

REVEALED! FIRST NEWS ON **PLAYSTATION 3**

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONLY

The #1 Videogame Magazine

SAY HELLO TO OUR
WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

SCARFACE

YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES...OR YOUR #@!% EARS
THE WORLD'S FIRST BLOODY LOOK INSIDE

Not to be outdone...

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

This game is HUGE! (150+ hours!?)
New screens and info inside!

2 fast

STREET RACERS

Need for Speed Underground 2,
Midnight Club 3, and more previewed!

2 good

THE BIG 2'S

BIG updates on Halo 2,
Prince of Persia 2, and more!



**275+
GAMES
INSIDE**



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2



METROID PRIME 2



CATWOMAN



NFL STREET 2

- Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory ■ Oddworld: Stranger ■ Pikmin 2 ■ Burnout 3
- X-Men: Legends ■ Star Ocean: Till the End of Time ■ Viewtiful Joe (PS2)
- Silent Hill 4 ■ NASCAR 2005 ■ Sly 2 ■ Suckdeki...er...we mean Sudeki

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA™

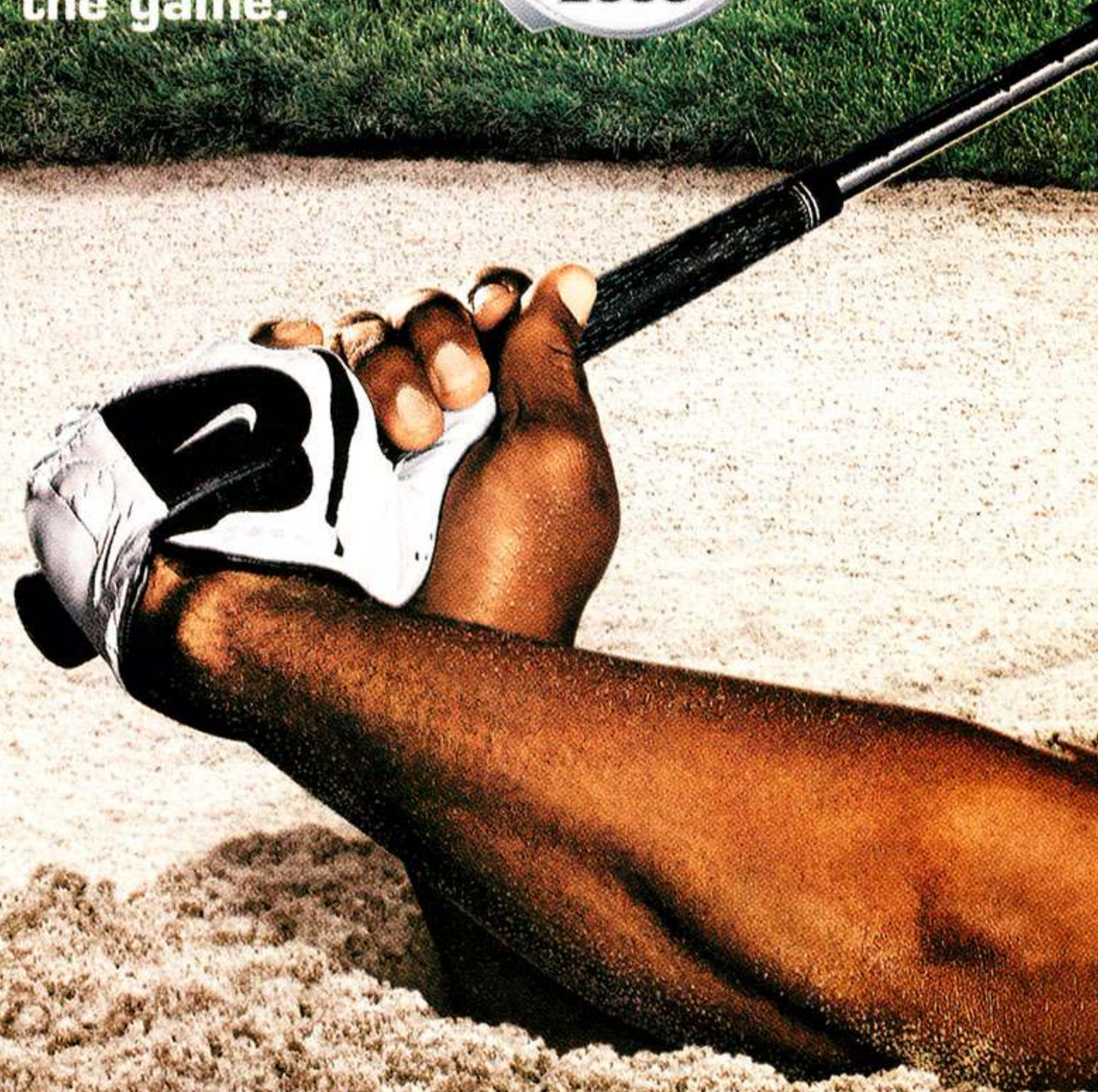
October 2004 ISSUE 183
\$6.99 U.S. / \$8.99 Canada



WWW.1UP.COM

TIGERPROOFING

It's in the game.



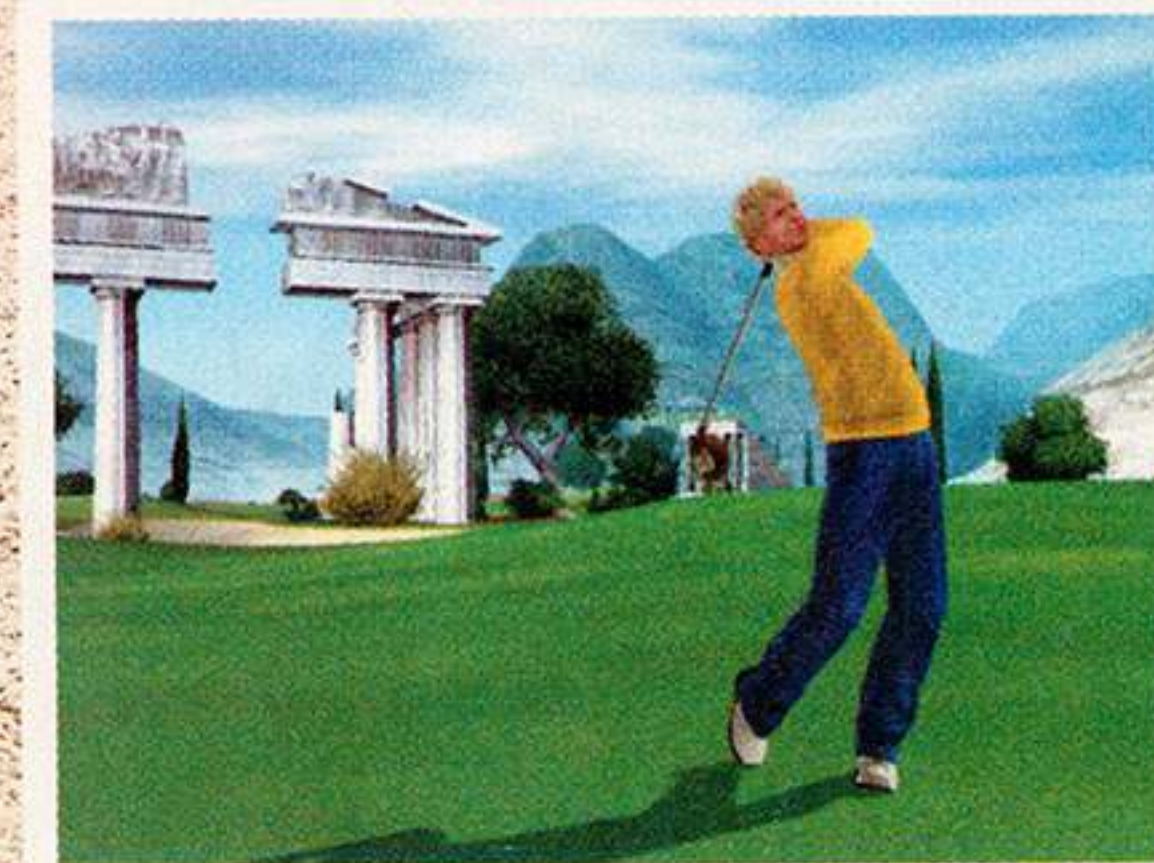
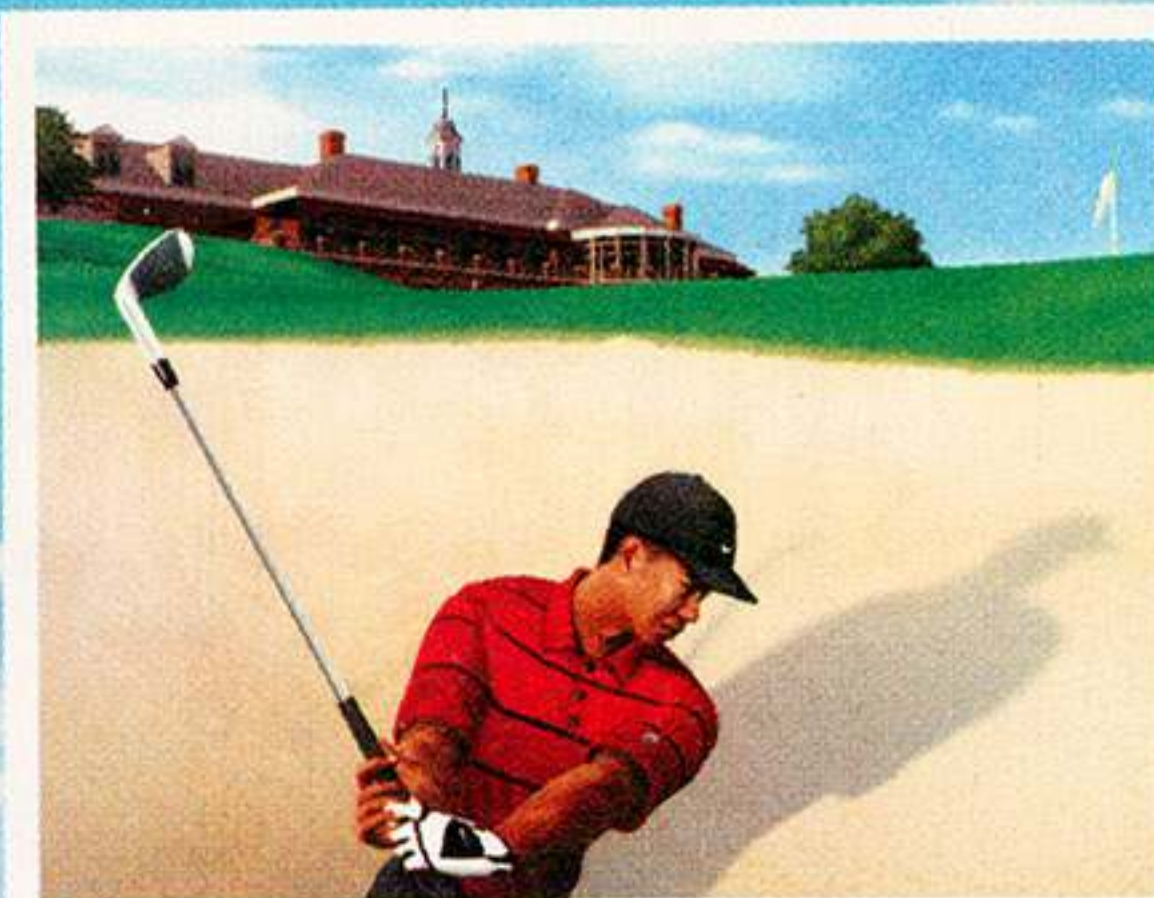
TIGER WOODS



PlayStation 2



Tiger Woods is really good at golf. So we let you alter his world. Make bunkers deeper. Make fairways narrower. Make the rough rougher. Make it rain. Make it night. Confuse and torment the greatest golfer in the world. Take it online and prove yourself the master architect. And if you and your course humble Tiger, there's always Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan and an army of unbeatable legends waiting for you around any given dogleg. Just remember, no matter how hard you make the course, you also have to play it.



www.tigerwoods2005.com



Internet Connection required for online play PlayStation 2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Not all features available on all platforms. See back of respective product packs for details.

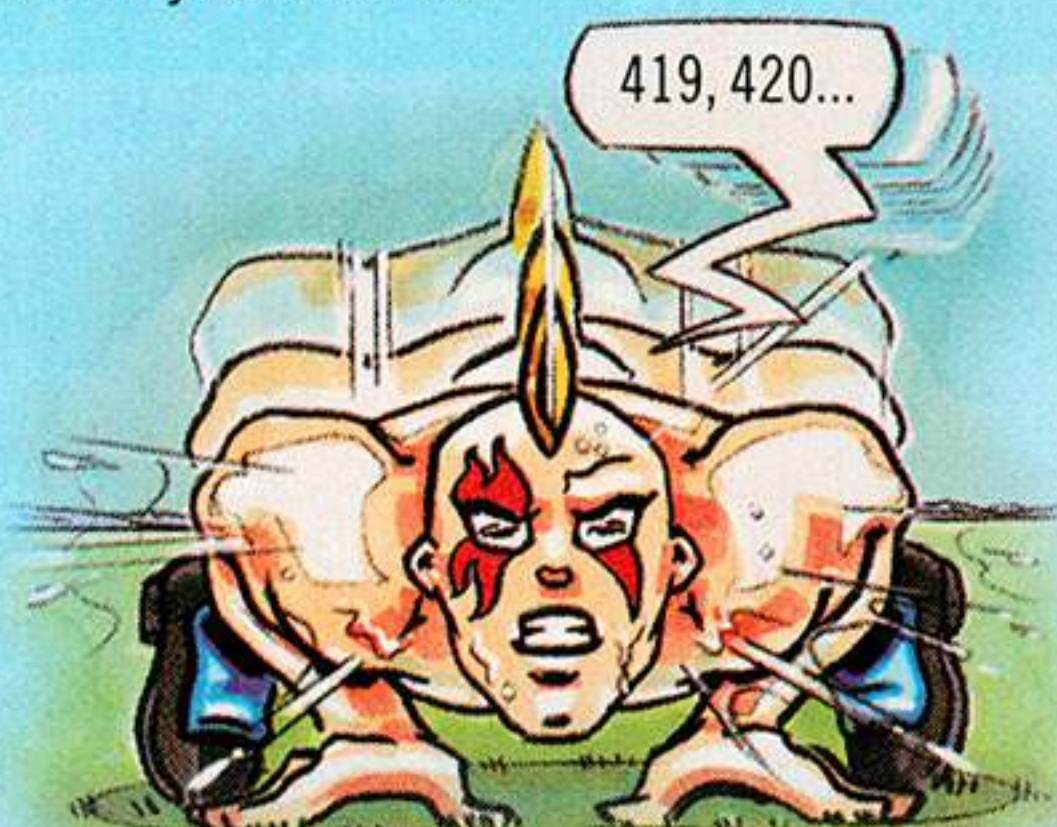
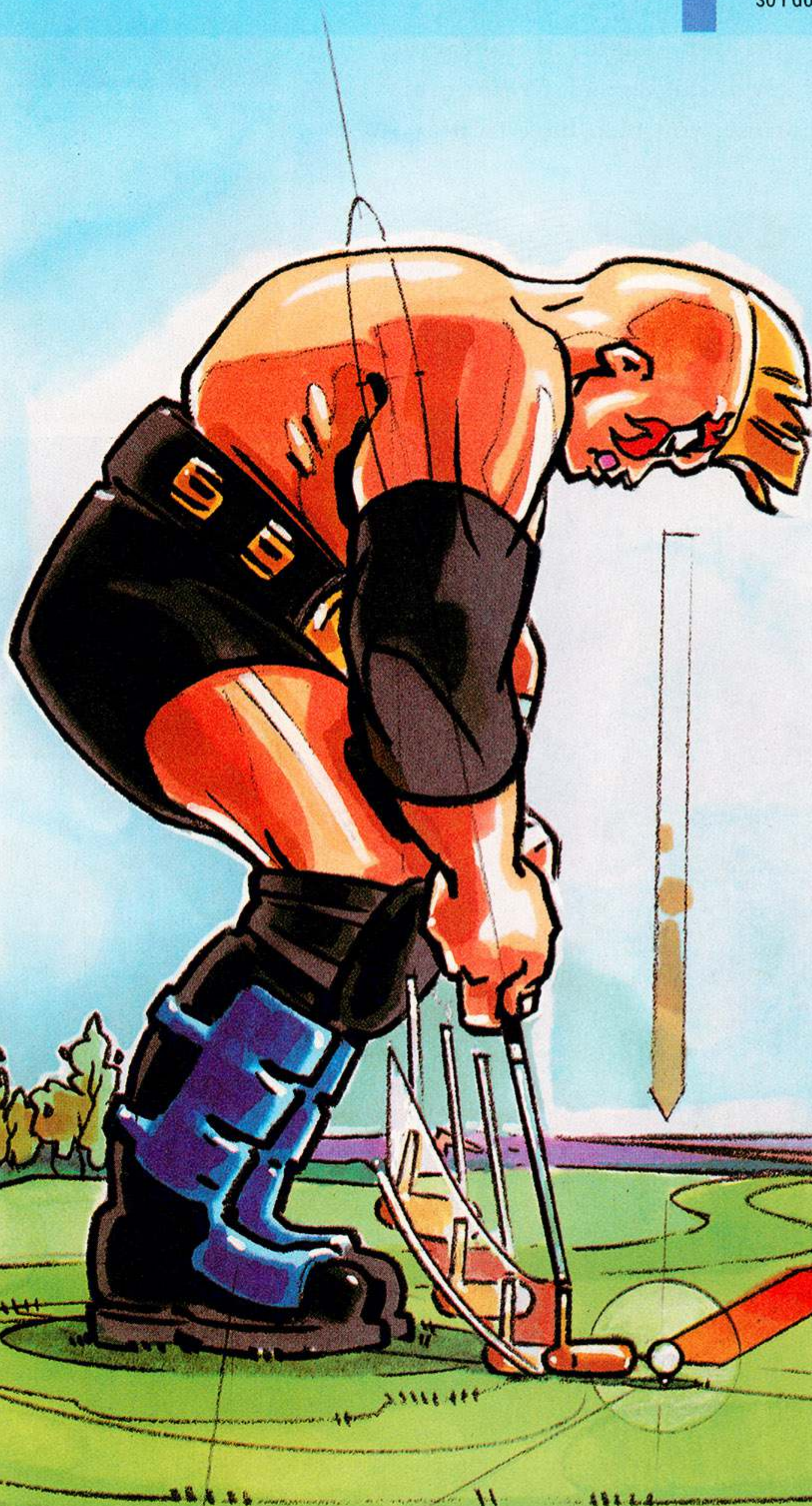
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HOT SHOTS TIPS

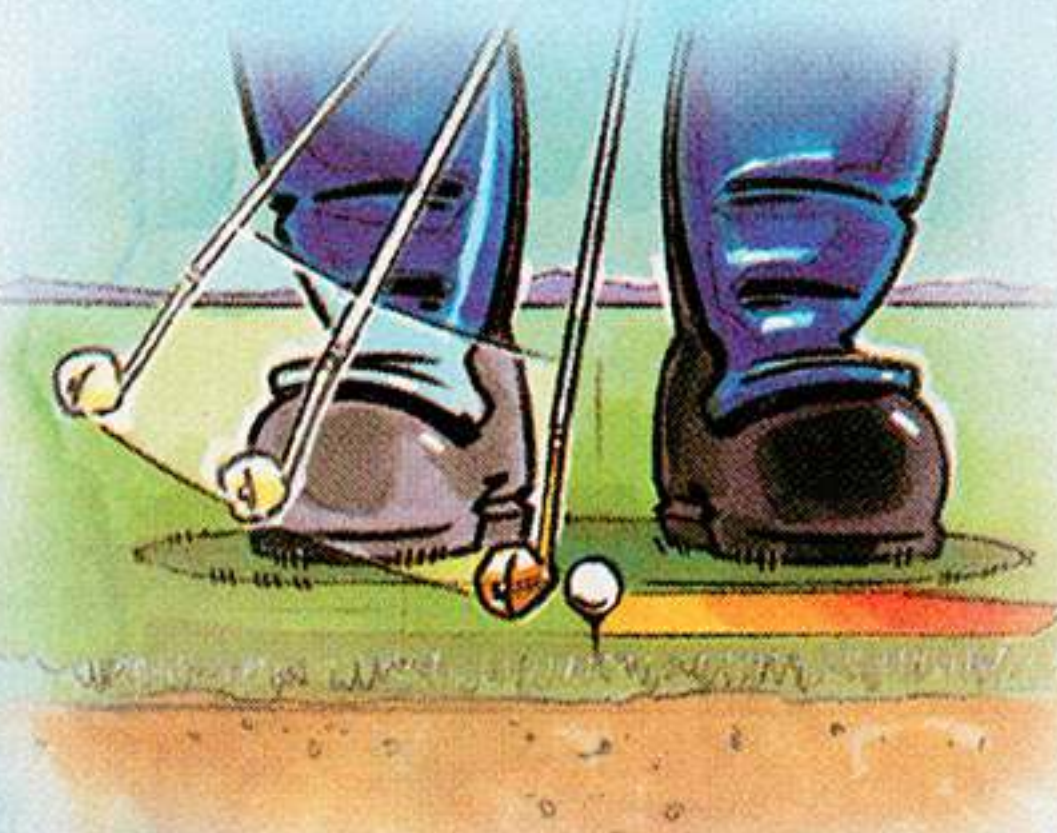
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PuttCrusher04 on the Short Game

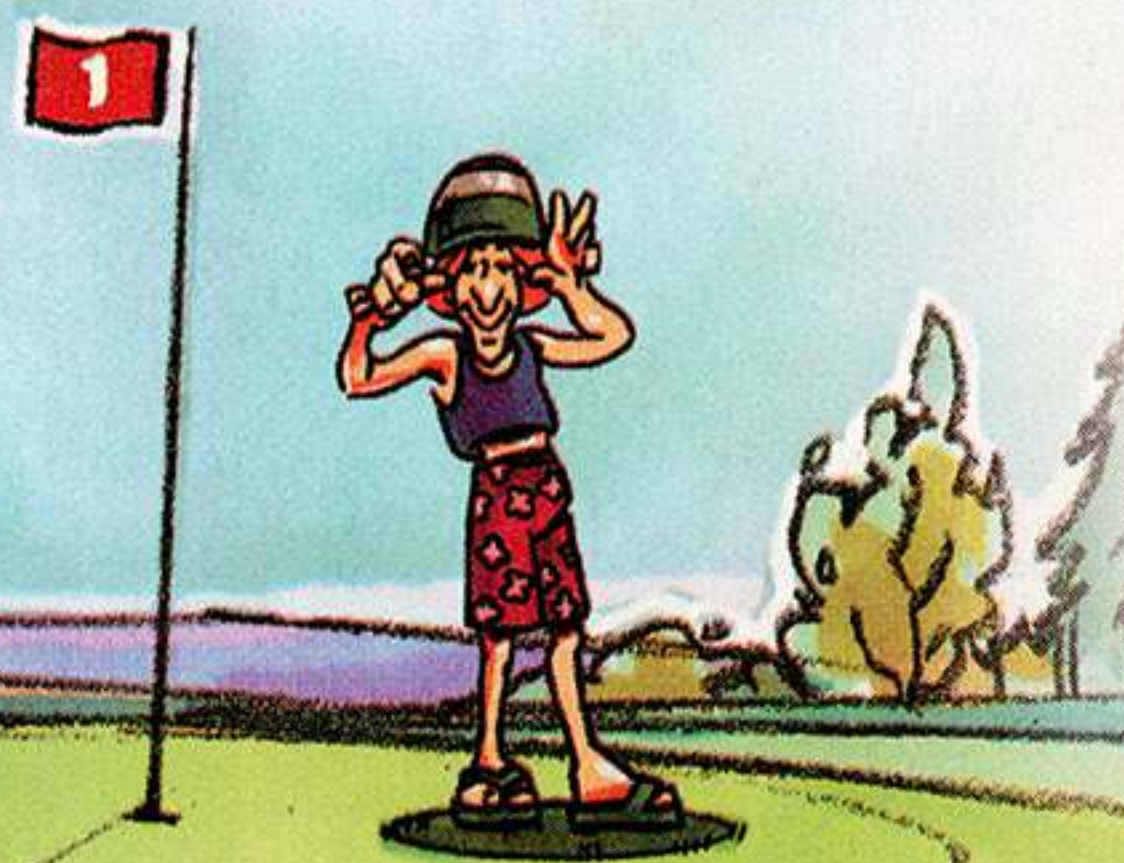
There are two places I like to blow off steam. One is the wrestling ring, where I see how high I can throw other wrestlers. The other is the putting green. A good putt depends on a proper grip. I grip the putter firmly, but just loose enough so I don't shatter it with my bare hands.



When it comes to putting, mental preparation is key. For me, bench-pressing a golf cart and a couple hundred push-ups usually do the trick.



While standing with your feet neck-width apart, bend over until you can see the ball past your pectorals.



The cast of golfers is crazier. The golf physics are sweeter. And the chance to out-birdie other players online is finally here. Play real-time tournaments online with up to 30 players, or go head-to-head, chatting it up during each round. Hot Shots Golf® FORE! Golf for the People.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.

ONLINE
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www.us.playstation.com

Online play requires Internet connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). Hot Shots Golf trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World. Play In Ours." is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Online icon

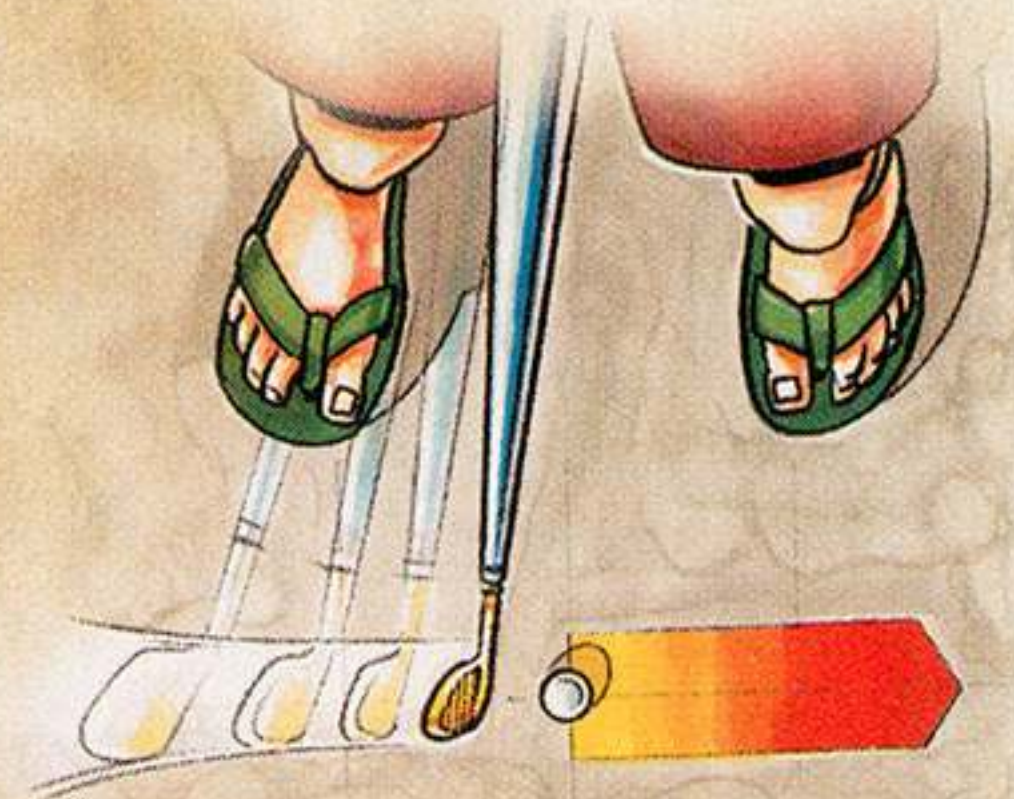
2

BunkerBreaker007 on Getting Out of the Sand

People always ask how I learned to conquer these mighty sand traps. I don't know. That's like asking how gale-force winds learn to blow just as a dude's ready to tee off. All I do know is that ever since I was a kid, I liked surfing near sand, sitting on sand, even eating sand. But that was on a dare.



Before attempting to get that ball out, thoroughly wax your wedge. Better too much than not enough.



Swing under the ball and lift it out of the sand. Then do a thorough toe check for any signs of sand jam.



PlayStation®2



PlayStation 2

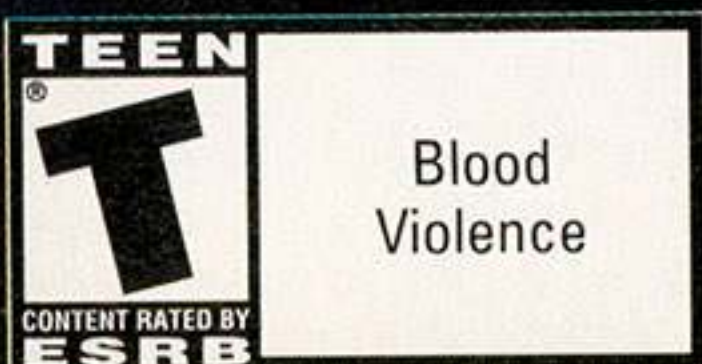


STAR OCEAN

Till the End of Time™



The year is SD 772. Fayt's vacation on the peaceful world of Hyda is shattered when an unknown military force attacks. Separated from all he knows and loves, Fayt must brave the galaxy to recover what he has lost.



SQUARE ENIX
www.square-enix-usa.com
Published by Square Enix U.S.A., Inc.



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The BARD'S TALE™

Coming Fall 2004

www.thebardstale.com



PlayStation 2



RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.



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“...Right Now, There Is No Other Game In The Genre That Looks Remotely As Good.”

- PSM

“...It Has Skyrocketed To The Top Of My Most-Wanted Games List.”

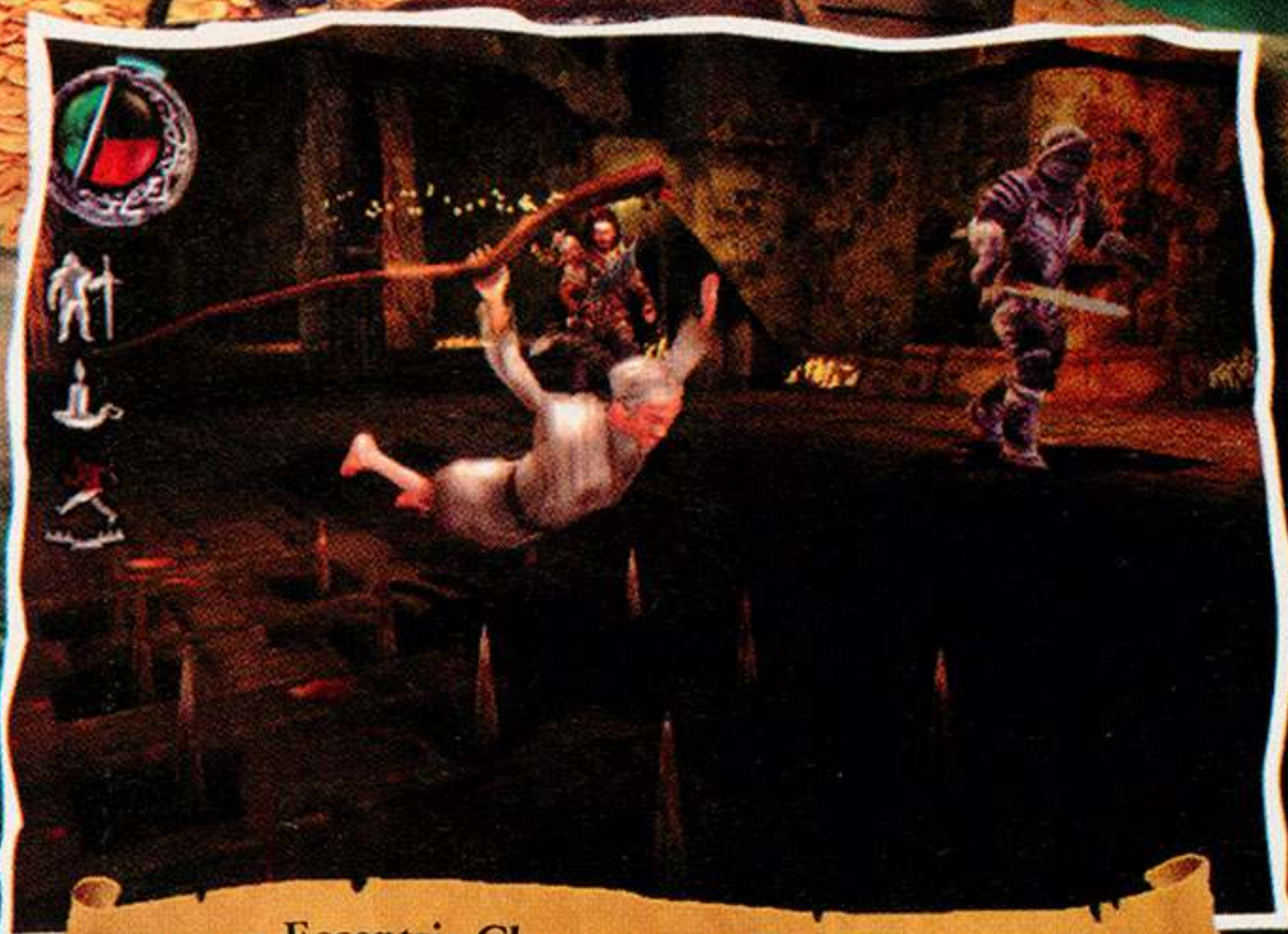
- Gamespy

“Turning RPG Clichés On Their Head.”

- Electronic Gaming Monthly

“...Intelligent Scriptwriting And A Well-Developed Sense Of Humor.”

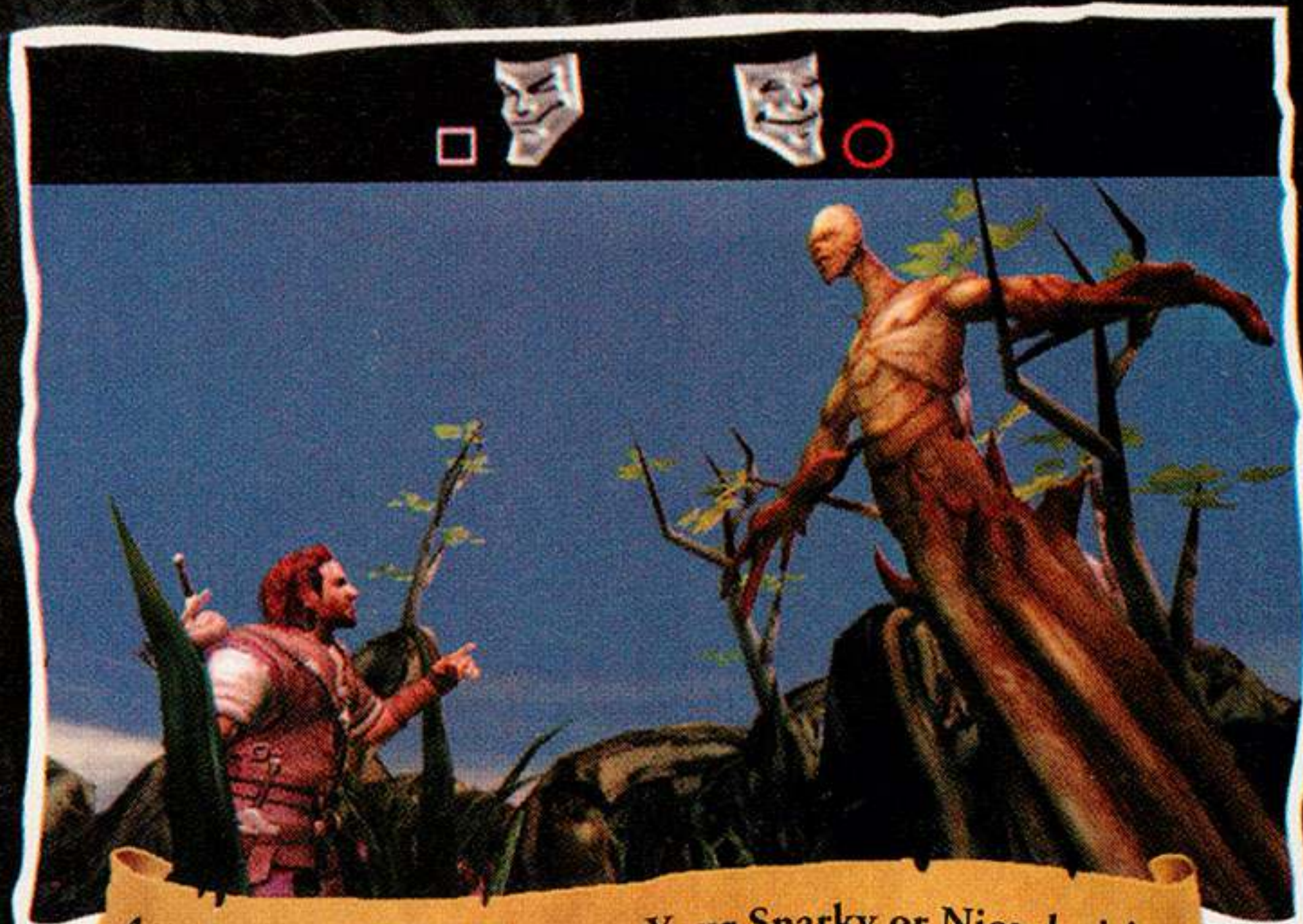
- GamePro



Summon Eccentric Characters To Do Your Dirty Work, Like This Poor Old Bastard Who Finds Traps...the Hard Way



Less A, More I - Don't Underestimate Your Crafty Opponents.



Advanced Attitude System - Your Snarky or Nice decisions change the course of the game for true replayability.

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**This battle doesn't
call for a hero.**

**It calls
for a savior.**



BUNGIE



Blood and Gore
Violence
Language

halo2.com



On November 9th
Earth Will Never Be The Same



LETTERS

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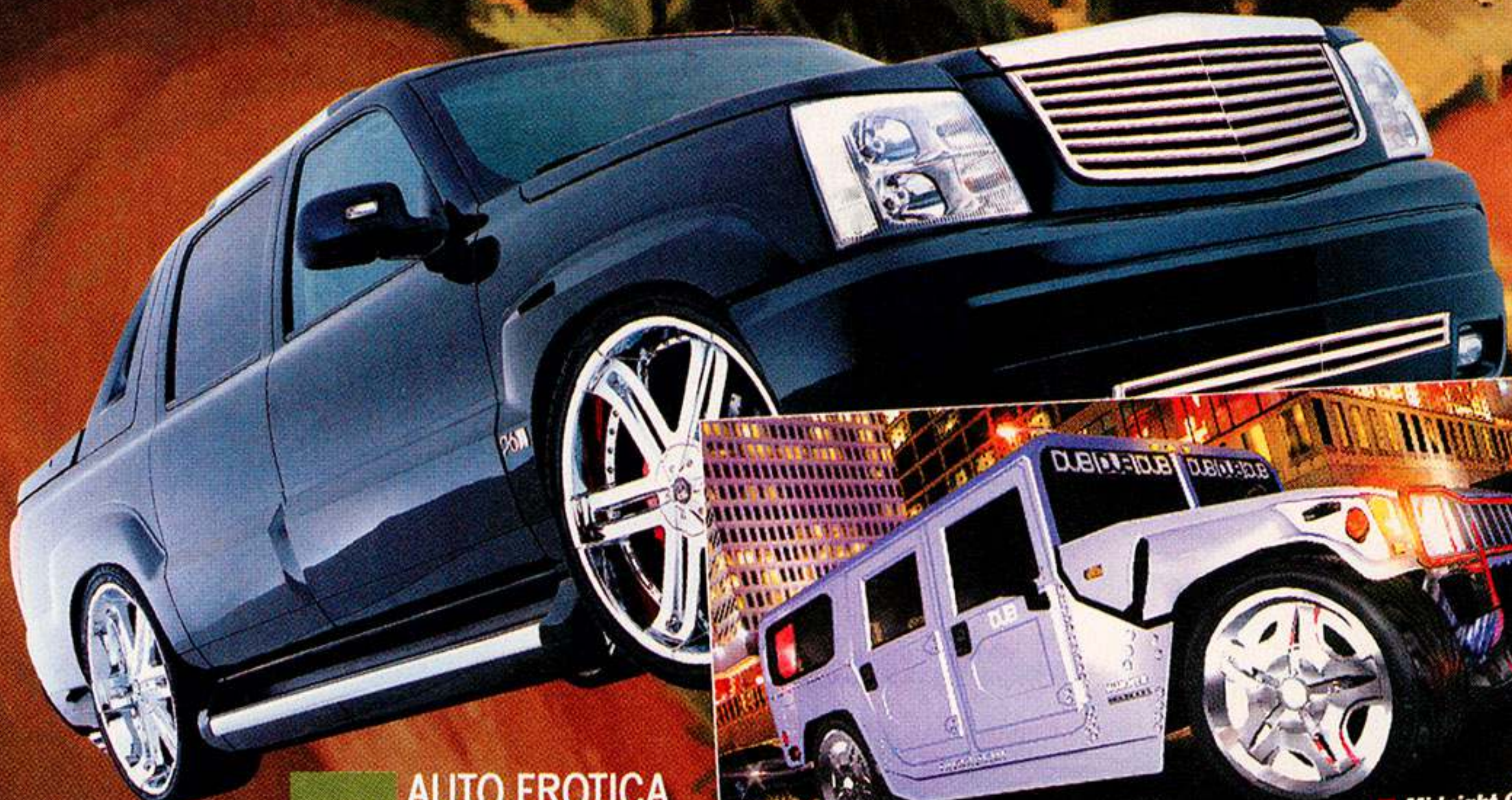
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COVER STORY:

SCARFACE

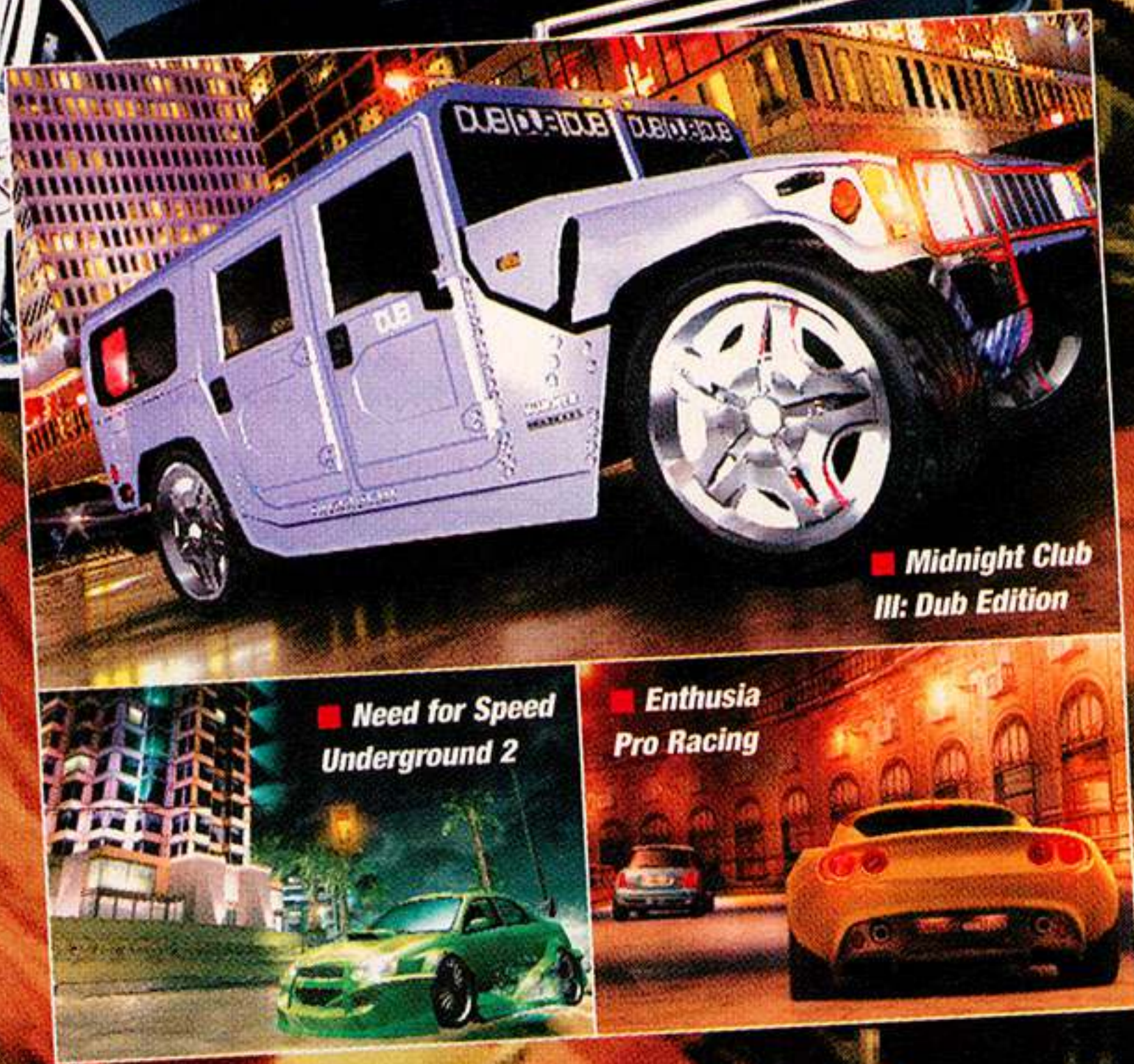
Hope your swear jar is handy—our exclusive first look at *Scarface* is cranking out more f***ing asterisks than the Cuban Missile Crisis, mang



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AUTO EROTICA

Streak down city streets in style with *Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition*, *Need for Speed Underground 2*, *Gran Turismo 4*, and more



Midnight Club III: Dub Edition

Need for Speed Underground 2

Enthusia Pro Racing

REVIEW CREW

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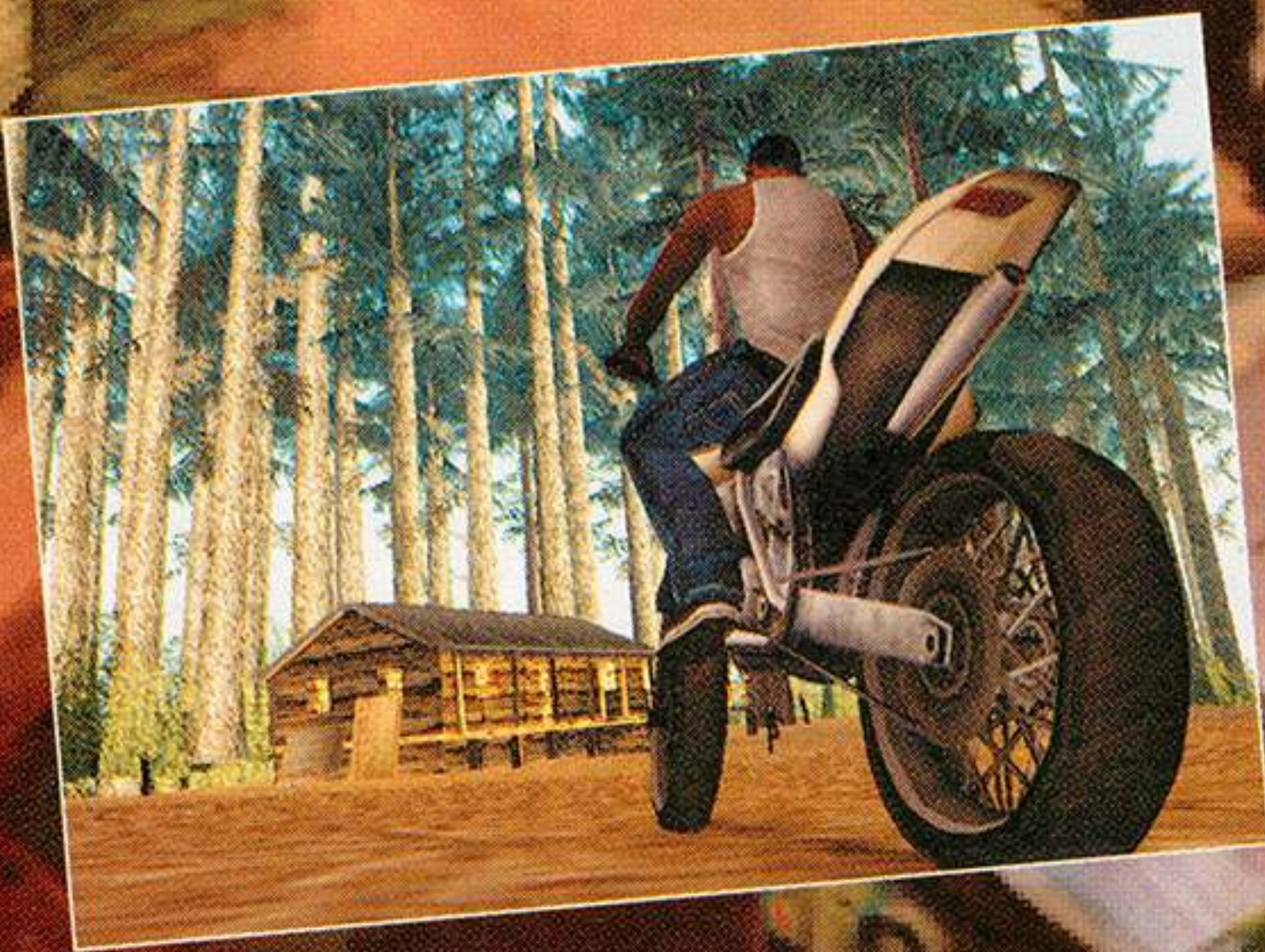
100 BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN 108 mph



111 SUDEKI

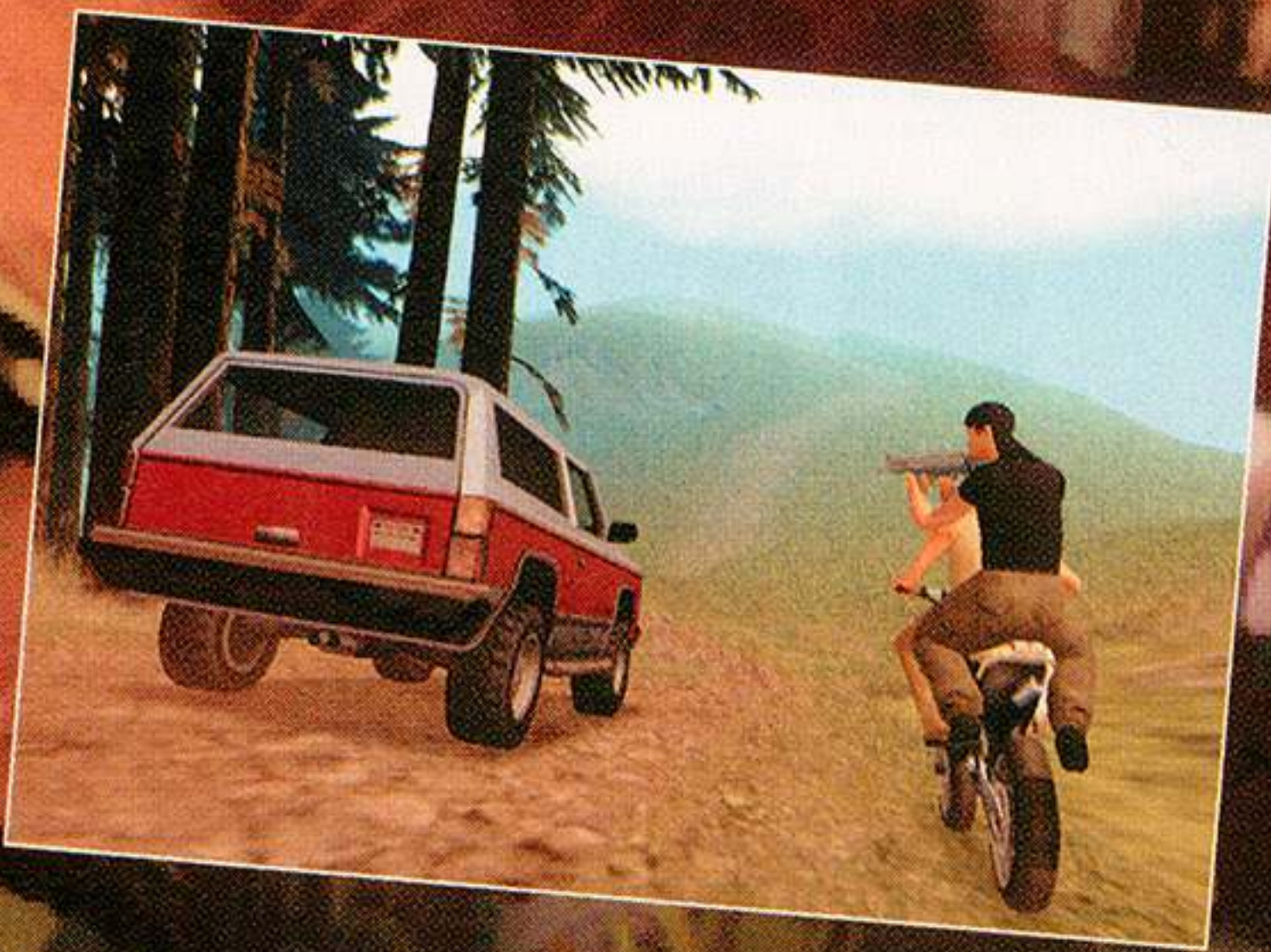


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Beat feet to the *Vice City* sequel's backcountry



68 SECOND COMINGS

Super sequels to smash hits: *Halo 2*, *NFL Street 2*, *Prince of Persia 2*, *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*, *Tony Hawk's Underground 2*, and *Sly 2: Band of Thieves*



editorial



Game magazines need to get their acts together. Right now, some of them are being run by a bunch of amateurs instead of journalists with a sense of responsibility and integrity.

Example: Recently, I was negotiating

for a cover story with a big game publisher whose name won't be mentioned here. The timing was right, but guess what? The company hit me with a clause: *EGM* could get the exclusive review only if we guaranteed the game would receive a certain review score or higher. I couldn't believe my ears. I ended the discussion right there, saying that would never happen in a million years

with *EGM* or any other Ziff Davis Media publication. I gave up an incredible exclusive, but that was not happening under my watch.

I later learned that another publisher's magazine wanted to take them up on the offer; I guess they were hungry for the exclusive. Maybe that game deserves high scores, maybe it doesn't. Doesn't matter. All magazines have a responsibility to their

readers, and without that, we're nothing more than glossy toilet paper.

You might think I'd want our competitors to be lousy. But when they suck, it makes us all look bad. All I can do is promise you, our readers, that we will never do anything to compromise your trust in us. We'll continue to be honest, unbiased, and fair in everything we do in this magazine.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu

Meet UP @ 1UP.com

The all-new 1UP is here, and it's exploding with new features! We've still got all of that great daily content you've come to know and love, but we're now the first-ever destination for gamers to meet, play, get informed, and show off.

Check out the cool new stuff you can do!

If you have a GameFace, we have a place for you to put it.



YOUR GAMEFACE

Show off your game collection and trade games with others!

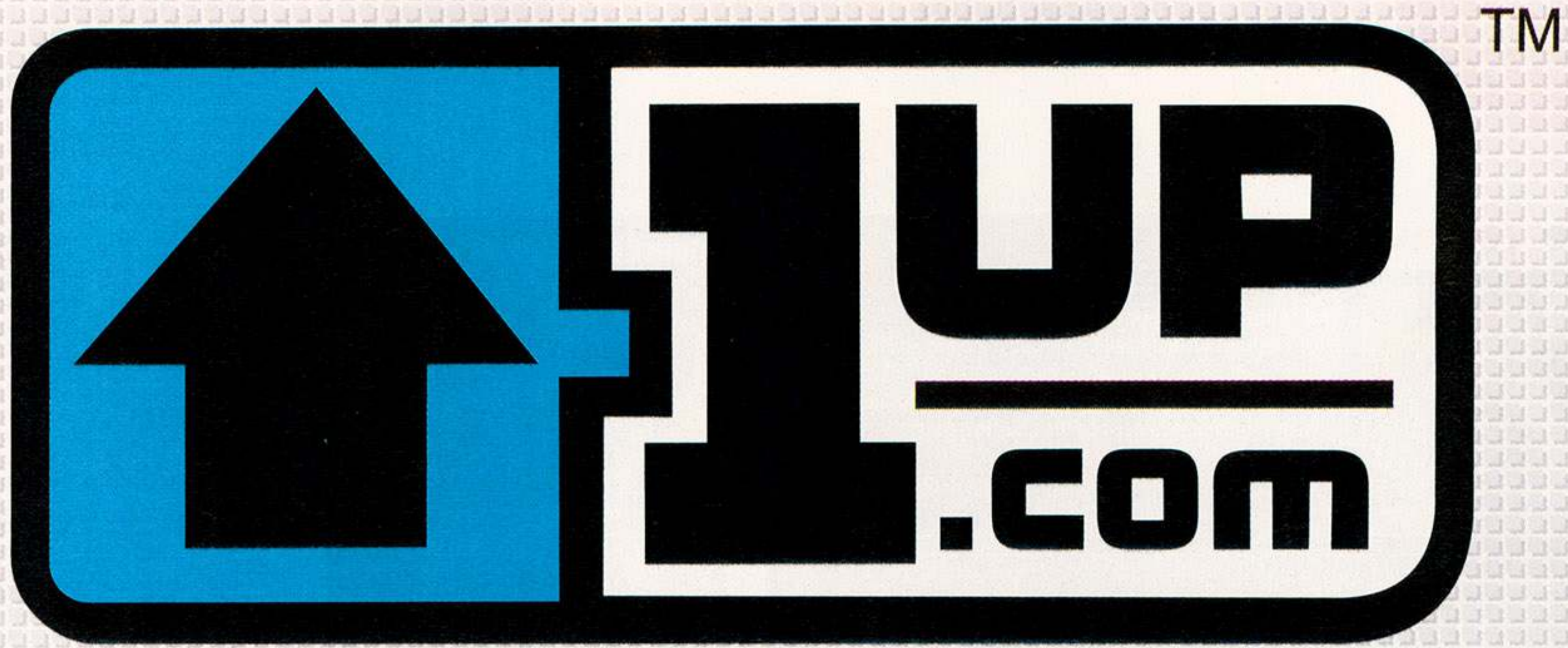


YOUR GAMES



Get YOUR GameFace on.





Get clubbing! Join clubs or create your own and invite all of your friends.

MY CLUBS (7)

- EGM Fans**
Members: 364
[JOIN THIS CLUB](#)
- Shoe's World**
Members: 496
[JOIN THIS CLUB](#)
- SOCOM II Club**
Members: 283
[JOIN THIS CLUB](#)

YOUR CLUBS

Make friends with other gamers - including us editors.

You Share 3 Friends

- John Davison**
Oakland CA
Points: 75,250
- Dan Hsu**
Honolulu HI
Points: 65,250
- Sam Kennedy**
San Jose CA
Points: 33,250

YOUR FRIENDS

You've got a voice, let it be heard! Tell everyone what you're playing or doing.

DAN'S 1UP JOURNAL

My day at the office

Some of you reading this will need no more than "Ico with good combat and witty dialogue" to understand why *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* is getting the second-highest score possible. The rest will need a little more explanation than that, which I'm only too happy to provide.

The setup in *Prince of Persia* is a very simple one, and it stays simple the whole way through. When the Prince's father raids another castle, assisted by its traitorous Vizier, the Prince is eager to gain glory for himself and steals the Dagger of Time. When the whole party arrives at the Sultan's palace and presents their spoils to the Sultan as a gift, the Vizier tricks the Prince into unleashing the Sands of Time, which transforms all of the palace's inhabitants except the Prince, the Vizier, and a captured princess named Farah into sand demons. It's then up to the Prince to reverse the spell using the power contained in his *Dagger of Time*.

Tuesday, January 20, 2004 5:17 AM [PERMALINK URL](#)

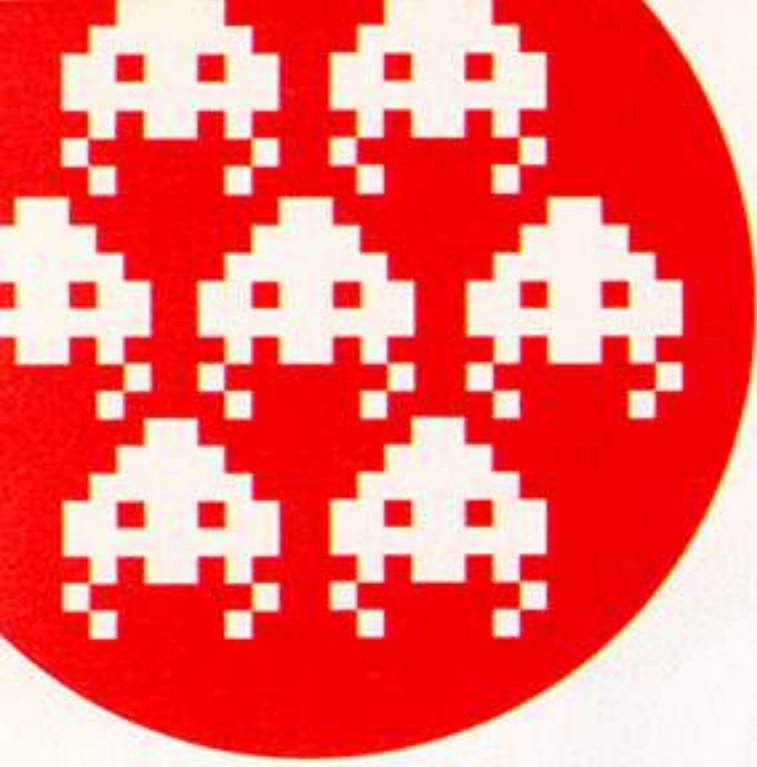
Next generation Consoles

The gameplay is pretty simple, too. The Prince has quite a few moves, but nothing that seems superhuman. The wall-running is a stretch, but it doesn't take much suspension of disbelief (especially in a game with zombie crows and time-reversing sand) to believe it would be possible for an extremely physically fit person, like the Prince. Simple.

YOUR JOURNAL



We're all here. Join us at 1UP.com.



staff

live to game, game to live

the review crew



DAN "SHOE" HSU, Editor-in-Chief
Shoe was recently humbled in a public match of *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* (for charity—check his Blog's archives for the deets), so he's taking a break from that game for now. Wait, never mind. He's back on the addictive wagon.
1UP.com Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Dead or Alive Ultimate, Phantom Brave, SCPT*
Fave Genres: Just about everything

MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor
When we realized Mark was having his cult of pikmin servants do all his work this month, we were all like, "WTF?" But then we realized they were better writers. Editor's note: The pikmin were not allowed to write Mark's *Pikmin 2* review.
1UP.com Blog: egmmark.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Pikmin 2, Katamari Damacy, Halo, Burnout 3*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Shooters



JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor
Having to review two massive role-playing games this month pushed Jennifer to new frontiers of sleep deprivation. Now that she's discovered how to operate on four hours' sleep, she's excited to get back to *City of Heroes*.
1UP.com Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Pikmin 2, Donkey Konga, City of Heroes (PC)*
Fave Genres: RPG, Adventure, Action Sports, Rhythm-Action

CRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor
Shoplifting Optimus Prime from Wal-Mart is out. Identity theft is in. Cris learned all about this new criminal craze by reviewing *Spy Fiction* for PS2. Spy fact: The game blows, but it does teach players that espionage is a cinch with the right mask.
1UP.com Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Pikmin 2, Burnout 3, Silent Hill 4: The Room*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, RPG



SHANE BETTENHAUSEN, Previews Editor
Driven mad by *Silent Hill 4*'s oppressive claustrophobia, Shane barricaded himself in his room. There, he divided his time between playing the pile of RPGs he had to review and conducting "surveillance" on the girls' dorm across the street.
1UP.com Blog: egmshane.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Silent Hill 4, Phantom Brave, Burnout 3*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, RPG, Fighting, Karaoke

DEMIAN LINN, Reviews Editor
The Internet, the universe, and *EGM* joined forces to play a deliciously cruel joke on Demian this month. The world's biggest anti-Blog crusader now has a Blog of his own. Now everyone will know what he had for breakfast. The horror.
1UP.com Blog: egmdemian.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Burnout 3, ESPN NHL 2K5, Burnout 3, Burnout 3*
Fave Genres: Action, Hockey, Racing, Fighting



BRYAN INTIHAR, News Editor
Bryan was way too busy this month to sit down for a bio picture. So when it came time to choose between a shot of a toothless hockey player and a *Sudeki* character, he decided to go with the lesser of two uglies.
1UP.com Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Burnout 3, ESPN NHL 2K5, GTA: Vice City*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports

SHAWN ELLIOTT, Associate Editor
Shawn resented his nameless status as Shoe's "partner" in a recent *Splinter Cell* charity contest. After having his ass handed to him, however, he was happy to have remained anonymous.
1UP.com Blog: egmshawn.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Burnout 3, Guilty Gear X2 #Reload, Pikmin 2, Silent Hill 4, Call of Duty: United Offenses (PC)*
Fave Genres: Fighting, Shooters, Racing, Action



Guest Reviewers



JON DUDLAK
Jon's genius cat, Mr. Head, was nice enough to step in and review *Catwoman* this month.



GREG FORD
Tuning both mechs and cars in review games this month gave Ford some ideas. We're scared.



KEVIN GIFFORD
Always late to the party, Kev just got around to finishing *Suikoden II* (PS1). He's been weepy ever since.



DAN LEAHY
Dan misses the *EGM* football seasons of old. Look for him online at www.theprs.com for a game.



PATRICK MAURO
Patrick's working through a serious case of road rage he developed while playing *NASCAR 2005*.



JOHN RICCIARDI
John works two jobs and goes to school and still stays up to play *Fire Emblem* until three every night.

■ When they're not out fighting crime on the streets of San Francisco, the editorial staffs of our sister mags **GMR**, **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE**, **XBOX NATION**, and **1UP.COM** take a bite out of our criminal workloads by helping us out with news, reviews, and previews.

The Contributors

- Reporter **GEOFF KEIGHLEY** took a peek behind the blue door at Sony to get the scoop on the next-generation PlayStation for our top story in Press Start....
- Writer **JON GIBSON** comparison-shopped to find out which game-store chains offer the best trade-in value for your used games....
- *Masters of Doom* author **DAVID KUSHNER** went back to school and observed a new academic movement to make videogame studies a legit subject....
- Former *GameNOW* editor **PHIL THEOBALD** donned his stealthiest camo to gather intel on the *Metal Gear* comic....
- While researching great fansites for Online, writer **JOHN BRANDON** played the role of fanboy suspiciously well....

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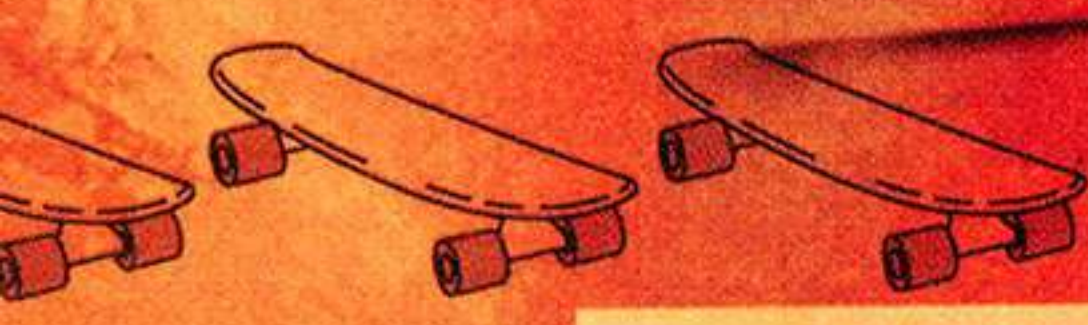
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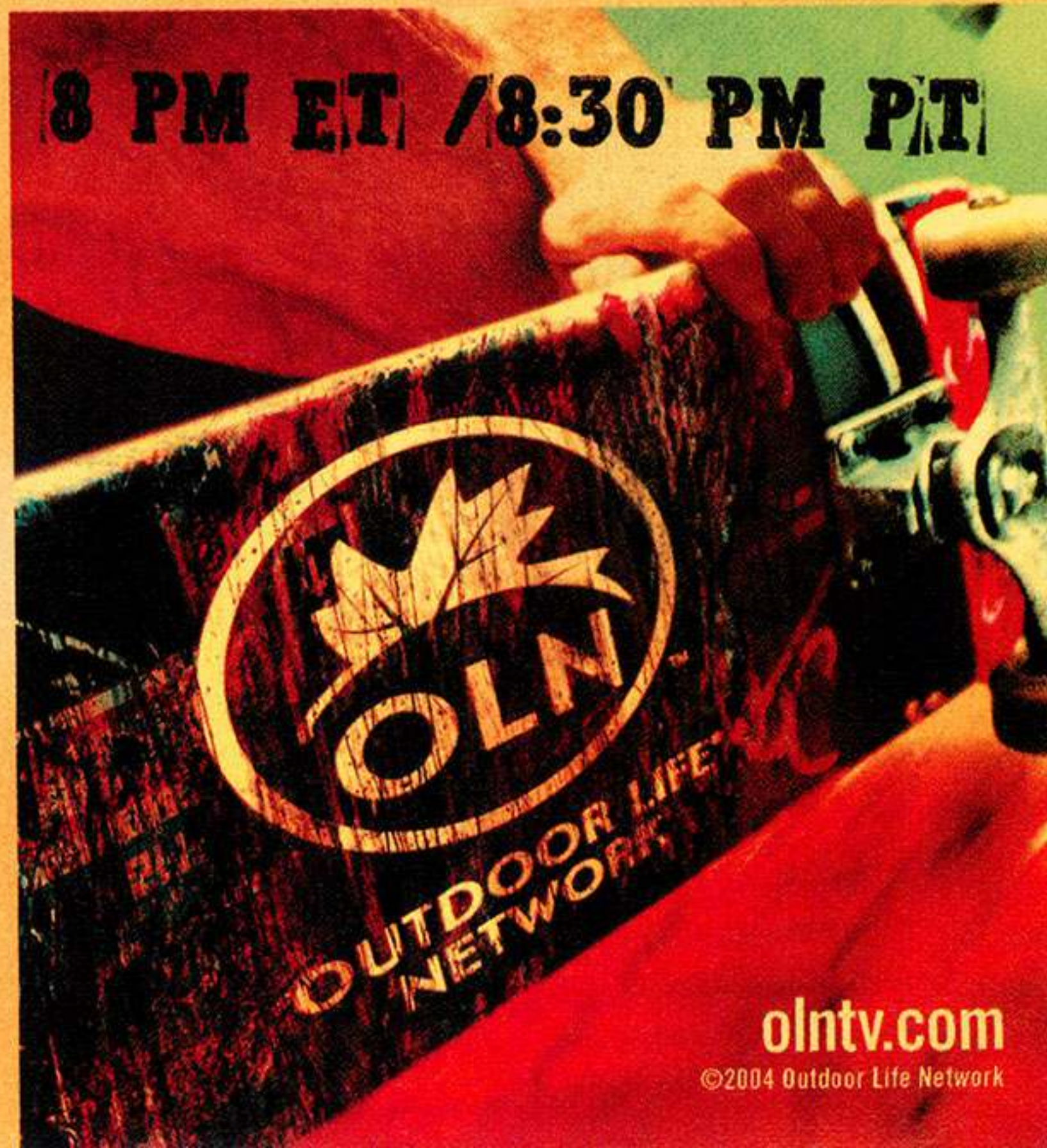
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Letters

ranting, raving, and a bird that can beat you at Soul Calibur



Letter of the month

Progressive pappy

In *EGM* #181, page 20, reader Josh Puckett suggested programming consoles to prevent children from playing inappropriate games. Thing is, I'm responsible for what my kids play—not Sony, not Nintendo, not Microsoft, not the stores that sell their products, and certainly not some politician. Deciding what's permissible is my burden as a parent, even when that means watching the wretched *Garfield* movie and learning to play *Pokémon*.

—Chris Courtney

While Xbox's ratings-based control feature is a bonus for busy parents, we agree: You can't beat over-the-shoulder supervision, especially with today's tech-savvy tykes. By the way, how much do you give for allowance? We're looking for new guardians.



Congrats, Chris Courtney! As our Letter of the Month writer, you've won a copy of whatever game we happen to have on hand. (That *Burnout 3* box is just there to tease ya.)

Halo 2D

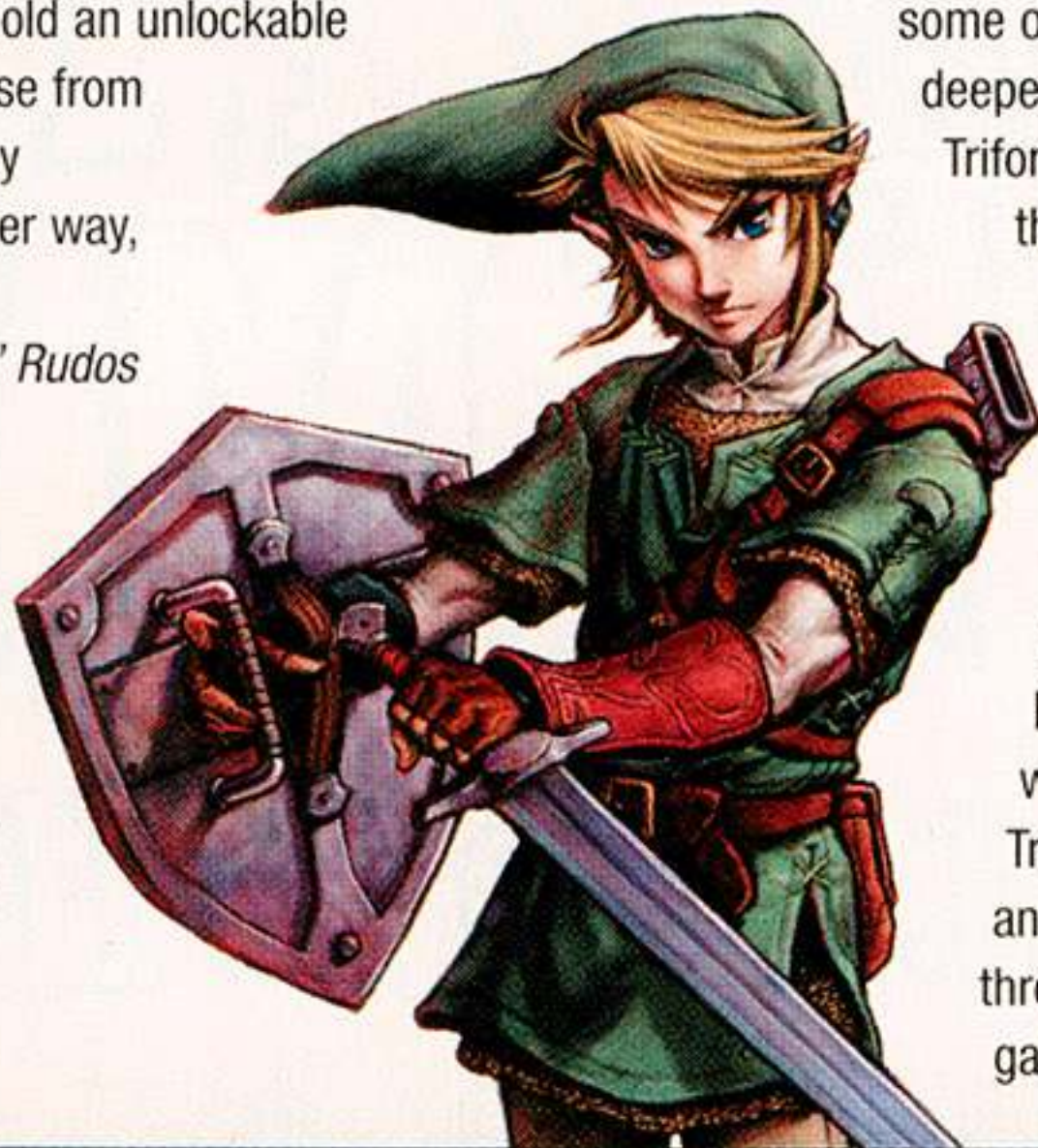
So I'm searching through screens at Ebgames.com when, low and behold, I find what seem to be shots of a 2D *Halo 2* side-scroller (see the pics for proof). What's it all about? Might *Halo 2* hold an unlockable minigame? Or are these from the rumored Game Boy Advance version? Either way, I've gotta have it.

—Chris "Bassy" Rudos

Sadly neither, Chris. According to Microsoft, what you're seeing is a "fan-created tribute that will not be included in the *Halo 2* collector's edition."

Diary of madmen

On a recent trip to New Orleans, a friend and I decided to play through *The Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* (N64). One night we began to grasp some of the game's deeper meanings. The Triforce symbolizes the Holy Trinity of Christian tradition. Since Zelda holds the Triforce of Wisdom, she represents the Holy Spirit. Link, who wields the Triforce of Courage and sacrifices much throughout the game, stands in for



Jesus. As for God's identity in the game, well, that left us guessing. My pal suggested that *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto holds that honor, as Link is, in a roundabout way, his son.

Note: We deny responsibility for any and all future cults inspired by our discovery.

—Andy Burras

Let's get this straight. You went to the Big Easy, but instead of bothering with all the beads, booze, and boobies, you shut yourselves inside and thought up this crackpot theology? Sweet!

FYI: Germany lost

I've saved the day in several Word War II shooters and even some set in the Gulf, but where's the World War I action? Games are the only history I get, and I

need to know what happened.

—Chris Brooks

Ground combat in the Great War just doesn't seem suited for fun and games, Chris. Between forays into a no-man's-land of lethal artillery fire, soldiers spent most of their time in squalid trenches on static lines, covering their mouths with urine-soaked cloth to keep German gas from liquefying their lungs.

Group think

In last month's reviews, all three editors openly discuss *Madden* and *ESPN NFL 2K5*; Mark MacDonald refers to Crispin Boyer's *Spider-Man 2* text; and Jennifer Tsao mentions the other two *Malice* write-ups. How do you keep from influencing each other's review scores?

—Nicojo ▶

POST OFFICE

Bull sessions from our message boards, boards.1UP.com (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* forums)



■ "Know what they call *Grand Theft Auto* in Paris? They call it *Grand Theft Le Car*."

Box office to game box

Which classic movie would you like to see made into a game?

Drbuns: With a single level you play over and over, *Groundhog Day* is a lax designer's dream come true.

Neoism: *Pulp Fiction* on a pair of discs: one for Sam "Jules" Jackson, the other for Bruce "Butch" Willis.

Chixdiggitt: *Battle Royale* [Ed.—an ultraviolent Japanese cult classic that never came out in the U.S.]: a handful of participants isolated on an online island form shifting alliances and have at it until only one man's left standing.

Acelinks: Slip into sorority houses to swipe panties and plant cameras—*Revenge of the Nerds* would so totally redefine stealth.

Back to the front
'Nam's the new WWII of shooters, but will the setting stick?

T_Devil: Not if hippies scream "baby killers" and spit on us when the closing credits roll.

Dead in Red: Does Vietnam even have enough epic battles to base an exciting game on?

Senor_SP: Unlike Vietnam, the world remembers and respects the Second World War. And yeah, the jungle just isn't the best theatre for war games.

T_Devil: Wrong. In jungle warfare the environment is every bit as lethal as your enemies. Factor in booby traps, invisible foes, venomous snakes, and unpredictable weather and you've got a setting scarier than *Doom's*.

CONTACT EGM

Astonished by the accuracy with which our resident astrologist reads your stars (page 124)? Shoot her a telepathic thank you or simply send it to us at EGM@ziffdavis.com or:

EGM Letters

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1UP.com member of the month

Visited 1UP.com lately? The revamped site now lets you create personal pages and clubs, just like horror-game-loving hottie Raychul here.

Name: Raychul Moore

Age: 23

Favorite Genre: Survival-Horror

Favorite Games: *Silent Hill*, *Fatal Frame*, *Grand Theft Auto III*

Turn-ons: *Dead or Alive Beach Volleyball*'s bounce and bikinis; guys who don't mind beating bosses for me or playing for hours on end when I just feel like watching

Pet Peeves: People who put the wrong games in the wrong cases

1UP Address: Raychul.1UP.com



OOPS!

Capcom developed the cell phone shooter *Commando*, not Upstart Games as our June issue (#179) had it.



Birdbrain

Pete, my pet cockatiel, likes videogames, too. Check out the picture of him playing *Soul Calibur 2*.

—Mike Reyes

Neat trick, Mike. Our canaries just peck at the corn-colored parts of our controllers.

“I like guys who don't mind beating bosses for me.”

—Raychul Moore

➤ Reviewers do discuss their opinions with each other—after they've decided what score they're going to give a game. Otherwise, you're right—they could influence each other. For the *Madden* and *ESPN NFL* football reviews last month (and this month's hockey reviews on page 99), the three writers committed to their scores before the discussion took place.

But we wouldn't want to completely cut them off from each other in little hermetically sealed, soundproof boxes. Trash must be talked when trash must be talked.

