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# HYPER



  
**TOP 50  
HANDHELD  
GAMES**

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LAPTOPS**  
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of PC gaming?

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GAIDEN II**  
Gory hands-on  
ninja action

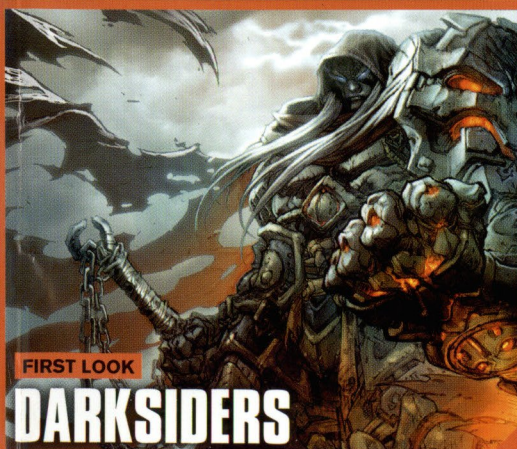
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The Wii finally  
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**FIRST LOOK**  
**DARKSIDERS**

Videogames go Old Testament



**FIRST LOOK**  
**TOM CLANCY'S HAWK**

High Altitude Warfare revealed!



**HANDS-ON**  
**SOUL CALIBUR IV**

Hands on with HD weapons fighting

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 Tom Clancy's  
**RAINBOW SIX**  
**VEGAS 2**

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# HYPER»

JUNE 2008 ISSUE 176

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## Hyper Crew MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

### DANIEL - Editor

1. Everybody's Golf - PS3  
*"Golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf"*
2. No More Heroes - Wii
3. Downstream Panic - PSP
4. Professor Layton - DS
5. Ninja Gaiden 2 - Xbox 360

### DARREN - Deputy Editor

1. Everybody's Golf - PS3  
*"Golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf"*
2. Mario Kart Wii - Wii
3. Professor Layton - DS
4. Time Crisis 4 - PS3
5. Air Hockey - Arcade

### MALCOLM - Art Director

1. No More Heroes - Wii  
*"Cranberry Chocolate Sundae!"*
2. Everybody's Golf - PS3
3. Team Fortress 2 - PC
4. Peggle Deluxe - Mac
5. Zack & Wiki - Wii

### DANIEL FINDLAY - Mania(c)

1. Okami - PS2  
*"Fools can't say shit about a magic white wolf. Blam!"*
2. Wipeout Pulse - PSP
3. Bioshock - PC
4. Mario Kart Wii - Wii
5. Wii Sports Golf - Wii

## Editorial

»» The countdown to the 15th birthday of Hyper continues apace, and the closer we get to the big day the more I realise how much things have changed over the years as far as the gaming landscape is concerned. This month I had a chance to sit down and play with three gaming notebooks and it made me feel old. Real old. You see, way back in the day I had a portable computer - a hand-me-down from my father. At the time it was the best thing since sliced bread - the Osbourne Portable Computer 2 - a suitcase sized monstrosity with a 5" screen, proprietary OS and a bunch of Osbourne supplied software. I played games on that machine, games like Amulet of Yendor and Columns (not the columns that appeared in the arcades, a totally unrelated turn based puzzle game), and I thought it was amazing. Flash forward more years than I'd like to admit and I'm playing with notebooks that are lighter, thousands of times more powerful than the Osbourne and just generally better than my home desktop rig. The computer technology landscape has changed and most of those changes have been driven, in some manner, by gaming.

Lest I harp on about feeling old for another 100 or so words, I'll turn my attention elsewhere. Welcome to issue 176. It's a goodie, with new information on the rather impressive looking Hawx, hands on with Soul Calibur 4, Ninja Gaiden 2, GTA IV Multi-player, Lego Indiana Jones, Wipeout HD and more. Sit back, enjoy and we'll see you next month.

**Daniel Wilks** »» Editor



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# IT'S ORANGE IT'S PLASTIC AND IT RULES THE STREETS



From AK47s to grenade launchers, the street is knee-deep in weapons. Luckily, there's nothing as destructive as the G-CON™3. Equipped with a control pad that allows you to stalk freely around your hunting ground, the G-CON is a weapon you use with both hands and feet to maximise the carnage. Buddy-up with Time Crisis™4 supercops Giorgio Bruno and Evan Bernard and stamp out the mercenary threat. The world is on the brink, it's time to stand up and fight.

**M** Moderate violence

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PLAYSTATION 3



RUMBLE!

## Dual Shock 3 Arrives

Get ready to rumble, but bring money

This month Hyper HQ received a couple of boxes decked out with intriguing labels. "X-RATED!" "CAUTION: For pleasure at home only." "Contents will vibrate at exciting moments." Yes, the DualShock 3 controller has been launched for Sony's PlayStation 3, finally returning the much-missed rumble abilities to the console.

On the outside it's exactly as you'd expect. The shape and form is curve for curve the same as the SIXAXIS, and the only visual indication that it's anything different is in the simple "DUALSHOCK 3" branding near the USB port. Pick it up, and it certainly feels heftier than the worryingly light SIXAXIS. Those motors definitely lend some weight to the controller which, in turn, lends a sense of (perceived?) substance.

It's hilarious to recall Sony's earlier comments regarding the lack of DualShock when the PS3 was ready to launch. Because of the legal kerfuffle surrounding the technology, they were unable to implement it, but tried to save face

by passing it off as an obsolete feature. It's last-gen, they said. It'll mess with the SIXAXIS feature, they said. And now, here it is, with Sony doing a whopping about-face and saying it "provides the most intuitive game play experience". Corporate lies have never looked so transparent.

But it's not all sunshine and shakes. For starters there's the price tag: a whopping \$99.95 for a single controller. Egads. And the package does not include a recharge cable. Double egads. And when you think about it, consumers are essentially given little choice but to shell out for a feature that had previously been offered for free. Triple egads.

It's a pricey addition to an already pricey console, and coupled with the bloated price of today's new-release games, it's not unreasonable to expect many to investigate the importing scene, which can knock around \$40 off the DualShock 3. The option is nice, but lower local prices and a less arrogant corporate attitude would be nicer.



SPORTS!

## Professional Gamers Run!

The addition of a comma would have changed that sentence completely

In a sure sign of changing times, professional gamers from — where else — South Korea are among the elite few who will carry the Olympic torch as it continues its trek across the world. Warcraft III gamers Jae Ho "Moon" Jang and Li "Sky" Xiaofeng will be accompanied by StarCraft players Junchun "Pj" Sha and Lei "Leilei" Shen as they keep the flame out of the reach of protesters... uhh... assist it on its way to Beijing.

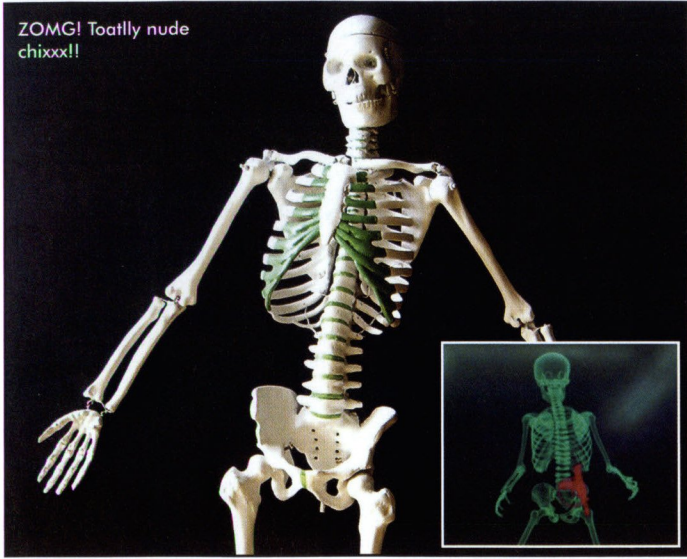
Professional gamers rubbing elbows with the world's best athletes? Surely it's only a matter of time until gaming is considered as a future Olympic event? Or maybe that'll have to wait until the 2032 games, which will take place on the Moon and see numerous athletes taking gravity-enhancing steroids.

Rehearsing for liberating Tibet





ZOMG! Toatly nude  
chixx!!



SCARY!

## I Can See Your Underwear

Airport scanner leaves no fold of flab unturned

In the fight against terrorism and civilian dignity, a new security measure has been installed in three of the United States' busiest airports, and has been given a trial run for Qantas passengers in Melbourne.

The ProVision Portal is akin to an X-ray phone booth. One at a time, passengers step in and raise their hands above their head (as if surrendering in advance, amirite?). The machine takes a full-body scan using low-energy electromagnetic waves, giving security personnel a computerised image that peers through their clothes to reveal any weapons hidden beneath. The images, although lo-resolution black and white, do go some way to revealing the subtleties of the human form that some of us might prefer to keep to ourselves, despite the fact that TSA officials say the

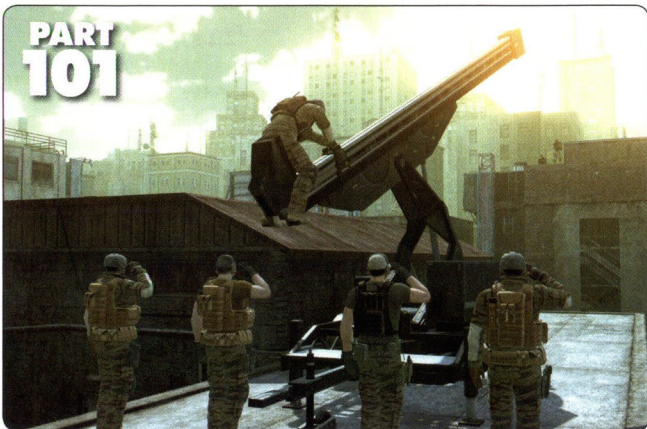
scans are not saved.

They also highlight other privacy factors. Faces are blurred in order to protect their identities, the staff viewing the images don't interact with the passengers — they aren't even in the same room as them — and, for the time being, the scan is an optional process should one refuse to undertake a physical pat-down. But that doesn't put the minds of civil libertarians at ease, who not only question the rigidity of the privacy precautions, but fear it's only a matter of time before the images end up on the internet.

We guess it's better than a rubber gloved probing, but the hoops one must jump through at the airport terminal are demanding as it is. Has it really come to the stage where security must take a pseudo-nudie shot of every passenger?

## CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Just send your funny screen captions to us at [captionthis@next.com.au](mailto:captionthis@next.com.au) with **Caption This Part 101** in the subject line.

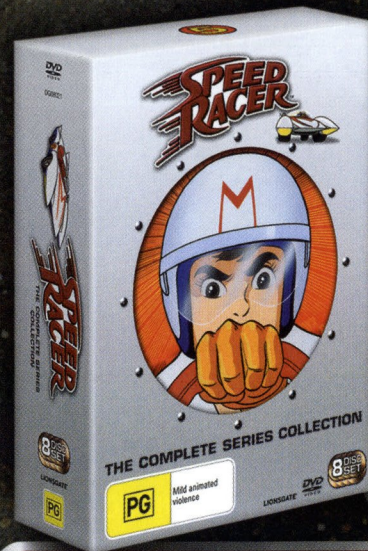


Caption it!

"HERE HE COMES,  
HERE COMES SPEED RACER!"



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"HE'S A DEMON ON WHEELS"

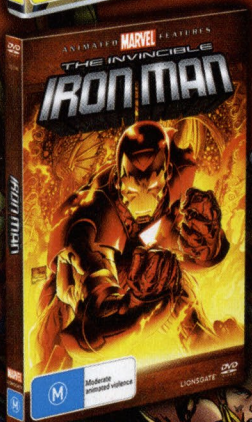
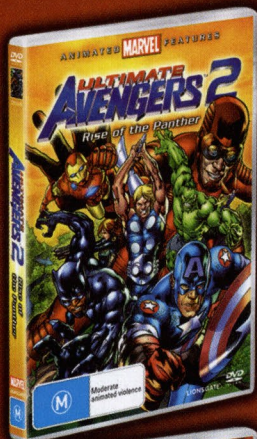
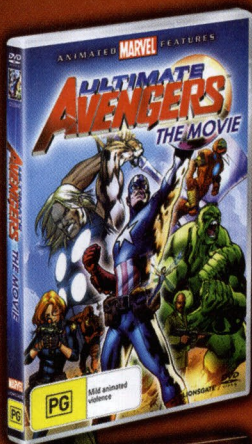
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MONEY!

## Stock! Stock! Stock!

News! News! News!

Those who keep a keen eye on all things stock-market will no doubt have filed this one in their log books already, but for the rest of us, here's where the latest videogame happenings are at.

The European Commission has given the thumbs up to the proposed merger of Vivendi's purchase of — and subsequent merger with — Activision, having found that the deal would not squash competition. First announced in December 2007 with a value of over \$US18.9 billion, the merger unites the publishers of MMO juggernaut World of Warcraft with the publishers of Guitar Hero and Call of Duty. Yet despite the amount of big names melding together to form some kind of multi-limbed earth swallower, the go-ahead was granted since it'll still face plenty of fight from the likes of EA, Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft.

Meanwhile, the shenanigans between Take-Two and EA continue to get tenser. Since warning its shareholders to hang on to their stock, Take-Two has held an official meeting where the matter of a buyout by EA was formally addressed. Again, chairman Strauss Zelnick stressed that individual shares were worth much more than the \$US26 that EA was offering as part of its hostile takeover, but noted that the door

was not completely closed on future negotiations.

But then it gets murky. The Federal Trade Commission has, for the second time, requested more information from EA regarding the deal, since it believes it would be anti-competitive. Zelnick noted in his meeting that both Take-Two and EA are complying with this request. In addition, a Take-Two shareholder has filed a lawsuit against the GTA IV publisher for not accepting EA's offer. The individual, alleged to be Michael Maulano, submitted a class-action complaint in the belief that going ahead with the deal would have resulted in him being a richer man. They didn't, he's not, and now he's spending money on legal fees with this lawsuit.

Oh, what crazy plot twists will happen next? Tune in again soon when we find out that Ubisoft is sleeping with Sony's half-brother and is carrying their love child!



DOUCHE!

## Man Beats Kid With Game Controller

Not in a game, but in real life

The ties are tenuous, but the story is no less tragic. In early April, two-year old Darisabel Baez of Pennsylvania was beaten to death by her mother's boyfriend. The weapon of choice — an unspecified videogame controller.

26-year-old Harve Johnson now faces a first-degree murder charge, while Darisabel's 19-year-old mother Neida was also detained for child endangerment, as she did nothing to prevent the assault and only realised it had occurred when the girl was unconscious. Police are considering whether or not Neida's charges will be upgraded. It's not the first time Harve has faced the arm of the law, with previous convictions including aggravated assault and reckless endangerment.

His bail for the death of Darisabel is set at \$200,000, while Neida's is set at \$25,000.

Don't be expecting a token Hyper punchline making light of this event. It's a tragic outcome for a sad batch of circumstances. However, we will say this: the fact that a videogame controller was involved should in no way be misconstrued into placing the blame onto videogames as a whole. Heck, replace it with a frying pan and see how you go banning cooking shows. So it's pleasing to see that the mainstream media has not followed its traditional route and pointed the finger at games, but instead has kept things in perspective. Well done!



## We call this one The Gouger

**W**hen the European price for Rockband was announced there was, to put it mildly, not a little bit of outrage. And quite rightly so. The instruments will set European consumers back €169 and the game (sold separately) will cost €69.99 for a staggering total of around €240. For comparison's sake, the US release of Rockband is priced at \$169 USD not including tax. For point of comparison, with current (as of this writing) exchange rates, that puts the European release of Rockband at around \$382 USD, or, horrifyingly, \$407 AUD – more than twice the American price, with or without tax included. This isn't new news but it does make me shudder to think how the game is going to be priced if and when it finally reaches our shores. After all, we usually pay half as much again as our European counterparts for games.

After the pricing announcement resulted in some rather outraged online activity, Greg, the head of product development at Harmonix posted some of the reasons for the price hike on the Rockband forums, initially stating that comparing European and American pricings is erroneous as "The European SRP incorporates the VAT tax, but AFAIK, there aren't any further taxes piled on at retail. In the US, the SRP doesn't include state and local sales taxes. These vary from state to state, (and don't exist at all in a few states), but a reasonable rule of thumb is that US customers are paying an additional 5% on top of the SRP. So the appropriate full-bundle US price to compare against isn't \$169.00, but more like \$177.50." It's as good a place to start as any but the addition of \$8.50 USD doesn't go very far to making up the price discrepancy at all.

Later in the post stated that, "This is probably already well understood by folks on these forums, but the built-in VAT tax boosts the price by an additional 17.5% in the UK, and more elsewhere in Europe. That's not the whole discrepancy, but it's a big chunk of it." Even taking the

- modified base figure of the US Rockband with maximum possible state tax included (20%) and adding VAT the price still only comes to €149, leaving €91 or so unaccounted for.

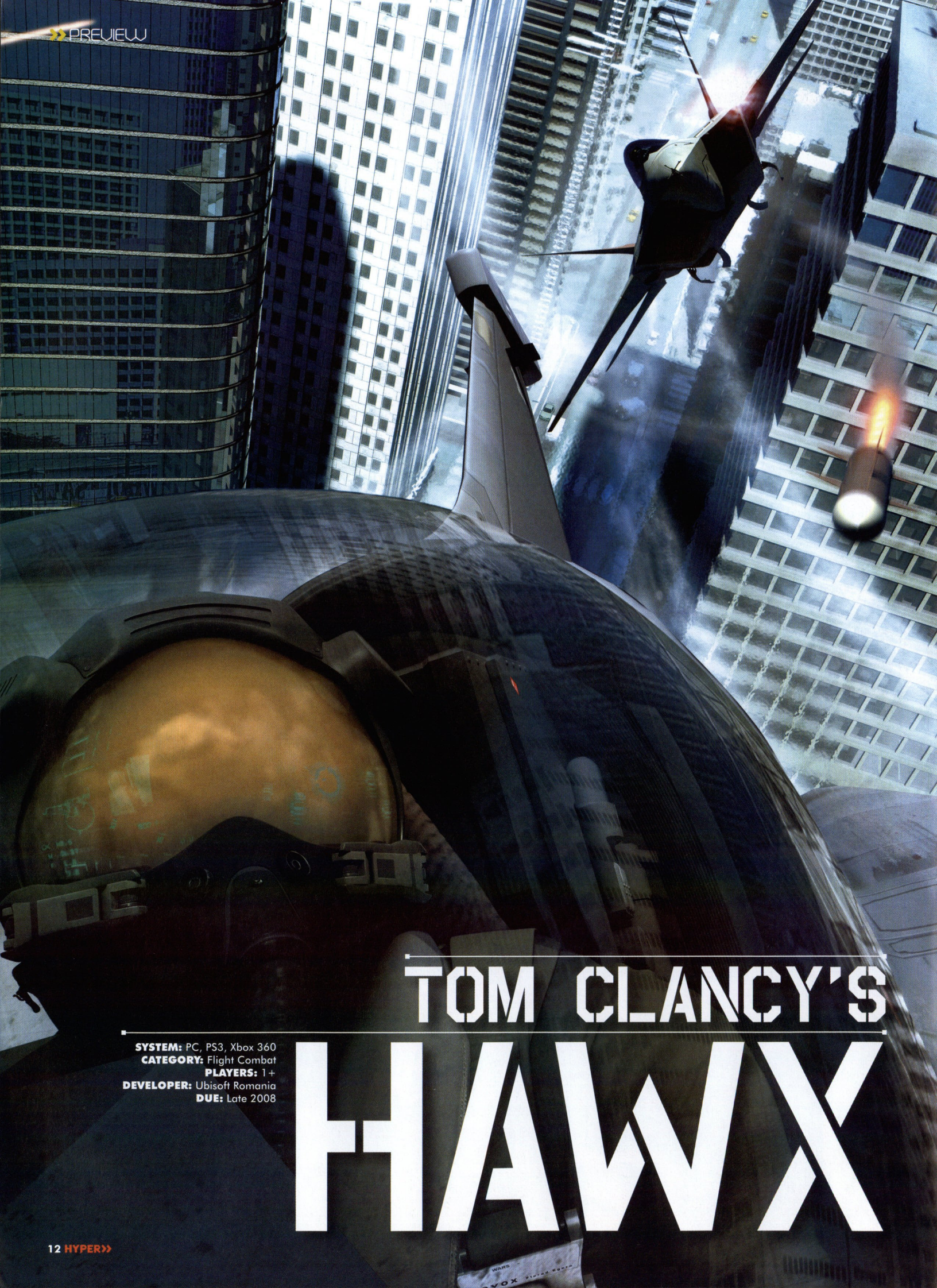
- Other reasons are stated as well, claiming that it's further from China to Europe than it is from China to America and that there has to be manuals made in different languages. I'm rooting for Europe to get a serious price reduction but all of the reasons (excuses) given for the price hike make me worried about the local release – not simply for the price but for the validity. We're an English speaking country so they can't claim that multiple manuals need to be printed and packaged separately and we're pretty damn close to China as well – roughly 1500 miles closer to China than America in fact. We've asked EA multiple times about an Australian release date and price but have so far had no response. Rumours are rife about \$499 price points or the fact that the game will be so expensive EA won't even bother releasing it out here at all. We don't believe either rumour at the moment but we're pretty sure that when Rockband does finally get an Australian release, budding musicians will most likely have to tighten their belts for some time afterwards.

### budding musicians will most likely have to tighten their belts

- Putting the issue of actual cost aside for a moment, the grotesque European price hike seems rather counterintuitive to us. Surely EA, Harmonix and everyone involved in the game are counting on creating a strong install base for the game and milking that resource through their micro-transaction based song pack DLC. It's a business mould that has worked well for Activision and Guitar Hero after all. The idea of pricing a game so high that potential players (and downloaders) can't/won't become part of the install base just seems insane to us. Of course, EA could just be so arrogant and sure that the masses will pay whatever they demand that they will set prices as high as they want. If that is truly the case then we all need to be very worried.

Try to unlock the secret mode in which notes are replaced by dollar signs





# TOM CLANCY'S

# HAWX

**SYSTEM:** PC, PS3, Xbox 360  
**CATEGORY:** Flight Combat  
**PLAYERS:** 1+  
**DEVELOPER:** Ubisoft Romania  
**DUE:** Late 2008

I am on the ramparts of Dracula's Castle. Bran Castle, as the boring call it. This is all, of course, based in Romania.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, games have bought me to a former communist hell, presumably to hunt me for sport.

Ironically, I have to thank for this strange turn of events a certain Tom Clancy, that one-man bastion of American techno war fetishism. Bringing me, a gawping-eyed tourist to well behind what was once the Iron Curtain is the game I then knew as Tom Clancy's Air Combat. Communism is truly dead.

Perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself...

In case you have never been to a bookstore, airport, newsagent, in fact, outside, you might not know that Tom Clancy is the writer of enormously popular novels about spies, gadgets, wars, special ops, submarines and all things warfare and dodgy politics related. He went on to be ever better known as the guy who wrote kick-arse film Hunt For Red October and the terrifying saga of a man phobic towards mathematics, Fear of All Sums. Pretty much any films you see with Ambassadors punching out some form of terrorist or dudes in black with balaclavas saying things like 'Ten Four Commander, K-Team away', the chances are good Tom Clancy wrote it.

In '96, he formed Red Storm, a games company which was quickly bought out by Ubisoft, the French powerhouse publisher. Since then, games based from the work of Tom Clancy include 19 Rainbow Six, 8 Ghost Recon and 6 Splinter Cell games. That's not including the one-off games, either.

All of these franchise games have been strictly 'real world' shooters. Rainbow Six and Ghost Recon are both gritty, clever tactical squad games while Splinter Cell is a renowned stealth FPS.

When Ubisoft announced it was doing a Tom Clancy flight sim, everyone was curious. These guys have been pushing the envelope for realism from day one. Expectations were high.

That's where Dracula comes in. 'Want to go to Budapest?' 'Sure, boss.' 'K.'



#### KEANU WASN'T HERE

That's how quickly it happens. Hours or days later, you get an email from mysterious strangers telling you about hotels, planes, itineraries. Much to my bemusement, I wasn't going to Budapest but Bucharest. Motherloving Romania, man! The land where Draculas and Frankensteins and Wolfmans openly war



## STRETCHES OF ROADS ARE UNPAVED AND MY CAB GOES THUMPING OVER POTHOLES THE SIZE OF A FAT GOAT

on the streets! Castlevania itself! Yes!

Here's the thing about getting to Romania. It takes nearly thirty hours. So it was I stepped off the plane having had about two hours sleep into a city I'd wanted to visit since I first saw a goddamn vampire film.

Bucharest is a lovely city. Or rather, it was. Decades of communist rule have seen it smashed apart and rebuilt. In 1990, a bloody revolution killed its old strongman bosses and about nine hundred other people, mainly students. Stretches of roads are unpaved and my cab goes thumping over potholes the size of a fat goat. Rubbish is everywhere as government services are sporadic at

Joining the Mile High club solo doesn't count

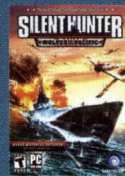
## UBISOFT ROMANIA

I've been to games companies in three countries but I've never seen anything as impressive as Ubisoft Romania. It's a converted parking lot, turned into an office building because there were just too damn many people to fit them in anywhere else. There's never ending levels of programmers, coders, designers and something like 200 testers, who do run throughs for every single game Ubisoft produces.

They might not be well known but the well-regarded Blazing Angels series



was developed here. Judging by the quality of staff and the level of programming excellence involved, I'll be watching these guys, expecting big things.



best. After catching some hours of sleep, with a while to go before I need to check out the game, I spend the day catching a train up through the Carpathians Mountains up to Bran Castle. This was where Vlad the Impaler marshalled his legions and perhaps more importantly, the home of the villain from Ghostbusters 2. It is beautiful and wild and in the distance, from the train window, I can see where great building programmes have been cut short. Huge power stations, small towns, abandoned. An eerie sight.

Then, back to civilisation and the Ubisoft Romanian offices and we get a look at the game I've travelled half-way around the world to play.

## FIZZACKS

Is the physics model tight? Sure as hell looks like. With two nuclear physicists and the 24 year old winner of the Programming Olympics on board, you'd really rather hope so, eh?'



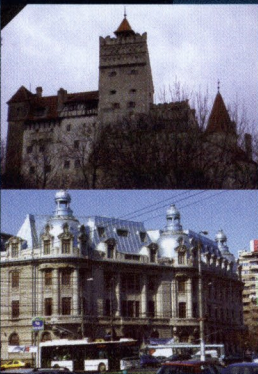
## THE STORY

In 2012, posits HAWX, all the world's armies will be private military contractors. Thomas Simon, lead developer, speculates openly about the rise of what we old-fashioned folks called mercenaries. The company that you work for is hired out to fight the air forces of other PMCs, rogue nations every other point along the axis of evil. Keeping to the Clancy tradition and the real world rise of PMCs, it's hard not to ask if there's some sort of commentary or subtext to this game. 'No, we are just speculating. Our job is to tell a story, not preach.'

Hot plane-on-plane dogfight style combat is only part of the gameplay experience. You start out as a rookie, new to the world of piloting for your supper. There's also a macro-campaign where your company develops reputation and contacts, unlocking new planes and, more importantly, new gear and weapons with which to destroy your business rivals.



**Eurodisney Romania fails to pull crowds**



## PHLEGMATIC

Officially, we are finally told the name of the game. High Altitude Warfare: HAWX. It's a bad omen as all I can immediately think of is that you have a never ending series of puns for sequels. HAWX: Up Blood. Hawx: A loogie! Ioan Palalau, the Site Creative Director says to me 'We want to be the new reference for this genre. Innovate in a genre that hasn't seen innovation in a long time.' A bold claim. Then the game starts up and for a moment, I'm even more disappointed.

Up on the gigantic flatscreen the game is being demoed on is a pretty standard flight sim game. HUD, standard UI and controls. I mean, it sure looks purty as the jet skims over an elaborate cityscape and begins to engage a hunter-killer mission. In fact, the city looks so good I'm quite irritated they keep moving away from it. I've come all this way for a Warhawk clone? Bah.

There's a rather nifty feature that finally kicks in and competes with landscapes for my attention. A plot is charted out



**I'll be your wingam any time Maverick!**

on screen, a curving grid that suggests a tunnel, tracking courses to avoid barrages of missile fire, of which there is a great deal. The pilot of our bird seems to be having some troubles keeping his lock on an enemy. Suddenly, the Assistance kicks in, plotting not where the enemy is, rather where it will be. It looks a little counter-intuitive but by abandoning an unsure firing solution and in a move that would disgust Obi-Wan, trusting the computer, the player follows his path and quickly takes out his enemy. It's really rather cool and a neat trick of programming.

It's called the ERS, Enhanced Reality System. It's not a simmers dream where the idea is to slavishly copy real planes but it's not Rogue Squadron either. 'Where reality and Hollywood meet, that's where the game exists.'

## ROMANIAN DRIFT

Prettier than most, generating a strong 60 FPS and all 3D modelled nonetheless, it all seems very ho-hum. Indeed, I'm quite dubious that a game where most of the hard work is taken care of by computer.

Until the key feature of the game goes into action. HAWX has an Assistance Off. The perspective shifts to third person and you're outside the plane. The HUD becomes minimal and suddenly, the brakes are off. 'When you're in the plane, you can do incredible manoeuvres' says Palalau. With that, he spins the plane nearly one eighty, unleashing heat-seeker missiles at some scumbag on his tail. The plane swings around again with a tight 260 degree turning circle before strafing another enemy. Too much spinning seems a bit much for the plane as it stalls out. 'When you stall, you have to be quick. That's the thing about Assistance Off, it is faster, more fun but requires more skill'.

Then, watching carefully, you can see that planes in Assistance Off mode are doing what looks like drifting. That's probably the wrong word to use but careful use of thrust and jiggling back and forth adds to the manoeuvrability of the jet you're in. 'It's very similar to drifting, yes. It's not an essential part of

the game, just another thing for players to use,' remarked Thomas Simon, the lead developer, in a charming French accent. I asked him to use it properly, he shrugged and smiled. 'Any drift that works is the right one.' A series of clever throttle moves demonstrates the mechanism as a plane dodges a barrage of incoming missiles and cannon fire. 'It's a case of manageability versus manoeuvrability.' This is all further enhanced by air thickness. Different altitudes, I'm told, will feel different to move through.

Like any good flying game, dogfighting is at the heart of HAWX. Between ERS and Assistance, the combat is a long way from point and click. Enemy AI is smart and there are a whole lot of better planes than the ones your sorry arse will be starting out with.

With missions that block out the ERS, jamming vehicles, as well as it simply being overwhelmed by too many targets, you'll have to get good at tricky moves and combos. A lot of special moves and attacks are fuelled by an energy gauge that replenishes over time, meaning you'll have to be careful when you deploy the big gun and the hell tricks.

#### GEAR

There's a whole lot of ordnance and planes to be used as well. There's twenty bits of equipment that can be unlocked and used. Bombs and rockets, obviously but also electronic countermeasures and other sorts of tools and tricks.

That's when it hits me. The game plays out rather similarly to any particularly fine racing game, with a little bit of Tony Hawk style trick moves to spice the whole show up.

Gameplay, though, ain't the whole kit. It's the sounds that really bring the whole thing to huge, hairy-chested life. The engines roar, the missiles whoosh and the plane cuts through the air with a sound that cuts the very atmosphere itself. It's one of those effects that creeps up on you. At first, it's gameplay that I tend to look for but after a few minutes watching, suddenly it sounds like I'm in Apocalypse frigging Now, thunder all about.

One aspect of HAWX that really seems promising is in the look of the cities and terrain you'll be flying over. The whole terrain of the game is developed from satellite imagery. Ubisoft contracted with GeoEye, a commercial satellite company (who have close ties to real life intelligence agencies). GeoEye provides imagery at 4X the resolution of Google Earth. 'For a Tom Clancy game, things must be detailed and realistic,' says Mari Ricco, the art director. 'We had to fit 10KMs of maps into the memory [of a Console.] However, those 2D images had to be mapped in 3D. The technique is called the Digital Elevation Model.

As if that wasn't fancy enough, every visual element maintains excellent clarity no matter the altitude and speed. Lighting changes, so does weather but the huge depth of field remains no matter what



mad moves you're pulling off. There are no real world countries in the games but the cityscapes are strongly designed and expressionistic. 'Creating buildings in a real size was not good enough. We oversized the building and emphasised the difference between light and dark. Special efforts were made for strong explosion FX, persistent missile traces, smoke columns, they all create a very realistic world. We create more realism.' It's a rather fancy technique called High Dynamic Range, a constant sharp contrast and, brother, it's a fine thing to behold.

Hopefully there's more than just a few hours gameplay in all this. There's a bunch of different missions, each of which follow a pattern like protecting from invasion, keeping convoys of jets safe, protecting in-flight refuelling and others. In fact, in a nice touch, you'll be recreating a Ghost Recon mission from the early days. That game had you on the ground, relying on air support to cover you as you go. This time, you'll be the flyboy, working to protect the ground pounders. In fact, turns out you're a former Black Jaguar gone in to private sector practice. Nice touch that. Other in game scenarios will see you in stealth planes, working closely with wingmen, moving under radars and even assassinating individual targets. As in, people. The whole range of possibilities, from precision kills to mass destruction, is



#### TACTICS

NPCs such as Wingmen, support planes, will have a big role in HAWX. There're teammates, who are close combat partners. These are the guys who go into dogfights with you, watching your back. Squads are tactical uses of groups of these guys. You'll also be supporting ground troops and then there's support vehicles you'll have to defend and utilise. Palalau mentions the Boeing Airborne Warning and Control System as the focus of one such mission.

## EVERY VISUAL ELEMENT MAINTAINS EXCELLENT CLARITY NO MATTER THE ALTITUDE AND SPEED



Oh Christian, your antics are truly priceless

Stay on target, stay on target!



there. The macro campaign is semi-linear, meaning you'll be free to discover the game at your own pace. Of course, there'll be a multi-player element but the word on numbers and scenarios is still uncertain.

#### UP, UP AND AWAY

The planes themselves are the real stars of the show. There'll be perhaps twenty or so planes available to choose from. They'll all be real world planes but, interestingly, some of them may not have existed. We can only assume that there'll be some experimental planes that never got off the drawing board included for that speculative edge.

It's odd that there'd be no actual hands on. I've come a long way, after all. But sadly, there's no playable code yet. At first, I found myself frowning at that, thinking it would be hard to really have

an opinion. But as soon as I left Ubisoft, goddamn if I didn't want to immediately go home and rev myself up plane and go wack a heat-seeker right up the bum of some evil terroristic bastard. I suppose that's indicative of how great the gameplay looks and hopefully feels.

So it was I left Romania, hankering to travel at Mach 2 killing terrorists. It's probably wrong to sit in a pub drinking Eastern European beer and be talking about F-22s and how the game was wise to avoid dealing with gravity effects on pilots but that's how it goes.

HAWX looks like it has promise, real promise. Thirty hours and a city riddled with bullet holes were worth it. ☺

# Soul Calibur IV



## HANDS-ON

**SYSTEM:**  
PS3/Xbox 360

**CATEGORY:**  
Beat 'em up

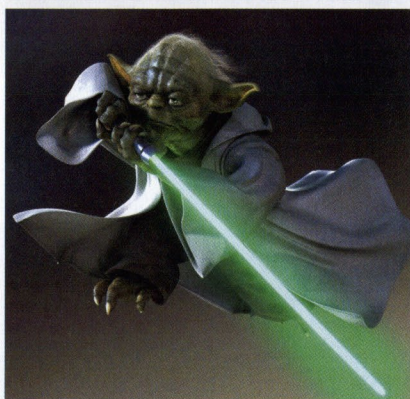
**PLAYERS:**  
1-2

**DEVELOPER:**  
Project Soul

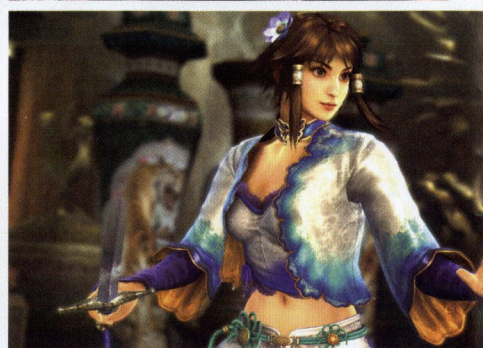
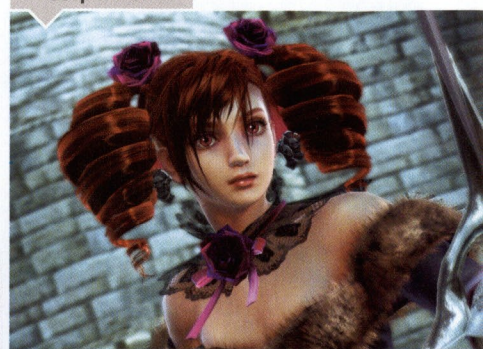
**DUE:**  
June 26

We had chance recently to visit Namco's Shinagawa HQ for a playtest of Soul Calibur IV, and it didn't disappoint. Purists might worry when they see Star Wars characters prancing about in Soul Calibur, but there's no need to be too concerned. Darth Vader, at least, is a solid fighter with some awesome transferred levitation skills: he can pick up and throw opponents when they're down, without even touching them. Very impressive. His response time is as quick as any of the established Soul Calibur cast, so he fits in perfectly and will inevitably become the favoured fighter of many players. Darth is exclusive to the PS3 version, mind, and we'll probably end up opting for that one over the 360 release, because Yoda — exclusive to Xbox — is pathetic and virtually useless...

