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ISSUE ONE
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CVG PRESENTS

3, 2, 1... IV

The new generation of Grand Theft Auto is upon us. And what finer series – what bigger phenomenon – could there be with which to kick off a brand new magazine? CVG Presents is a quarterly publication aimed at the collector in us all, at the enthusiasts and the curious. In association with Computer & Video Games, each issue we bring you everything you ever wanted to know about a genuine gaming legend. Where it's come from, where it's at and where it's going – exhaustively collected and compiled, stripped bare and laid out before you by those who know and care. No other publication brings such depth to the games that really matter. And if they even try, we'll shoot them like dogs. Over to you, Niko. CVG

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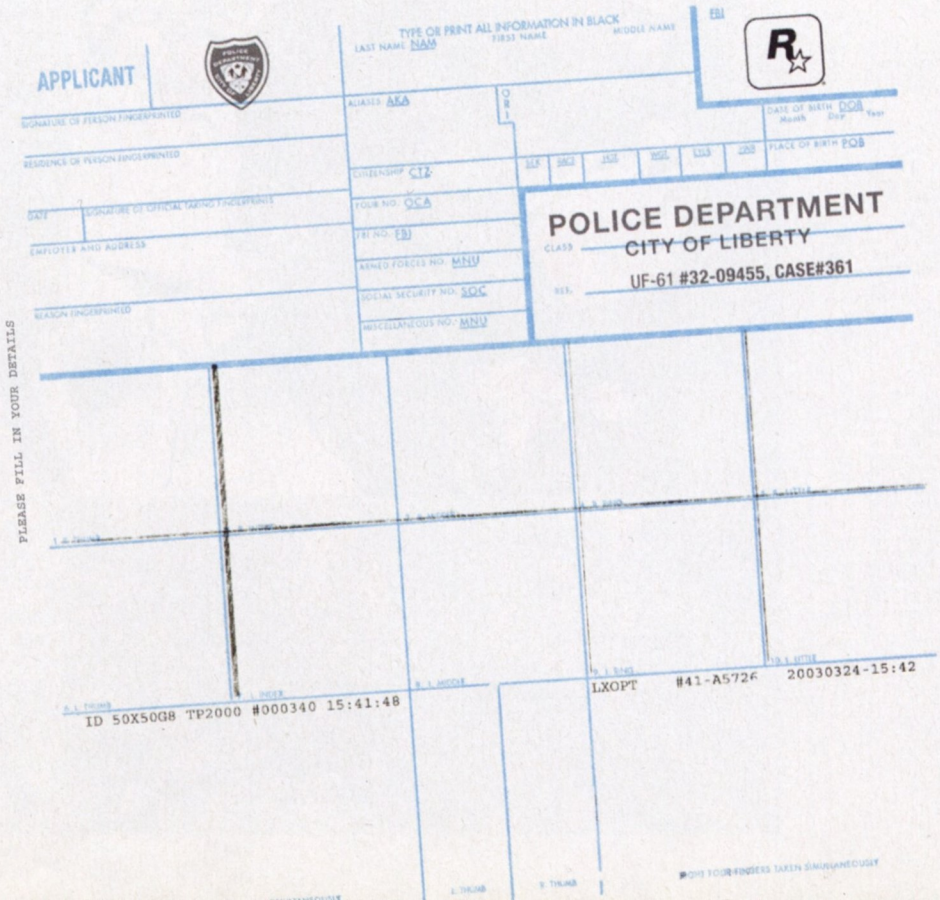

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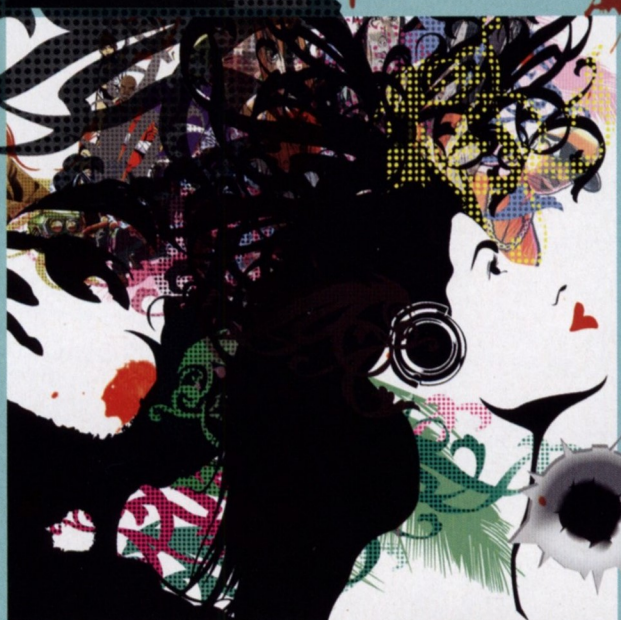

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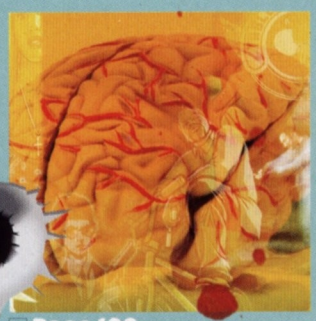

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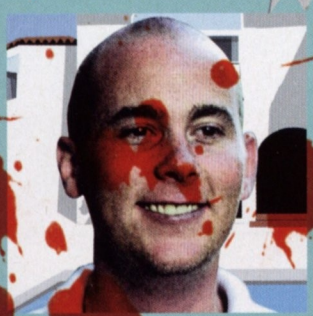

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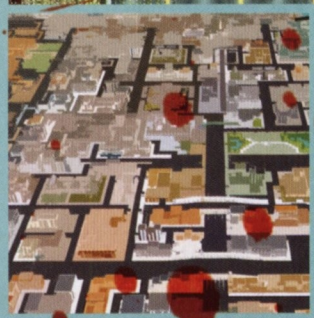

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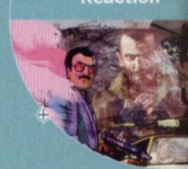

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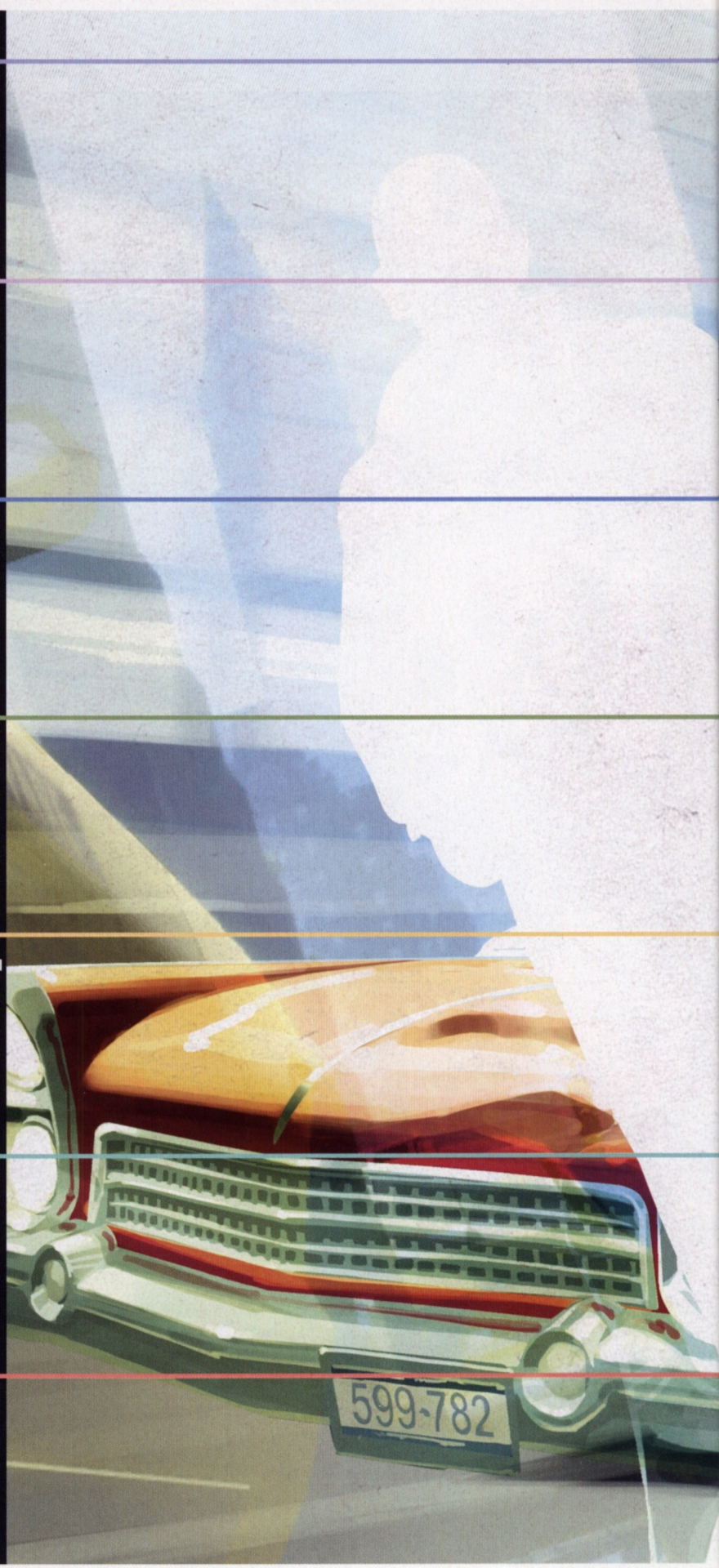


GTA IV

WRONG NUMBER | DRIVING | THE CITY | EUPHORIA | COMEDY | ONLINE | SKYLINE

This city is more dangerous than ever before, and in more ways than you think - p16

WHY IS THIS GTA

Take a quick headcount – it just doesn't add up

It's not that Rockstar can't count. But technically, this should either be GTA VI or – if you're being totally completist about it – Grand Theft Auto XIII. Just check the complete series timeline on pages 42-43 if you don't believe us.

There may be some surprises in there, but even the most casual observer will know there have been two games between III and IV, those being the not inconsiderable Vice City and San Andreas. So why *is* this game number 'four'?

It's an indication of how Rockstar sees it. More than that, it's an indication of how it's seen its progression all along. As you may know, the very first GTA featured three cities, namely Liberty, Vice and San Andreas. GTA III turned the series into 3D with Liberty City, while the Vice City and San Andreas games simply finished off the process – almost in the manner of expansion packs – with that generation of technology. This new game, Rockstar is saying, is the first *true* sequel since that original 3D effort in 2001.

Vice City and San Andreas were simply extensions of GTA III all along.

Of course, to call games as vastly ambitious as Vice City or San Andreas mere 'expansion packs' seems childish, but nevertheless, the downloadable content (DLC) coming for the Xbox 360 version of IV has repositioned those games in just this way. DLC so far has meant the odd new car, jumper or bit of horse armour, but GTA IV is set to completely redefine the idea with *expansions that are to GTA IV what Vice City or San Andreas were to GTA III*. Yes, Rockstar is clearly hinting at new downloadable cities; and the chances of them being London, Vice or SA again are slim to none. So that's new as in *brand* new. GTA IV's Liberty City is the beginning. Think about that. And be excited. CVG

This new game, Rockstar is saying, is the first true sequel since that original 3D effort in 2001

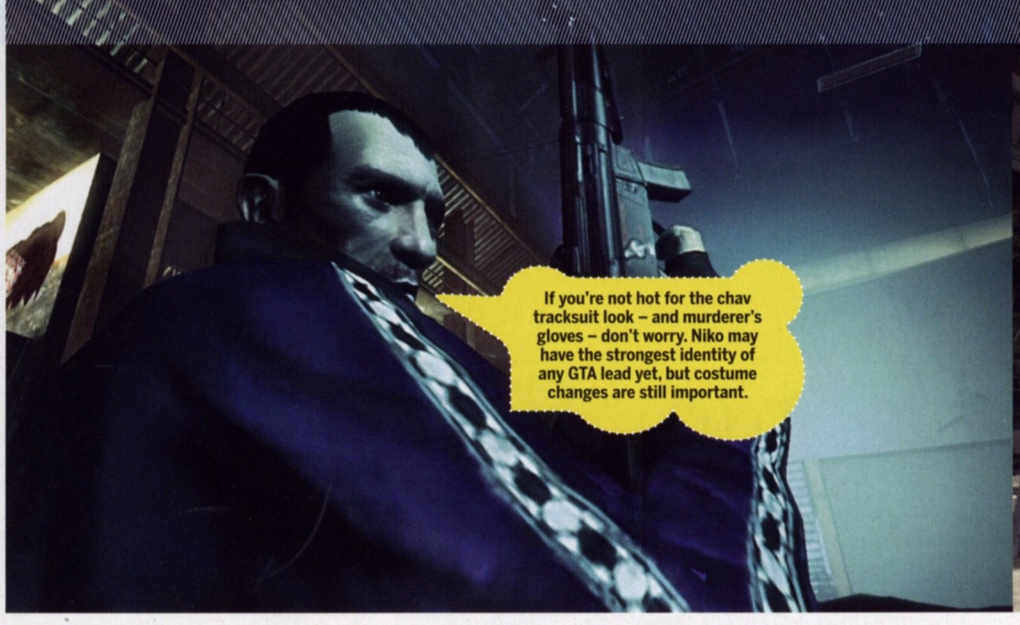
IV?

"You're dead, meat boy!"

The policemen are even more scary this time around: they're policemen with moustaches. There's little that's more worrying, bar perhaps cops with 'taches and large shades.

Slay hello, wave goodbye

Drugs, guns, alcohol and gambling – despite the years of opposition, Rockstar is in no way compromising its vision of adult games for adults. GTA IV earns its 18 certificate *hard*.



If you're not hot for the chav tracksuit look – and murderer's gloves – don't worry. Niko may have the strongest identity of any GTA lead yet, but costume changes are still important.

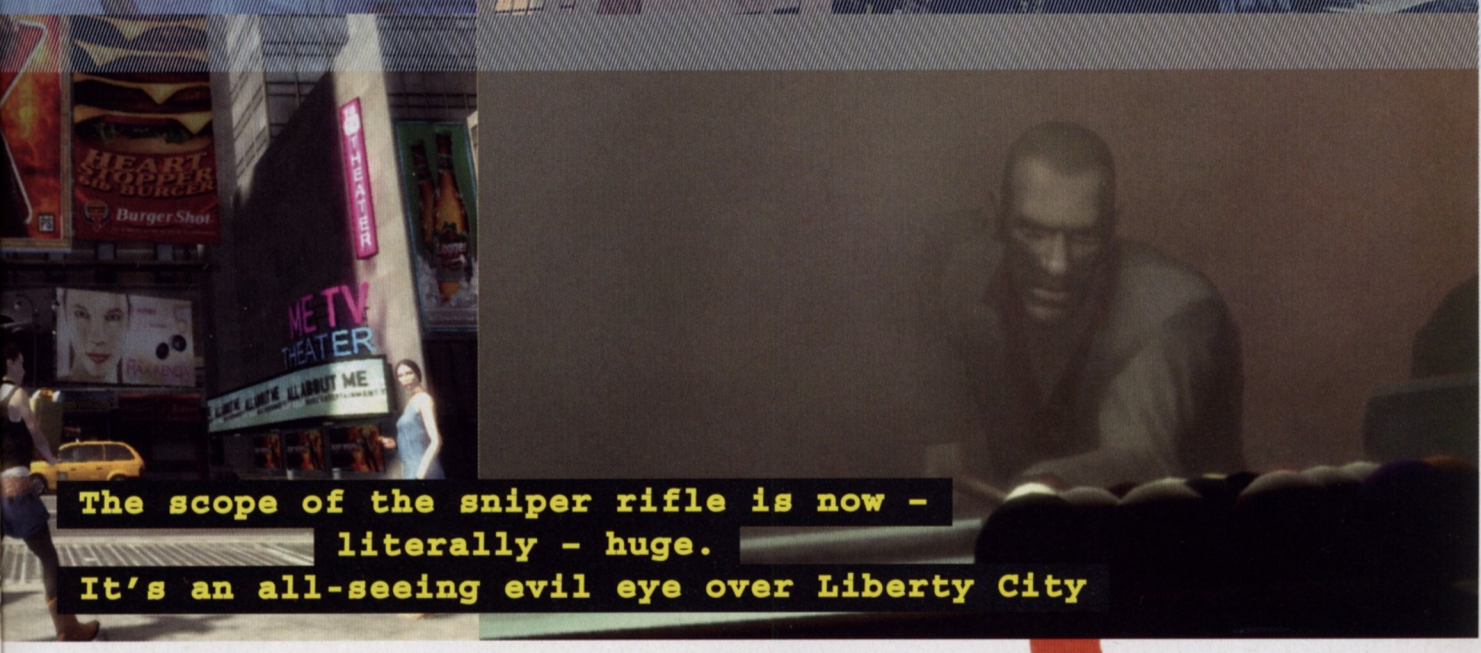
Where the ladies at?

San Andreas introduced fully wooable girlfriends, but GTA IV takes socializing to a new level. Making friends – both male and female – is the key to making Liberty yours.

In the air tonight

It's still possible to fly – one of your associates will even lend you his private copter – though there are no planes this time due to the smaller area. Still, where would you land?

You'll be pleased to learn the targetting and gunplay has finally got the overhaul it's long needed. It's even possible to lock on and then target specific bodyparts after that.



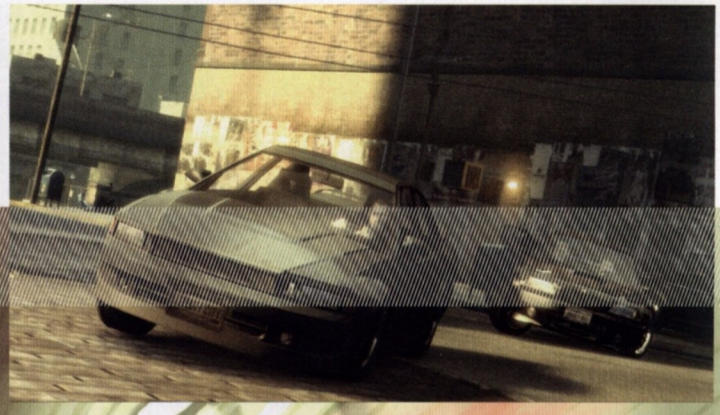
The scope of the sniper rifle is now – literally – huge. It's an all-seeing evil eye over Liberty City

HEAVY METAL DRIVE-BY

The handling system has been totally re-written – for the better?

Deep down in its cold, merciless heart, GTA is all about cops 'n' robber chases. It should be no surprise that the handling has seen considerable work. The result? The driving experience is still irrepressibly GTA, yet new at the same time. It's far harder to swoop into junctions flat out with a dab of handbrake, as the sense of mass, and its unwillingness to alter course, is palpable. You actually *need* the brakes this time. Larger vehicles really work the exceptional physics, as despite taking an age to get going, they're *really* hard to stop once rolling. Not that it stops the cops from trying...

Their new physicality also makes vehicles an excellent source of cover. No longer prone to blowing up with a single shotgun blast, cars take all kinds of punishment before expiring. Just make sure they don't drive away mid-fight: frightened drivers can hide under the dash... CVG



Look, it's just that some cops feel more comfortable in a moustache, OK? It goes with the cap to create a certain authoritative look. It so works. Even the biggest guys drop to their knees and obey.

Realism is vastly enhanced by the cutting edge graphics, but in motion it's boosted by physics to match. Ally that to an astonishing sense of place and things are all set to blow.

For the first time, there's an over-the-dashboard in-car view, for those who like to keep it real. Careful though – crash hard and the view won't be the only thing going through the screen....

STILL TAKING LIBERTIES

GTA returns to the city that never sleeps – and finds it's moved on

Y After several jaunts into Miami and San Andreas, GTA has come home. Liberty City – Rockstar's unblinking homage to New York and all its moods – is where it all started.

And now it's the star of GTA IV, the massive next-generation leap after many small (but hugely significant) steps on PlayStation2.

While much is familiar, despite its total reworking (even mob-boss Salvatore Leone's cliff-top mansion returns, for instance) much else is new. Perhaps the most obvious addition is the Statue of Happiness, Rockstar's wickedly sarky tribute to NY's massive metal-faced tourist attraction, on her own little island. Of course, the real Liberty Island was (with terrible irony) closed after the 2001 terrorist attacks, but Niko can actually try a little Happiness and go ashore. In fact, his climbing prowess means he can do considerably more than that around this vast statue. OK, there's a beautiful view of the skyscraper skyline now the fixed tourist telescopes work, but there's an even better one through a scope from a higher vantage point...

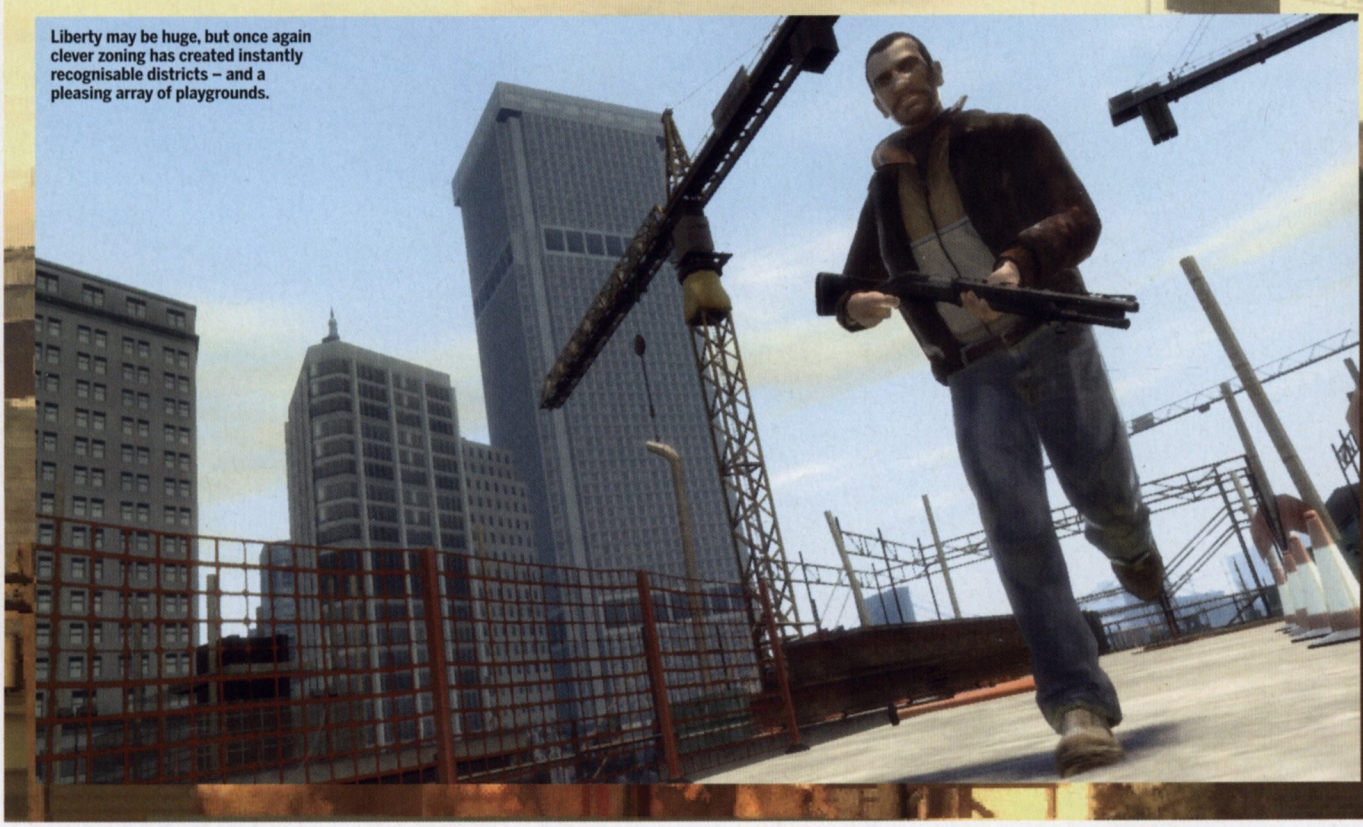
Fittingly, the bridge closures that limit Niko's early movements are not due to hurricanes, as in Vice City, or damage, as in GTA III, but because of terror threats. GTA IV's setting is *now*, mid-War On Terror.

Predictably, Rockstar doesn't avoid the subject just because so many people are ready and waiting to 'take offence'. Liberty is a fully-realised reality featuring hopeless dual-fuel cars, corrupt politicians and a television output smothered by 'America's Next Top Hooker' TV shows and immoral, sensationalist neo-conservative propaganda masquerading as news. We're assured it's a satirical parallel world.

Other new yet familiar landmarks include the multi-tiered steel lattice of the East Borough Bridge, the neon-frenzied Times Square-style Star Junction and the Carney Island Screamer – a mirror of the roller coaster on the real-life Coney Island, immortalised in The Warriors. And yes, we mean both the cult 1979 movie and the cult 2005 action adventure by... Rockstar.

So, this 're-imagined' Liberty City is split into four areas: Dukes, Broker, Algonquin and Bohan (Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx) and it's on an altogether different scale. It's way smaller than San Andreas' vast sprawl, but far more concentrated, more focused. And it's taller, much taller, than ever before. Niko's ability to shimmy along ledges, boost up drainpipes, clamber over fire escapes – or simply whir up skyscrapers on window washing platforms – combines with this new altitude to create some truly horrifying drops. This city is more dangerous than ever before, and in more ways than you think. CVG

There's a beautiful view of the skyscraper skyline now the fixed tourist telescopes work

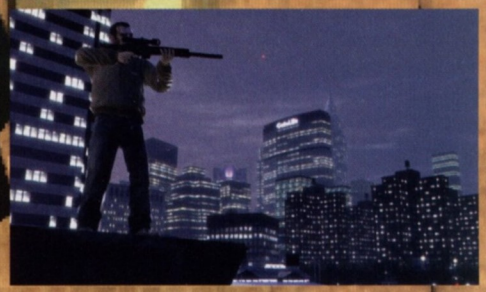


Liberty may be huge, but once again clever zoning has created instantly recognisable districts – and a pleasing array of playgrounds.

"Ain't got time to bleed"

Niko is a man of action, but unlike the throwback Blaine from Predator, he's a modern man who *makes* time to bleed. However, Niko doesn't have time to do laundry. He's a mess.

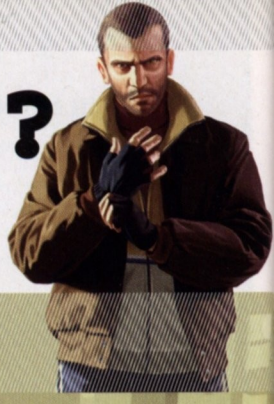
Even though it's possible to climb all kinds of structures and snipe lookouts, this is still GTA. You don't *have* to. There's *plenty* of weaponry more suited to crazed frontal assaults...



You haven't seen Liberty City until you've seen it at night. The sparkle, the roar, the wail of sirens... most of it's your fault.

WHO IS NIKO BELLIC?

And just what is it that he wants?



Unlike Grand Theft Auto's previous anti-heroes, Niko is not just some small time hood with a certain moral flexibility. He's a bad man, one-time people smuggler, killer and all-round criminal with a murky background. Certainly he has a military past – which explains his handiness with sniper rifles, rocket launchers and helicopters far better than, say, Tommy Vercetti's – but not in the most clean-cut of ways. There are few links to his past life somewhere in Eastern Europe in Liberty City, so his history is murky... yet the few people who *do* know him here mean that his future is going to get pretty badly stained too.

Pulled towards the city by the (somewhat exaggerated) tales of riches of his cousin, Roman. Niko is also on the lookout for 'a certain someone' from his past that he... well, we're not going to ruin it, but let's just say it's *not* to return the jam jar he borrowed some sugar in from that time he had to kill someone with sugar, but had run out. No.

As Niko you'll be working every angle – from calling in favours to hacking police computers, to good old-fashioned intimidation, disfigurement and mayhem – in order to locate the object of Niko's damaged affections.

Two things really stand out about Niko Bellic the man.

One, if you were to create a word that meant 'to act like Bellic,' it would come out as 'bellicose' – a word which already exists. A word that means *warlike*. Coincidence?

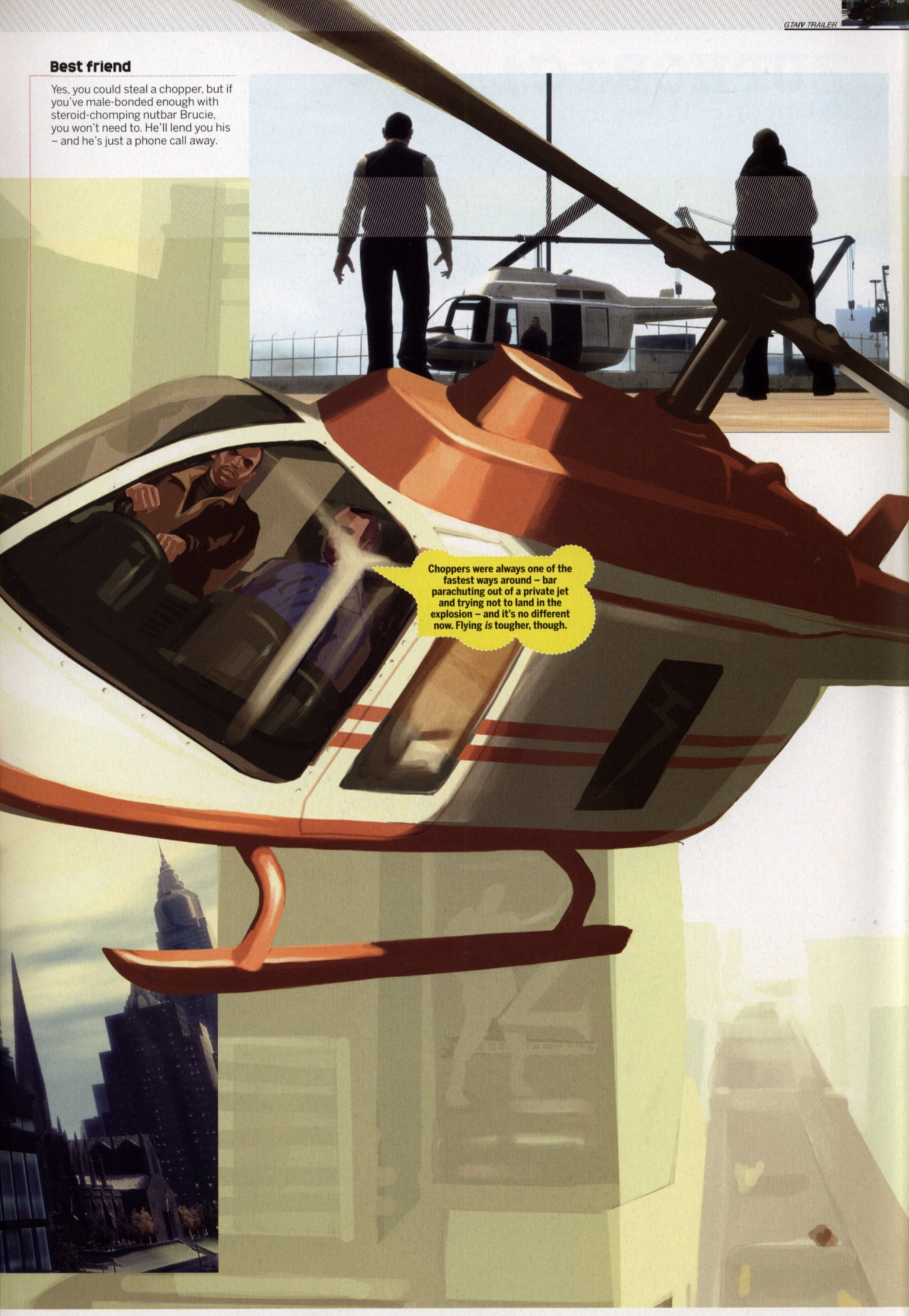
Probably not.

Two, he's a bit older than those around him, more experienced, more cunning. He uses this hard-won street smarts to run increasingly bloody rings around LC's gobby pretenders and faint-hearted blowhards. You can even see it in the way he walks – swaggers – through the city. It's part Robert De Niro in Mean Streets, part Al Pacino in Scarface... and all Rockstar, through and through.

Shooting forwards out of cars is just one of the abilities Niko brings to the table. And the streets, and to anyone unfortunate enough to be on them.

Best friend

Yes, you could steal a chopper, but if you've male-bonded enough with steroid-chomping nutbar Brucie, you won't need to. He'll lend you his – and he's just a phone call away.



Choppers were always one of the fastest ways around – bar parachuting out of a private jet and trying not to land in the explosion – and it's no different now. Flying *is* tougher, though.

EUPHORIC!

And in really terrible pain

You Rockstar has never been precious about technology, preferring to focus on creating gaming experiences – fun – rather than spend years re-inventing the wheel with yet another game engine. All the PS2-era GTAs, for example, were based on Criteron's Renderware tech – yes, *that* Criterion, of Burnout fame. Rockstar licensed their 'Middleware' chassis and built its own body on top.

And yet, for this next generation Rockstar has developed its own – RAGE, or the Rockstar Advanced Game Engine. Why? The reasons are manifold, but although it's not so precious about tech, Rockstar *is* fiercely independent. The GTA brand is owned and published by Take 2, so Criterion's acquisition by rival publisher Electronic Arts created a huge conflict of interests (in fact, EA has since tried to buy Take 2, and with it GTA, outright. An offer of $2 billion was turned down by Take 2's board of directors in February 2008).

But never fear: GTA IV has not just become a technological exercise for Rockstar. The RAGE engine has been tested already in Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis, while this time it's the physics system that's been bought in. And that's exciting because the system is NaturalMotion's Euphoria, a massively impressive technology that blends animations with on-the-fly AI decisions to create characters that balance, grab and generally try to save themselves. They're not just boneless ragdolls, and 'set pieces' don't need rigidly setting up beforehand. You may have seen it demoed elsewhere with Indiana Jones and Star Wars characters.

Consequently, the action in GTA IV is unlike anything you've experienced before. It's possible to clamber around the outside of vehicles – from trucks to helicopters – all the while swinging and balancing realistically. Drive into something fast enough and your battered body vaults through the shattering windscreen. Blow someone off the docks and they'll float. Shoot the exposed leg of an attacker in cover and they'll fall forwards, unbalanced – allowing you to ventilate their now-exposed head.

Stuck in a crowd? Shove everyone out of the way, and if things get more heated you can always target specific body parts for location-specific damage. Kneecap someone and they won't be running after you, for instance... and all this action is topped off with persistent bloodstains and splashes on bumpers, windscreens and – if things get too close – in your eyes. Sprays of blood on the screen only makes wasting someone that much harder... your honour. No, seriously. CVG

Climb over and into moving vehicles, then chuck the driver out – all in a day's work for Euphoria

Land, sea and sky

They may be familiar GTA elements, but this is the first time helicopters and boats have played a *key* part in Liberty City. Past versions have only really paid lip service.

Is that yoga practice (left)? An unhealthy fascination for shoes? Or is that Niko kicking seven shades of sorrow out of some poor dope? The arresting officer (above) is a clue. Those police types *hate* yoga.

You can always target specific body parts... kneecap someone and they won't be running after you

JUST FOR LAUGHS

It may look like the series has gone all serious. It hasn't

The looks are less cartoonish, but Rockstar's trademark humour hasn't gone anywhere. From throwaway jokes such as the name (and presumably nature) of a popular German import lager – Pißßwaßßer – to really central business such as the Tw@ internet café, Grand Theft Auto IV is brimming with the kind of gleefully immature jokes that defined its predecessors.

We snigger particularly hard at the dockside restaurant called The Poop Deck – even though it's simply a real term, and many galleons had them – and are quite impressed by the Russian-seeming, but American sounding, dilapidated sign (below). The middle letter has fallen out and now it says... Cherkov.

Of course, it was never just toilet humour alone that amused Rockstar, and it's not the case here either. There are puns, satirical barbs and pop culture references almost everywhere you look. Where else would honour cult leader Reverend Jim Jones (he of 1977's 900-victim Jonestown Massacre, a violently compulsory mass 'suicide' involving shotguns and cyanide) and sci-fi hack/Scientology creator L Ron Hubbard with *street names*? OK, it's dark, but it's funny – what kind of a damaged town would name its streets after, to be polite, *contentious* men like these? Liberty City, that's what kind of town. CVG

It's not just daft signs and spoof posters, of course. The (often dark) humour spreads to the actual gameplay too, such as in Niko's attempts to get home while stone drunk and even comedy club interludes.

Brimming with the kind of gleefully immature jokes that defined its predecessors

Pun-ative damages

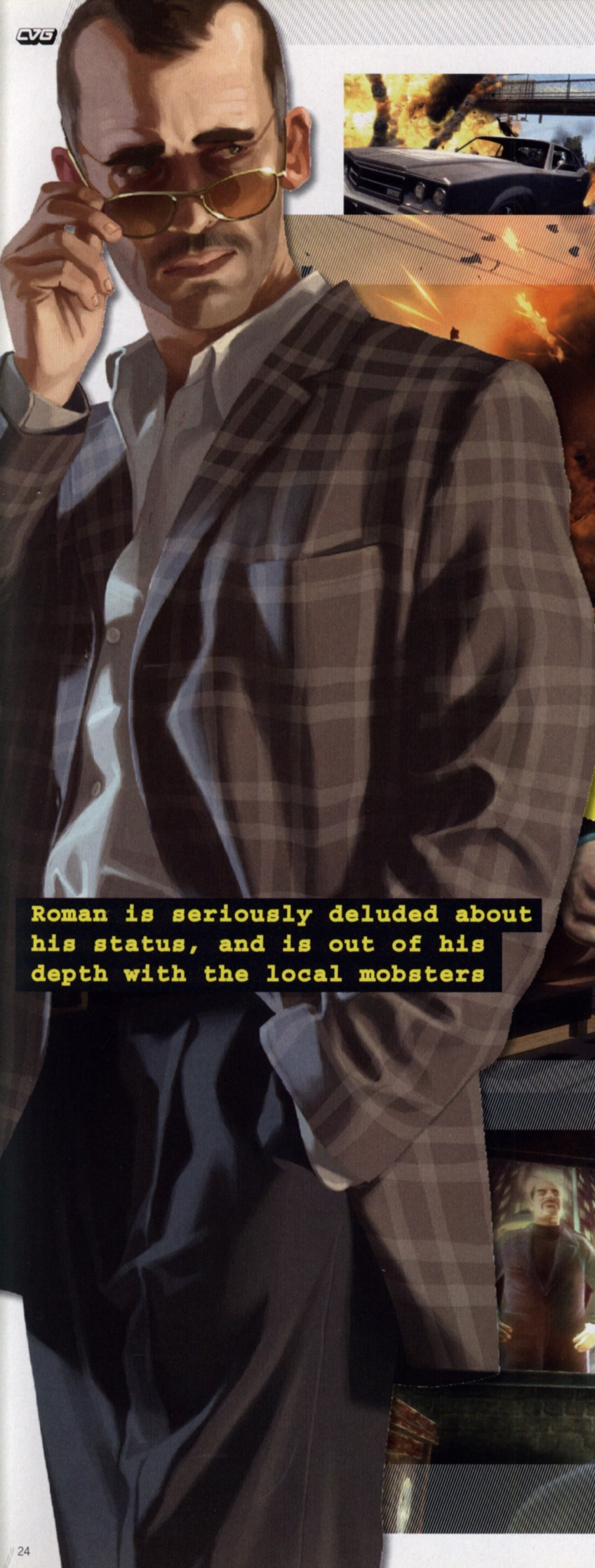
Yes, you read that (almost) right. In the best traditions of Gash and Screw This, this shop is called Jerk N Gizzada. And no, it's not what you may (reasonably) think – it deals in fresh food, not nasty mayo.

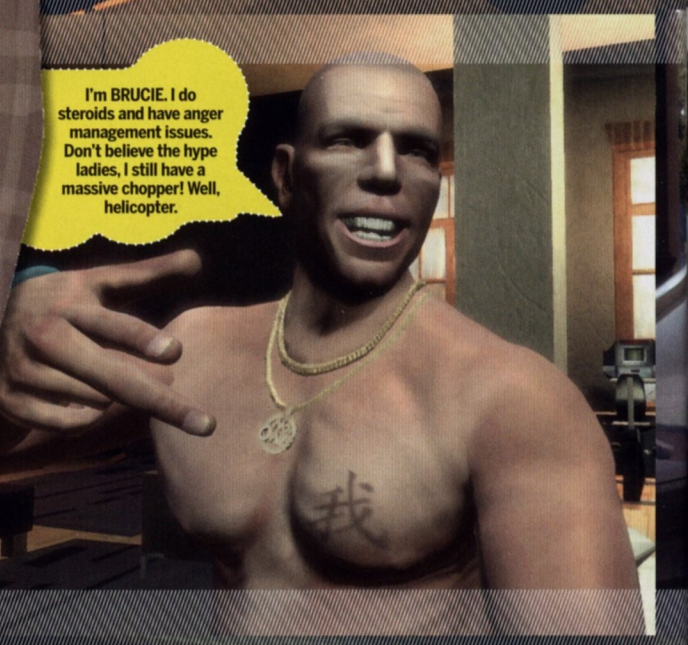
A Pay 'N' Spray could fix this, but shooting is – mercifully – no longer 'spray and pray'. Gunplay is massively improved by a clever new cover system and proper targetting.

Honestly, it's just this kind of renegade local business that's getting the whole neighbourhood a bad name. How am I, Little Jacob, supposed to sell guns with this kind of filth around?

Yay-Kaboom-Boom

If you're going to go out –and let's face it, you are – you might as well go out in a blaze of glory. GTA IV's new physics means those explosions are even more satisfying than ever.

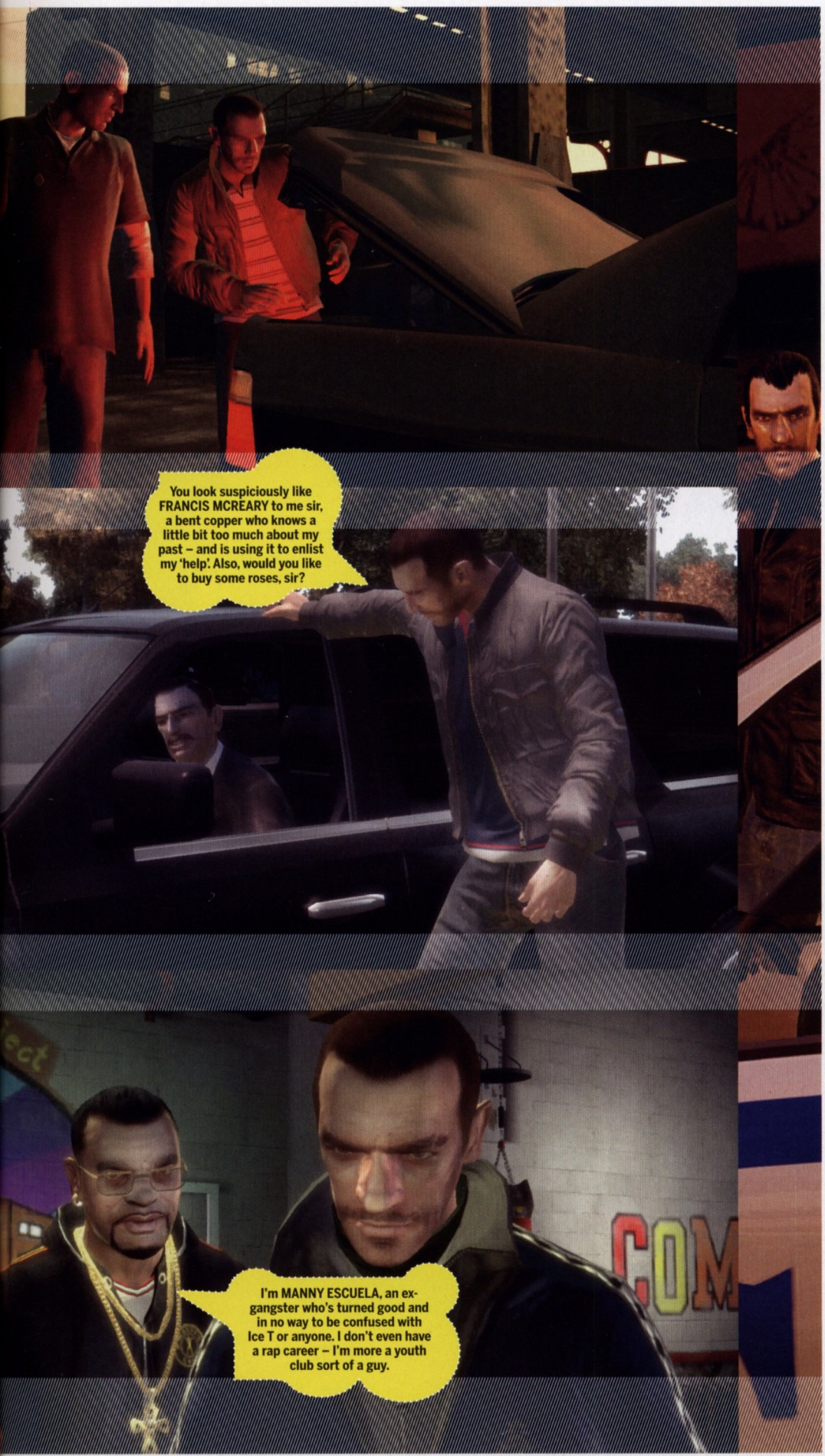




Roman is seriously deluded about his status, and is out of his depth with the local mobsters

FRIEND OR FOE?

It's not always easy to tell in Liberty City



Even before its release, GTA IV's wide cast of characters was causing chaos and confusion. And that's because there's a hell of a lot going on behind the scenes; there are hidden links and closeted skeletons in everybody's murky past.

Even *your* character, the mysterious Niko Bellic, is mysterious in a very different way to past protagonists such as Claude Speed (whose name we barely knew at the time) or Tommy Vercetti. Speed – The Guy In GTA III to most people – was mysterious because he never said a word, never revealed a thing. But that's because there was nothing to reveal. He was barely a character at all. Bellic is different.

Bellic has history.

Francis McReary, an unsavoury Liberty City cop, knows a bit too much of that history for Bellic to relax. Also, Francis is related to another associate of Niko's – Patrick 'Packie' McReary, who's essentially a bit of a psycho. And just to further complicate matters, Patrick's sister takes a shine to Niko at pretty much the same time as Patrick warns Niko off.

And talking of families, Niko is in America for the mansions and girls promised by his cousin Roman. But Roman is a seriously deluded about his stautus (he actually runs a scummy cab company) and is out of his depth with the local mobsters.

These crims include mafioso Ray and Phil Bell, his full-on bada-binging sidekick; Hummer-driving blowhard and gangsta-wannabe Playboy X and his lower-key, more calculating ex-jailbird associate, Dwayne; sozzled, all mouth and no trousers Russian mobster Vlad... you may be getting the impression that these guys, rather than embodying and glorifying violence, are pathetic and inadequate human beings. And you'd be right. Liberty City is a sink for a host of shambolic thugs, genuine psychos and the occasional amoral go-getter. Though of course, the latter ones have gone in to politics.

Chief among them is deputy mayor Bryce Dawkins, whose dedication to joyless abstinence for everyone is, as always, a guarantee of hideous excess, greed and ambition for himself.

He fits right in. EVO

LOOK BACK IN ANGER?

Not all the toys we've got used to have made it into the new game

There's much in GTA IV, but undeniably not as much as in San Andreas. Motorcycles, helicopters, speedboats, yachts, cars, trucks – all these things are present, and at an entirely new level. Vastly advanced graphics and a superior physics system see to that. But there are no planes, no jetpacks and – so it seems – not even any bicycles (though you'd have to be a special kind of insane to want to cycle around New York, let alone Liberty City).

What else is gone? There's no diving – hence no hidden objects in the harbour either – and all the massive farm vehicles associated with the countryside, such as combine harvesters, tractors and graders, have also been culled. However... with this generation of games there's always the possibility of extra vehicles as 'downloadable content'. Still not combine harvesters, mind – and Rockstar seems committed to redefining DLC with whole *cities* – but, well, never say never. Ever. CVG

Like you stole it

If you want speed, agility and the chance to slip away down narrow alleys, motorcycles are still king. GTA IV's selection appears to owe much to Kawasaki in particular.

Even a murderous criminal knows it's important to be safe in this hectic modern world. Hence the lid. Stack too hard it'll come off, though – perhaps for GTA V it'll have a chin strap?

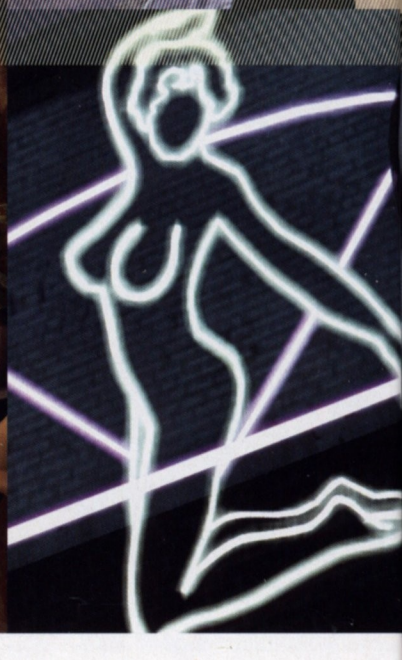
Never fear, off road fans – the hilarious Sanchez is back in sexy-slinky redesigned form. And just because there's no desert this time doesn't mean there's no dirt to rip up at all.

The hole truth

Everything is more realistic – to such a degree, in fact, that it drove Rockstar to a darker, tougher overall atmosphere simply because *everything* carried more weight.

Got the moves

The Euphoria physics don't just mean great explosions; they bring astonishing animations too, created under the aegis of one Sandy Roger. Truly a Rockstar name, there.

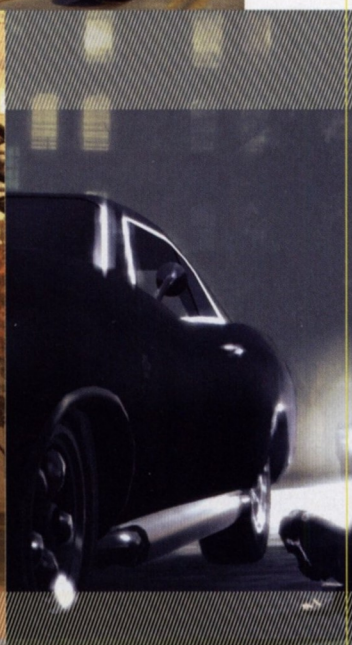


Cash point blank

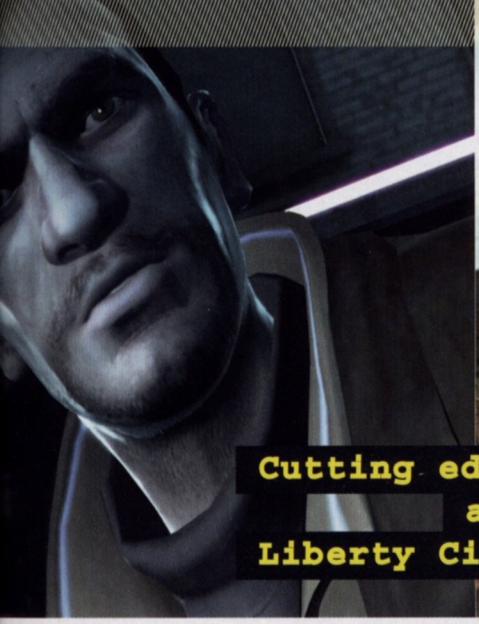
Cover is important this time, and Niko 'snaps' to it intelligently, as seen in titles such as Gears of War and Uncharted: Drake's Fortune. Though using it for muggings is new.

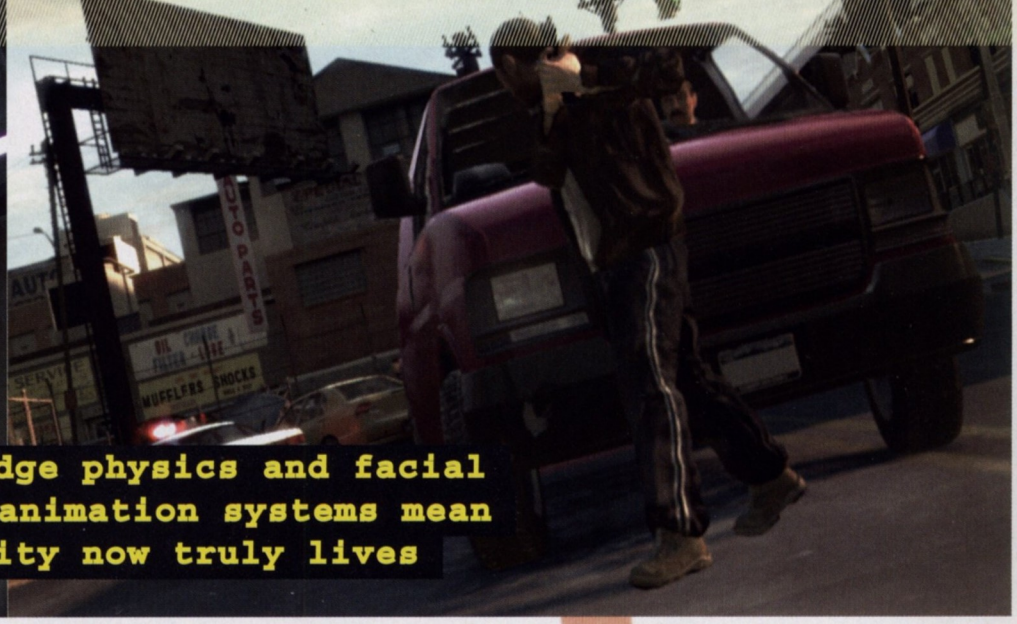
Face off

While the Euphoria system provides the stumbles and 'splosions, it's actually a separate system from Image Metrics that handles facial expressions. And it's *amazing*.



Why is nothing ever simple? An honest guy tries to whack some schmuck in the privacy of his own shadows, and boom! It turns out to be massively more complicated than that.





Cutting edge physics and facial animation systems mean Liberty City now truly lives

CH-CH-CHANGES

Was David Bowie singing about GTA IV? Well, no, but he could have been

Every new GTA has introduced many changes – some major, some minor – but none have done it like this since that infamous jump into 3D. Yes, some of IV's changes are down to the additional raw power available, and the huge advances in technology that can be run with it. But some are simply design issues.

Things to make it more fun.

Things such as hospitals no longer taking your weapons when you get wasted. Sure, this fitted with the world, but in reality it was easier to reload your last save than restock on guns – so most players did, breaking the consistency anyway.

Things such as not having to drive to a safe house with a sliver of post-mission health to save – only to get busted for a single star you hadn't even noticed, and lose either all weapons or all progress. GTA IV autosaves after each mission; even after important non-mission objectives, in fact. You no longer even have to do the whole mission at once, even. Set a phone reminder and you can pick up later where you left off.

Things like not having to commute miles to retry a mission. The half-baked 'Trip Skip' is gone. Fail now and a txt msg will aks, rtry? Reply in the affirmative and you're straight back in. Yeah, we hip.

Things like cops no longer busting you the second they touch the door – Niko raises his hands automatically, but you've a few seconds to act. Cops don't shoot over the smallest thing, either, and *your* guns come from car boot sales (really) now Ammu-Nation is gone.

Things like music no longer stopping outside of a car – you can listen on your mobile, even hear tunes leaking tinnily from other cars. Not parked ones, however. Liberty is no longer a city of idling vehicles. Steal a parked car and it takes longer – smash window, hotwire ignition – than an occupied one. See, it's not all grim in LC, is it? This will do wonders for pollution levels.

Drink it in

It's sliced in the familiar way into islands joined by bridges, but don't go thinking they're small. It takes over five realtime minutes to go round Algonquin – in a fast boat.

Liberty City was always far stormier than Vice or the cities of San Andreas. Heavy rain and freezing fog will play a big role in how things go down once again. Also, my back is killing me.

FEEL THE HEAT?

GTA continues to expand its filmic frame of reference

Anyone who's seen Michael Mann's classic 1996 heist flick Heat will find this moody image causing strange ructions in their souls. The straight-edged suits, the over-the-shoulder bags bulging with loot, the illegally-converted semi-automatics... hell, even the sense of weariness, of things coming to a close, is here; captured in the setting sun, in the lassitude of the onlooking villains, in those unchanging cityscape silhouettes and the flames.

Anyone who *hasn't* seen Heat – what are you thinking? Have you even *got* a soul? Get out and press a copy to your cold heart now.

Some of you may instead be thinking of Eidos' recent Kane & Lynch, which took Mann's film as its core inspiration, but that... well, let's just move on, shall we? CVG

As always, references come from all over: this chase is not so much Heat as Ronin, another fantastic De Niro crime caper.

MASS MURDER

Rockstar has revolutionised GTA with huge online multiplayer potential

Pimp your deathrattle

Even the simple Deathmatch mode is full of options for customisation. Fancy a rocket launchers-only battle for supremacy? You've got it.

Get your own way

It's possible to set waypoints on the map, which the GPS will then guide you to – and it can make as much difference in multiplayer as solo.

Races involve waypoints and even weapons pick-ups, but that doesn't mean the usual complication of pedestrians and heavy traffic is absent. Write off your car and it's up to you to comandeer another.

This has no fewer than ten multiplayer modes – you weren't just expecting a token Deathmatch option in a Rockstar game, were you?

After nothing for multiplayer fans in the main series since 1999 – bar the odd two-player knockabout in San Andreas – GTA IV rocks out with some truly heavy gear.

Modes like Cops 'n' Crooks, where two teams of four face off as natural enemies. Thing is, one of the crooks (it's randomly assigned) is a Don who must be delivered to a certain location, such as a speedboat on the docks. From there he must escape. If he dies it's game over, so teamwork (and sacrifice) is a must. Oh, and the police side can see the crooks on their radar, while the crooks are flying entirely blind...

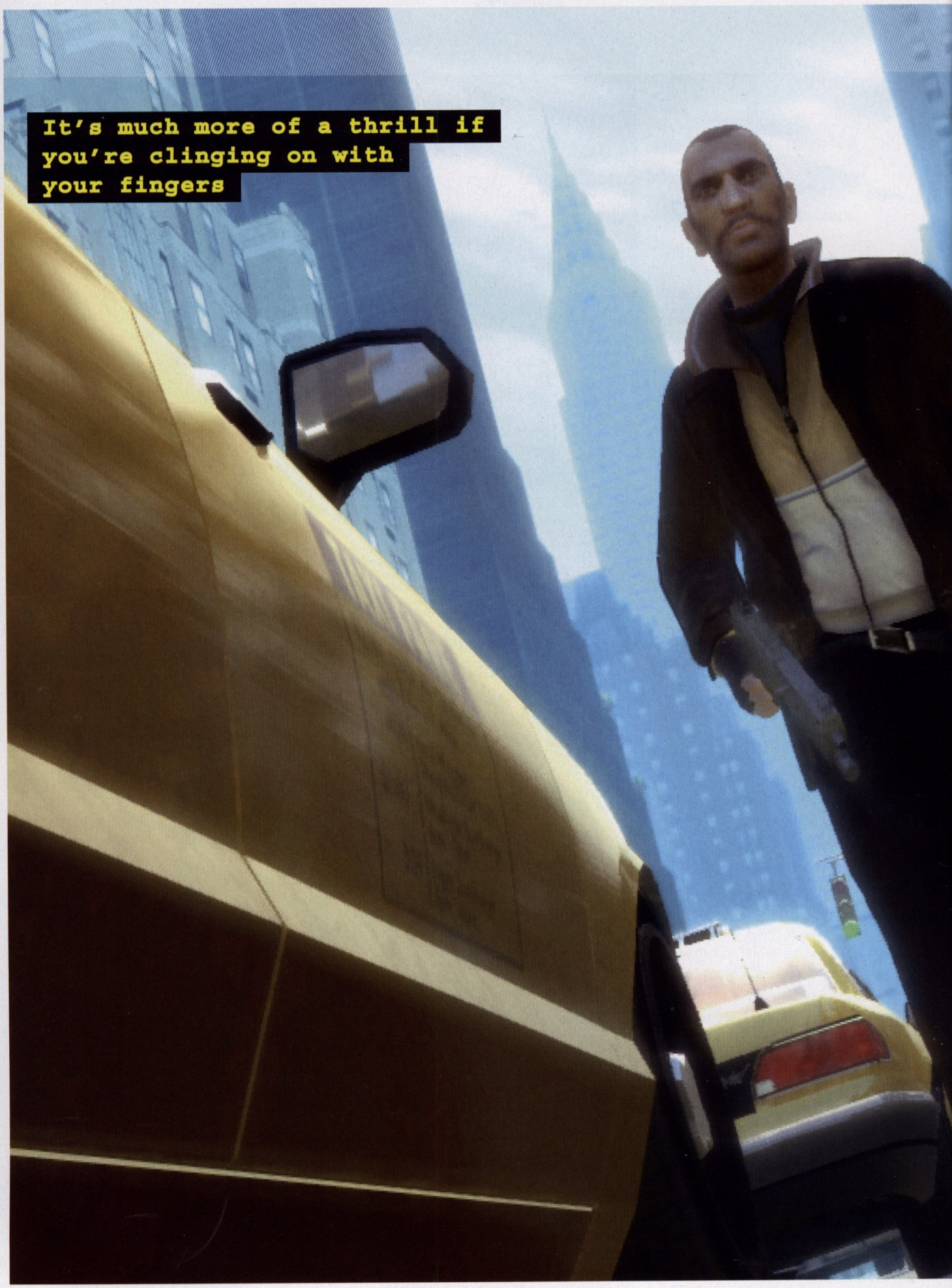
Then there's Mafiya (or Team Mafiya, co-op fans), where you perform objectives that pop up on your mobile – whacking informants, stealing cars, collecting/delivering drugs etc – against the clock. *And* against seven other psychos who're trying to beat you to it. It's a beautiful thing.