Left-out lefty

I'm a Nintendo devotee, but I don't think I'll be supporting the new DS handheld. Although the technology sounds interesting—twin screens, touch sensitivity, Wi-Fi, and whatnot—I foresee a major problem: How will us southpaws comfortably control the stylus with our right hands in games that require us to simultaneously work the D-pad with our left hands?

—Kurt Koegler

While Nintendo declined to comment, there's hope for you yet, Kurt. *Metroid*

Prime: Hunters lets lefties use the handheld's four face buttons as a substitute controller, and it's likely that other titles will, too.

Life imitating art imitating life

I'm in the process of moving, and while packing my stuff I said to myself, "This is just like *The Sims*!" Then it dawned on me that I'd just compared my life to a game that simulates life, and I felt like a dumb-ass.

—Joe Welker

Statistically speaking

Who or what determines the stats we see for all of our favorite players in football games? Does Madden himself sit down and rank every single athlete's attributes from speed to leadership? How do the developers arrive at accurate figures?

—Ed Leahy

"We set up an internal scouting group, tied into NFL insider sources such as coaches and players, who track players and rosters all year," says an EA Sports representative, who asked to remain unnamed. "In addition, we use a professional scouting service that provides us with unbiased personnel evaluations to use in our ratings. But John Madden is still the final check on our work, and his insight is always helpful in arriving at the ratings in each year's *Madden NFL Football*."

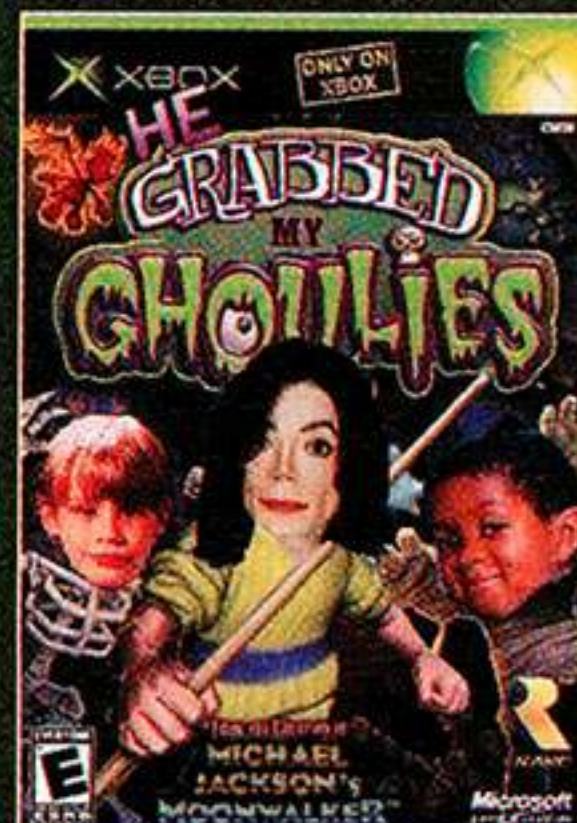
The future is now

I know that print can't keep pace with up-to-the-minute online media, but previewing *Tekken 5* in 2004? Come on, the game is already on store shelves...well, at least in India, where I snapped this un-Photoshopped pic.

—Alok S.

GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Sick of the status quo? Scheme up the game of your dreams and send it (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama



HE GRABBED MY GHOULIES!

The purported pedophile Michael Jackson sets out to prove he's really a misunderstood Peter Pan by hosting a sleepover for minors. As the Gloved One, your goal is to keep the little hand from touching the big hand, even at the stroke of

midnight. If one of your greedy li'l guests manages to make contact and shout "He grabbed my ghoulies!" it'll cost you millions. Once you're too poor to afford more plastic surgery, it's game over.

—Johnny D.



■ We were pumped, too...until we opened it and found a pirated copy of *Clay Fighter*.

We Made the First Level.



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EXPERIENCE COUNTS



PS3: WORK NOW IN PROGRESS

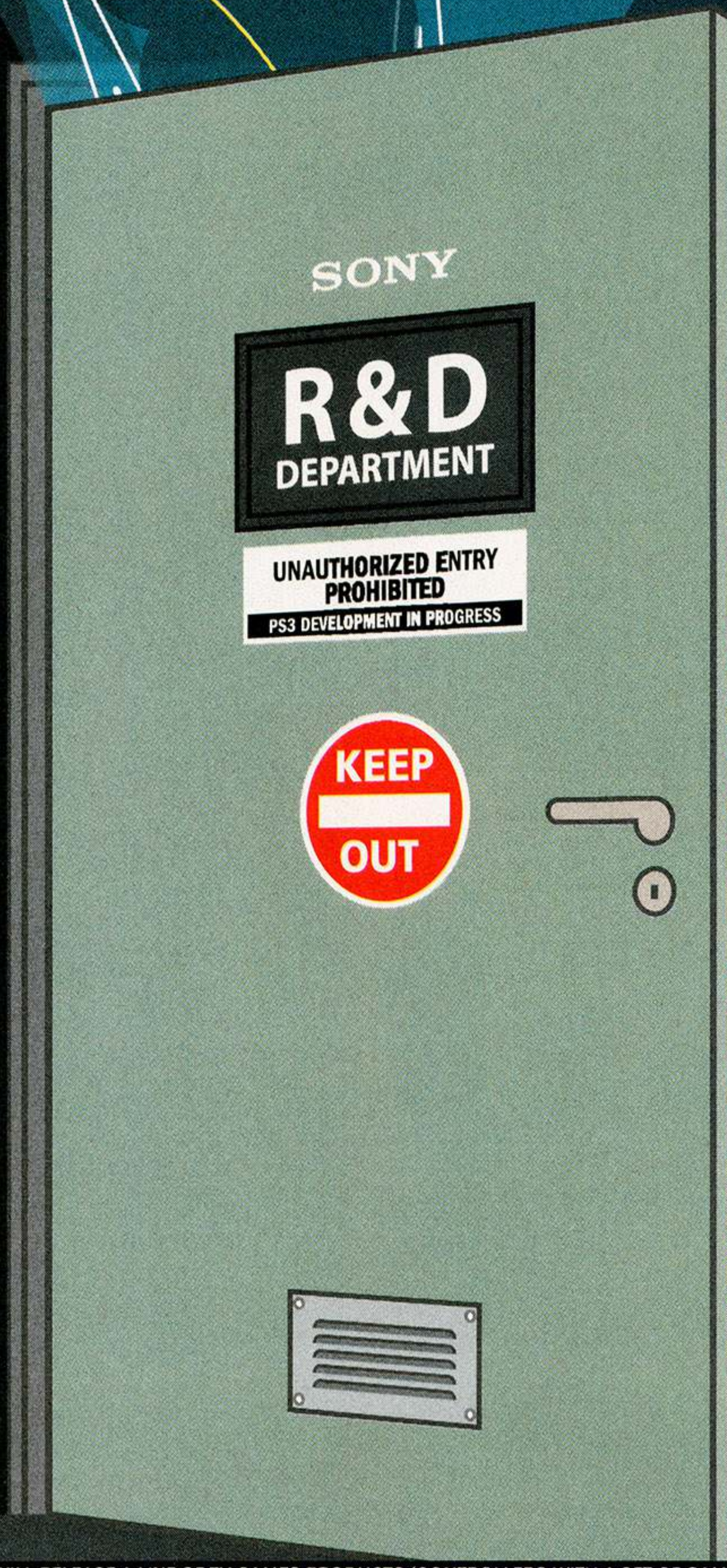
What can you expect from the next PlayStation? We peek behind Sony's door to find out

The opening salvo has just been fired in the next-gen console war—and the company doing the shooting may not be the one you think. Sony Computer Entertainment President and CEO Ken Kutaragi shocked the world this July when he announced during Sony's annual PlayStation meeting that "we expect to have a playable version" of PlayStation 3 (Sony is just referring to it as "next-generation PlayStation" for now) at next May's annual gaming trade show, the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). He also mentioned that Sony would unveil the console at a "premiere event" by the end of its fiscal year (March 2005). Microsoft and Nintendo were no doubt taken aback by the news, but Kutaragi's comments even stunned key PS2 developers. "Kutaragi is becoming the [*Sixth Sense* director] M. Night Shyamalan of gaming," jokes one well-known developer who wished to remain anonymous. "Just when you think you know what to expect, he throws in a last-minute twist to keep things interesting."

Before Kutaragi's proclamation, most industry watchers were betting that Sony would reveal PlayStation 3 at E3 2006. But he has now set the stage for a major showdown at next year's trade show between the three console makers. According to some, the surprise news about the next PlayStation may serve as a very public rallying call for the engineers working on the project. "When Kutaragi goes out and says something like that in public, he's probably trying to motivate his engineers, to give them a goal to strive for," says a development source at a major game publisher.

Just what goal is Sony trying to achieve? Besides the ongoing news about the system's powerful Cell processor (a joint venture between IBM, Toshiba, and Sony), the company has made no official statements about the machine. But in an effort to jump-start the discussion, we asked a group of analysts and developers to speculate on some of the possibilities for PS3. —Geoff Keighley

Illustrations by Nik Schultz



>> TAKING IT BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL—THIS FALL, JAKKS PACIFIC WILL RELEASE A LINE OF TV GAMES PRODUCTS (CONTROLLERS WITH A SET OF GAMES BUILT DIRECTLY INTO THE



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Although analysts at Wedbush Morgan Securities believe Sony's upcoming console could retail for as much as \$500, the conventional wisdom is that PS3 will be introduced at the same price point as the original PlayStation and PS2 (\$299), or perhaps \$399 at most. (Given that the machine's exact feature set hasn't been nailed down, speculation over price is somewhat premature). Analysts suggest that Sony may be considering two versions of PS3: a base machine for gaming and a home server version with more multimedia features.



WHAT ABOUT A HARD DRIVE?

The inclusion of a hard drive is up in the air. On the one hand, it seems natural that some type of mass storage will be included to support games and downloading media like movies and music. But the lack of support for HDD, the current PS2 hard drive (presently, only *Final Fantasy XI*, which shipped with the hardware, and *Resident Evil Outbreak* take advantage of the HDD), has the development community quietly wondering whether Sony thinks the expensive piece of hardware is unnecessary for next-generation gaming.



So far, only two PS2 games support the console's hard drive: *Final Fantasy XI* requires the hardware, and *Resident Evil Outbreak* uses it to speed up load times. This leaves some wondering if including a hard drive will be a priority for Sony when finalizing PS3's specs.



ONLINE OUT OF THE BOX?

Given that Sony spoke about the idea of an interconnected "cyber world" for PS3 at this year's E3, it's a fair bet that its next machine will feature built-in broadband support. And with the number of PlayStation 2 Network Adaptors sold surpassing Sony's expectations, developers are anticipating that all next-generation games will feature (or perhaps be mandated to include) online functionality.



WHAT ELSE CAN IT DO?

Ever since Sony shipped the PSX console—a PlayStation 2 with multiple extra features such as TiVo-like digital recording capabilities—in Japan last December, rumors have swirled that similar technology will come to PlayStation 3. Analysts say that Sony likely hasn't made a decision about whether PS3 will be able to record TV programming. (It largely hinges on whether the machine includes a sizable hard drive). But even if the next-generation machine does have a hard drive, some analysts question whether the Cell processor will be powerful enough to play a videogame *and* record a television program at the same time. "That's an open question that no one knows the answer to at this point," says P.J. McNealy of American Technology Research.

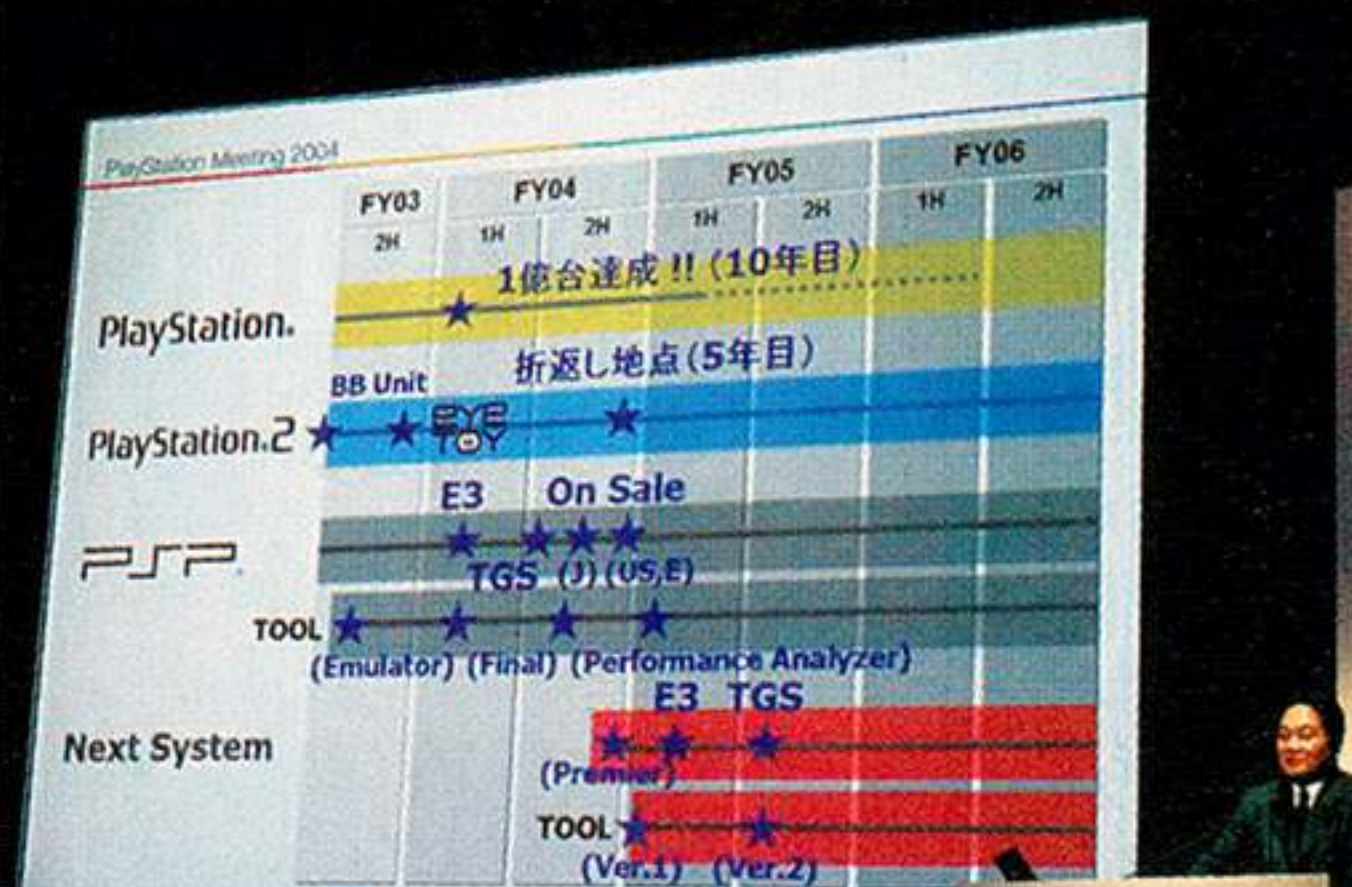


Poor sales in Japan mean we may never see Sony's PS2-plus-TiVo PSX superconsole here, and could impact PlayStation 3's feature set.



WHEN'S IT COMING OUT?

"If the machine is playable at E3 next May, we don't see any reason why Sony couldn't ship the machine in late 2005 in Japan," says Richard Doherty of Envisioneering, who is known as one of Kutaragi's favorite analysts. Doherty goes so far as saying that a U.S. launch in late 2005 might even be possible, depending on how fast Cell chips can be produced. Others predict that PlayStation 3 will not come out until 2006 at the earliest. What's their evidence? During his presentation in Japan, Kutaragi displayed a slide showing that the first PS3 development tools wouldn't be available until April 2005. "Publishers are going to need at least a year from then—perhaps even 18 months—to develop games for the system," explains analyst P.J. McNealy.



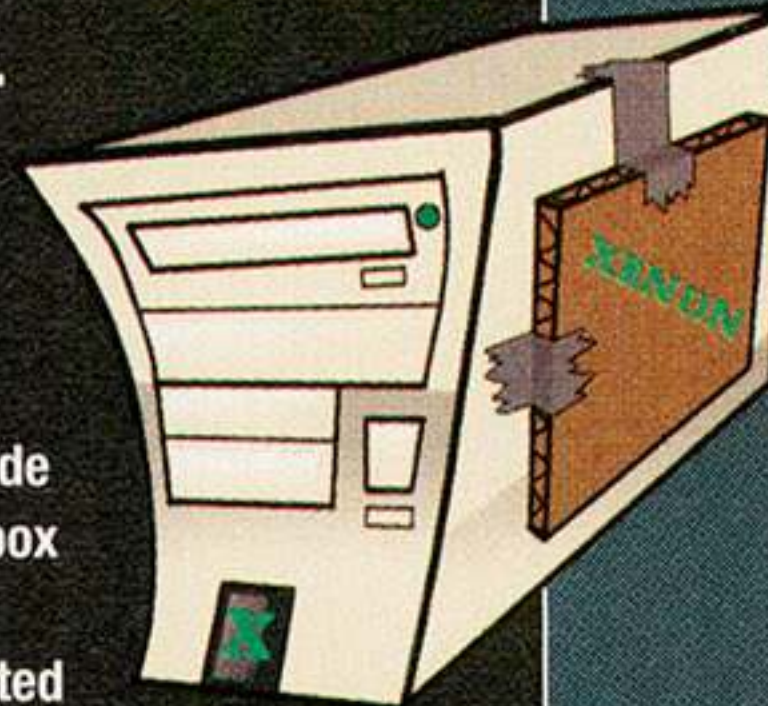
Pictured: Ken Kutaragi, the father of everything born PlayStation, presents the timeline for Sony's next system. Not pictured: Kutaragi laughing about how much money he's gonna make.

THE COMPETITION

The top contenders for Sony's crown are working overtime to plot their next consoles

MICROSOFT

The worst-kept secret in gaming is that Microsoft's Xenon—the code name for its Xbox follow-up—is currently targeted for a late 2005 launch.



Is this Xenon? Of course not.

Development kits have gone out, and major publishers like Electronic Arts and Ubisoft are cranking away on launch titles for the system, which may not feature a hard drive or backward compatibility. While there have been rumblings that Microsoft may push Xenon's release to 2006, this much is for sure: Xbox executives believe that in order to successfully compete against Sony, Xenon must launch well in advance of PlayStation 3. Sources also say Microsoft doesn't want to make any next-gen announcements that would prematurely slow down Xbox sales or overshadow *Halo 2*'s launch (Nov. 9). Of course, Bill Gates' gang won't confirm anything yet. Look for an official announcement on Xenon as early as January 2005.

NINTENDO

As Microsoft and Sony battle it out for the living room with multimedia-focused consoles, Nintendo is expected to take a radically



An artist's take on Revolution.

different approach for its next system. The company's long-standing emphasis on innovation suggests that the GameCube successor—code-named Revolution—will likely debut with new technology, such as an integrated PS2 EyeToy-style camera or a new kind of control pad. Just don't count on the big N to support online gaming (big surprise!). In a recent interview, company President Satoru Iwata claimed that "customers do not want online games." Whatever the case may be, Nintendo is planning to debut the console at next May's Electronic Entertainment Expo. And you'll get to decide whether you want to experience the Revolution when it ships in 2006.



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UP FOR A CHALLENGE?

Maddenites throw around the virtual pigskin for big bucks

Hey, armchair quarterbacks: EA is looking for the best *Madden* player in the land—and offering \$50,000 to the one who's got the goods. The third annual EA Sports Madden Challenge—where gamers from around the nation compete in *Madden NFL 2005*—will visit 32 cities from now until the end of November (log on to maddenchallenge.com for locations), with regional winners battling for the crown and 50 large in Las Vegas this January.

We recently sat down with the reigning champ, 19-year-old David "Sandman" Seitchick, who had some choice *Madden* tips for this year's competitors. (And yes, he will defend his title—what a greedy SOB.) Check out Sandman's advice on:

Level of Commitment

"I tried to play *Madden NFL 2004* at least one hour per day, but sometimes I would spend more time while watching NFL games on Sundays—having a television with picture-in-picture helps."

Training Regimen

"A good 80 percent of your time should be spent in practice mode setting up

defenses that give you problems. The other 20 percent should go toward competing against friends—if you play a buddy 50 times and he knows all your tendencies and still can't stop you, then imagine how much trouble someone will have playing you for the very first time."

Best Teams

"I'd say the Philadelphia Eagles and Minnesota Vikings. Both made key additions to their squads during the off-season, like the Eagles acquiring wideout Terrell Owens."

Final Words of Wisdom

"Get some rest the night before [the tournament]. And if you see me at the event, feel free to approach me and we can talk some *Madden*."



■ Sandman says take the Vikes this year.

GRUDGE MATCH

Can't we all just get along?



ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

KRAMER VS. KRAMER

Being in the middle of an extraterrestrial battle is a bitch, but so's divorce litigation. Though the mythical *KVK* Atari 2600 game never actually came out, we still figure there's enough evidence to grant custody of our Grudge trophy.

BACKSTORY

Two alien races and a handful of meddling humans thin each other out in an...uh, ancient underground pyramid?

In 1979, a struggling couple introduces the U.S. public to divorce and custody battles, which would replace disco as the No. 1 pastime in coming years

Advantage: Kramer vs. Kramer

WEAPONRY



Shoulder-mounted cannons and face-hugging larvae
Advantage: Alien vs. Predator

Harsh litigation and dramatic testimony



FIGHTING FOR...



The chance to continue living in that underground pyramid, we suppose

An 8-year-old tax break
Advantage: Kramer vs. Kramer



IN THE GAMING WORLD



Responsible for an exceptional game on the otherwise ghastly Jaguar console
Advantage: Alien vs. Predator

A modified *Pong* with a little ball version of Billy would make a symbolically delicious diversion. It's not too late, Atari!



POSSIBLE UNDERSTUDIES



Alf
Advantage: Alien vs. Predator

Seinfeld's Kramer



WINNER: ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Those creepy creatures have given us gamers a lot more entertainment than the Kramers ever could. We reckon the movie won't win any Oscars, but we're pretty sure there will be lasers and alien mucus, so how can you go wrong?

NEWS TIDBITS GONE IN 60 SECONDS



Double the Urbz, Double the Fun

This November, publishing powerhouse Electronic Arts will release a Nintendo DS version of its all-new life simulator *The Urbz: Sims in the City* (that's if Nintendo launches the dual-screen handheld on time). Exclusive DS features include a touchscreen menu, a wireless multiplayer mode, and five new minigames.



■ Apparently, PSP is only for the beautiful people.

PSP Multiplayer Details

During Sony's annual PlayStation meeting in Japan, Chief Technology Officer Masa Chatani revealed PlayStation Portable's wireless multiplayer capabilities, stating that gamers will be able to link up to 16 of the handhelds. He also mentioned that PSP, which is currently slated for a March 2005 release in the United States, is "in the final stages of development."



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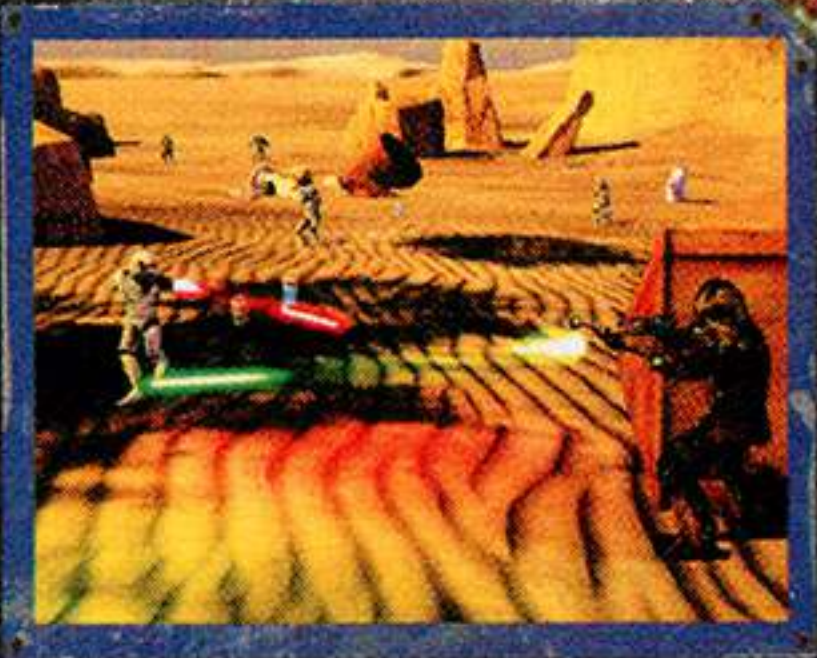


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BEST OFFERS

What have your old games done for you lately? Recycle them the thrifty way with our guide to the very best trade-in deals

You play it, you beat it, then you toss it aside like ratty underwear. But what good is that game you couldn't wait to beat yesterday doing for you

gathering dust today? Why not trade it in for credit toward something new? But with so many options and special deals to consider, it's hard to get the most for your used (and

possibly abused) collection unless you dare to comparison shop. Lucky you: We've done all the legwork, crunching the trade-in numbers* for three games—an old one, a newer

title, and something just released—at three popular chains, plus two online sites for you shut-in gamers afraid of human contact.

—Jon M. Gibson




	WALK-IN STORES			ONLINE STORES	
	EBGAMES	GameStop	BLOCKBUSTER	MyVideoGames.com	Game Dude.com
 SOMETHING OLD: GRAND THEFT AUTO III FOR PS2	\$2	\$2	\$7	\$7.50	\$7
 SOMETHING NEWER: RETURN OF THE KING FOR PS2	\$7	\$12	\$21	\$16.60	\$15
 SOMETHING JUST RELEASED: DRIV3R FOR XB	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$10.10	\$20
SPECIAL DEALS**	The more you spend, the more you save: Buy any four used games and get 30 percent off the total	Trade in any three games (for PS2, XB, or GC) and get an extra 10 bucks' worth of in-store credit	Trade in two used games (for PS1, PS2, XB, GC, or GBA) and get any used game for \$10	N/A	N/A
IN-STORE CREDIT OR CASH?	Credit	Credit	Credit	Cash/Credit	Cash/Credit
PERKS	Good trade-in prices for new games; useful special deals; great selection of classic and new releases	Good trade-in prices for new games; useful special deals; excellent selection of classic and new releases	Offers top dollar for most games old or new; decent special deals on a fairly regular basis	Gives decent price quotes; offers cash or credit	Inventory includes everything from NES to Xbox; pays well for most games; offers cash or credit
PITFALLS	Older games worth hardly anything in trade-in value	As with EB Games, older titles go for far too cheap	Not all Blockbusters have game hubs, so you may have to drive to find one	No bonus for using in-store credit; no special deals	Also no bonus for in-store credit; no special deals

Illustration by Miles Donovan

THE VERDICT

While not as generous as Blockbuster, **GameStop** has a hearty product selection and useful special deals, while **Gamedude.com** offers value and great selection for collectors and casual gamers alike.

TIPS OF THE TRADE

➤ **Save everything** — A missing case or chewed-up instruction booklet will ultimately subtract from your total tally.

➤ **Respect your games** — Don't toss discs on the carpet for the vacuum cleaner to suck up later. Treat games like you would a significant other's emotions—firmly, to show them who's boss, but gently as not to damage.

➤ **Bad sports** — Most stores will give the bare minimum for last year's sports offerings—if they'll take them at all. So consider trading them in sooner than later if you plan on picking up next season's update.



■ **Madden contemplates his low trade-in value.**

➤ **Watch for deals** — Nearly every month, stores like EB Games entice customers with different trade-in deals (as shown above). So pay close attention to those cards on the counter, you ADDers. 🎮

*Trade-in prices are subject to change due to supply and demand. **All deals subject to a limited-time-only clause, but appear as they were at press time.

>> THE MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE WORLD OF FINAL FANTASY XI (PS2) WILL GROW ON SEPT. 21 WITH THE RELEASE OF THE CHAINS OF PROMATHIA EXPANSION PACK... >>



■ Now the shadows aren't so safe: Enemies will make their own light to find you.

■ Xbox

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

Sam Fisher pulls double duty in 2004

Ready for more *Splinter Cell*? Well, you'd better be, as the third episode in two years, *Chaos Theory*, sneaks onto Xbox shockingly soon—this November.

To outdo critical darling *Pandora Tomorrow*, this new chapter will have to offer something beyond its predecessor's already polished single- and multiplayer spy antics. Well, consider that mission accomplished: *Chaos Theory*'s high-photorealistic visuals demonstrate a sizable leap, outclassing anything previously seen on Xbox.

Even more vital to *Splinter Cell*'s stealth magic is ingenious A.I., something the team has been conscientious about revamping for the forthcoming sequel. Gone are terrorists of old who conveniently forget you just shot their night-watch buddy in the face; now

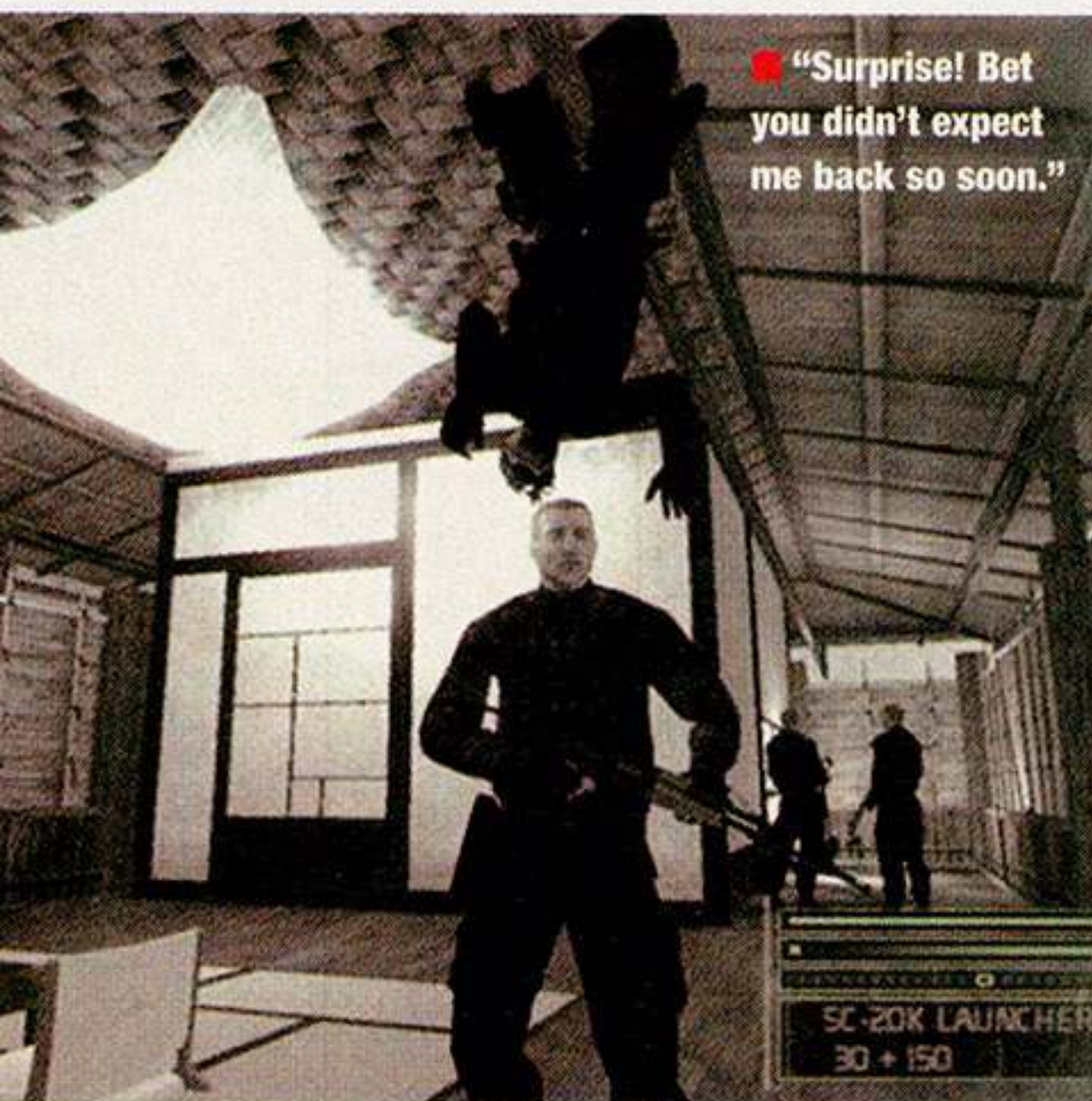
these evil henchmen will be more tenacious than ever, exhibiting unpredictable, even volatile tactics by way of advancing, retreating, and taking cover. During gameplay, they're even hampered by the same 3D line-of-sight limitations imposed on the player.

But nothing jackhammers you out of the game more than hearing "Fisher! You're paid to be invisible!" for the twentieth time because you didn't go about a mission like the level designer wanted you to. To remedy such frustration in the sequel, *Theory* will feature environments that give you the freedom to accomplish objectives your own unique way. Combined with *Chaos Theory*'s dynamic A.I., these open-ended levels produce a "story within a story" phenomenon where no two persons' gameplay experiences are the same. The full extent of

Chaos Theory's multiplayer suite is still anybody's guess. So far, Ubisoft has been emphasizing online co-op, where it's two Shadownet spies versus a map full of A.I. enemies.

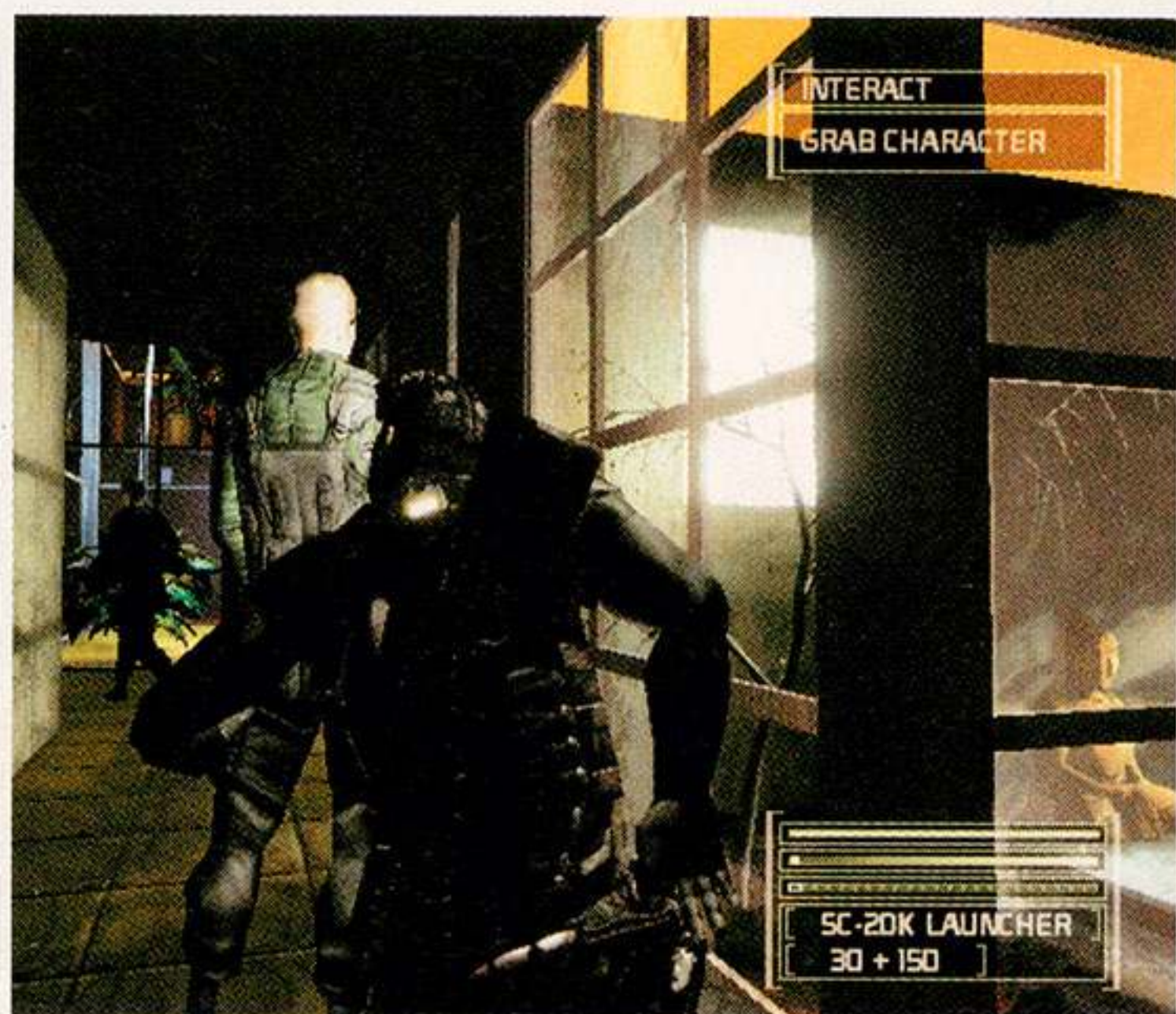
The big question nobody asks out loud is whether *Chaos Theory* is following a little too closely after the heels of *Pandora Tomorrow*—both games will see release in 2004. For Ubisoft, the problem is more about public perception rather than a corporate tactic to pimp Sam Fisher out to a series of cheap sequels. Development on this game began almost in parallel with *Pandora*, which is why there's only an eight-month gap between the two titles. But for gamers addicted to *Pandora*'s online stealth game, *Chaos Theory* certainly couldn't come fast enough. **BT**

—Che Chou



■ "Surprise! Bet you didn't expect me back so soon."

SC-20K LAUNCHER
30 + 150



INTERACT
GRAB CHARACTER

SC-20K LAUNCHER
30 + 150



WHO YOU ARE
IS NOT ALWAYS...

SAN ANDREAS VISITORS' GUIDE: THE COUNTRYSIDE

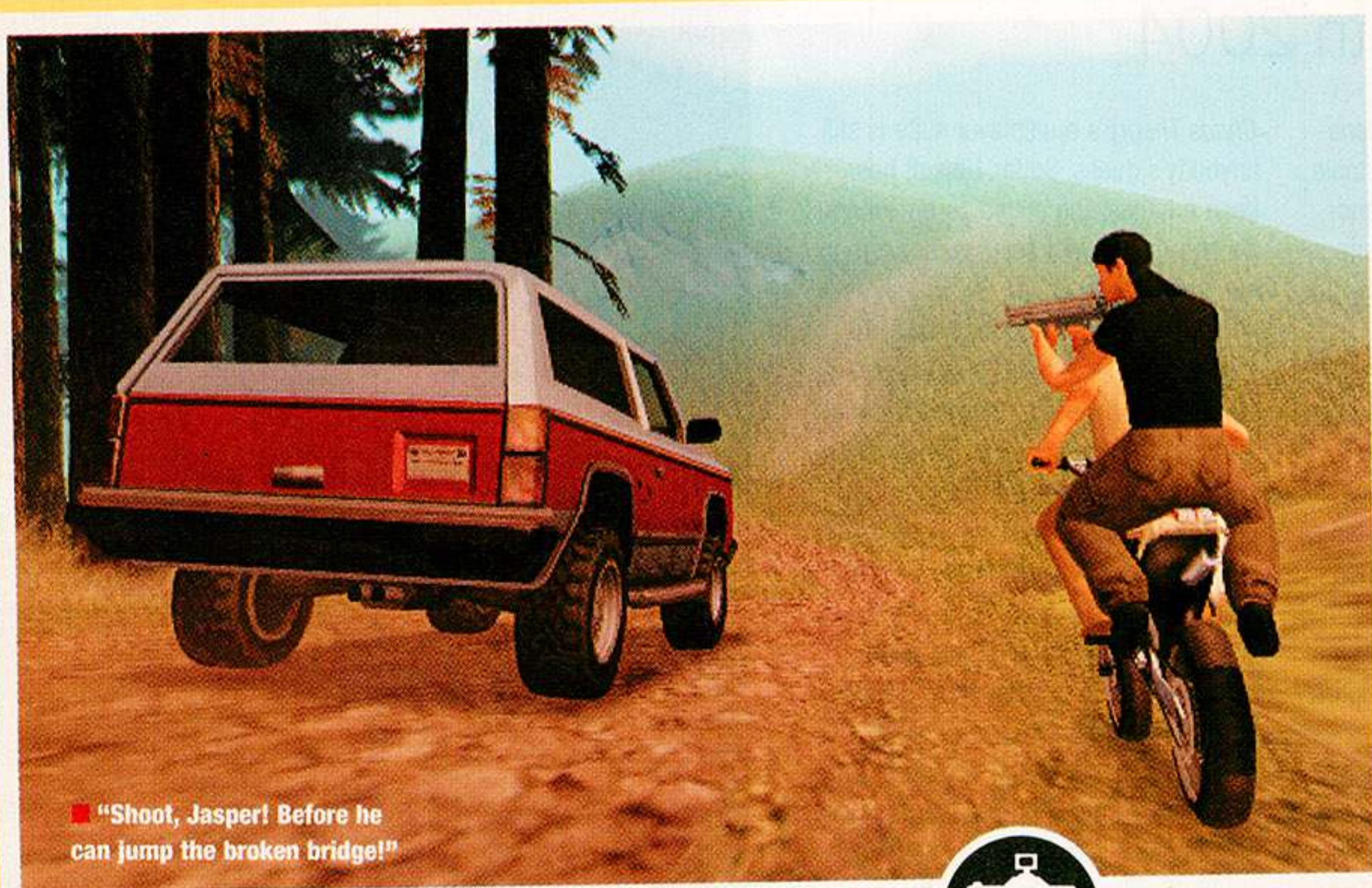
See the great outdoors in the latest **Grand Theft Auto**

Creating a state instead of a single city for our next *Grand Theft Auto* game proved something of a challenge," says Jeff Castaneda, a rep for publisher Rockstar. "Wide-open spaces separate West Coast

hot spots, and simple streets couldn't connect our game's versions of Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Los Angeles." Rockstar's solution for the sequel, set in the fictional state of *San Andreas*: Build the game actual size, with plains, moun-

tains, and miles of interstate filling the gaps between the three metropolises. After all, as Castaneda says, "Take the highway half an hour or so outside of L.A., and you'll hit the great outdoors. *San Andreas* had to have that same

scope and scale." So it's time to quit walking the line between cradle and coffin within the confines of a single town. Shut yourself in, then get out and see the countryside on PS2 this October. —Shawn Elliott



■ "Shoot, Jasper! Before he can jump the broken bridge!"



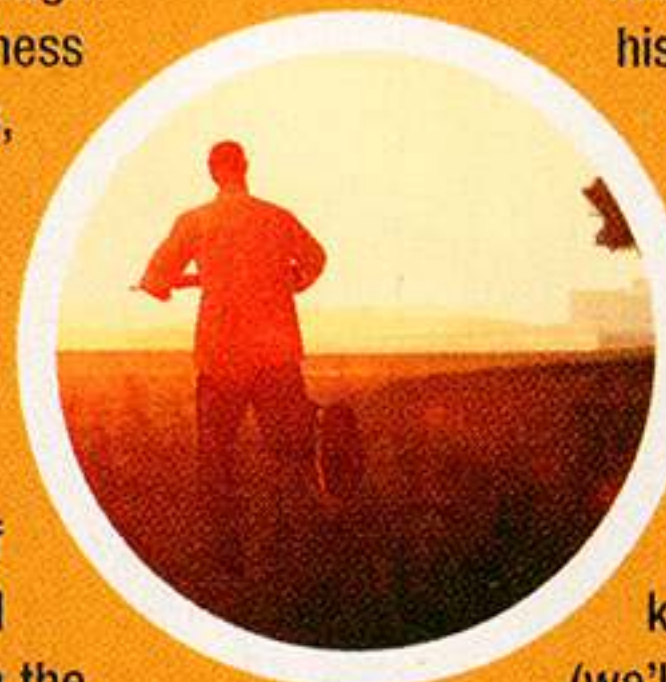
THINGS TO DO ON YOUR STAY



For reasons Rockstar's still keeping close to its chest, main man CJ leaves his hometown of Los Santos and heads to the hills where big-city jive makes way for jug bands and jamborees. But San Andreas' outlying counties have hazards of their own, such as the backwater bikers who want to skin 'n' gut one of your dawgs. You'll do decoy duty in your friend's Bronco, buying him time to flee, while the good ol' boys follow you through gorges and gullies on their hogs. Your heavier four wheels can hurl them from their two, but if you lose a window in the commotion, they'll realize they've been duped and break off the hunt.

Later, another local lowlife blackmails

you into murdering a man holed up in a mountain cabin, forcing you to become the hunter. There's a catch, though: Your target's a federal witness guarded by FBI watchdogs, so tiptoeing in for quiet, easy wet work is out of the question. What's more, your quarry hops in the G-men's car and splits at the slightest whiff of foul play, meaning you'll have to pursue them down the remote mountain's steep roads. For the most part, how you complete the mission is up to you—just don't plan on ramming them through a guardrail, as you'll need to

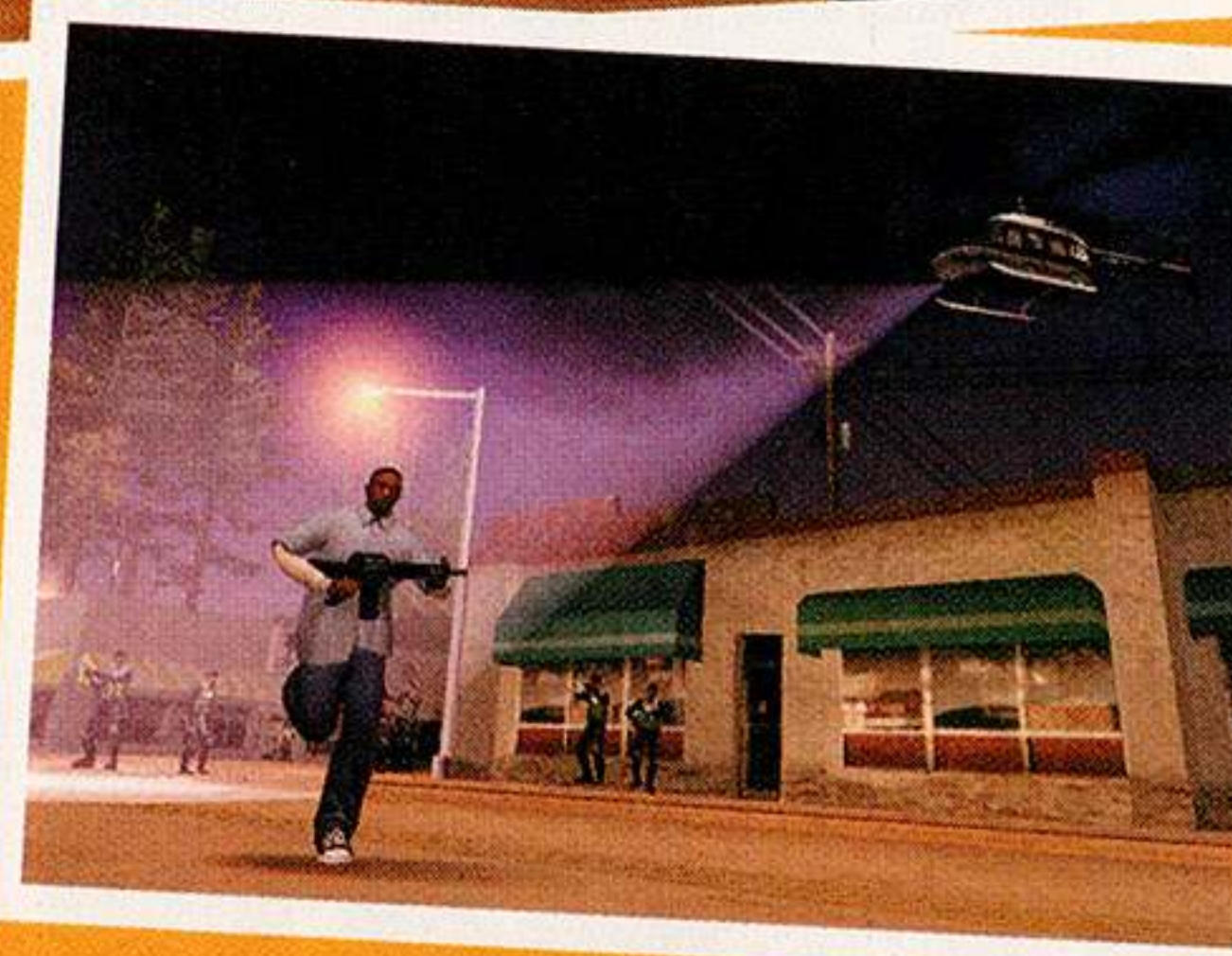


photograph the remains as proof of your misdeeds.

Along with the guys from his gang, the Orange Grove Families, CJ collaborates with at least one familiar face from a previous *Grand Theft Auto*. The raven-haired hottie with a knack for robbery

(we'll leave it at that so as not to

spoil the surprise) plans on knocking over a gas station but isn't banking on there being bulletproof glass. So she cuts her losses by having you help her swipe a nearby fuel



tanker with the hopes of selling it—that is, if you can escape the clerks who follow and fire at your combustible freight without jackknifing your 18-wheeler.

>> KROME STUDIOS, THE TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE *TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER* SERIES, HAS TEAMED UP WITH DPS FILM ROMAN (*THE SIMPSONS*, *KING OF THE HILL*) TO DEVELOP



■ Death Row Records recently confirmed Dr. Dre's "Let Me Ride" and "Nuthin' But a G Thang," as well as Snoop Dogg's "Gin & Juice" for *San Andreas*' soundtrack.



■ Bigfoot sighting.



GETTING AROUND



Screw parallel parking in sardine-packed streets—the world's your sandbox when you're sitting high in a star-spangled monster truck. All-wheel steering and substantial suspension let you rumble through shallow rivers and smash prissy imports like so many speed bumps. Or try an ATV for open-top off-roading—serious hang time and traction on steep slopes make up

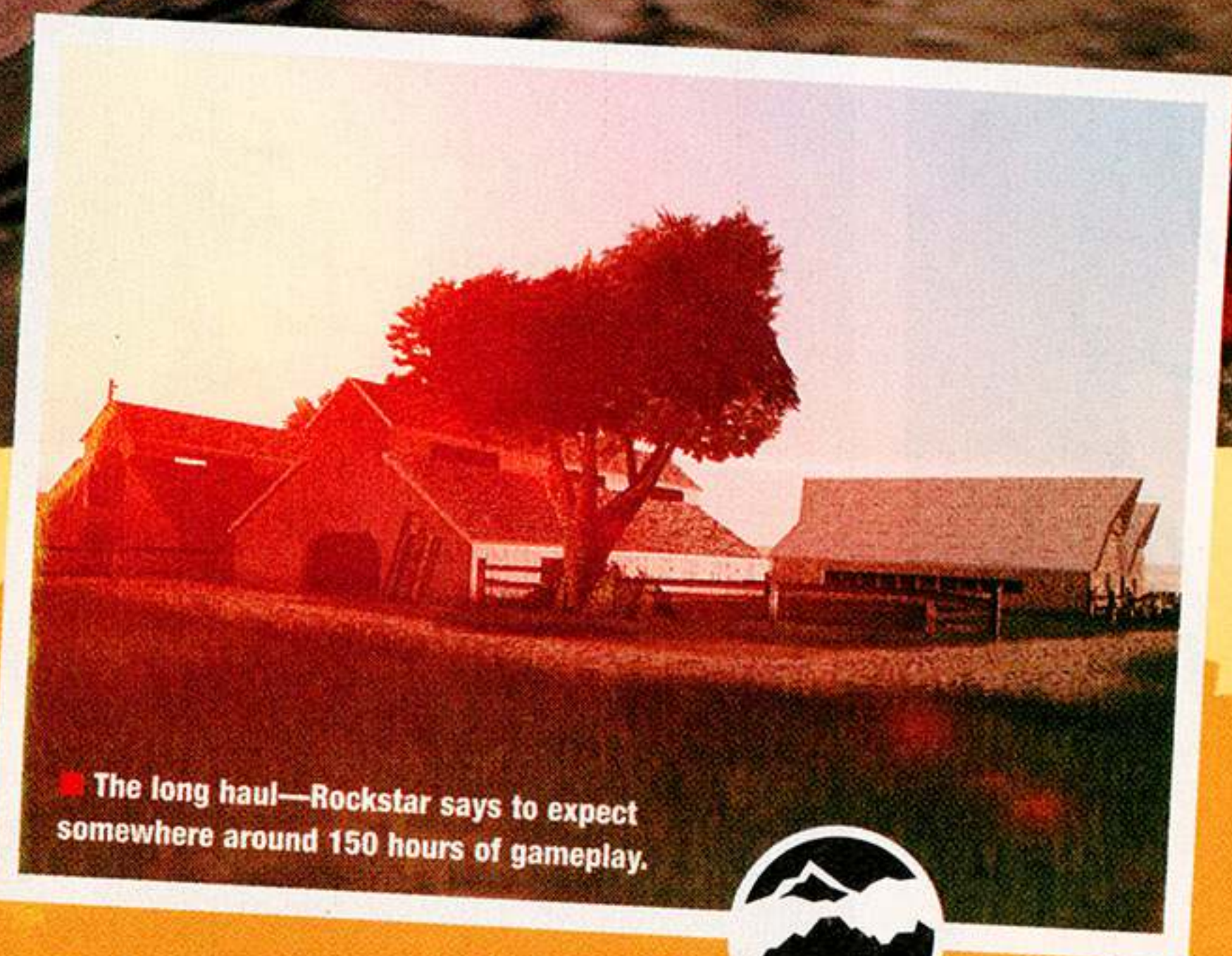
for squirrelyness and the hazard of landing on your head. Other choices for cross-country cruising include big rigs with detachable trailers and fully functional tow trucks. We've also got word of weenie vending vans (can you smell the side job sizzlin'?), as well as combines, but we're not sure whether you can mow down human chaff with the slow-moving harvesters. ►

WHO YOU
WILL BECOME.





■ Determined not to miss his date on Deliverance Mountain, CJ opens his hog up and lets 'er squeal.



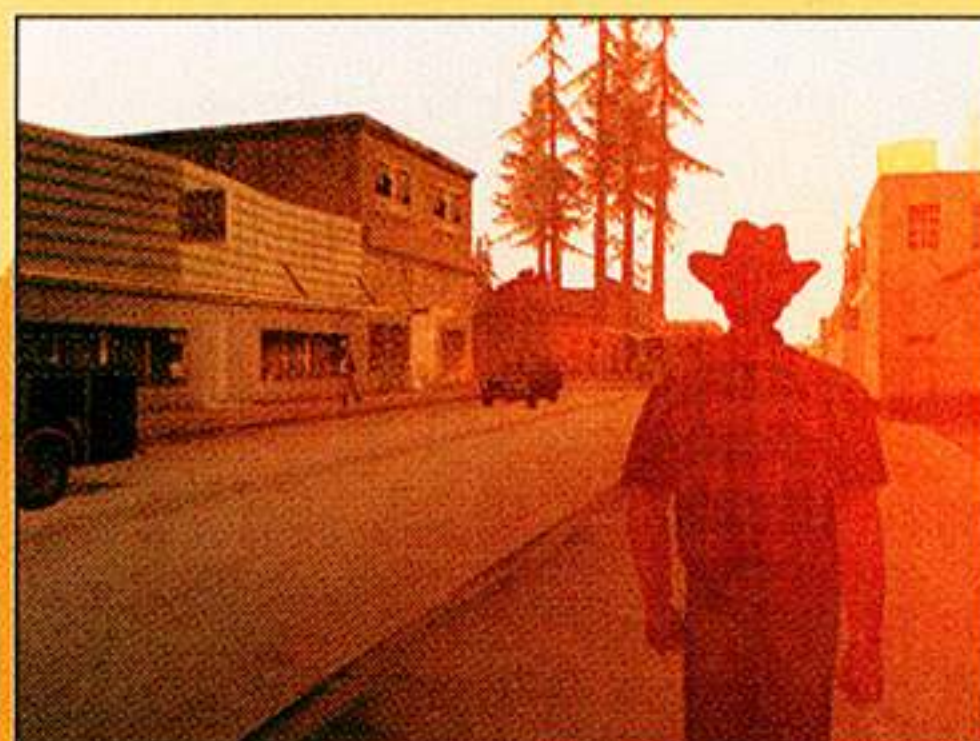
■ The long haul—Rockstar says to expect somewhere around 150 hours of gameplay.

LOCAL LANDMARKS

► You can't miss it. Rising into the clouds a half-mile above the hustle and bustle below, Mount Chiliad makes skyscrapers look like mere miniatures. Lose local smokies on the treacherous trails that snake through its tree-tangled slopes or stay slender by biking to the summit (*San Andreas* star Carl Johnson gets chubby without proper conditioning). CJ's even got his own

camera and can capture the moment on Kodak.

At the base of the towering landmark lies Angel Pine, a backwoods logging town with accommodations at the U-Get-In Motel. Spread out between San Andreas' farms and forests, deserts and badlands, you'll find at least 11 other folksy communities, each with its own local flavor.



FASHION AND BEAUTY

Rolling into rural San Andreas clad in Cross Colors is fine, but to fit in you'll have to swap the hip-hop hues for cowboy accoutrements. In addition to selecting hairstyles and sculpting his physique, Carl can dress as he chooses.

BY THE NUMBERS

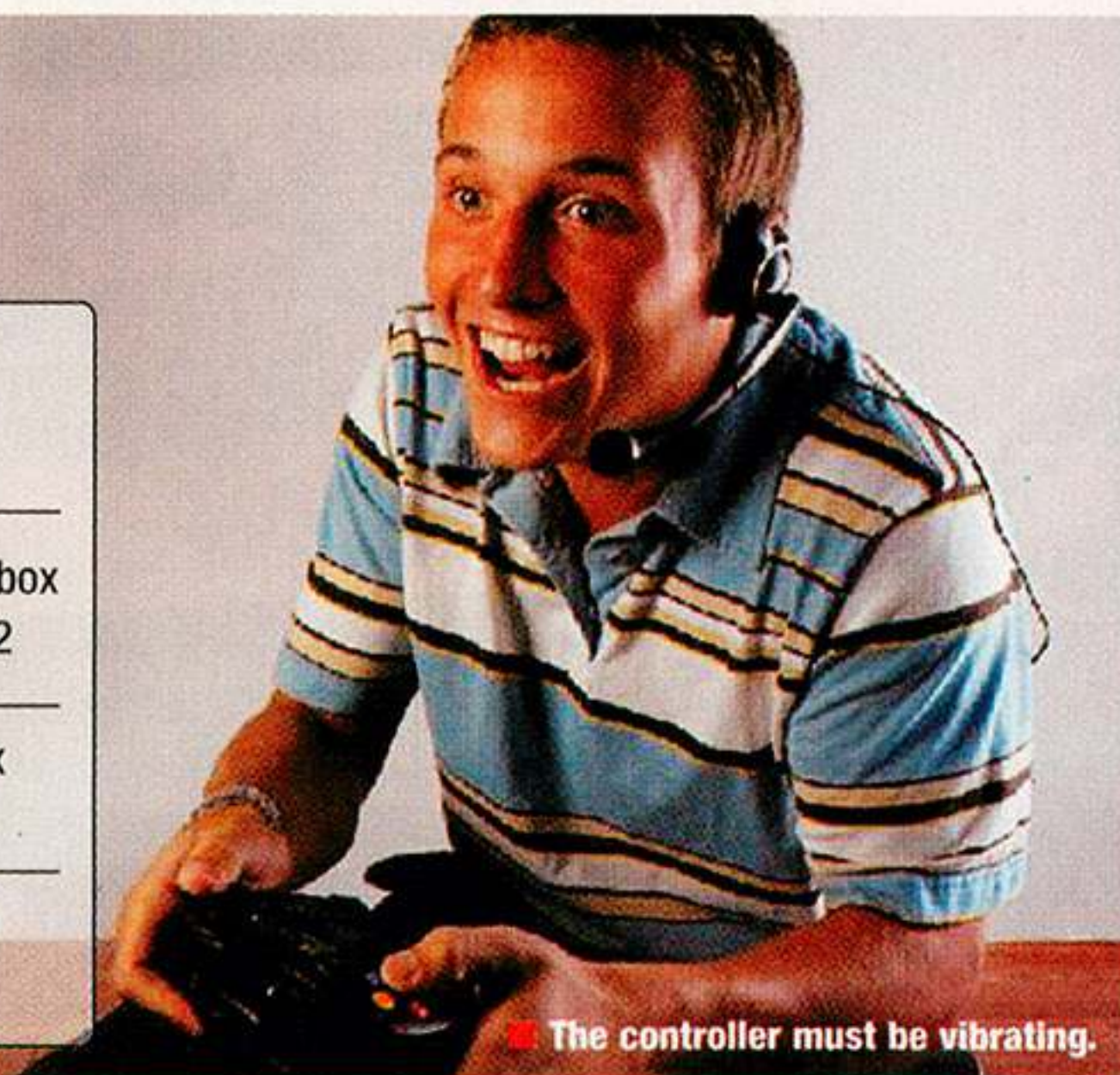
It's good to play together

1 Million Xbox Live members worldwide

160 Million Hours that members have logged on Xbox Live since its launch in November 2002

265,549 Average number of hours per day Xbox Live members collectively play online

0 Hours left in your social life after *Halo 2*'s release



■ The controller must be vibrating.

IN THE HOT SEAT: TED PRICE



Every so often, *EGM* corners big-time gamemakers and asks for their preferences. First at bat: Insomniac President Ted Price, who can't sleep until he finishes his multiplayer-friendly PS2 platformer *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal*.

Hero



Mario

Sonic

Multiplayer Addiction



Halo

SOCOM II

Robot Companion



C-3PO

R2-D2

Gadget Man



Inspector Gadget

MacGyver

Sleeping Aid



Counting sheep

Relaxation CDs

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What if the choices you made had everlasting repercussions? Your every action would immediately affect your appearance and change the way people perceive you. Would you wield a sword in the name of virtue, create a path of evil with spells and treachery, or become something in between? Before you create your destiny, know this: no two Fables are the same. What will yours be?

xbox.com/fable



Blood
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Violence



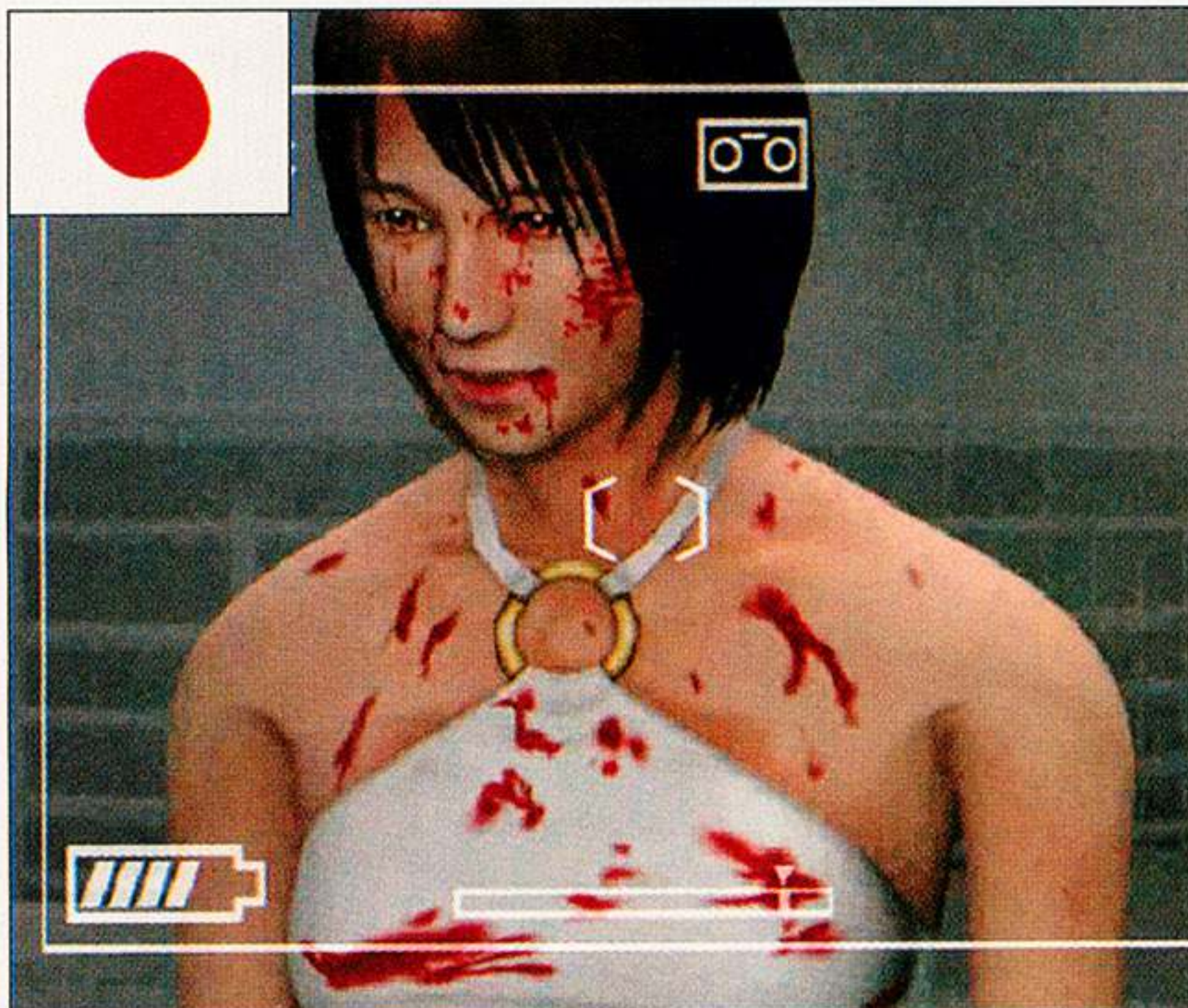
Microsoft
game studios



it's good to play together

EGM INTERNATIONAL

Now covering Asia *and* Oceania



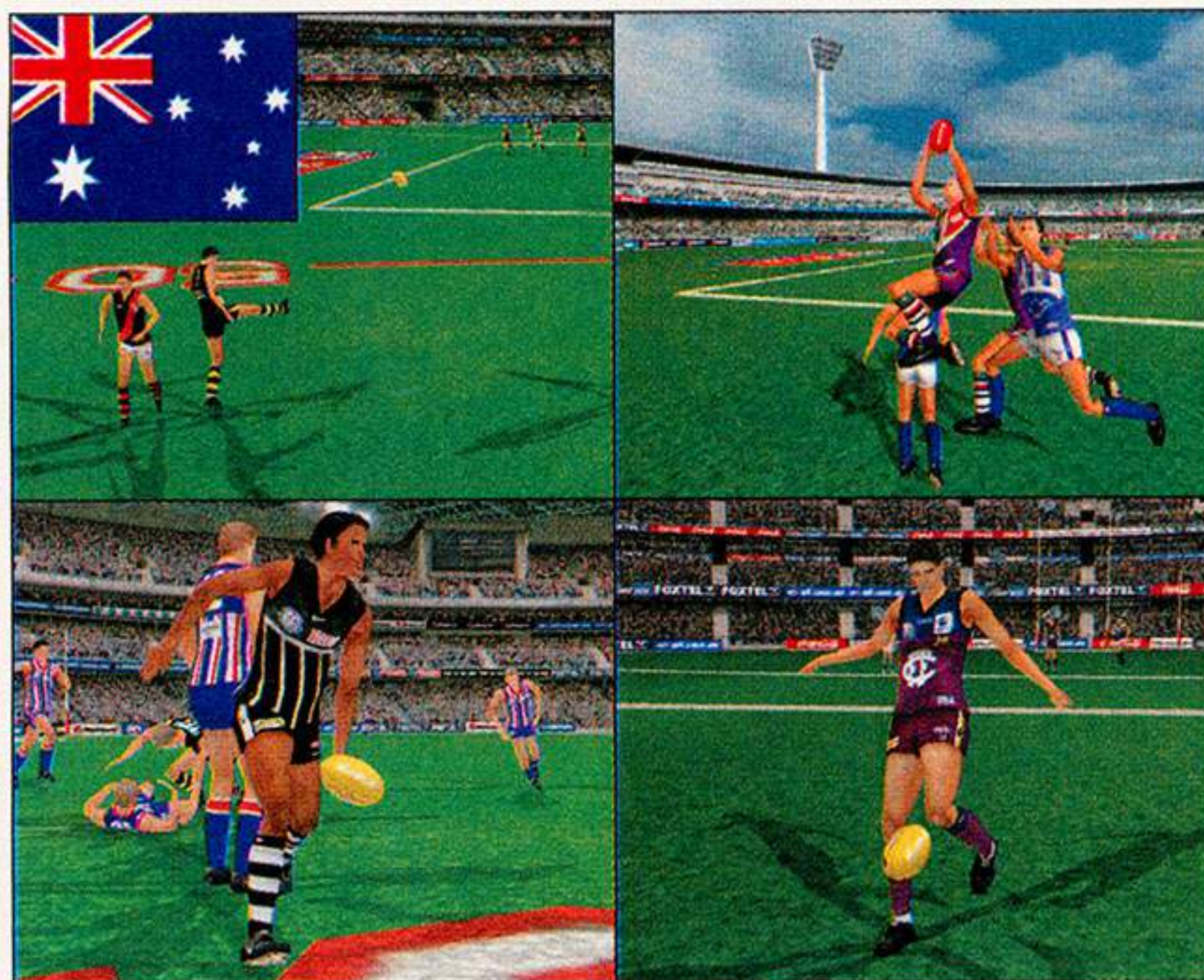
PS2

MICHIGAN

The Great Lakes state...er, here we come?

Sorry, but as thrilling as an adventure set in America's 26th state would be (Visit actor Tom Selleck's birthplace! Explore the abandoned auto factories of Flint!), this ain't it. Instead, *michigan* (no caps) is a horror quest starring a cameraman for the fictional "ZaKa TV," investigating a mysterious fog that's enveloped the city of Chicago. The twist: You view all of the action through your camera. And sometimes, you'll have to choose whether to save the reporter you're filming or let her die in the name of a hot exclusive.

Sounds like it's made for the U.S. audience. Doesn't it? Horror games like *michigan* tend to fare better here than in Japan, so there's always a chance it'll arrive Stateside.



PS2/XB

AFL LIVE PREMIERSHIP EDITION

Crikey! Another football sim? Not exactly—this one's an Australian rules football sim. The sport is all the rage Down Under with its mixture of ball kicking, vicious tackling, stripe-tacular uniforms, and man pies. The *AFL Live* series has been the top console version for two years running, thanks in part to its popular mission mode—can you recreate Essendon's comeback victory against the North Melbourne Kangaroos in the 2001 playoffs? Well, can you?!

Uh...sure, whatever. But will it ever tackle our consoles? Highly unlikely unless two things happen: ESPN starts showing Aussie rules football during the wee hours of the morning again, and Acclaim (the game's publisher in Australia) gets really, *really* desperate.

PREVIEW GALLERIES: FUTURISTIC FLIGHT

SCRAPLAND

XB • Enlight • November 2004 — It's *Grand Theft Auto* meets *Short Circuit*—you're a sassy robot who must unravel a mystery in the massive robo-city of Chimera. Rather than jacking cars, our hero hops into sleek spacecraft, zipping around the urban landscapes at insane speeds. Your robotic avatar can also morph into 15 different forms, each boasting unique attacks and abilities.



YAGER

XB • Kemco • September 2004 — 44 months after it was originally announced as an Xbox launch title (seriously, look in *EGM* #139), this ambitious flight sim is finally about to make its approach. You pilot a fortified airborne tank across a multitude of missions, taking on massive gunships and ground targets. It's a bit like *Panzer Dragoon Orta* mixed with *Halo*, and a lot like *Battle Engine Aquila* (which isn't half bad, really).



OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

On the Cover: Donkey Kong Country

An exclusive sneak peek at three levels of Nintendo's visually stunning (well, back in the day anyway) side-scroller gave readers a severe case of jungle fever.



These things... I am going to destroy!!

Game of the Month: Final Fantasy III (SNES)

Neither *Mortal* pugilists nor a worm named Jim could top Square's *Fantasy*. Even the Review Crew's fighting guru Sushi-X gave the RPG two katanas up (along with a score of 9 out of 10, like everyone else).



Men Are From Mars, Sega Is From Venus

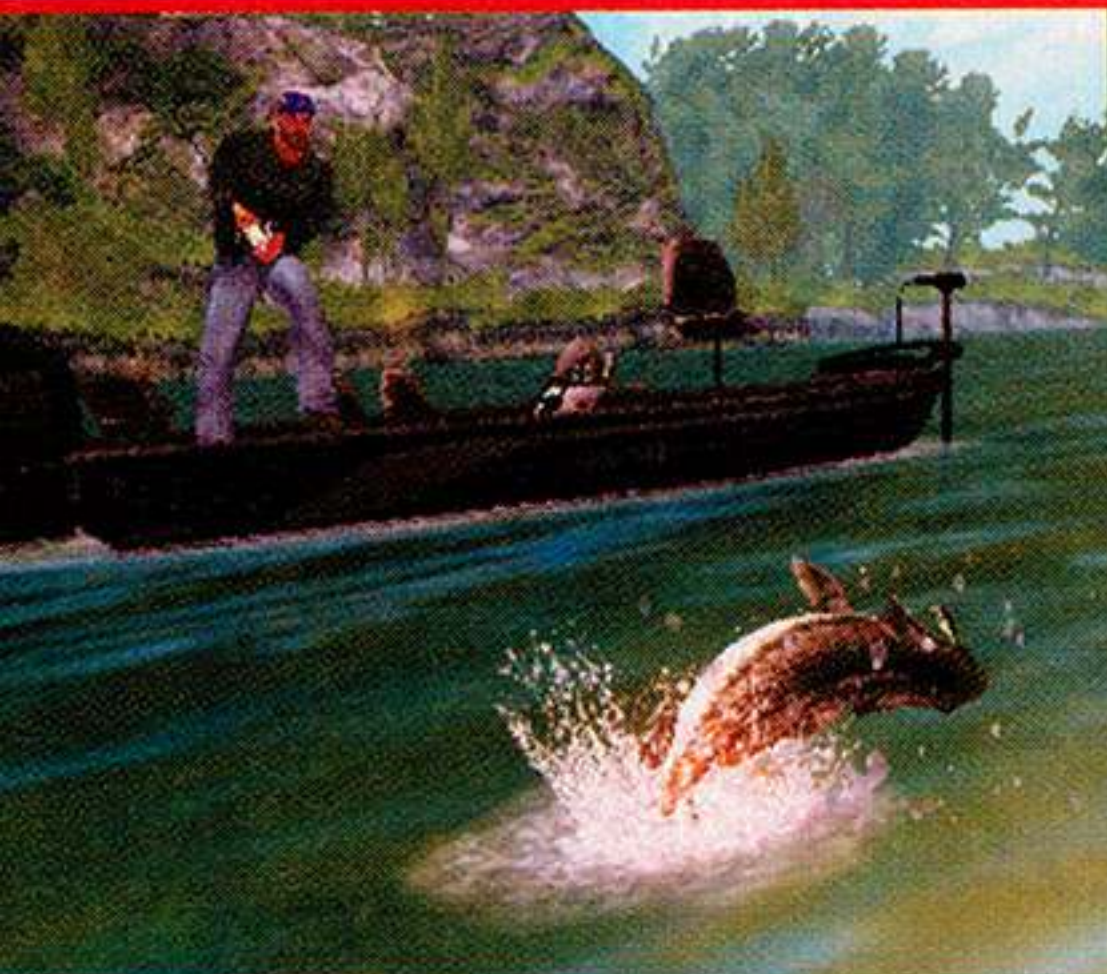
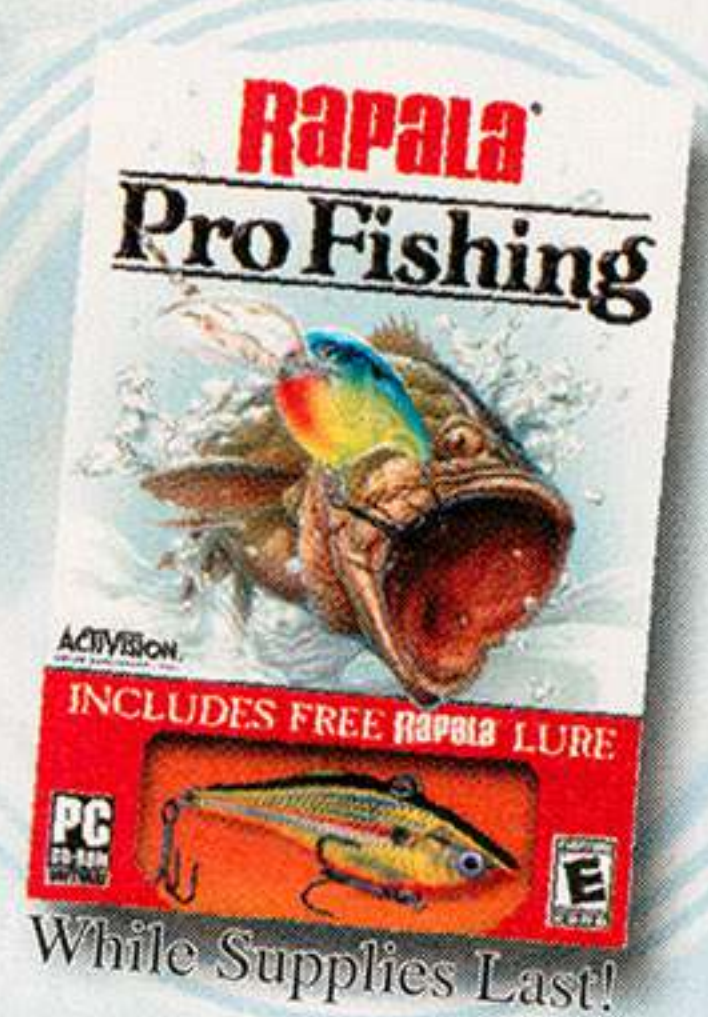
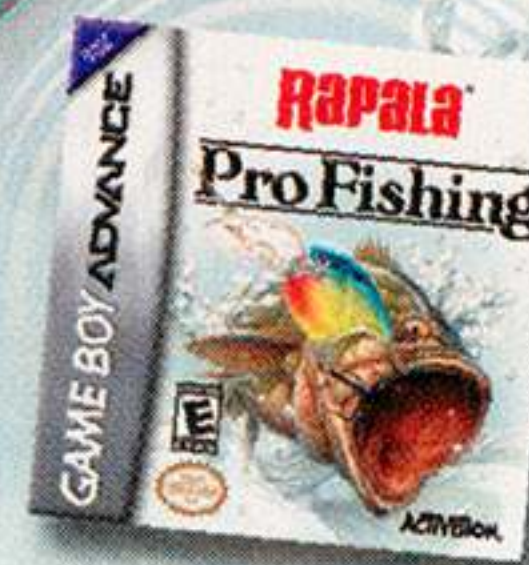
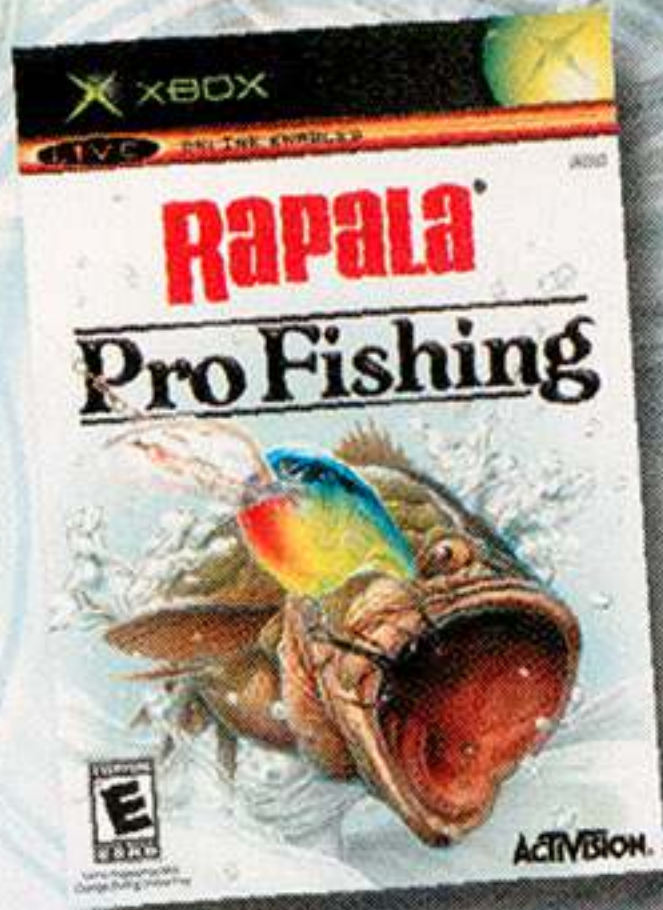
The mag's resident gossipmonger, Quartermann, spilled the beans on code name Venus—a handheld version of Sega's 16-bit Genesis console. And it wasn't just hearsay, as a year later Sega released what became known as Nomad.