The problem with Yoda is that he's too small. Many of his attacks are linked with jumps, which leave him vulnerable to the mid- and high-level attacks of standard fighters. Even when Yoda fights against another Yoda, which we tried in a Versus setting with fellow journalists, the result is nothing more than an oddly conceived freak show, albeit in some very pretty environments. Which isn't really satisfactory, especially when compared with the infinite cool of Darth Vader. It's difficult to imagine any serious Soul Calibur players using Yoda as their preferred fighter; he seems to be included for novelty value, rather than through any gameplay considerations. The Star



Pictured: Head mounted suspension



Judge me by my size will you?



»» When Yoda fights against another Yoda, which we tried in a Versus setting with fellow journalists, the result is nothing more than an oddly conceived freak show

Wars characters do have a special Force gauge, but even when operating at full Force, Yoda is inadequate.

### THAT'S NO MOON!

The dedicated Star Wars stage looks great on both platforms, though, with TIE Fighters flying dangerously close to the action. It feels wonderfully authentic and is a great showcase for the Soul Calibur team's design skills. Other arenas feature flooring that can be broken during play — there's a pirate's ship, for example, where the decking will be smashed if an opponent is slammed, and it stays broken until the fight is over. Speaking of new areas, we also fought on a carousel inside a clocktower, overlooking a quasi-Bavarian backdrop; this stage is a bit creepy, but there's plenty of potential for ring-outs between carousel horses. In general, though, it's now more difficult than ever to ring-out opponents. This is largely because the levels are broader: you might have an enemy pinned against a wall, but many of the game's boundaries can be broken, leading into other areas where the fight continues. So there's a bit of Dead or Alive 4 about it — but not (as far as we were shown) to the extent of multi-tiered stages. Perhaps next time...

Another similarity with Tecmo's game

is in the boobs department (yep, there's a whole department dedicated to these mysterious and wonderful things), with Soul Calibur IV's well-appointed female characters now, um, bouncing along like DoA's finest. The lead character designer maintains that everything has been kept in proportion, with smaller characters endowed with 'appropriately' smaller 'parts'. We say: you're having a laugh, mate.

Anyway.

There are a few new gameplay features (it's not all about 'enhanced physics'). For one, armour plays a big part in battle. Each character has three armour zones, which provide protection but can also be smashed up by other fighters (with the exception of Yoda and Darth Vader, whose 'armour' stays intact regardless of any damage sustained). Only after dismantling an opponent's armour does it become possible to perform a critical finishing move, which in turn triggers a mini cutscene to increase the visual impact of said special attack. Hilde, one of the new characters we had a chance to fight with, is perhaps the best example of how this system works: she wears literal armour, like a shining knight, which can be removed piece-by-piece. Cut away Hilde's shoulder protection and her



Voldo, I am your father! Put some clothes on!



Vader is wary of crotch attacking midgets

chunky shoulders will be bared – every act of dismantlement has an immediate visual effect and also tilts the balance of play in favour of the dismantler.

Arse. And Yoda.

**THE SOUL! IT BURNS!**

We only had chance to play the game in local multiplayer, but Soul Calibur IV's major new feature is its online play. We were told that the possibility of official networked tournaments is being examined. Even in straight versus games there will be character development features, with fighters customisable to some extent.

There are still a few months to go before Soul Calibur IV is pressed to disc, but the core of the game is in place and technically very solid. There's no obvious difference between the PS3 and 360 versions – both run natively at 720p and seem to be moving at 60fps – so if you have both machines, you'll want to go for the version that your friends will be playing, because obviously there's no chance of PS3-360 interplay online (Sony and Microsoft are too uptight to allow anything like that). <<

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**

Surely there's enormous potential for a game with the essence of Soul Calibur IV but entirely populated by Star Wars characters. Yoda and Darth Vader are fine (well, Yoda isn't), but we'd like to see Namco develop a kind of Star Wars spin on Smash Bros. at some point.



Kilik decides to try his hand at billiards



**TAG-TEAM FENCING**

Another new addition to Soul Calibur IV's repertoire is an interesting take on the tag-team style of fighting. Each player can have multiple characters waiting off-screen, out of sight – you're not limited to just one partner – and these can be summoned to enter the action from any direction. In practice, this makes it possible to switch fighters and take your enemy by surprise through sending in your substitute from the opposite side of your current position. This mode will apparently be playable online, as well, increasing the need for tactical nous before and during play.

# Soul Calibur IV: The Sound of Music

A game without sound is a game that's incomplete, and with work all but finished on Soul Calibur 4's pixels, it's some for the audio department to step in. **Darren Wells** attends the recording of the game's musical score and speaks to the man who penned it.

As far as recording facilities go, the Trackdown studio looks normal enough. At Sydney's Fox Studios, past the construction work and the stores selling expensive clothes, there it sits, calling little attention to itself beyond a clean typeface spelling out its name in letters that could touch the ceiling of an average room. It's almost tucked away in a corner of the Fox lot while the bigger buildings — the famous ones — hog the limelight. It's not hard to imagine what they'd say, given the chance. "I had The Matrix. I had Star Wars. I had Superman Returns."

Today this building has something else. Today it's home to videogame royalty as our own Eminence Symphony Orchestra

then Yura, serving as his translator, will relay his feedback via microphone. Melodies will be recorded and re-recorded. Tweaks will be made on the fly. Revisions and fine-tuning are part and parcel of the two day-long session, and as the hours tick by, the strain is starting to show.

"Can we go again from K?" the conductor says. And even though they perhaps shouldn't, the orchestra heaves a collective sigh. The control booth empathises. They've gone from K for about half an hour now. The same piece of music fills the room over and over again as trained ears detect an instrument that's just a little off key, a musician that comes

» "Can we go again from K?" the conductor says. And even though they perhaps shouldn't, the orchestra heaves a collective sigh. The control booth empathises.

— known for its performances of famous videogame and anime soundtracks — is under the direction of composer Junichi Nakatsuru to record the score for Soul Calibur 4. Having worked on games such as Time Crisis 2, Ace Combat 5, Tekken 5, and every Soul Calibur game since the sequel in 2002, Nakatsuru is no stranger to games, and working alongside Hiroaki Yura, himself the director, producer and concertmaster of Eminence, it's clear that things are in capable hands.

The recording process demonstrates as much. Directions flow from the control booth to the conductor seamlessly — as the orchestra plays, Nakatsuru listens intently,

in just a little late.

They try again. And again. At the end of yet another take, Nakatsuru nods. "That's it," relays Yura. "Take a break." In an instant the orchestra is on its feet, heading towards the double door exit, mass exodus style. Rushing to squeeze in as much respite as possible before heading back to work.

## NEVER FORGET THE FLUTES

It's been a long 48 hours for everyone involved, but Nakatsuru is pleased with the effort. "The sound that I got out of this studio and this orchestra is very good," he says via Yura's translation. "I'm

very satisfied with what I got, because this kind of sound can't be produced in Japan. Japan has no studio which has the capability of Trackdown, and since Australians have a bigger physique than the Japanese, the brass and the woodwind sections in particular produce naturally better sound."

The recording process here differs to that on his previous projects, namely because this is Nakatsuru's first time working with an actual orchestra. "That's the biggest thing," he confesses. "Before, we worked with studio musicians in Japan. With studio musicians you can get good takes in a short amount of time, but with an orchestra, although it takes slightly longer, you get better quality music in the end, because it's more emotional and more musical. So when everybody gets into the groove, the strength of the sound that comes out is much better."

All too soon, the break is over, and slowly the orchestra members filter back to their seats. Tune-up toots and strums are made as everyone settles back into work mode, and the conductor readies them as recording resumes.

But confusion pricks up in the control booth: there's an error on the score sheet. Yura discusses it with Nakatsuru and relays instructions to the orchestra. "There's no semi-tone trills for the brass," he says. "For Violin 1, both G and D are semi-tones. For Violin 2, your D is a semi-tone, but your F trill is a tone trill. For viola, your first note is a semi-tone, your second note is a tone."

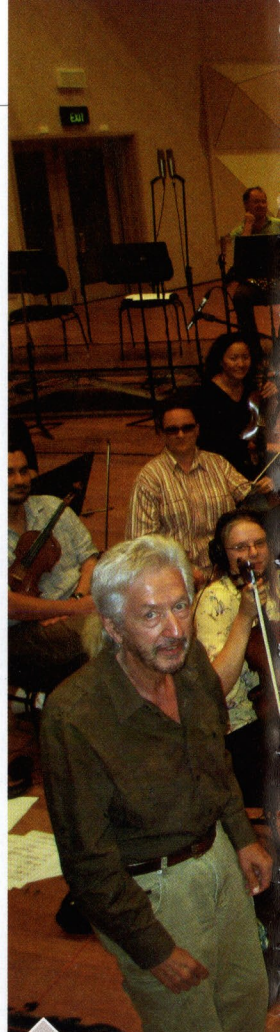
"Flutes?"

"Oh, I forgot about flutes."

He checks with Nakatsuru and relays further instructions, before quickly realising he's trilled where he shouldn't have. He hastily makes the correction, and the sound of the orchestra shifting in their seats is audible.

"I'm really sorry," Yura pleads. "But that's it, that's it."

The adjustments are made, and things continue on. But despite the hassles, or



Nakatsuru (center) and his musical posse



"What page were we up to again?"





perhaps because of them, it's clear that Nakatsuru is in his element. Each time a new recording commences, he constantly moving with the music, keeping his own beat. Listening. Watching. Sometimes sitting, moving his pencil like a miniature baton, sometimes stalking the room with visible look of concentration.

An hour passes, though it seems like forever since the team in the control booth have turned the page of the sheet music in front of them. Indeed, the booth is filled with the same passage of music, again and again, over and over. The search is on for that perfect recording. Yura remains unfazed. "The thing is, if we notice [an imperfection], then the player will eventually notice after playing the game so many times. It's not like a movie — there's more replay value than a movie. People notice, people talk about it."

Again, the orchestra plays. It sounds good — though to an outsider everything from the orchestra has sounded good — and there are no immediate concerns from the booth. "Once more, same thing," says the conductor. It begins again.

### NOT ENOUGH

Yura's work with Eminence gives him an automatic ear for its presence in videogames. He knows its sound. He knows how it shouldn't sound. He knows how it's written.

"The hard thing is depicting a character's mood or surrounding," he explains. "Stealth games are easy because the situation is predictable, but it gets trickier with an MMO like World of Warcraft, for instance. When you see



grand views you get grand music, but when you see it all the time it's not grand anymore. That kind of thing requires a lot of programming and a lot of thought, and I think that music technique [in games] hasn't advanced enough to get to that stage yet.

"Warcraft only has one hour of music — the expansion added three — but it's by far not enough for a game that you can play for hundreds of hours. No wonder people turn off the sound in games.

**Bonus character, Scheherezade's elfin design is by Yutaka Izubuchi, anime illustrator, director and designer**



It's inevitable that it happens, but it's because we don't have the technology or know-how to stop it. Predictable RPGs such as Final Fantasy win in the end, and that's unfortunate, because people miss out on the good music in World of Warcraft. But when you hear it so many times, the appeal is easily lost."

Nakatsuru predicts that a very clear evolution of videogame music will occur. "I think it will be split in two different ways," he says. "One style involves the high-spec consoles such as the Xbox 360 and PS3, where very beautiful graphics are used on the top of a Hollywood-like score containing very detailed sound. The other style goes back to the basics, for portable game systems such as DS, PSP, or even your mobile phone. Cheap sound is used, and there's going to be further development in this type of field where simple sound is used where the memory can't hold a higher type of recording. But regardless of platform, I believe what those two ways have in common is the relationship to the graphics. If you have very rich graphics you will have rich sound, whereas if it's simple animated graphics you will have a simple sound."

### A TRUMPET, ALONE

It's late afternoon. The bulk of the recording is done and the orchestra has gone home, save for a handful of players required for a few extra minutes to record their solos. A lone trumpet player sits in an otherwise empty studio, his small presence in such a large space looking almost comical.

He performs a piece. It's simple; there are hints of a sombre mood, but at the same time it's almost inspiring. A piece that's alluding at events of the past, but looking towards events in the future.

A number of takes are done, but it doesn't sound quite right. The trumpeter is called into the control booth and his recording is played back to him. Yura points to a monitor overhead, where the Soul Calibur 4 logo is displayed.

"Just as the game logo comes up," he says, "that's when you'll be heard."

The man looks up, the realisation slowly dawning. His solo will take centre stage on the Soul Calibur 4 arena. "Oh... wow," he says. He takes a moment, breathes in, nods. "Okay."

"Really play it," says Nakatsuru through Yura. "But play it a little slower. Think something like 'Saving Private Ryan.'"

He nods again and takes his seat in the studio. The control booth goes silent as the Record button is pressed. People lean forward in their chairs. All eyes and ears are on him.

He plays it once more, slower. Nakatsuru relays a minor adjustment to be made to a single note. He attempts it again, flubs that note. Starts over.

Again, he plays. Slower. And as that last note stretches out and fades away, the control booth is silent. Waiting.

"Perfect," smiles Nakatsuru, leaning back in his chair.

There's applause. Soul Calibur 4 has a score. ☐☐

# Ninja Gaiden 2



**HANDS-ON**

**SYSTEM:**  
Xbox 360

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

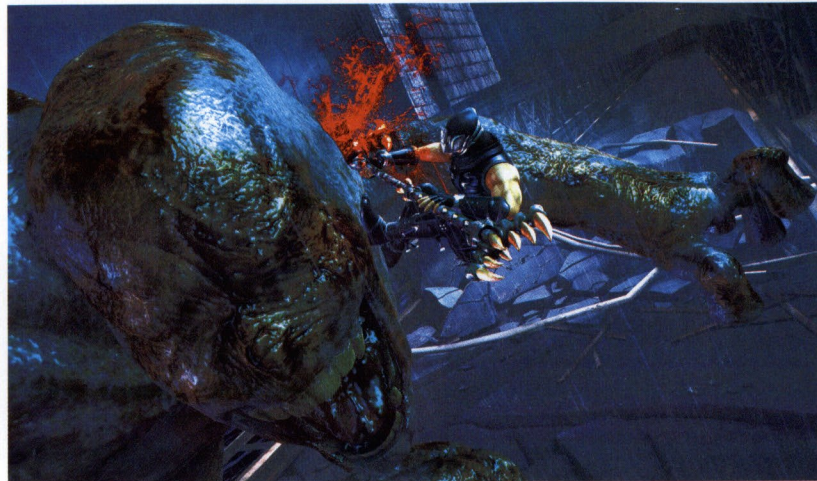
**PLAYERS:**  
1

**DEVELOPER:**  
Team Ninja

**DUE:**  
Soon

We've been in trouble before for pointing out how violent a game is. Way back when Bloodrayne was actually a title of note, we stated in a preview that the game was very violent, listing the ways in which the game eviscerated enemies and mentioning the fact that Rayne made some rather disconcertingly sexual grunts when draining an enemy of blood. Apparently some concerned parent read this and made a complaint to their local Member, who forwarded the complaint up the chain to the OFLC who contacted the local distributor who then went on to contact Hyper and have a go at us for making their lives miserable. Why do we mention this? Well, honestly we feel a little coy about talking about how violent Ninja Gaiden 2 is. Ultimately though, it's our job and if someone gets their knickers in a twist about the levels of violence in the game, don't come complaining to us. We're talking to you, Microsoft.

So, we've established that Ninja Gaiden 2 is a violent game. How violent? Without a doubt the game contains the largest number of severed limbs and heads we have ever seen in a game. If you've ever seen the Takashi Miike film Ichi the Killer, you'll understand the level of violence. The game is so gory that it is



no longer gore but instead something to be marvelled at for its sheer exuberance and dedication to the cause. Seriously, there are more dismemberments in two minutes of Ninja Gaiden 2 than there are in the entirety of Dark Sector. Hell, there are more flying body parts in the game than there are in all of the Soldier of Fortune games combined. We bring up those other games for the fact that recently both have been refused classification without cuts for their gory violence, while Ninja Gaiden 2

has been rated whilst remaining far more violent. We've harped on the fact that a lot of ratings criteria is centred around context so we can only assume that being a ninja is so awesome a context that the violence of the game is a given.

## THE TEA PARTY IS OVER

Aside from the violence, there are a few new additions to gameplay that make the game a lot more approachable for new players. The new regenerating health bar is a godsend as it means that rarely are you caught in the near impossible position of having to finish a fight without taking a single hit due to your extremely limited health. That said, fights are near constant, so getting the required distance or breathing room for your health to regenerate can be something of a chore, so Ninja Gaiden veterans shouldn't worry that the new health system will make the game a cakewalk. Save points healing Hayabusa back to full is also a great addition to the game, as it means that you no longer have to worry about starting a boss battle on only a sliver of life. Unfortunately the positioning of these save points isn't always the best — one level sees Hayabusa fighting a huge boss monster on a bridge, but rather than saving after the ensuing cutscene, the ninja is thrown straight into another battle with no chance to save or regenerate health. If the player dies there, they have to do the boss battle over again. It's more than a little frustrating.

Combat is fast, furious and looks rather spectacular, with ample bloodletting, acrobatic mover and flashy weapon combos. A new combat technique, Obliteration, allows players to instantly kill an enemy missing a limb with a simple hit of the Y button. Each attack Hayabusa makes has a chance to remove an enemy limb. Rather than killing an enemy, removing one of their limbs, if anything, makes them even more dangerous. Instead of bleeding to death,

Ryu Hayabusa demonstrates his painting skills



Snikt!

KAMEHAME-  
-HAAAAAAAAA!

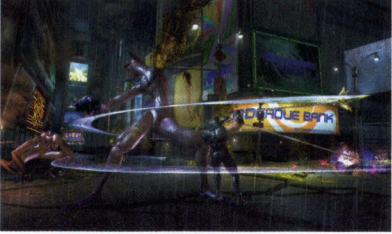


### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Amazingly, each of the weapons we've had a chance to play with so far feels as balanced as all of the others, leaving the player to decide on what suits them best rather than simply opting for the strongest weapon. Although it's fairly traditional to have fast weapons doing light damage and slow weapons doing heavy damage, all of the weapons in NG2 are fast, including the Lunar Staff and Scythe. Each of the weapons can be levelled up three times, gaining in power and looking more impressive each time.

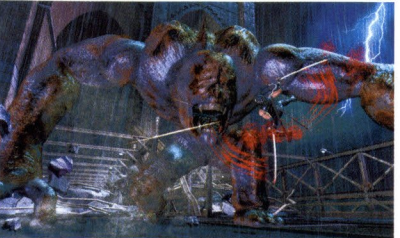
### The game has some real "f\*\*k yeah!" moments, such as the first time Hayabusa is attacked by a pack of ninja dogs holding swords in their muzzles

mutilated enemies instead act like suicide bombers, trying to grab hold of Hayabusa while detonating some explosive charges, killing themselves and doing a large amount of damage to the hero. Each weapon has a few different Obliteration moves, ranging from crushing an enemy's head with the Lunar Staff through to stabbing a sword through the enemy's head and using leverage to tear it off their shoulders. It's all very over the top and gory but remarkably satisfying all the same. Holding down the Y button charges and attack allowing for a devastating automatic combo. Holding the B button charges ranged attacks, making them do far more damage than usual — a little too much it seems as a few of the bosses we've tried proved remarkably easy to take down with charged ranged attacks.



### LIGHTS, CAMERA, TRACTION

The camera in Ninja Gaiden 2 can be best (and charitably) described as being antagonistic. To put it more bluntly, the camera is in no way up to the task of keeping up with the fast-paced action and acrobatic movements of Ryu Hayabusa. Rather than opting for a sensible, locked camera, like God of War, Heavenly Sword or even Team Ninja's own Dead or Alive series, the developers have again opted for a manually controlled right-stick/AI camera that hampers the



flow of action at every turn. Players have manual control of the camera using the right stick but much of the time this is not really an option, as the game is comprised of virtually constant combat, making taking your thumb from the face buttons is something of a mistake. Some rudimentary automatic camera controls sometimes take over but often leave the camera occluding the enemy, focussing on a wall or something equally useful. The problem is exacerbated by enemies with knock back attacks — one combat fairly early in the game sees Hayabusa going up against a half dozen or so demons and another half dozen or so flying demons, each of which has a ranged attack capable of knock back. Thanks to the camera it's all too easy to do nothing but be pinballed around by knock back attacks without being able to target one enemy. The addition of a lock-on feature would do away with this jarring problem but I wouldn't keep my fingers crossed. We really have a mixed opinion of Ninja



### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A decent camera, a lock on feature, a coherent plot and Itagaki taking off his damn sunglasses in interviews.

Gaiden 2. On the one hand the game has some real "f\*\*k yeah!" moments, such as the first time Hayabusa is attacked by a pack of ninja dogs holding swords in their muzzles, or when you use a fire ninpo to set a bunch of enemy ninjas on fire and watch them run around screaming. On the other, for every obscenely cool moment we had a half dozen screaming matches with the TV as the camera did its best to ruin the experience for us. With any luck the camera will be tweaked by the time the game reaches stores but considering how soon that is we wouldn't keep our fingers crossed. We'll let you know how it ends up when we get final review code in a month or so.

When "I've got your nose" goes horribly wrong



# Metal Gear Online

**SYSTEM:**  
PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
Stealth/Shooter

**PLAYERS:**  
1-16

**DEVELOPER:**  
Konami

**DUE:**  
June

Releasing a standalone Online only game is a risky proposition when there are so many games with excellent multi-player and loyal fan-bases, such as Halo 3 and Call of Duty 4. Add to that the fact that the Metal Gear Solid franchise has a bit of a patchy history when it comes to multi-player, with patchy online options for both Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater and Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops and we have a little healthy scepticism about Metal Gear Online.

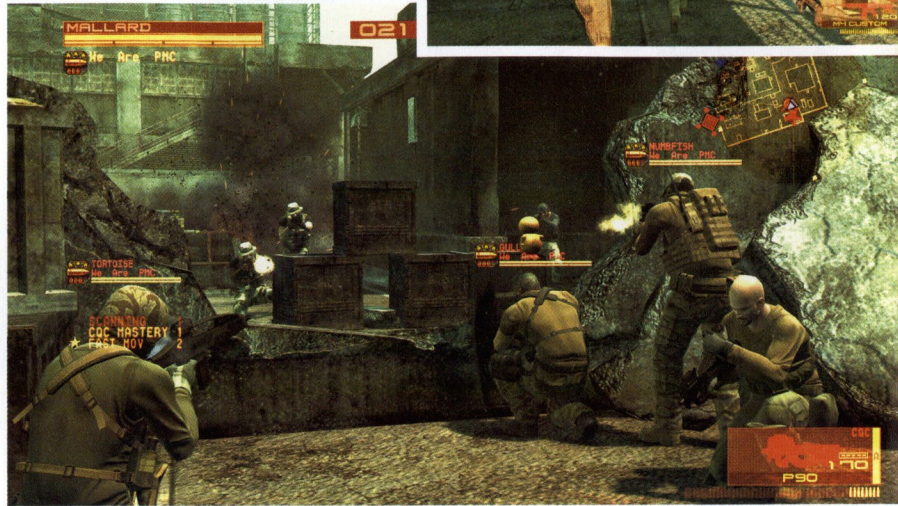
## STARTER FOR 16

Rather confusingly, it has been stated that the version of Metal Gear Online that will ship with Metal Gear Solid 4: Sons of the Patriots will be a "starter pack", comprising five levels and a handful of gameplay modes. So far we haven't been able to get any type of clarification as to what a "starter pack" is, but to our ears it sounds like something along the lines of GTA5 Prologue — a teaser for a full game that will be released independently somewhere down the track. Of course, the fact that the Metal Gear Online disk is shipping free with Metal Gear Solid 4: Sons of the Patriots makes the offer sound a whole lot more appealing. Konami has also recently announced that downloadable content will become available for MGO throughout, so we wouldn't be surprised

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some actual information of how the release of the game is going to work. Calling the MGS4 bonus disk a "starter pack" is all well and good but they really need to explain what that means.

Icons for Deathmatch, Team DM, CTF and Capture the Base



if players will be expected to download the rest of the game for a fee over the Playstation Network. We're also scratching our heads a little about the Beta that has just started as of this writing. Requiring two forms of online ID to play the game just seems ludicrous — hopefully this is just a symptom of pre-release paranoia and will be done with by the time the game goes gold.

Confusion over the actual release aside, and contrary to our fears about the online heritage of Metal Gear Online, there is

actually quite a lot to look forward to in the game. The "starter pack" will ship with five alliterative maps, evocatively titled, Ambush Alley, Blood Bath, Grozny Grad, Midtown Maelstrom and Urban Ultimatum, each of which will support all of the play styles — Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Defend the Flag and Capture the Base. The gameplay modes are pretty far from being original but, as can be expected of Kojima game, there is a pleasant level of surrealism involved in most game types. Take, for example,

One of these things is not like the others





No more one-eyed Snake jokes please



player movement in Metal Gear Online is a good deal slower than what is common for shooters, online and otherwise ... making the overall feel of the game more tactical

Capture the Flag. Rather than having typical flags positioned next to bases, Metal Gear Online instead features a frog and a duck that croak/quack when picked up and bob happily over the heads of the flag carriers alerting all and sundry to their identity. The positioning of the bases and flags is quite clever as well. Rather than opting for the standard CTF layout of having a base at each end of the map with a flag next to the goal, Metal Gear Online instead has both bases relatively close to each other in the centre of the map with the flags equidistant at the far ends of the field, making for a more furious give and take around the bases.

**LOCK ON**

Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch should also stand out from the norm for two distinct reasons. The first of these reasons is that player movement in Metal Gear Online is a good deal slower than what is common for shooters, online and otherwise. The lack of running speed makes the overall feel of the game more tactical, as nothing will get you shot faster than trying to run and gun or bunny-hop when you move at a fairly sedate speed. This necessitates the use of cover as well as area sweeping. It also promotes the use of stealth tactics, something that should give MGO a fairly distinct flavour.

The other fairly radical departure from standard online shooter tropes is the fact that MGO features an optional lock on to aid shooting. While the lock on does aid with basic aiming, it is by no means as accurate or deadly as manual aim, so will probably find most use at close range where twitch reflexes will play far more part in combat than accuracy.

MGO will feature a persistent player

model that will see the player being able to choose an initial load-out of four skills that will influence their proficiency with the various types of available weapons, grenades, stealth, running speed and the like, as well as their appearance. Player characters will gain XP throughout battles (much like Call of Duty 4) that can be used to improve character abilities throughout the course of play.

**CLARIFICATION NEEDED**

All in all, Metal Gear Online is looking like a solid multi-player shooter with some phenomenally good looks but we still have a few reservations, mostly revolving around what form the final game will take – if the “starter pack” is simply a five level teaser for a larger retail game somewhere down the track, Konami is going to have to put a

I've fallen and I can't get up

hell of a lot of effort into the final product to make a standalone multi-player shooter stand out when it will be competing with games with both a multi-player and a single-player game. If, on the other hand, the “starter pack” is the game and the rest will be available for download for a fee, the price point will have to be set at a reasonable figure to entice gamers away from more fully featured retail games. We'll have to keep wondering until Konami releases some actual information of how the game will be released. <<



**MANAPULT**

MGO features one of the best “jump pads” we've ever seen in a game. Rather than simply jumping on to a pad and being rocketed off, Quake 3 style, players in MGO can use a catapult to hurl themselves across a level. It appears as though players will actually be able to aim themselves before launching, giving the catapult some real tactical usage. As far as we can see, the only problem with the catapult as it stands is that it doesn't have a name nearly as awesomely homoerotic as the jump pad from Halo 3, the “Man Cannon”.



If anything, this is the real Man Cannon

# Legendary

**SYSTEM:**  
PC, Ps3, 360  
(leading SKU)

**CATEGORY:**  
First Person Shooter

**PLAYERS:**  
1

**DEVELOPER:**  
Spark Unlimited

**DUE:**  
Q3 2008

Legendary is a difficult beast to grasp the identity of. It's a game that has compensated for the loss of its sub header (the former full title being *Legendary: The Box*) by throwing in just about everything else that it and its creators can possibly think of. Shown off to a gathering of Journalists in a Central London screening room, *Legendary* was presented with all the bubbling enthusiasm of a nerd who's been told that his job is to sit in a large playpen full of all the things that he likes. As such, this *Legendary* feels like an exasperating pastiche of ideas and desires. This is a game that wants to be all things to a lot of people, and at this point in time it appears as though it could be either a phenomenal success, or a horrible, well-intentioned misfire.

## LEGENDARY OF WAR

The easiest way to summarise the gameplay scenario is to drag *God of War's* greatest hits approach to a mythological battle royal kicking and screaming into a modern era where technology has developed a disillusioned sense of power over nature, and where a team comprised of staff who have worked on franchises such as *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honour* still make First Person Shooters.

Such was the mindset that was enforced by an opening piece of concept art: that of a faceless marine type looking down



My, what a big phallic symbol you have

Within moments the museum he has infiltrated is falling apart, and New York is being overtaken by a scene that plays out like the *Ghostbusters* outtake that comedy forgot.

the barrel of a chain gun towards the towering Griffon that peered right back at him, splashed against a backdrop of apocalyptic reds. The spin given is that this is a FPS game that does something new, which is to say that the opponent is no longer human, but rather of a more beastly nature. We'll happily enough forget Will Rock, which was so forgettable that we're amazed that we've actually remembered it for long enough to write this sentence, but

the claim nonetheless remains hard to swallow on face value. Wasn't the game that popularized the entire FPS genre on a mainstream scale populated by hordes of ravenous demons?

Games have progressed a long way since *Doom* though, and in hindsight that 94% that we awarded *Doom 3* was perhaps a mite over-enthusiastic. It's certainly been a while since we've enjoyed gunning down some beasties from the intimate perspective of the barrel of a warm gun, and it's also been a while since anyone has really gone out of their way to make sure that each and every one of these beasties — all of which are, in this case, based on creatures of myth — actually gives the impression of being the animal that it's supposed to be.

## TIGER TIGER

The team at Spark Unlimited have put considerable effort into the behaviour of the various animals that will populate the game. Werewolves scale buildings and bound from wall to wall with a sense of predatorily intelligence, their AI forced to consider any surface; Griffons will patrol the skies, their volumetric flight paths being perhaps even more complicated still.

With development actually starting around the same time that Hurricane Katrina was unveiling a national Government's utter ineptitude by ripping New Orleans to shreds, *Legendary* was infused with a fascination with forces beyond man's control from the very beginning. "We're talking about a major metropolis here", Spark CEO Craig Allen enthuses, with not a hint of the jet lag he should be suffering from. "It's amazing how quickly it — New Orleans! — was reduced to a primitive state".

As such, *Legendary's* somewhat overbearing and ludicrous premise finds functionality when it opens Pandora's Box

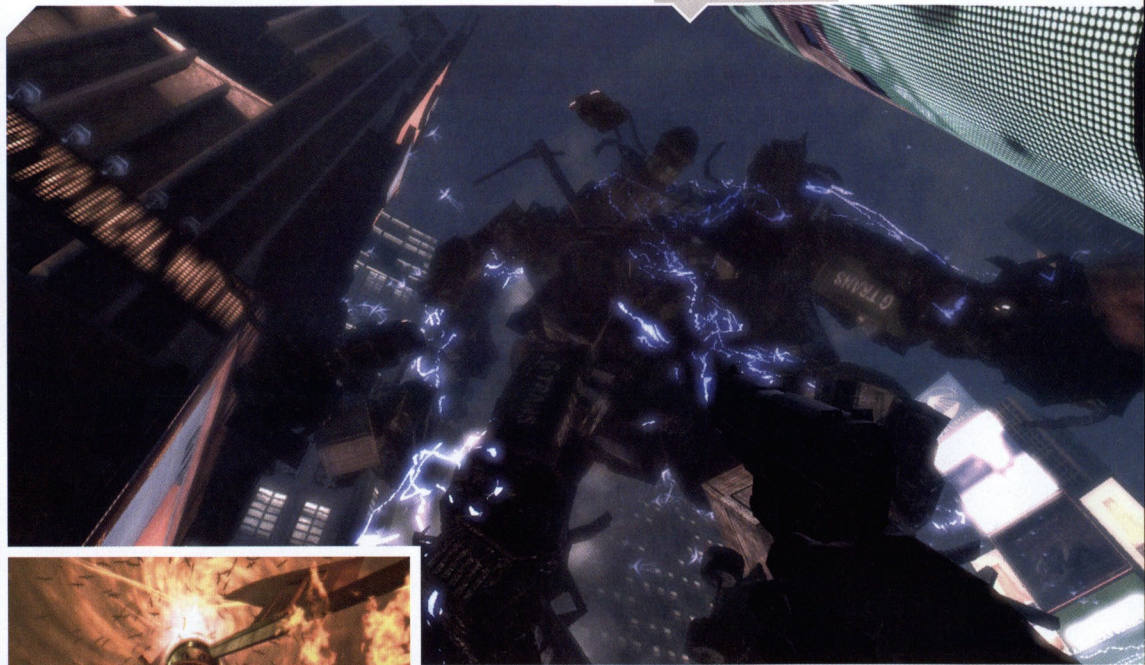
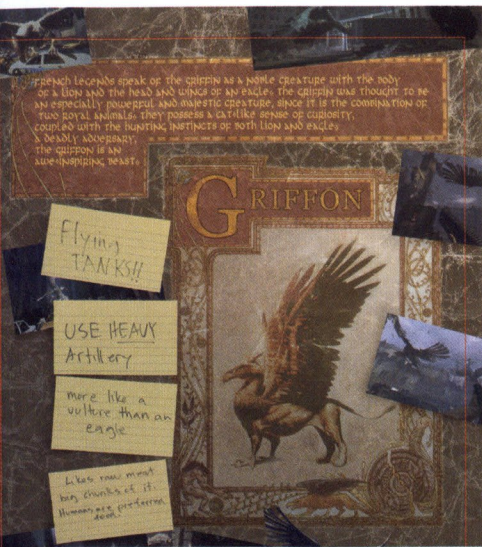
Not pictured: Skin, high poly count monster



There's a lot of eating on that bird



Wait, Jack Hawksmoor is a villain?



### FOLLOW THAT COLOSSUS!

Although clearly still work-in-progress, a standout moment occurred at the very end of the demonstration of the first stage: Having been tricked into opening Pandora's Box, Charles rushes through a museum full of panicking people and then out onto the streets of New York. Here, a shockwave sees the streets literally getting torn apart (as is a popular thing to do to NYC in this year's release lineup) as huge pieces of rubble, debris, cars and whatever else are all sucked together to form the one, gigantic Gollum.

We've been told that you will eventually need to do battle with this monolith, but for the immediate session its purpose was that of a rather neat means of creating a path for linear progression, Deckard left with little choice but to follow in the abomination's destructive wake.

— both literally and figuratively — upon mankind, allowing for a gameworld that will dissolve into disorganized savagery as the player rushes towards an urgent objective. It may be taking the path of a game so chock-full of large animals that it has to be careful not to choke (one promotional video contained footage of a member of the team stating that it was the quantity of creatures that made them 'next gen'), but it's a path with the potential to exploit mankind's overall powerlessness in the grand scheme of things, and Legendary appears poised to capitalise on this.

The story scenario sees the player in the role of master thief Charles Deckard, who has been commissioned to steal a (Pandora's) box that might as well unleash hell itself if opened. Upon being instructed by his employer to do so, he is physically branded, in Allen's own words, as "the idiot who opened the box", something

that leaves him with an intimidating responsibility. Within moments the museum he has infiltrated is falling apart, and New York is being overtaken by a scene that plays out like the Ghostbusters outbreak that comedy forgot.

