

WORLD EXCLUSIVE: METAL GEAR BOSSES EXPOSED! P. 58

GAMEPRO

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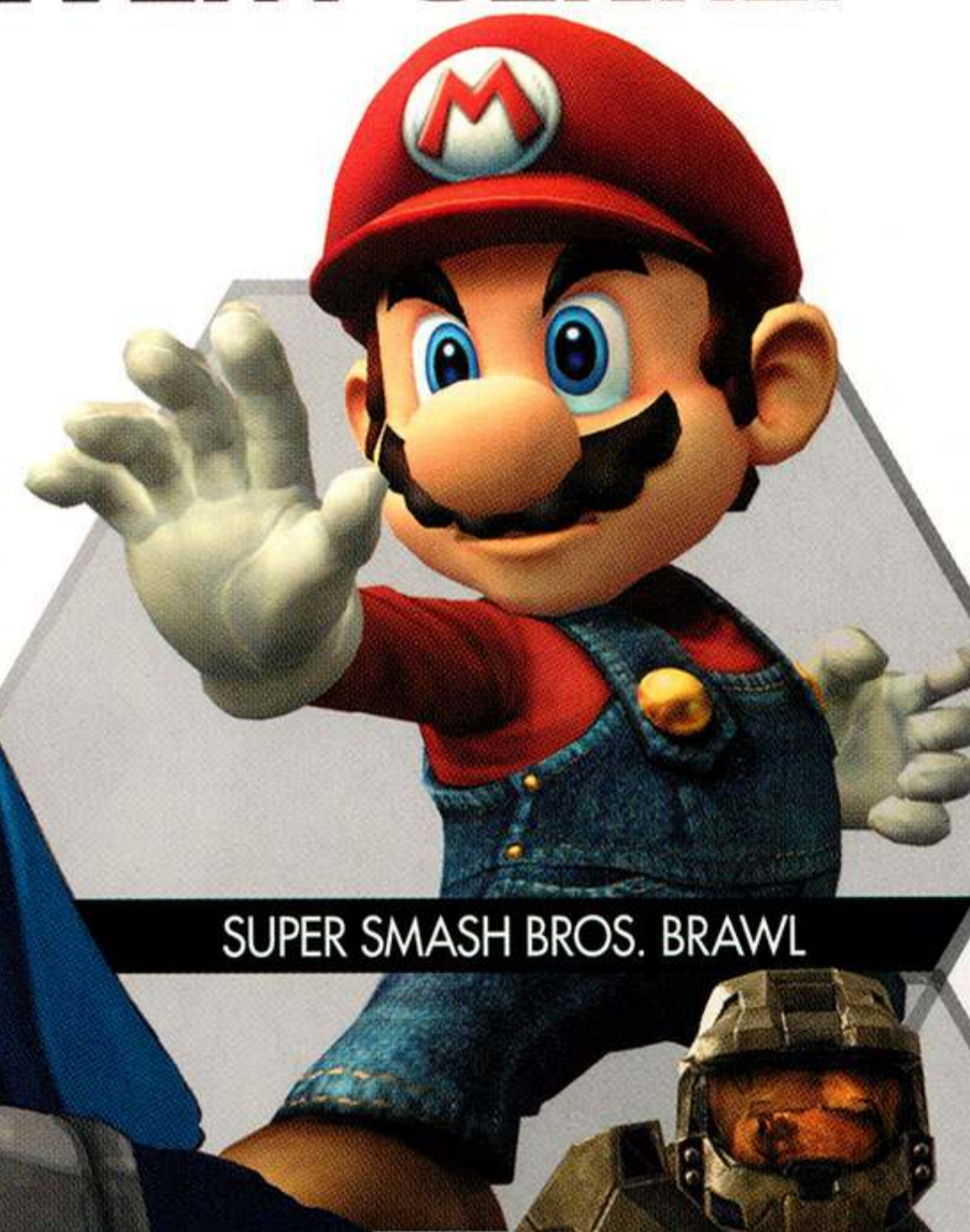
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2008 PREVIEW GUIDE

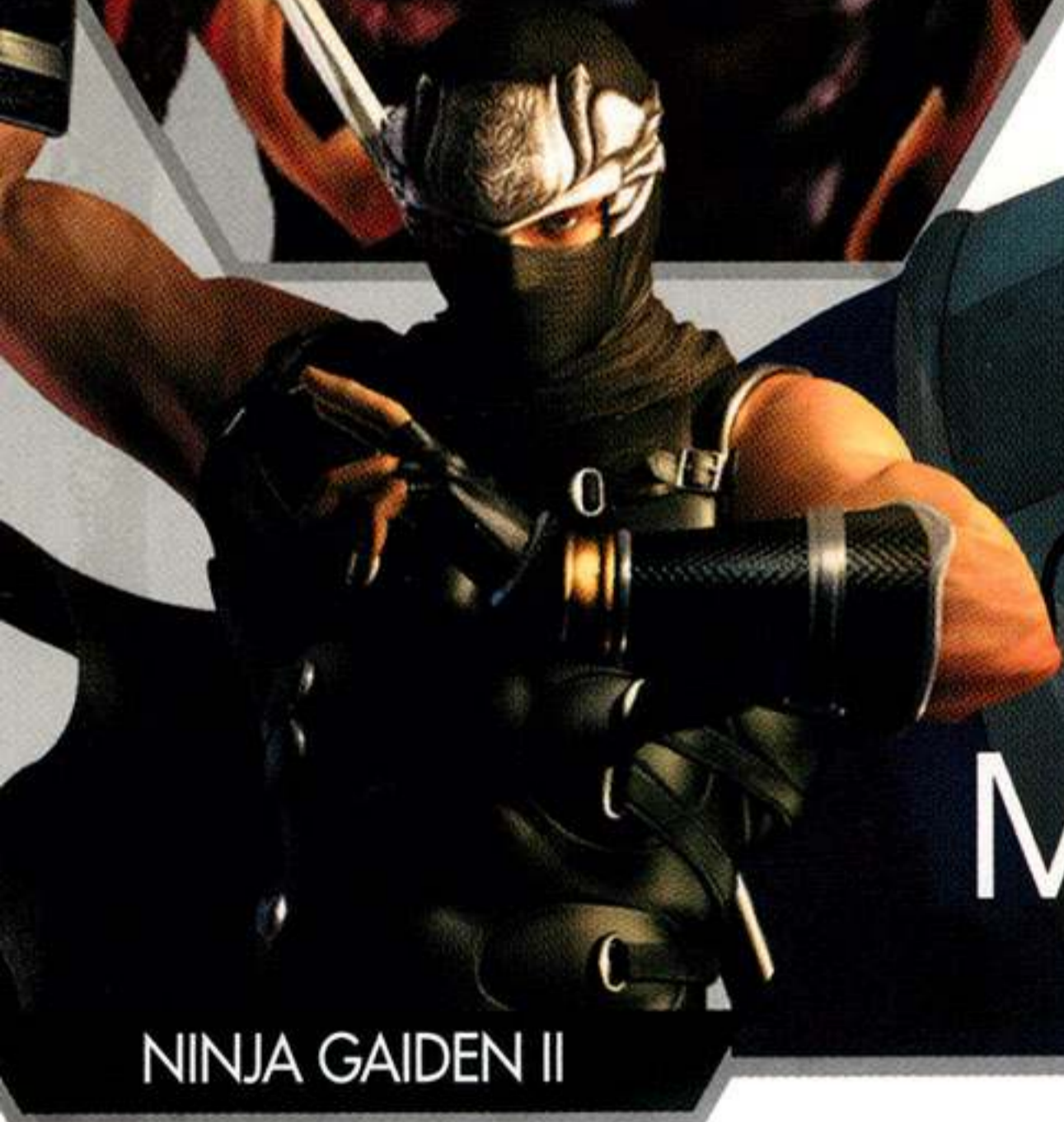
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NINJA GAIDEN II

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS



HALO WARS

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Issue 232 / JAN 08

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GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
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MARIO KART Wii
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ORCHESTRATE THE PERFECT OP.

22:01 Eliminate soldiers near ambassador.
22:02 Suppress fire on left building.
22:03 Cover northwest corner for extraction.

22:01 Eliminate enemy on balcony.
22:02 Provide covering fire.
22:03 Move in to extract ambassador.

www.socomtacticalstrike.com
www.us.playstation.com/psp
www.seal.navy.mil



Drug Reference
Violence

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Tactical Strike ©2007 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation," "PSP" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Internet connection and Memory Stick Duo™ may be required. Player responsible for Wi-Fi fees. The U.S. Navy provided technical support, but does not officially endorse this product.



22:01 Engage enemy soldiers.
22:02 Eliminate all enemy threats.
22:03 Cover team's extraction.

22:01 Fire grenade at machine gunner.
22:02 Move to secure ambassador.
22:03 Escort ambassador to rendezvous point.

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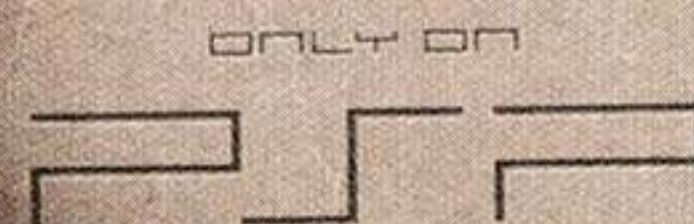
Play as a team. Experience the action from each SEAL's perspective.



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Evaluate the situation, plan your approach and execute on your command.



PlayStation Portable



★ Features

58 Mega Metal Gear

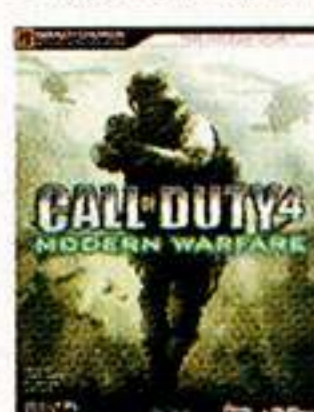
Four female bosses revealed and more Solid Snake than you can handle in our Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots blowout. Take an exclusive look at why Snake's latest adventure is *the* PS3 game to get.



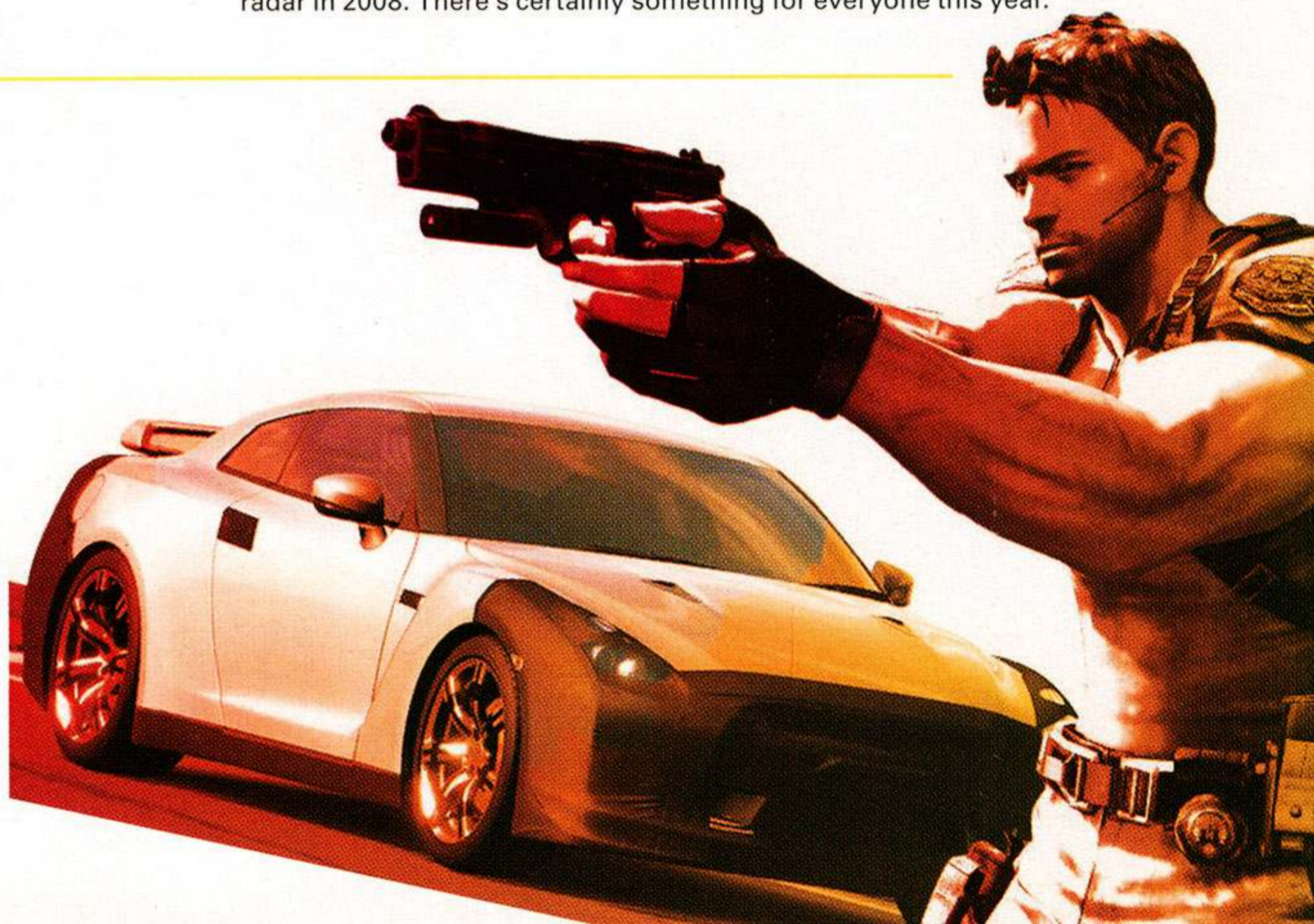
36 The 48 Most-Promising Games of 2008

Killzone 2, Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and Ninja Gaiden 2 are just the tip of the iceberg. We list off the top games to keep on your radar in 2008. There's certainly something for everyone this year.

64 BradyGames Strategy: Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



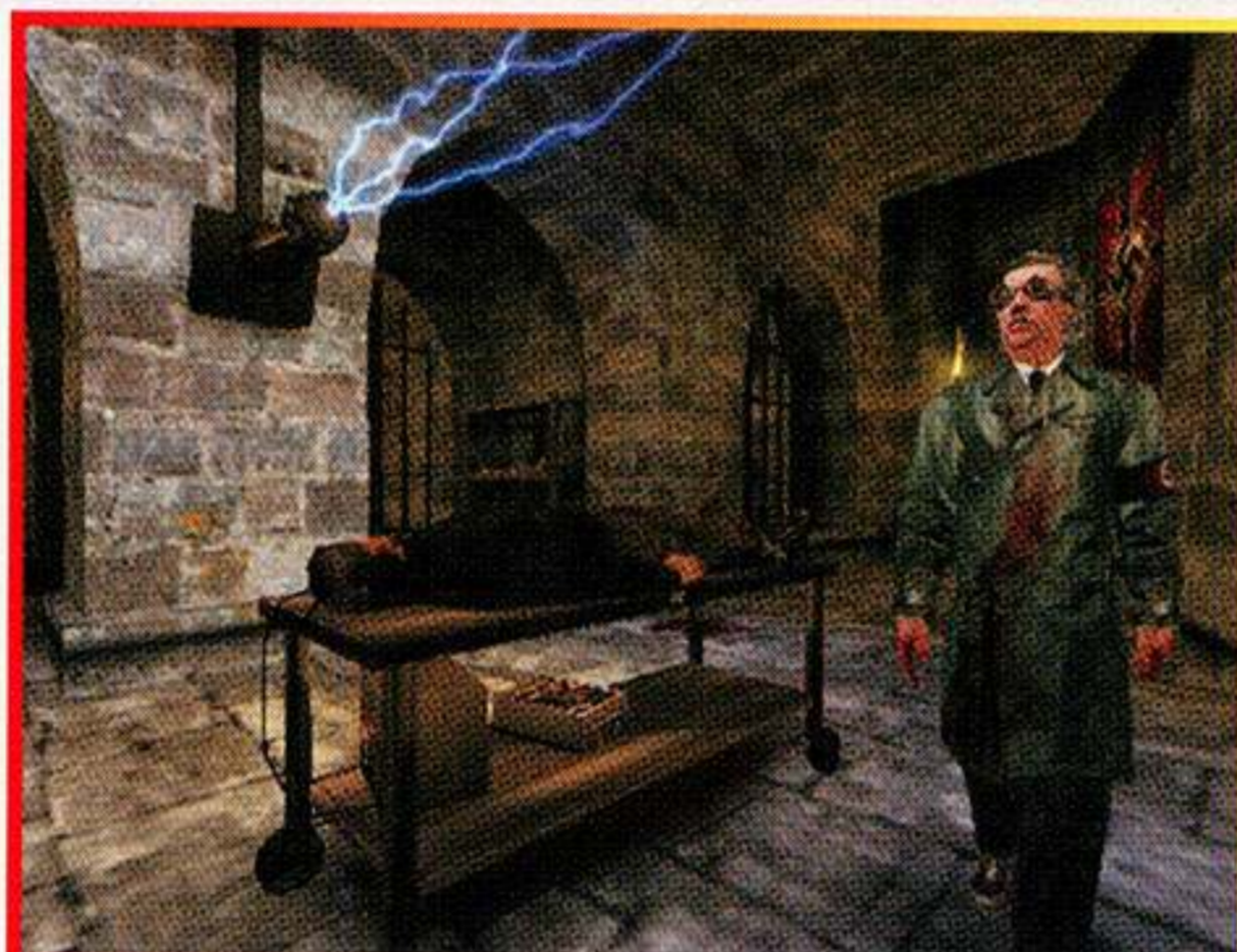
Is Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare better than Halo 3? Who cares (they're both great games). In this excerpt from the full guide, we walk you through two multiplayer levels—Ambush and Downpour—complete with maps and weapon breakdowns. For more Call of Duty strategies, check out the full guide from BradyGames, on sale now



★ Departments

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22 Project Origin: Life Without F.E.A.R.

Sure, they may not have the name but there's no need to F.E.A.R.: Monolith's on the right track with the sequel to its cult-hit FPS. Just don't call it, uh, F.E.A.R. 2.

26 Wolfenstein Goes Hollywood

At last year's QuakeCon, id Software CEO Todd Hollenshead announced that Academy Award-winning screenwriter Roger Avary (*Pulp Fiction*) will be writing and directing *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* for the big screen. Avary took some time away from writing the script to talk about his latest adaptation of a video game franchise in this exclusive interview.

28 Race for Photorealism

Photorealistic cars, Blu-ray vs. DVD, and Home integration, *GamePro* digs for the latest details on Gran Turismo 5: Prologue for the PlayStation 3.

Change is in the Air

Weird, isn't it? The year 2007 has come and gone...and everything feels different. Lately I've been struck by the sheer number of radical changes that have impacted our world of video games. I think that when we look back at 2007, we'll see it as the Year That Everything Changed. Here are a few standouts from the year that was:

Microsoft and Nintendo took the lead: Sony's not out the race yet, but it's looking more and more like the Wii and the Xbox 360 will be the reigning champions of the current generation, with the PS3 filling in the bizarre GameCube slot from last generation. For those of us who grew up with the PlayStation and PS2, Sony's lower standing this generation comes as something of a shock. It doesn't mean the PS3 has failed... it just means that Sony is no longer the undisputed champion. They'll have to fight harder than they've ever fought before.

Buying and selling: Activision bought Red Octane (Guitar Hero) and Bizarre Creations (PGR). EA gobbled up BioWare (Mass Effect) and Pandemic (Mercenaries) for over \$600 million. There are a bunch of other acquisitions I'm forgetting, but the message is clear: game companies are getting bigger and bigger. How will this shift impact gamers? We may find out in 2008.

And, well, *GamePro* dropped personas: After 18 years and tons of jokes, 2007 was the year when the staff of *GamePro* decided to call it quits on "editorial personas" (which included Major Mike, Mr. Marbles, and yours truly, Vicious Sid). As far as big changes go, this wasn't much of an earth-shaker...yet I think it shows how gaming as a whole is getting a bit older and, hopefully, wiser.

Sid Shuman
Senior Editor
sid_shuman@gamepro.com

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IN THEIR FUTURE LIES



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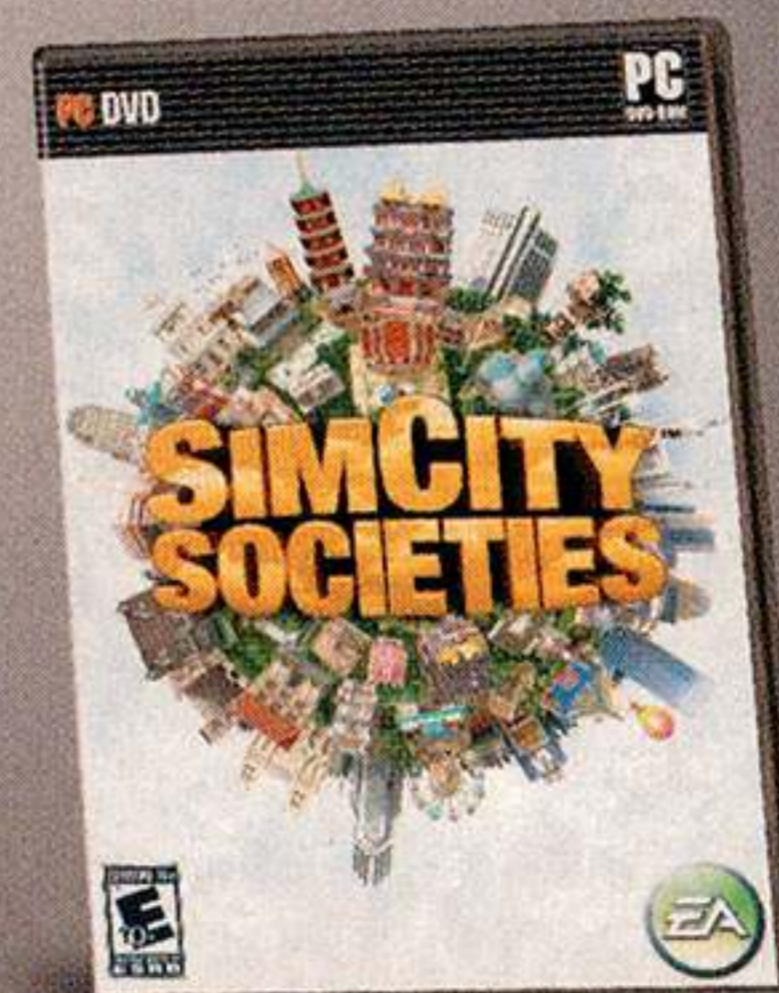


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▼ **TEKKEN 6** PS3, ARCADE



▼ **THE ORANGE BOX** PS3, XBOX 360, PC



▼ **HELLGATE: LONDON** PC



▼ ACE COMBAT 6: FIRES OF LIBERATION XBOX 360



▼ BURNOUT PARADISE PS3, XBOX 360



▼ GRAN TURISMO 5 PS3



▼ PROTOTYPE PS3, XBOX 360, PC



Now we know why they call it *Smash Bros.*, huh?

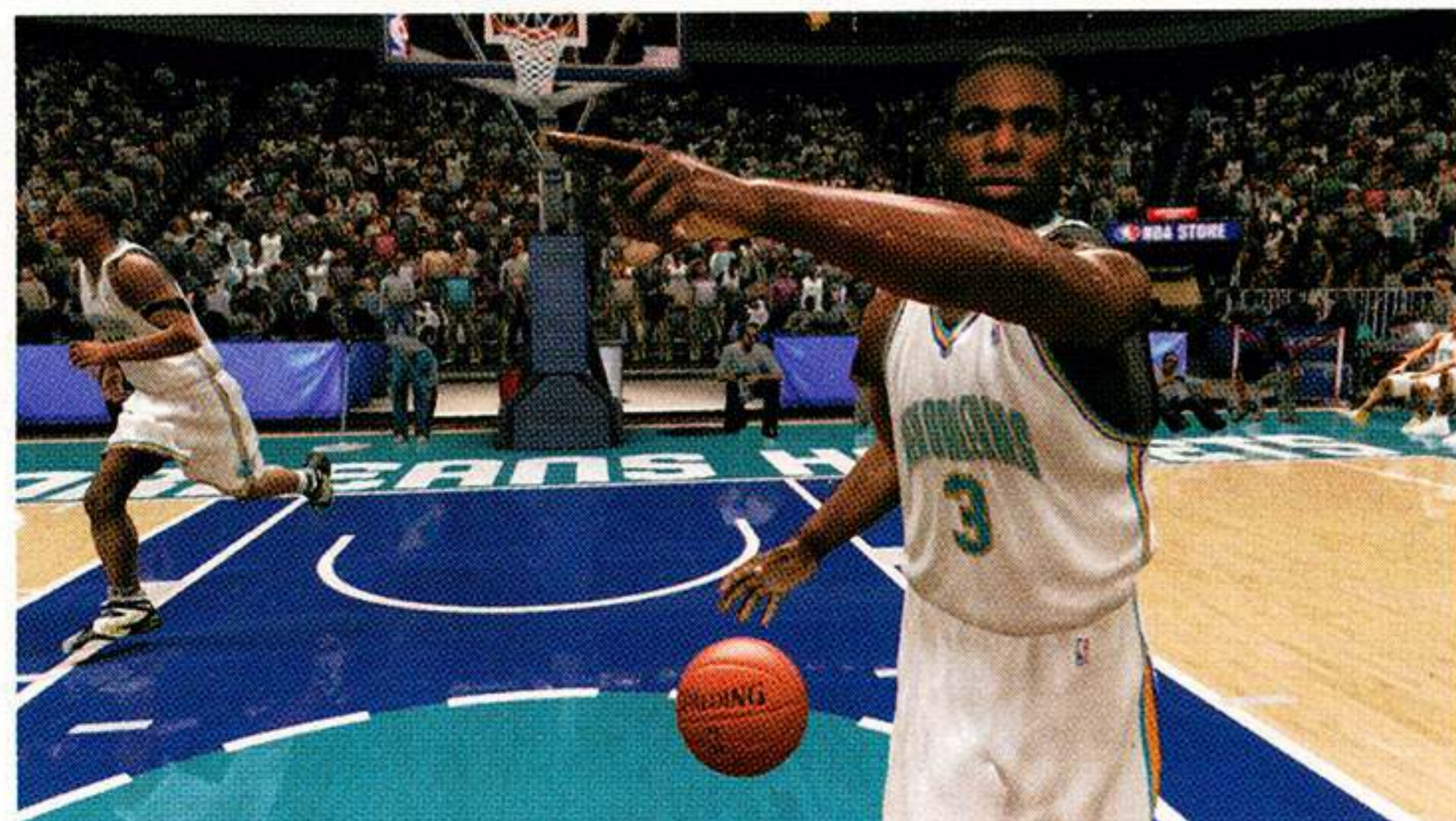
▼ SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL Wii



▼ DEVIL MAY CRY 4 PS3, XBOX 360, PC



▼ THE SIMPSONS GAME PS3, XBOX 360, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS



▼ NBA 2K8 PS3, XBOX 360, PS2



▼ NHL 2K8 PS3, XBOX 360, PS2

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▼ SOULCALIBUR IV PS3, XBOX 360



▼ TIME CRISIS 4 PS3



Too bad Seinfeld never had a six-barreled rocket launcher...

▼ BEE MOVIE GAME XBOX 360, Wii, PS2, DS, PC



▼ UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE PS3



▼ SUPER MARIO GALAXY Wii

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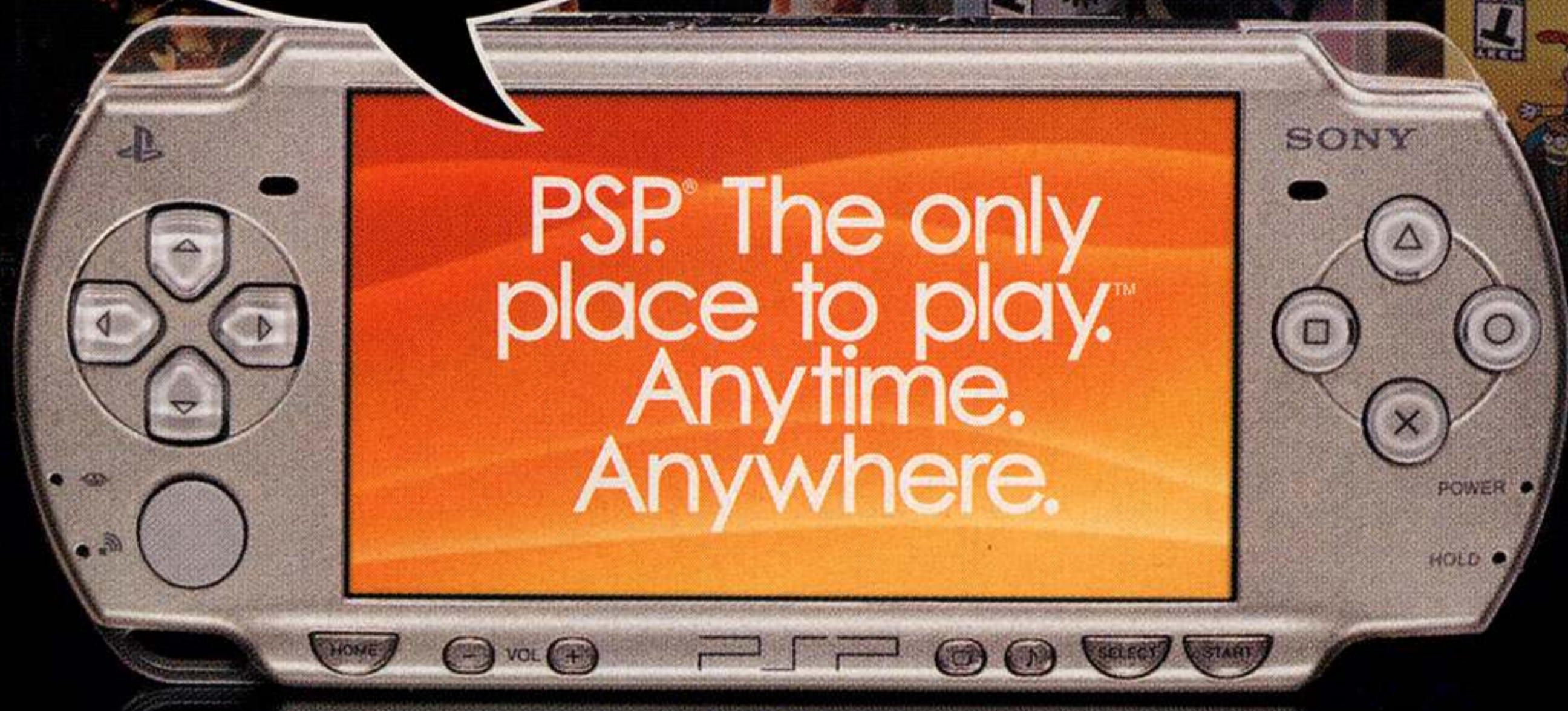
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XBOX 360

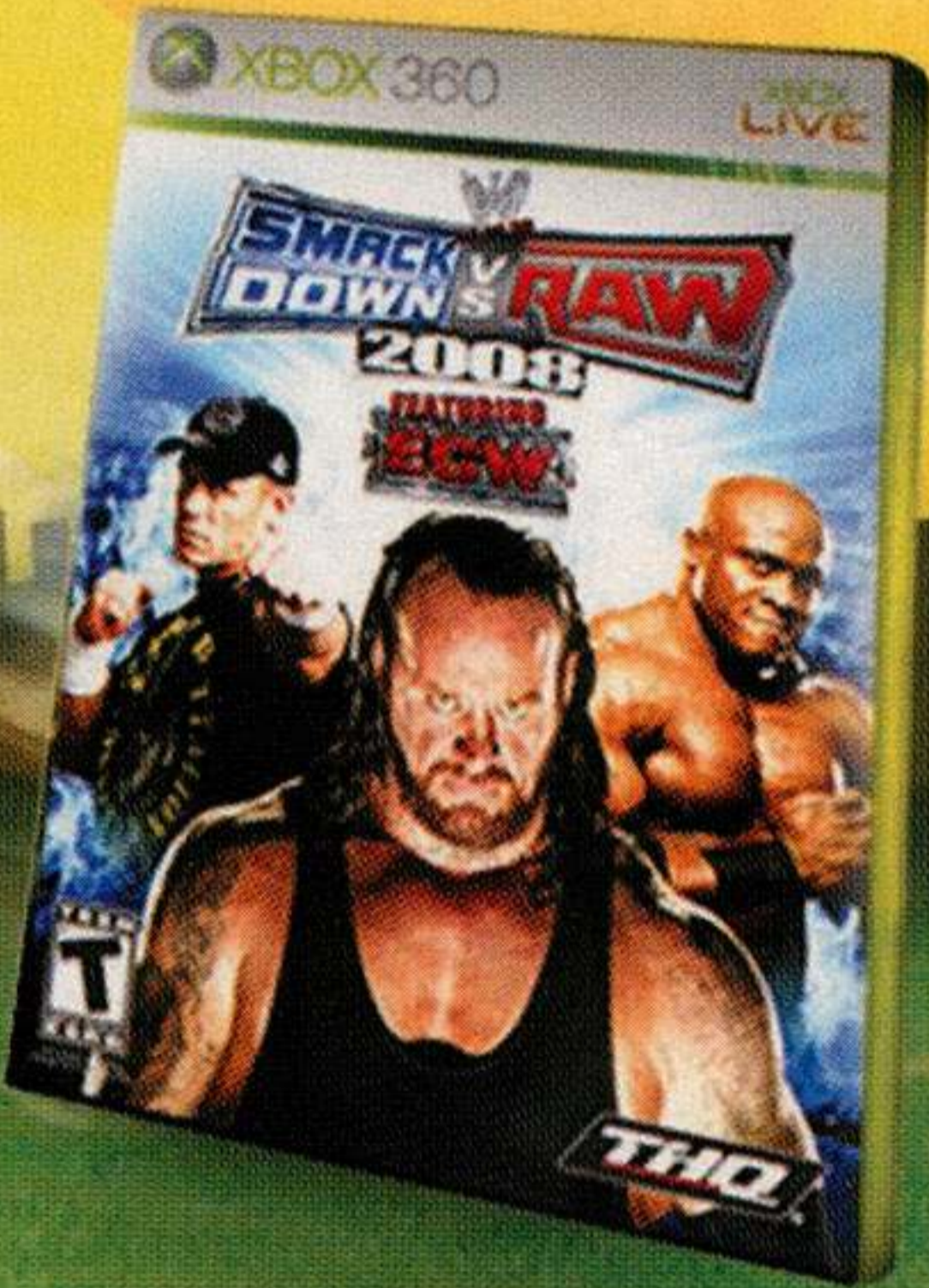
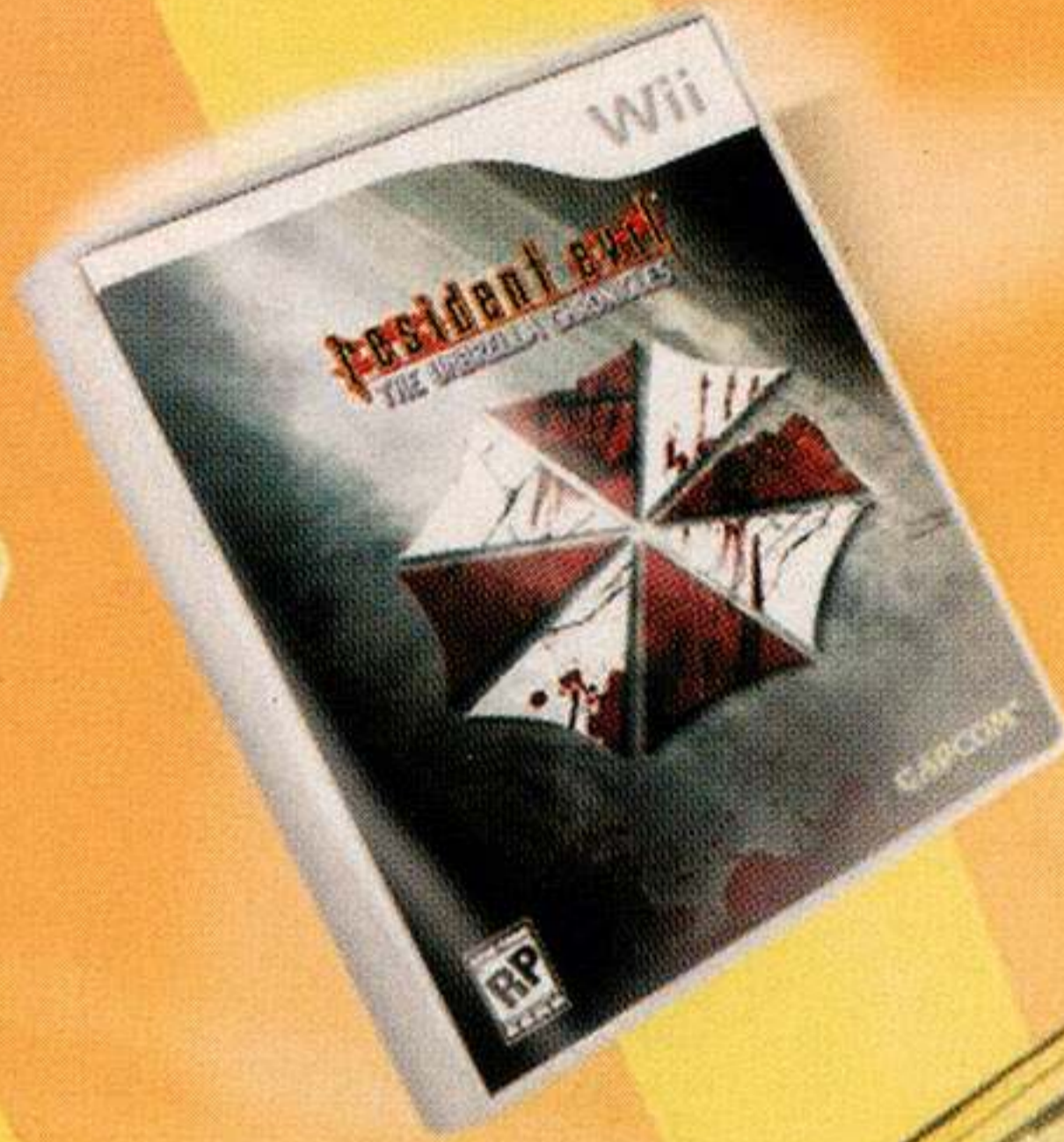
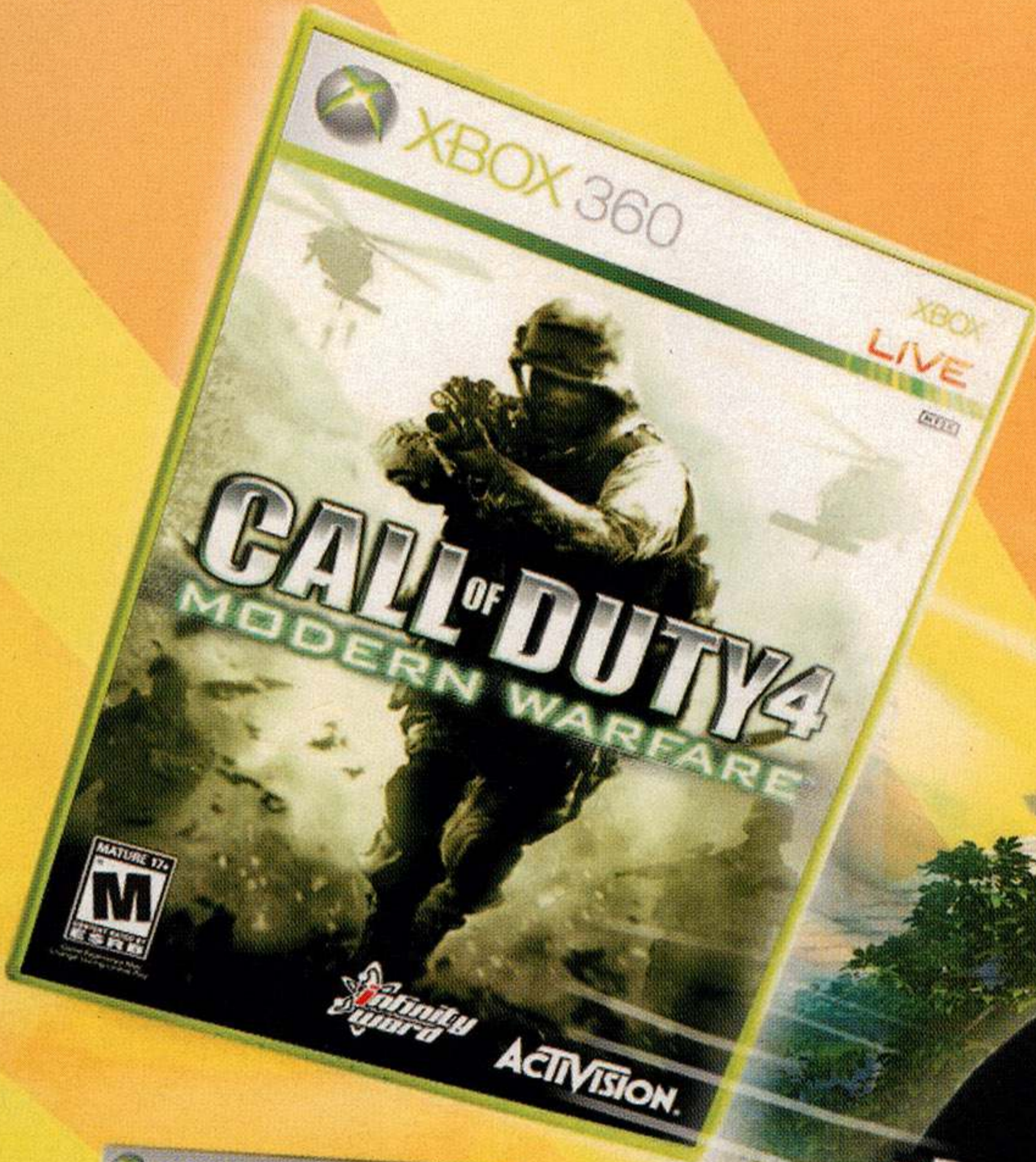
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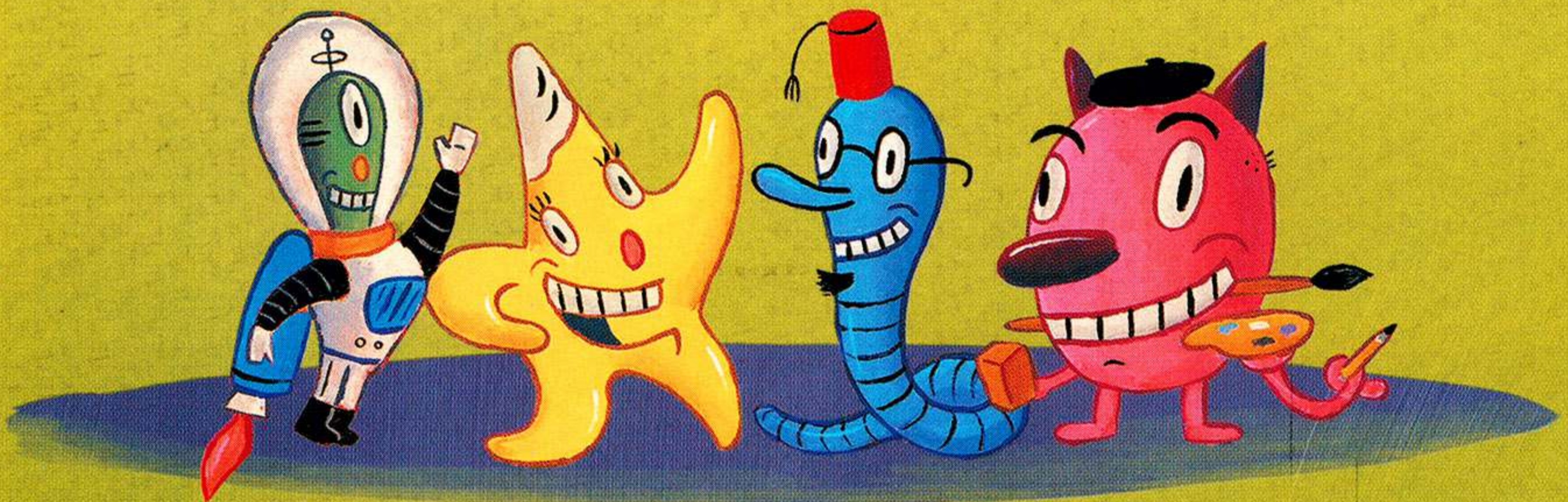


UP TO
4 TEAMS

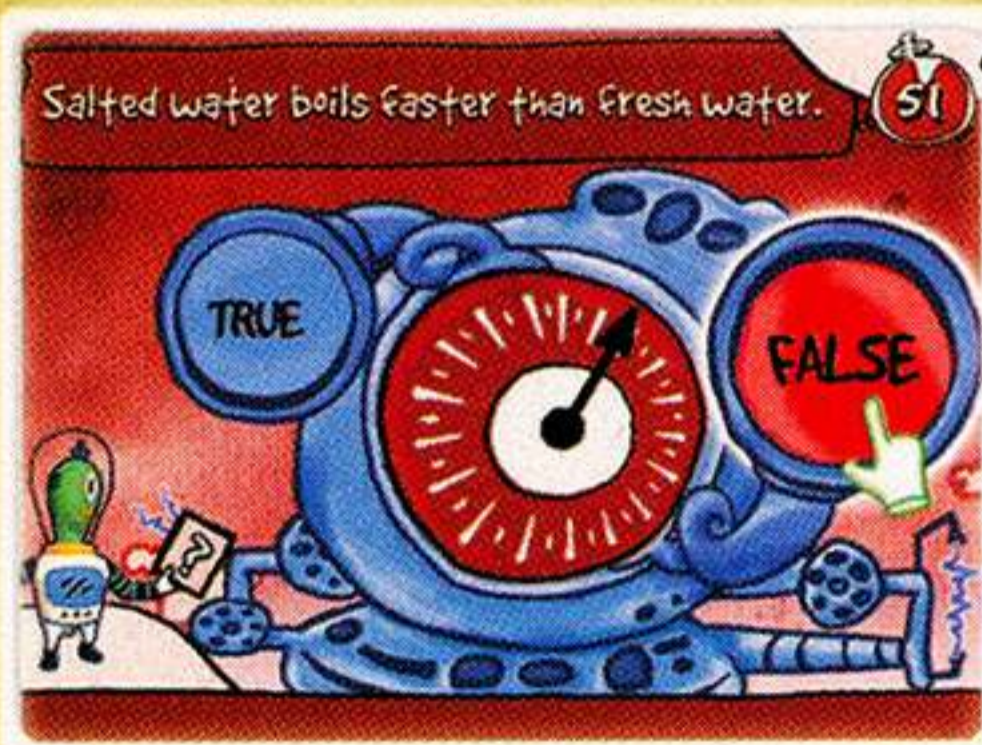


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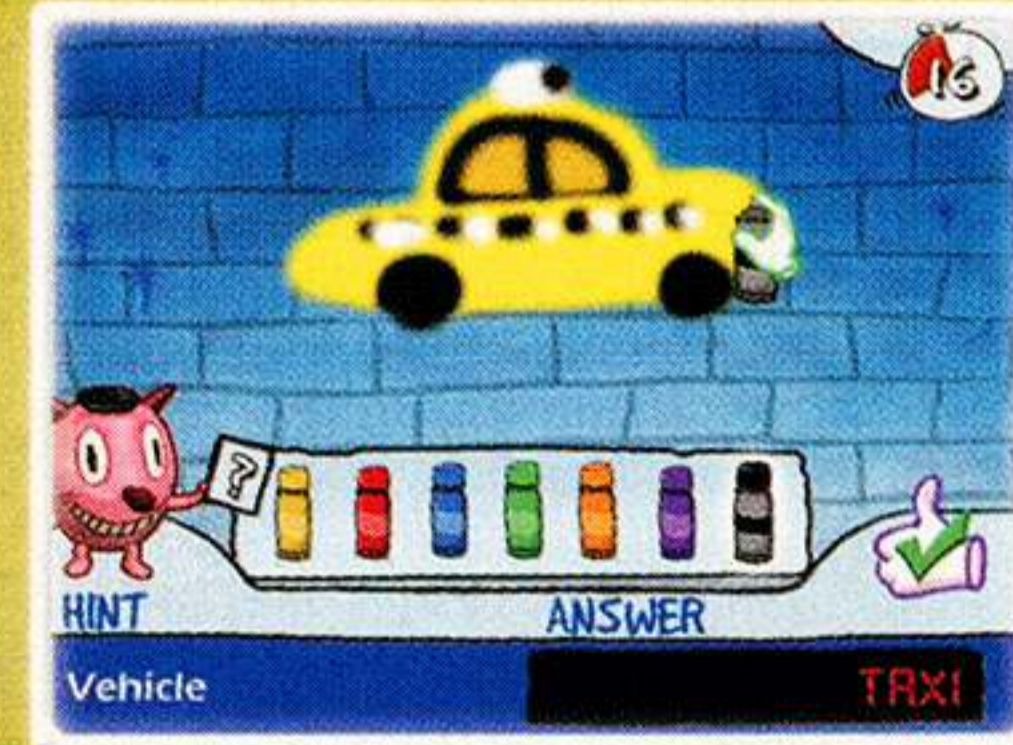
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SPAWN POINT

GAMES. GOSSIP. GEAR.