Breaking the Sound Barrier

Wacky peripherals like Aura Systems' Interactor littered our pages this month. The \$100 backpack-style device supposedly transformed sounds into vibrations so you could "feel" the game, but really, it just gave an overpriced massage.



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PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

ACTIVISION



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Xbox

MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM

Basic guide for surviving the bush

Men of Valor: Vietnam, assaulting Xbox this October, hopes to win hearts and minds with historical accuracy rather than Hollywood hoopla. "Early on, we decided not to rely on movie references alone for our level designs," explains Kris Jackson, lead designer for 2015, which is creating *Valor* for VU Games. "When you start poring over oral

histories, you realize that 99.9 percent of Vietnam films are pure bulls***. Books provide a better blueprint, and much of our research has gone right into the game." Case in point: Your African-American character encounters propaganda challenging his conviction to fight for a country that considers him a second-class citizen. "We're not shying away

from the social issues inherent in the mid- to late '60s," says Jackson.

This shooter's devotion to detail doesn't stop there. A unique bandaging system requires shot-up soldiers to stop their bleeding or run the risk of a slow death, and because levels aren't littered with health packs, players have to search fallen foes for life-saving supplies.

(Computer-controlled friendlies will take damage during combat, too, limping around or carrying fallen squadmates to cover.) But it's the game's 12-man multiplayer matches (over Xbox Live or system link) that might convince you armchair commandos to save your draft cards, so stand at attention as we teach you the basics of bush survival. —Shawn Elliott



UNITED STATES TRAINING MANUAL

Search and destroy mode puts two teams of eight in a race to collect and reassemble mortar pieces. Ideally, each force divides itself into offensive and defensive elements, with the former locating its own army's mortar fragments and the latter finding the enemy's for an ambush. "Here, the Americans have the advantage of long-range firepower and will want to cover hostile locations with their M79 grenade launchers," says Level Designer Josh Tyrell. This long-bore "Blooper" rifle is also equipped with buckshot rounds for close-range combat. "It's like a shotgun

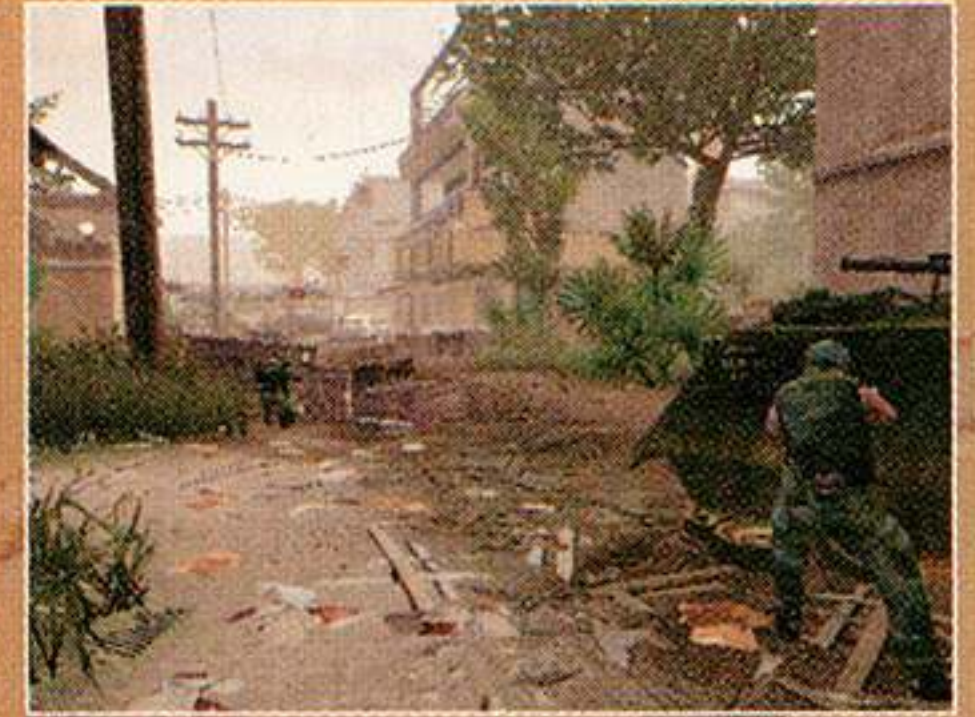
on steroids and will reduce your opponent to a red cloud—now that's a bragable frag." A second game-winning strategy involves sneaking a Green Beret (another of the United States' seven selectable character classes) into the Communists' base to plant claymore mines. In their mad rush to return mortar components, chances are the Vietcong won't notice the surprise amid the mess of burning vehicles and rubble from bombed-out buildings until it's too late. Once you've won, your completed mortar begins showering the enemy with artillery shells.



Jungle foliage offers a modicum of cover, but leaves can't stop bullets.



■ "There's not one exploding barrel or crate in our game," brags Lead Designer Kris Jackson. "This may be a first in the genre."




■ Plant explosives on enemy armor in multi-player mission mode.



VIETCONG TRAINING MANUAL

As Vietcong, mission mode generally involves preventing GIs from gaining access to explosives and, if that fails, defusing the C4 they plant at designated points. In Bong Son, a wide-open map played out in grass plains and rice paddies, the GIs are after an armored personnel carrier. "There's plenty of soft cover, bushes that'll help them stay hidden but won't stop bullets," says Tyrell. "Try staking out the APC with an RPG-wielding guerrilla. Scan for movement, and with practice, you'll put down the enemy without him having a chance." Just remember to relocate after launch-

ing a rocket, as the smoke trail you leave points snipers to your exact position. Tyrell also suggests that forward observers pop red smoke to spot for mortar rounds and keep the Americans at bay with inbound artillery.

If the U.S. obtains the charges stowed in the APC and plants them on your supply cache, you'll have to change tactics. Firepower is crucial, and the Communists should send in machine gunners to clear out any Marines before calling in a sapper (who specializes in demolitions and can disarm the explosives more quickly than other classes). 

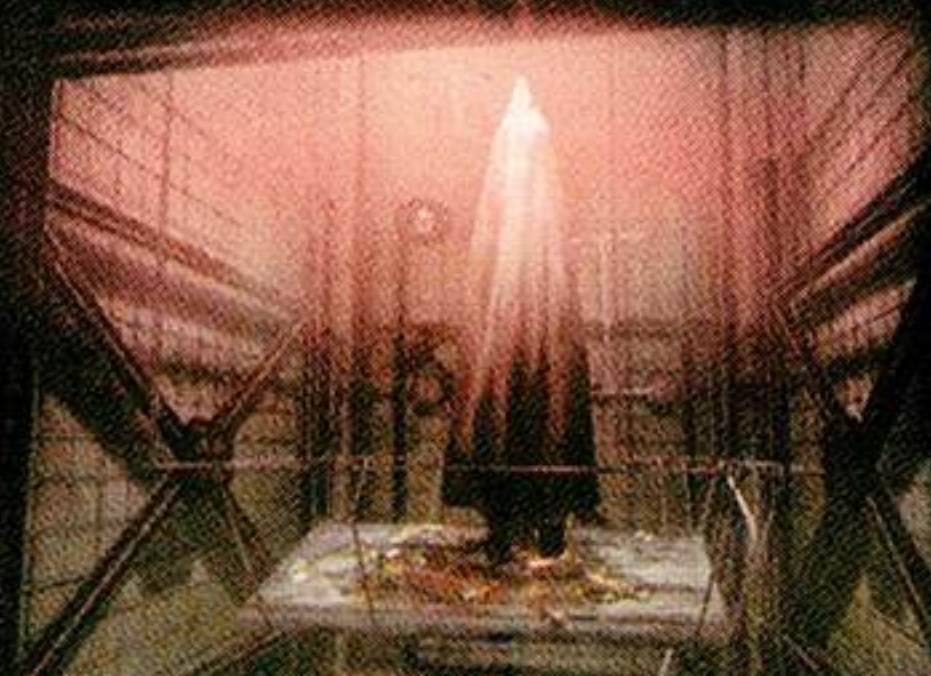
WELCOME TO AN ENDLESS NIGHTMARE OF
PAIN AND SUFFERING



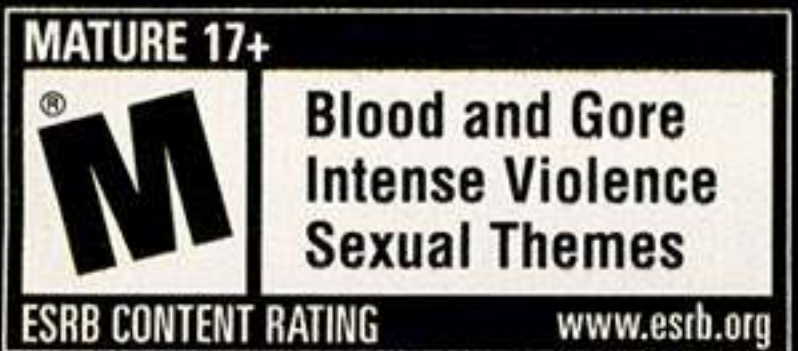
■ New 1st Person Mode



■ Riveting Story



■ Ghostly New Creatures



PlayStation 2



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Home is definitely where the heart is.

Along with some spleen. And a little chunk of liver in the hall.

“Best Adventure Game of E3” - *IGN.com*

“Forget about pushing the envelope. Silent Hill 4 tears it to pieces.” - *XBN Magazine*

“In the end, Konami’s game will, without a doubt, be the preeminent scare fest of 2004.” - *IGN.com*



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NEW SCHOOL

Back-to-school season got you bummed? Buck up. At some colleges, videogame studies are becoming as legit as English lit

Finally, a degree more useless than political science," quipped *Tonight Show* host Jay Leno shortly after Southern Methodist University in Dallas launched a college—called The Guildhall—devoted to videogames. But the joke's on anyone who doesn't think our favorite hobby belongs in higher education—especially if two Princeton students have anything to say about it.

Earlier this year, Roger Bellin and Deter Palmer, two Ph.D. candidates in Princeton's English department, held a standing-room-only conference called Form, Culture, & Videogame Criticism at

their school. Their goal is to get universities to recognize games as a kosher subject—as valid as literature and film—for study, discourse, and, most important of all, college credit. "We had a shared interest in thinking critically about games," Bellin tells us, "and we decided to gather others with a similar interest and see what kind of work they were doing."

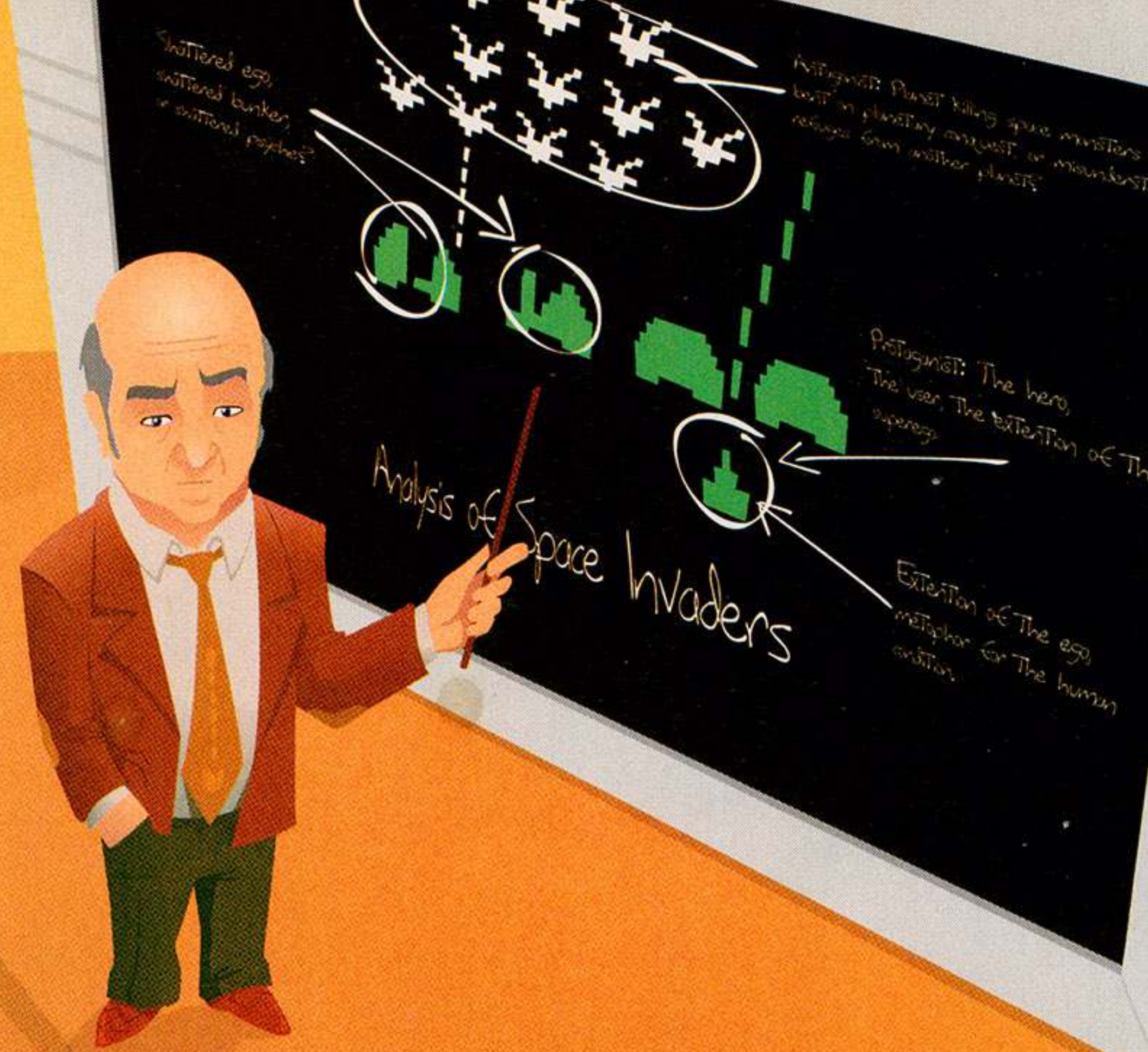
Turns out, plenty. Scholars around the world, particularly in the U.K. and Europe, are busy helping game studies become legitimate. They even have a fancy pants, Latin-derived name: "ludology," from the word "ludus," which means game. They've

got websites—Games Studies (www.gamestudies.org) and Ludology (www.ludology.com). They've got classes slowly creeping into universities from Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA, to Princeton University in New Jersey. They've even got research centers, such as the Game Culture and Technology Lab at the University of California in Irvine, CA, and GRAVEL, the Games Research and Virtual Environment Lab at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, MN. But—as Leno's jab attests—the one thing they don't have is respect.

Although schools such as Digipen in

Redmond, WA, and the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta are expanding their coursework in videogame design and programming, finding a course on, say, the narrative structure of *The Legend of Zelda* isn't easy—yet. Budding ludologists think that's just a sign of the game medium's relative infancy. "There will be some problems getting videogames taken seriously as interesting cultural objects in some institutional settings," says Bellin, "but it's nothing different from the problems that film studies, mass media, and popular culture have experienced before."

Ludus on! —David Kushner



Subject Matter

Wondering what a ludology tract might look like if this really takes off? Let's crack open a likely course catalog, based on actual papers in the field....

LUD 101—Introduction to American and Japanese Videogames
Surveys the history of the industry from its beginnings in the early 1970s to today. Includes analysis of key titles and genres of this period. (Three semester hours)

LUD 112—The Myth and Reality of the Ergodic Videogame
Examines the player-character relationship in a wide variety of videogames, focusing in particular on player reactions to famous mascots and heroes. This is an essay-heavy course. (Three semester hours)

LUD 203—I Lose, Therefore I Think
Encourages contemplation during game sessions, with an emphasis on highly challenging games. Lab featuring Xbox title *Ninja Gaiden* required. (Four semester hours)

LUD 204—Lara Croft: Feminist Icon or Bimbo?
Examines the image of athletic female archeologist to Aran and other more puritanical videogame heroes. Required viewing: both *Tomb Raider* movies. (Three semester hours)

Illustration by Terry Wong

UBISOFT IS KEEPING ITS STEALTHY FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER FAR CRY INSTINCTS (PS2/XB) ON DEVELOPMENT ISLAND, PUSHING THE GAME'S RELEASE TO EARLY NEXT YEAR....



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Power
of the
Judgment
Ring
to Fullfill
Your Destiny



A fantastical world filled with ancient magic, mystical lore, unspeakable curses and a diabolical plot



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A MIDST THE CHAOS OF WORLD WAR I, YURI AND KARIN EMBARK ON AN EPIC JOURNEY TESTING THEIR POWER AND MAGIC SKILLS WITH THE JUDGMENT RING TO COMBAT TERRIFYING CREATURES AND CONQUER THE EVIL THAT RASPUTIN PLANS TO UNLEASH UPON THE WORLD.



PlayStation 2



AUTO EROTICA

Racing games with dangerous curves and hot bodies...oh, and Brooke Burke, too

Purists can keep their boring NASCAR games and F1 simulations—true automotive action goes down on the mean city streets, far from the safety of a race track. In addition to offering high-speed thrills, street racin' allows you to exercise your creativity: Lower your ride, get some phat tires, and install some neon-purple ground effects if you want to make an impact.

Here, we give you a quick heads-up on five barely legal racers hitting your consoles in the next few months. Pimp out your ride and get ready to put your pink slip on the line.... —Kevin Gifford



Prepare to be mesmerized by *MC3*'s spinning rims.

CERTIFICATE OF TITLE

Pimpin'...at two miles per gallon.

MIDNIGHT CLUB III: DUB EDITION

PS2/XB • Rockstar • November 2004

Street Cred:
Street racing returns to the home of the automobile in *Midnight Club III*—the exotic locales of the past *Club* games give way to all-American competition in cities such as Detroit and San Diego. Of course, don't expect traditional racetracks, since the action here takes place on rain-slick streets, down narrow alleyways, and even through buildings (smashing through a store's display window makes for a great shortcut).

Tricked Out:
In order to offer legit street-tuning culture, Rockstar has hooked up with *Dub* magazine, the bible for street-racing enthusiasts.

Penchant for Lawlessness:
Illegality runs rampant here, but luckily, the police have trouble catching überspeedy roadsters hellbent on victory.

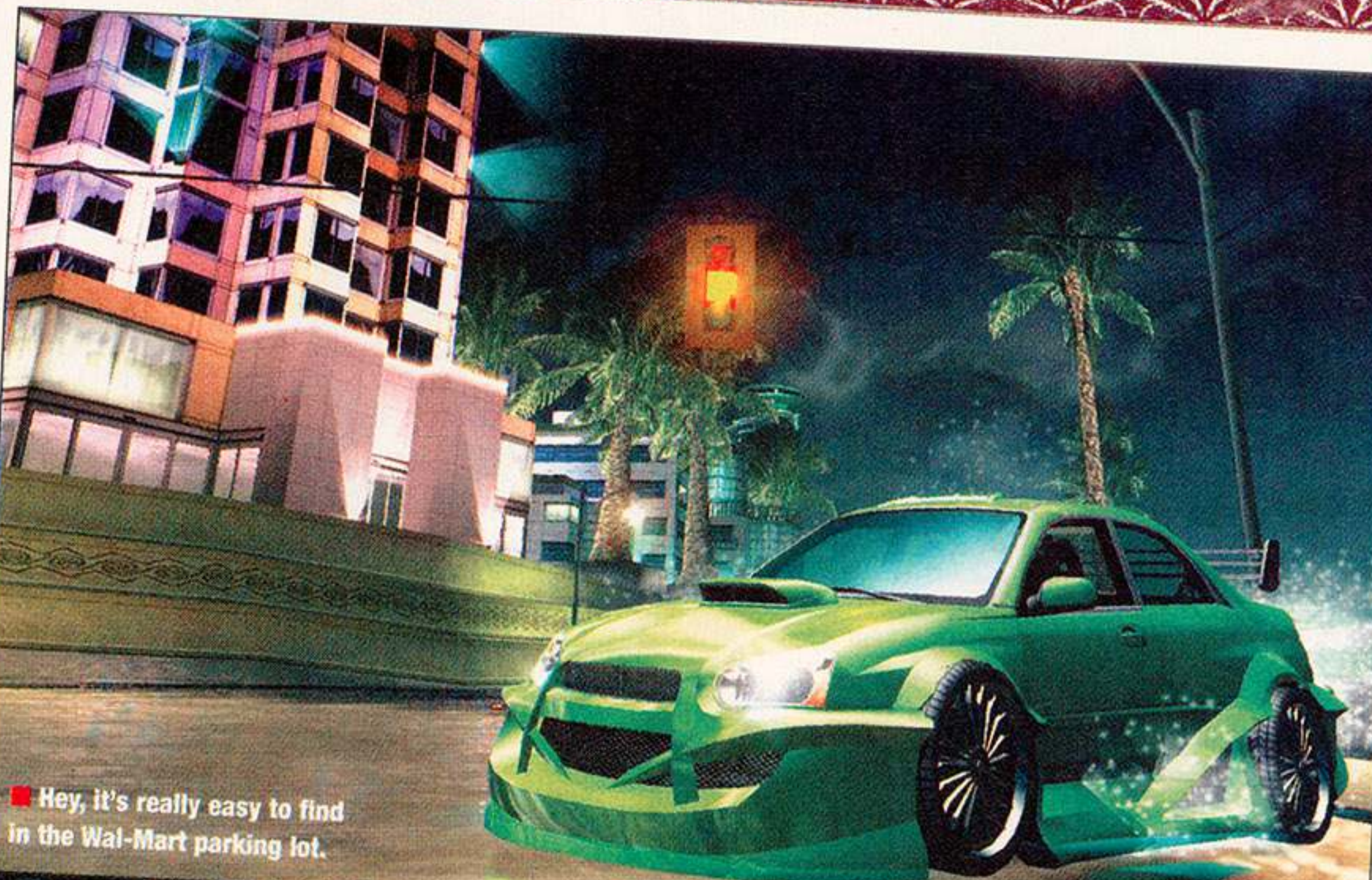
Hoochie Quotient:
Rockstar claims to be downplaying the importance of characters in this third *Club*, so don't expect throngs of chicas flocking to your ride. Pity.

VOID IF ALTERED

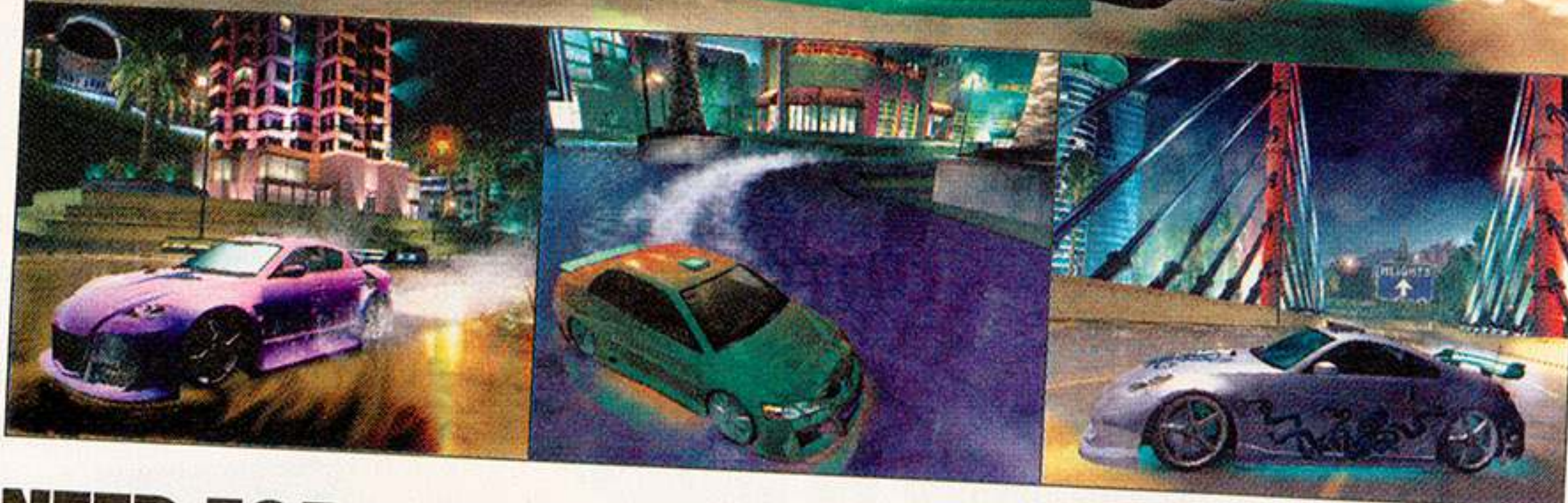
>> UBISOFT WILL RELEASE *ADVANCE GUARDIAN HEROES*, A GBA SEQUEL TO THE CULT-CLASSIC SEGA SATURN BRAWLER BY REVERED DEVELOPER TREASURE, THIS SEPTEMBER >>

■ *NFSU2*'s Brooke Burke, looking vaguely pissed off.

CERTIFICATE OF TITLE



■ Hey, it's really easy to find in the Wal-Mart parking lot.



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2004

Street Cred:

The sequel to the surprise hit of 2003 scraps the original game's menu-driven setup. Instead, the story mode takes a page from *Grand Theft Auto*: You cruise a virtual city at night, poking around for opponents and searching for illicit parts shops. The bigger a name you build running street races, the more high-stakes challenges you can join—just like in real life, sort of.

Tricked Out:

There are 30 cars in *NFSU2*, each with hundreds of custom parts you buy with your race plunder. Most add-ons help your car's performance, but the selection of outlandish accessories has also more than doubled. Spoilers? Stickers? That's kid stuff—how about some gull-wing doors for your sister's Subaru?

Penchant for Lawlessness:

None of *NFSU2*'s racing is legal, strictly speaking, which explains the hapless oncoming traffic you'll bash into on occasion. A wide variety of illegal races means that you can concentrate on whatever type you prefer—drags down the interstate, Japanese-style drift racing up in the mountains, or dangerous street heats that would make Vin Diesel proud—and still keep the story going. A multicar garage (sorely missing last time) makes it easier to customize rides for each individual race mode.

Hoochie Quotient:

Former E! *Wild On* hottie Brooke Burke plays race organizer Rachel in-game. Does she know racing? Probably not, but a *NFSU2* promo video features two cars racing up her curvy, bare tummy. Maybe she's a track? ➤

VOID IF ALTERED



JUICED

PS2/XB • Acclaim • September 2004

Street Cred:

Juiced tackles most of the same terrain that *NFSU* expertly handled last year, but with a twist: Instead of a balls-out arcade bash, the emphasis is on simulation-style racing, similar to Xbox's *Project Gotham*.

Tricked Out:

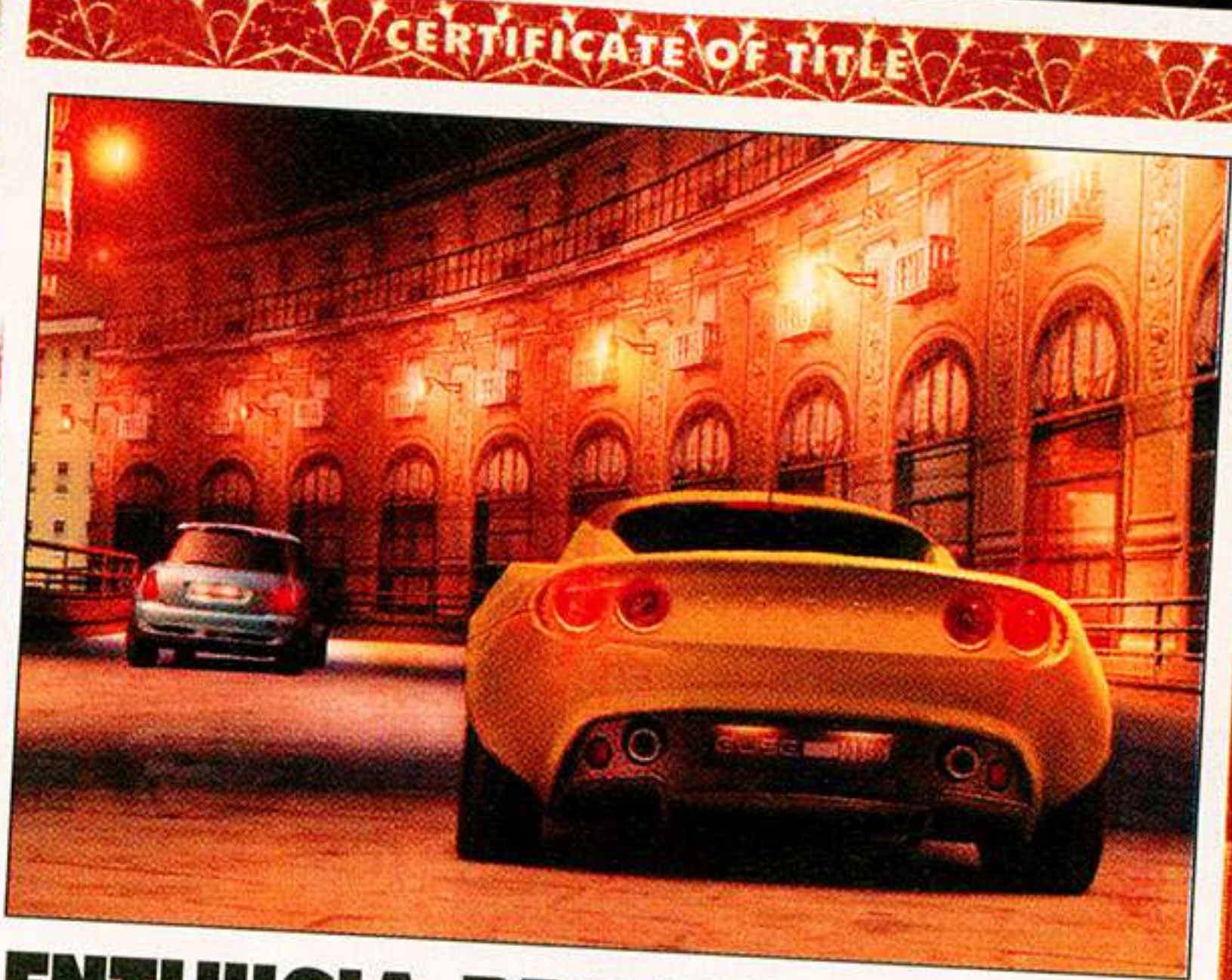
The customization available in *Juiced* is almost intimidating: Every part of your car's performance can be futzed with, and you can paint the exterior any way you like for online races.

Penchant for Lawlessness:

Juiced takes place in a weird legal limbo, with tricked-up racers pushing 100 mph on mysteriously deserted city streets. It runs like an organized street racing league—in fact, you can even create virtual car clubs and race in team tournaments worldwide.

Hoochie Quotient:

Very low—with its realistic car physics and damage, *Juiced* is more for car nerds than image-conscious kids. All the hotties are in *NFSU*...



ENTHUSIA PRO RACING

PlayStation 2 • Konami • Spring 2005

Street Cred:

Konami, a newcomer to the car field, is trying something different with *Enthusia*—it's all about the "feel" of racing. There's a decent variety of cars, but don't expect much customization—the focus is on the driving experience itself rather than *Gran Turismo*'s endless tinkering.

Tricked Out:

With little car tuning available, the main new gimmick is the Visual Gravity System, an onscreen display

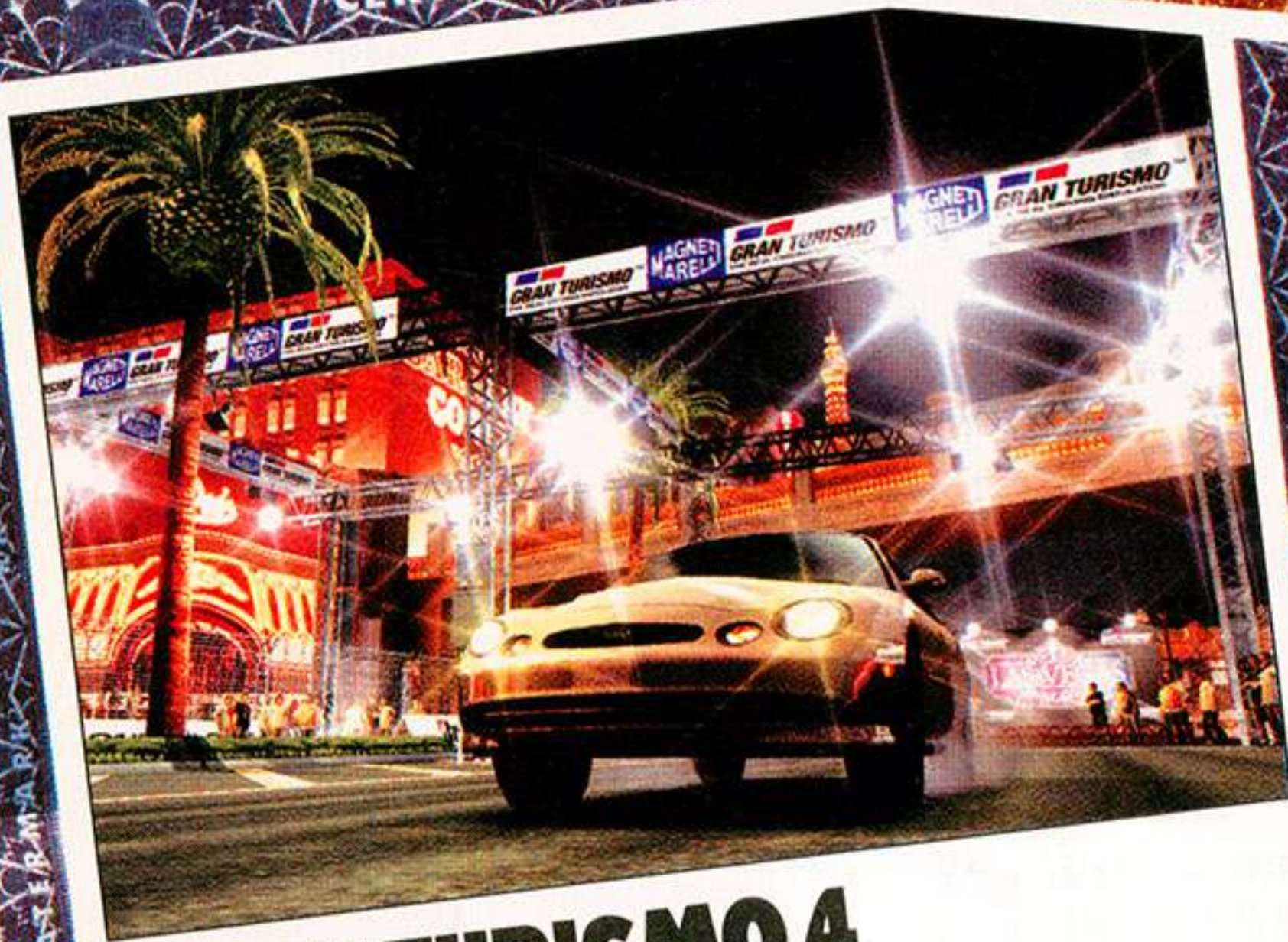
that relays info on the forces working against your car and (presumably) helps you become a smarter driver.

Penchant for Lawlessness:

Not too high, though it's doubtful the Arizona Highway Patrol would look kindly on driving a Shelby Cobra through the desert at 120 mph.

Hoochie Quotient:

Enthusia's only sensual appeal? The vibration of your steering wheel—mixed with a very fertile imagination.



GRAN TURISMO 4

PlayStation 2 • Sony CEA • January 2005

Street Cred:

Let's be honest: Does anyone really care about any racing sim besides *GT4*? The heavily delayed PS2 exclusive has at least 500 cars (Sony unofficially hints that the number could be greater) and a wagonload of new courses, including all 13 miles of Germany's Nurburgring.

Tricked Out:

An expanded version of *GT3*'s customization library, the deepest in all of gamedom, will come with *GT4*.

Rumor has it that Sony might also go all out with external body mods to compete with the likes of *NFSU2*.

Penchant for Lawlessness:

Slim to none. In fact, in a nod to all the car licensors that Sony is working with, the cars in *GT4* still take no external damage after a crash.

Hoochie Quotient:

Pretty bleak, unless you happen to play against a sultry temptress in the game's online mode.



For more hot chicks and fast cars, scope the review of *SRS* on page 98.

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I

ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING

Inappropriate for All Ages



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CELEBRITY GAMER: TORRIE WILSON

We willingly submit to the **WWE's** gorgeous lady of wrestling

As a lean, mean, and sexually frustrated teen's dream, WWE diva and two-time *Playboy* cover girl Torrie Wilson is one wrestler we wouldn't mind hitting the mat with. And come this November, you can do just that in THQ's *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* for PlayStation 2, where the hardbody—known for her savvy combat skills and stunning good looks—really puts the hurt on. But know this before storming the squared circle: Just because the lovely grappler has no problem baring bra and panties for an audience doesn't necessarily mean she's a pushover during playtime.

EGM: Squeezing into those black thigh-high boots is one thing, but a wrestling simulation?

Torrie Wilson: Yeah, [seeing myself in a videogame] was weird at first. Now it's cool. I thought it'd be a cold day in hell before they let me in a game, but I'm glad it happened.

EGM: Why is that?

TW: Because it's awesome to play myself. I get to do stuff I can't do in real life.

EGM: Right. Like hang out with a bunch of dweebs....

TW: More like the bits where I leap six feet high off a rope and dropkick someone. I'd bust my ass doing that for real.

EGM: Any secrets we should know when trying to take you down?

TW: Pick someone good to come at me with, like Triple H. Then max out his power.

EGM: Pop quiz: Name your favorite interactive diversions of all time.

TW: You'll laugh. I've played plenty of games since the days of *Donkey Kong* and *Ms. Pac-Man*, but those two games still captivate me. They require little brainpower—I don't like thinking when I'm in front of a console.

EGM: What system's got enough game for a girl like you?

TW: Game Boy Advance. I carry it with me constantly on overseas trips. I can't bring it along when we tour the United States, though. The other wrestlers on the bus

make fun of me. Still, I'm in love with Mario—he makes monotonous trips so much easier to bear.

EGM: So that means gamers like us have a chance of dropping you for the one, two, three?

TW: Already done. My husband [WWE wrestler Billy Kidman] is a gamer. While we speak, he's busy combing the E3 [the gaming industry's annual trade show] exhibits for any free games.

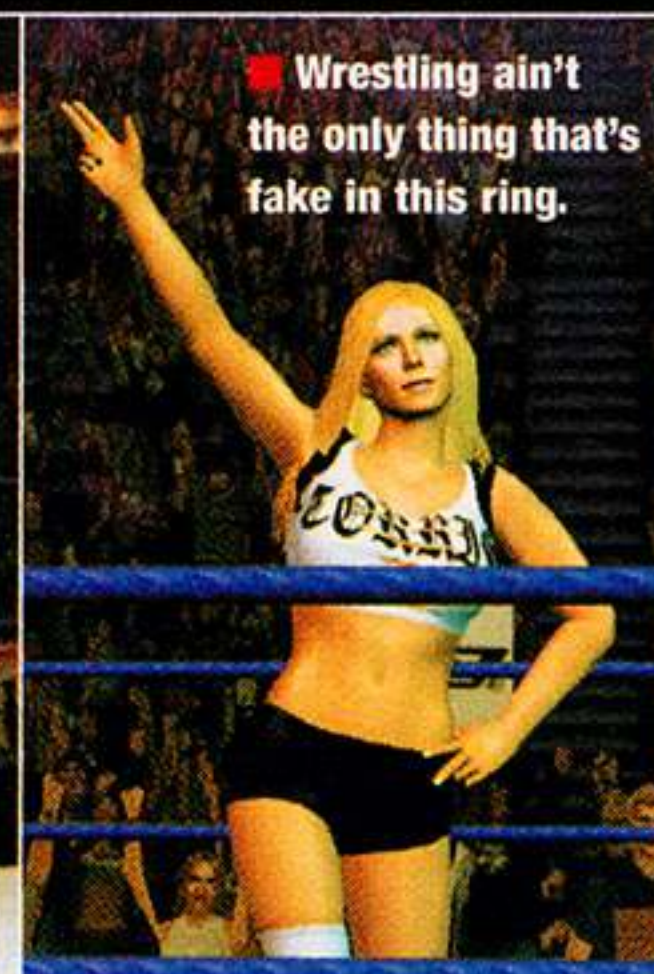
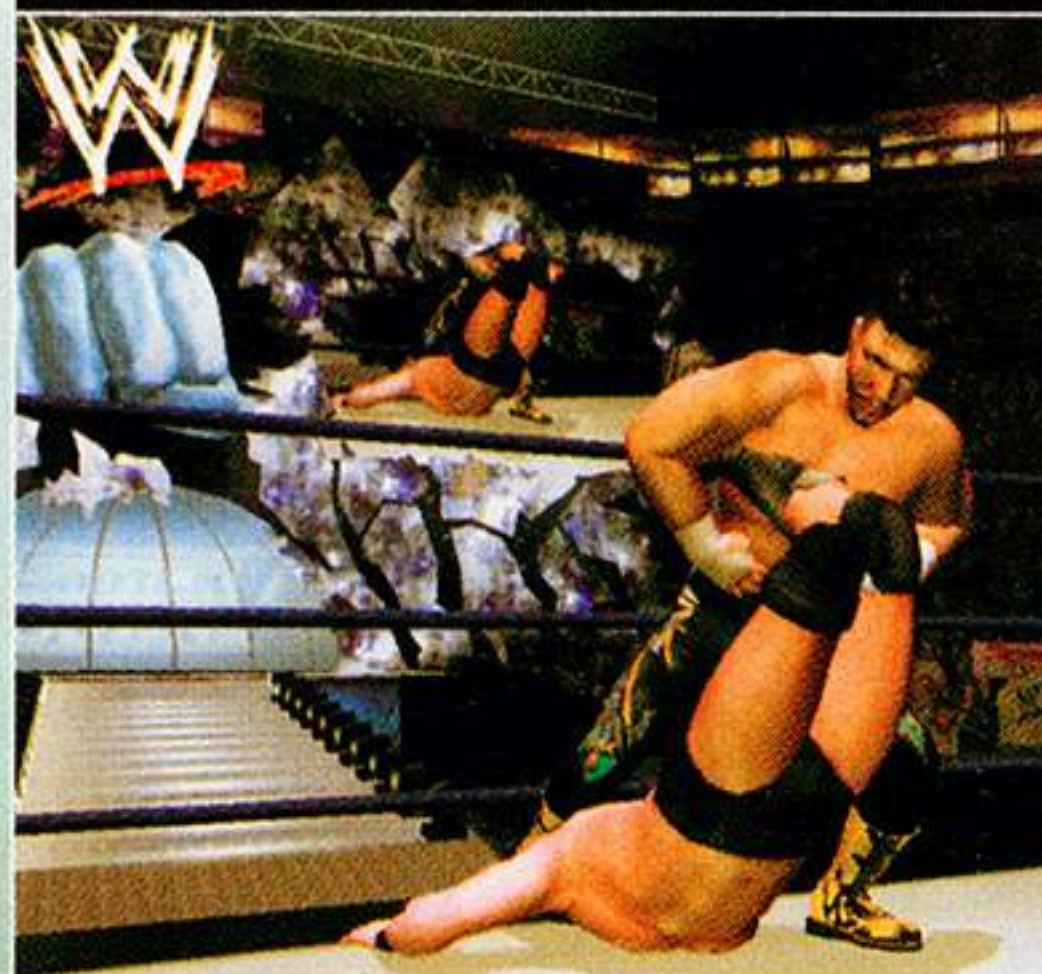
EGM: Figures—the good ones are always taken. But how could a lonely gamer get a diva of his own?

TW: Invite a girl to play with you, but start slow and basic. Choose a game that's simple. Too many buttons are intimidating for some gals. Then let nature take its course.

—Scott Steinberg

WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw

PS2 • THQ • November 2004 — The title says it all: The focus of this grappler is the feud brewing between the WWE's top TV brands, *SmackDown!* and *Raw*. The game's multiple story lines should mimic each show's, as THQ is working closely with the WWE's team of writers to "find out what directions they are taking with the superstars," Associate Producer Cory Ledesma says. *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* will also include new grappling techniques and modes like creating your own pay-per-view event, plus ringside commentary and voiceovers from several of the wrasslers—a series first.

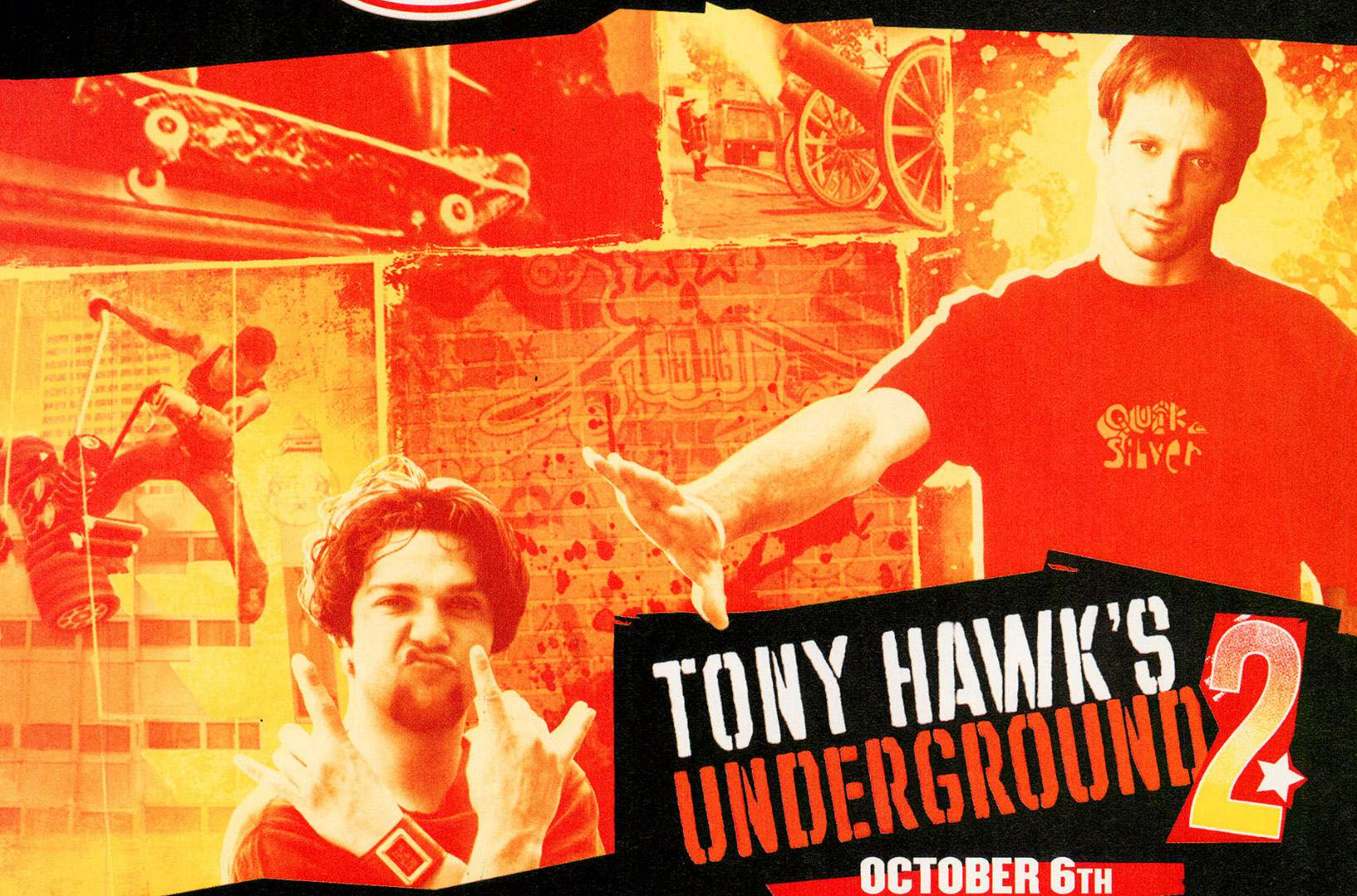


Wrestling ain't the only thing that's fake in this ring.

Photograph by Frederick M. Brown

>> CONTRARY TO INTERNET REPORTS, VU GAMES SAYS IT HAS NO PLANS TO RELEASE A PS2 VERSION OF THE XBOX HIT *CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY*... >>

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PlayStation 2



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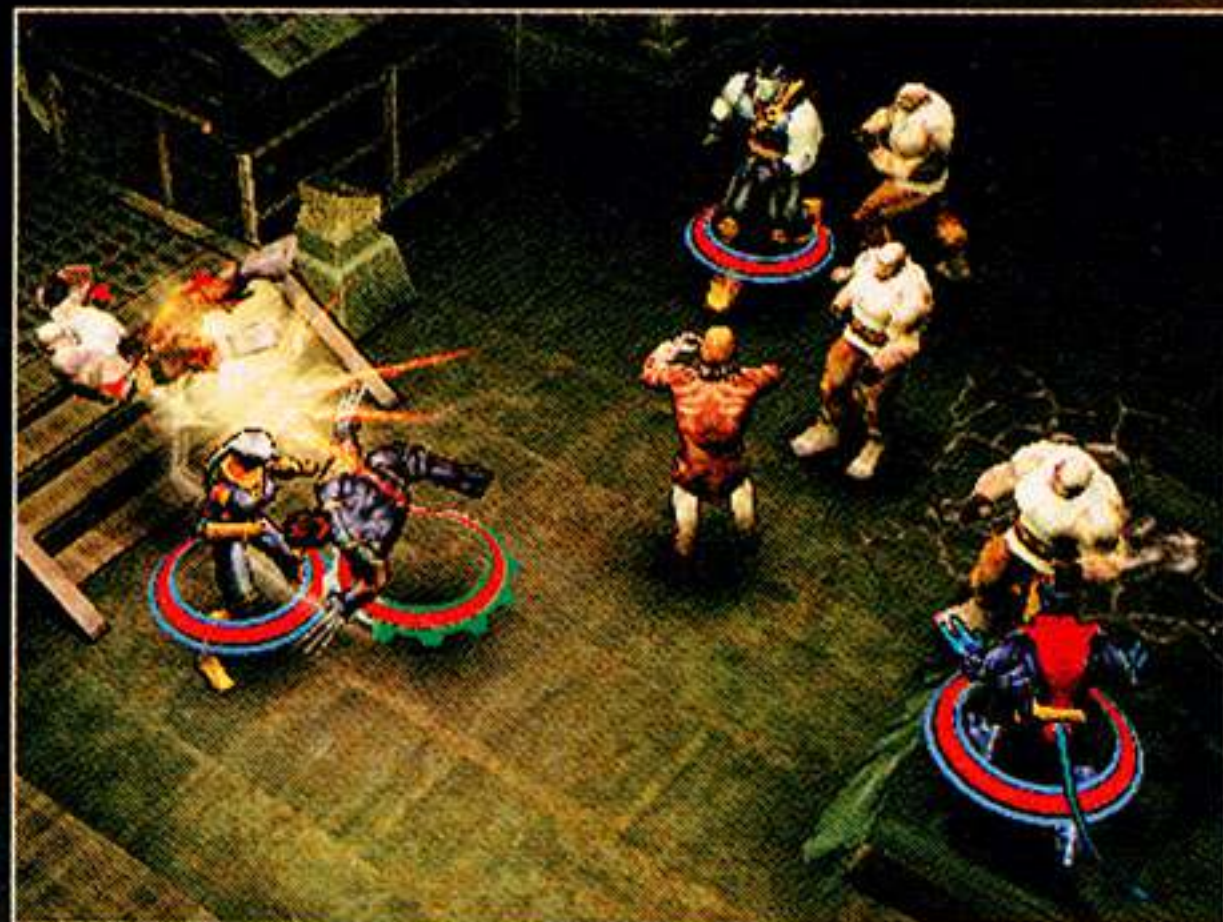
PS2/XB/GC

SHOW AND TELL: X-MEN: LEGENDS

Roleplaying with a mutant twist

Professor X believes that normal humans and mutants can peacefully coexist. Just because the X-Men are different, that doesn't exclude them from simple pleasures such as getting married, rearing children, or battling in top-down, *Champions of Norrath*-style action-RPGs. *Legends* (coming this September for all three major consoles)

offers all the established accoutrements of the hack-n-slash fantasy genre—four-player simultaneous play, searing magical spells, and labyrinthine levels to explore. We headed straight to the source—Producer Blaine Christine—to get the full scoop on this refreshingly elf-free (well, unless you count *Nightcrawler*) quest. —Shane Bettenhausen



Mutant Massacre

Blaine Christine: "It's best to use teamwork tactics against the creepy Morlocks. Here, Colossus, Storm, and Nightcrawler keep the grunts busy while Wolvie finishes off a Morlock brute with a punishing combo."



Blood on the Dance Floor

BC: "Another great teamwork example: Jean Grey holds 'em in place with telekinesis while Beast cleans house with his propeller kick. You'll want to be creative and try using different characters' moves in tandem."



A Touching Tribute to Dazzler

BC: "A sudden ambush leaves the X-Men surrounded, so Gambit wisely uses his screen-clearing extreme power, 52 Pickup, to obliterate the attackers. These moves are costly—use them only when necessary."



Slip Them the Tongue

BC: "*Legends*' bosses aren't always huge, but they still pack a punch. Take Toad, for example (that's him with the blue circle): Our Toad is the one from the *Ultimate X-Men* comic, and he's a total freak—an acrobatic British slimeball armed with a nasty 'tongue lash' attack. In order to beat him, you'll have to use objects in the environment."



Playing Favorites

BC: "While in his steel form, Colossus is a walking tank. He can punch through walls and take out a group of enemies all by himself—he's a valuable asset on any mission. The 15 playable characters in *Legends* are all really unique, but we have a feeling that some—like Wolvie and Colossus—get sent out more often than others..."

>> CHEAPSKATES TAKE NOTE: ACTIVISION VALUE WILL PUBLISH A GAME BASED ON THE HIT DISCOVERY CHANNEL SHOW AMERICAN CHOPPER FOR PS2 AND XBOX THIS FALL.... >>



■ The Stranger is a much more active, heroic character than past *Oddworld* wusses Abe and Munch.

■ PS2/XB

ODDWorld: STRANGER

Oddworld returns with a chip on its shoulder

Your last encounter with the bizarre realm of *Oddworld* came in 2001, when *Munch's Oddysee* delivered a double dose of strangeness to the Xbox launch. The game earned high scores in *EGM* and performed well at retail, but *Oddworld* creator Lorne Lanning doesn't look back on it fondly. "*Munch* was a big lesson for us," he admits. "The technology drove the story, and going forward, I refuse to water down the *Oddworld* epics for the sake of this hardware cycle's limitations."

So Lanning's new title, *Stranger* (due in spring 2005), isn't a proper *Oddworld* game (he has a quintology of five games planned; *Munch* was the second), but rather a side story. Seemingly freed from the constraints of the past titles, *Stranger* marks a decidedly new direction for the *Oddworld* universe. Lovable protagonists Abe and Munch are notably absent. Also, the series now shifts from platforming adventures emphasizing

stealth and brains to a more action-oriented first- and third-person run-and-gun experience.

The titular Stranger works as a bounty hunter and runs afoul of the Outlaws, a bunch of dirty dealers with names like Filthy Hands Floyd and The Looten Duke. Using his dual-ammo crossbow and powerful natural abilities (a running ram and wicked punch used in third-person mode), Stranger must bring in the Outlaws one after another. Dead is fine, but the bounty is higher if they come in breathing.

Here, *Stranger* shows its *Oddworld* heritage. The ammunition Stranger uses is quite literally "live ammo" that must be hunted and collected. Chippunks, when shot, land on the ground and begin talking smack; enemies rush to them and begin stomping in an attempt to shut them up. Fuzzballs act as land mines, tearing rabidly at foes who approach.

Seems like this inventive new combat would make for some rollicking death-matches, right? Sadly, nope. "There won't be any multiplayer in this one," says Lanning. "Once we establish this new genre, we'll take that chemistry and head into the next one...this could be the birth of a new franchise."

—Greg Orlando



WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Now is the slowest time of the year for PC games, as you'll find yourself desperately whiling away hours playing Flash games through Yahoo.com just to keep your decade-long streak of avoiding actual human contact intact. So what's a PC gamer to do? How about catching a *Silence of the Lambs*-style killer and looking forward to a great RPG? Sounds like a plan.

Missing



For the last couple of years, most PC adventure games have sucked hard enough to create an actual vacuum in the game box. *Missing*, however, bucks the trend by being good and genuinely creepy. From the second you load the game, it creates the fiction of being sent a message from a serial killer. The combination of actual Internet content and some odd minigames help make *Missing* succeed where Electronic Arts' big conspiracy thriller *Majestic* so utterly failed.



Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines

OK, the first *Vampire* game—here comes an easy joke—sucked. But this nosferatu simulator looks good enough to drive a stake into the heart of any memory of the original, as you can play as, like, a quadrillion vampire races and have a totally different experience each time. Add in the strong story and *Bloodlines* may be the spiritual *System Shock 2* successor we've been waiting for.

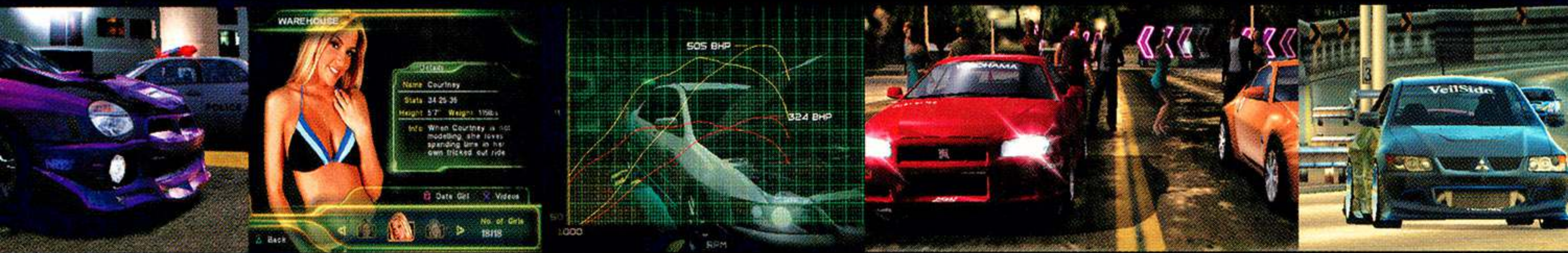
—Robert Coffey,
Computer Gaming World



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■ One big happy family: Members of the fansite PSO World pose for pics in the game's lobby. And every weekend they barbeque together.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

If you build it, fanboys will come

Maniacal stares, oddly deformed digits, an overly flattened butt—these are telltale signs of an obsessed gamer. And when they aren't playing their favorite games, these sleep-deprived patrons of titles such as *Final Fantasy XI* and *Halo* are usually scouring the Internet for hardcore secrets or socializing with fellow addicts online. Other diehards take it a step further—they start fansites.

Simple game- or franchise-specific portals are surprisingly easy to create. You just need to make a general site design, know some basic HTML, and grab images off the game's official website; some companies even have downloadable starter kits with lots of art and screenshots for you to use. Plus, most Internet service providers—such as America Online and Earthlink—provide small amounts of Web space to subscribers free of charge. Building a fansite that will win a bigger following takes more serious dedication. Think about what you'd want to see in a site about your favorite game—you'll need

to update regularly, have unique and compelling content, and find good contributors.

PSO World (planetdreamcast.com/psoworld) is a prime example of a fansite done right. The *Phantasy Star Online*-dedicated site receives around 3 million visits per month and has 30,000 registered users, thanks in large part to word of mouth. "It helped that we were the first PSO site ever," says Tom Meininger, who runs the site with his stepbrother, Mark

Murray. He adds that people post messages by the hour and come to check out the site's extensive item-collection database, voting booths, contests, and guides. "The real driving force behind it is the admins and contributors," explains Murray. "Without them continually providing us with info and help, the site couldn't function." Thus leaving fans with no place to go except back in front of the boob tube to further flatten their backsides. —John Brandon

Online Now Downloading in three, two, one....

Project Gotham Racing 2 • Xbox
The Xbox driving scene shifts gears and heads to SoCal, thanks to the *PGR2* Long Beach booster pack. You'll be cruising the coastal fronts on eight new tracks and putting the pedal to the metal in eight new rides, including the luxurious Ferrari 612 Scaglietti and Porsche 911 GT2 (shown here). But it will make your wallet a little lighter—the downloadable content costs \$4.99.

must-hit fansites

halo.bungie.org — Fan fiction in the *Halo* universe? Yes, and it's actually good.

residentevilfan.com — Watch censored *Resident Evil* trailers from 1995. And try not to wet yourself—Raccoon City has a strict no-pee policy.

samus.co.uk — Learn how to skip the Flaahgra boss on the first level of *Metroid Prime* without cheating. The space-faring Samus will thank you for it.

eyesonff.com — Game reviews, wall-papers, maps, and...the invisible lady? People who consider themselves *Final Fantasy* fans should check it out.

gta-sanandreas.com — This one launched almost a year before the setting of the next *Grand Theft Auto* game was even announced. Obsess much?

WHAT'S UP AT



Layin' the SmackDown



Head to egmextras.1UP.com and check out our complete interview with the developers of *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw*. Will there be exclusive screenshots of the game, too? Oh hell yeah!

The Champ Says



Read the rest of our chat with last year's grand-prize winner of the *Madden Challenge*, David "Sandman" Seitchick (left). Plus, we'll have extra *NFL Street 2* images posted online (both available at egmextras.1UP.com).

1UP.com Club in the Spotlight: Club Sandwich



Official U.S. *PlayStation Magazine* News Editor Giancarlo Varanini (left) has given the 1UP.com community a forum to voice their love for an all-time lunch classic—the club sandwich (sandwiches.1UP.com). All are welcome, but don't you dare mention turkey burgers.

EGM Editor Blogs

Don't like our opinions in the magazine? Well, too bad. See if we can irritate you on a daily basis by reading our online journals (check out page 16 for the URL of each editor's blog).



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PS2/XB/GC

AFTERTHOUGHTS: SPIDER-MAN 2

We pull the mask off Activision's superhero supergame

This summer an excellent little low-budget indie movie called *Spider-Man 2* quietly leaked into theaters. At the same time, a game based on the film from developer Treyarch (whose previous credits include a title based on the cult hit *Minority Report* starring up-and-coming actor Tom Cruise) sneaked onto store shelves for all three consoles. In our attempts to help this struggling but deserving underdog, we talked to Senior Producer Gregory John about building a virtual New York City, motion sickness, and Tobey Maguire's tepid voice acting.

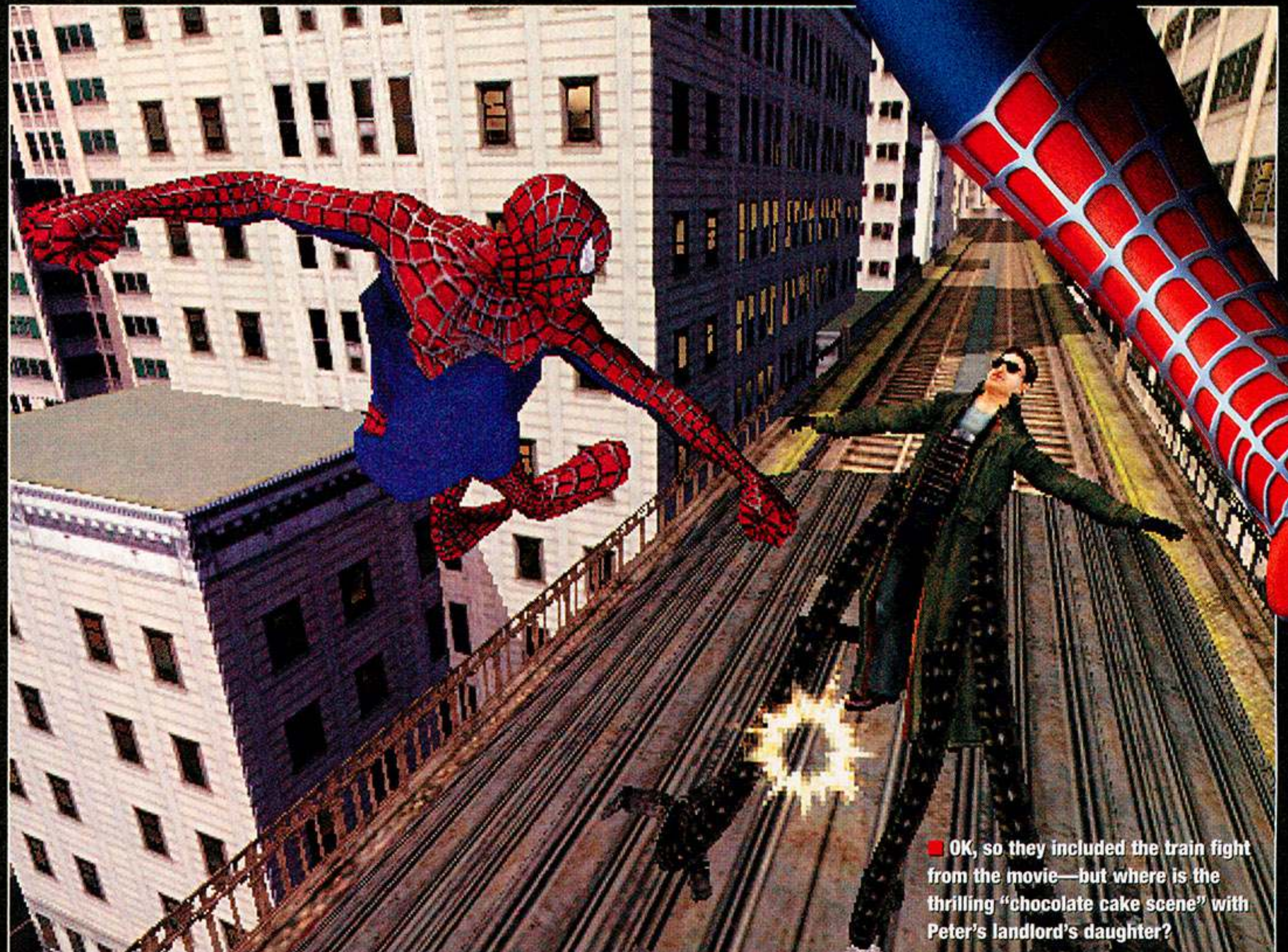
EGM: The web-slinging is definitely our favorite part of the game. How did you guys nail it so perfectly?

Gregory John: We started with some basic ideas like having the web stick to buildings—what we call anchor points—and using a pendulum physics model to dictate the motion. That was the easy part. The hard part was making all that feel like actual web-swinging. We wanted players to be able to just point in the direction they wanted to go, and that required a lot of calculations. We added acceleration thrusters to give the player even more control of direction and speed.

Interestingly, moves like being able to orbit or do a 360 around a flagpole actually came naturally out of the physics model.

EGM: The game duplicates all of Spider-Man's powers except for his superstrength. Why not let Spidey pick up and toss cars and such?

GJ: It was just a design choice. Manipulating objects was just a feature that we prioritized lower than the features that ended up getting into the game. There



OK, so they included the train fight from the movie—but where is the thrilling “chocolate cake scene” with Peter’s landlord’s daughter?

“Some people get motion sickness from watching another person playing the game.”

—Treyarch Senior Producer Gregory John

were other features we thought contributed more strongly to gameplay.

EGM: In some of the game's voice work Tobey Maguire sounds...bored. Did he have a cold or something?

GJ: I think Tobey did a fine job. He's really the perfect voice actor for the role since he's lived and breathed this character so much.

EGM: I guess we'll just have to agree to disagree there. Moving on, just how close is the New York in the game to the real New York?

GJ: Very close. We worked from maps of New York and websites showing how areas and neighborhoods were zoned. Several artists visited and took pictures and generally got the feeling of New York City. For example, if one part of the real-life city had brick buildings, then our game would have brick buildings in that area.

Also, we worked with the movie people to get our rendition to closely match theirs.

EGM: Did you have to cut or change parts of the city to make it work better for the game?

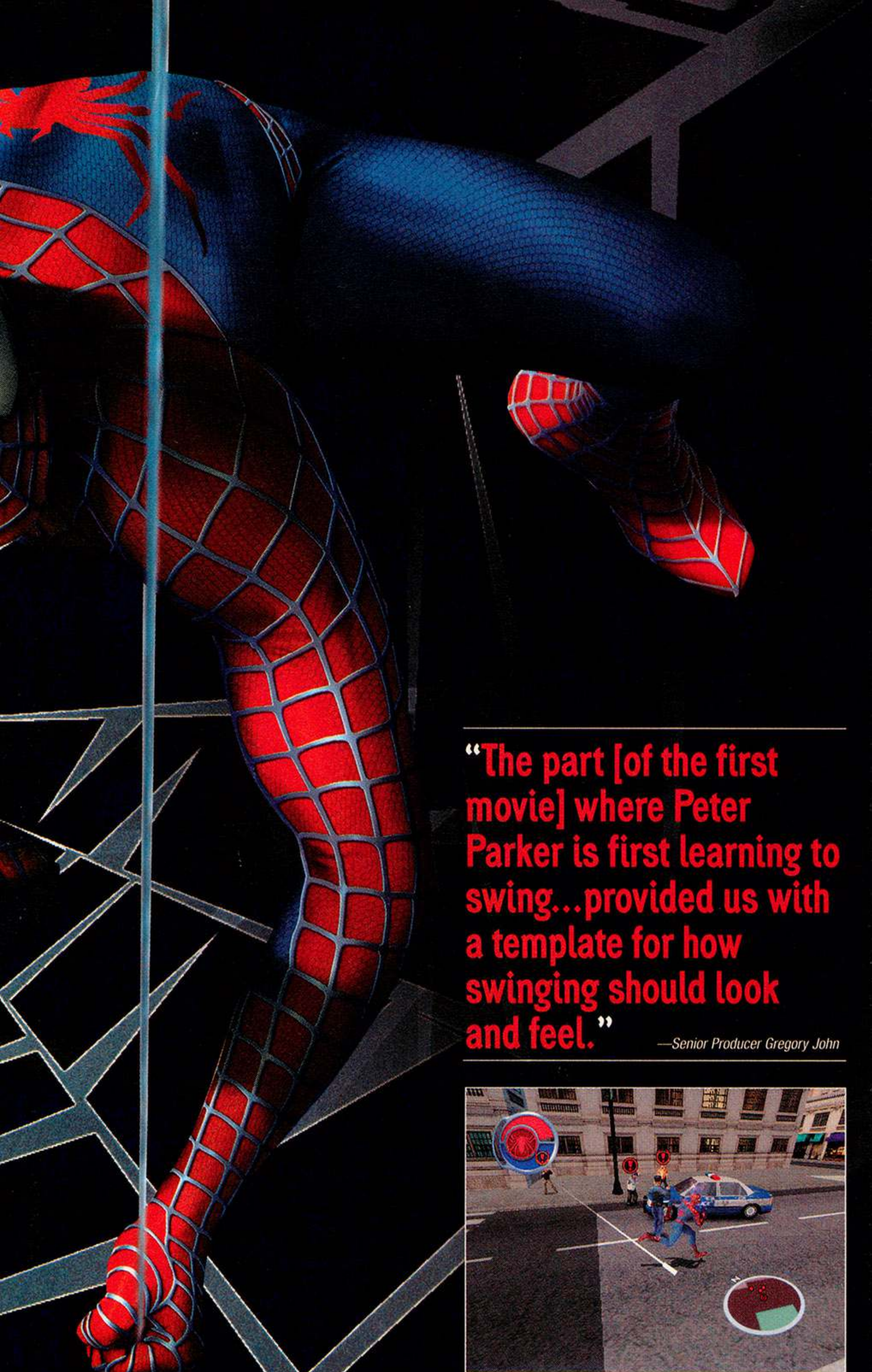
GJ: We had to shift some things around to make it ideal for our swinging system. We found that re-creating New York City at half scale was perfect. The buildings are all true scale—in particular the heights are real life—but the density is greater.

EGM: How did you choose the villains like Rhino and Mysterio added for the game? Can you not use certain bad guys like Venom and the Lizard if they

Leap of Faith

With all of the time he's spent playing *Spidey 2*, Senior Producer Gregory John's favorite stunt is surprisingly simple: “Jumping off the tallest building in Manhattan,” he says, “plummeting towards the ground, and shooting out a web at the very last moment so I don't splat against the pavement.”





“The part [of the first movie] where Peter Parker is first learning to swing...provided us with a template for how swinging should look and feel.”

—Senior Producer Gregory John



Rescue the Man About to Fall off the Ledge! ...Again?

Maybe you noticed how, after an hour or two, all of the “random” crimes going down in *Spider-Man 2*'s New York start to feel oddly familiar: the sinking sailors, the crooks robbing the armored car—what, that kid lost his balloon again? “Of the mission types that had significant work done on them,” Senior Producer John explains, “we cut about a third of them. [It was a] design decision that took into account whether things were compelling or fun and whether we had the time to polish them.” When we asked for some examples of what got the ax, John’s answer reminds us that a sequel is already in the works. “I’d rather not say too much about them,” he says, “since many of them still have a lot of potential.”

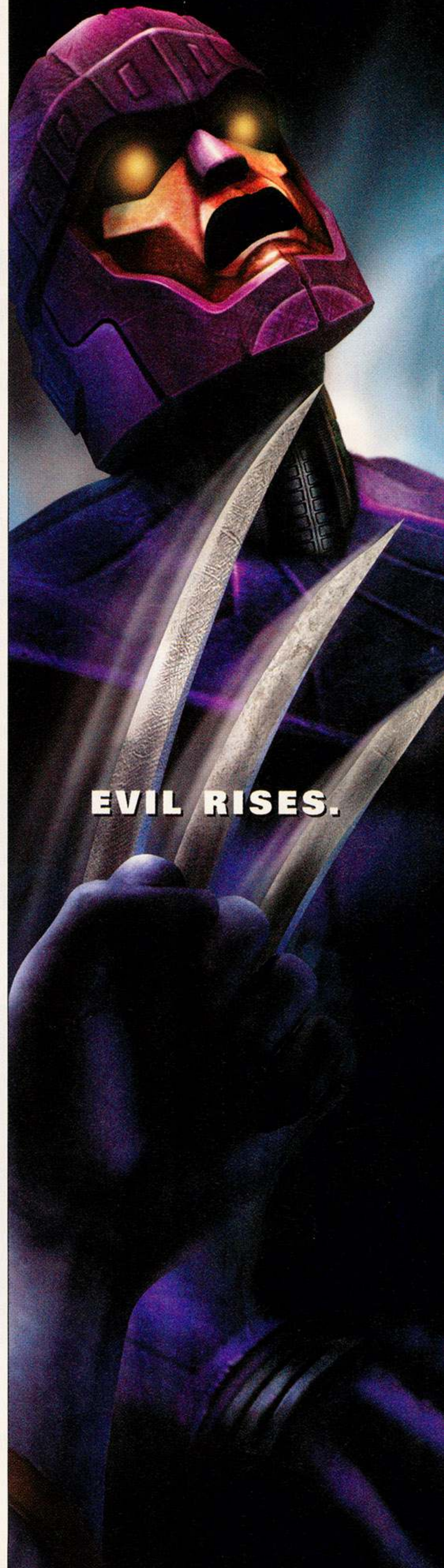
might be in future *Spider-Man* movies?

GJ: We do take into consideration the potential for villains to appear in future movies. Mostly, though, we choose villains by suitability to gameplay.

EGM: Did working on this game after the first movie was out change things at all? Any other sources of inspiration?

GJ: The first movie provided a lot of inspiration for the new physics-based web-swinging system. It really captured the feeling of that uniquely Spider-Man method of locomotion—the parts where Peter Parker is first learning to swing and the final sequence really provided us with a template for how swinging in the game should look and feel. We also took a lot from the comic books.

—Mark MacDonald



EVIL RISES.

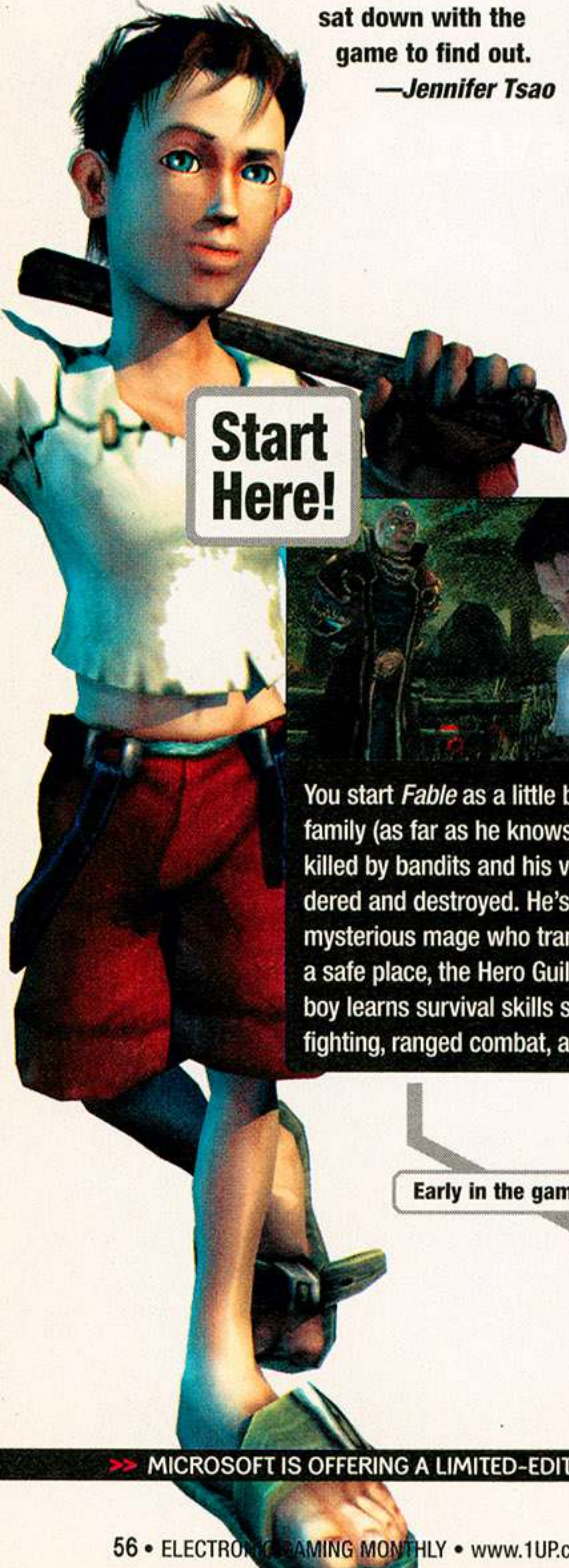
Xbox

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

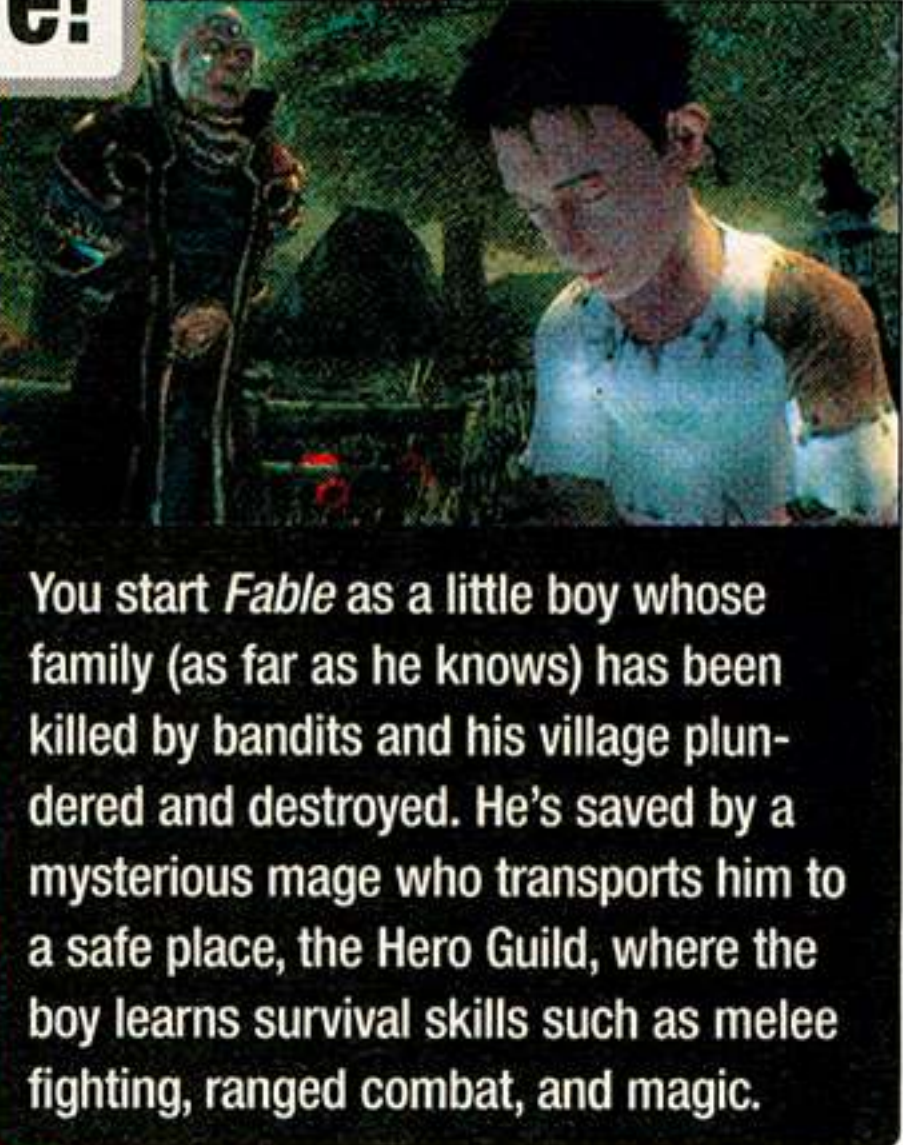
Fable gives you the power of Aesop

Think back to your childhood—back when anything seemed possible, back before you screwed it all up.... That's precisely where you start in the upcoming action role-playing game *Fable*. It's an open-ended adventure that presents players with many choices as they live the virtual life of a hero: Will you make truly noble choices or succumb to...shall we say...darker temptations? "[*Fable*] is about morality," says Microsoft Games Product Manager Josh Goldberg. "What do you want to do?" We sat down with the game to find out.