#### AIM, FIRE!

Such a narrative checkpoint also lent itself conveniently to a shift in gameplay type. Legendary is promising more than one style of play, as this initial moment of moody adventuring that suddenly went ballistic aptly proved.

A later stage in the game was used to highlight not only Legendary's sheer brutality, but also its scope for manipulative strategy. Charles is awoken (the reason for his sleep we're yet to find out) by a companion and then thrust head-first into a series of dystopian streets, where both man and beast are already at war with each other. It seems

#### The terror of the Man-Cow



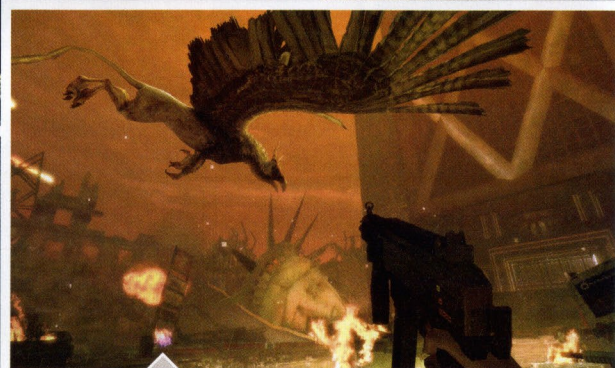
that the plot is backboneed by two black-and-white secret societies at odds with each other, and no prizes for guessing that Deckard was suckered in by the one presented with the evil lick of paint. Throughout this segment of gameplay, members of this society (aptly named 'The Black Order') are busy trying not to get torn head from limb by a couple of Werewolves, and the option to help them out is very much there.

Not that helping would entertain a screening room full of tired Journalists as much as pure slaughter would, and so the demonstration instead saw Deckard climb some stairs and use his rifle to unlock a cage and unleash a particularly nasty wolf on the unfortunate masses. The end result was a mixed blessing on the player's part, with the wolf itself left wounded, but still standing. A perfect game for those who want to hide behind walls, then.

Well, it would be if it weren't for the showdown with a Minotaur that followed soon after. Obviously chosen to show off the destructible nature of the environments, as well as the sort of snarling force that Legendary's foes promise to possess, the stone walls here proved about as protective as paper as the boss ploughed its way through the arena, reducing the battlefield to an increasingly impressive pile of rubble in the process.

That cow has a cross to bear - sigh...

Legendary continued...



Suck it, Harry Potter fans!



**INTREPID FOX**

Throughout the session we noticed that *Legendary* is a part of the current crop of games that alter their soundtracks to suit their moods. The only drawback was that when the tempo shifted up a gear, the rock music that kicked in felt a bit safe and by-numbers. While this may have been the result of the sound levels being set at a perhaps-too-sensible volume, we pushed the question of the soundtrack's intensity anyway. While the response was mostly defensive, it ended on an interesting note, with Allen pondering further possibilities: "we are also looking at potentially having alternative soundtracks to allow audiences to better tailor their play experience to their particular interests."

**MEN. MILITARY. MONSTOR.**

Throughout this whole showcase, we couldn't escape the feeling that *Legendary* really wanted to be a Neil Gaiman work expressed in another medium. As it turned out, we weren't far off: "I love *Neverwhere!*" Allen exclaimed before we could even finish phrasing our question, "I was trying to make a game out of *Neverwhere* at one point." Our impression of the team's greater goal was then vindicated further when he elaborated that "juxtaposition of a modern world and of fantasy is when *Legendary* is at its best. It's about being reminded of the force of nature."

While *Legendary's* premise may be a little too contrived towards allowing for an indulgent parade of mythological beasts to be fully worthy of its inspiration, Allen remains refreshingly aware of his game's place in the world: "It's still an action, popcorn, fun-for-all experience. Basically, we started with the coolest aspect of the game concept - mythological creatures



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**

Everything come legibly together. We're still unsure about this one, but there's no doubt that it could be awesome.

attack the modern world and you blow them away with machine guns - and molded the story to fit the gameplay goals. People can investigate deeper if they want, but *Legendary* is not a message game, overtly."

And that may be just enough to give us all the faith that we need. So long as *Legendary* manages to consistently use its premise for one ridiculous but amazing sequence of events after another then it will be a total triumph, a welcome retreat from disillusioned over-serious World War stories that plague the FPS genre, and a template for straightforward, gory fun.

**Tim Henderson** «



OMG! Giant Japanese pr0n!

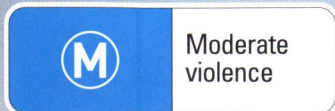
# CRISIS CORE

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# Darksiders: Wrath of War

**SYSTEM:**  
PC, PS3, 360

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1

**DEVELOPER:**  
Vigil Game

**DUE:**  
Late 2008

And there went forth a horse that was red, and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword. -- Revelation, Chapter 6

The horsemen of the apocalypse have turned on each other. Heaven and hell war on earth, the savagery of demonic strength versus the celestial technology of the angels. Abominations and devils stride the streets and you get to kill every motherloving last one of them with a sword the size of a goddamn Cadillac and a horse made out of ash and shadows.

Yep, I recently had the opportunity to see a whole lot of extended gameplay of Darksiders: Rise of War and, to be perfectly

character and some straight up lunatic monsters as enemies.

Right, here's the skinny. Armageddon has come. In this dark future, dogs and cats do indeed live together but there's a slight problem: the whole thing has happened too early. Demons and angels are at open war and the earth has been reduced to the terrifying desertst called the Ashlands. Ooops, you stuffed up. Now you're in for it as the Charred Council, who are sort of like the referees of the netherworld, have stripped you from your powers and even stolen your pets. As War, you have to find out who started the Big Show early by making a conspicuous show of violence.

## HORSE(MAN) PLAY

I got the chance to sit down with the creative director of this game as I played it. Joe Mad chatted about the philosophy behind the looks of this world. "More badass. Every time we saw the characters sketches and renders, I had a simple rule I'd use. Make it more badass." It works. War himself makes the grim reaper look like a schoolgirl, draped in black cloak and foreboding armour and a mighty broadsword. Later, he rides Ruin, his supernatural steed, all shadows and fire and fights Trauma, a level boss who towers over the terrain.

"Yeah, we really wanted to bring some power and..."

"Majesty?"

"Yeah, majesty, to the gameplay. I wanted people to really experience something when fighting these bosses."

The gameplay itself seems at first influenced by God Of War but that's perhaps too familiar. GoW seems more a touchstone than a direct daddy. There's a feeling of Devil May Cry in there as well but Darksiders looks to be shaping up

to be it's own beast. Part of that is the addition of Ruin. The horse is summonable at will, giving the player access to considerably increased speed, as well as charging attacks. During the small snippet of gameplay seen, War uses the speed of the horse to stay out of the range of a particularly large and vicious demon, wearing it and its smaller allies down with an angelic machine gun. War takes a particularly mighty wallop during the boss fight, knocked clean of his horse that rematerialises as he lands.

"For sure, the addition of Ruin gives the player a chance to build up different kinds of combo moves, different tactics to use against the enemy creatures."

Those tactics and combos are all up there on the screen. The animations for War are fluid and loose. We watch him slaughter enemies up close, cleaving them with his giant sword before gunning down adds. Fighting what seems to be a kind of gigantic and satanic hellworm, War gets in close then slices the damn thing from tail to head, eviscerating the bastard thing. On mentioning the move to Joe Mad, he grins shyly.

"It is so sweet."

## THE WORLD IS YOUR WEAPON

Even better though, are the fully destructible environments. "Yeah, everything you see is a weapon. Cars, lampposts, everything, we want people to really explore the world and find stuff to beat things with!" Joe Mad says with a laugh. Watching the game we do indeed see a great deal of brutal trauma damage done to the various creepy beasts, one of whom is pretty much beaten down by a barrage of cars War casually chucks at it till it's arms drop off. Mr. Mad ain't lying. Everything that can be picked up is picked up and used for various acts of heartstopping brutality.

Better still, the enemies drop souls which are later traded in for weapons upgrades. "War starts out much weaker than what he'll become later on in the game. That's one of the ways he gains in equipment and power. As well as taking them from specific enemies and bosses in the game." Later on, we see War amped up with some Emperor-style lightning, blasting blue death all up inside the faces of various beasts. I gotta agree with Joe Mad. It is indeed sweet.

It isn't all just killing though. There's a Legacy of Kain, Metroid vibe going on to the whole thing, with an element of exploration to the game. You know the type. To access certain areas of the open ended game world, you'll need to kill certain enemies and take their stuff. There's a nice bit of MMO inspired gameplay involved in this. Certain particular bosses have powers you may

Right, here's the skinny. Armageddon has come. In this dark future, dogs and cats do indeed live together.

honest, it looked... arousingly great. It's by the legendary Joe Madureira, a comic artist who's worked on X-Men and Battlechasers, that got him known for extraordinary character design, specialising in awesome mashups of horror, fantasy and SF elements. Guess what? He's lifted his game this time, with a particularly brilliant main

And lo he rode a flaming horse...



...and it was enormously rad

"I once caught a fish THIS big!"



Stop snuggling against my thigh!



Huge swords... is this a Final Fantasy game?

### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

More comic book artists get into games - a Mike Mignola Screw on Head game would be rad - or maybe a Mike Allred game

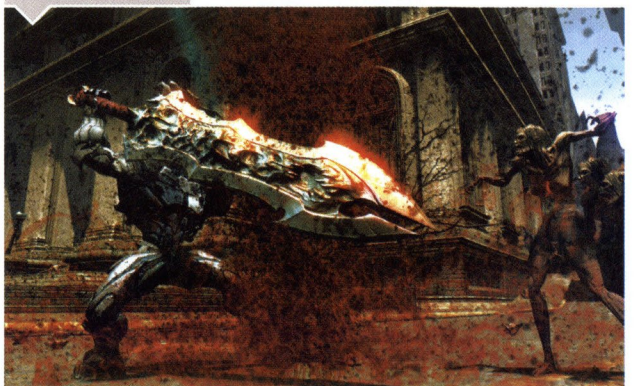
the enemies was totally the most fun for the studio and something we all prided ourselves on."

I have to agree. War is an imposing figure and we can only guess at how great he will look after he's powered up but the insane beasts he fights are just incredibly detailed and really quite threatening. Earlier video released shows War fighting some horrifying squid thing in what seemed to be an abandoned train. If you like it gory and Bible black, this is the place.

It ain't perfect though. Even though there are still a few months yet before we see it, frame rates might want to go a little smoother and I thought I detected a few artefacts during some of the more vicious fighting. But even on hands off, that's a minor worry.

Here's the deal though. I played five unreleased games the night I played Darksiders. It was the one I'm still aching to try out. **Christian Read** ◀

Soul Edge sure gets around



### AWESOME NAME GUY

Joe Mad, Creative Designer, is a special talent. He hit the comic world like a slap in the face, then just as quickly moved on to games. A list of his videogame works includes Trade Wars: Dark Millennium. From there, he moved on to Dungeon Runners, while still freelancing as an artist. "Vigil, we just started up just as a few guys and now we've really taken off. We've got a heap of people working on staff now and we've got a whole new crew for our next projects." Joe is also working on the wildly popular Ultimates series with the writer of TV's Heroes, Jeph Loeb. Busy lad.

need. "War might need to jump over a chasm to get to a new world area. So he'll have to go into a dungeon and find that boss who has that ability."

### DUNGEONS SANS DRAGONS

Dungeons seem a very tasty addition to they gameplay. They're intense combat areas filled with enemies but most particularly specific bosses that you'll need to continue. "Yeah, at the moment it's probably around sixty-fourty in relations to dungeons versus above ground play and but that might change during gameplay." Bosses in dungeon areas are particularly grand. In one we see a weird angel looking thing battle another boss as War tries to battle his way through to them. "There's also going to be a certain level of puzzles in dungeons."

Then you can cross the Ashlands, which are mainly human cities that are ruined warzones fought over by warring factions of angels and demons.

What really stands out here is how great all of this looks. The monsters are the really big draw, of course. Half the trash mobs look good enough to be bosses by themselves. The cities and Ashlands are the kinds of ruins we've seen before in a few games over the last few years but have a kind of gloomy atmosphere very well suited in a post-Apocalypse. The dungeons themselves seem a varied lot, from cathedrals to subways to things I couldn't name.

What really stands out, what really makes this game stand out from the pack is those bosses though. "Designing

# GTA IV: Multiplayer



**SYSTEM:**  
360

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1-16

**DEVELOPER:**  
Rockstar

**DUE:**  
Next month!

**C**rime doesn't pay. Jack a car or pull a gun as you're walking down the shops, and your return ride will be in the back of a police car, your room will be exchanged for a concrete cell, and your hot flatmate will be replaced with Bubba. Don't do it, kids. Leave it to Rico and the professionals of Liberty City.

But that's the singleplayer campaign, and that's for next issue. For now, we're examining the other side of this highly-anticipated title: multiplayer. The desire to team up with, or fight against, other players in the free-roaming GTA universe has appealed ever since we first set eyes on GTAIII, but went unanswered in that title as well as its follow-up, Vice City. By the time San Andreas came around in 2004, the demands for multiplayer still left begging, gamers finally took matters into their own hands. Multi Theft Auto was developed, allowing those with the PC version to roam around with, shoot at, and run over other players across the world.

Now it's no longer a modder's task. Multiplayer in GTA IV is very real, and much like the singleplayer campaign, it's very large. Of the 14 multiplayer modes included, we've had hands-on time with four of them, and between all those car chases, gun fights and squashed bodies, it's clear that Rockstar has left no stone unturned. Here's how they're making up for lost time.

## TEAM DEATHMATCH

The first mode that we had hands-on time with was a multiplayer staple: deathmatch. Pure and simple deathmatch. The only difference is in the ultimate goal: it isn't to score the most amount of scalps, but instead, the most amount of money.

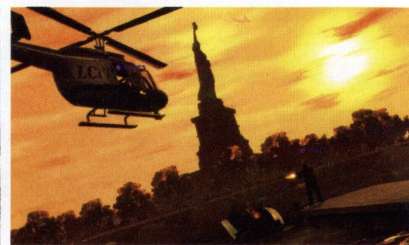
Tony Jaa is the Protector!



An outtake from Top Gear's Southern trip



»» One round of deathmatch presented us with the standard fare. A later game plonked us in an industrial quarter armed with nothing but rocket launchers. Hilarity ensued.



Dots of cash are littered around the map, able to be picked up, and once killed, players will drop their loot, enabling their killer to pocket the goods.

As much or as little of the map as you want is open to your destruction, where it's very much a kill-or-be-killed environment. It's just one of many options — offered in every one of the multiplayer modes — that are made available, which allow the game host to customise their match as they wish.

The map size, that's a given. The game lets you choose how much terrain you and your buddies will stomp over; an important feature when numbers are paltry, though not necessarily essential. Sure, you and 15 buddies can cram the action into a few blocks, or you and your housemate can go mano-a-mano across the entire city. It's up to you, and each option really does impact your gameplay choices. You might find it's hardly worth jacking a car to traverse down the road, finding it easier instead to run and take shortcuts through alleyways. Likewise, when the map is at its largest, you'll want to find some wheels as soon as possible, as a cross-city marathon is significantly less fun than cappin' fools.

There's plenty of other options, too. Enable or disable police presence, pedestrians, adjust the traffic density, the weather, the time of day, or the

types of weapons on offer. One round of deathmatch presented us with the standard fare, allowing the AK-47 to be the most powerful gun on offer. A later game plonked us in an industrial quarter armed with nothing but rocket launchers. Hilarity ensued.

## RACE

On the surface it's just what it sounds like: a checkpoint-based race through a circuit of highways, city blocks, on-ramps and side streets. But there's more to it than just a "drive faster than everyone else" mentality.

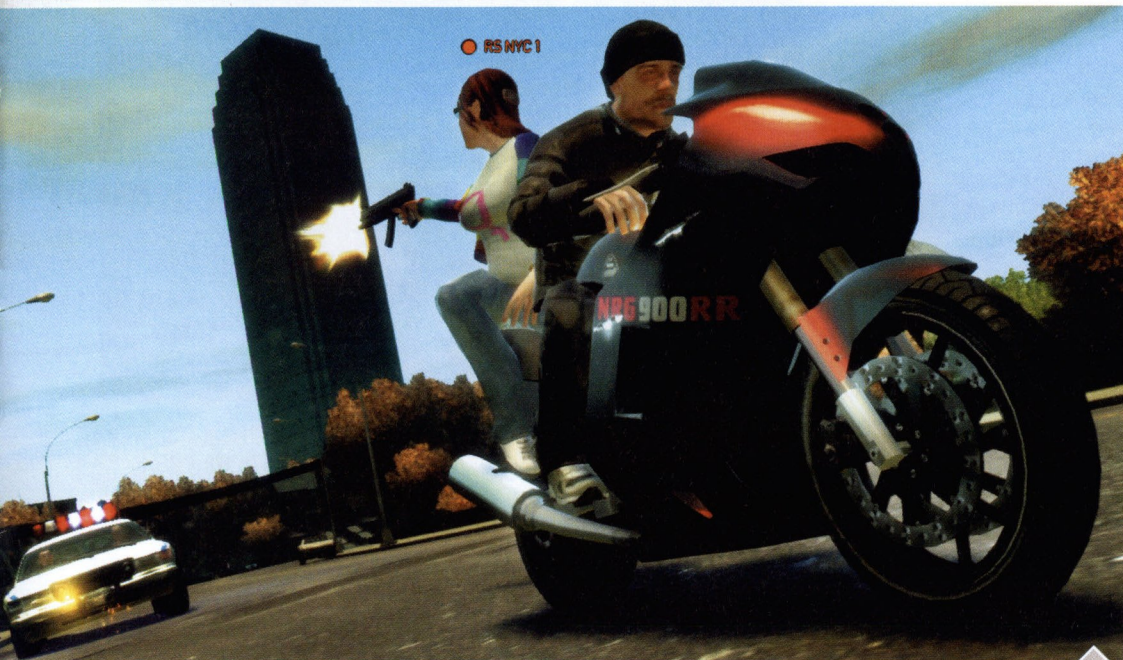
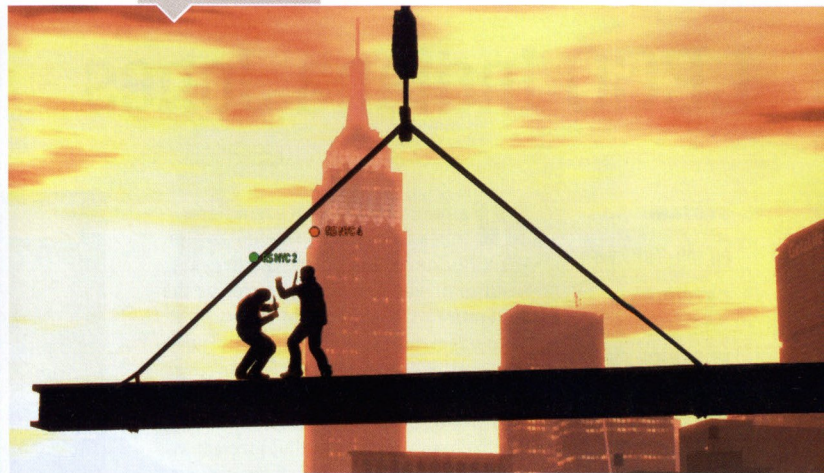
There's weapons, for a start. In your quest to be number one in the pack, you're able to implement firearms in your strategy, picked up on the fly as you drive over icons hovering on the road. With a tap of the Left Bumper, you elbow out the glass of the car window and pop a few shots, aiming with the Right Trigger. It's a bit of a balancing act, managing the aiming of your firearm with the steering of your car, but it works. And along with the weapon pickups there's also health packs, restoring your banged-up, bullet-riddled ride to pristine condition in an instant.

Make no mistake, your car will weather a significant amount of damage. Right from the starting line opponents bump and jostle in an effort to get just a smidge

Diving out of the way - you're doing it wrong



Olympic level "Extreme Balance Beam"



in front, and should a course take you up a narrow ramp onto a multi-lane highway, expect to fight for road space as your foes cram in with you. Cars will spin out, flip over and blow up, just as they do in the normal solo campaign.

As in the singleplayer portion, you're not restricted to just the one car. Although you might start off with a particular set of wheels that adhere to a car class decided by the host - "Classic" or "Modern", for instance - you don't have to stick with them. Should you find yourself running from a flaming wreck, or even if your junk heap just isn't putting out the revs, you can hijack any other nearby car and use that instead. Nabbing a sleek midlife-crisis car amid a race of oldsmobiles is entirely possible, and results in more strategy than a standard race would allow. Of course, this is another option that can be adjusted pre-game, so if you prefer to keep things more traditional, you're more than able.

### COPS 'N' CROOKS

Or Cops 'n' Robbers, depending on your mileage. The concept is the same - a team of crims against a team of cops - but it's the little things that go towards putting it in its own unique light.

The crooks are tasked with escorting their Boss - a randomly chosen player on that team - to safety. Naturally, it's the

cops' task to take down the boss by any means necessary. Crooks start on foot and have to make their way to the goal by any means necessary: vehicle, on foot, separately, or together. The cops begin in a police car, with the crooks marked on the minimap with a crosshair.

From there, it's a race against time. The crooks rush to the escape point, the cops rush to stop them. Spawn points are randomly determined, meaning that not only the position of each team differs, but so too does the proximity between them. A match might commence that puts the two teams on opposing sides of the play area, but one might place them only a single block away. Likewise, games can last anywhere between a couple of minutes to something more substantial.

### HANGMAN'S NOOSE

This is one of the more interesting game modes. Departing from the overtly multiplayer structure of, say, deathmatch, Hangman's NOOSE is story-based, presenting a scenario akin to those in the singleplayer campaign.

Working as a team, players are thrown into a heated shootout at an airport, fighting against AI-controlled police officers with the aim of getting their crime boss to a secluded helipad. There's no warmup here: once that loading screen

Moments before a tragic wheelie popping

### WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

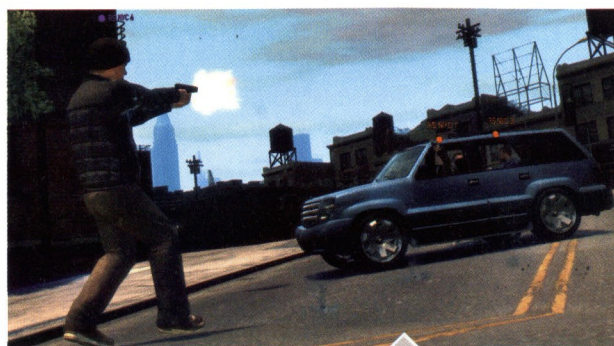
Some more code optimisation. We found multiplayer rather chuggy at times - something that wasn't visible in singleplayer.

fades out and the action fades in, you're greeted with SWAT vans, police choppers, riot shields and shotgun blasts from every direction. It's a battle just getting past that first layer of fuzz, and if success is your goal rather than becoming a bullet sponge, you'd better stick with your team and ensure everyone is on the same page.

Should you survive the airport onslaught, the action goes to the road. You'll need to hijack a vehicle - preferably one of the police's own armoured vans - and get your crew to the getaway chopper. The cops will still throw everything they've got against you, and expect rammings, spike strips and from-the-window pot shots on your way between the airport and the end goal.

Tactics and teamwork are everything. Will you all pile into the same vehicle and weather the storm, or will you fan out, nabbing different cars and drawing police attention away from the one vehicle that contains the boss? Will that approach leave him more vulnerable when the road blocks hit? Decisions, decisions.

That's just the tip of the iceberg with GTA IV's multiplayer. Full report next month, when we'll put the entire game through its paces! ☛



This is what you get for buying a SUV!

# LEGO Indiana Jones

**SYSTEM:**  
360 / PS3 / PS2 /  
PC / DS / PSP / Wii

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1-2

**DEVELOPER:**  
Traveller's Tales

**DUE:**  
June 4, 2008

We're on the verge of an Indiana Jones fever pitch. The fourth film, *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, is a handful of weeks away, set to revive the adventures of a generation's favourite whip-cracking archaeologist. Faithful followers will reunite with Indy and his battered fedora, while new audiences will be introduced to one of cinema's most iconic characters. Naturally, interest in the DVD trilogy is likely to be re-sparked, and one can almost hear the cash registers cha-chinging already.

It's therefore the perfect moment to jump on the videogame bandwagon. As far as LucasArts' in-house Indiana Jones title goes — you know, the one with the euphoria engine and Digital Molecular Matter — news is rather thin on the ground. But when it comes to Indy's original adventures, they're coded, loaded, and ready to go. Just don't be surprised if the graphics, ahem, look a little blocky.

LEGO Indiana Jones covers every step of the classic film trilogy, from the discovery of the Ark, to saving a village from the Temple of Doom, to the search for the Holy Grail. Following up from its previous LEGO title, *LEGO Star Wars*, Traveller's Tales has once again approached a series with its own mischievous take, resulting in a family friendly romp through each movie. Dialogue is converted into charade-like movements, mature moments get a slapstick conversion, and the whole production is geared around what a few interlocking plastic bricks is able to achieve.

They're everywhere. LEGO studs are plentiful and tumble out of every destructible object, themselves modelled after their plastic LEGO counterparts.

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

LEGO Short Round and LEGO Willie eating LEGO monkey brains.



**"I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS..."**

Anticipation for *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* could not be higher, yet the sullen tone of George Lucas is quick to sap the fun right out of it. Numerous interviews with Mr Beardy reiterate his less-than-enthusiastic stance on Indy's fourth adventure — despite professing that the movie was fun and fulfilling to make, he's warning audiences not to get their hopes up when they line up at the box office. "It's just a movie," he says, before suggesting our positive memories of the original trilogy might not hold up if we were to re-watch it. Burned by fan reaction to the *Star Wars* prequels or just a good old-fashioned wet blanket? Guess we'll find out.

LEGO Indy + LEGO hairdryer?



LEGO Simpsons reference



Every character in the Indiana Jones saga is represented as a LEGO figurine, complete with square feet and horseshoe hands.

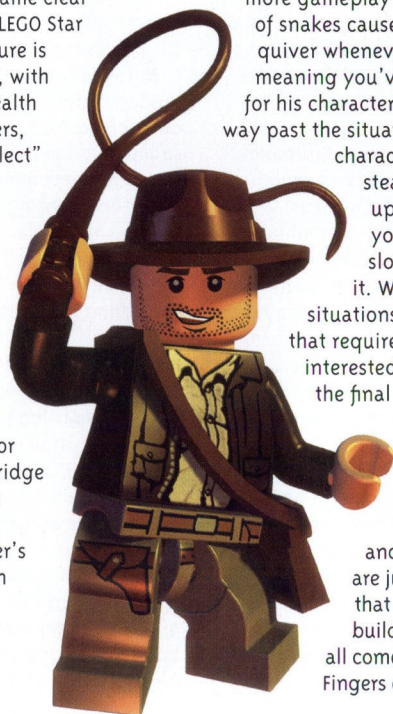
LEGO vehicles look exactly like digital representations of actual kits. LEGO props are everywhere, from railroad tracks, to cranes, to flowers, to gates and fences. And of course, every character in the Indiana Jones saga is represented as a LEGO figurine, complete with square feet and horseshoe hands.

## IT BELONGS IN A MUSEUM!

From our time with the preview build, the first thing that became clear was the similarities to *LEGO Star Wars*. The game structure is by and large identical, with a Free Play mode, a wealth of unlockable characters, and a central "level select" hub all carrying over from Mr Beardy's universe. Likewise, puzzles retain a similar formula of uncovering piles of bricks, using them to construct a useful item, then using that item with a part of the scenery — for instance, building a bridge to cross an impassable gap. It's well-trodden ground for the Traveller's Tales team, resulting in a confident handle on each level and some truly clever situations sprinkled throughout.

Several elements have been given a boost, though. Backgrounds and surrounding environments consist of textures that look significantly more realistic than the plastic blocks of the characters, objects and items. *LEGO Star Wars* did this also, but due to the real-world settings of Indy's adventures, the effect is more pronounced, and rather than appearing at odds with the plastic, it actually works quite well. There's also more gameplay options — Indy's fear of snakes causes him to stop and quiver whenever one approaches, meaning you've got to accommodate for his character quirk by finding a way past the situation with your other character. There's also a stealth mechanic — back up against a wall and your character will slowly shuffle along it. We didn't see any situations during our playtest that required it, but we're interested to see it at work in the final version.

There's still room for polish before that happens, though. Long loading times, quirky shadows and an unsolvable level are just some of the things that plagued our alpha build of the game. Will it all come together by June? Fingers crossed. «





LIVE THE GAME.

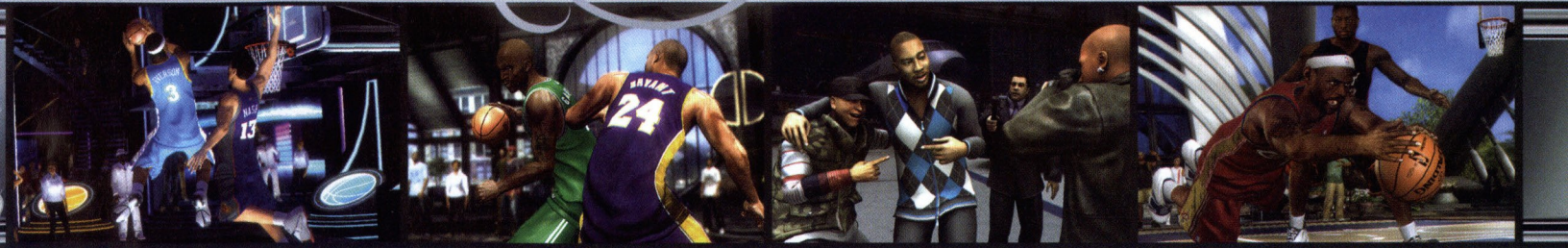
PLAY THE LIFE.



# Ballers

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featuring  
*Dwight Howard and Al Horford*



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# Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword

**SYSTEM:**  
DS

**CATEGORY:**  
Action

**PLAYERS:**  
1

**DEVELOPER:**  
Team Ninja

**DUE:**  
Very soon!

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Some more attention drawn to the oh-so-clever subtitle. It's Dragon Sword! DS Just like the console! See what they did there?

It's sideways! Sideways! To play *Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword*, you rotate the DS 90 degrees to the left and hold it like an open book! Only Dr Kawashima and Kyle Hyde have achieved such a feat!

Sorry for the excitement, but it's been a while since we've seen Nintendo's handheld used in such a manner. As previous games have shown, the DS need not be bound to the traditional position, meaning that developers have all manner of possibilities available to them. *Ninja Gaiden* creator, Tomonobu Itagaki, has taken up the challenge in spectacular fashion and, rather than shovelling forth a simple port, has fashioned an entirely new chapter in his game series. With the touch screen proven to be one of the DS's most important assets, *Dragon Sword* uses it almost exclusively, casting aside those D-pad and button shackles in the process.

Hands-on time with a preview build demonstrated as much. You don't mash the A button to throw shurikans at your

foes, you simply tap on them with the stylus. You don't press B to jump over their heads, you just slide the stylus upwards in a short vertical line. Sword slashes are performed via actual slashes across each baddie, and movement is as simple as dragging your stylus around the screen in the same manner as *The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass*. It's all very intuitive, not to mention a great demonstration of the DS's versatility. Buttons? Bah, old news!

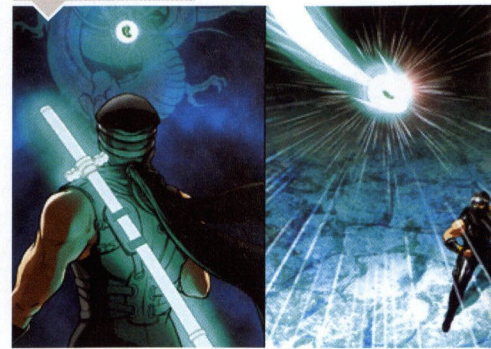
Well, they are used, but they're relegated to a minor – but perhaps equally important – role: blocking. Press any direction on the D-pad, or any button at all, and your character Ryu will fend off those swipes, swings and swishes. They're also employed for when you want to perform a roll: simply block and tap, and you'll bowl over in your desired direction.

## NINJING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

The presentation harks back to the days of *Resident Evil*, which would employ a 3D character moving throughout static 2D backdrops. The same technique is employed here, with Ryu darting left, right, up and down each scene, his height perspective changing accordingly. The viewing window scrolls as necessary, while the top screen of the DS (which is now the side screen) displays a map with an overhead view of the terrain.

movement is as simple as dragging your stylus around the screen in the same manner as *The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass*

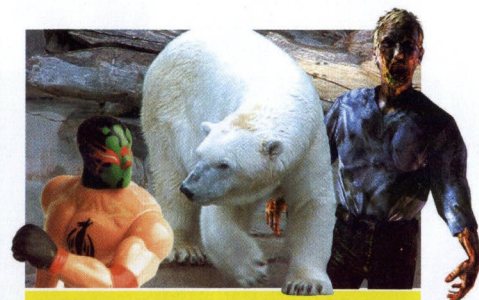
The neon ninja strikes!



Considering those pre-rendered backdrops can hide an available pathway with ease – interactive elements are slightly less obvious compared to a 3D wander – the map is an essential part of a ninja's toolkit, right alongside the shurikans, headband and that powder that makes you vanish into the night.

As the game progresses, numerous story sequences are unveiled via dynamic still frames, drawn in iconic anime style. The frame pans across points of interest and conveys dialogue and important moments in an engaging and efficient manner. It all goes towards a game that's, through and through, pure ninja, pure action, and pure gameplay.

We should have our hands on the final review build soon, and we must say we're looking forward to playing it. It's great to see developers play a console to its full strengths, and between the under-utilised sideways tilt and the touch-screen control method, *Dragon Sword* looks to be a worthy chapter not only in the *Ninja Gaiden* saga, but in the Nintendo stable of high-quality games. Now we're off to hassle Ubisoft for final review code. ☞

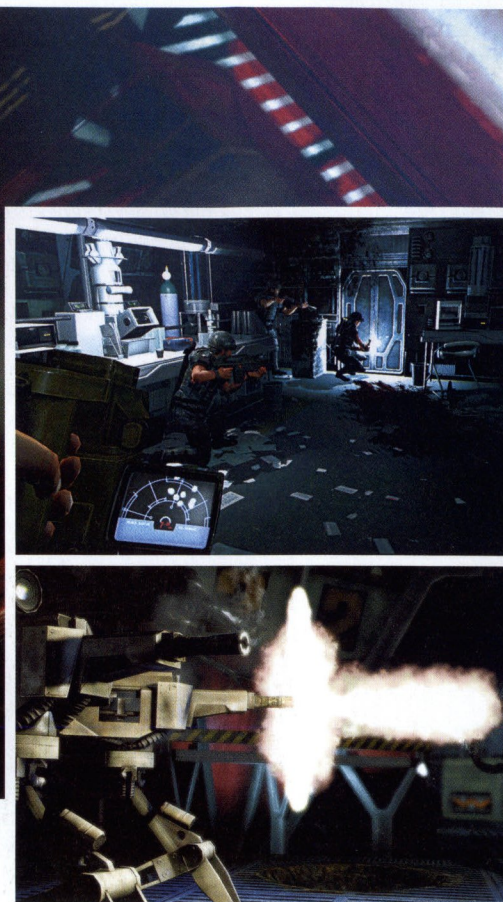
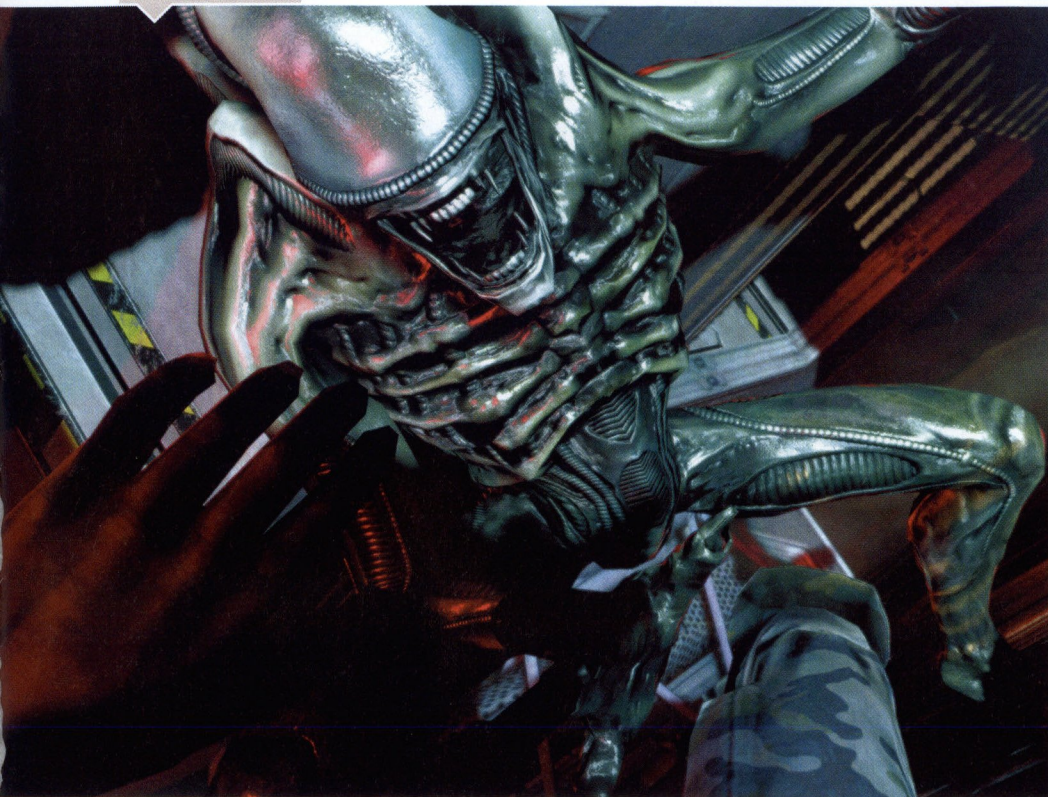


## PIRATES OR NINJAS?

Ahh, the eternal question. It's true: pirates do have the allure of high-seas adventures, treasure chests and bouncy wenches. But then again there's the scurvy thing. And the pegleg thing. Ninjas, on the other hand, are silent creatures of the night, with fashion sense that never dates coupled with some mean moves in the combat department.