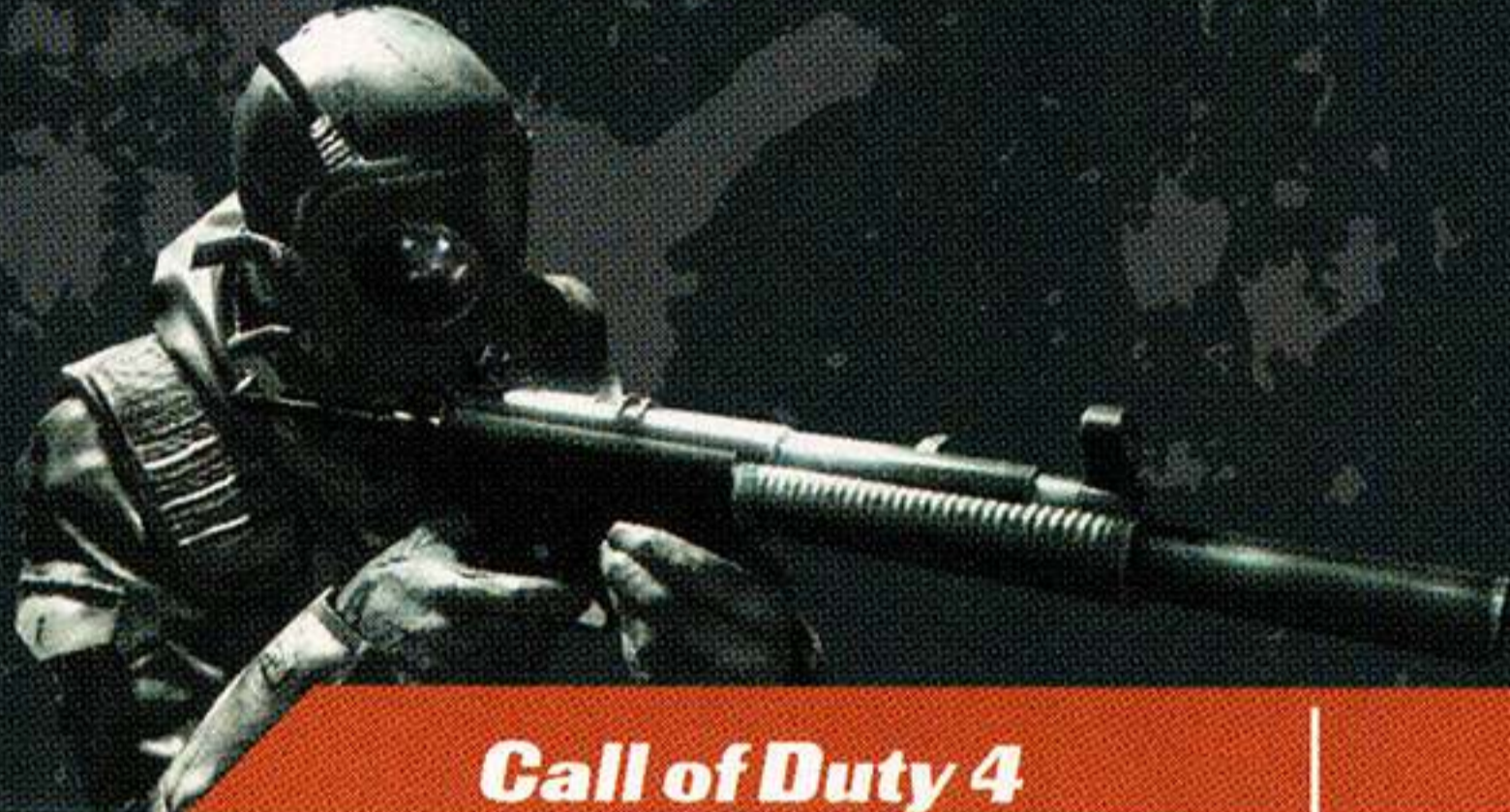
INSIDE SPAWN POINT

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CALL OF DUTY 4 MODERN WARFARE

HALO 3

GamePro pits two obvious Game of the Year candidates against each other in seven crucial categories. But which one emerges victorious?



	Call of Duty 4	Halo 3	Winner
 Controls	The lack of dual-wielding frees up more than just the left trigger for the vital aim-down-sights mode.	Bungie has it down to a science for the amount of actions Halo 3 demands.	Halo 3. Nothing beats its comfort and familiarity.
 Graphics	CoD4 is more like playing a major motion picture than a video game.	Halo 3's multiplayer matches are clean and crisp, but not a vast leap over Halo 2's	Call of Duty 4. It doesn't get any more photorealistic than CoD4.
 Innovation	Nothing too innovative here apart from rock solid gameplay and extreme polish.	Halo 3's innovations are tied almost exclusively to its cutting-edge online community.	Halo 3. Undeniably. File Share is truly the most important "next-generation" innovation in gaming.
 Multi-player	With 55 attainable ranks, fun-filled challenges, create-a-class perks, and a gigantic arsenal of weapons to unlock, CoD4 is nearly flawless.	With four-player online co-op, the best matchmaking experience in gaming, and video and screenshot sharing functionality, Halo 3 yet again raises the bar.	Halo 3. Winner by divine Forge and File Share features.
 Sound	Like its attention to visual detail, CoD4's sound design is meticulous and immersive.	With crisp 5.1 spatial effects and distinctive positional audio on weapons fire, Halo 3's sound effects tilt towards the pragmatic.	Call of Duty 4. Crank up the volume and prepare for one of the most intense experiences of your life.
 Story	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse with a dash of nuclear war.	Halo 3's story can be so incomprehensible, even the most devoted Halo fanboys are left scratching their heads.	Call of Duty 4. Comparing CoD4's story to Halo 3's is like comparing Shakespeare to Fantastic Four.
 Single Player	Though blisteringly challenging on the harder difficulty levels, CoD4's single-player campaign is a rewarding experience you won't soon forget.	Halo 3 has an intense, satisfying single-player mode...but for the money, there are more engrossing choices than Halo 3.	Call of Duty 4. CoD4's single-player campaign and storyline are simply far more polished and engrossing.
WRAP IT UP	It's almost unbelievable, right? CoD4 is the better game based on the seven categories that we feel every developer should take into account when making games. This was a close fight, almost too close to determine a winner, but the games speak for themselves. GamePro would like to add that both CoD4 and Halo 3 should both be in every gamers' Xbox 360 library.		Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

PROJECT ORIGIN: LIFE WITHOUT F.E.A.R.

They may not have the name but there's no need to F.E.A.R.; Monolith's on the right track with the sequel to its cult-hit FPS. Just don't call it, uh, F.E.A.R. 2.

Let's revisit F.E.A.R., the B-movie grade story, the intense, in-your-face action, the slick slo-mo bullet-time power—it all came together to form a solid and highly enjoyable FPS title that somehow never managed to gain the cachet of other franchises like Quake. But after sitting down to a demo of the upcoming sequel, Project Origin, it looks like the franchise's status may well be on its way to being elevated to the high peaks that's normally reserved for titles like Half-Life 2.

The demo consisted of a run through of the first level, and from what we saw, it's clear that the game is going to closely follow in the footsteps of the original. In fact, so closely that it picks up **spoiler alert** right after the nuclear explosion and helicopter crash that ended the first title. And Alma, that spooky little ghost girl from F.E.A.R., features prominently in the story.

The look and feel of the game is largely the same, though there are some clever new tricks like the ability to shove aside obstacles or kick them over to dynamically create cover. The action is still the same brand of in-your-face gunplay with the sweet slo-mo ability mixed into the fray. One tactic that was utilized to great effect was the change-up grenade toss which involves chucking a grenade at your foes, then activating the slo-mo. The resulting explosion looks as if it's taking place underwater and the way the bodies fly around is equally impressive and satisfying.

It looks as though this sequel is just more of the same but that's not a bad thing as F.E.A.R. was one of the better FPS games to come out in recent years. We'll see if Monolith can hit the jackpot twice when Project Origin hits the PS3, Xbox 360, and PC in 2008.

LEGAL 101

The title controversy of the F.E.A.R. franchise breaks down like this: The franchise name and the intellectual property (IP) rights belong to two separate parties. The game's developer, Monolith, owns the IP rights, which allows them to revisit the world and characters of the original without the F.E.A.R. title. While the game's publisher, Vivendi, owns the name F.E.A.R., which means they can continue to make games using the F.E.A.R. name, but it cannot be in any way related to the first title.



Lasers: the new rocket launchers.



Back for more action, the Assassins are even more agile than before.



This creepy, contortionist cannibal-crack fiend jumps around like a lopsided bouncy ball.

GAMEPRO FORTUNE TELLER



SUCKS OR RULES

Changing the world, one insult at a time

War is coming, and Polygonus couldn't be more excited. With Halo Wars and Star Wars: The Force Unleashed on the horizon, fans of science-fiction and violence have much to look forward to.



HALO WARS
Release Date: Spring 2008 // Xbox 360



**STAR WARS:
THE FORCE UNLEASHED**
Release Date: 2008 // PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PS2

The developers of the Age of Empire series are hard at work at adapting the biggest FPS franchise of all time to a console RTS. Polygonus would never attempt such a lofty project, even with his God-like powers. Halo Wars will likely be the best console RTS to date, but will it live up to the lofty expectations of Halo and Age of Empires fans? That's a tall order that only perfection can live up to, and very few people—author excluded—are perfect.

VERDICT: Halo Wars is the ultimate challenge that will prove, once and for all, whether consoles and RTS titles can play well together. With unprecedented expectations, can Halo wars triumph? Uncertain.

CARD: The Gambler



With the trilogy over, the new shows a year away, and the LEGO Star Wars franchise milked for all it's worth, LucasArts needs a new IP to get gamers into the greatest space story ever told. Polygonus never sees promise in ports—this game is planned for six (!) systems—but the new-gen systems look to reap the most benefit. The game looks gorgeous, and more action-packed than any before it. From what Polygonus has seen, this could be the Wii lightsaber game the world's been waiting for since the console was announced.

VERDICT: While he's not sure if the portables and PS2 version will be up to par, the new-gen versions of this mysterious part of the Star Wars saga look pleasing to Polygonus. He sees the power of the Dark Side, and can think of no better card to hand down to the game.

CARD: The Dark Horse



SUCKS

Xbox 360 parental timer. This fall's Xbox 360 firmware update lets parents limit young gamers' play time. Parents might love it for improving the odds of homework actually getting done, but few kids are going to cherish having a clock attached to their frag-fests. **SUCKS**

PlayStation Home. Unable to hit its own development milestones in the limited beta, Sony has pushed back release of its PlayStation 3 meta-game to at least early 2008. So much for filling up a virtual trophy room over the holidays. **SUCKS**

World Series of Video Games cancelled. These events are usually hosted by loud-mouthed dipsticks with all the gaming cred of Henry Kissinger, and watching isn't nearly as much fun as playing, but it's still a shame to see competitive multiplayer gaming get ganked again. **SUCKS**

RULES

Holiday gaming glut. Any time the list of amazing games you want to grab in a given season is longer than your last bank statement, you can't help but feel like your hobby is getting better and better with each passing year. **RULES**

Wii gets online multiplayer. Friend codes are about as intuitive as filling out a tax return, but the Wii's finally got some great online multiplayer on the way, from 16-player kart races to 32-player World War II running and gunning. **RULES**

Virtual Console expands. Remember SNK's \$650 Neo Geo, and its \$200 cartridges? How about NEC's CD-based TurboDuo? Classic games from both systems are coming to the Wii's Virtual Console for less than \$10 each. Fatal Fury and Dracula X for the win! **RULES**



GAMES TO DIE FOR

Our current obsessions



#1

WORMS: OPEN WARFARE 2 (DS)
Who says handheld retreads have to suck? Worms's cartoon personalities, inimitable sense of humor, and kick-ass multiplayer all combine to rock the DS.



#2

SKATE (PS3, XBOX 360)
Skate's emphasis on timing and personal playing style rewards wannabe riders with a sense of genuine accomplishment.



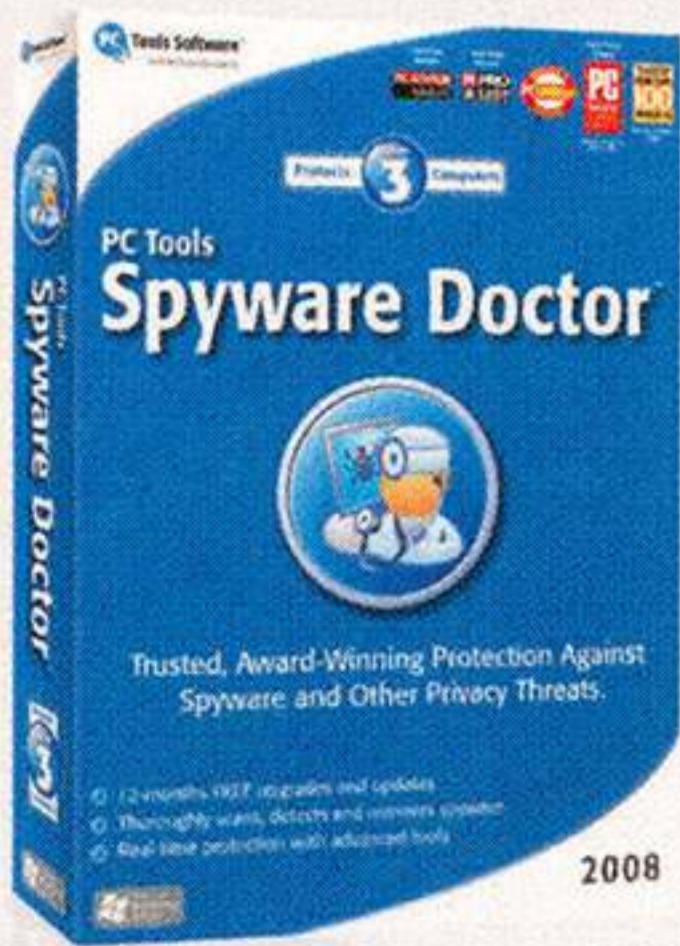
#3

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION (Wii)
Corruption deftly marries the combat action and strange puzzles of Samus's previous adventures with the Wii's unique motion sensitive trappings.

PC World 'Best Buy', October 2007, Best Anti-Spyware of the year 2006 Computer Shopper and 2005 PC Magazine.



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Wolfenstein GOES HOLLYWOOD

The writer behind the stories of *Pulp Fiction* has a new mission: bring classic shooter *Wolfenstein* to theaters.

Oscar-winning screenwriter Roger Avary went to Germany to write the script for the *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* film, in an attempt to immerse himself in World War II. He also watched a lot of World War II films to draw inspiration from.

"I'm not just using the game, I'm also using pretty much every World War II film ever made," said Avary. "The way my process works is I play through the game, and after I've played through it once I continue to go back and play through different chapters so that when I sit down to write, that energy infuses itself and informs me on how I should approach the material."

Avary said he will strive to bring elements from the game into the film, especially the sounds of the guns being fired, the props, and the costumes.

"It's almost like entering into a project where someone has already done all the exhausting production design and research for you," said Avary, referring to the game bible that id Software gave him. "The guys at id are insanely imaginative and creative guys. They've already done all of the heavy work for me with everything from the costumes to the creature designs."

The *Wolfenstein* bible outlines the dos and don'ts for the game's protagonist, U.S. Army Ranger B.J. Blazkowicz, who will also be the central character in the film. Avary said Blazkowicz approaches situations from a perspective of action and duty above self-interest as he investigates Heinrich Himmler's SS Paranormal Division at Castle Wolfenstein.

Avary said he will remain true to the spirit of the game, just as he did when working with Christophe Gans on the *Silent Hill* script, which they collaborated on. While *Silent Hill* was heralded as both a box-office and critical success in the burgeoning video game-to-film genre, Avary said that film maybe stayed too

true to the source material based on Gans' desires. With *Castle Wolfenstein*, Avary will be bringing his vision to life both on paper and then through the director's lens.



THE BIG 5

We sound off on the top stories on GamePro.com.

1 REDESIGNED PS2 COMING EARLY 2008

Sony will introduce a "compact" PS2 in the U.S. early 2008 for \$99, a trade publication reported in October. "[We] can exclusively reveal that this 'compact' PS2 will hit the U.S. at just \$99 in the New Year—a reduction of \$30 from its current selling price of \$129," MCV revealed.

THE VERDICT: Assuming the source's accuracy, it would mark the second time that Sony would have redesigned the PS2, the first being in 2004.

2 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3 DELAY?

After pushing the Xbox 360 release into early 2008, Epic Games is unable to confirm that their twitch shooter will make its November release date...at least on PS3.

THE VERDICT: It's never a good sign when a developer says "we don't know exactly when the game will be completed."

3 TIME MAGAZINE KERFUFFLE

An article in *Time Magazine* called gaming an "invisible geek ghetto," which stirred up some serious ire in players.

THE VERDICT: Precisely how out of touch with the modern world do you have to be to pretend that video games are a shameful niche phenomenon?

4 FREE WII REMOTE ADD-ON FROM NINTENDO

New Wii consoles come with protective silicone "jackets" for the Wii Remote, and current owners of the controllers can get them for free directly from the big N.

THE VERDICT: It might be the gaming equivalent of putting a cork on your fork, but how can you complain about free hardware protection?

5 METAL GEAR SOLID 4 DELAYED

Konami has delayed *Metal Gear Solid 4* until sometime in the second quarter of 2008 "in order to make additional improvements."

THE VERDICT: MGS4 was originally planned for release in "winter," or February 2008. PS3 owners may now have to wait until May/June 2008.



Geek Speak 2.0

Big words, small type.

J/K: Shorthand for "just kidding." Usually used immediately after a bit of spicy smack talk that might otherwise be taken seriously.

Ninja: A player who grabs valuable goodies from a downed monster or treasure chest without checking with the other members of the party first, presumably hoping they'll simply fail to notice.

TKer: Short for "team killer." Go around shooting your buddies in the back, or lobbing grenades with reckless abandon, and expect to have this branded on your forehead.



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- ODETTE BURTON, WSVN (MIAMI)

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CO-PRODUCERS JAMES M. FREITAG LEON DUDEVOIR EXECUTIVE PRODUCER TOBY ENAMERICH PRODUCED BY ARTHUR SARAKSIAN ROGER BRINDAUM JAY STERN JONATHAN GLICKMAN ANDREW Z. DAVIS BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY ROSS LAMARCA WRITTEN BY JEFF MATHANSON DIRECTED BY BRETT RATNER
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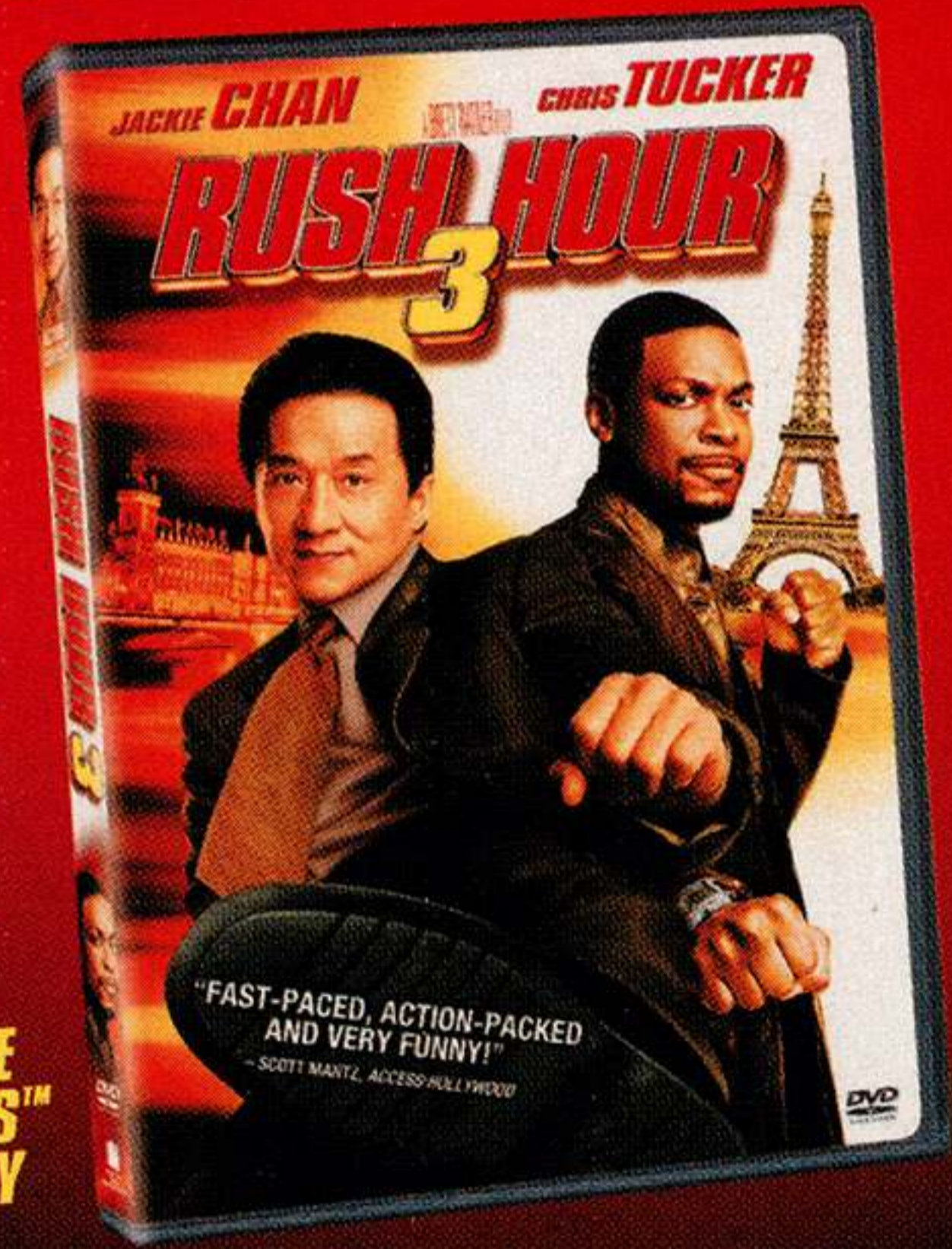
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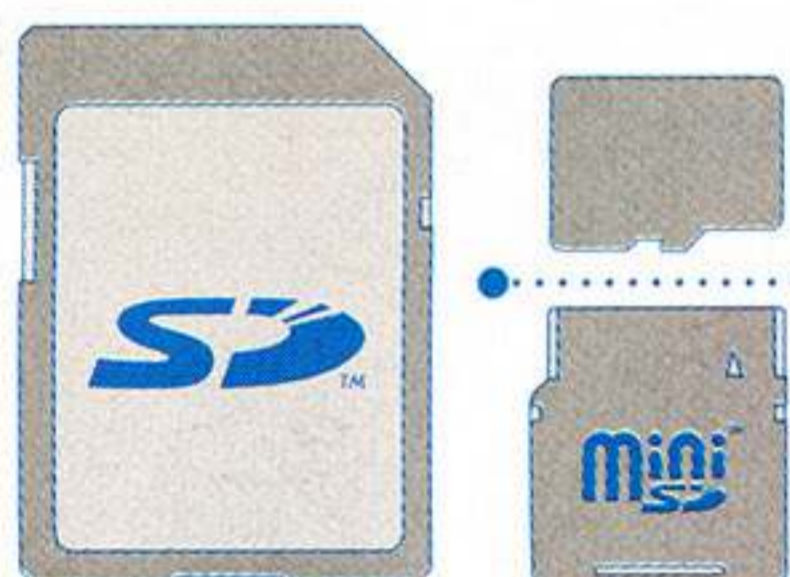
USB Drive

Typically small and lightweight, USB drives can be plugged directly into a computer. USB drives have become the standard for portable storage and range from 1GB thumb drives to full-sized 500GB hard drives.



Memory Stick

Memory Stick is a Sony technology designed for use in portable devices such as cameras, cell phones, and the PSP. These thin, lightweight cards can still hold plenty of information—currently as much as 8GB.



SD Card

The SD card is a popular format for cell phones, cameras, and even Nintendo's Wii. It's backed by Panasonic, Toshiba, and SanDisk to compete with Sony's Memory Stick format...and, by and large, it has succeeded.



Compact Flash

This old-school format is traditionally aimed at serious digital photographers, but it's still a popular enough format to be included in the PlayStation 3. Compact Flash cards are larger, but they're lightning-fast and can hold more data.

MINI-GAMES

Lots of games have shops to buy handy goods from but none of them take American Express. Can you match each fictional currency with the game series it appears in?

1. NANITES		A. PHANTASY STAR
2. RUPEES		B. ODDWORLD
3. GILDR		C. SYSTEM SHOCK 2
4. NESETA		D. BREATH OF FIRE
5. SINGLE		E. SPACE QUEST
6. ZENNY		F. FINAL FANTASY
7. GIL		G. SIM CITY
8. PYREALS		H. LEGEND OF ZELDA
9. MOOLAH		I. ASHERON'S CALL
10. ZENNY		J. DARK CLOUD

Answers: 1. C 2. H 3. I 4. A 5. G 6. D 7. F 8. J 9. B 10. E

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH



Peter Molyneux, veteran game designer, in an interview with Canal Juegos.

"This is the company that pioneered Live, which I believe will ultimately be far more impactful on video games in the long term than something like the Wii controller."



David Perry, founder of Shiny, responding to criticism labeling him a "Wii Hater" in an interview with Disposable Media.

"The Wii controller adds some slop to the system, and that in turn goes against the golden rule that controls should be tight and perfect, something Nintendo has lived off for years."



Simon Jeffrey, president of Sega North America, in an interview with MTV.

"There is no doubt that we will see more risks, and therefore more creativity, on both the Wii and the DS in the next couple of years."



Yoichi Wada, Square Enix president.

"Sony first unveiled the PS3 as a mighty home electronics product. Then, after some badgering from game companies, it shifted the position of the console closer to a game machine. The future of the PS3 will be tough if its marketing strategy is not straightened up."

"One of our goals is to take the violence portion as far as we can. That being said, I think it's important that the violence is not just for its own sake. Slaughtering innocent people in the street is not what we are trying to do."
Yoshifuru Okamoto, assistant producer on Tecmo's upcoming Ninja Gaiden II, in an interview with GamePro.

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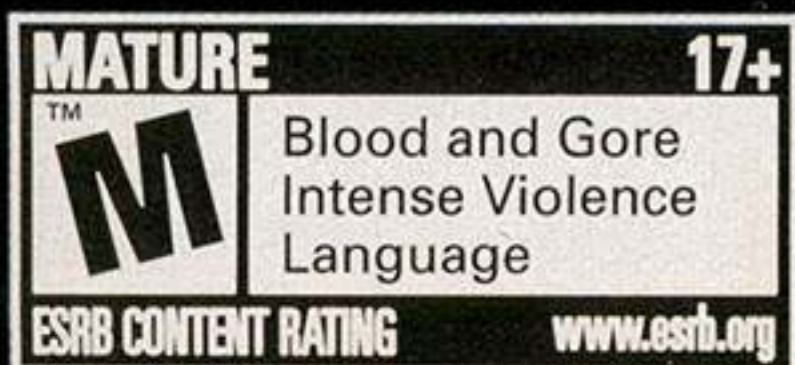
GAME IN STORES 02.05.08



PLAYSTATION 3



Touchstone



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THE BEST GAME YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF: FRACTURE

Deformable terrain in the wave of the future; Red Faction, eat your heart out.



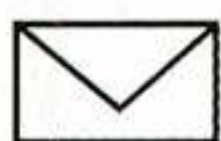
Fracture utilizes bleeding-edge technology to deliver an experience only one game has come even remotely close to simulating. That experience is deformable terrain. Players will use different grenade types to raise or lower the terrain like Play-Doh, and even summon enormous pillars of hardened lava to gain the tactical high-ground advantage. The anti-rocket launcher burrows under ground sending shockwaves of rolling hills across the landscape. Fracture will feature a fulfilling and unique single-player campaign as well as online multiplayer. Look for Fracture in Summer 2008 on the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.

STATIC By Sid Shuman

ow 2...Saints Row 2...Saints Row 2... • **Vicious Sid is gone, along with all the other GamePro editor personas.** It's been a change 18 years in the making; some of you love it, some hate it. What do you think? E-mail me at sid_shuman@gamepro.com... • **So, a \$400 PS3, eh?** That's starting to sound downright reasonable. My prediction: If you buy one, you'll find yourself watching a lot more Blu-ray movies than you'd think... • **Speaking of the new PS3, is missing backward compatibility really that big of a deal?** Sites and blogs screamed for a cheaper PS3; Sony delivered. Now they're screaming "scandal!" because it can't play PS2 games. Okay...so why not just buy a PS2? They're dirt cheap these days, right?... • **On the Halo 3 front, the EGM and 1UP guys pretty much blew us away in our epic Halo 3 tournament.** We're man enough to admit it when we get beaten (3 to 2, a slim win if you ask me). You can see all the gory details for yourself by accessing my Xbox Live account, GP Vicious Sid, and looking at my shared vids. So when's the rematch, guys?... • **So which is the real Game of the Year: BioShock or Halo 3?** That's the big argument at GPHQ these days, and the staff is split right down the middle. As much as I love BioShock, I might personally have to give the nod to Halo 3 for its amazing Forge mode. Head to GamePro.com to join the debate squad... • **Anyone else think that id Software's next game, Rage, looks a little...odd?** They're toning down the gore, and mixing first-person shooting elements with dune-buggy racing—not exactly the game I would expect from the guys who made blood-gushing shooters like Doom and Quake. I'm all for pushing boundaries and stuff, but I hope id Software isn't experiencing a mid-life crisis... • **You know, that new Turok game isn't bad at all.** The dinosaur hunter hits stores in early 2008 and is worth a look, especially after you've melted through Halo 3... • **It's high time for Sony to make the PS3 online community more like Xbox Live.** Why do I have to quit a game to check and send messages, or scope my buddy list? How much longer do we have to wait for Sony to add these basic features?... • **So which game studio is Microsoft going to buy next?** Bungie left (wow!); FASA is now dissolved. That only leaves Ensemble (Halo Wars), Lionhead (Fable 2), and Rare (Viva Pinata), right? If I were Shane Kim, I'd scoop up Insomniac (Ratchet & Clank) or Valve (Half-Life). That is, if those guys are even willing to consider joining Microsoft Game Studios. But money talks, as they say... • **Dead Space...Dead Space...Dead Sp...**



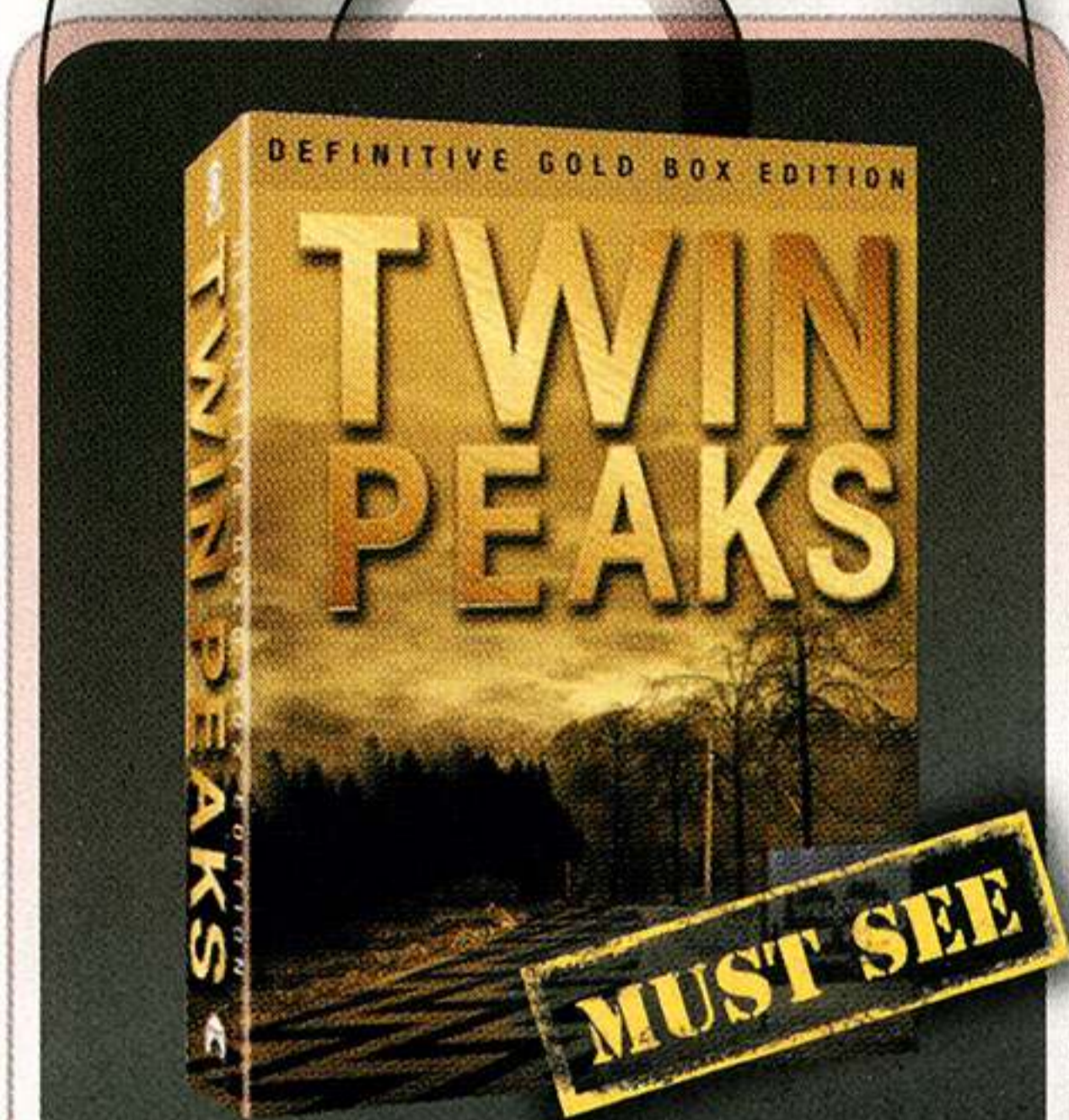
Pwned this month:
GamePro editors,
Rage, PSN



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HELLRAISER: 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The special effects are dated, and the series unwisely departed from its own rich mythology years ago, but Clive Barker's original still puts most modern horror schlock to shame.

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GF MOST WANTED

The GameFly Weekly Top 10 is the leading source of online video game rental data—and the *only* top 10 list that features what gamers actually want to play.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|----------|
| 1. Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare | (Activision) | Xbox 360 |
| 2. TimeShift | (Vivendi Universal) | Xbox 360 |
| 3. Assassin's Creed | (Ubisoft) | Xbox 360 |
| 4. The Orange Box | (Valve) | Xbox 360 |
| 5. The Simpsons Game | (EA Games) | Xbox 360 |
| 6. Conan | (THQ) | Xbox 360 |
| 7. Kane & Lynch: Dead Men | (Eidos) | Xbox 360 |
| 8. Mass Effect | (Microsoft) | Xbox 360 |
| 9. Ace Combat 6: Fires of Liberation | (Namco Bandai) | Xbox 360 |
| 10. Clive Barker's Jericho | (Codemasters) | Xbox 360 |

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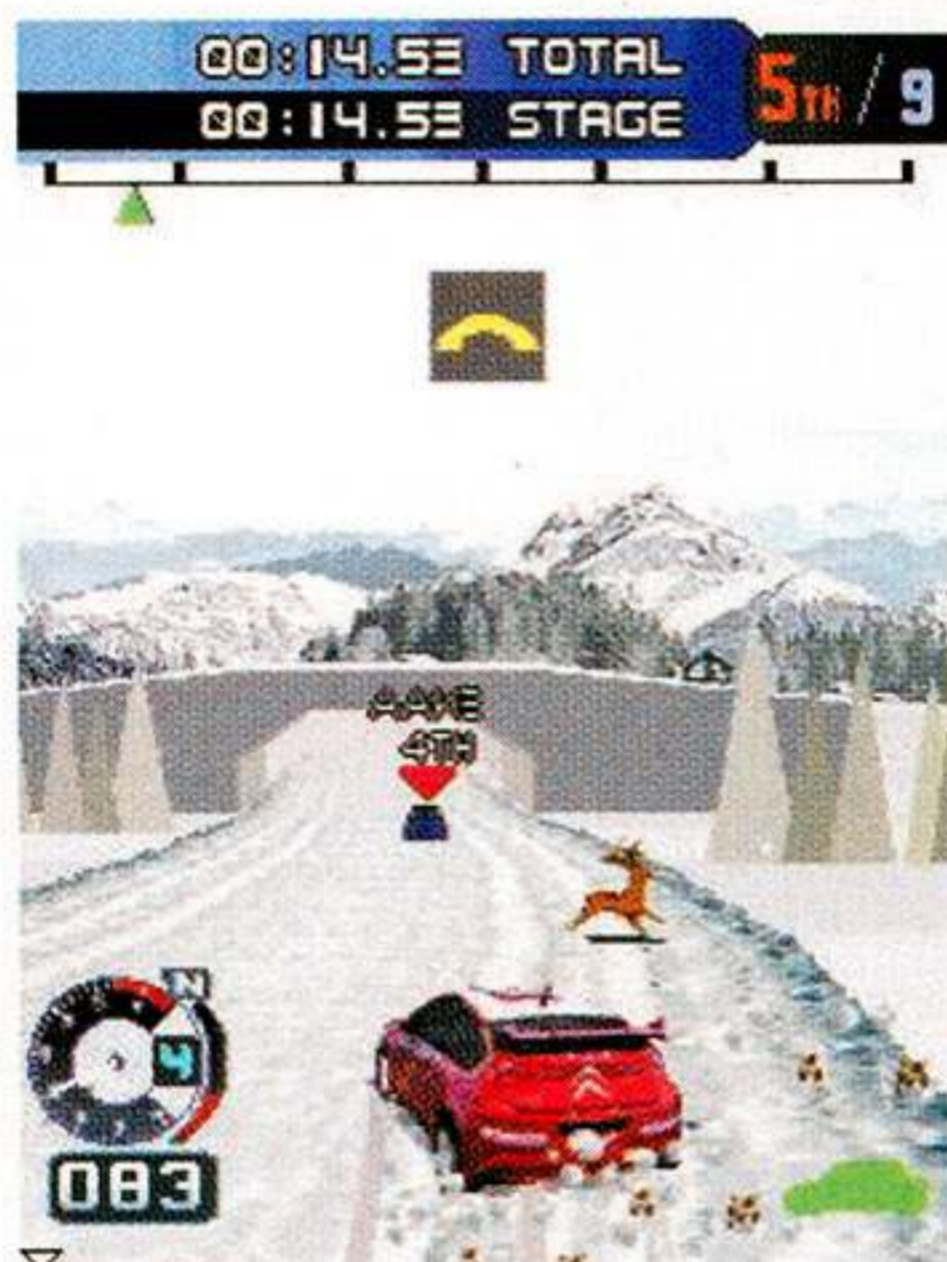
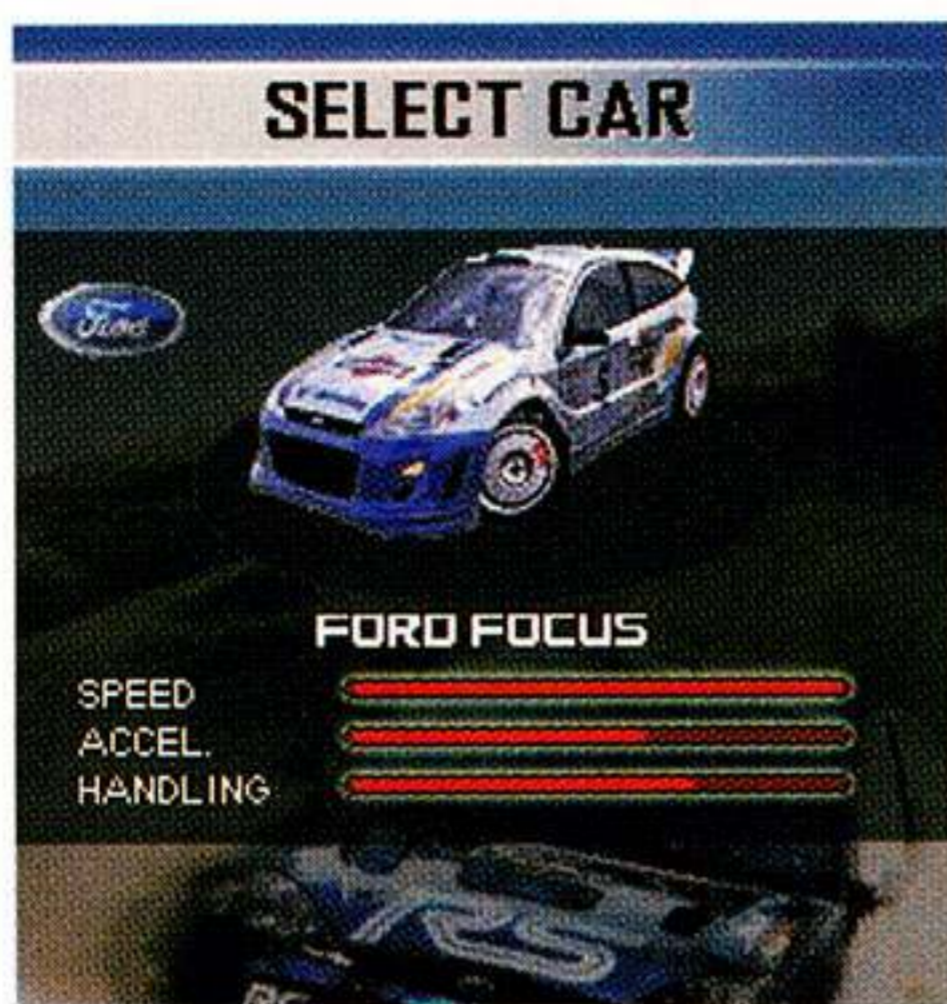


PRO RALLY RACING

Mobile

■ Publisher: Gameloft ■ Release Date: Fall 2007

Pro Rally Racing is the new dirt-bound title from Gameloft. The game lets you choose from six official car models, from companies such as Ford, Subaru, and Mitsubishi. You also have the ability to choose from different locals, such as Mexico and Norway, all with different terrains that can affect the way your car handles. Buckle up!