—Jennifer Tsao



Start Here!



You start *Fable* as a little boy whose family (as far as he knows) has been killed by bandits and his village plundered and destroyed. He's saved by a mysterious mage who transports him to a safe place, the Hero Guild, where the boy learns survival skills such as melee fighting, ranged combat, and magic.

Early in the game...



Nice guys get the ladies in *Fable*—this is a game that lets you get all domestic if ya want. You can buy a house, flirt with the goodly women of your village, and give the right girl enough chocolates, perfumes, and roses to win her hand in marriage.

...continue along the path of good



Bad guys sure do look cool. "That's the trick with *Fable*," says Goldberg. "[Actions] change your appearance and the way people think of you." Doing nasty deeds makes you look nasty, which tends to scare the common village folk. So if you choose the path of darkness, expect to spend a fair bit of time wandering the forest alone. Evil characters can still get married, but it's more difficult 'cause the chicks run away from you on sight. (Figures.)

...begin your descent into evil



A few initial quests test not just your combat abilities, but also your character's moral alignment (so much for the consequence-free youth you always dreamed of). When faced with the choice to rat out or protect a cheating husband, your noble or duplicitous responses earn you good or evil alignment points, and your reputation as either an honorable do-gooder or a crafty pest quickly becomes known around town. Villagers even taunt or congratulate you depending on what you chose to do. When you're ready to move on (and no sooner—the game is paced as quickly or slowly as you choose), you'll...

No matter what, the game records your personal history meticulously—from how many chickens you randomly kicked back in your home village to how many times you've puked from too much drinking. (No joke: The game features several bar-based minigames—21, checkers, coin golf, and more—so you'll have no trouble wasting away the hours in the local pub.) "It's amazing all the stuff you see," says Goldberg of this incredibly detailed character sheet.



And, whether you're predominantly good or bad, as you go through the game you'll learn new actions and emotions (called "expressions"), which you can map to the D-pad. This lets you quickly and easily express yourself...

...as a decent, swell fellow...

...or as a total jerk...



...who giggles with the common folk, charms everyone he meets, and always says thank you.



...who farts on hapless bystanders or flips off innocent villagers as a prelude to kicking the crap out of 'em.

Fundamentally, though, *Fable* is a game in which you choose your own adventure and reap exactly what you sow.

But is it a simple hack-n-slash?

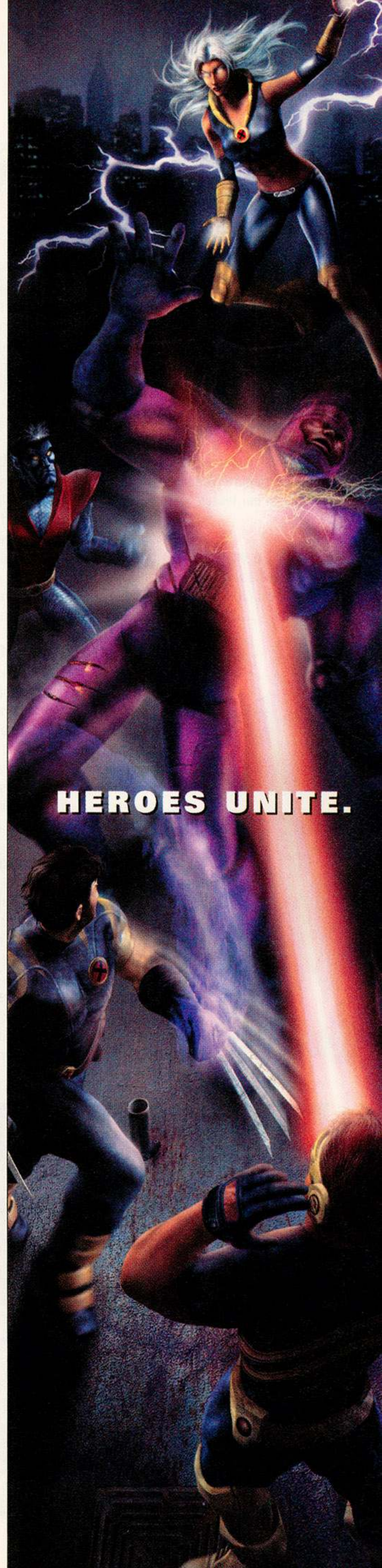
Or is it a free-roaming RPG?



The answer is yes. As you go through the game, you can skip all the role-playing malarkey and just focus on combat if you want. Leveling up, too, is quite seamless: Experience points are awarded based on what you do most of. So, for example, if you like melee combat, you will automatically get better at it. And if you don't like building relationships or doing side quests, you're more than welcome to skip those parts.



Again, yes. You could spend your days in *Fable* earning money to buy real estate in your town, opting in and out of all the quests you want. Certain quests must be completed to propel the story along, but how your character grows is really up to you. In the end, maybe you'll be a wise old man (above) or a crusty old bad guy with ugly horns and no friends (top). One thing, though, is for sure: The moral of this story will be uniquely yours.



HEROES UNITE.

THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that's worthy of the honor roll

School may be back in session for some of you out there, but don't worry—Professor Q is at the head of the class this semester. Here we'll be studying the fascinating subject of rumorology, which includes several lectures on the latest and greatest gaming gossip. If you ever wanna talk more or schedule time for extra help, simply shoot me an e-mail at quartermann@ziffdavis.com. OK, let's begin our lesson for today....

—The Q

2005: The year of the bat

The Caped Crusader's been hiding out in the Bat Cave for some time now, but that could all change very soon. My pals in Gotham City tell me that billionaire Bruce Wayne and his crimefighting alter ego Batman will return to the gaming scene (thanks to a very well-known publisher) next summer, alongside the upcoming flick *Batman Begins*. I only hope it's better than that declawed feline they call *Catwoman* (check out our review on page 101).

PSP pigskin

To my surprise, news outta developer 989 Sports'

training camp isn't all about the studio overhauling its struggling football series for PlayStation 3. Apparently, 989 is also hard at work on a rock 'em, sock 'em, arcade-style gridiron title for PlayStation Portable. Expect the game to go helmet to helmet with the PSP version of *NFL Street* at the handheld's launch.

Eyeing the open road

Start your engines, people, 'cause I've got some *Gran Turismo 4* gossip to report. Word around the track is that Sony will also release a special limited edition of the PS2 driving simulator with—get this—EyeToy support. I'm not sure yet how it all works, but news like this surely gets my gaming motor running.

GTA for Xbox: part deux

Every month, I receive tons (and I mean tons) of e-mails asking whether Rockstar will bring *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* to Microsoft's big bad console. Well, your all-time favorite gossipmonger finally has some info that may turn your frown upside down: A person in the know tells me that the game will indeed carjack your Xbox, but not until March of next year.

Diesel powered

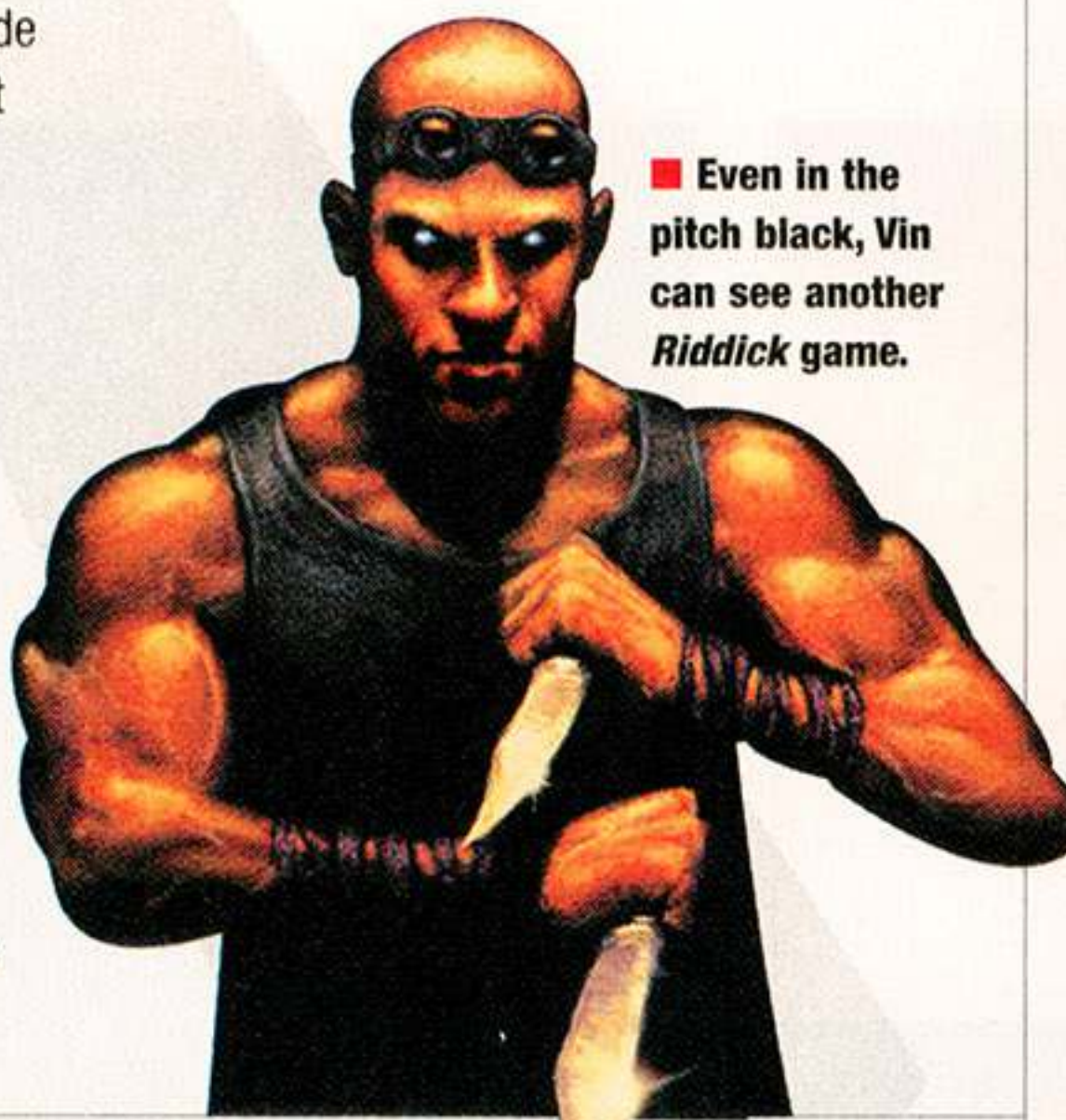
Who woulda thunk it—Vin Diesel, a videogame superstar. And if what I'm hearing is correct, you're gonna be seeing a lot more of the bald one on your console. Supposedly, publisher VU Games is planning another *Chronicles of Riddick* title for as early as next year, with the game acting as more of a side story than a direct sequel to *Escape from Butcher Bay*.



■ SSX may get tricky next on Sony's PS3.

Next-gen snowboarding conditions

You may not be aware of this, but The Q has always had a major jones for the *SSX* series (I could never cut it on the real slopes). It appears, however, that my virtual board, goggles, and long underwear will stay in the closet for a long while, as I'm hearing that the next edition of EA's snowboarder is slated as a PlayStation 3 launch title (as was the original *SSX* for PS2).



■ Even in the pitch black, Vin can see another *Riddick* game.

OVERHEARD

"I am betting we can take Sony in the next generation."

—Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer talks the talk with CNET news.com

"When the Rubik's Cube came out I was very frustrated that I didn't think of that. Whenever people ask me who my biggest rival is, I never say any other game designers—I always say Professor Rubik!"

—Mario and Zelda creator Shigeru Miyamoto

"I got to approve the videogame, the way [Mary Jane] looks. They made her boobs gigantic. I was like, 'Tone down the boobs please!'"

—Actress Kirsten Dunst details her input on *Spider-Man 2*'s development



CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR JUNE 2004



1 **Spider-Man 2**
PS2 • Activision

2 **Full Spectrum Warrior**
XB • THQ

3 **The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adv.** GC • Nintendo

4 **DRIV3R**
PS2 • Atari

5 **Spider-Man 2**
XB • Activision

6 **The Chronicles of Riddick**
XB • VU Games

7 **Shrek 2**
PS2 • Activision

8 **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** PS2 • EA Games

9 **Classic NES Series: Super Mario Bros.** GBA • Nintendo

10 **Mario vs. Donkey Kong**
GBA • Nintendo

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 07/18/04

BLOCKBUSTER



1 **DRIV3R**
PS2 • Atari

2 **NCAA Football 2005**
PS2 • EA Sports

3 **DRIV3R**
XB • Atari

4 **NCAA Football 2005**
XB • EA Sports

5 **Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow** PS2 • Ubisoft

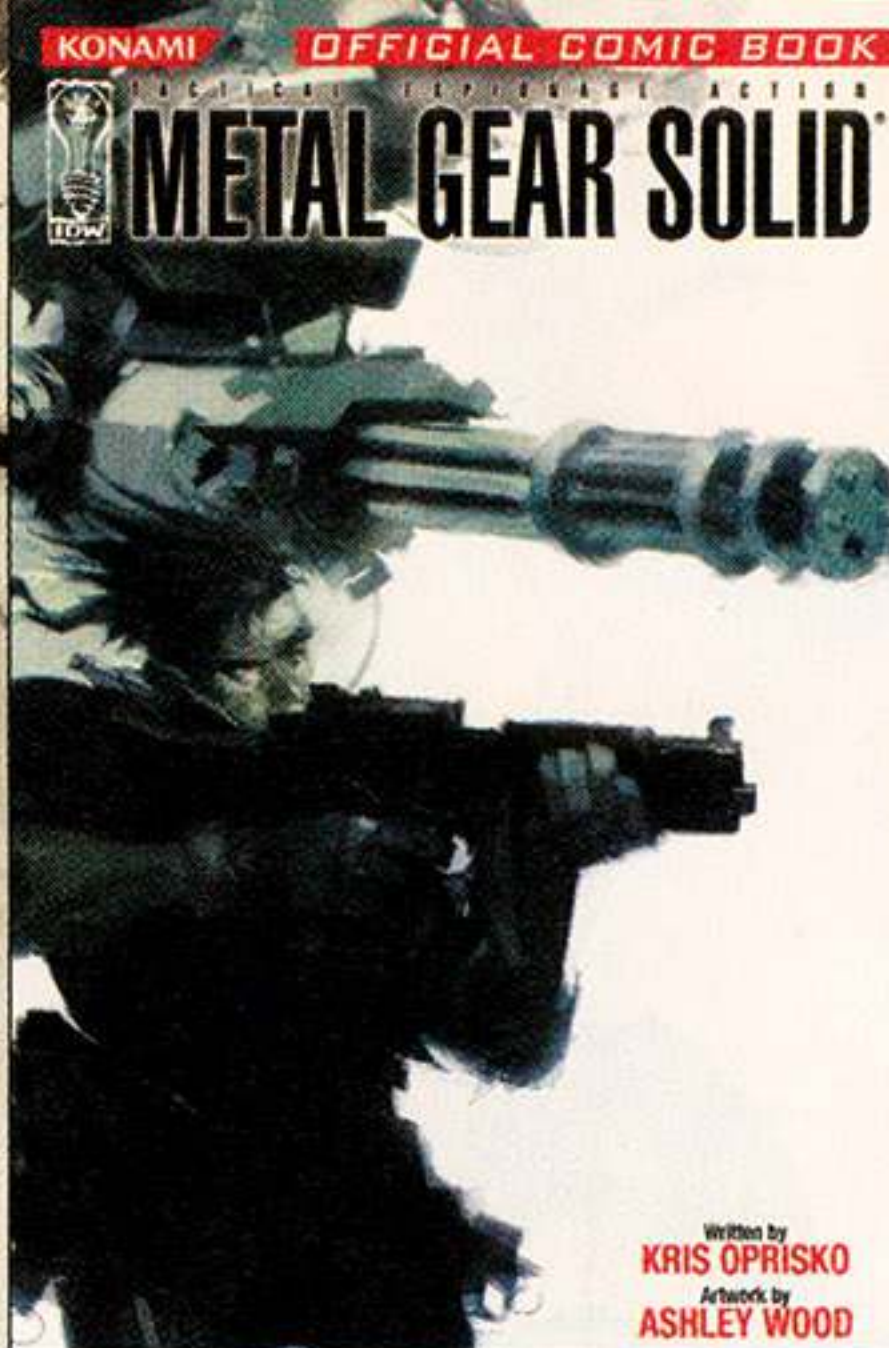
6 **Red Dead Revolver**
PS2 • Rockstar

7 **Spider-Man 2**
PS2 • Activision

8 **Spider-Man 2**
XB • Activision

9 **NBA Ballers**
PS2 • Midway

10 **Shadow Ops: Red Mercury**
XB • Atari



TACTICAL ESPIONAGE COMICS

Solid Snake sneaks into Superman's territory

Scruffy supersoldier Solid Snake may be sitting out the next *Metal Gear Solid* game (his poppa's starring in November's *MGS3: Snake Eater* on PS2), but it doesn't mean the mulleted one will be completely out of the spotlight this fall. Konami is teaming up with IDW Publishing to create a comic book series based on its blockbuster sneak-n-shoot franchise. The first issue hits stores this September, with new 32-page, full-color books arriving every month at a price of \$3.99. We recently spoke with the comic's two creators, writer Kris Oprisko and artist Ashley Wood, about how these



books tie into *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima's head-scratching, yet popular world of tactical espionage.

—Phil Theobald

EGM: Does the comic follow the story of the *Metal Gear Solid* videogames, or is it an entirely new narrative?

Kris Oprisko: It will start off by following the plot from the first *MGS* game [for the original PlayStation, then remade on GameCube]. However, some scenes that were just alluded to in the game's dialogue will be more fully explored here.

EGM: For instance?

KO: In the beginning of the first issue, there's a three-page scene where Colonel Campbell's Fox Hound unit tracks Solid Snake down to his remote cabin to recruit him for the mission.

EGM: The look is very reminiscent of Character and Mechanical Designer Yoji

Shinkawa's original *MGS* art—is that intentional?

Ashley Wood: Well, I'm trying to have fun while trying to stay close to the source material, which in my opinion is some of the best ever done.

EGM: How much was the creator and designer of the series, Hideo Kojima, involved?

KO: He reviews every part of the comic book process, from the script to the art, and even the advertising and promotional materials.

EGM: Have you played any of the *MGS* games?

AW: Originally, I was a big fan of the art and design. Then I played the *MGS* games and I was hooked.

EGM: Yeah? Then can one of you explain *MGS2*'s baffling story? We sure couldn't...

KO: Well, if we continue the comic through the *MGS2* story line, the expanded sections may help clear up people's questions.



LEGENDS ARE BORN.

9.24.04

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PlayStation 2



N-GAGE NOKIA

ACTIVISION

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REALITY CHECK

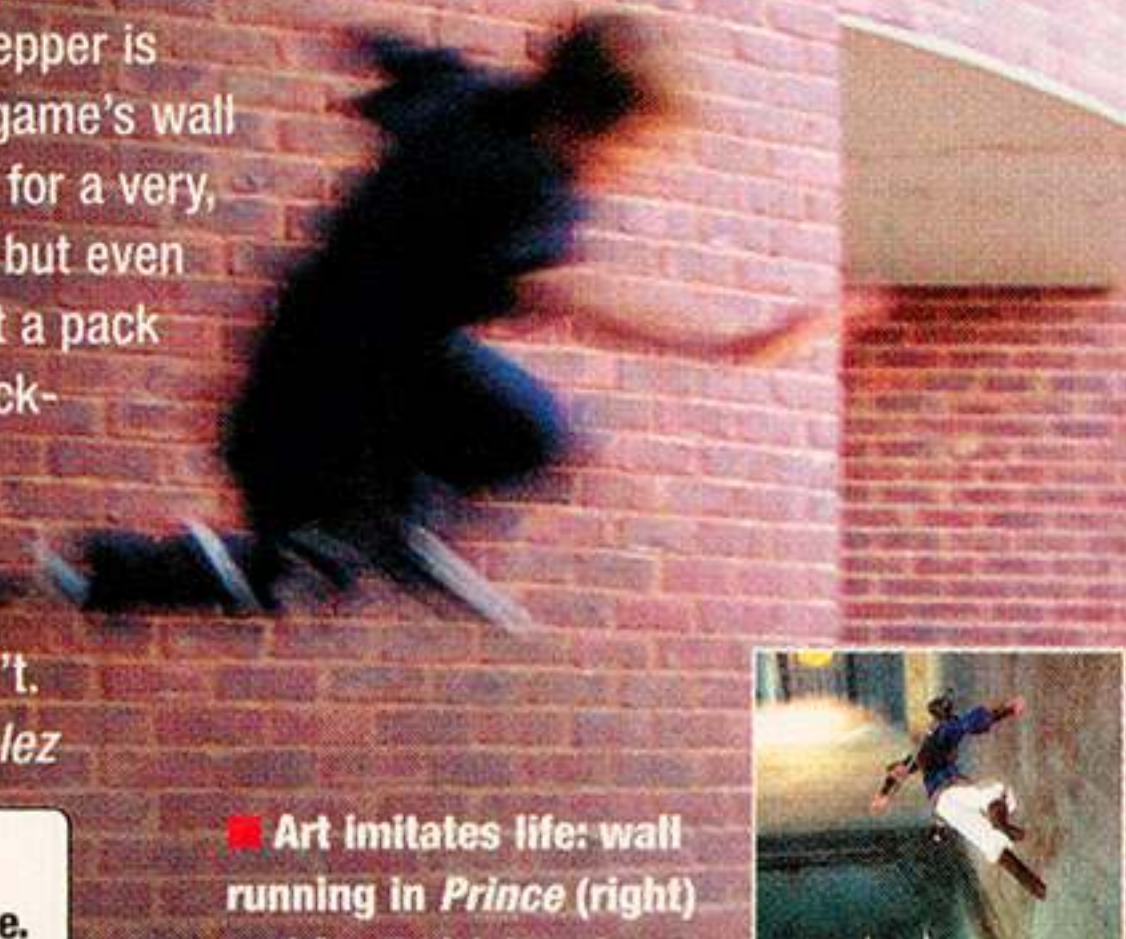
Experts explain what happens when videogames get real...

Q: Could a person leap back and forth between walls or run along them as in *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*? —Matthew Peel

A: No sweat, if you're a virtuoso of the French-born street sport le parkour, which combines gymnastics, sprinting, and martial arts to turn urban jungles into jungle gyms. Matthew Blackwell of the UK Parkour Association (www.parkour.org.uk) says that with training, you "might

achieve impressive heights" bounding with your hands and feet in a chimney climb. And while a three-step wall run is common in parkour, a four-stepper is rare. Blackwell says the game's wall run "is probably possible for a very, very skilled practitioner," but even this bad boy would "want a pack of [energy pills] in his pocket." Or at least the power to rewind time like *Prince*'s Prince if his derring-do derring-doesn't.

—Lauren Gonzalez



Submit game scenarios you'd like to see tested in real life to EGM@ziffdavis.com. Write "Reality Check" in the e-mail's subject line.

Art imitates life: wall running in *Prince* (right) and for real (above).



>> ALSO DUE THIS FALL: COMICS BASED ON THE BLOODRAYNE SERIES AND THE NEW PS2 SHOOTER, KILLZONE.... >>



THE HOT TEN

This just in: Publishers cruelly delay your most-wanted games

Disagree with the list? You're the ones who created it. Rock your vote at www.egmmag.com.



1 Halo 2
XB • November 2004

2 The Legend of Zelda
GC • Fall 2005



3 Jade Empire
XB • March 2005



4 Fable
XB • September 2004



5 Knights of the Old Rep. II
XB • February 2005

6 Final Fantasy XII
PS2 • Summer 2005

7 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
GC • November 2004

8 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
PS2 • October 2004

9 Paper Mario 2
GC • October 2004

10 Resident Evil 4
GC • February 2005

6

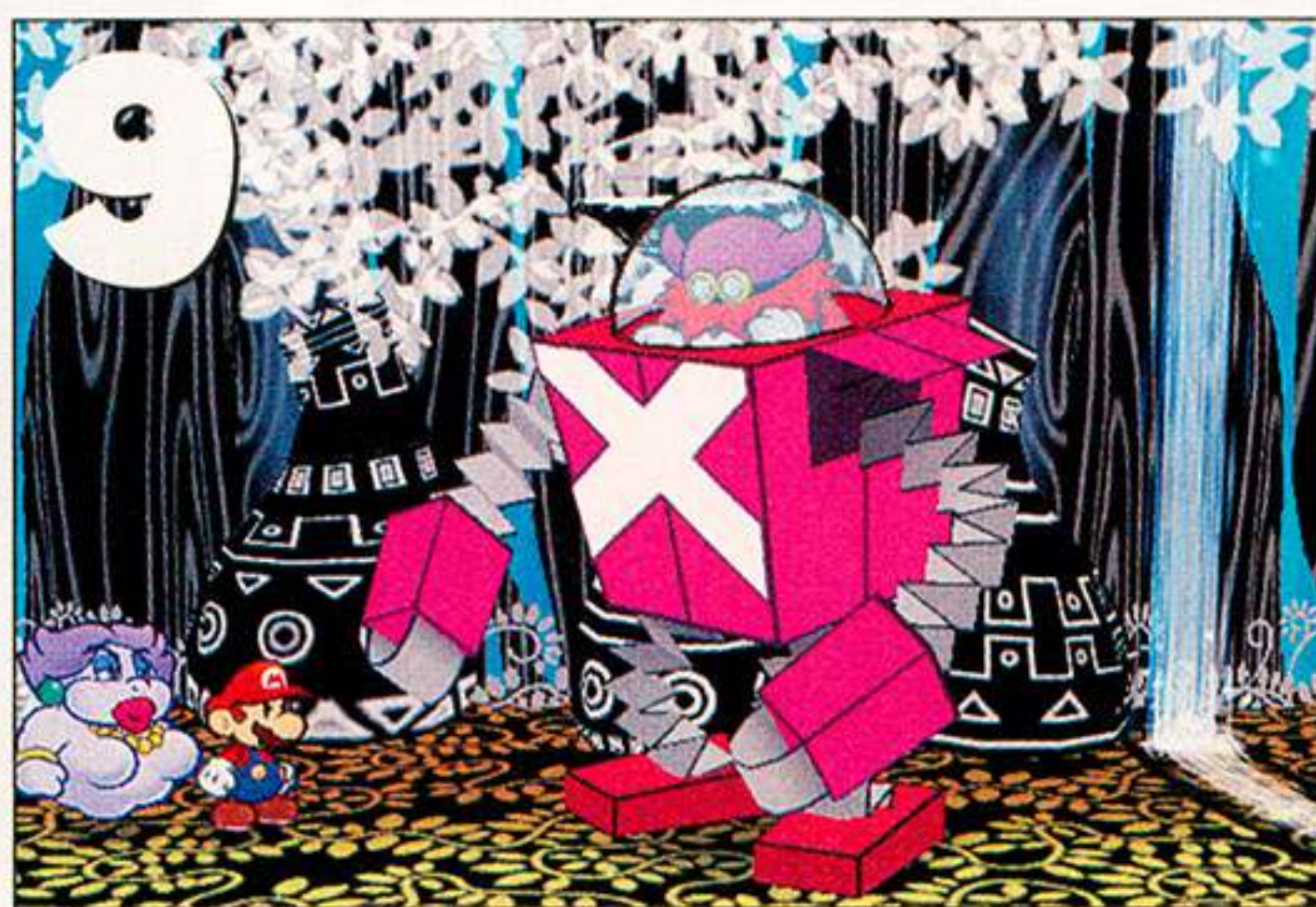
■ Sadly, you won't be attacking fanciful bird-men until mid-2005.

		HP	MP
戦う	ヴァン	306 / 306	40 / 40
戦う	バルフレア	338 / 338	39 / 39
	フラン	263 / 263	28 / 37

FINAL FANTASY XII

PS2 • Summer 2005 — Sorry to be the bearer of bad news: It looks like *FFXII* might get pushed back a little further. It's now slated to release in Japan before the end of March 2005 but probably won't make it Stateside until later in the year. Director Yasumi Matsuno apologized for the delay, saying, "The development

process is not going as smoothly as I expected it to, and I have a tendency to emphasize quality over obligation." With a revamped battle system, tons of amazing cinemas, and a wildly complex story, it should be worth the wait. Plus, the slippage gives fervent fans more time to complete their *FFXII* cosplay outfits.



PAPER MARIO 2

GC • October 2004 — While there's only so much you can do with the thin plumber-saves-princess plot, there's a lot you can do with the paper-thin plumber himself. Mario is turning out to be a flexible character actor, folding himself into dramatic roles such as "ambitious paper airplane," "brave paper boat," and "enigmatic rolled-up tube." With enough dedication, he may even master the brooding, taciturn character of "origami rock"—not to imply that Mario's career could be heading for the wastebasket. You're a star, baby! An invincible star!



RESIDENT EVIL 4

GC • February 2005 — Here we see heroic Leon Kennedy pausing to reload his revolver in the face of some overwhelming odds. Consider it a poignant metaphor, as *Resident Evil 4* is also pausing a bit, skipping the busy holiday gaming season. Now, look for it to release in early 2005. Capcom hasn't issued an official reason for the delay, but we're imagining that it couldn't correctly engrave the ancient medallion that, when placed in the base of a statue, opens the door to the secret underground game-making lab.

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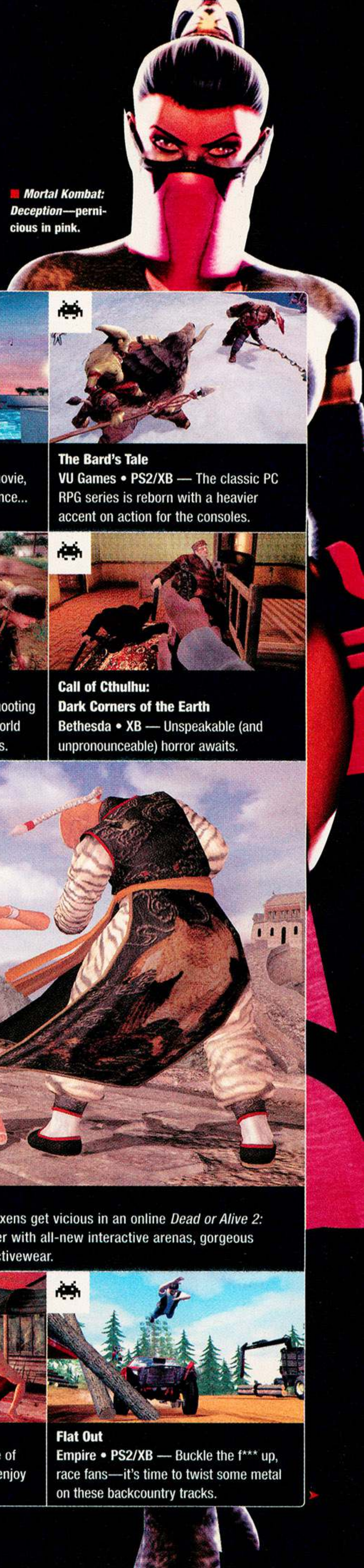


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COMING SOON

October treats

■ *Mortal Kombat: Deception*—pernicious in pink.



OCTOBER 2004



Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood
Eidos • PS2/XB — Time to take out the white trash again.



Bad Boys: Miami Takedown Empire • PS2/XB/GC — Like the movie, minus Will Smith and Martin Lawrence... and with a lot more zombies.



The Bard's Tale
VU Games • PS2/XB — The classic PC RPG series is reborn with a heavier accent on action for the consoles.



BloodRayne 2
Majesco • PS2/XB — Carnage and curves define this violent action game, starring killer vampire babe BloodRayne.



Blood Will Tell: Tezuka's Dororo
Sega • PS2 — Search for your lost limbs as a samurai with prosthetic swords. Say what?



Brothers in Arms
Ubisoft • PS2/XB — First-person shooting with a strategic slant—you wage World War with assault and support squads.



Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth
Bethesda • XB — Unspeakable (and unpronounceable) horror awaits.



Colin McRae Rally 2005
Codemasters • XB — Colin takes an easy left this year with an all-new, non-linear career mode.



Cowboy Bebop
Bandai • PS2 — Bandai's revered anime morphs into a bare-knuckle brawler, complete with cartoon-style graphics.



Dead or Alive Ultimate
Tecmo • XB — Beach volleyball vixens get vicious in an online *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore* (PlayStation 2), made over with all-new interactive arenas, gorgeous graphics, and a wardrobe full of activewear.



Crash 'n' Burn
Eidos • PS2/XB — All these racing games are gonna turn us into a nation of serial Sunday drivers, by gum.



Doom 3
Activision • XB — In the dark, sometimes your own shadow is all it takes to scare you silly.



ESPN NBA 2K5
ESPN Videogames • PS2/XB — ESPN's baller hopes to rattle the rim with its flashier visuals and new dribble moves.



FIFA Soccer 2005
EA Sports • PS2/XB/GC — More responsive controls should prevent David Beckham-like blunders on the pitch.



Fight Club
VU Games • PS2/XB — At least one of your split personalities is bound to enjoy this movie-based fighter.



Flat Out
Empire • PS2/XB — Buckle the f*** up, race fans—it's time to twist some metal on these backcountry tracks.

ROCKSTAR GAMES
PRESENTS

grand theft auto San Andreas



A ROCKSTAR NORTH
PRODUCTION

COMING SOON
TO PLAYSTATION®2



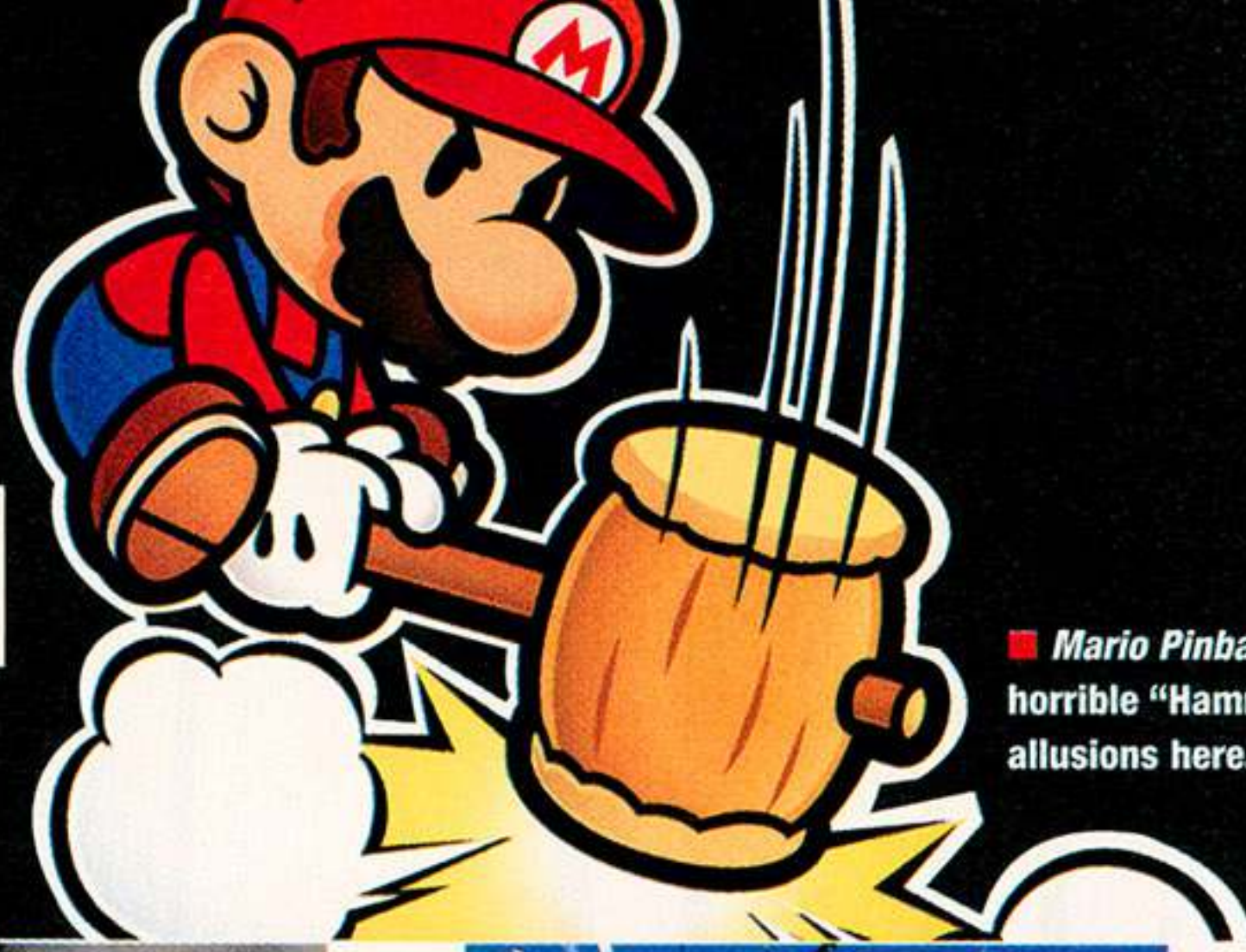
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PlayStation®2



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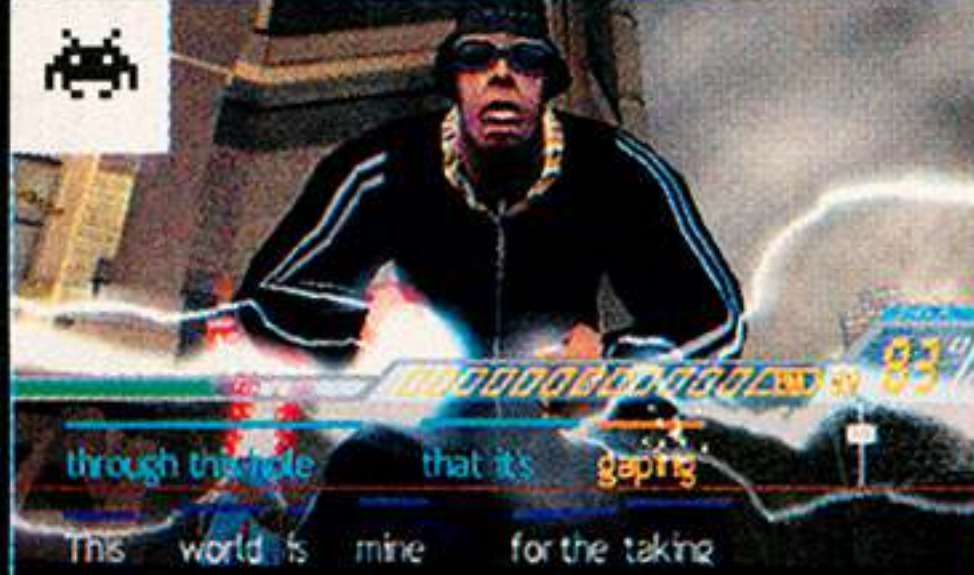


COMING SOON

(Continued)

■ *Mario Pinball*—no horrible “Hammer time” allusions here.

OCTOBER 2004



Get On Da Mic

Eidos • PS2 — If you had one shot to seize everything you ever wanted, this game probably wouldn't help you.



Gundam Battle Assault 3

Bandai • PS2 — Trade knuckle sandwiches with your favorite mobile suits in both versus and tag-team matches.



Kirby & the Amazing Mirror

Nintendo • GBA — The lovable pink puff-ball binges and purges through a new pastel-colored world. Breath mint optional.



Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude

VU Games • PS2/XB — Prepare yourself for plenty of dirty jokes, double entendres, and delightful boobage.



Mario Pinball

Nintendo • GBA — Flip a rolled-up Mario through different worlds in this tabletop adventure.



Mega Man Zero 3

Capcom • GBA — What, you thought a month would pass without a new *Mega Man* game?



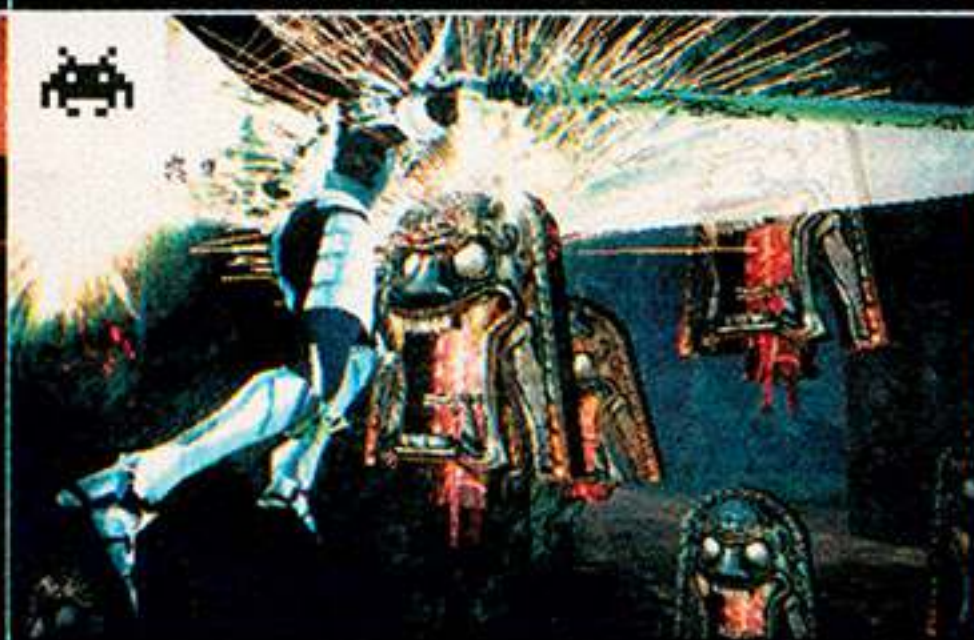
Midway Arcade Treasures 2

Midway • PS2/XB/GC — More coin-op classics (minus the quarter slots), including *Mortal Kombat* and *Total Carnage*.



Mortal Kombat: Deception

Midway • PS2/XB/GC — The bloody fight continues with a bevy of new modes, including a chesslike board game.



Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors

Sega • XB — Demon hunters (now in five different flavors) slice and dice with style in fully destructible environments.



Outlaw Golf 2

Globalstar • PS2/XB — Unsavory characters take a cue from *Happy Gilmore* and club their caddies.



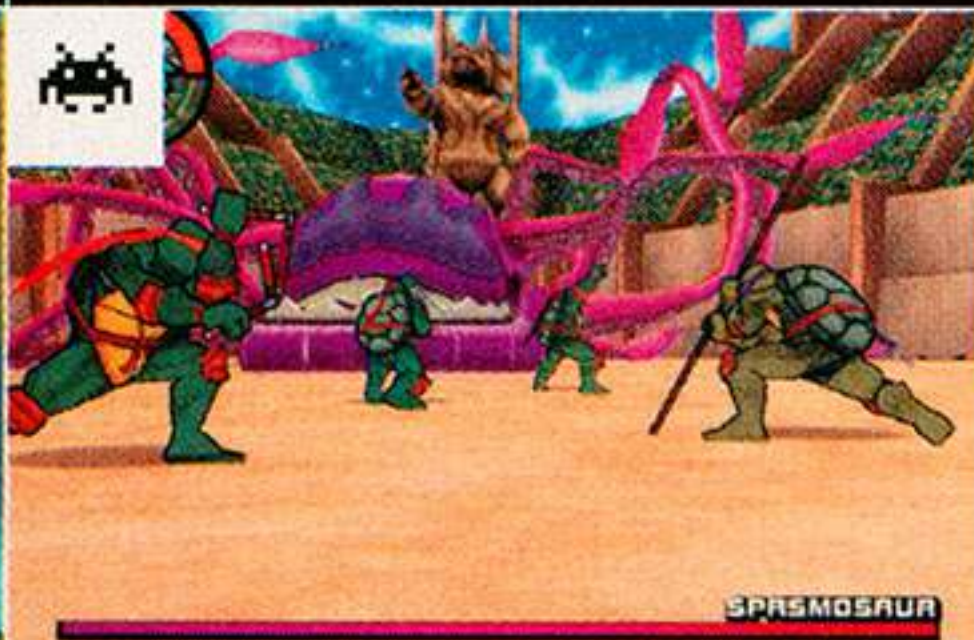
Robotech Invasion

Gathering • PS2/XB — The world needs saving, and you're the only robo-piloting, first-person-shooting guy (or gal!) to do it.



Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams

THQ • PS2/XB/GC/GBA — Possess animals and create your own juju magic in this 3D platforming sequel.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2

Konami • PS2/GC/GBA — Kind of like the second *Turtles* movie, minus Vanilla Ice. Oh, and now with four-player action.



Under the Skin

Capcom • PS2 — Play a body-snatching alien and try to freak out regular folks. Shouldn't be too hard, then.



Virtua Quest

Sega • PS2/GC — Sega's pioneering 3D brawler takes a turn for the kiddie in this *Shenmue*-style adventure.

Also in October:

Bicycle
Activision • XB

Monster Garage
Activision • XB

Rave Master
Konami • PS2/GBA

The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie
THQ • PS2/XB/GC/GBA

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2
EA Games • GBA/PS2/XB/GC

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
Rockstar • PS2

NBA Live
EA Sports • PS2/XB/GC

Paper Mario 2
Nintendo • GC

SVC Chaos: SNK vs. Capcom
SNK • XB

Worms Forts
Acclaim • PS2/XB

Hot Wheels Stunt Track Challenge
THQ • PS2/XB/GBA

Pinball Hall of Fame
Crave • GC

Scaler
Global Star • PS2/XB

Tokyo Xtreme Racer Pocket
Crave • GBA

X-Men: Legends
Activision • PS2/XB/GC

Mega Man Anniversary Collection
Capcom • GBA

Puzzle Trouble
Crave • GC

Shrek 2 Part 2
Activision • GBA

Tony Hawk's Underground 2
Activision • PS2/XB/GC/GBA

Yu-Gi-Oh! Destiny Board Traveler
Konami • GBA

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- September 2004 **Professional Baseball Player** 9/1/04 - 9/4/04
Played for 16 teams and won world series twice.
- U.S. Army Private First Class** 9/4/04 - 9/6/04
Stormed the beach at Normandy as well as Guadalcanal. Disposed of 837 enemy soldiers, was fragged 38 times.
- Grand Prix Race Car Driver** 9/6/04 - 9/8/04
Drove 12 different cars and survived 132 crashes. Won races on 10 different courses around the world.
- Professional Volleyball Player** 9/8/04 - 9/12/04
Won the Pro Beach Volleyball Championship as both man and woman.
- Secret Agent** 9/12/04 - 9/15/04
Infiltrated evil genius's compound. Neutralized 17 plutonium bombs. Saved world 7 times.
- Western Gunslinger** 9/15/04 - 9/16/04
Defeated all young and old guns offering challenge. Died only 8 times.
- Alien Menace** 9/16/04 - 9/21/04
Crushed 5 galaxies and subjugated 29 separate intelligent life forms.

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SECOND

Gaming's heaviest hitters prepare for sophomore success

It's true: Game companies tend to milk a successful debut, pumping out sequels until we're all officially sick of what we once adored. A relentless avalanche of hot-on-the-heels rehashes can quickly

tire your patience—Mega Man's street cred faded a bit after his 45th game, and at this point, we're not even sure if *Tomb Raider: Chronicles* was Lara Croft's fifth or sixth adventure. Even so, a good sequel...a really good

sequel...can be a truly wondrous thing. We've lined up six games that make part two exciting again: From cooler characters to refined gameplay, everything from the original games is evolving. (Oh, and we know that *THUG2* and

Metroid Prime 2 aren't technically the second games in their respective series, but they do represent the first follow-ups to major series overhauls, so they're worthy examples.)
—Shane Bettenhausen



COMINGS



DOUBLE DIPPING

Your guide to six games that were way 2 legit 2 quit

68 Tony Hawk's Underground 2

The Birdman's newest grind session gets a destructive makeover, *Viva La Bam*-style.

72 Prince of Persia 2

Fiddle with time all you want, Prince. None of it changes the fact that you'll die in this sequel.

75 NFL Street 2

EA takes the pigskin back to the street and promises to knock the snot outta all armchair QBs.

78 Sly 2: Band of Thieves

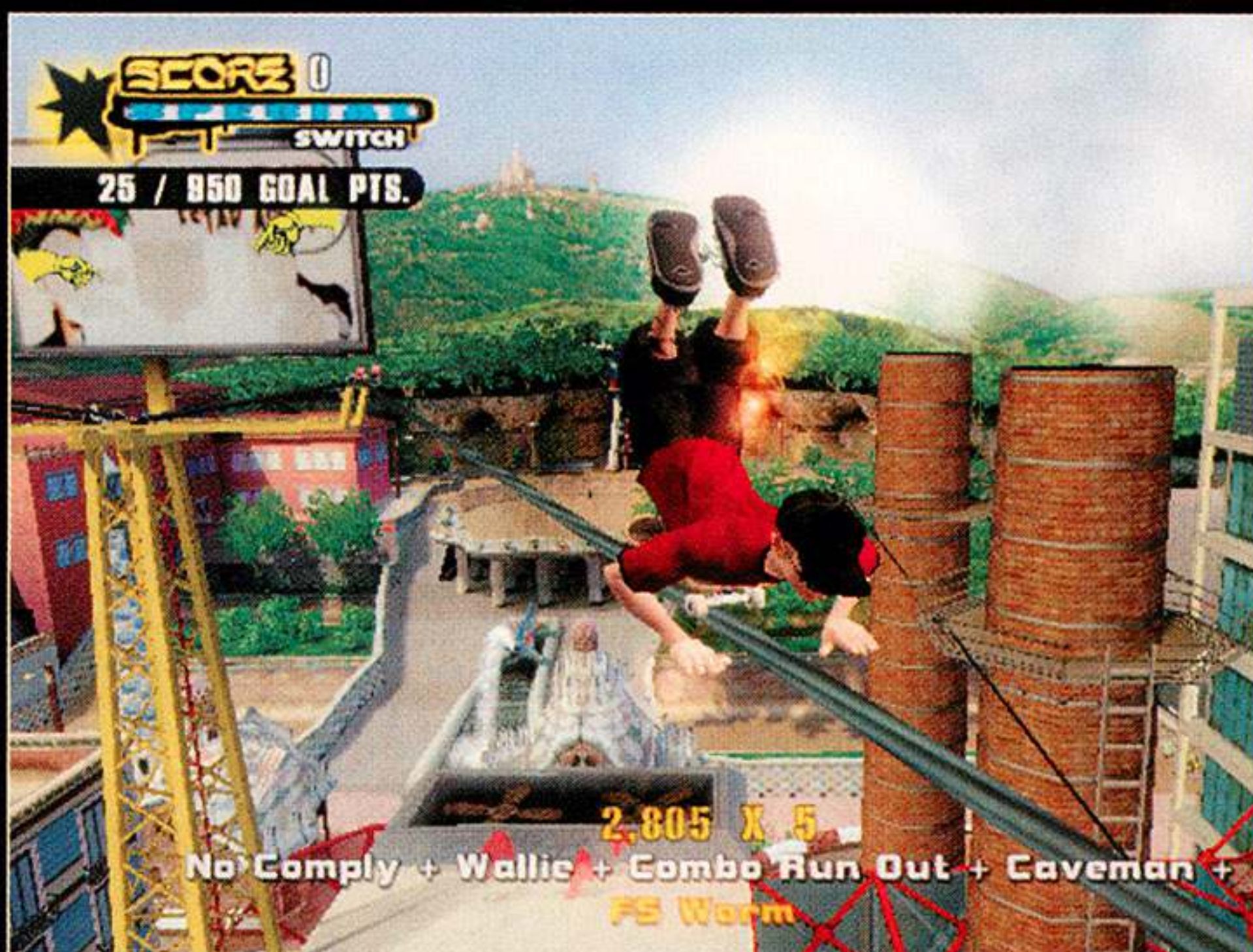
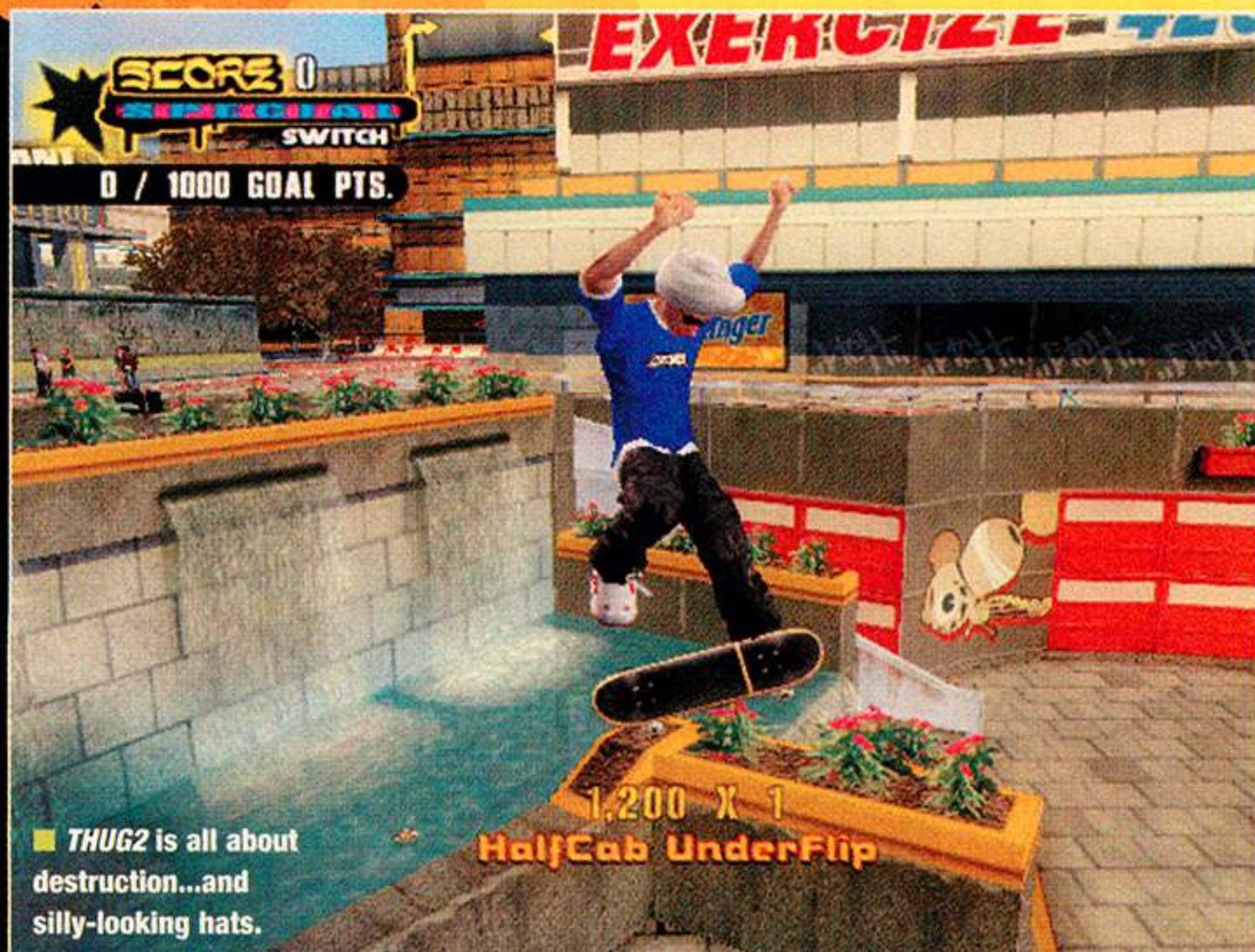
Sony's shifty raccoon strikes back, with a leaner look and a longer game.

82 Halo 2

We expect Master Chief's November 9 return to seriously damage our nation's productivity.

84 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes

Samus Aran greases up her space suit for another genre-bending endeavor into the unknown.



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2: WORLD DESTRUCTION TOUR

PS2/XB/GC • Activision • October 2004

Previously on Tony Hawk: *Tony Hawk's Underground* proved to be a huge success last year, adding a compelling story mode to the classic skateboarding series and giving it the shot of innovation the (fundamentally changeless) annual outing needed. You could even e-mail a pic to developer Neversoft and put yourself in the game—a feature made easier in this sequel with Sony's EyeToy camera.

What needed fixin': *THUG's* levels weren't as memorable as those in previous *Hawks*, and minus the rad story mode, it was still fundamentally the same (albeit awesome) skateboarding game you've played for years.

If it ain't broke: The one constant that has held the series together for the past five years has been the sublime controls.

Take away any story, goals, or secret characters and you'd still have one hell of a fun game. If all Neversoft did every year was fine-tune the skating engine, each sequel would still be worth a spin.

New for part two: While last year's *THUG* gave gamers a taste of the dedication, hard work, and tough breaks it takes for a skateboarder to go pro, *Tony*

Hawk's Underground 2, due on all three systems this October, reassures them that these guys are the destruction-crazed anarchists we always knew they were. "We kind of did [the serious side of skateboarding] in the last game," says Production Director Scott Pease, "so it was time to just spin it in a new direction and have fun with it." As a member of the World Destruction Tour's Team



History of the Combo

Each iteration of the *Hawk* series has made combos easier and more fluid, thanks to the introduction of new linking moves, making 100,000-plus point combos a common occurrence nowadays. Looking back, it makes you wonder how you could ever break 10K in a *Tony Hawk 1* combo. Here's a look at some of the moves that forever changed the art of videogame skateboarding.



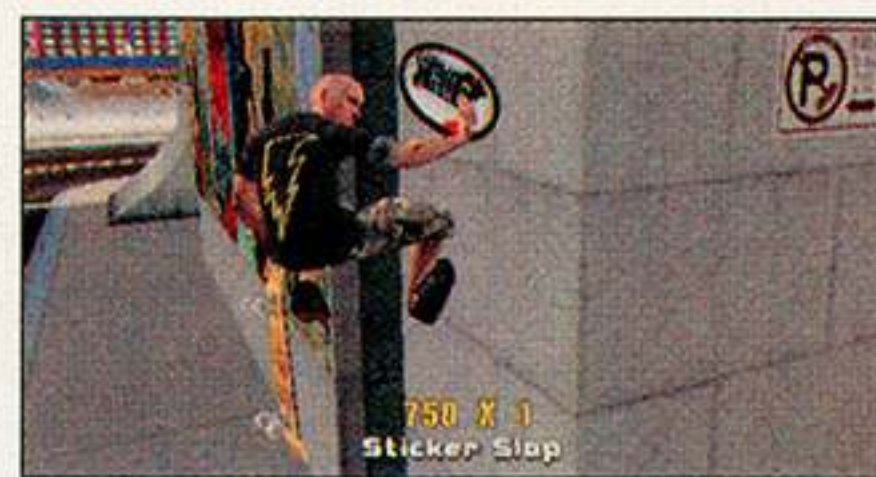
Hawk 2 introduced the Manual, letting you link multiple street combos.



The Spine Transfer from *Hawk 4* lets you leap between ramps midcombo.



THUG's off-the-board linking move, the Caveman, helps keep combos alive longer. Plus, it looks really weird.



THUG2's tweaked Sticker Plant lets you leap off a wall, boosting in the other direction.

Hawk, you're charged with helping wreak more havoc than Bam Margera's hell-bent-on-property-damage team.

This revamped, lighter, and much more destructive story features its share of drama—including twists, swaps, and the always nerve-wracking Wheel of Loogies—spread out over roughly 150 goals and eight levels. It's also got a solid squad of hidden playable characters. Each of the cities features two hidden skaters (including Ben Franklin in Boston and his wicked-awesome electrified-kite-assisted special grind), with one of each pair sporting a unique ride. Says Producer Kevin Mulhall, "This year, instead of going with the traditional nor-

mal vehicles—regular cars, regular trucks—we went with vehicles that were smaller and could actually utilize the skate lines." So, look out for *Monster Garage*'s Jesse James pulling off mad Ollies on a souped-up scooter or Bam's fellow jackass Steve-O making an appearance on his, uh, mechanical bull.

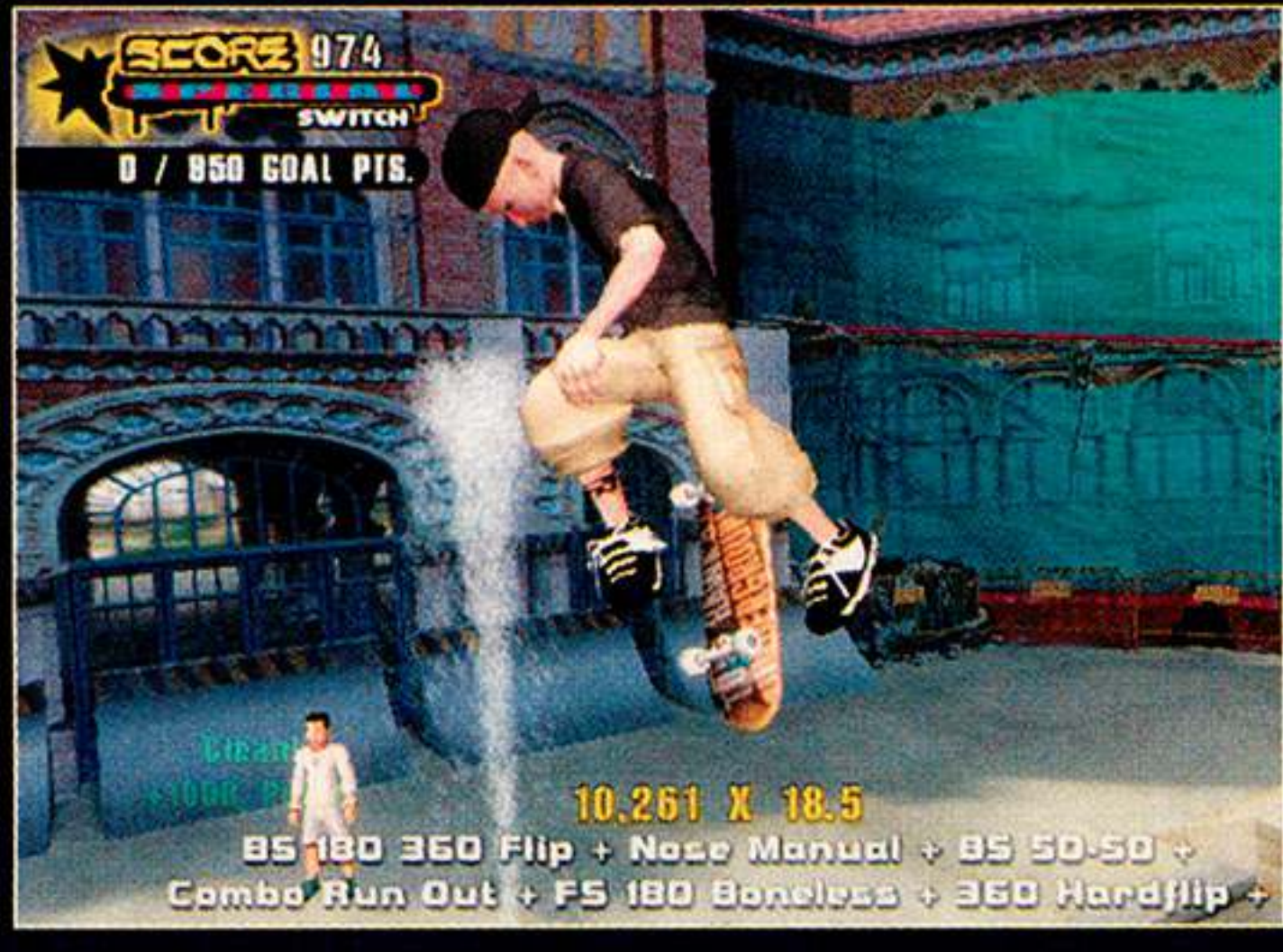
The stages represent an improvement upon last year's, too. Each features a level event, which is a destructive mishap that creates new skate lines and opens up new areas. Newly revealed Berlin—where you'll pass Checkpoint Charlie, grind through a church, and depreciate art in a gallery—suffers a slight mishap that can be eloquently

summed up in three words: Train. Bar. Kaboom. This, unfortunately, leaves some lederhosen-clad Oktoberfesters sober and disappointed.

And while it may seem *THUG2*'s additions are geared solely toward MTV-watching malcontents, Neversoft has decided to give more weathered fans a gift in the form of classic mode. This secondary, but equally as massive, game brings back the two-minute timer into the new levels (and throws in a few secret old-school delights) while offering up 150 familiar goals, such as collecting S-K-A-T-E and finding hidden tapes. We're also told to expect some new multiplayer modes in addition to the return-

ing regulars, although Mulhall would spill the goods on only one of 'em: In Elimiskate, the player with the lowest score after a set time interval (say, every 30 seconds) gets the boot until one skater remains.

And while every *Hawk* sequel has trotted out a new linking move (see sidebar above) to make combos even more insane, *THUG2* misses that boat. Instead, the developers decided to take some of last year's late-addition moves—Hip Transfers, climbing, the Wall Plant (now known as the Sticker Plant)—and build the levels around them. "This time around," says Neversoft President Joel Jewett, "there are a lot of different >



Bullflop!
Trigger the right event, and you'll be able to reshape *THUG2*'s levels. For example, here's what happens when you free an angry bull in Barcelona.



After breaking loose, the bull quickly spots a target to its liking—a mime.



The chase is on! The mime thinks he'll be safe in this cozy red dumpster. The bull easily dislodges this human trash.



Simultaneously enraged and horrified by the smell of some hamburgers, the bull takes out some tables.



Here, you see how the level's skate lines are gonna change...and how the mime's hat magically stays put.



Good luck explaining this one to the insurance company.



The chase ends at this tower, which wasn't built to withstand a head-on hit from a PO'd bull. The tower collapses, further changing the level's layout. ▶

places where the lines are more or less built to incorporate the Sticker Plant." That's not to say the game lacks new moves. The Natas spin lets you go 'round and 'round a single point, such as a pole or fire hydrant. Focus mode, which uses juice from your built-up Special meter, turns things all bullet time on you, helping you nail tough tricks. When you bail, the freak-out

option lets you bang on a button, which, if done enough, lets you slam your board in frustration and gives you some points to try to integrate into a new combo. And keeping with the game's destruction theme, you can spray-paint specialized graffiti tags on walls, anywhere you want. But despite all this new stuff, you'll once again need the PS2 version to

experience everything—namely, face mapping and online play. "It's not that we don't want to support [online Xbox multiplayer]," says Mulhall, "but we've just got a really vast array of features going with the PS2 online stuff. Right now, it's more a matter of supporting what we have and adding to it and making it better, and we'll see what happens next year." —Greg Ford

Specialist. Seth Scott. 93C Air Traffic Controller.

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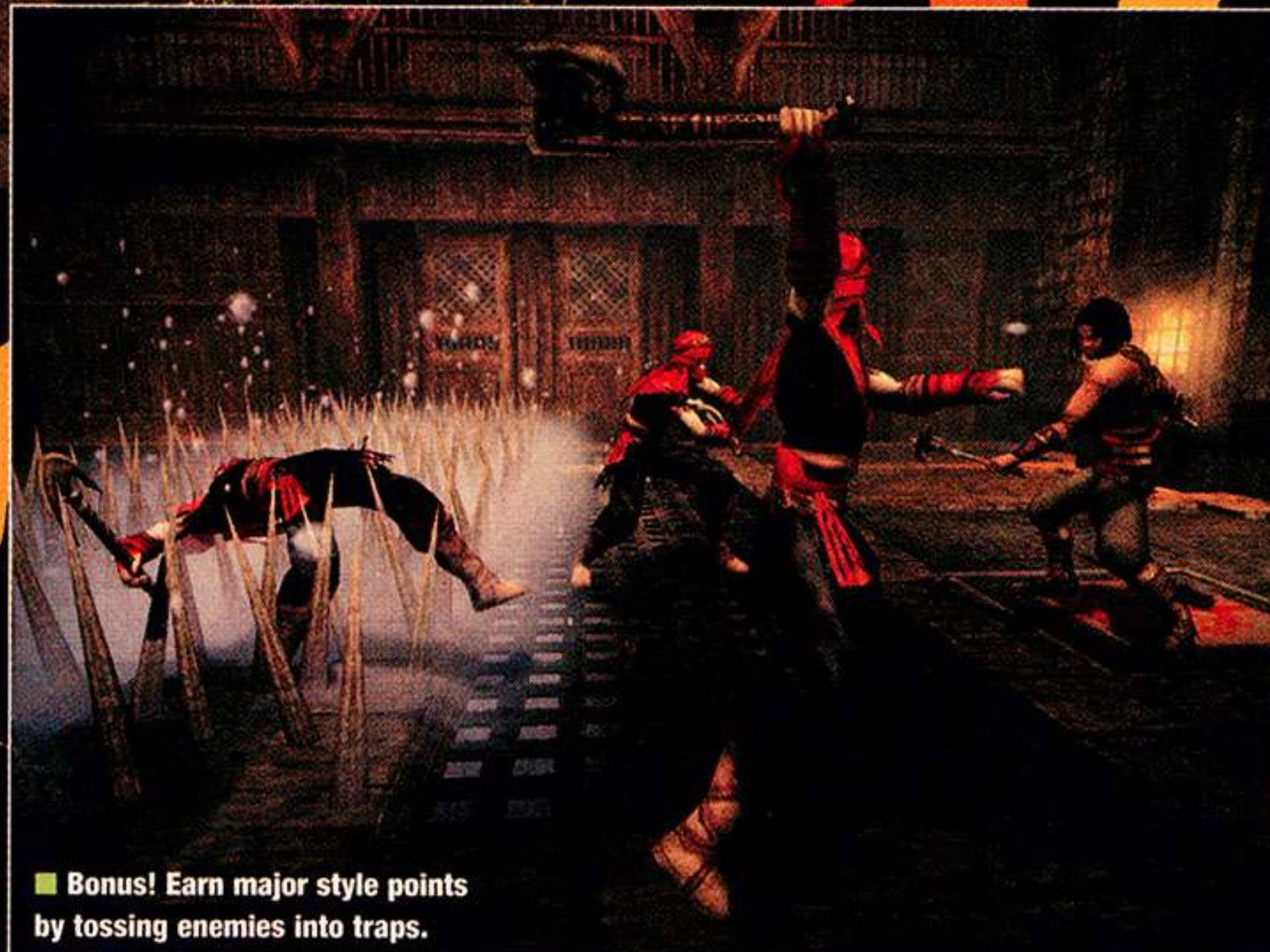
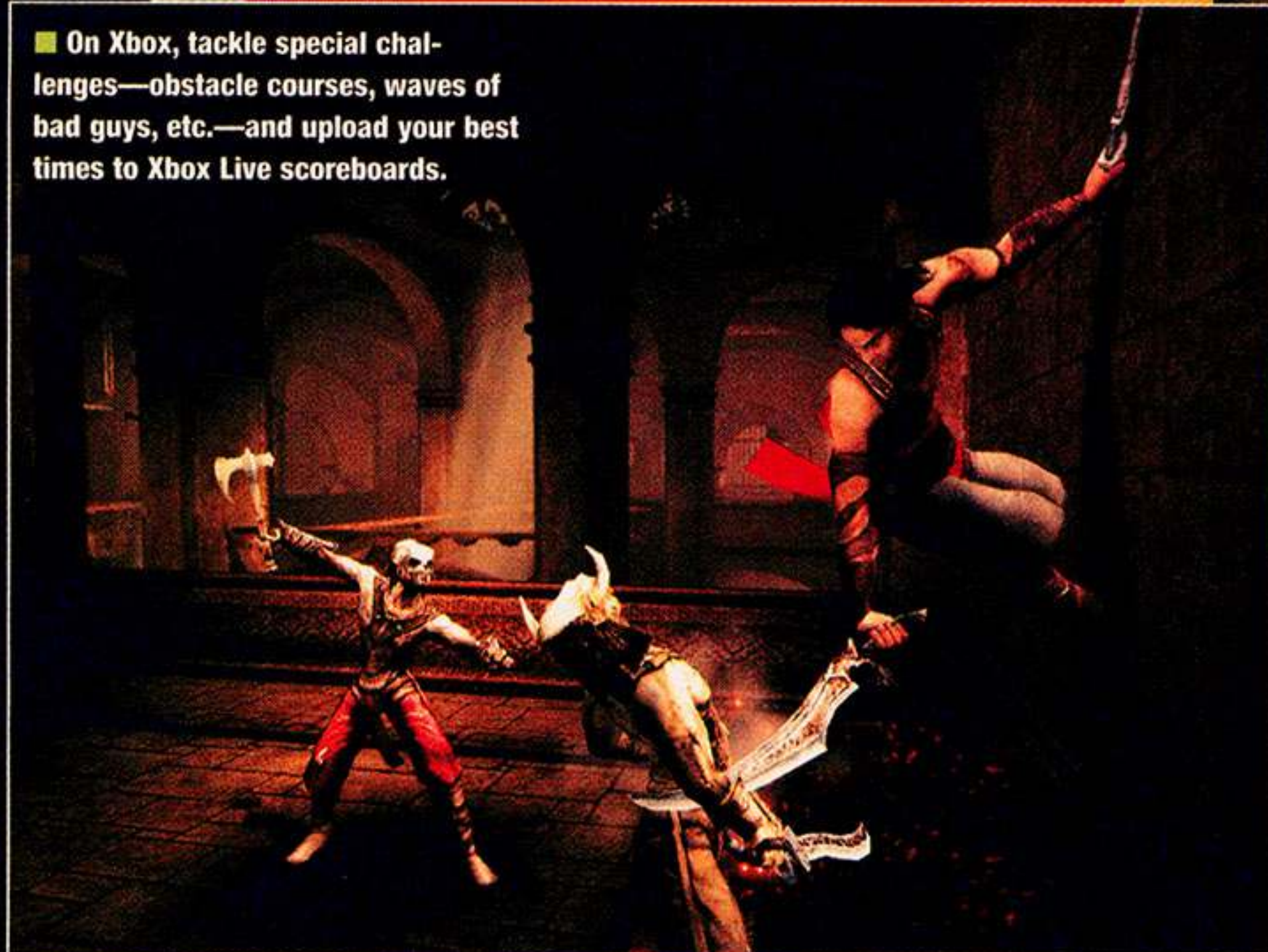
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■ On Xbox, tackle special challenges—obstacle courses, waves of bad guys, etc.—and upload your best times to Xbox Live scoreboards.



■ Bonus! Earn major style points by tossing enemies into traps.



PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft • November 2004

Previously on *Prince of Persia*: An acrobatic prince who could rewind the clock like it was a cosmic TiVo saved the kingdom—and a royal hottie—from the forces of time run amok. *EGM* liked the first game (subtitled *The Sands of Time*)—we really, really liked it—naming it our 2003 Game of the Year.

What needed fixin': Executive Producer Yannis Mallat gives it to ya straight up:

"[*Sands of Time*] suffered from a lack of variety in the enemies, repetitiveness, and no real boss."

If it ain't broke: The prequel reinvented the platform-adventure genre with pick-up-and-play controls that made pulling off the Prince's circus-star moves a super cinch. Plus, his Dagger of Time gizmo let him redo stunts that ended badly and even undo a relationship faux pas at the

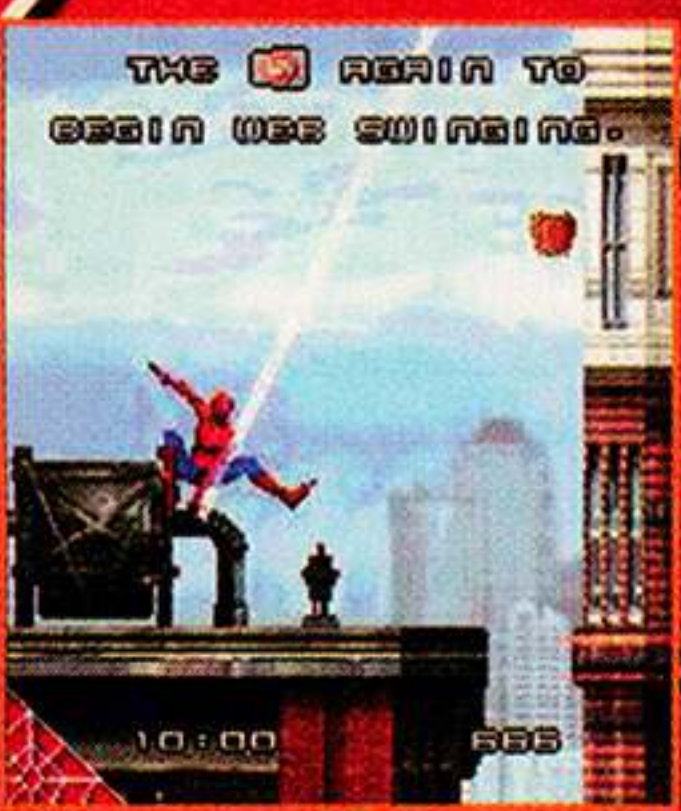
adventure's end. If only real life were that easy.

New for part two: Sweaty, scruffy, and so strung out, the Prince looks downright pauperish at the start of *Prince of Persia 2* (working title). But then you'd look like hell too if you were a walking dead man. No kidding here: "The Prince will die, no matter what he does," Mallat says.

Why the death sentence? Turns out all

that abuse of the time continuum in *Sands of Time* put the Prince on fate's hit list. "Pardon my English, but he f***ed with the timeline," says the French-speaking Mallat. "Now someone has been sent to correct it." That someone is the Dahaka, a hulking, unstoppable incarnation of fate itself, who pursues the Prince with the sole goal of snuffing him out. "He's a mix between [*Resident Evil 3*'s] Nemesis creature and the more >

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SLAY IT YOUR WAY

■ Variety is the slice of life in *Prince 2*. New combo options open with every move. Sprint up a bad guy's chest and over his head, for instance, and you can either 1) lop off his noggin, or 2) snap his neck and swipe his sword, or 3) kick him to the curb, or 4) just go all-out Ginsu on him.



1



4



2



3



■ The past and...



■ ...the run-down present.

Link to the Past

Not only can the Prince once again rewind time to undo unsightly blunders (as well as perform new time tricks such as slowing down enemies and unleashing baddie-flattening shock-waves), he can now travel back several centuries in some levels, courtesy of wispy portals. These trips are essential: You'll need to tinker with the past to solve puzzles in the present. In one long-ago level, for instance, you must alter water levels to irrigate budding trees, which you'll climb to reach new areas when you return to the present.

But you can only play with time travel for so long before you run into some awkward situations, such as when you begin meeting a familiar-looking Prince in areas you could have sworn you visited earlier in the game. "Have you seen *Back to the Future*?" asks Executive Producer Yannis Mallat. "Expect that kind of situation." >

> cartoony chase scenes of the *Crash Bandicoot* games," says Lead Level Designer Pier-Luc Papineau. When the Dahaka shows up and starts shooting tendrils your way, you'll have no choice but to haul royal tail in the opposite direction, leaping, running along walls, and sliding down banners without the usual luxury of scoping out the way ahead for traps. "We're trying to create a feeling of fear and urgency within the player," Papineau says.
The Dahaka is boss enough for two games (although this sequel will pack

many more end-of-level monstrosities, including a snarling griffin), so that's one fault fixed from the original. And when it comes to that other universal gripe—the repetitive combat—Ubisoft has revamped the way players beat down the bad guys. Using a new battle system called freeform fighting ("because we don't have the rights to call it 'SSX with swords,'" Mallat says), *Prince 2* throws enemies at you throughout the entire game rather than in isolated areas, then lets you infuse attacks with your own panache. "We let you build your own way

of fighting," says Producer Bertrand Helias. "You can run up an enemy's back, grab him, and then you have lots of choices. Do you want to behead the guy? Toss him into a trap or other enemies? Use him as a human shield? You can do whatever." Of course, what's the point of all the custom fisticuffs if you know your character's doomed to die at the hands of the unbeatable Dahaka? "Don't worry," says Mallat. "We have a lots of tricks. And even if the story sounds hopeless, don't you want to survive long enough to see how the Prince dies?"