But what about zombies? Or Eskimos? Or zombie Eskimo pirates who dress like ninjas on Tuesdays? What about those midget wrestlers? Let's see some more love thrown their way. Wilks has a love for polar bears that I'll never understand. Oh, the possibilities!

I will avenge this flower!



# Aliens: Colonial Marines

**A**lthough *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is still a fair way out from release, it's managed to brew up an online storm of anticipation since being announced. Understandably so, seeing as *Aliens* probably one of the most quotable movies ever – "Game over, man...game over!" If there was ever a universe that begged to be made into a first person shooter, it's *Aliens*. Face huggers, power loaders, dark corridors – it's got it all.

The first interesting fact about *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is that it actually eschews recreating events from the movie, opting instead to create an entirely new storyline between the events of *Aliens* and *Alien 3*. Don't roll those eyes just yet, because this brand new narrative will be penned by David Weddle and Bradley Thompson, writers on the recent *Battlestar Galactica* TV series. Couple this with an extremely strong alliance with Fox Studios – which gives Gearbox access to scripts, artwork, music and sound effects – and you have a fairly 'official' sounding product.

## STAND BY ME

In the game you'll take charge of a squad of Colonial Marines (hence the title), and will use each person's skills for

## MANIC MULTIPLAYER

*Colonial Marines* will feature four player co-op, and it will be seamlessly integrated so that your mates can drop in and then leave whenever they want. No word yet on other multiplayer types, but Bug Hunt definitely needs to feature!

different situations. Got a blocked door? No worries, send in your blowtorch guy. Want to set up a charge? Go demolitions dude. Your squad will also come in handy during Make a Stand moments (which is Gearbox's term for defence situations), where the motion tracker (yep, it's an inventory item) shows a shitload of *Aliens* inbound and it's up to you to think quickly and fortify your position. Did somebody say auto turrets?

»» Your squad will also come in handy during Make a Stand moments (Gearbox's term for defence situations), where the motion tracker shows a shitload of *Aliens* inbound

Some of you might be slightly put off to hear that quick time events will be included in the game. However, the way that these will be implemented is quite unique. Rather than flashing up some random button and causing the player an immense amount of frustration in having to replay missed prompts, *Colonial Marines* introduces Close Encounters, which will be much more intuitive in nature. During these scripted sequences, colour prompts will flash on the screen and these will indicate the direction that you need to press in order to proceed in the situation – be it escaping from the retractable jaws of an Alien or avoiding all manner of deadly obstacles.

Instead of locking you into a particular button, Close Encounters will let you choose whichever input is intuitive to you. So, for example on the 360 controller, pressing the B button will be just as acceptable as pressing the right trigger

or even pushing right on either of the thumbsticks. Some of these encounters will actually be quite involved, with multiple opportunities to save yourself from being devoured by a xenomorph.

As we've mentioned, the motion tracker will be useable, and you'll be limited to just a pistol in this mode, which should make for some pretty intense moments. *Aliens: Colonial Marines* will include other iconic weapons

from the movie, such as pulse rifles and the flamethrower. The game is a fair way from release, but the promise of a brand new *Aliens* storyline already has us fiddling with the settings of the cryogenic sleep chamber. Wait, was that a face hugger that just went past the door? **Dylan Burns** «

**SYSTEM:**  
360, PS3, PC

**CATEGORY:**  
First Person Shooter

**PLAYERS:**  
1-4

**DEVELOPER:**  
Gearbox Studios

**DUE:**  
TBA (late 08 or early 09)

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

An android and/or knife game mini-game would be cool. But seriously, the game needs to dish out fan service thick and heavy – it's *Aliens*!



They're coming out of the gaddamn walls!

# Wipeout HD

**SYSTEM:**  
PS3

**CATEGORY:**  
Racing

**PLAYERS:**  
1-8

**DEVELOPER:**  
SCE Studio

**DUE:**  
June 2008

**L**ove the Wipeout series but hate those annoying jaggy pixels and small screens? Well, you're in luck, friend! Presenting the new Wipeout game for today's non-portable hardware, Wipeout HD!

Okay, so the infomercial spiel need a little work, but you get the idea. It's a remake rather than a full-fledged sequel, which brings the best tracks from Pure and Pulse — the PSP games — onto the PS3. In the process they've received the full 1080p makeover, a swathe of graphical effects, Dolby 5.1 sound, a few extra frames thrown in for good measure, and the results are "wow".

Seeing Wipeout HD run is a thing of beauty. Forget about eye sex; this game is a full-on eye orgy. Everything looks jaw-droppingly fantastic, from the textures on the ships to the buildings in the background. Movements are fluid and smooth. Colours are bright and vibrant. Lights are natural and immersive. If ever there was a game to showcase the capabilities of the PS3, this is it.

That's certainly the belief of the Sony suits, for they're using Wipeout HD to showcase a range of the console's features. It should come as no surprise to learn that SIXAXIS controls have been implemented, allowing the player to steer their craft by tilting and turning the controller rather than using the analogue stick or the D-Pad. With memories of Lair still rotting in our minds we were hesitant

## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

More tracks — there's only eight!

## DOOF!

It just wouldn't be Wipeout without a techno soundtrack, and Wipeout HD puts that Dolby 5.1 to work on some fitting music. A total of nine songs will be included upon initial release, featuring artists such as Ed Rush, DJ Fresh, Booka Shade, and... you know what, I'm not even going to pretend I've heard of them. In fact, the only one in the pack that rings a bell is Kraftwerk, and I'm not sure whether that's good or bad.



The smiling face hides a sinister secret!



»» Seeing Wipeout HD run is a thing of beauty. Forget about eye sex; this game is a full-on eye orgy ... If ever there was a game to showcase the capabilities of the PS3, this is it.

to try it out, but imagine our surprise to learn that it doesn't entirely suck. The sensitivity levels of these controls can be tweaked, and a toggle is available to enable or disable forward and backward tilts affecting the pitch of your craft. The traditional controls are still present, however, so you're not bound to the new wiggle-waggle ways of Sony if you don't wish to be.

It's also a game to showcase the power of the PlayStation Network. Rather than offer it as a game in a box, Wipeout HD is only available via download from the PlayStation Store. After launch extra


downloadable content will also be offered, in much the same fashion as the PSP saw with Wipeout Pure and Pulse. And with an online multiplayer mode part of the package — complete with leaderboard stats from all games played — the ties to the Internet become even stronger.

That's not to say singleplayer will be left out in the cold. Quite the contrary: there's the usual gaggle of offline modes, including Tournament, Time Trial, Speed Lap, and the gradually punishing Zone mode, in which death is all but inevitable. Records obtained in these modes will still filter through to the online world, allowing you to compare your best lap time with others on a worldwide scale, but the AI-controlled opponents will give you an experience akin to a dedicated human.

While we're big fans of the Wipeout series, we can't help but think this is something of a strange product. This is the first time the franchise has been seen on Sony's new machine, but it's a baffling debut — it's little more than a remix of tracks we've already seen. And considering the brand power that Wipeout has in its title, it's odd that it wasn't considered for a launch title, as it certainly has all the hallmarks and production qualities of one. Only after 18 months since the PS3's release has it decided to meander onto the console, in much the same manner as it took Mario a year to waddle his way onto the Wii. As much as we're in awe of the game's visuals, it's going to take a lot more than pretty pixels for us to embrace this as we did the previous games. Guess we'll find out soon. «



The trench run from the next Star Wars edit



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# Handheld Gaming TOP fifty

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. History has given us some fantastic handheld games, so we're taking a moment to acknowledge 50 of the best.

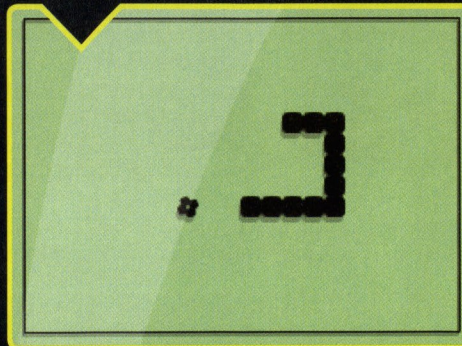
## EGG 50: Tamagotchi BANDAI. 1996

» There's nothing quite so insidious and addictive as the virtual pet growing Tamagotchi. There have been literally dozens of iterations of the game since 1996, including versions made for consoles and hand held systems. Hell, there's even a movie. Along with Tetris, this is one of the handheld games that really gained the attention of the mainstream.



## Mob. Phone 49: Snake (MOBILE PHONE)

» There are very few mobile phones that don't feature some version of the game Snake, in which players control a snake that eats anything it encounters, growing each time it consumes something, challenging the player to not only eat more food but also avoid obstacles or running into the snake's own tail. The game itself is old but it's still a great deal of fun and a great way to kill five minutes waiting for a train.



## PSP 48: Daxter READY AT DAWN. 2006

» Who would have thought a spin-off game featuring the fairly odious comic relief sidekick of Naughty Dog's platform/action hero Jak would be so good? Set during the period in which Jak is in prison (turning him all emo/bad-arse), Daxter sees the titular character working as an exterminator in one of the best PSP platformers around.



## Stand Alone 47: Mattel Electronic Football MATTEL. 1977

» Yes, some of us are old enough to remember Mattel Electronic Football, a totally addictive action/strategy game that saw players controlling tiny footballer blips, trying to avoid other footballer blips. Honestly, the game isn't particularly playable anymore but for the sheer jollies we got from this thing many, many years ago, it deserves a place on the list.

## Handheld Gaming Time-line

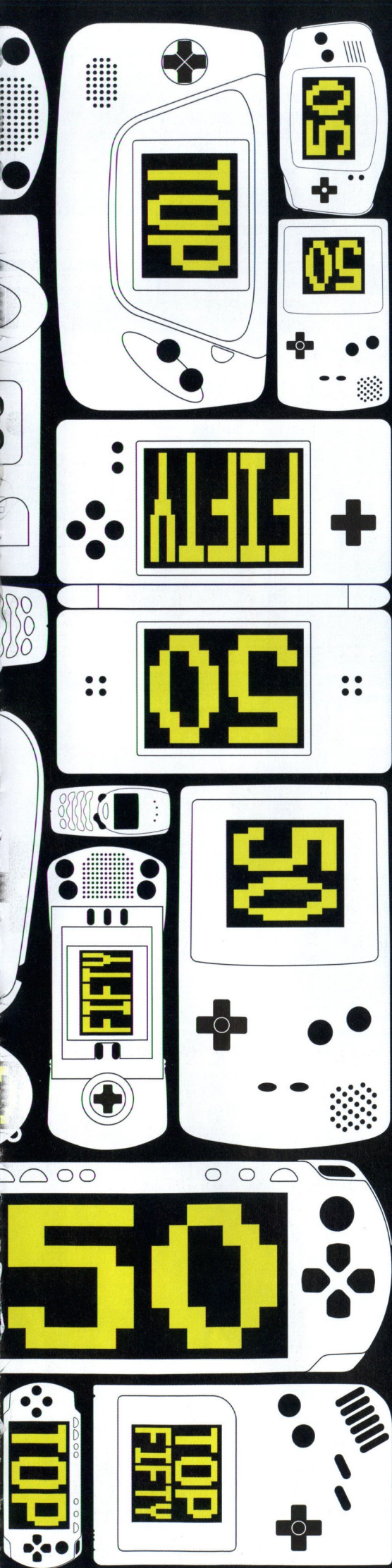
### Various LED-based Handhelds

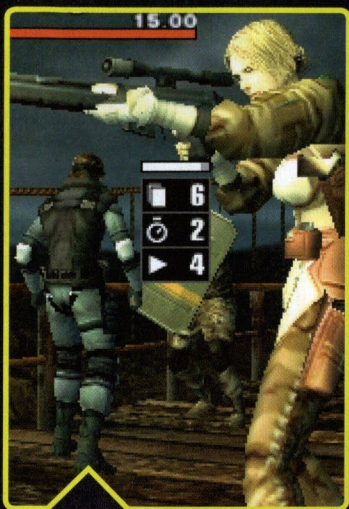
**COMPANY:** Mattel  
**RELEASED:** 1977  
**BEST ASPECT:** Portable gaming! Huzzah!  
**WORST ASPECT:** Terrible graphics, terrible sound, no 1080i option, no motion sensitive controls, no free-roaming environments  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Madden Portable Football



### Microvision

**COMPANY:** Milton Bradley  
**RELEASED:** 1979  
**BEST ASPECT:** First handheld console to allow interchangeable game cartridges  
**WORST ASPECT:** LCD screen prone to rotting  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Bowling, Connect 4





### PSP 46: Metal Gear AcId

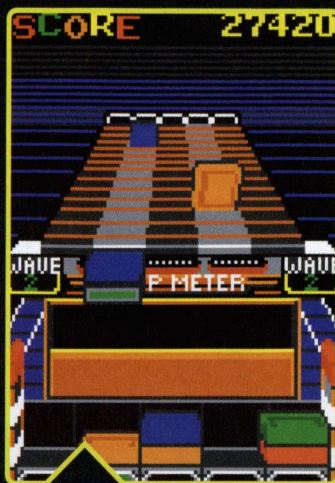
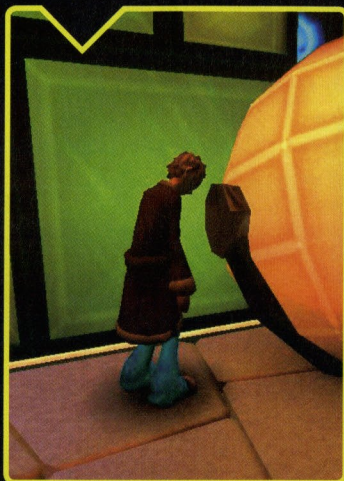
KONAMI. 2005

» Some Metal Gear fans may have been disappointed by the fact that Metal Gear AcId is a turn based strategic card game rather than a traditional Metal Gear Solid game, but we couldn't be happier. Using trading cards to control Snake's actions may sound a little odd – and it is – but it's also fun. Probably the best card game on any handheld system.

### PSP 44: Crush

ZOE MODE. 2007

» Too many puzzle games reuse the same gameplay mechanics over and over again. Crush is something refreshingly new and devastatingly clever. As the insomniac protagonist Danny, players must "crush" the 3D levels into 2D, changing perspectives to allow for movement towards an exit. If it sounds like a bit of a brain strain, that's because it is. The short but difficult levels are perfectly suited to the hand held format.



### LYNX 42: Klax

ATARI GAMES. 1990

» Over the years, Klax has appeared on just about every platform known to man, ranging from an arcade machine through to the GBA and PS2 but for our money, Klax on the Lynx – the first time the game ever came to a handheld – is the best. A simple falling block game similar to Columns, Klax charges players with grouping coloured falling blocks to clear rows. Sometimes the simple things are the best.

### GBA 40: Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku II

WEBFOOT TECHNOLOGIES. 2003

» We here at Hyper aren't really the biggest fans of Dragon Ball Z in the world. There's only so much flexing and screaming we can put up with at the best of times (that being any time Wilks gets some booze in him), but we love Legacy of Goku II. While we can't really follow the cartoon, the game presents a fairly straightforward action RPG experience with some great mechanics, cutscenes and animations.



### PSP 45: Patapon

PYRAMID / JAPAN STUDIOS.

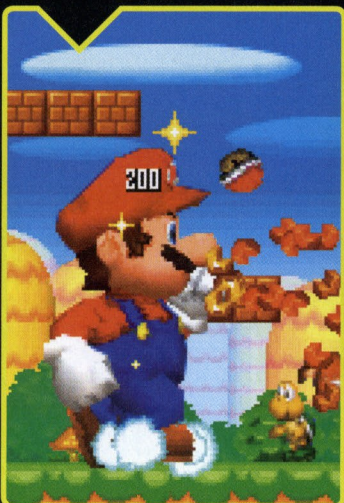
2008

» As far as genre mashups go, the rhythm/RTS/god game is just about the strangest we've heard. It's also one of the very best. Players take the role of a powerful god, leading their Patapons to war via different rhythms beaten out with combinations of two of the face buttons. Timing and good rhythm build up combos, increasing the damage of Patapon attacks. The simple but alarmingly deep gameplay is complimented perfectly with a charming 2D silhouette art style.

### DS 43: New Super Mario Bros

NINTENDO. 2006

» Inspired by the original Super Mario Bros, New Super Mario Bros is a return to a more traditional style of side-scrolling platformers, but one that has all of the modern bells and whistles such as a 2.5D perspective, 3D bosses and some truly gorgeous graphics. The addition of competitive multi-player and 18 mini-games only adds to the longevity of the title.



### GBA/GCN 41: Pac-Man Vs

NINTENDO. 2003

» OK, so technically Pac-Man Vs is a GameCube game and not a GBA game but the interactivity between the two platforms is what makes the game so great. One player takes the role of Pac-Man (playing on a system-linked GBA) and the others play the ghosts. From there it's fairly traditional Pac-Man, albeit a really tough Pac-Man with human opponents who can work as a team rather than simple AI ghosts.

### PSP 39: Disgaea: Afternoon of Darkness

NIPPON ICHI. 2007

» It's Disgaea – one of the best, and funniest turn based strategies around. And it's on a handheld gaming system so you can carry it around with you and play it on the train/bus/crappier or wherever else you could possibly want to kill some time strategically killing monsters, fighting your way through items to level them up or otherwise waste hundreds of hours beating the crap out of adorable, funny and sometimes terribly crude cartoonish enemies.



### Game & Watch

**COMPANY:** Nintendo  
**RELEASED:** 1980  
**BEST ASPECT:** Entertaining portable games, device doubled as a clock  
**WORST ASPECT:** Usually the watch, sometimes the game  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Donkey Kong, Mario Bros, Turtle Bridge



### Game Pocket Computer

**COMPANY:** Epoch  
**RELEASED:** 1984  
**BEST ASPECT:** Will score you geek cred if you actually know about this console  
**WORST ASPECT:** Only offered five games  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Uhh... all five of them?



### Game Boy

**NAME:** Game Boy  
**COMPANY:** Nintendo  
**RELEASED:** 1989  
**BEST ASPECT:** Single-handedly ushered in the new age of handheld gaming, decent price  
**WORST ASPECT:** Blurry screen, consumed AA batteries like a beast  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Tetris, Mario Tennis



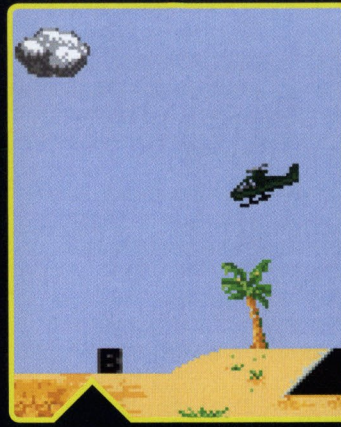
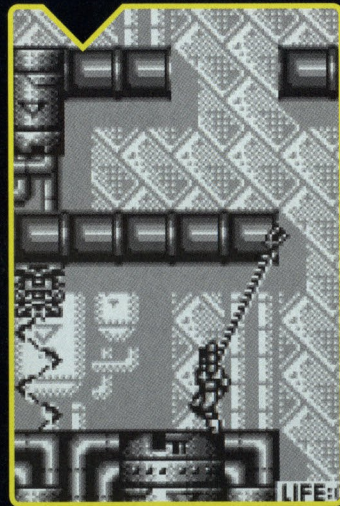




### GAME BOY 36: Bionic Commando

CAPCOM. 1992

Although not as well known as the NES original due to a general lack of publicity and a small production run, Bionic Commando on the Game Boy is an absolute winner. Not only did the game feature all of the mechanics of the console original, such as grappling, it also added an extra level of detail to the graphics and a much more fully fleshed out storyline.



### GAME GEAR 34: Choplifter III

BEAM SOFTWARE. 1993

Choplifter III is a game that requires all of your attention at all times. Players take control of a rescue helicopter and must, simultaneously, make sure that there is enough upward thrust to avoid rooftops, not enough to make them crash into any obstacles above, dodge enemy aircraft and fire and rescue hostages to take home to your base. It's a game guaranteed to make you pull your hair out in frustration...and come back for another round once it has grown back.

### PSP 38: LocoRoco

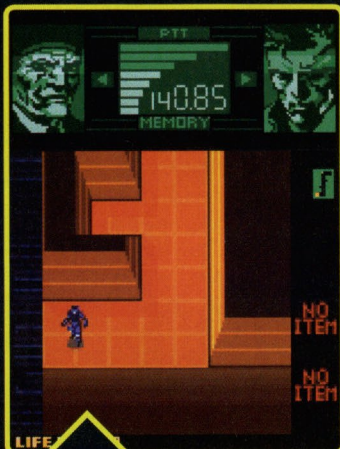
SONY. 2006

Jooiiiiiiiiinnnn! We could just write that overly long word 50 odd times to describe why LocoRoco is so great, but that would be a monumental copout. Instead we'll say that we love the crazy little world tilting game for its wonderful sound and art design and the deceptively deep rolling/splitting/joining gameplay. Far too often handheld games don't take advantage of the fact that they are hand held but LocoRoco does, utilising the wide screen, control system and player perspective brilliantly.

### PSP 32: WipEout Pure

SONY LIVERPOOL. 2005

Going back to the basics of the WipEout franchise, WipEout Pure, the first WipEout game for the PSP uses the tried and true control mechanics and track design of WipEout 2097 to great effect, rendering the most blisteringly fast racing game available on the Sony hand held. The UMD featured 12 tracks, but a further 16 are available as DLC, making for one seriously big racing game.



### GBC 37: Metal Gear Solid

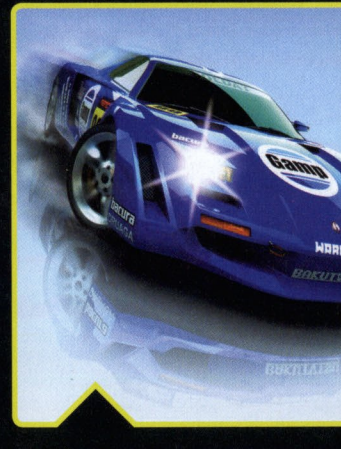
KONAMI. 2000

Known as Metal Gear: Ghost Babel in Japan, Metal Gear Solid on GBC does not fit as a straight instalment of the franchise and instead tells a parallel story featuring the eponymous Metal Gear hero, Solid Snake. Going back to earlier Metal Gear presentation, Metal Gear Solid is a top down adventure focussing mainly on stealth, with Snake sneaking past or silently killing guards during his mission to stop the creation of a deadly Metal Gear.

### GBA 35: Astro Boy: Omega Factor

TREASURE. 2005

Part side scrolling shoot-em-up and part beat-em-up, Astro Boy: Omega Factor combines all of the best elements of both the original Tezuka manga and anime as well as the 2003 redux to make a game that is at once nostalgic and cutting edge. If you're a fan of the little robotic boy powerhouse then you can't help but love the huge number of characters that make an appearance in the game, from Dr. Tenma through to Atlas.



### PSP 33: Ridge Racer 2

NAMCO. 2006

42 tracks (21 unique tracks, all of which have mirrors) taken from previous console Ridge Racer games and 62 fictional cars make for one hell of an entertaining game. Controlling nearly perfectly, Ridge Racer 2 was one of the very best arcade racers of 2006. Taking the nitrous system from the previous PSP Ridge Racer, Ridge Racer 2 is a fast and furious (and far better than the movies) thrill ride. Going around corners sideways has rarely been more fun.

### GBA 31: Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow

KONAMI. 2003

It's a toss up between Aria of Sorrow and Symphony of the Night as to which game is the best in the long running Castlevania franchise but for our money, Aria is definitely the best on a handheld console. A mix of 2D side scrolling action/exploration and simple console RPG concepts, Aria of Sorrow also features a fantastic "Tactical Soul" system that allows the player to absorb the souls of slain enemies and use them to acquire and equip special abilities.



### Lynx

**COMPANY:** Atari  
**RELEASED:** 1989  
**BEST ASPECT:** Powerful graphics, flippable control layout for lefties  
**WORST ASPECT:** High price, chunky build design, terrible battery life  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Klax, Chip's Challenge



### TurboExpress

**COMPANY:** NEC  
**RELEASED:** 1990  
**BEST ASPECT:** Portable TurboGraphx 16, TV tuner add-on  
**WORST ASPECT:** High price  
**NOTEABLE TRIVIA:** Was featured in Enemy of the State



### Game Gear

**COMPANY:** Sega  
**RELEASED:** 1990  
**BEST ASPECT:** Decent game library, offered a TV tuner add-on  
**WORST ASPECT:** Chunky build design, bad D-Pad  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Sonic the Hedgehog



### Nomad

**COMPANY:** Sega  
**RELEASED:** 1995  
**BEST ASPECT:** It was basically a portable Mega Drive  
**WORST ASPECT:** Poor battery life, chunky build design  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Sonic the Hedgehog, Columns



**GBA** **30: The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap**

**FLAGSHIP.** 2005

» To be honest, The Minish Cap doesn't do a lot different from other handheld Zelda games – aside from keeping the graphical style of Wind Waker – but that is really the game's strength. It's a fine example of all of the things that make the Legend of Zelda games so damn good – great stories, high production values, impeccable build quality and solid, well thought out action and puzzles.



**GBA** **29: Final Fantasy Tactics Advance**

**SQUARE ENIX.** 2003

» The triumph of Final Fantasy Tactics Advance is that it takes all of the deep, deep tactical combat of Final Fantasy Tactics and adds new layers of complexity with the addition of 25 jobs (character classes) for troops and Laws, arbitrary rules for combat that result in penalties is broken. These additions could have made the game a frustrating mess, and in some ways they do, but more often than not the handheld additions just make the game even more challenging and addictive.

**GBA** **28: Metroid Fusion**

**NINTENDO R&D1.** 2002

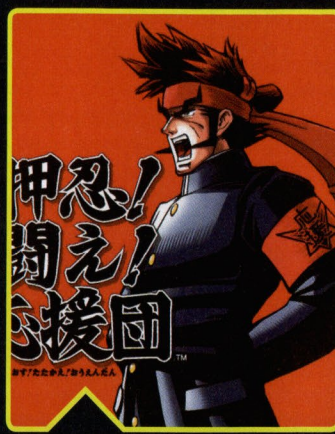
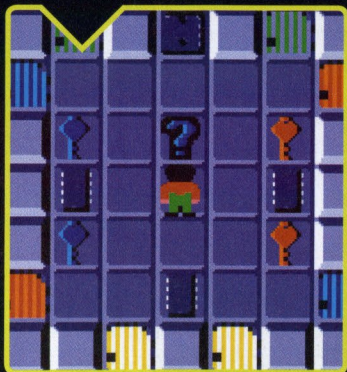
» While not as open-ended as some people would have liked, Metroid Fusion is still an absolutely wonderful example of 2D side-scrolling action and exploration. As Samus Aran, players return to the site of Metroid 2: Return of Samus to face a new threat to the universe. In addition to her guns and armour, Metroid Fusion sees Samus with some new powers, including the ability to absorb the nuclei of her new enemy, the X-Parasites.



**LYNX** **27: Chip's Challenge**

**EPYX.** 1989

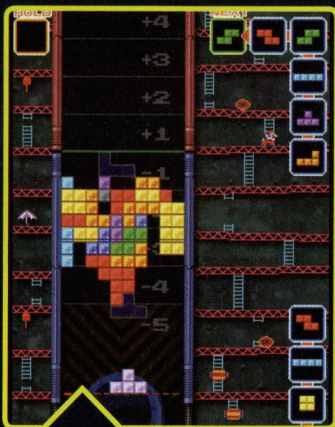
» Sure, the Lynx may have been roughly the size of a tractor and had a battery life of about 7 minutes, but the ill-fated Atari handheld boasts some of the highest average aggregate review scores of any handheld console ever. Chip's Challenge charges players to take control of a young computer nerd named Chip who must brave 148 levels of tile-based puzzling to impress the geeky object of his nerdish obsession, Melinda the Mental Marvel. Pushing blocks, collecting computer chips, finding keys and flicking switches has never been so romantic/fun.



**DS** **26: Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan**

**INIS.** 2005

» No, we don't mean the translated version of the game, Elite Beat Agents, we mean the original, odd and totally awesome Japanese original. With a name that translates to mean Hey! Fight! Cheer Squad, players take the role of male cheerleaders rousing a number of downtrodden Japanese folk to victory through rhythm action. Don't worry if you can't understand the text – the screens are hilarious with or without translation. The original music is better too.



**DS** **25: Tetris DS**

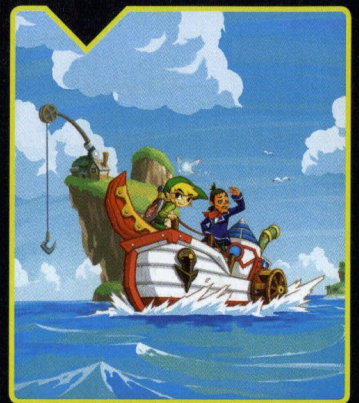
**NINTENDO.** 2006

» Most of the time when some developer who thinks they know better tries to muck around with the Tetris formula we get very cranky (we're looking at you THQ and your woeful Tetris Worlds) but this does it right. In addition to the standard falling block game, Tetris DS contains a few multi-player modes for up to four players, as well as multiple single player modes, including a fantastic puzzle mode and a static mode in which the player moves around still blocks with the stylus to complete rows.

**DS** **24: Zelda: Phantom Hourglass**

**NINTENDO EAD.** 2007

» How's this for a little bit of controversy. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass is the highest scoring hand-held game in Hyper history but we're only ranking it 24th in our list of 50 games. What gives? We stand by our score – it is a truly fantastic game, but for our money it just doesn't have the heart or warmth of some of the earlier Zelda games. The game is a technical marvel and ranks up there as probably the most accomplished piece of development on the DS.



**DS** **23: Animal Crossing Wild World**

**NINTENDO EAD.** 2005

» Fixing a house, collecting bugs, fishing and paying off debt are so much more fun when controlled via a tough screen. Seriously, even Wilks, a notorious Animal Crossing hater, found himself addicted to Wild World. There's something about the direct level of interaction that makes the game, when played on the DS actually feel like a game, rather than a series of random tasks and chores with no intrinsic fun value.



**game.com**



**COMPANY:** Tiger Electronics

**RELEASED:** 1997

**BEST ASPECT:**

Internet and PDA functions, touch-screen

**WORST ASPECT:**

No online gaming capabilities

**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Duke Nukem 3D, Frogger, Resident Evil 2, Sonic Jam

**Neo-Geo Pocket**



**COMPANY:** Neo-Geo

**RELEASED:** 1998

**BEST ASPECT:** It's Neo-Geo!

**WORST ASPECT:**

No third-party support, no colour until the revised model a year later

**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Metal Slug: First Mission, Metal Slug: Second Mission

**Game Boy Color**



**COMPANY:** Nintendo

**RELEASED:** 1998

**BEST ASPECT:** Colour screen, backwards compatibility with Game Boy games

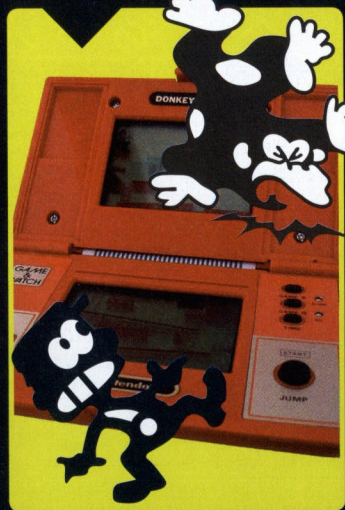
**WORST ASPECT:** Nothing really innovative – mutton dressed as lamb

**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Zelda: Oracle of the Ages



### Game & Watch 20: Donkey Kong

**NINTENDO.** 1982  
In 1982, Donkey Kong (and Donkey Kong Jr.) were doing great business in the arcades. Not only were the games fun, they were also a huge challenge, prompting people to pump coin after coin into machines. The home version of the game, the DK Game & Watch is every bit as fun and challenging as the arcade version, only you don't have to keep paying money to play. Win!



### DS 18: Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney

**CAPCOM.** 2007  
There is just no way to play Phoenix Wright and not develop the urge to point at things and scream "OBJECTION!", and quite rightly so. The game presents a fantastic return to semi-tradition adventure gaming, with a great mix of puzzles, character development and story. All of the sequels are great as well, but we just don't think they have the impact of the original.

### GBA 16: Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising

**INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS.** 2003  
Turn based strategy doesn't get much better than this. Taking everything good from the original Advance Wars and extending on it, such as adding eight new commanding officers to choose from and a tonne of new maps for multi-player, makes Black Hole Rising one of the most fully featured and addictive games on the GBA. A good story, some great music and a ranking system that allows the player to unlock more the better they play makes for a game you can come back to again and again.

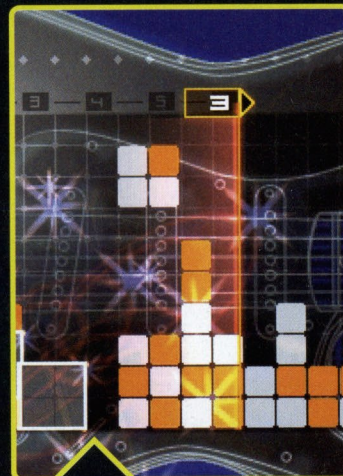
### GBA 22: Super Mario Bros 3: Super Mario Advance 4

**NINTENDO.** 2003  
We're sure some haters out there will be sick of our multiple mentions of Mario games by now, but they're just going to have to cope as there's more to come. Not only does the GBA port of SMB 3 contain a modified version of the original game, it also contains a full (modified) version of the original Mario Bros, as well as extra levels available on E-Reader cards (if you're lucky enough to be one of the three people who bought an E-Reader, that is).



### GBC 19: Mario Tennis

**CAMELOT SOFTWARE PLANNING.** 2001  
Mario Tennis is good on pretty much every platform it has appeared on and the Game Boy Colour is no exception. The simple arcade tennis is a treat and the RPG style progression adds a real sense of attachment to the game. A much different experience to Mario Tennis on the N64, the RPG mode allows the player to level up Mario by completing challenges and lessons, as well as explore the tennis academy grounds when not playing a match.



### PSP 17: Lumines

**Q ENTERTAINMENT.** 2005  
Who would have thought that synesthetic sound-scapes and falling block puzzle gaming would go so well together? Matching coloured blocks in groups of four or more can become dull in most falling block games, but the addition of a moving bar that wipes the blocks to the beat of the background music adds a wonderful depth to gameplay. Ignore Lumines 2 with the out of place rock tracks and go back to the original and best.

