA Jam 2002	1.25	May-02
Peter Pan: Return To Never Land	3	May-02
Pinball of the Dead, The	9	Jul-02
Punch King	3	Aug-02
Puyo Pop	8.5	May-02
Ripping Friends: The World's Most Manly Men, The	4.75	Dec-02
Robopon 2: Ring Version	7	May-02
Robotech: The Macross Saga	8.5	Jan-03
Rocky	7.5	Jan-03
Rogue Spear	7.75	May-02
Salt Lake 2002	5	Apr-02
Scorpion King: Sword of Osiris, The	5	Jun-02
Sega Smash Pack	7	Dec-02
Sonic Advance	8.5	Apr-02
Spider-Man	8.5	Jun-02
Spy Hunter	7.5	Jun-02
Spyro 2: Season of Flame	7.5	Dec-02
SSX Tricky	4	Dec-02
Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones	1	Jul-02
Star X	6.75	Jul-02
Street Fighter Alpha 3	9.5	Sep-02
Super Ghouls N' Ghosts	8.5	Nov-02
Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2	9.5	Apr-02
Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis	8	Apr-02
Tomb Raider: The Prophecy	6.5	Jan-03
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	9	Apr-02
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	8	Jan-03
Virtua Tennis	7.75	Jan-03
Wacky Stackers	6.5	Jan-03
Wolfenstein 3D	7	Jul-02
WTA Tour Tennis	7.75	Sep-02
XXX	3	Oct-02
Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3	8.75	Nov-02
Zoocube	8.5	Jul-02

MAFIA

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS ■ **REVIEWED** NOV-02

Another mark of a title that stands above the rest is the writing. Whoever decided to spend some cash on a good script for Mafia should be canonized; I was completely engrossed by the plot and the cutscenes. I never once had one of those sphincter-clenching "Oh, c'mon" moments like I did yesterday as I watched *Orange County*. This game does suffer from some control difficulties while in and out of vehicles, but I'm guessing that you'll be too enthralled with the experience to care. Do yourself a favor and pick this game up before it sells out – because it most definitely will. – **KRISTIAN**

9.25

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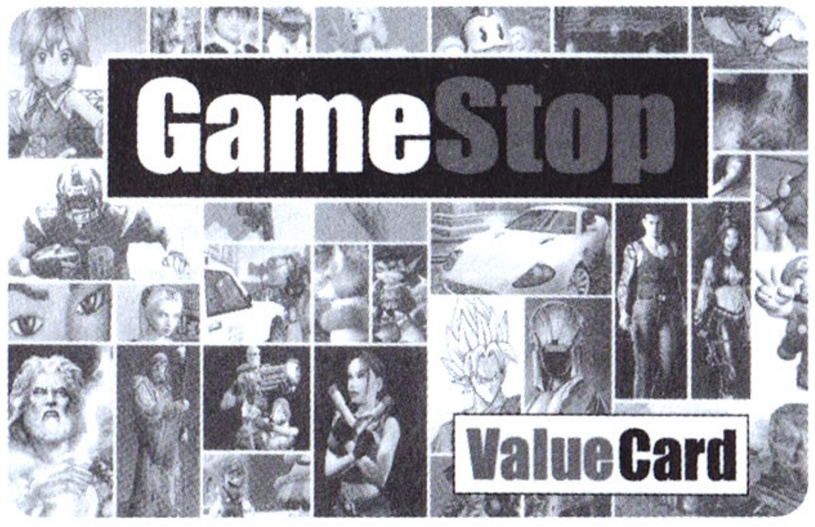

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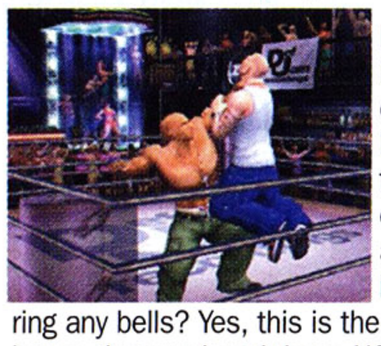
PLAYSTATION 2

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
2/11/03	.hack	Bandai
3/17/03	Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega
3/3/03	Air Force Delta 3	Konami
3/25/03	Auto Modellista	Capcom
3/4/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
1/21/03	Battle Engine Aquila	Infogrames
2/4/03	BattleBots	THQ
1/28/03	Black & Bruised	Majesco
3/3/03	Bomberman Kart	Konami
2/18/03	Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom
2/3/03	Cabela's Off Road Adventure	Activision
4/15/03	Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games
3/4/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Chop Lifter: Search and Rescue	Xicat Interactive
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft

DEF JAM VENDETTA

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 4 (PS2), MARCH 10 (GC)



EA Big combines the spirit of independent wrestling with the equally gritty hip hop culture for Def Jam Vendetta. First, let's talk about the engine, which is done by AKI. Who's AKI, you ask? Do the names WCW Revenge and WWF No Mercy ring any bells? Yes, this is the same Japanese development house that produced those N64 classics, along with Virtual Pro Wrestling 2 in Japan – widely regarded as the best wrestling game ever (sorry, NES Pro Wrestling fans). This means that the action will be extremely authentic, and the gameplay will be insanely deep. It's apparent this is a wrestling game first, and a rap music vehicle second.

4/22/03	Clock Tower 3	Capcom
3/4/03	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
2/10/03	Dark Cloud 2	Sony
3/4/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts
1/28/03	Devil May Cry 2	Capcom
3/11/03	Dragon's Lair 3D	Encore Software
5/27/03	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames
3/17/03	Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei
2/17/03	Elder Scrolls Adventures	Bethesda Softworks
5/13/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
1/28/03	Everblue 2	Capcom
2/11/03	EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony
3/17/03	Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
3/3/03	Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Titus
5/15/03	Fear Effect: Inferno	Eidos
1/21/03	Fisherman's Challenge	Konami
4/1/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway
3/18/03	Frogger Beyond	Konami
1/21/03	Getaway, The	Sony
5/10/03	Gladius	LucasArts
3/18/03	Gunfighter 2: Return of Jesse James	Ubi Soft
2/11/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/17/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperors Tomb	LucasArts
3/18/03	Jane's Air Force	Xicat Interactive
1/21/03	JoJo's Bizarre Adventure	Capcom
2/4/03	Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Kengo 2	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	King of Route 66	Sega
3/11/03	Mafia	Take 2
4/1/03	Malice	Vivendi Universal
3/4/03	Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames
2/11/03	Midnight Club II	Rockstar Games
3/11/03	MLB 2004	Sony
3/18/03	Moto GP 3	Namco
3/3/03	Moto-X	Konami
2/10/03	My Street	Sony
2/18/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
2/11/03	Pride FC	THQ
2/10/03	Primal	Sony
2/18/03	PTO IV	Koei
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Red Dead Revolver	Capcom
3/25/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
3/3/03	Robocop	Titus
3/17/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
3/4/03	Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder	Activision
4/15/03	Silent Hill 3	Konami
3/3/03	Smash Cars	Metro3D
3/18/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Sum of All Fears	Ubi Soft
3/3/03	Tankers	Titus
3/4/03	Tenchu 3: Wrath of Heaven	Activision
2/25/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
2/17/03	Toon Shade Racing	Xicat Interactive
2/4/03	Vexx	Acclaim
3/11/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
2/10/03	World Tour Soccer 2003	Sony
3/11/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
2/25/03	Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Willie Zur Macht	Namco
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelist of the Roses	Konami
3/11/03	Zone of the Enders: 2nd Runner	Konami

PSONE

2/18/03	Big Strike Bowling	Gotham Games
2/17/03	Black & White	Bethesda Softworks
3/11/03	Bratz	Ubi Soft
4/15/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO

GAMECUBE

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
4/1/03	1080 White Storm	Nintendo
3/3/03	Army Men: Air Combat	3DO
3/25/03	Army Men: Sarge's War	3DO
3/4/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
2/4/03	BattleBots	THQ
1/28/03	Black & Bruised	Majesco
4/3/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	City Racer	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Conflict: Desert Storm	Gotham Games
2/4/03	Cubix Robots for Everyone: Showdown	3DO
3/10/03	Def Jam Vendetta	Electronic Arts
5/27/03	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames
3/11/03	Enclave	Conspiracy Games
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
4/1/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway
1/28/03	Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
5/10/03	Gladius	LucasArts
3/3/03	Haven: Call of the King	Midway
4/15/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/24/03	Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker	Nintendo
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames
2/18/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Rally Championship	Encore Software
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction II	THQ
3/17/03	RTX Red Rock	LucasArts
3/4/03	Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder	Activision
1/28/03	Skies of Arcadia Legends	Sega
3/18/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/3/03	Tankers	Titus
3/4/03	Top Angler II	Xicat Interactive
2/4/03	Vexx	Acclaim
1/31/03	Wario World	Nintendo
3/11/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
3/11/03	WWE Crush Hour	THQ
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft

XBOX

3/4/03	Batman: Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
1/21/03	Battle Engine Aquila	Infogrames
1/28/03	Black Stone: Magic and Steel	Xicat Interactive
4/8/03	Brute Force	Microsoft
2/11/03	Capcom vs. SNK 2 EO	Capcom
3/4/03	Chessmaster	Ubi Soft
2/4/03	Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
1/16/03	Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Tecmo
2/3/03	Dino Crisis 3	Capcom
4/1/03	Dronez	Metro3D
5/27/03	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Infogrames
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames
3/17/03	Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ
3/3/03	Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Titus
3/4/03	Fila Tennis Champions	Xicat Interactive
4/1/03	Freaky Flyers	Midway
3/17/03	Fuel	Dreamcatcher
5/10/03	Gladius	LucasArts
3/3/03	Haven: Call of the King	Midway
2/11/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
2/17/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperors Tomb	LucasArts
3/3/03	Kung Fu Chaos	Microsoft
3/18/03	Lamborghini	Majesco
3/25/03	Loose Cannon	Ubi Soft
5/1/03	Mafia	Take 2
4/1/03	Malice	Vivendi Universal
3/11/03	Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom
2/17/03	Mercedes Benz World Racing	TDK Mediactive
3/11/03	Micromachines	Infogrames

TRON 2.0

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** DISNEY INTERACTIVE/MONOLITH ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 3

All of the stops are being pulled out for Tron 2.0, as Syd Mead, who was a concept designer for the film, is back redesigning units and structures for the game. Additionally, Tron wouldn't be Tron without the man himself, Bruce Boxleitner. Bruce has signed on to reprise his role as Alan Bradley – or as he's known in the ether – Tron. As if this isn't exciting enough, Tron 2.0 will be staying extremely close to the art direction in the film. You can tell from the screenshots that the Tron team over at Monolith has been paying careful attention to the look and feel of the Tron universe.