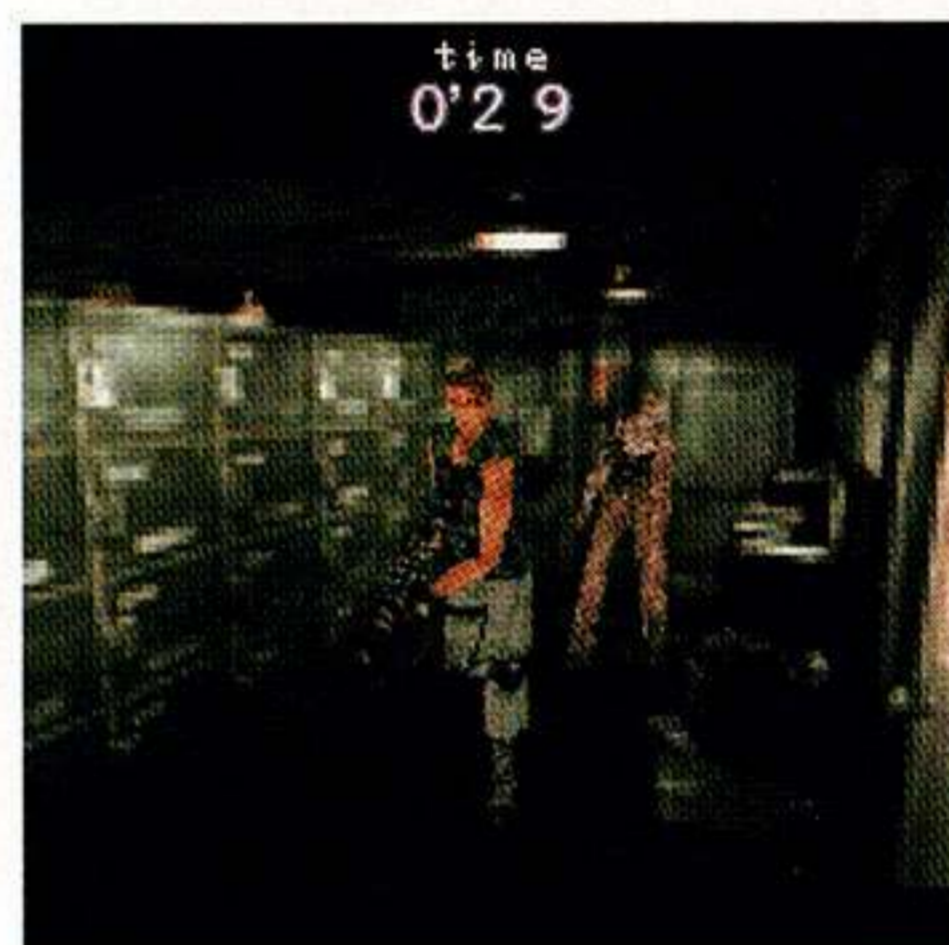
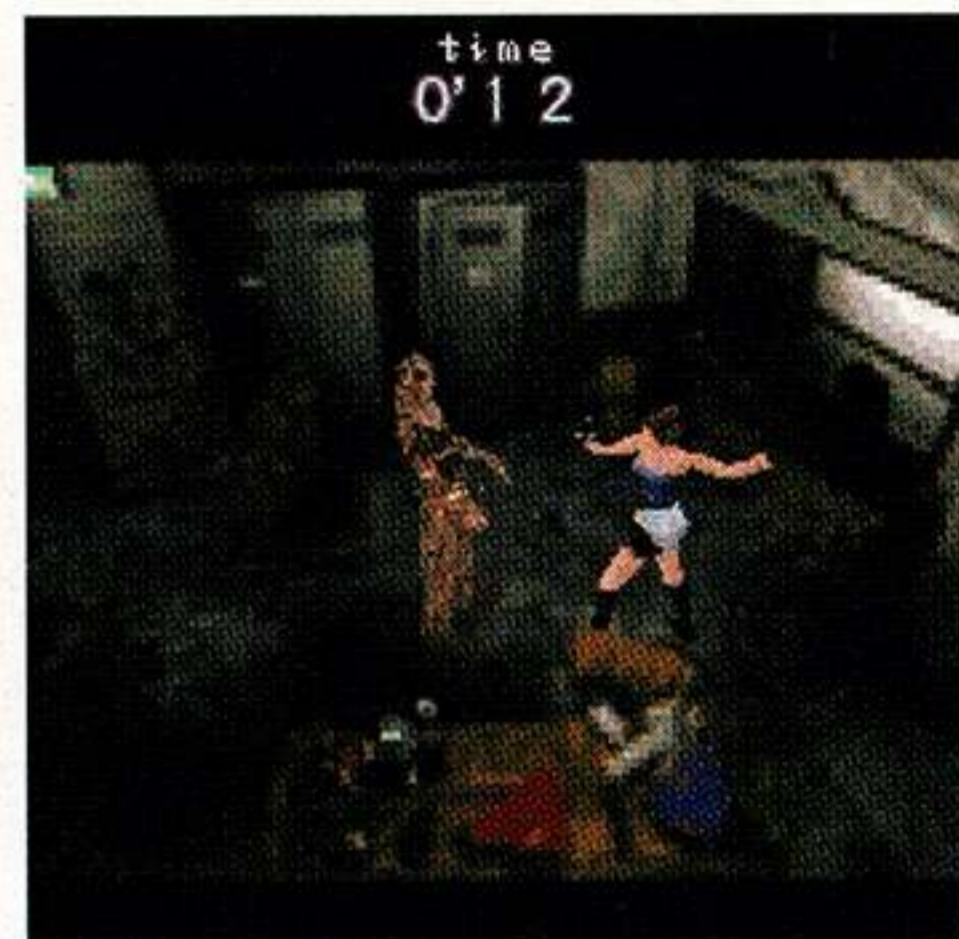
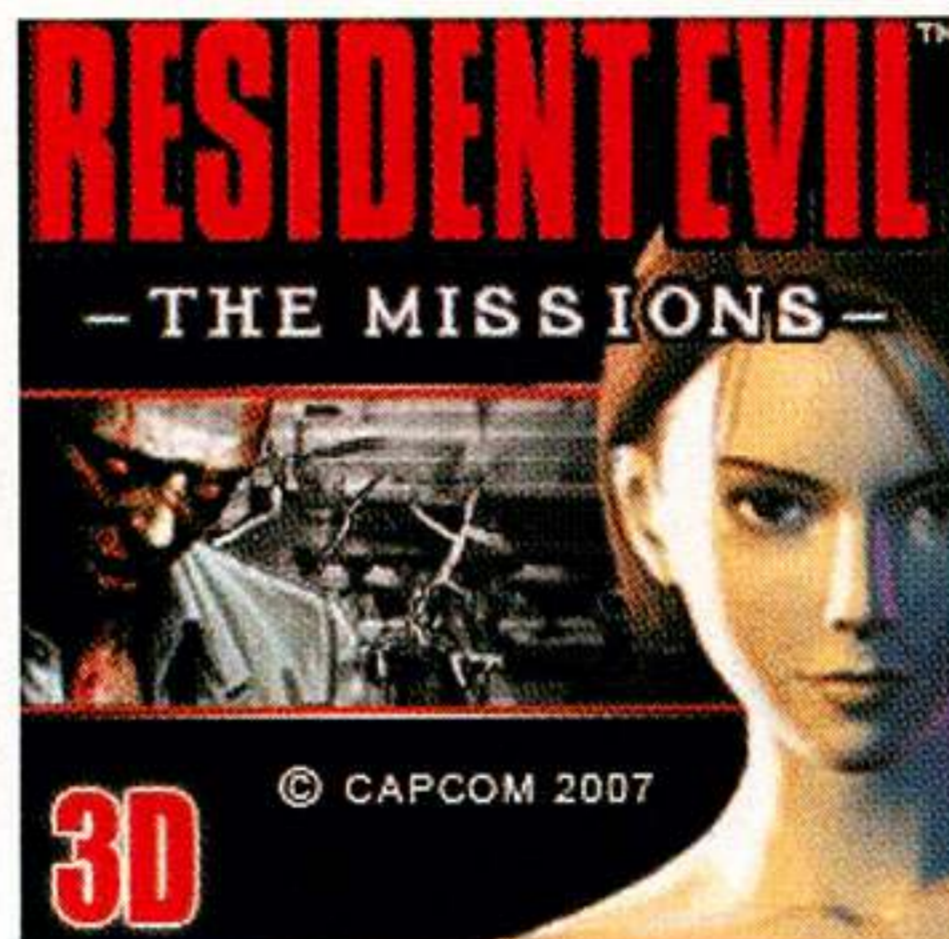


RESIDENT EVIL: THE MISSIONS

Mobile

■ Publisher: Capcom Mobile ■ Release Date: Fourth Quarter 2007

Fans of the original Resident Evil games will be right at home with Resident Evil: The Missions, complete with pre-rendered backgrounds and all. You'll play as Jill Valentine (as well as other unlockable characters), blasting through zombies and participating in missions to escape the confines of an Umbrella stronghold.



SMALL ARMS MOBILE

Mobile

■ Publisher: Reaxion ■ Release Date: Fall 2007



Vets of side-scrolling shooters will be right at home with Small Arms, the Xbox Live Arcade game that is now for your mobile device. The game will be unchanged from its XBL Arcade incarnation, providing the same locals (Waterfall Madness, Runaway Train) as well as the ability to choose from six of the original characters.



PHOENIX WRIGHT

Mobile

■ Publisher: Capcom Mobile ■ Release Date: Fourth Quarter 2007

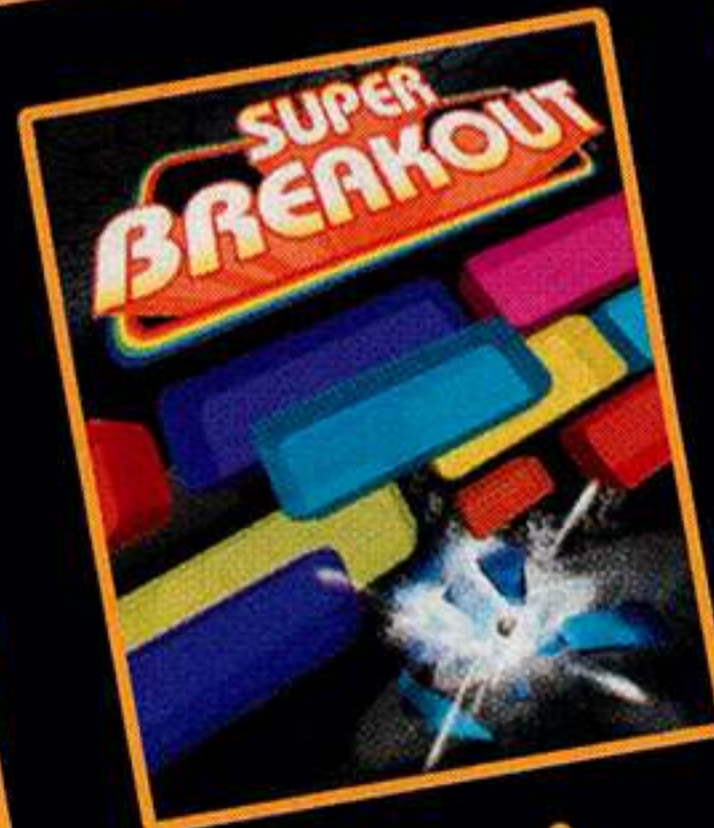
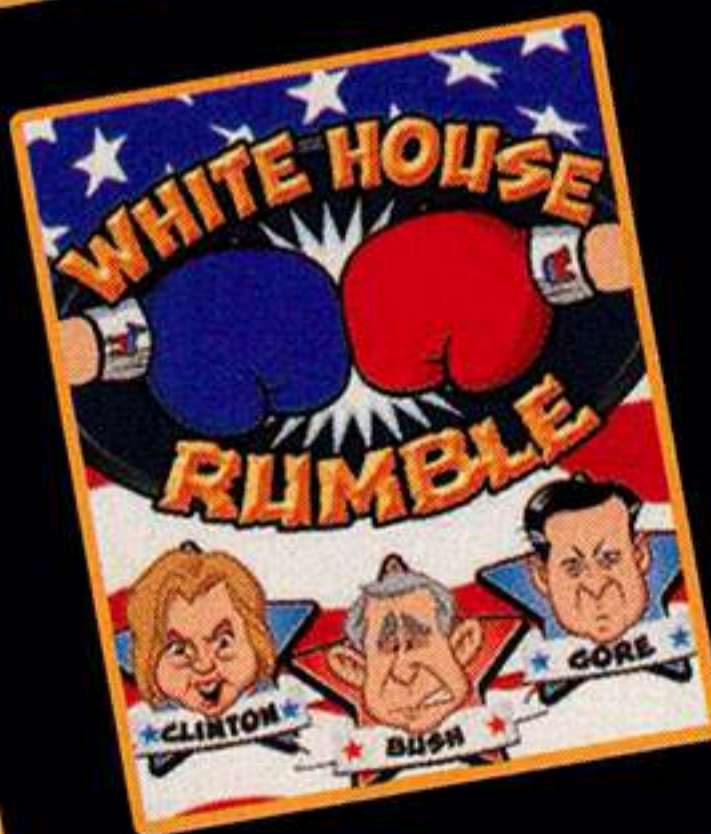
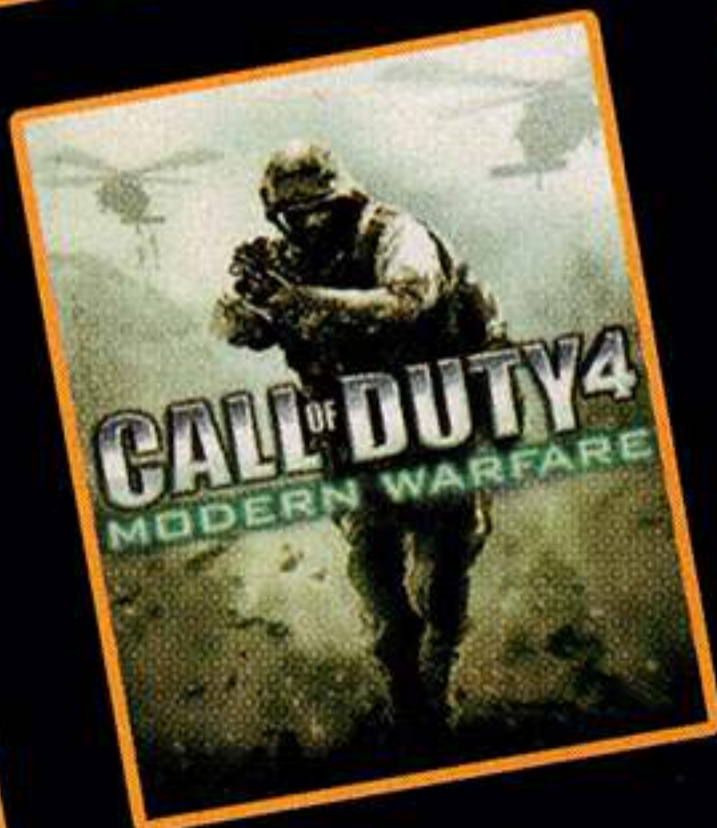
Fans of this series will be glad to know that this handheld-to-mobile title is being translated without any changes or cuts whatsoever. For people new to the game: you play as Phoenix Wright, a crack-shot attorney with an itch for justice. Present evidence, cross-examine, and call witnesses on their BS to get them to crack.





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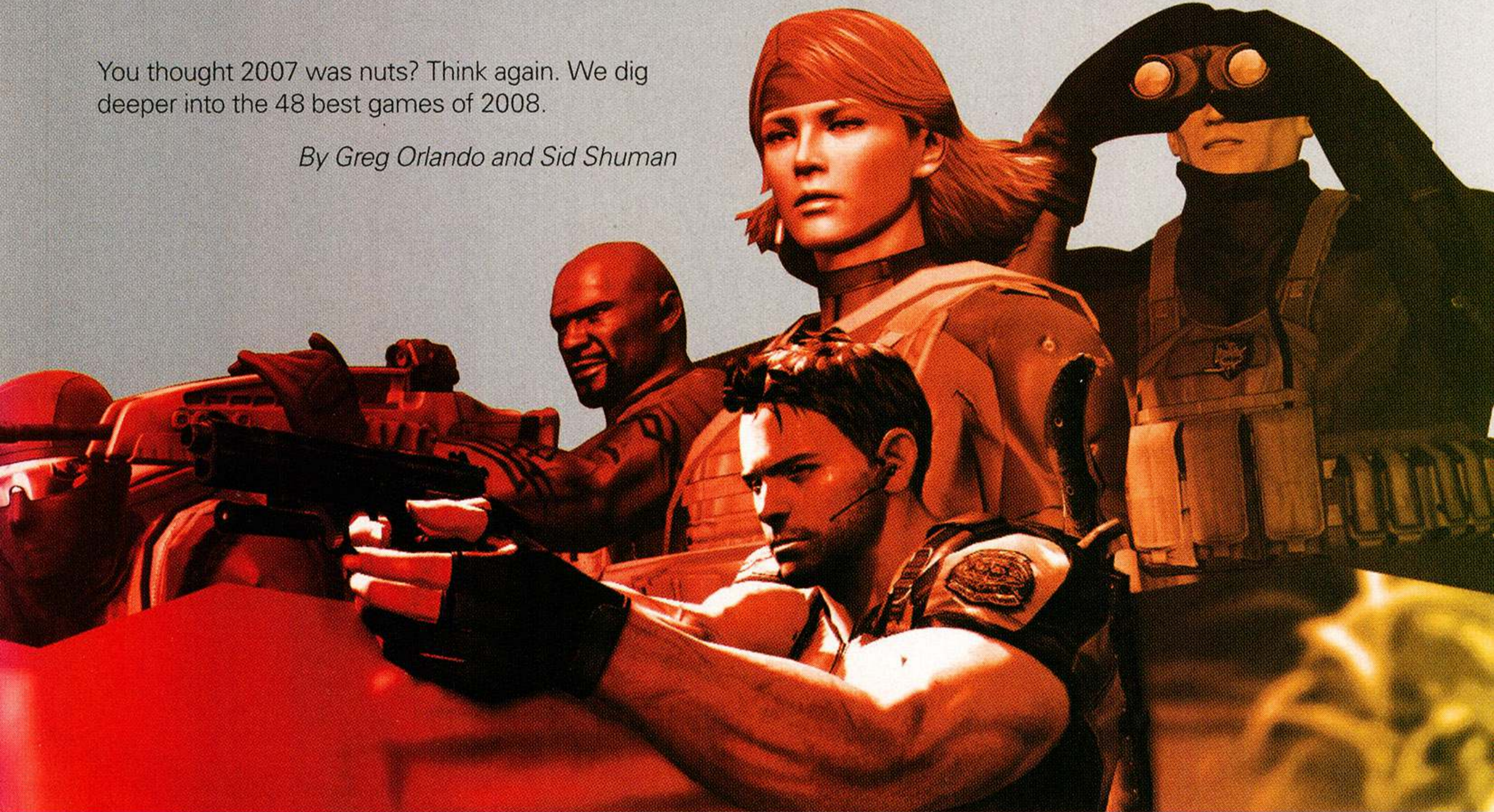
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THE 48 BEST GAMES OF 2008

You thought 2007 was nuts? Think again. We dig deeper into the 48 best games of 2008.

By Greg Orlando and Sid Shuman



48 RESIDENT EVIL 5

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Late 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Well, Haiti certainly cares. Not only is the beleaguered Caribbean nation the birthplace of the zombie, but it's also Capcom's next stop on the ungrateful dead tour. Resident Evil 5 drops Chris Redfield (you remember him from such Evil games as Resident Evil and Resident Evil: Code Veronica) into the sort of zombie hell you really need a gun—or multiple guns—to escape from.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

After the brain smashing awesome Resident Evil 4, Capcom may not be able to raise the bar any higher. And that dusty old smell? It doesn't smell like zombies, but rather been there and shot that.

47 PROJECT ORIGIN

PS3 /Xbox 360 ■ 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:



F.E.A.R. by any other name would still be serial-killer-standing-by-the-bedside scary. Project Origin picks up where the ominous first-person shooter F.E.A.R. left off, with the creepy little ghost-girl Alma prepared to make you shriek in abject terror. Happy shooting!

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You've probably gotten your recommended yearly allowance of game-related frights with Resident Evil 5 or Silent Hill 5, and your first-person shooter needs should be fulfilled by Turok or Far Cry 2.

46 FAR CRY 2

PC ■ Summer 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Who's going to save Africa from the supervillain ambitions of the mysterious no-good Jackal? Not the fat cats in Washington, that's for sure. You'll take the role of a mercenary and will need to play feuding factions against one another as you shoot, chop, and burn your way across a series of jungles and savannas in this intriguing first-person shooter.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The game recognizes how well you're playing, and brightens or darkens the in-game skies accordingly. As if you wouldn't be able to tell by the amount of lead your character eats.

45 SILENT HILL 5

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Late 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

After the lackluster Silent Hill IV: The Room, Konami has handed the scarifying Silent Hill franchise to American developer The Collective. With the new start comes the hope for the best, most terrifying, trip to the world's least hospitable town ever, Silent Hill. The game stars war hero Alex Shepherd, a man who's desperately searching for his lost brother. Psychics predict he will find (in no particular order): horror, bizarre monsters, and lots of fog. Players can expect Shepherd to be aided by a female companion named Ellie, as well as a brand-new combat system allowing the hero to grapple with the monsters he encounters.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Konami is taking a big risk handing one of its top-tier franchises off to a third party. The Collective (Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Wrath Unleashed) has proven itself to be a competent developer, but will it "get" Silent Hill's distinct brand of fog-choked Japanese horror?

44 TUROK

PS3 /Xbox 360/PC ■ February 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Simple math says menacing dinosaurs plus heavy weaponry minus the ridiculous former Turok antagonist Tobias Bruckner equals good, destructive fun. Dinosaur hunting, last seen in the execrable Turok: Evolution for last-generation consoles, gets a shot in the arm here. A primordial alien world serves as the gorgeous backdrop, and players can blast through it in the first-person perspective, opt to use stealth and silent weapons, or lure the game's rampaging beasts against a host of human foes. This new Turok also promises dinosaur-laden multiplayer contests for up to 16 players.

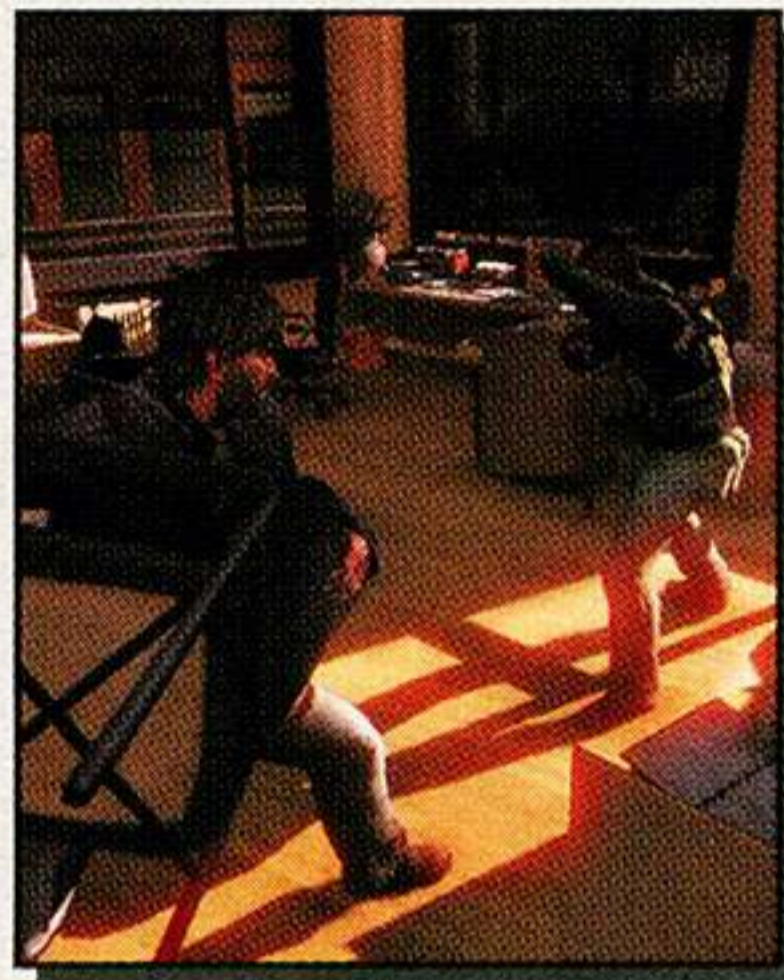
WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Why an alien world would have Earth-like dinosaur aliens is completely beyond us.

CONTINUED ►

43 TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CONVICTION

Xbox 360/PC ■ Early 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Now 53, a grizzled agent Sam Fisher has gone rogue—and will be hiding in plain sight. Here, Fisher will have to manipulate crowds, cause disturbances to create distractions (like throwing stacks of papers), or blend in to worm his way through the masses. Oh, and never fear: He'll also get to beat and/or shoot bad guys aplenty.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Splinter Cell now sounds a lot like Ubisoft's other "hide in plain sight" game, Assassin's Creed. There's also no PS3 version in the cards.



41 SABOTEUR

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Who among us won't enjoy kicking Mean Old Uncle Adolf square in his rotten Nazi pants? As a saboteur in this stylish third-person action game, you'll sneak around occupied France during World War II, and do horrible, horrible things to Nazis. As you complete missions, your progress is reinforced by the use of color: Nazi-occupied turf looks dark and gloomy, while the territories of the French resistance sparkle with equal parts hope and sunshine.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

It's genuinely hard to get excited about another World War II game, however ambitious the gameplay approach may be.

42 BURNOUT PARADISE

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Early 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

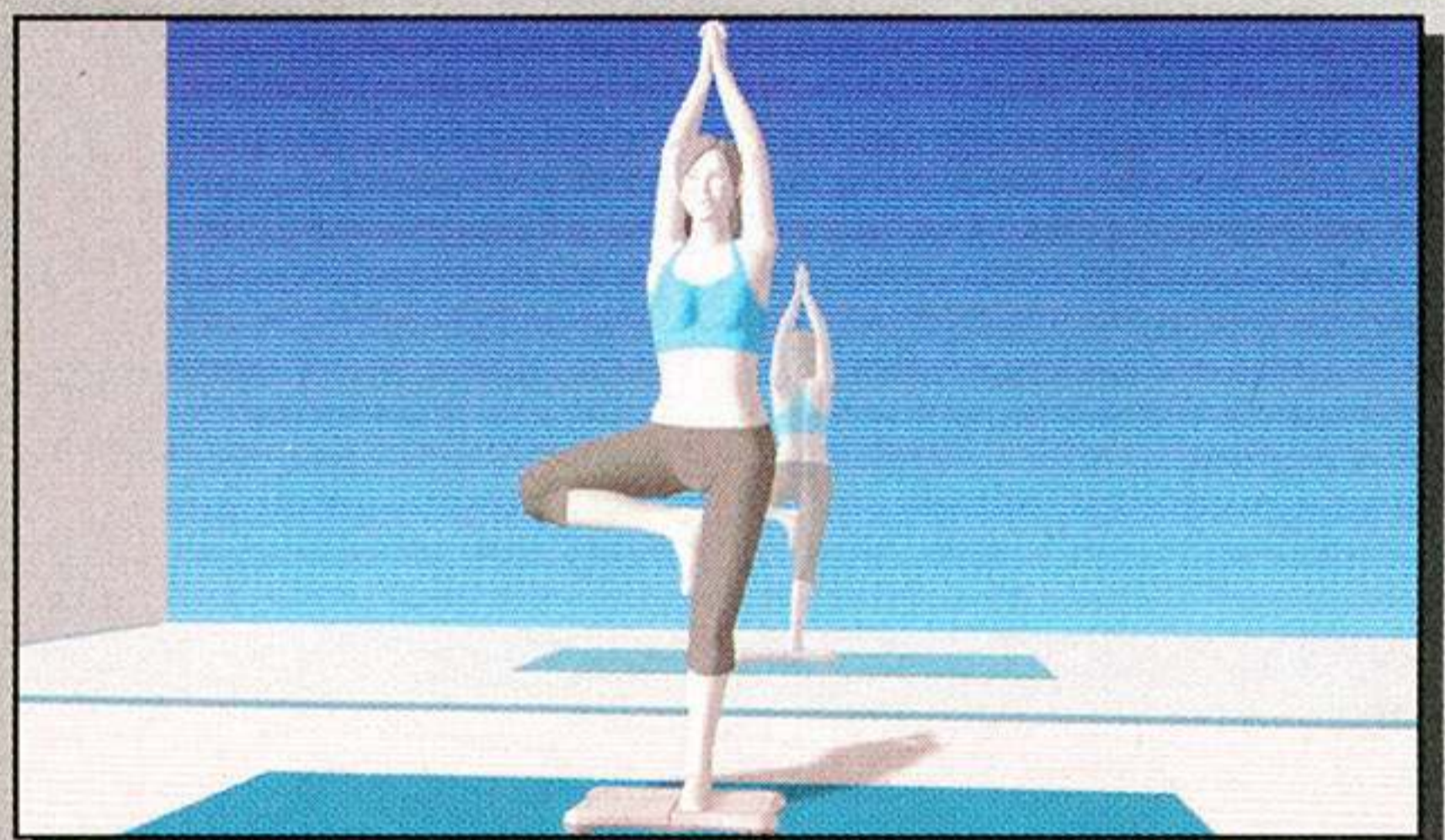
The ultra-fast and crashtastic driving game Burnout goes open world this time around. Players, either online or off, get to drive around the fictional Paradise City, taking part in races or destruction-based challenges. Paradise will also make use of the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3's camera capabilities, with drivers able to pose for both their in-game licenses and post-game snapshots taken to record momentous wins and humiliating defeats.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Burnout may well be one of those rare series that functions better inside a more restrictive world.

40 Wii FIT

Wii ■ Early 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Because you will max and/or blast your quads whilst simultaneously feeling the burn with this physical fitness simulator. Wii Fit comes with a special balancing board that calculates a user's body mass and also serves as a tool for approximately 40 different exercises. And, frankly, with your best friends being Ben and Jerry, you could stand to shed some pounds, if you catch our drift.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

If you wait just a little longer, they'll invent a game or game console to exercise for you.

39 THE CLUB

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ February 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

A fast-paced, third-person shooter, *The Club* drops players into a series of themed arenas in an underground blood sport. The goal, of course, is to chain kills and other acts of destruction together one after another in order to keep a mayhem meter filled. More kills and more fancy shooting earns big bonuses. The developers have been likening *The Club* to *Burnout* with guns, and this seems like a fairly accurate assessment.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

It's uncertain how far *The Club's* timed-destruction gimmick will actually carry the game.

38 DEVIL MAY CRY 4

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ February 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The *Devil May Cry* series comes to new-generation consoles with a brand-new hero: the gun-and-sword toting Nero. Expect epic confrontations pitting the newbie against a huge, four-legged fire demon named Belial. Capcom's already showed off this particular boss fight and it was, without hyperbole, amazing.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

This series has long been overdue for a *Resident Evil 4*-style reboot, and this is not the game to shoulder that particular burden.



37 TOO HUMAN

Xbox 360 ■ Early 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

Because Silicon Knights has put forth a massive, multi-year effort to ensure that *Too Human* lives up to its insanely long development time (it started as—gulp—a PlayStation title). But the real reason to care is that *Too Human* borrows heavily from legends like *Diablo II* and *God of War* to create a highly replayable action-RPG game with tons of phat loot. *Too Human* is about as epic as they come: Four-player online cooperative play, wicked mid-air melee combos, and futuristic Vikings with laser guns sounds like a pretty excellent mix to us. The graphics have also come a long, long way.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The lock-on targeting can be a little sticky, and the melee combat (via wiggling the Right Analog Stick) is so simple that you can play one-handed. If you're into that sort of thing...

CONTINUED ►

36 DARK SECTOR

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ February 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The moody third-person adventure Dark Sector features a protagonist who, when infected with a virus, neither sickens nor dies but rather becomes a superhero of sorts. With a mutated right arm and the ability to grow a glaive (a razor-tipped discus) to fling at foes, Hayden

Tenno battles a series of mutated freaks in—what else?—a dystopian Eastern bloc country in the not-too-distant future.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

An early version of the game suffered from poor animations. For a game so long in development, this set off some warning bells.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Because it's pretty, and it's violent, and it gives you a rare chance to hack at underdressed school girls using 10-foot tall swords. Do we really have to explain Soul Calibur's allure? This revamp adds ever-more seductive graphics, a new character with an independently controlled spear and dagger, plus the usual array of gameplay refinements and subtle balance adjustments. One such tweak makes it harder to knock your foes out of the ring because you've got to smash through walls and barriers first.



35 SOUL CALIBUR IV

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You hated *Kill Bill*. Or you parrot the old logic that says "fighting games never change."

34 NINJA GAIDEN II

Xbox 360 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Everything old is new again when ninja extraordinaire Ryu Hayabusa expands his arsenal of weapons with weapons in a scythe and Wolverine-esque claws; travels to exotic locations such as New York and Venice; and improves upon his

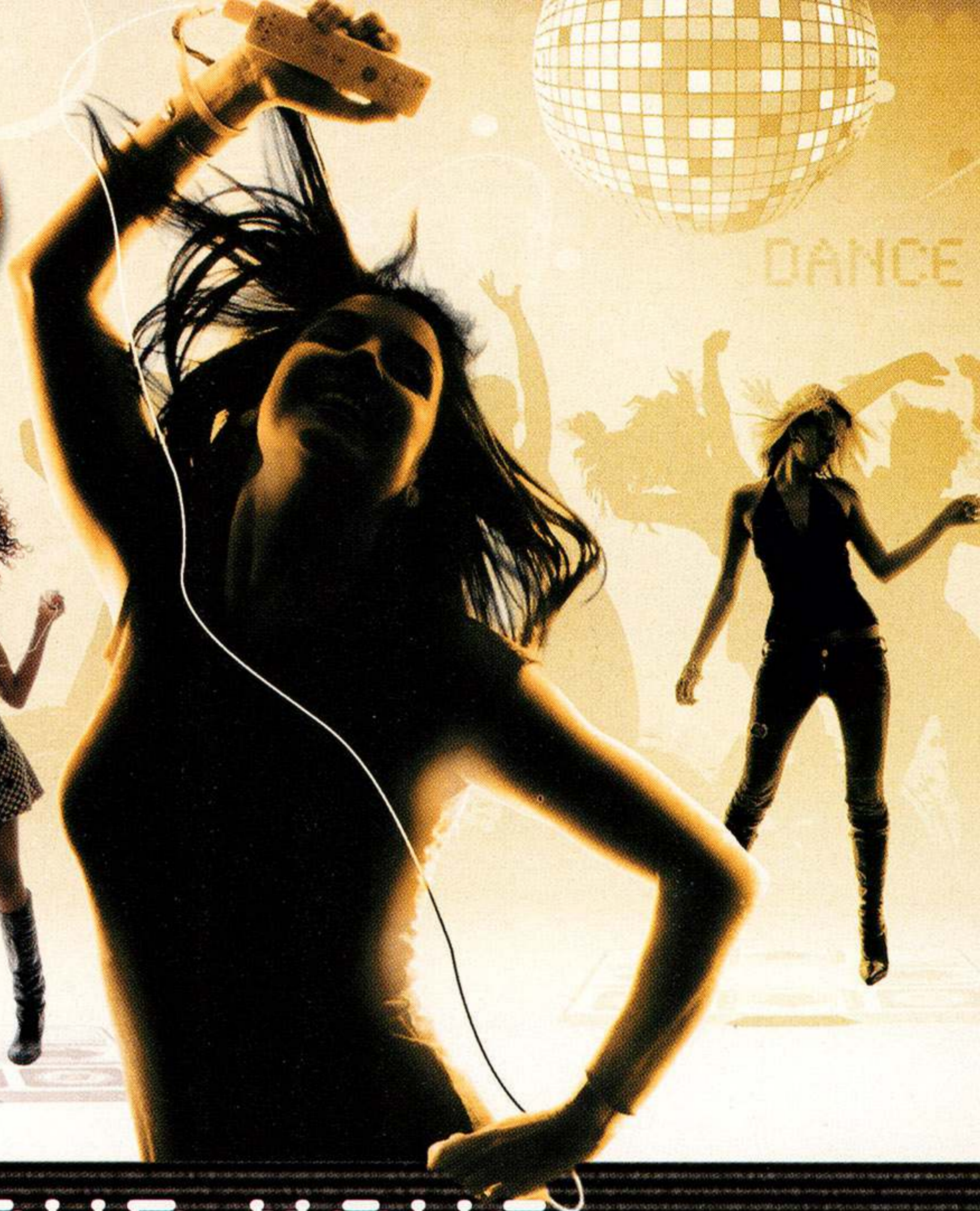
killing and maiming prowess by decapitating his foes or dismembering them. Tecmo's Team Ninja promises a 30-hour story mode and, thankfully, a less punishing check point system wherein, upon reaching one, Hayabusa's health will be at least partially restored.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The game's mastermind Tomonobu Itagaki thinks too hard is far too easy for you.

CONTINUED ►



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Wii

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33 FRACTURE

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Summer 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

This third-person shooter offers an interesting premise: a 23rd century civil war fought between factions who use either technology or biomodification to enhance their soldiers. You're a feisty young explosives expert who gets caught in the middle. Oh, and the kicker is that terrain-deforming grenades will turn the battlefield into a digital sandbox, creating huge pillars, deep sinkholes, or simply barricades.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Fracture may rely too heavily on its grenade gimmick, and not heavily enough on its gameplay or story.

32 METAL GEAR ONLINE

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Well, it's Metal Gear, and it's online. But far from being a crass cash-in on the Metal Gear Solid 4 gravy train, MGO appears to be a rather ambitious attempt by Kojima Productions to create a team shooter with all the cardboard box-scurrying and tranquilizer dart-firing influences of the slinky single-player classics. So far, so good: MGO plays nice and tense, just the way Gears of War fans would want it.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Aiming feels a bit wonky and oversensitive; but hey, they've got time.

31 TOM CLANCY'S ENDWAR

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ February 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

EndWar lets you build and customize an elite fighting unit and then drop it into one of 40 battlefields across the globe in an epic, real-time massively multiplayer strategy game. There will be six levels of experience and more than 150 different upgrades for individual units, proving definitively that war (or at least video game war) is not always hell. Plus, it's got advanced voice-only controls. The future is now!



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You'll probably be playing one of 10 other war games with a similarly apocalyptic theme.

CONTINUED ►



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30 SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

Wii ■ February 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Brawling has never been less serious, and it is most certainly good. Where else will you be able to pit your Mario against your sap of a friend's Sonic the Hedgehog, another drippy pal's Pikachu, and someone else's Solid Snake? This lighthearted fighting game features a host of cool Nintendo-themed environments, offers great power-ups, excellent weaponry (you can whack foes with Solid Snake's cardboard box), and online play via Nintendo's WiFi Connection.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Wait until the giant Nintendog appears on screen, almost wholly obscuring the gameplay. Whose lame idea was that?

29 GRAN TURISMO 5

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Because the free demo of Gran Turismo 5: Prologue is already available online and absolutely amazing. The Gran Turismo games are famous for their laser focus on pixel-perfect visual realism and agonizingly authentic racing simulation. If you like your cars fast and realistic, GT5 is the game you've been waiting for. New to this installment are huge races and massive racetracks (including the Daytona Speedway, a long-requested addition), online play and a car-centric community tools, and a slick YouTube-style video channel called "GT TV."



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

If you don't live, breathe, and eat automobiles, you should probably run screaming from any Gran Turismo game.

CONTINUED ►





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28 INFAMOUS

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

You could be heroes in this third-person adventure. Or you could be a really bad guy. Developer Sucker Punch will give you the opportunity to gain great superhuman abilities such as flight, electrical manipulation, and telekinesis. Once you've become powerful, you can take to heart the words of Uncle Ben Parker ("with great power...") or you can start talking about yourself in the third-person like Dr. Doom while trying to rule the world. You decide.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

This one is a long ways off...2008 is probably a pipe dream.

27 STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Spring 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

A third-person adventure, Unleashed has players hunting down Jedi Knights as a bad-ass apprentice for Darth Vader, giving them the opportunity to hurl a giant Star Destroyer around like so much garbage. The mass-carnage ambition of Unleashed is backed up with impressive tech, so when you force-throw Stormtroopers through walls, a physics engine ensures that characters flop and twist in cool, but realistic, ways.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Who wants to serve as Darth Vader's lackey? Here's a wild idea: Let us play as D. Viddy himself for once.

26 PROTOTYPE

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ Summer 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

New York takes it on the chin in Prototype. As the mysterious Prototype, players can tear through the city, hurl cars, wreak havoc, and blend in with the crowd by eating a hapless victim and then assuming his form and memories. You see, the Prototype isn't just incredibly agile and able to form weapons from his own body tissues, but he's also very, very hungry for human flesh.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The Prototype seems like a neat character, but who can empathize with a city-wrecking cannibal?

25 SAINTS ROW 2

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ 2008



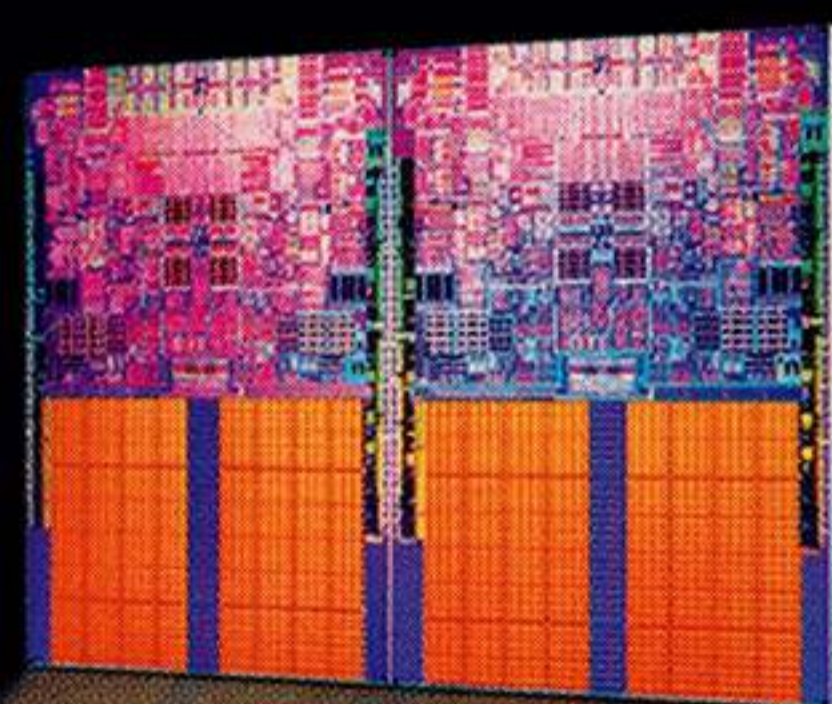
WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

THQ will improve on its crime drama in a host of ways in Saints Row 2. The city of Stillwater has been expanded to include new locations, and within its borders, players will be able to access motorcycles, boats, helicopters, and planes. The entire game will be playable online in a true cooperative mode, and THQ promises competitive play through Xbox Live and the PlayStation Network as well. Also, the first game was pretty damned good.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Saints Row is universally regarded as a Grand Theft Auto knockoff. And Grand Theft Auto IV comes out in 2008, too...

CONTINUED ►



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24 FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ January 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

THQ gives the Nazis a rest in the first-person shooter Frontlines: Fuel of War. Instead, the war pits East versus West, with each side using vaguely futuristic weapons such as armed drones (some of which can see through walls) and player-controlled precision air strikes. Customizable warriors and online play for 32 players (64 people on PCs) flesh out this war. Battlefield fans, take note.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

There are some cool touches here, but they might not be enough to distinguish Frontlines from all the other upcoming war games.

23 MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Spring 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

A gigantic Los Angeles awaits, and you can race through it to your heart's content. This time around, Rockstar Games is adding weather, time progression, a quick repairs option for people too busy to drive into a service station, and realistic traffic patterns. Rockstar also thinks menus are for chumps, so you'll be able to change objectives and access online races without leaving the game world.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Battling "realistic" Los Angeles traffic doesn't sound like very fun at all.