### GBC 15: Donkey Kong Country

**RARE.** 2000  
Clever platforming action at its best. Rather than simply playing one character, as is standard with most platformers, Donkey Kong Country sees players controlling both Donkey and Diddy Kong, using each simian's unique skills to uncover treasure, defeat enemies and collect DK's stolen banana horde. The addition of these unique skills gives Donkey Kong Country a pleasantly puzzle-like twist, marking it out from the hordes of other platformers that were released around the same time.



### GBA 21: Mario & Luigi Superstar Saga

**ALPHADREAM.** 2004  
At once a fantastically funny RPG that utilises both turn based and real time action, and a loving tribute/parody of the Mario universe, Mario & Luigi Superstar Saga is a game dripping with charm and clever gameplay. Combining elements of both platforming and JRPG (like Paper Mario before it), Superstar Saga rarely makes a wrong step, keeping the action flowing as smoothly as the laughs. Even though a new Villain, Cackletta is the main evil in the game, Princess Peach, in deference to tradition, still manages to be kidnapped.



#### WonderSwan

**COMPANY:** Bandai  
**RELEASED:** 1999  
**BEST ASPECT:** Held an exclusive license to publish Final Fantasy titles...  
**WORST ASPECT:** ...until Squaresoft signed up with Nintendo  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Hmm, let's lock in Final Fantasy on this one



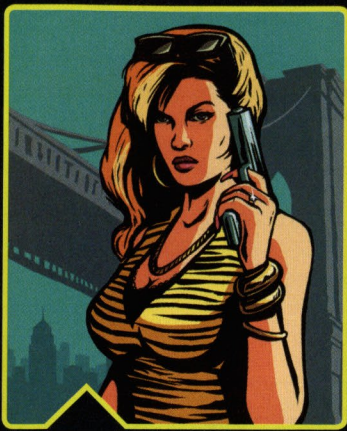
#### Game Boy Advance

**COMPANY:** Nintendo  
**RELEASED:** 2001  
**BEST ASPECT:** SNES-like gaming in portable form, plenty of great games available  
**WORST ASPECT:** Superseded by GBA SP  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Advance Wars, Super Mario World, Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow



#### GamePark 32 (South Korea Only)

**COMPANY:** Game Park  
**RELEASED:** 2001  
**BEST ASPECT:** Open-source development haven, plays DivX files with a little fiddling  
**WORST ASPECT:** Paltry number of official games  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Any emulated oldies



## GBA 12: Final Fantasy VI Advance

SQUARE ENIX. 2007

» One of Hyper's absolute favourite Final Fantasy games (a lot of us think it's better than Final Fantasy VII – ooh, controversy), Final Fantasy VI Advance not only contains one of the best villains ever, the irredeemably nasty Kefka, it also contains a bunch of extra material unique to the GBA, including some pretty nifty updated graphics, four new Espers to obtain and a whole new dungeon to fight your way through. If you've never played this classic JRPG, the GBA is the way to do it.



## PSP 8: Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops

KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS. 2007

» Who would have thought kidnapping people and forcing them to participate in covert military operations could be so much fun. Actually, after reading over the last sentence we can't think of a way kidnapping people and making them fight could not be fun. Rather than simply trying to kludge traditional Metal Gear Solid action onto the PSP, Kojima Productions wisely chose instead to modify the gameplay and camera, added an addictive collect-em-up (kidnap-em-up) element and some kick arse squad based action.

## PSP 14: GTA: Liberty City Stories

ROCKSTAR. 2005

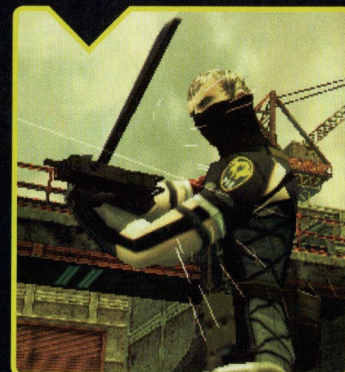
» Set three years after the revolutionary GTA III, Liberty City Stories successfully manages to both port the action of the GTA franchise into the handheld arena and continue the GTA story, almost making the game a sequel to GTA III. Forgoing the Renderware engine, Rockstar instead chose to opt for a custom built, in-house graphics engine – a wise choice, as the new engine allowed the game to run (fairly) smoothly in both single and multi-player.



## DS 10: Meteos

Q ENTERTAINMENT. 2005

» There are many falling block games in the world but few are as clever or deep as Meteos. Rather than clearing blocks by simply matching three or more of the same colour, the blocks in Meteos instead transformed into tiny rockets, propelling the line, and all blocks on top of the line into orbit – if the thrust was great enough to break the bonds of gravity. It's testament to the greatness of a game when a hastily skinned Disney version of the game can be rushed to release and is still a pretty kick-arse game.



## GBA 11: Zelda: A Link to the Past

NINTENDO. 2003

» Much like the Super Mario games, A Link to the Past has stood the test of time, playing as brilliantly in 2003 as it did when first released on the SNES way back in 1992. Introducing concepts not synonymous with Zelda, such as the Hook Shot, Master Sword and dual worlds, A Link to the Past is one of the great Zelda games, ported near perfectly to the GBA.



## PSP 7: God of War: Chains of Olympus

READY AT DAWN. 2008

» Sure, it's a very recent game that may not have withstood the test of time (as yet) but that does not take away from the overall awesomeness of Chains of Olympus. The PS2 controls and visuals of previous God of War games were honed to near perfection. Amazingly, the controls and visuals translate nearly perfectly to the Sony handheld, making for one of the most, if not the most technically impressive hand held games ever. Bloody good fun too!

## lots 13: Pokemon (all of them)

NINTENDO. MANY

» We haven't differentiated between all of the myriad Pokemon handheld titles because, honestly, they're nearly all the same game with a new coat of paint. Pokemon is the truest example of that old adage, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". The franchise has all but perfected the near autistic drive to catch them all, trapping players in a loop of moreish grinding. Normally, this cynical repackaging and all but forced labour mentality would piss us right off, but there's just something about Pokemon that you can't help but love.

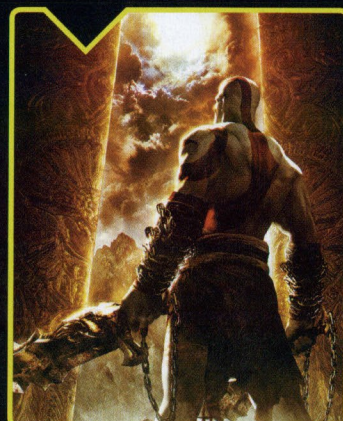


## GBA 9: Golden Sun

CAMELOT SOFTWARE

PLANNING. 2001

» Golden Sun is a fairly traditional Japanese RPG, featuring a team of four adventurers, random battles, bosses, a convoluted story and turn based combat, all of which are done near perfectly, making for one of the best traditional RPGs of all time, on any format. The real defining point of Golden Sun are the Djinn – magical spirits that can be linked to characters to influence stats, class progression and magical skills, as well as enabling characters to perform powerful summoning attacks.



### N-Gage

**NAME:** N-Gage  
**COMPANY:** Nokia  
**RELEASED:** 2003  
**BEST ASPECT:** It's a phone and a handheld gaming system  
**WORST ASPECT:** It wasn't particularly good at either  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Side Talkin'!



### Nintendo DS

**COMPANY:** Nintendo  
**RELEASED:** 2004  
**BEST ASPECT:** Dual screens, touch screen, microphone input, decent battery life  
**WORST ASPECT:** Not suited for most racing games, some titles fail to utilise the console's unique features  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Mario Kart DS, Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, Meteos



### PlayStation Portable (PSP)

**COMPANY:** Sony  
**RELEASED:** 2004  
**BEST ASPECT:** Powerful hardware, multimedia abilities  
**WORST ASPECT:** Short battery life, more ports than original games  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Lumines, MGS: Portable Ops, Wipeout Pure, God of War: Chains of Olympus

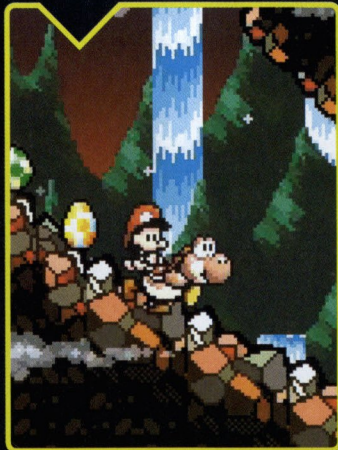


**GBA 4: Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3**

**NINTENDO EAD. 2002**  
 )) Yoshi's very own game. Players take the role of the cute little dinosaur on a mission to protect Baby Mario and rescue Baby Luigi after a stork kidnaps the brothers. At once familiar in terms of platforming and level design, and refreshingly new in terms of mechanics (swallowing and shooting enemies immediately springs to mind), Yoshi's Island is one of the most charming games ever made.

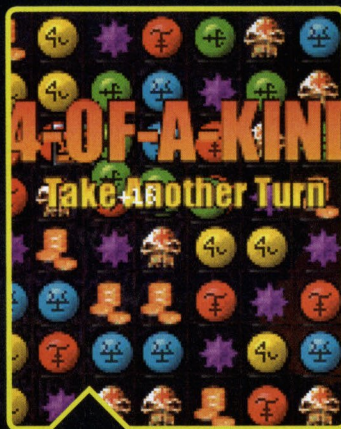
**GBC 6: Zelda: Oracle of the Ages/Seasons**

**FLAGSHIP. 2001**  
 )) A hugely ambitious project, Zelda: Oracle of Ages and Zelda: Oracle of Seasons are two linked games, not only sharing a main character and franchise (Link and Zelda respectively), but could also link together to swap items and receive power-ups. What's more, if a player plays both games sequentially, on completion of the first they receive a password that changes the other game into a sequel. Although different games – Ages focussed on puzzles whereas Seasons focussed on action – they both deserve to sit in the same spot in the top 10.



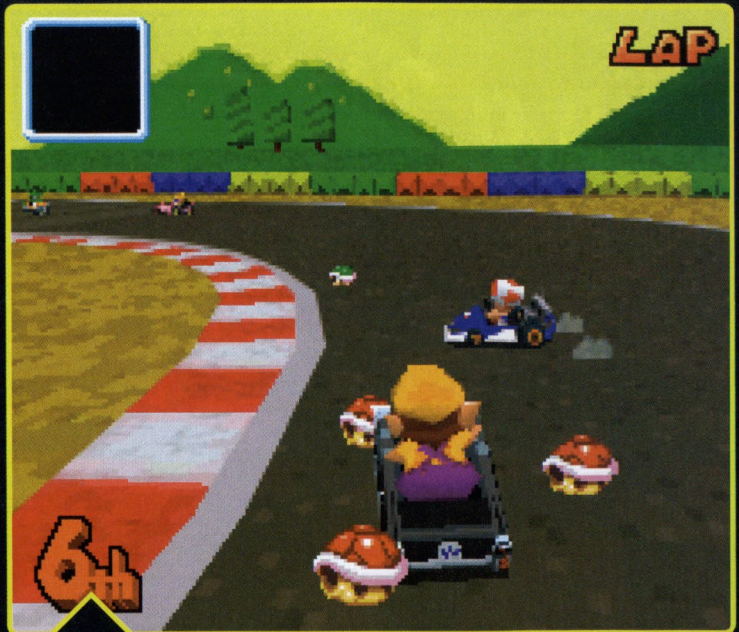
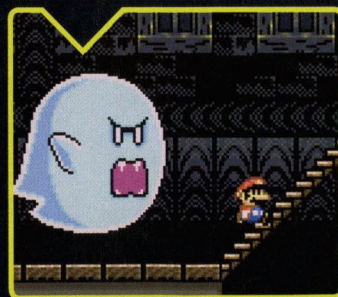
**GBA 3: Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2**

**NINTENDO EAD. 2002**  
 )) The name is a bit of a mouthful but Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2 is a handheld winner. Featuring the "Overworld" introduced in Super Mario Bros 3, SMW features a massive 72 courses spread over seven worlds. What's more, SMW added now familiar Mario Bros mechanics such as the spin-jump and suit power-ups. Even better, the game marked the first appearance of Yoshi in a Mario game. Even though SMW on GBA came out a decade or so after the original NES version, the game still feels fresh and fun, remaining one of the best side scrolling platformers ever.



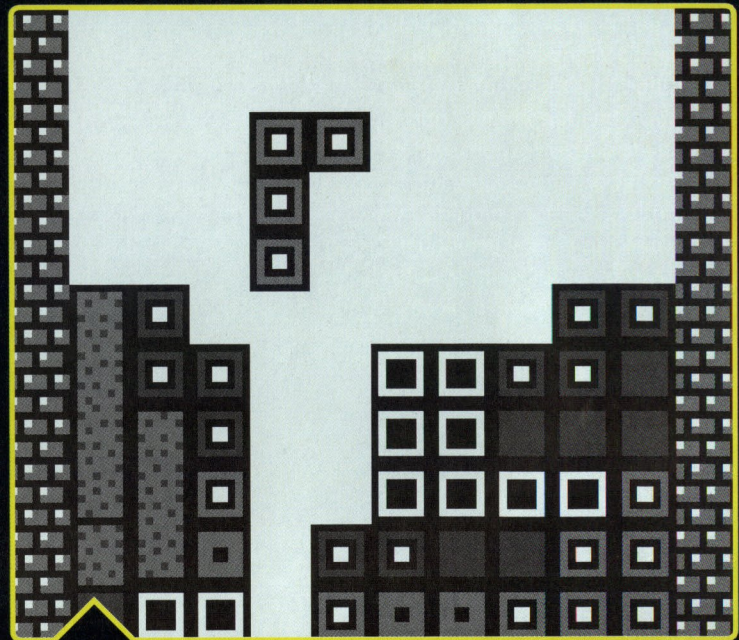
**DS 5: Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords**

**INFINITE INTERACTIVE. 2007**  
 )) Woo-hoo! An Aussie in the top 10. There's no mindless jingoism here. Puzzle Quest is a brilliant combination of familiar colour matching, sliding block puzzles (such as Bejeweled and Zoo Keeper) and hugely addictive role-playing tropes. While all versions of the game are excellent, for our money the best is on the DS – shifting gems with the stylus is so natural you'll wonder how you played a sliding block game any other way.



**DS 2: Mario Kart**

**NINTENDO EAD. 2005**  
 )) There have been few games in Hyper history that have led to as many unproductive days as Mario Kart on DS. Sitting around with the guys in the office for a quick Wi-Fi race would often result in the rest of the day being lost to constant rematches and trash talking. The tried and true Mario Kart gameplay and tracks translate brilliantly to the Nintendo handheld, and the addition of such simple ad-hoc multi-player is pure genius.



**GAME BOY 1: Tetris**

**BULLET PROOF SOFTWARE. 1989**  
 )) To put it simply, there is little chance of any handheld game ever being as perfect as Tetris. Combining the immensely enjoyable, easy to pick up, hard to master falling block gameplay with a hand held format was the console equivalent of the perfect storm. It's arguable that without Tetris on the Game Boy (and later the Game Boy Colour) selling a phenomenal 33 million units, the hand held gaming scene wouldn't be nearly as big or important as it is today.

**Zodiac**

**COMPANY:** Tapwave  
**RELEASED:** 2004  
**BEST ASPECT:** PDA/console hybrid, multimedia and Internet support  
**WORST ASPECT:** Company went bankrupt  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Doom 2, homebrew titles



**Gizmondo**

**COMPANY:** Tiger Telematics  
**RELEASED:** 2005  
**BEST ASPECT:** Built-in GPS and camera, decent hardware  
**WORST ASPECT:** Company a front for shady shenanigans  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Sticky Balls



**GP2X**

**COMPANY:** GamePark Holdings  
**RELEASED:** 2005  
**BEST ASPECT:** Aimed at homebrew developers, supports a range of emulators, multimedia support  
**WORST ASPECT:** Few commercial games available, possibly daunting for newcomers  
**NOTEABLE GAMES:** Make your own or play retro oldies!



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# »» Reviews



## REALITY BYTES

DARREN WELLS

### The Game of the Game

**C**onfession time: I don't play any sports. I'm the most un-coordinated chump you'll ever meet when it comes to physical activity. I'll flounder in a pool, swing through thin air in baseball, and can't catch to save my life. The most exercise I'll do is running for the train on the way to work. Yeah, me and sports, we haven't spoken in a while.

But none of that matters when it comes to videogames. I'm not talking about the fact that playing them removes us from doing all things out-doorsy, unless you're the type who plays their PSP during your morning jog. No, I'm talking about the ways in which games can take a sport and present it in an engaging way – one that's satisfying for those who play it in real life and accessible for those who don't.

This month Everybody's Golf: World Tour landed in Hyper HQ, and after we booted it up for a quick look, the fight was on between Daniel and myself on who would get to review it. Both of us were immediately taken with its presentation, personality, sense of achievement and gentle learning curve. Here was a game that didn't require us to know the subtle differences between a four iron and a nine iron, nor force us to bone up on our golf glossary terms like dormie, hardpan and sprachle (they're all real) in order to enjoy it. We were allowed to pick up the controller, play a few holes, and walk away with a decent score and a sense of fulfillment. Then we argued over who would get the next go.

Of course much of the appeal comes down to the style of the game: the eschewing of nitty-gritty realism in favour of something more simple and fun. It's by no means the first sports game to do this. In the early 90's Midway enjoyed much success with NBA Jam, a lightning fast interpretation of two-on-two basketball that soon became known for its over-the-top dunks and spawned numerous catch phrases. It was fun.

But as if responding in countermeasure, EA created NBA Live '95, a game that favoured a more realistic approach and, naturally, went on to spawn annual updates. It was also fun, despite being based in realism more than the former.

There have been others prior and many since. But how do they do it? How does one make a sports game that even the most unsportish person can enjoy? Daniel's a fan of the 2K series of NHL titles, EA's Madden series, Fight Night: Round Three, and SKATE, while I'm quite partial to EA's NHL and NBA series. And, of course, both of us enjoy Everybody's Golf (as you'll see, we reached a compromise on who would take the review honours).

### Perhaps sports games educate us more than any other game genre

Perhaps some of it comes down to the "crash course" approach, in that sports games actually impart some level of knowledge onto the player, rather than requiring the reverse. Whether it's teaching them alien-sounding terms like birdie and goal tending, or ensuring they become aware of – and abide by – that sport's rules, there's a certain degree of learning that goes beyond memorising weapon locations or enemy weak points.

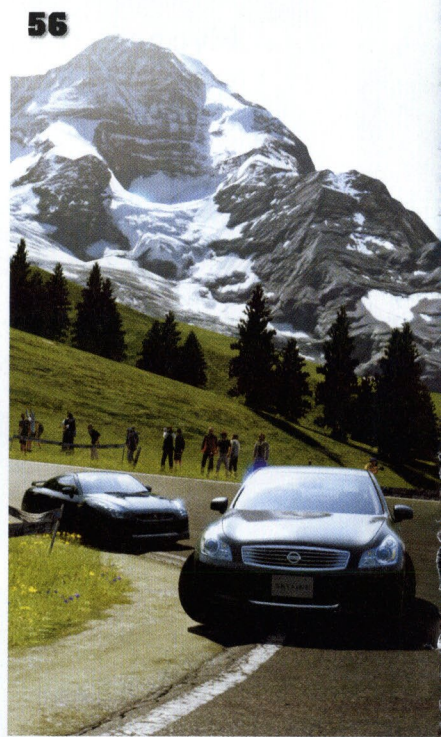
I can't believe I'm saying this, but perhaps sports games actually educate us more than any other game genre.

Maybe that's where the appeal lies. Maybe that's where the satisfaction stems from. A game or two of EA's latest hockey franchise will ingrain names, positions, rules, tactics, procedures and plays, some of it actually proving useful in the real world should one be required to sit in on a televised match. Maybe a love of the videogame will inspire a love for the sport itself, spurring an uptake of it in much the same way as Guitar Hero has reportedly caused a spike in music school guitar lessons.

Then again, maybe not. After all, I can't catch for peanuts.



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### The Hyper Scoring System - What's It All About?



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Chip-in Albatross

90+

Hole in one



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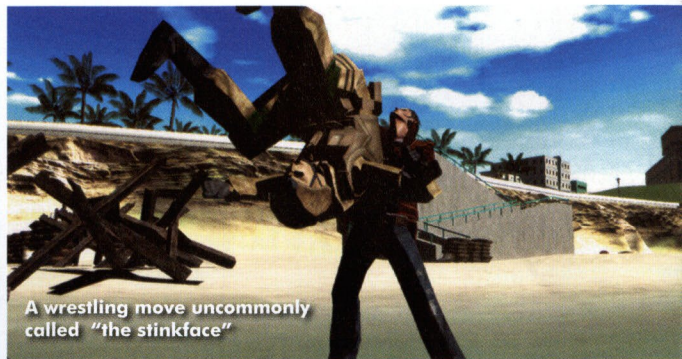
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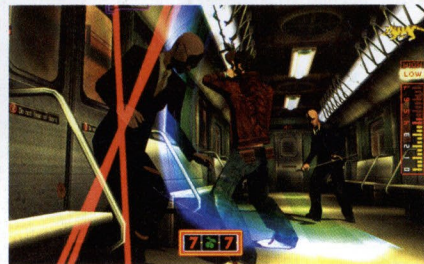




The Star Wars Kid a few years on



A wrestling move uncommonly called "the stinkface"



# No More Heroes

**DANIEL WILKS** knows he is in a videogame

**G**oichi Suda is an odd man. Originally an undertaker, Suda 51 rose to Japanese game infamy when he worked as a scenario writer for the wrestling game Super Fire Pro Wrestling Special, creating a shock ending that saw the game's hero committing suicide. Suda worked on a few more games with developer Human before moving on to found his own development studio, Grasshopper Manufacture. From here he released a few Japan-only games including *The Silver Case*, a convoluted murder mystery, and *Flower, Sun and Rain*, a Groundhog Day style game in which the protagonist lives out the same day again and again trying to stop a bomb from destroying a plane and slowly losing their grip on reality in the process. He later launched into the Western market with the decidedly, and deliberately, strange GCN action game, *Killer 7*, which told (obliquely) the story of a 60 year old, wheelchair-bound master assassin with multiple personalities that can be manifested as the killers of the title. Not only was the story strange, but the presentation of the game veered towards the surreal and abstract, and although it wasn't a commercial hit, it definitely stands up as a cult classic for the ages.

Why the history lesson? Well, honestly, because Suda 51's new game, *No More Heroes* needs a bit of context. Once again, Suda and

Grasshopper Manufacture have crafted a genuinely odd game, both in terms of structure and story, but this time around the game contains elements of post-modern self-awareness that marks it at once as being familiar Suda 51 material and something decidedly new and almost too clever by half.

## NOT A LIGHTSABER

We'll get on to that bit later. One of the first truly adult oriented (though remarkably juvenile) games on the Wii, *No More Heroes* casts players as the rather obnoxious/cool Travis Touchdown, a slacker who, after winning a "Beam Katana" (I'm sure Mr. Beady's lawyers must be trying to find a loophole to get litigious for copyright infringement) kills the 11th best hitman in the world and decides to kill his way through the ranks to reach number one. Like *Killer 7*, each of the 10 ranked hitmen (or should I say hit-persons, as more than one is female) are sketched around broad archetypes and

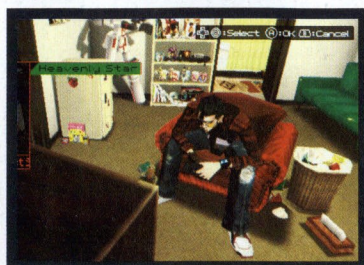
pop-culture ideals, with references taken to the Nth and made far larger than life. Characters include a sexy schoolgirl with a samurai sword, a crazy stage magician, a perverse martial arts master, and a murderous cosplaying postman, with all of these (and others) made up of references from just about any cult movie made in the last 25 years.

The action of the game can be divided into two sections — the ranking battles and everything else. To get to a ranking battle Travis must, somewhat counter-intuitively, earn enough money doing jobs around the vast but rather empty city of Santa Destroy to pay for his entry fee. Once the fee is paid, Travis can ride off to his final fight destination where he must hack his way through hordes of themed minions before encountering the boss. More on the combat in a second. First we should have a look at earning money, as this is something that players will spend a good amount of time doing.

X360 | PS3 | **Wii** | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

category: **Action** / players: **1**  
 developer: **Grasshopper Manufacture**  
 publisher: **Red Ant**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **MA**  
 available: **Now**

There are two ways of making money in Santa Destroy — by doing odd jobs and by carrying out contracted hits in which the player must kill one of more targets whilst adhering to some strict rules, such as a time limit, a damage limit and the like. These assassination missions play much like the ranked battles so deserve no more real attention. It's the odd jobs that need to be looked at. It's as though Suda 51 and Grasshopper Manufacture have deliberately set out to create a series of mini-games designed specifically to have the player constantly on the verge of screaming. Activities like collecting coconuts, picking up garbage, catching scorpions, mowing lawns and the like are simultaneously totally out of place



## STUFF

Aside from riding from destination to destination, there are a few other things to do in Santa Destroy. Travis can kick open dumpsters to find money or T-Shirts (there are a hundred or so to be found and bought), buy new Beam Katanas and Katana upgrades from his friend Dr. Naomi, train his body with his wrestling instructor Thunder Ryu and collect Lovikov balls to trade with a drunk Russian for secret techniques. Travis can also buy clothing and wrestling videos, the former doing nothing but changing Travis' appearance and the latter teaching Travis new wrestling moves.



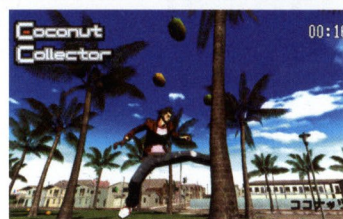
!!! To add to the smart-arse attitude, recharging the Beam Katana makes you look like you're furiously rubbing one out.



Destroyman has a junk-mounted laser/awesome name



The manly art of lawn mowing rendered camp



in the game and yet so perfectly in character. Nearly every part of No More Heroes, from design through to dialogue, is self-consciously aware that it is a game. The HUD and other on screen prompts are old school 8 and 16 bit images. Many of the incidental sounds could have been ripped directly from old arcade games. Characters reference release delays for the game and ratings hassles in dialogue. With this in mind it's not hard to think that the mini-games have been developed to be obvious, almost inappropriate mechanics.

### NO MORE MINI-GAMES

While the mini-games can come across as being a little too self-aware for their own good, the combat, on the other hand, is excellently handled, using a combination of button mashing and motion control that utilises the strengths of the Wiimote and Nunchuck brilliantly. Hitting the A button triggers a Beam Katana attack while hitting the B trigger makes Travis lash out with a stunning attack enabling him to grapple and pull off a devastating wrestling move. Holding the Wiimote pointed up or down changes the angle of the Beam Katana attack, allowing Travis to bust out longer

combos and attack around enemy defence. Motion controls are also used for finishing moves, wrestling moves and sword clashes, with the player moving the Wiimote and Nunchuck as indicated by on-screen prompts. Killing enemies starts a fruit machine-style wheel. Matching three symbols puts Travis in Dark Side Mode for a short while, giving him access to superhuman killing powers. Striking a nice balance between straightforward

» **So is No More Heroes a good game? Yes, definitely. But I wouldn't necessarily recommend it.**

and pleasantly finicky (some of the advanced wrestling moves require multiple synchronised movements), No More Heroes is one of the few non-Nintendo games that has fully utilised the capabilities of Wii control without feeling gimmicky. Boss battles are a pleasant mix of old-school pattern memorisation and white-knuckled luck but remain fun throughout.

Visually, No More Heroes is as strange and post-modern as the writing. The game uses an anime-style approach to character design and some striking cel-shading but for all the vibrancy and humour

of the characters and some of the locations (Travis' apartment springs to mind) the rest of Santa Destroy is a rather dull and lifeless expanse. For every outstanding image or animation there is one equal and opposite and, disappointingly, the frame-rate is far from stable. A lot of fuss has been made about Australia not getting the full gore of the American release and instead has

to put up with enemies turning into showers of coins when killed. Having played both versions of the game I can honestly say I prefer the non-American version. Whilst splitting bodies in half and showers of blood is funny, I think the approach of killing people and having them turn directly into money is totally in keeping with the general outlook

and philosophy of the game. Voice acting and general sound is sublime. Each of the characters walks the line between being super-cool and hugely obnoxious, delivering serious and grotesquely over the top lines with the same confidence.

So is No More Heroes a good game? Yes, definitely. I'd even go so far to say that it is brilliant. But I wouldn't necessarily recommend it. More often than not, No More Heroes comes across as a little too clever for its own good, especially during the Santa Destroy sections, in which players often have to (and quite deliberately, by the looks of it) fight their own frustration by performing overly repetitive tasks to earn enough money to enter the next ranked match. If you can put up with a good solid dose of post-modern, self-aware wankery, then No More Heroes is a must buy. If, on the other hand, people rubbing your nose in how damn clever they are annoys you, caveat emptor. «

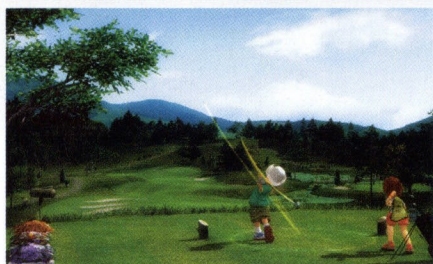
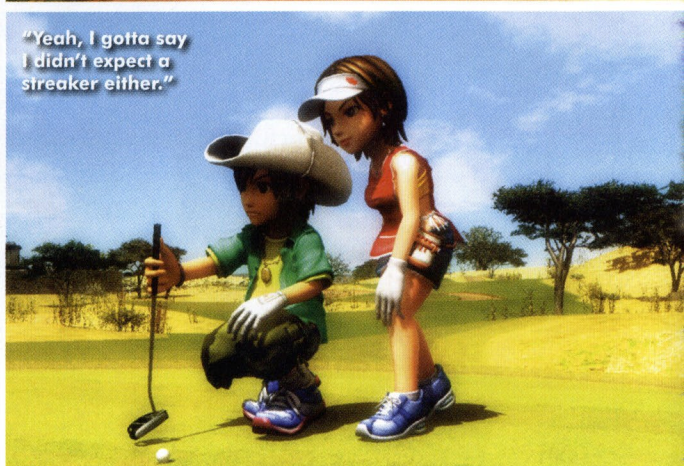
Very clever writing; self-aware; great combat mechanics	Often too self-consciously clever; deliberately repetitive	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>	
Brilliant, but more than a little bit of a smart-arse	VISUALS <b>84</b>	SOUND <b>93</b>	GAMEPLAY <b>88</b>
			<b>85</b>



After this, he's got a shareholders meeting.



"Yeah, I gotta say I didn't expect a streaker either."



# Everybody's Golf: World Tour

**DARREN WELLS** and **DANIEL WILKS** are golf. You should be too

**Wells:** It was sometime during our second week of playing Everybody's Golf: World Tour that I realised something. "You know," I said, turning to Wilks, "this has got to be the most we've used the PS3 in months."

He nodded. "Yeah." Then he proceeded to get his third eagle that day.

From the moment the game arrived, it has not been removed from the console. Not once. Its likeable charm, combined with

its "easy to learn, hard to master" approach to the sport of chequered pants, makes it instantly accessible, and as much of a delight to watch as it is to play. Colours are bright, characters are cheery, and each course is distinctly memorable. Between us we wouldn't know a nine-iron from a tire iron, but damnit, this golf game had us back for more every single day.

**Wilks:** That it did. I hate to say it, but Everybody's Golf: World

Tour is a game filled with that totally ephemeral substance that is charm. It's just an overwhelmingly charming experience. And a very satisfying one. There have been few things more gratifying this month than rubbing Darren's nose in the fact that he has only scored one Eagle (2 under par) while I get one nearly every match. When I inevitably score the first Hole in One, watching him cry over his keyboard will be a thing of beauty. Really though, who would have thought that an anime-inspired golf game would be one of our favourite games of the month? More than that, it's one of our very favourite games on the PS3.

**Wells:** Admittedly, it's a very similar game to the PSP version released in 2005, but considering how much fun it was, perhaps that's a good thing. The likenesses are many, including the presentation, camera angles, Challenge Mode tier system, and — as we've mentioned — the magic of the gameplay. Things aren't given much of a shake-up, so expecting something radically different is likely to disappoint.

That's to take nothing away from what the game delivers. The sense of accomplishment is impeccable, with tough shots and skilful swings celebrated in lashings of colour and cheer before they're recorded for posterity. You've got a caddy in tow

PS3 | Wii | PC | PS2 | DS | PSP

category: **Sport** / players: **1-4**  
 developer: **Clap Hanz**  
 publisher: **Sony**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **G**  
 available: **Now**

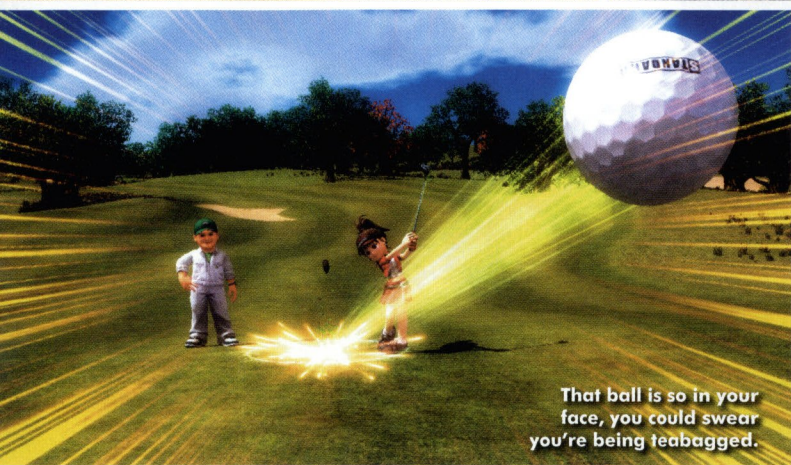
who'll enthusiastically chase after your ball like a hyperactive pup, as well as offer advice about the lay of the ball. Characters come with their own strengths and weaknesses, and have stats that will improve the more you use them. Combine that with two different shot techniques and the carrot-on-a-stick chase to improve one's best score, and the result is a game that everyone can get something out of.

**Wilks:** A nice new addition is the Advanced Shots mode. Instead of looking at the traditional power bar to gauge the strength of shots, the player instead looks at the position of the player's club. When a shot is started the maximum draw of the club is silhouetted on screen. Hitting the club at maximum draw allows for more powerful shots. Once the shot strength is chosen, players must then hit a button again (X for standard shots, o for slightly weaker shots and Triangle for stronger shots) to stop a shrinking ring within a target representing the accuracy of the shot. It's not a big change of pace from using the traditional power-bar method of

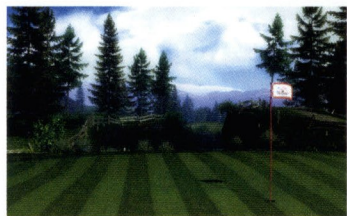




!!! There's an Australian caddy but avoid using her unless you love the cultural cringe. Use the one that looks like Amos instead.



That ball is so in your face, you could swear you're being teabagged.



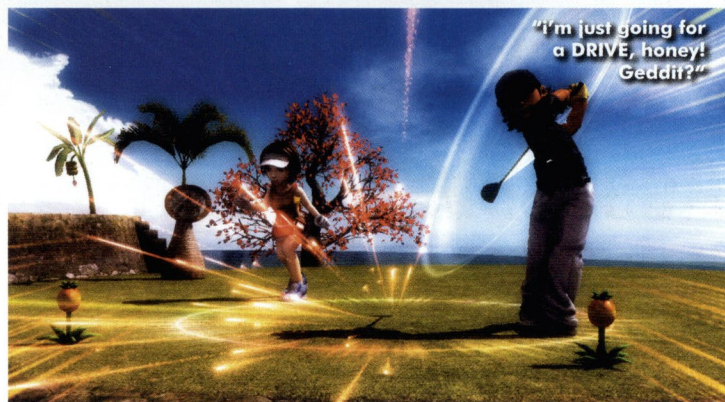
shot placement, but looking at the actual character and course rather than a yellow line is a welcome change, and one that makes you feel a little more involved in the action. As an added bonus, the Advanced Shots mode increases the overall power of your shots, enabling you to make longer drives.