3/3/03	Midtown Madness 3	Microsoft
5/1/03	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Infogrames
4/1/03	Moto-X	Konami
1/28/03	Motor Trend Lotus Challenge	Xicat Interactive
2/25/03	Murakomo: Mech Hunter	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts
3/3/03	Ninja Gaiden	Tecmo
3/4/03	Operation Flashpoint	Infogrames
2/18/03	Pro Race Driver	Infogrames
3/4/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/4/03	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
3/25/03	Red Faction II	THQ
3/18/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
3/3/03	Robocop	Titus
3/17/03	Sea Dogs II	Bethesda Softworks
3/3/03	Sergent Cruise	Titus
3/4/03	Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder	Activision
5/1/03	Shayde	Metro3D
3/4/03	Sniper: Path of Vengeance	Xicat Interactive
2/27/03	Stake	Metro3D
2/17/03	Star Wars: Knights of Old Republc	LucasArts
2/11/03	State of Emergency	Rockstar Games

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor
4/1/03	Suikoden III	Konami
3/3/03	Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus	Microsoft
3/4/03	Top Angler II	Xicat Interactive
3/3/03	Top Gun	Titus
2/4/03	Vexx	Acclaim
3/11/03	World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega
3/4/03	XIII	Ubi Soft

PC

1/20/03	1503 A.D. The New World	Electronic Arts
1/27/03	1914: The Great War	JoWood Productions
2/3/03	American Conquest	CDV
1/27/03	Aquanox 2: Revelation	JoWood Productions
2/3/03	Bandits: Phoenix Rising	Tri-Synergy
3/11/03	BloodRayne	Majesco
2/18/03	Castles & Catapults	Infogrames Interactive
1/27/03	Cold Zero	JoWood Productions
2/11/03	Command & Conquer: Generals	Electronic Arts
5/6/03	Crusader Kings	Strategy First

UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (ONLINE TBA)
■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 4

Unreal II is the sequel to Unreal – the single-player FPS adventure that started everything. The quest will consist of 35 levels within 13 missions. Fortunately, Legend will spend considerable time ensuring that each area presents enough unique situations to make gameplay interesting throughout. The missions will range from typical heart-thumping free-for-alls and escorting objectives to command based squad fights! Each level will take place in different environments; some will be indoor and outdoor scenarios, and one will actually put you inside of a large, living organism!

3/12/03	Curse of Atlantis: Thorgal's Quest	Dreamcatcher
2/18/03	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Electronic Arts
2/25/03	Devastation	Hip Interactive, Inc
2/25/03	Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	Digital Leisure
3/11/03	Enclave	Conspiracy Games
5/15/03	Enter The Matrix	Infogrames Interactive
3/4/03	Eve Online	Vivendi Universal
2/4/03	Fire Department	Infogrames Interactive
4/1/03	Freelancer	Microsoft
4/1/03	Ghostmaster	Vivendi Universal
1/27/03	Gothic II	JoWood Productions
2/13/03	Harbinger	Dreamcatcher
3/25/03	Harpoon IV	Ubi Soft
5/15/03	Hidden & Dangerous II	Talonsoft
1/22/03	Highland Warriors	Data Becker
4/8/03	Humvee Assault	Infogrames Interactive
2/18/03	IL-2 Sturmovik Forgotten Battles	Ubi Soft
2/17/03	Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts
2/11/03	Inquisition	Strategy First
3/11/03	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Vivendi Universal
4/15/03	Lion Heart	Vivendi Universal
3/11/03	Lock On Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft
2/4/03	NASCAR Racing 2003 Season	Vivendi Universal
3/25/03	Neverwinter Nights: The Shadows of Undrentide	Infogrames Interactive
3/4/03	Planetside	Sony
2/28/03	Post Mortem	Dreamcatcher
2/17/03	Praetorians	Eidos
2/25/03	Project IGI2: Covert Strike	Codemasters
2/25/03	Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft
3/3/03	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory	Activision
2/3/03	Rise of Nations	Microsoft
1/21/03	Serious Sam Gold	Global Star Software
2/3/03	Shadowbane Online	Ubi Soft
1/22/03	Sherlock Holmes: The Mystery Of the Mummy	Dreamcatcher
1/31/03	Sims: Blue Print Pro, The	Abacus
2/17/03	Soldier Of Fortune 2: Gold	Activision
2/25/03	Space Ace	Digital Leisure
1/21/03	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Star Trek Elite Force 2	Activision
3/17/03	Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts
5/1/03	Starsky & Hutch	Vivendi Universal
2/3/03	State Of Emergency	Rockstar Games
2/17/03	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Eidos
3/3/03	Tron 2.0	Disney/Monolith
4/15/03	Tropico 2: Pirate Cove	Take 2
2/11/03	Ultima Online: Age Of Shadows	Electronic Arts
2/4/03	Unreal II: The Awakening	Infogrames Interactive
2/25/03	Vietcong	Take 2
2/11/03	World Of Outlaws Sprint Car Racing 2	Infogrames Interactive

GAME BOY ADVANCE

3/4/03	Baldur's Gate	Ubi Soft
3/11/03	Bratz	Ubi Soft
3/17/03	Crazy Taxi: Catch a Ride	THQ
3/18/03	Crushed Baseball 2004	Bam Entertainment
2/4/03	Daredevil	Encore Software
4/1/03	Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
2/4/03	GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing	THQ
3/18/03	High Heat Baseball 2004	3DO
3/17/03	Jet Grind Radio	THQ
2/4/03	Jungle Book	Ubi Soft
3/18/03	Mega Man and Bass	Capcom
3/4/03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubi Soft
2/11/03	Samurai Jack: The Amulet of Ti	Bam Entertainment
4/15/03	Sega Arcade Gallery	THQ
3/18/03	Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom
2/3/03	Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames
2/5/03	Wings	Metro3D
3/25/03	Woody Woodpecker: Crazy Castle 5	Kemco
3/4/03	Worms Blast	Ubi Soft
2/18/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dungeon Dice Monsters	Konami
3/18/03	Yu-Gi-Oh! Stairway to the Destined	Konami

SECRET ACCESS

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX

CODE OF THE MONTH

James Bond 007: Nightfire

Select the Codenames option at the Main Menu. Enter a code at the Secret Unlocks screen. Exit and begin.

All Gadget Upgrades – Q LAB
All Multiplayer Options – GAMEROOM
Alpine Escape Level – POWDER
Camera Upgrade – SHUTTER
Chain Reaction Level – MELTDOWN
Countdown Level – BLASTOFF
Deep Descent Level – AQUA
Double Cross Level – BONSAI
Enemies Vanquished Level – TRACTION
Equinox Level – VACUUM
Golden P2K – AU P2K
Golden PP7 – AU PP7
Grapple Upgrade – LIFTOFF
Island Infiltration Level – PARADISE
Laser Upgrade – PHOTON
Multiplayer All Characters – PARTY
Multiplayer Assassination Option – TARGET
Multiplayer Baron Samedi – VOODOO
Multiplayer Bond Spacesuit – ZERO G
Multiplayer Bond Tuxedo – BLACKTIE
Multiplayer Christmas Jones – NUCLEAR
Multiplayer Demolition Option – TNT
Multiplayer Drake – NUMBER 1
Multiplayer Elektra King – SLICK
Multiplayer GoldenEye Strike Option – ORBIT
Multiplayer Goldfinger – MIDAS
Multiplayer Jaws – DENTAL
Multiplayer Max Zorin – BLIMP
Multiplayer Mayday – BADGIRL
Multiplayer Nick Nack – BITESIZE
Multiplayer Oddjob – BOWLER
Multiplayer Pussy Galore – CIRCUS
Multiplayer Renard – HEADCASE
Multiplayer Scaramanga – ASSASSIN
Multiplayer Wai Lin – MARTIAL
Multiplayer Xenia Onatopp – JANUS
Nightshift Level – HIGHRISE
P2K Upgrade – P2000
Phoenix Fire Level – FLAME

Mona Lott
New York, NY

BMX XXX

Go to Acclaim Extras at the Main Menu. Now access the Cheats option and enter the following codes.

All Bikes – 65 Sweet Rides
All Levels – XXX RATED CHEAT
All Movies – CHAMPAGNE ROOM
Bronx, NYC 1 FMV – LAPDANCE
Bronx, NYC 2 FMV – STRIPTEASE
Bronx, NYC 3 FMV – FREESAMPLE
Dam 1 FMV – BOING
Dam 2 FMV – Enter THONG
Dam Level – THATDAMLEVEL
Final Movie FMV – DDUULRRLDRSQUARE
Fluffy Bunny Mode – FLUFFYBUNNY
Hellkitty's Bikes – HELLKITTY487
Itchi's Bikes – ITCHI594
Joyride's Bikes – JOYRIDE18
Karma's Bikes – KARMA311
La'tey's Bikes – LATEY411
Las Vegas 1 FMV – HIGHBEAMS
Las Vegas 2 FMV – TASSLE
Las Vegas Level – SHOWMETHEMONEY
Launch Pad 69 1 FMV – IFLINGPOO
Launch Pad 69 2 FMV – PEACH
Launch Pad 69 Level – SHOWMETHEMONKEY
Manuel's Bikes – MANUEL415
Mika's Bikes – MIKA362436
More Speed – Z AXIS
Nutter's Bikes – NUTTER290
Play as Amish Boy – ELECTRICITYBAD
Rampage Skatepark 2 FMV – BURLESQUE
Rampage Skatepark Level – IOWARULES
Random Introduction – XXXINTRO
Rave's Bikes – RAVE10
Roots Level – UNDERGROUND
Sheep Hills 1 FMV – ONEDOLLAR
Sheep Hills 2 FMV – 69
Sheep Hills Level – BAABAA
Skeeter's Bikes – SKEETER666
Stage Select – MASS HYSTERIA
Syracuse 1 FMV – FUZZYKITTY
Syracuse 2 FMV – MICHAELHUNT
Syracuse Level – BOYBANDSSUCK
Tripledub's Bikes – TRIPLEDUB922
Twan's Bikes – TWAN187
UGP Roots Jam 2 FMV – BOOTYCALL
Visible Gap Mode – PARABOLIC

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

Minority Report

Go to the Cheats menu under the Special option and enter the following codes. However, if you even think of entering these codes, you're committing pre-crime, in which case the Activision team will hunt you down and place you in video game hell – an eternity of playing Blade and Blade II!

