OXM 50

Official XBOX Magazine

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE TWO THRONES

World-exclusive review of the final chapter in the Prince of Persia trilogy! See the Dark Prince in action!

XBOX

Official Xbox Magazine

Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL 4

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- Serious Sam II
- Total Overdose
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Future

REVIEWS: PRINCE OF PERSIA THE TWO THRONES, NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED, CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE, ENTER THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO GUIDE: HALF-LIFE 2

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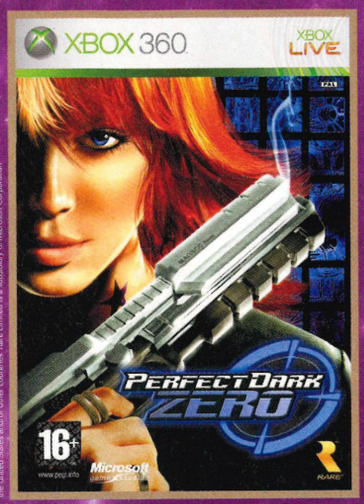
Top Dog for Christmas Gifts



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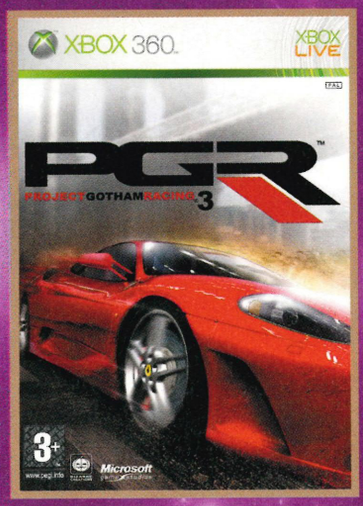

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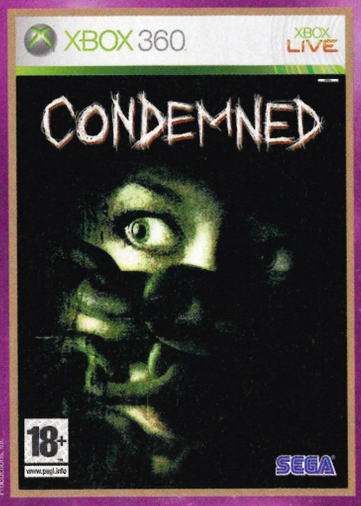

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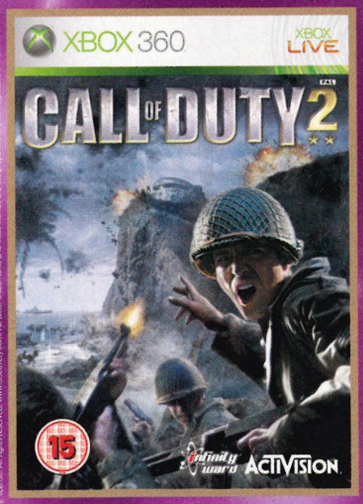
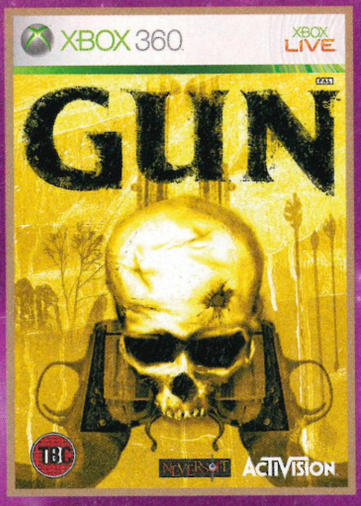


Call Of Duty® 2
Xbox 360



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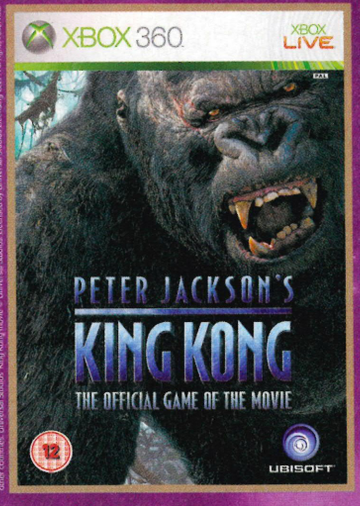

Peter Jackson's King Kong
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What's in it for you

OFFICIAL Xbox Magazine **is written by experienced gamers who've spent their lives playing games. We believe that games are the most exciting form of entertainment and the magazine will reflect that at all times.**

BEING THE *OFFICIAL Xbox Magazine* means we're in the best position to give impartial, honest reviews and scores to base your buying decisions on. We don't do deals for access to finished games.

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WE BELIEVE that the readers of *Official Xbox Magazine* are one of our most important assets. We want to be a place where your opinions and expertise can be shared with the Xbox community.

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50 This Month!

Time flies when you're having fun, and this month marks the 50th issue of the world's favourite Xbox magazine. We've been here right from the very beginning of Xbox, and we'll be here right to the very end. If you're one of the many gamers who joined us along the way, we've assembled the ultimate feature covering the entire history of Xbox to bring you up to speed on how the world's most powerful games console was born. If you've been with us from *OXM* 01, we salute you; if this is your first issue, we welcome you with open arms. There are enough games for everyone to enjoy. Aside from exclusive playable demos, you'll find over 600 reviews of EVERY Xbox game ever released in the UK on your *Official Xbox Magazine* game disc.

If you've just bought an Xbox, or are thinking of taking the plunge, there's never been a better time. Look out for future Play:More features, which will take you back to games gathering dust on your shelves. We'll show you new ways to get the most out of your old games, or games you may have missed out on. Likewise, we want you to show us what you've found tucked away in your favourite titles. With most games serving up hours and hours of gameplay that many miss, between us we'll crack every game out there wide open.

Enjoy the issue,

GAVIN OGDEN
EDITOR, *OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE*

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PRINCE OF PERSIA THE TWO THRONES

Exclusive! The stunning time-bending trilogy is finally complete. Will Prince save Persia and the Princess? Find out how it all ends in our massive review...

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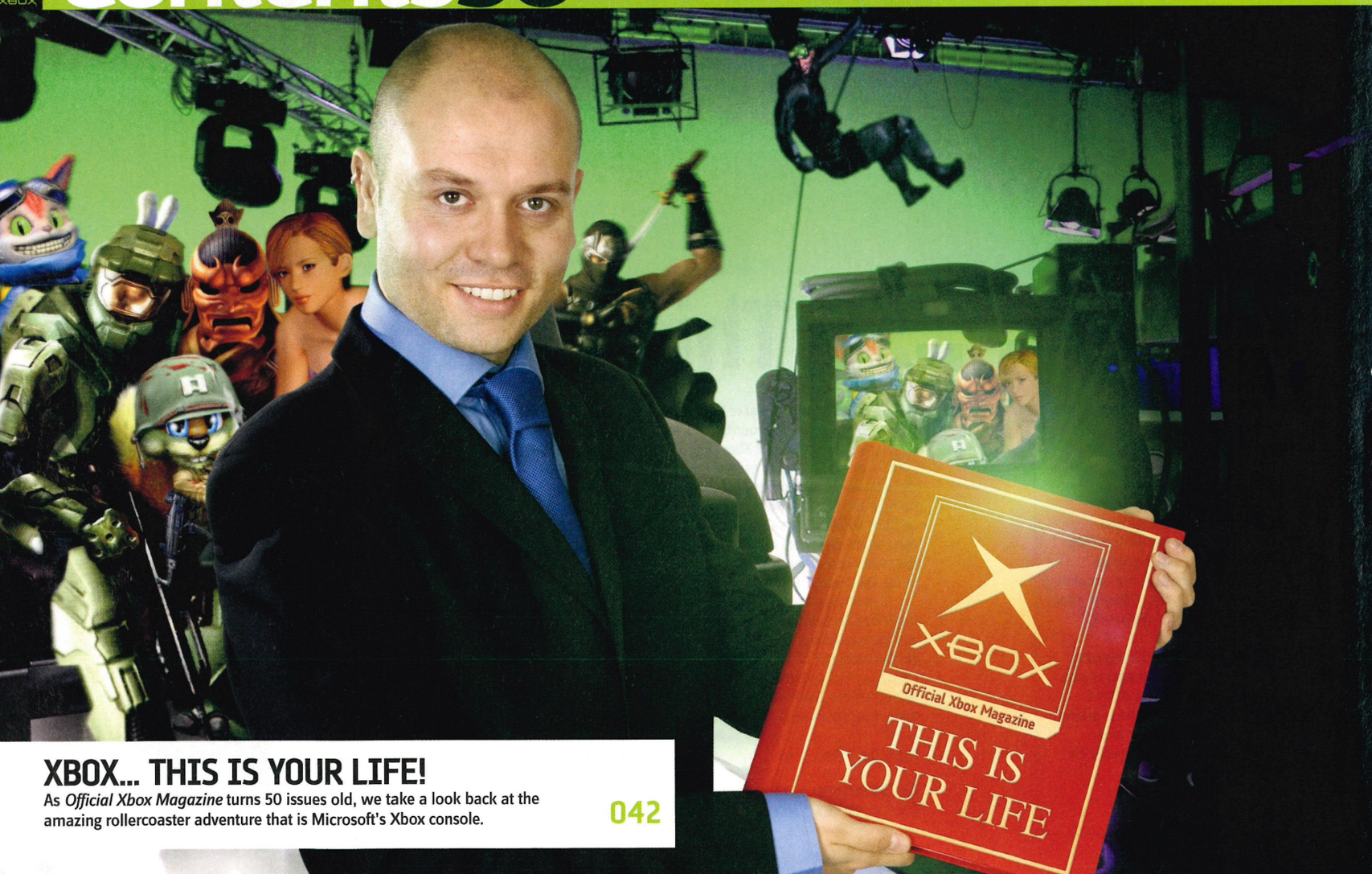

XBOX... THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

As *Official Xbox Magazine* turns 50 issues old, we take a look back at the amazing rollercoaster adventure that is Microsoft's Xbox console.

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Play:More On the Disc 50

On The Disc: Playable

Need For Speed Most Wanted, Total Overdose, Serious Sam II, Darkwatch

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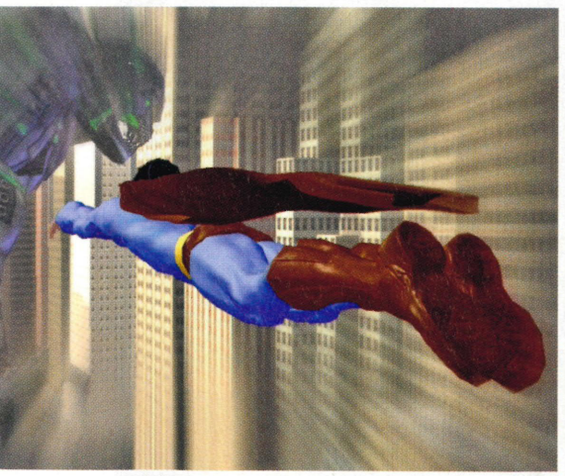

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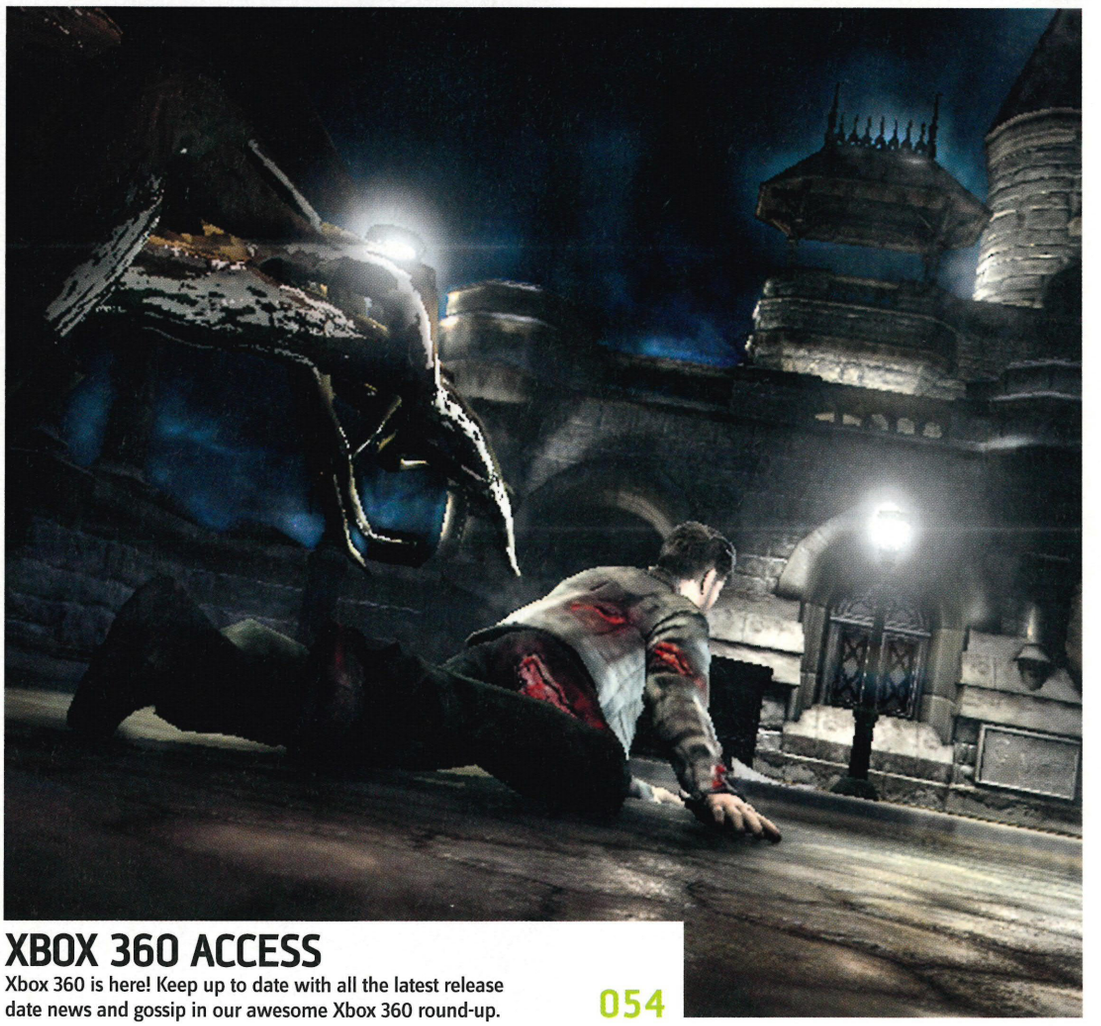

XBOX 360 ACCESS

Xbox 360 is here! Keep up to date with all the latest release date news and gossip in our awesome Xbox 360 round-up.

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For a fantastic opportunity to subscribe to *Official Xbox Magazine*, saving yourself a wedge of cash and getting it delivered to your door, turn to page 052 right now. There you'll also find details of our Back Issues service, in case you've missed a vital review, great trial version or essential guide.

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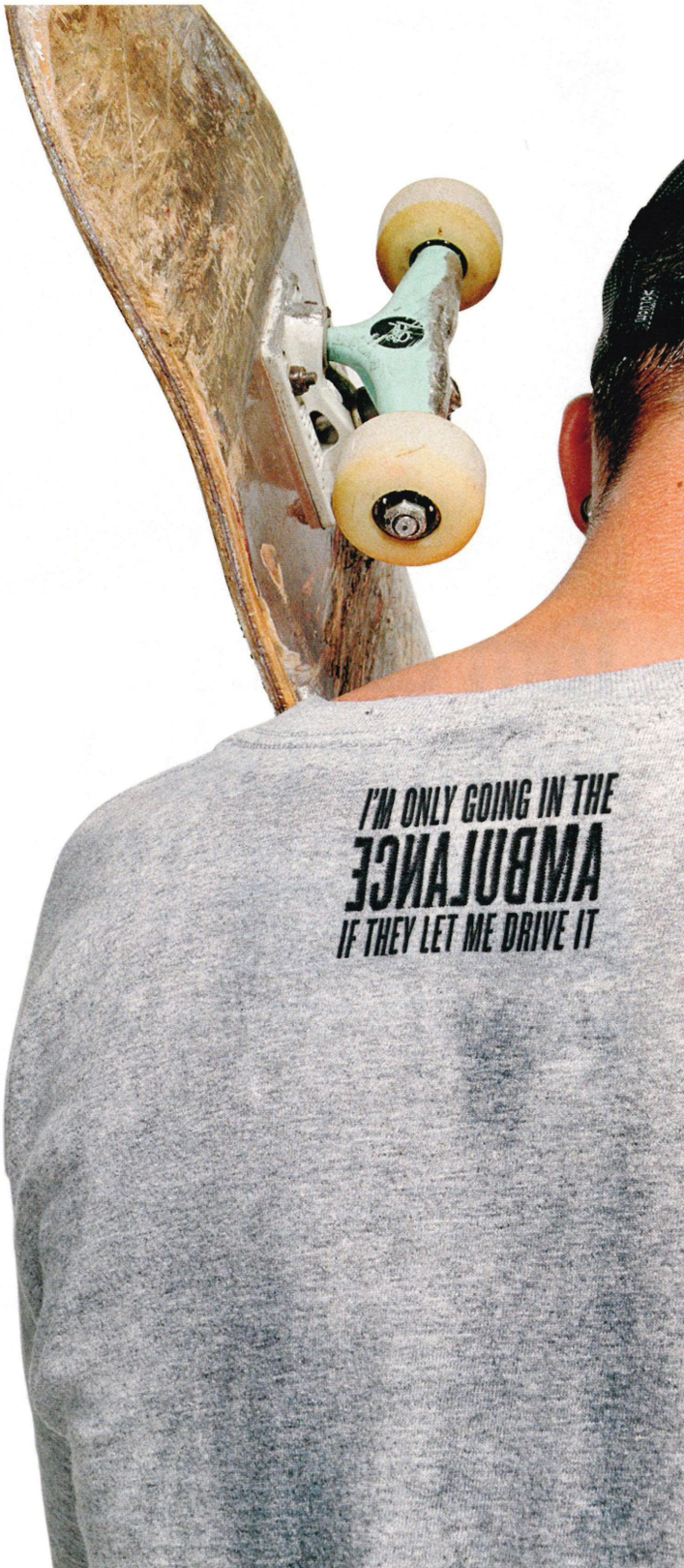
SNICKERS



↑ The goggles are off, and Fisher's been banged up for 20 years.

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 4

Fisher goes off the rails and on the rampage

Dev: Ubisoft	Pub: Ubisoft
Release: March 06	Live: TBA
Players: 1	

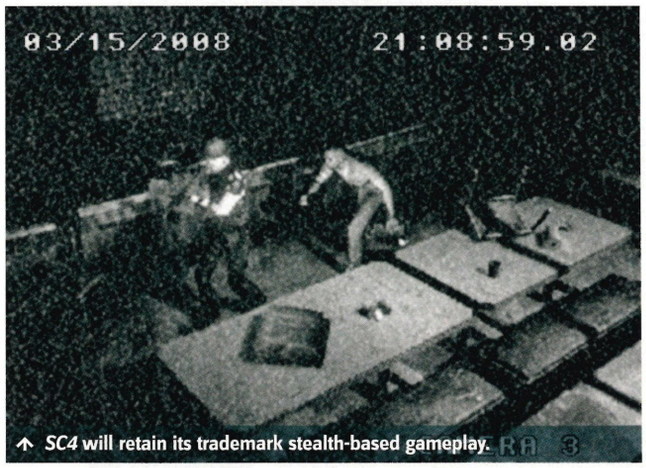
YOU'RE LOOKING at the world's first screens of the latest instalment of the *Splinter Cell* series. And the fourth episode sees Sam Fisher as a man on a completely new kind of mission. Gone are the trademark green goggles and high-tech gadgets that the series became known for. Gone is his daughter too, which we know has a lot to do with what's shaping up to be the darkest *Splinter Cell* game yet. From the teaser info Ubisoft has released so far, *Splinter Cell* is going in a totally new direction and is already one to watch. This is going to be interesting...

Following the death of Sarah Fisher (we don't know how she died yet, or what it has to do with the story), Sam has landed himself in the slammer for 20 years after being caught and charged for armed robbery and murder. He's gone from a shadowy ghost warrior to small-time criminal getting caught with his pants down. It's not yet known whether Fisher quit the top-secret organisation Third Echelon or was disgraced and booted out, but it's safe to say he's parted company with the stealth unit for good. As you can already see, the game is beginning to take on a completely different form from the previous three titles in the series, which is a good thing in our opinion. Change is good for the soul and all that.

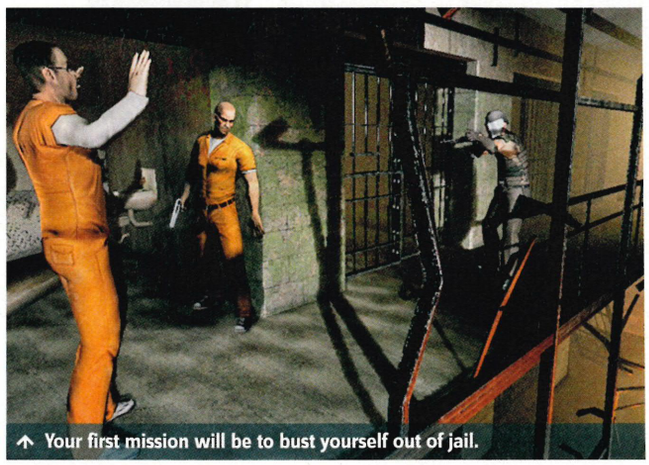
While banged up in chokey, Fisher gets to know a fellow inmate by the name of Jamie Washington. He's done time for a number of run-ins with the law in the State of Louisiana, and is a known member of the John's Brown army, a small New Orleans-based criminal organisation that's not considered a major threat to public order. Sam and Jamie decide they don't want to stay locked up so they join forces and escape. The story goes that Jamie couldn't have made it alone, and will be thankful to Sam for the rest of life.

Fisher's old mentor Lambert (from the previous games) is fully aware of the situation and is still close to him. But we're told Lambert is having a hard time understanding what happened to his protégé. He also goes to visit Sam several times 'in Kansas', it says here.

Those are details we could extract from Ubisoft at time of going to press, but it all makes for an interesting and radically different spin on the series. Keep you eyes peeled for our next issue (on sale 22 December), where we'll be unveiling the full title and exclusively revealing specific plot details to the world. You'd be a fool to miss it!



↑ *SC4* will retain its trademark stealth-based gameplay.



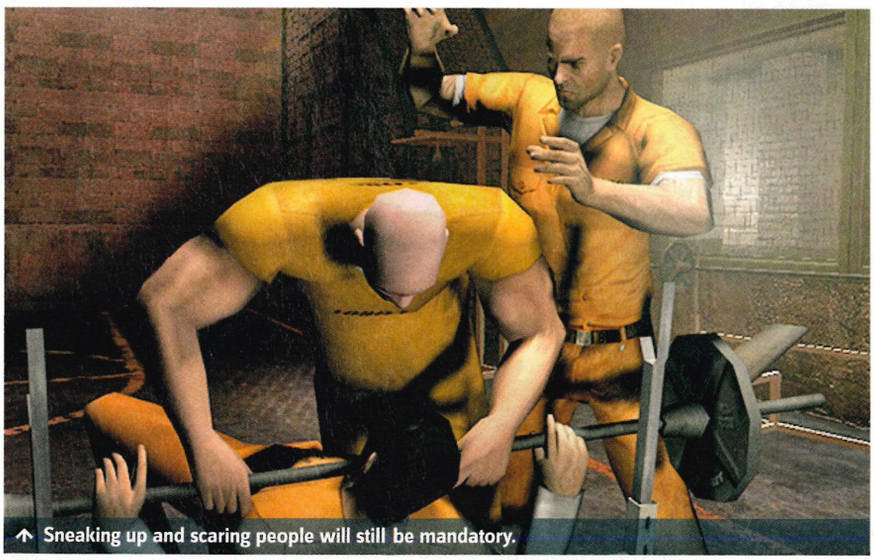
↑ Your first mission will be to bust yourself out of jail.

↑ It's all change for Sam Fisher. Look out for world-exclusive plot revelations in next month's *OXM*, on sale 22 December...

Bonus info

SCARRED FOR LIFE

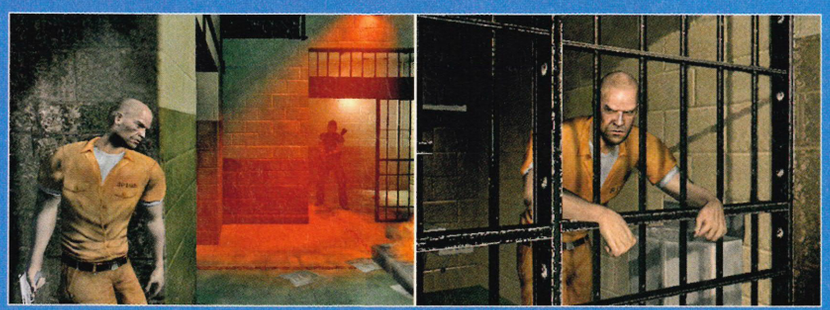
A clue about Fisher's new direction can be found inked onto his back in the form of a mysterious new tattoo. "Nothing is certain about this, but it shows how Sam's personality changed in the recent past," Ubisoft tells us. "There are rumours he got it in prison, others that he had it before getting caught. No one knows what it really means." we bet they do but they're just not telling yet. Check out more at www.bewaresamfisher.com.



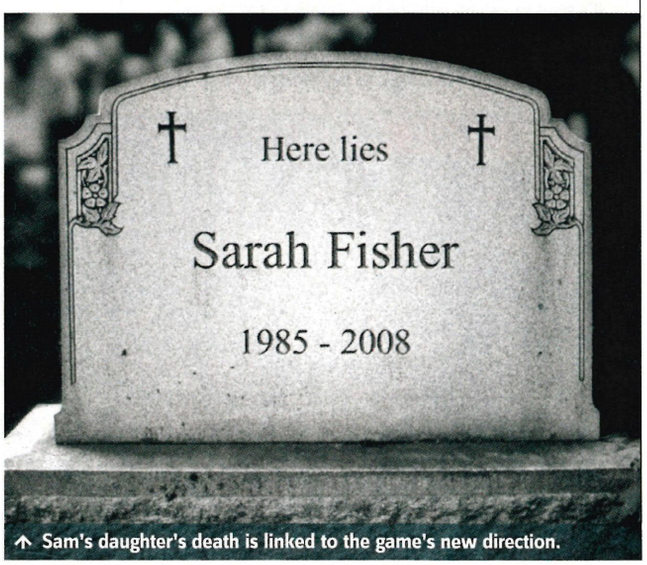
↑ Sneaking up and scaring people will still be mandatory.

↑ Sam and his new friend draw up plans for an escape to victory.

BREAKING THE LAW When good Sam goes bad...



After the jail break, new-found friend Jamie introduces Sam to the John's Brown army. We know they end up working together but it's not going to be as simple as that. There are others people who need to be factored into the story too. The main figures in the John's Brown army are Emile Dufraisne and his second Carson Moss. A chemist expert named Enrica Villablanca is said to have tight links with the group but information is scarce about her so far. All will be revealed next issue, only in *Official Xbox Magazine*!



↑ Sam's daughter's death is linked to the game's new direction.

SOLD OUT: TO DATE THE SPLINTER CELL SERIES HAS NOTCHED UP IMPRESSIVE SALES OF OVER 12.5 MILLION

Incoming

All the essential news, exclusive previews and latest screenshots from the wonderful world of Xbox

P14 BUNGIE'S BLACK EYE
Which UK developer is aiming to crush *Halo*'s legacy?

P14 FIFA STREET TOO?
A written aplogy from the *FIFA Street* team...

P15 IT'S COMING HOME, AGAIN!
The latest news on the future of *PES* on Xbox.

P16 GET BACK TO HELL!
New spine-shredding *Doom* content ready for download!

P16 SIMS GO RACING?
Could it be true? Are *The Sims* to star in a karting game?

P17 STREETS OF RAGE
Eidos reveals riotous shooter *Zero Tolerance: City Under Fire.*

Brave New World

Microsoft announces its launch line-up, and we look at what's in store for 2006

WITH XBOX 360 almost upon us, Microsoft has gone all-out letting us in on its launch line-up secrets. Unveiled at X05, this year's Microsoft and Xbox convention in Amsterdam, the range of games crosses every genre.

Three of Xbox 360's most anticipated titles - *Kameo: Elements of Power*, *Perfect Dark Zero* and *Project Gotham Racing 3* - have all made the Christmas launch date, and were all confirmed by Microsoft at the X05 conference.

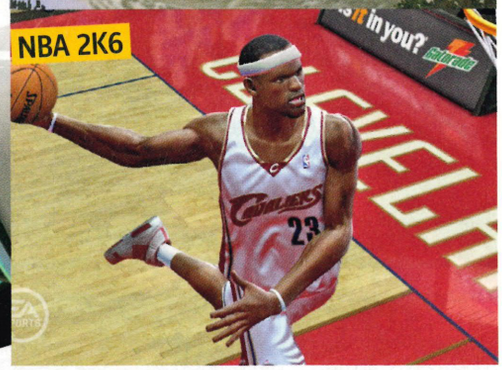
Although these titles dominated the event, other companies also revealed their line-ups for 2006. Activision, for example, announced that it will be releasing *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, *Gun*, *Call of Duty 2* and *Quake IV*. All of these, with the exception of *Quake IV*, will be around in just a month's time.

Take Two revealed that its Xbox 360 launch titles will include *Top Spin 2*, *NBA 2K6* and *NHL 2K6*. It also announced the release of *Amped 3* and *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, which are due to hit the shelves in 2006.

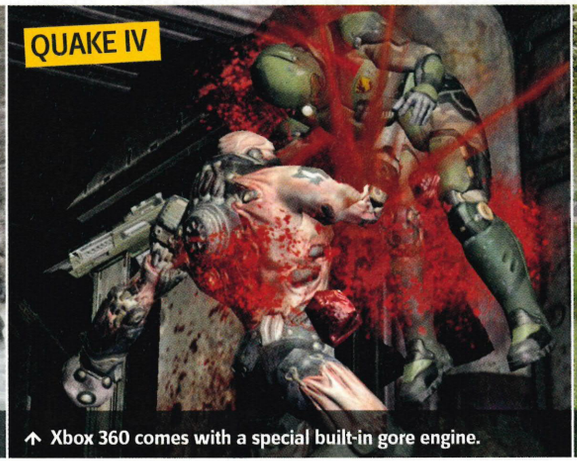
Five titles were also announced by EA. These include *Need For Speed Most Wanted*, *FIFA 06: Road to FIFA World Cup*, *NBA Live 06*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06* and *Madden NFL 06*. What's interesting about EA's line-up is that all of them are sequels or updates of current-generation titles. In fact, the vast majority of launch games are also sequels, and although a few may grumble, they are perfect for comparing and contrasting the Xbox with the 360.

Although the complete launch list is a strictly guarded secret, our sister magazine *Official Xbox 360*, has given us a few hints regarding launch titles. At a best guess, these include *Dead or Alive 4*, *Dead Rising*, *King Kong* and *Condemned: Criminal Origins*. If these also make it, there's every chance that anyone who gets an Xbox 360 under the tree will miss an entire afternoon of Morecambe and Wise repeats and the Queen's Speech too!

It's great to see not only the best publishers giving us launch titles, but so many of them to choose from. Even if the officially announced games were the only ones available, it would mean over a dozen titles to be getting on with!



↑ War has never been more brutal than on Xbox 360.



↑ Xbox 360 comes with a special built-in gore engine.

↑ You can almost hear those birds singing.

P17 YELLOW PERIL
Alien Hominid gets himself a heap of downloadable content!

P17 MOVING TO 360
Microsoft makes it easy to move between consoles. Honestly!

P18 STREETBALL STRIKES
AND 1 Streetball comes to town. Looks mighty fly too.

P19 BRAIN EATERS
Freshly unearthed screens of Romero's latest offering.

P20 GTA LONDON?
The rumour mills begin for *GTA*'s next violent killing spree.

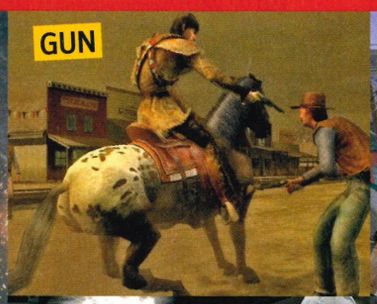
P20 SPARTAN VS RYU
Halo character joins *DOA 4* cast. New pics inside!

P22 WIN A HOLIDAY TO CANADA!
Win a trip of a lifetime and visit the makers of *Far Cry*!

P24 START YOUR ENGINES
More from the *Driver* series. Is it back on track?

P26 DOING THE TIME WARP
Delayed but looking good, *TimeShift* spills its secrets.

↑ Just look at that screen. Don't read this, just look!



↑ Enemies will be bigger, badder, and better than ever.

THE INSIDE VIEW

PETER MOORE
CORPORATE VP OF WORLDWIDE MARKETING AND PUBLISHING

At the recent X05 games conference in Amsterdam, where Microsoft unveiled many of its plans for the future of the Xbox 360, this is what Peter Moore had to say about the console and the launch line-up:

"The biggest and the best names in publishing are committed to the success of Xbox 360, and looking at the titles we have announced [at the recent X05 games conference] we are very excited. From exclusive titles to debuting the next instalment of some of the world's best-loved franchises, Xbox 360 will redefine gaming and entertainment. The high-definition era of gaming starts now."

THE EXPERT VIEW

GERHARD FLORIN
EXECUTIVE VP OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING

Also speaking at X05 was EA's man, Gerhard Florin – here's what he had to say: "This is the start of a new era in interactive entertainment. The combined power of Xbox 360 and innovation from EA in graphics, animation and gameplay means consumers will have unprecedented levels of interaction and rich connection with the games they play. EA has more than 20 games in development for Xbox 360 and is delivering quality entertainment in support of the launch, with franchises like *Need For Speed*, *FIFA*, *NBA Live*, *Tiger Woods* and *Madden NFL*. The X05 event is a global showcase of great digital entertainment to come."

OUR VIEW

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
CUTTING TO THE CHASE AND TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

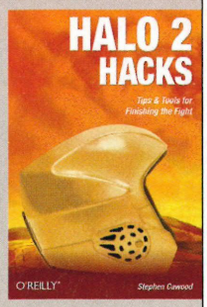
Xbox 360 needs a strong launch line-up if it's to get a hold on the market, as a mere time advantage over the PS3 might not be enough. We're pleased to see that the titles are a mix of established names, such as EA's sports updates, and new games like *Kameo: Elements of Power*, *Gun*, *King Kong* and *Condemned: Criminal Origins*. It's also great to see such a wide range of genres covered – triple-A titles to boot. Each of the games has been crafted with the Xbox 360 launch in mind, and we can't think of one that doesn't have star quality written all over it. If this is the future of Xbox, then we're in safe hands. Now go buy one!

BUYING A BOX: WHEN BEN BUYS HIS XBOX 360 HE'S GOING TO SLEEP WITH IT. HE'S THAT EXCITED!

News Wire.....

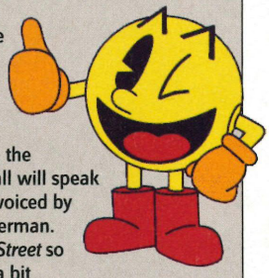
Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Halo Hacks



Want to learn where every glitch and secret is in *Halo 2*? Want to find those mysterious areas in multiplayer maps where people walk through walls or find secret glitches? Now you can! A new book called *Halo 2 Hacks* shows you the places most people never see, and how to do things most people never do with *Halo 2*. Written by expert hackers, glitchers and tricksters, every glitch, easter egg and more is in there. Buy it now!

Talking Balls



Ever wondered what Pac-Man actually sounded like? We always thought he just went 'yakka yakka yakka'. Not any more. In the forthcoming *Pac-Man World* 3, the gaping-gobbed ball will speak for the first time, voiced by actor Martin T Sherman. He was in *Green Street* so presumably he's a bit cockney and violent, innit?

Too few 360 consoles?

Microsoft's Chris Liddells has predicted only four or five million Xbox 360s will ship this year, ruling out a 'flooded market'. Instead, we're looking at a 'steady trickle'. "Whereas others have shipped significant volumes for launch then resupplied many weeks or months later, our process is to continually supply on a regular basis," said Liddells.

Jackson Attacks!

Why EA didn't make Kong...

PETER JACKSON has told the *New York Times* just why he turned to Michel Ancel to handle *Kong* rather than *LOTR* developer EA. Apparently it all comes down to directorial input (something EA has since learned - see page 017).

According to the article, Jackson "chafed at his dealings with the industry heavyweight [EA]", saying the company didn't really allow him much imput. Jackson, a passionate gamer himself, chose Ancel to do *Kong* after being dazzled by the developer's overlooked *Beyond Good & Evil*.

Black To Basics

Copycat games "all Halo's fault" says Criterion man, while re-reinventing the FPS...

Official Xbox Magazine PLAYED IT

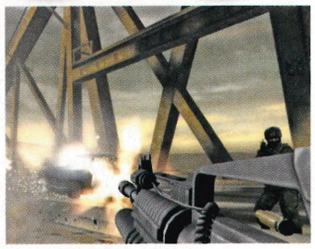
Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

FED UP WITH having nothing to play but endless, generic first-person shooters? It's all Bungie's fault, according to Criterion's Dean Evans, project manager on the developer's forthcoming, erm, shooter, *Black*. While revealing new levels for the much-anticipated super-violent FPS, Evans good-naturedly SLAMMED the *Halo* developer for creating a cynical copycat culture in the games industry.

"Developers seem to have forgotten what first-person shooters should actually be about," preferring to endlessly recycle the hugely successful *Halo* formula rather than strive to do anything different, said Evans. Naturally, *Black*, will go some way to remedy this - Criterion is stripping away the flim-flam and taking shooters back to basics with its first venture into the genre. "If you enter a dark room in *Black* you won't be able to turn on your night vision - because you won't have any," Evans told us. "The only way you'll be able to see in the dark is by firing your gun more!"

We have to admit, it does sound rather ace. With gameplay that's "closer to every Arnie movie made" than the fiddly tactical shooters of late, *Black* is putting the shooting back into the first-person genre. "We're aiming to get back to what the genre was all about in the first place," Evans said. And if *Black* does to first-person blasting games what Criterion's original *Burnout* did to driving ones, we're in for something rather special...

↑ We've played it! *Black* RULES!



↑ *Black* is the new, er, *Halo*?

↑ "It was all about shooting, not being stealthy or driving vehicles..."

Deep Silver's harder than hardcore tank sim Panzer Elite Action has been delayed until Februrary. Look out for a full preview in the mag soon

Rumour has it Brian Harvey's nan will be 'da MC' this time...

STOP PRESS!!

SENSIBLE SOCCER COMING! As we were going to press, Codemasters announced it was bringing footie classic *Sensible Soccer* back to life with a souped-up cel-shaded Xbox version. We'll have more next issue!

Another Own Goal?

EA defends FIFA Street 2 after the original got a panning

EA PRODUCER Simon Andrews has been on the defensive following the announcement of *FIFA Street 2*, the sequel to last year's critically mauled urban football mess. "We recognized that we needed to really get the gameplay experience right this year," admitted Andrews. "So our biggest focus has been gameplay."

We're promised new features such as improved responsiveness and ball control, and less emphasis on rubbish smart-arsed trick moves. "This year you will be able to juggle the ball in gameplay and incorporate that into your style of play. We are also making big improvement to the goalie as well. You will be able to take control and bring him onto the pitch if you want," Andrews told us.

So while *FIFA Street 2* will still sell itself on the 'trick-pulling' aspect, EA's learned that you can't just replace actual gameplay with a load of sponsorship logos and trick moves. "We've made some great improvements - the game plays smoother and the AI is far more refined," said Andrews. Let's hope he's right.

Pro Evo 6 In Training

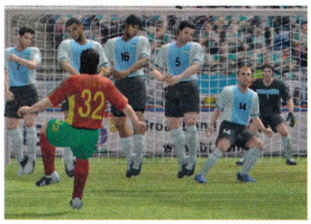
Exclusive: PES stays on Xbox for another season

INFAMOUS *PRO EVO* producer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka has told *OXM* his team was guilty of dropping PSone support too soon when PS2 came along, but he assures us it won't be the case with Xbox and Xbox 360.

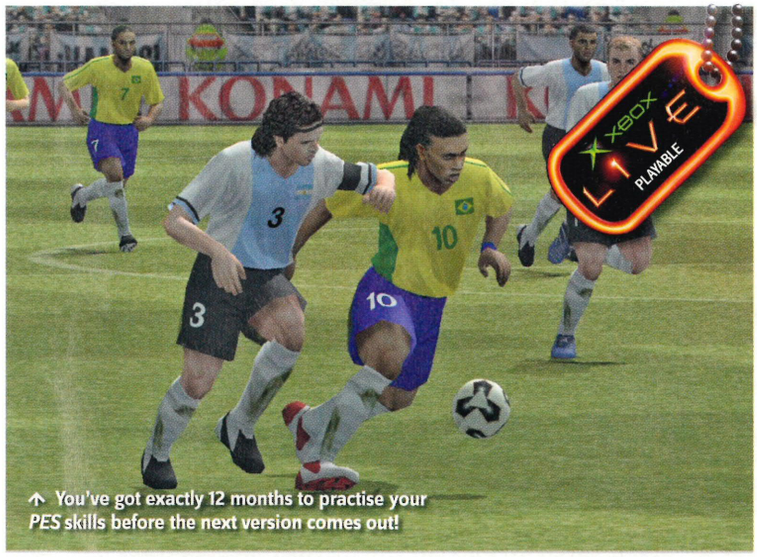
Speaking to *OXM* in Sardinia during the finals of the *PES* European Cup (see page 116 for more), Seabass explained: "We pulled out too early of the last hardware shift, but we'll support this generation as long as possible." EA has already expressed interest in releasing next year's *FIFA* title on as many platforms as possible, so expect another round of *FIFA* versus *Pro Evolution Soccer* arguments same time next year.

An Xbox 360 version of *Pro Evo* is already in development - Seabass revealed his wish to one day have 11 versus 11 play over Xbox Live. "We possibly could do it in the next generation, though I think you're more likely to see five vs five first." One step at a time, then - could you imagine the chaos 11 vs 11 online would create. Who would want to play in nets, or be a sub?

↑ Press Y to bring the keeper out.



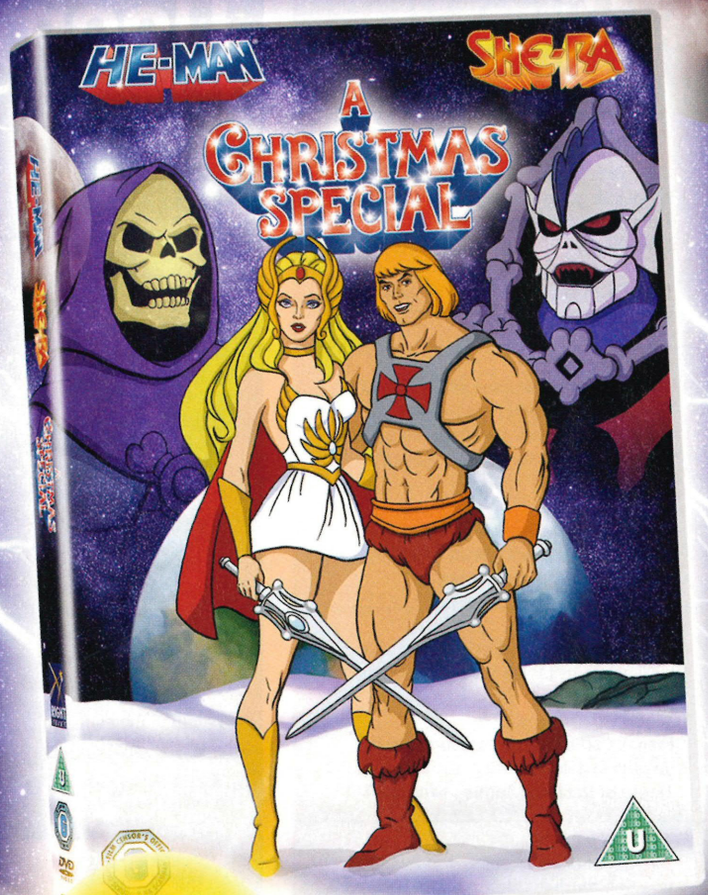
↑ Will we ever score a free kick?



↑ You've got exactly 12 months to practise your *PES* skills before the next version comes out!

↑ We suggest using nine of those months to practise heading the ball in the right direction.

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR FAMILY



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Quotes of the month...

"As a grown man, I find playing with an elf a little bit demeaning. We're into gangster movies, car chases, *The Warriors*, westerns and a load of other things."

Take Two's creative VP Dan Houser talks to the *New York Times*.

"We can make more plastic. We can get more memory. We can easily make more software and print more game discs - but the silicon thing is really the bugaboo."

J Allard tells everyone 'Don't panic, don't panic, everyone will get an Xbox 360!' in his best Corporal Jones voice.

"We are hoping that it's going to be much better than the first one. That won't be hard."

French-Canadian actress Emmanuelle Vaugier speaks her mind about the *House of the Dead* Sequel. Whoopie!

"*Manhunt* is so über-visceral that it's too much for me."

And this coming from *Mortal Kombat* producer Shaun Himmerick!

"We'd like to take this opportunity to apologise to all gamers who were expecting 80,000 triangles in *PGR3*. I can conclusively reveal that in fact we do NOT have 80,000 polygons on average per car. It's actually closer to 96,000."

Bizarre Creations, your humble apologies are wholeheartedly accepted.

"It's all about bestiality!"

***King Kong* executive producer Michel Ancel reveals the ethos behind the game.**

"As of today, we've banned 53,982 accounts. That's a LOT of jerks. There are also about 662 active temporary suspensions for less horrible offences."

Bungie kicks some ass, and reveals just how many numpties have been banned from the *Halo 2* servers!

"Peter told us he wanted Kong to be intuitive to the player; to give him the pleasure to feel the power of Kong. He said, 'Hey, it's a gorilla. Just make him move like a gorilla.' He gestured like Kong and explained how he moved. It was like an interview with Kong himself!"

***King Kong* producer Xavier Poix loves Peter Jackson almost as much as we do.**

Doomload New Content!

Two multiplayer maps from Resurrection of Evil, completely free!

NOT SURE about getting your mitts on *Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil* (reviewed on page 070)? Need some persuading, or maybe a great slobbering monster breathing down your neck for inspiration? You could do worse than check out the new *Doom 3* downloadable content unleashed by id this month. Two of *Resurrection of Evil*'s seven levels are there, free to download for multiplayer: the Communications and Surface levels.

Communications is a 'receiving area warehouse' providing storage and distribution for the communication sector on Mars. The map consists of long corridors and dark corners, perfect for surprising enemy players from the shadows or taking them out head-on, so gamers will have to keep on their toes to survive in this dangerous environment.

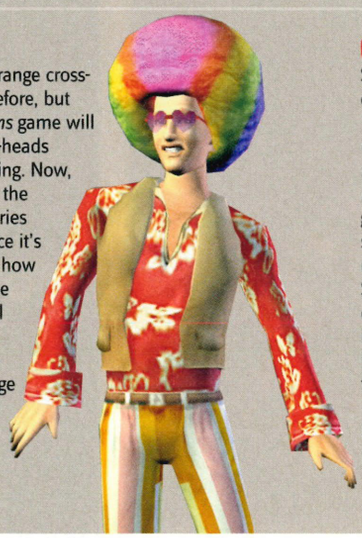
id describes 'Surface' as a lonely section of the Mars UAC base that's been left exposed to the elements of the Martian environment. The map consists of a multi-tiered industrial yard centred between two external gates, where a vast amount of pipes and platforms criss-cross over a large section of the Martian surface, from which players can visit death from above on their enemies. You must be quick, agile and skilled at shooting on the fly to win.

EA has apparently copyrighted the name 'The Sins'. Could we be seeing an R-rated version of the people-pushing hit? Mmm...

BIZARRE Weird goings-on from the world of Xbox

Sim Racing?

We've heard of some strange cross-overs in game genres before, but word has it the next *Sims* game will see the babbling cursor-heads partaking in a little karting. Now, call us cynical, but with the exception of Mario, a series always seems to die once it's 'done' karting. And just how will the fragile Sims cope for a whole race? They'll be pulling over to use the bathroom every five minutes and leaving huge piles of litter at the side of the track. Sheesh!



→ We're reserving judgement on this...

Governated!

↓ He's a good Terminator now!

Star of such R-Rated classics as *The Terminator*, *Commando*, *Predator*, and, erm, *Raw Deal*, California governor and shortarse Austrian muscleman Arnold Schwarzenegger decided in his infinite wisdom this month to sign the Video Game Restriction bill, which bans anyone under 18 buying "games in which the range of options available to a player includes killing, maiming, dismembering, or sexually assaulting an image of a human being." The law comes into effect next January. Given that Arnie's old job involved rather a lot of killing, maiming and dismembering (albeit on screen), we'll leave you to mull over the ironies of that one yourself.

Ground Zero

First glimpse of Eidos's brutal new anarchy-based FPS

TIME FOR some crime! Eidos has unveiled two juicy screenshots for its forthcoming Live FPS *Zero Tolerance: City Under Fire*. It's the new name for the game previously known as *Roll Call*, which also shares its name with an old Mega Drive title, an urban game of war and violence with an unusual twist - you're not the gangster this time.

Nope, you play as large-chinned Special Forces hero and ex-Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason (that's a joke for the grandads there!), member of elite tactical anti-gangster squad T-Zero, civilisation's last line of defence against total anarchy and loud punk music. The game spans a year in Nick's life as he patrols the streets, teaching the urban scumbags to respect the badge. You'll also get to fight alongside and co-ordinate the beleaguered emergency services and the regular police, who are desperately trying to maintain law and order. With rival gangs in scary hockey masks tearing up the place like they were in a John Carpenter movie, Nick must rely on a large arsenal of dual pistols, shotguns, petrol bombs and melee weapons to gently persuade the lowlife troublemakers to appreciate the values of citizenship. Mainly by killing them.

Details on Live compatibility are sketchy, but *Zero Tolerance* looks like it was made for online clan gaming. With rumoured police vs thugs face-offs in the streets and the whole gang rivalry thing going on, we could be seeing whole clans duking it out on Live, armed not with tanks and comms equipment, but with bats and flaming bottles of petrol. Bring it on...

↑ Teach him a lesson he'll never forget. Or survive, either.

↑ Protect the tax-paying middle classes from smelly punks!

Ace classics compilation Taito Legends zoomed straight to the top of the budget charts this month. Deservedly so!

Halo Evolves?

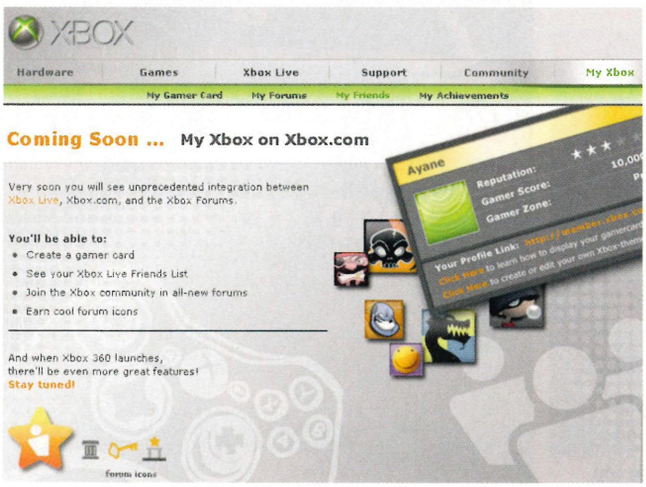
Microsoft helps the migration to 360 and improves Halo 2!

XBOX LIVE 360 took a step closer this month with the launch of the new My Xbox website at www.xbox.com. The site enables you to access your Friends list and gaming achievements, and enable others to see when you're playing Xbox and Xbox 360 titles on Live in real time.

If you have a Gamertag already linked to a Microsoft Passport account, you'll be able to create a Gamercard at the site. Better still, once you migrate to Xbox 360 all the important bits and bobs such as ranks, clan members, online stats, and Friends lists will migrate with you, allowing you to dive straight into the world of Xbox 360 without so much as a glitch. Head there now to sign up!

Also, in case you were worrying about *Halo*'s compatibility with Xbox 360, don't - it's going to be playable straight from the box. It seems Bungie is going to improve upon the original game, too: "First thing I am going to do is play *Halo 1* on my HDTV," said one Bungie tester. "There is a very slight possibility I might play *PGR3* or *Perfect Dark Zero* first. But then, straight onto *Halo 1*. We're going to have more to tell you about how both *Halo*s look on 360 - and it's all good news." Does this just mean HDTV improving the visuals, or is Bungie hinting at something else? Guess we'll find out soon, but it looks like the original might be back to knock a few next-gen titles out the water!

↑ We can't wait for *Halo: Extra Polygon Edition*!

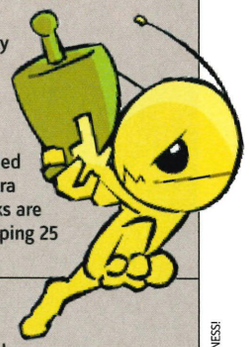


↑ Shift your Live details over to Xbox 360 with the greatest of ease.

News Wire.....

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Hominid Live!



That ickle yellow beasty Alien Hominid has got a few chunks of Live love for us this month. There are two level packs up for grabs, called 'Chicken Pack' and 'Ultra Hyper Load'. Both packs are crammed with a whopping 25 new levels. Get it!

BioWare Rules

Big up to BioWare this month. The *KOTOR* and *Jade Empire* developer was named the best Canadian firm to work for, topping a poll of 100 companies. With new first-person shooter/RPG *Mass Effect* in the pipeline, and fans clamouring for another *KOTOR* and *Jade Empire*, it looks as though we're assured some first-class titles from the officially happiest company in Canada!

Stubbed Out

Stubbs the Zombie has a UK publisher in the form of THQ. The brain-munching title from the creators of *Halo* will see a UK release in February. Bungie veterans used an updated *Halo* engine to deliver a stirring tale of 'one man's hunger for love, justice... and brains'!

Spielberg Beds EA!

Bearded director joins bearded software giant!

EA IS rubbing it little hands in glee this month, after signing a deal with Steven Spielberg to create three new original game ideas. Reminds us of a few months back when EA said it had pretty much done everything it wanted to regarding games. Could this be the beginning of a strange EA/Pixar/Spielberg animation collaboration? The agreement will see The Berg supervising the development of the games, while Spielberg's company, Amblin Entertainment, will retain the rights to develop them for film or TV. The deal is totally independent of DreamWorks, although any screen adaptations would likely be produced by the company.

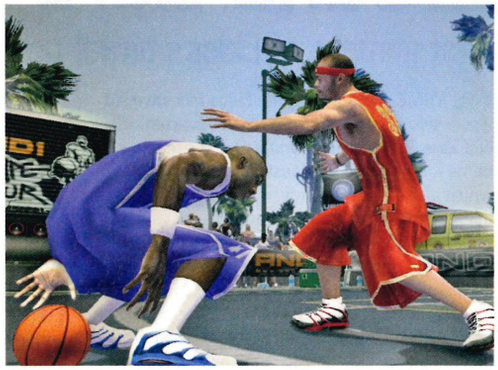
"He's a pretty passionate gamer - he loves the medium", said Neil Young, EA vice president and EALA studio head, adding that although Spielberg's games would be next-gen, there was also a possibility that all three would come to Xbox as well.

THE LAST BROADCAST: IF THE WORLD DOES FALL INTO COMPLETE CHAOS AS IT DOES IN ZERO TOLERANCE, APPARENTLY CNN HAS A VIDEOTAPE IT WILL PLAY ON LOOP DURING ARMAGEDDON. IT WOULD BE A 'BEST OF' COMPILATION OF EARTH'S NICEST AND GREATEST MOMENTS. MADNESS!

AND 1 Streetball

DEV: **BLACK OPS** PUB: **UBISOFT** RELEASE DATE: **DECEMBER 2005**

↑ Slam-dunk da funk! In fact, slam-dunk just about anything you like. *AND 1* is going to be fast-paced, no-nonsense gaming.



↑ AND 1 is a sport's brand in the US, so expect plenty of shop options in Ubisoft's new 'urban' basketball. Word!

↑ Realistic detailing on the players means you can see cuts, scratches and facial expressions during the game.

TOCA Race Driver 3

DEVELOPER: **CODEMASTERS** PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2006**

↑ A little vintage action never goes amiss, especially when you can smash all the valuable classic cars into tiny bits.

↑ Check that impact on the side panel! New *TOCA* has 100 TIMES the amount of SHEER DAMAGE than before, apparently!

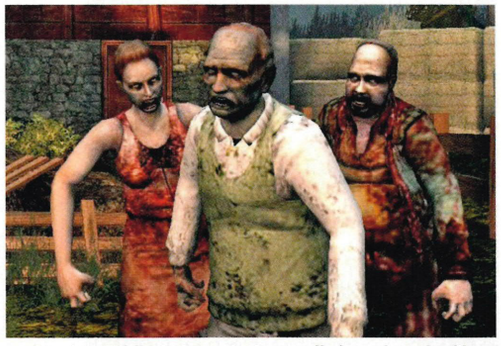
↑ No draw distance, loads of cars on screen, and some on-track argy-bargy too. The Masters of Code strike once again!