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DRIVER



PS2, XBOX

DRIVER'S ED

- If you're on foot and you need to take out a vehicle, hit a fire or two to slow it down, then (if you can't target the driver) use all available ordinance to plug the vehicle's hood, setting the engine on fire. If the car's engine is in the rear, aim there instead. When the car's engine is burning, your job is done. That vehicle is going sky-high!
- Not all vehicles handle like cars. Bikes are more susceptible to oversteer, accelerate faster, and come off worse in a crash. However, they have amazing handbraking abilities (making the sharpest turns at speed), and can go anywhere Tanner can walk. They flip out on curbs and scenery more than cars.



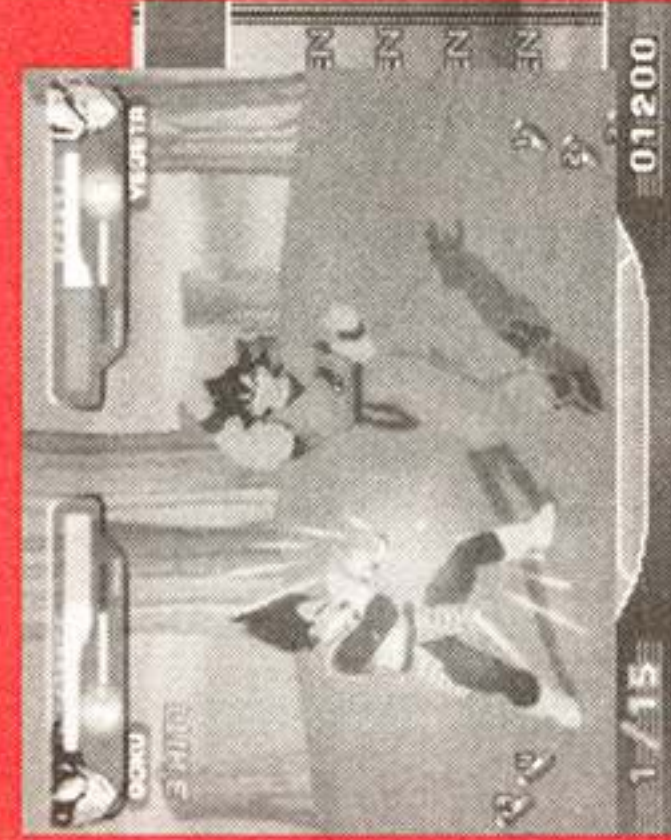
DRAGONBALL Z: SUPERSONIC WARRIORS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER TIPS!

- It's important to remember that you can't play as Level 3 characters without unlocking their earlier incarnations. Taking Goku, for example, even if you unlock his 3rd form in the Shop, you won't gain access to him till you've also unlocked level 2 and the same goes for those characters that aren't unlocked at the outset, so you'll have to unlock their level 1 then 2 then 3 to gain playable access to the full set.



TUTORIAL

- MOVEMENT COURSE
- FIGHTING COURSE
- POWER SHOT COURSE
- CERTAIN KILL COURSE
- SUBSTITUTION COURSE
- COMBO COURSE

PREMIER EVENT

- For many of the foes in the game, it's entirely possible to beat them without actually getting anywhere near them. The key is to keep your Chi bar as powered up as possible between EX Super Attacks which will form the basis of your strategy. Simply keep hurling EX Attacks at your enemies till they're a smoldering ruin. This strategy, however, does not work with Android 18 or Dr.Gero, so be forewarned.

NCAA FOOTBALL 2005



PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

PIGSKIN SKILLS

- Using the Big Hit button may not produce a fumble, but it will ring the receiver's bell. And, it will still be ringing when the next pass comes in his direction. Use the Matchup Stick to see the effect of multiple big hits on a receiver's composure.
- The first tackler downfield on the punt coverage team is the most critical to the return man. Rather than try and run away from a defender who is one step from making the tackle, spin to avoid the initial hit and then look for running room.
- When executing a play-action pass, be careful not to outrun the play fake. Give the quarterback time to lay the handoff in the running back's gut, and then drop back to pass. The longer the defense sees the handoff in progress, the more time it will buy you to complete the pass.





Unlock hidden characters, upgrade your weapons and find new worlds with these sweet cheats, tips and tricks. Cut out the cards, and stash them in the game case so you can really get into the game. Check out www.GetintotheGame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game shown here and check out more codes for the latest hot titles.

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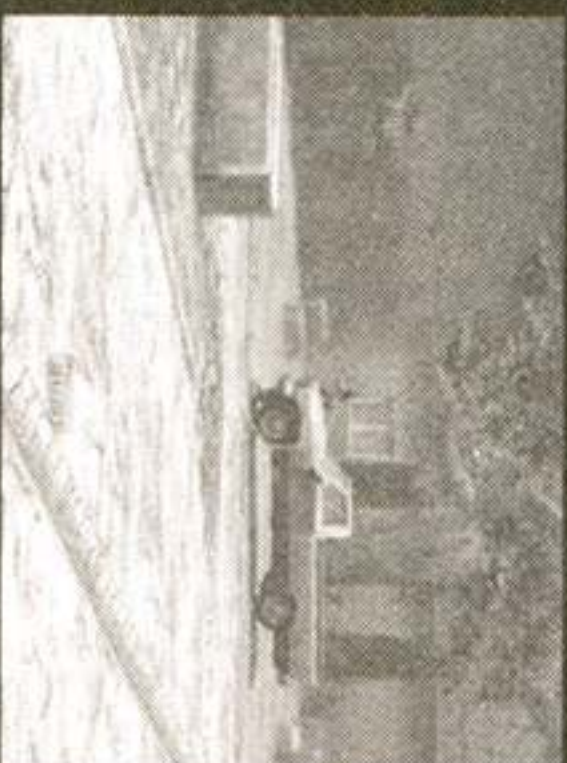
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR



XBOX

ULTIMATE WARRIOR

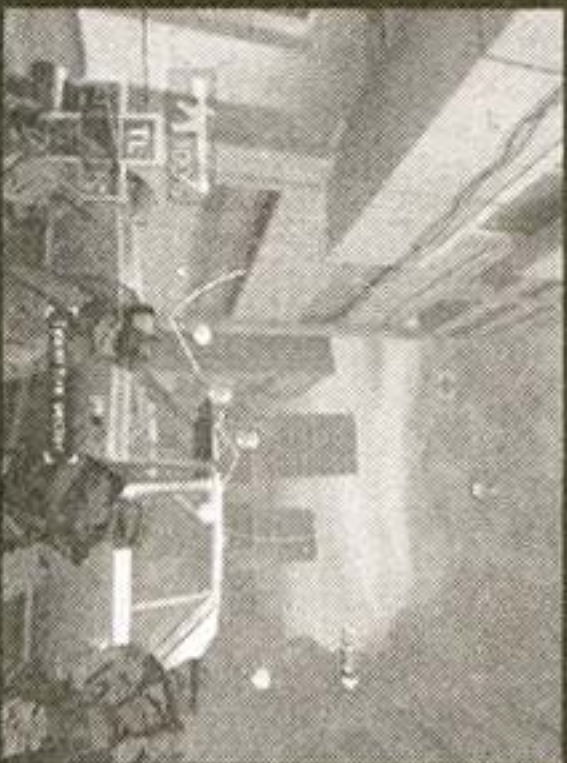
- When firing at a target with the M203, use the zoom feature for precision aiming. You only have three M203 grenades per team—you can't afford to waste a round with sloppy aiming.



- Your men can fall victim to friendly fire. Sometimes, you must move one team between a target and the other team as it lays down suppression fire. In these situations, be sure to keep your Fire Cursors off the ground, that way the other team can slip beneath your cover fire without harm.



- In tight situations, like alley firefights, it is impossible to get a clean shot at a target without exposing your team to danger. Instead, try banking a fragment grenade off a wall so it lands near your target's dug-in position.



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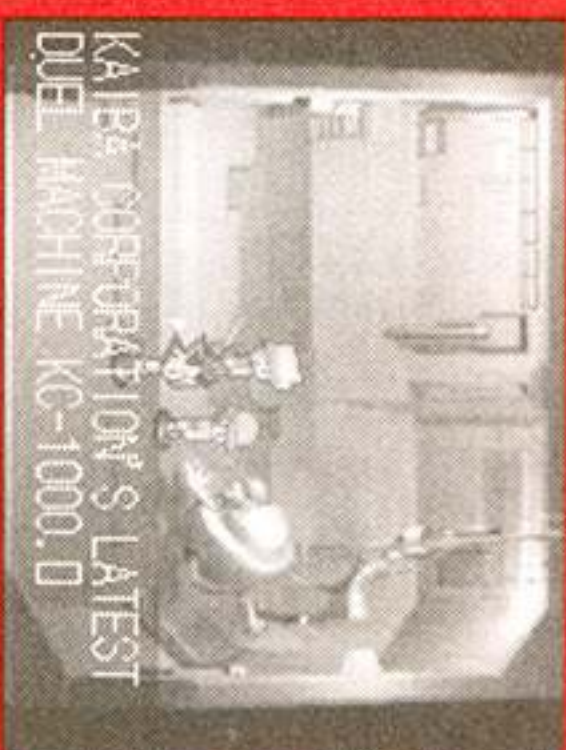
YU-GI-OH! RESHEF OF DESTRUCTION



GAME BOY ADVANCE

MASTER DECK

- The KC-1000 is probably the single best place to fight repeatedly when attempting to build your Duelist Level, Deck Capacity, and trying to earn better cards.



- There's a simple way to get past cards that have a strong defense, but a weak attack. The computer is normally very aggressive against cards that are brought into play face-down in the Defense Position, since it assumes the card isn't attacking because it's too weak or of the wrong alignment to challenge the cards it has in play. If a card with a strong defense is holding you back, bring out any monster and immediately set it to defend. When the computer takes its turn, it should try attacking the new card, which leaves the strong defender in a weak attack position making it easy to destroy on the next turn. This little feint can be a real LP saver.



TOM BLANGY'S SPLINTER BELL: PANDORA TOMORROW



PS2, XBOX

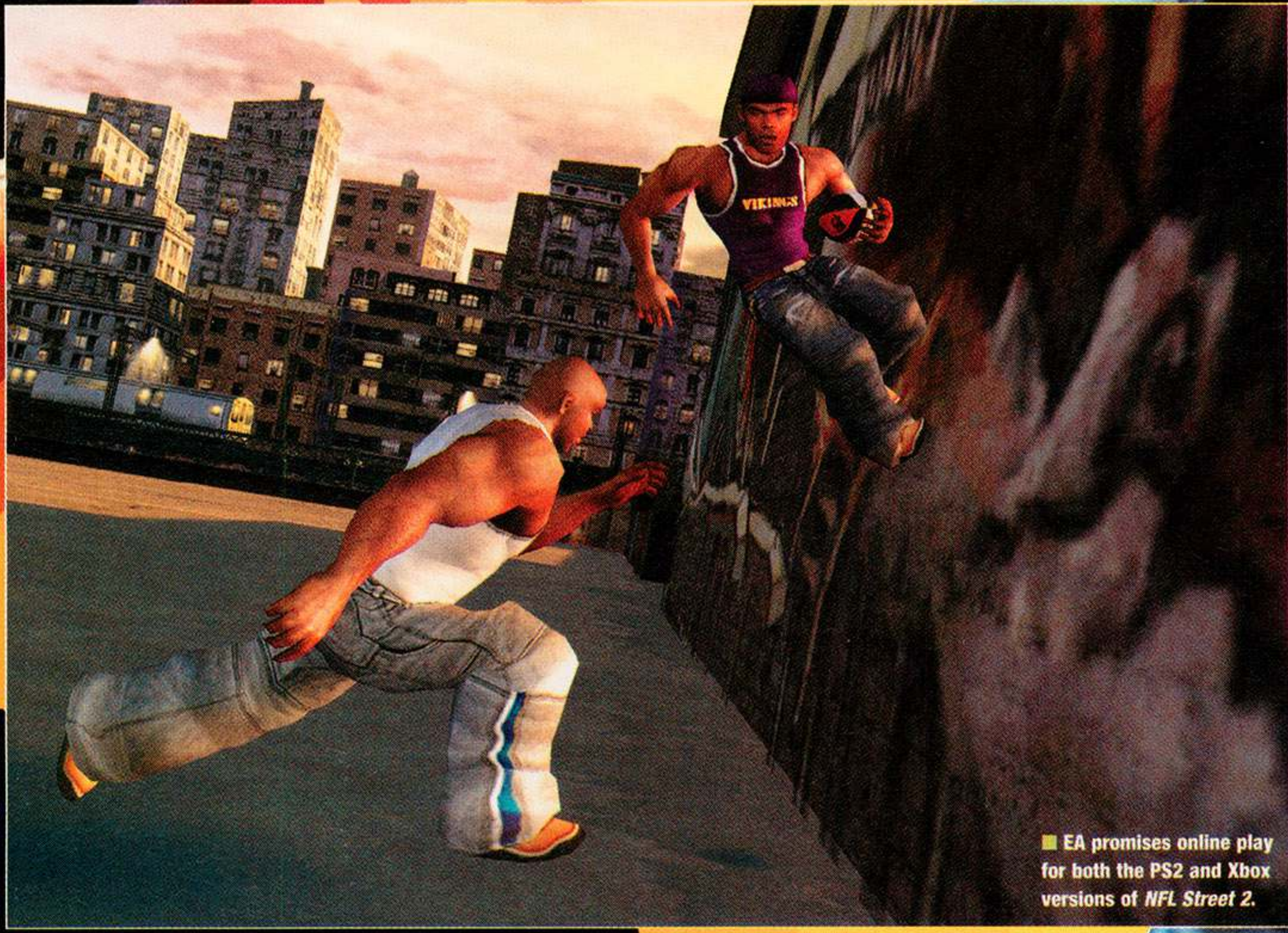
SURVIVAL SKILLS

**Multiplayer
Mercenary Tactics**
When playing the mercenaries, you must defend the ND133 consist of all costs. Luckily, each building can only be assaulted by a couple of access areas, so it's possible for mercenaries to camp the choke points—the points that the Shadownet players must pass through—and blast them to pieces.



Multiplayer Spy Strategies
Your most important tactic will be subterfuge. You can send one spy to trigger an alarm at a main entrance, especially one close to ND133 tubes, and force the mercenaries to counter with some armed security. While they're busy in that section, a second spy can mount a quick in-and-out assault on another building's ND133. Operate in a timely manner and you can have the mercenaries pulling their collective hair out. Drop your smoke grenades at the first sign of enemy fire.





■ EA promises online play for both the PS2 and Xbox versions of *NFL Street 2*.



NFL STREET 2

PS2/XB/GC • EA Sports Big • January 2005

Previously on *NFL Street*: EA took the old-school *NFL Blitz* game plan and gave it some serious *Street*-itude. Pigskin lovers praised the 7-on-7 arcadey baller for its onfield trickery and refreshingly different play locales, which included a muddy back alley and a gritty urban rooftop.

What needed fixin': And the unruly home crowd chanted: defense, defense, defense....

If it ain't broke: Unlike its superserious

stepbrother *Madden*, *NFL Street* didn't require you to know the difference between a 4-3 monster blitz and two-deep zone coverage. Hopefully, the sequel will stay as accessible so even the most casual arm-chair quarterback will take a snap or two.

New for part two: When Lead Designer Jason Barnes talks about *NFL Street 2*, he mentions phrases like "persistent world," "fictitious city," and "defending your turf." No, this isn't *Grand Theft Football*. "The key

component of *NFL Street 2*'s single-player mode is owning the city," explains Barnes, adding that the only way to become the Tommy Vercetti of Footballtown, U.S.A., is to compete against and defeat the city's elite squads. The rough and tough urban area is broken up into 10 all-new playing environments, like Second Street Station (showcased in the screenshots here).

Barnes also promises you'll have much more interaction with the fields and their surrounding structures than in the previous





■ The new wall-jump maneuver leaves Packers gunslinger Brett Favre huggin' air. Stick to offense, Brett.



Legendary Newcomers

NFL Street returned Hall of Famers like running back Walter "Sweetness" Payton and the bone-breaking sack-master Lawrence Taylor to the gridiron. Lead Designer Jason Barnes says that the sequel will feature a whole new cast of NFL legends, including the always wide-eyed former middle linebacker of the Chicago Bears, Mike Singletary. Expect many more retirees to sign a *NFL Street 2* contract in the months to come. ►

► edition. For example, *NFL Street 2* will include the ability to sprint across and jump off of walls, à la *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (but with none of that rewind hocus pocus). "In *NFL Street*, you wanted to avoid walls while on offense because nothing good could happen," says Barnes. "In this sequel, offenses will be drawn to the walls for pulling off special moves, launching players high into the air and embarrassing opponents."

When you're not doing your best Prince

impression, you'll also have a ton of new gadget plays available. Yet Barnes is quick to point out that *NFL Street 2* will emphasize "what you do with the ball more than your play selection." This translates into additional showboat moves that'll definitely tick off those stodgy folks in the NFL front office (could a Joe Horn-like cellular celebration be in the works?).

And in other X's and O's, developer EA Tiburon is working this off-season to correct last game's ground-happy, unbalanced

offensive attack. "The inspiration for this one is to stretch the field vertically," says Barnes. "We are balancing the running game by opening up the passing game, allowing players to build a variety of offensive styles."

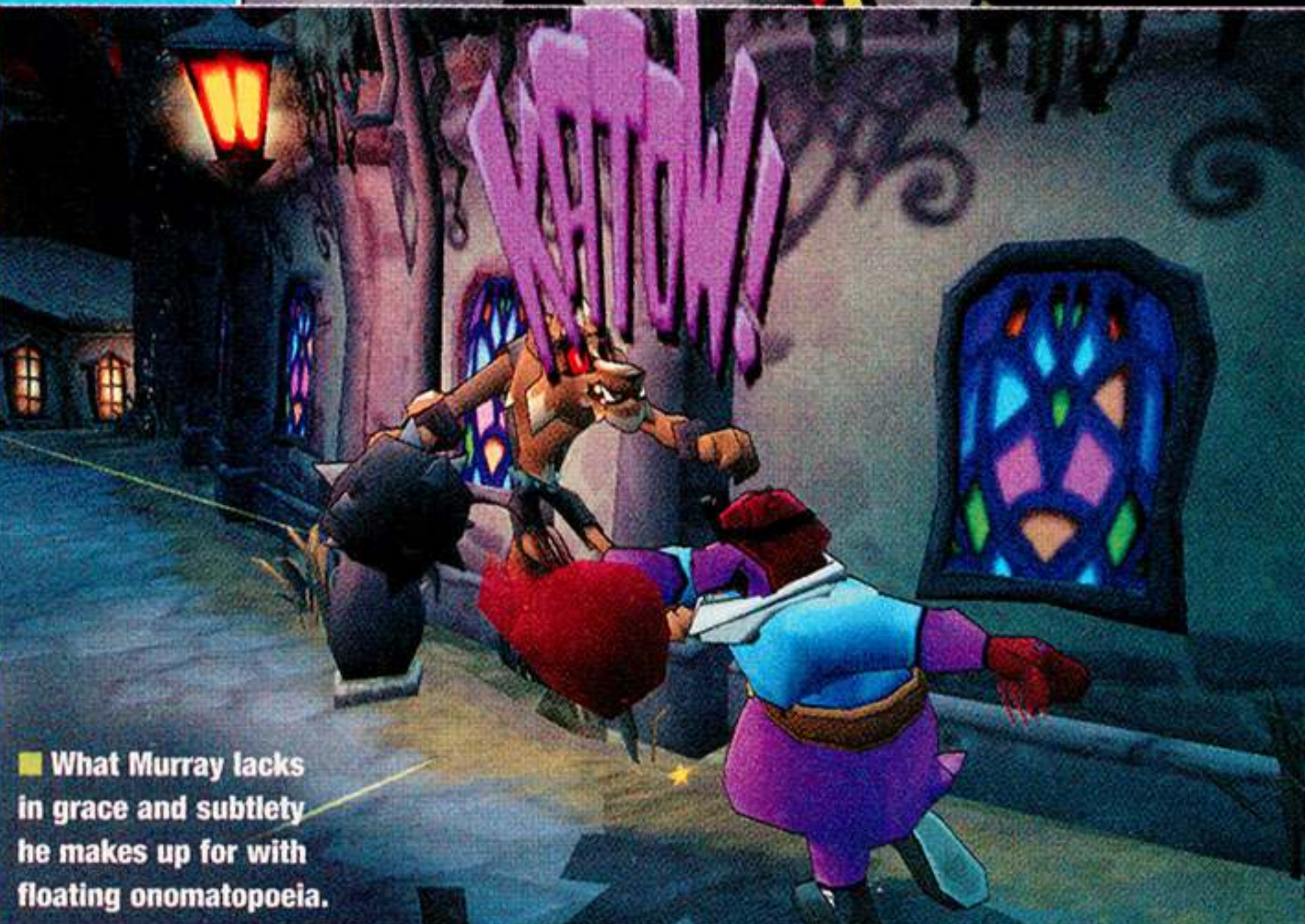
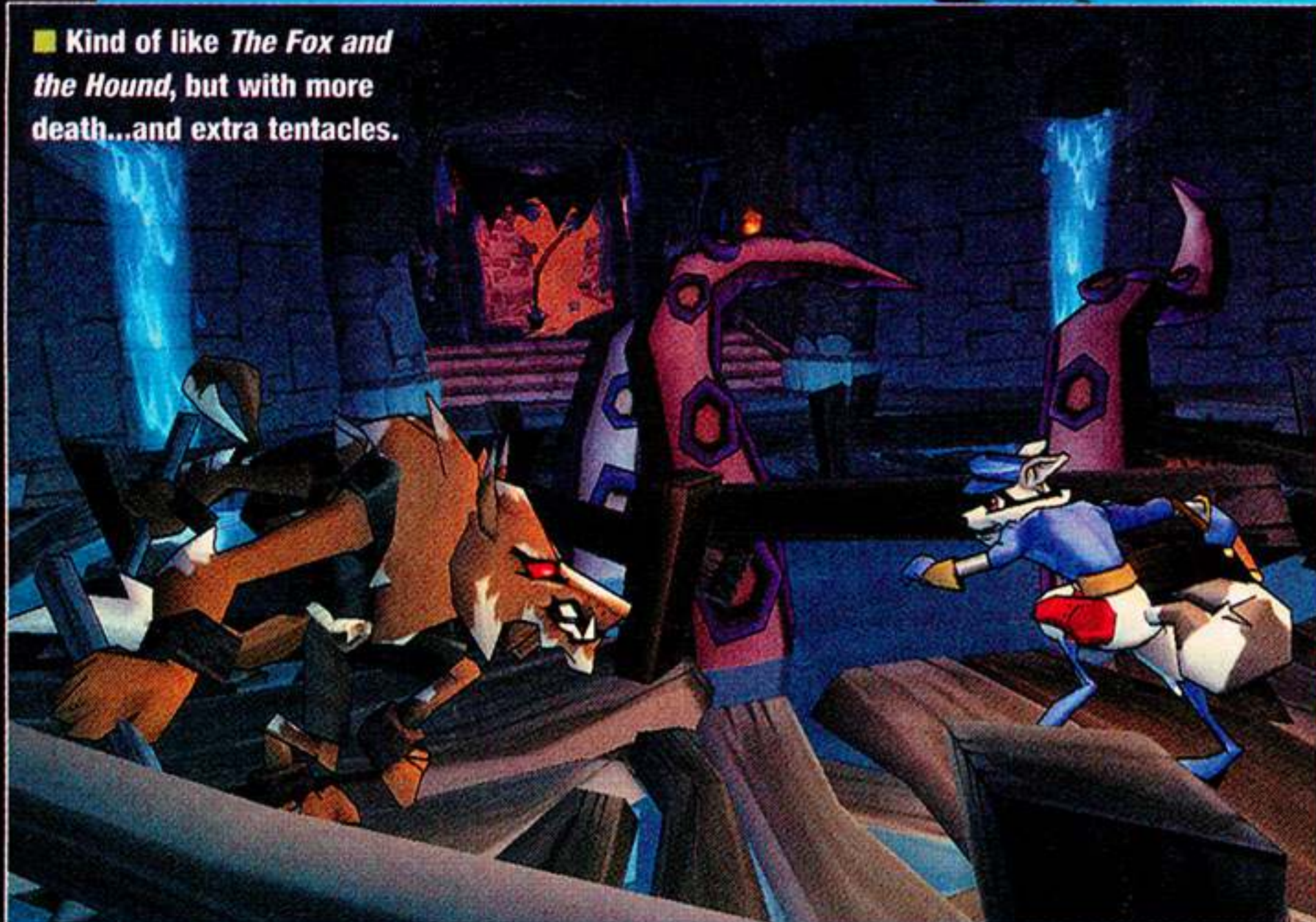
Like any smart coach, Barnes isn't revealing *NFL Street 2*'s entire game plan just yet, as other surprises remain on the chalkboard. But rest assured one of them won't be performing drive-bys with heat-seeking pigskins.



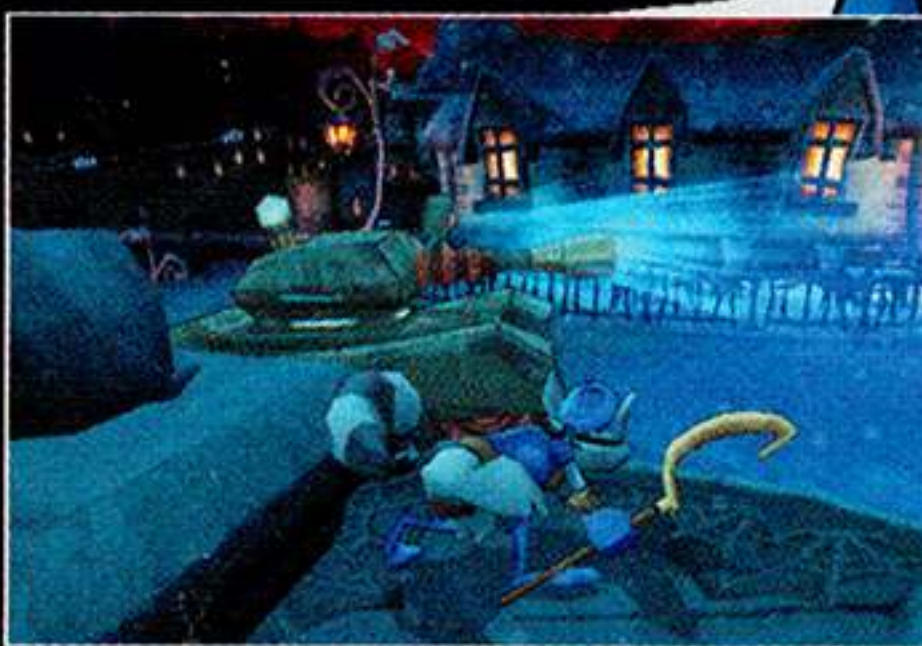
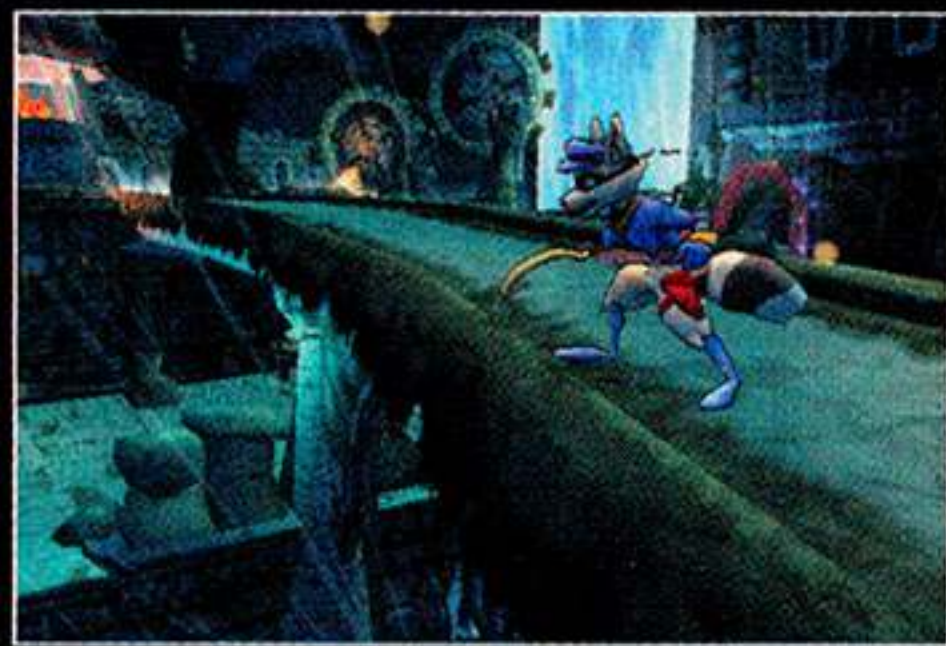
TWISTED
GOTTA HAVE ^ SWEET?



■ Kind of like *The Fox and the Hound*, but with more death...and extra tentacles.



■ What Murray lacks in grace and subtlety he makes up for with floating onomatopoeia.



SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

PlayStation 2 • Sony CEA • September 2004

Previously on *Sly Cooper*: The titular raccoon—a master thief—worked with partners-in-crime Bentley and Murray to get an ancient thievery book back from the Fiendish Five. Straightforward platform hijinks ensued for the next eight hours.

What needed fixing: The length—the original *Sly* was easily finishable in a day.

If it ain't broke: The cartoony visuals had

style to spare; developer Sucker Punch was wise to leave them intact.

New for part two: As anyone who read homespun tearjerker *Rascal* in grade school knows, it is absolutely impossible to hate on raccoons—no matter how many times they dine on your garbage or dent your car's bumper on the highway. They're just so darn cute. Don't believe us? Check out the first *Sly Cooper*,

released two years ago to near-universal praise for its smooth graphics and unrelentingly film-noir take on the platform genre. It was a winning formula, and with *Sly 2*, Sucker Punch is working on exactly what gamers missed in the first game: the same sort of thing, except *more* of it.

A lot about *Sly 2* is unmistakably similar. Like before, you're a burglar of great talent and even greater mouth, ducking around buildings and trying to avoid rival

thugs. Your object of desire (the disassembled pieces of Clockwerk, Sly's robotic archnemesis in the last game) has changed, but your tactics haven't—you can still expect an addictive blend of hopping, bopping, and stealth, with a remarkable variety of minigames (including a hilarious dance sequence with Carmelita, the Interpol agent out to get Sly in most levels) to spice things up.

The real change lies in the approach >

TERMINATOR® 3

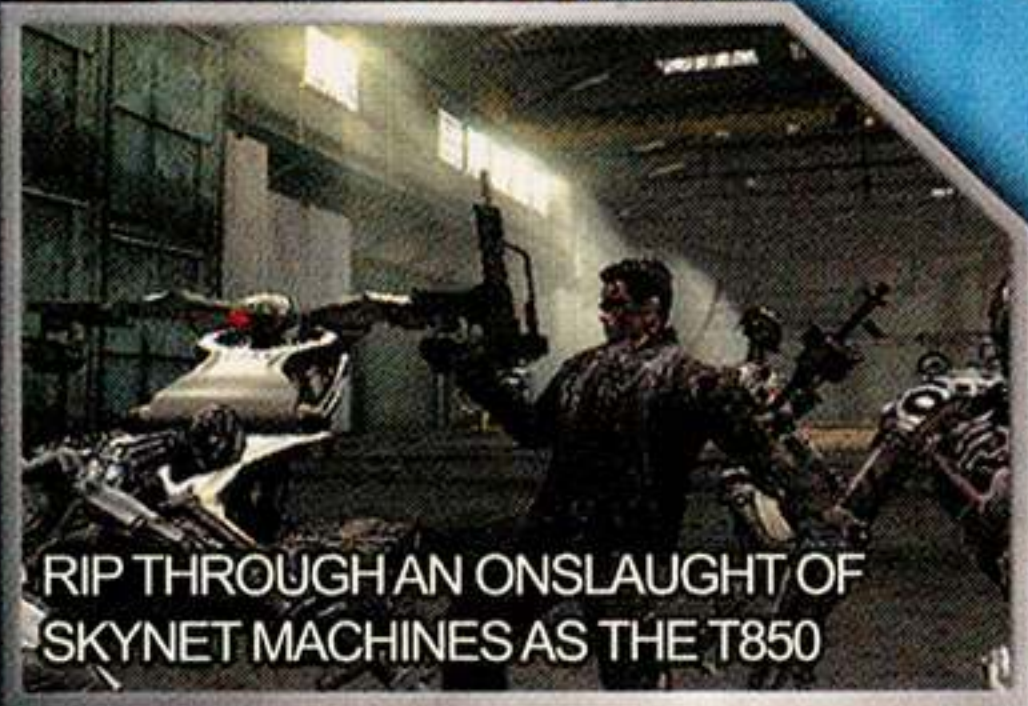
THE REDEMPTION

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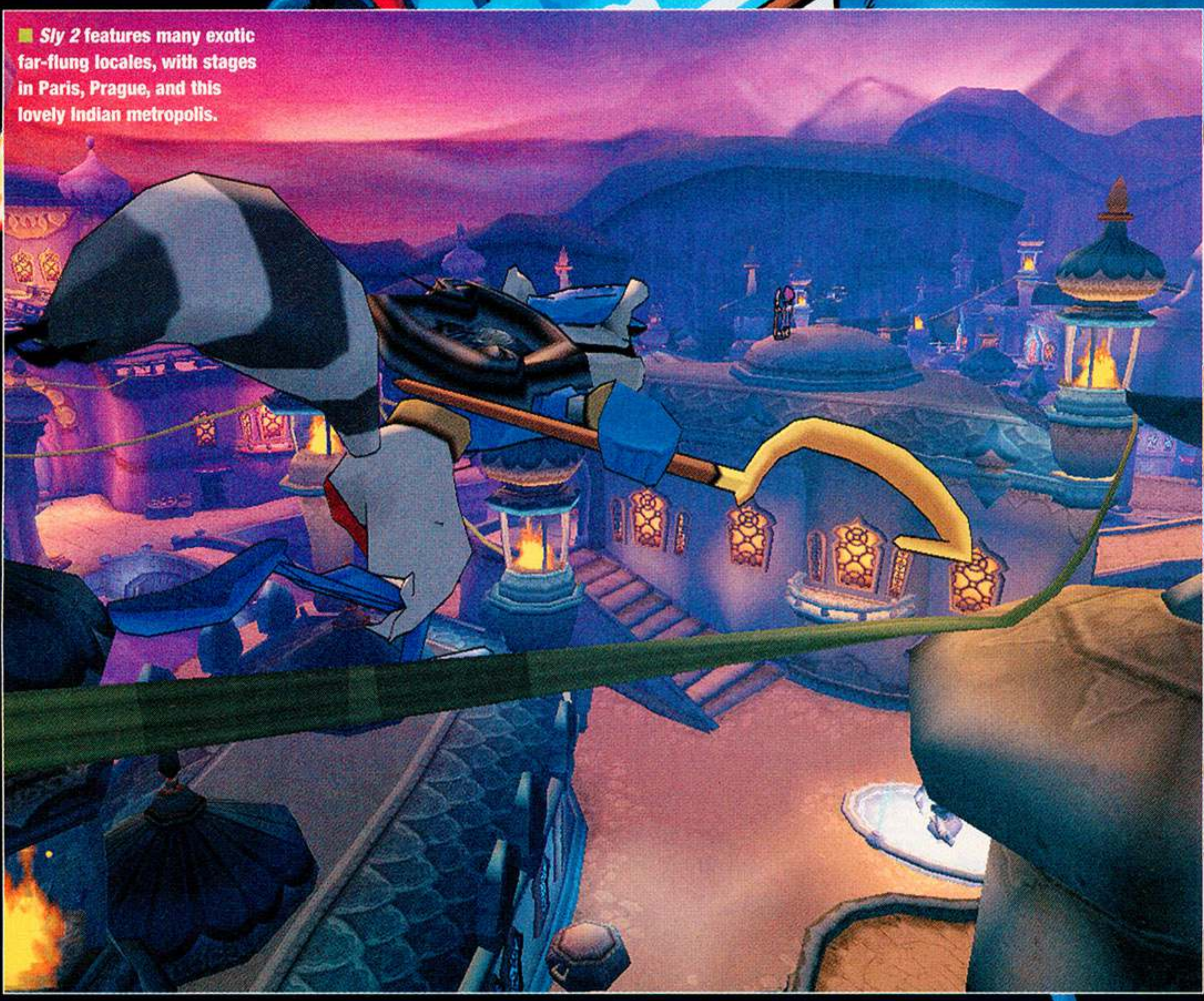
PlayStation 2



PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT



■ *Sly 2* features many exotic far-flung locales, with stages in Paris, Prague, and this lovely Indian metropolis.

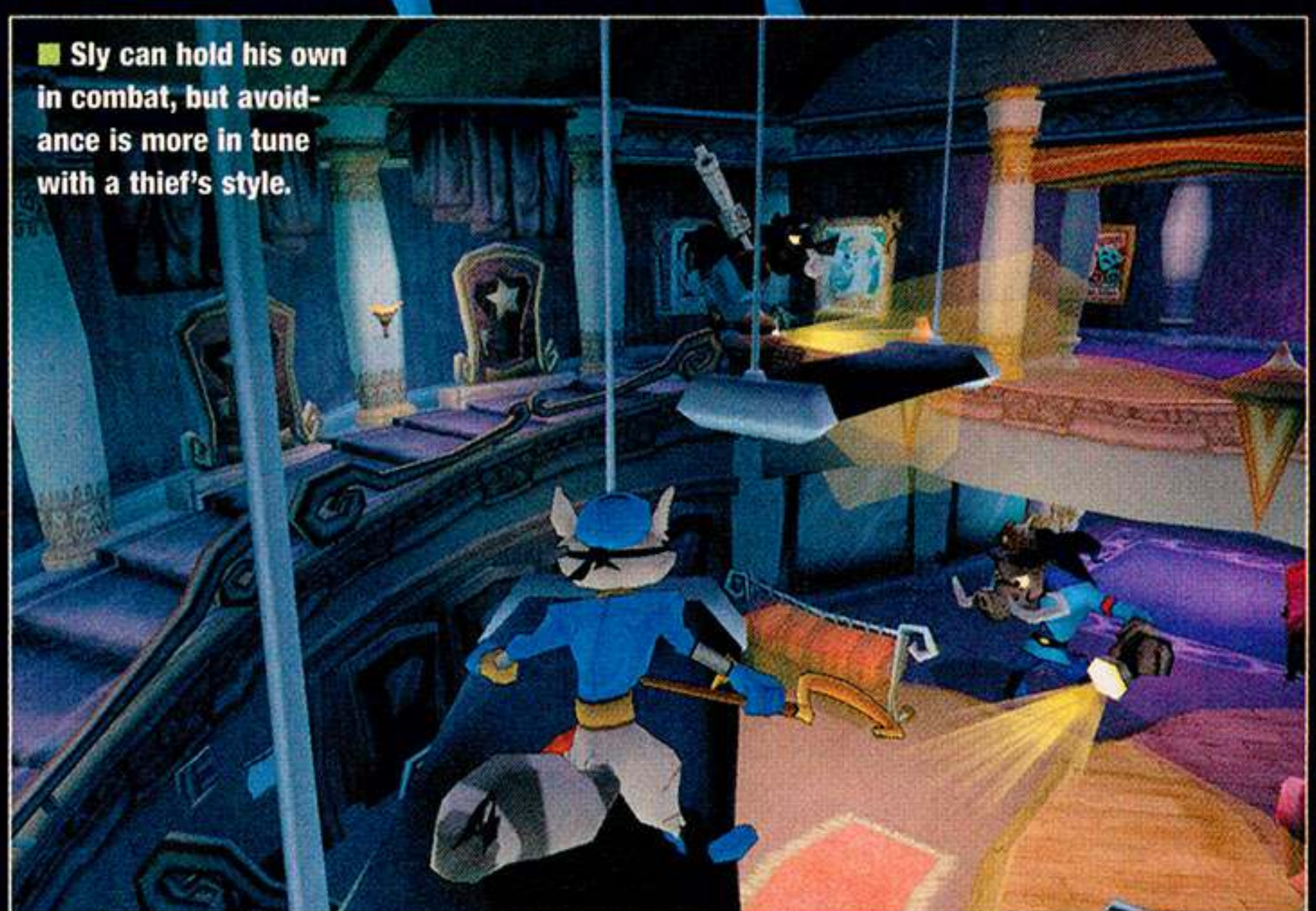


Species-ism!
Much like '80s afternoon staple *DuckTales*, the *Sly* series perpetuates some long-held stereotypes against certain animals—it seems like the majority of bad guys you encounter are either rats, lizards, or pigs. Designer McDaniel denies all allegations of animal discrimination, however: “Sly tends to run around at night in the bad parts of town while all the upstanding rats and lizards are sleeping because they have to go to work the next morning. I’ve heard mice are good people.”

■ Sly solves the riddle of how videogame heroes climb things while holding weapons.



■ Sly can hold his own in combat, but avoidance is more in tune with a thief's style.



▶ that Sly—or, to be more exact, Sly and his pals Bentley (a persnickety turtle) and Murray (a dopey hippo)—takes to each mission. “In the first game, Sly’s pals provided the motivation for several of the minigames, but you could not walk around and have your own adventures as them,” says Game Designer Rob McDaniel. “In *Sly*

2, [your friends] have all sorts of crazy things you need to accomplish to pull off your master plan for the heist. As a player, you never know what’s coming up next.”
How does this work in action? Let’s look at a sample mission, in which Sly’s after some Clockwerk parts on display at a private party. You start out as Bentley, the

brains of the group, whose goal is to set up some explosives to distract the guards. After that’s done, control shifts over to Sly (in disguise), who dances with Carmelita in the minigame we mentioned before. Do well enough, and Rajan, the wealthy tiger who owns the target of your heist, will be so enraptured that he won’t notice when

you switch over to Murray, lower yourself down to the parts, and leave without a trace. All of your team members play a major part in every caper; imagine what *Ocean’s Eleven* would be like if Disney produced it in the 1950s, and you aren’t far from the mark.

—Kevin Gifford ▶

TWO FRIENDS
ONE DESTINY

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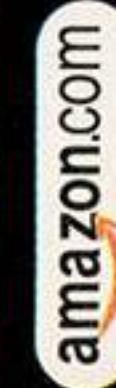


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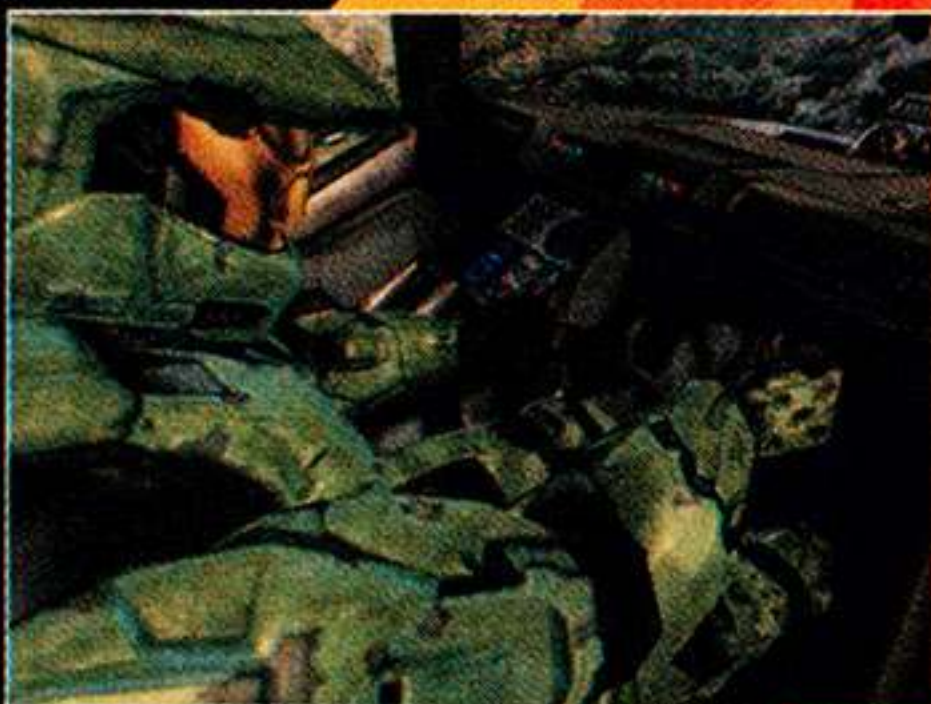
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■ This Covenant Elite is about to play *Grand Theft Warthog*.



HALO 2

Xbox • Microsoft • November 2004

Previously on *Halo*: Fantastic graphics, smart enemies, driveable vehicles, and robust multiplayer options...this ol' first-person shooter raised the bar for the genre so far that today's wannabes still can't touch it—even on their tippy-toes.

What needed fixin': Some single-player levels were repetitive. Some single-player levels were repetitive. Some single—oh, and the game needed to go online.

If it ain't broke: Everything else about *Halo* rocked. So give us more already.

New for part two: We've told you in past issues about the major changes in store for *Halo 2*, including new techniques such as holding two guns at the same time and boarding enemy-driven vehicles. So let's get into the nitty-gritty. We know you can't melee-attack or throw grenades while dual-wielding. The

designers have also joked about some slightly more obvious facts. "You can't dual-wield anything stupid, like two sniper rifles," says a rep for developer Bungie. "[And] you can't triple-wield."

We've learned more about boarding vehicles during multiplayer—you always hit the X button to do it, but what you do depends on the situation. "You can punch, yank, or flip [enemies] out of their ride," says Bungie's rep. "You can board

gunner and passenger seats, as well as the driver's spot. We've seen some pretty funny situations [during testing], where a Warthog's gunner is boarded without the driver noticing, and the illicit gunner starts taking out the driver's compatriots. Confusion ensues."

For more *Halo 2* development updates than you'll ever need to know (like how one designer has "sushi farts"), check out www.bungie.net. ➤

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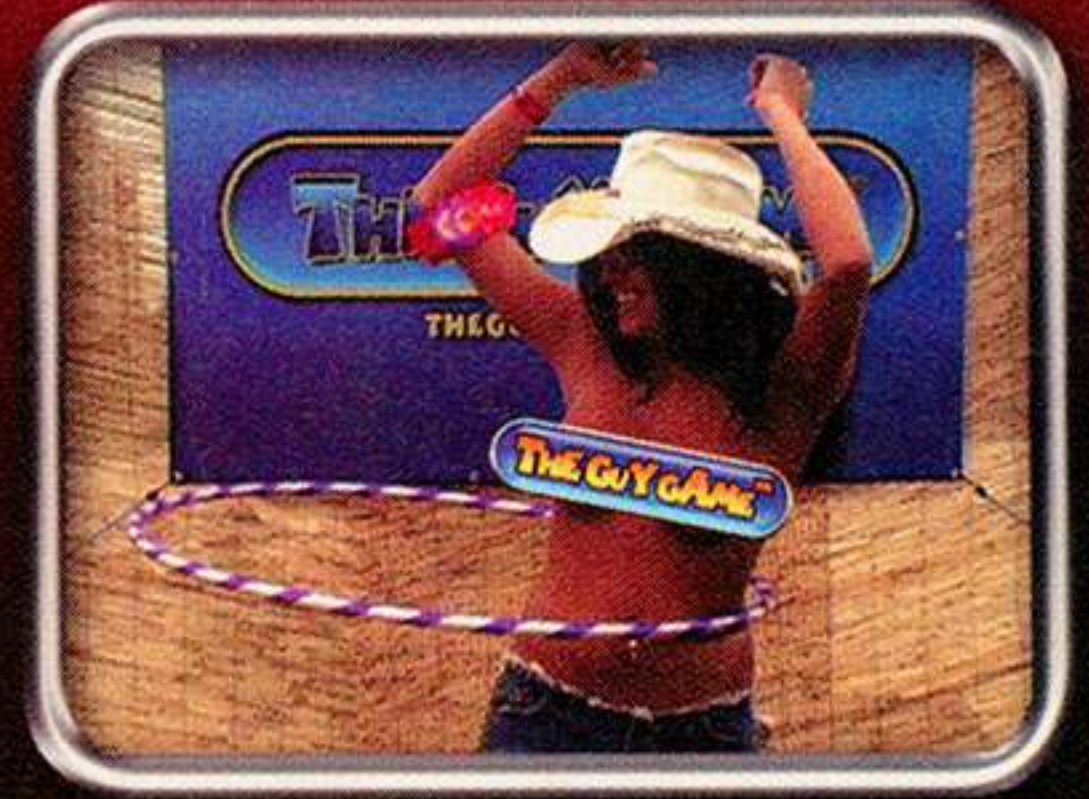


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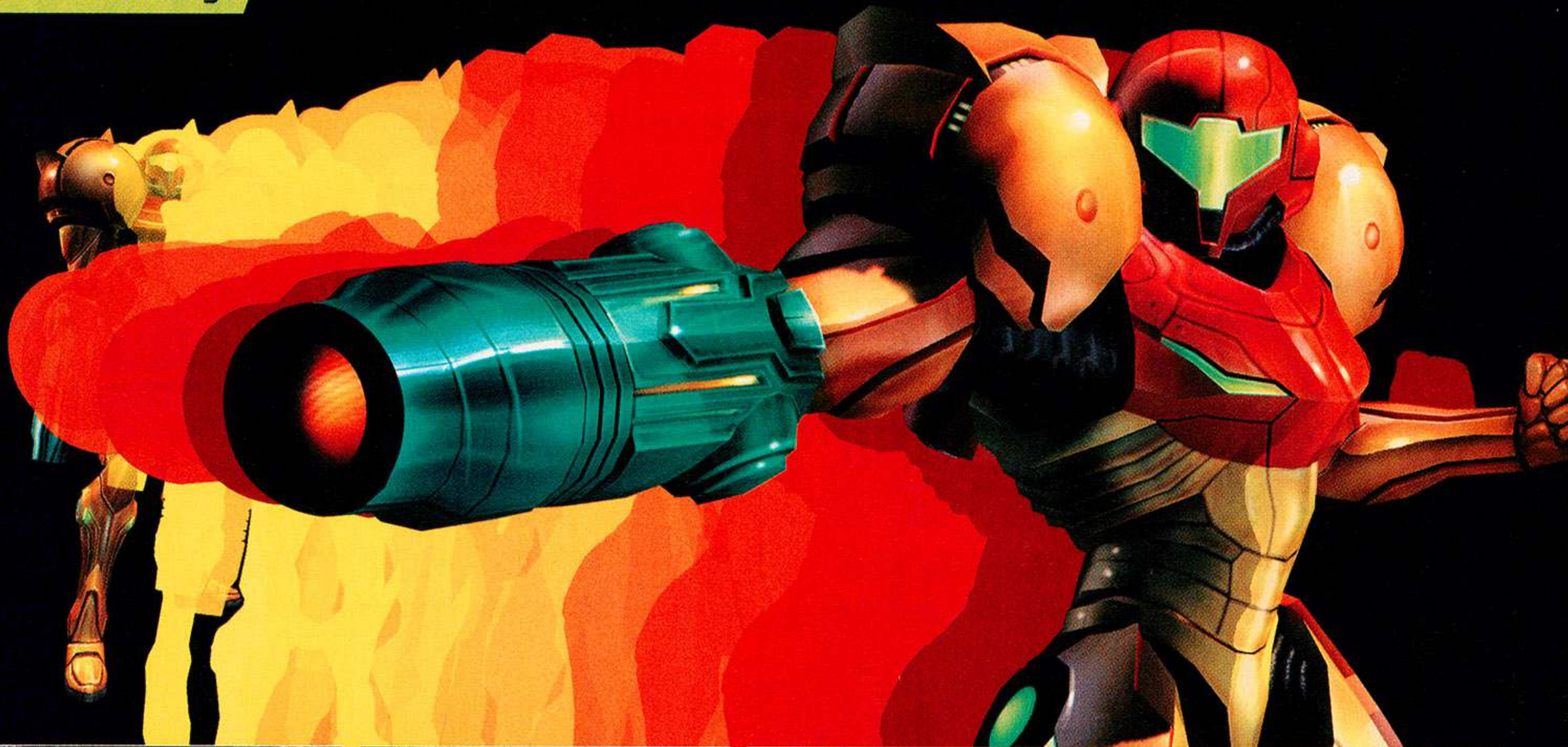


PlayStation 2



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■ Samus gets all goopy with her new Dark beam.



METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

GameCube • Nintendo • November 2004

Previously on *Metroid Prime*: Nintendo's first 3D take on its classic franchise successfully duplicated the old games' unique feel, turning expansive exploration on an alien world into a spankin'-new genre: first-person adventure.

What needed fixin': Many players quibbled about the control setup: *Prime*'s unique system made jumping and locking on to enemies a snap, but it didn't allow you to freely look around. (Sadly, it doesn't appear that this issue will be addressed.) Also, some multiplayer action would have been nice....

If it ain't broke: Incredibly organic level design set *Prime* apart from the pack, since every cavern, corridor, or ruin you explored looked different from those around it. They shouldn't tinker with the haunting musical style, climactic boss encounters, or countless well-hidden secrets, either.

New for part two: The sequel to *EGM*'s 2002 Game of the Year doesn't stray far from its predecessor's trailblazing path—you're still Samus Aran, a sultry spacegal with an impressive arsenal of beam weaponry (not to mention the ability to

morph into a roly-poly ball for speedy get-aways). In *Echoes*, she's on a new mission to investigate the disappearance of missing Galactic Federation Troops on planet Aether. Things get a bit odd when you land on this particular planet, though: A massive Phazon meteorite ripped open a dimensional rift, *Star Trek* style. Samus must weave between the normal Light world and a creepy, noxious (you take damage just by being there) Dark world in order to uncover the planet's mysteries.

The dualistic world setup has a serious affect on the gameplay. You'll find new weapons, the Light and Dark beams,

that rip monsters in the opposing world to shreds (like in the GC space shooter *Ikaruga*); new visors that spot otherwise invisible elements in the different realms, and a deadly new rival, Dark Samus, who is your own twisted, dark reflection.

Ostensibly, the all-new single-player adventure would have been enough to warrant a sequel, but Nintendo's grafting multiplayer battles on to the action. Four players will be able to roll around and zap each other in a variety of versus modes, but don't expect any online action or system-link play—splitscreen melees will have to suffice. **B+**

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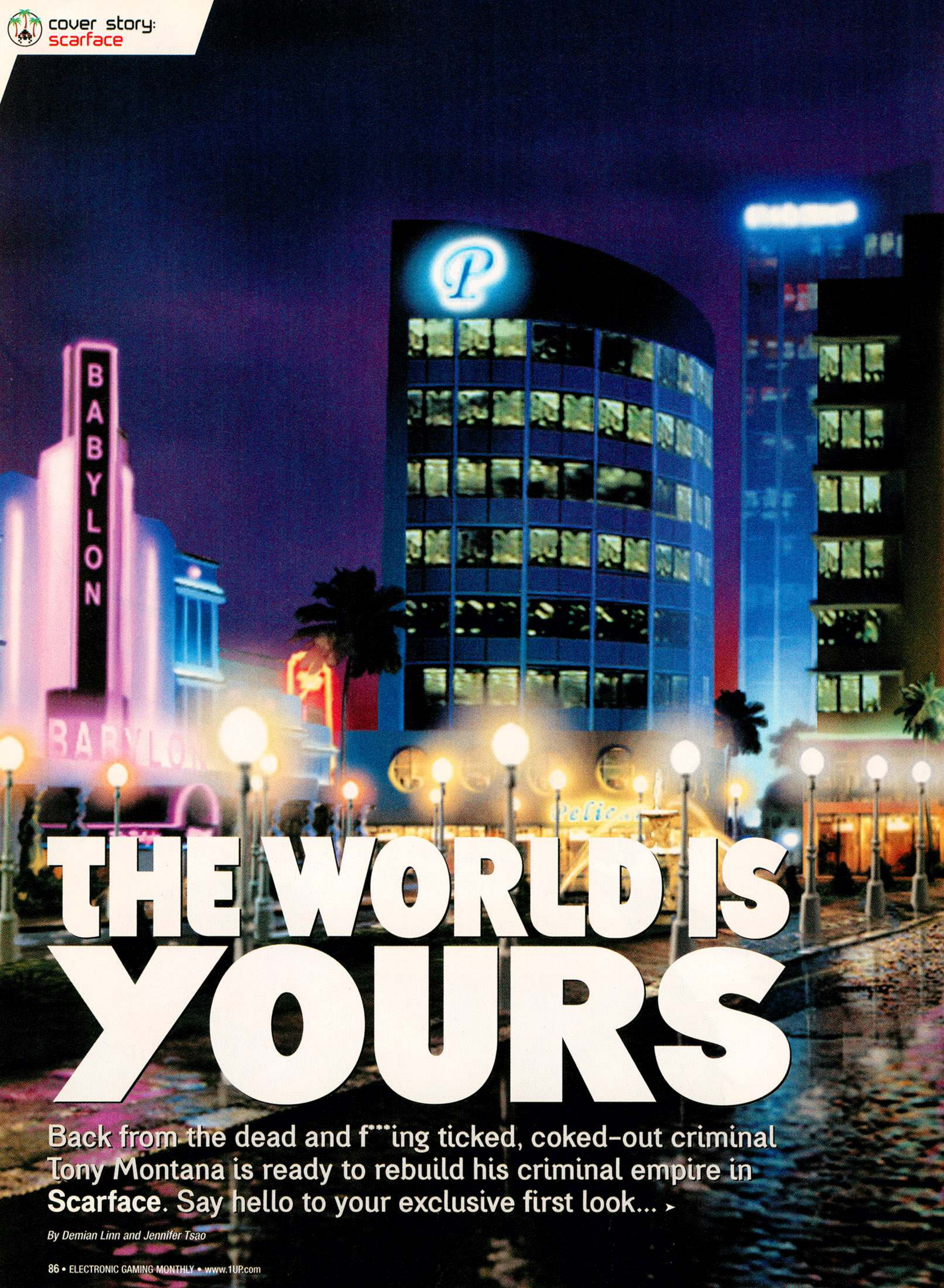
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THE WORLD IS YOURS

Back from the dead and f***ing ticked, coked-out criminal Tony Montana is ready to rebuild his criminal empire in **Scarface**. Say hello to your exclusive first look... >

By Demian Linn and Jennifer Tsao



HOTEL

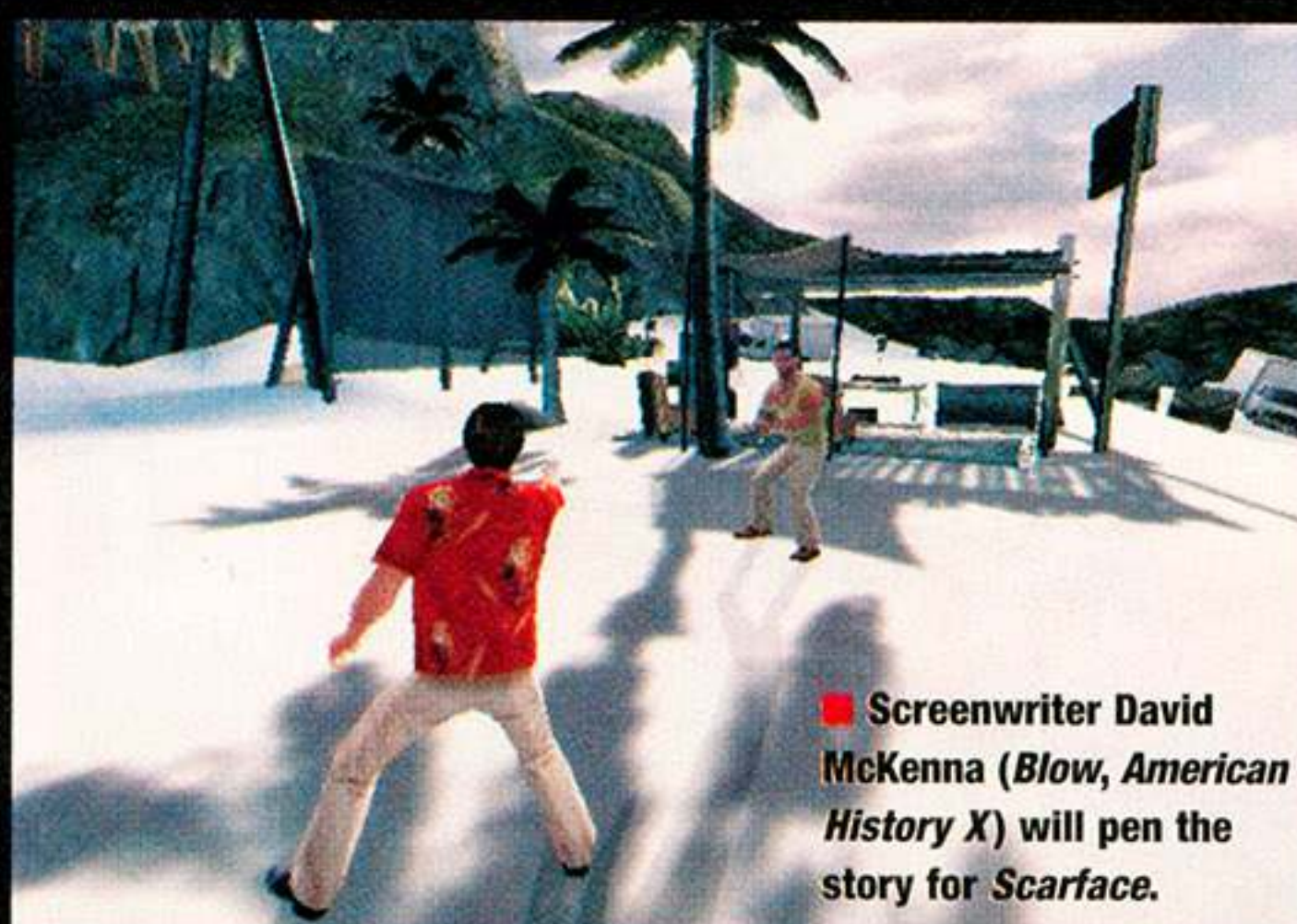
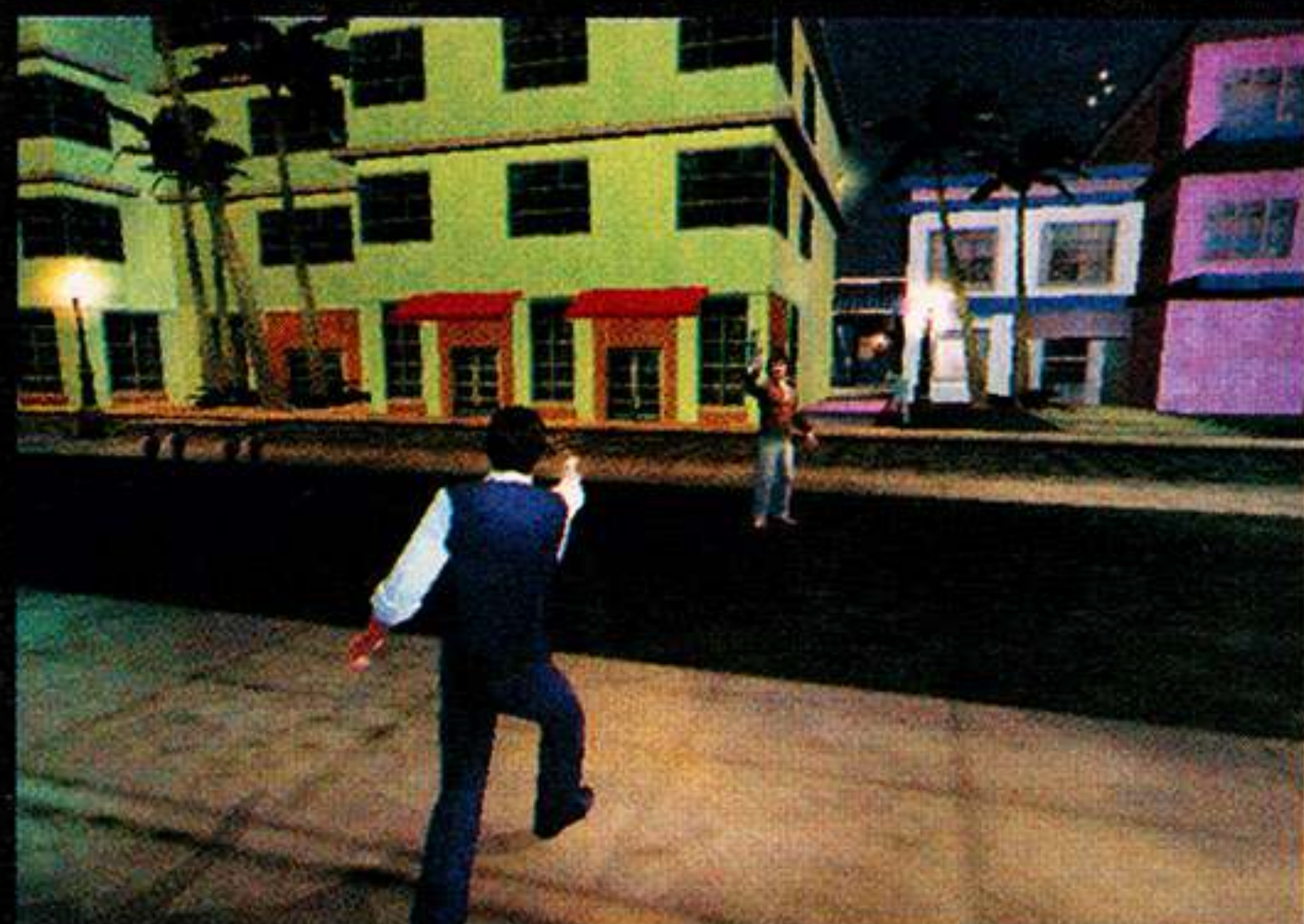


CLOUDBY

192



■ Hopefully the McKenzie quadruplets won't all hang out together in the final game....



■ Screenwriter David McKenna (*Blow*, *American History X*) will pen the story for *Scarface*.

If you've seen seminal '80s gangster movie *Scarface*, you can probably think of one or two scenes that might be difficult to translate into videogame form. Like, say, the part when Tony Montana kills his best pal, snorts a mountain of coke, watches his sister die, introduces his now-famous "little friend" (a grenade launcher) to a group of home-invading rival henchmen, takes a few dozen bullets and a shotgun blast in the back, then swan-dives into a shallow pool, dead—roll credits. Kind of a rough

way to end a game, eh?

And that's why developer Radical Games (the guys behind *The Simpsons: Hit & Run*) is going to whip out some gigantic artistic license and start its *Scarface* videogame—due in late 2005 (likely on PlayStation 2 and Xbox, though that's unofficial)—right where the movie finished, except with one teensy difference: Turns out, Tony doesn't die in the climactic battle after all. He's a little worse for wear, his mansion is a smoking ruin, and oh boy, is he ever pissed at friend-turned-arch-enemy drug lord Alejandro Sosa, but he ain't dead. It's a lot to swallow, but for the sake of a good game, we'll open wide.

"Players have seen the movie—the movie does a great job of telling that story," says Peter Wanat, senior producer at *Scarface* publisher VU Games (Wanat also produced *Chronicles of Riddick* on Xbox). "We would much rather give the player a unique and new experience. We're gonna get away from games [where] you've seen the movie, [now] play the movie. If Tony doesn't die in the mansion scene, what happens?" What happens is a whole lotta drug dealing, murderous

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES?

Scarface has been a classic action film since it debuted in 1983. Sorta made us wonder, what if *Scarface* the game had come out in...

...1983?

System: Atari 2600

Hypothetical review quote: "...a vivid version of Miami created in four colors and with up to three (!) pedestrians onscreen at once."



...1989?

System: NES

Hypothetical review quote: "The side-scrolling gameplay fits Tony's single-minded nature, although we wish he had a double-jump."



...1997?

System: PlayStation 1

Hypothetical review quote: "The 3D platforming action puts you in Tony Montana's shoes, even if you don't collect all 180 cocaine baggies."



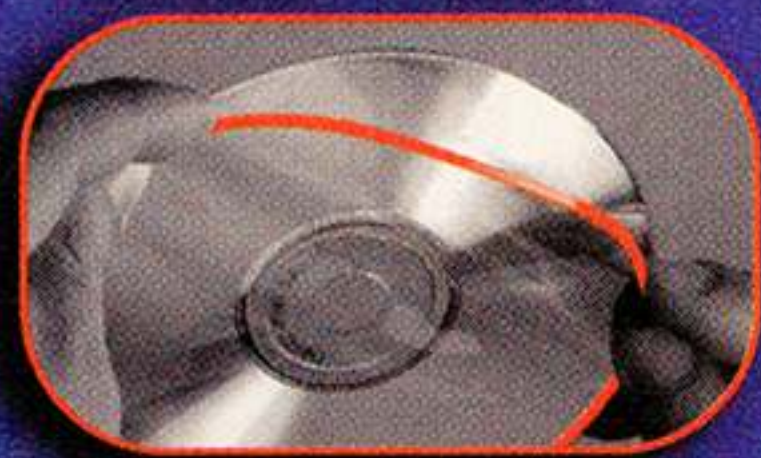
■ With two dialogue options, Tony can be as nice or nasty as necessary.



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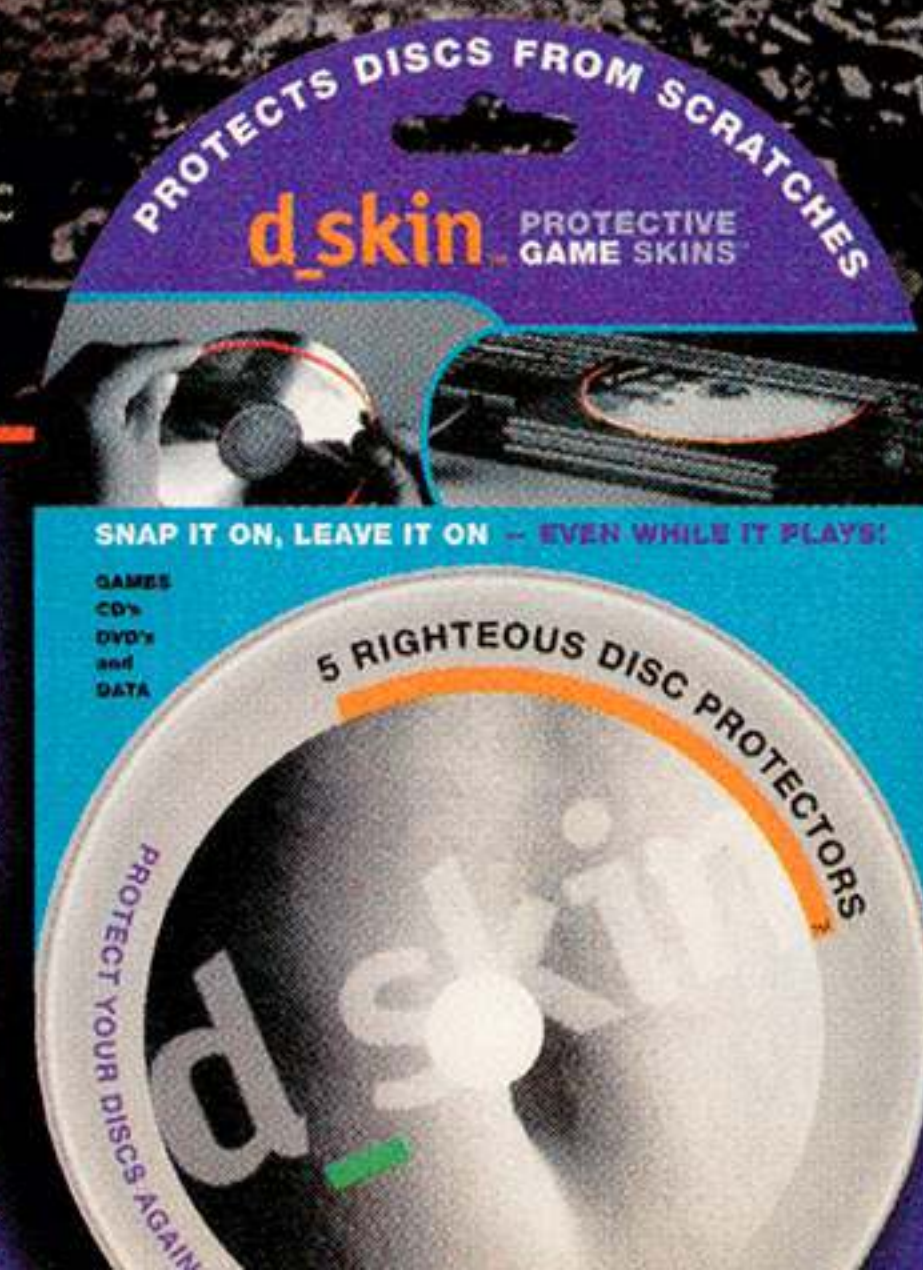


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MINI GRUDGE MATCH!


 Scarface's
Tony Montana

VS.


 Vice City's
Tommy Vercetti

"Tony laughs and then taunts him... then **Tommy goes down.**"
 —Pete Low, designer, Radical Games

► rampaging, and sweet revenge as Tony rebuilds his empire kilo by kilo, brick by gaudy, gold-leafed brick.

Miami Vice City

Seeing as how *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* "borrowed" extensively from the *Scarface* movie, it's only fitting that *Scarface* the game pinches some inspiration from *GTA*. You'll have a reimagined version of Miami

to commit various gangster-related acts in, along with a chain of offshore islands meant to resemble the Bahamas. Tony will also travel to some other, as-of-yet-undisclosed locations as he hunts for Sosa. When Tony isn't carrying out one of the main story missions, though, he'll find plenty of other ways to fill his time—running drugs, assassinating key competitors, money laundering, the odd boat race....

"A lot of it is taking ideas that *GTA* sort of incorporated with the taxi, like when you get into a taxi, you can do certain missions with that, [and] when you get into the police car, you can do the vigilante missions," says Game Designer Pete Low. "We want to take that a step further and enable [the player] a lot more, so we have on-foot things that you can do as well. The idea of drug dealing always exists in the

world. You can just go and do that whenever you want."

Though Tony will never actually take drugs in the game—the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) isn't too keen on that sort of behavior, even in a Mature-rated title—illegal substances are the cornerstone of the Montana empire. Tony will meet up with suppliers in the islands, negotiate a price, and then take a

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

If it's been a while since you've seen *Scarface*, here's a little plot refresher—'cause, y'know, you won't be seeing this stuff in the game. We call out the major events in the movie and some of their possible consequences in the game



Big-screen moment: Cuban jefe Fidel Castro lets his people go in the 1980 Mariel Boat Lift from Cuba. Tony Montana enters the United States as a political refugee.
Little-screen possibilities: We spied a pile of books about Cuba in the developers' office, so don't rule out a visit to Tony's home island in the game.
Classic Tony line: "I want my f***ing human rights now, just like the President Jimmy Carter says."



Big-screen moment: Tony discovers that political refugeeism/dish washing is not the life for him.
Little-screen possibilities: None (we hope).
Classic Tony line: "I didn't come to United States to break my f***ing back!"



Big-screen moment: Paying his dues as a petty drug dealer pretty much sucks, but Tony proves he has *cajones* of steel. And horrific potential as a lumberjack.
Little-screen possibilities: Will the chain saw be a weapon in the game? Producer Peter Wanat admits, "It's a possibility."
Classic Tony line: "Why don't you try sticking your head up your ass and see if it fits?"



Big-screen moment: Tony meets drug kingpin Frank Lopez, immediately impresses him, and falls for Elvira, the boss' lady. They do an unforgettably '80s dance at the Babylon nightclub.
Little-screen possibilities: The '80s tunes defined *Vice City*, so what's left? According to the developers, *GTA* makers Rockstar didn't use any songs from the actual movie soundtrack, so those would all be fair game.
Classic Tony line: "You got a look in your eye like you haven't been f***ed in a year."



Big-screen moment: Tony accompanies Lopez associate Omar Suarez to do some business in Bolivia. He hits it off famously with drug lord Alejandro Sosa and cuts a huge deal. Omar doesn't fare so well.
Little-screen possibilities: You'll pilot planes and boats in the game, but chopper missions à la *Vice City* aren't a sure thing as of now.
Classic Tony line: "All I have in this world is my balls and my word, and I don't break 'em for nobody."



■ A bizarre set of circumstances forces Tony to end Gilligan's three-hour tour prematurely.

boat or seaplane back to Miami and sell the drugs to individual dealers. Of course, as *Miami Vice* has taught us, drug deals

caught in a Mexican standoff, can you talk your way down, or does it all come to bullets?" If it's a police sting, you may be

never done. Though Tony can buy guns or more drugs with his dirty money, you must first launder that cash at the bank to make it clean. Once your money is legit, you can use it to purchase exotic items like swank cars, cigarette boats, a pet tiger, businesses, and all the red-velvet and chrome mansion furnishings a nouveau riche gangster-about-town could want. One unlockable item is a Rolls-Royce limousine; forget pulling some old lady out of her Honda—grab your 3-foot long, '80s-era cell phone and Jeeves will come pick you up wherever you are.

But Tony isn't all bad guy. While he may corrupt the nation's youth with his

"The one thing we will not do with *Scarface* is puss out."

—Peter Wanat, senior producer, VU Games

often have a way of going sour. "You're gonna go and make a drug buy, [but] you don't know if the guy you're buying from or selling to is an undercover agent," says Wanat. "And then what happens when they pull out the badge? Do you get

able to bribe your way out, but if it's the Feds, things could definitely get ugly.

First you get the money...

Even when drug deals go off without a hitch, the work of a narcotics baron is



Big-screen moment:

Upset with Tony's aggressive handling of the Bolivia situation, Lopez puts out a hit on Tony, who narrowly escapes.

Little-screen possibilities:

The Babylon nightclub is faithfully re-created and will undoubtedly serve as an important setting in the game.

Classic Tony line:

"The only thing in this world that gives orders is balls, you got that?"



Big-screen moment:

Tony seizes control by offing Lopez and scooping his babe right out of her satin-sheeted bed.

Little-screen possibilities:

Truly rebuilding his prior glory would have to involve recapturing the elusive and ice-cold heart of Elvira. Wanat does promise "strong female characters," but the story details are still being worked out.

Classic Tony line: "A man ain't got his word is a cock-a-roach."



Big-screen moment:

Tony's rise to power is quick and complete. 'Fore you know it, guy's got his own tiger.

Little-screen possibilities:

Basically, everything. "You're taking Tony from the very bottom back to the very top again," says Wanat. "That rags-to-riches thing is key."

Classic Tony line:

"You know what capitalism is? Getting f***ed."



Big-screen moment:

As the bags of dirty money multiply like cock-a-roaches, Tony's bank jacks the price of its involvement in his laundering. He goes underground—a move that will ultimately bring about his demise.

Little-screen possibilities:

In-game banks should be more cooperative than those in the movie, and you'll need them to launder any cash you have on hand.

Classic Tony line:

"The f***ing country was built on washing money."



Big-screen moment:

Tony is called upon by Sosa to help kill an antidrug activist, but Tony won't do it because the guy's wife and kids would get caught in the crossfire. This launches Tony into a downward spiral of guns, violence, and an insane amount of cocaine consumption.

Little-screen possibilities:

Hey, Tony Montana *cares!* In the game, his moral code will prevent you from targeting innocents in the streets, unlike in that *other* game.

Classic Tony line:

"You think I kill two kids and a woman? F*** that."



Big-screen moment:

After the botched assassination attempt, Tony's estate is attacked by Sosa's henchmen. Tony goes down in a veritable hurricane of gunfire.

Little-screen possibilities:

This scene was the specific inspiration for the game's rage meter. "He's taking a million shots, and he's barely affected by them," says Designer Mike Lopez. "That's the idea of rage."

Classic Tony line:

"I take you all to f***ing hell. I'm Tony Montana. You f*** with me, you f***ing with the best."

MINI GRUDGE MATCH!



Scarface's
Tony Montana

VS.



The Godfather's
Michael Corleone

"It'd be a draw. Mutual respect."

—Pete Wanat, senior producer, VU Games



■ Tony will pilot a seaplane to travel between the islands and Miami and make the odd drug drop. These displays are all subject to change, by the way.

➤ evil drugs, for instance, he's not an indiscriminate killer. "There's a line from the movie, 'I never f***ed over anyone who didn't have it coming,'" says Mike Lopez, lead game designer, "[and] he stands by that. There's a scene where he's supposed to assassinate a witness that's gonna testify to Congress, but when it comes to the moment of actually killing him, the guy's wife and daughter are with him, and [Tony] backs away. It's a pivotal point that shows he sticks by his moral values." Tony may massacre cartel thugs by the hundreds, but he can't directly target civvies. If they get in the way of an errant grenade or speeding car, though, sometimes you gotta break some eggs. "We're not gonna make Tony Montana a generic videogame psycho killer just for the sake of doing it," adds Wanat. "If the player is allowed just to kill random peo-

ple, well that's not Tony Montana. Go play a dozen other s***ty videogames that let you kill anybody you want." Oh, he did not just say that!