All Combos – NINJA
All FMV Sequences – DIRECTOR
All Weapons – STRAPPED
Armor – STEELUP
Baseball Bat – SLUGGER
Bouncy Men – BOUNZMEN
Cluttered Locations – CLUTZ
Concept Art – SKETCHPAD
Do Not Select – DONOTSEL
Dramatic Finish – STYLIN
Ending Sequence – WIMP
Extra Health – BUTTERUP
Free Aim – FPSSTYLE
Invincibility – LRGARMS
Level Select – PASSKEY
Level Skip – QUITER
Maximum Ammunition – MRJUAREZ
Maximum Damage – SPINACH
Pain Arenas – MAXIMUMHURT
Play as Clown – SCARYCLOWN
Play as Convict – JAILBREAK
Play as GI – GNRLINFANTRY
Play as Lizard – HISSSS
Play as Moseley – BIGLIPS
Play as Nara – WEIGHTGAIN
Play as Nikki – HAIRLOSS
Play as Robot – MRROBOTO
Play as Superhero – SUPERJOHN
Play as Zombie – IAMSODEAD
Rag Doll – CLUMSY
Slow Motion Button – SLIZOMIZO

"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN

GAMECUBE/XBOX

Star Wars: Jedi Outcast

Go to the Cheat menu to enter these codes. You know, cheaters never win! A true Jedi never cheats. Are you some kind of Jedi Wannabe?

All FMV Sequences – FLICKY
All Multiplayer Characters – PEEPS
Bonus Level – DEMO
Invincibility – BUBBLE
Start With Lightsaber – FUDGE
Unlimited Ammunition – BISCUIT
Unlock Levels 1 to 7 – CHERRY

"Joystick Juggalo"
Lansing, MI

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

ATV Offroad Fury 2

Go to Profile Editor at the Main Menu and then choose Unlock Items. Select Cheat and enter the following codes. A message will confirm a correct entry.

1,000 Profile Points – GIMMEPTS
Aggressive CPU ATVs – EATDIRT
All ATVs – SHOWROOM
All Championship Events – GOLDCUPS
All Equipment – THREADS
All Games – GAMEON
All Tracks – TRLBLAZR
Disable Wrecks – FLYPAPER
Master Code – IGIVEUP
San Jacinto Isles – GABRIEL

"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen soiling Reiner's car in the freezing winter night)

The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers

To enter these codes, pause during a game, hold all four shoulder buttons, and input the following sequence. The sound of a sword will indicate a correct entry. Also note that except for the codes that boost your level, every other code can only be enabled after you complete the game.

All Combo Upgrades – △, ○, △, ○
Devastating Attacks – □ (x2), ○ (x2) Note: Hold Triangle during battles to do devastating attacks.
Invincibility – △, □, ✕, ○
Level 6 Skills – □, Left, □, Left
Level 8 Skills – ✕ (x2), Down (x2).
Slow Motion – △, ○, ✕, □
Small Enemies – △ (x2), ✕ (x2)
Unlimited Missile Weapons – □, ○, ✕, △

"Tokoya"
Unco, Japan

Contra: Shattered Soldier

We commend you if you actually manage to achieve an A or S ranking on some of these wonderfully hard levels.

Contra vs. Puppy – Complete the game with an S rank.
Database – Complete the game with a B or C rank under the normal difficulty setting.
Final Boss Training Mode – Defeat the final boss during the normal game.
Gallery – Complete the game with an A rank under the normal difficulty setting.
Level 5 Training Mode – Complete level 5 during the game under the normal difficulty setting.
Level 6 – Complete level 5 with an A rank.
Level 6 Training Mode – Complete level 6 during the normal game.
Level 7 – Complete level 6 with an A rank.
Level 7 Training Mode – Complete level 7 during the normal game.
Return – Complete level 7 up to the credits with an A rank.
Satellite Weapon – Complete level 5 with a B or C rank.
Theater – Complete the game on Normal. Your rank determines how much of the theater is unlocked.
Triumphant Return – Complete level 7 including after the credits with an A rank.

"The Armchair Quarterback"
Canton, OH

Simpsons Skateboarding

Enter all of the following codes at the character selection screen. Hold all four shoulder buttons and input the following sequence.

All Boards – ✕, △, ○, □
All Skaters – ○, △, ✕, □
Ballerina Nelson – △, □, ✕, ○
Big Head Bart – ✕, □, ○, △
Big Head Chief Wiggum – ✕, ○, □, △
Big Head Homer – ○, ✕, △, □
Big Head Lisa – □, △, ✕, ○
Big Head Nelson – △, □, ○, ✕
Big Head Prof. Frink – □, ✕, △, ○
Business Suit Krusty – ○, △, □, ✕
Demon Marge – ✕, □, △, ○
Fuzzy Skaters – ✕, △, □, ○
Gangsta Bart – ○, ✕, □, △
Gangsta Lisa – □, △, ○, ✕
Get $99.00 – △, ✕, ○, □
Groovy Frink – ✕, ○, △, □
Level Select – △, ✕, □, ○
Man Eater Wiggum – △, ○, □, ✕
Sunglasses Otto – □, ✕, ○, △
Underwear Homer – △, ○, ✕, □

"Captain Howdy"
Georgetown

Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon

Secret Pilots
To unlock the following secrets, enter the case-sensitive name on the right at the pilot's name entry screen.

Amuro Ray – Amuro
Char Aznable – Char
Dozle Zabi – Dozle
Garma Zabi – Garma
Hayato Kobayashi – Hayato
Kai Shiden – Kai
Lalah Sune – Lalah
Ramba Ral – Ramba
Ryu Jose – Ryu
Sayla Mass – Sayla
Sleggar Rowe – Sleggar

Versus Mode Characters
To unlock the following characters in Versus, simply encounter them in Arcade mode and defeat them. Also note that if an ally destroys your target, you won't unlock it.

ADZAM – Pick a Federation pilot. Choose the first stage and wait until the desert mission appears; you should fight one Zaku 2, a Gouf, and an ADZAM mobile armor.

Big-Zam – Pick a Federation pilot. The easiest way to encounter it is to choose the fourth stage. Kill Big-Zam to unlock it in versus mode. Use your Beam Sword on its main body to off it.

Braw-Bro – Pick a Federation pilot. Choose the third or fourth stage. When you encounter the second to last mission, a mobile armor called Braw-Bro will appear.

Elemeth – Pick a Federation pilot and go to Solomon Space to find Elemeth. If it does not appear, try being the Gundam, or restart.

G-Bull – Play as a Zeon pilot. Go to the second or third stage. Play until you encounter the G-Bull and one other Mobile Suit.

G-Fighter – Play as a Zeon pilot. Choose the fourth stage and play until the second to last mission, where you'll find G-Fighter.

GRABRO – Pick a Federation pilot. Choose one of the four stages. Wait until you reach the mission that shows Zeon forces attacking a base named Belfast.

G-Sky – Choose a Zeon pilot. Choose the fourth stage; you'll eventually run into G-Sky.

Zakurutella – Select a Federation pilot. Choose the fourth stage; play until you reach the mission that pits you against Zakurutella.

"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

James Bond 007: Nightfire

When you enter the codes to use the alternate vehicles, the game will take you back to the loading screen, so don't worry.

Berserk Racing – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, △ (x2), □, △, ○, then release L1.

Bonus Race In Alps – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game. Hold L1 and press ○ (x2), □ (x2), △, then release L1.

Double Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, △, ○, □ (x2), then release L1.

Frantic Racing – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, △, ○, □, △, ○, then release L1.

Quadruple Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, △, ○, □ (x4), then release L1.

Shelby Cobra – Begin a game on the Enemies Vanquished level. Pause the game. Hold L1, and on the d-pad press right (x2), left (x2), Up, then release L1.

Super Bullets – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press ○ (x4), and then release L1.

SUV – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, ○, △, □, △, then release L1.

Trails – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, ○ (x2), □, then release L1.

Triple Armor – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold L1 and press □, △, ○, □ (x3), then release L1.

Craven Moorehead
Hickleton, CT

Ty The Tasmanian Tiger

Input all of the following codes during gameplay for a special little treat.

Show Objects – L1, R1, L1, R1, △ (x2), ○, □ (x2), ○, R2(x2). Note: The locations of hidden Opals, Bilbies, Golden Cogs, Rainbow Scales, and Thunder Eggs will be shown with colored lines from the sky. The Opals and Rainbow Scales have a green line, Golden Cogs have a gold line, Thunder Eggs have a purple line, and Bilbies have a white line.
Unlimited Health – L1, R1, L1, R1, △ (x4), ○ (x2)
Unlock Gallery – L1, R1, L1, R1, △ (x2), ✕ (x2), R2, □, R2, □

Steve Irwin
Melbourne, Australia

Shox

Guilty or carefree, this is a wonderful way to start racing.

Start With $10,000,000 – Begin a new game in the single-player mode and enter LOADED as a name.

Louis Cipher
Fallen Angel, NY

Superman: Shadow Of Apokolips

With his x-ray vision, the man of steel will certainly be able to detect if you're cheating. Use this cheat at your own risk!

Master Code – Enter MXYZPTLK at the cheat codes screen in the Options menu.

"Braniac 13"
Metropolis, DC

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

James Bond 007: NightFire

Playing as Bond is admittedly cool. But taking playing with all of Bond's hidden gadgets is even more fun.

Berserk Racing – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press B, Y (x2), B, Y, X, then release the Left Button.

Bonus Race In Alps – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press X (x2), B (x2), Y, then release the Left Button.

Double Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press X, Y, B, X (x2), then release the Left Button.

Frantic Racing – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press B, Y, X, B, Y, X, then release the Left Button.

Quadruple Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press X, Y, B, X (x4), then release the Left Button.

Shelby Cobra – Begin a game on the Enemies Vanquished level. Pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press Right (x2), Left (x2), Up, then release the Left Button.

Super Bullets – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press X (x4), then release the Left Button.

SUV – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game, then hold the Left Button and press B, X, Y, B, Y, then release the Left Button.

Trails – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press B, X (x2), B, then release the Left Button.

Triple Armor – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the Left Button and press X, Y, B, X (x3), then release the Left Button.

Mona Littlemore
Los Angeles, CA

Dead To Rights

When you get to the New Game screen just after the Press Start screen, hold the Left and Right Buttons and input the following key sequences. A message will confirm a correct entry.