Or there's Hangman's Noose, a co-op battle of unbelievable proportions where you and your mates are tasked with protecting (AI) Kenny Petrovic in a chase across the city after a massive SWAT shootout at the airport.

Of course, there are Deathmatches, races and team & co-op variants too, all highly customisable, all highly chaotic... and all highly amusing. CVG

JESUS CHRYSLER!

A landmark game with all the landmarks you could want. Chrysler Building included



Big pointy building

San Andreas may have had some tall stuff, but GTA IV redefines what tall *means*. It's much more of a thrill if you're clinging on with your fingers, rather than floating on a jetpack, too.

Go anywhere with a view, any time, and it will take your breath away. And in this skyscraping city, almost everywhere has a view.

Photorealism? We'll take the beauty of artistic interpretation any day

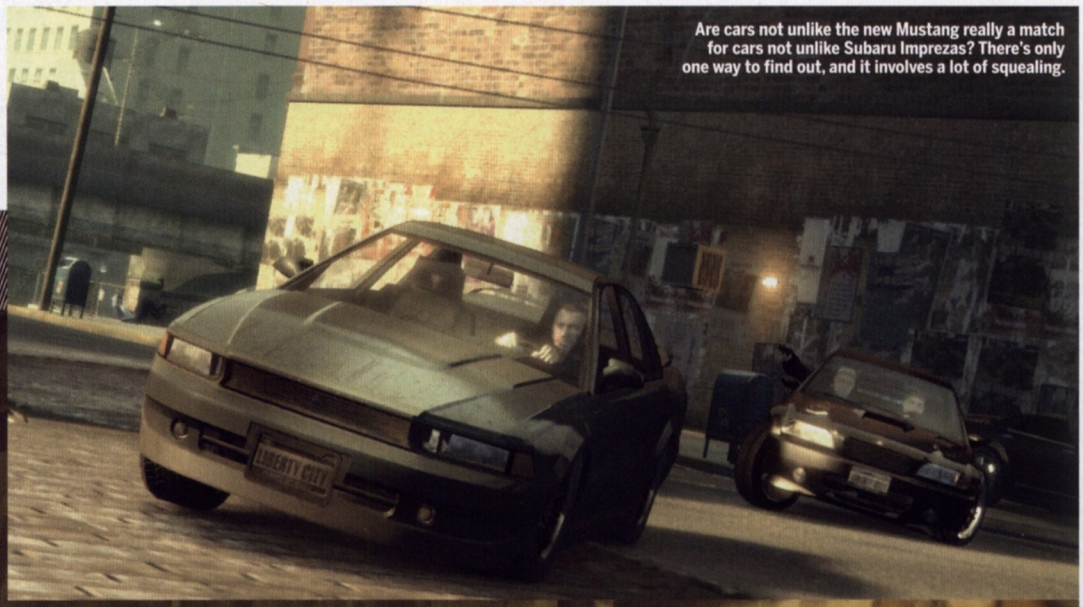
CHARIOTS OF IRE

Police cars are more than just a rapid set of wheels this time

Cop cars have always been have always been useful because they're fast and sweet-handling, though of course they're a little high profile. But they're *much* more useful in GTA IV. Every car has a terminal linked to the central police computer, making them excellent ways of finding addresses for people who otherwise don't want to be found. Regular cars now have satnav that'll lead you to an exact postcode – put the two together and life is sweet (for Niko, at least). Meanwhile, massively updated cop behaviour based on line of sight makes escaping with the car more intuitive (if you know those seedy little alleys and hidey-holes) and it's even a breeze to find a cop car in the first place. No need to start something: just make a hoax call and a car rolls up... convenient in Liberty City, remember but, like sniping from a supermarket roof or trying to jump a river on an Italian scooter, it's incredibly dumb in real life. Don't forget! CVG

Time to kill

The clock is even more important now. Meetings are frequently set for specific times – arrive late and you'll have to wait for the next opportunity. A fast car helps, obviously.



Are cars not unlike the new Mustang really a match for cars not unlike Subaru Imprezas? There's only one way to find out, and it involves a lot of squealing.

Every car has a terminal linked to the central police computer

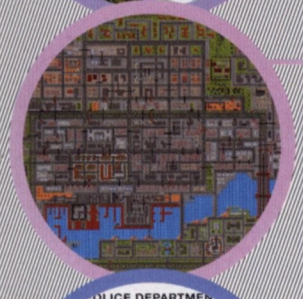
Now I have to escape the cop's circle of interest centred on my original crime. If they spot me again, the circle recentres – and if I commit more crime, the circle grows. Eek.

SERIAL KILLER

Grand Theft Auto has been all killer, no filler for 11 years. This is the story of how & why

Page 42

Think GTA IV is the fourth GTA? In true Rockstar style, it's not as simple as that. See our at-a-glance guide to completing your Grand Theft collection.



Page 44

We reveal the story of every release, detail the important changes as they occurred and turn you into an instant series authority.

Page 58

The first of our Words of Wisdom spots features none other than Rockstar's Dan Houser. GTA III blew our minds; but was it everything Dan promised?

Page 60

GTA is a genuine phenomenon. We examine exactly how and why it came to be more than just another successful game.

Page 69

Need proof that the world of GTA is like no other? Then what other game has its own urban myths? Separate the reality from fantasy!

Page 70

The Grand Theft Auto games are stuffed with amusing secrets – some deliberate, some not so. We reveal the top ten secrets ever.

Page 74

There's a world of extra content just waiting for you – from new cars to entire makeovers. Or how about building your own vehicle instead?

PHENOMENA

TIMELINE HISTORY INTERVIEW COMMUNITY MYTHS SECRETS DIY

Can you honestly say you've tried every single one... or even knew they were all possible? - page 60

TIMELINE

GTA IV? Ha! Did you know there are 13 Grand Theft Autos?

GTA

The first GTA emerges and its violent freedom sets a precendent of badly-informed outrage, melodrama and lies. Questions are asked in parliament. Stupid questions.

1997

London 1969

The series takes what now looks like an unusual detour from American lands into an Austin Powers-flavoured swinging London. The half-sized add-on didn't convince everyone.

1999

London 1961

Think downloadable content (DLC) is a cutting edge concept for the first decade of the 2000s? Think again. London 1961 was a download only add-on for the London add-on... how post-modern.

1999

GTA 2

Flashy lighting, a massive new city and the ability to play gangs against one another pleased many, but the tiny 2D action was starting to creak. Check page 130 to see how they run now...

1999

GTA

Confusingly just called Grand Theft Auto despite there being three (and a half) other versions already out there, this GameBoy Colour version was seriously terrible in all other respects too.

1999

GTA 2

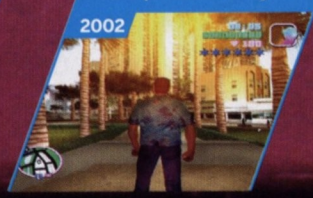
The first GameBoy Colour GTA was diabolical, so obviously a sequel was commissioned. It barely improved on anything, and even with extra traffic it was a hideously awkward ghost town.

2000

Vice City

As well as fixing many technical niggles, Vice City brought a zeitgeist-surfing, pop culture-referencing historical monster to glorious, pastel life – and sealed GTA's place in history.

2002



GTA Advance

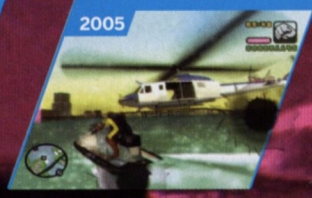
The first handheld version to be done properly, GTA Advance (unsurprsingly for the GameBoy Advance) was nevertheless a backwards step into two dimensions. See page 50 for more.

2004

GTA: VICE CITY STORIES

Another revisiting of familiar GTA ground, but who needs excuses to go back to Vice City? Yet... beyond being technically superior to LCS, had enough really changed? Answers on page 55.

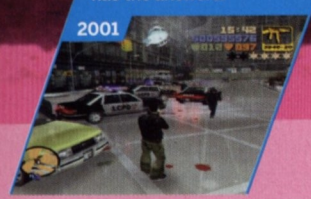
2005



GTA III

The 3D rebirth that made GTA a household name, it formed the Renderware chassis for the next two games. How did Rockstar do it? Is GTA III worth revisiting now? Page 144 has the answers.

2001



San Andreas

So ambitiously huge it's frankly a thing of wonder it worked at all, SA put everything but the kitchen sink into one Renderware-powered swansong. But the tech clearly couldn't be pushed any further.

2004

GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

At last, a 'proper' 3D version of Grand Theft Auto for handheld – and at last, a proper reason to buy a PSP. Check out page 174 to see what the critics made of portable Liberty at the time.

2005

GTA IV

Biggest event of 2008? Though originally on for the end of '07, the first 'Next Gen' iteration since 2001 is upon us. You've seen our exhaustive GTA IV media-gasm (starting page 8) already, right?

2008

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Elsewhere, Apple revolutionised being annoying on the bus with the first iPod...

The world's changed in 11 years and, according to a shrill minority, it's because GTA has eroded civilisation to the point of collapse. So what *has* been happening in the real world?

1997, the year of the first game, saw the first **clone** – Dolly the Sheep who, amazingly, was the spitting image of the donor. Less amazingly, she looked exactly like all other sheep too. **Princess Di** died in an accident caused, according to Mr Al Fayed, by nearly everyone, while the **Heaven's Gate** cult suicided in California in order to board an alien spaceship behind a comet. Tony **Blair** was elected, **Harry Potter** debuted and the **PSone** was still a match for most PCs.

By 2001 and GTA's move into more realistic 3D, the **PS2** – memorably described as 'Darth Vader's toaster' – was already too established for the new **Xbox** and **Gamecube** to make a dent. Elsewhere, Apple revolutionised being annoying on the bus with the first **iPod**, the Pope officially discovered **email** and a murderous idiot called **Richard Reid** tried to blow up an plane with his shoe.

By the time of the sublime 80s stylings of Vice City, the **Larsen Ice Shelf** began to melt because we don't recycle enough of those green plastic recycling boxes. US journalist **Daniel Pearl** was beheaded by murderous idiots in Pakistan and two other murderous US idiots were arrested for the '**Beltway Sniper**' attacks performed bravely from the boot of a **uneconomical** car. The world's first 'space tourist' Mark Shuttleworth took a $15m rocket ride – ironically in a Russian **Soyuz** – and Myra Hindley finally died.

For the last major title before GTA IV – San Andreas in 2004 – the world faced the Indian Ocean tsunami, the appalling Madrid bombings for the majestic cause of **something or other** and genocidal idiot Slobodan Milosevic, Yugoslav leader during the **Balkan** conflicts of the 90s, escaping his cell by dying. Very few of these heavily-reported events were nice, though the repeated exposure **won't influence** any youngsters as none of them have so far been specifically linked to GTA. CVG

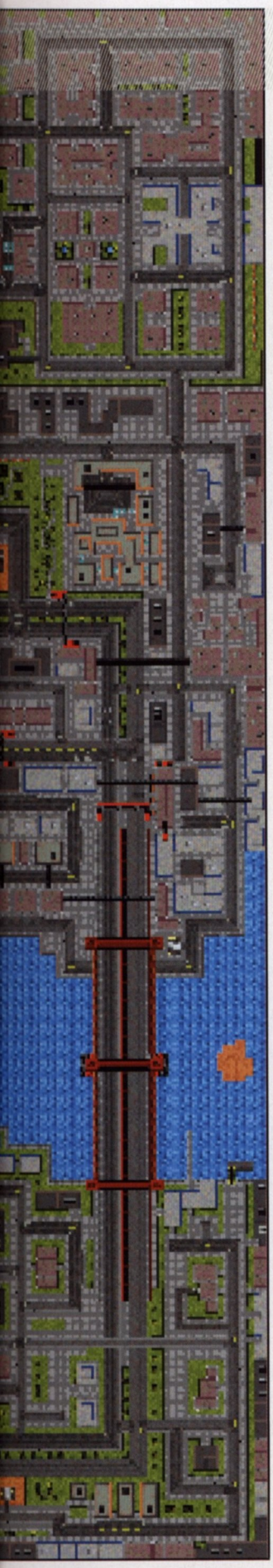
GTA STORY

From the original 2D Grand Theft Auto to the latest 3D glories of GTA IV, this is the story of one game with 13 different faces. See how it all began, and just how far it's come.

Crime doesn't pay. But virtual crime? That does pay. And by the bucket-load. Even by the time the series reached Florida, it was breaking records in a major way, with Vice City becoming the fastest-selling PS2 title ever – until San Andreas beat it. And that's despite four million Americans pre-ordering Vice City, and a million more buying it upon its release (here in the UK, the Miami Vice-vibed title shifted over a quarter of million units over a *single weekend*). Both GTA III and Vice City went on to sell well over 10 million units each. San Andreas, meanwhile, sold one million copies in just nine days in the UK alone, going on to top 15 million sales around the world. Astonishing. Total sales of the Grand Theft Auto games are now in excess of 65 million copies.

So GTA is big, but it's about more than just units shifted and cash generated. Indeed, Vice City's 2002 release prompted TIME magazine to say that it "will force us to realise that video games aren't toys anymore; they're sophisticated, thought-provoking entertainment for grownups. At their best, they're art." Not everybody has caught on, even now – six years later and with the release of GTA IV – but it can't be much longer before games are accepted as entertainment for adults. If only because all the non-gaming haters will die out... CVG

"one of the most original innovative and controversial releases ever."



GRAND THEFT AUTO

PSone / PC / Dreamcast / October 1997

The 18-certificate gameplay of GTA IV is the pinnacle of an eleven-entry series that began life in 1996 on the Commodore Amiga. As the Amiga grew old and technologically infirm, GTA's creator, DMA Design, switched the development of the original game to the PC. Grand Theft Auto eventually hit the PSone in 1998, where the mighty Official PlayStation Magazine praised it to the heavens as "one of the most original, innovative, technically impressive and controversial PlayStation releases ever".

Looking back, the core gameplay elements that define Grand Theft Auto are present in this first title. The game cast you as a small-time car thief with big-time ambitions. Featuring six levels split between three cities – Liberty City, San Andreas and Vice City – there were over 200 vehicle-based tasks to complete. These missions (received via payphones) were often timed, challenging you to ferry passengers across the city chunks, assassinate rival criminals or act as a getaway driver. Complete a mission and you earned greenbacks for your efforts – amass $1,000,000 and you could advance to the next city.

The appeal of GTA wasn't the way that it looked. The game was functional rather than fancy, using a top-down 2D perspective and crude sprite-based graphics. Instead, GTA's strength lay in the vast scope of its gameplay and in the freedom it gave you to stray from the guiding mission structure. You could steal cars and sell them at the docks – there were over 20 different vehicle types in each city (all driveable); or set fire to drum-banging groups of Hare Krishna worshippers. You could even rampage through crowds of Saturday shoppers with a machine gun.

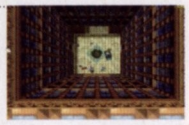
GTA gave you entire cities to act disgracefully in, cities that felt real and alive. It revelled in detail. Pedestrians wandered the streets, cars obediently halted at traffic lights, ambulances and fire engines responded to death and fiery destruction. To play this game with any success, you needed to spend time learning the layout of the city to avoid the police, perfecting Micro Machines-style driving on the wide freeways and narrow side-streets. It was easy to ignore the fact that GTA's gameplay was actually all-too-repetitive. But at the same time, it was also irresistibly immoral, allowing you to live a cartoon life of crime complete with Bullitt style car chases and Heat-style shoot-outs.

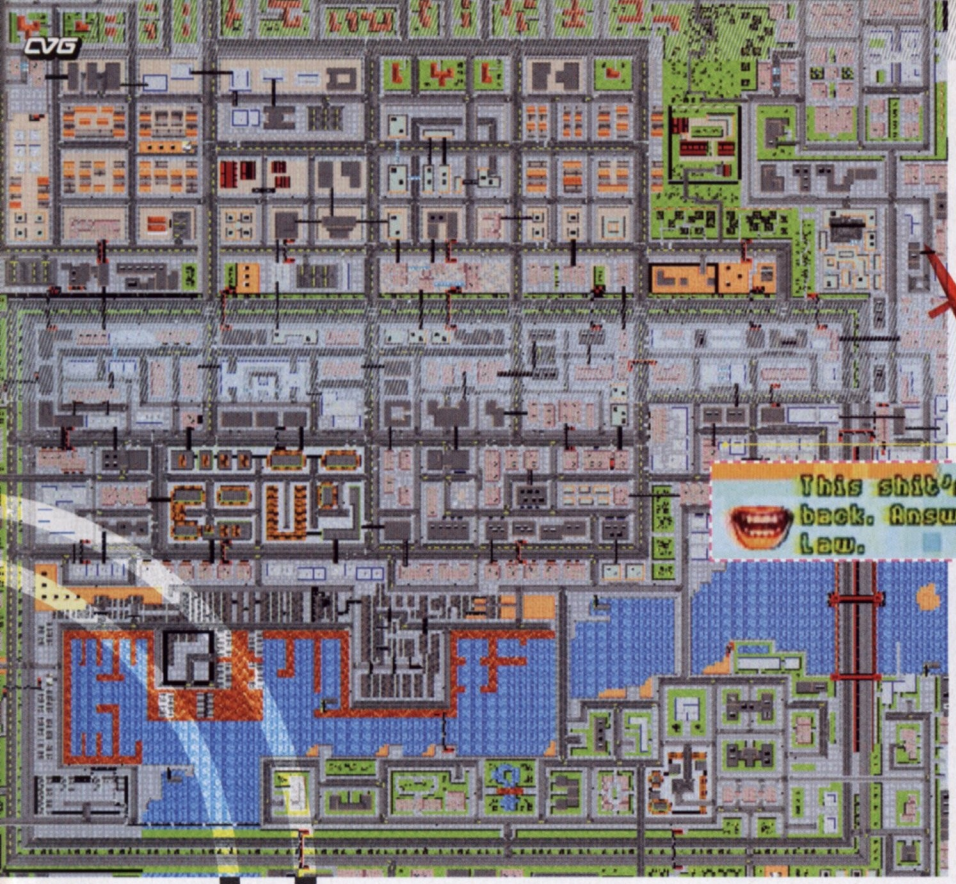
18 Certificate Gaming

Grand Theft Auto was originally granted an 18 certificate by the BBFC, and with this rating it was considered suitable for supply only to adults. Its supply to anyone under the age of 18 would therefore be deemed an illegal act subject to criminal penalties. The maximum penalty for supplying a computer game in breach of its classification is six months imprisonment, a £5,000 fine, or both. Parents should be aware of this.

Cursed precursor

Though top down and 2D, the original contained almost all of GTA's most loved features. Even 'copters! You couldn't steal them, mind....





The first game featured three huge cities – the now very familiar Liberty City, Vice City and San Andreas.

Inevitably, GTA's degenerate gameplay (killing cops, murdering passers-by, stealing cars) stirred up an international controversy. Despite its 18 rating, there were protests against it in Britain and Australia, while other countries – such as Brazil – banned the game altogether, imposing fines on anyone who tried to sell it.

So great was the hoo-ha that GTA's seediness even became a topic for discussion in the House of Lords, where crusty peers questioned its impact on impressionable youngsters. An outraged Lord Campbell of Croy asked whether: "[the government] propose to modify the system of classification under which the computer game Grand Theft Auto, which allegedly involves thefts of cars and driving at excessive speeds to evade police cars, has been granted an 18 certificate?"

You can just feel the evil seeping from it, can't you? Go on... steal a car. You know you want to.

The word 'allegedly' implies Lord Campbell had not actually played GTA and was irritated by his assumptions rather than directly annoyed by its often indistinct mayhem. Lord Campbell also didn't mention what age people *should* be assumed to be adults, if not at 18. Retirement, perhaps?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office (Lord Williams of Mostyn) replied at some length to Lord Campbell's excellent question, and basically said: "No."

Ignorance is bliss

Lord Campbell, still piqued, would not be swayed from his moral course. "Should criminal offences be allowed to be presented as games?" He ranted. "Is the Government now ready for computer games on burglary and mugging, bearing in mind it is mostly young people who play these games and not the adults who bought them?" Lord Avebury replied: "Demonstration copies of Grand Theft Auto are being distributed with magazines. My 12 year-old son, who has played it, assures me he is not motivated to go out and steal cars." Could it be that criminals are not innocent victims of games, but *criminals*? That ordinary gamers will remain just that after playing GTA? The debate raged – the moral minority had clung to an anti-GTA bandwagon without actually seeing or playing it, setting a strong precedent. With its profile boosted by the controversypress, GTA strode on to become one of the biggest-selling PSone titles of the year. Adults openly adored it, while kids sent their moms into HMV to buy it for them, so they could adore it in secret. CVG

GTA: LONDON 1969

PSone / PC / April 1999

Yeah baby! All the teeny-tiny thrills of GTA, but set in a virtual 1960s London.

Originators DMA morphed into Rockstar, and GTA was transformed into the big-bloused, bellbottomed GTA: London 1969 – all the car-jacking, pedestrian-squashing gameplay of the original but with a 1960s London vibe.

Far from being a true successor, GTA: London 1969 was essentially a stylistic add-on that required ownership of the original game. The changes were mostly cosmetic – Chevrolets became Capris (or non-copyright-infringing 'Crapis'), Greyhound buses were transformed into the capital's iconic Double Deckers and the mission dialogue was now inspired by slang from classic Brit TV and movies such as The Professionals and The Italian Job.

But underneath the paint-job, the gameplay was identical. While GTA: London 1969 featured a whole new environment, the go-anywhere, do-(almost)-anything gameplay remained. As did the familiar top-down 2D perspective, the phone-based mini-missions and the radio stations, now complete with hand-picked '60s tunes. But for half the price of GTA, you were treated to half the content – GTA: London 1969 only featured one city map (compared to GTA's three). Admittedly, the visuals were a little better, the frame rate a little faster. But this semi-sequel was still an ugly duckling of a game, boldly trading on its gameplay rather than its graphics. Sold for only £20 (and later in a handy Director's Cut set with the original Grand Theft Auto), GTA: London 1969 offered cheap, extended GTA play. With hindsight it was a cash-cow, designed to hold our collective attention until the sequel arrived six months later... CVG

GTA2

PSone / PC / Dreamcast / October 1999

The design brief for GTA2 was obviously to make it 'bigger', 'badder' and 'better'. But at first glance, little seemed to have changed. Hitting at the end of 1999 (Tomb Raider sparked the 3D revolution as early as 1997), GTA2 used the familiar top-down perspective, albeit with more detail. Again, missions involved phones and an amoral mix of assassinations, bombings and getaway driving. And as before, you were free – do missions, joyride or simply hunt for secrets, bonus objectives and hidden vehicles. Yet GTA2 also tweaked and added to this core. Set in a near-future metropolis with three enormous areas (Downtown, Residential and Industrial) the AI had been hugely improved; a high 'wanted' level would see SWAT, FBI and finally the Army join the overstretched cops after you, while in addition to stealing cars, GTA2 also introduced the ability to work semi-honestly as a taxi driver, jump across rooftops or even bolt a set of machineguns to your car. Rockstar also added extra weapons including a silenced Uzi, Tazers, Molotov cocktails and landmines. *Landmines*!

The familiar GTA gameplay was also complicated by the presence of no fewer than seven gangs. Each area was controlled by three, and you could work for any or all of them.

Respect the cock

Rockstar's mantra was this: "Respect is Everything". Why? Crucially, by allying yourself with one (say, the Zaibatsu), you upset their rivals (the Yakuza / Loonies). Gaining Respect from one gang meant loosing it from the others, which in turn could make your life hard. And because you needed to work for more than one gang in order to make enough money to progress, a certain degree of back-stabbing and betrayal was necessary...

While GTA2 was an improvement, many were disappointed. The novelty was wearing off and its controversial gameplay, ageing 2D form, huge size

Kill Rockstar!

"I'm for freedom of speech but... Grand Theft Auto is heinous." So ranted Washington Post columnist Mike Wilbon on ESPN's commentary show, Pardon The Interruption. "The people who put it together should be stoned in the street." Yes, that'll stamp out street violence.

"An adult audience wants more than furry animals bounding over gaudy platform worlds."

Call the cops! GTA2 introduced further angry parties beyond the familiar police – the SWAT, the FBI and the Army.

and freeform(ish) gameplay didn't generate the raw excitement that they once had. Despite its innovations, the sequel did not reinvent Grand Theft Auto – it merely tuned it, refined it. Sales were poor in comparison, and nothing like what Rockstar expected. Or wanted. What the public (if not the House of Lords) really wanted was Grand Theft Auto 3D – all the lawless thrills of GTA and its expanded, extended sequel, but with the immersive, believable graphics of the much admired Driver... CVG

Dead, rich and unarmed – and it's only quarter to ten in the morning. GTAIII proved worth the wait.

GTAIII

PS2 / PC / Xbox / October 2001

One PS2 and a year later, GTA in 3D is precisely what Rockstar delivered. But few expected a game with so much detail and depth. Again, the gameplay dynamics in GTA III are almost identical to its predecessors – starting on foot, you can drag hapless motorists from passing vehicles and then drive off into the vast and virtual Liberty City (one of the three cities that featured in the original GTA). As per usual, various paying jobs are available via payphones and you can stray from the mission structure to raise a little unscripted hell. Once again too, the environment was blessed with an extraordinary degree of detail, intelligent AI and more filth and wicked brutality that ever before.

This is classic GTA with a 3D face. GTA III's detailed Liberty City is irresistibly immersive. Viewed via a third-person perspective, the posh suburban areas contrast with grimy downtown districts; Triad gangs operate out of Chinatown laundries, while sharply-dressed Mafia kingpins live it up in hilltop mansions calling themselves 'businessmen'. The city feels alive, almost real. Day turns to night as you play, sunshine turns to rain. And fog. Lots of fog. Warring gangs and commercial radio station chit-chat add to the big-city atmosphere. If you stop and stand still, you can expect GTA III's digital life to go on without you. And eventually steal your car.

As usual, most of the game's action takes place in a variety of vehicles, each one with handling that feels realistic

You dumbass!

A car thief in the US state of Pennsylvania was caught after he left a rental receipt for GTAIII inside one of the vehicles he had stolen. Police were able to nab Jabari Wallace, 24, of Warrington (Penn) using the receipt from Blockbuster Video, which helpfully detailed both Wallace's name and his home address. "He did this because he wanted to be a big man in the neighbourhood," said the right honourable Judge Kenneth Biehn at Wallace's trial.

Bigger than Snake

GTA III shifted over seven million copies on PS2 alone, winning the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association's first 'Diamond Million Seller' award. Incredibly, GTA III appeared in the top ten of the official Chart Track listings for a over 50 weeks. Not even the hotly anticipated PS2 exclusive Metal Gear Solid 2 would compete with that.

Oh, the trouble she's caused... GTA III's (rather manly) hookers, who're up for a bit of car-rattling how's-your-father – allied to the ability to kill anyone and take whatever money they leave – led to tabloid meltdown.

enough, but has an arcade edge that favours easy street-cruising and frantic car chases. On foot, things are a little less perfect. Aiming the weaponry can often be imprecise and when some missions hinge on your ability to hit-and-run, this can be frustrating. But the crime missions give GTA III the feel of a gangster movie.

A (big) bit on the side

You can collect and sell cars, find hidden packages and locate hidden vehicles. And should you want to, you can live life as a taxi driver or play at being a paramedic, ferrying injured citizens to the hospital in a wailing ambulance. Or be a fireman, squirting out car fires with your massive pump. Or a vigilante, squishing criminals in a cop car. Or a psycho, running heinous rampages. Or a stuntman, squealing through the streets looking for sheet glass to shatter and ramps to hit. Or a pilot... you may think that planes, New York-style skyscrapers and a 2001 release were a bad mix, and yes – the terrorists scored another little victory here. Changes were made. But it was to the cop car liveries, not the Dodo. The wings on this horribly tricky light plane (registration Y-ME369) were clipped well before 9/11 – perhaps because of what lurked behind the reservoir of the Cochrane Dam...

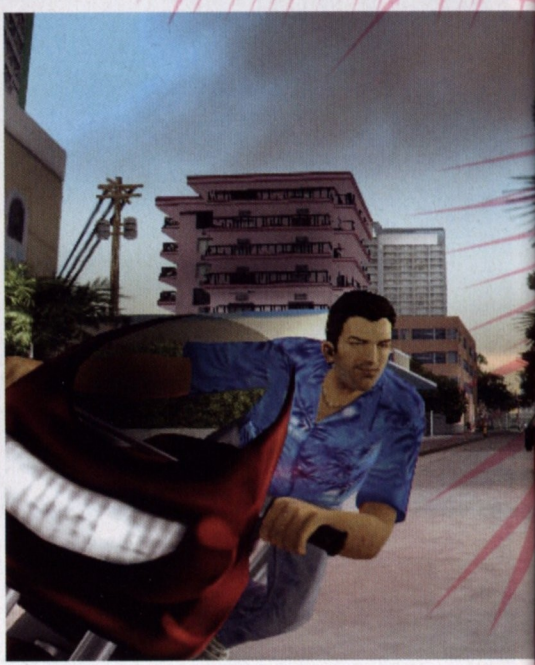
GTA III just keeps on giving. It also illustrates how gamers have changed over the years. A demanding adult audience now wants more than cute furry animals (armed with oversized weaponry) bounding around gaudy platform worlds in search of floating coins and orbs.

And let's face it, the PlayStation2 was a big part of turning this successful and respected (by knowledgable people rather than ignorant and self-righteous moralists) series into a phenomenon. The PS2 built a bigger, hipper and (to generalise) more culturally savvy audience than powerful but cantankerous PCs ever could. And, again counter to the proudly stupid assumptions of the "I'm all for the rights of the individual, but that individual is me" brigade, not all PS2 owners are goggle-eyed, blank slate 12 year olds.

If Gran Turismo satisfied players' need for fast cars and Pro Evolution Soccer sated their dreams of football glory, then GTA III recreated the gritty, violent action of gangster movies; the wild chases of cops 'n' robber shows of many a childhood. It may be seedy and nasty, but it's proud of it like Bodie and Doyle were, delivering 'escapist' entertainment that lets you play a sinner in Paradise Lost – rather than standing by, tutting, and watching everyone else have all the fun. CVG

"It doesn't just blur the boundaries between games and pop culture. It decimates them."

Bikes! They nearly made it into GTA III, only the animations weren't quite ready. By Vice City, Rockstar had it nailed.



Seven out of ten murders are committed in tracky bottoms – fact. Vice City introduced the novelty of job-specific costume changes, something San Andreas would later take much further.

GTA VICE CITY

PS2 / PC / Xbox / October 2002

All of which brings us to 2002 and to Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. A prequel story-wise, rather than a sequel, this is GTA III with tubular bells on. Yes, it bore all the now-familiar gameplay elements, but it streaked up in its tasselled slip-ons with a ton of extra content and an irresistible 80s kick that takes its cues from (among others) Miami Vice, GoodFellas and Scarface. Not simply a game, Vice City offers you 1980s themed, 'Greed is Good' digital role-playing. It polishes GTA III's best bits and then adds even more to the mix – such as the ability to own property and make money from businesses. As our wise friends on the Official PlayStation2 Magazine suggested at the time, this is a game that: 'doesn't just blur the boundaries between video games and popular culture, it decimates them."

Hidden depths Play the central missions then seek the secret bonus extras.

You may have forgotten just how much stuff Vice City added, especially in the wake of San Andreas. It was a *long* way from being just a pinked-out GTA III with bikes. Trust us.

Need convincing? To get into some cold, hard numbers for a second, at over a hundred vehicles, Vice City had *two and a half times* as many as GTA III. It also had 40 weapons as opposed to 11; more than 60 internal locations instead of, well, none; and was at least twice the size of Liberty City. You had to contend with a brief, postcard-style loading screen every now and then, but only when crossing the bridges between the islands. It wasn't too great a price to pay. Want more of those devastating digits? OK.

More than just bikes

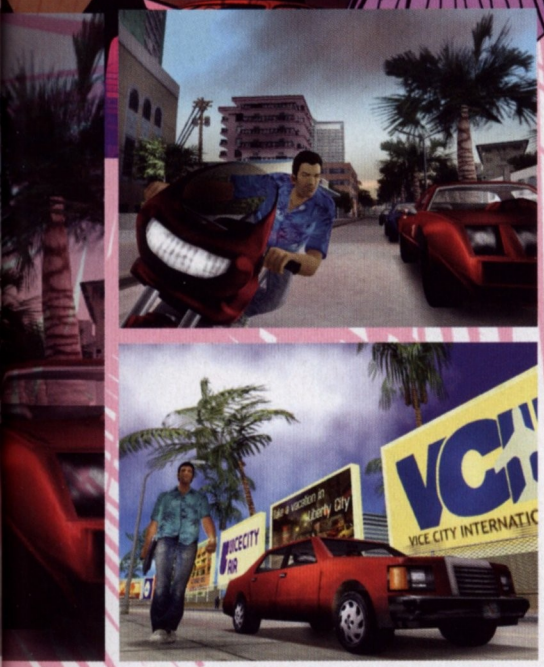
Vice City had eight hours of scripted speech, nine hours of radio, 80 types of pedestrian (including rollerbladers and people who looked suspiciously like Michael Jackson and David Hasselhoff), 8000 pedestrian comments and one targeting reticule. The last may not sound like much, but VC's lock-on was a huge improvement over the haphazard shooting of old – though it still didn't totally fix the awkward combat.

Vice City offered many more minor, yet equally welcome tweaks. For instance, you could now fire weapons forwards from bikes and boats instead of just out to one side, you could kneel behind cover (though not move once you'd done it), shoot people through car windows, snipe vehicle tyres and – most usefully – leap from moving cars. This

HAND THEFT AUTO

Nintendo's GameBoy handhelds haven't been ignored

GTA has not always turned out well. The original, appearing on GameBoy Colour in 1999, looked nice but had horrible controls, empty streets, an inaccurate and woefully incomplete manual, no maps and dreadful sound. It's not entirely unfair to say that it sucked, but it is hard to say why anyone bothered making a sequel for GBC in 2000 – GTA 2 had more traffic but ran dreadfully as a consequence. Still, that 'anyone' was Tarantula Studios rather than originators DMA, so you can't blame them. Happily, the GameBoy Advance version of 2004 (handled by Digital Eclipse and confusingly also called Grand Theft Auto) was excellent, capturing the original top-down madness in over 300 missions. Arguably, it's now the 2D version of choice.



GTA SAN ANDREAS

PS2 / PC / Xbox / October 2004

was particularly handy if you were being shunted sidways along the speeding highway by a phalanx of angry SWAT vans, burning furiously and about to blow at any second, or slithering horribly towards one of Vice's lovely, sparkly bodies of water.

No, you still couldn't swim, but previously you could only sit in the car and await your doom – you had to be stationary to get out. At least now you could leap out when things got too hot and wet and take your chances.

This edition also upped the city simulation, too, bringing us pedestrians – and police – who interacted with each other to a far greater degree, rather than wandering around being a simple background for our idiocy. Watch and the pedestrians don't simply wander up and down but sit and laze on benches, chat to each other, read papers, rollerblade, fight with one another, have accidents, commit serious crimes and get chased down (and often run over) by the cops.

There's a much greater sense of a city living around you, and the technical improvements – such as better textures, smoother animations and even quicker streaming – means it pretty much keeps up even as you scream down its seafronts, flat out and wheelying on a stolen PCJ.

Go back to GTA III now and you'll be surprised by how basic it was in comparison – and especially by how much the camera has improved. Go back to Vice City, however, and you'll be surprised by how much fun it remains. CVG

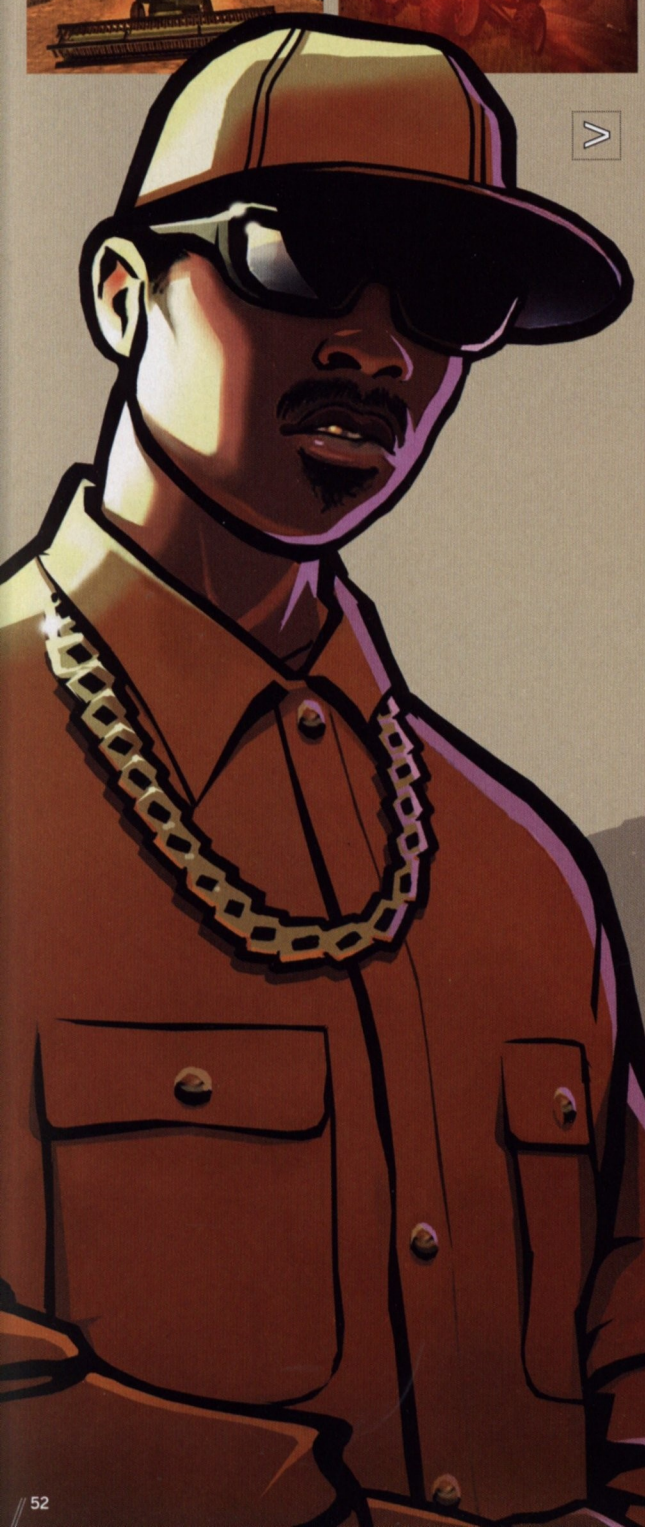
San Andreas was the big one. And in so many ways. This expanded the GTA idea from a city to a state, introducing countryside for the first time to a game that, in all other respects, was the very definition of 'urban'. And while all the familiar elements – do-anything chaos, Hollywood voices, gritty stories, action movie physics – were there, San Andreas expanded on seemingly every element to a nearly insane degree.

Certain elements are reworked for every GTA, and SA was no exception. Dual wielding debuted and targeting was improved again, inspired by another Rockstar game, Manhunt, with some of that title's stealth elements coming along too – donning a mask let you creep into certain houses at night and rob them. Melee combat was hugely expanded,with extra moves available for those who trained in the gym. And, at last, you could swim.

Driving physics and car explosions were brushed up, and for the first time you could tune and customise cars, even adding hydraulics or nitrous. If your car was big enough you could also recruit a three-homie gang to help out with drive-bys, while it was even

From home-invading stealth to blind mobsters and state-crossing triathlons, San Andreas covered it all.

The inclusion – for the first time – of countryside gave Rockstar a whole new target: redneck, hillbilly inbreds, or 'voters' as they're known over there. They won't like your 'do any more than you stealing their combine...



possible to respond (either positively or negatively) to the comments of passing pedestrians. Their responses would be influenced by another new feature, your character CJ's evolving look – unlike previous characters, he could gain or lose weight, get stronger, become more adept at skills such as swimming, driving or cycling and change his hair, jewellery, tattoos and clothes. San Andreas was a whole lifestyle.

Boom bang-a-bang

Opposing gangs have attacked players on sight since GTA2, but for San Andreas this was expanded – CJ could take control of areas of 'turf' by provoking a gang war and surviving the waves of gangbangers until everyone was dead. The flipside was that rival gangs attack CJ's turf while he was elsewhere, requiring some tiresom commuting to deal with the threats – the answer is to take control of every bit of turf (not that there's much grass in all that concrete) and leave no base for any other gang to attack from.

And of course, there was more here than just new cars. BMXs and mountain bikes joined an wider roster of motorcycles, while air travel expanded to include everything from light aircraft to private jets to freight transporters... to military fighters to huge helicopters to jetpacks. You could even buy a ticket for a commercial airliner, or take a ride on the train. Or just steal the train.

With such a vast space – each of the

One of Carl's less successful attempts at stealth involves hanging around the basketball courts pretending to be a headlight cluster. Can you make out CJ in this picture?

three cities was around the size of Vice City, while the often spooky, hillbilly-filled countryside covered the same sort of area again – there was inevitably a vastly increased amount of hidden, unique or just plain weird things within it. There was also a hugely expanded amount of things to do in San Fierro, Los Santos and Las Venturas when you weren't on a mission. Go gambling, dancing, play pool, train in the gym, commit burglary, enter sports events, bet on horses, race mountain bikes or build a property portfolio... there was more to do just *living* in San Andreas than many games offer full stop.

Dramatic irony

San Andreas really brought Rockstar full circle. Rockstar's key players had long been in love with the rap scene. San Andreas was their homage to it, to the early 1990s, the gangsters and ghettos. If there was a criticism, however, it's that the first five hours or so are consequently pretty grim – the cartoonish, Die Hard-style action takes a back seat to Boyz 'N The Hood poverty, squalor, bickering, drug abuse and egotism. It's hard to like the cast. And after a gorgeously silly middle section that includes jetpacks, alien conspiracy nuts and giant chickens, San Andreas returns to the theme of idiocy, misery and squalor with a crack house-set finale. If nothing else, it does make it clear that GTA is very much an adult game for adults. CVG

"There was more to do just living in San Andreas than many games offer full stop."

"What other game could offer exactly the same locations and remain fresh?"

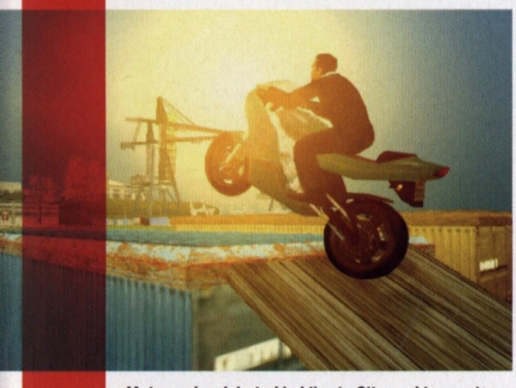
The city is the same, but the characters all change. Nevertheless, it's the three-island city that remains the real star.

GTA LIBERTY CITY STORIES

PSP / PS2 / October 2005

The very idea of portable GTA was enough to get most people wet – the game that almost single-handedly defined PS2, on a near-PS2 spec walkabout. How could it fail? It was, as the Official PSP Guidebook put it, 'GTA on the crapper'. It's worth remembering two things at this point: it didn't fail, and Official PSP quite possibly oversimplified things there. Also, yuck.

Though similarly oversimplified by its detractors as an add-on mission pack for GTAIII or – worse – a cynical re-heat, Liberty City Stories was quietly revolutionary in its own right. Yes, it brought technical improvements from further down the series retrospectively to Liberty – half-decent aiming and camera systems, for instance – and it brought more advanced stuff, too. Chief among these were motorcycles (though sadly nothing really new, and still nothing sporty over 600cc) and some great comedy costumes.



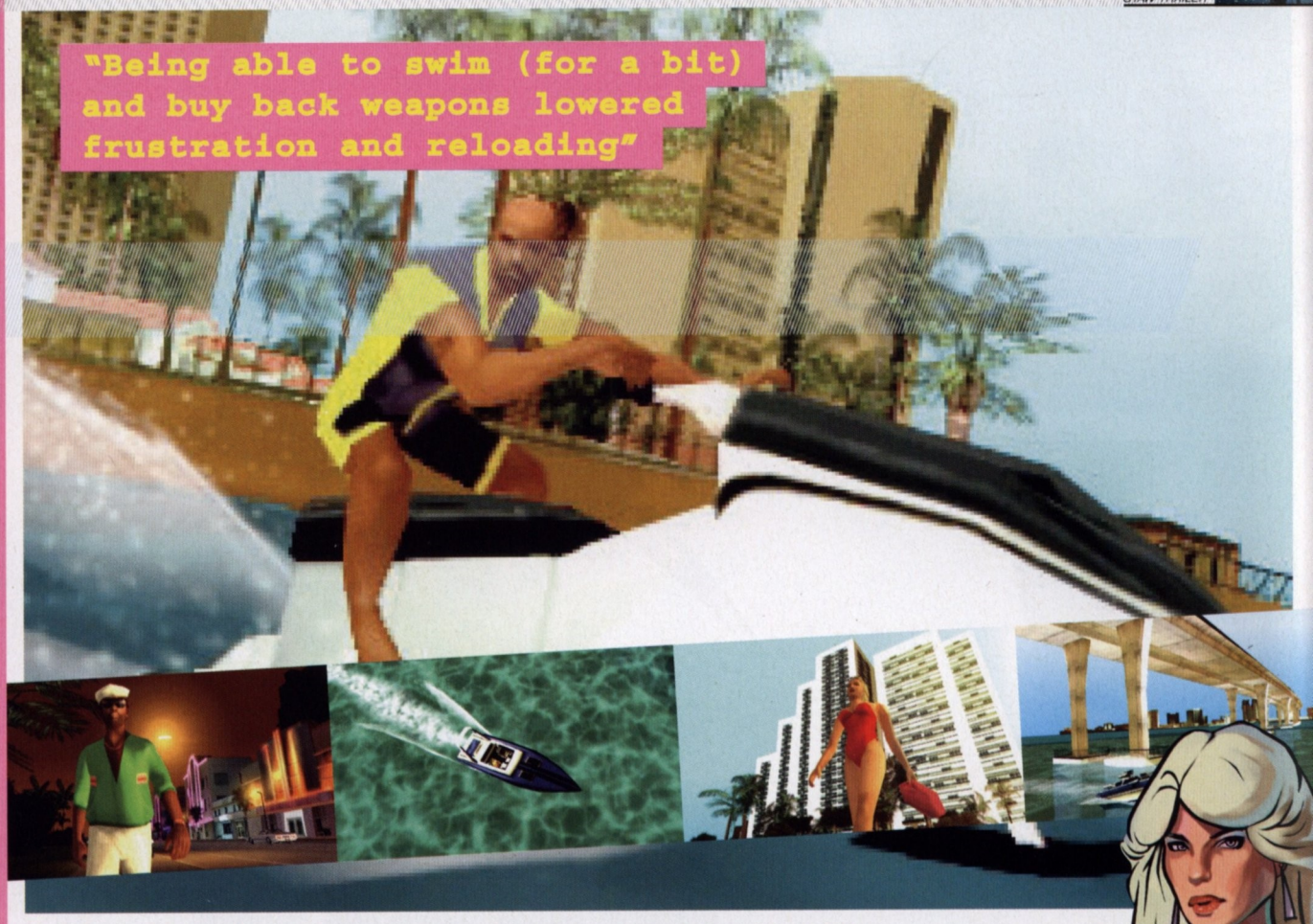
Motorcycles debuted in Liberty City, and to great effect. But where were the mountain bikes?

Hot for the city

But these things clearly aren't revolutionary, no matter how welcome. What was amazing is that Liberty City itself didn't need to change – and bar the placement of a few ramps and the opening of a few doors, it didn't. The fact is, Liberty is a place of such astonishing definition, character and detail that you only need change the start/end point of a mission and the player will see new things, experience new challenges, face new difficulties anyway. Vast areas of the city never needed to be visited at all in GTA III. Now they did. What other game could offer exactly the same locations and remain fresh?

Yet LCS did more than simply change the start points of GTA III's events. It added new missions, new characters, new storylines and – holy of holies – a multiplayer mode, the first of GTA's 3D era. Featuring races, objective-specific battles, deathmatches and more, it the first (official) party in a truly populated GTA city. Sweet. Liberty City Stories was ported back to PS2 in June 2006. CVG

This wife-beating hick lives in a new trailer park in Vice City; girls with guns are at liberty to live anywhere they want.



This is Vince Vance, brother of Vice City's infamous Lance. His moral compass is prone to Bermuda Triangle-style confusion.

GTA VICE CITY STORIES

PSP / PS2 / October 2006

You know the drill – new cast, story and featureset in a familiar city. But now Rockstar Leeds knew it too: Liberty City had taught this Rockstar splinter group much about PSP. Consequently they pushed it far harder, and frame rate, draw distance and loading times were much improved. In some ways it even improved on the original Vice City – its expanses of water gained hugely in terms of realism, even if some still preferred the stylised colours and sun-flashed twinkles of the original.

VCS made no concessions to quick-burst, handheld play, with multipart missions often involving all types of transport – including 'copters – for lengthy challenges. Being able to swim (for a bit) and buy back weapons after being wasted/ busted lowered frustration and reloading, but VCS took a patchwork approach to design fixes – the taxi back to the mission start, for instance, was all but redundant. Empire building – where you buy property and run R3-style missions – also brought the dreaded random attacks from San Andreas, which soon boil down to a long drive and unwanted cop attention (starting/exiting an R3 mission in a suitable vehicle makes it all go away...).Still, Empire cash is paid straight into your account. At last, direct debits in GTA! Vice City Stories was ported to PS2 in March 2007. CVG

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TRUE OR FALSE?

Dan Houser, Rockstar's 'man of many titles,' promised much for GTA III. Did they deliver?

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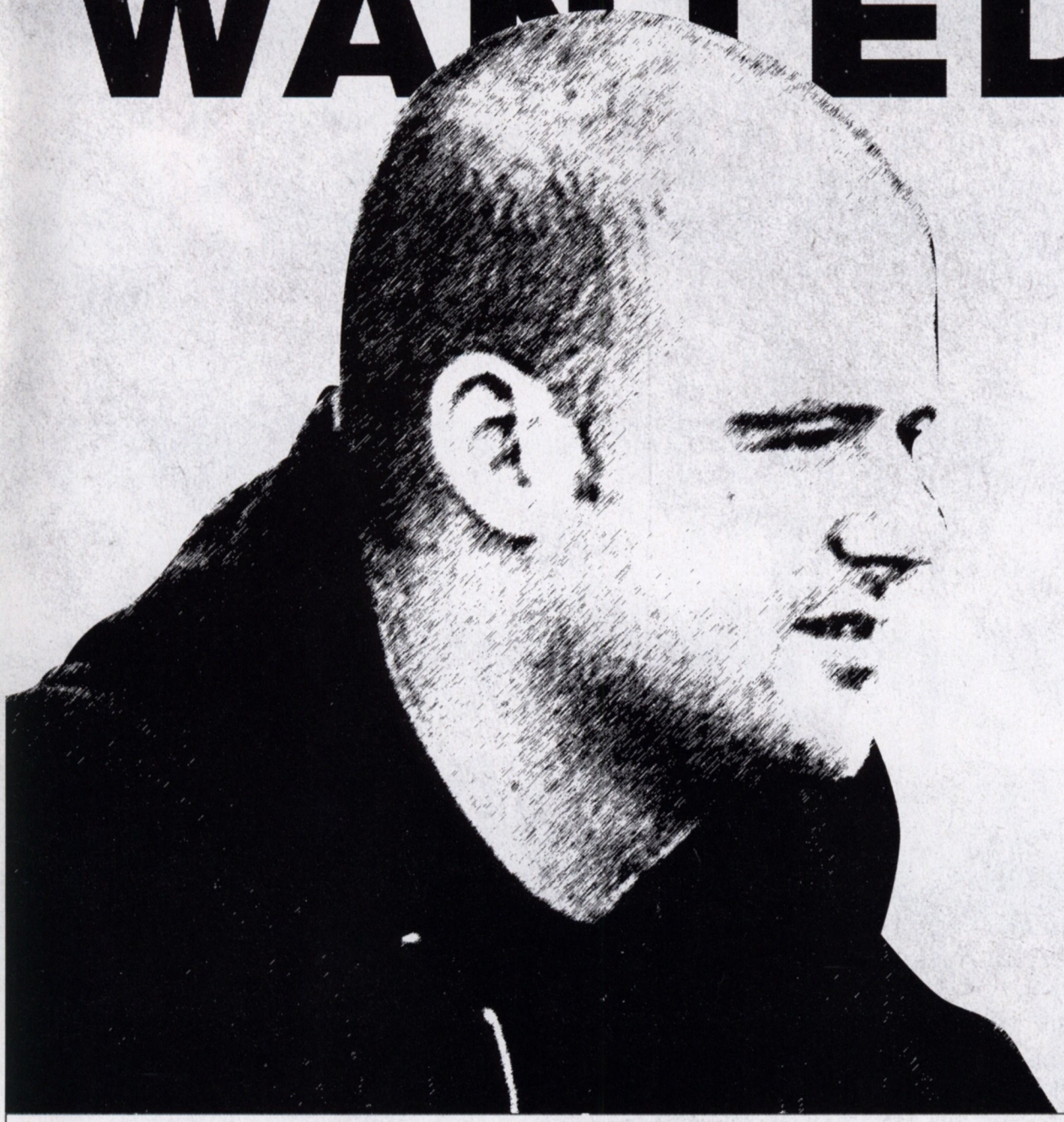
CITY OF LIBERTY

PLEASE POST IN A
CONSPICUOUS
PLACE

WANTED



DESCRIPTION

WHO: DAN HOUSER **WHERE:** SPEAKING TO OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE **WHEN:** JANUARY 2000

HOUSER: "Although graphically primitive compared to other games at the time, I was seduced by the non-linearity of [GTA], the freedom and the anarchic nature of the game. I like the way the game played on a humorous British interpretation of America. The public were happy to be sold on the fact that it was games over graphics. They could see the fun of driving wildly, the fun of car jacking, the thrill of just wrecking stuff."
CVG: You can't argue with that... Dan was right on the money.

HOUSER: "Grand Theft Auto opened up the market for urban, crime-based gangster games. Everything from Driver to Kingpin has been directly influenced by GTA."
CVG: And then some... GTA III and its sequels have been hugely influential.

HOUSER: "[GTA2] didn't have any single feature that blew people away. It lacked the 'wow' factor of the first game."
CVG: True, though GTA: London suffered more.

HOUSER: "In terms of game design, [Manhattan] is perfect. We don't have to construct artificial borders, it's an island."
CVG: We guess that's why Rockstar's gone back to Liberty City!

HOUSER: "Some of the popular characters such as Bubba and Brother Marcus from the first game will be returning, as will characters from GTA: London. They will appear alongside the gangs from Grand Theft Auto 2 because we now have room to include them all."
CVG: Neither Bubba nor Brother Marcus made it in the end...

HOUSER: "Some gangs will only meet in darkness. The city is almost an entirely different place during the night. The time and the weather, they seem like minor touches but they've actually been implemented in such a way that they affect the decisions you take in the game."
CVG: That's pretty steep... gang attacks were fairly arbitrary whatever the time or weather. Was it worse at night? Not that we could tell.

HOUSER: "We can't make the shooting elements too hard to play because the overall strategy of the mission is more important. We want to give the player the feeling of an action hero, the way that Steven Seagal strolls through a crowd of enemies and suddenly everyone's dead."
CVG: And yet, GTA III was hard... harder than Vice City, certainly. Mostly because the targeting was woeful.

HOUSER: "There are going to be areas where you learn not to shoot people in the street because it's crawling with plain-clothes cops, or areas where you can't go round stealing the best-looking cars, because they all belong to the local gang bosses."
CVG: Wisely, this wasn't the case in the end. Imagine how irritating plain clothes coppers and sexy but unstealable cars would be!

HOUSER: "We don't feel the game is immoral. It may be amoral, but not immoral. We're not setting out to encourage kids to steal cars, we want to give players the sense of being in an action movie. It's an 18 rated game. It's meant to be hardcore."
CVG: Only an idiot would argue with that, though we assume the word 'kids' was a Freudian slip...

PHENOMENON

Grand Theft Auto is big because it inspires love. And it inspires love because it's big

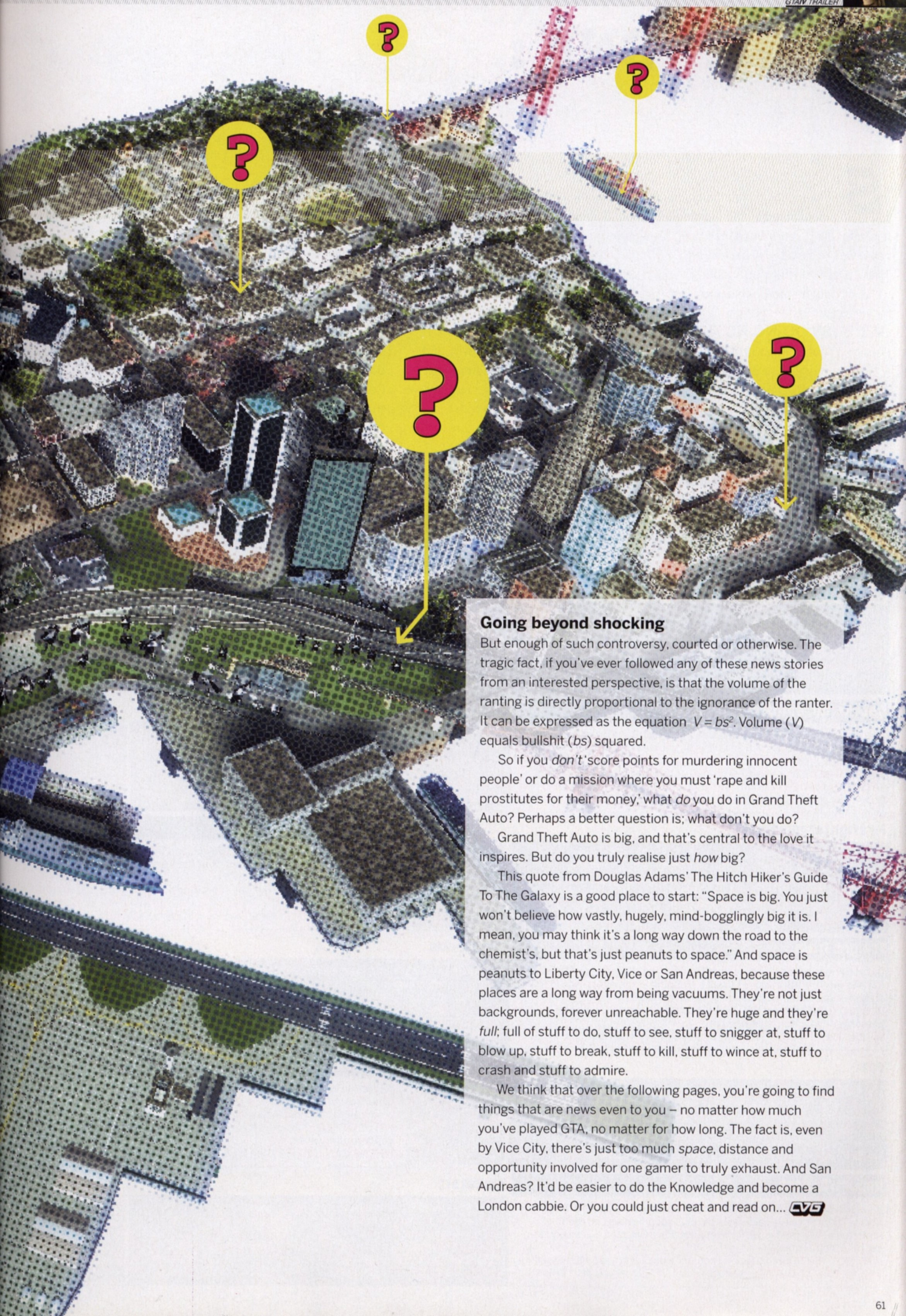
Let's face it, Grand Theft Auto is more than just a game, or even a series of games – it's a loyalty-inspiring marvel. It's moved the goalposts, raised the bar and interfered mightily with whatever poles gaming – and society – have poked at it. And no, cheerful double entendres like this aren't above its station, and yes, the Poles are just about the only group it hasn't offended so far.