Land of the Dead: Road to Fiddler's Green

DEV: **BRAINBOX GAMES** PUB: **TBA**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2006**

↑ The dead walk! Combat dozens of on-screen ghouls at any one time in this hair-raising FPS – coming in the new year!

↑ Celebrated inventor of zombie makeup Tom Savini designed the characters for *Land of the Dead*.



↑ *Road to Fiddler's Green* isn't actually based on the film, but is a whole new standalone episode of zombie action!

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES** PUBLISHER: **BUENA VISTA** RELEASE DATE: **MARCH 2006**

↑ As you progress through Narnia you'll become stronger and braver, and able to take on nasty minotaurs and cyclopses-es.

↑ The Ice Witch's minions are everywhere – you'll have to work as a team to survive Narnia.

↑ Jump on a Cyclops and the idiot smacks himself over the head with his own club.

Freeze Frame

It looks more and more like the news every day...

This month, horror and paranoia with *American McGee's Bad Day LA*! Head over to www.gametrailers.com to check out the full trailer...

↑ We knew it was going to be bad, but who'd have though a jumbo jet would crash on an LA freeway? Panic!

↑ Taking inspiration from *The Day After Tomorrow*, we'll be running away from giant tidal waves!

↑ Train crashes kill hundreds of Americans per year, apparently. Or per day, according to *Bad Day LA*.

↑ Riot! It wouldn't be LA if there wasn't a riot. But it really doesn't help when they turn into zombies...

↑ Terrorists drop chemicals from planes, just like in real life! This game is starting to make us really worried...

AGENT X

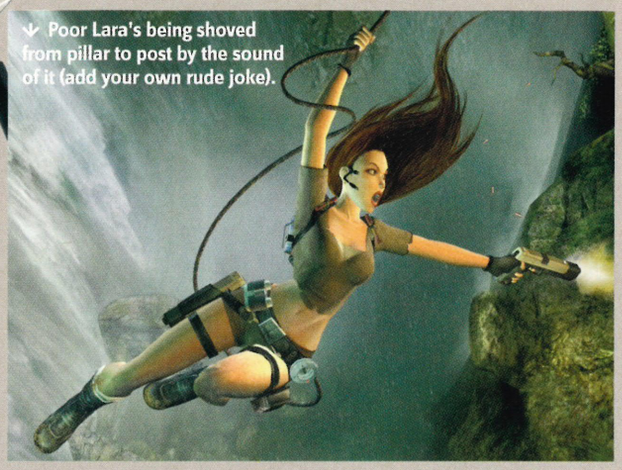
Delving into enemy territory to bring you all the gossip from the world of games

ANGRY MANAGEMENT

The recently announced PS2 *Pro Evolution* management game isn't PS2 exclusive by the sounds of it. I recently overheard Konami's Japanese development team saying that they're testing the water with the PS2 version to gauge its popularity. Should it be a success in Europe, there's every chance we'll see it on Xbox. Tell all your PS2-owning mates to get it. Twice!

EIDOS FOR SALE, AGAIN?

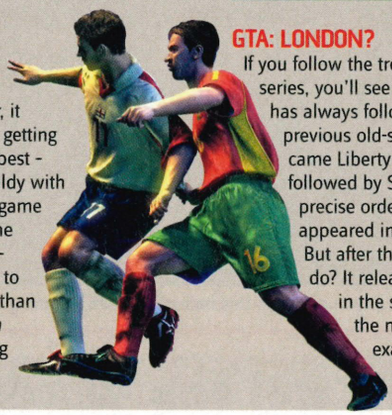
Could it be true? No sooner does SCi snaffle up the company that I hear both EA and Midway are now fighting for ownership rights. It sounds interesting, but can you really imagine *Marvel vs Lara Croft* or *Tomb Raider Kombat*?



↓ Poor Lara's being shoved from pillar to post by the sound of it (add your own rude joke).

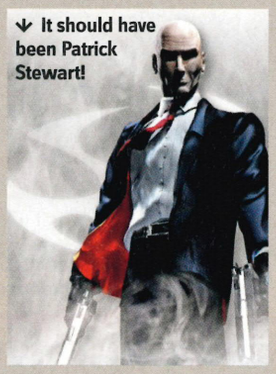
DIESEL POWERED

After starring in "best movie I've ever seen" (Paul Ross, *News of the World*) *The Pacifier*, it looks like Vin Diesel is getting back to what he does best - being a gruff-voiced baldy with an attitude. And what game character ticks the same boxes? You guessed it - Mr Diesel is rumoured to be playing none other than Mr 47 from the *Hitman* games in a forthcoming movie! Lawks.



GTA: LONDON?

If you follow the trend of Rockstar's *GTA* series, you'll see that the franchise has always followed the path of the previous old-school *GTA* titles. First came Liberty City, then Vice City, followed by San Andreas - the precise order in which they appeared in the very first *GTA*s. But after that, what did Rockstar do? It released *GTA London*, set in the swinging 60s. Could the next Xbox *GTA* do exactly the same thing I wonder? Hmm, etc.



↓ It should have been Patrick Stewart!

Namco is gearing up for the release of Curious George, the tale of a monkey who gets into trouble by going places he shouldn't...

AND FINALLY...

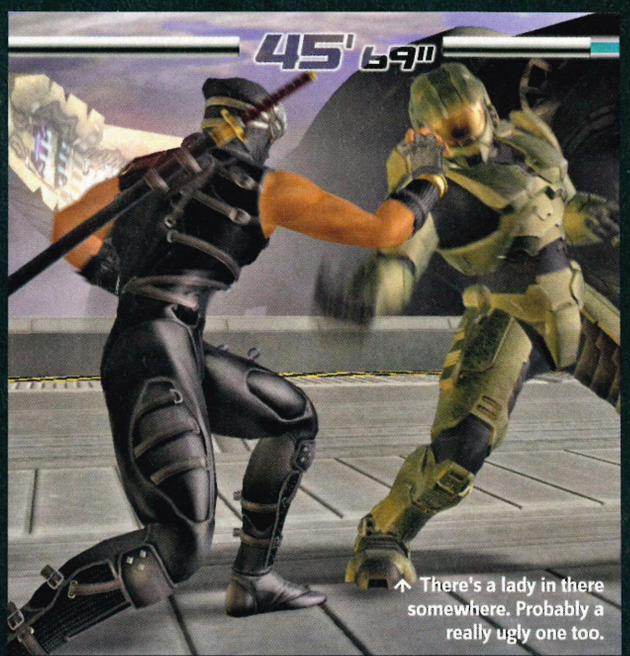
Halo DOA Character Revealed!

We thought it would be someone we'd heard of, at least...

WHEN NEWS surfaced that *Dead or Alive 4* would feature a character from the *Halo* universe, it was as though all Gavin's Christmases had come at the same time. We've never seen him so happy. Or indeed, seen him happy! Who though, he wondered, would actually join the likes of Hitomi, Kasumi, Tina, Helena, Christie, and Ryu Hayabusa? Would it be the Chief himself, or better still, would it be the lovely Cortana in some skippy little foil space-suit number? As long as it wasn't the librarian robot thing, we really didn't mind either way.

Then it got better - when we heard further confirmation that the character would be female, we really started to lose it a little bit. But no, our dreams were shattered. Instead of a skippy vixen, we get a stupid lady Spartan, called 'Spartan 458' and painted in the classic Master Chief colours of 'green' or 'red'. Pah! No knickers or anything. She probably doesn't even take her helmet off, for Pete's sake!

Still, we mustn't moan too much, especially when the combat looks so damned fine. Just take a peek at this little beauty - it's Ryu fighting Lady Spartan! Whoever thought we'd see the day? Just one more reason to get us one of them there new-fangled Xbox 360s, we reckon.



↑ There's a lady in there somewhere. Probably a really ugly one too.

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WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! W

WIN! A Far Cry Trip To Montreal

Meet the Far Cry Instincts development team in our amazing map designing competition!

WITHOUT DOUBT, *Far Cry Instincts* (Issue 48, 9.1) has been one of THE major Xbox success stories of the year. Whether it's played offline or online over Live, *Far Cry* has exploded onto Xbox, and it's not hard to see why. Not only does the Ubisoft shooter boast one of the largest and most attractive game worlds ever seen on Xbox, but thanks to its ludicrously easy-to-use map designer, you can even make your own.

With just a few flicks of the joypad you can design your own tropical island heaven (or hell), with buildings, forests, rivers, vehicles and, of course, heavily stocked ammo dumps.

And to help celebrate *Far Cry Instincts* unprecedented success we've teamed up with Ubisoft to offer the chance for one lucky reader to fly out to Montreal to meet the *Far Cry Instincts* development team for themselves.

Sounds ace, right? Now here's the tricky bit: we want you to design us the best *Far Cry Instincts* multiplayer map ever! How you go about it is up to you, but we're looking for something striking, original and above all fun. It can be on any terrain type, be set during any time of day and feature any combination of objects, vehicles and buildings – we don't care just so long as its playable.

THE PRIZE

The winner will be flown to Montreal and put up in a hotel for two nights, during which time they'll get to spend a day with the *FCI* development team, learning how the game and the map designer was put together. They'll also get to see their map appear on a forthcoming *OXM* Game Disc!

THE RULES

Your map must be Live compatible, so you must be signed into Live when designing it. Unfortunately we can't accept entries from people without Xbox Live. The map must be completed and ready for play so don't forget to include all the spawn points. While drawing rude shapes or words in the map designer is incredibly funny, please keep them clean too. You must be 18 or older to enter.

Copy your maps to a memory card and send them with your address and phone number to *FCI* Map Making Competition, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP by 01 January 2006. Don't worry, we'll send the cards back! Good luck!

FARCRY INSTINCTS

Terms & Conditions: The trip will take place towards the end of January. The winner must be available to take the trip during the last two weeks of January. The winner must be over 18 as they will attend the trip on their own and must carry a valid passport. The prize includes flights, accommodation for two nights and transfers to and from the studio in Montreal. The editor's decision is final.

Top Map Making Tips

1 Be inventive! See what's already out there and then do something different.

2 Keep it simple! Try not to clutter your map up with too many objects.

3 Test, test, test! Playtest it all the time. Make sure it all works.

4 Seek advice! Get friends to test it too and note their comments.

↓ You could be here

↑ Meet the team!

WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! W

PSYCHONAUTS WANTED THIS NOVEMBER
FOR HILARIOUS THIRD PERSON ADVENTURE THROUGH 13 UNIQUE LEVELS!

FROM TIM SCHAFER, THE CREATOR OF
GRIM FANDANGO AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE

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9/10 Official PlayStation®2 Mag

9.5/10 Official Xbox® Mag(US)

91% PC Format

"Hugely intentive, charming and funny. Psychonauts is a surprise hit and this year's star platformer."
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PlayStation.2 XBOX PC CD ROM BUDCAT Creations, LLC DOUBLE FINE MAJESCO ENTERTAINMENT THQ

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Driver: Parallel Lines

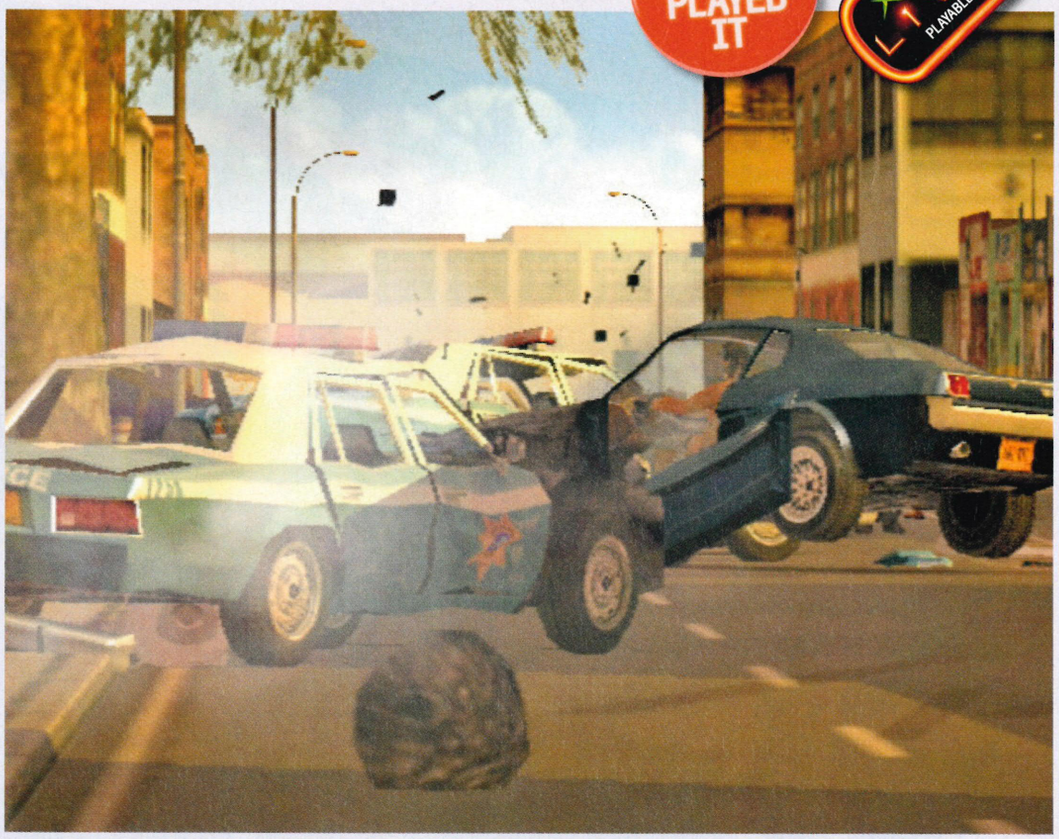
Official Xbox Magazine PLAYED IT

Xbox LIVE PLAYABLE

Puts paid to the disappointing memories of Driv3r for good

Dev: Reflections	Pub: Atari
Players: 1	Live: 1-4 Players
Release: March 2006	

0 Percentage Complete 80 100



↑ New *Driver* is all about DRIVING! Except when we let go of the controller to take a screenshot, then it's about this.

TAKE A REAL good look at the screenshots scattered about the page and you'll notice one important thing about *Driver: Parallel Lines*: this time it's all about the cars. This time we're putting the painful memories of the abysmal, practically uncontrollable on-foot sections that turned *Driv3r* (Issue 32, 6.9) from potential auto-erotica smash to bitterly flawed and utterly humourless *GTA* wannabe behind us to concentrate on unparalleled driving magnificence. Atari might have sounded like a stuck and suspiciously untrustworthy record when it announced that its new *Driver* game really would be the one to take the series back to its roots, but in this case - and having actually played the game for ourselves helps a bit too - it looks like that's exactly what *Parallel Lines* will do.

Driv3r's biggest and stupidest mistake was trying to pretend it was some kind of awful Steve McQueen movie, an often frustrating experience that ranked laborious cut-scenes above actual bug-free gameplay. Thankfully, you should find no such fault with *Parallel Lines*. Not only does it boast its own distinctive style (largely thanks to the ultra-cool 1970s setting, bump-'n-grind soul-funk soundtrack, and the fact that all the characters have massive trousers and even massiver hair), but virtually the entire game is now spent behind the wheel of a 'car'. Chases, races and outlandish three-point turns in busy streets are the primary order of the day here, which is exactly what the *Driver* series is supposed to be about.

Given that the actual driving physics were *Driv3r*'s biggest strength, it's no surprise *Parallel Lines* uses the same driving engine as its maligned predecessor, albeit a massively tweaked, faster and notably smoother version. The handling is spot-on, the attention to detail on the cars is quite staggering, and Reflection's penchant for panel-shredding, axle-grinding crash spectaculars is all present and correct. So far so good.

Better still, *Parallel Lines* offers a new, non-linear approach to its mission structure. As you'd expect playing a young getaway driver in 1978 New York, opportunity is everywhere, and you're free to pursue jobs and missions in any order as they appear across the map. Bonus mini-games are dotted about the place as well, and by completing these you can gain cash that in turn can be used to upgrade and customise your own garage of motors, something of a first for the *Driver* series.

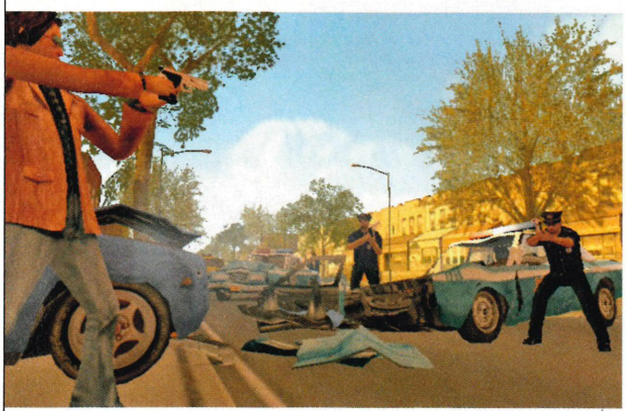
Another first is full online play, *Parallel Lines* allowing you to take your mates on in a series of custom race events. It's more akin to a throwaway party mode than proper online racing, perhaps, but it's definitely a step in the right direction.

The only real downer is that Reflections has dropped the much-loved Director mode. On the plus side, it has meant the amount of screen traffic has now virtually doubled, although we can see the Play:More section of our Game Disc being a much sadder place without it. More details and a full hands-on report soon.

↑ We always have to do one with a wheel coming off. It's in the contract.

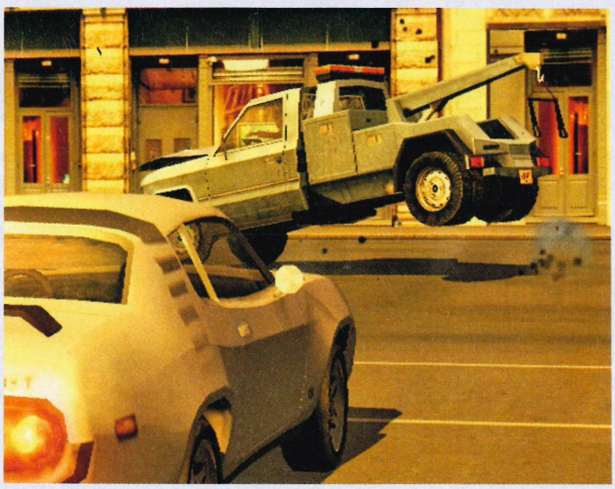
FOOTLOOSE

There are still some on-foot bits though...

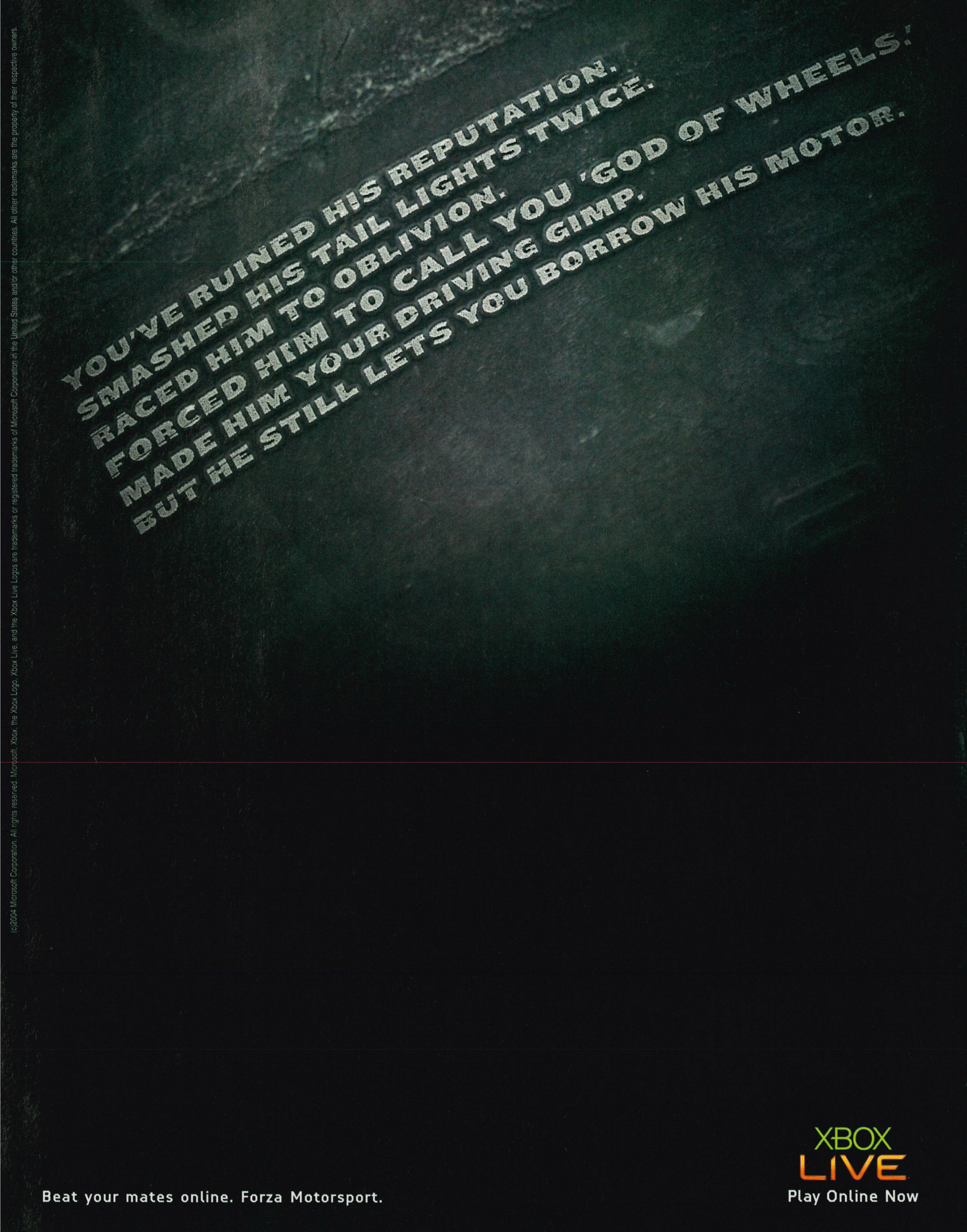


↑ The cops soon get pretty angry about you crashing into their cars.

As you can see, there are some points - thankfully not many - where you simply have to get out of the car and start shooting. But don't panic yet! All the animation in these bits has been completely motion-captured and is now a silky-smooth delight to watch, compared to the horrible mess on offer in *Driv3r*, which just made Tanner look like he'd crapped in his pants and was running around in a desperate search for a bush to dump his filthy undercrackers in.



↑ EMERGENCY STOP! (Some fluffy hedgehogs were crossing the road.)



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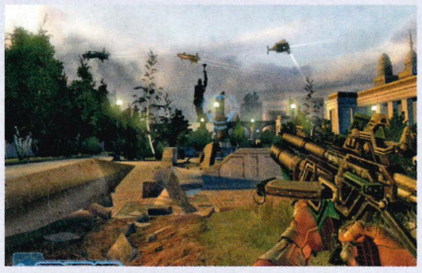
↑ Sorry! Don't worry - just pause time, then put his guts back in the right holes!

↑ It's *Blinx* meets *Planet of the Apes*.



↑ You MESS UP TIME, Homer Simpson style!

TimeShift

Time waits for no man, unless he has the remote control...

Dev: Saber Interactive	Pub: Atari
Release: Summer 06	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 1	

0 Percentage Complete 80 100

YOU ARE a chrononaut. Not an astronaut - a chrononaut. Which is basically a fancy way of saying you travel through time.

That in itself is a fancy way of saying that you, Michael Swift, military chrononaut extraordinaire, must travel through time blowing up as much stuff as possible in Atari's extremely bold and unique new first-person shooter *TimeShift*.

Got it? Good, because this is where it gets complicated. You begin in 2007. You then travel back in time to 1911. Some bad stuff happens. Then, when you get back to 2007, you discover you're in a completely different timeline - some kind of fascist superstate where all the well-armed soldiers seem to have taken an instant dislike to you. Time, if you'll forgive the pun, to put things right again.

While *TimeShift* is a perfectly respectable FPS in its own right - huge levels, varied environments, plenty of weapons (each with multiple fire modes), drivable vehicles and clever enemy AI - it's the time powers that really set it apart. Thanks to your chronosuit's ability to physically take you out of the time stream, it's possible to slow, stop or rewind time while still running around as normal.

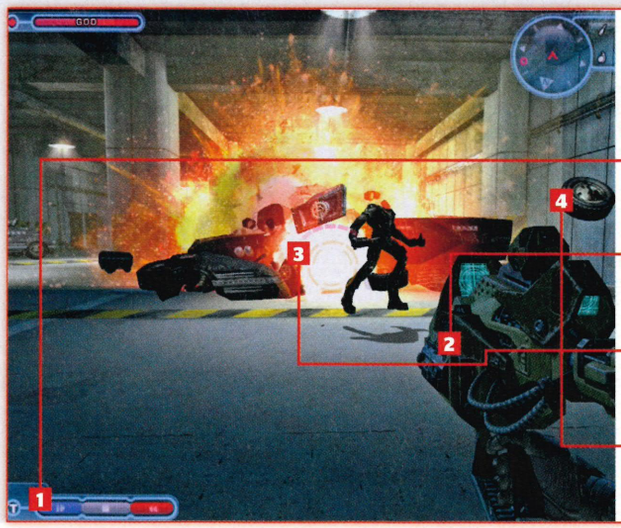
The brilliant thing here is working out how best to use your powers to overcome the challenges *TimeShift* chucks at you. You can slow down time and move faster than the enemy can aim. You can stop time, walk up to a guard and nab the gun right out of his hands. Or you can walk into an ambush, rewind time, and walk into the ambush again, this time knowing exactly which direction to shoot in...

The only thing you can't do is cheat death - after all, how can you rewind time if you're already dead? In fact, once a bullet has punctured your suit's protective aura the damage is done and no amount of rewinding time will reverse it. Shame. Still, at least you can blow someone up, pause time and then literally pick their giblets out the air.

While *TimeShift* is primarily in development for Xbox 360, the Xbox version is coming along nicely just a few steps behind. Graphically we're being treated to something "outstanding", apparently. When it's eventually released in the latter half of next year *TimeShift* could make quite a splash in the Xbox space-time continuum...

↑ Expect a so-so TV version to air on Channel 5 some time in 2007.

↑ We're not sure how the multiplayer will work.



Killing Time

A grenade in time kills nine

1 TIME POWERS! Use these to control time. They're not unlimited, but they do regenerate over, erm, 'time'.

2 HOT TECHNOLOGY! Not just rocket launchers, but rocket launchers with fancy add-ons. This is the future!

3 HUGE EXPLOSIONS! Pause time during this beauty and you can walk right up to it and through it without taking damage.

4 REAL PHYSICS! As opposed to the slightly-not-real physics of time travel. Expect amazing ragdoll effects throughout.

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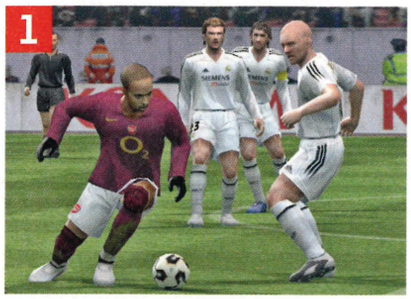
Charts

The ten best-selling games in the UK



1 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
Dev: **Konami**
Pub: **Konami**
Proof that quality games sometimes speak for themselves, *Pro Evo* storms to the top slot, courtesy of stellar gameplay and Mr Henry's strange adverts. Bravo Thierry!

2 THE WARRIORS
Dev: **Rockstar** Pub: **Rockstar**
Brute force, mindless violence, a whole heap of groovy 70s themes and a whopping 18 Cert, means this just misses out on the top spot. Dig it!

3 STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
Dev: **Pandemic** Pub: **LucasArts**
Star Wars takes to the skies - you can now fly craft from the series and launch daring raids on the Death Star and Star Destroyers!

4 FIFA 06
Dev: **EA Sports** Pub: **EA**
If *FIFA* learns anything from this entry to the charts, it should be this - don't copy *Pro Evolution Soccer* so much!

5 FAR CRY INSTINCTS
Dev: **Ubisoft Montreal** Pub: **Ubisoft**
Jack Carver gets all animal on us as this cracking shooter finds itself in the mid-chart position.

6 TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND
Dev: **Neversoft** Pub: **Activision**
Not as high as Activision would have liked, but it may yet climb as Christmas approaches.

7 ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN
Dev: **Treyarch** Pub: **Activision**
Spidey goes cel-shaded and meets a wealth of Marvel villians. Despite huge TV campaigns, the game enters fairly weakly.

8 SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR
Dev: **Creative Assembly** Pub: **Sega**
A surprise entry to the charts, this is more *Troy* than Ray Harryhausen.

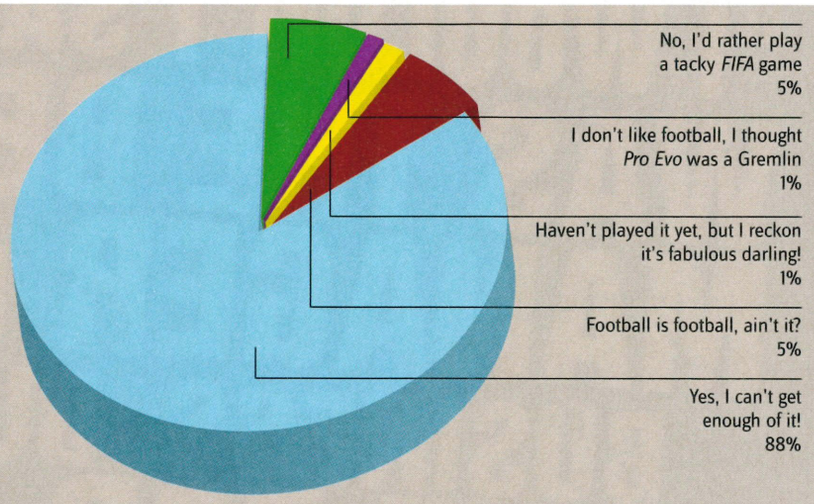
9 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06
Dev: **EA Sports** Pub: **EA**
Woods delivers another sterling effort, but doesn't quite have the clout to make it a hole in one.

10 LA RUSH
Dev: **Midway** Pub: **Midway**
Just peeking into the charts, it seems odd that *LA Rush* is up there, yet last month's number one, *Burnout: Revenge*, is nowhere to be seen!

Virgin megastores Virgin Megastores sponsors the charts.

The hot topic You answer the burning question...

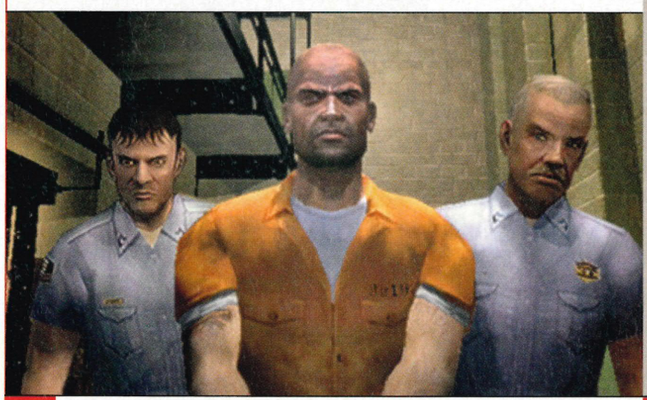
Pro Evolution 5. Is it the best footy game ever?



With *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* riding high at the top of the charts, it finally seems the series is getting the recognition it deserves. But, with everyone loving *Pro Evo*, does the game actually deserve it?
Throw in your own two cents by logging onto our forums at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk

Your most wanted

THIS CHART IS composed entirely from the entries you send in and shows the upcoming games you're most excited by. We can then fill the mag with the news, previews and features you most want to see!



↑ TO VOTE FOR your favourite upcoming game, text 'MW: Game Name' to 80889 (see page 032 for details), or email us at staff@futurenet.co.uk with the subject line 'MW'.

← Sam Fisher takes a turn for the worst as the series changes direction dramatically. Will the new revelations make you want it more, or less, and what's with the shaved head? Head to page 010 now, then let us know your thoughts!

1. **TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL 4**
Dev: Ubisoft **Pub:** Ubisoft **Release:** April 2006
2. **BLACK**
Dev: Criterion **Pub:** EA **Release:** Spring 2006
3. **TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER**
Dev: Red Storm **Pub:** Ubisoft **Release:** Q4 2005
4. **HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY**
Dev: IO Interactive **Pub:** Eidos **Release:** Spring 2005
5. **NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED**
Dev: EA **Pub:** EA **Release:** Q4 2005
6. **LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND**
Dev: Crystal Dynamics **Pub:** Eidos **Release:** Spring 2006
7. **DRIVER PARALLEL LINES**
Dev: Reflections **Pub:** Atari **Release:** Q2 2006
8. **FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS**
Dev: Pendemic **Pub:** THQ **Release:** Q1 2006
9. **THE GODFATHER**
Dev: EA **Pub:** EA **Release:** Q2 2006
10. **BULLY**
Dev: Rockstar North **Pub:** Rockstar **Release:** Q2 2006

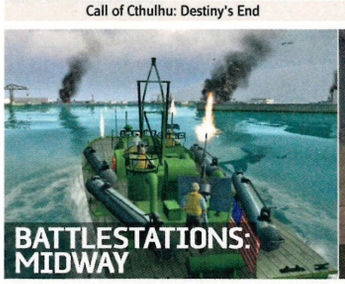
OUR SHOUT

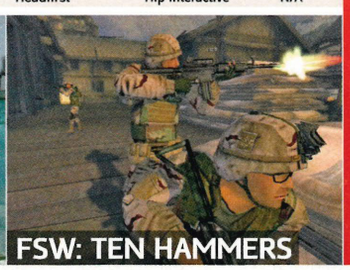
We've played *Black* and can say, even with just two levels tucked under our belts, that it's going to be one of *the* games of 2006. It's quite unlike any shooter we've seen before and will do for the genre what *Burnout* did for racing. It may not be Live compatible, which is a pity, but the single-player mode more than makes up for it.

Xbox Game Releases

Detailing every Xbox game from now until eternity

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Christmas	50 Cent: Bulletproof	TBA	Vivendi	50
	NBA 2K6	Visual Concepts	Take 2	50
	Need For Speed: Most Wanted	EA	EA	50
	NHL 2K6	Kush Games	Take 2	50
	Prince of Persia The Two Thrones	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	50
	Psychonauts	Double Fine	THQ	50
	Raze's Hell	Artech	THQ	N/A
	Rugby Challenge 2006	Swordfish Studios	Ubisoft	49
	Ski Racing 2006	Coldwood Interactive	JoWood	50
	Tecmo Arcade	Tecmo	Microsoft	50
	True Crime: New York City	Luxoflux	Activision	50
	World Poker Tour	Core Soft	Take 2	50
January	Battlestations: Midway	Mithis	Eidos	43
	Marc Ecko's Getting Up	The Collective	Atari	43
	Namco 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection	Namco	EA	N/A
	Zathura	High Voltage	Take 2	N/A
February	Advent Rising	GlyphX	THQ	41
	America's Army: Rise of a Soldier	Secret Level	Ubisoft	41
	Blazing Angels: Squadrons of World War 2	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	43
	BloodRayne 2	Terminal Reality	THQ	42
	Bully	Rockstar	Rockstar	N/A
	Castlevania: Curse of Darkness	Konami	Konami	48
	Chicken Little	Buena Vista Games	Buena Vista Games	N/A
	Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Battleborne	Deep Silver	32
	Commandos Strike Force	Pyro Studios	Eidos	49
	Extreme 4x4	Hog Studios	GMX Media	N/A
	Frankie Dettori Racing	Sidhe Interactive	Player One	N/A
	Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers	Pandemic	THQ	49
	Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows	Midway	Midway	45
	King of Fighters 2003	SNK Playmore	Ignition	N/A
	Metal Slug 5	SNK Playmore	Ignition	N/A
	Painkiller: Hell Wars	People Can Fly	DreamCatcher	48
	Panzer Elite Action	Zootfly	JoWood	41
	Samurai Showdown 5	SNK Playmore	Ignition	N/A
	Scarface: The World is Yours	Radical Ent	Vivendi	43
	Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel Without a Pulse	Wideload Games	THQ	49
	Tak: The Great Juju Challenge	Avalanche Software	THQ	N/A
	The Godfather	EA	EA	47
	TOCA Race Driver 3	Codemasters	Codemasters	49
March	Black	Criterion	EA	45
	Dancing Stage Unleashed 3	Konami	Konami	N/A
	FIFA Street 2	EA	EA	50
	Final Fight: Streetwise	Capcom	Capcom	44
	Hitman: Blood Money	Io Interactive	Eidos	48
	Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend	Crystal Dynamics	Eidos	44
	Splinter Cell 4	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	50
	StarCraft: Ghost	Swingin' Ape Studios	Vivendi	23
	The Chronicles of Narnia	Traveller's Tales	Buena Vista Games	N/A
	Tom Clancy's GR Advanced Warfighter	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	48
	UFO: Aftershock	Altar Interactive	Ascaron	N/A
	Winback 2: Project Poseidon	Omega Force	Koei	N/A
Spring 06	6GUN	BattleBorne	TBA	42
	25 to Life	Avalanche	Eidos	N/A
	American McGee Presents Bad Day LA	Enlight Software	TBA	N/A
	AND 1 Streetball	Ubisoft	Black Ops	N/A
	Call of Cthulhu: Destiny's End	Headfirst	Hip Interactive	N/A

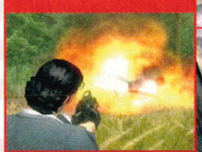




THE WISH LIST

OFFICIAL XBOX Magazine may provide the most comprehensive release list on Planet Earth, but as we all know, game release dates can change quicker than the Xbox 360 launch line up. Why not drop us a line and tell us what you're waiting for? Send your top five to staff@futurenet.co.uk

AFTER MUCH gnashing of teeth over its missed pre-Christmas release slot, it's nice to know that *Painkiller: Hell Wars* now has an official release date of February 2006. Which means we can look forward to a full review soon!

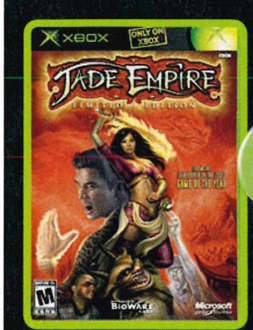


WHILE WE'RE all munching Xmas Turkey, the good people of Avalanche Studios, Sweden will be busy putting the finishing touches to *Just Cause*, the huge tropical *GTA* homage from Eidos. Let's all have a sherry for them.

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
	City of the Dead	Kuju Entertainment	TBA	45
	Close Combat: Red Phoenix	Destineer	Take 2	N/A
	Driver Parallel Lines	Reflections Inter	Atari	50
	Family Guy	TBA	Take 2	N/A
	Fear & Respect	Midway	Midway	38
	FlatOut 2	Bugbear	Empire	N/A
	Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	WXP Inc	Activsion	N/A
	Highlander	Eidos	Eidos	N/A
	Interview with a Made Man	SilverBack Studios	TBA	30
	Johnny Whatever	Warthog	TBA	N/A
	Just Cause	Avalanche	Eidos	46
	Justice League of America	TBA	Warner Bros	N/A
	Pac-Man World 3	Namco	EA	N/A
	Pac-Man World Rally	Namco	TBA	N/A
	Pirates OTC: The Legend of Jack Sparrow	7 Studios	Buena Vista Games	N/A
	Pro Evolution Soccer 6	Konami	Konami	N/A
	Punisher 2	Volition	THQ	N/A
	Reservoir Dogs	Eidos	Eidos	N/A
	Rogue Trooper	Rebellion	Eidos	39
	Sensible Soccer	Kuju Entertainment	Codemasters	N/A
	Shuriken School	Zinkia Entertainment	TBA	N/A
	Snow	Frog City Software	Take 2	N/A
	Sonic Riders	Sega	Sega	N/A
	SpyHunter 3	TBA	Midway	N/A
	Stacked With Daniel Negreanu	TBA	5000ft	N/A
	Stargate SG1: The Alliance	Perception	TBA	43
	Superman Returns	Tiburon	EA	50
	Taxi Driver	Papaya Studios	TBA	N/A
	The Da Vinci Code	The Collective	Take 2	N/A
	The Movies	Lionhead Studios	Activision	16
	TimeShift	Saber Interactive	Atari	50
	Ty the Tasmanian Tiger: Night of the Quinkan	Krome Studios	Activision	N/A
	World Tour Golf	Gusto Games	Oxygen Interactive	N/A
	X3: Reunion	Egosoft	Deep Silver	N/A
	Xyanide	Playlogic	Playlogic	N/A
	Zero Tolerance: City Under Fire	Rocksteady Studios	Eidos	50
	Zombies	Krysalide	TBA	41

XBOX CLASSICS

The latest and best of the £19.99 value range

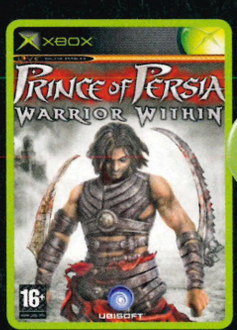


Official Magazine ELITE

Jade Empire
Issue 41
Score 9.3

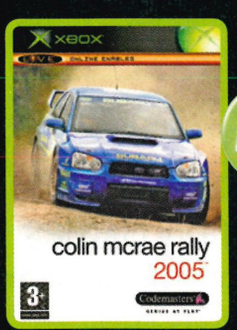
Official Magazine ELITE

Halo 2
Issue 36
Score 10.0



Official Magazine ELITE

Prince of Persia: Warrior Within
Issue 37
Score 9.0



Official Magazine ELITE

Colin McRae Rally 2005
Issue 34
Score 8.5

BROTHER'S IN ARMS: GAV IS SECRETLY PLEASED SAM FISHER NOW HAS A BALD HEAD - IT MEANS HE CAN DRESS UP IN ALL HIS CAMO GEAR AND STALK BEN WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING LAUGHED AT. THE NUMPTY

Inbox

Letters 50 Editor

BEN LAWRENCE
NOW PLAYING: HALF-LIFE 2

Yo yo yo, you crazy cats! It's been a good month for the old letters - if you're not drooling over the Xbox, you're either inventing devices to torture gamers, or talking directly to God himself! Keep them coming...

YOUR OPINIONS COUNT! Your input here has a direct effect on the content of your *Official Xbox Magazine*, so let us know which games you like or don't like, what you want to see more of or less of in the mag, or just rant by text, mail, forum or email!

TEXT US! Send uestions and comments on 80889* (standard network rates) or picture message us on 07921 889345*

WRITE TO US at *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP

POST ON THE FORUM! Get it off your chest at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk. Be nice, now!

EMAIL US WITH your rants, hopes and opinions at staff@futurenet.co.uk

"GANGSTER CRAP"

Thank God for your recent preview of *Crime Life: Gang Wars*, and thank God I'm not the only one who thinks all this 'urban' (ie: black) gangster crap is getting too much. I'm a black guy and I'm a gamer, and seeing just about every black character in a game being portrayed as a gun-waving gang-banger is doing my head in. It's like seeing a game full of white people shooting foxes or sipping tea. The sooner developers stop insulting us, thinking we're all cap-wearing 'homies' with a desire to 'smack some bitches' and do 'drive-bys' the better. And no, when I see my mates, I don't call them 'bro' and perform elaborate handshakes either.

Ian Ohene, London

You're not the only one Ian - there seems to be a general feeling among many of our readers that urban warfare car-modding crime games have had their day - and many of them are certainly handy when it comes to lazy racial stereotypes. This time next year we'll all be grumbling at there being too many zombie titles - luckily for the developers, zombies can't complain about being misrepresented in videogames.

↑ We're beginning to suspect that 70 per cent of you are pasty TV-stealing spraycan scallywags.

GRUNTLED

Regarding 'Disgruntled From Tunbridge Wells' in Issue 48, I have been a subscriber to your magazine since I got my Xbox. I can never recall you proclaiming yourselves to be the Xbox Bible, or your reviewers as gaming 'prophets', unlike certain mags out there I could name. Also, you never lower yourselves to the pointless slagging off of other consoles. You guys just concentrate on the important stuff - ie, the games! You're an Xbox magazine, you have reviewers offering opinions which we, the public can use as a guide. It's really that simple, so I fail to see the gripe here, 'Anon via email'. I'm damned if I've agreed with every review score you've given, but I ain't gonna soil myself over it. If it wasn't for likes of your magazine giving some damn fine previews, I doubt I'd have given the likes of *Otogi* and its sequel so much as a second glance! So, 'Anon', if you don't like the mag, don't buy it - it's as straightforward as that! I can appreciate the work that goes into *OXM* each month. But if it ever goes downhill to the point where it doesn't deliver what I expect for my hard-earned cash, I'll stop buying it! Sometimes when I read the letters pages it's like someone showing a card trick to a dog!

Ross Sillifant, via email

☆STAR LETTER☆ Sponsored by Simply Games www.simplygames.com

THE WRITER of the Star Letter gets a whopping £100 to spend at internet games store Simply Games. Simply Games makes online shopping easy. As well as the most competitive prices and exclusive special offers for Simply Games customers, there's free delivery to your door and no hidden admin costs. For cost-effective software, hardware and accessories, go to www.simplygames.com

A LIST A-LIVE HO!

I've have had many hours of fun meeting people from all over the world and then shooting them on Xbox Live. As more games become Live-enabled I can't help wondering what life would be like if it was more like Live...

1: God would have created the earth in six days, and spent day seven creating a patch.
2: The Mexicans would have accused the guys in the Alamo of camping.
3: The Americans would have accused the Germans of spawn-killing during the D-day landings.
4: Churchill would have been famous for his "We will fight them at the spawn points on the beaches!" speech.
5: The Americans would have blamed the loss of the Vietnam war on the VC tunnel-glitching.
6: JFK's last words would have been "Noob sniper!"
7: The second gunman on the grassy knoll would have been given away by tracer and threat indicator.
8: Neil Armstrong's famous "One small step..." speech would have been interrupted by a 14-year-old burping and singing "I love pop tarts!"
9: Saddam Hussein would accuse the Yankee infidels of lagging.
10: Pamela Anderson would really be a 20 stone unemployed guy called Alan.

Brad Allen, Rochester

Very funny! You should send your CV to Gaz Topp and Violet Berlin's *Bits and Bytes*. It ended in the 90s, but hey, you never know!

↑ JFK's still floating around the Dallas map waiting to respawn.

It's letters like this that make the daily trudge through the miserable, unfriendly streets of London and the monotonous grind of the commute almost worth it. More praise please! It makes us feel all warm and tingly inside.

PAIN SUIT

Wouldn't it be great if someone invented a pain suit? You could wear it like a diving suit and plug it into your controller, and it would detect the exact body part and location that had been shot or injured and send electrical currents directly to it to create a mind-numbing sensation of pain! Can you imagine the extra depth of atmosphere it would give every game? Take *Brothers in Arms*, for example. Imagine the genuine fear you'd experience in that short sprint from cover to cover as the Germans open fire on you and you desperately struggle to get behind that fence before a bullet rips through your arm and causes you to spasm in pain on your living room floor. Then you might realise how frightening fighting in a war actually was. It would revolutionise the gaming experience!

Dean Boundford, West Midlands

We passed your suggestion to peripheral maker Joytech – strangely, they never got back to us, so we made one ourselves, using Gav's old spandex leotard from when he was in crap Stockport-area metal band Visitor and some tinfoil, and plugged it into the mains. And we can tell you this – if you're as bad at games as Ben, you'd better leave the windows open to get rid the stench of burning flesh and hair.

RISE OF THE IBOX

Is it me, or are game consoles as we know them a dying breed, rather than 'groundbreaking pieces of technology'?

Look at the recent movie iPod, which was unveiled in October. It's a brave machine with brave visions. Then there are phones with cameras and MP3 storage. Even the PSP seems to have cottoned on to the idea that our game devices need to be more than just capable of animating a few polygons.

The Xbox 360 may look like a sweet piece of kit, and it may boast the ability to be online and act as a storage device for MP3s and photos, and so on, but no one's going to care about that. It's being marketed as a games device, not the 'do everything, be everything' supercomputer than it truly is. With devices popping up everywhere that are being advertised as multi-functioning gadgets, is Microsoft actually shooting itself in the foot in its desperation to rule the videogames market? I dread to see how the PlayStation 3 is sold to us, because if it's anything like the way the PSP arrived, Xbox 360 looks dead in the water.

Lee Stanley, London

The thing is, there have always been different breeds of gadget nerd, and the Xbox 360 is intended to appeal to people who simply want to play the best games on the best console available. The market may be awash with all kinds of super gadgets and portable media devices, when it comes to gaming, there will be only one console worth owning – Xbox 360.

BACK OF THE NET!

I'd like to ask the team behind EA's *FIFA 06* whether they think piracy is a crime. Obviously not, when all they have done is strip down *ISS Pro* and stick their name on the bloody thing. I thought cloning games was illegal. Konami should sue EA.

'Keays' via email

We like to think that EA isn't 'pirating' games, after all – for us to agree with you would mean upsetting EA's lawyers, an inadvisable thing to do. Instead, we like to think EA's simply woken up to the fact that *PES* constantly outdoes its own footie game in the eyes of fans. Imitation is the highest form of flattery and you can never lead a gift horse to its mouth, and all that.

The Church of Xbox

Join the Xbox evangelists!

This month's convert is Rod Brown of Essex, who took advantage of low second-hand prices to purchase not one but FOUR Xboxes. "I use them for drunken post-pub games of System Link *Steel Battalion* WIF DER LAAAADS," he says. "It certainly beats fighting with bricks outside Dixy Chicken, which is how we used to entertain ourselves!" Bravo, sir! Have a free game!

↓ With the End of Days at hand, what better time to convert?

↑ PRAISE BE to the ALMIGHTY BOX.

360 JITTERS

I'm writing mainly for reassurance over the release of Xbox 360, as I have to say that I'm not that impressed with what I'm seeing.

When you look at the specs, Xbox 360 should blow Xbox out of the water. Yet I'm seeing in-game footage that only looks marginally better than what I'm playing on at the moment. I was expecting photorealistic textures, flawless framerates, and amazing particle effects. Instead, we get what appear to be spruced-up Xbox games. Not one title has stood out as mind-blowing. *Burnout: Revenge* looks as good, if not better, than the *Full Auto* demo in Issue 48.

I'll definitely get a 360, but I'm looking for reassurance that it really will be as good as we're told when the technical demos don't reflect it. I've always favoured Xbox over PS2, but the PS3 tech demos are far more impressive (check out *Killzone*). Has Microsoft made a mistake and jumped the gun too early? Programmers may have to get used to the technology, but I remember the jump from PSone to PS2 being far more apparent in terms of improvement.

Matt, Rugeley

↓ Ben models the Pain Suit. We're going to be RICH!

We once were doubters too, much like yourself Matt, but then we experienced the majesty of Xbox 360, and lo, did the scales fell from our eyes! Such is the AWESOME POWER (financial »»

↑ Say what you like – no console can do French nails quite like Xbox 360.

The OXM team

And what we done did this munf!

PHOTOS: PHIL MADGE

GAVIN OGDEN //
EDITOR

Some idiots let Gav have a go on "the fastest sports cars on the planet". It'll be the last they'll see of it, until the speed cameras catch him trying to drive from London to Manchester in 25 minutes.

NOW PLAYING: *PES 5, Serious Sam II*

MARK ROBINS //
DEPUTY EDITOR

Mark's cheerful games of 'guess the celebrity birthdays from *The Sun*' are the only let-up from the usual office atmosphere of barely-concealed resentment. We wish our dad was like Mark. If we had a dad. Sniff.

NOW PLAYING: *World Poker Tour, PES 5*

DAN GEARY //
PRODUCTION EDITOR

Dan told the bank he was the son of a famous Greek shipping tycoon this month so they'd give him a mortgage. It backfired when it turned out Aristotle Onassis still owes HSBC £6.4m in missed Visa payments.

NOW PLAYING: *Grim Fandango, Half-Life 1*

POSITION VACANT //
REVIEWS EDITOR

WHO WILL IT BE? We still don't know! Our money's on the wizened old man who cleans the phones, but he'd have to take a pay cut. That leaves Dan's anglepoise lamp or the cactus. It'll take a big man/inanimate object to fill Andy's shoes!

PHIL MADGE //
ART EDITOR

After a pleasant meal at a well-known fast food chain, Madge's face suddenly swelled up to THREE TIMES its normal size. He nearly died and everything! Every lunchtime is now an exciting game of Russian Roulette...

NOW PLAYING: *PES 5, PES 5* and *PES 5!*

BEN LAWRENCE //
NEWS EDITOR

Ben's officially GONE INSANE. His only companion these days is Zandy's old box of Alpen (with crudely-drawn stubble and fright-wig), which he constantly talks to in a creepy small girl's voice. Wake up, Ben!

NOW PLAYING: The new Will Young album

ADAM KULESZA //
DEPUTY ART EDITOR

Like a large child hungry for free beer, Adam went a bit mental at the recent *PES 05* party, spilling John Terry's drink and waving his arse at the PR girls. A fruitful career in games magazines begins!

NOW PLAYING: *Colin McRae 2005, PES 5*

'DESKY' //
EMPTY DESK

Say hello to the latest crazy *OXM* recruit! When he's not getting covered in rubbish, 'Desky' likes to have coffee spilled on his surface and get stood on by the man who fixes the lights. The action never lets up when Desky's around!

MEET US! WANT TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE OXM TEAM IN THE FLESH? THEN STAND OUTSIDE TESCO ON BAKER STREET, LONDON AT AROUND 3PM ON ANY WEEKDAY – BEN OR ADAM WILL USUALLY BE IN THERE BUYING THE SUPPLIES OF YORKIES AND 7UP WE NEED TO SURVIVE

Shorts

sms TEXT US questions and comment on 80889* (standard network rates)

WRITE TO US at *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP

www POST ON THE FORUM You can find it at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk

@ EMAIL US WITH your rants, hopes and opinions at staff@futurenet.co.uk

@ Now Andy Irving has left your magazine, who do you think is the best looking? And Monobrow man doesn't count cos he doesn't work for U anymore!

Jake Cake, email

Well, we'd all argue for the crown now Jake, but that's like trying to pick out the least smelly turd. Let's just say the stain still lingering on Andy's chair is the best looking and be done with it, eh?

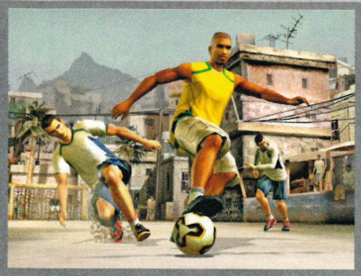
sms Why don't u giv us ur gamer tags and get on line for a good asswhipping you r all chickens and I culd whip ur ass any day with my eyes closed and a bag on my head. Gamer tags now chicken!

Roland, text

We tried letting people know who we were online once before, and it was like trying to answer a Q&A session when we just wanted to play *Halo*. Then when we turn our mics off people think we're being rude. It's a lose-lose situation. Trust us though, we are out there!

sms Pleeze don't tell me Fifa Street 2 is coming out, the first one was shite!

Queeper-peeper, text



Yeah, 'fraid so. Don't worry though, if it's anything like the first one we'll give it a good kicking, like we did last time.

@ My Mum thought my Xbox was dead cos the break-away part of the controller cord had come away. She told me she thought I couldn't play it with it broken and had thrown the lot in the bin. I'm gutted.

Dan, email

Are you serious? That's really harsh!

sms If Phil Madge's first name was Madge, his name would be Madge Madge.

Barry, email

Yes, that's right. Just as Ben's would be Lawrence Lawrence, Mark's would be Robins Robins, Adam's would be Kulesza Kulesza, and so on and so forth. Sometimes we despair, we really do.

@ I love horror movies but haven't seen anything REALLY scary in years!

Lord Percy, forum

No? Go see *Wolf Creek* if you're old enough. It's nasty - REAL nasty. And look out for the bit with the shed full of abandoned cars. It'll have you squirming like a worm!

www Forget the muppets, it's all about Fragile Rock!

Jaunty, email

Erm, are you sure you don't mean *Fraggle Rock*, as opposed to a rock that is in some way easily breakable? We agree, though, the Fraggles 'pwnz' the Muppets. Dance your cares away, worries for another day...

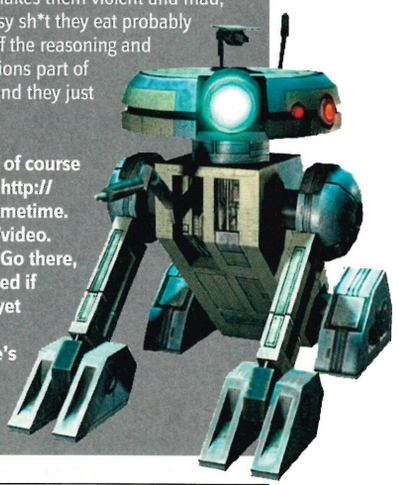
@ I love all star wars games and even if Battlefront 2 turns out to be crap and a big waste of time, I will still buy it! Lucas may not be making the films anymore but He's gotta be on a winner with the battlefront franchise.