10,000 Bullets Mode – Up, Left, Down, Right, X
Boomstick Mode – Right, X (x3), B
Chow Yun Jack Mode – Y, X, Up (x3)
Hard Boiled Mode – Y, B, Left (x2), X
Lazy Ass Mode – Down, Left, Down, Y, Down
Precursor Mode – Up (x2), Down (x2), Up
Time to Pay Mode – B (x2), X (x2), Right
Wussy Mode – B, Left, Y, Up, Down

Faye Kinitt
Violet, FL

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Outlaw Golf

Unlock Everything – Start a new game and enter Golf_Gone_Wild as a name to unlock all characters, clubs, and stages. Note that the name is case sensitive and you must include the underscores.

Lou Natic
Arkham, PA

Ty The Tasmanian Tiger

Enter all of the following codes during gameplay.

Show Objects – Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button, Y (x2), X, B (x2), X, Z (x2). Note: The locations of hidden Opals, Bilbies, Golden Cogs, Rainbow Scales, and Thunder Eggs will be shown with colored lines from the sky. Opals and Rainbow Scales have a green line, Golden Cogs have a gold line, Thunder Eggs have a purple line, and Bilbies have a white line.
Unlock Gallery – Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button, Y (x2), A (x2), Z, B, Z, B
Unlimited Health – Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button, Y (x4), X (x2)

Rusty LeCrowe
Sydney, Australia

Blood Omen 2

Cheat Mode – At the Main Menu, press Z, R, Left Button, B, X, Y. A voice will say "go cheese" to confirm a correct entry. You'll begin with the Soul Reaver and Iron Armor.

"Alucard"
Suckington, CA

Die Hard: Vendetta

Enter all of the following codes at the Main Menu. A message at the bottom of the screen will indicate a correct entry.

Big Heads – Right Button (x2), Left Button, Right Button
Exploding Fists – Right Button (x2), Y, B, X, Right Button (x2)
Flame On – X, Y, B, X, Y, B, X
Hot Hands – Left Button (x2), X, B, Y, Left Button (x2)
Invincibility – Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button, Left Button, Right Button
Kamikaze – Left Button, Right Button, Z, Y, B
Level Select – X, Y, Z (x2), X, Y, Z (x2)
Liquid Metal Texture – B, Y, X, B, Y, X
Pin Heads – B, X, Y, B, X, Y
Small Heads – Left Button (x2), Right Button, Left Button
Unlimited Hero Time – B, X, Y, Z, Left Button, Right Button

Lew De Behavoire
Rockville, MD

XBOX

James Bond 007: Nightfire

Before a true Zen gamer begins an intense session of playing, he or she always clears the mind with this thought: Is a cheat truly a cheat if there's nobody around to see you use it?

Berserk Racing – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press X, Y (x2), X, Y, B, then release the L Button.

Bonus Race In Alps – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press B (x2), X (x2), Y, then release the L Button.

Double Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press B, Y, X, B (x2), then release the L Button.

Frantic Racing – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press X, Y, B, Y, X, then release the L Button.

Quadruple Armor – In the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press B, Y, X, B (x4), then release the L Button.

Shelby Cobra – Begin a game on the Enemies Vanquished level. Pause the game. Hold the L Button and press Right (x2), Left (x2), Up, then release the L Button.

Super Bullets – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press B (x4), then release the L Button.

SUV – During the Enemies Vanquished level, pause the game, then hold the L Button and press X, B, Y, X, Y, then release the L Button.

Trails – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press X, B (x2), X, then release the L Button.

Triple Armor – During the Paris Prelude, Enemies Vanquished, Island Infiltration, and Deep Descent levels, pause the game. Hold the L Button and press B, Y, X, B (x3), then release the L Button.

"Anita Lay"
Moscow, Russia

Reign Of Fire

Enter all of the codes during gameplay. However, you must enter the master code at the main menu.

Double Damage – X, Black, X, Y, X, White, X
Invincibility – White, X, Y, Black, X, Y, Black
Level Skip – X, Black, Y, Black, X, White, Y
Master Code – X, Y, White, Black, X, Y, X

"The Game Molester"
Washington, D.C.

Ty The Tasmanian Tiger

Input all of the codes during gameplay.

Show Objects – White, Black, White, Black, Y (x2), B, X (x2), B, R (x2). Note: The locations of hidden Opals, Bilbies, Golden Cogs, Rainbow Scales, and Thunder Eggs will be displayed with colored lines from the sky. Opals and Rainbow Scales have a green line, Golden Cogs have a gold line, Thunder Eggs have a purple line, and Bilbies have a white line.
Unlimited Health – White, Black, White, Black, Y (x4), B (x2)
Unlock Gallery – White, Black, White, Black, Y (x2), A (x2), R, X, R

Heath Iledger
Brisbane, Australia

Quantum Redshift

Enter all of the following case-sensitive codes at the Cheat menu.

All Ships Upgraded – RICEitup
All Pilots – Nematode
All Speed Categories – zoomZOOM
Unlimited Shields – ThinkBat
Unlimited Turbo – FishFace

Richard Rasch
Portland, OR

The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring

You must enter this code during gameplay once you finally get control of Gandalf

Unlimited Magic For Gandalf – X, Y, A, X, B, X

Ulrika Garlic
Ontario, Canada

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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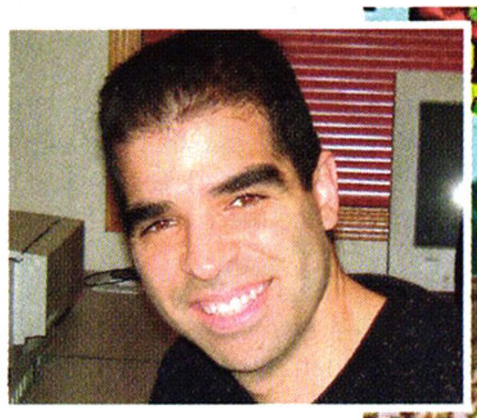
CLASSIC GI

ED BOON

CREATOR OF MORTAL KOMBAT



This month, we sit down with one of the main designers of the original Mortal Kombat. We pick his brain about his desire to create games; discuss his inspiration for Mortal Kombat, and the subsequent controversy; and delve into his future.

When did you first realize that you wanted to make games for a living? Was it at University of Illinois' arcade, Space Port?

No, no. It was way before that. It was in high school. When Defender, Pac-Man, Missile Command, and Centipede and all that stuff came out. I was completely hooked. During my break between classes and stuff, I would always go and play Robotron; I was able to play for a long time on one quarter, too. I would spend a quarter and go for like a half-hour or something.

Prior to Mortal Kombat, you worked on High Impact, Super High Impact, and other titles. Was there anything before that?

Before that I programmed about five pinball machines – that's what I started doing when I was hired. I graduated from the University of Illinois in 1986 and started at Midway in September of '86. So, I had the summer off and started working. At first, I basically did pinball, and then went on to do High Impact.

How did this experience shape your future work with video games?

I would consider it a kind of preparation. I always tell everyone, software-wise, in six months at Midway I learned more than all four years in school. That's not really a put-down to the school. It's just so much more valuable to work on a game, go through the process, and find out all of the important stuff.

How did you make that leap from programmer to getting your own project?

You know, I don't really know how. It's weird because for Mortal Kombat 1, 2, and 3, I was the only programmer. So in my mind, I was a programmer. I was still a programmer when I started coming up with ideas about special moves – how this button layout was going to be, etc. I associated that whole process with being a programmer. It wasn't until MK 4 that we had three programmers, and I started separating those jobs in my mind. The technical part and the design part, in my head, were all lopped together. I didn't really think about it much; it was just about making games.

Are you still all inclusive or are you just a designer now?

I still wrote software for Deadly Alliance – a lot of the special moves, the combos, and the new fighting styles. But I wrote a lot less software on this game than some of the main programmers. My brother is one the programmers on this game, Mike Boon. He and the other guys wrote more software than I did. But then again, there's ten times more code to be written in this game than MK 1.

What did you want to do when you set out to create Mortal Kombat as a fighting game?

You know what, we wanted to make an American version of Street Fighter. It was just that Street Fighter looked very anime to us, and it was awesome. But we wanted MK to be grittier, and utilize digital technology, which was state of the art at the time; and spice up the whole thing by adding blood. From that point, we just kind of went off. We didn't have a goal to make this game as controversial as possible, and test the limits of what was acceptable. It was a bunch of guys in their early 20s going, "Wouldn't it be cool if...." Everything in Mortal Kombat was inspired by a movie, or some crazy idea that someone devised. Sub-Zero's spine rip is from *Predator*, and Kano's heart rip was taken from Bruce Lee.

What inspired your most famous element – the Fatality?

The Fatality was the result of the dizzy feature in Street Fighter. In Street Fighter, if you beat someone with enough hits in a row, they get dizzy. We used to hate that feature and love it at the same time. I always loved that feeling of "Okay, now I'm going to go kick your ass because you're dizzy and you can't do anything about it." We just moved that element to the end of the fight. At first, we just had one guy dizzy at the end, and then the opponent could walk over and deliver one final blow. Then, at some point, we thought about having a special ability that you could do, like some super-duper uppercut. Eventually, that evolved into "What if you could tear the guy's heart out!?"

Was Midway behind the idea from the start?

There was definitely an "Oh man, are you sure that this is what we should be doing?" But, nine out of ten people thought that it was the coolest thing they'd seen in their life. That always weighs more heavily than a few who are offended.

How did you feel about the controversy?

Actually, we were a little surprised, because the controversy didn't start until the home versions of MK came out. It had already been in the arcades for over a year. We had sold a ton of arcade units and a lot of people already knew about it, but it wasn't until the console versions when things got crazy, where the average player was much younger. I think that the objection was a lack of a rating system. I was in agreement; I didn't think that Mortal Kombat should be sold to a 10-year-old kid. So when Mortal Kombat 2 came out, a rating system had been set up already.

There was a big controversy with Nintendo wanting to censor Mortal Kombat 1. Were you frustrated with that?

I was so frustrated. We were saying that all they were doing was ensuring that the Genesis version sold more. But they were on their high horse. They ruled the world at the time. Obviously, the fact that MK 2 had all the blood on the Super Nintendo was an admission.

Were they willing to compromise at all?

No, they were not entertaining any argument at all. It was made very clear to us that it was not even an option. When we had heard that MK 2 was going to have all the blood, you could have knocked me over with a feather. I was like, "What?"

The Super Nintendo version of MK 2 is considered the best. Why is that?

You know, there were different companies doing each version for each system. And we actually talked and met with the guys working on them. Unfortunately, you were at the mercy of these guys. It was entirely the quality of the guys and the amount of time they were given. But there were also many other factors that played into the final quality of the product. MK 2 on the SNES, the first version that they showed us, was like, "Ok, you guys got it."

Was there any partnership or rivalry between other companies that you inspired?