There's always time.

Perhaps the truest test of GTA's status as a true phenomenon, as opposed to just another successful game, is that it inspires hatred too. It's bigger than gaming. It transcends its own (massive) chart success. It's made such an impact on the gaming millions that it can't help sending ripples frothing out into the wider world – especially via the tabloids, churches and other right-wing institutions. There's been some very loud opposition, for the most part from embarrassingly misinformed doomsayers quivering with rage at crimes that often aren't 'virtual' so much as completely imagined.

But it's always this way with important things. It's always this way with phenomena that speak more strongly to young people than the soft and frightened ranks of middle-aged end-of-the-worlders know they ever can. Especially when those complainers are too righteous and lazy to check if they're right.

It was this way for The Beatles with their degenerately unmanly hair, for The Rolling Stones for their sleazy swagger, The Life of Brian with its lampooning of the religious mind, American rappers NWA for being black and poor and not accepting it, The Exorcist for actually showing Christian mythology, 2 Live Crew for liking sex, The Sex Pistols for being angry brats, Brass Eye for satirising news pomposity via paedophilia and Marilyn Manson for systematically pushing the religious right's massive buttons by, mostly, wearing black clothes and white makeup. And for occasionally draping his nutsack over security workers. That too.



Going beyond shocking

But enough of such controversy, courted or otherwise. The tragic fact, if you've ever followed any of these news stories from an interested perspective, is that the volume of the ranting is directly proportional to the ignorance of the ranter. It can be expressed as the equation $V = bs^2$. Volume (V) equals bullshit (bs) squared.

So if you *don't* 'score points for murdering innocent people' or do a mission where you must 'rape and kill prostitutes for their money,' what *do* you do in Grand Theft Auto? Perhaps a better question is; what don't you do?

Grand Theft Auto is big, and that's central to the love it inspires. But do you truly realise just *how* big?

This quote from Douglas Adams' The Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy is a good place to start: "Space is big. You just won't believe how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist's, but that's just peanuts to space." And space is peanuts to Liberty City, Vice or San Andreas, because these places are a long way from being vacuums. They're not just backgrounds, forever unreachable. They're huge and they're *full*; full of stuff to do, stuff to see, stuff to snigger at, stuff to blow up, stuff to break, stuff to kill, stuff to wince at, stuff to crash and stuff to admire.

We think that over the following pages, you're going to find things that are news even to you – no matter how much you've played GTA, no matter for how long. The fact is, even by Vice City, there's just too much *space*, distance and opportunity involved for one gamer to truly exhaust. And San Andreas? It'd be easier to do the Knowledge and become a London cabbie. Or you could just cheat and read on... EVO

POINT ONE:

It wants you to ignore it

So, just how has Grand Theft Auto created such a dedicated community, ensnared so many gamers? It is, after all, 11 years since the first game was released, way back in 1997. That's a lot of driving and shooting we've all bought into. The answer is, of course, that the driving and shooting has come a long way – it's not just the graphics that have improved. It's grown a lot from those 2D beginnings to the sprawling insanity of San Andreas; a game that researchers NPD Group say sold 5.1 million copies in 2004 alone. And that's despite only being released at the very end of October... impressed? As a series, it's sold 66 million copies. Given that the series' appeal is so broad, we'll break it down into the various great things it does – and the insane things it sometimes inspires. Like all the best things, the parts work so well together you only notice that the *whole* is genius, but what follows are the hidden reasons GTA is bigger than space, cleverer than gravity and funnier than Bobby Davro dying in a mincer for charity.

GET BUSY DOING NOTHING

Despite all the Hollywood A-list talent, clever homages and general creativity of the main missions, GTA almost *actively* wants you to ignore them and do something else. Anything else – whatever you fancy. That's pretty extraordinary in itself, and doubly so because in most games 'doing something else' means little more than standing still long enough for your character to tie their shoelaces, check their gun or sit down. *Brilliant.* In GTA, of course, there's more stuff to do outside the missions than many games have at all. Consider this lot. Not *one* of these things is necessary, yet there's hours of stuff to enjoy – can you honestly say you've tried every single one... or even knew they were all possible?

Ammu-Nation firing range challenge

In any Ammu-Nation with a firing range is a competition against two other shooters. The rounds involve the pistol, micro-SMG, shotgun and AK-47 – it's a good way to practice.
WHY BOTHER? It'll max out your pistol abilities.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Ammu-Nation from Vice City on – though not all stores have a firing range.

Basketball

Take some time out to shoot a few hoops, why don't you? A little like exploring on San Andreas's bicycles, basketball is strangely relaxing. It's not a full game, just shooting at the basket, but if you want to dress up in the full outfit, try ProLaps.
WHY BOTHER? No measurable reason, to be honest. It's just so real, yo.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Any of San Andreas' courts.

Brown Thunder

Find and steal the Hunter military helicopter for its own, special Vigilante missions. They're special because it's armed with machine guns and rockets... now that's zero tolerance policing.
WHY BOTHER? Do you need a reason to fly a helicopter gunship?
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In the Hunter chopper in Vice City or San Andreas. Find them in the military base.

Burglaries

Spotted any parked-up Boxville vans? Are they black? Is it between 10pm and 6am? Then jump in to take advantage of all that space in the back to load up on TVs, stereos and, erm, games consoles!
WHY BOTHER? For the cash you make.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? San Andreas. There's one van per city.

Courier missions

Bike or cycle the around San Andreas' cities delivering drugs with paper boy-style lobs, It earns cash and adds businesses as cash-generating assets.
WHY BOTHER? Your finances, property portfolio and stats all benefit.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Roboi's in Commerce LS, Hippy Shopper in Queens SF and Burger Shot in Redsands East, LV.

Disco dancing

Want to let your hair down after a hard day's killin'? Just find a bar or nightclub (there are loads, dotted all over San Andreas) and get down with some bad shapes and neatly timed button presses in this Bemani-style rhythm action minigame.
WHY BOTHER? It's just kind of silly...
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Most enterable bars and clubs in San Andreas.

Firefighter missions

Steal a firetruck and race to douse fires in increasing numbers of cars – and increasing numbers of panicking, flaming pedestrians. The size of the truck does tend to incur a fair amount of 'collateral damage,' mind...
WHY BOTHER? Completing all 12 levels makes you fireproof which, as you can imagine, becomes invaluable.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In any firetruck from GTAIII onwards.

Freestyle BMX

The BMX is the very first vehicle you get, and there's a skate park not far from CJ's home – just the other side of the freeway, in fact. Just be careful crossing the road, m'kay?
WHY BOTHER? Like basketball, it's strangely relaxing and just sort of hip, yo.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Near Glen Park, in East Los Santos.

Freight Train

Did you know you can hijack a train? If it's in a station, just pull the driver out and go! The 'R3' missions involve stopping at the right place in the stations, against the clock, and trying not to derail.
WHY BOTHER? You get $50,000 for beating two levels, plus free passenger travel from that point on.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? From any of San Andreas' train stations.

Girlfriends

You'll meet two girls during the missions, but there are four others to woo. Turning up in nice cars bearing presents helps... success brings free exit from hospital and jail with all your weapons.
WHY BOTHER? Cars, clothes, special abilities and (not too hot) coffee!
WHERE CAN I DO IT? The driving school and Avispa Country Club in SF, Blueberry Ammu-Nation and the desert police station in El Quebrados.

Gym

This one you'll all know about – and obviously it's useful for increasing your stats. But dare we suggest you get out in the fresh air and either run or pedal instead? That way you'll learn the city at the same time...
WHY BOTHER? The gym gets you fitter more quickly, and fighting the trainer will unlock new combat moves.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Each SA city has one –the dumbbell on the map.

Ice cream selling

Yes, really! Well, almost. Vice City's esteemed Cherry Popper's ice cream factory asset let you hit the streets in a brilliant van to sell 'non-dairy products' for the people to sniff. Eat! Whatever.
WHY BOTHER? It's funny, it earns you money, and it lets you buy Cherry Poppers afterwards.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Look for two big scoops on VC's west island

Import/Export

It's worth delivering the cars listed on the blackboard by the crane in the docks. There are large cash rewards, plus specific cars can then be imported at will. Best of all, for every five you deliver, an extremely rare car becomes available.
WHY BOTHER? Order buggies, monster trucks and supercars at will!
WHERE CAN I DO IT? At the docks since GTAIII (car crushers before).

Kickstart

Named for the 1980s kids bike trials programme hosted by Peter Purves, this is an arena-based dirt bike challenge the requires accuracy and technique rather than speed.
WHY BOTHER? Success means the game spawns a massive Paris-Dakar style truck by the Stadium.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Blackfield,East Beach or Foster Valley stadia.

Kissing

San Andreas is a lovely place to live, apart from the killing and explosions, so how about a bit of canoodling? While in two-player, get close and pull L1 to show your affection for your girl. Or the priest with you...
WHY BOTHER? An obese gangster snogging Elvis next to a flaming car crash? What's not to like?
WHERE CAN I DO IT? At any of the two-player icons in San Andreas.

Lowrider dancing

Fancy a dance but feel that, somehow, doing it surrounded by girls in a disco is a bit unmanly? Then do it in a car, surrounded by men in long socks! The fact is, it's intrinsically far funnier.
WHY BOTHER? You can bet on the outcome, and bet big to earn loads of cash (if you're good).
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Right next to Unity Station in Los Santos, SA.

Mountain biking

What better use of a mountain is there? There are three downhill races on Mt Chilliad – there's even some North Shore woodwork – though you need a cycling skill over 40% to enter. Higher still is better still.
WHY BOTHER? For the challenge! These races are really tough.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? San Andreas's Mt Chilliad, between seven in the morning and six in the evening.

Off-road missions

Racing on public roads is dangerous, so it's better to plough through the backwoods in massive offroad vehicles instead. Or race bikes on outdoors dirt tracks. Or to struggle not to roll a Patriot off a cliff.
WHY BOTHER? For the cash and the comedy.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Hilly seaside spots in GTAIII, Eastern Vice City's beachfront track or SA's Badlands races.

Paramedic missions

Steal an ambulance and race about picking up bleeding patients before delivering them to hospital. Ironically, you'll probably kill quite a few pedestrians while you're at it.
WHY BOTHER? Completing level 12 increases your max health to 150. Invaluable for those later missions where you're facing M16s.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In any ambulance from GTAIII onwards.

Pimping

Steal a Broadway and set off to ferry girls to and from their, well... jobs. It can get tricky, however, as some 'customers' will try to do a runner or even beat up your girls. You must deal with them too.
WHY BOTHER? Complete level 10 and prostitutes will pay you for sex...
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In a Broadway anywhere in San Andreas, or from a brothel in Vice City Stories.

Pizza delivery

Live the dream! Ride a stupid red moped all over town, collecting and delivering pizzas against the clock. It's actually surprisingly fun – and the easiest 'R3' mission by far.
WHY BOTHER? Beat level 10 and you get 150 max health and $5000. Handy. Did you know this was originally how Vice City was going to start?
WHERE CAN I DO IT? From shops in Vice City's Downtown, Vice Point

Property empire

You don't need to buy property, but why wouldn't you? Especially if those properties then generate more cash for you on a daily basis.
WHY BOTHER? Extra safe houses and garage space, more money, respectability... and a foot on the property ladder. Sensible.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Various buildings dotted around Vice City and the towns of San Andreas.

Quarry missions

There's a mission in Bone County's quarry in the main game, but did you know it had seven more non-story missions? All involving incredibly large vehicles? Fun in its own right, quarry equipment has other uses, too...
WHY BOTHER? Beat them all and Hunter Quarry becomes a cash-generating asset.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Another SA-only event, this time in Bone County.

Rampages

Chaotic and almost always enormously fun, GTA's rampages (originally known as Frenzies) task you with wiping out a certain amount of people with a certain weapon. Against the clock. To the annoyance of the cops.
WHY BOTHER? For the fun! And to desensitise yourself to killing! To practice for the forthcoming murders! JOKING!
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Various semi-hidden locations until San Andreas.

RC missions

As if there wasn't enough to do in full-size choppers, cars and planes... From Top Fun vans full of tiny exploding cars (very Dirty Harry) to Zero's RC Red Baron biplanes, GTA has plenty to do with radio control miniatures too.
WHY BOTHER? Just for the sheer hell of it.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In various locations from GTA III on.

Schools

With the advent of stats for just about everything came schools for just about everything – driving, flying, riding and even boating. They both help with your abilities and teach you the various knacks. Useful.
WHY BOTHER? For the rewards, and to unlock rare and sexy vehicles.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? SA's Doherty, Blackfield, Bayside Marina and the Verdant Meadows Airstrip (look for the red 'S' on the map).

Stadium races

Race in 8-Track stock car events, armed Blood Bowl destruction derbies and Dirt Track motocross races for cash – and to get some sweet cars to spawn in the parking lot afterwards.
WHY BOTHER? Fancy a monster truck or the ace Bloodring Banger?
WHERE CAN I DO IT? At a stadium (Blackfield LV,East Beach LS and Foster Valley SF). Events differ from day to day.

Store Robbery

Sometimes even the most maniacal of us want to slow things down a little, step out of the performance car, and rob something. Hold up shopkeepers for cash – then outrun the law with the loot.
WHY BOTHER? You make cash from each robbery, and the police bring you nice fast cars. Which is sweet of them.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Various establishments around Vice City.

Sunshine Autos

Incorporating the familiar Import/Export activities (stealing cars to order) of past games, Sunshine Autos also offers organised street races, a handy Spray 'N' Go – free, if you own it – and loads of extra garage space. You can also drive through plate glass off the second storey. Nice.
WHY BOTHER? It generates cash in all kinds of ways.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In Vice City, south of Little Havana.

Taxi driver

Steal any taxi and, yep, speed about the cities picking up and dropping off fares. The quicker you get there, the bigger the tip. It's a good way to learn the layout and find interesting locations where other stuff (such as gambling) occurs, too.
WHY BOTHER? Take 50 fares and all taxis gain nitro.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? In any cab, new or old, from GTA 2 onwards.

Triathlon

There are two triathlons – races involving running, swimming and cycling – and they're amazingly hardcore. At around 20 minutes long, CJ will need some major stamina and swimming ability to 'Beat The Cock'. So named because the man in the chicken suit is the fastest competitor.
WHY BOTHER? The highest prize is $20,000
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Fisher's Lagoon/Santa Maria Lighthouse (weekends).

Trucking

This would almost be a reputable occupation – you don't have to steal anything – but for the company bearing the genius name of RS Haul. Deliver your huge loads for decent paydays (up to $10,000).
WHY BOTHER? Complete all eight deliveries and RS Haul becomes a cash-generating asset.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? From RS Haul in Flint County, SA.

Unique jumps

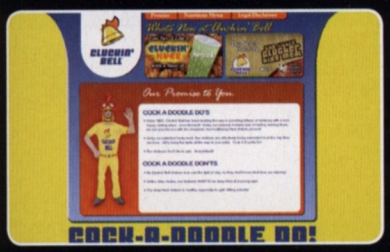
Slam into various makeshift ramps, sets of steps or piles of dirt and enjoy the slo-mo shot of you – and maybe whoever's chasing you – arcing through the skies like some kind of massive jerk. Unbelievably fun.
WHY BOTHER? Do you even have to ask? Also, it's required for 100 percent completion.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? Various spots (search them out) from GTAIII on.

Valet parking

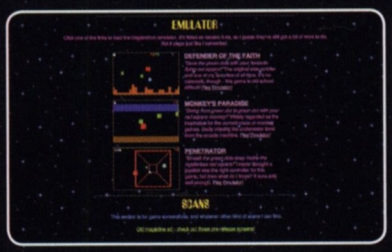
Take the guests' cars at a swanky hotel and park them neatly in the underground garage. Against the clock. OK, it's not very gangsta, but it's a job. You need the valet uniform to do this.
WHY BOTHER? For the tips – and the hotel as a cash-generating asset.
WHERE CAN I DO IT? At the Vank Hoff Park Hotel in San Fierro's Financial district, San Andreas.

WWW.MOCKSTAR.COM

Did you know GTA's goods and services extend into the 'real' world too?

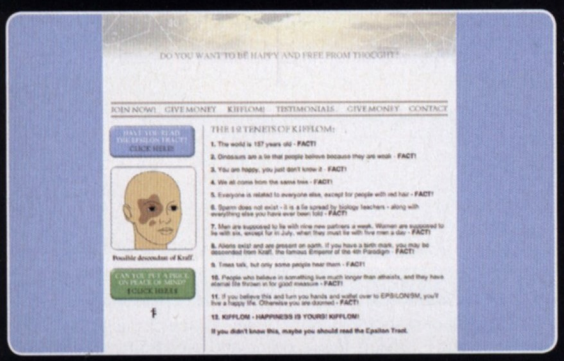


Everything you could possibly want to know about GTA's foremost fast food outlet. Complete with cheery theme tune; make sure your speaker are on. Or off.
www.cluckinbellhappychicken.com

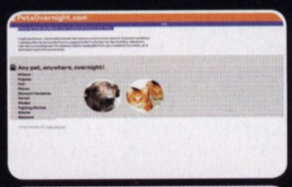


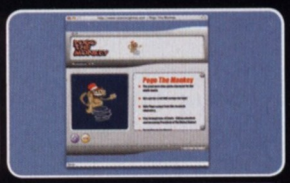
The Degenatron, as advertised on Liberty City's radio. See its amazing games and check out the emulator...
www.degenatron.com

The deeply worrying Exsorbeo 'handheld' is here! See the testimonials! It's just this kind of thing that's corrupting our youth, you know. This and this alone.
www.exsorbeo.com

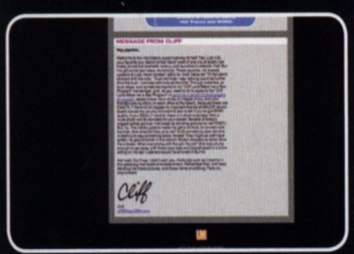


Sad? Confused? Easily led and just raring to delude yourself? Then you might even think this religion's homepage is real. It certainly covers all the usual bases convincingly.
www.epsilonprogram.com



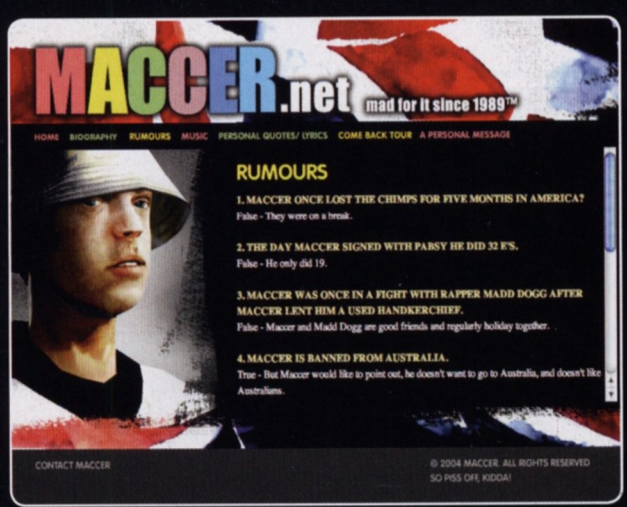


Exercising is hard and eating properly is just boring – what you need is the Dormatron to burn off fat for you, while you're asleep.
www.sleepofflard.com

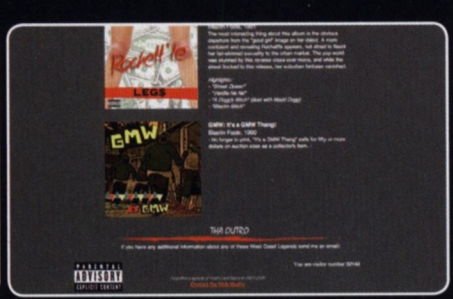


Want to be a star? Then it's probably best not to listen too closely to what Cliff of GTA III radio station Lips106 has to offer. He may be old, but this DJ reckons he 'connects with the kids' all the time...
www.lips106fm.com

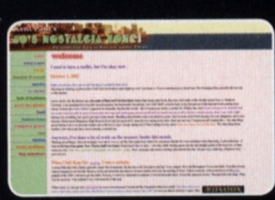
You may have thought that Donald Love was just a slightly creepy man who lived in a skyscraper and never quite said the words 'kill these people for me,' but you were wrong. A bit. He has a whole media empire.
www.lovemedia.tv



This E-ed up Manc singer may seem a little bit familiar – visit Vice and his voice will be even more familiar. Find out the truth behind the man.
www.maccer.net



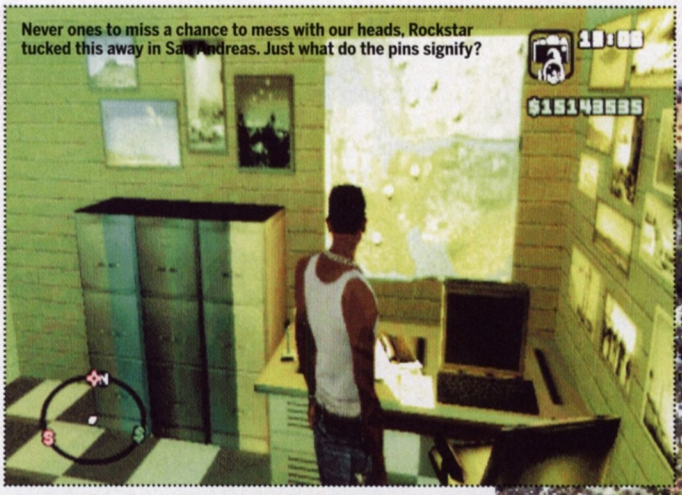
If you want to know more about the rap scene that spawned both Madd Dogg and OG Loc this is the place Check it out and be inspired.
www.westcoastraplegends.com



Planning a visit to Vice City? There's no better way to prepare than this Miami citizen's 80s nostalgia zone.
www.kentpaul.com

POINT TWO:

It's clever at being stupid



These games reward silliness and wilful stupidity with spectacular sights. One of the special things about GTA is that it's not just about passing missions; it's not just about being efficient and accurate and ticking all the boxes. There are usually a whole host of ways to achieve your objective, so why do things the dullest way? On the other hand, however, you're not being *judged* on 'kudos' or style or anything else: there are no 'points' for doing things flashily, as is increasingly occurring in other games more in need of a way to force you to have fun.

No, the reasons for, say, driving a burning van towards a jump, bailing out and watching it explode just as it plunges into Vice City's waterways – as opposed to simply chucking a grenade under its parked wheels to achieve its mission-critical destruction – are far more fundamentally ingrained.

You do things because it just looks funny... dare we say it, even cool. It's Die Hard enough to simply be a reward in itself. GTA has no need for any kind of style meter or extra incentives. This is undoubtedly one of the series' points of genius. The slightly floaty yet impressively realistic physics, the animations, the intensity of the explosions, the comedy screams of frightened bystanders... it all combines to make being stupid a nearly irresistible temptation. Yes, even when it might just prove fatal. It's worth the risk just to be entertained.

In what other game, for instance, would you find yourself nearing safety in a battered, smoking car, pursued by psychopathically violent cops and being shot at by a helicopter and yet *still* hit a massive jump, simply because it's there? Hit it in the full knowledge that you'll probably have to bail out seconds before your now inverted car explodes, gun down a few SWATs and steal another ride to continue your escape?

GTA encourages idiotic behaviour for its own sake, and it encourages it simply by making lunacy fun. Why brake to enter Asuka's riverside apartments when you can launch off the carpark wall, smash into the fifth or sixth floor, rebound into the parked cars and crawl out to the sound of flames? Why stop your motorcycle near a pink glowing mission circle when you can just jump off the back at full speed and watch it career into a nearby huddle of gangbangers? Why continue your car chase past a skyscraper when you can abandon your stolen ambulance, run into the tower, come out on the roof and basejump back into the fray?

To call GTA a 'murder simulator' is to misunderstand it on an incredibly basic level. It's an inescapably fun place to live life like a Hollywood stuntman: jumping, crashing, shooting, skidding, exploding and chasing through, over and off every possible thing – all of the time.

And it never, ever forgets it. CVG

GTA's cities are, in many ways, simply massive film sets for you to play Hollywood stuntman. The killing is – as with a James Bond movie – a natural extension of the ceaseless action.

You do thing because it just looks funny... it's Die Hard enough to simply be a reward in itself

NOT A LIE!

I'M THE MOON

Shoot the moon with a sniper rifle and it gets bigger... keep shooting and it keeps swelling. Rockstar quietly put it in expecting it to be found, and dedicated players promptly did so. Mad.

POINT THREE:

It rewards the most demented exploration

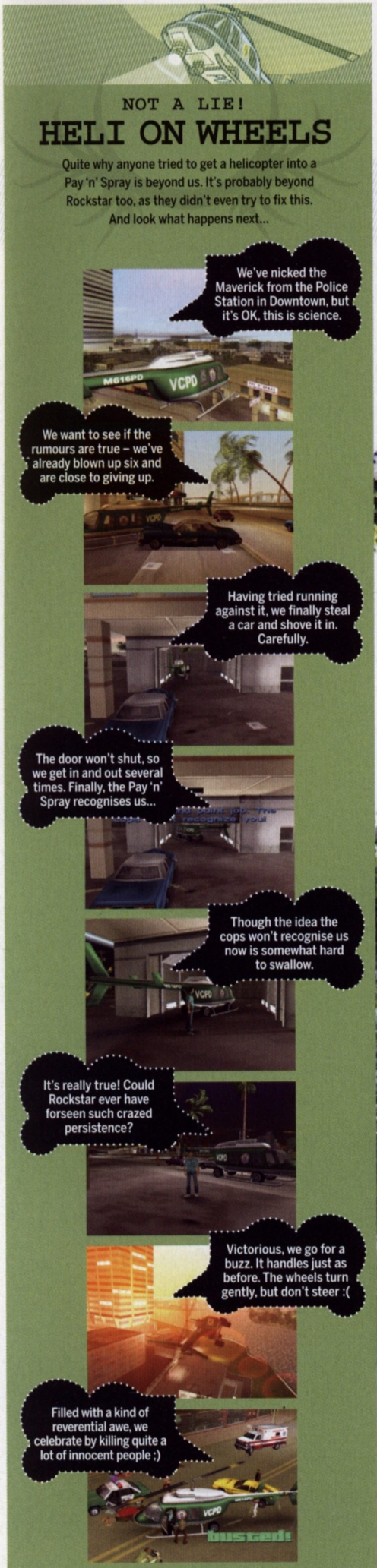
It knows it's fun just to *exist* in, to live and die in – Rockstar knows it – so GTA gives you hundreds, and by San Andreas thousands, of reasons to do just that. Thousands of things to find, do and see *just for the hell of it*. And then it doesn't force you to even notice any of them.

The game just leaves things up to you, but the decision is always worthwhile – and that's another side of its genius. It's easy to create an 'open' world, but it's another thing to fill it.

The Grand Theft Auto games don't rely on your good will, or even their own innately entertaining realities. Almost every effort the player can make is rewarded. GTA III did it very simply with its 100 hidden packages – for every ten you find, a weapon appears at your safehouse. So, the more you explore, the more powerful you get. This way there's an incentive, but not a necessity, to take the time to spread out across the city, settling feelers and memories into all its nooks and crannies – something which in itself will make you more powerful anyway.

And of course, there are individual weapon, armour and health pickups you'll uncover along the way, which make you more formidable yet again. Being able to find stores quickly when things are getting heavy can frequently be the difference between success and failure. As in life, in Liberty, Vice and San Andreas, knowledge is power. A shotgun is one thing, but it's no use if you can't reach the target in time. And it's not as good as being on a nearby hidden rooftop with a rocket launcher...

Unlike many games, this is not about mastering the controls, or a set of combos, or some art of timing and reaction. It's about learning a city as if it was your home town, as if it were a real place; mentally mapping its twisted alleys, rooftops, shortcuts and possibilities until it becomes as much a part of your toolset as the Uzi, sniper rifle or armoured car.



HOT FOR THE CITY

The cities are everything – more than the sum of their many parts, they're the true stars. Not the licences, famous names and other shallow novelties many other games (even some damn fun ones, frankly) rely on entirely. Not even the main characters here are really the stars, no matter how fat or stupidly dressed you can make them, which Hollywood gangster voices them or whether the urban idiot can swim.
And all this is why obsessive GTA players aren't learning to be murderers, as the far-right loons will have it – they're learning to be tour guides and taxi drivers.
OK, on some levels that's the same thing. So let's move on.

By Vice City there were 100 more hidden packages – little Tiki statues this time – but far more in the way of comedy secrets, hidden 'easter egg' surprises and visual jokes. Then San Andreas took it to the extreme. Despite being the largest game by far – around three times the size of Vice City, which itself was twice the size of GTA III's Liberty City – it also had by far the highest proportion of hidden treats.

There were 350 hidden packages alone (horseshoes, oysters, tags and snapshots) while secrets, properties, extra missions, races, jumps, schools and other content reached a near-insane level. Importantly, though, whatever the size, players always know that heading into the desert, wandering the slums, rummaging behind buildings or trying repeatedly for some hard-to-reach spot is rarely time *wasted*. And that's very important.

In fact, the cities are so sprawling and players' freedom so broad that Rockstar couldn't seriously anticipate every single thing we might do.

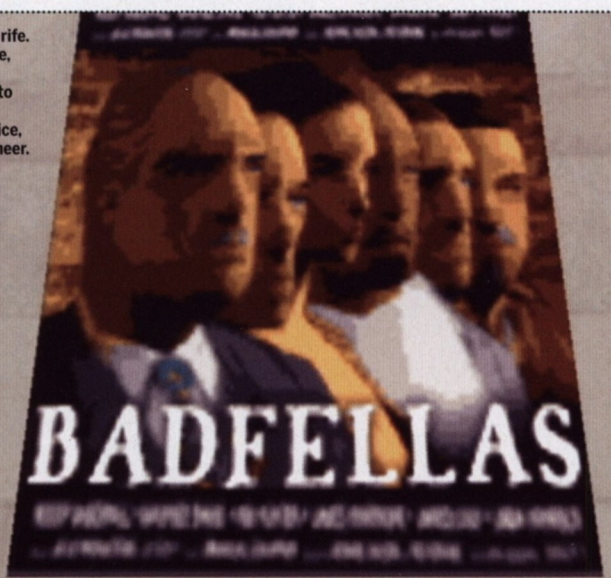
Especially as some people are apparently obsessively curious and blessed with the patience of a saint – not to mention the persistence of one of those door-to-door idiots who wave a little laminated badge while insisting you switch your gas supply for the third time in as many weeks on the basis of some vastly unrealistic sums and a carefully memorised argument that doesn't make sense and unless, of course, you actually want to pay *more* for your utilities which, and they're not being funny, they find pretty embarrassing on your part.

So, with millions of near-demented gamers all determined to make it over THAT wall, get THAT bulletproof car into their garage and unlock it or slip past THAT metal detector with all their weapons – even to reach closed islands too soon or cram way too many cars in their garage – somebody out there has found a way to do it. What follows are the results. CVG

Did you know that in Vice City there were shipwrecks and even a massive sub lurking beneath the waves? Even though Vercetti *can't swim* and there's no sensible way of us seeing them?

Explore all you like, but if you're not switched on you'll miss the references anyway. Have *you* spotted the observatory from the James Dean classic Rebel Without a Cause?

References are rife. Some are subtle, some not... but when R* go on to employ a 'real' Goodfella for Vice, it's harder to sneer.



COMPLETE THE LOOK!

TOP THREADS

Some of the most pleasing things to find are new costumes – and dressing up has increasingly become a part of GTA. Nothing sensible, of course. Not if we can help it.

The Uma: Kill Bill | The King: Elvis | The Pro Golfer | The Jason / Eminem | The Pants & Socks | The Nerdy Clerk | The Pimp Daddy | The James Bond Tux

"DID THAT JUST HAPPEN?"

50 must-see moments from a world of crazy details

HIT OR MYTH?

The Yeti

Not even GTA has quite as many crazy details as some of its players would insist. What other game has its own urban myths? Rumours of a Yeti in the admittedly overgrown and creepy badlands of San Andreas are persistent... but wrong. MYTH.

The Man In Concrete Shoes

So hard to find that for a long time we simply didn't believe it ourselves, Vice City's near-mythical Mob-victims – feet encased in concrete, sent to sleep with the fishes – actually do exist. Result. HIT.

The Ghost of CJ's Mum

Many claim to have witnessed a shadowy figure on the stairs at CJ's Los Santos family home, and believe it to be the shade of our hero's deceased mother. Unfortunately, these many are charlatans, madmen and liars. MYTH.

Flying Saucers From Outer Space

Area 69, the spacey ramblings of The Truth and the wild spaces of the San Andreas deserts – complete with Lil Probe Inn and saucer-shaped sign – has led to reports of 'lights in the sky' and even abductions. Fictional reports. MYTH.

Carcer City

The setting for Manhunt has long been connected with GTA , not least because Rockstar has been throwing little references in since GTA III. But, while Carcer exists in the same 'universe' as Liberty, Vice *et al*, that's it. MYTH.

Ghost Cars in the Back O' Beyond

Chrome barges from the 50s – not unlike Stephen King's famous haunted car Christine – starting themselves up and driving off? Yes... and no. They do spawn in the hills, but only roll down them due to gravity. No ghosts. MYTH.

Jimmy Hoffa In A Bridge

So famous US labour leader Hoffa – who 'failed to turn up' to a meeting with two mafia men in 1975, and has never been seen since – is in the western Prawn Island bridge, is he? No. MYTH.

The Mysterious Fighter Plane Crashes

A vintage single-seater fighter drones into sight, fresh from the Bermuda Triangle, and promptly crashes and explodes right near San Andreas's CJ. Oddly, though rare, this does actually happen! HIT.

TOP 10 SECRETS

The cream of a particularly crazy crop

It wasn't easy compiling this list. There are just so many tiny brilliant things lurking the various cities of Grand Theft Auto – everything from tombstones that glow at night to a 'Locals Only' shop to Valentino Rossi's MotoGP bike to the actual meaning of 'burger shot' to ridiculous posters for the Wizard of Ass – and there's no telling which you might have seen, and which you may remain blissfully unaware of. So some of these you'll have stumbled up already, some will be new, and every one of them is a tiny vital fibre in the colossal overall weave that is Grand Theft Auto.

SECRET Nº 10

BODY BAGS

Where?

El Castillo del Diablo, Bone County, SA

San Andreas may be a harsh and grizzly place, but it's a bit of a shock to find *you're* not the only reason. Somebody is up to very bad things, and using a cave tucked away in the desert to dump the remains – in a pile of horribly stiff body bags. Oddly, the serial killer's truck is still there too, parked right where the bodies were presumably slung from it's bed. You can find this worrying little scene directly south of the western end of the desert airstrip, in the rock formation shaped (on the map) like a near perfect circle.

SECRET Nº 9

STATUE OF LEWDITY

Where?

Inside the Atrium in Commerce, San Andreas

Rockstar is hardly above using sexual innuendo for a cheap laugh, but this is – literally – a monument to it. The grand central space of this shopping mall features a broken statue that's still quite clearly... enjoying himself, shall we say. What really lifts it above a simple knob gag is that it's surrounded by other statues in states of obvious horror; certainly an odd tableaux to come across. So to speak. Even so, it's quite easy to miss the first time due to the furious gun battle you get into with the Russian Mafia (Big Smoke's mission Just Business).

SECRET Nº 8

TASTE THE COCK

Where?

On the uniforms in any Cluckin' Bell restaurant

And you though 'finger lickin' chicken' was bad... there are many, many jokes about cocks in Grand Theft Auto, but this is perhaps the best in a really blatant, 'My God, I can't believe they got away with that!' kind of way. At least one barrel short of a double entendre, it nevertheless makes a kind of sense in context. Taking a look for yourself is an even better reason to hop over the counter than robbery. Also, you can feel a bit better knowing that the employee will probably thank you for shooting him dead and putting him out of his misery.

SECRET Nº 7

POLICE BRUTALITY

Where?

In the back of Pershing Square police station

The forces of law and order in GTA are keen – perhaps overzealous is more the word. Police brutality has always been hinted at (helicopter gunners occasionally shout "I'm gonna kill you!" only to be chastised by their pilots as early as GTA III), but in San Andreas it's explicit. Still hidden away, mind, a guilty little secret – take a look in the car pound below the police station and you'll find two cops beating Rodney Ki... a suspect. They scatter when you arrive, but you saw them, right? Be aware just going in gives you a wanted rating.

SECRET Nº 6

BLUE HOTEL

Where?

The Washington Beach area of Vice City

As day turns to night, the guests in this hotel innocently switch their lights on... and make the shape of a giant cock and balls in the process. OK, it's not there all the time – the shapes cycle through various less rude-looking ones – but it's certainly there often enough. Sometimes it's even there when the rooftop fountain spurts in quarter-hourly load into the cool night air, and if that looks even more suspicious, well, that's just coincidence. Surely. Head in by air over Starfish Island and you're sure to spot it.

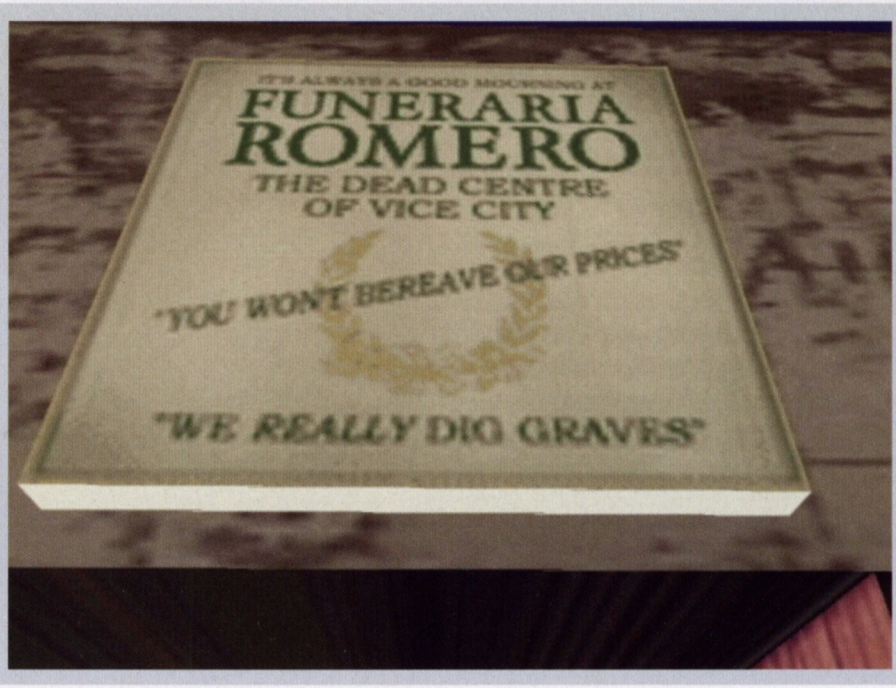
SECRET Nº 5

DEAD FUNNY

Where?

Romero Funerals, Little Havana, Vice City

See this? Despite some very stiff competition, this is the most pun-laden sign ever to appear in Grand Theft Auto. This spot in Little Havana – worryingly close to the Cluckin' Bell and *really suspiciously* close to the butcher's shop at number three in this list – is apparently the 'dead centre of Vice City,' and the funeral parlour is a place where 'it's always a good mouring'. What's more, you 'won't bereave' their prices and they 'really dig graves'... that's right, it's the most pun-tastic sign there is, and not a willy gag in sight. Good work, Rockstar!



SECRET Nº 4

EASTER EGG

Where?

In a skyscraper, Downtown Vice City

Much has been made of the various jokes, items and tableaux Rockstar likes to squirrel away, and such things are known as Easter Eggs – after the real-life hidden egg hunts of Easter, presumably. So for Vice City, some Rockstar wit created the primal, the most fundamental Easter Egg possible – an egg. With Happy Easter written on it. The wilting sarcasm! To see it, steal a chopper and land on the VCN helipad in Downtown. Jump at the skyscraper window closest to the corner of the pad – you'll go right through, into this little room. Ace.

SECRET Nº 3

'THAT' BUTCHERS

Where?

Near Cluckin' Bell in Little Havana, Vice City

Yes, we're back near Romero's funeral parlour, and yes, those are human body parts in the window. Brains, kidneys, livers... there's even a whole arm – complete with surprisingly clean shirt sleeve – lined up in the display. And as if that wasn't enough proof, there's a donor transport box with 'Human Organ' written on it, opened at the front. Is this not enough for Vice City's police to at least check out? Shouldn't they be out catching real criminals, rather than harassing innocent motorists for speeding during a drive-by in a stolen car?

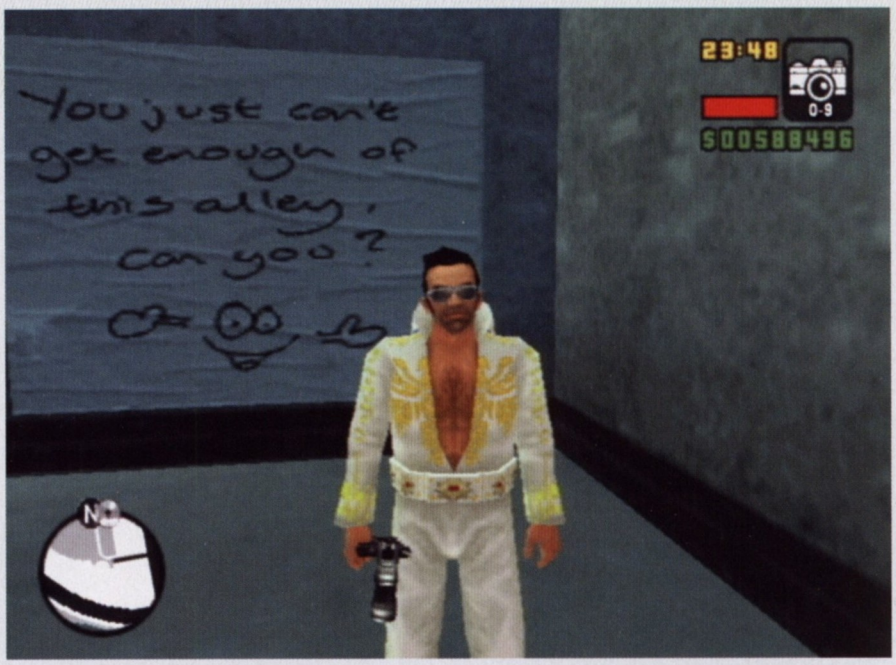
SECRET Nº 2

THE LOST ALLEY

Where?

Bedford Point, Staunton Island, Liberty City

This sign is in a very hard-to-get-to alleyway in Liberty City, but it's only like this in the PS2 version of Liberty City Stories – it's a running joke. The original sign, in GTA III, said 'You weren't supposed to be able to get here, you know,' while the PSP version of LCS bore the legend 'You just can't get enough of this alleyway, can you?!' To witness it yourself, take a van to the carpark in Bedford Point on the second island (near the big church and Donald Love's building) and use it to climb over the back wall, near the green dumpsters.



SECRET Nº 1

GHOST TOWN

Where?

In the sea behind the Cochrane Dam in GTA III

Thought this was a myth? It's not surprising if you did, as finding it is hard simply because flying the Dodo is hard – and that's (almost) the only way to visit. Take off heading out to sea and bank right, around the cliffs. You can't land, however. It's not solid. What is it? Not Carcer City, as some claim, but simply the 'set' from the bank job that opens the game. And you thought Hot Coffee was the first time Rockstar left something in... and the other way to visit? PC players can always try the Bridge To Ghost Town mod, which makes it pretty simple.

POINT FOUR:

It's full of things even Rockstar didn't imagine

There's no doubting that GTA, as a series, is the very definition of gaming freedom. The worlds that benevolent Mother Rockstar creates are a playground with near endless possibilities for mucking with the rules and making your own fun. But if you've only ever played the games on PlayStation or Xbox you're still only experiencing a tiny slice of the insanity, of the love GTA inspires. That community the series pulls around itself is a long way from passive. Scan the net and there's a wild underground river of clever (and presumably sociopathic) enthusiasts making their own content, using GTA's open worlds as the perfect place to create new vehicles, characters and even new modes.

Yet Rockstar never released any development tools, so all that new stuff has been created with improvised tools. It's a measure of the community's true passion.

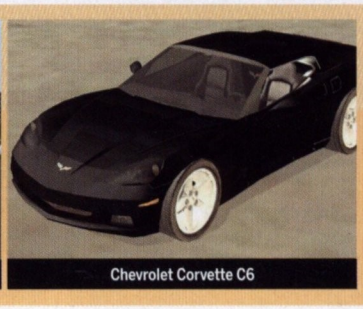
The most impressive of these hack jobs brings one of GTA IV's most eagerly awaited features to the colourful worlds of previous games – yes, PC owners have been enjoying full-blown online multiplayer since the third instalment. And while it's rough around the edges, it's more than a tantalising glimpse of the future. Even if you don't fancy engaging in knife fights with faceless internet strangers, there are *plenty* of other ways to increase the longevity of GTA III, Vice City and San Andreas. Here's our guide – and salute – to the highlights. CVG

POWER PLAY

FAST CARS

Look-alike spuercars not enough to really get you going? Fancy something a little more up to date? Then search out a few of these downloadable lovelies

Lamborghini Murcielago



Chevrolet Corvette C6

MULTI THEFT

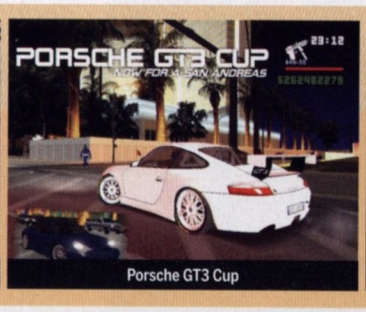
GANG WARFARE

Massively multiplayer online San Andreas? Check!

The PC versions are fantastic targets for bedroom programmers and fans keen to make their mark. But easily the greatest feat those crazy modders have managed is to add proper multiplayer to three resolutely single-player games. And the guys who did it received no help from Rockstar – they had to tear the game apart themselves, and start fiddling with its guts. OK, because these things are completely reverse engineered they're still somewhat buggy, but Multi-Theft Auto (the most popular) is still a frighteningly professional piece of software, adding a new interface and even a server browser to get you online in an instant.

GTA is usually hilarious, but adding other maniacs with bikes, rockets and helicopters makes for a ridiculous ballet of destruction that every true fan should experience. It may lack the sophistication of GTA IV's online modes, but it certainly proves just how spectacular the core idea is: Xbox Live and PSN will be ringing to the sound of people blowing chunks out of Liberty City, and each other, for years to come. Meanwhile, see www.multitheftauto.com

Subaru Impreza WRX



Porsche GT3 Cup

Ferrari Enzo

McLaren F1

HOMEMADE CARNAGE PIE

Get the impression the best modders grew up in the 80s?

CLASSIC TV

SCREEN MACHINES

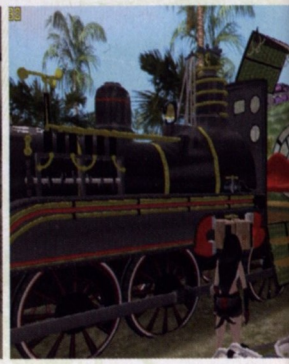
General Lee, Dukes of Hazzard
Good ol' boys Bo and Luke Duke get an outing on the jumps and bumps of GTA. Prepare for lairy handling and plenty of whoopin' and a hollerin'.

KITT, Knightrider
Dust off that chest wig and leather jacket, the quintessential 80s car, the Knight Industries Two Thousand, is the perfect way to cruise the streets of GTA.

Gran Torino, Starsky & Hutch
Our cities are positively bristling with alleyways (complete with boxes) just waiting to be careened down. It simply wouldn't be right to do it in any other car.

GMC van, The A-Team
It may not be the sportiest number on this list, but if you have a penchant for pitying fools, this is the *only* way to travel.

The Batmobile, Batman
Holy horsepower, Batman! The jet powered batmobile is normally associated with the other side of the war on crime, but that just makes jacking it all the more fun.



CUNNING STUNTS

OMG LOL, IT'S YOUTUBE

If you think you're pretty handy behind the wheel, you clearly haven't seen some of the stunt videos recorded in the GTA – particularly San Andreas. Flips, spins and motorcycle grinds are just some of the carefully executed tricks that hardcore players can pull off. Just type the keywords into YouTube to see these professionals in action.

Spin cycle
A freakishly talented player named 'Barney', who specialises in motorcycle spins and flips, utterly abuses Vice City's highways and byways. Most impressive are the flips where he gets off the bike in mid air as it rotates, then somehow manages to hop back on before landing. It's witchcraft, clearly.
KEYWORDS: GTA Stunt'd 2

Touchdown!
A pair of players, Kaneda and Darkness, specialise in leaping *enormous* heights on bikes before deftly landing on narrow ledges. Particularly impressive is the clip where Kaneda steams up San Andreas' hydroelectric dam and plops perfectly onto a ledge smaller than a supermodel's bikini. And don't miss the leap from the bridge over the water and into a passing boat, either.
KEYWORDS: GTA sanandreas bike stunt

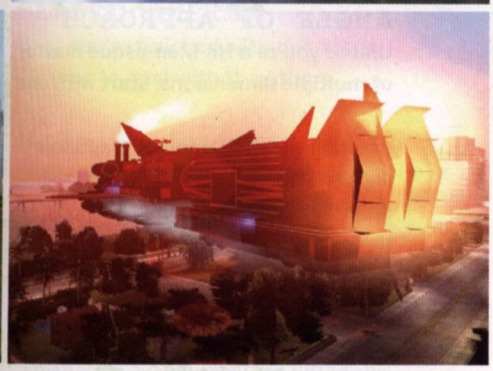
Trucking brilliant
This is less a demonstration of skill, and more a demonstration of the player's bizarre sense of humour. And determination. The anonymous trucker takes a big rig tanker all the way up to San Andreas' huge peak, Mount Chiliad. He then drops the hammer and launches it from the summit, presumably cackling as the trailer separates and sails away in the wind.
KEYWORDS: GTASA Chilliad Tanker Truck Jump

ZOMBIE NATION

EVERYONE'S WASTED

The living dead shamble into Vice City. Your only hope? Heavy weaponry... There aren't many total conversions for these games (perhaps because it's hard to improve on what's already there), but one of the most amusing brings hordes of the undead to that familiar 80s playground.

The Long Night is a remarkable piece of work, with 20 new missions, new radio stations and, of course, a whole horde of zombies to cut a swathe through. The result feels almost like a different game, with zombies constantly appearing and chasing you across the city. Predictably, rotting flesh is pretty easy to turn to mushy chunks, and you're also able to carry all of the heavy weaponry at once, so you're well equipped to send those walking corpses back where they came from. It still manages to be surprisingly spooky, though. Grab it from www.moddb.com



DE PERFECT DELOREAN

BACK TO THE FUTURE

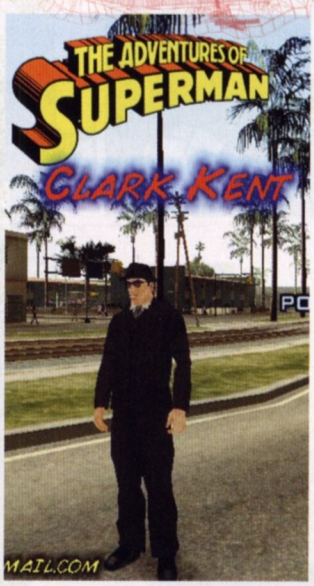
Back To The Future: Hill Valley is a work in progress that aims to bring time travel to Vice City, using the iconic DeLorean already (unofficially) present. As soon as the speedo hits 88mph, sparks fly across the front of this gloriously detailed time machin, and it warps to one of five different eras – each with its own vehicles and pedestrians. The car really is the star here, particularly because the hover conversion from the second film allows you to bypass any traffic jams.

The team behind this has even seen fit to include the time travelling locomotive from Back to the Future III! It's not complete yet, but an early version is available at www.moddb.com, along with several YouTube videos of the DeLorean in action. Great Scott!

SUPERHERO WORSHIP

A MAN MADE OF SUPER

As Clark Kent you blend into the crowd inconspicuously, but tap in a quick cheat and you become the ultimate superhero – complete with authentic powers such as super strength, unaided flight and confusion over where your underwear goes. Flying is clearly the best addition, allowing you to swoop around at ridiculous speeds and cover some serious mileage without a car, but a special mention has to go to the heat vision, which just creates an enormous explosion in front of you – always a crowd pleaser. Superman SA can be downloaded from www.moddb.com



A NEW MAN

BORED OF CJ?

Master Chief, Halo

After a hard day's Covenent mashing, Master Chief likes nothing better than to unwind with a little vehicular homicide, the odd spot of Taking Without Consent andfirearms offences. Quite how he fits in the driver's seat in all that Spartan armour is beyond us. And is that visor tint really legal for motorcycle use? Want proof it works? YouTube has proof. KEYWORDS: Halo (MasterChief player model)

Mario, multiple games

There's something slightly disturbing about watching Nintendo's cheery mascot blowing up cars, beating pedestrians to death and causing mayhem a Harrier jump jet, but that said it's somehow arousing as well. We're not quite sure Nintendo would find it as funny, mind... Again, YouTube has proof if you'd rather not replace CJ just yet. KEYWORDS: Mario in GTA Vice City

007

SPY HARD

JAMES BOND

Get thrashing with a garage full of gadget-packed vehicles in this James Bond themed mod

The completed mod may not be out yet, but one of the more eagerly anticipated community projects in production aims to bring the famous cars of James Bond – complete with smokescreens, oil slicks and rocket launchers – to San Andreas. The preview edition of Grand Theft Auto: 007 boasts three Aston Martins (including the classic 1960s DB5), three BMWs and several Bond-ish weapons. All that's missing is a terrible impression of Sean Connery. Head to moddb.com to download the preview of the most debonair add-on for GTA yet.

TOTAL REDESIGN

So just how do these internet geniuses do it? We asked the boffins at PC Format

As you can probably imagine, alongside the standout mods we've already shown you are are *hundreds* of downloadable vehicles with which to turn your' traffic from gentle nods to existing marques into the same cars you'd see on the road or, as is more often the case, in David Beckham's driveway. But how in the world do you turn a real life motor into a virtual vehicle you can tote an Uzi from?

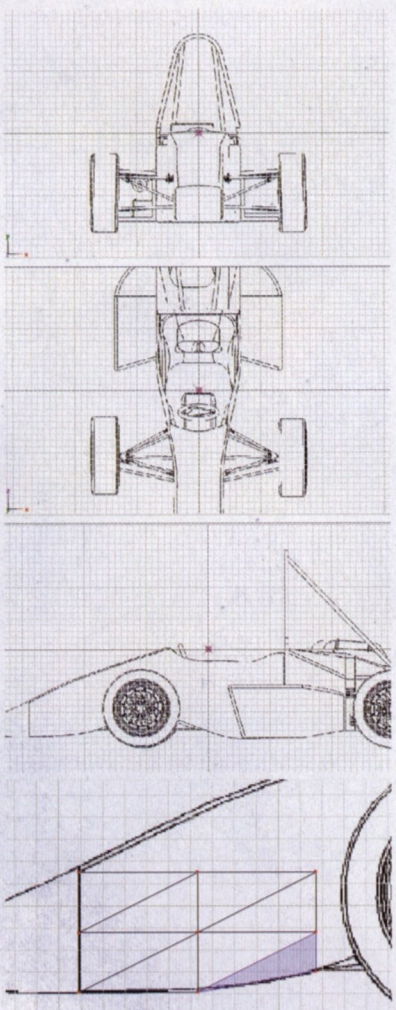
The answer is with a lot of careful 3D modelling – transferring the angles and shapes as accurately as possible into a series of polygons that follow the lines of the car. The best news if you're keen to give it a punt is that the software is free – simply pop over to www.zModeler2.com and download zModeler2.

But first, check out our quick guide to what's really involved in developing a GTA car. Seems a bit complex... but doable? If you *really* want to get your hands dirty, make your first stop the forums at zModeler's website, and dive into that community spirit. N00b. Joking!

BLUES MOBILE

The best way to ensure an accurate 3D replica is to use blueprints

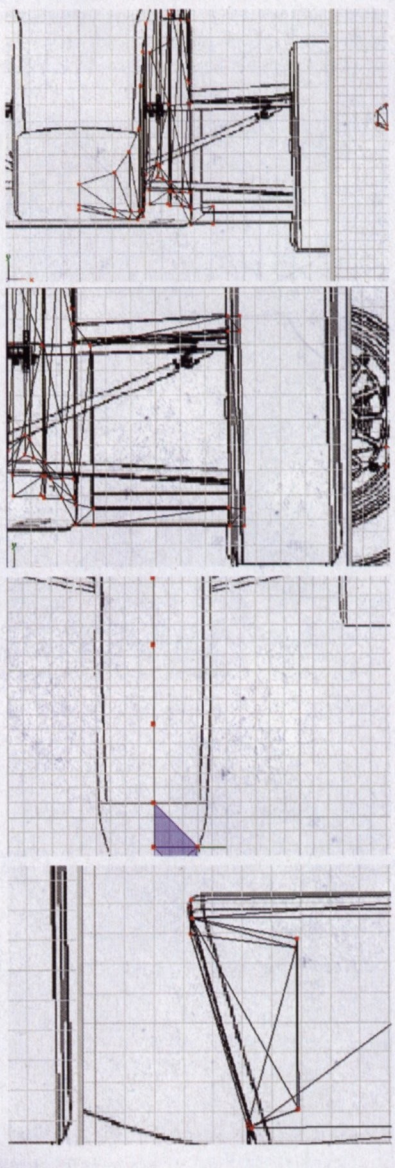
The surest way to get a car that doesn't look a five year old's Play-Doh 'interpretation' of a Capri is to use schematics of the actual car. These blueprints can either be found in plastic Airfix-style model sets or, less expensively, on the internet. Just tapping 'car blueprints' into Google will present you with sites that boast hundreds of the bally things, for just about any vehicle you could think of. zModeler allows you to use these schematics as backgrounds for each of the modelling panes, meaning you're essentially tracing a picture, only in three dimensions. To do this, you'll need each image perfectly centred in each pane so that they all line up.



ANGLE OF APPROACH

Unless you're a He-Man-esque master of multiple dimensions, start with one

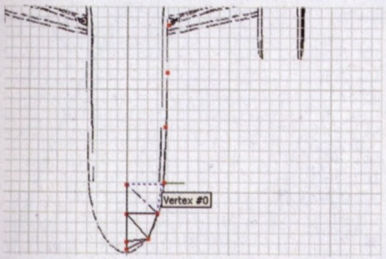
Creating virtual 3D models is all about lines and points, and sadly the human brain simply isn't equipped to handle three dimensions of them at once, no matter how bright your mum thinks you are. The answer is to begin by tracing just one dimension – for instance, the side of the car. Once you've got a paper thin profile of the car's shape, you can then drag it out to line up with one side of your top view. For creating 3D models of largely symmetrical stuff – as, handily, most vehicles are – the trick is to create half the car and then, once you're done, create a mirror-image to complete the model.

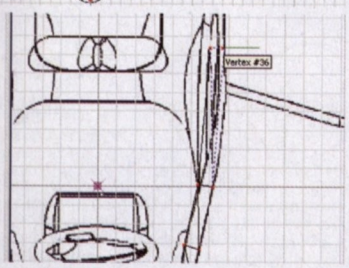


SEALED SYSTEM

Once you're finished with one angle, it's time to deal with the others

At this point what you've got is still paper thin, it just happens to follow the line of the side of the car. Now you need to switch to the top view and start working your way along, creating a surface that's attached to the side you created, and that goes up to the centre line running across the top of the car. Then you'll have to make sure the front, rear and underside all make sense as well, one after the other. Sheesh.