22 SECRET AGENT CLANK

PSP ■ Fall 2008

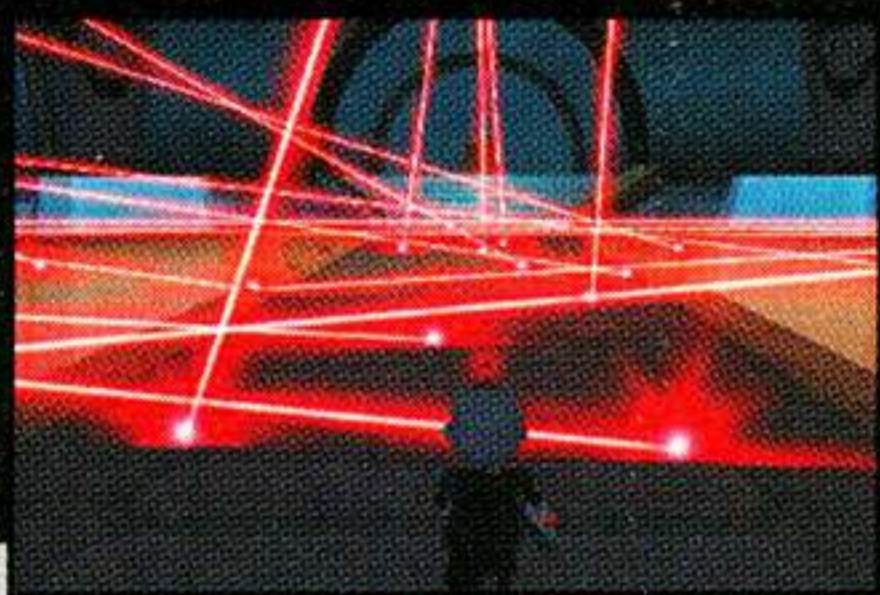
WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The beloved robot from the Ratchet & Clank series leaps into his own adventure, learning the mysteries of Clank Fu and trying to clear his falsely accused friend. Not much about this title is yet known, but sequences have shown Clank dodging lasers in a rhythm-style mini-game, and the goofy hero Captain Quark battling gangsters with—no lie—a vacuum.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

There's a reason why sidekicks are relegated to background roles and comedic relief.



21 GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

PSP ■ March 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Set before the events of the two PS2 God of War games, Chains of Olympus features the violent warrior Kratos in servitude to the gods. That means he'll be traveling to Hades, battling with the Persians, and performing sweeping, multihit combination attacks on such mythological creatures like Cyclopes and basilisks. Developer Ready at Dawn is preparing new combination hits for Kratos, including a wide arcing windmill hits that damages one opponent greatly, but also injures nearby foes—and then leaves the hero vulnerable at its conclusion.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

A lot of the game's fighting controls had to be reworked for the PSP, so you'll need to adjust accordingly.





20 MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

As a mercenary in Venezuela, you won't be sipping tea and reading the London Times literary supplement. Instead, you'll be blowing stuff up, killing folks, stealing vehicles, and generally creating mayhem. The third-person perspective Mercs 2 also offers the unique opportunity for players to set up shop and recruit mercenaries to join the company. In the end, it's all about family.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The paranoid Venezuelan government has stated Mercenaries 2 is a tool to drum up support for an invasion of its country. True story!

CONTINUED ►

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19 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ Early 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Remember Gears of War? This is the other series from that developer. As Unreal Tournament 3 glides in on a cushion of post-Gears cool, it's nice to see that this online shooter can back up at least some of its hype. Compared to Gears, UT3 is both similar (note the robot suit and oversized gun motif) and different (Gears is slow and suspenseful; UT3 is a whirling dervish of death and chaos). Otherwise, the plot is simple: kill stuff online using sweet guns like the Flak Cannon and the always entertaining Bio Rifle. You can also drive one of those hulking tripods from Tom Cruises's *War of the Worlds*.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

It's entirely likely you'll still be wrapped up in Halo 3. And Call of Duty 4...

18 BORDERLANDS

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ Late 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The subtle art of extraterrestrial diplomacy plays out in Borderlands, by which it is meant you can blow the crap out of a host of aliens, alien monsters, and other humans who may remind you of aliens. A first-person shooter with lots of weapon customization and role-playing elements, Borderlands shifts to the third-person for vehicular manslaughter and Mad Max-style raids. Four-player cooperative play sounds groovy, too.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

It's uncertain how the mishmash of shooting perspectives and RPG elements will mesh in the final package, but it's worth finding out.

17 ALAN WAKE

Xbox 360/PC ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Horror writer A. Wake (get it?) finds himself trapped in one of those nightmarish situations that video game characters so often get themselves into. As Wake, players will have to use light—what little there is—to good advantage, as the game's monstrous enemies are susceptible to it. Wake will also have to piece together what's happening to him in the creepy, haunted world of Bright Falls.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

If A. Wake is simply dreaming, someone is going to get punched... in the neck.

CONTINUED ►

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16 LEGENDARY

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ Early 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

As a cautionary tale, *Legendary* teaches each and every one of us not to open Pandora's box. Opening Pandora's box is a bad thing, and unleashes great evil on the world; evil that must then be shot, in the first-person perspective, with guns, repeatedly, until it is dead. And we're talking about huge rampaging Minotaurs, snarling, ceiling-climbing werewolves, and other hideous monstrosities. So keep the box closed.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Using reverse psychology, you should totally open Pandora's Box. We heard there's candy inside.

14 INDIANA JONES

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Everyone's favorite archaeologist/Nazi puncher Indiana Jones returns to video game glory to coincide with his new flick, *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. LucasArts is big on showing off the game's realistic physics engine, which has bad guys desperately trying to grab on to the sides of the San Francisco cable cars they've been thrown off of, or hurling right through store windows after receiving a right hook to the jaw. Expect adventure, far-flung locales, and lots of Nazi punching.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Nazis are people, too.

15 HALO WARS

Xbox 360 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Because you already like Halo. Or, conversely, maybe you want to like Halo but you hate first-person shooters. Halo Wars is noteworthy because it takes the ultra-hot

shooter to a strategy setting, with players sitting God-like over the battlefield while pitting tiny Warthogs and Pelicans against Covenant Scarabs and Ghosts. Early gameplay actually looks quite good, with spot-on sound effects and enemy behaviors. Though it's a strategy game and not a shooter, Halo Wars seemingly performs the impossible: it looks and feels like Halo.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

With this being an Xbox 360 exclusive for the moment, you'll be stuck fiddling with analog sticks when you really want a mouse. Ensemble Studios is promising the easiest RTS control scheme yet, but you know how these things often turn out...

13 MARIO KART Wii

Wii ■ Early 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The classic kart-racing franchise returns for a Wii iteration, one that comes bundled with a "Wii wheel" controller. Once again, Mario and his friends and enemies will gather for epic races with cool weapons, and this time around it will be possible to drive motorcycles and compete in 12-player online races via Nintendo's Wi-Fi connection.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You're probably still playing the older, still magnificent versions of Mario Kart on other platforms.

12 LITTLEBIGPLANET

PS3 ■ Early 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Because this cute little game-making simulation lets you create your own worlds. You can decorate them however you choose, and then take delightful, expressive little cloth men and women and run through the levels you've created. Players can also upload the levels they've created and

download other people's creations online. LittleBigPlanet offers a trio of Cs: customization, creativity, and coolness.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You possess no creativity whatsoever and genuinely dislike fun.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

So far, creator Peter Molyneux's grand innovations for Fable have been: 1) a dog and 2) a one-button combat system. But in doing so, he's allowed for lots of emotion in his role-playing game, and for players to learn a combat scheme that's simple yet remarkably deep for those who care to master it. This time around, players will literally be able to buy every building they see, and use guns on their various quests through Albion.



11 FABLE 2

Xbox 360/PC ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

A lot of Peter Molyneux's crazy ideas sound better on paper than they play within the context of a game.

10 FINAL FANTASY XIII

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Although little is known about this newest Final Fantasy, the first game trailers proclaiming its existence were phenomenally gorgeous. The game stars

a gun/sword wielding female protagonist named Lightning, and features real-time combat that eschews those pesky random battles that plagued the Final Fantasy series until XII. Recently, Square revealed a brand-new, hulking male ally for Lightning, and showed off some new, very awesome monster summons. We also hear it'll take full advantage of the PS3's finicky-but-powerful Cell CPU.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

We're drawing a blank here...a complete blank.

CONTINUED ►

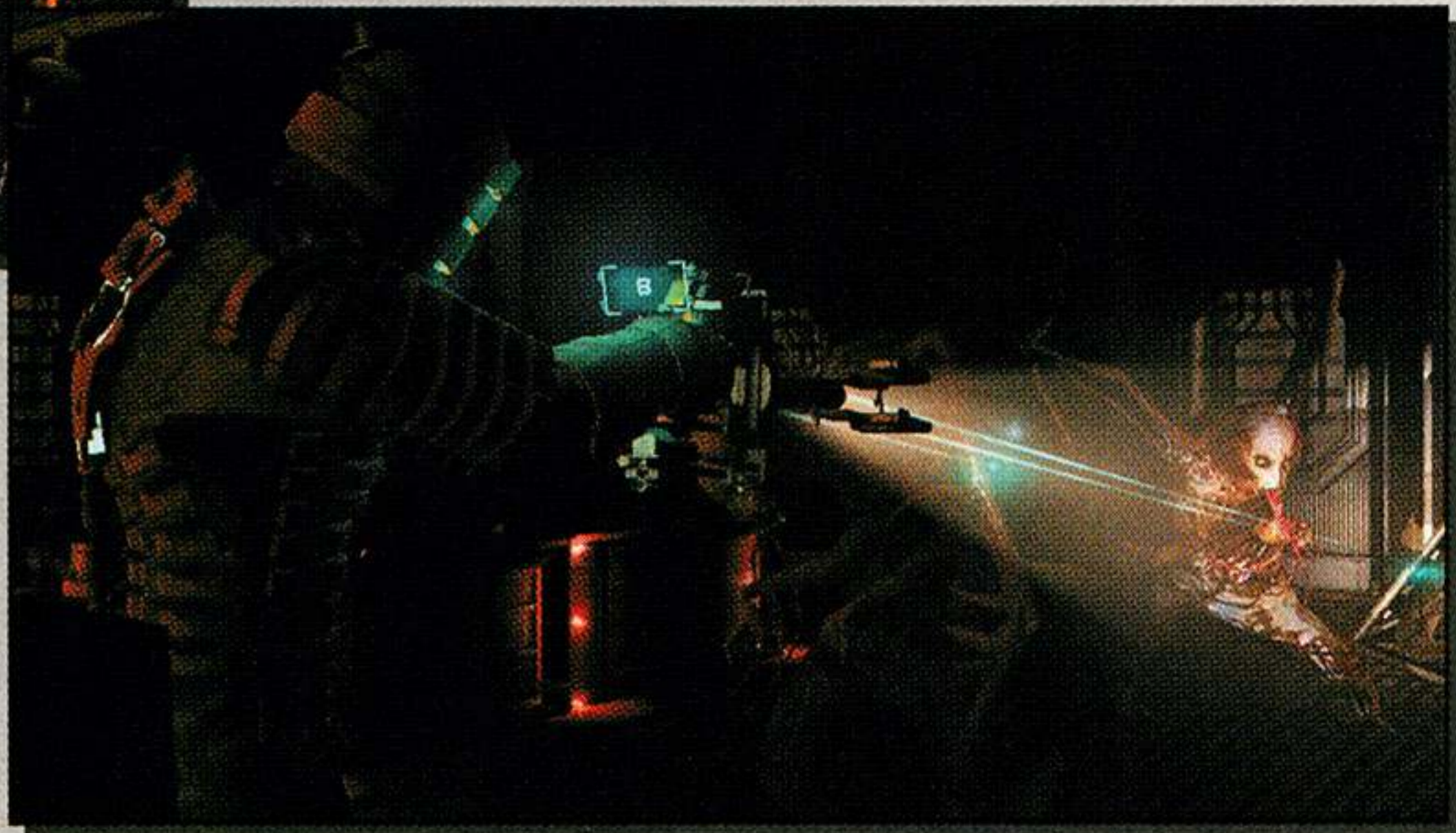


9 DEAD SPACE

PS3/Xbox 360 ■ Late 2008

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Resident Evil 4 fans will instantly spot the similarities between that game and EA's upcoming splatter-fest Dead Space. Both games play from a slick over-the-shoulder perspective and feature more decapitations and eviscerations than you can shake a plasma cutter at. But Dead Space, a horror gamer's dream come true, goes several steps further. The plot—part *Alien*, part *Event Horizon*—is well paced, putting you in the boots of a humble engineer trapped on a haunted mining spaceship. Other surprises abound: Zero-gravity segments have you bounding from wall to wall, and combat focuses almost exclusively on amputating limbs from the pus-spewing, gut-busting creatures that infest the ship. Creativity counts, too: Slice off a creature's limbs, and you may cause it to float helplessly into the void while saving yourself a few precious shots. Nice!



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The multi-limbed enemies looked suitably freaky, but we picked up on more thrills than chills. Of course, there's a whole year for EA to pump up the scares...

8 STARCRAFT II

Mac/PC ■ 2008 (in theory)



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Protoss, Zerg, and human once again meet in mortal combat in this much anticipated sequel to the classic real-time strategy StarCraft. The game takes place four years after the events of StarCraft and includes the standard complement of new weapons, units, and game scenarios. This time around improvements include new plasma torpedoes for the Terran BattleCruiser and teleportation abilities for some Protoss units.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

If you don't own a game-worthy PC or Macintosh, you're missing this party.

7 LEFT 4 DEAD

Xbox 360/PC ■ March 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

It's more zombie-killing mayhem, this time in the first-person perspective. As part of a four-person team of survivalists, it's your job to escape, outwit, and blast speedy super-zombies à la *28 Days Later*. The twist comes from being able to play as special zombie-types in multiplayer, too, and the developers promise this experience will be vastly different than the human campaign. We particularly dig the fast pacing, realistic weapons, and emphasis on teamwork.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The team-based play might not be so fun for players who have to rely on computer-controlled allies. Then again, that's what friends are for.

6 TEKKEN 6

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

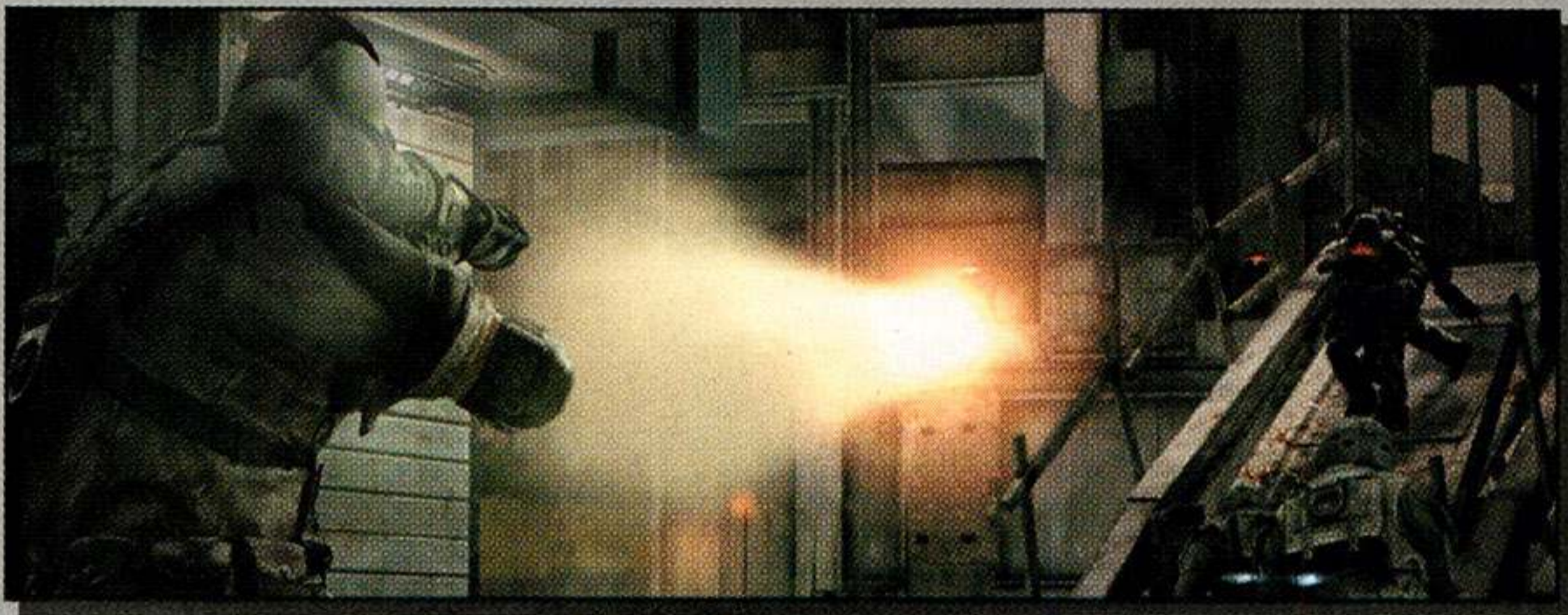
Because after Tekken 4, the programmers learned their lessons the hard way and have been kicking major booty ever since. Tekken 6 is the first game in the venerable fighting series to have fully smashable arenas, so feel absolutely free to pile-drive and dragon punch your friends through walls, floors, and other minor obstacles. True to Tekken form, there are also a whole bunch of crazy new characters, including a matador and a lady contortionist. But our early favorite is Bob, a pork-fried brawler with a whole lotta wiggle.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The arcade version hits in early 2008, and a PS3 port later that same year seems like a long shot. Fingers crossed, people!

5 KILLZONE 2

PS3 ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

The developers for Killzone 2 are aware of the frame rate drops that plagued the first Killzone, and have sworn to eliminate them. This means that when players drop down to the Helghast home world, Helghan, the game will run at a smooth 30 frames per second, and look remarkably good while doing so. Players can expect a host of cool weather effects and multiplayer options that have, sadly, yet to be disclosed...but we know Home and Killzone.com will play a big part.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

The first Killzone broke your heart, and hurt your eyes. Can you forgive and forget?

4 SPORE

PC ■ 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Famed game designer Will Wright has created a simulation where you start off as a one-celled organism and end up as a space faring race of creatures capable of kicking ass in copious quantities. There is literally no game like Spore, and it may cause a revolution the likes of which has not been seen since The Sims.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Spore may well be too ambitious and too wide in scope for its own good.

CONTINUED ►

3 FALLOUT 3

PS3/Xbox 360/PC ■ Late 2008

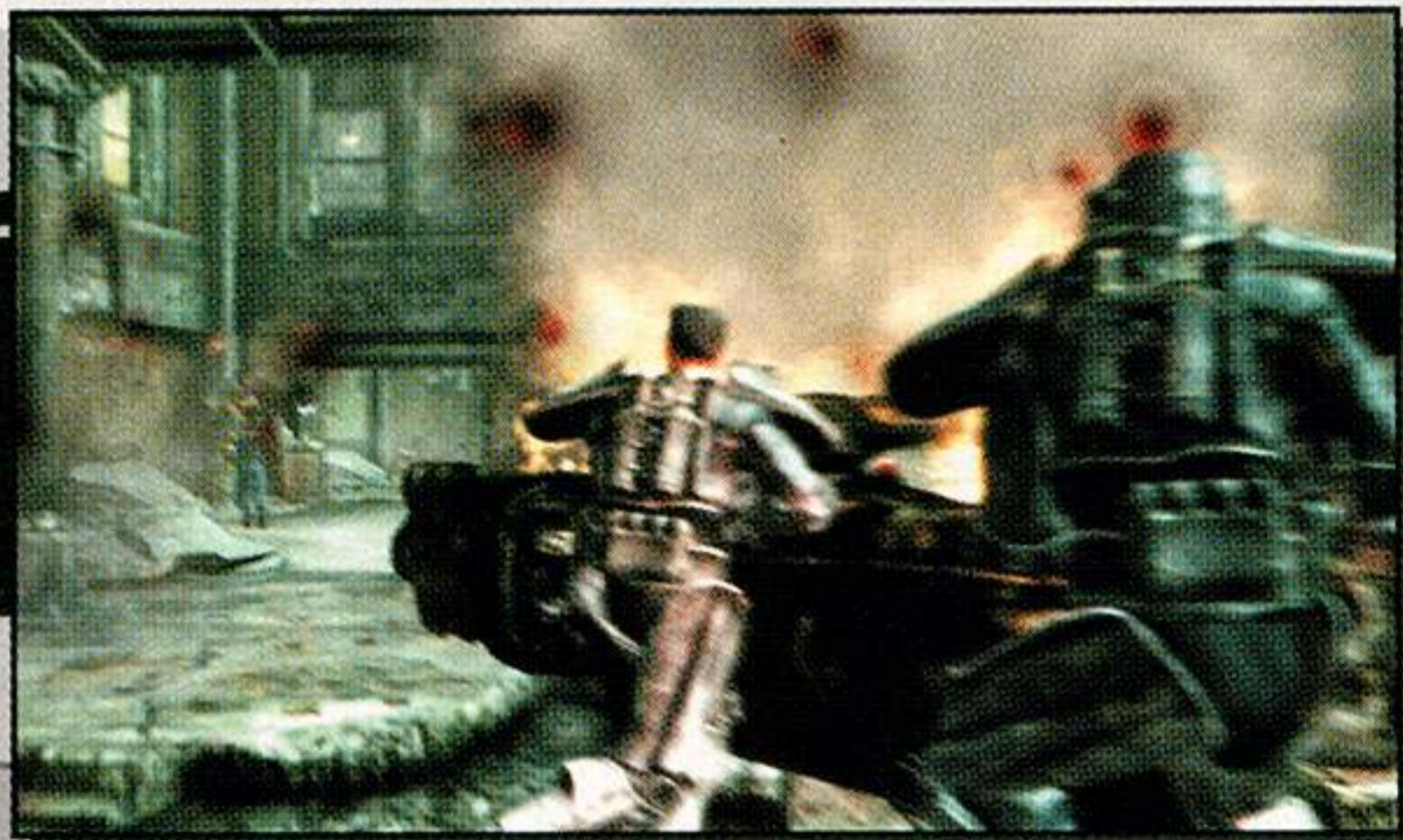


WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

Post-apocalyptic wastelands have never seemed so inviting. Players create their own character, customize him, and set him out into the world, killing and exploring in either the first- or third-person perspective. Stars such as Ron Perlman and Liam Neeson have already signed up to do voice acting in the game, and the genuine hope is that this role-playing game lives up to its heritage: Fallout and Fallout 2 were classics.

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

This is Bethesda's first crack at a Fallout game...then again, they made Oblivion, which was stupendous.



2 METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

PS3 ■ Early 2008

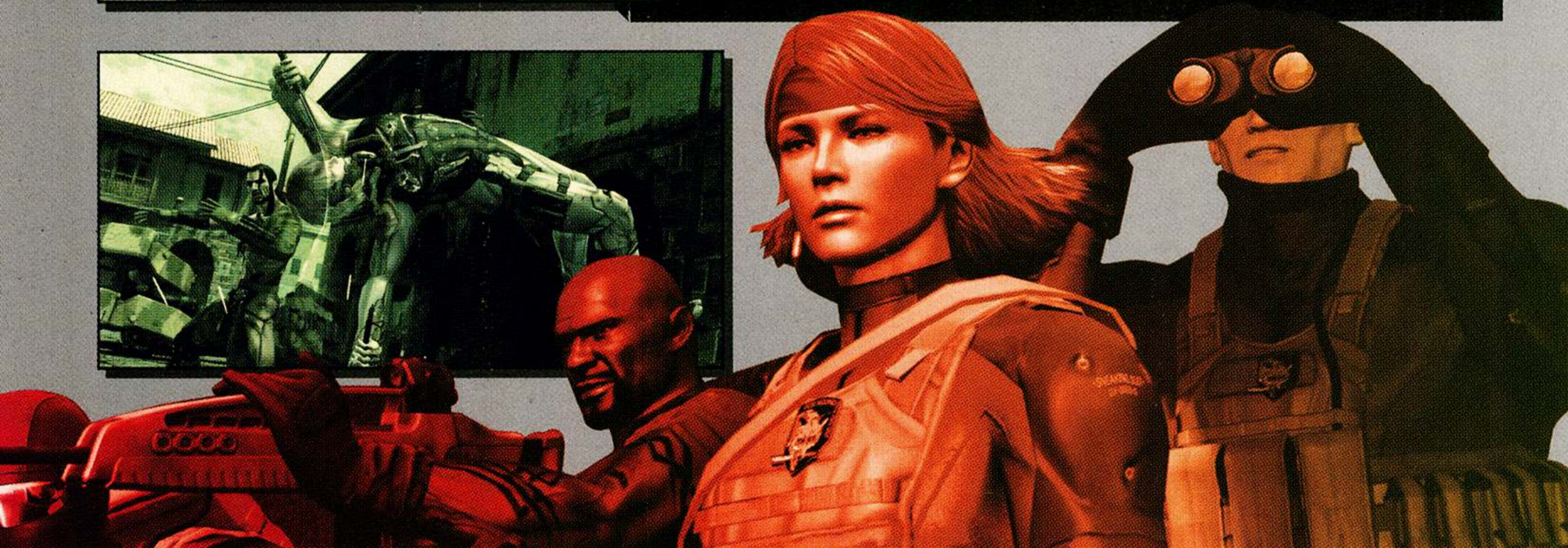


WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

For many, this will be the first honest-to-God reason to own a PS3. And why not? The ever-enigmatic Hideo Kojima is notorious for crafting long-winded game cinemas... but he's equally renowned for his lush production values and relevant subject matters. By shifting to a somewhat more shooter-friendly format, complete with modern camera controls and customizable button layouts, MGS4 will instantly appeal to series vets as well as twitchy newcomers. Stealth is still a major element, but you'll have optical camouflage, cardboard boxes, and a stack of girly magazines to help with all that.

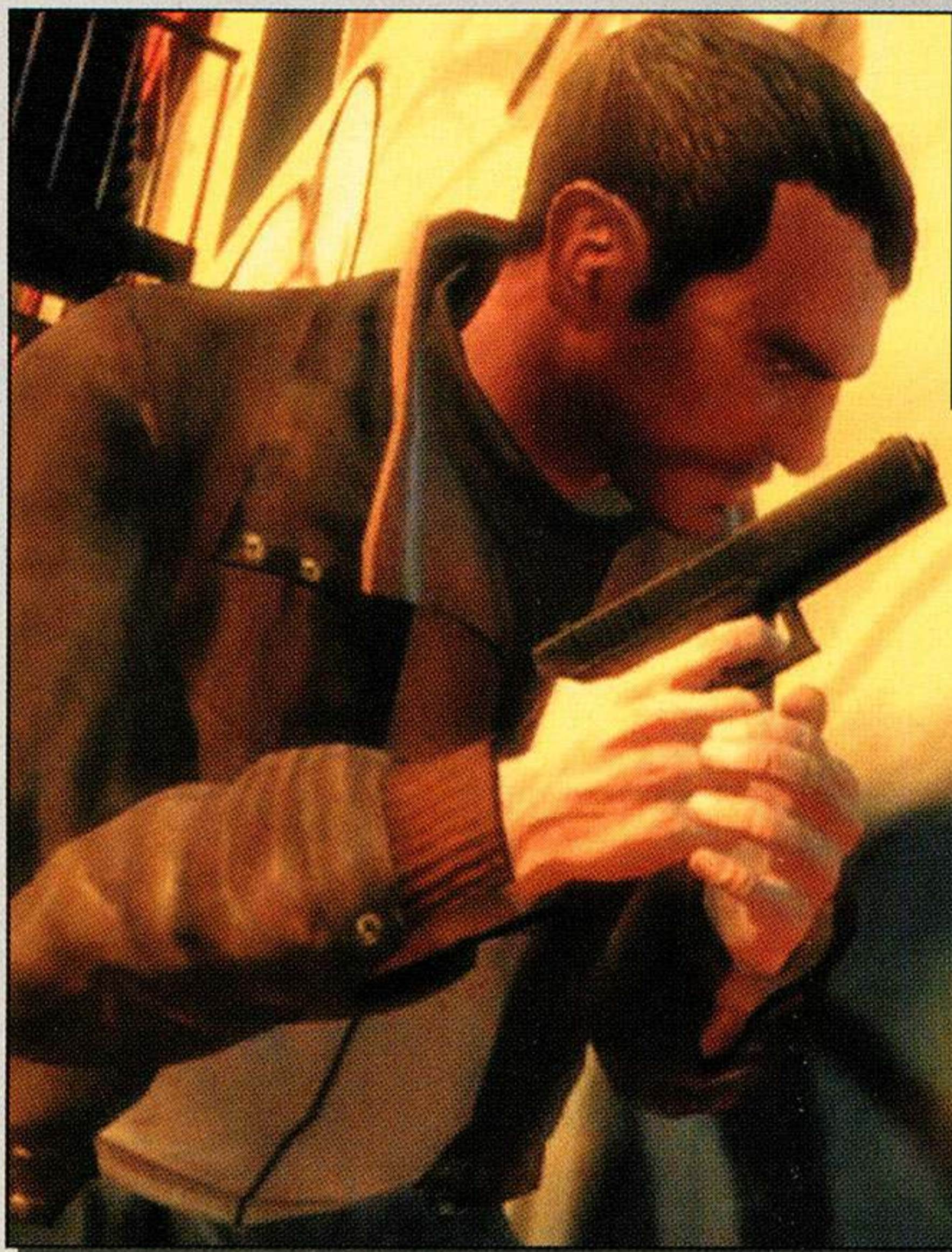
WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

You're allergic to Sony consoles and/or stealthy older men.



1 GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

PS3/Xbox 360 • Spring 2008



WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:

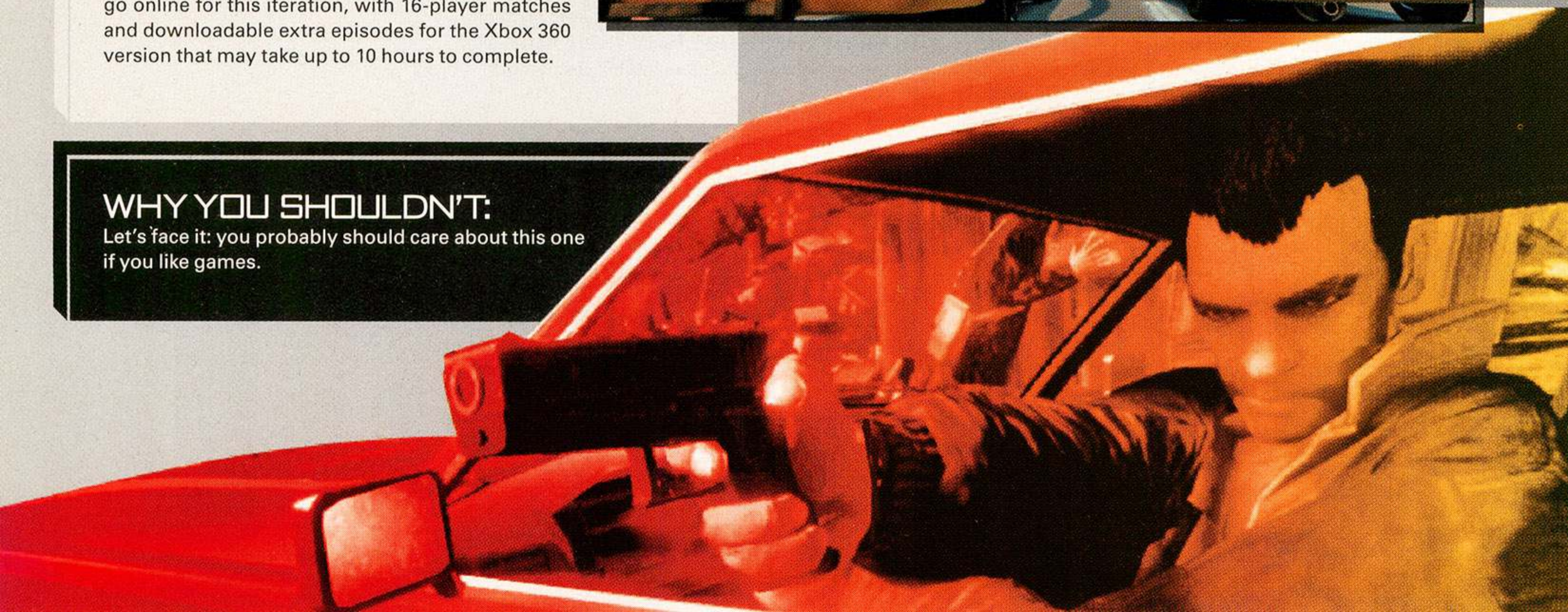
The epic Grand Theft Auto IV takes place in a reworked New York with an Eastern European protagonist and promises a grittier, more mature take on the franchise's trademark open-world, crime-based drama. For this fourth episode, Rockstar promises the near-impossible, claiming, "You can basically play the game from beginning to end without a single load screen." In addition, players can also expect fineries such as redone weapon aiming system (with blind firing) and a most rocktastic music soundtrack.

Protagonist Nico Bellic can toss people off of buildings, hot-wire cars, ride in taxis or buses, and fly helicopters onto just about any building. Rockstar has also promised Grand Theft Auto will go online for this iteration, with 16-player matches and downloadable extra episodes for the Xbox 360 version that may take up to 10 hours to complete.



WHY YOU SHOULDN'T:

Let's face it: you probably should care about this one if you like games.





SNAKE CHARMER

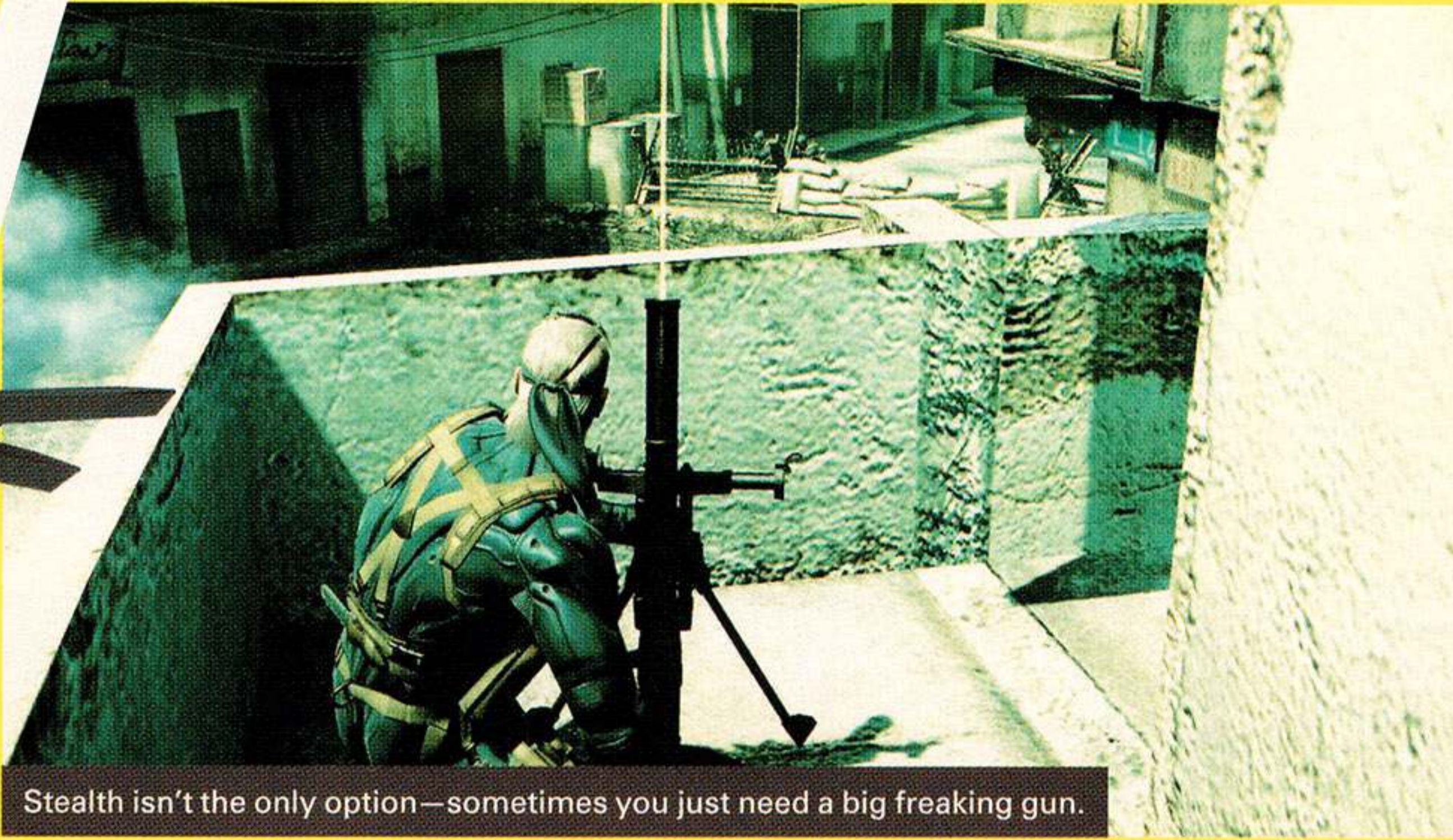
Snake might be getting a little long in the tooth for all this gunplay and intrigue, but even the oldest of dogs can learn new tricks. *By Cameron Lewis*

Over twenty years after Solid Snake made his 8-bit debut on the NES, our favorite rapidly aging protagonist prepares to suit up for what is supposedly his last adventure. Metal Gear Solid 4's promotional materials have promised to answer all your outstanding questions in the final chapter, but it's the long list of gameplay improvements that has us most excited.

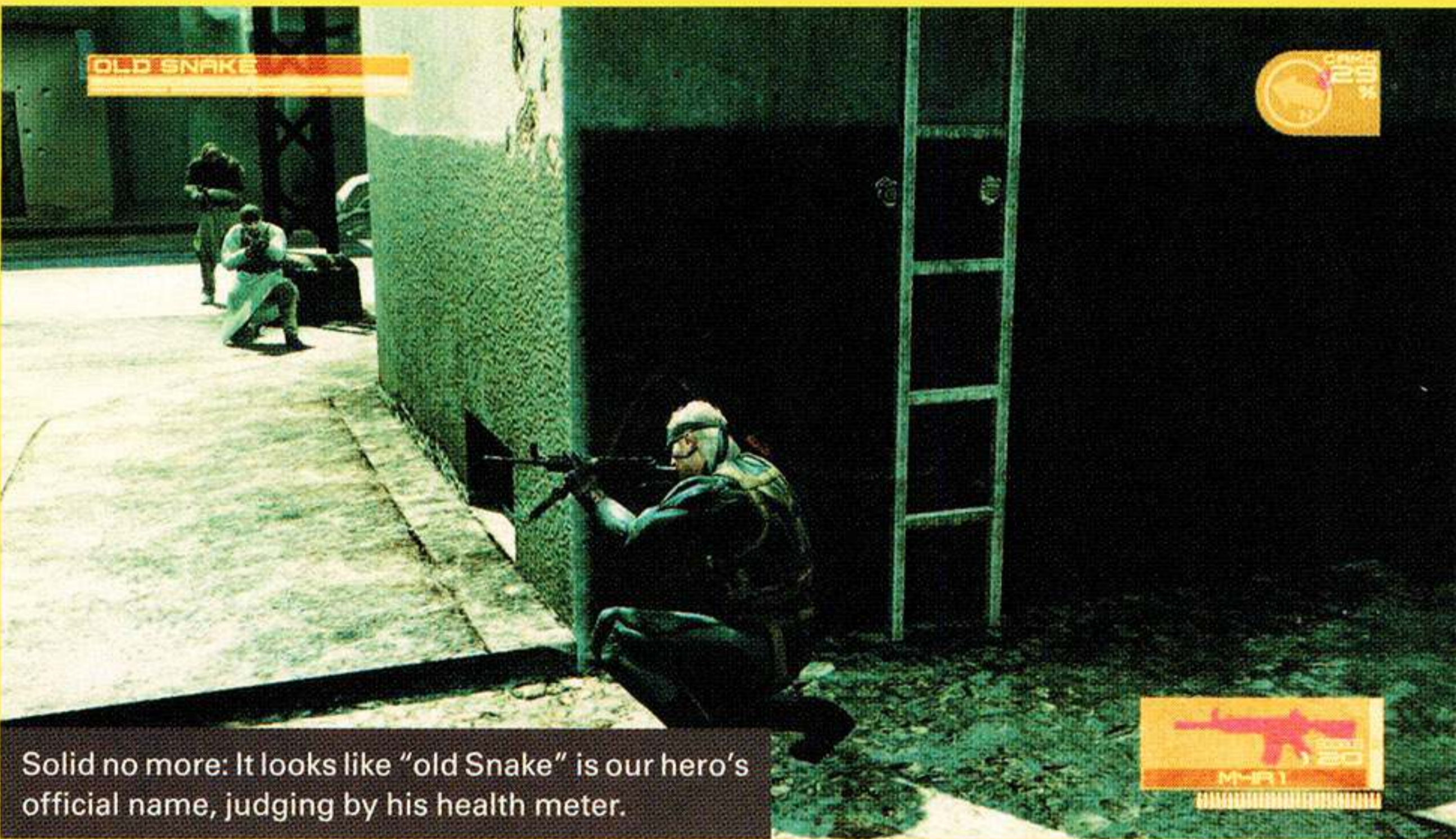
SMOOTH OPERATOR

By now you've heard all about the new Octocamo suit and lock-on targeting, but what you might not have heard is how a wide range of abilities are mapped to the newly context-sensitive triangle button. Stroll up to an interactive object, and an icon appears to indicate the available action, from climbing a ladder to slitting an unwary guard's throat. This means no more holding down multiple buttons to maintain cover: just tap a button to enter and exit at will, and pop out temporarily to spray lead with the left analog stick and R1 trigger.

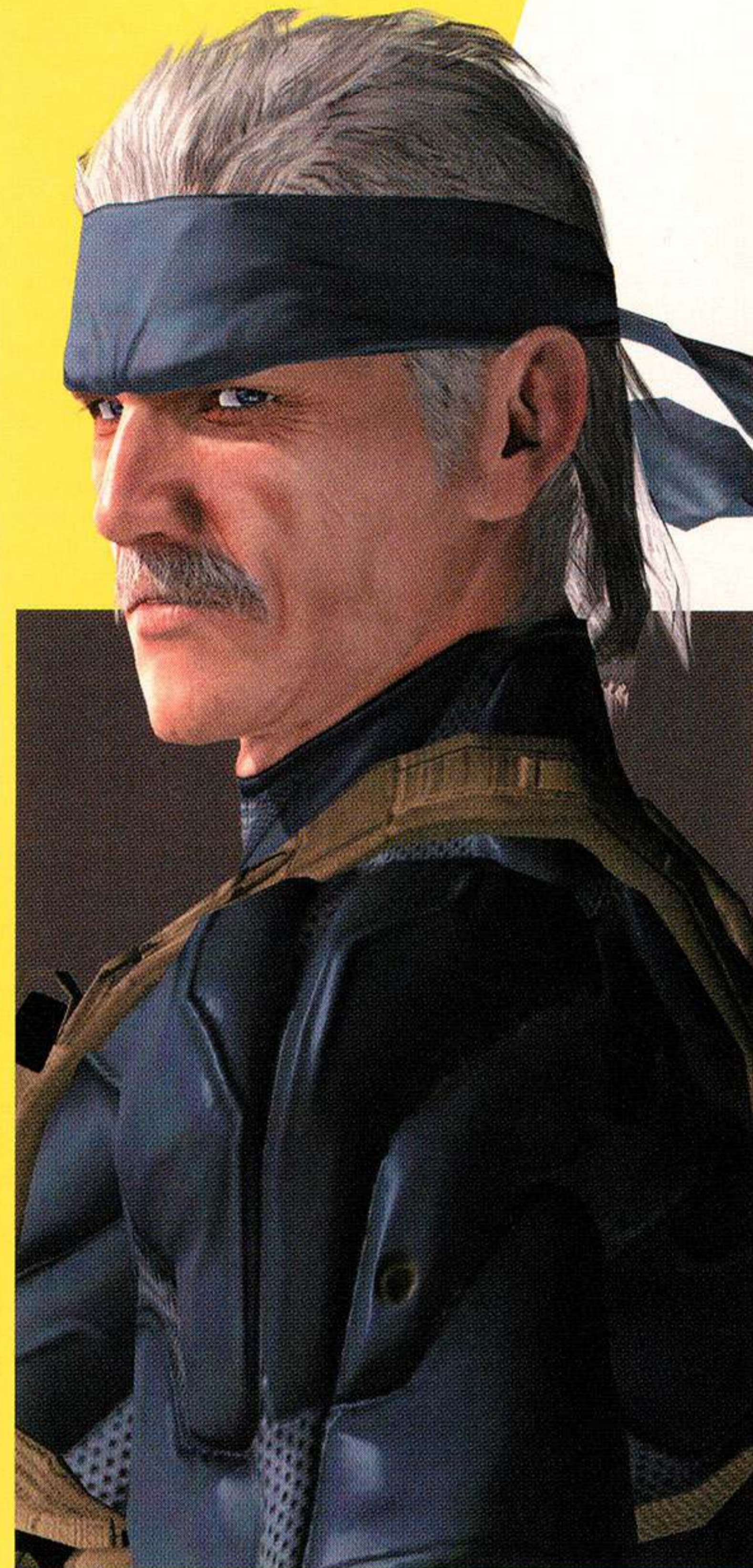
Snake's got some new close-quarters combat attacks to show off as well, like knocking enemies unconscious with two-handed weapons and wrestling foes to the ground then choking them until they black out. Support for Sony's upcoming DualShock 3 means the return of force feedback and the addition of simple motion-sensing maneuvers like banging open a garbage container's lid from the inside with a simple jerk of the controller.