Talk dirty

So you can't slaughter the general public, but you sure can verbally abuse the holy f***ing hell out of 'em. You've got two dialogue buttons to choose from in any situation—one gives a "provoke" response (also known as the "f*** you button"), the other a "nice" response. And when Tony wants to provoke, he goes all the way, spouting off lines like "you f***ing c***sucker," "f*** you, cabron," and the classic "you look like you haven't been f***ed in years" to poor, random folks just minding their own business on the streets of Miami. ("Hey, ease up on the lingo, gringo," was one passerby's response.) Who knows what Tony says when he's being nice—that feature hasn't been implemented yet. "Have a great f***ing day," maybe.

Players will use the provoke and nice dialogue options throughout the game when negotiating drug buys and dealing with informants or other characters. "You might have conversations with someone one way at one point in the game," says Wanat, "and come back to them at a different time with a different attitude, and it'll completely change the information you'll get." But Tony's potty mouth isn't just for idle chitchat—you can also use ➤

SAY HELLO TO MY STRIKINGLY SIMILAR FRIEND...

Scarface's Tony Montana, meet Vice City's Tommy Vercetti

	Checkered Past Ex-con getting a second chance in a life of crime	
	Career Working his way up from petty thug to big-time dealer	
	Favorite Attire Hawaiian shirt	
	Likes to Cruise The Miami strip	
	Favorite Hangout Hip '80s nightclub	



■ "I told you, nobody wears the red shirt/white pants combo but Tony f***ing Montana."

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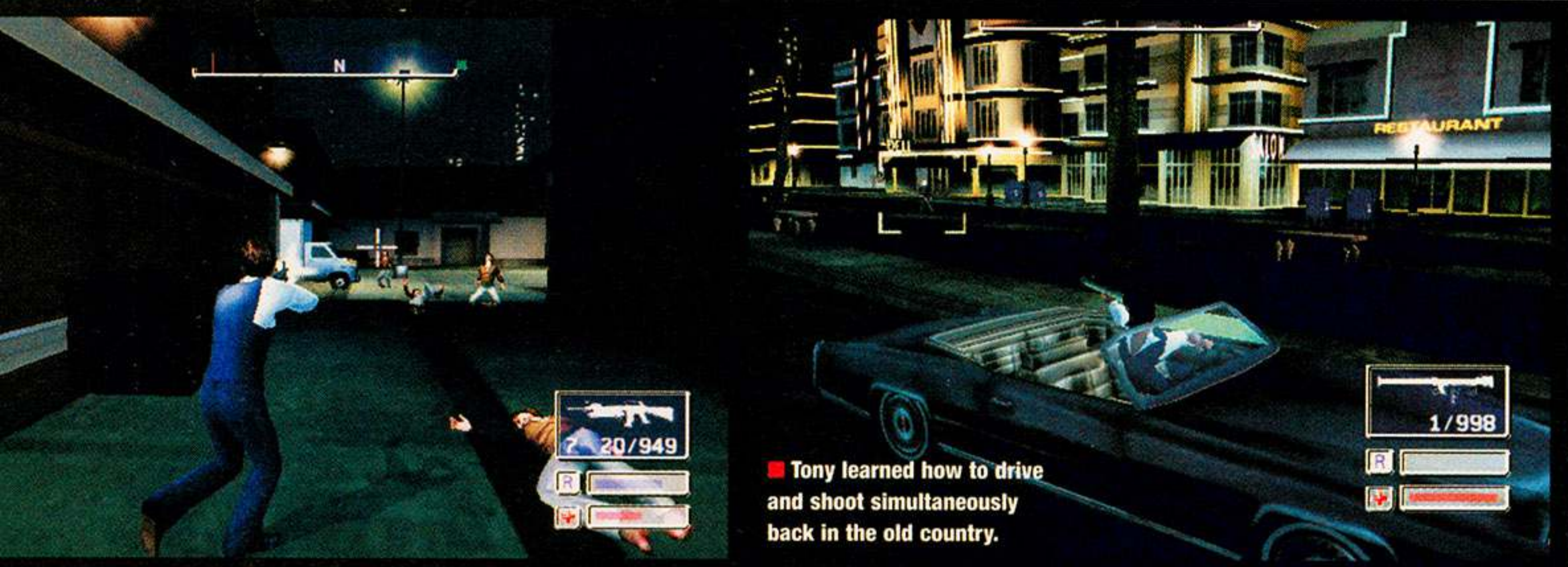


"Tony the Tiger would be tied up in Tony Montana's backyard and fed nothing but bran."

—Pete Low, designer, Radical Games



■ The publisher is still negotiating the celeb voice talent...but hey, Al Pacino did *Gigli*—work is work, eh?



■ Tony learned how to drive and shoot simultaneously back in the old country.

► the dialogue system during gun battles. Unleash a stream of swears and you may intimidate enemies into retreating, or try the nice approach to lure them out of cover positions...and into your crosshairs. Not that Tony relies much on head games when it comes to fightin'. "We look at Tony Montana in terms of on-foot combat—we call him the 'Cocaine Cowboy,'" says Low. "He goes into battles like a cowboy. He's not always looking for cover. He's not a sneaky character. He will walk into a room because he knows he's the best. He goes in with so much confidence...you should feel it." In one mission, Tony has to clear out dozens of gang members in a sprawling warehouse complex, often battling four or five at a time. Inspired by Tony's coke-fueled, bullet-riddled rampage at the end of the *Scarface* flick, Radical has translated this

near-invincibility into "rage mode." As Tony dishes out damage, his rage meter increases; once in rage mode, the normally third-person viewpoint snaps to first person, enemies move in super-slow-mo, and Tony can't be hurt (or he takes significantly less damage; the team is still tweaking the rage mode details). All the while, Tony spouts a steady stream of expletives—"Prepare to f***ing die!"—and impugns the reputation of his enemies' mothers.

Riding shotgun

Tony doesn't always play the lone cowboy, though. As a crime lord once again on the rise, he'll pick up a crew of henchmen during the course of the game. They'll help you through missions, defend your mansion, etc. "You can have one of your henchmen drive for you, and they'll

maneuver while you shoot," says Wanat, "or vice versa if you're one of those people who loves to drive. [But] this is Tony Montana—he's chauffeured around. You're gonna be picked up and driven places. Being in the back seat, making deals—[that's] really what a kingpin does."

Radical is hoping Tony's bloody, surreal pursuit of the American dream will resonate with—and shock—gamers as much as the original did two decades ago. "The one thing we will not do with *Scarface* is puss out," says Wanat. "We're not gonna puss out on the violence, we're not gonna puss out on dealing with the drugs, sex, whatever. Nobody wants to play a watered-down version. We will absolutely go to the most upsetting point, where people go 'uh....' And once we get there, we'll know we've hit our mark."

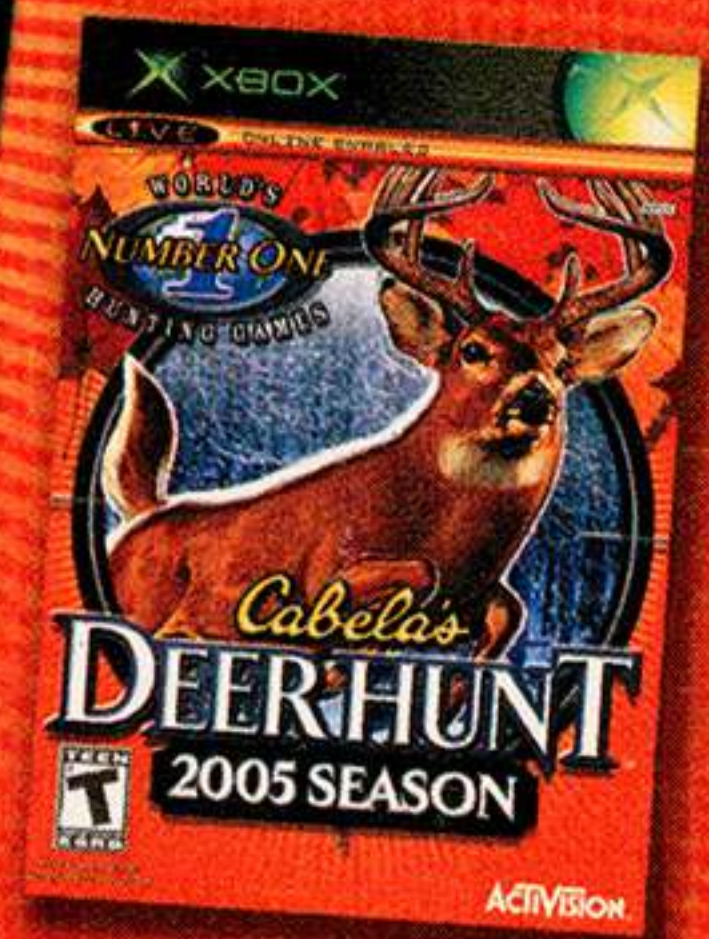


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**100%
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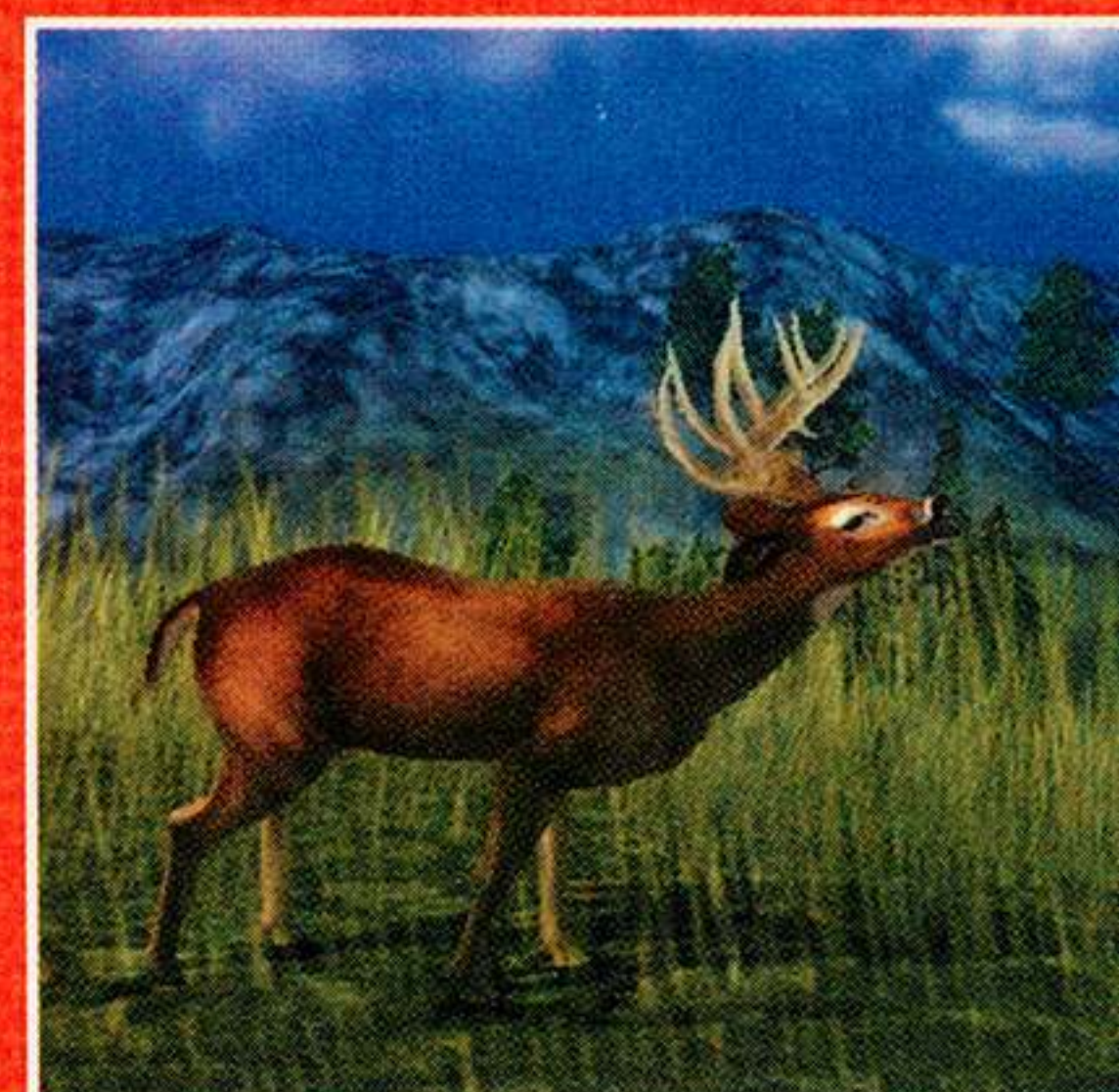
**100%
 ACTION**



2005 Season Opens Today!



Cabela's
DEER HUNT
 2005 SEASON



*Sales based on NPD, 2003-04 data

Available In Stores September 2004



XBOX
LIVE
 ONLINE ENABLED



PlayStation 2

ACTIVISION

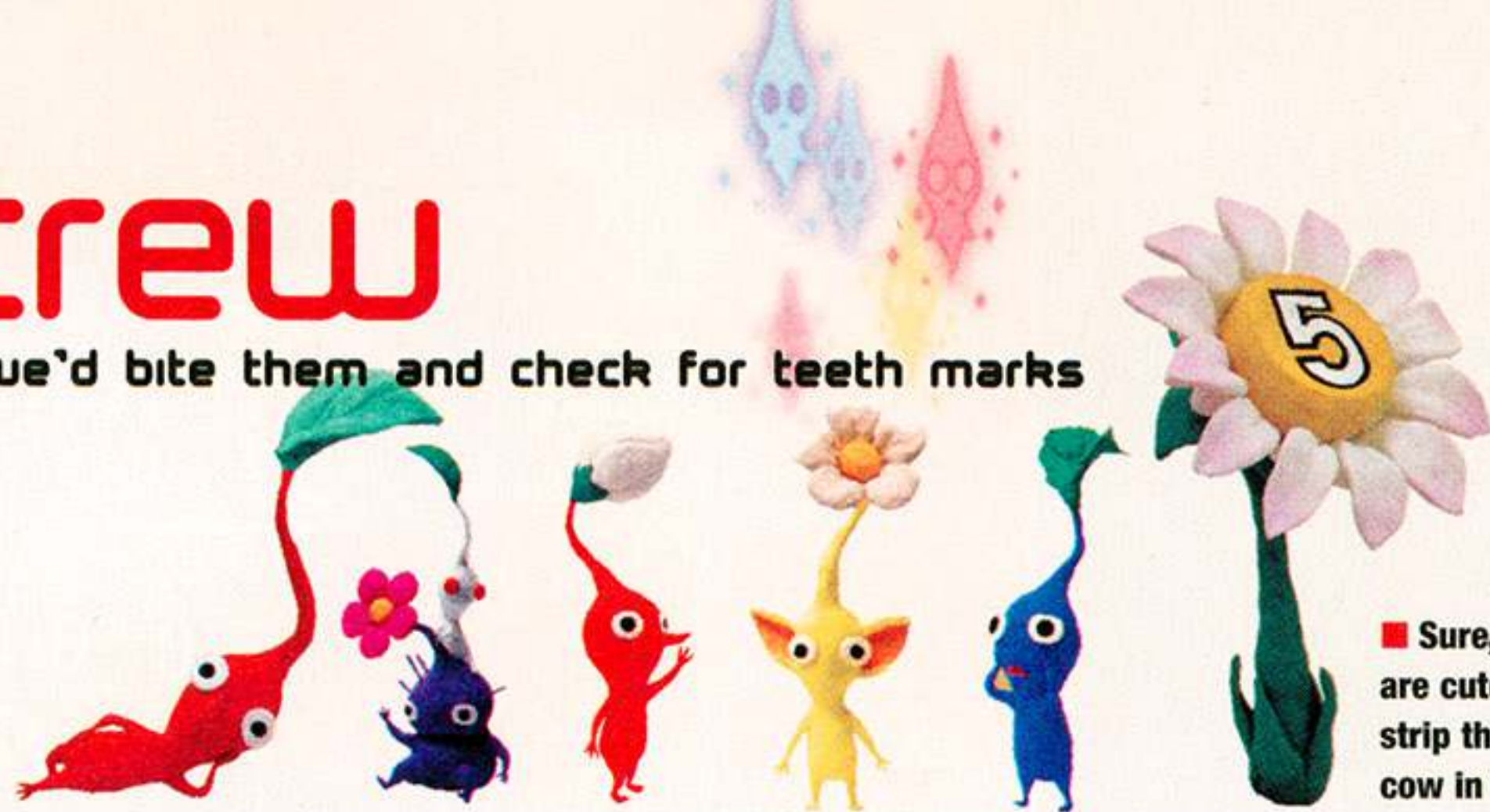


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review crew

if games were gold doubloons, we'd bite them and check for teeth marks



■ Sure, them pikmin are cute, but they'll strip the flesh off a cow in five seconds.

DIRECTORY

MULTIPLATFORM

- 96 Silent Hill 4: The Room
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- 104 Star Ocean: Till the End of Time
- 106 Astro Boy
- 106 Viewtiful Joe
- 108 Hot Shots Golf Fore!
- 108 Phantom Brave
- 110 Spy Fiction



■ *Silent Hill's* most disturbing monster yet—an undead hillbilly wearing coveralls.



■ PS2/XB

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

Haunted house party

FPS: First-Person Scarer
The first-person parts of *Room* are a new twist for the series—one that fans better get used to. Producer Akira Yamaoka says that “the next *Silent Hill* will probably be entirely from a first-person perspective.” Don’t get too scared—it’s years away, likely for PS3, Xbox 2, etc.

SHANE: The *Silent Hill* municipal tourism bureau demands that every horror game set in the town include a walking tour of rusty, fog-choked buildings, a conflicted protagonist with a mysterious past, and a nightmarish trip to a hospital packed with hideous monstrosities. *Silent Hill 4* toes the line. Sure, these elements provide some of the most artful scares in gaming, but will the series remain freaky if Konami keeps hitting the same dissonant note over and over? Thankfully, *Silent Hill 4* mixes up the staid formula by adding a cool new gameplay concept—like a stern parent, it sends you to your room.

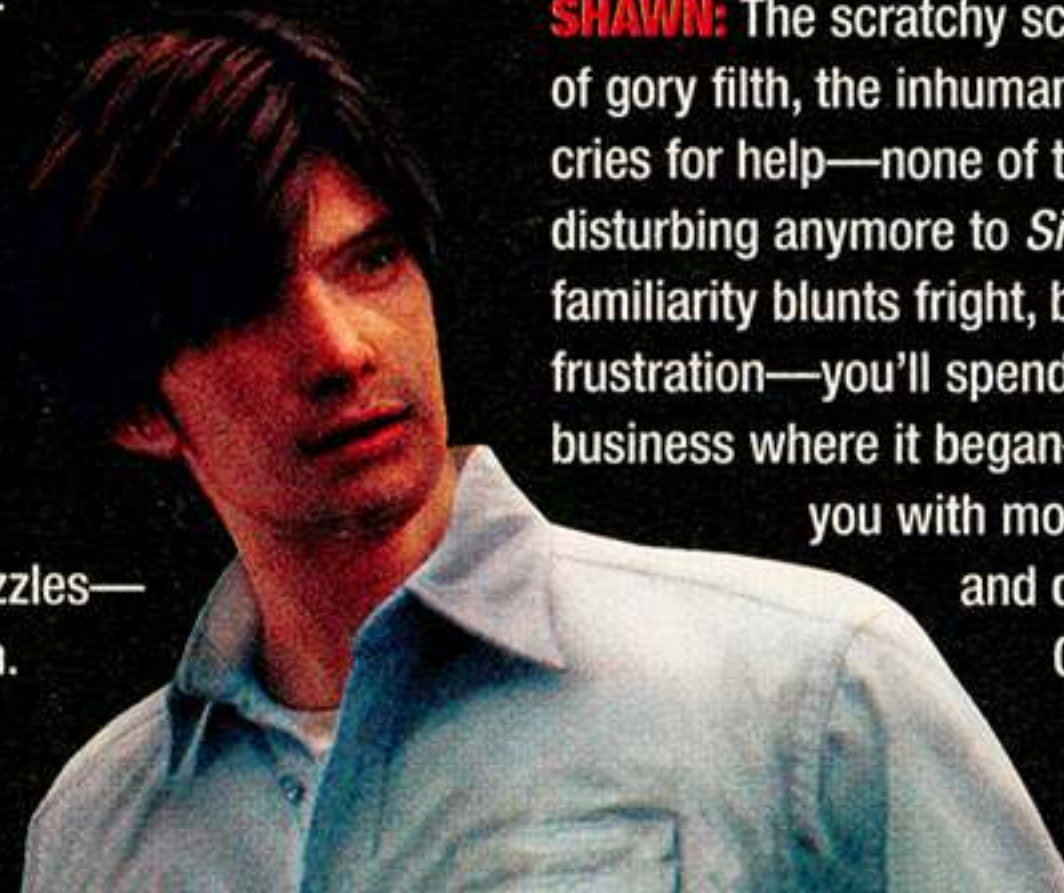
At the game’s outset, you wake to find your apartment utterly sealed off from the outside world. As you explore your small space from a

first-person perspective, a true sense of claustrophobia begins to set in. You can stare at neighbors across the way, peer through your peephole at passersby in the hallway, and even peep through a hole in the wall at the cutie living next door. This makes for surprisingly effective gaming, especially when your apartment starts to turn against you—the game’s most unsettling scares happen at home.

The rest of the game—traditional stages in which you thwack monsters with a crowbar and solve simple puzzles—feels a bit tired in comparison.

Arresting visuals and music make it worthwhile, but the slightly revamped combat remains clunky. Luckily, interweaving these bits with trips back to your room keep things fresh, so you’ll actually want to see it through to the grisly end.

SHAWN: The scratchy screen filters and corridors of gory filth, the inhuman horrors and half-heard cries for help—none of these things are as disturbing anymore to *Silent Hill* vets. Where familiarity blunts fright, backtracking leads to frustration—you’ll spend half the time finishing business where it began—but *The Room* menaces you with more than multipart puzzles and death in dark places. Gazing through your





THE RATING SYSTEM

0-4.5
BAD

5.0-6.5
FAIR

7.0-10
GOOD

At *EGM*, we evaluate only games that have been deemed final and reviewable by their publishers. Three editors rate each game independently, and we use the whole scale. **5.0 IS AVERAGE.**

AWARDS



Platinum — straight 10s. For games that are life-changing.



Gold — for games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.



Silver — for games with a mean score of 8.0 or higher.



The highest-scoring game each month gets a star.



The lowest-rated game with unimously bad scores.

XBOX

- 110 Guilty Gear X2 #Reload
- 111 Sudeki

GAMECUBE

- 112 Pikmin 2
- 114 Amazing Island

ESRB KEY (Also check out www.esrb.com)

E-Everyone: Saccharine fun for the whole family; dancing elves, rampant sharing, and possibly Smurfs.

T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies, Teen games often feature fisticuffs, mild violence, and madcap antics.

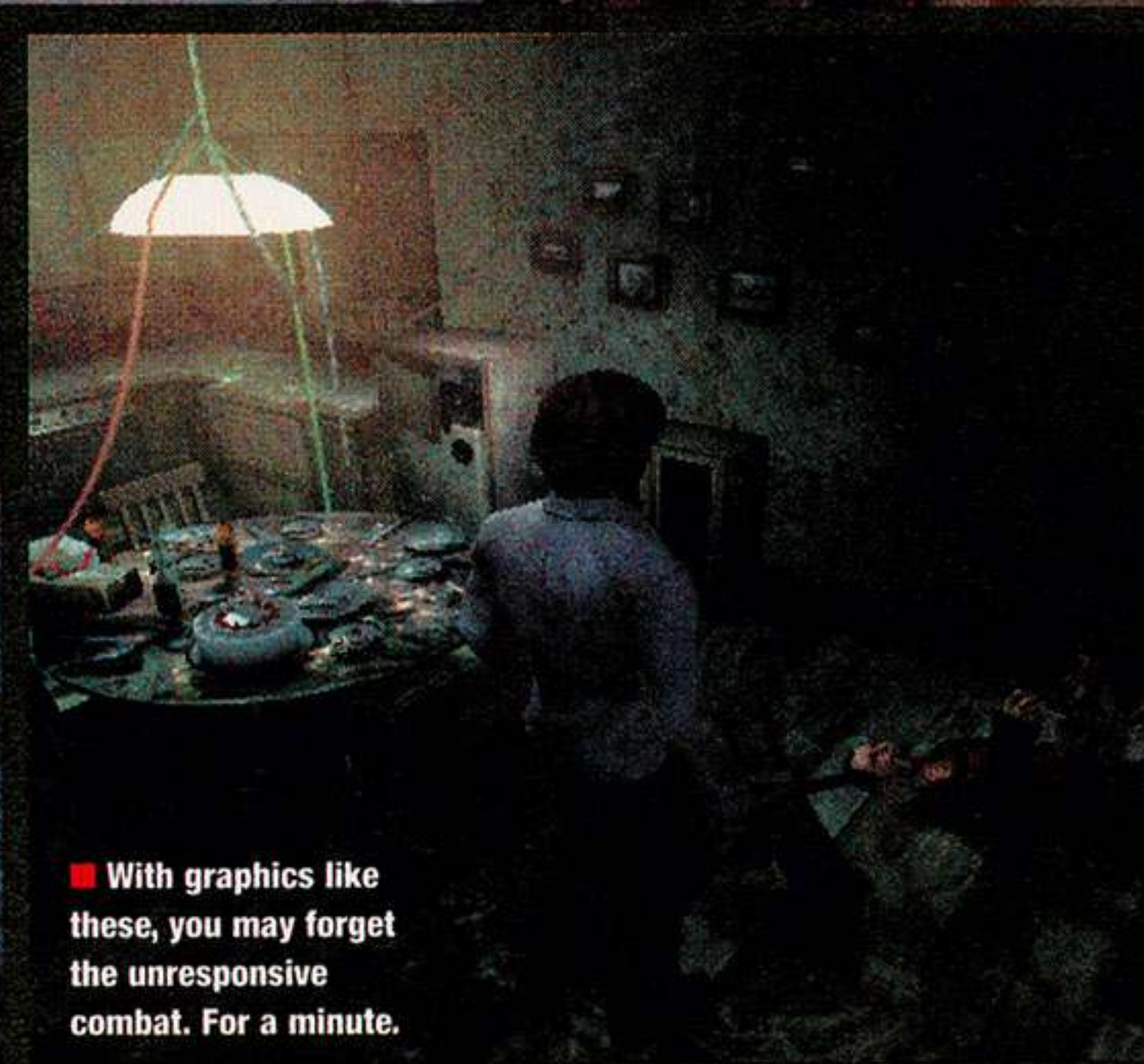
M-Mature: For the 18-and-over crowd. Intense violence, gore, pixelated sex, drugs; parents no likey.



■ Room is full of "Don't go in there!" moments like this one....



■ This is what a Mature rating looks like, kids.



■ With graphics like these, you may forget the unresponsive combat. For a minute.



apartment's windows, glimpsing ordinary life as it goes on outside, makes your cabin fever that much more intense. It also introduces a cerebral angle to a genre that's left little to the imagination and makes it all the more unnerving as the hell on the other side of the hole in your wall closes in.

JON D: Compared with *Resident Evil* going online, *Silent Hill*'s retooling feels a lot

more successful. It's nothing drastic; the guts are the same. But *Hill*'s branched out of the usual edifices to more inventive indoor and outdoor scenarios linked by your apartment hub, which keeps the story centered and more cohesive than before. Creepy-as-hell enemies show more variety and are finally smart—they won't just walk into your iron pipe on the downstroke like the mindless mannequins of *Hills* past. But

with limited health and ammo around, avoidance is consistently the best weapon, which means you've few chances to even appreciate the new fighting mechanic.

While the spotty action and dearth of bosses and puzzles make *The Room* my least favorite *Silent Hill* title, some series fans will certainly find its new format refreshing. It's worth buying or renting to find out. **A-**



Good: Fantastic visuals, totally creepy atmosphere
Bad: Repetitive areas, clumsy combat
Preorder Bonus: Cool, remixed soundtrack CD



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

7.5
SHANE

7.5
SHAWN

7.5
JON D.

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Konami Tokyo
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.konami.com



■ Your *NASCAR* career starts with the Craftsman Truck Series, the Milwaukee's Best of oval racing.

prev lap
lap time 18.350
best lap

DRAFT
149 mph
7559 RPM

■ PS2/XB/GC

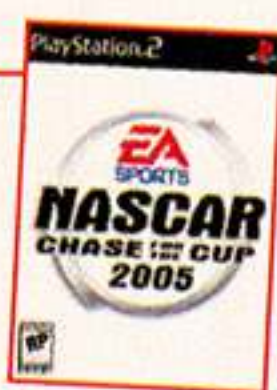
ONLINE
(PS2/XBOX ONLY)



NASCAR 2005: CHASE FOR THE CUP

Who knew pole-sitting could be this fun?

Good: Postrace confrontations
Bad: Getting booed by the crowd
Wish It Had: Full-field online races



DAN L: Deep down, NASCAR fans have to face the dirty, shame-faced truth: Their sport is built on a series of never-ending left-hand turns. Newcomers like me have a tough time getting up to, ahem, speed on what a dynamic sport this is. But EA Sports has retooled its *NASCAR* franchise in hopes of making it more accessible to your average car nut, and it definitely is.

Longtime fans will surely notice the eye-catching new street races, which steal a bit from EA's megapopular *Need for Speed* series. These unsanctioned showdowns only add to the drama that fuels the best male soap opera this side of the WWE. Heroes are crowned, villains twist the ends of their mustaches, and grudges are held. *NASCAR 2005's* career mode unfurls around you, draws you in, and keeps you coming back.

If it's just racing you want, well, *NASCAR 2005* has plenty of horsepower under the hood. Great car handling, savvy A.I., and an enormous amount of trackside detail kick this game into high gear.

KEVIN: There's something oddly engrossing about the career mode in *NASCAR*.

New race series are great additions, yes, but the real draw is undoubtedly the violence. Sure, you can become a "hero" by making clean passes and helping pensioners across the street, but in practice, it's far easier (and more fun) to run cars off the track, get in fights, and be the baddest overweight, mustachioed Kentuckian you can possibly be. There are some potholes—the graphics get choppy at times, and the retail-car challenges seem tacked on—but the sheer variety is something that even non-NASCAR fans will find addictive.

PATRICK: Bah! Dan, NASCAR is so much more than just driving in circles, and *NASCAR 2005's* major revamp conveys that from the moment you start the game—smack-dab in the middle of a street race with NASCAR's Ryan Newman. OK, so maybe that's not realistic, but it is cool. Beat him, join his modified racing team, and you're off and driving in the career mode. Last year's *Grudges and Alliances* feature goes a step further with this year's heroes and villains—what'll it be, good guy or bad?



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	8.0	9.0
	DAN L.	KEVIN	PATRICK

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: PS2/XB 1-2 (2-4 online), GC 1-2
ESRB: Everyone

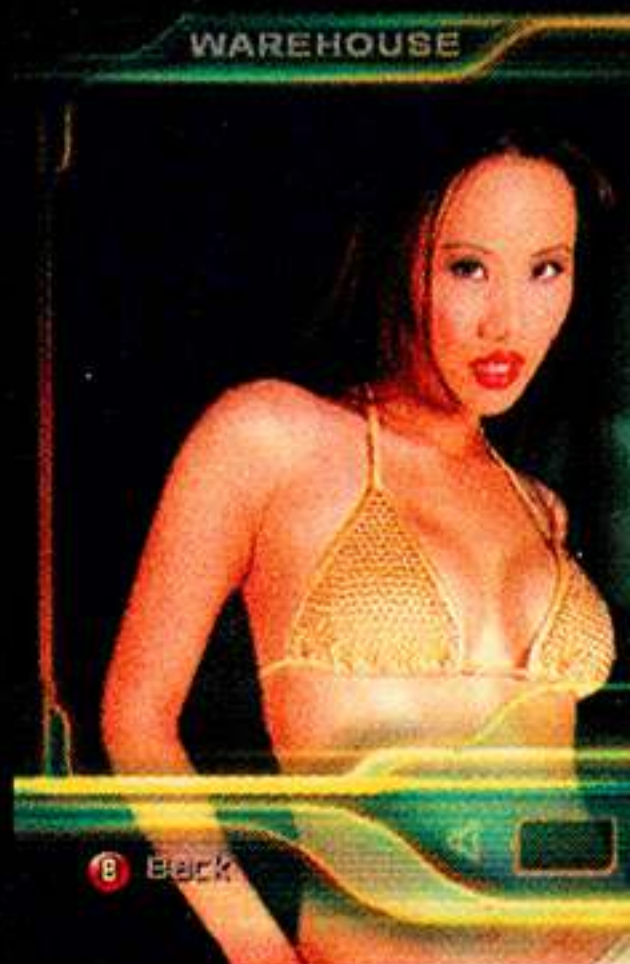
www.easports.com

■ PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE
(PS2/XBOX ONLY)

STREET RACING SYNDICATE

Cars and chicks—the American way



■ Whoever thought it'd be cool to win "girlfriends" has problems.

Good: Deeper than *Need for Speed Underground*
Bad: Almost the same game as *Need for Speed Underground*
So Why Not Wait For: *Need for Speed Underground 2?*



KEVIN: Some games just can't get a break. Despite its eerie resemblance to *Need for Speed Underground*, *Street Racing Syndicate* actually predates EA's runaway hit by several months. Publishing snags kept *SRS* from coming out first, though, and the result is a racer that's still solid but lacks *Underground's* freshness.

SRS does manage to do many things right—for example, the freely explorable cityscapes. Unlike in *Underground*, you can go around town at will in search of pickup races, sanctioned matches, cop chases, and hot female car groupies. There's a far deeper selection of custom parts (although it'll bewilder the casual crowd), and the online play includes a mode in which you actually race for other players' rides, which is way more gratifying than jumping from 10,485th to 10,484th in the world rankings.

It's not that the graphics are poor, either, or that the driving (which is a bit more sim-oriented than most street racing games) is subpar. It's just that you have seen or will see nearly everything *SRS* has to offer in *Underground*, which makes it difficult to get very enthusiastic about such a similar title. I'd recommend it for street-racer nuts, but for others, it'll serve mainly as a time killer before *Underground 2's* November launch.

G. FORD: If *Need for Speed Underground* and *Midnight Club II* are the tuning genre's trademark pill, then *SRS* is the generic, FDA-approved equivalent. It does what it's supposed to—it looks decent, controls

well, features a solid open-city format, and has a variety of multiplayer and online options—yet it still feels substandard. This may be because it does nothing to pull ahead of the year-old pack, nor does it match the visceral thrills offered by the aforementioned games. And, well, unlocking girls and videos of them bouncing around to the droning soundtrack doesn't close that gap.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOHN D: Boob-related gimmicks aside, *SRS* is a competent and feature-packed game, but my fellow reviewers called it—*SRS* just lacks the certain something that made *Underground* so exciting. It's disappointing, because *SRS* covers all the bases except for the two most important in this genre: There's no real sense of speed, and the handling lacks weight or feel. The result is more like driving an RC car around a game packed with unrealized opportunity. There are some great ideas, particularly in the online game, but with *Underground 2* on the way and *Burnout 3* already here, *SRS* doesn't quite have what it takes.



■ You'll have to avoid not just the other racers, but Sunday drivers, too.

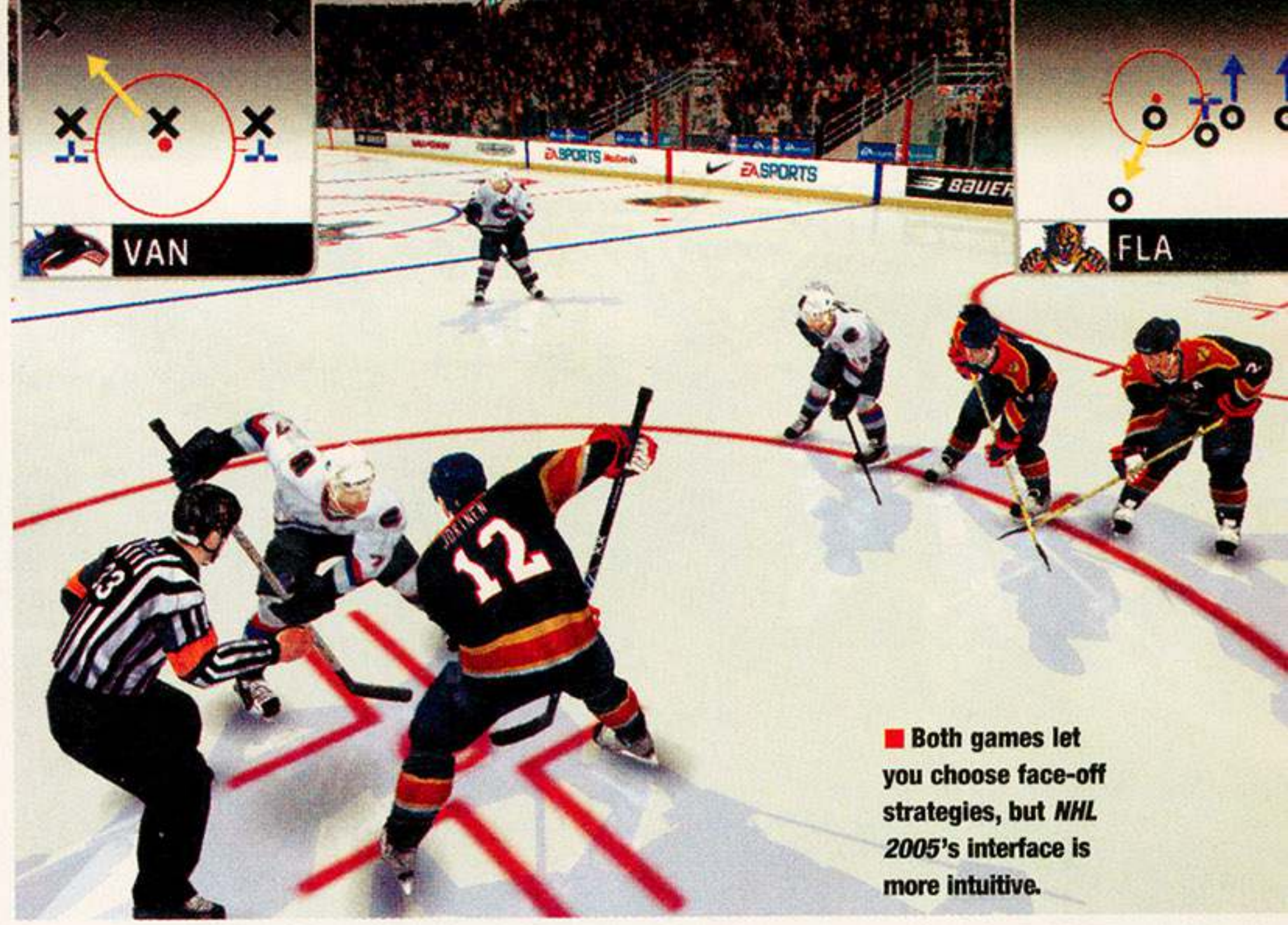
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	6.0	6.0
	KEVIN	G. FORD	JOHN D.

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Eutechnyx
Players: 1-2 (1-4 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.namco.com



Both games are online for PS2 and Xbox, but only ESPN (above) lets players organize leagues.



Both games let you choose face-off strategies, but NHL 2005's interface is more intuitive.

PS2/XB

ONLINE (PS2/XB)



ONLINE (PS2/XB)

PS2/XB/GC

ESPN NHL 2K5 VS. NHL 2005

It's getting a little chippy out there

DEMIAN: Though the real NHL season may not even happen, what with the lockout, nothing can stop the videogame puck from dropping. Both ESPN and EA Sports have opted to tweak their rosters rather than rebuild, but we'll get to the details in a minute—the important question is, which has the best gameplay?

DAN L: For me, the big thing is feeling like I'm actually on the ice. ESPN's physics and skating put me there. NHL 2005 is too stiff compared with the flow in 2K5.

BRYAN: Flow? NHL 2005's skaters have no flow, 'cause they're always lying out on the ice from hit after hit—just like last year. I know hockey is a rough game, but c'mon, I like to control the puck for more than two seconds before picking up my teeth.

DEMIAN: I'm all for a tough defense, but it should be tough because it plays smart, not because your team has been knocked on its collective ass. ESPN, on the other hand—it doesn't have enough checking.

BRYAN: Well, ESPN did try to make it a

more physical game, as you can now use the right analog stick for "intense contact" moves—such as slashes and dirty checks.

DEMIAN: Remember that time you were on a breakaway, and—

BRYAN: Here it comes.

DEMIAN: —and I whacked you with a two-handed slash at the last second and you couldn't get the shot off? That was awesome. But then I got called for a penalty, so that made it less awesome.

DAN L: The "intense contact" stuff is great. Kudos to ESPN for borrowing EA Sports' "hit stick" concept and making it better.

DEMIAN: I might have deserved the slashing call, but in general, I have to say that ESPN is really penalty happy. It's the first game that tries to call interference when you obstruct another player, but it also sometimes calls penalties on totally innocuous plays. You'll want to crank the interference, spearing, and elbowing penalty sliders way down...

BRYAN: ...and crank them way up in NHL 2005. Too many times, the third period ends without a single infraction called. That's not very realistic—this is the NHL, not the Swedish Elite league!

DEMIAN: But ESPN's franchise mode, which borrows a lot from NHL 2004's comprehensive franchise setup last year, makes me think that sports games can actually get a little *too* realistic. The contract negotiations are amazingly tedious, and the all-new, off-season scouting stuff is incredibly in-depth. The near-endless cavalcade of menu screens made my eyes glaze over.

BRYAN: Agreed. But I do bang my stick on the ice to ESPN for trying to beef up its franchise offerings. NHL 2005's dynasty mode is pretty much just like 2004's, except now you're updated on your team's progress via e-mail. Woo.

DAN L: ESPN's party mode is all-new, at least. These multiplayer minigames feel kind of Mario Party-esque, and though most are pretty wacky, they are a nice change of pace and also help build key gameplay skills.

BRYAN: Yeah, ESPN's minigames make it nearly impossible to leave the frozen pond, especially since a slew of them are playable online. Sah-weet. NHL 2005, however, is a one-trick pony; its lone Free-4-All minigame (in which four players fight for the puck and try to score) gets old fast.

DEMIAN: Enough with the fluff minigames. Back at the NHL arena, I have to give ESPN the big edge in presentation—it does a better job at capturing that "Hockey Night" feel, and announcers Gary Thorne and Bill Clement are way better than those NHL 2005 dudes. (Thorne and co. have stopped babbling about "shoulder hits," too—last year's oddly favorite topic.)

Another season, another victory to ESPN NHL—which is now just \$20! How long before we're talkin' dynasty here?

NHL 2005 has a new wrap-around shot—problem is, it scores about 50 percent of the time.



The close-up, picture-in-picture face-off cam in ESPN NHL is a nice touch.

ESPN NHL 2K5			
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.5	8.0
	DEMIAN	BRYAN	DAN L.

Publisher: ESPN Videogames
Developer: ESPN Videogames
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multitap, 2-8 online), XB 1-4 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.espnvideogames.com

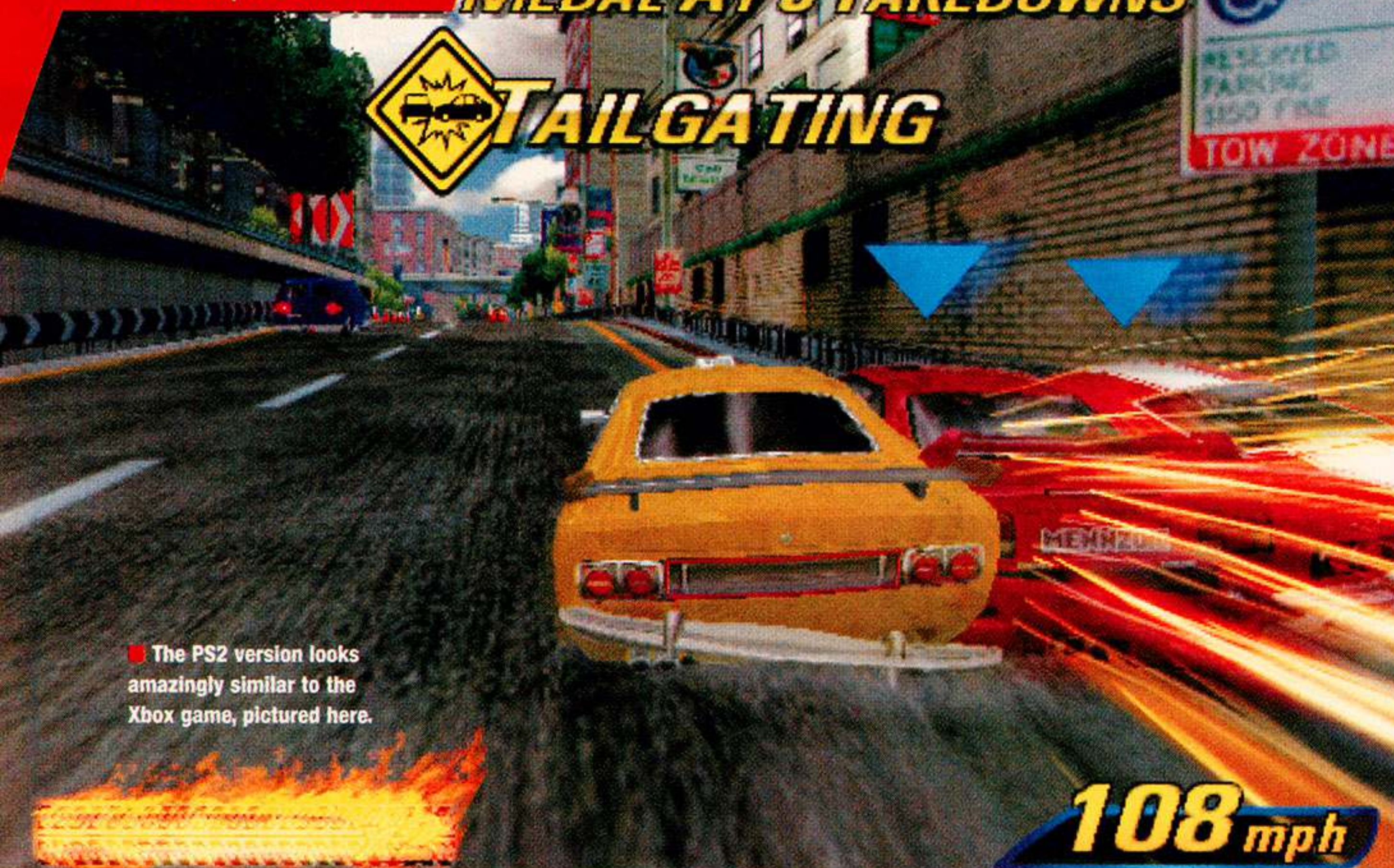
NHL 2005			
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	6.0	7.0
	DEMIAN	BRYAN	DAN L.

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multitap, 2 online), XB 1-4 (1-2 online), GC 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

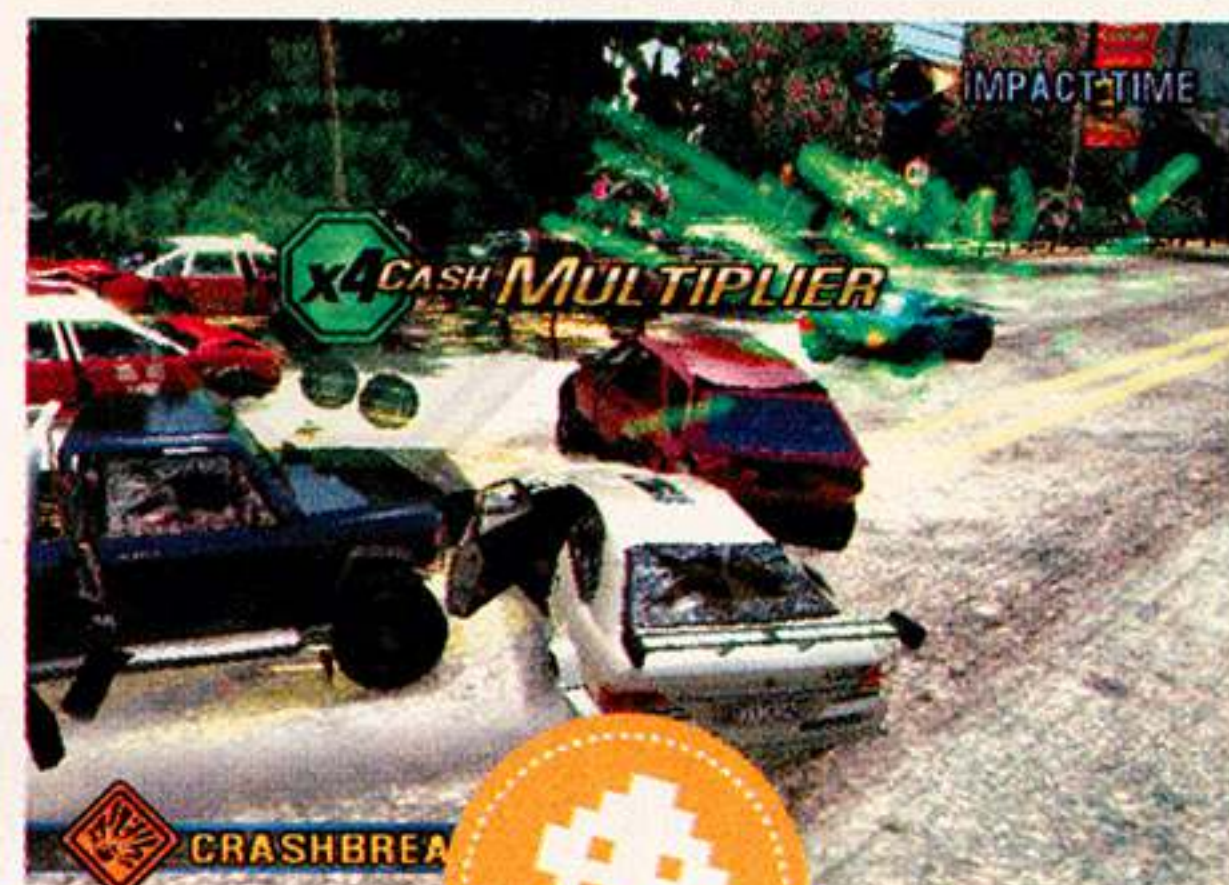
www.easports.com

MEDAL AT 3 TAKEDOWNS

TAILGATING



The PS2 version looks amazingly similar to the Xbox game, pictured here.



PS2/XB

ONLINE
(PS2/XBOX ONLY)

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN



Tune in, turn on, burn out

DEMIAN: Crunched-up cars glide through the air in super-slow-mo, accompanied by a dull roar and the tinkling of shattered glass. It's like car accident porn, or how David Cronenberg's movie *Crash* might have been if it hadn't sucked so bad.

And then, miraculously, my car is hurtling down the road again and time is suddenly going three times faster than normal. Weave around head-on traffic, punch the boost to really get nuts, slide through a series of superfast bends...and then broadside a Winnebago, triggering a five-car pile-up. *Burnout 3: Takedown's* racing is amazingly frenetic, and its frequent crashes cataclysmic.

There is no gear-ratio tweaking. No credits to hoard, no neon to buy, no sprawling city to free-roam around. Just pure arcade racing with simple controls (hold the gas, tap the brake to slide, and don't forget the boost button) that's so good, you never miss all that other stuff. Well, OK, *sometimes* I wish for a little more depth, but I'm a sim-racing freak. Normal people will be too busy having a blast to notice.

Rubber-band A.I., frequent loading (PS2 especially), and no onscreen map—which would be especially helpful in some of the online battle modes (see sidebar)—are the only bumps in an otherwise smooth, twisty, and really fast road.

SHAWN: Forget about tuning and tweaking in *Takedown*. The tenacity to ram your rivals and a sixth sense for finding a safe route through the snarled mass of sparking steel and smoking rubber are all that matters now that the contact motorsport is as mind-blowing as the second

Matrix movie's freeway free-for-all.

This is by far the best *Burnout* yet, and simulators aside, it's the rawest, most rewarding racer your buck can buy. While the pimple-pop-rock soundtrack shoves shoddy tunes on you instead of letting you handpick songs from your hard drive (Xbox), the courses are sensational, the speed is staggering, and the smashes spectacular. Rubberneck, it's all right—bunched up and barreling through busy intersections at breakneck speed, you were almost part of the roadside attraction.

BRYAN: *Takedown* is hell on wheels—and I just can't stop sinnin'. *Burnout 3* blows the doors off its predecessors with blisteringly fast online play,

a massive single-player mode lousy with unlockables, and all the right gameplay tweaks.

With boost available at any time (assuming you've still got some juice), you're never that far out of first place, and strategically steering your car in slow-mo during a crash-tacular fender bender—the better to sideswipe your competitors—is pure genius. Plus, new effects like the blinding glare of the sun and smoke-filled intersections add to the tension of pushing 175 mph in your manly man's muscle car, weaving in and out of traffic like a professional stunt racer (or an idiot). If you really have a need for speed, don't bother waiting for EA's *Underground* sequel—get burned out here.

Bump and Run

Online or off, *Burnout 3* packs multiplayer pile-ups aplenty. While straightforward races to the finish are twice as fun with five friends (Xbox's cleaner voice chat gives its version a slight lead on PS2's), the more interesting modes reward foul play. Just don't bother strapping in; you're going through the windshield, seat and all.

Road Rage Online

Objective: A hunted team races for the finish line as hunters attempt to ram 'em off the road for a rewarding, fiery finale.
Our multipoint inspection says: The reason to take the race online.



Team Crush

Objective: Cooperate to cause collateral damage in congested intersections.
Our multipoint inspection says: Short and sweet, but you still spend more time watching than behind the wheel.



Road Rage Splitscreen

Objective: Be the first to trash a set number of computer-controlled cars.
Our multipoint inspection says: Reckless and unrelenting action for the gamer with a sluggish (or no) Internet connection.



Good: The best arcade racer since...jeez...

Bad: Our eyes hurt. Because of the not blinking

Relevant Simpsons Quote: Somebody get the jaws of life!



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

9.0

DEMIAN

9.5

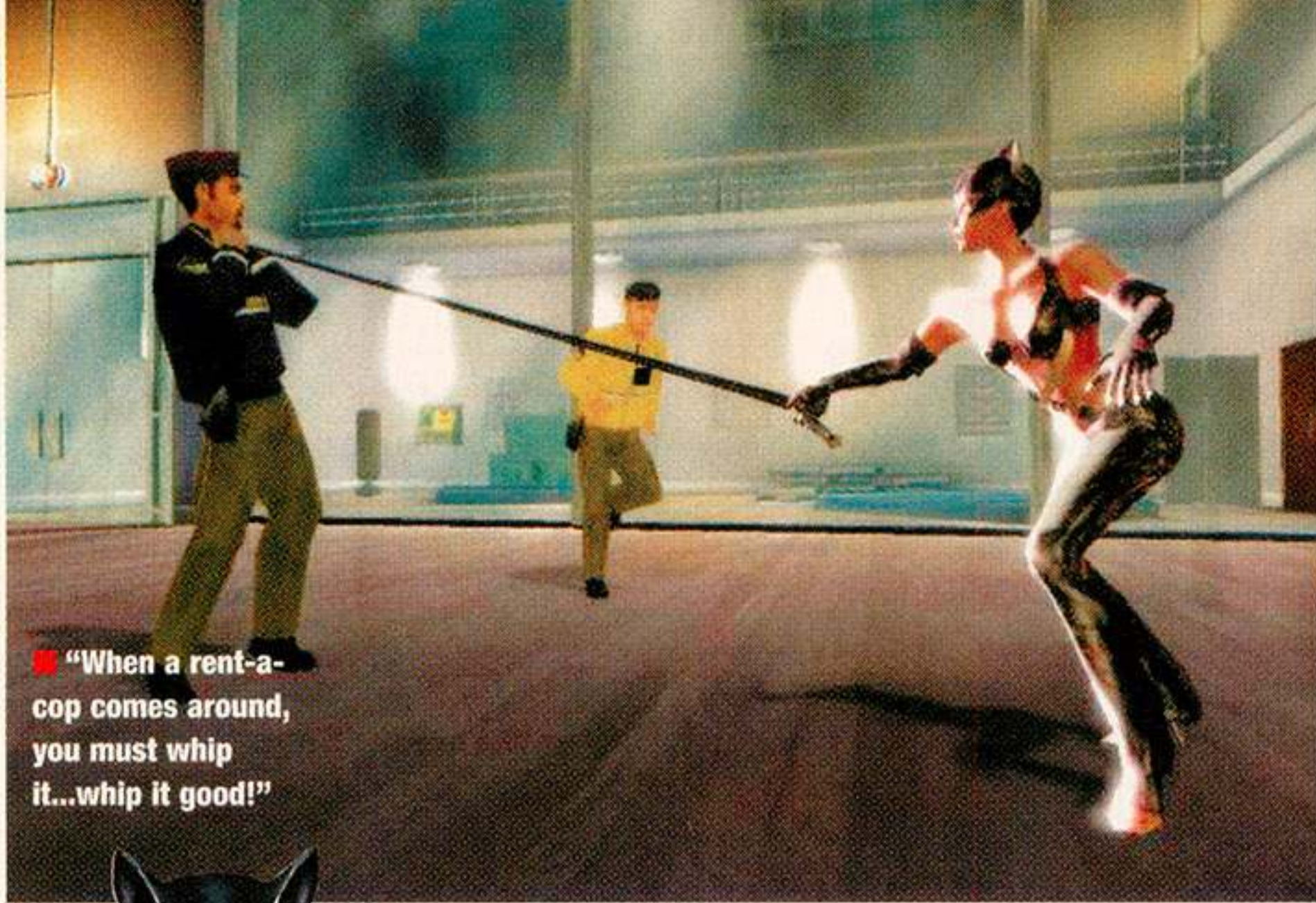
SHAWN

9.0

BRYAN

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Criterion
Players: 1-2 (2-6 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.eagames.com



■ "When a rent-a-cop comes around, you must whip it...whip it good!"



■ PS2/XB/GC

CATWOMAN

Kiddy litter



Kick the guard into the dumpster to create an escape route!

■ If you *don't* boot the guard into the dumpster, he'll assume you just suck and eventually jump in of his own accord.

Good: Soft visual sheen
Bad: Mangy gameplay
Halle Berry: Better off as *X-Men's Storm*



SHAWN: Soft lighting and slinky movement make this feline a fancy feast for the eyes, but she's flea-ridden under all the fluff. It's the unfaithful camera that keeps you from landing on your feet in the platforming parts. You're forced to leap for occluded ledges and, after you fall and fall again, work your way back to the same aggravating situation. Lousy as it is, the box office *Catwoman* has got the game licked, in that, unlike here, sitting through an hour guarantees you're that much closer to the credits.

Going at it on the ground is comical by comparison. Granted, the game's analog controls work well—just tap the stick toward whomever you want to hurt, and you'll shove a spiked heel in his head. Snaring a goon or stripping away his gun with a snap of your whip is fun, too, but there's a catch. Unless you toss 'em into trash bins or trunks, they'll just get back up, turning what should've been a scratching post of a city into so much tail chasing.

JON D.'S CAT, MR. HEAD: As a cat, I feel *Catwoman* really captured our species'

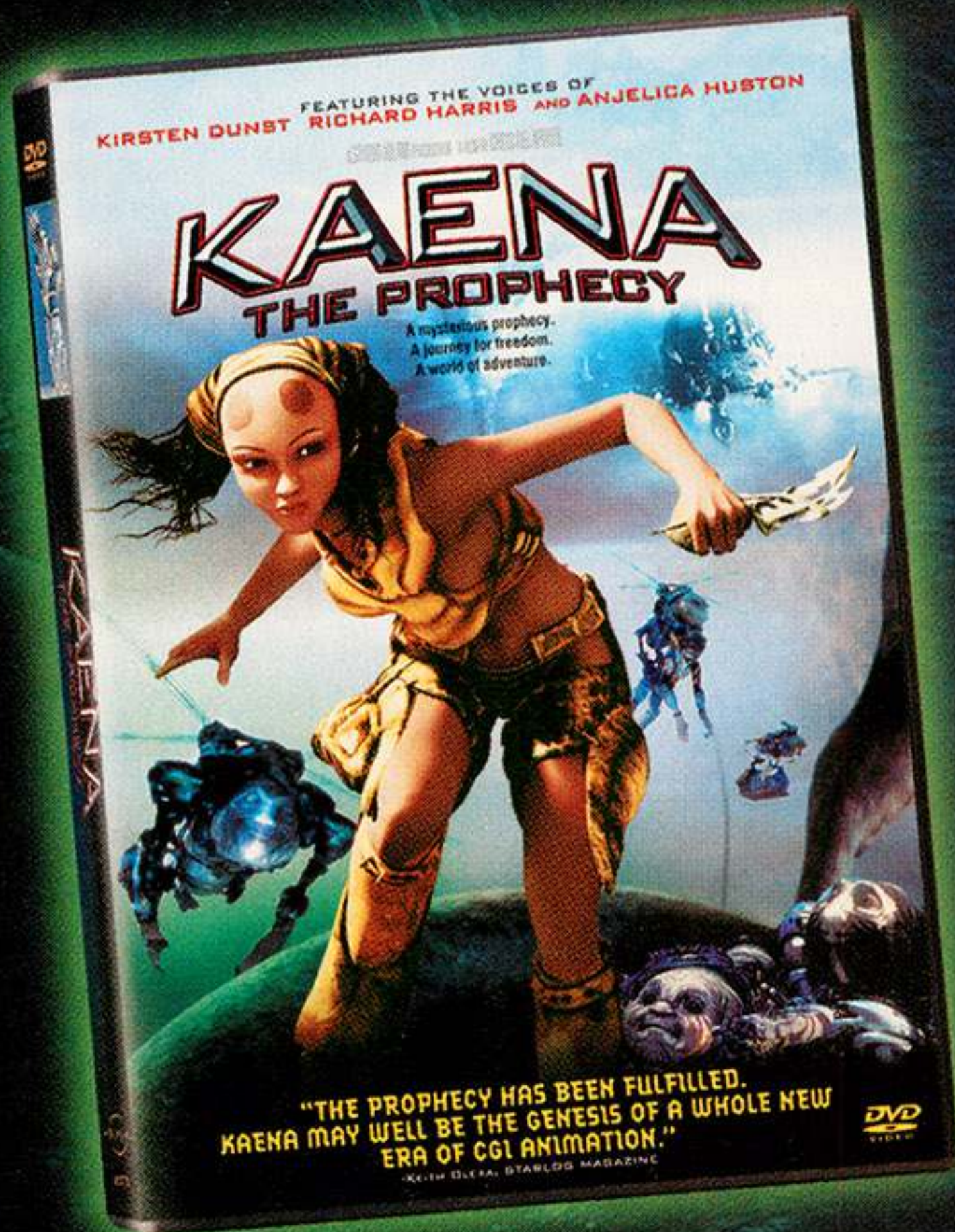
abilities and made them fun to use in a crime-fighting context. And that Catwoman...me-OW! But so high maintenance: I didn't feel the game ever left me free to satisfy my own curiosity—it had a prescribed way of getting to every ledge, dispatching every bad guy...I don't like being told what to do. And maybe it's just my botched declaw job, but I struggled endlessly to marry up the controls and confusing camerawork—used up at least nine lives on awkward misjumps alone.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: Shawn gently touches on how *Catwoman* is basically the imbecilic cousin of *Prince of Persia*. Besides the horrendous camera and controls, what irked me the most was how nonsensical it was. Its relentless linearity leads to jumping puzzles that make absolutely no sense (like jumping across factory machinery to get to the other side of the room, rather than, oh, climb up the short wall instead). The only "good" points are the prettiness and the rare chance of fighting a crazed Sharon Stone look-alike.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.5	5.5	2.0
	SHAWN	JON D.'S CAT	SCOOTER

Publisher: EA Games
 Developer: Argonaut
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.eagames.com



"A RICH REALM OF IMAGINARY FANTASY."

— DAVID E. WILLIAMS, CINEFANTASTIQUE MAGAZINE

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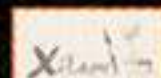
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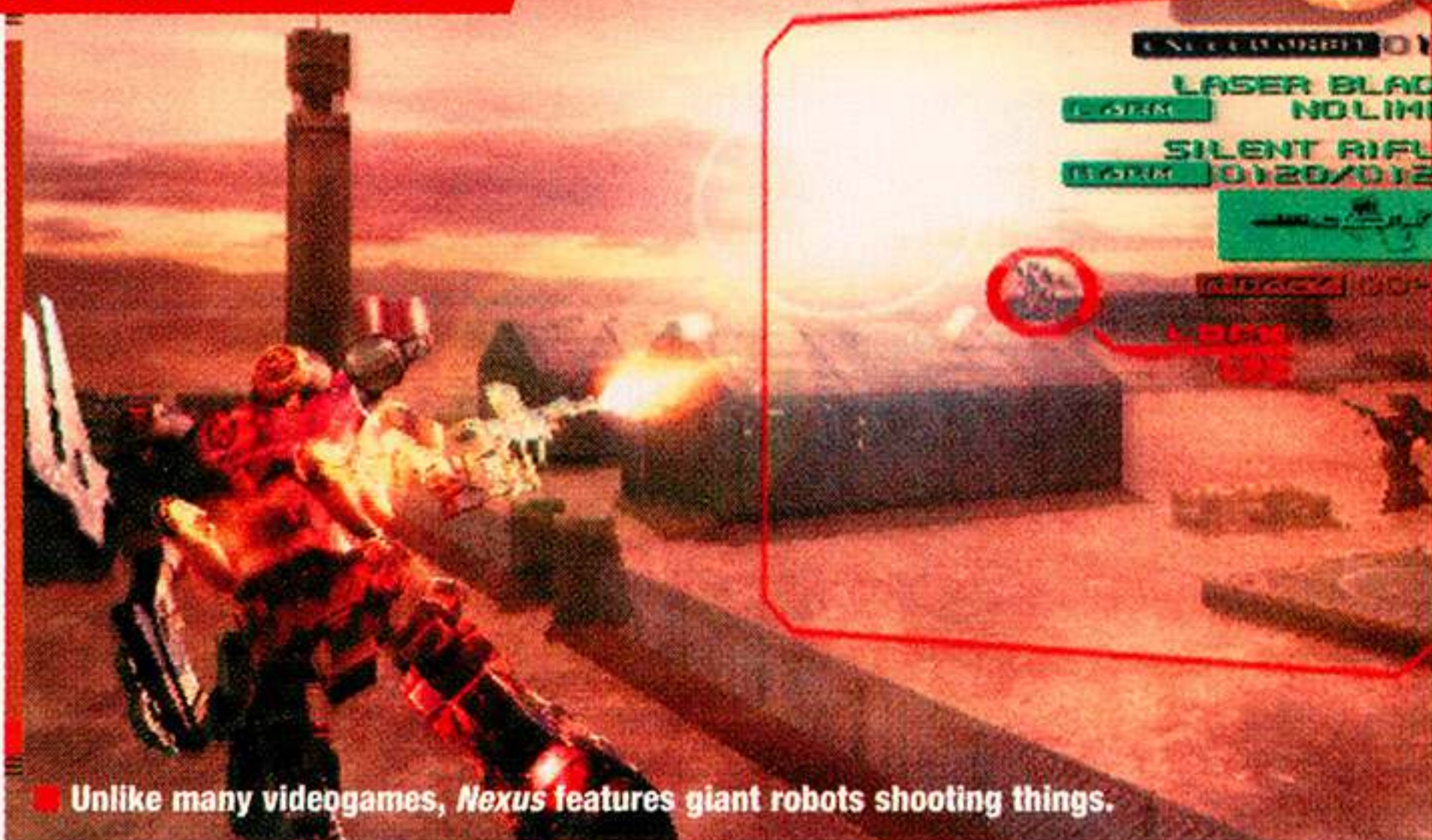
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Unlike many videogames, *Nexus* features giant robots shooting things.

PlayStation 2 ONLINE

ARMORED CORE: NEXUS

One more for the *Core* corps



OK, they finally improved the controls, now can someone please upgrade the graphics?

Good: Controls better than ever
Bad: Still ugly after all these years
For Core Heads: Bonus disc with plenty of *AC* beat-off material



JON D.: I'd like to think it was my bitching (*EGM* #169) that turned *AC3*'s cruddy button layout into *Nexus*' intuitive, pilot-friendly controls. But whatever the reason, this alleged "final game" in the *AC* series has worked out most every annoyance from the previous offerings.

Big-reward missions make it possible for you to shell out for upgrades early on, but *Nexus* is still difficult enough to prevent newbies from waltzing through the first third without managing their modifications properly. After all these *AC* games, though, even this latest model looks like it could've been a PS2 launch title—not a pretty game by any stretch of the imagination. And since I don't really get nostalgic about *Armored Core* (does anyone?), the bonus disc of music, art, and revamped stages from older games gave me little more than a place to set my drink. Hardcore fans will certainly appreciate this one; newcomers, try a rental.

G. FORD: *Nexus* is definitely one of those slow-burn good games. Based on my first hour, I was ready to send it off to the scrap

heap. It's no fun looking at a level description, arbitrarily guessing which upgrades to buy, and then getting your iron ass kicked in by a constant volley of locked-on lasers and missiles. But once you learn enough to outfit your mech to personal preferences (which quietly becomes quite addictive) and begin to effectively execute missions, *Nexus* can suck you in. Not great, but worth it for more patient mech-heads.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO: I say if you've played one *Armored Core*, you've played them all. *Nexus* has the same type of boring escort and seek-and-destroy missions as its predecessors, and the controls haven't lost their clunkiness, despite mild tweaks. But the customization aspects of *Nexus* are still pretty cool, since assembling a decent giant robot actually requires some thought. In fact, your journey to build the world's best battle robot is probably the single greatest motivating factor for plodding through *Nexus*' limp single-player experience or its mildly entertaining multiplayer modes.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	6.0	5.0
	JON D.	G. FORD	GIANCARLO

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: From Software
Players: 1-2 (2-4 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.agetec.com



PlayStation 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EMPIRES

Confucius say, overmilking kills the cash cow

Good: Strategy elements add depth to classic slasher gameplay...
Bad: ...But not enough
Kinda Fun: Study these famous battles before playing them out



JON D.: I was wondering how you organize a frenzied free-for-all like *Dynasty Warriors* into controlled, strategic battles. Turns out you really don't. You just throw that egghead stuff in between the melee warfare. Yes, the bulk of *Empires* is still foot-soldier fighting on a huge scale. But the twist-battle strategy curves the game throws in—take on temporary status effects, recoup numbers lost in battle, form alliances with other clans—make it a notch more interesting than any other *Dynasty* title.

Versus mode is a veritable who's who of obscure Asian military generals, if that does anything for you: Zhuge Liang, Xu Zhu...you know, all the crowd-pleasers. But the competitive games they play are just variations on the hack-it-up main game—about as much fun as memorizing ancient Chinese battle names. Stick with the Empire mode if you can endure the marathon of button-mashing.

SHOE: Got milk? Koei's certainly squeezed plenty out of its *Dynasty Warriors* franchise—and things are smelling sour.

Although the action's still decent in that mindless beat-em-up sorta way, *Empires* is nothing more than a cheap cash-in on a series that hasn't fundamentally changed in years. It adds a map-conquest mode that should offer deep strategy and role-playing elements—but deep it's not, so all you really get is the same button-mashing we've seen before.

Jon D. heaped scorn on the two-player mode, but I think it's actually more fun this time around, despite being really simple and straightforward.

KEVIN: *Empires* is to the original *Dynasty Warriors 4* what Hardee's is to Carl's Jr. They're virtually the same thing, but *Empire's* interface (a heavily cut-down version of Koei's own *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) makes it seem just a smidge different. *DW4* freaks like myself will enjoy it simply for the change of pace; seeing your empire gradually extend across the Asian continent with each battle is much more gratifying than slogging through yet another war without any context. Everyone else will ignore it, and rightly so.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.0	5.5	6.5
	JON D.	SHOE	KEVIN

Publisher: Koei
Developer: Omega Force
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

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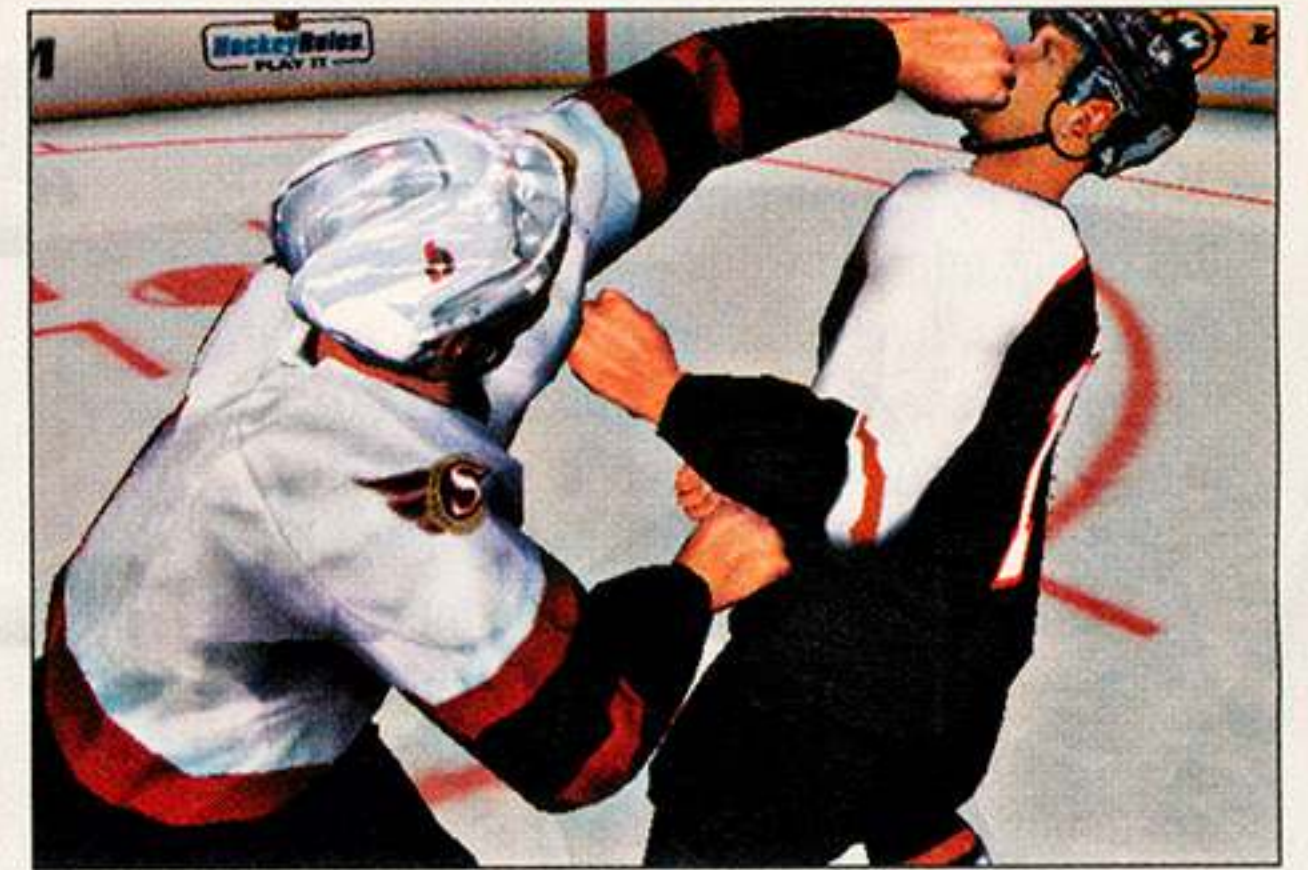
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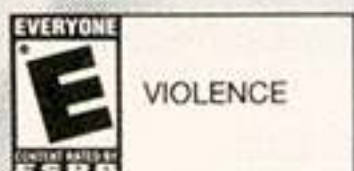
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PlayStation.2



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■ Haphazard collision detection often makes battles a pain.

	HP 3153		HP 3186		HP 1484
MP 148		MP 170		MP 338	
Guts 84%		Guts 100%		Guts 100%	



■ PlayStation 2

STAR OCEAN: TILL THE END OF TIME

Not quite stellar

SHANE: To anyone expecting *End of Time* to be some sort of *Final Fantasy*-meets-*Xenosaga* synergistic role-playing masterwork: Sorry guys, but...not so much. It is, however, a solid follow-up to *Star Ocean: The Second Story*, a second-tier PS1 RPG that, like this game, got a lot of things right while missing the mark in crucial ways.

An RPG lives or dies by its story line, and *Time*'s mostly succeeds: It begins as a celestial sci-fi romp but quickly devolves into fantasy fare when you crash-land on a primitive planet. Likable characters, intriguing morality issues, gorgeous cut-scenes, and a few flabbergasting (and oddly *Star Trek*-esque) plot twists push you onward.

Time also offers up some impressive geography: Hyperdetailed environments, from sprawling villages to deep caverns, make for excellent exploration. You'll backtrack through towns and fields quite a lot, but a good number of puzzle-laden labyrinths keep your adventure fresh.

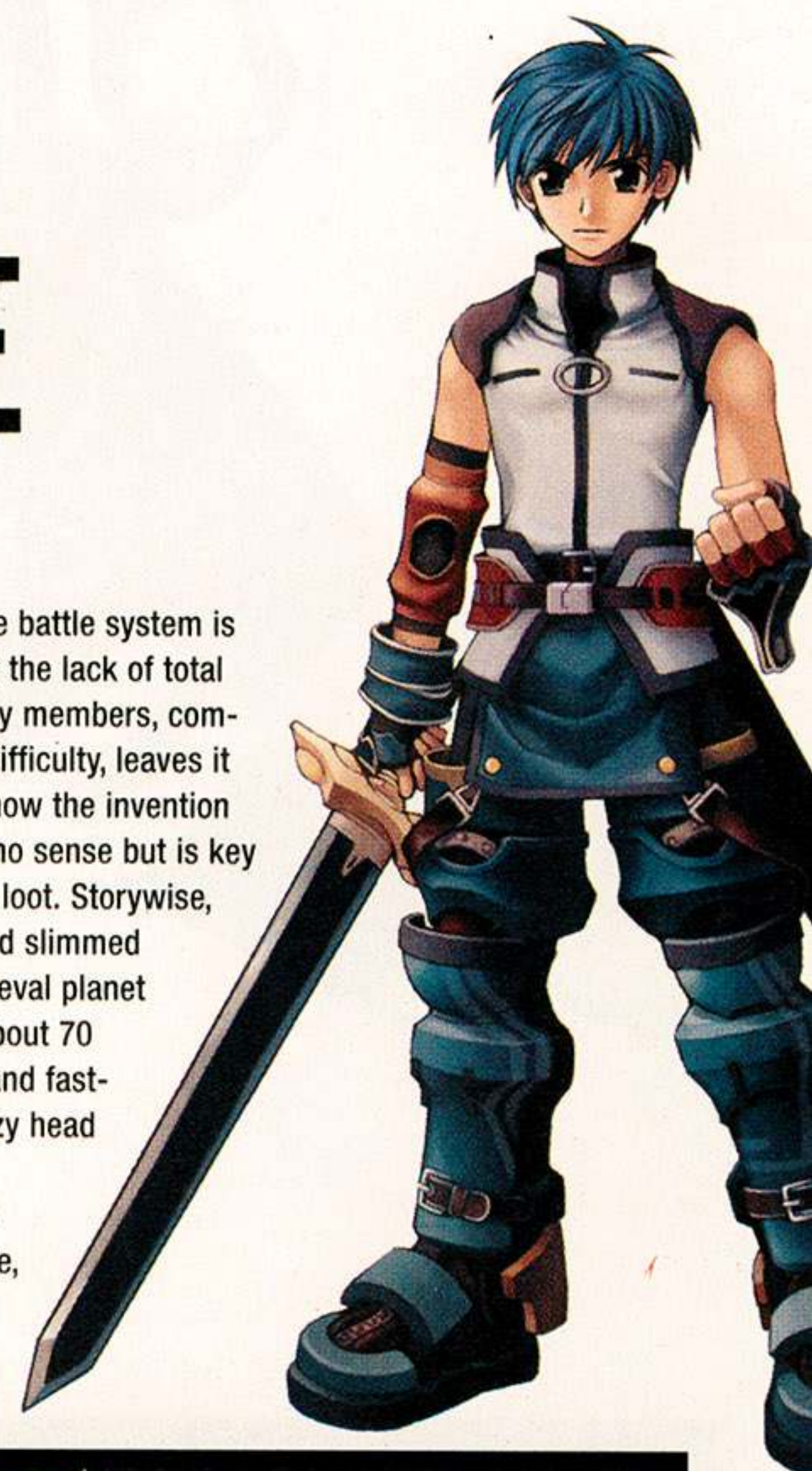
Trouble is, you have to fight your way through this lovely, gripping world—and the battle system kinda sucks. Real-time, action-packed combat can be fun (see *Tales of Symphonia* on GC), but here, shoddy collision detection and foolish A.I. spoil the fun. It's less a matter of skill and timing and more a guessing game, as you must patiently wait for your foes to stand up before hitting them again. You'll still want to trudge through to see where this epic goes...but it isn't always fun.