Incredible Technologies came up with Time Killers, which was violent like Mortal Kombat. I think that there was a lot of confusion as to what made MK a success. I think that some people thought that it was just the violence. Sometimes you'd see what some company made and you'd kind of get a feeling that they just didn't get it. Someone else would try and say, "Let's get these crazy superheroes and costumes, but add a ton of blood to it. Make it violent!" This sort of game design doesn't create a hit.

Way of the Warrior was so bad, huh?

[Sighs] Yeah, it was.

How do you think Tobias leaving affected the series?

With MK IV, we had all of these new guys on the team that simply added a different perspective. They were doing interpretations on existing characters and creating new ones too. If you only saw how radically different everyone's tastes were that worked on this game. That was my whole goal for Deadly Alliance. I don't want it to be perceived as just another Mortal Kombat title. I want people to say, "Wow! This plays nothing like a Mortal Kombat game."

Sorry, but we have to ask. Why the K, instead of the C?

Because with the C, the title, Mortal Combat, is pretty common. We just wanted to add a twist to it, for individuality's sake. It's not like the K stands for anything.

Was it a big joke to add a K in front of everything around then?

Exactly.

We're disappointed that in Deadly Alliance, the word, contestants, started with a C and not a K.

Really? That must have just been an oversight. Had I noticed, I definitely would have changed that.

How has the downfall of arcades affected you? Do you miss developing for them?

I totally miss the arcade market. There was nothing like a crowd of people around a game in an arcade. You know, quarters lined up, and one person with 20-something wins on their side of the screen, and everyone's still trying to knock them off. I also miss hearing things like, "How did you do the Fatality? How did you do this?" The whole social atmosphere, I thought, was a huge part of the success of this game. Plus, I would get a kick out of driving to some arcade and listen to the people standing around commenting on a game that I worked on. Knowing that MK V's [Deadly Alliance] not going to be in arcades, we didn't tailor it to a three-minute experience. We've made things longer, and the process of payback more gradual.

One of the secrets in Deadly Alliance is a picture for MK Basketball. How far did that project go?

That wasn't MK Basketball. That shot emerged when Eurocom (a company in England) was working on NBA Hoops or something. They simply wanted to have a secret MK court in their game. Unfortunately, the NBA denied them the right. However, they did send me a test image, which we put in the Krypt area of Deadly Alliance.

Did anyone ever seriously suggest making MK Basketball, Hockey, or Football?

You would be amazed the kind of things that get suggested. You put an MK in front of any kind of genre, and it's been proposed.

What's the most ridiculous?

I remember they wanted to do an MK puzzle fighter type game. I've also heard ideas for MK baseball and MK skiing.

What's it like to look back on all that has happened now?

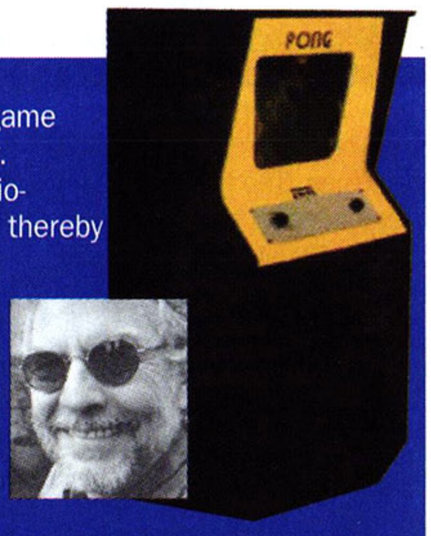
I was lucky enough that I saved a bunch of the paraphernalia over the years, and now it's just kind of starting to sink in – long after the fact. It's really cool, but at the same time, I totally acknowledge that all the planets were aligned and we were in the right place at the right time – like the extra exposure from the media. It certainly is not something that a company can plan. I don't look at it like "I did this." It's definitely bigger than we are.

Is there anything you can say about MK VI?

There is going to be some really kick ass single-player stuff in the next one. It's going to be really focused on multiple single-player experiences.

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

February 5, 1943 marks the birth of a very special game designer, Nolan Bushnell. If you're unfamiliar with Mr. Bushnell's accomplishments, simply know this: He pioneered our industry. He created Pong for the arcade, thereby establishing a precedent from which video games as we know them were born. After Pong's success, Bushnell went on to found Atari, which he ran until 1976, when he sold the company to Warner Communications. As serious fans of video games, we show our gratitude to Mr. Bushnell by wishing him a happy birthday.



CLASSIC GI

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Jared Dolphin

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

SOUL CALIBUR

■ **FORMAT** DREAMCAST
■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO

From the moment you turn it on, Soul Calibur begins its stubborn refusal to fit the mold of the genre. First off, the plot and the characters are original: a demonic sword that gives its bearers extreme strength. Gone are the gi-wearing, clean-cut kids of yesteryear. Now we have tortured beings with massive psychological problems that desperately need your help. For the first time in a fighting game I cared about the characters.

There's more to Soul Calibur than fighters squaring off in a ring. Among your list of options includes a Mission Mode. This turns out to be a thinly disguised tutorial that is actually quite a bit of fun. Completing these missions through a hellish and gothic world not only hones the skills you'll need later, but it also earns you points. These can be redeemed for new modes; various art, and secrets such as fan art, character concepts, insight into story lines, and somber group shots. Suddenly, you find yourself playing the game for reasons other than seeing a minute-long CG; you want to see what you can buy next. Perhaps the most interesting secret is the director feature, which allows you to manage your own opening scenes. In fact, you can mess with just about everything. You can stage battles between characters and watch the computer fight it out. Use different weapons, turn your characters into metal, and play Survival mode. The extras thrown into this game are phenomenal; they were a first for their time.

Speaking of firsts, I was hugely impressed with the graphics. Clothing waves in the breeze, and light and sparks glint off weapons. In one world, I was so surprised to see my character's image slowly fade away as she sank beneath the surface of the ocean that I forgot the sadness of the situation.

Even the gameplay is a refreshing experience. The controls and combos are rather standard, but the camera angles are not. You can even control the camera during replays! Sidestepping and parrying are fun elements tossed in the mix, and the ability to beat on your opponent after you've won is also a nice touch.

To me, a great game is one that you remember well after you stop playing it, and Soul Calibur is definitely one of those. This is a game that's better than the sum of its parts. In fact, it's even better than the console it came out on. Cheers to Namco!

PSONE

STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE

RETRO RATING 4.5

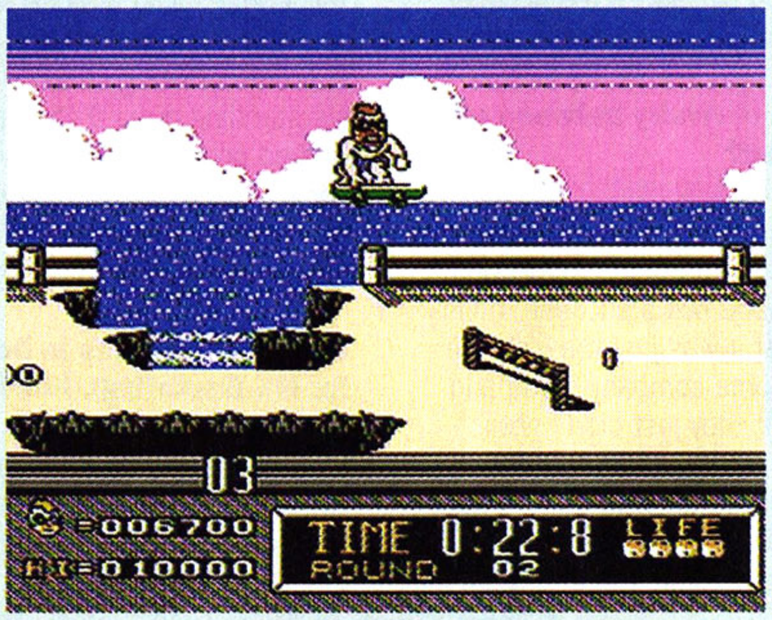
We can all agree that Street Fighter rules, right? Well, the series is not infallible, especially when you make a game that was based on the movie that was based on the game. That's just what Street Fighter: The Movie is. The title takes the settings and actors from the flop film, and digitizes them all. In theory, the premise is pretty cool. However, in execution, many things go wrong. The first flaw is in the animation. Most moves have only two or three frames and are, therefore, very choppy. In a game of split-second timing, this wreaks havoc on gameplay. The overall look is poor, too. There are a few new modes, including one with a semi-branching story, as well as a brand new character (Sawada, the most generic EVER), but it's a pretty by-the-books Street Fighter game. Hollywood couldn't take Capcom's classic series; mix in Kylie Minogue, Raul Julia, and Jean-Claude Van Damme; and make anything good. SF: The Movie only further bastardizes the subject and reigns as the worst Street Fighter game to date.

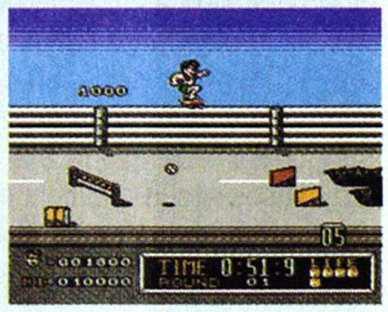
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

NES

T&C SURF DESIGNS: WOOD & WATER RAGE

RETRO RATING 6





In the eighties, action sports were beginning to pick up speed. Games like 720° and Skate or Die did a fairly good job of capturing this hobby. T&C Surf Designs was LJN's attempt to catch the skate and surf set. It is essentially two games in one. Pick from two skaters, and ride your board through an obstacle course. Boxes, potholes, and errant baseballs all litter your path. You can jump with the board or without it, as well as grind. There is just one course, but it gets longer with each new run. The surfing side also has two characters: a tux-wearing cat and a gorilla. Its control is far more erratic, as you try to stay above water long enough to hit the goal point. The game can be played as all surfing, all skating, or alternating between the two. Multiplayer entails taking turns as each person attempts a run. The skateboarding is a good bit of fun, but surfing is far too arduous for any prolonged play. We Tony Hawk players sometimes forget how good we have it. Playing T&C is a fine reminder.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** LJN ■ **DEVELOPER** ENTERACTIVE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1987