Stealth isn't the only option—sometimes you just need a big freaking gun.



Solid no more: It looks like "old Snake" is our hero's official name, judging by his health meter.



Crying Wolf is part of the Beauty and the Beast unit, a group of cyborg monstrosities out to squash Snake for good.

CONTINUED ►

SNAKE CHARMER

BATTLE FATIGUE

All those years of stealth tension are taking their toll on Snake, as evidenced by the new Psyche and Stress meters that gauge his emotional spirits and psychological boiling point. Unpleasant conditions like hot weather or the rancid stink of a nasty hiding spot can sap the old fellow's spirits, leaving him with diminished aiming skill and other undesirable effects. Let it drop too low and the poor guy'll catch the vapors and swoon like a schoolgirl. Battle stress, on the other hand, gets the one man army amped up for combat, greatly improving his abilities in short, adrenaline-fueled bursts that then leave him panting on the edge of total exhaustion.

He's not the only soldier with a new mindset, though: enemy A.I. alert states have been simplified, doing away with the caution and evasion modes that muddled the mental waters between normal patrols and the frenzied exclamation-point searches of alert individuals.

GEARS OF SNAKE

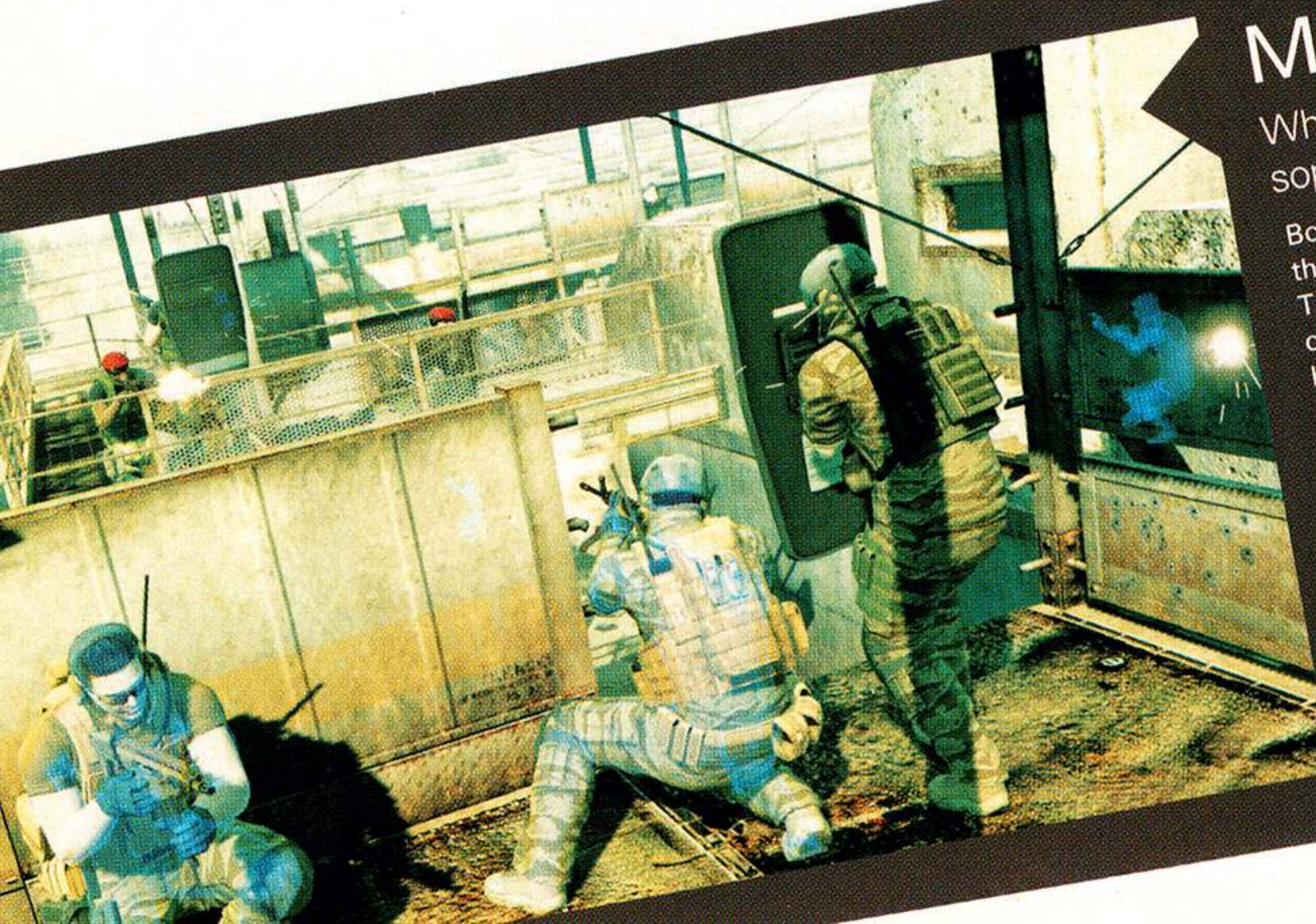
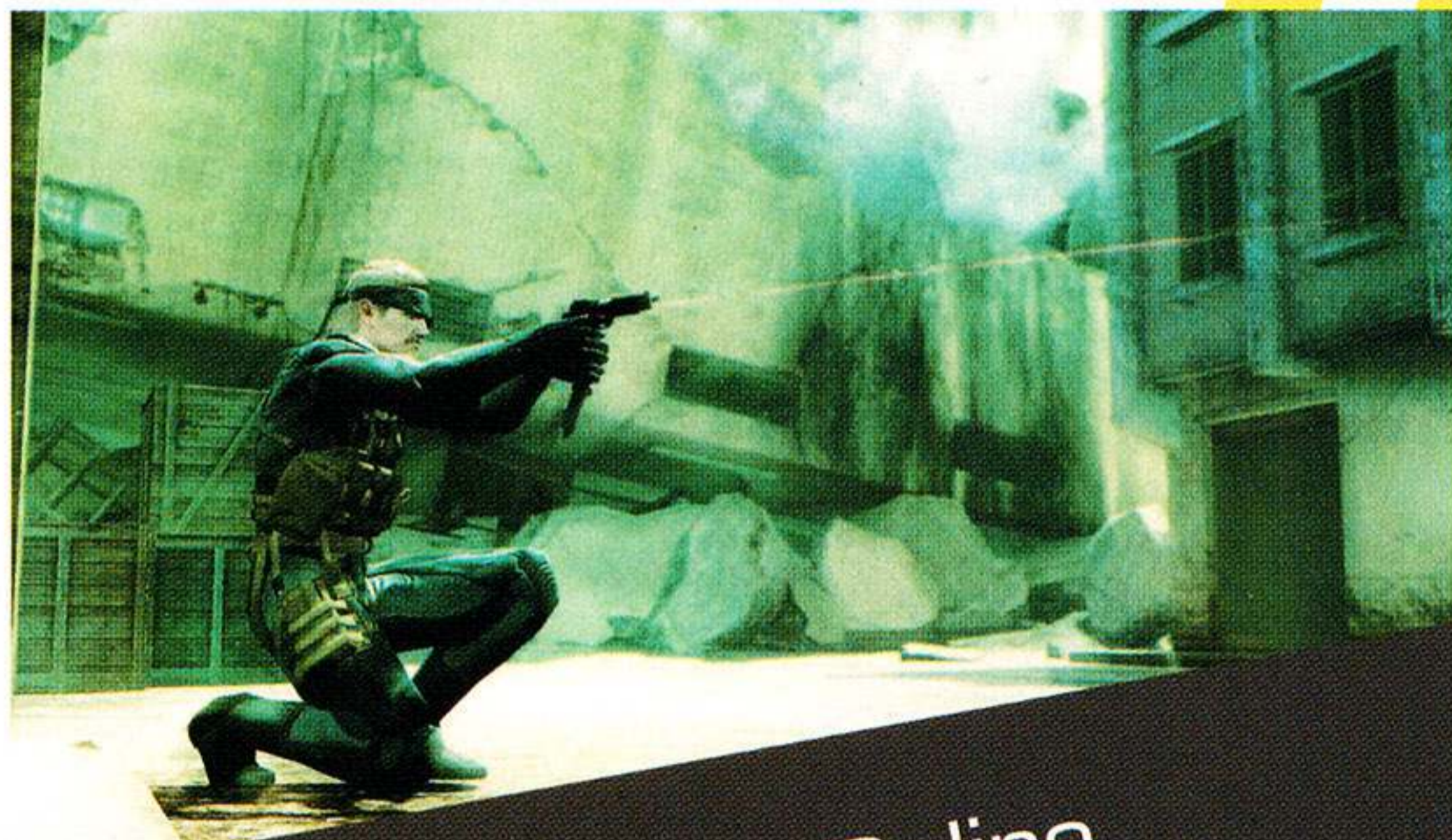
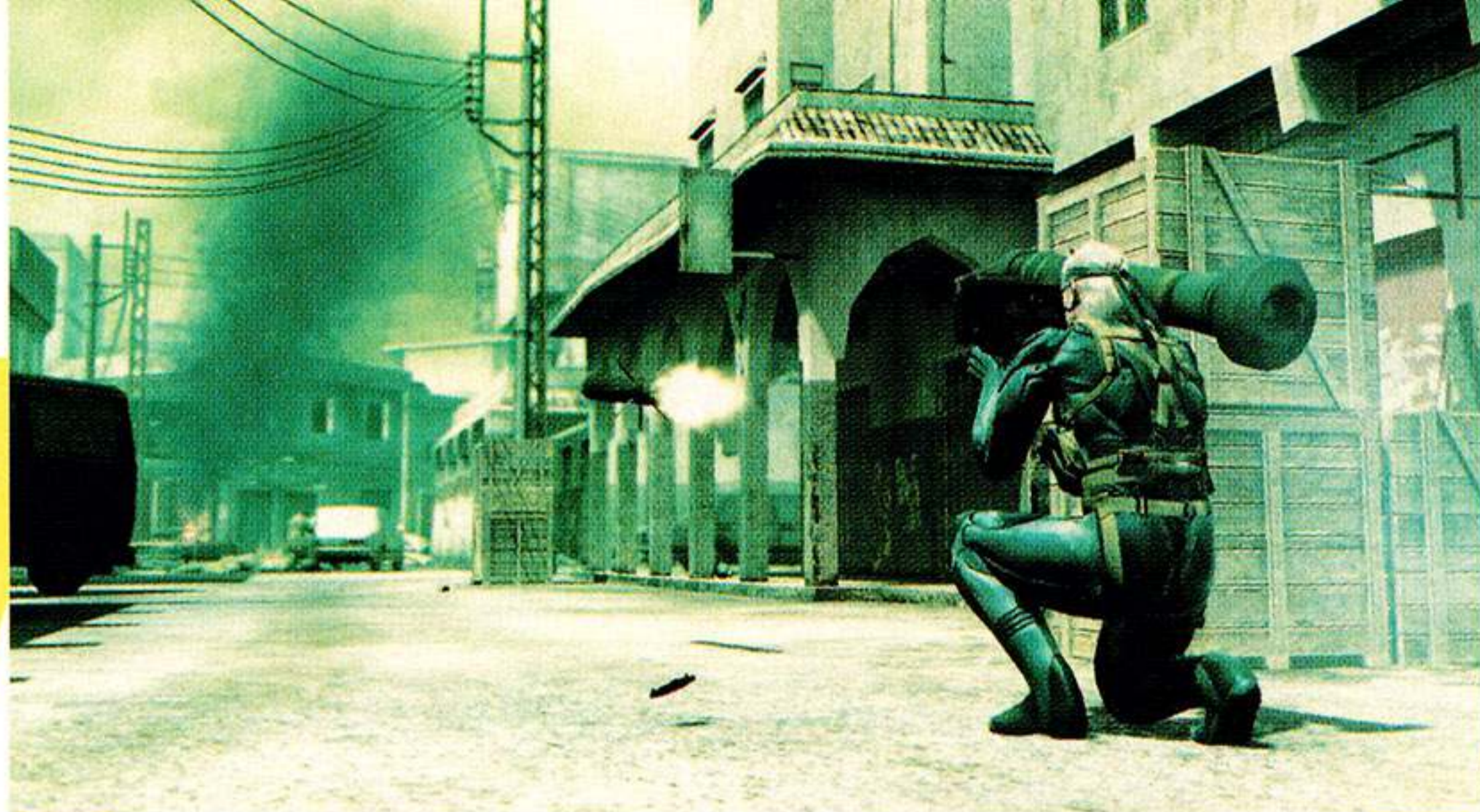
Though Snake's still got a lot of sneak left in him, some of the hellish battlefields he'll encounter are simply too chaotic to go tip-toeing through. For these you'll have ample opportunity to try out the expanded arsenal of offensive gear. From pistols to machine guns, shotguns to petrol bombs, and sniper rifles to anti-tank javelins, there doesn't seem to be much of a limit on the raw destruction you can leave in your wake, as if the bombed out and intricately detailed environments haven't already sustained enough damage.

What's more, weapons get slots for customizable upgrades. A rifle, for example, might have a slot for a scope and a mounting spot on the underside for a flashlight, and that's not even getting into the potential for alternate firing modes as you get to crouch-run through enemy fire for the first time in the series.

SHOOTING THE MOON

What's most exciting about Metal Gear Solid 4 is that for all the talk of vastly improved controls, intelligent enemies, and equipment imbued with creative expandability, we're probably only just scratching the surface of the mayhem headed our way early this year. All you need to do is take one look at some of the insane boss creatures—like the four somewhat less-than-fetching ladies **featured on the following page**—to realize the level of unhinged creativity the 200-member development team is bringing to the series' swan song.

We can't yet be sure whether the story is more or less comprehensible than usual, or if this is indeed the last time we'll see good old Solid Snake, but we'd be as surprised as anyone if this long-running saga didn't go out with one hell of a bang.



Metal Gear Online

What's cooking for Metal Gear's sophomore multiplayer effort?

Boosting your fellow players to areas they can't reach on their own is cool, but the benefits of teamwork go far deeper. The SOP network that lets you see teammates through solid objects sounds handy, just as long as you don't let enemies hack into it, but it also opens the door to some interesting gameplay wrinkles when used in tandem with the brand-new skill system.

At the beginning of a mission, you'll equip four skills from a list of fifteen, which bestow advantages like enhanced targeting and faster movement. What's particularly noteworthy is that linked-up soldiers can actively share those skills with one another if they're within network range, making the local unit as a whole much stronger than the sum of its parts. When actually working together as a team yields such tangible selfish benefits, you can expect to see much less lone-wolf death-wish behavior in online matches.

Bosses of Metal Gear: The Beauty & the Beast Unit

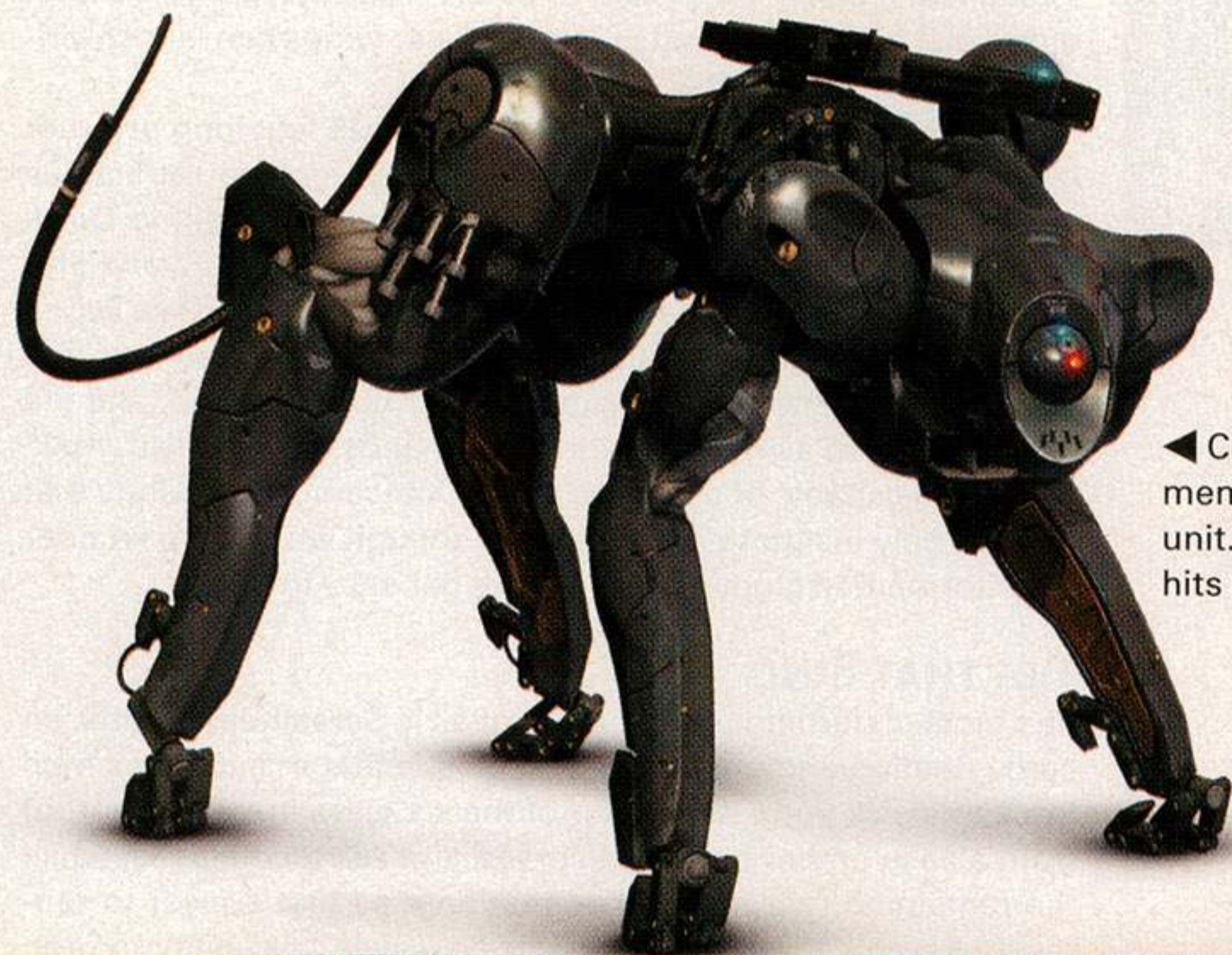
We peek beneath the skin of this decidedly unlovely quartet of female Metal Gear bosses.

The nightmarish members of Metal Gear Solid 4's Beauty and the Beast unit might seem more at home as Cenobites in a *Hellraiser* movie than warriors on a modern battlefield, especially given that not one of these dames even started out as a soldier. Trouble is, in a world where peace simply isn't profitable, the trauma of war worms its way into the lives of anyone unfortunate enough to live in a conflict zone, and the price those people pay isn't always measured in lost loved ones and collateral damage dollars.

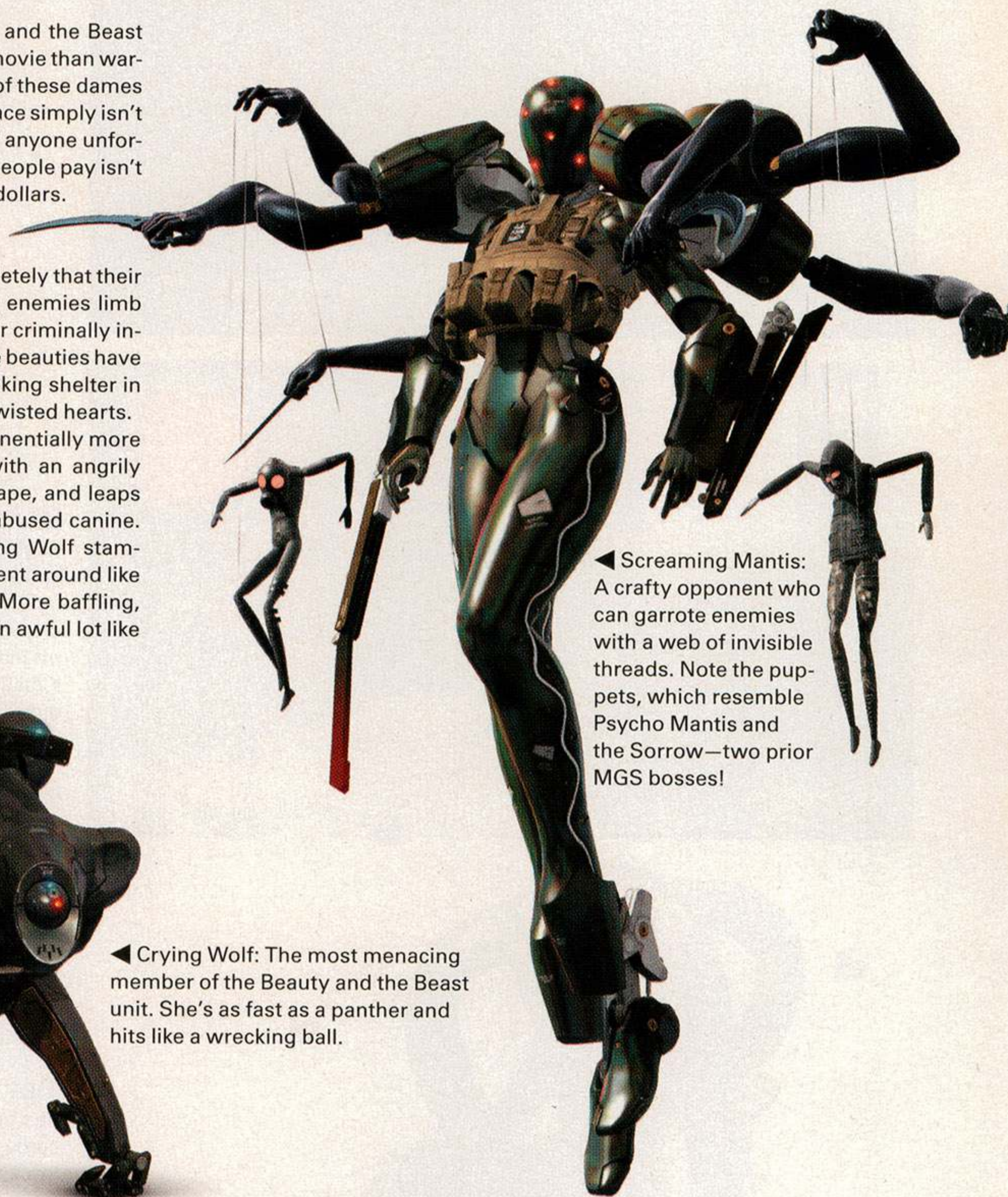
SHOCK & AWE

Emotionally ruined, these women have withdrawn so completely that their tortured psyches are no longer fit for anything but tearing enemies limb from limb in diabolically creative ways. A roving pack of four criminally insane women would be pretty hard to contend with, but these beauties have become beasts in a most literal, if mechanical, manner, seeking shelter in metal exoskeletons and taking up arms as diverse as their twisted hearts.

Crying Wolf, for instance, is stubborn as a bull, and exponentially more powerful. Encased in a black metallic quadruped body with an angrily swishing tail, she's no longer even strictly humanoid in shape, and leaps around as a headless mechanical beast that howls like an abused canine. Blessed with incredible strength and cat-like agility, Crying Wolf stamperes around knocking militia members and heavy equipment around like action figures, and seems impervious to ordinary gunfire. More baffling, though, is that the weapon mounted on her shoulder looks an awful lot like the electric gun that Fortune wielded in Metal Gear Solid 2.



◀ Crying Wolf: The most menacing member of the Beauty and the Beast unit. She's as fast as a panther and hits like a wrecking ball.



◀ Screaming Mantis: A crafty opponent who can garrote enemies with a web of invisible threads. Note the puppets, which resemble Psycho Mantis and the Sorrow—two prior MGS bosses!

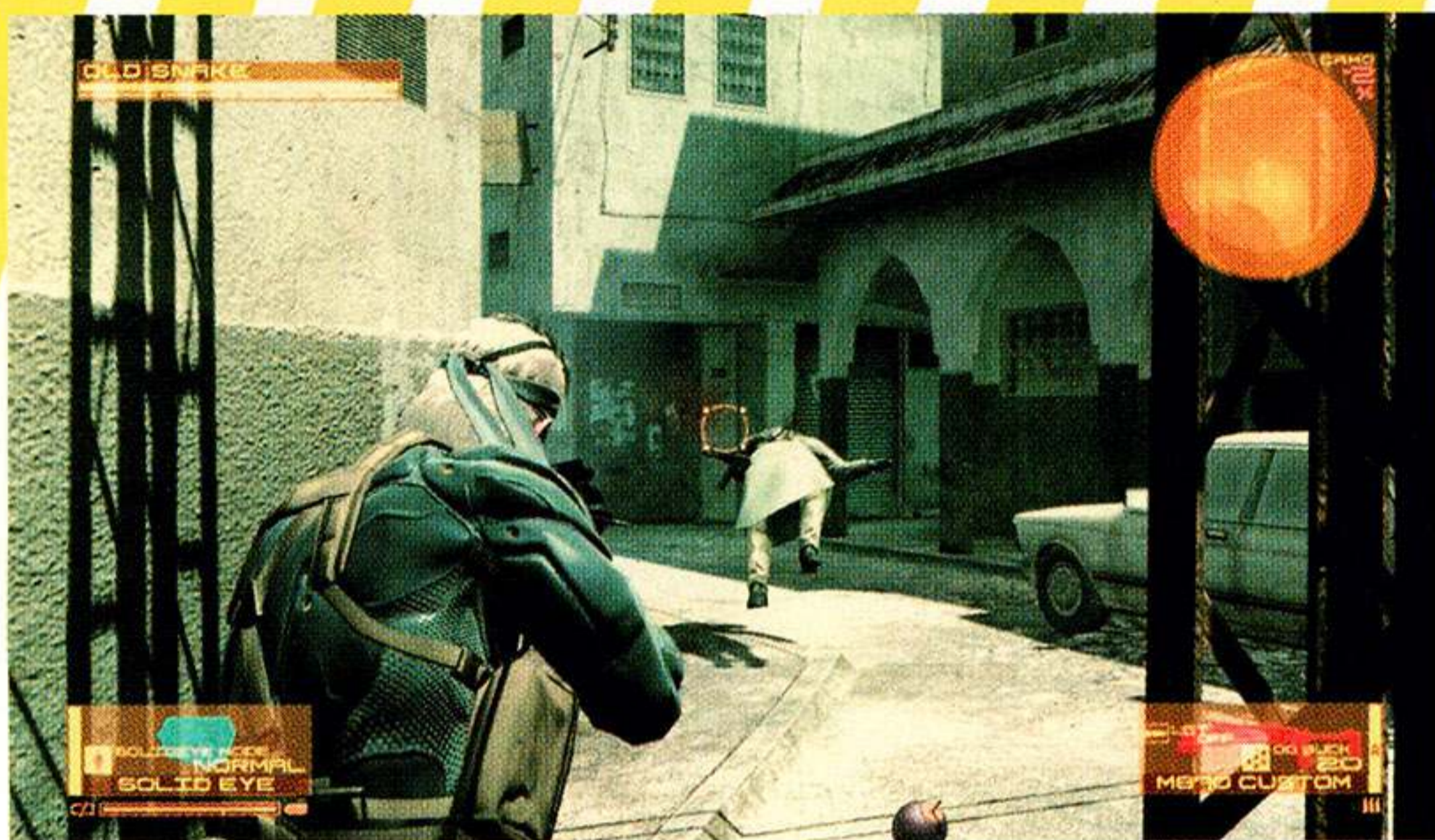
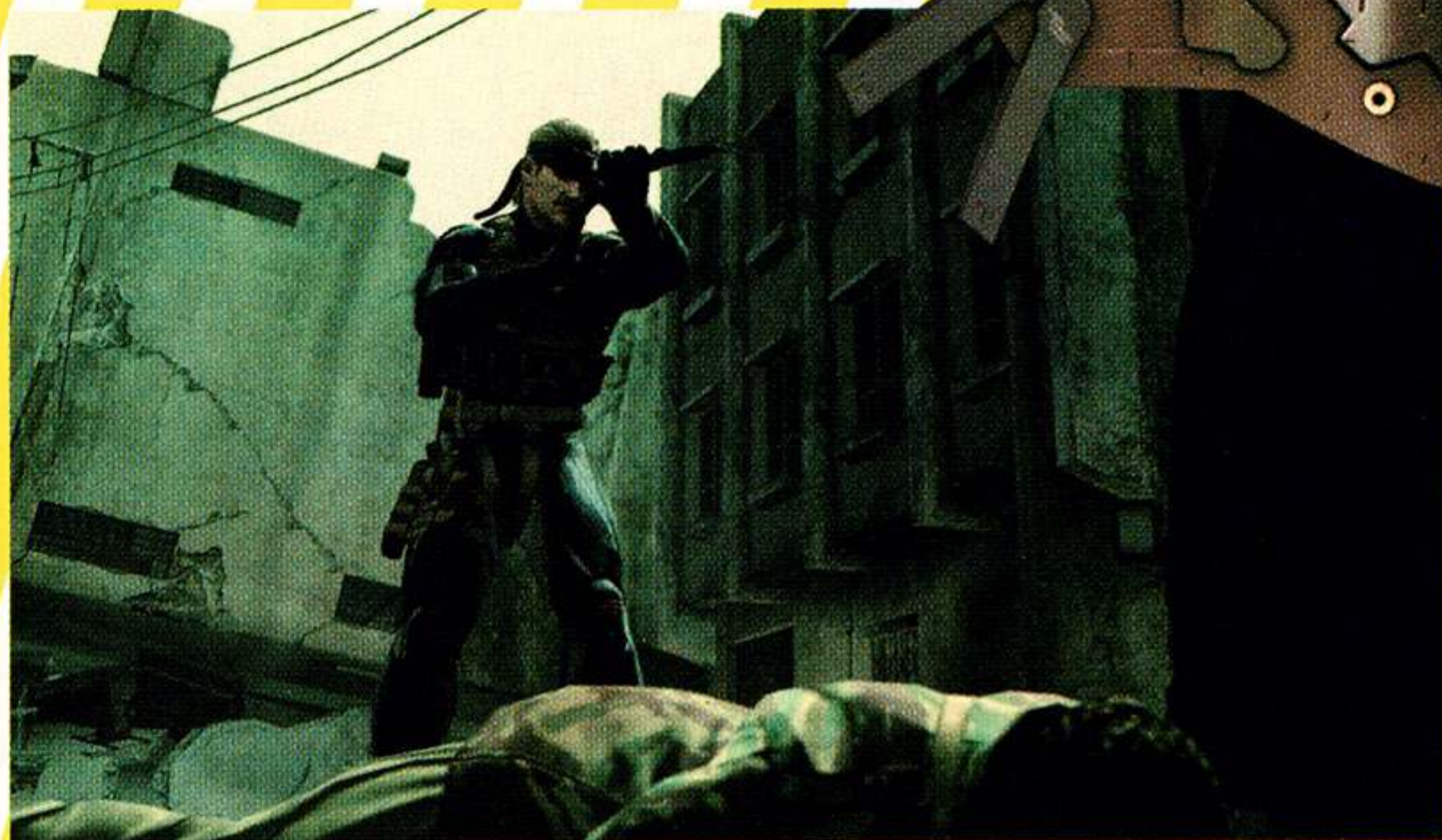


What's the Story?

Here's what we do know for sure.

It's 2014, and Liquid Snake is back, albeit in Revolver Ocelot's hijacked body, and he's running the Outer Haven organization. Liquid's in the Middle East mixing it up with the local militia via a private military corporation known as Praying Mantis. Colonel Campbell sends Snake to the dangerous hellhole on a mission to kill the bastard once and for all, while his niece, Meryl Silverburgh, leads the Foxhound investigative unit. Characters known to be returning include Raiden, Vamp, Otacon, and Olga Gurlukovich's daughter Sunny, and we'll also meet offbeat strangers like Drebin the weapons wholesaler and monkey enthusiast.

CONTINUED ▶



◀ Raging Raven: A tough foe given her gift of flight. Don't get decapitated by her razor-sharp wings!

DEATH FROM ABOVE

Raging Raven is a psychotic bird of prey that only technology run amok could birth, and she can ride those jet-powered wings in a tight swoop mere feet above the ground, neatly bisecting anyone in her flight path like so much warm butter. Leaving the pieces to rot in the dusty street, she'll carve a path back into the sky with a distinctive avian shriek and cries of, "Rage! Rage!" As if that didn't make her sufficiently fearsome, her wings can launch volleys of powerful rockets.

Meanwhile, with four tentacles at least 25 feet long protruding from behind her head and three nasty-looking retractable metallic tendrils poking from the end of each, **Laughing Octopus** can easily puncture flesh and concrete alike. Anyone stupid enough to get within range is liable to get impaled like kebab meat on one slithering stalk, or get scooped up by all four in a terrible death embrace that squeezes all breath, blood, and life from the victim as the sick witch commands: "Laugh with me!" She's also capable of using the same Octocamo technology that Snake's only just gotten his mitts on, though we have to wonder if her tormented giggling won't make her easy to track.

TIES THAT BIND

The most disturbing unit member of all is **Screaming Mantis**, an eerily floating and strangely calm lunatic that manipulates men like some sick puppeteer. Four of the six extra arms that sprout from a case on her back grip curved and serrated blades, while the remaining two manipulate marionettes that appear to represent Psycho Mantis and the Sorrow. Given her ability to drop barely visible metallic strands with which to control the unwary, it's only fitting that she appears to be the one in charge of the group as a whole.

Each of these four formidable bosses seems to simultaneously pay tribute to both the Foxhound unit of the first Metal Gear Solid, and the Cobra Unit of the third, but what they're actually after, beyond spilling as much blood as possible, remains a mystery. Can they be saved, perhaps? Is there any humanity left in these twisted living weapons, or is your only option to put them down like the crazed animals they've become? Only Hideo Kojima knows for sure, and he ain't talking yet. **GP**



◀ Laughing Octopus: This sinister figure is known to chuckle mindlessly as she crushes enemies boaconstrictor style.

GPRO

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SECTOR A

A M B U S H

SECTOR B



- SPAWN POINT
- TO 2nd LEVEL
- MOUNTED GUN
- WINDOW
- UP
- UNPLAYABLE
- UNDERGROUND



AMBUSH: TEAM DEATHMATCH

H S U B W V

SECTOR D

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WEAPONS

MULTIPLAYER COVERAGE

SINGLE-PLAYER WALKTHROUGH

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Act 1

Act 2

Act 3

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UNLOCKABLES

XBOX 360 ACHIEVEMENTS



▶ DOWNPOUR

Spec Ops vs. Spetsnaz. This map is a farm on an overcast, rainy day. Lots of vegetation allows for great stealth maneuvering and use of the ghillie suit. The weather on this map makes for low visibility, but some good cover as well. Use it to your advantage whenever possible.

SEA SNIPER TIP









If possible, use the prone position to snipe. It's hard for enemies to see you when you're hiding in the grass.

These classes are great for keeping mobile, stealthy, and deadly. The Silent Assault kit lets you move in and out of cover and around the map without making a sound or getting lit up on radar, while the Mid-Range Sniper CCS lets you pop off some deadly one-shots whether your enemy is hiding behind cover or not. The increased damage from Stopping Power, combined with the Deep Impact perk, will let you shoot through most cover on this map and retain your bullet damage.

Remember, these are only suggested loadouts, and you can mix and match whatever you like whenever you want. With the Silent Assault kit, you could replace the Dead Silence perk with Steady Aim to increase your accuracy while ground-pounding. With the Mid-Range Sniper, you could swap out your G3 for a Barrett .50 cal and your Stopping Power for Overkill, and take an assault rifle with you as well. The choice is yours.

SUGGESTED LOADOUTS

SILENT ASSAULT

SLOT	NAME	
PRIMARY WEAPON	M4 Carbine	
NOTES/ATTACHMENT	Silencer	
SIDE ARM	M1911	
NOTES/ATTACHMENT	Silencer	
SPECIAL GRENADE	Smoke	
PERK 1	Claymore x2	
PERK 2	UAV Jammer	
PERK 3	Dead Silence	

MID-RANGE SNIPER

SLOT	NAME	
PRIMARY WEAPON	G3	
NOTES/ATTACHMENT	ACOG Scope	
SIDE ARM	M1911	
NOTES/ATTACHMENT	Silencer	
SPECIAL GRENADE	Smoke	
PERK 1	Claymore x2	
PERK 2	Stopping Power	
PERK 3	Deep Impact	



SECTOR A

D O W N P O U R

SECTOR B



- SPAWN POINT
- TO 2nd LEVEL
- MOUNTED GUN
- WINDOW
- UP
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- UNPLAYABLE



DOWNPOUR: TEAM DEATHMATCH

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Written by Thom Denick
Multiplayer by the Sea Snipers

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GAME OF THE MONTH

MASS EFFECT

We had quite a month here at the *GamePro* offices. The Reviews staff was kept insanely busy with a boatload of titles but no one was complaining because we were treated to some amazing games. Just how amazing? Consider this: out of 13 total games, more than half (seven) scored high enough to earn our coveted Editors' Choice award. The only hurdle came when we had to hand out the Game of the Month award. There were so many eligible candidates that we couldn't decide.

Which game deserved the distinction? Was it the outstanding *Rock Band*? The ambitious *Assassin's Creed*? The visceral *Call of Duty 4*? The stellar *Super Mario Galaxy*? We had some heated debates which ended with slammed doors and hurt feelings and things were looking dire—that is, until *Mass Effect* arrived in our offices and the arguments immediately ended.

With its sweeping story, deep gameplay, and topnotch presentation, *Mass Effect* immediately distinguished itself from the other worthy contenders and boldly claimed the Game of the Month award. Turn the page to read reviewer Cameron Lewis' exhaustive review of this instant classic.

But don't stop there: following that are reviews of some genuinely awesome games that also deserve your attention. With games this good hitting store shelves, it's going to be a very happy holiday season for gamers indeed.



GAME REVIEWS:

Assassin's Creed (Xbox 360)	74	Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (Wii).....	87
BlackSite: Area 51 (Xbox 360).....	83	Mass Effect (Xbox 360)	70
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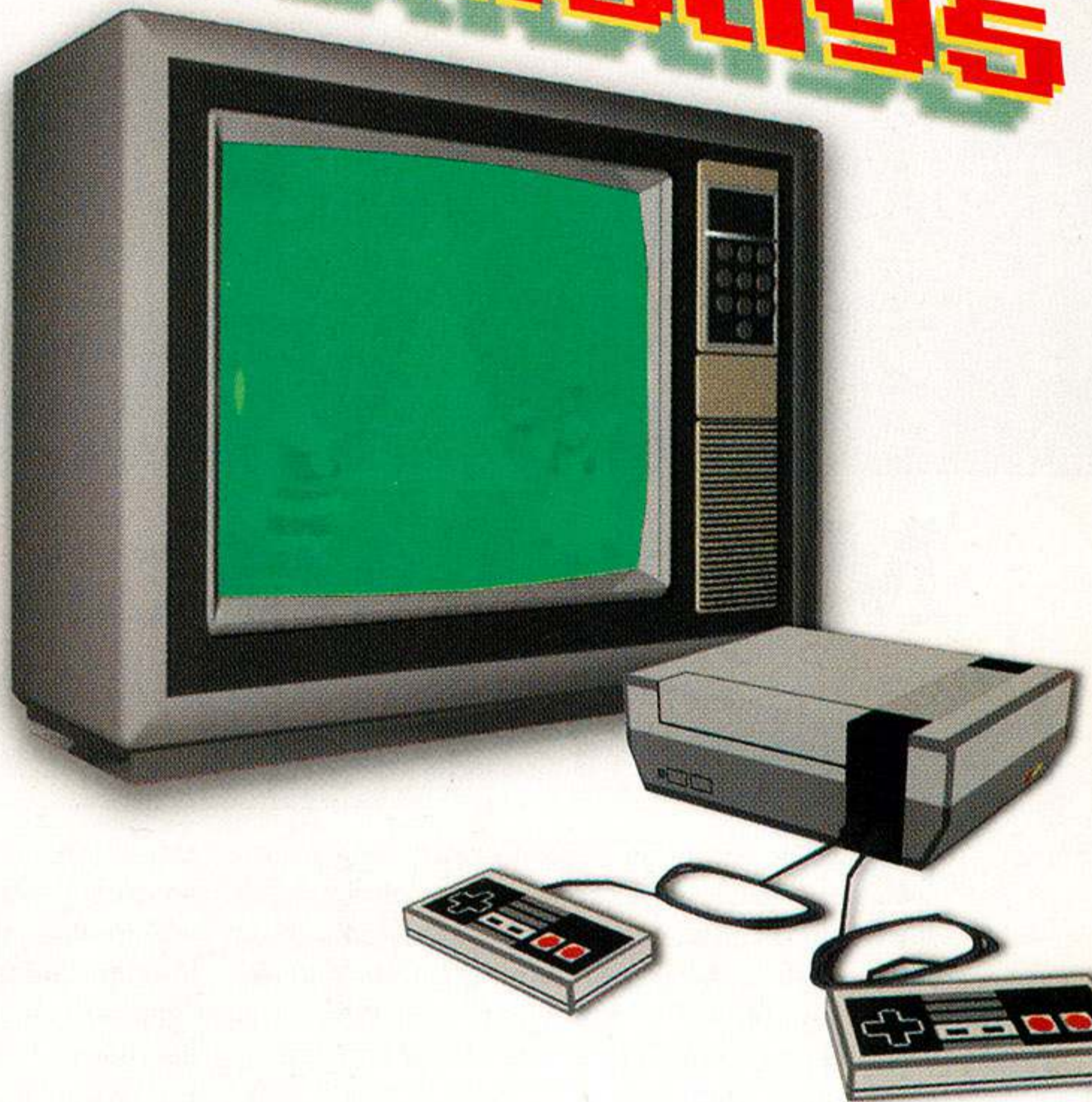
GAMEPRO WISHES YOU A

By the time this issue reaches your hands, the holiday season will be in full swing. So let us take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a safe and happy holidays. We hope the coming days are filled good times and cheer; oh, and we hope you also take the opportunity to play some video games!

As this issue proves, this is a great time to be a gamer. With the six gaming platforms (Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, DS, PSP, and PC) all going strong, gamers will have a wide array of titles to choose from this holiday season. So go out there and enjoy yourselves! Gather your friends and family together, boot up your console of choice, and let the good times begin!

And we'll see you all in the year 2008!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



GAMEPRO'S RATING SCALE

Behind the numbers:

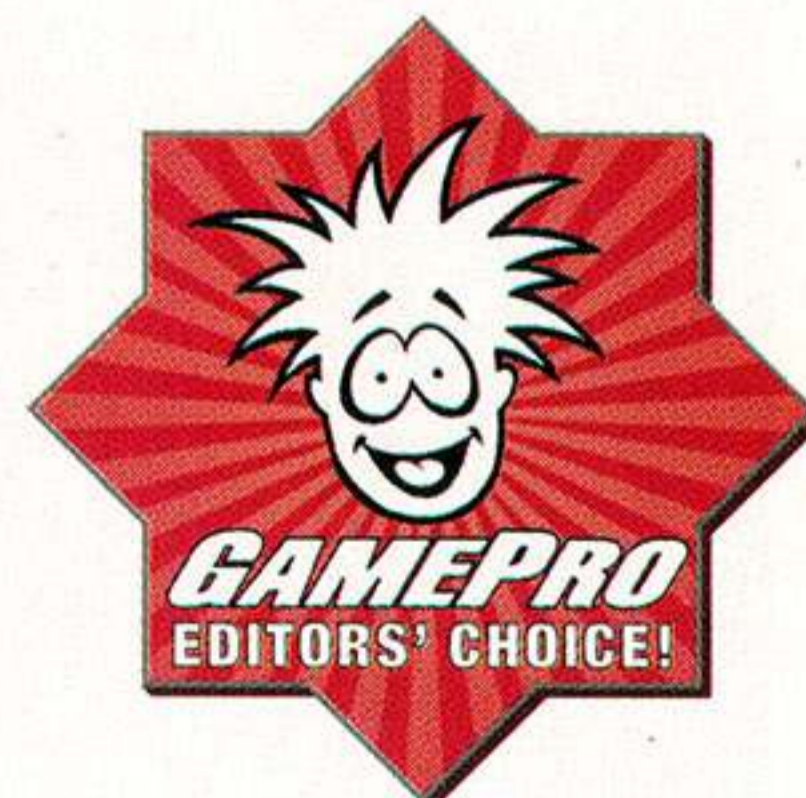
5.00-4.50 The best of the best. If you don't own this game, you should. Think Halo, Zelda, Resident Evil, and Metal Gear Solid.

4.25-3.50 Highly enjoyable, but falls short of true greatness. The Fight Nights and Tony Hawks of the world.

3.25-2.50 Approach with caution—try before you buy. Enter the Matrix and the Dynasty Warriors games fall squarely in this category.