JENNIFER: Another month, another hardcore Japanese RPG...and like so many before it, if you're really, really überhardcore, you'll really dig

this game. It has amazing voice acting and cut-scenes, interesting environments, copious combat opportunities with a bevy of creative baddies, and an unbelievable story—all of which earn *Time* high points in my book. But get ready for the rub: The punishing and overly complex combat system will keep almost everyone (even the terribly determined Shane!) from forging on. If you didn't pay really close attention during the tutorial, you're basically doomed—you can't go back and learn what you might have rushed through initially. I also spent, literally, hours and hours poking around the world, searching aimlessly for my next goal. That's when the game's title started to make total sense to me.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: *Time* is a great heaping chunk of RPG, and it could have easily

used some editing. The battle system is pretty neat at first, but the lack of total control over other party members, combined with the harsh difficulty, leaves it wanting. I also hated how the invention system makes nearly no sense but is key to getting some primo loot. Storywise, if developer Tri-Ace had slimmed down the boring, medieval planet section (which hogs about 70 percent of the game) and fast-tracked you to the crazy head trip that is the fourth dimension, *Time* could have been an awesome, shorter RPG. Instead, it's merely a solid, loooooong RPG. ★★



Soldering for Fun and Profit

Like most modern RPGs, *Time* assaults the player with a bevy of minigames. Most are simple and cute (like one in which you saddle up giant turtles through treacherous mines), but one in particular challenges the "mini" classification—the phenomenally convoluted Item Creation. About 10 hours into the game, you'll get the chance to open up your own chain of sweatshops, filling them with the finest craftsmen in the land, and experimenting with all manner of alchemic combinations. It's amazingly time-consuming but ultimately worth it: It's the only way to get the best equipment in the game.



Good: Detailed environments, challenging dungeons
Bad: Frustrating combat
Far Too Complex: Item Creation minigame



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	7.5
	SHANE	JENNIFER	SCOOTER

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Tri-Ace
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

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■ Kick, punch, it's all in the mind: Joe's beat-em-up gameplay is far from brainless.

■ PlayStation 2

VIEWTIFUL JOE



Just as viewtiful as ever

Good: Cool powers keep the fighting fresh
Bad: Enemies and minibosses recycled often
Play: On Adult difficulty—Kids is way too easy



MARK: My favorite GameCube title of 2003, *Viewtiful Joe* comes to PS2 with everything I loved about this unique platforming/fighting hybrid intact: tight controls (which translate just fine to the DualShock), unique art style, tongue-in-cheek humor, and, of course, deeply satisfying gameplay. The freedom to mix and match all of the different attacks, along with time-altering special abilities, makes each and every one of Joe's countless fights—especially the superb boss battles—a new experience.

With practice, you can achieve a Zen-like state of beat-em-up bliss, managing insane combos that are as fun to watch as they are to execute. And even though the puzzles are essentially switch flipping, *Joe* makes clever use of your different special powers (zoom in to view the dials on a tiny slot machine, slow down time to stop a fan blade from spinning, etc.) to pull them off.

As for the PS2 additions, the gun-and-sword combo of *Devil May Cry's* bad boy Dante is a great change of pace (too bad they couldn't add voices) and the best of *Joe's* many unlockable reasons for replay.

SHOE: *Joe* is so wonderfully hardcore, fun, geeky, creative, stylish.... I could go on, but you just need to know that it's in a world of its own, and if you're looking for something—*anything*—different from the norm, check it out. If you're the type who would even think about playing, say, a *Catwoman* game, however, then *Joe* wasn't made for you.

The action is easy to learn, but about halfway through, the game decides it needs to start kicking your ass, so be prepared for frustration and blistered fingers.

KEVIN: If you never tried the Cube *Joe*, just drop everything and grab this budget-priced PS2 version immediately. It starts out slow, but the addiction factor is amazing. Hardcore *Joe* nuts don't have jack to whine about, either: Everything runs silky smooth, the PS2 pad actually seems to respond better than the GC controller, and except for the occasional bit of grainy graphics, this is a perfect replica of the original. Playing as Dante is also hilarious, thanks to the parody-laden plot. (Apparently, he likes going to movies in electrifying thong briefs. Respect.)



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.5	9.0
	MARK	SHOE	KEVIN

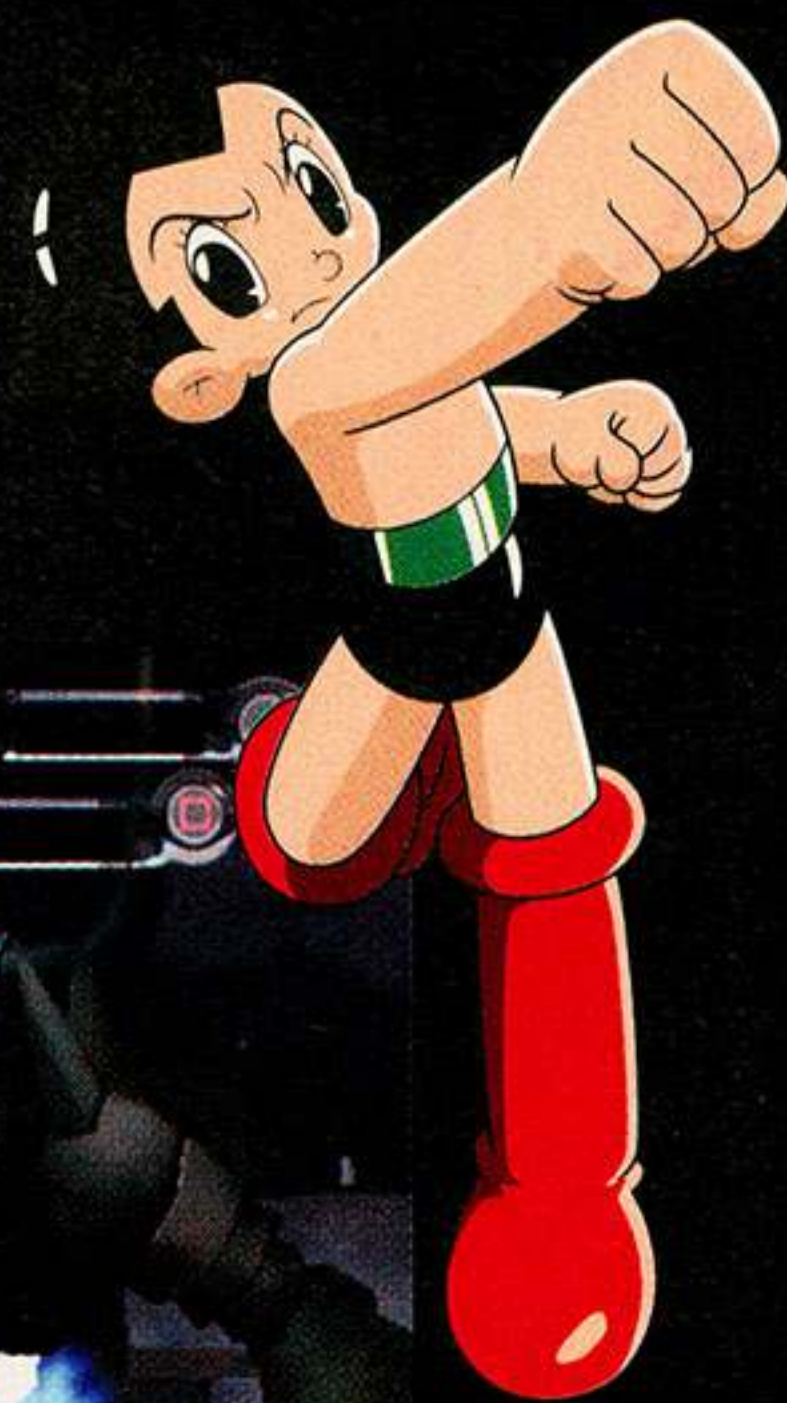
Publisher: Capcom
 Developer: Clover Studios
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Everyone

www.capcom.com

■ PlayStation 2

ASTRO BOY

Juvenile delinquency



Good: Easy to get into
Bad: Practically over before it begins
Why: Is Metro City so devoid of people?



KEVIN: Strange how two games with the same title can be so different, eh? Sega's first *Astro Boy*—a GBA game reviewed last issue—was superb, both in gameplay and in reverence to the original robots-are-your-friends anime. This new PS2 *Astro Boy*, though, is virtually the opposite—it's short, twiddly, and has little of the trippy, optimistic *Astro*-ness of the portable version.

The big surprise comes after you've solved a couple crimes and visit four or five locations around Astro's hometown, when, whoa, the game suddenly ends. In fact, it took me exactly four hours and seven minutes to finish *Astro Boy*, which (if you buy the game at list price) comes out to around 10 dollars per hour.

It's not a particularly memorable four hours, either. The controls are easy enough to learn (rocketing around is refreshingly fun), but an unhelpful camera pins our hero behind obstacles and makes it difficult to target many enemies. Most levels are short and restrictive, and you get the impression that the whole game was rushed to hit stores before the cartoon is off TV. Save a 10 spot and buy the GBA *Astro Boy*. You'll thank me later.

JOHN R: I hear that. Unlike the stellar GBA *Astro Boy*, this underdeveloped turd reeks of that foul "quickie cash-in" odor so many licensed games suffer from. Combat is sparse and boring, load times are long and frequent, and the camera is utterly horrible. Worst of all, the entire thing is over in a matter of hours. Unless you're an ultrahardcore fan of all things *Astro Boy*,

listen to Kevin and just play the GBA game instead.

CRISPIN: Hello, I'll be you're nostalgia-free reviewer for this evening. But since the *Astro* fans hate it, too, you won't notice much difference. You're not gonna like this game unless you're seriously down with its tin-diapered robo-baby and his roster of Day-Glo pals and foes. Well, unless you happen to dig a screwy game camera and hearing the same one-liners 300 times. Or maybe you're into exploring lame environments that repeat seemingly just to stretch out an already too-short game. Or perhaps you're just a wee gamer looking for some kids'-stuff action and a series of decent boss battles.



■ Too old for Teletubbies, too young for Power Rangers, *Astro Boy's* not yet a man.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	3.0	5.0
	KEVIN	JOHN R.	CRISPIN

Publisher: Sega
 Developer: Sonic Team
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Everyone

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PlayStation 2

HOT SHOTS GOLF FORE!

A little off the fairway

Good: Sweet courses

Bad: Dated swing control, slow-paced online play

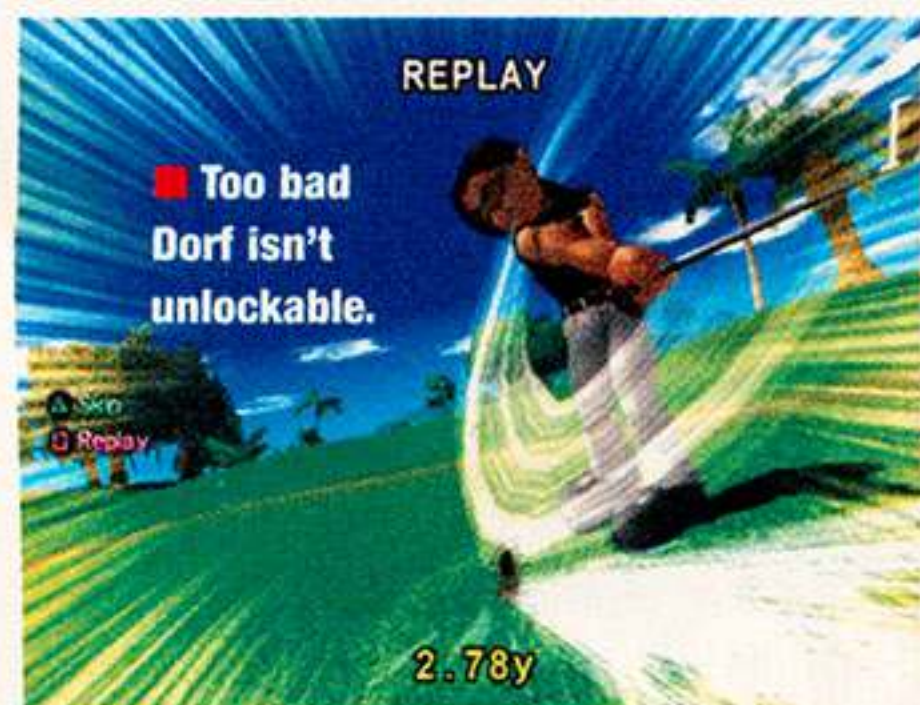
Ninja Gal Golfer? Check

PATRICK: We waited two and a half years for this *Hot Shots*, and while developer Clap Hanz added many new, beautiful courses, I'm amazed that the golf swing remains a three-button-tap affair. How about some analog action, à la *Tiger Woods*, *Links 2004*, and *Outlaw Golf*?

Despite the olde-tyme swing control, *Hot Shots* delivers the wacky, lighthearted approach to golf that series fans expect. The extended cast of characters includes several over-the-top unlockables (such as—in a fit of shameless cross-Sony-game promotion—Jak, Daxter, Ratchet, and Clank), each with different control, impact, and spin ratings.

The goofy commentary rapidly begins to grate, and though the miniature golf option returns, it doesn't up the over-the-top quotient as much as I'd hoped—aside from a missed opportunity to really get nuts with course design, it's incredibly easy.

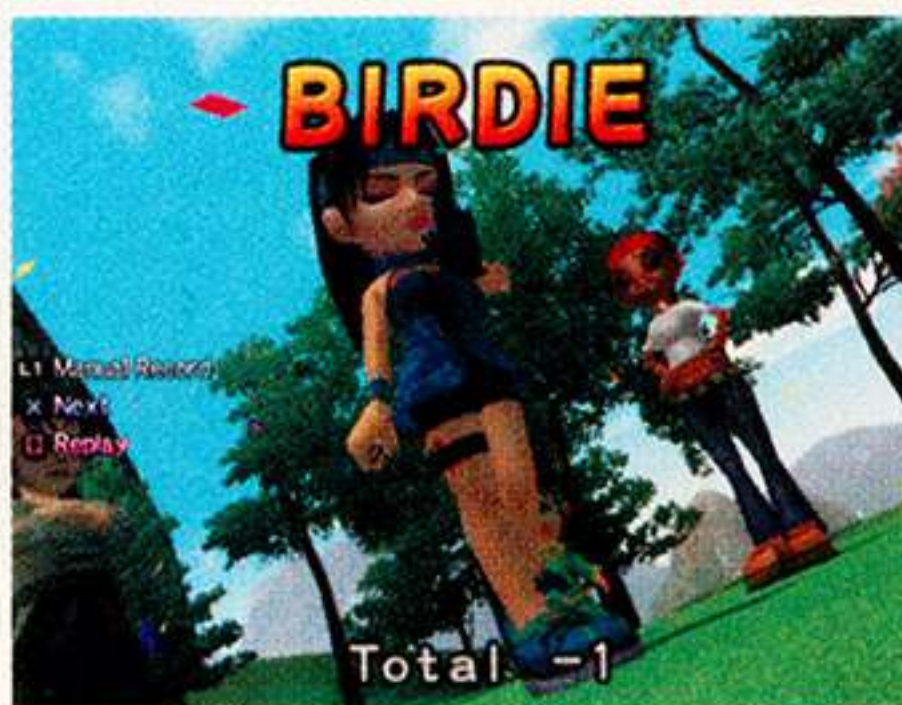
Hot Shots may be outlandish by design, but the golf proves true. Off the tee, out of the sand, the chipping, the putting...it's all pretty realistic, and ultimately that's what will keep you playing.



DAN L: *Hot Shots* is deep, accessible, great looking, and seriously challenging. The courses are more "alive" than *Tiger's* or *Links'*, as true bounces and gentle contours offer new surprises round after round. And while *Hot Shots* lacks an analog swing, the swing system still allows for plenty of shot creativity.

Online, the game offers straight-up head-to-head play with a friend or live tournament action with up to 50 people. While that sounds good in theory, the between-hole updates to scoring slows the action to a crawl.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE: If you liked the previous three *Hot Shots*, you're gonna love this one—because it's almost *exactly the same*, aside from that new online mode. Sure, there are more delightfully stereotyped characters with wacky one-liners, and minigolf is back...only it's not remotely as cool as in the first game. *Hot Shots* is still a really fun 18 holes, but with other golf games (most especially *Tiger*) making major strides every year, this quirky, cutesy title is falling farther and farther behind.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	8.5	6.5
	PATRICK	DAN L.	JOE

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Clap Hanz
Players: 1-4 (up to 50 in online tournaments)
ESRB: Everyone

www.us.playstation.com

PlayStation 2

PHANTOM BRAVE

Your mind...it will boggle



A little slippery
A little bouncy

This strategy-RPG tosses out the traditional grids for free-form combat.

Good: So much to do

Bad: Too much to do

Special Guest Stars: The wacky demon kids from *Disgaea*

SHOE: Rainman. The math-genius dude from *A Beautiful Mind*. The hardest of the hardcore who beat both *Final Fantasy Tactics*. These are the people who can dig *Phantom Brave*, a strategy-RPG to end all strategy-RPGs. This mind-boggling sequel to cult hits *Disgaea* and *La Pucelle: Tactics* is easily the most overwhelming game I've ever played, with almost infinite aspects to consider. For example, take that everyday brick lying on the battlefield. You can summon a phantom to it and absorb its properties, use it as a weapon, develop its innate powers, change its title from Soft Brick to Great Brick to make it more powerful (yeah, you read that right), fuse it with a tree to give that tree more brick-like powers (yeah, you read that right, too), and much, much more. And that's just a brick, for chrissakes.

It's enough to melt your brain—several times over. If you're into the little details in your strategy games and love leveling up your characters, well, slap on your pocket protector and get this game. It'll easily keep you entertained until the people with the straightjackets show up.

SHANE: Crazy...I thought that *Phantom Brave* was going to be a more accessible follow-up to the mathematically dense *Disgaea*, but it's actually even more strategically demanding. Luckily, I'm OK with that—I invite the complexity of binding spirits to objects, sapping mana from weapons, and controlling the flow of energy to better fell my foes through myriad tactical melees. Merely passable visuals, a downer of a story (compared with the

absurd antics of *Disgaea*), and repetitive tunes keep it from reaching the highest echelons, but it's still a must for serious strat buffs.

1UP.COM—NICH: I'm not sure that people, even hardcore strategy-RPG fans, are going to be prepared for how great *Phantom Brave* is. Everything is so new it's scary: You can treat enemies as your weapons, the scenery as your allies, and your allies as items—nothing in *Phantom Brave* has just one use, which makes for a dizzying range of possibilities. Too bad, then, that the 2D sprites—though the best Nippon Ichi has produced yet—still don't take advantage of all the sharpness and resolution the PS2 has to offer.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.5	8.5	8.5
	SHOE	SHANE	NICH

Publisher: NIS America
Developer: Nippon Ichi
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

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Hey, buddy, Tom Cruise wants his schtik back.

PlayStation 2

SPY FICTION

Metal Gear Flaccid

- Good:** Disguising yourself as the enemy
- Bad:** A bevy of small flaws hold things back
- Garbology:** The game's strangely appropriate collectible



G. FORD: Fundamental flaws can sink any game, *Spy Fiction* being a prime example. The premise of this third-person stealth-action game is basic enough—you play as one of two agents (with diverging paths) who must locate and destroy a deadly virus. Unfortunately, the game's coolest feature is also riddled with inconsistencies. You can assume the identity of any character by taking a quick pic of 'em, and shuffling past guards while dressed as a janitor is oddly thrilling. Unfortunately, you can only don a disguise in designated areas, which gets a bit frustrating. Also, while incognito, your weapon and move sets are severely limited so you can't, say, crawl into vents—something you'll need to do with distressing frequency.

Eavesdropping proves interesting enough, although it seems somewhat peculiar that people randomly talk to themselves about high-level company secrets while wandering the halls. As a stealth-action wannabe, *Spy Fiction* blends in a little *too* well.

CRISPIN: *Spy Fiction* isn't so much a clone of the *Metal Gear Solid* games as it

is an evil twin who cackles like a maniac and slowly goes bonkers, just like the game's overwrought, badly voice-acted plot. And that's too bad, because *Fiction* packs more gadgets than an entire season of *Alias* while forcing players to slip past armies of guards, laser trip wires, pressure sensors, and even body-heat detectors. But talk about a mission gone awry: The game deteriorates into a sloppy mess of nonsensical objectives, oh-so-awkward moments, and guards as brainy as microbes. I doubt *Metal Gear* main man Solid Snake is flattered by this imitation.

MARK: It may mimic *Metal Gear* in graphics, interface, controls, and gameplay, but *Spy Fiction* is anything but *Solid*. The do-it-yourself camera, the horrible targeting controls, the wonky A.I. (guards attack but then won't pursue you down a ladder, the same guy frisks you five times in a row, etc.)—this game is more awkward than a newborn horse on roller skates. A shame, too, since the cool gadgets and unique disguise system definitely have potential.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.5	3.0	5.0
	G. FORD	CRISPIN	MARK

Publisher: Sammy
Developer: Access
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.sammystudios.com



Xbox

GUILTY GEAR X2 #RELOAD

Headbanger's brawl



- Good:** Bracing blend of silliness and sophistication
- Bad:** Steep learning curve
- More Than Your Money's Worth:** It's \$20



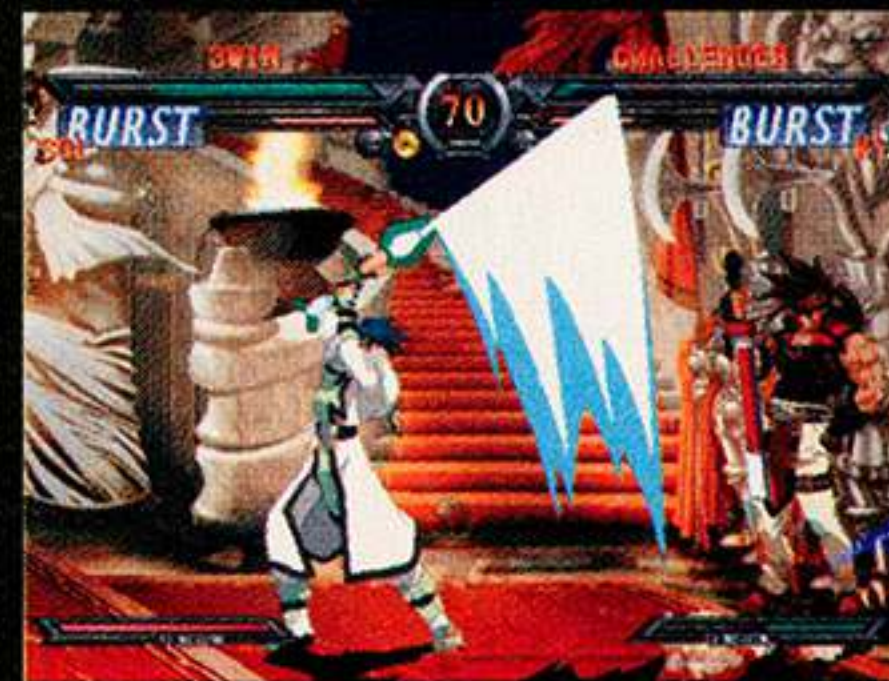
SHAWN: Think fast, play faster. *Guilty Gear* is so hardcore, only one in a 100 will have the hand-eye coordination necessary to play the eye-popping fighter at full pace. Not that you absolutely need to. Anyone can appreciate its razor-sharp resolution and helter-skelter rock references—the game grows guns and shoots roses when a guitar-strumming hell's belle swings her ax like a sword. Other madcap characters include a castaway from an Iron Maiden album cover and a babe who bangs heads with her heavy-metal hairdo.

Anyone can also execute a few effective moves with minimal effort, but a Fisher-Price toy that plays frenzied solos with the touch of a fret this ain't. You won't know whether you're the one in a 100 without taking your act online in a lag-free battle of the one-man bands. There, contenders will crush your momentum with counters and cancel attacks seconds before completing combos, allowing them to string on five or six more slashes than they could've otherwise. Still think you're worthy?

SHOE: Fighting games can be really technical (see *Virtua Fighter*) or really flashy (any *Capcom Vs.* title). *#Reload* gives you the best of both worlds, except "flashy" here is more like "a nuclear kaleidoscope of psychedelic insanity." Seriously. So much is happening onscreen, newbies are likely to be intimidated right out of their eyes (but they *will* be impressed). Fighting-game fans will love the huge variety of characters that mostly play differently from each other and especially

the lagless (at least during our review sessions) online play.

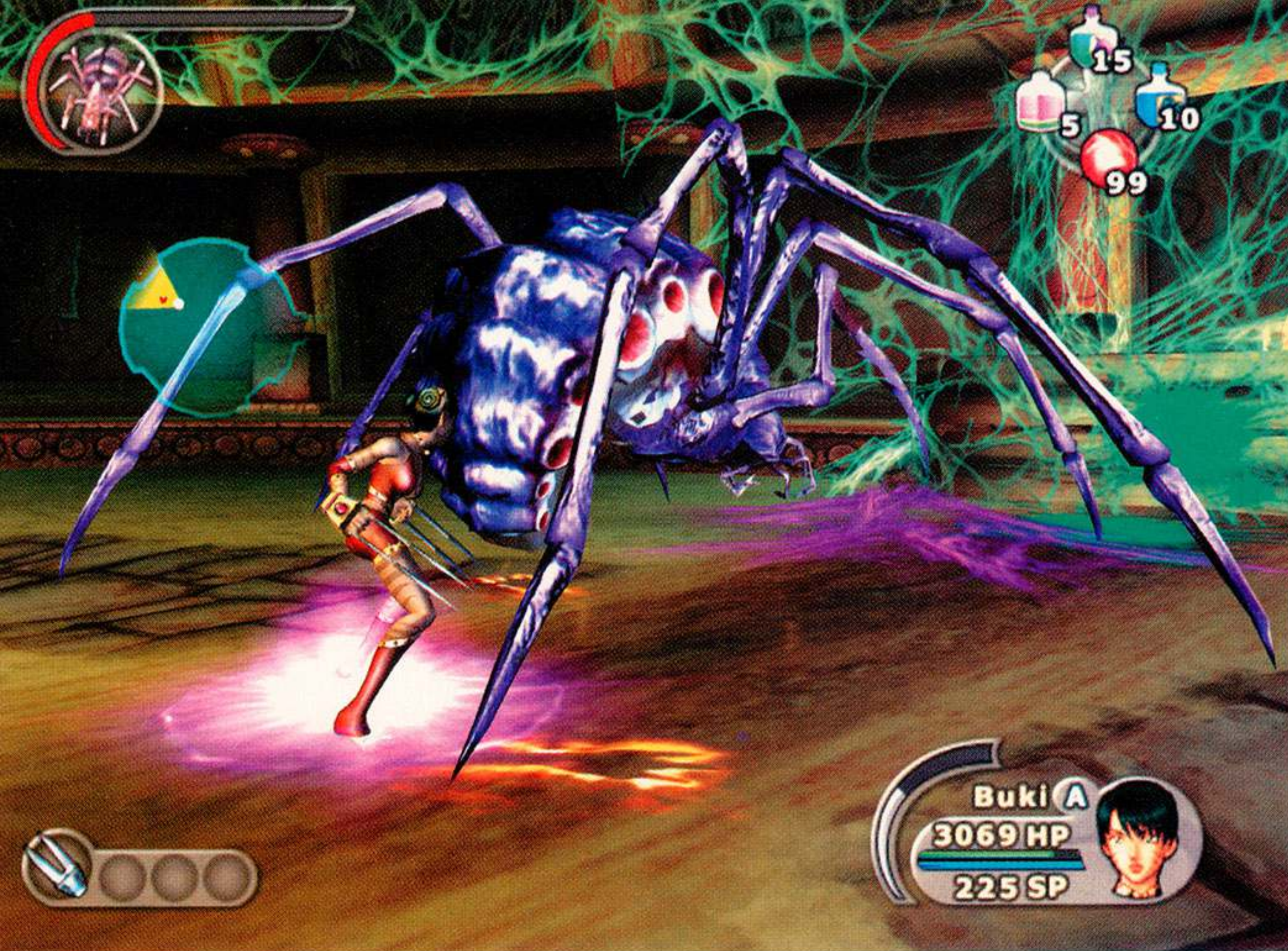
XBN—CHE: With all the hype surrounding *Dead or Alive Ultimate* and *Mortal Kombat: Deception* for taking video chop-socky onto Xbox Live (I don't count the online jank-a-thon that is *Capcom vs. SNK*), it's surprising to see a small-time 2D fighter like *#Reload* beat all other games to the online punch. But don't overlook this title just because it's 2D; the graphics here are detailed and ingeniously designed—the current pinnacle of pixelized art and animation. Behind the pretty façade is a fighting system as deep as any classic of the genre. At only \$20 bucks, what's your excuse for not checking out *#Reload*?



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	8.5	9.0
	SHAWN	SHOE	CHE

Publisher: Majesco
Developer: Arc System Works
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.majesco.com



■ Shrek's uglier, less comedically talented brother (below) is mightily PO'ed that he's stuck in this fairy tale.



■ Xbox

SUDEKI

Not much to see from this full frontal

BRYAN: LucasArts' gripping *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* gave Xbox owners renewed hope that the console wouldn't be just a home for first-person shooters and racing games. But since 2003's *Summer of Force*, the Xbox role-playing-game well has run dry. Unfortunately, *Sudeki* does very little to raise the water table.

Almost everything about *Sudeki* is hard to take seriously. I mean, check out the game's cast of characters—I'm not sure whether I should be casting spells with the female leads or stuffing dollar bills into their G-strings. It only gets worse when they open their mouths; both the hokey dialogue and overly dramatic voiceovers are on par with a late-night B-movie on Cinemax. And how am I supposed to believe that this world is in utter turmoil when the majority of the environments look like they're inspired by the board game *Candy Land*? Forget about the story, too; there's hardly any gripping plot twists, and the rather abrupt ending makes me think the developers wanted to put this RPG to bed as fast as I did.

So what did I take seriously? Well, the combat—the mix of real-time hack-n-slash and conventional summoning powers keep this one from being a total snoozer. If only the rest of *Sudeki* hit as hard....

JENNIFER: After playing this game, I had the not-totally-uncommon experience of dreaming about it. It wasn't a nightmare—rather, it was one of those dreams where you wake up wishing it were true. In my dream, *Sudeki* had an intricate and ever-evolving combat system that really rewarded

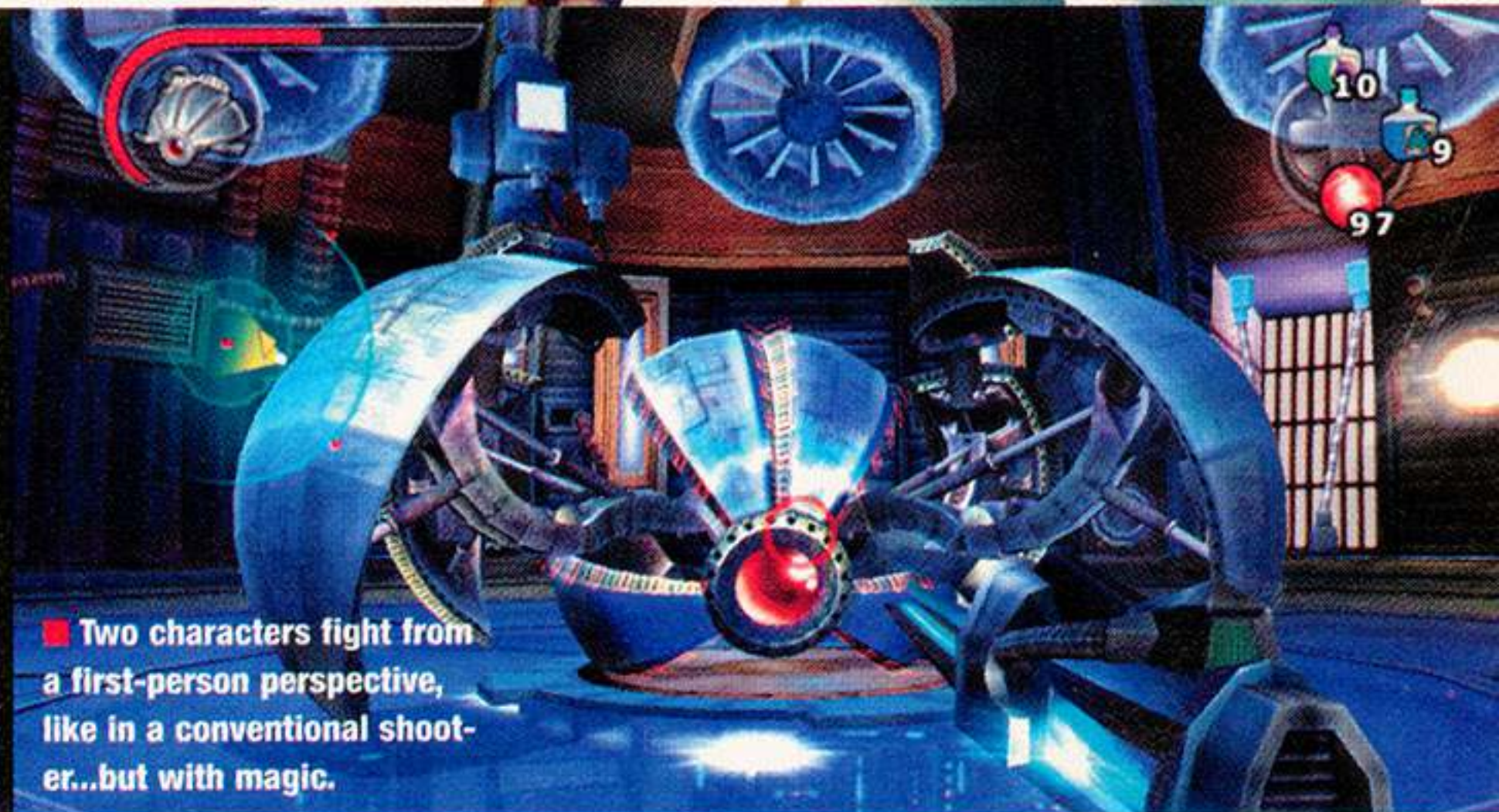
me for picking distinctive skills for my party members. Battles transcended workaday button-mashing because it was so fun trying different tactics. The characters and story line, too, were never predictable (and during dialogue, even when I impatiently clicked ahead, the subtitles stayed onscreen long enough for me to actually read them). Best of all, my dream *Sudeki* had no derivative puzzles and switch-flipping! Clearly, the real-life game had killer potential. Why not rent it for the weekend...you might like it more than Bryan, and hey, maybe you'll dream up the next truly awesome RPG for Xbox.

1UP.COM—NICH: *Sudeki* has some fantastic ideas for combat, like unique control systems for your fighters and spellcasters—the former use a third-person beat-em-up style, while the latter get a

first-person shooter perspective. However, it also has some ugly, fan-art-like character designs, a story line that's absent for most of the game and embarrassing when it kicks in, and awkward voice acting that sounds suspiciously like the design staff doing double duty. (Tellingly, not a single one of the actors is listed in the credits. Hmm....) At least it doesn't overstay its welcome; at about 20 hours in length, it does what it does without any padding, and there's something to be said for that. **A-**

Combat, Straight From the Heart

Sudeki ditches the genre's widely used turn-based combat in favor of real-time battles like in *Final Fantasy-meets-Disney Kingdom Hearts* (PS2). You can also slow down time during combat, which prevents you from sustaining unnecessary damage when scrolling through item and spell lists. The only hiccup is that after you've defeated all your foes, some will continue to respawn in certain areas. So make sure to hit the pause button when you get up for a bathroom break, or you could return to find your entire party resting in pieces.



■ Two characters fight from a first-person perspective, like in a conventional shooter...but with magic.

Good: Fast-paced combat
Bad: Laughable character design, cheesy dialogue
Not-New Gaming Trend: A light and a dark world?!



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

4.5
BRYAN

6.0
JENNIFER

5.5
NICH

Publisher: Microsoft
 Developer: Climax
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.sudeki.com



Being ripped to shreds has never looked so goddamn adorable.



GameCube

PIKMIN 2



Damn that's some good weed

MARK: At first glance it'd be easy to mistake *Pikmin 2* for its predecessor, and not just because the graphics haven't changed much. Once again you command an army of the painfully cute li'l soldiers, fighting plants and bugs in your hunt for discarded treasure (bottle caps, batteries, etc.). The same excellent controls return, allowing you to effortlessly separate (important since each color has its own special powers) and command your troops. Most enemies and even quite a few bosses are back as well.

But look closer and you'll discover that, while they left the roots alone, Nintendo pruned and nurtured *Pikmin's* unique real-time strategy/action concept until it blossomed into a beautiful, worthy sequel. A second "leader" character, for example, cuts down on the necessarily slow moments in the game, so while one group builds a bridge or knocks down a wall, you can be running errands with another. New types of pikmin (see sidebar) make for deeper strategy, and the

surprisingly good two-player splitscreen co-op and battle modes give the game life beyond the already substantial single-player quest. Other welcome tweaks: You can save pikmin from accidental death (due to fire, drowning, poison, etc.), enemies aren't so quick to slaughter your forces, and power-ups (both for your pikmin and now your leaders as well) are plentiful.

The one change I don't like is the dungeonlike caves. Their tight spaces and emphasis on combat make for a lot of frustration, and there's no incentive to fight enemies other than survival.

CRISPIN: Call it therapy for all those games of mass destruction—or maybe this is what the hippies really mean by "flower power"—but playing the sublime *Pikmin 2* just makes me happy. Even casual-gamer pals will stare fascinated as you direct your army of chirping motile fauna to battle like some green-thumbed Norman Schwarzkopf. I felt liberated by the lack of a time limit in the

sequel's new cave system, and you *will* get addicted to collecting every beautifully rendered junk trinket in the game. Then the surprisingly deep two-player battle mode and unlockable co-op challenges will keep you smiling.

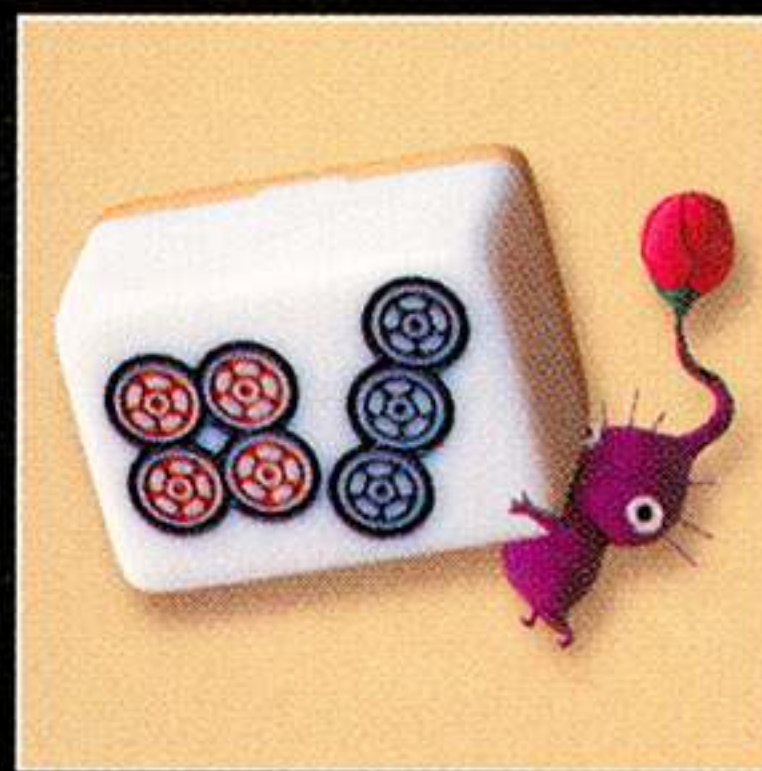
SHAWN: Happy colors and chirpy hi-hos hide the sinister side of *Pikmin's* lovable plant people. The lethal li'l sprouts prune and pluck apart whatever's in their way before hauling the pieces back to their larders. It's mesmerizing to watch and all the more so to play, especially when you split miniscule spacemen Olimar and Louie up in order to tackle the trickier challenges. Plus, where brevity nipped the first *Pikmin* in the bud, a supercool scavenger hunt for cast-off trinkets and amusing multiplayer modes that cross-pollinate strategy with puzzle solving bring the sequel into full flower.



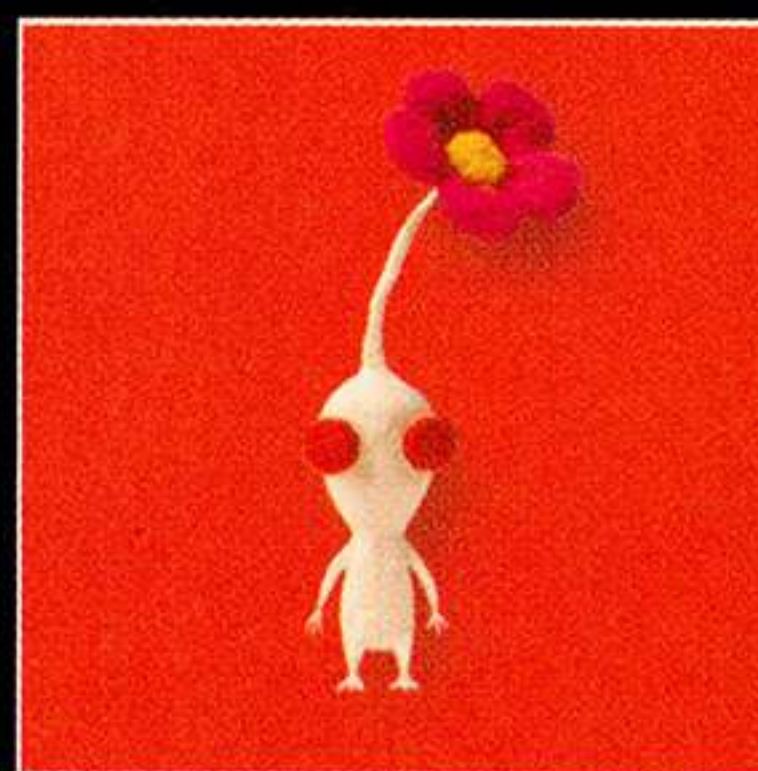
This third character becomes playable after you beat the game the first time.

Color Us Impressed

Two new types of pikmin, purple and white, add much more than a little color to the game. Since they don't occur naturally and aren't easy to find (you can only create a few at a time using special hard-to-find flowers), protecting them adds another layer to the strategy, plus their strengths and weaknesses give the game that much more depth.



Purple: These sumo-sized fatties might be a bit slower than your average pikmin, but their added weight means extra damage when they land on enemies. They are also worth 10 normal pikmin when it comes to carrying large objects.



White: Weak in combat but quick runners, white pikmin are the only ones that can dig up buried objects. They're also poisonous, so they help out even when they get eaten—especially handy against the larger boss monsters.

Good: Same great concept and controls, now with added depth
Bad: Sections of cave dungeons get tedious
Infectious: The little tune the pikmin hum as they work



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

8.5
MARK

9.0
CRISPIN

9.0
SHAWN

Publisher: Nintendo
 Developer: Nintendo
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com



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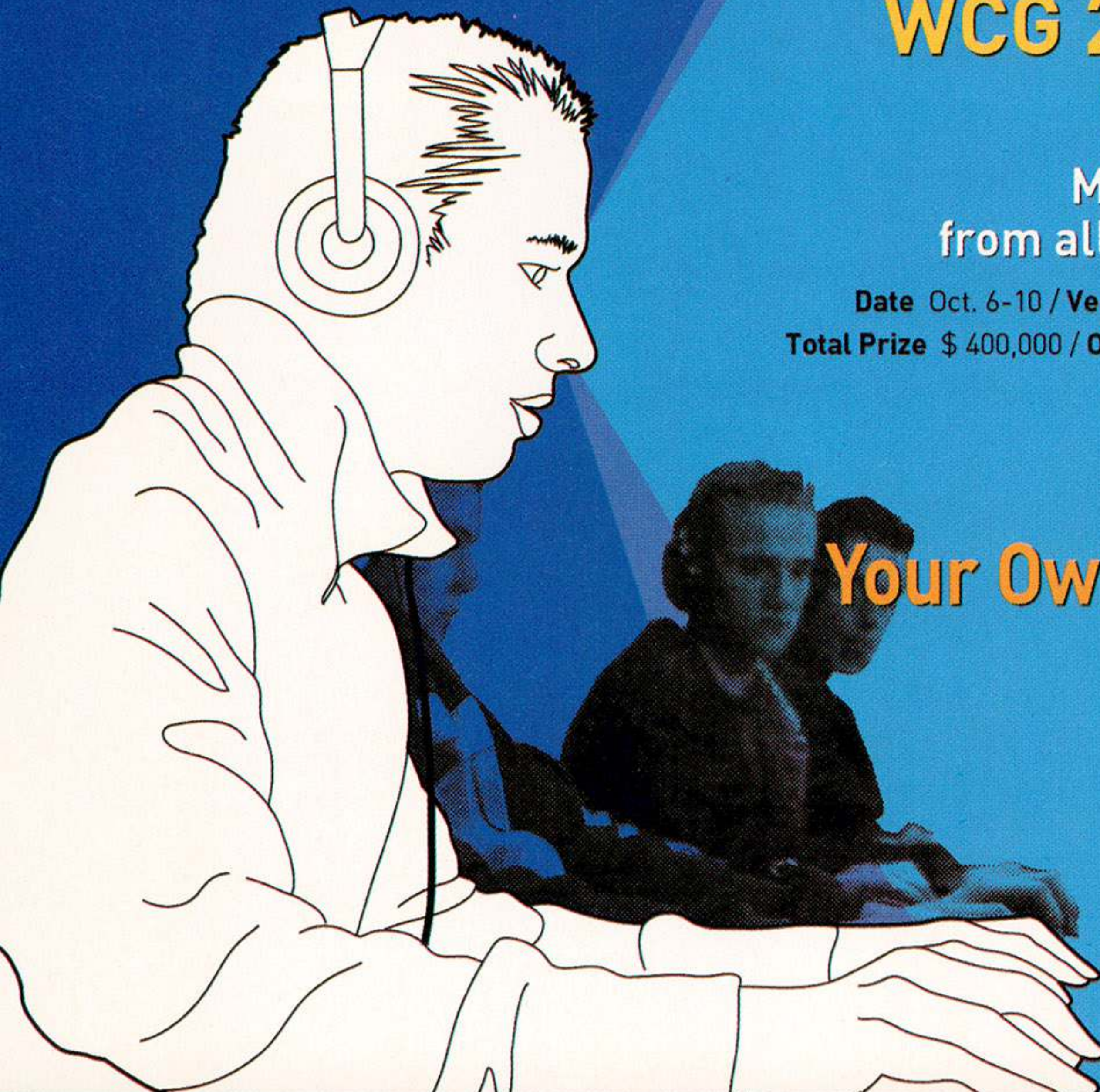
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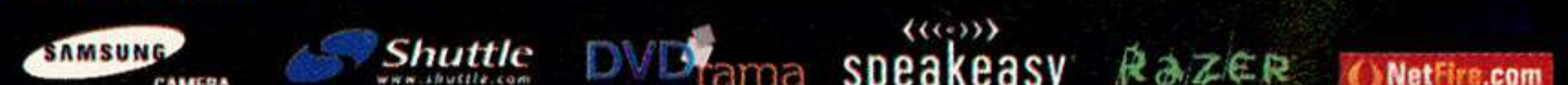
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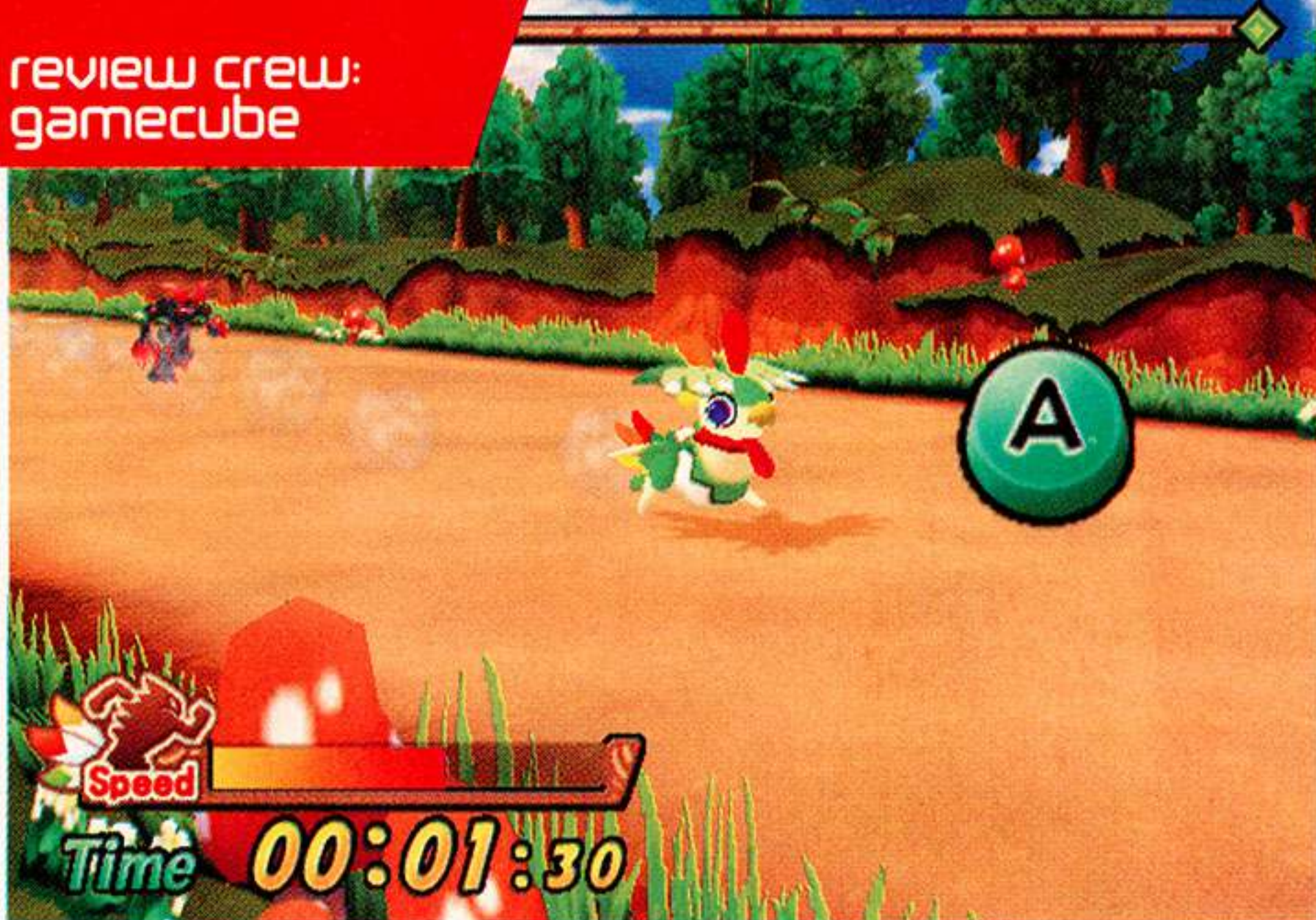


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GameCube

AMAZING ISLAND

More like "meh" island



So that's where McNuggets come from....



Good: Simple, fun monster-creation system
Bad: Poor graphics, samey minigames
Loosely Interpreted: "Multiplayer" minigames



SHANE: Last year, I had a rollicking time with Agatec's *Magic Pengel* (PS2), the first game to allow players to create their own wonderfully cuddly (or blatantly pornographic) monster by simply doodling its shape. *Amazing Island* offers a similar sketchbook-come-to-life system: You draw your critter, accessorize him with various doodads, then compete in a veritable field day of wacky minigames.

The monster-creation system, however, isn't quite as open-ended as that of *Pengel*, as you're limited to drawing outlines on top of preset skeletons. Your pets might look slightly more professional, but they're not quite as crazily imaginative.

The fun withers a bit when you get to the game proper, though. Both single-player and multiplayer modes consist of simple minigames decked out with Nintendo 64-ish visuals and obnoxious voice samples. Some of these challenges offer simple, effervescent fun—events in which you skip across water like a stone or gun down targets while skydiving—but too many are kinda lame button-mashing exercises in frustration.

JENNIFER: Remind me—what exactly is it about frantic, feverish, and somewhat random button-pressing that's...*fun*? 'Cause these minigames just aren't. Not in the annoying single-player mode, in which you get three attempts at beating the overly complex challenges. And not in the pointless multiplayer mode, in which you don't even play at the same time as your opponents in most events. Drawing your monster might be the best part of the game—except the upgrades don't seem to make much difference in your performance.

GMR—CARRIE: While I was impressed with the depth of the monster-editing component once everything was unlocked, *Island's* minigames and story line feel tacked on. For those who don't get into the creative process and are easily frustrated by drawing with a gamepad, there's just not enough compelling gameplay. Even the multiplayer mode, in which players must take turns to compete against A.I. instead of battling against each other, is completely un compelling. The game's overall concept is cool, but the competitions are ultralame.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.5	3.0	5.5
	SHANE	JENNIFER	CARRIE

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Hitmaker/Ancient
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.sega.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

Fashionably late...or just plain flaky

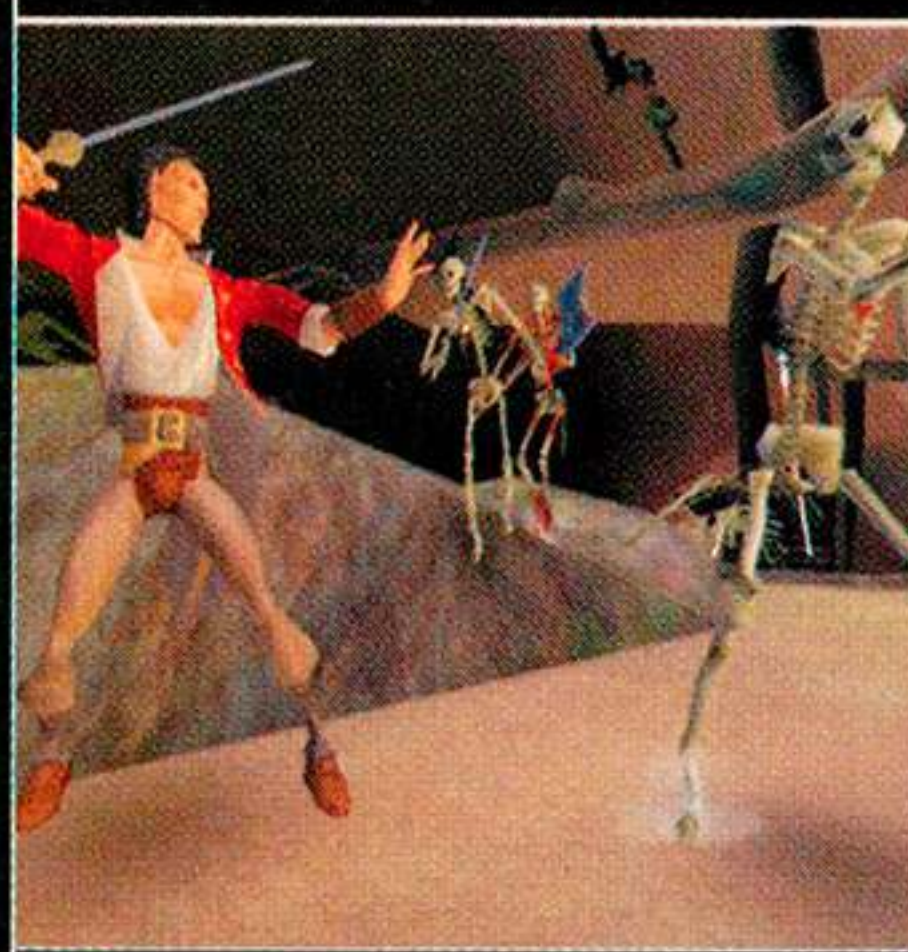
Christmas is coming, and you know what that means—way, way too many games. Some showed up too late for us to fit in the mag, and others, well, we're still tapping our feet, wondering just where the heck they are. Perhaps George Costanza said it best: "Let's get nuts!"

Monster Hunter • PS2 • Capcom
Phantasy Star Online addicts take note: While Capcom couldn't get us a fully equipped online version of this new RPG in time for review, we played enough to tell you that—despite a few annoyances—scrounging for *Hunter's* monstrous catalog of unique items to fashion into armor and weapons is hella addictive. Just make sure you have a keyboard. (My kingdom for voice chat!)



Another day, another dragon.

Galleon • XB • Atlus
Avast! In the works for half a decade from the guy who built *Tomb Raider*, island-spanning action-adventure *Galleon* has finally sailed into port—but is too late for a full review (see next issue for that). While it's tough on the eyes, the game has a great personality, with *Tomb Raider*-ish puzzles and novel point-where-you-wanna-go control that still winds up feeling cumbersome. More recent games like *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* just do this kind of thing better.



Damn, those are some tight pants.

Kingdom Under Fire: Crusaders
XB • Microsoft
This action/strategy hybrid narrowly missed our review deadline because someone at Microsoft was a space cadet, but based on our time spent with a nearly finished version, *Crusaders* has the makings of a classic sleeper hit. It combines hectic 360-degree button-mash combat (see also: *Dynasty Warriors*) with some accessible strategy bits, then adds four-player team and free-for-all matches on Xbox Live.



Just some ogres kickin' it. No biggie.



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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Cream or crap?

bargain bin bounty



ESPN NFL 2K5

■ PS2/XB
 ■ Released: August 2004
 ■ Original Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 8.0
 Minus a few gameplay fumbles, *ESPN's* latest stint on the gridiron is well on its way to paydirt. Armchair quarterbacks will surely break out into the Icky Shuffle once they check out *2K5's* robust franchise mode, spot-on ESPN telecast presentation, \$20 price tag, and online leagues.

GHOST RECON VS. RAINBOW SIX

Sure, their duties differ—Rainbows specialize in counterterrorism while Ghosts combine infantry tactics with cutting-edge military technology on the battlefield—but the guys in green get the job done with more gung-ho gusto, at least when we average available review scores for every game in each series. (The PS1 *Rainbow* games blew.)



■ *Ghost Recon* average review score: 6.77

■ *Rainbow Six* average review score: 6.37



GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Alias	PS2/XB	■ Clever disguises can't conceal crappy gameplay	5.0 5.5 4.5	
All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2/XB	■ Take us out to the ball game...just not this one	5.5 4.5 6.0	
American Idol	PS2	■ The only button you need to press is on your console	1.5 2.0 1.0	
Astro Boy: Omega Factor	GBA	■ 'Toon-loving tykes and jaded players alike will enjoy this intense platformer	8.5 9.0 8.5	Silver
Athens 2004	PS2	■ Sony's Summer Olympics aren't as special as we hoped	5.0 5.5 5.0	
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2/XB	■ Ho-hum hack-n-slash. Now that's a role you don't wanna play	7.0 4.5 5.0	
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	PS2	■ Your average martial arts actioner, but with 100 percent more Japanese rock stars	4.5 6.0 7.5	
Champions of Norrath: Realms of EQ	PS2	■ More about slaying orcs than socializing with dorks	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Chronicles of Riddick	XB	■ With gameplay this good, a life sentence isn't long enough	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Colin McRae Rally 04	XB	■ Rev your engines for <i>04's</i> top-notch handling and wicked terrain	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Crash Nitro Kart	PS2/XB/GC	■ For roadside assistance, call 1-800-BUY-MARIO-KART	5.5 6.0 5.5	
Crimson Sea 2	PS2	■ Space runs red with bug blood when <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> goes sci-fi	8.0 7.0 6.5	
Crimson Tears	PS2	■ Repetitive battles will bore you to tears	5.5 6.0 6.5	
Custom Robo	GC	■ Robo battling is solid, but what's with the shallow pseudo-RPG stuff?	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Cy Girls	PS2	■ Progress-impeding puzzles will make you feel like the butt of a bad blonde joke	7.0 5.0 5.0	
Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix	XB	■ Lose pounds and prepare for the prom	8.5 8.0 7.0	
Dead Man's Hand	XB	■ Find out how the West was dumb in this oddball first-person shooting gallery	6.5 5.0 4.5	
Destruction Derby Arenas	PS2	■ Even crash-test dummies would yawn at this wreckage	4.5 3.5 6.0	
Drake	XB	■ It's now illegal for anyone who considers buying it to use currency	2.0 0.5 2.5	
DRIV3R	PS2/XB	■ <i>Driver</i> meets <i>Grand Theft Auto</i> , and somehow an "e" becomes a "3"	8.5 7.5 6.5	
EA Sports Fight Night 2004	PS2/XB	■ EA returns to the ring under a new name and registers a knockout	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Echo Night: Beyond	PS2	■ <i>Echo Night's</i> creepy moonbase has everything you'd want...except for combat	6.0 5.5 5.0	
ESPN College Hoops	PS2/XB	■ Fouls out for playing too much like a pro baller	6.5 7.5 6.5	
ESPN Major League Baseball	PS2/XB	■ If <i>MVP</i> is this season's Yankees, then sadly, <i>ESPN</i> is its BoSox	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
ESPN NFL 2K5	PS2/XB	■ The best 20 bucks a sporto could ever spend	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
ESPN NHL Hockey 2004	PS2/XB	■ The reigning Cup champ	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	PS2	■ Doesn't the front lawn constitute a new frontier for <i>Evercrack</i> -heads?	6.5 6.0 7.0	
EyeToy: Groove	PS2	■ Don't let looking like a displaying ape stop you	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly	PS2	■ Combating poltergeists with a Polaroid is scarier than it sounds	7.5 7.5 6.5	
FIFA Soccer 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Responsive, intricate controls, but <i>FIFA's</i> our second fave after <i>Winning Eleven</i>	7.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	GC	■ Charming RPG romp works best with three friends along for the GBA-linked-up ride	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy XI	PS2	■ A monstrous MMORPG that'll consume your life. ADD types need not apply	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Firefighter F.D. 18	PS2	■ Fight fires, fireman-hating robots, and trial-and-error gameplay	6.5 6.0 4.0	
Front Mission 4	PS2	■ You'll need to be smart to figure out this deep mech-strategy game	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Full Spectrum Warrior	XB	■ A war-winning coalition of gritty graphics and tactical gameplay	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Future Tactics: The Uprising	PS2/XB/GC	■ Unattractive, uninspired, and woefully unfunny bargain-basement strategy trifle	4.0 4.5 6.0	
Galactic Wrestling: Feat. Ultimate Muscle	PS2	■ A bare-bones feature set makes this <i>Muscle</i> worth flexing only as a rental	5.5 5.5 5.0	
Ghosthunter	PS2	■ Light on the spookiness, with linear gameplay only an algebra teacher could love	6.5 6.0 6.0	
Harry Potter and the Pris. of Azkaban	PS2/XB/GC	■ Control Harry and pals in this charming yet simple <i>Zelda</i> rip-off for the preschool set	7.0 6.5 6.0	
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	GC	■ Would you really have more fun watching the grass grow? Find out	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Hitman: Contracts	PS2/XB	■ Money grows on trees when you cut throats to rake leaves	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	PS2/XB/GC	■ More gadgets and a better story than any of the recent flicks	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	PS2	■ Medleys, more songs to butcher, and a streamlined interface	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
La Pucelle: Tactics	PS2	■ Deep strategy-RPG gameplay you'll love, with childish characters you'll despise	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adv.	GC	■ <i>Zelda</i> teaches Link a little somethin' about four-play in this old-school adventure	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
LifeLine	PS2	■ Wanna play <i>Resident Evil</i> again, using speech recognition that doesn't really work?	4.5 4.5 4.0	
Lowrider	PS2	■ Won't make you wanna bounce	5.0 5.5 2.0	
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	PS2/XB/GC	■ Get hackin' in this beautiful beat-em-up	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	GBA	■ Legolas gets shrunk to Keebler size, and your girlfriend still thinks he's hot	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Madden NFL 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ News flash: <i>Madden's</i> the best again. Oh yeah, and the sky is blue	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Mafia	PS2/XB	■ Jack jalopies and outdrive thugs in this glitchy 1930s gangster game	6.0 5.0 7.5	
Magic: The Gathering—Battlegrounds	XB	■ The cards say you need a life	4.0 4.5 4.0	
Malice	PS2/XB	■ You can beat this limp platformer in a single sitting...but why bother?	5.0 5.0 4.0	
Manhunt	PS2	■ Rockstar's latest effort to keep the ESRB around	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Mario Golf: Advance Tour	GBA	■ Play with your putter on the bus—without getting arrested for once	9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	GBA	■ A polished, thoroughly enjoyable adventure in the same vein as <i>Paper Mario</i>	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC	■ Cooperative driving spells pure, unfiltered fun	10 10 9.5	Gold
Mario vs. Donkey Kong	GBA	■ The plumber and big ape clash again in this good, but not great, platformer/puzzler	7.0 7.5 7.5	
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	PS2	■ This half-assed, brainless beat-em-up is evil indeed	2.0 3.5 2.5	
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	PS2/XB/GC	■ Pro tip: Don't touch that tempting mounted machine gun	5.5 5.0 5.5	
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	PS2	■ This quality compendium is well worth it, but only for old fans	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	GC	■ A solid if uninspired update of the PlayStation stealth-action classic	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Metal Slug 3	XB	■ Fantastic but frustrating 2D side-scroller for the nimble-fingered	7.5 6.5 8.0	
Metroid: Zero Mission	GBA	■ Own this souped-up remake of she-warrior Samus Aran's first mission or face ridicule	9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
MLB 2005	PS2	■ A quick trip to the minors has made <i>MLB</i> a title contender again	7.0 7.0 7.0	
MLB SlugFest: Loaded	PS2/XB	■ Midway's slugger nearly clears the fences with its burning arcade play	8.0 7.0 8.0	



■ **Showdown's King Kong**
Bundy points a fat, accusatory
finger at fried foods.

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
MX Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ Realistic dirt racing minus the damn cleaning bills	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
MVP Baseball 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like the Bronx Bombers', MVP's new additions will excite all baseball fans	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
NBA Ballers	PS2/XB	■ Midway's 1-on-1 baller has the skillz to pay the billz (or something like that)	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
NCAA Football 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Subtle but oh-so-effective improvements make NCAA Heisman-worthy	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
NCAA March Madness 2004	PS2/XB	■ The only thing missing from this college hoopster is rioting coeds	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
NFL Blitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ A Madden-like face-lift puts Blitz firmly back in the playoff race	7.0 7.0 6.0	
NFL Fever 2004	XB	■ Scant franchise options keep Fever warming the bench	6.5 6.5 6.0	
NFL Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ Playground (or is it prison?) rules football; best played with friends	8.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
NHL 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Wild checking makes hockey look like a bar fight; dynasty mode scores a hat trick	8.5 6.5 7.0	
NHL Hitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like a porn star's assets, Hitz isn't exactly realistic, but it's sure fun to play with	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
NHL Rivals 2004	XB	■ Our referees slap Rivals with a five-minute major for sucking	3.5 4.0 6.5	
Nightshade	PS2	■ 3 Ninjas Kick Back on a scale of ninja-tude	6.0 5.5 5.0	
Ninja Gaiden	XB	■ Swordplay so sweet that you'll break out the split-toe slip-ons	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	PS2	■ The soul-sucking series finale has us screaming "Vive la France!"	8.5 7.0 9.0	Silver
Onimusha Blade Warriors	PS2	■ Think Super Smash Bros. (GC) with Bushido instead of butt-stomping	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Phantasy Star Online: Episode III	GC	■ As deep and addictive as real-life card games, but without all that geeky cardboard	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Pokémon Channel	GC	■ Good god, change the channel!	3.5 2.0 6.0	
Pokémon Colosseum	GC	■ Story mode injects some life into this otherwise mediocre Poké-battler	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Project Gotham Racing 2	XB	■ Xbox's best and most fun racer (well, along with RalliSport 2)	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	PS2/XB	■ Better than bullet time, Psi-Ops' brain powers are mind blowing	8.0 7.5 7.5	
Puyo Pop Fever	GC	■ A classic puzzle game updated with new modes and short-bus-ready characters	7.0 7.0 7.0	
R: Racing Evolution	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not much of a racer, but the ladies look lovely	6.5 6.0 4.5	
RalliSport Challenge 2	XB	■ Who knew driving in Sweden could be so much fun?	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Rainbow Six 3	XB	■ Oi! Clancy's Rainbow is one of Xbox's sharpest shooters...	9.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Rainbow Six 3	PS2	■ ...too bad the dumbed-down PS2 version misses the mark	5.0 6.0 6.0	
Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	XB	■ Mission-pack for the squad-based FPS is worth it for its expanded online features	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	PS2	■ A veritable cavalcade of platforming, shooting, space faring, and comedic hijinks	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Red Dead Revolver	PS2/XB	■ Guess we skipped the history lesson about the fat cowboy in a dynamite suit	6.0 4.5 4.0	
Resident Evil Outbreak	PS2	■ Raccoon City is more like Silent Hill when you can't speak with other players	5.5 6.5 7.0	
Rise to Honor	PS2	■ Tap-tap your right analog stick in this repetitive brawler with 360-degree combat	6.5 6.5 6.0	
R-Type Final	PS2	■ Remind your thumbs of yesterday with this fun throwback to '90s shooters	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	PS2/XB/GC	■ This samurai's game is better than expected...but still can't beat the cartoon	6.0 7.0 5.5	
Samurai Warriors	PS2	■ The series hasn't been there (Japan), but it's done that (skewer oodles of swordsmen)	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Sega GT Online	XB	■ Runs a good race, but can't keep pace with RalliSport and Project Gotham Racing 2	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Serious Sam: Next Encounter	PS2/GC	■ Never take your finger off the trigger in this dumb but fun first-person shooter	6.5 7.0 5.0	
Seven Samurai 20XX	PS2	■ See hari-kari	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	XB	■ War is hell—but still preferable to this modern-day, cliché-ridden first-person shooter	4.0 4.5 4.0	
Shining Force: Res. of the Dark Dragon	GBA	■ Addictive tactical RPG, but still a few steps shy of Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	PS2/XB	■ This glitchy grappler's retirees reek of Bengay	3.5 3.0 2.5	
Shrek 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Made for the kiddies, but a fun four-player fairy tale all the same	7.5 6.0 5.0	
Siren	PS2	■ Battle hayseed zombies in this Silent Hill clone that's more convoluted than creepy	5.0 7.0 4.0	
Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2	PS2	■ Smash may not look as good as Kournikova, but hey, it plays better	7.0 8.0 8.0	
Spider-Man 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Sticky-string commuting across New York City is a thrill, but combat's a tangled web	7.0 7.0 7.0	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	XB	■ The ultimate stealth game with revolutionary 2-on-2 online multiplayer...	10 9.5 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	PS2	■ ...gets a little chopped up on PS2, but non-Xboxers won't even notice...	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	GC	■ ...unlike GameCube owners, who'll wonder where the multiplayer modes went	7.0 8.0 7.5	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	GBA	■ Packs the stealth gameplay of the big-console version but none of the fun	4.5 5.0 4.5	
SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	■ This is one online war we hope never sees a cease in hostilities	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	XB	■ Another bland Star Wars third-person action game? Time to drop out	6.0 6.5 3.0	
Steel Battalion: Line of Contact	XB	■ This ultradeep robo sim's horrible interface and laggy play need an overhaul	5.0 5.5 4.5	
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	PS2	■ Celebrate a decade of street fighting with the champs of 2D combat	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	PS2	■ Low-fever shoot-em-up contaminated by foul controls	6.5 6.5 5.0	
Tales of Symphonia	GC	■ Solid adventure with a dippy plot, but RPG-starved Cube kids won't mind	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Thief: Deadly Shadows	XB	■ Adjust your TV set in this too-dark game of grand theft bauble set in medieval times	7.0 7.0 8.5	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ As hot as Tiger's bride-to-be. Well, almost	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
TOCA Race Driver 2	XB	■ Every form of racing devised by man...what? No mud bogging? #@\$! this noise	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Top Spin	XB	■ Microsoft steps up to the service line and nails an ace with Top Spin	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Transformers	PS2	■ Carriers that change into mile-high robots? Doesn't get much cooler than that	8.0 7.5 7.5	
UFC: Sudden Impact	PS2	■ There comes a point in every fighter's career when it's time to hang it up	6.0 4.5 4.0	
Van Helsing	PS2/XB	■ Van doesn't mind biting Devil May Cry so long as he can stick it to the count	7.0 6.5 6.0	
WarioWare, Inc.: Mega Party Game\$	GC	■ Single player stinks of a quick cash in—split the bill with four friends	8.0 6.5 7.0	
Way of the Samurai 2	PS2	■ The way of the warrior presents plenty of branching paths, but they're all kinda boring	6.0 5.5 5.0	
World Tour Soccer 2005	PS2	■ Receives a yellow card for its unresponsive controls and shallow gameplay options	6.5 5.0 4.5	
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	PS2	■ Of course, it doesn't tell you that the pain won't subside for four to six weeks	7.5 8.0 7.0	
WWE Wrestlemania XIX	GC	■ A tedious story mode keeps McMahon's bunch outta the main event	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Worms 3D	PS2/XB/GC	■ That's an entire extra dimension of caricatured carnage! Great multiplayer fun	7.5 7.5 6.5	

TREND SPOTTING

Gore is one thing, but showing a glass shard into a man's eye socket until he stops squirming (*Manhunt*), dragging women in your wheel wells (*RoadKill*), and whittling evildoers down one limb at a time (*Soldier of Fortune 2: Double Helix*) is a tad gratuitous. These games hoped to turn media fervor into free advertising.



Manhunt
(PS2)
7.0, 6.5, 7.0



RoadKill
(PS2/XB/GC)
5.5, 8.0, 5.0



Soldier of Fortune 2: Double Helix
(XB)
3.5, 6.5, 7.0



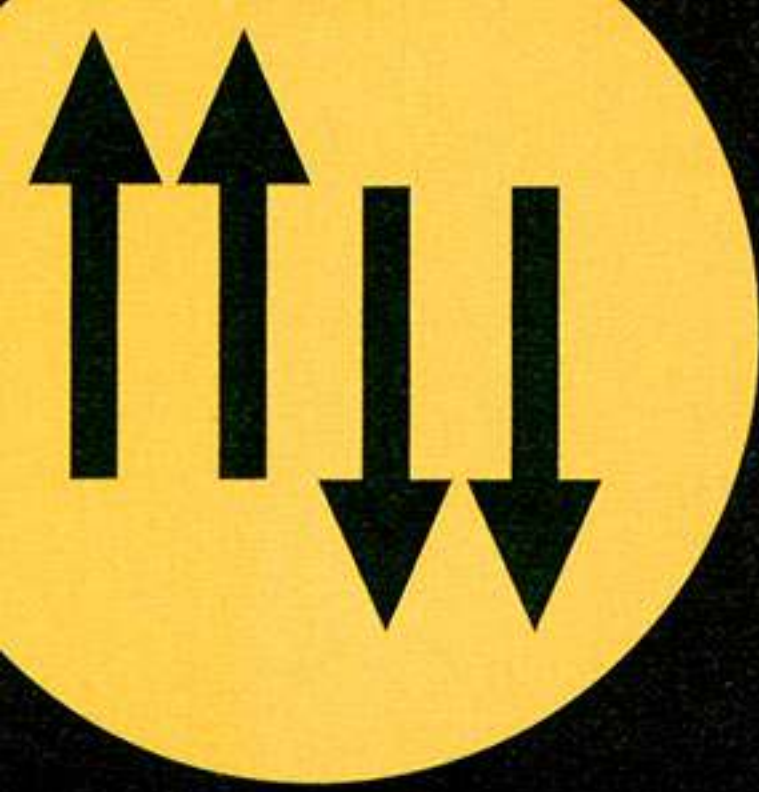
The Suffering
(PS2/XB)
6.5, 6.0, 6.5

bargain bin bounty



BREAKDOWN

■ **Xbox**
■ **Released:** March 2004
■ **Original Scores:** 8.5, 8.5, 7.0
Don't bother with machine guns; the bad guys you'll face in this first-person brawler are bulletproof. Instead, your memory-impaired protagonist puts up his plasma-powered dukes and punches holes in heads. But *Breakdown* isn't all brawn; its story, told through a series of unsettling flashbacks and hallucinations, is every bit as brainy.



tricks of the trade

if you can't beat 'em, cheat

trickster

What's that? Frolicking on the beach? Mowing the lawn for your Uncle Spenny? A hot-n-steamy romance with



the lady from the ice cream store who told you she was 23 but was in fact a 36-year-old married mother of two? We've learned from our past mistakes. The basement doors are bolted. The pizza boxes are strewn liberally about. There's a faint smell of toe-cheese in the air. Mom's out with her new boyfriend Kenny in his newly spray-painted Camaro. The *Madden NFL 2005*, *NCAA Football 2005*, *Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow*, *Spider-Man 2*, and yes, even the old-school *Mega Man* tricks are ready to be tested. All is right with the world.

—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com

■ PS2/XB/GC

MADDEN NFL 2005

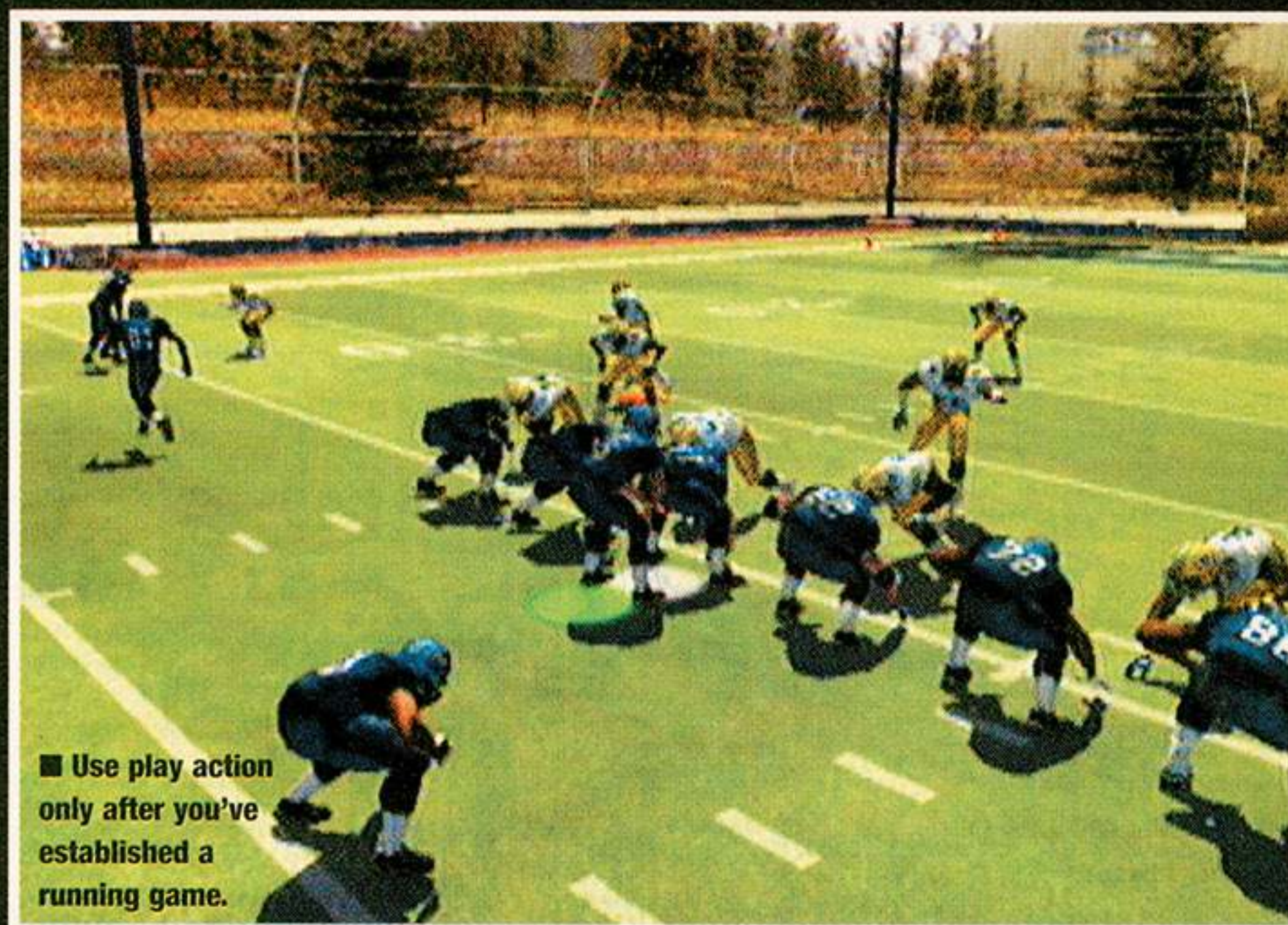
Offense 101: advanced passing techniques

Learning the basic pass routes and what coverage to throw them against is just the beginning of the passing game. At some point, your opponents begin to throw some new wrinkles at you, and you will need to adjust with some advanced techniques.