GENESIS

COMIX ZONE

RETRO RATING 8

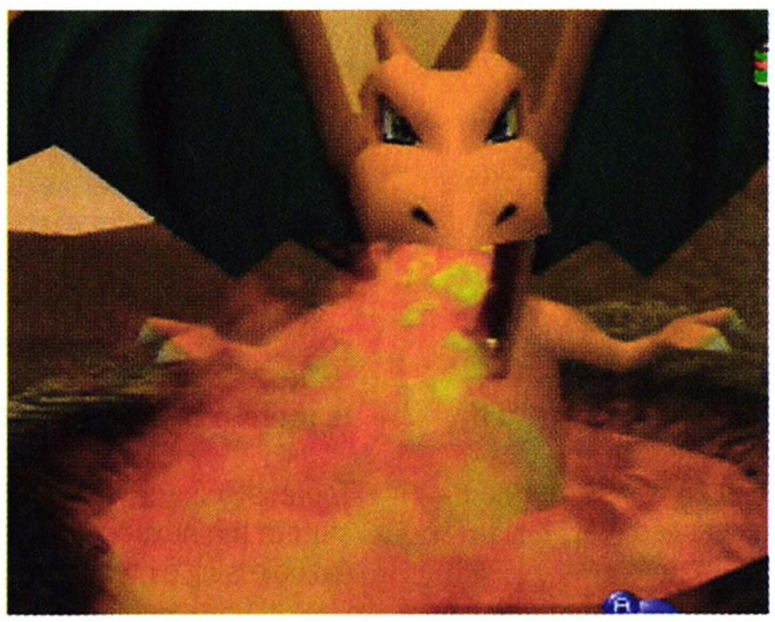
New ideas in video games come about as often as solar eclipses, so it's only natural that Comix Zone stunned many when it was released. It drops geeky comic book artist Sketch Turner (wearing an outfit that's laugh-out-loud-funny today) into the pages of his own creation. It turns out that the evil genius antagonist Sketch drew is aiming to take over the real world. His huge hand grips a pencil as he draws enemies to battle Sketch through 2D panels. Trash-talking ensues, and then hand-to-hand combat commences. The fighting is decent, featuring one button for attacking, which yields different results when holding various directions. Items like knives and Sketch's pet rat can be used as well. The visuals and sound are some of the best seen in the history of the Genesis. It may not have the gameplay variety of a Streets of Rage or Golden Axe, but its unique gimmick gives it more than enough to make Comix Zone a classic.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

NINTENDO 64

POKÉMON SNAP

RETRO RATING 9



Kids around the world were in love with Pokémon for many years. Snap hit while the franchise was in full stride, joining a group of Pokémon titles released on the system – none of which was the RPG quest gamers craved. While it doesn't sound like much, Snap is actually a tremendously entertaining and original game. Your job is to take pictures of dozens of Pokémon while riding in a track-based vehicle. The camera can be rotated to look all around, and tossing various items can either attract or annoy your targets. After completing a run, you decide which pictures to show Professor Oak. He judges them aesthetically based on size, pose, and centering. Bonus points are given for special poses, or having more than one of the same Pokémon in the shot. Pictures of each creature go in the Pokédex, and more can be saved in the album. With countless ways to get different shots of each monster, no two people will have the same pictures. This gives depth to a seemingly shallow game. Its graphics also capture the cute nuances of Pokémon.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** HAL LABORATORY
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1999

SNES/GAME BOY ADVANCE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

WALKTHROUGH

Grab the Lamp and work north to the castle. The entrance is hidden under the east bush surrounded by rocks. Grab the sword and shield from your uncle. To find Zelda, wind around west, north, then east, to a staircase going down. The key and Boomerang are both in a room to the right of the locked door. Throw pots at the mace guy to get the big key, so you can unlock Zelda. With the princess in tow, head to the Sanctuary. The right switch opens the door.

Pendant Searching

Go to the Elder's house (northeast in village), and talk to the woman inside. The kid by the troughs, south of the square, tells you where to go. The Elder's test takes you to the nearby East Palace.

Get the key from the room full of Skeletons, and use it on the locked door in the previous room. Kill the Skeletons and the Cyclops, then flip the switch underneath the pot where the Spinners were circling for the big key. Use this in the huge chest, to get the Bow. Work your way north from here until you get to the Armos Knights. It's best to cap them with arrow shots, though you can sword slash them, too. The final knight turns red and tries to land on your head. Watch his shadow, use your sword, and take him out.

The Elder gives you Pegasus Shoes. You'll need these to get the book in the library, which allows you to read the desert dungeon's tablet. Run into the shelf to make the book fall off. In the dungeon, get a key by ramming the torch, then use it on the far east door. You'll now get the big key. The big chest is on the opposite end of this floor. Use your new Power Glove by going south, outside, then around and up to get in the boss' cave. This battle has three giant worms. Your sword will do the trick. Charge it near their hole, then unleash it while they come out. The impact will usually propel you away from harm and do extensive damage to them.

Time to get your feet wet, and find the Flippers. You'll need 500 Rupees. Head to the northeast section of the world. Follow the shallow water maze to Zora, and pay up. This opens up the whirlpool waterways. Go south and west, and swim under a secret waterfall to reach the Waterfall of Wishing. Toss in your shield and Boomerang to upgrade them.

In the northwest, you'll find the entrance leading up to the third dungeon. Let the chatty grandpa tag along in the cave. Once you hit daylight, you get the Magic Mirror. You can return to him for healing. Take the long ladder up. The vortex brings you a glimpse of the Dark World. Go west to one of the diamond-shaped, dark marks in the ground, then use the Mirror.

In this dungeon, the Boomerang is great for hitting the blue/red switches. Going in the locked door on the northwest side of the main room leads to the big key. Above the big chest room, hit the switch so there's a hole slightly north, in the middle of the floor. Drop down to the big chest. You want blue blocks in the up position when you head back up the stairs, on your way to the boss. To beat it, keep hitting its tail. Don't fall down a hole, or you'll have to start all over. It's best to run around the hole on the left, and take swings at it when the tail's exposed.

Master the Sword

With all three dungeons beaten, go to the Lost Woods. In the northwest section is the true Master Sword. Use the Book. The Sanctuary is under attack. Boo! Before going there, use your newfound blade to get Ether magic. It's back up Death Mountain, west of the Tower.

The route to the wizard Agahnim is tough, but straightforward. Try to keep full health, for the sword projectile. To best the wizard, hit his blasts back at him – unless he appears in the middle of the top of the screen. If this occurs, run near him, as he'll be shooting lightning bolts downward.

The Seven Maidens

The Dark World's first dungeon is in the same place as the East Palace. Give Kiki Rupees so you can get in. There are many walls inside to bomb. The left downstairs area has a key. To kill the mimicking red enemy, use arrows, then bait him into them. In the bumper room, toss a bomb at the blue/red switch, then book across to get in the upper-left door. The big key is in the room south of this. Bomb the left platform, and fall down. At the dead end (northeast on 1F), shoot an arrow into the eye of the statue. Hammer the face blocks to get rid of them. Use the Hammer on the boss, cracking its helmet. Next, shoot at its green forehead with arrows.

In Dark World, travel to the grove southeast of the village. The flute boy is there, sans flute. Agree to find it with the Shovel. Warp to the Light World, and dig in the same area for it. It should be in the northwestern corner. Return it to him. Now, play it at the town square's weathervane.

Next, work to where the desert entrance would be in Dark World. Go to the dead end, warp to Light, and read the green tablet for Bombos magic. The second dungeon is nearby. Make sure the Light World water is in the building first. Once you reach 1F, the left drop point leads to a red Rupee. The right side requires red blocks to be down and will give you the big key. The second waterfall from the right, in the room full of them, hides a doorway. There's a bombable wall in the flooded room, if you need some hearts before the boss. To kill this big squid, grapple the orbs surrounding him and slash them. When they're gone, he'll drop down, then run around. Stay up when he's going to drop, then go low when he's skirting around and hit him in his eye.

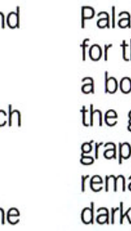
Go to the Light village, and take the west Lost Woods entrance. Immediately go east, then south to an alcove. A rock there hides a warp to Dark World. Take it, then go north to the next dungeon. When you drop down via the hole in the patch of flowers (have the big key at this point), you can bomb the west wall. Use the fire rod on the odd statue in the west end of the woods (you'll need to exit the dungeon a different way to reach it). The moth boss is tricky, with the moving floor and spikes, but keep shooting fire at him while you dodge. The sword works, too.

In the Dark village pull the pitchfork the gargoyle statue holds. The big key is in the same room you start in, but you need to enter the room to the east, then take a hidden lower-level door to get it. In the 1F room with light hitting a hole in the floor, whip a bomb at it. Take the girl you find to the room underneath this one to show her true form. Hack at this beast with your sword. You can't hurt the flying heads. If you didn't get to the big chest yet, go back and claim it.

With your new strength, go south of the Dark village, rescue the froggy-looking guy, and take him back to the blacksmith shop in Light World. Let them temper your sword. Tool around outside awhile, then return to a stronger blade. The next dungeon is in the middle of the southeast lake. You must use a warp in Light World. Bomb the big skeletons to kill them. Some statues require you to pull their noses. To get the big chest, go to the far west room on B4, and bomb the cracked floor. In the room with red jellyfish and two holes, fall down either one to reach a secret faerie stash. Make sure the switch has blue ones down, then work all the way around to the big chest room again, and go right. Push the bottom-left block down the hole, and jump in after it. Fire blast the boss until you're out, then switch to the sword. Make sure to avoid the ice.

Take the flute bird to the sixth position, and lift the right rock. Use Ether magic on the marked spot to open the dungeon. Light all four torches in 1F's west rooms, then drop down the hole next door to get the big key. Two rooms east of the big B1 room is the big chest. Use the grappling hook, then run north to it. Use the cane's block on the switch in B2. Hack the eyeball boss with your sword. Avoid the poisonous slime immediately around it.

Go to where Link's house would be in Dark World and buy the new bomb. Gently travel to the pyramid, and place it in front of the cracked wall. Toss in both your sword and Bow to upgrade each. In the northeast corner of the map, you'll see a ring of rocks in the water. Toss something in it, and a fish will give you Quake magic. Go to the top of the mountain in Light World, hammer the knobs counter-clockwise starting with the lower-right one, then take the warp to open the seventh dungeon.



This dungeon is long, and there's lots of trial and error involved. In the room with two chain chomps, push the top block of the left-hand pile. In the room full of chests and laser-shooting eyes, the last chest contains the key. Use your fire wand on the boss' ice head, then run up and slash it. Use the ice wand on the fire head, then slash that. When both are gone, go after the glowing midsection on the boss.