2.25-1.50 Should come with a sticker: "Warning, contains poisonous amounts of suckage." Remember Backyard Wrestling?

1.25-0.00 An absolute insult to humanity. Kill it with fire and holy water.



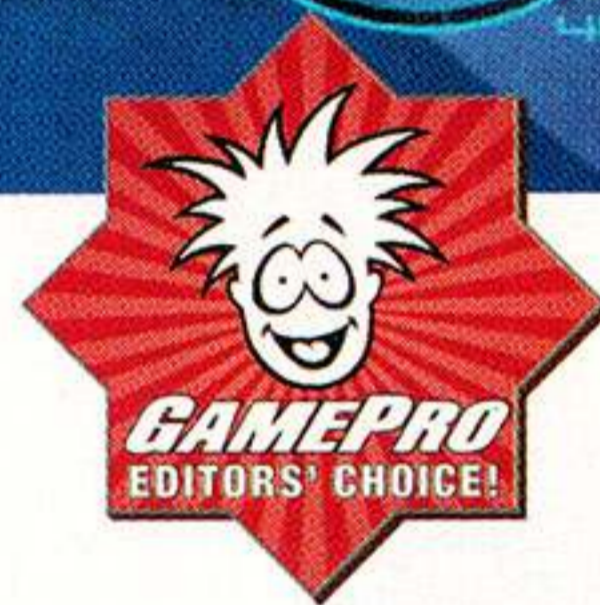
Games that score 4.50 or higher are awarded our coveted Editors' Choice Award.



Even if you've already been through a particular piece of real estate, don't assume that it'll be a safe haven the next time you pass through. There are all kinds of surprises waiting around, so save often, and be careful.

MASS EFFECT

This is one space odyssey that reaches for the stars and manages to grab on tight.



Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: BioWare Publisher: Microsoft

BioWare is no stranger to producing excellent RPG experiences. Its catalogue includes hits such as the PC classic Baldur's Gate as well as the amazing Knights of the Old Republic. And now, the company is back with what might be its best effort yet: the stellar and sensational Mass Effect.

CHILDHOOD'S END

After the climactic discovery of alien ruins on Mars, mankind finally starts taking its first baby

steps into the greater galactic neighborhood, courtesy of a little understood technology that manipulates the fabric of space and time to facilitate interstellar travel. Around the same time, the "element zero" carcinogen gives rise to psychic abilities in 10 percent of the population.

Two events of such magnitude might be sufficient for a simple space opera, but Mass Effect's universe is considerably more complicated. Between the seemingly arrogant posturing of the Council races, the instability of the outlying

Terminus systems, and the myriad minor species that operate in between, the cosmos at large feels positively alive with political conflict and thinly veiled hostility. Of course, where there's bureaucracy, there's corruption, and rooting it out isn't difficult solely because the perpetrators are hard to detect, but also because the long-term consequences of your own actions are so difficult to predict.

CUSTOM BUILT

As complex as the big picture is, your personal journey is almost as complicated. Before you move a muscle, you are responsible for the very creation of the protagonist. You can run with the stock character—John Shepard, soldier—but you can roll your own through a cleverly designed character creation process.

The beauty of this system is that Mass Effect embeds whatever details you choose for your character's past inside the larger story that follows. Even if all roads lead more or less to the same place, the attitudes you encounter and project along the way are drastically different based on your background and actions. In a game with so many thousands of lines of dialogue, and branching choices for how you present yourself in every single conversation, the sense that your character is a living and breathing individual in an unpredictable world is utterly convincing, whether you choose to be a paragon of virtue with an honorable past or a renegade scumbag who rose up from the societal muck.

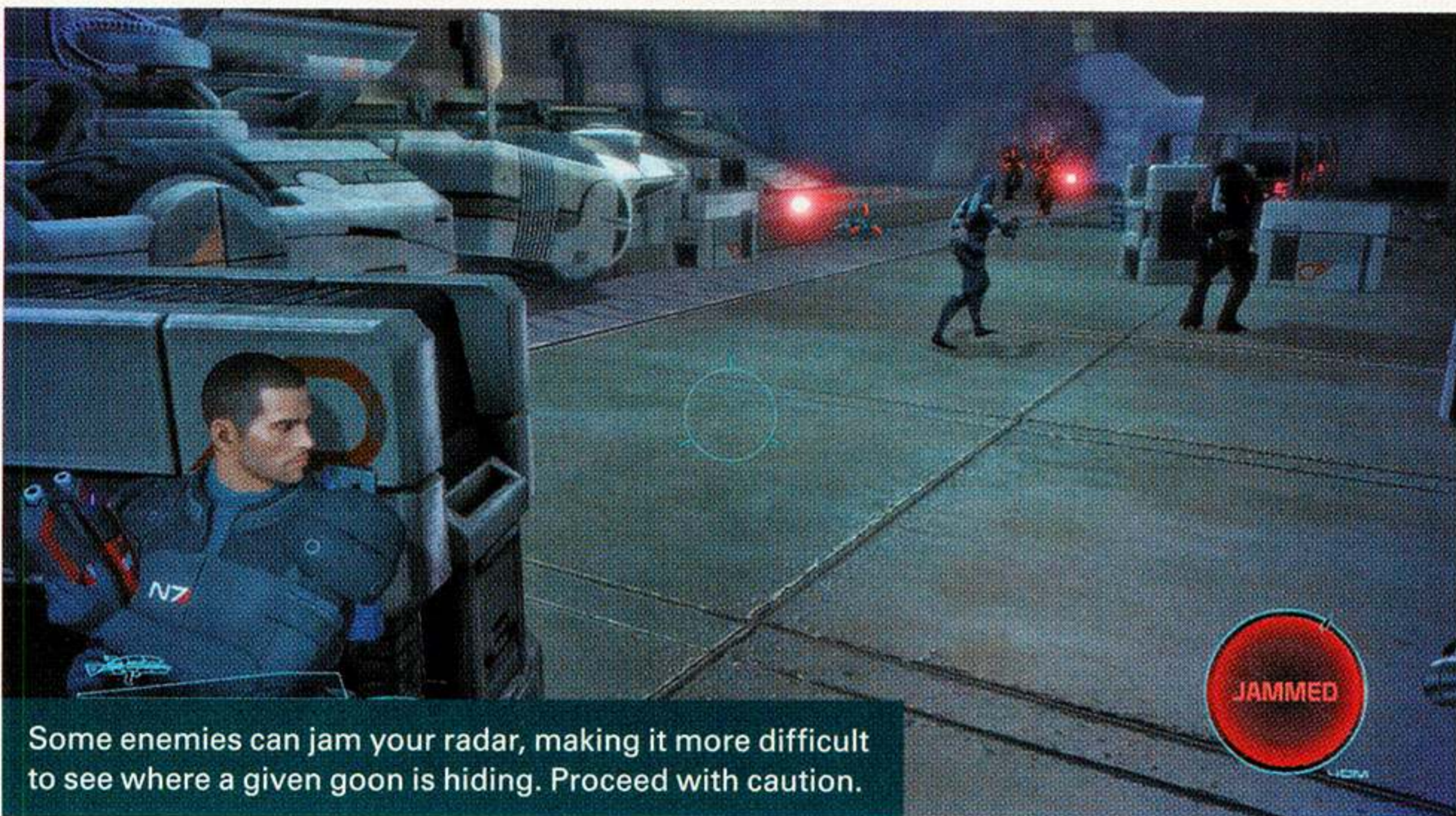


Consider your dialogue options carefully: they could have long-term consequences you're ill-equipped to predict or prepare for.

- What happened?
- Nobody lies to me, Fist!
- Shoot him.



We're pretty sure this isn't alien chiropractic at work.



Some enemies can jam your radar, making it more difficult to see where a given goon is hiding. Proceed with caution.

LOOSE LIPS

Of course, not everyone will be enamored with the frequent conversation trees that unfold any time you chat up an NPC, but BioWare wisely chose to communicate the bare essentials quickly, so those who don't have the patience to dig deep under the surface can quickly and efficiently move on without missing anything critical to the mission at hand.

Likewise, there's an enormous and beautiful galaxy to explore, filled not just with shrewdly designed mission-centric worlds, but also uncharted planets to land on and explore with the absurdly agile Mako vehicle. Zipping up mountains and down ravines to recover debris, examine anomalies, or explore underground bunkers is endlessly addictive, but it's also entirely optional. If you're the sort that wanted to explore every last cave in Oblivion, you'll love the sheer volume of things to do and side missions to wrap up. If you're not, you're free to just move on to the next stop on the main story-driven mission path which involves a deep and satisfying narrative that I won't ruin for you.

FIELD TRAINING

Let's move onto the battlefield: When you're not talking, exploring, or looting containers with a simple button-pushing decryption mini-game, you're going to be killing something from an over-the-shoulder view. This being an RPG, your class

has an enormous impact on how you battle. Three of the class options focus on combat, technology, or biotics while the three remaining classes offer a balance between two disciplines.

For example, Soldiers get improved health, can train in all weapon types, and can quickly learn to wear heavy armor, but the Adept can lift and throw objects and shield your three-humanoid squad. Anyone with a combat emphasis can get right into the thick of the action, while tech and biotics specialists are better off using special abilities to hinder approaching thugs.

As you level up, you'll climb ranks in existing talents and unlock new ones, earning special abilities along the way. An assault rifle user might invoke Overkill to keep his weapons cool while another character might temporarily diminish damage taken via Immunity, or raise a one-way shield by manipulating dark energy.

INTELLIGENT LIFE?

During battle, you can give your squad mates complete autonomy, but holding down the left or right bumper lets you dictate which weapon or skill they should use at key moments. You'll also find a couple of upgrade slots on most equipment, and a huge library of enhancements to plug into them.

Adding special effects to weapons is awesome and you'll be constantly tweaking your layout to get the best results. The game's automatic

cover system also works remarkably well, but the crappy A.I. behavior is a glaring fault. You'll easily survive most skirmishes against alien dipsticks unless you bump the difficulty to hard but don't expect your squad mates to lend much of a hand—even the most rudimentary tasks seem to utterly baffle them. I lost track of all the times I got shot in the back of the head by a buddy or had a teammate walk right into my line of fire. Your boneheaded mates resurrect as soon as the encounter is over, but this level of stupidity is hard to accept from a game that does everything else so damn well. The remaining quibbles, like the indefensible use of the back button for grenade tossing, and the ridiculously long elevator rides, pale in comparison to this one conspicuous problem.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

And yet, these issues, which would have been enough to cripple a lesser game, cannot take the shine off of a title like *Mass Effect*. The title's greatest strength is the way it completely wraps you in the main protagonist's skin, which is something more RPG games should strive to do. The game's staggering depth and complexity is also impressive, as is its accessibility. If you are an RPG fan, you should definitely give this game a look; it is good enough that you'll find yourself disappearing deeper into *Mass Effect* each time you play and demanding the inevitable sequel long before it's due.—Cameron Lewis



BT3F Get the link to **Mass Effect** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **BT3F** to **59479**
Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

4.75

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Absorbing storytelling; loads of character customization options; snazzy graphics; addictive exploration and loot collection

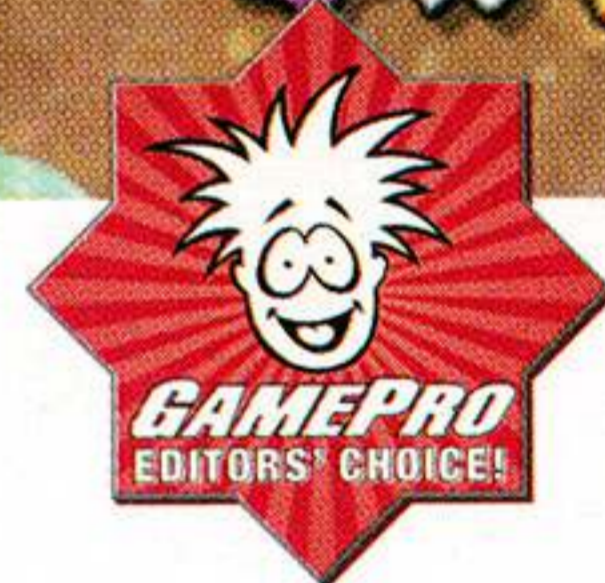
CONS: Surprisingly dim A.I.; misplaced grenade button; normal difficulty is too easy



That's the scariest mole I've seen since the one on my dad's back.

SUPER MARIO GALAXY

The best Mario game since Mario 64...period



Wii ESRB: E

Developer and Publisher: Nintendo

The Wii has already been fortunate enough to receive several quality Mario titles in the last year or so. But while games such as Super Paper Mario and Mario Strikers Charged were great, their graphics were less than spectacular and they failed to really take full advantage of the functionality of the console's controllers. Now, with the release of Super Mario Galaxy, Wii owners have a game that really shows off the system's capabilities, both in terms of graphics and controls.

WHERE NO PLUMBER HAS GONE BEFORE

Super Mario Galaxy begins with Mario receiving a letter from Princess Peach inviting him to the castle for the Star Festival. When Mario arrives, Peach, The Toads, and everyone else in Mushroom Kingdom are celebrating something that happens once every 100 years: the arrival of a giant comet that flies over the Kingdom. Pieces of the comet break loose and turn into multicolored shooting stars called Star Bits which fill the sky and crash into the ground.

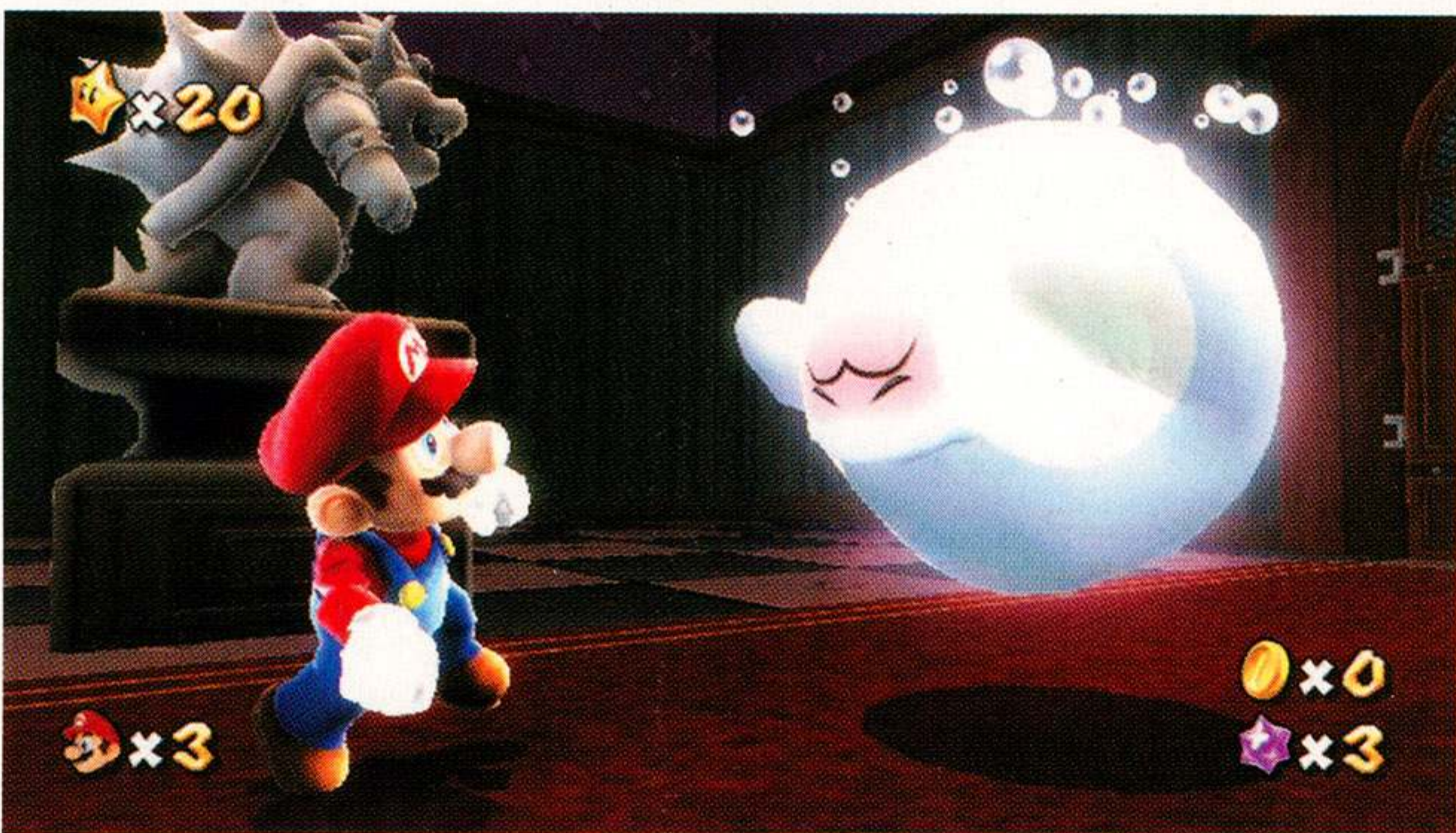
The Star Festival is running smoothly and everyone is having a good time until Mario's arch enemy crashes the party. Bowser and his sinister-looking fleet of airships blot out the spectacle in the sky and launch a full scale attack on Mushroom Kingdom. But this time around, Bowser doesn't just snatch the princess—he steals the entire castle using a UFO. No, you read that right: Bowser has a UFO, which means Mario must travel to different galaxies in order to save the princess.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Galaxy's gameplay is broken up into two main level types: there are levels where Mario is actually in space, jumping from planet to planet and then there are more traditional platformer levels akin to Mario 64. In both level types, the player utilizes the analog stick on the Nunchuk to move around and the Wii Remote to execute Mario's Crash Bandicoot-esque spin attack. The Wii Remote is also used to collect Star Bits scattered throughout levels, which can be fired at enemies and objects at any time and is a key aspect of the game.

The space levels definitely feature some of the more interesting moments in the game and offer up a new experience unlike anything we've experienced before in a Mario title. Each miniature planet has its own gravitational pull, allowing Mario to run all the way around them literally in a matter of seconds without floating off into space. The gravity is different depending on what planet the player is on which effects the gameplay. Just be warned that the potential for nausea is high, as it takes a moment or two to adjust to the camera.





ON SOLID GROUND

The other levels, which give the player a needed break from the dizzying space missions, feel very much like something from Mario 64 or Super Mario Sunshine, but Mario's new abilities in Galaxy as well as the excellent level design make it obvious that you're not merely playing another 3D Mario game with updated graphics. There are also some other level types aside from these two which are sprinkled into the game, such as one where you surf on top of a stingray around a race-track made entirely of water. Although the game feels very new, many things from previous Mario games remain unchanged such as having to collect stars as you progress.

MARIO'S NEW CLOTHES

One of the best things about Super Mario Galaxy is the various power-ups that you can acquire in the game. Of course, classic powers like Fire Mario are available, but Mario can also change into a bunch of all-new forms in Galaxy, all of which are extremely fun to play as.

These include Bee Mario, which enables him to fly around levels in brief spurts, Boo Mario, which makes it so that you can pass through solid objects, and Rainbow Mario, which makes Mario temporarily invincible. There are also a couple of other transformations possible in the game such as Ice Mario and Spring Mario. The included powers are expertly implemented into the gameplay and it's obvious that the developers put a lot of thought into the design.

MORE IS BETTER?

The one thing that I didn't like about Galaxy is the so-called two-player mode which felt gimmicky and tacked on. The only thing the second player can do is collect Star Bits with their Wii Remote, which is pretty much useless. Of course, the Mario franchise has never really had a true multiplayer component, so this isn't a huge deal but it is a little perplexing that they'd even bother to implement it in the first place.

This minor issue aside, it's obvious that Super Mario Galaxy raises the bar in terms of what can be achieved on the Wii. Galaxy is the kind of game that you're going to want to take your time with because there is just so much to do in the game. This is the first game in a long time that I've actually gone back and replayed levels just for fun. It's everything you loved about Mario 64 and nothing you hated about Super Mario Sunshine.

—Patrick Shaw

FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: The level design is superb and the new gameplay mechanics reinvigorate the Super Mario franchise.

CONS: The camera during space levels is hard to get used to; the two-player option is disappointingly weak.



These boots were made for free-running. These knights don't stand a chance against an assassin on the roof.



ASSASSIN'S CREED

Take a leap of faith with the amazing Assassin's Creed and you will be rewarded with one of the finest gaming experiences ever created.

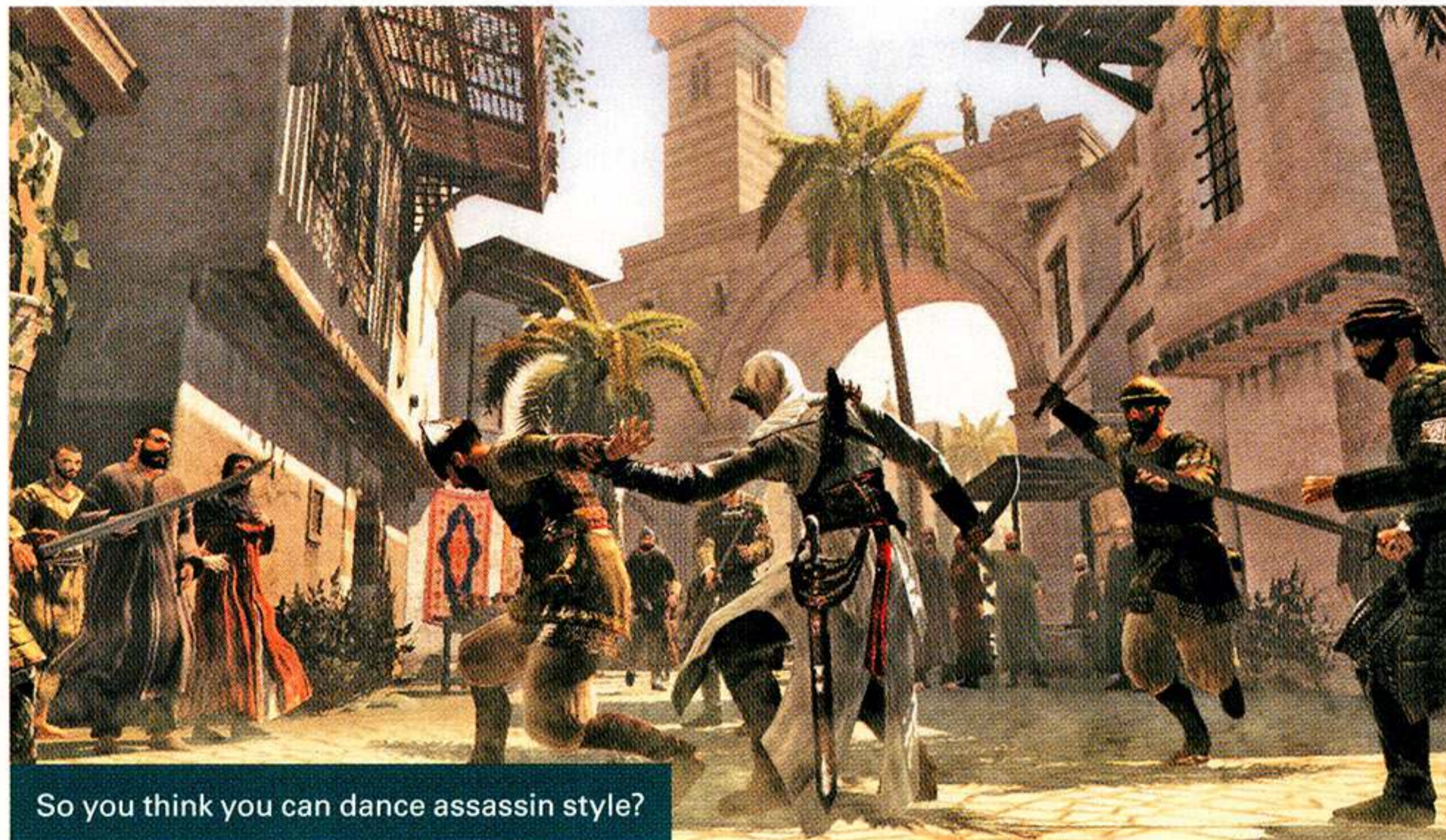
Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft

After a disappointingly weak showing at the past E3, many people were left to wonder if Assassin's Creed could live up to the developers' ambition and the media hype. Its large, expansive world and complex control scheme sounded great in theory but would it actually translate into a cohesive and compelling gaming experience? After spending time with the game, I'm happy to report that the answer is a resounding "yes!"

LIKE BUTTER, BABY

Assassin's Creed is a seamless experience in which every individual element works in harmony with the others. But the foundation of the entire gameplay experience lies in the fluid and intuitive control scheme. From walking around on the street to free running on the roof tops, the controls make it easy to manipulate Altair during his quests. The game would have suffered dramatically had the developers glossed over the control scheme.



So you think you can dance assassin style?





Falling with grace is the assassin's style.



Withering heights are nothing for Altair.

The game's story is also a strong point and while I won't ruin any of the surprises, I will say that Assassin's Creed does a great job of weaving a deep and enjoyable narrative.

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

The size of the game world is also immense but thankfully, it rarely feels overwhelming. After completing the tutorial level, which will take you a couple of hours, you are given a horse and sent out to the Kingdom; this area serves as the central hub that connects the three main cities of Jerusalem, Acre, and Damascus. As you cross the land in pursuit of your assassination targets, you quickly get a sense of just how big the game world is.

Luckily there are tall towers placed around the world that you can scale, and when you reach the top, you can hit the Y button to swing the camera out; this gives you a sweeping view of the vista which reveals more of the map and helps make things feel manageable. You will also find the locations of informants who help lead you to your targets.

Speaking of which, the main assassination quests themselves are repetitive in that you have to follow the same sequence of actions over and over again but what keeps these elements from getting stale is the life-like A.I.

IT'S ALIVE!

For the most part, non-playable characters that populate game worlds act and behave in a very artificial way but every onscreen person in Assassin's Creed has a presence and gives off a sense that they are unique individuals; this in turn helps flesh out the game's expansive world. As you move through the city streets you will be approached by beggars who will grovel and plead for money, merchants who proudly display their wares, menacing guards, and every other kind of citizen you would expect in the game's (mostly) ancient setting.

But you'll really notice the A.I. when you're out on the hunt for your next assassination target. Say you're roaming around on the rooftops, tailing your mark. You run into a guard who engages you in a scuffle. You dispatch him but his body falls to the crowded street below. As you'd expect, the citizenry will break out in a commotion and begin screaming, causing any nearby guard to come running.

The upside is that this then clears up different avenues of approach and allows you to get closer to your mark without fear of reprisal. The downside, of course, is that it puts the city on high alert with every arm of the law looking for you. Get the guards riled up enough and you will be greeted with a swarm of blades if you so much as sneeze in the wrong person's direction.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

But if you do happen to find yourself in a scuffle, know that the fighting mechanics in the game are based on timing, meaning you can't just hack 'n slash. While you can repeatedly swing your sword by hitting the X button, learning the nuances of battle, like dodging, countering, and using your combo attacks, are the key to making it out of the fray alive. Just as there is no set path to completing your assassination objectives, there is no set way to finish a battle. If you so choose you can simply run away, provided your free-running skills are good enough.

Of course, the minor skirmishes in the game don't compare to the rush of hunting down and slaughtering your assassination targets. Like everything else in the game, there's no set path to doing this. You have a lot of freedom to set up your kills and the end results are satisfying; also thrilling are the post-kill escapes that you have to pull off, outwitting and outrunning guards who are anxious to bring you down.

SO MUCH TO DO, SO LITTLE TIME

It's hard to put the sheer size and brilliance of Assassin's Creed into words. It is an epic game that you have to experience for yourself. I will caution that the game is not for the impatient or the faint of heart. While you can plow through the main story line in under 20 hours, to truly get every single last shred of gaming goodness, you will probably have to put in twice that number. The enormity of the game will probably turn off gamers expecting a fast-paced action title but remember that an assassin's greatest tool is patience. Approach this game with that frame of mind and you will be rewarded with one of the best gaming experiences around.

—Todd Melick



UPH3

Get the link to **Assassin's Creed** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text UPH3 to 59479

Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Life-like A.I., fluid play mechanics, and a compelling narrative come together to form an outstanding game experience.

CONS: The gigantic environments can be overwhelming; various fighting mechanics take practice to master.



Team Slayer, Cage Match, and Old School are just a few of the many multiplayer modes to choose from in Call of Duty 4.

CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Better than Halo 3? In more ways than you'd ever expect.



Developer: Infinity Ward Publisher: Activision

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

From the phenomenal graphics to the intense and realistic depiction of modern day war, Call of Duty 4 is the most solid first-person shooter I have ever played. Yes, in my opinion, it's even better than Halo 3, Half-Life 2, Bioshock and even Crysis. In fact, I'm declaring CoD4 as my choice for the one must-have game of 2007.

GET WITH THE TIMES

To take Call of Duty out of the bastardized World War II videogame genre was a genius move on the part of developer Infinity Ward. The genre had out stayed its welcome and the modern day setting is a refreshing change. The game still retains the trademark Call of Duty play style, how-

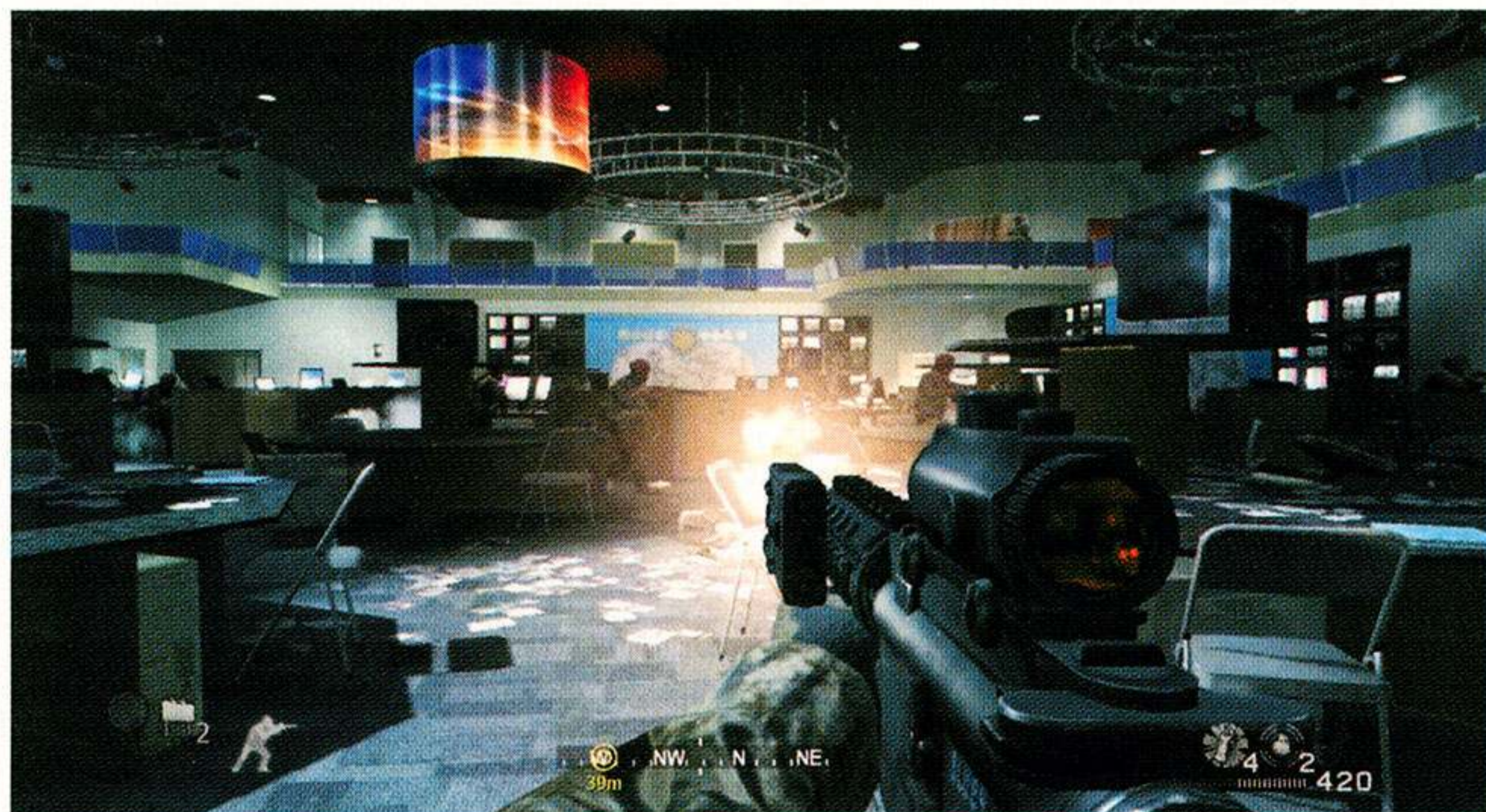
ever, and the two components combine to form a visceral and realistic experience that truly lives up to the high standard set by the original Call of Duty game.

Let me also address the concerns over the length of the game's single-player mode: rumors had it pegged at five or six hours on the normal difficulty, which is more or less accurate. But what gets lost in all the noise is the fact that it is an insanely action-packed experience. I played through the game on the Hardened mode, which the developers feel is the most fulfilling setting, and it took me about eight hours. Keep in mind that I was rushing through the game due to time constraints but I hardly realized how much time had passed: I was too busy having fun.

Think about it this way: would you rather play a mediocre game for 20 hours or play an amazing game for eight? I thought so.

PICK UP THE PACE

Now that I've done my own bit of complaining about complainers, let's talk about the actual meat and potatoes of the game. I'll take you on a quick walkthrough of the first two levels of the game which do a great job of immediately setting the in-your-face tone.





The first level places your team on a ship in the Bering Strait of the Pacific ocean. Once you've infiltrated the ship's bowels and its storage facilities to gather intel, a submarine missile tears a considerable chunk out of the ship's hull. You run behind the other members of your squad as the ship begins to tip and sink, but do you make it out alive?

In typical Call of Duty fashion, the game's action melds seamlessly into such cinematic moments, but it's the second level that truly gives you a taste of Infinity Ward's storytelling prowess.

WAY OF THE GUN

You start the second episode in the shoes of Al-Fulani, a presidential leader in the Middle East. This entire level plays out from his viewpoint, which adds a freighting level of realism to the proceeding events. Al-Fulani is kidnapped and manhandled into the backseat of a beat up car. The driver and the passenger never utter a word as they steer the car through the treacherous streets and alley ways. Out the car window, Al-Fulani can see clear evidence of the violence, looting, and murder that is poisoning the city.

The car pulls into a courtyard, and Al-Fulani is dragged from the backseat to a bloody wooden post in the middle of the square. One man speaks into a camera. He makes it very

clear that his name is Khaled Al-Asad and "This is how it begins." Through the eyes of Al-Fulani, you watch as Al-Asad raises a gun to your face; a gunshot rings out and the screen quickly fades to black.

Because of CoD4's near-photorealistic visuals, moments such as this are almost too real and painful to bear, but it again reinforces Infinity Ward's ability to expertly engage both the body and the mind.

TRICK OR TREAT

And yet, as compelling as the single-player mode is, it's just the tip of the iceberg. When you complete the campaign mode, Arcade Mode and Cheats become unlocked. Arcade Mode is a fun high-score romp through any level in the single-player campaign, and adds more replayability to the game. High scores are uploaded to leaderboards so you can compete with other CoD4 players.

The cheats are both practical and hilarious. The impractical, such as visual filters, change the look of the game, while others enable more practical things like slow motion gameplay. The best cheat, however, is Ragtime Warfare, which turns the entire game into a Charlie Chaplin film with sped up gameplay, old-school Western piano, and a choppy, sepia film effect. You'll laugh every time you see it.

MASTER OF UNLOCKING

But my favorite mode in CoD4 has to be the multiplayer, which is so deep it's practically a game in itself. Okay, so it doesn't have a saved replay feature or map editor like Halo 3, but it does come with a whopping 55 multiplayer ranks, six different classes (there's a Create-a-Class option as well), unlockable weapons, gadgets, and Perks. Perks are special abilities that can be added through the Create-a-Class option and range from Deeper Impact, which allows you to shoot through walls, to Martyrdom, which causes you to drop a grenade when you die.

Players who participated in the beta have seen nothing compared to what's in the final game. For me, the real fun of CoD4 multiplayer comes from unlocking items. I can't wait to complete all the Challenges and unlock every gun, aiming sight, and Perk. I can almost guarantee you that I will put more time into CoD4's multiplayer than I ever will with Halo 3 because of all the unlockables that are waiting for me.

ONE BADASS PACKAGE

I seriously cannot think of a single flaw in CoD4, and trust me, I looked for one. From the amazing graphics to the intense and compelling single-player campaign to the feature-loaded and addictive multiplayer, this game has it all. The holiday season is jam packed with quality triple-A titles, but I personally will be putting Call of Duty 4 at the top of my wishlist.—Travis Moses

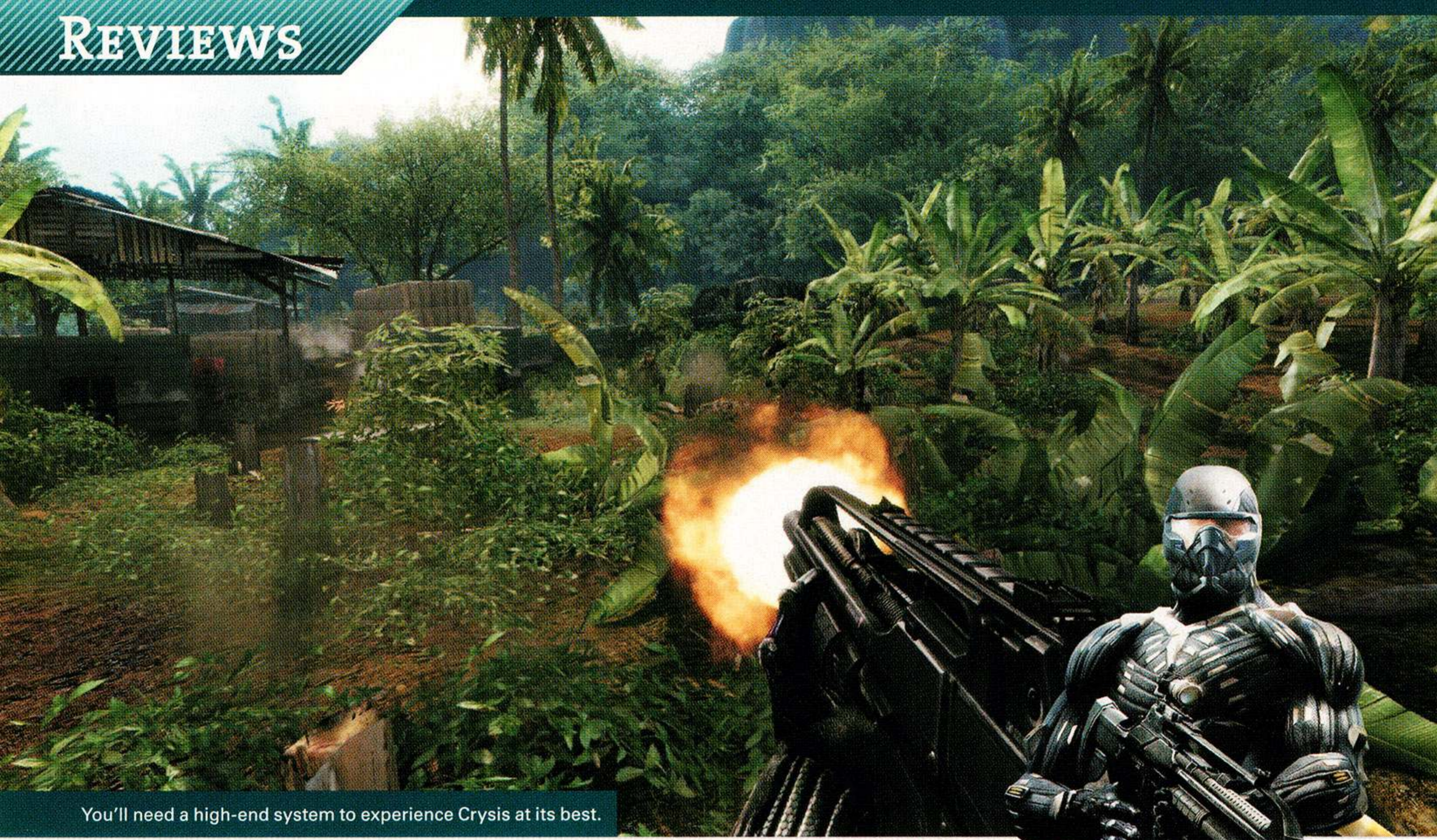
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FUN FACTOR
5.00
 OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Deep and engaging gameplay; outstanding graphics; multiplayer component should prove to be excellent.
CONS: There is really nothing bad I can say about the game. Seriously.



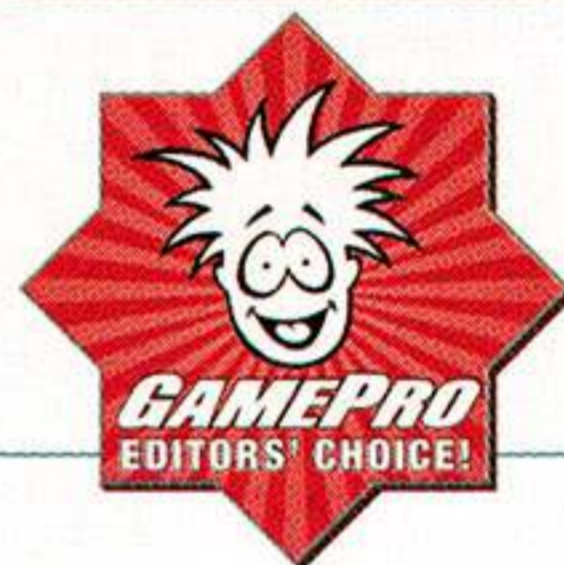
*No purchase necessary. Alternative method of entry and Official Rules available at <http://www.gamepro.com/text2win>. Eligible to U.S. residents 18 years or older. Entries accepted from December 11, 2007 to January 11, 2008. Void where prohibited. Standard text message rates will apply.



You'll need a high-end system to experience Crysis at its best.

CRYSIS

Annoying performance issues can't hold back this fantastic FPS.



■ Developer: Crytek ■ Publisher: EA Games

PC ESRB: M

When Crytek decided to partner up with EA for its next title, it left its Far Cry franchise behind with Ubisoft. But the talented developer held onto its design chops and used it to craft one of the most ambitious PC games ever made in Crysis. With console games currently dominating the market, the PC gaming market has needed a kick in the butt for a long time and Crysis is like a rocket-propelled foot that hits the bull's-eye.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

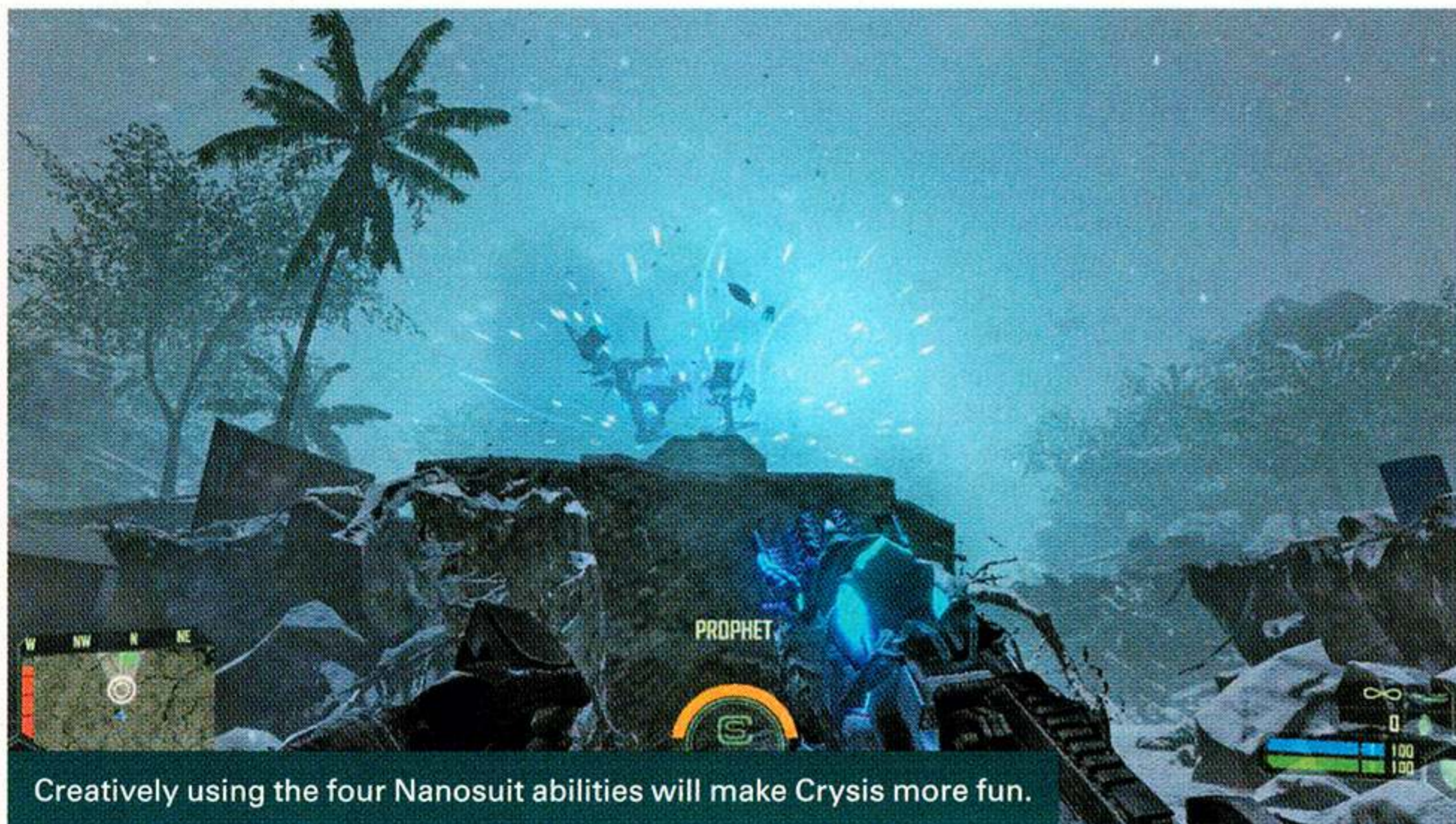
I'll just go ahead and say it: Crysis is the most photorealistic game ever created. Running at its best in DirectX 10 at a high resolution with all the effects cranked up, there is no other game that can come close to matching its visuals. It is definitely leading the PC gaming space to the next plateau. The CryENGINE2 can do marvelous things—when it's performing smoothly. The trouble is that it requires a very high-end machine to run properly.