CHECK YOUR MIRROR

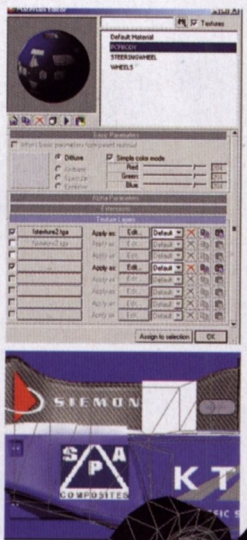
Frankly, it's the only part of the process that's a breeze

The best part about mirroring the half you've completed is that within a few scant seconds you go from fragment to nearly finished. Brilliant! Try this and you really will appreciate the work of those faceless internet modders.

TEXTURE LIKE FUN

Fashion the perfect paintjob for your newly modelled motor

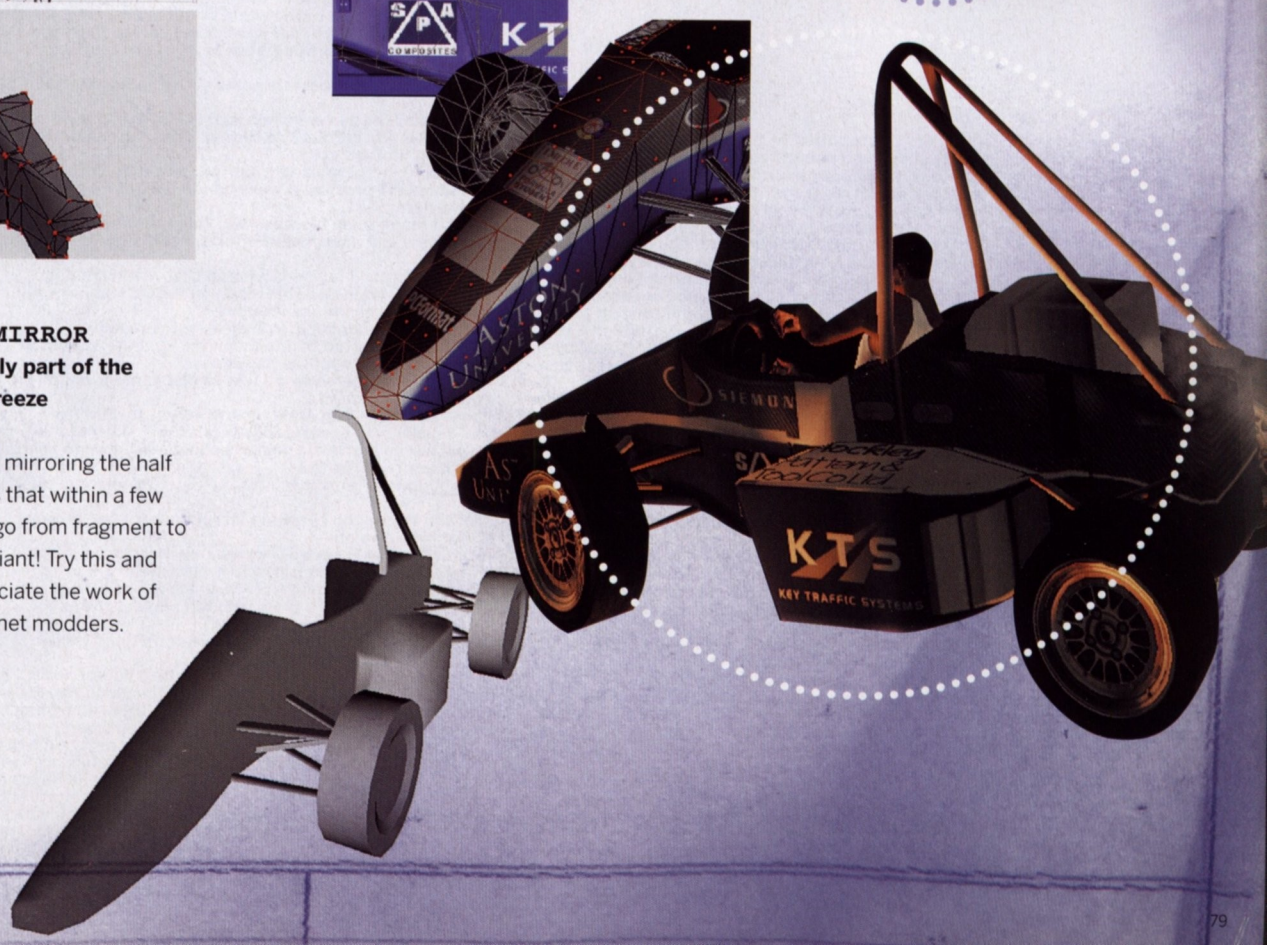
Once you have a 3D model, it's on to the really fun bit. The decoration. If you've spent hours manipulating shapes in the likes of Forza just so you can have a massive wang on top of your car, you'll be pleased to hear the same process for GTA takes a fraction of the time. You can texture your vehicle in just about any PC paint package, but again it's best to use the blueprints as a template. Then use zModeler's built in UV mapper to tie it into the shapes of your model, and make sure it's properly aligned. Easy.



START YOUR ENGINES

Once your car is finished, simply drop it into the game

Once you've done the tough part – modelling and texturing a car – all that's left is to integrate the model and texture files into Grand Theft Auto's files. Once done (it's pretty simple, and too dull to describe here), you should notice your car cruising the streets of whichever fine city you've chosen. There's little more satisfying than tearing around an open world in your own personally designed chariot, and once you've got the requisite skills, the sky's the limit. *Any* vehicle is game.



ANYONE

Lovely hot, wet, steamy coffee...

GTA: San Andreas was the flashpoint for the biggest, most expensive controversy in gaming history. The so-called Hot Coffee mod unlocked a rhythm-based minigame where CJ did naughty sex to his various girlfriends. Never mind the uzi-based gang killings – when American conservatives got wind of the embarrassing dry humping they went mad(der). The rest of the world was less bothered. Remember, the USA is a country that considered nuking itself when Janet Jackson showed the Superbowl most of one nipple for 0.5 secs.

Here, in a handy A-O (Adults Ony) list, are some actual facts about Hot Coffee.

a) In the normal version of the game, as released in 2004, impressing any of the six potential girlfriends culminates in CJ being invited in for 'coffee'. The camera then pans away from the house to the sound of muffled how's-your-father. It's all very Carry On Motherf**r.**

b) Rockstar initially intended there to be a sex minigame for when CJ went inside for 'coffee'. It worked in the same way as the dancing and lowrider hydraulics challenges, requiring well-timed button presses. It was abandoned before the animations were even finalised, presumably because even Rockstar thought it was naff.

c) Rockstar left the unfinished assets within the game's code, but made them inaccessible. This is normal practice: slicing out bits of computer code, even when they're inactive, can have strange and unexpected effects elsewhere. Testing San Andreas for bugs was a big enough task already.

d) In 2005, Dutch modder Patrick Wildenborg found this content and released a patch that reactivated it.

e) To access Hot Coffee, you needed to search for, download and install this patch on the PC version – all while avoiding the abundant actual pornography available freely on the internet.

f) Once news of the 'Shock Hidden Sex Scenes' spread, Rockstar claimed they were the result of 'significant technical modifications' by 'hackers.' Many interpreted this to mean the content was either partially or totally a third-party creation and thus nothing to do with the developer.

g) Cheat-disc codes later released for the PS2 version – in which there was no way to add content not already there – made Rockstar's 'significant technical modifications' look less than totally accurate.

h) In light of the content, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) chose to re-rate San Andreas in America. It went from 17 or over (Mature) to 18 or over (Adults Only). This extra year made all the difference, as usually only pornography is rated AO. Many of America's biggest chainstores simply refuse to stock anything AO that features happy, consensual sex as it offends decent people who're there shopping for guns. At least four major stores went to their shelves and pulled CJ and his friends off, though not like that.

i) In the unlocked content, both CJ and his girl are clothed and dry-hump in a series of positions. A later patch for the patch, also not created by Rockstar, added naked textures for the ladies. It's still rubbish.

j) In New York, 85 year-old Florence Cohen, who had previously felt good about her decision to buy the 17-rated San Andreas for her 14 year-old grandson, was outraged by the AO re-rating. She launched a suit for the good of mankind, or similar.

k) Senator Hillary Clinton, wife ex-president Bill Clinton – a man who 'did not have sex with that [Lewinski] woman' perhaps only because he was never the victim of GTA as an impressionable youth – asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Rockstar. The company had 'gamed the ratings system,' she soundbited, by hiding scenes that could later be unlocked with programs available on the internet. The somewhat paranoid implication is that Hot Coffee was a premeditated ploy for the purpose of distributing comedy shagging scenes to 17 year-olds.

l) The Federal Trade Commission estimated that it subsequently cost Rockstar $25 million to recall all unsold copies and issue a patch that completely removed the offending material.

m) The Australian censors also re-rated the game, which had been an MA15. Unfortunately, the Australian authorities do not accept that adults play games and have no classification beyond MA15 (though they do for films, which uses the same scale). Consequently, the game was refused classification, and effectively banned. Rockstar's recall/patch eventually led to San Andreas being re-granted its original classification and going back on sale.

n) The British Board of Film Classification, which rates games in the UK, left San Andreas alone. Firstly, they pointed out it took a third-party modification to access Hot Coffee (a patch or cheat disc). "The fact people can change what they have," said the BBFC's Jim Cliff, "makes no greater difference to us than the fact people can re-edit videos they buy in shops and create a different product." Secondly, Hot Coffee's consensual, utterly non-explicit sex falls well within its existing 18+ classification anyway. "Most people seem to wonder what all the fuss is about," said Cliff, "and point to the fact the game is already full of strong language, drug references and very strong violence."

o) Americans who found themselves 'offended and upset' after trawling the internet for an unofficial mod that exists only to add sex to their violent game, who then saw that sex, were subsequently able to claim compensation. Publisher Take Two put up around $1m to replace discs and pay faint-hearted hackers.

FOR COFFEE?

Come and get it! But how did a refreshing caffeinated beverage cost Rockstar $25m?

WHO: DAMAGING PUBLIC CONTROVERSY
WHERE: 2005
WHEN: PRINCIPALLY THE USA

OH NO, NOT AGAIN!

THIS IS NOT AMERICA'S FIRST MAJOR HOT COFFEE PROBLEM

In 1994, a New Mexico jury awarded 79 year-old Stella Liebeck $2.86m after she spilled a 49 cent cup of McDonalds drive-thru coffee into her lap, scalding her thighs. Though there was a warning on the cup that hot drinks are hot, the Albuquerque jury decided it wasn't big enough – presumably also deciding that Liebeck was, as a consequence and despite her years, unaware that coffee is hot. Liebeck eventually received an undisclosed amount of less than $600,000, once various appeals had been heard.

FOLLOW THE LEA

Its influences continue to spread, within gaming and beyond. But what – who – made GTA what it i

Page 84

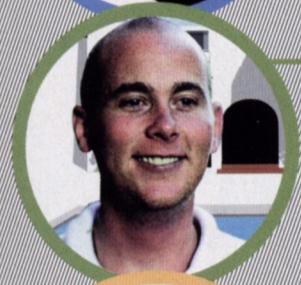
Much has been made of the movie references, but usually only the same few titbits. Total Film's Nathan Ditum digs deep into GTA's celluloid love.

Page 92

More Words of Wisdom – this time from Rockstars own rockstars, Love Fist, in a 1986 Vice City interview. Remember this?

Page 94

Rockstar considers sound every bit as vital as vision. Future Music's Dan Griffiths examines the path blazed by its soundtracks.



Page 104

In 2003, Rockstar CEO spoke to Gang War magazine about the then-new Vice City. Here's what he said.

Page 106

A game this successful is bound to encounter copycats. But just how far have the 'homages' gone? And what does it mean for the original?

Page 112

If you want wisdom, what better source could you tap than the authorities? Eh? Take a look at what the VCPD were actually saying...

Page 114

In its artwork, as in its soundtracks and its gameplay, GTA ploughs its own furrow. We take a look at just what it is that makes it special.

DER INFLUENCES

MOVIES WISDOM MUSIC WISDOM IMPACT COPS ARTWORK

"GTA III drew a line in the sand between games and movies" - Sam Houser, page 85

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CVG PRESENTS

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18

Some big, some cult, some hidden, some blatant – these are the 101 most important movie references of GTA

GTA III drew line in the sand," Rockstar head Sam Houser claimed in a recent interview, "between games and movies. It felt like we were taking over." Certainly, GTA III was the point at which the full force of Rockstar's passion for and knowledge of films was brought to bear in their game world.

We're not just talking broad overtures here, the way that the London expansion packs played on swinging sixties Britflicks like Get Carter and The Italian Job (and, via comic timewarp, the Austin Powers movies), or that GTA III itself was set in an nightmare blend of Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma and Quentin Tarantino underworlds. The cinematic references in the recent GTA titles have worked on two distinct levels. There's the top-surface, worn on sleeve influences – Vice City, for instance, drew obvious, iconic inspiration from Scarface and Miami Vice, and San Andreas inhabited the same gangbanging projects as '90s hood flicks Menace II Society and Boyz N' The Hood.

"Hey Mr Travolta, I loved you in Battlefield Earth! With the hair and the green drinks and...and... oh, Mr Jackson! *You* were great in The 51st State, with the chunky jumper and the kilt and... that... er..."

"That goalie sure is mad about something..." the hockey mask is pure Friday The 13th

Robert Loggia appeared in Scarface as Frank Lopez - you know him as the voice of Ray Machowski in GTA III

But there's also a level underneath that, fleetingly explored in earlier GTAs and fully unlocked by the added power of PS2, which contains a writhing web of interlocking allusions and references. If playing the 3D GTAs seems impossibility cinematic, if it makes you feel like you're in a living movie, if Houser's right and they really are taking over, it's down to this. Join us, then, as we try to find out just how the magic's made with our list of the top 101 film references in the GTA series.

Grand Theft Auto

1. The game's default character has a Mohawk, a green jacket and is called Travis – just like the tortured hero of Martin Scorsese's Taxi Driver.

2. The game name is taken from Ron 'The Da Vinci Code' Howard's directorial debut from 1977, about pair of runaway teenagers on a slapstick road chase to get hitched in Vegas. There's no official connection to the film, and yet, after the success of the games the DVD cover adopted an image and font strikingly similar to the GTA III cover.

3. Don Sonetti sets a trap for the player using a bomb-loaded bus that will explode if it goes under 50 mph, just like the one in the film Speed.

4. One of the text messages you get reads 'My God, it's full of stars!' It's taken from the sci-fi sequel 2010.

5. The explosive remote control cars – which also feature in subsequent GTA games – are exactly like the one which almost blows up Clint Eastwood in the fifth Dirty Harry film, The Dead Pool.

London 1969

6. One of the cars is called the James Bomb, and looks a lot like 007's favourite Aston Martin DB5.

7. The Fab car is a pink limousine not entirely unlike the one owned by Lady Penelope in Thunderbirds.

GTA 2

8. The first car in the tutorial mission is called the Schmitt, and it's based on a real line of bubble cars by German firm Messerschmidt – and as driven by hero Sam Lowry in Terry Gilliam's future fantasy Brazil. Why? The two share bleak dystopian settings with vague locations: GTA 2's metropolis is called Anywhere City, while a subtitle in Brazil tells the viewer that it takes place 'Somewhere in the 20th Century.'

GTA III

9. The betrayed-during-a-heist-and-left-for-dead plot which sees main character Claude double-crossed by the conniving Catilina is very similar to the Lee Marvin classic Point Blank, and also Mel Gibson's more recent update of the same story, Payback.

10. Indian cab drivers will often bark a heavily-accented 'Are you talking to

me?' when you oust them from their car, a reference to the famous line improvised by Robert De Niro in Martin Scorsese's film Taxi Driver.

11. One line of pedestrian dialogue heard on Liberty City's streets is an irate 'Get off the damn phone!' – a direct quote from Samuel L. Jackson's character Zeus in Die Hard With A Vengeance.

12. There are several billboards in Liberty City advertising the film Badfellas, a heavy nod to Scorsese's classic mob film, Goodfellas.

13. Also visible are posters for a movie called Top Down City, starring Arnold Steelone – it's a mix of 1980s action heroes Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone.

14. There's also a seedy pun on the John Travolta disco classic Saturday Night Fever, with posters advertising... Saturday Night Beaver.

15. The playlist on Flashback FM consists entirely of tracks from Oliver Stone's Scarface.

16. Robert Loggia appeared in Scarface as Frank Lopez – you know him as the voice of Ray Machowski in GTA III.

17. Don Salvatore Leone is voiced by Frank Vincent, best known as Phil Leotardo from The Sopranos. You may also have seen him as mafia characters in the Scorsese films Raging Bull, Goodfellas and Casino.

18. Mafia boss Toni Cipriani's difficult relationship with his overbearing mother is very similar to the problems suffered by Tony in The Sopranos.

19. Toni Cipriani is played by Michael Madsen, who starred as Sonny Black in the mob film Donnie Brasco and appears regularly in the films of Quentin Tarantino.

20. There's a cab company in Liberty City called Mean Streets Taxis, which takes its name from another Scorsese film, 1973's Mean Streets.

21. Once you've completed 100 taxi missions a special spiked cab called the Borgnine appears at Mean Street Taxis' HQ. It's modelled on the taxi driven by actor Ernest Borgnine in John Carpenter's Escape From New York.

22. Donald Love sends you on several missions to protect and carry a mystery briefcase. As with the similar briefcase in Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, we never discover what's inside...

23. An early mission called Drive Misty For Me is named after the first film Clint Eastwood directed, Play Misty For Me.

24. The bridge from Staunton to Portland Island is named after Eastwood's Dirty Harry character – Harry Callahan.

25. There's a particularly obscure reference to Peter Greenaway's arty British gangster film The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover in the names of the missions given to you by Marty Chonks. The four missions are called, in order: The Crook, The Thieves, His Wife, and Her Lover.

26. A poster for Pirates In Men's Pants ('Prepare for a jolly rogering!) is a take on the Gilbert and Sullivan Broadway hit Pirates of Penzance, filmed in 1983 with Kevin Kline.

27. The explosive RC car van carries a logo saying Toyz 'n' the Hood, in a pre-San Andreas reference to the movie Boyz n'The Hood.

Vice City

28. Lead character Tommy Vercetti is voiced by Ray Liotta, star of key GTA III influence Goodfellas.

29. Set in and around the cocaine trade in 1980s Miami, the game's two biggest influences are Brian De Palma's Scarface and iconic TV show Miami Vice, created by Michael Mann.

30. The character of Lance Vance is played by Philip Michael Thomas, who

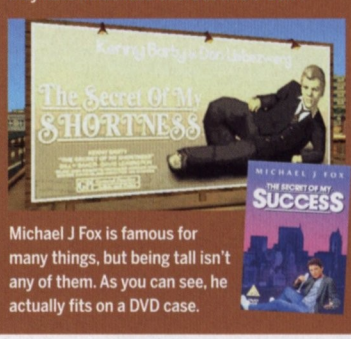
BILL POSTERS WILL BE PROSTITUDED

A Sanchez flying past a poster... or a bmx across the moon? Is this ET? Are you squinting?

This has nothing to do with anyone from Goodfellas who may have voiced Vice City's Tommy Vercetti.

Ed Wood Jr is famous as the worst movie maker ever. Coincidentally, these smokes sound similar.

Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1986 flick Raw Deal may have influenced this. But who's 'Don'?



Michael J Fox is famous for many things, but being tall isn't any of them. As you can see, he actually fits on a DVD case.

Two missions are simply named directly for Ray Liotta films – No Escape and Copland

Look closely – those images are actually of Tony Montana's mansion, rather than Diaz's similar one

starred as Ricardo Tubbs in Miami Vice. Like Tubbs, Vance is out to avenge a brother killed by drug dealers.

31. Is the drug dealer Ricardo Diaz one of the unseen Diaz brothers mentioned by Tony Montana in Scarface?

32. Vice City's Diaz is played by Luis Guzman, who appeared in several Miami Vice episodes and Carlito's Way, another De Palma flick starring Pacino.

33. You probably already know the Diaz mansion is modelled on Tony Montana's pad in Scarface. The office recreates Tony's paranoia-purchase security camera setup, with a bank of television monitors watching over the house. But did you know the monitors display tiny stills from the film itself, including the neon globe with its fizzing sign reading 'The World Is Yours'?

34. There's a hotel in Ocean Beach which contains a room called Apartment 3c. It's the room from Scarface where Tony's coke handover goes bad, and even has the blood-soaked bathroom from the film's chainsaw torture scene.

35. That iconic chainsaw from Scarface features heavily: in the mission Treacherous Swine, Cortez instructs Tommy to kill a business associate specifically using the weapon.

36. The picture on the wall of the upstairs office of the Malibu Club – palm trees at sunset – is identical to that seen in Frank Lopez's tasteful offices in Scarface.

37. This time doing 100 taxi missions unlocks the Zebra cab, which looks a lot like the yellow and leopard-skin Cadillac driven by Pacino in Scarface.

38. Vice City features a 'pseudo-intellectual' porn director called Steve Scott, whose name is a hybrid of superstar 80s directors Steven Spielberg and Tony Scott. Steve Scott's films Bite and Closer Encounters are Spielberg's Jaws and Close Encounters Of The Third Kind, while his over-elaborate skin flicks sound very similar in style to Tony Scott's infamous lesbian Vampire movie The Hunger.

39. Steve Scott is played by Dennis Hopper, who also once appeared in a Tony Scott film: the Tarantino-scripted True Romance.

40. The van housing the explosive RC cars now has Top Fun written across the side, aping the visual style of another Tony Scott film, Top Gun.

41. Tommy's highly strung lawyer Ken Rosenberg is actually a riff on David Kleinfeld from Carlito's Way. Played by Sean Penn, Kleinfeld is also a coked-up, curly-haired Jewish lawyer whose nerves get the better of him.

42. Rosenberg is voiced by William Fitchner: he played doomed businessman Van Zandt in Michael Mann's 1995 masterpiece Heat.

43. The voice of Liberty City crime boss Sonny Ferelli is provided by Tom Sizemore, who appeared in Heat as one of Robert De Niro's heist crew – and also appeared in Tony Scott's Enemy Of The State, funnily enough as the head of a mob family.

44. Hidden in a nightclub there's a

If Tony Montana is famous for one thing, it's that he really hated showers. Here, even after a morning painting his favourite cactus red, Tony breaks his father's heart by refusing even a quick wash.

William Shatner mask and butcher's knife outfit that makes Tommy look like Michael Myers from John Carpenter's 80s slasher Halloween.

45. The mission in which Tommy is attacked by chainsaw-wielding loons is called Portland Chainsaw Masquerade, in reference to Tobe Hooper's horror classic The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

46. If you successfully complete the above mission, you'll unlock overalls that make Tommy look curiously like Jason Vorhees from another big 80s slasher series, Friday The 13th.

47. Two missions are simply named directly for Ray Liotta films – No Escape and Cop Land.

48. The preposterous English rockers Lovefist bear striking similarities to 'rockumentary' band Spinal Tap...

49. Tommy destroys a building site with explosive remote controlled helicopters in a mission called Demolition Man – another Sylvester Stallone movie.

50. There's an undertaker named Romero's Funeraria – after zombie film master George Romero. 'The dead centre of Vice City', as the sign has it. (See the Top Ten Secrets on page 68).

51. Next door to Romero's Funeraria is a butchers – look closely in the window and you'll see it sells zombie-friendly human organs. Handy.

52. There's a picture on the Funeraria wall of a man in a suit with graffiti drawn on his face. This is a shot of Bela Lugosi from the 1931 version of Dracula!

53. At the Interglobal film studio there's a poster on the wall obscured by graffiti that reads 'Only The Monster She Made Could Satisfy Her Strange Desires!' This is actually the tag line from the 1971 horror Lady Frankenstein.

54. The Hyman Memorial Stadium is a namecheck for the Florida-based underworld giant Hyman Roth from The Godfather Part II – and not a misspelt dirty joke, as many believe. For once.

55. The name of the game's final mission, Keep Your Friends Close... is taken from a quote by Michael Corleone, also in The Godfather Part II.

56. There's a meat truck bearing the company name 'R.S. & L. Bow' (company motto: You can't beat our meat'). It's a reference to the U.S. Marine slang 'assholes and elbows', made famous by Sergeant Apone in James Cameron's Aliens.

57. There's also a removals truck with 'Haul: The Right Moves' written on the side, in reference to the Tom Cruise high school football movie All The Right Moves. The film also starred Chris Penn, who would go on to star as Officer Pulaski in San Andreas.

58. The game's hidden packages – mysterious, exotic-looking birds – are actually a reference to noir thriller The Maltese Falcon. In it Humphrey Bogart and all the other major characters hunt for an object called the Maltese Falcon, but it's never revealed what it is or why it's valuable.

59. The 1984 film Red Dawn, in which Communist Russia stages a successful invasion of the USA, is mentioned twice. Pastor Richards namechecks it on the VCPR radio channel, while an Ammu-Nation commercial invites listeners to a free screening and describes it as a Cold War 'documentary'.

60. The scene in which Tommy and Lance kill Diaz is a reference to the film To Live And Die In L.A, giving us a victim's-eye-view of the shooting, just as the film does when villian Rico Masters shoots Max Waxman.

61. Not convinced? A song from the above film's soundtrack, Dance Hall Days by Wang Chung, plays on Flash FM.

62. The star of To Live And Die In L.A. is William Petersen, who in the same year (1985) also starred in Manhunter for Miami Vice creator Michael Mann.

63. The Deluxo car is a clear homage to the infamous De Lorean, perhaps best remembered now for its role in the Back To The Future films as a time machine.

GTA: Liberty City Stories

64. Think it's all gangsters? In a nod to the classic musical Grease, the mission Grease Sucho has Toni racing a Hot Rod driver named Dan Sucho, after the film's character Danny Zuko.

65. The reward for completing 100 taxi missions this time is a new model of cab called the Bickle '76, after De Niro's character Taxi Driver Travis Bickle and the movie's year of release, 1976.

66. Completing the mission Crazy 69 unlocks the Dragon Jumpsuit. This is the same jumpsuit worn by Bruce Lee in Game Of Death, and more recently by

No100

Uma Thurman in Tarantino's Kill Bill. This film, of course, features a huge fight against the Crazy 88.

67. You can hardly miss the posters and radio commercials advertising a spoof of The Matrix called The Mainframe.

San Andreas

68. In Scorsese's Vegas epic Casino, Joe Pesci's character Little Nicky is buried alive alongside countless numbers of his own victims in the Nevada desert. In the intro film to San Andreas' PS2 Special Edition you can see two mobsters digging a similar shallow grave; find it in-game and it's filled with six body bags (for directions, see the Top Ten Secrets, p70).

69. One of San Andreas' pedestrians is modelled on Sharon Stone's femme fatale character Katherine Tremmel from Basic Instinct, with a short white dress and blonde hair. And no, we haven't checked if she's wearing any.

70. In a creepy reference to the unfortunate Marion Crane from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho, a caller to the WCTR station says "I'm watching you, Marion, in the shower..."

71. The Zombotech Sky Tower in San Fierro is a nod to the shady Umbrella Corporation from the Resident Evil games and films. Signs on their building read 'Sinister zombie virus research corporation welcomes visitors!'

72. Cobra Marital Arts in San Fierro is actually a reference to the bully-boy Cobra Kai karate dojo in '80s martial arts flick The Karate Kid – as well as a typically saucy pun. Read 'Marital' carefully...

73. Los Santos features a pedestrian model which looks *very* similar to Cuba Gooding Jr's character Trey from Boyz N' The Hood.

74. Cinemas all over San Andreas advertise screenings of The Wizard Of Ass, a lowbrow but still quite funny spoof of The Wizard Of Oz.

75. When you're shooting explosive remote control planes with a minigun, the character Zero says 'Nice shooting kid, but don't get cocky'! – it's a quote from Star Wars. Han Solo says it to Luke after he nails his first TIE fighter.

76. The Grove Street gang member with short dreadlocks and a green & black check shirt? He looks startlingly like Kevin O-Dog from Menace II Society.

77. During the cutscene for the mission Intensive Care, Rosenberg's parrot – Tony – says, "I never fucked anyone over in my life who didn't have it coming to 'em." It's a line first spoken by Tony Montana in Scarface.

78. The rankings for flight time in the pause menu stats are mostly named after pilots from Top Gun (Goose, Viper, Maverick, Jester and Iceman) and Star Wars (Wedge and Biggs).

79. There are several posters for a spoof of Michael Mann's Last Of The Mohicans, called Last Of The Mullets.

80. In the mission Just Business, CJ and Big Smoke are chased through a storm drain on a motorcycle. It's not entirely unlike John Connor and the T-100 in Terminator 2: Judgement Day.

81. CJ can purchase a gimp suit like the one worn by The Gimp in Pulp Fiction.

82. The jetpack is modelled after the Bell Textron model James Bond uses in the 1965 Thunderball.

83. Officer Frank Tenpenny, the corrupt

No71

No53

The horror, the horror! The cliche! Sorry. We only did it because the above references are to horror films – 1971's Lady Frankenstein and Resident Evil, 2002. It's from Apocalypse Now, you know. Sorry.

The Grove Street gang member with short dreads and a green & black check shirt? He looks startlingly like Kevin O-Dog from Menace II Society

Barzini was one of the 'families' in The Godfather.

police character, is played by Samuel L Jackson, who has himself appeared in several GTA-influencing films – including the big ones Goodfellas and Pulp Fiction.

84. The scene where Tenpenny and fellow bad cop Eddie Pulaski try to incriminate new recruit Officer Hernandez is highly reminiscent of the 2001 cop drama Training Day.

85. Eddie Pulaski is voiced by Chris Penn. He was Nice Guy Eddie in Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs.

86. SA's Cesar Vialpando is played by Clifton Collins Jr, who became famous playing a character named... Cesar Vialpando, alongside a certain Samuel L Jackson in gangland thriller 187.

87. Peter Fonda plays The Truth, an ageing hippie based on the Fonda's character Wyatt from classic anti-establishment road movie Easy Rider.
88. At one point The Truth ends a phone conversation with CJ by saying "I don't know you... who is this? Prank caller, prank caller!" It's a line originally spoken by drug dealer Lance in Pulp Fiction.

Vice City Stories

89. Billboards across Vice City advertise the films The Secret Of My Shortness and Top Shelf, which riff on The Secret Of My Success starring Michael J. Fox and Top Gun starring, of course, Tom Cruise. Both stars are known for being particularly diminutive...

90. ...unlike Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose film Raw Deal is inexplicably parodied the same way as Short Deal.

91. The star of these tiny movies is Kenny Barty, an amalgam of two real-life dwarf actors: Kenny Baker (who was R2-D2) and Billy Barty, seen in 1988's Willow.

92. The Italian restaurant Barzini's is named after one of the five mafia families from The Godfather.

93. You can find ads for an animated film called Ray The Otter, an hilarious pun on the star of the original Vice City, Ray Liotta.

94. The film Los Santos Fop has a poster image identical to the Eddie Murphy movie Beverly Hills Cop.

95. The billboard image for the San Andreas film Full Moon features the moonn shaded to look like a planetary backside, and also looks a lot like the poster for Speilberg's E.T. Indeed, during one mission you ride a bike in front of it in Unique Jump slo-mo...

96. The game's Redwood Jnr brand of cigarettes are named after cult director Ed Wood Junior, a man famed for being the worst filmmaker of all time.

97. CJ can buy a helicopter from the Carnivale Suite called The Little Willie. It's modelled after James Bond's chopper (Little Nellie) from Connery's You Only Live Twice. And it sounds rude.

GTA IV

98. The first trailer (Things Will Be Different) was edited *exactly* like Godfrey Reggio's experimental documentary Koyaanisqatsi ('life out of balance') and uses its Phillip Glass score. High brow!

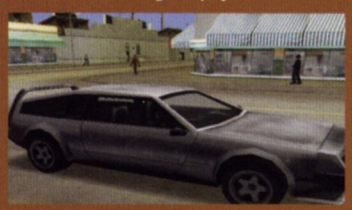
99. The early screenshot of Niko standing dockside with a man in a flat cap mirrors a scene from season two of The Wire, in which Spiros Vondopolous sported a similar hat to meet crime boss The Greek by the riverside.

100. When Niko buys guns from the boot of a car, the menacing red glow is taken straight from the opening murder scene of – you guessed it – Goodfellas.

101. The game's fairground contains a ghost train called The Corpse Ride, a necrophiliac gag at the expense of Tim Burton's animated film The Corpse Bride. *Always* end on a corpse.
And that's all, folks! CVG

COME ON, JOIN OUR CONVOY

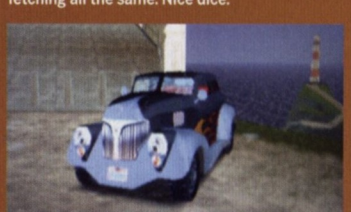
This gyrocopter in Vice City is very much like the one James Bond got to play with.



Takes you back, eh? The DeLuxo is rather like the DeLorean of Back to the Future fame.

This taxi would appeal to Scarface himself: his convertible was upholstered the same way.

The Bickle '76. Hardly a monument to taste, but fetching all the same. Nice dice.



Yes, this is Salvatore's driveway and yes, that is Danny Sucho's hot rod... as in the musical Grease!

Have they ever really listened to
the lyrics of Bury Me Deep Inside?

LOVE FIST

Rocker Jez Torrent spills it all in a K-CHAT interview

WHO: JEZ TORRENT OF LOVE FIST
WHERE: K-CHAT RADIO STATION, VICE CITY
WHEN: PRE-CONCERT, 1986

Jez: Cool Man, I'm cool! Things are good, you can't OD on love, and I *have* tried. The tour is really something special – you Americans, you really know how to rock 'n' roll man, not like back home.

Amy: I'm so confused... is that because the new album didn't do so well in the UK?

Jez: It's that facist Thatcher! I sing about working class people, trying to make it through a tough life. I sing about the things they want, trashing hotel rooms, wearing glitter on your eyes and waking up in a ditch next to a totalled sports car. When you make minimum wage, love conquers all, know what I mean, Sheila?

Amy: Uh, the name's Amy...

Jez: Aye right, whatever. Like as I was sayin' man, right, I'm an artist, I ain't in this for the money. If I were, would I be wearing these clothes? It's because the critics don't know, you know... they stand there and they do *not* know. Have they ever really listened to the lyrics to Bury Me Deep Inside? Eh, if the music isn't what they want to hear, if the songs ain't the right songs, you know, if things aren't in their space... or whatever, right, man, you know that's *my* choice you know. Because man I *am* Love Fist and the thing is, right, they're not, and if they don't get it, and if they're not riding my wave that day man, well – you know, I ain't gonna go crying puppies just because their dog is teething you know. As far as these idiots are concerned I'm a man, but I tell you sweetheart I've been over to the other side baby and man-oh-man it's beautiful, but these idiots, man, they've not been there.

Amy: OK! Riiiiight, this last album wasn't your best selling, was it? I don't even think it charted in the UK!

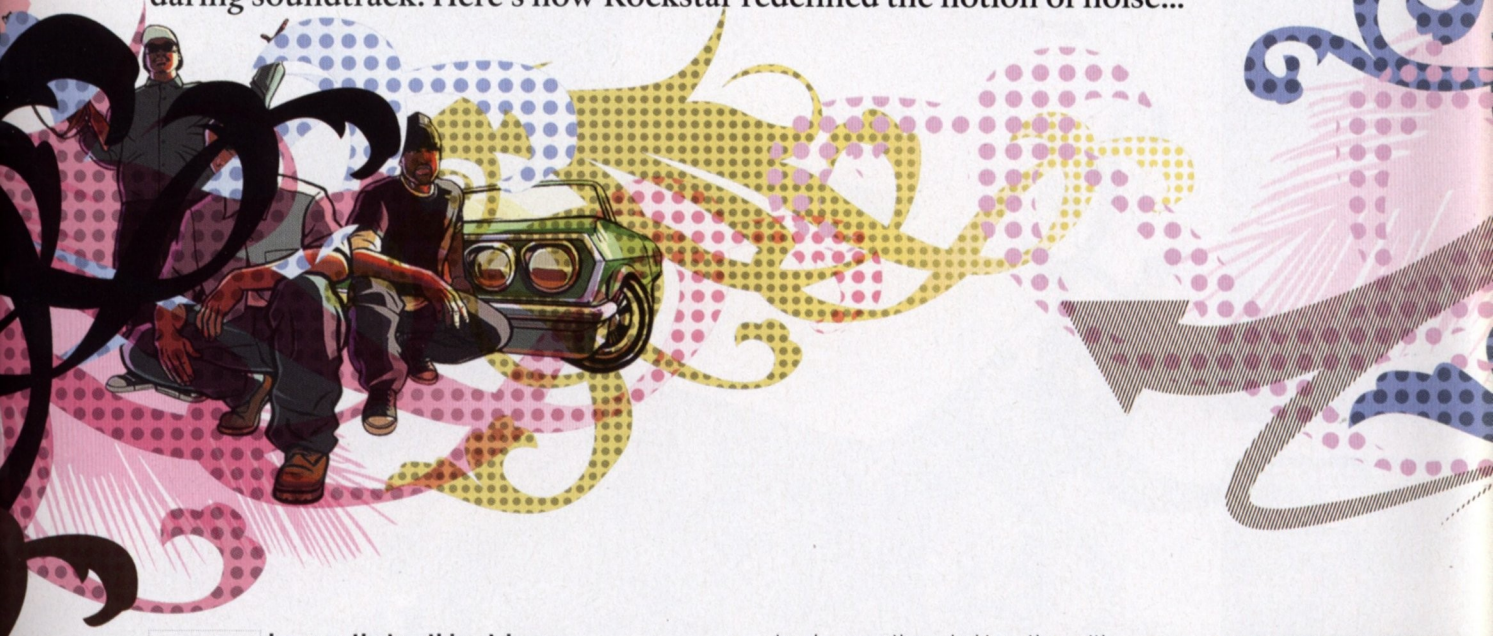
Jez: What *is* a chart, man? A piece of paper! Bring that to a concert and I'll set it on *fire*!

WORDS OF WISDOM

Illustration: tstokes **aka** tea-bone

SOUNDTRACK FOR THE GENERATIONS

GTA just wouldn't be GTA without its innovative, entertaining and downright daring soundtrack. Here's how Rockstar redefined the notion of noise...



They say that nothing triggers memories like the sense of *smell*. A musty whiff of a desk drawer can whisk you back to your schooldays; the delicate charring of a wheaty muffin will magically spirit you back in time to Sunday afternoons at Granny's.

We say 'bollocks' to this.

***Nothing* establishes a time frame like music, and this series goes further than any otherin order to pull all your strings and pluck all your senses – by not only ladling visual clues into your eyes, but hosing sweet scene-setting sounds into your ears. Without hypoerbole, these are the best game soundtracks the universe has ever seen.**

No one does tunes like Rockstar.

And here's why.

Music has always been a huge part of the GTA experience. Even back to the first games on PC and PlayStation, developers DMA Design (later to become Rockstar) heaped hundreds of hours of attention on crafting multi-themed soundtracks designed to bring alive the disparate 'living world' of the game's designers. They were a revelation – spoof rock, electro, house, pop and more ethnic tracks were threaded together with radio ads and talkshows subtly laced with comedy and brilliantly establishing the slightly twisted setting. The games may not have looked much in their flat-packed 2D suits, but soundtrack successfully filled the gaps, fluffing out an atmosphere that the graphics alone couldn't convey.

With the extra storage space of the new wonder, the compact disc, DMA was able to run riot and fill every spare corner with sound (remove the soundtrack and who knows how long GTA could have lasted...) However, it would require the series to achieve its now legendary status before the next important landmark could be achieved.

GTA1 and 2 had earned publishers Take Two a fortune. For the next step – the first three dimensional outing – they pulled out every stop. Not only would GTA III make full use of the graphical skills of machines such as the PS2, but the soundtrack would feature real-life records. A potentially costly and legally problematic business...

THE STYLES OF GTA

#1 FUNK

Reign: 1974 to 1977
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

Funk is what happens when rock meets jazz, smokes or snorts something that could scour aluminium and decides that a glittery top hat and star-shaped shades are not just 'a good idea' but 'absolutely freak-o-licious'. The narcotic fuelled thunk and whack of mid 70s funk is a grimy legend in music. When its creators weren't beating their 'hos' they were beating huge Musicman bass guitars in the quest for ever grimier, barely audible sub sonics. "Who is that black private dick that's a sex machine to all the chicks?" they asked. It's a question we're still pondering today.

THE STYLES OF GTA

#2 NEW WAVE

Reign: 1981 to 1984
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

Pop wants to make you happy. New Wave, meanwhile, wants to make itself happy – ideally while you watch open-mouthed and wonder where it got its shoes. After bending music with the incredible new sound of synths and drum machines, *genders* were next. Spandau Ballet emerged in skirts and tea towels, while Duran Duran appeared as a five-headed lipstick in a blonde wig. Lovely. It all coincided with the champagne decadence of Thatcher's Britain and suddenly, instead of rebelling against the grim early 80s, these (f)rockers were celebrating it. While early perv-ayors like Visage stayed true, the Duran boys butched up as 'Wild Boys', bringing the 'men in skirts' era keening to a close.

THE STYLES OF GTA

#3 HAIR METAL

Reign: 1983 to 1986
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto Vice City

Rock had flirted with the make-up counter back in the 70s, but unfortunately the shit-pop of Mudd, The Sweet *et al* took it all too far, effectively destroying the careers of anyone who wanted to play guitar and look like a lady. Rock toughened up for the likes of Iron Maiden and builder-faced Saxon but, by the mid-80s the time was right. Yuppie Britain was on the up and the west coast of America was riding a new wave of Top Gun excess. The genre had long grappled with the paradox of men that looked like brickies singing like they'd just dropped a hodload of them on their nuts, but now the gloves were off. Or rather, they were on. And rather fetching lace stretchy ones at that. Dudes who look like ladies? Let's rock.

The inclusion of a classical channel (providing the soundtrack to the Mafia's cars) was, however, a masterstroke

HIT PARADE: THE COMPLETE TRACKLIST

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Head Radio
DJ: Michael Hunt
Genre: Soft Rock
Dil-Don't - "Stripe Summer"
Whatever - "Good Thing"
Craig Gray - "Fade Away"
Conor & Jay - "Change"
Frankie Fame - "See Through You"
Scatwerk - "Electronic Go Go"
Dezma - "Life Is But A Mere Supply"

Double Clef FM
DJ: Morgan Merryweather
Genre: Classical, Opera
"Non piu andrai farfallone amoroso" from Le Nozze di Figaro
"Chi mi frena in tal momento" from Lucia di Lammermoor
"Libiamo ne'lieti calici" from La Traviata
"Finch'han del vino" from Don Giovanni
"O mio babbino caro" from Gianni Schicchi
"La donna è mobile" from Rigoletto

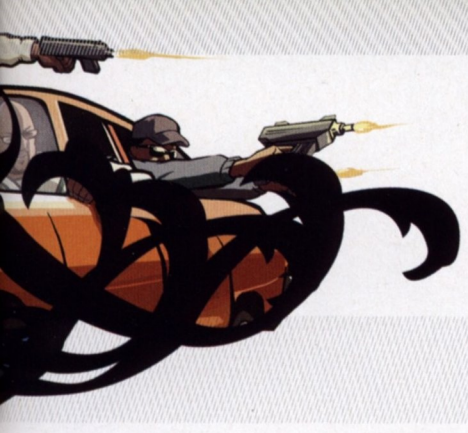
K-Jah
DJ: Horace "The Pacifist" Walsh
Genre: Dub Reggae
Scientist - "Dance of the Vampires"
Scientist - "Your Teeth in My Neck"
Scientist - "The Corpse Rises"
Scientist - "The Mummy's Shroud"
Scientist - "Plague of Zombies"

//4// Rise FM
DJ: Andre The Accelerator
Genre: Dance Anthems and Trance
Slyder - "Neo (The One)"
Slyder - "Score (Original Mix)"
Chris Walsh & Dave Beran - "Shake (Revolt Clogrock Remix)"
Shiver - "Deep Time"
R.R.D.S. - "Innerbattle"

//5// Lips 106
DJ: Andee
Genre: Pop
Fatamarse - "Bump To The Music"
Marydancin - "Wash Him Off"
April's in Paris - "Feels Like I Just Can't Take No More"
Lucy - "Forever"
Boyz 2 Girls - "Pray It Goes Ok?"
Da Shootaz - "Grand Theft Auto"
Funky BJs - "Rubber Tip"

//6// Game Radio FM
DJ: DJ Stretch Armstrong and Lord Sear
Genre: East Coast Hip Hop
Reef - Scary Movies (Instrumental)
Royce Da 5'9" - We're Live (Danger)
Nature - Nature Freestyle
JoJo Pellegrino - JoJo Pellegrino Freestyle
Royce Da 5'9" (Feat. Pretty Ugly) - Spit Game
Royce Da 5'9" - I'm the King
Rush - Instrumental Bed 1
Ilacoin (Feat. Labba, Black Rob) - By A Stranger
8-Off Agallah (Feat. Sean Price, Bazaar Royale) - Rising to the Top
Rush - Instrumental Bed 2

//7// MSX FM



Thanks, but no thanks...

Please forgive us, Horace 'The Pacifist' Walsh, but the five dub reggae tracks on GTA III's K-Jah had us reaching for the dial as soon as they started. Does Liberty City really have a big reggae vibe? We're not getting it.

Sony's Wipeout had set the scene for licenced soundtracks (and – hey - we're still talking about it 12 years later) but bringing GTA III to life was much more complex than slipping the odd Sony-connected label a few quid.

The result is a good beginning in the licenced music stakes, but the problems of dealing with multiple record companies and artists proved considerable. The result is that many of the tracks ended up as soundalikes.

OH, K-JAH

Meanwhile, in-game radio stations such as K-Jah only feature music from one artist – Scientist, who contributes all five songs it plays. Elsewhere, stations such as Game Radio FM and MSX FM fare better with a greater range of licenced tracks but no real 'big names' to speak of. The inclusion of a classical channel (providing the soundtrack to the Mafia's cars) was, however, a masterstroke.

GTAIII's biggest hits are found on Flashback 95.6, the game's 80's themed station. And even then they were acquired in a job lot – all the tracks originally appearing together as the soundtrack to the movie Scarface. It was no bad thing really – subtly drawing parallels between GTA and such a classic gangster movie – but a short-cut to greatness all the same.

In some way the success of Flashback and it's near subconscious allusion to Scarface began to influence the direction for the next game. Why not please the its mid-20s demographic by plundering more recognisable 80s hits? Why not deliver yet more memorable moments that would strike a chord with an audience brought up on Miami Vice and Michael Jackson? Why not make the next game a prequel and *totally* bathe in that rich vein of 80's nostalgia which GTAIII had only touched upon?

If you're cynical, the setting for Vice City was as perfect a piece of marketing as you can imagine. With 80s fashions back in vogue, 80s music acquiring a class and respect it never had at the time and an in-built audience familiarity with mullets, rolled-up sleeves, white-dusted neon signs and scissor-doored Lambos. The game was a pop culture timebomb, primed to explode into the nostalgic mainstream.

Once again the sound designers created a set of radio stations, but this time the period theme provided a real focus for their song-grabbing activity. What's more, the huge sales of GTAIII meant that now they had the funds, and status, to go gunning for the tracks they wanted – and get them.

THE STYLES OF GTA

#4 ACID HOUSE

Reign: 1986 to 1988
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

Oi oi! Rooted in the urban grimness of a Detroit systematically ruined by Reagan's 80s, the relentless robotic sound of techno gave way – and dance music ate itself in a quest for ever odder sounds and rhythms. The result was acid – like normal house, only with the incredible farty sound of the Roland TB-303's bass on top. It gained notoriety in the summer of 1988 in the UK, as thousands of youths – desperate to rebel against the stiff deathly Tory stranglehold – took to the fields in impromptu illegal raves. Famously, police would bust in with their sirens howling and shut off the sound system, only to have the 'off their tits!' kids start dancing to the sirens instead. Large.

THE STYLES OF GTA

#5 NEW JACK SWING

Reign: 1989 to 1991
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

This was the mid 90's rebirth of funk. Only this time the suits and top hats were replaced with Gucci and trainers, while the down and dirty bass was switched for chiming Japanese synthesizers. Three things set this hip-hop / R'N'B / pop hybrid apart: Firstly, the drum sounds don't as much like drums as a man throwing a dustbin down a concrete staircase. Secondly, there's the invention of mind-curdling vocal gymnastics where any note can be followed by any other note simply by singing all pitches in between. And thirdly, there's the inaudible sound of five men, one or two with strap on 'key-tars' perhaps, apparently running on the spot and yet getting nowhere...

DJ: MC Codebreaker and DJ Timecode
Genre: Voodoo-Stepping Darkkore (AKA Drum and Bass)
Calyx - "Quagmire"
Rascal and Klone - "Get Wild"
Ryme Tyme - "Judgement Day"
Omni Trio - "First Contact"
Aquasky - "Spectre"
Rascal and Klone - "Winner Takes All"
Ryme Tyme - "T Minus"
Cause 4 Concern - "Spasm"
D Kay - "Monolith"
TJ Rizing - "Agent 007"

//8// Flashback 95.6
DJ: Toni
Genre: 80s Pop
Paul Engemann - "Push It to the Limit"
Debbie Harry - "Rush Rush"
Amy Holland - "She's On Fire"
Elizabeth Daily - "Shake It Up"
Elizabeth Daily - "I'm Hot Tonight"

GRAND THEFT AUTO VICE CITY

//1// V-Rock
DJ: Lazlow
Genre: Hair Metal
Twisted Sister - "I Wanna Rock"
Mötley Crüe - "Too Young to Fall in Love"
Quiet Riot - "Cum on Feel the Noize"
The Cult - "She Sells Sanctuary"
Ozzy Osbourne - "Bark At The Moon"
Rockstar's Love Fist - "Dangerous Bastard"
Iron Maiden - "2 Minutes to Midnight"
Loverboy - "Working for the Weekend"
Alcatrazz - "God Blessed Video"
Tesla - "Comin' Atcha Live"
Autograph - "Turn Up the Radio"
Megadeth - "Peace Sells"
Anthrax - "Madhouse"
Slayer - "Raining Blood"
Judas Priest - "You've Got Another Thing Comin'"
Love Fist - "Fist Fury"
David Lee Roth - "Yankee Rose"

//2// Wave 103
DJ: Adam First
Genre: New Wave
Frankie Goes to Hollywood - "Two Tribes"
Sigue Sigue Sputnik - "Love Missile F1-11"
Gary Numan - "Cars"
The Human League - "(Keep Feeling) Fascination"
Blondie - "Atomic"
Nena - "99 Luftballons"
Kim Wilde - "Kids in America"
Tears for Fears - "Pale Shelter"
Corey Hart - "Sunglasses At Night"
ABC - "Poison Arrow"
A Flock of Seagulls - "I Ran (So Far Away)"
Psychedelic Furs - "Love My Way"
Animotion - "Obsession"
Spandau Ballet - "Gold"
Thomas Dolby - "Hyperactive!"
Romeo Void - "Never Say Never"

//3// Emotion 98.3
DJ: Fernando Martinez
Genre: Soft Rock

Thanks but no thanks...

We're sure Vice City's latin jazz station Espantoso is very authentic for the time period, but that doesn't stop it like being trapped in a lift... in the past... for ever. And look, Espantoso is surely not the Spanish word for 'awful' for nothing.

THE STYLE OF GTA

#6 OLD SKOOL HIP HOP

Reign: 1984 to 1988
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

It's important to make the distinction between Hip Hop and Electro. Electro was the sound of disillusioned urban America trying to be like disillusioned urban East Germany. But Hip Hop dropped the music entirely in favour of even harder beats (made possible by the new sampling tech, most famously Emu's SP1200 drum machine) and angry young men. 'Don't push me, 'cos I'm close to the edge' intoned Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in their seminal 'The Message'. They were furious because the new prosperity was leaving behind inner city ghettos like warzones. Plus, if we were dressed in fur, animal prints and track wear, we'd be furious too.

THE STYLES OF GTA

#7 ELECTRO

Reign: 1980 to 1982
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

In Europe, children are forced to learn the recorder. In the US, education authorities in The Bronx were a little short of cash by 1980, and instrument-playing skills came second to learning the 'not getting shot' skill. So instead, these urban terrorists turned on turntables and drum machines, making music from thin air and mashing established tunes to their own beat-crazed needs. These old-beyond-their-years street warriors took to dancing like robots and the smug synths of Germany's Kraftwerk. Walkmen got ever more microscopic even as ghetto blasters achieved their own gravitational fields. It's a future sound – filled with machines, Olympian sportswear and large sheets of bad lino.

The result is not so much a 'videogame soundtrack' as one of the finest 80s compilation ever put together. It's all killer – no filler. And THAT moment, the moment you first fire up an engine and Billie Jean kicks in, has become one of *gaming*'s defining moments, not just GTA's.

There are actually fewer music stations in Vice City than in GTA III (seven as opposed to eight), but the sheer number of tracks on each makes it irrelevant – there are as many as 15 on some channels. Flashback makes a re-appearance (this time as simply Flash... no 'back', geddit?) but is joined by Wave 103, a similarly 80's themed 'new wave' station that gave another avenue to heap on the 80s hits. The most obvious absentee is MSX FM, missing simply because hardcore drum & bass wasn't invented back then!

Go West Coast, young man

With such a rich seam to plunder, planning the soundtrack for the sequel looked like a nightmare. With internet speculation confidently predicting a 1970's setting laden with Bowie and T-Rex tracks, Rockstar went its own way – surprise – and successfully isoloated a sufficiently weighty cultural nubbin to hang a whole game off. That was, of course, the early 90's urban uprising of hip-hop and gangster rap. It was a great excuse to put together an absolutely rocking soundtrack.

And, indeed, there is a rock channel, and even one dedicated to the emerging house scene (in its various acid, trance and deep forms) but it's the urban content of the likes of Radio Los Santos and CSR 103.9 that pulls together the Boys 'N' The Hood vibe.

It roots San Andreas as firmly in its time as new wave did with Vice City. And with more stations than ever – ten – SA could delve into the brave new world of country music, as well as revisit the Dub Reggae of K-Jah via their west coast affiliate, K-Jah West.

What are you listening IV?

Those trademark genius collisions of sound and vision – like crazed ultra violence to mellow New York jazz – are only just beginning to emerge from GTA IV. Exactly what will come to be regarded as its 'Billie Jean moment' remains obscured by fresh rocket smoke and new-release excitement. But one thing's for sure: Grand Theft Auto IV will *have* such a moment all of its own. Or ten...

Foreigner - "Waiting For A Girl Like You"
Kate Bush - "Wow"
Squeeze - "Tempted"
REO Speedwagon - "Keep On Loving You"
Cutting Crew - "(I Just) Died In Your Arms"
Roxy Music - "More Than This"
Toto - "Africa"
Mr. Mister - "Broken Wings"
John Waite - "Missing You"
Jan Hammer - "Crockett's Theme"
Night Ranger - "Sister Christian"
Luther Vandross - "Never Too Much"

//4// Flash FM
DJ: Toni
Genre: Pop
Hall & Oates - "Out of Touch"
Wang Chung - "Dance Hall Days"
Michael Jackson - "Billie Jean"
Laura Branigan - "Self Control"
Go West - "Call Me"
INXS - "Kiss the Dirt (Falling Down the Mountain)"
Bryan Adams - "Run to You"
Electric Light Orchestra - "Four Little Diamonds"
Yes - "Owner of a Lonely Heart"
The Buggles - "Video Killed the Radio Star"
Aneka - "Japanese Boy"
Talk Talk - "Life's What You Make It"
The Outfield - "Your Love"
Joe Jackson - "Steppin' Out"
The Fixx - "One Thing Leads to Another"
Lionel Richie - "Running With The Night"

//5// Wildstyle
DJ: Mr. Magic
Genre: Old Skool Hip Hop and Electro
Trouble Funk - "Pump Me Up"
Davy DMX - "One for the Treble"
Cybotron - "Clear"
Hashim - "Al-Naafiysh (The Soul)"
Herbie Hancock - "Rockit"
Afrika Bambaataa and Soul Sonic Force - "Looking for the Perfect Beat"
2 Live Crew - "Get It Girl"
Run-D.M.C. - "Rock Box"
Mantronix - "Bassline"
Tyrone Brunson - "The Smurf"
Whodini - "Magic's Wand"
Zapp and Roger - "More Bounce to the Ounce"
Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five - "The Message"
Kurtis Blow - "The Breaks"
Man Parrish - "Hip Hop, Be Bop (Don't Stop)"

//6// Fever 105
DJ: Oliver "Ladykiller" Biscuit
Genre: Disco and Classic Soul
The Whispers - "And the Beat Goes On"
Fat Larry's Band - "Act Like You Know"
Oliver Cheatham - "Get Down Saturday Night"
Pointer Sisters - "Automatic"
René & Angela - "I'll Be Good"
Mary Jane Girls - "All Night Long"
Rick James - "Ghetto Life"
Michael Jackson - "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'"
Evelyn King - "Shame"
Teena Marie - "Behind the Groove"

Thanks but no thanks...

OK, so there's plenty of country in San Andreas, so it's bang on the money for scene-setting, but Conway Twitty & Loretta Lynn? Oh lord, give us a bit of gangsta rap any day!

THE STYLES OF GTA

#8 DISCO

Reign: 1977 to 1980
As featured in: Grand Theft Auto Vice City

Clean, melodic Philadelphia Soul slowed the up-tempo stomp of Motown and sliced out the bassy dirge of funk, but it was the influence of white, light rock – then the new pop – that tamed the beast. The result? Probably the world's most polite and inoffensive musical rebellion. Slurping, open hi-hats sat between kick drum hits and tempos levelled out to make 'disco dancing' less about sweatin than taking your flares for a flap. Yet the sheer versatility of the tame disco beat was to be its undoing: any tune could be 'discoed,' resulting in a tidal wave of soundalikes. The last straw was Rick Dee's 'Disco Duck' which effectively stuffing disco up its own arse. Disco's greatest contribution to music, and life, is that it led to the invention of punk.

Flashback makes a reappearance, this time simply as Flash... no 'back,' geddit?

James Mtume - "Juicy Fruit"
Kool & the Gang - "Summer Madness"
Indeep - "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life"

//7// Espantoso
DJ: Pepe
Genre: Latin Jazz
Cachao - "A Gozar Con Mi Combo"
Alpha Banditos - "The Bull Is Wrong"
Tres Apenas como eso - "Yo Te Mire"
Eumir Deodato - "Latin Flute"
Mongo Santamaría - "Mama Papa Tu"
Mongo Santamaría - "Me and You Baby (Picao y Tostao)"
Machito and his Afro-Cubans - "Mambo Mucho Mambo"
Unaesta - "La Vida es Una Lenteja"
Lonnie Liston Smith - "Expansions"
Irakere - "Anunga Nunga"
Eumir Deodato - "Super Strut"
Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra - "Jamay"
Benny Moré - "Maracaïbo Oriental"
Tito Puente - "Mambo Gozon"

GRAND THEFT AUTO SAN ANDREAS

//1// Bounce FM
DJ: The Funktipus
Genre: Funk
Zapp - "I Can Make You Dance"
Kool & the Gang - "Hollywood Swingin'"
Ohio Players - "Love Rollercoaster"
Ohio Players - "Funky Worm"
Rick James - "Cold Blooded"
Maze - "Twilight"
Fatback Band - "Yum Yum (Gimme Some)"
The Isley Brothers - "Between The Sheets"
Ronnie Hudson & The Street People - "West Coast Poplock"
Lakeside - "Fantastic Voyage"
George Clinton - "Loopzilla"
Dazz Band - "Let It Whip"
Cameo - "Candy"
MFSB - "Love Is The Message"
Johnny Harris - "Odyssey"
Roy Ayers - "Running Away"
Gap Band - "You Dropped A Bomb On Me"

//2// Playback FM
DJ: Forth Right MC
Genre: Classic Hip Hop
Kool G Rap & DJ Polo - "Road To The Riches"
Big Daddy Kane - "Warm It Up, Kane"
Spoonie Gee - "The Godfather"
Masta Ace - "Me & The Biz"
Slick Rick - "Children's Story"
Public Enemy - "Rebel Without A Pause"
Eric B. & Rakim - "I Know You Got Soul"
Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock - "It Takes Two"
Gang Starr - "B.Y.S."
Biz Markie - "The Vapors"
Brand Nubian - "Brand Nubian"
Ultramagnetic MCs - "Critical Beatdown"

games radar.
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BEYOND A GAME

There's plenty more where that came from... want to find out more? Here's our guide to the artists behind the tunes you love

Music has played a bigger part in Grand Theft Auto than any other gaming franchise in history. Whether it's spraying bullets from a car window while an incongruous country classic sauntered along in the background, or humming along a sunset motorway to a brittle chunk of '80s rock, chances are your fondest memories are set a particular song. Or five. But who are the artists behind these tunes? And what else have they done? Well, 'the voice of Rugrats' Tommy Pickles' and 'a hardcore British porn star' are two of the answers...