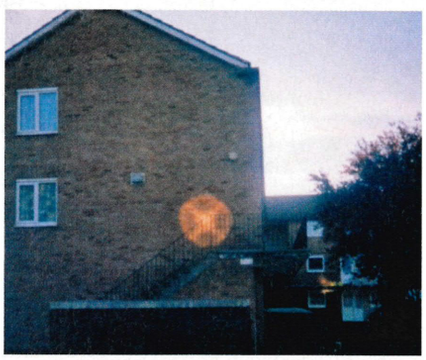
Matt3I, Forum

Wait until *Battlefront 3* comes out Matt! Imagine it - the *KOTOR* guys all going at it. Okay, that's just us dreaming, but what a sweet dream it is!

www Dunno what it is about the yanks that makes them violent and mad, all that greasy sh*t they eat probably has killed off the reasoning and higher functions part of their brain and they just lose it.

Ah, you are of course referring to http://www.killsometime.com/Video/video.asp?ID=327 Go there, and be scared if you've not yet seen it for yourself! He's obviously very, very stressed...





↑ **Bill is rich enough to BUY THE SUN.**

>> and otherwise) of the unstoppable Microsoft! Speaking of which...

GATES OF HEAVEN?

I looked out of the window the other evening and saw a strange light projected on the wall. The light slowly faded away as the sun went down. Is Bill Gates harnessing the power of the sun now to let me know I must buy an Xbox 360?

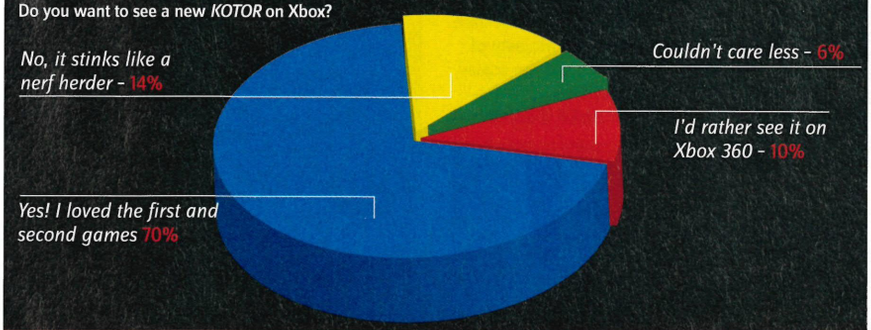
Martin Langford, Middlesex

Not just the sun, but the very molecular structure of the world around us! Does anyone else have any tales of mother nature trying to sell them electrical goods? Perhaps you were told to buy a toaster by a cloud? If so, write in!

YOU DECIDE

Find more online polls on our forum at **www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk**

Do you want to see a new *KOTOR* on Xbox?



>> GET ON THE FORUM NOW! To join the discussions on the forums, just head for our great website, found at **www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk** and click on Discussion Forums. Give yourself a name and a password, and then you can take part. Simple.

Win Our Stuff!

Look proper street, innit bruv, courtesy of Rockstar!

WIN ALL THIS!

Guess what? We've been to Rockstar! We love it when we go to Rockstar's office. Not only is it tucked away in one of the trendiest parts of old Landahn Tahn, but every time we go the nice people who work there insist on giving us bulging brown paper bags full of games-related urban accessories. It's well boss!

But since we're all too square to wear a *Warriors*-branded hoodie without looking like complete social outcasts we're going to have to give the job lot to one of you guys instead (minus the Chupa-Chup lollies, which were scoffed in seconds). There's also a *Warriors* T-shirt and cap (all Large for largin' it, obviously), a load of stickers, and a *Warriors* graffiti stencil to brighten up your bedroom, school desk or prison bunk, just like Banksy! It's well weapon!

Not only that, we've also got Gav's official X05 press pass to give away, so you can pretend to all your mates that you were THERE, in Amsterdam, playing on the new Xbox 360, yah?

Want it? Complete the following sentence in about ten words: "The most inappropriate place I ever wore a hoodie was..." Text the word OXMSTUFF, followed by a space then UR answer to 80889* by 22 December. Most cringeworthy answer wins!

***TERMS AND CONDITIONS** By texting the Editor or entering the competition you are agreeing to receive details of future offers from Future Publishing Ltd, if you do not want to receive this information please text the word STOP to 80889. Texts will be charged at 50p plus standard network tariff rate. Please ask permission from whoever pays the bill. Competition winners will be drawn at random from all entries that answer the questions correctly after the closing date of Nov 24. Postal entries should be sent to OXM, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. Mag choice of prize is final. Only UK residents aged 16 and over may enter. No employees of Future Publishing Ltd or any company associated with this competition, or any member of their close family may enter. No photocopies will be accepted for postal entries. Prizes are as stated and no alternatives cash or otherwise are available. Future Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury caused by any prizes won except by it's negligence. Publicity may be given to any competition winners and/or entrants and their names and/or photographs printed in Official Xbox Magazine. The Editors decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Where prizes are offered on behalf of an associated company these prizes are provided in their entirety by these associated companies. Future Publishing Ltd cannot be held responsible for any failure to provide prizes as specified and all enquiries relating to such prizes will be referred to the associated companies. All entries must be received by the closing date. Copies of competition entry forms and winners list are available by written request from Games Marketing, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

YOUR VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED FOR THE BIGGEST GAMES AWARDS OF THE YEAR...

GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2005

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE Carphone Warehouse ...for a better mobile life

THE CARPHONE WAREHOUSE HANDHELD GAME OF THE YEAR

SUPER MARIO 64 DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Burnout Legends (Electronic Arts)
- Advance Wars: Dual Strike (Nintendo)

THE SUN ONLINE – ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR

WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

RUNNERS UP:
- Battlefield (Electronic Arts)
- EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)

PC GAME OF THE YEAR

HALF-LIFE 2
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

RUNNERS UP:
- Football Manager 2005 (Sega)
- Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War - Winter Assult (THQ)

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour (Activision)
- The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures (Nintendo)

XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR

HALO 2
PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (Konami)

BEST FILM-BASED GAME OF 2005

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords (LucasArts)
- Spider-Man 2 (Activision)

THE GIRLS' CHOICE OF 2005

THE SIMS 2
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
- Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

IN STOCK RETAILER OF THE YEAR

PLAY.COM

RUNNERS UP:
- Gameplay
- GAME

HERO OF 2005

CJ
FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

RUNNERS UP:
- Gordon Freeman (from Half-Life 2)
- Master Chief (from Halo 2)

VILLAIN OF 2005

OFFICER TENPENNY
FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

RUNNERS UP:
- Saddler (from Resident Evil 4)
- Dr Breen (from Half-Life 2)

RADIO 1'S BEST GAME SOUNDTRACK OF 2005

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- Halo 2 (Microsoft)
- Need for Speed Underground 2 (EA)

GAME ONE – INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

SONY PSP

RUNNERS UP:
- Nintendo DS
- Valve Steam

THE SUN ONE TO WATCH FOR 2006

RESIDENT EVIL 5
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Final Fantasy XII (Square Enix)
- Age of Empires III (Microsoft)

EDITORS' UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR

FAHRENHEIT
PUBLISHER: ATARI

NOMINATED:
- God of War (Sony)
- Psychonauts (THQ)

THE ONE TO WATCH FOR XMAS 2005

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories (Rockstar)
- Call of Duty 2 (Activision)

SONOPRESS – PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

NINTENDO

RUNNERS UP:
- Rockstar Games
- THQ

EDITORS' GAME OF THE YEAR

RESIDENT EVIL 4
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

RUNNERS UP:
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas(Rockstar)
- Pro Evolution Soccer 4 (Konami)

NUTS MAGAZINE ULTIMATE GAME OF THE YEAR

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR

RUNNERS UP:
- EVE Online: Exodus (CCP)
- Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)

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Superman Returns

Official XBOX Magazine PLAYED IT

Official XBOX Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

We put our underpants on the outside and fly to Florida for a world-exclusive with the Man of Steel

Words: Steve Hill

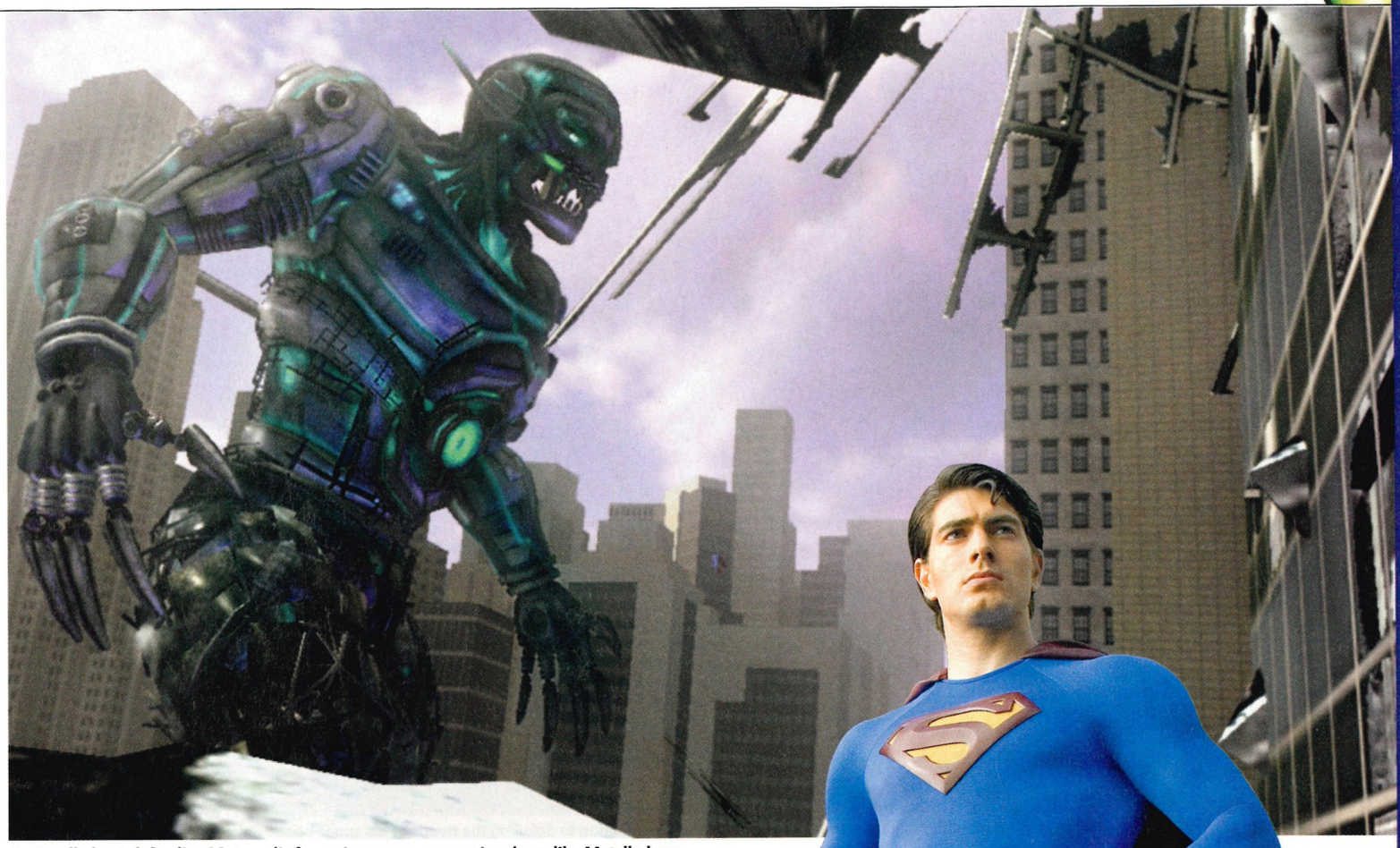
Dev: EA Tiburon	Pub: EA
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: 2006	
www.ea.com	

IN THE illustrious canon of superheroes, one man towers head, shoulders and cape above the rest. Whereas Batman is little more than a goth with gadgets, and Spider-Man's main skill is emitting a sticky fluid (we can all do that), Superman is clearly in a different league. Without getting too 'Comic Book Guy' about it, surely he has to be the undisputed don of crime-fighters? Consider the 'facts'. He comes from another planet, he's hard as nails, and, crucially, he can fly.

It is perhaps this last attribute that has thus far hampered all previous attempts to create a worthy Superman game, with those that have appeared over the years proving decidedly less than super. Naturally, EA is planning on righting those wrongs, with, development duties falling to EA Tiburon, based in sweaty Orlando, Florida – a hotter version of Milton Keynes, with alligators.

So why haven't you heard of EA Tiburon? Because until now the studio has been primarily concerned with painstakingly recreating American sports, churning out the *Madden*, *NASCAR* and *NCAA Football*

↑ **"Helicopters. Always with the helicopters. When will they *learn*?"**



↑ It's all about defending Metropolis from giant angry magnetic robots, like Metallo here.

↑ Supes is pretty much invincible – although Metallo's Kryptonite-flavoured halitosis can be a right pain.

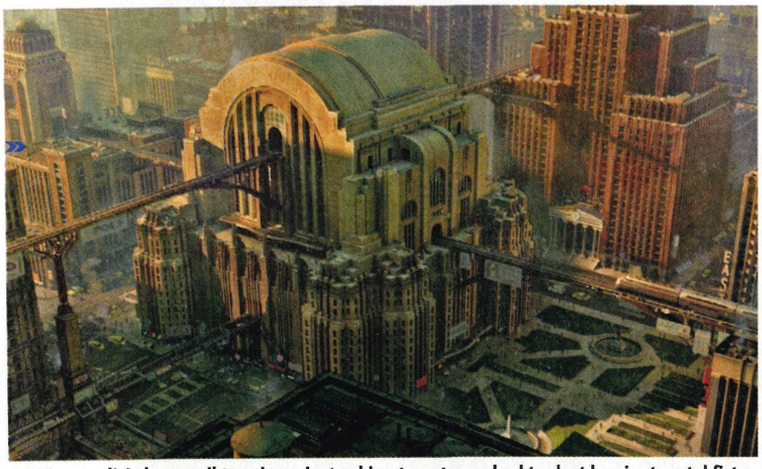
"Metropolis is crucial – the main objective is protecting the city"

franchises every year, along with the recent *NFL Street* series. This explains why we'd never been there before, and the fact that they kept us shut indoors for seven hours explains why we'll never go there again.

It was certainly time enough to glean an insight into their intentions for the game though, and Tiburon remains convinced that its sports background won't detract from *Superman Returns*. If anything, the team believes it to be something of an asset – indeed, the Superman character is actually based on a *Madden* skeleton. They're even claiming their experience of handling the sense of weight and speed in *NASCAR* will be to their benefit in terms of Superman's movements, along with their lengthy experience of animation.

Of course, EA isn't simply making a Superman game on a whim. There is also the small matter of a major motion picture next summer, with newcomer Brandon »

↑ Superman can reach flight speeds of up to 800mph with the wind behind him. Note the subtle attention to detail on the treads of his super-boots. Chic!



↑ Metropolis's huge rail terminus, just asking to get punched to dust by giant metal fists.

» Routh donning the blue tights almost 30 years after the late Christopher Reeve first used a phone box as a changing room.

It's an obligatory claim, but EA is convinced that *Superman Returns* is the most collaborative effort it's ever made, with Tiburon having an unprecedented three meetings with director Bryan Singer (*The Usual Suspects*, *X-Men*). "I was on the set at the beginning of July in Australia," says the game's executive producer Chris Gray. "I think they're doing a spectacular treatment. It has a lot of integrity, it's very well written, it's different in tone to the *X-Men* films, and it has much more of a broad appeal and a lot of character in the story."

Character and story don't necessarily make for good games, but Gray believes the partnership will prove fruitful. "We had a really great meeting with Bryan Singer and he was very supportive of the game. He's a big gamer. The big decision we made early on was not to do a literal version of the film. Whereas *Batman* was a linear game based directly on certain events in the film, we've taken some elements from the film but introduced a lot of new scenarios and characters from the DC universe into the game. It was important to have the creative backing of the director, but we're creating a much bigger version of Metropolis, for example. If you want to have a kind of 'live the film' experience I don't think you'll be disappointed, but if you didn't want a literal version, we have a lot of surprises in store."

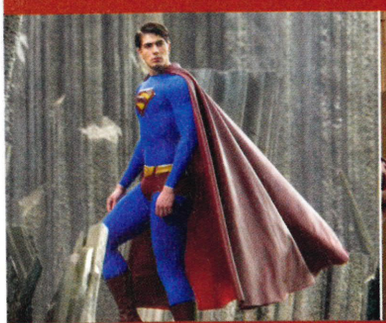
Tiburon's Metropolis plays a crucial role, as the primary objective of the game is protecting the city, which makes sense if you think about it. Given that Superman is pretty much invincible (give or take the odd bite of Kryptonite), it wouldn't make for much of a challenge if all you had to do was keep him alive. As Chris Gray says, "Superman is this invulnerable character, and one of the first questions people usually ask is 'how do I make a challenging game if the character can't be killed?' The answer is he's really there to save Metropolis."

As such, a system of collateral damage has been introduced, with a bar depleting depending on damage to the city or citizens. Superman also has a stamina bar himself, which recharges during periods of inactivity in much the same way as the *Halo* shield.

So who or what is causing this damage to Metropolis? Thus far we only have details of one supervillain, the impressively dimensioned and aptly named Metallo. Originally a fairly mundane robot about 12 feet high, Metallo worked in a car factory, where he discovered he had a magnetic command over mechanical items, sending the other robots on something of a rampage of destruction. Metallo himself kept growing,

RETURN OF THE MAN We could be superheroes

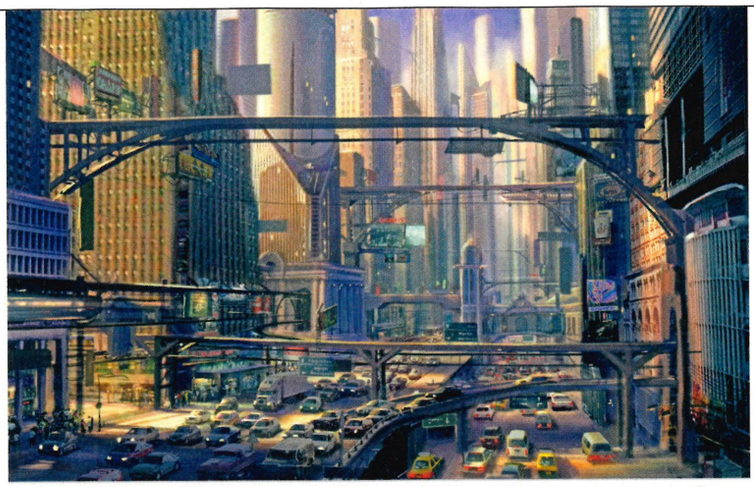
The last 'modern' attempt at bringing the Superman legend to the silver screen was back in 1978. Christopher Reeve squeezed back into the leotard for three sequels, including the little-known *Superman IV: The Quest For Peace*, filmed in and around Milton Keynes for budgetary reasons. Dean Cain has since carried the cape on the small screen, but the honour now falls to newcomer Brandon Routh.



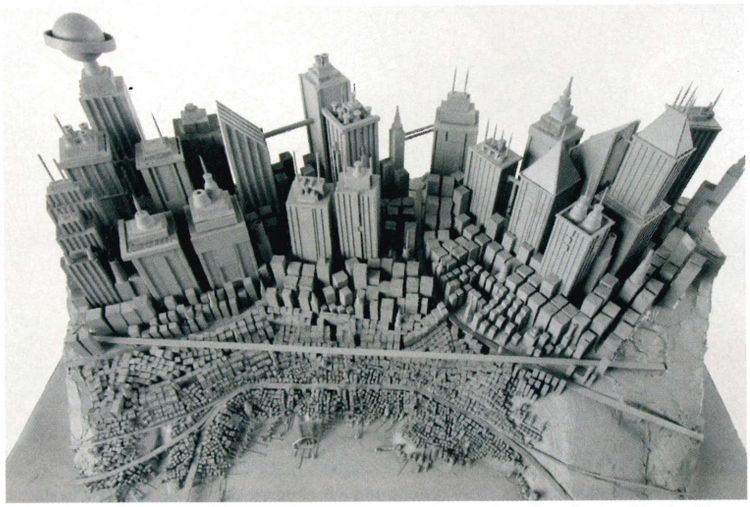
↑ Brandon Routh. New Superman, new underpants (on the outside).

↑ Kate Bosworth (right) as top reporter/love interest Lois Lane.

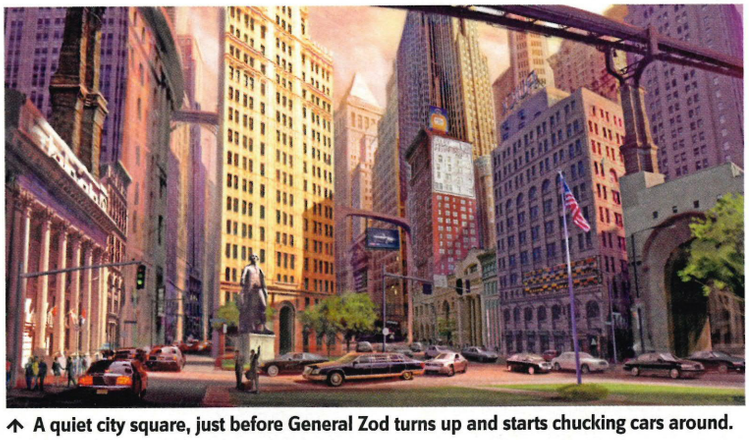
↑ Kevin Spacey appears to be perfectly cast as Lex Luthor.



↑ The city that never sleeps (for fear of giant mechanoid/evil criminal genius attack).



↑ The game's version of Metropolis is many times bigger than that depicted in the film.



↑ A quiet city square, just before General Zod turns up and starts chucking cars around.

transforming into a lumbering 60-storey behemoth caked in metallic objects such as cars, trucks, helicopters and even tanks.

With swirling vortices for legs, he's an impressive sight, but naturally no match for Superman, or indeed *OXM*, as we discovered during our exclusive hands-on playtest. Donning the blue cape, we came across Metallo wreaking havoc in a city square, knocking down buildings and terrorising the population of Metropolis. Naturally, we weren't going to stand for that, so we flew instead, circling his head and fixing him with a blast of heat vision. In fairness, he gave a good account of himself, returning a few punches and a bit of Krypto-vision, which had Superman cowering momentarily. Metallo eventually weakened though, at which point Superman clobbered him upside the head with an enormous stone obelisk, bringing the metallic pest to his knees. Superman 1, Metallo 0.

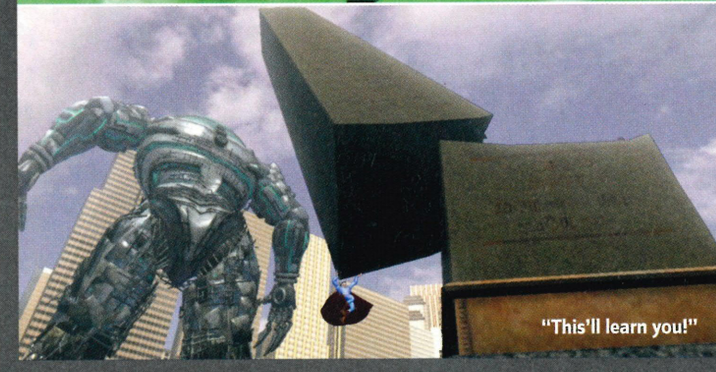
Fighting 60-storey metal mutants is all in a day's work for Supes, who won't dirty his tights with any of the more mundane elements of crime-fighting. If you're looking to pilfer some fags from the local offy, he simply won't be there, leaving such menial work to lesser heroes. As Chris Gray clarifies, "If it's something Spider-Man, or Batman, or even The Incredible Hulk could do, it's probably not big enough for Superman."

In Superman's world, it's all about playing the hero, and this is reflected in the response of the citizens of Metropolis, who will cheer his arrival as their saviour. Conversely, they will run screaming when Metallo strolls into town, for instance, and the citizens are only really in place to provide a reaction to the action, rather »

MAN VERSUS METAL

Lumbering behemoth is no match for the Man of Steel

We took on Metallo, and we showed him who's boss in this gripping encounter.



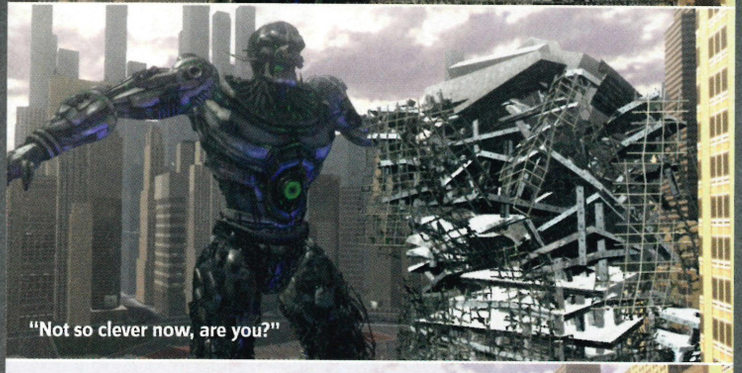
BREAK IT! BREAK IT!

When Metallo attacks

Knocking down buildings is all in a day's work for this metallic supervillain...

"Are you looking at me?"

"Take that, inanimate object!"

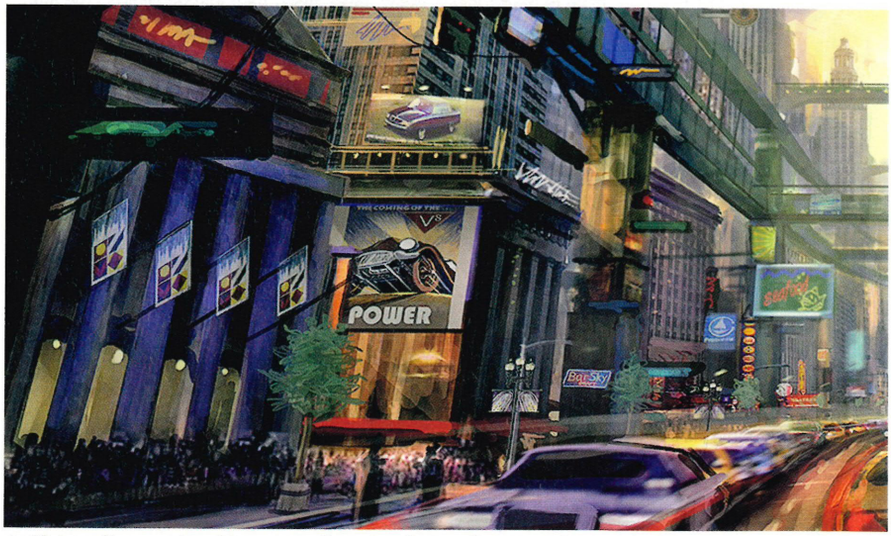


"Not so clever now, are you?"

"I am Metallo, and I rule!"

"Now don't do it again."

↑ Made of bent coathangers, rusty spoons and a broken washing machine for a brain.



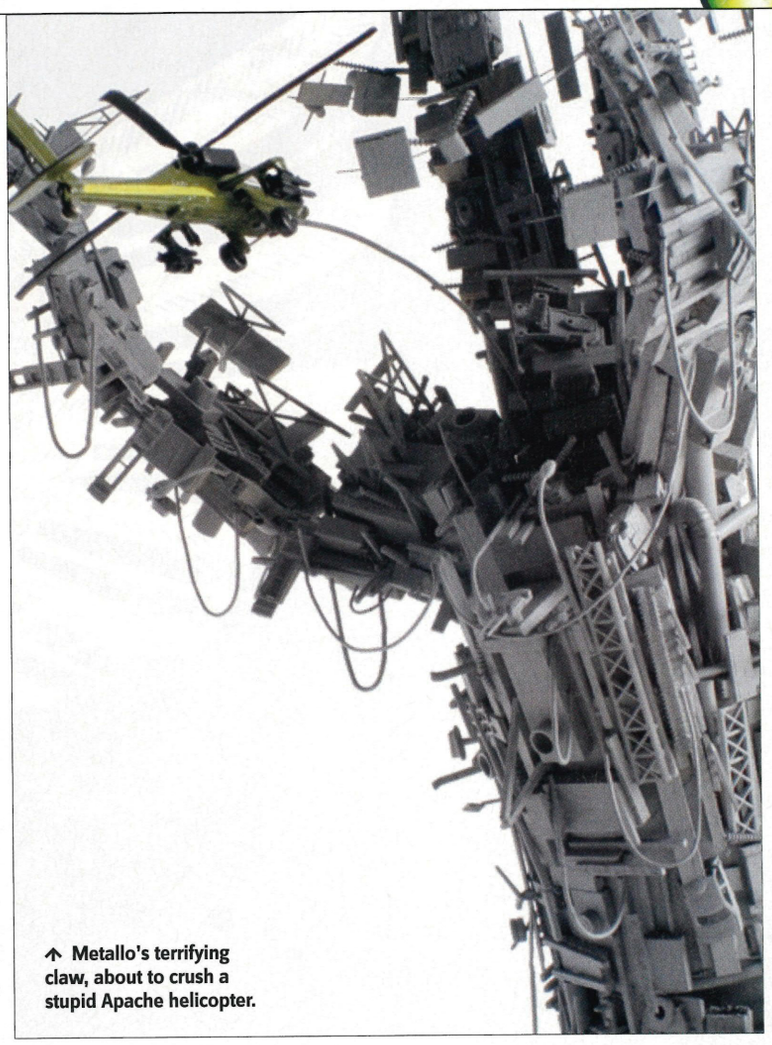
↑ Metropolis comprises 80 square miles, nine distinct districts and 10,000 buildings!

» than to exist as individual entities.

As for Blue Tights himself, "Superman is about three things," claims Chris Gray. "He's about flying – people first and foremost see him as a flying character. Secondly, he's there to protect Metropolis and humanity, so the idea of rescuing people, preventing buildings from collapsing or putting out fires becomes central to the theme. The third part is combat, fighting supervillains with his superpowers like heat vision or freeze breath."

The flying was probably the hardest to implement. Tiburon has attempted to make it a dynamic experience, coming up with the concept of "swimming through the air," a phrase apparently also used independently by the film-makers. As such, Superman will thrust upwards from the ground and corkscrew through the air, rather than hovering statically like Christopher Reeve in front of a blue screen. The superpowers – including super hearing, super speed, heat vision, frost breath, x-ray vision and super breath – are there from the start, but can be augmented between levels in the Fortress of Solitude, the mystical place in the films where Supes goes to get his head together. And if you were hoping to play as Clark Kent, he does appear briefly in a mini-game.

While it's still early doors, Tiburon has some lofty ideas for *Superman Returns*,



↑ Metallo's terrifying claw, about to crush a stupid Apache helicopter.

"If it's something Spider-Man, Batman or The Hulk could do, it's not big enough for Superman"

particularly in terms of the city, which exists on three levels – ground, middle and upper – requiring set flight paths for Superman to navigate the 'vertical gameplay.' The character seems robust enough, and while flying took some getting to grips with, it's reasonably forgiving, with buildings having an invisible buffer so you don't knock yourself out all the time. The combination of superpowers could prove interesting, and while the game is clearly aimed at a mass market of popcorn-guzzling proles, there should also be enough complexity to interest seasoned gamers, with levels interspersed with freeform aspects. Coming next year, the summer of Superman...

↑ In between rescuing screaming civilians and fighting robots, Supes likes to chill in his north pole pad (made entirely from diamonds).

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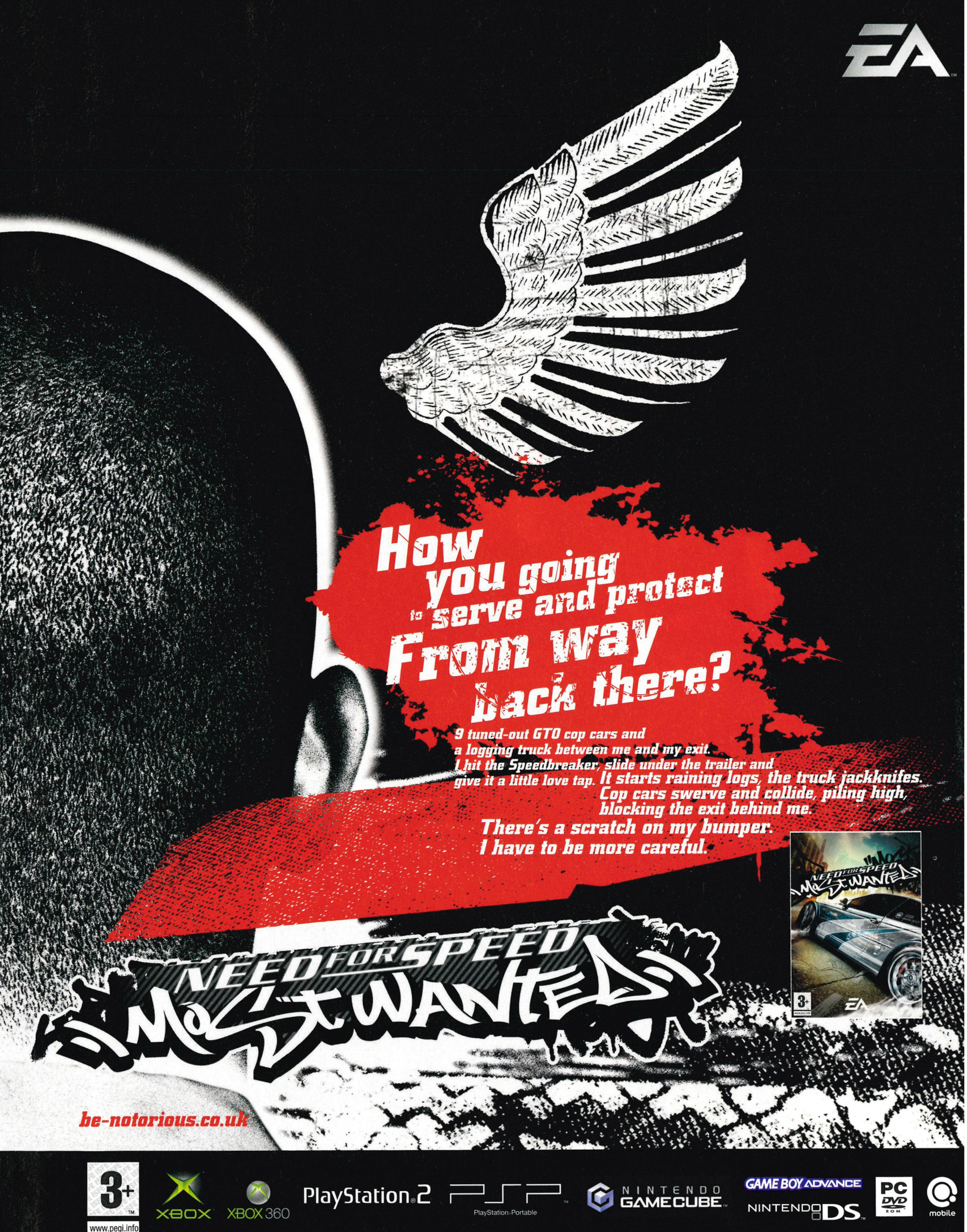

EA
How you going to serve and protect From way back there?
9 tuned-out GTO cop cars and a logging truck between me and my exit. I hit the Speedbreaker, slide under the trailer and give it a little love tap. It starts raining logs, the truck jackknifes. Cop cars swerve and collide, piling high, blocking the exit behind me.
There's a scratch on my bumper. I have to be more careful.
NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED
be-notorious.co.uk
3+
www.pegi.info
XBOX
XBOX 360
PlayStation 2
PlayStation Portable
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
GAME BOY ADVANCE
NINTENDO DS
PC DVD ROM
mobile

XBOX

From Dream to Reality...

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF XBOX

WHEN BILL GATES first announced the Xbox at the turn of the century no one knew exactly what to make of it. Was he mad, brave or just plain deluded? With Sony bashing Nintendo into a distant second place and Sega struggling to stay in the console arms race, his plans seemed a little crazy. But Microsoft never does things by halves, and five years on we see an industry radically altered by a powerhouse platform that many pundits wrote off before it even went into production.

There have been many big moments for the console - *Halo*, Xbox Live, major price cuts, that deal with Rare - not to mention a few teething troubles along the way, but Microsoft has stamped its authority on an industry noted for its resilience to outsiders. So, to celebrate these stellar achievements (and also to have a bit of nostalgic fun), we're charting all the seismic moments that contributed to Xbox's phenomenal success. Turn the page and we'll begin...

2000

Some called it the Death Star, others a PC in black box. The year 2000 saw Xbox evolving from a shadowy rumour into industry dark horse...

WHAT IS THIS 'EX-BOX' YOU SPEAK OF?

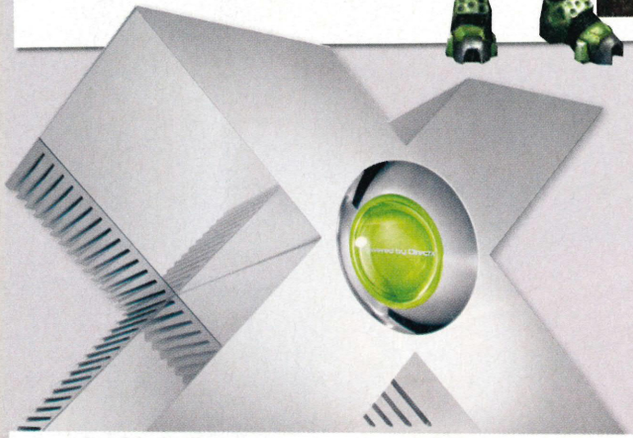
10 March 2000

At the Game Developers Conference in San Jose, Bill Gates finally ended months of speculation by revealing Microsoft's plans to launch a home games console. Originally called X-Box (note the additional hyphen), Gates effused about a machine that would be three times as powerful as the PS2 and would transform the way we consumed electronic entertainment. At this stage, however, many developers and industry veterans were less enthusiastic. Most believed Xbox would be nothing more than a set-top box, others a PC you could plug into a TV set. Specs listing a 600MHz processor (which would later be increased to 733MHz), DirectX compatibility and a built-in hard drive did nothing to assuage these fears. Such petty prejudices would dog the company until Xbox finally launched - one anonymous developer commented, "Why do I think Windows is in there? Because Xbox uses it. Ask any PC developer - it's there because Windows can't manage without it. Otherwise it'll fall over."

E3 2000

10 - 13 May 2000

Xbox's first E3 is an odd one, mainly because Microsoft only has tech demos to show. Still, it doesn't stop attendees queuing round the stand for over an hour to finally see what the machine is capable of. One of these includes a fabulous showreel of a luscious leather-clad female called Raven and her huge robot companion. Meanwhile, over at Take 2's stand, a relatively obscure PC game called *Halo* is being demoed. It looks impressive but gets little media attention. Soon after the event, it's snapped up by Microsoft to fill the FPS gap in its launch line-up. The rest, as they say, is history.



ALL ABOARD

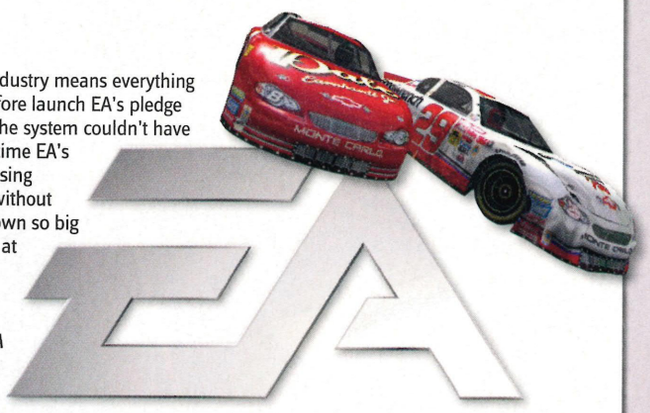
22 September 2000

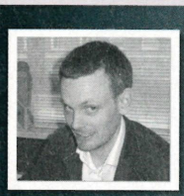
In a live satellite link between London, San Francisco and Tokyo, Microsoft reveals an impressive roster of support for its fledgling console. An incredible 156 developers, including big hitters Activision, Konami, Capcom, Eidos, Epic, id and THQ pledge support for the system. EA and Sega are notably absent, but the announcement gives Xbox momentum, striking FEAR into the hearts of its rivals. Or it should have - Sony and Nintendo just ignored Microsoft's efforts to muscle into their territory...

EA STRIKES A DEAL

13 December 2000

Catching the biggest fish in the games industry means everything to Microsoft and less than 12 months before launch EA's pledge to publish at least ten games a year on the system couldn't have come at a more opportune time. At the time EA's refusal to commit to the system was causing Microsoft a lot of heartache - arguably, without EA's backing Xbox would never have grown so big so fast. As a testament to Microsoft's joy at the partnership it immediately shipped 500 development kits to EA studios around the globe. The move would be responsible for the likes of *Madden*, *FIFA* and the *NASCAR* franchises being ready prior to launch. Quite an achievement.





James Ashton
Editor
OXM01 to OXM05

Why did you take on the job?
I'd been involved with Xbox since July of 2000 and spent time in America working on the pre-launch and launch activity for the US magazine. Back in the UK, I was in an ideal position to launch the British version.

What was the biggest change you made to the mag?
Writing and redesigning all of Issue 2's Play:More was probably the biggest single task I did in five issues. I think I only ever got around to writing one review, and that was of *Halo* in Issue 1. I was more of a director than a doer...

And the favourite cover you worked on?
Back then we did seem to have terrible trouble getting hold of decent cover art. Of the five issues I edited, only Issue 04's *Blinx* cover really stands up to re-inspection. Those of us who saw the original art for Issue 2 before it was reworked will never forget the depths games publishers can sometimes plumb...

Most played Xbox game and why?
Halo. Because I love FPSes and - while it's a bit repetitive visually - the challenge is perfectly pitched and it's one of the few games that changes as you rack up the difficulty setting. Finished it four times on Legendary, which is probably overkill in retrospect.

Personal highlight while editing OXM?
Getting Issue 01 back from the printers intact. Following a 52-hour 'day' on deadline, it was nothing short of a miracle...

XBOX Timeline

10 March 2000
Xbox officially announced

10 May 2000
First Xbox game demos showcase at E3

22 September 2000
An amazing 156 developers named as Xbox partners

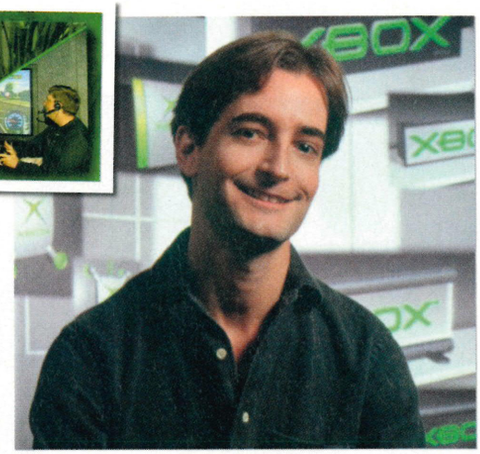
2001

In 2001 the Xbox buzz was beginning to build, and a launch at the end of the year had many doubters and critics eating their words...

XBOX FINALLY REVEALED

06 January 2001

By this point everyone had heard of Xbox but no one had actually seen one. At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas - and with sizeable help from The Rock - Bill Gates finally showed the world an Xbox for the first time. The response is mixed. Though developers generally agree that the system can do wonders, the big black box is hardly pretty. Others also criticise the controller for its chunky design and inability to fit inside a normal adult pair of hands, let alone those of a child. Luckily, a smaller controller is already on the cards.



CANNES YOU KICK IT?

16 - 17 October 2001

Prior to Xbox's official US launch, Microsoft organises a swanky event in Cannes to convince Europeans that the system is going to be a winner. Largely for journalists and important trade delegates, X01 is the kind of lavish party you usually only see in Austin Powers movies. With fireworks exploding over the city, booze on tap, celebrity DJs and the chance to inhabit Pierre Cardin's home for a day (a kind of Teletubbies universe for grown-ups), the event is a roaring success and sets a precedent for similar events in following years. There are games and speeches, and the likes of Lionhead's Peter Molyneux wax lyrical about the power of the box. If X01 proves anything, it's that Microsoft has pots of cash and a great console it will stop at nothing to get noticed.

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES SEGA

30 March 2001

Any new console needs one thing if it is to be successful: the support of major publishers. Microsoft's announcement at the 2001 Tokyo Game Show that it will exclusively publish 11 Sega games is a shock to many, and a clear sign that it is taking Japan seriously. The titles announced include *Jet Set Radio Future*, *Sega GT*, *Gun Valkyrie* and *Panzer Dragoon Orta*. Yes, Microsoft dollars had played a large part in the deal, but we must remember that Sega had just ceased manufacturing its failed Dreamcast system. It's seen as a gutsy move by the publisher, especially when other Japanese devcos are largely ignoring the advances of the big US corporation. As an interesting footnote, Microsoft marketing paraphernalia dominates the 2001 Tokyo Game Show, with Xbox banners covering most halls of the Makuhari Messe. Unfortunately, there are no Xbox games to back up the big spend, and the majority of Japanese gamers have no idea what the odd green logos represent.

OFFICIAL US XBOX LAUNCH

14 - 15 November 2001

After a year of speculation and excitement, Xbox finally hits US stores on the evening of 14 November 2001. Bill Gates himself attends the official launch in front of the Times Square branch of Toys 'R' Us, the whole place bedecked in green, including the odd hotdog stand. Carefully stage-managed, the event sees massive crowds queuing to get their hands on an Xbox - for the low, low price of $299! Quality titles like *Halo*, *Amped* and *Dead or Alive 3* also see many buying multiple games on day one. Although there are still concerns that the Xbox is too ugly, the controller too big and the price too high, Microsoft goes on to sell over one million units in three weeks, a phenomenal success by anyone's standards. The achievement is even more impressive when you consider Nintendo launched the Gamecube in the US just three days later on 18 November. The battle between Microsoft and Nintendo for second place to Sony in the console race rages for the next three years. Microsoft would eventually forge ahead thanks to aggressive price-cutting, Xbox Live functionality and a broader range of quality titles.

06 January 2001
Images of Xbox are revealed for first time...

16 October 2001
European X01 event held in Cannes

30 March 2001
Sega announces 11 exclusive games for Xbox

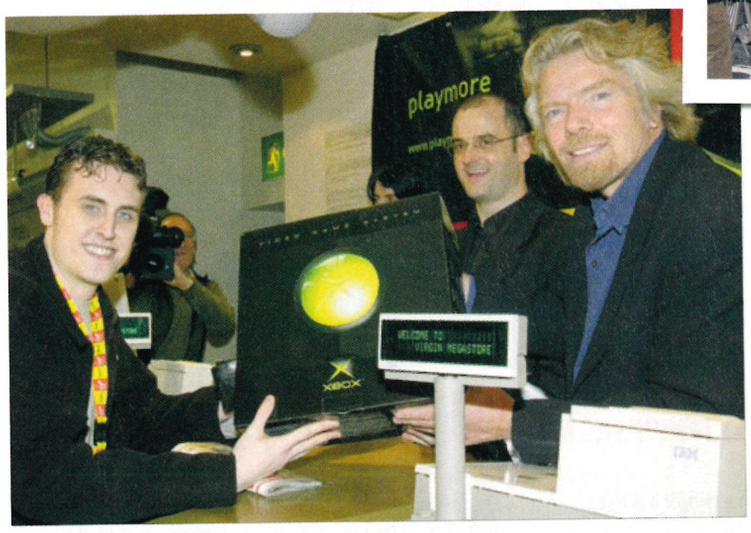
14 November 2001
Xbox officially launched in the US

2002

The most significant year in Xbox's history, 2002 saw major exclusives secured and the launch of the console in both Japan and Europe

XBOX GOES EAST
22 February 2002

Bill Gates was on the front line again for Xbox's launch in Japan. Tokyo's Shibuya district is decked out in the now familiar fluorescent green logos, with J-Pop band X-Japan on hand to drum up enthusiasm among the crowds. Well, crowds might be putting it too strongly. Although the launch isn't a disaster, only 123,000 Xbox units are sold during the first week (only half of those shipped) and many stores in Akihabara began discounting the system by the end of the month. Of the 12 titles available, *Dead or Alive 3* proves to be the most popular, selling a respectable 85,000 copies. Other titles, such as the wonderful *Jet Set Radio Future*, fared less well, only notching up a measly 10,000 units. While the timing of the launch was odd, marketing mistakes had also been responsible for the machine's poor reception, with many Japanese not really understanding why an American company would try to muscle into foreign territory. With any luck the Japanese launch of Xbox 360 will fare better.



A BOX FOR EUROPE
14 March 2002

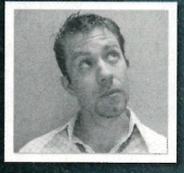
By contrast, the reception Xbox receives in the UK on its official launch is far more positive. Although only shifting 50,000 units in the first week, sales would continue to gather momentum. A price tag of £299 also keeps mass-market consumers away until the shock price drop just a month later (see below). The launch event takes place in Oxford Street's Virgin Megastore, with MC Jonathan Ross providing the crude one-liners and proving his *Dead or Alive 3* skills to consumers and journalists. A survey of new Xbox owners by Amazon.co.uk reports that 74 per cent took a day off work to stay at home and play games, and nearly half (46 per cent) feigned illness as an excuse. There was also cause for immense cheer, thanks to *Halo* selling in vast numbers across the country. Later in the month its global sales would exceed a million - mightily impressive for a launch title.

PRICE CUT BOMBSHELL
18 April 2002

Just four weeks after launch Microsoft decides to cut the price of Xbox by £100. Although sales are brisk, take-up is not nearly as rampant as expected, and the imminent launch of Nintendo's Gamecube - May 03, £129 - is clearly a factor. However, the new competitive price-point sees Xbox within the reach of most households and the platform does go on to exceed the Cube's sales figures over the next few years (something very few had predicted).

BIOWARE GOES EXCLUSIVE
08 June 2002

Microsoft continues its deal-making rampage by securing an exclusive agreement with BioWare to produce a first-party RPG for Xbox. The move couldn't have been more inspired, resulting in one of the best role-playing experiences of all time in the richly textured *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*. BioWare has since been a strong influence on Xbox's continued popularity, with *Jade Empire* also proving a hit. More recently, the company announced another exclusive title in development for 360.



Max Everingham
Editor
OXM06 to OXM21

Why did you take on the job?
James had made such a hash of it they needed someone who knew what they were doing. I'm joking - it was a very exciting opportunity.

What was the biggest change you made to the mag?
Some bold cover decisions and strong circulation increases - nothing to do with increased installed base, of course.

Favourite cover you worked on?
Issue 06, *Splinter Cell* - at the time, no one knew much about the game and I had to argue hard to get it on there.

Most played Xbox game and why?
Pro Evo when friends are round, *NFL2K5* alone. Both because sports games are now such good simulations and infinitely replayable.

Personal highlight while editing OXM?
Working in a team that always felt like hanging out with good friends. And X01 in New York and X02 in Seville.

Where are you now?
I'm working for Codemasters as Global Brand Manager.

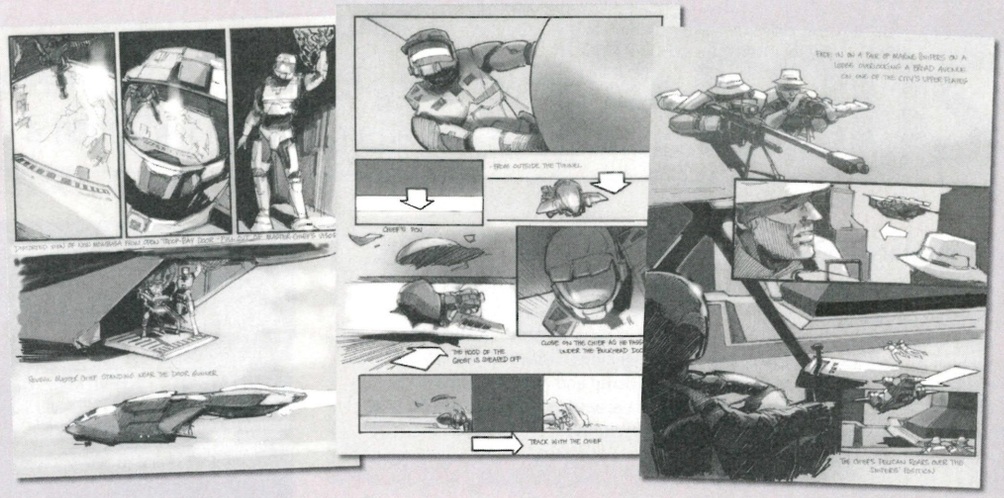
22 February 2002
Xbox officially launched in Japan

14 March 2002
First Xbox game demos showcase at E3

18 April 2002
Xbox price is cut by £100/$100

HALO 2 REVEALED
01 September 2002

A year after the original hit the shelves, Bungie officially announces a sequel to *Halo*. Of course, we all new it was in development but it was still thrilling to discover that *Halo 2* was going to improve upon the original by expanding the multiplayer options, bring in more creature types, and, hinted Bungie at the time, include Covenant levels. Meanwhile other Xbox games had reached impressive milestones with both *Project Gotham Racing* and *Dead or Alive 3* hitting sales in excess of one million units. This made the Xbox the first console in history to have three one-million sellers within a year of launch.



RARE ACQUIRED FOR $375m
24 September 2002

Rumours had been circulating for months that Rare was about to be snapped up by Microsoft for huge sums of money. Nintendo had already passed up the chance to take a 49 per cent stake in the company, citing 'limited value' as the reason behind its decision. The official announcement is made at X02 on 24 September in Seville and while there is much rejoicing by Microsoft employees, others question the price tag - coming in at a hefty $375 million. To date Rare has produced only two games for Xbox: *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* and *Conker: Live and Reloaded*, though the imminent release of *Perfect Dark Zero* and *Kameo: Elements of Power* on Xbox 360 is likely to make the deal seem like a much better long-term investment.

XBOX LIVE GOES LIVE
15 November 2002

Exactly a year after the release of its console, Microsoft launches its online service, Xbox Live, in the States. Six online-enabled titles are initially available, including *NFL Fever*, *NFL 2K3* and *NBA 2K3* (don't say the Americans only love sports games). With starter kits retailing for only $50 a pop, a whopping 150,000 join up on the first week. The even better news is that Xbox Live starter kits outsell PS2 online adapters by 86 per cent. The only fly in the ointment is EA's continued refusal to commit to the service...

MERRY CHRISTMAS XBOX
20 December 2002

The end of 2002 is an incredibly positive one for Microsoft and research conducted by NPD Group shows Xbox games outselling Gamecube titles by two to one. *Splinter Cell*, *Ghost Recon* and *Unreal Championship* are at the top of gamers' Santa lists and the prospect of Xbox exclusives in early 2003 including *Panzer Dragoon Orta*, *Knights of the Old Republic* and *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* are even more cause for celebration. In just over a year Xbox has gone from outsider to the second most popular console in the world.

08 June 2002
BioWare announces exclusive title for Xbox

24 September 2002
Rare acquired by Microsoft for $375m

15 November 2002
Xbox Live service is launched in US

2003

With the price falling to £129, Xbox becomes established in gamers' minds as the real alternative to PlayStation 2

PLATINUM PRICE
11 February 2003

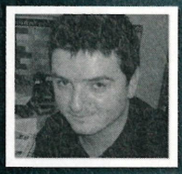
The beginning of 2003 kicks off beautifully when Microsoft announces a Platinum range of games to retail at £19.99. To achieve Platinum status, games must achieve high sales figures - the first wave of games include the dreamy *Amped*, the violent *Max Payne*, the ingenious *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* and superb racers *Project Gotham Racing* and *Rallisport Challenge*. Consumers are now in no doubt that the Xbox is easily a match for PlayStation 2 in terms of the depth, breadth and quality of games.

ANT AND DEC LAUNCH LIVE
14 March 2003

In a special event at the Tate Modern lovable Tyneside scamps Ant and Dec (aka PJ and Duncan from TV's *Byker Grove*) help officially launch Xbox Live in the UK. "Xbox Live is great because I can still shout at Dec and hear his excuses as I whip him at MotoGP," said cheeky chappie Ant McPartlin at the time. "But I don't have to see his ugly mug!" countered Dec, hilariously. Xbox Live Starter packs go on sale for £39.99 (including one year's subscription), and the take up is impressive with Microsoft announcing a further 50 Xbox Live-enabled games to be released over the coming year. Although broadband is still not prevalent in the UK, Xbox Live is a significant factor in its accelerated rollout.

XBOX PRICE IS CUT, AGAIN!
10 April 2003

Just as gamers are getting used to the idea of a £200 Xbox, the price comes tumbling down to a measly £129. To mark the occasion Microsoft also releases a very fetching limited edition translucent green version of its console. Unfortunately, unscrupulous scallywags on the internet use this new colour to their advantage, selling retail Xbox's masquerading as debug machines. Some of them even get away with it.



Steve Brown
Editor
OXM22 to OXM41

Why did you take on the job?
I dreamed of bathing in gold, flying helicopters to work, and being carried around on a throne. It *was* just a dream, but I stayed anyway.

What was the biggest change you made to the mag?
Effecting the redesign from Issue 34 to bring the look of the mag up to date, introducing new styles, fonts and badges throughout.