**Wells:** Traditionalists fear not, because the time-honoured power bar remains, allowing players to begin with the method they're most comfortable with before stepping

up to the more advanced technique. There's a little more guesswork involved with the Advanced Shots mode — namely, you can't gauge where your ball will go by stopping the meter under the flag icon — but as mentioned, it does come with a lot more power at your disposal, and it doesn't take long before it all becomes second nature.

Some of the courses will definitely require every inch of power you can muster. Long tee shots get things off to a great start, and once you've honed the spin controls,

## Who would have thought that an anime-inspired golf game would be one of our favourite games of the month?



you'll be putting up a fight against opponents that start off simple, but soon give you a run for your money. It's a pleasant difficulty curve, and as you build up your character's stats to convert that gap of defeat into a wide margin of victory, it becomes constantly rewarding.

**Wilks:** It's a pretty lengthy game as well — we've been playing it for about 25 or so hours so far and still have a bunch of characters to unlock (including a big American dude who looks like the love-child of Mr. T and N.W.O. era Hulk Hogan) and a couple more difficulty levels to master. We should be bashing balls for quite a while yet. That is the very last time I will ever consciously use the term "bashing balls" in a sentence. Ever.

**Wells:** S'okay, there are plenty more golfing euphemisms we can use, such as "putting from the rough" and "selecting a stroke technique",

but we're above that.

It's a great game, no doubt about it, but there are a few niggles. There's no character customisation — no opportunities to unlock funny hats and umbrellas and kit out your player with crazy fashion sense. It's a baffling omission, as it removes the chance to make one's character truly unique. There's also no way to exit a game once you've started. You're not able to go back to the main menu via a simple Exit option, forced instead to do a soft reset of the PS3. Trust us, the opportunities for ragequitting will present themselves all too often towards the game's later stages, and it's frustrating that an easier method was not implemented.

Still, World Tour is a clear winner in the Hyper bunker. Don't dismiss this as "just a golf game" — it's an approachable and engaging title, with more than enough fun and personality to keep your PS3 warm for months. **«**

Charming; great mechanics, pick up and play	Little customisation of characters; no "create a golfer"	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b> <b>89</b>	
Golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf, golf...	VISUALS <b>86</b>		SOUND <b>82</b>



# Assassin's Creed

**DARREN WELLS** doesn't get mad, he gets stabby

You know the game. Anticipated for months before being torn to shreds by the jaded masses, Assassin's Creed continues to polarise gamers. Some critics love it, some people hate it. Some loved it at the start but realised later they should hate it, while others hated it initially but found reasons to love it afterwards. Love, hate, love, hate. Who would have thought Assassin's Creed would receive such a prickly reception?

When it comes to Hyper, we loved it. Earning a very respectable 95, we found much to like about Desmond Miles' genetically relived memories as his assassin ancestor, Altair. But naturally, platform exclusives don't remain exclusive for long and so, a handful of months since its Xbox debut, it's unleashed on the PC. But is it really the best system for this love-hate-love-hate game?

## RUN, ALTAIR, RUN!

It should come as no surprise to learn that the game is very much the same as it was on the 360. Free running and neck stabbing is still the order of the day as Altair races through 11th century Jerusalem offing his targets, while Desmond, reliving these memories on the Animus, is pressured to co-operate with a mysterious corporation known as Abstergo Industries. The game weaves in and out of the two timelines, with

things eventually culminating to... well, I've said too much.

Or not. It's a safe bet to suggest that those interested in Assassin's Creed have already played it to completion on the 360; heck, perhaps you bought the console with the express purpose to play this one game. Even those who have not steered Altair throughout his genetically recorded memories have at least some idea of what's in store. So let's cut to the chase and examine what the PC version specifically gives us.

Short answer: not much. As far as extra bones go, Assassin's Creed provides very little incentive to pick up the PC version over the current console release.

The main offerings are the four new mission types, which slot seamlessly into the existing game and, upon completion, provide extra information about the next target.

Among them we have the Rooftop Race Challenge, which is very much what it sounds like, and the Archer Stealth Assassination Challenge, tasking the player with helping out fellow assassins by bumping off a number of archers patrolling a designated zone. Stealth is wavered in the former, essential in the latter, and likewise, the suitability of these modes on the PC platform hovers between levels of acceptance.

The rooftop races take too much

inspiration from the heady days of arcade development, with the Point A to Point B timed race feeling far too "arcadey", for lack of a better word. However, on the flip side, the archer assassination missions feel right at home on the PC, evoking the feel of some classic titles such as Thief and Hitman. However, on its new mouse-and-keyboard home, some tasks are made redundant — the flag collecting springs to mind. Unlike the 360 that would reward the act with an achievement, collecting flags on the PC results in nothing other than giving you bragging ammo for your next round table discussion.

Then there's the menu system. Assassin's Creed achieved an interesting result by turning a game device into an actual part of the world — it explained the game's menu as part of the Animus interface. Fine. But let's count the ways in which one exits the game to resume browsing the internet for lolcats: From Altair's mission, the game is paused and Exit is selected. You wake up as Desmond. Pause again and select Exit again. You're greeted with the Profile Select



**PC**  
 category: **Action** / players: **1**  
 developer: **Ubisoft**  
 publisher: **Ubisoft**  
 price: **\$89.95** / rating: **MA 15+**  
 available: **Now**

screen, whereby you must select your save file. Then it's back to the traditional main menu where, once again, you select Exit. Oh, and don't forget the obligatory "Are you sure you want to..." confirmation at every step.

The handful of other features warrants scant mention. The souped-up graphics look gorgeous and the mouse and keyboard controls, while confusing in the middle of a heated battle, generally work fairly well, though you'll still feel more at home with a dual thumbstick controller. But at the end of the day, it's still the same love-hate game, and its PC makeover won't change established opinions on this matter. Be aware of that before examining your gaming preferences and deciding which version — the console or the PC — is right for you. «

Great story, great graphics, intuitive controls

Some missions don't feel right on the PC, loopy menu system

**HYPER VERDICT**

Still a fine game, but nothing particularly PC-centric about it.

VISUALS **95** SOUND **88** GAMEPLAY **92**

**90**

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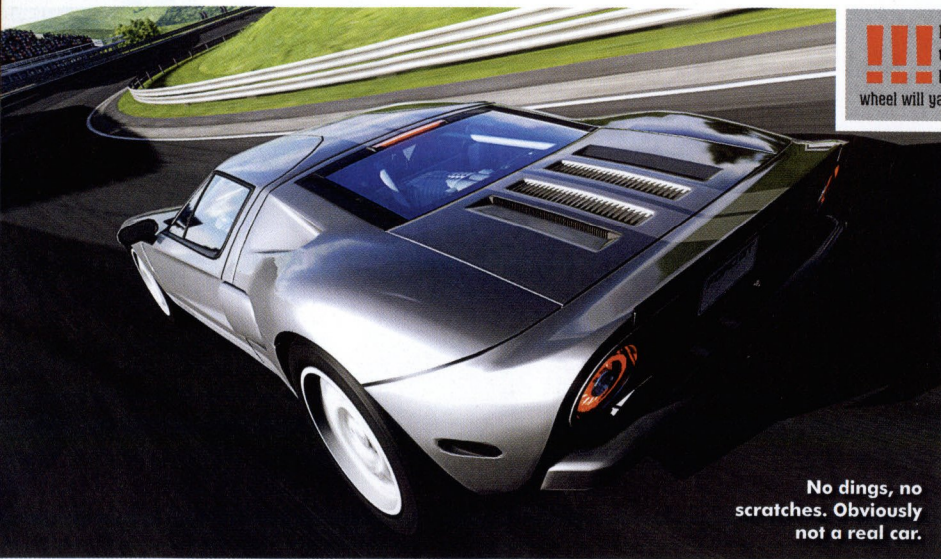


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No dings, no scratches. Obviously not a real car.

!!! Prologue supports the Dual Shock 3, but hey, just get a wheel will ya?!



Viper GT5 Blue/White Stripes  
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Next race, I'm choosing Herbie.



# Gran Turismo 5 Prologue

**ELIOT FISH** is a drifter..

Is it a glorified demo? A cynical cash making exercise? A watered down waste of time? A superb taster of things to come? A must-have purchase? Better than sex? GT5 Prologue is all these things, depending on who you choose to talk to. Some find the GT series boring and drab, others revel in its intricate simulation. So let's make one thing clear: I'm more of a Burnout type guy, but I love GT5 Prologue. Having never really understood the fascination and adoration that has been heaped upon the series in the past, for some reason, GT5 Prologue has made me see the (green) light.

What we have here is a little bit of everything that will be in the full game when it's finally released. To tantalise your tastebuds, Prologue

offers 71 cars, 16-player online racing, six different tracks (all playable in reverse), the GT TV channel (with content from the BBC's Top Gear), and a variety of racing challenges. There's enough here to keep you gaming for months, really.

Prologue's menus are slick, quick to access and designed with real class. In fact, Prologue is a beautifully constructed game from top to bottom. Browsing the manufacturers to ogle at a Ferrari F430 '06 or Art Morrison Corvette '60 is irresistible, and it's no joke that these car models will blow you away. Racing them in 1080p at 60 frames per second is just as good as it sounds. Absolutely stunning.

Even better, all the vehicles handle like a dream, with distinct

differences that even non-revheads can appreciate. The interior camera perspective is fantastic in all cars, with the reverse angle giving you a view over the back seat and out the rear window for ultimate immersion. The way certain cars accelerate, grip or drift differently is endlessly satisfying, and when you learn how to slingshot your opponents by drafting, circular tracks such as Daytona become strangely compelling, not at all a tiresome loop. The gorgeous maze of inner-London, meanwhile, is endlessly challenging.

Event racing starts you out in C class, with each challenge needing to be cleared (bronze, silver or gold trophies, natch) before you progress to B class, A class and eventually S class. However, there's also a Drift Trial mode (that rewards long, crash-free powerslides - much like Project Gotham), Time Trials (ghost car ahoy) and even 2-player split-screen.

The Online mode lets you tackle 15 other players from around the world, however, a lack of matchmaking options takes the shine off this feature. Online play is smooth, but

PS3

category: **Racing sim** / players: **1-16**  
 developer: **Polyphony Digital**  
 publisher: **Sony Computer Entertainment**  
 price: **\$59.95** / rating: **G**  
 available: **Now**



it's almost unforgivable that the player has no real control over who they race.

One of our only complaints is that Prologue is yet another PS3 game that requires an installation process. Pop it in and go make something to eat, because it'll be almost 15 minutes before you can start playing. But really, this is a minor quibble, because once it's all in place, loading times are made extremely bearable and you'll have family members trying to pry the controller out of your sweaty palms. «



Looks fantastic, feels fantastic.	Not the full game; no damage model.	<b>HYPER VERDICT</b>
2009 can't come soon enough.	<b>94</b>	<b>92</b>
	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>





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\* Subject to availability



!!! BWii features some shocking voice work. Like, can't even pronounce words properly shocking. We're not sure if it's taking the piss or they simply couldn't nail down a decent voice actor.



Your tax dollars at work.



# Battalion Wars 2

**DYLAN BURNS** still plays with plastic army men

**B**attalion Wars 2 is a fun little game, with short and snappy missions, plenty of action-packed combat and more command units than you can poke a Bazooka team at. At a basic level, it comes across as a zoomed in Advance Wars game – and there are certainly similarities to that excellent turn-based series, such as the rock-paper-scissors design aesthetic, the unit-focused strategy gameplay, and the cutesy character and vehicle models.

The first thing you notice about BWii is its very high production values. The opening cinematic is a great CG introduction to the Battalion Wars universe, where several factions have been vying for the ultimate super weapon, the doomsday device, for generations. Sure, it's all a bit silly, but the game

never really takes itself seriously, with each faction's leader painted in rather broad brush strokes (and a peppering of stereotypes).

BWii plays in real time, with you taking control of a squad made up of various units and proceeding through each mission's checkpoints. The game's graphics balance between realism and cartoon-like, with some quite detailed environments – such as lush, tropical islands – coupled with infantry and unit designs that lean towards the cute and bouncy. In fact, your Grunts jump along like little munchkins and don't look very battle hardened at all. The deliberately blocky, almost LEGO like, ground vehicle and air unit designs do, however, aptly suit the game's fairly light hearted approach.

## I'LL STRATO DESTROY YOU!

To start off with you'll be learning how to select units, target enemies and switch control (yep, you can fast swap to any unit in your squad). However, it's not long before you're telling your Bazooka guys to take out a light tank while you send some Grunts over to capture the enemy base. Throughout the course of the game you'll get to control all manner of cool contraptions – tanks, scouts, frigates, submarines, gunships, and even a Strato Destroyer (which is basically a fighter and bomber in one). Each unit has its strengths and weaknesses. For example, Bazookas are great against Tanks and MG nests, but can get burnt to a crisp by a dastardly Flame Veteran.

Most missions are extremely linear, requiring you to follow waypoint after waypoint, each of which is condescendingly symbolised as a big glowing star (go here, duh). The game gets pretty hectic later on, particularly if you want to get an A or S rank, so if it feels like the game is a bit tutorial heavy for the first half, it's only to prepare you for the constant

**Wii**  
 category: **Action/Strategy** / players: **1-2**  
 developer: **Kuju Entertainment**  
 publisher: **Nintendo**  
 price: **\$99.95** / rating: **M**  
 available: **Now**

real-time swapping, targeting and commanding that's needed to succeed in later stages.

The Wii controls work okay, but we can't help but feel like Kuju Entertainment ran out of buttons – with some iffy movements assigned to motion controls. Using tilt for flight control is all well and good, but too often you'll find your Grunts rolling sideways or jumping around at a slight twitch of the Nunchuck.

Battalion Wars 2 is a fun, light-hearted action romp. It won't win any awards for its story, and the short mission structure promotes short game sessions. Some more depth to the strategy side of the game would have been nice. As it is, you can pretty much get away with just pointing and pressing A to win. But if you like your strategy lite and your characters cute, then this is probably the game for you. ◀◀



<p>Heaps of units, high production values.</p>	<p>Iffy motion controls, a bit too cutesy.</p>	<p><b>HYPER VERDICT</b></p>
<p>It has the charm, but lacks that strategy X factor.</p>	<p>VISUALS <b>95</b></p>	<p>SOUND <b>88</b></p>
	<p>GAMEPLAY <b>92</b></p>	<p><b>90</b></p>



!!! The opening cutscenes are great and brilliantly voice acted but don't expect too many of them.



This is what it looks like when you put tiny cities in the microwave.



Eh, I've seen bigger dragons.



# Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn

**YURI SPADEFACE** never leaves a man behind

A direct sequel to the GCN game, Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance, Radiant Dawn shifts the action to three years after the events of that game. Players are once again cast as members of the rebel folk heroes, the Dawn Brigade, fighting against the oppression of an evil empire and villains so damn villainous they should be twirling their moustaches every time they slaughter some innocent peasants or laugh maniacally. In a series that has had strong stories and characters for years, Radiant Dawn feels like something of a throwback to a far more innocent time — a time when any old crap could pass as a story as long as it supported the gameplay, but honestly, “the president has been kidnapped” is a more compelling plot than the

one in Radiant Dawn. If you're a fan of Fire Emblem and play them for the stories, stop reading now and find something else to play. If you're looking to get into turn based strategy you may want to look elsewhere as well, as the game is unforgiving and uninviting to newcomers. Be that as it may, Radiant Dawn still features all the deep and unforgiving strategy the franchise is known for. As always, the game features no real main character, rather a number of heroes that players will control over the course of the game.

**THERE AIN'T NO COMING BACK**  
If you're new to the Fire Emblem series and are interested in getting into some turn based strategy action, this is not the game to

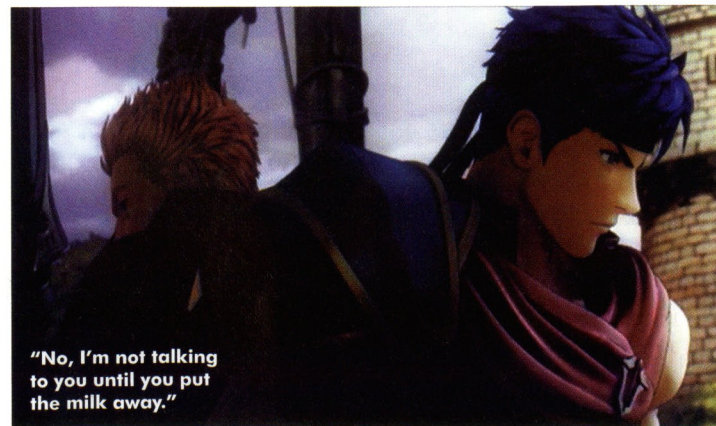
start with. Fire Emblem has always been known as an unforgiving series, given the fact that any character dying in battle means they are lost forever, but even for the franchise Radiant Dawn is difficult. In previous games players had the luxury of making a mistake or two in battle but in the current iteration battles need to be played out all but perfectly if you want your characters to survive to fight another day. Thankfully the game supports in-combat saving, taking away some of the frustration, but don't let the idea of saving go to your head — you'll still find yourself playing over the same battles again and again trying to keep people alive.

While we dig the idea of a game franchise being true to its roots, we have to make an exception with Radiant Dawn. There is absolutely nothing in the game that makes it a Wii title aside from the fact that it comes in a white plastic box. There is no new gameplay based around motion control, no significant graphical upgrade to make it stand out from the GCN Path of Radiance, no new orchestration

**Wii**  
category: **Turn Based Strategy** / players: **1**  
developer: **Intelligent Systems**  
publisher: **Nintendo**  
price: **\$99.95** / rating: **M**  
available: **Now**

or voice acting. There's nothing really to differentiate the game from the games before it aside from the expected slight iterative graphical upgrade. Hell, it doesn't even really support the Wiimote, insisting that players use it as a basic (and somewhat uncomfortable) gamepad. It's all well and good to be faithful to a franchise, but to do it at the expense of any type of evolution just rubs us the wrong way.

As it currently stands, Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn is the best turn based strategy game on the Wii, but with the lack of competition this isn't really saying much. The strategy is solid and if you can get over the difficulty cliff the game is an enthralling 40 or so hours but for our money you'd be better off trying to find a copy of Path of Radiance on Ebay for cheap and playing that instead. «

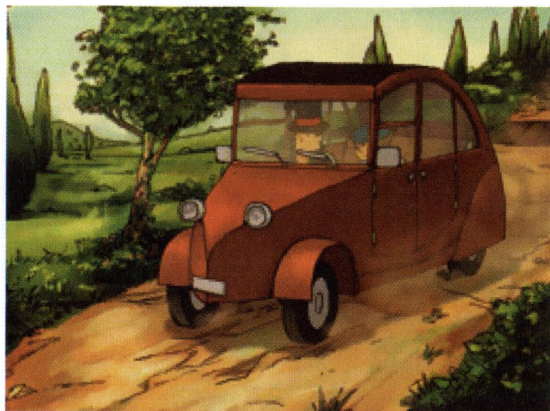


“No, I'm not talking to you until you put the milk away.”

Deep strategy; hard      Unforgiving; permanent death; not really a Wii game      **HYPER VERDICT**

Punishing but ultimately rewarding – if you have the patience      VISUALS      SOUND      GAMEPLAY      **79**

82      76      81



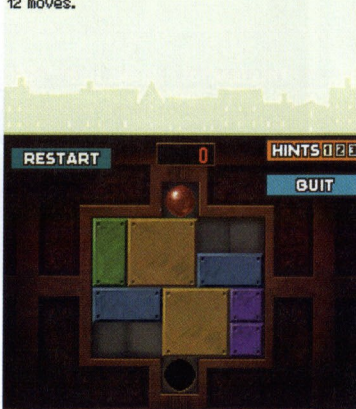
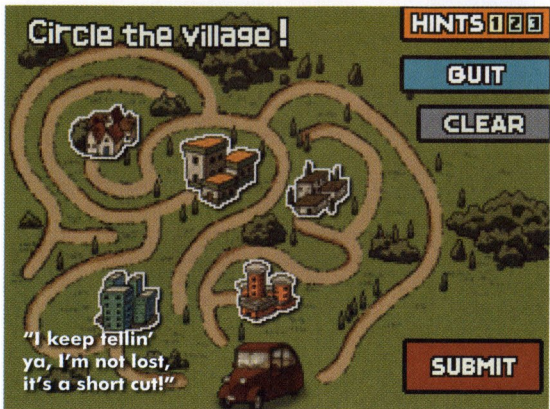
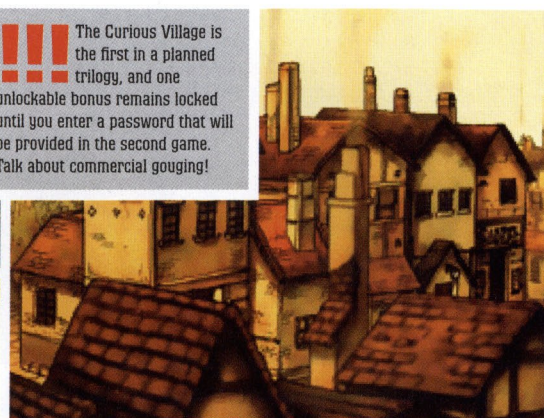
!!! The Curious Village is the first in a planned trilogy, and one unlockable bonus remains locked until you enter a password that will be provided in the second game. Talk about commercial gouging!

No.058 80 PICARATS COINS: 60

Can you get the red ball out of the maze?

Slide obstructing blocks out of the way to clear a path for the ball.

This Problem can be solved in as few as 12 moves.



The puzzles are even harder if you play it in Japanese.

あたしが出すナゾを、あんたが解いてくれたらね!

# Professor Layton and the Curious Village

**DARREN WELLS** wants a pet robot dog

As far as job descriptions go, being a famous archaeologist and puzzle-solving detective sounds pretty neat. See the world, demonstrate your smarts, haul in the ladies. Perhaps it's understandable that they don't make it more well-known down at Centrelink because, after all, society still needs people to flip burgers and wash cars.

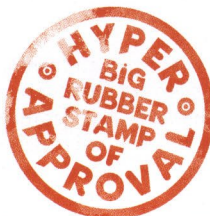
Professor Layton was obviously standing in the right queue, because he's heading off to St. Mystere with his assistant Luke (they get assistants? Daniel, I want a word with you...) in search of hidden treasure. This curious village is curious indeed, for around every corner, behind every doorway, on

every wall and in the mouths of every one of its inhabitants lies a puzzle. Forget helpful advice and keys lying near locked doors — to get the goods you've got to flex your grey matter at every possible opportunity.

## CAN I BUY A VOWEL?

There are logic puzzles. There are mathematical problems. There are puzzles that test your powers of observation. There are riddles. There are conundrums, brainteasers, tests and challenges of all types, some of which will be a breeze, some of which will result in an early on-set of hair loss. Critiquing these is a tricky exercise, since not everybody is a maths prodigy or a national television quizmaster, but their varying levels of difficulty, combined with a nice mix of centuries-old and modern-day puzzles, means that everyone who enjoys a brain workout should find something here.

Yes, when it comes down to it, this is "just" a puzzle game. Its base elements are easily recognisable from others such as Brain Training and Sight Training. But the thing that elevates Professor Layton above them — and the thing that puts it into a class of its own — is its execution. All its puzzles are wrapped around a narrative with



one main MacGuffin, several sub-plots, and some fantastically quirky characters. The result is a product that feels more substantial and complete, and less

"gimmicky" than its siblings. Occasionally, however, the seams begin to show. While some puzzles are integrated contextually — tap on the town clock, for instance, and Professor Layton will recall a puzzle from his past that involved clocks — others just feel tacked on. Talk to the townspeople and get used to a pattern that goes along the lines of "Oh, hi Professor! Here, have a go at this puzzle!" It's akin to going to your local bank and having the teller give you a pie made of kittens. The ending goes some way to rationalise these out-of-the-blue puzzles, but they nevertheless feels a little clumsy compared to the instances that fit more naturally into the game world.

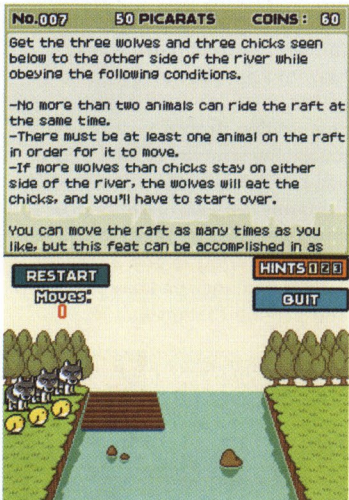
## I LIKE YOUR STYLE

One thing that's pulled off flawlessly is the art style: it's wonderful. Clean lines and crisp colours are used for

category: **Puzzle** / players: **1**  
 developer: **Level-5**  
 publisher: **Nintendo**  
 price: **\$69.95** / rating: **PG**  
 available: **Now**

the characters and backdrops to produce a world that looks like a cheerier version of Victorian London. Full-motion animated cut-scenes are also employed at key moments, looking all the world like something from the Studio Ghibli stable, while the introductory portion contains a fully-voiced dialogue exchange that baffles the mind at how a cartridge so small manages to contain so much. The only downside comes when things shift back to a traditional text-based, sans-voice, manner — just as we've accepted all that audio, it's taken away from us. A little jarring, but as the game progresses it's easily forgotten.

A surprising gem — that's our verdict. For fans of adventure games, brain teasers, and those "Train your (blank) in minutes a day!" titles, the purchase of Professor Layton is, dare we say it, a no-brainer. «



<p>▲ Clever concept, plenty to solve and unlock, fantastic presentation</p>	<p>▼ Some puzzles feel tacked on, music can get annoying</p>	<p><b>HYPER VERDICT</b></p>		
<p>Quite possibly the best puzzle game on the DS.</p>	<p>VISUALS <b>90</b></p>	<p>SOUND <b>88</b></p>	<p>GAMEPLAY <b>91</b></p>	<p><b>90</b></p>



# Downstream Panic

**DIRK WATCH** is a carnivorous predator

**D**ownstream Panic, a new puzzle game for the PSP, reminds us somewhat of Lemmings, in that players need to use set tools to guide all but uncontrollable AI idiots to an exit point in the stage. The game tasks the player with saving fish from predators by using a limited number of basic tools, physics and a bit of luck to create a path for water to run to a safe zone. In real time. If this sounds a little hectic to you, that's because it is. Downstream

Panic is also a hell of a lot of fun. Each level sees the player trying to modify the landscape, using tools such as terrain destroying rockets, dam-making plants and piranha killing harpoons to clear a path for 100 fish, initially trapped in water bubble at the top of the level, to get to safety in the water at the bottom of the level. Along the way players have to construct dams, blow up obstacles, avoid hazards and activate puzzle pieces in the terrain with precise timing to rescue the

number of fish required to complete the level.

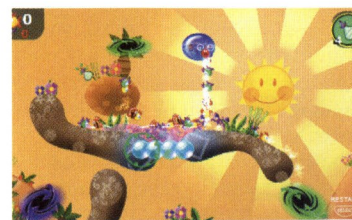
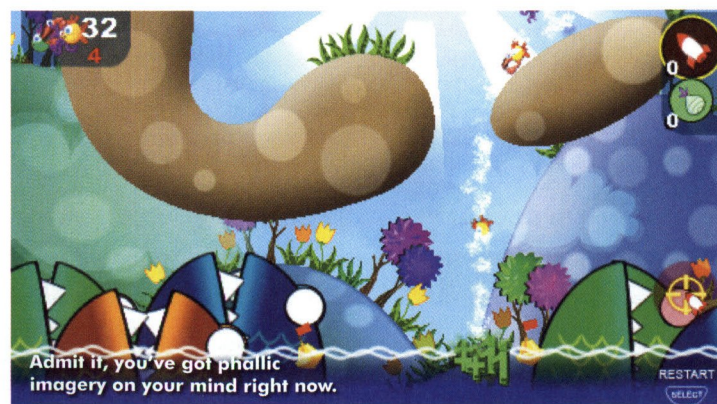
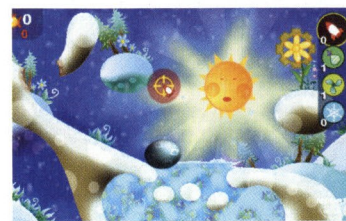
The greatest strength of Downstream Panic is the brilliant level design. Although an immediate solution to the problem of getting the fish to safety may present itself, each level features a number of coins that can be collected to purchase tools in another game mode, that require the player to think outside the box to collect. Although players are only given a limited number of tools at the beginning of a stage, prompting you to think that there is only one solution to a problem that is rarely the case, especially at later stages in the game in which the player can use the environment itself to help solve puzzle, such as using rockets to start landslides to roll a boulder into a position you would otherwise use a plant to block, freeing up said plant to make another dam.

For all of the great level design we do have one fairly small gripe with Downstream Panic — it relies a little too much on random chance in some places, mostly due to the physics of the game. Boulders won't necessarily roll in the direction you

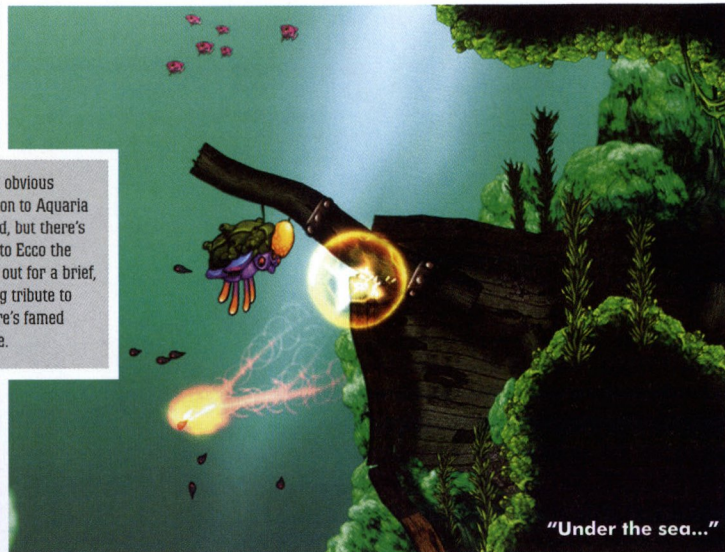
X360 | PS3 | WII | PC | PS2 | DS **PSP**  
 category: **Puzzle** / players: **1**  
 developer: **Eko System**  
 publisher: **Atari**  
 price: **\$49.95** / rating: **G**  
 available: **Now**

want them to and it's just a matter of timing and luck to see if the automated seashell taps featured in many levels actually pick up any fish. The rather hectic nature of the real time puzzling really does require a little more precision than crossing your fingers and hoping.

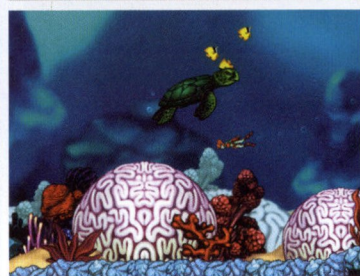
Niggles aside, Downstream Panic is one of the most interesting and fun puzzle games to have appeared since Crush wowed us last year. It's charming, accessible and served in portions small enough to make it an almost perfect game for whiling away time on public transport. «



<p>✓ Clever premise; fast paced puzzling</p>	<p>✗ Relies too much on chance; merciless</p>	<p><b>HYPER VERDICT</b></p>
<p>A frantic and satisfying puzzle experience</p>	<p>VISUALS <b>82</b></p>	<p>SOUND <b>80</b></p>
		<p>GAMEPLAY <b>88</b></p>
		<p><b>86</b></p>



!!! The most obvious comparison to Aquaria is Metroid, but there's also an obvious debt to Ecco the Dolphin. Keep an eye out for a brief, but nonetheless loving tribute to Defender of the Future's famed Hanging Waters stage.



"Under the sea..."

"Under the sea..."



# Aquaria

**TIM HENDERSON** assumes the Enthusiastic Form

Striding alongside an unprecedented number of quality blockbuster titles, the Indie scene has gradually found its way into the public and media's spotlight of awareness. Although it could be argued that this push to attention has been gradually simmering to a boil these past couple of years, there's little denying that all the pieces are finally falling into place. Nor is it going to be easy to deny that there's some serious quality out there — that we've taken this long to get to Aquaria should be proof enough.

## DIRTY WATER

Aquaria is a misleading little gem. Here is a game that starts out with a gentle intro section that leads into an equally gentle initial impression of the gameplay: gameplay that seems light and easy, hardly demanding, and very probably casual. These moments see Aquaria's isolated lead, Naija, swim calmly around a mostly harmless, linear patch of Aquaria so as to allow the simple control tutorials to be dispensed without causing concern.

So far so tranquil, but this first impression will evolve: Aquaria is not a casual game. In fact, it's a game that doesn't ask for devotion from its audience so much as it demands it — it just happens to know how to gently ease people into its style of play. It won't take



"There'll be no accusations, just friendly crustaceans, under the sea!"



long for Aquaria to cease with the hand-holding, and when it does it presents a world to be explored with such a sense of discovery that it feels as though new standards are being set for Metroid-style progression.

In fact, one of Aquaria's greatest strengths is the way in which it balances the acquisition of abilities. Many of the initial pathways that Naija happens across will be blocked by boulders, darkness, water currents and so forth, and as she progresses she will eventually learn

songs (many of which allow her to assume various other forms with unique characteristics) that will aid her progress. The thing is, there are usually multiple options for exploration, and as such each new ability isn't so much a flavour of the moment as it is a valuable tool that will be used throughout the whole adventure. Furthermore, players are left to decipher the full use of many

PC  
category: **Adventure** / players: **1**  
developer: **Bit Blot**  
publisher: **Bit Blot**  
price: **US \$30.00** / rating: **N/A**  
available: **Now**

of these skills by themselves. This does of course mean that Aquaria will alienate as many players as it enchants. The only way to enjoy the world of Aquaria is to be curious about it, and to explore it — to rush will only lead to impeded progress and frustration. It is true that the foreground and background graphic definitions are often unclear, and that the controls involve a few too many menu screens and can be fiddly in the heat of the moment. But then, these controls achieve a hell of a lot, and Aquaria is itself a sprawling and lovingly detailed world, one that is graced with sublime audio, and a wonderful narrated storyline. To mark Aquaria objectively brings about a lot of faults, but this is mere fodder, and the overall achievement remains an experience so engrossing that it would be churlish to deny it the rubber stamp it deserves. **«**

▲ A rare and genuine sense of exploration, wonder and discovery  
▼ Lack of widescreen support, occasionally fiddly  
**HYPER VERDICT**

Aquaria may demand dedication but the rewards are ocean deep.  
VISUALS **85** SOUND **89** GAMEPLAY **84** **90**

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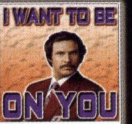
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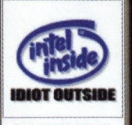
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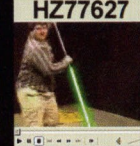
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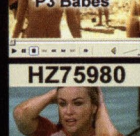
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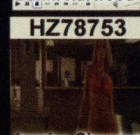
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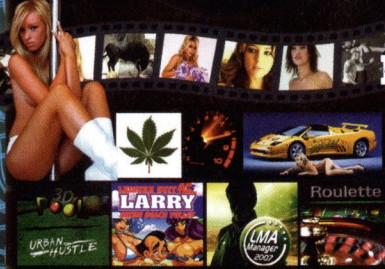
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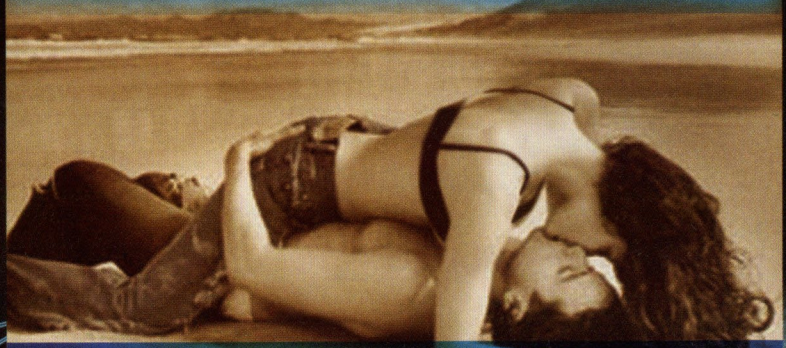
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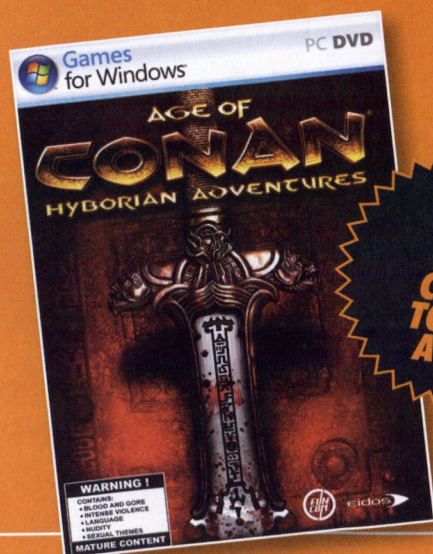
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# »» Win Win Win



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## WIN AGE OF CONAN ON PC!