The minimum system specs needed to play Crysis in Windows Vista's DX10 mode alone will put this game out of the reach of the average gamer—just imagine what sort of machine you'll need to run it with all the effects and features turned up to high.

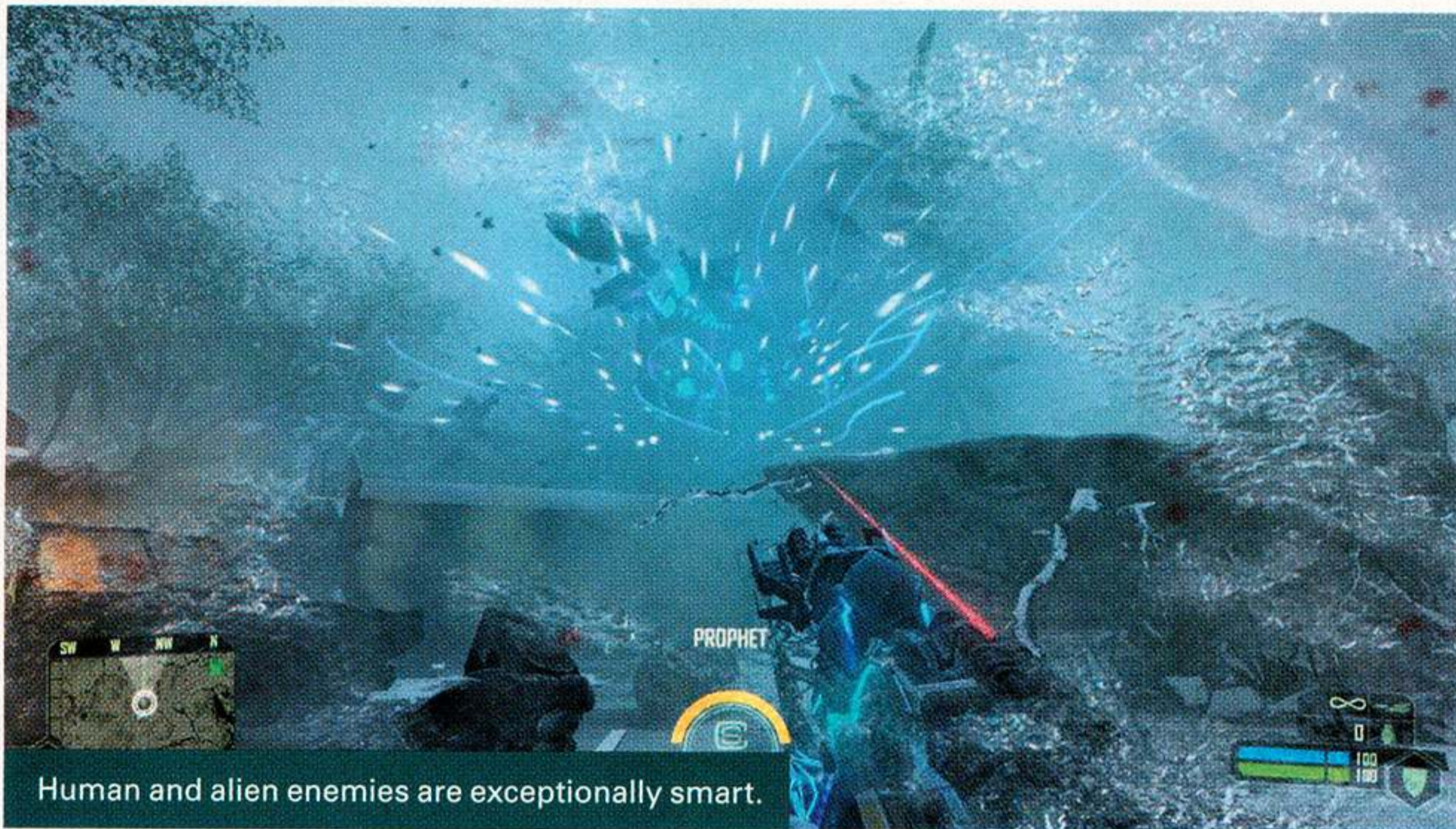
The bright side is that even in its DX9 mode, Crysis is a great looking game that can hold up graphically to any PC or console game out there. Its use of physics is also explosive and the enemy A.I. is, without a doubt, the best I've ever seen. The core gameplay is also amazing, constantly challenging you to approach in-game situations in a variety of ways.

AN ALIEN DISCOVERY

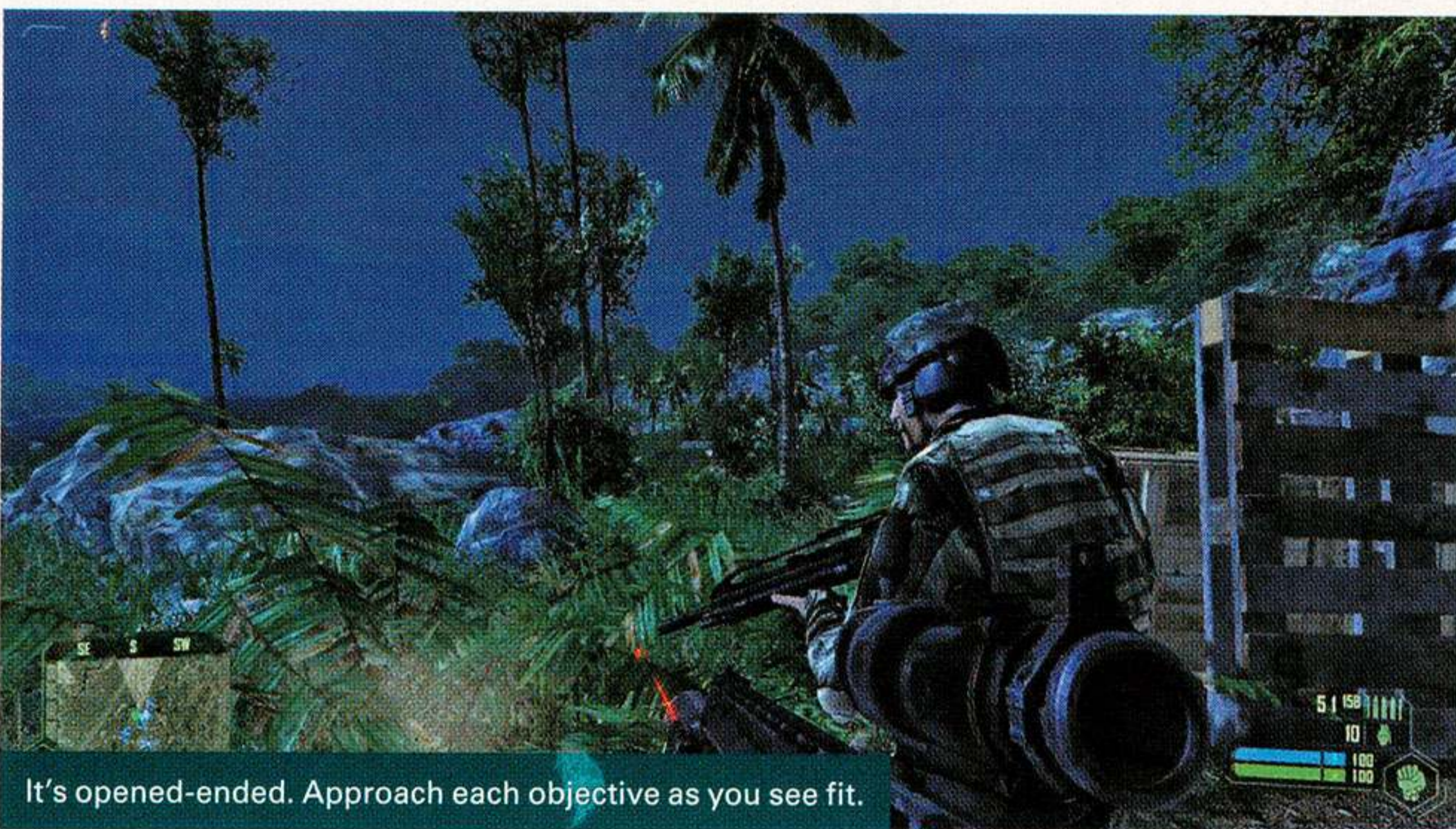
The game's story might be Crysis's one weakness, as it isn't spectacular, but it does a competent job of setting the stage for all the fun you will have during the game. Crysis casts you in the role of Delta Force Commando Jake Dunn who is also known by his call sign, Nomad. Jake airdrops into hostile territory with his team to deal with an international incident involving the North Korean government. But of course, once Nomad and his team land, things quickly escalate as a mysterious race of aliens who've crash landed on Earth become involved. I won't say anything more about the story, lest I give away any secrets, but again, the beautiful and intense action is the real star of the game and it's helped along by some of the most realistic enemy A.I. I've ever encountered.



Creatively using the four Nanosuit abilities will make Crysis more fun.



Human and alien enemies are exceptionally smart.



It's opened-ended. Approach each objective as you see fit.

TOP-NOTCH INTELLIGENCE

Crytek's A.I. technology produces enemy responses that are about as realistic as it gets. It's rare to see enemies doing something stupid like standing out in the open or charging your position mindlessly. But more than that, enemies rarely fall into predictable patterns. We're trained as gamers to memorize the movements of our digital foes because for so long, game developers would code in repetitive A.I. routines; but that's not the case in Crysis. There's a definite sense of unpredictability inherent in the enemy's actions, which adds a welcome sense of realism to the game. Enemies also work together and are much harder to eliminate as a group.

Enemy squads will work in concert to outmaneuver you. They will flank your position and use suppressing fire to keep you pinned. The enemy also uses grenades intelligently; rather than hang on to the precious orbs until they die, they'll use them to flush you out of your hiding places. The game's expansive jungle scenery doesn't exactly help either, as the dense cover makes it difficult to pin point enemies. It may sound a little unfair but thankfully, you have one ace up your sleeve: the Nanosuit.

SMALL WONDER

The gameplay in Crysis is completely centered on the use of the Nanosuit. Without the suit and its

ability enhancements you'd be dead in the water but with them, you have just enough of an edge to feel like a badass.

The four Nanosuit abilities are well-balanced and you'll definitely find uses for all of them by game's end. The Armor ability toughens your skin, making you more resistant to damage; Speed gives you a jolt of, well, speed, which is useful for quickly closing the distance between you and a foe or for quickly getting yourself out of a hot zone; Strength gives you Herculean-like power and lets you jump higher and further; and lastly, Cloak makes you invisible.

Your abilities drain an energy reserve that slowly replenishes, so you're not superhuman but by skillfully using your powers, you can get enough of an edge to overcome almost any situation. They also allow you to dictate the style of game you want to play. Much like Far Cry, Crysis features an expansive world and how you get to each objective is entirely up to you—you can turn on Armor and bull-rush through enemies or you can activate Cloak and sneak on past.

ARMS RACE

But as awesome as the Nanosuit abilities are, you'll still rely on good old ballistics-based weaponry to mow down your foes. You can carry a pistol—or two, if you want to dual wield—two larger guns such as rifles, a rocket launcher, and three

types of grenades; oh, and some C4 as well. There are several types of human weapons including a few types of assault rifles, a shotgun, a sniper rifle, a chaingun, and the incredibly effective Gauss Rifle that works wonders for taking down pesky airborne aliens. With the exception of one or two guns, almost every firearm in Crysis can be customized on the fly; you can bring up a menu and add attachments like a silencer, flashlight or laser pointer. With some assault guns, you can also add a grenade launcher or tranquilizer dart attachment.

TECH CRUNCH

Even without the picture-perfect graphics and spectacular technological prowess, Crysis is an excellent action game that can stand up against any great FPS. The acting and story aren't spectacular, but using the Nanosuit makes this open-ended adventure one that is fun from start to finish.

Of course, the game is not perfect. The multiplayer mode leaves a little to be desired as games can last way too long, but the maps are well thought out and the Nanosuit abilities translate over well to the multiplayer experience. Also, the constant tweaking of system specs needed to get the game running optimally is also a drag, and the average PC gamer will probably find that their system is nowhere near powerful enough to get this beast even up and running to standard.

Still, despite its power hungry ways, Crysis is an enticing adventure all the way through to the end. It's a worthy follow-up to the excellent Far Cry and a great step forward for PC gaming as a whole.—Chris Morell



HWRF

Get the link to **Crysis** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **HWRF** to **59479**

Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

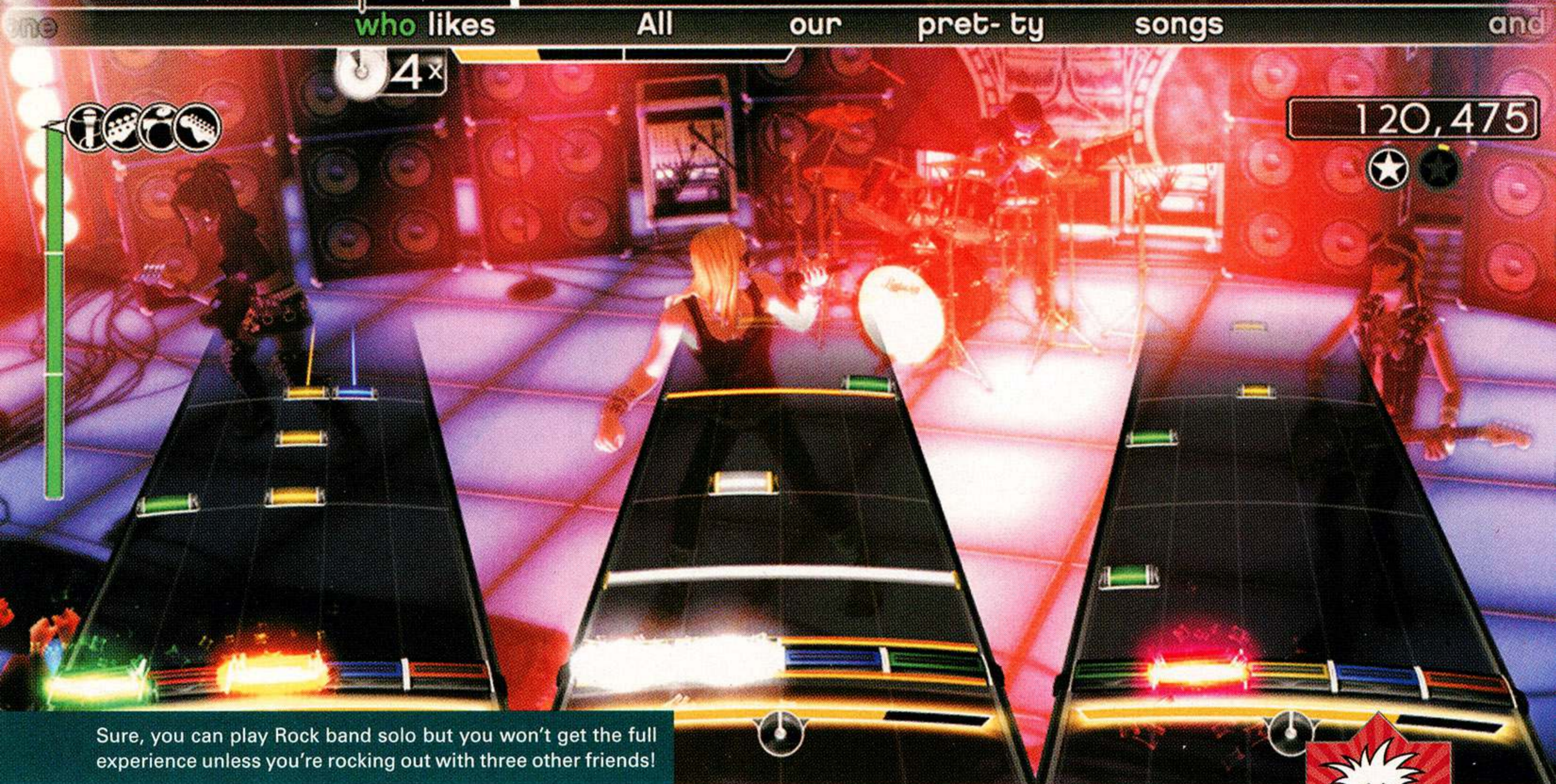
4.75

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Incredible graphics/cutting-edge technology; well-balanced Nanosuit abilities enhance open-ended play; topnotch enemy A.I.; creative level design.

CONS: Constant system tweaking is a drag; requires expensive hardware to run effectively.



Sure, you can play Rock band solo but you won't get the full experience unless you're rocking out with three other friends!



ROCK BAND

For those about to play Rock Band, we salute you!

Xbox 360 ESRB: T

Developer: Harmonix Publisher: MTV Games

At first glance, Rock Band may seem like just a Guitar Hero knock off with more plastic instruments involved but once you delve into the actual game, you see that it's so much more. More than any other rhythm game that has come before it, Rock Band gets you the closest to feeling like a true rock star.

Guitar Hero (and to a lesser extent, Guitar Freaks and other past music simulation games) laid the groundwork for Rock Band—no one's arguing that. But where Guitar Hero skewed towards the solo rock career, Rock Band focuses on all the essential elements of a band—guitar, bass, drums, and vocals—to the point that you feel like you're actually creating real music.

And because collaboration is the key to Rock Band's success, we've asked the members of GamePro's own super group, GP Bad Touch, to sound off on the game's individual instruments.

ON LEAD VOCALS: CHRIS MORELL

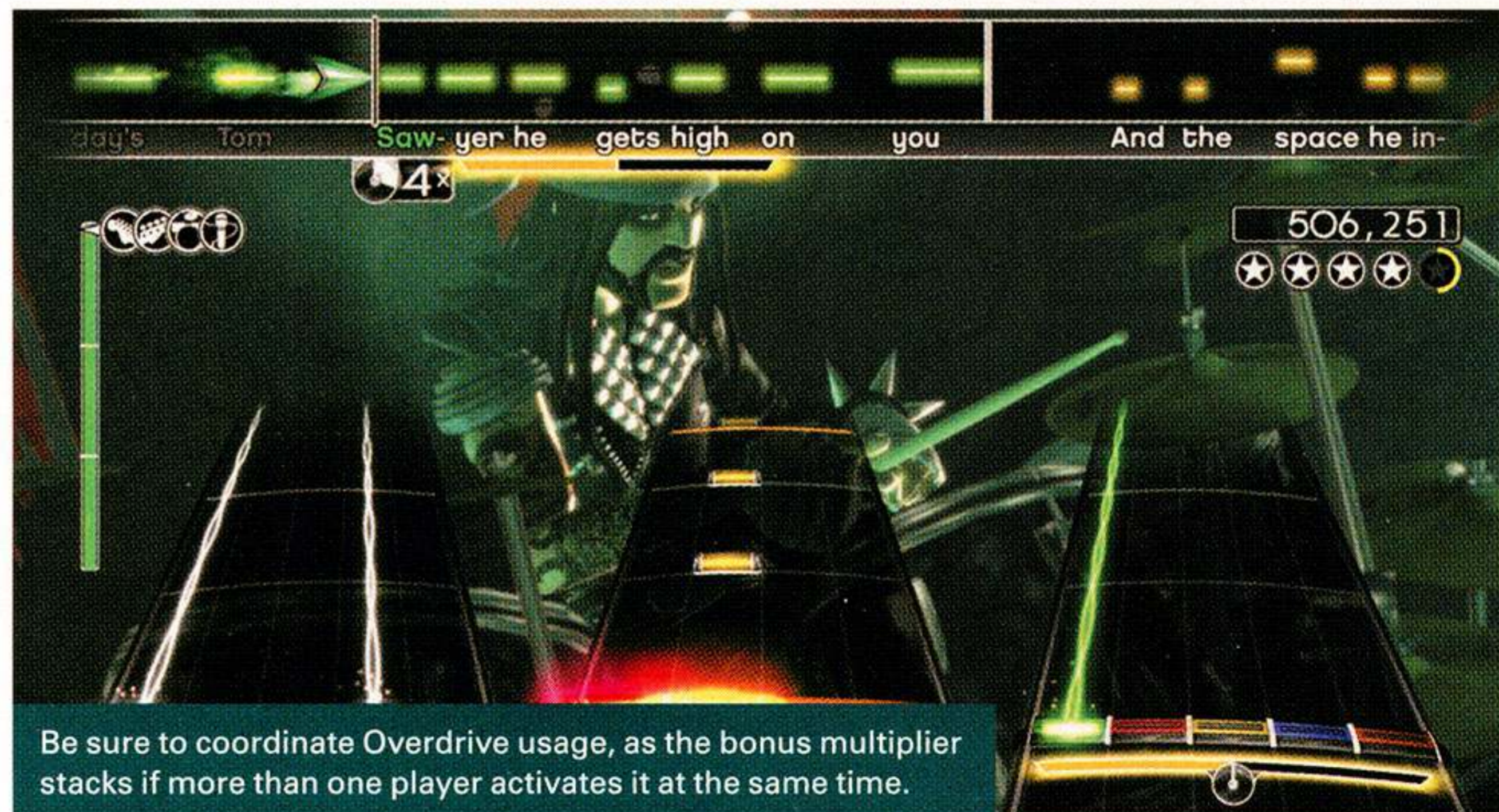
Karaoke requires a certain kind of determination. Most people love to sing—who doesn't have a rock star dream of belting one on stage—though they usually prefer to keep it confined to cars and showers. Being embarrassed at a crowded Karaoke bar isn't on everyone's to-do list but Rock Band helps out wanna-be vocalists by making them just another part of the band. Sure, everyone will notice if you sound like a monkey that just got its tonsils removed but your band mates will be too caught up with their axes and drums to notice that you sing

like Scott Stapp. Plus, the software does a perfectly sufficient job of tracking pitch, so even the worst warbler will still be half-way successful. It's not always easy, though, as most songs are trying on "Hard" and unbelievably difficult on "Expert." But unless you have terminal stage fright, singing in Rock Band is almost always a good time.

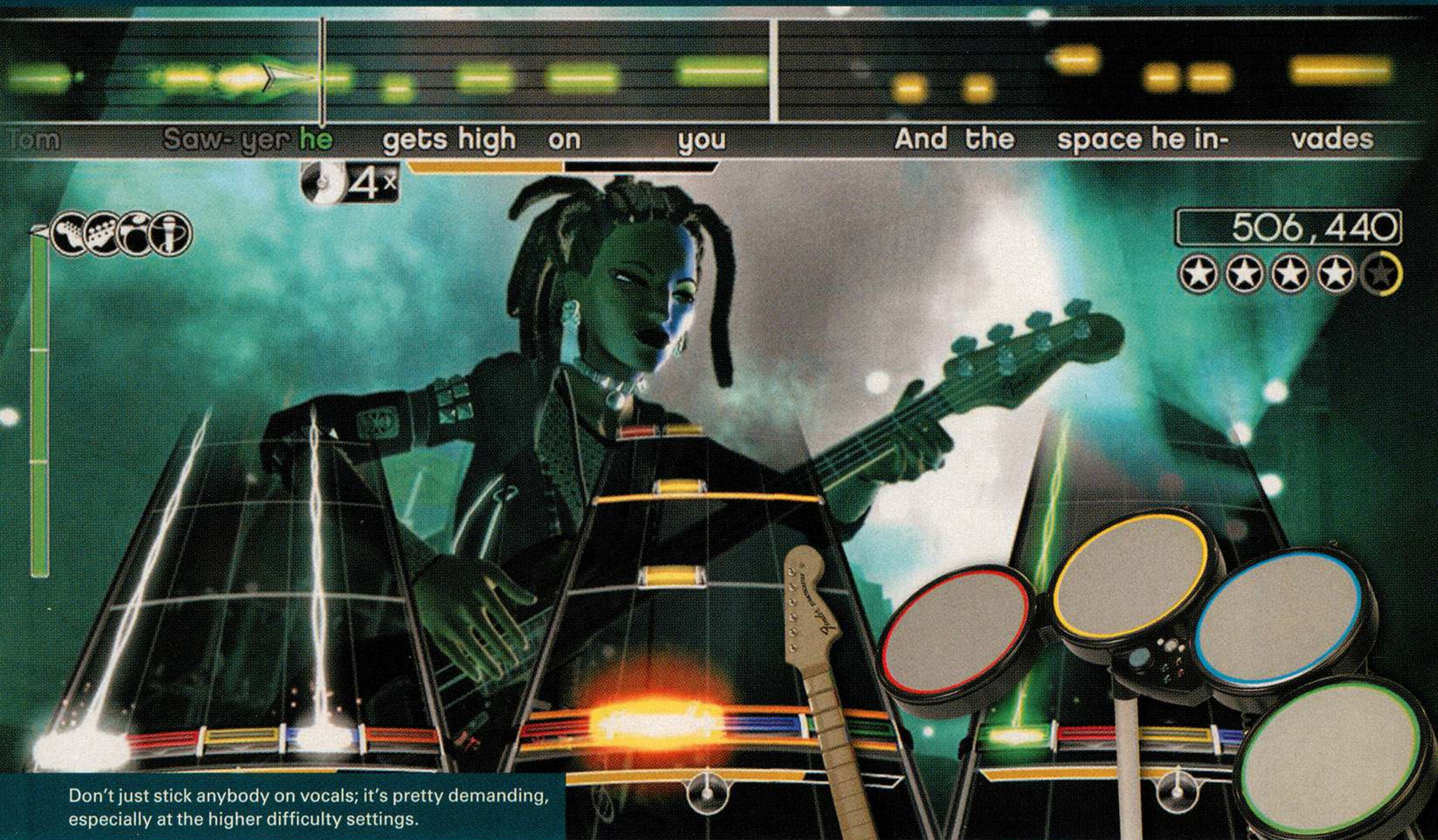
ON LEAD GUITAR: TRAVIS MOSES

Now that drums and vocals have been brought into the mix, the lead guitarist takes a backseat to the new hotness. And since Rock Band is a party

game focused on the collaboration of four different instruments, the track list is skewed as such. So don't expect every song to have a spotlight solo. In fact, if you are thinking about purchasing Rock Band solely for the guitar portion of the game you had better think twice—Guitar Hero III is your game. The reasoning behind this is that although the more-authentic looking Rock Band guitar controller has some fancy new features, such as an effects switch and additional buttons higher on the neck for solos, the hardware just isn't that great. The whole guitar feels extremely flimsy, the strum



Be sure to coordinate Overdrive usage, as the bonus multiplier stacks if more than one player activates it at the same time.



Don't just stick anybody on vocals; it's pretty demanding, especially at the higher difficulty settings.

bar offers almost no tactile feedback, and because of the flat button layout it's difficult to get your finger placement right. I've actually found myself playing Rock Band with the Guitar Hero X-plorer controller, which is the worst GH guitar but is still better than Rock Band's.

ON BASS: TAE K. KIM

As in real life, the bass guitarist is sort of the odd man out in Rock Band. Your principle task is to supplement the guitarist and the drummer, so don't expect a fair share of the spotlight. This instrument is definitely not for anyone with an ego. Some songs, such as the Yeah Yeah Yeah's "Maps" will make you suffer through long stretches of inactivity but if you crank up the difficulty, the bass guitar does provide a nice challenge; there aren't a lot of chords, so expect to move your fingers up and down the fret boards, especially during the faster songs. The bass guitar is best suited for casual players who have some skill but haven't yet mastered the finger gymnastics necessary to be a true Guitar Hero; it's also a safe way to introduce a n00b to the world of virtual rock.



ON DRUMS: ANDY BURT

Ahh, the joys of being a drummer. As someone who grew up playing drums, I was interested to see how well Harmonix handled the overall realism of playing an actual drum set. Thankfully, the developers have rewarded wanna-be drummers in spades. Everything about the drum kit feels right, from the intuitive use of a simple four pad setup to the surprising accuracy of the bass drum pedal. The drums can be an intimidating instrument but Rock Band is designed in such a way that even the most rhythmically-challenged gamer can hop behind the set and have fun with minimal frustration. But practice enough and you'll be wailing away like a true drum god.

FINAL VERDICT

Now's the time we tackle the question that's on everyone's mind: Is Rock Band better than Guitar Hero III? The answer will vary and really, it's all about personal taste. Rock Band is probably not the right choice for someone who just wants to shred by themselves and be in the spotlight. While personal glory is great, we like Rock Band's emphasis on collaboration, having a great time with friends, and feeling like an actual musician.

That's what's at the heart of the Rock Band experience. Plus, it provides more game modes, off- and online, than you could shake a stick at. There are so many ways to play and/or compete online, an ample character creator, cool venues, and ready-to-release downloadable content that makes the whole package worthwhile even if you shell out for the all-in-one bundle. But regardless, you *will* have fun with Rock Band. We guarantee it. —GP Bad Touch



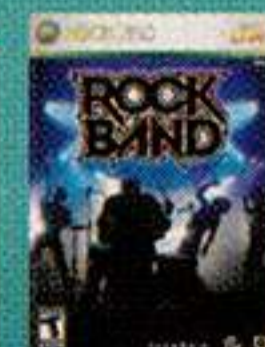
BAND

Get the link to **Rock Band** screens and news sent to your e-mail. Text **BAND** to **59479**
Only standard text messaging rates apply

FUN FACTOR

5.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Fantastic presentation, a great set list, and a wealth of modes; rock out with your friends.

CONS: Guitar controller has some quirks; worries about the drum controller's overall durability remain.

- 1 CHET HIGGENS
 - 2 ATSHUSHI MURAGUCHI
 - 3 **RYAN COOPER**
 - 4 SHINJI TAKASU
 - 5 FELIX TANG
 - 6 KAZU YOSHIDA
 - 7 PETE CARTER
 - 8 GUSTAVO DEMETRIUS
- TARGET TIME +20.64

LAPTIME:
15.72

LAP: 2/3



The game's damage-modeling is intricate and fairly precise, so drive carefully or your ride's dinged up paint job will tell the whole world of your swerve-happy ways.

NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET

EA Canada slams on the brakes and steers the popular Need For Speed series in a better direction.

Xbox 360 ESRB: E10+

Developer: EA Canada EA Games

The latest chapter in the Need For Speed franchise trades in the high speed chases, midnight races, and adrenaline-soaked sense of adventure of past titles for legally sanctioned events and high noon showdowns. But don't let the conservative shift throw you—ProStreet packs in the same quality racing that you've come to expect from this lauded franchise.

FRESHLY PAINTED EXTERIOR

The most immediate difference between ProStreet and its predecessors lies in its graphics. This is the first Need for Speed game to sport truly next-gen visuals with gorgeous vehicle modeling, spot-on damage rendering, and a general high-level of detail. Unfortunately, all this visual flash comes with a price: the game features a ridiculous amount of logos, advertisements, and various other graphics on

the screen, not to mention obnoxious announcers who sound like they belong more at a frat-boy kegger than at a competitive street racing event.

ProStreet also does away with the open worlds of previous Need for Speeds and replaces them with a branching career mode. As up and coming street racer Ryan Cooper, your ultimate goal is to take on the kings of four racing modes: grip, drift, drag, and speed. Successfully usurp their spots and you're free to challenge the street king to become the top racer. It's a long road to the head of the class though, as ProStreet packs in one of the longest careers in the franchise with tons of races, venues, and vehicles.

UNDER THE HOOD

There is a tremendous amount of depth lurking underneath ProStreet's hood. Aside from the long and rewarding career path, you can take your sled to the garage and customize it with a slew of upgrades and the autosculpt feature which enables you to shape individual components to your liking. You can also create custom blueprints for vehicles and share them via Xbox Live; leaderboards track the success of shared blueprints and unlock certain achievements for you.

ProStreet also takes online play to another level with plenty

of new venues and race types, as well as a slick new system that makes it far easier to socialize with your fellow racers. The online modes are solid and the ability to set up virtual race days that your buddies can enter on their own schedule offers a lot of flexibility. The system is so intuitive that I was left to wonder why it hadn't been done before.

VICTORY LANE

The outstanding online gameplay is just one item on a long list of reasons to play ProStreet. The great visuals, solid racing mechanics, lengthy career mode, and customization options help make this one of the most deep and enjoyable racing titles around. Even if the title's new direction doesn't jive with you, there's no denying the level of polish inherent in this slick racer.

—Tracy Erickson



FUN FACTOR

4.50

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Fantastic visuals; clever, well-designed multiplayer; deep and engaging gameplay.

CONS: Annoying announcers in career mode; visual style is sometimes too much.

BLACKSITE: AREA 51

Xbox 360 ESRB: M

Developer: Midway Studios Austin Publisher: Midway



I feel bad for BlackSite: Area 51. Sure, it's not a great FPS title but it is a solid and enjoyable shooter that will no doubt get lost in the shadow of great games like Halo 3, BioShock, and The Orange Box.

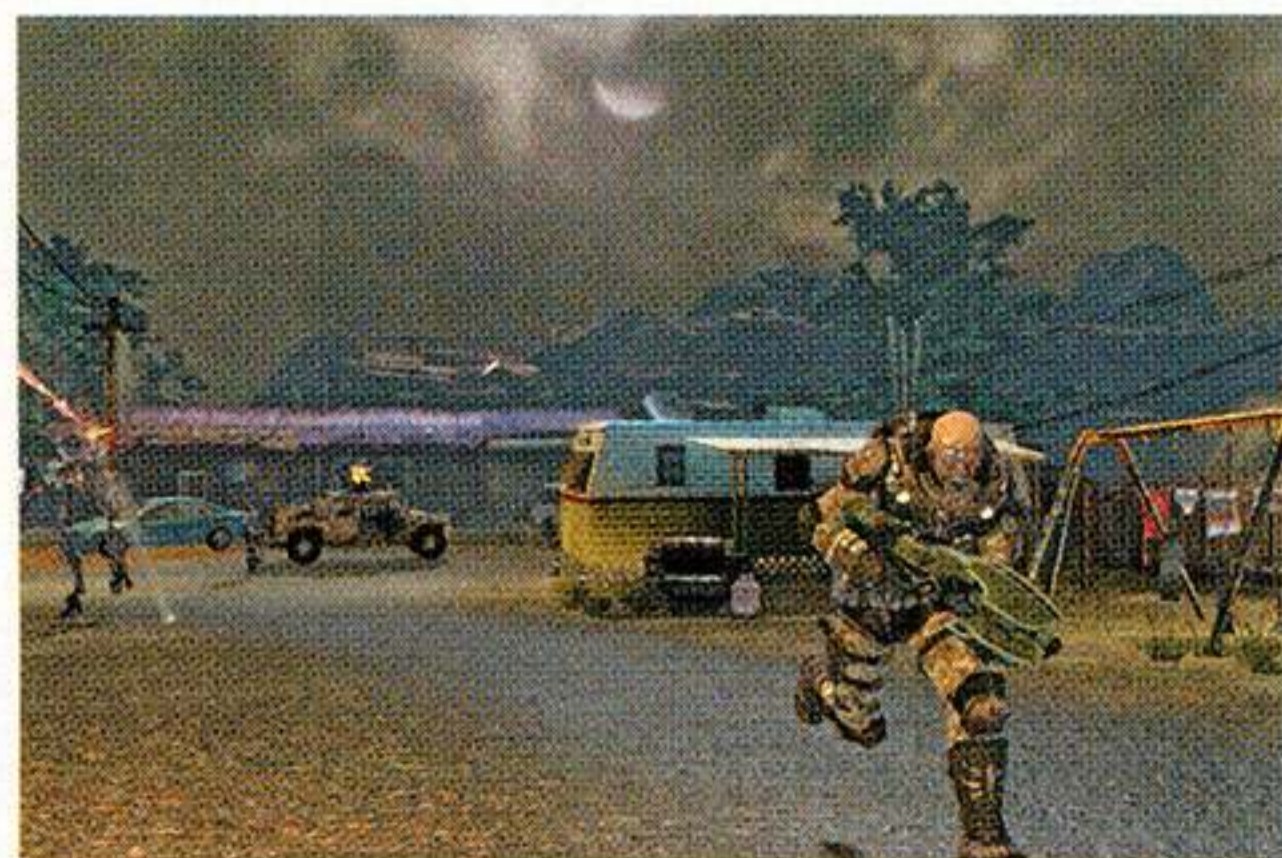
THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

And truth be told, BlackSite deserves to lurk in the shadow of those giants as it doesn't quite reach the lofty bar that's been set for the FPS genre. The plot is rather generic—you're a Delta Force commando who has to clean up the mess created by some egg-heads at a secret government research facility—and while your NPC comrades are likeable, their battle skills are seriously lacking. This becomes a big problem during the vehicle-based levels where you're forced to drive and rely on their near-sighted gunnery skills to take care of enemies.

POPCORN FLICK

That said, the gunplay, which follows the standard FPS formula of "see bad guys, shoot bad guys," is solid and fun; it's also bolstered by an interesting morale system where, if you perform well, your comrades get a small boost to their own skills. But let your team get into dire straits and their abilities take a small penalty. It's not revolutionary but it is an interesting system that rewards skilled gunplay.

At the end of the day, BlackSite is a decent enough FPS title that's the gaming equivalent of a summer action blockbuster: It sure as hell won't win any Oscars but it delivers just enough thrills to make you feel like you got your money's worth.
—Tae K. Kim



FUN FACTOR

4.00

OUT OF 5.00

PROS: Unreal Engine visuals shine; good, solid action; NPCs are actually likable.

CONS: Its story won't "wow" you; NPCs battle skills are lacking.



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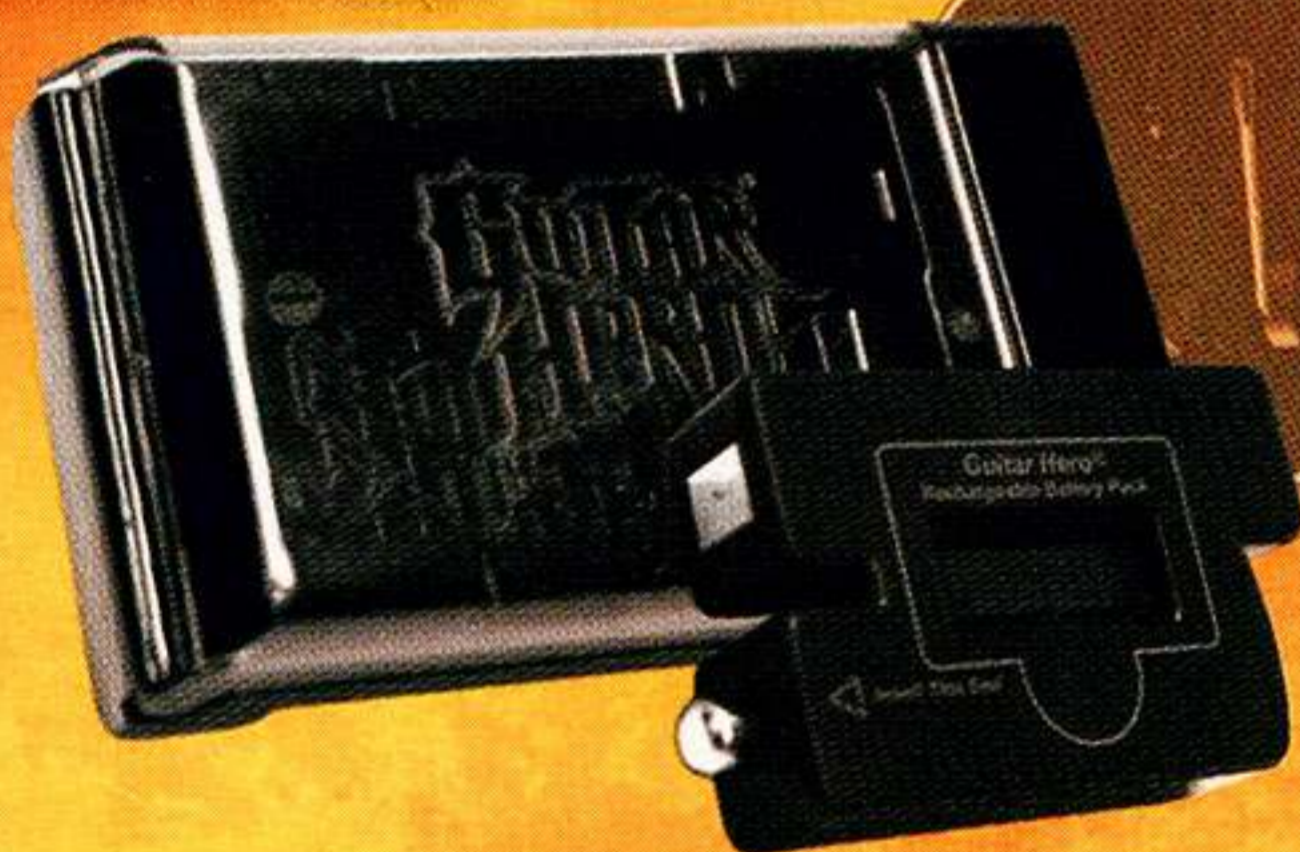


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REVIEWS

MANHUNT 2

Wii ESRB: M

■ Developer: Rockstar Toronto ■ Publisher: Rockstar Games



Rockstar is no stranger to controversy. In fact, you could argue that the company even welcomes it. No one is better at taking negative press and turning it into PR gold. But the company's secret has always been that, despite what critics say, their games are usually nothing short of brilliant. It's too bad then that their controversial *Manhunt 2* doesn't live up to the bar they've set.

THE TRUTH IS BRUTAL

The rest of the game boils down to a stealth adventure, maneuvering through shadows with bits of exploration and some mundane puzzles thrown in for variety. Visually the game does nothing that impressive, though there are a few nice touches such as blood splatters, and it does a good job of setting up an oppressive and soul-sucking atmosphere.

Still, *Manhunt 2* is only mildly amusing and the violence and gore gets tired after a while. If you're into movies like Eli Roth's *Hostel* then this game's right up your alley but if you're looking for a thriller with a little more substance, you might want to look elsewhere.—**Todd Melick**



HANDS-ON APPROACH

As with most titles on the Wii the controls are what make or break the game, and this is the case with *Manhunt 2*. You spend the first several minutes in the game getting acclimated to the Wii Remote and Nunchuk movements needed to control the main character, Daniel Lamb. The controls are passable but ultimately, they feel clunky and stiff, and that's just for mundane tasks like walking down hallways. When I finally got to the much discussed killing sequences, I often found myself confused by the motion sensing controls and I couldn't pull off the necessary moves.

Ironically, the one thing that saves the game are the many different executions. Creep up close enough to an enemy and you can activate a gruesome mutilation that requires you to swing the Wii Remote and Nunchuks around. As I mentioned above, the controls do get a little confusing but it does provide a nice visceral edge that most games can't even begin to touch.



FUN FACTOR

3.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Various motion-sensing assassinations are interesting; good atmosphere.

CONS: Clunky controls; mediocre graphics; repetitive gameplay.

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

PS3 ESRB: T

■ Developer: Naughty Dog ■ Publisher: Sony



It's no secret that the PS3 needs hits, and badly. That's why games like Uncharted are so important: They're not necessarily triple-A titles but if they're done right, they can give hungry PS3 owners something to tide them over until games like MGS4 finally arrive.

HERE THERE BE MONSTERS

The bad news is that Uncharted has its faults. First, the story, which centers on explorer Nathan Drake and his quest to hunt down a treasure that his ancestor Sir Francis had chased after, is sort of hokey and relies heavily on clichés.

The action can also be frustrating thanks to an overwhelming number of enemies that appear on-screen. The game's cover system is great but enemies will tear you apart the minute you peek your head out, and when your health is low, the screen goes black and white, which makes it that much harder to aim. It's also hard to see ammo when it's lying on the dense jungle floor which is problematic since I was always running low on bullets.

I also had trouble with the game's platforming elements: it's just way too easy to navigate your way around the treacherous terrain. You'll constantly find yourself hanging by your fingertips from high ledges but you can jump around like a hopped up monkey with a couple of button presses, which really takes away any sense of challenge. The environmental puzzles are also way too simple and you're helped along by blatantly obvious things like explosive barrels that just happen to be sitting next to a tall pillar that you have to topple over in order to create a bridge.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

The good news is that these complaints are fairly minor and while Uncharted will frustrate you, it also has the capacity to be thrilling and fun. The game offers up some amazing visuals and the gameplay is perfectly paced. You're always doing something interesting, whether it's investigating ancient ruins, trading bullets with modern-day pirates, or skydiving out of a burning airplane. And even though I never truly bought into the story, I still wanted to help Nathan solve the mystery behind Sir Francis Drake's diary.