Favourite cover you worked on?
The *Fable* review wallet is still my favourite, using a parchment effect, intricate die-cutting and laminate treatments to reveal the specially commissioned monster artwork on the mag cover within.

Most played Xbox game and why?
Shock, horror - it's *Halo*, whose single-player game I still enjoy most, even if *Halo 2* has taken over as my Xbox Live preference.

Personal highlight while editing OXM?
Showing Gavin he could rearrange the games list in Excel by clicking the A-Z button after he'd been alphabetising it for months by hand...

Where are you now?
Editor of *Xbox 360: The Official Xbox Magazine*.

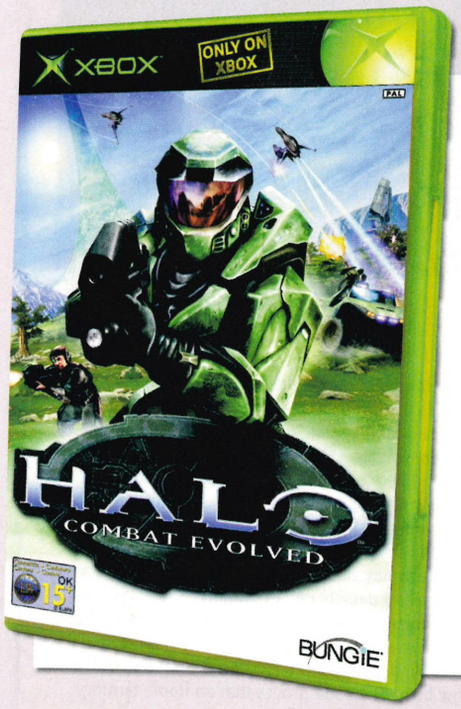
11 February 2003
Platinum range of games announced

14 March 2003
Xbox Live service launched in Europe

10 April 2003
Xbox price cut to £129

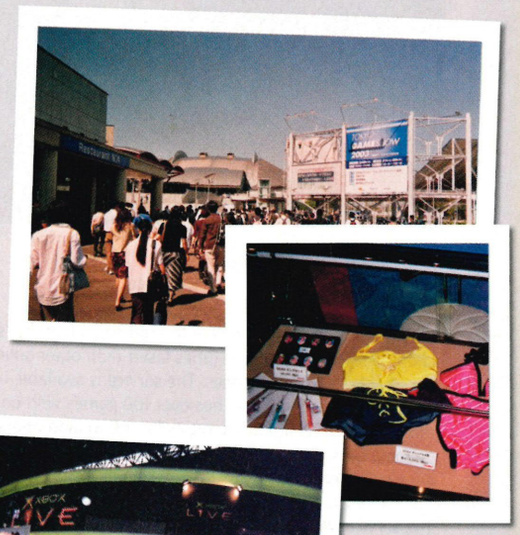
FAT CONTROLLER RETIRED
23 April 2003

After many months of hemming and hawing, Microsoft decides to ditch its cow-sized peripheral (let's face it, no one but oversized giants raised in growbags liked the original). The S-Controller - originally designed for the Japanese market - proved such a success at retail that it is now shipped with all Xbox consoles. With tighter triggers, better button placement and a D-pad that no longer looks like an impromptu ashtray, the S-Controller is arguably the best in the marketplace, especially if you love your first-person shooters.



HALO KEEPS ON SELLING
15 July 2003

Master Chief's status as gaming icon is assured as *Halo* cranks up worldwide sales in excess of three million - not bad for a game many had written off as a buggy mess prior to launch. It's easily the console's most popular title, with estimates suggesting that more than one in four users have a copy. Bungie is modest about the success. "At the current sales pace, there will be more copies of Halo than there are human beings on Earth, by the year 3254," it remarked. Astoundingly, *Halo* is even selling 40,000 copies a month in Japan (a country renowned for its distaste of the FPS). Meanwhile, Master Chief gets a staring role in comic books, novels and inspires the cult machinema site www.redvsblue.com. Much later, *Halo*'s success will result in the green-lighting of a movie version scripted by *The Beach*'s Alex Garland and produced by Peter Jackson.



SQUARE PEGS IN X-SHAPED HOLE
25 September 2003

In something of a coup Microsoft poaches Yoshihiro Maruyama from Squaresoft to be its new Japanese general manager. Square's former chief operating officer had been instrumental in establishing the *Final Fantasy* brand in America, as well as signing a megabucks deal with Walt Disney for the *Kingdom Hearts* licence on PS2. The move is finally seen as a step in the right direction for Microsoft in Japan. More recently, Maruyama has been instrumental in signing up key Japanese developers to bring exclusive games to Xbox 360, including Q Entertainment's Tetsuya Mizuguchi.

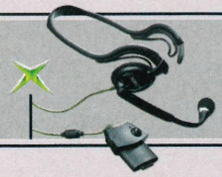
XMAS CHEER
24 November 2003

Development support for Xbox shows no signs of slowing down, and over 350 titles are available on the system in the crucial run-up to Christmas. Another incredible value pack is also released, and gamers are now able to get an Xbox console, *Halo*, *Midtown Madness 3* and a voucher for two month's free Xbox Live subscription for just £139.99. No other console can offer such a diverse entertainment package for the price. November also sees the release of the lush *Project Gotham Racing 2*, easily the best online racer of its generation and a game that keeps many hooked up to Xbox Live for hours at a time.

23 April 2003
S-Controller becomes standard

25 September 2003
Yoshihiro Maruyama defects from Square to Microsoft

24 November 2003
£140 Xbox Live starter pack released



2004

The year is significant enough for the launch of Halo 2, but 2004 also sees Xbox Live subscriptions go through the roof

XBOX IS CRYSTAL CLEAR

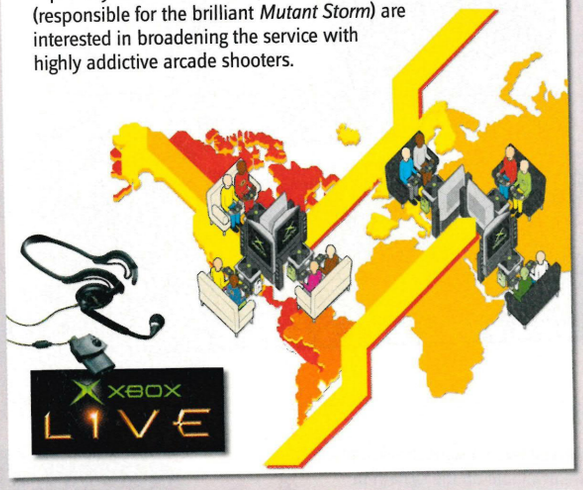
12 March 2004

Along with launching a new limited edition Crystal Xbox Microsoft aggressively hits the acquisition trail, announcing a glut of quality titles. With *Fable*, *Forza Motorsport*, *Halo 2*, *Jade Empire* and *Conker: Live and Reloaded* all ready for E3, things are looking better than ever...

ONE MILLION NOW ONLINE

15 July 2004

Xbox Live notches up its millionth member, a feat that sees it taking on subscribers three times faster than other online-based entertainment services. The service is available in 24 countries across the globe, has over 100 games with online multiplayer content, and accounts for 160 million hours of online play in just under two years. Xbox Live Arcade is also revealed, offering free downloadable content and bite-sized pub games, card games, puzzle games and arcade favourites. The service will eventually become incredibly popular especially with small developers. Today, teams like PomPom (responsible for the brilliant *Mutant Storm*) are interested in broadening the service with highly addictive arcade shooters.



XBOX NOW £99

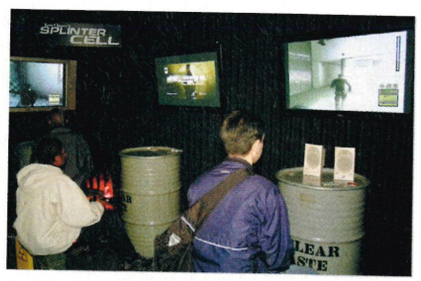
18 August 2004

Microsoft cuts the price of Xbox under £100, making it more affordable than a PS2 for the first time. There's more cheer as Xbox worldwide shipments reach a staggering 15.5 million, and *Fable* and *Knights of the Old Republic* are released, the former becoming the fastest-selling game of all time in North America. But it's a short-lived record...

MICROSOFT DOMINATES E3

10 - 13 May 2004

With incredible bombast and swagger Microsoft makes several announcements at E3 that will set the industry buzzing. The first is the revelation - after much secrecy - that *Halo 2* is to launch at the end of the year. The date quickly becomes stamped in the minds of attendees after Peter Moore reveals a tattoo depicting a *Halo* logo and the date 'November 9th' on his forearm (though it's later found to be henna dye). EA also uses the event to announce its commitment to Xbox Live, grabbing further headlines when legendary boxer Muhammad Ali takes centre stage to promote the deal. If that wasn't enough, Microsoft shows its sense of humour by using Donald Trump in a film to emphasise its online dominance over Sony. The short video is a spoof of the hit TV show *The Apprentice* and depicts J Allard, Robbie Bach and Peter Moore beating Sony rivals (or at least lookalikes) Kaz Hirai, Ken Kutaragi and Andrew House in a challenge to come up with a viable online gaming service. The movie exposes Sony's poor commitment to online gaming and audiences lap it up. With a similarly strong showing on the show floor, Microsoft proves that on home territory it's got the momentum and creativity to take on all rivals.



HALO 2 LAUNCHES

11 November 2004

Backed by an astonishing 1.5 million pre-orders, *Halo 2* is released on schedule. Across seven time zones over 7,000 retailers hold 'midnight madness' events to promote the most highly anticipated game ever. The epicentre of all this activity is Times Square where the Toys 'R' Us store sees queues go round the block. Microsoft cleverly ramps up media interest by predicting 'Halo flu' - a debilitating disease that will see thousands of workers across the globe taking sickies to play the game. Meanwhile, in the UK, the benevolence of Microsoft knows no bounds, as journalists are given rooms in plush London hotels to review the game several days before launch. Room service on tap ensures that the game gets 90 per cent-plus scores across the board!

10 - 13 May 2004
Xbox dominates E3

15 July 2004
Xbox Live notches up one million subscribers

11 November 2004
7,000 retailers hold midnight madness events as *Halo 2* launches

18 August 2004
Xbox price cut to £99

2005

With a quality back catalogue now second to none, Xbox is hitting full stride - just as its successor is announced

SALES RECORDS SMASHED
28 January 2005

Xbox finally reaches maturity with games such as *Forza Motorsport*, *Far Cry: Instincts* and *GTA San Andreas* imminent. Sales figures also show Microsoft closing the gap on Sony. Since its launch Xbox has now sold nearly 20 million consoles worldwide - 13.2 million in North America, 5 million in Europe, and 1.7 million in Asia. In Europe alone, Xbox is the only platform to see growth over the whole calendar year, while the overall market is in the doldrums. Indeed, Xbox's market share for 2004 was an impressive 29.5 per cent, increasing by seven points from the 2003 calendar year. Other impressive figures show that Xbox Live has surpassed more than 1.4 million members around the world, and that *Halo 2* has already totalled 6.4 million in sales.

SUCCESSOR TO XBOX ANNOUNCED
09 March 2005

The revelation of a new console is always cause for great excitement, but it can also be tinged with sadness. At this year's Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco Microsoft officially announces details of the successor to Xbox, but also hints that first-party development will cease on its original platform. Xbox 2 (as it was referred to then) will sport three 3GHz PowerPC units running in parallel, contain 256Mb of unified RAM and support HDTV. Branded as the most powerful console of 'this generation', early screens of the games are incredibly impressive and include photorealistic mock-ups of *Madden* and *Need For Speed*. Further excitement for the platform is kindled by the news that *Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi will be bringing two exclusive RPGs to the platform with his new company Mistwalker. Other key signings include Yoshiki Okamoto, president and CEO of Game Republic, and Tetsuya Mizuguchi, creator and co-founder of Q Entertainment. Developer and publisher enthusiasm is sky-high, although many doubt Microsoft will be able to launch the console by the end of the year...

NOT THE END OF THE LINE FOR XBOX
04 October 2005

The extravagant X05 event in Amsterdam is focused on all things 360, although Microsoft promises support for the console that brought it this far. Manufacture of the original Xbox will continue well into 2006, with many developers signed up to produce games into 2007. Shop space will also be earmarked for the Xbox and its games, though it appears increasingly likely that most retailers will offer Xbox trade-in deals to ensure the 360 gets off to a flying start. The fabulous *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* is released in the same month, easily the best Xbox Live game since *Halo 2*, and with titles including *Operation Flashpoint: Elite*, *Just Cause* and *Bully* on the way, there's certainly no need to abandon Microsoft's killer console any time soon.

Gavin Ogden
Editor
OXM42 and beyond

Why did you take on the job?
No one likes a quitter, and after after helping launch the magazine, becoming top dog was my goal. I needed a piece of that 'perk'-flavoured pie too!

What was the biggest change you made to the mag?
Bringing features (like this one) back into the mag! As we head towards Xmas, there are just too many games to pack into each issue to leave space.

And the favourite cover you worked on?
The Xbox 360 issue was both terrifying and incredible at the same time. The cover was done in a secret room - we might have been fired otherwise...

Most played Xbox game and why?
System Link *Halo* in the office! We played it EVERY SINGLE DAY for a year. In the end we had to make a team decision to play some other Xbox games.

Personal highlight while editing OXM?
Getting to visit Bungie in Seattle to play *Halo 2* before anyone else in the world. It's the kind of job I'd do for free - just don't tell James I said that!

28 January 2005
20 million Xbox units now sold worldwide

09 March 2005
Xbox 360 officially announced

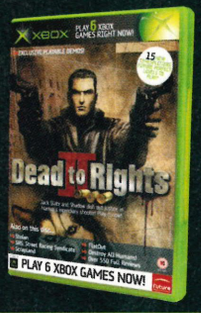
04 October 2005
Microsoft states intention to support Xbox into 2007 at X05

Back Issues

Missed a copy of your favourite mag? Trying to track down an essential demo? Don't fret - you can order back issues of *OXM* by calling 0870 837 4773 (UK only) or 01858 438795 (overseas). But hurry - stocks are limited!

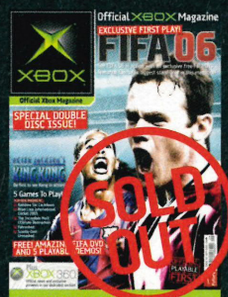
ISSUE 44 JULY 2005

Demos: Dead to Rights II, Stolen, SRS: Street Racing Syndicate, Scrapland, FlatOut
Game Saves: The Punisher, Playboy: The Mansion, 15 new TimeSplitters Future Perfect levels
Movies: The Godfather, Battlefield 2: Modern Combat, and more!



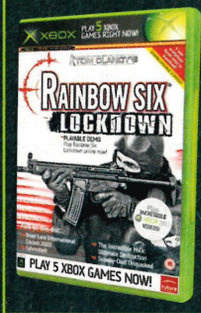
ISSUE 45 AUGUST 2005

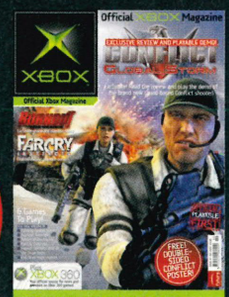
Demos: The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction, Worms 4: Mayhem, Scooby-Doo! Unmasked, MotoGP 3, Full Spectrum Warrior bonus missions
Game Saves: CT Special Forces, Unreal Championship 2, Lego Star Wars, Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30



ISSUE 46 SEPT 2005

Demos: Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Lockdown, The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction, Fahrenheit, Brian Lara International Cricket, Scooby-Doo! Unmasked
Xbox 360 Movies: Dead or Alive 4, Prey, NBA 2K6, NHL 2K6
Plus! Incredible free bonus FIFA 06 DVD!



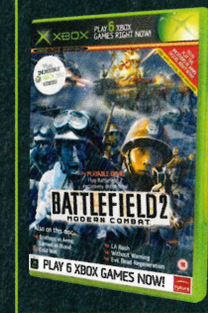


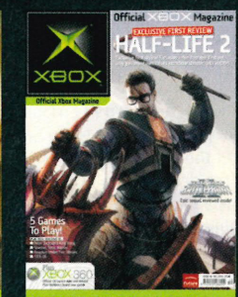
ISSUE 47 OCT 2005

Demos: Conflict: Global Storm, Burnout: Revenge, Heroes of the Pacific, Far Cry Instincts, Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects, Evil Dead Regeneration
Xbox 360 Movies: Top Spin 2, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, Huxley, Amped 3, NFS Most Wanted, Demonik

ISSUE 48 NOV 2005

Demos: Battlefield 2: Modern Combat, Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood, Cold War, LA Rush, Without Warning, Evil Dead Regeneration
Xbox 360 Movies: Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, Huxley, Condemned, APB, The Outfit, Full Auto





ISSUE 49 DEC 2005

Demos: Peter Jackson's King Kong, Battlefield 2: Modern Combat (single player), Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes, Spartan: Total Warrior, FIFA 06,
Xbox 360 Movies: Dynasty Warriors 5, Condemned: Criminal Origins, Dead Rising

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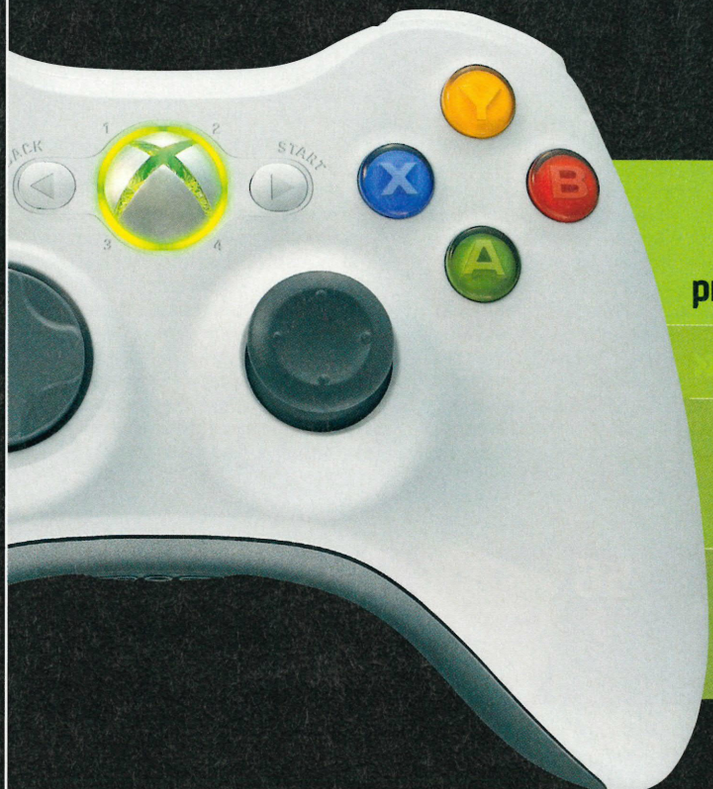

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FINEST HOUR

THE PIECES FALL INTO PLACE ON THE XBOX 360 HOUR TOUR.

There's nothing worse than an itch you can't scratch, and we've got it bad for the Xbox 360. But thanks to the Xbox 360 Hour Tour, it looks like we won't have to wait until December to spend some quality time with stunning launch titles including Project Gotham Racing 3, Perfect Dark Zero and Kameo.

The tour kicked off in glorious Glasgow at the start of November before fizzing around the whole of the UK (apart from Northern Ireland – sorry folks) before coming to a next-gen rest in London from 25-27 November – a full week before the console goes on sale across Europe on December 2.

It's a hugely important step for Xbox 360, because it's the first opportunity for the public at large to grab a hands-on with the console and decide first hand if it lives up to expectations.

We sent loyal reader and forum moderator at www.oxm.co.uk along to the show in Glasgow to sort the hype from the serious gaming. "When you register for the event, you're given a pass that lets you into specific sessions, each one giving you 30 minutes to play one of the launch titles," he reported.

"During that time you have access to over 60 demo pods running a huge variety of games including, Perfect Dark Zero, Kameo, King Kong, Need for Speed Most Wanted, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06, Gun, Call of Duty 2, Tony Hawks American Wasteland and Dead or Alive 4.

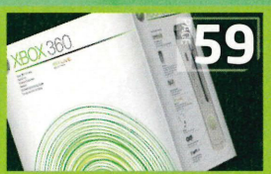
"The game that impressed most people was Project Gotham Racing 3, the first chance to play an almost final build left most people utterly stunned. the graphics are incredible, the in-car view got a lot of praise. But the unexpected surprise of the show was Condemned: Criminal Origins. Everyone was blown away by the graphics and the innovative game play."

There's still chance (if you're reading this mag close to its 29 November on sale date!) to take part in the Xbox 360 Hour Tour when the event moves to London. All you have to do is turn up at the venue and register on the door. You never know, you might even bump into some of us from Xbox 360: The Official Xbox Magazine, because we'll be there in force. Check out our beautiful faces at the magazine's website www.oxm.co.uk and look out for us at the London event on November 25-27.

THIS MONTH...

OLD BODIES STIR IN THE DARK AND THE AWESOME NEW CONSOLE STEPS INTO THE LIGHT!

Alone in the Dark on next-gen



Core or Premium Xbox 360?

Launch day-off excuses...

»The first opportunity for the public to grab a hands-on with the console and make their own decisions...

FIRST REACTIONS!

Xbox 360 demo kiosks are around – hard to find, but out there. Here's what players have to say...

"*Gotham* was fast and smooth. I'm so relieved 'cos it's the Xbox 360 game I really, really want," Tom Eastman

"I got stuck on *Kameo* and just rolled around looking at the shiny floor. It's really nice to look at," Ninjaracer

"*Perfect Dark* was amazing. The fire and burning scenery impressed everyone who saw it," Chris Jenson

"The games looked good, but everything tends to look good on massive LCD TVs!" Mikey Paul

"I couldn't stop playing. Someone from Microsoft had to tell me to get off the machine!" Gigafight

"I drove 50 miles to get to the Glasgow show. It was good, but I was expecting more," Jason Bellenger

"*Kameo* was fun. I thought it'd be a boring old 3D platform game, but it was better than I expected," Rose Porter

"Joanna Dark is hot. I like her. Can I have a poster?" Mortafied

GREEN LIGHT

REVEALING THE HOTTEST NEW GAMES GREENLIT FOR DEVELOPMENT!

PUB: ATARI | **PLAYERS:** 1
DEV: EDEN GAMES | **XBOX LIVE:** AWARE

RELEASE: 2006

NEW GAME!

ALONE IN THE DARK

The franchise that spawned survival horror returns to revitalise the genre

WHEN *ALONE IN THE DARK* steps out of the shadows in 2006, it will be the fifth instalment of the franchise to date. But whilst you assume the familiar role of paranormal detective Edward Carnby, that is where developer, Eden Games, hopes the similarities end.

Widely regarded as the first survival horror series, *AITD* never matched the success of its rivals within the genre it pioneered. *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* went on to sell millions, while *AITD* was lumbered with a Hollywood turkey featuring Christian Slater and years in the videogame wilderness. So having paved the way only to see others stagger by, *AITD* returns in the hope of pioneering a new niche market with a combination of thriller, action and survival elements.

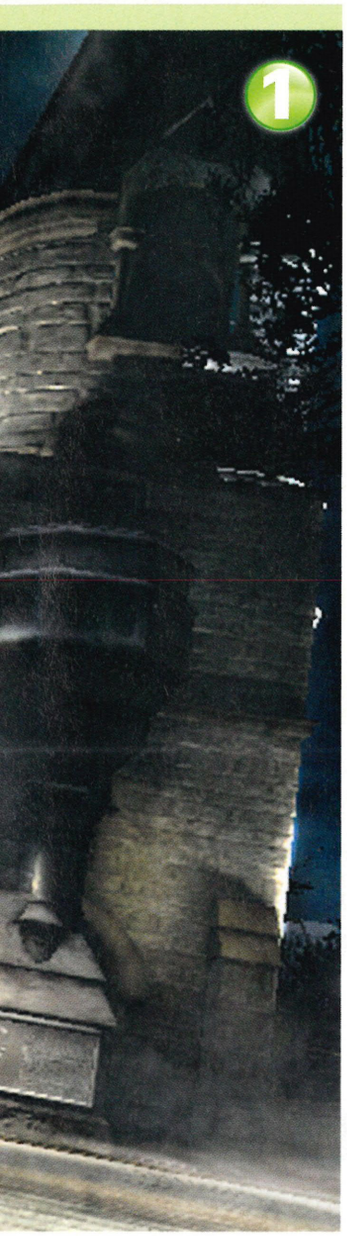
The present-day setting of New York's Central Park will play host to your adventure, offering a freeroaming environment for your investigation. Of course, while the park itself is huge, it's also enclosed. Although your movements are not restricted by underlit corridors or gloomy rooms, you will still suffer the claustrophobia of the surrounding environment, cloaked by the night's sky. There is already a promise of deep interaction with the park itself, with obvious scare points being afforded by the location. Whether that manifests in the eerie whistle of the wind rushing through the branches of a tree or the fright of a random lightning strike, the developer has been quick to stress that the real fear will be in your head.

Back in the day, when *Alone in the Dark* became one of the first PC games to pioneer real 3D polygon characters, Edward Carnby was a ginger, bespectacled, rather geeky-looking journalist (a ridiculous stereotype we can assure you – Ed). He turned out to be rather good at solving puzzles, defeating the undead and combining objects to great and often surprising effect – a sheriff's badge as a cog in a safe mechanism – of course! As you can see, he's looking a bit more dapper and direct-action these days.

At this early stage of development, specific gameplay and storyline details are scarce. The prevalent theme appears to be death and what happens in the afterlife. Even the monsters you encounter during your investigation may be in your mind, so just how will you find your way through to where the truth lies?

SELECT SCREENSHOT...

1. **ALONE IN THE PARK:** Although you will never leave the location of Central Park, your moonlit travels will lead you to structures within it. Whether these offer you temporary refuge or dangers of an altogether different kind has yet to be determined.
2. **LET'S HANG OUT:** Eden Games is keen to move away from the current generation of survival horror titles, but don't expect *Alone in the Dark* to be gore-free. Some scenes will feature the still-warm remains that stalwarts of the genre are used to!
3. **THE EYES HAVE IT:** Our protagonist has seen it all before, but what questions must Edward Carnby answer this time around? Is the secret that lies within the gates of the park worth dying for?
4. **BLINDED BY THE LIGHTS:** Despite the title, chances are you will encounter a number of characters on your way to solving the mystery at the centre of the game. If you really were alone in the dark it wouldn't be nearly so bad...
5. **MONUMENTAL SURROUNDINGS:** The gloom of Central Park will be instrumental in creating tension. You can expect gothic buildings (the developer may have taken a bit of poetic licence with the architecture in the game), suspicious shadows and unexpected movements as you make your way through.



KILLER FEATURES

TURN THAT OFF!

The developer of *AITD* has been given permission by Microsoft to not support custom soundtracks in the game. This would usually be considered a bad step, but in this case it's for your own benefit. Breaking the next-gen convention that all Xbox 360 games are totally customisable, Eden Games stressed that the music plays such an integral part in the overall game-playing experience, that to allow you the opportunity of ruining it with The Sugababes would be madness!

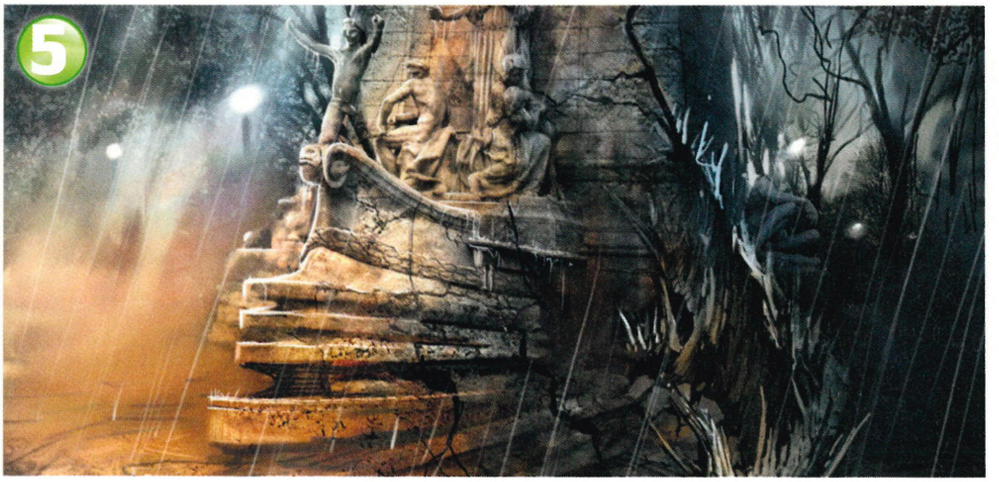
PARK LIFE

The real Central Park covers an expanse larger than the principality of Monaco, so its virtual representation will offer a gaming environment that promises to be vast!

THIS IS THRILLER

Looking to pioneer a new market in gaming terror, *AITD* is being touted as a 'survival thriller'. Eden Games is keen to disassociate itself with the 'survival horror' tag championed by franchises that were born out of its original *AITD* titles.

Any minute now Carrie Bradshaw will appear.



You've got some big decisions soon...

But you only need to make one!

SEE THE NEW GAMES IN ACTION WITH THE UK'S ONLY OFFICIAL XBOX 360 MAGAZINE

XBOX 360™

THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

Read the first reviews of the launch games before the Xbox 360 arrives this Christmas!

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SYSTEM ACCESS

LITE OR LOADED?

Which Xbox 360 package are YOU getting? The £210 bargain bundle or the power-user £280 super-deal? There's only one winner as far as OXM readers are concerned...

A STAGGERING 94 per cent of *Xbox 360: The Official Xbox Magazine* readers are planning to buy the more expensive of the two Xbox 360 bundles, with the £210 Core Pack losing out heavily to the goodie-filled £280 Premium Edition, according to a poll on our www.oxm.co.uk website.

Out on the street, opinion is much the same. "I've pre-ordered the Premium pack," says Tony Harrington, "because you get so much free stuff, and I really want the hard disk for custom soundtrack support as I'm used to it from the last Xbox."

We spoke to a couple of dozen potential Xbox 360 buyers, and only one was considering the cheaper £210 bundle. Mike Swanton says he really wants to get the console on launch day but the extra £70 is the deal-breaker. He says that he'd prefer to gradually power-up his new Xbox 360 system by "getting the hard drive in the future if it ever becomes essential to playing games".

Changed your mind? A new poll on our website at www.oxm.co.uk will keep us all up to date on the buying mood of the nation, so head there now and check out all the great new streaming game movies too.

CORE PACK, £209.99

BOX CONTENTS:

- Xbox 360 console (white disc tray)
- Xbox 360 Controller
- Xbox 360 Faceplate
- Xbox 360 Standard AV Cable
- Xbox Live Silver membership

PROS:

Cheap as (210 bags of) chips
Lighter to carry home
Not so much of a loss if you get burgled

CONS:

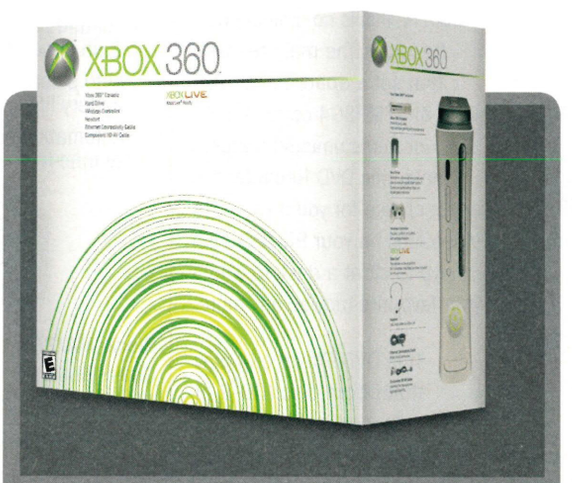
You'll need a memory card to save your games – that's an extra £22.99
No futuristic wireless controller
May trigger a slight feeling of regret, especially if all your mates have the Premium Edition

YOU SAY:

"When the wife asks me how much that thing cost, I can say quite truthfully the console cost £210!"

WE SAY:

Yeah, you can tell you wife that, but what about your friends? They'll be laughing at your weak and less-impressive choice. By the time you've forked out for a memory card, the price difference between packages is laughable. Don't cut corners. Spend the extra £70 and get the real Xbox 360 deal.



PREMIUM EDITION, £279.99

BOX CONTENTS:

- Xbox 360 console (silver disc tray)
- Xbox 360 Hard Drive (20GB)
- Xbox 360 Wireless Controller
- Xbox 360 Faceplate
- Xbox 360 Headset for online voice chat
- Xbox 360 Component HD-AV Cable
- Xbox Live Silver membership
- Xbox 360 Media Remote

PROS:

High-definition leads included
The essential, future-proofing hard drive
Free Xbox Live headset and remote control

CONS:

£70 would keep you in crisps for six months
Heavier to carry home

YOU SAY:

"It's £140 of stuff you get free!"

WE SAY:

It's £140 of stuff you get free, and you end up with a machine that can do everything, not just nearly everything. Unless you only have £210 in the whole world, you really do owe it to yourself to go for the Premium Edition. After all, you don't want to die wondering what might have been!

COMMUNITY ACCESS

"I'M GOING TO THE... ER... YOU KNOW... CLINIC"

...and other excuses for taking the day off on 02 December.

PLANNING TO skive on 02 December to buy and play Xbox 360? Fair enough, but you won't be alone. You need to make sure your skiving excuse stands up to scrutiny. These are the excuses our readers offered up on our website:

NAME: Cliff T
EXCUSE: I'm just phoning in sick in the morning. I work in a factory with a load of old women; none of them know the importance of the day so they'll believe me!

NAME: J3110
EXCUSE: I've booked the day off saying "I have a 'family thing." Nothing exciting, but it's worked!

NAME: shinesevens
EXCUSE: My MD knows about my gaming 'interest' and is used to me taking time off for important launches. I had two days off when *Halo 2* came out and I'm doing the same for the Xbox 360 launch.

NAME: killslay
EXCUSE: The best excuse for anything: say to your boss/teacher "I'm going to the... er... you know... clinic." They'll look embarrassed and no more questions will be asked.

NAME: Emma Hinds
EXCUSE: It's easy for me; I mumble something about "women's problems" and my boss goes bright red and tells me to go home.

NAME: Paul Collinge
EXCUSE: I've already had about 20 days off this year from a completely fictional back problem, so they're bound to sack me. But I don't care – more time to play games!

NAME: Steve Greene
EXCUSE: Well I'm the boss of my small business, so if I just don't turn up I never get any bother. I might take Thursday off too, if I can convince my mate who works in a game shop to sell me one early!

STRIP SEARCH

Xbox 360

GAMES ARE FREE ON XBOX 360!

PUZZLE GAME HEXIC IS INCLUDED FREE ON ALL XBOX 360 HARD DRIVES... BUT IS IT ANY GOOD?

Created by Alexey Pajitnov, the genius behind *Tetris*, *Hexic* has you rearranging hexagonal blocks into groups of three, which then disappear and start a chain reaction. Okay, it's not exactly *Perfect Dark Zero*, but it's great for killing ten minutes or so! Go to http://zone.msn.com/en/hexic/game.htm to try it.

Also on the hard drives is a custom soundtrack, Gamertile images to use as online avatars, wallpapers and a film showing the 'making of' the machine.

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DVD Recorder

DivX/MPEG4 Compatible

The time has come to get yourself a DVD recorder and, as you'd expect from MAX TV, this is no ordinary DVD Recorder. The main features that set it apart are its USB Socket and its DivX/MPEG4 compatibility. Both of these unusual features make this DVD Recorder the perfect choice for you if you have a large library of video files on your PC. It means you no longer have to sit at a desk to watch some of your favourite movies any more.

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- USB socket input
- Divx/MPEG-4 compatible
- SCART RGB video output
- DVD/CD/MP3/Picture CD DVD+R(W)/DVD-R(W) CD-R(W) playback
- S-video input
- 5 recording modes (60-360 minutes)

Only £129.00 +p&p

This DVD Player can play them from disc (CD-R or DVD-R depending on file size) or even directly from a USB Flash Drive. And it's not just video, it even recognises MP3 music and Picture CDs! All this is in addition to the ability to record up to 6 hours of TV per DVD+R(W) disc.

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Sat & Sun 10am - 10pm

CD Scratch Repairer Kit

Most scratches on CDs and DVDs merely damage the transparent surface of the disc and not the refelective layer that actually contains the information. If you have the right equipment you can repair this surface in a matter of minutes.

The CD Scratch Repairer Kit is one such piece of equipment. It comes with pads and repair fluid, which will be good for repairing up to 50 CDs, plus a bonus spare set which are good for 50 more.

The process is very simple. First put the sand pads in with your disc, set it going for three minutes, and they sand down the surface of the disc by a tiny, tiny fraction. Next, pop in the repair pads with a couple of drops of fluid, three more minutes while your disc is cleaned and resurfaced. And that's it!

FREE INCLUDES **BONUS** refill kit

Order Code: MAX467

Only £19.99 +p&p

Spy Cam

Spy Cam is a tiny camera with a micro lens and discreet microphone, which can be placed pretty much anywhere.

It's powered by an ordinary 9v battery and wirelessly transmits a high-quality signal to its receiver at a distance of up to 100 metres. The receiver can then be hooked up to a TV, a VHS recorder, a PC with capture card, a full-size camcorder or even a DVD recorder. It's great for surveillance, practical jokes or even just obtaining footage that wouldn't be possible with an ordinary camera. Simple to use - just insert the battery tune in the receiver and you're away!

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Reviews

Written by gamers who live and love games

THIS MONTH, the reviews section is so bloated with gaming goodness we've had to give it a tummy tuck. There are some meaty little numbers to get your gnashers round, including a few updates of classic titles such as the *Doom* and *Fable*. But most impressive of all is just how good the final instalment of the *Prince of Persia* trilogy is...

We're sorry about the lack of a review of *True Crime: New York City*. Because of a few issues at the publisher's end we weren't able to get it on time. Not to worry, because we've got it in for next month!

So, on that note, get feasting on everything from the cutting edge of *The Two Thrones*, the weird brilliance of *Psychonauts*, and the downright strangeness of *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Enjoy!

Our Badges explained

XBOX ELITE
Any game scoring a whopping 8.5 or more.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Our favourite of the Elite games reviewed this month.

XBOX LIVE
Downloadable content, online play, or both.

ONLY ON XBOX
An Xbox-exclusive game for at least three months.

ON THE DISC
A playable trial or movie of the game is on our disc.

Score Key

8.5-10.0
THE XBOX ELITE - ONE OF THE VERY BEST AVAILABLE

7.5-8.4
A TOP-QUALITY RELEASE THAT'S WELL WORTH HAVING

6.5-7.4
STILL WELL WORTH CONSIDERING, BUT HAS SOME FLAWS

5.0-6.4
AN AVERAGE TITLE WITH NOTHING OUTSTANDING TO OFFER

2.5-4.9
A BAD GAME, AND ONE YOU SHOULDN'T BOTHER WITH

0.0-2.4
CALLING SUCH A RANCID STINKER A 'GAME' IS LIBELLOUS

Prince of Persia The Two Thrones 062
The trilogy comes to an end in this explosive Xbox finale

The Matrix: Path of Neo 068
Be The One, then save the world. But is it any good?

Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil 070
Featuring the return of the legendary double-barrelled shotgun...

Need For Speed Most Wanted 072
The cops are back, but do they pull you over for going too fast?

Codename: Kids Next Door 074
Gem-collecting mayhem with large-headed children of the damned.

Ski Racing 2006 074
A game that does exactly what it says on the tin. And nothing else.

Gun 076
Gun, glory and guts from the makers of Tony Hawk's.

Fable: The Lost Chapters 078
More content and extra chickens. Will you be bad or good?

Call of Duty 2: Big Red One 080
Back to the front as WWII gets another seeing to.

Jacked 084
Motorbikes are bad for your health, as this bizarre title proves.

Crime Life: Gang Wars 084
Urban brawling for dummies. Come back GTA, all is forgiven.

Shadow the Hedgehog 086
Sonic's evil double packs a punch and two whopping great guns as well.

Operation Flashpoint: Elite 088
A long time coming, but has it been worth it for this tactical shooter?

Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire 090
Potter grows up and finally learns some decent spells.

The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer 094
Dodgy game sequel starring that bloke from the end of the movie.

SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, PANTS! 094
Baffling, loud, and insane. SpongeBob gets even stranger.

NHL 2K6 096
More face-smashing action. Come on, that's all you play it for, right?

NBA 2K6 096
Run back and forth up and down a court... for fun!

World Poker Tour 096
Forget holding a poker face, just get yourself some cards and go mad.

American Chopper 098
Like Pimp My Ride, but with bikes. And in game-form, obviously.

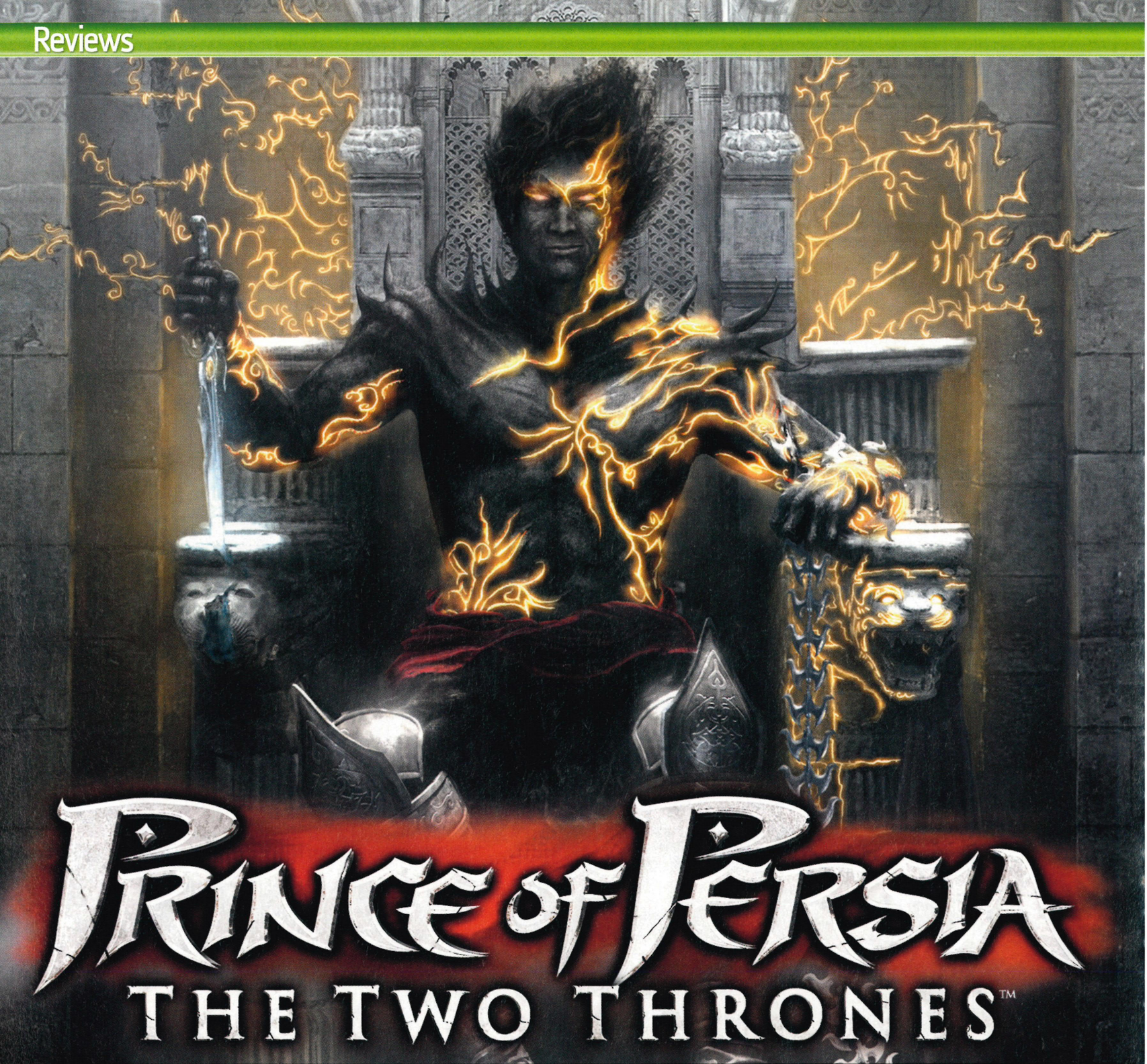
Tecmo Arcade Classics 098
More retro games shamble back from the grave.

Shattered Union 100
Puzzling icon-pushing weirdness that's better suited to a PC.

Crash Tag Team Racing 100
Is that bandicoot still around? Looks like he's karting again. Zzz...

Shrek SuperSlam 102
Surprisingly enjoyable, violent cartoon beat 'em up action.

Psychonauts 102
Brilliantly inventive, dark Tim Burton-style platforming at its best.



Prince of Persia™ The Two Thrones

The wheel comes full circle as chaos returns to Babylon

Words: Ben Lawrence

Dev: Ubisoft	Pub: Ubisoft
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: December	Price: £40
www.princeofpersia.com	

THAT PESKY butterfly effect keeps rippling outwards for the poor Prince. Having unleashed the Sands of Time, laying his kingdom to waste, and then journeying to the Island of Time to put things right, the Prince expects that finally, he can return back home to the Babylon he knew before the Sands reached out and corrupted the world. Only we know that's just not going to happen, don't we?

At the end of *Warrior Within*, when the Prince returned his kingdom to the way it was before he unwittingly unleashed the Sands, he thought he had altered everything. Well, he had, except for the small question of his fate. He returned the world to how it once was, which meant that all the dark powers in the world who had sought to wield the Sands of Time were now very much alive, and still hungering for them.

The wheel had come full circle, and as the final part of the *Prince of Persia* trilogy sets off, we find ourselves not so much back to the beginning, but at an alternate beginning, where the Vizier still walks the Earth, and where, in the Prince's absence, he's been able to make the Sands of Time his own. Now, in this final struggle, the Prince must put an end to the Vizier once and for all, and bring peace back to his native Babylon. But it's not going to be easy, especially because he's been infected with the Sands himself, but more on that in a bit...

Bonus info

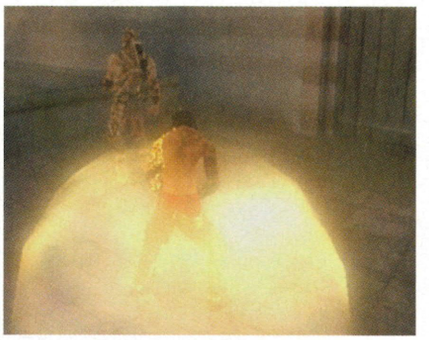
YOU LOOK RADIANT!
Watch how the Prince gradually changes throughout the game. It's very subtle and takes time, but gradually the infection in his arm will spread throughout his body and across his back. Nurse! The Germolene!

SMASHING CHEST
Remember, Sand can be found in many items, such as barrels and caskets. Use the Dark Prince's daggertail to smash them open and get the life-giving Sand inside.

GEE-UP
Horse-riding is deadly, especially if you're using your chariot to push an enemy off the road. Try and ram bad guy's chariots into walls to smash them to matchwood.

HANDY SANDY It does so much more than just reverse time. Observe!

↑ **Eye of the Storm**: If a door is shutting or you're overwhelmed with enemies, slow down time to give you the edge over the field.



↑ **Winds of Sand:** A blast that sends your nearest enemies falling to their feet. It won't kill, but it might stun them long enough for you to finish the job.

↑ **Sand Storm:** This sends out shockwaves of sand and is a more powerful version of Winds of Sand. It knocks all enemies off their feet.

↓ **Just how do you kill a giant weed monster armed with nothing but a small butter knife?**

Official Xbox Magazine GAME OF THE MONTH

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

"The Dark Prince is eating up the Prince's personality by randomly possessing him throughout the game"

By returning to the beginning of the Prince's story, and having him retain all the strength and power he developed during the second game, the third and final chapter is a perfect blend of the best of both games. The combat is there from *Warrior Within* and runs like a dark vein throughout, while the Sands of Time are back too, offering more time-meddling puzzling and head-scratching. This is the best of both worlds, and then some. New to *The Two Thrones* are the Prince's vastly improved killer moves. If the keywords for the previous games were 'puzzles' and 'combat' respectively, this time it's most definitely 'stealth'.

Because Babylon is occupied by a mysterious army, the Prince is effectively hunted at every turn and must use caution just as much as a sharp blade. Before getting into a ferocious swordfight with half a dozen or more enemies, there is always an option for stealth that presents itself. By looking around the environment there are always ropes or ledges you can hang from in order to spring a surprise attack. By doing so, and by keeping quiet, you can, if you time it correctly, wipe out entire legions of enemy warriors without alerting their comrades in arms to your presence.

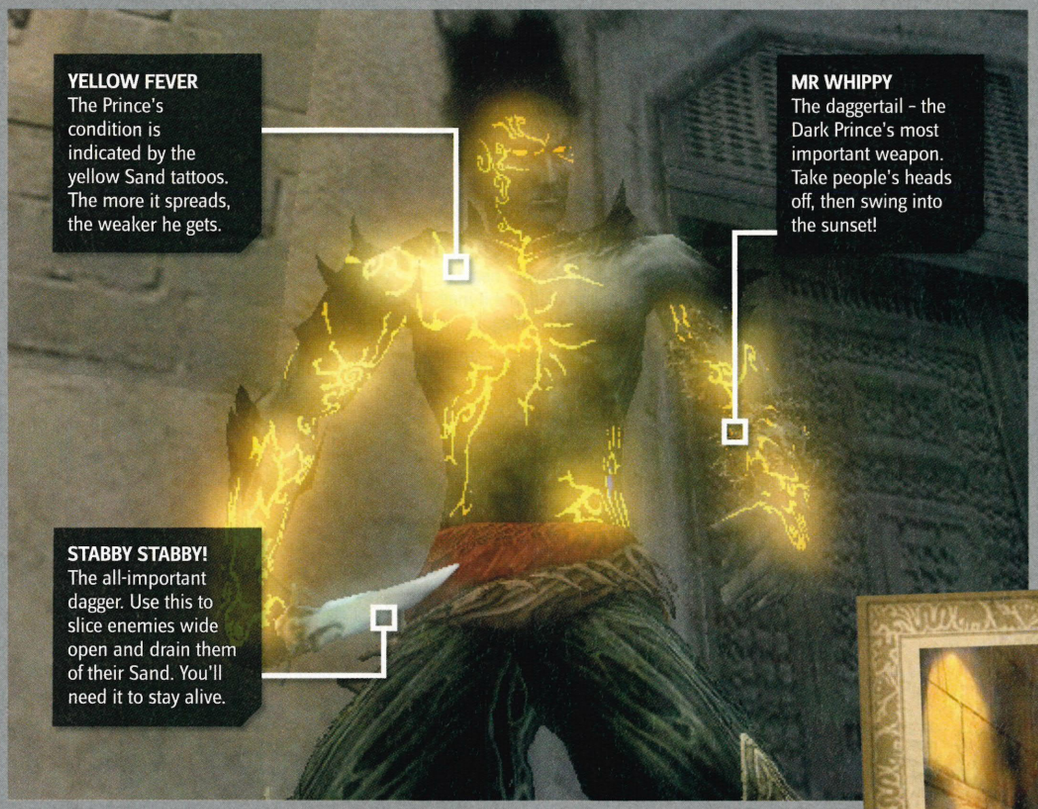
A stealth kill can only be carried out successfully if you strike when your dagger flashes blue. Time it right and you make the kill, but get it wrong and you'll have to fight your way out with nothing but a few tanks of time-reversing sand and acrobatics to save your skin. Neither option, be it stealth or full-frontal attack, is easy, but the choice to do either adds real depth to much of the game. Naturally, the harder the enemy the more times you have to perfectly time your strikes with the flashing of the blade, but pull off a stealth kill on a 30-stone, scimitar-wielding, fire-breathing cow-man and it's deeply satisfying. However, despite the new combat options, nothing quite makes *The Two Thrones* rock quite as much as The Dark Prince, a flame-haired lunatic with a penchant for choking people with his barbed-wire whip.

The Dark Prince is the badass alter-ego of the regular Prince, a character born of the Sands of Time, and one who is slowly eating up the Prince's personality by randomly turning up throughout the game and inhabiting his body. His arm, infused with a spiked chain known as the daggertail, is a stunning weapon, part whip, part portable guillotine. He can swing from distances too far for the Prince to reach, and lower the daggertail silently down over an enemy's head like a noose before yanking it upwards with a wet wrenching noise. You can imagine the mess that makes. »

FARAH WAY: THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE COMPLETED WARRIOR WITHIN WITH THE GOOD ENDING WILL KNOW THAT FARAH WAS IN THAT GAME TOO. DON'T BELIEVE US? GO BACK AND PLAY IT, SHE'S IN THERE!

FRESH PRINCE OF BABYLON

Just what is the Dark Prince made of? Know him well!



↑ Needless to say, he's not your friend.

↑ Just how do you get all the way up there?

↑ This lady is a bit of a nightmare. Don't worry though, you turn into the Dark Prince and finish her off.

»» The new Prince's abilities and the daggertail, have enabled the developers to construct bigger, more tricky environments that push this final instalment to the very limit. Gone is the claustrophobic feel of *Warrior Within*, replaced by a grander, more deadly *Sands of Time*-style environment, one that unfurls every step of the way with increasingly spectacular gameplay.

All the moves from the earlier games remain, but in addition to these you can now jump diagonally, or swing vast, incredible distances with the daggertail. By learning how to use this weapon effectively, you can perform graceful, but staggeringly deadly moves with it. If you see an enemy on a balcony far below, rather than slowly making your way down via a series of ledges and poles, you can perform a single manoeuvre and have his head on the floor before his body knows it's missing. First you run along a wall, then tear down a long tapestry with the daggertail. Then, as you rip through the fabric you dive across a chasm, swing on a pole, then bounce off a wall and latch the daggertail round his neck, ripping his head clean off. If, as is often the case at the beginning, you screw up, you can either reverse time and try again or just whip him into submission. If he calls for help (which every enemy now does, so beware) the daggertail can keep throngs of them at bay at once, lashing anyone who comes near with infected razor edges. Between Farah, Kaileena and the Dark Prince, as a secondary character old flame-head wins hands down every time.

But, for all the Dark Prince's strengths, he is still very much a creature of sand, which means if he doesn't keep feeding on the stuff, he'll eventually just collapse and die. Being a slave to time adds a further new element to *The Two Thrones*, for while the Dark Prince has no trouble slicing through enemies, the clock is his deadliest foe. He has to constantly move fast to stay alive, whereas the true Prince can take things more deliberately and thoughtfully. By combining these two very distinct styles of gameplay, there is never a moment, not a single second in the game where you're left wanting for something to keep you entertained. And as if »»

Bonus info

BLINDING TIME
Learn to time your stealth strikes well. If you screw up an attack and don't want to fight, just rewind time.

YOU'VE HUNTED HIM
LIKE A DOG.

FIRED AN ASSAULT
RIFLE INTO HIS CHEST.

OUTRUN HIM.

OUTGUNNED HIM.

SENT HIM SCREAMING
INTO THE DARKNESS.

LEFT HIM FOR DEAD.

AND HE STILL BUYS
YOU LAGER & CRISPS.

XBOX LIVE

Beat your mates online. Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory.™

Play Online Now

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↑ He won't know what's hit him. Attack from above by jumping from a ledge and most enemies will gladly die for you!

Bonus info

SCUFF MARKS
Unsure where to go or what to climb? Look for markings on walls. Sometimes a previous scuff mark or dagger hole will enable you to get a clue as to where you should be heading.

DOWN BOY!
You don't have to kill every enemy you see. If you don't want to stay and fight the demon dogs, you don't have to. Just run!

↑ A swish upper-cut makes short work of some enemies. Just don't let them hit you, though.

Sand Monster's Ball

Three of the game's nastiest beasts. Yikes!

1

↑ **Demon Dogs:** These mutts feed on the Sands – be careful or they'll drink you dry. Knock them off their feet and stab them with the dagger!

2

↑ **Archers:** Take these out as a priority. They attack swiftly and from afar, so get in close with your dagger. Don't let them get off any arrows!

3

↑ **Invisible Sand Demons:** Completely invisible and can only be seen once you've landed a blow. If you stand still you can just see a faint outline. Once visible they no longer pose a threat.

» to make doubly sure, there is a rich, dastardly plot woven throughout to keep you guessing. Nothing is what it seems, and as the Prince slowly realises this, it gradually becomes clear just how well planned the whole trilogy actually is.

Throughout the game, as the Prince moves from the slums below the city, through to the upper realms of the hanging gardens and royal courts, you'll occasionally be thrown into situations that require more than an ability to swing around like a turban-wearing monkey. New chariot race modes have been introduced, and while these are used sparingly, they make a great break from all the fighting with your enemies and flirting with Farah. They're fairly simple and involve little more than steering wild horses through the narrow streets of Babylon, but the races are a great mechanic for moving the action between locations in the game, and they illustrate how big this final episode actually is. There's no retreading old ground like in *Warrior Within* or exploring for secret rooms and treasures – this is an out-and-out hunt, a final push by the Prince to mend all the past wrongs.