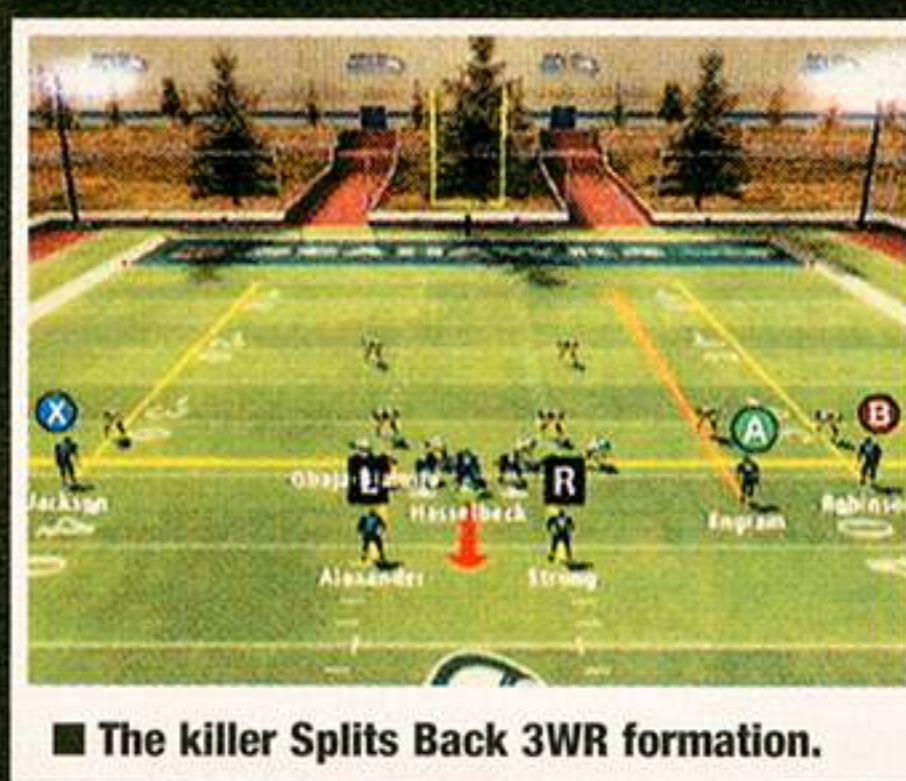
Play action

Utilizing the play action effectively requires running the ball enough to get the defense to bite on the fake. You must have a strong running game in order to make the most of the play-action pass. By doing this you can keep the defense both honest and off balance. Using the play action does two things to the defense. First, it slows down the pass rush. Often the defender will pinch in toward the running back, giving you time to drop back and look for a receiver. Second, it forces the linebackers and defensive backs to make a decision: Do they cover their assigned receiver or come up in run support? Play action should usually be used on first or second downs. Avoid it on passing downs like third and long. Also, as you near the goal line, defenses tend to run more blitzes than in the middle of the field. This can spell doom for your play-action passing game.

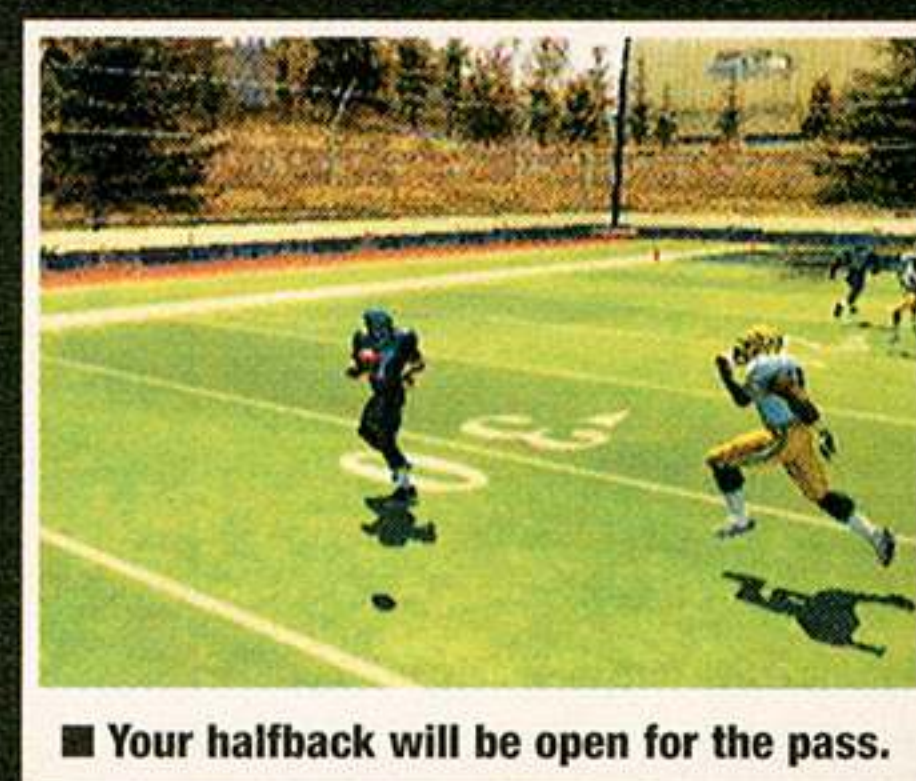
The linebacker bites on the fake handoff to the halfback. With the linebacker out of position, the quarterback throws a strike to



■ Use play action only after you've established a running game.



■ The killer Splits Back 3WR formation.



■ Your halfback will be open for the pass.

the flanker coming on the middle on a drag route. You can also use play-action passes with deep routes. If the safety bites on the fake, he will often be out of position to help the cornerback.

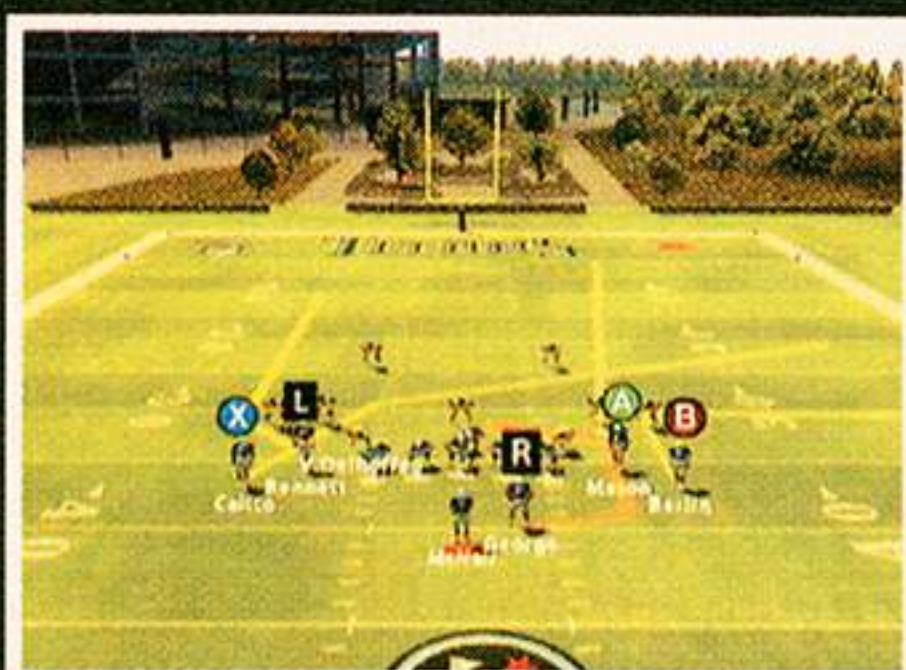
Hot route: backs on out routes

One of the more effective ways to use hot routes is to send the backs on out routes. More often than not, one will always be open once they make their break toward the side. In screenshot one (above left), the formation is Splits Backs 3WR. Notice both backs have been hot routed on outs. The other three receivers have been hot routed on streaks, clearing out the underneath coverage. The halfback ends up matched with a linebacker. In most cases this matchup favors the offense. After the halfback makes his break toward the sideline, he gets big-time separation

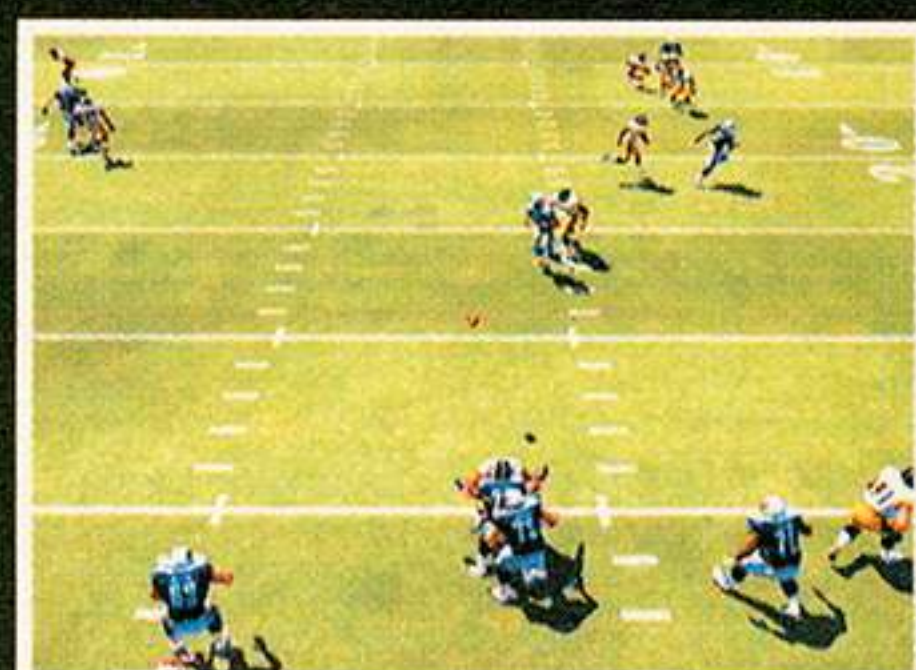
on the linebacker. The halfback is wide open near the sideline with an easy throw for the quarterback to make.

Step up, step back

If you're feeling the rush from the outside when in the shotgun formation, use the "step up, step back" technique to buy extra time in the pocket. After the snap, step up in the pocket, hold there for about a second, then step back. The defenders will pinch in toward the offensive line, giving the quarterback time to survey the field and find the open receiver. Here, the offense has called a play from the Shotgun Tight formation (below left). The QB steps up in the pocket. When the defensive line is drawn in, the QB can drop back in the pocket. Now it's just a matter of making the correct read and throwing the pass. The halfback running a circle route over the middle is open for a quick gain.



■ Step up, step back, step the heck off!



■ The defensive line will be toast.

GAME DIRECTORY

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NCAA Football 2005120
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Spider-Man 2120

■ XB

RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

Your squad

Black Arrow uses squad-based assaults. Your men can provide you with offensive and defensive support, making your job a whole lot easier—if you know how to use them to the best of their abilities.

No, you go first!

Moving into areas that have lots of hiding spots for snipers is dangerous business: Balconies above the streets, dark spots for gunman to hide in, and obstructions or debris can all spell trouble.

The Streets of Milan level is one such place. When faced with its long open areas, assign your men to a spot a little further down the road, preferably near some cover such as a car or wall. If they make it there and are waiting for your

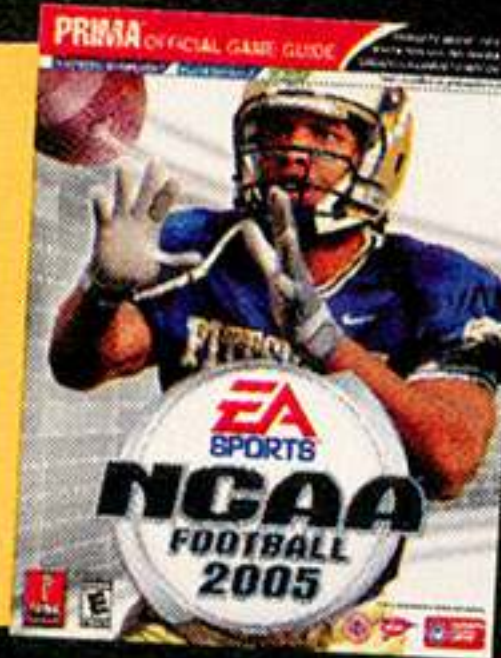


■ If one of your guys has to go, better him than you. (It pays to be the boss....)

next command, then you know you can advance safely to their position. If you see them start to fire at previously unseen attackers, you'll not only know where the sniper is located but also have the luxury of not being fired on. Hurry in to back up your men and quickly put down the armed terrorist.

**TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH PRIMA GAMES**

Enjoying these scintillating strategies and titillating tips? You can find these secrets and many, many more in the Prima strategy guides for *DRIV3R*, *Madden NFL 2005*, *NCAA Football 2005*, and *Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow*, on sale now at all the finest retail outlets.



■ PS2/GC

MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

This month we have even more *Mega Man* madness, this time for for games 2-7 in the series. Go Mega-crazy!

Mega Man 2

All energy tanks

A5 B1 B3 C4 D2 D3 E1 E4 E5

All weapons, items, and 4 energy tanks

A5 B2 B4 C1 C3 C5 D4 D5 E2

Mega Man 3

All weapons, items, 9 energy tanks, and no Dr. Wily Robots

Blue: A3 B5 D3 F4 Red: A6

Mega Man 4

All weapons and items

A1 A4 B5 E2 F1 F3

Mega Man 5

All weapons and items

Blue: B4 D6 F1 Red: C1 D4 F6

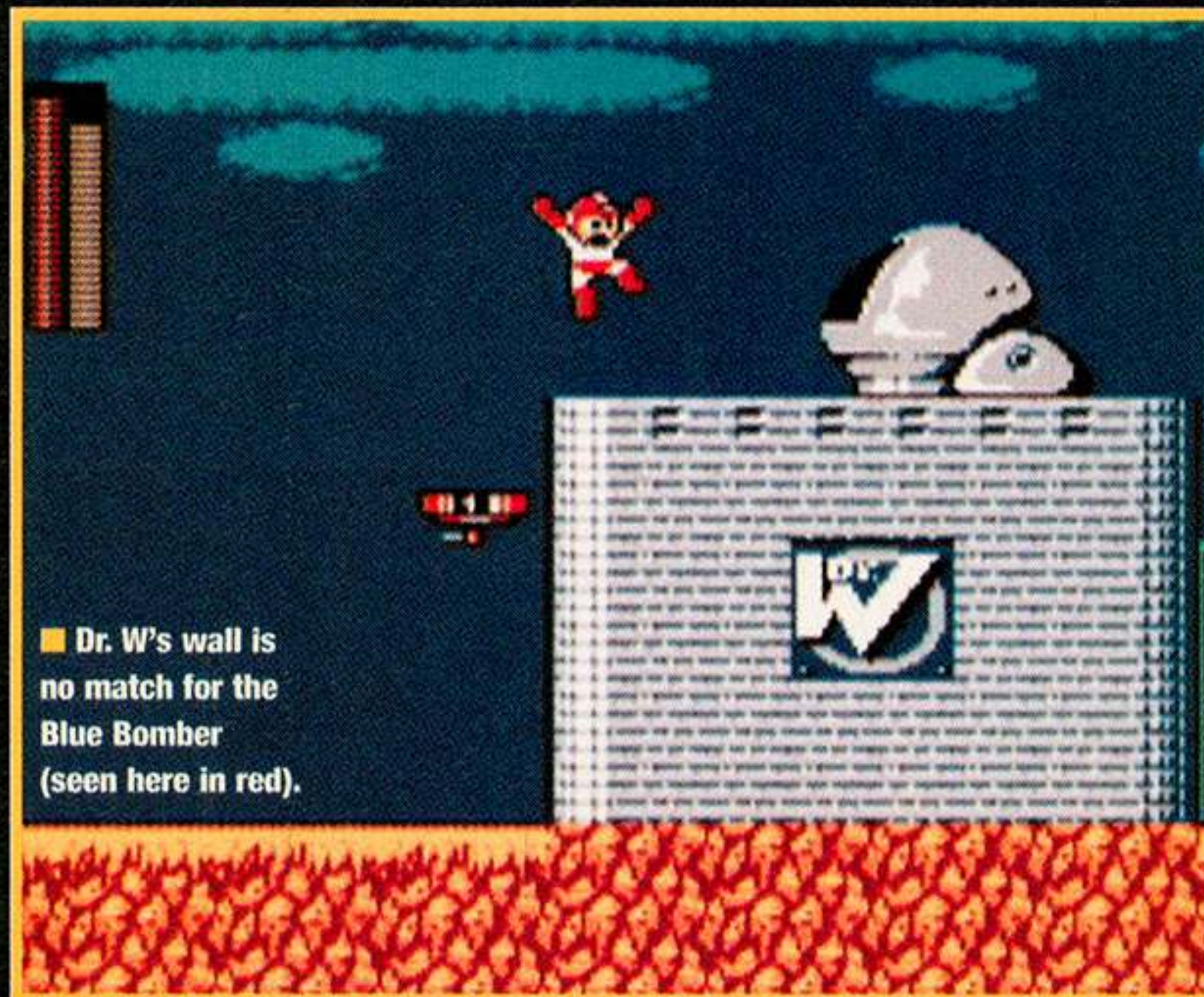
Mega Man 6

All weapons and items

B6 D4 F2 F4 F6

Mega Man 7

R.U.S.H., super rocket arm, 999 bolts, 4 birds, 4 energy & weapon tanks, SP tank, energy bolt, exit,



all weapons, shield, robot screw, all bosses dead

7853 5842 2245 7515

Homage to Mega Man Song

Complete *Mega Man 2*

Mega Man 2: The Power Fighters

Complete *Mega Man 7*

Mega Man Drum & Bass Song

Defeat the first three bosses of *Mega Man 8*

Mega Man Power Fighters

Complete *Mega Man 3*

Mega Man Radio Cut Song

Complete *Mega Man 7*

Mega Man: The Power Battles

Complete *Mega Man 3*

Picture Set 1

Complete *Mega Man 2*

Picture Set 2

Complete *Mega Man 4*

Picture Set 3

Complete *Mega Man 8*

Plant Man Remix Song

Defeat Plant Man in *Mega Man 5*

Power Battle

Defeat Needle Man in *Mega Man 3*

Power Fighters

Defeat Junk Man in *Mega Man 7*

Protoman Song

Complete *Mega Man 4*

Select Jungle Remix

Complete *Mega Man 7*

Unlock Interview

Get to Wily's Tower in *Mega Man 8*

Wily vs. Bass Song

Complete *Mega Man 4*



■ PS2/XB

DRIV3R

These codes can be entered at the Main menu.

PS2

All Weapons

R1, L2, Square, Circle, R1, R2, L2

All Missions

L1, R1, L1, L2, Square, Square, Circle

All Vehicles

L1, L1, Square, Circle, L1, R1, Circle

Invincibility

Square, Square, L1, R1, L2, R2, R2 (won't work in story mode)

XB

All Weapons

L Trigger, L Trigger, X, Y, Y, R Trigger, R Trigger

Invincibility

X, Y, L Trigger, R Trigger, L Trigger, R Trigger, L Trigger (won't work in story mode)

Unlimited Ammo

R, R, L, L, X, Y, Y

All Missions

X, X, Y, Y, R Trigger, R Trigger, L Trigger

All Vehicles

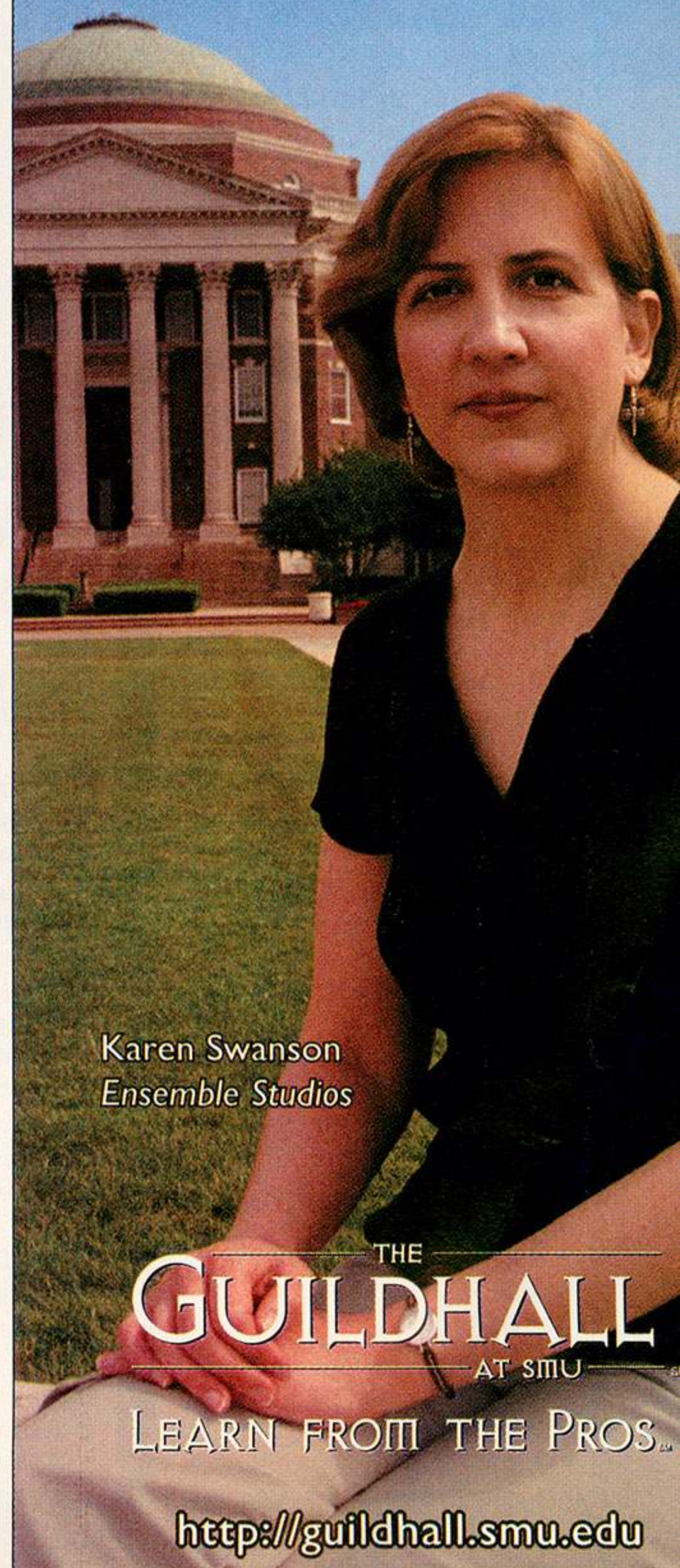
X, X, Y, Y, L Trigger, R Trigger, L Trigger >



Why does gaming professional **Karen Swanson** recommend **The Guildhall?**

Simple. She helped design the curriculum.

“The Guildhall at SMU is teaching a diverse mix of students to build real games and exposing them to all aspects of the craft – from team building to marketing strategy. I believe this experience will take them far when they graduate.”



Karen Swanson
Ensemble Studios

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► ■ PS2/XB/GC

SPIDER-MAN 2

Something's gone wrong, Doc

Arguably the most frustrating part of *Spider-Man 2* is deactivating the reactor once Doctor Octavius' experiment goes awry. While this seems easy enough, having to destroy four terminals located around the reactor while avoiding the pulsating containment field becomes quite troubling. Throw in the fact that Spider-Man gets tossed around the room like a wet noodle every time he comes in contact with the pulse, and it makes this chore worth retiring your superhero tights over.

The lights hanging above the room would ordinarily be of great use to the web-slinging superhero, but in this case,

swinging or even web slinging is not going to do the trick—these moves just aren't fast enough. No sir, you have to go with a good old-fashioned jump. However, jumping the pulse to each side of the room requires a lot of patience, and you must learn the pulse's timing. So ignore the taunting of Tobey Maguire and take a few moments to watch the pulse and its pattern. The pulse becomes its largest, shrinks slightly, gets large again, and then finally subsides long enough to get from one clearing to the next before expanding once again.

The first terminal is easy to reach because the pulse becomes more erratic as the terminals are destroyed. Once the first terminal is out of the way, stand angled to the next terminal clearing so that when you do jump, Spidey doesn't

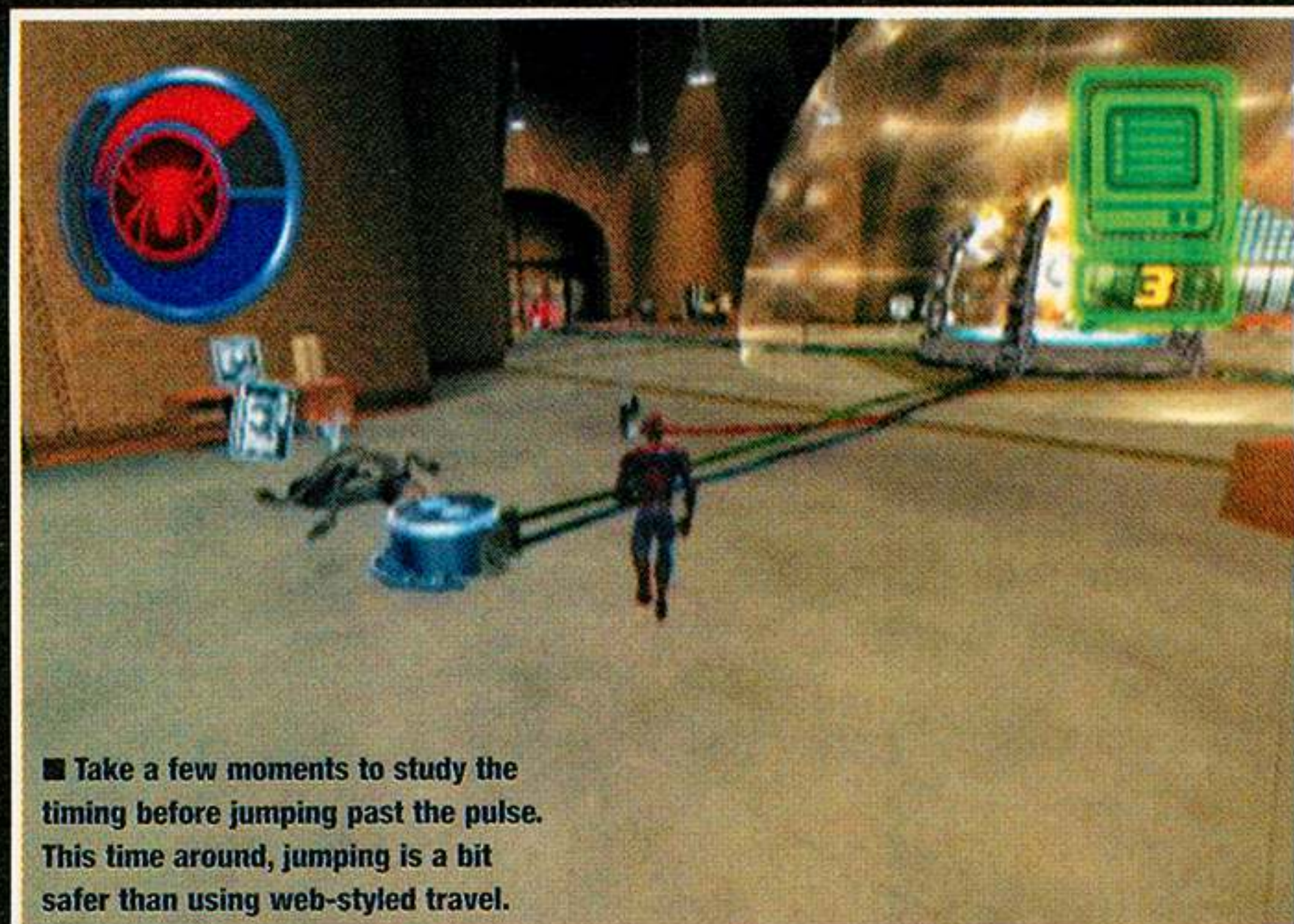


■ Carefully line up your jump so you avoid crashing into walls as you go over the pulse. Sprint with a charged jump to quickly get from one clearing to another.

crash into the curved sides of the vaulted ceiling. Hitting the walls will send Spider-Man bouncing into the pulse, tossing him around the room like a red-black-and-blue pinball. Begin charging a jump on the outskirts of the pulse and hold down Sprint. When the pulse begins to shift to the smallest diameter, quickly fling yourself to the next clearing. Watch the pulse carefully as you move from one



■ In addition to the pulse's erratic behavior, you must also keep your senses honed on incoming bolts of electricity that periodically zap your Spidey ass.



■ Take a few moments to study the timing before jumping past the pulse. This time around, jumping is a bit safer than using web-styled travel.

■ PS2/XB

PSI OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

In the menu, go down to Extra Content and press the R Trigger (R1 for the PS2) and enter any of these codes for extra playmodels.

Crispy Soldier: 454566

Scorpion: 546546

TK Alley: 090702

Edgar Barret (Training 3): 196003

Marlena Kessler (Leather): 136876

Bottomless Pit: 154897

Tip the Idol: 428584

Dockworker: 364654

Edgar Barret: 497878

clearing to another. Remember, the pulse will look as though it's going to become small, but it will quickly become large again before getting small enough to jump past.

Timing the pulses is not the only thing you must worry about while deactivating the terminal: Bolts of electricity intermittently fire out from the reactor's core. Like any other projectile threat, press the Grab button to dodge when Spider-Man's head flashes. As you break the last terminal, keep in mind that the next time you encounter Doctor Octavius, he will be doing more than lying on the floor while you do the dirty work.

■ PS2/XB

MLB SLUGFEST: LOADED

These codes must be entered in the Versus screen.

PS2

Max Batting

Square, Square, Square, Left

Max Power

Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Left

Max Speed

Circle, Circle, Circle, Left

Unlimited Turbo

Square, Square, Square, Square, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Circle, Circle, Circle, Down

XB

Unlimited Turbo

X, X, X, X, Y, Y, Y, Y, B, B, B, B, Down

Max Batting

X, X, X, L

Max Power

Y, Y, Y, L

Max Speed

B, B, B, L

■ PS2/XB

NCAA FOOTBALL 2005

Creating an Offensive Game Plan

Know your players

Review your team's ratings at each position and pattern your game plan accordingly. If your running backs lack Speed but possess good Strength, feature an inside running game and use power-controller techniques. If your backs have blazing Speed, look for opportunities to get outside. If your quarterback has low Overall and Accuracy ratings, use simple, high-percentage passing routes that allow your receivers to get inside positions on the defenders.

Use a balanced attack

Avoid calling the same type of plays over and over on the same down. Vary the distance, pace, and location of your pass routes, going from quick outs to crosses to comebacks, as you utilize both sides of the field. On the ground, mix in counters



■ **Balanced attacks:** your key to success.

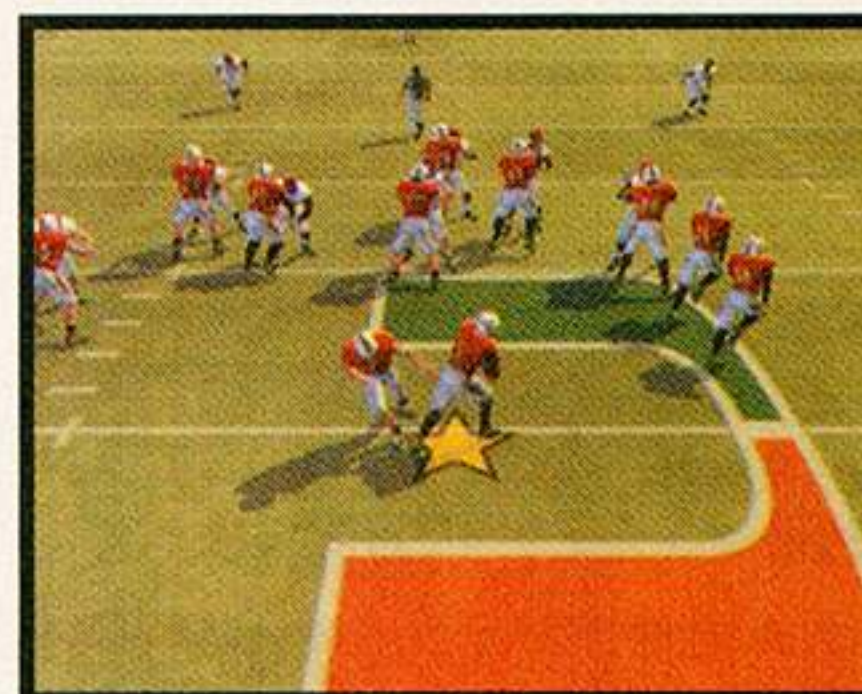
and misdirection. Don't give away your favorite side of the field.

Run on a passing down

Don't be afraid to keep the ball on the ground on 3rd and 6. You'll have the element of surprise, especially if you use a quick-hitting play like HB Direct, or call the option and take a sharp cut up the middle with the quarterback.

Read the blitz

If the linebackers and defensive backs are crowding the line of scrimmage, get ready for the blitz. Check your safety valve and short out patterns, and get ready to release the ball quickly after the snap. If you can avoid the initial rush,



■ **Shock value:** Run the ball on 3rd and 6.

look for your tight end, because if the linebackers are blitzing, the middle of the field is probably wide open. If you recognize the blitz but you don't have a short pass route in the selected play, Hot Route Audible to the Flare Left or Flare Right, or use a stored audible.

Don't forget to flip-flop

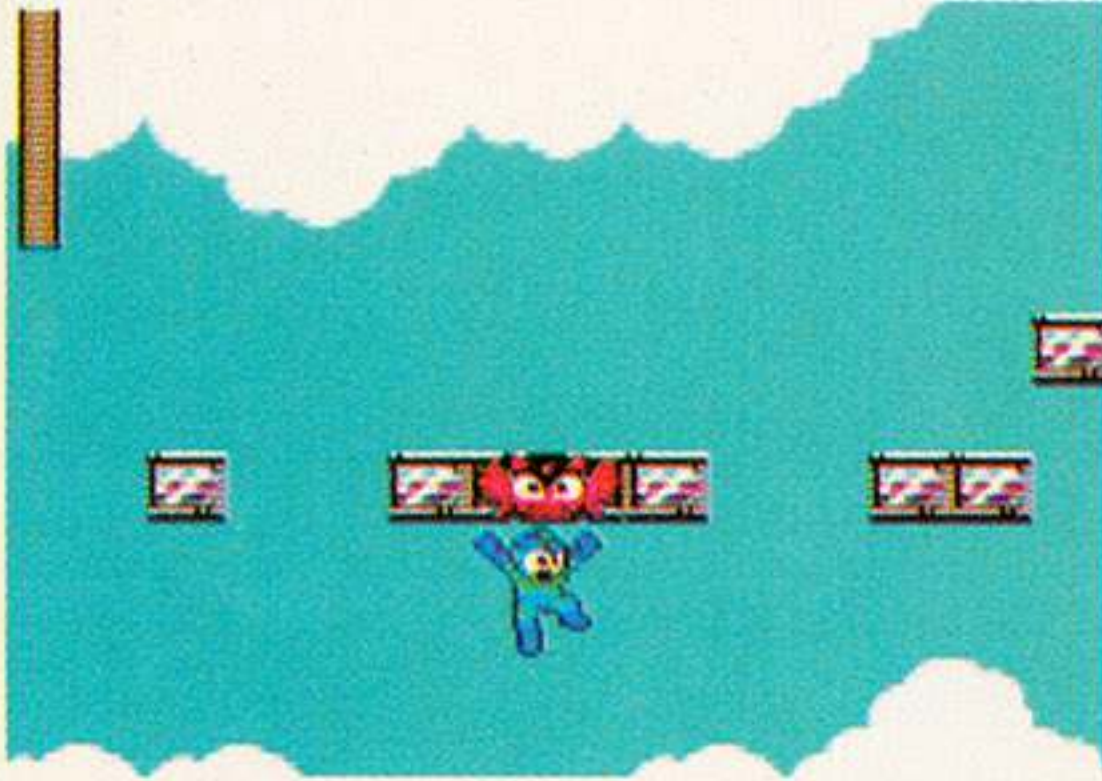
A quick and easy way to vary your attack is to use the Flip-Flop button on the playcalling screen.

Confuse the defense

Motion forces the defense to change its opening scheme. Be aware of the new position of your receiver. Try snapping the ball at various points in the motion path.



VS.



Action Replay puts in a respectable show this month, with *Mega Man* and *Mario Golf* codes.

■ GBA
Mario Golf

(M)
6ef7d4d9
07510443
645f454f
7dbceb9b

Player 1
a05a144c
078b0074

Max Exp./Level
cadadcda
402b1333

Max Drive
cec78dc8
f8ed2b8e

Max Height
48326a9e
ded39261

Max Shot
8fd51955
0eb8716f

Max Impact/Control
81a0b226
ff49284a

Max Spin
0d153ec5
c6301719

■ GC
Mega Man Anniversary Collection (Mega Man 2)

(M)
0XC1-CDZY-Y05PH
0F99-91CM-HHB7G

Exclusive!
Super Mega Man!
(Infinite Jumping, Invulnerability, and More)
XRFB-3RTT-CCX3U
D1UY-5B38-3BNJ4

00E8-13ZY-GRFTC
PXMM-4J5A-F1HMT
X3JG-8UBY-WAY3D
VR33-3A3B-55Z56
6EQK-AMUW-BXYB9

Exclusive!
Start at Dr. Wily with All Weapons
KUJ7-4KMQ-XMTRH
Z5AM-32R0-PXX94

■ PS2
Ribbit King
(M)
5057-G6D1-VVN8R
99ER-QMN6-3PXKY
RMAC-2DHC-NY16C

Exclusive!
One Round Battles – Save Slot 1
D634-Y4GZ-QCVQB
T2RV-WRZ7-11U5J
MZ43-4U3F-J42NB

Exclusive!
Game Complete
T23R-UKD0-GEM6D
YERK-3JPE-9DZWW
D87P-GOP7-4GNP
V6NU-87UB-UT7QN
VETY-74EK-WBQ47
GD49-RQ33-3GG6N
JF75-HW8Y-EZZVC
7BVG-MMK5-H3J7N
DEYE-XYCR-2UVZX
8CV6-4V20-WGKZ7
TMK2-UD4Z-HRNR
EHVH-QCQ9-G1Y7Q
CF1D-T5P1-NKGGD
M9Y3-ZNU9-90J9D
BW6U-EV77-QV0XA
K8XP-8X49-9RPBG
RE55-XTRX-N38XJ
5JKU-MUNN-215FW
BF08-G55B-HWG8P
Q4ZG-CH56-7HRRY
GNOP-Y392-U1KMZ
JER1-PYEJ-2U01U
CK16-DFQP-TWPH2
676X-RZDZ-WJCME
89RJ-U68B-C3QUN
GJPJ-HY4W-35UWV



GameShark does the *Mega Man* thing too, plus some exclusive *Spider-Man 2* (GBA) codes.

■ PS2
Mega Man Anniversary Collection

[M] Must be on
9481B9A0 17E6572E

Enable Secrets
2410902A B6B4C7DC

Have Picture Set 1
24109328 36B4C74C

Have Picture Set 2
24909328 36B4C76E

Have Picture Set 3
24109328 36B4C75E

Have Homage To Mega Man
24909328 B6B4C77C

Have Mega Man's Drum and Bass
24109328 B6B4C7CC

Have Proto Man
24909328 B6B4C7EE

Have Wily's Revenge
24109328 B6B4C7DE

Have Select Jungle
2490932A 36B4C7FC

Have Mega Man Radio Cut
2410912A 36B4C74C

Have Plantman
2490912A 36B4C76E

Have Wily vs. Bass
2410912A 36B4C75E

Have Mega Man Anime Episode
2490912A B6B4C77C

Have Atomic Planet Ent. Credits
2410912A B6B4C7CC

Unlock Mega Man: The Power Battle
0450B228 3634C75C

Unlock Mega Man 2: The Power Fighters
0450B228 3634E75C

Exclusive!
Mega Man: TPB: Mega Jump
\$D4009E76 BD7C0FB2
\$04B01D28 3E7455A8

Exclusive!
Mega Man: TPB: Press L2 to Warp Left
\$D4009E76 BD7C4EB2
\$14A0152C 367455A8

Exclusive!
Mega Man: TPB: Press R2 to Warp Right
\$D4009E76 BC7C0EB2
\$14301D28 BE7415AA

■ GBA
Spider-Man 2

Exclusive!
[M] Must be on
955162CCEDA7
86D492C35AD6
2FCF83C55A1E

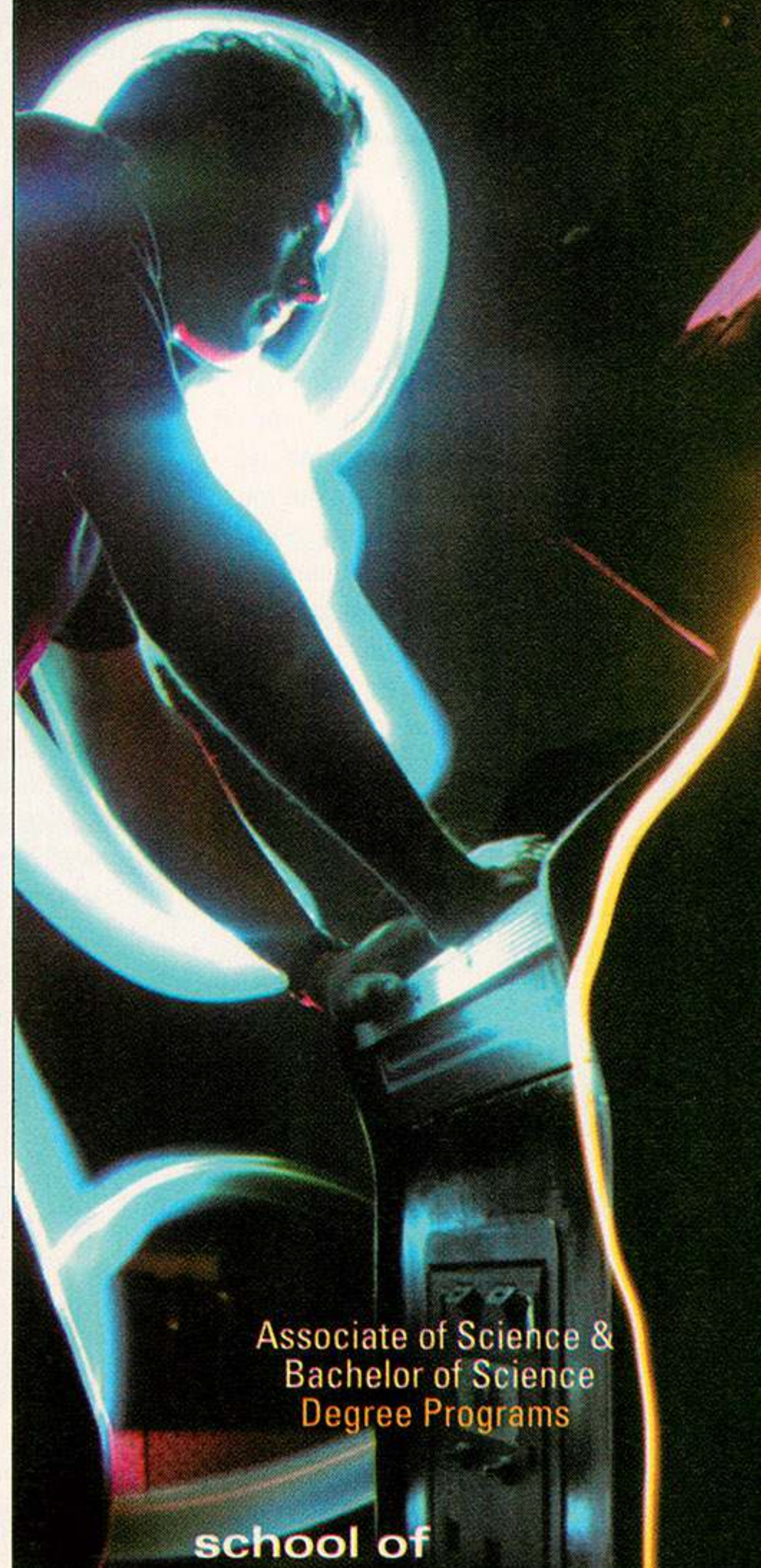
Exclusive!
Moon Jump
3765DF1108C9
D6565EBA001B

Mighty Beanz Pocket Puzzles
Exclusive!
[M] Must be on
9FFA581119C2
4E50492718DF
1EC8D2239494

Exclusive!
Have all Beanz and Power-Ups
32DB52BD2D27
49BDF4D20CDB
9C6D257F50F6
4E9994BB6EFB

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THE REST OF THE CRAP

All the s*** that's fit to print

help me

We're doing some things differently this month. Not because there has been a restructuring of crap in the last four weeks, but because I failed a psychological test, and a court order has made it illegal for several videogame genres to be within 300 yards of me. And as for how this came about, I'd like to apologize to the families of the victims in what is now being called the Fashion Funshine Massacre. I remember reviewing the create-a-dress feature in *Animal Giggletown 3*—next thing I know I'm waking up to my own screams, covered in the blood of elves and strawberry people. —Seanbaby



KNIGHT'S APPRENTICE: MEMORICK'S ADVENTURES

XB • XS Games — As I understand it from the 20-minute intro they were so sure I wanted to see that they wouldn't let me skip it, the time of gods has drawn to an end, and Memorick learns from his master Merlin that his treacherous journey will be fraught with peril. While I was watching it, clicking the button that doesn't skip it, I got to thinking. Wizard masters, if you're so damn lazy that you need me to go to the Cave of Death for the Orb of Never-Ending Danger, save yourself some time



■ Memorick, moments before saying "Screw it!" and jumping to his death.

and just let me assume that on the trip there, some peril will definitely be fraught. It doesn't inspire confidence when you scream, "The road to Dragobar is paved in Draculas! None has ever...RETURRRNNED! And pressing the B button twice performs a double-jump. Bye!"

Oh yeah, the game: In addition to how much I hate the wizards, I hated the rest of this game. I give it the score of one wizard trapped in a hat. Out of 50.



KINGDOM II: SHADOAN



■ Journey through pants-optional places of wonderment and impropriety.

DVD game • M2K — I can't believe some sadistic bastard is trying to sell this to people. It's a lame cartoon based on basic generic fantasy plot #3: Collect the Sacred Artifacts to Counter the Evil Something. Since it's made for DVD players and not a console, its gameplay is limited—after each short sequence, the action freezes and then you get to pick how the adventure continues. Do you A) stare at the screen, or B) go somewhere else and watch a different four-second cartoon? You'll be surprised how quickly you invent a third choice: crying into your hands.

I could not hate this game more. Aside from the lunatic control scheme that forces you to scroll past the "view credits" option in every single room, it's so boring you'd swear it was educational. If I live forever, I swear this is the last time I play a videogame on a home appliance that isn't a videogame console. OK, maybe after I try it out in my microwave and dive behind the couch, but then THAT'S IT.

Amazing but true: This is the worst game. I'm not qualifying it with "of all time" or "that I've played." If you're really calling this a game, then the context doesn't matter—this is the worst one.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

GBA • Hip Games — Jackie Chan made a movie about fighting corrupt water distributors in a magical tuxedo costarring his James Brown impersonation and Jennifer Love Hewitt, and its sheer amount of suckiness will defy description until the word "splorggledemic" is invented in the year 3086. We shouldn't judge him too harshly, though. Who can pretend to know



■ Jackie Chan's floating head makes another ridiculous proclamation.

the pressures of a man who's attacked by Nazi dune buggies every single time he's carrying something delicate and expensive? My point is that when Jackie Chan sucks, he does it in a spectacular way.

But not this time. This game is garbage in exactly the same way that nearly all licensed titles are. I don't expect GBA games about movies to redefine modern gameplay, but honestly, it'd be nice if one of them wasn't the same clumsy side-scrolling platformer with crappy visuals. In this case, its digitized actor graphics ensure that every character is a blurry swarm of ugly, and since Jackie himself moves exclusively in spastic eight-foot steps, he and your thumbs are going to have many arguments over whether he should stay on the tiny platform or herky-jerk to his death.

Maybe his eighth one will be good! This is Jackie Chan's seventh bad game, and since his next movie is probably going to be about a Frisbee expert who accidentally gets elected copresident of the United States with a chimp and a talking human, I don't expect a lot out of the game based on it.

peripheral crap

Radica Game Changer SP

What if I told you that with the Radica brand Game Changer SP, you'll never change cartridges again? With a click of a switch, the Game Changer swaps them for you, and it holds up to three games! You read that right, *three entire games!*

I'm not a Game Boy size scientist, so my figures aren't official, but this thing has got to make your GBA 12 times bigger. It's like attaching a lunch box to a GBA, only filled



■ The Game Changer SP enhancing away (left). Adult apatosaurus to indicate scale (right).

with convenience instead of lunch. Which is fine, because now you can use your Game Boy as a rescue raft in case of a water landing. Maybe Radica could offer an optional backpack attachment that could hold an additional four games. Or a Game Changer super van that could hold up to one screen magnifier and a medium-sized beverage.

Product Testing

Because if naming experts could fit a middle name between "Sean" and "Baby," it'd be "rigorous."

GBA without Game Changer

Swapping three games the old-fashioned way and turning them on took a total of 18.6 primitive caveman seconds. This included the time when I recognized the *Disney Princess* cart and my finger trembled on the power switch.



GBA with Game Changer

Loading the system and three games into the Game

Changer SP was a plastic-scraping struggle lasting 19.2 seconds. I didn't count this towards the official time, though, since a three-game-owner would presumably only perform this operation once in his or her lifetime. When ready for action, switching between games, including the brief period when I had to smack it to get its power switch to work, took only 15.9 seconds, a blazing 2.7 seconds faster than manually swapping cartridges. Or, as the Game Changer marketers refer to it, "Your daddy's way of changing cartridges!"

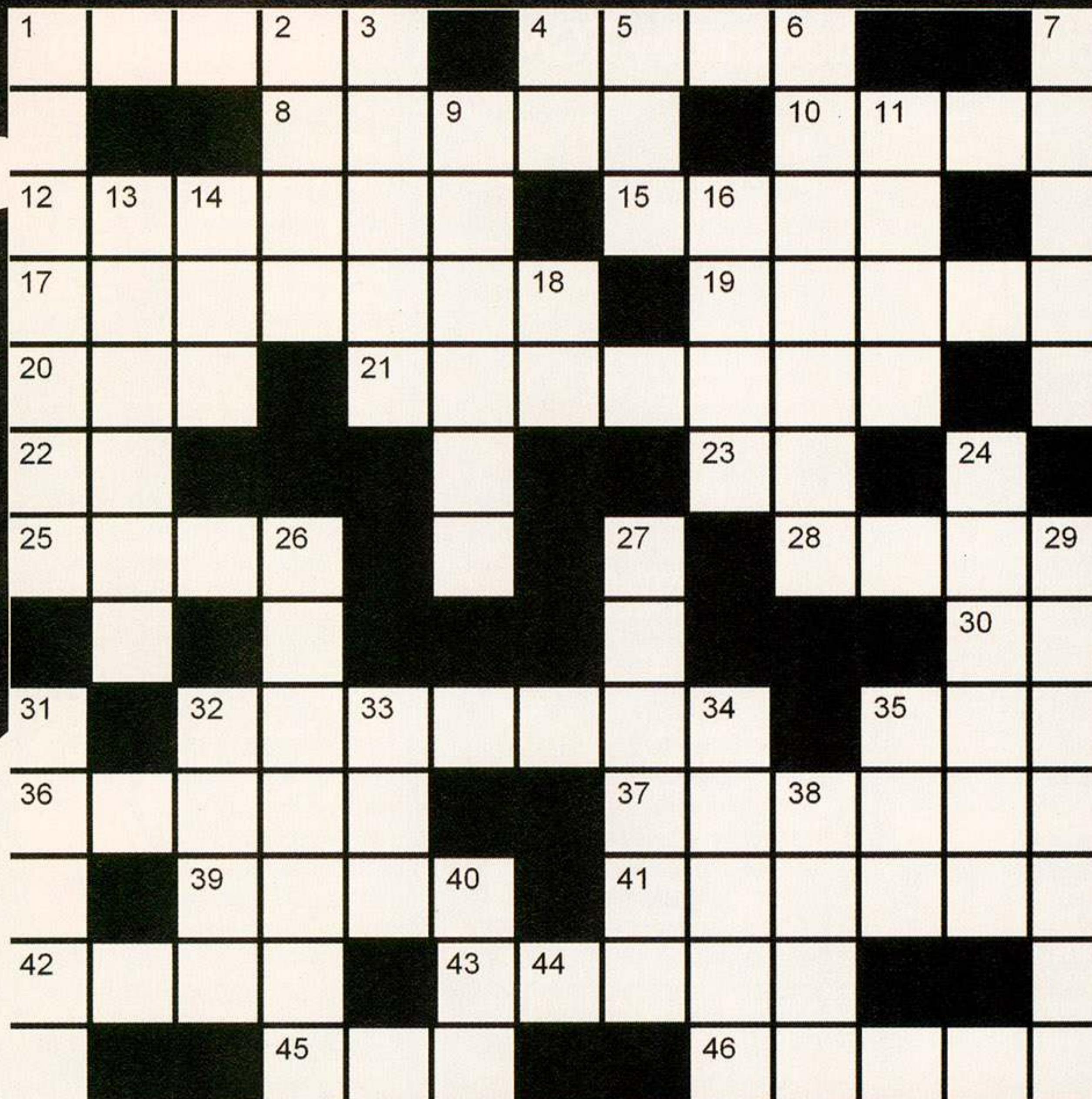


Conclusion

Not counting the initial investment of 19.2 seconds, a three-game-owner will, under optimum conditions, save .9 seconds every time he or she changes a game. Which means that after several weeks of cartridge-switching, you'll have saved enough time to tie that shoelace you've been putting off. 🦖

SAY HELLO TO OUR LI'L FRIEND

(Solution on page 125)



ACROSS

1. *Bad* arcade beat-em-up pair
4. Reptilian 3D platformer
8. *Futurama*'s (PS2) Bender, for one
10. *Crazy Climber* (Arcade) exclamation
12. Plays Montana in *Scarface* movie
15. *Urbz* predecessor
17. Star of PS1 *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*
19. Celes' *Final Fantasy III* musical debut
20. Skim the net on a *Smash Court* serve
21. Hero of *Castlevania: Dracula X* (Super Nintendo)
22. PS2 motocross series
23. Opposite of MT for driving-game transmissions
25. Positions reticule
28. Like PS2's *Alter* or *Night*
32. *100 Bullets* publisher
35. Game series inspired by *Scarface* movie
36. Home for *Super Smash Bros. Melee*'s Ice Climbers?
37. Devastating *Final Fantasy* spell
39. Nina's *Tekken* sister
41. Those who've played and completed *Rival Schools*?
42. *Psi-Ops* primary weapon
43. Like Montana in *Scarface*
45. *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* maneuver
46. *Nightmare Creatures* gal

DOWN

1. Directed 12 ACROSS in *Scarface*
2. *WWE Smackdown!*'s Bischoff
3. *Ecco the Dolphin*'s echolocation
4. *Madden*'s Broncos home state (abbrv.)
5. Strategy-game acronym
6. Play *Athens 2004*?
7. Use codes?
9. Drill Man's (*Mega Man IV*) specialty
11. Xbox Live Gamertag is this type of name
13. Alfred's *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* sibling
14. "Stop filming" in *The Movies*
16. Ninth letter in *God of War* alphabet?
18. *Catwoman* creator
24. Iron Man's *Marvel vs. Capcom* cannon
26. You get 35 per game in the upcoming *WarioWare, Inc. DS*
27. *Bloody Roar* alter ego
29. Link's (*The Legend of Zelda*) toot flute
31. *Scarface* city
32. *NBA Live*'s Hawk Henderson
33. Like *The Suffering*'s Torque
34. *Ms. Pac-Man* consumable
35. *Sonic Chaos Emerald*, for one
38. Caught in *Sega Marine Fishing*
40. Back of a PS2 *Pirates* boat

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GAMERSCOPES

Blame Uranus! Gaming-inclined predictions by EGM's Clitoria Van Buren

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 21-Feb. 19)

I hear a lot of things, Aquarius. Naughty, nice, I've got lists about you that would make Santa even ruddier-faced than usual. One of your big secrets is going to come out this month—what will it be? Your shameful preference for Digimon over Pokémon? Perhaps you bought your Gundam collection preassembled? Either way, nerds are going to point and laugh and then readjust their glasses.



PISCES

(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Stop me if you've already tried this, but have you considered looking at 2D shoot-em-ups like *Gradius* and *R-Type* as a metaphor for life? Because it totally works. You can't go backward, you're constantly under assault by aliens from all sides...OK, so there are a couple kinks, but I think we have more than enough here to base a cult around, if not a full-fledged religion. Declare yourself Final Boss and run with it.



ARIES

(Mar. 21-Apr. 20)

Steer clear of the survival-horror games for a while—especially *Silent Hill 4: The Room*. What with your budding case of agoraphobia, Hill's you're-locked-in-your-apartment-but-oh-crap-there's-a-portal-to-hell-in-the-bathroom premise just might push you over the edge. Renowned homebody and *Final Fantasy* summon Ifrit knows exactly where you're coming from; you two should start a support group.



TAURUS

(Apr. 21-May 21)

You know how playing *Dance Dance Revolution* for exercise (rather than arcade bragging rights) has turned into some kind of nationwide phenomenon? Well it has. As a trailblazer and tastemaker, I'm looking in your direction to start a new craze, Taurus. I'm just blue-skying it here, but I'm thinking maybe EyeToy jumping jacks or *Steel Battalion* controller step aerobics. Something that will require you to wear great swathes of Lycra.



GEMINI

(May 22-June 21)

No more retro-cool videogame shirts from Hot Topic. I'm sorry. As a geek culture icon, Mega Man needs his rest. Another thing that needs a rest is the slavish collection of action-figures, particularly the bondage-zombies-from-outer-space-type crap. If you own any, they should be destroyed with professional-grade fireworks. Also, consider playing *Crash Twinsanity* but ultimately decide against it. I'm glad we had this stern talking-to.



CANCER

(June 22-July 22)

Hope you've been savin' up—the next few months are going to leave your wallet abused and sad. Not just because of all the big titles coming out, but because you're going to develop a compulsive videogame gambling addiction. Whether you're betting on who can dress the cutest pony in *Barbie Horse Adventures* or who's the best *Bubble Bobble*-er, you're gonna be a big loser.



LEO

(July 23-Aug. 21)

Time to let out your inner entrepreneur, Leo. Unfortunately or fortunately, the videogame industry has no equivalent to Ron Popeil's amazing Food Dehydrator, or even the Salad Shooter. I don't know how or why, but I'm relying on you to fix this glaring problem. Gamers need labor-saving devices, too, not to mention late-night infomercials hosted by Englishmen. Hulk-themed Xbox controllers just aren't crappy enough for me anymore.



VIRGO

(Aug. 22-Sept. 23)

Looks like Venus is in your third house, Virgo—small children and squeamish adults should avert their eyes, because it's about to get ugly. The cosmos officially hates you right now (try not to take it personally, but I also feel a mild dislike toward you at the moment), so expect just about everything to go wrong. Erased memory cards, dirty-disc errors, renting *Burnout 3* and finding the *Beaches* DVD inside the case....



LIBRA

(Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

Big Lady Trouble coming your way, Libra, when your sports-game lingo starts slipping into everyday life. Drop an "end around" or "trickled through the five hole" at an indelicate moment, and you may land straight in the penalty box. Sometimes it pays to like more obscure sports like dressage or jai alai—if you spout off about them, no one will know what the hell you're talking about. Now go play with your chic chac.



SCORPIO

(Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

Unlike the Department of Homeland Security, I have some very specific threat information for you, Scorp. Your long-dormant *Star Wars* love is about to come rushing back in, oh, say, about four weeks from now. You may even find yourself holding bargain-bin copies of *Obi-Wan* (XB) and *Masters of the Teras Kasi* (PS1), thinking, "Maybe these aren't so bad." Do yourself a solid and write some *Star Wars* fan fiction instead.



SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23-Dec. 22)

I know you've been secretly pulling for a "mature" Link, Sag, and from what I've heard about the next *Zelda* game, your dreams will come true. But you're not getting any younger—how long before you start championing comb-over Link and bum-knee Link? When a tube of Bengay becomes a primo power-up, maybe it's time to hang up the hat and booties. Don't make your beloved game characters follow you into the twilight.



CAPRICORN

(Dec. 23-Jan. 20)

I suggest you adopt a very strong antirobot stance, Cap. Maybe I was just dazzled by Will Smith's star turn in *I, Robot* (also known as *Yo, Robot* in Mexico), but I really feel someone needs to step up and get the antirobot movement rolling. Our own Seanbaby has long been a critic of our metal friends, but he's an ideas guy. You're an action guy. Boycott all robot-intensive games and wear a "Kill all robots" sandwich board in public.



Illustrations by eBoy

NEXT MONTH: NOVEMBER 2004 • ISSUE #184

ON SALE SEPTEMBER 21

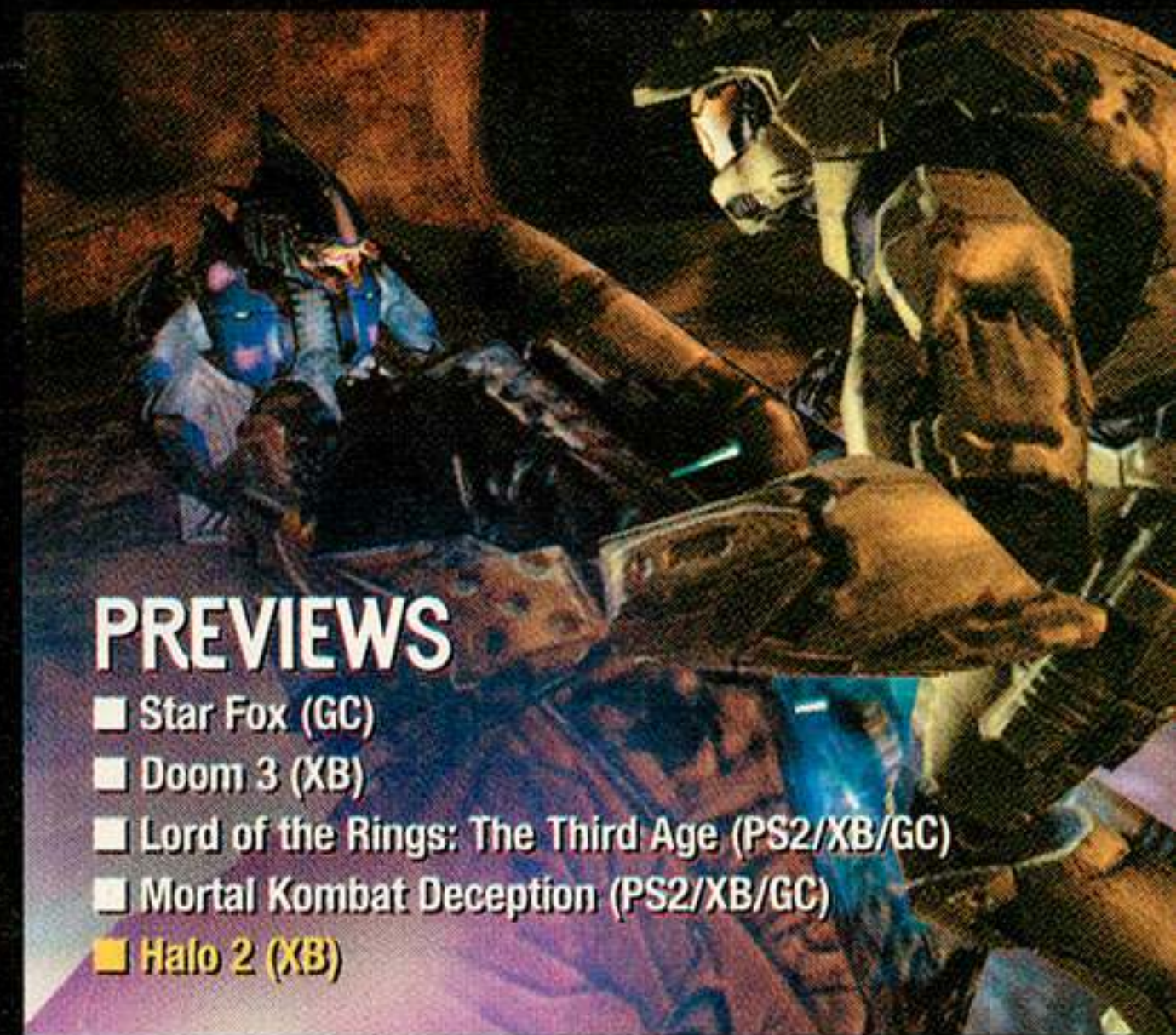
GRAND THEFT AUTO 4, 5, & 6

Well, OK, actually it's *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* we'll be taking for a joyride next issue, but with its three—count 'em *three*—huge cities, a sprawling countryside linking them all, and the developers at Rockstar talking about 150 hours of gameplay, it sounds like more than one game can handle. Like Dre says, get ready for the next episode.

Also, gird your loins for new hands-on coverage of first-person heavy-hitters *Halo 2* and *Metroid Prime 2*, plus new info and pics of the redesigned version of Nintendo's upcoming DS handheld system.

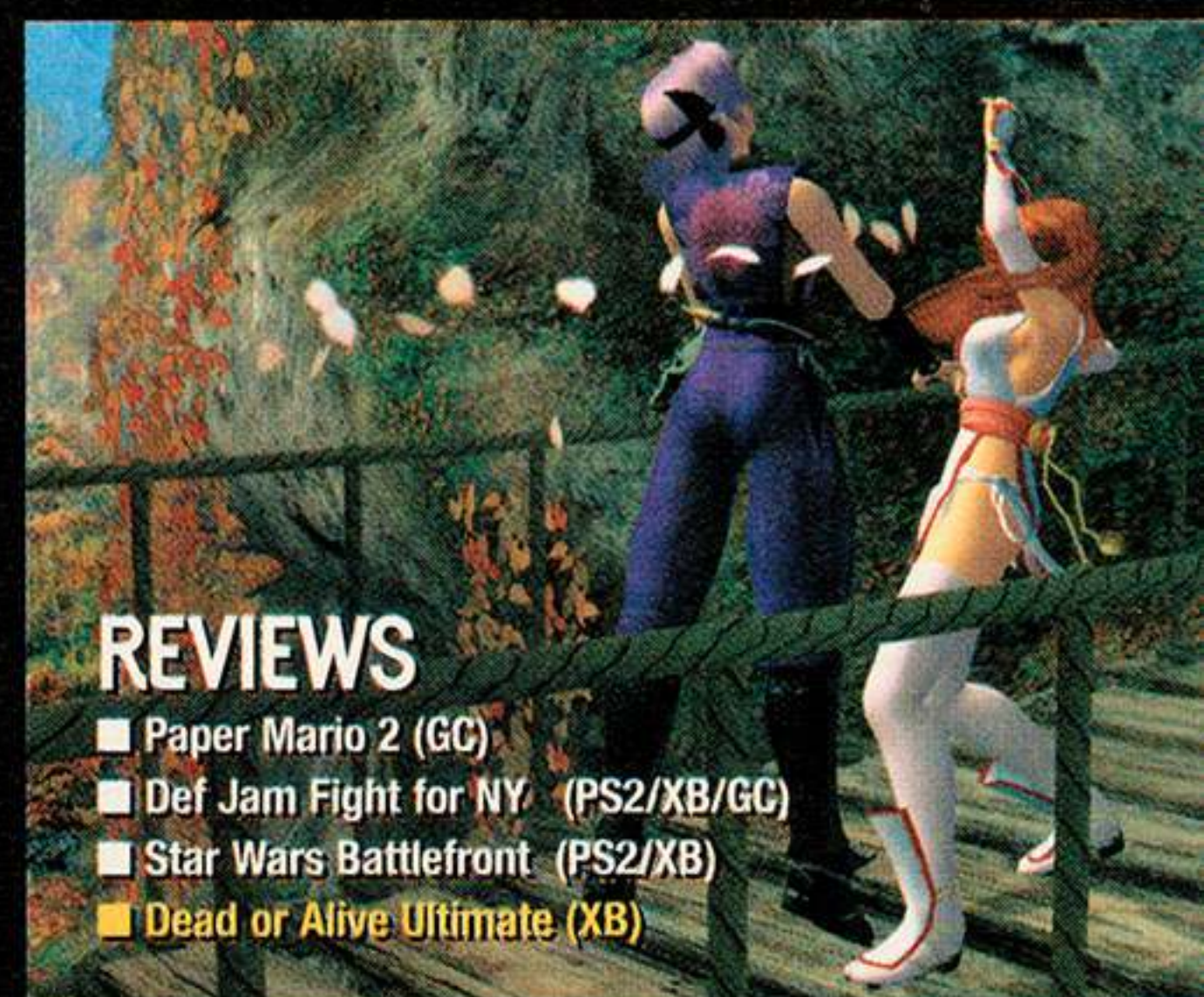


■ "Swing down, sweet chariot stop and, let me ride—hey! yeah."



PREVIEWS

- Star Fox (GC)
- Doom 3 (XB)
- Lord of the Rings: The Third Age (PS2/XB/GC)
- Mortal Kombat Deception (PS2/XB/GC)
- Halo 2 (XB)



REVIEWS

- Paper Mario 2 (GC)
- Def Jam Fight for NY (PS2/XB/GC)
- Star Wars Battlefront (PS2/XB)
- Dead or Alive Ultimate (XB)

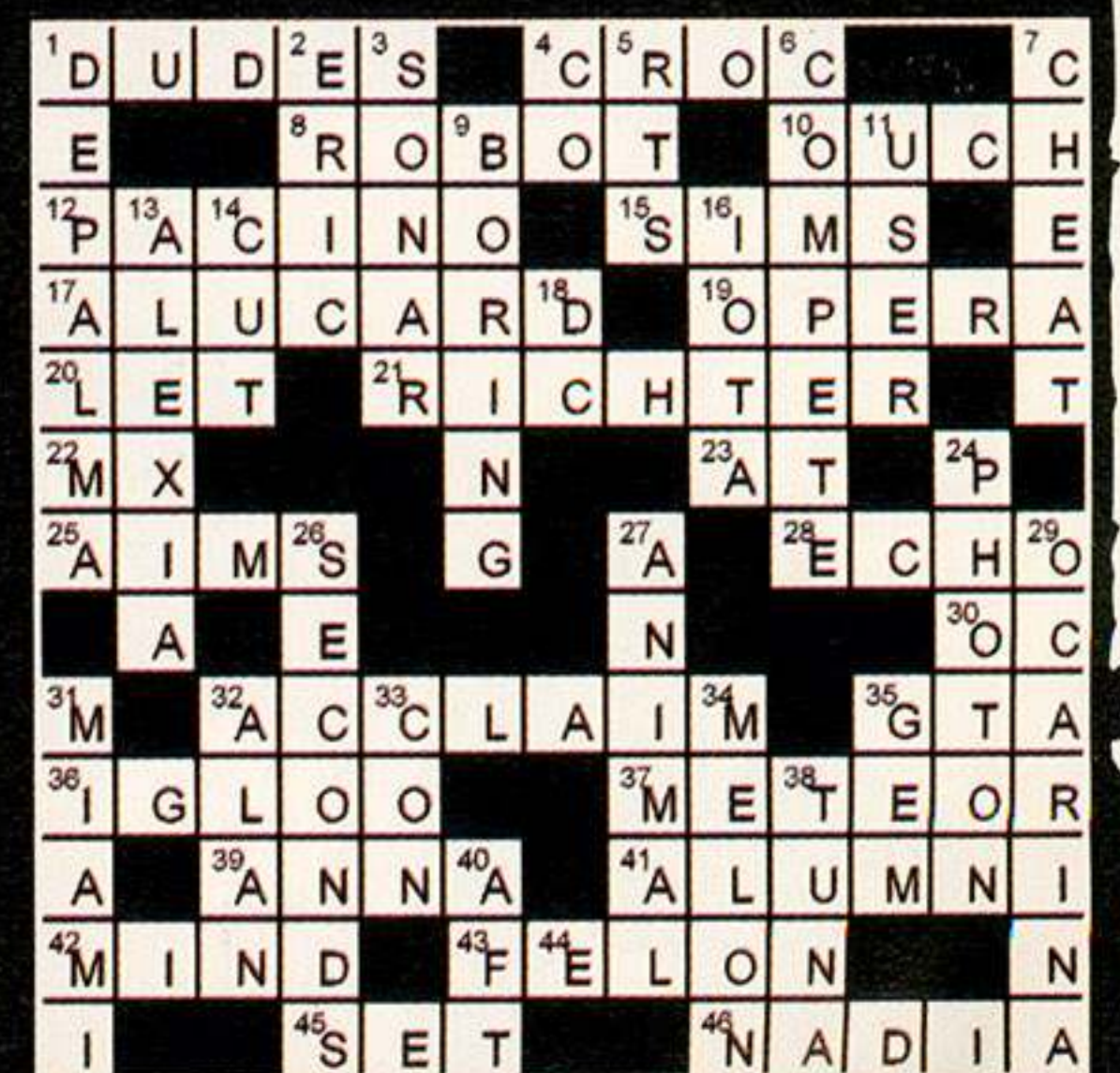
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HSU AND CHAN
 GAME DESIGNERS ARE...
'ABOVE THE LAW!'
 A MORALITY PLAY

OKAY, NOW WHAT?
 VWOOP

GREEN HILL POLICE DEPT

HELLO, VIDEO GAMERS-- I'M HSU TANAKA, AND I AM AFRAID I HAVE SOME GRIM NEWS FOR YOU, THIS DAY. VIDEO GAMES... ARE BAD FOR YOU.

AND IT TURNS OUT CATS ARE ACTUALLY NICE -- AND USEFUL!

MEOW.

THOUGH MANY IN THE INDUSTRY BALKED AT THE ACCUSATIONS LEVELLED AT VIOLENT GAMES -- THAT THEY CONTRIBUTE TO YOUTH VIOLENCE, ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND MALE-PATTERN BALDNESS -- WE AT TANAKA BROS. GAME DEVELOPMENT TAKE ANY THREAT TO OUR CONSUMER BASE VERY SERIOUSLY, EVEN WHEN WE RUN THE VERY REAL RISK OF HAVING TO CHANGE THE CONTENT OF OUR "MATURE" GAMES FROM "VIOLENT..."

HURT SQUAD
 BEACH CHECKERS
 ... TO JUST PLAIN DIRTY!

IN THEIR EXTENSIVE STUDIES, OUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT DISCOVERED A DISTURBING FACT MANY OF YOUR SENATORS ALREADY KNOW: VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES EMIT A TYPE OF LOW-LEVEL RADIATION KNOWN SCIENTIFICALLY AS "EVIL RAYS." EVIL RAYS ARE EMITTED ONLY BY VIDEO GAMES, WHICH IS WHY THOSE WHO PROTEST VIOLENT GAME SALES ARE NOT ALSO PROTESTING VIOLENT FILMS, MUSIC AND LITERATURE!

IT'S NOT JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE IGNORANT DOUBLE-STANDARDIZING JERKS, WE CAN TELL YOU THAT!

EVIL RAY
 GAME
 KID
 PUDDING

IN RESPONSE, THIS VERY DAY TBGD IS INCINERATING ITS ENTIRE STOCK OF VIOLENT GAMES, INCLUDING OUR 1988 BETA OF "FREDDY HARE'S FOREST HOP," WHICH WAS NOT VIOLENT, PER SE, BUT PORTRAYED ACORNS IN A THREATENING MANNER.

HSU-- THERE'S A RIP ON YOUR SLEEVE!

KILLIN' SUPPLIES

AAAIGH! DOUSE ME IN KEROSENE, QUICK!

HANG ON, BROTHER! YOU ONLY GOT A SMALL DOSE, MAYBE YOU'LL ONLY DO SOME THING A LITTLE EVIL, LIKE BEATING DAVID SPADE TO DEATH WITH A BRICK!

WE'D BEST REMOVE THE ARM, JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE!

MY INSIDES-- BURNING WITH EVIL...

UM... I GOT ROLAIDS.

I MUST WREAK HAVOC ON THIS WORLD!

PETTY CRIME SPREE!

10 ITEMS OR LESS

GRUNT!

ACHOO!

ENDLESS B...

NO LITTERING DO FINE

THE POWER... THE UTTER POWER!

HEY, YOU-- COME WITH ME, AND YOU DON'T GET HURT!

WHAT TH-- I KNOW YOU! YOU WORK FOR DON VITO BALONEY, THE PETTY CRIME BOSS!

NO TALKIN'! THE DON WILL SEE YOU NOW!

MR. TANAKA, YOUR WIDESPREAD PETTY CRIME HAS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF OUR ORGANIZATION... I LOOK AT YOU...

I SEE A MAN WHO KNOWS HIS WAY AROUND GUMBALL MACHINES AND PARKING METERS. I SEE A MAN WITH A LOT OF POTENTIAL...

BUT I ALSO SEE A MAN WHO HASN'T PAID US OUR DUE. THE BALONEYS, MR. TANAKA, ARE THE MOST POWERFUL PETTY CRIME FAMILY ON THE EAST COAST. THERE'S NOT SO MUCH AS AN EXPIRED AUTO INSPECTION STICKER THAT WE DON'T TAKE A CUT OF! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES! YES, SIR!

WAIT, NO-- HOW DOES THAT WORK OUT TO A DOLLAR AMOUNT?

IT'S A COMPLICATED BUSINESS. THE POINT IS, YOU DON'T PLAY IN OUR POOL UNTIL WE GIVE YOU SWIMMING TRUNKS! I GOT A JOB FOR YOU-- A CHANCE TO PROVE YOU GOT THE CHOPS FOR THIS LINE OF WORK!

ER.. THAT'S OKAY-- I DON'T THINK--

YOU'RE IN TOO DEEP TO BACK OUT NOW, KID! GET MOVIN' ANGELO'LL FILL YOU IN ON THE WAY!

C'MON!

ALAS!

WHAT'S THIS POOR FOOL IN FOR?

COUNTERFEITING COUPONS FOR FREE HOT DOGS.

HE'S SICK, THIS ONE!

IT WAS A SETUP!

MY FATHER WAS A HOT DOG VENDOR, YOU @!\$%!

YOUNG MAN -- I SEE IN YOU THE LOOK OF A GOOD MAN -- A GOOD MAN LED ASTRAY BY THAT VILE SEDUCTRESS AND ENEMY OF OUR YOUTH, THE VIDEOGAME! ALAS, IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOU, BUT PERHAPS WE'RE NOT TOO LATE TO SAVE THE CHILDREN, AND LET THEM SEE YOU REAP PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR CRIMES, TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF THE LAW!

SLAP!

OW.

TELL YOUR CHILDREN!

END!

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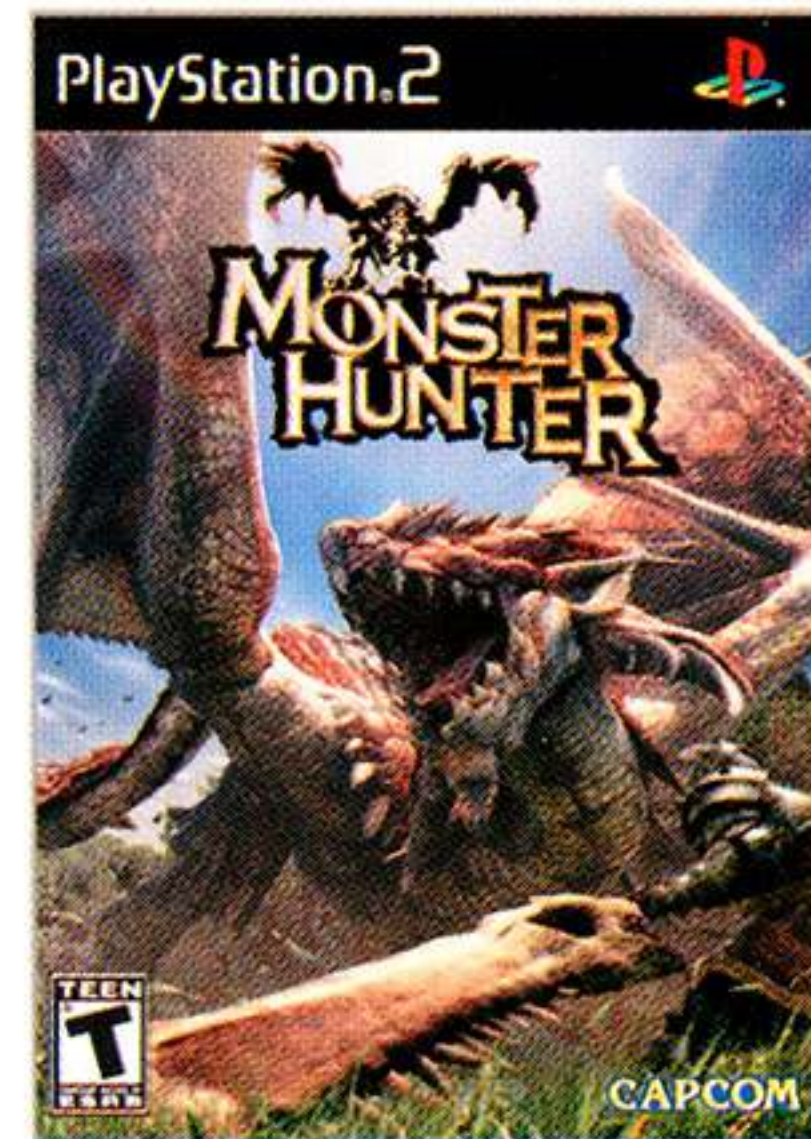
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