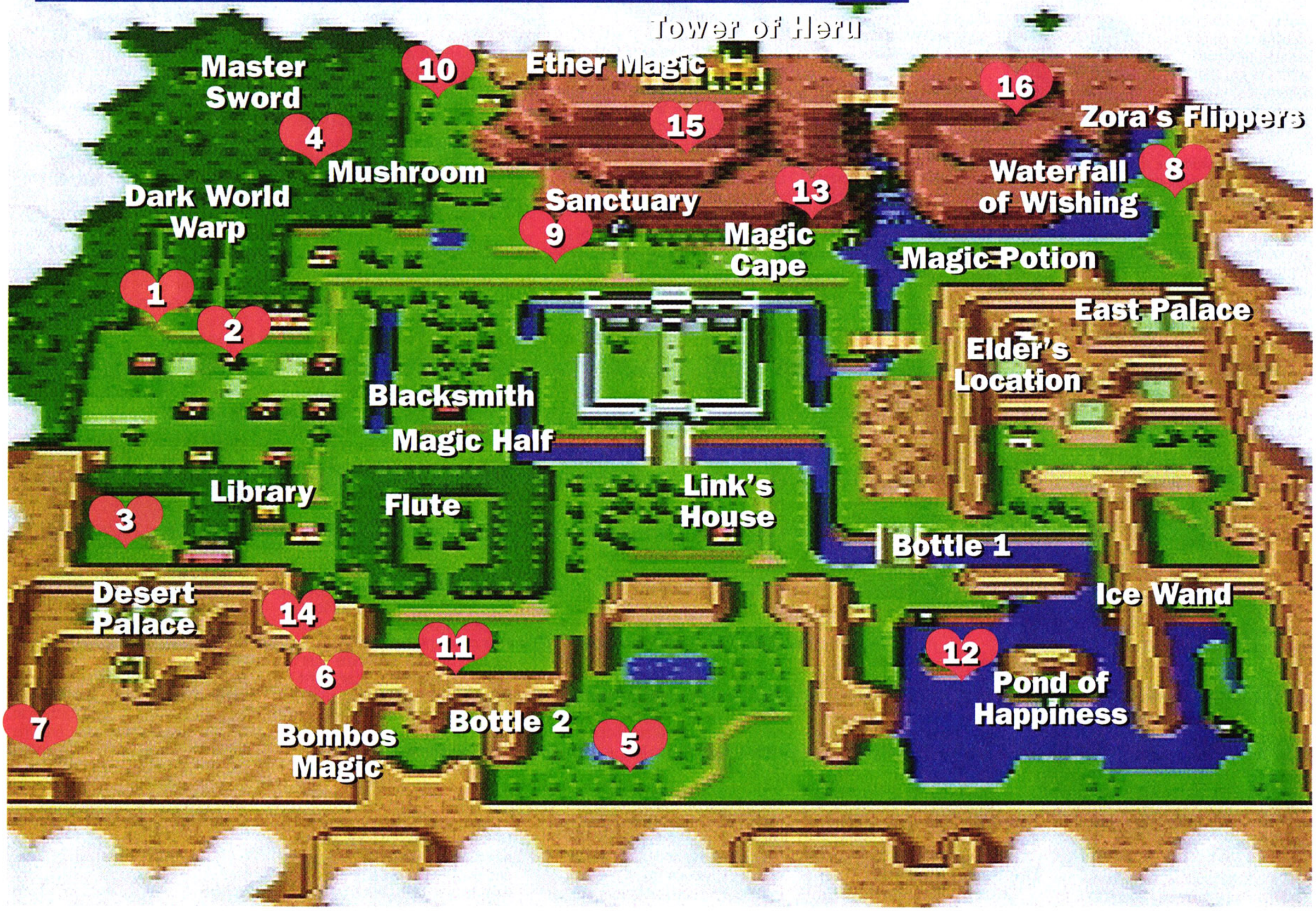
The Final Countdown

Stock up on potions, preferably at the witches' place in Light World, and tackle the glowing fortress. Use Ether magic to see hidden paths and map out the best ways to light multiple candles. After wasting the clone of the East Palace boss (use arrows), go north for the big key. The west room has a bombable north wall. South in the giant worm room is a chest to grapple to. For the Agahnim rematch, aim at the one with the dark shadow.

Refill your bottles, and go in the pyramid. Slash Ganon repeatedly. Use the Fire Rod to light torches to see him when it gets dark. After he turns silver, nail him with an arrow. DO NOT let yourself fall down the pit surrounding the room, or you'll have to start the fight all over. Zelda's fate is in your hands, dude.

HEART PIECE LOCATIONS – LIGHT WORLD

1. West of the Elder's former house is a ledge, which you can use to jump down into a hole. In there is a piece, and plenty of Rupees.
2. Plant a bomb on the north wall in the basement of the gray house, which is next to the Elder's former house.
3. South of the main village is a long house which you must bomb to get to the west side of. Exit there, and beat the obstacle course for a piece. The Pegasus Shoes help.
4. By the thief's entrance in the Lost Woods, slash the middle bush of nine to drop to this piece.
5. South of Link's house, go into the water-surrounded building and pull the right switch inside. Exit, and find the piece in the newly-drained area.
6. On your way to the Desert Palace, find the cave on the northeast side of the desert. The room with the elder has a bombable south wall, which leads to a piece.
7. Before going to the boss' lair in the Desert Palace, while outside, go south on the elevated area to find a piece.
8. After getting Zora's Flippers, go slightly south and west to a land-dwelling piece.
9. Dash into the pile of rocks west of the Sanctuary.
10. Dash into the discolored tree near the lumberjacks' house.
11. In Dark World, go south of the flute grove and enter the circle of flowers. Now warp to Light World and enter the cave.
12. Stand on the shallow area west of the dungeon entrance in Dark World (it's surrounded by stones) and use the Mirror.
13. Climb the ladder north of the graveyard in Dark World, then use the Mirror. Now, bomb the wall inside for the piece.
14. Near the sixth Dark dungeon, go in the northeast corner and use the Mirror. Lift the big rock.
15. On the mountain, drop down to slightly left of high tunnel near the first warp.
16. While in Dark World, pick up the big stone atop the mountain, and go in. Go north, and use Ether to light the hidden path. Take the door outside, then use the Mirror.



OPTIONAL ITEMS/EVENTS:

Magic Powder – Find the mushroom in the Lost Woods, then bring it to the witch brewing outside. Return later, and go inside to get the Magic Powder.

Bug-Catching Net – Get it from a sick, bedridden child in town. It can catch bugs and faeries, which you can then put in your empty pots.

Empty Bottle 1 – Near the hammerable spikes by the Dark World's pyramid, jump in the water. In the tiny shallow spot, use the Mirror, then go under the bridge.

Magic Half – If you have the Magic Powder, go by the blacksmith's in the village. You need the hammer to get to the ledge to drop down the hole. Inside, sprinkle powder at the altar, and a bat will half the amount of magic each attack uses.

Pond of Happiness – Swim out to the island, and go inside. Toss Rupees in the water. Every 100 you spend allows you to upgrade your carrying capacity for arrows or bombs.

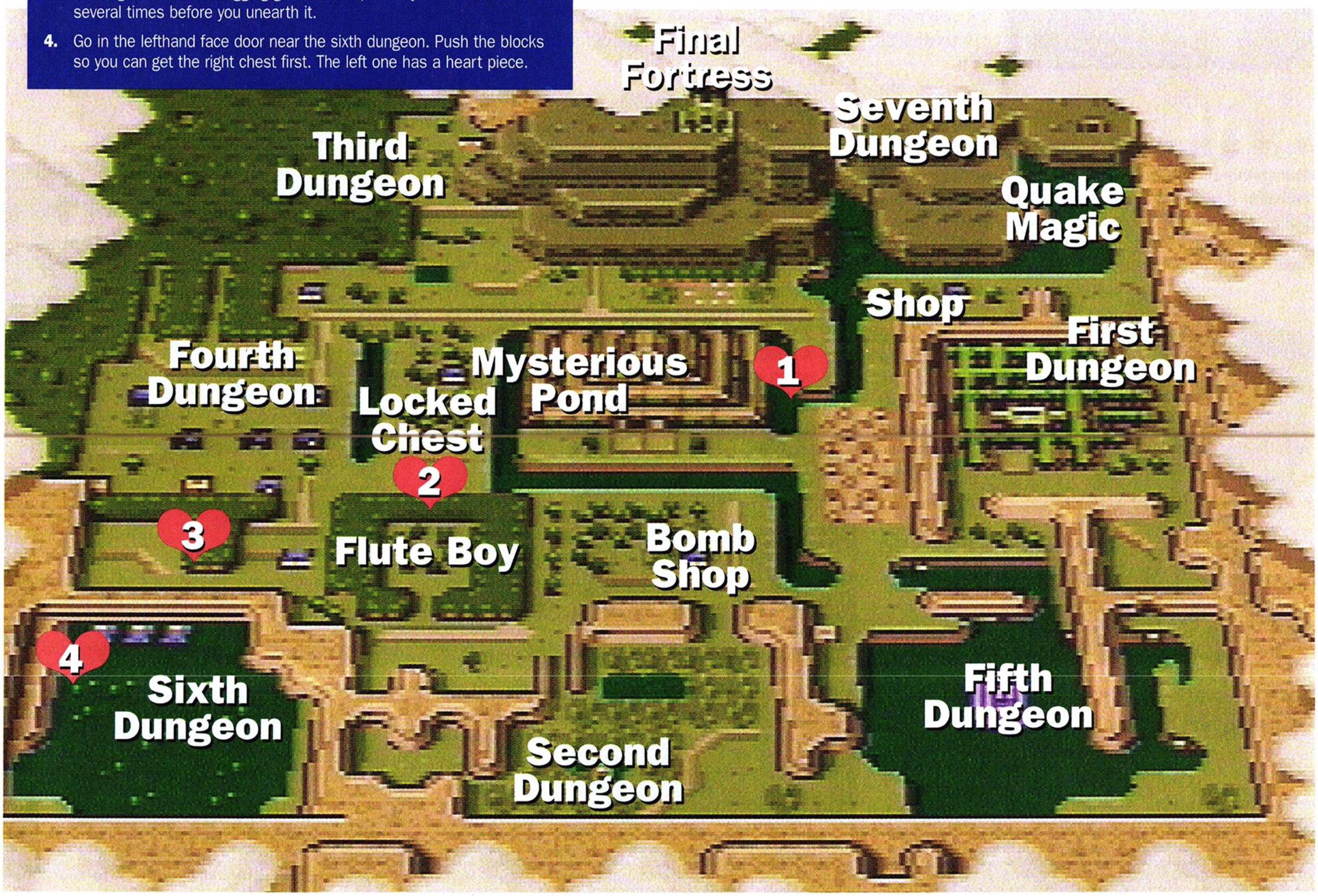
Empty Bottle 2 – In Dark World, the place where the blacksmiths stay has a locked chest. Bring it to the sign guy near the desert in Light World and he'll open it – so long as you keep your yap shut.