Uncharted reminded me a lot of an Indiana Jones movie in that both are fun and enjoyable romps that are just good enough to make you forgive their respective weaknesses. It isn't going to single-handedly pull Sony's bacon out of the fire this holiday season but it is definitely a title that PS3 owners can be proud to call their own. —Tae K. Kim

FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00

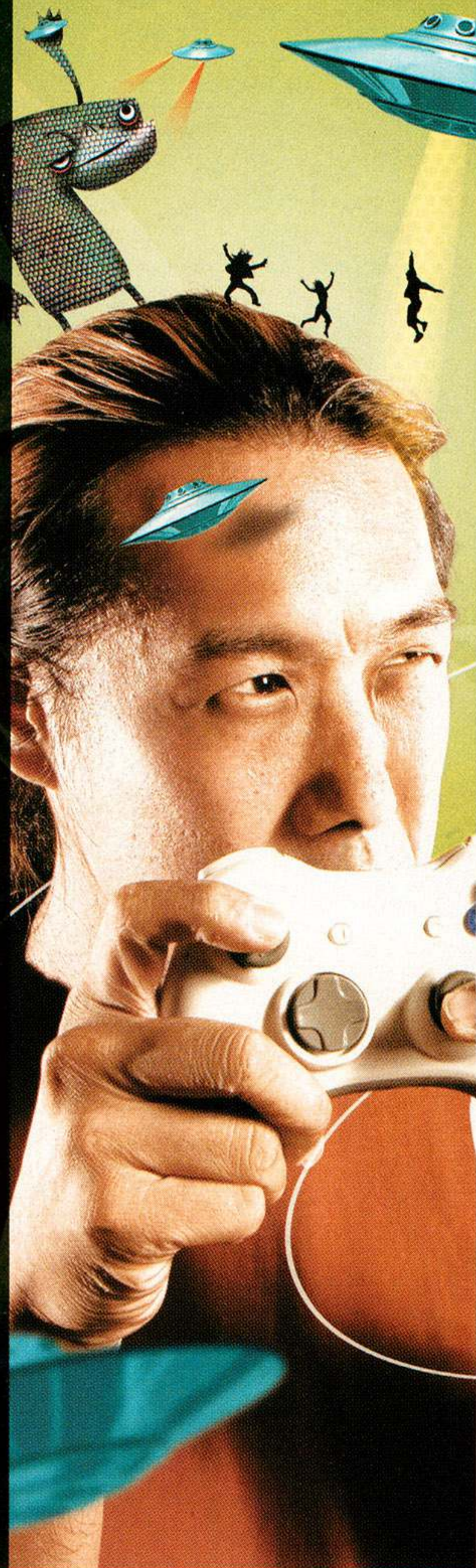


PROS: One of the best-looking PS3 games around; gameplay has its faults but is entertaining

CONS: Platforming sequences are way too easy; the story is a little clichéd.

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REVIEWS

RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

Wii ESRB: M

Developer and Publisher: Capcom



As the title suggests, *The Umbrella Chronicles* chronicles the story of the Umbrella Corporation's downfall by revisiting key events from past *Resident Evil* titles, such as the adventures of Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield from the original. You play the game from a first-person view point and shoot enemies using the Wii Remote, which is perfectly suited to the task.

(DON'T) GO WHERE YOU WANNA GO

The aiming is precise and the controls are easy to grasp. You just aim and hit the B button to shoot; to reload, you shake the Wii Remote back and forth. The Nunchuk's analog stick is used to shift your view around while the C button is used to change weapons.

Like most rail shooters, you have no real freedom of movement, and that's one of the main gripes with the game. The camera sometimes wobbles more than a toddler taking his first steps, which throws your aim off. It's a little frustrating but the zombie busting action is satisfying. Best of all, there are a ton of secrets to uncover, including hidden objects and bonus levels that fills in more of the overall story, which is sure to please die-hard fans.

AIM FOR THE HEAD

The only downside to *The Umbrella Chronicles* is that longevity will be an issue—once you run through all the levels, there isn't much incentive to play through them again, unless you're the obsessive type who needs to collect every single little trinket.

But *The Umbrella Chronicles* does a lot of things right. It combines the atmospheric charm of the RE series with awesome light-gun gameplay, then throws in a wealth of bonus material to unlock and discover. It's the perfect way to prepare yourself for the upcoming *Resident Evil 5*.—Tae K. Kim



FUN FACTOR

4.25

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Resident Evil plus solid light-gun action equals "teh awesome."

CONS: Little replayability; the camera can be a little frustrating.

MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Wii ESRB: E

Developer: Sega Sports Publisher: Sega

It only takes a few minutes of playing Mario & Sonic at the Olympics to understand that this isn't so much a game as it is a marketing tool to promote the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

So it would be silly to try and hold this title up to the same standards as, say, Halo 3 or even Madden. Mario & Sonic isn't meant for the hardcore audience—instead, it's meant for a decidedly casual crowd. The unfortunate irony, however, is that the inclusion of Mario and Sonic will ultimately raise the interest and expectations of hardcore gamers.



I say unfortunate because Mario & Sonic isn't particularly deep. And it certainly doesn't feel like it has been designed for "hardcore" gamers. The game features a wide range of Olympic events, from track and field to aquatics, but as they are presented here, each event is short and fairly shallow. They mostly require you to move the Wii Remote and Nunchuks in specific ways—rapidly up and down for running events, for example. None of the included sports are particularly challenging or even remotely fulfilling.

The game does have its charms. The visuals are colorful and bright. It is immediately accessible, and the all-star cast is chock full of recognizable characters. But ultimately, the entire experience feels fairly empty. This is why I'm going to suggest that you stay away from this game unless you are: a) a hardcore gamer who appreciates casual games; b) a self-defined casual gamer; c) insanely excited for the upcoming Olympics; or d) a huge Nintendo and/or Sega fanboy.

This said, I'm giving the game a relatively high score in recognition of its intended audience as well as the fact that it more or less succeeds in



reaching them. Mario & Sonic is exactly what Sega, Nintendo, and the International Olympic Committee wanted it to be: an interesting albeit shallow game that should prove successful with casual gamers, especially kids. So take it for what it is and don't let the fact that two of the most storied franchises in all of gaming are involved sway your decision to purchase this game.

The bright side to all this is that the hardcore gamers who were so obviously overlooked for this game may console themselves with the fact that they will be able to watch Sonic and Mario finally duke it out for supremacy in the upcoming Smash Bros. Brawl. I'm guessing it will be a far better game.—Tae K. Kim

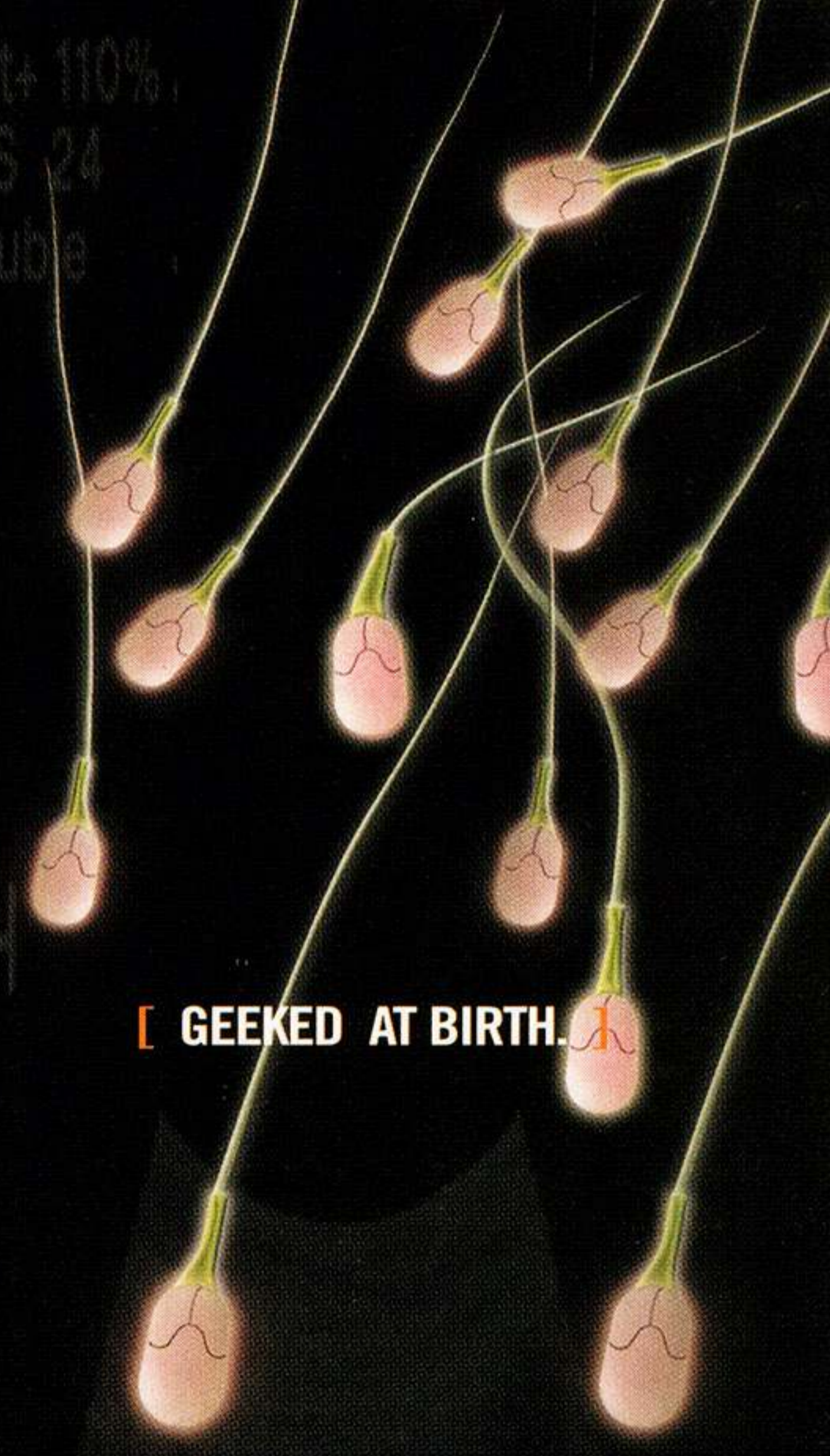


FUN FACTOR

3.50
OUT OF 5.00

PROS: It's a stylish tie-in to the upcoming 2008 Olympics in Beijing; the roster of included characters is awesome.

CONS: It features shallow gameplay, on the level of Wii Sports; really, it's not a game so much as it is a marketing tool.



[GEEKED AT BIRTH.]



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Expect to spend much your time prowling randomly generated hallways, and taking down bosses whose main claims to fame seem to be more resilient health bars.

HELLGATE: LONDON

Apparently, the road to Hell is paved with one diabolical treadmill after another.

PC ESRB: M

Developer: Flagship Studios Publisher: EA Games

Portals to Hell are opening all over the place, and demons are roaming free in such numbers that the land teeters on the edge of the abyss. Sound familiar? It should—it's the same basic premise that set the amazing Diablo series rolling. What's unfortunate about Hellgate is that it's neither as fun nor as memorable as its spiritual predecessor.

DARK PEDIGREE

Hellgate starts off well, with a character creation system that exposes six unique classes, but once you actually hop into the game, the game's faults become immediately apparent. For instance, once you make a decision in the skill tree, you're stuck with that choice forever, which is an anachronistic design decision that effectively kills the possibility of experimentation. Also, the available quests are boring, unimaginative and worst of all, repetitive. Having an NPC task you with killing ten, and only ten, demons in a specific area doesn't make any sense even in a virtual world.

IT'S A (PRE)FABULOUS LIFE

The game also suffers from a lack of tension and atmosphere; unlike the two Diablo games, Hellgate has no personality. The world looks sterile

and prefabricated, probably because it is prefabricated, with environments slapped together literally at random. While in theory this might imbue a game with infinite replayability, in practice—at least as presented here—it leads to worlds that lack the cunning creativity that a human designer might have come up with. Think of it this way: a cat walking across a piano might compose something new each time, but would you rather listen to that or the work of Beethoven?

THE BANALITY OF EVIL

Working in Hellgate's favor, however, is that the six classes complement each other so well in multiplayer. Gathering five friends, permanent or temporary, into a single band of brothers is definitely the way to go, leading to a fast-paced stomp through any environment, and an unremitting display of trippy pyrotechnics.

It also incorporates some interesting ideas—loot that drops separately for every player in a party, a weapon modification and upgrade system that turns even useless items into collectible trinkets, and a context-sensitive shift button that puts active skills within easy reach. But every single play session, regardless of whether it's solo or with friends, will invariably boil down to holding

the attack button and heading off on yet another "kill X to get Y" quest.

PRECEDING REPUTATION

Hellgate: London does offer some simple-minded entertainment, but it falls short of its lofty goals, a fact that is made all the more galling when you consider the fact that the developer, Flagship Studios, was founded by two of Diablo's creators. You might get sucked into the online world of competing slayers and level grinding for a while, but the tedium will kill you far quicker than any member of Hell's vast army.

—Cameron Lewis

FUN FACTOR

3.00

OUT OF 5.00



PROS: Class variety is interesting; loot drops will keep obsessive gamers occupied.

CONS: Randomized levels; repetition; locked progression choices; lack of atmosphere.

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ASK THE PROS

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH



miamifan



Tae Kim

REMEMBERING BRO BUZZ

Q: So, are you guys going to miss him? I remember him from the first issue of *GamePro* I read ever...a long time ago.—miamifan

Tae K. Kim says: To say that we are going to miss Bro Buzz is an understatement. Bro Buzz wasn't just an employee of *GamePro*, he was *GamePro*. He was around from issue number one and to see him leave closes off a very important chapter in *GamePro's* long and colorful history.

Besides that, he is a great human being; always upbeat, always ready with a supportive gesture when things got hectic, and he always kept his office door open for people to come in and chat. He was a great editor and an amazing co-worker and I learned a lot about how to comport myself as a professional and as a journalist during the time that I worked with him. So the short answer is, yes, we will all definitely miss him, the same way we miss the other *GamePros* who have left, including Rice Burner and Dr. Zombie. I know we'll all be friends for a long time. That's the great thing about *GamePro*: while we are co-workers, first and foremost we are also friends and treat each other as such.

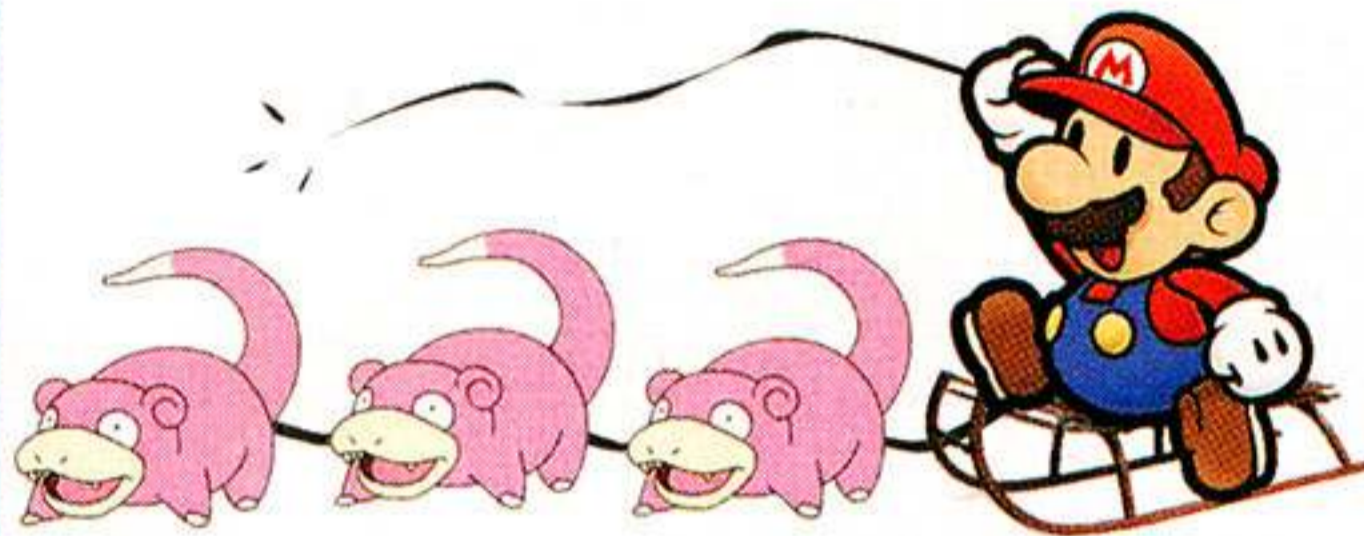


THIS IS YOUR SPACE

LOOKING FOR THE PRIME SHOOTER

Q: Which one is better: Halo 3 or Metroid Prime 3?—cubits12x

Tae K. Kim says: This is an apples versus oranges question; it's impossible to compare the two. Yes, they're both FPS titles but they're two completely different animals. Halo 3 is more of an action oriented game while Metroid Prime 3 is more puzzle solving and platform oriented. The differences in the gameplay and overall design of each game, as well as control schemes also make this one difficult. It's also very subjective. Some people will like MP3 better than Halo 3 and vice versa. I personally think both games are awesome and stand on their own merits.



BE A PAL TO PAL

Q: What's up with the PAL release dates for Wii games? Nearly every game arrives months after U.S. releases on PAL Wii consoles. Take Super Paper Mario for example. That game was released in the U.S. around six months ago but hasn't yet arrived in New Zealand yet. Are there that many technical difficulties in making a PAL version of a game that warrants a six-month wait or is Nintendo just lazy?—Popadophalis

Tae K. Kim says: That's a great question, Popadophalis, and one that I unfortunately don't have an answer to. There are probably a lot of different factors involved, though I don't know enough about Nintendo's policy on multi-region releases to competently talk about the issue, though I can make a guess. I believe there are technical issues that arises because of the differences between PAL and NTSC (the two prevailing standards). Again, I'm not knowledgeable enough, but I'm going to say that Wii games released in PAL countries output in PAL and the same should hold true for NTSC countries. We also need to remember that the European market isn't as big as the Asian and North American markets so that might explain why releases don't hit until later. What's weird is that sometimes it works the other way around. Remember that Mario Strikers Charged came out in Europe long before it came out in North America and Japan. This

is obviously above my head. There are many resources out there on the web to help understand the differences between regional formatting. In short, I have no idea why our PAL-standard-using brethren keep getting the short end of the stick, but I feel your pain.

HAVE CONSOLE, WILL TRADE

Q: I have a Wii and a 360 and I really want a PS3 now that everything is starting to fall into place for Sony? I want to trade-in one of my systems. What should I do?—codizzle587

Chris Morell says: Sounds like quite the brainteaser. My advice is to wait a little longer. Hang onto that Wii for Super Mario Galaxy and Smash Bros. After that, it's going to be a rough ride for Wii games for a while. You'll also want to hang with the Xbox 360 for Halo 3, Mass Effect, just to name a few. I'd wait until the holiday season before making any sudden moves and picking up a PS3. Good luck, it's a tough choice either way.

PS3 ADD ONS?

Q: I heard that with PS3 you have to buy additional stuff to play DVDs and CDs, etc. Is that true? And are the controllers still the same as the PS2?—dirtydave1486

Chris Morell says: Dave, you're livin' in the past, man. That was actually an Xbox thing back in the day. You had to buy that DVD remote to play movies on the Xbox. But it's 2007 and if you had to shell out extra cash on a \$600 machine to play aging DVD moves, that would suck...big time. All that stuff is playable on the PS3 out of the box. Getting a Bluetooth remote is a nice addition, but you can easily just use the Sixaxis controller which is exactly like the PS2's DualShock controller.



PROS

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AWESOME THREADS



gee-orge
Status:
End Boss

"Nowadays it seems like everyone is leaving."

On the problems with GamePro.com's forums.



rockface
Status:
Hero

"Halo 3 has a tough competitor and it's called Super Smash Bros. Brawl."

On the top-selling video game of 2007.

Member of the Month



kingconker64

Rank: Hero
Sex: Male
Age: 21

Expertise: Keeping fanboys in check
Hometown: Geneva, NY

Sequels aren't bad trends; they're the essence of gaming.



Quick Poll

Results as of September 28, 2007

Halo 3: Did you buy it?

I already have it: **41.1%**

I own it, but the disc is scratched: **4.5%**

Probably buy it later: **21.3%**

Nah, not interested: **33%**



GAMEPRO CHALLENGE

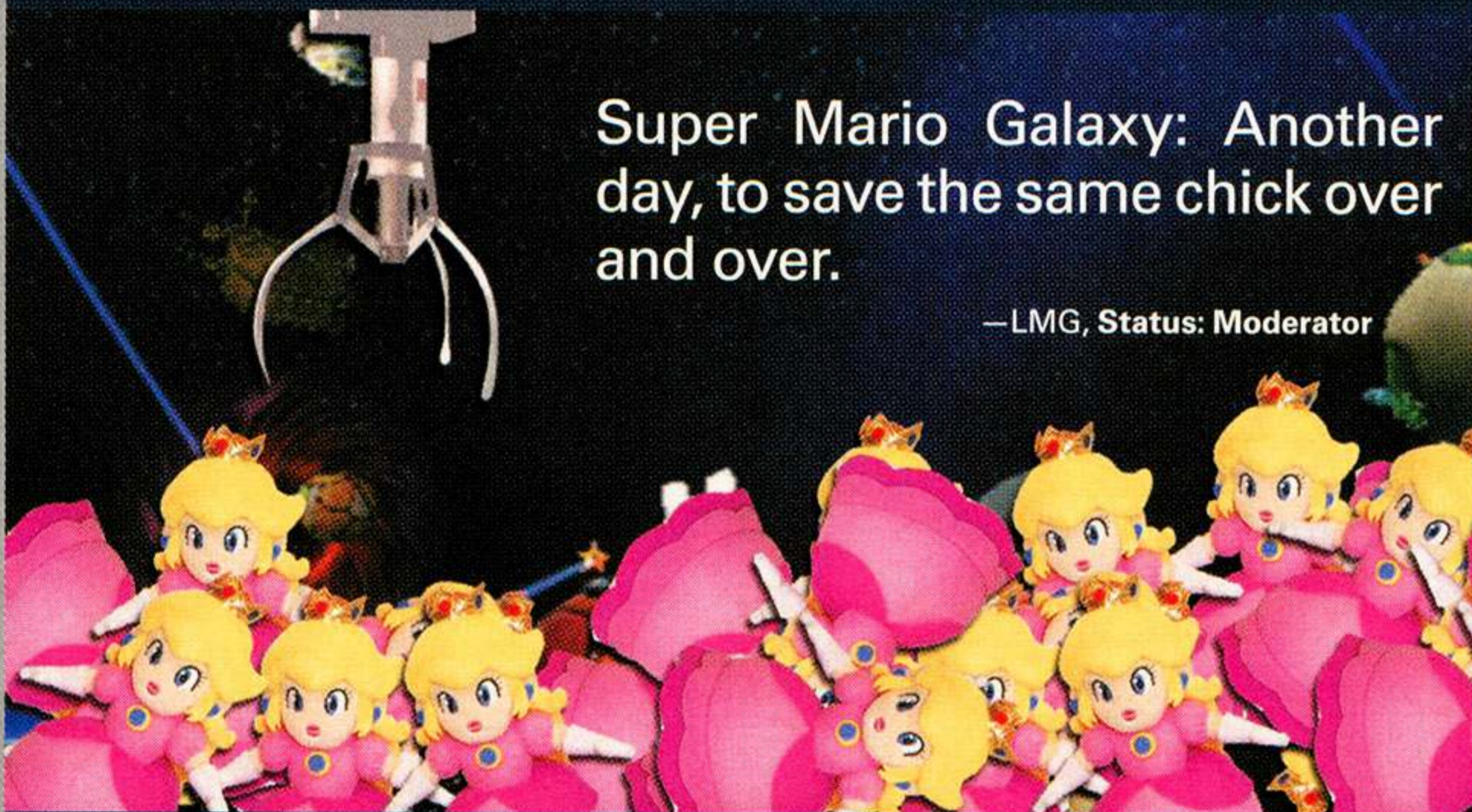
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THE CHALLENGE:

We asked you to preview the upcoming game you most excited about in 10 words or less, and these guys really packed a lot in a few words!

Super Mario Galaxy: Another day, to save the same chick over and over.

—LMG, Status: Moderator



OTHER NOTABLE PICKS:

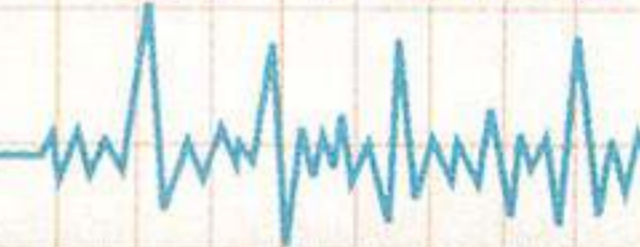
Metal Gear Solid 4: An old Snake trumps a young PMC every time.

—Elete, Status: Playa

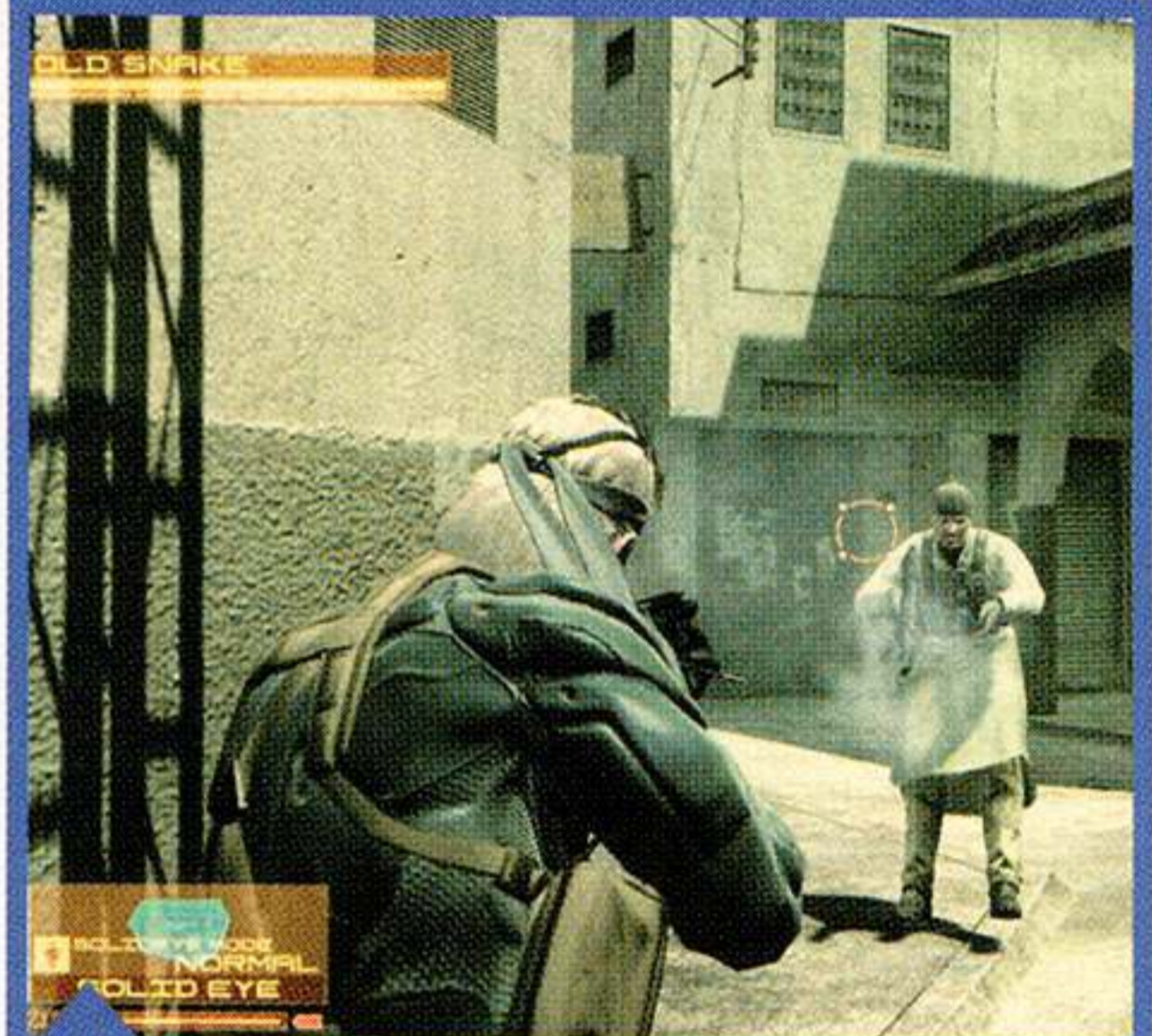
Super Smash Bros. Brawl: Frenetic fights between characters resembling steroid using stuffed animals.

—Joey_V5, Status: Hero

GP Pulse



Your hot picks as decided by Gamepro.com



1 Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots (PS3)

Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Wii) **2**

3 Halo 3 (Xbox 360)

Mass Effect (Xbox 360) **4**

5 Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction (PS3)

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"If I knew any fanboys in real life, I'd be the most argumentative and pissed off person ever. Fortunately, I know little about anything but the system they own."

On fanboys

"It would be so boring...not to mention it might rally up some skinheads."

On why there aren't more games based on the Civil War

feanaro
Status: End Boss

sportsviolence21
Status: End Boss

HTH

HEAD TO HEAD

You write, we respond.



LOOKING FOR A SPLINTER OF TRUTH

With all the upcoming video game movies, such as the Hitman, I've been wondering if they are ever going to make a Splinter Cell movie. I remember that in the third Splinter cell: Chaos Theory they had an advertisement for a Splinter Cell movie that never came. Has this idea completely drifted away?

Caleb Elgut—Chesapeake, VA

Well, Caleb it is true that a movie has been in the works for the past few years, and for a multitude of reasons has not seen the light of day. While it would be awesome to see the super-scruffy spy on the silver screen, for now we'll have to keep waiting with and ear to the rumor-mill.

WHAT'S THERE TO FEAR?

I've been debating whether to get PS3 or Wii. For years I've been a diehard Sony fangirl. All that changed when I got to play the Wii. I love the innovative remote and the idea of moving around while gaming. The one thing that has me hung up is the lack of survival horror and RPG games for Wii. Are there are going to be any horror and RPG games on Wii (Dare I say Silent Hill 5, House of the dead with the gun!), because they've always been my favorite genres. I know I can rely on PS3 for solid RPG and survival horror games. But Wii caught my attention and I'm holding out until I hear from you.

Jess Wright—Wilmington, DE

Be afraid Jess, be very afraid. Not only is Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles going to be a Wii exclusive, but Sadness, a noir-esqué survival horror game will be exclusive to the system as well. If that's not enough games like Manhunt 2 will be available on the Wii. And your RPG thirst will definitely be quenched with titles like Final Fantasy: Crystal

LETTER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

THE HEADPLAY PERSONAL CINEMA SYSTEM

The Letter of the Month winner will receive the Headplay Personal Cinema System—a visual headset and multi-media center. It's a cool, comfortable, immersive, high-res, cinematic experience for gaming, movie watching and the web, and connects directly to consoles, Macs, PCs, and most other visual devices. It also delivers true stereoscopic 3D viewing when playing 3D games and movies.



There's something to be said for reaching out and touching someone...

WHERE'S THE LOVE FOR OFF-LINE?

A lot of recent blog posts point to a need for online gaming for various reasons. As valid as some of these reasons may be, many people buy gaming consoles to enjoy games together and the success of the Wii is proof of this. The visceral experience of enjoying a victory with someone else in the same room magnifies the experience; it becomes more than a game, it becomes a reason for people to share time and connect.

As a thirty-something gamer I lack the free time that I once had in my teens. Being able to connect with friends locally and enjoy my gaming fix is worth the \$60 price tag. More importantly, as an uncle, having that offline multiplayer game that puts my nephews and nieces on my team is priceless. This is my concern though: is the offline gaming experience fading as the next-gen consoles battle for online dominance? I'm hoping this isn't the case and that game developers don't forget that, even though millions of gamers enjoy the online experience, there is still a strong market for creating offline games that are more than just a set of mini-games.

Brian Ramey—Raleigh, NC



Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers, Tales of Symphonia; Knight of Ratatosk, and Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors.

PARANOID FOR M-RATED

I have heard that the ESRB is cracking down on games like Manhunt 2. In an issue of *GamePro*, I saw an Xbox 360 Halo controller and there was a warning that said: this controller is based off an M-rated game. What is the purpose of this? Are people so paranoid of M-rated games that even controllers need a rating?

Carl Burgason—Hilliard, OH

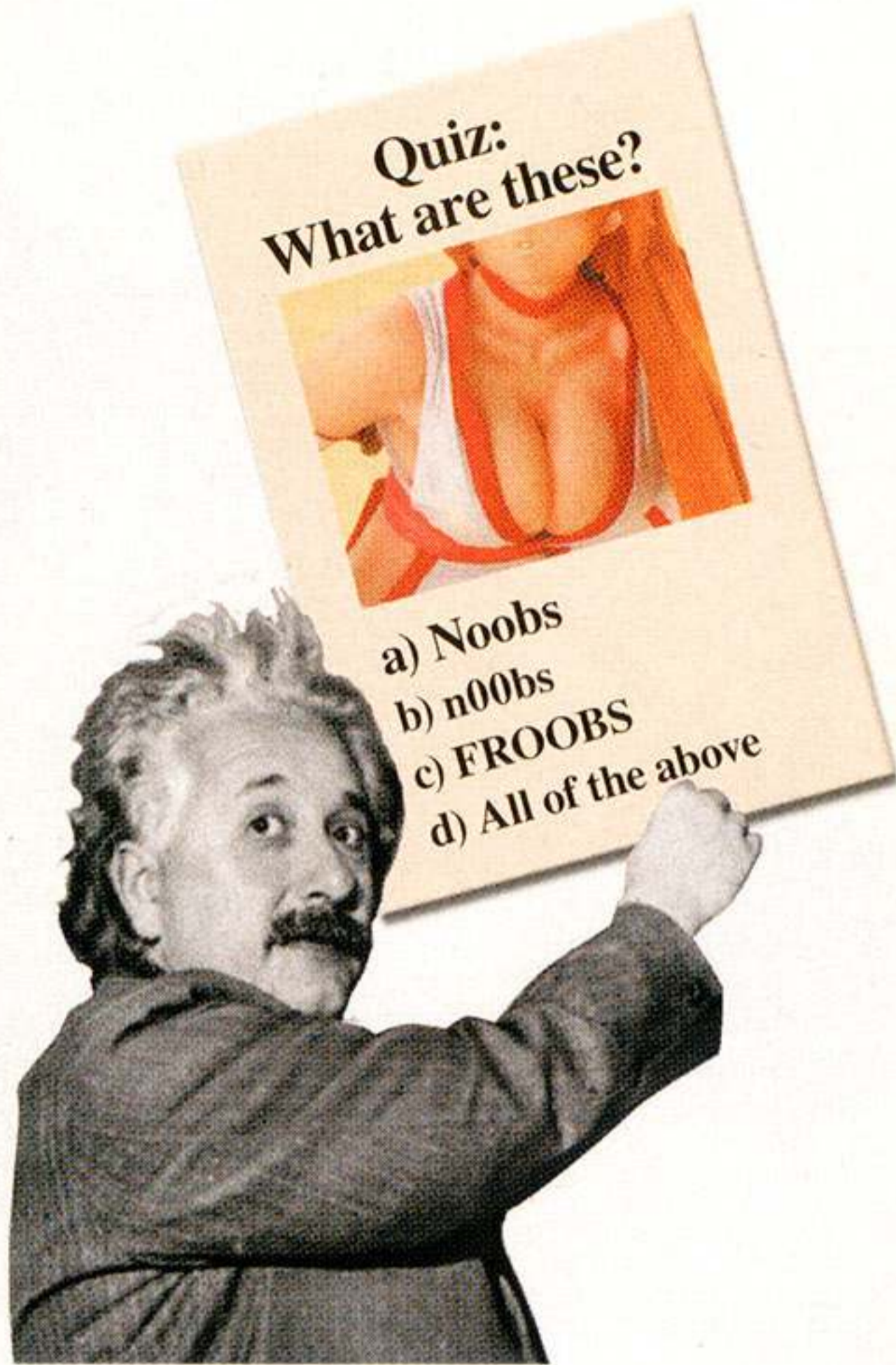
Well Carl, the truth is that there are many people including parents and lawyers that want to make sure that consumers have all the information the need to make informed decision when buying games and game related product. This may see like a pain, but in truth the ESRB is a group made up of people from and around the industry that works to self-regulate content to make sure the government

keeps their hands off. While the Master Chief is not going to make an appearance in Manhunt any time soon, there are people that may not know what game he's from, and think how awkward it'd be to see five-year-old playing games with that Halo 3 controller.

MAKING THE A.I. OPTIONAL

I think it's great that next-gen games now have better A.I. as it makes the games more challenging and fun. For some gamers it's not that awesome. Let me explain. A friend of mine says that the new NHL 08 A.I. is much smarter and that at easy difficulty it's already harder than medium in the previous games. Now, I've played it before, but not enough to do anything above easy. My sister is into games like Beautiful Katamari, but she likes to join in on Halo 2 cooperative sometimes. So what happens to gamers like us who are more than casual gamers, but not diehard fanatics? Maybe developers could make the difficulty of the A.I. something you can in the game's options.

Andrei Badulescu—BC, Canada



THE NOOBS HAVE IT

It amazes me that a videogame magazine can get the definition of the term n00b wrong. Notice the spelling difference. In short, a newb is someone that is new and a n00b is, well, bad. A n00b is someone that purposefully degrades the experience of a game (or even life as these online words spread to everyday use) thru cheating, name calling, or just being plain annoying. The reason I'm pointing this out is because I use the word n00b in everyday life and I get asked what a n00b is all the time and I have to explain what a newb, a n00b, another variation nub (only n00bs use nub), and, of course there's a froob, which means freak'n n00b.

Ein Stein—Eaton Rapids, MI

NIS IS SIMPLY THE BEST

NIS America makes me proud to still call myself a gamer. As an old school gamer who grew up playing games like Ogre Battle, Secret of Mana, and Robo Trek, I know what a good game looks like. Despite all the next-gen technological advancements, for my money, Disgaea is by far the best game ever made. It doesn't need a PS3's power to be epic and the depth alone makes the game replayable time and time again.



My argument is simple. If power is the only discriminator of a solid game, then I guess the PS2 will be where my 20 years of gaming will die. I don't want to bowl and play tennis in my living room and I don't want to go into an epileptic seizure every time I play a game. The real gamer grew up on the NES, SNES, and the PlayStation, and we no longer have to ask our parents for money. Long live talented developers and I will be waiting for Disgaea 3 or anything that takes a talented development team.

J.T. Shelton—Wadsworth, OH



JUST ANOTHER HYPED-UP SPIEL?

I have no regrets to the evolution of gaming and I definitely can't say that I won't try a game if it looks or sounds interesting, but to me I say that Halo 3 is completely overhyped. A friend of mine is obsessed with Halo 3 and I just don't get it. I played the game with him and I liked it, but is it really any better than any other FPS? It seems that some people are just going with the crowd. If you don't like a game, then why play along like you love playing it day-in and day-out? It just doesn't make any sense to do that if you don't really mean it. I just don't get the point of having a million years worth of hype for a game that has basically been made a million times before. *Long live Halo—but let the hype R.I.P.*

Trevor Edington—Grove City, OH

LET'S CONNECT!

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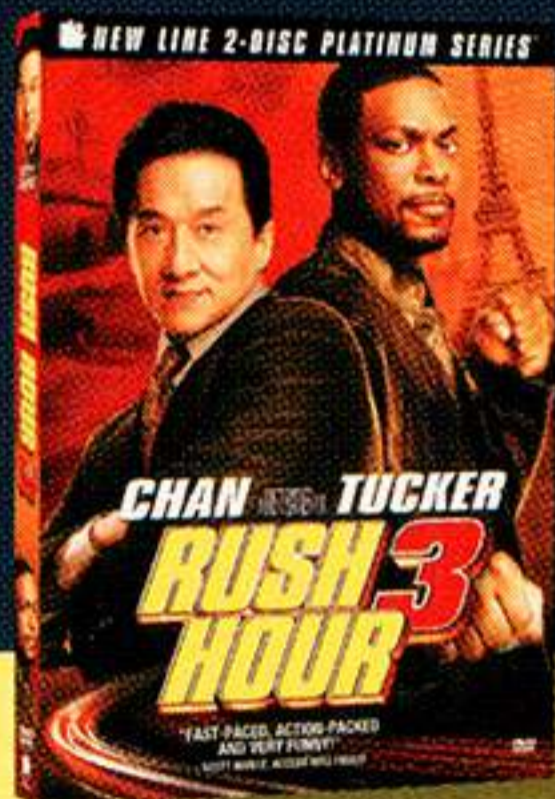


ART ATTACK!

This month's winner receives

Rush Hour 3 on DVD

Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker are back in the hilarious blockbuster *Rush Hour 3*!



Name: Corine M. Stinson

Age: 28

URL: Corallinaxoxo@aol.com

Favorite Artists: thomas Kinkade, Rumiko Takahashi

Favorite Comic(s): Inuyasha, Naruto, Wolf's Rain, Bleach, Trinity Blood

Dream Job: Game Costume Designer

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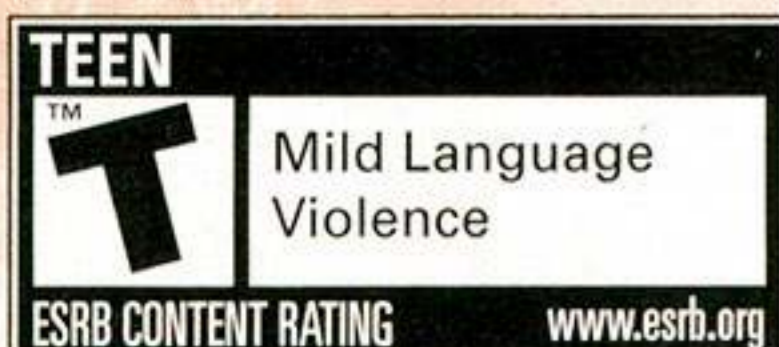
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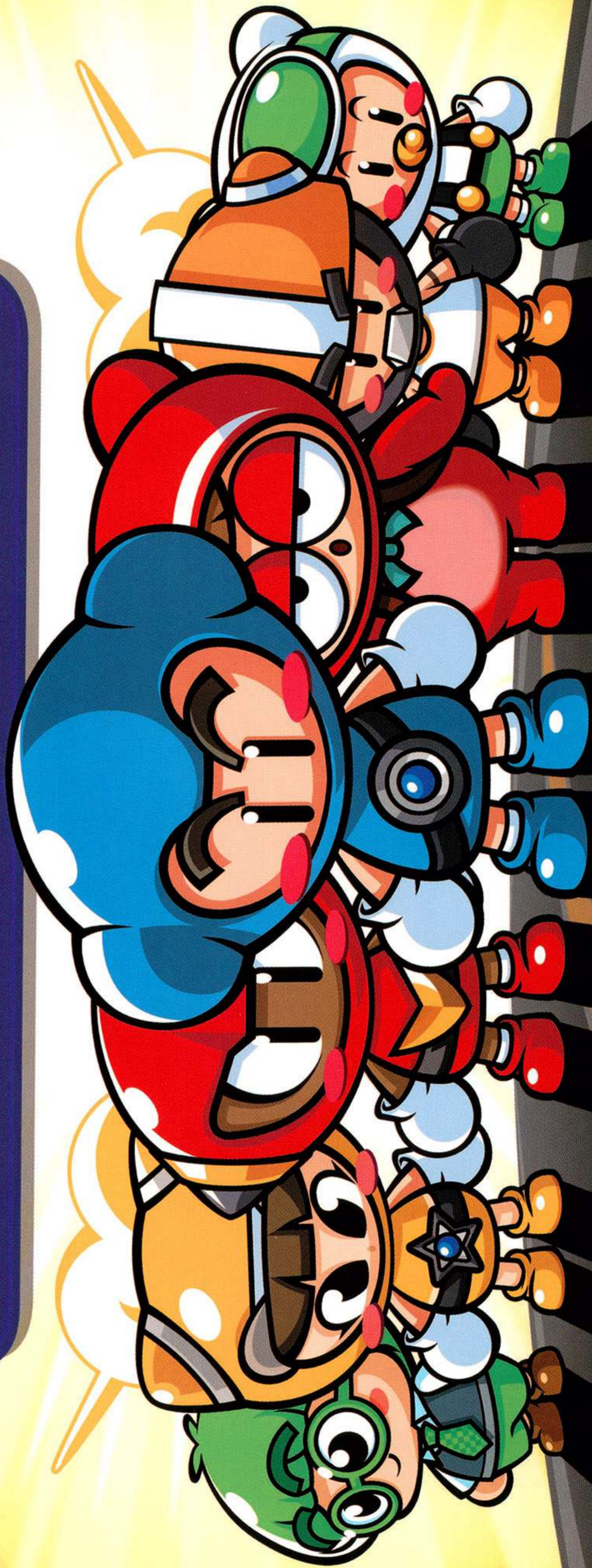
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