GTA III

Shake It Up Elizabeth Daily

Radio station: Flashback 95.6

Listen closely to this and it sounds like it's being sung by Tommy Pickles from The Rugrats. And that's because... it is. When her pop career fizzled out, Liz became a voiceover artist under the name E.G. Daily – and she's been the lady behind little Tommy for the past 16 years.

Best album: Wild Child

Must download: Love In The Shadows

Rising To The Top 8-Off Agallah

Radio station: Game Radio FM

How can you not admire a man who once released a mixtape entitled Fuck All My Enemies? Agallah is that man, and his work with GTA III began a beautiful friendship with Rockstar; he went on to record the main soundtrack to Midnight Club II.

Best album: You Already Know

Must download: Cry For Help

Deep Time Shiver

Radio station: Rise FM

If the title sounds suggestive, it's because Shiver was actually an alias for Sheffield's own Michelle Barrett – a porn star who specialises in "hardcore, lesbian and gonzo" – not the Muppet – plus another word we definitely can't publish, but isn't all that dissimilar to canal.

Best album: N/A

Must download: don't go there...

Dance Of The Vampires Scientist

Radio station: K-Jah

Scientist, *aka* Overton Brown, provided the entire soundtrack for K-Jah but received no royalties for it. So he sued Rockstar... and lost, because he was considered the mixer, rather than the author, of the tracks in question. Still, we can all laugh about it now.

Best album: Scientist Rids The World Of The Evil Curse Of The Vampires

Must download: Ghost Of Frankenstein

Rush Rush Debbie Harry

Radio station: Flashback 95.6

A 1983 hit for Harry, and featured in Scarface. But Debs' best work was as frontwoman for '70s pop perfectionists Blondie, spanning two UK number one albums and a stack of kitsch hit singles, including Vice City fave Atomic.

Best album: Eat To The Beat

Must download: One Way Or Another

AURAL SEX!

The Defining Moment

Track: *Push It To The Limit* Paul Engemann

Wait a second... I recognise this... it's the money making montage scene from Scarface! As soon as you hear it, your brain is secretly reset to violence & greed mode without you realising. Now, where's that lovely chainsaw?

//3// Radio Los Santos
DJ: Julio G
Genre: West Coast Gangsta Rap
2Pac (feat. Pogo) - "I Don't Give a Fuck"
Compton's Most Wanted - "Hood Took Me Under"
Dr. Dre (feat. Snoop Dogg) - "Nuthin' But a "G" Thang"
Dr. Dre (feat. Snoop Dogg & RBX) - "Fuck Wit Dre Day"
Dr. Dre & Snoop Dogg - "Deep Cover"
Too Short - "The Ghetto"
N.W.A. - "Alwayz Into Somethin'"
N.W.A. - "Express Yourself"
Ice Cube - "It Was A Good Day"
Ice Cube (feat. Das EFX) - "Check Yo Self (Message Remix)"
Kid Frost - "La Raza"
Cypress Hill - "How I Could Just Kill a Man"
Eazy-E - "Eazy-Er Said Than Dunn"
Above The Law - "Murder Rap"
Da Lench Mob - "Guerillas in tha Mist"
The D.O.C. - "It's Funky Enough"

//4// Master Sounds 98.3
DJ: Johnny "The Love Giant" Parkinson
Genre: Rare Groove and Funk
Lyn Collins - "Rock Me Again and Again"
Bob James - "Nautilus"
Harlem Underground Band - "Smokin' Cheeba Cheeba"
Lyn Collins - "Think (About It)"
The Blackbyrds - "Rock Creek Park"
War - "Low Rider"
The J.B.'s - "The Grunt"
Maceo & The Macks - "Soul Power '74"
James Brown - "Funky President"
Gloria Jones - "Tainted Love"
Booker T. & the M.G.'s - "Green Onions"
The Chakachas - "Jungle Fever"
Maceo & The Macks - "Cross The Tracks (We Better Go Back)"
Bobby Byrd - "I Know You Got Soul"
James Brown - "The Payback"
Bobby Byrd - "Hot Pants"
Charles Wright & the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band - "Express Yourself"
Sir Joe Quarterman & Free Soul - "So Much Trouble In My Mind"

//5// K-Rose
DJ: Mary-Beth Maybell
Genre: Country (and Western)
Jerry Reed - "Amos Moses"
Conway Twitty & Loretta Lynn - "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man"
Hank Williams, Sr. - "Hey Good Lookin'"
Juice Newton - "Queen of Hearts"
Statler Brothers - "New York City"
Statler Brothers - "Bed of Rose's"
Asleep at the Wheel - "The Letter That Johnny Walker Read"
Desert Rose Band - "One Step Forward"
Willie Nelson - "Crazy"
Patsy Cline - "Three Cigarettes In An Ashtray"
Mickey Gilley - "Make The World Go Away"
Ed Bruce - "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys"
Merle Haggard - "Always Wanting You"
Whitey Shafer - "All My Exes Live In Texas"
Eddie Rabbitt - "I Love a Rainy Night"

VICE CITY

99 Red Balloons Nena

Radio station: Wave 103

Everyone assumes Nena was a one-hit wonder. Alas not. She's still going strong in Germany and released a covers album (including Bowie's Starman!) last year, as well as voicing the dragon Saphira in the German dub of Eragon. Rock. Und. Roll.

Best album: Nena

Must download: Leuchtturm

Mambo Gozon Tito Puente

Radio station: Espantoso

Remember the jazz musician who showed up in The Simpsons? The two-part Who Shot Mr Burns episodes? Think, think... There ya go. That was Puente, or as he's better known, "The King Of Latin Music." In his case, the words 'marvellous mambo' genuinely apply.

Best album: king of Timbales

Must download: Coco My My

Run To You Bryan Adams

Radio station: Emotion 98.3

Of course you know his clear-yer-throat-for-god's-sake vocals, but did you also know that his photography's been in Vogue, Esquire, and Vanity Fair? Or that he helms a German publication called Zoo Magazine (Not to be confused with the breastastic UK mag of the same name...) devoted to fashion and art?

Best album: Waking Up The Neighbours

Must download: Summer Of '69

Gold Spandau Ballet

Radio station: Wave 103

From early '80s adulation to cringeworthy SCS ads via a grimy London soap – that's the lifestyle Spandau bassist Martin Kemp has enjoyed since Gold smashed through the charts like a sparkly-lipsticked mannequin in 1983. You may also know him as Steve Owen, former EastEnders' bad boy. We're saying he wishes they'd never split.

Best album: True

Must download: True

Tempted Squeeze

Radio station: Emotion 98.3

These London lads gave us power pop hits such as Cool for Cats and Up The Junction. *But* they also gave us the unbearably smarmy Jools "You May As Well Change The Channel Now." Holland, for which they will surely forever burn in hell while sitting on a spike.

Best album: Squeeze

Must download: Cool For Cats

AURAL SEX!

The Defining Moment

Track: *Billie Jean*
Michael Jackson

The game begins, you grab your first ride and that familiar, loose, vibey tapping of THAT drum intro begins. Suddenly you know you're in the presence of greatness. When a game has *Michael Jackson* on the soundtrack you realise the sky really is the limit.

//6// CSR 103:9
DJ: Phillip "PM" Michaels
Genre: New Jack Swing
SWV - "I'm So Into You"
Soul II Soul - "Keep on Movin'"
Samuelle - "So You Like What You See"
En Vogue - "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)"
Johnny Gill - "Rub You the Right Way"
Ralph Tresvant - "Sensitivity"
Guy - "Groove Me"
Aaron Hall - "Don't Be Afraid"
Boyz II Men - "Motownphilly"
Bell Biv DeVoe - "Poison"
Today - "I Got the Feeling"
Wreckx-N-Effect - "New Jack Swing"
Bobby Brown - "Don't Be Cruel"

//7// K-Jah West
DJ: Marshall Peters and Johnny Lawton
Genre: Dub Reggae
Black Harmony - "Don't Let It Go To Your Head"
Blood Sisters - "Ring My Bell"
Shabba Ranks - "Wicked Inna Bed"
Buju Banton - "Batty Rider"
Augustus Pablo - "King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown"
Dennis Brown - "Revolution"
Willie Williams - "Armagideon Time"
I-Roy - "Sidewalk Killer"
Toots & the Maytals - "Funky Kingston"
Dillinger - "Cocaine In My Brain"
Pliers - "Bam Bam"
Barrington Levy - "Here I Come"
Reggie Stepper - "Drum Pan Sound"
Black Uhuru - "Great Train Robbery"
Max Romeo & The Upsetters - "I Chase The Devil"
Toots and The Maytals - "Pressure Drop"

//8// K-DST
DJ: Tommy "The Nightmare" Smith
Genre: Classic Rock
Foghat - "Slow Ride"
Creedence Clearwater Revival - "Green River"
Heart - "Barracuda"
Kiss - "Strutter"
Toto - "Hold the Line"
Rod Stewart - "Young Turks"
Tom Petty - "Runnin' Down a Dream"
Joe Cocker - "Woman to Woman"
Cream - "White Room"
Humble Pie - "Get Down To It"
Grand Funk Railroad - "Some Kind of Wonderful"
Lynyrd Skynyrd - "Free Bird"
America - "A Horse With No Name"
The Who - "Eminence Front"
Boston - "Smokin'
David Bowie - "Somebody Up There Likes Me"
Eddie Money - "Two Tickets to Paradise"
Billy Idol - "White Wedding"

//9// Radio X
DJ: Sage
Genre: Alternative Rock / Heavy Metal
Helmet - "Unsung"
Depeche Mode - "Personal Jesus"
Faith No More - "Midlife Crisis"
Danzig - "Mother"
Living Colour - "Cult of Personality"
Primal Scream - "Movin' On Up"

AURAL SEX!
The Defining Moment

Track: *The Horse With No Name* America

After the hustle and urban bustle of the early missions, you finally earn the right to leave the inner city and search for greater things. Mor... rustic things. The city thins out and soon you find yourself out in the sticks as America's twangy folk rock magically summons itself from your speakers. Cosmic.

SAN ANDREAS

Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys Ed Bruce

Radio station: K-Rose

Bruce also penned hits entitled You're A Woman and When I Die, Just Let Me Go To Texas... he later presented the brilliant sounding Trucking USA and American Sports Cavalcade. Note: Not just Update, but *Cavalcade*. This man is our hero.

Best album: One To One

Must download: You're The Best Break This Old Heart Ever Had

Motownphilly Boyz II Men

Radio station: CSR 103.9

There was a time when Boyz II Men were officially the biggest band in the world. Remember End Of The Road? I'll Make Love To You? (That's a song title, not an offer.) Now down to three members, they're still crooning with eyes closed and brows pained – and released a covers LP last year.

Best album: Cooleyhighharmony

Must download: End Of The Road

Free Bird Lynyrd Skynyrd

Radio station: K-DST

Free Bird is one of the finest songs in rock history, but the man who wrote its lyrics – Skynyrd frontman Robin Van Zant – was killed along with guitarist Steve Gaines and four others when the band's chartered plane crashed in October 1977. For 12 years after, Skynyrd played it without vocals.

Best album: Street Survivors

Must download: Sweet Home Alabama

Hey Good Lookin' Hank Williams Sr

Radio station: K-Rose

Long before Kurt Cobain and Jeff Buckley, Williams was a bone fide musical genius who passed on long before his time. In 1953, aged just 29 years old, he died in the back of a limo on the way to a gig after injecting himself with vitamin B12 and morphine.

Best album: Lovesick Blues

Must download: Alone And Foresaken

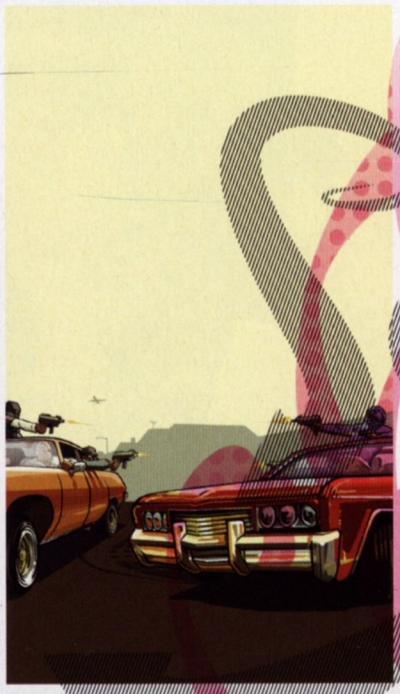
Rusty Cage Soundgarden

Radio station: Radio X

If you've any taste in film you'll have seen latest Bond flick Casino Royale by now, and been hooked by the film's excellent theme – Chris Cornell's threatening yet catchy You Know My Name. That's the very same Cornell who fronted Soundgarden, the 1990s most prominent churners of dirge. Yep, shocked us too (not all of us – Ed).

Best album: Badmotorfinger

Must download: Jesus Christ Pose



Guns N' Roses - "Welcome to the Jungle"
L7 - "Pretend We're Dead"
Ozzy Osbourne - "Hellraiser"
Soundgarden - "Rusty Cage"
Rage Against the Machine - "Killing in the Name"
Jane's Addiction - "Been Caught Stealing"
The Stone Roses - "Fools Gold"
Alice in Chains - "Them Bones"
Stone Temple Pilots - "Plush"

//10// SF-UR

DJ: Hans Oberlander
Genre: House (in its many forms)
Jomanda - "Make My Body Rock"
808 State - "Pacific"
The Todd Terry Project - "Weekend"
Nightwriters - "Let The Music Use You"
Marshall Jefferson - "Move Your Body"
Maurice - "This Is Acid"
Mr. Fingers - "Can You Feel It?"
A Guy Called Gerald - "Voodoo Ray"
Cultural Vibe - "Ma Foom Bey"
CeCe Rogers - "Someday"
Robert Owens - "I'll Be Your Friend"
Frankie Knuckles - "Your Love"
Joe Smooth - "Promised Land"
28th Street Crew - "I Need a Rhythm"
Raze - "Break 4 Love"
Fallout - "The Morning After"

MADE MAN

Rockstar's CEO on the then-new Vice City, Rico Tubbs and cool '80s references...

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DESCRIPTION

WHO: TERRY DONOVAN, ROCKSTAR CEO **WHERE:** GANG WAR MAGAZINE
WHEN: 2003, AROUND THE TIME OF VICE CITY

Obviously a predictable question, but people wanna know – what influenced you in the making of the game?
Donovan: Scarface, Miami Vice, Less Than Zero, Manhunter, among a huge array of culture from the period. But with both, what it felt like at the time, and the chance to reinterpret it – providing the widest and most relevant palette.

Broadly speaking, what were your intentions in producing a follow-up to Grand Theft Auto III?
Donovan: To make another huge leap forward in entertainment and to increase the game as an experience in every conceivable way – some obvious, and some subliminal. Hopefully, people feel that we achieved that. Initial responses have been very positive, but it took people six to nine months to really dig through the last game.

How many people, how many man-hours, how much money has gone into producing this GTA incarnation?
Donovan: It depends whether you count the combined painful adolescences of all at Rockstar in Edinburgh and New York, which in my mind count as probably the most costly part of research and development for Vice City...

GTA: Vice City has the best soundtrack in a videogame. Period. How ever did you go about compiling a shortlist and then deciding on the final line-up?
Donovan: We started with a shortlist of two or three hundred, so I guess it wasn't so short. The discussions were difficult, the licensing was a nightmare, but we're very proud of the result.

How did Phillip Michael Thomas respond to, as it were, 'revisiting' the whole Miami Vice style ethos?
Donovan: He was incredibly receptive to the respect we were obviously paying to Miami Vice, but he also brought to the table a very astute understanding of the gameplay methodologies of GTA III that he had picked up from friends and family. In discussion it was clear that he got it both stylistically and at a high-concept level.

What's your favourite car to drive in Vice City, and why?
Donovan: PCJ 600. Admittedly not a car, but unquestionably a rush every time I get on it. First-person camera is unreal, and shooting forwards while riding is completely amazing. A must-have for missions that involve long chases.

Do you have a file marked 'Cool 80s References'?! If so, can you email it to us...?
Donovan: We don't have a file called that... the references are really things we have all collected in our heads; memories, influences and so on. But here are a few images and links that may be of interest:
1: www.80s.com
2: www.wildhorse.com/MiamiVice
3: www.prebble.com/80sFashionFile.html
4: www.80schildren.com/fashion/default.html
5: www.yesterdayland.com/popopedia/shows/decades/fashion_1980s.php

Was there anything you designed for GTA: Vice City and then found that you couldn't fit in? If so, what? Please tell.
Donovan: Rockstar North always has an enormous list of things it didn't put in between the teams because Grand Theft Auto is this completely ever-morphing development process where the cities grow, the gameplay grows, the production values grow, and it continues regardless of whether a game is coming out. But the game releases constitute a line in the sand, of sorts. The moment you draw it Rockstar North has already travelled beyond it.

What is the next GTA title? What cities? An online version, perhaps?
Donovan: I'm sorry. We can't say.

Do you have, or have you ever had, a fanatical fan-stalker? If you did would you shoot his face off with a rifle while hanging out a helicopter? Or run away crying like a small child?
Donovan: No, sorry! Most of the people who but Grand Theft Auto are socially functional. Or at least they seem like it.

IT'S A BIG,

BAD WORLD...

...and Grand Theft Auto is reshaping it in its own image

The world of gaming is full of *grand thefts*. Once a template has been established, no-one seems to mind when other games start pilfering its ideas – and when a template proves to be as horrendously successful as that of GTA III, we end up with a whole new genre.

Copycats, bandwagon jumpers, wannabes, freeloaders, gold diggers... in the wake of GTA's touchdown, it seems like everyone wants a slice of the free-roaming pie. And who can blame them? There's been a glut of games that didn't just borrow Rockstar's framework, but further slipstream its criminal-wonderland style. Again, no-one really minds, provided impersonators *improve* on what's gone before. And do they? Occasionally. But many seem to overlook (or misunderstand) its all-important core qualities: zingy satire, genuinely smart humour, great scripting and superb voice acting. The bar was raised for production values, not just technical achievement. So let's put our money where our mouth is: we're going to name and shame those 'homage-paying' copycats. Who were the dons and who were the dongs in the gangland scrap for turf?

ANARCHY OR WANABEE?

The games that owe the greatest debts

THE GETAWAY

Which side of the law? Cop (geezer)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Different how? Staged in a realistic(ish) rendition of London's centre. It's HUD-free and features uninspired shootouts revolving around taking cover.
Any good? Frustrating. Also rife with well 'ard cockney stereotype shooters-and-blagging geezers.

TRUE CRIME

Which side of the law? Cop (martial artist)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
Different how? Tried to up the ante with fancy-pants bullet time, kung fu stunts and in-depth hand-to-hand combat. And a bland licensed hip-hop soundtrack.
Any good? Ambitious but ultimately average. Plus, its cut-scenes were eggy rather than hard-boiled.

THE GODFATHER

Which side of the law? Overlord (Mob)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Different how? You gotta get your respect, right? And so, extorting cash from business owners was the order of the day, roughing them up all bully like to instill them with fear.
Any good? Despite the mother of all movie licenses, no. Not really.

SAINTS ROW

Which side of the law? Crim (gangsta)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★★★★
Different how? It didn't even try to be different... though it does have entertaining physics for corpses and a clumping pimps/bitches/respect attitude so thick it makes you wonder, 'is this satire?' Most important of all, Saints Row had a release date a whole two years before GTA IV.
Any good? Terrible driving and dull gunplay, but nice shopping. Deliberately getting run over for insurance scams was a highlight.

SCARFACE

Which side of the law? Overlord (gangster)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★★★☆
Different how? There are mini-games for such interactions as intimidation and drug dealing; you also get to customise your own luxurious vision of Tony Montana's swanky mansion.
Any good? Technically adept, but the missions are plain and unadventurous. Best original 1980s soundtrack since GTA: Vice City, mind.

DRIV3R

Which side of the law? cop (undercover)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆
Different how? Pretty enough to justify a replay editor, it allowed you to share clips online. It also featured 'Timmy Vermicelli' collectibles – people in glass houses, and all that...
Any good? Deeply irritating and buggier than Bugsy Malone.

JUST CAUSE

Which side of the law? Merc (principled)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Different how? About ten times the size of San Andreas, and nearly all jungle. It had a grappling hook you could steal passing copters with and involved sticking C4 to a president. While he was in freefall.
Any good? Stunning, but a little empty.

CRACKDOWN

Which side of the law? Cop (superhero)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★★☆☆
Different how? Superhuman skills see you flinging cars, leaping from roof to roof like a futuristic jerk and kicking people off skyscrapers. The 21 bosses were impressively freeform, too.
Any good? Brilliant. But then, the minds behind the very first GTAs made it.

MERCENARIES

Which side of the law? Merc (unprincipled)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Different how? It gave the sandbox a major khaki makeover with its militaristic vibe, though it's still all 'money, power, respect' underneath. Think thundering air strikes, huge explosions and heaps of destruction – it's like San Andreas but with jeeps and very well polished boots. It also featured Indiana Jones as an unlockable character, so it couldn't be all bad.
Any good? Very... decent. Exploring isn't much fun, but combat is a cut above.

TORRENTE 3: THE PROTECTOR

Which side of the law? Cop (hapless)
Clone rating: ★★★★★★★★★☆
Different how? Set in Madrid, this shockingly offensive game offers not one but three mini-games whenever you're near a toilet: whizzing, crapping and tossing one off. Charming.
Any good? Possibly the worst PS2 game in existence. Case closed, and tossed – not like that – in the canal.

STOP COPYING!

GTA's ideas are not so narrow they only work with violent criminals. Freeroaming designs are spreading far and wide...

Rockstar's violent baby smashed open Pandora's Box, but while the first following wave broke up under the onslaught – content to imitate without even being as good – the next wave acknowledged it with far more style. No, GTA didn't invent sandbox-style play – it's something that's been waiting in the wings until technology could catch up with the ideas, touched upon here and there – but they certainly made it matter. Gritty crime outings are one thing, but having games become fully-fledged worlds is a concept that will apply across the board. And so, having such phrases as 'dynamic', 'living, breathing', and 'go anywhere, do anything' splashed across the box seems to work wonders for sales. But it's not (just) some cynical marketing tool – those games that nail a sense of freedom without compromising their cores are often irresistible. Trouble is, plenty don't quite hit that nail; hammering out a 'living, breathing' world often takes so much effort that missions become an afterthought. Filling a world with things is just part of the problem. Making them bounce around in an interesting fashion – creating a playground, instead of some clockwork warehouse – is the true challenge. These games at least tried:

BURNOUT PARADISE

An incredible achievement, plus stellar multiplayer, its rocket-powered, crash-porn racing transferred well to a persistent world, but you'll need to spend a while getting to know the layout.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? A new dawn for the franchise, but takes time to blossom. Freedom ain't that free, y'know...
Hidden Packages? Billboards

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

Moderately amusing force-of-one alien invasion of '60s America, featuring punchy weapons and gross destruction when gliding about in your saucer. Its style had much more personality than its missions.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Rubbish sub-quests. Feels far too diluted for an open-world game.
Hidden Packages? Space probes

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

Phenomenal levels of tank-splatting carnage, in a game that makes you *feel* just as mighty as the superhero it stars. Shame that progression through the game proper can be such a chore.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? No matter how dynamite the action, its poorly-judged goals still manage to grate.
Hidden Packages? None!

SPIDER-MAN 2

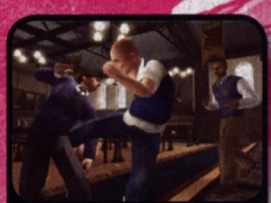
Web-slinging in NY is a buzz, but that's where it ends. Being a radioactive Tarzan is one thing, but crimefighting should never be this feeble. Spins a web, any size! Then do a dull chase/fight mission.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Initially thrilling, but it all turns to cardboard in record time.
Hidden Packages? Skyscraper values

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Bit cheeky, this – this preposterously large-scale RPG series predates GTA. It's full of wizards 'n' goblins cliché, but it's basically GTA D&D.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? The sense of choice is almost overwhelming, but this is an accomplished antidote to Japanese RPGing.
Hidden Packages? Nirnroot plants

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Hitman meets the Crusades in some awe-inspiring Middle Eastern cityscapes, with a lead character that sets new standards for agile clambering – and unskippable cut-scene whining.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Its missions aren't half as acrobatic as nimble as sulky time-travelling hero Altair is, sadly.
Hidden Packages? Flags



CANIS CANEM EDIT

Rockstar shows everyone how riffing on GTA's template should be done. A novel schoolboy sim, you must find time for lessons as well as graduating as top dog of the social food chain.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? There's nothing else like it, and it's packed with hallmark Rockstar detail and culture.
Hidden Packages? Rubber bands

YAKUZA

A glamorous, grown-up beat 'em up. Crime based? Sure, but it's much more than that. Has superbly directed cut-scenes, gambling asides and much hanging out at a hostess bars or glugging posh whisky in cool nightspots.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Its pretty Japanese city brims with life, and the hidden sub-missions are often excellent.
Hidden Packages? Locker keys

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

The previous game – American Wasteland – was the series' first stab at sandbox gaming, but it felt unnecessary. Project 8 had a smaller, but far superior open-plan skate park with a great online mode.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Played second fiddle to the much improved skate trick system.
Hidden Packages? None!

THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

Was the best-selling Simpsons game for *ages*, and hung around in the charts for months rather than weeks. Exploring Springfield was strangely addictive, just for the delight of 'being' there.
Freedom Or Free-Dumb? Missions are dreary, but seeking out all the gags and references is distracting enough.
Hidden Packages? Robot wasps

THE REAL WORLD

Ironically, given its magpie-style ransacking of pop culture, GTA itself has become a reference point for the wider world

You know you've made it in this world when Coca Cola – one of the biggest brands on the planet – nabs your iconography for an advertising campaign. What further proof could there be that GTA has pushed itself to the front of mainstream consciousness?

Well, how about this little lot? Once a title reaches critical mass, it starts entertaining us in new ways. Of course, you could probably name other series that have spawned their own cultural spin-offs and multimedia mutations – Nintendo's Mario, say – but how many of them have done it as swiftly as Grand Theft Auto? In the space between Grand Theft Auto III and San Andreas – just four years – it's gone from being a largely unanticipated (even amongst gamers) 3D update to a global phenomenon and gaming benchmark.

GTA, the following people salute you, in their own, sometimes very special ways...

DAVE CHAPPELLE

US professional funnyguy Chappelle was one of the first to cotton on to GTA's popularity. His show featured a sketch where Chappelle leaves his house for work and bumbles woodenly down the steps, before barging a pedestrian, and carjacking someone using a gun that suddenly appears in his hands.

MADTV

A lampoon that manages to gently zing a whole US state. Made for American sketch show MADtv, GTA: Kansas features mile upon mile of living, breathing... road. After a carjacking, you're treated to nearly a minute of deathly-dull footage of someone driving up a straight, unwavering, unchanging road. Realism, eh?

YOU LOT

There are dozens of homemade homages out there, but few are any good. They all stick to the same themes – apeing the HUD, and making merry about the carjacking animation and the stop-motion nature of gun cycling. Bleh. The 'Real' GTA, however, is one of the better offerings, thanks to its literally ham-fisted combat.

LEGO FANS

Created by 'Brickstar Games', Lego City is one of the slickest tributes around. Made completely with blocky bits (even down to the mini-map), it's got one of the best low-budget explosions in home-movie history, plus crashes, insane stunts, elaborate weapon sets... hey, is a real GTA Lego game *that* much of a pipe dream?

ROBOT CHICKEN

Probably the most viewed of GTA lampoons. Produced by quickfire sketch show Robot Chicken, Grand Theft Mario sees Nintendo's most super profitable brothers taking the wrong turning while pootling about in their go karts, and winding up in Vice City. Queue whores, booze, drugs, cop chases, pimps and DEATH.

THE SIMPSONS

Direct spoof of San Andreas' 'Welcome to the Jungle' trailer, made to promote EA's recent The Simpsons Game. A rock tune accompanies cuts between fancy environmental camera pans and acts of violence, interspersed with characters strolling nonchalantly into the screen as things explode behind them.

KUBRICKS

Kubricks are Japanese-produced toys, created in small, exclusive quantities, and targeted at collectors. Both GTA III and Vice City were issued with their own cute, characterful sets of dinky figurines, limited to a run of just 3000 bundles. Lovely, but GTA III's Misty comes dangerously close to looking like a chunky tranny.

JAK, OF DAXTER FAME

Jumped-up sidekick weasel Daxter stars in a bonus cut-scene called 'Hot Coffee'. Him and his girlfriend Tess make all kinds of saucy intimations that they're about to do some furry sex but, as a visual punchline, they really are about to drink some hot coffee!! Oh, mercy. Actually, it's not at all funny. Still, any PR is good PR, right?

COCA COLA

A massive 'homage,' sure, but not that affectionate. Perhaps 'subversion' is closer. A broody-looking bloke tears around gritty city streets, lunging from his car in order to... promote happiness and joy, through the sharing of some healthy soft drinks. Not even the meanest streets can resist its God-like life-force, apparently.

ROCKSTAR!

Fictional DJs presenting tunes used in a game as a real-life CD... yes, Vice City's 80s earcandy gained such accolade that this glorious fist of licensed tunes became an object in itself, justifying the release of not just one album, but a boxset of *seven* discs. San Andreas beat it with with eight. And GTAIV? We're thinking, oh, 20...

THE BLAME GAME

Come on, join in – anyone can play! You can't lose, and best of all, there aren't any rules. You don't even need to tell the truth!

The world at large doesn't understand games. That'll change, of course, and it'll be thanks to the likes of GTA – these may be feared now, but the next generation will grow up actually knowing what games are all about. It'll take a while for perceptions to change.

Until then, anything faintly recognisable that's a bit of an unknown quantity is a great big bullseye of a target.

Moralists and other soapbox jockeys need a scapegoat to blame all kinds of angst on, so that everyone knows how great and right they are. Something as big-time as GTA – everyone knows it, but relatively few know what it *really* is, or even care to – is the ideal quarry for anyone with a tub to thump. It's been hit with some ludicrous accusations already. So much so that we've made it into a game in itself: The Blame Game. Cut out the dice. Cut out the counters on the left. Winner gets to pretend they're awesome.

FINISH
66

65

Hackers find mildly naughty unused content. Despite the phenomenal effort needed to access it, your game is banned and has to be re-released. You lose £15 million
64

63

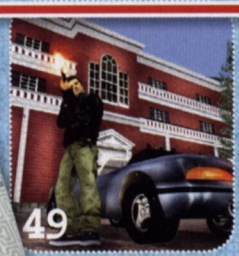
62

45

46

At your glitzy launch party, Girls Aloud get such a big cheer all their clothes fall off while stood in front of an enormous banner of your game's logo
47

48


49

44

43

42

A big-name supermarket bans your game, despite it being six months from release and as yet uncertified, to curry favour with its everything-phobic middle class customer base
45

A week after controversy flares up, the world's social guardians forget about your game as they begin a fresh attack on a new wave of amorality: fizzy birth-control drinks
40

A teen trips over a brick and hits his eyes on a piano. His parents, in a bid to sue, pick the nearest object: your game. They lose, but your name is dragged through the mud
23

24

25

The world's largest fast-food chain signs up a cross-promotion via a themed burger rammed with popping candy that's 'Primed To Explode In Your Throat!'
26

27

Your lead voice talent goes from unknown to drug-snorting, whore-consuming, dirt-magnet tabloid superstar during production. And it's not your fault! Textbook PR
22

21

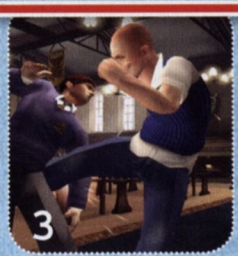
Your arthouse epic of transsexual rivalry – Atilla the Hunny – suffers delays as censors take issue with a level set in an underground fur factory
20

19

A singer collapses in a Camden gutter wearing a t-shirt with your logo in rhinestones – glistening with sick – as blood turns the white nose-trails red. You become cool
18

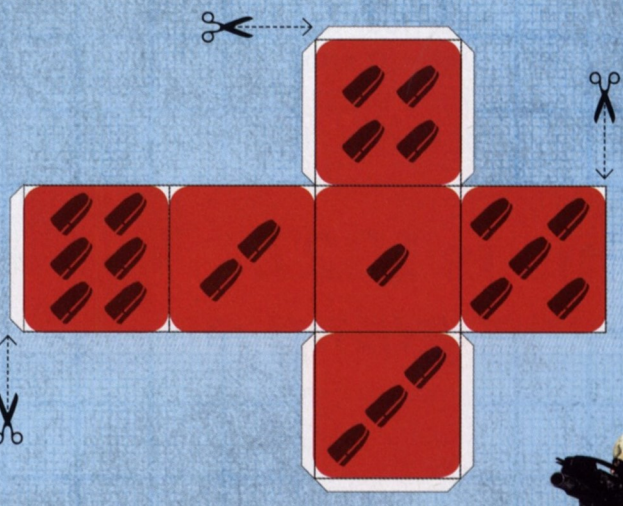
START
1

2


3

Staging your shooter in a near-future version of a politically turbulent country results in the king banning it in the run-up to release. Lose 5% of potential sales
4

5



61

60

Children younger than the highly-visible age rating are found playing your game. The parents who bought it are outraged exclusively in The Daily Tit, pages 3 to 32

59

58

57

56

Renowned children's author Jan K Spangle is quoted as saying she's happy for her kids to play any game, no matter how violent, provided they sit up straight

50

Anti-race-hate campaigners take issue with the plausible range of ethnicities in your game. Lose two weeks trying to defend yourself, then cave in

51

52

Despite all the media hoo-ha, hundreds of thousands of gamers have bought your game. In fact, it's often *because* of all the media hoo-ha. Irony

53

54

55

39

38

37

36

Using the wisdom of the ancients, you release your game on a quiet Friday when hundreds of other publishers aren't doing the same thing. Take a reward, genius

35

34

28

29

30

An enormous amount of well-informed normal people buy your new game because it's really fun, and few if any go mad as a result. Nobody sues. Business is good

31

A columnist for a right-wing paper decides games are next. Several lazy Google searches later and your game is lambasted for being 'digital arse porn' of some kind

32

33

17

16

A criminal on trial in the US decides to blame your new game, as the rhythm-action dancing mini-game trained him to forge signatures and craft incendiary devices

15

14

13

12

Your game gets the elite score (five testicles out of two) in the UK's leading lad's mag, Putz. "Wave goodbye to sex!" becomes a choice quote for the box. Pre-orders soar

6

7

8

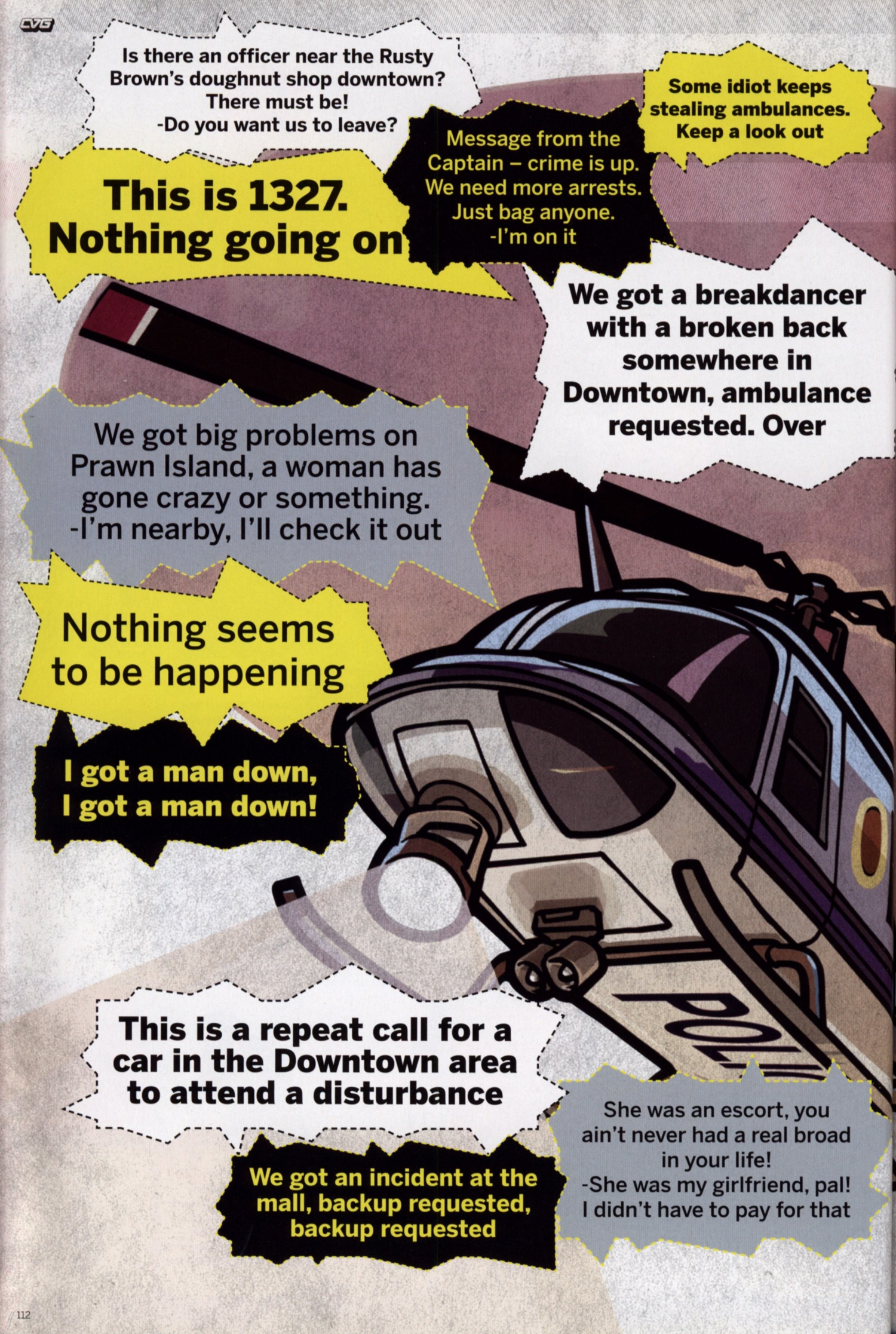
A politician with nothing to offer life and nothing better to do than scapegoat emerging tech as the cause of civilisation's every downfall decides to target your game

9

The host of Britain's thickest TV talkshow devotes an entire hour to castigating your game, using desperate, foolish terminology that makes him a national hero. Pre-orders soar

10

11


Is there an officer near the Rusty Brown's doughnut shop downtown? There must be!
-Do you want us to leave?
Some idiot keeps stealing ambulances. Keep a look out
Message from the Captain – crime is up. We need more arrests. Just bag anyone.
-I'm on it
This is 1327. Nothing going on
We got a breakdancer with a broken back somewhere in Downtown, ambulance requested. Over
We got big problems on Prawn Island, a woman has gone crazy or something.
-I'm nearby, I'll check it out
Nothing seems to be happening
I got a man down, I got a man down!
POLICE
This is a repeat call for a car in the Downtown area to attend a disturbance
She was an escort, you ain't never had a real broad in your life!
-She was my girlfriend, pal! I didn't have to pay for that
We got an incident at the mall, backup requested, backup requested

CALL THE COPS!

Just what *are* they saying on the police band radio?

WHO: THE COPS
WHERE: ALL OVER THE POLICE RADIO FREQUENCY
WHEN: MID EIGHTIES, VICE CITY

We got a fat woman stuck in an elevator. I'm checking it out

We have a stolen squad car driving erratically!

This is a notice from the chief – all overtime payments have been cancelled. Have a great day. Over

I checked it out, not a big deal. Just a couple of idiots with a case of Giggle Cream. I gave them a little beating, nothing too serious

All paid leave has been cancelled

We got problems at Ocean Beach! -This is Miller, I'll check it out

We got a stolen car and a robbery in progress. Over -This is 5793. I'm in the area. I'll take a look

Somewhere in Downtown, back up requested. Over

Got a problem, Jones? Why don't you try fighting crime and get away from that microphone, you dumb asshole! -You're a real asshole, Miller

We got a serious problem down here, we need fire, two ambulances and a SWAT team. Come on!

Message from the Captain – whoever stole his 'personal' magazines better make themselves know immediately. Those are for 'investigative' purposes only

PHYSICAL GRAFFITI

Take a moment to appreciate the art of Grand Theft Auto

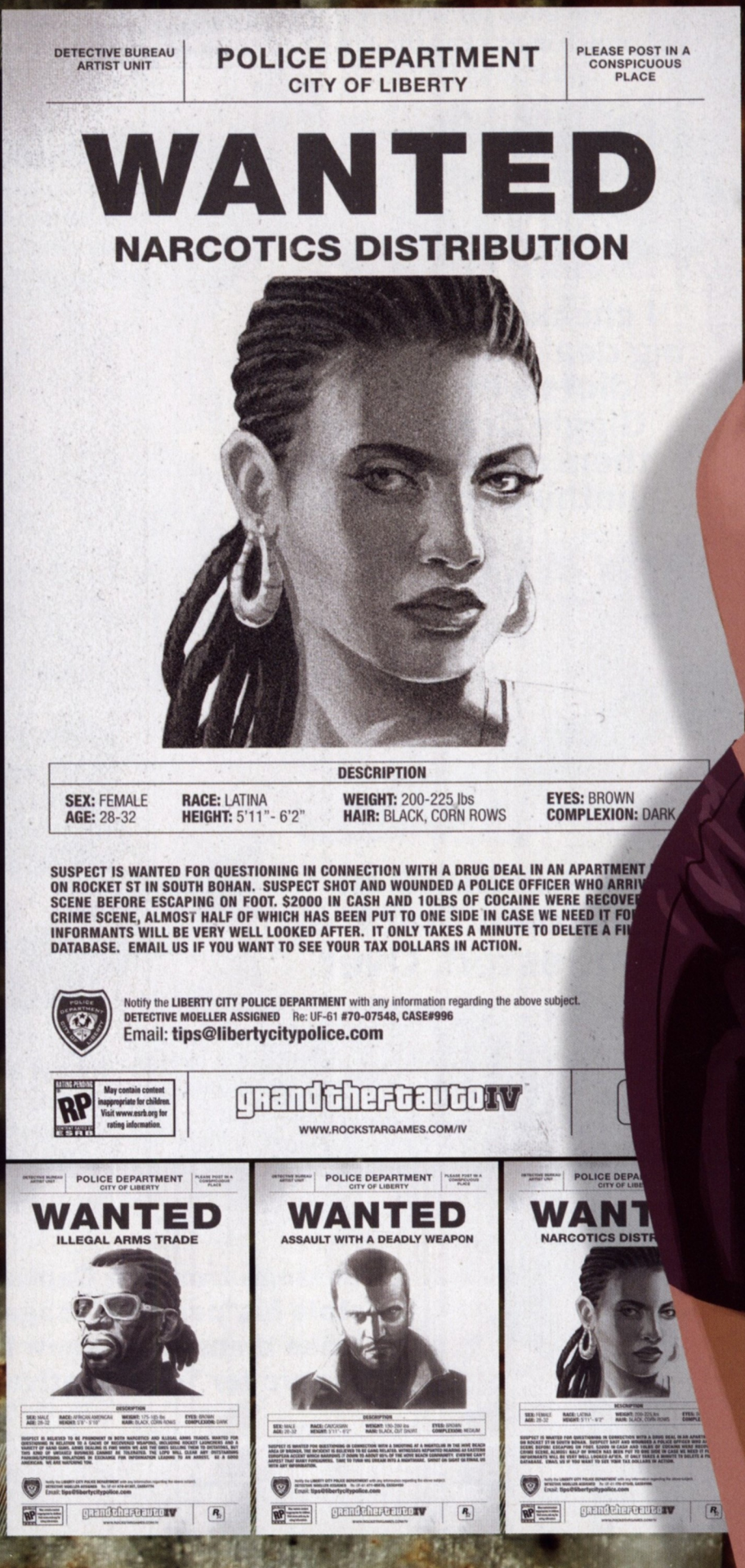
In a medium dominated by idealised computer generated renders, crappy sports photo montages and grimacing men with guns – who may be grimacing because they appear to have been drawn by a misshapen drunk – the art of GTA stands out. And not just the boxart either. The copious pieces Rockstar puts out are unlike those of any other series.

It's common for artwork to feature the instant of gunfire, freezeframe kung fu or something just reaching the *ex!* of explosion. The idea, clearly, is to make the associated game seem exciting and cool.

Rockstar doesn't approach things that way. Their art centres on characters. Ones that are not 'cool' – not in the familiar all-powerful special agent, one-in-a-million hero kind of way. Rockstar's characters are sleazy. Arrogant. Greedy and lascivious. They're pictured with briefcases of cash, zoned out on sofas, *posing* with weapons, sucking on lollypops, dribbling vodka or staring down their noses at the world. The GTA games might be violent and full of blockbuster chaos, but that's because the people *in* them are human scum. With the emphasis on the 'human' as much as scum.

It's not just confined to artwork in magazines, either. Rockstar's publicity campaigns follow the same unusual tack. Rather than the standard montages and esoteric guff about new features and technical whizzbangery, GTA IV's promotion centred on... characters.

From the mock wanted posters pasted around New York to artwork covering the sides of whole buildings, it's been all about the humanity. Few marketing departments would be so brave. "We can't use these. Nobody knows who these people are! Let's talk about how it runs in 720p hi-def Blu-ray vision and has more than 50 weapons and however many cars. We'll use the word 'unique' as well, quite wrongly. It's what kids want." Just thank your lucky rocket >



GTA IV's muted earth tones are a deliberate step away from the colourful block neons of old.

There is nothing to admire about this man other than his cuffs. Will GTA IV cause copycat cuffs?

launchers that Rockstar has a bit more bravery than that.

These are not the actions of a now-successful company that can afford to indulge itself. Glance across the early covers (below) and there's no attempt to fool gamers with wild promises the PSone couldn't keep. The first two main games feature stylish evocations of New York – glassy skyscrapers and a yellow cab – but, notably, no guns or even menace. This game, in other words, is about the *city*, and Rockstar has always wanted you to know that.

Meanwhile, the London 1969 expansion pack originally went purely for iconography; it was only by its re-release as a Special Edition that a character even appeared on a Grand Theft Auto cover. And, as subsequently became the form right up until 2008 and GTA IV, that character was a cartoonishly stylised thug. Not a role model. Not a hero. A thug.

In fact, this original art from Grand Theft Auto III (right) is the most 'traditional' it ever really gets – and even then, the explosions, characters and weapons all genuinely feature in the game. Meanwhile, the whole cast is squashed against a backdrop of Liberty City: a jostling crowd of angular buildings and tangled bridge struts that dwarfs every individual.

So it's not really such a big leap to the moody, flawed characters of GTA IV's softer, darker imagery (right). The thugs are still there, but they're more complex – look and you see vanity, anger, sloth and moral decay in every stroke of those coffee tones. And once again, Rockstar's own promotional screenshots major heavily on vistas, skylines and cityscapes.

The shots focusing on the violence and prostitutes come later. From us. The *players*. Oops... CVG

The caricatured, graphic novel stylings of GTA III's artwork were both at odds with, and reflected in, the hyper-realistic world of Liberty City.

GROWN UP

Just compare the colourful, frenetic art style of GTA III (left) with the downbeat mood of GTA IV (above). Note it's not just the colour palette that's changed – the medium has too, from ink to paint, for a softer, more nuanced look. This, of course, mirrors the progress of the game itself.

WHO'LL BE COMPLAINING ABOUT GTA IV?

DESPITE ITS IMMENSE POPULARITY, MANY PEOPLE WILL NEVER PLAY GTA IV. THEY WILL COMPLAIN THE LOUDEST – BUT WHO ARE THEY?

WHO: THE IGNORANT
WHERE: EVERYWHERE
WHEN: WHENEVER IT SUITS THEM

Eastern European Groups

Previously, Haitian-American groups and even the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, got involved when somebody heard Vice City had a mission called 'Kill All The Haitians'. There's no such mission name, though you are told to kill them during one job for the Cubans. Within the context of the game, it's obvious it means 'kill the rival Haitian gang' rather than 'visit genocide on the Haitians as a people,' but who cares about context? The reference was later removed. GTA IV's leads, meanwhile, are Eastern European immigrants, which should be enough for various groups to complain about negative stereotyping and racism. At the very least, it'll make a nice change from complaining that lead characters are never Eastern European due to Western racism.

New York

Representatives of places depicted in video games are increasingly complaining abut being shown in the games they haven't played. Lovers of Manchester Cathedral famously objected to Resistance: Fall of Man, while Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman claimed Rainbow Six: Vegas was 'maybe something not entitled to [the protection of] free speech' and tried to stop its release. How very Un-American. Mayor Goodman was worried a story depicting US forces foiling a terrorist attack could be 'harmful economically' by making Vegas, a city famously founded by gangster money purely to enable gambling and synonymous with greed and excess ever since, look bad. Meanwhile, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg missed his chance to sue Peter Jackson for making The Big Apple look like it's full of giant monkeys, and could well go gunning for Liberty City's loving homage to NY before more harm is done.

Anti drinking groups

It's possible to get drunk in GTA IV, and the animations make staggering around look funny. This will make children who legally shouldn't be playing GTA IV think that getting drunk, which legally they shouldn't be doing either, is fun. There's no evidence that drinking is fun. Clearly, the answer is to make everything MORE illegal, and ban it. Expect anti-drinking groups to issue dire warnings re: GTA IV and the end of civilisation.

Anti drink-driving groups

It's also possible to drive a car while drunk, with all the control and vision difficulties you might expect. Far from simply being something you can choose to do or not do, this actively encourages drink-driving in the real world by not actively encouraging it in

the game, but allowing it. Gamers aged 18 or over will be brainwashed into thinking it's OK and essentially consequence-free when driving an actual car, while 13 year-old GTA-playing joyriders with soft, unformed brains will start stealing cars while drunk, and probably explode. The next time anyone who's even *heard* of GTA flattens someone while trying to open another Stella, mid-text, with the end of their heroin spoon, Rockstar will essentially be murderers.

Anti gun groups

Getting rid of real guns is terribly hard, because everyone who disagrees is heavily armed, so campaigning to get rid of not-real guns is entirely preferable. Furthermore, throwing wild, inaccurate insults at gamers is much safer than attacking anyone who could a) take the safety catch off anything more lethal than a bottle of antidepressants or b) run after you without needing medical attention. You can therefore expect a fair measure of anger directed at the way GTA IV glamorises gun crime by throwing increasing police resistance against you until you either die in a blizzard of lead or go to jail.

Mr Jack Thompson

Jack Thompson is a conservative Christian lawyer from Florida who has a lurid beef with videogames – especially those by Rockstar. GTA IV is, he says, 'a murder simulator for violence against women, cops and innocent bystanders'. He's previously tried (and failed) to get both Bully and Halo 3 prohibited as 'public nuisances' and erroneously implicated games in various murders, even after any link has been disproved – even going so far as to take legal action against Omaha's Chief of Police, who dared prefer the evidence in a December 2007 shooting to Thompson's beliefs. Thompson has also been vocal about homosexuals, rap music, obscenity, erotically themed music videos and the Florida Bar. The latter is currently investigating ethics complaints against Thompson, who could lose his license to practice law as a result. Bizarrely, Thompson has filed to subpoena President George W Bush in this case, among others.

Conservative pundits who've searched youtube

There are plenty of other games by other devs for objectors to not play, so 'controversy' can occur with non-Rockstar games too. The most recent was caused by US channel Fox News – a sort of televisual Daily Mail – and their embarrassing 'story' about 'digital nudity' in sci-fi RPG Mass Effect. The tale was high on gibbering sensationalism and low on fact. A talk show host who admitted she'd never seen the game was invited to give expert analysis, along with games journo Geoff Keighley, who *had* played it but was talked down by outraged panellists who hadn't.

The whole thing was actually kicked off by right-wing blogger Kevin McCullough, who ranted about 'virtual orgasmic rape' and 'customisable sodomy' on the net... forgive him for not realising these sexual fantasies were his own, as he hadn't played Mass Effect either. He did later search youtube for it, however, finding lesbian aliens with hands 'passing between the legs' and proof, visible only to him, of extra 'kinks' for those 'in the know'. Yes, real life really is that stupid. Expect youtube to become Exhibit A for some really astonishing lies about Grand Theft Auto IV.

I HEART GTA!

Most games are reviewed and then forgotten. Not these...

The Grand Theft Auto games are just too big to go away. It's an odd thing for the press. Previews and then reviews have long been the bread and butter of specialist magazines, and the only reason any given title would reappear after that is for a walkthrough. An unemotional, go-here-do-this-then-win screed devoted purely to one question: how to beat it. But as gaming has become more complex, a more fundamental question with far more interesting answers has arisen: why?

Why beat the game?

Why play it all?

Increasingly, in this age of game, console and media proliferation, it's just this question that's coming under the spotlight. Magazines are going back to the big hitters and re-examining them in new light: in the light of their success, in light of massively extended experiences, in light of the lusts and creations of whole communities that have sprung up around them. And just who *are* the people that made them this way? That's key, too.

GTA lies in a narrow band at the very heights of gaming – a troposphere of games so dense, tangled and important they deserve whole books (or lovely thick magazines...) devoted to their arts. If only such a thing were available, eh? We can but dream.

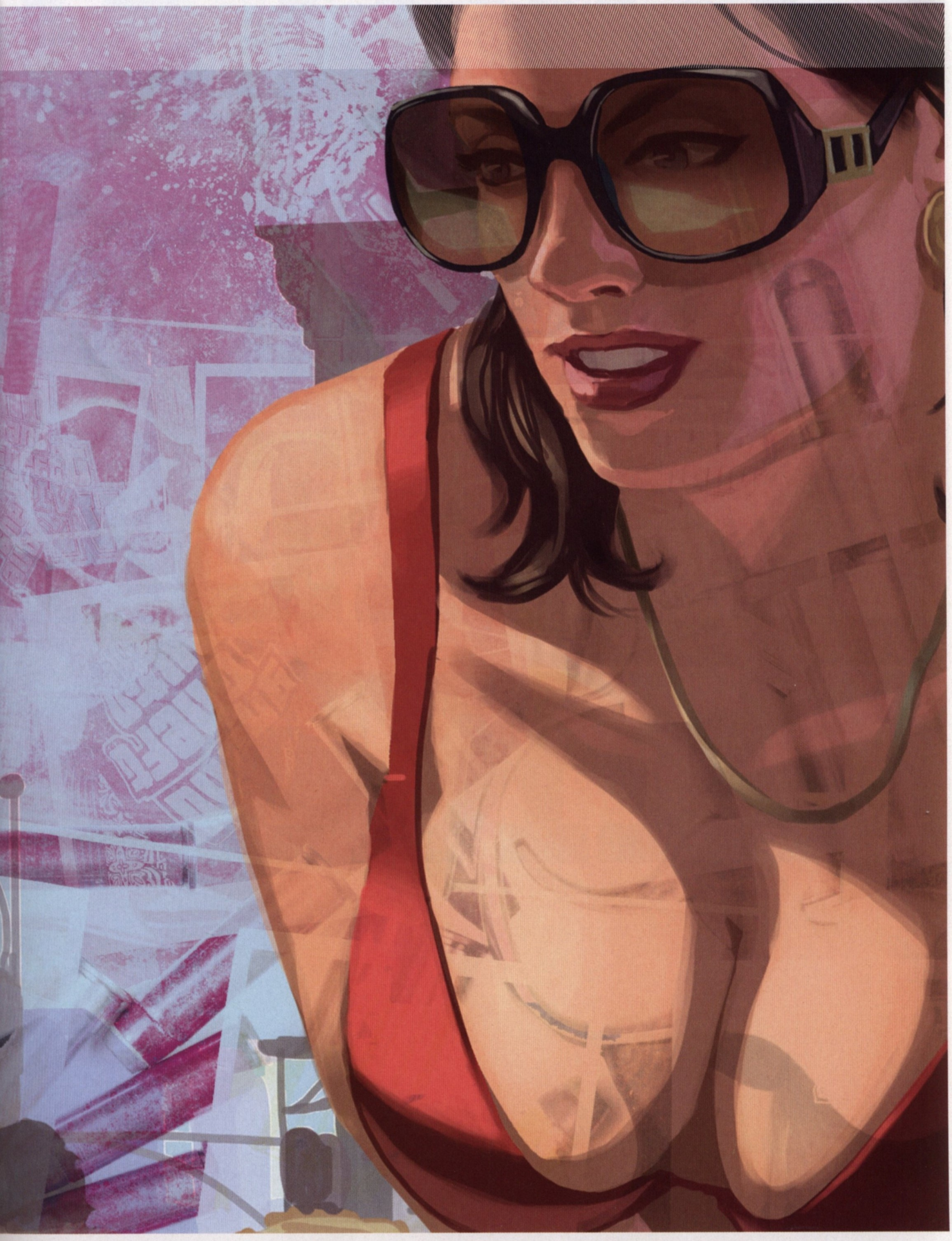
In the meantime, we've gathered together the best of that critical appreciation – the post-release examinations, as distinct from the pre-release reviews – for your

As gaming has become more complex, a more fundamental question has arisen: why?

consideration, perusal and edification. Sprinkled in are specially commissioned pieces that take in the view all the way from the heady, futuristic peaks of 2008. Annnnddd.... go! CVG

APPRECIATION

EDGE PC GAMER PC FORMAT CVG PRESENTS



Q:WHAT ROCKS REALL LIKE?

A:NUT

*In a good way. You all know their work. You know they call themselves 'Rockstar'. But what's it like to actually meet the men behind Grand Theft Auto? We asked a few prominent journos who've done just that...

T ARE
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STEPHEN PIERCE,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE

WHAT: SAN ANDREAS
WHEN: 2004
WHERE: LOS ANGELES
WHY: THE FIRST JOURNO EVER TO SEE SAN ANDREAS

In the industry of video games there are ways of doing things. Unwritten rules of engagement, squeezed into being by the economic dominance of gaming's corporate superpowers. Among them are 'games companies shall heavily advertise products to the captive audience in specialist magazines' (Exhibit A: in your hands) and 'video game journalists shall not be paid much to write about their hobby' (Exhibit B: me writing this).

(Mr Pierce was actually paid his own weight in rhinestone encrusted Elvis shades for this – Ed.)

It's just, sort of, *the law* that magazine previews should be even-handed, right up to the millisecond before a review savaging – whereas the press releases we receive should be written by gibbons and must always, but *always* contain the phrase 'unrivalled excitement.'

It is also the norm that game presentations (where software companies unveil new titles to drunken journalists) are usually affable, but ultimately humdrum affairs. Grins all round, hyperbole and a free buffet; sincerity as plastic as the cutlery. For these occasions most companies wheel out for public speaking duties guys who, for 364 days of the year, make their living elbow deep in C++ code. Either that or a theatrical 'real-world' expert (typically an ex-general) who is paid to shout for half an hour solid that the game in question is so absurdly 'real' that you could actually keel over while playing it. And then calling for an awkward minute's silence to remember the servicemen who've died so we might play.

All of which finally brings me to the point of this waffle. You see, to my mind Rockstar have not just innovated the way we all play games. For those of us behind the scenes they've had a damn good stab at re-imagining the wishy-washy world of the game presentation too. Case in point: back in 2004, as Editor-in-Chief of Official PlayStation2 Magazine, I was lucky enough to be invited by Rockstar to be the first journalist in the world to see Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, at the Electronics Expo in Los Angeles.

Compared with other big hitters, Rockstar's presence at such events is deliberately understated. Not for them 50 foot plasmas and walls of girls in hotpants – just hordes of iconic yellow & black logos and staff in Japanese denim with angular manes. But while twatting about like a giddy, lanyard soaked fan-boy all over EA's stand is positively encouraged, just getting access over at Rockstar is akin to bowling up at Gordon Ramsay's at Claridge's for Christmas lunch, without a reservation, wearing shorts. Short shorts. Your name's not down, you're *definitely* not coming in.

But my name was down and once past the velvet rope, I waited. I waited in one waiting area, then was moved to another. Then finally into a room to meet with a couple of PRs, who didn't intend to actually do the presentation, but just wanted to explain that I was about to witness a presentation. To be fair I was aware of this. But looking back now, this glorious pomp and ceremony surrounding the fact that I, and I alone, was about to see the biggest game of the year was pretty damn captivating.