As Babylon expands you're often torn between objectives. The Dark Prince yabbers on inside your head about seeking revenge (he can be quite funny when he's not eviscerating people), while the good Prince sees his subjects in danger and wants to rescue them. This often involves a complex set of puzzle-solving, and all credit must be given to the team for once again producing the kind of devious conundrums that sets the *Prince of Persia* series apart from its closest rivals. One puzzle, set in a giant masonry workshop, sees the Prince trying to manoeuvre a colossal statue through the interior of the workshop and out the other end. It's like pushing a 50-ton climbing frame through a maze, and is incredible stuff. You will pull your hair out at the roots, we almost guarantee it. But, sadly, other things also have the same effect...

A lot of the niggles of the first two games have been addressed in *The Two Thrones*. The tone is right, the feel is superb, the camera is faultless and the gameplay has been taken up another notch, yet we still have a few quibbles. Some checkpoints are infuriating. At some points you are expected to navigate through a labyrinth of traps only to face a pack of bastard-hard demon dogs at the other end. The battle may take three, four, or even five goes before you've learned how to defeat the fiery mutts, but every time you're sent back to the beginning of the puzzle section that precedes it, and forced to do it all again. We found ourselves literally screaming in frustration. A game should only make you repeat that which you can't beat, not ten minutes of tasks you could do blindfolded that you've already done a hundred times over.

Another thing is the random distances the Princes can both jump. For the sake of getting a Prince from A to B, sometimes liberties are taken in

↑ Using the daggertail like a whip can keep many enemies at bay. Then just lash out at the weakest and he'll crumble to sand.

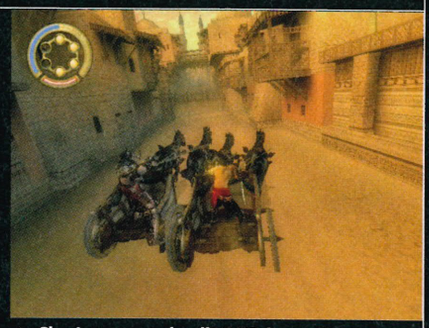
↑ Stealth kills allow the Prince to avoid confrontation. This keeps health up and the guard's alertness down.

the distances they can or cannot jump. What may have been a deadly distance earlier in the game becomes jumpable. We spent an age, with no time-reversing Sand, wondering how to get to the only visible ledge. Turns out that because it's the only way to go, the Prince can somehow manage it.

Technically, this is the best of the three games in the series. Besides the new game mechanics, superb story and a great secondary character in the Dark Prince, everything under the bonnet purrs beautifully. The eye can sometimes see right to the horizon, observing the burning buildings in Babylon, while other less obvious but nonetheless impressive touches, such as red embers rising in the breeze, give *The Two Thrones* a classy feel. The voice-acting is fantastic (the Prince is still American though) and the environment design, while lacking the whirring buzz-saws and spring-loaded traps of the previous games, is just as fiendish to navigate. As we say, because of the new character abilities, levels can become open-expanses of traps.

For a series that has consistently proven itself at least three steps ahead of the competition, it was a daring move to give stealth a pop, but *The Two Thrones* handles it so well, and lends it such a fresh perspective it'll feel like you've never played a stealth game before. In fact, everything in *The Two Thrones* is crafted with such brilliance that you'll almost mourn the fact that it's the last of the trilogy.

It's a cracking, clever, and crafty title, packed with surprises and brimming with invention, and a game that makes sure that, once you've completed it, you'll want to go right back to *The Sands of Time* and play it all over again, if only to spot all those clues that were there all along right from the start. We've said enough – go buy it already!



↑ Chariot races – deadly AND horsey!

↑ The Dark Prince does some strangling.

↑ Ride this chap through the streets! Swishy.

↑ Suck up the spilled Sand to refill your tanks.

The Summary

PRINCE OF PERSIA THE TWO THRONES THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- ✔ Picking out the best of the previous games, *The Two Thrones* strikes a perfect balance between combat and puzzle solving.
- ✔ The plot! How devious, how tricksy, how did we not see it coming? We've said too much, but trust us, the pay-off is brilliant.
- ✔ The Dark Prince. How cool? Okay, his hair makes him look like a satanic Gary Rhodes, but he rules whenever he's around.
- ✔ It's huge. The new 'outdoors' feel, and seeing Babylon in all its glory, give a real weight and seriousness to the game. Sweet.
- ✘ Checkpoint positioning can be annoying. We don't want to go back and re-do a stupid block-pushing puzzle, we just want to fight.

The Verdict

The best possible send-off for the series, and easily the best *Prince of Persia* game to date. A classy little number.

9.2//10

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming – Issue 49
COMING SOON: Masterclass – Issue 51

MORE PERSIA: DON'T WORRY, THIS ISN'T REALLY THE LAST PRINCE OF PERSIA GAME. A NEW TRILOGY BEGINS ON XBOX 360 SOON, WITH THE FIRST GAME, *POP: ASSASSINS*, DUE OUT IN 2006!

↑ He knows kung fu, karate, ninjitsu, aikido and origami. Paper plane style!

The Matrix: Path of Neo

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

Re-enter the Matrix - this time as Neo himself!

Words: Barry Keating

Dev: Shiny	Pub: Atari
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
www.atari.com/thematrixpathofneo	

DESPITE THE fact 2003's *Enter the Matrix* (Issue 17, 8.5) has since been largely sneered at, it still managed to shift over three million copies, something not to be sniffed at. Yet Shiny and Atari are all too aware of the fact that the game played and looked like it was rushed out just so its release could coincide with the equally disappointing *The Matrix Reloaded*.

The most damning aspect of *Enter the Matrix* was a simple one - you couldn't play as the film's hero, Neo. Now, two years later, Shiny has returned to the world of gravity-defying combat and bullet ballet with *Path of Neo*. From the outset it becomes apparent that someone's attempting to exorcise demons from the past. Presentation is top-notch, menu screens are inventive, and the sound will make your ears bleed. The key cast from the film handed over their likenesses, so there's no fear of having an entirely new *Matrix* gang comprised of complete unknowns parading around either.

Narrating the story by splicing scenes from the film, you're presented with the option of taking either the blue pill or the red pill at the game's outset. Oddly enough, you can opt to take the blue pill, whereby Neo wakes up at his computer and the game simply ends. Certainly the shortest gaming experience we've ever had.

Alternatively, choosing the red pill catapults you into the game and the first mission, a dream sequence played out in Neo's head whereby you brawl against wave after wave of enemies in order to gauge your difficulty level and showcase some of the moves Neo will eventually be able to execute.

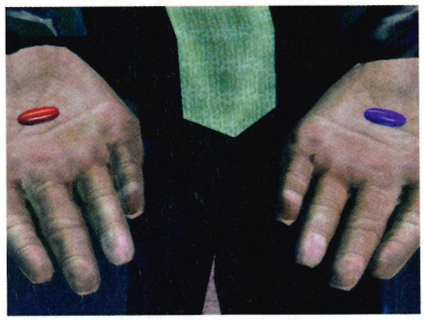
Bonus info

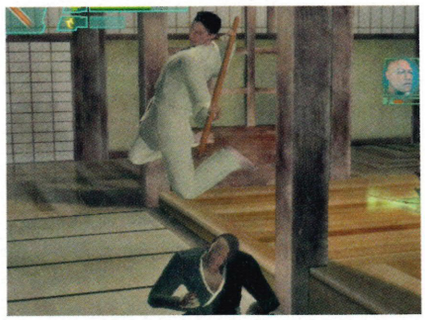
ENTER THE DRAGON

The Wachowskis have managed to cram every single movie influence imaginable into this. Our personal favourite is a nod to *Enter The Dragon* - a training mission set in an underground base mirroring that of Han's drug lair in Bruce's film.

↑ Shades of *The Animatrix*. Nice dressing gown!

↑ Give Agent Smith a proper pasting.

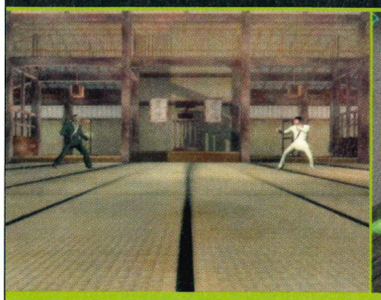

↑ Take the red jellybean. They taste nicer.


↑ Combat is great, but takes time to get used to.

↑ Combat feels satisfyingly weighty.

↑ Punching and shooting? Oh yes!

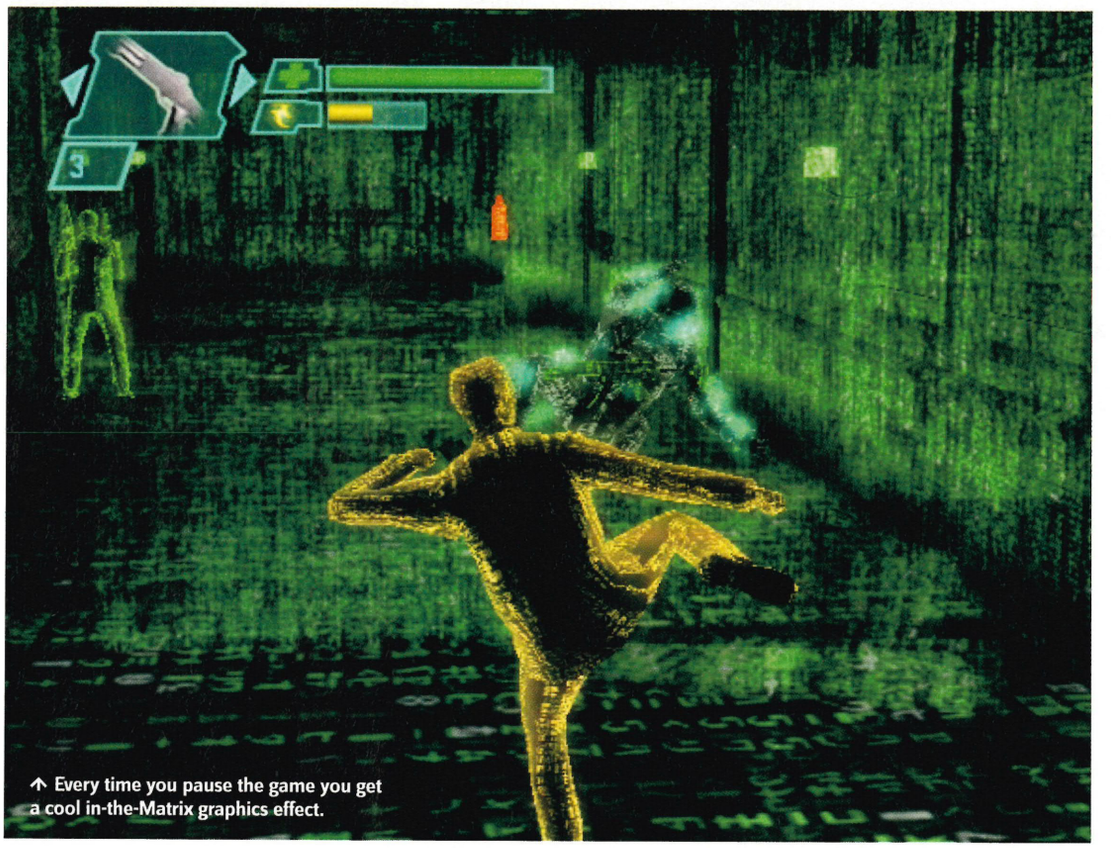
KNOW KUNG FU! Hit the gym, unless you want to end up dead



Slip into something more comfortable, preferably kung fu pyjamas, and square off against the shiny-domed Morpheus to hone your fighting skills. Throwing him around the room provides a sickly element of sheer bliss.

Looks like someone's been watching rather a lot of *Big Trouble in Little China* and playing some *Project Zero* before designing this weapons training mission. Just watch as Neo performs deft impaling moves with his sword.

The harder you brawl, the more moves you learn to execute and the more your Focus develops over the course of the game. This enables you to chain super-combos capable of flooring waves of enemies.



↑ Every time you pause the game you get a cool in-the-Matrix graphics effect.

↑ Smash walls like they were made of paper!

↑ We remember this fight scene from the film.

↑ It's better than *Matrix Reloaded*, anyroads.

↑ It's an almost balletic display of violence.

From here the action shifts to the office sequence from the first film, with Agents in pursuit of a sneaking Neo. It's stealthy, but without too much emphasis on remaining invisible all the time. You can easily make a break for doors here, unlike say, *Splinter Cell*, where you'd be spotted straight away.

Once the real fighting kicks in, things start to get really juicy. That said, be prepared to persevere with the sheer level of combat techniques and initially confusing button combinations required to pull off some of the flashier moves. Scrapping with multiple enemies involves lots of flicking the Left stick towards an enemy followed by endless series of button hits. Get the hang of that and you can start adding Focus power by way of the Left trigger to ramp up the ferocity of the attacks and allow for some very cool moves indeed. Best of these is the one where Neo runs up an enemy and follows through with a wrecking ball kick to the head. However, we did find moments where the buttons we hit seemed to have no bearing on the moves happening on screen.

What works in the game's favour are the meaty RPG elements - the further you progress, the more moves and abilities you unlock for future battles with the hard-as-nails Agents. The temptation to just button-bash is removed, and you're encouraged to hone your skills to the point where enemies don't even get a chance to raise a fist. It's all been painstakingly planned down to the last detail to ensure the best possible Matrix experience to date.

One frustrating aspect is the camera. Fights can get furious, especially if you're surrounded by a number of enemies, and it's not unknown for the camera to jar, leaving you open to an attack from an off-screen enemy. But it does the job most of the time. If anything we're more disappointed about the slightly basic character models.

But anyway. Fans of the first game won't believe the treat Atari's dished up, and anyone looking for a hugely impressive brawler fused with a great story and lots of guns will find everything they want. If nothing else, this is a vast improvement - it undoubtedly is The One.

The Summary

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

✔	While it's basically retreading the same storylines as the three films, the script has been tweaked, with a few surprises for fans
✔	It features one of the most amazing fight engines around. Really does take beat-'em-ups to a whole new level
✔	We were gutted that you couldn't play as Neo in the last one. So taking control of him this time round is fantastic
✘	The controls can be annoyingly difficult to use because of the ridiculous button commands required for certain moves
✘	The camera sometimes freaks out during fights, leaving you very vulnerable to attack. It's frustrating, but doesn't ruin things entirely

The Verdict

The Matrix game we should have had back in 2003, and probably the most in-depth use of a film licence in years.

8.5//10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 44, Preview - Issue 48, Gallery - Issue 49
COMING SOON: Tips - Issue 51

AWESOME MOVE: OUR FAVOURITE BIT? DISARM AN ENEMY, LEAP OVER THEM AND SHOOT THEM IN THE FACE, ALL IN SLO-MO. NOW THAT'S THE MATRIX WE KNOW AND LOVE!

↑ Boss versus the double-barrelled shotgun - you win EVERY time!

Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil

Weapons so powerful, Hell will be scared of you!

Words: Gavin Ogden

Dev: Nerve	Pub: Activision
Players: 1; S.Link 2-4	Live: 2-4 players
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
http://www.idsoftware.com	

AFTER *DOOM 3* (Issue 40, 8.5) id Software quickly farmed out the expansion pack to Nerve Software. By its very definition an expansion pack 'expands' on the original episode rather than being a full-blown sequel, and that's exactly what *Resurrection of Evil* does. If you took the Pepsi challenge between this and *Doom 3*, you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference. Only a few new weapons and enemies give it away.

It's as dark, tense and frighteningly atmospheric as *Doom 3*, and almost exactly the same - the dark sections of corridors of the original are replaced by dark caverns and sewers. You do get to walk along the surface of Mars, but again these sections are too short to really break up the creeping corridor action. Visually, the mighty *Doom* engine still packs a punch unlike any other shooter.

The story sends you back to the Mars research facility to find out what went wrong. While you play a different character, his adventure into the bowels of Hell is exactly the same as his predecessor's. We would have loved to see more of the place, but as it is you play about half the game skulking around the deserted base before stumbling back into Hell for the big finale - again, JUST LIKE THE ORIGINAL.

But it's not all the same (well, it is mostly), as new weapons and enemies come as standard. Of the few new weapons available, the grav gun has the biggest effect on the gameplay. Ripping the idea clean out of *Half-Life 2* (Issue 49, 9.8), it lets you pick up objects and fire them in any direction. You can even lock and hold enemy fireballs and shoot them straight back to where they came from. If you can't reach that ammo or health pick-up, you can use the grav gun to suck it right into your inventory.

Thanks to the game's linear corridor style it's easy to grab fireballs and shoot them back, as enemies often spawn right in front of you. You also get the grav gun right at the start of the game, and any competent FPS fan will be walking through it with ease, saving ammo for later use.

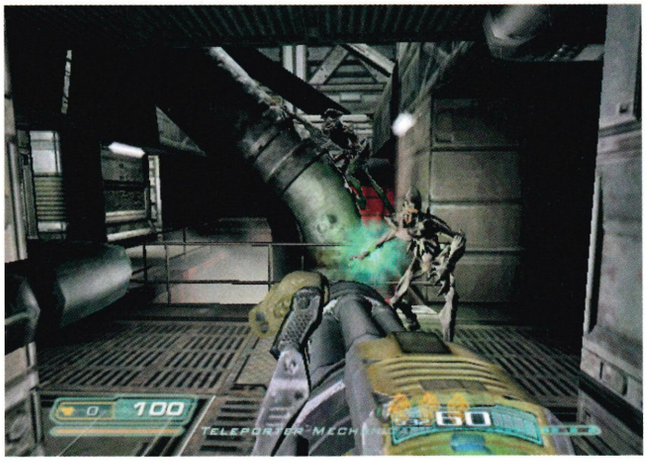
Cranking up the carnage factor even higher is the return of the fabled double-barrelled shotgun from *Doom 2*. In our opinion, while it's a riot to use, it makes chunky mincemeat of anything stood in front of it, thus making the game on Normal far too easy. Because it's so powerful, the game doesn't seem half as scary any more. Even a small child walking through Hell with it wouldn't be scared.

Best enjoyed in short doses with the lights off, *Resurrection of Evil* is more of the same. A little too similar to *Doom 3*, but then we had no problems gunning our way through another *Doom* adventure - especially for a cool 20 notes.

Bonus info

CREDITS DUE

Scattered around the corridors of Hell are arcade machines that basically act as little mini-games. While they serve no purpose to the game at all, they do take your mind off the horrible sights and sounds of Hell for a minute or two.


↑ The chain gun sounds as phat as it looks.

↑ It's more powerful than even the BFG!

↑ Look! A rare glimpse of outside.

↑ Prepare for spawning enemies with rockets!

↑ The artifact gives you the power to slow time.

The Summary

DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

✔	Every bit as atmospheric, gorgeous and heart-pounding as the original. Not many games today can match that.
✘	Too similar to the first one. Casual fans won't tell the difference and hardcore players will blast through it in no time.
✘	The grav gun and sawn-off shotgun are so powerful you lose the sense of terror, because you can kill anything in a few shots.
✔	New Xbox Live maps have been included to extend the life of mega online carnage.
✔	Enormous, ground-shaking boss battles! You'll have to think about your tactics before offing Hell's finest.

The Verdict

Another quality romp through the bowels of Hell - just far too similar to the original in every aspect. Still worth £20, though!

8.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: News - Issue 45, Q&A - Issue 48
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats, Live Review - Issue 50

You are Kameo. Morph into 10 different formidable elemental warriors at will. Explore enchanted lands. Then crush, clobber, char, freeze, elude, ensnare, and destroy the evil boss Thorn and his minions. Only you have the power to restore peace to the Kingdom. Make that, several powers... xbox.com

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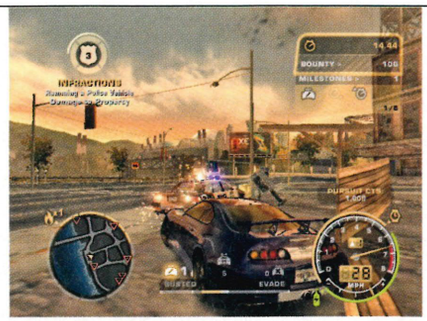
XBOX 360™

↑ It's another Saturday night out on Southend seafront.



↑ Ram cops first, mourn their widows later.

↑ Rockport's roads are suspiciously empty.

Need For Speed Most Wanted

Official XBOX Magazine ON THE DISC

Welcome to Rockport, where licence points mean prizes

Words: Mark Robins

Dev: EA	Pub: EA
Players: 1-2	Live: 2-4 players
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
www.eagames.co.uk	

AFTER TWO distinctly average *Need For Speed* games, we'd pretty much given up all hope for the venerable street-racing series. However, the good news is that *NFS Most Wanted* is a much, MUCH better game. The basic premise might be the same as *NFS Underground 2* (Issue 37, 7.5) - race heavily modified cars, illegally, through the free-roaming city of Rockport for cash and respect - but *Most Wanted* does it with a real sense of style. And by that we mean law enforcement-style.

Not only is it enough to beat your rivals, now you have to do it while avoiding the rozzers as well, and it's this twist in the gameplay that turns out to be the best thing to happen to the *Need For Speed* series since, ooh, police chases were last a big feature of the game (*NFS: Hot Pursuit 2* (Issue 09, 7.2) to be exact). *Need For Speed Most Wanted*'s police chases are so good, that you'll want to get caught speeding just to hand Old Bill his arse on a plate yet again.

It's this sense of excitement more than anything that elevates *Most Wanted* over its forerunners. Here is a game that hits the ground with all four wheels running. A game that thrusts you into a world of illicit street-racing and cop baiting. A world where, just like in dodgy full-motion videogames of ten years ago, real people act against computer-generated backgrounds. Yes, it's tacky, yes, it's cheesy, and yes, you really do have to endure an endless stream of third-rate actors talking directly to camera, but somehow it works. And for a while it's great, racing street punks and pissing off traffic cops. Properly great, even.

But then you get busted, and it's back to square one with just enough cash to buy a low-end hatchback. It's here that *Most Wanted* starts straying back into banal *Underground* territory. The idea is to build up 'Cred' (what else?) through races and run-ins with the law. The more Cred you have, the higher up the 'Blacklist' of notorious drivers you can challenge, until eventually you reach the top again. Which is fine - it's just the getting there that's the chore. Put simply, it's the same old races from *Need For Speed: Underground* all over again: generic and predictable. And while Rockport might look pretty enough, we can't help but notice how suspiciously empty all its roads are (despite the switch to daytime racing), or how similar it all looks. *Most Wanted* might be a vast improvement technically, but this is still nowhere near as impressive as *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* (Issue 42, 8.2) or *Burnout: Revenge* (Issue 47, 8.9).

Until the police start chasing you again that is, at which point everything speeds up, the music switches back into BIG SCREEN ACTION mode, and everything feels right with the world again. Even if the cop chases do start to repeat themselves after a while, there's nothing quite as satisfying as slamming a siren-topped sports car into a big, concrete barrier.

But what about the bit where you strip down your boxy, sales rep Lexus and kit it out with a bad-

Bonus info

THE HEAT IS ON

The more you wind up the cops by being naughty and generally resisting arrest, the more your 'Heat' meter increases. The more Heat you pack, the more aggressive the police start chasing you. When your Heat is too high it's time to lay low in a safe house for a bit. Alternatively, fool the fat pigs with a quick paintjob.

NFS: THE MOVIE Most Wanted's ridiculously cheesy video sequences keep the story 'rocking'...

↑ Drag racing is back, and so are the gormless morons who love to drive straight out in front of you.

Bonus info

WELL TUNED
It's possible to manually fine tune several aspects of your car such as brakes, steering, handling and ride height for the ultimate ride height. You can even set up three different performance settings that can be switched between on the fly so you'll always have the perfect setup, no matter the situation.

boy spoiler, pearlescent paint and several litres of highly volatile liquid nitrous oxide? Naturally, this being *Need For Speed*, car-modding is still an important consideration. There are hundreds of official performance add-ons, body kits and decals, it's just that now they're not nearly as integral to the plot as they were in *Underground 2*.

Whereas *Underground 2* force-fed you its car-modding-is-cool philosophy at every opportunity, *Most Wanted* simply lets you get on with it as and when you have the time/cash/inclination to spare. You'll still need to upgrade your car if you hope to remain competitive, but as an aside to the racing it's less confusing, more approachable and generally better all round – even if it does use a strangely counter-intuitive checkout system for making purchases (items have to be put in a basket first, and then bought together in what appears to be some kind of weird homage to amazon.co.uk).

It's not just modification parts there are plenty of either – in terms of racing content *Need For Speed Most Wanted* provides a seriously meaty challenge. The districts of Rockport may not be all that big on their own, but joined together they provide plenty of races and cop chases to beat on the way to climbing the Blacklist. And even then, there are still some 70-odd single-player challenges to tackle outside of Career mode, plus Live multiplayer for four racers at a time.

Despite their obvious shortcomings, both *Need For Speed Underground* 1 and 2 still managed to sell like bags of crisps at a fat camp. Even now, we're still at a loss to explain why. But when you consider the improved gameplay, better quality graphics and suitably exciting police chase mechanic of *Need For Speed Most Wanted*, it's clear EA has finally produced a title deserving of its undoubted success. We're not claiming *Most Wanted* to be the best urban racer money can buy, but at least your get your 40 quid's worth out of this one, instead of some mediocre old night-time racer with an over-hyped modification element welded onto the bonnet. Good effort.

↑ That'll be the button marked 'Nitro', then.

↑ Clip the cops for bonus credibility. Bitchin'.

↑ More crap decals than a model plane kit.

↑ Cops love hanging out at the 'donut' shop.

↑ "County jurisdiction my arse, copper!"

The Summary

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- ✔ The police chases are every bit as exciting and as intense as we were hoping for. Outrunning the fuzz is THE reason for owning this.
- ✔ A range of cars, visual modifications and licensed upgrades every bit as comprehensive as the last games. Tweak to your heart's content.
- ✔ Not a huge or particularly varied world to drive round, but it's attractive and well-designed and there are plenty of challenges.
- ✘ The whole street 'cred' thing has worn very thin indeed and the videos are super-cheesy, but the wicked tone suits the game well.
- ✘ Like the *Underground* games, *Most Wanted* still feels too workmanlike. Not as fast *as MC3* or as exciting as *Burnout*.

The Verdict

NFSU during the day with great cop chases. Good fun, but still not the most adrenaline pumping racer available.

8.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview – Issue 47
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats – Issue 51

HOT COFFEE: JUST LIKE IN REAL LIFE, IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR COPS TO TAUNT IN NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED, TRY DRIVING PAST ALL THE 'DONUT' STORES. YOU'RE VIRTUALLY GUARANTEED SOME HOT CHASE ACTION

Ski Racing 2006

Skiing! Racing! 2006! What a brilliantly named game

Dev: Coldwood	Pub: JoWood
Players: 1-2 Split	Live: 2-4 Players
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
www.skiracing2006.com	

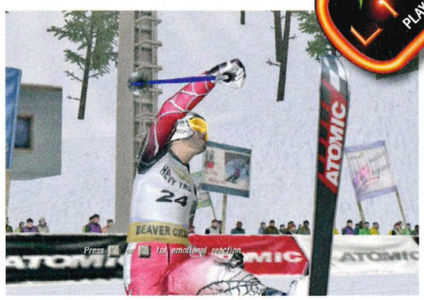
Words: Ben Lawrence

OCCASIONALLY A game comes along with so few pretensions, its honesty makes up for its weaknesses. It's like the big greasy northern pies that Gav has for his lunch every day, smelly grey meat dripping in fat and gravy. Salt of the earth, and all that.

With various ski-themed races to undertake, with downhill, cross-country, and slalom modes, this is as cowbell-tastic as you can find. There's not a lot else going on - no fancy MTV soundtrack, no snowboarders. Just good old *Ski Sunday* action.

Gameplay, though straightforward, does have its diversions. You can power your chap up, giving him the chance to go faster (and he needs to when you see how slow he goes during the first stages), and you can deck him out in different togs and skis. Beyond that, it's all downhill. Handling is, in keeping with the salt-of-the-earth theme, Yorkshire pudding-like. It can get a tad repetitive the 20th time you bomb down a slope, and that's not just because all the slopes look the same.

We can't see this appealing to many, but for the niche it was designed for, it works well. Oh, and a final word of warning - try not to crash. It may sound obvious, but those ragdoll physics are lame. Think Stephen Hawking falling off a slide.



↑ Win or lose, your man waves his arms. Yeah!

↑ Smash into those red barriers and some awful ragdoll kicks in.

↑ Slalom about in the snow. Isn't it a beauty to behold? Lovely.

↑ Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

The Verdict

Robust, sturdy and a little bit 'beige'. And though it may well be Live, don't count on ever finding anyone to play against.

6.0//10

Codename: Kids Next Door

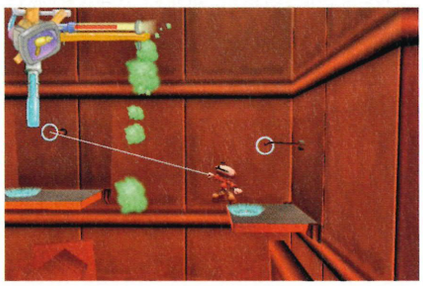
What's with all the bog roll?

Dev: High Voltage	Pub: Take 2
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £30
www.circle-studio.com	

Words: Ben Lawrence

COME ON THEN, we dare you to have a pop-shot at precisely how *Codename: Kids Next Door* plays. Do you, for instance, have to collect gems? Do you do jumping from platforms? Does it star cute, strangely deformed children being a bit cool with gloop guns and laser weapons? Yes, yes, and yes it does.

This is your average kiddy-pleasing bound around the mundane, with purple dragons and bandicoots replaced with Cartoon Network's *Kids Next Door* squad. It's perfect for little tykes eager to cut their teeth on videogames, and is so entirely inoffensive they'll probably lap it up. After all, it's solidly crafted and simple enough for them to zoom through the bold levels, and with a staggering amount of rainbow monkeys and milkshakes to collect, there's no guessing the amount of time it'll take to 'collect 'em all'. Anyone over the age of seven will find themselves at a complete loss, though, especially when much of the game seems to be about thwarting the dastardly deeds of bad guys such as Gramma Stuffum, The Toiletnator, and erm, Stickybeard. Don't ask. You don't want to know.



↑ Swing about like the Prince of Persia!

↑ This is the moment you fight a block dressed as a toilet. Honestly.

↑ Fire blobs at other blobs then collect the blobs they leave behind.

↑ It's all about jumping and collecting stuff.

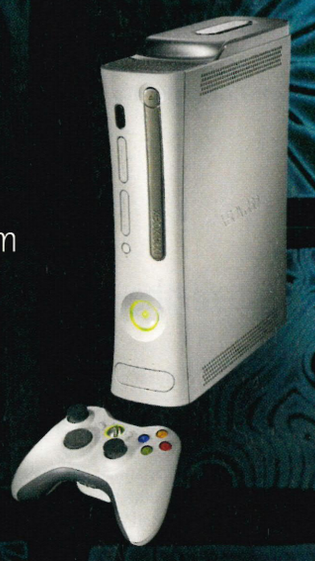
The Verdict

Tiny dinkers wanting to get their hands on an Xbox pad could do far worse. Nonsense, but kiddy-pleasing nonsense.

6.4//10

SHE CAN MEET THE CHALLENGE, CAN YOU?

CRACK JOANNA DARK'S CODE TO WIN THE ULTIMATE HIGH DEFINITION GAMING SYSTEM



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XBOX 360™

↑ Check out that flying bad guy. Know what the object is over his head? That's right – it's his leg!

Gun

The Hawk-men do old-time GTA in this best-of-the-west corker

Words: Ben Lawrence

Dev: Neversoft	Pub: Activision
Players: 1	Live: Aware
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
http://www.gunthegame.com	

WELL LOOKY what we have here! If it ain't the rootinest, tootinest piece of Wild West gaming we ever did see. 'But it's just a *Grand Theft Auto* rip-off on a horse', we hear you holler. Not so! Sure, it's a free-roaming, open-ended *GTA*-style game, but it's far more than a mere rip-off. In fact, we'd bet your bottom dollar the folk at Rockstar wish they'd come up with this themselves, rather than having a developer who usually only makes games about an old man on a skateboard do it first.

Gun is the story of Colton White (that's you), a man mysteriously thrown into the middle of a power struggle between the oppressed Apache and the evil Thomas McGruder, who has his one good eye on a sacred treasure scattered throughout the land. Through a combination of bounty hunting, sharp shooting, gold mining, and plain old murder, you must build a reputation and earn enough experience to go after the enigmatic McGruder.

The game is crammed with neat ideas, and it's as nasty, authentic, and entertaining as it can be. Whether you become the next Wyatt Earp or the next wanted poster celebrity depends on how well you treat injuns and whether you like walking into towns and shooting your gun off. Start trouble, and the locals will become hostile and force you out, making it harder to scratch together a living. Of course, you can always resort to mining gold or just robbing people. Do the right thing, though, and you can take on missions, clean up the streets, or help round up cattle rustlers. Whether it's classic wagon-train skirmishes with marauding injuns, sharp-shooting the hangman's rope in a daring rescue attempt, or getting drunk, playing cards and gambling on loose women, every spaghetti western cliché has been lovingly stolen, dunked in a barrel of blood and brains, then recreated on Xbox.

For *Gun* is exceedingly, exquisitely violent too. Take a headshot and you'll get to see the bullet enter and exit the skull, along with bits of scalp and soft brain matter. These scenes of gore are rationed out only for special kills, though, courtesy of the Quick Draw feature. Handy for when you're in a tight spot, it slows the action down, letting you pop enemy heads one at a time.

The weapons are also cracking – from six-shooters to buffalo-felling rifles and dynamite, there's so much to play with you'd be tempted to spend the whole game killing people for cash. There are also mounted cannons and machine guns scattered across the frontier, with which to take out hordes of attacking bandits or angry bears. Just because you're between missions doesn't make the Wild West a less dangerous place to be.

Of course, if you're making Old West *GTA*, you need to get the transport right. Neversoft bought real horses to study their movements, and it shows – *Gun* has the best in-game gee-gee handling we've ever seen in a game, and that includes *Barbie's Horse Adventures.* They move and respond so well, their tendency to stink and attract arse-flies is forgiven. You can even trample enemies to death under your hooves if you want to save bullets.

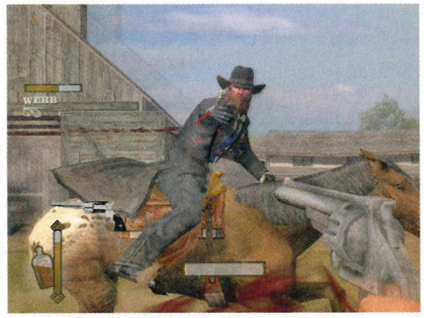
Gun is such a rich, panoramic story, chock-full of sneering bad guys, shoot-outs, can-can girls and jailbreaks, you'll wonder why no one ever thought of it before. Pour them Neversoft brothers a few jars of moonshine – the boys done good!

Bonus info

HEAD POPPER
The more you use your Quick Draw, the faster the Quick Draw meter drops. To top it up mid-battle, simply shoot a few varmints in the head. Headshots replenish the bar and allows you to carry on your slow-motion Sam Peckinpah-style rampage. Sweet!

↑ Beware of men on horseback – not nice!

↑ Protect the wagon train! It's bastard hard, too.



↑ Quick Draw mode lets you zero in for kills.

↑ Riding on horseback is great fun.

The Summary

GUN THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

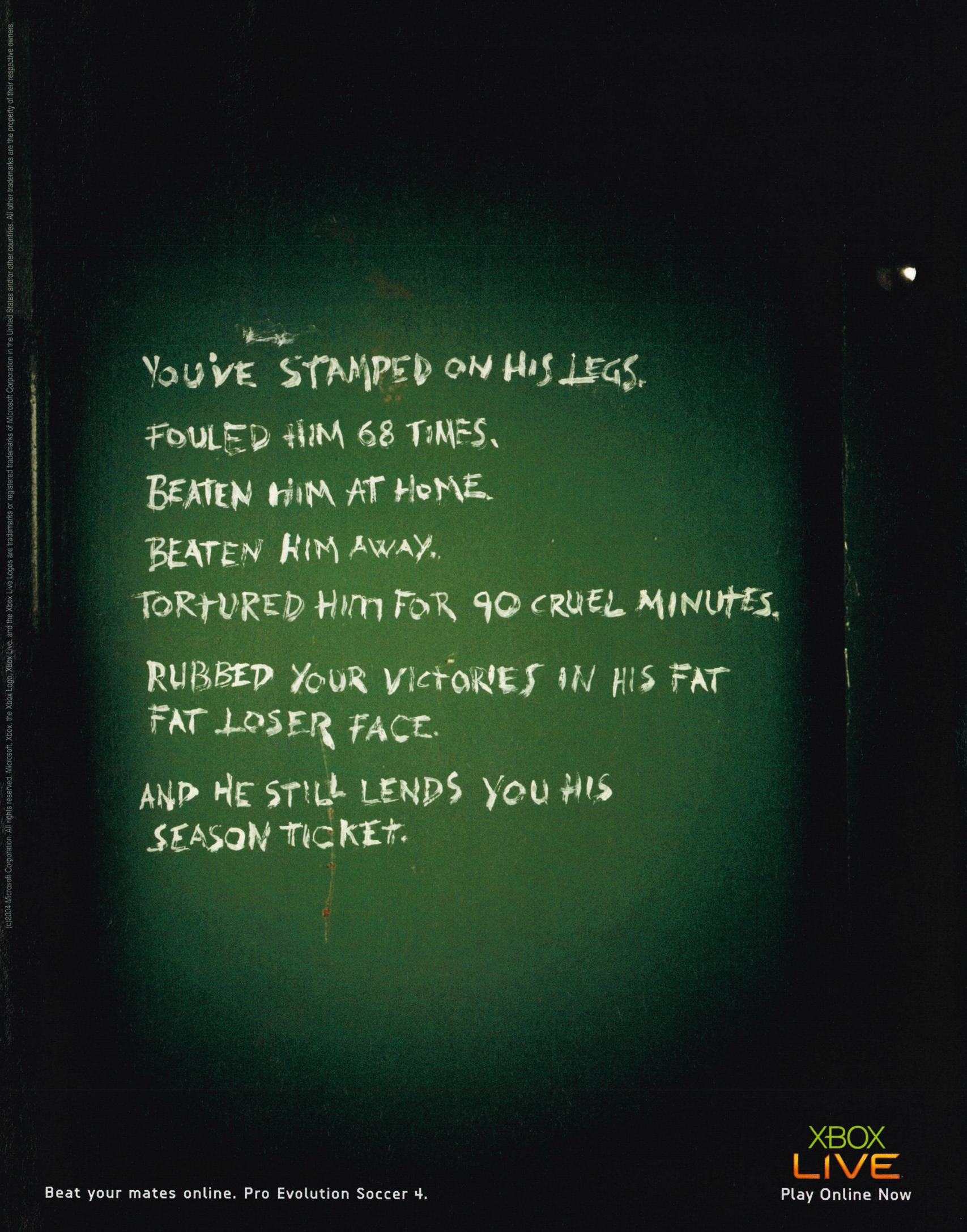
- ✔ A superb use of just about every Wild West cliché and plot ever set to film. You'll never want for a change in pace.
- ✔ The horses! They ride well, they can kill bandits and jump burning barricades. Neversoft does gee-gees as good as it does skateboards.
- ✘ We reckon it suits the game well, but some might find the constant hideous violence and gore a little too much.
- ✔ The free-roaming aspects means you can mine gold one minute and get high with a lone injun shaman the next.
- ✔ Amazing weapons! Inventive deaths! Want to see what it's like to fire a flaming arrow into an enemy's gob? Now you can!

The Verdict

Cracking stuff. A dusty, horseback *GTA*-style epic, with more attitude and head-popping action than you could hope for.

9.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview – Issue 43
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats – Issue 51



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↑ You can still terrorise villagers, but this time it'll be harder to make your wrath felt - they'll fight back!

Fable: The Lost Chapters

The Lost Chapters have been found, but are they enough for Fable old hands?

Words: Mark Robins

Dev: Lionhead	Pub: Microsoft
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
www.lionhead.com/fabletlc	

IN CASE YOU'RE new to the whole *Fable* 'scene' here's a quick recap. *Fable* (Issue 34, 9.4) is a traditional role-playing game. You play a young boy living in the fantasy world of Albion as he grows up to become a prophetic hero of legend. So far, so predictable, but it's how you get there that makes *Fable* so special.

Essentially, you're given free reign to develop your character any way you like. Fight monsters, cast spells, buy a house and rent it out, enter a bare knuckle boxing tournament, get married, get married again (only this time to a man), eat loads of food and get fat, get some tattoos, drink until you puke and so on. More specifically, it allowed you to tread a path of good or evil, both of which led to significantly different conclusions. While half the game was about following the story, the other, bigger, half was simply having fun in the expansive and highly imaginative world of Albion.

And it was mind-blowing. Really great fun. But *Fable*'s creator, Peter '*Black & White*' Molyneux, still wasn't happy. Not only was the actual plot component itself a little on the short side, *Fable* wasn't quite the all-encompassing 'life-simulator' he promised. It did a lot, certainly, but there were plenty of areas that still felt distinctly unfinished. Albion, for example, wasn't quite the living, evolving world that was originally envisaged.

Hence we have *The Lost Chapters*, a re-release of *Fable* that, among other things, boasts new spells, new missions, new characters and an extra

↑ Play as a giant chicken - for the entire game.

chapter that takes place after the original game's end boss. Don't be fooled though, this is still exactly the same game as before, it just happens that this one is a little wider around the girth.

But you probably knew that already, right? The real question here is does *The Lost Chapters* boast enough new content for people who owned the original? As a *Fable* master, should you shell out your hard earned cash on a budget version of a game you've for all intents and purposes got already? That depends on whether you're prepared to sit down and play the game all over again for what ultimately adds up to a few extra sub-quests and an hour-long (give or take) bonus mission tacked onto the end. It's still *Fable*, and therefore still great fun, but even at £20 that's a big ask for something that, in all honesty, could have been released as a couple of Xbox Live downloads.

On the other hand, if you're a *Fable* virgin now's the time to pick up one of the most unique, entertaining games to appear on Xbox.

Bonus info

NEW LANDS
The Lost Chapters take place after you defeat Jack of Blades, and involve a spooky boat ride to Snowspire. This should have been in the original *Fable* game, but was cut due to time constraints, so consider them more deleted scenes rather than new levels.

↑ With new areas to find, will you still end up being a goody two-swords?

↑ No wonder the Northern Wastes were empty!

↑ New costumes make you look swishy. Hot!

↑ The enchanted woods are just as deadly.

The Summary

FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- ✔ One of the most unique role-playing games ever made. Full of charm, wit and general British oddness. A triumph.
- ✔ Depending on your actions, every game plays differently. How your character appears is directly linked to what you do.
- ✔ Plenty to see and do throughout, along with masses of spells, skills, weapons and emotional reactions to fiddle with.
- ✔ A bargain price for one of Xbox's finest moments. Assuming you've not already bought the original, that is.
- ✘ If you already own the original the extra content - what there is of it - isn't really justification enough to buy this as well.

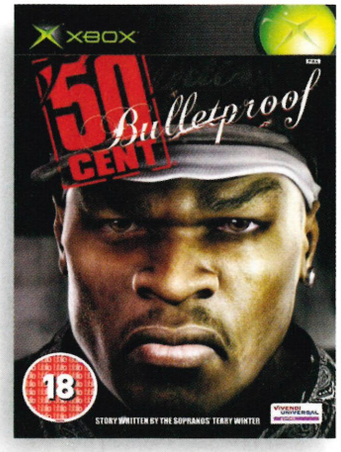
The Verdict

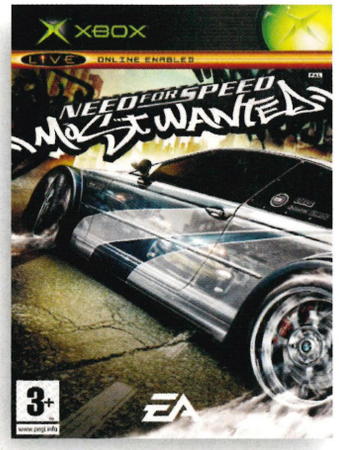
A slightly extended version of a total classic. Not worth buying for *Fable* vets, but newbies should snap it up instantly.

9.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: News - Issue 45, Q&A - Issue 46
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats - Issue 51

Released
25th November





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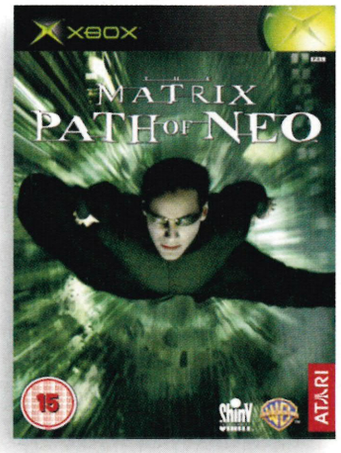

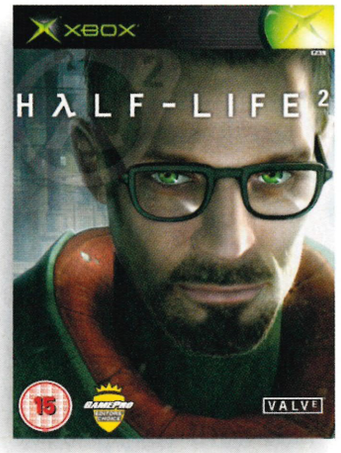

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Call of Duty 2: Big Red One

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

Makes Medal of Honor look embarrassing

Words: Gavin Ogden

Dev: Treyarch/Grey Matter	Pub: Activision
Players: 1; S.Link 2-16	Live: 2-16 Players
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
http://www.callofduty.com/bro	

IT'S ALMOST LIKE *Call of Duty: Finest Hour* (Issue 38, 7.0) never happened. Originally meant to show EA's *Medal of Honor* series how WWII should be done, *Finest Hour* was a huge letdown in every respect. It looked dated for its time, it was full of glitches, and was clearly rushed out for the pre-Christmas spending spree. Worse than that, though, people actually bought it.

But *Big Red One* more than makes up for those past horrors of war. Sensing the franchise could be dead before it really started, Activision pulled the game from developer Spark, and passed coding honours along to Treyarch and Grey Matter, developers of *Ultimate Spider-Man* (Issue 49, 8.5) and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (Issue 16, 9.2) respectively. *Big Red One* is everything a WWII game should be. It's even up there in style, presentation and immersion with the Xbox 360 version, *Call of Duty 2*.

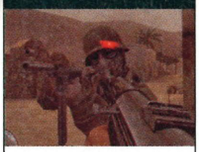
You'll be hard pressed to find a more engaging opening set of events in any wargame. When you fire up the single-player story mode and the action begins, you might think you're watching a fancy cut-scene. Then you realise you can move the camera and look 360 degrees around you. Then you realise your team-mates are talking directly to you. Finally, you realise that this is the actual game and not a fancy cut-scene at all, as you start running into battle. If you thought the character models in the *Brothers in Arms* games looked the business, they're nothing compared to those in *Big Red One*.

The dramatic opening showcases the new game engine in all its glory. Planes scream overhead after being shot down by anti-aircraft fire; tanks grind their way into position while firing at enemies too afraid to come out of buildings; mounds of dirt and plumes of smoke fill the air while bullets zip past your helmet. It's the most intense WWII game experience right from the words go, go, go!

Emphasis has been placed on story, and keeping your squad (part of the real-life Big Red One, the US Army's 1st Infantry Division) alive is key, although that said don't worry too much if you lose a few along the way. They keep you informed about the changing mission objectives, and also provide surprisingly decent AI covering fire, even if they are prone to sticking their heads in your line of sight. Try to resist the temptation to shoot them yourself, though, as the game doesn't like you doing that. The summary execution of your more idiotic comrades results in an instant game over, with the ironic message from the UNITED STATES developers that "friendly fire will not be tolerated".

You and your squad begin to traverse various locations in South Africa in an on-the-rails first-person shooter of epic proportions. Although when we say rails, we really mean tightrope. There's no room to manoeuvre off the beaten track or even fall off a wall onto the other side at certain points. You

Bonus info



GLITCH FREE

A big issue we had with the original was that shooting the enemy right in the face sometimes didn't have any effect. It was almost like they had to be within a certain (invisible) range before a hit would register. We're glad to say that shooting people in the face now results in satisfying instant death, just as it should. *Big Red One* also comes packed with System Link and Xbox Live features so you can take on your mates at war. Look out for the full Live review next issue, on sale 22 December.

↑ Pick your moment to slap a charge on vehicles.

↑ Decent AI sees your men taking cover.

↑ "Of course you get to drive tanks, Grandad."

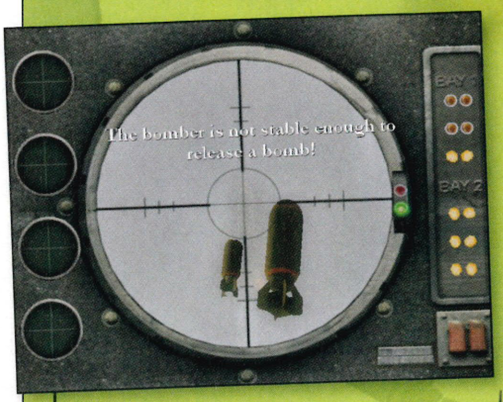
↑ Hold the Left trigger to zoom into the action.

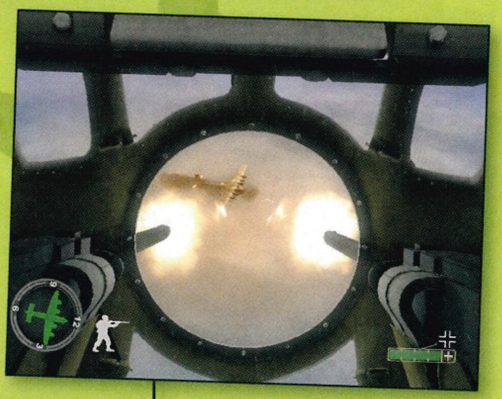
↑ Look out for incredible in-game cut-scenes.

↑ Your squad members will tell you what's next.

ACES HIGH Blueprint of a bomber...

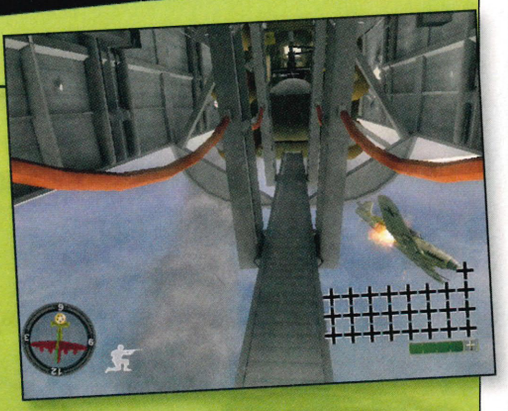
Who wants to fly a plane and dodge flak when you can be a gunner, or drop bombs on ships and buildings below? Half-way through the FPS section, the pace changes and you get to cause carnage with some really big guns – we love it!





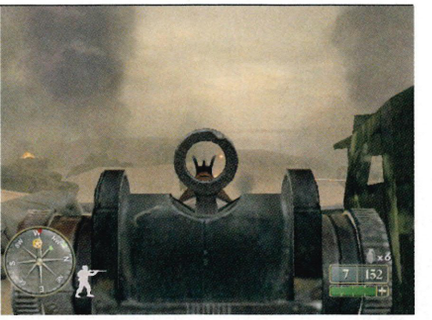
BOMBS AWAY
Line up your targets and let 'em go!

FRONTLINE
Fire thousands of bullets per second at everything!



TAIL GUNNER
Take out the planes that try to sneak up on you.

MIDSHIPS
Don't panic – the game won't let you fall out.



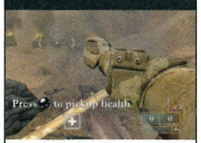
↑ You'll be squinting as you shoot the Germans.

↑ Jump in a jeep and tear everyone to pieces.

↑ Do what he says. It's your duty.

↑ Use your compass to find fresh meat to kill.

Bonus info



BIG BAD GUNS
There's nothing better than jumping into the seat of a massive cannon and cracking off a few rounds at the enemy. But there's nothing worse than it feeling no more powerful than a pistol. You get to use all kinds of mounted guns that make an incredible noise and rip Nazis to pieces. Great fun!

can only go where the developers want you to. Health and ammo pick-ups litter the way, usually gathering en masse just before a massive set-piece, so there's no point in exploring every nook and cranny for secret pick-ups. Don't bother, because there aren't any. But that's fine by us – this is all about shooting evil Nazis in their hundreds, and eventually thousands by the end of the game.

It's set-piece after set-piece, all constructed with formidable precision. One element that makes it all far more interesting is the sound. We've never had to stand in the middle of a real battlefield, but we'd imagine it would be pretty loud. Imagine hundreds of people screaming all around you, gunfire, and the rumble of tanks, aircraft and artillery in the background. It's what we imagine war sounds like, and it's what *Big Red One* sounds like too. If you're a bit on the posh side and have a full-on surround sound system hooked up to you Xbox, your ears are going to love this.

Occasionally you get to ditch the on-foot action and have a go in vehicles. There's a section that sees you manning the guns of a B-24 Liberator, attempting to shoot down as many planes as possible. It's a bit like *Duck Hunt*, but serves up some great fun with big guns.

Big Red One doesn't just do everything you'd expect from a WWII game, it does everything better than any previous WWII game. Striking visuals (it's not at all grey) and ear-piercing sounds make the action intense, engaging and very cinematic. If you buy one more WWII game for Xbox, make sure it's this one. You won't be disappointed.

↑ You'll be called upon to heal squad members.

The Summary

CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- ✔ Incredibly atmospheric. Crank it up and you'll be ducking for cover on the couch like you were in an actual, real-life war!
- ✔ Visually it's as solid as tank armour plating. The two developers have done an amazing job with the new game engine.
- ✔ Weapons to die for! You'll get to play with some of the biggest weapons ever used in war!
- ✘ It's a bit easy – experienced FPS fans should tear through the levels without too much trouble, partly thanks to the decent team AI.
- ✔ Full Live compatibility should make for great fun online. Whether it'll be bigger than *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* remains to be seen.

The Verdict

A perfect example of a WWII game. Great visuals, intense sound and smooth controls. It doesn't get any better.

9.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview – Issue 48
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats – Issue 51

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Jacked

No, we're not going to call this 'Burnout on bikes'. It's not!

Dev: Sproing	Pub: Xplosiv
Players: 1-4	Live: Aware
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
www.xplosiv.com	

Words: Ben Lawrence

TWO WHEELS GOOD, four wheels bad seems to be the message from the rather wanky-sounding *Jacked*, a clunky but well-meaning racer-slash-brawler-slash-piece-of-budget nonsense. The title refers to the 'jacking' (as in hijacking) you can dish out on other riders in order to make ground on the courses. You can smash them across the face with a crowbar, leap on their bike, then speed away as they lie in the road, clutching their gushing throats. And there's more! But not much more.

There are various modes of race, from your straightforward checkpoint-style affair to survival, 'jacking battles', and eliminator races. You've probably seen it all before about a thousand times over to be honest, and probably done a little better too, but *Jacked* is amiable enough tosh. There's nothing particularly engaging about it, nor is there anything particularly bad about it, it's just one of those titles that comes along that's destined to raise perhaps the tiniest of smiles before being consigned to the £1.99 bin at Gamestation. Okay, so *Jacked* does have a £19.99 price tag written all over it, and we have to congratulate what appears to be a small development team for doing their best, but with so many quality games now in the Xbox Classics range, it makes us question just why they bothered to make it? That said, it will no doubt please everyone who's ever played *Burnout* and thought to themselves, 'you know what, they should have bikes in this as well'. Oh, and here's a tip - don't worry too much about hitting oncoming traffic in any direction other than from head-on - the chances are you'll just stop or bounce along the road, free to continue your race. See what we mean about clunky?

↑ Yeah, scored some DRUGS, probably. Games have lost their innocence.

↑ Jump high and earn extra boost points to spend when you like.

↑ This is us 'jacking'. Insert your own joke here.

The Verdict

What does a disinterested shrug look like in words? If a not-particularly-outstanding update of *Road Rash* is your thing, dig in.

5.5//10

Crime Life: Gang Wars

Word up! New GTA clone hits the streets - face first

Dev: Konami	Pub: Konami
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: November	Price: £40
www.konami-crimelife.com	

Words: Ben Lawrence

AND SO THE horribly ill-conceived 'urban' violence machine continues to spout out rubbish. This month's instalment is *Crime Life: Gang Wars*. And you don't doubt the street credentials of a game with the words 'crime', 'wars' and 'gang' in its title, innit? The story? Have a guess. Yup, small-time 'homie' (you) gathers a gang of violent buffoons around him in a quest to smash up and rule 'da hood'. Whatevvvaaarrrrrrr...

Putting aside the horribly misjudged shower of racial clichés and 'attitude' for just a nanosecond, what does the game actually play like? Is it a sublime piece of programming that transcends all conventions to break new ground in the fighting/combat genre? What do you think?