Magic Cape – Once you have your lift strength at three, go to the northeast grave in the Light World graveyard. Lift the rocks to get in, then dash into the grave. The cape makes you invisible, but sucks magic energy.

Cane of Byrna – In Dark World, go straight south from the first warp you ever used (on the mountain). The Magic Cape will protect you from the spikes.

HEART PIECE LOCATIONS – DARK WORLD

1. On the east end of the pyramid.
2. Hammer down all the posts near the blacksmith house.
3. In the grounds of the digging game. You'll probably have to do this several times before you unearth it.
4. Go in the lefthand face door near the sixth dungeon. Push the blocks so you can get the right chest first. The left one has a heart piece.



ETC

AFTERBURNER GBA INTERNAL LIGHTING KIT

Manufacturer: Triton Labs, Inc.
Website: www.tritonlabs.com • List Price: $35.00

Who hasn't been frustrated with the lack of light on their Game Boy Advance? Triton Labs provides a solution. The Afterburner kit requires you to disassemble your GBA, solder a few wires, and install a lighting mechanism to the LCD screen. If this all sounds rather complicated, it is. It also voids the manufacturer's warranty. There isn't much room for error, so needless to say this isn't a project for kids. A tri-wing screwdriver, which you can buy off Triton's site, is needed, as well as some other basic tools. Precautions must be made to avoid dust, fingerprints, and bubbles. If done right, the finished product is just what you've dreamed about: freedom from blinding light sources. Quit waiting for Nintendo to backlight the GBA, and take matters into your own hands.

LYNX WIRELESS XBOX CONTROLLER

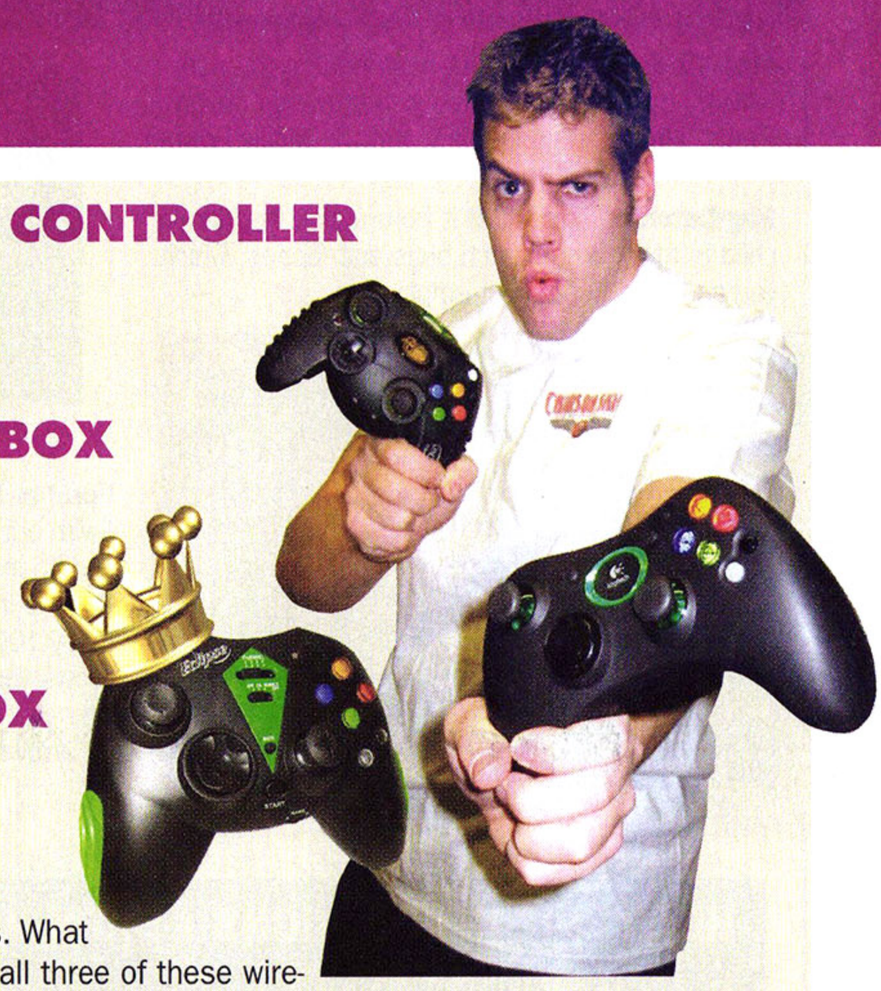
Manufacturer: Mad Catz
Website: www.madcatz.com
List Price: $59.99

LOGITECH CORDLESS XBOX CONTROLLER

Manufacturer: Logitech
Website: www.logitech.com
List Price: $69.95

ECLIPSE WIRELESS XBOX CONTROLLER

Manufacturer: Pelican
Website: www.pelicanacc.com
List Price: $39.99



You have an Xbox, but you don't want the wires. What do you do, hotshot? We'll tell you, having put all three of these wireless controllers through their paces. Logitech's is the most powerful (2.4GHz), but it's also the most awkward and expensive. The Mad Catz Lynx has a good shape and sweet rubber grips, but the analog sticks are slippery, and it's still pretty costly. Pelican's Eclipse, while not the prettiest in appearance, weighs in as the most compact and affordable, and the best performer. More expensive doesn't always mean better. A gullet-full of fish to Pelican for making the best Xbox wireless out there!

THE ORIGINAL SURPRISE BAG

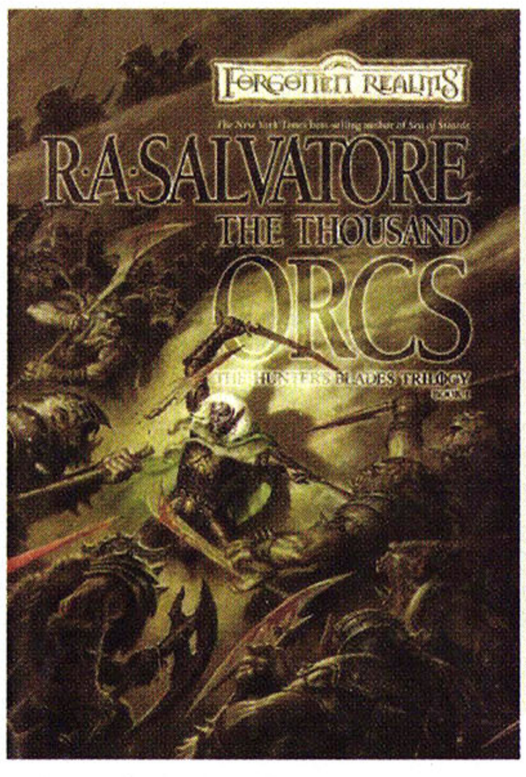
Manufacturer: The Foreign Candy Company, Inc.
Website: N/A • List Price: About $1.00

Got a dollar burning a hole in your pocket? Well, stop, drop, and roll into a grocery store and pick up the best grab bag ever! By best ever we mean pretty lame, with a random selection of foreign candy and cheap plastic toys in every sack. An activity book tells the tale of Mr. Surprise, as he delights in boys and girls ripping open his head and removing his innards. The real surprise with The Original Surprise Bag is how short your dollar will take you, but the journey is half the destination.

ATARI 10-IN-1 TV GAMES

Manufacturer: Jakks Pacific, Inc., Infogrames
Website: N/A • List Price: $19.99

Instead of compiling ancient games onto next-gen systems, Jakks Pacific has eliminated the middleman, and released a reasonably-priced joystick with a stellar collection of classic Atari titles built right in! Contained in this one-fire-button stick are Asteroids, Adventure, Breakout, and seven other games. While a paddle may be preferred for Pong, or a track ball for Centipede, the joystick design is what we remember playing with as kids. Four AA batteries are required. It hooks to your TV via RCA cables, which makes it ideal for travelling. Whenever you're bored, just whip out your stick, and fire away!



THE THOUSAND ORCS

Manufacturer: Wizards of the Coast
Website: www.wizards.com • List Price: $25.95

He eats hobbits for breakfast and makes Sauron look like a harmless little Muppet. The star of *The Dark Elf Trilogy*, Drizzt Do-Urden is back in this latest tale scribed by none other than R.A. Salvatore. *The Thousand Orcs* is the first installment in the new *The Hunter's Blades* trilogy, and as expected, it centers solely on this mean little elf. If you haven't had the chance to read *The Dark Elf Trilogy* yet, run out and do so immediately. It ranks right up there with *The Lord of the Rings* as one of the best fantasy tales ever conceived, and this new chapter only expands upon its brilliance.

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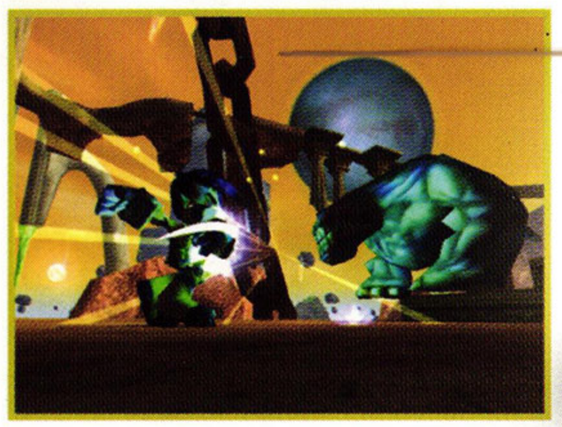
TO HELL WITH A PRINCESS, SAVE THE WORLD!



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+Enemies morph into more evil forms as the light of day wanes.

VEXXTHEGAME.COM

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Violence

XBOX · NINTENDO GAMECUBE · PlayStation.2 · Acclaim

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COOLER THAN HELL

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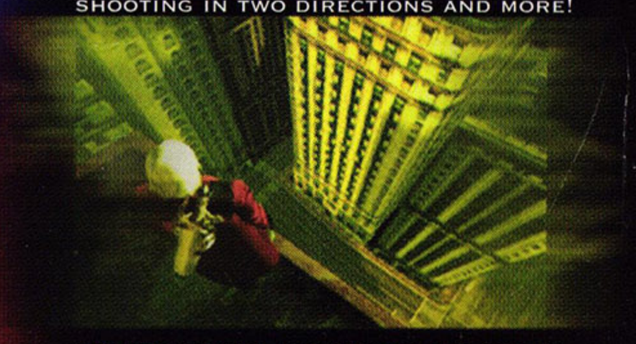

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