The pre-presentation over, I assumed the presentation would follow. I was mistaken; I had in fact only made it through the pre-pre-presentation. The pre-presentation took the form of an audience with Rockstar founders Terry Donovan and Dan Houser. So there I was, slouching on angular furniture, sipping latte, shooting the shit with two guys with more money than I could draw if fields were made of paper and cows pooed gold pens. I felt important. I liked this game a lot, and I hadn't even seen it.

Pre-presentation over, I assumed the presentation would follow. I was mistaken; I had in fact only made it through the pre-pre-presentation

The presentation, when it came, continued the histrionics. I was led to a pitch black room and seated at the front, on a grand sofa, on my own, before a large telly. Behind me the room was full of Rockstar staffers, but I couldn't really see anyone clearly. I was given some plush headphones and through them I could hear a guy talking me through – at last! – the presentation.

He was speaking into a mic about five feet away.

I was shown an 'inspirational' video of clips from South Central LA gangland movies (Colors, Boyz 'n' the Hood and so on) with the appropriate hands-in-the-air party hip-hop soundtrack. Followed by... finally... the world's first look at a game everyone is now more than familiar with.

I left the presentation, flew back to the UK and wrote the most breathless and frenziedly positive "I've just kissed Jesus" write-up of my life. So I guess their approach worked.

That said, the game was quite good as well.

PAUL FITZPATRICK,
STAFF WRITER,
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE

WHAT: GRAND THEFT AUTO III
WHEN: 2001
WHERE: GERMANY
WHY: FOR AN EARLY PREVIEW

Like many people in this industry, so it seems, my greatest GTA memory is not of a particular mission, some convergence of music and mayhem or a hard-won Easter Egg. No, my greatest memory of Rockstar's incredible series predates the release of Grand Theft Auto III by several months.

As a fresh-faced staff writer on Official PlayStation2 mag (well, as fresh as my face has ever managed) I found myself on a day trip to Germany – yes, *day* trip – to see Rockstar's latest games. One of these (but at the time, no more than 'one of') was a new Grand Theft Auto. GTA III was actually one of many 2D updates for 'next gen' back then, and almost all of them had been fun like spontaneous incontinence. The increasingly familiar cry of "It's X... in 3D!" was beginning to rhyme with "It's like being kicked... in the balls!"

I should have known that this was no ordinary demo when, after catching the red eye flight to Frankfurt, our group of journalists was ferried by taxi to a very unpromising looking residential district, rather than – as is more the norm in this business – a bar. Soon we were dropped off at what looked like a derelict sports centre. Once inside, however, it turned

The game swooped to its default, 3rd-person view. There were audible gasps

out to actually be... a derelict sports centre. Albeit one repurposed into a Rockstar showcase.

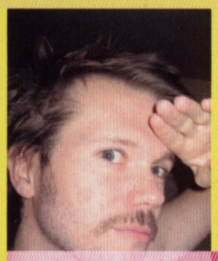
If I was taken aback by the location of the presentation for a game I was fairly sure featured things like carjacking, gunfire and 150mph speedos rather than backstroke, verucas and pink Speedos – it was in the deep end of a drained swimming pool – that was nothing compared to what came next.

The game demo started and GTA III looked just like a shinier version of the earlier PSone Grand Theft Autos. We were looking top-down on tiny cars doing bad things between skyscrapers. It looked tidy, but nothing to get massively excited about. Two-dimensions on PS3? Whatever.

It was then the guy leading the presentation flipped the top-down view off (only an option in GTA III, as it turned out) and the game swooped into its default, third-person view. There were audible gasps. Three dimensional gaming wasn't new, but a GTA world – a wide open, go anywhere, do anything how and when you like world – in 3D? Now *that* was a *staggeringly* exciting proposition.

I think everybody there that day knew right then. This was a pivotal game – the start of something absolutely massive. The onlooking gaggle of journalistic brains and hearts were afire with prose, with revelations and the urge to *write*.

And then we went to the bar.



DANIEL DAWKINS
EDITOR
PSM3

WHAT: GTA III / SAN ANDREAS
WHEN: 2001 / 2004
WHERE: BATH / PENTHOUSE SUITE, LONDON
WHY: TO PLAY MY PART IN GTA'S SCORING...

Thing is, Grand Theft Auto wasn't always so hotly anticipated. In fact, GTA III's announcement barely registered a ripple, despite some promising (if suspiciously pre-rendered-looking) early screens and some ambitious words about its 3D reinvention by the Houser brothers – these appearing in an early copy of Official PlayStation2 magazine. When the game fell off the radar for nine months before suddenly appearing suspiciously ready for review, most journalists jumped to the same conclusion – it was rubbish, and Rockstar had been forced to hide it. The surprise, of course, was that it wasn't rubbish... in fact, the first few hours suggested it was excellent, from the revolutionary 'sandbox' gameplay to the visuals to the in-car radio.

But because Rockstar hadn't shown the game until it was complete, everyone was obsessed with finding fault. I remember my flatmate, another journalist, was writing the world-first review, and – despite clearly enjoying himself – trying to find the catch. In between washing the dishes and wondering when he'd let me get the TV back (which I'd kindly donated to the front room), I caught several glances of the game: my flatmate seemed to spend most of his time driving around similar-looking streets. When he asked my opinion, I just said it looked a bit repetitive and that, if he was unsure, he was probably right. The game scored 8/10, and in some small way, I can't help think I helped to down-score possibly the most important game of PS2's life.

Moral: don't hide games from journalists, since the cynical sods will assume there's something to hide. Or failing that, don't let them review the things on *my* television.

Several years and several million sales later, San Andreas was the most hotly anticipated game in the world. So being invited to play it under five-star house arrest in London was fairly exciting. Rockstar booked us into a penthouse suite in a posh London hotel – it, er, must have been good, because I recognized later the suite in an episode of Katie & Peter: Unclever (or whatever it was called) when she was forced to go into hiding for some reason or other – and gave us five days to review the game.

On one hand, it was bliss: unqualified access to the world's hottest game and all the quartered cucumber sarnies you could eat. On the other, it was curiously oppressive: a nine hour daily shift with a superb, though repeatedly flawed, open-world game under the watchful gaze of an ever-present Rockstar representative. While they did their best not to intrude, every time you blundered a basically facile Los Santos mission you felt a silent murmur from the other side of the room – entirely imagined, of course.

On day three, forty hours in, as I failed – and cursed – the bloody impossible flying missions for the eleventy-ninth time, you could've played the chords from Rage Against the Machine's 'Killing In The Name' in the air alone, such was the tension. By Day Five, at 4.30 pm on our final sojourn, we were just leaving Las Venturas when our Rockstar rep spoke up.

"Know what?" he said, "Keep going, and you might be the first journalist in the world to finish this..."

"Know what?" he said, "Keep going, and you might be the first journalist in the world to finish this..."

Six hours later, I wasn't so sure. I had to hand the pad to the Rockstar chap so we could power through the Los Santos riots (he even rang New York to check how long it'd take) and it wasn't until 2.30 am that I finally lined up to tackle the final mission. Amazingly, I did it first go – or rather, thought I'd done it first go. Then I realised you had to *escape* the burning building once the killing was done, howling in agony as CJ burnt to a crisp just metres from the exit.

"Sorry dude, I've *got* to leave" revealed my Rockstar friend, explaining he had to be in work (on Saturday) four hours later. It'd take him an hour to get home in the first place.

Oddly, being politely forced to *almost* finish the game over 60-odd hours must've bent my mind, since I gave it an almost implausible 99% – two percent more than our equally ludicrous 97% score for Vice City. It was hard at the time to argue than San Andreas wasn't at least that much better – though years later, I can't help but feel Vice was *maybe* the tighter, more enjoyable game. Still, given my potential influence on the GTA III score, perhaps it was karmic redistribution. Or rather, what happens when I'm forced to review something on someone *else*'s 42" widescreen with an inexhaustible supply of room service savouries.

STEVEN WILLIAMS,
FREELANCER
EDITOR OF THIS MAGAZINE

WHAT: GTA: SAN ANDREAS
WHEN: LATE 2004
WHERE: LONDON
WHY: AN EARLY GLIMPSE OF SAN ANDREAS

Odd, but the *game* is the thing I least remember about my first visit to Rockstar. And that game was San Andreas – it's not exactly forgettable. This trip was to their London base on the Kings Road, and as it happened I'd been reading John Lydon's biography – the Sex Pistols and punk were very much a Kings Road thing. So on the way from the Tube I got talking to the cabbie, who'd been driving 25 years (that's taxi short cuts for you), about where Vivienne Westwood's infamous Sex boutique had been. It was the epicentre of it all – or so Malcolm McLaren would have it. Turns out it was pretty close by: 430 Kings Road. Rockstar's at 555.

I mentioned all this to the two friendly PRs once I found my way in, and they casually replied they often went drinking with guys from the Pistols. Rock 'n' Roll! Yet these tattooed, baggy-shorted, rockstar-knowing Rockstars would soon be giving me the most corporate presentation I've ever had in my life.

This weird duality defined Rockstar for me. It repeated everywhere. Even in the address: here's a company based on one of London's most famous streets, and you can't find it. It's not marked, not numbered; the entrance is not at the front. I actually had the cab wait, it looked so unpromising... With the other big companies you know what you're getting, but with Rockstar it's a bizarre mix of *there* and *not there*, chummy and corporate, hot and cold. Like GTA; comedy and ultraviolence, crime and punishment, sex and death. Grand Theft Auto is not just what they do, it's what they are.

The unseen voice behind the light declaims about bicycles while the other man, silent, plays the game

So we chat about old punks, get coffees, splodge into black leather sofas – and everything goes professional. One of the two produces a clipboard and the lights snap off, leaving just the TV as a distant light-square flickering over blue-lined tattoos. A neat little lamp on a stalk clicks on over the clipboard. It's perfectly adjusted. The speech starts. I make comments like before... the flow will not be broken. I shut up.

The unseen voice behind the light declaims about bicycles while the other man, silent, plays the game for me. I can't even remember if I was allowed to play it myself – but I do remember I was sent out each time a new area was loaded. It seemed a little... protective. And when it's all over, snap! We warp back to off-duty. There's more coffee. Jokes. *Bis*cuits.

Rockstar probably enjoy living up to their name (they 'do' controversy almost as well as the newspapers) but I really got the sense it's not just cynical. They're just not like other games companies. Not at all. And hooray for that.

ALEC MEER
REVIEWER,
PC FORMAT

WHAT: VICE CITY
WHEN: APRIL 2003
WHERE: LONDON
WHY: FIRST EVER REVIEW OF VICE CITY ON PC

Since GTA III, Rockstar's been big on secrecy. Fair enough – the less the fans know, the more they want to know. But actually *witnessing* their stranglehold on the flow of knowledge is, however, a startling experience. Let me explain. That infamous secrecy didn't seem much of a deal this time: after all, Vice City had been out on PS2 for six months. How worried could they be about me revealing, "Good game still good, now higher res"? Very, it turns out...

Thus I was sequestered in a luxurious London hotel for a couple of days. Their first action was to stay my hand as I reached for the curtains, craving sunlight. I paraphrase from memory: "What if another mag tries to see in? *Everyone* wants this exclusive."

I stare silently at the ten storey drop outside the window.

"Er. Really?"

"PC Gamer could be out in that park with binoculars."

I stare again, this time at the vast, empty park, across which one matchstick-sized man slowly walked his Rice Krispie-sized dog. "What, hiding behind that tree, trying to get a picture of the increased draw distance on his phone? "

...living a life of unfettered headonism and somehow failing to appreciate it

"Well, you never know."

"You'd need a jetpack to reach this window."

"Well, you never know." And so, darkness fell.

The room was a shrine to Rockstar. The towels were natty Vice City ones; neon-pink cocktail sticks and R* keyrings lay everywhere; the hi-fi was encircled by soundtrack CDs. I'd be lying if I said it didn't look awesome, that I didn't relish these delights. I'd also be lying if I said it wasn't a little creepy.

The days that followed were characteristically surreal. Fine booze and incredible food; I wanted for nothing except sunshine. However, playing a game with someone watching is deeply unsettling. Though no criticism was uttered, each time I died felt utterly shameful. Then, late one night some London chums stopped by, curious to see my luxury prison – and called up porn on the pay-per-view TV, purely to land me in trouble. Miserably trying to explain to the PR the next day, I was not believed, but nor was I admonished. I got the dread sense it was simply *expected*... and it all piled up on the tab. I felt like some seedy nobody living a life of unfettered hedonism and somehow failing to appreciate it. How very Vice City! I was treated exceptionally well for those two days. Rockstar took fine care of me, no doubt about that.

But they also scared me half to death.

ROCK

Did you know there's a whole world of GTA merchandise that *never gets merchandised*? These industry-only items are the most collectible GTA memorabilia in existence. Cast an eye over these... and another over eBay...

Subtly-branded brown paper bag. Classy.

Nothing says GTA IV like... a pizza box. Sadly, it only contained more tat.

Wear this while ram-raiding Dixons and it'll be a cinch to blame games for your behaviour.

The infamous Burger Shot tee. Subtle and garish simultaneously.

STUFF

Coasters! Skins! Is there nothing Rockstar isn't capable of logo-ing up for our evening's entertainment?

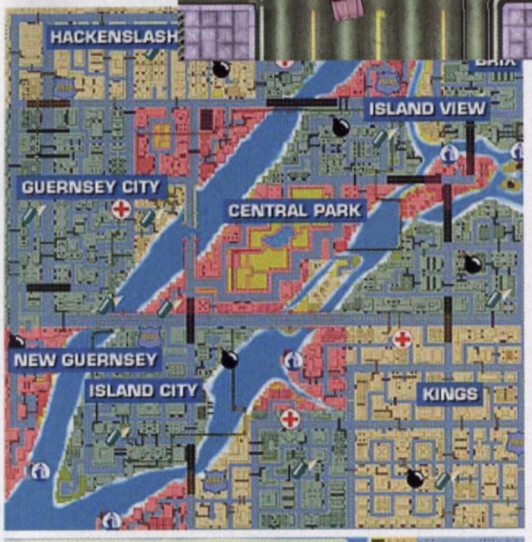
We love this the best – branded tat from in-game businesses. This is perhaps the world's most ironic mouse mat. Fact.

Never mind subtlety for this one – and why are promotional T-shirts always so huge? Do they think we're all fat for some reason?

The handy little branded matchbooks are sexy in a low key way. But use will only spoil them... oh the irony.

ARE THEY STILL

They were groundbreaking at the time – but are the original 2D GTAs a sound investment?



In the misty, bygone days of 1997, as hard as may be to believe, computers existed. Fortunately, so did a man called David Jones, who worked for a Scottish company called DMA Design. He'd already made his mark with Lemmings – one of the best remembered and most loved puzzle games of all time. The cutesy blue and green characters belied nothing of what Jones was planning to release next, their chirpy suicides a thousand fathoms from the mean streets of Grand Theft Auto. Or Race N Chase, as it was nearly called. Blimey, that was close.

What's most extraordinary as you go back to these games is quite how *much* of the GTA universe was in place from the very beginning. As top-down games, clearly they look strikingly different from the new-fangled techna-ma-complex excitement of a GTA IV, but once you get past this you see that nearly every core element was present. Stealing cars? Well, there's a clue in the name. Running over innocent people for fun and profit? You can bet your bum. Liberty City, San Vice City, San Andreas? Absolutely. Older than you thought, eh? Blowing up buildings, smuggling drugs, working for the mob, mowing down the police... yes, it's all here. Your local insane politician would have blown a vessel if they'd only heard of computer games at that point.

But what about today? Sitting in your holochamber, surrounded by your Micronytendo PlayBox 720ii, does the original Grand Theft Auto – or even its bells-and-whistles 1999 sequel – still survive? The answer is a rather surprising, and completely pleasant, yes. And it does it in a fashion even better than you might think.

They're a steal

Which makes the next bit of news all the better: in case you didn't know, they're completely free. In a moment of crazed altruism, Rockstar North decided to give their seminal car-stealing opuses away to the computer-owning masses (see the "You Want Some? box for details of how to get hold them, and how to get them working).

"Yes," you demand in your obstinate fashion, "But *why* are these ancient flat games still any good?" I'll tell you, calm down! Have videogames made you violent or something?

London Underground

Gone, but not forgotten

Missing from Rockstar's generous freebie giveaways is GTA London. Well, actually, both of them. In early 1999, the first mission pack, Grand Theft Auto: London 1969, emerged using the original GTA engine – not the one powering GTA 2 later in the year. As the more discerning reader might have learned from the title, it was set in London. But what you probably couldn't have guessed was the year, 1969. This gave DMA (soon to become Rockstar North) an excuse to make jokes based on a land closer to home. References to 60s culture, Bond spoofs and the like permeatewhat was a remarkably diverse release.

Only two months later in June 1999, GTA: London, 1961 appeared. This one was a completely free download only for PC and required the previous London game to work (which itself required the original GTA to work..). Rather obviously, it took the action back another eight years, and provided a big chunk of new missions, new cars, and a multiplayer map set in beautiful Manchester.

However, neither of these games are very easy to get hold of any more. Although Rockstar has put the rest of their catalogue on Steam, and do a generously priced bundle of all the GTA games, London is completely absent. Which is an odd decision. They weren't a lazy cash-in afterthought, but actually a fine collection of uniquely themed missions, in a brand new city, with brand new stories. Let's start the petition today: Rockstar, re-release GTA London NOW!

You Want Some?

Lock down some solid gold easy action – free

So you've read this, and you're salivating for some classic GTA funtimes. The first way is via Valve's Steam (www.steampowered.com). However, while the games are free, they'll still cost you. For a decent $43.45 (plus tax) you can get GTA III, Vice City and San Andreas. GTA 1 and 2 come 'free' in this package. It's about £25 in Earth pounds.

However, to get them on their own, and free in the sense that you don't pay any money while getting them, head to, www.rockstargames.com/classics

It's 'registerware', which means they'll take your name and address (and you totally mustn't make this up, even though you can) to access links to download both games.

The best thing is, these versions are especially updated for current incarnations of Windows, as original versions are scared out their pants by XP and Vista. Sadly, that doesn't mean it'll be plain sailing. Especially with GTA 1. The most common problems are a graphical glitch for those with Nvidia 8800 graphics cards that's currently unsolved, and a silly bug that only lets you run the game once before it begins crashing. However, a kindly user has created a patch to fix this second error (http://tinyurl.com/2wgsz7). Rockstar itself makes no guarantees the free games will work, and offer no tech support for them, so you may find issues for which there's no solution. Them's the breaks, friend – it's impressive they work at all considering it was the Stone Age back in them thar 1900s. Also, scanning the Steam forums often finds you excellent advice.

WORTH PLAYING?

So it's all about the freedom. At the time the games were released, no one had seen anything quite like it. These were games that dropped you into the middle of a large city, and told you, "brother, go find something to do." There were pointers, a couple of missions to get you started, and then it was up to you to answer payphones scattered around the city, and do the jobs available. And most weirdly of all, you fail a mission and it didn't restart, or offer you a reload. You'd just *failed*, bucko, and you'd better find some new work soon.

Wait! That's enough of this past tense nonsense. These games are still excellent now. There *are* pointers, it still *is* up to you to answer the payphones... the game still makes you want to.

You begin in the infamous Liberty City. There's not an abundance of story, but it's clear you're a jobbing criminal, and you start taking on jobs. The way to complete the city (and move on to Vice City) is to simply score enough points. You can take the tasks on offer and complete them with a remarkable amount of freedom, even here, and without hefty time limits or prescribed routes. Or if you prefer the long road, you can simply keep increasing your bank account by stealing and selling cars to various merchants, or even by being a sociopathic murderer and blitzing your way down the streets like a giant human-chopping lawnmower. It's really very familiar.

Grand Theft Also

GTA 2 steps outside of the universe that has occupied the series otherwise. It's set in a place rather ambiguously called Anywhere City – a strange place that seems like it might be from the near future. In splitting it into its three sections (The Downtown area, The Residential District and The Industrial District), DMA was clearly feeling a bit meta about the whole thing. This time around they emphasised the freedom further, not only letting you proceed as you see fit, but allowing you to align yourself with (or indeed piss off to the point of being chased down the streets by dozens of enraged thugs) various gangs. Playing as Claude Speed, you're a recently awakened cryo-prisoner (yes, really) seeking to become the, er, King of the Kennel. Once more you're score-collecting to let you move on to the next city section, but this time while trying to balance the three gangs against one another.

Fact is, the top-down perspective is still completely engrossing. Weirdly so. It makes the games much more about the cars than the on-foot sections (although you can dash about on your tootsies should you wish). Even controlling the game with the keyboard, rather than your 19-axis pressure-sensitive mindpad, remains utterly satisfying. The games are deliberately generous in their controls, applying the brakes for you as you turn at high speed, letting you feel all kinds of awesome.

It's also, perhaps surprisingly, still pretty brutal. Although pedestrians are just wee sprites, running them over is met with a gruesome splatting noise, leaving their corpses splayed in a puddle of their own tummy juices. And it's harder to avoid doing it, thanks to the somewhat unfortunate obscuring of the car by bridges and whatnot – you can dish out quite a serving of vehicular manslaughter without a moment's intention. Your Honour.

So, *should* you? Absolutely yes. Despite their ten years, and so long as you can get them working on your PC (or find a copy for your PlayStation, or find a PlayStation), these are still remarkably fun. If they'd cost a chunk of cash we'd be a bit more hesitant to recommend, since clearly a budget copy of GTA III or Vice City offers a far more elaborate, intricate and visceral experience. But when they're *free*, come on! They're of historical interest, certainly, but they're also fine ways to while away afternoons. Best of all, they'll run on your crappy old laptop on the train, letting you offend old ladies and passing vicars while on the move.

Which, let's face it, is all any of us can really ask for in life. CVG

MOT

It's time to give these games a check-up...

/GTA

- ☑ See where it all began, man
- ☑ The three famous cities, as seen for the first time
- ☑ Really cutesy design makes the violence that bit more shocking
- ☒ Tricky to get working on modern systems
- ☒ Annoying run-once-only bug requires a user-made fix
- ☒ Will corrupt your innocent mind and turn you into a crazed killer

/GTA 2

- ☑ Offers better graphics, smoother edges, and much more detail
- ☑ The lighting is super-lovely
- ☑ The gang dynamic makes for an even more open and adaptable world
- ☒ Setting has nothing to do with the rest of the series
- ☒ Why are all the taxis tank-sized, exactly?
- ☒ Will make you do crimes in real life and go to prison

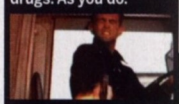
GTA 2: The Movie
How could we forget?

In 1999, DMA and Rockstar made a movie designed to promote GTA2. Bits of it were cut up for the game's cutscenes, but the full 8 minute movie is a missing piece of GTA memorabilia. And brilliantly, it can be downloaded from Rockstar's site: www.rockstargames.com/gta2/downloads/movie.html

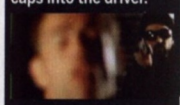
The story begins as hero Claude Speed (played by Eastenders' Scott Maslen) is heading on foot towards Disgracelands.

After defeating a pursuing gang, it's time for the first bit of auto grand thefting, as he drags the driver out of a white van and makes off. Heh.

Taking a BMW to a spray shop, he gets the colour changed before meeting the big boss, and delivering some drugs. As you do.



Then it's time to go rescue the Buddhists from the back of the van, which of course means popping some caps into the driver.

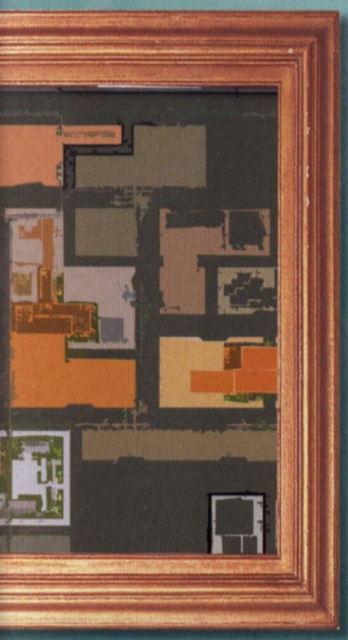


After quietly walking away as two rival gangs shoot out their differences, Claude finds his back is someone's target. Let's hope he's saved...

SLOW

ROMA

Und deshalb, macht sie kalt.
MORGENSTERN GUTES SPIEL.



GTA
GRAND THEFT AUTO

GRAND THEFT AUTO

THE MAKING OF...

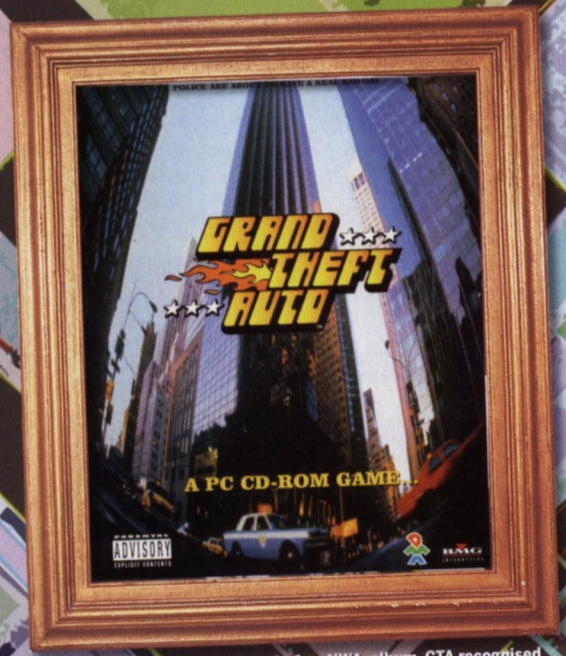
Even before its release and subsequent vilification, GTA was a world of trouble. In July 2006, Edge magazine investigated its fraught creation

- ORIGINAL FORMAT: PC
- PUBLISHER: BMG INTERACTIVE
- DEVELOPER: DMA DESIGN
- ORIGIN: UK
- DATE: 1997
- ORIGINAL ARTICLE: EDGE 164, 2006

The one thing everyone agrees on is that *they* didn't make Grand Theft Auto, but that's not strictly fair: the other thing everyone agrees on is that everybody made Grand Theft Auto. Talking to those that worked for DMA Design back in the late '90s it's difficult to get anyone to claim significant credit for themselves, though they're generous with praise for others. Development of Grand Theft Auto, or Race'n'Chase as it was originally known before a clash with a Matchbox slot-car racer forced a change, was collaborative and often tempestuous, and as a consequence it's extremely difficult to pin down the specific turning points, even for those who were there at the time.

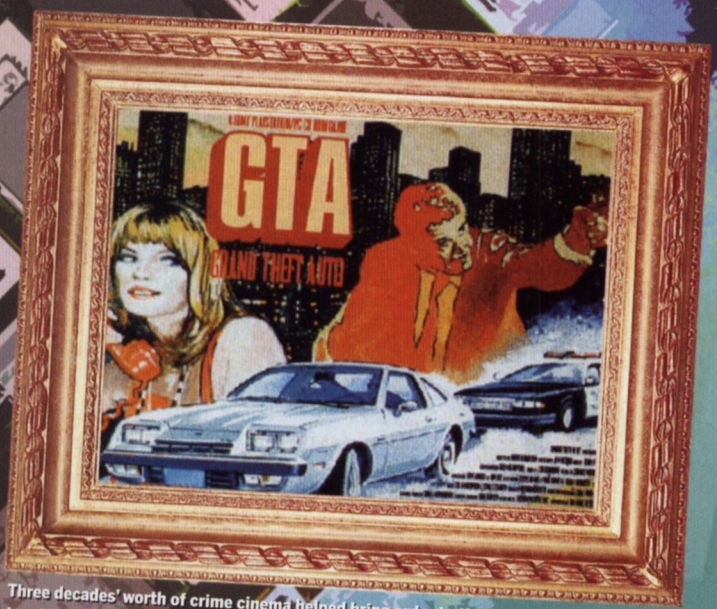
Its early days, however, are somewhat easier to piece together. "The original idea was to create a game based in a living city," remembers DMA lyricist and public relations head Brian Baglow. "The idea was to build an active environment that could react to the player and where there were consequences to their actions."

Developers at DMA had grown tired of the stereotyped settings and implausible enemies that seemingly existed for no reason other than to harass the player, constantly reminding them that they were playing a game. They wanted something more convincing, more immersive. 'Living' environments seemed to be the answer and several of the designs being worked on at the Dundee-based developer took this idea to heart. Body Harvest, for example, would be set on a series of sparsely inhabited islands, but the most ambitious of these worlds would be to make an entire city.

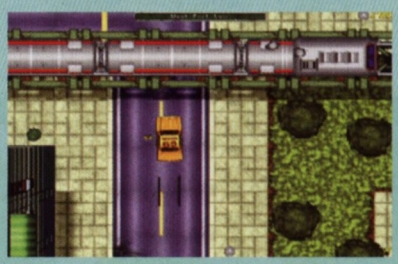


Sold as the videogame equivalent of an NWA. album, GTA recognised the universal marketing value of controversy. An omen for series episodes to come, the parental advisory notice earned by its content was deemed as much a badge of honour as a warning.

"BMG supported us 100 percent to put whatever we wanted into the game; coming from the music business nothing fazed them"



Three decades' worth of crime cinema helped bring order to the devil may care law-breaking that players instinctively undertook. Its missions derived enough character to attract even the most reckless players.



As the music is supposedly coming from the car radio, it makes perfect sense that it becomes muffled as your car passes under a building. A little touch, but one that draws the player in.

The first DMA living city bore little resemblance to the final game's distinctive look. Programmer Mike Dailly had produced a prototype city engine using a sophisticated, rotateable 3D isometric-style view. The gameplay for this modern-day metropolis was intended to concentrate on direct conflict between rival gangs, largely on foot because the view was ill-suited to driving. Unfortunately, as the engine moved from prototype to production, there were problems getting the required performance – and coupled with the release of the similar looking, if not playing, Syndicate Wars it caused the team to reconsider the ambitious project. But, fortunately, Dailly had been working on another, unrelated idea.

Platform games had served DMA well and Dailly had been impressed by the new graphical approach from Sega's Clockwork Knight. Although at heart a traditional side-view platformer, Knight used the 3D abilities of the new Saturn console to add a perspective display to the platforms. This gave them a convincing depth, the end nearest the player looming large, and reducing as it receded into the distance. Dailly had prototyped the effect, and liked it. Could DMA could use this approach for a new game of its own?

A chance remark about top-down racing games, however, got Dailly thinking: "It occurred to me that although I had a side-on engine, all I needed to do was add a floor, and it could be an above engine. So, with programmer graphics, I set about using the previous prototype as a base."

He showed the game to studio boss Dave Jones, who was immediately impressed: "It was a good-looking technical demo," he recalls. "By staying with this pseudo-3D engine we could

populate the world quite heavily compared to full 3D cities. With the camera attached to a car it would pull out quite a distance as you travelled faster. You got a great sense of depth." The constrained viewpoint allowed Jones to flesh out the concept by concentrating on what was in the city, rather than on what it looked like. "I wanted to create as busy a city as possible. I felt that a classic cops and robbers style of game would really appeal." So Race'n'Chase was born, and pitched to BMG as a title that Jones wanted to develop.

Work began straight away, putting flesh on the living city's bare skeleton. "We went a little overboard on the simulation," says Jones. "Buses following routes, people getting on and off, traffic lights working properly, a rail network. The more we could make it a mini living world the more fun the game became."

Unfortunately, when development began several problems with the original concept emerged. "No one wanted to play the cops, so we ditched that," recalls Jones, something that he has hopefully resolved, as his new studio, Real Time Worlds, is currently producing APB, an online action game where players have to make exactly that choice.

The inherent problem with the 'cops' part of this cops and robbers game was that being the good-guy all the time was hard, as anyone who tries to play the final game as a law-abiding citizen will testify. It's harder not to run people over. Baglow summarises the problems: "If traffic was heavy you, as a cop, couldn't decide to drive on the sidewalk, or plough through a busy park. We couldn't let the player do that and reward them. Driving safely and sensibly to your destination – observing all road safety – was about as much fun as Sim Driving Instructor."

Changes on this scale were typical of the entire game's development. Although it was very collaborative it could also be extremely fluid, and occasionally contentious, as Baglow remembers: "I sat through heated design meetings, which resulted in tears. Screaming, punches and arguments were common.

"We didn't have a clear concept of exactly what the final game would be like. We knew we had some great mechanics in there and some really innovative new ways to interact, but the details were impossible to pin down until you had most of the other elements in the game. Once you knew how the cars would handle and how the pedestrians would react and so on, you could incorporate that into level design and bonuses."

Elements of the game were added as they were thought of, often as a consequence of some casual tinkering with the behaviour of the living city.

"The Gouranga bonus is a really good example of that," he points out. "One of the programmers came up with a routine that had pedestrians following each other. This led to the idea of a line of Krishnas following each other down the street and then, once we had all experimented with ploughing through them all in one go, the Gouranga bonus became an obvious addition."

This was to be only one of many minor changes. Several, although essential to making the game a success, would cause a lot of work to be thrown away, as programmer Brian Baird recalls: "If we'd stuck to the original design, GTA would have flopped.

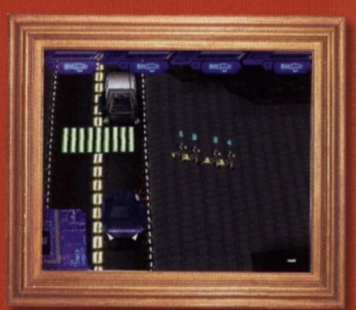
"The scale of the missions was very small, with the design being a series of short, sharp five-minute missions, returning to a mission select screen in between. Originally the player started as a delivery boy and worked his way up to the top. We quickly found it wasn't fun delivering pizzas."

One of the defining moments of the

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Everyone has their pet theory on the games that most influenced Grand Theft Auto, from obvious candidates such as Turbo Esprit, to the rather more esoteric 'living village' of Greendale in Postman Pat's Trail Game. Yes, really! But in order to find definitive answers we asked those who worked on the game what they thought the major influences were. "Mercenary, Elite and Syndicate were three pertinent references for GTA's perpetual design, because of their focus on play within strong microcosms instead of a rigid structure and challenges," says ex-BMG producer Gary Penn, revealing that fresh from producing Frontier for Gametek, the British tradition of open-ended games was firmly on his mind. "We were trying to get a fun racing game past Dave [Jones], and Micro Machines with 'perspective' was what we had in mind at the time," remembers Dailly of these early prototypes.

"There were no games that were a major influence on the design – apart from maybe Pac-Man," replies Baglow, somewhat mischieviously. Jones is perhaps more surprising in his choice: "Pinball. Lots of bonus multipliers, racking up of points, constant feedback..."



Ironically for a series that would become synonymous with the PlayStation, GTA was actually originally built as a PC game. A version for the console proved too tempting to pass up, however. Versions for the Saturn and Nintendo 64 were also planned, but dropped due to their relatively small user base.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

The GTA series' tradition of catching the wider public's attention, albeit in ways many would rather it didn't, began with the original. BMG brought in the big guns for the game's launch – tabloid favourites Max Clifford Associates. Never known for avoiding controversy, the promotional campaign concentrated on the blatant criminality of the game. The most surprising events involving the company might suddenly be splashed across the national papers, often in distinctly larger than life fashion. "An accident in which I crashed my 1.0 litre Mini Metro into a tree became a full page story in the News Of The World, in which the 'Sick Car Crime Boss' wrote off his powerful Ford Fiesta XR2. My parents wanted to sue the paper," claims Baglow. It was unusual for a game to find itself the subject of Newsnight and appearing in the tabloids, but as Anderson remembers, the DMA staff soon got into the spirit of things. "We were tired of reading loads of stuff in the papers that was blatantly false and made up. So rather than get annoyed we decided to get in on the act and started making stuff up, too. We had a bet going in the office at the time about who could get the most ridiculous lie printed about GTA." Anderson scored high marks with 'Sideways' Hank O'Malley. Supposedly he was a 1960s country & western singer, painstakingly tracked to his new home conveniently just down the road from the DMA, and reunited across the Atlantic with his old backing band for the first time in years. In reality, however, singer Drew Larg played in a local covers band and his Alabama Bottle Boys were staff from DMA and a local music shop, which just goes to show you shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers.

series happened in early 1996, not long after Baird joined the team. "At that time, we were still a series of small missions,' he says. "We had a long, long brainstorming session where we picked up on an idea for one long level containing multiple missions proposed by one of the level designers, Paul Farley. We took this and expanded it into the open-ended structure that it shipped with. This meant a big expansion of the scripting and improvements to game systems – they had to handle the game running over multiple missions instead of the short structure."

Many ideas and approaches were bandied about, some quite different to the final game. Baird remembers suggestions for a horror theme. "A large chunk of missions were originally planned to be Omega Man-inspired. The team loved the idea of running over hundreds of zombies but we couldn't fit it into the structure and the time it'd take wasn't worth it. Everything zombie-related got dropped."

Missions weren't the only thing he remembers having to scale back. "There were a number of background 'living breathing city' features that got dropped. The player could break traffic light boxes and a repairman would wander around fixing them. Of course the player could kill the repairmen and stop all repairs. There was a TV crew that went to major accidents. This got dropped, though the TV van itself stayed in. San Andreas was supposed to have a tram system like San Francisco's cable cars, working similar to the train system, however we couldn't get it working nicely with regular traffic so it was removed, though the cable art stayed in."

The PSone version, although preserving the core of the game, lost even more features, including the fire engines and trains. But 18 months into development, the entire city had to be razed and rebuilt, as Baird again recalls.

"Mike Dailly came up with a new technique to draw 24bit colour tiles instead of the low-res ones we were using. Technically, it was stunning for its time but it required every single tile and graphic in the game to be redrawn. We borrowed most of the artists in the company to blitz the tiles for an ECTS

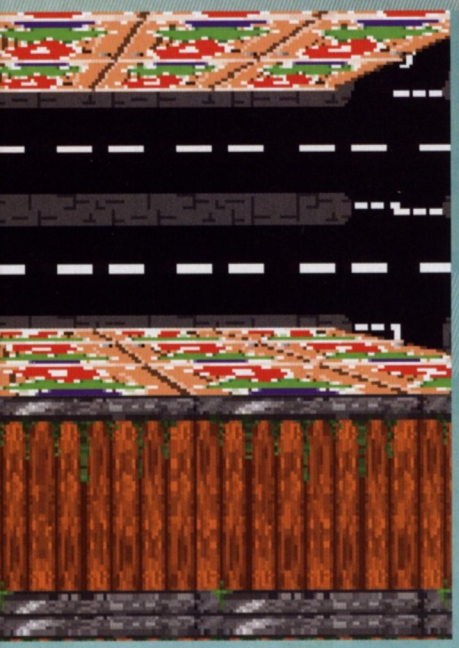
demo to show off this new style."

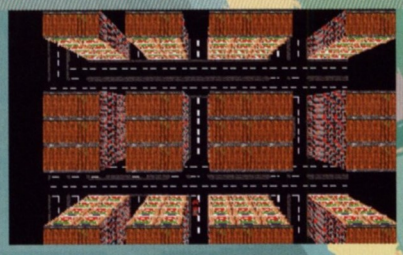
If a new feature promised a better game, then it was included seemingly irrespective of the extra cost. The new artwork added another 12 months to the schedule. As Baird puts it: "There was always an overall plan with GTA. However, the day-to-day development was more flying by the seat of our pants."

Fortunately, publisher BMG was generally sympathetic, with a very hands-on approach from producer Gary Penn. Relations with BMG in the US, however, were not always as smooth. As BMG took on more people from within the industry, some began to voice concerns, as Jones recalls: "We could not compete graphically with, say, Ridge Racer, so we were banking on the fact the game was radical in terms of gameplay and its edgy content. The content side was never an issue. BMG supported us 100 per cent to put whatever we wanted into the game; coming from the music business nothing fazed them. It was a real shame to see BMG losing its fresh approach and become more like a games publisher. BMG US didn't think you could release a top-down game into the market. They said it would simply not sell and we should drop the title. This was only three months from completion. I was confident the sheer fun and originality factors would make it a success, and we also had great backing from BMG Europe. Luckily, we won the argument."

Despite taking an entire year longer to produce than originally expected, Jones believes it was the right thing to do: "The extra time really benefited the game massively. We really pushed the boat out though on some areas such as audio, which I had not planned."

Fortunately, this resulted in another





Mike Dailly's living city prototype was designed to allow collapsible buildings. Although never used, this feature stayed in until the final release. The top-down perspective, showing the player from above, was explained as coming from the DMA News Chopper, hovering over the city.

area in which the game took chances. "At that time most people's idea of good game audio was 'you didn't switch it off'," recalls audio director Colin Anderson. "I suggested that in order to add an interactive element to the music it might be nice to place them 'in the cars' as if they were coming out of the car stereo. That way, when a player got into a car the radio would start and when they got out it would stop: voila! Interactive audio. Once the idea of radio stations was established the rest was relatively obvious – DJs, news reports and different types of music for different types of car."

The radio stations also provided an added incentive to try the game's less powerful vehicles. With poor handling and low speed, the pickup would have been quickly abandoned if not for the guaranteed burst of spoof country and western. Anderson's approach was unorthodox, and also controversial. "There were a sizeable number of people who felt it was too radical," he says. "I knew that was total nonsense because films do it successfully all the time. Different styles successfully blended because they work in context with the visuals."

A diverse range of tunes was also needed to make the radio convincing "It wasn't good enough for the music to sound good enough for game music; people had to believe they were listening to real bands they just hadn't heard of," as Anderson puts it. This proved very useful – and was taken somewhat literally – by Baglow when publicising the game. "I let it be known that the bands and tracks were all real and licensed especially for the game," perhaps one of the more understandable exaggerations (see 'Don't Believe The Hype'). Sadly not all the audio work could be used. The tank, for example, lost an interesting sounding, if perhaps credibility-straining, version of the Star Spangled Banner.

With audio, graphics, the living city and the game's mission structure finally coming together, Grand Theft Auto was released to immediate success, justifying the enormous effort and compensating to some degree for the immense amount of lost work. Jones' determination, and BMG's indulgence, received their just rewards.

Unfortunately, having helped to create such a success, BMG pulled out of the games market shortly afterwards, much to Jones' personal regret: "It helped create one of the biggest games ever but didn't stay around long enough to enjoy it. BMG really would have been great for the industry."

GTA is often seen as inventing the sandbox genre, but in truth it built upon a strong heritage of arcade and freeform games (see 'Driving Under The Influence'). Even the game's trademark carjacking had been seen in Hunter and Mercenary before that. Its unique achievement was to take the best from what had gone before and fuse it together with ambition, skill and incredible attention to detail. That process was a complicated one, but the idea at the heart of GTA wasn't.

The word that comes up again and again when talking to its creators is 'fun'. If an opportunity arose to make the game more fun, no matter who it came from, and even if it meant throwing away a huge amount of work, it was seized with both hands. The series that resulted has been copied countless times, but few imitators have stoppped to think that the secret to its success may actually lie in the process, and not the product. CVG

"We didn't have a clear concept of exactly what the final game would be like. The details were impossible to pin down"

SUMMER OF SAM

Rockstar co-founder Sam Houser talks 2D GTA in a rare, pre-millenium New York interview

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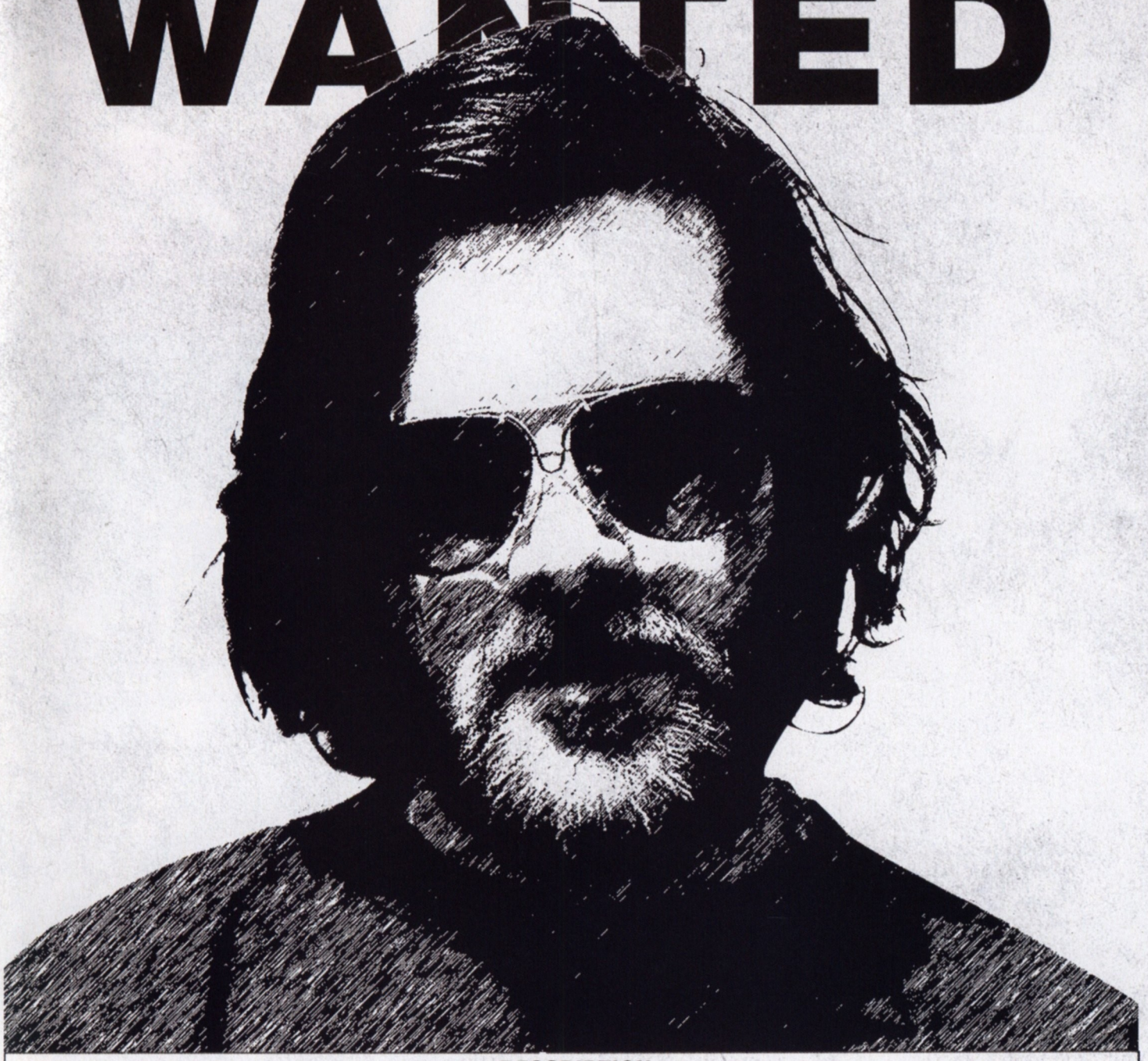

DESCRIPTION

WHO: SAM HOUSER **WHERE:** TALKING TO PC GAMER **WHEN:** DECEMBER 1999

How are you finding the Americans?
Well, the difference with English journalists is that they 'get' it. We're all young guys, into our games and culture. Here it's all graphics cards and polygon performance. That's like talking about what film stock you shot a movie on.

What is your focus, then, at Rockstar?
It's easy to think that, now we've done GTA, we've got to do games about serial killers, taking cocaine and shooting heroin, but that's not where it's going. It sounds whimsical, but we're going to publish games we like. It's gonna to start with gameplay.

So Rockstar won't just be the video nasty games label?
No, but it won't be games about the Rolling Stones either. That said, there's nothing better to turn heads then a bit of controversy. You have to combine it with good gameplay. An example where that wasn't the case was Postal. A guy goes nuts and goes out to kill everyone. Not a bad hook, but they decided to marry it with no gameplay whatsoever.

How would you define good gameplay?
For me, it's got to be something original. It's got to feel like something you haven't done before. It's something DMA do really really well. It's also got to be something that when you've left it, and later you're at having your dinner or watching TV – you're still thinking about something to do with the game. Obviously, GTA 2 is difficult because when people played the first GTA, they hadn't played anything like it. We've had to work hard to make sure you get these fresh new moments – which I believe you do get when gangs suddenly turn on you or support you, or shoot cops for you. I just love all that. As Gary Penn at DMA would describe it, 'it's a great big toyset'.

Do you have a favourite car?
Yeah, the Yakuza gang vehicle.

What weapon are you carrying?
The silenced Uzi. For me, it's the only one. All the characters have line of sight now so you can go up behind them and you shoot them and they don't even know you're there. There are guys here who are experts with the Molotov cocktails, which are a whole lot of fun in the right hands.

How do you stay focused?
My partner here is Terry Donovan, the son of the late Terence Donovan, the photographer. His dad once told me that when you're doing something creative, like a photo shoot or writing a book or making a game, you've got to have one great idea. You've got to have some single thing that gives it a proper reason for existing.

And that's enough to keep you focused?
Yeah. I don't want to sound like an asshole, but I think that too many games – and too many journalists – seem to focus on technology instead. The films that have stood the test of time have great stories, great content. The films of generations of youth are still those Scorcese films. I watched Raging Bull again the other day start to finish. Cinematically, it's a good-looking film but it isn't Stargate or Terminator 2. It's a great story presented brilliantly and you want to come back to it and see it again and again.

It's so much easier to attract people with good graphics though – it must be tempting to concentrate on that?
Gameplay is the most difficult thing to market, because it's so intangible. That's why we like to combine great gameplay with some sort of marketable commercial edge. The controversial element attracted people to Grand Theft Auto, but it wasn't the actual thing that sold it. If we could replicate that formula, we would. However, we're not going to come out with the GTA series Mass Murderer where you play Ted Bundy and go around and killing everyone. We're not going to shaft people with crap.

What is officially in the works at Rockstar?
GTA 2 on the PC and PlayStation and Thrasher on the PlayStation. Then we're going to focus on PlayStation2. I'm a big believer in this convergence

theory. Sony wants to own your living room. They have done so for 20 years, but they've made you buy so many boxes – the video player, the TV, the stereo, the PlayStation – that your front room has got a little messy! PlayStation2 – one machine, one focus, 'boom-boom-boom'. We'll be getting titles straight out of the gate at its launch.

Will any end of those up on PC?
Yeah, but basically I think there is an inherent difference in what makes a good console game and what makes a good PC game. GTA is one of those rare exceptions.

Is the writing on the wall for PC games?
No, I don't think so. Many people have a PC and a console. Will I be able to play Unreal Tournament through a PlayStation2? I think a keyboard and a mouse is still the way to play those games. Conversely, I've never been a fan of playing sports games on the PC.

What about the Microsoft's rumoured 'Xbox'?
It has potential but I've a few questions. They're talking about publishers not having to pay royalty. It sounds cool but it means that anyone can put out anything and you end up with the mess on the shelves that is PC titles. It sounds insane to say I want to pay Sony money, but it means you've actually got to make some effort. Also, the big PC games to move over are the first-person shooters, which work well with a keyboard and a mouse. Is this console going to have a keyboard and a mouse? At which point you ask, is it one thing or the other?

There is even talk of it being upgradeable...
Well, I suppose to the console crowd that's the Holy Grail. Upgrading scares the hell out of me, and I wouldn't bother. I just buy a new PC because I can't upgrade mine. I'm a half-wit. I can't go adding RAM. Uh-oh, I've just wiped the hard disk!

What games have you been playing recently?
I've been playing Everquest a lot. I think it's the best online one to date. But it's still only going to work with a certain audience.

Could you take the Rockstar way to a massively multiplayer audience?
I'd love to. We've got a bunch of concepts, one of which wouldn't take much guessing...

Could it be GTA in a huge on-line city?
[Laughs] I'm not going to comment! The big problem for me with on-line gaming is personality. It's like playing with computer characters because I don't know anyone. In Blood I used to love to cap someone with the flare gun. It would be so funny because it was your friend over the corridor. It's like conkers, you're just shoving it down their throats and it's all in good fun. No-one's going to pull a gun out and shoot the other.

Any other games you've been playing?
This PC game we actually licensed from a developer in Hungary to the Game Boy, called Action Supercross. Gary Penn at DMA gave it to me a year ago. You just steer a bike through these little 2D courses. The feel of the bike is un-fucking-believable. We've got the Evil Knievel license and we put the two together.

Do you look outside for all your titles?
No, we have one internal Rockstar studio in Canada. They developed GTA: London. I think the split will be 40 percent internal, 60 percent external. You've got to have internal to have that knowledge in-house, but you've got to work with externals to keep everything fresh.

Your parent company Take Two created a pretty poor name for itself with games like Lula: Virtual Babe. Isn't Rockstar just a cynical way of shaking off a bad reputation?
What happened was GTA had become kind of sexy and cool and people weren't scared about talking about it in the pub. And, before leaving England, we launched Three Lions. Whether it was good, bad or indifferent, we threw the best fucking party the games business has ever seen. Sanjay from EastEnders and Jane Middlemiss were banging on the window screaming to get in. I thought, it's not so geeky, it's not just for dickheads, it's actually real and people should be proud.

So Rockstar isn't hiding the fact that it's a games company?
No, it's promoting the fact. Even if you don't like the name Rockstar, it's glamorous but slightly tongue in cheek. No-one takes themselves too seriously around here. Imagine working at Apple records when the Beatles were on fire. Obviously Take Two has, in its own way, evolved over the last twelve months. It's got a lot more content and it's stopped releasing those shit titles you referred to. You can see that in stuff like Hidden & Dangerous.

Some people seem in awe of your music business roots
They fucking well shouldn't be. The games business is like motion pictures when people first turned on the sound. Currently, the music business is stagnant. There are some great people in the industry but they are stifled by monolithic companies. I was in BMG telling people about mp3 – they'd tell me to shut up.

Technology has overtaken them now...
Exactly, they're too big to respond and reflect. Our business isn't like that. I like hip-hop, and basically all my favourite hip-hop tracks are now in a game. We can incorporate anything we like into these things because they are, in the true sense of the word, multimedia.

Do you think games could come to replace movies and music?
It's an interesting one. When I was seven or eight years old, I was listening to David Bowie and Adam and the Ants and that was what I lived for. Now, when you hear kids talk, it's games.

But when you get depressed at 17 you still start listening to The Smiths. Games aren't doing that yet.
No, but there are games out there that generate feelings or responses. It's a question of moving up the emotions. I'm not saying a game can replace The Smiths' records. You're 16, you're depressed, your parents don't understand you...

What would the definitive Rockstar game be?
Two of my heroes from the movies are Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer. They started with Top Gun and then they made ConAir and The Rock. We'd be good at trying to be those guys meets John Woo. That level of insane production along with the style and precision of John Woo is exactly what I'm looking for.

Necessarily violent?
I like action. If at the end of the day it turns out to be violent, it's violent. I'm just wondering if I'll get to somersault through the air with two guns firing! I want you be able to dive over a load of people eating Dim Sum, in a restaurant in New York City. I want a double-handed Glock, and shooting to the side. Make it amazing to play, great looking, great fun, cinematic, great girls, the whole thing! For me, the game that we're involved with at the moment that is actually headed in that direction is Max Payne. Of course, we're the owners of the Grand Theft Auto series and it's not impossible that GTA could become all of those things itself. CVG

POLICE
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GRAND THEFT AUTO III

REVISITED

It's a crime-ridden cesspit of corruption and sleaze. How did Liberty City become the unofficial capital of the land of videogames? Gaming authority Edge magazine investigated...

- FORMAT: PC, PS2, XBOX
- PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR
- DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
- ORIGIN: UK
- RELEASE DATE: 2001
- ORIGINAL ARTICLE: EDGE 151, JULY 2005

Nobody expected Grand Theft Auto III. Even though it was to become the very definition of a massmarket game by virtue of the sheer weight of its sales, its pre-launch momentum was practically zero.

For everyone who wasn't Rockstar, Grand Theft Auto III just happened. Six months later, Videogame City had a new Mr Big. It became, arguably, the flagship brand for the PlayStation2 – a role typically reserved for a firstparty production. It's given publishers and developers inspiration for lucrative hits and has been used as a baseball bat by political opportunists with which to beat videogames they allege to be a threat to social stability.

It's reassuring that something so unheralded could become such a significant success. It seemingly triumphed without having to resort to blanket marketing and coercion. Pretty much any title can manoeuvre itself into the spotlight by fair means or foul, but to stay there takes a game of quality.

The ideas and structure of GTA III didn't just mesmerise gamers, they fascinated a significant portion of the industry itself. Yeah, nobody expected GTA III but, thankfully, that didn't stop it from being welcomed.

Super Mario 64 took an existing genre and made it 3D; GTA III took 3D and made it into its own genre. Is it fair to call a mixture of wonderful driving and poor gunplay its own new genre? Maybe not. But GTA III's fingerprints go much deeper than that – which is probably why, in an

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TREASURE DROVE

GTA III's freedom is so smooth thanks to Rockstar North nailing something crucial to the experience – the vehicles. They're fundamental in giving the player the mobility to move through what seems like such a huge space without ever becoming hamstrung by its size. A well-pitched blend of unfussiness and detail, every car feels just slightly different, enough to make the player favour certain options over others but not so much to prevent any vehicle being a useful getaway in a sticky situation. Not too realistic, not too throwaway, they're uncomplicated to control but still subtle enough for there to be a noticeable difference between braking and handbraking, while a moderate damage model succeeded in making players wince with each crash, and bail out once flames started spewing from the bonnet. Subsequent GTAs, and the irrepressible range of vehicles debuted in each, are just as successful in getting this balance right.

industry unhealthily obsessed with successful rip-offs, nobody but Rockstar North has yet managed to leapfrog it.

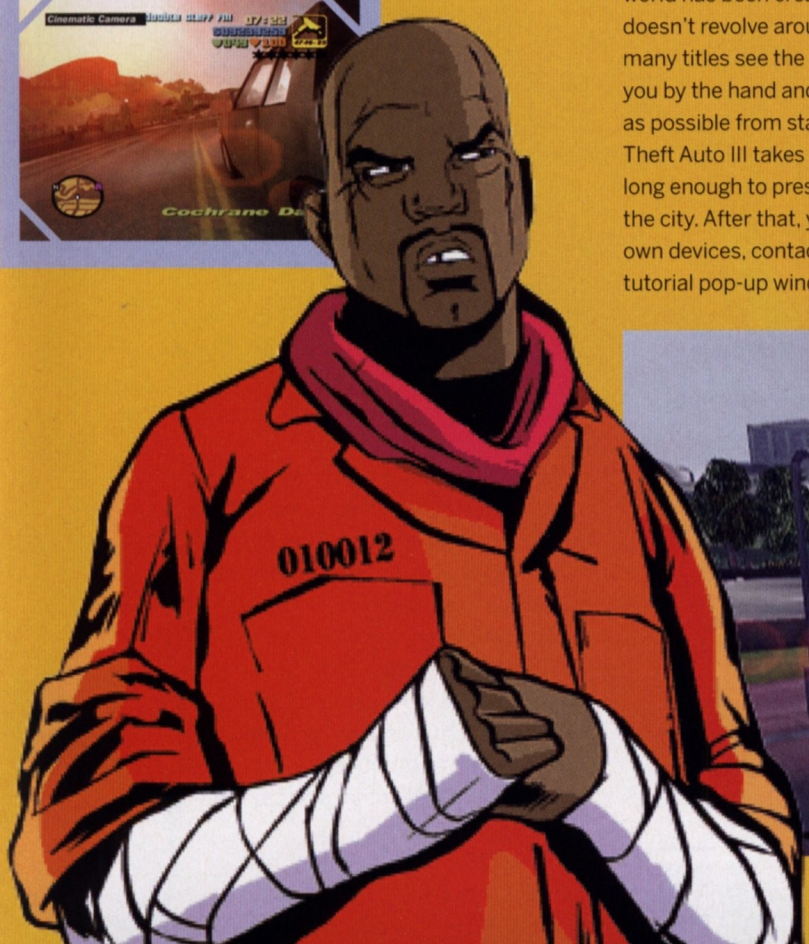
Life goes on

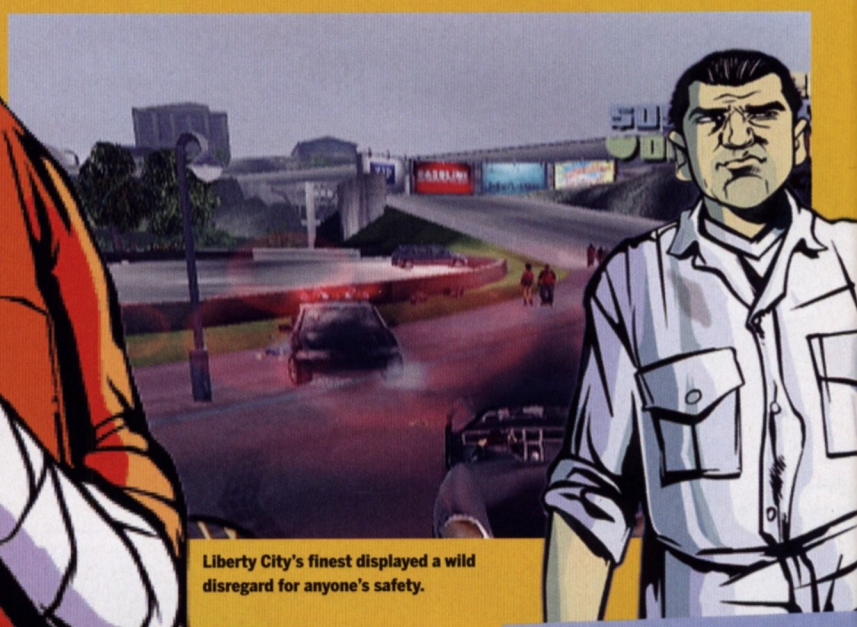
The game's vitality came down to three key ingredients, elements that allowed the free-roaming nature of the gameworld to come alive like very few others: cars, culture and continuity.