Although in the press release they try to pretend *Crime Life*'s main theme is that "The player must protect his own people from exploitation and abuse, and defend his crew from the violence and treachery that permeates the society he lives in," it's really about finding any old excuse for smashing people's faces in. It's spectacularly nasty, but in a strangely muted way - the kill moves are filtered, presumably to protect the 'delicate' urban 15-year-olds who'll buy this, but at least in those respects it's a fairly accurate portrayal of life in 'da hood'. You're given loose missions from the neighbourhood barber (??), then it's just a case of following waypoints on your quest to smash things up or stove the head in of a particular gangsta.

You do a lot of walking about, but pedestrian isn't the word. The combat is stupidly easy and as badly designed as MC Hammer's trousers - timing kill moves or complex combos together is rendered fun-free, as you're held by the hand all the way through by giant yellow 'Y' icons that flash over an enemy when he's ripe for a kill move. Welcome to *Crime Life*, kids - it's more bad gas than badass.

↑ Strangle enemies like they were limp chickens. Just like in da hood.

↑ You play a 'good' gangster, although it's hard to tell from these shots.

↑ Just like real life, bad men have red arrows.

The Verdict

Brutal and mundane in one, it's a bag of tired clichés, and little more. Really not worth bothering your arse about.

4.7//10

YOU'VE MELTED HIS FACE WITH A LASER.
PINNED HIM DOWN WITH SNIPER FIRE.
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↑ Homing bounce attack does away with the need for guns.

Shadow the Hedgehog

Sonic dumped in favour of his urban evil clone! Can Shadow bring light back to the Sonic series?

Words: Gary Cutlack

Dev: Sonic Team	Pub: Sega
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
www.sega.com/shadow/	

DON'T WORRY, *Shadow the Hedgehog* isn't half as 'urban' or quite as 'gangsta' as it first seems. Yes, the first level is laughably called Westopolis, the game features a ludicrously poor gunfire sound when you press a menu icon and the odd mixture of human, alien and woodland characters converse in a suitably street manner, plus there's the matter of all those guns you have to play with now. But it soon calms down and becomes a normal 3D Sonic game.

The streets of Westopolis quickly give way to the haunted castles and magic temples we've been spin-dashing through for years, and you're joined by the usual *Sonic* suspects as you go. Knuckles turns up, Amy Rose is there and poor defenceless little Cream the Rabbit needs to be rescued from da evil Robotnik crew – it's just like a normal Sonic game.

And those guns don't really need to be used that much, which is great news for us people brought up on 15 years of peaceful rescue-the-bunnies *Sonic* play. You can plod through it with a gun, slowly walking and aiming and trying very hard, but it's more fun to not bother and play it like *Sonic* of old – fast and linking attacks together.

Shadow has the same lock-on jumping attack from *Sonic Heroes* that lets you automatically attack bad guys without having to worry about your aim, so enemy crews can be gang-banged (bounced) to death just like before games all went urban. It's still a broken idea, though. Enemies take two or three bounces to kill, and once they're dead your attack button becomes a speed-dash button. So you die loads by flying off the edge of a level when Shadow goes to attack a non-existent enemy.

The save system helps lessen repeated death anger, with *Shadow*'s numerous save points also acting as teleporters from which you can whiz back to earlier parts to complete each map's various tasks. There's a lot to do, but as you go it becomes more of a chore. The maps get bigger and more intricate, so there's more getting lost, more falling off ledges and more smashing along at top speed only to get killed by an enemy that pops up right in front of you. All familiar annoying aspects of these modern three-dimensional Sonic games.

If you're a die-hard and quite old Sonic fan, *Shadow the Hedgehog* will probably disappoint with its weird mish-mash of styles and the same awkward and flawed 3D play of *Sonic Heroes*. But if you're young and thought *Heroes* was fun in its own little way (which it sort of was), this is more of the same thing only with loads more stuff to do – and guns. Westopolis-side!

Bonus info

REMEMBER ME?
In a staggering display of originality, the game's plot involves... amnesia! Shadow wakes up confused and with no memory, and is then led through a series of missions by mysterious figures who seem to know all about his past. If you've played the *Sonic Adventure* series you'll know it all anyway.

↑ Flying dragons isn't gangsta – *Shadow*'s actually cute in places.

↑ Grinding is a quick way to get around the map.

↑ It's *Sonic* underneath (but a bit browner).

↑ Shadow's pals (his crew) fight alongside him.

↑ And there's rings to collect. Gold-digga.

The Summary

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

✔	You can race through the levels and have fun without bothering with any of the missions or shooting bits.
✔	It's not all dark and urban – levels soon become cheery, happy and colourful trademark *Sonic* zones.
✔	The levels are much better suited to tearing through at high speed than the *Sonic Heroes* bunch.
✘	You'll still fall off edges you can't see, or get killed by enemies you can't see. Rage then ensues.
✘	The camera is okay when you're running fast and straight, but for close-up moments it's diabolical.

The Verdict

Not great, but *Shadow*'s massive levels, speed and multiple challenges make this a decent enough package for *Heroes* lovers.

7.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: News – Issue 45, Q&A – Issue 48
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats – Issue 51

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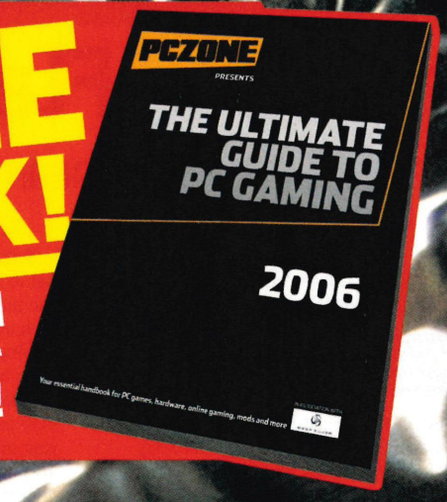

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↑ Each battlefield feels just like a real war zone, with planes screeching overhead and patrols swarming all over the place.

Operation Flashpoint: Elite

It's big, it's green, it's mean and it's finally here

Words: Martin Korda

Dev: Bohemia Interactive	Pub: Codemasters
Players: 1	Live: 2-8 Players
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
www.codemasters.co.uk/flashpoint	

FEW OTHER squad-based shooters can match the sheer depth and complexity of *Operation Flashpoint: Elite*. Modelled closely on real combat, it spits in the face of the frenetic Hollywood bloodbath ethos adopted by so many of its counterparts, instead preferring to embrace the gritty realities of war.

It's the mid-1980s, and with the Cold War still freezing everyone's balls off, you and your AI-controlled team-mates find yourselves battling the Rooskies after they unexpectedly invade a collection of Eastern European islands. After a brief and somewhat inadequate training section, you're shipped off to the front line, where the realism really kicks in. Each of *Operation Flashpoint: Elite*'s gargantuan, freeform levels must be used strategically in order to gain an advantage over your foes, meaning that one minute you'll be cutting through forests to outflank the enemy, the next hiding behind trees and bushes to avoid detection, or ensconcing yourself in elevated positions as you prepare an ambush.

Operation Flashpoint: Elite is no slouch in the hardware department, either. There are scores of realistically modelled weapons for you to blow the enemy away with (you can even pick up and use the enemy's hardware) and mastering how to shoot accurately will take time and practice, especially gunning down far-off enemies.

This is a tactical, visceral, real-world simulation of warfare, where fatigue, terrain and tactics can make the difference between killing and being killed, where battles range from daring raids to brutal skirmishes involving armoured divisions and attack choppers. The game's freeform missions (set routes are provided for each waypoint should you prefer) demand thought and precision, with each objective approachable from any angle, proving that in war, planning and strategy are every bit as important as an accurate shot.

Sadly though, *Operation Flashpoint* is far from perfect. Sound is grossly underused, while your team-mates are so proficient (especially on lower difficulty settings) that you often feel as though they wouldn't miss you if you skipped off and took a nap beneath a nearby tree. Then there are the cut-scenes, which feel more like a cheap afterthought than the tension-building cinematic moments they should have been.

Despite these faults, *Operation Flashpoint: Elite* is still one of the most engrossing, realistic and downright challenging squad-based shooters on the Xbox, and if you've ever wanted to know what real war is like - but don't fancy running the risk of having your intestines shot out - it's by far your best, and safest, bet.

Bonus info

DRIVE ME WILD

As well as being a top quality soldier sim, *Flashpoint* also allows you to drive and pilot scores of vehicles, including jeeps, tanks and choppers. In fact, the vehicle bits add some extra zest to the slower, more tactical on-foot sections.

↑ You get to drive and pilot a variety of vehicles, like this beast here.

↑ Fight with - or against - armoured divisions!

↑ Ambushes are the best way to deal with these.

↑ Man vs Tank: Man WINS! (Eventually.)

↑ Play from first- or third-person viewpoints!

The Summary

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: ELITE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

✔	Perhaps the most lifelike recreation of modern warfare on the Xbox. If you can do it in a real war, you can probably do it in this.
✔	Massive, brilliantly designed freeform levels and genuinely believable battles that require lashings of thought and skill.
✔	A huge, excellent and varied collection of weapons to fire and vehicles to pilot and drive.
✘	Team AI can be a little too accurate, especially on the lower difficulty settings. Often, they won't even need your help...
✘	It's an old game, and it's starting to show. Somewhat lacking in the polish and presentation departments.

The Verdict

A realistic, gritty and hugely tactical recreation of war that lacks the graphical polish it deserves.

8.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 30
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats - Issue 51

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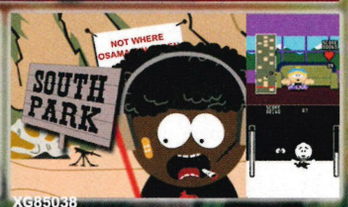

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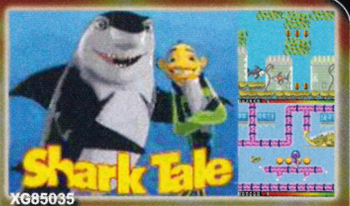

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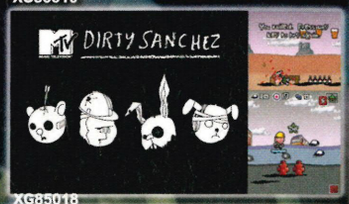

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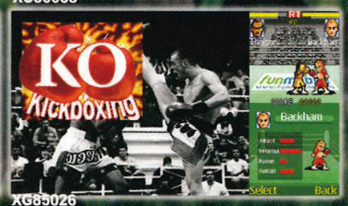

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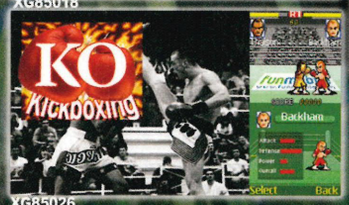

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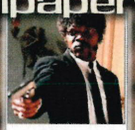
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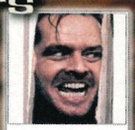
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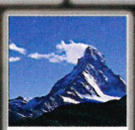
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↑ The first Triwizard event - not for the faint-hearted.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Potter grows up and becomes not only a full-blown wizard, but an RPG too!

Words: Ben Lawrence

Dev: EA	Pub: EA
Players: 1-3	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £40
www.gobletoffire.co.uk	

AS POTTER gets older, Potter gets better. With the latest, penultimate tome disappearing off the shelves, and the fourth movie heralding the return of Voldemort and the introduction of yet another defence from the Dark Arts teacher, we join Potter in the polygon world for his fourth Xbox outing. A lot has changed since we last saw the bespectacled sorcerer on Xbox. Having evolved through three stages of increasingly adult third-person adventuring, the latest instalment takes something of a detour. It's not quite *Baldur's Gate*, but it looks as if Potter is getting himself some of that tasty RPG action.

All three characters - Harry, the annoying ginger one, and the girl - are constantly on screen, working their way through not only a series of deadly levels, but doing so in unison. It's all well and good Potter scooting on ahead, but this game really is about teamwork. Large enemies or pieces of scenery can only be smashed, trampled, or zapped through combined effort. It works most of the time, but like a pack of Bertie Bott's, you'll occasionally end up with a bogie. When three people are needed to use a powerful Wingardium Leviosa spell (that's lifting things, for you Muggles), sometimes either Hermione or Ron will stand around or run into a wall. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's annoying - especially as this is the Potter game with the most magic for your money.

There is very little block-pushing and physical puzzle-solving this time; rather, every battle or puzzle can be solved with magic. It's great seeing Potter do what he does best for once. Hurl blocks, quash flaming salamanders with water spells, turn enemies into rabbits, inflate them, or give them a pumpkin for a head. Paul Daniels, get thee back to *Every Second Counts*!

There are also oodles of extras and bonuses to collect in order to get Potter through the

HASN'T HE GROWN?

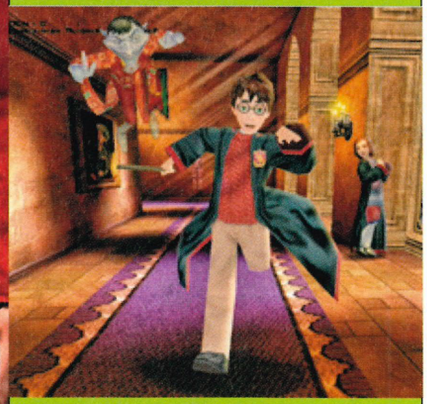
Remember Potter of old? It was all squeaky voices and strange house elves under the bed...

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

Here Harry is little more than an embryo with glasses. His parents barely decaying in the ground, little does this large-headed, four-eyed munchkin know what lies in store for him in the years to come...

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

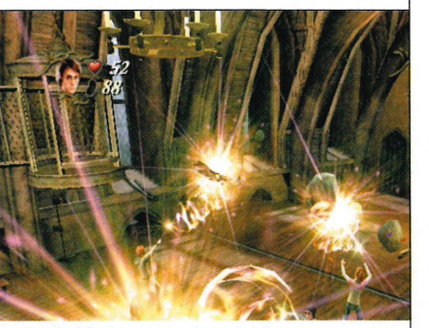
With flying cars and strange urges to look up girl's skirts, Potter gets a bit braver and hairier. He still pushes blocks in the game, though.



THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

A run-in with the Dementors ruins Potter's life, sending him on a downward spiral of Bertie Bott's Bean abuse and too many chocolate frogs for breakfast. We haven't actually read the book. Can you tell?

↑ Collect these shields - they unlock other parts of the game so you'll need them all!



↑ Looks kinda pretty, doesn't it?

↑ Work together to lift heavy objects like rocks.

↑ Those nasty Deatheaters are up to no good.

↑ Dugbogs a problem? Throw them over a wall.

Bonus info

Remember to always buy game cards when you've collected enough beans. They'll show you previously unseen episodes from the movie - and when you unlock six of a set you'll get a power card that will power up Potter for good.

game correctly. Levels can only be progressed with the collection of Triwizard shields, and you can play through them again and again until you've collected enough to move on. You can collect Bertie Bott's beans for stamina and mini-shields to unlock challenges, but there are also character cards to be bought with spare beans. These add permanent points to your spellcasting abilities, strength, and speed. Unlock them all and you've got just about every frame of the movie thrown in, too. Who needs to fork out £9 at the Odeon, eh?

Because it hasn't totally metamorphosed into an RPG yet (we reckon that'll happen at book six - if the series hasn't turned into an 18-certificate beat 'em up by then), *Goblet of Fire*'s puzzle-solving is occasionally interspersed with the Triwizard events. Racing a Bulgarian dragon through the grounds of Hogwarts is nightmarishly fast, and surprisingly hair-raising. You'll never look at *The Little Mermaid* in the same way again after you've seen Harry swim through a series of ghastly green underwater deathtraps. They don't happen particularly often, but Triwizard events are superbly placed within the bulk of what is otherwise a thoughtful, more paced-out adventure.

Of course, the voice acting is as bad as it always was (never a strength with those kids), and the cut-scenes show little of the actual game, but you know what? This latest Potter effort is rather damned good. It looks superb, it encourages teamwork without screwing up too much when you're only in single-player mode, and when a change of pace kicks in, it usually involves Potter being murdered by a 60-foot-long fire-breathing lizard. It's not your typical third-person adventure, but the child-friendly RPG elements work rather well, to the extent that we're now actually looking forward to the remaining three games, rather than dreading the arrival of yet another tedious cinematic cash-in. We wonder if Harry and Hermione end up bumping uglies.

The Summary

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

✔	A great change in direction for the series means that as the kiddies who played the earlier titles grow up, they're still going to enjoy it.
✔	This involves the most use of magic in any *Potter* title. Do what you like with your wand - just keep it clear of Hermione's short skirts.
✔	There's so much to do - it's not all collecting beans. A veritable treasure trove of extra content, power-ups, and treats.
✘	In single-player mode, Ron and Hermione have a tendency to do their own thing. But in an annoying way.
✘	That camera! It's just too far from the action. Though the distance can unveil hidden extra puzzles, we don't like it being miles back.

The Verdict

The best Potter game yet, this is all about Potter's magic and his ability to use it. Bring on *The Order of the Phoenix*.

8.3//10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 47
COMING SOON: Hints & Cheats - Issue 51

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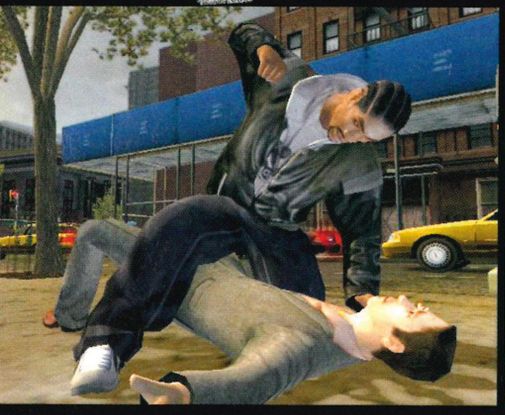

Screenshots taken from PlayStation 2

TRUE CONFLICT.

18

PlayStation 2

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

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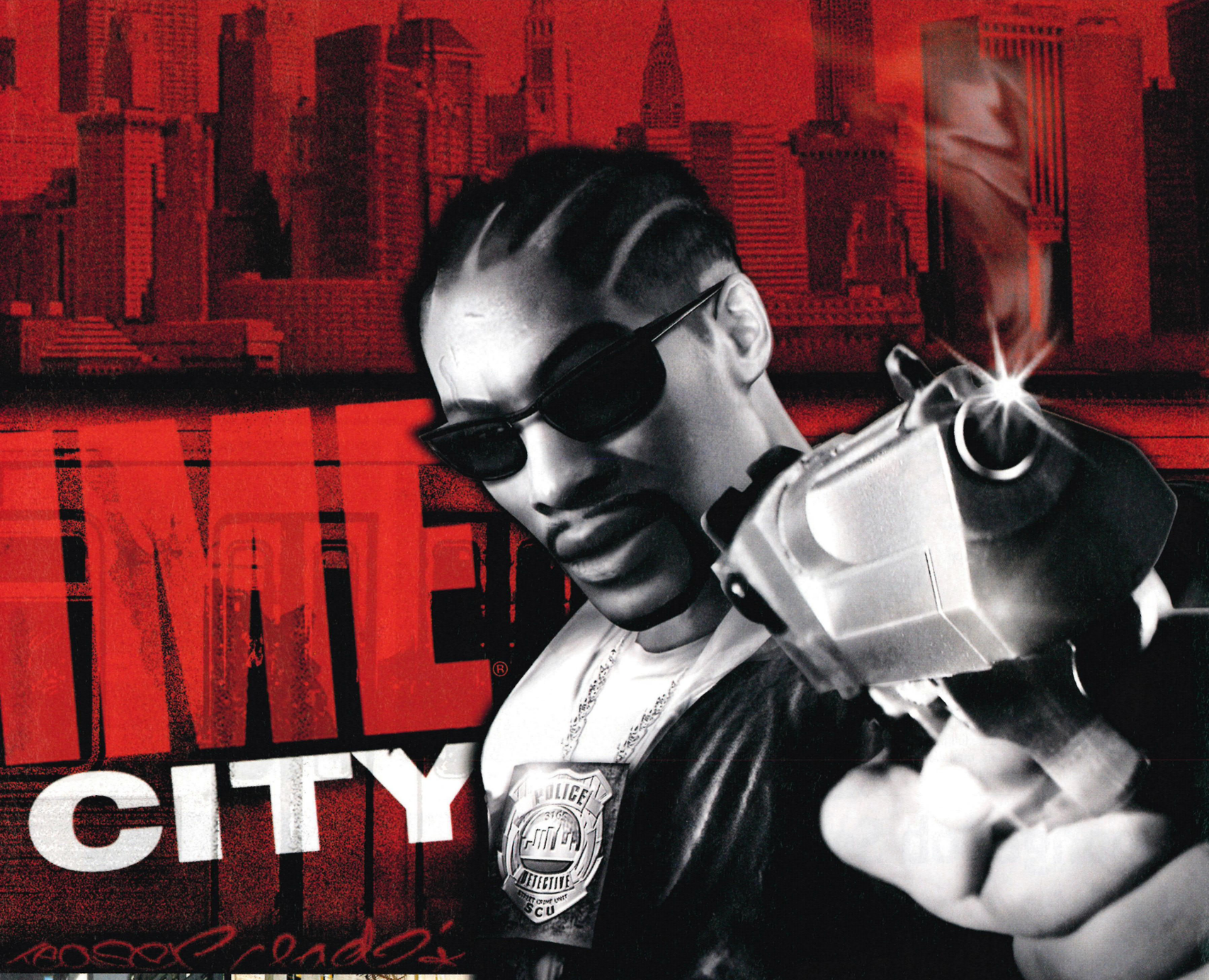

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The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer

Undermining the legacy of America's bendiest, strongest and most incredible family

Dev: THQ Heavy Iron	Pub: THQ
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £30
www.thq.co.uk	

Words: Ben Lawrence

REMEMBER THE end of *The Incredibles* when mole-man The Underminer exploded from the ground? Kinda set up the way for a sequel, didn't it? But what's this? We get a ropey old platformer instead? For shame.

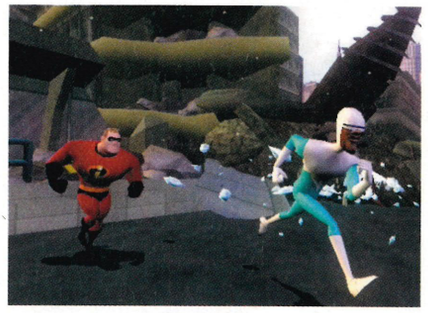
Forgetting his son Dash's running achievements, Mr Incredible bounds off with Frozone to thwart all manner of preprogrammed, randomly spawning robots... under the ground! Cue plenty of bland set-pieces, silly game mechanics and naff RPG elements. Use your super-lift as Mr Incredible, but only within predefined spots; listen to Frozone tell Mr Incredible to lift up frozen robots, then watch as he just stands around. Incredible.

As for the rest of the Incredi-clan? Forget it. You'll be so 'enthralled' by level upon level of drilling robots and darkness you won't give a crap. Okay, so there are a few brief moments of interest. You can switch between characters at random to combine their strengths – although for some reason Frozone is a stronger, far more useful character than Mr Incredible himself.

So there you are! Underground and underwhelming, it's a shame none of that Pixar magic rubbed off on this.

↑ Freeze enemies to allow Mr Incredible to bash them. If he's awake.

↑ Incredible by name, kinda crap by nature.



↑ Frozone – sometimes he runs, sometimes not.

The Verdict

With none of Pixar's characterisation or charm, this is just a cheap cash-in on the movie. Don't punish your kids with it!

5.0//10

SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, PANTS!

Brain-hurting party mayhem in a giant pineapple

Dev: THQ	Pub: THQ
Players: 1-4	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £30
www.thq.co.uk	

Words: Ben Lawrence

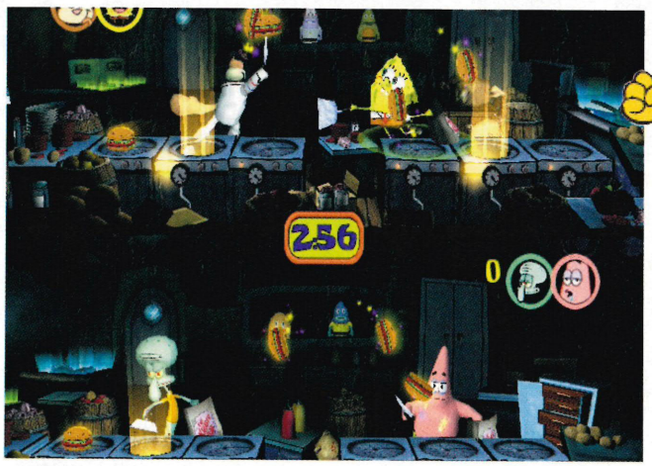
FLIP BURGERS, catch burgers, go faster, flip burgers, catch burgers, go faster, flip burgers catch burgers, go faster... Take orders, make orders, serve orders, repeat! SpongeBob leads a crazy, crazy life, but we're not sure if taking part in it is all that good for your health.

Sold as a 'party' game, *Lights, Camera, PANTS!* is as baffling and unfathomable a title as you're likely to find. Every 'game', of which there seems to be hundreds of the psychedelic bleeders, is an assault on the senses. If it's not working in the fast food store, it's lifting weights against muscle-bound sharks, cliff climbing while a conveyor belt above spews rubbish down on you, or taking part in a John Travolta-style dance-off against robots.

Things are so fast and frenzied it'll no doubt make the perfect party game to any 14-year-old with access to his parent's booze cabinet and the pin number to unlock *Men and Motors* on Sky. This is not a party game for anyone who likes things ordered and with definable goals. It's all about bashing buttons randomly and looking around to see whether your rivals have cottoned on, or are just as clueless as you are. It's probably the only party game we can think of where skill doesn't seem to matter, but being a frantic, spotty hyperactive boy is probably an advantage.

It features all the characters from the TV show, but that doesn't matter because you'll be so knee-deep in button sequences and flying hamburgers you won't even notice. Odd is not the word. Grab a packet of aspirin and judge for yourself.

↑ Madness at the shop.



↑ This is the flippy, tossy, burger-making game. Lunacy in a bun.

The Verdict

Insane to the point of being unfathomable. SpongeBob may be 'kerazy', but we think he's taken it one step too far this time.

5.6//10

THE HOTTEST NEWS ON THE PLANET...

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FROM EUROPE'S NO.1 GAMING WEBSITE

World Poker Tour

Come on dollies, do your dealing

Words: Mark Robins

Dev: Coresoft Games	Pub: 2K Sports
Players: 1	Live: 2-6 Players
Release: 26 November	Price: £30
www.2ksports.com/games/wpt	

POKER. IT'S everywhere at the moment. TV, newspapers, magazines. And why not? Not only is it the king of card games, but there's tons of money to be made playing it against drunk, rich Americans on the internet.

Of course, playing for real money can be intimidating, which is why, on the one hand, *World Poker Tour* is great, allowing you to play a few rounds of Texas hold 'em across Xbox Live without losing any real pennies. The interface is simple, the graphics are far better than anything you get on real internet Poker sites, and the presentation and options far outstrip anything seen in nearest Xbox rival *Bicycle Casino* (Issue 42, 3.6).

But if you don't have Live, *World Poker Tour* is little more than a glorified game of cards against the computer. It does put a lot of effort into catering for the single player, with a full career mode and several real-life players to challenge, but it won't take long for any half-decent player to figure out how to exploit the somewhat basic AI. A nice little package overall though, with plenty of tutorials, and decent enough for getting some practice in before you hit the money tables for real.

↑ It's 10am GMT, and the drunk Americans are still playing... JACKPOT!

The Verdict

A great way of playing online poker for free, but as an offline method of poker practice it's merely okay.

6.2//10

NHL 2K6

More wrist-slapping action from the virtual ice

Words: Mark Robins

Dev: Kush Games	Pub: 2K Sports
Players: 1-4	Live: 2 Players
Release: 26 November	Price: £30
www.2ksports.com/games/nhl2k6	

WELCOME TO the *Pro Evolution* of ice hockey games. A sports game so full of depth, game modes and options that you'd think its own mother had been, er, shafted by the great Wayne Gretzky himself. Put it next to its significantly better-known EA equivalent *NHL 06* (Issue 48, 8.0), and it's almost like looking at man against boy.

Only, and here's the annoying thing, EA's ice-hockey playing boy is by far the better looking of the two - and also the most approachable. What *NHL 06* might lack in depth of control, tactics, tutorials, classic teams, mini-games (including, bizarrely, darts and air-hockey!), party modes, advanced Live options and swathes of unlockables it makes up for in graphics, presentation and general user-friendliness. For fair-weather ice hockey fans who don't know their power plays from their dump shots, or even care for that matter (we're talking the majority of the UK population), *NHL 06* is perhaps still the better choice, playing as it does a slightly faster, if more arcade-driven game.

But for the really serious ice hockey fan, *NHL 2K6* is unquestionably the superior title. With simply dozens and dozens of bonus teams, kits and venues to unlock, a hugely involving franchise mode, and some of the best multiplayer party games we've seen for quite some time in a sports title, it really is ice-cool stuff.

↑ Certainly not as pretty as EA's effort, but it's a lot nicer to play.

The Verdict

Technically far superior to EA's NHL game, but lacking in user-friendly polish and presentation.

8.4//10

NBA 2K6

Fully Lived-up, it's the best version of American netball yet... just

↑ Is it this or ice hockey that has the stupid ner-ner-NERR! organ music?

Dev: Visual Concepts	Pub: 2K Sports
Players: 1-4	Live: 2 Players
Release: 26 November	Price: £30
www.2ksports.com/games/nba2k6	

Words: Mark Robins

IF YOU'RE the sort of person who really must buy a basketball game, then the question here is very simple: do you get this, or shell out an extra tenner on EA's *NBA Live 06* (Issue 48, 7.3). And the answer is? Well, it's hard to say.

As with *NHL 2K6* above, it's clear from the get-go that the 2K Sports game is technically the superior of the two. That's mostly through design rather than any general quality issue, *NBA 2K6* playing a more serious simulation form of the sport where Electronic Arts treads an increasingly arcade line in its own NBA games - but genuine fans of the ball of B will get far more out of *NBA 2K6* than they will with *NBA Live 06*.

NBA 2K6 is also far weightier on content, with training modes, street basketball, hordes of unlockables and a great single-player career mode. But in terms of visuals and sheer slickness of play EA's *NBA Live 06* is a hands-down winner.

So once again, it's a case of EA providing the more instantly appealing game, while 2K Sports' commitment to depth of play and content just gives it the long-term edge. Want a real deciding factor? *NBA 2K6* also has full Live support, something that mysteriously disappeared from *NBA Live 06* just before it was released. Take your pick...

The Verdict

More modes and options than *NBA Live 06*, but distinctly rougher around the edges. B-ball fans, your cup runneth over.

7.4//10

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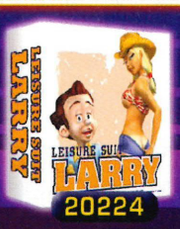

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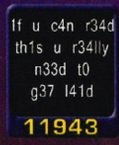

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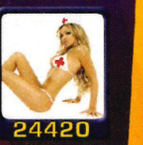
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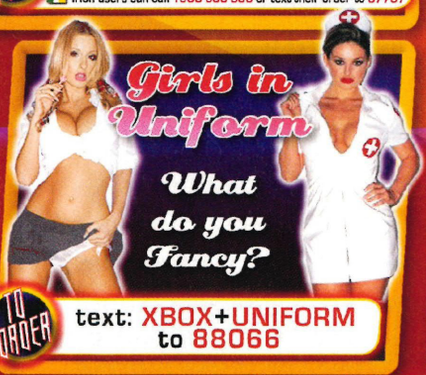

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Tecmo Classic Arcade

An exciting rummage around Tecmo's attic - and not a ninja or a helicopter in sight!

Dev: Tecmo	Pub: Tecmo
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: 28 November	Price: £20
www.tecmoinc.com	

Words: Dan Geary

THE NEVERENDING project to ruin your rose-tinted memories continues in this 11-strong showing of bleeping, flashing titles of the last century. This time it's the turn of Tecmo, with some typical offerings ranging from the surprisingly-still-quite-good, to the utterly forgettable, in that you forgot them first time round, to games so old they were probably invented by the Ancient Egyptian priests of the sun god Ra.

Stand-out moments are fiddly, likeable block-push platformer *Solomon's Key*, brainless but still quite fun left-to-right kill 'em up *Rygar*, and the nicely pitched *Pac-Man*-ish idiocy of *Bomb Jack*, still a joy to play. What with the ratio of good-to-awful-dross in most retro collections these days standing at about 1:4 Tecmo's done alright, with the only real stinkers being the incomprehensible (even if you 'get' US football) *Tecmo Bowl*, the pointless *Pinball Action*, and the just really, really ancient *Swimmer* and *Pleiads*, which are so old they defy classification. Filling out the middle are alright-ish 1990s shmups *Star Force* and *Strato Fighter* (basically an *R-Type* rip-off), clunky football game *Tecmo Cup* (which only Mark really enjoyed), and *Senjyo*, which looks a bit like *Battlezone* but is nowhere near as good. Ho hum.

As ever, it's a case of 20 minutes of quick-fire fun at best, another lesson in how games from the past should just stay there at worst. And with the similarly priced *Taito Legends* containing over 30 consistently better titles, this is a paltry collection, especially so given the notable absence of *Ninja Gaiden* and *Silk Worm*. You'll like it if you like this sort of thing™, but then you probably already own them all in cabinet form if that's the case.

↑ It may look rubbish, but THIS is the reason Gav only has two GCSEs.

↑ *Bomb Jack* is ace - like *Pac-Man* but with the gravity turned on!

↑ *Rygar*: he's Flash Gordon with a deadly yo-yo.

The Verdict

A small, workmanlike collection that still includes one or two genuine classics. Okay, but there's better elsewhere.

6.1//10

American Chopper

Pimp UR motorbike?! This tiresome two-wheeled TV show cash-in isn't even that interesting

Dev: Creat Studio	Pub: Activision
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out Now	Price: £20
www.activisionvalue.com/titles/AmericanChopper	

Words: Dan Geary

A terrible Frankenstein's monster of a game that looks like it was cobbled together in about two weeks from the grave-robbed remains of rejected Neversoft projects, *American Chopper* is the idiot, hog-riding hillbilly cousin of the *Need For Speed* titles, and they were already stupid enough to begin with.

It's the amusing Discovery Channel show about scary, unpredictable bike 'artistes' Paul Snr and Paul Jnr and their custom chopper shop in game form - a licence with some potential, you might think. Not one that's taken advantage of here, though. You're the 'new guy' in the *American Chopper* garage, fulfilling a number of exciting missions such as finding a fat man and driving him back to the shop, delivering a bike from one end of a motorway to another, or one-on-one racing vs dullard CPU riders, set mostly in a generic grey-brown Dullsville USA. It's a real barrel of laughs.

With its unchallenging, directionless missions, shonky, brittle handling and horrorsome graphics, *American Chopper* is like a worst-of compilation of all the most boring bits of games from the past five years, a *GTA* where you can't fire guns or steal a better vehicle, or even get off and walk; a *Crazy Taxi* with the sense of speed and mayhem clumsily scraped out with a bent spoon. Even the entire point of the show - bike customisation - only exists in the form of the occasional opportunity to add a useless cosmetic component to your 'ride' at the end of the odd mission. It's like they not so much 'developed' this as found it in a forgotten filing cabinet marked PLEASE RECYCLE in Activision's basement (see above). Purchase at your peril.

↑ At least you don't have to TXT UR bluds 2 maxxx UR RESPEC!!!1!

↑ You can always make 'donut' circles when you get bored (which is often).

↑ How depressing is this game? THIS depressing.

The Verdict

Trundle about on a boring bike doing not much at all. Like a malformed EA game they forgot to put the gloss on. Yuck.

4.9//10

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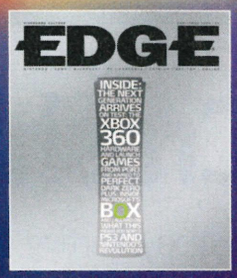


Inside issue 157:

Defining high-definition

A guide to the TV technology you need to get the best out of Xbox 360

Plus: Xbox 360 launch special, featuring Microsoft's new hardware on test and reviews of Kameo, Perfect Dark Zero and Project Gotham Racing 3

On sale November 24

Crash Tag Team Racing

Comedy. Karting. Platform. Romp. Starring the ancient ferret-thing, too

- Dev: Radical
- Pub: Vivendi
- Players: 1-4; 2-8 S.Link
- Live: None
- Release: Out Now
- Price: £40
- www.vugames.com

Words: Mark Robins

CRASH BANDICOOT is nine years old this Christmas. Nine years! Or in bandicoot years, 94. Which is ironic, considering we'd rather make out with a 94-year-old than play the red rat-thing's latest console offering.

It's not Crash's fault. Alright, it is – as game characters go Crash and his generic cartoon sidekicks are as charismatic and appealing as facial herpes. But it's also the game that's at fault here. Part platformer, part *Mario Kart*-style racer, it's a title that combines two underperforming halves into a not-that-convincing whole.

↑ The Bandicoot is back. Again. Are you excited yet?

↑ The generic karting hilarity almost NEVER STOPS. Almost.

Despite boasting some gloriously inventive and beautiful racetracks, there's nowhere near the depth of control or skill to make this anything other than a five-minute novelty. Even the ability to 'clash' (fuse yourself with an opponent's kart to turn yourself into a kart/giant mobile gun-thing) fails to add anything approaching freshness. It's fast and colourful, but hardly sets your Xbox on fire.

Then there are the platform sections, the multi-tiered hubs that act as the links between each racecourse. Again, they look good, but that's as far as the good stuff gets. Not only is the camera stubbornly uncooperative, but the whole design of the platform-hopping sections is tired, predictable and full of the clichéd old *Crash Bandicoot* item-collecting challenges. Okay, so they're just linking sections as opposed to a full-blooded platform game, but where's the polish that was so liberally dumped all over *Crash Twinsanity* (Issue 36, 8.0)?

Fusing two genres into a single game might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but with neither part offering up anything particularly impressive you have to wonder why they bothered. It's more crash victim than Crash Bandicoot.

↑ Crash is old and tired and ready to die.

The Verdict

Part platformer, part karting game, neither of which are particularly appealing. It's time to put this Bandicoot to sleep.

4.9//10

Shattered Union

Feel the joy of hex in this bewildering old-school RTS

- Dev: PopTop
- Pub: 2K Games
- Players: 1-4
- Live: 2-4 players
- Release: Out Now
- Price: £30
- www.shatteredunion.com

Words: Ben Lawrence

AH, THE ANCIENT turn-based hexagon boardgame, a staple of old PC strategy titles, now lovingly recreated and brought to life on Xbox. Like *Blockbusters*, it's mostly a case of getting as many pieces on as many hexes as you can before the enemy does the same, then blasting him off strategic hexes you might require for your own armies.

Shattered Union, concerning itself with the second American civil war (shame they didn't have more of those) is a spectacularly complex mish-mash of ugly sprites and good intent. You take control of one of seven different factions (including a European 'peacekeeping' force) attempting to reform the dis-United States in your own mould. It's similar to the *Total War* games on PC, with individual battles influencing the wider conflict taking place on a *Risk*-style map of the former US.

It's good fun building up an army and then pitting it against another itsy faction *Command & Conquer*-style, but by God, you'll not know what you're doing. That's more thanks to a confusing front end and baffling array of number-filled sub-menus than the game itself being too complex. Picking the best equipment for the job and navigating your way to a position where you're able to enter a conflict with confidence is primarily down to luck. And why can't you skip having to watch an enemy's turn?

It's details like this that spoil what could have been a great little game. Still, it's a brave thing for *Shattered Union* to even come out on Xbox – it's certainly a refreshing departure from the usual slew of first-person shooters and urban driving games. But it could have done with a more thoughtful conversion – stripped back from its PC roots and with a less headache-inducing camera, this could have been good. As it is, it's a missed opportunity.

↑ It's a brave developer who'll make a turn-based hexagon game for Xbox.

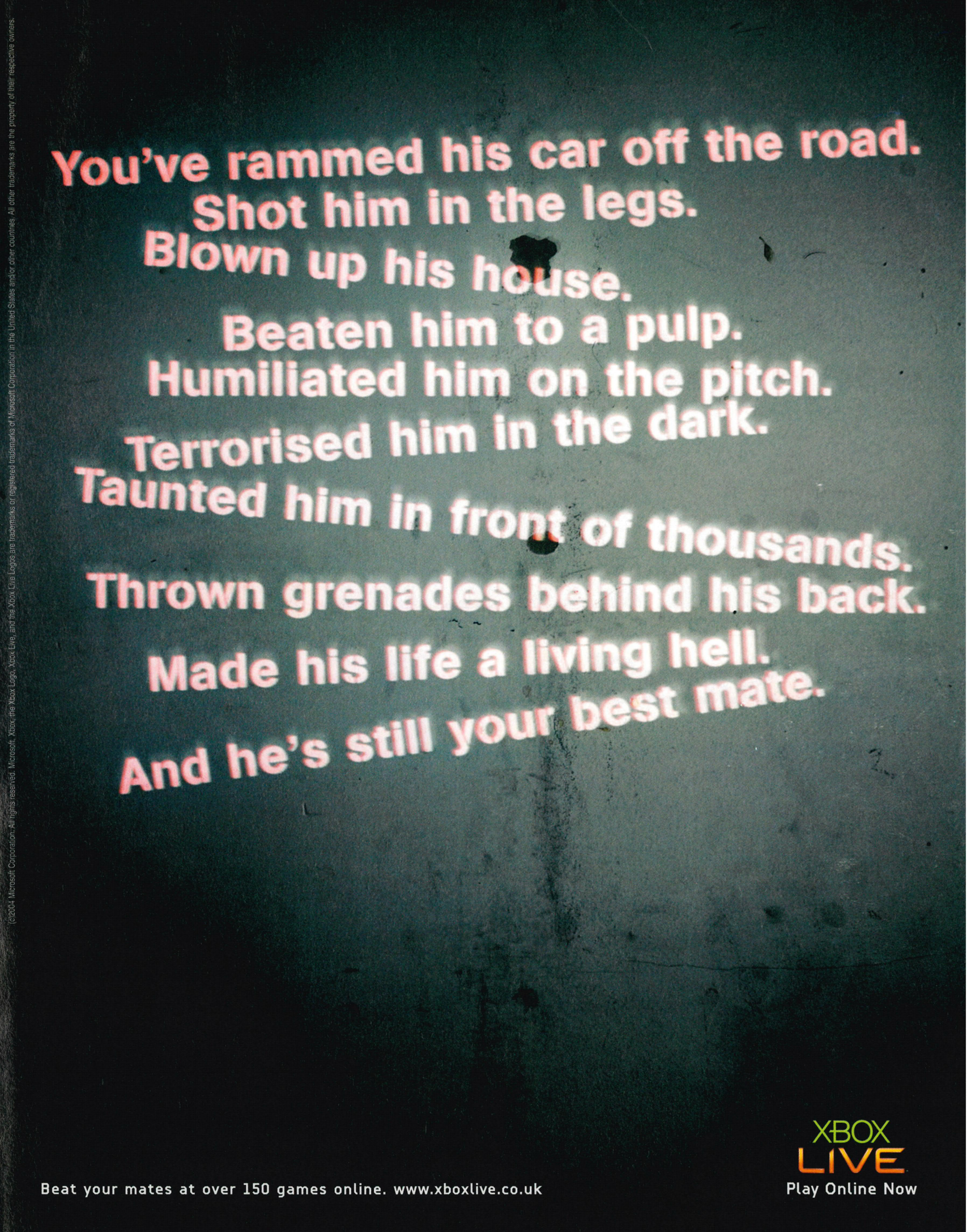
↑ If you're very patient and like numbers and stats a lot, this is for you.

↑ It doesn't really work on consoles. Shame.

The Verdict

Get bamboozled by the stats and menus, then, if you're lucky, you might have five minutes of furtive firing fun.

6.0//10



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Psychonauts

Scanners with kids! Take a platforming trip inside the mind...

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

- Dev: Double Fine
- Pub: THQ
- Players: 1
- Live: None
- Release: Out Now
- Price: £40
- www.thq.co.uk

Words: Ben Lawrence

FROM THE makers of classic PC adventure *Grim Fandango* comes 2005's most unique Xbox game. At a summer camp for gifted children (one of whom has to wear a metal hat because he's forever making people's heads explode), you are Raz, a highly potent young psychic who has attracted the attention of some rather unsavoury characters because of his powers.

Through a combination of detective work and psychic abilities such as psionic fists and exploding balls of energy, Raz must solve the mystery that's descended on the camp. But it's the bits of the game which are actually set inside people's minds that truly dazzle. For instance, entering the mind of the ex-military camp leader lets you witness the horrors of war like you're on some psychotropic trip. Ghostly apparitions of old battles and dead comrades haunt his thoughts, and you'll have to help offload him of his emotional baggage - depicted as shivering suitcases desperate to be reunited with their luggage tags.

It's this play on brain-related themes that adds real colour and character to *Psychonauts* and makes it so much more than just another hub-based platformer. Power up on 'mental health' for example, and you'll be right as rain. Throughout the camp there are richly detailed characters to meet, all of whom are beautifully animated and voiced, and oodles of strange dreamscapes and worlds to explore, many of which are like playing through drug-induced nightmares.

Psychonauts is dazzlingly clever and way left of field - if you want a platformer where collecting 99 gems for an extra life actually means drilling through someone's psyche to their darkest secrets, you're in for a treat. Bizarre, but beautiful.

↑ Don't worry, it won't hurt. It's just someone's memory.

↑ This mysterious old bleeder will give you gadgets and advice.

↑ Voyage into the minds of some right weirdos.

The Verdict

A platform lover's dream, literally. Turns the hopping/collecting formula on its head and then inside-out. Great stuff.

8.5//10

Shrek SuperSlam

A beat 'em up with ogres and gingerbread men!

- Dev: Shaba
- Pub: Activision
- Players: 1-4
- Live: None
- Release: 18 November
- Price: £30
- www.activision.co.uk

Words: Ben Lawrence

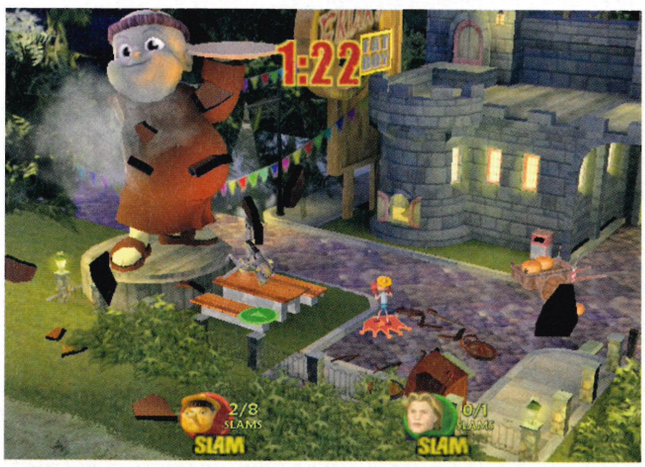
PRINCESS FIONA was always a little bit 'kick ass' in the movies, so it's a wonder *Shrek SuperSlam* has only just reared its ogrish head. But no sooner can you say 'keep the franchise alive until the next movie comes out', along comes Shrek doing the *DOA* thing. Cheesy awfulness, right? Spanking goodness, actually!

Featuring just about every character from both *Shrek* movies, this is a beat 'em up along the same lines (but done much better) as *Marvel Nemesis*. You can duke it out in taverns, chuck enemies through windows or across the bar, or smash the ramparts of old castles apart.

There's lots of crazy-ass shenanigans going on in the background too, with super-strength power-ups popping up randomly (Donkey does super-kicks, Puss-in-Boots goes on a scratching rampage), and you can use weapons too. At one point we had to fetch a giant leg of ham in order to smash our enemy through a nearby window. You can also throw enemies through roofs or upstairs windows, only to wait a few seconds before they stagger back in through the downstairs front door, shaking rubble off themselves. Ah, that *Shrek* humour!

With three modes, there's plenty to keep you from getting bored. There's Melee mode, where four players can smash the place down and see who's the last left standing; Quest mode, where Shrek must travel the length of Far Far Away in order to rescue Fiona; and a single-player mode in which any character can fight his way through the game, taking on the multitude of other *Shrek* characters. From Prince Charming to the Gingerbread Man, they're all here.

We'd have liked to see a more controllable camera as it's pretty static and doesn't allow for too much close-up action, but with such a bright and batty *Shrek* universe to demolish, we didn't find ourselves caring that much anyway.



↑ Destroy medieval fast food joints with your Super Slam attacks!

↑ The Gingerbread Man can wallop Puss-in-Boots with his candy cane.

↑ Power up and your characters glow orange.

The Verdict

An entertaining effort packed with special moves and colourful Shrek characters and humour. No *DOA*, but it's still a blast.

7.5//10

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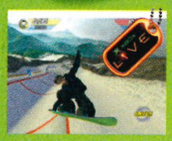


AMPED 2
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Stunning graphics. Dead easy to pick up and play but furiously addictive"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT
REVIEWED: Issue 48
TYPE: FPS
"Thrilling, tactical and easy to play. A great multiplayer FPS"
SCORE 9.0

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: Adventure
"Diverse and delicious. This isn't about violence, but about story, subterfuge and character"
SCORE 8.9

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Adventure
"A detective game that will stick with you after you've finished"
SCORE 9.0

BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD
REVIEWED: Issue 48
TYPE: Squad shooter
"A gripping, even harder follow-up to a great title"
SCORE 8.9

BROTHERS IN ARMS ROAD TO HILL 30
REVIEWED: Issue 41
TYPE: Squad shooter
"A compelling, well-designed title. Depth *MOH* dreams of"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★

BURNOUT: REVENGE
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: Racing/Action
"Sensational speed, great looks and superbly aggressive racing - recommended"
SCORE: 8.9

COLIN McRAE RALLY 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Driving
"Every bit as good as *04* with the added extra of online play"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★

CONFLICT: VIETNAM
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Bigger and tougher than its *Desert Storm* siblings. It'll suck you in and love you long time"
SCORE 8.5

CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED
REVIEWED: Issue 44
TYPE: "Rare delivers a game worthy of its pedigree. Funny, crude and hugely playable"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★★

CRIMSON SKIES
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action
"A great package that's been playtested to death - and it looks gorgeous"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★

DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"A beautiful, balanced fighter; a wealth of multiplayer options"
SCORE 8.8 XBL: ★★★★★

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NEW YORK
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Thoughtful, well-constructed. As fun as it is violent. Rated 18"
SCORE 8.5

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Mind-blowing, expertly crafted experience. Don't miss it"
SCORE 9.0

DOOM 3
REVIEWED: Issue 40
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Not the genre-defining FPS that we expected but still extremely polished and entertaining"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★

FABLE
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Action adventure/RPG
"Confident, flashy and polished beyond belief. There's no way you won't love it"
SCORE 9.4

FAHRENHEIT
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: Adventure/Puzzle
"A truly captivating, dark, and grown-up adventure title. Xbox needs more games like this"
SCORE: 8.9

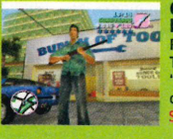
FAR CRY INSTINCTS
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: FPS
"Shoot guns in a free-roaming island paradise! At times stupid, at times wildly brilliant"
SCORE: 9.1 XBL: ★★★★

FIFA 06
REVIEWED: Issue 48
TYPE: Sports
"Your annual update of football fodder is served. The *Pro Evo*-est *FIFA* yet!"
SCORE: 8.5 XBL: ★★★★

FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Sports
"Absorbing, sweat-drenched title. Dazzling graphics and a groundbreaking control system"
SCORE 8.5

FORZA MOTORSPORT
REVIEWED: Issue 42
TYPE: Racing
"All the thrills of *Gotham*, plus mods galore and phenomenal online options"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action adventure
"Very polished. Top animation. A sure-fire crowd-pleaser"
SCORE 8.9



GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Driving/Action
"PS2 port, but a benchmark of crime titles yet to be beaten"
SCORE 8.9

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
REVIEWED: Issue 44
TYPE: Driving/Action
"Tons of new features - the biggest, most polished *GTA* yet"
SCORE 9.6

HALF-LIFE 2
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: FPS
"The finest single-player shooter made gets squeezed into the big black box"
SCORE 9.8

HALO 2
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: FPS
"You won't find a better single-player and multiplayer game on this generation of consoles"
SCORE 10.0 XBL: ★★★★★

HALO 2 MULTIPLAYER MAP PACK
REVIEWED: Issue 45
TYPE: FPS
"This great collection of maps is stunning value for money"
SCORE 9.0

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
REVIEWED: Issue 46
TYPE: Action
"Destroy everything you see in the Xbox smash spectacular!"
SCORE 8.5

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Action adventure
"One of the best single-player adventures on Xbox. Brilliant"
SCORE 9.0

JADE EMPIRE
REVIEWED: Issue 41
TYPE: RPG
"BioWare outdoes itself once again. Imaginative, accessible, beautiful and immersive"
SCORE 9.5

JET SET RADIO FUTURE
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Platformer/ Extreme sports
"Supremely playable and very stylish. Huge, intricate levels"
SCORE 8.9

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Strategy
"Very atmospheric strategy with exhilarating combat"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES
REVIEWED: Issue 46
TYPE: Strategy
"Give the orders, then get stuck in yourself! The best *KUF* yet..."
SCORE 9.0

LMA MANAGER 2006
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: Sports
"Chewing gum and sheepskin coats at the ready - *LMA* gets a great(ish) new look!"
SCORE 8.5

MADDEN 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: US sports
"Incredible visuals, great commentary, brilliant play. You'll be busy for months"
SCORE 8.5

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Definitive blockbuster action title bursting with new ideas"
SCORE 9.2

MERCENARIES
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Third-person shooter
"Amazing effort. More plot and fewer explosions would have shaken *GTA*'s grip considerably"
SCORE 8.5

METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Gorgeous graphics, engaging characters, stacks of variety"
SCORE 9.0

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Brilliantly brutal. Xbox's most complete fighting game"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★

MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Eye-wateringly good. A new beginning for the *MK* franchise"
SCORE: 8.6

MOTOGP: URT 3
REVIEWED: Issue 46
TYPE: Racing
"Thrilling tracks and the best graphics on Xbox - you need this more than any other racer"
SCORE 9.5 XBL: ★★★★★

MTV MUSIC GEN. 3
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: Music
"Essential for anyone with aspirations of headlining at Ministry. Playable and friendly"
SCORE 8.5

NINJA GAIDEN BLACK
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: Action
"Calling all ninjas - it's now EVEN HARDER! Twice the ninja goodness for half the price"
SCORE 9.4

NHL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: US sports
"The standard annual update, but with an improved roster of dummy shots and tricks"
SCORE 8.9

OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Adventure
"An absolutely stunning, deceptively deep actioner"
SCORE 8.6

OUTRUN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Driving
"Top presentation and brilliant controls. Fast and furious racer that'll please old and new fans"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★

PANZER DRAGOON ORTA
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Cutting-edge looks and classic blasting. Gorgeous"
SCORE 8.8

PARIAH
REVIEWED: Issue 42
TYPE: FPS
"Absorbing, tightly paced, ace mapmaker, incredible physics, innovative weapons system"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: FPS/Action
"Beat your chest with joy! This is the true king of the jungle..."
SCORE 8.7

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP. I & II
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: MMORPG
"This should be the most addictive online game ever"
SCORE N/A XBL: ★★★★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: Adventure
"The Prince is the new king of platformers. Truly outstanding."
SCORE 9.0

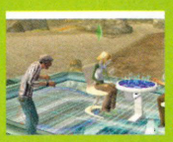
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: Sports
"Proving that *Pro Evo* is still the greatest sports game ever"
SCORE 9.5

PSI-OPS: TMC
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Third-person shooter
"Inventive powers offer hours of fun. Outstanding AI compensates for poor story"
SCORE 8.6

RED DEAD REVOLVER
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Frantic, fun and reasonably demanding. Highly polished arcade entertainment"
SCORE 8.5

ROCKY LEGENDS
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"Excellent visuals and gameplay. Controlling Creed, Lang and Drago is a big plus"
SCORE 8.6

SERIOUS SAM II
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: FPS
"Bonkers, balls-out blaster. All first-person shooters should be this much fun"
SCORE: 8.5



THE SIMS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: World builder
"The little people are back, this time with proper console controls. Hurrah!"
SCORE: 8.5

SOUL CALIBUR II
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"The most fluid fighter ever. Easy to pick up, tough to master, graphically superb"
SCORE 9.1

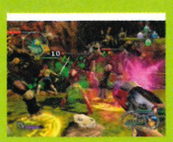
SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
REVIEWED: Issue 41
TYPE: Action adventure
"Elegant, engaging, electrifying. The best *Splinter Cell* yet"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★★

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: MMOFPS
"Top notch *Battlefront* action made even more accessible"
SCORE 8.5

STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS
REVIEWED: Issue 37
TYPE: RPG
"All that was good from *KOTOR*, in a far more oppressive place"
SCORE 9.3

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO
REVIEWED: Issue 40
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Amalgamation of every quality shooter - it's great fun to play"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★

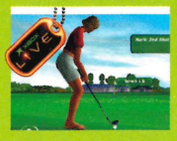
STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Mech action
"The best robot game ever. Evil learning curve but worth it"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★



SUDEKI
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: RPG
"One of the best-looking games on Xbox. A brilliant, vibrant adventure romp with great AI"
SCORE 8.7

SUPER MONKEY BALL DELUXE
REVIEWED: Issue 41
TYPE: Party
"The gameplay is simple but so addictive. A huge challenge too"
SCORE 8.6

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Stealth
"Captivating, atmospheric, with massive replayability"
SCORE 8.9



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006
REVIEWED: Issue 48
TYPE: Sports
"The Tiger-man finally gets a Live mode for his golf game!"
SCORE 9.0

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Racing
"The most realistic, detailed racer ever. Gorgeous graphics, incredible variety and handling"
SCORE 9.1 XBL: ★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Atmospheric with online play"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Looks ace and only £20!"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3: LOCKDOWN
REVIEWED: Issue 47
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The most accessible one yet"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Hawk on Xbox Live! It's ace!
SCORE: 8.8

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"The guvnor of Xbox managerial titles. Works with *FIFA 2005*"
SCORE 8.7

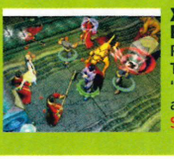
ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: ACTION
"Spidey versus Venom! Make a big mess of New York in this comic-book grudge match"
SCORE: 8.5

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT
REVIEWED: Issue 40
TYPE: Shooter
"First-person blasting and frantic third-person action. Superb"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★★

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEAT. SHAUN MURRAY
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Outrageous arcade action"
SCORE 8.6

WORLD CHAMP. SNOOKER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Sports
"Tension-filled fun for anyone remotely interested in snooker"
SCORE 8.8 XBL: ★★★

XIII
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Unique, stylish and captivating. You can't afford to miss this superb FPS"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★



X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF APOCALYPSE
REVIEWED: Issue 49
TYPE: Adventure/RPG
"Super-detailed comic adventuring goodness"
SCORE: 8.5

Full interactive Reviews Directory

Scroll through more than 600 Xbox games on the disc. Press the A button on your controller to read the full reviews!