»» Every time a new MMO comes out somebody asks whether the game will be a WoW killer. They question whether the game will be able to draw in as many customers as the Blizzard juggernaut to make it rake in filthy amounts of cash.

Honestly, none of that really matters — what matters is quality, and from what we've seen of Age of Conan so far, it's shaping up to be a seriously high quality game, featuring all of the high fantasy fun that made the Conan books (and movies) so much fun. We don't know whether it will kill World of Warcraft (and frankly we don't give a crap) — what we do know is that we'll be playing it.

All you need to do for a chance to win a copy of Age of Conan is **tell us, in 50 words or less, who should play Conan in the next movie now that Arnie is no longer available?**

Send your answers, with your name and address to: **It's Not a Tumour!, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW, 2016**, or email your entry to [hypercomps@next.com.au](mailto:hypercomps@next.com.au) with the comp name in the subject line. One entry per person please.



# »» Win Win Win

**6**  
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## WIN ALONE IN THE DARK!

»» Alone in the Dark is a franchise that has a long and storied history. It has been a decade or so since the last release but now the daddy of survival horror is back in an intriguing mix of monster fighting, puzzle solving and physics interactions. Review code should be coming soon so we can give you our final verdict but from what we've played so far, it looks like Alone in the Dark will be one of the most interesting games of the year.

All you need to do for a chance to win one of the Alone in the Dark prize packs is **tell us, in 50 words or less, why should people be afraid of the dark?**

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

### 1 MAJOR PRIZE:

A copy of Alone in the Dark for PC and an Alone in the Dark lighter, keyring, T-Shirt, art book and figurine.

### 5 RUNNERS UP:

A copy of Alone in the Dark and an Alone in the Dark T-Shirt.

**Terms & Conditions:** 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am May 6, 2008 and entries close at 6pm June 11, 2008. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am June 12, 2008 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners names will be published in the August issue of Hyper on sale July 2, 2008. 9) 10 Winners will receive Age of Conan on PC (RRP: \$89.95). Total competition value \$899.50. 1 winner will receive a copy of Alone in the Dark on PC, a lighter, T-shirt, art book, figurine and keyring (RRP: \$249.95). 5 winners will receive a copy of Alone in the Dark on Xbox 360 and a T-Shirt (RRP: \$699.85) Total value of the competition is \$949.80. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

# Gaming Notebooks

If you want to get the most performance out of PC gaming there is really only one avenue for you to take – build the beefiest desktop machine possible and start running on the upgrade treadmill, pausing every six to twelve months to get a new GPU, CPU and all the other bells and whistles. We're not suggesting that the only way to have a good computer is to constantly be upgrading (that's a straw man argument silly people use when debating the benefits of console over PC and vice-

versa). What we're saying is that to have the cutting edge you are limited when it comes to choice of platform. If you want the absolute best it will be a desktop machine, weighing a ton and so full of fans that it will either sound like a small plane taking off or force you to pay a huge amount of money for a silenced case.

We prefer the idea of having a little flexibility when it comes to our gaming machines, which is why we are in love with the direction that gaming notebooks

are progressing. Actually, before we go any further, we should clarify something. What we are talking about are not machines that you can tote around in a laptop bag for general use. Compared to all but the most high end laptops, these are mighty beasts in terms of both size and weight, making them impractical for most portability aside from taking to a LAN.

Rather amusingly, by the time you read this, newer models in the same product lines will have superseded all of the gaming notebooks we're

looking at. This, ultimately, points to the biggest failing of the gaming notebook – the almost total lack of upgrade potential outside whacking in more RAM and a bigger HDD. If you want a more powerful machine, you really have to get a new one, making them much like Macs in terms of upgrade cycles. Normally we wouldn't wish Mac use on anyone but we think you'll agree that the future of gaming notebooks is still pretty bright after you take a look at the Toshiba X200, the Dell XPS 1730 and HP HDX.



**PRICE:** \$3999

**DISTRIBUTOR:** [www.toshiba.com.au](http://www.toshiba.com.au)

**RATING:** ★★★★★

#### SPECS

- Intel T7800 2.6GHz CPU
  - Dual 8600m GT in SLI
  - Vista Home 32 bit edition
  - 17" 1680 x 1050 LCD
    - Dual 200GB HDD
    - 2GB 667MHz DDR2
    - HD DVD drive
- Weight: 4.04KG

#### BENCHMARKS

3DMark06: 6766

Prey: 54 FPS (1680 x 1050)

## Toshiba X200

■ The lightest of the three notebooks we looked at (and light is a relative term in this case), the Toshiba X200 is a fairly no frills gaming notebook, delivering decent power at the lower end of the price spectrum (once again, lower is a relative term). Clocking in with a respectable 6766 3D Marks, the X200 is capable of playing most modern games, albeit at moderate detail rather than high. The notebook can double as a decent multimedia machine thanks to an HDMI port but unfortunately the machine sports a now near useless HD-DVD drive. In the next generation of machines, Toshiba has opted to revert to standard DVD rather than Blu-Ray, citing the advent of downloadable content and upscaling DVD players making the HD formats obsolete, but we call shenanigans – we reckon it's just a holdout measure designed not to throw any support behind an opponent's product. The notebook also boasts some excellent sound thanks to the built in Harman Kardon speakers and small, yet remarkably powerful, subwoofer.

While the X200 doesn't have that many bells and whistles, aside from a garish (and ghastly) mottled red finish, the Toshiba notebook makes a very decent gaming machine, perfect for LANing.

# Dell XPS 1730



**PRICE:** varies

**DISTRIBUTOR:** www.dell.com.au

**RATING:** ★★★★★

#### SPECS

- Intel X7900 2.8GHz CPU
  - Dual 8700M GT in SLI
  - 17" 1920 x 1200 LCD
  - 2GB 667MHz DDR2 RAM
    - Aegia PhysX PCI Card
  - Dual 200GB HDD in RAID 0
    - Blu-Ray DVD drive
  - Vista Home 32 bit edition
- Weight: 4.7KG

#### BENCHMARKS

3Dmark06: 8327

Prey: 61 FPS (1920 x 1200)

■ For sheer gaming grunt, the Dell XPS series is definitely the way to go. Our sample unit clocked up a very respectable 8327 3D marks, making it capable of running pretty much any game you can throw at it at fairly high settings at the native resolution of 1920 x 1200. Thanks to the Blu-Ray drive, the XPS 1730 makes for a great media player as well. At 17" the screen is a little small (we would have preferred a slightly larger footprint and a 19" screen) but it's sharp and fast and looks great. There's even a small G15 style LCD above the keyboard to display different notebook/game info.

The 1730 isn't a small machine. When closed it looks like a giant and spectacularly unattractive mock carbon fibre brick, but there is a hell of a lot of grunt packed into the shell in the basic unit. Better still is the fact that potential buyers can customise the machine at time of purchase to seriously jack up the grunt. For our money we'd probably dump the Blu-Ray drive and PhysX card in favour of another gig of RAM, dual 8800 GTX GPUs and some more HDD space. Thankfully, unlike the Toshiba machine, XPS owners can even customise the colour of their machine — as long as they like red, blue, white and grey, that is.

# HP HDX9004TX

**PRICE:** \$5499

**DISTRIBUTOR:** www.hp.com.au

**RATING:** ★★★★★

#### SPECS

- Intel X7800 2.6GHz CPU
  - 20.1" 1680x1050 LCD
  - 400Gb 5400 RPM HDD
    - 2GB DDR2 RAM
  - Radeon HD 2600M XT GPU
    - HD-DVD Drive
  - Windows Vista Home 32 bit edition
    - Media Remote
  - Integrated Webcam
  - Integrated TV Tuner
  - Media Card Reader
- Weight: 7.1KG

#### BENCHMARKS

3Dmark06: 4002

Prey: 36 FPS (1680 x 1050)

■ Unless you're some kind of freakish giant (like Lindsay from PCPP, who stands roughly 6'20" and has a brain for a heart), the HDX9004TX is about as portable as a normal desktop machine, as it weighs in at a whopping 7.1KG with a footprint measuring 47.5 x 34 x 5.8cm. As a laptop the HDX is pretty much a failure, but as an all-rounder desktop replacement/media machine, it's a pretty sweet deal.

\$5499 isn't a small amount of money, but for the price you essentially get a run of the mill gaming machine, a HD digital TV (thanks to the inbuilt TV tuner and remote) and a HD movie player. Unfortunately, as it currently stands, the HDX features a now fairly useless HD-DVD drive. We've tried contacting HP to see if the next iteration of the HDX will feature a Blu-Ray drive or will revert to standard DVD (like Toshiba) but have had no response so far.

As a gaming machine, the HDX is functional but unspectacular. It will run most games decently but don't even bother trying something like Crysis or Assassin's Creed, thanks to the underpowered 2600M GPU. However, the full sized keyboard and enormous screen go some way to making up for the overall lack of power. Hopefully the next iteration of the HDX will see the platform adopting SLI or Crossfire to seriously boost gaming performance.



# Shenmue

## DREAMCAST 1999-2001

» Tim Henderson

It's difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when games started the real-time process of turning day into night, of blending pale blue into orange into dark blue and back again. We do know that some game had to do it before any other, and we know that game certainly wasn't Shenmue. We remember brief twilights from the likes of Ocarina of Time and earlier, although at the beginning of the current decade we were still sufficiently impressed by the simple fading of one background colour into another. Shenmue did this, of course. Hell, it's pretty much the first thing it did do: the introductory animation opened upon the beginning of a sunset before focusing on a young girl, Shenhua, as she stepped out onto a ledge to recite a prophecy that would become the backbone of the storyline. As she spoke, her clothes flapped in the wind with unprecedented technical grace, a bird soared over the desert landscape, and the pale pink tones of the sky evolved into a deep, burning red. Then she looked at the camera as it rapidly zoomed in upon the most lifelike face yet seen in a videogame, and behind her the fire of the sky began to subside into an arid, nighttime blue.

### THE SAGA BEGINS

Few games have ever dared to be as ambitious as Shenmue, a project that seemed to proclaim anything and everything to the point where, really, the world should have been left wondering just how the hell AM2 intended to compress all of their promises into a mere videogame. Brainchild of Sega arcade stalwart Yu Suzuki, Shenmue supposedly started off life as a role playing game based upon his influential Virtua Fighter franchise. The similarities are certainly there to be noticed: it's obvious from where the combat engine was derived, and it doesn't take much effort to look at Shenmue's adolescent lead, Ryo Hazuki, and see a more youthful take on the hardcore Virtua Fighter

fan's character of choice, Akira Yuki.

Drowning everyone and everything around it in a pool of exuberant ideas, Shenmue consumed more than its share of Sega's resources — both time and money — throughout the 90's. Not only did it start life as a Saturn title before eventually being released on the Dreamcast hardware, but it's also spent its share of time listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the most expensive videogame ever developed. It then famously failed to sell enough copies to vindicate the reported \$70 million that Sega had poured into the title.

### WHAT IS SHENMUE?

The prospects that Shenmue held were bold and plentiful, and, in principle, the beginning of a brave new world of gaming that would offer everything that many gamers claimed to want. Charging its way

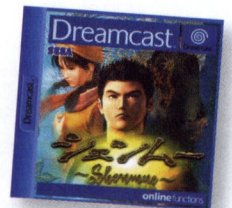


**It would often be impossible to hurry the plot along**

through the later end of the nineties, the hype train promoted freedom — a flavour of the era if ever there was one — above all else, with all other concepts and features dumped upon the freight towed behind. The lesson here? Don't tell the public what you think they want to hear — tell them what you're actually going to give them.

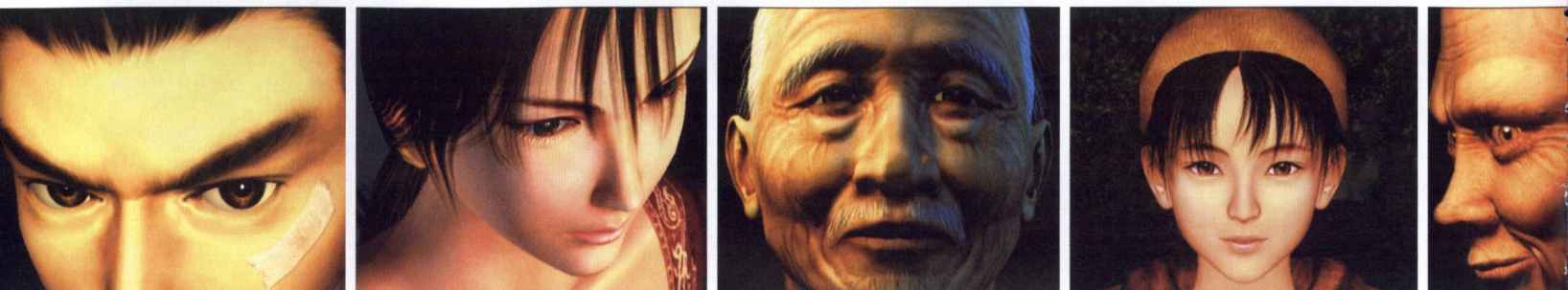
What is Shenmue? Well, that's a bit of a tricky question, because what Shenmue set out to be is simple, but at odds with how game genre is generally understood. In essence, it's an attempt to re-think the rules for creating an immersive, interactive narrative experience. The rules of the RPG as we define it hark back to tabletop games, and the inventory based puzzles of commonly understood Adventures was a trait born of processing limitations. Gameplay conventions evolved from both, and the titles that followed often forgot what these earlier games were trying to do

in the first place; following (and occasionally tweaking) set rules, they repeatedly overlooked the initial purpose of trying to put the player in the role of a character and allowing them to go on an adventure.



A character, it seemed, that the player would share every waking moment with. As such, Shenmue's gameplay needed to cover a lot of bases — Ryo would become involved in fights, but Shenmue wasn't an action game, and the game engine would have to accommodate the story and function for anything that would happen in Ryo's life. Shenmue's much emphasized freedom would turn out to be in reference to the passing of time in its gameworld, rather than some impossibly open-ended storyline. The day/night structure — so much more elaborate than just a new colour in the sky — that was implemented would turn out to be a real deal-breaker for some, while becoming a tool for almost unbreakable immersion for others. It would often be impossible to hurry the plot along, and it was up to the player to find ways to occupy the blocks of Ryo's free time that would typically end up on most cutting-room floors.

Things to do were plentiful, although they were often time-fillers rather than tools for character growth. Ryo could consume numerous beverages from the vending machines that littered the streets, but although they came with the occasional toy prize they offered no reward of healing or improved ability. In any other game a can of cola would at the very least serve to regenerate a few hit points — in Shenmue it was just a can of cola. Arcade games appropriate to the 80's setting also made an appearance, Suzuki delving into his own back catalogue to provide full versions of titles like Space Harrier and Hang On. His past work also provided Shenmue with a combat system far too visceral to be seen as common of any RPG. The debt owed to Virtua »





# Shenmue continued...

[left] So much to do, but not all of it meant that much. Such is the nature of Shenmue.

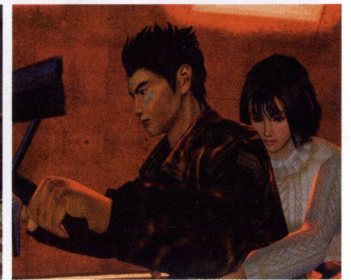
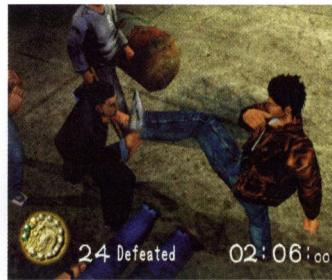


Fighter was heavy, although the engine had been tweaked to allow Ryo to face off against multiple opponents at once, and training proved to be one of the more practical time killers — not so much for improving Ryo's abilities as the player's own.

## QUICK! BLAME TIME!

AM2's experience in crafting what is regarded as the deepest fighting series in existence ensured that Shenmue's combat engine was robust enough to serve most scenarios, so long as the presentation didn't want to delve into cinematic indulgence or make over-specific use of the environment. A solution was found to this, a solution that means that Shenmue is to blame for the abundance of annoying Quick Time Events that continue to populate action games today. Unlike many titles that utilise these screen prompted button-presses as a mere gimmick to get in the way of progress, however, Shenmue implemented them as means of allowing at least some interactivity during story moments that its established controls and rules couldn't cater for. They were, in essence, a way of expanding the game beyond what AM2 had been able to accomplish with the play mechanics achievable on the Dreamcast hardware.

That gaming is yet to move on past the QTE is an ironic antithesis to Shenmue's initial goals. A game that sought to write its own rules and injected some interactivity into its cutscenes as a means of further



trying to expand its expression, it has sadly gone on to create a new convention — one often used and expanded upon for its own sake, with little mind for why Shenmue used it in the first place and even less for trying to progressively think past it.

## SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

For all of its accomplishments, however, it was Shenmue's world and the populace that filled it that bestowed the game with its overall character. The recreation of the area surrounding Ryo's hometown in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan (and the various locations in China that were traveled in Shenmue 2) was rendered with a focus more keenly pitched at detail than scale. The world had its own sense of personality, and felt honestly, genuinely crafted.

This was noticeable enough in the layout of the buildings themselves. Every single one had its own size and shape, and there was enough variety in the texturing to ensure that each and every structure the player passed had its own unique relevance to the space it occupied. Many could be entered, also — more than were strictly required to progress through the narrative. The appeal of being in Shenmue's world was of knowing that, while there may be no real need to step into that Hong Kong café that just went by, you could do so if you really wanted. The world was created in such a way that — especially in Shenmue 2 — it would be possible for players to all experience different pieces of it while still progressing down the same linear storyline.

And then there were people. Lots of people who would walk around town, go about their business, and then return home at night. The types of characters who populated Shenmue's locations would gradually change throughout the day, stereotypically having the children all run off to bed as the more seedy and drunken types came out for the dark hours. The effort here was inevitably underappreciated by many. After all, most people are just going to an NPC presence for granted and not stop to think about how, should you follow one character around for a

day, he or she would actually visit shops and cafes and return to an apartment rather than just wander around like a headless chicken. The execution wasn't exactly flawless, of course, but hindsight shows Shenmue to have come much closer to its promises in this regard than we originally realised.

Explaining away much of Shenmue's phenomenal production expenses, Yu Suzuki mentioned in interviews leading up to the game's release that clay models were commissioned for all the characters that populate his virtual world. That's a number that easily reaches into the hundreds, as no single character model was ever repeated. Forget your memories of Grand Theft Auto where you just ran past the same hooker ten times in the past couple of minutes, sometimes in batches of three. In Shenmue, if you walked past a character you had seen earlier then it was that very same character, now returning from wherever they had been.

## THE SAGA STAGNATES...

As an unfortunate pioneer at the forefront of episodic gaming (the notions of getting it out quick and cheap are foreign to Shenmue's production), Shenmue will probably never be completed. An online game that seemed to miss the point entirely — it's hard to become immersed in a world that functions around you when everyone would rather go on an adventure than work in a bread shop — reared its head briefly, but aside from a carefully worded article on the website Kikizo a few years back, no proof exists that Shenmue 3 will ever see the light of day. Although its narrative and dialogue may be too hammy and truly warrant the comparison, imagine if The Return of the King had never been written. Hell, imagine if not even The Two Towers had been put to paper and you can start to appreciate the scope of the project that has been left to wilt.

Shenmue was a staggering title, but it was always going to be one that would lack universal appeal — never a smart move if you want to make the kind of money back that Sega inevitably needed to. ☹



## Real Life

Considerable research was done on Shenmue's real world locations circa 1980's. Those familiar with the cast of the first game would probably also be amused to know that there is actually a hot dog place called Tom's in Dobuita, although some inaccuracies seem to have been allowed for the sake of dramatic impact. The scripted event that sees Ryo desperately needing a motorcycle in order to get to the harbour in time is diminished of any believability when it becomes apparent that the harbour would actually be but a few minutes walk away.



# GETTING PAID

»Mikolaj

## A brief history of rock music & videogames

Last month we looked at the convergence of hip hop and videogames: how the two industries managed to crossover into the mainstream and get paid.

The relationship between rock music and videogames has been considerably less turbulent. Basically, big hair, tight jeans and one hour drum solos have been a staple of western culture for the last quarter century. It's what guys like John Romero, Jeff Minter, Lord British, etc all grew up on.

Thing is, smoking cigarettes and looking bored doesn't really make for a satisfying videogame experience. Neither does shooting heroin. Or dying...

What does work really well is a plastic guitar peripheral, a group of drunken friends and a set list of slightly dodgy rock classics. Unfortunately, it took the videogame industry 20 years and a lot of licensed rubbish to figure that out.

### 1983: Journey

**Bally / Midway (Arcade, Atari 2600)**

■ Journey may have been a tedious 80s band, but they were at the forefront of shitty videogame licenses. Teaming up with Bally/Midway, they utilised 'cutting edge technology' to cram actual cassette players inside each arcade cabinet (so you could hear their crappy music). Not content with that engineering miracle, the arcade game also featured digitised images of the band members and their stupid haircuts. An Atari 2600 version of the game was also released; while it lacked the built in cassette player, it featured the same pointless gameplay mechanic: move from the top of the screen to the bottom to collect an instrument while avoiding 'loved crazed groupies'.

### 1990: Michael Jackson's Moonwalker

**Sega (Arcade, Megadrive, Master System +)**

■ A videogame in which Michael Jackson sprinkles 'magic' on small children tied up in empty warehouses probably wouldn't get past the initial design brief in this day and age... Get beyond the questionable concepts involved and the Michael Jackson videogames were actually quite good. The arcade version was an isometric

beat-em-up in which Michael transformed into a giant robot. The Megadrive port was a side scrolling affair and featured a special move that made enemies dance themselves to death. Yes, seriously.

### 1992: Crue Ball

**EA (Megadrive)**

■ Mention Motley Crue and all kinds of images come to mind: big hair, groupies, Sunset Strip, men in make-up, heroin, inappropriate use of a mobile phone, etc, etc. Noticeably, pinball doesn't really rate a mention. It certainly wasn't a defining element of the band's tell-all biography, 'The Dirt'. You'd therefore have to assume that slapping a Motley Crue license and some music on a pinball game was a massively cynical exercise in marketing.

### 1992: INXS: Make My Video

**Sega / Digital Pictures (Mega CD)**

■ Ever wanted to splice together some INXS videoclips using rubbish film editing technology that doesn't work properly? Didn't think so...

### 1993: Rock n Roll Racing

**Blizzard (SNES, Megadrive)**

■ Before they had 10 million World of Warcraft subscribers and a license to print money, Blizzard were making okay-ish console games. Rock n Roll Racing was basically an update of RC Pro Am on the NES — four cars race around an isometric racecourse blowing each other up with missiles. Since the whole isometric racing thing had been done to death by 1993, a soundtrack of vintage rock music was brought in to give things a 16-bit sheen, i.e. dodgy versions of 'Paranoid', 'Bad To The Bone' and 'Born to Be Wild' play while you race.

### 1994: Revolution X

**Midway (Arcade, SNES, Mega CD, Megadrive)**

■ Oh noes! The New World Nation has seized power in the U.S. and banned music, television and videogames! This looks like a job for Aerosmith! But wait — Aerosmith have been kidnapped. Looks like you're gonna have to take things into your own hands and murder everyone yourself! Cue tedious lightgun action as you shoot badly digitised men in yellow jumpsuits. There were a million games just like this in the early 90s and the use of Aerosmith's name and music was a shameless marketing angle — literally. This was originally supposed to be a Jurassic Park game until Midway lost the license to Sega.

### 1996: Quake

**iD Software (PC)**

■ If you've just released a platinum selling rock album, you can pretty much do whatever you

want: murder some hookers, save a starving child in Africa, forget to pay your taxes, whatever. Trent Reznor used the opportunity to call iD Software and offer his services as a musician. Turns out he was a big fan of the original Doom and wanted in on the company's next project.

### 2000: KISS: Psycho Circus

**Take Two (PC, Dreamcast)**

■ So you've acquired the rights to a Kiss videogame — what do you do with it? If you're a group of disgruntled (former) Ion Storm employees you turn it into a FPS. Based on the Psycho Circus comic series, the band members are all portrayed as their supernatural alter egos, i.e. Gene Simmons is 'The Demon' — not an old man with a third rate reality TV show.

### 2003: The Black Mages

**Square Enix (CDs, occasional live show)**

■ Middle-aged Japanese men turning their videogame compositions into a prog rock live band = nerds. Calling themselves The Black Mages was just the icing on the nerd cake.

### 2004: Konga Beat

**Nintendo (Gamecube)**

■ Given drums are (A) fun to bang on, and (B) a fairly integral aspect of rock music, it kinda makes sense to incorporate them into a videogame. If you work at Nintendo that game will involve Donkey Kong, hand claps and a plastic set of bongos. Taking that concept to its illogical conclusion, the Jungle Beat (spin-off) series used the same concept to control a side scrolling platformer.

### 2005: Guitar Hero

**Harmonix / RedOctane (PS2, Xbox)**

■ Harmonix had been releasing their rhyme action / Bemani games to good reviews and rubbish sales when they decided to tweak the formula. One plastic guitar and several million copies later, the company had set the benchmark for music based videogames. Oh, and said plastic guitar caused a generation of men to embarrass themselves while attempting to hold it like Peter Hook / Johnny Marr / Hendrix / whoever... yes, we know Peter Hook actually played bass.

### 2007: Rock Band

**Harmonix / EA (PS2, Xbox)**

■ What's better than a plastic guitar and a set-list of bad rock songs from the 80s? An entire band playing bad 80s music on plastic instruments. Massively fun (if you can get everyone organised), this is about as close as videogames and rock music have ever come. Hell, if anyone finds themselves doing this on a regular basis with friends then it's probably time to invest in some real instruments and form a shitty garage band. «





»» The relationship between rock music and videogames has been considerably less turbulent

# DONKEY KONG JNR MATH

»James O'Connor

Nintendo Entertainment System • 1983 (Japan), 1985 (USA) • Developed and Published by Nintendo



**T**hese days, half the games released on the DS seem to be about learning. You can't throw a stone in EB without hitting a Brain Age, Maths Training, or Dr Mamushimi Presents: Intelligence Assault! Increase Your Knowledge of Certain Numbers Through A Daily Routine Of Grueling Mathematical Challenges, and frankly, it's starting to bother me. When I play my DS, I want to solve crimes, race go-karts, or at the very least pat an adorable puppy. I recognise, however, that the current generations of gamers have it easy compared to the myriad of children who woke up on Christmas morning, 1985, to find a brand new, state of the art Nintendo Entertainment System under the tree - complete with a copy of Donkey Kong Jnr Math.

**2 - 3 = NEGATIVE FUN**

The smartest thing about this entire game is the title, which Nintendo cleverly arranged to throw customers off the stench of shit. They were, I suspect, hoping that gamers wouldn't read past 'Donkey Kong' and would only notice 'Jnr Math' after they handed over cash. Or maybe, just maybe, there were parents out there who had the bright idea of spending hundreds of dollars to teach their children ridiculously basic maths in an insanely convoluted way. Donkey Kong Jnr, you see, is more than just a bad game - it's an evil piece of software. Imagine, if you will, little Johnny coming home from school, his cheeks glowing with embarrassment, handing over his report card. His mother (an abusive alcoholic) is horrified at his C+ in Maths, having bought him that 'educational game' to help him improve. Johnny is beaten severely, and the next day his wheelchair is stolen (because he was crippled too, it's all very tragic). But little

Johnny couldn't help it that he didn't improve, because Donkey Kong Jnr Math is about as educational as a watermelon. A month later, Johnny is dead of cholera.

Gameplay wise, Donkey Kong Jnr Math plays like a calculator, except without the ability to spell out 'boobs' with numbers. There are three modes - one single player, two multiplayer, all three of them resembling a horrible nightmare experienced during a flu-affected slumber deep in the heart of a society of cannibalistic savages. In single player, you choose between different types of equations - long division, simple addition, all the highlights of Grade 4 - and get equating. You do this by standing under the row you want to calculate, climbing up the row's 'vine' until you're across from the correct number, climbing back down, and repeating the process on every row. Basically it's just like doing the sum normally, only you're controlling a monkey and there's no room to list your remainders and various other

frankly they were deluding themselves - they didn't have any friends). So, essentially, its a game for parents who had children struggling with maths, but decided that instead of sitting down with the child and helping them through their problems a videogame was better suited to raising and educating their child. Parents of the mid-1980s, if you've somehow traveled forward in time and stumbled upon this magazine - buy your kids some exercise books, sit down and go through their problems with them. Donkey Kong Jnr is an ape, and apes don't make great teachers (believe me, I had one for Year 8 maths). Kids could get more education and fun out of doing their maths homework while sketching Donkey Kong in the margin - and that is not an exaggeration.

**DONKEY WRONG**

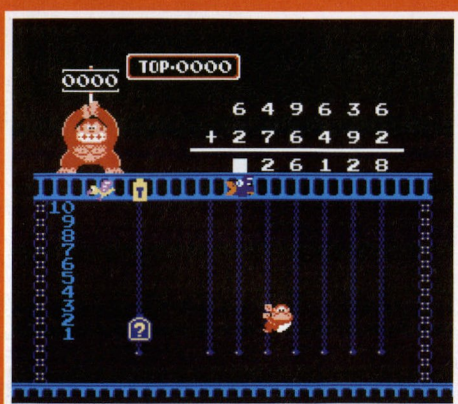
At this point, I guess I should go into the positive aspects of the game, although I do so somewhat begrudgingly. First up, the graphics. For a NES launch title, the animation is pretty nice. Sure, the game doesn't have a lot of colour to it, but Donkey Kong Jnr jumps and climbs with a kind of enthusiasm not really worthy of the task ahead of him. And... well shit, that's really about it. I suppose, if you were

**» Kids could get more education out of doing their maths homework while sketching Donkey Kong in the margin**

to give the multiplayer a shot with a friend, and you were both drunk, you might have a bit of a laugh over how bad it was. It would eventually turn into a last-round desperation match as you both frantically tried to get to the '7' first. Of course you'd have to be pretty damn smashed and it's probably not worth the hangover or vomit stains.

It was always puzzling that Donkey Kong Jnr Math was included in the Gamecube version of Animal Crossing and on the Wii Virtual Console, but now I believe it was all part of a devious scheme to prepare us for the upcoming assault of games that were supposed to make us smarter, or at the very least make us aware of how far educational titles have come since their vile, odious beginnings. Even if they're not everyone's cup of tea, 'edutainment' titles have grown massively in the last few years. Even your grandparents are desperately trying to cling on to their youth through their supposed 'Brain Age'. There's a surprising amount to be learnt from gaming, whether educational title or not, but Donkey Kong Jnr Math carries with it only one simple lesson - no matter how much you like most of their games, never, ever trust Nintendo. Or apes. Also, I'm really glad I managed to do this whole article without making a single awful 'less than the SUM of its parts' pun. I guess I haven't quite slipped into insanity just yet. Maybe next month, aye? «

[below] "Two plus two is four! Four plus four is eight! Eight plus eight is... ah, screw this."

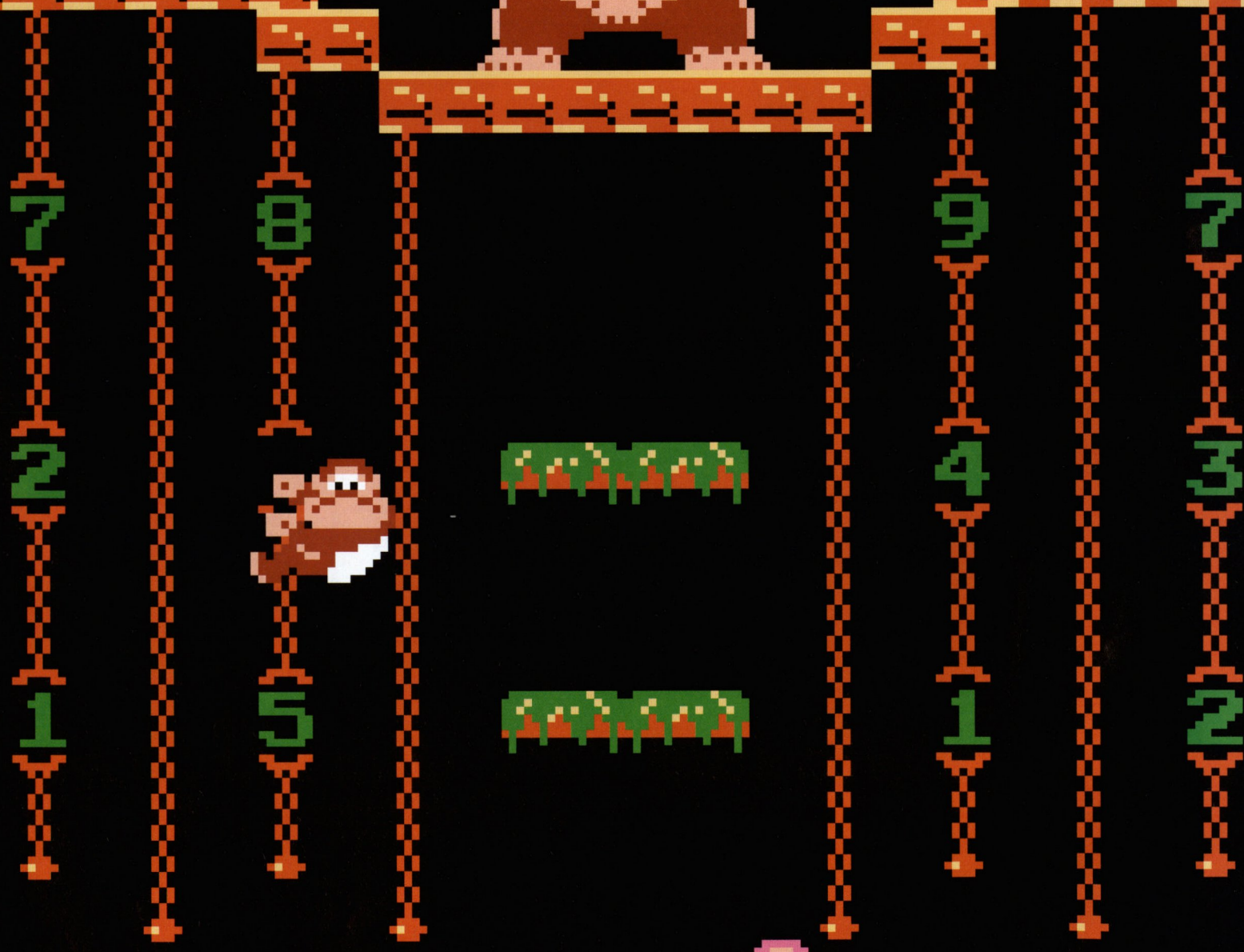
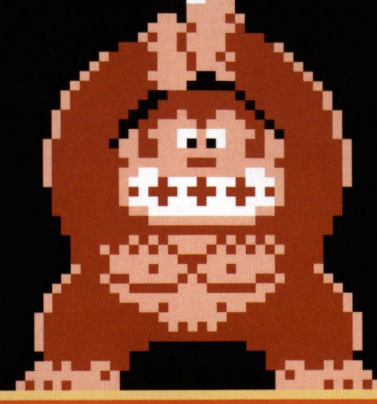


+72

WIN.

+ 74

WIN.