There's no game-over screen and no title screen. Failing a mission never breaks the illusion of the gameworld; it just carries on regardless. Get your character killed or arrested and he'll just be delivered straight back to the streets. Most games slice their worlds up into stages, bracketed by menus and loading screens but, although GTA III's world has been created for the player, it doesn't revolve around you. Whereas many titles see the developer taking you by the hand and holding on as tight as possible from start to finish, Grand Theft Auto III takes that hand for just long enough to press into it the keys to the city. After that, you're left to your own devices, contact limited to a small tutorial pop-up window when the situation calls for it.

At time of launch, this was liberty on a scale that console gamers had rarely been presented with, and never in such a readily identifiable fashion. GTA III's setting, Liberty City, is a place where invisible walls are extinct, and where progression is an option, not an obligation. Sandbox, toy set, playground – whatever you call it, it's an effective lure, allowing game breaking, improvisation and DIY player-created chaos. It felt like a release from captivity, without a creator towering over you and coaxing you down a series of glorified tunnels. No wonder people revelled in such freedom.

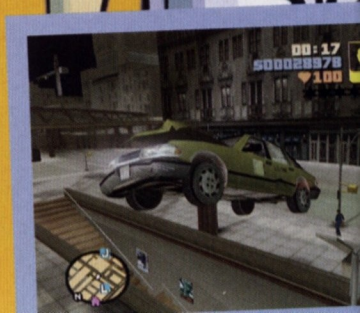
But the liberation was, by construction, a loaded deal. Improvised behaviour is a boon when it's a means to no end whatsoever, but it makes for a schizophrenic difficulty curve. One mission might pass in a pathetic breeze as your target is accidentally run down by some aggressive traffic. The next might be a hellish, dispiriting experience in which your meticulous and lengthy plan collapses thanks to a nearby policeman deciding to intervene at just the wrong moment.





Liberty City's finest displayed a wild disregard for anyone's safety.

Most games hold your hand from start to finish; GTA III takes that hand just long enough to press into it the keys to the city. After that, you're left to your own devices



But however frustrating these moments become, it's hard to stay discouraged. Spend 20 minutes just cruising around Liberty City, cooling off and goofing about, and a brand new (and this time, guaranteed foolproof) scheme will hatch in your head. OK, so the idea of a foolproof plan is almost ridiculous in GTA III – preparation is about as reliable a tactic as pushing your luck – but this emergence is key to maintaining a powerful illusion, even if it risks discouraging some players from ever advancing through the plot.

This is grow-your-own gameplay, an organic set-piece editor just begging to be exploited and taunted, and which could just as easily rebel and maul you when asked to behave. A similar relationship is at work behind the game's surprisingly excessive depths, too: the hidden packages, the unique stunt jumps, the odd jobs, the Easter eggs. While Grand Theft Auto III never demands the player conduct a serious combing of the game's environment, it's more than ready for it.

Show me the money

Gamers have been trained to expect a shiny reward for uncovering a hidden nook or knocking down a suspiciously cracked wall. GTA III's venous network of back alleys and side streets, though, have no guarantee of rewards. That only makes it all the more exciting when something is unearthed, however, even if it's just a body armour pick-up or a hit of the fictional drug Spank, a narcotic that affords the player superhuman strength, slows the game world and turns sound effects from beeps and yells into foghorns and whale song.

It is this aspect of the game that has been responsible for the spread of something far more insidious than any moral crusader would notice: hard-to-collect collectibles. Most visitors to Liberty City inevitably stumble on a good number of the 100 hidden packages dotted throughout the city. With every ten collected, a new resource – guns or body armour, for example – is made available for free at your safe house. But the idea of finding them all without a magazine walkthrough perched on your knee or an FAQ browsed online is an astronomical demand, one only approachable by those with excellent map-making skills or several million billion hours to spare.

It's a concept that was formerly quarantined to RPGs but is now rife in modern videogames, a deadly percentage-completion predator masquerading as extra lifespan. Three of last year's games – Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, Mercenaries and Spider-Man 2 – contained a wealthy range of collectibles dotted around their environments, but featured no in-game mechanism to help you to find them and no aid to dedicated players who want to see every little thing within this game they've become so smitten with. Of course, it's a joy to stumble across something completely unexpected and not signposted, a true reward for investigation. But the flipside is an inescapable worry that you're not seeing the game's most intriguing secrets – and the side effect of falling in love with any videogame is that you can't help but want to.

GTA III has become the greatest advert for official game guides since Final Fantasy, encouraging a culture of compulsory spoon-feeding. For all of the game's sophistication, it palls when compared to the user-friendly structure of discovery and exploration presented in, say, the Ratchet & Clank series. But that's a tarnish that gamers only ever stumbled upon when it was too late, when they were too deeply entranced to

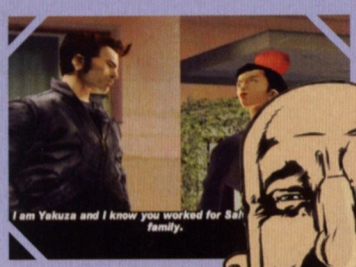
SIM CITIES

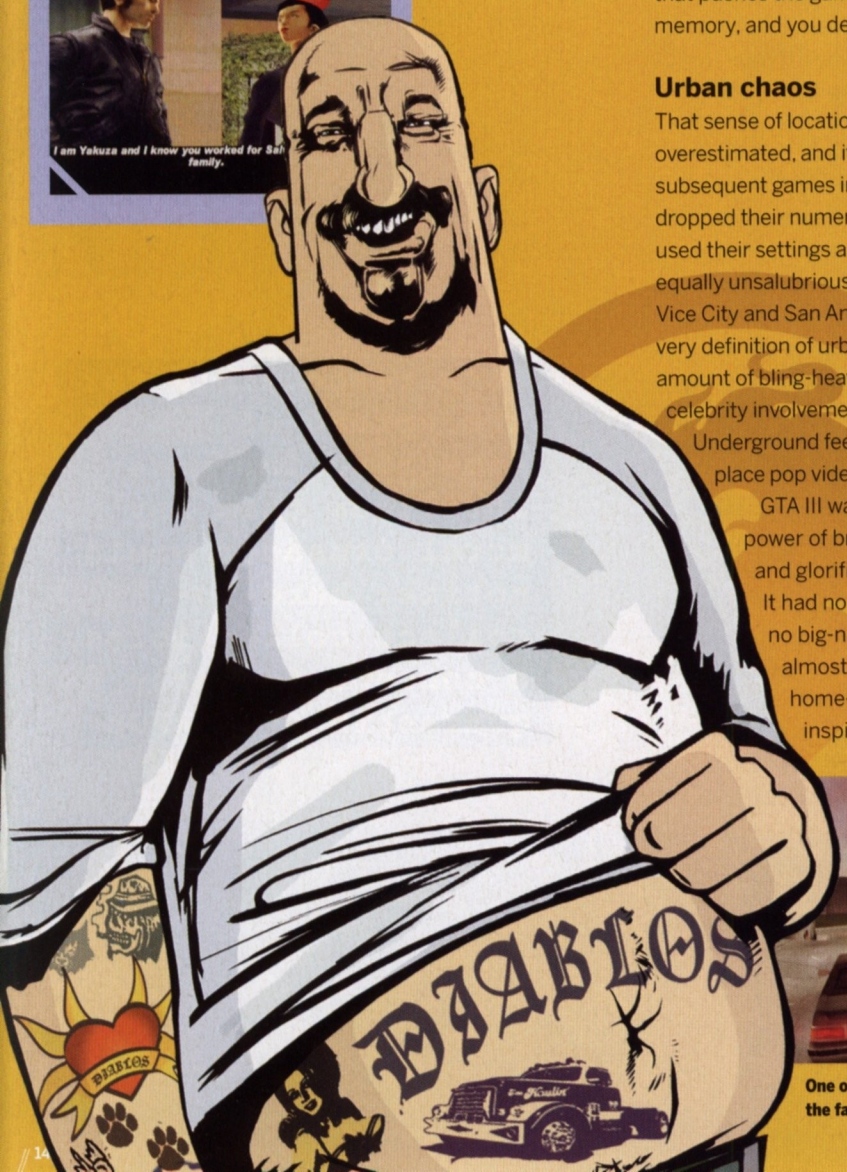
Just a year after Grand Theft Auto III, GTA: Vice City struck the PlayStation2, a contrast to its predecessor both in terms of its garish look and the fact that the lead character actually had a voice. A camp neon cartoon next to the grime of GTA III, and one of few games to claim pink as its trademark colour, Vice City perhaps does more to ram home the strengths of the series than GTA III or the next instalment, San Andreas. A heavyweight licensed soundtrack offers the perfect retro resonance for 20-somethings and carries the torch for the series' magnificent audio design. Vice City's game world is strangely flat, but this is countered by the use of bikes and helicopters – making up for the bland topography by giving the player even more degrees of freedom. San Andreas sees GTA turning its eye to the early '90s and feeding off its culture just as voraciously, even if the actual result isn't as attractive as Vice City's plundering of the '80s. It increases the series' scope – from the size of the world, to the intimidating range of collectibles – even further, without losing its trademark immersion.

It's responsible for the spread of something far more insidious than any moral crusader would notice: hard-to-collect collectibles, a concept formerly quarantined to RPGs

SAYONARA, SALVATORE

The missions in Grand Theft Auto III often allow players to bring their own strategies to the fore, but one in particular demands it: Sayonara Salvatore. A communal sticking point for plenty of players, this tricky sub-plot closes the story strand for the first island just as you take residence on the second. You must travel from one to the other under a time limit to eliminate a target that appears for a scant few seconds before being whisked off with a well-armed escort to a refuge just up the road. As well as being your first true test of patience, it's likely to be the first true test of your ingenuity, too. Try to find a cosy sniping point from a nearby rooftop? Construct a ramshackle barricade from passing cars at the end of the street? Try for a full-frontal assault? Block the path between hideout and escort by jamming a truck in the way? None are guaranteed to work, of course, but each one is likely to yield different results for different players.





protest. One of GTA's vital talents, and one often lost on any number of clones, is that it managed to make culture and geekery coexist.

It's rendered in realism that's recognisable enough for the game to seep steadily and smoothly into a casual consciousness, but detailed and broad enough to keep seasoned players absorbed. It's a ready-made kickabout of an experience, action as instant as your virtual aggression but that offers a roleplaying level of depth for anyone seeking it. A free fold-out map that came in the box emphasised this, although it could just as likely have been compensation for the inexcusable oversight that is the lack of a global in-game map. That said, forcing you to familiarise yourself directly with Liberty City is yet another double-edged sword – a demanding requirement but one that pushes the game deeper into your memory, and you deeper into the game.

Urban chaos

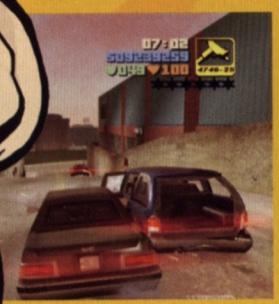
That sense of location can't be overestimated, and it helps explain why subsequent games in the GTA series dropped their numerals and instead used their settings as subtitles – the equally unsalubrious neighbourhoods of Vice City and San Andreas. GTA III is the very definition of urban, more than any amount of bling-heavy aspiration and celebrity involvement. Need For Speed Underground feels like an out-of-place pop video by comparison. GTA III wasn't about the power of brand recognition and glorified merchandising. It had no significant licences, no big-name anything; almost everything was home-grown. Of course, inspiration was drawn from the real world, from movies, music and identifiable products, but the game didn't need manufacturer-faithful vehicles for its cars to feel varied and recognisable. And, arguably, the curious names (Banshee, Patriot, Cheetah, Dodo and the rest) afforded to the motley gathering of automobiles only reinforced Liberty's coherence and bolstered its validity as a metropolis.

But despite all this, GTA III wasn't about realism. It was about caricature, capturing the essence of urban society with attention to detail but never getting bogged down in it. This gave way to the most fundamental and immediate slapstick of all: violence.

The violence is comedic, over the top, and, for many, the game equivalent of a post-watershed You've Been Framed. Without that character and excess, the action GTA III offers would have been hard to enjoy.

Its gunplay is famously dreadful, hampered by an unreliable lock-on. Glitches and rough edges abound throughout the game. Park a car, turn away and there's no guarantee it won't have vanished when you turn back, for example. But there was always enough going on, enough clockwork life marching on around the player, to swiftly detract from it. And despite the hefty number of missions – 73, not including the peripheral rampage, package, stunt and garage collections – there was enough variety, as much in the player's approach as the game's own parameters, to keep its anatomy ticking over.

The ambience of urban life is captured vividly. We've had the rain fall and the sun set on us plenty of times in games like Shenmue and Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time, but while they were prettier, they didn't feel anywhere near as moody and isolated. The



One of the most questionable aspects of GTA's morality never gets questioned – the fact the player is rewarded with a little money for crashing into another car.

environmental variety in the districts of Liberty City – the hemmed-in flatness of Staunton Island, the steep and winding hills of Shoreside Vale – did as much to reinforce a sense of place as the wealth of generic landmarks.

Plus, GTA III was host to a huge range of believable social reactions and behaviours among its populace. Gun someone down on the street and half the passers-by will run away in terror; the other half sprint towards the body, gathering around it and muttering among themselves. It's simple, but very effective. Mugging and car-jacking happens at random, implying that it also takes place when you're not there to see it. Pedestrians stroll and amble, some of them accompanied by the tinny beats of a set of headphones. Fire engines and ambulances appear on the scene of a suitable emergency, and even the prostitute-health quirk has a sense of amusing logic about it.

The morality of such features – and GTA III in general – is an entire discussion in itself, but it's as hard to condone the carefree slaughter of prostitutes and pedestrians as it is to berate it for being a choice, and one that's obviously virtual and framed within a world that's built upon, and breeds, corruption. Still, there's identifiable and irrefutable real-life culture represented here, which is why it finds such a quick identity with players and becomes such a prime target for those who rail against the existence of violent games.

Culture in videogames is, even in the production-heavy climes of today, still a sore spot and one that's rarely tackled with any amount of grace. Too often, dialogue is idiotic; too many characters are clumsy cardboard rejects and come across as contrived funnels for gameplay delivery. By comparison, GTA III still seems brave.

Quite rightly, it assumed an iconoclastic amount of cultural experience on behalf of its prospective audience, attributing to it a knowledge that goes beyond videogames and has significant experience of cinema and music. And while the script and voice acting occasionally felt cheesy, they were never insulting. Admittedly, it doesn't zing society as well and as often as do Vice City and San Andreas, but it did manage to land a blow that seemed almost illegal: taking the mickey out of a rival game, and doing it well.

Plenty of games make reference to one another, but few of them sling any mud – and none with such accuracy as GTA III. Its biggest jibe was the Two-Faced Tanner mission, a bid to eliminate a 'strangely animated' cop who was 'more or less useless outside of his car'. With said character's unmistakable resemblance to Driver's lead character Tanner, this was clearly a direct stab at Driver 2, a PlayStation title that could well have superseded GTA III if not for the fact that Driver 2's on-foot sections weren't much cop. With the Liberty City mission culminating in Tanner being murdered, it's perhaps the series' most brutal lampoon yet, beyond the Metropolis Street Racer riff to be found in Vice City or the Driv3r and True Crime mockeries in San Andreas.

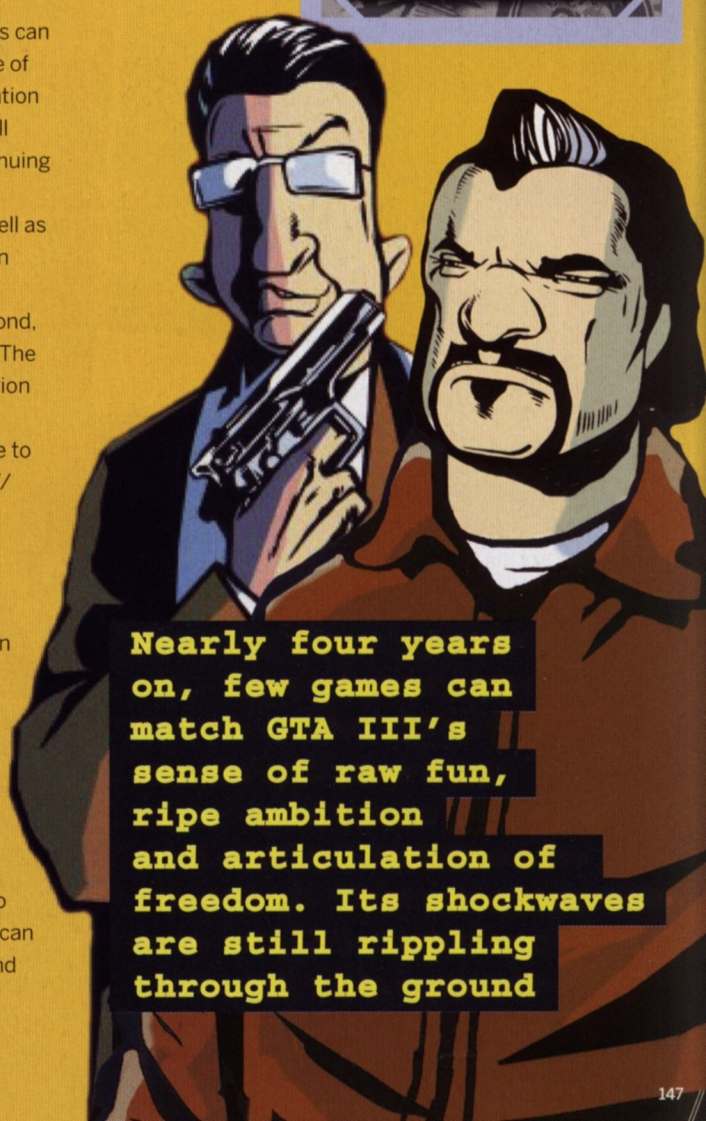
Nearly four years on, few games can match Grand Theft Auto III's sense of raw fun, ripe ambition and articulation of freedom. Its shockwaves are still rippling through the ground, continuing to make it fertile for so many opportunists and duplicates. As well as a depressingly long queue of urban crime-game forgeries lining up for release throughout 2005 and beyond, titles like Destroy All Humans and The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction are departing enough from the established free-roaming template to be more than simply 'GTA does ET/war/The Simpsons/whatever'.

Back is the future

Despite budding from ideas implemented in the early top-down GTAs, and being so weak in a number of ways, the third GTA eels like a potential year-zero for videogames. It is set to be the seed for so much future growth when the right brains get a hold of it. But, of course, only Rockstar North knows where it's planning to take GTA in the future. And where can it go after Liberty City, Vice City and the sprawl of San Andreas? Just about anywhere, really. CVG

SOUND EFFECT

As with so much else in Grand Theft Auto III, the game's soundtrack is its own riff on real-world culture, both in its composition and the way it slots into the game's framework. Heard in vehicles only, the tunes give the game a supreme amount of personality without compromising the ambience of the city, and offer something far more sophisticated than the typical looping backdrop of videogame music. The radio stations are where the majority of the game's satirical commentary and humour reside, too, thanks to a number of excellently scripted DJs, fictional ads and even whole radio stations dedicated to the inane and insane banter of chat-show callers. The radio characters are perhaps even bigger stars than the plot's major players.

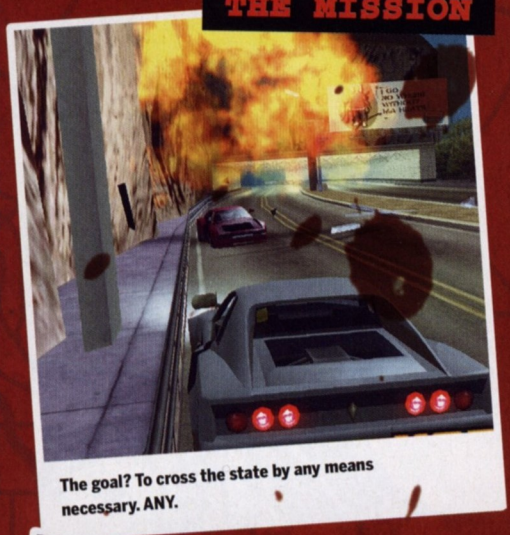


Nearly four years on, few games can match GTA III's sense of raw fun, ripe ambition and articulation of freedom. Its shockwaves are still rippling through the ground

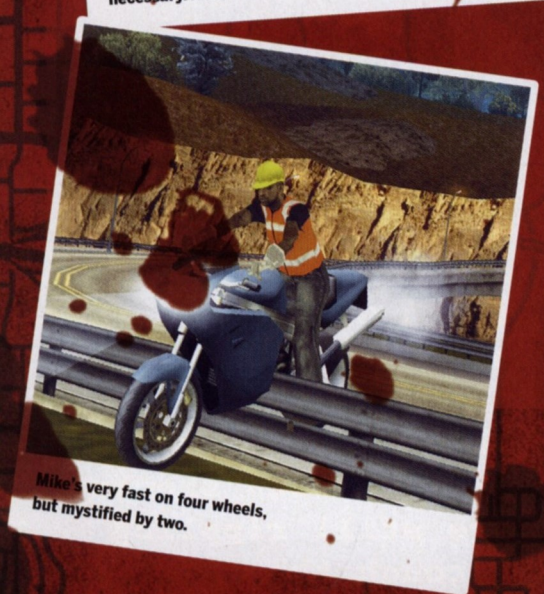
ROAD

HAVING MODDED SAN ANDREAS FOR FULL-ON MULTPLAYER, PC FORMAT'S MIKE CHANNEL & HENRY WINCHESTER GET INTO A STATEWIDE RACE TO SEE WHO'S QUICK... AND THE LEAST DEAD

THE MISSION



The goal? To cross the state by any means necessary. ANY.



Mike's very fast on four wheels, but mystified by two.

Few games are big enough for a five minute drive, let alone a road trip, but San Andreas has the square-mileage required for a state-sized jaunt. Using the SA: MP mod (sa-mp.com) opens the entire area up for multiplayer driving, shooting and general hilarity. To add a little spice, we decided to turn the trip into an It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World-style race with the help of GTA's menagerie of land and air vehicles.

Leg one – Las Venturas Airport to Santa Maria Pier, Los Santos

Mike: The start of the inaugural Gobstopper Rally was marked with a ceremonial knife fight between my hard hat-clad construction worker and Henry's probably-gin-soaked priest. Once the starter's Glock was fired, our respective priorities quickly became clear: I headed straight for the shiny supercars parked on the strip, while Father Winchester disappeared straight into the local gun shop.

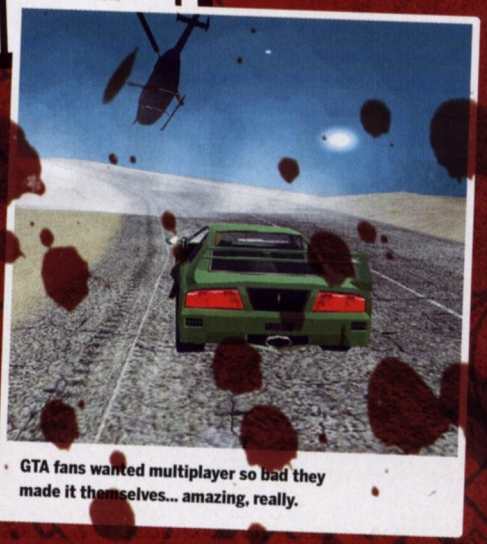
Henry: Being unaccustomed to the wonders of multiplayer GTA, I reverted to my instinctive behaviour of driving like a lunatic, following cars and shooting them until they explode. Unfortunately for YMCA builder Mike, the car I chose happened to be his. *Fortunately* for Mike I crashed before I could get anywhere near him, and had to revert to a police bike and a shortcut to get to the pier.

Mike: After chucking my Lambo-clone in the drink just 200 metres from the pier, I had no choice but to furiously splash to the end of the pier from the sea. But my heart sank. First I saw a cop bike sail into the water, then a shadowy, dog-collared figure appear high above me. Leg one to the priest.

Leg two – Santa Maria Pier to Mount Chiliad summit, Whetstone

Henry: We headed for the tip of the majestic Mount Chiliad on foot, aiming to nab whatever locomotion we found. Unfortunately there was none, so we killed each other in a stabby session to cause a respawn. Taking a look around the airport I stumbled across a helicopter. Would it be as tricky as the

TRIP



GTA fans wanted multiplayer so bad they made it themselves... amazing, really.

RC choppers in Vice City? Not a bit, but it *did* seem unsportsmanlike to be cruising the skies while Mike chugged along in his glorified Land Rover, so halfway there I switched to a more conventional classic car. I felt like Roger Moore. I looked like a dodgy priest.

Mike: What with Henry's switch to air travel I decided to nab something with a little more kick. Grabbing a superbike I headed for San Andreas's highest natural peak. Unfortunately, my riding isn't as honed as my driving. After nearly blowing it all by wedging my bike on a motorway barrier, I blew it instead by throwing it in the bloody water. Again. A quick thigh-burning run to Easter Bay and I'd bagged myself a Hummer to scramble up the mountain. Surely I could outrun the flimsy ragtop Henry had ditched his 'copter for? Nope. the soft suspension let me down on a tight bend and I tumbled off the mountain into a lake. Fortunately, owing to some strange physics, I was able to run up the cliff almost as quickly as Henry could drive, and I came a close second.

Henry: Having conquered Mount Chiliad we had a mini race to the bottom, with Mike on foot. I was in my convertible, which promptly flipped over and exploded. We both made it to the bottom, but crucially neither of us were alive when we got there.

Leg three – Mount Chiliad to Gant Bridge, San Fierro

Mike: A new, spur of the moment challenge: instead of simply meeting at the centre of San Andreas's answer to the Golden Gate, we'd take a detour. I grabbed a plane for me and a chopper for Henry and attempted to fly through the topmost gaps in the bridge. With GTA's dodgy flight physics it's harder than it looks.

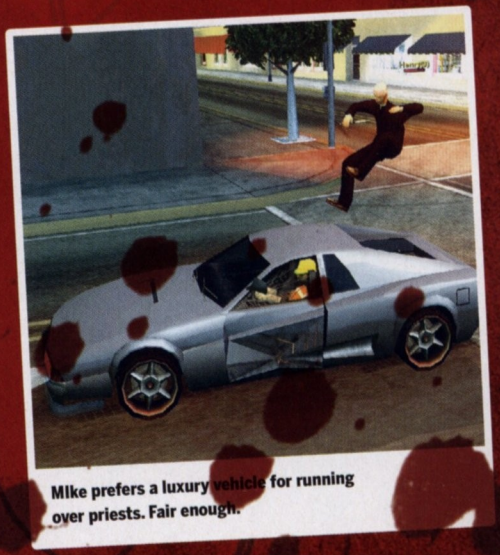
Henry: There's something cinematically cool about gracefully darting a huge luxury chopper through a small gap at the top of the faux-Golden Gate. But I snagged the blades on a girder and exploded.

Mike: I smugly looped the bridge, came to a neat landing on a nearby skyscraper and leapt off, parachuting Bond-style to the road. It was then I realised the plane I'd left on top would have been enormously useful.

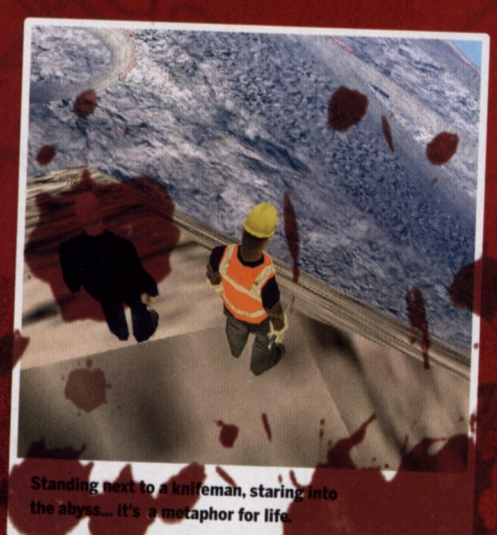
Final leg – Gant Bridge to Camel's Toe Casino, Las Venturas

Henry: Deciding 'copters are the best transport in GTA, I pursued Mike at near-ground level, even working in an impressive T2-style bridge flythrough. But, spotting another sports car, I decided to drive to the pyramid... atop which stood Mike, a triumphant fluoro safety Pharaoh.

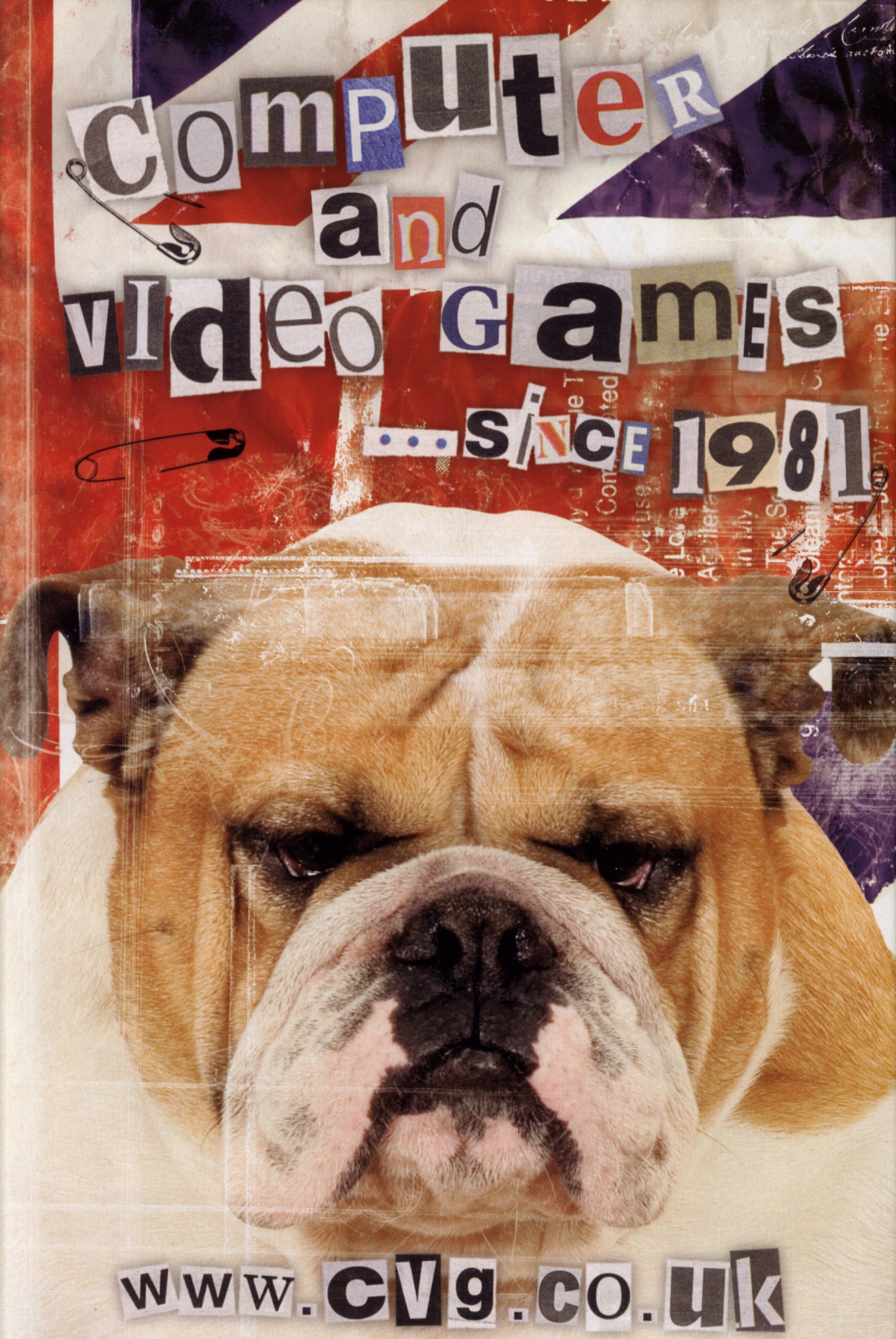
Mike: The Bond-style helichase was a fitting end to this fraught intercity rally, and it was only Henry's decision to land the chopper and find a car in Las Venturas that handed me the race. Having victoriously sprinted up the pyramid and in need of some post-race stress relief, I knifed Henry, mercilessly, to death. CVG



Mike prefers a luxury vehicle for running over priests. Fair enough.



Standing next to a knifeman, staring into the abyss... it's a metaphor for life.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SAN ANDREAS

A LOOK BACK

In April 2007, Steven Williams finally found the time to explore SA to the full. He had to snap his leg in three places first but, as he wrote in PC Gamer, every cloud has a full metal jacket...

■ FORMAT: PC, PS2, XBOX ■ PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR ■ DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH ■ RELEASE: 2004 ■ ORIGINAL ARTICLE: PCG 173, APRIL 2007

At last, I crawled into San Andreas on a broken leg, and left on a jetpack. There was blood everywhere. But you've got to laugh.

Except this one time, I couldn't laugh. I... well, I killed two policemen under a seedy expressway in San Fierro. I shot them and stood looking at the bodies, but no one happened by. For some freak reason, there was no response. No Wanted stars. No vengeful authorities. I left their cruiser there with its doors still open, empty and idling. Nobody knew what I'd >

HOW TO WIN #1

POWER USER

So much to do, so little time... there are even six girlfriends to impress, but two are particularly special. So be sure to woo the hell out of divorcee cop Barbara and nurse Katie, as success means you get to keep weapons and cash after being busted or wasted respectively. This removes the need for those tactical reloads (we know you do it) and lets the game flow the way it should. Death can even become the fastest way across town... Also, complete the Fire Truck missions to become fireproof, indubitably becoming da man, perhaps even da bomb in the process, I'll wager.

done. Whether it was a momentary glitch or a deliberate effect because I was entirely out of sight, I don't know, because I never wanted to try it again. It felt odd.

Every time I go past the spot, I think, "That's where I murdered those two men." It tears my brain a little, the guilt. It's not like I haven't whacked hundreds already, but that one time, *nobody knew* what I'd done. And underneath the strange guilt... a nasty dark little thrill. A rude secret. I am going to digital hell.

This oddity was such an affecting moment precisely because there's always a response in GTA; there's always a reaction. No game has a greater range of cause and effect than this, and no GTA has a greater range than San Andreas. That's its genius. Ironically enough, if it really did play the way right-wing ignorati believe it does – a consequence-free "murder simulator" – it would be entirely boring. It's the forces of law and order that make it fun; it's pushing against such wild resistance that makes it a game. Yes, the aim is to get away with it and you're rewarded with toys and cash, but you can only go so far before you're swatted with overwhelming force. Take the consequences away for any longer than, say, one tawdry little underpass double cop homicide, and all the toys in the world won't thrill. If you don't believe me, try removing the heat with the cheats. It's empty like a lawyer's soul. It's horrible.

San Andreas is bigger than the long clean hair of Jesus, yet Rockstar still managed to find time to add responses where other games barely have animations. Step off a tall building without a parachute, and Carl either curses his clumsiness or makes a final pronouncement to the effect of "f*ck this for a game of soldiers". Bother to go all the way to the top of the Gant Bridge and you'll find a sign telling you to 'go away.' Walk into someone and they'll complain – and react if you answer back. Hit a car and the driver might just come for you. But you know all this.

You might not know just how huge San Andreas *really* is, though, how gigantically content-rich and diverse. Did you ever really finish it? Forty or fifty hours in, I was stumbling across things I'd just never seen before. The parked Ferrari-alike down the hill in San Fierro. The coastguard helicopter on the beach in Los Santos. The triathlon just next to it. The North Shore-style mountain bike run on Mt Chiliad. The armour under the tower opposite the Four Dragons Casino. The E-Type-style Windsor in what's nearly the last mission (I paid $120,000 for the mansion opposite Mad Dogg's, just so I could garage its smoking wreck before it blew). I've only just found the *whole town* of Bayside Marina, complete with chopper and float plane. There's the depressed photographer in Flint who walks into the sea. The ghost cars of Back O' Beyond... the Valantino Rossi homage NRG in San Fierro docks, and another in a multi-storey in East Beach. Yes, the scale is impressive, but it's the sheer amount of stuff it holds that's astonishing.

It has its own urban legends. What other singleplayer game has myths? And player-created myths at that? Despite legions of hopelessly Photoshopped pictures fairly obviously proving otherwise, many still insist there's a Yeti roaming the hick woods of Back O' Beyond. Others claim the ghost of CJ's mom haunts the Johnson House in Grove Street, but it's a less popular belief than the Yeti – and not just because it's easier to disprove. The miles of redneck countryside to the west and the desert to the north are creepy enough by night to host a horror film (or a horror game). There's plenty of space out there to spark your imagination, and enough details to act as lightning rods for your darker thoughts. Shallow graves, discarded shovels, empty idling cars, 60-year-old fighter planes crashing into lonely hilltops with no sign of a pilot, glowing headstones, abandoned wheelchairs...

Speeding past a cop while holding an Uzi and pulling a huge wheelie – that's three points and a £60 fine right there. We're off to do this in real life now. It's not our fault.

I want to believe

Get stranded among the firs of Shady Creeks on a rainy, thunderous night, or stumble upon a mass desert grave under the stars and you can see why people Believe. The fog alone is worthy of Silent Hill. For what's always been an entirely city-based game to achieve such an middle-of-nowhere effect, and achieve it so seamlessly, is near miraculous. People still describe San Andreas as three cities, but look at the map. The country is the size of three more.

I'll be honest: I disliked San Andreas at first, back around its PC release in June '05. I thought the dream was dead. I'd spent many hours on GTA streets, starting with the 2D sequel, moving to Liberty and Vice City like every good gangsta should. I'd even gone back with Liberty City Stories, partly for the bikes, but mostly because I wanted to see what GTA III would have been like without the wit.

It's hard to argue with a grunty, fruity-sounding Fireblade-style streetfighter, because it's an inanimate object.

But in '05 I'd given San Andreas eight hours, then given up. Drab. Crack-weary. Confusing. It gives up hardly any of its wonders in those first few hours. Say, ten...

Then I broke my leg. I had titanium in my bones and time on my hands. Well, crutches in my hands, and Time inside the tubes, whistling through the holes like kids' recorders whenever the wind got up. And morphine! So, somewhat lacking in options and with little hope, I returned to San Andreas, and found two things. Firstly, I'd been playing it wrong. It's another life, not a game – play for what you'll get later and it's a bore, as there's a queue of what seem like tedious chores in the way. Want a jetpack, a jumpjet or a room on The Strip? Deliver this package first. This package of ENDLESS FOREVER.

Savour the moment, however – explore in the strange calm cycling brings, or better still run across the city like Forrest Gump – and you find so much *stuff*, such wonderful *stuff*, the tears roll down like giggling Swedish girls in an Alpine field, the sun glinting off their coiling plaits.

The second thing I realised is that San Andreas is bookended with a grim and depressing scenario. Sorry. As worthy as the subjects of deprivation, racism and family are, and as laudable as it is that gaming (or perhaps just Rockstar) is willing to tackle them, the result is not as hilarious as you might think. Moreover, it's a confusing mix. While the first eight hours or so are full of miserably sweary muthaf*****g homies, miserable crack addicts, miserable gang bangers and miserable interiors furnished with Adolf Hitler's Shit-Caked Ghetto Fire Damage range, the solid middle chunk of the game is neon-crazy, jet-stealing, base-jumping, alien-technology fuelled escapism. You work for James Woods, hang out in casinos and drive motor homes off mountain-tops. Now *that's* living.

Then, just as you're finally relaxing into your private airstrip in the desert, your brother Sweet pops up to call you a 'buster' another 1,000 times, whine furiously at you for having any sort of fun and drag you back into XXL Grim Reality. Sure, call me a buster too for not keeping it real (like J-Lo, bless her ruby-drenched realness), but if there's a choice between (a) a laudable, 'Grove Street 4 Life' sense of brotherhood lived in collapsing poverty or (b) my own hangar with a private jet and a monster truck painted like a flag, I know where my post is going. And hey, Confucius, are CJ, Sweet et al really helping each other up in life, or dragging each other down? Whatever the answer, the 'hood is sigh-suckingly drab. Sorry.

Bullet in the head

One thing, though. Just make sure you sidetrack into the item collections while there are still missions in which to enjoy the Vitamin D(eath)-rich fruits of your labour. Don't leave it until after you're done with the story. There's a heavy price to be paid for San Andreas's riches in the sweat and fractious misery of Los Santos, so you want to get your money's worth from having all those joy-bringing instruments of death sooner rather than later. It may not be fashionable to say it, but these weaponry treats are most fun within the narrower confines of the structured missions. Sure, the sandbox is wonderful, but you need rules to fight against – there's no friction without resistance. Toys and rewards are sexy, but to really enjoy them you need the organised response of freedom-loving Americans shooting you in the face. Perhaps in a desert. That seems familiar somehow.

But this is not art imitating life, or even the foreign policy of a superpower somewhere near Canada, say, because GTA's overwhelming mechanisms of cause & effect mean these guys are shooting for a good reason. That alone is cause enough to spend your hours there, and damn the grim early days in the ghetto. All you need is a relaxed attitude, time dribbling near-endlessly from your hands and a love for the streets. Oh yeah, and maybe a jetpack. CVG

HOW TO WIN #2

For access to the tools a man needs, spend a little (OK, a lot of) time tracking down all the tags, photos, horseshoes and oysters you can, as getting them all spawns heavy weaponry at your main houses. And while you're at it, try funding your Ammu-Nation sprees with the betting shop under the intersection in downtown LS – bet big on the shortest odds, save/reload and repeat. Buy property early. Finding the secrets also brings local knowledge that, if anything, is more powerful than guns – it can easily mean the difference between life and death.

I HATE GTA?

Has Grand Theft Auto *always* been loved?

We all know GTA as a colossal success – a behemoth with so much momentum little or nothing could derail it.

The sad truth is this: such knowledge alone is enough to tint (if not actually taint) the conclusions of anyone facing a new version. When such a repuation precedes a game, nobody wants to be the one who gets it 'wrong.' The one who deviates from the party line. It's just safer to join the rejoicing, right?

Or perhaps you're not that cynical. You're well-intentioned but you just... don't *like* GTA, get it, enjoy it or (whisper this) maybe you even think it's flawed but well then, um, oh God... maybe it's *just you*?

Everyone else loves it.

Maybe you're not playing it right. So is the phenomenal momentum Grand Theft Auto has picked up just serving to perpetuate ideas that are no longer true? Or even never were true? Perhaps its adulation isn't deserved and GTA's status is actually new; its glorious past simply a Soviet-style re-writing of the history books.

The only true way to find out is to go back to the original history books. So, what follows is an archive of the press reaction *from the time*: unearthed, examined and revealed for the first time in years. It traces the *actual* arc of Grand Theft Auto's rise and... rise.

So then, is this phenomenon built on long-recognised genius or is it all just a house of cards – every one the 69 of Clubs? Take a look for yourself. CVG

...enjoy it or (whisper this) maybe you even think it's flawed but well then, um, oh God...

REACTION

EDGE PC GAMER OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION PSM2 OFFICIAL PS2 MAGAZINE

PC GAMER

DATE: December 1997
ISSUE: 51
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 92 percent

EDGE

DATE: December 1997
ISSUE: 52
SIZE: Three pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 9/10

GRAND THEFT AUTO

+ "Grand Theft Auto is an extraordinarily good game. A clever, thrilling, original, sublimely constructed and relentlessly exciting thing of beauty whose freshness, intelligence and all-round smartness proves how insultingly lazy the vast majority of games designers have become in their brainless reliance on formula and precedent."

+ "This has the most finely tuned gameplay of any PC title I've played since Doom II. End of story. Buy it, play it, live it, love it."

+ Grand Theft Auto, though, sneers at such shallow sloth. Instead of aimlessly remixing familiar elements, it rolls up its sleeves and tackles the most fundamental gaming questions. With expert arcade sense and a smidgen of genius, it says things like, 'Why are you allowed to save at any time in most games these days? Doesn't that actually make things a bit, you know, pointless?"

– "Grand Theft Auto revels in a continuous assault of enthusiastically graphic violence, and is bound to provoke tabloid outrage as it slaughters by-standing monks and tank-tramples cops, but – hey – who cares? Films are violent. Sports are violent. Computer games are violent. Live with it, granny."

+ "As an example of an almost extinct breed, Grand Theft Auto manages to take myriad remarkably simple concepts and mould them into a thoroughly absorbing experience."

+ "...Each is based on a real US city, so that the New York-Inspired Liberty City contains a much higher proportion of skyscrapers than the East Coast-situated San Andreas, with its long, red suspension bridge and steep hilly climbs, or the drug-infested streets and numerous pool equipped villas that make up the dangerous, yet picturesque, setting for the Miami-flavoured Vice City."

Reviews

Grand Theft Auto

GAME OF DISTINCTION PC GAMER Classic 90%

SLOW MOTS SLOW

Banging

You know how we're always telling games designers what makes a game great, and what makes a game rubbish? Looks like someone's finally paid attention...

BAN THIS SICK FILTH NOW! Ooooh joking. Grand Theft Auto needs to a contraceptive assault of enthusiastically graphic violence, and is bound to provoke tabloid outrage as it slaughters by-standing monks and tank-tramples cops, but – hey – who cared films are violent. Sports are violent. Computer games are violent. Live with it, granny.

The point about Grand Theft Auto is not that it gives you 100 points for turning over a pedestrian, or huge bonuses for rampaging through the streets on gratuitously machine-gunning 'kill-frenzies' (although it does both these things, and more), but that it is an extraordinarily good game.

This is an important point to grasp, so I'll repeat it.

Grand Theft Auto is an extraordinarily good game. A clever, thrilling, original, sublimely constructed and relentlessly exciting thing of beauty whose freshness, intelligence and all-round smartness proves how insultingly lazy the vast majority of games designers have become in their brainless reliance on formula and precedent.

"You won't want to play anything else for weeks."

Just another pair of faceless pedestrians who didn't heed the wise words of the Green Grass Code man.

I mean, Command & Conquer was quick and all, but did we really need another two dozen half-baked imitators? And even they have been at the upper end of the quality scale recently. In comparison with the tame amalgamations of graphics engine and game mode developers seem to think passes for a 'computer game'.

Grand Theft Auto, though, sneers at such shallow sloth. Instead of aimlessly remixing familiar elements, it rolls up its sleeves and tackles the most fundamental gaming questions.

Reasons to be cheerful

YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU LIKE

THE GRAPHICS...

THE SOUND IS SUPERB

THERE'S A MULTI-PLAYER DEATHMATCH GAME

IT'S GOT A ROCKET LAUNCHER

THE CITY RESPONDS TO YOUR ACTIONS

IT'S TRULY CINEMATIC

PC GAMER 92%

"BAN THIS SICK FILTH NOW! OOOOONLY JOKING."

GRAND THEFT AUTO

"GTA'S MOST AMAZING FEATURE HAS TO BE THE LEVEL OF REALISM AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL EVIDENT THROUGHOUT."

THEIR VERDICT:
One of the cleverest, most enjoyable and satisfying games the PC has ever seen.

THEIR VERDICT:
DMA has succeeded in creating a uniquely engrossing and magnificently

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION

DATE: January 1998
ISSUE: 28
SIZE: Six pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 8/10

+ "[Stealing a fire engine] tends to seriously upset the law... and with unrealistic efficiency, a cortege of squad cars will be in hot pursuit while others set up road blocks. Brave drivers will no doubt put up a fierce resistance as they engage in frantic and adrenaline-soaked car chases, which might develop into a frantic shoot-out... the entire proceedings are far more exciting than anything Hollywood has ever been able to come up with."

– "Obviously, simply going around causing mindless mayhem without having to face the consequences would ultimately spoil the game. Which is why, as in reality, police are there to clamp down on any felonious activity... It's bound to attract the public's attention for all the wrong reasons..."

+ "They [DMA] were reliably informed Sony's machine just couldn't cope. While the PlayStation can still run rings around tops PCs when it comes to sumptuous 3D graphics, it does suffer from a lack of memory – the very thing that DMA's complex, non-linear creation needed in spades. DMA went ahead and did it anyway."

+ "The result is one of the most original, innovative, technically impressive and controversial PlayStation releases ever. It's also a damn fine game in its own right. Unfortunately, it's not without its problems, either."

– "[Its] very freedom, however, is something of a double-edged sword. GTA is a game that actively rewards initiative and curiosity in its players. Sure, you can play it in a straightforward, linear fashion, progressing from one mission to the next and just doing what you're told. But if you play it this way, you'll probably get bored quite quickly, and you'll certainly be missing most of the best bits of the game. "

– "In fact, the graphics are very disappointing – GTA may not be the worst-looking PlayStation game ever, but it's certainly in the running."

IN A NUTSHELL

- It was wildly original and innovative
- It was a shock for some, design-wise
- It was controversially, perhaps cynically violent
- It didn't look too hot, even at the time
- It was better on PC

TESTSCREEN | EDGE DECEMBER 1997

...ple of a convincingly real, living and ...drug-related crimes are prevalent

...although it tends to seriously upset the law-keeping authorities, and with unrealistic efficiency, a cortege of squad cars will be in hot pursuit while others set up road blocks at all the surrounding major junctions.

Brave drivers will no doubt put up a fierce resistance as they engage in frantic and adrenaline-soaked car chases, which might develop into a frantic shoot-out using cars abandoned by their drivers as protection – the entire proceedings are far more exciting than anything Hollywood has ever been able to come up with. On the other hand, more conscientious drivers may wish to surrender themselves to the authorities and pay their bail in order to get back on the streets (although these individuals might never have got into trouble in the first place). However, the easiest way of dealing with the heat is to locate one of the city's paintshops and simply get the colour and number plates of the vehicle changed, instantly putting an end to the relentless, stress-inducing noise of nearby sirens.

Indeed, the sound effects are dynamic, so that a faint jingling of bells will develop into a full-on chanting session as a group of Hare Krishnas got dangerously close – still, they can always be disposed of in a variety of ways.

A further mention must go to the in game music, which changes according to the car being driven, and includes 40 minutes of funk, techno, hip hop, rock and even country & western. Although clearly tongue in cheek, their inclusion adds the final master stroke to the game's overflowing atmosphere levels.

With GTA, DMA has succeeded in creating a uniquely engrossing and magnificently playable title displaying the same levels of originality first witnessed in its Lemmings series.

It's bound to attract the public's attention for all the wrong reasons, but then it is said that all publicity is good publicity...

E

EDGE RATING
Nine out of ten

...THE SAME LEVEL OF ...DMA'S LEMMINGS

Few titles can claim to immerse players into the game world as effectively as DMA's *Grand Theft Auto*, resulting in an impressively unique experience

Format: PC (tested)/PlayStation	Publisher: BMG Interactive
Developer: DMA	Price: £40
	Release: Out now

"YOUR ONLY GOAL IN EACH LEVEL IS TO EARN ENOUGH POINTS TO MOVE TO THE NEXT. HOW YOU GO ABOUT IT IS LARGELY UP TO YOU."

playable title displaying the same levels of originality first witnessed in its Lemmings series.

THEIR VERDICT:

Behind the unimpressive visuals and controversial subject matter lurks a very good game – playable, addictive, and above all original. But it *is* an acquired taste.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION

DATE: June 1999
ISSUE: 46
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 7/10

GTA: LONDON 1969

+ "A genuine ugly duckling of a game, GTA featured tiny 2D cars driving around a chunky city being shot at by blocky cop sprites and mowing down Amiga-style pedestrians.

Nevertheless, it was a curiously engaging affair, much of its appeal coming from the go-anywhere-do-anything gameplay which enabled players to complete the myriad jobs in their own way. GTA captured the public's affections sufficiently to warrant a sequel. GTA: London 1969 is what they're calling a mission pack..."

– "Curiously, it [ownership of the original] is not because London requires any code from the original disc. Instead, after initial loading, it demands a peek at the original Grand Theft Auto disc just to check you've got it. It's a clumsy business with no merit..."

– "The good news is that the graphics are better this time around. Vehicles are no longer the cubist monstrosities of the original game, and the shockingly jerky frame rate is now smoother – but only just. Despite the changes, GTA London still looks painfully dated."

"FORTUNATELY, THE SOUNDTRACK IS AS EXCELLENT AS THAT OF THE ORIGINAL GAME."

THEIR VERDICT:

Does nothing new and offers less content than the original game. But if you're a fan of GTA and can endure the '70s jokes, this is £20 well spent.

PC GAMER

DATE: May 1999
ISSUE: 69
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 80 percent

+ "London 1969, the new expansion disc for Grand Theft Auto, is full of ponces. Nonces, too. And slags. And filth. But mostly ponces. Ponces who are, by and large, 'in need of a slap'. Ponces tooled up to nick some other ponces' motor, who've just blown a couple of ponies on skirt and a monkey on billy."

+ "London 1969 is an energetic and evocative jaunt, buoyed by an Austin Powers sense of fun and plenty of explosions."

+ "There are more than 30 [missions] to attend to over three main chapters, and they're more complex and involving than the original's, each one requiring several stages of narrative-linked action before completion."

– "On the downside, the missions do become a little repetitive ("go to place X, pick up a car and drive it to place Y, generally). A forgiving level of difficulty, and the lack of more than one city, means that you'll find yourself tiring of London (albeit not, as it turns out, of life) within a day or two of concentrated playing."

GRAND THEFT AUTO: LONDON 1969

The bodywork-mangling car-chase classic goes all 'swinging Sixties'.

Let's be honest: who has never wanted to ruin but land upon the traffic wardens of our great cities?

MUCH though there is to be said for America – birthplace of The Simpsons, land of the free, blah blah blah – it's an incontestable fact that England has better words. For example: ponce.

My ignorant Bill Gates-brained word processor's spellchecker highlights it disapprovingly. And, according to Webster's weighty bookshelf-hogging American so-called 'Comprehensive' Dictionary of the English Language, 'Ponce' is merely part of the (slightly unfortunate) name of Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon, who discovered Florida. For citizens of the United States, it has no other meaning.

To UK English speakers, by contrast, 'ponce' is a word of rare richness and quality, ripe with nuance and glistening with potential mouth pleasure. The Oxford English Dictionary, unlike its dreary translantic counterpart, is able to gorge itself on a succession of succulent citations. "You're nothing more than a dirty ponce," it quotes from Compton Mackenzie's 1914 novel Sinister Street – and who can read that wonderful line without relishing the sneer of its final heavy syllable?

"A raid was made," jots Somerset Maugham in a notebook entry for 1916, "and fourteen ponces were arrested". Fourteen ponces – what a wonderful thing to be able to say. Almost as good, in fact, as "Let's face it, New Zealand has been ponceing on us for years," which the OED attributes to an unknown writer in the 24th June 1971 edition of The Guardian. Both 'ponceing on' and 'ponceing off', it seems, are legitimate forms.

The dictionary goes on to enumerate some other indispensable derivatives, such as to *ponce about* ("to act in an effeminate or languid manner; to fool or mess about") and to *ponce up* ("to make effeminate or effete"). "Hence," it adds, "ponceing, and ponced up." On the fourteenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... fourteen ponces ponceing.

Marvellous.

London 1969, the new expansion disc for *Grand Theft Auto*, is full of ponces. Nonces, too. And slags. And filth. But mostly ponces. Ponces who are, by and large, 'in need of a slap'. Ponces tooled up to nick some other ponces' motor, who've just blown a couple of ponies on skirt and a monkey on billy.

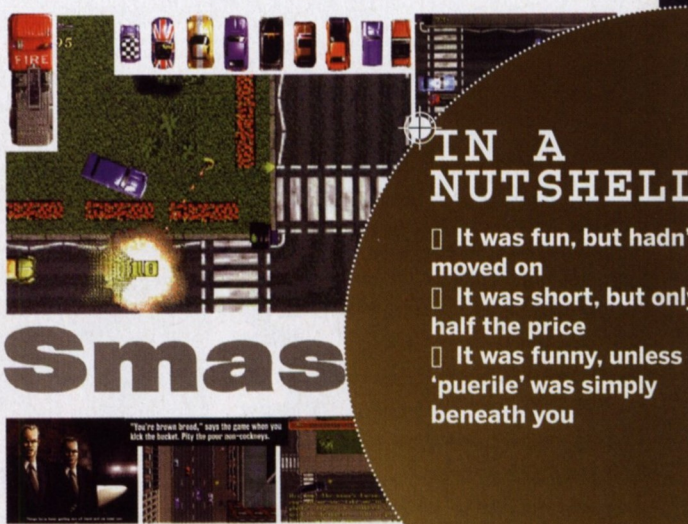
CAPITAL IDEAS

At a loose end in the big city? Well, there's always something to do in London. Try indulging in one of these excellent pastimes if you're short of ideas...

The Pedestrian Pizza – See how many pedestrians you can run down at once – with bonus points doubled for each successive victim.

The Bonnet Bound – Steal a load of cars, line 'em up, and see how many you can jump over in one leap. No points, but a lot of fun.

The Firearm Fiesta – Arm yourself to the teeth and visit bloody vengeance on London. It's not a massacre, man – it's a do-in.



"You're brown bread," says the game when you kick the bucket. Pity the poor our-cockneys.

God only knows what the Americans are going to make of it.

Those of us brought up on The Italian Job, however, who imagine Lee-Sidesplearly-Seventies London populated by Michael Caine, Bob Hoskins and The Kray twins to the soundtrack of Blow-Up, will find it a right laugh. With its 'swinging' graphical stylings and exuberant use of scene-setting slang, *London 1969* is an energetic and evocative jaunt, buoyed by an Austin Powers sense of fun and plenty of explosions.

You'll need a copy of the original *Grand Theft Auto* to play it and, gameplay-wise, everything proceeds very much the same as it did before. You're still driving around city streets, stealing cars and shooting coppers while following instructions concerning jobs. Except this time you're driving on the left hand side of the road. And the city isn't some made up metropolis, but a living, breathing London, complete with recognisable landmarks including the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. You don't have to spend

"Full of ponces. Nonces, too. And filth."

every other minute pouring over a map, because the chances are you already know how everything fits together, from Camden Town in the north west to Camberwell in the south east. And that makes things a lot more fun.

The pager has been turned into some kind of 'telegraph' device, and has less of a role to play than in the original game, but the missions come thick and fast nonetheless. There are more than thirty to attend to over three main chapters, and they're more complex and involving than the originals, each one requiring several stages of narrative-linked action before completion.

Unusually for an add-on pack, *London 1969* also comes with its own all new soundtrack. The in-car radio music, so much a part of the cherished

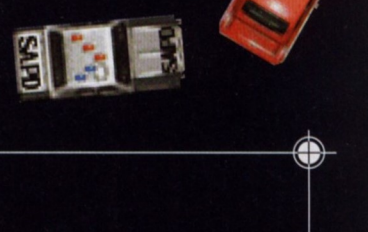
■ Publisher **Take2** ■ Developer **In-house** ■ Price **£25** ■ Minimum System **P120 with 3Dfx; P166 without** ■ Recommended **P166, 32Mb RAM, 3Dfx** ■ Graphics Accelerator **3Dfx** ■ Multi-Player **Four-player deathmatch** ■ Web Address **http//www.take2games.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

PC GAMER Atmospheric and great fun, if a touch short-lived. You ponce. **80%**

IN A NUTSHELL

- It was fun, but hadn't moved on
- It was short, but only half the price
- It was funny, unless 'puerile' was simply beneath you

"GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT THE AMERICANS ARE GOING TO MAKE OF IT."



THEIR VERDICT:
Atmospheric and great fun, if a touch short-lived. You ponce.

PC GAMER

DATE: December 1999
ISSUE: 76
SIZE: Six pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 90 percent

EDGE

DATE: December 1999
ISSUE: 79
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 8/10

GTA2

+ "GTA 2 is the comic Cosa Nostra of crime sims, stylish and ultra-violent but never forgetting that life is most exciting when short and sweet."