Official Xbox Magazine ON THE DISC

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

ELITE CLASSICS

All of these Elite-scoring games are now available for the incredible price of £19.99 in the Xbox Classics range...

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER
REVIEWED: Issue 09 TYPE: Platformer
"Inventive and intriguing with a unique feel. *Blinx* looks superb and has loads of genuine replay value. Essential"
SCORE 9.3

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN
REVIEWED: Issue 34 TYPE: Driving
"Essential arcade racer, brimming with deliciousness. The *Burnout* franchise comes of age"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★

COLIN McRAE RALLY 04
REVIEWED: Issue 21 TYPE: Driving
"Rallying at its grandest, prettiest and most absorbing. The rock-hard Expert mode and Xbox Live leaderboards make for a long lifespan. Handles brilliantly"
SCORE 9.1

DEAD OR ALIVE 3
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Accessible, slick and satisfying. Simple to pick up; instantly enjoyable. A visual benchmark - striking, breathtaking levels populated with superbly animated fighters"
SCORE 8.5

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35 TYPE: Sports
"Significantly improved gameplay, massively deep career modes and Live play"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
REVIEWED: Issue 30 TYPE: Strategy
"Fantastic and innovative strategy title that captures the visceral atmosphere of modern-day warfare. Punishing learning curve, but huge missions and ace lighting"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★

HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: First-person shooter
"A masterpiece; without question one of the best games ever. The pitch of the missions is so perfect that you're rarely frustrated. Brilliant story, unmatched level design"
SCORE 9.7

MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY
REVIEWED: Issue 04 TYPE: Bike racing
"Hotly contested bike racing combined with a perfect control method. Sumptuous visuals and ace presentation"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★

NINJA GAIDEN
REVIEWED: Issue 29 TYPE: Action
"Groundbreaking beat 'em up action of the highest calibre. Looks stunning, and oozes style. A tough pig of a game that's a must for anyone with the ability to hold a pad"
SCORE 9.2

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 35 TYPE: Sports
"The most accurate and fun footy sim on a console. Superb stuff"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Driving
"Epic racer blending accuracy with entertainment. Daunting at first, but rewards with masses of enjoyment"
SCORE 8.9

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Driving
"The most complete and best-looking street racer. The consummate and definitive driving experience. Hefty single-player mode and virtually limitless enjoyment on Live"
SCORE 9.3 XBL: ★★★★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
REVIEWED: Issue 37 TYPE: Adventure
"The Prince is back - grittier, enhanced combat and a darker storyline set the tone for the sequel. This is ass-kicking adventuring at its best"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Driving
"An excellent, searingly fast rally game. Big variety of gameplay and a tough career mode means there's plenty to keep you occupied. Handsome as hell, too"
SCORE 8.5

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2
REVIEWED: Issue 30 TYPE: Driving
"Edge-of-your-seat racer that doesn't overload on technical details. Equally fun for a quick blast or becoming absorbed in Career mode. Looks great, with brilliant Live multiplayer"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR
REVIEWED: Issue 16 TYPE: First-person shooter
"A cracking action shooter that is superb in single-player and provides outstanding team play experiences on Live. An epic, gripping, cinematic adventure from start to finish."
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★★

SPIDER-MAN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 32 TYPE: Action
"Fun tutorial, simple combat, and a huge environment to explore - you'll be smashing and swinging your way around the streets of New York in no time"
SCORE 8.6

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
REVIEWED: Issue 35 TYPE: Action shooter
"A breathtaking game that's a real joy to play from start to finish, every time"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
REVIEWED: Issue 20 TYPE: RPG
"A whole universe with a thousand paths to explore. One of the most compelling games on any console ever"
SCORE 9.5

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: First-person shooter
"A textbook example of how to do movie/game tie-ins. Intuitive controls, stylish, atmospheric and violent"
SCORE 9.0

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Action
"Recreates the film beautifully. You'll be ripped out of your chair and launched into Middle-Earth. You won't look back. A blockbuster action game"
SCORE 8.5

TIMESPLITTERS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 09 TYPE: First-person shooter
"Polished, frantic, hyper-paced action. There'll be a McDonalds on Mars before you can exhaust all the deathmatch variations"
SCORE 9.3

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON
REVIEWED: Issue 11 TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Confident and addictive. Suspense and excitement by the bucketload. Hugely playable; easy command interface and intuitive controls. *Ghost Recon* is the strategy/action benchmark"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: First-person shooter
"A great variety of missions, excellent multiplayer. Looks fantastic, sounds incredible and the action is relentless. The ultimate package for fans of ultra-serious realism-based first-person shooters"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Action adventure
"An amazingly good-looking, exciting adventure that's so addictive it should carry a Government Stealth Warning. Superbly tense with lots of cool gadgets to play with"
SCORE 9.0

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 11 TYPE: Extreme sports
"Silky trick system. User-friendly structure and loads of new ideas. Levels aren't quite as interesting as *THPS3*'s though"
SCORE 8.6

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 24 TYPE: Extreme sports
"The slight change in direction is refreshing. Story mode is impressive, though there's still no Live play. Hop off and explore!"
SCORE 8.6

TOP SPIN
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Sports
"Incredible. This is the best tennis game in the world. Even if you don't like tennis you'll soon be hooked. Massive single-player game and awesome with friends"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
REVIEWED: Issue 10 TYPE: First-person shooter
"Frantic action will have you playing for hours at a time. Fast yet easily controllable and limitless fun on Xbox Live"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★

WE ARE 50! THAT'S ISSUES NOT YEARS, OF COURSE. ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE YEARS. TURN TO PAGE 042 TO READ THE FUN-FILLED HISTORY OF THE GREATEST CONSOLE TO COME OUT SINCE THE WAR!

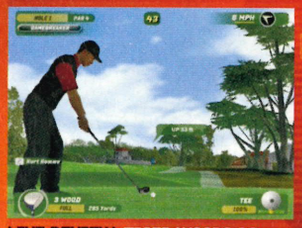
Play:More

PLAY:MORE is about getting more from your games. From tips and cheats to in-depth Masterclasses, you'll find everything, explore everywhere and beat everyone.

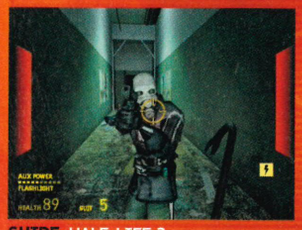
It's about playing games until the disc wears out. It's about demonstrating your expertise, proving you're the best and taking your place among our elite community of Xbox gamers. It's about winning stuff, beating the challenges and earning respect from your fellow gamers.

Play:More is where you make *Official Xbox Magazine* your magazine.

DEMO: TOTAL OVERDOSE



LIVE REVIEW: TIGER WOODS 06



GUIDE: HALF-LIFE 2

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BT

Unlock the true potential of Xbox Live with BT Broadband, and challenge gamers worldwide with the latest Xbox Live games.

Experience the adrenaline rush and harsh realities of war as never before, get to know your squadmates, and fight alongside them through an epic story in *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One*! Experience a wide variety of missions on land, sea, and in the air, with the aid of over three dozen authentic American, Italian, French and German weapons. Charge into battle together as Allied and Axis planes duel overhead, artillery explosions shake the ground and choke the air, and bullets and shrapnel streak past you and your squadmates. Take the battle online with BT Broadband for intense Axis vs Allies team-based multiplayer action on Xbox Live.

To find out more about superfast BT Broadband, offering speeds of up to 2Mb*, check out www.bt.com/gaming/oxm

***If your line won't support 2Mb, we'll offer the best speed available. Terms and conditions apply.**

On Your Disc...

GENTLEMEN (AND LADIES): start your engines for this, the 50th *Official Xbox Magazine* Game Disc. And what better way to kick off this momentous occasion than by presenting a huge exclusive demo of *Need for Speed Most Wanted*, the latest in the hugely popular series.

Plus, we've also got massive demos of *Total Overdose* and *Serious Sam II* for you to get busy with, as well as vampire shooter *Darkwatch*, which includes a fully playable online mode so you can get staking your mates over Xbox Live NOW! Not forgetting the usual mass of Xbox and Xbox 360 video demos we always like to spoil you with.

That's simply hours and hours of 50th anniversary Game Disc fun. Pedal to the metal!

Need For Speed Most Wanted

Reviewed: Issue 50 | Score: 8.0
Players: 1

LIKE AN extended episode of *Police, Camera, Stop* on acid, EA's venerable street racer is back – and so are the boys in blue. Gone is the strictly night-based Japanese tuner culture of *Need for Speed: Underground*, replaced instead by daytime races and the most vindictive constabulary force this side of Guantanamo Bay. It's you and your beloved motor racing not just for pinks, but to stay one step ahead of the fuzz as well.

The demo is split into three separate parts, giving you the perfect opportunity to sample some of the different modes of play on offer in *Need For Speed Most Wanted*. Firstly you'll need to take on the Tollbooth Time Trial, which is a straight race against the clock. Secondly you'll have to face off against your fellow *Need for Speed*ers in a straight Sprint Race. And finally you'll have to complete a one-on-one Blacklist Race against your chief rival, drag-race stylee.

Of course, burning around residential areas at 100mph-plus is bound to attract the attention of the po-po cars, which is why each section of the demo concludes with a mad street chase between you and the police. Stay clear and you're fine, but get boxed in by the peelers' superior driving techniques and you could end up in the slammer. Still, with a constantly regenerating tank of nitrous on hand you shouldn't have much trouble outfoxing the Old Bill, right?

↑ The Highway Patrol are the Stormtroopers of real life.

Prize Challenge

This one's simple – we want you to clock the fastest time possible in the Sprint Race section of the demo (not including the police chase afterwards). If your time's the fastest we receive, the good people at JOYTECH will dispatch two of their finest Neo S Wireless controllers to you forthwith, thus ensuring years of pleasure-filled gaming. As this month's disc is rated 15, you must be 15 years or older to enter. The closing date is 22 December.

ON THE DISC

STEER
GEAR SHIFT
STEER
A HANDBRAKE
B NITROUS
X SPEEDBREAKER
Y LOOK BACK
L BRAKE/REVERSE
R ACCELERATE
NOT USED
CHANGE CAMERA

GOAL!!!

We want your PES 5 Wonder Goals!

IN AN IDEA suspiciously similar to that on *Match of the Day*, we're launching our very own *PES5* Goal of the Month contest! Save your greatest *PES5* goals to a memory card, send them in, and we'll shortlist the best every month for pride of place on the Game Disc. An Alan Hansen-style debate will then ensue, with each month's winner receiving a top random prize! So get your boots on, start scoring and send your cards to *PES5* GOTM, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. Don't forget to include your full address so we can return your memory card!

↑ Try not to trip when practising.

Challenges

WELCOME TO the section of the magazine where we ask you to polish your trumpet and blow it louder than anybody else. In a games-playing sense, of course. Think of it as your chance to become a celebrity! Look out for challenges based on both the Game Disc demos and full-price titles. Some are for prizes, others just for glory. Check it out!

LA RUSH

Game Disc 48
THE CHALLENGE: Complete Street Race 3 in the fastest time possible

NAME	LOCATION	TIME
JAMES ANDERSON	CAMBRIDGE	1:13.84
MICHAEL RYDER	BIRMINGHAM	1:15.49
STUART CULLEN	LARKHALL	1:15.88
DEAN KING	LONDON	1:16.88
GLYN HORSLEY	KIRKBY	1:20.67
HARVEY BINNING	LEICESTER	1:21.78
DARRON EDEN	LIVERPOOL	1:22.94
PAUL IRISH	TORQUAY	1:24.12
DAVE MARDELL	STEVENAGE	1:25.37
G MARSHALL	DONCASTER	1:29.52

And it's a big winning shout out and funny hip-hop finger-snaps to Stuart Cullen for his 'well wikkid' driving 'skillz' on *LA Rush*. Da JOYTECH pads be comin' atcha in da post, innit blud. Rrrrrrrrrrrr-ispec't!

Issue 50 Challenges

Dear *Official Xbox Magazine*
Here is my Demo Challenge score:

NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

My best time in the sprint is:

.....

SERIOUS SAM II

My best score is:

.....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Email Address .....

Telephone number .....

Fill out the form and send it to Game Disc 50 Demo Challenge, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP by 22 December 2005.

NEED FOR SPEEDBREAKER: DON'T FORGET TO HIT THE X BUTTON FOR YOUR SPEEDBREAKER DURING THE BLACKLIST RACE. PERFECT FOR A QUICK HIT OF SLOW-MOTION CONTROL

Reviews Directory

WE'RE TAKING a break from Content Download, but in the meantime, don't forget that we've still got our massive interactive reviews database, containing every single Xbox game review we've ever written. This huge and indispensable guide is ideal, whether you're completely new to the Xbox scene, or just a handy reference when you're looking to buy a new game.

Xbox 360 Videos

Don't forget to check the special Xbox 360 section of the disc for awesome footage from some of tomorrow's hottest next-generation games, including...

Call of Duty 2
Completely different to *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One* on Xbox - see real in-game stuff from the Xbox 360 version of the hit World War II FPS series.

↑ **It's all the war you'll ever need.**

Kameo: Elements of Power
Get ready for Xbox 360 with this new trailer for Rare's release day game. Pure unbridled fantasy meets cutting edge visuals. Sweet!

Gun
This seizure-risking trailer for Neversoft's wild west thriller should give you a good indication of how the *Tony Hawk's* developer is bringing period America to Xbox 360.

Frame City Killer
Namco's Xbox 360 debut - slick, stylish, and almost pornographically over-the-top. Top shooting madness.

CHROMEHOUNDS
More Japanese-inspired stuff as Sega's giant robotic armour game crashes onto Xbox 360. Big mechs, big guns and even bigger explosions are the order of the day.

Dead Rising
The dead walk... in their thousands! Cacpom's new survival-horror looks set to put the heebee-jeebies up anyone with a fear of large crowds.

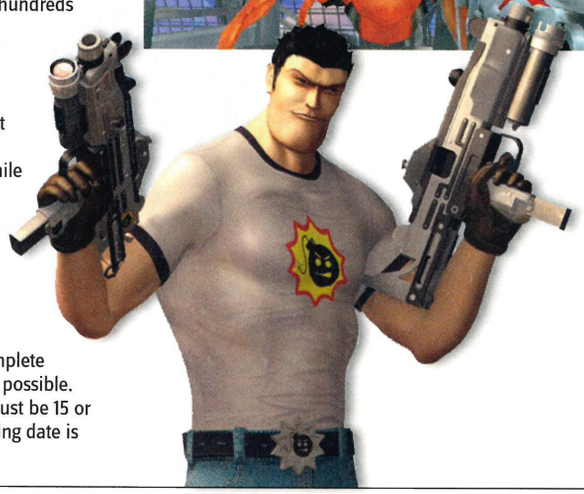
Serious Sam II

Reviewed: Issue 47 | Score: 8.5 | Players: 1

THE OBJECT OF this manic single-level demo of *Serious Sam II* is seriously simple: if it moves shoot it. If it still moves, shoot it again. And if it still moves after that - and it might - shoot it again with something much bigger. In fact, this is as pure as first-person shooting gets: absolutely hundreds of on-screen monsters at once, and thousands of scattered rounds of ammunition to shoot them with.

This demo is split into two main sections: the first is a standard on-foot level, complete with numerous tricky jumps to pull off midway through, while the second lets you take flight in a mini-combat plane.

Prize Challenge
If you fancy winning yourself a nifty pair of gloriously fit JOYTECH Neo S Controllers, *OXM*'s favourite wireless joypad, then all you have to do is complete the demo level with the highest score possible. As this month's disc is rated 15 you must be 15 or older to enter, alright sonny? The closing date is 22 December 2005.



ON THE DISC

Total Overdose

Reviewed: Issue 48 **Score:** 7.6 **Players:** 1
Arriba! If it isn't *Max Payne* with tequila and lime all down his shirt and a bowl of chilli wedged between his cheeks. Welcome to *Total Overdose*, the spicy new Mexican-style shooter from Eidos.

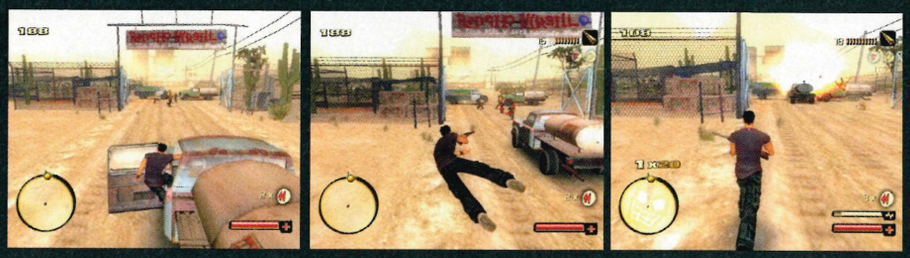
This huge demo allows you to play a cut-down version of one of the early missions. Don't worry though: it's still enormous, with dozens of grimy bad guys to blast away. There are loads of different moves to play around with, such as the slow-mo Shoot Dodge feature, and you can wall-run like some south-of-the-border *Matrix* reject. Best of all is the Straw Hat Steal - drill a bad guy in the head then catch his titfer before it falls to the ground!

↑ **It's like that film with that guy!**

ON THE DISC

Replay

Turn any vehicle you're driving into a fast-moving missile of death by hitting the gas and leaping out at the last moment. KAA-BOOOOM!



Darkwatch

Reviewed: Issue 48 **Score:** 8.0 **Players:** 1-8

SHARPEN YOUR stakes and crack out the garlic for this vamp-tastic single- and multiplayer demo of Ubisoft's hellish new FPS *Darkwatch*.

The story is typical cowboy-horror stuff, in as much as cowboy-horror stuff is typical - you play Jericho, a part-vampire gunslinger who has to saddle up and ride forth on a mission of undead-bashing mercy. And, well, that's about it really.

Suffice to say, shooting medieval monsters to death (again) is the name of the game.

This demo gives single players a level's worth of action - look out for blood left behind by fallen demons as this can be used to power your special attacks - while the multiplayer demo lets you play deathmatch across two different maps with up to eight people at a time. The single-player demo is also accessed from the Xbox Live menu on the Game Disc. Look out for the full Live review in next month's issue.

← It's vampires vs varmints in our ace Live demo!

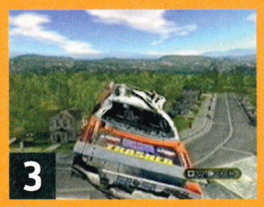
VHS Play:More On The Disc

EARN A PLACE in Xbox history and appear in your section of the Game Disc! Play:More brings you the maddest tricks, and we love to show Xbox Live clans causing mayhem.

Complete and cut out this coupon and attach it to the front of your VHS tape or DVD. Entries must be less than ten minutes long and rewound to the correct starting position. Please don't have custom soundtracks playing.

Waaaah! The intriguingly named duo of Cornish Riskie and Numpty007 show off some interesting rocket jumps and tricks in this clever *Halo 2* movie.

See Glyn Horsley's ridiculously fast challenge-winning time in this insane piece of *Burnout: Revenge* footage. This is reckless driving perfection.



***FlatOut* high jump specialist Arronxan Poucher brings us a selection of over-the-top jumpage and crashage. We wouldn't want to be the poor driver in these clips.**

It's nice to see people acting like complete mentalists on *Halo 2* because they can! A cool video courtesy of Ahmed Al-Refaie - the four-seater Warthog is killer.

Glyn Horsley's other prize-winning clip shows him pegging through our recent *Scooby-Doo! Unmasked* demo. Give the man credit: these are flawless skills.

Play:More On The Disc

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Postcode _____

Description of my Top Play _____

❑ I have made sure that custom soundtracks are turned off.

Calling all Master Ninjas!

DON'T FORGET, we're still on the lookout for *Ninja Gaiden Black* masters everywhere to send in footage of themselves tonking *NGB*'s Mission mode on Master Ninja difficulty level. Just record yourself selecting the hardest difficulty on your VHS cassette or DVD then wow us with your sword-swishing talents. Send it in to the usual address and we'll put the best clips in a forthcoming Play:More special on the Game Disc.

Challenges

ANOTHER TOP challenge league for you. If you want to suggest a new challenge or have some results from an event you've organised, send them in to the usual address and we'll do our best to get them mentioned in the magazine.

↑ Gavin's taking the train up next weekend.

FLATOUT

Full Game Challenge

THE CHALLENGE: Achieve the highest combined jump distance over three jumps (in one attempt) in the high jump event.

NAME	DISTANCE
Osky	400.74m
Paul King	386.77m
Greg Noles	384.18m
Warren Kelling	382.09m
Arronxan Poucher	375.74m
Stephen Holder	354.32m
Daniel Parkhouse	339.46m
Clive Wolstenhome	338.17m
Daniel Eales	336.60m
Matthew Lang	334.53m

Congratulations go to Osky for out-jumping everybody in this popular challenge. You can see his awesome winning jump on this month's Game Disc. That's the end of the *FlatOut* challenge; look out for a new rolling challenge in next month's magazine.

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

Full Game Challenge

THE CHALLENGE: Fastest time on El Cortez Dash

NAME	DISTANCE
James Greehalgh	19:10
Nick Black	20:44
Andrew Shariat	25.27
Austen Maguire	28.22
Paul Bell	36.36
Jonathon Bryant	37.95
Ben Duguid	38.61
Yukiko Goto	39.74
Zam Khan	39.85
Marc Jay	41.12

The competition is certainly hotting up in our *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* rolling challenge, with some super-fast times speeding in. Think you've got the motoring muscle to do better? Send your times to the usual address, or email mark.robins@futurenet.co.uk

PUMP UP THE VOLUME DON'T FORGET TO HIKE THE VOLUME UP IN THE BLACK VIDEO DEMO ON THE DISC. YOU'LL WANT TO FOR THE FULL EAR-SPLITTING INTENSITY OF IT

EventsCalendar

Your official guide to this month's hot releases, events and Live gaming sessions

THUR 24 NOVEMBER 05

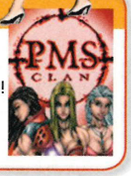
Fansite Event
Project Gotham Racing 2
Race night
www.matchxbox360.co.uk

FRI 25 NOVEMBER 05

Fragdoll Friday!
Far Cry Instincts
Play the girls from 8 to 10pm
www.fragdolls.com/uk

SAT 26 NOVEMBER 05

Clan Night
Burnout: Revenge
Girls' Night In with the PMS clan!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/pmsclan.htm



SUN 27 NOVEMBER 05

Winning Weekend
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat
Register now to win limited edition Adidas gear!
www.xbox.com

MON 28 NOVEMBER 05

Featured Game
Star Wars Battlefront II
The galaxy needs YOU!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/s/starwarsbattlefront2/

TUE 29 NOVEMBER 05

Mystery Gamer
Play him (or her!) tonight at *Far Cry Instincts*
www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/calendar/mysterygamer/

WED 30 NOVEMBER 05

Tactical Operations Night
It's a Clancy double bill! Play *Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike* and *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* over Live!
www.xbox.com

THURS 01 DECEMBER 05

Featured Game
Halo 2
What better game to play the night before Xbox 360 is launched!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/

FRI 02 DECEMBER 05

Xbox 360 is launched today!
www.xbox.com

SAT 03 DECEMBER 05

Winning Weekend
Project Gotham Racing 2
Register now to win an ultimate gamer's multimedia chair!

SUN 04 DECEMBER 05

Trueplayerz
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat
Take part in the monthly Sunday gaming event organised by Joystick Junkies.
www.joystickjunkies.com

MON 05 DECEMBER 05

Skive with Live
Turn to page 127 to take part in our mega *MotoGP 3* competition.
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/m/motogp3/

TUE 06 DECEMBER 05

Sports Arena Night
Get on Live and play some *PES4* and *PES5*!
www.xbox.com

WED 07 DECEMBER 05

Featured Game
Need For Speed Most Wanted
Give the cop-baiting a break for some underground racing on Live
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/n/needforspeedmostwanted/

THUR 08 DECEMBER 05

Fansite Event
Project Gotham Racing 2
Take part in a classic street-racing tourney courtesy of LMS
www.thelastmanstanding.net

FRI 09 DECEMBER 05

Clan Night
Rainbow Six: Lockdown
Take on the PMS clan!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/pmsclan.htm

SAT 10 DECEMBER 05

Fansite Event
Far Cry Instincts
Get involved and become king of the paradise island!
www.xboxelite.co.uk

SUN 11 DECEMBER 05

Winning Weekend
Conker: Live and Reloaded
Sign up now to be in with a chance of winning an amazing prize!
www.xbox.com

MON 12 DECEMBER 05

Developer Showdown
MotoGP 3
Take on the developers
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/m/motogp3/

TUE 13 DECEMBER 05

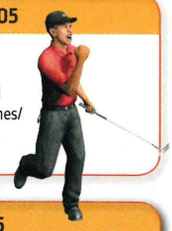
Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike and *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* tonight!
www.xbox.com

WED 14 DECEMBER 05

Fansite event
Halo 2
Shotgun Slayer
Register now to get involved.
www.thelastmanstanding.net

THUR 15 DECEMBER 05

Featured Game
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
Go for some online birdies!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/t/tigerwoods06/



FRI 16 DECEMBER 05

Fragdoll Friday!
Far Cry Instincts
Play the girls from 8 to 10pm
www.fragdolls.com/uk

SAT 17 DECEMBER 05

Winning Weekend
Halo 2
Register now to win an awesome 32in HDTV
www.xbox.com

SUN 18 DECEMBER 05

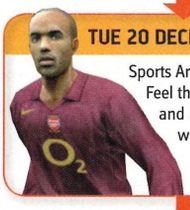
Winning Weekend
Halo 2
Register now to win an awesome 32in HDTV
www.xbox.com

MON 19 DECEMBER 05

Featured Game
Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes
It's MAGIC on Live!
www.xbox.com/en-GB/games/k/kingdomunderfireheroes/

TUE 20 DECEMBER 05

Sports Arena Night
Feel the goal rush with *PES4* and *PES5* on Live!
www.xbox.com



WED 21 DECEMBER 05

Look out for the new issue of *Official Xbox Magazine*, on sale tomorrow!

All dates and events subject to change due to reasons beyond our control. For up to date Xbox Live event news visit www.xbox.com/en-gb/community/calendar

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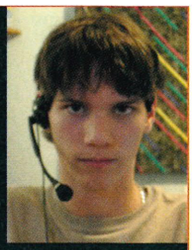
Game Star of the Month



Name: Adam Plumb
Age: 17
GamerTag: Plumsaround
Home town: Colchester, Essex

THIS MONTH'S GAME Star of the month crown goes to Adam Plumb, the winner of Virgin Megastore's UK *Forza Motorsport* Challenge 2005. Not a bad feat given he only joined the Xbox Live Community in June this year.

Adam had to pit his driving skills against 1,200 *Forza* addicts to win a place in the grand final of the tournament, in which he put pedal to the metal to win an actual *Forza*-themed car!

We caught up with Adam and quizzed him on his fruitful win. "I'd like to thank www.ForzaCentral.com for many hours of tuning tips and general chat on the *Forza Motorsport* forums. I also had a lot of support from my car club, Team Technique (www.TeamTechnique.co.uk). They helped me to be a better, faster racer and are a great car club!"

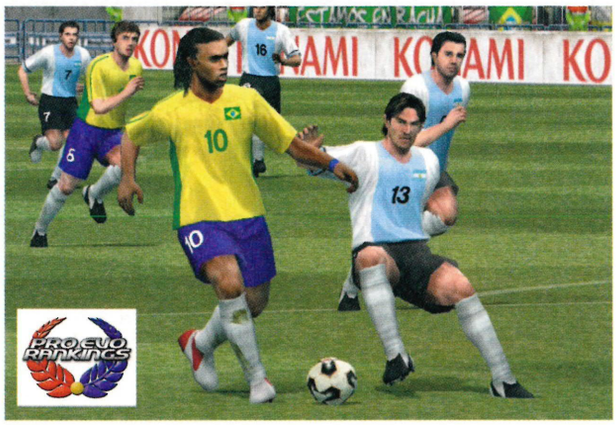
Adam is currently learning to drive around his home town of Colchester, although he's happy to speed past you on the driving circuits of Xbox Live should you require a beating.

Top of the League

Sign up for the biggest PES tournament ever

So you think you're pretty special at *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* then? Well now's the time to prove it. Konami, in association with Future, is pleased to announce that registration for the 2005-2006 *PES* National League is now open, and you're all invited to take part!

The system, known as Pro Evo Rankings, is a huge *PES* ladder, wherein every match counts towards your position. It all kicks off this Christmas with thousands of players already registered. To get involved, sign up at www.proevorankings.com and then keep checking *OXM* for further details.



↑ **Have you got the skills to take on the best?**

The X-Word

With Luke 'Duke' Newcombe, community expert

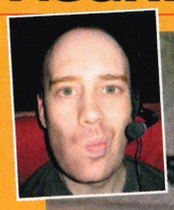
THIS MONTH I've been privileged enough to take part in an extensive playtest of the Xbox 360 launch titles, as well as have a good poke around the Xbox 360's dashboard! All I can say is, "whoa, are you gamers in for a treat!" I'm almost blind with excitement!

I've also been engrossed with the *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* demo, and I really can't wait for the official release. Talking about anticipation, the build up to *Half-Life 2*'s release has been all the rage across the community forums, and it looks like you lot can't wait to see the mind-blowing physics in action!

Star Wars: Battlefront II is another game to have recently blasted its way into my hands, and I'm looking forward to using some Jedi mind tricks on you all as we engage in some epic battles. As always, keep your events, tourneys, competitions and gatherings coming in to luke@msxbox-world.com - I'll be sure to check them all out. Until then, may the Force be with you...

Clans Reunited

Addicted to Halo



↑ **terahertz and Evilpoo line up with their friends for an online family photos. Aah, sweet.**

THIS MONTH'S Clan of the Month is the DVDF Xbox Clan, which was established in November 2004 in preparation for *Halo 2*'s launch. The clan was initially set up by three Xbox Live stalwarts, terahertz (Richard Sherwood), Evilpoo (Andy Baldwin) and UR1D1UM (Richard Fletcher), but has since grown into a bustling community of gamers from around the world, arranging and organising all kinds of gaming fun.

The DVDF Xbox Clan boys are mad for *Halo 2*, but you can find them racing around the driving circuits of Xbox Live. More notably, the clan has ranked up over 4,000 matches on *Halo 2*, making them very hard to beat in matchmaking!

We highly recommend you head over to the DVDF Clan's website (www.dvdf-xbox.co.uk) and send them a challenge. They're ready for you.

Challenges

MOTOGP 3
Skive with Live challenge
The Challenge: Get the fastest lap time on Catalunya Time Trial as possible.

Once again we are truly astonished by the quality of gaming brought out by Skive with Live with two world top ten times. Congrats go to F1 Raikkonen who just pipped phil14. Check out Skive with Live on page 127.

A BIG SHOUT OUT: TO NUTTER45 AND NUTTYGREG OF THE DVDF CLAN - THE SHIRT SAYS "CAN'T WAIT TO HAMMER YOU AT PES 5 SOON!" GOT AN XBOX MESSAGE FOR A LIVE FRIEND YOU WANT US TO SHARE? LET US KNOW AT THE USUAL ADDRESS

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE™

LiveReviews

We take a look at recently reviewed Xbox Live-enabled games

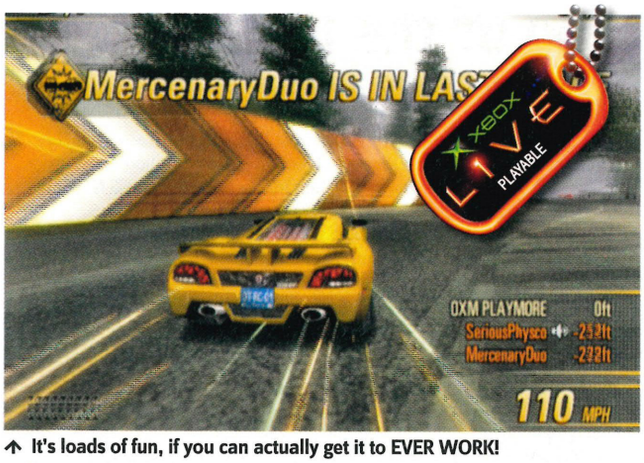
Burnout: Revenge

The curse of the EA servers strikes again!

Reviewed: Issue 47 | Score: 8.9
Players: 1-6 | Live: 2-6 players

EA'S FIRST attempt at doing a Live game on Xbox was *Burnout 3: Takedown* (Issue 34, 9.4), which sucked big-time online. So you'd be forgiven for thinking, given the time between the two, that *Burnout: Revenge* would have improved somewhat. The short answer is: it hasn't.

In 45 minutes we managed to nab ourselves three races, all of which were peculiarly random affairs, with lobbies dropping out for no reason, and games starting before an entire race was lined up properly. At times we had a whole lobby of six raring to go, yet the game wasn't 'ready' to start for some reason. Then people would crash out, and the game would start with just a couple of cars. Not what we'd call a particularly encouraging start.

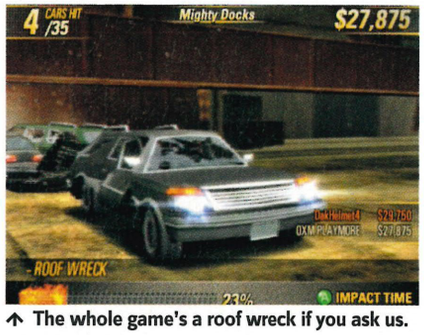


↑ It's loads of fun, if you can actually get it to EVER WORK!

Granted, once we managed the herculean task of getting into an actual working game, *Revenge* was a sturdy, varied beast with all manner of Crash and Race modes available. The Team Crash mode is easily the most interesting, with races consisting of people trying to outdo and out-smash each other. Nice, simple, neck-snapping stuff.

But overshadowing it all is the monumental frustration you have to go through before getting to what is undeniably a good game. It's a real chore,

↑ "Hello? HELLO? Is there anyone in here?"



↑ The whole game's a roof wreck if you ask us.

and the interface is so unstable you'll wonder whether it's actually worth it. Maybe *Burnout: Revenge* is so popular it's clogging the system, but whatever the reason, after glaring at a blank lobby screen for a quarter of an hour, you'll probably be past caring. There's a great Live game lurking under the tangle of server bloopers here, but only the extremely patient will find it.

The Verdict

Another hopeless mess on EA's servers. It's good when it works, but everything's so unstable that won't be very often.

2/5

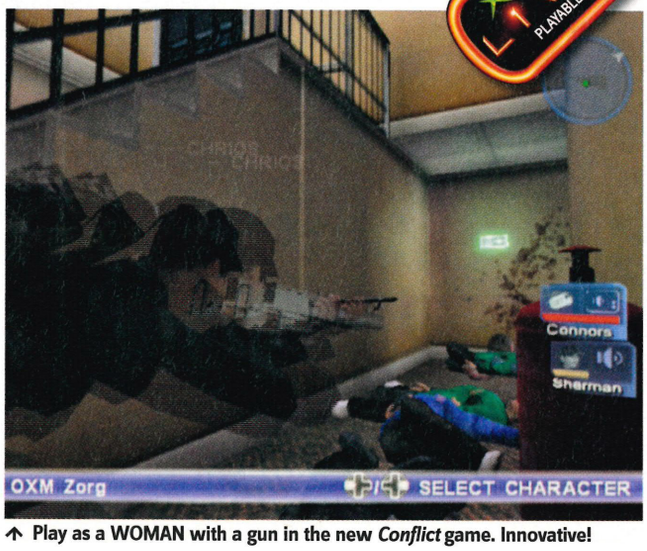
Conflict: Global Assault

New Conflict is online. Hands up who wants to be the girl!

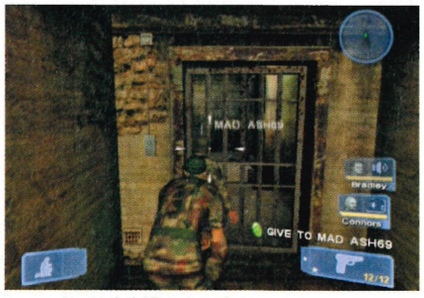
Reviewed: Issue 47 | Score: 8.1
Players: 1-4 | Live: 2-6 players

A WORD OF warning - make sure you've got a Live headset for this one. We know it might be stating the obvious, but without one you're pretty much screwed when it comes to *Global Storm*. It's co-op, co-op, co-op, all the way, and we have to say it's also kind of fun.

Four-man teams are pitted against certain scenarios and AI enemies, and without super-effective communication it's staggeringly hard to make any ground. Thankfully, the lobbies are stable and intuitively designed, allowing each member of a squad to state his specific strengths before being allowed to join a match. If a four-man squad are all snipers, there's every chance the host will boot those with weaker stats back into the lobby. If this happens, it's achingly simple to create and host your own matches, allowing for all manner of factors, including the likes of weather, friendly fire, weapons sets, and enemy AI. You also



↑ Play as a WOMAN with a gun in the new *Conflict* game. Innovative!



↑ Everyone left the *Burnout* servers to play here!

need to keep a close watch on how you perform and execute certain moves, as these yield greater rewards - a clutch of stealth kills makes for a great leaderboard standing, for example.

Global Assault may not have the instant clout of other online shooters, but clans wanting a more thoughtful shooter can't go far wrong.

The Verdict

A storming clan-pleaser that requires a balanced team to truly enjoy. One of the more enjoyable Live team combat titles.

3/5

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

Serious Sam II

Official Xbox Magazine ON THE DISC

No deathmatch? You can't be serious!

Reviewed: Issue 47 | Score: 8.5
Players: 1 | Live: 2-4 players

WITH ITS massively over-the-top guns and its visceral carnage, you'd think good old-fashioned deathmatch would be standard in online *Sam II*. But nope - for some mystifying reason, all you've got here is co-op over Xbox Live. You what?

Up to four players can run and gun their way through the entire game online. From the lobby, you can choose which level you play and on what difficulty. Unless you've only got one hand, choose hard, as it's more a race against time to shoot the enemies than a case of working together. It can be fun with actual friends, but it's a bit useless otherwise. Stick to the single-player, we would.

The Verdict

Co-op isn't the way forward for this type of game - you NEED deathmatch. What on earth were they thinking?

2//5

↑ Online *Sam II* is just a big stupid co-operative joke. Don't even bother.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06

Nice of you join us online, Mr Woods

Reviewed: Issue 48 | Score: 9.0
Players: 1-4 | Live: 2-4 players

EA HAS finally given us what we've wanted for years now; a Live-enabled Tiger Woods golf game. The good news is it all works fine - the bad news is that finding a game to join can be a real pain in the bunker. But isn't that the same old story with EA's online servers?

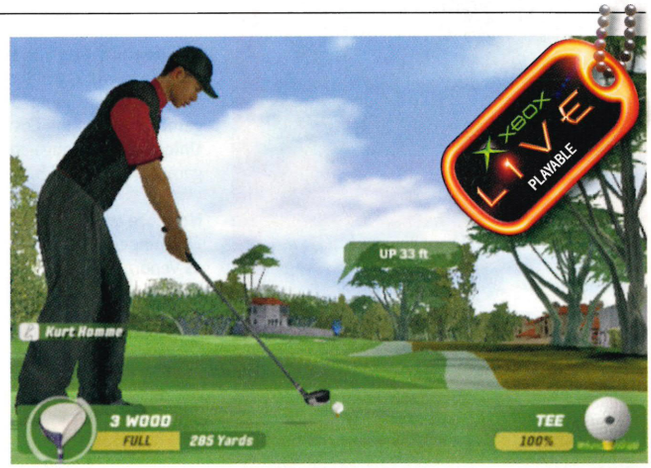
One minute the servers are deserted, the next they're full of games. Getting into a lobby and staying there is a challenge, as we constantly got dumped back to the front end.

But once you're in, it's all good. A variety of game modes are set up, and you can bet your single-player money online with others. The stats track all leaderboards and name golfers of the week, too. And luckily, because it's golf, a touch of lag doesn't affect the game!

The Verdict

You might struggle to get into a game, but it's worth the effort. *Tiger Woods 06* will be a massive hit online.

4//5



↑ Even the crap EA servers don't spoil a nice game of *Tiger* online (much).

Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes

Set Xbox Live ringing to the clash of sword on shield!

Reviewed: Issue 46 | Score: 9.0
Players: 1 | Live: 2-6 players

A GAME as involved and as hardcore as *Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes* is only going to appeal to a certain crowd, and even more so online, where fanatical players demolish noobs with accustomed ease. Even with a custom filter to cap combatants' experience, until you've played enough to build your character's skills and powers up you really are at the mercy of higher-level players.

And that's a shame, as this is a much improved online effort over the previous *KUF* game. Six players are catered for in Hero (button-bashing combat) and Troop mode - the full-on strategy-humping skirmishing of the single-player game. Matches can be ranked or unranked, and regular downloadable content is promised. Impressive, if something of a frosty welcome for *Kingdom Under Fire* newcomers.

The Verdict

Plenty of options, ranking lists and downloadable content, but new players might find it hard getting a fair fight.

3//5

↑ *KUF: Heroes* online: as violent and unfair as a sixth form rugby match.

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

FUN OF SAM: ONLINE SERIOUS SAM II MIGHT BE A PILE OF POO, BUT THE SINGLE-PLAYER GAME IS OLD-SCHOOL BLASTING AT ITS FINEST. GIVE IT A TRY - IT'S ON THIS MONTH'S GAME DISC!

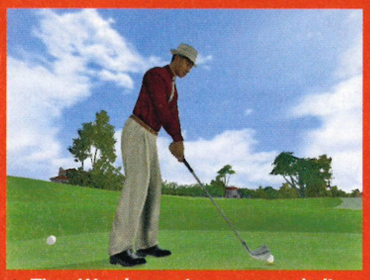
Hints&Cheats

Unlimited lives? Super-health? Characters with enormous comedy heads? Don't get stuck on games - get with the only cheats listings page you'll ever need, right over here!

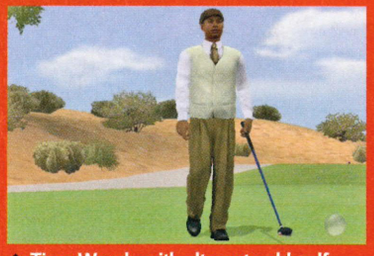
CHEATS IN MOTION

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06
Issue 48, 9.0

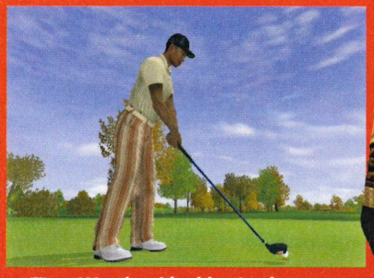
Enter the following codes in the Password section of the Options menu:



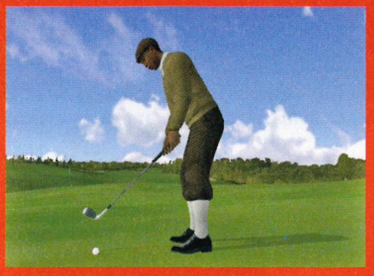
↑ Tiger Woods wearing your grandad's old Trilby: GOLDENAGE



↑ Tiger Woods with alternate old golf outfit: OLDSKOOL



↑ Tiger Woods with old striped pants: TECHNICOLOR



↑ Tiger Woods with very old golf outfit: THROWBACK

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN
Issue 49, 8.5

UNLOCKABLES
Codes are entered in the Controller Setup menu. You'll hear a sound confirming the code.

Unlock all Characters: Right, Down, Right, Down, Left, Up, Left, Right
Unlock all Comic Covers: Left, Left, Right Left, Up, Left, Left, Down
Unlock all Concept Art: Down, Down, Down, Up, Down, Up, Left, Left
Unlock all Landmarks: Up, Right, Down, Left, Down, Up, Right, Left

Full Health when Life is low
For this to work, you'll need at least one costume. When you're running low on health, pause the game and go to the Costumes menu under Unlockables. Change costumes then return to the game - you should have a full health meter.

No more cops
Finishing the Story mode allows you to play as Venom. Normally, destroying anything as Venom triggers a mini-game, where the police and the military relentlessly try to kill you. If you want to go around on a crazed rampage without ever being attacked, just destroy something to activate the mini-game. Then pause the game and go to the Unlockables menu - the game will warn you that this will exit your mission. Agree to exit the mission, and then exit the Unlockables section. Now you can smash up as much stuff as you want without getting hassled by the authorities.

↑ Venom's RUBBISH symbiote-suit is no match for the power of CHEATS.

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND
Issue 48, 8.4

CHEAT CODES
Enter the button combinations while playing a game. A message will confirm correct code entry.

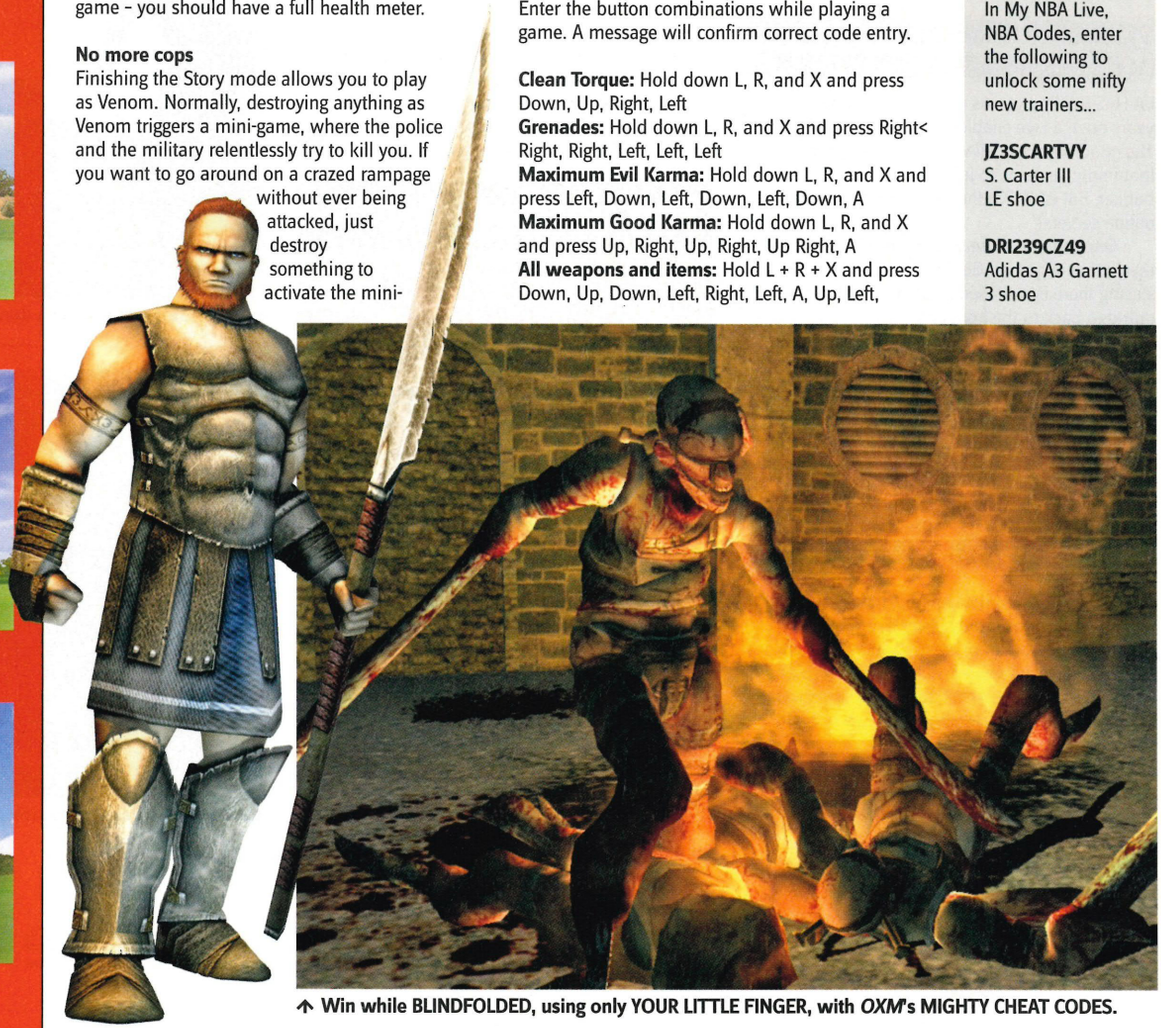
Clean Torque: Hold down L, R, and X and press Down, Up, Right, Left
Grenades: Hold down L, R, and X and press Right< Right, Right, Left, Left, Left
Maximum Evil Karma: Hold down L, R, and X and press Left, Down, Left, Down, Left, Down, A
Maximum Good Karma: Hold down L, R, and X and press Up, Right, Up, Right, Up Right, A
All weapons and items: Hold L + R + X and press Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, A, Up, Left,

NBA LIVE 06
Issue 48, 7.3

NEW SHOES
In My NBA Live, NBA Codes, enter the following to unlock some nifty new trainers...

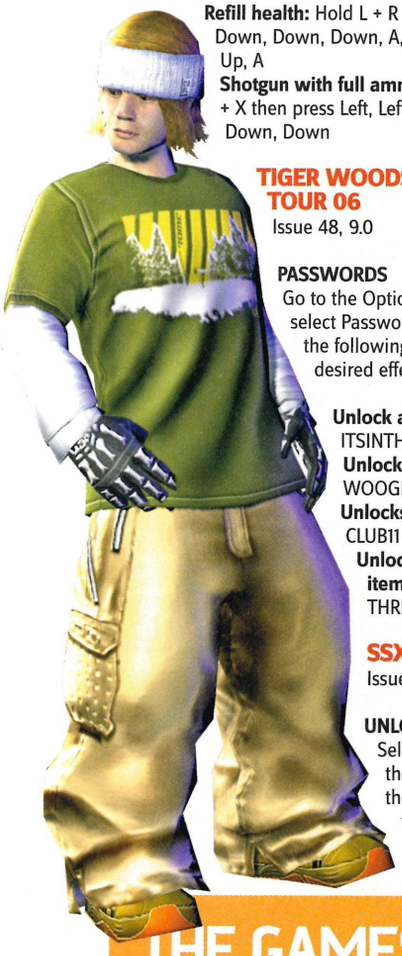
JZ3SCARTVY
S. Carter III LE shoe

DRI239CZ49
Adidas A3 Garnett 3 shoe



↑ Win while BLINDFOLDED, using only YOUR LITTLE FINGER, with *OXM*'s MIGHTY CHEAT CODES.

Down, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, A, Down, Down, Down, A, A
Full ammunition for equipped gun: Hold L + R + X and press Right, Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Left, Left, A.
Refill health: Hold L + R + X and press Down, Down, Down, A, Up, Up, Down, Up, A
Shotgun with full ammo: Hold L + R + X then press Left, Left, Left, Down, Down, Down



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06
Issue 48, 9.0

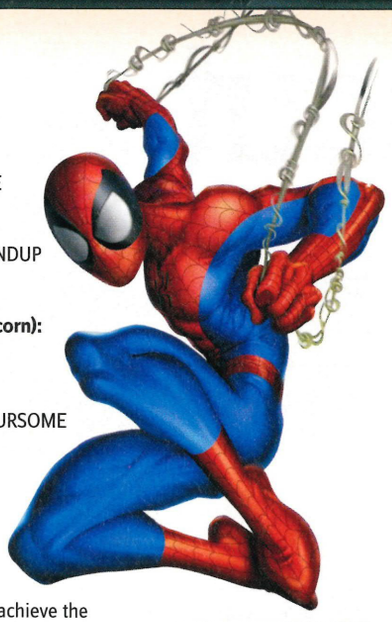
PASSWORDS
Go to the Options menu, select Password, then enter the following codes for the desired effect:

Unlock all courses: ITSINTHEHOLE
Unlock all golfers: WOOGLIN
Unlocks all clubs: CLUB11
Unlock all Adidas items: THREESTRIPE

SSX ON TOUR
Issue 49, 7.4

UNLOCKABLES
Select Cheats from the Extras Menu, then enter the following codes for the desired effect:

All clothing: FLYTHREADS
All levels: BACKSTAGEPASS
All movies: THEBIGPICTURE
Extra cash: LOOTSNOOT
Infinite boost: ZOOMJUICE
Monster tricks: JACKALOPESTYLE
Snowball fight: LETSPARTY
Stat boost: POWERPLAY
Unlock characters: ROADIEROUNDUP
Unlock Conrad the MiniViking: BIGPARTYTIME
Unlock Mitch Koobski (The Unicorn): MOREFUNTHANONE
Unlock Nigel (Rocker): THREEISACROWD
Unlock Ski Patrol character: FOURSOME



MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS
Issue 96, 5.2

Unlockable Items
Enter the following codes in the Cheats menu (under Options) to achieve the following results:

Storm's swimsuit card: MONROE
Unlock all *Fantastic Four* comics: SAVAGELAND
Unlock all *Tomorrow People* comics: NZONE
Unlock Elektra swimsuit card: THEHAND
Unlock Solara swimsuit card: REIKO

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR
Issue 48, 7.6

LEVEL UNLOCK
Even unlocking the cheat mode involves button-mashing. Highlight Extras at the main menu, then press Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left, Left (that's 11 Lefts!), Right, Right, Right, Right, Right, Right, Right (and seven Rights), X to unlock all the levels in Single Mission Replay mode.

NHL 06
Issue 48, 8.0

SUPER WAYNE GRETZKY
Create a player and enter Wayne Gretzky as a case-sensitive name to get Wayne Gretzky with all stats at 99.

THE GAMES MECHANIC

Shoving his greasy spanner right into your games-related problems

Dear Games Mechanic,
In *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*, I'm stuck on the level Freedom's Swansong. I can get past the first wave of military but I can't get past the second Titan. Can you help?
Henry Kasmi, Coventry

Ooh, this is a nasty problem. You see a lot of it, like rust on Eastern European cars. It's easily fixable, though. You need to concentrate on Hammer Tossing the Abrams tanks at the Titan as quickly as you can. Your Critical Mass move is also effective here. Good luck! Don't come back if it doesn't work!

Dear Games Mechanic,
I hear that you can fix any gaming problem so I was wondering if you can fix mine. In *Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders*, during Lucretia's campaign, how do you get past Mission 7, Halmoral? Please, please help.
Michael Warne, via email

You're right Michael, I CAN fix anything. The key here is preparation. Make sure you have enough cash to improve Morene, Lucretia and the core troop's melee armour - it's vital. Use your experience to make sure you're around Level 17 Melee as well. And make sure you kill the first few heavy infantry units before moving on - the game has been known to crash here if you don't.

Dear Spanner,
In *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* I can get as far as the side of the giant head with the dagger on top (wow, a whole 18 per cent completed!) but cannot get up it for love nor money. I've followed the on-screen prompts to the top but it still doesn't work. Can you help?
Dave Hamilton, via email

Spanner? Comedian are we? I'm laughing more at your *Prince of Persia* ineptitude. Anyway, you need to perfect your wall jump here. Run up the side of the head and then at the HIGHEST point press the opposite direction then jump. Pull back and press jump again as you hit the wall opposite. And so on until you reach the top. You'll get the hang of it.

WRITE to **The Games Mechanic, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP, or email staff@futurenet.co.uk. All work guaranteed!**

Your Opinion

WITH THE end of the year almost upon us, what do you think will be the must-have game for 2006 on Xbox? With *TOCA Race Driver 3*, *Splinter Cell 4* and *Black* all due next Spring, there's plenty of life left in the old Xbox yet!