## MAIL HYPER!

**POSTAL:**  
78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW  
2016 Australia

**EMAIL:**  
freakscene@next.com.au

### SERVICE, SCHMERVICE

I would just like to comment on Nerje's mail in the May issue entitled "Ring of Delight". I too used to think like Nerje, that perhaps Microsoft's Xbox-360 reliability problems re the "dreaded red ring of doom" and the subsequent Xbox customer care and repair service was being too harshly judged by dissatisfied Xbox-360 owners. However, shit happens to change ones mind. I own two Xbox-360's (Lan is great, do try it!) and both have previously been returned for repairs because of internal hardware faults occurring during their warranty period (one console was returned twice due to poor quality repair work). Now once again a red light fault has hit, this time a single red light and a "black screen of death" displaying a system error number. Upon contacting Xbox

### protest by purchasing a different brand of console

Customer Care, I was advised that as it is not the three red lights fault and my Xbox-360 is over twelve months old, it will not be covered by warranty. The customer care operator advised that the error code indicates (yet again) a problem with the internal hardware, this time the graphics chip and the cost for repair is \$132.00 to be paid "up front" before returning the Xbox. Now, I am a mature fellow, so I most politely advised that I feel this repair fee is somewhat unfair, as this console has had internal faults since day one of ownership and this return for repair work will be the fourth time I have had to return one of my Xbox-360's in two years. The reply I received was simply "Well, thats how it is." Well, hows that for service? So be warned dear readers, if your Xbox-360 is older than twelve months and it implodes due to no fault of your own, showing indications other than the three red lights of doom,

you will not be covered by the three year extended warranty as specified by Microsoft's Peter Moore in his open letter to disgruntled Xbox-360 owners. You will merely be told by the Xbox Customer Care Operators that they are so very sorry for the inconvenience (should be "so sorry for your loss") and then you will just have to pay up. Or perhaps you could do as I am going to do, protest by purchasing a different brand of console that has a reputation of far greater reliability. **"Geriatric Gamer"**

*Aaaaand... flip! The other side of the coin is revealed! We feel your pain, Geriatric Gamer, just as we do to all those who lost their console to the nefarious red ring. It's frustrating to have a piece of expensive hardware fail due to no fault of the owner, and remedying the process can be hit and miss.*

*It's easy to get frustrated at the call center monkeys, but throughout the rage, remember that they're just people acting under the directive of the Big M, most likely following a pre-written checklist with each call they receive. If the anger should go anywhere, it's further up the chain of command, and this is especially so when it comes to Microsoft's red ring warranty.*

*As you state, the traditional "Red Ring of Death" is covered, but other errors, such as your single red light, are not. From Microsoft's hip-pocket standpoint, it's understandable why this is the case - the red ring is the most common error, and the*

*odds are it will be experienced by more consumers than any other. Therefore, it needs to be addressed. But in doing so, they've excluded those less-common errors from the warranty umbrella, simply because it means more pennies can be directed towards the red ring issue. Yeah, it sucks. But that's corporate thinking for you.*

*We'd like to see a more forgiving stance when it comes to the technical errors of the 360. It's a console that is prone to hardware failures like no other in this generation. The least Microsoft could do is make the pain hurt a little less - cover all those errors, not just the ones it chooses to.*

### SOMETHING ABOUT IMMERSION

Hey hyper guys,

Over a significant past few months of playing games, I am rather troubled, and I wont be doubting



## Feedback

**the\_watchers\_eye:** I'm glad Dan found that button-mashing toward the end of GoW:CoO to be heart-wrenching, because, to be honest, I kinda laughed when I realised what I had to do...

**winter\_combat\_knight:** Good issue. I liked the interview for GTA as well as the letters section. Nice design overall. Hyper is a good reference for how to structure my type and images for my illustration work at uni. Also, how about a return of the Hyper CD? This probably pisses you guys off but a CD maybe every quarter/half year would be good. Something like a big video feature would be interesting or video reviews/previews.

**UKG:** I reckon upon initial flick through that it looks like the best month of Hypergoodness for a long time. It is thicker and contains more substance and information then it has for a while well done guys.

**Knuckle Children:** I don't normally give feedback in this thread, but 2 very funny write-ups in this month's mag have compelled me to. Jickle's Shaq Fu article was hilarious and a great read from start to finish. If it's a permanent fixture then 'Bottom of the Barrel' could quickly become my favourite section of the mag. Great stuff mate.

Also the 'Hitman' film review made me laugh a lot. The idea of a bald dude with a barcode tattooed on his scalp trying to blend into a crowd like all good hitmen do had me in stitches as did the descriptions of his character inconsistencies.

Reviews of s\*\*\* films/games rock!

**Zephiot:** Just read Darren's editorial. You're so right, I can remember all the controversy when Mortal Kombat first came out. Now it seems every 1 in 5 games seem to have some kind of blood.

other readers of your magazine will agree with me on a certain level. On the odd occasion lately I find myself thinking such cliché and dramatic thoughts along the lines of "this is just a game." now for a gamer like myself i believe immersion in games is the most valuable tool, and to engage someone into a game there has to be story with substance. The point im trying to make is if people let themselves believe that what they are doing is simply "just a game" a medium of enjoyment, the optimal choice to escape from the other enjoyable but restrictive forms of entertainment such as movies, then that immersion factor will be greatly lost. So my aim now, is to attempt to block out such negative thoughts finding there way to my head. After all, if there was no feeling of success in enjoying, playing and completing games, then the video game market and industry would be nothing like it is today, and 90% of households would not have or own a console. Lets hope im going through a phase.

### G HEARTBREAK

*Uh-huh. Yep. Oooo-kay. Pardon us good sir, but what exactly are you saying? It seems like you're not finding games as immersive as you once did... are we in the right ballpark? If so, then that's probably because you've (we assume) played a lot of games throughout your life, and can thus see the techniques used to construct them. You know, the arbitrary-placed barriers, the lead up to a boss battle, the reason why a wall is here instead of there, stuff like that. We daresay the same thoughts are going through the heads of game developers as well - today's audience is a lot more cluey and a lot more jaded. The pressure's on ... but who will get there first?*

### WII WANT ACHIEVEMENTS!

Hey Hyper crew

Just finished last months Hyper, Im a busy family man so it takes a full month to get through it all but man its someones I saviour! I luv it! Anyway you guys produce a wonderful entertaining read, really the wierd wierd feature was so awesome!! I mean the Kancho! anal probing game!!! I showed my wife and she couldnt stop laughing!!!! me too!!! great stuff!

We finally just got a Wii a little while back, tell you what its so awesome and so much fun! Ive pretty much been a PC - gamer converted to the 360 but now Im really enjoying the simple joy of "fun" in games. It really really is fun! if your an old school gamer like me who thinks its too "kiddy" think again and try it. You will be impressed. But just a question, I luv the achievements aspect of the 360

and the game history it has ect ect, why dosent the Wii have the same?

Is that only for Microsoft? did they patent the achievement system of something?

As for the 360 can anyone seem to get Bio Shock???? I keep going to JB and its never in stock? It was advertised for \$59 bucks along with forza 2 new! tell you what its never been a better time to hold off on the new releases, wait a few months and get them cheaper! I just got VF5 and Sega Rally for \$44 at full price no way would I even consider buying at full price but at that price I am willing to buy 2 for \$90 than 1 for \$79-89 tag. Do you think thats what the publishers are trying to do, sell for 2 for 1?

Cheers,  
**Cameron**

*Glad you liked the weird games feature in #174 - we received a lot of positive feedback on that, so we'll be sure to continue covering everything wacky and bizarre in the world of games.*

*When it comes to your Wii, does it really feel that incomplete without an achievement system? It's a nice feature on Microsoft's platform, but that doesn't mean that others need to copy it just because it's there. Do we really need every little action validated via a sprinkling of points? Why not enjoy the console on its own merits: innovative controls, ambitious games, and a timeless approach to game design.*

*BioShock out of stock? That's a new one. Our wanderings through various retail outlets reveal plenty of copies on the 360. If you're coming up short, why not order online?*

*(Incidentally, when you're out shopping for BioShock, consider purchasing a new keyboard or a new monitor. Lowercase L's might look like uppercase I's, but in your e-mail... not so much.)*

## FIGHTING FIT

This is a first for me and perhaps a last, however I felt the need to write in about a little something that I got a chuckle out of on TV the

## Forum Talk

**TOPIC: Gaming terms that annoy you.**

**mayo:** MMORPG. Only because I can never be arsed saying it. Too long for just one genre.

**Azzaman:** My wife hates just about any term used in WoW, especially toon. I just think it's her in denial that she plays more games than me when given the opportunity.

**etnlcarus:** I think the biggest one for all of us has to be:

"Innovation".

99.9% of the time it's merely marketing fluff used to promote any deviation from orthodox design, however small and insignificant.

If there is a person who isn't sick of gamers; writers and developers farting on about innovation, please speak up so we can point at you for being oblivious.

**Eibach:** Anything used in a PR statement. If I hear the terms "innovative," "revolutionary" or "fresh gameplay" one more time I'm going to shank somebody.

**the\_watchers\_eye:** The term 'clocked'. As in "I clocked the game". Seriously, you aren't impressing anyone.

**Jickle:** Next-gen and 'sandbox' rub me up the wrong way.

**Hyperblau:** I absolutely love that people still use 'Your Mum' disses both in real life and in online gaming. I laugh so hard everytime, not because they are funny though. There is the occasional one in a hundred that will fit perfectly and make me laugh my ass off, but for the most part, they just cop about 50 insults back each so much better than the mum joke.

## CAPTION THIS!

It was a month of rather suggestive captions, but "Drew the 1 winged angel" provided the only one that we could get away with printing.



Seeing the player naked is always a shock.

other night. I have been following the development of Wii Fit for some time. From you're magazine to online articles etc. As a "girl gamer" I've been playing games on pretty much all consoles since about oh, grade 2, when my best friend introduced me to his Nintendo. The new line of Wii games coming out for actual exercise interests me quite a bit. Now, this completely unbiased news station that I will not name (Channel 7 Today Tonight "cough") had an awesome program on Wii Fit and it's introduction into families for those too busy to get out and take a walk. The whole program was pretty great, not ONE slam about how video games are the downfall of society. I was AMAZED. Then, the program is over and back to the newscaster who says, "If you have any concerns about video games please visit our forums at blah blah blah." Not literally that, so I shouldn't have quoted, but you know, close. I guess I should have turned off the TV after they made mention that Bill Gates introduced the home computer to the world, but you know, had to stick around for further disappointment. With all the bad that media seems to throw

on video games, they can't leave us with one good review. Thank you Today Tonight.

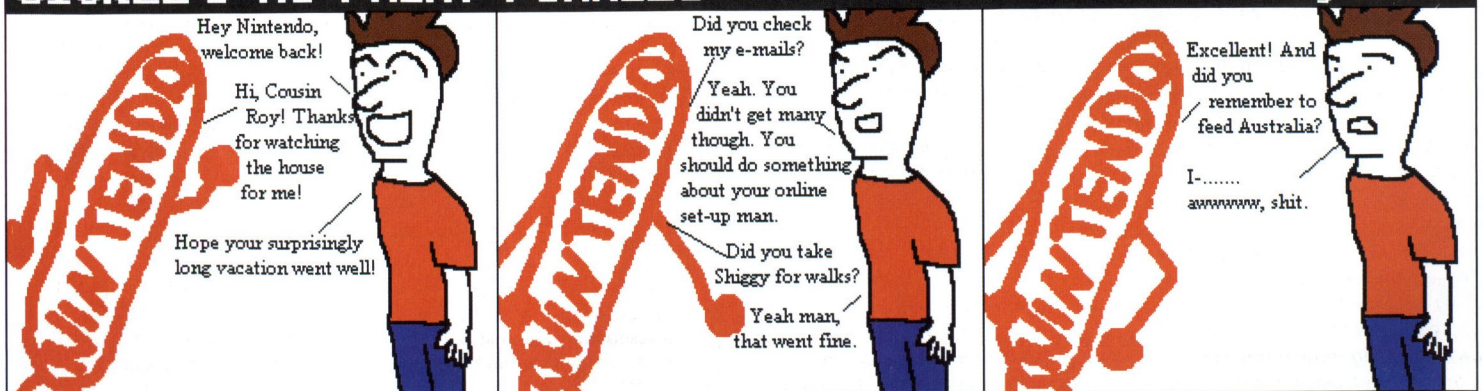
**Jamaine**

*Come on, it wouldn't be Today Tonight if it didn't include some shaky reporting and fear-mongering, would it? It's great that Wii Fit got a decent throw, but the obligatory counter-balancing comment at the end kind of undermines any positive steps made. It falls back on the timeless "games are the fault of everything" preconception that is still in the back of people's minds - a preconception that's almost certainly held by the target audience of current affairs shows. A shame.*

*The sad fact is that that videogames are still seen as an alien other when it comes to entertainment. Baby boomers know all about movies and books, but games come across as something else. Getting people of all ages involved with titles such as Wii Fit is a great step towards bridging the gap, and we hope it's not long before outdated views are cast aside in favour of seeing gaming as something that everyone can enjoy.*

## JICKLE'S MS-PAINT FUNNIES

by Jickle





# LAND OF THE RISING FUN

Jonti Davies on games and life in Japan.



iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii(Ware)!

**O**n March 25th Nintendo launched the WiiWare service here in Japan. I decided to download all of the launch games, which in retrospect wasn't a very clever idea. There are a few gems on WiiWare right now, but the majority of titles are duds. I don't think the pricing is really a problem – the cheapest games currently available sell for 500 points, and only Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King (which is most representative of a full-fat game) goes for more than 1000 points. Memory isn't a problem, either. Saku Saku Animal Panic is the biggest game so far, and it only takes up 301 blocks, so you won't need to shell out on SD Cards for a while.

There is one obvious problem with the WiiWare launch line-up, though: the presence of too many duffers. Star Soldier R is a big let-down as it's nothing more than a glorified hi-score challenge, capped with a five-minute time limit – is this Hudson's idea of a joke? Having blown 800 points on it, I'm not laughing. Everyone's Pokemon Ranch is another disappointment – it's essentially a screensaver with a few limited options. Only young Pokemon fans need apply. Lonpos Wii and Solitaire are mediocre puzzle games, easily outclassed by stacks of Virtual Console entries, and even Dr. Mario & Bacteria Extermination proves to be tired and barely worth the 1000 points Nintendo is asking for it. Still, there are a few good 'uns...

I've had a lot of fun with My Life as a King, which is an odd 'nation management RPG' where there's no need to go through the traditional Final Fantasy routine of endless battles (you play as King Leo, who sends out adventurers to fight battles on his behalf – he's either very lazy or very shrewd) and where satisfaction is gained from constructing and maintaining a thriving kingdom. I plan on

putting more time into this one; the Sim City element is quite captivating.

I'm also really enjoying Saku Saku Animal Panic, which in spite of its Japanese-sounding name was developed in California. You play as a farmer who needs to get his animals into pens, fencing them off so that only like species are together. It's the kind of puzzle-action game that is perfectly suited for WiiWare, and its pricing (1000 points) is spot-on. There's a decent amount of content and it's backed up with co-op and competitive multiplayer modes.

While Animal Panic and My Life as a King will inevitably show up on the Aussie version of WiiWare, Okiraku Ping Pong and Mojipittan Wii probably won't. Which is a shame, as I'm having a great time with these games. Ping Pong is only 500 points and while there isn't much to it (it's just a simple, anime-inspired take on table tennis, with a neat two-player mode), it's a tasty gaming snack and makes better use of the Wii Remote (think a simplified version of Rockstar's Wii attempt) than every other WiiWare launch game, bar one: Mojipittan Wii. I've talked about Mojipittan in this column previously, so I won't bore you with the details again, but it's a brilliant Japanese word puzzle game. 1000 points and it'll never be released outside of Japan. Sorry about that.



# COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON

We are all familiar with the gaming hoarder.

A title enters the hoarder's collection and barring theft, fire or prolonged contact with younger siblings, there it stays. Even when offered generous trade-in terms, the hoarder cannot contemplate parting with a single game. No, not even that copy of *Bad Boys: Miami Takedown*.

Then there is the pruner. The pruner simply won't allow a substandard title to sully an otherwise sterling collection. Mediocrity is ruthlessly excised by the pruner, leaving only the best of the best. Crackpot Entertainment's Michael Levine definitely falls into the latter category.

Though he admits to retaining a modicum of 'crap', Levine's collection consists almost entirely of top shelf material. "I just keep the classics," he says, identifying story-driven action/adventure titles as his primary weakness.

As you can imagine (given his professional background), the graphical adventure titles of the 90s were enormously significant in Levine's growth as a designer. "I think I was influenced by all the stuff I worked on at



## Meet Michael Levine

Designer Michael Levine is the president of Crackpot Entertainment. Prior to striking out on his own, he contributed to a range of LucasArts projects, including *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, *Full Throttle* and *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire*. His most recent work is *Insecticide*, Crackpot's inaugural release.

Featuring a cast of anthropomorphic creepy crawlies, *Insecticide* is a hard boiled murder mystery with elements of platforming and shooting thrown in for good measure. Already available on the Nintendo DS in the United States, *Insecticide* is rumoured to be making its way to our shores in the near future. It is also scheduled for a PC release via episodic download.



LucasArts," he says, "and all the people who taught me what good really was."

"I am also influenced by the mass amounts of media I have consumed my whole life, not just games."

Today, Levine maintains a strong focus on characterisation and narrative. Given the endlessly repeated industry mantra of 'gameplay is king', Levine's words are somewhat surprising. "I think the common theme is strong story, worlds and characters. Fun gameplay is a must," he says, "but if you don't have the first, the second get boring, no matter how good it is."

We ask Levine to nominate a few of the titles from his collection that he continues to play today. "You are mistaking me for someone who has time and a life to play games!"

One of the sad realities of games development, it seems,

**Michael Levine recommends Oil of Olay for younger looking skin.**



is that there are precious few opportunities to play the darn things.

"At this point," he says, I play what my 4.5 year old wants, which is mainly LEGO Star Wars (when I let him!)."

LEGO Star Wars, a game as much about exploration and cooperative problem solving as sabre wielding heroics, is a title Levine admires greatly. "That is a great game experience" he says.

"The people at Travellers Tales get it. It's quick and easy to dive in and just have fun and the story and characters just pour through all the time. That is what games have been missing," he says.

We would like to thank Michael Levine for participating in this month's column.



### Cataloguing the Classics

We dipped into Levine's collection and pulled out a random assortment of LucasArts games. You read that correctly, Nine of the ten titles in our showcase originated at LucasArts. You'd think the guy was on the payroll. Oh wait... he was.

#### 1. *Ballblazer*

A schoolyard prank? A Rodney Dangerfield film? You'd think so, but *Ballblazer* was actually LucasArts' 1985 foray into the hotly contested field of future sports.

#### 2. *The Curse of Monkey Island*

This 1997 PC farce from LucasArts was the third in a series of four legendary point and click adventures featuring protagonist Guybrush Threepwood.

#### 3. *Defenders of Dynatron City*

LucasArts' 1992 side-scroller for the NES had two key points in its favour. One, you could play as a monkey. Two, you were armed with exploding bananas.

#### 4. *Football*

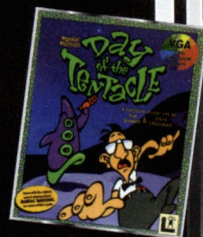
Mattel Electronics' handheld hit stores in 1977. Given the technical limitations of the day, it was a surprisingly bold attempt at simulating the sport of gridiron. Plus, LucasArts had nothing to do with it.

#### 5. *Full Throttle*

Though perhaps not as well known as the *Monkey Island* titles, this biker-themed 1995 PC adventure from LucasArts boasts a cult following of its own.

#### 6. *Maniac Mansion: Day of the Tentacle*

This time-spanning graphical adventure from... well, you know... was co-designed by Double Fine Productions founder Tim Schafer.



#### 7. *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*

This barnstorming WWII flight simulator was released by LucasArts and Totally Games in 1990.

#### 8. *Star Wars: Jedi Knight - Dark Force II*

The addition of multiplayer proved to be a trump-card.

#### 9. *Star Wars: X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*

This 1997 PC space combat epic featured two of the most celebrated craft in sci-fi cinema.

#### 10. *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*

LucasArts' 1993 shooter for the SNES was a vibrant (and violent) tribute to b-movie schlock.

# The Passion of the Gamer

## BOFFIN BLOGS

By Dylan Burns

It's not enough to have a whole page in the back of one of Australia's best games magazines ever (have I sucked up enough for that next press trip, Mr. Editor?). It's not enough that I get paid - actually paid - to dribble shit on a monthly basis. Nay, it's not even enough that I get free games, the odd trip across the globe and emails from my legion of scantily dressed female fans. Nope, I want more; I want to scream to the world about all of the boring day-to-day crap that I get up to. And I want people to care, dang it!

You know, hilarity like how that peg fell on the ground while I was hanging out the washing, or how I haven't shaved for eight days and my neck is starting to itch. Or that I'm currently starving myself so that I can at last look at the scales and see those little numbers go in a slightly downwards pattern, as opposed to the rather alarming exponential growth of late. Quite simply, I want to blog.

Of course, this path is one trodden by millions each day, people I have never met yet who parade their lives across the internets for all to see. They are much braver than I, for I have eschewed web logging, sorry, blogging (because us new fangled geek talkers can't stand the first syllable of any word) for as long as possible. There are several reasons for this. For one, I thought that it required some deep knowledge of html coding to even start one up. And secondly, I didn't think anyone would care. Of course, I know that nobody cares, but I have recently learnt that it's surprisingly easy to get a blog up and running - heck, you can even put YouTube videos on it!

Of course, being a passionate gamer, my blog is almost exclusively filled with gaming stuff. And about 99% of that is related to GTA IV (which I'll probably be playing to death by the time you read this).

But that's the beauty of a blog, it's totally self-indulgent. Not only can I say f\*\*k without the asterisks, but I can pump out anything I want: news, mini-reviews, silly pictures of David Hasselhoff, anything! I'm not even saying that you should visit my blog, but that the liberating experience of those first few days is something that every vitriolic gamer should at least try.

I'm proposing that if enough people start up their own game-themed blog we could band together and turn into some kind of entity, perhaps call it the Gaming Blog Alliance, or GBA, a place where hot topics can be passed around and analysed from all angles, a bit like those shows where people bring in their deceased relatives' antiques to see how much they're worth. Surely, amongst all the anger, angst and amateur posts there will shine a beacon of commonsense and, gasp, a prudent point.

A blog doesn't have to be just a place for shits and giggles; it can be an evolving beast, capable of slowly morphing into a thing of influence over time. Of course, this relies on people actually visiting your blog. It's no good having the best post in the world ever if nobody knows about it. This brings me to my next discovery: the embarrassing act of pinging your blog.

The cold, harsh reality is that nobody wants to know what you think. Fact. No one cares if you brushed your teeth eight times on Thursday or are planning to propose to your other half this weekend. The internet is full of people doing this. So you're relegated to the debasing act of casually mentioning at every opportunity that you have a blog. This doesn't mean that you tell the check-out chick about your blog, but it can descend into some worrying behaviour, such as providing links on forums, headers in online profiles, and even directing your monthly Hyper column towards the subject. This needs to be done subtly, or people will see through your motives and your slow but steady recruitment campaign will be derailed.

Self-referential blog pinging aside, I do wonder whether it is our job, as gamers, to make blogging actually interesting. After all, it could be argued that we use the internet far more than the average pleb - to browse

forums, to post in them, to download screenshots, trailers and reviews, and to play against other people from all over the world. It might just be our duty, the Gaming Blog Alliance's duty, to analyse trends, comment on the market and keep other gamers informed. Or do we leave that for so-called online professionals? Keep in mind that so often these days a strong cynical breeze blows through the web, with advertising scandals and cash-for-high-scores exposés almost commonplace.

In such a climate, the GBA risks descending into self-hate before it has even begun. Are gaming bloggers simply trolls of the internet, shooting down every new development and press release in a shower of vitriol? So many questions and yet I have no answers. All I know is that the simple act of posting your opinion - having complete control over its content

- and then sitting back waiting for comments to roll gives the writer something that he/she rarely gets from print: instant feedback, and the gratification of seeing your words published.

The harsh reality is that only three people ever visit your blog, and two of those are your parents. The other one is a mate who only visits because you hound him incessantly on MSN and, well, there may be a fourth person who visits on occasion, and they only do so in order to post 'first'. This is because a blog is not 'official', it carries no weight other than your own pomposity and self-importance. You know this, but you post anyway because you feel that you need to have an opinion on everything.

Your blog will probably never come to anything, and those comment boxes will sit there dejected, empty coffers offered no alms. But at least you tried, and at least you're posting. Indeed, my sad little life still gains some spark of excitement every time I open my blog page and check for feedback. It's never forthcoming, but such is the life of a passionate gamer.



Early 17th century Gaming blogger, St. Lucius Marellius, best known for inciting the infamous "Hide and Seek is teh sucks" flame war.

Boffin's Blog: [thepassionategamer.blogspot.com](http://thepassionategamer.blogspot.com)



# DEVELOPMENT

I'm sitting in a hotel bar on the West Coast with a fairly prominent Australian computer games developer. He's drinking vodka tonics and I'm on the whisky sours. I've always wanted to write something like that – it makes me sound like a suave traveller of the world instead of some nerd who got lucky. Anyways...

It turns out I'm a fan of his work from way back. Like, before he was a games dev and before I was legally allowed to drink. The booze is flowing and we are having a grand conversation before he looks up at me and says 'Yeah, no, I don't really feel like doing a formal interview.' So, my attempts to get a dev liquored up and *trick him into giving me a job* have failed.

However, before I can figure out how to wheedle my way past any basic professionalism, here's what I can report. In on the conversation was Codename: PirateMonkeyNinjaZombie, as he insists upon being called. I, however, refuse to call a grown man

**Codename: PMNZ then undid his fly, stared hatefully at me, raised his hands over his head, clenched fists, then urinated upon my shoes like a monkey**

that and so shall spare him, you, his family and God that indignity and simply call him PMNZ. His role in the industry is quite a secret one and again, off the record, so I cannot even tell you that. Suffice to say, if a game comes out of any publisher affiliated studio, this man is involved.

Look, this is op/ed journalism, ok? That means you'll just have to trust me that I'm not making it up. Bastards.

After my trickery failed, I fell upon the most desperate act I have ever been in the noble history of this column: I enquired about education. 'Honestly, Secret Dev and Codename PMNZ, if I go and do a university course, would that increase my chances of getting a job?'

The answers surprised me. 'I never (expletive deleted) look at that stuff. I just don't care about that (expletive deleted) stuff. I just want to see the (expletive deleted) knows his stuff. Give me a guy whose made a 3D engine in his bedroom. Give me a guy who really wants it.'

'Portal, of course, is the great example. There're loads of studios that just started as four (expletive deleted) who worked hard. You've got to understand, making a game is hard. I need to see passion. You could make twice the money doing half the work in other industries.' Interviews are always more fun when the swears start but our man worked blue. Part programmer, part drunken merchant-marine.

I liked this answer because the only thing in life distracting me from creating games is a total lack of technical skills. If I don't need an education, that's just, golly, it is just super.

However, Codename: PMNZ had a slightly more reasonable answer. In the interests of opacity and accountability, I should reveal this part of the conversation took place in an airport after five days of guzzling American food, which is basically mounds of starch, fat, and fatal gastric distress.

'The university stuff is good, don't get

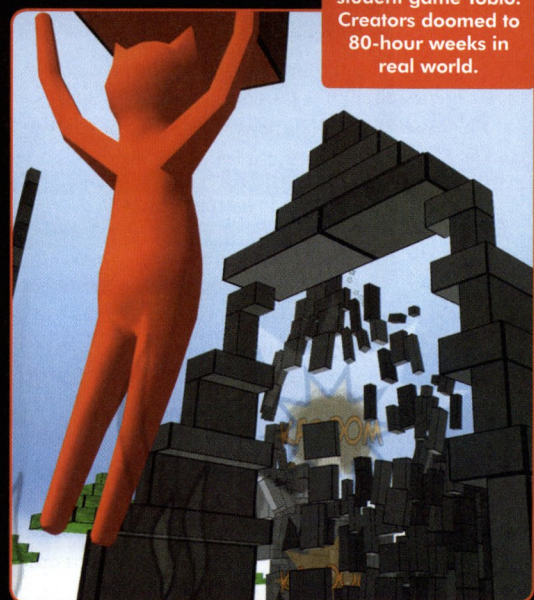
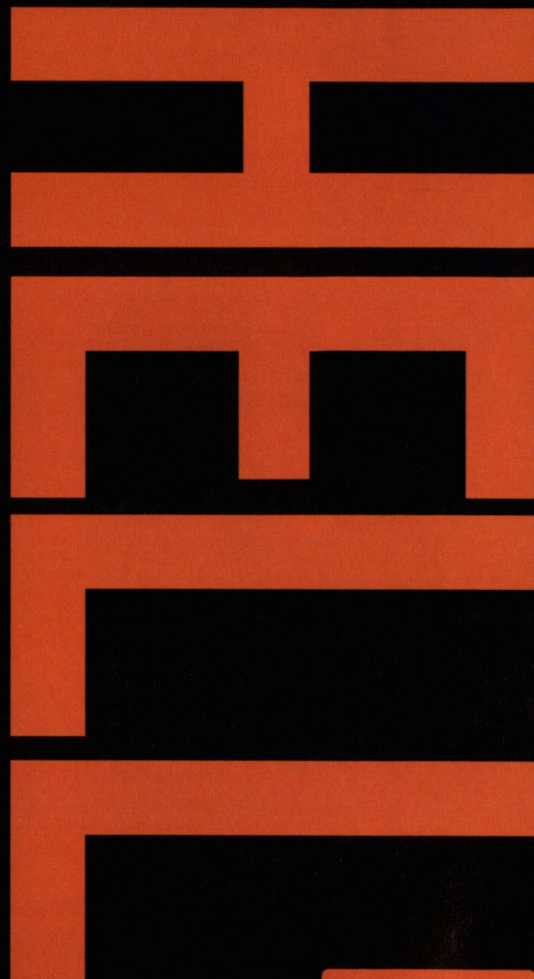
me wrong. It really does give you the basic skill-set for creating games. But more than that, you have to understand about the pressures of working in the industry. We tend to look for people who have proven they can work in those kinds of environments. Film, television, music. People who really can step up under incredible stress.'

Like games journalism, I asked politely?

Codename: PMNZ then undid his fly, stared hatefully at me, raised his hands over his head, clenched fists, then urinated upon my shoes like a monkey, an act of pure hate. 'No.'

Dear reader – I understand there's a lot in this article I cannot prove. But that last, it is utterly true.

*NEXT TIME: Tell me of this human thing you call... pressure.*



Award-winning student game *Toblo*. Creators doomed to 80-hour weeks in real world.

BY CHRISTIAN READ

# THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP  
10

PlayStation 2  
Games Over \$30

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
2	▲	Ratchet & Clank Size	Adventure
3	▲	Mx Vs Atv Untamed	Racing
4	▲	Buzz RoboJam Bundle	Family
5	▲	Buzz Monster Bundle	Family
6	▲	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
7	▲	Singstar Pop Hits Bundle	Family
8	▲	Guitar Hero 2 (S/W)	Family
9	▲	Guitar Hero Rock The 80'S	Family
10	▼	Singstar 90S Bundle	Family

TOP  
10

Nintendo DS Games  
Over \$30

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
2	▲	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Sports
3	▲	Imagine Babies	Strategy
4	▲	Sight Training	Family
5	▲	New Super Mario Bros	Action
6	▲	Mario Kart	Racing
7	○	Kageyamas Maths Training	Family
8	▲	Imagine Fashion Designer	Other
9	▼	Transformers Decepticons	Action
10	▼	The Sims 2 Castaway	Strategy

TOP  
10

Nintendo Wii Games  
Over \$50

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Sports
2	▲	Mario Party 8	Family
3	○	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
4	▼	Super Mario Galaxy	Action
5	◆	Sega Bass Fishing	Sports
6	◆	Ea Playground	Family
7	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
8	▼	Guitar Hero 3 Double Pack	Family
9	▲	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
10	▼	Super Paper Mario	Action

TOP  
10

Playstation 3  
Games Over \$60

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	Racing
2	◆	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
3	▲	Fifa 2008	Sports
4	▼	Assassins Creed	Action
5	▼	Army Of Two	Shooter
6	▲	Need For Speed Pro Street	Racing
7	▲	Condemned 2	Adventure
8	▲	Heavenly Sword	Action
9	▼	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
10	▲	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007	Sports

TOP  
10

PC Games  
Over \$20

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Sims 2 Free Time	Strategy
2	◆	WOW Burning Crusade	Role-Playing
3	○	Assassins Creed	Action
4	◆	The Sims 2	Strategy
5	▲	The Sims 2: Bon Voyage	Strategy
6	▼	Command & Conquer Kanes	Strategy
7	▲	The Sims 2: Seasons	Strategy
8	◆	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
9	▲	The Sims 2: Open Business	Strategy
10	▼	The Sims 2: Pets	Strategy

TOP  
10

Xbox 360  
Games Over \$50

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Guitar Hero 3 Rock Bundle	Family
2	▲	Halo 3	Shooter
3	▲	Assassins Creed	Action
4	▼	Rainbow Six Vegas 2	Shooter
5	▼	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
6	▼	Army Of Two	Shooter
7	▲	Mx Vs Atv Untamed	Racing
8	▼	Viking: Battle For Asgard	Action
9	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
10	◆	Bully Scholarship Editon	Action

TOP  
10

All Format  
Games Over \$50

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	PlayStation 3
2	▲	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	PlayStation 2
3	▲	The Simpsons Game	Nintendo DS
4	▲	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Nintendo Wii
5	▲	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Nintendo DS
6	▲	Imagine Babies	Nintendo DS
7	○	The Sims 2 Free Time	PC/MAC
8	▲	Ratchet & Clank Size	PlayStation 2
9	▼	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	PlayStation 3
10	◆	Sight Training	Nintendo DS

TOP  
10

PlayStation Portable  
Games Over \$40

W/E 13th April  
2008 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	God Of War: Chains	Action
2	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
3	◆	Mx Vs Atv Untamed	Racing
4	▲	Jackass: The Game	Action
5	▼	Need For Speed Pro Street	Racing
6	▼	Fifa 2008	Sports
7	▲	Socom Tactical Strike	Shooter
8	▲	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
9	▲	Patapon	Adventure
10	▲	Ricky Ponting 2007: Pressure	Sports

- New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



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Full-Length	Tracks	Artist / Title
HY44215	HY47234	Flo Rida feat T Pain - Low
HY44332	HY47187	Rihanna - Dont Stop The Music
HY44261	HY47156	Soulja Boy Tellem - Crank That (Soulja Boy)
HY44052	HY47086	Leona Lewis - Bleeding Love
HY44216	---	Jordin Sparks - Tattoo
HY44405	HY47207	Kelly Rowland - Work
HY44404	---	The Last Goodnight - Pictures Of You
HY44183	HY47129	Britney Spears - Piece Of Me
HY44393	HY47209	Chris Brown - With You
HY44593	---	Axle Whitehead - I Dont Do Surprises
HY44336	HY47193	The Veronicas - Untouched
HY44053	HY47087	Chris Brown - Kiss Kiss
HY43808	HY47012	Newton Faulkne - Dream Catch Me
HY44489	HY47223	One Republic - Stop and Stare
HY44419	---	M. Jackson/Akon - Wanna Be Startin Somethin 2008
HY43994	HY47069	Timbaland Pts Onerepublic - Apologize
HY44518	---	The Presets - My People
HY44226	---	The Potbellyez - Dont Hold Back
HY44481	HY47232	Timbaland/Keri Hilson/N. Scherzinger - Scream

**RINGTONES, POLYS, MOVIE TONES AND MORE FOR YOUR MOBILE JUST TEXT JINGLE TO 194400**

\*RINGTONES ARE SOUND-A-LIKES OF NAMED ARTIST

**Mobile Java Games**

HP85435	HP85031	HP85631	HP85628
HP86220	HP85939	HP85926	HP85777
HP85792	HP85155	HP86163	HP85900
HP86231	HP86224	HP86071	HP85941
HP85635	HP86162		

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**Top wallpapers**

HY56677	HY53506	HY57751	HY60017	HY58352	HY56216
HY56856	HY61436	HY56225	HY56829		

**Babes**

HY59500	HY57979	HY594484	HY58327 wallpaper	HY75979 video
HY56766	HY60185	HY58243	HY57978	HY58150
HY57978	HY58150	HY59285	HY.56176	HY57796
HY57796	HY56969	HY58276	HY57657	

**Dirty vids**

HY75984	HY79042	HY75978	HY78932	HY78730	HY78912
HY78076	HY78933	HY76363	HY78753	HY79707	HY78938
HY75962	HY75979	HY77266	HY77280	HY75931	HY78035
HY77303	HY76420	HY77252	HY75966	HY76219	HY75952

**BARE CELEBRITY**

NO SUBSCRIPTIONS

HY58248

HY75984

HY58052

HY57598

HY58329

**\*TXT STRIP TO 194400**

FOR 1000s OF NAKED CELEBS

HY58114

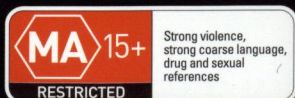
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Niko Bellic

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PLAYSTATION 3