+ "...Away from multiplayer games, the boffins of game creation are increasingly banishing laugh-out-loud hysteria. Grand Theft Auto 2 has you giggling, swearing and messing up missions just for the kick of it. Anyone worried about videogame violence could do a lot worse than actually watch someone playing GTA2. You'll see uglier scenes at Sainsburys."

+ "Later missions become yet more inventive, including driving remote-controlled taxis packed with explosives to meet opposing forces, or butchering enough police so that SWAT teams are called in, allowing you to appropriate their armoured van."

+ "Indeed, [the graphics] are so functional that it's only when you dig out the original that you appreciate the changes. While there has been both an aesthetic and functional face lift (particularly with the introduction of climbable buildings which let you lob bombs off the roof) looks won't sell Grand Theft Auto."

– "It's more likely to be Carmageddon that pushes things too far, however much GTA2's publishers try to stoke controversy. It's littered with corpses but... you'll even see paramedics magically clean up dead bodies with the wipe of a cloth. Little computer people don't die, however much you run them over, incinerate, crush, burst, blast or blow them up. They just get reincarnated at the top of the screen."

+ "In some ways GTA2 is caught between the colourful excesses of its predecessor and the more serious overtones of this sequel."

REVIEWS

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Great Traffic Accidents! Guns & Terrorist Activities! Good, Terrible or Average?

STREET TALKING

Joyride

"Gangs and 'respect' add a new dynamic."

GANG STARS

"ONE OF THE CLEVEREST, MOST ENJOYABLE AND SATISFYING GAMES THE PC HAS EVER SEEN."

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

"IF ANOTHER GTA IS TO APPEAR (WORD IS ONE WILL), THE CHALLENGE WILL NOT BE THE THIRD DIMENSION, BUT TO DISPOSE OF ANY MISSION STRUCTURE."

THEIR VERDICT:
Effortlessly ramraids back into our affections. Beg, borrow or steal a copy now.

THEIR VERDICT:
That it still manages to draw you deep into the complexities of its world, rewarding

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION

DATE: December 1999
ISSUE: 52
SIZE: 1.5 pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 9/10

+ "Unsurprisingly, compared to its PlayStation sibling, Grand Theft Auto 2 on PC delivers many more cars and pedestrians, significantly adding to the gameplay."

+ "The missions offered include just about every foul deed you can think of. The riskier the job, the more currency and respect it earns you. Getaway driver, drug runner, assassin... the list is endless."

– "You can earn money as a car thief, a mugger or even a taxi driver. GTA2 is a game that no two players will experience in quite the same way."

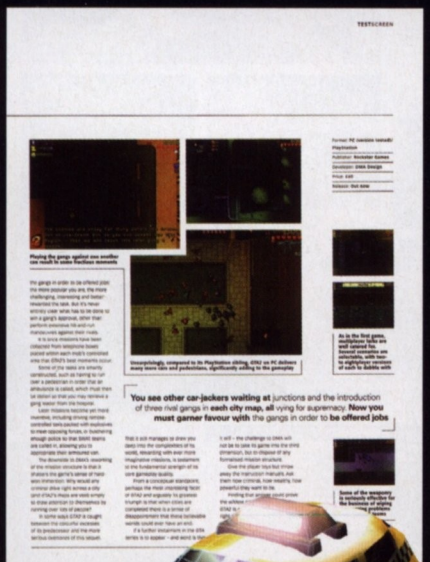
– "As in the first game, multiplayer larks are well catered for. Several scenarios are selectable, with two- to eightplayer versions of each to dabble with... The visuals are better hued and more detailed, and the lights of emergency vehicles, plus those cast by traffic signals and other static sources, conspire to make it all seem less 2D."

+ "Grand Theft Auto 2 is a sentient masterpiece, created by a team for whom it was clearly a labour of love. Respect is due."

– "It's actually possible to complete the game without completing a single mission, though it'll take a lot longer."

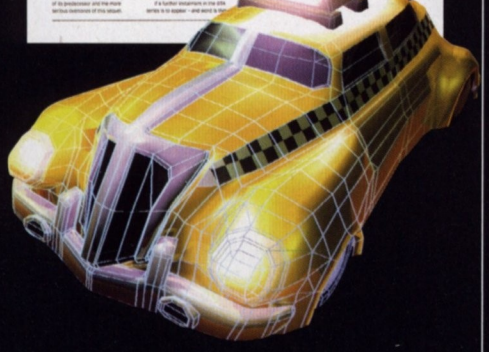
IN A NUTSHELL

- It was better than GTA, but it was increasingly 2D ugly
- Its rival gangs were a shot in the arm
- Its soundtrack was, once again, inspired
- It was better on PC than PSone
- Its competition was now firmly 3D



TESTSCREEN

You see other car-jackers waiting at junctions and the introduction of three rival gangs in each city map, all vying for supremacy. Now you must garner favour with the gangs in order to be offered jobs



REVIEW

A great new feature of GTA2 is the ability to insure weapons on your chosen vehicle

The stunning intro incorporates many of the ideas in the game and could be straight out of Hollywood. Well, maybe

JOYRIDING, DRUG DEALING, GETAWAY DRIVING... GUESS WHO?

Grand Theft Auto 2

Your only objective is to make an obscene amount of money...

FACTFILE

PUBLISHER	Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER	DMA Design
RELEASE DATE	October
AGE RESTRICTION	18 and over
PRICE	£39.99
NUMBER OF PLAYERS	One

When *Grand Theft Auto* was unleashed on the PlayStation in 1998 it managed to upset MPs, breakfast TV presenters and tabloids alike – none of whom, incidentally, have any knowledge of videogames whatsoever. Now, for those who are capable of appreciating such things (and aged 18 or over) there's a sequel. GTA2: it's bigger, badder and better than ever.

Set in a sprawling metropolis of the near future, GTA2 gives you complete freedom to do whatever you wish. Your only objective is to make an obscene amount of money by any means possible. The city is divided into three playing areas (Downtown, Residential and Industrial) and each is inhabited by a number of rival gangs. Do something to gain favour with one of them and they might offer you a job. Upset them and you can expect to be used for target practice next time you enter their turf. See, everything you do in the city affects your standing with both these gangs and the ever-present police force.

The missions offered to you include just about every foul deed you can think of. The riskier the job the more currency and respect it earns you. Getaway driver, drug runner, assassin... The list is endless. It's actually possible to complete the game without completing a single mission, though it'll take a lot longer.

You can earn money as a car thief, a mugger or even a taxi driver. GTA2 truly is a game that no two players will experience in quite the same way. The sheer number of vehicles, weapons and locations enable you to come up with your own way of playing. The radio-station soundtrack works brilliantly and you'll often find yourself just cruising around with the volume turned up. Graphically it's not as pretty as Driver but the top-down view enables you to keep an eye on everything without hampering the gameplay – a small price to pay.

GTA2 is a sentient masterpiece, created by a team for whom it was clearly a labour of love. Respect is due. ■

Justin Calvert

IF YOU LIKE THIS THEN LOOK AT...

DRIVER
Earning to look at old switchbox to play Driver it took to perfect

VERDICT

GRAPHICS	Butterfly presented throughout, very fast and very smooth
GAMEPLAY	Do whatever you want and then enjoy the consequences
LIFESPAN	Playing it is none the same twice, enough said
OVERALL	So good it should be illegal – indeed it probably already is in some backwater American state. If you're old enough to buy it, then you're old enough to enjoy it. PSM2 suggests you do so post haste

9 OUT OF 10

114 OFFICIAL UK PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE DEC 99

"GRAPHICALLY, IT'S NOT AS PRETTY AS DRIVER..."

with ever more imaginative missions, is testament to the fundamental strength of its core gameplay quality.

THEIR VERDICT:
So good it should be illegal – indeed it probably already is in some backwater American state. If you're old enough to buy it, you're old enough to enjoy it.

PSM2

DATE: December 2001
ISSUE: 16
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 92 percent

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

+ From kneecapping old ladies with a Louisville slugger to reversing over a rozzer, you're only limited by your own depravity... it's a short step from harmless experimentation to outright bloodlust, and you'll be shocked by how quickly you're baying through red mist like a vengeful Joe Pesci. But what the Daily Mail won't notice, and outraged parental groups won't care about, is that *this isn't GTA III's core appeal.*"

+ "Radio stations broadcast genuinely funny chat – the on-air debate about videogame violence made us smirk – bit if you don't fancy that, why not counterpoint the sickening thuggery with a bit of light opera?"

+ Other tiny details astonish – the police draw chalk outlines round corpses, paramedics do CPR and choppers leave a telltale rotor wash. If standing atop a blazing mash of police cars screaming "Top of the world, Ma!"and hoying Molotovs at paramedics doesn't appeal, fine. But if the idea of playing Crazy Taxi, Chase HQ and Emergency Call Ambulance with the sniping from Unreal Tournament sounds like the sheer heaven it is, welcome to the criminal fraternity."

− "Actual hand-to-hand combat can feel a bit fiddly... the camera angles aren't helpful in gunfights... the missions can feel a bit anticlimactic."

"LIBERTY CITY'S INHABITANTS AREN'T THE COW-LIKE BULLET SPONGES THEY ONCE WERE."

THEIR VERDICT:

The immoral allure might attract, but attention to detail keeps you hooked. GTA III's vast scope and tiny touches are some of the most impressive on PS2.

OFFICIAL PS2 MAGAZINE

DATE: November 2001
ISSUE: 13
SIZE: Four pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 8/10

+ "Auto-based missions are as good as anything in Reflections' Driver games. Tailing your quarry at top speeds while a police squad resorts to kamikaze tactics to take you down is one of gaming's greatest thrills. Knowing that just clipping the bumper of a Sunday driver will send you spinning into the clutches of the constabulary makes for a genuine white-knuckle ride."

+ "First rung on the ladder to infamy is Luigi, a strip club owner and small-time pimp... successful completion of simple early missions will see you ingratiated into the local Mafia, with gangsters competing for your business. Ostensibly, you have a choice of who serve next, but the progressive mission structure is sometimes at odds with the idea of freedom promised by the game."

+ "Character models are often ropey, movement control is never quite ideal and the shot targeting system is suspect. You can toggle between targets but when trapped in a busy precinct the flawed system means you spend more time pummelling bullets into grannies than the rival ganglord you're supposed to be whacking, as his goons ambush you from all sides. The easiest way to is to run them over..."

+ "With unfailing dedication to the cause of criminality and a streak of humour that allows you to cruise for whores while listening to Verdi on Double Clef FM, DMA Design and Rockstar have sired another landmark videogame. It's far from perfect, but bursting with originality.

"YOU'RE NEVER SURE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE DOING NEXT. UNFORTUNATELY IT'S THE TIME BETWEEN MISSIONS THAT BECOMES REPETITIVE."

THEIR VERDICT:

DMA delivers on its promise to bring Grand Theft Auto into the 3D era. The game has its flaws, but there's nothing quite as sick, funny and inventive as this on the shelves.

PC GAMER

DATE: August 2002
ISSUE: 112
SIZE: Three pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 92 percent

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

+ "It explores the power of open-context in creating the illusion of non-linearity in a strictly linear experience. It takes the bubble-structure of non-linear episodes in a linear narrative and expands the bubble to contain the entire game-world. It makes a glorious squelching noise when you crush a hapless, flailing-armed pedestrian beneath your thinly disguised Beamer's tyres. It's brilliant. Or at least mostly."

+ "Binnsy [James Binns] our publisher, once memorably appeared on Newsnight to defend games, managing to provoke a bewildered "What... you mean *adults* play these games?" from Paxman by explaining these are for grown-ups."

+ "It's easy to get confused between the second-to-second freedom of gaming expression, which is near-absolute, with the long-term freedom, which is minimal. Don't be tricked into believing the hype on this count – especially when the game justifies its hyperbole in other areas."

– "This conversion, while it's more entertaining in several areas than the PS2 original, is something of a technical wreck... Since this is a game where fluid control uninterrupted by your computer stopping to have a little think is of paramount importance, this can totally ruin the experience if you have an afflicted machine – and some of the graphical compromises are harsher than we expect from a modern game."

REVIEWS

GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE

GTA III

Get your motor running. Head out on the highway. Flee the police.

GAMES OF DISTINCTION PC GAMER August 2002

CAUSES UPSET STOMACHS

THIS is the last review of Grand Theft Auto III in a major specialist magazine. More than that, it's the last review in a major specialist magazine of a game whose original console version, of which this is a direct translation, appeared seven or so months ago and has sold millions of copies. The initial critical denouements have all been made. Anyone who wanted to play will have at least encountered it briefly, has left the morning after at the party, swooping up the dopiest and cat sick. It's all over bar the shouting.

So let's do some shouting. GTA III's the most important game – on any format – since Deus Ex (it's the fact that Ion Storm Austin have repeatedly described it as their current favourite game speaks volumes). It explores the power of open-context in creating the illusion of non-linearity in a strictly linear experience. It takes the bubble-structure of non-linear episodes in a linear narrative and expands the bubble to contain the entire game-world. It makes a glorious squelching noise when you crush a hapless, flailing-armed pedestrian beneath your thinly disguised Beamer's tyres.

It's brilliant. Or at least mostly.

But we'll get to that.

Henry Ironside first. The first GTA emerged from the vaults of Scottish game-incubators DMA (now renamed with Rockstar as Rockstar Studios) and caused all manner of questions to be asked about a disturbing victory. Binnsy our Publisher, once memorably appeared on Newsnight to defend games, managing to provoke a bewildered "What... you mean *adults* play those games?" from Paxman by explaining these are for grown-ups.

While graphically the game was simple – viewed from above, cartoonish – the cause for all the furore was the game's topic: you were placed in a low-level hood in the city, committing felonies to rise through the ranks of organised crime. The order-game took place in a living city, with traffic and pedestrians wandering the streets and going about their lives. Of course, your actions caused their lives to take more interesting turns, either by bringing a little chaos (starting car-bombs, driving on the pavement, whatever) or by just brutally cutting them. You collected money and attempted to avoid the attentions of the police, who would become more active the more criminal deeds you undertook. If you were bad enough, the military were called in to sort you out. Stuff 'exploded. Dudes got kicked. The sequel, GTA II, featured a similar top-down flat perspective, and dropped the addition of a rather nifty gang reputation system and more structure was generally viewed as a disappointment. It adds terms if nothing else.

"It makes a glorious squelching noise."

Fast-forward a few years to GTA III. It's basically – woefully – GTA. But in 3D, with everything that implies. Ultra-violence – both vehicular and gun-based – in a free-form city, with pre-defined missions leading you through a narrative. And it's brilliant, but I've already said that, so I'd better move on to something a little more specific.

Firstly, don't get too carried away with the free-form nature. While you can go anywhere in the play area – two of the three islands of Liberty City, the game's setting, are locked at the game's opening – if you actually want to play the game, you're pot on a very pre-set route. While often several employers are offering you a job of some kind, these are always fixed, with success leading to the next in the chain – or, alternatively, a new employer. If you want to progress and improve power and standing, you're tied by the game. It's easy to get confused between the second-to-second freedom of gaming expression, which is near-absolute, with the long-term freedom, which is minimal. Don't be tricked into believing the hype on this count – especially when the game justifies its hyperbole in other areas.

Conversely, you may not even want to play the single player game. I've sat and watched some of my more sociopathic friends cheerfully play for hours at a time with no intention of going anywhere near the game's main structure. As an idle distraction (for that read "destruction"), it's peerless. The extra weapons, extra-violence and uber-blood codes are especially useful for those with this tendency.

The second caveat is a little more important. This conversion, while it's more entertaining in several areas than the original PS2 version, is something of a technical wreck. Although you'll find extensive tweaking guides on the internet to improve performance, this doesn't excuse the fact that a) it requires this amount of extensive work to make it operate at a decent level and b) it still doesn't work at a decent frame-rate on some computers. Since this is a game where fluid control uninterrupted by your computer stopping to have a little think is of paramount importance, this can totally ruin your play experience if you have an afflicted machine – and some of the graphical compromises are harsher than we expect from a modern game. The Office Xbase PC (Pt. 3Ga-ie, Geforce 4), for example, will only give us a sh-it-stutter-free rate at 640x480.

The solution? And how to score a game with this sort of problem? Well – I've only let the remedial technical shooting affect the mark slightly, as those with a machine that works will find it totally sublime. However, be sure to purchase from a retailer with a no-questions return policy, so you can get a refund if the worst happens. And then loot fire to wife, nasty kittens to Archbishop, as it's just not on.

Thanks, there's a really odd bug which occasionally pops up when running down star-cases or slopes, your character is thrown miles, incurring massive damage. In certain areas – like the Docks on the Staunton Island – this is often fatal. It seems to be less frequent if you walk down slopes, yes, you read that right. It's annoying and utterly inexcusable, being the sort of thing which a modicum of playtesting would have pointed out. This is one of the things that keeps GTA away from the mid-90s.

AUTOMATIC GEARBOX FOR THE PEOPLE

Liberty

ROCK CITY

AUGUST 2002 PC GAMER 79

REVIEWS

"The PC control system gives more power."

THAT'S ALL FOR THE WEATHER

ALSO WANTS A LOOK...

92%

"IT'S ALL OVER BAR THE SHOUTING. SO LET'S DO SOME SHOUTING. GTA III IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GAME – ON ANY FORMAT – SINCE DEUS EX."

THEIR VERDICT:
Innovative, ground-breaking, blue-blooded classic. But technical problems abound.

EDGE

DATE: December 2001
ISSUE: 105
SIZE: One page
ORIGINAL SCORE: 8/10

+ "The air of studied gangster cool that surrounds Take 2's latest – caricatures more than characters; theatrics more than cinematics – is almost as clichéd as the flea-bitten leather jacket sported by the game's moody, taciturn lead. However, early play quickly dispels such concerns – the shift to three dimensions is a shrewd and rewarding step for the GTA universe."

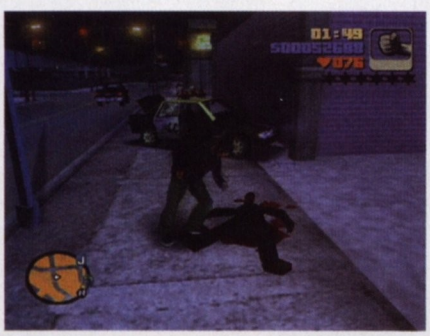
+ "...both previous titles saw the player take the role of a wannabe crook, rapidly rising in villainous stature by completing short 'get A, destroy B, kill C' missions for cartoon bosses. GTA III is equally amoral, and essentially a 3D facsimile, although the extra dimension creates more than a corresponding increase in flair, scale and aesthetic."

+ "Most heists rely on the holy trinity of planning, execution and a little bit of luck, but executing a tricky gangland hit through an adroit scheme of your own provides its own definitively visceral satisfaction."

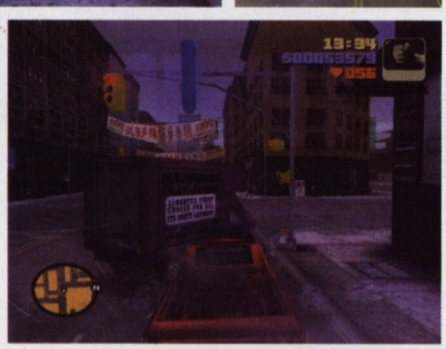
– "The one jarring flaw is the spurious nature of up-close combat – it's an awkward system that stymies play during hectic hails of gangland warfare, and is doubly infuriating at the end of a protracted campaign.

GTA 3

Format: PlayStation2 Publisher: Take 2 Developer: Rockstar/DMA Price: £40 Release: Out now Previously in E102



Fans of the original who can't get used to *GTA*'s new 3D stylings will be pleased to note that a top-down perspective is available. Driving's much easier in the behind-wheel view, though



A zoom with a view

Although an obligatory feature of any first/third person arsenal, the sniper rifle initially seems at odds with the textbook *mêlée* weaponry available in *GTA3*. Surprisingly, it soon becomes one of the most gleefully mischievous offensives available (even more so than the riotous cars-for-kindling flamethrower), enabling a neat and remote approach to certain tasks. One memorable mission involves providing cover fire from the distance of a nearby rooftop, as a Mafioso explosions expert skulks his way across the deck of a well-patrolled rival ship.

The car damage is visually satisfying, although all it does is slow your car down. Smoke indicates the level of destruction, but it's best to bail before it gets too thick. Thankfully, replacements are easily available

Nothing burns as pleasingly as the *hoi polloi* of a city and so, with no review code forthcoming, it's with both regret and anticipation that **Edge** is forced to purloin a copy of *GTA3* from the shelves of its local gaming emporium. The air of studied gangster cool that surrounds Take 2's latest – caricatures more than characters; theatrics more than cinematics – is almost as clichéd as the flea-bitten leather jacket sported by the game's moody, taciturn lead. However, early play quickly dispels such concerns – the shift to 3D is a shrewd and rewarding step for the *GTA* universe.

For those unaware of *GTA*'s criminal record, both previous titles saw the player take the role of a wannabe crook, rapidly rising in villainous stature by completing short 'get A, destroy B, kill C' missions for cartoon bosses. *GTA 3* is equally amoral, and essentially a 3D facsimile, although the extra dimension creates more than a corresponding increase in flair, scale and aesthetic. Most heists rely on the holy trinity of planning, execution and a little bit of luck, but executing a tricky gangland hit through an adroit scheme of your own provides its own definitively visceral satisfaction.

The considered and burgeoning topography of Liberty City feels both intricate and robust. It's a place that sprawls but doesn't bustle, and the sparse ambient effects which accompany your on-foot travails are testament to this. In-vehicle, however, it's a different story. In true *GTA* fashion, there's an entire spectrum of radio stations to flick through, veering from the sardonic to the satirical.

The one jarring flaw is the spurious nature of up-close combat – it's an awkward system that stymies play during hectic hails of gangland warfare, and is doubly infuriating at the end of a protracted campaign. It feels even more unfair when juxtaposed with the wonderfully *laissez-faire* attitude of the cruising patrol cars. There's a lamentable lack of freedom for your own criminal genius, too. You're still boxed in by the whims of your current overlords – any schemes of your own ruthless devising are restricted to trivial pursuits for petty cash.

While the coherent and emergent behaviour of the city is limited to a local scale, *GTA3* definitely gets one crucial thing right: it's all about owning the streets, strutting your territory and walking tall.

Edge rating: Six out of ten

IN A NUTSHELL

- Belated transformation to 3D is a thing of wonder
- Delayed and technically flawed on PC, but still genius
- Controversy among the ignorant getting boring
- Those who require leading by the hand will miss its finest aspects

"UNFORTUNATELY, DUE TO A PRODUCTION ERROR, LAST ISSUE'S REVIEW OF GTA III WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AN INCORRECT SCORE. THE CORRECT EDGE RATING WAS 8/10."

THEIR VERDICT:

While the coherent and emergent behaviour of the city is limited to a local scale, GTA III definitely gets one crucial thing right: it's all about owning the streets, strutting your territory and walking tall.

PSM2

DATE: December 2002
ISSUE: 29
SIZE: Four pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 97 percent

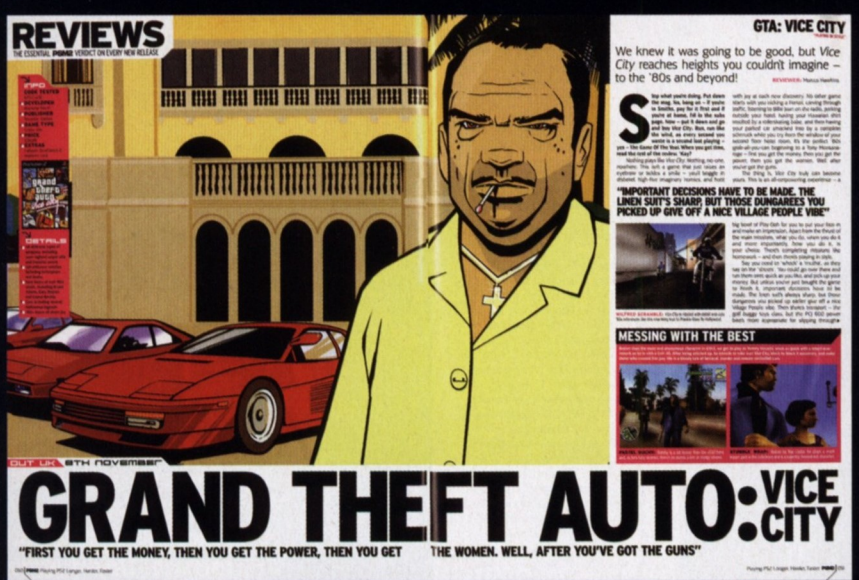
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

+ Say you need to 'whack' a 'mutha' as they say on the 'streets'. You could just run them over, quick as you like, and pick up the money. But unless you've just bought this to finish it, important decisions have to be made. The linen suit's always sharp, but those dungarees give a nice Village People vibe. Then there's transport – the golf buggy says class, but the PCJ is more appropriate for traffic. Radio station? Let's go for dramatic irony..."

+ Too often in GTA III the missions were far too vehicle-based, and suddenly you were more minicab driver than gangster. Not in Vice City. One of the stand oiut missions in GTA III was Bonb Da Base, as it minced many of the gameplay ingredients – driving, shooting, strategy – into one chunky gangster pie. *Every other* mission in Vice City is like that."

– "Some missions are tough – boss level tough. Consequently you can get a bottleneck of mission threads when you can't complete a task. You get frustrated, you get tired, but when this happens it's time for a break. Visit the mall, watch a gang fight. Or get a Freeway bike, go to the water's edge and weep to Toto's Africa."

– "There're some drawbacks here too. The biggest is the Artificial Intelligence of your sidekicks, as in many missions you're accompanied by a crew of heavies, or by cool-kat Lance Vance who becomes the Tubbs to Vercetti's Crocket. Their presence on the missions is to help out, but often they just get in the way or occasionally disappear from sight."



"THERE'S COMPLETING MISSIONS LIKE HOMEWORK – AND THEN THERE'S PLAYING IN STYLE."

THEIR VERDICT:
Rather than creaking under all the expectation, Vice City has flourished. Quite simply, it's the best that videogaming can offer.

OFFICIAL PS2 MAGAZINE

DATE: December 2002
ISSUE: 27
SIZE: five pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 10/10

+ "The increased use of boats, helicopters and planes form two extra layers of action to explore with refreshingly different gameplay."

+ "The much-anticipated motorbikes don't disappoint and they range from the Faggio scooter and the Harley-esque Freeway to the super-fast PCJ 600. The ability to pop wheelies and endos, combined with the new cinematic chase cameras, makes for a top game in itself."

+ "Now, the use of a target that appears around the cop/rollerblader/mob boss/old lady of your choice means that if you've got an accurate gun, you'll be able to lock on easily and mow them down. In GTA III your weapon would lock on to the nearest individual, but in Vice City the lock-on works on a threat basis. Anyone with a gun takes the brunt of your semi-automatic rage."

+ "Your personality can have a real impact. Want to snipe the gangsters from 50 metres? No problem. Want to steal a helicopter and jump out with a chromed shotgun? Be our guest. The question is, which outfit will make it look best? ...Mind you, it's hard to take yourself too seriously when someone's threatening you with a mobile phone the size of a breezeblock and I Just Died In Your Arms Tonight is playing."

"WE WERE AWESTRUCK WITH WHAT WE COULD DO IN GTA III, BUT VICE CITY BEATS THE BEST SELLING GAME IN HISTORY HANDS DOWN."

THEIR VERDICT:

This is undeniably the best thing ever to come out of the Eighties, and it's one of the greatest console games ever.

PC GAMER

DATE: July 2003
ISSUE: 124
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 93 percent

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

+ "Vice City really is spectacular, and possibly the most polished game you're likely to see this side of a Brasso factory. The production values alone are insanely high. The presumed cost of all the Hollywood actors, from the so-so (Ray Liotta) to the legendary (Dennis Hopper) and the sublime Tourettism of Luis Guzman, together with the 100-plus tracks of '80s hits, is mind boggling."

– "Granted, it's not without its flaws: repetitive missions, dodgy AI and physics, and city interactivity is limited by its PS2 origins. Most prominently, it's a repeat performance of a show we've seen four times before, albeit one that's light years ahead of its predecessors."

+ "The lurking, irrepressible problem that dogged the grimy but alluring heels of GTA III and held it back from real greatness is now gone. The last game would seemingly only run on one in three PCs, and probably only then if it had been built by the screwdriver of the gods... Vice City runs smoothly and beautifully, although it remains scarcely worth playing if you're not using a halfway decent machine."

– "There are, sadly, a few ill-advised additions – the RC choppers are irritatingly unwieldy to fly, the hidden packages extraneous, and some of the latter race missions prove ludicrously difficult to finish. But these are exceptions."

REVIEWS

GENRE: THIRD-PERSON ACTION

GRAND THEFT AUTO VICE CITY

Urban massacres and Talk Talk, together at last. Viva anarchy – it's the finest, Day-Glo-est hour yet for the *Grand Theft Auto* series.

GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
July 2003

"Production values alone are insanely high."

missions leading into short story arcs. Typically, these stories ultimately end with you taking over an opposing crime's estates and business in Scarface fashion.

To not like this game is to hate videogames. To like it means you're a twisted little individual, and a bleak, mass-market conformist like the rest and best of

predecessors.

But then *Vice City* really is spectacular, and possibly the most polished game you're likely to see this side of a Brasso factory. The production values alone are insanely high. The presumable cost of all the Hollywood actors, from the so-so (Ray Liotta) to the legendary (Dennis Hopper) and the sublime Tourettism of Luis Guzman, together with the 100 plus tracks of '80s hits, is mindboggling, and a harsh reminder of just how populist *Grand Theft Auto III* was, no matter how much it felt like it was yours, heart and soul.

But that's irrelevant. Almost. The lurking, irrepressible problem that dogged the grimy but alluring heels of *GTA III* and held it back from real greatness is now gone. The last game would seemingly only run on one in three PCs, and probably only if it had been built by the screwdriver of the gods. Now it's almost impossible to recall the jerking and stuttering, the screwed-up fogging or the illegible text – *Vice City* runs smoothly and beautifully, although it's scarcely worth playing if you're not using a halfway decent machine.

BIGGER, BETTER, MORE...

How many polygons in the player-model? Or, what's new, better and possibly deeply unintoxicating in *Vice City*'s PC incarnation following its conversion from the Playstation 2?

High resolutions and clearer textures give *Vice City* a pin-sharp, living cartoon feel on the PC, while little touches, such as birds flying overhead and vast draw distances, make the world breathe more realistically.

As with *GTA III* on the PC, you can easily customise your character's skin. Of course, your cackhanded effort will look far worse than the default Tommy Vercetti model, but then that's your fault, not Rockstar's.

You can also save instant replays of insane stunts, brutal gangland slayings or just you doing absolutely zilch, if you want. They're saved as small avi files which you can email to mates or old people's homes as required.

Along with the bucketloads of '80s music, which arguably gives the game more of its character than anything else, there's an mp3 station that you can fill with your own music. Course, ours is better.

Remember the Dodo, the wingless plane in *GTA III*? And the hours you wasted trying to fly it?

Our favourite weapon is the chainsaw. It's a gas watching Tommy lollop about with it.

Just check out the ripples and reflections on the water. Mmmm...

SYSTEM MISER

How *GTA: Vice City* will play on your PC

- Supported resolutions: 640x480 to 2048x1536
- Scalable options: Draw distance, trails, colour depth, 3D audio

VERDICT: Realistically, you shouldn't even bother running this game on a machine that's less than the minimum specs. *Vice City* is more colourful and detail-packed than almost any other PC game, and playing it at a slow frame-rate is a tragedy. At a low resolution, it will run fairly happily on slower PCs, but don't even bother if your machine is below minimum specs.

Gripping

While the conversion to PC suffers from the removal of the game's social element (it's more difficult to have a group of people clustered around a monitor and laughing at flippant killings than it is around a huge telly), the play is taken to a new level by mouse support. The ability to snipe precisely (you can now even shoot out tyres or through windscreens; mind you, so can the cops) is essential to feeling like an invincible lord of gangland. In addition, the difference between driving and action is more decisively divided as you switch from gamepad or keyboard to mouse and WASD and back, depending on your mode of transport. Vehicles remain the violently bruised meat of the game, of course, and are generally better honed and less dependent on courier tasks, but it's the city itself that provides you with such free-roaming independence. Vice is far larger than Liberty, and there's always something new to discover – an army base, an airport, buildings you can now wander inside, even an arena featuring GTA-ised versions of *RASCAR* and *Stunt Car* mini-games. There are, sadly, a few ill-advised additions – the RC choppers are irritatingly unwieldy to fly, the hidden packages extraneous, and some of the latter race missions prove ludicrously difficult to finish. But these are exceptions.

The city's all there to wander through and shower in blood without consequence, yet it never feels as uncomfortably purposeless, moronic or largely unfunny as *Postal 2* at any point. While it's quite blatantly the same game as *Grand Theft Auto III*, but with gigantic, neon, ultra-buffed bells strapped to its beefed-up torso, that doesn't ever hold it back from being one of the most mesmerising and consistently entertaining games on any platform, ever.

Good or evil, we just don't mind – because it has class, and that's surely more important.

ALEC MEER

PC GAMER PROFILE

Vice City is:
- GTA's best yet
- Challenging
- Full of cars

Vice City is not:
- That different to GTA III
- Postal 2
- Disappointing

■ Publisher: Rockstar Games ■ Developer: Rockstar North ■ Price: £35 ■ Minimum System: PIII 800, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ Recommended: P4 1.6GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ Multi-Player: None ■ Web Address: www.rockstargames.com/vicecity/pc/ ■ Release Date: Out now

PC GAMER
Near-perfect at everything it does, but wisely limits its remit. A great conversion.
93%

ALSO WORTH A LOOK...

Postal 2 PCG 123, 70%
Sick, pointless and occasionally funny, but horribly unsuccessful.

Grand Theft Auto III PCG 102, 92%
A subversive classic, but buggy and enhanced in *Vice City*.

JULY 2003 PC GAMER 93

"TO NOT LIKE THIS IS TO HATE VIDEOGAMES."

THEIR VERDICT:
Near-perfect at everything it does, but wisely limits its remit. A great conversion.

EDGE

DATE: December 2001
ISSUE: 118
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 8/10

+ "Most importantly, perhaps, you're no longer a nobody. Where GTA III's lead was two dimensional, your character this time around sweats charisma. Not only because he speaks (Ray Liotta is mostly perfect as a worldly wise scuzzrag) but because he has a real place in this world."

+ "On the Tarmac of Vice City's streets you'll immediately be drawn to two-wheeled propulsion, and motorcycle manoeuvres prove as gratifying as you might imagine."

– "Negotiating a passage across the city's rooftops via motorcycle, dropping leaflets from a plane and travelling via waterways present their own set of unique and rewarding challenges. However, in putting together all of this, Rockstar North has left visible a number of cracks, rendering the environment of Vice City somewhat broken."

– "If this game was a car it wouldn't be an entirely new model, but last year's with an ostentatious spoiler on the back and a clutch of other bells and whistles that would no doubt impress passers by."

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

"Your character sweats charisma, not only because he speaks (Ray Liotta is mostly perfect), but because he has a real place in this world"

IN A NUTSHELL

- Its soundtrack is irresistible
- Its bikes, boats and helicopters are really welcome additions
- Its gunplay is much improved
- It topped everything available on PS2 at that time

"IT WAS NEVER GOING TO LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS, OF COURSE. NOTHING AS HYPED AS THIS EVER COULD."

THEIR VERDICT:
Like a TVR, mechanical faults are evident, but it remains a formidable experience.

PSM2

DATE: December 2004
ISSUE: 56
SIZE: Seven pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 99 percent

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

+ "It took five days to reach the last mission... during this time,109 virtual days passed, we'd wasted 1609 people (don't worry, they – usually – deserved it), spent $109838 on shopping, started 756 fires, travelled 537,367 miles by car (forgetting on foot, bikes, planes, choppers, BMXs and some *huge* surprises) and – this is the killer – achieving a mere 51.87% progress."

+ "It's not the game to end all games. It *is* all games. Well, almost. The driving sections are a match for Midnight Club 2, the shooting flits seamlessly from Max Payne to Hitman, the stealth is Manhunt, and – just thrown in – are competent homages to Dance Dance Revolution, Time Crisis and, yes, Crash Bandicoot. There's even a host of retro arcade games in bars, including our fave, 'Let's Get Ready To Bumble, a bee-shooting game."

– "Problems? The first few hours could be dismissed as 'a bit like Vice City' and a disappointment. The draw distance occasionally pops things into view, but only atop the highest peaks. Certain aircraft are a shade fiddly. The targeting has a tendency to point at the floor – but in fairness, this improves as your shooting skills develop... and your first glimpse of Las Venturas – sexiest city of all – is underplayed and slightly disappointing."

+ "It's so far ahead of the competition, it's embarrassing. San Andreas contains *minigames* with more substance than some full price pap."

"IT'S STEEPED IN MINUTE INTRICACIES, FLATTERING THE INTELLIGENCE OF PLAYERS AND SERVING CONSTANT SURPRISES."

THEIR VERDICT:

PS2's defining moment – you'll forgive it its tiny flaws, because few games have been this polished, or – above all – such magnificent, ever-lasting fun.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE

DATE: December 2004
ISSUE: 54
SIZE: Five pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 10/10

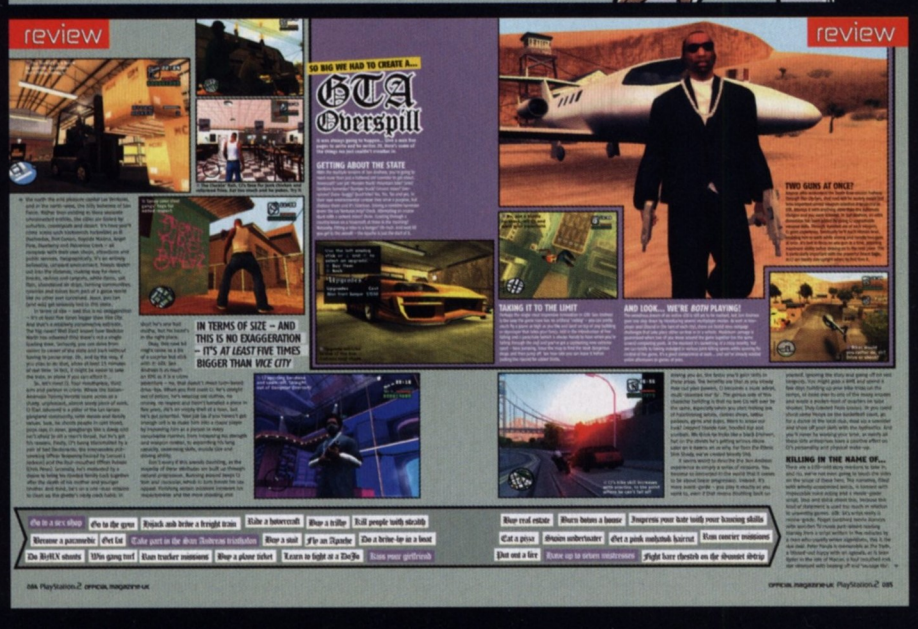
+ "San Andreas is quite simply *unbelievable*. It's bigger, more diverse and more freeform than any other videogame to have gone before it. It gives you an instantly loveable cinematic parody of the Golden State and the ability to interact with it with seemingly endless variety. It lets you loose in every one of your favourite Hollywood movies, all at once."

+ "It seems weird to describe the San Andreas experience as simply a series of missions. You become so immersed in the world that it ceases to be about linear progression. Instead, it's more avant-garde – you play it exactly as you want to, even if that means doubling back on yourself, ignoring the story and going off on vast tangents."

+ "The narrative, filled with wholly-unexpected twists, is blessed with impeccable voice acting and a movie grade script. Stop and think about this... SA's script really *is* movie grade. Forget contrived licences with wooden TV movie part-timers reading blankly from a script written in five minutes by a man who normally writes algorithms, this is the real deal."

+ "The first time you arrive in Los Santos and you cycle to your deceased mother's house on a BMX it'll seem ever so slightly alien. There's no music for a start. It's all a bit downbeat. But, minute by minute, a wave of comforting familiarity washes over you. It's GTA for sure. But it's not just 'GTA 5', a bigger, more orange version of Vice City. It's GTA taken to a level we could never have feasibly envisaged."

"SAN ANDREAS IS AS MUCH AN RPG AS IT IS A CRIME ADVENTURE – NO, THAT DOESN'T MEAN TURN-BASED DRIVE-BYS."



THEIR VERDICT:

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

PC GAMER

DATE: July 2005
ISSUE: 150
SIZE: Six pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 94 percent

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

+ "If you thought that Vice City's twin islands offered a huge playground, prepare your mind for a boggling. San Andreas offers a whole new world of largeness."

+ "Throughout the game, the variety of the 100-plus missions never fails to delight. Steal a combine harvester. Infiltrate a secret Army base. Chase down thieves on quad bikes. Rob a bank. Shoot down remote controlled planes with a minigun. Rescue a bunch of stoned English rockers from the desert. Fly a plane to Liberty City to carry out a hit..."

+ "From the simple to the devilish, from the grimly criminal to the comedic, from the sublime to the ridiculous, San Andreas retains the power to surprise and entertain throughout its lengthy structure."

– "My only quibble is that CJ never questions the reasoning behind the hundreds of casualties he's asked to inflict. "Kill that man? Aiiight," sums up his usual response, and at times it's hard to empathise with such a cold-blooded hero."

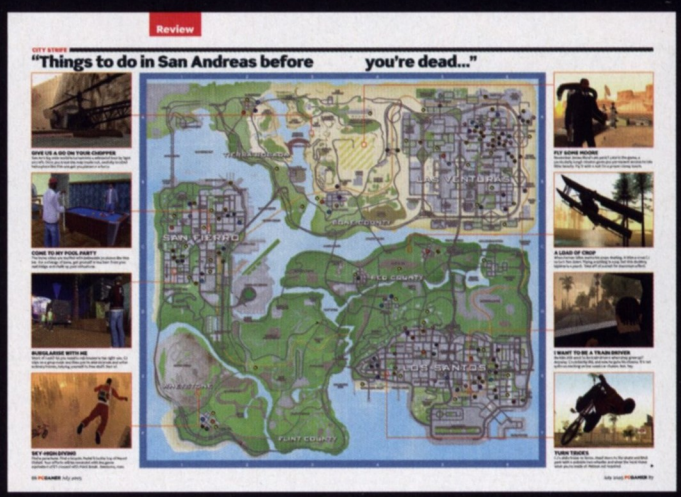
Review

GTA SAN ANDREAS

Welcome to GTA as it was always meant to be

"Living in a gangsta paradise"

Steal a combine harvester, infiltrate an army base


Review

"Things to do in San Andreas before you're dead..."

Review

GTA: SAN ANDREAS

A spot of pimping, or exploring, or riding around

TAKEN APART

"Welcome to the neighbourhood..."

"FORGET THE FACT THAT SAN ANDREAS STARTED AS A PS2 GAME. THE UGLY CATERPILLAR HAS BECOME A BEAUTIFUL (IF FOUL MOUTHED) BUTTERFLY."

THEIR VERDICT:

Minor graphical scars left from its painful transformation into a PC game do nothing to dull San Andreas' inner beauty. The best of the series, and already a contender for game of the year.

EDGE

DATE: December 2004
ISSUE: 144
SIZE: Two pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 9/10

EDGE

\+ "The game is so fat with possibilities and details that you're pretty much forced to turn to the missions in order to enlighten you as to the available avenues for profitable exploration and joyous time wasting."

\+ "The ability to improve gun skills, along with the inclusion of Manhunt's excellent headshot system, does help substantially, meaning that combat is now bearable – a leap over the comedic trauma of past Grand Theft Autos."

– "...everything is moving and swirling together before you, and when it all hums in smooth unison it's an unbeatable rush of freedom and empowerment. A ten. A phenomenon. A game like no other. And when it clashes, you're left with a grudging seven. A flawed gem. A broken masterpiece; nothing has *really* changed in three years."

– "It's a masterful marriage of perfectly-pitched vehicle insanity and decent combat, more so than any other version of GTA, but its world is one that demands work as much as it allows play."

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE

DATE: December 2005
ISSUE: 67
SIZE: Five pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 9/10

GTA: LIBERY CITY STORIES

+ It's not long before you're fawning over the atmospheric graphics and almost negligible loading times."

– "Even your old dear gets in on the act, hiring a gang of hitmen to show you exactly what she really thinks of her darling boy. It's not difficult to see why, as Cirpriani's a charmless and emotionless sod who you never warm to."

"Tiny blemishes prevent it becoming the all-conquering god-in-your-palms we hoped for."

+ "But just as the doubts start to creep in, along comes a clever story arc to reassure you Rockstar hasn't lostthe plot. At one stage you're caught up in a fight to stop ferry workers striking over plans to build a tunnel linking all three of the Liberty Islands. Of course, this is the Porter Tunnel so prominent in GTA III, which is set three years later. It's genuinely intriguing to see this snipped of back story, and further

+ "If the small flaws do get you down, multiplayer is there to save the day. As we revealed last month, you get seven different ways of playing with up to six of your mates, the pick being Liberty City Survivor – essentially GTA does deathmatch – and Street Rage, a straight-up race mode with drive-bys enabled. Eat bullet, Mario Kart."

review

review

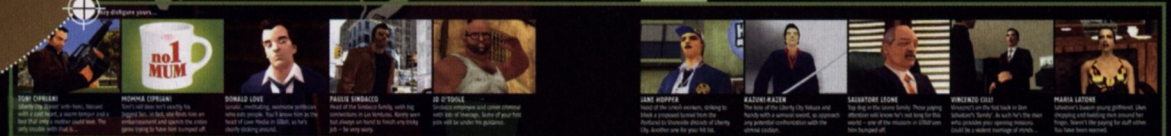
GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

Stealing cars and capping ass, 24/7

DETAILS

AT A GLANCE

THIS IS THE BEST GAME CURRENTLY AVAILABLE ON PSP, STEALTHILY EDGING PAST *RIDGE RACER* AND *LUMINES*



IN A NUTSHELL

- It's small but mostly perfectly formed
- It's impressive, but in some ways a step back
- It's brilliant to have bikes in Liberty at last
- It's still not possible to swim, even though CJ can

review

review

review

"ULTIMATELY, WHAT YOU GET OUT OF LIBERTY CITY STORIES COMES DOWN TO WHAT YOU'RE EXPECTING IN THE FIRST PLACE."

THEIR VERDICT:

LCS is a brilliant extension of the GTA series, and the new yardstick against which every future PSP title will be measured.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE

DATE: December 2006
ISSUE: 79
SIZE: Three pages
ORIGINAL SCORE: 10/10

GTA: VICE CITY STORIES

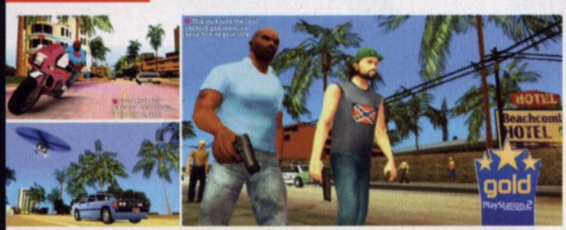
+ "Sure, [Liberty City Stories] was a cracking game, but it wasn't a timeless classic like San Andreas or Vice City. And for some, that was enough to suggest that GTA on PSP would never work. The arrival of Vice City Stories sees that theoryt ripped into shreds, set on fire and burnt to a crisp, as it's an entirely joyful gaming experience."

+ "The contrast between Vic [Vance] and Liberty City Stories main character – the eminently unloveable Tony Cipriani – couldn't be starker."

+ "Most of the flaws that had critics sharpening their knives are gone – such as the ghosting, which made Cipriani look part gangster, part phantom. Targeting is more instinctive than ever, and Rockstar has done a miraculous job with the oft-criticised PSP nub. Whether you're using a plane, helicopter, vehicle or Vic's own two feet to get around, there's no sliding at all – it all feels natural."

– Where [pop-up] does prove troublesome is when you're doing missions for Marty, a white trash hick with his own protection racket. He lives on a trailer park surrounded by a steel fence, but the trouble is that the fence doesn't appear until you've smashed into it, wrecking the bonnet of the new Cuban Hermes you've just swiped."

review



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

An East Coast adventure that's dripping with machismo

DETAILS

AT A GLANCE

Fact: people like watching once-great entities lose the plot. Ask Michael Jackson. Or Britney Spears. Or Nottingham Forest FC. (No, they were great once. Honest.) So it was hardly surprising that when Rockstar released GTA: Liberty City Stories this time last year, critics began to wonder whether the legendary series was showing signs of weakness. Sure it was a cracking game, but it wasn't a timeless classic like San Andreas or Vice City. And for some, that was enough to suggest that GTA on PSP would never work.

The arrival of *Vice City Stories* sees that theory ripped into shreds, set on fire and burnt to a crisp, as it's an entirely joyful gaming experience. The key is its beautiful simplicity – every mission you carry out starts a short radius from your safe house, making it a pleasure to play in 15-minute micro sessions. But you don't have to do things that way. We had one uninterrupted seven-hour blast through the storyline, using vigilante and taxi missions to ease our frustration on the occasions where we got stuck. How time flies when you're having fun, mowing down pedestrians in a sports car and putting holes in rival gang members...

TOASTING THE VICTOR

While *Vice City Stories* does many things exceptionally, its storyline is the reason that you'll keep this UMD glued into your PSP for the next three months. Lead character Victor Vance is the most reluctant of villains, having been booted out of the army for misdemeanours forced upon him by a bent sergeant. Desperate for work in order to help pay for his drug-addicted brother Lance's (remember that name?) medical bills, he begins doing odd jobs for the sarge's lowlife buddies – but always out of necessity, either than enjoyment. As such you can't help but sympathise, as this increasingly desperate good guy is gradually dragged into the city's criminal underbelly. The contrast between Vic and liberty *City Stories'* main character – the eminently unloveable Tony Cipriani – couldn't be starker.

HOME(Y) IMPROVEMENTS

That's not the only reason this is superior to its Stories predecessor. Most of the flaws that had critics sharpening their knives are gone – such as the ghosting, which made Cipriani look part-gangster, part phantom. Targeting is more instinctive than ever, and Rockstar has done a miraculous job with the oft-criticised PSP nub. Whether you're using a plane, helicopter, vehicle or Vic's own two feet to get around, there's no sliding at all – it all feels natural. Two new close-combat commands – ⊗ to block an opponent, ⊗ to grab them in readiness for a pummelling – improve hand-to-hand fisticuffs, although this area still feels crude in places.

Crucially, the brightness issues that often left you flailing in the dark in *Liberty City Stories* are also a thing of the past. Indeed, *Vice City*'s pastiche of '80s Miami – with its crisp Atlantic skies, vivid tangerine sunsets and crystal clear blue water – makes the PSP absolutely shine. Driving along the Vice Point shoreline on a bike as a blood-red sun hovers over the horizon is one of the most majestic experiences available on any handheld, ever. And taking a dip a dozen at Ocean Beach – the ability to swim has also been implemented this time – isn't exactly unpleasant, either.

Not only have Rockstar corrected some of the issues which blighted *Liberty City Stories*, they've added features we haven't seen before. Most are common-sense improvements, like the ability to buy back your weapons when busted or wasted by paying a $2,000 bribe. We also like the ability to smash up the inside of shops with whatever's close to hand. Fancy unloading a machine gun into every freezer in a supermarket because they're run out of Hot Pockets? Go right ahead my friend. And the new empire-building model adds another layer of depth to an already gigantic experience – have a look at 'My Little Empire' overleaf to see how it works.

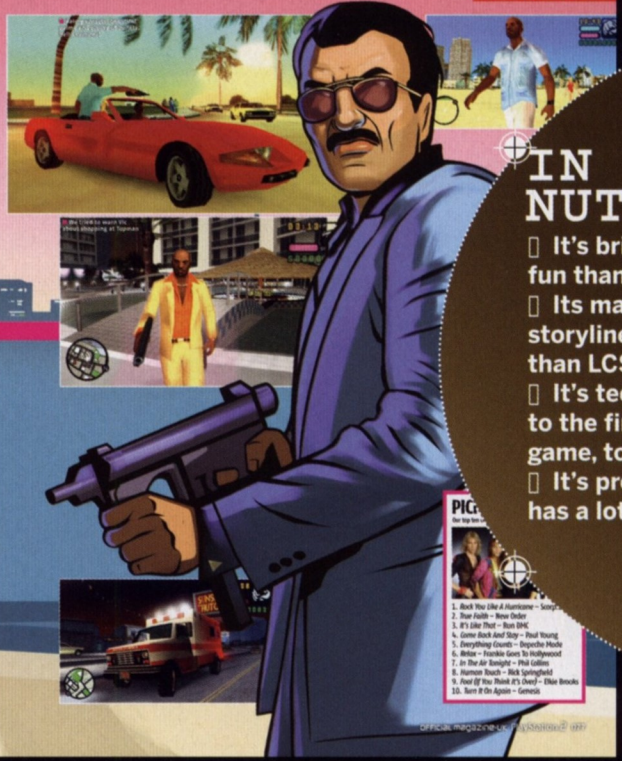
One annoyance that has returned is the problem of pop-up. Large buildings still

DANCE INTO THE VICE

Protecting Phil Against All Odds

In a genius – or should that be Gerrard? – twist, duplicated '80s pop star Phil Collins makes a cruelly scripted cameo appearance playing himself! Having jetted into Vice City to plan a gig, he learns that his manager owes one of the town's most notorious villains a sizeable wad of cash. You task is mission where Vic has to pick Phil up from the airport in a limo, deliver him safely to his hotel and then protect him from a gang of assassins. The latter mission's named: Kill Phil Part II, of course.

review



IN A NUTSHELL

- It's brighter and more fun than LCS
- Its main character and storyline is much better than LCS
- It's technically superior to the first handheld game, too
- It's proof Vice City still has a lot to give

"[POP UP] IS PRETTY MUCH IT FOR FLAWS. YOU KNOW YOU'RE PLAYING SOMETHING SPECIAL WHEN THE ONLY NEGATIVE YOU CAN DRAW FROM 25 HOURS OF GAMEPLAY IS A FEW FENCES THAT APPEAR AS IF FROM NOWHERE."

THEIR VERDICT:

Not only is this the greatest game on PSP, it also leaves a large percentage of the PS2 back catalogue looking ordinary. But it right now.

TRIVIA

The tiny broken stitches in life's rich tapestry

It's not all cock jokes

The Avispa Country Club in San Andreas is called that because, in Spanish, 'avispa' means wasp. And in America, a WASP is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant – a kind of snotty, privileged upper class. See! It's satire! And not a willy in sight!

It goes around the block

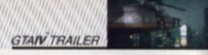
Search youtube for Grand Theft Auto – Lego City and you'll find a wonderful stop-motion parody. But did you know, the man who reviewed the very first GTA for top mag PC Gamer went on to create the brilliant Lego Star Wars game. It all links!

Your hero lives in Albert Square

The guy from GTA2 – also the guy from GTA III and called, incidentally, Claude Speed – was voiced by none other than Jack from EastEnders. That's Scott Maslen to those of you not so mentally ill you believe he's really Jack.

Tron is a pedestrian

The Vice City credits list Tron – the electronic hero of the 1982 computer game-based movie – as the voice of a passer-by. Fair enough. Tron was always fairly pedestrian.



WORDS OF WISDOM

It was once set in Manchester

If you had GTA London 1969 and installed the download-only add-on London 1961, you got a multiplayer only map set in sunny and normally crime-free Manchester. These remain the only time GTA has ventured into Europe.

It wasn't going to be called Grand Theft Auto

The game was originally called Race 'n' Chase – which pretty much nails its cops and robbers intent to the mast. Matchbox objected, however, as they owned that name for their toy cars.

The first two are free

Both Grand Theft Auto and GTA2 can be downloaded absolutely free of charge from Rockstar's site. Your PC shouldn't struggle to run them these days. Hey, your mobile could probably run them... www.rockstargames.com/classics/gta.html

80s pop is in the family...

The flashily glam video for Robert Palmer's irredeemably 1980s hit Simply Irresistible was directed by Terence Donovan – father of Rockstar bigwig Terry Donovan.

...and so are classic gangster flicks

You might recognise Dan and Sam Houser's mum. She played Glenda in the classic Michael Caine revenge tale Get Carter.

You've met Sam Houser

Sam is one of the biggest of Rockstar's big cheeses – and you've met him! It's possible you've even shot him. He runs the Ammu-Nation store in GTA III. That's his likeness, and even his voice.

The cop cars changed colour

GTA III's cop cars were blue & white – just like New York's. They were changed soon after the 9/11 attacks, very late in development, to a more LAPD-ish black & white. How late in development? Watch the game's intro movie carefully....

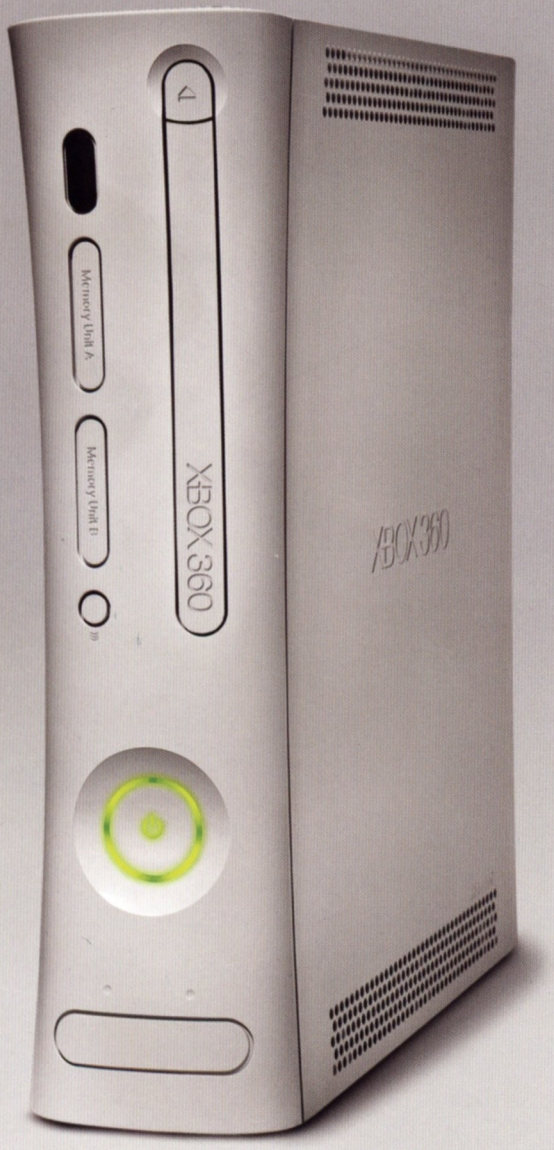
Its cover was a landmark

The New York street pictured through a fish eye lens on the very first cover is actually Fifth Avenue, at the intersection of 56th street. That means the glass skyscraper in the background is actually Donald Trump's famous Trump Tower.

Even once we had the final basic design nailed, there were plenty of options. It was so nearly sleeve-rolling boy on the cover of this magazine... but the lollypop won out.

In an alternate universe – perhaps in a newsagent tucked away in a Liberty City sidestreet – we chose another cover. Yes, CVG Presents very nearly looked like this. And these. And those. And that.

Now from £159.99ERP



1. It's a console. 2. It's a movie theatre. 3. It's all that in high-def. 4. Over 10 million people on Xbox LIVE. 5. Four wireless controllers can be connected, but we'll count that as one reason. 6. More than 300 games. 7. Game demos let you try before you buy. 8. Get the gang together without having to get the gang together. 9. Games the whole family can enjoy. 10. Retro classics on Xbox LIVE Arcade. 11. Hook up your MP3 player. 12. Hook up your digital camera. 13. Use it to instant message your friends. 14. Xbox Classics – old faves at lower prices. 15. Widescreen video chat with Xbox Live Vision camera. 16. Clever gamer tags. 17. Multi-continent play. 18. Stream content from your PC. 19. Family settings. 20. Watch movies, play movie trivia. 21. Your HD telly is lonely and wants a friend to play with. 22. Exclusive games. 23. Exclusive content. 24. 32-bit audio (trust us, that's awesome). 25. You've got photos, it's got USB ports. You two should talk. 26. 1080p games. 27. Plays all your old DVDs, except the ones you loaned to friends and really shouldn't expect to ever get back at this point. 28. Anyone can play. 29. Wireless headsets. 30. Hear the wind swirling in Dolby Digital 5.1. 31. It wants to meet your DVD library. 32. Your ex wouldn't like it. .....Find all the reasons for yourself at xbox.com

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XBOX 360