I like the look of *Battlestations: Midway* and hopefully a return to form in the new *Tomb Raider: Legend*. Also, *Just Cause* is looking like a *GTA*-beater, but only time will tell. The big question, though, is will *Starcraft: Ghost* finally get a release in 2006? Place your bets!
Lordpercy, from the forum

Any chance Microsoft might surprise us and release *Halo 3* on Xbox instead of 360. That would be wicked skillz!
Scruff, via SMS

Black looks absolutely fantastic - the destructible scenery is definitely something to look forward to!
Doublehelix, from the forum

Are we ever going to see the *Reservoir Dogs* game that was touted ages and ages ago? I've saved up for that one about 75 times over now. I can't decide whether to keep saving for it or blow it all on a deposit for a new house.
Clive Woods, Clacton-on-Sea

Shenmue 3!!!
Everyone, via SMS

Mortal Kombat 7? Midway bring out a new *MK* every year now and they said they will be concentrating on current generation systems too...
Masta-Dante, from the forum

Probably *Black*. I love first-person shooters and this looks like being the last big hurrah for Xbox. I'll probably move to Xbox 360 permanently after this one.
Dave, via email

It has to be *American McGee's Bad Day LA*. Anything with tramps and zombies in it is a sure-fire winner!
Evil_Edna, via email

X3: Reunion! I've given up waiting for David Braben to make *Elite IV*...
Your Dad, via email

NEXT MONTH'S TOPIC: With plenty of people rushing out to buy Xbox 360 as soon as it hits the shops what are people's plan for their old Xbox. Ebay? Younger siblings? Charity Shops? The dump? Email your random thoughts and insane suggestions to mark.robins@futurenet.co.uk with 'Your Opinion' as the subject line, or send it to Your Opinion, Official Xbox Magazine, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. You can also drop into the *OXM* forum at http://forum.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk and leave your opinion there.

BONUS CHEAT: IN BEATDOWN: FISTS OF VENGEANCE, PUT ON THE POLICE SHIRT, THE POLICE HAT AND THE GUN HOLSTER BELT AND THE GAME WILL AUTOMATICALLY PUT 1026 LARGE MEDS INTO YOUR INVENTORY

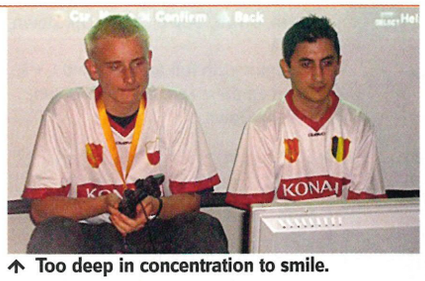
YourShout

Reader events and reviews
PES: The road to Sardinia

↑ *PES* producer Seabass (left) is on hand.

↑ England lost AGAIN on pens in the semis...

IF YOU ARE running a major Xbox event or competition, let us know about it! Write to Your Shout, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP.



↑ Too deep in concentration to smile.

LAST ISSUE saw brothers Oz and Maz secure themselves a place in the European grand final. Oz lost in last year's Euro final, so we expected nothing less than an outright win this time. No pressure then.

Maz's opening game ended in a draw, while Oz destroyed Switzerland's Edwidge 6-1, and we thought we had a winner. Maz lost his rag a little against Qualtero from Spain after losing 3-0 in his second game, but Oz kept up his winning form. Maz found his touch in his third game with an impressive 5-2 win, but it was starting to go wrong for Oz who, after an own goal, lost 3-0.

The Idris brothers played their fourth games simultaneously. Maz ended his fourth game on a 3-2 high, while Oz had completely lost it and was 4-1 down. In the final game of Oz's group he could only watch as Jinxy and Edwidge played to determine the final standings. With Jinxy already through and Edwidge needing only a point, the game disappointingly ended 1-1 and Oz was out.

Maz entered the second stage paired with Edwidge and last year's champ Sebou-hoo. After dealing with the crying Frenchman, Maz saw off Edwidge with a 4-0 win.

In the knockout stage Maz faced Poland's Esiek, a one-trick pony who would dribble the ball into the corner until he was able to get to the byline and cut it back for a simple tap in. He quickly scored three against Maz, and went on to win 5-1. Sadly for the game, Esiek went on to claim the crown in EXACTLY the same way.

The final was worth staying up till 2am for though, as Esiek's challenger went bananas, giving away a penalty and getting three players sent off as he got fed up with him scoring the same goal EVERY TIME. Good job *PES* producer Seabass has vowed to plug these gaps in *PES6*...

Crying Game

A lavish resort in northern Sardinia was the setting and, as is tradition, the final kicked off with an exhibition match between the Japanese champion Asada and last year's Euro champion (from France) Sebou. After 15 minutes Asada was up 3-0, but Sebou could only pull it back to 3-2. Proving that people take football games far too seriously, the Frenchman was later seen crying outside. He was aptly nicknamed Sebou-hoo!

Play Your Cards Right...

OXM gets its Jacks out for the World Poker Tour

TO HELP celebrate the launch of Take 2's Xbox card-playing beast *World Poker Tour* (read the review on page 096), *OXM*, along with various other distinguished members of the sporting press, was invited along to London's swish No 5 club to take part in a special poker event, the winner of which would receive a buy-in to a top Vegas tournament.

The game in question was No Limit Texas Hold 'Em, with 22 players crammed around two tables in a straight knockout tournament. *OXM*'s representative, Mark 'Five Aces' Robins, made a tentative start, folding on a flush he clearly could have won with, before things got steadily worse. His 'all-in' bet ended in tears when his Queen-high straight was marginally beaten – by a King-high straight of all things. A mildly respectable 12th, then – certainly better than being knocked out first – and an evening of cards almost enjoyable as strip poker with the Miami Dolphins' cheerleading team. Here's hoping we do marginally better on Live!

↑ Looking confident...

↑ The pressure starts to show.

↑ There goes the mortgage payment!

10-minute Masterclass

Top ten tips to bring out your inner ninja

NINJA GAIDEN BLACK (Issue 49, 9.4) isn't just a game – it's a way of life. It's also one of the most challenging and rewarding games you're ever likely to play. But it can be done – with the help of our ten-minute masterclass. Remember you're playing a beat 'em up and not a third-person action game.

Follow these tips and we'll turn you into a roundhouse-kicking, star-throwing masked killing machine. You're going to have to up your game considerably, though, which might take more than ten minutes. For the Ninja Dogs out there it could even take ten weeks. But there is hope...

BLOCKING: It sounds pretty obvious, but you should always block whenever you're not attacking. Holding the Left trigger and moving the Left stick lets you easily move round opponents. Blocking when surrounded is a must if you don't want to end up as cat food.

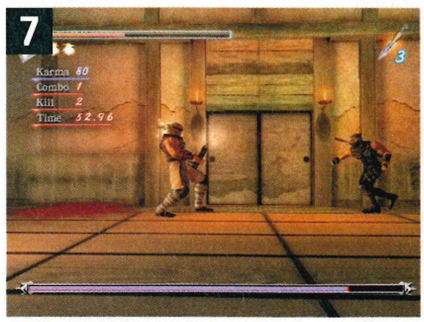
COUNTER ATTACKS: Vital in breaking the attack of an enemy and giving yourself the upper hand. Once an enemy is in full swing, hit the X-button and Ryu will counter the incoming combo. Be quick to follow it up!

USE ALL WEAPONS: An easy mistake is to rely too much on the sword. Once you unlock the 50 Missions, each one has a set arsenal of weapons and some don't give you sword at all. Be an all-round ninja from the beginning!

MAGIC: Or Ninpo as it's called in the game – vital for killing bosses or several enemies at once. You're invulnerable when casting the big spells too, which can be a great way of getting yourself out of trouble.

IZUNA DROP: Similar to a move in the *DOA* series, the Inzu Drop takes you out of harm's way and delivers an instant kill to any enemy you perform it on. When Ryu slams into the ground he also delivers splash damage to nearby foes.

DEATH FROM ABOVE: Wherever possible, use Ryu's downward slash from a great height to deliver those crushing blows. It keeps you out of the way of enemies, allowing you to pick them off with ease.



PROJECTILES: Shuriken stars (especially the incendiary variety) are a great way to slow enemies down and pick up extra hits. If you're quick enough you can also use the bow to knock riders off their horses.

PATIENCE: Every ninja needs a little patience. Don't just go flying in there because you'll get hurt. Take you time and always know who you're aiming for. Get used to the pace of the fighting and you'll see things in bullet time.

ULTIMATE TECHNIQUES: Use your Ultimate Techniques as frequently as possible. You're invulnerable while doing so, and more often than not you end up taking out more than one enemy. It makes you look cool too!

DEATH SLICE: The perfect way to introduce yourself in battle. While jumping towards an enemy, press Y to slice right through them. Decapitations are finally back in the UK version, so watch those heads roll!

THE BOSS: OXM'S MASTER NINJA IS GAVIN. OXM'S NINJA DOG IS A TOSS-UP BETWEEN MARK AND BEN

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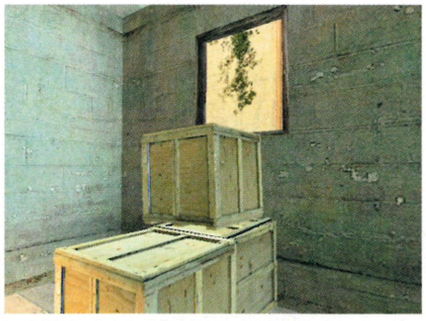
Masterclass: Half-Life 2

We help you beat one of the toughest, brainiest and most thought-provoking first-person shooters ever! Rise and shine Dr Freeman! It's time to wake up and smell the ashes...

IT'S BEEN a long while since Gordon Freeman was recruited by the GMan following the Black Mesa incident. Now you're back in business, travelling to City 17 aboard a run-down train. It's an unusual start for an FPS, because it's not until the second level until you actually get your hands on a weapon. Until the action really kicks off, sit back and enjoy the majesty and awe of City 17. When things start to get hairy, you'll need to make the most of your shooting, driving and puzzle-solving abilities to get through. That's where we come in. Welcome Dr Freeman, welcome to the next step in FPS action!



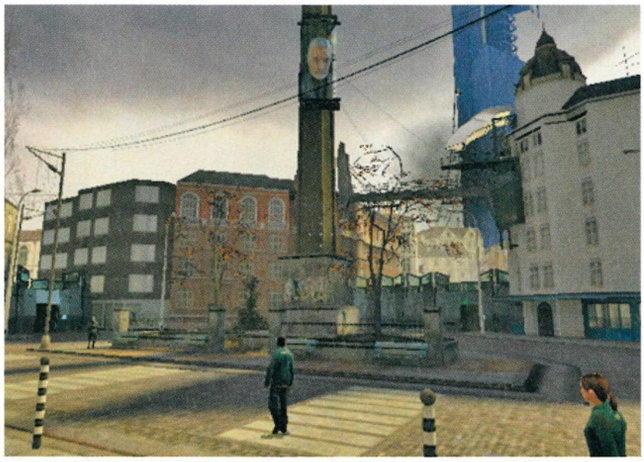
↑ Pile the boxes high to make a step up.

Chapter One: Point Insertion

Listen to the GMan's words, then make your way through the terminal, talking to all the people you meet by pressing Y. Eventually, the guards will wave you through a checkpoint towards a train heading to the dodgy-sounding Nova Prospekt.

Luckily, one of the Combine soldiers who seems to be leading you toward a terrible fate is actually your old friend Barney Calhoun in disguise. After some introductions, a bang on the door sends Barney into a blind panic. The only way to escape is to pile up some boxes near the open window and climb through. Continue through the door to your right and up a flight of stairs. A guard nearby will tell you to throw a can into the nearby dustbin. You can either do as he tells you, or lob it at his head for a laugh. Don't worry, you can't be killed just yet. Leave the train station and head down the alleyway to the right. Use the dumpster to climb up onto the ladder and make it over the wire fence. Go through the playground and into the building to the left of the two Combine soldiers.

↑ Put the can in the bin if you want to pass.



↑ Your first major glimpse of City 17 is dramatic stuff.

Follow the hallway until you reach a spiral staircase going around an elevator. Take the stairs up. At this point, the Combine will start raiding the building. Escape onto the roof and walk along the ledges. At the end of this route, you'll be cornered and things will start looking very bad. Luckily, a mysterious young woman comes to your rescue...

Chapter Two: A Red Letter Day

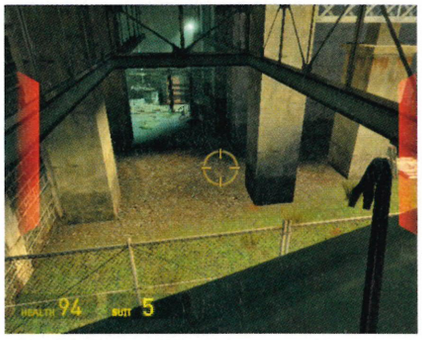
Alyx leads you into Dr Kleiner's lab. Here you can enjoy some interesting sights, like the working mini teleporter, some funny pictures on the notice board and a tame headcrab called Lemar. After you've put on your suit and charged it up, you'll be asked to help teleport Alyx to the rebel safehouse. During the operation, the plug comes loose and you have to put it back in. Once that's done, it's your turn to get teleported. Typically, this doesn't work out quite so well, and you end up in a dangerous area of City 17. Barney will give you your crowbar - you can use it as a weapon and to break down obstacles.

Go forwards into the dark passage ahead, and then drop down into the train yard. Find the open train car on the left and smash through the boxes blocking your way. Be careful when you exit the car because another locomotive will come rushing past, crushing you if you don't move out of the way. When it has passed, head down the track and look for another open train car. Move quickly to avoid taking too much damage from the Combine soldiers who are shooting at you. At this point there's no way to retaliate. Climb the ladder inside the next train and then jump from the roof to the train running alongside. From this rooftop, leap over the wire fence and break the planks blocking your access to the dark tunnel.

Chapter Three: Route Kanal

Use the medical console to replenish you health, then defeat the two Combines harassing a young woman. Now you have a gun - it's time for some payback! Two more guards are waiting on the stairs. Head down the tracks and listen for a horn, indicating you're about to get squished by another train. Instead of shooting the next two Combine soldiers, blast the red explosive barrels they're standing near. Go through the fence door, kill two more Combines and continue along the fence, turning right when you reach some shipping crates.

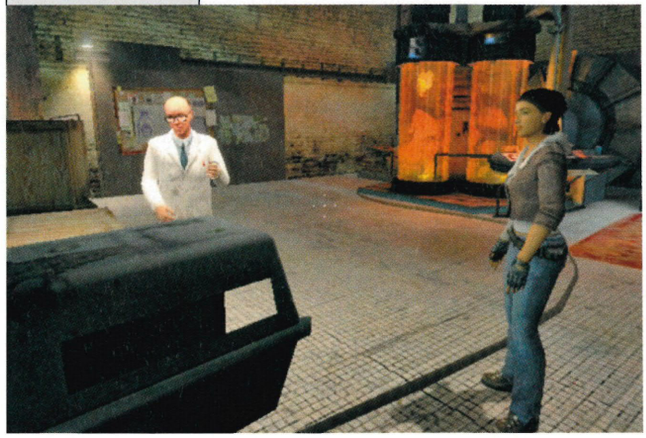
ZOMBIE FAN CLUB
See the spinning fan blade in the middle of the path to your right? Any zombies caught in its path will be instantly cleaved in half. Just don't get caught up in it yourself - crouch to go underneath it.



↑ Jump from the train roof over the fence.

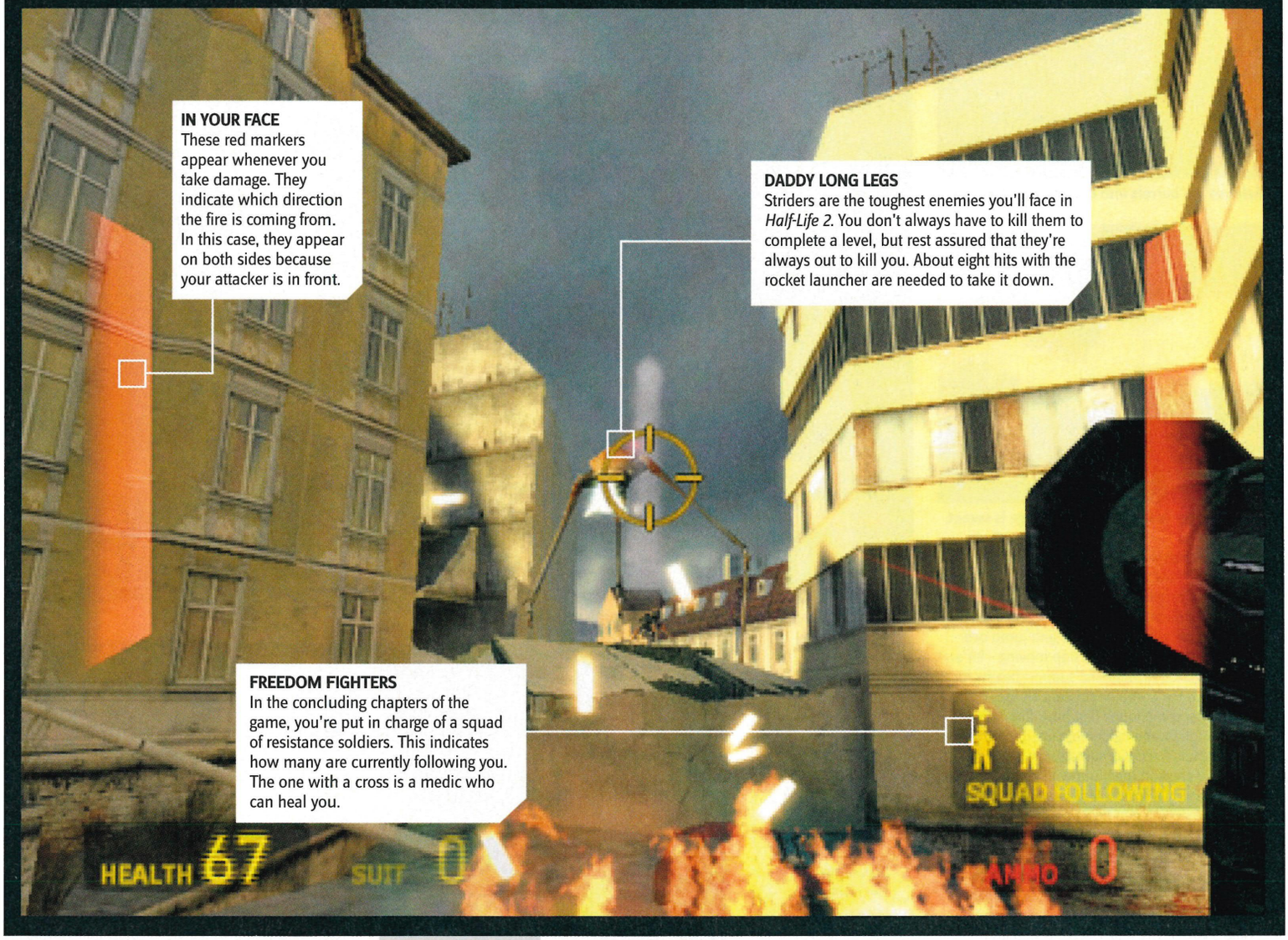
Look out for the orange lambda symbol. It indicates the position of an open grate that you can crawl through. You'll then be able to continue down the tracks, running quickly to avoid being blasted by the Combine on the other side of the force field. A few boxes of supplies and a medical console are waiting for you across the track. Kill six more enemies and jump into the canal water. Swim through the broken fence, then climb the ladder on the left side of the wrecked truck.

At this point you'll meet two members of the resistance - a human and a vortigaunt. The alien creature will recharge your suit before heading on. Smash through the wooden frame holding up the tunnel entrance and continue through to an open area with a machine gun nest on the far end. The only way to get close enough to blast the gunner is to dash between piles of debris, using them for cover. Enter the tunnel on the right wall and quickly man the machine gun and start mowing down the incoming soldiers. When the armoured car arrives, run across the elevated path on the right wall and continue through to a flooded chamber. Duck beneath the water to avoid being killed by the burning barrels falling from above. Continue on, killing some more Combines. To get past the



↑ Wonder where Lemar got to? You'll find out soon enough.

THAT'S ONE GIANT STEP... A quick guide to taking out the scary striders!



barnacles later on, throw an explosive barrel down the oily slopes, then blast it just as the barnacles are about to spit it away.

Put some bricks on the see-saw to raise up the opposite end leading up to the platform. Dodge the helicopter's attacks and you'll eventually meet another rebel. Defend him from the manhacks and continue on to the mixing room. Swim through the long underwater tunnels and progress to the large room full of exploding barrels. Use the ladder to climb onto a pipe leading over to the balcony. Cross the balcony and head down into a pump room with a valve at the bottom. This raises the water level in the previous chamber but also releases loads more manhacks. Deal with them, then swim through the underwater pipe. In the next flooded room, smash the wooden planks underwater to release a floating platform. Climb the ladder nearby and use the planks to climb over the fence and drop down into the canal. Continue on, help the resistance member fight some headcrabs and then you'll get to a hovercraft at the end of this long level.

HEALTH AND SAFETY
Conserve ammo by combining the gravity gun with the hazardous objects around you. These include saw blades, gas cans, gas cylinders and explosive barrels.

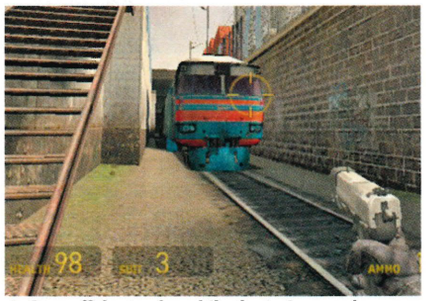
Chapter Four: Water Hazard

Hop aboard your new vehicle and prepare to race through miles of watery danger. Look for the lambda symbol on the right wall for a secret ammo stash.

You don't have to stop at any of the barns along the way, but most will contain stashes of ammo, making them worth a visit. The first red barn with a lambda symbol on it contains some ammo and a bunch of zombies. Take care!

A short way down the river, you'll come across a lowered see-saw platform. Collect the blue »

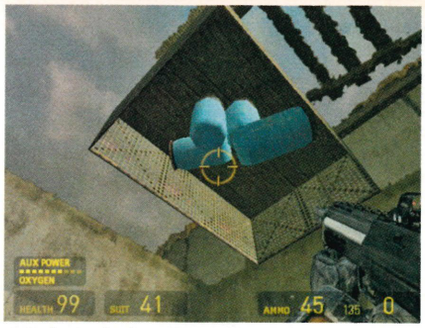
↑ This is where you get a proper weapon!



↑ Stay off the tracks while the train goes by.

↑ Lure these idiots next to the explosive barrels...

ONE IN THE LEG: WHEN YOU'RE FACED WITH ENEMIES SHOOTING AT YOU FROM A TOWER, FIRE AT THE TOWER'S LEGS AND THE WHOLE THING WILL TOPPLE OVER, KILLING ANYONE IN AND UNDERNEATH IT



↑ Release the barrels into the underwater cage.

↑ This chopper is a right pain. Revenge is sweet.

↑ Saw blades cleave though the zombies with satisfying ease.

» floating barrels and pull them below the water, releasing them into the cage beneath the see-saw. You can find a couple more barrels up in the tunnel to the left. Five barrels are enough to raise the platform. Get back in your vehicle and jump over the see-saw to continue. Don't stop moving - for an extra laugh, smash through the support beams for the docks with the Combine soldiers on top.

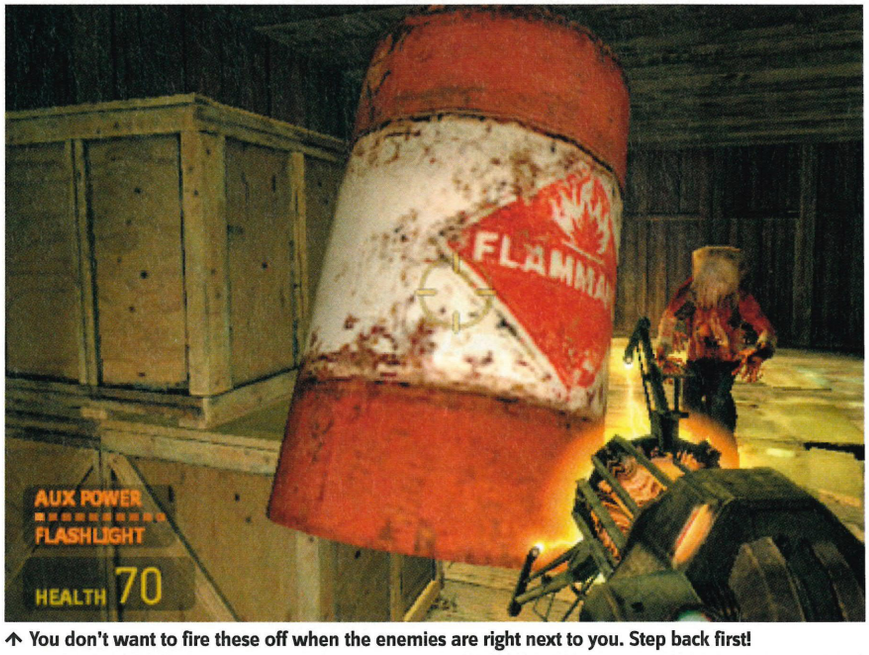
When you come to the first huge floodgate, get off and look for the ladder leading up into the control complex. A few Combine soldiers will attack here, but you can sort them out with some grenades from the green crate inside. Use more grenades to take out the machine gun nest and proceed through the door. The handle for the floodgates is broken, but don't let that stop you! Blow up the explosive barrel and see what happens. Use the machine gun nest to wipe out the Combine assault team that's just turned up before returning to your vehicle.

Here's where you really need to step on the gas. Don't stop at any cost until you reach the tunnel. Get out and take the bricks from the hanging basket. A pulley at the opposite end will lower some goodies in another cage. Continue down river until the next floodgate. Shoot the lock off the door to get inside and grab the Colt Python. Run through the cargo area and use the gun turret in the control tower to frighten off the helicopter. Use the console to open the floodgates, then get back on the river.

↑ The vortigaunts have recharging abilities.

MAGNETISM
The only way to 'kill' a magnetic mine is to fire it into some water using your gravity gun. You can pluck them off your buggy with ease.

RED ALERT!
This is where listening for the sentries' sirens becomes very important. You'll have to quickly rush out, pick them up and then stand them back upright before running back to safety.



↑ You don't want to fire these off when the enemies are right next to you. Step back first!

At the next dead end, use the washing machine on the high platform as a weight to raise the ramp. You'll now acquire a gun for your vehicle, which is handy for when the Combine ambushes you at the next floodgate. There's another puzzle where you must blow open the red container by shooting the explosive barrels inside through a small crack. This clears a route to the ramp near the sunken ship.

When you reach the following set of floodgates, all you have to do is climb the ladder near the water tower to find the control wheel. However, you'll then have to activate the overflow on the opposite side of the dock to clear the way forward. Head back to your vehicle, jump the logs through the Overflow Gate and go down the dam.

Chapter Five: Black Mesa East

After the trials of the last chapter, it may come as a relief that this is a mostly story-driven stage. Drive your vehicle into the dock with the lambda symbol painted on it. Meet up with Vance and Alyx, and listen to their plans to overthrow Dr Breen and the Combine. You also get the chance to play around with their pet robot dog.

↑ Don't bother trying to kill them all, there are infinite antlions in this level.

Once you're done, the Combine will show up and crash the party. Not only that, but mortars full of headcrabs are also dropping from the sky. Escape with Alyx and Dog into the interior and you'll soon be cut off from the group. The only escape route is the Ravenholm tunnel entrance. At this point, you'll receive the gravity gun, arguably the best weapon in videogame history! Use it to clear the path of junk and shoot the lock off the ladder to give you access to the shaft leading directly into Ravenholm.

Chapter Six: Don't go to Ravenholm

Break inside the building and remove the table blocking your path with the gravity gun. Be careful not to blow up a barrel at close range. Continue to your right, clearing out the next lot of zombies by firing saw blades at them.

In the following building, use another fan blade to make mincemeat out of all the zombies that attack. Continue down the alley to the town square, where a large number of zombified corpses are burning. Father Gregori will kick open the door and start blasting away at yet more zombies. Clear the path and head inside the building to find another zombie in a cage. Turn the wheel on the fuel tank and activate the red dial to set the creature ablaze. Remember this little trick – it'll come in useful several times throughout this chapter.

↑ Splat! Not really worth wasting ammo on.

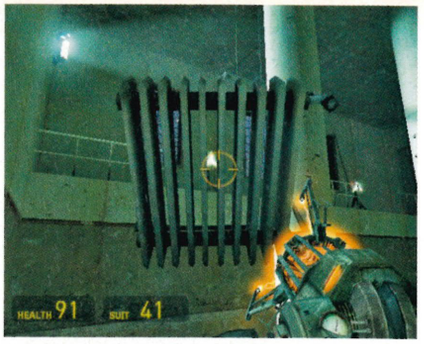
Flames aren't always your friend though. In the next pathway you'll have to turn off a gas vent to progress further. At this point you'll be ambushed by zombies, so run back and turn the flames back on to sort them out. Enter the power plant and head upstairs. Pretty much every zombie in this area is just playing dead, and will get up when you're not expecting it. With the power off, you can head back down to the fence where the corpse was being electrocuted and climb the ladder. Kill the black jumping creatures and go up the fire escape. Leap to the next building and listen to Father Gregori's words of wisdom. To the left you'll see a plank bridge. Inside the garage is a motor attached to a pulley system. Turn it on to drop a car on some more zombies. Before it goes back up, jump on the roof of the car and ride it to the plank bridge.

Continue, helping Gregori take out the leapers and zombies. He'll reward you with a shotgun! Immediately kill the onslaught of leapers and make a running jump over to the watchtower. Take the lift down and go into the next building leading to a control tower. The switch inside lowers a platform in the main street. Follow the planks around until you see the platform, and use it to get across.

Jump into the window after your next meeting with Gregori and collect the medkit. Continue along wiping up many more zombies and ride the gondola, following Gregori into the mines through the graveyard. Drop down into the mines by falling from one support column to the next one down. As you come to the train tracks, turn right, and get ready for a leaper zombie, who will come bounding down the tops of a few parked train cars. You'll also find yourself being shot at by snipers. The blue laser beam indicates their targeting system. Take them out by lobbing grenades through their windows.

CANNONBALL RUN
Don't stress if your buggy gets flipped over, just hop out and right it with a blast from the gravity gun.

CREEPY CRAWLIES
You can only control the antlions for a couple of levels, so make the most of them! Using them will keep you out of harm's way, and will help conserve ammo for later!



↑ Radiators make great shields.

↑ The mummy antlions charge head-first.

Chapter Seven: Highway 17

Enter the dune buggy and you'll be 'gently' dropped upside down by the magnetic crane. Flip the buggy with the gravity gun then go up the road and boost across the ramp. Take some supplies from the house and go through the tunnel, down the embankment and right across the plains. You'll eventually reach a house with a thumper outside. Kill the headcrabs inside and grab some grenades.

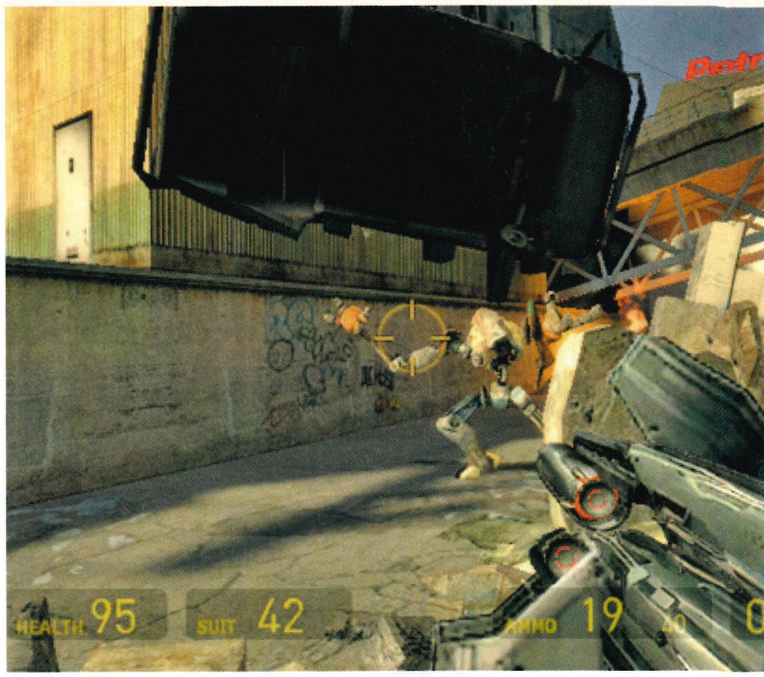
Keep driving, park near the thumper and head into the barn. Pick up the supplies and eliminate the two Combine troops coming out of the house. Return to the buggy for another journey across the wastelands. When you come to the resistance camp listen to the leader telling you about how to use the rocket launcher. The enemy dropship that attacks the camp take about eight hits to destroy. Drive out through the newly opened gate to an area where the Combine are battling the antlions. Turn on the thumper to deal with the latter.

Climb up into the crane and use it to raise your buggy onto the high platform and squish some Combine soldiers underneath the cargo crates. Knock the bridge down with a cargo crate, clearing the way to drive to the big garage. Boost up the ramp and smash right though the window. When you make it to the traffic jam, jump out and collect the rocket launcher lying on the floor. Keep driving through the tunnel, avoiding the magnetic mines.

Fight the enemies inside and around the house, then continue up the hill and grab the crossbow. Drive down to the forcefield and exit the buggy. Clear out the garage and house for ammo and health. Take care climbing on the bridge supports. You not only risk falling off, but also being attacked by snipers on the bridge. After deactivating the forcefield a gunship will attack. Deal with it before you even attempt to work your way back to the buggy. Play chicken with the train, but remember to turbo or you probably won't make

» WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE GRENADE LAUNCHER IS INDISPENSABLE – IT FITS JUST ABOUT ANY SITUATION YOU FIND YOURSELF IN.

↑ Make sure you go for the head to stop the crabs jumping off.



↑ Let Dog do all the hard work at the start of this level.

↑ Mines drop down from the roof.

» it. Go left at the end and drive up the broken overpass into the tunnel. You'll soon reach yet another barricade. Hit the natural ramp at the right edge to leap over it, but you'll be boxed in by the other gate. Here you need to find some batteries to escape. One is nearby on the bed, the other is out in the junkyard under a wrecked car bonnet. Fight the last gunship and escape the level.

Chapter Eight: Sandtraps

If you've paid any attention to what happened to the two unfortunate victims at the start, you'll know stepping on the sand is a BAD idea. Use the crates and flat pieces of rock to progress without touching the ground. Look out for the windmill that has fallen over. Move a box to the near end and climb up to get to the buildings. Position a board across the gap to get to the red building with white doors. Climb on top using another item as a step-up and turn on the generator behind the white building.

Continue along the trail of rocks down to a beached ship and a cliff. Nearby, you'll do battle with a giant antlion. Follow the vortigaunt into the antlion pen to learn to use the pheropod. Move through the caves until you reach a large thumper that must be switched off before you can summon more antlions to assist you. The switch can be found at the top of the ladder. Collect the two supply crates and move on down the beach to the next thumper. Beware of the mounted gun turret – send your buddies up the rocks to deal with it. There are several more turrets to eliminate in this area, not to mention about ten more Combine soldiers. Some bunkers can be taken out using grenades. Head into the tunnel near the circular stone pit. Loads of troops and a couple of manhacks wait inside. Exit the tunnel and proceed up the hill. You'll be fired at from the bunkers and more Combine guys will come pouring out of a dropship.

Continue on the path around the cliffs, following the guard rail. Knock out the support beams to drop the ramp and ascend to the next path. Follow the next pipe to a sewer with a ladder at the far end. Take cover from the gunship and use your antlions to deal with the Combine.

Head for the hollow crate nearby – there's some health inside. Ascend the stairs, kill the troops up on the metal balcony, and collect some rockets. Destroy the dropships, turn off the gas using the red valves and exit the level through the wire fence.

Chapter Nine: Nova Prospekt

Go down the stairs and through the tunnel in the back of the cell. Knock over the sentry and climb through the gap in the fence. Continue on until you have to climb a pile of rocks through the broken ceiling. Four headcrabs are lurking nearby. Use radiators to defend yourself from the sentries on the balconies. Don't forget to use your antlion friends wherever possible. They not only distract the sentries but also wreak havoc on the Combine.

Beware of the manhacks a little further on, then destroy the shield generator at the end of the hall to continue on. Also keep an eye out for laser tripwires. There's one positioned on the door of the security office. Activate the gate lock panel and retrace your steps to the newly opened gate. Further on, jam the giant fan with junk to burn out the motor. Unplug the shield generator and go upstairs, avoiding trip mines along the way.

Towards the end of the mission you'll be ambushed by eight or nine Combine soldiers at once. Don't panic! Just use your antlions to assist you and grab a metal object using your gravity gun to act as cover. There are also plenty of supply crates containing grenades around here. After the onslaught, you'll catch up with Alyx who leads you back to the outside world. Phew!

CAN'T HACK IT
An easy way to dispose of the manhacks is to grab them using your gravity gun and fire them at other enemies!

BEYOND REACH
If you can see a health kit or weapon that you can't reach, chances are you'll have to use the gravity gun to pull them closer.

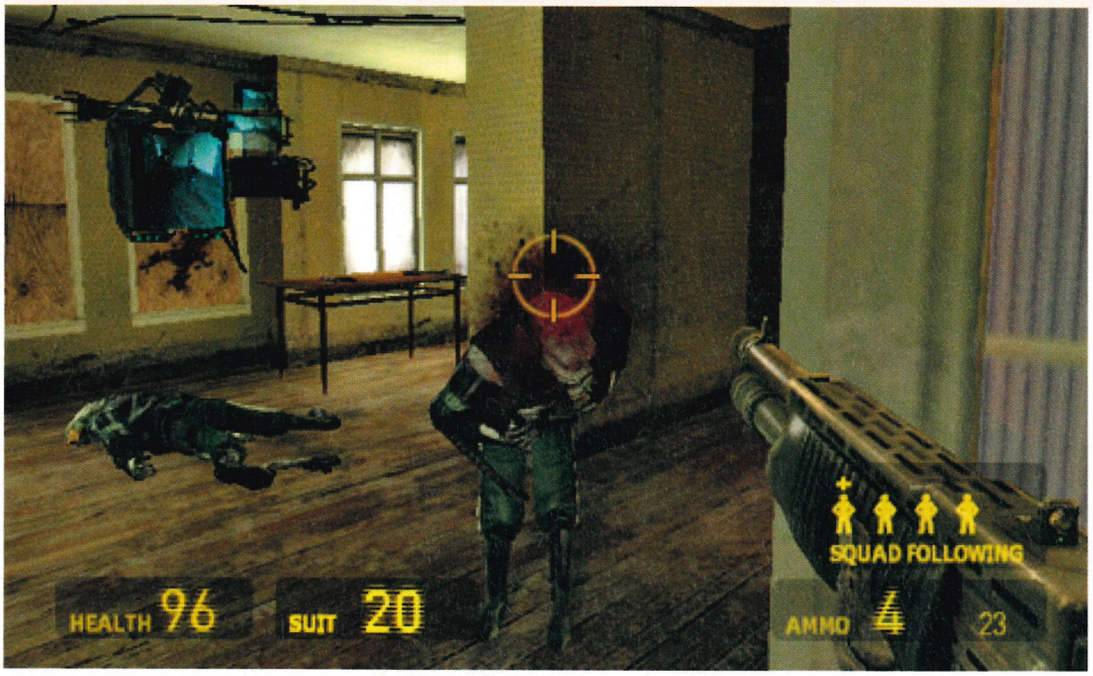
CASUALTIES OF WAR
Once you get a team together, don't worry too much about protecting them. More will come along soon enough once the others are dead...

↑ Now you're in charge of an elite squad.

↑ Your team is calm under pressure.

Chapter Ten: Entanglement

Head down the tracks with Alyx and stay with her until you find out what's happened to Vance. There are a couple of headcrabs and Combine thugs to take out on the way. Before long she'll lead you to an office with an airvent hidden behind two wooden shelves. Smash them up and kill the headcrabs inside. Kill some more Combines and progress to the control room. Kill the two guards and then position the sentry guns in defensive positions. The best places are the upstairs landing facing out towards the enemy and another on the ground floor facing one of the energy shields. Hide



↑ **The shotgun is easily the best weapon for close quarters house-to-house fighting.**

in the control room and let the sentries do the work. Only step out if you hear one being knocked over.

After the second wave of troops/manhacks, Alyx will arrive via a grate in the ceiling. Press on, but don't jump into the electrified pool of water. Jump the railing and use the pipes to get across instead. You can also use the gravity gun to create impromptu bridges across this dangerous area. You'll soon come to another area where you must set up sentry turrets. This time, make sure the three turrets are facing out towards three of the four entrances. You'll need to defend the fourth entrance yourself. As before, make sure you set the turrets back up immediately if they get booted over.

If you survive long enough, Alyx will open the gate. Take a sentry gun with you as a souvenir. Just hold it in front of you as you walk about – it takes away all the hassle of aiming! There's one final sentry challenge at the end of the mission, but by now you should know exactly how it works.

Chapter Eleven: Anticitizen One

Let Dog do all the work for you at the start. He'll open the metal gate for you once the Combine are defeated. Join up with the resistance fighters and go through the playground. There are loads of hopping mines to deactivate in the following sections. You can pull them out of the floor using the gravity gun, then fire them off like a giant grenade. Lead your squad through the derelict buildings until you reach the barricade. Don't stick around here too long – the enemies will continue respawning. Go through the building on the left to find a route around the metal wall. There's a door button on the inside of the wall. Activate it to let your buddies through.

HOPPING MAD
Disarming a hopper with your gravity gun only takes a few seconds, and you get a cool explosive to fire off too!

VIEW TO A KILL
Don't forget that the crossbow has a sniper scope, and can also nail enemies to the walls. Cool!

↑ **Dr Breen disarms you with more than just witty conversation.**

In the next area, defend the medic while he blows open the escape route. Avoid the green slime and build yourself a bridge using the debris and the gravity gun. There are hordes of zombies around so stay alert and don't let them knock you into the ooze. Enter the pipe at the end of this section and open the door for your rebel friends.

There's only one route to follow from here on in – beware of headcrabs lurking around. Soon you'll be required to protect Alyx while she lowers the shields. Run and gun, blasting the Combine with the shotgun or the Python. Also, use the hoppers like grenades and snipe the enemies at long range with your crossbow. Unfortunately, even once the shields are down, Alyx still manages to fall into enemy hands. Continue until you find the broken stairs. Climb the ladder and follow the catwalk around to the switch, Activate this, then ride the lift up to some support beams. There's another ladder at the far side leading to the end of the chapter.

Chapter Twelve: Follow Freeman

Stealth is essential if you want to get past the snipers. Sprint down the main streets, taking cover when your suit needs to recharge. Lob a grenade into your attackers' windows when you make it close enough. Revenge is sweet! Kill the zombies a little further on and try to save Barney from almost certain death. To do this, go downstairs and kill the snipers with grenades. After this ordeal, Barney will lead you to a locked door that he'll open.

Use your gravity gun to open the next forcefield and take out the turrets just past it using grenades. These turrets only open when you trigger one of the blue beams, so your timing and aim have to be spot on. It helps if you trigger the lasers on purpose and are already pointed in the right direction. There's no option but to destroy them all in the main building, otherwise Barney will probably be killed and you'll fail the mission. Take great care in the generator building and you'll eventually be able to deactivate the generator itself. At this point, reinforcements will arrive and you should head to the roof. Use the unlimited rocket ammo in the crate to destroy the gunship and kill the Combine descending from the drop ships.

Outside the museum, you have to avoid or fight four massive striders. These scary giants can take you out in a matter of seconds, so hiding in the trenches is essential. You can't stay in one place for too long though. Work your way through to the opposite side of the square, where there's a crate of unlimited rocket ammo. Now it's time to stop hiding. You must use the rocket launcher to kill all four striders, which is no simple task!

There's a short lull in the action after this, but further on you'll be chased by yet another strider. Just evade it as you fight through the demolished buildings. Head for the coffee shop and wait for the strider to blow an exit hole in the wall. After fighting another Combine battalion, the strider will blast another hole, which ironically leads to another crate of rocket ammo. You know what to do! Afterwards, head towards the horse statue by following the beams and leaping off the building.

Chapter Thirteen: Our Benefactors

This first bit can be tricky and misleading. One slip-up results in a massive fall and an untimely death, so save often. Walk along the path to the left and drop down onto the rocky ledges, one after another. When you reach the one with the pipe sticking out, use it as a bridge to get onto the moving platform. From here, jump onto the static ledge and run up the stairs inside the main structure. Continue along the beams until you reach the blue laser with pods moving through it.

Wait here for a pod to come along and open up. Press Y to jump inside and you'll be treated to a tour of the Combine's home. When you're eventually dropped off, you'll lose all your weapons during another cutscene. Thankfully, they're soon replaced with the ultimate weapon – a gravity gun that picks up enemies! Use this to fling the Combine security forces as you progress down the rather linear path.

To cut down the forcefields, grab the floating white energy balls using your gravity gun and then fire them away. The energy balls also make a good weapon when you have to deal with the strider. Fire them off like missiles, just like you did with the explosive barrels and hoppers earlier on. Deactivate the final forcefield to escape the level and confront Dr Breen.

Chapter Fourteen: Dark Energy

Don't let Dr Breen escape! He deserves a bit of retribution after everything he's put you through. The evil scientist tries hiding in the teleportation device, protected by a seemingly indestructible shield. Head right until you reach the three energy pillars, then disable them by removing the floating energy balls. You'll be attacked by the Combine, but you can fire the energy balls at them for a bit of fun. Ride the elevator to the thin support pillar and cross to the other side. Use the next lift to reach the catwalk leading to the roof.

Just before Breen teleports, grab the white energy balls and fire them straight into the white light above him. Ignore the gunships if you can, and keep firing balls into the white light. Eventually you'll disrupt the teleportation sphere and the game is finished! Well done Dr Freeman!

BODYGUARD: USE THE GRAVITY GUN TO PICK UP METAL OBJECTS, THEN YOU CAN RUN AROUND USING THEM AS A SHIELD

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Time to cut your teeth on one of *MotoGP3*'s street racing tracks. Specifically, we want your best times on the UK Shires track. Stick it on Time Trial and dazzle us with your fastest times. Our best is 1:25.65, but that's fairly rubbish. You can easily do better.

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Apart from the respect of your fellow gamers, get the fastest time and we'll send you an Xbox game of your choice. Plus, we'll get all the fastest Skive with Livers back for a special Champion of Champions competition with an amazing prize up for grabs. So get texting and start skiving.

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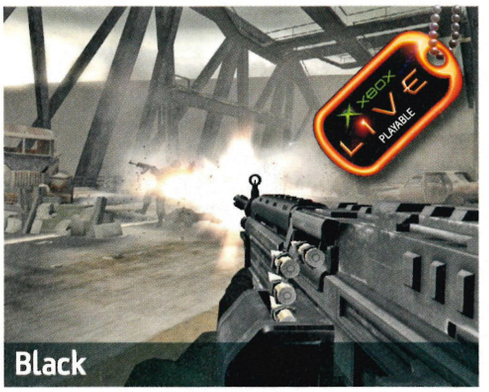
Previews The hottest new games before anyone else!



Black

More exclusive screens and news of Criterion's genre-busting beauty. Prepare for a new type of first-person shooter...

Full Spectrum Warrior: TH

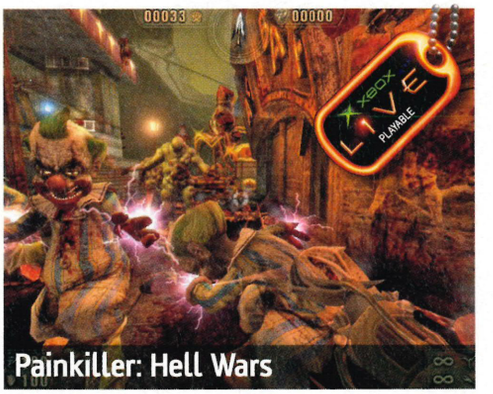
How much fun can it be not firing a single bullet? Pandemic shows us fresh details of one of 2006's most anticipated titles.

Stubbs the Zombie

Take one *Halo* game engine, mix it up with body parts and brain matter, then turn it into a ground-breaking zom-com.

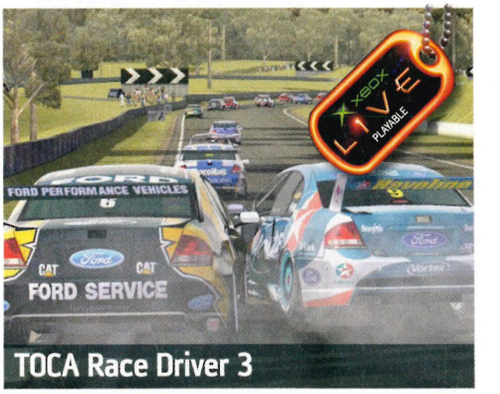
Sonic Riders

Sonic and chums take to the skies as the franchise crashes head-on with the likes of *SSX* and *Amped*.



Painkiller: Hell Wars

Save Heaven, destroy Hell. Trapped in a netherworld limbo, only you will be able to save the universe as we know it...



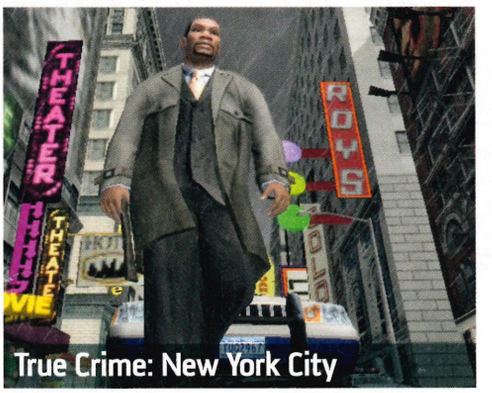
TOCA Race Driver 3

Another blinder in Codies' seminal driving series. More cars, more crashes... *TOCA 3* pulls up to the starting line.

Reviews Bringing you the biggest Xbox reviews first!

50 Cent: Bulletproof

Is he really? We'll be firing as many rounds as we can into the goofy rap artiste's game to find out if it's bulletproof too...



True Crime: New York City

We take to the mean streets of New York in this superior-looking sequel. Will it be a *GTA* killer or another lame-ass copycat?

Mark Ecko's Getting Up

We test drive this urban spraypaint graffiti-a-thon. Will it cause you to gasp in admiration or run off in the rain?

Castlevania: Curse of Darkness

Drac's back and he's got his fangs out for his treacherous dark lieutenant. Can you put an end to his bloodsucking once and for all?

Advent Rising

It's been a long time coming, but has it been worth it? Find out when we go hands-on with the massive space opera.

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend

We interview Lara creator Toby Gard and reveal just how the Tomb Raider resurrection is coming along. Will Lara really come out as a POP beater?

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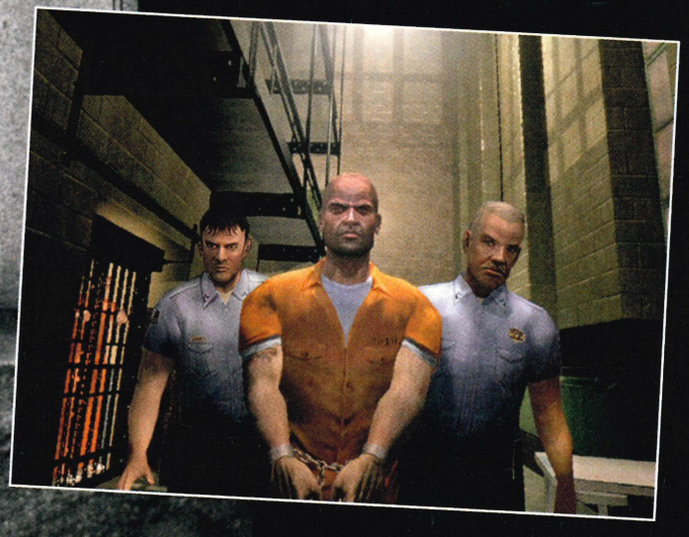
Sarah Fisher

1985 - 2008



Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL 4

Fisher's in prison, with no weapons, no gadgets and no hope of rescue... We judge whether Splinter Cell's new direction is all it's cracked up to be!

Contents subject to change due to reasons beyond our control.

NEXT MONTH Official XBOX Magazine

Official XBOX Magazine ON THE DISC

CASTLEVANIA: COD

Storm Dracula's fortress and fend off hordes of slavering beasties eager to suck your neck dry. We recommend stocking up on as much garlic as you can find.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

New worlds, new levels, and more intense action, *Battlefront* returns with a barrage of new gameplay. Pull on your X-Wing helmet and enjoy the ride.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: TTT

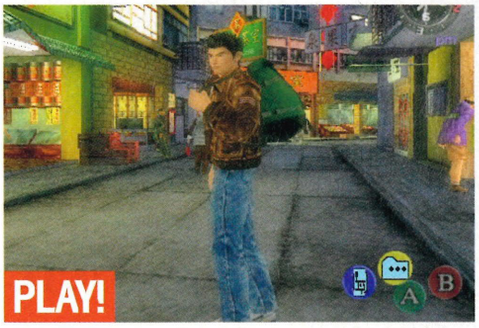
The complete, official walkthrough of the final *Persia* instalment. Learn where all the secrets are hidden, master every move, and face your destiny fully armed!

NINJA GAIDEN

Your chance to play this Xbox classic again. With *Ninja Gaiden Black* storming the charts, have you sampled what the fuss is about yet? You can now!

PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

Try your hand at this airborne Xbox classic. Fly whopping great dragons and wage fierce battles high above the clouds. Just remember to hold on tight though, eh?



SHENMUE II

With rumours about the final part of the trilogy surfacing, this is your chance to find out why so many people consider this one of the best RPGs of all time.

XBOX 360 VIDEOS

Tomb Raider: Legend
Lara looks to be back on form, bless her arse, er, we mean, heart. She floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee in this stunning first look.

Perfect Dark Zero
The return of Ms Dark! Watch as she murderises just about everyone in her wake. You'll want an Xbox 360 after this, we guarantee it.

Gun: Dodge City Part 1
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Back to Baghdad
Backyard Wrestling
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Bard's Tale
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Batman Vengeance
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Brothers In Arms: E.I.B.
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Buffy The Vampire Slayer
Burnout 3: Takedown
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C = 0 3
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Championship Manager '02
Chronicles of Riddick
Commandos 2
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Conflict: Global Storm
Conflict: Vietnam
Conker: Live and Reloaded
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D = 0 4
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Dark Angel, J. Cameron's
Darkwatch
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Dead or Alive Ultimate
Dead or Alive Volleyball
Dead to Rights
Def Jam: Fight for NY
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Destroy All Humans
Deus Ex: Invisible War
Dino Crisis 3
Doom III
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Enter the Matrix
Everything or Nothing: 007
Evil Dead: Fist.of Boomstick

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Fahrenheit
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Fallout: Brotherhood of St.
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James Bond: E. or Nothing
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Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis

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Knight of the Temple
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Knights of the Old Republic

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Lego Star Wars
Leisure Suit Larry: M.C.L.
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LMA Manager 2004
LMA Manager 2005
Lord of the Rings: 3rd Age
Lost Expedition, Pitfall

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Manhunt
Marvel Nemesis: R.O.T.I.
Max Payne
Max Payne 2
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Nightfire
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Pitfall: The Lost Expedition
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Turok, Evolution

U = 2 1
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V = 2 2
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Y = 2 5
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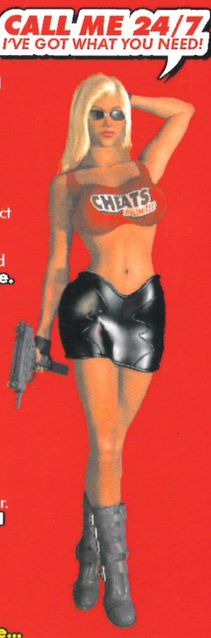

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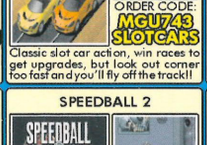
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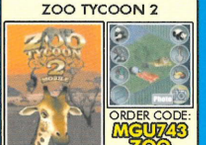
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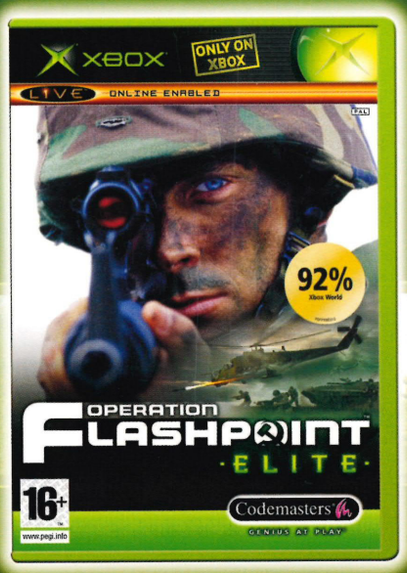

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